

Climate change has 'irreversibly' changed Florida, a new global report says

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Unchecked climate change has already changed Florida permanently and irreversibly—and the world has a limited window to stop it from getting worse, according to a new global report from the world's top scientists.

"The scientific evidence is unequivocal: [climate](#) change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in

concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future," says the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, released on Monday.

The nearly 2,000-page report had a global focus, but Florida was repeatedly used as an example of a place where the impacts of climate change were already being felt, both economically and environmentally.

Those impacts aren't news to resident of the Sunshine State. It's tidal flooding from [higher sea levels](#), even on perfectly sunny days, it's hotter days and nights, more harmful algal blooms and mosquito-borne illnesses, stronger and wetter hurricanes and less productive crops, livestock and fisheries.

Financially, studies have repeatedly shown buyers are already selecting homes and buildings that face less flood risk, which has already taken at least a \$500 million toll on the Miami-Dade [real estate market](#) alone, according to a study cited in the report. This has led to the displacement of poorer communities, usually communities of color, from higher elevation neighborhoods in a process known as climate gentrification.

Adapting to it all is doable, but pricey. Florida has already spent hundreds of millions raising roads, homes and seawalls to defend against the incoming threats, but the report noted that at a certain point, there isn't enough money or technology to keep everywhere in the world habitable.

The IPCC report doesn't name a single event or global temperature that would tip the planet into civilization-ending chaos. Instead, it points out that this point has already been reached for some ecosystems around the world, like coral reefs.

If the planet reached 2 degrees Celsius of global warming, up to 99% of

the globe's coral reefs will be lost, according to research cited in the report. But even under the best-case scenario, where the world stays under 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming, 95% of coral reefs will be lost.

The world is currently at 1.09 degrees and an IPCC report issued last year suggested we could hit 1.5 degrees by 2040.

In a fiery speech, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called the report "an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership." He railed against fossil fuels, the main source of climate change-causing [greenhouse gasses](#), and urged the world to stop burning them immediately.

"This abdication of leadership is criminal," he said. "The world's biggest polluters are guilty of arson on our only home."

But just because some parts of the world are irreversibly harmed doesn't mean the planet is beyond saving, the report said.

A focused, well-financed push to help the world adapt to climate change—as well as an equal push to stop burning [fossil fuels](#) as fast as possible—could lessen the horrors for humanity in store with unbridled global warming.

Miami-Dade County's sea level rise strategy, which calls for building higher and farther away from water, was name-checked in the global report as an example of a community with a clear-eyed look at the risks of climate change.

Florida's government has recently committed nearly half a billion dollars to local governments around the state to help them adapt to rising seas and temperatures, although none of that cash goes toward helping lower

greenhouse gas emissions.

"We simultaneously need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to reduce the impacts of [climate change](#)... and we have a very limited amount of time to do this," said Adelle Thomas, a researcher at the University of the Bahamas and a lead author on the IPCC [report](#).

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