

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **New Study Details L.A. County Neighborhoods At Highest Risk of Extreme Climate Impacts**

**Los Angeles, CA (Wednesday, October 13, 2021)**—More than half of L.A. County residents live in a community deemed highly exposed to impending and severe climate impacts, according to a [study](#) released today by the County's Chief Sustainability Office (CSO).

An estimated 56% of County residents – nearly 5.7 million residents -- face high risk to such climate hazards as extreme heat, wildfire, inland flooding, extreme precipitation, coastal flooding, and drought. [The Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#) evaluate both present-day risks and projected changes in exposure by 2050.

The report highlights 47 communities of concern that face dual dangers -- an increased exposure to climate hazards and high susceptibility to negative impacts. Low-income and communities of color face a disproportionate amount of climate vulnerability as well as limited capacity to withstand and weather future threats, the study finds. Nearly 17% of the population live in high-vulnerability tracts.

Among the communities facing multiple high-risk climate threats: East Los Angeles, South Gate and Bellflower; Long Beach and San Pedro; Santa Clarita; Reseda and Winnetka in the San Fernando Valley; Montebello; Westlake and Crenshaw districts; and North Lancaster, Hi Vista and Roosevelt in the Antelope Valley.

The report takes an innovative approach by tackling difficult-to-analyze factors that increase vulnerability, like homelessness or employment conditions, in addition to other more geographically-specific data. The more holistic approach considers factors like employment in warehousing jobs, where workers are typically indoors but are still exposed to climate-related hazardous conditions like heat.

Among the most severe climate impacts predicted to disrupt the daily lives of County residents by 2050:

- A tenfold increase in extreme heat waves
- A doubling of the population highly vulnerable to extreme heat
- Megadroughts lasting multiple decades

- Nearly 20% of properties at risk of flooding during a large storm event
- More extreme swings between droughts and rain, likely leading to flash floods and landslides
- Seas rising by 2.5 feet at local shorelines
- A 40% increase of wildfire burn areas in the San Gabriel Mountains

The vulnerability assessment acts as a companion piece to the [Our County Sustainability Plan](#), the nation's most ambitious regional blueprint for community sustainability. Its findings will guide future priorities for implementation of the Plan, such as increasing the tree canopy in low-income urban areas. The County will also seek out new opportunities to increase climate resilience, such as infrastructure spending.

The state government has provided nearly \$15 billion over the next three years to help California communities prepare for extreme weather and climate-related disasters. The funding includes investments to build wildfire resiliency, address drought impacts and bolster water resilience, and protect vulnerable communities from climate risks.

### Quotes from Stakeholders

"This study demonstrates the County's leadership on climate change and environmental justice," said Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda L. Solis, Supervisor to the First District. "By identifying the people and places who stand to suffer the worst impacts of climate change, and highlighting the urgency of making our communities more resilient to climate change, it will spur real action among County departments, our many community partners, and jurisdictions across the region."

"This assessment highlights the urgent need to do all we can to lessen the impending harms caused by climate change that will disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color" shared Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell. "We have an opportunity to apply the findings shared towards our strategies for proactively strengthening our infrastructure and protecting our most vulnerable neighborhoods and residents."

"The devastating consequences of climate change are already here and we know they could continue to worsen over the years to come," said Third District Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. "This report, while deeply disturbing, gives us an invaluable planning document with the analyses we need to act now to mitigate and avoid the possible negative impacts on our local county communities."

"While we know places like Long Beach and San Pedro will face rising tides and Bellflower and its surrounding communities will experience extreme heat, we also know that by taking action today to reduce emissions and prepare our communities, we can avoid the worst impacts" said Fourth District Supervisor Janice Hahn. "This report reminds us we must renew our efforts."

"The assessment of the vulnerability and criticality of our electricity infrastructure was an interesting finding in this comprehensive study, further emphasizing the need for partnership and collaboration in our efforts to strengthen grid reliability," said Supervisor Kathryn Barger, 5th District.

"This report is a sobering assessment of the profound challenges that climate change poses for our communities," said Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer for Los Angeles County. "These findings will be a critical tool as we work to mitigate these impacts and make sure our most vulnerable and historically disadvantaged populations can withstand the climate impacts that we know will come."

“With this study, Los Angeles County has conducted a comprehensive and equity-focused assessment” said Nuin-Tara Key, Deputy Director for Climate Resilience at the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, “and this work is vital to informing future policies and programs to protect people and infrastructure from the devastating impacts of climate change.”

“This report really brings to light the dangers that immigrant, low-wage workers and other vulnerable populations face not just once in a while, but on an increasingly regular basis,” said Nancy Zuniga, Workers Health Program Manager with the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California, who served on the study’s Advisory Committee. “This information will help us organize around the issues in a new way and prepare our community members so they can stay safe and healthy now and into the future.”

#### Report Methodology

The study utilized a methodology recommended within the [2020 California Adaptation Planning Guide](#). The County tailored the methodology for Los Angeles County, identifying 29 social indicators that make residents more susceptible to harm from climate hazards and analyzing the locations of susceptible residents across the County. The indicators fall into 10 broad categories: age, community and language, occupation, education, health, housing, income and wealth, race and ethnicity, access to information, and transportation.

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