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

A decade tracking progress on health and climate change

IRELAND

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DATA SHEET 2026

Health and Climate Change in Ireland

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 presents key country-level findings from the 2026 Lancet Countdown report for Ireland.

Climate change is making heatwaves more frequent in Ireland. Exposure among young children and older adults has risen substantially, and the economic cost of heat-related deaths among older people has almost tripled.

Wildfire smoke is causing a growing number of deaths in Ireland, reaching a record high in 2025, while extreme drought affected most of the country that year.

Ireland has sharply reduced coal use and expanded renewable electricity, but households and road transport remain heavily reliant on fossil fuels, and emissions from meat and dairy production continue to rise.

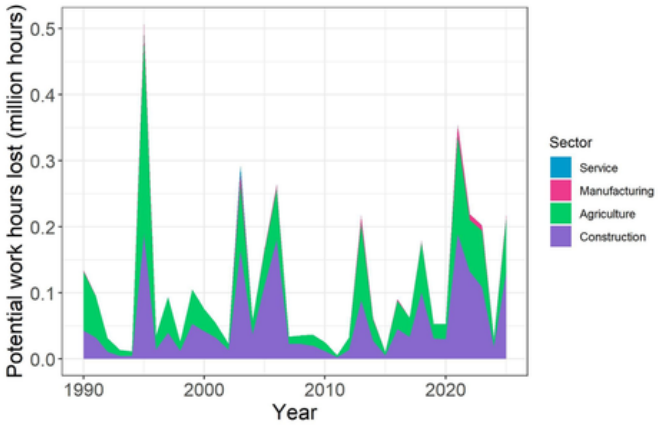
Heat and Health

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.

55% of the heatwave days that people in Ireland were, on average, exposed to between 2021 and 2025 would not have been expected to occur without climate change. (Indicator 1.1.1)

Children under one year of age and adults over 65 experienced an average of approximately 3 additional heatwave days per year between 2016 and 2025. This was an increase of 83% and 79%, respectively, compared with the 1986–2005 baseline. (Indicator 1.1.1)

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



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HEAT

Heat stress reduces labour productivity, undermining livelihoods and the social determinants of health, while heat-related deaths impose a growing cost on society.

- The average annual economic value of heat-related mortality losses in those over age 65 was US$240 million between 2021 and 2025, which is equivalent to 13,900 average incomes in Ireland. This is an 184% increase since 2000 to 2004. (Indicator 4.1.2)
- The potential income lost from reduced labour capacity due to heat was US$5 million in 2025. Workers in the construction sector were the most severely affected, incurring 68.6% of the losses. (Indicator 4.1.3)

Heat exposure caused an annual loss of 146,000 potential labour hours on average between 2016 and 2025 - 38.4% higher than the average year in the 1990s. The construction sector was most affected, accounting for 56.2% of losses. (Indicator 1.1.3)

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Extreme Weather Events and Health

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as droughts and wildfires. Wildfire smoke, which can travel long distances, harms respiratory and cardiovascular health, while droughts can disrupt water supplies and food production. In Ireland, strengthening preparedness and early warning systems is essential to protect health from these growing hazards.

Wildfire smoke caused an annual average of 96 deaths, equivalent to 2 deaths per 100,000, in Ireland from 2021 to 2025, up from 57 annual average deaths (1.4 deaths per 100,000) from 2003 to 2012. In 2025, there was a record-breaking 249 deaths (5.2 deaths per 100,000). (Indicator 1.2.1)

In 2025, 76% of Ireland land area experienced at least one month of extreme drought, the highest level since 2018. (Indicator 1.2.2)

Air Pollution, Climate Change Mitigation and Health

Transitioning to clean energy and reducing agricultural emissions can benefit health by reducing air pollution while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Ireland's annual mean concentration of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) was 8 μg/m^3, almost twice the WHO's recommended annual guideline of 5 μg/m^3. In Ireland, where agriculture and fossil fuels remain major sources of emissions, accelerating action across energy, transport, housing and farming can deliver substantial health co-benefits.

In 2023, the carbon intensity of Ireland's energy system decreased to 55 tCO_2/TJ, which is 13.7% lower than in 2016. As of 2023, coal made up 3.2% of Ireland's total energy supply and 3.8% of electricity generation, down 68% and 75% respectively since 2016. Renewables accounted for 8.3% of total energy supply and 39.6% of electricity, approximately a doubling since 2016. (Indicator 3.1.1)

In 2023, 28.4% of household energy came from electricity; however, 60.4% still came from liquid fossil fuels and natural gas, which is unchanged since 2016. (Indicator 3.1.2)

In 2023, fossil fuels still accounted for 91.6% of all road transport energy, and electricity accounted for only 0.6%. (Indicator 3.1.3)

Ireland had a net-negative carbon revenue in 2024, indicating that fossil fuel subsidies were higher than carbon prices. The country saw a net subsidy of US$2.2 billion, which is equivalent to 5.5% of the national health budget. (Indicator 4.3.2)

Emissions associated with meat and dairy production increased by 2% from 2016 to 2023, the 7th highest increase in Europe, making Ireland the 8th highest emitter in Europe. (Indicator 3.3.1)

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
World Health Organization (2023). Health and environment scorecard: Ireland