

Heat killed nearly 50,000 in Europe in 2023: Study

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High temperatures which scientists say are being worsened by human-driven carbon emissions caused nearly 50,000 deaths in Europe last year, a study published Monday found.

The study by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health estimated that 47,690 died in connection with heat during the world's warmest year and Europe's second-warmest year on record.

In the past decade, only 2022 was deadlier, the annual report found, with more than 60,000 [heat-related deaths](#).

[Published](#) in the journal *Nature Medicine*, the study took in temperature and mortality records from 35 countries across the continent.

The authors highlighted that [older people](#) were most at risk, with countries in southern Europe worst affected by the heat.

More than half the deaths occurred during two periods of high heat in mid-July and August, when Greece battled [deadly wildfires](#). The mercury hit 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) on July 18 in Sicily.

The report cautioned that the headline figure was an estimate, adding it was 95 percent confident the mortality burden was between 28,853 and 66,525.

But it also found that heat-related deaths would have been 80 percent higher were it not for action taken by European governments in the 21st century to adapt to hotter summers.

"Our results highlight the importance of historical and ongoing adaptations in saving lives during recent summers," said the authors.

The report also showed the "urgency for more effective strategies to further reduce the mortality burden of forthcoming hotter summers", they added, urging more proactive measures to combat global warming.

Europe, where the United Nations says temperatures are rising quicker than the rest of the globe, has experienced a growing number of often deadly heat waves since the turn of the century.

Scientists say that [climate change](#) is making [extreme weather events](#) like heat waves more frequent, longer and more intense.

More information: Elisa Gallo, Heat-related mortality in Europe during 2023 and the role of adaptation in protecting health, *Nature Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1038/s41591-024-03186-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-024-03186-1).
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