



Supercritical
Climate 100 UK

Positive Steps Towards Net Zero: The Tech Founders Paving the Way



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Michelle You
CEO, Supercritical

14,000x. That's how much annual carbon removal rates need to grow to meet 2050 requirements, according to the IPCC. That's approximately the growth Amazon has experienced since 1997—so one way of looking at it is to say carbon removal rates today are where Amazon was back then. It's no accident that Amazon is a tech company: hypergrowth and exponential improvement is in the DNA of tech companies, so if there's one sector that can meet this challenge, I'm confident it's ours.

I have three reasons for this:

First, by nature founders of tech companies are disruptive, first principles thinkers that move quickly, act decisively, and expect fast outcomes and far-reaching impact. Our archetype can show the corporate world what decisive climate action looks like within urgent timescales—exactly what's needed to keep the planet stable.

Second, it's quick and easy to measure emissions from tech companies, and to understand their climate impact. As data-driven founders, we know the power of information. To take climate action without the information on our emissions would likely only lead to missteps or false dawns.

Third, we are used to facing—and disrupting—difficult truths. For tech companies, most emissions come from areas that are beyond our direct control, like advertising or business travel. We can't always decarbonise our partners—but instead we have the mindset needed to look at the problem from a different angle, and invest in early stage technological solutions which will become exponentially more effective at carbon removal.

That said, I appreciate it's hard to know where to start. We all know that the challenges posed by climate change are complicated and expensive. The problem is that for many companies today, this perception, together with the fear of greenwashing, are enough to put them off doing anything. Today, having an impact and tackling climate change doesn't need to be either expensive or complicated. The average cost of measuring and offsetting for tech firms is £4.98 per employee per week – less than a pint of beer.

We built Supercritical to make it easy for tech companies to do something about climate change. I believe founders (myself included) are uniquely placed to take action—and that we have a responsibility to do so. My hope is that this report will inspire all founders to take their first, or their next step.

It is absolutely essential that private companies get net zero right. UK tech companies are at different stages of their journey to measure, report, reduce and (as a last resort) offset their carbon emissions. This fascinating and timely report by Supercritical celebrates their progress and challenges them to double their efforts.

Sam Fankhauser
Research Director, Oxford Net Zero

Executive summary

Executive summary

Climate 100 is a celebration of the UK's private technology companies that are setting the standard for climate action. The aim of this report is to understand who's taking action, what they're doing, why they're doing it and what commercial impact it's having on their business.

There is a common misconception that climate action is complex, time-consuming and expensive. This is not the reality, but a perception borne out of a lack of information. Our hope is that by highlighting best practice, we can give you the tools and inspiration you need to take your first or next step to measure, reduce and remove your carbon footprint.

In our research we looked at 500 VC-backed tech companies which are headquartered in the UK with over \$20M in funding and 30+ headcount. Each of these companies was evaluated on a number of criteria across measurement, reduction, offsetting and reporting. In addition, we spoke to dozens of sustainability leads inside businesses.



We knew that our emissions measurement report would be an upfront investment, but lots of the changes recommended to us had immediate cost saving results.

Huma

The results are encouraging:

- The #1 position goes to Monzo, with a perfect score of 100. There's barely daylight between #1 and #2—and it's OakNorth Bank that comes in second. Tide, Faculty, Yulife are all hot on their heels—each with a score of 95. [Click here](#) to see the full top 100 list. If your company isn't in the top 100, you can find the climate score for any company in the wider top 500 list by using the search bar on the website.
- A spend of £4.98 per full time employee per week would put companies in the top 100. Emission reductions range from cost-saving to small investments, while measurement and offsetting costs businesses around £61,500 per year for the average business in the Top 500 – a drop in the ocean compared to their average of £65M in funding raised.
- 52 of the top 100 companies were founded since 2016, suggesting that younger companies are quicker to measure their footprint than incumbents, perhaps recognising the urgency. Interestingly, companies at later stages also take more action as they seek to manage their risk ahead of potential IPOs.
- Edtech companies score the highest on average—with climate close behind, followed by the food, transport, real estate and fintech sectors. This demonstrates the wide range of companies that are taking action based on a holistic view of climate, with many of these seeing it as part of their mission to ensure their business' sustainability as well as its profitability.
- Motivations vary by industry. For example, healthtech businesses like Accurx know that climate risk carries significant health risk, meaning there's mission alignment. Similarly for food and transport disruptors, these companies' raison d'être is often improving climate outcomes, so it's great to see them keeping their own house in order as well as working to decarbonise other industries.
- In most cases, the people leading the charge tend to be passionate founders or, in the more mature business, a passionate team member. Hiring a formal sustainability lead might come later, but a driven individual usually kickstarts the process—beginning with measuring the company's carbon footprint. Of the top 10 companies, only 70% had a climate role in the business; as we expand to the top 100 this drops to 30%.
- There's outsized ROI: beyond the benefits to the planet, companies reported that taking climate action had helped to bring their employees together, built their brand as a business and employer, which had increased the quality of candidates, and enabled them to save costs.



Our motivation for carbon footprinting and implementing a carbon reduction plan is rooted in doing the right thing. Why wouldn't you do it? For us, it's as simple as doing everything you can to contribute to a better future.

Sensat

One of the main benefits we've seen is with our people. It's become a clear rallying point for our organisation—we're not a Google, we don't have the brand name. People come into work because they want to make a difference.

Infogrid

Methodology

The aim of the report is to rank tech companies in the UK on how they exemplify climate leadership. There are a number of ways in which this can be assessed—none are perfect. In this iteration, we have focused on actions that any company can do.

We compiled a list of pre-IPO, UK-headquartered, VC-backed tech companies with over \$20M USD in funding and 30+ in headcount. We used data from DealRoom, which was accessed on 28th July 2023. Each of these companies was evaluated using our ranking criteria.

Many of the UK tech companies are climatetech companies. While their ultimate climate impact may be broader and deeper, this is separate from their own corporate carbon emissions. We feel they have the imperative to track and reduce their operational emissions regardless of the climate impact of their business. In this study, they are treated and ranked the same as other companies and the broader impact of their missions is not factored into the ranking.

Our ranking criteria was developed to provide a comprehensive and realistic checklist of the actions technology companies in the UK could be taking to show climate leadership.

Companies were scored on a yes / no basis on the following 6 criteria:

- 1. If the company measured their carbon footprint;**
- 2. If the company has implemented a carbon reduction plan;**
- 3. If the company has set a climate target or commitment,** such as a net zero or carbon neutral target;
- 4. If the company ever purchased conventional, avoidance offsets** (e.g. offsets which protect existing forests from being cleared);
- 5. If the company ever purchased carbon removal offsets** (e.g. projects like direct air capture which actively remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere); and
- 6. If the company has reported on their climate progress publicly.**



Our ranking criteria in detail



Emission measurement (corporate carbon footprint): If the company measured their corporate carbon footprint according to GHG protocol or ISO 14064, it received 25 points for this action. The quality and comprehensiveness of the measurement were not assessed—this is something that will be considered as future improvement. We consider measurement to be the foundation of evidence-based climate action which enables effective emission reductions.

Emission reductions: If the company stated that it has either implemented or is planning to implement, specific emissions reduction measures, it received 25 points. We are aware that stated reduction actions are very different from achieved and measured reductions, and we are hoping to be able to capture this in the next iteration of this report. Emissions reductions are arguably the most important part of climate leadership and the hardest to achieve.

Setting a climate target: If the company stated they have set a net zero or carbon neutral target, it received 25 points for this action. Climate targets are important commitments that galvanise emissions reductions. The climate target space is in a state of transition, with “carbon neutrality” being increasingly questioned in its current form and “net zero” emerging as the only valid climate target. Nonetheless, both are counted for now.

Offsetting with emission avoidance offsets: Emission avoidance offsets such as renewable energy projects and forestry protection credits are increasingly questioned in terms of the climate benefits they actually deliver. However, we believe that companies purchasing these credits in the past have done so in good faith, hoping to support needed activities around the world and as such have awarded them 5 points.

Offsetting with carbon removal: If the company purchased carbon removal credits in the past, it received 15 points. Carbon removal projects actively remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Examples can include properly structured afforestation projects through to technological solutions that directly capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequester it permanently. Any carbon removal purchase regardless of durability, quantity and timing counted in this iteration. Tech companies are in a unique position to be leaders in supporting the early carbon removal market and kick-starting this group of technologies that will need to scale 14,000x in the next 25 years to play their role in stabilising the climate at 1.5 degrees warming.

Communication: Actions speak louder than words, which is why we scored this action with 5 points. Being transparent and communicating your climate footprint and actions can support wider progress and help build credibility.

Ranking companies with the same climate score

Funding and headcount are not used to determine the score, however, in the case of companies with the same climate score, they are ranked based on headcount, high to low. The reasoning is that the more employees, the more effort actions are likely to take. In cases where companies have the same climate score and similar headcount, they are ranked on the inverse of investment received, to give credit to companies acting despite lower financial resources.

Our methodology will continue to evolve over time, increasing in sophistication and allowing more nuanced rankings for future versions of the Climate 100.



**Rising stars
vs seasoned
players:
approaches
to climate**

Rising stars vs seasoned players: approaches to climate

Younger companies are prioritising climate action

The up-and-coming companies of today know that climate action is essential—both because it is critical for the planet and also because it can set them apart in a competitive market for top talent and investment. Infogrid is a great example of this—at only five years old, it takes a long-termist view which helps it to lead the way in climate action—that's part of the reason it came in at #9 on our list.

Top 10



William Cowell de Gruchy
Founder and CEO

Infogrid is an AI-powered platform that gathers and analyses data from the smartest IoT technology to drive its mission of making every building healthy, efficient and sustainable. Their climate actions have catapulted them to #9 on the list—but that's far from the only benefit.

“One of the main benefits we've seen is with our people. It's become a clear rallying point for our organisation—we're not a Google, we don't have the brand name. People come into work because they want to make a difference.”

What's standing in the way of other tech companies making environmentally conscientious choices?

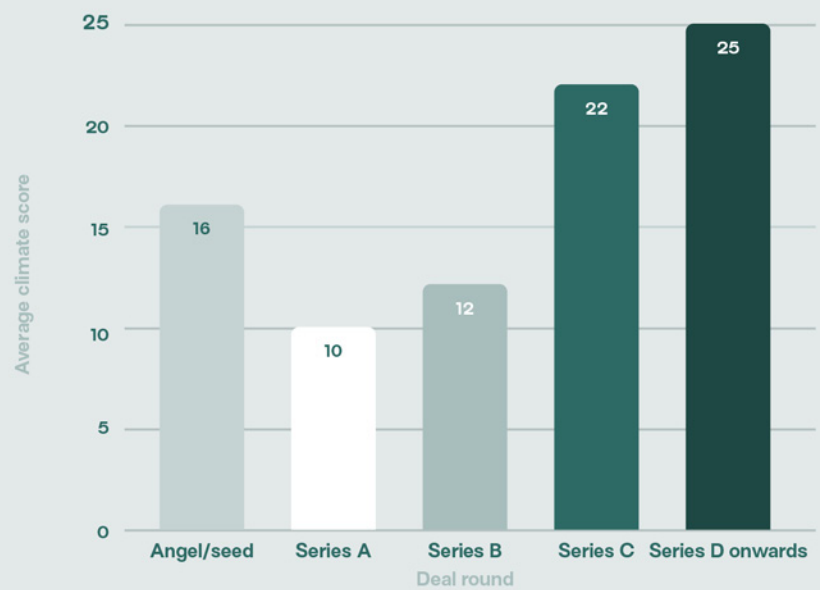
“Unfortunately some people just don't care enough—for many, there's a cost hurdle. The inaction of many businesses in the UK tech space is a microcosm of the challenges we're facing on a global level, where businesses are prioritising the potential for short term monetary losses over the potential long term gain of taking positive environmental action.”

Later stage companies are minimising risk ahead of potential IPOs

- It comes as no surprise that later stage companies typically have higher climate scores—they tend to face more pressure from customers, employees and investors to understand and manage their climate (and in some cases, regulatory) risk as they think more seriously about IPO. That's why we see that companies from Series D onwards have an average score of 25, compared to those at angel / seed stage which have an average climate score of only 16.
- What's surprising, though, is the huge jump in progress between Series B and Series C. This can be accounted for by the fact that at Series C, investors have a much closer eye on companies—they take a much keener interest in business practices, including climate approach.

- We also see a slight drop in climate actions between the companies currently at angel or seed investment stage to those at Series A. This is best explained as correlation rather than causation: today's younger companies are more attuned to climate issues, which makes them more likely to take action.

Companies prioritise climate action as they accelerate towards IPO



When it comes to climate action, edtech takes first place, but other sectors are close behind

When it comes to climate action, Edtech takes first place, but other sectors are close behind

The sector leaderboard: sectors with the highest average climate score

Sector	Average climate score
Education	27
Climatetech	25
Transportation	22
Food	21
Fintech	16

Edtech takes pole position

Edtech companies had an average climate score of 27, higher than any other sector. This is particularly impressive given edtech companies are not typically climate-focused, and are likely to face less pressure from customers to decarbonise.

Top 100

Perlego



Ashleigh Otter
Chief Operating Officer

For Perlego, a digital textbook resource for learners around the world, sustainability has always been at the forefront of their mission.

“Sustainability has been part of our brand strategy from the beginning. It’s both fundamental to our business model, which is moving educational materials from print to digital, and intimately linked with part of our mission to improve the lives of people everywhere through education. We see education as a basic human right, as is living in a safe, clean and sustainable environment. It’s part of what we do, not an added workstream.”

Perlego’s advice for other companies looking to integrate sustainability into their business practices?

“Never underestimate the importance of education and awareness. I know some argue that we should be moving past awareness and into action. But there’s a long way to go. Education and awareness among our employees has had a huge impact on our company-wide initiatives. It’s not just about top down measures—now half of what we do is the 120 people in the company pushing us forward.”

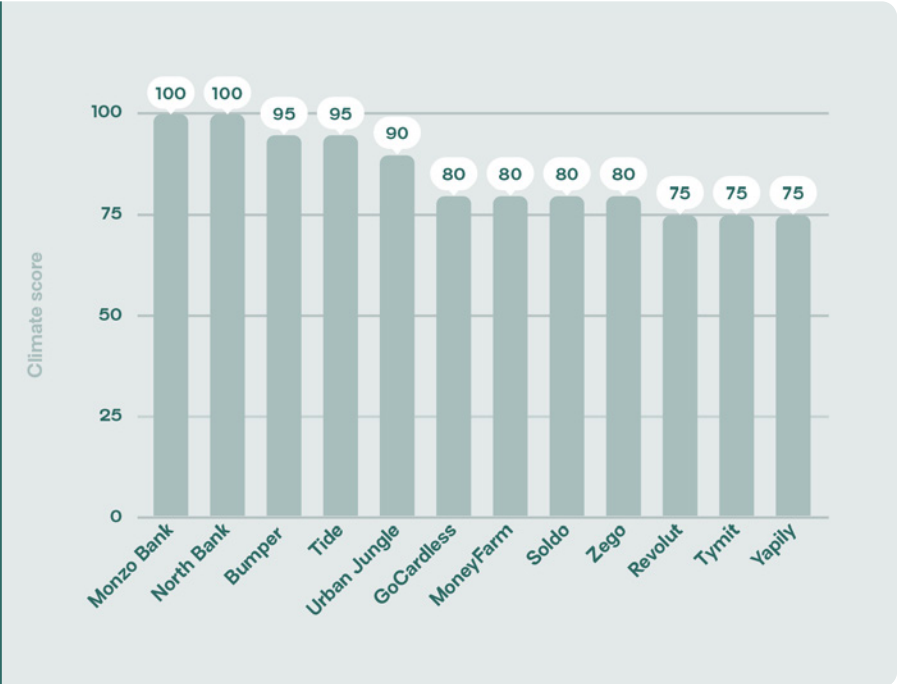
Other leading sectors: climatetech, transportation, foodtech and property

- Climatetech companies are just behind edtech, with a score of 25. Top scorers include Origami Energy, Satellite Vu, Sylvera and Notpla. It's great to see these companies reducing their own operational emissions alongside their core missions to tackle climate—though, of course, we'd love to see climatetech take the top spot in future.
- Transportation and foodtech firms had a joint score of 21, with property companies just behind on 18. These companies are often disruptors in their space, bringing together improved climate impact with new and better processes, and their leadership shows in their actions.

Fintech—a massive opportunity, where the leaders are lighting the path

Fintech is a huge sector in the UK: of our top 500 tech companies, 132 were fintechs, which together had raised \$16,500M in funding. It's also one of the sectors taking the most climate action: the fintech sector ranked sixth in terms of average climate action taken. Within fintech, it's great to see that the biggest names are leading the way: Monzo, OakNorth, Tide and Revolut, to name just a few, all scored 75 or over. This bodes well for the sector, which has the opportunity to be a leading light in the UK not just in terms of its business creds and its excellent reputation with consumers, but also in terms of its climate awareness and action. This will surely help UK fintechs to continue attracting climate-conscious Gen Z customers both nationally and internationally.

The UK's flurry of high scoring fintech businesses



Top 10




Ian Sutherland
Chief Financial Officer
and Head of Net Zero

Tide—one of this year’s Top 5 Climate Leaders—provides integrated, holistic financial services to small and medium businesses, and is one of the fastest-growing fintechs in the UK.

“When it comes to climate, we wanted to be thoughtful about understanding our carbon footprint, make sure it was being calculated in the right way, and be purposeful about what it means to actually reduce that over time. We’ve done that, and we’re excited to be the first fintech to remove all of our carbon using durable carbon removals. We’re committed to doing that going forward.”

Tide’s vision for the future extends beyond their own net zero journey—they are looking to use their customer base to galvanise climate action.

“We’ll be an agent for positive change when we’re able to provide our SME member base with the tools they need to potentially remove millions of tonnes of carbon through our platform. These are small and medium sized businesses who want to do the right thing, but don’t have the resources or technical integration to do so.”

Tide looks to lead by example when it comes to transparency and accountability in carbon reporting and removal:

“Many of the discussions we’re having at Tide are around how to make sure we have a single source of truth when it comes to carbon accounting. We don’t want to have a situation where there’s a lack of trust in the data underpinning positive action.”

While the industry has room to grow when it comes to demystifying the measurement and reduction tools available to businesses today, Tide thinks the importance of carbon measurement will grow and grow:

“We’re already on a journey towards seeing carbon accounting becoming as integral for business operations as calculating P&L.”

Deep-diving into climate action

Deep-diving into climate action

It's a strong start to emissions reduction from edtech, climatetech and transportation

When it comes to actions taken, the results vary by sector. Education companies are most likely to have reduced emissions—33% have planned or started emissions reduction. This is great to see and is a real testament to the disruptive and forward-thinking efforts of founders who are prioritising climate impact. Climatetech companies come next—31% have planned or started reduction. While this is reassuring, and perhaps expected, it's not necessarily a given that climatetech businesses will prioritise their own emissions while seeking to reduce others, so it's heartening to see them doing both. It's also encouraging to see some of the traditionally biggest-emitting sectors close behind—26% of the transportation companies we looked at, 23% of real estate companies and 21% of foodtech companies have already planned or started emissions reduction.

33%

of education companies have planned or started emissions reduction

Top 10

what3words

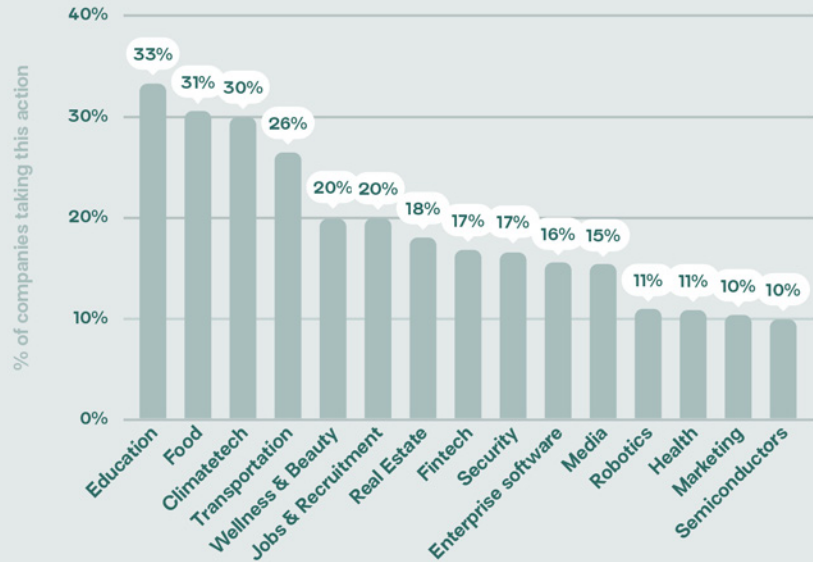


Jack Waley-Cohen
Co-Founder & Chief
Operating Officer

A global business model that demanded extensive employee travel drove leadership at what3words to find new ways to balance business operations and climate impact. Their success in doing so is evident—and they've reached #8 on the list as a result.

"It's always been incredibly rewarding to hear how what3words' technology is used to reduce businesses' carbon footprints and support conservationist projects around the world. Now though, and through our work with Supercritical, we're proud to be doing more internally to ensure we are doing the right thing for the business and also trying to do what we can as a good citizen of the planet."

Reducing emissions is critical, and edtech, climatetech and transport companies are leading the way



Measurement: levelling up the impact of reduction

It's great to see so many companies already taking action to reduce. But for data-driven tech businesses that understand the importance of evidence-based strategy, measurement must go alongside reduction in order to achieve the biggest possible impact.

Top 10



Faculty AI is built on the belief that science is the best way to tackle some of the biggest problems that we face. That's why Faculty AI has prioritised measurement alongside reduction.



Andrew Perry
 Director of Energy
 Transition and Environment

"We're an AI company, and the focus on science for impact is really important to us. We apply the scientific method to everything we do. And so, when it comes to carbon measurement, walking the walk ourselves was also very important for both the way we felt about ourselves and the way we're able to present ourselves to the world."

Top 100



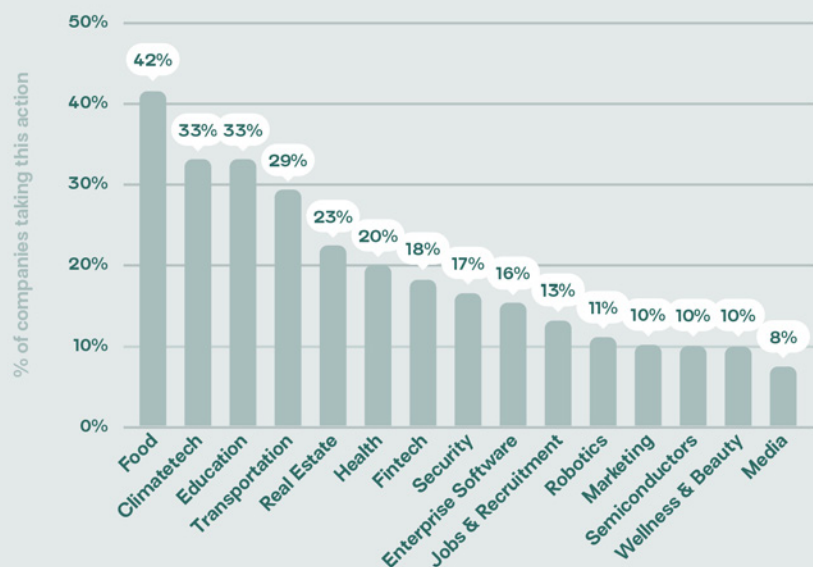
Laurence Bargery
Co-Founder

Accurx, a leading healthtech company, has prioritised climate action from its founding. Being a data-led company, they've prioritised taking evidence-based actions which have the biggest impact on the environment.

"You can always do other things like put a battery bin in the office, go litter picking, and try to reduce your plastic waste. But I think from a business perspective, you need to use the same evidence-based methodology that you apply to other business decisions—which is why getting measurement right is so important."

Looking at the results by sector, foodtech businesses who understand that emissions don't always come from the places you'd most expect (consider the very complex impact ruminants have on biodiversity, methane emissions and the need for fertilisers in agriculture, for example), and get the need to take a pragmatic approach which takes multiple factors into account, lead the way in measurement—42% have already measured the carbon footprint of their businesses. The education and climatetech sectors come next—33% of companies in these sectors have done some form of carbon measurement, followed closely by transportation on 29%.

When it comes to measurement, foodtech companies are in the lead



Galvanising action through setting climate targets

Climate targets are important commitments that galvanise emissions reductions. It's important to recognise that the climate target space is in a state of transition, with "carbon neutrality" being increasingly questioned in its current form and "net zero" emerging as the only valid climate target. However, the benefits of setting targets are clear: it gives companies a clear metric for success which fuels activity to reduce emissions, and instills passion in a workforce to drive through the changes.

Top 100



Mai Fenton
Chief Marketing Officer

At Superscript, a fast-growing business insurance provider, setting targets has spurred action and helped them to reach the top 100.

"We've made a public commitment and a commitment to our employees that we'll be net-zero by 2030. This commitment, together with employee engagement and regular updates, have allowed us to make progress much faster."

Education companies are top of the tree when it comes to setting a climate target—17% of edtech companies had already done this. Security and wellness companies came next—10% had already set targets.

Setting targets: the sector leaderboard

Education	17%
Security	10%
Wellness beauty	10%



**Passionate
leaders,
outsized ROI:
the motivations
and benefits
of climate
action**

Passionate leaders, outsized ROI: the motivations and benefits of climate action

Passionate leaders are key to climate success

When we spoke to companies, they overwhelmingly told us that their climate actions were driven by their passionate leaders—often that was founders, but also many COOs and other executives. This speaks to the importance of founders in being the vanguards for climate, and inspiring and driving their businesses to prioritise emissions reduction.

Top 100

sensat[®]



Jamaica Lancee
Head of Marketing

Sensat is a visualisation platform that translates the real world into a digital version to help physical industries analyse their built environment. For Sensat's founders and leadership team, building an environmentally-conscious company was a non-negotiable.

"Our motivation for carbon footprinting and implementing a carbon reduction plan is rooted in doing the right thing. Why wouldn't you do it? For us, it's as simple as doing everything you can to contribute to a better future."

Outsized ROI: the business benefits of climate action

Looking at the benefits of climate action, many of the companies we spoke to told us that one of the most significant benefits had been the effect on the team—top quality employees want to work at environmentally-conscious companies. For others, taking climate action has helped them to reduce costs e.g. cutting down on waste, limiting business travel to what's strictly necessary, and improving business processes to reduce the amount of energy required.

Top 100

 H U M A



Constanza Di Gennaro
Chief of Staff

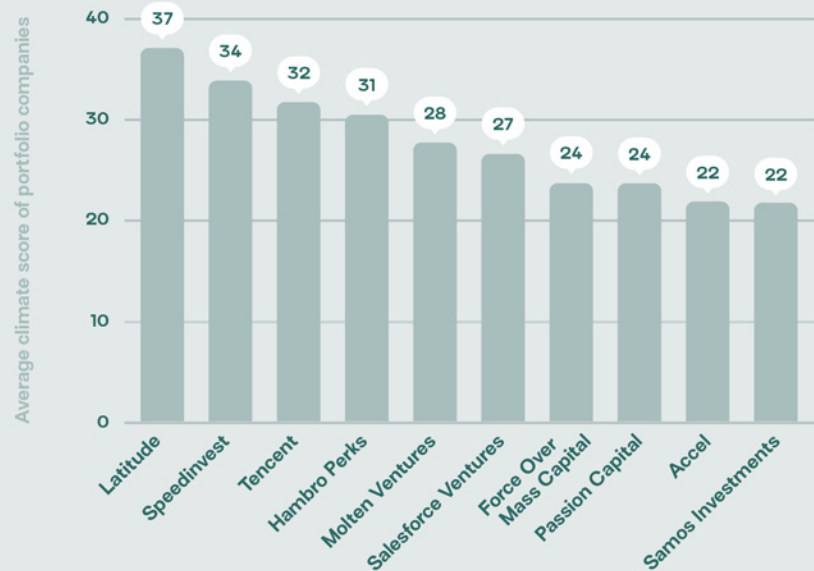
For Huma—a global health tech company—not only is taking climate action an integral part of their mission and identity, but it has helped them to save money.

"Our main aim is to help people live longer, fuller lives. Some may think that isn't strictly associated with environmental factors, but the reality is that the environment and any environmental emergency has an immediate effect on people's health. We knew that our emissions measurement report would be an upfront investment, but lots of the changes recommended to us had immediate cost saving results."

The VCs leading decarbonisation

- Investors have an important role to play in encouraging growing companies to decarbonise—several of the companies we spoke to, who had scored in the top 100, told us that part of their motivation was investor pressure.
- Looking at the top scorers, Latitude, Molten Ventures and Tencent lead the way: their portfolio companies had the highest scores on average with 37, 34 and 32 respectively.

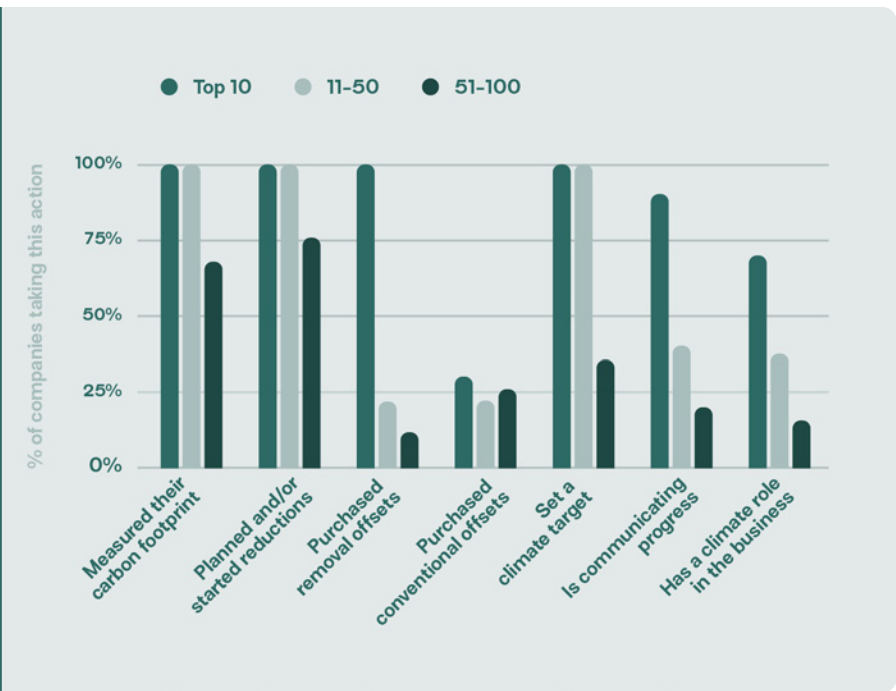
Portfolio companies taking climate action: VC top 10 leaderboard



Footprint, reduce, offset: the typical climate journey

- Companies prioritised carbon reduction, measurement and setting targets: 84 of the companies in the top 100 had planned or started emissions reduction; 88 had footprinted and 68 had set a climate target.
- Actions like dedicating a climate role in the business come later: only 25 of the companies that made the top 100 had a formal climate role in the business, highlighting the importance of a founder or passionate colleague in driving forward climate action.

Actions by companies at different stages of their climate journey



Top 100



Miranda Grattan
Office & Community Manager

Immersive Labs, a cutting-edge cybersecurity company, reached an impressive #6 on the list. On their climate journey, getting expert support not only on footprinting but also on implementation strategy has helped them to galvanise support from across the business.

“One of the best things about doing carbon measurement has been how easy it’s been to get advice on how we can do more for the environment. When I started leading our sustainability efforts I didn’t have very much background in climate, but working with experts has given me the chance to learn more, and it’s given me a new perspective on how to effect change.”

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion and recommendations

One thing is crucial for founders and business leaders to understand: none of the actions we recommend are as difficult—or as expensive—as you might think.

What is particularly striking is how small the step is for tech companies transitioning from 0 to 1. With relatively little cost or effort, you can move from a position of having taken no action, to rising to the top of the Climate 100.

The companies who are currently paving the way often relied on a single motivated employee or leader to kickstart the process. Those employees and founders have not only done a lot for the climate, they've helped their businesses build stronger reputations with customers, investors, and talent. In some cases they've even reduced overall costs.

If you're considering how to help your business, portfolio companies, or other businesses take action on climate, we make three recommendations:

- 1. Collect data to devise the most effective strategy.** Armed with facts on their emissions, companies can act more quickly and effectively to reduce their carbon footprint. You might be surprised that the issues you thought were most pressing are in fact not the best things to prioritise.
- 2. Share progress to inspire action.** Reducing emissions is seen as costly and time consuming, so there's an opportunity for the businesses who are leading the way to set the standard and encourage other firms to take their first steps towards net zero, while building their own reputation among important audiences.
- 3. Have high expectations when it comes to the benefits.** Companies who have taken action have seen benefits in terms of investment, employee recruitment and retention, and customer satisfaction and loyalty—often in unexpected ways. When conducting a cost-benefit analysis of carbon measurement or reduction, companies should consider not just the impact they can have on the planet, but also how they can improve their own bottom line.

Ending climate change should be everyone's business. Companies around the world are realising this, with a third of the world's largest PLCs now pledging to go to net zero emissions. It is getting harder to excuse those without a climate target, and easier for companies to measure their own carbon footprint. I am delighted this report highlights examples of good practice for others to be inspired by.

Dr. Steve Smith

University of Oxford (co-lead of the Net Zero Tracker
and co-author of the Oxford Principles for Net Zero Aligned Carbon Offsetting)

The climate crisis is the single biggest threat to humanity. Scaling carbon removal is crucial in avoiding the catastrophic impacts of climate change, and we're working tirelessly to pull as much carbon dioxide out of the sky as we can. Our goal is to remove 500 million tonnes from the atmosphere—and then some! Our carbon accounting platform makes it easy for you to measure your carbon footprint, comply with regulation like SECR and TCFD, and make a plan to get to net zero. If you're looking to buy carbon removal offsets, our platform provides access to the best carbon removal on the market, in one easy transaction.

Find out more at gosupercritical.com



 Supercritical
Climate 100 UK

 **Supercritical**