

# Climate Alarmism



an explainer from the oregon **education** project



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Clear Thinking.  
Critical Thinking.  
Effective Thinking.

## Is activist-led “doomerism” about climate change harming kids?

The earth’s climate is undergoing meaningful change — though **not unprecedented**.<sup>1</sup> We’ve plateaued in a warming trend that has raised the **average**<sup>2</sup> global temperature 1.5° celsius since roughly 1850. It’s come in two waves. We may be entering a third.<sup>3</sup>

Recent warming correlates with a sharp increase of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere from the burning of coal, oil, and gas for the energy needed to fuel the modern economy. CO<sub>2</sub> is a greenhouse gas<sup>4</sup> that has a modest warming effect in greater concentrations. The central question is: **How much warming do you get with a doubling of CO<sub>2</sub>?**<sup>5</sup>

That’s been the key issue since debate on “global warming” began in the late 1980s.<sup>6</sup> **IPCC** models<sup>7</sup> now estimate it’s “very likely” 2.5° celsius: we’ll add 1° celsius by the end of the century when CO<sub>2</sub> is projected to have doubled from preindustrial levels.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, this *assumes* atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is the “control knob” of the earth’s climate. And that human-generated industrial emissions are the primary cause of the warming. Skeptics have good reason to challenge that, and provide disconfirming evidence.<sup>9</sup> They promote a “lukewarm” **climate realism**, adding key facts about natural variability.<sup>10</sup>

There’s been little warming over the past 25+ years despite CO<sub>2</sub> greatly increasing. The cause and effect argument is weakened by this loss of correlation. **IPCC** leaders now admit their highly publicized modeling of worst case scenarios is implausible.<sup>11</sup> There’s no evidence of increased extreme weather events or severe droughts.<sup>12</sup> The **realists** seem to have won — as a recent New York Times editorial conceded.<sup>13</sup>

**Climate change is a concern. But it’s not something to be alarmed or worried about.** Yet for decades activists have used **an inflated version of the science**<sup>14</sup> to sow fear. They’ve targeted **young people**: underdeveloped brains are much easier to fool. We now have a population of school-aged children raised to worry about their future.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 40% of high schoolers say they persistently feel sad and hopeless — up from 28% ten years ago. One fifth have seriously considered suicide. Girls are especially troubled: almost 60% feel sad and hopeless; 30%, have considered suicide. Researchers see this as the result of a new classroom narrative depicting the world they are inheriting as **bad, broken, and heading for climate disaster**.<sup>15</sup> As Arthur Brooks laments,

“Almost every day that my daughter was in high school, she was taught about the dangerous world — about bad people, dangerous forces in nature, and a bleak future for our country .... She told us about the **doom and gloom** each evening at dinner, and my wife and I could see her growing pessimism.”<sup>16</sup>

Former climate activist Lucy Biggers is now an assertive proponent of **climate realism**. She writes in a Substack post that **Climate Fear Has Done More Harm Than Good**:  
“**And don’t get me started on the fact that climate doomerism has created an epidemic of climate anxiety among young people who’ve been told they have no future. The amount of human capital that is wasted worrying about this nonsense cannot be overstated .... Climate fear hasn’t made us safer. It has only wasted our money, made energy more expensive and less reliable, and scared a generation of young people. Enough is enough.**”<sup>17</sup>

We need to think clearly, critically, and effectively about climate change. **Not worry.**

<sup>1</sup> During the Medieval Warm Period [900–1300 CE] people grew grapes in the British Isles — which is impossible today. It marked a dramatic change in the climate that came and went.

<sup>2</sup> The average temperature across the entire surface of the Earth at a given time.

<sup>3</sup> **A Very Convenient Warming: How Modest Warming and More CO<sub>2</sub> are Benefiting Humanity** by Gregory Wrightstone.

<sup>4</sup> A greenhouse gas is any gas in the Earth’s atmosphere that absorbs and re-emits infrared radiation (heat), thereby trapping heat and warming the planet — similar to how glass traps heat inside a greenhouse.

<sup>5</sup> Equilibrium Climate Sensitivity.

<sup>6</sup> **Searching for the Catastrophe Signal: The Origins of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** by Bernie Lewin.

<sup>7</sup> The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Seventh Assessment Report, per Roger Pielke Jr.

<sup>8</sup> From 280ppm to 560ppm. The current estimate is 430ppm. Climate Scientist Judith Curry and other “realists” say it’s closer to 1°.

<sup>9</sup> **Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn’t, and Why It Matters** by Steven Koonin.

<sup>10</sup> **Inconvenient Facts: The Science That Al Gore Doesn’t Want You to Know** by Gregory Wrightstone.

<sup>11</sup> “**IPCC Misled The Public For Over A Decade On Emissions**” by Michael Shellenberger.

<sup>12</sup> “**Climate Change and Disaster Losses**” by Roger Pielke Jr.

<sup>13</sup> “**Democrats Don’t Have to Campaign on Climate Change.**”

<sup>14</sup> **Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All** by Michael Shellenberger.

<sup>15</sup> **Mind the Children: How To Think About the Youth Mental Health Crisis** Edited by Naomi Schaeffer Riley & Sally Satel.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur C. Brooks, “**Don’t Teach Your Kids to Fear the World.**”

<sup>17</sup> Lucy Biggers on Substack.

## How to think about Climate Change

Climate change is a risk-management issue. We need to weigh costs *and* benefits. Left out of popular discussion is [the benefit of having more CO<sub>2</sub>](#) in the atmosphere:

- Increasing crop growth and soil moisture
- Shrinking deserts and expanding forests
- Lengthening growing seasons
- Declining cold-related mortality

More CO<sub>2</sub> has led to the [greening of the earth](#) writes geologist Gregory Wrightstone:

“Rather than being at unprecedented high levels, CO<sub>2</sub> is at one of its lowest concentrations in the long history of the Earth. Recent increases of this miracle molecule are greening the earth with an astonishing boost in the productivity of plants worldwide — an increase so dramatic that it can be seen by satellites.”<sup>17</sup>

That benefit needs to be weighed against *assumed* costs projected by the IPCC — which have been consistently **overstated** in their public pronouncements.<sup>18</sup>

Scientists agree that [the warming effect of added CO<sub>2</sub> decreases in greater concentrations](#) — contrary to some IPCC models that “run hot” expecting more.<sup>19</sup> Physicist and CO<sub>2</sub> expert William Happer uses the example of painting a barn red: it doesn’t get much “redder” the more coats you add.<sup>20</sup> CO<sub>2</sub> warms like that.

That doesn’t mean we should ignore the risks of global warming — it’s a concern. Warmer temperatures in upper and lower latitudes melt ice that raises sea level. Because much of that warming is natural, it’s difficult to predict a future scenario.<sup>21</sup> With such uncertainty, the prudent thing is to build infrastructure to avoid damage. [Not drastically reducing the use of fossil fuels in a vain attempt at zero emissions.](#)<sup>22</sup>

The [reality](#) of climate change calls for effective thinking, not [one-sided activism](#). Kids need a reason to hope. That means promoting agency, not victimhood. Agency is the degree to which you can consciously shape your own future. [Effective Altruism](#)<sup>23</sup> is a better framework for young people. Unlike climate activism, using the tools of science to *so*lve real climate-related problems is empowering.

[Climate change is a call to “wise up.”](#) Kids need to get outside and off their screens. We need to restore the vision of early environmentalists like Oregon’s Mark Hatfield.<sup>24</sup> He focused on [ecological self-determination](#): protecting lands and rivers, acting as good stewards of our natural resources — promoting [pragmatic conservation](#) efforts.

Hatfield avoided the [one-sided activism](#) dominating environmentalism today. He strove for [consilience](#)<sup>25</sup> and cooperation to successfully achieve shared goals. He championed deliberation and moderation to overcome differences and unite people across the cultural and political divide in *effective* collective action.



<sup>17</sup> *A Very Convenient Warming: How Modest Warming and More CO<sub>2</sub> are Benefitting Humanity* by Gregory Wrightstone.

See the CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition, which emphasizes the positive role of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the environment and economy.

<sup>18</sup> *Unsettled* by Steven Koonin.

<sup>19</sup> The warming effect of each molecule decreases *logarithmically*.

<sup>20</sup> *Standing Up For Science: The Life, Discoveries, and Legacy of William Happer* by Will Wilkinson.

<sup>21</sup> The IPCC “consensus” is that at least half is human-caused. That means the remainder is natural and (thus) unpredictable.

<sup>22</sup> *Canary in a Climate World: Climate Realism vs. the Net Zero Myth* edited by Ian Clark & Tom Harris.

<sup>23</sup> *Effective Altruism* is focused on using conscious, *deliberative reasoning* to determine the most effective ways to benefit others and make positive, lasting change by using the scientific method. Note: It’s important to distinguish effective altruism as a method from extant expressions of it.

<sup>24</sup> *Against the Grain: Reflections of a Rebel Republican* by Mark O. Hatfield.

<sup>25</sup> *Consilience* is the convergence or “jumping together” of different sets of facts. Those facts may represent different disciplines, interests, or worldviews.

## Explainers Clear Thinking. Critical Thinking. Effective Thinking.

Brief primers providing basic information about a particular topic, point of view, or “doctrine.” They include links to online references and resources (in the digital versions).



Rob Schläpfer is a retired social science educator who’s spent over a decade conducting classes and community conversations to bridge Oregon’s deep political divide.

A former pastor, professor, and publisher, he’s taught critical thinking, civics, and cultural studies for over four decades.

He created the Oregon Education Project to promote high-quality American Education centered on the Science of Learning.