New Report Says Global Carbon Emissions Have Essentially Plateaued

Global carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels didn't grow in 2015 and are projected to rise only slightly in 2016, marking three years of almost no growth, according to researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Global Carbon Project.

The Global Carbon Budget 2016, which was published in the journal Earth System Science Data, says global CO' emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels and industry (including cement production) were 36.3 billion tonnes in 2015'the same as in 2014'and are projected to rise by only 0.2% in 2016, which is a big departure from emissions growth rates of 2.3% for the previous decade and more than 3% during the 2000s.

The main reason for the three-year slowdown' Decreased use of coal in China, which is the biggest emitter of CO_2 at 29%. China saw emissions decrease by 0.7% in 2015, compared to growth of more than 5% per year the previous decade. A further reduction of 0.5% is projected for 2016, though with large uncertainties.

Canada's CO_2 emissions decreased last year by 3%.

The US, the second biggest emitter of CO_2 at 15%, also reduced its coal use while increasing its oil and gas consumption. It saw emissions decrease 2.6% last year.

The EU's 28 member states are the third largest emitter collectively, causing 10% of emissions. The EU's CO_2 emissions went up 1.4% in 2015, in contrast with longer term decreases.

In 2015, coal burning was responsible for 41% of the total emissions, oil 34%, gas 19%, cement 6%, and gas flaring 1%.

But note that emissions from the past two years were still the highest in human history and 60% higher than in 1990.

Download an infographic that summarizes the report's findings below.