DEMOGRAPHICS

China\(^1\) is a large country in East Asia and shares a border with 14 countries, including India, Mongolia and Russia (Fig. 1). Although the majority of its population is urban, some 42.04 per cent still live in rural communities. The population is growing, with a fertility rate of 1.6 children and life expectancy of 76.6 years. Around 72 per cent of the population is of legal working age (15–64 years) (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Map of China

The Employment and Environmental Sustainability Fact Sheets series provides key features of employment and environmental sustainability performance. Jobs that are green and decent are central to sustainable development and resource productivity. They respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion. Such jobs create decent employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and build low-carbon, sustainable societies. The fact sheets include the most recently available data for selected indicators on employment and environmental sustainability: (i) employment in environmental sectors; (ii) skill levels; (iii) vulnerability of jobs; (iv) jobs in renewable energy; (v) scoring on the Environmental Performance Index; and (vi) air quality.

Figure 2. China population statistics

Population:\(^2\) 1386.39 million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population growth rate</th>
<th>Fertility rate</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.56%</td>
<td>1.6 children</td>
<td>76.6 years</td>
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Rural population
Urban population

Population age categories

- 0-14 years: 17.7%
- 15–64 years: 71.7%
- 65+ years: 10.6%

Note: Data is for 2017 except fertility rate and life expectancy (2018 data).


1 China became a member of the International Labour Organization in 1919.
2 Population data based on 2017 data.
LABOUR FORCE

In 2018, the labour force participation rate was 68.4 per cent and the employment-to-population ratio was 65.71 per cent. Both these rates are more than 14 to 17 percentage points higher for men than for women. The total unemployment rate in 2018 was 4.09 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate was 10.8 per cent, with the male youth unemployment rate 2.19 percentage points higher than the female rate. Employment is heavily reliant on services followed by industry, and on medium-skilled occupations (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Basic employment statistics for China, 2018

Employment by occupation, 2018

Vulnerable employment in China as of 2018 accounted for 33 per cent of the labour force, with the majority of those workers having own-account status (Fig. 4). Own-account and contributing family workers are more likely to experience low job and income security than employees and employers, as well as lower coverage by social protection systems and employment regulation.

Figure 4. Vulnerable employment, 2018

Rural population growth was negative 2.3 per cent in 2017. The share of agricultural land in total land area remained steady at 56 percentage points between 2000 and 2016, while agricultural employment rates decreased from 312.2 million to 125 million people. The share of agricultural employment within total employment fell by approximately 28 percentage points due to much faster job creation in other sectors (Fig. 5).
China ranks at number 120 of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI)\(^3\), with a score of 50.74 (with 0 being furthest from the high-performance benchmark target of 100). China outperforms the average score for Asia and the Pacific (Fig. 6) in some of the EPI categories, including water and sanitation, agriculture, biodiversity and habitat, fisheries, air pollution, and climate and energy. However, there is room for improvement, especially in environmental health (air quality and heavy metals) and ecosystem vitality (forests). Action to address climate change and improve environmental health, ecosystem vitality and resilience to weather disasters all have the potential to provide job creation, green economy growth and innovation in China.


Since 2000, there has been a gradual increase in access to basic drinking water, to an average of 95.8 per cent in 2015, and access to basic sanitation, to an average of 75 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 8). Both are still below the ideal threshold of 100 per cent. Improvement in water supply and sanitation access could provide decent job opportunities in the future.

The carbon dioxide (CO\textsuperscript{2}) emission levels for China increased by an average of 6 per cent from 1990 to 2014 (Fig. 9).\textsuperscript{5} The increase was primarily due to fossil fuel combustion for power generation and transportation.\textsuperscript{6} The level of emissions since 1990 is significantly higher than both the Asia-Pacific and ASEAN averages.

The PM\textsubscript{2.5} (atmospheric particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres) emission levels for China reached their highest levels in 2010 (Fig. 10). Overall PM\textsubscript{2.5} emission levels exceeded the World Health Organization’s Air Quality Guideline threshold level, thus indicating high emissions. China also shows higher levels of emission than the ASEAN and Asia-Pacific averages. Dust, fossil fuel combustion, transportation, biomass burning and industrial emissions are the main sources of PM\textsubscript{2.5} identified in China.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5} The value is calculated on the basis of CAGR (compound annual growth rate).


Applying the Just Transition guidelines, an area of possible intervention includes efforts to reduce harmful emissions, which could potentially generate green jobs in high emitting sectors such as transportation and fuel-intensive industries. Reducing emissions is a significant challenge, which can be achieved not only by mitigation methods, but also by adapting to, and coping with, the changes required by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

**CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

According to the *World Risk Report*[^8], China has a medium World Risk Index score. It ranks number 80 of 171 countries because of its medium exposure to natural hazards and limited institutional capacity to cope and adapt. Part of the country's vulnerability relates to the 6.6 per cent of the total population who, in 2010, lived in the 1.2 per cent of the total land area below 5 metres above sea level.[^9]

According to the *Emergency Events Database*,[^10] there was a substantial increase in natural disasters[^11] and associated damage costs between the 1980s and 2018 (Fig. 11). The natural disasters in that time were mostly floods, droughts, landslides, typhoons and earthquakes. Damage costs have increased significantly since 2009. Developing preventative measures to limit infrastructure and property damage and increase institutional capacity to respond to climate events, particularly for small businesses, can be a source of decent job creation while building resilience.

**GREEN JOBS POTENTIAL**

In 2016, 59 per cent of the population relied primarily on clean fuel and technology, in the sense that these do not create pollution within the home.[^12] The share of renewable energy in total energy consumption has not kept pace with overall consumption. In 2000, it was 29.73 per cent but fell below 13 per cent in 2010 and, after some fluctuation, fell to 12.41 per cent in 2015 (Fig. 12). However, renewable energy electricity generation has increased over the last 16 years, with hydropower being the main renewable energy source in 2016 (Fig. 13). In 2018, almost 4,191.2 thousand people were employed in the renewable energy sector, with 53 per cent employed in solar photovoltaics (Fig. 14). With the push for increasing reliance on renewable energy, there is the potential for decent job opportunities in the future.


[^11]: Climatological, hydrological and meteorological disasters.

[^12]: The proportion of the population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology is calculated as the number of people using clean fuels and technologies for cooking, heating and lighting divided by the total population reporting any cooking, heating or lighting, expressed as a percentage. “Clean” is defined by the emission rate targets and specific fuel recommendations (against unprocessed coal and kerosene) included in the normative World Health Organization guidelines for indoor air quality; see the data for household fuel combustion, https://unistats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-07-01-02.pdf.
Better data collection relating to the green economy and the environmental sector would be very valuable for policy-makers in Asia-Pacific countries. In particular, better data on green and decent jobs is needed to assess the impact of climate change and climate-related policies on social inclusion. Without better data it will be difficult to determine what policy changes are needed to ensure a just transition to environmental sustainability and to monitor progress going forward.

Source: ILO compilation using source: IRENA (2018); available at: http://resourceirena.irena.org