LANCET COUNTDOWN: HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

SINT MAARTEN

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DATA SHEET 2025

Health and climate change in New Sint Maarten

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 New Sint Maarten, showing that:

In New Sint Maarten, populations are increasingly exposed to extreme heat, contributing to rising cases of heat-related illness and mortality, and undermining livelihoods and wellbeing.

Globally comparable data for many climate-health indicators are currently unavailable for New Caledonia. Strengthening national data collection and monitoring systems would support the development of locally relevant, health-promoting climate policies.

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.

Heat and Health

Exposure to high temperatures threatens lives and health, increasing the risk of heat-related illness and mortality. Vulnerable groups, including older adults, young children, pregnant women, and those with pre-existing conditions, face the greatest risks. In Sint Maarten, heatwave exposure has risen over the years, placing growing pressure on health systems. This trend not only increases demand for emergency care and cooling infrastructure but also exacerbates existing health inequalities, particularly in underserved communities.

In 2024, people in Sint Maarten were exposed to 116 heatwave days each, on average. Of these, 103 (89%) would not have been expected to occur without climate change. (Indicator 1.1.1) This surge in climate-driven heatwave days poses serious health risks, particularly for vulnerable populations, and places increasing strain on healthcare systems, infrastructure, and outdoor labour productivity.

Rising temperatures also threaten the health benefits associated with outdoor physical activity. In 2024, individuals in Sint Maarten experienced over 1,037 more hours per person during which ambient heat would have posed a moderate or higher risk of heat stress if undertaking moderate outdoor physical activity (e.g., running), relative to the 1990–1999 baseline average. (Indicator 1.1.2)

From 2015–2024, heat exposure in Sint Maarten resulted in an average annual loss of approximately 2.1 million potential labour hours. Agriculture accounted for 47% of these losses, while the service sector saw the largest increase, 2.5 times more losses per year compared to 1990–1999. (Indicator 1.1.3)

The potential income lost from labour capacity reduction due to extreme heat was US$14.7 billion in 2024 in the SIDS region. Workers in the agricultural and construction sectors were severely affected, incurring 31% and 32% of the respective losses in 2024. (Indicator 4.1.3) This reflects the growing economic burden of climate-related heat stress, which threatens productivity and livelihoods, particularly in outdoor and heat-exposed sectors.

Extreme Weather Events

Droughts in New Caledonia are becoming more frequent and severe due to rising temperatures, which increase evaporation and reduce freshwater availability, contributing to extreme heat and dry conditions. Sea level rise is intensifying coastal flooding and storm surges, making New Caledonia more vulnerable to cyclones and heavy rainfall events linked to climate change.

636

In 2024, 636 people were living less than 1m above sea level in Sint Maarten. (Indicator 2.3.3) This highlights the population's direct exposure to coastal flooding and sea level rise, increasing vulnerability to climate-related displacement and infrastructure damage.

The sea surface temperature in coastal areas of Sint Maarten were 1.1C higher in 2024 compared to 1981-2010. (Indicator 1.4) Warmer seas can intensify storms, disrupt marine ecosystems, and threaten food security through impacts on fisheries and coral reefs.

Data Scarcity and Importance of Local Data Sources

Low data availability is one of the key challenges in measuring and monitoring climate change and health impacts in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Global datasets, particularly gridded satellite monitored data, are often of too coarse resolution for small countries, and can therefore not be used. Many modelling models, such as for greenhouse gas emissions, are also often not suitable to run over very small areas, further limiting the available data. For a large proportion of indicators in the 2024 SIDS regional report (39 out of 59), data was available for some of the larger islands but only 13 had suitable data for over 30% of the countries in this region. This was true for both modelled and reported data, highlighting both technical limitations but also a lack of monitoring and reporting to international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO).

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.

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