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ENVIRONMENT

India Had Eighth-Worst Air Pollution in 2022: Report

Indian cities filled 12 of the top 15 rankings of the most polluted cities in the world, the same as in last year's report.

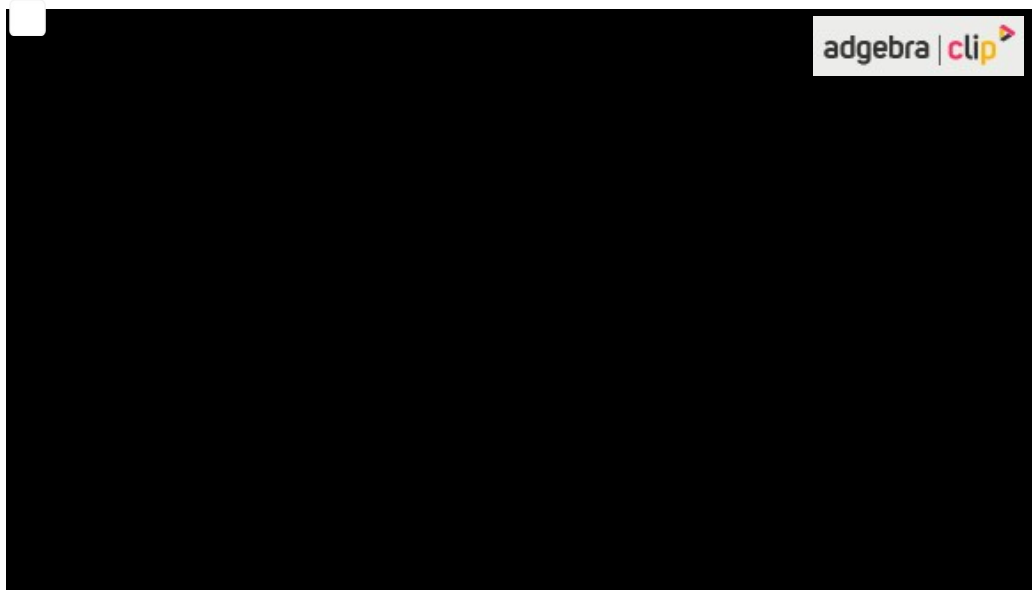


Representative image. Air pollution in Delhi on November 13, 2019. Photo: PTI

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New Delhi: India had on average the eighth most polluted air and cities in the country made up a dozen of the 15 most polluted cities, a report by Swiss technology company IQAir says.



Weighted by population, India's average PM2.5 concentration, measured in micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), in 2022 was 53.3 – against the WHO's recommended annual guideline level of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. PM2.5 is particulate matter that is less than 2.5 microns in diameter and is used as the standard air quality indicator for IQAir's World Air Quality Report. The average calculated by IQAir was also higher than the liberal standard of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ set by India's Central Pollution Control Board.

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India's annual average PM2.5 level in 2022 was slightly lower than the 2021 report's average of 58.1. Bhiwadi, which was the most polluted city in the world in 2021, came third in this year's report. Lahore in Pakistan was the worst, according to IQAir, followed by Hotan in China. Delhi was fourth.

According to NDTV, there are six Indian cities in the top 10, 14 in the top 20, 39 in the top 50, and 65 in the top 100 – up from 61 in the previous year.

The report says that “roughly 60% of cities in India included in this report experienced annual PM2.5 levels of at least seven times higher than the WHO guideline”.

The transportation sector's contribution to PM2.5 varies from 20-35% across Indian cities, the report says, adding that stubble burning is also an important challenge.

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2022 Report monitoring has increase
rs in India, the country still “lacks the
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reliable emissions inventory”.

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IQAI collected data for PM2.5 concentrations from more than 30,000 air monitoring stations located in more than 7,300 spots in 131 countries and regions. The data was then analyzed keeping certain factors in check, such as the country’s population.

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India has consistently performed poorly on air quality indices. The states of State of Global Air report, [published in August 2022](#), said New Delhi and Kolkata were the most polluted cities in the world. Mumbai was 14th.

A 2021 [study](#) said that breathing ambient air with unsafe levels of PM2.5 causes approximately four million early deaths each year, globally. Of this, 25% of deaths occur in India, it said.

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(65.8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).

South Asia 2022: Report also performed poorly. In 2022, Central and South Asia was home to the world's ten cities with the worst air pollution. India had the eighth worst air, Pakistan had the third worst (13) and Bangladesh had the fifth worst (65.8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).

“According to the World Bank’s report on Air Pollution in South Asia 2022, air pollution causes an estimated two million premature deaths across the region each year and incurs significant economic costs,” IQAir said.

In addition to the dominant primary sources of air pollution, other sources which make substantial contributions in this region are the combustion of solid fuels for cooking and heating, emissions from small industries such as brick kilns, burning of municipal and agricultural waste, and cremation, the report says.

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Representative image. A farmer burns paddy stubble in a field, in Amritsar district, Tuesday, October 13, 2020. Photo: PTI

‘Disproportionate exposure’

IQAir said that only six countries met the WHO PM2.5 guideline of an annual average of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ or less: Australia, Estonia, Finland, Grenada, Iceland, and New Zealand. On the other hand, 118 (90%) out of 131 countries and regions exceeded the WHO annual PM2.5 guideline value.

Independent air quality monitoring stations reveal

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“In 2022, more than half of the world’s air quality data was generated by grassroots community efforts. When citizens get involved in air quality monitoring, we see a shift in awareness and the joint effort to improve air quality intensifies. We need governments to monitor air quality, but we cannot wait for them. Air quality monitoring by communities creates transparency and urgency. It leads to collaborative actions that improves air quality,” Frank Hammes, the global CEO of IQAir, said.

“Too many people around the world don’t know that they are breathing polluted air. Air pollution monitors provide hard data that can inspire communities to demand change and hold polluters to account, but when monitoring is patchy or unequal, vulnerable communities can be left with no data to act on. Everyone deserves to have their health protected from air pollution.” said Aidan Farrow, senior air quality

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