



**DID  
COVID  
AFFECT  
CLIMATE  
CHANGE?**



1  
00:00:02,402 --> 00:00:04,625  
Has COVID affected climate change?

2  
00:00:05,425 --> 00:00:07,507  
NASA.

3  
00:00:07,507 --> 00:00:09,075  
We Asked a NASA Scientist.

4  
00:00:09,075 --> 00:00:10,936  
This is a question we actually get a lot because

5  
00:00:10,936 --> 00:00:13,980  
one of the first things that people notice  
in terms of the environment

6  
00:00:13,980 --> 00:00:17,350  
during COVID was that  
the air seemed to be a little bit cleaner.

7  
00:00:17,384 --> 00:00:19,085  
And when scientists started  
looking at the data,

8  
00:00:19,085 --> 00:00:23,256  
we did see a decrease in air quality  
pollutants like nitrogen dioxide.

9  
00:00:23,256 --> 00:00:26,326  
In some cases,  
those decreases were as large as 30%.

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00:00:26,326 --> 00:00:27,494  
So pretty significant.

11  
00:00:27,494 --> 00:00:28,862  
But when we started looking more

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00:00:28,862 --> 00:00:32,766

at greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide,  
the gases that stay in the atmosphere

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00:00:32,766 --> 00:00:36,236

a really long time and caused  
climate change, we saw that the decreases

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00:00:36,236 --> 00:00:39,672

were much more subtle, more on the order of 5 to 10%.

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00:00:39,906 --> 00:00:41,975

That's because the shorter-lived air pollutants

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00:00:41,975 --> 00:00:45,145

that are harmful to human health  
are emitted more strongly from things

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00:00:45,145 --> 00:00:48,625

like traffic, while the climate polluters,  
like carbon dioxide,

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00:00:48,625 --> 00:00:50,483

come from things like power plants.

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00:00:50,483 --> 00:00:53,853

And during COVID, while we weren't driving  
as much going into the office

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00:00:53,853 --> 00:00:56,623

or meeting up with friends,  
we were still heating our homes.

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00:00:56,623 --> 00:00:58,758

We were still using air  
conditioning during the summer.

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00:00:58,792 --> 00:01:01,561

So those decreases in the gases  
that caused climate change

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00:01:01,928 --> 00:01:03,263

were much more subtle.

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00:01:03,263 --> 00:01:05,265

So has COVID affected climate change?

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00:01:05,265 --> 00:01:06,366

The answer is a little bit.

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00:01:06,366 --> 00:01:08,368

We saw small decreases

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00:01:08,368 --> 00:01:11,137

in emissions of greenhouse gases,  
like carbon dioxide and methane,

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00:01:11,404 --> 00:01:15,241

but they continued to build up in our  
atmosphere much like in any other year.

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00:01:15,508 --> 00:01:17,977

That means that we all have to continue  
to work hard

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00:01:17,977 --> 00:01:19,612

to reduce emissions of those gases

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00:01:19,612 --> 00:01:22,048

if we really want to turn climate change around.

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00:01:22,315 --> 00:01:23,283

We Asked a NASA Scientist.