

The State of Sustainability in the Global Business Travel Sector Summary for Policymakers

Much of the global business travel industry has already made sustainable travel a priority with a focus on reducing emissions and its environmental footprint. But the industry as well as external stakeholders, such as policymakers, recognize more needs to be done. These are just some of the insights from an extensive, landmark research study —“**The State of Sustainability in the Global Business Travel Sector**”— from the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), the world’s largest business travel association, and Grayling, a leading global public affairs and communications consultancy.

The report reveals barriers to achieving more sustainable business travel include higher costs, limited data, and lack of access to transparent information. On the flip side, a change in industry culture, easier tracking of data, and harmonized standards are seen as key enablers. Partnerships will be critical for sustainability transition, as the issues over financial burden-sharing and data availability are best addressed through collaboration.

Key takeaways from the study:

- Almost 9 in 10 industry respondents (89%) collectively say that **sustainability is already a priority** for their company.
- **Regardless of region**, travel buyer and supplier respondents say better protecting the planet is a priority: Asia Pacific (99%), Europe (97%), Latin America (91%), North America (84%).
- Only 14% say that the industry is currently well advanced on sustainability – but improvements are being made as 76% of travel buyers have already incorporated or are planning to **incorporate sustainability objectives** in their travel policies.
- 88% of the industry sector ranks reducing business travel **emissions as the top priority** for the next two to three years.
- Industry respondents say the **most impactful actions** for sustainable business travel programs are prioritizing energy efficient accommodations (81%), suppliers with sustainability certification (78%), and flights with sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) (73%).

MAIN BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS towards a green transition, as ranked by the business travel industry

BARRIERS	RANK			FACILITATORS
Higher costs	82%	1	63%	Culture change within the industry
Lack of data and access to transparent information	63%	2	63%	Better/easier tracking of data
Lack of clarity on environmental regulations	49%	3	60%	Harmonized standards
Lack of interest from some industry stakeholders	48%	4	57%	Scaling up of innovation and technology
Competing priorities within travel departments	44%	5	56%	Sharing of best practice
Lack of financial incentives	42%	6	53%	Accountable and time-bound sustainability targets
Fragmentation of standards	38%	7	46%	Advocating for cost-efficient environmental regulations
Loss of traveler comfort	34%	8	40%	Public incentives
Longer travel times	32%	9	29%	Stricter criteria for green incentives

- A vast majority (96%) of the external survey respondents see prioritizing routes with the **smallest CO2 footprint** as a big opportunity for impact.



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What we need from the decision-makers to make the green transition a reality

Many of the key barriers and facilitators of the green transition need **an enabling regulatory framework to succeed**.

The GBTA study identified a clear need from the global business travel industry to gain better access to sustainability data (63%), while a half (49%) of the industry also feels that there is a lack of clarity on environmental regulations blocking the transition pathway on sustainability. In addition, a majority of the industry (60%) identified harmonized standards as one of the top facilitators of the business travel journey to sustainability.

The need for **more consistent environmental provisions, data transparency, and common sustainability standards** are all tied to the enabling conditions established by public authorities. Ambitious, predictable, and cost-efficient policies are needed to help realize the green transition with a basket of measures from incentivizing the uptake and scaling up of new technologies, such as alternative fuels, to harmonized climate disclosure rules proportionate to the administrative burden.

All new and updated legislation should also ensure that the costs of the transition do not fall unfairly onto the individual traveler or otherwise hinder the connectivity that underpins the global economy.

Furthermore, the survey of external stakeholders – policymakers, trade associations, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations – identified further practical actions for government to take:

- 77% say that governments should **improve rail infrastructure** to enable multimodal travel options.
- 63% call for governments to promote the deployment **charging infrastructure for electric vehicles**.
- 62% want governments to set binding targets to **increase the share of clean energy** sources in the energy mix.
- 61% support binding targets and **funding for energy efficient renovations** to improve the environmental performance of accommodation.
- 49% believe that governments should mandate the use of **sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)** blends in aviation.
- 44% want governments to provide **public subsidies** to incentivize the uptake of sustainable technologies.

Methodology

From January to March 2022, GBTA surveyed 762 global business travel industry professionals from four regions — Europe, North America, Latin America, and Asia-Pacific — for their views on how to best incorporate sustainability into business travel programs.

GBTA also surveyed 100 relevant external stakeholders worldwide including policymakers, think tanks, non-profit organizations, and international organizations to strengthen its understanding on the perceptions of the sector from the outside.

GBTA's "**The State of Sustainability in the Global Business Travel Sector**" full research report can be [downloaded here](#). The report and the GBTA Sustainability Program are supported by the association's Founding Partners in Sustainability. Visit www.gbta.org/sustainability for more information or email sustainability@gbta.org.

About the Global Business Travel Association

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) is the world's largest business travel and meetings trade organization headquartered in the Washington, D.C. area with operations across four continents. GBTA's members manage more than \$345 billion of global business travel and meetings expenditures annually. GBTA delivers world-class education, events, research, advocacy and media to a growing global network of more than 28,000 travel professionals and 125,000 active contacts. To learn how business travel drives lasting business growth, visit www.gbta.org.