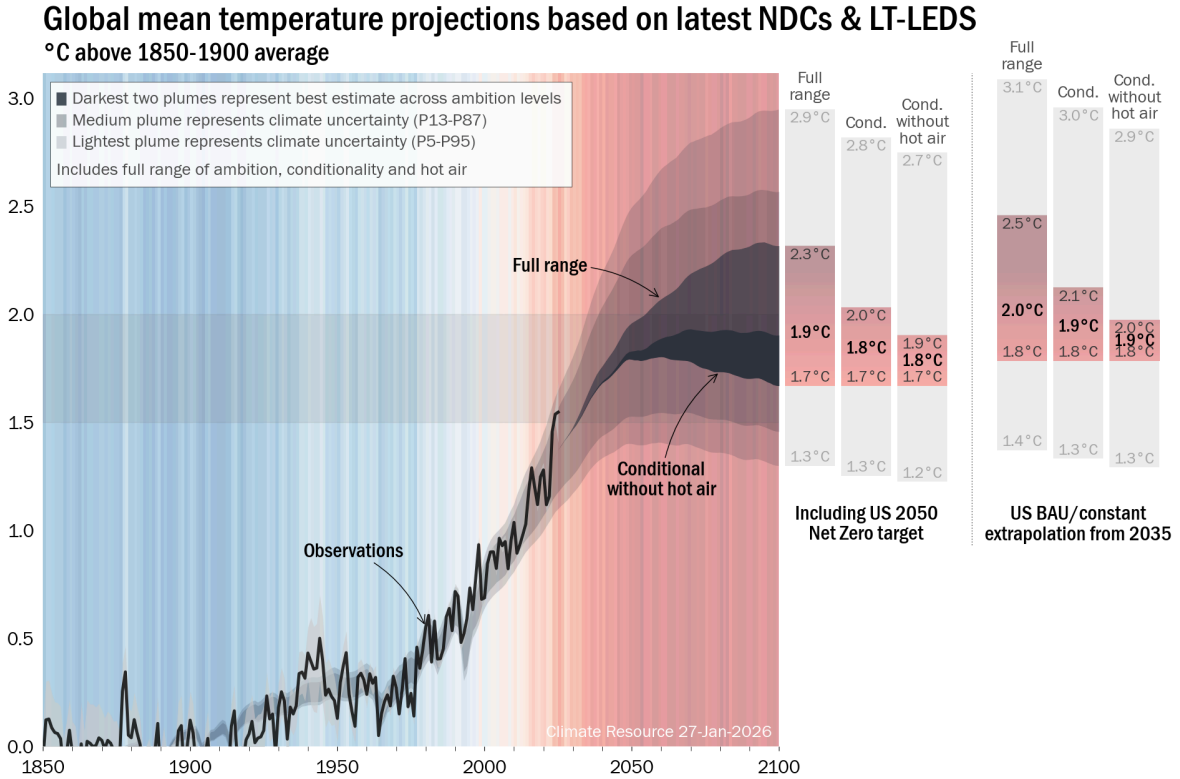
Behind the curves: warming projections after the US Paris withdrawal

Policy briefing - 27 January 2026

This briefing assesses global warming outcomes following the submission of 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement effective 27 January 2026. Full report here.



Global 2100 temperature implied by NDCs + Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS) in two cases. *The two cases use projections based on US current policies to 2035, and then (1) assume US emissions trend to net-zero from 2035 to mid-century (three bars on the left) and (2) assume the US does not follow a net-zero pathway, instead using a BAU and constant extrapolation range from 2035 to 2060, followed by an equal-quantile walk from 2060 to 2100.*

Key findings

- Three consistent warming bands emerge across major assessments: 2.5-2.9°C under current policies; 2.3-2.6°C with NDCs only; and 1.8-2.2°C when NDCs and long-term targets are fully implemented.
- Differences in warming estimates reflect divergent assumptions about policy implementation and post-2035 trajectories, not disagreement about climate science.
- The 2035 NDCs send a strong signal, broadly aligning with linear emissions pathways from 2030 targets to mid-century net-zero goals.
- US withdrawal shifts warming projections upward by 0.1-0.2°C depending on post-2035 trajectory assumptions.
- The opportunity to limit warming to 1.5°C without overshoot has likely passed. However, returning to 1.5°C by 2100 after temporary overshoot remains technically feasible if existing targets are met and ambition accelerates.

Policy implications

- **Base case for planning:** Scenarios delivering 1.8-2.2°C are now the central expectation for policy, regulatory frameworks, and investment strategies.
- **Implementation is critical**: The gap between current policies (2.5-2.9°C) and stated targets (1.8-2.2°C) requires rapid, non-linear policy changes, faster clean energy deployment, and heightened transition risks for high-emission assets.
- **Risk cuts both ways**: Failure to implement raises warming risk, but successful implementation may drive faster-than-expected transitions. Investment strategies assuming slow progress face growing downside risk.
- **International cooperation remains essential:** Achieving targets requires scaled climate finance, stronger domestic frameworks, sectoral transitions in hard-to-abate industries, and support for countries with conditional NDCs.

The gap between current 'just below 2 °C' projections and pathways consistent with '1.5 °C with a short and shallow overshoot' defines the global mitigation challenge, requiring both enhanced and earlier targets and the policies to implement them.

Critical uncertainties

Large emitters drive global outcomes. China, the US, India, the EU, and Russia collectively account for nearly 60% of 2030 emissions. For India, the absence of a 2035 NDC leaves significant uncertainty in medium-term pathways. For the US, post-2035 trajectory assumptions, whether emissions reflect current policies or trend toward net-zero by mid-century, shift projected warming by 0.1-0.2°C.

Bottom line

The 2035 NDCs represent meaningful progress. Global emissions are projected to peak this decade, and aggregate commitments reaffirm pathways toward net-zero goals. However, warming of 1.8-2.2°C, even under full implementation, underscores the consequences of delayed action. The remaining gap between projected outcomes and 1.5°C defines the scale of the global mitigation challenge. Policy choices made in the next few years will determine which pathway becomes reality. Understanding the assumptions underlying warming estimates is essential for credible policy design, investment planning, and risk management.