

# **Climate change and mental health: Diagnosing climate change anxiety**

Dr.med. Tamara Vukičević

Charité - Klinik für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie

Contact : [tamara.vukicevic2@gmail.com](mailto:tamara.vukicevic2@gmail.com)

# Introduction

- Climate anxiety? - „Clinically significant anxious response to climate change“
- Different names : „Eco-worry“, „Eco-anxiety“...
- Is it recognised? - There is currently no official recognition and there is an ongoing debate about whether it should be an official diagnosis.

## Climate anxiety: trigger or threat for mental disorders?

[Francisco Sampaio](#)<sup>a,b</sup> ✉ · [Carlos Sequeira](#)<sup>b,c</sup>

## Climate anxiety does not need a diagnosis of a mental health disorder

[Navjot Bhullar](#)<sup>a</sup> ✉ · [Melissa Davis](#)<sup>a</sup> · [Roselyn Kumar](#)<sup>b</sup> · [Patrick Nunn](#)<sup>b</sup> · [Debra Rickwood](#)<sup>c,d</sup>

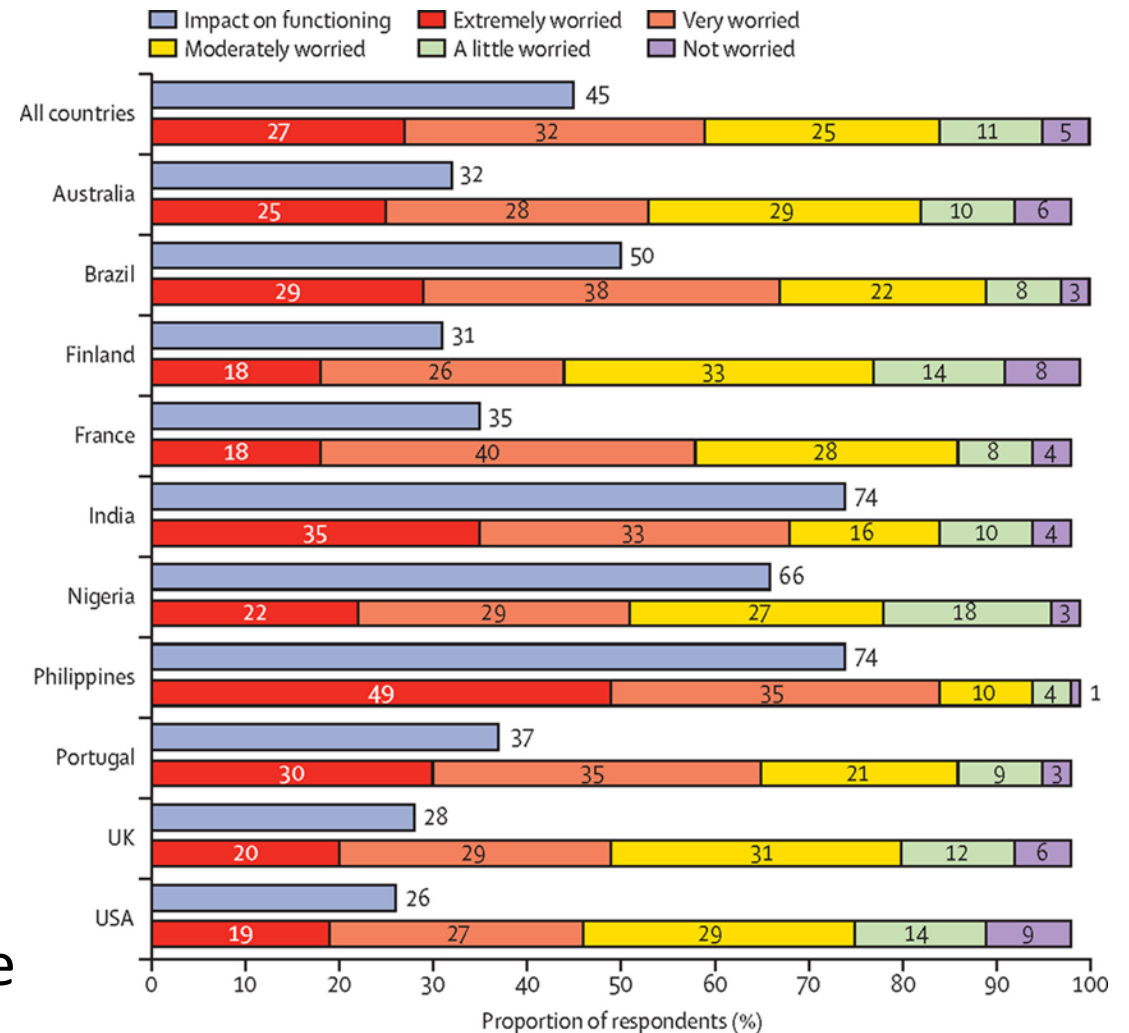
## Diagnosing climate anxiety? Environmental mental health challenges

[Tamara Vukičević](#)<sup>a</sup> ✉ · [Shuyan Liu](#)<sup>a,b</sup> ✉

# Introduction

- Coping with climate anxiety:
  - Negative : negative emotions, de-emphasizing
  - Positive : pro-environmental behaviour
- Co-morbidities: Depressive and anxiety symptoms
- No specific treatment or widespread training for health professionals on this issue

## Worry about climate change and impact on functioning



Hickman et al., 2021 *The Lancet Planetary Health*

Ojala, 2013 *Sustainability*

Ogunbode et al., 2022 *Journal of Environmental Psychology*

## Research

- Is there a need to formally recognize climate change anxiety according to activists?
- Climate change activists:
  - ✓ Vulnerability
  - ✓ Key stakeholders
  - ✓ First-hand accounts of the impact on mental health
- Qualitative interviews with 31 participants
- 12 Open-ended questions
- Thematic analysis
- Median age was 29,5 years

	Men	Women	Non-binary	Gender queer	Choose not to say	Total participants
<b>Activist</b>	8	11	2	0	0	21
<b>Non-activist</b>	5	2	1	1	1	10
<b>Total by gender (%)</b>	13 (42%)	13 (42%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	31 (100%)

## Results

	YES (n= 18)	UNSURE (n=12)	NO (n=1)
<b>Activist (N)</b>	15	6	0
Reasonings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mitigating a growing problem</li> <li>• Addressing societal and mental health challenges</li> <li>• Worrying about the future</li> <li>• Helping to cope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fearing stigma</li> <li>• Lacking treatment options</li> </ul>	/
<b>Non activist (N)</b>	3	6	1
Reasonings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing an uncertain future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling irrelevant to personal anxiety</li> </ul>
<b>Activist + Non activist Reasonings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having psychological and cognitive effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fears and uncertainty</li> <li>• Lacking research evidence</li> </ul>	/

## Conclusion

- Majority (58%) in agreement for the official recognition!
- (YES) “Having psychological and cognitive effects” was the most frequent reasoning overall → Shows that the mental health issue of climate change is already something that is prominent in our society
- (UNSURE) “Fears and uncertainty” and “Lacking research evidence” was a prominent reasoning in both groups → There is still skepticism and feelings of ambiguity about the issue

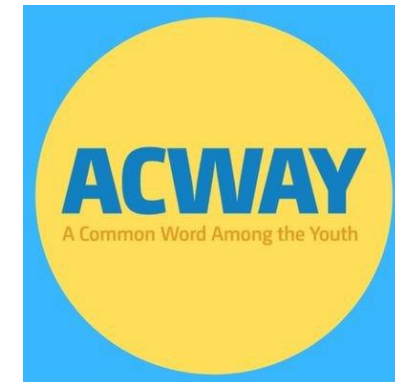
# How can faith communities help?

**Yes!**

- Community engagement
- Building close relationships
- Mutual understanding of the issue and acceptance
- Unofficial community support for mental health
- Influence policy making at all levels

**PaRD**

International Partnership on  
Religion and Sustainable Development



# Thank you for your attention

Dr.med. Tamara Vukičević

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