

The Cost of Confused Climate Science



A retracted blockbuster study shows the motivated reasoning that fuels climate hysteria.

By The Editors

12.03.25 —U.S. Politics

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A high-profile scientific study all but promised a climate catastrophe. It's now been retracted, but the climate hysteria it created remains. (David McNew via Getty Images)

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Have you heard how, by the end of the century, climate change will cut the world's economic output by two thirds? How Australia's Great Barrier Reef, one of the wonders of the natural world, is disappearing? How the island nations of the Pacific are sinking into the sea?

If you have even a glancing knowledge of the reporting on climate change, you have heard all of this and much more. It's always a minute to midnight when it comes to the climate, and the future we're approaching is a barren desert, where humanity's last stragglers scrape for seeds in the grit of the hot wind.

These scary scenarios motivate legions of megadonors and have spurred a generation of young activists. But the grim predictions are often based on bad science. And while we hear a great deal about the costs of climate change, we hear far less about the costs of climate hysteria—both the direct financial costs of all the programs meant to save us from it, and the damage it inflicts on the proper practice of science.

The leading science journal *Nature* on Wednesday retracted a paper that made the striking claim that climate change will reduce global economic output by 62 percent by the end of the century. This wasn't just any paper. It was, as [The Washington Post has reported](#), the second-most cited climate paper of 2024, and one that helped define the debate. But when skeptical researchers checked the math, they found the underlying data indicated a 23 percent loss, not 62 percent. And a 6 percent loss by 2050, not 19 percent.

These numbers may have already made your eyes glaze over. And that's part of the point. In climate science, you're not supposed to look too closely at the details. For too many researchers, the goal is to produce the biggest numbers and galvanize action. When peers check their work closely, they often find howlers. In the *Nature* paper, a series of data errors linked to temperature in Uzbekistan appears to have tripled the projections.

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The *Nature* retraction is part of a long pattern. Scientific studies make outsize claims in the hope of influencing the public debate—always in one direction. By the time they're proved false, attention has already moved elsewhere. And it's not just about formal retractions. For years we've heard about the bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef. Now it turns out that in fact, the reef is seeing its [highest level of coral cover in 36 years](#). Tuvalu, a tiny Pacific island country, has served as a rallying cry for climate panic for its supposedly imminent descent into the rising sea, but in fact, it's been clear for years that its land area is [actually increasing](#). And real data gets twisted beyond recognition to reflect the perils of climate change, no matter how bizarre the argument. In Sweden, for instance, [the dangerous effects of heat waves](#) are said to include drowning deaths, because more people go swimming.

Costly climate policies are the fruit of this poor science. *The Wall Street Journal* on Tuesday offered an eagle's-eye view of [the price of Europe's green energy overhaul](#). Europeans were told that replacing fossil fuels with renewables would cost little—after all, what's cheaper than sunlight? But now they're getting the bill, and each item is eye-popping. Manufacturing plants are closing because electricity prices are too high in industries like chemical production. Solar and wind farms require “vast redundant capacity” for periods when the sun isn't shining or the wind isn't blowing. And even when conditions are right, they're wrong. Scotland's biggest wind farm is shut off 70 percent of the time because it produces so much power that running it at full tilt would overwhelm the electric grid. The UK is paying £2.7 billion (about \$3.6 billion) a year to subsidize projects like this, and that figure is set to triple by 2030. These are the costs that European rate payers are facing.

The greatest cost is to science itself, which is drained by every paper, research grant, and article that trades real scholarship and discussion for climate agitprop. Don't get us wrong—we love our beautiful planet and applaud the serious scientists who work to preserve it. But many of the alarmist predictions that drive the press aren't worth the paper they're printed on.