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Jul 8, 2023 - Energy & Environment

# America's cruel summer



Andrew Freedman, author of [Axios Generate](#)



Illustration: Sarah Grillo/Axios

Record-setting heat and hazardous air have already consumed much of the U.S. this summer, and the worst may be yet to come.

**Driving the news:** Blistering heat waves have struck all over the country; another one is now ramping up in the Southwest.

- Tens of millions of people have been exposed to dangerously poor air quality due to [smoke billowing from Canada's record-breaking wildfires](#).
- Those fires could worsen this month, and some could even last through the winter by becoming "[zombie fires](#)" in the Far North, burning in the soils of peatlands.
- This week featured the world's hottest days on record. Even hotter extremes lie ahead from the one-two punch of [El Niño](#) and climate change.

**Between the lines:** To meteorologists and climate scientists who closely track the planet's "climate indicators," the simultaneous number of flashing red signs are ominous.

- The daily heat records set or tied this week have been astonishing, beating previous spikes that also occurred during 2016's El Niño conditions.
- The North Atlantic Ocean Basin's [sea surface temperatures](#) are at all-time record highs, leading some scientists to [increase their forecasts](#) for the number of hurricanes likely to form this season.
- Antarctic sea ice cover is at an [all-time low](#).

**Global monthly and daily temperatures** are spiking off the charts, too.

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record.

- This month will likely be the hottest July, and maybe the hottest month ever recorded, Zeke Hausfather, a climate scientist with Berkeley Earth and at Stripe, tells Axios.
- The heat waves across the country this summer have been [long-lasting and deadly](#), the result of stagnant weather patterns featuring brutal heat domes locked in place for weeks at a time.

**What's next:** Another developing heat dome, this one setting up across the Southwest, looks to yield one of the longest, [hottest heat waves](#) on record in Arizona during the next two weeks. That includes Phoenix, the [National Weather Service warns](#).

- "Temperatures across the region may be some of the hottest we have ever seen," forecasters wrote in an [online briefing Friday](#). They also stated it could break a record for the longest-lasting heat wave in the region's history.
- It is possible that Phoenix will tie or exceed its all-time temperature record of 122°F, which would be an acute public health risk.
- Extreme heat is the deadliest weather-related hazard in a typical year across the U.S.

**Context:** Stronger areas of high pressure aloft, or heat domes, are a suspected hallmark of a warming climate. Studies show that heat waves are becoming more severe, longer lasting, and likely to occur as the global average temperature rises.

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warming.

- According to Michael Wehner of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, climate change now makes typical heat waves about 5°F warmer than temperatures would have been in a preindustrial climate.
- The transition out of a cooling La Niña and into an El Niño, which tends to boost global average temperatures, has quickly manifested in record monthly temperatures, Hausfather told Axios in an email.

**The bottom line:** It is increasingly likely that both 2023 and 2024 will set records for the warmest years since instrument records began in the 1800s. In April, Hausfather wrote that there was only about a 22% chance that 2023 would eclipse 2016 as the warmest year on record.

- That has now increased to "roughly 77%," he said.
- "We expect 2024 to be even warmer, as the majority of the El Niño's effects will be felt then."



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## Putin met with Wagner boss days after short-lived mutiny



Yevgeny Prigozhin in Rostov-on-Don on June 24. Photo: Handout/Wagner/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) met with [Yevgeny Prigozhin](#) less than a week after the Wagner boss launched a short-lived rebellion, the Kremlin [said](#) on Monday.

**Why it matters:** Kremlin spokesperson [Dmitry Peskov](#) told reporters that Putin, Prigozhin and other Wagner commanders met for three hours in Moscow on June 29 — the first known meeting between the Russian president and mercenary chief since the brief mutiny.

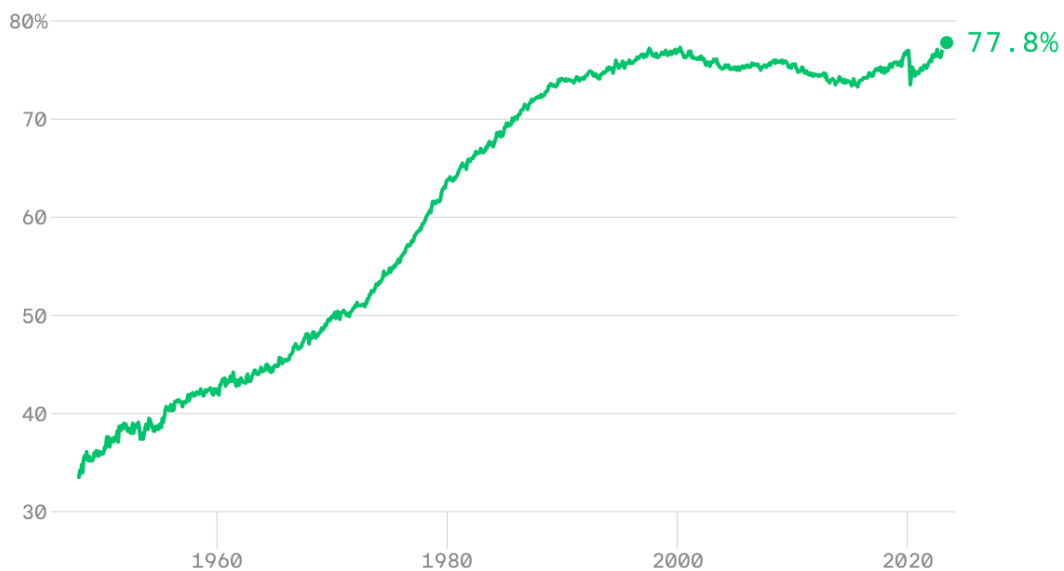
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# women's labor force participation hits record high

## U.S. labor force participation rate among 25- to 54-year-old women

Monthly; January 1948 to June 2023



Data: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Chart: Axios Visuals

The share of women in their prime working years who (ages 25-54) are either working or looking for work is at a record high of 77.8% for the third consecutive month, per the jobs data out Friday.

**Why it matters:** Despite all the doom and gloom talk about women not coming back to the labor force after the pandemic, the participation rate is now higher than it was pre-pandemic.





Emily Peck, author of [Axios Markets](#)

1 hour ago - Economy & Business

## Warning: Student loan cliff ahead



Illustration: Annelise Capossela/Axios

There's a big economic shock coming this fall for both the economy and millions of American households — the resumption of student loan payments.

**Why it matters:** For millions of individuals that means real and often [painful](#) cuts to spending — cuts that will translate to a slowdown for the economy overall.

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