



# A reef through a heatwave

## Background reading for teachers

This reading gives you background for the heatwave analysis.

### The global event

The fourth global bleaching event, from early 2023 to mid-2025, exposed 84% of the world's reef area to bleaching-level heat stress.<sup>1</sup>

### The teaching data

The coral data was adjusted to show a clear marine heatwave from April to October 2024, with higher water temperatures, a bleaching peak in mid-year that is strongest in shallow water, and a drop in coral cover afterwards that is smaller and recovers faster at protected sites. The real MCP records are messier. This pattern reflects the widely reported link between heat stress, bleaching and coral loss, and the idea that reducing local stress helps reefs recover, but the exact numbers are for teaching only.

### Sources

1. NOAA NESDIS (2026). World's fourth mass coral bleaching event likely ended in 2025. [nesdis.noaa.gov](https://nesdis.noaa.gov)

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