

GLOBAL METHANE EMISSIONS ARE WORSE THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT

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Emissions from both fossil fuel industry (coal, oil and natural gas) and geological sources (cows, agriculture, swamp gas) combined are 60 to 110 greater than current estimates

Methane emissions are difficult to measure or estimate because they come from a wide range of resources, both biological and fossil fuel emissions. Therefore, the data extracted from various techniques also produces highly uncertain and inconsistent results.

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Recently, a study published in [Nature](#) has revealed new data regarding the rising levels of methane emissions. The study shows that the methane emissions are far higher than previously thought, suggesting how much this greenhouse gas is affecting climate change.

According to the new research, fossil fuel industry is emitting 20 to 60 percent higher methane than previously thought. Every year up to 160 tons of methane accumulates in the atmosphere

due to fossil fuel activities. That's about 25% of total global methane emissions. Overall, global methane emissions are 60 to 110 percent higher than current estimations.

“Methane emissions from fossil fuel development have been dramatically underestimated,” said Stefan Schwietzke, a scientist at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and lead author of the study.

“Emissions scenarios currently used for climate prediction need to be reassessed taking into account revised values for anthropogenic”—or human-generated—“methane emissions.”

Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas that is 34 times more potent than carbon dioxide over the course of 100 years. Though both gases contribute to the Earth’s rising temperatures, prior researches suggest that methane has a less serious effect on the climate over long term basis.

Methane does not stay in the atmosphere for long but has a greater effect on global warming over a short period of time and then it dissipates. Carbon dioxide, by contrast, accumulates over centuries, warming the atmosphere with its increasing levels gradually over time.

To re-evaluate the global methane budget and the contribution of coal, oil and gas, researchers looked at the largest database of methane emissions’ sources so far and found that global methane emissions driven by fossil fuel industry are not increasing over time, but are significantly greater than current estimates.

Methane concentrations in the atmosphere remained constant until 2007 but then started to climb sharply.



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