

[Key Findings](#)

[City Rankings](#)

[Our Fight](#)

[Health Risks](#)

[Con](#)

[Home](#) > [2011](#) > [Key Findings](#) > [2007-2009](#)

## Key Findings

- » 2007-2009
  - » Year Round Particle Pollution
  - » Short Term Particle Pollution
  - » Ozone Pollution
  - » Cleanest Cities
  - » **People at Risk**
  - » What Needs to be Done
  - » What You Can Do
- » Methodology
- » Acknowledgements

### Take Action

- » [Join Our Fight For Air](#)
- » [Donate](#)
- » [Vent \(Discuss Your Air\)](#)
- » [Test Your Knowledge](#)
- » [Share Your Air](#)
- » [Shop For Air](#)
- » [Send an eCard](#)



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Enter Your Zip  

## People at Risk

With the risks from airborne pollution so great, the American Lung Association inform people who may be in danger. Many people are at greater risk because or because they have asthma or other chronic lung disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes. The following list identifies each at-risk group. Click on the list to find about why these people face higher risk—and how many in each group lived who was unhealthy in 2007-2009.

- [Children and teens](#)
- [People age 65 and older](#)
- [People with asthma, chronic bronchitis, or emphysema](#)
- [People with cardiovascular disease or diabetes](#)
- [People with low incomes](#)

**Children and teens** – Children’s lungs are still developing until they reach middle childhood. Children and teens can be more active when they are outdoors, so they may be exposed to more pollution. Children face greater risk of infection, coughing and bronchitis from outdoor air pollution. They may even suffer from lower lung function, putting them at greater risk of lung disease as they age.

- Nearly 37 million children age 18 and under live in counties with unhealthy ozone levels.
- Nearly 15.5 million children live in counties with unhealthy short-term level ozone particle pollution.
- Nearly 5 million children live in counties with unhealthy levels of year-round ozone particle pollution.

[Back to Top](#)

**People age 65 and older** – Older adults are at increased risk from air pollution. As people age, their bodies become increasingly susceptible to the assault from outdoor air pollution. Studies have found older adults face a greater risk of respiratory and cardiovascular problems after breathing ozone and particle pollution.

- Nearly 17.4 million adults age 65 and over live in counties with unhealthy ozone levels.
- Nearly 7 million seniors live in counties with unhealthy short-term levels of ozone particle pollution.

- Over 2 million seniors live in counties with unhealthful levels of year-round particle pollution.



[Back to Top](#)

**People with Asthma, Chronic Bronchitis or Emphysema** – People with lung diseases face greater risk from both ozone and particle pollution. Here are a few of the threats: shortness of breath, chest pain, wheezing, coughing, asthma attacks, and increased need for medical attention and admission to the emergency department or hospital. Breathing these pollutants can even kill—they can shorten life by months to years.

- **Asthma** – Approximately 3.2 million children and nearly 9.5 million adults with asthma live in parts of the United States with very high levels of ozone. Over 3.8 million adults and over 1.2 million children with asthma live in areas with high levels of short-term particle pollution. Nearly 1.1 million adults and over 339,000 children with asthma live in counties with unhealthful levels of year-round particle pollution.
- **Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema** – Nearly 4.8 million people with chronic bronchitis and nearly 2.3 million with emphysema live in counties with unhealthful ozone levels. Over 1.9 million people with chronic bronchitis and over 917,000 with emphysema live in counties with unhealthful levels of short-term particle pollution. Nearly 573,000 million people with chronic bronchitis and more than 268,000 with emphysema live in counties with unhealthful year-round levels of particle pollution.

[Back to Top](#)

**People with Cardiovascular Disease or Diabetes** – Particle pollution can especially threaten the health of those with cardiovascular disease and diabetes. People with diabetes face a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, putting them also at higher risk from particle pollution. Breathing particle pollution can kill. It can shorten life by months to years. Particle pollution can increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes, and increase the need for medical attention, hospital admission and emergency department visits.

- **Cardiovascular Disease** – Over 15.9 million people with cardiovascular diseases live in counties with unhealthful levels of short-term particle pollution; nearly 4.7 million live in counties with unhealthful levels of year-round particle pollution. Cardiovascular diseases include coronary heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, hypertension and angina pectoris.
- **Diabetes** – Over 3.9 million people with diabetes live in counties with unhealthful levels of short-term particle pollution; over 1.2 million live in counties with unhealthful levels of year-round particle pollution. Research indicates that because diabetics are already at higher risk of cardiovascular disease, they may face increased risk due to the impact of particle pollution on their cardiovascular systems.

[Back to Top](#)

**People with Low Incomes** – People who have lower incomes face greater risk from air pollution. Often they live closer to the sources of pollution, including near major highways or factories. Sometimes they are more likely to have diseases that put them at higher risk. This report uses the U.S. official definition of poverty to estimate the number of people who have low incomes.

- **Poverty** – Over 20 million people with incomes meeting the federal poverty definition live in counties with unhealthful levels of ozone. Over 9.3 million people in poverty live in counties with unhealthful levels of short-term particle pollution, and nearly 3 million live in counties with unhealthful year-round levels of particle pollution. Evidence shows that people who have low incomes may face higher risk from air pollution.

[Back to Top](#)

**FACT:** People who work or exercise outside face increased risk from the effects of air pollution.

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