# Four billion people faced a month of extra extreme heat due to climate change



Four billion people, nearly half the global population, experienced an additional month of extreme heat from May 2024 to May 2025, driven by human-induced climate change. This alarming data was released by leading scientists associated with World Weather Attribution, Climate Central, and the Red Cross. The consequences were dire: widespread illness, fatalities, agricultural losses, and strained healthcare and energy systems.

The report highlights a staggering increase in extreme heat days, with virtually all countries witnessing a doubling of such events compared to a world without climate change. In the Caribbean, for example, Puerto Rico saw a dramatic rise in extreme heat days, soaring from a projected 48 to an astonishing 161. Charlotte Gossett Navarro, chief director for Puerto Rico at the Hispanic Federation, commented on the debilitating effects of this heat on daily life, stating that even simple outdoor activities became unbearable. The persistent issues with the island's power grid only exacerbate the difficulties, particularly for those with pre-existing health conditions.

Beyond statistics, the human impact is critical; heatwaves are termed "silent killers" by Friederike Otto, an associate professor of climate science at Imperial College London, who contributed to the report. She pointed out that the fatalities often go unnoticed, either occurring within the confines of healthcare facilities or hidden within poorly insulated homes. Vulnerable populations, particularly the elderly and those living in low-income communities, suffer disproportionately, emphasizing the urgent need for systemic intervention.

Recent studies have linked the severe temperatures experienced across Central Asia and the Mediterranean to climate change, further corroborating the report's findings. In Morocco, for instance, extreme heat conditions contributed to at least 21 deaths, highlighting the dire risks associated with rising temperatures. The consequences of such heat not only endanger human life, but also pose serious threats to food security and economic stability globally. The latest data suggests that heat-related deaths among older adults surged by 167% since the 1990s.

Experts stress that proactive measures are essential to mitigate the impact of future heatwaves. Recommendations include establishing early warning systems, designing heat-resilient infrastructure, and ensuring comprehensive health services are prepared for extreme weather events. Strikingly, the report asserts that without urgent action to phase out fossil fuels, the protection strategies designed to safeguard communities may ultimately become ineffective as extreme heat events intensify.

Additionally, the economic ramifications of climate-related heat stress are severe. Projections indicate that the U.S. alone could see annual losses of $100 billion in worker productivity due to heat, a figure that may double by 2030. The construction and agriculture sectors—where outdoor work is prevalent—are expected to be particularly hard hit. This loss disproportionately affects certain demographics, notably Black and Hispanic workers, particularly in the southern and midwestern regions of the U.S.

In summary, the report underscores a stark reality: as climate change continues unabated, the frequency and severity of extreme heat events will escalate, necessitating robust global cooperation and urgent policy reforms. The historical patterns of climate change indicate that we are nearing a critical threshold, with implications that extend well beyond the immediate increase in temperatures, directly impacting health, economies, and social stability worldwide.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/four-billion-endured-extra-month-of-extreme-heat-due-to-climate-change-report/a1389449901.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/a67a14271d1d53021e0cac69da0bc971)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/four-billion-endured-extra-month-of-extreme-heat-due-to-climate-change-report/a1389449901.html), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/climate-change-is-making-temperatures-deadlier-food-less-reliable-experts-warn-2024-10-30/), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/06157ede7ea4a22ea6431f135cda275f)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.axios.com/2024/10/30/climate-change-heat-health-effects), [[5]](https://time.com/6093845/how-heat-hurts-the-economy/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/four-billion-endured-extra-month-of-extreme-heat-due-to-climate-change-report/a1389449901.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/a67a14271d1d53021e0cac69da0bc971> - A report by World Weather Attribution, Climate Central, and the Red Cross indicates that from May 2024 to May 2025, approximately 4 billion people experienced at least one extra month of extreme heat due to human-caused climate change. This extreme heat led to increased illness, death, crop damage, and stressed energy and healthcare systems. The study highlights that extreme heat days have at least doubled in nearly every country compared to a world without climate change. Regions like Puerto Rico saw significant increases in extreme heat days, from a projected 48 to 161. Vulnerable groups, including low-income communities, older adults, and those with health conditions, were particularly affected. The study underscores the need for early warning systems, urban planning, and international cooperation to mitigate future heat waves. Without a global transition away from fossil fuels, these protective strategies may become increasingly ineffective as extreme heat becomes more frequent and intense. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/a67a14271d1d53021e0cac69da0bc971?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/climate-change-is-making-temperatures-deadlier-food-less-reliable-experts-warn-2024-10-30/> - A report by medical and health experts warns that climate change, driven by fossil fuel emissions, is elevating temperatures to dangerous levels and worsening droughts and food security. The year 2023, the warmest on record, resulted in the average person experiencing 50 more days of hazardous temperatures. Older adults are especially vulnerable, with heat-related deaths among this group increasing by 167% since the 1990s. The report also highlights that heat is contributing to diseases associated with heat exposure. Outdoor work capacity has been limited, with an estimated loss of 512 billion work hours last year. Climate change is also making food less safe, with up to 48% of the world's land area facing extreme drought conditions and 60% affected by extreme rainfall. The authors urge directing climate finance towards public health at the upcoming COP29 climate summit. The UN Secretary-General has called for reducing fossil fuel use to create a more just, safe, and healthy future. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/climate-change-is-making-temperatures-deadlier-food-less-reliable-experts-warn-2024-10-30/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://apnews.com/article/06157ede7ea4a22ea6431f135cda275f> - In 2024, human-caused climate change led to an average of 41 extra days of dangerous heat worldwide. An analysis by World Weather Attribution and Climate Central found that climate change exacerbated a significant portion of the year's adverse weather events, contributing to what is expected to be the hottest year on record. Scientists observed extreme heat, droughts, tropical cyclones, and heavy rainfall affected lives globally, with some regions experiencing over 150 days of extreme heat. Vulnerable populations, particularly in the world's poorest and least developed countries, faced heightened impacts. The findings highlight that heat waves, intensifying with climate change, are the deadliest extreme events, often with underreported fatalities. As the world inches closer to the Paris Agreement's 1.5 degrees Celsius warming limit, the link between climate change and extreme weather events becomes increasingly evident. The El Niño phenomenon also contributed to the year's severe weather, although climate change was deemed a more significant factor. Experts urge efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change to mitigate future risks. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/06157ede7ea4a22ea6431f135cda275f?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://time.com/6093845/how-heat-hurts-the-economy/> - A report by the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center states that increasing extreme heat due to climate change will severely impact workers' productivity in the U.S., costing the economy significantly. Currently, heat-related productivity losses are estimated at $100 billion annually and are projected to double by 2030, reaching $500 billion by 2050. These losses will be most severe in the southeast and midwest, particularly affecting outdoor workers in sectors like construction and agriculture. Climate projections suggest that by 2050, up to 30% of the U.S. population will experience more than 100 high heat days annually, up from 5% today. The report highlights the disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic workers and underscores the need for investment in adaptation measures such as urban forests, early warning systems, and heat-resistant crops to mitigate the economic damage from rising temperatures. ([time.com](https://time.com/6093845/how-heat-hurts-the-economy/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/30/climate-change-heat-health-effects> - In 2023, climate change led to a significant increase in exposure to health-threatening temperatures, averaging 50 more days of extreme heat globally compared to past years. According to the annual Lancet Countdown report, heat-related deaths among people over 65 spiked by 167% since the 1990s due to rising temperatures. This calls for major policy changes, including ending fossil fuel expansion due to its health impacts. Recommendations include enhanced funding for renewable energy and climate actions. Despite some progress in the U.S. spearheaded by the Biden administration, ongoing climate change poses severe threats to air quality, temperature extremes, and social stability for future generations. ([axios.com](https://www.axios.com/2024/10/30/climate-change-heat-health-effects?utm_source=openai))