

## **HCA Toolkit for Humanists UK Local Group and Partner Group meetings**

*The session leader does not need to have any special knowledge but will need to spend some time planning the session and deciding which of the options is appropriate. If Option A is appropriate, attendees will need to be told which Carbon Footprint tool they should use so the results are comparable.*

### **Purpose of session**

To lead a facilitated discussion in Humanists UK Local Groups and Partner Groups. The aim is to provide participants with some information and encourage them to consider their environmental impact, share ideas on how to reduce their impact, connect with other groups and projects, and ideally to make commitments to take further action. To be successful the session needs to provide a supportive and motivating environment with open discussion and idea sharing.

### **Options for the session**

If you believe the group would be happy to calculate and share their current carbon footprint then use option A. As it will require action before the meeting it should be possible to gauge whether this is an appropriate starting point for the group. If you think the group would be more comfortable with a general discussion or the participants prefer not to share their carbon footprint use Option B. Even if participants would prefer not to share their carbon footprints they should be encouraged to calculate them for their own use if they have not done so before.

### **Sensitivities**

The session leader needs to be sensitive to the individual constraints participants will face when considering changes. For example, older people or disabled people may need to be careful about turning the heating down and younger or less affluent participants may be in rental properties where they are unable to improve the energy efficiency of their home. In many cases people will either not be able to afford some of the things they would ideally like to do or not have time. Drawing attention to changes that are cost neutral or save money (using second hand clothes/eating less meat/reducing food waste etc) ensures everyone can participate. Generally those who are most affluent have much higher carbon footprints than those who are not, but they also have the resources to reduce their impact if they wish.

## Humanist Climate Action Newsletter

Please use the session to make participants aware of Humanist Climate Action (HCA) and the HCA Newsletter. If participants are interested, please advise them to sign up at [humanists.uk/humanist-climate-action/sign-up/](https://humanists.uk/humanist-climate-action/sign-up/).

### Introduction options

HCA has some presentation material and additional resources that can be used to introduce either session if required. The introduction should take no longer than five minutes and may not be necessary if your group is already engaged and informed on the climate emergency.

For presentation material please contact Pauline at [pauline.element@humanists.uk](mailto:pauline.element@humanists.uk).

### OPTION A

#### When arranging the session, communicate preparation required by participants

Ask participants to calculate their carbon footprint prior to the session using [www.carbonindependent.org/](https://www.carbonindependent.org/) and ask them to print out their results and bring them to the meeting. There is a 'view/print summary' option that provides a personal breakdown. It is helpful if everyone uses the same tool as then the results are directly comparable.

It is important that the facilitator comes with their own results and is willing to share them.

#### Process

The facilitator initiates a discussion using the suggestions below but should allow the discussion to go in any direction the participants find useful. If the group is too large for proper discussion, split into smaller groups and ask someone to report back.

1. Have participants learned anything they didn't already know by doing their carbon footprint?
2. Would the groups be willing to share their results?
3. Ask the group to reflect on the spread of results? Are they similar or very different? Are those with lower results deliberately seeking to be environmentally responsible or is there another reason for the results?
4. What actions have participants taken already, and how easy or difficult have they found these changes? Record what is said on a flip chart or on screen if available.
5. Would other participants consider making any of the changes? What are the enablers and obstacles?
6. Introduce some suggestions for future actions that may not have been raised, sharing some information to assist the discussion. The facilitator can choose

which and how many of these suggestions are suitable for the group or time available. Record the number of those prepared to adjust their choices a on flip chart or on screen, if appropriate. We have data sheets that can be used on bank current accounts and energy companies – please get in touch with Pauline for these at [pauline.element@humanists.uk](mailto:pauline.element@humanists.uk).

The facilitator may find it interesting to share comparative data on which groups in the UK produce most CO<sub>2</sub>. This underlines the urgency for those who are affluent to make changes in their consumption.

Oxfam and the Stockholm Environment Institute [analysed](#) the carbon emissions of income groups around the world, including the UK, over 25 years. It found the richest 10% of British were responsible for 27% of the total emissions accumulated over this period – roughly the same as the poorest 50%, responsible for 28%. The richest 1%, 657,840 people were responsible for 7% of the pollution.

Please check out the charts in the Resources – ‘Our World In Data’ section of this [process guidance online](#). The charts have been chosen as they provide international comparisons or historical data on a number of issues. The charts are interactive and allow you to select which countries to compare. This should enable participants to explore areas of interest and initiate some interesting discussions.

## OPTION B

### Process

The following can be mixed and matched and adjusted in any way that the facilitator thinks is appropriate for the group.

Ask:

1. Who is concerned about the climate emergency?
2. What is it that concerns them most?
3. Who is already taking some action in their own lives to reduce their impact?
4. Who has previously calculated their carbon footprint and what did they learn from the result?
5. Do they know what the global average per capita of total greenhouse gas emissions are now? *Our World in Data* for 2023 found [6.7 tons p.a.](#) The [consumption-based global average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is 4.7 tons p.a.](#)
6. What is the current average per capita consumption based CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the UK? *Our World in Data* for 2023 found [7.2 tons p.a.](#) As points of comparison, Qatar’s figure is 21.7 tons p.a. and Benin’s is 0.5 tons p.a.
7. Is the UK on track to achieve net zero? This could be an important discussion – by some measures we are doing well but much of the improvement is linked to manufacturing being done outside the UK, in particular China. Use the Resources – ‘Our World In Data’ section to provide a factual backdrop for the discussion.

8. What is the impact of imports for the UK - are they included in measurement of the country's progress to net zero?
9. Introduce some suggestions for future actions that may not have been raised, sharing some information to assist the discussion. The facilitator can choose which and how many of these suggestions are suitable for the group or time available. Record the number of those prepared to adjust their choices a flip chart or on screen, if appropriate. We have data sheets on bank current accounts and energy companies. Please get in touch with Pauline for these resources at [pauline.element@humanists.uk](mailto:pauline.element@humanists.uk).

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## Resources - 'Our World in Data'

If you want to provoke a discussion of countries' comparative current and historical impact and progress this is the tool to use.

It allows you to identify the countries you wish to compare from a number of different perspectives and provides the opportunity to look at the difference when measuring what a country produces versus what it consumes (including imports). All of the data is available as graphs, many of them showing impact over time. The facilitator would need to familiarise themselves with the material in advance to decide what data is most appropriate for the planned discussion and be able to display on a screen in the session or provide hard copies (which is less flexible).

## Some suggestions

1. **Total greenhouse gas emissions.** Use the 'bar chart' option and select countries for comparison. Include a country from the global south for comparison, the US, China, and a Gulf state. Then see what comparisons the group is interested in seeing.

2. **United Kingdom consumption-based accounting.** How do emissions compare when we adjust for trade? Use the 'line graph' option and select countries for comparison. This can be used to initiate a debate on UK progress with and without imports and particularly our dependence on China for imported goods. What should we take away about our responsibility for some of the increase in China's emissions?

## **'Our World in Data' charts**

Please check out the charts in the Resources - 'Our World In Data' section of this [process guidance online](#). These include:

- Year-on-year change: what is the percentage change in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions?
- Cumulative: how much CO<sub>2</sub> has it produced to date?
- Consumption-based accounting: how do emissions compare when we adjust for trade?
- What share of global cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> has the country emitted?
- Total greenhouse gas emissions: how much does the average person emit? Where do emissions come from?
- Has economic growth decoupled from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions?

## **What can you do? Activism**

One of Humanist Climate Actions objectives is to encourage humanists to become activists on climate related issues. While those opposing the move to net zero are extraordinarily well funded and have powerful lobbyists, a recent YouGov poll [showed](#) 61% of adults either strongly support or somewhat support the government's commitment to cutting carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

It is critical that the government and other political parties are constantly reminded that most voters are behind ambitious plans to act on the climate emergency.

An aim of holding a session using the toolkit would be to get some follow up actions in place. For example, connecting with another local group, joining or hosting an event, arranging a meeting with a local councillor or MP. There are many forms of activism from attending demonstrations, lobbying local and Westminster politicians and signing petitions in support of local or national campaigns seeking to protect the environment. HCA members participate in demonstrations where possible and would love the wider Humanist UK membership to join us. [Look out for dates in the HCA newsletter](#).

HCA will launch an activism toolkit soon - watch this space.

## **Contact Us**

If, when you are planning your session, you would like to discuss anything regarding these materials please contact Pauline Element on [pauline.element@humanists.uk](mailto:pauline.element@humanists.uk).