

# MCS/ES Info

## **Study reveals links between UK air pollution and mental ill-health**

Study reveals links between UK air pollution and mental ill-health Long-term exposure to even comparatively low levels of air pollution could cause depression and anxiety, according to a study exploring the links between air quality and mental ill-health.

Tracking the incidence of depression and anxiety in almost 500,000 UK adults over 11 years, researchers found that those living in areas with higher pollution were more likely to suffer episodes, even when air quality was within official limits.

Writing in the Journal of the American Medical Association Psychiatry, the researchers, from the universities of Oxford and Beijing and Imperial College London, said their findings suggested a need for stricter standards or regulations for air pollution control.

The findings come as the ministers face criticism for passing new legally binding air quality guidelines that allow more than double the levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) than equivalent targets set by the World Health Organization.

Peers approved legislation this week that allows a maximum annual mean concentration of 12 micrograms per cubic metre by 2028.

The WHO completed a review of its 2005 guideline air quality levels in September 2021, halving its limit for PM2.5 to five micrograms. Air pollution has long been implicated in a number of respiratory disorders but, the researchers noted, a growing body of evidence is establishing a link with mental health disorders.

So far, however, the only available studies on the risk of depression were carried out in regions with air pollution concentrations exceeding UK air quality limits. The researchers drew on the data of 389,185 participants from the UK Biobank, modelling and giving a score to the air pollution, including PM2.5 and PM10, nitrogen dioxide and nitric oxide for the areas in which they lived. They found 13,131 cases of depression and 15,835 of anxiety were identified among their sample within a follow-up period of about 11 years.

**<https://tinyurl.com/mtd4fpns>**

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**<https://www.chemicalsensitivitypodcast.org/>**

## **EU considers ban on 'forever chemicals', urges search for alternatives**

In February the European Union started to consider a proposal to ban widely used, potentially harmful substances known as PFAS or "forever chemicals" in what could become the bloc's most extensive piece of regulation of the chemical industry. The five countries - Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and nonEU state Norway - which have been collaborating on the proposal said in a joint statement that, if passed, it would become "one of the largest bans on chemical substances ever in Europe".

"A ban on PFAS would reduce quantities of PFAS in the environment over the long term. It would also make products and processes safer for humans," they added. Once the ban is in force, companies will be given between 18 months and 12 years to introduce alternatives to the more than 10,000 PFAS affected, depending on the availability of alternatives, according to the draft proposal. "In many cases, no such alternatives currently exist, and in some they possibly never will," the five countries said in their statement, urging companies to work on substitutes.

Waterproofing agents for textiles are among the easiest to replace, with paraffin wax for instance, but no substitutes are currently available for use in some medical devices such as pace makers, the dossier showed. Speaking at a media briefing in Brussels, Audun Heggelund of the Norwegian Environment Agency said they are now detectable across the globe. "You can find PFAS in penguins in the Antarctic, in polar bears in the Arctic, even in rain water in Tibet," he added. The FPP4EU group of 14 companies that make and use PFAS said the restrictions would have a "huge impact" on many products for daily use and that the association would flag the need for certain exemptions in the public consultations.

<https://tinyurl.com/ypzk8e2c>

## **UK government allows 'emergency' use of banned bee-harming pesticide just days after EU tightens protections**

In January the government announced that for the third year in a row, it will permit the use of the banned pesticide thiamethoxam – a type of neonicotinoid – on sugar beet in England in 2023. A single teaspoon of neonicotinoid is enough to deliver a lethal dose to 1.25 billion bees. This comes just four days after the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) declared that providing emergency derogations for expressly prohibited neonicotinoid-treated seeds is not in line with EU law. This emergency authorisation comes a month after the UK government was advocating for a global pesticide reduction target at the UN COP15 biodiversity talks in Montreal. Despite a global pesticide target being significantly watered down in the final deal signed at COP15, UK negotiators supported more robust action. It is disappointing that the same approach is not being taken when it comes to domestic pesticides.

<https://tinyurl.com/565y5e7k>