

WHO Releases Country Estimates on Air Pollution Exposure and Health Impact



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), some three million deaths a year are linked to exposure to outdoor air pollution, while indoor air pollution can be just as deadly. In 2012, an estimated 6.5 million deaths'11.6% of all global deaths'were associated with indoor and outdoor air pollution together. But what populations in which areas are most vulnerable'

A new WHO air quality model confirms that 92% of the world's population lives in places where air quality levels exceed WHO limits. The 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 combatting it,' says Dr Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director General at WHO.

The WHO model also represents the most detailed outdoor (or ambient) air pollution-related health data, by country, ever reported by WHO. It's based on data derived from satellite measurements, air transport models and ground station monitors for more than 3,000 locations, both rural and urban.

According to the WHO model, 94% of air pollution-related deaths are due to non-communicable diseases, notably cardiovascular diseases, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer. Air pollution also increases the risks for acute respiratory infections.

'Air pollution continues take a toll on the health of the most vulnerable populations ' women, children and the older adults,' adds Dr Bustreo. 'For people to be healthy, they must breathe clean air from their first breath to their last.'

Major sources of air pollution include:

- Inefficient modes of transport
- Household fuel and waste burning
- Coal-fired power plants
- Industrial activities

- Dust storms, particularly in regions close to deserts.

Dr Maria Neira, WHO Director, Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health, said, 'Fast action to tackle air pollution can't come soon enough. Solutions exist with sustainable transport in cities, solid waste management, access to clean household fuels and cook-stoves, as well as renewable energies and industrial emissions reductions.?