

Press release

Paris, June 5, 2019

World Environment Day

Indoor air pollution: French, Belgian or Chinese, same struggle!

A major opinion survey commissioned by Veolia from Elabe¹ reveals that people in France, Belgium and China are all equally worried about the impact air quality has on health, particularly the air that we breathe in our homes and offices. We need to act now.

1-in-2 French people are unaware that they are more exposed to air pollution when indoors

It is no surprise to learn that 9-in-10 French people feel that their health is affected by the quality of the indoor air they breathe at home and in the office, in cars and public transport, and in other publicly-accessible buildings that they visit.

However, the survey shows that most people underestimate the health risks involved, particularly in private spaces: **over half of those questioned were surprised to learn that we are more exposed to air pollution when inside** our homes and other buildings than we are when outside. And a **large majority are unaware of the possible sources of this pollution**, such as indoor air fresheners, household cleaning products, paint, and floor and wall coverings, **and their potential impacts**. There is a general sense in all three countries that it is **time to act and raise awareness about the sources of this pollution, behaviors to adopt and actions to take to improve indoor air quality**. This citizen-led call for a collective response highlights the extent to which awareness of this issue has grown and the need for the private and public sectors to take action.

Indoor air can be up to eight times more polluted than outdoor air

Although we drink an average of two liters of water daily, we breathe in and out almost 15,000 liters of air daily when at rest, representing almost eight liters a minute, and up to 200 liters when our breathing accelerates in response to physical effort. Humans breathe an average of 16 times a minute, and children can breathe up to 40 times a minute. This means that women, who like children breathe faster, will breathe 714 million times during their lives, and men will breathe 664 million times.

And even while **indoor air can be up to eight times more polluted than outdoor air, according to the World Health Organization**, an eighty-year-old will have breathed over 350 million liters of air during their lifetime. The WHO also estimates that **air pollution is one of the world's main environmental risks and the fourth largest risk factor for mortality worldwide**: 4.2 million premature deaths are attributed to outdoor air pollution and 3.8 million to air pollution in buildings. Considering that on average we spend over **85% of our time in enclosed spaces** and that, in France, **65% of workers are in an office**, breathing quality air is both a public health and a productivity issue. In France alone, the **annual socioeconomic cost of indoor air pollution could amount to €19 billion** according to the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety - ANSES.

Despite this, indoor air quality is very commonly overlooked. **In France, 1-in-2 offices and 3-in-5 classrooms have no ventilation or air-handling provision**, while the WHO estimates that the **air is unhealthy in 30% of new and refurbished buildings**. Another significant benefit of tackling this issue is that properly treating indoor air and using efficient ventilation units can **reduce energy consumption by 7% to 10%**.

¹ Survey conducted in France, Belgium and the Shanghai region (70 million inhabitants).

Veolia already at work with several big names

Veolia has worked with **Gaumont-Pathé** in Caen and Lyon to maintain good air quality for audiences at its cinemas while also optimizing energy consumption. Veolia has also provided support to **Société Générale** for many years, monitoring indoor air quality at its historic head office and at over 30 other sites. A few years back Veolia air quality experts were called in to investigate **Radio France's** headquarters in Paris after employees and guests would feel indisposed in the studios and offices, following the building renovation. Measurement of air quality levels in the whole building allowed to identify pollution sources and to suggest solutions to improve indoor air quality. Poor indoor air quality on the first stage of the building renovation had significant financial consequences due to the redesign of installations and the non-use of studios during construction work. Veolia's support to Radio France is ongoing and the companies work together to ensure a good indoor air quality at the Maison de la Radio.

Antoine Frerot, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Veolia, says: *"To mark this World Environment Day, and its theme of combating air pollution, Veolia is making a commitment: we are today launching a new all-in-one offer aimed at guaranteeing air quality in buildings. This is a pioneering offer suitable for every type of client, industrial or municipal, and every type of building - office, educational establishment, shopping mall or hospital – that reflects their specific needs and requirements."* He adds: *"Just as Veolia has ensured that access to drinking water became a driver for improving public health and living conditions, so Veolia is committed to deploying its expertise and solutions to deliver better indoor air quality. 40 years ago, Veolia proved its inventiveness in the treatment of hazardous waste, treating industrial waste being discharged into the Seine. Indoor air quality and treatment is another field where our determination to be pioneers offering innovative solutions to treat the most difficult forms of pollution has an important role to play."*

Veolia thus becomes the first major global resource management company to offer services that guarantee indoor air quality:

- **AIR Control**, which allows customers to **know the quality of indoor air** and become invested in their environment by assessing the level of pollutants identifying potential sources of pollution and offering adapted solutions.
- **AIR Performance**, which allows customers to **offer indoor air quality** in their buildings through the assessment of the air quality level, the optimization of the practices and operation of the facilities, and a guaranteed result with performance follow-up.
- **AIR Human**, which makes it possible to **make occupants and employees be "actors"** of the improvement of the air quality, by making the information on air quality accessible and comprehensible, by involving the users in the remediation actions and by taking into account what the people concerned feel.

[Click here](#) to access online the **Elabe surveys** for France, Belgium and China.

For more information on **Veolia's new services and capabilities** for indoor air quality, [please visit this page](#).

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Veolia group is the global leader in optimized resource management. With over 171,000 employees worldwide, the Group designs and provides water, waste and energy management solutions which contribute to the sustainable development of communities and industries. Through its three complementary business activities, Veolia helps to develop access to resources, preserve available resources, and to replenish them. In 2018, the Veolia group supplied 95 million people with drinking water and 63 million people with wastewater service, produced nearly 56 million megawatt hours of energy and converted 49 million metric tons of waste into new materials and energy. Veolia Environnement (listed on Paris Euronext: VIE) recorded consolidated revenue of €25.91 billion in 2018 (USD 30.6 billion). www.veolia.com

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