# Researching your local area

Use this guide to help you work out why emissions in your area are the way they are.

## Housing

What kind of homes are in your area? Different characteristics of buildings affect how they use or save energy. Heating is the largest source of UK housing carbon emissions.

* Look at the types of buildings. For example, terraced houses and flats have fewer exposed external walls through which heat can be lost compared to detached or semi-detached houses, so can be more energy efficient. Park homes are poorly insulated and lose heat quickly. Large, detached properties also more energy as they have more space to heat.
* Look at the age of buildings. Older properties tend to be less energy efficient, partly because most houses built before 1919 have solid walls and are harder to insulate well. [More tips to work out the age of buildings.](https://goodmove.co.uk/blog/buying-advice/determining-the-age-of-your-uk-property/)
* Look at the energy sources of the buildings. How are local homes usually heated and how does this affect emissions? The most common methods are gas and electricity, but in more rural areas, houses may use biomass, LPG or another type of burnable fuel. Are wood burners common where you live? What about solar panels, or heat pumps?

## Road transport

* Are there any motorways or other major roads that go through your area?
* What is it like to walk, cycle or take public transport?
* How far do people have to travel from home to get to school, work, or shops?
* Do most people have a car? How far do they usually drive it?
* How easy is it to own an electric vehicle in your area? Are there charging points readily available? Can people reliably park right outside their homes to charge?
* Get more [statistics about UK road transport](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-and-environment-statistics-2023/transport-and-environment-statistics-2023) here.
* Maybe your city took part in the [Bike Life](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index/#citylist) survey 2023 – read the report.

## Industrial and commercial

What are non-domestic buildings used for? Use Google Maps or openstreetmap.org to look.

* Are there factories, manufacturing centres or industrial estates?
* Are there office buildings? Find out more about the [energy usage of commercial buildings](https://ukgbc.org/news/tackling-emissions-from-office-operations-start-with-usage/).
* Are there large shopping centres and retail parks?
* What kind of energy consumption might they need for the work they’re doing?

## Agriculture

Is there much agricultural activity in your area?

* If yes, what kind? E.g. livestock, poultry, fish, cereal crops, fruit and veg.
* Livestock farming, including dairy farming, produces high levels of methane, while crop farming produces more nitrous oxide. Farm machinery and vehicles emit carbon dioxide. But at the same time, some agricultural schemes can be used to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, improve the soil and increase yield from crops e.g. agroforestry or hedging.
* For a deep dive into agricultural emissions, see [this government report](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agri-climate-report-2023/agri-climate-report-2023).

## Waste management

* How does your council manage the waste in your area? How much is recycled?
* Is there food waste collection or composting?
* Does your territory contain a recycling centre or landfill site? Do these sites receive waste from the surrounding areas?
* Your local council website should include a waste management policy. Find out more about [emissions from waste management](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/5%285%29%20Climate%20Change%20and%20Waste.pdf).