INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

Why are operators collecting less sustainability data?


Peter Judge

6 Oct 2025

In 2025, most data center operators are maintaining their public support for net-zero goals (albeit supported by energy attribute credits), while acknowledging that rapid growth in data center power demands will require more high-carbon electricity from sources such as natural gas.

At the same time, most governments remain publicly committed to emissions reduction. While the US has backtracked at the Federal level, many state governments maintain climate policies. Outside the US, some climate policies are being relaxed for reasons of growth or security, but reporting regimes — particularly the EU's Energy Efficiency Directive — remain largely in force.

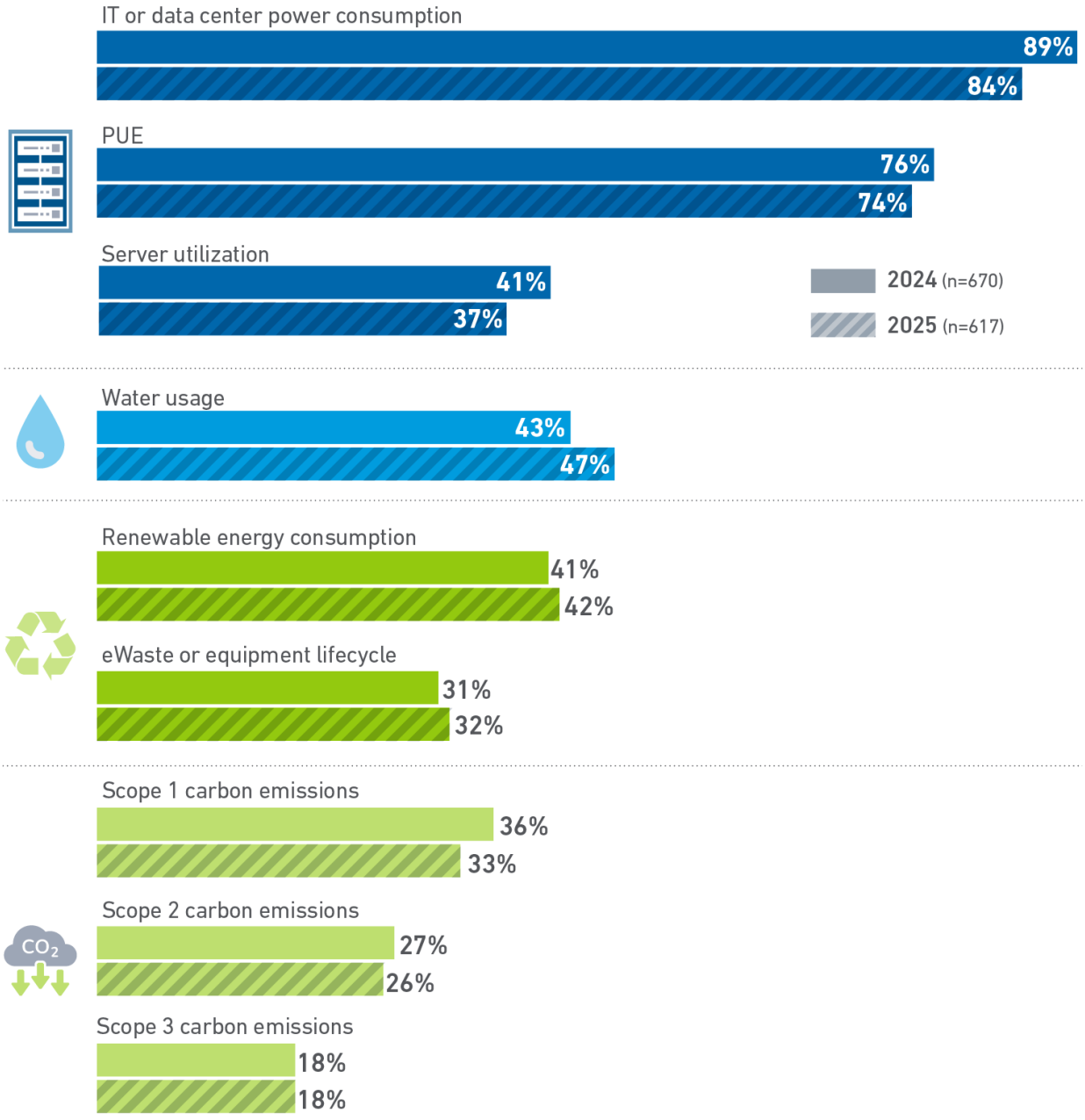
Against this backdrop, it is clear — from conference programs, inquiries, company statements and media coverage — that data center operators are discussing their environmental goals less frequently and redirecting their focus toward AI and growth. Uptime Intelligence's research indicates they may — and *may* is the key word — also be reducing the collection of sustainability data. If this is occurring — because the trend is not strong — this raises an important question: why is this happening when such data is often required by reporting regimes?

A small, but real, change

The Uptime Institute Global Data Center Survey tracks the collection of nine metrics relating to efficiency and environmental impact. For the past four years, the share of operators reporting that they collect each metric has grown slightly each year. In 2025, however, for the first time, the proportion of operators reporting data collection either declined or flattened for some of the most important metrics (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1 Sustainability reporting falters

Which of the following IT or data center metrics does your organization collect for corporate sustainability purposes? Choose all that apply.



All the changes were small, but even a slight decline — or a plateau — represents a reversal of the recent trend of steady increases.

IT power usage and PUE directly affect costs. Their measurement is essential in most facilities, and both are still widely supported, particularly by colocation providers. However, the total share of operators saying they collected the metrics declined — by 5.6% for power consumption and 2.6% for PUE compared with 2024.

The increasingly important, and still widely underreported, IT metric of server utilization also fell by 9.7%.

Six metrics — water usage, renewable energy, e-waste, and greenhouse gas emissions (Scope 1, 2 and 3) — more directly measure a data center's environmental impact, although improving them is likely to increase costs, at least initially. Collection of this data has historically been low,

although legislation in the EU and elsewhere increasingly requires it.

Of these measures, three increased: water usage (by around 9.3% compared with 2024), renewable energy consumption (by 2.4%) and e-waste (by 3.2%). These increases in data collection likely reflect growing reporting requirements.

By contrast, Scope 1 carbon emissions reporting fell by 8.3%, Scope 2 fell by 3.7%, while Scope 3 remained flat compared with 2024. This might be a response to SEC abandoning a bid to require climate risk disclosure, and the EU simplifying climate risk disclosure under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

Less talk about sustainability

There are several reasons why sustainability now appears to have a reduced priority compared with previous years. Some in the industry claim there is less need to discuss sustainability because it has become an established norm. Others say operators are dialling back public statements because they are falling short — likely to miss the targets they have set or achieve them only through the heavily criticized practice of market-based emissions reporting.

Whatever the reason, there is evidence of a measurable tendency toward a strategy of saying less about sustainability. Harvard researchers, in a survey of 75 large organizations, found a striking “bifurcation between what companies say and what they do.” While 85% had maintained or expanded their sustainability programs, only 16% publicly reaffirmed those commitments (see *"Constancy of Purpose" Under Pressure: An Observational Study Examining How Political Shifts Are Transforming Corporate Sustainability and DEI*).

The change in corporate policy is one of visibility, not underlying strategy, say the researchers: any supposed retreat from sustainability is a “mirage.” However, it could become a reality if industry peers believe the message over the actions.

Other related reports published by Uptime Institute include:
Incomplete data threatens effectiveness of EED
Should operators continue to prepare for climate risk reporting?
EU climate reporting: simplification is not simple
Remaining EED reporting deficiencies need immediate attention
On-site natural gas: why some sites need it
Global PUEs — are they going anywhere?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Judge

Peter is a Senior Research Analyst at Uptime Intelligence. His expertise includes sustainability, energy efficiency, power and cooling in data centers. He has been a technology journalist for 30 years and has specialized in data centers for the past 10 years.

pjudge@uptimeinstitute.com

About Uptime Institute

Uptime Institute is the Global Digital Infrastructure Authority. Its Tier Standard is the IT industry's most trusted and adopted global standard for the proper design, construction, and operation of data centers – the backbone of the digital economy. For over 25 years, the company has served as the standard for data center reliability, sustainability, and efficiency, providing customers assurance that their digital infrastructure can perform at a level that is consistent with their business needs across a wide array of operating conditions.

With its data center Tier Standard & Certifications, Management & Operations reviews, broad range of related risk and performance assessments, and accredited educational curriculum completed by over 10,000 data center professionals, Uptime Institute has helped thousands of companies, in over 100 countries to optimize critical IT assets while managing costs, resources, and efficiency.