

In his ERG Lecture last week, John Holdren made an excellent point about terminology. The term “Global Warming” is totally misleading. “Warming” suggests a gradual, gentle process. Combined with the term “global,” it suggests that the main concern is the increase in average global temperatures.

As Holdren pointed out, this is all quite misleading: (1) the big concern is not with global averages (which are heavily weighted by the large amount of area occupied by oceans) but with the much larger changes that can be expected in many areas; (2) the pace of change will outpace the ability of ecosystems and human institutions to respond; (3) temperature extremes such as heat waves are much more worrisome than average local temperatures; and (4) extreme weather events such as storms, droughts, and floods are scarier than the temperature changes themselves.

Instead of “Global Warming,” Holdren suggested the term “Climate Disruption.” That seems to me like a much more accurate description of the real problem.

P.S. We will be posting the entire lecture on the [ERG homepage](#) next week.