

# CLIMATE AND HEALTH COUNTRY PROFILE – 2015

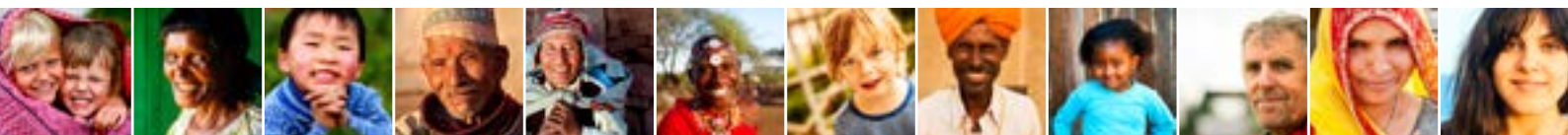
## SOUTH AFRICA



World Health Organization



United Nations  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change



### OVERVIEW

The second-largest economy in Africa, the Republic of South Africa is defined as a middle-income country but still faces high poverty levels and one of the highest inequality rates in the world [World Bank Overview, 2015].

South Africa has a generally temperate climate with desert and subtropical zones – a result of the mixed topography and influence of bordering Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Climate change is predicted to further the trends of marked temperature rise in the country, alongside increased rainfall variability, sea level rise, and more frequent extreme weather events [South Africa INDC, 2015]. These, in turn, will likely impact on food and water security, human settlements, infrastructure and ecosystems. Health will likely be affected: climate change could aggravate heat stress, vector-borne diseases including malaria, dengue fever and yellow fever, air pollution, communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cholera and TB, and respiratory disease.<sup>a</sup>

South Africa – recognizing such threats – has conducted a 'Long-Term Adaptation Scenarios' flagship research programme<sup>b</sup> to develop national and sub-national adaptation scenarios for

primary sectors, including health, under plausible climate and developmental pathways.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- In South Africa, under a high emissions scenario, mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 5.1°C on average from 1990 to 2100. If global emissions decrease rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.4°C [page 2].
- In South Africa, under a high emissions scenario, the number of days of warm spell<sup>c</sup> is projected to increase from less than 5 days in 1990 to about 145 days on average in 2100. If global emissions decrease rapidly, the days of warm spell are limited to about 25 on average [page 2].
- The risk of infectious and vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue, will likely increase towards 2050, under a high emissions scenario in South Africa [page 3].
- In South Africa, under a high emissions scenario heat-related deaths in the elderly (65+ years) are projected to increase to about 116 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to the estimated baseline of about 2 deaths per 100,000 annually between 1961 and 1990. A rapid reduction in global emissions could limit heat-related deaths in the elderly to about 18 deaths per 100,000 in 2080 [page 4].

### DEMOGRAPHIC ESTIMATES

Population [2013] <sup>d</sup>	53.42 million
Population growth rate [2013] <sup>d</sup>	1.1 %
Population living in urban areas [2013] <sup>e</sup>	63.8 %
Population under five [2013] <sup>d</sup>	10.4 %
Population aged 65 or over [2013] <sup>d</sup>	5.0 %

### ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

GDP per capita [current US\$, 2013] <sup>f</sup>	6890 USD
Total expenditure on health as % of GDP [2013] <sup>g</sup>	8.9 %
Percentage share of income for lowest 20% of population [2011] <sup>h</sup>	NA
HDI [2013, +/- 0.01 change from 2005 is indicated with arrow] <sup>i</sup>	0.658 ▲

### HEALTH ESTIMATES

Life expectancy at birth [2013] <sup>j</sup>	60 years
Under-5 mortality per 1000 live births [2013] <sup>j</sup>	43

a South African National Biodiversity Institute. The Long-Term Adaptation Scenarios Flagship Research Programme [LTAS] for South Africa. Climate and Impacts Factsheet Series, 2013. <http://www.sanbi.org/sites/default/files/documents/documents/ltas-factsheetclimate-change-and-human-health2013.pdf>

b Republic of South Africa, Department Environmental Affairs. Climate Change Implications for Human Health in South Africa. LTAS Phase I, technical report, 2013.

c A 'warm spell' day is a day when maximum temperature, together with that of at least the 6 consecutive previous days, exceeds the 90th percentile threshold for that time of the year.

d World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, UNDESA [2015]

e World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, UNDESA [2014]

f World Development Indicators, World Bank [2016]

g Global Health Expenditure Database, WHO [2014]

h United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports [2014]

i Global Health Observatory, WHO [2014]

j Levels & Trends in Child Mortality Report 2015, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation [2015]

# CURRENT AND FUTURE CLIMATE HAZARDS

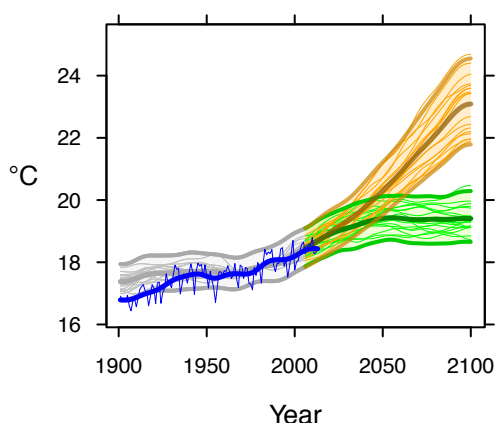
Due to climate change, many climate hazards and extreme weather events, such as heat waves, heavy rainfall and droughts, could become more frequent and more intense in many parts of the world.

Outlined here are country-specific projections up to the year 2100 for climate hazards under a 'business as usual' high emissions scenario compared to projections under a 'two-degree' scenario with rapidly decreasing global emissions. Most hazards caused by climate change will persist for many centuries.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CLIMATE HAZARD PROJECTIONS

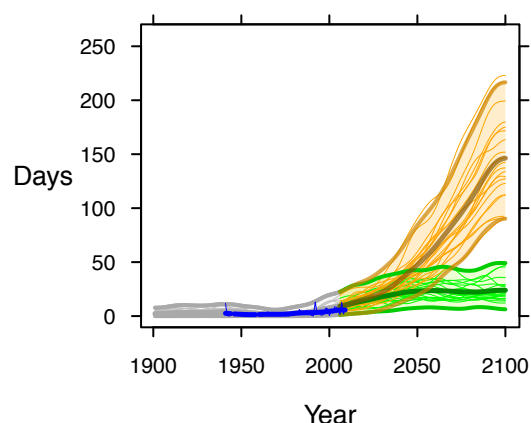
The model projections below present climate hazards under a high emissions scenario, Representative Concentration Pathway 8.5 [RCP8.5] (in orange) and a low emissions scenario, [RCP2.6] (in green).<sup>a</sup> The text boxes describe the projected changes averaged across about 20 models (thick line). The figures also show each model individually as well as the 90% model range (shaded) as a measure of uncertainty and, where available, the annual and smoothed observed record (in blue).<sup>b,c</sup>

### MEAN ANNUAL TEMPERATURE



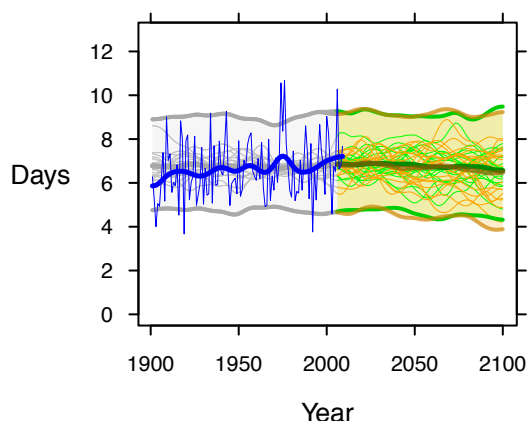
Under a high emissions scenario, mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 5.1°C on average from 1990 to 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.4°C.

### DAYS OF WARM SPELL ('HEAT WAVES')



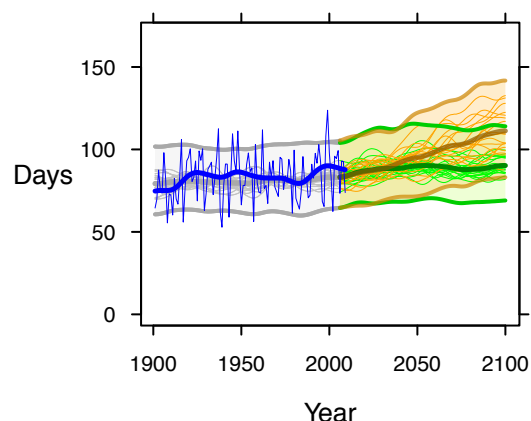
Under a high emissions scenario, the number of days of warm spell<sup>d</sup> is projected to increase from less than 5 days in 1990 to about 145 days on average in 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the days of warm spell are limited to about 25 on average.

### DAYS WITH EXTREME RAINFALL ('FLOOD RISK')



Under both high and low emissions scenarios, the number of days with very heavy precipitation [20 mm or more] is not indicated to change, remaining around 6/7 days on average.

### CONSECUTIVE DRY DAYS ('DROUGHT')



Under a high emissions scenario, the longest dry spell is indicated to increase by about 30 days on average, to about 110 days on average in 2100, with continuing large year-to-year variability. If emissions decrease rapidly, the increase is limited to less than 10 days on average.

<sup>a</sup> Model projections are from CMIP5 for RCP8.5 (high emissions) and RCP2.6 (low emissions). Model anomalies are added to the historical mean and smoothed.

<sup>b</sup> Observed historical record of mean temperature is from CRU-TSv.3.22; observed historical records of extremes are from HadEX2.

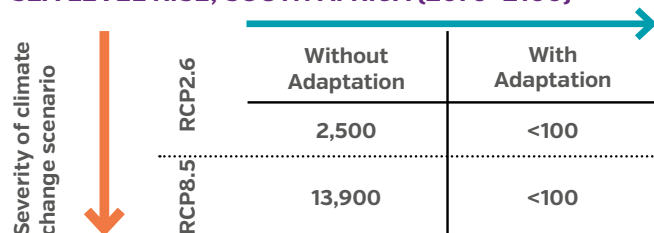
<sup>c</sup> Analysis by the Climatic Research Unit and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia, 2015.

<sup>d</sup> A 'warm spell' day is a day when maximum temperature, together with that of at least the 6 consecutive previous days, exceeds the 90th percentile threshold for that time of the year.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE HEALTH RISKS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Human health is profoundly affected by weather and climate. Climate change threatens to exacerbate today's health problems – deaths from extreme weather events, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, infectious diseases and malnutrition – whilst undermining water and food supplies, infrastructure, health systems and social protection systems.

### ANNUAL EXPOSURE TO FLOODING DUE TO SEA LEVEL RISE, SOUTH AFRICA (2070–2100)



\* Medium ice melting scenario

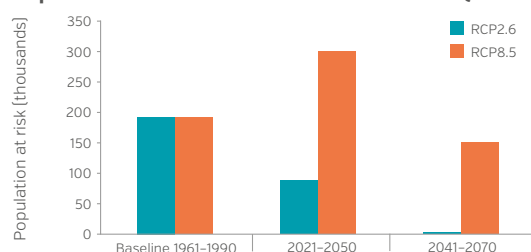
\*\* Values rounded to nearest '00

Under a high emissions scenario, and without large investments in adaptation, an annual average of 13,900 people are projected to be affected by flooding due to sea level rise between 2070 and 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly and there is a major scale up in protection (i.e. continued construction/raising of dikes) the annual affected population could be limited to less than 100 people. Adaptation alone will not offer sufficient protection, as sea level rise is a long-term process, with high emissions scenarios bringing increasing impacts well beyond the end of the century.

Source: Human dynamics of climate change, technical report, Met Office, HM Government, UK, 2014.

### INFECTIOUS AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

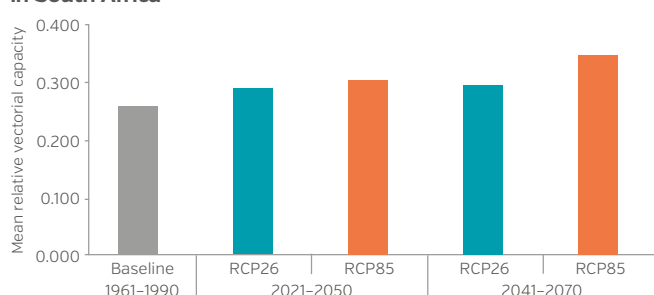
#### Population at risk of malaria in South Africa (in thousands)



By 2050, under a high emissions scenario about 300,000 people annually are projected to be at risk of malaria, an increase from the baseline of about 190,000 per year between 1961 and 1990. The population at risk would then decrease towards 2070. By contrast, under a low emissions scenario, the population at risk would continually decrease towards 2070.

Source: Rocklöv, J., Quam, M. et al. 2015.<sup>d</sup>

#### Mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission in South Africa



### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

South Africa also faces inland river flood risk. It is projected, that by 2030, an additional 8,500 people may be at risk of river floods annually as a result of climate change and 8,000 due to socio-economic change above the estimated 45,900 annually affected population in 2010.<sup>a</sup>

In addition to deaths from drowning, flooding causes extensive indirect health effects, including impacts on food production, water provision, ecosystem disruption, infectious disease outbreak and vector distribution. Longer term effects of flooding may include post-traumatic stress and population displacement.



### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Some of the world's most virulent infections are also highly sensitive to climate: temperature, precipitation and humidity have a strong influence on the life-cycles of the vectors and the infectious agents they carry and influence the transmission of water and food-borne diseases.<sup>b</sup>

Socioeconomic development and health interventions are driving down burdens of several infectious diseases, and these projections assume that this will continue. However, climate conditions are projected to become significantly more favourable for transmission, slowing progress in reducing burdens, and increasing the populations at risk if control measures are not maintained or strengthened.<sup>c</sup>

For example, in the baseline year of 2008 there were an estimated 9,500 diarrhoeal deaths in children under 15 years old. Under a high emissions scenario, diarrhoeal deaths attributable to climate change in children under 15 years old are projected to be about 10.2% of approximately 4,300 diarrhoeal deaths projected in 2030. Although diarrhoeal deaths are projected to decline to about 1,700 by 2050 the proportion of deaths attributable to climate change is projected to rise to about 14.8% [Source: Lloyd, S., 2015].<sup>d</sup>

Under a high emissions scenario, the mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission is projected to increase towards 2070 to about 0.35 from the baseline value of about 0.26. If global emissions decline rapidly, this increase in mean relative vectorial capacity could be limited to about 0.30.

Source: Rocklöv, J., Quam, M. et al., 2015.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> World Resources Institute, <http://www.wri.org>. Aqueduct Global Flood Analyzer. Assumes continued current socioeconomic trends (SSP2) and a 25-year flood protection.

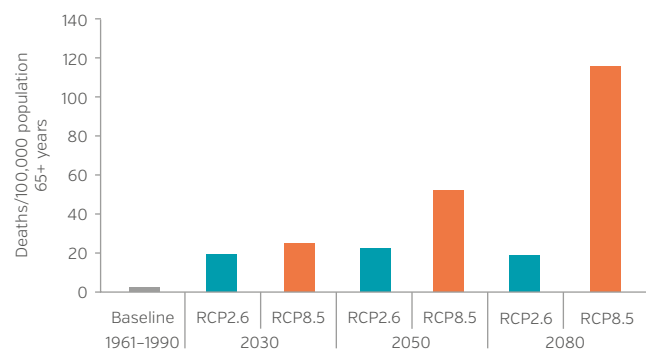
<sup>b</sup> Atlas of Health and Climate, World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization, 2012.

<sup>c</sup> Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

<sup>d</sup> Country-level analysis, completed in 2015, was based on health models outlined in the Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014. The mean of impact estimates for three global climate models are presented. Models assume continued socioeconomic trends (SSP2 or comparable).

## HEAT-RELATED MORTALITY

Heat-related mortality in population 65 years or over, South Africa  
(deaths / 100,000 population 65+ yrs)



Under a high emissions scenario heat-related deaths in the elderly (65+ years) are projected to increase to about 116 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to the estimated baseline of about 2 deaths per 100,000 annually between 1961 and 1990. A rapid reduction in global emissions could limit heat-related deaths in the elderly to about 18 deaths per 100,000 in 2080.

Source: Honda et al., 2015.<sup>a</sup>



## KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Climate change is expected to increase mean annual temperature and the intensity and frequency of heat waves resulting in a greater number of people at risk of heat-related medical conditions.

The elderly, children, the chronically ill, the socially isolated and at-risk occupational groups are particularly vulnerable to heat-related conditions.

## UNDERNUTRITION

Climate change, through higher temperatures, land and water scarcity, flooding, drought and displacement, negatively impacts agricultural production and causes breakdown in food systems. These disproportionately affect those most vulnerable people at risk to hunger and can lead to food insecurity. Vulnerable groups risk further deterioration into food and nutrition crises if exposed to extreme climate events.<sup>b</sup>

Without considerable efforts made to improve climate resilience, it has been estimated that the global risk of hunger and malnutrition could increase by up to 20 percent by 2050.<sup>b</sup>

In South Africa, the prevalence of stunting in children under age 5 was 23.9% in 2008, the prevalence of underweight children and wasting in children under 5 was 8.7% and 4.7%, respectively, in 2008.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Country-level analysis, completed in 2015, was based on health models outlined in the Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014. The mean of impact estimates for three global climate models are presented. Models assume continued socioeconomic trends (SSP2 or comparable).

<sup>b</sup> World Food Project 2015 <https://www.wfp.org/content/two-minutes-climate-change-and-hunger>

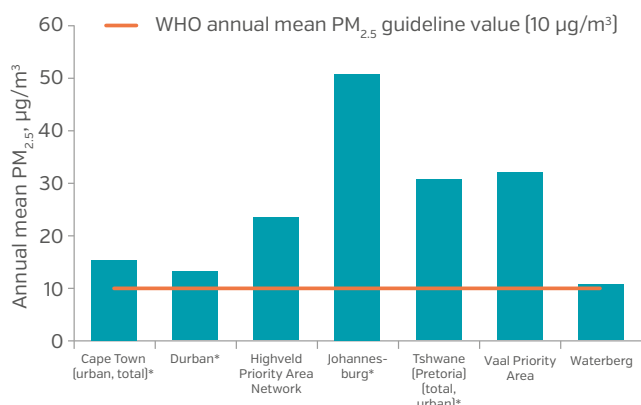
<sup>c</sup> World Health Organization, Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition [2015 edition]. Please see source for definitions of child malnutrition measures.

## CURRENT EXPOSURES AND HEALTH RISKS DUE TO AIR POLLUTION

Many of the drivers of climate change, such as inefficient and polluting forms of energy and transport systems, also contribute to air pollution. Air pollution is now one of the largest global health risks, causing approximately seven million deaths every year. There is an important opportunity to promote policies that both protect the climate at a global level, and also have large and immediate health benefits at a local level.

### OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION EXPOSURE

Outdoor air pollution in South African cities  
annual mean  $PM_{2.5}$  ( $\mu g/m^3$ ) 2011–2012\*



The South African cities for which there was air pollution data available had annual mean  $PM_{2.5}$  levels that were above the WHO guideline value of 10  $\mu g/m^3$ .

Source: Ambient Air Pollution Database, WHO, May 2014.

\* A standard conversion has been used, see source for further details.



#### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Outdoor air pollution can have direct and sometimes severe consequences for health.

Fine particles which penetrate deep into the respiratory tract subsequently increase mortality from respiratory infections, lung cancer and cardiovascular disease.

### HOUSEHOLD AIR POLLUTION

#### SOUTH AFRICA

Percentage of population primarily using solid fuels for cooking (%), 2013



RURAL  
AREAS  
**28**



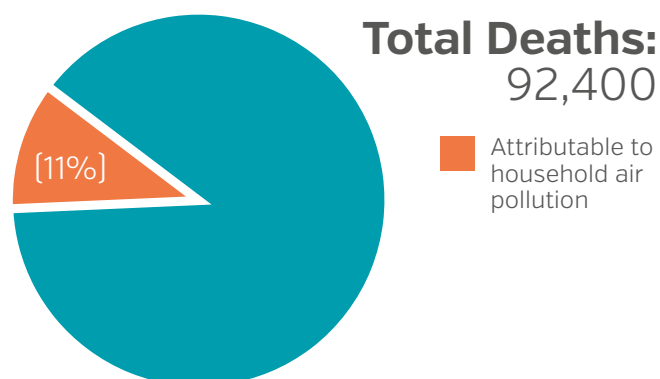
URBAN  
AREAS  
**<5**



NATIONAL  
TOTAL  
**12**

Source: Global Health Observatory, data repository, World Health Organization, 2013.

Percent of total deaths from ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (18 years +) and acute lower respiratory infections (under 5 years) attributable to household air pollution, 2012.



Source: Global Health Observatory, data repository, World Health Organization, 2012.



#### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Air pollution in and around the home is largely a result of the burning of solid fuels (biomass or coal) for cooking.

Women and children are at a greater risk for disease from household air pollution. Consequently, household air pollution is responsible for a larger proportion of the total number of deaths from ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and COPD in women compared to men.<sup>a</sup>

In South Africa, 19% percent of an estimated 7,900 child deaths due to acute lower respiratory infections is attributable to household air pollution (WHO, 2012).

a Annu. Rev. Public. Health. 2014.35:185–206. [http://www.who.int/phe/health\\_topics/outdoorair/databases/HAP\\_BoD\\_results\\_March2014.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/databases/HAP_BoD_results_March2014.pdf?ua=1)

## CO-BENEFITS TO HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Health co-benefits are local, national and international measures with the potential to simultaneously yield large, immediate public health benefits and reduce the upward trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions. Lower carbon strategies can also be cost-effective investments for individuals and societies.

Presented here are examples, from a global perspective, of opportunities for health co-benefits that could be realised by action in important greenhouse gas emitting sectors.<sup>a</sup>

### Transport

Transport injuries lead to 1.2 million deaths every year, and land use and transport planning contribute to the 2–3 million deaths from physical inactivity. The transport sector is also responsible for some 14% (7.0 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e) of global carbon emissions. The IPCC has noted significant opportunities to reduce energy demand in the sector, potentially resulting in a 15%–40% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and bringing substantial opportunities for health: A modal shift towards walking and cycling could see reductions in illnesses related to physical inactivity and reduced outdoor air pollution and noise exposure; increased use of public transport is likely to result in reduced GHG emissions; compact urban planning fosters walkable residential neighborhoods, improves accessibility to jobs, schools and services and can encourage physical activity and improve health equity by making urban services more accessible to the elderly and poor.



### Electricity Generation

Reliable electricity generation is essential for economic growth, with 1.4 billion people living without access to electricity. However, current patterns of electricity generation in many parts of the world, particularly the reliance on coal combustion in highly polluting power plants contributes heavily to poor local air quality, causing cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Outdoor air pollution is responsible for 3.7 million premature deaths annually, 88% of these deaths occur in low and middle income countries. The health benefits of transitioning from fuels such as coal to lower carbon sources, including ultimately to renewable energy, are clear: Reduced rates of cardiovascular and respiratory disease such as stroke, lung cancer, coronary artery disease, and COPD; cost-savings for health systems; improved economic productivity from a healthier and more productive workforce.



### Household Heating, Cooking and Lighting

Household air pollution causes over 4.3 million premature deaths annually, predominantly due to stroke, ischaemic heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, and childhood pneumonia. A range of interventions can both improve public health and reduce household emissions: a transition from the inefficient use of solid fuels like wood and charcoal, towards cleaner energy sources like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), biogas, and electricity could save lives by reducing indoor levels of



### Healthcare Systems

Health care activities are an important source of greenhouse gas emissions. In the US and in EU countries, for example, health care activities account for between 3–8% of greenhouse gas [CO<sub>2</sub>-eq] emissions. Major sources include procurement and inefficient energy consumption. Modern, on-site, low-carbon energy solutions (e.g. solar, wind, or hybrid solutions) and the development of combined heat and power generation capacity in larger facilities offer significant potential to lower the health costs of health care facilities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.



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