

Air Pollution: Some Facts

- In 2017, the PM 2.5 concentration in Delhi was more than 1200 microgram per cubic metre, i.e. 48 times the guideline value established by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- While it may be the most polluted city on earth, Delhi is not the only place affected by air pollution. This is a global epidemic, with 92 per cent of the world population living in places where the WHO air-quality guideline levels were not met in 2014.
- According to the Lancet Commission on pollution and health, 2.5 million people died early because of pollution in 2015.
- According to a study conducted by Health Effects Institute (HEI), particulate-matter (PM) air pollution was responsible for approximately 1.1 million deaths, or 10.6 per cent of the total number of deaths in India in 2015.
- Between 1990 and 2015, India posted a 150 per cent increase in annual deaths from COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, one of the diseases attributable to air pollution), according to HEI estimates.
- Studies worldwide link exposure of pregnant women to ambient-air pollution with low birth weight, intrauterine growth restriction, and preterm birth.
- The welfare economic losses due to pollution are estimated to be US\$ 4-6 trillion per year. This is 6.2 per cent of global-economic output, according to Lancet Commission, 2018.
- According to OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) forecasts, the global welfare costs of premature deaths from outdoor air pollution may be around \$25 trillion in 2060.
- Pollution disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable. Nearly 92 per cent of pollution-related deaths occur in low and middle-income countries. Globally, diseases caused by pollution are more prevalent among the minorities and marginalised, according to Lancet Commission, 2018.
- If no action is taken, population exposure to PM 2.5 is likely to increase by more than 40 per cent by 2050, according to the HEI study.
- According to a study conducted by Shakti Foundation across 11 cities in India, a majority (54 per cent) of respondents were not satisfied with the government's action to control air pollution. Over 60 per cent wanted a ban on plastic and termination of open burning of garbage.

Cover Photo Credit: Prabhjot Gill

A farmer in rural Amritsar (Punjab) burning crop residue