

Benchmarking Air Emissions/100 Largest Electric Producers in the United States: July 2021 M.J. Bradley & Associations LLC Report



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The Natural Resources Defense Council (“NRDC”) in a July 20th news release provided a copy of a July 2021 report titled:

Benchmarking Air Emissions – Of the 100 Largest Electric Power Producers in the United States (“Report”)

The *Report* is authored by Christopher Van Atten, Amian Saha, Luke Hellgren, and Ted Langlois of M.J. Bradley & Associates LLC.

NRDC notes that the United States power sector carbon dioxide (“CO₂”) emissions fell 10% between 2019 and 2020. This is described as the largest year-over-year increase since an earlier version of the *Report* was released in 1997.

The *Report* states that its conclusions are facilitated by comparison:

. . . of emissions performance by combining generation of fuel consumption data compiled by EIA with emissions data on sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxide (NO_x), carbon dioxide (CO₂) and mercury (Hg).

The information on United States power plant generation and air emissions were obtained through databases maintained by both state and federal agencies.

Described as “key findings” in the *Report* include:

- The 100 largest power producers in the United States own nearly 3,500 power plants and account for more than 80 percent of the sector’s electric generation and reported air emissions. Their fuel mix, emissions, and emission rates vary widely as summarized throughout this report (based on 2019 data).
- For the electric sector overall, in 2020, power plant SO₂ and NO_x emissions were 95 percent and 88 percent lower, respectively, than in 1990 when Congress passed major amendments to the Clean Air Act. In 2020, power plant SO₂ and NO_x emissions were 18 percent and 15 percent lower than they were in 2019.
- Power sector CO₂ emissions decreased about 10 percent between 2019 and 2020. In 2020, power plant CO₂ emissions were 20 percent lower than 1990 levels, and about 40 percent lower than their peak in 2007. Some of the factors driving this longer-term trend include energy efficiency improvements and the displacement of coal by natural gas and renewable energy resources.

- Mercury air emissions from power plants (as reported to the TRI database) have decreased 92 percent since 2000. The first-ever federal limits on mercury and other hazardous air pollutants from coal-fired power plants went into effect in 2015.

A copy of the *Report* can be downloaded [here](#).