

India & Pollution

Health Impact, Economic Impact, Injustice, and Solutions



The Lancet Commission on pollution and health provides data related to the health and economic costs of pollution for 190 countries. It also gives specifics on the inequity of pollution's impact, and provides an overview of solutions implemented or possible to reduce the burden of pollution.

The Commission's lead authors have prepared this brief summary of pollution's impact specifically in India.

Health Impact

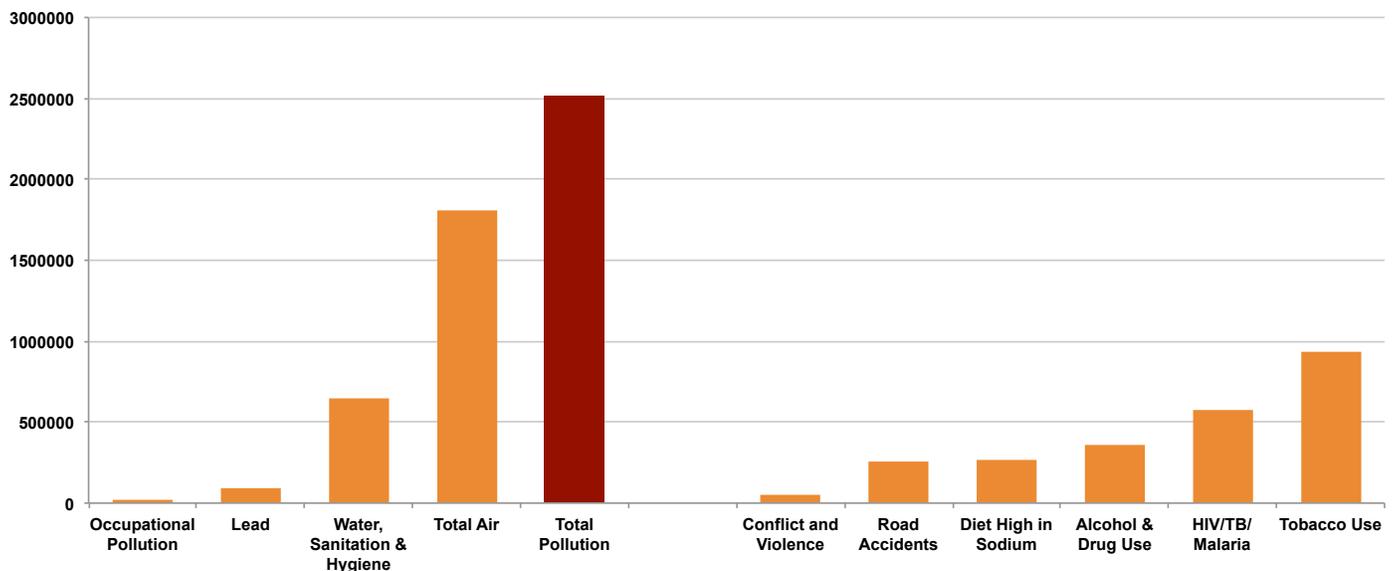
In 2015, the report indicates that 2,515,500 in India died from pollution-related disease. That is five times more than deaths from HIV, TB and malaria combined.

Pollution in the air, water and soil was responsible for **24.5%** of all deaths in India.

Average % of Deaths from Pollution

High-Income Countries	7.3%
Upper-Middle-Income Countries	10.3%
Lower-Middle-Income Countries	14.7%
Low-Income Countries	19.2%

Causes of Death — India



Source | *The Lancet* Commission on Pollution and Health, October 2017

Economic Impact

The economic cost of pollution to India is calculated in two ways:

- The costs of lost productivity from pollution-related diseases are estimated to be between 0.74% and 0.96% of gross domestic product (GDP)
- When the willingness-to-pay method is used to estimate the amount that people would be willing to pay to avoid premature death due to pollution-related disease, the total is estimated to be US\$ 266 billion, which is approximately 12.8% of the country's economic output.

Environmental Injustice

Pollution disproportionately kills the poor and the vulnerable. Nearly 92% of pollution-related deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries and, in countries at every income level, disease caused by pollution is most prevalent among minorities and the marginalised. Children are at high risk of pollution-related disease and even extremely low-dose exposures to pollutants during windows of vulnerability in utero and in early infancy can result in disease, disability, and death in childhood and across their lifespan.

Pollution Solutions

These few observations are not intended to be comprehensive. Long known for its substantive sanitation problems, especially with outdoor defecation, India has launched a series of programs on water treatment along the Ganges and elsewhere. Air quality in Delhi and other cities has reached record levels, without a clear strategy currently obvious. Rural cookstoves household air pollution have had a boost with subsidy support transferring from the middle class to rural poor households. Urban slums continue to be sources of household air quality issues. Very little has been done with respect to chemicals and soil pollution.

A valuable strategy recommended at the national and state level is to undertake a review of pollution impact and potential. The Health and Pollution Planning process involves multiple national or state government agencies (environment, health, industry, transport, finance, etc) meeting to identify, evaluate and prioritize pollution issues based on health impacts. Existing programs are reviewed, priorities for further action decided, and concrete interventions designed. The process is driven by national governments, with support and facilitation by GAHP members. For more information contact drew@pureearth.org.

Indians can also make use of www.pollution.org to review specific pollution data related to air, water and soil in their own neighborhoods, and post new data for pollution issues that deserve recognition by the international community.

The Global Alliance on Health + Pollution (GAHP)

GAHP was formed in 2012 in response to the growing crises posed by toxic pollution. With more than 50 members from multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, UN agencies, low- and middle-income country government agencies, and others, GAHP aims to provide low-and middle-income countries with the tools to tackle toxic pollution and alleviate its impacts on human health.

GAHP has served as a coordination mechanism for defining highly polluted sites globally, for advocacy related to the SDGs and inclusion therein of all aspects of pollution, and most recently for the Lancet Commission on pollution and health. GAHP's secretariat is Pure Earth, an NGO based in New York, with operations in 40 countries globally.