

WHAT IS ECO-ANXIETY?

Definition

Eco-anxiety is a term used to describe the chronic fear of environmental doom. It encompasses a range of feelings, including anxiety, worry, and distress, stemming from the awareness of climate change and environmental degradation. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines eco-anxiety as “the chronic fear of environmental cataclysm that comes from observing the seemingly irrevocable impact of climate change and the associated concern for one’s future and that of next generations” (APA, 2020).

In simpler terms, eco-anxiety is the persistent worry about the future of our planet and the life it supports due to environmental issues like climate change (Clayton et al., 2017).

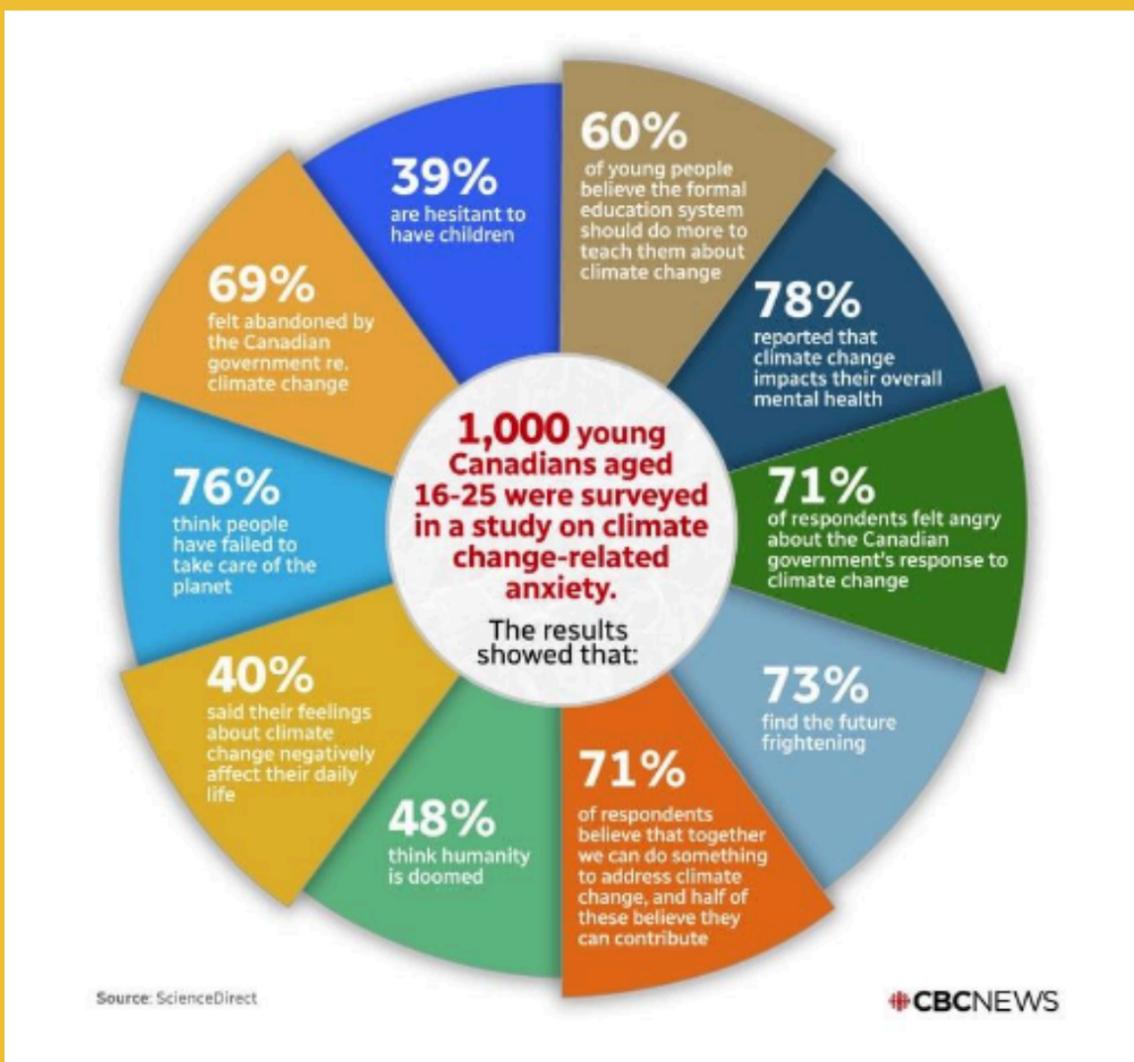
Prevalence and Impact

- 76% of young Canadians find the future frightening due to climate change
- Nearly 50% believe humanity is doomed
- 80% report that climate change affects their overall mental health
- 40% experience daily impacts on their well-being due to climate anxiety
- 58% feel afraid, sad, anxious, and powerless about climate change
- 40% say these feelings negatively affect their daily lives

Galway & Field, 2023

Impact of Climate Change on Mental Health

- **Trauma from direct and indirect sources:** Natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires can cause trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Being exposed to the constant flow of negative information can also cause pre-traumatic stress. (Clayton et al., 2017).
- **Mental Health Toll:** Climate change exacerbates existing mental health issues, affecting nearly one billion people globally (WHO, 2021).



References

Clayton, S., Manning, C. M., Krygsman, K., & Speiser, M. (2017). *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, and ecoAmerica.

Galway, L.P. & Field, E. (2023). Climate emotions and anxiety among young people in Canada: A national survey and call to action. *The Journal of Climate Change and Health*, 9 (2023) 100204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joclim.2023.100204>



Scan to learn more and register

Information provided by Alexandra Hajas, RP B.A., M.C PSYCH

From the training “Eco-Anxiety in Youth and Young Adults: Addressing the Effects of Climate Change on Mental Health Through a Trauma Lens”