

CHINA

Figure Analysis – Displacement Related to Disasters

SUMMARY OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN 2019

China has one of the highest numbers of new displacements associated with disasters on a yearly basis, because of its large population, high exposure and vulnerability to a range of natural hazards. Flooding, tropical storms and typhoons displace millions of people every year, with many displacements taking the form of pre-emptive evacuations. This year was no different as China was once again among the countries with the most new displacements associated with disasters. From an earthquake in Gansu province that displaced 12 people to the more than 2 million people who evacuated during Typhoon Lekima, there were more than 60 disaster events that displaced about 4 million people during the year. The government reported that disasters caused approximately US\$48 billion in direct economic losses. The country was hit by a range of disasters, including floods, typhoons, drought, earthquakes, forest fires and hailstorms. The overall disaster impact was smaller than the average for the past five years, however, with a reduced toll in terms of deaths, the number of collapsed houses and the impact on GDP.

Table 1 – 2019 summary of internal displacement in China

Number of events that triggered displacements¹	63
Total new displacements²	4,034,000
Estimated IDPs as of 31 December 2019³	220,000
Houses destroyed⁴	49,000
People pre-emptively evacuated before events⁵	N/A
People officially sheltered after events⁶	N/A
Notes	
¹ This corresponds to the number of disaster events that triggered displacement during 2019	
² This corresponds to new instances of total internal displacement related to the disaster event during the year	
³ This corresponds to the total number of individuals living in a situation of internal displacement as of 31 December 2019 as a result of disasters	
⁴ This corresponds to the number of houses destroyed during the year	
⁵ This corresponds to the number of people that have been detected as pre-emptively evacuated before the disaster events	
⁶ This corresponds to the total number of people that have been sheltered following the disasters events	

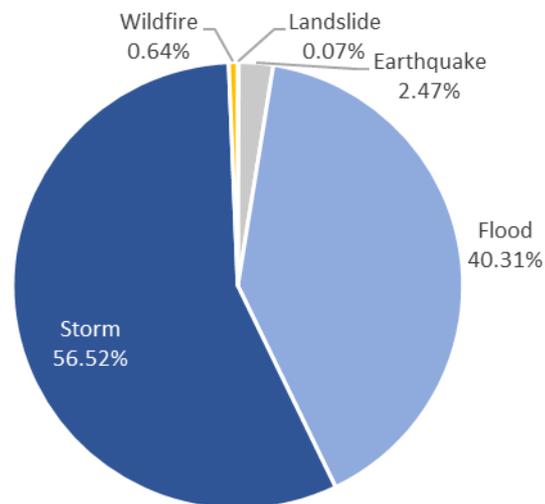
The country experienced extreme weather, earthquakes, storms, landslides and forest fires that displaced more than 4 million people in 2019. The largest displacement event was a result of Typhoon Lekima in

August which displaced 2 million people, destroyed 15,000 homes, and contributed to approximately \$7 billion in economic losses. The flooding season which took place between June and July caused almost 1.6 million people to evacuate their homes in at least eight provinces. A 6.0-magnitude earthquake that hit Sichuan province in mid-June, caused at least 95,000 people to evacuate while destroying 3,500 homes, killing at least 11 people, and injuring more than 200.

New Displacement in 2019 by hazard type

The new displacements can also be categorized by hazard type: Storms and floods displaced more than 3.8 million people, earthquakes more than 83,000, wildfires and extreme temperatures more than 37,000, and landslides and other mass movements about 1,700 people.

Fig. 1. Distribution of new displacements by hazard types in China in 2019.



DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The complexity of the drivers, dynamics and patterns of displacement in China means there are many significant research gaps related to the phenomenon, with the exception of that associated with sudden-onset disasters. Data on the latter comes from situation reports published by the Ministry of Emergency Management on the disaster events themselves and corresponding evacuations, relocations and emergency relief efforts. Information is widely available at the provincial and municipal level. Other sources [we use for our estimates include English-language Chinese newspapers](#), which are helpful in understanding the context of certain disasters and triangulating figures.

- 63 disaster events were recorded with some form of displacement between January and December
- Almost 200 individual facts were recorded for these events, including over 120 for triangulation

- More than 130 of these facts referred to individual displacement (for example evacuation or relocation), while around 60 of these facts relate to some form of housing destruction

IDMC's estimate for new displacements came from a mix of sources and situations in which people left their homes. Most of this displacement was in the form of evacuations that caused 4 million people to leave their homes, whether as a result of pre-emptive evacuation or housing destruction. IDMC's data specifically identifies about 1,500 people who were displaced due to housing destruction.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

China established the emergency management ministry in March 2018, integrating related functions in 13 different departments. Previous experience had demonstrated the country's lack of unified strength and collective efficiency in emergency response scenarios. [A single entity is now responsible for prevention, response and rescue and post-monitoring of emergencies.](#)

With the ministry's continued development, information and data on disasters and associated events also continue to improve. Reports on the ministry's website regarding disaster impacts are becoming more regular. The establishment of the China Emergency Information portal means that various local media reports of disasters are collected on one platform. There are also plans to improve data sharing for emergency management to make use of big data, cloud computing, Internet of things and other technologies. [This could help achieve online monitoring, warnings and forecasts for major risks and hidden dangers and greater efficiency in handling disasters and accidents.](#) The current challenge in monitoring displacement in the country, however, continues to be that of access to information, particularly where time series data is concerned. While media and government sources provide figures on the number of people evacuated or displaced by individual disaster events, data on housing destruction is not always clearly provided or identified.

Our stock estimation in 2019: Providers of disaster displacement data tend not to include information about when, how and for how long people were displaced. One of the main gaps and challenges in accurately estimating the number of IDPs is the lack of measurement of return flows. Nor does data tend to be collected on people who have achieved durable solutions by integrating locally or resettling elsewhere in the country.

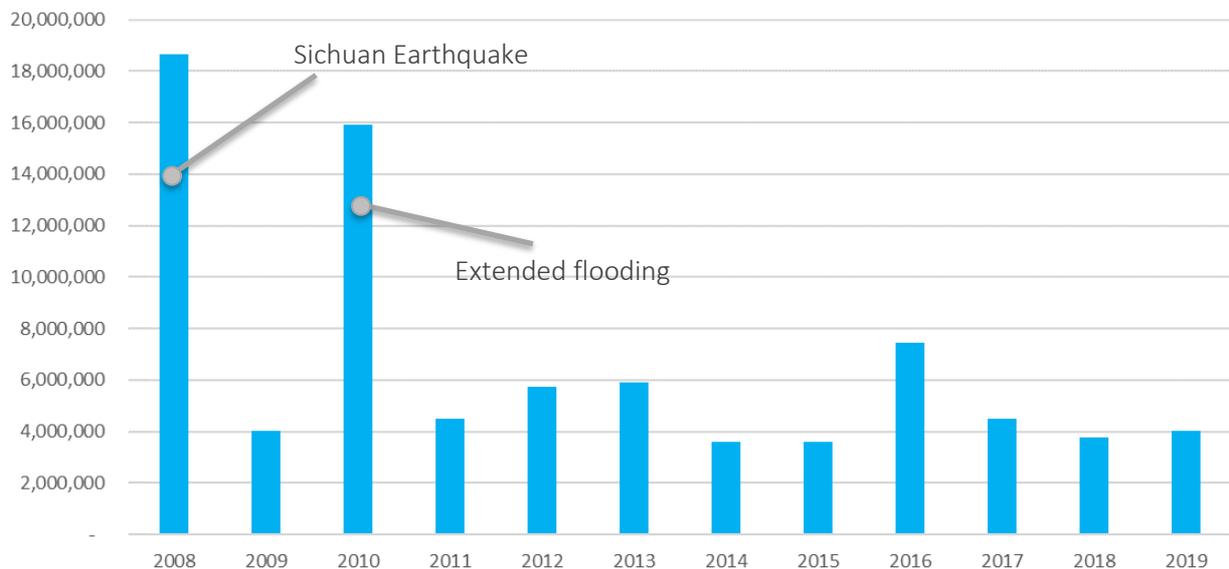
Our year-end estimate is based on time series data and housing destruction data for specific disaster events, as well as aggregated figures about the number of people displaced by disasters recorded by governments and other stakeholders (more information on - <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/2020-GRID-methodology.pdf>)

CONTEXT

China is exposed to an array of natural hazards, including droughts, earthquakes, floods, extreme temperatures, landslides, typhoons and volcanoes. Frequent disasters have caused large losses of life and property damage in recent decades. [Disasters affected some 1.7 billion people, killed more than 110,000 people, and caused almost \\$400 billion in damages between 2000 and 2018](#). According to IDMC's global risk model, about 1.3 million people on average are displaced by disasters every year. Given the lack of access to more reliable data for the country, however, the model's result is an underestimation, as IDMC's monitoring shows that the number of people displaced by disasters is much higher.

Trends analysis 2008-2019

Fig 2. Historical displacement trends in China



Based on an assessment of annual displacements over the last 10 years, the 4 million new displacements in 2019 did not make it a significant year for new displacements. The country on average experiences 7 million displacements each year as a result of natural hazards. Government reports also confirm this finding, showing that the overall impact of natural hazards in the [first three quarters of 2019 was slightly down from the same period over the past five years](#). In the first three quarters of 2019, the death toll and missing population, relocated population, [number of collapsed houses and direct economic losses fell by 25 per cent, 17 per cent, 55 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively](#).

For the full country profile on China please visit:

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/china>