

## The Climate Change-Style Gamble

When you make a decision about the future – whether it's based on theory or observation – it is a sort of gamble. You can never absolutely know what is going to happen. When we make decisions about how to tackle climate change (mitigation or adaptation) it is no different.

Because of the uncertainty we can't be sure exactly what degree of challenge we will face. None the less, some things are clear – uncertainty doesn't mean ignorance.

We know that a smaller increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will have a smaller impact on climate. So this means we know that it is possible to stack the odds in favour of less change, by our efforts at mitigation.

We also know that bigger increases in atmospheric greenhouse gas levels are likely to lead to much bigger impacts; the impact of a 4° warming is likely to be more than twice the impact of a 2° warming. This is because people and societies have some flexibility to adapt, or cope with changes, but this becomes increasingly hard as the changes become more substantial.

So we can gamble on the changes not being too great, or we can stack the odds against that, knowing as we do that reducing greenhouse gas emissions will reduce the likely impacts.

### A One-Shot Bet

Here's another issue for a gambler looking at this problem. Climate change is a one-shot bet. We can't repeat the game, unlike the ones in this exhibit. There will only ever be one climate of the 21st century.

We can influence what that climate will be, with the decisions that we make. But we can't know for sure what the result of those actions will be until we get there.

Many people look at a one-shot bet differently from other sorts of gambles. How much they are willing to risk depends on how much they are likely to lose. What would you spend to stop yourself losing 5p? Or 50p? Or £75? Or your home?



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