

A survey\* of more than 1,000 UK businesses carried out by the British Chambers of Commerce in partnership with O2 Business has found that only one in ten (11%) respondents overall are measuring their carbon footprint. This falls to 9% for small businesses, and 5% for microbusinesses, with fewer than 10 employees. By contrast 26% of larger firms, with more than 50 employees, are measuring their footprint.

Despite the uncertainty on carbon footprints, many firms are still taking a wide variety of positive actions to reduce their emissions and become greener. Over the next 12 months, 54% of businesses surveyed are planning to reduce their consumption (e.g., of paper, food and plastics), 47% are planning to reduce the energy they use through travel, and 40% are planning to reduce the energy used at their offices and premises. Of those looking to take action, eight in ten (79%) cite concern about the environment as the motivating factor, followed by efficiency gains or cost savings (cited by 59%).

### Which firms are currently measuring their carbon footprint? (n=998)

**24%** of firms with more than 50 employees

**9%** of firms with 10 to 49 employees

**5%** of firms with less than 10 employees

### Barriers and required support

- The main barriers preventing respondents from making their business more sustainable are high upfront adaptation costs (34%) and a lack of finance (30%).
- Getting access to grants (28%), tax allowances (14%) and reducing the costs of making adaptations (14%) were cited as the three steps businesses would most like to see to help them reduce their carbon consumption within the next six months.
- While 13% said they would like access to impartial, bespoke advice with an action plan – and almost a third said they look online for advice on net zero and environmental sustainability.

\*1,072 participants took part in the online survey. 29% were operating in the manufacturing sector, 32% were B2C service firms and 38% were B2B service firms. 94% were SMEs with fewer than 250 employees. 46% of respondents reported that they export internationally and 47% said their business was established more than 20 years ago. The fieldwork for this survey was conducted between 5 and 23 July 2021.



**Shevaun Haviland**  
Director General, BCC

*"This research is a real eye-opener and shows just how big a challenge the UK's net zero target is.*

*"Climate change is something that affects every single one of us and businesses have a big part to play in tackling it. But the Government must also recognise that smaller firms will need access to grants, subsidies and other financial support to help them take effective steps on the journey to a greener future."*



**Jo Bertram**  
Managing Director,  
Business & Wholesale, O2

*"In May, the Government called on small businesses to lead the charge and pledge to reach net zero by 2050 or sooner, but our research shows that to do this, they need more support.*

*From microbusinesses to larger firms, they have all told us they're concerned about the environment, but in the wake of lockdowns and growing economic pressures, the majority are understandably facing barriers to improving their sustainability."*

The BCC, in partnership with O2, has launched a new Net Zero Hub containing free tools, support and advice for business to reach their net zero goals

[www.britishchambers.org.uk/page/net-zero-hub-2](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/page/net-zero-hub-2)

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