

# Capitalism failing on all 45 indicators of climate progress

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6 November 2025

The United Nations' "Emissions Gap Report 2025" shows the planet is on course for 2.8 degrees Celsius of warming above the pre-industrial average by the end of this century based on current policies. If current climate commitments are implemented, temperatures will still rise by 2.3-2.5 degrees.

This is a looming catastrophe for billions around the world. The Earth has not yet passed the 1.5 degree warming mark for a sustained period and already this has led to historic droughts, heatwaves, floods, wildfires, storms and ocean acidification; widespread crop failures, species extinction and the more extensive spread of disease.

Scientists predict that these symptoms will worsen dramatically, in non-linear fashion, as temperatures rise. A 2.5 degree warming scenario would mean devastation for vast swathes of the world's population.

However, even the UN's dire figures are rose-tinted. There are uncertainties over tipping points (like the collapse of ice sheets or ocean circulation systems) and feedback loops (like loss of sea ice, thawing permafrost, degraded forests and rainforests) which could make for a substantially worse trajectory than predicted.

Moreover, the projections are based on "overshoot" models which assume temperatures will rise higher than their end-of-decade figure, then be reined in by the removal of massive quantities of carbon from the atmosphere. This relies on technology and methods unproven or potentially harmful at such a scale.

To limit warming to 1.5 degrees, the report explains, carbon emissions need to be cut by 55 percent in the next ten years, and then 66 percent in the subsequent fifteen, while 5-15 years' worth of carbon emissions are removed from the atmosphere.

This is a civilizational challenge which the increasingly barbaric capitalist system is incapable of meeting in a world divided into competing nation states, with the major imperialist powers escalating trade and military war to secure the right of the financial oligarchy to plunder essential resources.

The "State of Climate Action 2025" report from the World Resources Institute found that the world's governments are failing on all 45 indicators of progress towards limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees. Of these, 29 indicators are "well off track", meaning at least a twofold and for most a fourfold acceleration of progress is needed to meet end-of-decade targets.

Five indicators—the carbon intensity of steel production, the share of kilometres travelled by passenger cars, mangrove loss, share of food production lost, and public fossil fuel finance—are heading in the wrong direction.

There is not even enough data to analyse the trend for the remaining five: the rate of retrofitting buildings, the share of new buildings which are zero-carbon, peatland degradation, peatland restoration and food waste.

The scale of the failure is staggering. If world governments are to meet 1.5 degree-aligned end-of-decade targets, and stay on track through to 2035, these are just some of the steps which must be taken:

? Coal generation must be phased out more than *ten times* faster, closing 360 average-sized coal-fuelled power plants a year.

? Deforestation must be reduced *nine times* faster.

? Affordable and reliable public transport systems in the world's heaviest emitting cities must be constructed *five times* faster, building 1,400 km of light and metro rail and bus routes every year.

? Solar and wind power's share of electricity generation must be expanded at *double* the recent rate.

? Consumption of beef, lamb and goat in high-consuming regions must fall *five times* faster.

? Climate finance must increase by close to \$1 trillion each year, equal to roughly two-thirds of public fossil fuel finance in 2023.

The science underlying these reports is unarguable. But their political premise, that they provide advice to a ruling class which will act accordingly based on the science, is fatally flawed.

Since the Paris Agreement establishing the 1.5 degree limit

in 2015, global emissions have continued rising. In 2024 alone, the figure rose by 2.3 percent—the largest annual increase since the 2000s—to a historic high.

A more-or-less open repudiation of climate action is underway among the imperialist powers and the major banks and corporations. “State of Climate Action 2025” points out:

In a particularly notable development this year, the world’s second-largest emitter and largest historical emitter, the United States, has scaled back climate policies and programs, reduced the scope of environmental agencies, and discontinued long-standing investments in climate science and decarbonization measures.

But American capitalism is only the sharpest expression of a global trend. According to the Stockholm Environment Institute’s “Production Gap 2025” report, “Ten years on from the Paris Agreement, countries collectively plan even more fossil fuel production than before.” Oil, gas and coal developments now in the pipeline would see the world emit double the carbon in 2030 that is consistent with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees.

The continued expansion of these projects underscores the crucial fact: the scope for profitable extraction of fossil fuels massively exceeds the sustainable limits on their exploitation. Moreover, the wealth accrued by doing so insulates the beneficiaries from the environmental consequences.

The unavoidable conclusion is that only the expropriation of the vast, profit-seeking fortunes of the super-rich can begin to address the climate crisis. Around the globe, the billions wanting to fight for a liveable planet cannot console themselves with the illusion of international collaboration to meet climate targets, led by capitalist governments representing the world’s mega corporations.

The wealth of the oligarchy must be seized not only to put a stop to their obscene lifestyles—with the top 1 percent burning through their annual carbon budget in just 10 days—but to give the working class control of the resources and productive forces necessary to reshape the economy and lower its environmental footprint as a whole.

In many countries, social life has been so distorted by the profit motive such that even the average person unavoidably uses more carbon a year than the global per capita limit if global heating is to be kept even to 1.5 degrees Celsius: roughly 2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. In Europe, the per capita emissions for the middle 40 percent income group was 10.7 tonnes in 2019, in North America 21.8 tonnes.

For those who do not exceed the per capita limit—in the rich countries and the wider majority of the world—this is frequently a result of poverty. However, the connection between carbon use and living standards, past a certain threshold, is not a fixed law; it can appear so under capitalism only due to its destruction of communal goods and services, the gutting of social life and underdevelopment of sustainable technologies.

In addition to the replacement of fossil fuelled with renewable energy systems, there must be a substantial reduction of car ownership and use, made possible by the increased provision and quality of public and cycle transport. Homes must be built or retrofitted to eco-friendly standards around common facilities for efficient energy use.

Agriculture must be shifted to more carbon-efficient methods and produce; consumer industries retooled to provide lasting, durable goods; and the advertising and algorithm industries, now used to turbocharge the consumption of resources and energy, torn apart and reassembled to serve the public good.

There should be a vast expansion of social spaces, public events and the time to enjoy them.

All of which would bring society within safe and sustainable environmental limits and dramatically improve the quality of life of the vast majority of people on the planet.

This cannot be done through the destructive, inherently exploitative forces of the market, or while preserving private property in the means of production. Both must be replaced with democratically planned production, in which society as a whole can make educated decisions about how to manage its resources.

Poll after poll shows enormous support (89 percent globally, according to a study by Oxford University) for stronger action to tackle the climate crisis. Yet each year the planet is plunged deeper into catastrophe, because the “green” programmes on offer are based on a capitalist system which renders a serious response impossible.

As with all the major issues facing humanity, the climate crisis is a class question; it requires a revolutionary socialist movement of the working class for its solution.



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