

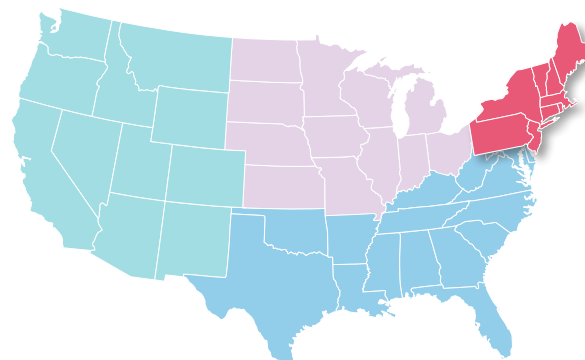
Focus on the Northeast

The U.S. must take rapid climate action to prioritize and protect health and equity, including a rapid transition away from the burning of fossil fuels.

The Northeast region is experiencing the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, warming oceans, increased coastal flooding, extreme rainfall, more intense tropical storms and hurricanes, and extreme heat.

Climate change is harming the health of residents in the Northeast

- **Extreme Heat:** Extreme heat can cause heat exhaustion and heat stroke; contribute to poor pregnancy outcomes; harm lungs, kidneys, and hearts; worsen mental health; and contribute to higher crime rates and suicides. Extreme heat means lost labor hours for outdoor workers and less days children can safely play outside or participate in sports. People living in cities, low-income and rural communities, children, and outdoor workers are at especially high risk.
- **Extreme weather:** Climate-intensified disasters, such as hurricanes, can cause injury and death; damage health facilities; limit access to healthcare, safe water and housing; cause power outages; and harm mental health. People with disabilities or chronic conditions like asthma or heart disease, older persons, and low-income communities are among those at greatest risk. Evacuations, power outages, and disruptions to healthcare are particularly harmful during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Poor air quality:** Air pollution causes lung and heart disease, poor birth outcomes, childhood asthma, and early death. In July 2021, wildfire smoke from California reached as far east as Maine and contributed to the worst air quality in New York City in 15 years. Higher temperatures also worsen local air quality especially in areas that already have high air pollution. Climate change increases pollen levels, worsening allergic and respiratory diseases. Children's health is especially harmed by air pollution.



- **Infectious disease:** Climate change is influencing the spread of infectious diseases. Longer warm seasons over a larger geographic area have contributed to an increased incidence of Lyme disease in the Northeast, which can be spread by ticks. Warming oceans and sea level rise are associated with increased concentrations of *Vibrio*, bacteria that can cause severe diarrhea, wound infections, and blood infections that can be life-threatening.

Climate change deepens health inequities from discriminatory policies

Everyone's health is at risk from climate change, but some communities bear a greater burden. Decades of racially-biased policies including structural discrimination in housing, zoning, and industrial and transportation infrastructure put certain communities at higher risk of the health harms from air pollution and climate change. Black, Latinx, Alaskan Native or American Indian, Asian American or Pacific Islander, and other people of color are more exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution. Discriminatory policies also negatively impact the health of low-income communities and make it harder to adapt to the rapidly changing climate, deepening health inequities. People with certain medical conditions, outdoor workers, pregnant people, children, and the elderly are also at higher risk from climate change.

Residents in the Northeast are worried about climate change and support climate action. The majority of adults in Northeastern states are worried about climate change, believe climate change will harm people in the U.S., and think Congress should do more to address climate change.¹

Action on climate change is critical to protect health and advance equity in the Northeast

Taking urgent action to address climate change today is one of the most important things policymakers can do to protect the health of residents in their states. The 2021 Lancet Countdown U.S. Policy Brief outlines three policy recommendations to highlight how health and equity can guide action on climate change.

- 1. Rapidly increase funding to protect people's health:** Make urgent investments in research and local solutions that reduce the health impacts of climate change and that prioritize health and equity.
- 2. Account for the health-related costs of burning fossil fuels in decision-making:** Incorporate health-related costs of fossil fuels into calculations of the social cost of carbon and climate change to guide policies that prioritize health equity.
- 3. Rapidly cut greenhouse gas emissions, especially in areas suffering most from fossil fuel-related air pollution:** Reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 57-62% of 2005 levels by 2030 with a goal of a near zero-emission economy by mid-century. Direct at least 40% of investments towards improving air quality in under-resourced communities.

The Lancet Countdown U.S. Brief is supported by a diverse group of health experts from over 70 U.S. organizations. This document is supported by data and recommendations from the 2021 Lancet Countdown U.S. Policy Brief and global report, and prior years' reports. Additional region-specific information was obtained from the **Fourth National Climate Assessment**. The Northeast region includes: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

1. Yale Climate Opinion Maps 2020 accessed at <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/>