Most People Experiencing More Days of Heavy Wildfire Smoke

Exposure to wildfire smoke has increased in the US over the past decade, with more than 87% of the nation's population experiencing an increase in the number of days of heavy smoke, according to an analysis of satellite-collected and census data and information about communities' sociodemographic, economic, and cultural characteristics. On average, the number of person-days of heavy smoke exposure increased 350% between the first and the second 5 years of the study from about 310 million person-days during 2011 to 2015 to about 1.4 billion person-days during 2017 to 2021.

The increases in smoke exposure were highest in areas with the greatest health and social disadvantages, such as communities with large numbers of people who had limited English proficiency, lower levels of education, crowded housing conditions, or who were from racial or ethnic minority groups, the researchers reported in the American Journal of Public Health. – Emily Harris

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Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.