

Changes in Temperature, Sea Level and Northern Hemisphere Snow Cover

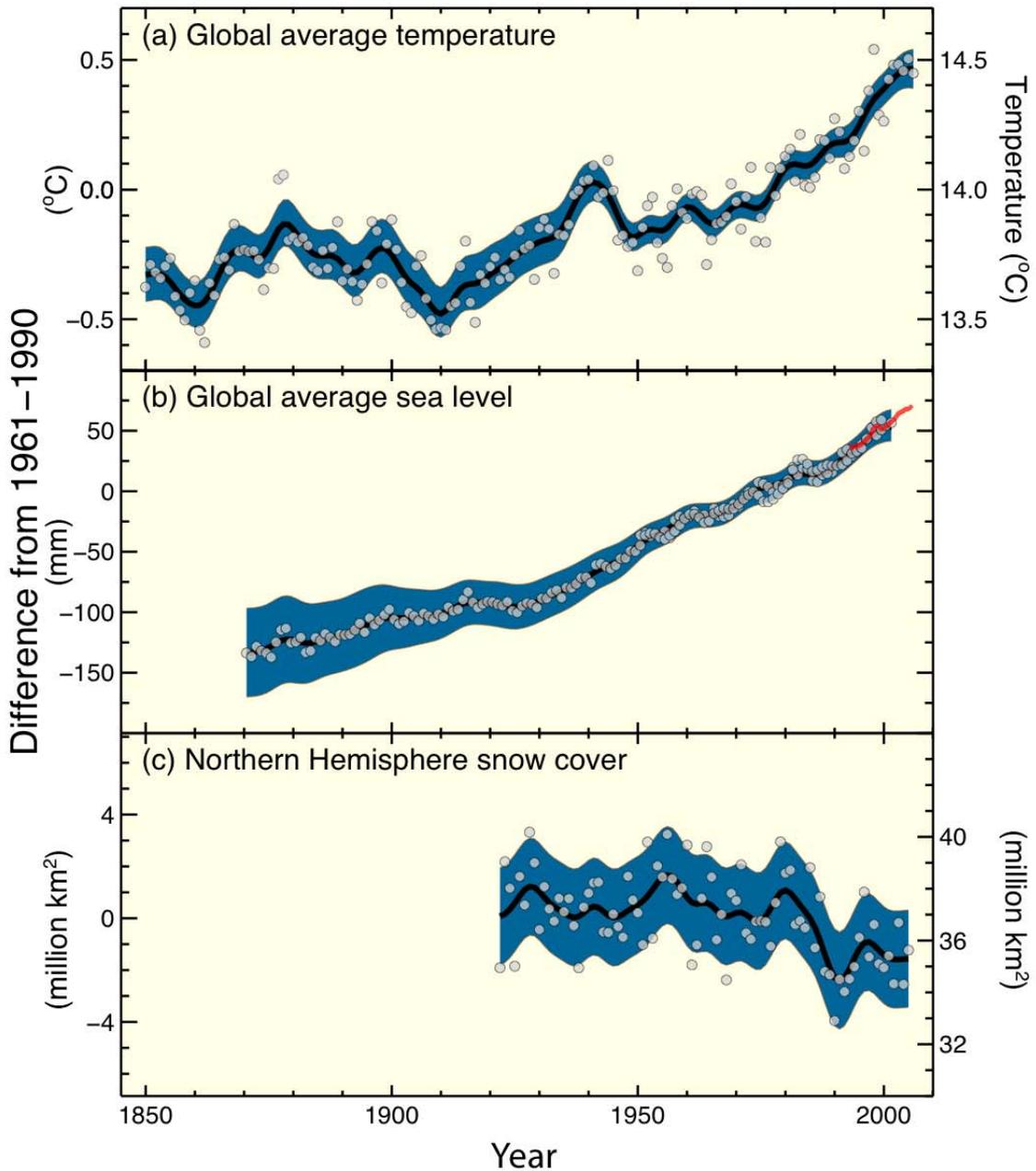


FIGURE SPM-3. Observed changes in (a) global average surface temperature; (b) global average sea level rise from tide gauge (blue) and satellite (red) data and (c) Northern Hemisphere snow cover for March–April. All changes are relative to corresponding averages for the period 1961–1990. Smoothed curves represent decadal averaged values while circles show yearly values. The shaded areas are the uncertainty intervals estimated from a comprehensive analysis of known uncertainties (a and b) and from the time series (c). {FAQ 3.1, Figure 1, Figure 4.2 and Figure 5.13}

- New analyses of balloon-borne and satellite measurements of lower- and mid-tropospheric temperature show warming rates that are similar to those of the surface temperature record and are consistent within their respective uncertainties, largely reconciling a discrepancy noted in the TAR. {3.2, 3.4}

- The average atmospheric water vapour content has increased since at least the 1980s over land and ocean as well as in the upper troposphere. The increase is broadly consistent with the extra water vapour that warmer air can hold. {3.4}
- Observations since 1961 show that the average temperature of the global ocean has increased to depths of at least 3000 m and that the ocean has been absorbing more than 80% of the heat added to the climate system. Such warming causes seawater to expand, contributing to sea level rise (see Table SPM-1). {5.2, 5.5}

Table SPM-1. Observed rate of sea level rise and estimated contributions from different sources. {5.5, Table 5.3}

Source of sea level rise	Rate of sea level rise (mm per year)	
	1961 – 2003	1993 – 2003
Thermal expansion	0.42 ± 0.12	1.6 ± 0.5
Glaciers and ice caps	0.50 ± 0.18	0.77 ± 0.22
Greenland ice sheet	0.05 ± 0.12	0.21 ± 0.07
Antarctic ice sheet	0.14 ± 0.41	0.21 ± 0.35
Sum of individual climate contributions to sea level rise	1.1 ± 0.5	2.8 ± 0.7
Observed total sea level rise	1.8 ± 0.5 ^a	3.1 ± 0.7 ^a
Difference (Observed minus sum of estimated climate contributions)	0.7 ± 0.7	0.3 ± 1.0

Table note:

^a Data prior to 1993 are from tide gauges and after 1993 are from satellite altimetry.

- Mountain glaciers and snow cover have declined on average in both hemispheres. Widespread decreases in glaciers and ice caps have contributed to sea level rise (ice caps do not include contributions from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets). (See Table SPM-1.) {4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 5.5}
- New data since the TAR now show that losses from the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica have *very likely* contributed to sea level rise over 1993 to 2003 (see Table SPM-1). Flow speed has increased for some Greenland and Antarctic outlet glaciers, which drain ice from the interior of the ice sheets. The corresponding increased ice sheet mass loss has often followed thinning, reduction or loss of ice shelves or loss of floating glacier tongues. Such dynamical ice loss is sufficient to explain most of the Antarctic net mass loss and approximately half of the Greenland net mass loss. The remainder of the ice loss from Greenland has occurred because losses due to melting have exceeded accumulation due to snowfall. {4.6, 4.8, 5.5}
- Global average sea level rose at an average rate of 1.8 [1.3 to 2.3] mm per year over 1961 to 2003. The rate was faster over 1993 to 2003, about 3.1 [2.4 to 3.8] mm per year. Whether the faster rate for 1993 to 2003 reflects decadal variability or an increase in the longer-term trend is unclear. There is *high confidence* that the rate of observed sea level rise increased from the 19th to the 20th century. The total 20th century rise is estimated to be 0.17 [0.12 to 0.22] m. {5.5}
- For 1993-2003, the sum of the climate contributions is consistent within uncertainties with the total sea level rise that is directly observed (see Table SPM-1). These estimates are based on improved satellite and *in-situ* data now available. For the period of 1961 to 2003, the sum of climate contributions is estimated to be smaller than the observed sea level rise. The TAR reported a similar discrepancy for 1910 to 1990. {5.5}

At continental, regional, and ocean basin scales, numerous long-term changes in climate have been observed. These include changes in Arctic temperatures and ice, widespread changes in precipitation amounts, ocean salinity, wind patterns and aspects of extreme weather including droughts, heavy precipitation, heat waves and the intensity of tropical cyclones¹⁰. {3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 5.2}

- Average Arctic temperatures increased at almost twice the global average rate in the past 100 years. Arctic temperatures have high decadal variability, and a warm period was also observed from 1925 to 1945. {3.2}
- Satellite data since 1978 show that annual average Arctic sea ice extent has shrunk by 2.7 [2.1 to 3.3]% per decade, with larger decreases in summer of 7.4 [5.0 to 9.8]% per decade. These values are consistent with those reported in the TAR. {4.4}
- Temperatures at the top of the permafrost layer have generally increased since the 1980s in the Arctic (by up to 3°C). The maximum area covered by seasonally frozen ground has decreased by about 7% in the Northern Hemisphere since 1900, with a decrease in spring of up to 15%. {4.7}
- Long-term trends from 1900 to 2005 have been observed in precipitation amount over many large regions¹¹. Significantly increased precipitation has been observed in eastern parts of North and South America, northern Europe and northern and central Asia. Drying has been observed in the Sahel, the Mediterranean, southern Africa and parts of southern Asia. Precipitation is highly variable spatially and temporally, and data are limited in some regions. Long-term trends have not been observed for the other large regions assessed¹¹. {3.3, 3.9}
- Changes in precipitation and evaporation over the oceans are suggested by freshening of mid and high latitude waters together with increased salinity in low latitude waters. {5.2}
- Mid-latitude westerly winds have strengthened in both hemispheres since the 1960s. {3.5}
- More intense and longer droughts have been observed over wider areas since the 1970s, particularly in the tropics and subtropics. Increased drying linked with higher temperatures and decreased precipitation have contributed to changes in drought. Changes in sea surface temperatures (SST), wind patterns, and decreased snowpack and snow cover have also been linked to droughts. {3.3}
- The frequency of heavy precipitation events has increased over most land areas, consistent with warming and observed increases of atmospheric water vapour. {3.8, 3.9}
- Widespread changes in extreme temperatures have been observed over the last 50 years. Cold days, cold nights and frost have become less frequent, while hot days, hot nights, and heat waves have become more frequent (see Table SPM-2). {3.8}
- There is observational evidence for an increase of intense tropical cyclone activity in the North Atlantic since about 1970, correlated with increases of tropical sea surface temperatures. There are also suggestions of increased intense tropical cyclone activity in some other regions where concerns over data quality are greater. Multi-decadal variability and the quality of the tropical cyclone records prior to routine satellite observations in about 1970 complicate the detection of long-term trends in tropical cyclone activity. There is no clear trend in the annual numbers of tropical cyclones. {3.8}

¹⁰ Tropical cyclones include hurricanes and typhoons.

¹¹ The assessed regions are those considered in the regional projections Chapter of the TAR and in Chapter 11 of this Report.

Table SPM-2. Recent trends, assessment of human influence on the trend, and projections for extreme weather events for which there is an observed late 20th century trend. {Tables 3.7, 3.8, 9.4, Sections 3.8, 5.5, 9.7, 11.2-11.9}

Phenomenon ^a and direction of trend	Likelihood that trend occurred in late 20th century (typically post 1960)	Likelihood of a human contribution to observed trend ^b	Likelihood of future trends based on projections for 21st century using SRES scenarios
Warmer and fewer cold days and nights over most land areas	<i>Very likely</i> ^c	<i>Likely</i> ^d	<i>Virtually certain</i> ^d
Warmer and more frequent hot days and nights over most land areas	<i>Very likely</i> ^e	<i>Likely (nights)</i> ^d	<i>Virtually certain</i> ^d
Warm spells / heat waves. Frequency increases over most land areas	<i>Likely</i>	<i>More likely than not</i> ^f	<i>Very likely</i>
Heavy precipitation events. Frequency (or proportion of total rainfall from heavy falls) increases over most areas	<i>Likely</i>	<i>More likely than not</i> ^f	<i>Very likely</i>
Area affected by droughts increases	<i>Likely</i> in many regions since 1970s	<i>More likely than not</i>	<i>Likely</i>
Intense tropical cyclone activity increases	<i>Likely</i> in some regions since 1970	<i>More likely than not</i> ^f	<i>Likely</i>
Increased incidence of extreme high sea level (excludes tsunamis) ^g	<i>Likely</i>	<i>More likely than not</i> ^{f, h}	<i>Likely</i> ⁱ

Table notes:

^a See Table 3.7 for further details regarding definitions.

^b See Table TS-4, Box TS.3.4 and Table 9.4.

^c Decreased frequency of cold days and nights (coldest 10%).

^d Warming of the most extreme days and nights each year.

^e Increased frequency of hot days and nights (hottest 10%).

^f Magnitude of anthropogenic contributions not assessed. Attribution for these phenomena based on expert judgement rather than formal attribution studies.

^g Extreme high sea level depends on average sea level and on regional weather systems. It is defined here as the highest 1% of hourly values of observed sea level at a station for a given reference period.

^h Changes in observed extreme high sea level closely follow the changes in average sea level {5.5.2.6}. It is *very likely* that anthropogenic activity contributed to a rise in average sea level. {9.5.2}

ⁱ In all scenarios, the projected global average sea level at 2100 is higher than in the reference period {10.6}. The effect of changes in regional weather systems on sea level extremes has not been assessed.

Some aspects of climate have not been observed to change. {3.2, 3.8, 4.4, 5.3}

- A decrease in diurnal temperature range (DTR) was reported in the TAR, but the data available then extended only from 1950 to 1993. Updated observations reveal that DTR has not changed from 1979 to 2004 as both day- and night-time temperature have risen at about the same rate. The trends are highly variable from one region to another. {3.2}
- Antarctic sea ice extent continues to show inter-annual variability and localized changes but no statistically significant average trends, consistent with the lack of warming reflected in atmospheric temperatures averaged across the region. {3.2, 4.4}

- There is insufficient evidence to determine whether trends exist in the meridional overturning circulation of the global ocean or in small scale phenomena such as tornadoes, hail, lightning and dust-storms. {3.8, 5.3}

A PALEOCLIMATIC PERSPECTIVE

Paleoclimatic studies use changes in climatically sensitive indicators to infer past changes in global climate on time scales ranging from decades to millions of years. Such proxy data (e.g., tree ring width) may be influenced by both local temperature and other factors such as precipitation, and are often representative of particular seasons rather than full years. Studies since the TAR draw increased confidence from additional data showing coherent behaviour across multiple indicators in different parts of the world. However, uncertainties generally increase with time into the past due to increasingly limited spatial coverage.

Paleoclimate information supports the interpretation that the warmth of the last half century is unusual in at least the previous 1300 years. The last time the polar regions were significantly warmer than present for an extended period (about 125,000 years ago), reductions in polar ice volume led to 4 to 6 metres of sea level rise. {6.4, 6.6}

- Average Northern Hemisphere temperatures during the second half of the 20th century were *very likely* higher than during any other 50-year period in the last 500 years and *likely* the highest in at least the past 1300 years. Some recent studies indicate greater variability in Northern Hemisphere temperatures than suggested in the TAR, particularly finding that cooler periods existed in the 12 to 14th, 17th, and 19th centuries. Warmer periods prior to the 20th century are within the uncertainty range given in the TAR. {6.6}
- Global average sea level in the last interglacial period (about 125,000 years ago) was *likely* 4 to 6 m higher than during the 20th century, mainly due to the retreat of polar ice. Ice core data indicate that average polar temperatures at that time were 3 to 5°C higher than present, because of differences in the Earth's orbit. The Greenland ice sheet and other Arctic ice fields *likely* contributed no more than 4 m of the observed sea level rise. There may also have been a contribution from Antarctica. {6.4}

UNDERSTANDING AND ATTRIBUTING CLIMATE CHANGE

This Assessment considers longer and improved records, an expanded range of observations, and improvements in the simulation of many aspects of climate and its variability based on studies since the TAR. It also considers the results of new attribution studies that have evaluated whether observed changes are quantitatively consistent with the expected response to external forcings and inconsistent with alternative physically plausible explanations.

Most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is *very likely* due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations¹². This is an advance since the TAR's conclusion that "most of the observed warming over the last 50 years is *likely* to have been due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations". Discernible human influences now extend to other aspects of climate, including ocean warming, continental-average temperatures, temperature extremes and wind patterns (see Figure SPM-4 and Table SPM-2). {9.4, 9.5}

- It is *likely* that increases in greenhouse gas concentrations alone would have caused more warming than observed because volcanic and anthropogenic aerosols have offset some warming that would otherwise have taken place. {2.9, 7.5, 9.4}
- The observed widespread warming of the atmosphere and ocean, together with ice mass loss, support the conclusion that it is *extremely unlikely* that global climate change of the past fifty years can be explained without external forcing, and *very likely* that it is not due to known natural causes alone. {4.8, 5.2, 9.4, 9.5, 9.7}

¹² Consideration of remaining uncertainty is based on current methodologies.

- Warming of the climate system has been detected in changes of surface and atmospheric temperatures, temperatures in the upper several hundred metres of the ocean and in contributions to sea level rise. Attribution studies have established anthropogenic contributions to all of these changes. The observed pattern of tropospheric warming and stratospheric cooling is *very likely* due to the combined influences of greenhouse gas increases and stratospheric ozone depletion. {3.2, 3.4, 9.4, 9.5}
- It is *likely* that there has been significant anthropogenic warming over the past 50 years averaged over each continent except Antarctica (see Figure SPM-4). The observed patterns of warming, including greater warming over land than over the ocean, and their changes over time, are only simulated by models that include anthropogenic forcing. The ability of coupled climate models to simulate the observed temperature evolution on each of six continents provides stronger evidence of human influence on climate than was available in the TAR. {3.2, 9.4}

Global and Continental Temperature Change

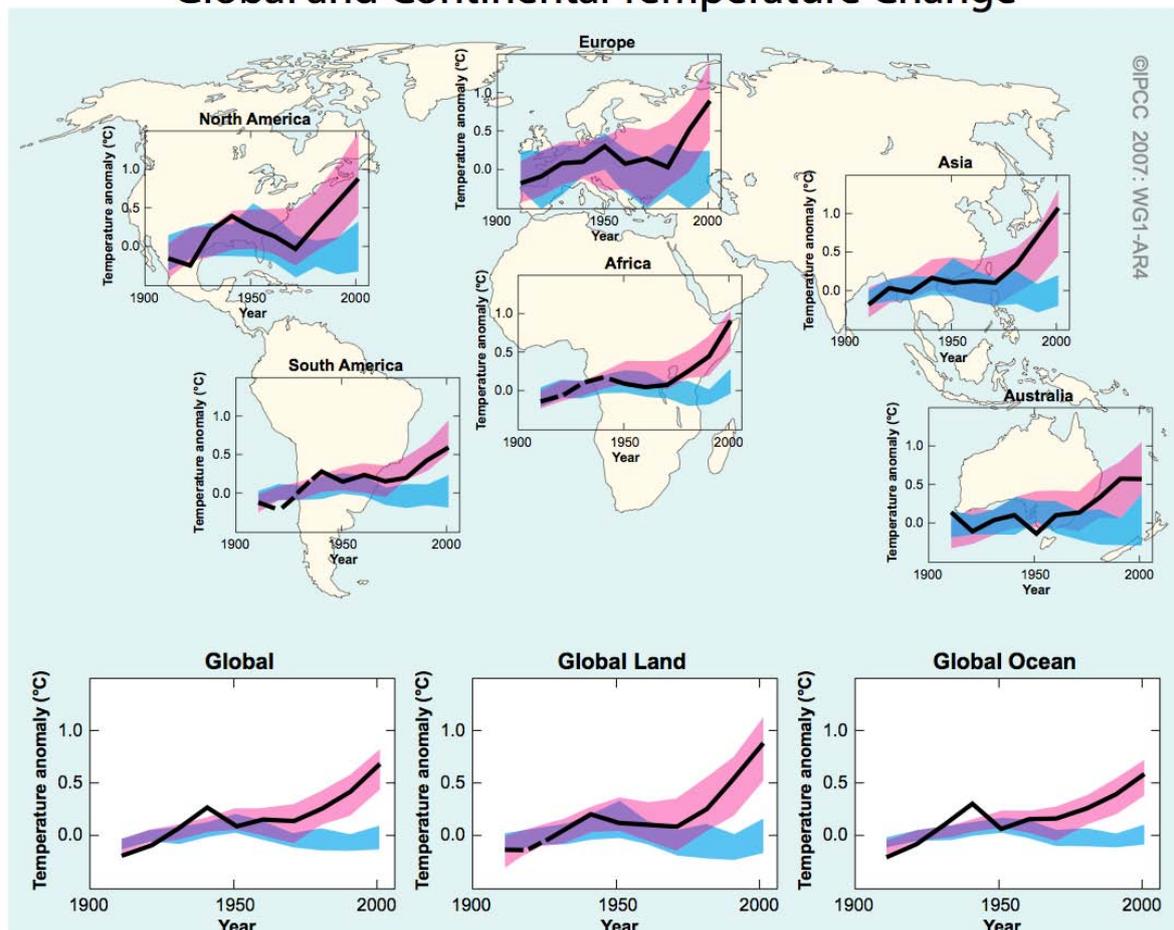


FIGURE SPM-4. Comparison of observed continental- and global-scale changes in surface temperature with results simulated by climate models using natural and anthropogenic forcings. Decadal averages of observations are shown for the period 1906–2005 (black line) plotted against the centre of the decade and relative to the corresponding average for 1901–1950. Lines are dashed where spatial coverage is less than 50%. Blue shaded bands show the 5–95% range for 19 simulations from 5 climate models using only the natural forcings due to solar activity and volcanoes. Red shaded bands show the 5–95% range for 58 simulations from 14 climate models using both natural and anthropogenic forcings. {FAQ 9.2, Figure 1}

- Difficulties remain in reliably simulating and attributing observed temperature changes at smaller scales. On these scales, natural climate variability is relatively larger making it harder to distinguish changes expected due to external forcings. Uncertainties in local forcings and feedbacks also make it difficult to estimate the contribution of greenhouse gas increases to observed small-scale temperature changes. {8.3, 9.4}
- Anthropogenic forcing is *likely* to have contributed to changes in wind patterns¹³, affecting extra-tropical storm tracks and temperature patterns in both hemispheres. However, the observed changes in the Northern Hemisphere circulation are larger than simulated in response to 20th century forcing change. {3.5, 3.6, 9.5, 10.3}
- Temperatures of the most extreme hot nights, cold nights and cold days are *likely* to have increased due to anthropogenic forcing. It is *more likely than not* that anthropogenic forcing has increased the risk of heat waves (see Table SPM-2). {9.4}

Analysis of climate models together with constraints from observations enables an assessed *likely* range to be given for climate sensitivity for the first time and provides increased confidence in the understanding of the climate system response to radiative forcing. {6.6, 8.6, 9.6, Box 10.2}

- The equilibrium climate sensitivity is a measure of the climate system response to sustained radiative forcing. It is not a projection but is defined as the global average surface warming following a doubling of carbon dioxide concentrations. It is *likely* to be in the range 2 to 4.5°C with a best estimate of about 3°C, and is *very unlikely* to be less than 1.5°C. Values substantially higher than 4.5°C cannot be excluded, but agreement of models with observations is not as good for those values. Water vapour changes represent the largest feedback affecting climate sensitivity and are now better understood than in the TAR. Cloud feedbacks remain the largest source of uncertainty. {8.6, 9.6, Box 10.2}
- It is *very unlikely* that climate changes of at least the seven centuries prior to 1950 were due to variability generated within the climate system alone. A significant fraction of the reconstructed Northern Hemisphere interdecadal temperature variability over those centuries is *very likely* attributable to volcanic eruptions and changes in solar irradiance, and it is *likely* that anthropogenic forcing contributed to the early 20th century warming evident in these records. {2.7, 2.8, 6.6, 9.3}

PROJECTIONS OF FUTURE CHANGES IN CLIMATE

A major advance of this assessment of climate change projections compared with the TAR is the large number of simulations available from a broader range of models. Taken together with additional information from observations, these provide a quantitative basis for estimating likelihoods for many aspects of future climate change. Model simulations cover a range of possible futures including idealised emission or concentration assumptions. These include SRES¹⁴ illustrative marker scenarios for the 2000–2100 period and model experiments with greenhouse gases and aerosol concentrations held constant after year 2000 or 2100.

For the next two decades a warming of about 0.2°C per decade is projected for a range of SRES emission scenarios. Even if the concentrations of all greenhouse gases and aerosols had been kept constant at year 2000 levels, a further warming of about 0.1°C per decade would be expected. {10.3, 10.7}

¹³ In particular, the Southern and Northern Annular Modes and related changes in the North Atlantic Oscillation. {3.6, 9.5, Box TS.3.1}

¹⁴ SRES refers to the IPCC Special Report on Emission Scenarios (2000). The SRES scenario families and illustrative cases, which did not include additional climate initiatives, are summarized in a box at the end of this Summary for Policymakers. Approximate CO₂ equivalent concentrations corresponding to the computed radiative forcing due to anthropogenic greenhouse gases and aerosols in 2100 (see p. 823 of the TAR) for the SRES B1, A1T, B2, A1B, A2 and A1FI illustrative marker scenarios are about 600, 700, 800, 850, 1250 and 1550 ppm respectively. Scenarios B1, A1B, and A2 have been the focus of model inter-comparison studies and many of those results are assessed in this report.

- Since IPCC's first report in 1990, assessed projections have suggested global averaged temperature increases between about 0.15 and 0.3°C per decade for 1990 to 2005. This can now be compared with observed values of about 0.2°C per decade, strengthening confidence in near-term projections. {1.2, 3.2}
- Model experiments show that even if all radiative forcing agents are held constant at year 2000 levels, a further warming trend would occur in the next two decades at a rate of about 0.1°C per decade, due mainly to the slow response of the oceans. About twice as much warming (0.2°C per decade) would be expected if emissions are within the range of the SRES scenarios. Best-estimate projections from models indicate that decadal-average warming over each inhabited continent by 2030 is insensitive to the choice among SRES scenarios and is *very likely* to be at least twice as large as the corresponding model-estimated natural variability during the 20th century. {9.4, 10.3, 10.5, 11.2–11.7, Figure TS-29}

Continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21st century that would *very likely* be larger than those observed during the 20th century. {10.3}

- Advances in climate change modelling now enable best estimates and *likely* assessed uncertainty ranges to be given for projected warming for different emission scenarios. Results for different emission scenarios are provided explicitly in this report to avoid loss of this policy-relevant information. Projected globally-averaged surface warmings for the end of the 21st century (2090–2099) relative to 1980–1999 are shown in Table SPM-3. These illustrate the differences between lower to higher SRES emission scenarios and the projected warming uncertainty associated with these scenarios. {10.5}
- Best estimates and *likely* ranges for globally average surface air warming for six SRES emissions marker scenarios are given in this assessment and are shown in Table SPM-3. For example, the best estimate for the low scenario (B1) is 1.8°C (*likely* range is 1.1°C to 2.9°C), and the best estimate for the high scenario (A1FI) is 4.0°C (*likely* range is 2.4°C to 6.4°C). Although these projections are broadly consistent with the span quoted in the TAR (1.4 to 5.8°C), they are not directly comparable (see Figure SPM-5). The AR4 is more advanced as it provides best estimates and an assessed likelihood range for each of the marker scenarios. The new assessment of the *likely* ranges now relies on a larger number of climate models of increasing complexity and realism, as well as new information regarding the nature of feedbacks from the carbon cycle and constraints on climate response from observations. {10.5}

Table SPM-3. Projected globally averaged surface warming and sea level rise at the end of the 21st century. {10.5, 10.6, Table 10.7}

Case	Temperature Change (°C at 2090-2099 relative to 1980-1999) ^a		Sea Level Rise (m at 2090-2099 relative to 1980-1999)
	Best estimate	<i>Likely</i> range	Model-based range excluding future rapid dynamical changes in ice flow
Constant Year 2000 concentrations ^b	0.6	0.3 – 0.9	NA
B1 scenario	1.8	1.1 – 2.9	0.18 – 0.38
A1T scenario	2.4	1.4 – 3.8	0.20 – 0.45
B2 scenario	2.4	1.4 – 3.8	0.20 – 0.43
A1B scenario	2.8	1.7 – 4.4	0.21 – 0.48
A2 scenario	3.4	2.0 – 5.4	0.23 – 0.51
A1FI scenario	4.0	2.4 – 6.4	0.26 – 0.59

Table notes:

^a These estimates are assessed from a hierarchy of models that encompass a simple climate model, several Earth Models of Intermediate Complexity (EMICs), and a large number of Atmosphere-Ocean Global Circulation Models (AOGCMs).

^b Year 2000 constant composition is derived from AOGCMs only.