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

A decade tracking progress on health and climate change

PANAMA

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DATA SHEET 2026

Health and Climate Change in Panama

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. The Lancet Countdown Latin America tracks these links across the region, and its forthcoming 2026 report will provide the latest assessment of progress and challenges on health and climate change across Latin America.

This document draws on findings from the **2026 Lancet Countdown Global Report (indicators represented in bold)** and the forthcoming 2026 Lancet Countdown Latin America Report to present key insights for Panama.

Increasing heat exposure is affecting vulnerable populations and workers in Panama, with consequences for heat-related mortality, labour capacity and livelihoods.

Environmental conditions remain highly suitable for dengue transmission in Panama, while increasing coastal suitability for Vibrio transmission poses additional risks to health.

Expanding renewable electricity use in households and road transport can reduce harmful air pollution and protect health in Panama, while supporting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Panama has incorporated health into national climate planning, but its latest NDC contains fewer explicit health references, and gaps remain in the coverage of health risks and the integration of climate information into health decision-making.

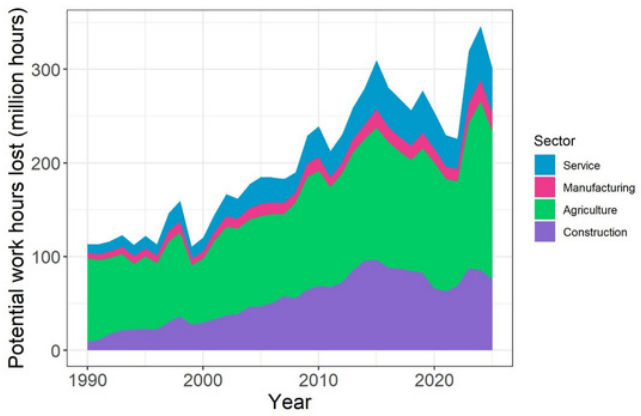
Heat and Health

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. Heat can also limit safe physical activity and reduce people's capacity to work, with consequences for livelihoods.

Children under one year of age and adults over 65 in Panama each experienced approximately five heatwave days annually between 2016 and 2025, around three to four additional days per year compared with 2006–2015. **(Indicator 1.1.1)**

The average annual monetised value of heat-related mortality among people aged over 65 in Panama was approximately US$62 million between 2021 and 2025, equivalent to approximately 3,500 average annual incomes. This was a 618% increase compared with 2000–2004. **(Indicator 4.1.2)**

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



Heat exposure caused an average annual loss of approximately 276 million potential labour hours in Panama between 2016 and 2025, 124% higher than the annual average in the 1990s. Agriculture accounted for approximately 50% of these losses. **(Indicator 1.1.3)**

Heat-related labour capacity reduction in Panama caused an estimated potential earnings loss of US$982 million in 2025, equivalent to approximately 1.1% of national GDP. Agriculture accounted for 33% of these losses, followed by construction at 32% and services at 26%. **(Indicator 4.1.3)**

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Climate-sensitive Infectious Diseases

Changes in temperature, rainfall and coastal conditions can influence the environmental suitability for mosquito-borne and waterborne disease transmission. In Panama, climatic conditions remain highly favourable for dengue transmission, while expanding coastal suitability for Vibrio bacteria poses additional health risks from exposure to coastal waters and contaminated seafood.

The transmission potential (R_0) of dengue spread by *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes in Panama increased by 54% between 2016–2025 and 1951–1960, rising from 0.7 to 1.1.
Transmission potential for *Aedes aegypti* remained high, averaging 4.6 between 2016 and 2025, although this was 2.1% below 1951-1960. **(Indicator 1.3.1)**

The length of Panama's coastline with conditions suitable for *Vibrio* transmission increased by 19% compared with 1982–1991, reaching approximately 1,420 km in 2025.
Estimated vibriosis cases more than doubled compared with 1982-1991, reaching an annual average of approximately 1,460 cases between 2016 and 2025. **(Indicator 1.3.6)**

Energy Transition and Health

Fossil fuel combustion contributes to harmful air pollution, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and premature mortality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Panama's annual mean concentration of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) was 12 µg/m³, more than twice the WHO annual guideline of 5 µg/m³. Expanding household and road transport electrification powered by renewable electricity can improve air quality, protect health and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Electricity accounted for 48.1% of household energy use in Panama in 2023, an increase of 4.6 percentage points compared with 2016. (Indicator 3.1.2; Latin America Report)

In 2023, no electricity use was recorded in Panama's road transport sector. (Indicator 3.1.3; Latin America Report)

In 2023, low-carbon sources accounted for 60.3% of Panama's electricity generation, while renewable sources contributed 13.4%. The carbon intensity of the overall energy system increased by 14.2% compared with 2016, reaching 64.2 tCO_2/TJ. (Indicator 3.1.1; Latin America Report)

Health in Climate Policy and Research

Integrating health into national climate policies can help strengthen responses to the health impacts of climate change. In Panama, health has been incorporated into national climate planning, although gaps remain in the coverage of climate-sensitive health risks and the use of climate information for health-sector decision-making.

Panama did not mention health in its first NDC in 2016 but included substantial health-related content in its subsequent submissions. Mentions peaked at 145 in its 2024 NDC before falling to 14 in its most recent 2025 submission, which mainly covered wellbeing and overall health. **(Indicator 5.4.1)**

Panama's 2022 *Plan Nacional de Acción Climática* includes a dedicated health component. However, the Lancet Countdown's assessment identified substantial gaps: only health infrastructure and disaster risk were addressed with supporting baselines, proposed actions and indicators. Infectious diseases, malnutrition, injuries and mental health were not comprehensively covered, while health-specific financing provisions were absent. (Indicator 2.1.2; Latin America Report)

Panama's November 2025 NDC links health to its loss and damage response and commits to strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems. However, it does not explicitly establish how climate information will inform health-sector early warning or decision-making. (Indicator 2.2.1; Latin America Report)

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
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