In what may be the most serious repercussion yet from predicted temperature rises, NPR is reporting this morning on Professor Richard Larrick's research showing that as temperatures increase, so does the number of batters who get hit by pitches. Moreover, when a batter gets hit by a pitch, retaliation by the opposing team increases in the form of — you guessed it — pitchers throwing at hitters. Thus if, as predicted, temperatures rise across the U.S. in coming decades, especially in the dog days of summer, climate change is likely to increase the number of hit batters, causing an increase in retaliation by opposing teams, leading to more retaliation and so on and so on.

The chaos an increase in hitbatsman could wreak on Major League Baseball — indeed on all levels of baseball — is to my knowledge an understudied phenomenon. We don't know, for example, whether the connection between higher temperatures and getting hit by a pitch is simply coincidence or whether the higher temperatures are actually the cause. Same question with respect to whether retaliation increases because of higher temperatures or for some other reason. Larrick speculates that temperatures cause an increase in aggressive baseball playing based on other research showing that when you put research subjects in a hot room, they behave more aggressively. But surely more research is needed. Perhaps field study? Funded by Major League Baseball?

Source: National Public Radio,
Richard Larrick