

What is Climate Change?

Gases in the earth's atmosphere naturally trap heat from the sun creating a suitable climate on earth to sustain plant and animal life – including human life. These gases are known as greenhouse gases. Over time, humans have been releasing additional greenhouse gases – in particular carbon dioxide (CO₂), into the atmosphere through processes such as fossil fuel power generation. The additional gases in the atmosphere result in more of the sun's heat being trapped around the earth, causing the earth's temperature to rise and the climate on earth to change. This climate change has the potential to significantly impact the way we live for example, by increasing temperatures and changing rainfall patterns.

The status of this climate change is analysed by many organizations around the world, the well -known of which is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC, which was set up in 1988 by the United Nations, in their latest climate change assessment report, concluded that global CO₂ emissions need to be halved between 2010 and 2050 if we are to stand a chance of keeping global temperature increase to below 2°C – the internationally agreed temperature beyond which the impacts of climate change become significant.