Counting the Cost 2025

A year of climate breakdown

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Above: Credit: Cherish Gonzales/Shutterstock

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Contents

Foreword

2025 has once again shown the stark reality of climate breakdown. Violent storms, devastating floods and prolonged droughts are hitting communities across the globe. The climate crisis continues to turn lives and livelihoods upside down.

Below: Patrick Watt, Chief Executive Officer, Christian Aid.

The scientific evidence of the lethal toll that burning fossil fuels is taking on people and the planet is now overwhelming. Global temperatures remain at record levels[1], following successive years of unprecedented heat. The consequences for human health, food systems and ecosystems are becoming ever more severe.

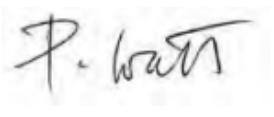
The data continues to show that climate change is increasing both the likelihood and intensity of extreme weather events, including floods, heatwaves and tropical cyclones. These events are causing widespread destruction and loss of life, with the greatest impacts falling on communities that have done least to cause the crisis.

These climate disasters are a warning of what lies ahead if we do not accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels. They also underline the urgent need for adaptation, particularly in the global South, where resources are stretched and people are especially vulnerable to climate shocks.

The good news is that the transition to clean energy is gathering pace. Renewables remain the cheapest form of new electricity, and the rollout of solar power continues to exceed expectations. Despite a political backlash in some settings, public support for climate action remains strong, and the consequences of inaction are becoming ever clearer - in lost lives, destroyed homes and livelihoods, and growing economic losses.

This transition to an economy powered by renewables is inevitable, but the critical challenge is whether it will move fast enough, and fairly enough, to protect the poorest people. Rich countries must do far more to finance the clean energy transition and to support communities to adapt to a changing climate. At the same time, as shown by examples in this report, people in the global South are already experiencing permanent loss and damage from a crisis they did little to cause. This is why it is vital that adequate resources are channelled into the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.

The suffering caused by the climate crisis is a political choice. It is being driven by decisions to continue burning fossil fuels, to allow emissions to rise, and to break promises on climate finance. In 2026, world leaders must act - supporting communities already adapting at a local level, and providing the resources urgently needed to protect lives, land and livelihoods.



Patrick Watt

Chief Executive Officer, Christian Aid

Introduction

Year after year, communities around the globe are grappling with the devastating effects of climate change. In 2025, the intensity of extreme weather reached new heights: heatwaves pushing the limits of human adaptation, record-breaking hurricanes and typhoons overwhelming disaster response systems, and a brutal combination of extreme rainfall and severe droughts. This year has been marked by climate breakdown on an alarming scale, resulting in 2025 being one of the costliest years.[2]

Yet, despite the mounting evidence of the damage caused by the continued reliance on fossil fuels, the world remains on a path of unchecked consumption. As we witness cities drying up, uncontrollable fires destroying homes, and tornadoes wiping out entire communities, the consequences of inaction are undeniable. With every year of delayed action, the losses continue to grow. Unfortunately, 2025 was no different.

At the same time, the scientific community has never been clearer. New studies not only link greenhouse gas emissions to climate change, but also directly connect fossil fuel companies to specific, deadly weather events. 213 heatwaves this century have now been attributed to greenhouse gas pollution from major fossil fuel producers – individual oil, coal, and cement companies, as well as some countries.[3] During the most recent European summer, climate change-driven heatwaves led to an estimated 16,500 additional deaths compared to a world without fossil fuel-driven warming.[4] Researchers can now even project the human toll of fossil fuel projects *before* they are built.[5]

Whether through immediate, catastrophic events or long-term impacts, climate change carries both a human and a financial cost. The economic impact of emissions is measurable, totalling an estimated US$28 trillion in damage between 1991 and 2020 alone.[6] Water shortages have worsened, displacement is rising, and the cost of inaction continues to escalate. Without urgent emissions reduction, the price of inaction will only grow steeper, both financially and in human suffering.

Fossil fuel companies, large and small, are complicit in the deaths and suffering caused by the disasters they help fuel. The burning of coal, oil and gas cuts global GDP, and although estimates vary depending on methodology, one thing is certain: the damage caused by the fossil fuel industry is severe, increasing, and could reach trillions yearly if left unchecked.[7] Yet, this same killing and destructive industry continues to receive billions in investments and public subsidy to accelerate expansion rather than limit it.[8]

This report seeks to catalogue some of the most significant extreme weather events of the year. However, as the events are listed, it is crucial to remember that every event that could have been minimised by climate action is already too costly. Every life lost to climate change-fuelled events is an avoidable tragedy.

Methodology

The first half of the report highlights *the most expensive climate disasters in 2025* and is primarily based on loss estimates published regularly by insurance company Aon, complemented in some cases from other sources.

For this report, most events are treated as individual disasters, though in particular cases multiple storms were grouped together due to their timing or shared geographical or meteorological characteristics. This includes the Southeast Asia Storms and the Philippines Typhoon Season.

The cost figures presented can exclude other forms of losses that are difficult to quantify, such as damages to livelihoods, lost income, long-term damage to the environment, and permanent displacement of residents. As a result, the true toll of disasters is almost certainly far higher than the insured losses suggested. Recognising these limitations, a second part of the report highlights additional crises that were severe, deadly, or transformative, and where robust cost data is unavailable or overshadowed by events with clear and high dollar-value estimates.

Most expensive climate disasters of 2025

Date	Event	Location	Type	Fatalities	Economic cost
Jan	**Palisades and Eaton Fires**	United States (Los Angeles area)	Wildfire	31 direct deaths; ~400 additional deaths reported in later study	US$60+ billion
Nov	**South & Southeast Asia Cyclones**	Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Malaysia	Cyclones, extreme monsoon rainfall, flooding	1,750+	~US$25 billion
Jun–Aug	**Flooding**	China	Extreme rainfall and flooding	30+	US$11.7 billion
Mid–late 2025	**Hurricane Melissa**	Jamaica, Cuba, Bahamas	Hurricane (Category 5-equivalent)	Not finalised	~US$8 billion
Jun–Sep	**Flooding**	India and Pakistan	Extreme monsoon rainfall, floods, landslides	1,860+	~US$5.6 billion
Mid-year–Nov	**Typhoons**	Philippines	Typhoons and tropical storms	Hundreds	US$5+ billion
Jan–Jun	**Drought**	Brazil	Drought	Not specified	US$4.75 billion
Feb	**Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred**	Australia	Tropical cyclone	1	US$1.2 billion
Feb	**Cyclone Garance**	Réunion (East Africa)	Tropical cyclone	5	US$1.05 billion
Jul	**Texas floods**	US	Extreme rainfall and flash flooding	135+	~US$1 billion

Palisades and Eaton Fire (US)

In January 2025, a large-scale wildfire erupted in Palisades and Eaton in the United States, spreading rapidly due to a combination of prolonged drought, unusually high temperatures, and strong winds. The fires burned more than 9,000 hectares, killed 31 people directly, but a subsequent study released later reported 400 additional deaths[9]. The flames destroyed entire neighbourhoods as they moved through parts of Los Angeles. By the time the fires were fully contained, they had become the most destructive and expensive wildfire event in US history. While some estimates attribute roughly US$32 billion in damage to the Palisades Fire and US$25 billion to Eaton Fire, later assessments recorded total economic losses exceeding US$60 billion, surpassing previous US wildfire loss records by a large margin.[10] Insured losses represent only a portion of damages, as thousands of people were displaced and significant losses were uninsured. Particularly, many homeowners in lower-income areas were either underinsured or completely uninsured, leaving them with catastrophic financial burdens. Additional long-term economic impacts, including the destruction of housing stock, critical infrastructure, and local commerce, are expected to continue affecting local communities for years to come.

The fire-weather conditions – including extreme dryness, heat, and high winds – that enabled the Palisades and Eaton Fires to be so devastating have become at least 35% more likely in today's climate compared to a world without human-induced climate change.[11] The intensity of these fire weather conditions were 6% more intense when compared to a world without climate change.[12] A separate study found that climate change may be linked to about a quarter of the extreme fuel moisture deficit when the fires began.[13] This means that vegetation was significantly more primed to burn during the fires. Together, the findings show that climate change substantially worsened the conditions that made the LA fires so destructive. **Photo:** Credit: CAL_FIRE official

South & Southeast Asia Cyclones (Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Viet Nam)

In late-November, a combination of three storm systems during the extreme monsoon season across South and Southeast Asia resulted in one of the deadliest extreme weather events this year. Cyclone Senyar formed in the Strait of Malacca, a rare event, and impacted Indonesia and Malaysia.[14] Cyclone Ditwah made landfall in Sri Lanka and became the worst weather event to strike the country in recent decades.[15] Typhoon Koto (also known as Verbena) made its first landfall in the Philippines, before continuing to wreak havoc in Viet Nam.[16]

The economic toll of these storms have been substantial, but final numbers are still pending. Some experts estimate that Senyar will become one of the costliest events in Thailand's history, at around, at around 500 billion baht, equivalent to roughly US$ 15.7[17] Indonesia will likely face reconstruction costs exceeding US$ 3 billion, primarily on Sumatra Island.[18] In Sri Lanka, the floods damaged about two-thirds of the rail lines, more than 137,000 acres of land, and power grids. Costs for rebuilding are

estimated between US$ 6 and 7 billion.[19] The death toll exceeded 1,750 people, highlighting the severe human cost of these events.[20]

Climate scientists noted that climate change supercharged these storms, increasing rainfall and contributing to the deadly floods.[21] As global temperatures rise due to the rise in greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels, the atmosphere's capacity to hold moisture also increases. In turn, this can make cyclones more powerful and destructive. Separate studies show that a rise in ocean temperatures is linked to more intense tropical cyclones.[22]

Photo: Credit alexkoral/Shutterstock

China seasonal flooding

Between June and August, China experienced a wave of extreme seasonal rain: heavy and prolonged rains, and flash floods impacted several regions. Near the capital, torrential rain turned streets into rivers as it saw rain that exceeded the monthly average within a few days, killing at least 30 people.[23] In other agricultural regions, farmers struggled with nonstop rain as extreme rain inundated thousands of acres of cropland.[24]

Estimated costs from these floods between June and August reached US$ 11.7 billion.[25] These losses contributed to a total of US$30.5 billion in natural disasters damages recorded in the first three quarters of 2025., which affected an area of 530,000 hectares of crops.[26] More than 530,000 hectares of crops were affected, although reporting highlighted that the greatest portion of losses were indirect – stemming from disrupted supply chains and prolonged business disruptions.[27]

Experts warn that the intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall events in parts of China can increase with climate change.[28] A hotter atmosphere can hold more moisture, increasing the likelihood of heavy and destructive floods. Some studies indicate that climate change may shift the regions affected by extreme precipitation, bringing typhoons to areas that previously experienced them only rarely.[29] Other research shows that the probability of heavy precipitation events increases with rising global temperatures, particularly short-duration, intense rainfall in southeast China.[30]

Hurricane Melissa (Jamaica, Cuba, Bahamas)

Hurricane Melissa began as a tropical disturbance but rapidly intensified over the Caribbean, becoming the strongest hurricanes of the year and the most powerful storm to ever hit Jamaica.[31] As it moved through unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the Caribbean, the hurricane gained energy and strength. By the time it made landfall in Jamaica with maximum sustained winds of 296 km/h.[32] After hitting Jamaica, it made a second landfall in Cuba before reaching the Bahamas.[33]

In Jamaica there were 45 deaths[34]. The storm caused widespread destruction, including severe damage to homes, businesses, critical infrastructure, communication networks, and power grids.[35] Estimates of the economic cost vary as assessments have not been finalised, but preliminary analyses suggest losses of around US$ 8 billion.[36]

Scientists have noted that Melissa's rapid intensification is consistent with climate change, as warmer sea surface temperatures provide more energy for similar storms.[37] Attribution scientists concluded that climate change enhanced the intensity of the hurricane over Jamaica by 30% and made it about twice as likely to occur.[38] **Photo:** Credit: Lothina1/Shutterstock

India and Pakistan Monsoon Season

Above: Credit: Drone/Shutterstock

From June to September, large parts of India and Pakistan experienced an exceptionally heavy monsoon season. Torrential rains began early, triggering deadly floods, landslides, cloudbursts, and flash floods, particularly in mountainous regions.[39] Across the region, rivers overflowed, farmlands were inundated, glacial melt worsened flooding, and thousands of towns were submerged.[40] Entire communities were displaced, and the human cost was severe: at least 1,860 people were reported dead.[41] For some of the regions, this year's monsoon was one of the deadliest.[42] For Pakistan alone, monsoon rains combined with glacial floods and riverine inundation killed over 1,000 people, damaged 12,500 homes, washed away 240 bridges, and killed at least 6,500 livestock.[43] Nearly 7 million people were affected by floods.[44] Meanwhile, India's monsoon season started with the wettest May since records began.[45] By September, the country had received 8% more rainfall than the average, with 2,277 flood and heavy rain events recorded.[46]

The heavy rain had a significant impact on agriculture and infrastructure. By the end of the season, India's agricultural sector – responsible for about 18% of the economy and 1.4 billion people's incomes – saw a yield reduction.[47] In Pakistan, 1.3 million acres of crops were submerged, with costs estimated at US$1.4 billion in agriculture losses alone.[48] Damage was significant to infrastructure too, with Pakistan seeing over 600km of roads damaged.[49] The cost of the monsoon season reached a combined total of US$ 3 billion.[50]

Warmer oceans and atmosphere supercharge evaporation, increasing atmospheric moisture and fuelling heavier downpours.[51] These conditions favour the melting of glaciers and permafrost, further amplifying the risk of floods and landslides.[52] Scientists have linked the extremity of monsoon seasons with human-driven climate change, estimating that for every decree of warming monsoon rains will likely increase by around 5%.[53] A recent attribution study found that climate change intensified the heavy monsoon rain in Pakistan, with rainfall being approximately 12% more intense than it would have been in a world without climate change.[54]

Philippines typhoons

Above: Credit: Cherish Gonzales/Shutterstock

From mid-2025 throughout November, the Philippines was struck by a sequence of extremely powerful and destructive tropical cyclones, including Typhoon Ragasa (Nando), Typhoon Kalmaegi (Tino), Typhoon Fung-wong (Uwan), Tropical Storm Wipha, Tropical Storm Bualoi, and more recently Typhoon Koto (Verbena). The country usually experiences about 20 typhoons per year due to its location.[55] These storms made large-scale landfalls, triggering severe flooding, landslides, and deadly storm surges.

Super Typhoon Fung- Wong alone brought sustained winds up to 185km/h and gusts up to 230 km/h,[56] displacing more than 1.4 million people.[57] It was the most powerful cyclone to make landfall in the Philippines this year, affecting at least 15 other countries.[58]

Hundreds of people died because of these typhoons, and the cumulative economic impacts of these storms are very high. Wipha alone caused losses of approximately US$1.5 billion alone[59] and Bualoi caused damages totalling around US$ 900 million.[60] The back-to-back nature of these events meant communities had very little time to recover, compounding the destruction of homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods across the country.

As oceans get hotter due to human-induced climate change, they lead to more intense tropical cyclones in higher categories (category 4 and 5).[61] While the frequency of these typhoons might not increase, their severity is increasing and will continue to do so, bringing greater wind speeds, more rainfall, and higher storm surges.[62]

Climate change intensifies these typhoons and contributes to a significant increase in damages experienced. According to attribution studies, climate change intensified the intensity of a typhoon similar to Ragasa and makes it 49% more likely in 2025 in comparison to a world without climate

change, and consequently increasing its economic damage.[63] When looking at Typhoon Fung-wong, researchers estimate that about 30% of the economic damage can be attributed to climate change.[64]

Brazil drought

In the first half of 2025, Brazil faced a persistent and widespread drought that affected more than half of the country at its peak.[65] Severe drought conditions stretched from the North and Northeast, to major agricultural states including São Paulo, Goiás, Minas Gerais, and Mato Grosso do Sul.[66] Rivers fell to extreme low levels, urban water supplies came under pressure, and Indigenous and rural communities struggled with limited access to drinking water and declining harvests.[67]

The economic consequences were severe. Estimates for the January to June period indicate that the drought caused around US$ 4.75 billion in losses.[68] Agriculture was hit the hardest, as the sector also experienced wildfire-related losses, exacerbated by dry conditions.[69] Reduced yields were reported for several commodities, including macadamia, which saw a reduction of 30%.[70]

Researchers point to climate change as a major force driving the frequency and intensity of droughts in Brazil. An attribution study conducted last year found that climate change made an unprecedented drought event in the Amazon rainforest 30 times more likely to occur.[71] Rising temperature and shifting rainfall patterns also make the dry season more severe and unpredictable, heightening the risk of severe droughts and leaving the country increasingly vulnerable.[72]

Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred (Australia)

At the same time Cyclone Garance intensified in the Indian Ocean, Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred developed in the South Pacific in late February. It became the first cyclone in 50 years of comparable strength to approach a densely populated stretch of the Australian coastline.[73] Alfred rapidly strengthened to Category 4 intensity while it moved southward, an unusual trajectory as most tropical systems weaken on such paths.[74] Although Alfred eventually weakened and narrowly missed densely populated areas, it still caused significant impacts across coastal communities through damaging winds, heavy rainfall, flooding, and severe coastal erosion.[75] There was one fatality[76] while Economic losses from Alfred were estimated at US$1.2 billion.[77]

Researchers concluded that human-driven climate pollution made Cyclone Afred more intense and destructive. Warmer ocean waters provided greater energy for rapid intensification, while higher sea levels increased the flooding and coastal impacts associated with the storm.[78] Scientists also noted that Alfred's track is further south than usual Australian cyclones, raising concerns that as the oceans heat up, cyclone pathways may be shifting towards regions that are not prepared for this type of event.[79] The event occurred just weeks after Cyclone Zelia, an extreme weather event that was also strengthened by climate change.[80]

Photo: Credit: X

Cyclone Garance (Réunion, Mauritius)

Cyclone Garance formed on February 28 over the South-West Indian Ocean and underwent rapid intensification, reaching the equivalent of a Category 3 storm before making landfall on the island of La Réunion.[81] Garance developed during a rare period when three tropical systems were active simultaneously in the Indian Ocean.[82] It brought destructive winds – the strongest recorded in 20 years – uprooting trees, damaging homes, and triggering widespread floods and mudslides. Around 900,000 residents were affected, with approximately 170,000 homes left without running water and power.[83] As the strongest storm to strike Réunion since 1989, it prompted authorities to issue the highest level of warning for the entire island.[84]

When Garance made landfall, it caused US$1.05 billion in damages, becoming the fourth costliest tropical cyclone in the South-West Indian Ocean and the costliest ever recorded in Réunion.[85] The storm claimed five lives and caused significant damage.[86] During the aftermath of the cyclone, the prices of fruit and vegetables widely consumed on the island significantly increased, reflecting the losses suffered by local farmers.[87] Given the intensity of the storm and scale of losses, current estimates are likely an undercount of Garance's full economic toll.

Research shows cyclones in the South-West Indian ocean are becoming stronger, wetter, and more unpredictable due to human-driven climate change. Warmer sea surface temperatures provide more energy for the storms, contributing to rapid intensification, while a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture and contributes to heavier rainfall.[88] Together, they worsen flood impacts, especially in countries like Réunion, characterised as densely populated and with limited space for evacuation.
Photo: Credit: X

Texas floods

In early July, central Texas was struck by a catastrophic flash flood. A slow-moving storm unleashed extreme rain of up to 8 metres in just 45 minutes, resulting in the surge of rivers and creeks.[89] The rapid surge upward overwhelmed communities during the night, as floodwaters swept through towns, rural areas, and campsites. At least 135 people were killed, most of whom were in outdoor camps when the event happened. Estimated economic losses are at around US$ 1 billion.

Climate change is making extreme rainfall more frequent and intense in many parts of the world. A study by World Weather Attribution found that human-induced global warming made the heavy rainfall that led to the floods in Texas about 9% more intense[90]. **Photo**: Credit: Karim Shuaib II/Shutterstock

Other notable climate disasters of 2025

Climate change affects the world in different ways, with many of the most harmful impacts not registering on the top 10 list for economic damage. Here we list 10 other notable disasters that may not have received the same headlines but are devastating lives around the world.

Whilst the growing accuracy and use of science to demonstrate the links between weather events and climate change are becoming more assured, particularly through the work of the World Weather Attribution Group, there are more data gaps than might be expected when it comes to tracking the full extent of economic losses in many global south countries.

Even where data is available, it is hard to compare across contexts and different kinds of disasters. For example, the start and end point of slow onset disasters such as heatwaves may complicate who is counted as being affected as well as what subset of the population is affected.

As in previous years, the mainstay of economic loss estimates is insurance claims or insurance-based estimates, particularly in contexts where there are significant insurance markets. There are seldom equivalent insurance-based 'economic loss' estimates in lower income counties because insurance markets are less developed. Therefore, economic loss estimates often rely more on official government or international organisation estimates. These may measure slightly different things compared to insurers, making comparisons harder.

Despite scouring a range of sources, it is noticeable how few climate-related disasters have comprehensive estimates of economic damage in the absence of insurance-based estimates. This is particularly the case for climate disasters in lower-income countries, and especially for slower-onset or more prolonged disasters such as droughts and heatwaves.

For most of these disasters, there is no estimate of the overall economic cost and where there are some economic assessments of impact, they tend to be narrow (e.g., focused on the foregone revenue from a failed harvest of a particular crop) or cover only part of the time period of a disaster. In some cases, the only relevant economic data related to impacts is from UN appeals to partially address the impacts of a crisis. Whilst the 'uncounted' deaths of rapid-onset disasters are becoming more recognised, with studies aimed at understanding the long-term increase in fatalities after a natural disaster[91], there is not yet an equivalent way to assess the longer-term economic impacts of disasters at the household, affected population or national levels.

Wildfires in the UK

In 2025, the United Kingdom experienced an unprecedented series of wildfires, driven by prolonged dry conditions and record-breaking heat. By late summer, wildfire crews across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had responded to the highest number of wildfire incidents on record, with nearly a thousand separate outbreaks by early September and far surpassing historic averages and pointing to a fundamentally altered fire season. Wildfires scorched tens of thousands of hectares of moorland, heath and forest, with early estimates suggesting more than 46,000–47,000 ha burned nationwide — the largest annual area affected since detailed monitoring began[92].

Scotland saw some of the most severe blazes, including the Carrbridge and Dava Moor wildfires in late June, which devastated extensive swathes of moorland and woodland in the Highlands and required multi-day firefighting efforts involving local crews and volunteers.

In England, prolonged dry spells contributed to a large blaze on Langdale Moor in North Yorkshire in August, declared a major incident as it resisted containment for weeks and drew fire services from across the region. Across the UK, smaller but numerous grassland and heath fires were reported through March and April, reflecting how the wildfire season expanded beyond the traditional summer peak.

The economic and environmental impacts have been significant. Estimates published in mid-2025 suggested wildfires had already cost the UK upwards of £350 million, factoring in firefighting costs, land damage, smoke pollution and impacts to tourism and agricultural sectors[93]. The scale and frequency of these events have prompted warnings that the UK remains dangerously underprepared for wildfire threats exacerbated by climate change, with calls for greater investment in fire services, land management and community resilience[94].

Climate change is already making wildfires in the UK both more frequent and more severe by driving warmer, drier conditions that increase the likelihood of extreme "fire weather", that is, the hot, dry, and windy periods that dry out fuels and expand the window for fires to ignite and spread.

Attribution research by the Met Office, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and University of Exeter found that the extreme fire weather which contributed to the UK's damaging wildfires in the 2022 heatwave was made at least six times more likely because of human-caused climate change, illustrating how rising greenhouse gas emissions intensify conditions favourable to wildfire[95].

Iberian Wildfires

During the Summer, the Iberian Peninsula experienced one of its most devastating wildfire seasons in decades. Weeks of extreme heatwaves, with temperatures exceeding 40°C, combined with low humidity, created explosive fire conditions. Spain recorded record-breaking heat, including a daily high of 45.8 °C.[96]

By September, around 383,000 hectares of land had burned in Spain.[97] Portugal had 260,000 hectares burned – about 3% of the country's land and a number nearly five times above average.[98] The fires caused at least six direct fatalities, although smoke and air-pollution impacts affected thousands more people , spreading across Europe.[99] Preliminary economic assessments suggest direct economic losses from the fire are estimated at US$ 810 million.[100]

Experts have linked the extreme fire weather conditions to climate change. Attribution scientists estimate that climate change made this event around 40 times more likely and increased the intensity of fire conditions by about 30%.[101] If warming continues, unusually high temperatures and extreme dry conditions such as those seen in 2025 are expected to become more frequent.

Above: Credit: Joao Serafim/Shutterstock

Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador flooding

In early 2025, South America experienced successive and severe heavy rainfall events that triggered floods and landslides with significant human and economic impacts.

In Ecuador, intense and prolonged rain affected 23 of the country's 24 provinces, leading to widespread flooding, landslides, infrastructure damage and displacement across large areas of the country[102]. Local reports highlighted urgent rescue efforts as communities coped with rapidly rising waters and terrain failures. Heavy rains also caused dangerous landslides in mountainous regions, further compounding risks and disrupting transport links.

Across Peru, heavy rainfall beginning in late January prompted the government to declare a 60-day national State of Emergency across 20 regions, reflecting the scale of flooding, river overflow and slope failures[103]. The rains resulted in at least dozens of fatalities, thousands of people affected, damaged homes, schools and infrastructure, and large numbers displaced by both floods and landslides. National emergency response operations attempted to reach isolated communities and support the most vulnerable populations[104].

In Bolivia, prolonged and above-average rainfall during the December–March wet season caused widespread river flooding and landslides across several departments. Authorities declared a national emergency in March after the rains had already claimed more than 55 lives, displaced tens of thousands of people, and affected hundreds of thousands through loss of homes, crops and essential services[105].

Climate change is making extreme rainfall more frequent and intense in many parts of the world. Scientific assessments confirm that climate change is increasing both the frequency and intensity of extreme rain events in South America[106], amplifying flood and landslide hazards and posing growing challenges for adaptation and disaster preparedness.

Above: Credit: Octavio Parra/Shutterstock

Canada drought

Drought afflicted – and continues to afflict – many Canadians this year, including in the Atlantic provinces, which traditionally experience a cooler, wetter climate. Late summer and early fall saw an overwhelming majority of the country classified as abnormally dry, indicating moderate to exceptional drought, including 80% of the country's agricultural landscape.[107] Parts of the Maritimes endured a once-in-50-years drought,[108] with other regions facing the driest summer on record.[109] Alberta experienced its driest fall in 140 years,[110] and across the country, municipalities put water restrictions in

place[111] or declared a state of emergency.[112] Households in Nova Scotia[113] and New Brunswick[114] went without running water, as wells ran dry. Drought is also being blamed in part for the rising costs of food like beef, which is up 16%. Dry conditions fuelled Canada's second worst wildfire season on record.[115] Wildfires displaced more than 85,000 Canadians from coast[116] to coast[117] to coast[118], with 50% evacuating from First Nations communities.[119] Although conditions have improved for some in Atlantic Canada, the latest analysis shows 84% of the country classified as abnormally dry or experiencing moderate to exceptional drought.[120] Many Canadians are gearing up for a winter[121] where they'll need to conserve water.[122]

Democratic Republic of Congo flooding

In 2025 the Democratic Republic of the Congo was struck by multiple devastating flooding events, driven by unusually heavy seasonal rains that overwhelmed rivers and infrastructure in both the capital and the eastern provinces. In April, torrential rains caused the Ndjili River in Kinshasa to burst its banks, cutting access to large parts of the city and killing at least 33 people as authorities scrambled to evacuate trapped families and support displaced residents; many deaths resulted from collapsing walls and submerged homes, and emergency shelters were established for hundreds of displaced households[123].

Above: Credit: Ruben Nyanguila/Shutterstock

Later in the season, in South Kivu province near Lake Tanganyika, extreme rainfall triggered flash floods that caused the Kasaba River to overflow, washing away villages and resulting in more than 100 confirmed deaths according to local officials, with additional fatalities and injuries as rivers surged through vulnerable communities poorly served by basic services[124].

Across Central Africa, scientific assessments show that if the world keeps burning fossil fuels, heavy rainfall episodes will become more frequent, increasing flooding[125].

Nigeria flooding

In May, floods triggered by extreme rainfall killed hundreds and left a trail of destruction in Mokwa, a market town in north-central Nigeria. The floods happened overnight, when many residents were asleep and helpless[126]. While the official death toll is 200, hundreds of people are still missing, meaning the number of casualties could be as high as 700[127].

In Nigeria, floods during the rainy season are becoming the norm. Different attribution studies have shown that rainfall is becoming more intense and frequent in the region due to climate change[128,129].

Iran & West Asia drought

A five-year drought continues to grip large parts of West Asia, including Iran, Syria and Iraq. In Syria, the drought contributed to the severity of wildfires[130] and in Lebanon, Lake Qaraoun, the largest body of freshwater hit an historic low[131]. In Iran, an unprecedented and ongoing water crisis is impacting livelihoods and crops. Local authorities warned that if the crisis persists, the country's capital Tehran, where nearly 10 million people live, might need to be evacuated[132].

Above: Credit: Dr.MYM/Shutterstock

The drought has been linked to climate change through at least two studies by the World Weather Attribution team, in 2023[133] and 2025[134]. Both studies found that the drought wouldn't have happened in a world without human-induced global warming.

Japan's extreme year

Japan saw massive snowstorms and record heatwaves this year. After an unusually warm January, in February and March different low-pressure systems brought heavy snow and strong winds to large parts of the country, including the capital city Tokyo[135,136]. The storms killed 12 people, destroyed several houses, and caused train and flight cancellations[137].

Just a few months later, the snow gave place to extreme temperatures. The 2025 summer season was the hottest ever recorded, with an average temperature of 2.36ºC above the 30-year historical average[138]. On August 5, the city of Isesaki recorded the highest temperature ever recorded in Japan, with 41.8ºC[139].

Climate change played a role in both the snowstorms and the summer record temperatures. Although global warming is making snow less frequent, high temperatures can lead to stronger downpours, both of rain and snow, because the atmosphere can hold more water vapor, which turns into snow when exposed to cold air. A rapid analysis by the Japan Meteorological Agency concluded that climate change made the February snow episodes up to 10% more intense[140]. Similarly, two analyses by the Weather Attribution Center Japan found that the mid-June and July extreme temperatures "would not have occurred without global warming"[141]

Above: Credit: x

Antarctica heatwave

In late September 2025, scientists observed an exceptional warming event high above Antarctica, with stratospheric air temperatures rising as much as 35 °C above average for this time of year, a highly unusual spike during the Antarctic winter and spring[142].

Normally the stratosphere above Antarctica remains extremely cold, but a phenomenon known as Sudden Stratospheric Warming (SSW) caused the temperature at around 30 km altitude to climb from typical values near –55 °C up toward –20 °C in repeated pulses throughout the month. This event represents one of the most pronounced such anomalies recorded over the Southern Hemisphere, where stratospheric warmings are much rarer than in the north[140].

This stratospheric heating has the potential to alter weather patterns in Australia and the broader Southern Hemisphere for weeks to months afterward[143]. Meteorologists note that past Southern Hemisphere SSWs have been linked to warmer, drier conditions and shifts in atmospheric circulation that can influence rainfall and fire risk in southeastern Australia[144].

Record ocean temperatures

Sea surface temperatures have been extremely high across the world all year, with temperatures about 0.5ºC hotter than the historical 1982-2024 average.[145]

One of the places that saw record temperatures was the Mediterranean Sea. The first semester of the year was the warmest ever, with 98% of the region affected by marine heatwaves.[146] In West Australia, a heatwave that started in late 2024 and extended over the first half of 2025 caused what was described as “the worst bleaching event on record” for coral reefs in the region.[147]

In addition to direct impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity, warmer seas and oceans also provide more energy for tropical cyclones and storms.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation, the exceptional high ocean temperatures were driven by “record greenhouse gases” which cause climate change.[148]

Recommendations

As we look ahead to 2026, world leaders must take bold steps, not just in adapting to the inevitable changes that lie ahead, but more importantly in mitigating future damage by moving away from fossil fuels.

- Most countries submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2025, but nearly all were insufficient to be compatible with the Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial temperatures. We need to see far more rapid carbon emissions cuts from rich, polluting nations. These developed countries need to heed the warning from the International Energy Agency, and the COP28 agreement in Dubai, and stop developing all new fossil fuel projects and divert the trillions of dollars of subsidies to supporting an energy transition and to climate adaptation both domestically and internationally.
- The funding gaps faced by lower income countries need to be bridged so that they can mitigate and address climate impacts. The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) agreed at COP29 fell far short of providing the finance that is needed and little progress was made at COP30 in Belem. In 2026 wealthy nations need to agree new forms of public finance, such as polluter-pay and extreme wealth taxes, to provide the $1.3tn annual finance needed for the NCQG.
- The new Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is now operational. But it is critically low in funding with under $1bn committed so far. As well as a big funding boost it needs to demonstrate it can respond quickly and effectively to climate impacts which can't be adapted to including by providing grants directly to communities experiencing such impacts.
- The unequal impact of climate disasters demonstrates the importance of adaptation to lower vulnerability before disasters strike. The UN Early Warnings for All Initiative has an ambitious target of universal coverage by 2027 from a situation where over a third of the global population, mainly in the Global South, lacked access. This is unlikely to be met without a significant increase in resources. Whilst much progress has been made in reducing the incidence of deaths, much more can be done to make communities more resilient, for example by investing in agroecology which can withstand climate change better whilst helping to prevent emissions in the first place.
- The global 'postcode lottery' facing those experiencing climate disasters shows the importance of governments investing in effective social protection. These services are even more vital when homes and livelihoods have been damaged and can help people recover dignity and agency as well as practically providing income and wider economic benefits. Rich countries have a vital role to ensure lower income country governments have more 'fiscal space' to invest in social protection, through debt relief, fairer international tax rules, mobilising international climate finance and development aid. Apart from the start of negotiations for a UN tax convention, none of these issues saw progress during 2025; 2026 needs to make up for lost time.
- The patchy data on the impacts of climate-related disasters in the global south highlights the importance of better data provision and gathering. It is particularly important to understand the totality of economic impacts in lower income countries where insurance-based estimates are not often available.
- Researchers should develop methodologies for analysing the long-term impacts of climate-related disasters, including economic costs, so that a more comprehensive understanding of prevention, adaptation and addressing losses is produced. This can contribute to a more needs-based approach to international climate finance.

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