

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2012-2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Acknowledgments

Collecting the data required for the University of Chicago greenhouse gas emissions inventory was a collaborative effort, involving contributions from many University departments and individuals. The Office of Sustainability offers a sincere thank you to everyone who contributed.

Core Project Team

Sara Popenhagen, sustainability manager
Brian Bozell, senior director, energy programs
James Cook, space information manager
Andres Castillo, data analyst
Maureen McMahon, communications and engagement specialist
UChicago ABIS Team, IT Services

Inquiries

Please direct inquiries to the Office of Sustainability at officeofsustainability@uchicago.edu.

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About

This document contains the University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas emissions inventory for fiscal years 2012 through 2023. This document is the latest release of the inventory and has been updated from all prior releases. [Dashboards](#) for this inventory, including the organizational boundary, are located at the Office of Sustainability website.

The location- and market-based methods of calculation outlined in [The GHG Protocol Scope 2 Guidance](#) were used to calculate emissions from scope 2 electricity in this inventory. Below is a discussion of each.

For inventory background information, context, and methodology, refer to [the University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Supplemental Information](#).

Reporting and methodology

2030 GOAL

The University has a goal to reduce its absolute greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030. The 2030 goal is based on scope 1 and scope 2 absolute greenhouse gas emissions and is analyzed by comparing 2030 greenhouse gas emissions to the target base year greenhouse gas emissions. Scopes 1 and 2 emissions are more than 70% of University emissions in any given fiscal year, and are an area with an opportunity to make the biggest impact. Scope 3 emissions, while voluntary reporting, are included in this report for transparency reasons where verifiable and reliable data is available.

TARGET BASE YEAR

The target base year is an average of greenhouse gas emissions from fiscal years 2012, 2013, and 2014. The target base year is used as a “baseline” to compare subsequent years and represents a typical year in the University’s emissions profile.

ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARY

As seen in the greenhouse gas emissions [organizational boundary](#), the properties included in the greenhouse gas emissions inventory vary by fiscal year and by reporting period as new buildings are built and other buildings are sold or demolished. For example, from the target base year to fiscal year 2023, the organizational boundary FICM gross area increased by 17% due to the addition of multiple new properties. Since the last reporting period, High Bay Research Building and Kimbark South Parking were added, contributing to the 17% increase. Please refer to [the University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Supplemental Information for additional information](#).

Executive summary

Scopes 1 and 2 absolute greenhouse gas emissions increased less than 1% from the target base year to fiscal year 2023. This is significant given the 17% increase in the organizational boundary Facilities Inventory Classification Manual (FICM) gross area in the same period.

Scopes 1 and 2 absolute greenhouse gas emissions increased less than 1% from the target base year to FY2023 despite a 17% increase in the organizational boundary.

Most notably, scope 3 air travel emissions from the target base year to fiscal year 2023 increased by 43%, and were higher than any other year in the inventory’s recorded history, including pre-pandemic.

Air travel emissions increased 147% from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2023. Although not part of the 2030 goal, emissions from air travel are 9% of University emissions in fiscal year 2023, and are the third largest contributor to University emissions.

Scopes 3 air travel emissions increased significantly in FY2023.

Therefore, emissions from campus buildings and business air travel present the most opportunity.

See figures 1 and 2 on the following pages for an inventory summary, and Appendix A for a full inventory analysis.

Results

Location based

Scopes 1 and 2 absolute greenhouse gas emissions increased less than 1% from the target base year to fiscal year 2023. This is significant given the 17% increase in the organizational boundary FICM gross area in the same period as discussed above.

SCOPE 2 ELECTRICITY

Greenhouse gas emissions from the target base year to fiscal year 2023 declined by nearly 6% while electricity usage increased 25%. The increase in electricity usage can be explained by the 17% increase in the organizational boundary FICM gross area in the same period as discussed above. Emissions decreased while usage increased due to the decline of U.S. EPA regional eGRID emissions factors from the target base year to 2023. Factors are generally decreasing over time because of the electrical grid transition to lower and zero carbon emissions. However, one cannot rely on this method entirely to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as future factors are uncertain. For example, from regional eGRID2020 (15th ed.) to eGRID2021 (16th ed.) emissions factors increased. This is likely due to a change in the generation mix to more carbon intensive sources.

Since the previous reporting period and this reporting period use different emissions factors, as shown in table 1.3 of [the University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Supplemental Information](#), the fiscal year 2022 emissions from electricity are higher in this reporting period than the previous reporting period.

As indicated in figures 1 and 2, electricity is the largest contributor to campus greenhouse gas emissions and was 50% of overall campus emissions in fiscal year 2023.

SCOPE 1 ON-CAMPUS STATIONARY

On-campus stationary sources are the largest contributors to scope greenhouse gas emissions and include natural gas and distillate fuel oil #2. On-campus stationary sources were the second largest contributor to overall campus greenhouse gas emissions at 33% of scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions in fiscal year 2023. Distillate fuel oil #2 emissions are negligible when compared to natural gas emissions in fiscal year 2023, as usage was due to testing of equipment. Distillate fuel oil is available on campus as required by code to support UChicago Medicine in case of a natural gas disruption.

Natural gas usage increased by 12% and emissions by 11%

from the target base year to fiscal year 2023. This is attributed to an increase in the organizational boundary FICM gross area of 17% as mentioned previously. Despite this increase, overall scope 1 and 2 emissions still increased less than 1% from the target base year due to the factors discussed above.

In addition to on-campus stationary sources, scope 1 includes direct transportation (UGo shuttles and University owned fleet) at 1% of overall campus greenhouse gas emissions, and agriculture (nitrogen in fertilizer) at less than 1% of overall campus greenhouse gas emissions. Refer to figures 1 and 2, and the [dashboards](#) for additional information.

SCOPE 3

The pandemic had a significant impact on scope 3 air travel emissions, as can be seen in figure 1. Scope 3 University greenhouse gas emissions from the target base year to fiscal year 2023 in areas of domestic and international air travel for business needs and study abroad programs declined significantly due to the pandemic and then increased significantly to exceed pre-pandemic levels in fiscal year 2023.

While scope 3 is not part of the 2030 goal, it is important to note that the third largest contributor to overall campus

greenhouse gas emissions is business air travel in most years including fiscal year 2023.

From the target base year to fiscal year 2023, emissions from scope 3 business air travel increased by 43%, and were higher than any other year in the inventory, including pre-pandemic. Air travel emissions increased 147% from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2023. When comparing to pre-pandemic levels, air travel emissions increased by 20% from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2023. Emissions from air travel are 9% of overall University emissions in fiscal year 2023. Even with the increased use of technology, the cultural shift due to the pandemic, and many conferences and events being offered virtually or hybrid, business air travel exploded above pre-pandemic levels in fiscal year 2023. This finding presents an opportunity to seek

opportunities to mitigate air travel emissions as discussed in the [Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan](#).

Fiscal year 2023 ground transport emissions declined by 55% indicating less rental car usage and a decline in personal mileage reimbursement from the target base year, but fiscal year 2023 values are within the order of magnitude of fiscal year 2022 values.

Study abroad air travel emissions increased by 17%, and were also higher than any other year in the inventory, including pre-pandemic. However, study abroad emissions are only 1% of overall campus emissions.

Solid landfilled waste absolute emissions increased by 7% from the target base year to fiscal year 2023, which can be explained by the 17% increase in the organizational boundary FICM gross

area, increase in campus population, and increased shipping of personal items in student housing during the same time period. However, solid waste emissions are only 2% of overall campus emissions.

The fourth largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in fiscal year 2023 was transmission and distribution losses from scope 2 electricity at 3%. When added with scope 2 electricity emissions, emissions from electricity are approximately 53% of campus emissions in fiscal year 2023.

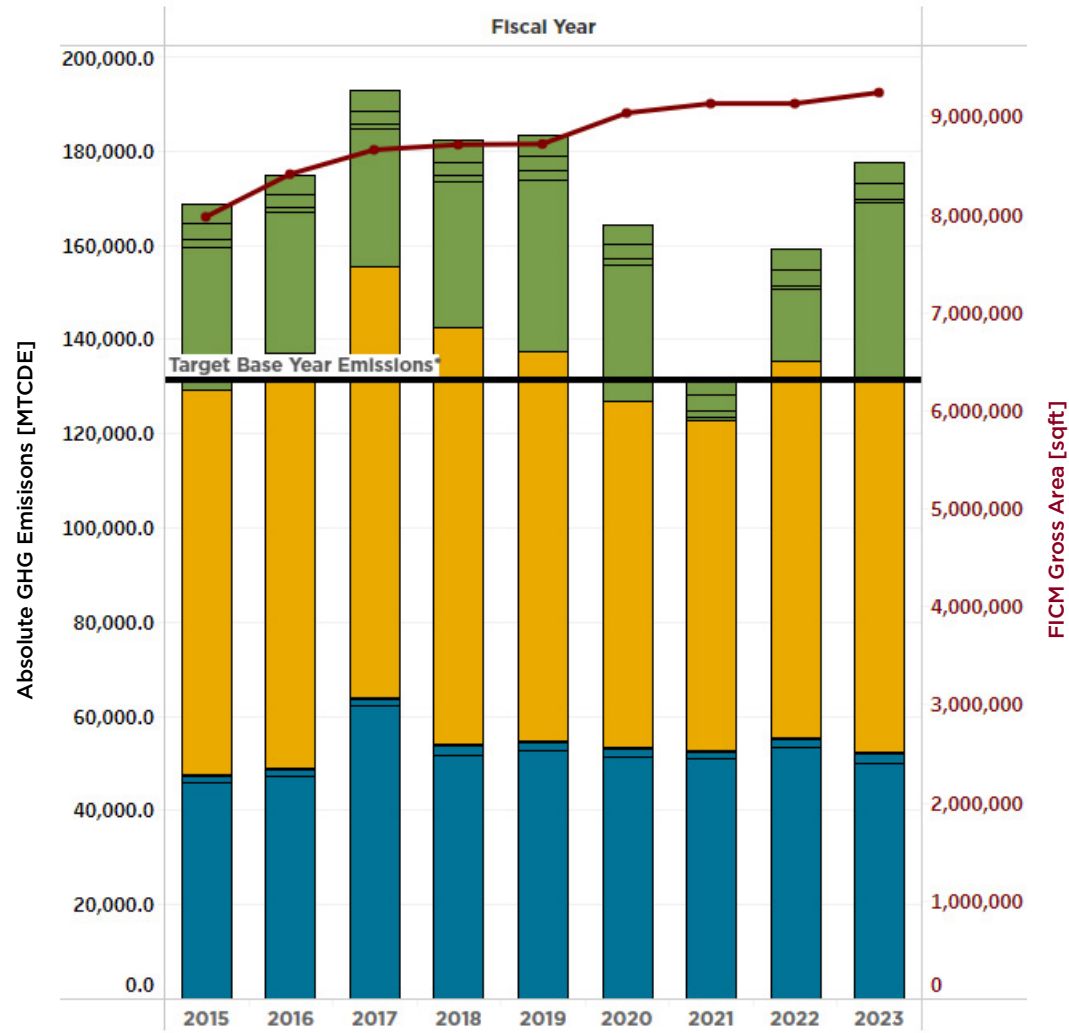
Total scope 3 emissions were 16% of overall campus greenhouse gas emissions in fiscal year 2023.

Refer to figures 1 and 2, and the [dashboards](#) for additional information.

Figure 1: Scopes 1, 2, and 3 Absolute Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Source, Scope, and Fiscal Year [MT eCO₂] Location-Based Method

Year	Scope 1 [MTCDE]			Scope 2 [MTCDE]	Scope 3 [MTCDE]				
	Other On-Campus Stationary	Direct Transportation	Agriculture	Electricity	Directly Financed Outsourced Travel Air	Other Directly Financed Travel	Study Abroad Travel Air	Solid waste	T&D losses
2012	41,867.5	1,685.1	22.1	84,348.1	22,916.2	1,169.9	2,379.7	3,372.8	8,515.9
2013	44,973.4	1,820.1	6.6	83,785.2	25,908.4	1,331.9	2,430.1	3,253.8	8,459.1
2014	48,995.2	1,973.1	6.8	84,568.0	29,510.3	1,535.2	2,246.7	3,158.0	4,422.8
2015	45,760.8	1,962.1	9.6	81,451.3	30,386.3	1,596.5	2,476.4	3,322.6	4,259.8
2016	47,345.7	1,744.9	6.3	88,052.7	29,932.8	1,027.8	2,039.8	2,649.0	4,139.4
2017	62,091.2	1,943.6	6.2	91,339.7	29,344.4	1,066.2	2,249.3	2,680.4	4,294.0
2018	51,750.6	2,306.6	8.3	88,351.5	30,997.4	1,459.0	2,425.8	2,770.8	4,534.7
2019	52,671.5	2,108.9	8.2	82,805.9	36,068.8	2,240.6	2,466.4	2,892.3	4,450.1
2020	51,532.9	1,918.7	6.9	73,325.8	29,131.8	1,269.6	2,177.0	3,074.6	4,103.8
2021	50,865.2	1,743.7	2.0	70,088.5	872.5	1,234.4	181.6	3,300.2	3,922.6
2022	53,559.2	1,951.1	2.0	79,929.0	15,088.6	743.1	2,090.0	3,354.0	4,473.3
2023	50,091.2	2,143.2	2.0	79,595.9	37,262.0	600.6	2,748.9	3,488.3	4,454.7

Figure 2: Scopes 1, 2, and 3 Absolute Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Source, Scope, and Fiscal Year [MT eCO₂] Location-Based Method



Listed in order of appearance on Figure 1:

- T&D losses
- Solid waste
- Other Directly Financed Travel
- Directly Financed Outsourced Travel Air
- Electricity
- Agriculture*
- Direct Transportation
- Other On-Campus Stationary
- FICM Gross Area

*value is too small to display

SCOPE 1 natural gas, distillate fuel oil #2, University-owned fleet and UGo shuttles, nitrogen in fertilizer

SCOPE 2 electricity

SCOPE 3 directly financed air travel, directly financed automobile travel, study abroad travel, solid landfilled waste, T&D losses

Results market based

The **GHG Protocol Scope 2 Guidance** requires both location- and market-based reporting. The market-based method allows organizations to take credit for their green electricity purchases. This method impacts emissions for scope 2 electricity and scope 3 transmission and distribution losses. It begins in 2015 because that is when The GHG Protocol Scope 2 Guidance was released. This method is considered best practice and uses residual emissions factors for electricity (acceptable) or supplier-based emissions factors for electricity (best practice).

In this inventory, residual emissions factors were used for emissions from CO₂, and U.S. EPA regional eGRID emissions factors were used for emissions from CH₄ and N₂O, as is acceptable

practice. Supplier-based emissions factors were not available at time of inventory calculations.

In the market-based method, optional purchased renewable energy credits (RECs) and offsets are included. At time of reporting, no optional RECs had been purchased, and offsets were incorporated for the year purchased, fiscal year 2021.

Since the University does not have green electricity purchases, the results of the location- and market-based greenhouse gas emissions in this reporting period are identical except for a slight difference in scope 2 electricity and scope 3 transmission and distribution losses emissions due to the different emissions factors used in each method as discussed above.

Fiscal years 2022 and 2023 are the only years where the market-based method yields electricity emissions

that are lower than the location-based method. This is simply because the CO₂ eGRID emissions factors for those two years are higher than the residual factors. If the University had green electricity purchases, that would be highlighted in the market-based method.

SCOPE 2 ELECTRICITY

The target base year, the average of fiscal year 2012 through 2014 emissions, is not included in the market-based method since the market-based method begins in 2015.

As discussed above, in the case of this inventory, the location-based and market-based results do not vary by much since no optional RECs have been purchased and are therefore absent in the inventory. Therefore, the only difference in the location-based and market-based method in this case is the emissions factors as discussed. Refer to figure 3 and Appendix B for additional information.

Figure 3: Scopes 1, 2, and 3 Absolute Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Source, Scope, and Fiscal Year [MT eCO₂] Market-Based Method

Fiscal Year	Scope 2 [MTCDE]	Scope 3 [MTCDE]
	Electricity MB	T&D Losses MB
2015	81,496.2	4,262.2
2016	88,103.5	4,141.8
2017	91,377.8	4,295.7
2018	88,388.7	4,536.6
2019	82,836.1	4,451.7
2020	73,465.8	4,111.6
2021	70,222.3	3,930.1
2022	75,428.4	4,221.4
2023	75,114.1	4,203.8

Appendix A

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Analysis FY2012-FY2023 location based

The University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Analysis
RP8 FY2012 through FY2023 Location Based

last updated 12/01/2023 FOR REPORTING

ABSOLUTE EMISSIONS	INSTITUTIONAL	SCOPE 1			SCOPE 2	SCOPE 3					Offsets	SCOPE 1	SCOPE 2	SCOPE 3	SCOPES 1+2	SCOPES 1+2 LESS OFFSETS	SCOPES 1+2+3	
	Area	Other On-Campus Stationary ¹	Direct Transportation ²	Agriculture ³	Electricity	Directly Financed Air Travel	Other Directly Financed Travel ⁴	Study Abroad Air Travel	Solid Waste	Scope 2 T&D Losses ⁵		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Fiscal Year	[sqft]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]
2012	8,090,775.14	41,867.5	1,685.1	22.1	84,348.1	22,916.2	1,169.9	2,379.7	3,372.8	8,515.9	0.0	43,574.8	84,348.1	38,354.5	127,922.9	127,922.9	166,277.4	
2013	7,872,700.63	44,973.4	1,820.1	6.6	83,785.2	25,908.4	1,331.9	2,430.1	3,253.8	8,459.1	0.0	46,800.2	83,785.2	41,383.3	130,585.3	130,585.3	171,968.6	
2014	7,698,422.80	48,995.2	1,973.1	6.8	84,568.0	29,510.3	1,535.2	2,246.7	3,158.0	4,422.8	0.0	50,975.1	84,568.0	40,873.1	135,543.1	135,543.1	176,416.2	
2015	7,971,740.85	45,760.8	1,962.1	9.6	81,451.3	30,386.3	1,596.5	2,476.4	3,322.6	4,259.8	0.0	47,732.5	81,451.3	42,041.7	129,183.8	129,183.8	171,225.5	
2016	8,407,558.97	47,345.7	1,744.9	6.3	88,052.7	29,932.8	1,027.8	2,039.8	2,649.0	4,139.4	0.0	49,097.0	88,052.7	39,788.9	137,149.7	137,149.7	176,938.6	
2017	8,656,223.67	62,091.2	1,943.6	6.2	91,339.7	29,344.4	1,066.2	2,249.3	2,680.4	4,294.0	0.0	64,041.0	91,339.7	39,634.2	155,380.7	155,380.7	195,014.9	
2018	8,709,057.70	51,750.6	2,306.6	8.3	88,351.5	30,997.4	1,459.0	2,425.8	2,770.8	4,534.7	0.0	54,065.6	88,351.5	42,187.7	142,417.0	142,417.0	184,604.7	
2019	8,715,798.81	52,671.5	2,108.9	8.2	82,805.9	36,068.8	2,240.6	2,466.4	2,892.3	4,450.1	0.0	54,788.6	82,805.9	48,118.1	137,594.5	137,594.5	185,712.6	
2020	9,031,821.48	51,532.9	1,918.7	6.9	73,325.8	29,131.8	1,269.6	2,177.0	3,074.6	4,103.8	0.0	53,458.5	73,325.8	39,756.7	126,784.4	126,784.4	166,541.1	
2021	9,128,250.16	50,865.2	1,743.7	2.0	70,088.5	872.5	1,234.4	181.6	3,300.2	3,922.6	10,000.8	52,610.8	70,088.5	9,511.2	122,699.3	112,698.5	132,210.6	
2022	9,128,250.16	53,559.2	1,951.1	2.0	79,929.0	15,088.6	743.1	2,090.0	3,354.0	4,473.3	0.0	55,512.3	79,929.0	25,749.1	135,441.3	135,441.3	161,190.4	
2023	9,240,545.85	50,091.2	2,143.2	2.0	79,595.9	37,262.0	600.6	2,748.9	3,488.3	4,454.7	0.0	52,236.4	79,595.9	48,554.6	131,832.3	131,832.3	180,386.9	
target base year	7,887,299.5	45,278.7	1,826.1	11.8	84,233.8	26,111.6	1,345.7	2,352.2	3,261.5	7,132.6	0.0	47,116.7	84,233.8	40,203.6	131,350.4	131,350.4	171,554.1	
FY2023 % of total based on 1+2+3 w/o offsets	NA	33.2%	1.2%	0.0%	49.6%	9.4%	0.5%	1.3%	2.1%	2.8%	0.0%	34.4%	49.6%	16.0%	84.0%	84.0%	100.0%	
FY2023 rank	NA	2	7	9	1	3	8	6	5	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
TBY TO FY2023	17.2%	10.6%	17.4%	-83.5%	-5.5%	42.7%	-55.4%	16.9%	7.0%	-37.5%	NA	10.9%	-5.5%	20.8%	0.4%	0.4%	5.1%	
FY2022 TO FY2023	1.2%	-6.5%	9.8%	0.0%	-0.4%	147.0%	-19.2%	31.5%	4.0%	-0.4%	NA	-5.9%	-0.4%	88.6%	-2.7%	-2.7%	11.9%	

FOOTNOTES

- ¹natural gas; distillate fuel oil #2
- ²University-owned fleet; UGO shuttles
- ³Nitrogen in fertilizer
- ⁴Rental car; personal mileage reimbursement
- ⁵T&D = transmission & distribution

TARGET BASE YEAR CALCULATION

To obtain the target base year, calculate the average greenhouse gas emissions from FY2012 through FY2014.

Appendix B

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Analysis FY2012-FY2023 market based

The University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Analysis
RP8 FY2012 through FY2023 Market Based

last updated 12/07/2023 FOR REPORTING

ABSOLUTE EMISSIONS	INSTITUTIONAL	SCOPE 1			SCOPE 2	SCOPE 3					Offsets	SCOPE 1	SCOPE 2	SCOPE 3	SCOPES 1+2	SCOPES 1+2 LESS OFFSETS	SCOPES 1+2+3	
	Area	Other On-Campus Stationary ¹	Direct Transportation ²	Agriculture ³	Electricity	Directly Financed Air Travel	Other Directly Financed Travel ⁴	Study Abroad Air Travel	Solid Waste	Scope 2 T&D Losses ⁵		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
Fiscal Year	[sqft]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]	[MT eCO ₂]
2015	7,971,740.85	45,760.8	1,962.1	9.6	81,496.2	30,386.3	1,596.5	2,476.4	3,322.6	4,262.2	0.0	47,732.5	81,496.2	42,041.7	129,228.6	129,228.6	171,270.3	
2016	8,407,558.97	47,345.7	1,744.9	6.3	88,103.5	29,932.8	1,027.8	2,039.8	2,649.0	4,141.8	0.0	49,097.0	88,103.5	39,788.9	137,200.4	137,200.4	176,989.3	
2017	8,656,223.67	62,091.2	1,943.6	6.2	91,377.8	29,344.4	1,066.2	2,249.3	2,680.4	4,295.7	0.0	64,041.0	91,377.8	39,634.2	155,418.7	155,418.7	195,052.9	
2018	8,709,057.70	51,750.6	2,306.6	8.3	88,388.7	30,997.4	1,459.0	2,425.8	2,770.8	4,536.6	0.0	54,065.6	88,388.7	42,187.7	142,454.2	142,454.2	184,641.9	
2019	8,715,798.81	52,671.5	2,108.9	8.2	82,836.1	36,068.8	2,240.6	2,466.4	2,892.3	4,451.7	0.0	54,788.6	82,836.1	48,118.1	137,624.7	137,624.7	185,742.8	
2020	9,031,821.48	51,532.9	1,918.7	6.9	73,465.8	29,131.8	1,269.6	2,177.0	3,074.6	4,111.6	0.0	53,458.5	73,465.8	39,756.7	126,924.4	126,924.4	166,681.1	
2021	9,128,250.16	50,865.2	1,743.7	2.0	70,222.3	872.5	1,234.4	181.6	3,300.2	3,930.1	10,000.8	52,610.8	70,222.3	9,511.2	122,833.1	112,832.3	132,344.4	
2022	9,128,250.16	53,559.2	1,951.1	2.0	75,428.4	15,088.6	743.1	2,090.0	3,354.0	4,221.4	0.0	55,512.3	75,428.4	25,749.1	130,940.7	130,940.7	156,689.8	
2023	9,240,545.85	50,091.2	2,143.2	2.0	75,114.1	37,262.0	600.6	2,748.9	3,488.3	4,203.8	0.0	52,236.4	75,114.1	48,554.6	127,350.5	127,350.5	175,905.1	
FY2023 % of total based on 1+2+3 w/o offsets	NA	34.2%	1.2%	0.0%	48.1%	9.6%	0.5%	1.3%	2.1%	2.7%	0.0%	35.4%	48.1%	16.4%	83.6%	83.6%	100.0%	
FY2023 rank	NA	2	7	9	1	3	8	6	5	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
FY2022 TO FY2023	1.2%	-6.5%	9.8%	0.0%	-0.4%	147.0%	-19.2%	31.5%	4.0%	-0.4%	NA	-5.9%	-0.4%	88.6%	-2.7%	-2.7%	12.3%	

FOOTNOTES

- ¹natural gas; distillate fuel oil #2
- ²University-owned fleet; UGO shuttles
- ³Nitrogen in fertilizer
- ⁴Rental car; personal mileage reimbursement
- ⁵T&D = transmission & distribution

Conclusion

Managing greenhouse gas emissions is a top priority for the University of Chicago and it allows for progress in multiple areas of the [Sustainability Plan](#).

The results of the UChicago 2012–2023 greenhouse gas emissions inventory indicate a need for continued action, especially in areas 1 and 2 of the Sustainability Plan, Climate Change and Energy and High Performance Buildings. Emissions from campus buildings and business air travel present the most opportunity.

Since the 2030 goal is based on scopes 1 and 2 absolute emissions, and natural gas and electricity use in campus buildings contribute to over 70% of the University's greenhouse gas emissions in any given fiscal year, reducing electricity and natural gas consumption in campus buildings will make the biggest impact on reducing University greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy efficiency projects are outlined in [the University of Chicago Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan \(FY2022–FY2030\)](#).

Only by collaborating together as a campus community will the 2030 goal be achieved. For ways to get involved, please visit sustainability.uchicago.edu.



Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 2012–2023

sustainability.uchicago.edu/reporting



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