

# Deaths from Carbon Monoxide poisoning on the rise in mainland China, says new research

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A study conducted by scientists at Shanghai Public Security Bureau, Wuhan Public Security Bureau, City University of Hong Kong and Hubei University China was carried out to compare the rate of deaths from CO-poisoning in the Pudong District, Shanghai. Data were collected from police records for the Pudong area from 2005-2014 and compared with data collected in a previous study conducted in Wuhan. Both fire- and non-fire-related events were considered in the study.

The study found that while deaths caused by CO-poisoning is low when compared with rates around the globe, there were distinct differences between the Shanghai and Wuhan regions. The Shanghai study showed a definite upward trend in the number of suicidal deaths caused by CO-poisoning from burning coal or charcoal. Equally, the number of accidental deaths relating to improper installation of gas heating has also increased. Speaking of the research, Heng Choon (Oliver) Chan, Assistant Professor of Criminology, Department of Applied Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong said: "The lack of a comprehensive [death](#) registration system in China has made investigation of CO-poisoning deaths a challenge. For the first time, we have a study that analyses the trends in deaths caused by CO-poisoning in Shanghai and Wuhan which can help China understand how these trends compare with a study carried out in Hong Kong (2007) as well as wider global trends."

For both fire- and non-fire-related-CO-poisoning events, more deaths were recorded in winter, with a higher number of deaths occurring in

January. The least number of deaths occurred in the summer months of May, June and July. Heng Choon (Oliver) Chan continued: "By looking at the data from two of China's largest cities, we can begin to understand trends in CO-poisoning-related events and monitor the rate at which these events are increasing or decreasing over time. For example, we know from the results of both studies that gas showering accidents were a major cause in accidental death by CO-poisoning while other nations rarely reported this event. We also know that, unlike Western countries where suicidal deaths are more likely to occur from breathing in vehicle exhaust fumes, in Shanghai and Wuhan the most common method used is the burning of coal or charcoal. Notably, in the regions surrounding Mainland China, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea, suicide by burning coal or charcoal is increasing rapidly and becoming a major suicide method. Hence, further studies would be required to gather data from other mainland regions in China to verify these trends. The findings provide some evidence towards helping to find solutions to reduce the number of deaths from CO-poisoning."

**More information:** Xuesong Lu et al. Carbon monoxide poisoning deaths in Shanghai, China: A 10-year epidemiological and comparative study with the Wuhan sample, *Cogent Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/2331205X.2015.1137131](https://doi.org/10.1080/2331205X.2015.1137131)

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