# Millions of Marginalized Americans at Risk from Extreme Heat and Energy Disruptions, Report Warns



A recent report by the ICF Climate Center reveals that millions of Americans in disadvantaged communities are facing increasing risks from extreme heat and energy disruptions due to climate change. The report, released Wednesday, emphasizes that under a moderate-emissions scenario, 25 million people in marginalized areas will endure life-threatening heat annually by 2050. This number could escalate to 53 million if emissions follow a "business as usual" trajectory.

These Justice40 communities, designated by the federal government as underserved and polluted, are expected to suffer disproportionately. Heat waves can impact their energy systems, potentially causing power outages for about 8 million people, a figure that may rise to 43 million under high-emissions conditions.

The broader American population will also be affected. Under moderate emissions, 41 million outside of Justice40 locales will face similar heat challenges, with 44 million experiencing energy-impacting heat. The report underscores that marginalized communities are at higher risk due to factors like age, health conditions, and inadequate infrastructure.

V. Kelly Turner, associate director of urban planning at UCLA, highlighted the challenges these communities face due to inadequate infrastructure. Differences in vegetation and urban design lead to temperature variations even within cities, complicating the situation further.

The report's findings are set against the backdrop of increasing global heat records. For instance, the 2021 Pacific Northwest heat dome caused over 650 fatalities. Projections indicate regions like the Central Valley and southeastern California will significantly suffer from energy-impacting heat days.

The report calls for policymakers to identify and engage at-risk communities in planning and preparation. Initiatives like Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are mentioned as providing funding for such efforts. Moreover, newly announced national centers for heat monitoring and resilience aim to support community adaptation efforts.

The study concludes that while imminent action is critical for current and future safety, continuous efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are essential to mitigate these scenarios.