



BRIEFING - MAY 2024

Are French companies reducing their business travel emissions?

Analysis of emissions in 2023

1. Context

2024 has already been marked by the intense impacts of climate change, increasingly affecting ecosystems and people in France and around the world. Experts are now calling for faster, deeper cuts in emissions to keep global warming within 1.5°C by 2050.

Governments are currently defining climate emissions reduction plans for the next years up to 2030, and will need to raise their ambition. Businesses, especially those with high emissions and significant financial resources, have a responsibility to contribute to achieving those targets.

[In France, the government's energy sobriety plan](#) calls on businesses to reduce energy use for travel, by taking the train instead of the plane for trips of 4 hours or less. The Netherlands has already enshrined this ambition in law: from July 2024, businesses above 100 employees will have to report to the government on progress made towards the mandated 50% reduction in domestic mobility emissions by 2030, compared to 2016 levels.

Against this context, the latest data on business travel emissions from the Travel Smart Emissions Tracker shows that some major companies are not heading in the right direction. Have French companies bounced back to 2019 levels of flying? Are they meeting business travel emissions reduction targets?

2. Analysis

We analysed the business travel emissions of 18 French companies in 2023. Of the 36 French companies in the [Travel Smart Ranking](#), only 18 published data that allowed us to make a valid comparison with their 2019 data.

We find that only 2 of the 18 companies in our sample managed to keep their travel-related emissions lower than 50% of 2019 levels. In 2022, nine companies had achieved this, largely due to COVID restrictions. The objective of the Travel Smart campaign is to reduce emissions from business air travel by at least 50% by 2025 or sooner, to be in line with climate targets.

In 2023, the vast majority of the 18 companies had lower travel emissions than before the pandemic - although 15 of them were at levels between 50% and 100% of the 2019 total. This shows the feasibility of the business culture shift: fewer flights, better use of online collaboration tools, and mandated travel by rail where alternatives to flying exist.

The Travel Smart [Emissions Tracker](#) calculates the reduction in business travel emissions compared to 2019 levels. Analysing the emissions of the 18 French companies for which we had access to data, we find that their emissions were reduced by a third (-33%) in 2023 compared to 2019, representing 425,000 tons of CO2 saved at a crucial crossroads moment in



global climate action. This is equivalent to the emissions from 215,000 petrol cars in one year. It is however a significant rebound from 2022, when emissions from the 18 companies remained at half (-50%) of 2019 levels. If the 16 companies now exceeding this threshold had maintained their business flying in 2023 at 50% of 2019 levels, our analysis shows that this would have saved almost 245,000 additional tonnes of CO₂.

The company data for 2023 is consistent with the uptick in business travel traffic. In 2023, aviation emissions in Europe reached 88% of 2019 levels. Global levels of business travel remained relatively lower than air travel as a whole, at 76% for domestic bookings and 70% for international bookings.¹ According to Air France-KLM CEO Ben Smith, some big corporate customers say they are no longer as interested in flying, as they have gotten used to traveling less.² A new study by the New Economics Foundation finds that in the UK, companies took 29% fewer flights in 2023, and spent 22% less on air travel, compared to 2019 - while real GDP grew by 1.8%, demonstrating that a reduction in business flying does not mean a loss in growth.³

The Travel Smart campaign reviewed available emissions data for 2019 and 2023 for the 36 French companies listed in the Travel Smart ranking.⁴ We compared this data against company targets and the campaign's goal of reducing business air travel emissions by at least 50% by 2025 or sooner, using public company data. 18 companies whose data was imprecise, incomplete or incomparable were excluded. For almost all companies, the data was for business travel emissions (by plane, train, bus or car). Only Publicis published more specific data on air travel emissions for 2019 and 2023. The percentage change for 2019/2023 corresponds to absolute emissions, while companies with an intensity reduction target are marked with a double asterisk.

The Emissions Tracker holds companies accountable by allowing users, including employees, to compare a company's target with its progress in 2023, and to verify if companies are meeting their targets. The Tracker then looks at the progress companies are making against the Travel Smart campaign target of at least a 50% reduction, by 2025 or sooner. This goal has been established based upon Transport & Environment's [Roadmap to climate neutral aviation](#), which shows that a 50% reduction in overall business travel is needed during this decade, in order to keep aviation within a 1.5°C-compatible pathway. T&E's analysis "[How Europe can cut its oil demand by a third by 2030](#)" also highlights the importance of short-term business travel reductions for Europe's energy security.

Within a 50% overall reduction in business travel, it is fair that companies with higher levels of flying - and which have greater financial resources at their disposal - should have a greater

¹ Global Business Travel Association, October 30 2023 Business Travel Outlook Poll.

² "Three Things We Learned from Air France-KLM's 2023 Results," *Skift*, 29 February 2024.

³ "Demand for business flights falls almost a third as economy moves away from corporate air travel," New Economics Foundation, 20 May 2024.

⁴ The sample of 36 companies from the ranking are amongst the biggest French corporations (listed on the CAC 40, with a large number of employees globally, and reporting high emissions from flying).

share of the responsibility to significantly and rapidly reduce their emissions. The top 1% of people who fly most frequently and for the longest distances are responsible for 50% of global aviation emissions.⁵ Meanwhile, almost 90% of the world's population never flies, but are still affected by the considerable environmental impacts of the excessive flying habits of large multinational corporations. A handful of leading global companies have already set targets compatible with the campaign's goal, and emerging data for 2023 confirms that innovative companies such as Swiss Re, AstraZeneca and EY have managed to maintain low levels of business travel, demonstrating feasibility. However, for many other top flyers, emissions are creeping back up again, showing that political action is needed.

3. Conclusions

In 2024, all global companies which have not yet set reduction targets should follow the example of those that have. A significant, long-term reduction target of 50% in business air travel emissions compared to 2019 is both necessary and possible within this decade, and companies have the means and the power to achieve it. Legislators now need to help companies achieve this goal.⁶

French policymakers should seize the momentum and set mandates to halve business travel emissions. The best way to control aviation emissions in this decade is to halt the growth in demand, and for this, reducing business travel emissions is key. Mandates to halve business travel emissions, and measures for an enabling framework, will accelerate the transformational changes underway towards the mobility of the future: purposeful business travel.

⁵ Stefan Gössling and Andreas Humpe, "The global scale, distribution and growth of aviation: Implications for climate change," *Global Environmental Change*, 2020.

⁶ See T&E, [Mobility of the Future 2025-2030: Purposeful Business Travel](#), May 2024.

4. Annex

Data

	Reduction 2023	Reduction 2022
Dassault Systemes	-60%	-58%
Amundi	-51%	-68%
Capgemini	-48%	-59%
Sopra Steria Group	-46%	-60%
Crédit Agricole	-44%	-57%
L'Oréal	-42%	-45%
Michelin	-41%	-54%
Kering	-40%	-47%
Renault	-34%	-62%
AXA	-34%	-71%
SPIE	-30%	-40%
Airbus	-30%	-57%
Publicis	-23%	-23%
Engie	-12%	-45%
Forvia	-11%	-37%
Sanofi	-7%	-45%
Air Liquide	-4%	-33%
bioMérieux	9%	-23%

Further information

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