More than 90 percent of the world’s population lives in areas where fine particle levels exceed WHO Guideline for healthy air.

Key Facts

- Air pollution is the fifth leading risk factor for mortality worldwide. Each year, more people die from air pollution-related diseases than from road traffic injuries or malaria.
- In 2017, air pollution is estimated to have contributed to close to 5 million deaths globally — nearly 1 in every 10 deaths.

Number of Deaths Attributable to Air Pollution in 2017.

- Air pollution exposures, including exposure to outdoor fine particulate matter (PM$_{2.5}$), household air pollution (HAP), and ozone, have been linked with increased hospitalizations, disability, and early death from respiratory diseases, heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and diabetes. Most (82%) deaths are from chronic non-communicable diseases.
- In 2017, exposure to PM$_{2.5}$ was the third leading risk factor for deaths and years of healthy life lost due to type 2 diabetes, after high blood sugar and high body mass index.

Percentage of global deaths from each cause attributed to air pollution in 2017.

- 41 percent of COPD deaths
- 20 percent of diabetes deaths
- 16 percent of ischemic heart disease deaths
- 19 percent of lung cancer deaths
- 11 percent of stroke deaths
**Life Expectancy**

- Air pollution collectively reduced life expectancy by 1 year and 8 months on average worldwide, a global impact rivaling that of smoking. This means a child born today will die 20 months sooner, on average, than would be expected in the absence of air pollution.

**Contribution of major risk factors to loss of life expectancy.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Loss of Life Expectancy (months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Risks</td>
<td>2 years, 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Cancer</td>
<td>2 years, 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>1 year, 10 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Pollution</td>
<td>1 year, 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Sanitation</td>
<td>7 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe Sex</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ambient PM$_{2.5}$**

- In 2017, the highest annual average exposures to PM$_{2.5}$ (population-weighted concentrations) were in South Asia, led by Nepal (100 µg/m$^3$), India (91 µg/m$^3$), Bangladesh (61 µg/m$^3$), and Pakistan (58 µg/m$^3$).
- The region with the second-highest average PM$_{2.5}$ exposure was western sub-Saharan Africa with 59 µg/m$^3$.
- In East Asia, China continues to experience the highest population exposures to PM$_{2.5}$ (53 µg/m$^3$). However, PM$_{2.5}$ levels have declined by nearly 20% since the implementation of stringent air pollution controls in 2013.

**Household Air Pollution**

- Nearly half of the world’s population — a total of 3.6 billion people — were exposed to household air pollution in 2017.
- Globally, the proportion of people cooking with solid fuels has declined from about 64% in 2005 to 47% in 2017. However, disparities persist, and less-developed countries continue to suffer the highest exposures to household air pollution.

**Ozone**

- Ozone contributed to approximately 472,000 deaths globally from COPD in 2017.