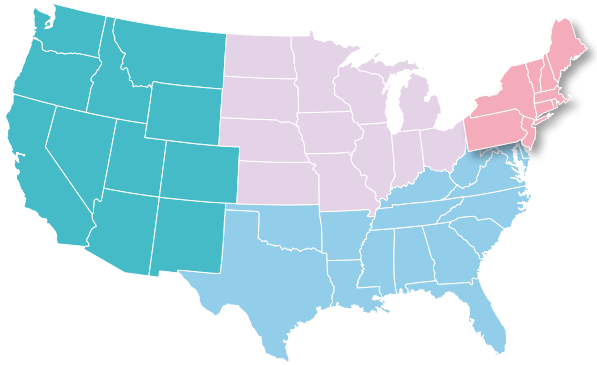
Focus on the Northeast

An equitable transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy sources will improve health, save lives, and promote equity. Momentum for action on climate change is growing, and promising climate solutions are available to protect Northeast residents from the health crisis of climate change.



Climate change is harming the health of residents in the Northeast.

Climate change is impacting Northeastern residents' health and livelihoods by worsening several climate-sensitive hazards that are common to the region, including extreme heat, air pollution, severe storms, flooding, and sea level rise.

- **Heat:** Heat exposure is rising across the region, and it is particularly hazardous in urban areas and for low-wealth and communities of color.[1] In July 2022, a heatwave affected much of the region including **New York**, **New Jersey**, **Massachusetts**, and **Pennsylvania**. Temperatures in Newark, **New Jersey** were over 100°F for five days in a row.[2] Extended exposure to heat worsens chronic illnesses and leads to more hospitalizations and deaths.
- **Air pollution:** Air pollution from the use of fossil fuels contributes to lung disease, heart disease, and early death across the Northeast region.[3,4]
- **Extreme weather:** Hospitals along the Atlantic coast are at risk from sea level rise, hurricanes, and flooding.[5] Severe storms and flooding have led to damage, and in some cases, closure of regional health care facilities. For example, the Norwood Hospital in **Massachusetts**[6] closed, resulting in reduced access to health care for thousands of patients.

These hazards are creating compounding health impacts in the Northeast, including increases in heat-related illness and infectious tick-borne diseases in the region. The Northeast must also prepare for mental health needs, displaced populations, socioeconomic losses, impacts to food security, and health care infrastructure disruptions resulting from climate change.

The majority of voters in all Northeastern states are worried about climate change.

Residents of the Northeast are concerned about climate change. At least 60% of voters in each state are worried about global warming, and more than 60% think that climate change will harm people in the U.S.[7] There is substantial support for clean energy policies in the region. Over 60% of voters in every Northeastern state support clean energy and climate change policies, such as requiring that a fifth of their electricity come from renewable sources, and setting CO2 emissions limits on coal-fired power plants.[7]

States across the Northeastern region are taking action on climate change.

Climate solutions are available today that will protect our health by ending our dependence on fossil fuels and slowing climate change. States across the Northeast are working together to transition to clean and renewable energy and prepare communities to withstand harms related to climate change. These efforts will improve health now while creating a safer, healthier future.

- **Decarbonizing the energy sector:** The proportion of power in the region coming from wind, solar, and other renewable sources has increased over time. The **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative** is a consortium of eleven Northeastern states working to reduce power sector emissions and fund regional climate and job creation programs.[8] This initiative is reducing air pollution, with significant benefits for children's health,[9] and economic savings from reduced mortality and health care costs.[10] In 2022, **Massachusetts** passed legislation to increase installation of solar arrays and offshore wind power, in addition to a variety of other actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across multiple sectors.[11]

- **Building health care system resilience:** Health care facilities must be able to withstand flooding, heat, and severe storms to serve patients during and after weather events. Patients need resources to address climate-related illnesses, mental health impacts, and displacement, as well as programs to manage climate hazards in their communities. The **Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)** program provides a model for action to address many of these issues. Through the use of competitive municipal-level grants, the MVP program has supported projects ranging from vector-borne disease control programs to installation of green flood resilience infrastructure.[12]
- **Strengthening community resilience:** A wide variety of models exist to address urban heat through emergency cooling, education, and neighborhood connectivity. Organizations like **Communities Responding to Extreme Weather**[13] and the **Urban Sustainability Directors Network**,[14] have partnered with municipalities to implement resilience hubs, putting climate adaptation and health protection tools in the hands of those who need them most. Other approaches being piloted in the region include mapping block-by-block heat risks, urban greening initiatives, neighborhood heat action plans, and heat mitigation programs led by community-based organizations.
- **Enhancing agricultural sustainability:** The **USDA Climate Hubs** and **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education** cooperative agreement programs provide funding and education to increase the resilience of Northeastern rural communities and support the transition to climate-smart agriculture.[15,16]

Several national and regional coalitions, such as the U.S. Climate Alliance and We Are Still In, provide opportunities for state leaders to learn from one another and work together to advance climate solutions. Programs and policies in the Northeast can serve as examples for local and state governments across the U.S. For more information on climate policy solutions that can protect health and equity, please read the **2022 *Lancet* Countdown U.S. Policy Brief.**

The *Lancet* Countdown U.S. Brief is supported by a diverse group of health experts from over 80 U.S organizations. This document is supported by data and recommendations from the **2022 *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, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

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