Concentration and source changes of HONO during the COVID-19 lockdown in Beijing

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Abstract:

Nitrous acid (HONO) is an important precursor of OH radicals which affects not only the sinks of primary air pollutants but also the formation of secondary air pollutants, whereas its source closure in the atmosphere is still controversial due to a lack of experiment validation. In this study, the HONO budget in Beijing has been analyzed and validated through the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) lockdown event, which resulted in a significant reduction in air pollutant emissions, providing a rare opportunity to understand the HONO budget in the atmosphere. We measured HONO and related pollutants from January 1, 2020, to March 6, 2020, which covered the Chinese New Year (CNY) and the COVID-19 lockdown. The average concentration of HONO decreased from 0.97 ± 0.74 ppb before CNY to 0.53 ± 0.44 ppb during the COVID-19 lockdown, accompanied by a sharp drop of NO_x and the greatest drop of NO (around 87%). HONO budget analysis suggests that vehicle emissions were the most important source of HONO during the nighttime (53%) before CNY, well supported by the decline of their contribution to HONO during the COVID-19 lockdown. We found that the heterogeneous conversion of NO_2 on ground surfaces was an important nighttime source of HONO (31%), while that on aerosol surfaces was a minor source (2%). Nitrate photolysis became the most important daytime source during the COVID-19 lockdown compared with that before CNY, resulting from the combined effect of the increase in nitrate and the decrease in NO. Our results indicate that reducing vehicle emissions should be an effective measure for alleviating HONO in Beijing.

1. Introduction

As the most vital oxidant in the troposphere, OH radicals not only govern the sink of most trace compounds but also affect the production of secondary pollutants by initiating photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Nitrous acid (HONO) is an important primary precursor of OH radicals (Kulmala and Petäjä, 2011; Zhang et al., 2023c). Photolysis of HONO can contribute 60% (Tan et al., 2018) and sometimes even 92% (Xue et al., 2020) to OH production in the morning. Therefore, HONO can indirectly promote the formation of both secondary aerosols (Zhang et al., 2019b) and ozone (Zhang et al., 2022a). In addition, HONO can react with histamine to form carcinogens, such as nitrosamines, after entering the human body (Farren et al., 2015). Thus, understanding the sources of HONO in the atmosphere has been a hot topic for several decades, but it is still far from closed (Jiang et al., 2022). Intensive studies have been carried out on HONO measurements and source analysis (Liu et al., 2020c; Liu et al., 2020d; Zheng et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019a; Liu et al., 2019b). The concentrations of HONO in the atmosphere range from a few ppt in remote areas (Spataro et al., 2016) to several ppb, even several tens ppb in heavily polluted areas (Liu et al., 2019b; Liu et al., 2020c; Liu et al., 2020d; Zheng et al., 2020).

The sources of atmospheric HONO consist of direct emissions and secondary formation in the atmosphere. Direct emissions include soils, biomass burning, vehicles, indoor air, and livestock farming. Soil emissions, which depend on soil types, microorganisms, water content, temperature, and pH (Kulmala and Petäjä, 2011; Weber et al., 2015; Kim and Or, 2019), are important sources of HONO. Biomass burning, often occurs in the summer and autumn when wheat/corn is harvested and wildfires are common (Zhang et al., 2019b; Sun et al., 2017; Sun

73 et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2020). Vehicle emissions are considered an important source of HONO

74 in traffic-intensive areas (Kramer et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). This source is more important at

75 nighttime compared with daytime (Zhang et al., 2016; Fu et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020d).

76 Recently, indoor emissions have also been proposed as a potential HONO source (Xue, 2022),

77 which is related to the ventilation from high HONO concentrations in indoor air to low HONO

78 concentrations in outdoor air (Zhang et al., 2019b). Livestock farming is a previously

79 overlooked source of HONO, especially in agricultural areas.

80 Secondary formation of HONO includes gas-phase reaction between NO and OH radicals,

81 photolysis of particulate nitrate, and heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on ground and particulate

82 matter surfaces, including photochemical heterogeneous reaction of NO_2. Gas phase reaction

83 between NO and OH, photolysis of nitrate particles, and light-enhanced conversion of NO_2 are

84 the main daytime sources of HONO (Liu et al., 2019c; Liu et al., 2020d; Zhang et al., 2022b).

85 Furthermore, acid replacement processes may be a non-negligible source of daytime HONO in

86 locations affected by soil-borne mineral dust deposition (Vandenboer et al., 2014). The

87 heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on various surfaces is widely regarded as an important source

88 of HONO (Han et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2020b).

89 Table S1 summarizes the sources of HONO at various locations. The type of observation

90 site often has a great impact on the source intensity and contribution proportion of each source

91 of HONO. In natural ecological areas or Antarctic stations with little human activity, the

92 photolysis of nitrate is the main source of HONO during the day, and its contribution is much

93 higher than the homogeneous reaction of NO and OH (Bond et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2024). In

94 the ocean or areas close to the sea, the heterogeneous transformation of NO_2 becomes the main

source of HONO, and the transformation on the aerosol surface may be more important than that on the ground (Xing et al., 2023). In smoke collected near wildfires, it was found that the heterogeneous conversion contribution of NO_2 can reach 85%, making it the most important source of HONO (Chai et al., 2021). Emissions from soil and biological soil crusts are important in some areas where vegetation and soil are exposed (Meusel et al., 2018). For three different types of observation sites: rural, suburban, and urban, the relative importance of sources is also obviously different. In rural areas, there are usually no traffic activities, and are mainly affected by agricultural activities and animal husbandry, so traffic emissions can be ignored. During periods of intensive agricultural activity, soil emissions are the main source of HONO, accounting for up to 80% (Liu et al., 2019c), When there is little agricultural activity, the reaction of NO and OH and the heterogeneous transformation of NO_2 on the ground become the two main sources in rural areas (Xue et al., 2020; Song et al., 2022), accounting for up to 70%. In rural areas with developed animal husbandry, its direct emissions can contribute 39-45% of HONO (Zhang et al., 2023a). Suburbs are mostly covered by vegetation, with a small number of villages nearby. The heterogeneous conversion of NO_2 is the main source of HONO, which can reach 70% of HONO sources (Fu et al., 2019; Ye et al., 2023). For highways, tunnels, and urban areas with heavy traffic, traffic emissions usually dominate HONO sources, accounting for 40% to 80% of HONO sources (Xu et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2019c; Liu et al., 2020d; Kramer et al., 2020). In some ordinary urban areas where traffic activities are not so intensive, the heterogeneous conversion of NO_2 and the reaction of NO and OH are also the main sources of HONO in addition to traffic sources. It can be seen that the relative importance of different sources is often affected by the type of emission source near the observation site.

117   Although intensive studies have been performed on HONO sources, the contributions of

118   different sources are still controversial (Zhou et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2019;

119   Kramer et al., 2020; Meng et al., 2020). For the same type of observation area, the contribution

120   of each source still diverges in different studies. For example, in mixed residential, commercial,

121   and traffic areas, the importance of traffic emissions varies greatly. In some studies, it accounts

122   for as much as 50% (Liu et al., 2020d; Zhang et al., 2019a; Tong et al., 2016), while in some

123   studies, it can be ignored (Zhang et al., 2020). A similar situation exists for the heterogeneous

124   conversion of NO_2. Some studies suggest that this process is not important (Tong et al., 2015;

125   Zhang et al., 2019c; Zhang et al., 2022b), while some studies believe that it can contribute at

126   least 70% of HONO (Meng et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2020). It should be noted

127   that the contribution of NO_2 heterogeneous reaction to HONO greatly depends on the choice

128   of NO_2 uptake coefficient (γ_{NO2}), which varies from 10^{-8} to 10^{-4} in different studies (Meng et

129   al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020b; Ge et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2020d). Vehicle emissions

130   also have similar characteristics because the HONO emission rate strongly depends on the

131   emission factor, i.e. the ratio of $HONO/NO_x$ (Kramer et al., 2020; R. Kurtenbach et al., 2001;

132   Zhang et al., 2019c), which ranges from 0.03% to 2.1% (Liao et al., 2021). For other HONO

133   sources, the relative importance is affected by many parameters, such as reaction kinetics for

134   photolysis of nitrate, OH concentrations for homogeneous reaction between NO and OH,

135   emission fluxes for soil emissions, and so on. Thus, the HONO budget still has a large

136   uncertainty. In particular, it is an open question how to prove the importance of a specific

137   reaction pathway or a source of atmospheric HONO.

138   Special events taking place on large spatial scales provide us with an alternative

139 opportunity to disclose the mysteries of the HONO budget because of obvious and potentially

140 large changes in some of the HONO sources. During the Spring Festival in 2020, the lockdown

141 measures during the new coronavirus disease -19 (COVID-19) pandemic led to a significant

142 reduction in primary emissions from traffic and industries. The magnitude and speed of changes

143 in air pollutant emissions have been considered the largest changes in the history of modern

144 atmospheric chemistry (Kroll et al., 2020). We conducted continuous field observations of

145 HONO and other air pollutants from January 1, 2020, to March 6, 2020, in downtown Beijing,

146 aimed at understanding the changes in HONO concentrations and sources during the lockdown

147 period compared to that before.

148 **2. Experimental section**

149 **2.1 Field measurements.**

150 Observations were carried out at the Aerosol and Haze Laboratory, Beijing University of

151 Chemical Technology (AHL/BUCT), which has been described in our previous work (Liu et

152 al., 2020d). Briefly, it is located on the west campus of BUCT, around 550 m from the west

153 third-ring road of Beijing, which is a typical urban observation site. The station is on the rooftop

154 of a 5-story building (about 18 m from the ground). HONO was measured with a homemade

155 Water-based Long-Path Absorption Photometer (LOPAP, Institute of Chemistry, Chinese

156 Academy of Sciences), which has been deployed in field observation studies (Tong et al., 2016;

157 Chen et al., 2020) and has been proven to be a stable and credible instrument for HONO

158 measurements (Crilley et al., 2019). The principle of this instrument is similar to that of a

159 commercial LOPAP (QUMA). Briefly, gas-phase HONO absorbed by deionized water ($\geq$ 18.2

160 MΩ) in a stripping coil reacts with N-(1-naphthyl) ethylenediamine-dihydrochloric acid (0.077

161   mmol L^{-1}) in an acidic solution (2 mmol L^{-1} sulfanilamide in 0.12 mol L^{-1} HCl) to form an azo

162   dye, which is measured at 550 nm with a spectrometer equipped with a LWCC (Liquid

163   Waveguide Capillary Cell, LWCC-3250, WPI, USA). The sampling rate was 1 L min^{-1}

164   controlled by a flow meter and a diaphragm pump. The flow rate of absorption liquid was 0.5

165   ml min^{-1} controlled by a peristaltic pump. The limit of detection of the LOPAP was 0.01 ppb

166   for a sampling duration of 60 s. The instrument was calibrated with nitrite standard solution

167   before and after each measurement about every three weeks and calibrated by zero air every

168   24 hours to check zero drift. An overestimation of HONO concentration (6.7%), calibrated in

169   control experiments with 100 ppb of NO_2 at 50% RH due to the interference of NO_2 in the

170   sampling inlet (about 30 cm of Teflon tube), was accounted for when we calculating the HONO

171   concentrations in this work.

172   A set of commercial analyzers for NO_x, SO_2, CO, and O_3 (Thermo Scientific 42i, 43i, 48i,

173   49i) were also available. Notably, the NO_2 measured by 42i includes HONO, and we have

174   corrected it. $PM_{2.5}$ was measured using a Tapered Element Oscillating Microbalance (TEOM,

175   Thermo Fisher Scientific, 1405). The chemical composition of non-refractory $PM_{2.5}$ (NR-$PM_{2.5}$)

176   was measured using a Time-of-flight Aerosol Chemical Speciation Monitor (ToF-ACSM,

177   Aerodyne). Meteorological parameters including temperature, RH, pressure, wind speed and

178   direction, and ultraviolet radiation (A and B) were measured using a weather station (AWS 310

179   at AHL/BUCT station, Vaisala). The planetary boundary layer (PBL) height and visibility were

180   measured using a ceilometer (CL51, Vaisala) and a visibility sensor (PWD22, Vaisala),

181   respectively. The photolysis rate (J_{NO2}) was measured via a continuous measurement of the

182   actinic flux in the wavelength range of 285-375 nm using a J_{NO2} filter-radiometer (2-pi-J_{NO2}

183   radiometer, Metcon). All instruments used in the measurement as well as their detection limits

184   are shown in Table S2.

185   **2.2 HONO budget calculation.**

186   Potential sources of HONO include direct emissions (vehicle emissions, soil emissions, indoor

187   emissions, biomass combustion), the gas-phase reaction between NO and OH radicals, the

188   photolysis of nitrate in particulate matter, and the heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on the ground

189   and particulate matter surfaces. The sources including vehicle emissions ($E_{vehicle}$), soil

190   emissions (E_{soil}), the reaction of NO and OH (P_{NO-OH}), the photolysis of particulate nitrate

191   ($P_{nitrate}$), and the heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 ($P_{aerosol}$ and P_{ground}). At present, there are

192   relatively few studies on indoor emissions. Biomass combustion is an unimportant HONO

193   source in downtown Beijing in winter according to a previous study (Zhang et al., 2019b). Thus,

194   these two sources are not accounted for in this work. The major sinks of HONO, including dry

195   deposition ($L_{deposition}$), the homogeneous reaction with OH radicals ($L_{HONO-OH}$), photolysis

196   ($L_{photolysis}$), and vertical and horizontal transport (T_{trans}), are considered.

197   The calculation method and details in parameterization are shown in Table 1. Briefly, the

198   budget and estimated concentration of HONO can be calculated according to the following

199   equations,

200    $$\frac{dHONO}{dt} = E_{soil} + E_{vehicle} + P_{NO-OH} + P_{nitrate} + P_{aerosol} + P_{ground} - $$

201    $$L_{photolysis} - L_{HONO-OH} - L_{deposition} - T_{trans} \tag{1}$$

202    $$HONO_{est,t_2} = HONO_{obs,t_1} + Sources_{t_2} - Sinks_{t_2} \tag{2}$$

203   where $\frac{dHONO}{dt}$ is the change rate of HONO mixing ratios (ppb h^{-1}), $HONO_{est,t_2}$ is the

204   estimated concentration of HONO at time t2, while $HONO_{obs,t_1}$ is the observed concentration

205 of HONO at time t_1. Given that the result of potential source contribution function (PSCF, Fig

206 S2), the source distribution of HONO between BCNY and COVID was highly similar and the

207 trend of HONO was similar (Pearson'r=0.78) between BUCT and Institute of Atmospheric

208 Physics (IAP, 8 km away from BUCT), the steady state analysis on HONO is appliable and

209 reasonable even though the lifetime of HONO is several minutes in the atmosphere. In addition,

210 the instrumentation time resolution of LOPAP was 6 s. We calculated the variation coefficient

211 for the datasets with different time resolutions, i.e., 1 h vs 6 s. A small variation coefficient of

212 ~0.02-0.05 implies that a small uncertainty of the HONO budget might result from the lifetime

213 of HONO. Thus, we think the possible uncertainty should not have a large influence on our

214 conclusions when the budget is compared at a fixed site between two different periods. The

215 input parameters for the parameterization scheme are detailed in Table S3 (M0).

216   The emission rate (E_{HONO}, ppb h^{-1}) of soil and vehicle were calculated based on the

217 emission flux (F_{HONO}, g m^{-2} s^{-1}), the PBL height (H, m), and the conversion factor (α, g m^{-3} s^{-1}

218 to ppb h^{-1}). For vehicle emissions, according to our previous research at the same site, the

219 emission factor (EF, HONO/NO$_x$) was selected as 1.09% (Liu et al., 2020d), which is

220 comparable to the actual values in Hong Kong ($1.2 \pm 0.4\%$ and $1.24 \pm 0.35\%$) (Liang et al.,

221 2017; Xu et al., 2015), Guangzhou (1.0%) (Li et al., 2012), Beijing (1.3% and 1.41%) (Zhang

222 et al., 2019c; Meng et al., 2020), and other places. For secondary formation, the calculation of

223 the production rate (P_{HONO}, ppb h^{-1}) is shown in Table 1, in which k_1 is the rate constant of the

224 quasi-first order reaction (s^{-1}). For the heterogeneous reaction of NO$_2$, we calculated the

225 conversion rate in the light of Eqs. (3)-(5):

226 $$k_{het}^0 = \frac{HONOcorr,t_2 - HONOcorr,t_1}{\overline{NO_2} \times (t_2 - t_1)} \qquad (3)$$

$$k_{het}^{co} = \frac{2\times\left[\frac{HONOcorr,t_2}{CO_{t_2}}\times\overline{CO} - \frac{HONOcorr,t_1}{CO_{t_1}}\times\overline{CO}\right]}{(t_2-t_1)\times\left[\frac{NO_{2,t_2}}{CO_{t_2}}+\frac{NO_{2,t_1}}{CO_{t_1}}\right]\times\overline{CO}}$$

$$= \frac{2\times\left[\frac{HONOcorr,t_2}{CO_{t_2}} - \frac{HONOcorr,t_1}{CO_{t_1}}\right]}{(t_2-t_1)\times\left[\frac{NO_{2,t_2}}{CO_{t_2}}+\frac{NO_{2,t_1}}{CO_{t_1}}\right]} \qquad (4)$$

$$k_{het} = \frac{1}{2}\times(k_{het}^0 + k_{het}^{co}) \qquad (5)$$

where k_{het} is the quasi-first-order rate constant of the transformation to HONO (s^{-1}), k_{het}^0

and k_{het}^{co} are the reaction rate constants after uncalibrated and CO calibrated, respectively

(Zhang et al., 2020). To decrease the contribution of boundary layer height variation on the k_{het}

calculations, we normalized HONO concentration to CO concentration as the same as reported

in the literature (Zhang et al., 2019c; Li et al., 2012). $\overline{NO_2}$ and $\overline{CO}$ are the mean

concentration of NO$_2$ and CO from t$_1$ to t$_2$. CO_t and $NO_{2,t}$ are mixing ratios of CO and NO$_2$,

respectively, at the measuring time t. HONO$_{corr,t}$ (ppb) is the HONO concentration corrected

after subtracting the primary emissions (including vehicle and soil emissions, and the HONO

produced by the homogeneous reaction of NO and OH and the photolysis of nitrate) at the

measuring time t according to Eq. (6):

$$HONO_{corr,t} = HONO_t - E_{soil,t} - E_{vehicle,t} - P_{NO-OH,t} - P_{nitrate,t} \quad (6)$$

it is worth noting that the $HONOcorr$ only accounted for vehicle exhausts in previous HONO

budget studies. This may overestimate the contribution of heterogeneous reactions to HONO

sources because other emission sources and homogeneous reactions should also contribute to

HONO.

Meanwhile, when estimating the upper limit of the contribution of heterogeneous

reactions, we take a small conversion factor (HONO/NOx) of 0.4% as the lower limit of vehicle

emissions, in contrast to the normal value of 1.09% (Liu et al., 2020d). We normalize the

248 EI_{NO_X} caused by the vehicle with the measured NO_X during the observations. This method

249 has also been widely used in previous studies (Liu et al., 2019b; Li et al., 2018). In addition,

250 soil emissions are calculated using the lower limit (Oswald et al., 2013). The mean value of

251 k_{het} during the BCNY (before the Chinese New Year) was 0.0051 h^{-1}, while it was 0.006 h^{-1}

252 in the COVID-19 lockdown, which are consistent with previous studies, such as Ji'nan (0.0068

253 h^{-1}) (Li et al., 2018) and Shanghai (0.007 h^{-1}) (Wang et al., 2013), while less than those in

254 Shijiazhuang (0.016 h^{-1}) (Liu et al., 2020c), Kathmandu (0.014 h^{-1}) (Yu et al., 2009), and

255 Guangzhou (0.016 h^{-1}) (Qin et al., 2009).

Table 1. Summary of parameters for HONO sources and sinks

HONO formation/loss pathways	Calculations	Parameters	Reference
Soil emissions → HONO		$F_{HONO,soil}$	1
Vehicle emissions → HONO	$E_{HONO} = \alpha \times F_{HONO}/H$	$F_{HONO,vehicle} = (EI_{NOx,vehicle}/A) \times$ (HONO/NOx)$_{vehicle}$	2
NO + OH → HONO		$k_{NO-OH} = 7.2 \times 10^{-12}$ cm^3 molecule^{-1} s^{-1}	3
NO$_3^-$ $\xrightarrow{h\nu}$ HONO		$J_{NO3^-} = 8.24 \times 10^{-5}/3.59 \times 10^{-7} \times J_{HNO3,MCM}$	
NO$_2$ + H$_2$O $\xrightarrow{aerosol\ surface}$ HONO	$P_{HONO} = 3600 \times k \times c_{precursor}$	$k_{het} = (\gamma_{NO2} \times A_s \times \omega/4) \times Y_{HONO}$	
NO$_2$ + H$_2$O $\xrightarrow{ground\ surface}$ HONO		$k_{het} = (\gamma_{NO2} \times \delta \times \omega/4H) \times Y_{HONO}$	4
HONO $\xrightarrow{h\nu}$ NO + OH	$L_{photolysis} = 3600 \times J_{HONO} \times HONO$	$J_{HONO,\ MCM}$	
HONO + OH → H$_2$O + NO$_2$	$L_{HONO-OH} = 3600 \times k_{HONO-OH} \times HONO \times OH$	$k_{HONO-OH} = 6 \times 10^{-12}$ cm^3 molecule^{-1} s^{-1}	5
HONO deposition	$L_{deposition} = (3600 \times V_d \times HONO)/H$	$V_d = 0.001$m s^{-1}	6
HONO transport (vertical and horizontal)	$T_{trans} = k_{dilution} \times (HONO-HONO_{background})$	$k_{dilution} = 0.23$ h^{-1}	7

$F_{HONO,soil}$ (soil emission flux) was calculated by the temperature-dependent HONO emission flux on grasslands with a water content of 35% to 45%. A is the urban area of Beijing, $EI_{NOx,vehicle}$ is the emission inventory of NO$_x$ from vehicle (g s^{-1}). The calculation of the HONO emission flux, during BCNY, was based on the hourly NO$_x$ emission inventory of Beijing vehicles ($F_{HONO}=F_{NOx} \times$ (HONO/NOx)$_{vehicle}$), while during COVID-19, it was combined with the hourly average traffic index (www.nitrafficindex.com). The (HONO/NOx)$_{vehicle}$ was selected as 1.09% (Liu et al., 2020d). $c_{precursor}$ is the concentration of the precursor (ppb). The OH concentration was estimated using the same method as in the previous study (Liu et al., 2020c). The mean photolysis frequency of nitrate (J_{NO3^-}) was normalized to the measured UV light intensity. A_s is the surface area concentration of the reaction surface (m^2 m^{-3}); ω is the average molecular velocity (m s^{-1}); γ is the uptake coefficient of the precursor, was assumed to be 2×10^{-6}; Y_{HONO} is the yield of HONO. δ is the surface roughness, in this study, we used 3.85 for our calculation (Liu et al., 2020d). $HONO$ and $HONO_{background}$ are the HONO concentrations at the observation site and background site, respectively. J_{HONO} is simulated in a box model using J_{NO2} data observed at our site.

1: (Oswald et al., 2013). 2: (Yang et al., 2019). 3: (Liu et al., 2020c). 4: (Liu et al., 2020d). 5: (Kanaya et al., 2007). 6: (Han et al., 2017b). 7: (Dillon et al., 2002).

258   We further derived the uptake coefficient of NO₂ (γ_{NO2}) on both ground and particle

259   surfaces according to Eq. (7).

$$k_{het} = \frac{\gamma_{NO2} \times A_s \times \omega}{4} \times Y_{HONO} \tag{7}$$

261   The calculated γ_{NO2} ranged from 1×10^{-6} to 3×10^{-6}. Therefore, we choose

262   2×10^{-6} to calculate the heterogeneous yield of HONO, which is comparable with those

263   derived in urban environments like Ji'nan (1.4×10^{-6}) (Li et al., 2018) and the laboratory

264   experiments (10^{-7} to 10^{-6}) (Han et al., 2013; Stemmler, 2007; Han et al., 2017a) on different

265   particles, but lower than the uptake coefficient of 10^{-5} reported in other studies (Zhang et al.,

266   2020; Ge et al., 2019).

267   The OH concentration was calculated according to Eq. (8), which is based on the function

268   of the photolysis rates (J) of O₃ and NO₂, and the NO₂ mixing ratio (NO_2).

$$OH = \frac{4.1 \times 10^9 \times (J_{NO2})^{0.19} \times (J_{O1D})^{0.83} \times (140NO_2 + 1)}{0.41NO_2^2 + 1.7NO_2 + 1} \tag{8}$$

270   Notably, this parameterization scheme was developed based on measurements at rural sites

271   (Ehhalt and Rohrer, 2000), where NOx concentrations were lower than in urban environments.

272   Alicke et al. (Alicke, 2002) found that OH concentrations estimated with this scheme were in

273   good agreement with those calculated according to a pseudo-steady state method during the

274   pollution period in urban environments (such as Milan), although some uncertainty was

275   expected. In our previous study (Liu et al., 2020d), we also found that the estimated OH

276   concentrations using this method were comparable with those observed values in the North

277   China Plain (Tan et al., 2019). Thus, daytime OH concentrations estimated using this method

278   should be overall credible although the uncertainty is inevitable. The nocturnal OH

279   concentration in North China generally varied from 1.0×10^5 molecules cm^{-3} (Ma et al., 2019;

280 Tan et al., 2018) in winter to 5×10^5 molecules cm^{-3} in summer (Tan et al., 2017; Tan et al.,

281 2020). We further parameterized the nocturnal OH concentrations according to atmospheric

282 temperature to reflect the seasonal variations of OH concentration. Fig. S3 summarizes the

283 observed OH concentrations in the North China Plain. The results estimated in this study are

284 slightly lower than those observed in Wangdu (Rural), but almost consistent with those in

285 Beijing (Urban) and Huairou (Suburb). In summary, we should be optimistic about the

286 estimation of OH concentration. Then a sensitivity analysis was performed to understand the

287 influence of the uncertainty of OH concentration on HONO sources as discussed in Section 3.3.

288   The loss rate of HONO, including dry deposition ($L_{deposition}$), homogeneous reaction

289 with OH radicals ($L_{HONO-OH}$), photolysis ($L_{photolysis}$), and vertical and horizontal transport

290 (T_{trans}), were calculated using the equations shown in Table 1. Where J_{HONO} is the photolysis

291 rate of HONO (s^{-1}), $k_{HONO-OH}$ is the second-order reaction rate constant between HONO and

292 OH, V_d is the dry deposition rate of HONO, and $K_{dilution}$ is the dilution rate (including both

293 vertical and horizontal transport). The details are described in our previous work (Liu et al.,

294 2020c; Liu et al., 2020d).

295   Oracle Crystal Ball (version 11.1.2.4, Oracle's software for modeling, prediction,

296 simulation, and optimization) (Rahmani et al., 2023) to evaluate the overall uncertainty of the

297 parameterization through Monte Carlo simulations. The details are shown in Text S2 in the SI.

298 **3. Results and discussion**

299 **3.1 Air quality during observations.**

300 Figure 1 shows the time series of the concentration and relative proportion of non-refractory

301 components in $PM_{2.5}$, trace gases (SO_2, O_3, CO, NO, NO_2, and NO_x), and meteorological

302   parameters (temperature, relative humidity (RH), and pressure). We divide the sampling period

303   into two sub-periods, i.e., P1 from January 1 to January 24 (BCNY, before the Chinese New

304   Year) and P2 from January 25 to March 6 (COVID-19 lockdown).

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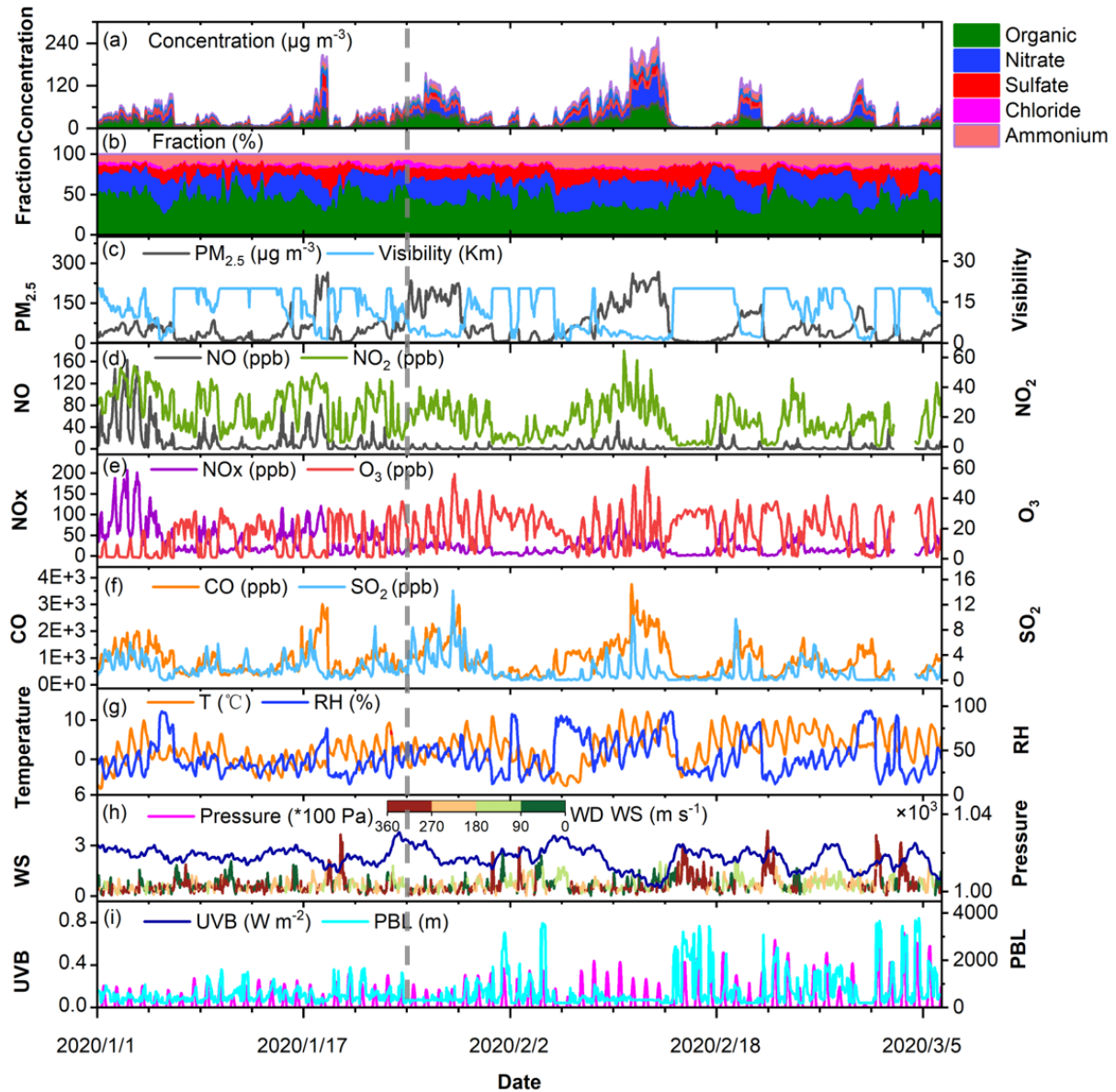


Figure 1. An overview of the measurement of the mass concentrations of the different

components of non-refractory-PM$_{2.5}$ (NR-PM$_{2.5}$), the mass fraction of the individual

components, PM$_{2.5}$, and meteorological parameters, NO$_x$ (NO, NO$_2$), O$_3$, CO and SO$_2$ in 1-hour

average from 1 January to 6 March 2020. Meteorological parameters consist of visibility, PBL

heights, UVB, wind speed, wind direction, Pressure, RH, and temperature. The observations

311   are divided into two phases (P1:2020.01.01-2020.01.24 and P2:2020.01.25-2020.03.06).

312

313   It can be seen from Fig. 1 that during P1, there was only one heavy pollution incident

314   lasting one to two days, while there were two serious pollution events lasting more than two

315   days ($PM_{2.5}$ > 75 µg m^{-3}) in the P2 stage. Table S4 summarizes the statistical results of the wind

316   speed, $PM_{2.5}$, RH, T, HONO, trace gases, and NR-$PM_{2.5}$ for the entire measurement period.

317   During P1, the measured concentration of $PM_{2.5}$ varied between 0.2-288 µg m^{-3} and the mean

318   concentration was 47.2 ± 44.5 (mean ± 1σ) µg m^{-3}. In contrast, they were 0.3-258 µg m^{-3} and

319   69.9 ± 67.2 µg m^{-3}, respectively, during P2. The mean concentrations of NO_x decreased

320   significantly (P < 0.05) from 45.35 ± 38.86 ppb in P1 to 19.44 ± 14.42 ppb in P2, dropping by

321   about 57%. This is close to the reduction amplitude (50%) reported by Wang et al. (Wang et

322   al., 2020a) but lower than that (76%) proposed by Lv et al (Lv et al., 2020). In particular, the

323   NO mean concentrations dropped from 18.42 ± 29.24 ppb (ranging from 0.03 to 163 ppb) in

324   P1 to 2.4 ± 5.46 ppb (ranging from 0.01 to 51 ppb). The average hourly concentration of NO_2

325   in the P1 phase was 26.9 ± 13.4 ppb, while it was 17.18 ± 11.3 ppb in P2. The NO_2

326   concentration dropped by about 36% from P1 to P2, which is similar to the recently reported

327   findings (ranging from 36% to 53%) (Zhao et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020b; Wang et al., 2021).

328   According to the emission inventory of NO_x, traffic and industry contributed 46.7% and 31.3%

329   to NO_x emissions in Beijing, respectively (Zheng et al., 2014). This means the decrease in NOx

330   concentration should be explained by both reductions in traffic and industrial emissions (Lv et

331   al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020a; Zhao et al., 2020). In particular, traffic emissions during P2

332   should play an important role in local NO reduction. However, as the temperature and

333 ultraviolet light irradiation increased and the NO_x concentration decreased (Kroll et al., 2020;

334 Le et al., 2020), the average concentration of O_3 during P2 was 21.31 ± 11.73 ppb, which was

335 significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher than 12.16 ± 10.79 ppb during P1. This result is similar to the

336 71.4% increase in O_3 in Shijiazhuang during the same period (Liu et al., 2020c). The

337 concentrations of SO_2 were in the range of 0.02-8.56 ppb with a mean value of 2.09 ± 1.35 ppb

338 in P1, while it varied from 0.01 to 14.23 ppb with the mean concentration of 1.49 ± 1.99 ppb

339 during P2, suggesting slightly decreased contribution of coal combustion during P2 (Fig. 1i).

340 This is similar to that reported by Cui et al (Cui et al., 2020) and Shen et al (Shen et al., 2021).

341 In addition, it can be seen from Fig. 1 that the change trends of $PM_{2.5}$ and CO are synchronized,

342 which also means that both primary emissions and secondary generation contribute to the

343 accumulation of $PM_{2.5}$ concentration (Liu et al., 2020c).

344 It is worth noting that changes in atmospheric pollutant concentrations are affected by

345 both emissions and meteorology. Especially, during the lockdown period, meteorological

346 conditions in Beijing were not conducive to the dispersion of pollutants, thus the impact of

347 meteorological conditions on the concentration of these pollutants needs to be assessed. We

348 use the random forest algorithm of machine learning to remove the influence of meteorology

349 from air quality time series data by a deweather method. The details are present in Text S1 in

350 the SI. The model performs well in predicting the concentrations of pollutants compared to the

351 observations in both the training and test datasets (Table S5). The concentrations and relative

352 changes of each pollutant after deweather are recorded in Table S6. The $PM_{2.5}$ concentration

353 after deweather increased significantly from 45.22 ± 28.56 in P1 to 67.92 ± 57.97 µg m^{-3} in P2 at

354 a confidence level of 0.05, with an increase of 50.2%. The mean concentration of HONO was

355 0.89±0.37 ppb in P1, while it decreased to 0.51±0.25 ppb in P2, with a drop of 42.70%; The

356 concentrations of NO and NO_2 significantly decreased from 15.44±18.40 and 23.28±7.28 ppb

357 in P1 to 3.24±2.05 and 16.43±5.98 ppb in P2, respectively, which decreased by 79.02% and

358 29.42% respectively; SO_2 decreased from 2.27±0.69 in P1 to 1.48±1.18 ppb in P2, a decrease

359 of approximately 34.8%; CO increased from 823.60±318.92 in P1 to 896±488.29 ppb in P2

360 (an increase of 8.79%) and O_3 increased from 16.98±5.62 to 22.60±4.10 ppb, an increase of

361 about 33.1%, which was much lower than the change range of observed values (75.08%). As

362 shown in Table S6, meteorological conditions have a significant impact on O_3 concentration.

363 The impact was +39.64% and +6.15% in P1 and P2, respectively. The impact of deweather on

364 NO in the two periods was -16.18% and +32.79%, respectively. It was -13.75% and -4.81%,

365 respectively, for NO_2. However, the changes of other species in the two periods after deweather

366 fluctuated between 2.3% and 7.8%. This implies that meteorological conditions have an

367 important impact on the concentrations of NO and O_3, while meteorological factors have little

368 impact on HONO, SO_2, CO, and $PM_{2.5}$.

369   It can be seen from Figure 1 combined with Table S4 in SI. All the major components of

370 $PM_{2.5}$, including sulfate, nitrate, ammonium, chloride, and organic aerosol, increased obviously

371 in P2 compared to P1. Throughout the entire observation period, organic matter and nitrate

372 dominated the composition of $PM_{2.5}$. The proportion of nitrate in inorganic salts increased to

373 31.2% in P2, up from 28.1% in P1. Although the sulfate concentration increased, its proportion

374 within inorganic salts slightly decreased on haze days, going from 16.5% in P1 to 15.2% in P2.

375 Thus, the ratio of NO_3^- to SO_4^{2-} during pollution events increased significantly from 1.76 in P1

376 to 2.10 in P2 (P < 0.05). This is similar to previous findings reported by Sun (Sun et al., 2020).

377   These findings suggest that the decrease in anthropogenic emissions during the P2 period

378   resulted in a significant reduction (After the T-test, it is significant at a confidence level of 0.01.)

379   in gas precursors (Table S4), but it did not lead to a corresponding reduction in secondary

380   aerosol species during periods of pollution. This is supported by the increased potential

381   secondary aerosol formation under pollution conditions (Sun et al., 2020). For example, higher

382   values of the SOR (sulfur oxidation ratio, molar fraction of sulfate in total sulfur including

383   sulfate and SO_2) and NOR (nitrogen oxidation ratio, molar fraction of nitrate in total nitrogen,

384   including nitrate and NO_2), i.e., 0.63 and 0.34, were observed in P2 than those (0.48 and 0.14)

385   in P1. Under stagnant weather conditions (wind speed < 2 m s^{-1}), higher temperatures and RH

386   as shown in Table S4 might facilitate the conversion from precursors into particles (Liu et al.,

387   2020d). The above results indicate that the air pollution dominated by secondary formation is

388   much more serious in P2, which is supported by both the increased concentration and the

389   greater number of pollution days in P2 than in P1, even though primary emissions decreased

390   obviously.

391   **3.2 Influence of Chinese New Year and the COVID-2019 epidemic event on HONO**

392   **concentration in Beijing.**

393   Figure 2 displays the time series of the HONO concentration, the HONO/NO_2 ratio, and the

394   traffic index (www.nitrafficindex.com). In Fig. 2b, there is a significant decrease in the traffic

395   index ($P < 0.05$), indicating reduced traffic congestion during the COVID-19 lockdown (P2

396   period) compared to the P1 period. The HONO/NO_2 ratio is frequently used to indicate the

397   conversion of NO_2 to HONO through heterogeneous reactions (Sun et al., 2013). A higher

398   HONO/NO_2 indicates that the heterogeneous conversion process plays a more significant role

399   in HONO production. However, as depicted in Fig. 2b, both the traffic index and HONO exhibit

400   a similar decreasing trend, while the HONO/NO$_2$ ratio remains relatively stable. Notably, both

401   the traffic index and the NO concentration experienced a steep decline after January 24,

402   coinciding with a significant decrease ($P < 0.05$) in HONO concentration. Furthermore, as

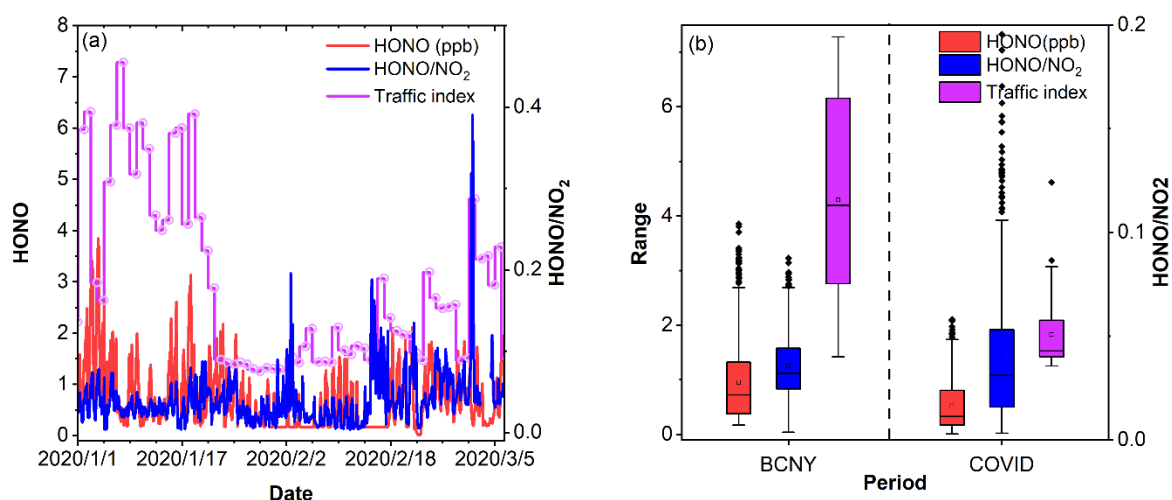
403   shown in Fig. S4, there is a strong correlation between HONO and NO$_x$ in both P1 and P2.

404   However, HONO concentration does not track PM$_{2.5}$ concentration well. These results imply

405   that HONO might be more influenced by vehicle emissions than by heterogeneous reactions

406   on aerosol surfaces. This contrasts with prior studies that heterogeneous reactions on aerosol

407   surfaces are the primary source of HONO in pollution events in Beijing (Liu et al., 2014; Cui

408   et al., 2018; Meng et al., 2020).

409

410   **Figure 2.** (**a**) Times series of HONO, traffic index, and HONO/NO$_2$, (**b**) Box plots of HONO,

411   HONO/NO$_2$, and the traffic index in Beijing during different periods (BCNY=P1, LOCK=P2).

412

413   Table S7 summarizes the mean concentrations of HONO, NO$_2$, NO, and PM$_{2.5}$ over the

414   two periods in this study as well as the data reported in previous studies. During P1, HONO

415   concentration ranged from 0.17 to 3.85 ppb, with a mean value of 0.97 ± 0.74 ppb. This

416   concentration is similar to previous observations, such as in Beijing, Xi'an, Jinan, Shanghai,

417   Hong Kong, and Rome, which all ranged from 0.95 to 1.15 ppb (Acker et al., 2006; Wang et

418   al., 2013; Xu et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2020d; Li et al., 2018). However, during

419   the COVID-19 lockdown, the HONO concentration decreased to 0.53 ± 0.44 ppb, representing

420   a drop of 45.3% compared with that in BCNY. After deweather, the HONO concentration

421   decreased significantly from 0.89±0.37 in P1 to 0.51±0.25 ppb in P2 at a confidence level of

422   0.05, with a decrease of 42.7%. This means that meteorology has little impact on HONO. This

423   value is comparable to the concentrations reported in the literature for clean days in December

424   2016 in Beijing (0.5 ± 0.2 ppb) and in the winter of 2018 in Xiamen (0.52-0.61 ppb). At the

425   same time, as discussed in the previous section, the NO concentration decreased by nearly 87%

426   from BCNY to COVID-19 lockdown, and the NO_2 concentration dropped by about 36%.

427   Consequently, we can conclude that the concentrations of HONO, NO, and NO_2 were the most

428   affected pollutants during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

429   Figure 3 shows the diurnal curves of HONO, NO_x, NO, NO_2, HONO/NO_2, O_3, SO_2, and

430    $PM_{2.5}\times NO_2$ during P1 (BCNY) and P2 (COVID-19 lockdown). The black and red lines

431   represent P1 and P2, respectively. HONO shows a similar trend in both periods. After sunset,

432   HONO began to accumulate due to the attenuation of solar radiation and the development of

433   the boundary layer, reaching maximum values of 1.41 ± 0.83 ppb and 0.92 ± 0.64 ppb around

434   7:00 during P1 and P2, respectively. Subsequently, due to the impact of the boundary layer and

435   rapid photolysis, the HONO concentration gradually decreased and remained at a low level

436   until sunset, with the corresponding minimum value of 0.43 ± 0.24 ppb and 0.27 ± 0.17 ppb at

437   about 15:00. Similar to HONO, the NO_2 concentration shows an upward trend during the

morning rush hour. Its peak appeared at 7:00 (BCNY: 31.4 ± 9.23 ppb; COVID-19 lockdown: 23.3 ± 10.74 ppb), and then dropped rapidly and remained at a low level due to photochemical processes and the development of the boundary layer. The minimum concentration occurs around 14:00 to 15:00 (BCNY: 18.17 ± 10.69 ppb; COVID-19 lockdown: 11.0 ± 7.64 ppb). After sunset, NO_2 began to increase again. It is worth noting that during BCNY, both NO_2 and NO exhibited a prominent evening peak, whereas there was no such evening peak during the COVID-19 lockdown. Thus, NO_x and NO_2 had similar changing trends, i.e., the morning peak observed in both periods with the highest mean values of 65.93 ± 50.37 ppb and 31.7 ± 21.47 ppb in BCNY and COVID-19 lockdown, respectively.

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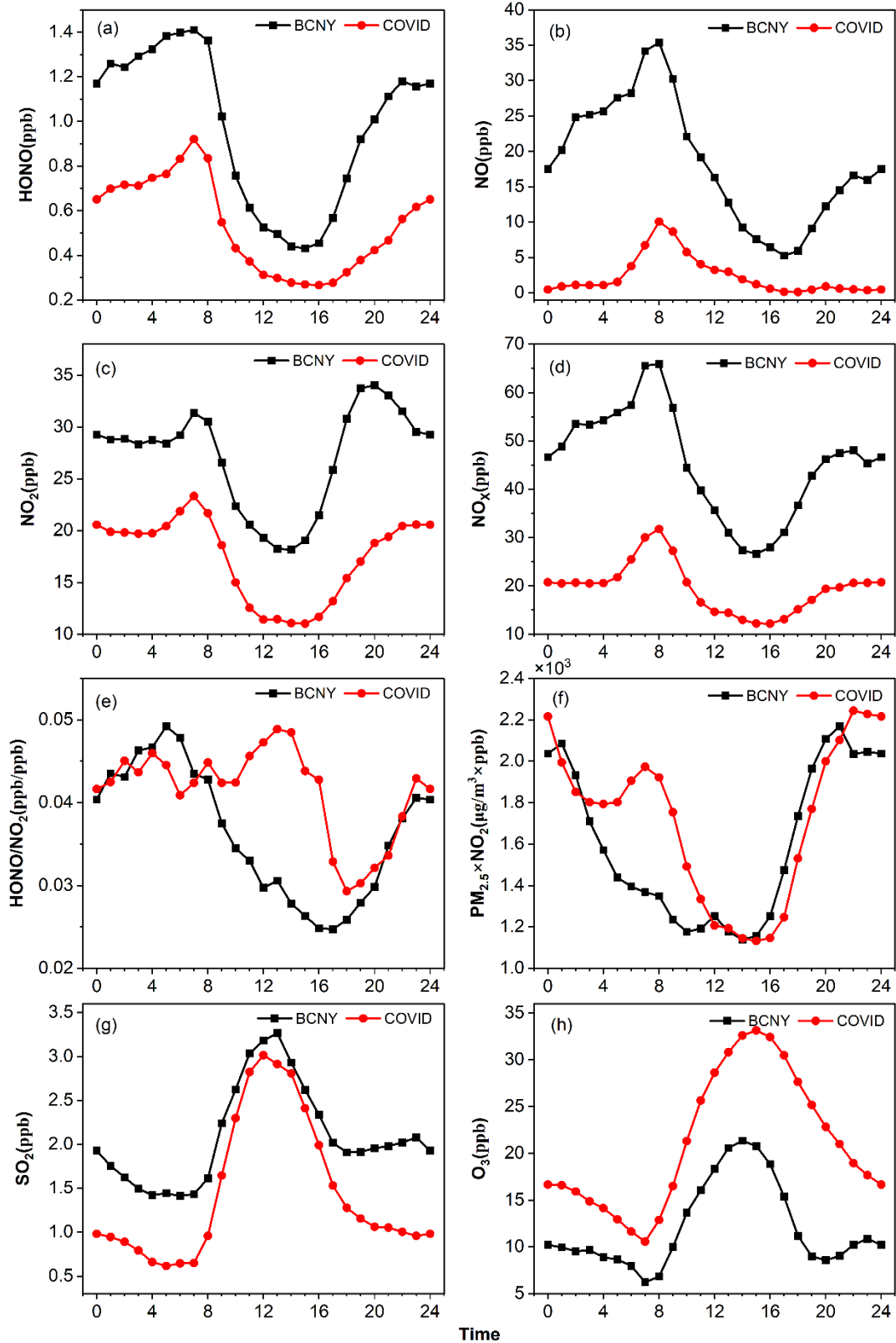
Figure 3. Diurnal variation of HONO, NO, NO$_2$, NO$_x$, HONO/NO$_2$, PM$_{2.5}$×NO$_2$, SO$_2$, O$_3$. The

black lines are the diurnal curves before CNY and the red ones are during the COVID-19

450   lockdown.

451

452   NO and HONO showed a similar trend in P1. They began to decline continuously after

453   sunrise and continued to rise after sunset. The peaks of NO were 35.40 ± 43.55 ppb and $10.0 \pm$

454   12.67 ppb in P1 and P2, respectively. It is worth noting that the upward trend of NO

455   concentration in the afternoon of the P2 stage was not obvious, as the absolute concentration

456   of NO was very low. O_3 and HONO showed opposite diurnal curves, with the maximum O_3

457   concentrations occurring in the afternoon, which were 21.35 ± 9.31 ppb and 33.14 ± 10.26 ppb

458   in P1 and P2, respectively. SO_2 and O_3 exhibited similar trends, with the maximum values in

459   P1 and P2 were 3.26 ± 2.19 ppb and 3.01 ± 3.06 ppb at 13:00, and their lowest values were

460   1.41 ± 0.68 ppb and 0.62 ± 0.82 ppb at 5:00 or 6:00.

461   Previous studies proposed that the heterogeneous reactions of NO_2 on the aerosol surface

462   play an important role in HONO production. Specifically, this pathway was considered the

463   major source of HONO on polluted days (Cui et al., 2018; Meng et al., 2020; Zhang et al.,

464   2020). $PM_{2.5} \times NO_2$ can be used as an indicator for the heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on the

465   surface of aerosols (Cui et al., 2018). It was found that the value of $PM_{2.5} \times NO_2$ in P2 ($1697 \pm$

466   2142) was slightly higher than that in P1 (1583 ± 1967). In the early morning, the product of

467    $PM_{2.5}$ and NO_2 in the P2 stage was even higher than that in the P1 stage. On the other hand, the

468   ratio of $HONO/NO_2$ is usually used to evaluate the formation of HONO during the conversion

469   of NO_2. As shown in Fig. 3, in the P1 stage, the $HONO/NO_2$ ratio shows a similar daily trend

470   to HONO, which began to rise after sunset and reached a peak at night and then decreased in

471   the early morning due to the increase of NO_2 concentrations and the photolysis of HONO. In

472 the P2 stage, the variation of $HONO/NO_2$ is different from that of the P1. The $HONO/NO_2$ in

473 the P2 period was higher than that in the P1 stage, especially in the daytime, although the values

474 of $HONO/NO_2$ in both stages (P1: 0.036 ± 0.016; P2: 0.041 ± 0.038) were lower than that

475 (0.052-0.080) reported by Cui et al (Cui et al., 2018). Subsequently, we further analyzed

476 $HONO_{corr}/NO_2$ (details shown in Sect. 2.2). The $HONO_{corr}/NO_2$ attributed to secondary

477 formation via heterogeneous reactions changed obviously after subtracting other secondary

478 HONO sources. As shown in Fig. S5, the daytime peak of $HONO_{corr}/NO_2$ in P2 became more

479 prominent compared with that in Fig. 3e. At the same time, the $HONO_{corr}/NO_2$ (0.038 ± 0.035)

480 in P1 was slightly lower than that in P2 (0.042 ± 0.034). However, the HONO concentration

481 decreased significantly as discussed above. These results suggest that heterogeneous reactions

482 of NO_2 on the aerosol surfaces may not be a major source of HONO because the enhanced

483 potential of heterogeneous reactions indicated by $PM_{2.5} \times NO_2$ and $HONO_{corr}/NO_2$ in P2 contrast

484 with the decreased HONO concentrations compared to P1. In summary, we propose that during

485 our observation period, heterogeneous reactions of NO_2 should have a relatively minor

486 contribution to HONO production.

487 **3.3 Relative change of different sources to HONO budget in Beijing during different**

488 **periods.**

489 Figure 4a-f shows the diurnal variation of HONO production or emission rates for these sources

490 at different stages, and Fig. 4g-l shows the budget of the HONO sources and sinks during P1

491 (BCNY) and P2 (COVID-19 lockdown). The HONO production rate via homogeneous

492 reaction between NO and OH in the P1 period was much higher than that in the P2 period,

493 especially during the daytime. The average rate decreased from 0.145 ± 0.189 ppb h^{-1} in the P1

494   stage to 0.047 ± 0.073 ppb h^{-1} in the P2 stage. The OH concentrations increased slightly from

495   P1 ($4.1 \times 10^5 \pm 5.8 \times 10^5$ cm^{-3}) to P2 ($6.7 \times 10^5 \pm 1.0 \times 10^6$ cm^{-3}). Therefore, the observed decrease

496   in HONO production rate via homogeneous reaction between NO and OH should be ascribed

497   to the substantial reduction of NO concentration as discussed above. It can be seen that the

498   homogeneous reaction between NO and OH is indeed an important source of HONO at night.

499   In previous studies, the nocturnal production of HONO via NO and OH was often ignored

500   because low nighttime OH concentrations were estimated (Fu et al., 2019). However, some

501   studies have shown that the observed nighttime OH concentrations in the Beijing urban area

502   can also be maintained in the order of 10^5 molecules cm^{-3} in winter, which also means that the

503   contribution of the reaction channels of NO and OH to HONO cannot be ignored. In the P1

504   stage, the homogeneous reaction between NO and OH accounted for 13% of the nighttime

505   HONO sources. However, in the daytime, the homogeneous reaction between NO and OH was

506   the most important source of HONO, which accounted for up to 51% of the daytime HONO

507   source. This is consistent with previous studies in urban Beijing (Gu et al., 2021; Jia et al.,

508   2020; Liu et al., 2021). Interestingly, a recent study proposed a new mechanism through smog

509   chamber experiments, that is, NOx photooxidation (reaction of NO and adsorbed HNO$_3$) may

510   be an important daytime HONO source (Song et al., 2023), although it has not yet been verified

511   by field observations. In the P2 stage, its proportion in the night was negligible due to the

512   dramatic decrease in NO concentration during the pandemic event, and the maximal proportion

513   of HONO sources in the daytime was also reduced to 25%. It is worth noting that the

514   parameterization of OH concentration will introduce uncertainty to HONO sources. Table S3

515   shows the sensitivity test for the HONO simulation. An increase of 10% and 200% in OH

concentration in M3 and M4 results in a 24-26% change in the HONO source. It means that the accuracy of the OH measurement is important for understanding the source-sink balance of the HONO.
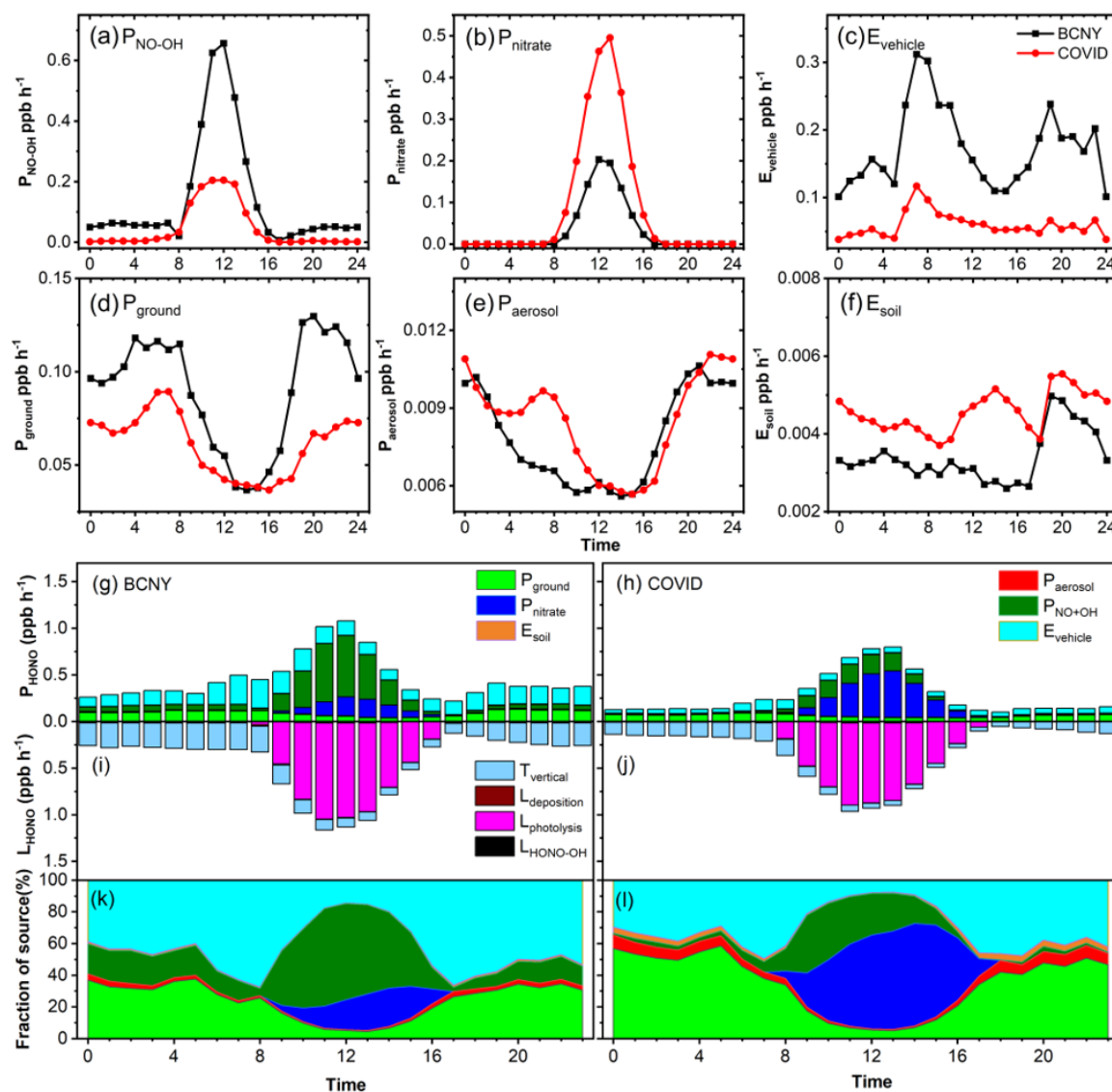
Figure 4. (**a-f**): Diurnal variations in HONO production rate from various sources. The black lines are the diurnal curves before CNY and the red ones are during the COVID-19 lockdown. (**g-l**): Variations of HONO budget. (**g,h**) Diurnal production rates of HONO; (**i,j**) loss rates of HONO (unit: ppb h^{-1}); (**k,l**) relative contributions of each source. Panels (**g**),(**i**), and (**k**) show the data from BCNY, and panels (**h**),(**j**), and (**l**) show the data from the COVID-19 lockdown.

525   The daytime HONO source related to photolysis of nitrate (0.223 ± 0.175 ppb h^{-1}) in the

526   P2 stage was much larger than that (0.107 ± 0.068 ppb h^{-1}) in the P1 stage. It contributed 16%

527   to the daytime HONO source in the P1 period. However, it became the most important daytime

528   source of HONO in the P2 stage, accounting for up to 53%, as both the nitrate concentration

529   and the light intensity increased significantly ($P < 0.05$). Ye et al. (Ye et al., 2016) reported that

530   the photolysis rate constants of nitrate particles on the surface of different materials were in the

531   range of 6.0×10^{-6} - 3.7×10^{-4} s^{-1}. Thus, we used the lower limit value of 6.0×10^{-6} s^{-1} and the

532   upper limit value of 3.7×10^{-4} s^{-1} for sensitivity tests (methods M9 and M10), which resulted in

533   a change of 25% and 95% of HONO sources, respectively.

534   The direct emission rate of HONO from vehicles in the P1 stage was much higher than

535   that in the P2 stage. The emission rate of the P1 stage was between 0.135-0.39 ppb h^{-1}, with a

536   mean value of 0.227 ± 0.071 ppb h^{-1}. This is comparable with the value (0.079-0.32 ppb h^{-1}) in

537   the winter of 2018 (Liu et al., 2020d). In the P2 stage, it decreased to 0.062-0.173 ppb h^{-1}, with

538   a mean value of 0.086 ± 0.027 ppb h^{-1}. This value is slightly higher than the lower limit of

539   vehicle emissions of 0.013-0.076 ppb h^{-1} estimated using an emission factor of 0.18% in our

540   previous study (Liu et al., 2020d), while it is less than the upper limit reported by Li (Li et al.,

541   2018) in Jinan of 0.13 ± 0.06-0.53 ± 0.23 ppb h^{-1}. During the lockdown, the emission rate of

542   HONO from vehicles was reduced by 53%-66% when compared with that before the lockdown.

543   In the P1 period, vehicle emission was an important nighttime source of HONO. It contributed

544   53% to the HONO sources, much higher than heterogeneous reactions of NO_2 on aerosol and

545   ground surfaces (33%) (Fig. S9). In the P2 stage, due to the reduction of transport, the

546   contribution of vehicle emissions to HONO sources decreased to 40%, while the contribution

547 of heterogeneous reactions of NO_2 increased to 53%. This is consistent with the observed

548 decrease in HONO concentrations. The daytime contributions of vehicle emissions to HONO

549 sources were lower than the corresponding nighttime contributions, while it was still higher in

550 the P1 period than in the P2 period. These results mean that vehicles should be important

551 contributors to ambient HONO under typical emission patterns in Beijing. In the sensitivity

552 analysis, the emission factors of 0.008 and 0.0186 were considered in methods M1 and M2,

553 and 8% and 20% changes were found in the simulated HONO sources, respectively. The yield

554 of soil emissions in the P2 stage is also higher than that in the P1 stage due to the temperature

555 rise in the P2 stage because the temperature will affect the soil emission flux (Oswald et al.,

556 2013), while the importance of this source is negligible in this study. In M15 and M16, we

557 amplify and shrink the soil emission flux by 10 times, respectively, and the change of the

558 simulated HONO sources was less than 5%.

559   As shown in Fig. 4e, the heterogeneous reaction rate of NO_2 on aerosols did not change

560 much between the P1 and P2 stages. The average production rate of HONO in the P1 stage was

561 0.007 ± 0.002 ppb h^{-1}, and it was 0.008 ± 0.002 ppb h^{-1} in the P2 stage, showing an increase of

562 about 14%. It is worth noting that the HONO formation rate from the heterogeneous conversion

563 of NO_2 on the surface of aerosol does not decrease, which is caused by the increase in $PM_{2.5}$

564 concentration along with a decrease in NO_2 concentration during the P2 period. If the

565 heterogeneous transformation of NO_2 on particulate surfaces is important, especially in the case

566 of heavy pollution, increased HONO concentrations should be expected instead of a large

567 decrease, as observed in the P2 stage. This is consistent with the changes in $HONO_{corr}/NO_2$ and

568 $PM_{2.5} \times NO_2$ as discussed in Sect. 3.2. For the heterogeneous transformation of NO_2 on the

569 ground and aerosol surfaces, this source is sensitive to the uptake coefficient (γ) of NO_2. For

570 the aerosol surface, here we assume that the upper limit of γ is 10^{-5} (M7) and the lower limit is

571 2×10^{-7} (M8) (Liu et al., 2019b; Liu et al., 2020d). As shown in Table S3, the change in simulated

572 HONO is less than 5%. We reduced and magnified the surface area concentration (A_s) of

573 particulate matter by a factor of 10 in M11 and M12, respectively, and the resulting change in

574 HONO was still less than 10%. It should be noted that HONO is sensitive to the uptake

575 coefficient and surface area concentration. When the uptake coefficient is expanded by 5 times

576 or reduced by 10 times, the absolute HONO flux attributed to heterogeneous reactions increases

577 5 times or decreases 10 times, while the relative contribution is very low due to the small

578 absolute value of heterogeneous reactions compared with other sources.

579 Regarding the heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on ground surfaces, the average formation

580 rate of HONO in the P1 stage was 0.09 ± 0.03 ppb h^{-1}, while it was 0.06 ± 0.02 ppb h^{-1} in the

581 P2 stage. This is ascribed to the significant drop ($P < 0.05$) in NO_2 concentration during the

582 COVID-19 lockdown. Fig. 4k shows that the heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on ground

583 surfaces is also an important nighttime source of HONO. In the P1 stage, heterogeneous

584 reactions on both aerosol and ground surfaces explained 33% of the nighttime HONO source.

585 In the daytime, however, the contribution of heterogeneous reactions to HONO sources

586 dropped rapidly. In the P2 stage, the heterogeneous reaction became the most important

587 nighttime source contributing up to 53% of HONO (Fig. S9). This can be explained by the

588 significant decrease ($P < 0.05$) in NO and direct emissions of HONO from traffic. Similar to

589 heterogeneous reactions on aerosol surfaces, we assumed that the upper limit of γ_{NO2} on

590 ground surfaces was 10^{-5} (M5) and the lower limit was 2×10^{-7} (M6), respectively, and the

591 changes in simulated HONO source were 40% and 9%, respectively. Indicating that HONO is

592 sensitive to the NO_2 uptake coefficient on the ground surface. In M13 and M14, we set the

593 surface roughness (δ) to 1 and 2.2 as reported in the literature, respectively (Zhang et al., 2022b;

594 Liu et al., 2020c), and the simulated changes in HONO were less than 8%.

595   During the P1 and P2 periods, the mean values of $T_{vertical}$ were 0.195 ± 0.076 ppb h^{-1} and

596 0.102 ± 0.048 ppb h^{-1}, respectively. It was the main sink of HONO at night. The mean $L_{photolysis}$

597 was 0.563 ± 0.375 ppb h^{-1} and 0.442 ± 0.324 ppb h^{-1}, respectively, which was the main daytime

598 sink of HONO. The average loss rate of $L_{HONO-OH}$ during P1 and P2 was 0.005 ppb h^{-1} and

599 0.004 ppb h^{-1}, respectively. The $L_{deposition}$ was 0.009 ± 0.005 ppb h^{-1} during P1, while it was

600 0.004 ± 0.003 ppb h^{-1} during P2. In M17 and M18, we set the lower limit of the deposition rate

601 (V_d) to 0.00077 and the upper limit to 0.025 (Zhang et al., 2023b), causing a change of 1% and

602 24% in the simulated HONO, respectively. In M19 and M20 at the same time, we set the

603 dilution rate ($K_{dilution}$) to 0.1 and 0.44, resulting in a 12% and 19% change, respectively.

604   It should be noted that each source is sensitive to the corresponding parameter as discussed

605 above. Thus, a more restrictive criterion is required to evaluate the reasonability of the

606 parameterization. We further estimated the HONO concentration according to Eq. (2) and the

607 parameters described in Sect. 2.2 to verify these calculated sources and sinks of HONO. Fig.

608 S6 shows the time series of estimated HONO concentrations. The observed HONO

609 concentrations were also shown for comparison. The estimated HONO concentrations were

610 well correlated with the observed values from the perspective of both diurnal curves and the

611 scattering point plot during the whole period (Fig. S7 and Fig. S8) although the estimated

612 HONO concentrations were slightly lower than the observed values at noon as shown in Fig.

613 S7. This means that our parametric scheme is overall reasonable but still underestimates the

614 daytime HONO source due to some unknown daytime sources. This unknown source may be

615 related to the photochemical reactions related to NO_2 and nitroaromatic compounds mentioned

616 in recent studies (Liu et al., 2020a). Liu et al. have found the photoenhanced effect of the

617 conversion from NO_2 to HONO on real urban grime and glass windows simulated in laboratory

618 studies (Liu et al., 2019a; Liu et al., 2020b). Yang et al. also have proposed that photolysis of

619 nitroaromatic compounds may be a daytime source of HONO (Yang et al., 2021). Considering

620 the uncertainty of parameterization, we used Oracle Crystal Ball (version 11.1.2.4, Oracle's

621 software for modeling, prediction, simulation, and optimization) (Rahmani et al., 2023) to

622 evaluate the overall uncertainty of the parameterization through Monte Carlo simulations. The

623 relative standard deviation is 27.2% for the HONO budget (details are in SI).

624 In summary, heterogeneous reactions of NO_2 (including ground and aerosol surfaces)

625 contributed 33% to the nocturnal HONO sources in the P1 stage, while they increased to 53%

626 in the P2 stage. Ground surfaces were the main interfaces for heterogeneous reactions,

627 compared to aerosol surfaces. At the same time, vehicle emissions account for 53% and 40%

628 of nighttime HONO sources in the P1 and P2 stages, respectively. Therefore, we can conclude

629 that traffic-related emissions, rather than heterogeneous reactions of NO_2 were the main HONO

630 source at night in Beijing in the typical emission patterns of air pollutants.

631 **4. Conclusions and atmospheric implications**.

632 During the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of 2020, the concentration of many air

633 pollutants decreased significantly ($P < 0.05$) due to the emission reduction of factories and

634 transportation. The average concentration of NO_x decreased by about 57%, of which NO

635 decreased by about 87%, and NO_2 decreased by about 36%. The average concentration of

636 HONO decreased by about 45.3% compared with those before the pandemic control. The

637 average concentration of O_3 and $PM_{2.5}$ increased by approximately 75% and 50%, respectively.

638 After removing meteorological factors, the change proportions of $PM_{2.5}$ concentration in the

639 two stages were -4.26% and -2.28% respectively. The HONO changes were -8.25% and -3.77%

640 respectively, the CO changes were -9.27% and -6.17% respectively, and the SO_2 changes were

641 +8.61% and +0.68% respectively. The change proportions are all less than 10%, which means

642 that the impact of changes in meteorological factors on $PM_{2.5}$, HONO, CO, and SO_2 is very

643 weak. However, the change proportions of NO in the two stages were -16.18% and +32.79%,

644 respectively, and O_3 was +39.64% and +6.15% respectively. The change ratio is greater than

645 30%, indicating that NO and O_3 are greatly affected by meteorology. In addition, the changes

646 in NO_2 were -13.75% and -4.81% respectively, implying that NO_2 is also affected by

647 meteorological factors. From the entire observation period, except for O_3, the changes of other

648 species in the two periods fluctuated between 2.3% and 7.8% after deweather, all less than 8%.

649 In general, after removing the meteorological effects, NO increased by 79%, NO_2 increased by

650 approximately 29%, HONO decreased by approximately 43%, and $PM_{2.5}$ increased by

651 approximately 50%. It is worth noting that O_3 increased by about 33%, which is much lower

652 than the change in observed values (75.08%) (as shown in Table S6).

653   In this study, the parameters of HONO sources were optimized. The balance of sources

654 and sinks is well supported by a relatively high correlation between observed and estimated

655 HONO concentrations. During the observation period, we used lockdown during COVID-19

656 as a disturbance factor and compared the concentration and source changes of HONO before

657 and during COVID-19 lockdown to determine whether heterogeneous reactions on the surface

658 of particulate matter and vehicle emissions were important HONO sources. We found that

659 vehicle-related emissions were the most important nighttime HONO source in Beijing,

660 contributing 50-60% to the nighttime HONO sources. The homogeneous reaction between NO

661 and OH and the heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on the aerosol surface were not important for

662 the contribution of nocturnal HONO, accounting for 13% and 2%, respectively. The

663 heterogeneous reaction of NO_2 on ground surfaces was also found to be an important source of

664 HONO at night, accounting for 31% of the nighttime HONO sources. Nitrate photolysis

665 became the most important source of HONO during the daytime compared with the situation

666 before the pandemic control because of the combined effect of the increase in the average

667 concentration of nitrate and the decrease in the NO concentration during the pandemic. This

668 study confirms that reducing anthropogenic emissions can indeed reduce the concentration of

669 HONO in the atmosphere. However, such reduction does not have a simple linear relation with

670 the reduction in human activities, but it also depends on meteorological conditions and complex

671 chemical transformation processes taking place in the atmosphere.

672   As a megacity in China, Beijing has a large population and intensive traffic emissions, as

673 a result of frequent air pollution. Although concentrations of HONO are usually lower than

674 those of other major pollutants, HONO efficiently triggers the formation of secondary

675 pollutants acting as an important primary source of OH radicals. Therefore, the sources of

676 HONO deserve to be investigated for air pollution control in Beijing. Our results suggest that

677 motor vehicle emissions are an important HONO source, while the contribution of the

678 heterogeneous conversion of NO_2 to HONO on the aerosol surfaces still needs to be further

679   evaluated and, especially, the kinetic parameters on ambient aerosol should be determined. In

680   future research, it is necessary to combine field observations, laboratory studies, and model

681   simulations to quantify the contribution of traffic-related emissions to HONO, and finally

682   obtain an accurate budget of HONO.

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686 conceptualization, investigation, reviewing, and editing the text, and supervision. XF

687 contributed to the methodology, reviewing, and editing the text. YZ and WM contributed to the

688 methodology, investigation, data curation, and reviewing and editing the text. ZL and CL

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690 methodology, investigation, resources, and data curation. CY contributed to the methodology,

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