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China gains major ground on global scientific stage

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China has gained major ground on the five leading scientific nations in the world according to a ranking of the top 100 countries for scientific research outputs in 2012. Published today, the first Nature Publishing Index (NPI) Global supplement ranks countries and institutions according to their output of primary research articles in the 18 Nature research journals in 2012, and includes data from 2008-2011 for comparison.

The world's most populous country came sixth in the NPI, nipping at France's heels for the number five slot, and was selected as one of the five "countries to watch". The editors predict that China will overtake France in the 2013 rankings, saying "It will be a surprise if France is not relegated to sixth by further Chinese improvement in 2013."

The growth in China's contribution to the NPI since 2011 shows how the country is increasing its quality research output, and becoming a global leader in scientific publishing and scientific research. Authors based in China contributed 8.5 % (303) of all research papers published in Nature research journals in 2012.

The country also had nine institutions in the Top 200 worldwide – up from three in 2011. The Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) broke into the global top 20 scientific institutions in 2012, up at 12th from 22nd in 2011. CAS is number one in China in each of the four subject areas (life sciences, physics, chemistry and earth and environmental sciences.) The number two spots in the four areas are spread among Tsinghua University (chemistry), BGI (life sciences), University of Science and Technology of China (physics) and Zhejiang University (Earth and environmental sciences).

The NPI shows how national investments, institutions and cities have contributed to China's rapid scientific expansion. It also provides indicators that the country, traditionally strong in physical sciences, is making gains in high quality life sciences research.

The Global Nature Publishing Index 2012 supplement is available online at nature.asia/publishing-index-global and is published as a supplement to *Nature* today. The ranking is a snapshot based on papers published in 2012, with 2008-2011 data also included to show trends.

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