

Coronavirus and its impact on carbon emissions

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The emergence of a novel coronavirus towards the end of 2019 that has led to the major ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has already taken its toll on people's lives, healthcare systems, and the commercial world.

Anecdotal evidence early in the "lockdowns" imposed by many governments seemed to suggest that pollution levels fell as road and air traffic density fell considerably and people began working from home across the world's major cities. Consumption of certain products also fell off although initial demand for essentials was high as people panicked and stocked up on food and other supplies. However, as lockdowns are eased, there is now an increased use of plastics for disposable personal protection and in shops, homes, and the workplace, and for packaging to help reduce the spread of the virus.

In the face of such a pandemic, it is as if [climate change](#) and pollution have been figuratively put on the back burner as serious concerns for humanity. However, Alberto Boretti of the College of Engineering at the Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, writing in the International Journal of Global Warming, has looked at carbon dioxide levels during the shutdown. Indeed, emissions have fallen considerably as airlines have been grounded, factories shut down, businesses closed, and citizens confined in their homes.

He suggests our current reduced activity over the last few months at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic could give us novel data to demonstrate exactly how anthropogenic are [carbon emissions](#). In 2014, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) expressed how it is 95% certain that humans are the main cause of current global warming. But, there are denialists and detractors. The data shows there has not been a fall in carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere since lockdown, natural drivers as the [temperature rises](#) and seasonal variation seem to obscure any effect on such a short timescale. The process of global warming itself is known to increase [carbon](#) dioxide emissions from natural sources.

"While we cannot legislate for natural changes, it seems appropriate to better identify every environmental and societal threats to availability of

water, food, energy, plus health and ecosystems conservation; then optimize mitigation and adaptation strategies according to the relative risks of the various threats," the team writes.

More information: Boretti, A. (2020) COVID 19 impact on atmospheric CO₂ concentration, *Int. J. Global Warming*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp.317–323.

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