WHO releases country estimates on air pollution exposure and health impact

A new WHO air quality model confirms that 92% of the world’s population lives in places where air quality levels exceed WHO limits. Information is presented via interactive maps, highlighting areas within countries that exceed WHO limits.

“The new WHO model shows countries where the air pollution danger spots are, and provides a baseline for monitoring progress in combating it,” says Dr Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director General at WHO. It also represents the most detailed outdoor (or ambient) air pollution-related health data, by country, ever reported by WHO. The model is based on data derived from satellite measurements, air transport models and ground station monitors for more than 3000 locations, both rural and urban. It was developed by WHO in collaboration with the University of Bath, United Kingdom.

For more information on the global assessment of exposure and burden of disease, interactive map, FAQs and press release, please click here.

Action: SDG – All for health equity

During the World Health Summit, taking place 9-11 October 2016, WHO is organizing a panel with academic, government, civil society and media representatives elaborating their experiences, views and potential contributions to Action: SDG. Action: SDG is a user-oriented platform under development, which will offer a common logic model for action on social determinants of health and serve as a repository of action-oriented materials for stakeholders who are in a position to influence people’s health and health equity – across the policy cycle, and from local to international levels. WHO is scaling up globally-available e-based information services on Social Determinants of Health (SDH) and support for coordination between different e-platform and SDH information service providers considered as leaders in this area.

The World Summit is a unique opportunity to discuss this project with a broader audience, to gain their interest in further collaboration for action on the SDGs, as well as to receive suggestions on improving the platform. For more information on the panel, please click here.

Health prepares for the 22nd session of the Conference of Parties (COP22) to UNFCCC

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, including reference to a right to health, there will be an increased focus on health at the 22nd session (COP22) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). For the first time, there will be specific days dedicated to health within both the Adaptation Programme, and the Lima-Paris Action Agenda. In addition, the host Moroccan Government, WHO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will co-organize a meeting of health and environment ministers from around the world, to further develop and support a strategic alliance between health, climate and environment objectives. Throughout COP22, WHO will be working with the wider health sector to take forward the Action Agenda developed at the Second Global Conference on Health and Climate, in July 2016.

COP22 will be held from 7 to 18 November 2016 in Marrakech, Morocco. For more information on specific days on health, please click here.
International lead poisoning prevention week of action

The 4th international lead poisoning prevention week of action (23-29 October 2016) will focus on the need for further efforts to phase out lead paint. During this week, activities will be organized around the world to raise awareness about the health hazards linked to lead and lead paint. Campaign materials and a related pack will soon be available on the WHO website to help people organize campaigns. Organizers are requested to register their events on the WHO website.

Paint has developed the Toolkit for Establishing Laws to Control the Use of Lead in Paint to enforce necessary legal controls. To meet this need, the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead established the Global Health Observatory (GHO), show that 62 of 132 countries have legal controls in place. However, it is clear that many countries still need support to develop, implement and enforce necessary legal controls. To meet this need, the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint has developed the Toolkit for Establishing Laws to Control the Use of Lead in Paint for key stakeholders and is organizing regional workshops on this topic.

New map highlights status of legally-binding controls on lead paint

To phase out the use of lead paint, WHO Member States have agreed that all countries should introduce legally-binding controls on the manufacture, import, export, sale and use of lead paint by 2020. The latest data, summarized in a map and database in the Global Health Observatory (GHO), show that 62 of 132 countries have legal controls in place. However, it is clear that many countries still need support to develop, implement and enforce necessary legal controls. To meet this need, the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint has developed the Toolkit for Establishing Laws to Control the Use of Lead in Paint for key stakeholders and is organizing regional workshops on this topic.

Intersectoral planning for health and health equity

Strategizing national health in the 21st century: a handbook focuses on national health planning and strategizing for health. It includes a dedicated chapter on Intersectoral planning for health and health equity highlighting the need and practical action for doing so within the overall national health planning process. It discusses why and how to integrate other sectors into national health planning processes, with the objective of ensuring better health and health equity. Health equity and SDH are acknowledged as being critical components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and are an essential element of any country’s path towards achieving universal health coverage (UHC). Intersectoral planning implies that governments and other stakeholders proactively address social determinants and health inequities by identifying and promoting intersectoral action as an integral and vital component of the national health planning process. Without intersectoral action as a fully integrated component – and indeed, mindset – being embedded in the national health planning process, health inequities are likely to persist and, as a result, the health of the populations of the nations in question will suffer.

Facts and Figures

Air pollution is a major environmental risk to health. By reducing air pollution levels, countries can reduce the burden of disease from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and both acute and chronic respiratory diseases, including asthma.

Ambient (outdoor air pollution) in both cities and rural areas was estimated to cause 3 million premature deaths worldwide in 2012.

Some 88% of those premature deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and the greatest number in the WHO Western Pacific and South-East Asia regions.

Policies and investments supporting cleaner transport, energy-efficient housing, power generation, industry and better municipal waste management would reduce key sources of urban outdoor air pollution.

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Selected Health Topics from WHO's Public Health and Environment Web Sites

Updated: Water and Sanitation

Air pollution and health

Social Determinants of Health

New Publications and Videos

Ambient air pollution: A global assessment of exposure and burden of disease

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