

Report: Climate change is threatening health globally

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The effects of climate change are killing people and negatively affecting the health of more and more people in the world. The growing health

threats could worsen if we do not urgently address climate change. Even at a global warming of 1.14 degrees, human losses are increasing rapidly, states the [eighth global report from The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change](#).

Umeå University is the only one in Sweden that participates in the work, and researchers have contributed with new findings that are presented in the [report](#). One of the researchers is Maria Nilsson, professor at the Department of Epidemiology and Global Health, who states, "This year's report provides growing evidence of the harmful effects of [climate change](#) on [health](#) and highlights the urgent need for [climate change mitigation](#) and adaptation measures. The report provides a worrying update on the trends."

New global projections reveal the serious and growing threat to health exacerbated by late and lack of [climate action](#).

"With 1,337 tons of carbon dioxide still emitted every second, emissions are not reduced anywhere near what is needed to keep climate hazards at the levels that our [health systems](#) can cope with," says Professor Jan Semenza at the Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, one of the researchers who worked on the report.

Some of the key findings:

- Waiting passively without implementing climate action is already costing lives and livelihoods. In 2022, individuals were exposed to an average of 86 days of unhealthily high temperatures, of which 60% were at least twice as likely to occur due to human-caused climate change.
- Recent global projections show the serious and increasing threat to health resulting from further delayed action on climate change, and that the world is likely to experience a threefold increase in

[heat-related deaths](#) by mid-century.

- A new regional section of the report highlights the different and unequal experiences of the health impacts of climate change, and who benefits from climate change adaptation and the health benefits of the clean energy transition. The authors describe the opportunity that a just energy transition offers to reduce health inequities and improve the health and well-being of all populations.
- Data from this year's report shows that the world is moving in the wrong direction. Governments, businesses, and banks continue to invest in oil and gas as the challenges and costs of climate adaptation skyrocket and the world nears irreversible damage.
- Without deep and urgent action to address the root causes of climate change, [human health](#) is seriously threatened. The clear findings must lead to urgent health-centric climate action to transform the global economy to a carbon-neutral foundation, while delivering "transformative opportunities" to improve the health of the world's populations through improved energy access and security, cleaner air, safer drinking water, healthier diets and lifestyles, and more livable cities.

Health-centered climate action

The failure to seriously mitigate climate change is evident in the report, with health-related loss and damage skyrocketing globally. However, the report is being launched ahead of the 28th United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP28), which for the first time will have health as a central theme, with an official health day and a climate-health ministers' meeting. The Lancet Countdown report provides the evidence needed to inform the negotiations and deliver real health-protecting climate action. In response to the report's publication, UN Secretary-General António Guterres (who was not involved in the preparation of the report) said,

"We are already seeing a human catastrophe unfolding with the health and livelihoods of billions across the world endangered by record breaking heat, crop-failing droughts, rising levels of hunger, growing infectious disease outbreaks and deadly storms and floods. The continuing expansion of fossil fuels is a death sentence to millions. There is no excuse for a persistent delay in climate action. Temperature rise must be limited to 1.5°C to avert the worst of [climate](#) change, save millions of lives, and help protect the health of everyone on earth."

Improved air quality

The challenges are extensive, but the report outlines the health benefits that could come from transitioning to a carbon-free future. An important part is the commitment to enable and support an accelerated transition to clean energy and energy efficiency in low-income countries.

At the same time, improvements in air quality could prevent many of the 1.9 million deaths every year coming directly from exposure to fuel-derived outdoor air pollution, and millions more from indoor air pollution. The report also describes opportunities for significant bonus effects on health through an accelerated transition to diets with a low carbon footprint.

More information: Report: [The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change](#)

Provided by Umea University

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