

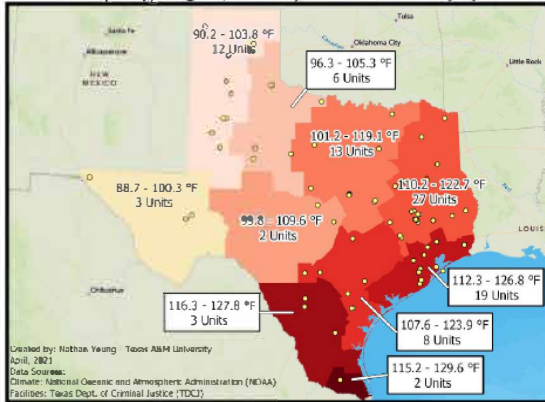


SURVEY RESULTS: HEAT IN TEXAS PRISONS
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TDCJ Prison Facilities and Average Heat Index Temperature in June, July, August, and September of 2018 (°F)



Without universal temperature regulation (air-conditioning) in high heat temperatures, prison units must mitigate the impact of heat to individual incarcerated persons to prevent heat-related illness and death. Such policies include providing water and cups, access to respite, maintaining fans, and allow additional showers when the heat index is above 90F. However, the structure of prisons and the characteristics of imprisonment make this challenging.

IMPACT OF COVID19

Lockdowns restricted incarcerated persons to cells, restricting their access to communal water, ice, showers, and respite areas. Communal resources present risk of spreading infection.

"Cold showers are being denied daily. Excuse—COVID Lockdown."

"No access [to water] when we are locked in our cells because of COVID19."

IMPACT OF SHORT STAFFING

Getting resources to incarcerated persons becomes even more challenging with under-staffing which leads to denial of access to respite areas, showers, and refills of water and ice. *"Happens every day! Short of staff, a flat-out denial."*

HEAT RESTRICTION & SENSITIVITY

- 39% of participants identified as having some type of official heat restriction
- 37% of participants identified as having heat restrictions due to a medical condition.
- More than half (54%) described themselves as physically sensitive to heat.
- More than half (54%) described being prescribed medication that could exacerbate the impact of heat to their health.
- In 2020, 45% of participants reported having had a health crisis disregarded by staff.
- In 2020, the majority of participants (61%) also described that wellness checks were not being conducted.

"I was taken to the infirmary after fainting from heat exhaustion. I was denied access to respite prior."

WATER

- 13% of participants reported that water is not distributed to them by TDCJ.
- About a third of participants (29%) described unsanitary conditions for water such dirty coolers (debris, insects, vermin) and harmful contaminants in the water (E. Coli, H.Pylori, arsenic, lead).
- The majority of participants (60%) reported that they did not have access to a cup. Without a cup, some use unsanitary alternative like their hands or other random objects to hold water or hold ice taken from the coolers.

"The water is contaminated with heavy metals, dirt, and excessive amounts of arsenic."

ACCESS TO ICE

- A third of participants (34%) reported not having access to ice.
- A significant number of incarcerated persons (17%) also reported they weren't receiving ice due to broken ice machines.

"Limited ice water during extreme heat due to ice machine failure."

SHOWERS

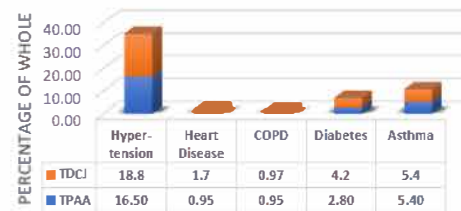
- Nearly a quarter (22%) reported having experienced broken showers.
- 24% described them as having low-water pressure.
- In 2020, 40% reported not having access to "cool down" showers.

RESPITE

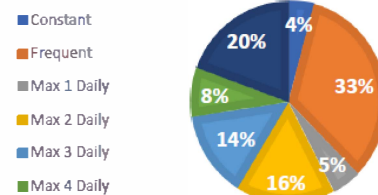
Respite areas are for incarcerated persons to rest and cool off at any time when the heat index is above 90 degrees.

- Close to half (43%) reported having been denied access to respite areas.

CHRONIC ILLNESS



WATER ACCESS



GRIEVANCES

- About a third (32%) reported having filed a heat-related grievance. Most who filed a grievance (59%) contested the response by filing another.
- 16% of those who reported filing a grievance had not yet received a response.
- Nine participants wrote into the survey that they feared retaliation or had directly experienced retaliation for writing a grievance.

"I have recently been retaliated on by an officer for asking him to wear his mask and am in fear of further retaliation if I make too much noise."

Survey data collection efforts by TPAA began in Fall of 2018 and continued through 2020. A total of 315 surveys about experiences with heat impact to persons incarcerated within TDCJ units were analyzed in 2020 through a partnership with Dr. J. Carlee Purdum, a Research Professor at the Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center at Texas A&M University.