

UNITED KINGDOM

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE DATA SHEET 2025

Health and climate change in the United Kingdom

The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change tracks the evolving relationship between climate and health through 50+ peer-reviewed indicators. Since 2016, it has provided peer-reviewed annual assessments, published in *The Lancet*. The 2025 report reveals the grave health toll of climate change inaction: fossil fuel dependence, rising emissions, and delayed adaptation are costing millions of lives. Recent climate policy rollbacks further threaten our ability to respond to the accelerating crisis, undermining progress towards a healthy future.

This document highlights key country-level findings from the 2025 Lancet Countdown report for the United Kingdom, showing that:



Rising temperatures are **amplifying health and productivity risks**, as heatwaves increasingly affect vulnerable populations and workers across multiple sectors.



Climate extremes are intensifying, with wildfires, drought, and air quality impacts emerging as **growing threats** even in a temperate climate.



Decarbonisation is advancing but uneven, as the UK phases out coal and reduces pollution, while overall emissions and the health sector's footprint remain substantial.

With the threats of climate change growing, protecting people's health and survival demands simultaneous and unprecedented efforts to advance adaptation and mitigation, and requires an "all hands on deck" approach.

Rising Heat Exposure and Labour Impacts

Exposure to high temperatures threatens people's lives, health, and wellbeing, leading to death and heat-related disease, and increasing healthcare demand during heatwave episodes. Older people, socio-economically deprived communities, very young children, pregnant people, and those with underlying health problems are particularly at risk. The United Kingdom is experiencing increasingly intense and frequent heat exposure, with growing risks to vulnerable populations and the workforce.

EXTREME HEAT

Older adults and workers are vulnerable to extreme heat, with rising temperatures and more frequent heatwave days intensifying health risks and reducing labour productivity. The growing burden of heat-related labour losses highlights the urgent need for targeted heat-health action plans, strengthened occupational safety standards, and robust public health preparedness to protect those most exposed during extreme heat events.

88%

In 2024, people in the UK were exposed to 6.6 heatwave days each, on average. Of these, 5.8 (88%) would not have been expected to occur without climate change. (Indicator 1.1.1)



For 2024, heat exposure resulted in a loss of 5.16 million potential labour hours per year, 71% more than in 1990-1999. The construction sector was most affected, accounting for 73% of the hours potentially lost in 2024. The associated potential income lost from labour capacity reduction due to extreme heat was USD103 million in 2024. (Indicator 1.1.3)

\$103MN

In 2024, heat exposure led to total potential income losses worth US\$ 103 million, of which \$6.7 million were lost in the agriculture sector, \$78.8 million in construction, \$6.7 million in manufacturing, \$USD 11 million in services (Indicator 4.1.3)

Growing Wildfire and Drought Risk

The United Kingdom is experiencing a measurable rise in climate-driven environmental hazards, with wildfire and drought risks intensifying in both frequency and geographic spread.



From 2020-2024, with wildfire PM2.5 caused an average of 486 deaths annually, and PM2.5 concentration of 0.101 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (40% increase from 2003-2012). (Indicator 1.2.1)



In 2020-2024, 7% of the UK's land area experienced on average at least one month of extreme drought each year. (Indicator 1.2.2)

DRY PERIODS

Increasing heat and prolonged dry periods are expanding the potential for wildfire smoke exposure and seasonal water scarcity. This threatens respiratory health, strain water resources, disrupt ecosystems, and intensify social and economic vulnerabilities.

Air Pollution, Energy Transition and Health Co-benefits

The United Kingdom continues to advance in reducing fossil-fuel dependence, yet much remains to be done. The low adoption of clean renewable energy and the continued use of fossil fuels and biomass lead to high levels of air pollution, which increases the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, diabetes, neurological disorders, adverse pregnancy outcomes, and leads to a high burden of disease and mortality. All of these lead to increasing demand on care services



Between 2016 and 2022, CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion in UK declined 17% to 309,418 kilo tonnes, and the share of renewables in the energy grid has more than doubled between 2016 and 2022, to 5.3% of total energy supply (Indicator 3.1.1). However, as of 2022, coal still made up 2.5% of total energy in the UK, even despite a reduction from 6.4% in 2016 (Indicators 3.1.1)

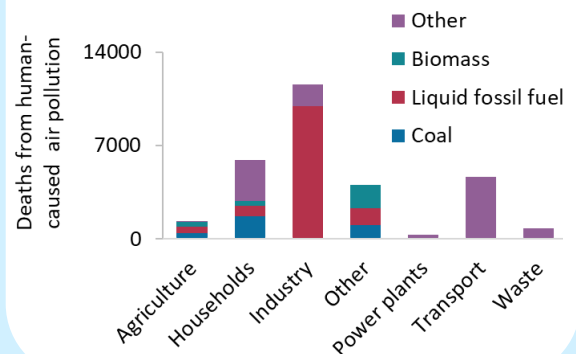


In 2023, the UK had net fossil fuel subsidies for a total of USD 28.5 billion, including from tax breaks (Indicator 4.3.2).



In the UK, PM2.5 air pollution from human sources resulted in 28,000 premature deaths in 2022. 55% of these came from fossil fuel burning, with coal burning alone still accounting for 3,000 deaths every year (indicators 3.3.1 and 3.3.2)

DEATHS FROM AIR POLLUTION



Diets and Health

Shifting to healthier, plant-rich diets can reduce agricultural emissions and improve health outcomes. In United Kingdom, diet-related risks contribute to preventable deaths and chronic disease burden.



In 2022, red meat and dairy accounted for 62% of all emissions related to the consumption of agricultural products in UK. Nonetheless, total agricultural emissions related to products consumed in the UK decreased by 14% between 2000 and 2022. (Indicator 3.3.1)

115,000 DEATHS

were associated with unhealthy diets in the UK in 2022. Of these, 22,900 were associated with insufficient consumption of nutritious plant-based foods, and 49,000 deaths were associated with to excess consumption of dairy, red meat, and processed meat. (Indicator 3.3.2)

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The Lancet Countdown was established in partnership with Wellcome. For further information, visit lancetcountdown.org