

New Report: Baton Rouge Ranked 42nd Most Polluted City in Nation for Ozone Pollution, Worst in Southeast

American Lung Association's 25th Annual "State of the Air" report highlights air quality and impacts on public health in the Baton Rouge metro area and across the nation.



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The Baton Rouge metro area was named 42nd worst in the nation for ozone pollution, according to the American Lung Association's 2024 "State of the Air" report, which was released today. The metro area earned a failing grade, making it the worst in the Southeast for ozone pollution. Nationally, the report found that more than 131 million people, or nearly four in ten people, in the U.S. live in counties that had unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution.

The Lung Association's 25th annual "State of the Air" report grades exposure to unhealthy levels of ground-level ozone air pollution, annual

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particle pollution and short-term spikes in particle pollution over a three-year period. This year's report includes air quality data from 2020-2022 and is updated to reflect the new annual particle pollution standard that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized in February.

"In the 25 years that the American Lung Association has been doing our 'State of the Air' report, we have seen incredible improvement in the nation's air quality. Unfortunately, more than 131 million people still live in places with unhealthy levels of air pollution, and Baton Rouge still has work to do," said Eric Weinzettle, Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association. "Climate change is making air pollution more likely to form and more difficult to clean up. So, there are actions we can and must take to improve air quality, including calling on EPA to set long-overdue stronger national limits on ozone pollution."

Ground-level Ozone Pollution in the Baton Rouge metro area:

The "State of the Air" report looked at levels of ozone "smog," the air pollutant affecting the largest number of people in the United States. The Baton Rouge metro area ranked 42nd worst in the nation for ozone pollution. The ranking was based on the area's worst parish's average number of unhealthy days—4.5 days per year, an "F" grade, in Iberville Parish. This was worse than the area's ranking in last year's report of 44th worst, with 3.3 days per year, an "F" grade.

Particle Pollution in the Baton Rouge metro area:

The report also tracked short-term spikes in particle pollution, which can be extremely dangerous and even deadly. The Baton Rouge metro area ranked 85th worst in the nation for short-term particle pollution. The ranking was based on the area's worst parish's average number of unhealthy days—1 day per year, a "C" grade, in East Baton Rouge Parish. This was worse than the area's ranking in last year's report among the nation's cleanest cities, with 0 days per year, an "A" grade.

For the year-round average level of particle pollution, the area's worst parish, West Baton Rouge Parish, received a passing grade for pollution levels below the federal standard that was recently updated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The Baton Rouge metro



area ranked 78th worst in the nation. This was worse than the area's ranking in last year's report of 79th worst in the nation.

Beyond Baton Rouge:

In addition to the Baton Rouge metro area, other notable findings across Louisiana include:

- The New Orleans metro area ranked among the nation's cleanest cities for short-term particle pollution and matched last year's report's best-ever result for ozone smog.

The "State of the Air" report found that nationally, more than 131 million people live in an area that received a failing grade for at least one measure of air pollution, and 43.9 million people live in areas with failing grades for all three measures. In the three years covered by this report, individuals in the U.S. experienced the highest number of days when particle pollution reached "very unhealthy" and "hazardous" levels in the history of reporting the "State of the Air." Communities of color are disproportionately exposed to unhealthy air and are also more likely to be living with one or more chronic conditions that make them more vulnerable to air pollution, including asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. The report found that a person of color in the U.S. is more than twice as likely as a white individual to live in a community with a failing grade on all three pollution measures.

Both ozone and particle pollution can cause premature death and other serious health effects such as asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, preterm births, and impaired cognitive functioning later in life. Particle pollution can also cause lung cancer.

EPA recently finalized new air pollution rules that will help clean up particle pollution and address climate change. The agency also finalized measures that will reduce emissions of hazardous air pollutants from chemical manufacturing facilities, which will help clean up the air in Louisiana. Now, the Lung Association is urging EPA to set long overdue stronger national limits on ozone pollution. Stronger limits would help people protect themselves and drive cleanup of polluting sources across the country. See the full report results and sign the petition at

[Lung.org/SOTA](https://lung.org/SOTA).



About the American Lung Association

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to champion clean air for all; to improve the quality of life for those with lung disease and their families; and to create a tobacco-free future. For more information about the American Lung Association, which has a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and is a Platinum-Level GuideStar Member, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: [Lung.org](https://www.lung.org). To support the work of the American Lung Association, find a local event at [Lung.org/events](https://www.lung.org/events).

