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IMPALA Carbon Calculator Report 2025

Insights from
carbon footprinting
independent labels



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the European Union

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Foreword



**Peter Quicke, Ninja Tune,
Chair of IMPALA's
Sustainability Task Force**



**Helen Smith, IMPALA
Executive Chair**

Welcome to the third annual IMPALA Membership Carbon Report written in collaboration with Julie's Bicycle. This past year has seen significant structural growth for IMPALA's sustainability programme. 2025 marked the beginning of our new status as a recognised EU cultural network, co-funded by the European Union for the next four years. This grant provides the stability and resources needed to embed climate literacy and carbon reporting in the independent music sector across all 33 member markets.

The independent music landscape is not static, and neither is our methodology. This year, we undertook a comprehensive update of the IMPALA Carbon Calculator to reflect evolving findings of the sector, including updates to the vinyl factors, based on the findings of the Vinyl Alliance / Music Climate Pact study. Powered by Julie's Bicycle, these updates ensure that our members are reporting against the most accurate, science-based benchmarks available.

A central highlight of this year was the launch of the Weidenmüller Sustainability Fund. Established in memory of the visionary Horst Weidenmüller, and in partnership with Merlin, this fund is a dedicated multi-year initiative designed to accelerate our community's sustainability transition. This year, we have also finalised our USA pilot project, supported by Merlin and in collaboration with A2IM and moved one step closer to a unified reporting standard for the independent sector.

As we look toward 2026, our focus is clear. With the support of our EU network grant, we can continue with the series of Climate Clinics, aiming to reach even more labels. Beyond internal capacity building, our EU network status has allowed us to amplify the voices of the wider ecosystem. In 2025, we highlighted the work of Music Declares Emergency Denmark, reinforcing our belief that the transition requires engagement on different levels.

We will also continue working with the industry, in the context of climate investment solutions through Murmur, as well as with supporters and signatories of the Music Climate Pact to promote standardisation.

Introduction

"This third annual report of the IMPALA Carbon Calculator is a landmark moment for the independent recorded music industry. It provides the most accurate picture to date for the average emissions of an independent label. This follows important updates to how the impacts of vinyl manufacturing are measured, reflecting the latest research by the Music Climate Pact and Vinyl Alliance into lifecycle emissions of vinyl.

Air freight and business travel make up a larger percentage of the total footprint than previously estimated. While vinyl manufacturing remains the largest source of emissions, the results mean that a holistic sustainability strategy is required to tackle multiple areas head on. With the support of Julie's Bicycle, the IMPALA Sustainability Programme will help labels build this in for long term success."

Richard Phillips, Music Lead at Julie's Bicycle

Since its launch in 2022, the **IMPALA Carbon Calculator** has provided a valuable, free tool for independent labels to measure their carbon footprint and, in doing so, manage their business more sustainably.

The tool has been continually improved to reflect new research on environmental impacts and to meet the needs of a streamlined, straightforward user experience.

This report provides an update on the important developments made to the tool in 2025 and shares key insights from those labels already using the tool to manage their impacts.

In measuring a carbon footprint, labels stand to gain from a number of business-related benefits, many of which directly impact the bottom line. The next page summarises how your label can benefit from using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator.

Reporting data via the Calculator is also helping to generate insights support wider environmental action toward a cleaner recorded music industry.

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator is the first environmental impact measurement tool for the independent recorded music sector. The Calculator helps IMPALA's members measure their carbon footprint with a standardised methodology that is aligned with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG Protocol) Corporate Standard, the most widely used framework for reporting organisational greenhouse gas emissions.

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator was built with contributions from the IMPALA membership and is supported by Merlin and Murmur. The tool is powered by the Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools platform.

What you'll find in this report

As in previous annual reports, we share insights from data submitted in 2025. This includes an update to the average carbon footprint for independent labels.

Case studies of environmental actions taken by labels in 2025 are also highlighted, from overarching strategies to deep-dives on topics, such as merch.

The report also summarises the outcomes of a pilot project to adapt the Calculator to better support labels in the USA and introduces wider improvements on reporting functionality and user experience.

IMPALA's Sustainability Programme

The Carbon Calculator is a key tool for IMPALA members that supports progress towards environmental objectives for the independent recorded music sector. It forms part of IMPALA's **Sustainability Programme**, which encompasses a long-term action plan to support the sector in:

- halving greenhouse gas emissions before 2030
- achieving net zero emissions before 2050, or sooner if feasible
- measuring and disclosing greenhouse gas emissions on an annual basis

We invite our members to act in line with our Climate Declaration for Individual Companies. So far IMPALA has released a sustainability **charter** of 15 points, practical **guidance for members** and a climate **declaration** for members.

IMPALA also uses its voice to amplify other climate initiatives from the music sector, see more [here](#).

5 Business Reasons to Use the IMPALA Carbon Calculator

IMPALA believes that sustainability is more than an environmental obligation—it's a strategic opportunity for independent music businesses and the sector as a whole.

The points below are just some of the highlights identified by IMPALA's research into the business benefits of carbon footprinting and environmental action.

1 Reduce costs

A carbon footprint helps identify areas where you can be more efficient in your operations (e.g. energy savings), reducing both carbon emissions and financial costs.



2 Better serve music fans

Labels using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator can benefit by demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and improving brand awareness among music fans, who have been shown to want more environmental action than non-music fans.

3 Attract and retain top talent

Multiple studies confirm that today's workforce want to apply their skills at businesses that have a positive social and environmental impact. You can prove to employees and artists that your label is taking its impacts seriously by monitoring your carbon footprint with the IMPALA Carbon Calculator.



4 Get aligned with legislation

Using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator ensures your label is prepared for future environmental reporting legislations (e.g. the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive - CSRD) as well as accessing grants and tax incentives related to environmental actions, which are expected to apply to all companies in the future.

5 Drive innovation in your supply chain

In collecting data for your carbon footprint you stand to gain from closer engagement and strengthened relations with your key suppliers, who will also be looking to reduce their environmental impacts. This can create more streamlined business practices, greater efficiency and even product innovations.



Getting started

Members not already using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator can do so **quickly**, **easily** and **at no cost**. IMPALA members (both direct members and members of national associations) can create their account for free directly on the **sign up page**. (Other labels or associations should contact us first. Specific arrangements are possible, especially for Merlin members, and other licences are available.)

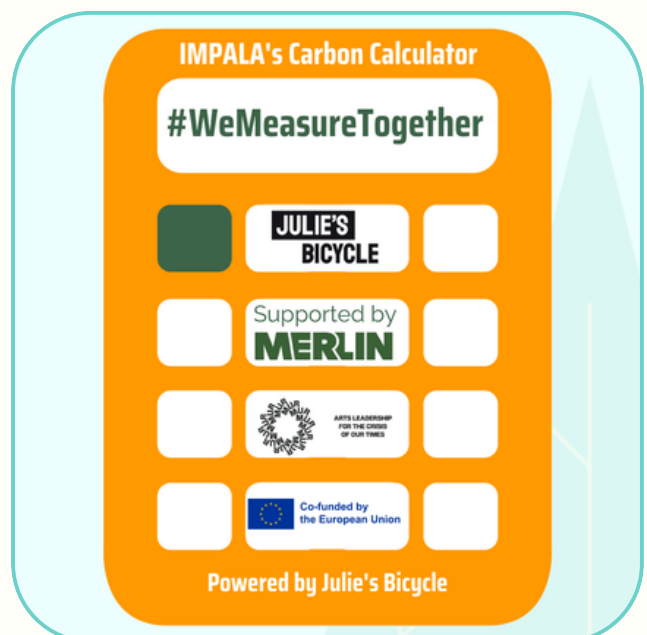
From there, you can start building your first carbon footprint and take advantage of the business benefits.

5 steps to creating a carbon footprint on the IMPALA Carbon Calculator:



Creating a carbon footprint is not a static exercise. Data should be entered into the Carbon Calculator regularly to monitor progress and identify emerging issues related to environmental impacts.

For further guidance, see our '5 Steps to Create your Carbon Footprint using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator' guide [here](#).



The story so far

Since its launch in April 2022, the IMPALA Carbon Calculator has been shared widely among the IMPALA membership.

The countries with the greatest number of registered users are:

**UK, France,
Germany,
Spain, Italy**

**Over
180 labels**

**have started their
carbon footprint
journey on the
Calculator**

**Three quarters of
IMPALA's National
Associations
are represented
among registered users**

**Labels from
31 countries**

**have signed-up to
the Calculator so far**

**73 complete
footprints**

**have been submitted
so far**

Alongside the Carbon Calculator, IMPALA provides its members with a number of sessions and resources to help labels in their carbon footprint journey:

- **'How to' webinars** explaining the key steps to using the Calculator
- **Supporting resources**, including practical guides for labels at every stage of carbon footprinting
- **Business Case for Sustainability** report on the commercial and operational value of taking environmental action and using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator to monitor performance

Merlin – Weidenmüller Sustainability Fund



Merlin is the independent's digital music licensing partner with a global membership from 70+ countries around the world, representing 15% of the recorded music market.



On Earth Day 2025 (22 April), Merlin and IMPALA launched the joint initiative, the **Weidenmüller Sustainability Fund**. In honour of the legacy of Horst Weidenmüller and designed to accelerate the independent music community's transition toward a more sustainable future.

Together, Merlin and IMPALA are reaffirming their shared commitment to environmental responsibility, equity, and innovation.

Horst Weidenmüller, was the visionary founder of **!K7 Music**, a long-standing Board Member of both Merlin and IMPALA, as well as a co-founder of Merlin. Horst was always a passionate advocate for climate action within the music industry. He played a central role in shaping IMPALA's **Sustainability Programme** in 2021, including its pioneering **Carbon Calculator**. In December 2024, Horst also received IMPALA's **Outstanding Contribution Award** for his inspiring work in sustainability within the European independent music sector.

The fund provides the resources needed to develop IMPALA's bespoke Carbon Calculator, provides guidance for labels and carries out market assessments to make it more globally available. Additionally, the fund supports IMPALA's ability to offer strategic advice and training to independent labels and distributors that use the Carbon Calculator.

The fund also facilitates significant enhancements to the tool and generally support the work of the IMPALA task force, which Horst established in 2020.

Updates to the Carbon Calculator

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator was updated in 2025 (Release 4) to reflect the latest research into the impacts of vinyl manufacturing, as well as introducing a number of wider improvements on reporting functionality and user experience.

Vinyl Manufacturing

In 2025, a significant update was made to the methodology used in the IMPALA Carbon Calculator to measure the environmental impact of vinyl manufacturing. The updates reflect recent research by the Music Climate Pact (MCP) and the Vinyl Alliance (VA).

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator now includes new emissions factors for a 'traditionally pressed vinyl record' (virgin PVC, manufactured with standard galvanics and pressing processes, and standard packaging) for three manufacturing regions: North America, Europe and a Global Average. The new emissions factors are derived from the average product-level carbon footprints of 7 suppliers assessed by the MCP/VA.

The emissions factors are lower than those previously used in the IMPALA Carbon Calculator. This is the result of an improved methodology, as well as some efficiency gains made since emissions from vinyl were last estimated.

These updates to the Calculator ensure your carbon footprint is more accurate and aligned with current best practice. The changes have some implications for your reporting since footprints calculated before the update are not directly comparable with those calculated afterwards (see new guidance resources on page 11).

Updates to the Carbon Calculator

Enhanced reporting functionality

Further upgrades have been made within the Calculator to align with recently published guidance by the Music Industry Climate Collective (MICC), and to improve the experience of international labels.

Updates include:

- **Recording Studios:** Users can now explicitly select "Recording Studio" as a building type under the Buildings tab. This aligns with MICC best practice, allowing labels to record impacts from occupied or third-party studios.
- **Global Flights:** Flight categories have been consolidated into a single "Flights" output to streamline the user experience for international labels.
- **Verified Custom Reporting:** The custom "Wildcard" system has been expanded across all travel categories to provide labels with greater reporting flexibility.
- **Intensity Metric Dashboards:** A new "View by Metric" section allows users to compare their results against membership averages (e.g. emissions per physical unit manufactured, per employee, or per €/£/\$10,000 of revenue).
- **Merchandise:** The Beyond Carbon survey has been expanded to include a dedicated section on Merchandise to improve recording of environmental actions taken by labels.

Updates to the Carbon Calculator

User experience

Updates have focused on improving the reporting journey, enabling labels to quickly access targeted guidance and generate high-quality visual reports that facilitate clear and accurate communication of progress.

- **Advanced Resource Library:** Users can now filter guidance by document type and year, with essential materials marked as "Featured" to ensure labels can quickly identify and access the most relevant resources for their reporting.
- **Reports:** Visualisations in the "Compare" tab now reflect real-time user filters. By toggling specific impact areas, labels can generate custom data views that can help with labels communications.

New Guidance Resources

Further guidance materials have been released in 2025 to help labels understand and navigate Calculator updates. You can find these on the [Resources page](#). The new resources include:

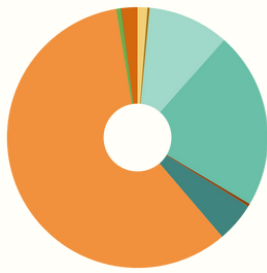
- **Update on Vinyl Emission Factors Methodology** – A document providing more detail of how the vinyl emissions factors have changed following the MCP/VA study.
- **Guidance for Updating Past Footprints and Rebaselining** – A short guidance document to support users with year-to-year footprint comparison following the vinyl methodology update. The document includes suggested wording to communicate the methodology change for published reports and wider carbon reporting.

IMPALA would like to thank Merlin and Murmur for their support in funding the tool updates in 2025.

The full list of updates as part of the April 2024 update can be viewed [here](#).

Average Label Footprint Breakdown

Data submitted to the IMPALA Carbon Calculator tells us that on average across all business activities, independent labels generate:

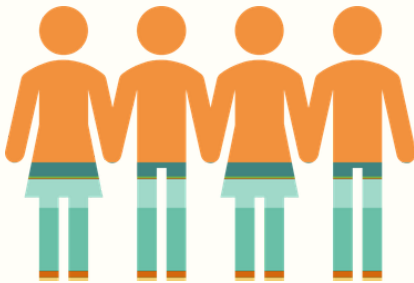


2.14 kg CO₂e

per physical unit manufactured

0.61 t CO₂e

per 10,000 € of revenue

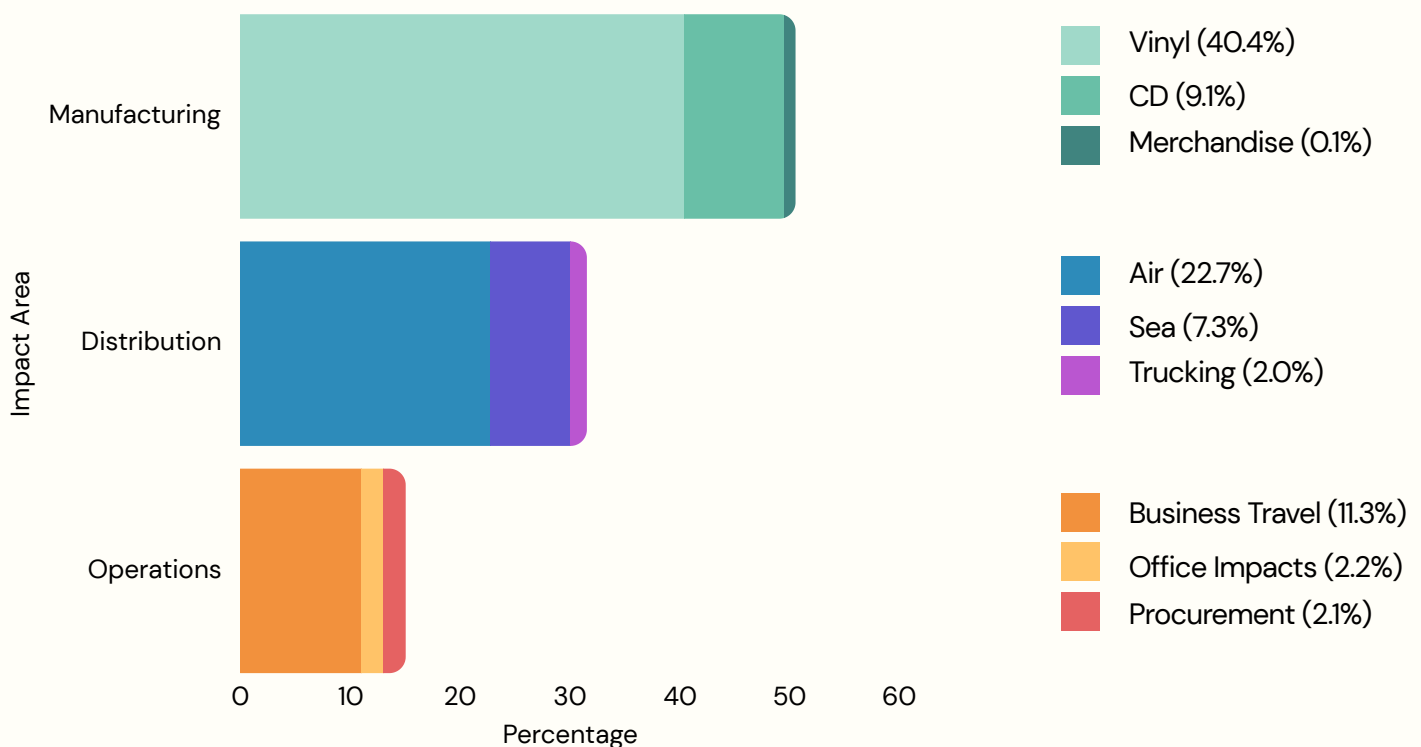


19.56 t CO₂e

per full-time employee per year

Note – these figures reflect emissions across all label activities. They do not reflect the emissions created by a unit manufactured or an employee.

The chart below highlights the key emission sources by category:



Notes

- Metric figures exclude organisations marked as "Distributors Only".
- Per 10,000 euro of revenue figure derived using proxy data where labels did not submit this information.
- 2% of the Distribution emissions could not be categorised under a specific vehicle type as the emissions were entered under the custom emissions section unlabeled.
- 'Merchandise' currently accounts for t-shirts only.

Average Label Footprint by Scope

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator allows labels to see their emissions by Scope, reflecting best practice in carbon footprint reporting.

What are Scopes?

In carbon footprinting, 'Scopes' indicate the level of control or influence an organisation has over types of emissions. The GHG Protocol sets out three Scopes:

- **Scope 1** – direct emissions from sources an organisation owns or controls (e.g. boilers in offices, travel in company owned/leased vehicles)
- **Scope 2** – indirect emissions from purchased energy (e.g. electricity used in offices)
- **Scope 3** – all other indirect supply chain impacts (e.g. physical product manufacturing; business and artist travel; employee commuting; physical product distribution etc)

Emissions from Scope 3 represent the largest portion of an average labels carbon footprint – equalling 97% of the reported 2024 carbon data. This is typical among many businesses and sectors who are not engaged in heavy industry.

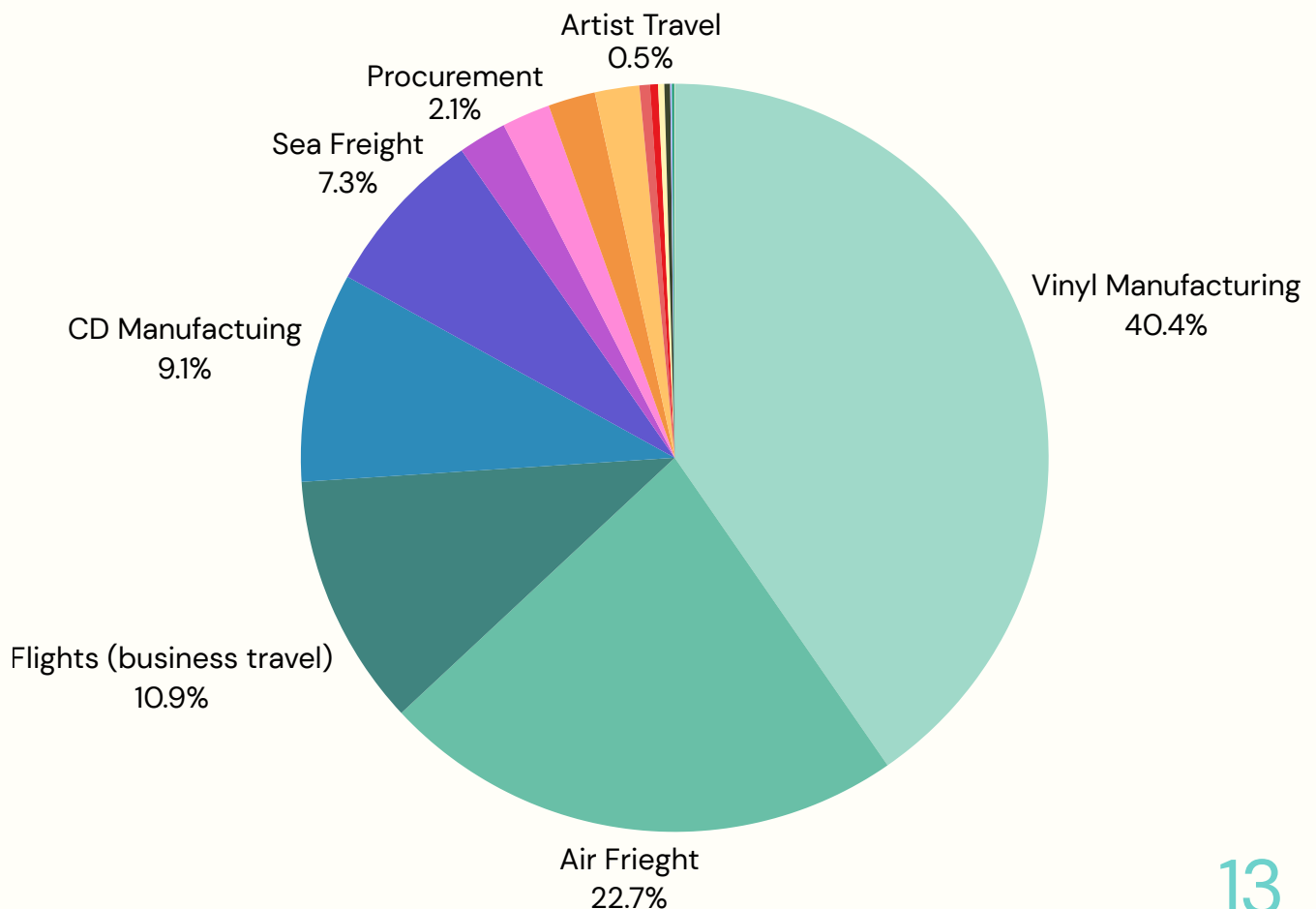
Scope breakdown for an average label:

Scope 1 – 1.39%

Scope 2 – 1.20%

Scope 3 – 97.41%

The chart below provides the full breakdown of an average label's carbon footprint



Data Change vs 2024

Average emissions

The average label footprint in 2025 is lower than previous estimates (owing to changes in methodology and intensity data submitted – see next page). The table below summarises the change to estimated average emissions across all label business activities for the three reported intensity metrics*.

Intensity metric	Emissions across all label activities	
	2024	2025
per physical unit manufactured (kgCO2e)	3.12	2.14
per 10,000 € of revenue (tCO2e)	1.38	0.61
per full-time employee per year (tCO2e)	29.4	19.56

Emissions breakdown by impact area

The relative importance of some impact areas to the overall footprint has also changed. While vinyl manufacturing has come down as a proportion of the total, it remains the most significant environmental impact for labels. The relative importance of other impact areas, such as CD manufacturing and air distribution, has increased as a proportion of the footprint.

Impact area	% of total emissions*	
	2024	2025
Manufacturing	64%	50%
Vinyl	59%	40%
CD	5%	9%
Distribution	22%	34%
Air	11%	23%
Operations	14%	16%

Notes

- Intensity metrics are used to normalise emissions data by expressing them relative to a unit of activity or value to enable comparison over time.
- Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
- Percentages may not add to total impact area percentage – this is due to other smaller data points within each category area (manufacturing, distribution, operations).

Data Change vs 2024

Why have the figures changed?

Methodological changes

In 2025, there was a significant methodological change to how emissions from vinyl manufacturing are estimated, affecting the 2024 data reporting period. New emissions factors from the MCP/VA study are 48.5% lower (using the 12-inch 140g, single, global average emissions factor) than previous, meaning the same number of units manufactured will result in lower emissions. The new emissions factors reflect greater accuracy in understanding vinyl manufacturing emissions, as well as the efficiency improvements made since they were last estimated. See [here](#) for more information.

Financial and operational changes

The reported intensity metrics, used to normalise emissions, amplified the emissions decrease from the methodological update to vinyl manufacturing. Both the total number of employees and revenue reported by labels increased in the reporting year compared to previous. This change, combined with the lower overall carbon emissions, contributed to the lower estimated average emissions intensity.

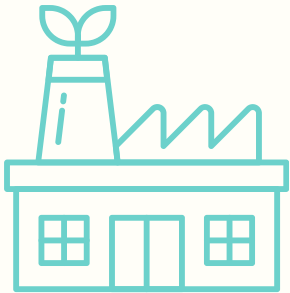
It is worth noting that the number of units manufactured in the reporting window decreased (largely owing to supply chain delays), which meant the decrease in emissions intensity per physical unit manufactured is less significant than per 10,000 € of revenue (tCO₂e).

Note on data comparability:

The data within this annual report is intended to provide an accurate snapshot of emissions for an average label based on footprints submitted to the IMPALA Carbon Calculator. It is not currently designed to present a like-for-like comparison on previous years' data as an assessment of environmental performance of the sector.

Emission hotspots for labels

Three activities typically generate the most emissions for labels. Read more below.



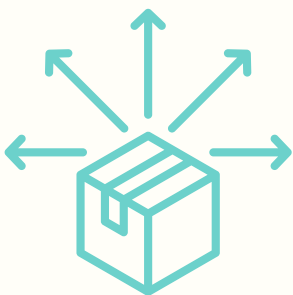
Manufacturing

Manufacturing vinyl records is typically **the largest source** of emissions for a label, representing 50% of the footprint on average.

Traditionally pressed vinyl uses **significant amounts of energy to generate the steam** required to heat the puck into a pliable state.

Most often, this energy is generated by gas boilers, creating an environmental impact. Other types of manufacturing processes exist that do not require as much energy and steam, such as injection moulding.

Both vinyl and CDs are themselves typically **made from types of plastics derived from petrochemicals**, i.e. oil. Alternative vinyl materials exist, such as recycled and bio-based plastic, which can help to reduce the carbon footprint of records.

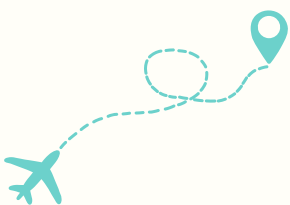


Distribution

The **second highest source** of emissions for most labels is the distribution of physical products.

This includes the freighting of vinyl records, CDs and merchandise from manufacturing plants to warehouses or distribution centres and then finally onto retailers.

Distribution by air amounts to nearly a quarter of all label emissions on average. Air freighting is highly polluting – it is 63 times more carbon intensive than sea freight.



Operations

The **third largest source** of emissions for labels on average are operational impacts, **including procurement, business travel and office energy use**.

Business travel (e.g. for events, conferences, training or meetings) via plane is a significant contributor to emissions from operations.

The purchase of office furniture, office equipment, studio equipment and company cars also contribute to emissions within the operational impacts category.

Reimagining the future of merchandise: Ninja Tune



Environmental sustainability is a priority for **Ninja Tune**. They have begun to bring concerns about the climate and ecological emergency into all of their operational developments. In 2025, a key focus was placed on reducing the environmental impact of merchandise.

Through forging new partnerships with merchandising companies such as **I Dress Myself**, Ninja Tune have begun reimagining what the future of merchandise looks like in the context of addressing environmental sustainability across their operations.

I Dress Myself have supported Ninja Tune in:

- Sustainable sourcing of materials
- Advice on the life-span and disposal of products
- Identifying recycled, durable fabrics and alternative inks and embroidery options
- On-demand production of merchandise
- And true-limited runs

In addition, Ninja Tune has been exploring ways to further reduce impacts through industry collaboration with **Music Declares Emergency**, **Murmur**, and **Earth Percent**.

Additional areas considered include:

- Recycled vinyl pressings and recycled packaging
- Longer-term zero-to-landfill ambitions through the repurposing of surplus vinyl to manufacturer AIAIAI headphones
- Utilising 'timeless' design concepts in merchandise

Creating a Sustainability Strategy: Partisan Records



Starting in 2023, Partisan Records undertook a project internally to create their **first sustainability strategy** and **mission statement**. Through working closely with their artists and team, they have been able to reduce their emissions and develop processes to help with recording their data across the year to aid with end-of-year carbon reporting.

Partisan Records' Mission Statement:

"Partisan's commitment to climate and social justice is in direct alignment with our foundational company value of enhancing the human condition, not exploiting it. Cultural organizations are touch points for society, often at the heart of their communities, providing spaces for connecting, collaborating, refuge, education, care and much more. As purveyors of culture, we understand our unique position to make change, influence others, and shape our environment with and for the community and beyond."

Partisan Records' Top Tips – things to consider when writing your sustainability strategy:

- **Forecast physical product needs strategically** to minimise over-manufacturing records. Unsold records create excessive use of resources and go eventually go to waste.
- **Minimise the use of air freight** when shipping products as it has the highest impact.
- **Stop manufacturing products that include plastic** (which have a high carbon footprint and are non-recyclable) and encourage the use of FSC-certified paper/card.
- **Move from manufacturing 180g vinyl, to 140g** – the sound quality is identical to standard 140g, but the carbon footprint from manufacturing and shipping heavier records is higher.
- **Source merchandise and marketing materials from suppliers that meet minimum environmental standards**, ie. organic cotton and recycled or FSC-certified cardstock, etc.
- **Minimise business travel** to reduce company carbon emissions ie. replace non-essential trips with video conferencing, replace domestic flights with trains when possible, etc.
- In company office spaces, **use energy-efficient lighting, recycle, and only buy locally for office supplies and groceries.**

Behaviour Change for a Sustainable Future: Playground Music Scandinavia



Playground Music Scandinavia is the largest Nordic independent label, who have adopted a 'rolling policy' for their environmental work – meaning that they actively search for opportunities to reduce their environmental impacts.

Speaking with Torgny Sjöö (COO), they have introduced a number of internal changes to help aid this.

- **Using online meetings:** where possible, online meetings are prioritised to save unnecessary travel.
- **Travel:** where travel is needed, and in line with the report's advice to minimise high-impact travel, they are reducing air travel where possible, and replacing it with journeys completed by train and boat. They have also begun using electric company cars, and using public transport for local travel.

Manufacturing tips – direct action

- Choose suppliers that source 100% renewable electricity
- Press vinyl at 140 gramme instead of 180 gramme to minimise use of raw materials
- Avoid overstock if you can to avoid waste products

Travel tips

- Avoid international business travel – use online meetings as much as possible
- Where business travel is necessary, choose the train first (fly economy if you have to fly)
- Develop a travel policy for the organisation to guide less impactful business travel decisions (e.g. 'no flights if a journey can be made in under 8 or 6 hours by train')
- Include 'business-minded travel' within your travel policy, explaining reasons for travel
- Help staff commute better (e.g. through cycle-to-work schemes, public transport cards)
- Join programmes like "Climate Perks" committing to offer paid 'journey days' to staff who travel on holiday by train, coach or boat instead of flying

Common Actions Labels are Taking

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator also provides a checklist of actions a label can take to reduce emissions.

Top 5 most popular actions reported by IMPALA members were:

- Separate recycling waste streams (e.g. paper and cardboard, plastic, cans)
- Steps taken to eliminate single-use plastic
- Staff opportunities for training and professional development on environment and climate issues
- Publishing an environmental policy, strategy, and/or action plan
- Installing energy efficient lighting and/or lighting sensors/timers

Reported benefits from labels taking action:

Labels taking action to reduce their environmental impact also indicated the commercial benefits they have experienced in doing so.

The most commonly cited benefits were **profile/reputational benefits** and **employee morale/well-being**.

You can find more information on the benefits of using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator on **page 5**.

Looking ahead

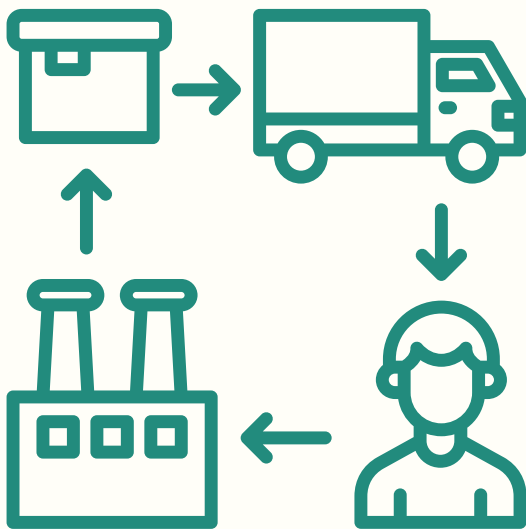
The results also highlighted areas where labels can make further progress with emissions reduction going forwards:

- Having onsite composting facilities or collect organic waste for composting
- Serving more plant-based catering at label-run events (e.g. meetings, presentations, marketing events)
- Divesting from fossil fuels by switching to an ethical bank and pension provider

Environmental Actions for Labels

Many immediate and longer-term actions can be taken to reduce emissions at record labels. These actions can be categorised into the following:

1. **Greener products** – engaging with suppliers on how products are made and packaged
2. **Greener logistics** – making choices about how products are transported
3. **Greener operations** – running your day-to-day operations more sustainably



Within these categories, there are things which your label may have 'direct control' over and things your label can 'influence'.

- **Direct control** – Actions record labels can take themselves to reduce impacts (e.g. procurement decisions, organisational planning)
- **Influence** – Actions which encourage decisions by other stakeholders in the value chain to reduce environmental impacts (e.g. engagement, further research)

The following section provides recommendations for specific actions to reduce the impacts of the key areas. This is not an exhaustive list and further inspiration and examples can be found in the further reading section.

1. Greener products:

a. Manufacturing

Manufacturing physical products typically creates the most emissions in a label's carbon footprint, mainly due to energy intensive traditional pressing processes. There are many steps a labels can take to reduce these impacts. **See the recommendations below to find out how.**

ACTION TYPE	IMMEDIATE ACTIONS	LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Direct control	- Choose suppliers that source 100% renewable electricity - Press vinyl at 140g instead of 180g to minimise use of raw materials - Avoid overproduction if you can to avoid overstock	- Support start-ups that are developing lower-impact products and materials that offer an alternative to traditional oil-based plastics - Work with others in the recorded music industry supply chain to co-invest in making manufacturing 100% fossil-fuel-free
Influence	- If you cannot switch suppliers, encourage existing suppliers to: – implement energy efficiency measures – source 100% renewable electricity – reduce factory floor waste – provide carbon data	- Engage the supply chain, exploring less energy intensive production - Work with suppliers to explore alternative materials for vinyl that offer lower environmental impacts

Benefits:

- Avoiding overstock can reduce costs for warehouse space
- Engagement with suppliers can help to strengthen relationships
- 140 gramme has a near identical sound quality to 180 gramme, but with less materials

b. Packaging

Eradicating all unnecessary packaging and using better, lower-impact materials are essential measures for reducing impacts from packaging. It will be crucial to work closely with suppliers to achieve shared goals on reduced emissions from packaging. **See what labels can do to reduce packaging emissions below.**

ACTION TYPE	IMMEDIATE ACTIONS	LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Direct control	- Switch from plastic jewel cases to 100% card packaging (use recycled card or FSC-certified) - Choose lightweight packaging and minimise overall quantities of packaging (e.g. removing shrink-wrap) - Use a standard sleeve instead of gatefold – they use less material and are easier to ship - Avoid thick plastic lamination, UV inks and varnishes, and metallised gold, silver, and glitter in packaging design	
Influence	Encourage suppliers to minimise packaging	Work with suppliers to explore innovative new lower-impact packaging materials

Benefits:

- Action on packaging provides an opportunity to communicate your environmental efforts and values directly with music fans
- Engagement with your supply chain can unlock new product innovations

2. Greener logistics

While the impacts of travel connect to wider challenges around existing infrastructure and cost, there are many actions that can be taken to minimise emissions from freighting physical products. Lower-impact choices of transport mode and better planning can support achieve optimal efficiencies. **See what labels can do to reduce transport emissions below.**

ACTION TYPE	IMMEDIATE ACTIONS	LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Direct control	• Avoid air freighting as much as possible • Choose to sea-freight products for international deliveries (and plan your operations accordingly to avoid last-minute air freighting)	• Consider banning air freighting
Influence	• Ask your distribution partners about their commitments to electric vehicles and fuel-efficiency measures (e.g. fuel-efficient driving and backhauling) • Check your distribution partners are loading vehicles for optimal efficiency	• Support the uptake of electric vehicles for road transport

Benefits:

- Sea freight is often cheaper than air freight
- Ensuring last mile delivery vehicles are fully loaded can reduce the number of individual trips required, potentially avoiding overpaying for distribution services

3. Greener operations:

There are many actions that labels can take to improve the environmental impact of their operations, both at their own premises and among staff. Such actions are visible to employees and can foster a culture of environmental stewardship. **See what labels can do to reduce operational emissions below.**

a. Office

ACTION TYPE	IMMEDIATE ACTIONS	LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Direct control	• Switch to a 100% renewable electricity tariff for your office • Divest your label's pension fund from fossil fuels and switch to an ethical bank • Keep electronic equipment as long as you can. Recycle it with a registered electrical waste processor	• Invest in your own renewable electricity generation where possible, and invest in reducing the carbon footprint of heating (e.g. shifting from gas to heat pumps) • If fitting a new office or studio, buy energy efficient and second-hand equipment where possible
Influence	• Speak to your landlord about improvements to the energy efficiency of your building (e.g. install LED and sensor lighting) • Raise awareness among employees and partners of environmental actions they can take	• Encourage your landlord to make further improvements to the energy efficiency of your building (e.g. retrofits and installation of a building management system)

Benefits:

- Demonstrate to current and potential employees that you take sustainability seriously – a value that is increasingly desired by the labour market
- Foster a strong company culture by engaging employees and partners in sustainability

b. Business travel

ACTION TYPE	IMMEDIATE ACTIONS	LONGER-TERM ACTIONS
Direct control	• Avoid international business travel – use online meetings as much as possible • Where business travel is necessary, choose the train first (fly economy if you have to fly)	• Develop a travel policy for the organisation to guide less impactful business travel decisions (e.g. 'no flights if a journey can be made in under 8 or 6 hours by train')
Influence	• Help staff commute better (e.g. through cycle-to-work schemes, public transport cards) • Join programmes like "Climate Perks" committing to offer paid 'journey days' to staff who travel on holiday by train, coach or boat instead of flying	

Benefits:

- Avoiding unnecessary travel and more expensive (and polluting) first class tickets will help to reduce costs
- Climate perks and sustainable commuting schemes can help attract and retain talent

US Pilot Project

In 2024, IMPALA launched a **pilot project** together with A2IM, supported by Merlin, to build the community of labels reporting their emissions in the USA. With the tool already used by European labels to measure emissions in Europe and the USA, the pilot aimed to develop a trial with US based labels.

A series of webinars, workshops and one-to-one interviews explored key updates required within IMPALA's Carbon Calculator to address context-specific needs. As a result, significant improvements were implemented to improve the usability of the tool in the USA, including US-specific emissions factors for travel and energy and enhanced unit options among other changes made as part of the 2024 software release (Release 3.2.7 to 3.2.8).

An internal findings report, prepared by our partners Julie's Bicycle, set out a series of recommendations following this pilot:

- Continue to communicate the business case for carbon footprinting and climate action in the USA and new markets.
- Support the growing community of labels using the tools in the USA through workshops and peer learning from more advanced labels.
- Continue improving the tools when appropriate for all users, adapting to regional differences where necessary, while keeping alignment to the overall 'umbrella' methodology of the tool.
- Ensure any technical developments to internationalise the Carbon Calculator are combined with a programme of deep engagement to support uptake and climate action.

The project marked the first step towards rolling-out IMPALA's Carbon Calculator in the world's biggest music market. It has also provided a pathway for future calculator adaptations in other key territories.

IMPALA is open to the continuation of the project in the USA or in other territories, depending on resources and interest.

Sector Efforts in 2025

Music Climate Pact (MCP)



The MCP was established in 2021 by the UK's Association of Independent Music (AIM) and the BPI to promote a sustainable recorded music sector. In 2025, the MCP brought together industry experts and partners to drive action across three deep-dive areas: vinyl manufacturing, climate literacy and digital distribution. The vinyl manufacturing workstream culminated in the **MCP and Vinyl Alliance Supplier Programme** which produced three new product carbon footprints for a traditionally pressed vinyl record for North America, Europe and a Global Average. This work has fed directly into the IMPALA Carbon Calculator. Keep your eyes peeled for future announcements on the outcomes of the climate literacy and digital distribution workstreams.

Music Industry Climate Collective (MICC)



Launched by major labels, with contribution from the rest of the sector, MICC is a working group aiming to facilitate more sustainable operations in the recorded music industry. In 2025, the first MICC report was released to establish clear and consistent guidelines around carbon footprinting. The guidance establishes a standardised approach to measuring Scope 3 emissions, alongside a practical tool and supporting materials to enable implementation. Work is underway to ensure the IMPALA Carbon Calculator is fully aligned with the MICC's proposed approach to carbon reporting.

ReDisco



ReDisco is a French vinyl and CD recycling initiative launched in 2023 by FÉLIN (Fédération Nationale des Labels et Distributeurs Indépendants) to tackle overstock. ReDisco provides a structured recycling path for unsold vinyl and CDs by collecting, dismantling and reprocessing discs at bespoke facilities. The separated plastics and paper are turned into new materials for other industries, while black PVC vinyl can be shredded and made into Revinyl as a new product, supporting a circular economy and lowering environmental impacts. In 2025, ReDisco expanded its collections, putting thousands more discs formerly in overstock to use and contributing to its total of over a million discs already processed.

EU Grant Sustainability Activities

In 2025, IMPALA celebrated its 25th anniversary by expanding its sustainability work under the new EU grant. The organisation focused on capacity building, providing practical, localised training and tools for independent music companies across Europe.

Climate Clinics (France, UK, Germany)

- To address the specific needs of different markets, IMPALA rolled out Climate Clinics in three key territories. These online training sessions were designed to increase climate literacy among independent labels and help them get started.

Member Webinars

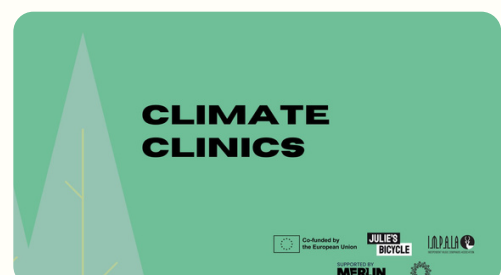
- Complementing the Climate clinics, IMPALA hosted two pan-European webinars to ensure accessibility for all members:
 1. The first membership webinar focused on cost-effective sustainability steps for companies at the beginning of their journey, with a "deep dive" into reducing business travel emissions.
 2. The second membership webinar took a deep dive into vinyl manufacturing and its impact, options for reducing impact in this area and concrete steps to take.

Organisation with a Cause: Music Declares Emergency (Denmark)

- Under the "Organisation with a Cause" scheme, a dedicated strand of our EU-funded programme, we selected Music Declares Emergency (MDE) Denmark as its 2025 beneficiary. The objective of this scheme was to support MDE Denmark's mission of placing climate at the forefront of cultural discourse, mobilising the music sector to demand faster government action and industry transition.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



Murmur – Collaboration & Funding



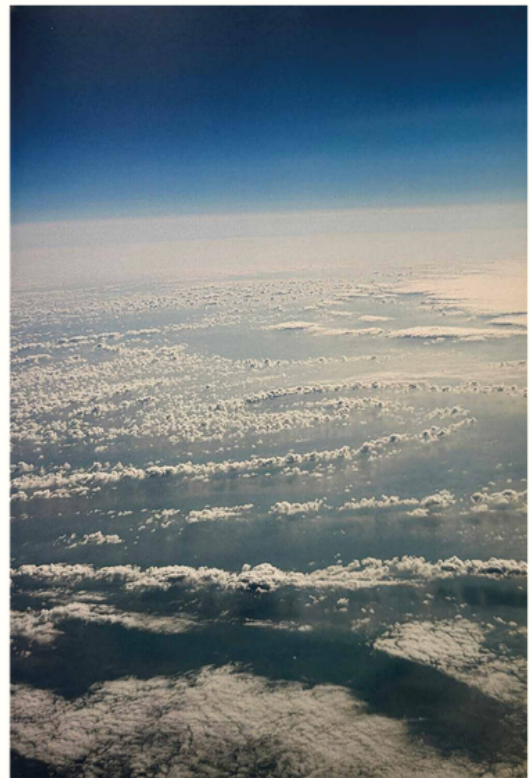
Murmur is a strategic climate fund bridging art, music, and climate science, channeling funding from creative industry partners into environmental projects. Murmur's partners assign a monetary value to carbon emissions they cannot yet remove, while taking a reduction-first approach aligned with science-based commitments to minimise emissions as close to zero as possible, without making claims of compensation.

In November 2025, Murmur released its first report for people working in music, ***The Power of Music: A Call for Climate Action.***

Murmur's work is organised in three pillars, Change the Industry, Change the conversation and Change the world. Within these three pillars, Murmur collaborates with and provides funding to different initiatives connecting arts and climate, including **IMPALA's Carbon Calculator**. This also included funding for Climate Partner (in partnership with the Music Climate Pact and the Vinyl Alliance) to launch a project on Record manufacturing Supply Chain to better understand supply chain opportunities in record manufacturing – closing out knowledge gaps, improving data and agreeing a framework for suppliers to demonstrate long term sustainability performance.

THE POWER OF MUSIC:

A Call for Climate Action



The results of this study have been integrated into the calculator, ensuring the alignment of the calculator with the relevant climate science.

Looking ahead

Sustainability work within our EU Network Grant

The EU has recognised IMPALA's work with a four year grant, commencing in January 2025, with sustainability as a core focus. The grant is supporting the continued running of the IMPALA Carbon Calculator, as well as our international climate webinar series. In 2026, IMPALA and sustainability specialists Julie's Bicycle will continue delivering training with three new climate clinics in Bulgaria, Portugal and Norway.

Quality review

In 2026, the IMPALA Carbon Calculator will undergo a third party assessment to validate the tool against best practices in carbon reporting and highlight any areas that can be improved. The review will look at the underlying methodologies behind the tool, including the emissions factors used and the automatic calculations made. This process will help maximise the value of the Carbon Calculator to IMPALA members and ensure it is meeting the highest standards of carbon footprinting.

Industry collaboration

Increased industry collaboration and standardisation is helping to improve the sustainability of the sector, with initiatives such as the **Music Climate Pact** and the **Music Industry Climate Collective**. IMPALA will continue supporting this collaboration and efforts to standardise within environmental sustainability. We're excited to see where we can achieve the greatest positive impact through joint action and collective approaches. Watch this space!

Member engagement

This year will see a focus on growing the community of labels using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator. A number of initiatives are being explored to engage and support more labels to complete an annual carbon footprint and start benefiting from the many advantages. You can read more about the business benefits of using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator [here](#).

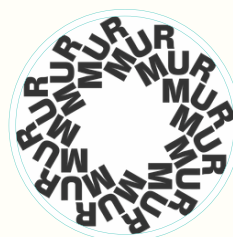
The more data that is entered into the Calculator by IMPALA's members, the more powerful it will become as an instrument to support business decisions and manage environmental impacts. IMPALA members can sign up [here](#).

Thanks go to all the current and former IMPALA member companies and associations across Europe who helped raise the finances needed to get our Calculator project off the ground in 2021 and make it available for free to the whole membership (in alphabetical order):

!K7 Music Group, Altafonte, Anjunabeats, Because Music, Beggars Group, Cherry Red Records, City Slang, Domino Recording Company, Edel, Encoding Management Service – EMS, Epitaph Records, Everlasting Records, FONO, FUGA, HAIL, Hot Action Records, Irascible Music, Las Vegas Records, Lusitanian Music Publishing, Mouthwatering Records, N.E.W.S. Records, Ninja Tune, Partisan Records, [PIAS], Playground Music Scandinavia, PMI, Roton Music, Secretly Group, TAMBOURHINOCEROS, Two Gentlemen, Warp Records, Zebralution.



Our thanks also go to **Merlin** and **Murmur** for supporting the development and functioning of the calculator.



Further Resources

[Business Case for Sustainability](#)

[IMPALA Climate Declaration for Individual Companies](#)

[IMPALA's Climate Ambition](#)

[IMPALA Climate Charter](#)

[IMPALA Climate Investment Guidance](#)

[IMPALA Sustainability Guidance for Record Labels](#)

[IMPALA Digital Standards](#)

[Music Declares Emergency Climate Pack](#)

[Julie's Bicycle Music Top Tips Guide](#)

[Julie's Bicycle Guide to Reducing Emissions of CD Packaging](#)

[Julie's Bicycle Sustainable Procurement Guide](#)

[IMPALA Carbon Calculator](#)

About IMPALA

IMPALA was established in 2000 and now represents over 6000 independent music companies. 99% of Europe's music companies are small, micro and medium businesses and self-releasing artists. Known as the independents, they are world leaders in terms of innovation and discovering new music and artists – they produce more than 80% of all new releases and account for 80% of the sector's jobs. IMPALA's mission is to grow the independent music sector sustainably, return more value to artists, promote diversity and entrepreneurship, improve political access, inspire change, and increase access to finance. IMPALA works on a range of **key issues** for its members, runs various **award schemes** and has a programme aimed at businesses who want to develop a strategic relationship with the European independent sector – **Friends of IMPALA**. Sustainability of the sector is one of our key priorities. In 2022 we launched a key European co-funded project **IMPACTS**, and **#WeMeasureTogether**, a campaign to promote the Calculator take-up.

About Julie's Bicycle

Julie's Bicycle is a pioneering not-for-profit organisation mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate and ecological crisis. Founded by the music industry in 2007 and now working across the arts and culture, Julie's Bicycle has partnered with over 2000 organisations in the UK and internationally. Combining cultural and environmental expertise, Julie's Bicycle focuses on high-impact programmes and policy change to meet the climate crisis head-on.

This report has been prepared by Julie's Bicycle with inputs from IMPALA and the IMPALA Sustainability Taskforce, and all the labels reporting through the carbon calculator.

Authors: Richard Phillips, Grace Redmond, Karla Rogożar, Frank Shortle

Editors: Helen Smith

Design: Frank Shortle

A big thank you goes to all our association members across Europe for providing additional market data. Discover all IMPALA trade associations [here](#).

We also thank our Sustainability Task Force for their continuous support, including Julie's Bicycle and Thema1 for their expertise.

Appendix

What does the IMPALA Carbon Calculator measure?

The IMPALA Carbon Calculator can be used to measure the following impacts across your business:

- Office(s): Energy use, Water, Waste
- Staff commuting
- Business travel
- Manufacturing of key product categories
- Distribution
- Key areas of purchased goods (e.g. IT and studio equipment)

The platform additionally asks for environmental actions 'Beyond Carbon' to support businesses in making greener choices, and helps IMPALA identify priorities across the European independent music sector. What are the measurement boundaries?

The aim of our Tool is to help members measure emissions comprehensively and with a high degree of accuracy. Business activities deemed to be within our 'operational boundary' are included within our carbon calculations and reduction targets. We refer to international best-practice guidelines contained within the GHG Protocol Scope 3 Standard to help us identify all relevant emission sources. Activities included in the tool are listed below. Collectively, these cover an overwhelming majority of total emissions from our sector:

- **Scope 1** – direct emissions from owned sources (e.g. boilers in offices)
- **Scope 2** – indirect emissions from purchased energy (e.g. purchased electricity in offices)
- **Scope 3** – physical product manufacturing; capital goods purchases; business travel; employee commuting; physical product distribution. The Tool does not currently cover some Scope 3 impact areas which record companies do not own or control and which are considered to be the responsibility of third parties who are already taking responsibility for the relevant emissions, such as downstream digital distribution (streaming services), and other retailers, or where there is a lack of readily available data, e.g. consumer use of purchased products.

More information on existing & upcoming legislation

- As mentioned in our **Business case for sustainability**, there is a clear direction of travel regarding environmental legislation, with businesses increasingly needing to meet requirements around carbon reporting and sustainability practices (see e.g. CSRD, SECR and TCFD). While legislation is focused on the largest companies now, small and medium sized businesses throughout the supply chain will have to comply in the coming years.
- By proactively engaging in sustainability and by using the IMPALA Carbon Calculator to complete a carbon footprint and set targets, companies can prepare for forthcoming regulations, future-proofing their operations and positioning themselves as industry leaders.
- For example, in Europe, a set of new rules in place since 2023 aim to make the EU's climate, energy, transport and taxation policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. This includes legislation which will apply to our members, depending on their size.
- **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)** – the CSRD requires larger companies to report in detail on their environmental and social impacts, which will also pressure small and medium businesses to improve their own sustainability practices, such as tracking and reducing their carbon emissions, to remain competitive suppliers.
- **Environmental Labeling and Green Claims Directive** – To avoid 'greenwashing' (making false or misleading environmental claims) and ensure fair and accurate reporting on environmental impacts, small and medium businesses are being held more accountable for any environmental claims made about their business or products.

Why digital emissions are excluded

Standardising the sector's approach on streaming is vital. The IMPALA's Climate analysis group and Sustainability Task Force reviewed the whole chain and reached a key set of conclusions related to the scope of responsibility concerning digital distribution.

Emissions from downstream digital distribution (the distribution of digital recordings through Digital Service Providers [DSPs] and consumption by fans through streaming services or digital download) are excluded from the Greenhouse Gas inventories of labels for the following reasons:

- **Scope of responsibility** – labels do not own or control DSPs which are the responsibility of third parties who are already taking responsibility for the relevant emissions.
- **Influence** – record companies have no direct control over the distribution of digital files once they have distributed to DSPs, or influence over emission reduction programmes.
- **Data** – due to a lack of available data, it's not possible for the recorded sector to estimate with accuracy the size of emissions from digital distribution. The necessary data is controlled by DSPs and their downstream partners. Some DSPs are working towards gathering data from their operations and are establishing emissions calculation methodologies. We refer to this as availability of data is part of the GHG protocol, but as noted above, scope of responsibility and lack of influence mean that DSP emissions (including subscriber emissions) are not counted as record company emissions. (This is the same as for other downstream areas of activity in the music market, such as physical retail.)
- **Use of sold products** – similarly to physical products, digital audio and video requires a secondary device to "use" the product (i.e., listen or watch content). Therefore, emissions associated with digital audio and video usage can be classified as indirect emissions in alignment with the GHG Protocol.

Digital distribution is a vital part of our industry and makes up a significant portion of income for our members. IMPALA is therefore working closely with DSPs to encourage greater transparency and will support towards measuring and reducing the impact of streaming. Following IMPALA's Climate Charter, and as part of the Music Climate Pact, IMPALA call on DSPs to work collaboratively to share data and knowledge on this issue.

Note on data

The metrics estimations shown under the Average Label Footprint Breakdown section of this report are based on data submitted by the organisations currently reporting to the IMPALA Carbon Calculator. Only complete reports covering key impact areas were included in the calculation. The time period of the data used includes reports from either calendar year 2024 or financial year 2024-25.

The data in our report should not be used to undermine physical product, which is a fundamental part of the music market, and many actors in the manufacturing sector are making significant progress in the area of sustainability.

However, until there are scaled up clean energy solutions, it will not be possible for manufacturing partners to achieve effective change promptly.

This report is addressed to national and EU decision makers to ask them to support the whole music sector's transition by investing properly in innovative energy solutions for clean manufacturing at scale.

Call for clean energy solutions at scale and fair access

Until there are scaled up clean energy solutions, it will not be possible for manufacturing partners to achieve effective change promptly. This report is addressed to national and EU decision makers to ask them to support the whole music sector's transition by investing properly in innovative energy solutions for clean manufacturing at scale. Access to clean energy facilities must also be secured as this is a fundamental competition point. If availability of clean manufacturing is limited compared to demand, those who are leading change must not be locked out of achieving their carbon reduction goals because access is bought out by bigger operators.

CONTACT US



[@IMPALAMusic](https://www.impalamusic.org/)



[IMPALA Independent Music Companies Association](#)



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