

Why half a degree of global warming is a big deal

The Earth has already warmed 1 degree Celsius since the 19th century. Now a major new United Nations report has looked at the consequences of jumping to 1.5 or 2 degree Celsius.

Half a degree may not sound like much. But as the report **details**, even that much warming could expose **tens of millions** more people worldwide to **life-threatening** heat waves, water shortages and coastal flooding. Half a degree may mean the difference between a world with coral reefs and **Arctic** summer sea ice and a world without them.

detail 详述

tens of millions 数千万的

life-threatening 威胁生命的

Arctic 北极的; 极寒的

The report also warns that vulnerable areas, like many African countries and small island nations, may struggle to cope with multiple impacts. **Crop failures**, heat waves and the expansion of **malaria**-carrying mosquitoes **compound** when they occur together.

crop failure 作物歉收

malaria 疟疾

compound 恶化; 加重; 和解; 妥协

These dangers are no longer remote or **hypothetical**. At current rates of warming, the world will likely cross the 1.5 degree threshold between 2030 and 2052, well within the lifetime of most adults and children alive today.

hypothetical 假设的

And 1.5 degrees is a **best-case scenario**. Without an extremely rapid, and perhaps unrealistic, global push to zero out **fossil fuel** emissions and remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, 2 degrees or higher this century looks more likely.

best-case 最佳情况的

scenario 设想; 情节

fossil fuel 化石燃料

worst-case scenario 最坏情况

“My view is that 2 degrees is *aspirational* and 1.5 degree is *ridiculously* aspirational” said Gary Yohe, an environmental economist at Wesleyan University. “They are good targets to aim for, but we need to face the fact that we might not hit them and start thinking more seriously about what a 2.5 degree or 3 degree world might look like.”

aspirational 雄心壮志的

ridiculously 荒谬地