

The Impact of Anthropogenic Forcing on ENSO Amplitude

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- Drives extreme weather around the world
- Oscillation between warm and cold temperature in the Pacific Ocean
- Some events are more strong than others
- Significant effect on people: 2015-2016 event
- Major issue is prediction

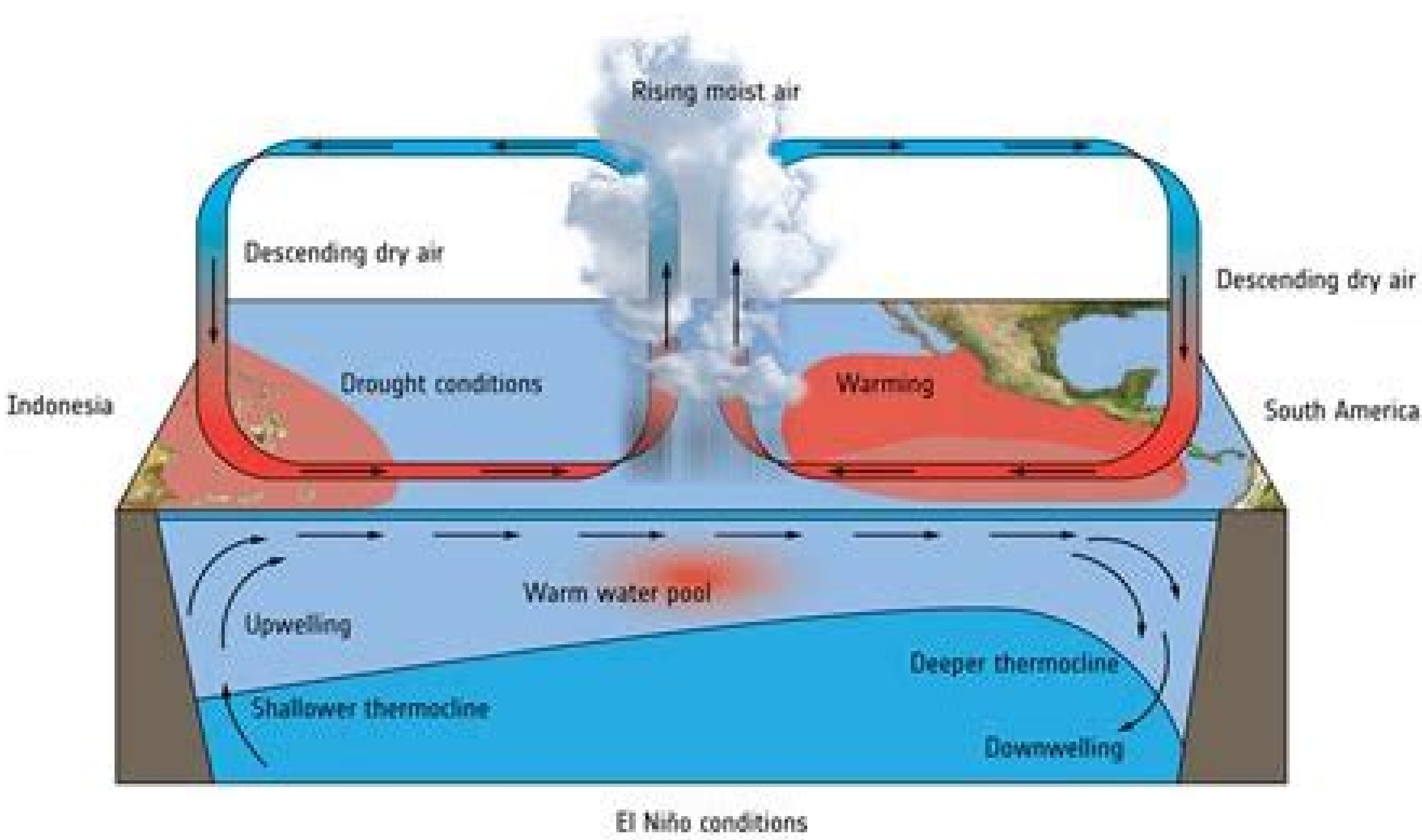


Figure 1: Changes to tropical Pacific climate during El Niño. https://www.esa.int/ESA_Multimedia/Images/2018/08/El_Nino

- Long-term change: climate change/global warming
 - Causes: greenhouse gasses, aerosols (smoke), land use, etc.
- Short-term change: climate variability
 - ENSO, seasons, AMO (Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation), etc.

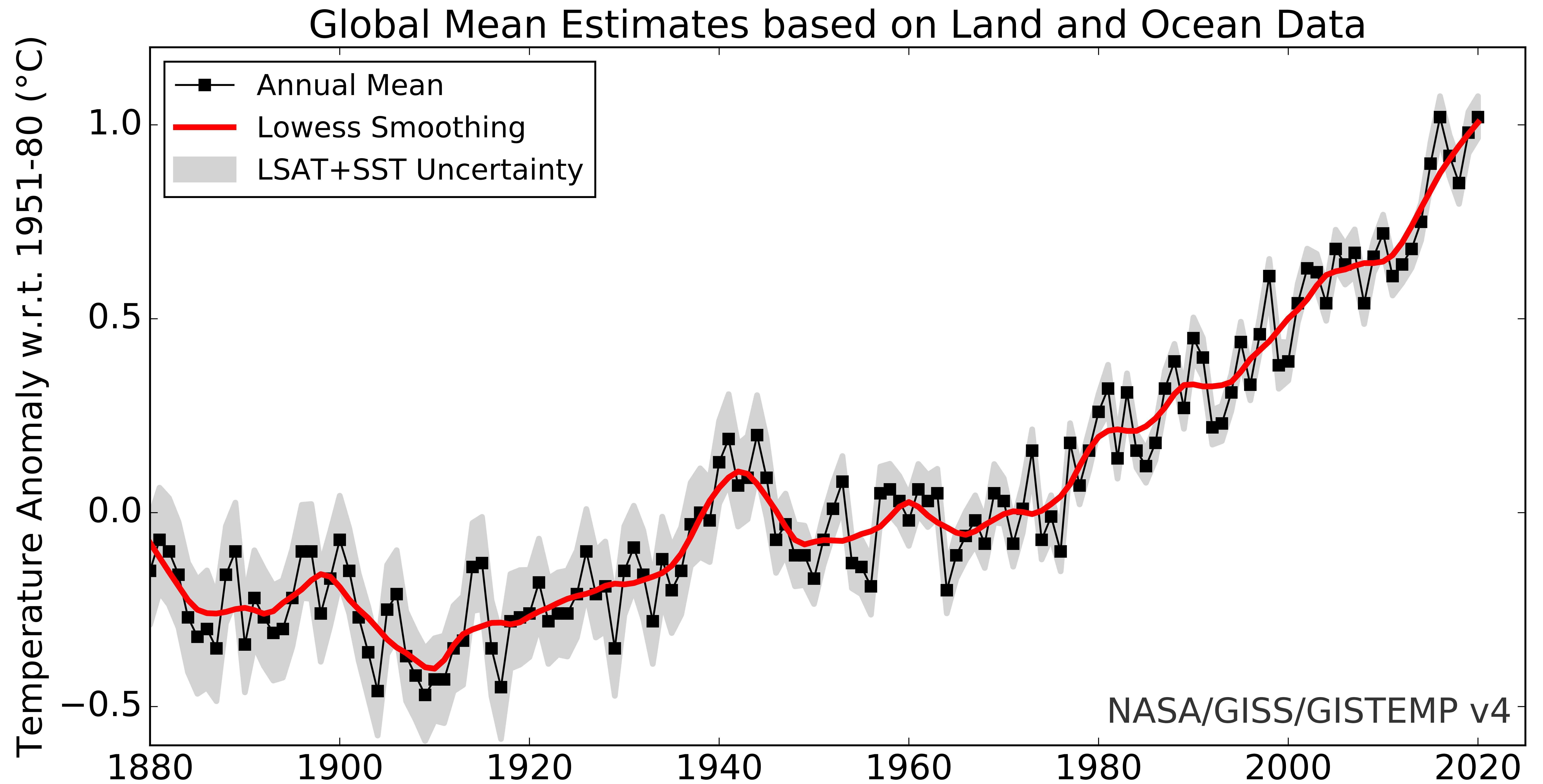


Figure 2: Global average temperature changes since 1880. Red line: smoothed average, black line: unsmoothed average. https://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/graphs_v4

- ▶ Chen et al. (2017)
 - ▶ Past studies disagree about whether ENSO will strengthen or weaken.
 - ▶ Simulation discrepancy caused by modeling of ENSO mechanics.
- ▶ Maher et al. (2018)
 - ▶ Used a large dataset of climate predictions.
 - ▶ ENSO may become stronger in the future.
- ▶ Cai et al. (2018)
 - ▶ Found that models agree by using a more flexible way of defining ENSO events
 - ▶ ENSO is strengthening because global warming is leading to higher stratification.
- ▶ Overall changes to ENSO amplitude
 - ▶ Estimate future changes to ENSO amplitude using the CESM1 dataset.
- ▶ Role of individual factors
 - ▶ Compare contributions of greenhouse gasses, aerosols, land use, biomass burning, and ozone to ENSO intensity.
- ▶ Changes to ocean structure
 - ▶ Examine changes to correlation coefficient between ENSO intensity and ocean temperature for each simulation.
- ▶ Explore hypothetical scenarios with a computer model Kay et al. (2015).
- ▶ Estimation of how the earth's climate actually works.
- ▶ Experimental group: Receives input of rising greenhouse gas and/or aerosol levels.
- ▶ Control group: Emissions fixed at levels before industrial revolution.
- ▶ How to calculate ENSO intensity in the model output?
- ▶ Step 1: Calculate sea temperature in Niño 3.4 region (5°N - 5°S, 120°-170°W) of tropical Pacific Ocean.
- ▶ Step 2: Convert temperature dataset to dataset representing change in temperature variation over time.
- ▶ Calculate variance around one point, move point forward slightly, repeat.
- ▶ Butterfly effect: Small differences in initial conditions can become big differences in end result (Lorenz, 1963).
- ▶ Each simulation by itself is inaccurate.

Repeat simulation with slightly different initial conditions.
Due to larger sample size, noise can be filtered out by calculating the mean.

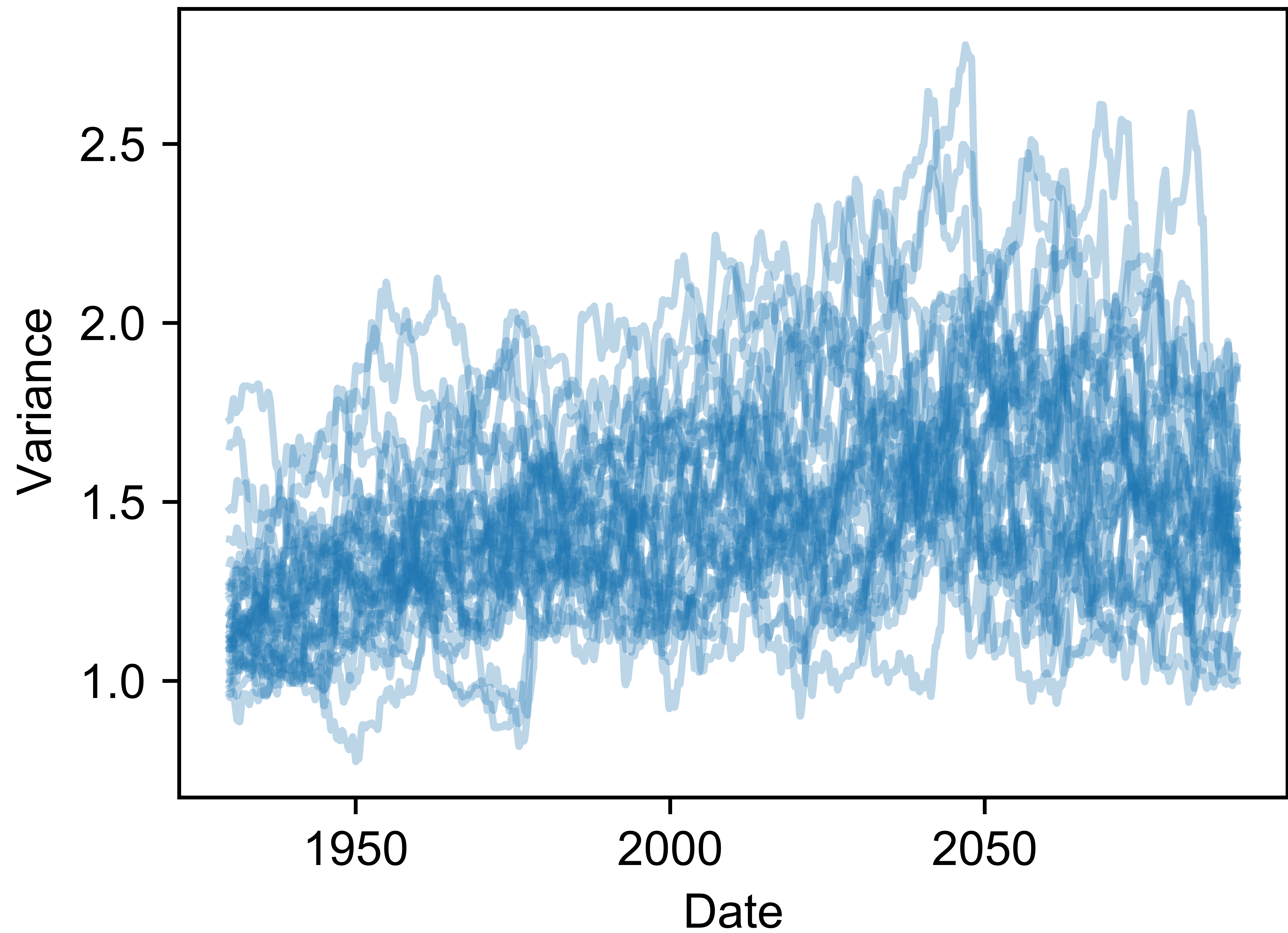


Figure 3: Nino 3.4 20-year variance for individual members in full forcing ensemble.

Calculate mean and standard error of ENSO intensity in ensemble and control.

ENSO is predicted to intensify in the 21st century!

Statistically significant: exceeds 2 standard errors.

Decreasing variance after 2060: still under investigation.

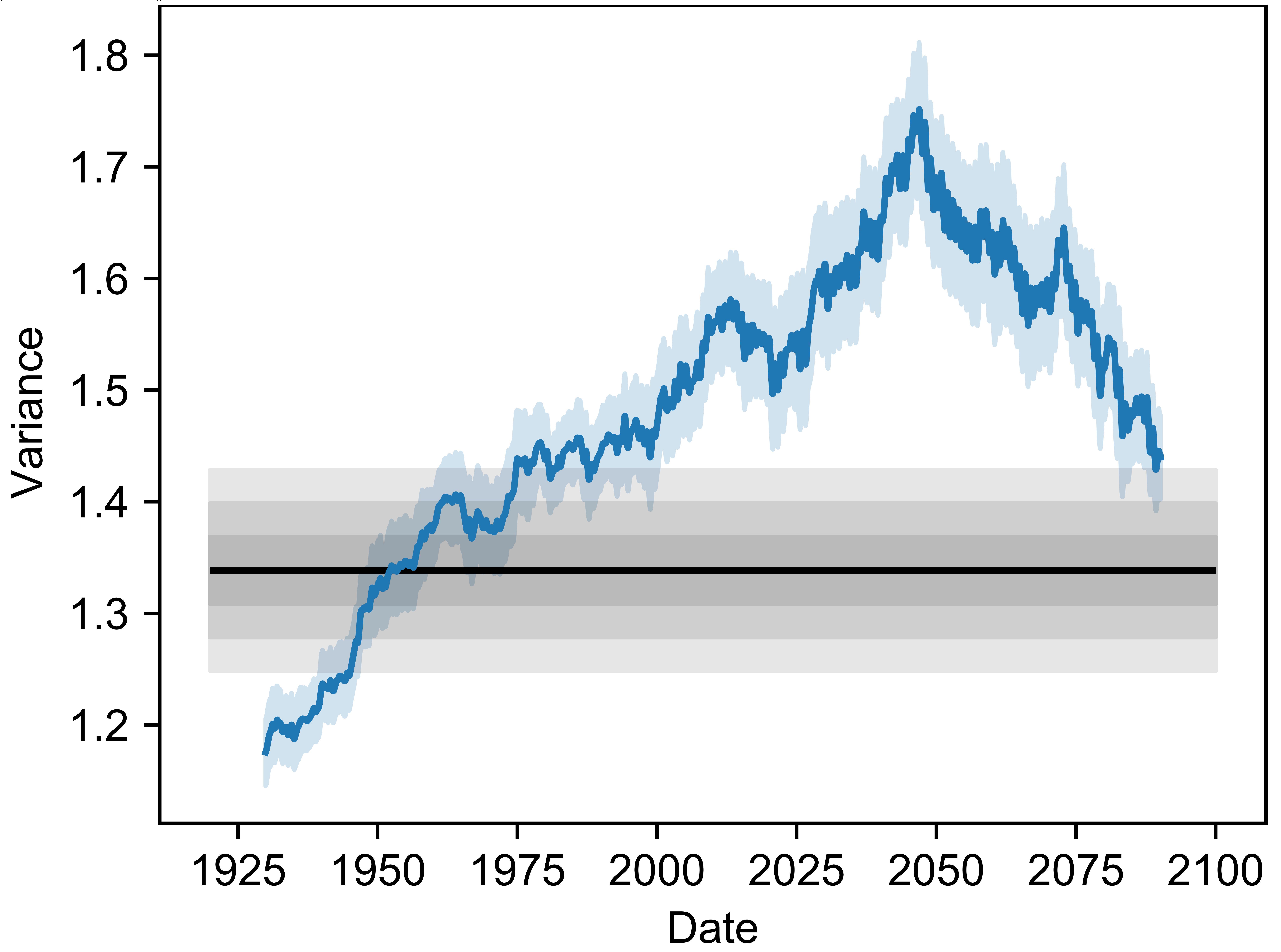


Figure 4: 20-year variance of Niño 3.4 index for fully-forced ensemble. Grey bar shows control mean and standard errors

► Why is ENSO predicted to intensify? What human impacts play the largest role?

► Factors include: Greenhouse gasses, aerosols, natural factors.

► Separate out individual influences in model output.

► Single forcing ensembles: forced by all factors except for 1.

► Subtract "all-but-one" ensembles from original "full-forcing" ensemble.

► Resulting data represents influence of only one factor.

► Greenhouse gasses and aerosols contribute to increase in variance.

► Aerosols and greenhouse gasses have same sign: disagree with previous studies (Deser et al., 2020).

► Greenhouse gasses and aerosols are both human-produced.

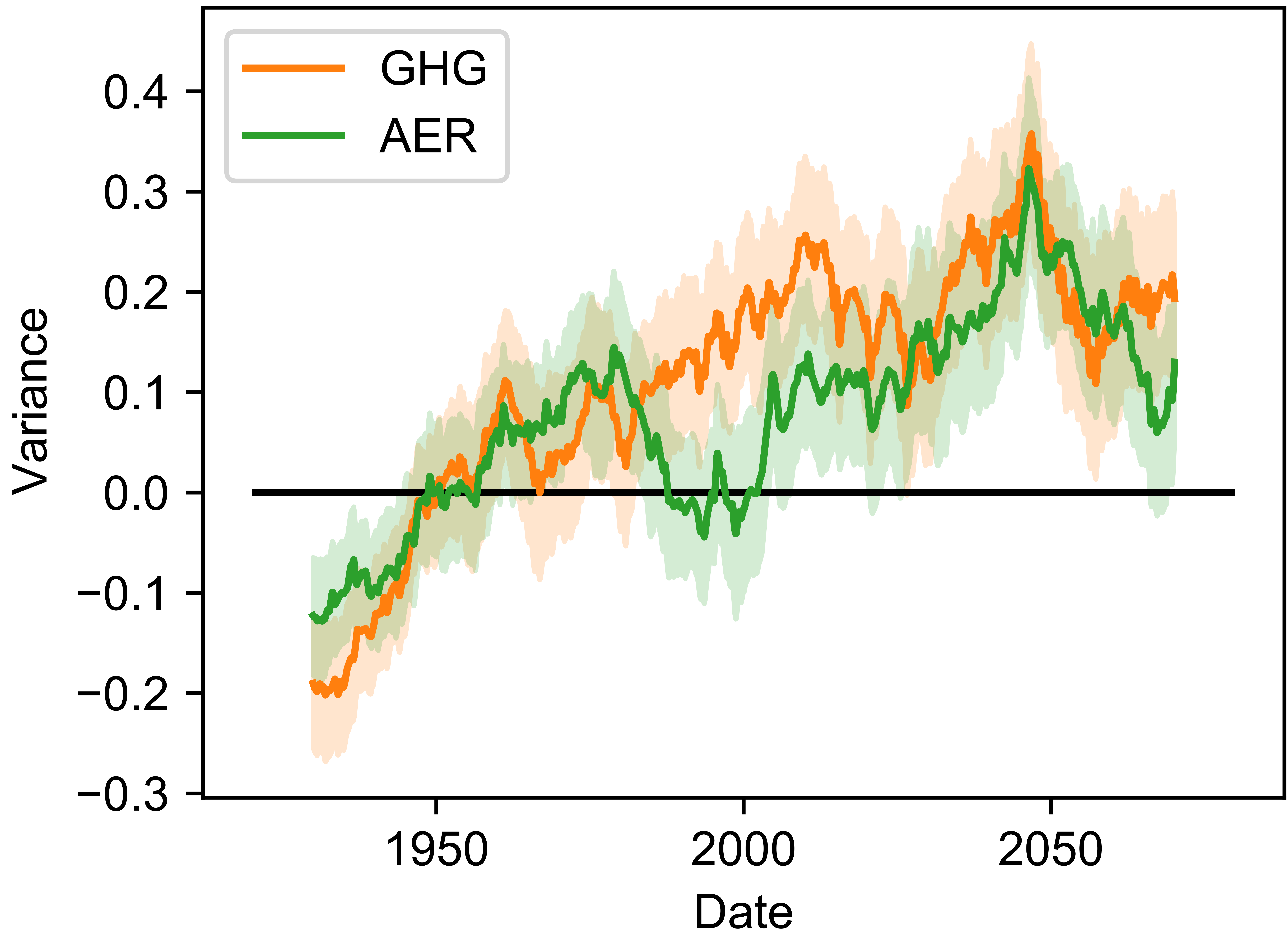


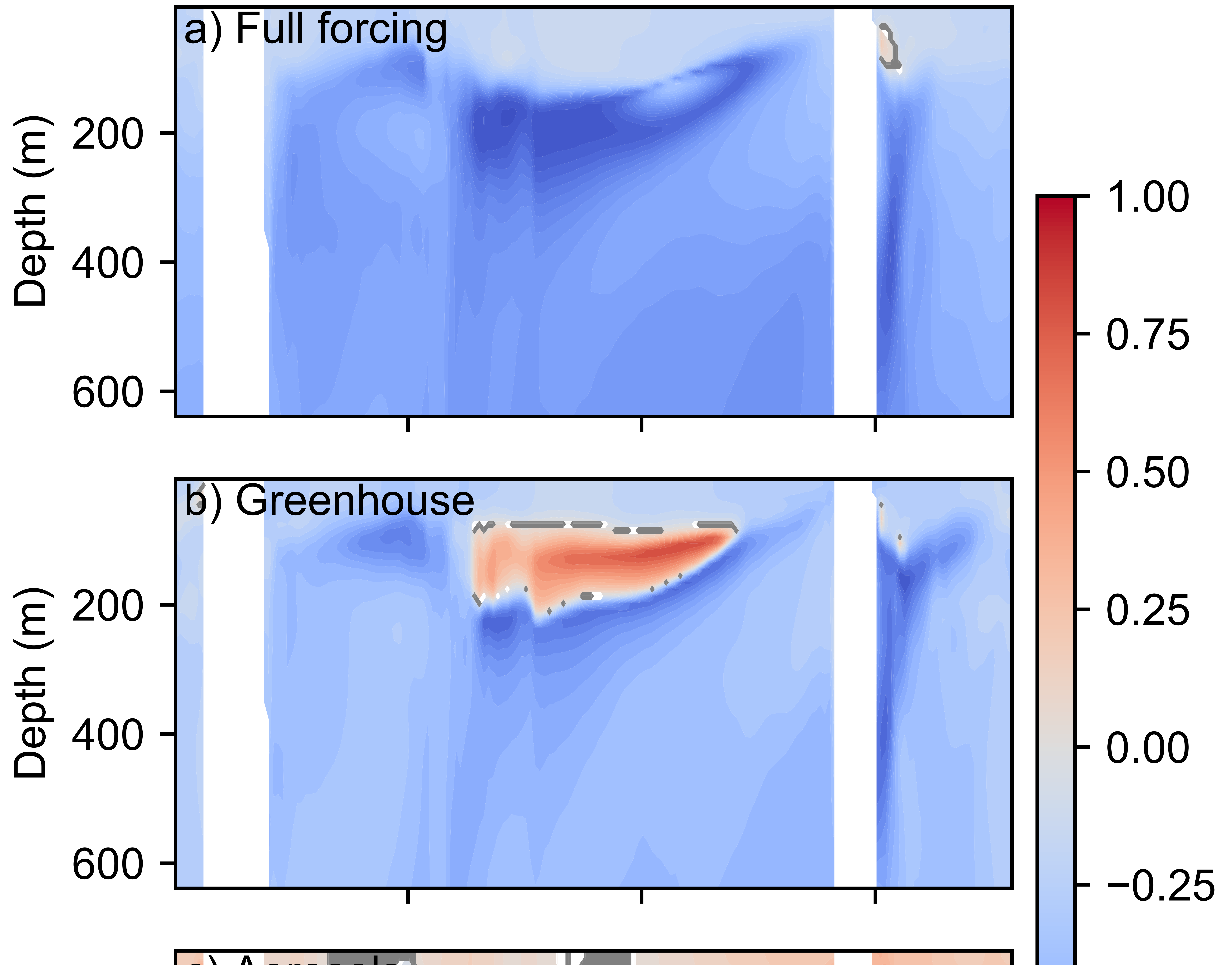
Figure 5: Influence of individual human factors. Yellow is greenhouse gasses, green is aerosols.

- ▶ Examine relationship between ocean temperature and ENSO intensity in each simulation.
- ▶ Calculate correlation coefficient between ENSO intensity and ocean temperature.
- ▶ Find correlation coefficient at each grid-point.

► Strong negative correlation in fully forced ensemble below surface.

► Positive correlation in greenhouse ensemble and weak/zero correlation in aerosols ensemble

► Rising temperatures heat different layers of ocean at different rates, modifying heat transfer.



- ▶ Predicted increase in variance
 - ▶ There is likely to be an increase in ENSO strength over the next 100 years. Agrees with Cai et al. (2018).
- ▶ Greenhouse gasses and aerosols
 - ▶ Increase is likely caused by the combined influence of greenhouse gasses and aerosols.
- ▶ Heat transfer
 - ▶ Global warming increases ENSO intensity by warming upper layers of the Pacific faster than central layers.
- ▶ Notable disagreement
 - ▶ Greenhouse gasses and aerosols both increase ENSO amplitude, in contrast to Deser et al. (2020)
- ▶ Improve prediction ability to help people prepare for increased likelihood of extreme weather.
- ▶ Reduce danger by switching to renewable energy.
- ▶ Limitations:
 - ▶ Only used one climate model.
 - ▶ Niño 3.4 index may not be fully accurate for various models (Cai et. al. 2018).
- ▶ Next steps:
 - ▶ Work with other datasets, such as the new CESM2.
 - ▶ Examine other variables to further analyze mediator process.
- ▶ This material is based upon work supported by the National Center for Atmospheric Research, which is a major facility sponsored by the National Science Foundation under Cooperative Agreement No. 1852977.
- ▶ Thank you to my teacher, my family, and my mentor!
- ▶ Role of mentor:
 - ▶ Provide raw data from his facility
 - ▶ Suggest methods and interpretations
 - ▶ Provide feedback on results
 - ▶ Make similar calculations to check student's results

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