

Correspondence

Heat and COVID-19 could be twin killers

People who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 also tend to be affected more by extreme weather events. Examples include elderly people and those living in densely populated cities. As the pandemic continues, scientists should help politicians to develop plans and policies that protect those most susceptible to the cascade of socio-economic risks that would arise when these hazards combine.

We need to find out how human behaviour is changing in response to COVID-19, how this affects demands for food, energy, the Internet and transportation, and whether these altered demands are likely to increase or decrease people's susceptibility to the effects of extreme weather. Heatwaves could make COVID-19 shelter-in-place policies dangerous, for example, if elderly people or those with low incomes do not have air conditioning.

Cities and scientists must work together to protect urban residents. They need to improve city infrastructure, expand data sharing and create open communication channels between policymakers, planners and researchers. They should focus first on those most in need.

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