

# EVERY VOTE COUNTS

A VOTE IN THE EU ELECTIONS CAN REDUCE YOUR FOOTPRINT  
BY TWICE AS MUCH AS ANY CONSUMPTION CHOICE



**IN AN ELECTION WITH  
+350 MILLION  
ELIGIBLE VOTERS,  
EVERY VOTE COUNTS**



**1**

We carbon footprinted the voting choice for EU voters for each of the major parliamentary groups

The 'mean' vote for a Centrist Parliamentary Group reduces your political footprint by 6 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> / yr vs. non-voting.

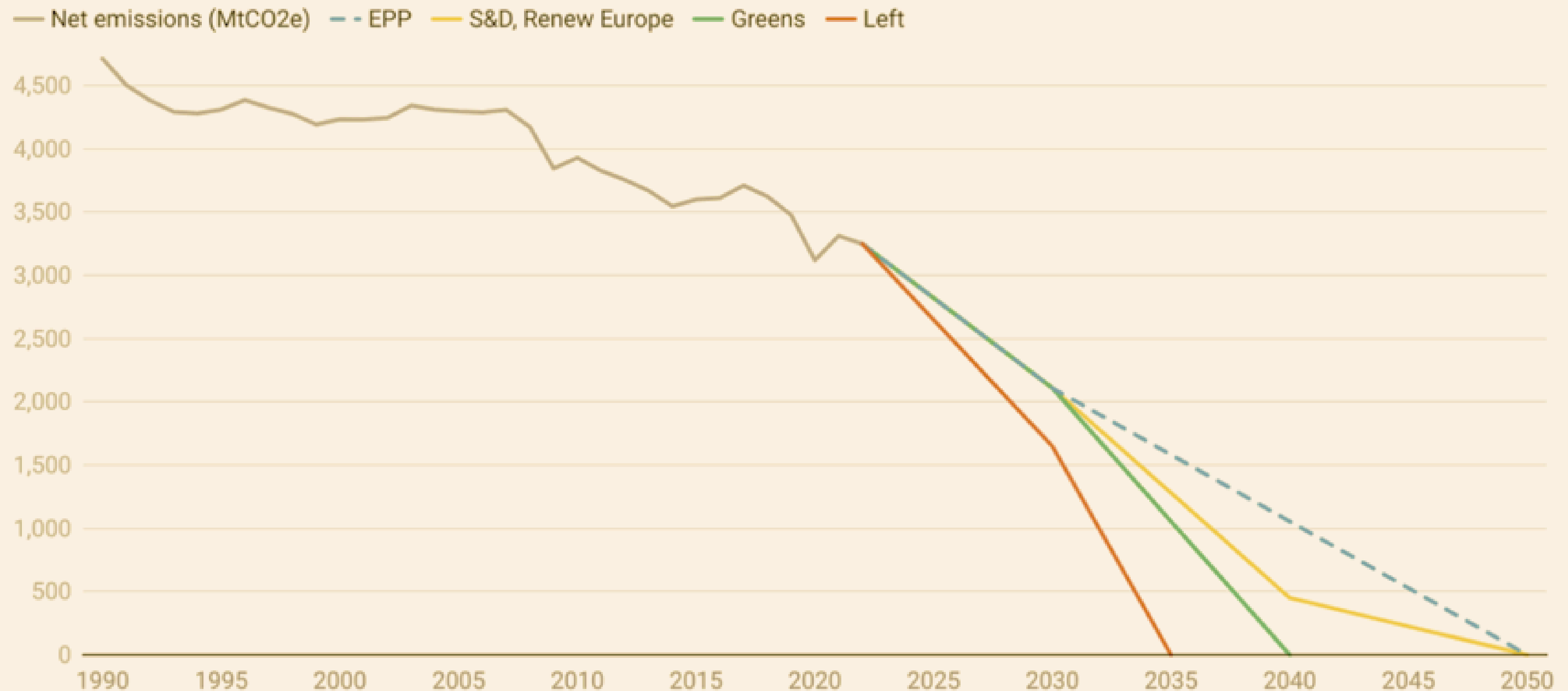
**2**

That compares to ~0.5 tons reduction from eliminating air travel and ~1 ton from switching to a vegan diet.

**3**

# European parties have proposed various targets to achieve a net-zero EU

Projections of net EU emissions, MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, based on targets communicated in election manifestos

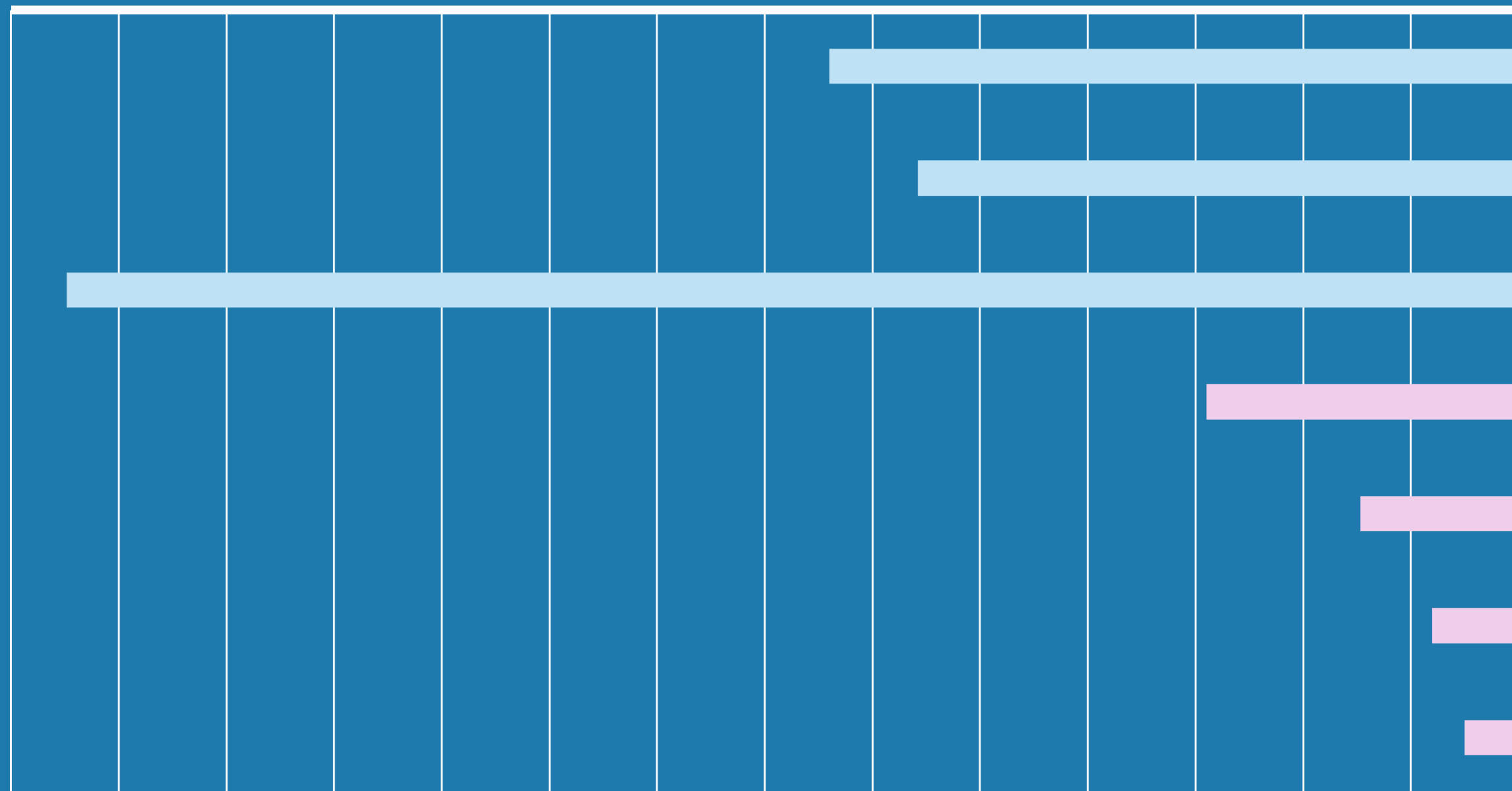


Source: Eurostat, party/group manifestos, Carbon Brief analysis

**WHEN THESE NET ZERO TARGETS ARE ALLOCATED TO THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THEM POSSIBLE - THE VOTERS - THE ANSWER IS CLEAR. WHATEVER LIFESTYLE AND INVESTMENT CHOICE YOU MAKE, VOTING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHOICE YOU HAVE**

Tons of CO2 footprint reduction / year

-14 -13 -12 -11 -10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 -



Not voting -> Voting for a "Centrist Party"

Switching vote from S&D/RE to Greens

Switching vote from EPP to Greens

"Sustainable consumption lifestyle"\*

"Decarbonizing your portfolio" (\$5,000)

Going vegetarian

Eliminating all air travel

*Note: Centrist parties defined here as EPP, S&D, RenewEurope, and Greens*

**IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:  
REDUCING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT  
DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY LEAD TO  
REAL WORLD EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS**

Carbon footprint calculators estimate your footprint by allocating potential emissions changes to individuals or companies.

However, that doesn't necessarily mean emissions are reduced:

- Taking a bicycle instead of a car reduces emissions directly, but buying alternative protein instead of meat may not. On the flipside, lifestyle choices like going vegan may, when part of a broader movement, have significantly higher impacts than one's 'direct impacts'.
- You may vote for a party that does not win the election, or even if it wins the election, does not fully implement its manifesto, or - even if it implements its manifesto - be hindered from achieving the desired outcomes as a result of other economic actors (e.g. member states).

**THIS IS AN IMPORTANT CAVEAT. THE POINT  
IS NOT TO FOOTPRINT YOUR IMPACT  
(WHICH YOU DON'T CONTROL), BUT YOUR  
CHOICES (WHICH YOU DO CONTROL)!**

**FOOTPRINT  
≠  
IMPACT**



# HALF OF EUROPEANS THINK THEIR 'VOICE' DOESN'T MATTER

At the same time, we are constantly fighting over what 'personal responsibility' for climate change actually means vs. the need for systemic change...

There is a simple response to both of these challenges:

Footprinting your voting choices demonstrates the potential power of every voter!



## **THEIA FINANCE LABS DEVELOPED THE “CITIZENS FOOTPRINT” CALCULATOR IN 2021 FOR THE GERMAN GENERAL ELECTIONS. IT IS THE FIRST “VOTING CARBON FOOTPRINT CALCULATOR” IN THE WORLD**

The calculator allocates the cumulative carbon footprint of political party manifestos (i.e. the estimated emissions from the current election to net zero year) to the parties voters. Step 1 involves creating an annual average emissions difference between manifestos, using data from CarbonBrief. The methodology assumes manifestos get fully implemented and that there are no international spillover emissions effects We then estimate the ‘mean’ annual emissions difference between manifestos for each party and - using forecasts of their relative vote share, create a ‘mean’ footprint of an EU parliament for all parties and a mean footprint for an EU parliament considering only ‘Centrist parties’ (EPP, S&D, RenewEurope, and Greens) to establish the relative difference between a ‘non-voter’ and a voter tilting parliament in favour of Centrist parties.

These annual emission deltas are then allocated to voters of the parties using a standard 25% factor, assuming 23.2% vote share is needed to form the largest parliamentary group (based on latest polls) and be able to have the best chances at implementing the manifesto. An alternative approach is to allocate the emissions based on the actual estimated vote share, which would however in our view falsely reward ‘fringe parties’. The citizen footprint calculator as it is currently designed is predicated on the idea of estimating the emissions reduction potential of voting ‘if’ the manifesto gets implemented, assuming that that requires a plurality of the vote. The same assumption applies indirectly for consumption footprint calculators where your footprint is reduced if you don’t eat meat, even if there is not a ‘critical mass’ of consumers eating less meat such that meat production patterns change.

There are some obvious caveats to such a footprinting exercise including but not limited to the ‘double counting’ of voting patterns at EU, member state, and regional level, as well as across actors (I reduce my emissions when the electricity grid is greener which may be driven by corporate, individual, or political choices. There is also the ex-post / ex-ante exercise here, where the actual policy dynamics may be unduly influenced by certain parties in a multi-party system, similar to the different importance of votes in different countries / districts in Europe. Similar and perhaps in turn other caveats apply as well for traditional footprint calculators, of course in other configurations.

A more detailed description of the original methodology can be found [here](#).









**Sources:**

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/eu-election-2024-what-the-manifestos-say-on-energy-and-climate-change/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion\\_polling\\_and\\_seat\\_projections\\_for\\_the\\_2024\\_European\\_Parliament\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_and_seat_projections_for_the_2024_European_Parliament_election)

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Thomä, Jakob (2022) *Der Kill-Score: Auf den Spuren unsers ökologischen und sozialen Fußabdrucks*. Klett-Cotta Verlag.

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