Air Pollution Causes People to Lose A Year of Education

Air pollution leads to people losing the equivalent of one year of education, says a new study conducted in China. Developing countries are more likely to have poor air quality, and 95% of the world's population is breathing unsafe air. This has resulted in an estimated 6.5 million premature deaths worldwide from air pollution in 2016. We're aware of the toxic effects of air pollution on our health and environment, but this study looks at some of the more subtle side effects of unsafe air. A year's worth of education is what people are losing on average. Xi Chen at Yale School of Public Health in the US, a member of the research team, said,

> *Polluted air can cause everyone to reduce their level of education by one year, which is huge…But we know the effect is worse for the elderly, especially those over 64, and for men, and for those with low education. If we calculate [the loss] for those, it may be a few years of education."*

The Susceptible

In addition to the elderly, at-risk populations include children, men, low-educated people, and individuals with mental disorders. This study also identified how air pollution impacts cognitive ability. Subjects were more likely to lose language ability, rather than math ability. Longer exposure also meant a greater decrease in these abilities and a greater likelihood of developing dementia and mental illness.

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China

China is notorious for their poor air quality. More than half of the people that die from air pollution every year, more than three million people, live in China and India. The government has been focused on improving their air quality, closing down 500 factories, forcing 300,000 older cars off the roads, and reducing coal consumption by a whopping 30 percent. But that is likely not enough. Less than three years ago, the smog and air pollution in Beijing was at eight times the level considered healthy by the World Health Organization.

Can We Fix It?

Air pollution is a serious health hazard. Like many of the emerging causes of disease, it is a problem of our own making. Factories in all of their forms (industrial and farmed) have permanently altered our atmosphere and left billions worldwide at an increased risk of physical conditions like heart disease, emphysema, cancer, and asthma, among others. Studies have previously confirmed that air pollution can affect cognitive performance, but now the link between the loss of overall intelligence and air pollution has been drawn.

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China has already put programs in place to combat air pollution. That will provide crucial intel into whether or not air pollution can be effectively dealt with for ourselves and the next generation.

Sources:

- *Air pollution causes 'huge' reduction in intelligence, study reveals* – Guardian
- *Beijing creates anti-smog police to tackle air polluters* – Guardian

- *Pollution Linked to Nine Million Deaths A Year Worldwide* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine
- *Pollution linked to one in six deaths* – BBC News