

## Transition Scilly briefings

*Simplifying difficult issues*



TRANSITION  
S C I L L Y

# Carbon footprinting

Your carbon footprint is a measure of the emissions of greenhouse gases (those which cause climate change) generated by activities in your life. In effect it is the direct impact your life has on climate change.

### A new language

Carbon is the new international language. The reasons are simple:

- Every human activity creates carbon dioxide and other gases
- Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere creates climate change
- Everyone creates different amounts of carbon emissions

Carbon dioxide emissions (simplified to “carbon emissions”) are measured in tonnes. The important figures are personal, and national, carbon emissions in tonnes per year.



There are several gases that cause climate change, called greenhouse gases. These include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane, nitrous oxide, CFCs and others. They all have different warming potential in the atmosphere, so they are converted to carbon dioxide equivalents, meaning all emissions can be measured in a single language (simply “carbon emissions”).

[Find out more](#) →

[Climate change link to carbon emissions](#)

### A personal commitment

The most important principles of carbon emissions are:

- Global carbon emissions must be capped to avoid runaway climate change
- Every person in the world has the right to an equitable level of carbon emissions
- Responsibility for not exceeding this equitable share rests with every individual

The only sustainable method of reducing global carbon emissions is for every person to take personal responsibility for their emissions, so that individuals emit no more than **2 tonnes** of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

### How we compare in the UK

As an industrialised country, the UK is amongst countries with the highest carbon emissions per person in the world, eclipsed only by the likes of the USA, Australia and Dubai. We need to **cut our carbon footprint by 80%** to come down to the sustainable 2 tonnes per person per year.

**11 tonnes**

Current carbon emissions per person per year of every person in the UK

Source:

<http://www.carbonplanet.com/co>

If every citizen of the world lives like us, runaway (irreversible) climate change would take its grip and severe climatic consequences would ensue.

[Find out more](#) →

[Consequences of runaway climate change](#)

## Work out your footprint

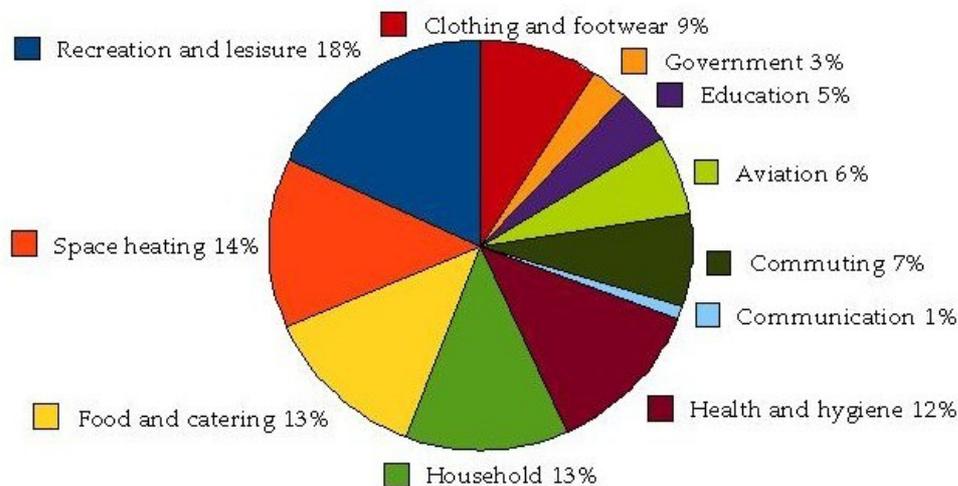
Before you can reduce your emissions, you need to know where your carbon emissions are coming from. We recommend using the comprehensive, but user-friendly Resurgence

Carbon calculator:

[Resurgence Carbon Calculator](#)

at the heart of earth, art and spirit  
**Resurgence**

Set aside 15 minutes to complete the calculator – you'll be surprised at some results.



*A breakdown of the average carbon footprint in the UK. Source: Carbon Trust*

## Reducing your emissions

This is the important part. Identify the biggest emissions factors in your life. They are likely to be:

- Powering and heating your home
- Personal transport
- Food

From whatever point you start at, you can then develop a plan to reduce those emissions by a certain amount, say 4% per year. Saving 4% per year will be easy and will in no way diminish your quality of life; yet it will help reduce the effects of climate change **and save you money.**

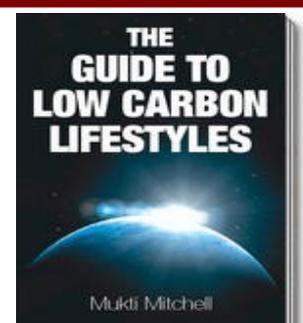
The Guide to Low Carbon Lifestyles by Mukti Mitchell is a great place to start – accessible, clear, concise and free!

**6.1 tonnes**  
Carbon emissions from one return flight from London to New York

**2.8 tonnes**  
Average carbon emissions from electricity use in the home

At just 22 weeks old, an average British citizen will be responsible for the equivalent emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide that someone in Tanzania will generate in a lifetime.

[www.transitionscilly.org.uk](http://www.transitionscilly.org.uk)



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