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

A decade tracking progress on health and climate change

COLOMBIA

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DATA SHEET 2026

Health and Climate Change in Colombia

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 2026 report provides the latest assessment of progress and challenges on health and climate change across Latin America.

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

Increasing heat exposure is affecting vulnerable populations and workers in Colombia, while drought threatens health, livelihoods and water security.

Environmental conditions have become increasingly favourable for dengue transmission in Colombia, posing growing risks to health.

Colombia has strengthened the integration of health into national climate policy through comprehensive health-sector adaptation planning, climate-informed disease surveillance and local climate risk assessments.

Air pollution continues to pose substantial health risks in Colombia, while net fossil fuel subsidies sustain dependence on polluting energy sources. Expanding household and road transport electrification powered by renewable electricity can protect health.

Healthier diets can reduce diet-related mortality while delivering benefits for the climate.

Heat and Drought

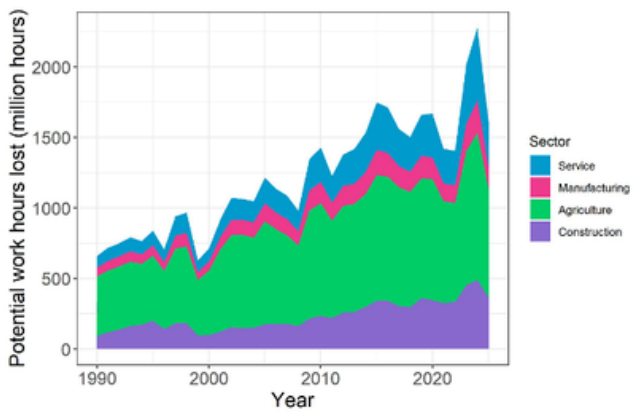
Exposure to high temperatures increases the risk of heat-related illness and mortality. Vulnerable groups, including older adults, young children, pregnant women, and those with pre-existing conditions, face the greatest risks. Drought can threaten water availability, food security and livelihoods, with consequences for health and wellbeing.

99% of the heatwave days that people in Colombia were exposed to on average were directly attributable to climate change between 2016 and 2025. **(Indicator 1.1.1)**

Children under one year of age and adults over 65 in Colombia experienced approximately 5 and 4 additional heatwave days per year, respectively, between 2016 and 2025 compared with 2006–2015, reaching an annual average of 7.3 and 6.1 heatwave days, respectively. **(Indicator 1.1.1)**

The average annual monetised value of heat-related mortality among people aged over 65 in Colombia was US$1.51 billion between 2021 and 2025, a 401% increase compared with 2000–2004. This is equivalent to almost 87,000 average incomes of Colombia. **(Indicator 4.1.2)**

Annual potential work hours lost, disaggregated by economic sector. Colombia, 1990-2025.



Heat exposure caused an average annual loss of 1.68 billion potential labour hours in Colombia between 2016 and 2025, 117% higher than the annual average in the 1990s. Agriculture accounted for 50% of these losses. **(Indicator 1.1.3)**

Heat-related labour capacity reduction in Colombia caused an estimated potential earnings loss of US$3.48 billion in 2025, equivalent to 0.79% of national GDP. Agriculture accounted for approximately 38% of these losses. **(Indicator 4.1.3)**

An average of 55% of Colombia's land area experienced at least one month of extreme drought annually between 2016 and 2025, compared with almost 13% in 1982–1991. (Indicator 1.2.2; Latin America Report)

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Dengue

Changing environmental conditions can also increase the suitability for dengue transmission, highlighting the importance of effective public health preparedness.

The transmission potential (R_0) of dengue in Colombia was 36% higher for *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes and 50% higher for *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes between 2016 and 2025 than in 1951–1960. Transmission potential remained above 1 for both mosquito vectors, indicating environmental conditions suitable for sustained transmission. **(Indicator 1.3.1)**

LIVED EXPERIENCE

The increase in temperature has led to the presence of vector-borne diseases in areas that did not have the vector.

Anonymous, clinical health worker, Colombia

Health in Climate Policy

Colombia's health-sector climate change management plan and updated NDC provide examples of how health considerations are being incorporated into national climate policy.

Colombia's 2026 health-sector climate change management plan, the Plan Integral de Gestión del Cambio Climático del Sector Salud, addresses all seven climate-sensitive health topics assessed, including baseline information, adaptation measures and financing considerations. It was assessed as the most comprehensive health adaptation plan in the region. (Indicator 1.3.1; Latin America Report)

Colombia's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), submitted in December 2025, includes climate information and early warning systems to support epidemiological surveillance and modelling of climate-sensitive health risks, including dengue, malaria and heat stress. (Indicator 2.2.1; Latin America Report)

Twenty-seven administrative units in Colombia reported having undertaken climate risk and vulnerability assessments, accounting for 10.4% of all reporting units in Latin America. These included Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Cartagena, alongside smaller municipalities. (Indicator 2.1.3; Latin America Report)

Energy Transition and health

Fossil fuel combustion and the use of polluting household fuels contribute to harmful air pollution, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and premature mortality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Colombia's annual mean concentration of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) was 14 μg/m^3, nearly three times the recommended annual guideline of 5 μg/m^3. Reducing dependence on polluting fuels through renewable electricity can improve air quality and protect health while lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Household air pollution from the use of polluting fuels was associated with approximately 600 deaths in Colombia in 2023, a 60% decrease from approximately 1,500 deaths in 2016. **(Indicator 3.2.2)**

Electricity accounted for 44.4% of household energy use in Colombia in 2023, while 25.4% came from fossil fuels. **(Indicator 3.1.2)**

Electricity accounted for almost none (0.04%) of road transport energy use in Colombia in 2023. (Indicator 3.1.3; Latin America Report)

Fossil fuel subsidies in Colombia exceeded revenues from carbon pricing in 2024, resulting in net subsidies of US$10.85 billion, equivalent to 31% of current national health expenditure. These subsidies perpetuate dependence on polluting fossil fuels, undermining opportunities to improve air quality and protect health. **(Indicator 4.3.2)**

Healthy Diets and Food Systems

Unhealthy diets contribute to preventable mortality, while food production and consumption generate greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing the consumption of healthy plant-based foods can improve health while supporting more sustainable food systems.

In 2023, approximately 37,000 deaths in Colombia were associated with insufficient consumption of healthy plant-based foods, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, a 34% increase from 2016. A further 6,500 deaths were associated with excessive consumption of dairy, red meat and processed meat, a 47% increase from 2016. **(Indicator 3.3.2)**

Red meat and dairy accounted for approximately 67% of greenhouse gas emissions associated with food consumption in Colombia in 2023, although these emissions were 4.5% lower than in 2016. **(Indicator 3.3.1)**

Testimonials were collected by The Geneva Learning Foundation as part of efforts to elevate health worker voices and recognize their lived experiences as valuable evidence in climate and health policy.

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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