BU staff business travel sustainability guidance

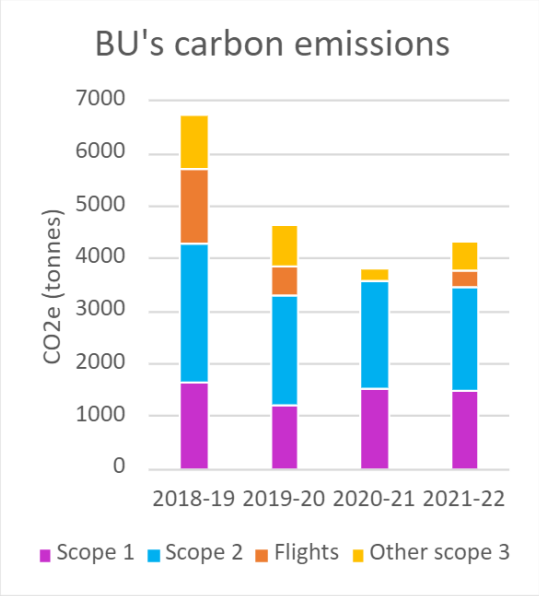
Introduction

This guidance supports the BU Business Travel Policy. It aims to provide recommendations on **when**, **why,** and **how** staff should travel for business purposes through information and tools to support practices that address sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting equality.

Business travel is any travel associated with university work including, meetings, conferences, training, teaching and research. This guidance does not cover commuter travel or travel between campuses.

Global and BU **context**

In the 2015 United Nations Paris Climate Agreement, 195 countries agreed to keep global temperature increases this century to well below 2°C, and ideally below 1.5°C. The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) demonstrated that achieving this would require 'net zero' carbon emissions by around 2050. Allowing global heating to increase by 2°C would have many potentially catastrophic impacts, including drought, floods, poverty and food insecurity for millions of people around the world.



Within BU's Climate & Ecological Crisis Action Plan (CECAP), we have committed to **halving our emissions by 2030/31** and achieving net zero emissions. In our baseline year 2018-19, flights were responsible for:

24% of BU's carbon footprint

1,426 tonnes of CO2e

£2.2 million spending

The economic, social and environmental benefits associated with reduced flying cannot be ignored and BU are committed to ensuring its activities as an organisation support our aspirational visions and values.

Responding to this means we need to prioritise and consider the following three areas:

How **often** we travel
(ensuring value and using virtual options)

How we choose to travel
(choosing low carbon travel modes)

How we **maximise** travel **benefits**

The Business Travel Guidance will follow this framework, as well as covering the environmental and financial implications of travel and additional resources.

It's time for **change**

A reduction in air travel in HE not only aids BU to achieve its emissions reduction targets, but it is also suggested to address inequalities across genders and regions, increase productivity, and support mental and physical wellbeing (Chatterton et al, 2022).

Sustainable travel decision tree

When considering any business travel use this decision tree below, adapted from the Tyndall Centre. By using this, you can choose the most sustainable option for your travel.

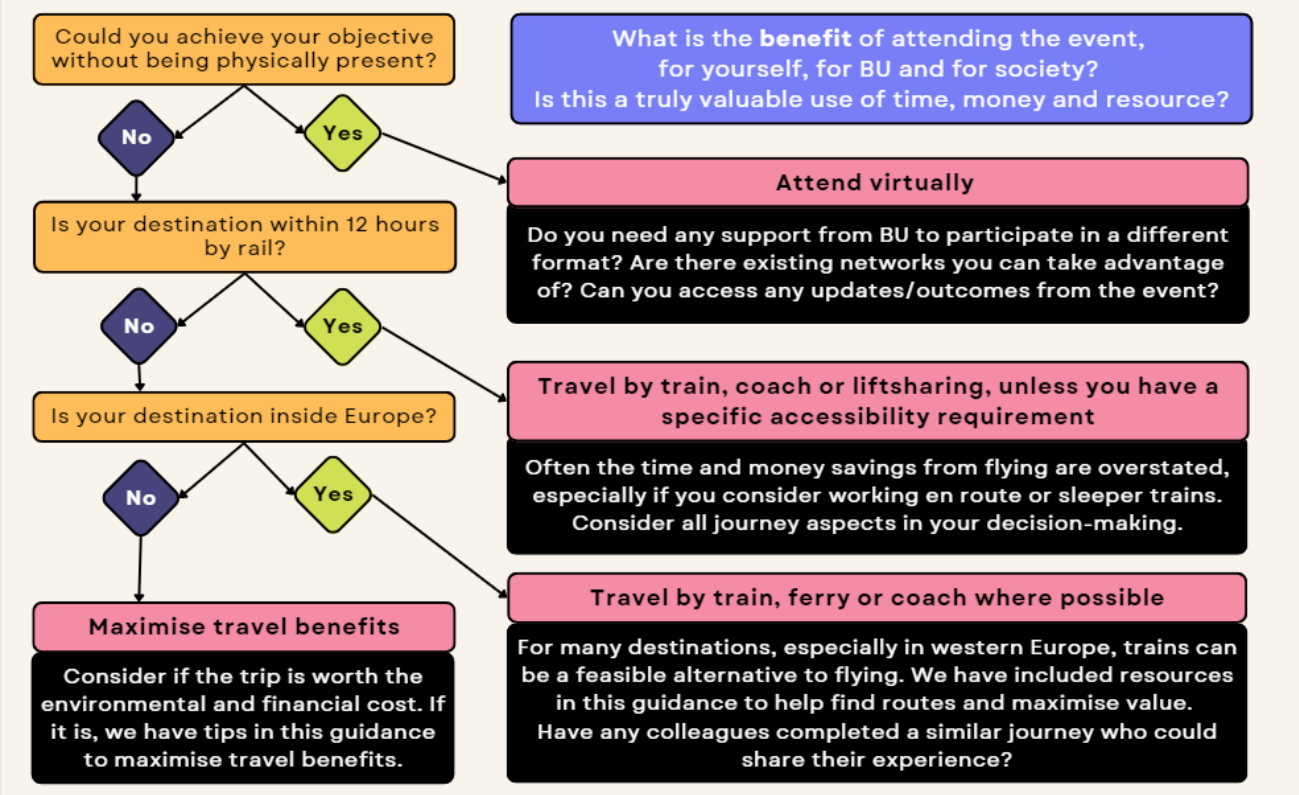


Figure 1. Sustainable business travel decision tree

The rest of this Guidance document aims to support you to fulfil this decision tree.

1. Choosing **when** to travel

Is your travel essential?

The BU Business Travel Policy mandates that essential travel must fulfil **at least one** of these criteria:

	There is no virtual attendance option available
	Physical attendance is key to the event / activity
	The staff member is a key speaker, and this cannot be delivered virtually
	Physical attendance is required for furthering BU's position or relationships and there is no other member of staff attending to fulfil this

Where an exception is required or where the activity falls outside of these parameters, further clarification should be sought by the authority responsible for approving business travel.

Is your travel worthwhile?

Even if your travel does fulfil one of these criteria, it is worth evaluating its potential benefit against its time and financial resource requirements. This can vary depending not only on the **purpose** of your travel but also the **context of your role and career stage**.

Questions to consider include:

1. How will this travel benefit my work, BU or society more broadly?
2. Could time and money be better spent on other means of dissemination?
3. Would other colleagues benefit more from attending, or can less of us attend?
4. If virtual opportunities aren't available, can I request them?
5. Is my flight footprint particularly high due to my career stage, gender or location?

The below graphic aims to support you with this choice.

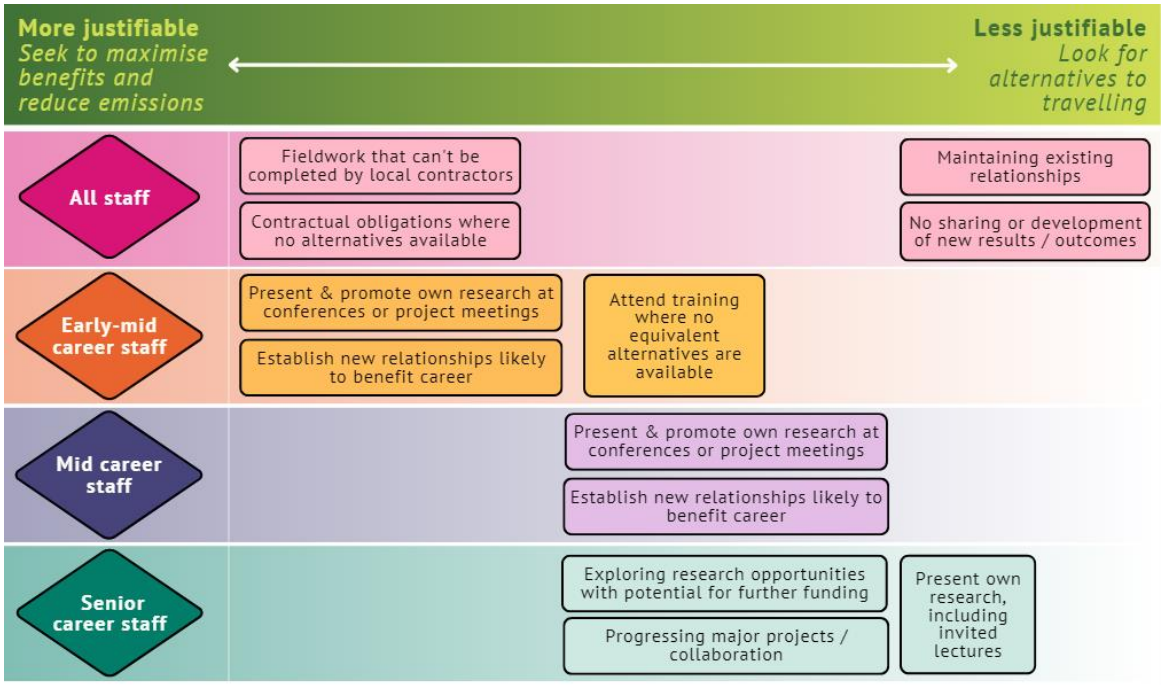


Figure 2. Adapted from the Tyndall Centre to explore how context and seniority could affect travel value.

2. Choosing **how** to travel

We recommend staff prioritise low-carbon travel. Figure 3 shows the greenhouse gas emissions for various travel options: this graphic can be used as a hierarchy, whereby if you must travel, you consider the lowest-carbon option first. This process creates a strong recommendation to **avoid domestic and short-haul flights**, except where specific individual circumstances apply to exclude this possibility.

Choosing a low-carbon option can involve beneficial changes to workstyles. For example, there is an increasing network of sleeper trains which can facilitate efficient and comfortable travel across the world while reducing impacts to productivity, sleep pattern and, when hotel costs are considered, budget.

The Chronotrains map shows you journeys that can be completed within 5 hours. Destinations from Bournemouth that are accessible within this timeframe include much of England and Wales, as well as multiple cities in Belgium and France. From London, destinations extend to Scotland, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

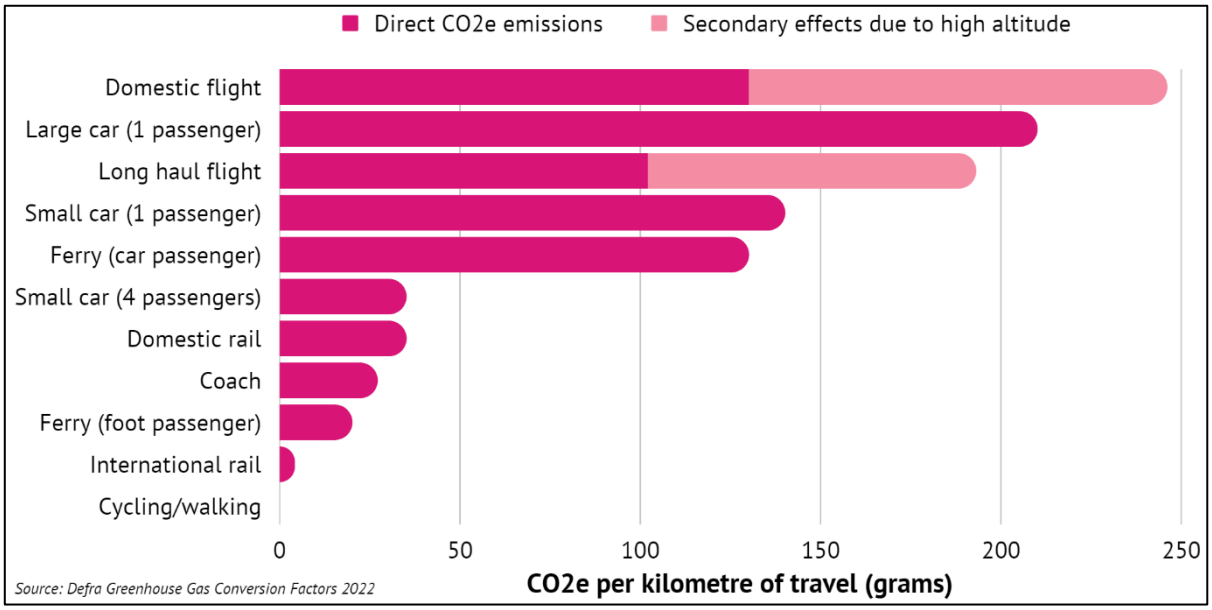


Figure 3: greenhouse gas emissions caused by 1 kilometre of travel using various travel options.

3. Maximising the **benefits of travel**

If you've reached this section, you may have decided that your travel is essential and have chosen the lowest-carbon option. The question to answer now is: *how can I maximise the benefits of this trip, including to reduce the need for further travel?* Here are our tips:

Travel solo and feed back to colleagues

Combine trips with other meetings and visits

Identify clear objectives before travelling

Use sleeper trains to save hotel costs, save day travel while avoiding jetlag.

Take advantage of extra stops for additional meetings or annual leave.

Use onboard Wifi to work and prepare for upcoming meetings.

Useful resources for sustainable travel

- **The Man in Seat Sixty-One** www.seat61.com/
  Our recommended go-to place for finding train routes, planning tips and general advice for travelling by train in almost 100 countries.
- **Chronotrains** https://www.chronotrains.com/
  This interactive map shows you everywhere you can reach within 5 hours from any train station
- **RailEurope** https://www.raileurope.com/en-gb
  Rail Europe helps you plan rain journeys across Europe.
- **Night Trains** www.night-trains.com
  A directory of night trains across the world. *Sleeper trains are a very effective form of travel for longer journeys: save the cost of a hotel stop and your time by travelling while you sleep.*
- **Busbud** www.busbud.com/en-gb
  Find a bus, plot routes, and plan your intercity bus journeys all over the world.

FAQs

Here we attempt to address some of the concerns you may have when attempting to reduce your air travel for business.

How much does **my department** fly?

Below you can see our annual carbon footprint since 2017-18 for business travel. Unfortunately, no data was provided at this level for 2019-2020. You can see that the four Faculties were responsible for most emissions.

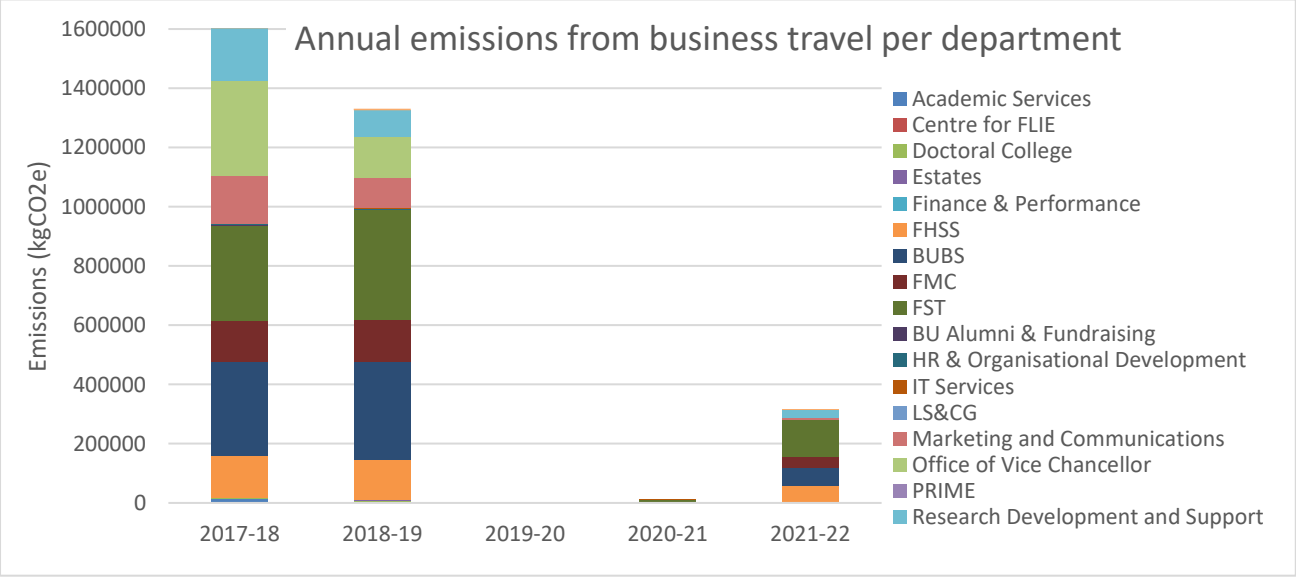


Figure 4: annual greenhouse gas emissions caused by BU business travel, split to department level.

What are the **impacts of flying?**

Financial impacts of travel

Of course, any travel comes with a cost. Since 2020, travel restrictions have led to great savings of BU budget while we have still been able to maintain and develop international relationships. Maximising value for money is a key part of our Business Travel Policy: this guidance will help you to do this.

Environmental impacts of travel

Research suggests that tourism makes up around 8% of the world's carbon emissions. As seen in Figure 5, transport makes up the largest footprint of this. Air travel is a very carbon intensive activity, with aviation estimated to be responsible for **around 5%** of global warming, and this has been increasing: CO_2 emissions from global aviation marked 4-5% growth per year between 2010 and 2018.

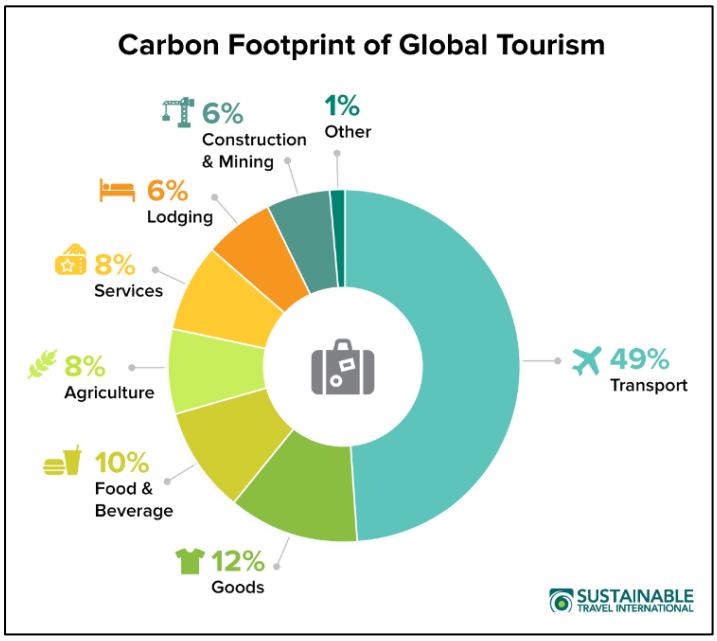


Figure 5: estimated carbon footprint of global tourism.

Air travel dominates a frequent traveller's individual contribution to climate change. **One long-haul flight emits as much carbon as many people across the globe do in one year** (Figure 6).

5% of global emissions may therefore seem small, however there are large inequalities in how much people fly – most of the world's population do not, or cannot afford to, fly at all. Even in **the UK**, 70% of flights are taken by 15% of the population. In academia, it has been seen that senior male academics travel the most while early-career researchers the least.

Figure 6: This graphic displays the inequality and disparity between UK emissions and global emissions. It shows the carbon emissions caused by flights relative to average annual citizen emissions across the world.

Won't reducing air travel **affect my research quality?**

We recognise that academic success has been regularly linked to attending, presenting, and networking at conferences, participating in international research projects and adhering to international benchmarks which have inevitably involved air travel. However research, including from the University of British Columbia who analysed over 1,700 flights by academics, has found a lack of relationship between air travel and academic productivity nor increased collaboration on papers.

We do not expect BU staff to avoid air travel entirely, but to reduce air travel, make better travel decisions and challenge the notion that we must regularly fly to contribute meaningfully.

Can't flying **save time?**

Not necessarily. Particularly for domestic and European travel, travelling by train can take less time than flying, with an analysis by the University of Edinburgh showing that, when taking account of check-in times and commuting to the airport, a train is quicker to travel between London and Edinburgh than a flight. Therefore, we do recommend investigating the time to travel by plane alternatives to test this theory for your particular journey.

Of course, air sometimes will be the quickest travel mode. Here, we must ask: what are the benefits of saving time? It could be to spend time with family, to complete other work, or simply to not spend more time travelling. If saving time is a priority, it may be that what you are travelling for is not actually beneficial. Moreover, does the time saved outweigh the negative impacts of frequent flying, environmental but also physical and emotional consequences such as jetlag and isolation?

There are also multiple benefits to slow travel. These include seeing more of a country and being able to work while you travel, with many trains now fitted with tables, sockets and Wifi. An emergent practice is "slow scholarship" which advocates for a slower and more thoughtful practice of work in the HE sector, particularly in contrast to the increase of rushed research, anxiety and inequality in the sector. We recognise this form may not be suitable for all, but suggest it is worth highly considering.

Can different fuels and technology decrease the environmental impact of flying?

Although there is increasing research into technological solutions to the environmental impact of air travel, including the use of biofuels and electric batteries to fly planes, one if the most important reasons why we cannot rely on technology to make air travel 'cleaner' is that demand for flights is accelerating to an extent that mitigates technological advancements. Increase in traffic has "historically outpaced the improvements in technology".

Furthermore, industry targets to reduce emissions that rely on emerging technologies may not be realistic. These technological solutions often have negative impacts and are not "silver bullets", especially when there is a large demand that continues to increase. For example, researchers are still trying to understand how we can produce enough biofuel to meet increasing consumption of goods and services without compromising food supply or more greatly contributing to climate change through deforestation. Furthermore, these solutions take time to develop, with researchers estimating that, if batteries improve at the current rate, they may not be able to run a commuter plane until 2050.

This all means that we simply do not have the time to wait for technological solutions to fix our problems.

Can I continue to fly if I **offset the emissions?**

A carbon offset is to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions – or an increase in carbon storage– that is used to compensate for emissions that occur elsewhere. Interest in carbon offsetting is rising as people hope to continue their behaviours without the environmental impact however carbon offsetting is controversial, and does not present an ideal solution to the negative impacts of air travel for the following reasons:

1. **Calculating the emissions offset through offsetting schemes is complicated** and likely inaccurate. They also often ignore any negative impacts of a project, both in terms of indirect emissions and other factors such as biodiversity loss or social impacts.
2. **There is a large risk of double counting**: a key principle of offsetting is that you are investing in something that wouldn't already have been done. This is very difficult to prove but without it, we cannot say for certain that an activity has been offset.
3. **There is little accountability or guarantee:** carbon storage takes time. For example, a tree may be planted but if it is not maintained to reach a certain age, its offsetting potential will not be achieved. We cannot guarantee that carbon storage will occur fast enough.
4. **It does not solve the problem:** the climate crisis is caused by our large carbon emissions. Offsetting does not remove this problem and should not be relied on to do so. We are amid a climate crisis and must act to remove the cause: unnecessary emissions.

What if I reduce my environmental impact in **other ways?**

We encourage all staff to lower their individual carbon emissions through any relevant means, such as cycling and walking to work, purchasing less and second-hand and eating less meat and dairy. However, it must be noted that, if you are a frequent flyer or fly internationally, the environmental impact of this will form a large proportion of your carbon footprint.

It has been estimated that the annual CO_2 savings from eating a plant-based diet, buying green energy or getting rid of your car would all be outweighed by one transatlantic flight (Figure 7). It is therefore important that when aiming to reduce our environmental impact, high-impact carbon reduction activities such as flying are considered if not prioritised.

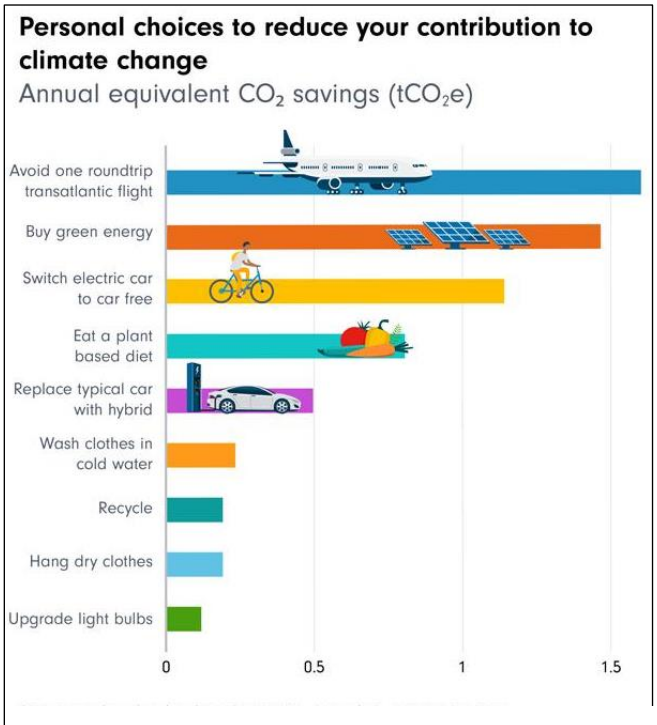


Figure 7: estimated carbon-saving activities based on estimated lifestyles within developed countries

I have more questions.

Many of these answers have been modified from the EAUC's Travel Better: Questions and Answers document. For more detail on the above answers, or answers to more questions, you can access it here. You can also contact sustainability@bournemouth.ac.uk internally.