

The hidden impact of London's consumption: an opportunity for London boroughs

The environmental and climate impact of Londoners' consumption extends far beyond its borders.

Most of what we consume in London is produced and transported globally, including materials to make the buildings we live in, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the latest electronics we buy and the plastic packaging these all come in.

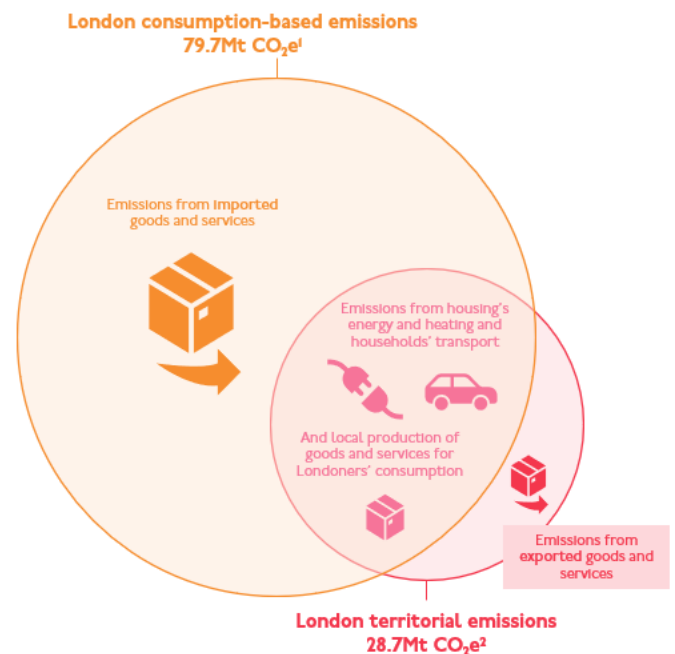
I. What are consumption-based emissions?

Most councils monitor their boroughs' greenhouse gas emissions through territorial accounts.

Territorial emissions are those that arise within the city's boundaries. They mainly come from the energy used for transport and for heating and powering buildings.

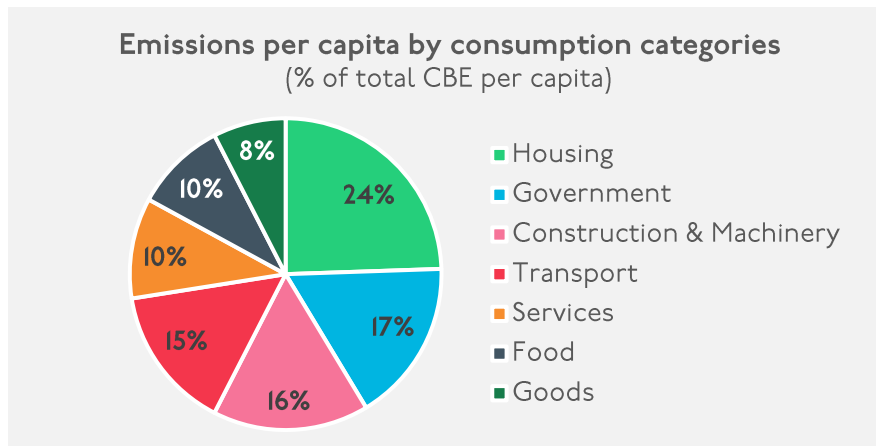
Consumption-based emissions give a more complete picture of the full climate impact of Londoners' lifestyles, irrespective of where those emissions occur. They include embodied emissions associated with the production of imported goods and services.

Those consumption-based emissions are 2.5 times higher than London's territorial emissions.



II. London consumption-based emissions hotspots

London's consumption-based emissions are spread across a large range of consumption categories. Heat and power for housing has the largest footprint (24%), closely followed by government operations (17%), and construction and machinery (16%).



While London's per capita consumption-based emissions were at a similar level to the UK average in 2001, the capital is now the region with the lowest per capita footprint. It has reduced by 35% since 2001, mainly because of the decarbonisation of the UK electricity grid, and the introduction of ULEZ.

However, this decarbonisation needs to be accelerated. More action needs to be taken to tackle the carbon footprint of categories that have seen the lowest decarbonisation in the past 20 years, which are mainly imported goods: government operations (-13% CBE reduction), food (-19%), goods (-25%) and construction and machineries (-29%).

III. Why should London boroughs take action?

The Mayor and London's boroughs have ambitious targets for reaching net zero and adapting to climate change. Research shows that city-level actions can tackle up to 30% of emissions embodied in goods consumed in London.

A change towards sustainable and healthy consumption patterns in our city can tackle imported embodied emissions: local reuse, repair, rental and sharing practices (a circular economy); and the consumption of lower carbon goods. Over and above the

climate impact, transitioning to a circular economy can deliver multiple economic and social benefits, including:

- the creation of nearly 300,000 jobs and a £7bn contribution to GVA;
- costs savings for residents as a result of better access to refurbished and shared goods;
- a more resilient local economy through shorter supply chains, reducing London’s reliance on imported goods and susceptibility to supply shocks.

IV. What can London boroughs do and where they can find support?

London boroughs can tackle consumption-based emissions by promoting and influencing sustainable and healthy consumption patterns through a wide range of levers: from reducing the carbon footprint of their own operations, to supporting local communities and businesses, and developing targeted regulatory measures (e.g. through planning). The ambition to tackle consumption-based emissions should be recognised across the boroughs’ strategies and plans.

Targeted resources and support for London boroughs are available through London Councils’ Climate Programme and ReLondon:

<i>Who can help</i>	Food & goods	Building materials	Buildings’ energy and heating	Transport
London Councils’ Climate Programme	One World Living	Low carbon development		Low Carbon Transport
			Retrofit London Renewable Power for London	
Other borough partnerships	ReLondon		Local Area Energy Planning	
	The Mayor’s Business Climate Challenge	London Plan resources and guidance		