

## Largest ever UK industry study finds 73% of organisations prioritising net zero, but over half face barriers

- UK Net Zero Business Census provides key insights, challenges, and recommendations for decarbonising the UK economy
- Survey of 2,005 UK organisations benchmarking industry progress to net zero reveals cost, finance, and expertise seen as major hurdles, especially by SMEs
- 65% of respondents are targeting net zero by 2050, with 48% setting targets within the next decade
- 46% of organisations had been asked by customers for carbon data, including 37% of SMEs

**LONDON, UK – September 11:** The UK Net Zero Business Census has found that organisations recognise net zero as essential, but high costs, policy uncertainty, and skills gaps are leaving many unsure about the path ahead.

The report of 2,005 organisations across all sizes and sectors has been released today by [UK Business Climate Hub](#) in partnership with [Planet Mark](#) and 50+ of the largest business associations, banks and corporates, including CBI, Make UK, Institute of Directors and the British Chambers of Commerce. The results explore the current priorities, plans, barriers, opportunities and actions to decarbonise being used by organisations on their journey to net zero.

With 73% of respondents reporting that net zero is a strategic priority in the next 12 months, the census provides recommendations for policymakers, organisations, industry bodies and researchers to help propel the UK economy towards its legal requirement of reaching net zero by 2050. To support this commitment, 65% of respondents had set targets to reach net zero by 2050, with 48% aiming to achieve net zero within the next decade, before 2035.

Despite this, organisations report significant barriers hindering progress, including high costs (59%), limited access to finance (52%), time constraints (52%), outdated infrastructure (53%), regulatory uncertainty (50%) and lack of trusted information sources (46%). To overcome these barriers, 92% of organisations said improved government support would be beneficial. By working in partnership with business and finance to establish clear, long-term regulatory timelines, government can provide stability and confidence for investment in net zero initiatives, further helping to address many organisations' policy uncertainties. This support is particularly needed by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who are being indirectly affected by carbon disclosure regulations cascading down to impact them via supply chains, with 37% of SMEs having been asked for carbon data by a customer, compared to 55% of large organisations.

**Ed Lockhart, Convener of Broadway Initiative who manage UK Business Climate Hub said:** *“The leadership shown by many UK organisations in the census is deeply inspiring, helping accelerate our collective progress towards a more sustainable future. Despite these significant strides, substantial challenges remain, particularly for small and medium size enterprises who often lack the same access to resources available to larger organisations. To address these disparities and drive collective action for all, we recognise the need for greater partnership between government and business to develop sector-specific decarbonisation pathways and guidance, as well as enhanced financial mechanisms and expanding trusted information resources like the UK Business Climate Hub. Such measures are crucial for ensuring a smooth and effective transition towards a net zero economy.”*

**Andrew Griffiths, Director of Policy & Corporate Development at Planet Mark said:** *“With 73% of respondents saying net zero is a priority for their business strategy within the next 12 months, UK businesses have made their intent clear. At Planet Mark we see this every day through our 800+ Member organisations who we support to measure and reduce their carbon emissions annually, so seeing this commitment reflected nationally is extremely positive. The findings also send a clear message that targeted support and a stable policy environment is critical for them to implement effective net zero strategies, which the Labour government have a unique opportunity to deliver. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with UKBCH to make net zero accessible to all organisations.”*

The UK Net Zero Business Census Report is available for free download, along with a free webinar at 12pm on 18<sup>th</sup> September at: <https://netzerocensus.co.uk> or <https://businessclimatehub.uk/census>

Businesses can also access a free library of government-backed resources and guidance on net zero at UK Business Climate Hub here: <https://businessclimatehub.uk>

Partners supporting the Census include:

- UK Business Climate Hub
- Planet Mark
- Broadway Initiative
- British Chambers of Commerce
- CBI
- Institute of Directors (IoD)
- Make UK
- Ad Net Zero
- Advertising Association
- Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE)
- Association for Rental Living
- Bankers for Net Zero
- Barclays
- British Business Bank
- British Institute of Cleaning Science
- British Promotional Merchandise Association
- British Retail Consortium
- BSI
- BT Group
- Clear Channel UK
- Climate Action
- Climate Action For Associations (CAFA)
- Cold Chain Federation
- Commercial Interiors UK
- Corporate Leaders Group UK (CLG UK)
- East Lancashire Chambers of Commerce
- Environmental Industries Commission (EIC)
- Environmental Services Association (ESA)
- Electricity North West
- Food & Drink Federation (FDF)
- Garden Centre Association
- Heart of the City
- Home Builders Federation
- HSBC
- IEMA
- Innovation Zero
- ISOQAR
- LawNet
- London & Partners
- Lounge and Outdoor Furniture Association
- Lloyds Bank
- National Grid
- NatWest
- Northern Powergrid
- Octopus Energy
- Renewable Energy Association (REA)
- RESET Connect
- Safecontractor
- Sage
- Scotch Whisky Association
- Small Business Britain
- SME Climate Hub
- TechUK
- UK Hospitality
- UK Power Networks
- Water UK

The perspectives and recommendations expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of individual partners, having been primarily produced by the core census delivery partners below.

**About UK Business Climate Hub** (for more information, visit <https://businessclimatehub.uk>)

The UK Business Climate Hub is the nation's net zero portal for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which condenses carbon-cutting advice into one easy to use website. Through the website, businesses can access financing and support, guidance on steps to reduce emissions, and sector-specific plans for reaching net zero. The UK Business Climate Hub is a shared endeavour, developed with the [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero \(DESNZ\)](#), the international [SME Climate Hub](#) and the UK's main business organisations, energy networks, high street banks, other leading businesses and professional bodies. The coalition is managed by the [Broadway Initiative](#), the coalition of major trade associations working with business, government and ENGOs to facilitate the collaboration necessary to achieve the UK's net zero and environmental goals.

**About Planet Mark** (for more information, visit [www.planetmark.com](http://www.planetmark.com))

Planet Mark is an internationally recognised carbon reduction and net zero specialist, with over 10 years of experience. It is committed to helping organisations of all sizes find solutions to reduce carbon emissions, secure net zero targets and generate long term business value. On average, 99% of certified organisations succeed in reducing their carbon emissions. Operating at the centre of climate tech, advisory and legislation, they bring together the best of people, technology and nature with a unified model that helps their 800+ members achieve tangible business results that stand for meaningful climate action.

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## Appendix – Notes

Launched in May 2024, the census was delivered by the UK Business Climate Hub in partnership with Planet Mark and 50+ other leading business associations, banks and large corporates. With a sample size of 2,005 responses, this Census is the largest known national survey of UK industry progress on net zero, with other surveys in our literature review typically sampling ~1,000 organisations (e.g. BSI Net Zero Barometer) or being focused on very specific organisation sizes / sectors.

Moving forwards, UK Business Climate Hub, Planet Mark and the Census Partners intend to provide an annual update, monitoring industry progress over time, the impact of improvements in policy and the update of support mechanisms to guide government strategy for a net zero economy.

### What is Net Zero

The 2008 Climate Change Act was amended in 2019, setting a legal target for the UK to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The accepted way for an organisation to achieve net zero status is to set and achieve a science-based emissions target. These typically involve an absolute emissions reduction of at least 90%, alongside accredited carbon removals to offset the balance.

In practice, to reach net zero at a national level, most organisations in the economy will need to be reducing their emissions in line with science-based targets, in part through formal processes as well as wider decarbonisation action across the economy.

### Best Practice for Organisations and Industry Bodies

The UK Net Zero Business Census provides a series of best practice points for organisations unsure of how to start, or progress, their decarbonisation initiatives:

- **Accelerating carbon footprint measurement** - Promote the urgency in which organisations need to measure full baseline carbon footprint (Scopes 1, 2 and 3). With 52% of participating organisations having already established at least a partial baseline, and a further 29% planning to do so within the next 12 months, it is critical for setting accurate reduction targets and tracking progress.
- **Develop comprehensive carbon reduction plans** – organisations of all sizes and industries must be encouraged to establish clear, actionable plans to reduce carbon emissions, including measurable milestones and timelines.
- **Use trusted information sources** - leverage platforms like the [UK Business Climate Hub Website](#) (accessed by 30% of participants) and the [Race to Zero Campaign](#) (accessed by 18%) to gain access to best practices across sectors and foster collaboration.
- **Invest in education and training** - Advance educational support to enhance staff understanding of net zero goals through regular training and development programs, leveraging the critical role of sustainability professionals highlighted in the findings. This is likely to also enhance staff engagement.
- **Invest in renewable energy and efficiency measures** - Encourage adoption of renewable energy solutions and implement energy efficiency measures, the most common action that had already been taken by 59% of organisations.
- **Leverage industry associations and sector decarbonisation initiatives** - Only 14% of respondents indicated they have accessed industry or trade association guidance on net zero. Encouraging membership and active participation in these associations can facilitate knowledge sharing on best practice, collaboration on shared challenges and foster a collective approach to achieving net zero, particularly in driving sectoral decarbonisation initiatives.