



# Climate Change, Defined

**Resource Type:** Articles

**Topic:** Climate Risk

We hear the term “climate change” often. But what does it really mean?

**The term “climate change” describes long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, largely due to human activity. Climate change has caused deaths, community disruption and damage and destruction of property around the world. Climate scientists say those consequences will multiply if the world doesn’t take quicker action to slow the rate of climate change.**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says the world [faces unavoidable increases in climate hazards](#) even if we can keep global warming to about 1.5 degrees Celsius, which equals 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit. And as the IPCC has noted, just keeping warming at that level will be a big challenge. The scientific community considers the IPCC, created by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization in 1988, the world’s top authority on climate science.

A look at the challenge: June 2024 was [the hottest June for the globe](#) in the 175 years that NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has kept records. June 2024 was the thirteenth consecutive month of record-high global temperatures.

The challenge is daunting, but change is possible. The IPCC notes that there have been successful development and adaptation efforts around the world to reduce climate vulnerability. In this issue, we explore how your nonprofit could be part of that effort—and how climate risk mitigations strengthen a nonprofit’s understanding and readiness for a wide array of possibilities (risks).