

# Assessment finds millions of lives can be saved with climate action

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Unless we take urgent action to tackle climate change, we can expect an ever-hotter world that threatens global health, disrupts lives and livelihoods and overwhelms healthcare systems, according to *The Lancet's* Global Countdown on Health and Climate Change, a comprehensive global analysis tracking the impact of climate change on human health across 41 key indicators.

Experts from institutions across the globe who work at the nexus of [climate change](#) and health contributed to the published findings, including faculty from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. While the report presents the most worrying outlook to date as key trends worsen, the collaborators also find that with urgent climate action and a holistic response to the converging crises, the lives of millions can be improved and saved.

The 41 indicators are organized across five categories: 1) climate change impacts, exposures and vulnerabilities; 2) adaptation planning and resilience for health; 3) mitigation actions and health co-benefits; 4) economics and finance; and 5) public and [political engagement](#).

Jeffrey Shaman, Ph.D., professor of environmental health sciences, director of the climate and health

program and vice chairman of Columbia's Climate School, was a report contributor and reviewer. Lewis Ziska, Ph.D., associate professor of environmental health sciences, contributed to the chapter on food insecurity following extreme climate events where he also addressed structural and social determinants of [food insecurity](#). "An important aspect of public health involves ensuring food security following a climate change induced extreme event. Here we look for common occurrences, problems and potential solutions that can be used as recommendations to ensure that no one goes hungry following a hurricane, flood or intense windstorm. But more needs to be done," noted Ziska.

According to Kim Knowlton, DrPH, assistant professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia Mailman and senior scientist, Natural Resources Defense Council, "This year's Lancet Countdown is the latest warning that the U.S. is going in the wrong direction on climate change and health. But it's not too late to change course. The incoming Biden/Harris administration should seize this opportunity to embrace the knowledge, expertise, and passion of the American public health and healthcare community. Together, we can build back a healthier, more equitable, and climate-resilient nation."

"Whether it's the spread of viruses and infectious diseases, heat exposure, or wildfires, the 2020 Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change U.S. Policy Brief shows how climate change makes communities and health care systems more vulnerable. The Brief lays out how climate action across sectors will lead to major environmental and public health gains," said Brittany Shea, Project Director, Global Consortium on Climate & Health Education, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

**More information:** Nick Watts et al, The 2020 report of The Lancet Countdown on health and

climate change: responding to converging crises,

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