

# Climate Change Study Predicting Dire Economic Damage Is Retracted

Outside researchers had raised questions about data in research published by Nature

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Steam rising from a coal-fired power station in Datteln, Germany. INA FASSBENDER/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

- A climate change study projecting a 62% decline in global economic output by 2100 was retracted due to skewed data.

**A [widely cited study](#) on economic damage from climate change was retracted Wednesday following criticism from peers.**

The research, **published last year in the prestigious journal Nature**, projected that the world's economic output would decline **62% by 2100 under a high-carbon emissions scenario**. The estimate was much more severe than other forecasts, prompting scrutiny of the underlying data.

“We broadly agree with the issues raised, and have made corrections to the underlying economic data and to our methodology to address them,” said study author Leonie Wenz, from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany. “These changes are too substantial for a correction of the original article in Nature.”

The study examined historical data from some 1,600 regions worldwide over the past four decades to project how changes in temperature and precipitation would affect economic growth, including factors like agricultural yields, labor productivity and infrastructure.

However, after the study was published, other researchers found that economic data from one country—Uzbekistan—during a short time from 1995 to 1999 had skewed the results. Without Uzbekistan, the 2100 **damage forecast fell to 23%, not 62%**. The researchers [published their critique](#) in Nature in August.

Another researcher who wasn’t involved in the original work, Christof Schötz, said the results were more uncertain than the study suggested and [published a separate critique](#) in Nature in August.

The study had been cited by the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, the World Bank and the Network for Greening the Financial System, or NGFS, a coalition of central banks from which the Federal Reserve withdrew this year.

The coalition, which has members in about 90 countries, incorporated the damage forecast in risk tools that banks can use, for instance, to stress-test portfolios to meet European regulations. The NGFS damage estimate [still incorporates the study](#)—with a disclaimer flagging the retraction—pending its next update.

Central bank models of the economic impacts of climate change could have far-reaching implications. If these models show impacts are going to be much worse than previously thought, regulators could make banks set aside more capital to buffer against potential losses associated with assets exposed to climate change, according to Ely Sandler, a researcher at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Scientists noted that despite problems with the data in this study, there is still scientific agreement that climate change hurts the world economy.

“There is a broad **scientific consensus regarding the severe negative economic effects of climate change**,” said Schötz, who added the retraction “does not alter that reality.”

Wenz noted that, despite the retraction, the conclusions of her group’s study are consistent with other research showing climate change has substantial effects on macroeconomic productivity, and that those impacts outweigh the costs of climate change mitigation.

The group plans to submit a revised version of the study for peer review.

Nature said it followed the journal’s process for handling concerns about a published paper, which involves consulting the original authors of the paper and seeking advice from independent, external peer reviewers.

“Our priority is always to uphold the integrity of the scientific record,” said Karl Ziemelis, chief applied and physical sciences editor for Nature.