MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES
MÉDICOS SEM FRONTEIRAS

2023 CARBON FOOTPRINT REPORT

MSF USA

Last Updated December 2024

Photo by: Karim Eldib/MSF

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Photo by: Matias Delacroix

INTRODUCTION

At its core, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) works to provide healthcare services to those who need it most. MSF cares for people affected by conflict, disease outbreaks, disasters, and social exclusion in more than 70 countries. Because of its mission, the organization is uniquely positioned to tackle the ongoing humanitarian issues presented by the climate crisis. In particular, the increasing levels of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in our atmosphere pose new and widespread challenges to human health. This includes more cases of respiratory-related issues in areas that experience higher concentrations of pollution and worsening extreme weather events that leave communities without proper care. Malnutrition and the increased spread of diseases are also attributed to the impacts of climate change (Benoît, Avril).

Recognizing this intersection, MSF USA and MSF as a movement have committed to reducing the environmental impact of organizational activities, to reduce its carbon footprint by 50% by 2030. This aligns with the Paris Agreement's goals of keeping planetary warming under 2 degrees Celsius. MSF is also a signatory of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations. This charter is an initiative led by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

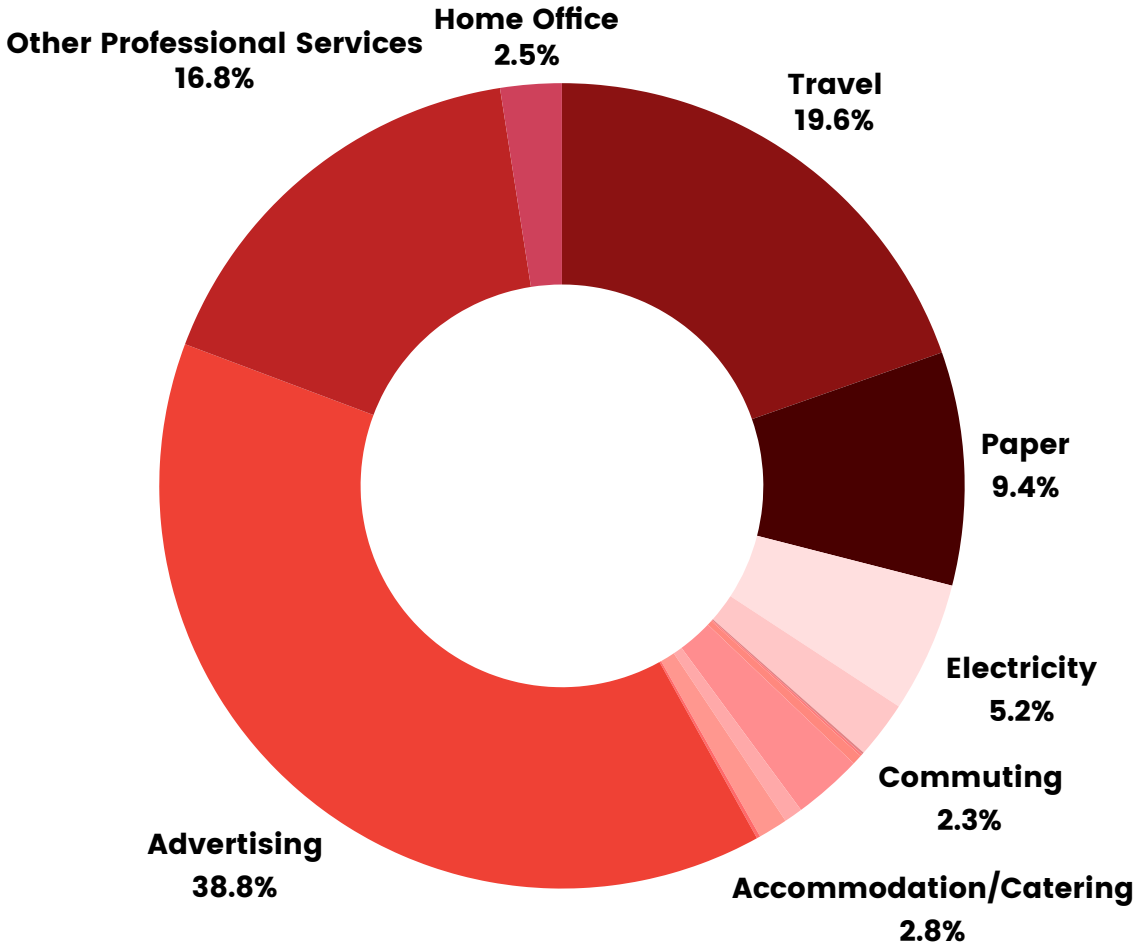
MSF USA has been reporting a carbon footprint annually since the baseline in 2019. In prior years, there were three primary areas of focus: electricity consumption, paper use, and work-related air travel. Moving forward, MSF USA will work to report more categories of GHG emissions to get a full picture of the environmental sustainability of organizational activities.

The purpose of this report is to outline the current carbon footprint of MSF USA and note trends that have been present since the baseline report in 2019. To calculate the footprint, MSF USA used the Carbon Reporting Toolkit provided by ClimateSmart, a team that runs the environmental sustainability of MSF internationally. The current Toolkit spans many categories, such as service providers, commuting, and purchased goods which have not been measured by MSF USA previously.

MSF USA is a partner section (PS) of the broader MSF organization that is focused heavily on fundraising and internal operations such as communications, systems, programs, and people and culture. Around the world, there are 6 Operational Directorates and 24 partner sections that are contributing to the carbon footprint exercise. Each PS is expected to produce its own carbon footprint report, contributing to a well-rounded idea of environmental sustainability at MSF. MSF USA has three office locations: Oakland, Washington DC, and New York City (headquarters).

New York City	
Number of Employees	**231**
Office Space	**60,000 sqft**
Oakland	
Number of Employees	**8**
Office Space	**495 sqft**
Washington DC	
Number of Employees	**32**
Office Space	**1,257 sqft**

TOTAL CARBON FOOTPRINT



Category	Emissions (tons of CO2e)
Travel	1202
Paper	573
Electricity	321
Commuting	141
Equipment	5
Office Supplies	6
Computer Hardware/Software	24

Category	Emissions (tons of CO2e)
Accommodation/Catering	170
Legal	46
Insurance	72
Accounting	9
Advertising	2373
Other Professional Services	1029
Home Office	150

TRAVEL

Boundaries and Methodology

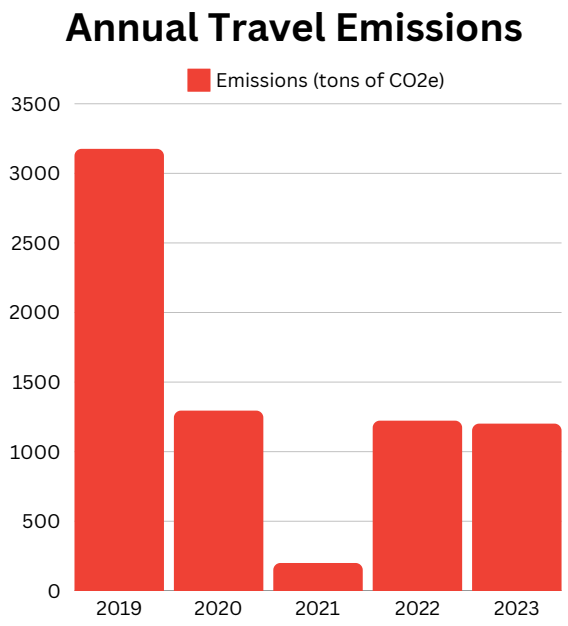
In the travel calculations, all domestic and international travel made by MSF USA staff members was included. This includes full-time employees, International Mobile Staff (IMS), Board members, and Hosted staff that are administratively linked to the New York, Washington DC, and Oakland offices. To book flights, employees were encouraged to utilize the travel agency and online booking tool “Travel Leaders” which automatically records basic data about the flight reservation including the mileage, cost, destination, and emissions (in CO2e). All other travel booked outside of Travel Leaders was accounted for using financial data, providing just the name of the traveler and the cost spent on the travel. The use of the Travel Leaders application has encouraged more accurate reporting because of the increased availability of data points such as mileage. When calculating emissions only based on cost, a looser estimation is required as compared to emissions calculated based on distance traveled. MSF USA will continue to encourage the use of Travel Leaders in the travel booking process, producing the most precise measurement of emissions possible.

The emissions calculations were broken down into air, rail, and road travel. For air and rail travel, a combination of Travel Leaders and extraneous financial data was used. From the Travel Leaders data, the air travel distance was divided into short-haul (< 1000 km), medium-haul (1000-3500 km), and long-haul (> 3500 km) to assess the impact of each flight more accurately. After the data was divided, each section was summed up and entered directly into the Carbon Reporting Toolkit with the accompanying emissions factors for each flight haul. From the Travel Leaders data for rail transport, the total distance was summed up and added to the Carbon Reporting Toolkit with the emissions factor for high-speed rail travel. Using the Travel Leaders data, a ratio was created that assigned kilometers to an average price which was then applied to the remaining financial data. Using this ratio, the distance flown based on price was estimated, and therefore the carbon impact of the flights not booked directly through Travel Leaders was calculated. To get the most accurate figures possible, the percentage of cost in the Travel Leaders data for short-, medium-, and long-haul flights, was calculated respectively. Those percentages were then applied to the financial data to approximate the breakdown of short-, medium-, and long-haul flights in terms of cost.

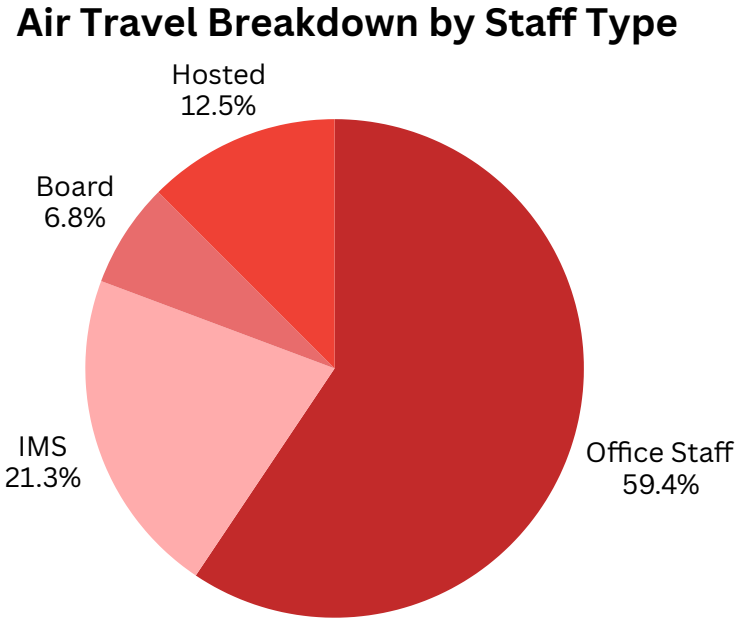
To supplement this, MSF USA was particularly interested in the air travel habits of the different types of employees, including the Board of Directors, IMS, Hosted positions, and Office staff. The data was analyzed for each aforementioned group to better understand how much each staff type travels. This is an expansion upon last year's Carbon Footprint Report which did not reflect this depth in analysis.

Emissions Data and Trends

Overall, there has been a significant decrease in emissions due to travel since the base year of 2019, with a small dip in CO2e between 2022 and 2023. As expected, these emissions were close to zero in 2021 due to the onset of COVID-19 which prohibited travel temporarily.



The travel emissions were further broken down by employee type and it was found that Office Staff travel the most (59%) with IMS following (21%). Hosted staff and Board members made up a smaller proportion with 13% and 7% respectively. Considering the majority of employees are Office Staff members, these results were expected. However, this does show where there is the most potential for progress.



Climate Smart has provided the Partner Sections with a guide to encourage more sustainable travel practices. This guide includes an assortment of tools to help decide whether an individual travel situation is necessary. It also prioritizes direct flights, rather than layovers even if this increases the cost of travel. For more information regarding the updated travel guidance from Climate Smart, see the linked SharePoint. MSF USA recognizes the value of meeting face-to-face, however, there is an opportunity to increase strategic planning and encourage trips that serve multiple purposes, such as those where staff should optimize their time in the target location by scheduling numerous in-person meetings.

ELECTRICITY

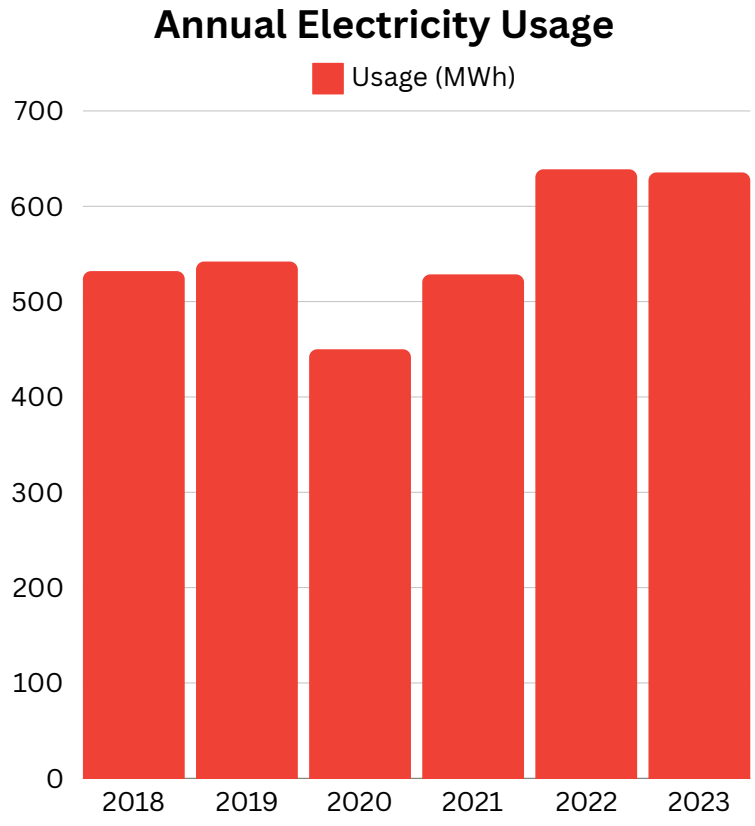
Boundaries and Methodology

For the electricity data, the managers of the facilities in NYC, Oakland, and Washington DC were contacted. The NYC office was able to provide invoices that break down the electricity used per month, which was then inputted into the toolkit using kilowatt hours (kWh). However, the Oakland and Washington DC offices were unable to provide proper data to report their electricity usage, so those office spaces are excluded from the calculations.

For the New York Office, electricity included office lighting, which is all LED and incorporates natural light and motion sensors to improve efficiency. The electricity calculation also included the heating/cooling system which is set to automatic ranges. Lastly, this category included all appliances that are Energy Star rated and reflect energy-efficient models. The paper copiers in the office are in electricity-saving mode unless they are being used. The office is kept at 72 degrees Fahrenheit during work hours and between 68-70 degrees Fahrenheit in the computer room.

Emissions Data and Trends

The electricity usage lowered slightly from 2022 but is up overall from the 2019 base year. This slight decrease can be attributed to minor differences in weather between 2022 and 2023.



In the last year, the MSF USA building in NYC utilized a new chilled water plant which boasts a lower use of electricity than air-cooled systems. In the past, the building struggled to supply enough chilled water for the system to be fully operative, so the MSF offices on the 16th floor had to rely on an air-cooled system, whereas the 17th-floor offices made use of the new chilled water plant. The fully functioning chilled water plant is expected to contribute to a future reduction in electricity and an overall increase in energy efficiency.

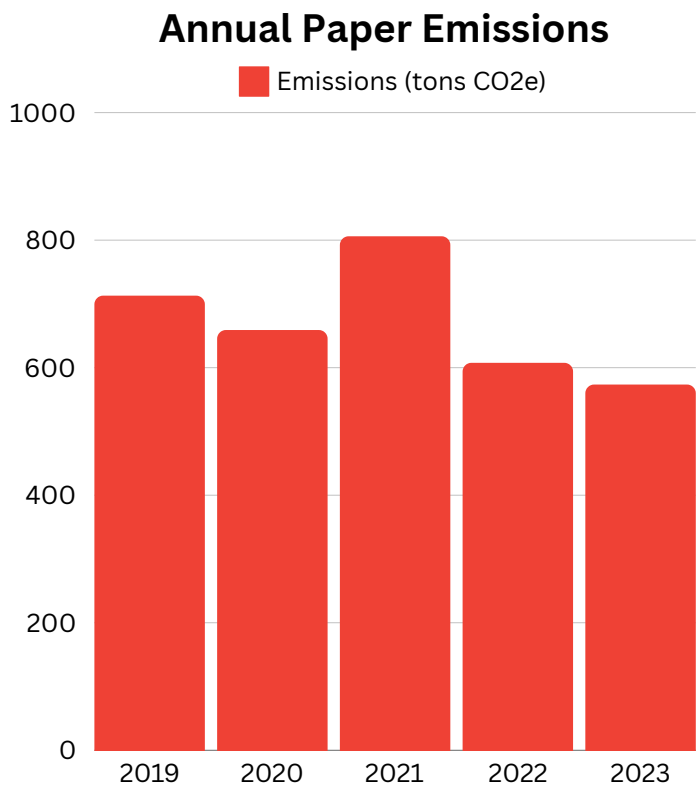
PAPER

Boundaries and Methodology

To calculate the impact of paper products, MSF USA had one core focus area: paper mailings. Considering MSF USA's active contribution to fundraising and marketing efforts, mailings have the largest paper-related environmental impact. To calculate the number of mailings, we contacted the Development Department for the final numbers for 2023. A slightly updated emission factor was used, resulting in a small increase in emissions due to mailings when looking back to the 2022 Carbon Footprint Report. However, it is important to note that the volume of paper mailings actually decreased slightly from 2022 to 2023. To graphically represent the actual trend in paper mailings emissions, all prior year's emissions since the 2019 baseline were converted using the new emissions factor, showing the true decrease in emissions over five years. Other paper areas include paper towels, toilet paper, and printer sheets, however, this data was included in the more general purchased goods and services section and cannot be distinguished between other office supplies/products.

Emissions Data and Trends

It was found that MSF-USA utilized 234 million paper mailings in 2023 which resulted in 573 tons of CO2e. This represents a slight decrease from last year's number and an overall decrease from the 2019 base year where 291 million mailings were produced leading to 668 tons of CO2e. This is evidence of a shift towards more digital fundraising and advertising efforts.



MSF carefully considers the importance of mailings, recognizing that it is currently the best way to connect with donors and approach fundraising efforts.

MSF USA's fundraising contributes to 30% of the movement's funds, so any changes to mailings and vendor selection due to carbon impact must be weighed against the impact of dollars raised.

MSF USA sources paper from Production Management Group (PMG), an organization that serves medium and large nonprofit organizations. PMG holds sustainability as one of its core values, evidenced by its green sourcing efforts, recycling capabilities, and operational practices. For more information regarding the suppliers' sustainability commitments, see the linked document.

COMMUTING

Boundaries and Methodology

For the first time, MSF USA conducted a Commuter Survey to receive feedback from all staff members regarding their weekly transportation habits coming to and from work. In this survey, all employees were asked the following questions:

1. What office location do you work out of?
2. What mode of transportation do you use to commute to work?
3. How far do you travel one way (in miles)?
4. How often do you commute to work (on average)?

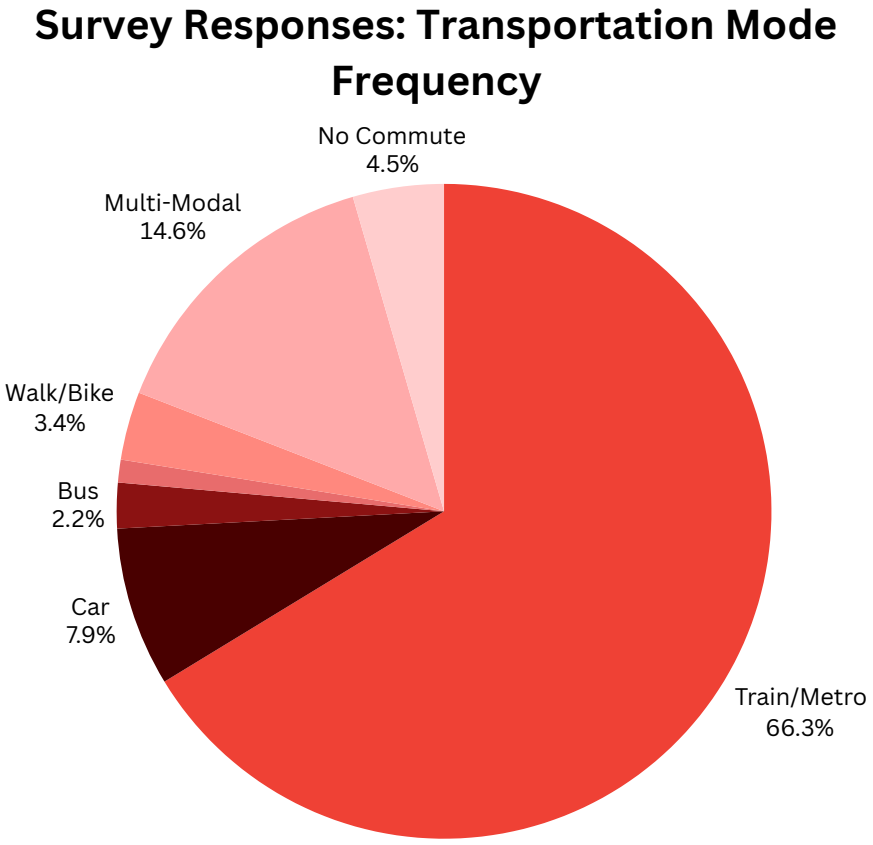
Using just these four questions, MSF USA was able to get an estimation of emissions related to commuting using accurate primary data. There were approximately 90 responses to the survey, a sample size that creates a detailed representation of the habits practiced by the staff. Most responses were straightforward, showing a single mode of transport used to commute to work. In those cases, the miles that were specified by the respondents were converted into kilometers, scaled up to a round-trip distance, scaled up again coinciding with the number of days per week the individual commutes, and then further multiplied to get an annual figure. In this case, it was assumed that staff members work for 40 weeks out of the year. Once the annual kilometers were calculated, they were directly inputted into the Toolkit.

The multi-modal responses were treated slightly differently. The mileage was split evenly between each mode that was specified. This may lead to some inaccuracies considering the number of miles per mode of transport was not collected for each individual, however, the number of multi-modal commuters was low enough to warrant this solution. This completes the calculations for those who responded to the survey.

Next, those who did not respond had to be accounted for, so ratios were created from the data collected to be applied to the number of employees who did not fill out the survey. To calculate these ratios, the percentage of respondents who took the train/metro, car, bus, ferry, walked, or multi-modal were applied to the number of employees who did not respond to find out the number of total employees that utilize each mode of transport. Then, the annual kilometers were averaged from the collected data as well and applied to those who did not respond.

Emissions Data and Trends

In 2023, MSF USA emitted approximately 140 tons of CO2e due to commuting with a majority coming from three main modes of transport. Car travel represented the second largest mode in terms of distance traveled but was the biggest contributor as far as emissions with 58 out of the 140 total tons of CO2e. It is also important to note that commuting by car was more common for staff members working out of the Oakland and Washington DC offices. Travel by train was, by far, the most commonly used mode of transport and reflected almost 4x the kilometers traveled compared to car commuting. Train commuting made up 42 tons of CO2e out of the total 140. The third largest emissions contributor was commuting by ferry. Although this mode of transport was relatively uncommon with only a small percentage of survey respondents detailing a commute via ferry, the emissions factor was much bigger than the others and skews the data to reflect an unforeseen large footprint due to ferry commuting. Lastly, commuting by bus was not very common and represented a much smaller fraction of the total commuting emissions. The survey also recorded those who did not commute (work fully remote) and those who commuted via walking/biking which resulted in zero emissions contributions.



PURCHASED GOODS AND SERVICES

Boundaries and Methodology

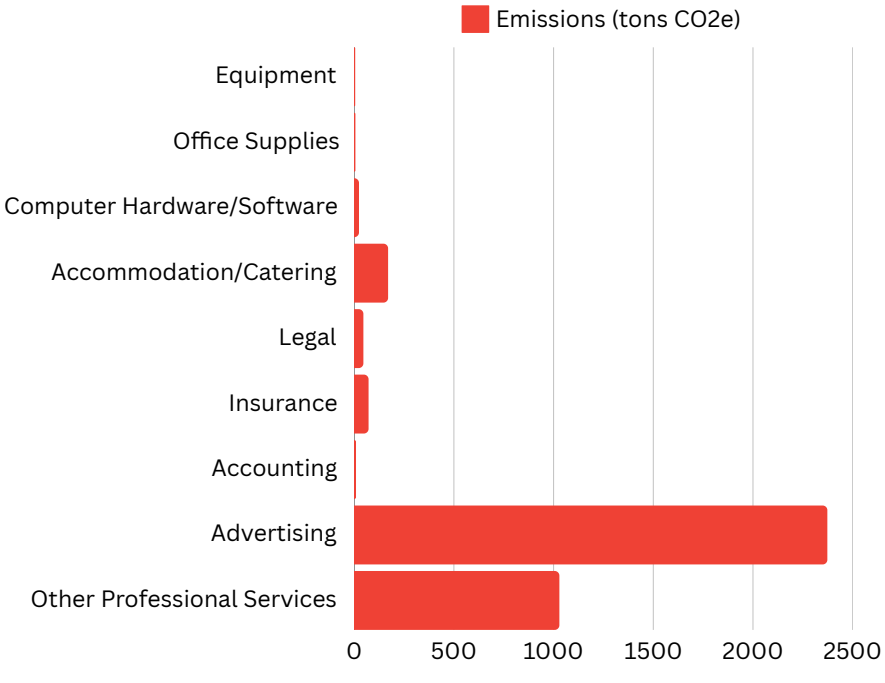
Service providers and purchased goods reflect new categories in the Toolkit, meaning this year will serve as a baseline for future emissions targets. The financial data was extracted and directly inserted into the Toolkit. There are 5 main subcategories within service providers that were able to be reported: advertising, legal, accounting, insurance, and other professional services. There are 4 main purchased goods subcategories: equipment, office supplies, computer hardware/software, and accommodation/catering.

Emissions Data and Trends

Advertising represented the most significant contribution to emissions among service providers and purchased goods. However, the advertising emissions were not only big in comparison to other paid-for services. Advertising was the largest emitter for MSF USA, more than doubling the emissions due to travel. Approximately 90% of this advertising category was made up of online advertisements through Meta and Google. The emissions factor for advertising was as accurate as possible, but it is acknowledged that there are not currently many options for calculating an emissions factor for advertising. If the emissions factor for advertising continues to develop and become more precise, it is expected that the data will be recalibrated to fit the most up-to-date emissions factor. Additionally, the high advertising figure isn't surprising because fundraising is one of the core roles MSF USA plays in the broader movement.

Purchased goods and services, as a whole, made up a significant portion of the total carbon footprint. There is an opportunity here to examine ways to lower the negative environmental impact of these activities.

Annual Purchased Goods and Services Emissions



HOME OFFICE

Boundaries and Methodology

Home Office is also a newly reported category in the Toolkit which reflects the energy used in remote working and the resulting emissions. To complete this calculation, the number fully remote staff, hybrid staff, and the corresponding remote days per week were inputted into the Toolkit. These figures were multiplied by an average kilowatt hour per person per day measurement to get the total emissions from home office.

Emissions Data and Trends

The Home Office calculation resulted in 150.7 tons of CO2e. The number of fully remote and hybrid staff members is expected to fluctuate slightly in the future and it will be important to monitor how these changes impact organizational emissions.

CONCLUSION

In 2023, MSF USA contributed 6,122 tons of CO2e. The organization will continue to focus on decreasing environmental impact while remaining steadfastly committed to the MSF mission. MSF USA plans to produce annual carbon footprint reports as per the movement's commitment, building on the current data to examine ongoing trends in each category.

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