



Leveraging Quality, Driving Success.

Sustainability
Report 2024

“Our commitment: To support companies worldwide with high-quality, practice-oriented audits — always with the goal of creating economic, social, and environmental added value. This is made possible by our global network of more than 3,000 auditors.”

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Foreword

Dear Readers,

Sustainability is not a static condition but an ongoing process. This is our firm conviction at DQS. In the reporting year 2024, we pursued this ambition with great determination — transparent, responsible, and with a clear commitment to our own standards.



Ingo M. Rübenach

CEO
DQS Holding GmbH



Michael Drechsel

Managing Director,
DQS Holding GmbH

Our Sustainability Report for 2024 builds on the foundation laid by last year's publication — the first report of its kind in our company's history. In a time when the demands placed on sustainability are increasing rapidly, we continue our efforts with unwavering commitment. Our business model, our identity, and our mission remain unchanged: We support organizations in not only demonstrating sustainability but embedding it effectively in their daily operations — through audits and assessments that provide guidance, reveal potential, and create space to further develop processes in the spirit of sustainable improvement.

At the same time, we take responsibility within our own sphere of influence and deliberately use the opportunities available to us as a service provider to reduce our ecological footprint.

With the commissioning of a photovoltaic system at our headquarters, we have taken a visible step in this direction in 2024. The system will cover around one quarter of our electricity demand at the Frankfurt site and will reduce annual CO₂ emissions by more than 34 tons — a significant signal for our internal understanding of sustainability.

This report documents our sustainability performance for the year 2024 — a year characterized by consistent engagement as well as important milestones for the future of our corporate group. We laid the foundation for the realignment of our Sustainability business field — a process that became tangible at the beginning of 2025 with the consolidation of our international expertise in this area. This underlines the importance we continue to attach to sustainability — not only as a social responsibility but as a central pillar of our company's growth strategy.

We thank you for your interest in our report and invite you to join us in taking responsibility — for a more sustainable, fair, and future-oriented economy.

Best regards,

Ingo M. Rübenach

Michael Drechsel



Report Profile

The present report is based on a group-wide survey conducted within the DQS Group to systematically and transparently represent our ecological and social impact. The 2024 report covers all subsidiaries in which DQS Holding GmbH holds a majority interest. These include: DQS GmbH, DQS CFS GmbH, DQS Medizinprodukte GmbH, DQS Inc. (USA), DQS Brasil, DQS Mexico, DQS MSS Argentina s.r.l., DQS (PTY) Ltd. (South Africa), DQS Türkiye, DQS France SAS, DQS UK, DQS Polska Sp. z o.o., DQS Management Systems Solutions (HK) Ltd. (Hong Kong), DQS Korea LLC, DQS India, DQS South Africa MSS, DQS Chile, DQS Taiwan, DQS AP Ltd. (China), and DQS Japan Inc.

All branches of the Group regularly undergo internal on-site audits. Since 2021, DQS has also been independently evaluated by various sustainability platforms, including EcoVadis, IntegrityNext, and Supplier Assurance. With the publication of this report, we reaffirm our goal of providing our business partners and other stakeholders with continuous and transparent insight into our sustainability activities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Universal Standard 2021. External verification of the contents is not planned. Through ongoing monitoring of legal developments and reporting obligations, we ensure that our sustainability management and reporting will continue to comply with all relevant guidelines and requirements in the future.

Who We Are

DQS is among the world's leading providers of audits and certifications for management systems. With our services, we support organizations across the globe in building trust among customers and stakeholders, driving sustainable development, and accessing new markets.

Founded in 1985 by the German Institute for Standardization (DIN) and the German Society for Quality (DGQ), DQS was the first independent certification body in Germany, headquartered in Frankfurt am Main.

In 2008, our U.S. partner Underwriters Laboratories (UL) integrated its global certification activities into the DQS Group — a key milestone in the internationalization of our business and the expansion of our global presence.

Today, DQS operates in more than 60 countries. Our mission: to accompany organizations worldwide with high-quality, practice-oriented audits — always with a focus on creating economic, social, and environmental value. This is made possible by our global network of more than 3,000 auditors who perform over 130,000 audit days each year, bringing expertise across more than 200 internationally recognized standards. Our specialization in management systems enables sustainable solutions that are structured, efficient, and measurable in their impact.

Shaping change — with foresight and responsibility

Our aim is to set benchmarks in the assessment and certification of management systems — as a foundation for trust, quality, and long-term business success. In an increasingly interconnected and digitalized world, DQS facilitates collaboration between business, government, and society through transparent, credible, and internationally recognized certifications.

We see ourselves not merely as an auditing company but as a co-creator of change. We are committed to the further development of a forward-looking audit culture and to driving the transformation of our industry toward greater relevance, sustainability, and effectiveness. Our actions are aligned with the key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, to which we aim to make tangible contributions.

Global presence, local expertise

As a globally positioned group, DQS provides tailored certification solutions that address international requirements while respecting local contexts. Our international presence ensures consistent service quality for our clients worldwide — regardless of location.

In Germany, our structure comprises four entities: DQS GmbH focuses on quality, environment, occupational health and safety, and information security. DQS Medizinprodukte GmbH specializes in regulated healthcare markets. DQS CFS GmbH is responsible for audits and assessments in sustainability and food sectors. DQS Holding GmbH, based in Frankfurt, manages central steering, administration, and coordination for the entire corporate group.

The DQS Group includes companies in Argentina, Brazil, China, Chile, France, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and the United States, along with numerous licensed partners in Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. This broad presence allows us to operate flexibly, close to our markets, and deliver consistent client support worldwide.

Broad service portfolio and recognized sector expertise

With a portfolio of more than 200 standards, DQS covers key management systems in the areas of quality, environment, energy, occupational health and safety, information security, medical devices, food safety, and sustainability. Our certifications address organizations of all sizes and industries — from automotive and mechanical engineering to chemicals, healthcare, IT, retail, and agriculture. In addition to established standards such as ISO 9001 (quality), ISO 14001 (environment), and ISO 45001 (occupational health and safety), our portfolio includes industry-specific standards for the automotive sector (e.g. IATF 16949, TISAX®), for sustainability and food safety (e.g. FSSC 22000, BRCGS), and for healthcare (e.g. MDR (EU) 2017/745, MDSAP).

As a first mover, we identify market trends at an early stage and integrate new frameworks consistently and effectively — most recently ISO 42001, the world's first management system standard for artificial intelligence, and the ENX VCS scheme for evaluating cybersecurity management systems in the automotive industry. The excellent expertise of our auditors, the global recognition of our certificates, and our accreditations from leading bodies such as DAkkS, ANAB, and CNAS ensure top quality and international validity. In addition, DQS acts as a Notified Body under EU regulations — an essential function for the approval and marketing of medical devices in Europe.

Our audit philosophy: impartiality and drivers of positive change

DQS stands for the highest integrity and neutrality in auditing and certification. Our auditors assess independently and objectively, providing a reliable foundation for informed decisions and continuous improvement. We regard audits as opportunities for critical reflection, new perspectives, and genuine development — with the aim of continuously enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of management systems.

Our commitment to objectivity, transparency, and relevance ensures that every certificate is not only formally valid but also substantively sound, creating real value in practice.

Shaping the certification landscape of tomorrow

Innovation and digital transformation are integral parts of our strategic direction. Under the leadership of CEO Ingo M. Rübenach, we focus on data-driven methods to make audits more efficient, precise, and transparent. Process automation, digital platforms, and modern analytical tools are at the heart of our ongoing development. At the same time, we aim to position certification more strongly as a strategic management instrument: audits should help organizations understand complex interrelations, set priorities, and actively shape their progress.

Sustainability and digital leadership as guiding principles

As an enabler of sustainable development, we support organizations worldwide in achieving their ESG objectives — through reliable assessments, transparent certifications, and practical, actionable insights.

Our audits enable organizations to manage sustainability strategically, identify risks, and implement improvements effectively. Especially in an increasingly regulated environment, we provide orientation and reliability, helping organizations turn sustainability into a competitive advantage.

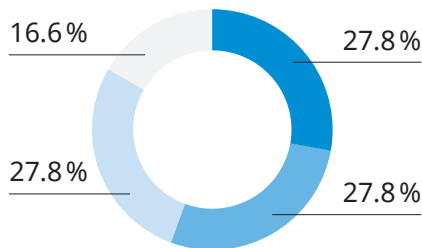
We also lead by example: with the commissioning of a photovoltaic system at our Frankfurt headquarters in December 2024, we have made our energy supply more independent and climate-friendly. The system generated 869.7 kWh in its first month and avoided more than 600 kg of CO₂ emissions; we expect annual reductions of more than 34 tons of CO₂.

In 2024, DQS also launched a transformative process to realign the organizational structure of its Sustainability business area. In parallel, we are driving the digitalization of our processes with the goal of making certification simpler, more accessible, and more future-oriented for our clients worldwide.

With expertise, innovative strength, and international presence, we are shaping the certification landscape of tomorrow — for greater trust, more sustainability, and a better future.

The DQS in facts and figures

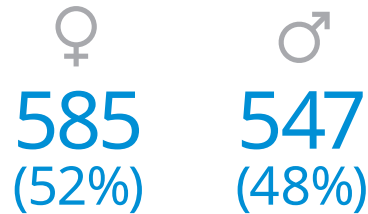
Shareholders



- DGQ
- DIN
- Underwriters Laboratories
- VDMA, Spectaris, Main Federation of the German Construction Industry (Hauptverband der Deutschen Bauindustrie e.V.), ZVEI e.V., DQS Holding GmbH

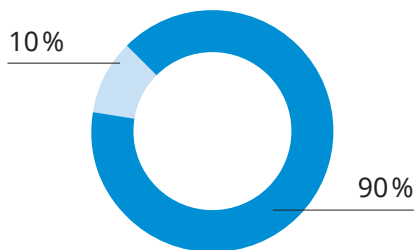
1,132

Employees
(as of December 31, 2024)



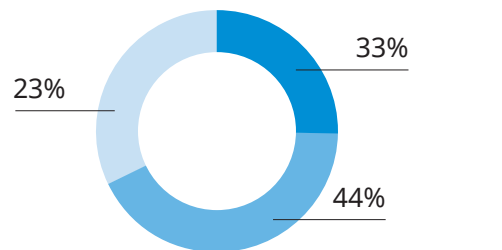
Employment Contracts:

All employees have guaranteed working hours



- permanent
- fixed-term

Age Structure



- under 30
- 30-50
- over 50



Corporate Governance

The DQS Group consists of DQS Holding GmbH and its affiliated subsidiaries. As the strategic corporate headquarters based in Frankfurt am Main, DQS Holding GmbH is responsible for the international business development of the entire corporate group. The management acts in accordance with legal requirements and the company's articles of association and is authorized to represent the company both in and out of court (§ 35 para. 1 GmbHG). Management is carried out on the basis of the instructions and resolutions of the shareholders' meeting.

The highest governing body of DQS Holding GmbH is the shareholders' meeting, in which all shareholders are represented. This body usually meets twice a year and decides on all matters within its statutory and contractual remit.

In addition, a permanent shareholders' committee has been established, consisting of up to four members. This committee advises the management and performs ongoing supervisory functions in day-to-day business. Its responsibilities and areas of authority are formally defined in a dedicated set of rules of procedure.

To ensure the independence and impartiality required by international accreditation bodies for certification activities, DQS has also established an independent impartiality committee. This body, which represents various stakeholder groups, usually meets twice a year and monitors compliance with impartiality principles in DQS decision-making processes.

Leadership structure of the DQS Group

Responsibility for the operational business of the individual subsidiaries lies with the respective local management teams. All subsidiaries report directly to DQS Holding GmbH as the central coordinating entity.

To facilitate group-wide coordination, the "Group Leadership Team" was established. In 2024, this team comprised the management of the Holding, the managing directors of the subsidiaries, and the heads of central corporate functions and the four global Centers of Excellence (CoEs). The globally coordinated areas included Human Resources, Digitalization and IT Infrastructure, Finance and Controlling, and Marketing.

Unified regulations governing collaboration, responsibilities, and decision-making processes within the DQS Group are laid down in the binding internal framework known as the "Rules of Collaboration."

Organizational Profile

Company Name	DQS Holding GmbH
Headquarters	Frankfurt am Main
Commercial Register	Registered under HRB 54018 at the Local Court of Frankfurt am Main
Articles of Association	Original version dated February 1, 1985, amended April 8, 2021
Purpose of the Company	<p>a. The purpose of the company is to promote economic development. DQS sees itself as a service partner to organizations, businesses, and institutions, focusing its activities on value creation through effective management systems and processes for its clients.</p> <p>b. The company manages and coordinates subsidiaries, partnerships, and cooperations in order to provide assessment and certification services both nationally and internationally.</p> <p>c. The company strives for worldwide recognition of its certificates and those of its affiliated entities.</p>
Shareholders	<p>DIN – German Institute for Standardization e.V., Berlin</p> <p>DGQ – German Society for Quality e.V., Frankfurt am Main</p> <p>UL International – Singapore Private Ltd.</p> <p>ZVEI e.V. – German Electrical and Digital Manufacturers’ Association</p> <p>VDMA – German Engineering Federation, Frankfurt am Main</p> <p>Spectaris – German Industry Association for Optics, Photonics, Analytical and Medical Technology e.V., Berlin</p> <p>Main Federation of the German Construction Industry e.V., Berlin</p>
Shareholders’ Committee (as of December 31, 2024)	<p>Mr. Mirko Bautz, Chair, Managing Director, UL International Germany GmbH</p> <p>Mr. Daniel Schmidt, Member of the Board, DIN – German Institute for Standardization e.V.</p> <p>Prof. Dr.-Ing. Robert Schmitt, President, DGQ – German Society for Quality e.V.</p> <p>Dr. Sandra Drechsler, Head of Technical Policy and Standardization, VDMA; Managing Director, DIN Standards Committee Mechanical Engineering (NAM)</p>
Management	<p>Mr. Ingo Mathias Rübenach, Frankfurt am Main</p> <p>Mr. Michael Drechsel, Friedrichsdorf (until December 31, 2024)</p>

Sustainability at DQS

Our Understanding of Sustainability

Sustainability is a core element of our corporate identity. We empower organizations worldwide to integrate environmental and social responsibility permanently into their structures and processes — both as an independent auditing body and as a driver of effective, future-oriented business practices.

Lived responsibility

The comprehensive expertise we demonstrate daily in the field of sustainability through our work with clients is consistently applied to our own organization. The same high standards that we expect from others also apply to ourselves. By addressing challenges openly and transparently, we create the basis for continuous learning, further development, and ongoing improvement of our own sustainability performance.

A better world for all

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations as part of the 2030 Agenda, define key areas of action for a sustainable global society. These goals also form the foundation of DQS's own sustainability strategy. Through our auditing and certification services, we help organizations implement national and international sustainability requirements in a practical way and make accountability along the value chain transparent.



Sustainable Development Goals
were established by the United
Nations for the 2030 Agenda.

We view the transformation toward a more sustainable economy as a shared responsibility of society as a whole. To this end, we work closely with a wide range of partners to exchange knowledge, develop joint approaches, and make tangible contributions to achieving the SDGs. Furthermore, we contribute our technical expertise to various standardization committees of the German Institute for Standardization (DIN) to actively shape the further development of global standards and certification systems.



Material Topics

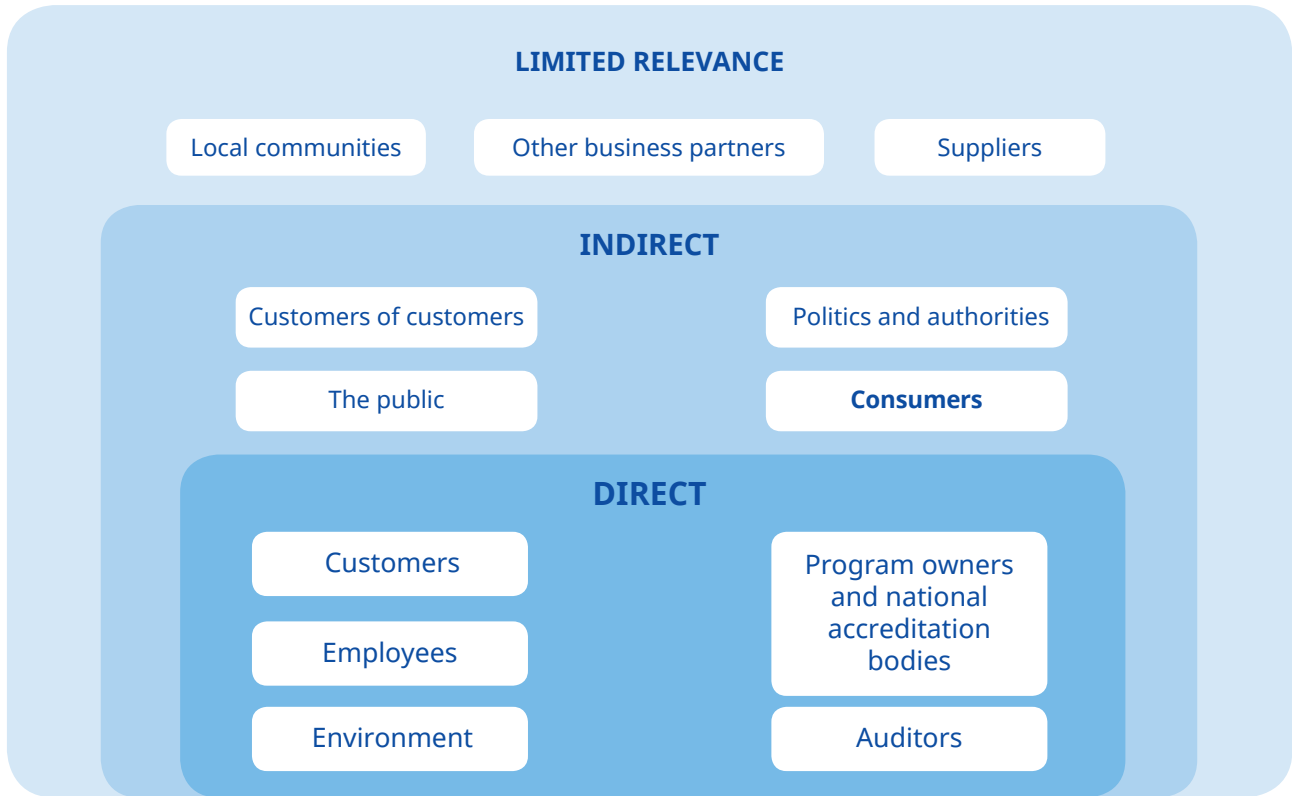
As part of the development of our sustainability strategy, DQS conducted a comprehensive materiality analysis across the entire Group, largely following the requirements of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). The analysis was based on the potential impacts of corporate activities on the environment and society, as defined by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). In close coordination with our stakeholders, these topics were systematically evaluated in terms of their relevance to DQS.

The assessment was carried out using a three-tier scale that considered both the likelihood of occurrence and the potential extent of impact on affected stakeholder groups. All topics rated as highly significant and within our sphere of influence form the basis of this report.

From a total of 30 sustainability topics analyzed, 10 were identified as material for the DQS Group. These were grouped into five key areas of action:

<div style="border: 1px solid #0070C0; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;">Governance</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #0070C0; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic performance • Market presence • Indirect economic impacts • Procurement practices • Anti-corruption • Anti-competitive behavior • Tax </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #C00000; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;">Society</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #C00000; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Occupational health and safety • Training and education • Diversity and equal opportunity • Non-discrimination • Freedom of association and collective bargaining • Child labor • Forced or compulsory labor • Security practices • Rights of indigenous peoples • Local communities • Social assessment of suppliers • Political involvement • Customer health and safety • Marketing and labeling • Customer data protection </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #000000; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <p>These were consolidated under the following five action areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity and impartiality • Labor and human rights • Occupational health and safety • Competence management • Energy and emissions </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid #008000; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 20px;">Environment</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #008000; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials • Energy • Water and wastewater • Biodiversity • Emissions • Waste • Supplier environmental assessment </div>	<p><i>For each of these topic areas, responsible persons have been appointed to ensure their integration into management processes.</i></p>	

Our Stakeholders



Ongoing and structured dialogue with our stakeholders is of central importance to DQS. We therefore rely on a variety of communication formats to systematically capture their concerns, needs, and expectations — and to incorporate these into our materiality analysis.

Our most important stakeholder group is our customers, with whom our account managers are in close daily contact. In addition to individual client support and the coordination of audit schedules, this dialogue also includes annual planning discussions and invitations to customer events. DQS also regularly provides white papers and expert articles to share insights on current developments and relevant industry topics.

Around 80% of our audits are conducted by external auditors who work with DQS on a freelance basis. These professionals are closely supported by a dedicated internal department. Alongside individual coaching, structured feedback meetings and joint evaluations are held annually. Additional communication channels such as newsletters provide further opportunities for information exchange and engagement.

For our employees, we have established a range of feedback and participation mechanisms, including annual performance reviews, internal surveys, and a dedicated whistleblower channel that enables confidential and anonymous reporting. Employee representation is ensured, among others, through the works council of DQS GmbH. Compensation is based on local conditions and designed to ensure transparency and fairness across all roles.

Sustainability Strategy

Our contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 is a key element of our sustainability strategy. The scope of our impact particularly relates to the following goals:

- ✓ Goal 5: Gender equality
- ✓ Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation
- ✓ Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy
- ✓ Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth
- ✓ Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production
- ✓ Goal 13: Climate action

The sustainability strategy is centrally managed by DQS Holding and implemented across the entire Group. Since 2019, a dedicated sustainability team has coordinated these efforts in close collaboration with all international offices.



Direct impact through the internal sustainability management system

DQS's sustainability management is based on a three-pillar framework designed to integrate ecological and social responsibility consistently into our internal corporate governance.

Compliance and commitment

To fulfill our due diligence obligations and to express our commitment to the SDGs, DQS has established a comprehensive Code of Conduct aligned with the ILO Core Labor Standards, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the UN Human Rights Principles, and international climate goals. All suppliers are required to acknowledge and sign this Code of Conduct. In addition, DQS is regularly evaluated by independent sustainability rating agencies such as EcoVadis, Supplier Assurance, and IntegrityNext.

Accountability and disclosure

To ensure transparency in our sustainability engagement and to communicate responsibly with all stakeholders, DQS will publish regular sustainability reports. These reports document our progress and provide verifiable key figures — particularly regarding emissions. This disclosure builds trust and fosters dialogue with our stakeholders.

Improving our footprint

To continuously enhance our environmental and social performance, DQS has implemented binding internal guidelines covering climate, environment, human rights, labor standards, and ethical business conduct. The objective is to achieve concrete progress in all business areas and to make a measurable contribution to sustainable development.



Indirect impact through our business partners

Our impact as an enabler of sustainability

Our core business is to certify and verify organizations against applicable norms and standards. Through these services, we empower companies to improve their sustainability performance, fulfill due diligence obligations, and assume comprehensive social and environmental respon-

sibility. By providing independent audits and certifications, DQS enables organizations to create transparency along global value chains and to promote responsible practices beyond their own operations. Our goal is to act as a transformation partner — helping to shape a better future for all.

Our Sustainability Goals



Equal share of women and men in the total workforce

KPI

Percentage of women and men

Status 2024

52% women
48% men



Reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% (compared with 2023)

KPI

CO₂e emissions (Scopes 1–3)

Status 2024

Average 225.39 kg CO₂e per audit according to the 2024 emissions accounting



100% of staff trained on the Code of Conduct

KPI

Participation rate

Status 2024

Training delivered on the updated Code of Conduct



No violations of the Code of Conduct

KPI

Number of violations

Status 2024

No significant incidents in 2024



No cases of discrimination

KPI

Number of reported cases

Status 2024

No significant incidents in 2024



Zero Lost Time Incidents (LTI)

KPI

LTIR

Status 2024

LTIR 0.08; no significant incidents in 2024



Annual employee survey

KPI

Frequency

Status 2024

100% conducted

For 2030 we have set seven overarching goals to make DQS more sustainable. Additional corporate goals are shown in the materiality analysis.

Our Core Business: Sustainable Impact

At the heart of the DQS Group's activities are auditing and certification — always grounded in collaboration on equal footing. Our expertise spans numerous fields, including quality management, environmental and energy management, occupational health and safety, information security, medical devices, food standards, and sustainability. Our certifications aim to make a meaningful contribution to promoting a global understanding of quality and sustainability, strengthening cooperation among business, public authorities, and civil society.

We do not regard our work as a purely technical service but as an active contribution to achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — and thus to shaping a responsible and future-oriented society.

Gender Equality



Gender equality is a central element of a fair and inclusive society. In many international social standards audited by DQS worldwide, this topic forms an integral part of the assessment criteria. Promoting gender equality is not merely a compliance issue — it is a key lever for social participation, diversity, and sustainable corporate governance.

Clean Water and Sanitation



Access to clean water and adequate sanitation is essential for health and quality of life — and a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development. This topic is addressed in numerous international management systems such as ISO 45001 (occupational health and safety) and ISO 14001 (environmental management), both firmly anchored in our audit portfolio.

In addition, DQS supports organizations through ISO 46001, which provides a structured approach for efficient water use and conservation. This internationally recognized standard helps organizations manage water resources effectively, contributing directly to the achievement of SDG 6.

Affordable and Clean Energy

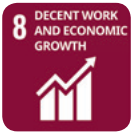


Energy efficiency and sustainable energy supply play a crucial role in global climate protection. Organizations that implement an energy management system according to ISO 50001 and have it certified by DQS make measurable progress in reducing their energy consumption and continuously improving energy performance.

This commitment directly contributes to SDG 7.3, which calls for a doubling of the global rate of energy efficiency improvement. At the same time, a well-implemented ISO 50001 system contributes significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and thus also supports SDG 13 — climate action.

The recent amendments to the ISO High-Level Structure integrate climate change as a mandatory contextual factor across all management systems. As a result, the substitution of fossil energy sources with renewables has become even more relevant. An ISO 50001 certification therefore provides not only economic benefits but also clear strategic orientation for customers and business partners on the path toward responsible energy policies and sustainable supply chains.

Decent Work and Economic Growth



Ensuring decent working conditions is a fundamental element of corporate responsibility. Companies are obliged to respect and protect core labor and human rights throughout their value chains. A key instrument for promoting occupational health and safety is the international standard ISO 45001, which DQS certifies on a regular basis.

This standard covers essential aspects of SDG 8.8 — particularly the protection of workers' rights and the creation of safe and health-promoting workplaces. ISO 45001 also plays a vital role in meeting regulatory and legal requirements in occupational health and safety.

In addition to management system certifications, DQS conducts audits of social management standards such as IQNet SR 10 and FSSC 24000. These help organizations go beyond compliance to actively strengthen employee rights and social standards within their operations.

Furthermore, DQS verifies numerous other internationally recognized social and sustainability standards such as SEDEX SMETA, Together for Sustainability (TfS), RSCI, and RVA. These schemes provide credible proof of compliance with human rights and labor norms across complex supply chains — a topic of growing importance in light of due diligence legislation.

Responsible Consumption and Production



Consumers increasingly expect transparency and reliability when it comes to sustainable products and services. DQS meets this expectation through independent certification that provides a sound basis for informed purchasing decisions.

Our audits and certifications enable companies to provide credible evidence of sustainability — whether in product design, supply chains, or production processes. In doing so, we help ensure that sustainable solutions gain market traction while meeting both regulatory and societal expectations.

To support organizations in their journey toward responsible production, DQS offers a wide range of sector-specific certifications, including ISCC PLUS (sustainable biomass and circular economy), ASI (responsible aluminum production), GLOBALG.A.P. (good agricultural practice), and Responsible Steel (sustainable steel production). These standards strengthen corporate credibility and actively promote sustainable consumption and production patterns in line with SDG 12.

Climate Action



DQS provides a broad range of environmental and climate-related services designed to guide companies toward improved environmental performance. Verified results open up market opportunities for sustainable products and offer customers the assurance they expect.

To support clients on their journey toward sustainable production, DQS offers a wide array of industry-related certifications — such as ISCC PLUS, ASI, GLOBALG.A.P., and Responsible Steel. These programs make a concrete contribution to improving environmental performance and actively advance the realization of SDG 13 — climate action.



Sustainability Heroes – The Conference for Inspiration on Sustainability and Transformation

To live up to our ambition of contributing to a sustainable economy beyond our core business, DQS offers the Sustainability Heroes Conference — a dedicated platform for dialogue and inspiration. In line with our holistic strategy, the conference provides practical insights into sustainable action and fosters discussion on current developments and regulatory frameworks.

A conference with tradition and new perspectives

Originally launched in 2014 as the DQS Sustainability Day, the event began as an in-person conference in Frankfurt am Main, attracting numerous decision-makers, sustainability experts, and professionals in environmental and energy management. Since 2020, the conference has been held entirely online to allow broader participation while improving its CO₂ balance. Jointly organized by DQS and DGQ, the event has since become a cornerstone of the sustainability landscape in the DACH region. Expansion into additional markets where DQS operates is already being planned.

Highlights and inspiring contributions: A look back

Over the years, Sustainability Heroes has featured forward-thinking keynote speeches, panel discussions, and interactive sessions with renowned experts and pioneers. A recurring highlight is the debate on how sustainability regulations can be implemented with measurable impact. For instance, Siemens AG presented in 2017 its approach to measuring corporate contributions to the SDGs. In 2018, the Voith Group showcased its Green Controlling strategy, which achieved significant savings in water and energy consumption during production. Another memorable contribution came from Symrise AG in 2021, providing insights into its comprehensive biodiversity strategy built on close cooperation with local communities and sustainable supply chains.

The Sustainability Heroes Awards: Incentives for change

Since 2015, DQS has presented the annual **Sustainability Heroes Awards**, recognizing organizations for outstanding sustainability projects. Initially launched as the German Awards for Excellence, these awards motivate companies to showcase their sustainability initiatives to a wider audience. Many renowned companies have actively submitted their projects and received awards — among them Deutsche Telekom, honored for its extensive measures to reduce CO₂ emissions along the value chain, and Epson Germany, awarded for its innovative PaperLab technology, which enables closed-loop paper recycling and significant water savings.

A strong network and exchange for sustainable transformation

Sustainability Heroes has developed into a vibrant platform that brings together hundreds of participants each year — including sustainability managers, environmental and energy experts, and compliance professionals. The conference fosters an atmosphere of exchange where networking plays a central role alongside best practices and presentations. Together with our partner DGQ and other industry leaders, we aim to use this event to promote sustainable practices and inspire companies to drive positive change.

The next Sustainability Heroes Conference will take place from November 25 to 27, 2025. Further information is available at

www.sustainability-heroes.com

Governance

Compliance with applicable national laws and internationally binding regulations is a fundamental pillar of our sustainability strategy. DQS is committed to conducting its business according to the highest ethical standards — both internally and in interactions with external stakeholders. These requirements are anchored in a series of binding internal policies.

At the core stands our Ethics Policy, which defines our fundamental principles and expectations for interactions with employees, business partners, and third parties. Among other things, it includes clear guidelines for preventing corruption and maintaining information security. Supplementary policies address occupational health and safety, human rights, and environmental protection.

Our Code of Conduct also extends to our suppliers, requiring them to observe the principles of corporate due diligence. To ensure compliance with legal requirements within the company, they are made available through the internal intranet, handed out to new employees upon hiring, and communicated through regular training sessions. All employees and auditors are obliged, in accordance with the Ethics Policy, to report violations or suspected violations of rules to their supervisors or to management. A whistleblower channel explicitly protects informants from reprisals. Non-compliance with the Ethics Policy may have employment, disciplinary, or — in severe cases — legal consequences.

Integrity and Impartiality

As an independent certification body, integrity, impartiality, and credibility are the guiding principles of our work. They form the foundation for trust in our services and for the recognition of our certificates worldwide. To ensure this trust on a lasting basis, DQS regularly undergoes both internal and external reviews. Subsidiaries of the Group are subject to stringent internal control mechanisms: while larger entities are audited annually, smaller offices are reviewed at least every three years. This system ensures that our processes remain transparent, compliant, and consistently aligned with the highest quality standards.

Anti-corruption

The integrity of DQS is not only essential for our own economic stability, but also for the trust that customers, partners, and consumers place in our audits and certifications. For this reason, DQS devotes particular attention to preventing corruption — both organizationally and individually. As part of regular risk assessments, DQS specifically analyzes potential corruption risks. These assessments are supplemented by structured Anti-Bribery Risk Assessments and additional risk

analyses. Already during the hiring process, DQS places special emphasis on integrity: managers are screened, and all executives are required to confirm their impartiality and independence. Our Ethics Policy contains a dedicated chapter on anti-corruption. It clearly stipulates that DQS strictly prohibits any form of bribery and the acceptance of advantages. All employees and auditors are obliged to observe the anti-corruption laws applicable in the countries in which they operate.

In addition to the provisions of the Ethics Policy, all employees and auditors must comply with the anti-bribery and anti-corruption laws of their respective countries. These rules cover gifts, sales and promotional activities, government-related work, and the use of company assets. The complaint management process is also described in the policy. Various channels are available for submitting reports:

- ✓ Online-System
- ✓ Mailbox
- ✓ Postal mail
- ✓ Telephone hotline
- ✓ Callback system
- ✓ Personal meetings

The confidentiality of whistleblowers is guaranteed in all cases at DQS. Every report received is carefully reviewed, documented, and — where appropriate — followed by corrective action. The anti-corruption provisions of the Ethics Policy are introduced to all employees upon joining the company and reinforced through regular training sessions.

Our business partners and suppliers are also informed about applicable anti-corruption regulations. Since 2023, the revised version of the Code of Conduct and the Ethics Policy has formed a mandatory part of our collaboration — their acknowledgment and compliance confirmed through signature.

During the reporting period, no significant corruption-related risks or incidents were identified. In line with DQS's sustainability goal of ensuring that all employees are trained on compliance-relevant topics by 2030, the focus remains on expanding and strengthening our internal training offerings.

Anti-competitive Behavior

Anti-competitive behavior undermines confidence in fair markets and has a negative impact on sustainable development — the kind of development DQS actively seeks to promote. DQS expressly commits itself to the principles of free and fair competition. Any form of cartel formation, price-fixing, or monopolistic conduct is strictly rejected.

We are committed to strict compliance with antitrust laws and fair-competition regulations in all countries where we operate. Throughout the reporting period, there were no legal proceedings against DQS concerning anti-competitive behavior. Our clear position on this topic is also enshrined in the Ethics Policy, which obliges all employees and business partners to observe these principles.

Our Principles

DQS is fully committed to lawful, transparent, and fair market behavior. Our business relationships with customers, suppliers, and partners are based on objectivity, integrity, and fairness.

- ✓ We reject any agreements — whether direct or through third parties — that involve price fixing, market sharing among customers, regions, or services.
- ✓ We coordinate no strategies with competitors regarding pricing, costs, product ranges, market entry, or marketing activities.
- ✓ We strictly avoid business practices that are dishonest or would be deemed anti-competitive.
- ✓ We refrain from any actions that might give the impression of attempting to exclude or disadvantage competitors.

These principles are binding for all employees and organizational units within the DQS Group and form an integral part of our ethics and compliance culture.

Society

Labor and Human Rights

DQS supports companies around the globe in achieving the highest standards in labor and human rights. Equally important to us is living up to these principles within our own organization and acting as a positive example. As an international company operating under a variety of national labor laws and standards, we consider it a central duty as an employer to assume responsibility toward our employees.

Employment

As an employer, DQS takes responsibility for creating jobs with fair pay and high-quality working conditions. The Group-wide Labor and Human Rights Policy obliges all locations to comply with the applicable statutory minimum wages or industry-specific standards. Unlawful wage deductions are explicitly prohibited.

In Germany, remuneration is based on a function-related pay matrix, which is defined by a corresponding works agreement. Salaries are consistently well above the statutory minimum wage. For new hires, DQS attaches great importance to local recruitment — both for employees and managers — to strengthen regional expertise.

The policy also includes binding provisions on working hours and conditions. These include compliance with statutory holidays, adherence to maximum working hours under national law, and consideration of common industry standards. To enable better work-life balance, DQS promotes flexible work arrangements. These include options for mobile work, part-time models, and flexible hours — each regulated through local works agreements.

Depending on location, employees also have access to additional benefits, such as subsidized occupational pension schemes. As a rule, all baseline benefits offered to full-time employees also apply to part-time and fixed-term staff. To continuously improve our work culture, DQS conducts regular employee surveys across all locations. The insights gained are used to implement targeted measures aimed at enhancing satisfaction, engagement, and development.

In 2024, DQS recorded 179 new hires and 136 departures. This corresponds to a global hiring rate of 15.8% compared with a turnover rate of 12.0%. Notably, the share of new hires was higher among women, while the turnover rate for women was lower than for men.



new employees
at the DQS Group in 2024

Total number and rate of new employees

	Global	female	male
Total	179	80	99
Rate	15.8 %	45 %	55 %

Total number and rate of employee

	Global	female	male
Total	136	49	87
Rate	12 %	36 %	64 %

The parental leave policy is based on the respective legal requirements of each country and site. Group-wide, a total of 716 employees are entitled to parental leave. There are no exclusions based on gender. Differences result solely from the distribution of the total workforce by gender.

During the reporting period, parental leave was taken predominantly by women: 22 women and 7 men used this option. Seventeen employees returned to work after parental leave, corresponding to a return rate of 77%. All returnees remained with the company twelve months after their return, resulting in a retention rate of 100%.

Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Non-Discrimination

DQS views the promotion of diversity not only as a social responsibility but also as a strategic success factor. Our clear commitment to equal opportunity, inclusion, and non-discrimination is firmly anchored in the Labor and Human Rights Policy. We commit to treating all employees and applicants objectively and fairly, regardless of personal characteristics.

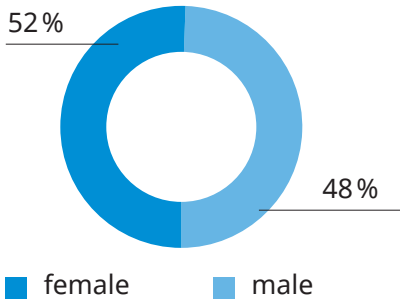
We promote diversity through initiatives such as better work-life balance, inclusion of people with disabilities, and an inclusive work environment. This approach shapes our corporate culture and is actively practiced.

DQS rejects all forms of discrimination — throughout all stages of employment, from recruitment and pay to training, promotion, contract termination, or retirement. Discrimination is defined as any unjustified disadvantage based on gender, age, religion, origin, disability, sexual orientation, social or family background, political belief, trade union membership, or other personal traits. This list is intentionally open-ended. A whistleblowing system accessible via the DQS website is available to report discrimination. All reports are reviewed and, if necessary, addressed by the central Compliance Officer. In 2024, no cases of discrimination were reported.

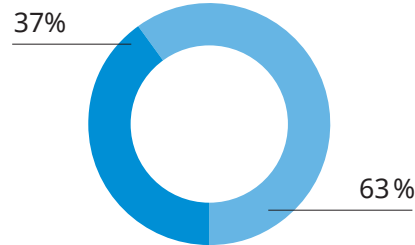
As part of our strategic sustainability goals, we are committed to maintaining a discrimination-free workplace in the future as well.

Percentage of employees in the DQS Group by category and gender

Employees



First Line Management



The share of female employees increased slightly to 52%, compared with 48% male employees. This indicates a balanced gender ratio within the DQS Group overall. In first-line management, the share of male managers is somewhat higher, at 63% compared to 37% women. Other diversity dimensions — such as age structure, control body composition, or affiliation with other minority groups — will be available Group-wide starting in 2025 through dedicated software.

Average pay across all companies shows a gender pay gap of about 14%. To address this, DQS uses a transparent pay matrix in which remuneration depends solely on job function and responsibility, independent of gender.

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The right to freedom of association and collective bargaining is an essential part of fair and decent working conditions. DQS fully recognizes this right and has embedded it both in its Labor and Human Rights Policy and in the Code of Conduct. All employees have the unrestricted right to freely form and join unions, or to collectively negotiate with the company — in a lawful and peaceful manner. These rights apply to all DQS locations worldwide.

If employees suspect that these rights are being restricted, they can contact DQS at any time via established grievance mechanisms. No violations of the right to freedom of association or collective bargaining were identified during the reporting period.

Occupational Health and Safety

Our employees form the backbone of our business activities. As a responsible employer, DQS places the highest importance on the well-being and safety of its staff. Preventing work-related illnesses and accidents is therefore a top priority. To fulfill this responsibility, all measures relating to occupational health and safety are comprehensively and bindingly defined in a dedicated guideline.

This guideline covers the following topics:

- ✓ Compliance with legal regulations
- ✓ Instructions on workplace conditions and environment
- ✓ Health promotion
- ✓ Incident and disruption management
- ✓ Emergency preparedness
- ✓ Fire protection
- ✓ Personal protective equipment

Employees are expressly encouraged to report violations of the occupational health and safety guideline. It is ensured that such reports can also be submitted anonymously and confidentially.

The protection of health and safety in the workplace is a central concern of DQS. Responsibility for implementing the relevant measures lies with management and leadership, with national legal requirements at the respective locations serving as the minimum standard.

A key instrument for risk prevention is the hazard assessment, which is implemented for each site in accordance with national regulations. To sustainably eliminate potential hazards, various methods are used, including the established Fine-Kinney analyses and the RCAT™ method.

Our employees are not only recipients of these measures but are actively involved — for example, through feedback formats, occupational safety committees, and — in Germany — through the ASA committee. This includes representatives of the works council, management, occupational safety specialists, and the company physician.

Health services differ from location to location and are adapted to the needs of a service company with primarily office-based workplaces. Depending on the site, these include, among other things:

- ✓ Influenza and COVID-19 vaccination offers
- ✓ Private supplementary insurance
- ✓ Company bicycle schemes
- ✓ Sports and exercise programs to promote health

Training on occupational health and safety is already a fixed component of onboarding for new employees. In addition, site-specific, topic-focused training sessions are conducted, for example:

- ✓ Heat stroke and risks from UV radiation
- ✓ First-aid courses
- ✓ Mosquito-prevention courses
- ✓ Fire drills and fire alarm exercises

As part of occupational health and safety management, absences due to work-related illnesses or accidents are regularly recorded and evaluated. For the reporting year, DQS can report that neither days lost nor serious health incidents or fatalities occurred.

Binding safety requirements also apply to external auditors working on behalf of DQS. They are subject both to the respective national legal provisions and to sector-specific and company-specific regulations. A briefing by the audited organizations is mandatory, as is the provision and use of prescribed personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure a safe working environment.

Competence Management

Expert knowledge and professional competence are central pillars of our success — both in ensuring excellent service for our customers and in supporting the individual development opportunities of our employees. To meet this ambition, internal regulations on training, professional development, and career pathways are firmly anchored in the DQS Labor and Human Rights Policy.

Our auditors play a particularly important role: they are not only highly qualified experts in their fields, but also key representatives of DQS in direct customer interactions. To ensure the maintenance and enhancement of their expertise, DQS offers a comprehensive training and development program consisting of regular training sessions, advanced qualification modules, and structured experience exchanges. These measures ensure that auditors stay current with standards, methods, and market developments.

Training and Professional Development

The training and development programs for DQS employees are primarily based on their function and area of responsibility. Accordingly, both the content and the duration of the programs vary. On average, employees participated in 10 to 14 days of training during the reporting year — equivalent to about 80 to 112 hours of continuing education.

DQS awards training opportunities according to a role-based and needs-oriented approach, independent of gender or other personal characteristics. Qualification measures are exclusively aligned with professional requirements and individual development needs.

Examples of training programs conducted during the reporting period include:

- ✓ Mandatory compliance trainings
- ✓ On-the-job training
- ✓ Intensive onboarding support during the probationary period
- ✓ Special qualifications for auditors
- ✓ Sales and communication training
- ✓ English courses
- ✓ Digital training sessions
- ✓ Financial support for external continuing education

As supportive measures to maintain employability and assist in career transitions — such as entering retirement or moving to new professional roles — DQS provided various programs during the reporting period, including:

- ✓ Retirement planning
- ✓ Reintegration management
- ✓ Support in adapting to remote work
- ✓ A “World Café” as a platform for adapting to organizational changes
- ✓ Active support for internal change processes and preparation for new responsibilities
- ✓ Opportunities for continued employment after reaching retirement age

All managers within DQS are required to conduct regular annual reviews with their employees. These meetings serve to systematically evaluate individual performance, discuss feedback, and jointly plan professional development goals. Compliance with this requirement is monitored through internal audits.

During the reporting period, over 80% of employees took part in annual review meetings — a key element of DQS's personnel development and feedback culture.



Environment

Energy and Emissions

Protecting our natural life-support systems is a shared responsibility of governments, society, and business. DQS takes this responsibility very seriously and is actively committed to contributing to the achievement of global climate goals while minimizing the negative ecological impacts of its business activities. For this reason, the topics of energy and emissions are firmly anchored in the company-wide sustainability strategy.

To ensure environmentally responsible business practices, a dedicated environmental guideline was developed. In it, DQS commits, among other things, to the sustainable use of natural resources — particularly energy, air, and water — as well as to the reduction of climate-damaging emissions.

Particularly relevant are the areas of travel by our auditors, electricity supply, and operational energy efficiency, as these have been identified as the key influencing factors in our environmen-

tal balance. Concrete instructions for employees on waste prevention are also part of the guideline.

In addition, the environmental guideline defines the company-wide goal of climate neutrality and specifies the responsibilities of management for implementing and developing appropriate measures. Through the Code of Conduct, suppliers are also obliged to adhere to climate- and environmentally friendly business practices.

Energy

Energy consumption during DQS's business activities focuses mainly on electricity usage in office buildings and on fuel consumption resulting from travel to on-site audits. As a service company, overall environmental impacts are low. In the reporting year, total electricity consumption within the DQS Group amounted to 898,686 kWh.

Because audits must, in accordance with applicable requirements, predominantly take place on-site, a certain level of travel by our auditors is unavoidable. Consequently, savings potential in mobility is limited. Nonetheless, since 2019, concrete measures to reduce emissions have been identified and implemented based on our emissions assessment.

For example, the German companies of DQS have entered an additional agreement with a local energy supplier under which only renewable electricity is purchased. Furthermore, in 2024, a photovoltaic system with around 174 modules was installed at our Frankfurt headquarters on an area of about 350 square meters and was commissioned at the end of the year. For the first full year of operation, electricity generation of around 65,000 kWh is forecast, covering about 26% of local energy demand. Based on this, we expect annual savings of more than 34 tons of CO₂ emissions — a clear increase in our degree of energy autonomy.

Additional savings were achieved through the widespread use of an intelligent LED lighting system and through the gradual integration of electric vehicles into the vehicle fleet. The expanded implementation of the "Mobile Working" policy has contributed to a reduction in commuting and the associated energy consumption.

An additional positive effect results from the ongoing digitalization of internal processes. This has not only led to higher efficiency but also to a noticeable reduction in the consumption of paper, packaging materials, and plastics. DQS consistently pursues the goal of an almost entirely paperless and mail-free office environment.

Emissions

The results of CO₂ accounting by our largest subsidiary, which have been available since 2019, form the basis for preparing the Group's greenhouse gas balances for 2023 and 2024. In accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG Protocol), emissions were comprehensively recorded across all three scopes. Only those subcategories that represent significant emission sources in the context of our core business were included.

To derive concrete reduction targets, emission sources were identified that are both significantly influenceable and emission-intensive — that is, each accounting for at least 5% of total emissions. The calculations were based on a combination of primary and secondary data, as well as substantiated assumptions and modeling.

The majority of emissions — more than 60% — result from the travel activities of our auditors, which, given our service profile and the necessity of physical on-site audits, is unsurprising. Most of these audits are conducted using non-company means of transport, and thus the related emissions are assigned to Scope 3. For the calculations, invoice data from our auditors were used, containing information on the modes of transport, travel routes, car rentals, taxi use, and hotel stays.

Based on the audits in 2024, an average emission value (market-based) of 225.39 kg CO₂e per audit and 81.47 kg CO₂e per audit day was determined across all three scopes.

The emission calculations were carried out with reference to the 6th Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The underlying Global Warming Potentials

(GWP) also stem from this source. For emission factors, the specifications of the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA) were used.

The calculations include all greenhouse gases listed by the IPCC — including the six gases regulated under the Kyoto Protocol.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions of the DQS Group in the Reporting Year 2024

Carbon Emissions in 2024	Gross Volume in t CO ₂ e	% of Total Emissions	Gross Volume in t CO ₂ e, location-based)	% of Total Emissions
	Scope 2 market based		Scope 2 location based	
Scope 1 (Direct emissions)	478.13	5 %	478.13	5 %
1.1 Stationary installations	124.74	1%	124.74	1%
1.2 Mobile installations	332.0	4%	332.0	4%
1.3 Refrigeration systems	21.39	0%	21.39	0%
Scope 2 (Indirect emissions)	367.83	4%	452.5	5%
2.1 Electricity	367.83	4%	452.5	5%
Scope 3 (Other Indirect Emissions)	7,999.35	90%	7,999.35	90%
3.6 Business travel	7,136.39	81%	7,136.39	81%
3.7 Employee commuting	862.35	10%	862,35	10%
Total	8,845.31	100%	8.929,93	100%
Per audit	225.39 kgCO₂e (market-based)		227.55 kgCO₂e (location-based)	
Per audit day	81.47 kgCO₂e (market-based)		82.25 kgCO₂e (location-based)	

In our sustainability strategy, we have committed to achieving Net Zero in the long term across all three scopes. As a medium-term goal, we aim to reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% by 2030 compared with the reference year 2023. To reach this goal,

a reduction in emissions of around 5% per year is required. Additionally, the average 2023 baseline per audit and per audit day serves as the future reduction benchmark.

GRI-Index

Statement of Application

DQS Holding GmbH has reported the information specified in this GRI Index for the period from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, with reference to the GRI Standards

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Leveraging Quality, Driving Success.

Sustainability
Report 2024



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