

China says coal consumption falls for third year

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The burning of coal for electricity and heating is the main cause of China's notorious smog which has caused increasing public discontent

China's world-leading coal consumption fell for the third straight year in 2016, government data showed Tuesday, as the planet's biggest carbon emitter struggles to break its addiction to the heavily polluting fuel.

Coal consumption fell by 4.7 percent year-on-year in 2016, and the share

of coal in the country's energy mix slipped to 62.0 percent, down 2.0 percent year-on-year, the National Bureau of Statistics said in a report.

Overall coal production also fell, dropping 9.0 percent to 3.41 billion tonnes in 2016.

The data suggests that "coal consumption probably peaked around 2014," according to a statement from environmental group China Dialogue.

It added that "there is still some concern about a 'rebound' in coal demand if China continues to stimulate its economy by infrastructure investment".

In December China said it would reduce its annual coal production capacity by 800 million tonnes, the official Xinhua news agency reported, as the country tries to tackle unsafe and inefficient mines and reduce pollution.

The burning of coal for electricity and heating contributes most of China's [greenhouse gas emissions](#) and is the main cause of its notorious smog.

Severe smog has caused increasing public discontent, particularly in winter, when large swathes of the northeast are often choked by bad air.

The government has vowed to reduce consumption of polluting energy sources, but the move also has an economic logic.

Many of the country's giant state-owned [coal](#) mining firms are now unviable and plagued by overcapacity, leading the government to curb output.

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