CREA review: 91.8% of Indian studies link air pollution to health effects

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16 November 2026: A new review by the **Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA)** - "Air pollution and health in India: A review of epidemiological evidence" - finds that of **184 epidemiological studies** published in India between 1975 and 2025, **169 (91.8%) reported at least one positive association** between air pollution exposure and a health outcome. Air pollution in India, it concludes, is no longer just an environmental concern but a **primary determinant of public health**.

Key findings

- **Scope:** a synthesis of 184 studies over five decades (1975-2025), examining exposure settings, monitoring approaches, geographic distribution, institutional involvement and funding trends.
- **Headline:** 169 of 184 studies (91.8%) found a pollution-health association; risks include **respiratory, cardiovascular and metabolic diseases**, varying by pollutant type, concentration and duration.
- **Authors:** CREA analysts with professors from VIT Vellore and The Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University.

- **Challenge:** methodologies vary widely - from stationary monitors to satellite imagery and chemical transport models - making cross-study comparison hard; localised studies rarely reflect national risk, and several pollutants and outcomes remain understudied.

Policy context: NCAP and the way forward

- **NCAP:** the National Clean Air Programme (2019) targets up to a **40% reduction in PM10** by 2025-26 in 131 non-attainment cities (revised from 20-30% by 2024). The growing health evidence raises the stakes for meeting it.
- **Burden:** WHO estimates place air pollution among India's leading risk factors; CREA's review strengthens the domestic evidence base.
- **Recommendations:** evidence-based policy, standardised methods, nationally representative studies and research into understudied pollutants and outcomes.

Quiz: Test your knowledge

▶ Q1: Consider: 1. The CREA review synthesises 184 studies from 1975-2025 2. 91.8% of them found a pollution-health association 3. The report was published by the Ministry of Environment. Which are correct?

▶ Q2: When was NCAP launched and what is its revised target?

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

In short: CREA's review: 169 of 184 Indian studies (91.8%) from 1975-2025 found an air pollution-health link; respiratory, cardiovascular and metabolic diseases lead; evidence-based policy recommended.

Question: What is the key finding of the CREA report?

Of 184 epidemiological studies from five decades, 91.8% found at least one positive association between air pollution and a health outcome - pollution is now a primary determinant of public health in India.

Question: What is CREA?

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air - an independent international research organisation on energy and air pollution; this review was prepared with VIT Vellore and The Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University.

Question: What does the report recommend?

Evidence-based policymaking, standardised study methods, nationally representative research and studies of understudied pollutants and health outcomes.

Sources:

- https://energyandcleanair.org/publication/air-pollution-and-health-in-india-a-review-of-epidemiological-evidence/ (official: CREA publication page)
- https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/91-of-studies-in-india-in-last-5-decades-linked-air-pollution-to-health-effects-analysis/article71704215.ece