

# Pollution

is the world's largest environmental cause of disease and premature death

**Pollution disproportionately kills the poor and the vulnerable.**

Nearly **92 percent of pollution-related deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries.** Children face the highest risks because small exposures to chemicals in utero and in early childhood can result in lifelong disease, disability, premature death, as well as reduced learning and earning potential.

In 2015, diseases caused by pollution were responsible for **9 million premature deaths.** That is **16 percent of all global deaths.**

Exposures to contaminated air, water and soil kill more people than a high-sodium diet, obesity, alcohol, road accidents, or child and maternal malnutrition. They are also responsible for three times as many deaths as AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined, and for nearly 15 times as many deaths as war and all forms of violence.



3 x



15 x



**Air pollution and climate change are closely linked and share common solutions.**

Fossil fuel combustion in higher-income countries and the burning of biomass in lower-income countries accounts for 85 percent of airborne particulate pollution.

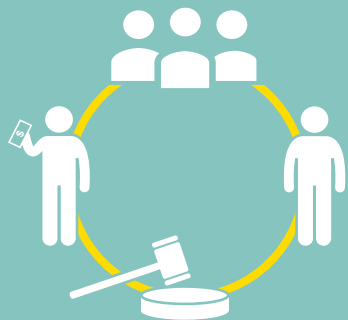


Major emitters of carbon dioxide are coal-fired power plants, chemical producers, mining operations, and vehicles. Accelerating the switch to cleaner sources of energy will reduce air pollution and improve human and planetary health.

**The cost of inaction is high, while solutions yield enormous economic gains.**

Welfare losses due to pollution are estimated at **\$4.6 trillion per year — 6.2 percent of global economic output.** In the United States, investment in pollution control has returned \$200 billion each year since 1980 (\$6 trillion total). The claim that pollution control stifles economic growth and that poor countries must pollute to grow is false.

**Pollution is neglected by funding agencies worldwide.**



**We can all help to make a difference.**

**Governments** can integrate pollution challenges and control strategies into planning processes. Ask for support from development assistance agencies. Design and implement programs that reduce pollution, and save lives. End government subsidies and tax breaks for polluting industries.

**International donors, foundations, health professionals, and individuals** should prioritize funding for pollution planning, interventions, and research.

**People affected by pollution** can review data related to toxic exposures in their neighborhood and connect with help by visiting [www.pollution.org](http://www.pollution.org)

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