

1 **Projected Increases in Summertime Temperature**  
2 **Variance are Driven by Local Thermodynamics**

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5 **Key Points:**

- 6 • Summertime temperature variance over land increases with local mean temper-  
7 ature in contemporary global climate models.  
8 • A theoretical model captures these increases using only projected changes in tem-  
9 perature and relative humidity from global climate models.  
10 • Uncertainties in plant processes and climate sensitivity control the spread of cli-  
11 mate model summertime temperature variance change.

## Abstract

The increasing frequency of very high temperatures driven by global warming has motivated growing interest in how the probability distribution of summertime temperatures will evolve in the future. Climate models predict increasing temperature variance in global warming simulations, but given their biased representations of historical temperature variability, it is important to use simple models to evaluate and understand these predictions. In this study we show that the projections of increasing temperature variance are indeed credible and are driven primarily by the magnitude of local warming. A simple analytic theory based on the surface energy and water budgets reproduces the increased midlatitude summertime temperature variance shown by state of the art climate models using only the local change in summertime mean temperature and relative humidity. The relative contributions of local warming and relative humidity changes to the increases in summertime temperature variance are roughly equal.

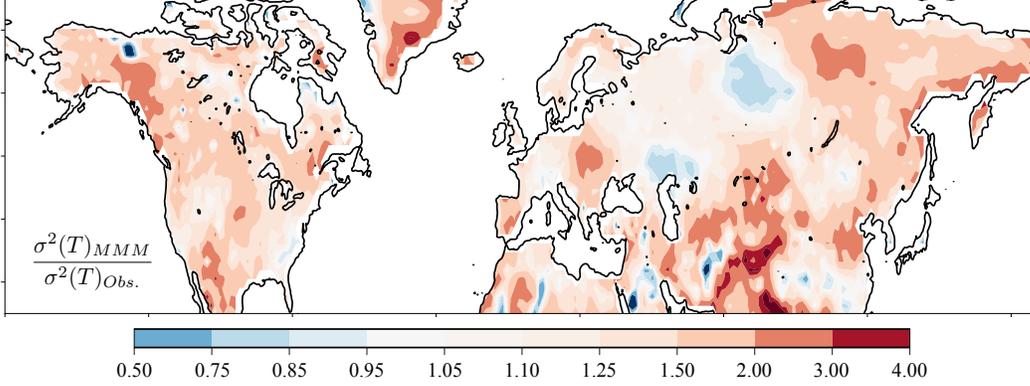
## Plain Language Summary

Extreme summertime temperatures are a focal point for the impacts of climate change. Climate models project increasing summertime temperature variance in simulations driven by anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> forcing. If credible, these increases imply that extreme summertime temperatures will become even more frequent than a simple shift in the contemporary probability distribution would suggest. Given the impacts of extreme temperatures on public health, food security, and the global economy, it is of great interest to understand whether the projections of increased temperature variance are credible. In this study, we find that the large increases in summertime temperature variance projected by climate models are credible, predictable from first principles, and driven by local changes in summertime mean temperature and relative humidity.

## 1 Introduction

How will summertime land surface temperature variability evolve as the climate changes? This question is of paramount importance, not only for a more complete understanding land-atmosphere interaction, but for a more nuanced projection of how the frequency of heat waves and droughts will change in the future. Complicating our understanding of temperature variability over land is the fact that contemporary climate models show significant biases in their representations of summertime temperature variability. The ratio of the multi-model-mean (MMM) summertime temperature variance in 41 global climate models participating in the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CMIP6, Eyring et al., 2016) to the variance observed over the last 20 years of the historical period (1995-2014) is shown in Fig. 1. The supplementary information contains a list of all models in the ensemble (Table S1). The models over-predict the summertime temperature variance by at least 20% over a considerable fraction of the mid-latitudes; a similar value was found in an analysis of the CMIP5 ensemble (Vargas Zepetello, T etreault-Pinard, et al., 2020).

Debate over the dominant controls on summertime temperature variability is prevalent throughout the climate modelling literature. Studies of atmospheric dynamics have argued that thermal advection and steep gradients in land-ocean temperatures are responsible for shaping the distributions of above-boundary layer temperatures (Schneider et al., 2015; Linz et al., 2020). However, Holmes et al. (2016) found that thermal advection can explain only a small fraction of the increases in summertime temperature variance projected in CMIP5 models in global warming simulations. As atmospheric dynamics provides relatively little insight on how the contemporary pattern of summertime temperature variance will evolve in a changing climate, local processes related to surface soil moisture have been shown to contribute a significant amount of variability in climate models (e.g., Koster et al., 2006; Berg et al., 2014; Vogel et al., 2017). Donat et al. (2017)



**Figure 1.** Summertime temperature variance bias defined as the ratio of the multi-model-mean variance from 41 CMIP6 models from 1994-2014 of historical simulations to observed temperature variance from gridded weather station observations from the same period (Willmott & Matsuura, 2001).

documented the connection between surface fluxes, soil moisture, and temperature variability in the CMIP5 ensemble, but also pointed out that changes in extreme temperatures represented in the models driven by the anthropogenic emissions during the historical period have not been observed; a problem that is likely linked to the biases in temperature variance documented Fig. 1. The biases in contemporary models and the consensus that soil moisture and surface fluxes are of paramount importance to temperature variability over land justify using simple models to understand the evolution of summertime temperature variance in a warming world.

In recent work, Vargas Zeppetello, Battisti, and Baker (2020) used the local surface energy and water budgets to derive a simple equation for summertime temperature variance as a function of monthly variability in shortwave radiation  $\mathcal{F}$  and precipitation  $\mathcal{P}$ :

$$\sigma^2(T') = \frac{1}{\Gamma^2} [\sigma^2(\mathcal{F}') - 2\zeta\overline{\mathcal{F}'\mathcal{L}\mathcal{P}'} + \zeta^2\sigma^2(\mathcal{L}\mathcal{P}')] . \quad (1)$$

In Eq. 1, primed quantities represent deviations from monthly mean values in June, July, and August while  $\sigma^2$  terms represent the variance, or average of the squares of these primed anomaly terms. Barred terms indicate summertime mean averages. The shortwave variance, precipitation variance and covariance between monthly anomalies in these two terms will be referred to as “forcing components” and are illustrated in the supplementary information (Fig. S1). Importantly, terms  $\mathcal{F}'$  and  $\mathcal{P}'$  are not independent, they are anti-correlated and the term  $\overline{\mathcal{F}'\mathcal{L}\mathcal{P}'}$  is negative and acts to increase the overall temperature variance.  $\Gamma$  [ $\text{W m}^{-2} \text{K}^{-1}$ ] is a damping parameter that scales linearly with mean soil moisture, reflecting the fact that climatologically wet regions use more incident energy for evapotranspiration, thereby reducing surface temperature fluctuations (Seneviratne et al., 2010, and references therein).  $\zeta$  (unitless) is a dryness index between zero and one that amplifies temperature variance associated with precipitation in dry regions. Precipitation-induced soil moisture anomalies preferentially amplify temperature variability in dry regions due to a combination of evapotranspiration’s sensitivity to soil moisture in regions with low soil moisture and high atmospheric demand for water vapor (Seneviratne et al., 2010; Vargas Zeppetello et al., 2019). A brief derivation of this equation is found in the Appendix, and evaluation of the equation’s capacity to replicate summertime temperature variance in the CMIP6 ensemble is provided in the supplementary information (Fig. S2).

## Temperature Variance Sensitivity

In this section, we perform a sensitivity analysis of Eq. 1 to provide insight into how temperature variance will evolve as the climate warms. The partial derivative of Eq. 1 with respect to mean summertime temperature  $\bar{T}$  is:

$$\frac{\partial \sigma^2(T')}{\partial \bar{T}} = \frac{2}{\Gamma^2} \left[ \zeta \frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \bar{T}} \sigma^2(LP') - \overline{\mathcal{F}'LP'} \frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \bar{T}} - \Gamma \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial \bar{T}} \sigma^2(T') \right]. \quad (2)$$

This partial differentiation ignores potential contributions to changing temperature variance from the forcing components, summertime mean soil moisture, and model parameters. Thus, Eq. 2 represents *only* the change in temperature variance associated with climatological warming. Changes in the forcings parameters  $\sigma^2(\mathcal{F})$  and  $\sigma^2(\mathcal{P})$  are shown in the supplementary information (Fig. S3), but those changes could also be induced by local warming impacting boundary layer clouds over land (Laguë et al., 2019) and thus may not constitute a completely independent forcing on the land surface. Eq. 2 ignores changes in soil moisture; some authors attribute more extreme temperature variability in climate change simulations to large scale land surface drying (Vogel et al., 2017), but Berg et al. (2016) have shown that soil moisture changes in models are largely seasonal, reflecting an increased amplitude of the cycle of climatological precipitation minus evapotranspiration. Thus, soil moisture changes may also not constitute a purely independent forcing on the land surface in the same way as the climatological warming. The partial derivative in Eq. 2 provides a thermodynamic estimate based on purely local changes associated with atmospheric water vapor demand realized through the two parameters  $\zeta$  and  $\Gamma$ :

$$\frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \bar{T}} = \frac{\alpha}{(\bar{V} + \alpha)^2} \left( \frac{d\bar{q}_s}{d\bar{T}} (1 - \overline{\text{RH}}) - \bar{q}_s \frac{\partial \overline{\text{RH}}}{\partial \bar{T}} \right), \quad (3)$$

$$\frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial \bar{T}} = \frac{L\rho_a \bar{m}}{r_s} \left( \frac{d^2 \bar{q}_s}{d\bar{T}^2} (1 - \zeta) - \frac{d\bar{q}_s}{d\bar{T}} \frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \bar{T}} \right). \quad (4)$$

In Eq. 3,  $\alpha$  is a constant composed of various parameters that we assume are spatially invariant across the land surface (see Eq. A7),  $\bar{m}$  is the mean soil moisture, and  $\bar{V}$  is the summertime mean atmospheric water vapor demand calculated as  $\bar{V} = q_s(\bar{T})(1 - \overline{\text{RH}})$  where  $\bar{T}$  and  $\overline{\text{RH}}$  are the surface temperature and relative humidity, respectively.

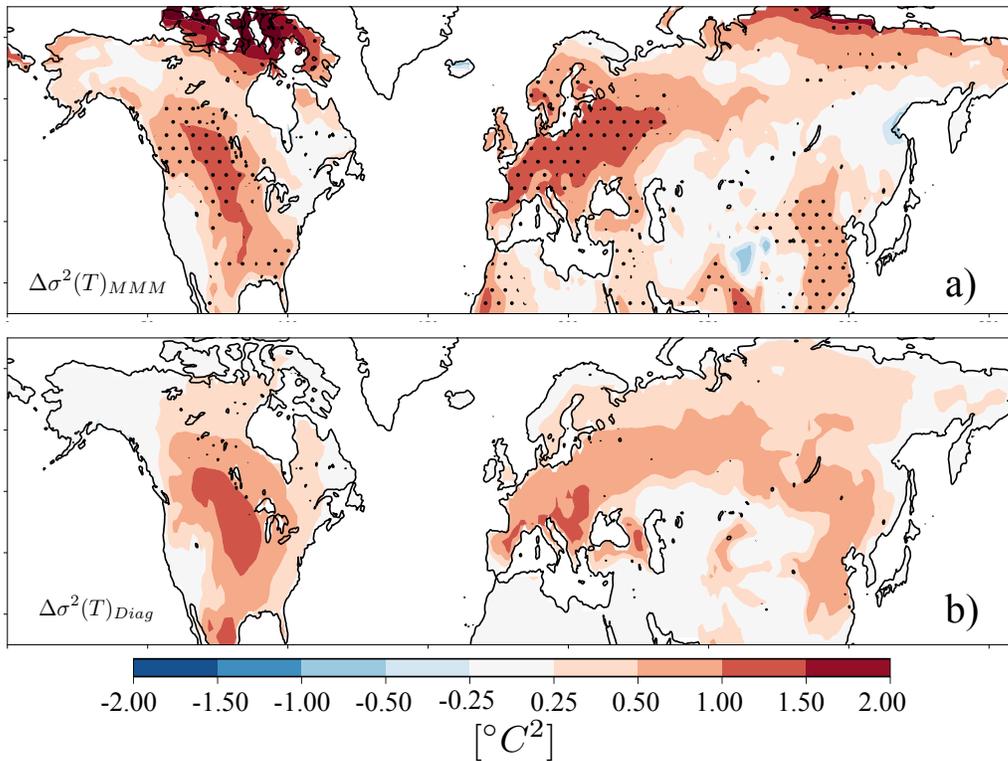
The differentials in Eqs. 3 and 4 reflect different impacts of mean temperature change on local thermodynamics that impact the energetics of evapotranspiration. The change in  $\zeta$  with mean temperature reflects the tendency towards a more arid climate both through increasing summertime mean saturation specific humidity  $\bar{q}_s$  directly through the Clausius-Clapeyron's temperature dependence *and* modulating the climatological relative humidity  $\overline{\text{RH}}$ . The change in  $\Gamma$  expresses the change in the land surface's capacity to mute forced energy perturbations due to changes in the climatological mean evapotranspiration.

## Impact of Climate Change on Temperature Variance

To calculate the change in temperature variance expected purely from local warming, we calculate the derivatives in Eqs. 3 and 4 using CMIP6 MMM climatological  $\bar{V}$ ,  $\bar{m}$ ,  $\bar{q}_s$ , and  $\overline{\text{RH}}$  from the end of the historical period (1995-2014). We approximate  $\frac{\partial \overline{\text{RH}}}{\partial \bar{T}}$  by dividing the local MMM relative humidity change at the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by the local MMM warming  $\Delta \bar{T}$ . After calculating these derivatives, we substitute them into Eq. 2 and compute the total change in temperature variance as:

$$\Delta \sigma^2(T') = \frac{\partial \sigma^2(T')}{\partial \bar{T}} \Delta \bar{T}. \quad (5)$$

Figure 2a shows the CMIP6 multi-model-mean change in temperature variance between 2080-2099 of the SSP585 scenario and 1995-2014 of the historical simulations, while



**Figure 2.** The changes in variance of summertime monthly mean temperatures over the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2080-99 of the SSP585 emissions scenario minus 1995-2014 of the historical simulations) in the CMIP6 ensemble mean and (b) predicted from Eq. 5. Stippling in panel (a) shows regions where more than 75% of the models in the ensemble agree on the sign of the variance change.

133 Fig. 2b shows the pattern of temperature variance change predicted by Eq. 5. The three  
 134 contributions to temperature variance change on the right-hand-side of Eq. 2 are shown  
 135 in the supplementary information (Fig. S4). The first two terms contribute most of the  
 136 change, suggesting that increased aridity with warming acts to amplify the evapotran-  
 137 spiration anomalies in regions with high precipitation variability. The final term is a small  
 138 residual and does not contribute much to the spatial pattern shown in either panel of  
 139 Fig. 2.

140 Given the simplicity of our calculation, the agreement between the two projections  
 141 is surprisingly good; the increases in summertime temperature variance shown in Fig. 2  
 142 represent a 30-50% increase from the historical period (a map of the increases represented  
 143 as a percentage is shown in Fig. S5). The Central United States, Europe, and East Asia  
 144 all stand out as regions where the projected impacts of increasing surface temperature  
 145 variance will be particularly impactful for international food security (Tigchelaar et al.,  
 146 2018). Further, public health crises driven by extreme heat waves have devastated Eu-  
 147 rope multiple times since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schär et al., 2004; Grumm, 2011);  
 148 our result suggests that these heat waves will grow more severe in a warming world as  
 149 the mean *and variance* of summertime temperatures increase. The agreement between  
 150 our simple model and the CMIP6 ensemble suggests that despite the large biases present  
 151 in the temperature variance in the CMIP6 model simulations of the historical period,  
 152 the *changes* projected by the climate models are credible and should be accounted for  
 153 in policy that seeks to make populations and food systems throughout the midlatitudes  
 154 more resilient to extreme temperature shocks.

155 The calculation in Eq. 5 reveals the impact of climatological warming on temper-  
 156 ature variance and does not include potential changes in shortwave radiation, precipi-  
 157 tation, soil moisture, and model parameters. Another method of calculating the expected  
 158 temperature variance is to subtract one realization of Eq. 1 that uses the forcings and  
 159 mean state variables taken from the end of the SSP585 scenario from another that uses  
 160 the forcings and mean state variables taken from the end of the historical period. This  
 161 calculation, shown in the supplementary information (Fig. S6), displays the same over-  
 162 all pattern of temperature variance change but poorer overall agreement than the cal-  
 163 culation based only on local warming shown in Fig. 2b. This suggests that large scale  
 164 soil moisture drying or changes in underlying model parameters may compensate for the  
 165 reduction in radiative and precipitation forcing shown in Fig. S3. Overall, our results  
 166 indicate that local climatological warming is the dominant control on changes in sum-  
 167 mertime temperature variance.

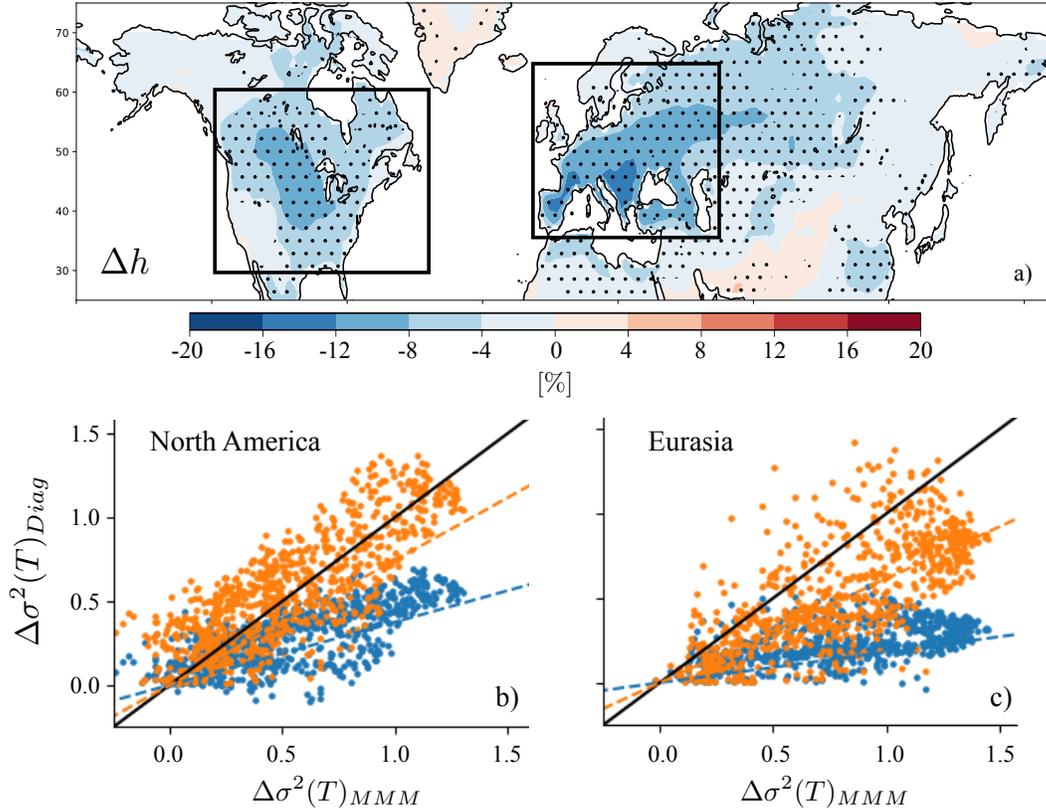
168 In our simple model we have assumed the variance in summertime temperature is  
 169 due to local (one dimensional) forcing. This assumption is supported by previous stud-  
 170 ies that demonstrate variability in atmospheric temperature advection does not contribute  
 171 significantly to summertime temperature variability on monthly time scales, except for  
 172 parts of far western Europe and near the marginal sea ice in the Arctic (e.g. Holmes et  
 173 al., 2016). In these regions, the projected increase in the climatological land-sea temper-  
 174 ature difference should enhance the variance associated with temperature advection. This  
 175 may explain why the change in temperature variance predicted by our simple model slightly  
 176 underestimates the increase in temperature variance projected by the CMIP6 models in  
 177 western Europe and in the coastal regions of the Arctic.

## 178 **The Importance of Relative Humidity in Temperature Variance Pro-** 179 **jections**

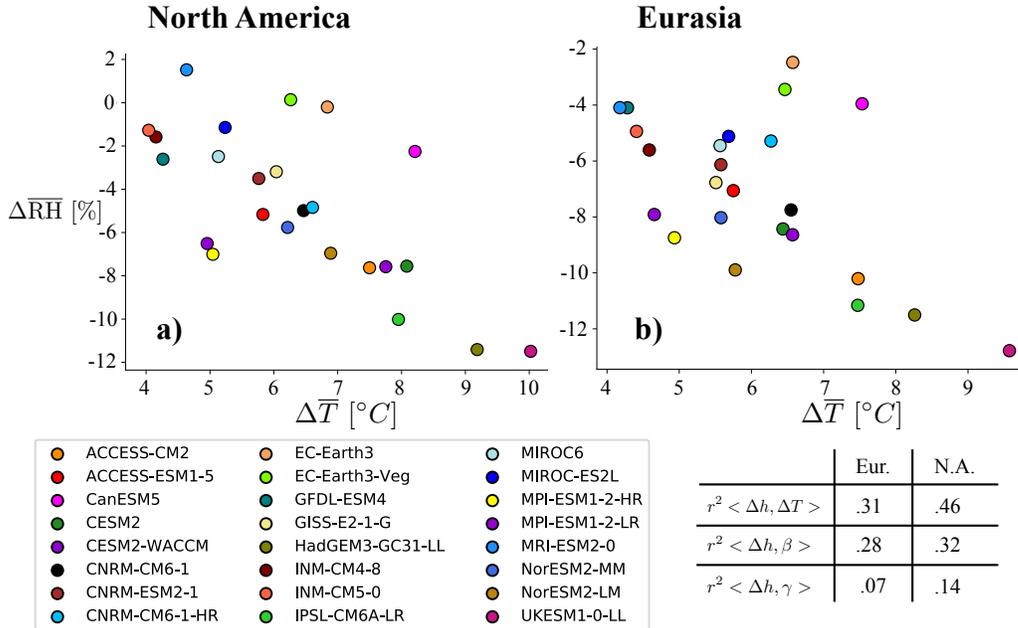
180 Using only changes in local summertime temperature and relative humidity, our  
 181 diagnostic model reproduces the projected changes in summertime temperature variance  
 182 in the CMIP6 models. The multi-model mean change in relative humidity is shown in  
 183 Fig. 3a; stippling shows grid cells where more than 75% of the models agree on the sign  
 184 of the change. Changes in North America and Eurasia are particularly large and robust  
 185 across models, to understand the relative contribution of local relative humidity changes  
 186 to the increased temperature variance, we can artificially set  $\frac{\partial \overline{\text{RH}}}{\partial T} = 0$  in Eq. 3 and  
 187 recalculate  $\Delta\sigma^2(T')$ .

188 The dots in Figs. 3b-c show the temperature variance changes predicted by the full  
 189 version of Eq. 2 (orange) and the artificial prediction where relative humidity changes  
 190 are excluded from the analysis (blue) as a function of the MMM value of  $\Delta\sigma^2(T')$ . In  
 191 both regions, relative humidity changes are equally important as local warming to the  
 192 projected increase in temperature variance. Both local warming and decreasing relative  
 193 humidity act to amplify the local atmospheric water vapor demand. In regions where  
 194 soil moisture is plentiful due to large annually averaged rainfall (like Eurasia and the cen-  
 195 tral United States) increased atmospheric demand for water vapor allows for large evap-  
 196 otranspiration anomalies that amplify the atmospheric forcing variance, and therefore  
 197 temperature variance.

198 Relative humidity changes are of first-order importance to the increased summer-  
 199 time temperature variance projected by climate models in the CMIP6 ensemble, but to  
 200 what extent does local warming control changes in relative humidity over land? Byrne  
 201 and O’Gorman (2018) have argued that the change in relative humidity over land sur-  
 202 faces is primarily a product of the differential warming over land and ocean. If this were  
 203 true, the dominant control of model climate sensitivity on the regional warming patterns  
 204 found across contemporary climate models suggests that model differences in surface warm-  
 205 ing should account for differences in the change in local relative humidity over land. Fig-  
 206 ures 4a-b show the changes in local relative humidity as a function of local temperature  
 207 changes averaged across the two boxed regions in Fig 3a. Nearly half the variance in rel-



**Figure 3.** Panel (a) shows CMIP6 multi-model-mean difference in summertime mean relative humidity at the end of the SSP585 experiment and the end of the historical experiment. Stippling shows grid cells where 75% of models agree on the sign of the change. Panels (b) and (c) show comparisons between our simple model’s prediction of temperature variance change (y-axis) and the multi-model-mean values (x-axis) in North America and Eurasia, respectively (regions are defined by the black boxes in panel (a)). Orange dots show the calculation when the change in relative humidity is accounted for, blue dots show the calculation when the value of  $\frac{\partial \text{RH}}{\partial T}$  is artificially set to zero.



**Figure 4.** Average summertime mean changes in relative humidity across North America (a) and Eurasia (b) between the end of the SSP585 experiment (2080-2099) and the end of the historical period (1995-2014) and as a function of average summertime warming across models participating in the CMIP6 (see legend). The table inset shows the fraction of the inter-model variance in the change in local relative humidity that is explained by local (top) warming, the carbon-concentration feedback parameter (middle)  $\beta$ , and the carbon-climate feedback parameter (bottom)  $\gamma$  from Arora et al. (2019).

208 active humidity changes across models (46%) is explained by the local warming over North  
 209 America, while in Eurasia 31% of the variance is explained by local warming. While local  
 210 warming is clearly a strong predictor of local changes in relative humidity, other mech-  
 211 anisms are required to explain the inter-model spread within the CMIP6 ensemble.

## 212 Plant Activity and Summertime Temperatures

213 Arora et al. (2019) have calculated sensitivity parameters that quantify the global  
 214 response of the carbon cycle to increasing  $\text{CO}_2$  and temperatures in ten of the models  
 215 analyzed in Fig. 4. Such parameters necessarily combine numerous plant physiological  
 216 responses to increasing temperature and atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  such as increased leaf area,  
 217 stomatal closure, and a changing growing season start date. The carbon-concentration  
 218 feedback parameter  $\beta$  quantifies global ecosystem response to a change in atmospheric  
 219  $\text{CO}_2$ : a high  $\beta$  value implies a large increase in land carbon uptake by the land surface  
 220 in response to increasing  $\text{CO}_2$  emissions. One pathway of interest for this study is an in-  
 221 creased leaf area driven by a higher atmospheric  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration which would increase  
 222 the mean evapotranspiration in the midlatitudes. The carbon-climate feedback param-  
 223 eter  $\gamma$  quantifies the global ecosystem response to changing mean temperature. The ta-  
 224 ble inset in Fig. 4 shows that of the two parameters, the carbon-concentration feedback  
 225 value  $\beta$  explains a larger fraction of the inter-model spread of relative humidity change  
 226 in both Eurasia and North America, comparable to the spread explained by local warm-  
 227 ing.

228 Across models, the vegetation response to increasing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is impor-  
229 tant for the projections of future carbon sequestration and for changes in local relative  
230 humidity and, by extension, temperature variance. In models with a large carbon-concentration  
231 feedback parameter  $\beta$ , the vegetation response to the increased CO<sub>2</sub> concentration com-  
232 pensates for local warming, likely by increasing leaf area and evapotranspiration thereby  
233 reducing the impacts of local warming on relative humidity. Models with a larger leaf  
234 area response will therefore exhibit smaller changes in temperature variance due to the  
235 mitigating effects on the climatological relative humidity. Differences in the plant response  
236 to warming (quantified by the  $\gamma$  parameter values from Arora et al. (2019)) explain more  
237 than 10% of the model spread in the climatological relative humidity change in North  
238 America; this suggests that modeled plants that are more sensitive to warming mitigate  
239 the increase in temperature variance associated with warming by reducing the climato-  
240 logical drying of the atmosphere perhaps by way of earlier leaf-out dates in springtime  
241 (Xu et al., 2020).

242 In general, the spread in the climatological local warming combined with the plant  
243 response to climate change explains nearly all of the inter-model differences in the pro-  
244 jected change in land summertime relative humidity in North America, where we have  
245 already demonstrated that the remote influence of thermal advection on temperature vari-  
246 ance is negligible (see Fig. 3b; Holmes et al. (2016)). Over western Eurasia, some of the  
247 unexplained variance in relative humidity changes may be due to model differences in  
248 temperature advection, but even here we find a large portion of the inter-model spread  
249 in the projected change in summertime relative humidity is explained by the combina-  
250 tion of local land warming and the plant response to climate change.

## 251 Conclusions

252 A diagnostic model based on monthly equilibrium considerations of the land sur-  
253 face energy and water budgets shows that changes in summertime temperature variance  
254 across the midlatitudes are driven in roughly equal parts by local mean warming and de-  
255 creases in relative humidity. We have shown that despite the high biases in summertime  
256 temperature variance present in the CMIP6 models' representation of the historical pe-  
257 riod (Fig. 1), the model projections of large increases in monthly averaged summertime  
258 temperature variance are credible and explained primarily by local warming and its im-  
259 pact on climatological relative humidity.

260 We have identified two major uncertainties in how summertime temperature vari-  
261 ance will change: first, the magnitude of local warming which is primarily controlled by  
262 model climate sensitivity. Second, the plant physiological response to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and  
263 how that response changes with mean climate warming. We have shown that models with  
264 strong land-carbon cycle responses to increasing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> simulate smaller re-  
265 ductions in relative humidity than do models with weak land-carbon responses, indicat-  
266 ing that plant activity mitigates the projected reductions in relative humidity that are  
267 driven by increasing temperature.

268 The combination of local warming and plant responses to climate change are the  
269 primary contributors to how summertime temperature variability will increase in the fu-  
270 ture. The diagnostic model and the CMIP6 MMM predict that changes in summertime  
271 temperature variance will be greater than 1°C<sup>2</sup> across much of Eurasia and central North  
272 America, representing a 30-50% increase in temperature variance in these regions. Though  
273 an assessment of the impacts these kinds of increases in variability would have on the  
274 frequency of food shocks and deadly heatwaves is outside the scope of this study, the com-  
275 pounding impacts of a mean warming *and* increasingly temperature variability warrant  
276 future study and likely serious policy attention.

277 **Appendix A Methods**

278 This section presents a derivation of Eq. 1, but interested readers can find a more  
 279 detailed presentation in Vargas Zeppetello et al. (Vargas Zeppetello, Battisti, & Baker,  
 280 2020). We begin our derivation by considering the equilibrium land surface energy and  
 281 water budgets:

$$0 = \mathcal{F}' - F'_{LW} - LE' - H' - G' \quad (\text{A1})$$

$$0 = \mathcal{P}' - E' - R' - I' . \quad (\text{A2})$$

282 All terms in Eq A1 are given in [ $\text{W m}^{-2}$ ], while all terms in Eq. A2 are given in [ $\text{kg H}_2\text{O}$   
 283  $\text{m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ ].  $\mathcal{F}$  is the net downward shortwave radiation incident at the land surface, while  
 284  $F_{LW}$  is the net upward surface longwave radiation flux.  $LE$  and  $H$  are the upward tur-  
 285 bulent fluxes of latent and sensible heat respectively, while  $G$  is the flux of energy down-  
 286 ward into the soil column.  $R$  and  $I$  are the surface runoff and infiltration moisture fluxes  
 287 respectively,  $E$  is the net evapotranspiration, and  $L$  is the latent enthalpy of vaporiza-  
 288 tion.

289 We assume that the sum of monthly net longwave, sensible heat, and ground heat  
 290 flux anomalies is linearly proportional to temperature fluctuations, thus:

$$F'_{LW} + H' + G' = \nu T' . \quad (\text{A3})$$

291 Here,  $\nu$  [ $\text{W m}^{-2} \text{K}^{-1}$ ] is a parameter that controls the response of two-meter air tem-  
 292 perature  $T'$  to a radiative forcing  $\mathcal{F}'$  in the absence of evapotranspiration anomalies (see  
 293 Eq. A1).

294 The sum of runoff and infiltration anomalies is assumed to be linearly proportional  
 295 to soil moisture fluctuations, thus:

$$R' + I' = \mu m' . \quad (\text{A4})$$

296 The fractional surface saturation  $m$  is a unitless number between zero and one that des-  
 297 ignates the fraction of available pore space in the evapotranspiration-accessible portion  
 298 of the soil column that is occupied by liquid water. To ensure proper scaling between  
 299 runoff, infiltration, and precipitation we set the ‘‘surface moisture capacity’’  $\mu$  [ $\text{kg m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ ]  
 300 to be:

$$\mu = \eta \sigma(\mathcal{P}) , \quad (\text{A5})$$

301 where  $\sigma(\mathcal{P})$  is the summertime standard deviation in monthly averaged precipitation at  
 302 each grid cell and  $\eta$  is a unitless parameter that controls the mass of liquid water required  
 303 to effectively change the soil’s fractional saturation  $m$  that we assume to be constant ev-  
 304 erywhere across the land surface.

305 Total evapotranspiration is given by:

$$E = \frac{\rho_a}{r_s} m V . \quad (\text{A6})$$

306 In Eq. A6,  $\rho_a$  [ $\text{kg air m}^{-3}$ ] is the density of air,  $r_s$  [ $\text{s m}^{-1}$ ] is the ‘‘bulk surface resistance’’  
 307 parameter,  $V$  [ $\text{kg H}_2\text{O kg air}^{-1}$ ] is a measure of the atmospheric demand for water va-  
 308 por  $q_s(T) - q$  where  $q_s$  is the saturation specific humidity at the two-meter air temper-  
 309 ature  $T$ , and  $q$  is the boundary layer specific humidity. We can now define the  $\alpha$  param-  
 310 eter used in Eq. 3:

$$\alpha = \frac{r_s \mu}{\rho_a} . \quad (\text{A7})$$

311 The first order terms in a Taylor expansion of Eq. A6 are:

$$E' = \frac{\rho_a}{r_s} [m' \bar{V} + \bar{m} \frac{dq_s}{dT} T'] , \quad (\text{A8})$$

312 where barred terms indicate summertime mean values. In Eq. A8, we have made use of  
 313 observations and model results that show that anomalies in  $\bar{V}$  are overwhelmingly due  
 314 to anomalies in surface temperature (van Heerwaarden et al., 2010). By substituting Eq. A8  
 315 into Eq. A2, we obtain:

$$m' = \frac{1}{\mu + \delta} [\mathcal{P}' - \frac{\rho_a \bar{m}}{r_s} \frac{dq_s}{dT} T'] , \quad (\text{A9})$$

316 where we have defined

$$\delta = \frac{\rho_a \bar{V}}{r_s} \quad (\text{A10})$$

317 as the climatological mean potential evapotranspiration, or the mean evapotranspira-  
 318 tion  $\bar{E}$  expected for  $\bar{m} = 1$ , or saturated soils. Note that  $\delta$  increases exponentially with  
 319  $\bar{T}$  according to the Clausius-Clapeyron relationship. Combining Eq. A9 with Eqs. A1  
 320 and A8, we obtain:

$$T' = \frac{1}{\Gamma} [\mathcal{F}' - \zeta L\mathcal{P}'] , \quad (\text{A11})$$

321 where  $\zeta = (1 + \mu/\delta)^{-1} \in [0, 1]$  is a dryness index and  $\Gamma^{-1}$  is the “moist surface cli-  
 322 mate sensitivity”:

$$\Gamma = \nu + \frac{L\rho_a \bar{m}}{r_s} \frac{dq_s}{dT} (1 - \zeta) . \quad (\text{A12})$$

323 By squaring Eq. A11 then taking a time average, we arrive at our equation for summer-  
 324 time temperature variance given in Eq. 1:

$$\sigma^2(T) = \frac{1}{\Gamma^2} [\sigma^2(\mathcal{F}) - 2\overline{\mathcal{F}'L\mathcal{P}'}\zeta + \sigma^2(L\mathcal{P}')\zeta^2] . \quad (\text{A13})$$

## 325 Acknowledgments

326 This paper contains data from the NOAA ESRL, and the CMIP6 data archive. We are  
 327 grateful to all who made these data available to the public. The EcoClimate group at  
 328 the University of Washington provided invaluable feedback during the development of  
 329 the diagnostic equation and preparation of the manuscript. Marcia Baker helped develop  
 330 the model and provided feedback on the text of this manuscript. LRVZ was supported  
 331 by a NSF GRFP Fellowship and DSB was supported by a grant from the Tamaki Foun-  
 332 dation. Datasets for this research are available in this in-text data citation reference: (Eyring  
 333 et al., 2016), with license of CMIP6. Analysis codes and processed data for generating  
 334 figures in this study are posted at: <https://zenodo.org/record/3877318#.XtqiG55KhTY>.

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