



# Lancet urges response to heatwave exposure surge

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## **Lancet urges response to heatwave exposure surge-Indians faced almost 60 mn heatwave exposure events in 2016, says journal**

- Indian policy makers must take a series of initiatives to mitigate the increased risks to health, and the loss of labour hours due to a surge in exposure to heatwave events in the country over the 2012-2016 period, the Lancet Countdown 2018 report recommends.
- From 2014-2017, the average length of heatwaves in India ranged from 3-4 days compared to the global average of 0.8-1.8 days, and Indians were exposed to almost 60 million heatwave exposure events in 2016, a jump of about 40 million from 2012, the report released showed.

### **Impact of Heatwaves**

- Heatwaves are associated with increased rates of heat stress and heat stroke, worsening heart failure and acute kidney injury from dehydration.
- Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing morbidities are particularly vulnerable.
- Almost 153 billion hours of labour were lost globally in 2017 due to heat, an increase of 62 billion hours from the year 2000.

### **Recommendations**

- These include identifying “heat hot-spots” through appropriate tracking of meteorological data and promoting “timely development and implementation of local Heat Action Plans with strategic inter-agency co-ordination, and a response which targets the most vulnerable groups.”
- The report prepared jointly with the Public Health Foundation of India also urges a review of existing occupational health standards, labour laws and sectoral regulations for worker safety in relation to climatic

conditions.

### **Farm labour vulnerable**

- The agriculture sector was more vulnerable compared to the industrial and service sectors because workers there were more likely to be exposed to heat.
- The findings are significant for India as agriculture makes up 18% of the country's GDP and employs almost half the population.
- A recent World Bank report on South Asia's hotspots predicted a 2.8% erosion of the country's GDP by 2050, accompanied by a fall in living standards due to changes in temperature, rainfall and precipitation patterns.

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