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## *FOSSIL FUEL USE LINKED TO SUBSTANTIAL HEALTH IMPACTS IN SERBIA*

Burning of coal accounts for 26% of fossil fuel pollution emissions and related deaths.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022 – Residents of Serbia are exposed to poor air quality, putting them at greater risk for health impacts and decreased life expectancy, according to a new report released today from the Health Effects Institute's Global Health program. The report, *Trends in Air Quality and Health in the Republic of Serbia*, highlights air quality and its significant health impacts for the Southeast European country. In 2019, air pollution was the 7th leading cause of death in Serbia, resulting in 12,700 deaths. Despite some recent declines, Serbia is still third highest in annual average exposure to fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) across the region and has some of the highest disease burdens in Europe.

Use of fossil fuels — including coal, liquid fuel, and natural gas — contribute to both air pollution and climate change and is responsible for 36% of the deaths related to outdoor $PM_{2.5}$ in Serbia, among the highest in the Western Balkans region. Coal burning itself contributed to 26%

of Serbia's burden on health, the highest contribution among countries in Southeast Europe.

Actions to reduce these emissions are likely to bring both air quality and health benefits.

FIGURE 11 Percentage of deaths (by cause) linked to air pollution in the Republic of Serbia in 2019.
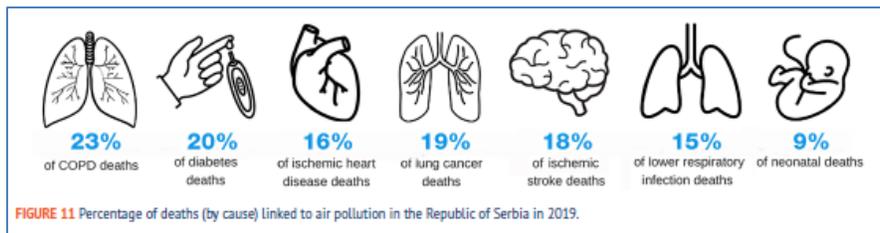
Despite a decline in PM$_{2.5}$ pollution levels over the past decade, annual average exposure in Serbia in 2019 was 25.4 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu g/m^3$). Overall, air quality remains a key concern in Serbia as the entire population lives in areas where levels of PM$_{2.5}$ exceed the World Health Organization's (WHO) annual guideline value of 5 $\mu g/m^3$. More than two-thirds of Serbia's population lives in areas with ozone levels higher than the WHO long-term ozone guideline for healthy air, 60 $\mu g/m^3$.

Dr. Elizabet Paunovic, an expert in air quality, noted that "Improving air quality, and by that saving human lives and helping to improve quality of life of people in Serbia, is one of the main tasks for many sectors."

Serbia currently has a draft of a National Air Protection Program that will focus on three key directives: reducing air pollution emissions, improving air quality, and reducing the impact of air pollution on its citizens' health.

Data in this report come from more than 40 studies and risk assessments of air pollution and health in the country, the Global Burden of Disease study 2019, and from a recent HEI-funded global assessment (McDuffie et al. 2021) that examines major air pollution sources and their

associated health impacts. A full set of data for this report can be found on the [State of Global Air website](#).

This report is the third in the series on Southeastern Europe, including a [report on the region](#) and another one [focused on Bulgaria](#). Earlier this year, HEI also released an interactive literature database containing relevant research articles on air pollution and health as well as reports and policy briefs from across the region, including many studies from Serbia.

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ABOUT HEI

The Health Effects Institute (HEI) is an independent, non-profit research institute funded jointly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, industry, foundations, and bi- and multilateral organizations to provide credible, high-quality science on air pollution and health for air quality decisions. The HEI Global Health Program works primarily in low- and middle-income countries and supports high-quality, rigorous science as well as science-based communication of the findings to policymakers, scientists, and advocates around the world through its State of Global Air Platform.