

PARTICULATE POLLUTION: 40% INDIANS RISK REDUCED LIFE EXPECTANCY

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Pollution - Air, Water, Soil & E-waste

NEW DELHI: Nearly 40% of India's population is exposed to pollution levels not seen in any other country, with 510 million North Indians forecast to losing 8.5 years of life expectancy on an average if current levels persist, as per a study done by Energy Policy Institute of University of Chicago.

The study highlighted that all of India's 1.3 billion people live in areas where the annual average particulate pollution level exceeds the World Health Organization's (WHO) guideline. Since 1998, average annual particulate pollution has increased 15%, cutting nine years off the life of an average resident over those years.

The scientists took into account new data from the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI), according to which South Asia is home to the most polluted countries on earth, with Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan accounting for nearly a quarter of the global population and consistently ranking among the top five most polluted countries in the world.

According to AQLI, the estimated impact is even greater across northern India, the region that experiences the most extreme of air pollution in the world. The residents of this region, which includes the megacities of Delhi and Kolkata, are on track to lose more than nine years of life expectancy if 2019 concentrations persist.

It added that annual average PM2.5 concentration in the cities of Allahabad and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh is 12 times the WHO guideline. Residents of Lucknow stand to lose 11.1 years of life expectancy if these pollution levels persist. Residents of the national capital could see up to 10 years added to their lives if pollution were reduced to meet the WHO guideline; up to 7 years if pollution met India's national standard, the study said.

Working unseen inside the human body, particulate pollution has a more devastating impact on life expectancy than communicable diseases like tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, behavioural killers like cigarette smoking, and even war, scientists said.

"During a truly unprecedented year where some people accustomed to breathing dirty air experienced clean air, and others accustomed to clean air saw their air dirty, it became acutely apparent the important role policy has played and could play in reducing fossil fuels that contribute both to local air pollution and climate change," says Michael Greenstone, the Milton Friedman Distinguished Service Professor in Economics and creator of the AQLI along with colleagues at the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC). "The AQLI demonstrates the benefits these policies could bring to improve our health and lengthen our lives."

Alarming, India's high level of air pollution has expanded geographically over time, the study said.

In 2019, the central government declared a "war on pollution" and announced the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). The goal is to reduce particulate pollution by 20-30% relative to 2017 levels by 2024. Though the NCAP's goals are non-binding, if India does achieve and sustain this reduction, it would lead to remarkable health improvements: a nationwide reduction

of 25%, the midpoint of the NCAP's target, would increase India's national life expectancy by 1.8 years, and by 3.5 years for residents of Delhi, the study pointed out.

Never miss a story! Stay connected and informed with Mint. [Download](#) our App Now!!

Log in to our website to save your bookmarks. It'll just take a moment.

Oops! Looks like you have exceeded the limit to bookmark the image. Remove some to bookmark this image.

Your session has expired, please login again.

You are now subscribed to our newsletters. In case you can't find any email from our side, please check the spam folder.

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS!