

Climate Change



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Climate change is any long-term significant change in the “average weather” that a given region experiences. Average weather may include average temperature, precipitation and wind patterns. In recent usage, especially in the context of environmental policy, the term *climate change* often refers to changes in modern climate (global warming).

Climate change can be caused by dynamic process on Earth, external forces including variations in sunlight intensity, and more recently by human activities. Current studies indicate that radiative forcing by greenhouse gases is the primary cause of global warming. The biggest factor of present concern is the increase in CO₂ levels due to emissions from fossil fuel combustion, followed by aerosols, which exert a cooling effect, and cement manufacture. Other factors, including land use, ozone depletion, animal agriculture and deforestation, also affect climate.²

Increasing global temperature will cause sea level to rise, and is expected to increase the intensity of extreme weather events and to change the amount and pattern of precipitation. Other effects of global warming include changes in agricultural yields, trade routes, glacier retreat, species extinctions and increases in the ranges of disease vectors.³

¹ “It Melts”, **Manitoba Wildlands**, http://manitobawildlands.org/images/it_melts_sm.jpg

² “Climate Change”, **Wikipedia**, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change

³ “Global Warming”, **Wikipedia**, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming

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