

CLIMATE FACTS

Climate change is likely to be worse than predicted

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It is not an exaggeration to say that the next 10 years will define our future on this planet.

The IPCC has warned that exceeding 1.5C warming will push us into "a highly uncertain world" - adding that "the current global commitments are not sufficient to prevent temperature rise above 2C, let alone 1.5C. A 2C increase would result in the average UK temperature during summer's hottest month increasing by about six degrees to 27C.

[London could feel as hot as Barcelona by 2050](#), with Edinburgh's climate more like Paris, Leeds feeling like Melbourne and Cardiff like Montevideo. London could suffer from the type of extreme drought that hit Barcelona in 2008 - when it was forced to import drinking water from France at a cost of £20 million

[Annual global temperature is likely to be at least 1°C warmer](#) than preindustrial levels (defined as the 1850-1900 average) in each of the coming 5 years to 2025 and is very likely to be within the range 0.91 – 1.59°C.

The critical issue is whether, and how soon, we reach some of the major climate 'tipping points'. These include:

- the melting of polar icecaps and glaciers. These act as reflectors, bouncing some of the sun's heat back out to space. When melted, sea ice will become dark ocean and absorb heat instead. Melting ice could be responsible for several metres increase in sea levels over the next century. [Arctic sea ice extent averaged for December 2020 was the third lowest in the satellite record](#)
- the melting of permafrost. This will result in the release of huge amounts of methane (an even more dangerous greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide) - and accelerate planetary warming. Scientists say they have found [evidence that frozen methane deposits in the Arctic Ocean have started to be released](#) over a large area of the continental slope off the East Siberian coast.
- the loss of forest cover. This occurs because of over-exploitation by humans and by natural change and fire. As temperatures increase, rain forest cover in Africa, Asia and South America will dry out and will become more prone to major fires.

CLIMATE OPINIONS

There is overwhelming support for more action

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[The biggest ever global survey on climate change](#), in December 2020, has found that almost two-thirds of the 1.2 million people asked think it is a global emergency. Italy and the UK topped the poll with 81% believing that there is a climate emergency.

The government should be more radical and put in place serious policies to fight the climate crisis with the same urgency as it has to coronavirus, voters believe.

A new survey by pollsters Opinium found [48 per cent of the public agree that the government should respond "with the same urgency to climate change as it has with Covid-19"](#), with just 28 per cent saying it shouldn't.

Young people and the better educated are more likely to believe in climate change and be concerned about the consequences, [according to the 35th British Social Attitude survey](#).

As the government unveils their ambitious recovery plans in light of the coronavirus crisis, new data by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Conservative Environment Network (CEN), shows [more than half of Brits want to see these plans involving measures that tackle pollution and climate change](#). The survey reveals that 69% of Brits would view a failure to tackle pollution and climate change in a post-coronavirus recovery plan as 'a sign that the government has the wrong priorities.'

The concerns can be seen in the significant increase in public protest. From the Greta Thunberg inspired 'school strikes for the climate' to the non-violent direct action of Extinction Rebellion, these are bringing the issue to the public's and politicians' attention. That pressure and activism is increasingly directed at private companies - including banks, investors, staff [and their charitable sponsorships](#). Being involved in the fossil fuel industry or other environmentally damaging activities is becoming more uncomfortable in the hot house of public opinion.

Greta continues to press the case for urgent action at the highest level and gets great traction with the media. [Her latest speech to the 2021 World Economic Forum](#) is scathing of political and corporate responses to the crisis.

FURTHER READING

