

# *Between Tourism and Sustainability: A Closer Look on the Impact of Overtourism*

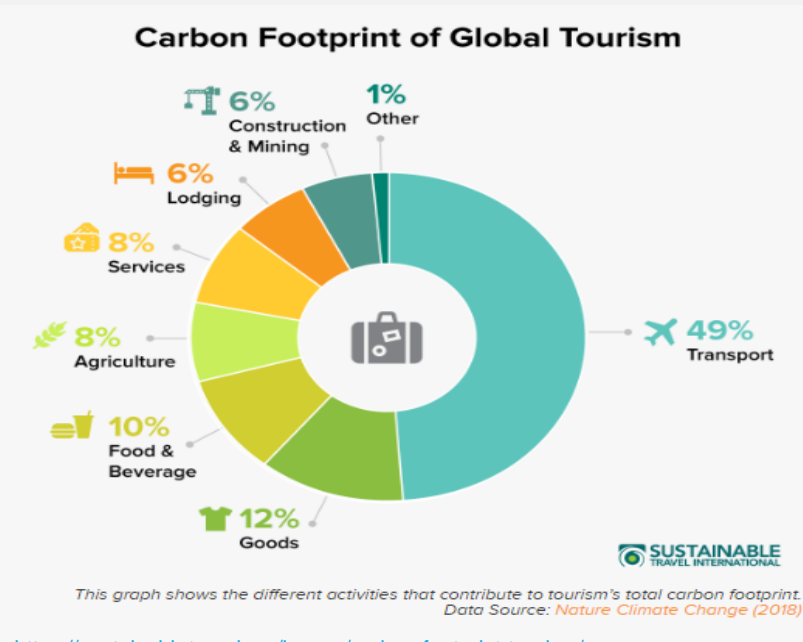
## SANKHYA (संख्या)

*“There cannot be a good plan for economic progress without adequate data and there cannot be adequate data without a good plan for collecting them...”*

*P.C Mahalanobis, Member, First Planning Commission of India & Scientist*

# OVERTOURISM: DEFINITION, FOCAL POINTS AND GLOBAL STATUS

Overtourism has been defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences the perceived quality of life of citizens and/or visitors in a negative way”



<https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/>

China, the United States, India, the EU27, Russia and Brazil were the six world largest GHG emitters in 2022. Together they account for 50.1% of global population, 61.2% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 63.4% of global fossil fuel consumption and 61.6% of global GHG emissions.

In 2022, China, the United States and India increased their emissions compared to 2021, with India having the largest increase in relative terms (5%).

As of 2022, India received approximately 14.33 million International Tourist Visits and 1731.01 million Domestic Tourist Visits.



The UN's World Tourism Organization and the International Transport Forum concluded in 2019 that 5% of global emissions – and 22% of global transport emissions – are from transport-related international and domestic tourism.

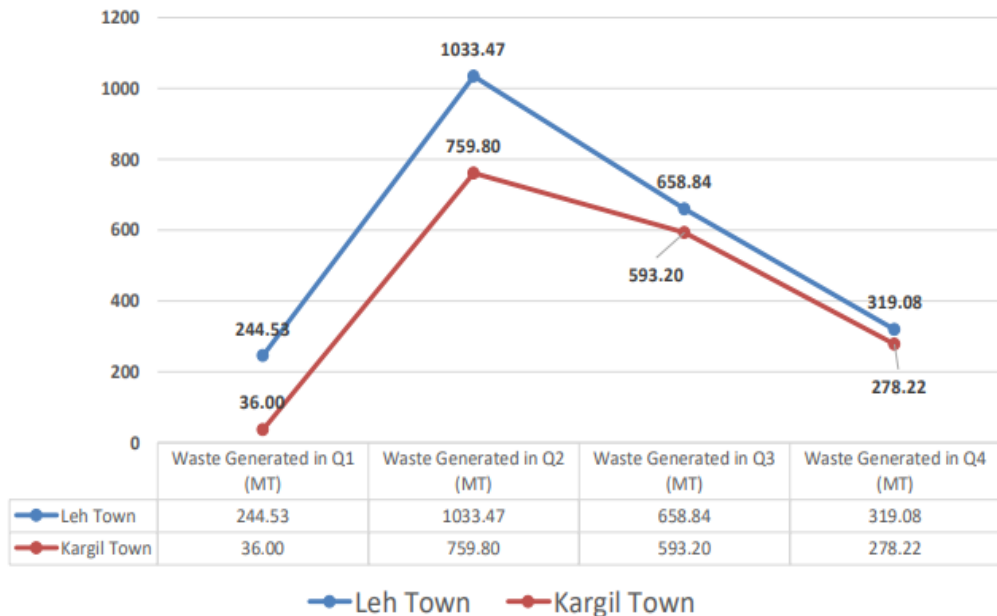
<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/tourism-emissions-climate-change>

This data indicates a 104.43% growth rate of tourist arrivals in India in 2022, when compared with the data regarding tourist arrivals in the same time period last year (2021).

# LADAKH: A CASE STUDY FOCUSING ON THE IMPACT OF OVERTOURISM

**According to the Ministry of Tourism, Ladakh saw an influx of approximately 0.213 lakh foreign tourist arrivals, and 5.101 lakh domestic tourist arrivals in 2022. Over 400,000 tourists visited Ladakh during May-September, showing an 800% increase in footfall in over 20 years.**

Waste Generation Ladakh from Q1- Q4



Leh generates an average of 8-10 tonnes of dry waste and 2-4 tonnes of wet waste per day during summer months (May- September), and the average decreases to 3-4 tonnes of dry waste and 1-1.5 tonnes of wet waste per day during winter months (October-April). Tourist season in Ladakh lasts from April to July.

244 metric tonnes(MT) of waste in Leh and 36 MT of waste in Kargil were generated in the first quarter of 2022 (January-March). 1033 MT of waste in Leh and 759 MT of waste in Kargil were generated in the second quarter of 2022 (April-June). 658 MT of waste in Leh and 593 MT of waste in Kargil were generated in the third quarter of 2022 (July-September). 319 MT of waste in Leh and 278 MT of waste in Kargil were generated in the last quarter of 2022 (October-December), negatively impacting the environment along with the locals.

[Presentation by Ladakh Administration to the National Green Tribunal](#)

**The waste generated in the second quarter of 2022 is high due to the high footfall of tourists and migrant laborers, directly linking overtourism, pollution and the environmental impact of the same.**

# POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

## Redirection of Tourism

Redirection of tourism involves steering visitors away from overcrowded hotspots towards lesser-known destinations. By promoting diverse attractions and highlighting cultural and natural gems beyond popular areas, this approach aims to distribute tourist traffic more evenly and reduce pressure on heavily visited sites.

## Policy Measures for Enforcing Capacity Limits in Tourism Hotspots

Policy measures for enforcing capacity limits in tourism hotspots are crucial to maintaining environmental and cultural sustainability. Implementing strict regulations on visitor numbers, tour group sizes, and transport modes can prevent overcrowding and preserve the integrity of sensitive ecosystems and historic sites. Such policies ensure that tourism development aligns with carrying capacity and local community needs.

## Promoting Eco-tourism/ Sustainable Tourism on a Global and Regional Scale

Promoting eco-tourism and sustainable tourism practices globally and regionally focuses on minimizing environmental impact while maximizing benefits to local communities. Encouraging responsible travel choices, supporting eco-certified accommodations and tour operators, and promoting conservation initiatives are key strategies. Sustainable tourism aims to protect natural resources, preserve biodiversity, and promote cultural heritage for future generations.

## Supporting Responsible Consumption instead of Maximized Extraction of Resources

Supporting responsible consumption over resource extraction entails promoting tourism models that prioritize local economic benefits, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. This approach emphasizes sustainable tourism practices that minimize waste, conserve resources, and engage tourists in respectful interactions with local communities. By encouraging mindful travel choices and advocating for ethical tourism standards, destinations can foster long-term sustainability and positive socio-economic impacts.

WANT TO SUBMIT IDEAS FOR  
SANKHYA OR GIVE YOUR  
VIEWS ON OUR PAST  
EDITIONS?

*Share your views, analysis, ideas and  
questions*

[appointments@bridgethinktank.com](mailto:appointments@bridgethinktank.com)



**BRIDGE**  
— THINK TANK —

Sankhya\* is an initiative of Bridge Policy Think Tank to create interface snapshots in statistics and policy analysis while promoting critical thinking and analysis.

*\* Sankhya means numbers and is also a school of rationalist Indian philosophy. According to Sankhya philosophy reliable knowledge comes from only three pramanas (proofs)- pratyakṣa ('perception'), anumāṇa ('inference') and śabda (āptavacana, meaning, 'word/testimony of reliable sources').*