# UK heatwaves have led to over 10,000 heat-related deaths since 2020



Recent data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reveals that over 10,000 individuals have succumbed to heat-related issues during heatwaves in the United Kingdom since 2020. This alarming statistic highlights the increased dangers associated with extreme weather conditions, particularly for vulnerable populations, such as the elderly.

The region significantly impacted by heat-related deaths last year was the West Midlands, which reported a staggering rate of 38 deaths per million, totalling 232 fatalities in 2024. The South West followed closely, recording 32 deaths per million or 186 deaths in total. Notably, the South East had the highest total number of heat-associated deaths at 259, with a rate of 27 deaths per million people. In contrast, Yorkshire and the Humber experienced the lowest overall fatality count, with only 38 deaths, equating to seven deaths per million people.

The data shows a worrying trend regarding mortality rates linked to heat exposure, particularly among older individuals. The highest mortality rates in 2024 were found in those aged 85 and over, with 521 deaths per million people in this demographic.

Dr Freya Garry, a senior scientist at the Met Office, spoke to The Independent about the implications of climate change on future heatwaves in the region. "We are seeing the frequency and intensity of heatwaves increasing around the world, and in the UK, there have been several major heatwaves in the last few years," she explained. She further projected that "from observational data and model projection, we'll be seeing continuation of trends, with hotter heatwave events and longer, hotter summers."

The UKHSA reported 1,311 heat-associated deaths during four notable heat episodes in 2024, accumulating to a total of 10,781 fatalities since the onset of these heat-related tracking efforts. The years 2022 and 2023 also saw alarming numbers of deaths with 2,985 and 2,295 fatalities, respectively, indicating a concerning upward trajectory. Historical data indicates that 2020 recorded 2,556 heat-related deaths over three episodes, while 2021 witnessed 1,634 deaths over two events.

The mechanism behind the rise in heat-related mortality has to do with physiological vulnerabilities, as the UKHSA noted. Older individuals, infants, and young children are particularly susceptible to heat-related illnesses due to their bodies' limited ability to regulate temperature. Conditions exacerbated by high temperatures include increased risks of heart attack, stroke, and respiratory problems.

Moreover, Dr Garry highlighted an important factor regarding overnight temperatures. With expectations that "events such as tropical nights" will become more frequent, the inability to cool down overnight compounds the adverse effects of high daytime temperatures.

A "heat episode" is defined by the UKHSA as a period during which an amber warning is issued for at least one region, or when the mean temperature in Central England reaches a minimum of 20°C.

Roger Harding, Director of Round Our Way, a UK-based climate charity, commented on the implications of rising temperatures for the population. “High temperatures used to be something people largely worried about when going abroad, but they are starting to have a devastating impact here, especially for those of us getting on a bit," he said. He suggested that as heatwaves become more frequent due to climate change, the ramifications for health may prove dire, stressing the importance of improving readiness within health services and care homes to address these challenges.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/heat-mortality-monitoring-report-england-2024> - This URL supports the claim about the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) reporting 1,311 heat-associated deaths during the summer of 2024 and highlights the impact of climate change on heat-related mortality in England.
* <https://taking.care/blogs/resources-advice/the-main-causes-of-uk-heatwave-deaths> - This source corroborates the information about the high number of heat-related deaths among older populations in recent years, emphasizing the vulnerability of those aged 65 and over.
* <https://pa.media/blogs/pa-editors-picks/more-than-1000-people-died-from-heat-in-england-in-2024-figures-show/> - This article provides additional details on the 1,311 heat-related deaths in England during 2024 and the response from environmental groups regarding preparedness for rising temperatures.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/england-green-alliance-government-more-nhs-b2731484.html> - This URL supports the claims made about climate change exacerbating health inequalities and highlights the concerns from environmental groups like Green Alliance on addressing these issues.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/heat-mortality-monitoring-report-england-2024/heat-mortality-monitoring-report-england-2024> - This report provides further insight into the methodology used by the UKHSA to estimate heat-associated deaths and the increasing frequency and intensity of heat episodes due to climate change.