

Multidimensional Analysis of Ice Mass Loss

"Exploring Trends and Forecasting using Advanced Analytical Techniques"

Aayushi Rajput

Boise State University

Boise, ID, USA

aayushirajput@u.boisestate.edu

Sharadha Kasiviswanathan

Boise State University

Boise, ID, USA

sharadhakasivisw@u.boisestate.edu

Abstract

Ice mass loss from Greenland and Antarctica is a significant contributor to global sea-level rise, with profound implications for ecosystems, human settlements, and climate systems. This study investigates the complex interactions between ice mass anomalies and global ocean mass variability over a two-decade period (2002–2024) using data from NASA's GRACE/GRACE-FO missions. The research integrates machine learning, statistical modeling, and time series forecasting to analyze trends, identify patterns, and predict future changes.

Advanced regression models, clustering algorithms, and time series techniques were employed to quantify relationships, uncover regional and seasonal variability, and forecast long-term impacts. This multidimensional approach provides a deeper understanding of ice mass loss dynamics and their influence on global ocean systems. The study emphasizes the critical role of data-driven insights in addressing climate challenges and supports the development of mitigation strategies for rising sea levels.

By combining state-of-the-art methodologies with robust datasets, this research offers unique contributions to climate science and policy development, providing actionable insights into the mechanisms driving global sea-level rise and the broader impacts of climate change.

Keywords

Ice Mass Loss and Sea-Level Rise, Climate Change Analysis, Machine Learning Models, Time Series and Clustering, GRACE/GRACE-FO Data

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1 Introduction

The loss of ice mass in Greenland and Antarctica is a critical driver of global sea-level rise, posing substantial threats to coastal communities and ecosystems worldwide. As climate change accelerates, understanding the patterns and impacts of ice mass loss has become an urgent priority for scientists and policymakers. This research seeks to explore the relationship between ice mass anomalies and global ocean mass variability, leveraging advanced data analysis and machine learning techniques.

Spanning two decades (2002–2024), this study uses datasets from NASA's GRACE/GRACE-FO missions, which provide detailed measurements of changes in polar ice mass and their effects on global sea levels. A multidimensional approach that combines regression models, clustering algorithms, and time series forecasting is used to analyze trends, uncover regional and seasonal patterns, and predict future ocean mass changes.

By integrating cutting-edge methodologies with robust datasets, this project provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between ice mass loss and ocean variability. The findings aim to support climate change research and inform strategies for mitigating the impacts of rising sea levels. Through this study, we address a critical knowledge gap, offering actionable insights into one of the most pressing challenges of the modern era.

- **Motivation** : Rising sea levels and the accelerating loss of polar ice are among the most urgent challenges of climate change. Understanding the mechanisms driving these changes and forecasting their future trends are essential for mitigation and adaptation strategies. This project is motivated by the need to uncover hidden patterns in ice mass loss and ocean variability, leveraging modern data-driven methods to gain actionable insights.
- **Objectives** : The primary objectives of this research are:
 - (1) Analyze trends in ice mass loss for Greenland and Antarctica over the last two decades.
 - (2) Establish correlations between ice mass anomalies and global ocean mass variability.
 - (3) Identify regional and seasonal patterns using clustering algorithms.
 - (4) Forecast future changes in ocean mass using advanced time series models.
 - (5) Contribute data-driven insights for climate change research and policy making.
- **Relevance** : This research addresses a critical gap in understanding the complex relationships between polar ice mass loss and global sea level rise. By integrating machine learning and statistical analysis, the study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of climate change, helping researchers,

polymakers, and environmentalists in devising effective mitigation strategies.

- **Approach** : The study adopts a multidisciplinary approach by combining robust datasets with advanced analytical techniques:
 - (1) **Data Collection and Preprocessing** : Leveraging datasets from NASA's GRACE/GRACE-FO missions, covering April 2002–April 2024, and standardizing them for analysis.
 - (2) **Exploratory Analysis** : Conducting visualizations and anomaly detection to understand the temporal and regional characteristics of the data.
 - (3) **Machine Learning and Statistical Models** : Applying regression, clustering, and time series forecasting methods to identify trends, correlations, and future projections.
 - (4) **Evaluation** : Using metrics such as mean absolute error (MAE), root mean square error (RMSE) and correlation coefficients to validate model performance.

2 Models Used

The analysis of ice mass loss and its impact on global ocean mass variability required the use of diverse models tailored to address specific aspects of the problem. This section provides a detailed overview of the models employed, their theoretical foundations, and their applications within the context of this research.

2.1 Regression Models

- **Linear Regression** Linear regression analysis is probably the simplest and most popular way to measure the relationships between continuous predictor and response variables.[7] It assumes a linear relationship and fits a straight line, minimizing the sum of squared residuals. The simplicity of Linear Regression makes it a foundational model in data analysis.
- **Polynomial Regression** Polynomial Regression is a model used when the response variable is non-linear, i.e., the scatter plot gives a non-linear or curvilinear structure.[9] This model provided a better fit for the data, particularly when trends exhibited curvature or acceleration in ice mass loss.
- **Random Forest Regression** Random Forest is an ensemble learning method that constructs multiple decision trees and aggregates their predictions. Each tree is trained on a random subset of data, making the model robust against over fitting and capable of capturing complex, non-linear patterns. This model was particularly effective in predicting ice mass anomalies by leveraging intricate dependencies in the data.
- **Decision Tree Regression** A Decision Tree is constructed from nodes which represent circles and the branches are represented by the segments that connect the nodes.[2] Decision Tree Regression splits data into subsets based on feature conditions, forming a tree structure where each leaf represents a prediction. While simpler than Random Forest, it offered interpretable predictions and helped identify key splits in the data trends.
- **Multivariate Regression** Multivariate Regression examines the relationship between multiple independent variables and a dependent variable. This model was applied to quantify

the combined impact of Greenland and Antarctica's ice mass loss on global ocean mass variability.

- **Ridge and Lasso Regression** The most popular form of regularized regression is Ridge Regression, which places a constraint on the sum of squares of the coefficients weights through a constraint on the p coefficients. Ridge Regression introduces an L_2 penalty to shrink coefficients, reducing multicollinearity and overfitting. The lasso regression technique tries to produce a sparse solution. It employs an L_1 penalty, which can shrink some coefficients to zero, effectively performing feature selection. Both models provide robust predictions in the presence of multicollinearity.
- **XGBoost (Extreme Gradient Boosting)** XGBoost is an advanced ensemble learning algorithm designed to optimize prediction accuracy by combining multiple decision trees through gradient boosting. It minimizes residual errors iteratively, incorporates regularization techniques to prevent overfitting, and handles large datasets efficiently through parallelization. XGBoost was used to predict ice mass loss trends for Greenland and Antarctica. Its ability to model complex, non-linear relationships made it ideal for capturing the intricate dynamics of polar ice loss. XGBoost ensured robust and accurate forecasts, contributing significantly to the study's objective of understanding and projecting the impacts of ice mass changes on global systems.

2.2 Clustering Algorithms

- **K-Means Clustering** K-Means is an unsupervised learning algorithm that partitions data into a predefined number of clusters by minimizing the intra-cluster variance. It was used to group data points based on similarities in seasonal and regional behaviors of ice mass anomalies, providing insights into recurring patterns.
- **Hierarchical Clustering** Hierarchical cluster analysis produces a unique set of nested categories or clusters by sequentially pairing variables, clusters, or variables and clusters. At each step, beginning with the correlation matrix, all clusters and unclustered variables are tried in all possible pairs, and that pair producing the highest average intercorrelation within the trial cluster is chosen as the new cluster.[4] It uses either a bottom-up (agglomerative) or top-down (divisive) approach to form clusters. This method revealed nested relationships in the data, offering a deeper understanding of variability across regions and seasons.
- **Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM)** A GMM is an unsupervised clustering technique that forms ellipsoidal shaped clusters based on probability density estimations using the Expectation-Maximization.[8] Unlike KMeans, GMM assigns probabilities to each data point for belonging to a cluster, enabling the identification of overlapping patterns. This flexibility made it particularly useful for datasets with complex structures.

2.3 Cross-Correlation

Cross correlation is a standard method of estimating the degree to which two series are correlated.[3] Cross-Correlation quantifies

the similarity between two time-series datasets as a function of their lag. It is widely used to identify lead-lag relationships, helping understand temporal dependencies between variables.

2.4 Time Series Forecasting Models

- **ARIMA (AutoRegressive Integrated Moving Average)** The Box-Jenkins Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) methodology is well established in the statistical literature.[6] The ARIMA modeling is essentially an exploratory data-oriented approach that has the flexibility of fitting an appropriate model which is adapted from the structure of the data itself.[6] It combines three components: autoregressive terms that model the relationship between an observation and its past values, differencing to achieve stationarity, and moving average terms that model the relationship between an observation and past forecast errors.
- **SARIMA (Seasonal AutoRegressive Integrated Moving Average)** Box et al. (1967) modified ARIMA methodology to account for seasonality, and developed a multiplicative form of Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model to define series containing seasonal patterns with periods (seasonal length) which is commonly known as SARIMA.[5] The SARIMA time series model has a general multiplicative form, SARIMA(p,d,q)x(P, D, Q)s (Hipel and McLeod 1994).[5] SARIMA (Seasonal ARIMA) extends ARIMA by incorporating seasonal components, enabling it to handle periodic patterns in data effectively.
- **Prophet** PROPHET is a procedure for forecasting time series data that was created by Facebook's Core Data Science team.[1] It aims to be able to forecast 'at scale', meaning PROPHET wants to be the forecasting tool that is automated in nature, giving more ease of use in tuning time series methods and enabling analysts from any background or people with little to (possibly) no prior knowledge in forecasting to be able to forecast successfully.[1]. Its automation and interpretability make it particularly suitable for handling noisy data with irregular seasonal patterns.

3 Methodology

- (1) **Data Acquisition and Preprocessing** This study utilized datasets from NASA's GRACE/GRACE-FO missions, capturing ice mass loss for Greenland and Antarctica and global ocean mass variability. Preprocessing steps included:
 - **Cleaning** : Missing values were filled using forward-fill techniques to maintain temporal continuity.
 - **Standardization** : Features were normalized to ensure consistency across models.
 - **Transformation** Temporal data was converted to date-time format for time-series analysis.
 - **Combining Datasets** Greenland and Antarctica ice loss data were merged with global ocean mass variability to enable comprehensive multivariate analysis.
- (2) **Exploratory Data Analysis** EDA methods included:
 - **Statistical Summaries** : To understand data distributions.

- **Time-Series Visualizations** : Time-series plots highlighted trends in ice mass and ocean variability.
 - **Anomaly Detection** : Uncertainty visualizations flagged potential data inconsistencies.
- (3) **Correlation Analysis** The relationships between ice mass loss and ocean mass variability were quantified using:
 - **Regression Models** : Linear and Multivariate Regression analyzed key relationships.
 - **Regularization** : Ridge and Lasso Regression improved model stability.
 - **Cross-Correlation** : Lead-lag relationships were identified.
 - (4) **Clustering Analysis** Clustering algorithms identified patterns in ice mass loss:
 - **K-Means and Hierarchical Clustering** : Grouped data by seasonal and regional trends.
 - **Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM)** : Probabilistic clustering handled overlapping patterns.
 - (5) **Predictive Modelling** Predictive models captured and forecasted trends in ice mass loss:
 - **Regression Models** : Linear, Polynomial, Random Forest, and XGBoost captured and predicted ice mass loss trends.
 - (6) **Time-Series Forecasting** Time-series forecasting models projected long-term changes in global ocean mass:
 - **ARIMA and SARIMA** : Modeled trends and seasonal components.
 - **Prophet** : Provided interpretable forecasts by decomposing data into trends and seasonality.
 - (7) **Model Evaluation** Model performance was assessed using appropriate metrics:
 - **Regression Metrics** : MAE, MSE, RMSE, R^2 .
 - **Clustering metrics** : Silhouette Score, Calinski-Harabasz Index, Davies-Bouldin Index.
 - **Forecasting Metrics** : MAPE, RMSE, R^2 .

4 Experiments and Discussions

- (1) **Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)** :
 - **Experiments** : EDA involved statistical summaries, time-series visualizations from the Figures 1 and 2, and anomaly detection to understand the structure of the data. Line plots highlighted declining trends in Greenland and Antarctica's ice mass, while uncertainty visualizations flagged potential outliers for closer inspection.
 - **Discussions** : EDA revealed declining trends in ice mass for both Greenland and Antarctica, with Greenland exhibiting higher variability as shown in the Figures 3 and 4. Minimal anomalies were detected, ensuring robust data integrity for subsequent analyses.
- (2) **Comparative Analysis** :
 - **Experiments** : Regression models—Linear, Polynomial, Random Forest, and XGBoost—were applied to analyze and compare ice mass loss trends. Linear Regression served as a baseline, while Polynomial Regression captured non-linear patterns. Ensemble models like Random Forest as shown in the Figure 5 and XGBoost provided advanced predictions by capturing complex interactions.

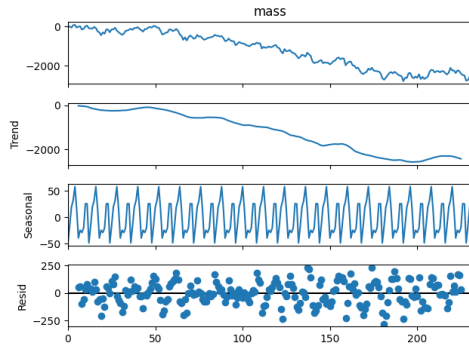


Figure 1: Time Series Decomposition - Antarctica

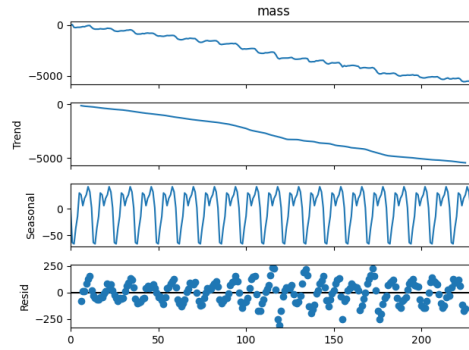


Figure 2: Time Series Decomposition - Greenland

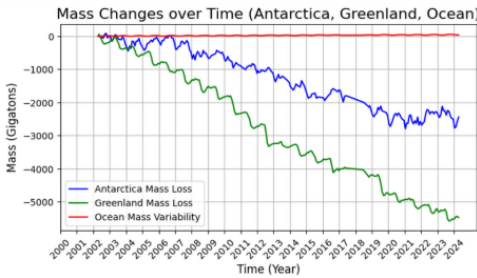


Figure 3: EDA - Mass Changes Over Time

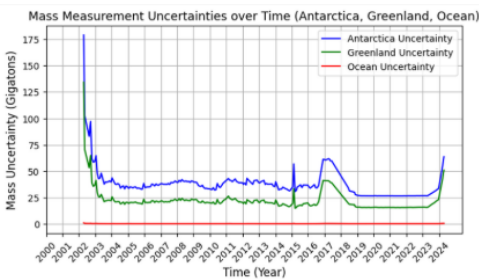


Figure 4: EDA - Mass Measurement Uncertainties Over Time

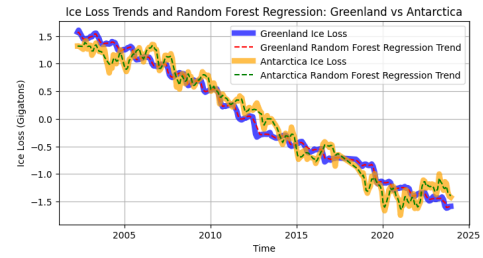


Figure 5: Random Forest Regression

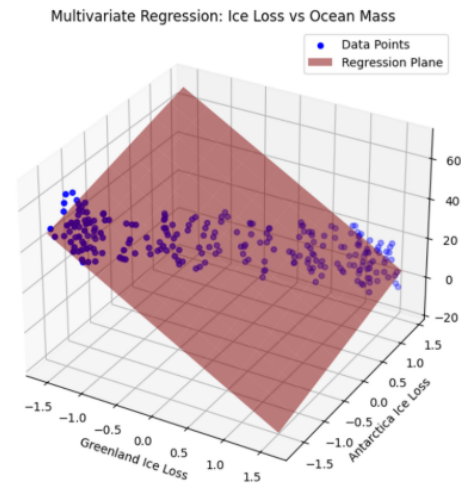


Figure 6: Multivariate Regression

- **Discussions** : Greenland showed greater interannual variability in ice mass loss compared to Antarctica. Random Forest and XGBoost outperformed Linear and Polynomial Regression, highlighting the significance of ensemble methods in capturing non-linear climate patterns.

(3) Correlation Analysis :

- **Experiments** : The relationship between ice mass loss and global ocean mass variability was analyzed using Multivariate Regression which can be observed from the Figure 6 and regularized Ridge and Lasso techniques to handle multicollinearity. Cross-Correlation explored temporal dependencies, identifying lagged effects between ice mass and ocean mass changes.
- **Discussions** : Strong correlations were observed between ice mass loss and global ocean mass variability. Greenland's ice mass changes had a slightly earlier and stronger influence on ocean mass, as identified through Cross-Correlation. These findings reinforce the interconnectness of polar ice dynamics and sea-level rise.

(4) Clustering Analysis :

- **Experiments** : K-Means, Hierarchical Clustering, and GMM were used to detect seasonal and regional patterns in ice mass loss. Clusters were validated using Silhouette Score, Calinski-Harabasz Index, and Davies-Bouldin Index to

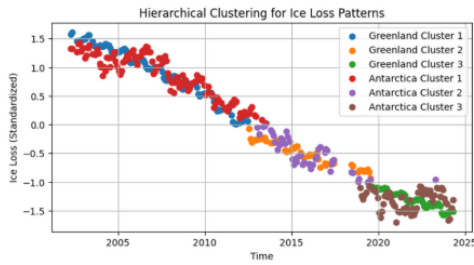


Figure 7: Hierarchical Clustering

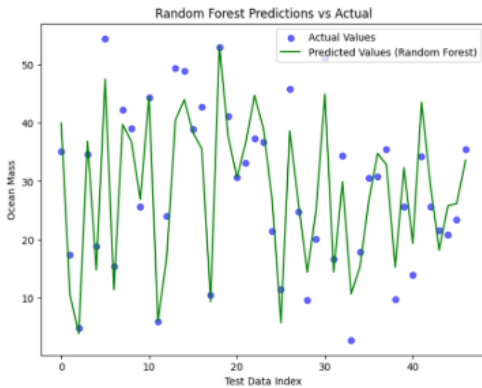


Figure 8: Random Forest Prediction

ensure meaningful separations. Dendrograms from Hierarchical Clustering revealed nested relationships.

- **Discussions** : Clustering revealed three distinct seasonal patterns, with Greenland showing pronounced variability. GMM excelled in handling overlapping clusters which can be observed in the Figure7, while dendrograms from Hierarchical Clustering offered visual insights into nested relationships.

(5) Predictive Modeling :

- **Experiments** : Random Forest and XGBoost were applied for forecasting ice mass loss trends. Performance was evaluated using MAE, MSE, and R^2 metrics. These ensemble methods excelled in handling data variability and complex dependencies.
- **Discussions** : Random Forest emerged as the most reliable predictive model for ice mass loss, with superior accuracy and robustness compared to other models. The Figure 8 depicts the Random Forest Model Prediction Vs Actual results. These results demonstrate the potential of ensemble techniques for climate forecasting.

(6) Time-Series Forecasting :

- **Experiments** : ARIMA, SARIMA, and Prophet were employed to forecast long-term ocean mass variability. SARIMA integrated seasonal components for improved accuracy, while Prophet decomposed data into trend, seasonal, and anomaly components for better interpretability.

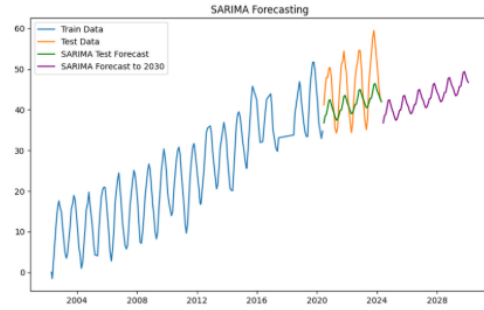


Figure 9: SARIMA Forecasting

- **Discussions** : SARIMA provided the most accurate long-term forecasts of ocean mass variability, successfully capturing seasonal and trend components. These projections indicate a steady rise in ocean mass variability, highlighting the urgency of addressing polar ice loss impacts and can be observed alongside the Figure 9.

5 Results

The analysis of Greenland and Antarctica ice mass loss, along with global ocean mass variability, provided critical insights into the performance of various models across different categories:

(1) Comparative Analysis

- Random Forest Regression outperformed other models, achieving near-perfect accuracy ($R^2 = 1.00$ for Greenland, $R^2 = 0.99$ for Antarctica) which can be observed from the Table 1. It effectively captured complex, non-linear patterns in ice mass loss trends.
- Polynomial Regression demonstrated significant improvements over Linear Regression for Greenland, but minimal gains were observed for Antarctica.

Model	MAE	MSE	R^2
Linear Regression (Greenland)	169.01	47890.54	0.98
Linear Regression (Antarctica)	173.00	45893.89	0.94
Polynomial Regression (Degree 2) (Greenland)	145.13	35053.94	0.99
Polynomial Regression (Degree 2) (Antarctica)	171.67	45805.90	0.94
Random Forest Regression (Greenland)	60.71	9415.98	1.00
Random Forest Regression (Antarctica)	69.25	7562.86	0.99
Decision Tree Regression (Greenland)	73.92	13727.79	0.99
Decision Tree Regression (Antarctica)	83.01	10009.98	0.99

Table 1: Performance metrics of regression models for ice mass loss predictions, separated by region (Greenland and Antarctica).

(2) Correlation Analysis

- Multivariate Regression showed the strongest correlation (Pearson Correlation: 0.919, $R^2 = 0.845$), effectively quantifying the relationship between ice mass loss and global ocean variability as shown in the Table 2.
- Ridge and Lasso Regression provided stable results but slightly reduced explanatory power compared to Multivariate Regression.

Model	Pearson Correlation	MSE	R ²
Linear Regression (Greenland)	-0.913561	35.207633	0.834594
Linear Regression (Antarctica)	-0.866885	52.896823	0.751489
Multivariate Regression	0.919429	32.918288	0.845349
Ridge Regression	0.918977	33.107591	0.844460
Lasso Regression	0.917452	33.711541	0.841622

Table 2: Performance metrics of regression models for ice mass loss, including Pearson Correlation, MSE, and R².

(3) Clustering Analysis

- Hierarchical Clustering achieved the best-defined clusters (Silhouette Score: 0.632, Davies-Bouldin Index: 0.420), effectively capturing seasonal and regional patterns which can be observed from the Table 3.

Model	Silhouette Score	C-H Index	D-B Index
KMeans	0.629400	2445.487800	0.474800
GMM	0.629700	2231.087900	0.457600
Hierarchical Clustering	0.631900	1850.140200	0.420200

Table 3: Clustering model evaluation metrics, including Silhouette Score, Calinski-Harabasz Index, and Davies-Bouldin Index.

- KMeans and GMM offered competitive performance, with GMM excelling in handling overlapping clusters.

(4) Predictive Modeling

- Random Forest consistently delivered the most accurate predictions for global ocean mass variability (MAE: 4.05, R² = 0.877), outperforming Linear Regression and XGBoost which is evident from the Table 4.
- XGBoost provided robust results but lagged slightly behind Random Forest in accuracy.

Model	MAE	R ²
Linear Regression	4.960094	0.785983
Random Forest	4.052119	0.877344
XGBoost	4.438482	0.821348

Table 4: Performance metrics for predictive modeling using MAE and R².

(5) Time-Series Forecasting

- SARIMA emerged as the most reliable forecasting model, accurately capturing both seasonal and trend components (MAPE: 0.120, RMSE: 6.85).
- Prophet performed better than ARIMA but was less effective than SARIMA in forecasting long-term ocean mass variability which can be inferred from the Table 5.

Model	MAPE	RMSE	R ²
ARIMA	0.156196	9.306339	-0.905872
SARIMA	0.120406	6.847024	-0.031667
Prophet	0.145253	7.167502	-0.130503

Table 5: Performance metrics for time-series forecasting models using MAPE, RMSE, and R².

6 Conclusion

This project successfully analyzed the dynamics of ice mass loss in Greenland and Antarctica and its relationship with global ocean mass variability using a comprehensive methodology combining regression, clustering, and time-series forecasting techniques. The results revealed significant insights into polar ice loss trends, their seasonal and regional variability, and their critical impact on global sea-level changes.

Random Forest Regression emerged as the most reliable model for capturing complex, non-linear interactions in ice mass loss data, outperforming simpler models like Linear and Polynomial Regression. Multivariate Regression demonstrated the strongest correlation between ice mass loss and ocean mass variability, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these systems. Clustering analyses highlighted distinct seasonal patterns, with Greenland showing greater variability, while Hierarchical Clustering provided the most well-defined groupings. SARIMA proved to be the best time-series forecasting model, accurately predicting long-term changes in ocean mass variability by incorporating seasonal components.

The study's findings underscore the importance of advanced ensemble methods and robust time-series models in climate research. The insights gained are crucial for understanding the trajectory of polar ice dynamics and their implications for global sea-level rise. This research contributes valuable knowledge for developing data-driven mitigation and adaptation strategies to address the accelerating impacts of climate change.

Future work could involve integrating additional variables, such as atmospheric and oceanic conditions, to further refine predictions and exploring newer machine learning techniques to enhance the scalability and accuracy of the models. These efforts will be instrumental in advancing our understanding of polar ice dynamics and informing global climate policy.

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