

200 Private Jet Owners Burned as Much CO2 as 40,000 Brits

The planes tracked by a new *Guardian* report belong to celebrities, billionaires, CEOs, and their families, among them the Murdoch family, Taylor Swift, and the Rolling Stones.

Olivia Rosane | Nov 21, 2023

The private jets of just 200 rich and famous individuals or groups released around 415,518 metric tons of climate-heating carbon dioxide between January 2022 and September 22, 2023, *The Guardian* revealed Tuesday.

That's equal to the emissions burned by nearly 40,000 British residents in all aspects of their lives, the newspaper calculated.

The planes tracked by the outlet belong to celebrities, billionaires, CEOs, and their families, among them the Murdoch family, Taylor Swift, and the Rolling Stones. All told, the high-flyers made a total of 44,739 trips during the study period for a combined 11 years in the air.

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Notable emitters included the Blavatnik family, the Murdoch family, and Eric Schmidt, whose flights during the 21-month study period released more than 7,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. The Sawiris family emitted around 7,500 metric tons, and Lorenzo Fertitta more than 5,000.

The Rolling Stones' Boeing 767 wide-body aircraft released around 5,046 metric tons of carbon dioxide, which is equal to 1,763 economy flights from London to New York. The 39 jets owned by 30 Russian oligarchs released 30,701 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

For comparison, average per capita emissions were 14.44 metric tons in the U.S. for 2022, 13.52 metric tons in Russia in 2021, and 5.2 metric tons in the U.K. the same year.

Taylor Swift was the only celebrity or billionaire in the report whose team responded to a request for comment.

"Before the tour kicked off in March of 2023, Taylor bought more than double the carbon credits needed to offset all tour travel," a spokesperson for the pop star told *The Guardian*.

Swift appears to have responded to public pressure to reduce private jet use. Her plane averaged 19 flights a month between January and August 2022, when she received criticism after sustainability firm Yard named her the celebrity who used her plane the most. After that point, the plane's average monthly flights dropped to two.

The Guardian's investigation was based on private aircraft registrations compiled by TheAirTraffic Database and flight records from OpenSky. Reporters calculated flight emissions based on model information found in the ADSBExchange Aircraft database and Planespotters.net and emissions per hour per model found in the Conklin & De Decker's CO2 calculator and the Eurocontrol emission calculator.

The report was released the day after an Oxfam study found that the world's richest 1% emitted the same amount as its poorest two-thirds. Given their high carbon footprint and luxury status, private jets have emerged as a rallying point for the climate justice movement.

"It's hugely unfair that rich people can wreck the climate this way, in just one flight polluting more than driving a car 23,000 kilometers," Greenpeace E.U. transport campaigner Thomas Gelin said in March. "Pollution for wasteful luxury has to be the first to go, we need a ban on private jets."

In the U.S., a group of climate campaigners is mobilizing to stop the expansion of Massachusetts' Hanscom Field, the largest private jet field in New England. An October report found that flights from that field between January 1, 2022, and July 15, 2023,

released a total of 106,676 tons of carbon emissions.

"While plenty of business is no doubt discussed over golf at Aberdeen, Scotland, or at bird hunting reserves in Argentina (destinations we also documented), this is probably the least defensible form of luxury travel on a warming planet when a Zoom call would often do," Chuck Collins, who co-authored the Hanscom report, wrote for *Fortune* on November 14. Our work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

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