

Air Pollution in China

Coal is the leading culprit of air pollution in China. [A recent University of Leeds study](#) sponsored by Greenpeace East Asia traced PM2.5 (fine particles with a diameter under 2.5µm) in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and found the amount of PM2.5 released into the air in 2010 alone was more than ten million tons.

The study also confirmed that the majority of air pollution happens when certain gases are discharged into the air and turn into fine particles. And coal burning contributes most of these gases.

China's epic climb to the world's second-largest economy has had devastating health impacts. [Another research project](#) co-authored by Greenpeace on the health impacts of coal power plants shows that PM2.5 pollution from the 196 coal-fired power plants in the capital region of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei caused 9,900 premature deaths and nearly 70,000 outpatient visits or hospitalizations during 2011. 75% of the premature deaths are caused by the 152 coal-fired power plants in Hebei Province.



Air pollution will remain a serious problem in China as long as coal continues to be the country's major energy source.

PM2.5 concentration levels have particularly endangered public health in big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xi'an. The PM2.5 concentration levels in all four cities exceed World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines. This means higher health risks to the cardiovascular system, cerebrovascular system and an increase in the probability of cancer and premature death.

Consider these statistics:

- Our report [Dangerous Breathing](#) found that if the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xi'an had effectively controlled PM_{2.5} levels and met WHO air quality guidelines in 2012, the number of premature deaths would have decreased by at least 81%, while the economic benefits of reducing these premature deaths in the four cities would amount to 875 million USD.
- [Another study](#) found air pollution from coal power plants within Beijing and surrounds caused up to 9,900 premature deaths in 2011, with nearly 2,000 deaths in Beijing, 1,200 in Tianjin and 6,700 in Hebei. Research also indicates that coal power plants within the region caused 850 deaths from lung cancer, 190 cases of infant deaths, and increase amount of children suffering from asthma by 9,300 and number of people with chronic bronchitis by 12,000.
- When we surveyed 1,021 people living in the area, 96% of the respondents believe the air pollution is impacting the health of his or her family. 23% called this impact "severe", while 62% said there was "some impact", 11% believed the pollution had a "minor impact" while only 4% said "no impact".

Fortunately, the solution to the problem is simple: stop burning coal. Greenpeace is working on reducing China's reliance on coal, in favor of clean, renewable energy. For more on what we are doing, you can [visit our section on coal](#).

In the short-term, there are also many [intermediate solutions for air pollution](#). However, all of these solutions require governments to recognize the impact of air pollution on public health and the economy, and take action immediately.

Source: <http://www.greenpeace.org/eastasia/campaigns/air-pollution/problems/china/>