

Capitalists Say AC is “Selfish”



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As Europe's heatwave killed an estimated 20,000 people, capitalist officials and media turned to whether air conditioning is "selfish."

Details. A recent [record-breaking](#) heatwave, which has claimed an estimated [20,000 lives](#) in Europe, [sparked](#) intense debates on French social media after the far-right National Rally initially [proposed](#) a vague but populist plan of mass installation of air con – though this ended up being just a poorly thought-out plan for zero-interest loans. Opponents from the environmentalist left argue that it would produce even more heat, though some have since admitted its necessity. The Paris Mayor [called](#) "individual air conditioning is a scourge".

► Debates are also going on beyond France. [Good Morning Britain](#) ran a programme on whether air con is selfish. Meanwhile the [European Commission](#) has decided to remain neutral in the debates, saying they prefer to focus on achieving "climate neutrality".

► Western mass media have long been raising individual guilt for climate change. Back in 2019, a Guardian [opinion](#) article claimed that the human body can handle the heat without AC. A [United Nations'](#) interview echoed anti-AC rhetoric in 2023, linking its damage to growing energy consumption. Later in 2025, a [Time article](#) reported that some people feel guilty for using their AC due to its potential climate damage.

Context. Just 20 fossil fuel companies are responsible for almost [35%](#) of all energy-related greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, and [90%](#) of all emissions are caused by fossil fuel use. The capitalist system of production is the [main cause](#) of climate change because it prioritizes individual capitalist profits over long-term environmental consequences.

► The environmental impact of AC use is largely determined by the electricity source, with individual AC use remaining [far less](#) damaging and localized. France, a country where these debates were especially intense, generates [most](#) of its energy through nuclear power.

► In practice, debates over AC-use shift the guilt from the capitalist system to individual workers who are simply trying to [survive](#) the intensifying effects of climate change. This strategy was adopted long ago when British Petroleum [popularized](#) the idea of a "carbon footprint", i.e. the individual impact that each worker has in damaging the environment. But even by this metric, it is [acknowledged](#) that the wealthiest cause far more damage.