LANCET COUNTDOWN: TRACKING PROGRESS ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
In collaboration with Wellcome

A decade tracking progress on health and climate change

BELIZE

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DATA SHEET 2026

Health and Climate Change in Belize

The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change tracks the connections between health and climate change. In its tenth iteration, the 2026 Global Report shows that the health impacts of climate change have escalated, and frequently accelerated, in the decade since the Paris Agreement came into force.

This document draws on findings from both the **2026 Lancet Countdown Global Report (indicators represented in bold)** and the 2025 Lancet Countdown Small Island Developing States Report to present key insights for Belize.

Increasing heat exposure is placing vulnerable populations in Belize at greater risk of heat-related illness, while limiting safe physical activity, disrupting sleep and reducing labour capacity, with consequences for health and livelihoods.

Extreme drought has become considerably more widespread in Belize, while warming coastal waters and increasing suitability for Vibrio transmission pose additional risks to health, marine food security and livelihoods.

Health has gained greater prominence in Belize's national climate commitments, although locally led research on climate change and health remains limited.

Health and Heat

Exposure to high temperatures increases 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 2025, almost all of the heatwave days that people in Belize were exposed to on average were directly attributable to climate change.
Children under one year of age and adults over 65 in Belize each experienced an average of approximately 13 heatwave days annually between 2021 and 2025, around 10 additional days per year compared with 1986–2005. **(Indicator 1.1.1)**

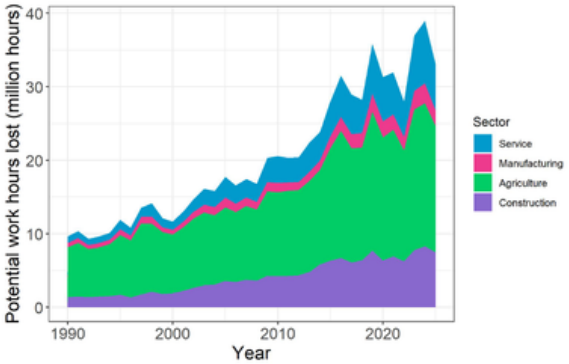
TREE COVER LOSS

Belize lost over 330,000 hectares of tree cover cumulatively between 2000 and 2024, including a record 34,000 hectares in 2024. Tree-cover loss can reduce natural cooling and ecosystem services that support health. (Indicator 3.4; SIDS Report)

People in Belize were exposed to over 3,400 hours annually in which heat posed a moderate or higher risk of heat stress during moderate outdoor physical activity (e.g., brisk walking) between 2016 and 2025, over 330 hours more than the annual average in the 1990s. **(Indicator 1.1.2)**

People in Belize lost an estimated 68 hours of sleep annually due to high night-time temperatures between 2021 and 2025, four hours more per year than in 1986–2005. **(Indicator 1.1.4)**

Annual potential work hours lost, disaggregated by economic sector, Belize, 1990 to 2025.



Heat exposure caused an average annual loss of 32.5 million potential labour hours in Belize between 2016 and 2025, 190% higher than the annual average in the 1990s. Agriculture accounted for 53% of these losses, followed by construction at 22%. **(Indicator 1.1.3)**

Heat-related labour capacity reduction in Belize caused an estimated potential earnings loss of US$82.4 million in 2025. Agriculture accounted for 49% of these losses, followed by construction at 23%. **(Indicator 4.1.3)**

Drought, Coastal Change and Health

Drought can threaten water availability, food security and livelihoods, with consequences for health. Warming coastal waters can affect marine ecosystems and fish stocks, while creating more favourable conditions for Vibrio bacteria, increasing risks of infections associated with exposure to coastal waters and contaminated seafood.

An average of 46% of Belize's land area experienced at least one month of extreme drought annually between 2021 and 2025, compared with just 4.5% in 1981–1990. **(Indicator 1.2.2)**

Coastal sea surface temperatures around Belize were 0.8°C higher between 2023 and 2025 than in 1981–2010. Rising coastal sea surface temperatures can affect marine ecosystems and fish stocks, with implications for marine food security and livelihoods. **(Indicator 1.4)**

VIBRIO

The length of Belize's coastline suitable for *Vibrio* transmission reached approximately 39 km in 2025, compared with no suitable coastline identified in 1982–1991.
An estimated 105 vibriosis cases were associated with these environmental conditions in 2025. **(Indicator 1.3.2)**

Health in Climate Policy and Research

Integrating health into national climate commitments and strengthening locally led research can support evidence-informed responses to climate-related health risks. In Belize, health has gained prominence in climate-policy documents, although the number of locally led scientific publications on climate change and health remains limited.

Five scientific papers on climate change and health were published with lead authors based in Belize between 2020 and 2025, fewer than one paper annually on average. Four of these papers focused on the health impacts of climate change. **(Indicator 5.3)**

Belize referenced the connections between climate change and health in its 2025 UN General Debate statement for the first time since 2022.
Health also featured in all three of Belize's submitted nationally determined contributions (NDCs), with 55 health-related references in its third submission, approximately twice as many as in the second. **(Indicator 5.4)**

The data on Adaptation (Theme 2) comes from the recently published 2025 small island developing states report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change (Gordon-Strachan et al., 2026). Additional information was sourced from UN websites (PAHO, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Romanello M, Walawender M, Israelsson J et al. The 2026 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: A decade of escalating health harms and a decisive moment for all. The Lancet 2026; published online October 2026. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(26)01779-4
Gordon-Strachan, Georgiana M., et al. (2026) "The 2025 small island developing states report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: building resilience in the face of rising heat." The Lancet Global Health.