

GREECE

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE DATA SHEET 2025

Health and climate change in Greece

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 Greece, showing that:



Rising heat exposure is threatening health and livelihoods, with older adults and outdoor workers increasingly affected by extreme temperatures and associated productivity losses.



Wildfires and drought are intensifying, driving environmental degradation, worsening air quality, and putting further strain on ecosystems and public health.



Persistent dependence on fossil fuels and unhealthy diets continues to undermine health gains, highlighting major opportunities for Greece to accelerate the energy transition and promote sustainable, healthy food.

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.

Extreme Heat and Labour Impacts

Exposure to extreme heat is rising rapidly across Greece, threatening health, productivity, and livelihoods. Older adults, infants, and outdoor workers are among the most affected as extreme heat events become longer and more frequent.

WORKING UNDER THE SUN

Outdoor labourers are on the frontline of Greece's rising temperatures. In 2024, 57% of potential heat-related labour hour losses occurred in agriculture, while construction workers accounted for 19%. The service and manufacturing sectors, though largely operating in shaded or indoor environments, still experienced substantial productivity declines.



In 2024, people in France were exposed to 13 heatwave days each, on average. Of these, 10 (77%) would not have been expected to occur without climate change. (Indicator 1.1.1) This sharp rise in climate-attributed heatwaves increases the risk of heat-related illnesses, particularly among older adults, children, and outdoor workers,



In 2024, individuals in Greece would have been exposed to a record 879 hours per person of at least moderate heat stress risk if undertaking exercise, 156% higher than the 1990–1999 average. This can compromise safe outdoor activity and occupational performance. (Indicator 1.1.2)



99.9M

Heat exposure is increasingly undermining productivity. In 2024, Greece lost 99.9 million potential labour hours due to heat exposure (67.2% more than in 1990–1999) with agriculture accounting for over half of the total hours lost, followed by construction. (Indicator 1.1.3)



The potential income lost from labour capacity reduction due to extreme heat was US\$0.95 billion in 2024. (Indicator 4.1.3) This economic toll reflects the growing impact of climate change on productivity, particularly for outdoor and manual workers. Without stronger protections and adaptation measures, heat-related losses will continue to undermine livelihoods and national economic resilience.

Wildfires, Drought, and Environmental Hazards

Rising temperatures and prolonged dry periods are intensifying Greece's exposure to wildfires and drought, threatening ecosystems, livelihoods, and population health. The combination of extreme heat, fuel-dry landscapes, and high winds continues to drive severe fire events across the country.

28

From 2020–2024, people in Greece experienced an average of 28 days per year classified as high wildfire risk, a 24.8% increase compared with 2003–2012. (Indicator 1.2.1)



During the same period, wildfire smoke (PM_{2.5}) was responsible for an annual average of 518 deaths, and population-weighted concentrations of PM_{2.5} from fires increased from 0.425 µg/m³ in 2003–2012 to 0.558 µg/m³ in 2020–2024, highlighting the growing health burden of smoke exposure. (Indicator 1.2.1)

CLIMATE-FUELLED FIRE SEASONS

While national averages suggest limited direct exposure to fires, this masks stark disparities, with communities in fire-prone areas facing significantly higher risks. Beyond immediate threats, the broader health and economic consequences of these climate-fuelled fire seasons are substantial.



Meanwhile, an average of 40% of Greece's land area experienced at least one month of extreme drought per year in 2020–2024, nearly triple the observed levels in 1951–1960, reflecting severe strain on water resources, agriculture, and natural habitats. (Indicator 1.2.2)

Energy, Emissions, and Economic Misalignment

Greece continues to face challenges in aligning its energy and fiscal systems with health and climate goals. While progress has been made in phasing out coal, fossil fuels remain a dominant source of energy and a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.



Between 2016 and 2022, CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion fell by 19%, however coal still contributed to 8% of total energy supply and 11% of electricity supply. (Indicator 3.1.1) Household reliance on fossil fuels remained high, with 30% of household energy still coming from liquid fossil fuels. (Indicator 3.1.2)



The fiscal landscape further undermines transition progress. In 2023, Greece still subsidised fossil fuels, with a net total subsidy of US\$1.41 billion, equivalent to 7% of current health expenditure. (Indicator 4.3.2) This fiscal imbalance constrains health-protective climate investments.

11,000

In 2022, nearly 11,000 deaths were attributable to anthropogenic outdoor air pollution (PM_{2.5}). This is a 24% reduction from 2010. In 2022, fossil fuels caused 49.2% of these deaths. (Indicator 3.2.1)

Diet, Health, and Environmental Co-benefits

Dietary patterns in Greece, long rooted in the health-promoting Mediterranean tradition, are shifting toward higher consumption of animal-based foods, increasing health risks and greenhouse gas emissions. Promoting a return to balanced, plant-rich diets would simultaneously improve population health and support climate goals.

76%

In 2022, red meat and dairy accounted for 76% of all agricultural consumption-related emissions in Greece. (Indicator 3.3.1)



In 2022, 13,453 deaths were attributable to excess consumption of dairy, red meat, and processed meat, while 10,954 deaths were associated with insufficient intake of nutritious plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and wholegrains. Together, these dietary risks accounted for a substantial share of all diet-related mortality in Greece. (Indicator 3.3.2) Transitioning to healthier, low-emission diets represents a major opportunity to reduce chronic disease, cut agricultural emissions, and strengthen food system resilience amid a heating Mediterranean climate.

Romanello M, Walawender M, Hsu S-C, et al. The 2025 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change. Lancet 2025; published online Oct 29. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(25\)01919-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(25)01919-1).

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