

Global carbon dioxide emissions are increasing for the first time in three years

After three years without any growth in global carbon dioxide emissions, levels of the potent greenhouse gas are spiking again.

[Natasha Geiling](#) Nov 13, 2017, 11:57 am



(CREDIT: AP Photo/Andy Wong)

For the first time in three years, global carbon dioxide emissions are back on the rise, illustrating that while the world has taken some crucial steps to curb greenhouse gas emissions, the work is far from over.

According to [figures released on Monday](#) by the Global Carbon Project during this year's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bonn, Germany, industrial emissions of carbon dioxide are set to

increase this year — reversing the previous trend of flat-lining emissions driven largely by the declining use of coal in China.

“Global carbon dioxide emissions appear to be going up strongly once again after a three-year stable period,” Corinne Le Quéré, director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia, and lead researcher for the Global Carbon Budget, [said in a press statement](#). “This is very disappointing.”

[The United Nations is sounding the alarm about seriously high levels of carbon dioxide](#)

The increase comes just weeks after the United Nations announced that atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide hit a record-high in 2018, and compounds the urgency for the Bonn climate conference, where nations are set to hammer out the details for implementing the Paris climate agreement. The Paris agreement, which [every country in the world except for the United States supports](#), states that countries should work to hold global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Scientists at the Global Carbon Budget attribute this year's increase to a [record-high](#) burning of fossil fuels around the world, especially in countries like China and India, which have failed to curb fossil fuel use as quickly as predicted. An increase in burning coal in China, in particular, is likely responsible for much of the projected increase in carbon emissions.

But, the Global Carbon Budget notes, it's not just China that is fueling the increase — both the United States and Europe, the second and third top emitters respectively, both reduced their emissions more slowly than in past years. In the United States, some of that decline is likely due to a slowdown in the use of natural gas, but some is also due to the fact that coal use is projected to increase for the first time in five years. Still, the report estimates that U.S. carbon emissions will likely fall this year by 0.4 percent — despite the Trump administration's policies favoring fossil fuels over renewable energy.

“The federal government can slow the development of renewables and low-carbon technologies, but it can't stop it,” Robert Jackson, a co-author of this year's Global Carbon Budget and a professor in Earth system science at Stanford University, [said in a press statement](#). “That transition is being driven by the low cost

of new renewable infrastructure, and it's being driven by new consumer preferences.”

Despite the noted increase in emissions due to the burning of fossil fuels, the United States' official position at the Bonn climate talks has been to support the use of fossil fuels as solutions to climate change. On Monday — the same day that the Global Carbon Budget was released — the official United States delegation held a talk about the benefits of coal, natural gas, and nuclear energy in response to climate change. The event was initially supposed to be about promoting clean energy, but the United States [switched the event's focus](#) to emphasize coal and nuclear power.

The event's focus on coal and nuclear mirrors a [push by the Trump administration](#) — through a rule proposed by the Department of Energy — to pay power plants that maintain a supply of at least 90 day's worth of fuel on site. The Trump administration has also lifted a series of environmental regulations on the coal industry — from rules limiting the amount of waste that companies can dump into rivers to the Clean Power Plan, which would have regulated carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

But as the Trump administration continues to push fossil fuel use at home and abroad, the Global Carbon Budget's scientists warn that the world is running out of time to tackle climate change.

“This year we have seen how climate change can amplify the impacts of hurricanes with stronger downpours of rain, higher sea levels and warmer ocean conditions favoring more powerful storms. This is a window into the future,” Le Quéré [said](#). “We need to reach a peak in global emissions in the next few years and drive emissions down rapidly afterwards to address climate change and limit its impacts.”