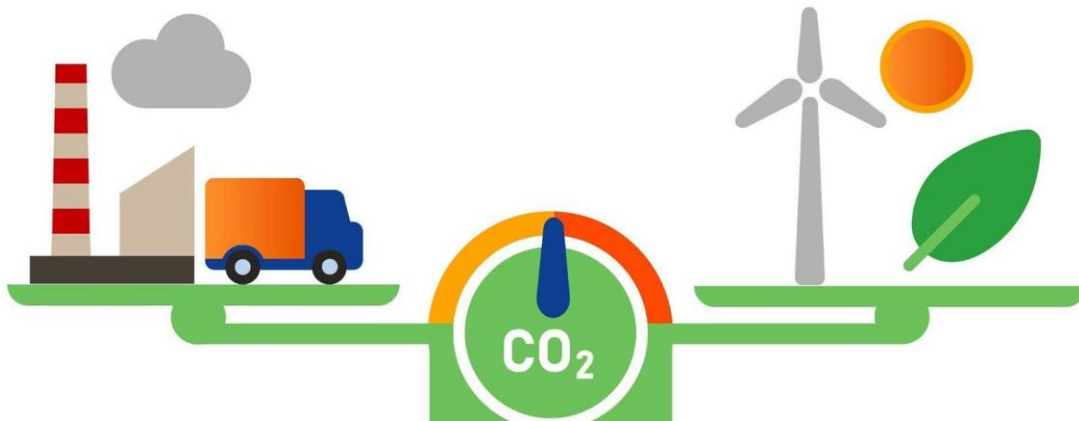


What's The Difference Between Carbon Neutral and Carbon Free?

The [main difference](#) between carbon neutral and carbon free is if there are actually carbon emissions. Carbon neutral is an equilibrium where carbon emissions are equal to carbon reduction, so overall net-zero carbon enters the atmosphere. On the other hand, carbon free means no carbon emissions are being produced in the first place. Let's take a deeper look at both.

What is Carbon Neutral?

[Being carbon neutral](#) means balancing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 'offsetting' or removing an equivalent amount of carbon from the atmosphere. One of the most common methods for this is by buying carbon credits. A carbon credit is a permit that allows the owner to emit one ton of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas emissions. A credit represents another plot of land in the world where one ton of carbon is being removed from the atmosphere. This is often through planting trees or protecting natural ecosystems from development.



Source: [Terrapass](#)

Although it is an essential step in [holistic climate action](#), a commitment to carbon neutrality does not require a commitment to reduce overall GHG emissions. A carbon-neutral business needs only to offset the GHG emissions— even if those emissions are increasing.

What Is the Meaning of Carbon Free?

In contrast to carbon neutral, becoming carbon free means directly reducing emissions to zero. For example, if a country or company is carbon free, all the energy and electricity used is from clean, renewable sources, like wind or solar.



Source: [United Nations](#)

Realistically carbon free is much more challenging to achieve than being carbon neutral. That being said, many countries are making commitments to have carbon free energy systems in the coming decades. In the US, four states (Washington DC, California, New Mexico, and Hawaii) have targets [that require 100% clean or renewable electricity](#) by a specific year, i.e., they have made plans to become carbon free.

Is Going Carbon Neutral Good?

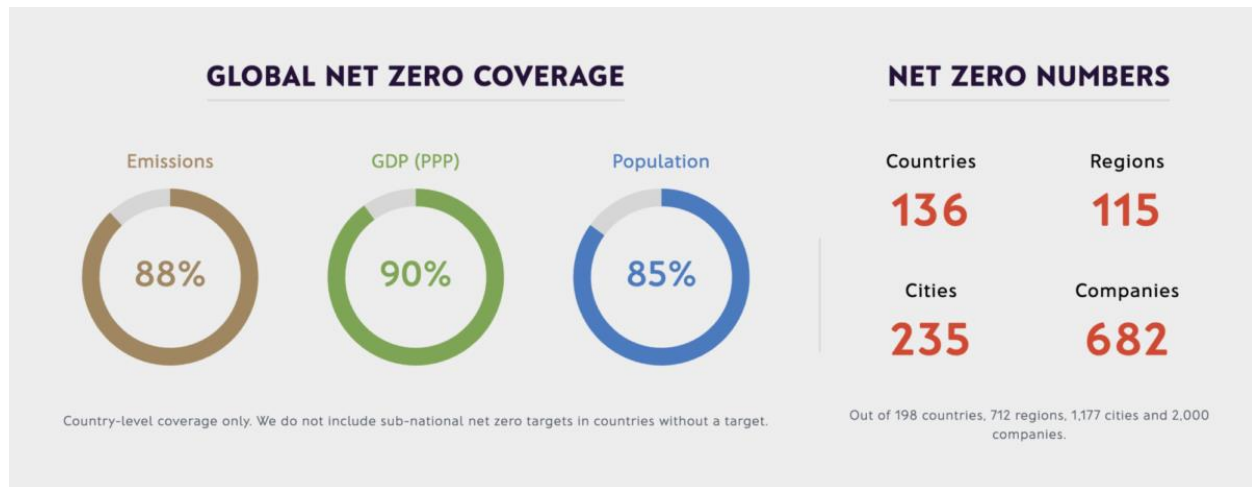
While most of the world is making carbon neutral or net-zero goals, the leading [climate indicators are still worsening](#). Using updated research on climate science, it is imperative to [cut down fossil fuel production](#) by 6% every year between now and 2030. If we do not, the state of the earth will get worse. Based on our current trajectory, the world is on track for a 2% rise in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions annually.

Companies and countries are increasingly looking toward offsets to meet their carbon neutral pledges. This has some estimates predicting offset prices will increase 50 times by 2050. Unfortunately, carbon offsets don't necessarily mean a reduction in emissions. While being carbon neutral is a part of holistic climate action, it is [not the sole solution](#) to fight global climate change. Similar to some US States, governments will need to enforce carbon free or zero carbon regulations to ensure an adequate and necessary reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Difference Between Carbon Neutral and Carbon Free

While the phrases are similar, going carbon neutral or carbon free are very different actions and have different effects on global efforts towards climate action. However, it is vital to acknowledge countries and organizations that achieve carbon neutrality. Their efforts are positive. Carbon-neutral businesses can go the extra mile by [ensuring the credibility](#) of their offsets. They can do this by using third party

assurance and conducting checks and balances to assure their stakeholders that they are going neutral the right way.



Source: [Net Zero Tracker](#)

On the other hand, countries and businesses that take a step forward and go beyond carbon neutrality to become carbon free have a substantially larger impact. They are reducing global emissions and contributing to international climate action efforts to [maintain a 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius](#) rise in global temperatures caused by climate change. Eventually, all businesses and states will have to transition towards a carbon free world if we wish to reduce and eliminate the impacts of climate change.