

Climate Hypocrites: China Contributes 27% Of Total Global Emissions



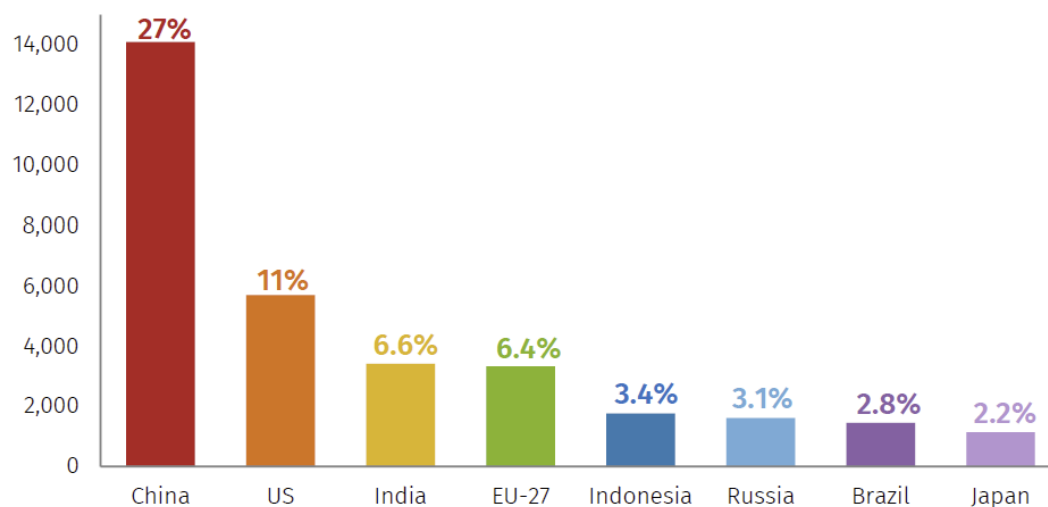
China continuously boasts about its commitment to the Paris Climate Accord, Sustainable Development and how it will lead the world in carbon reduction. In fact, its own pollution exceeds the entire developed world combined! □ TN Editor

Based on our newly updated preliminary estimates for 2019, global emissions—including emissions of all six Kyoto gases, inclusive of land-use and forests and international bunkers—reached 52 gigatons of CO₂ equivalent in 2019, a 11.4% increase over the past decade. China alone contributed over 27% of total global emissions, far exceeding the US—the second highest emitter—which contributed 11% of the global total (Figure 1). For the first time, India edged out the EU-27 for third place, coming in at 6.6% of global emissions.

FIGURE 1

2019 net GHG emissions from the world's largest emitters

Million metric tons of CO₂e, including emissions and removals from land-use and forests and share of global total



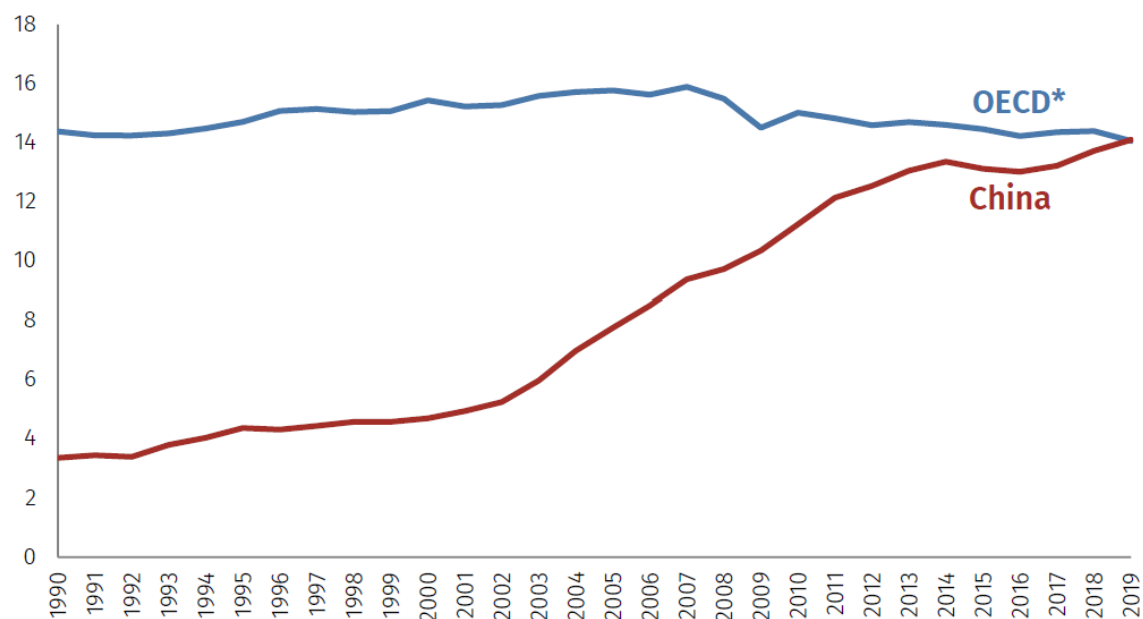
Source: Rhodium Group

China's emissions exceeded emissions from developed countries

In 2019, China's GHG emissions passed the 14 gigaton threshold for the first time, reaching 14,093 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (MMt CO₂e) (Figure 2). This represents a more than tripling of 1990 levels, and a 25% increase over the past decade. As a result, China's share of the 2019 global emissions total of 52 gigatons rose to 27%.[1]

FIGURE 2
Total net greenhouse gas emissions, 1990-2019

Gigatons of CO₂e

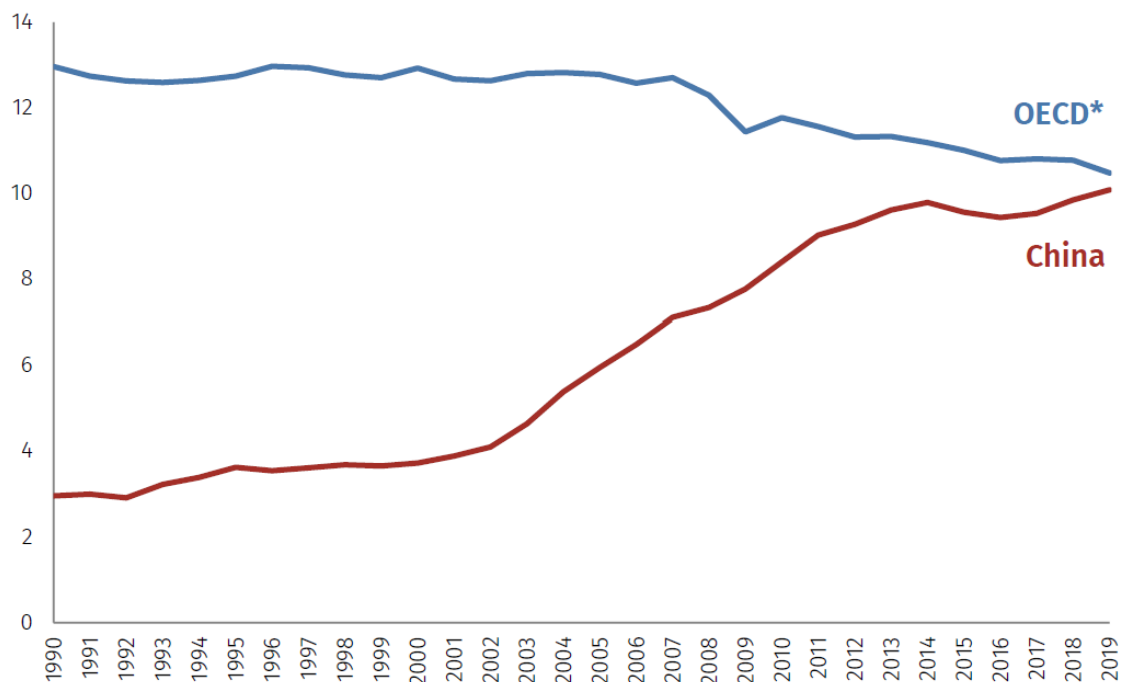


Source: Rhodium Group, UNFCCC. Includes emissions and removals of land-use, land-use change and forests (LULUCF). Excludes international aviation and marine bunkers. Includes six Kyoto gases using AR4 GWP values. *OECD includes OECD members as of 2019 and includes all EU member states.

In 2019, China's emissions not only eclipsed that of the US—the world's second-largest emitter at 11% of the global total—but also, for the first time, surpassed the emissions of all developed countries combined (Figure 2). When added together, GHG emissions from all members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as all 27 EU member states, reached 14,057 MMt CO₂e in 2019, about 36 MMt CO₂e short of China's total.[2]

But China is a large country, home to over 1.4 billion people. To date, China's size has meant that its per capita emissions have remained considerably lower than those in the developed world. In 2019, China's per capita emissions reached 10.1 tons, nearly tripling over the past two decades (Figure 3). This comes in just below average levels across the OECD bloc (10.5 tons/capita) in 2019, but still significantly lower than the US, which has the highest per capita emissions in the world at 17.6 tons/capita. While final global data for 2020 is not yet available, we expect China's per capita emissions exceeded the OECD average in 2020, as China's net GHG emissions grew around 1.7% while emissions from almost all other nations declined sharply in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 3
Per capita net greenhouse gas emissions, 1990-2019
Metric tons of CO₂e/capita



Source: Rhodium Group, UNFCCC, World Bank population. OECD* includes OECD members as of 2019 and includes all EU member states.

While China exceeded all developed countries combined in terms of annual emissions and came very close to matching per capita emissions in 2019, China's history as a major emitter is relatively short compared to developed countries, many of which had more than a century head start. A large share of the CO₂ emitted into the atmosphere each year hangs around for hundreds of years. As a result, current global warming is the result of emissions from both the recent and more distant past. Since 1750, members of the OECD bloc have emitted four times more CO₂ on a cumulative basis than China (Figure 4). This overstates the relative role of OECD emissions in the more than 1 degree Celsius increase in global temperatures that has occurred since before the industrial revolution because a large share of annual CO₂ emissions is absorbed in the earth's carbon cycle in the decades after release. But China still has a way to go before surpassing the OECD on a cumulative contribution basis.

[Read full story here...](#)