The Carbon Impact of Staff Commuting

Most carbon footprints only account for Scope 1 & Scope 2 emissions, as Scope 3[1] emissions are more complex and challenging to measure. Unfortunately, this blind spot is far larger than people expect and often leads to a drastic undercounting of corporate greenhouse gas emissions.

Developed by World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the GHG Protocol is the most widely used greenhouse gas accounting in the world[2]. The GHG Protocol's Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Accounting and Reporting Standard states that "the majority of total corporate emissions come from Scope 3 sources which means many companies have been missing out on significant opportunities for improvement"[3].

The purpose of this tool is to assist organisations in quantifying their Scope 3 emissions associated with staff commuting.

Directions for Use

The individual charged with conducting their organisation's staff commuting assessment will be referred to in this instruction as the 'admin'.

1. The admin should notify staff that a survey into commuting habits will be taking place asking about their travel behaviours for a typical week.
2. A link to the survey is available as an MS Forms page online (Here). The admin should access this survey and click the 'duplicate it' button in the top right of the survey page. This will allow them to change the text as needed to customise the form for their organisation.
3. The admin should then distribute the link to as many colleagues as possible within the organization.
4. Once responses have been collected the admin can close the survey and generate a spreadsheet of the results. This spreadsheet must be saved as a xlsx. file.
5. The admin will then upload this xlsx. file into the online tool which will display the results showing a breakdown of carbon emissions and mile travelled per mode of transport, as well as their annual totals.
6. If not everyone in the in the organization responded to the survey, or if some people responded multiple times, then please adjust the 'Number of Commuters' field to the total FTE staff of the company.
7. A PDF report can be downloaded at the bottom of the page for an organisation's records. This information is meant to help identify the main drivers of commuting emissions and the policy interventions/activities that could mitigate these emissions.

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[1] All indirect emissions (not included in scope 2) that occur in the value chain of the reporting organisation, including both upstream and downstream emissions.
[2] GHG Protocol About Us page
[3] GHG Protocol's Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Accounting and Reporting Standard

If repeated, annual emissions can be tracked to see the impact of changes in policies or activities.

Assumptions

The tool incorporates several assumptions:

1. Emissions factors for modes of transport are updated annually from the figures provided by UK Government Department for BEIS "Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors"[4].
2. FTE staff are assumed to have a 5-day working week.
3. Public holidays for 2022/23 are assumed to be: 15th April, 18th April, 2nd May, 2nd June, 3rd June, 26th December, 27th December, 2nd January, 3rd January.
4. FTE annual leave is assumed to be 30 days, giving an average of 2.5 days annual leave per month.

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[4] UK Department for BEIS GHG Reporting Conversion Factors