BRIEF REPORT

Swiss TPH

Summer 2026: initial estimates of heat-related deaths in Switzerland

Provisional results | October 2026

The summer of 2026 was the hottest in Switzerland since measurements began, even hotter than the summer of 2003. According to initial epidemiological estimates, around 1,260 deaths between May and August can be statistically attributed to heat. This is considerably higher than in previous years and similar to the figures for the summer of 2003. The final figures will be published in spring 2027.

Context

On behalf of the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) estimates each year how many deaths in Switzerland can statistically be attributed to heat (Heat-related deaths). This brief report, commissioned by the FOPH, presents initial estimates for the summer of 2026. It is based on the daily mean temperatures measured by MeteoSwiss and on the daily number of deaths from May to the end of August provided by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). At the time of the analysis, the data on deaths were still provisional, as some deaths are reported with delay. The estimates will be updated in spring 2027 using the final data, including September. The final report will also contain in-depth analyses and a discussion of the results.

Main results

Around 1260
deaths occurring between May and August 2026 can be attributed to heat according to initial estimates.

14
deaths per 100’000 inhabitants are estimated to be heat-related.

5.5%
of the deaths that occurred during the assessed period are heat-related.

7 out of 10 deaths
related to heat occur on days with a daily mean temperature of 25°C or higher.

85%
of heat-related deaths occur among people aged 75 and over.

Results

Analyses show that heat has a considerable impact on mortality in Switzerland: heat is the natural hazard responsible for the highest number of deaths. For the period from May to August 2026, the number of heat-related deaths is provisionally estimated at 1,257 (95% confidence interval [CI]: 1053-1479; **Figure 1**), which represents 14 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (95% CI: 12-16; **Figure 2**) or 5.5% of

all deaths between the beginning of May and the end of August (95% CI: 4,6-6,5%). Around 85% of these deaths occur among people aged 75 and over.

Around 70% of heat-related deaths are statistically attributed to hot or very hot days. Hot days (daily mean temperature of 25°C or above but below 27°C) account for 485 deaths (38.6%), while very hot days (27°C or above) account for 400 (31.8%). The remaining 373 deaths (29.7%) are attributed to days of moderate heat intensity (below 25°C). The temperature thresholds of 25°C and 27°C correspond to the thresholds used by MeteoSwiss for level 3 and level 4 heat warnings (Heat warnings).

Taking statistical uncertainties into account, the total number of heat-related deaths (Figure 1) and the number of heat-related deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (Figure 2) in 2026 are of a similar order of magnitude to those in 2003. Note that September 2026 has not yet been included.

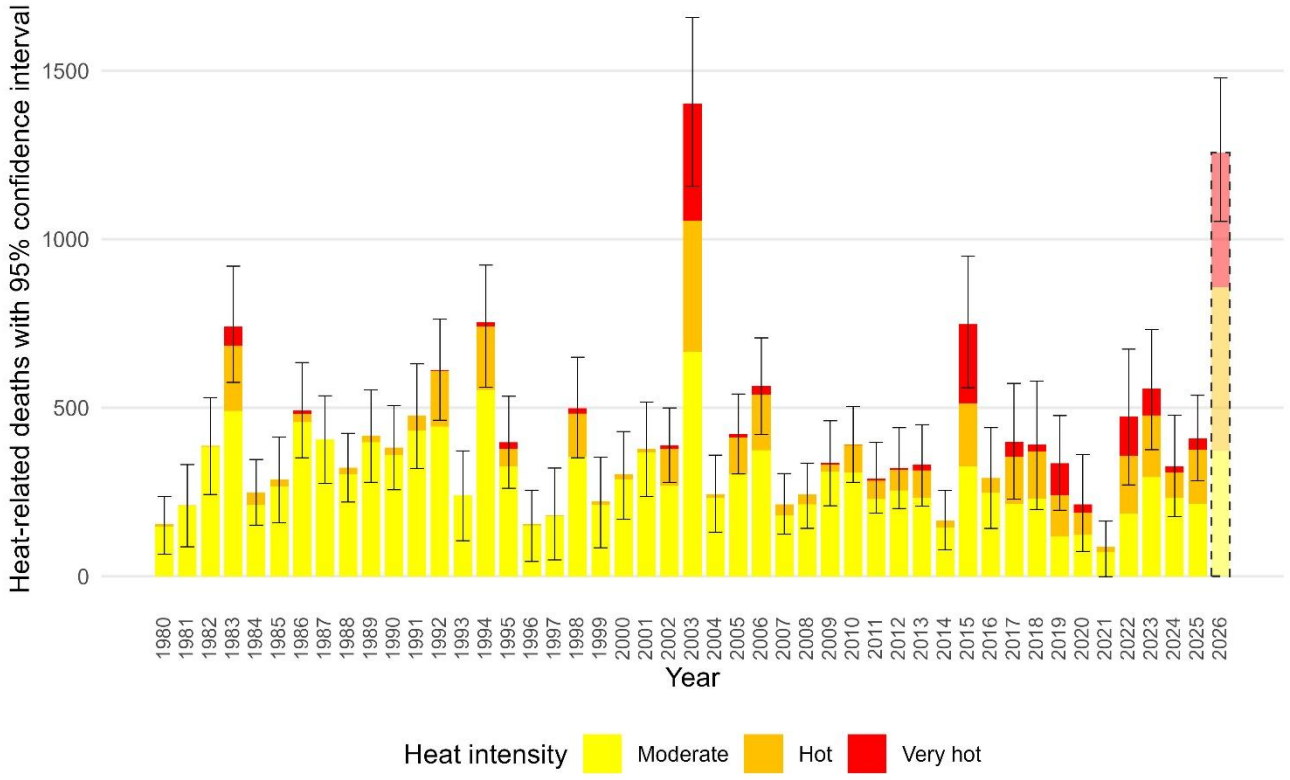


Figure 1 Heat-related deaths in Switzerland, 1980–2025 (May to September) and 2026 (provisional figures, May to August), with 95% confidence intervals. Deaths are shown for three temperature ranges defined by MeteoSwiss's heatwave alert thresholds (moderate: daily mean temperature [Tmean] is greater than or equal to the optimal temperature* and less than 25°C; hot: Tmean ≥ 25°C and < 27°C; very hot: Tmean ≥ 27°C). The uncertainty range is shown for the total number of heat-related deaths in each year. The estimate for 2026 is based on provisional mortality data from the FSO (as of 1 October 2026). *The optimal temperature is the daily mean temperature associated with the lowest risk of death. For 2026, the optimal temperature corresponds to a daily mean temperature of 18.7°C.

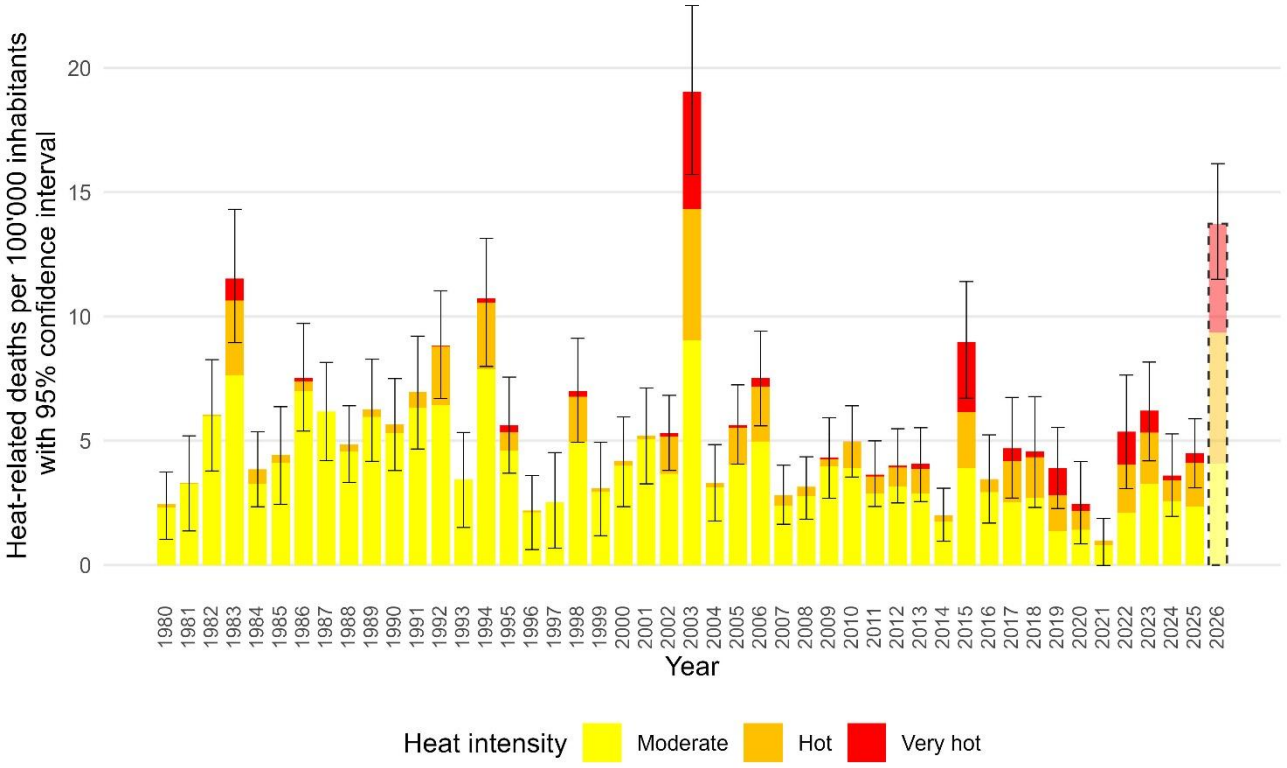


Figure 2 Heat-related deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in Switzerland, 1980–2025 (May to September) and 2026 (provisional figures, May to August), with 95% confidence intervals. Deaths are shown for three temperature ranges defined by MeteoSwiss's heatwave alert thresholds (moderate: daily mean temperature [Tmean] is greater than or equal to the optimal temperature* and less than 25°C; hot: Tmean ≥ 25°C and < 27°C; very hot: Tmean ≥ 27°C). The uncertainty range is shown for the total number of heat-related deaths in each year. The estimate for 2026 is based on provisional mortality data from the FSO (as of 1 October 2026). *The optimal temperature is the daily mean temperature associated with the lowest risk of death. For 2026, the optimal temperature corresponds to a daily mean temperature of 18.7°C.

Methods

The estimates are based on a statistical model that links daily mean temperature to the daily number of deaths. The delayed effects of heat on deaths are taken into account for up to seven days. The modell is used to estimate how many of the observed deaths can be statistically attributed to heat. The method and data sources are those used for the «Heat-related deaths» indicator. This indicator is calculated annually for the months of May to September. Due to the exceptionally hot summer of 2026, the FSO made provisional mortality data available earlier than usual, ahead of the official embargo date. The provisional estimate for 2026 is based on deaths occurring from May to August (data as of 1 October 2026). Data for September were still too incomplete at the time of the analysis and were therefore not included. The figures per 100,000 inhabitants were calculated using the permanent resident population at the end of June 2026 (FSO).

The «Heat-related deaths» indicator is designed for the long-term monitoring of the health effects of climate change. The time series currently covers the period from 1980 to 2025 (Heat-related deaths). In spring 2027, an in-depth analysis of heat-related mortality in 2026 will be carried out based on the final mortality data, broken down by age group, sex, major region and canton, together with a comparison with the FSO's mortality monitoring. This monitoring allows to track mortality in real time and to identify periods of low or high mortality. However, it does not take causes of death or temperature data into account. Therefore, the observed mortality cannot be directly attributed to specific events such as heatwaves.

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