



DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

LEADING HEALTH, POPULATION AND FAMILY WELFARE STORIES OF THE DAY

Friday

202101126

Active cases

Daily rise in new coronavirus infections below 20,000 for 49 straight days (The Tribune: 202101126)

Active cases in country rise to 1,10,133

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/daily-rise-in-new-coronavirus-infections-below-20-000-for-49-straight-days-343022>

India logged 10,549 new coronavirus infections taking the country's total tally of Covid cases to 3,45,55,431, while the active cases rose to 1,10,133, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The death toll climbed to 4,67,468 with 488 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 20,000 for 49 straight days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 152 consecutive days now.

The active cases comprise 0.32 per cent of the total infections while the national Covid recovery rate was recorded at 98.33 per cent, the health ministry said.

An increase of 193 cases has been recorded in the active Covid caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The 488 new fatalities include 384 deaths in Kerala and 50 from Maharashtra.

Of the 384 deaths in Kerala, 56 were reported over the last few days and 328 were designated as Covid deaths after receiving appeals based on the new guidelines of the Centre and the directions of the Supreme Court, a state government release said on Friday.

A total of 4,67,468 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 1,40,857 from Maharashtra, 38,737 from Kerala, 38,187 from Karnataka, 36,432 from Tamil Nadu, 25,095 from Delhi, 22,909 from Uttar Pradesh and 19,430 from West Bengal. PT

Air pollution levels

Air pollution levels in Delhi up again; unfavourable weather conditions major factor (The Tribune: 202101126)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/air-pollution-levels-in-delhi-up-again-unfavourable-weather-conditions-major-factor-343024>

The city's 24-hour average air quality index read 400 on Thursday evening

Air pollution levels in Delhi up again; unfavourable weather conditions major factor

Photo for representation purposes. Tribune

Air pollution levels in Delhi worsened on Friday morning due to unfavourable meteorological conditions - low temperature and slow wind speed - and the air quality index read 403 at 9 am, which falls in the severe category.

Low temperatures and slow surface winds allow accumulation of pollutants.

The city's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) read 400 on Thursday evening.

The air quality in the capital has remained very poor or severe on most of the days in November so far.

Delhi recorded lowest air pollution levels - in terms of 24-hour average quality index - on November 1 (AQI 281) followed by November 23 (AQI 290).

Neighbouring Faridabad (417), Ghaziabad (373), Greater Noida (378), Gurgaon (361) and Noida (383) also saw a dip in air quality on Friday morning.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered good, 51 and 100 satisfactory, 101 and 200 moderate, 201 and 300 poor, 301 and 400 very poor, and 401 and 500 severe.

Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 11 degrees Celsius. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 28 degrees Celsius.

According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences' air quality monitor SAFAR, no relief is likely till Monday.

Local emissions and weather are likely to be the dominant factors controlling air quality, it said.

The Delhi government on Thursday reimposed the ban on construction and demolition activities following the Supreme Court order.

The apex court reimposed the ban on construction activities in Delhi-NCR on Wednesday until further orders.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the workers affected by the ban on construction activities in the national capital would be provided a financial assistance of Rs 5,000 each and his government would also compensate them for the loss of minimum wages. PTI

Sex ratio:

Sex ratio: Number of women surpasses men for first time in India, shows survey (The Tribune: 202101126)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/number-of-women-surpasses-men-for-first-time-shows-survey-342858>

Sex ratio: Number of women surpasses men for first time in India, shows survey

In welcome trends that signal a decline in adverse sex selection, the ratio of women to men has crossed the 1,000 mark for the first time.

In welcome trends that signal a decline in adverse sex selection, the ratio of women to men has crossed the 1,000 mark for the first time.

Sex ratio of India's total population — defined as the number of women per 1,000 men — stands at 1020, according to the latest round of the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS). This represents an improvement of 29 points at the national level from 991 in 2015-16 (NFHS-4) to 1,020 in 2019-21 (NFHS-5).

Disaggregated data further show that rural India is leading the preference for girls with 1,037 women as against 1,000 men. The ratio in urban India is 985.

Haryana and Punjab, societies with traditional preference for sons, have powered the gains at the population level with sex ratio in Haryana improving by 50 points between the two surveys — from 876 to 926.

Punjab has registered a gain of 33 points in the sex ratio, which is now 938 as against 905 in 2015-16.

The trend of improvement in sex ratio (25 to 50 years) holds across India except in five states and UTs — Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Chhattisgarh.

“Sex ratio at the population level has crossed 1,000 for the first time. This trend is normally common in developed nations. The indications are that national women’s empowerment programmes are moving in the right direction, with the acceptance for girls increasing and adverse sex selection trends reversing,” said ministry officials.

WELCOME TREND IN GENDER RATIO

	NFHS-5	NFHS-4
All India	1,020	991
Haryana	926	876
Punjab	938	905
Delhi	913	854
Himachal	1,040	1,078
Chandigarh	917	934
J&K	948	971
Ladakh	971	1,000

(SOURCE: UNION MINISTRY OF HEALTH)



RATIO AT BIRTH



929 girls
per 1,000 boys

919 girls
per 1,000 boys
in NFHS-4

952
ideal sex
ratio at birth

WHO

WHO meets to review new Covid variant, Health Ministry alerts states (The Tribune: 202101126)

Strain in South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/who-meets-to-review-new-covid-variant-health-ministry-alerts-states-342860>

WHO meets to review new Covid variant, Health Ministry alerts states

Hours after the World Health Organisation met on Thursday to review a new Covid-19 virus variant detected in South Africa and Botswana, the Health Ministry alerted all states to conduct rigorous screening of all incoming passengers from the affected countries.

The ministry said the National Centre for Disease Control had reported that multiple cases of Covid-19 variant B.1.1529 have been reported in Botswana (three cases), South Africa (six cases) and Honk Kong (one case).

“This variant is reported to have a significantly high number of mutations, thus has serious public health implications for the country, in view of recently relaxed visa restrictions and opening up of international travel. It is therefore imperative that all international travellers from and transiting through these countries, (they are part of the ‘at risk’ category of international travellers coming to India) including all other at risk countries indicated in the revised guidelines for international arrivals are subjected to rigorous screening and testing,” wrote Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan to the states.

He said contacts of these international travellers must also be closely tracked and tested as per the ministry guidelines.

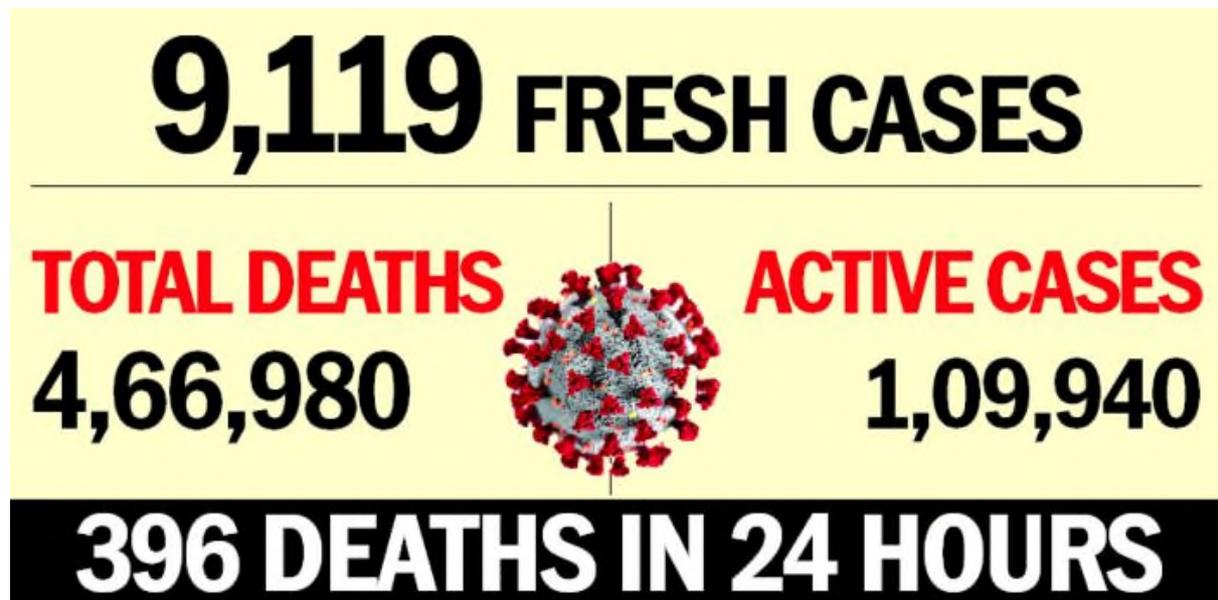
“You are also requested to ensure that samples of travellers turning positive are sent to the designated labs as per the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics Guidance Document. The state surveillance officers must also establish close coordination with their designated labs to expedite results of genomic analysis so that necessary public health measures may be undertaken by the states and the UTs in case the new variant is reported,” the letter said asking states to continue adhere to the “Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate” principle to ensure stringent implementation of containment measures against Covid-19.

\$1.5 bn ADB loan for Covid vaccine

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a loan of \$1.5 billion (over Rs11,000 crore) to India for the purchase of Covid vaccines.

It is expected to co-finance another \$500 million for project to fund procurement of 66 crore vaccine doses.

The funds will support the national vaccination plan that aims to fully vaccinate 94.5 crore adults or 68.9 per cent of the population



Fertility rate

Fall in fertility rate (The Tribune: 202101126)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/editorials/fall-in-fertility-rate-342825>

It augurs well, but health concerns remain

THE public health indicators of 2017-19 captured by NFHS-5 (National Family Health Survey), though a mixed bag, stand out for a couple of milestones registered. Sustained efforts by the government and society over the long term to check population growth have at last borne fruit. The latest data shows that the country is headed for a heartening reversal of population explosion – a much-anticipated goal, given the stress on limited resources. With the total fertility rate (TFR) falling to 2.0 (average number of children born to a woman), it is for the first time that an arrest in our rising numbers has been felt. Comparatively, the 2015-17 survey recorded a TFR of 2.2 and the 2005-07 survey 2.7. This achievement assumes greater importance in view of certain pockets even registering more women than men. It certainly raises hopes of acceleration in meeting our development goals.

Significantly, the credit largely goes to women for bringing the TFR below the replacement level of 2.1, which paves the way for an eventual reduction in our population figures. For, the onus of family planning, as has been seen all along, continues to lie with women. This is apparent from the considerable increase in the use of contraceptives or sterilisation by women as compared to men. At the same time, it reflects positively on the strategies aimed at the empowerment and education of women as they own up their agency inasmuch as having a say in matters of their health and reproduction. Of course, improved and easier access to hospital care and reduction of infant mortality rates played key roles.

However, this in no way spells a hunky-dory scenario. The health and nutrition parameters are not only still far from ideal, but they also show a slide in certain areas. Particularly grim is the struggle against anaemia. Its prevalence is, worryingly, up among both men and women and children have been the worst hit, predisposing them to health concerns. The efforts to stem stunted growth among children too have not been encouraging, even as malnourishment remains a formidable challenge. An increase in public health investment is called for.

Air quality turns 'severe'

Air quality turns 'severe'; maximum temp 27.8°C (Hindustan Times: 202101126)

<https://schoolepaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ArticleView>

The maximum temperature in Delhi settled one notch above the normal at 27.8°C on Thursday, while the city's air quality index (AQI) turned 'severe' from 'very poor' in the morning. The weather department has predicted 'shallow fog' for the next four days. It was a cold Thursday morning in Delhi as it recorded a minimum temperature of 9.7°C, two notches below the season's average, the IMD said. At 402, the AQI was recorded in the 'severe' category' at 7 pm on Thursday, according to the real-time data of the Central Pollution Control Board. The city's 24-hour AQI was 400. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered good, 51 and 100 satisfactory, 101 and 200 moderate, 201 and 300 poor, 301 and 400 very poor, and 401 and 500 severe. PTI

Govt forms Yamuna Cell for river clean-up

NEW DELHI : Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced the formation of a Yamuna Cleaning Cell (YCC) to expedite inter-departmental decision making and execution of projects for cleaning the heavily polluted Yamuna river in the city. The Cell, to be headed by the chief executive officer of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), will have representatives of all the departments concerned, he said. "In order to expedite inter-departmental decision making and execution, we formed a Yamuna Cleaning Cell (YCC) today, headed by CEO, DJB and representatives of all concerned depts. This will expedite Yamuna cleaning process," Kejriwal tweeted. Last week, the chief minister had announced a six-point action plan to clean Yamuna. PTI

DU forms panel for next year's admission process

NEW DELHI : The Delhi University (DU) has formed a committee, which will give recommendations for the admission process next year after analysing this year's admission data, according to a senior university official. The formation of the committee comes in the backdrop of a large number of students, particularly cent-per-cent scorers from Kerala, getting admission to the DU. The committee was formed last month and it has already held a couple of meetings. It is likely to submit its report by next month. The committee is headed by Dean (Examinations) DS Rawat. "The mandate of the committee is to analyse the admission data and the trends and based on that, suggest recommendations for next year's admission process," Rawat said. PTI

New Covid-19 variant

New Covid-19 variant: Centre issues advisory to screen travellers(Hindustan Times: 202101126)

<https://epaper.hindustantimes.com/Home/ArticleView>

: The Union health ministry has directed states to start rigorous screening and testing of all international travellers coming from or transiting through Botswana, South Africa and Hong Kong as these countries have reported multiple cases of new coronavirus disease (Covid-19) variant 8.1.1529 that is reported to have a significantly high number of mutations.

The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has flagged the global presence of this new variant of concern, and the need for India to keep a strict watch.

"It has now been reported by NCDC that multiple cases of a COVID-19 variant 8.1.1529 have been reported in Botswana (3 cases), South Africa (6 cases) and Honk Kong (1 case). This variant is reported to have a significantly high number of mutations, and thus, has serious public health implications for the country, in view of recently relaxed visa restrictions and opening up of international travel," said Union secretary for health and family welfare, Rajesh Bhushan, in a letter to the states on Thursday.

According to the letter, the whole genome sequencing activity being coordinated in the country through the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) and NCDC, which is the nodal agency for INSACOG, aims at tracking and monitoring emergence and transmission of Covid-19 variants of concern and interest in the country. INSACOG, which consists of 10 central laboratories and 28 regional ones, has been sequencing positive samples since January this year as part of surveillance measures taken to identify variants of concern and of interest.

Bhushan asked the states to ensure that samples of travellers turning positive are sent to designated laboratories promptly as per the INSACOG guidance document for expediting results of genomic analysis, so that necessary public health measures may be undertaken by

the states and Union territories in case the presence of variants of concern and interest is reported by the INSACOG network. It also asked that the contacts of these international travellers be closely tracked and tested.

At present, Delta and its sub-lineage continue to be the dominant variant.

New Variant (The Asian Age: 202101126)

<http://onlinepaper.asianage.com/articledetailpage.aspx?id=15990439>

New variant: Fresh govt advisory to states & UTs for intl travellers

New Delhi, Nov. 25: The Centre on Thursday asked all states and Union Territories to conduct rigorous screening and testing of all international travellers coming from or transiting through South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana, where a new Covid-19 variant of serious public health implications has been reported.

In a letter to additional chief secretaries or principal secretaries or secretaries (health) of the states and UTs, Union health secretary Rajesh

Bhushan asked them to ensure that samples of travellers turning positive are sent to the designated IGSLs or genome sequencing laboratories promptly.

It has now been reported by the National Centre for Disease Control that multiple cases of a Covid-19 variant B.1.1529 have been reported in Botswana (3 cases), South Africa (6) and Honk Kong (1 case), Bhushan said in the letter.

"This variant is reported to have a significantly high number of muta-

tions... It is therefore imperative that all international travellers travelling from and transiting through these countries, (they are part of the 'at risk' country category of international travellers coming to India) and also including all other 'at risk' countries indicated in the revised Guidelines for International Arrivals issued by this ministry dated November 11, 2021, are subjected to rigorous screening and testing, as per MoHFW Guidelines," he said. — PTI

TB (The Asian Age: 202101126)

<http://onlinepaper.asianage.com/articledetailpage.aspx?id=15990514>

Covid blow slows reporting of TB cases in India by 41%

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 25

The Union government's ambitious goal of eradicating tuberculosis (TB) in India by 2025, five years ahead of the global target date of 2030, has encountered a road block because of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic with considerable slow down in the notification of TB cases in the country.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s 2021 global report, notification of TB cases in India went down by 41 per cent between 2019 and 2020 which meant all hard-earned gains in TB testing and tracking had been lost, experts at a panel discussion held at the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital here on Wednesday said.

ACCORDING TO WHO's 2021 global report, notification of TB cases in India went down by 41 per cent between 2019 and 2020 which meant all gains in TB testing and tracking had been lost

Reporting information on diagnosis and treatment of TB cases to the nodal public health authority or officials designated by them was extremely important as every government, private, non-government organisations and individual practitioners providing healthcare were expected to notify such cases immediately, Prof. E. Venkat Rao, professor in the department of community medicine in IMS and SUM Hospital, said.

The panel discussion on 'Sensitisation of Private Sector TB Service

Providers,' which was organised by Centre for Catalysing Change (C3) in collaboration with IMS and SUM Hospital, was also addressed by the Dean of IMS Professor Gangadhar Sahu and the medical superintendent Professor Pusparaj Samantashinhar.

Prof. Rao said poor compliance from the private healthcare sector led to underestimation of the disease burden.

India, over the recent years, had been successfully inching its way towards bridging the gap between the WHO estimated number of TB cases (new and relapse) and the number of TB cases notified by the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) which replaced the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP) in 2020.

Younger population

Is the younger population at a higher risk of stroke from increased screen time? (The Indian Express: 202101126)

<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/younger-population-higher-risk-stroke-increased-screen-time-7634355/>

The pandemic can be blamed for "pushing us into a situation where most working adults and children are required to stick to their screens for prolonged hours", says a doctor

screen time, screen time and health, health problems related to increased screen time, laptops and phones, health, stroke, screen time and risk of stroke, stroke risks, indian express news

Limit your screen time and take frequent breaks from work. (Photo: Getty/Thinkstock)

Nowadays, as people work from home, they begin and end their day with a gadget. We are so dependent on technology that from the moment we open our eyes in the morning, we begin to scroll through our phones, respond to work emails, check social media, etc.

But, have we ever paused to wonder what this lifestyle is doing to our health? A 2021 study published in the Stroke Journal of the American Stroke Association stated that adults under 60, with increased screen time exposure and sedentary lifestyles, are more prone to a stroke than those who are physically active. Data from the World Stroke Organization (WSO) states that one in four persons may suffer a stroke attack in their lifetime. According to a recent study of The Lancet Global Health, non-communicable neurological disorders' contribution in India doubled to 8.2 per cent in 2019 from 4.0 per cent in 1990, with stroke leading the charts.

ALSO READ | 'It's the 16th anniversary of my diagnosis': Nick Jonas opens up about living with type 1 diabetes

Dr Ujwal Yeole, consultant-neurosurgeon, Fortis Hospital Kalyan, says there is a link between increased screen time and stroke. "A US study highlighted that one's life expectancy reduces by up to 22 minutes for every hour of digital screen time. It makes the person more prone to a stroke and various heart ailments, cancer, etc. Another UK-based study showed the possibility of a stroke was significantly high with continued 2-hour exposure to digital screens (laptop, TV, cell phone, etc.). Beyond two hours and in cases of addiction, the chance of a stroke increases by 20 per cent," he says.

The doctor blames the pandemic for "pushing us into a situation where most working adults and children are required to stick to their screens for prolonged hours, either for work or academics".

"The young generation is infamous for being glued to their mobile screens, which increases the risk of a stroke. Blue light from screens reduces melatonin production (the hormone released at night associated with control of the sleep-wake cycle or the circadian rhythm), which makes it difficult to sleep and wake up on time," says Dr Yeole.

Leading such a lifestyle also makes an individual vulnerable to other diseases like obesity, diabetes, heart conditions, etc. These are all interlinked:

- * A person with diabetes is twice as likely to suffer from a stroke, as the damaged blood vessels hasten the onset of ischemic stroke (happens from a blood clot blocking or narrowing the artery to the brain).

- * High LDL (bad cholesterol levels) initiates the build-up of plaque in the arteries, which ends up restricting blood flow to the brain, thus leading to a stroke.

- * Hypertension is the cause for approximately 50 per cent of ischemic strokes, increasing the threat of hemorrhagic stroke (brain bleed).

National Family Health Survey-5

Measuring progress: On the lessons of National Family Health Survey-5 (The Hindu: 202101126)

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/measuring-progress-the-hindu-editorial-on-the-lessons-of-national-family-health-survey-5/article37691898.ece>

The lessons of NFHS-5 must be used to improve social development indices

A periodic assessment of health and social development indicators is crucial for any country that is still clawing its way towards achieving ideal standards in the Human Development Index. While the results of the NFHS are usually mixed, and improvements in certain sectors ride along with stagnation and deterioration in other sectors, this year, there have been radical improvements in maternal and child health, sex ratio and population control. A greater proportion of births than ever before is now happening in institutions, more children in the 12-23 months age group have received their vaccinations, and, most interestingly, India has achieved a total fertility rate of 2.0, dropping further from the figure of 2.2 during NFHS-4, indicating that India has contained the population explosion. Policies, some even coercive, as in the case of the family planning sector, seem to have borne fruit, years after they were implemented. While gender ratio has, for the first time, recorded more women per 1,000 men, gender ratio at birth in the last five years still underlines the persistence of a deep-rooted son preference, one that has to be countered, through policy and law. There are other areas too, specially in the case of childhood nutrition where marginal gains in say, wasting and severe wasting, are deemed insufficient, and require renewed corrective efforts. The impact of the pandemic may also be noted, the disruption it caused to services such as balanced nutrition for children must be acknowledged, while this set of circumstances underscores the need for building resilient and fortified systems capable of delivering in the most trying circumstances. Having measured blood sugar and hypertension in the population for the first time, NFHS-5 highlighted the looming threat from lifestyle diseases.

This massive exercise that covered, this year, over six lakh households across the country, aims at providing data that will help shape the policies in a manner that will correct deficiencies, and ensure equitable access to services,

Lung function

Lung function hit by stubble burning: study (The Hindu: 202101126)

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/lung-function-hit-by-stubble-burning-study/article37344517.ece>

A farmer burning crop stubble after harvesting paddy on the outskirts of Amritsar on Thursday.
| Photo Credit: AFP

Over 3,000 persons tracked in two-phase study across six villages in Punjab

Pollution from stubble burning significantly reduced lung function and was particularly harmful to women in rural Punjab, says one of the largest studies of its kind in India, correlating the effect of air pollution on health.

The study was conducted in six villages of Patiala, Punjab and spanned two phases: The first was in October 2018 and again the following summer from March to April 2019 and the second phase was undertaken in the same villages during late Oct-Nov, 2018. The latter is the period when crop burning peaks and the two timeframes were considered to measure the change in air quality during both periods. Close to 3,600 participants, from 10-60 years of age were included in the study.

While the links between particulate matter pollution and respiratory health are widely documented, there have been limited studies in India that have clearly linked the impact of poor air on lung health.

High PM2.5 levels

It emerged from the study that the concentrations of PM2.5, the category of unburnt carbon particles considered most harmful to respiratory health, was found to increase more than twice between the two phases, from 100 g/m³ to 250 g/m³. Incidentally these are around 10-15 times the WHO prescribed air quality standards though the permissible standards by India's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) are higher.

More symptoms

During the crop residue burning period, a two to three-fold increase was noted in most of the respiratory symptoms including wheezing, breathlessness on exertion, cough in morning, cough at night, skin rashes, runny nose or itchiness of eyes etc. across all age groups (10-60 years). The highest number of respiratory complaints were reported by the elderly population (>40-60) and the lowest in the younger age group (>10-18) during crop burning period, the study's authors note.

There was decline in lung function with increase in PM2.5 concentration across all age groups even after controlling for several other exposure variables, such the influence of cooking fuel, ventilation, distance from road etc. The authors reported a 10-14% decline in lung function in men and nearly 15-18% decline in women across all age categories.

The study, authored by researchers at The Energy Resources Institute (TERI), Delhi has contributions from experts from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, and the Punjab Agricultural University. The findings, which have not been peer reviewed as yet, appear on the website of the CPCB, which has supported the study.