

The average UK carbon footprint is 8.1 tonnes per person*

In the air – varies!!

We include about half a tonne to represent domestic flights that make up part of the government’s calculation for per person footprint. This is the most widely varying part of the average footprint – some people fly a lot, some people don’t fly at all.

At Home – 1.5 tonnes

Based on 4,200 kWh of electricity and 12,000 kWh of natural gas (2017 average figures). The typical total carbon footprint for a UK household is about 3.6 tonnes, divided by the average household size of 2.4 people gives a footprint of 1.5 tonnes of CO₂.

For the average household, turning the heating down by just 1°C could reduce your footprint by up to 300 kgCO₂ per year (and save you money). Switching to energy saving lightbulbs, improving your insulation and taking a shower rather than a bath will also all reduce your footprint. And don't forget to turn off gadgets and lights that aren't being used!

The biggest saving would come from switching to a renewable energy supplier.

On the ground – 1.5 tonnes

Based on an average of 8,100 miles in a medium-sized (1.4 - 2.0 litre engine) petrol car.

The best way to shrink your footprint – drive less, drive a smaller car, go electric (depending on how you charge your car – using a renewable energy provider would make a huge difference).

Food – about 2.6 tonnes

The footprint of the food we eat varies enormously depending on diet. A study published in 2013 suggests that in the UK the carbon footprint of different diets is as follows:

- High meat-eaters : 2.6 tonnes
- Medium meat-eaters : 2.0 tonnes
- Low meat-eaters : 1.7 tonnes
- Fish-eaters : 1.43 tonnes
- Vegetarians : 1.39 tonnes
- Vegans : 1.0 tonnes

Food makes up a big part of our lifestyle footprint - by cutting down the amount of meat in our diet we can save between 0.6 and 1.6 tonnes of CO₂ per year per member of our household.

Government and Services – about 1 tonne

Fixed amount for all the things that go to make up “society” – hospitals, prisons, schools, military, other government functions, road construction, our part of industry, etc. This is “shrinkable” only by lobbying and engaging politically.

All the rest – 2.0 tonnes+

This figure is everything else that can’t be readily directly calculated and said to be “yours”. This figure includes everything that goes to make up the social and economic structure of our country and how it runs, but doesn’t adequately reflect the amount of “stuff” we import from abroad. If we could calculate those emissions, also known as “embedded” or “embodied” emissions, “All the rest “ would be a lot larger than most of us imagine – taking the average footprint well beyond the 8.1 tonnes quoted above, and on some estimates doubling it. On a per person basis, the most significant “modifier” for this figure is how much we consume. We can lower this figure by consuming less! Keep gadgets going for as long as possible – avoid upgrades as far as is possible.

* – the 8.1 tonnes of CO₂ quoted is based on emissions within the UK that are reported to the UNFCCC in the country’s annual “National Inventory Report”. It is an average based on the UK’s total emissions and total population in 2016, reported April 2018.

