

ECO ANXIETY REPORT

GHANA

2023

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Note from Iris Sustainable Development

Anxiety relating to a multitude of ecological crises, or eco-anxiety, is a subject of growing research significance. The main idea of the first report series is to establish an international overview of eco-anxiety rates in 20 countries utilizing the HEAS scale and correlate these rates with variables of geographical location (urban, rural), education as well as the type of experiencing climate crisis (indirectly via the media or public discourse).

More precisely, the main objectives of this report series is to:

- create an international overview of eco-anxiety rates in 20 countries
- contribute to the growing body of knowledge around to what extent the climate crisis affects mental health identifying possible differentiation on eco-anxiety determinants
- raise awareness on the impact of climate crisis on mental health

The target group of Ghanaian national report are citizens of Ghana and/or people (ages 18-50) that are/have been experiencing climate change in the country.

Climate change impacts in Ghana

Ghana's climate is tropical and strongly influenced by the West Africa monsoon winds. The climate is generally warm with variable temperatures masked by seasons and elevation. The northern part of the country typically records one rainy season, which begins in May and lasts until September. Southern Ghana records two rainy seasons; major season from April to July and minor from September to November (World Bank, 2023).

Greenhouse gas emissions

Ghana's greenhouse gas emissions are primarily linked to the energy sector, where the demand for power has surged alongside economic expansion. Traditionally, the country has heavily relied on fossil fuels, particularly oil and natural gas, for electricity generation. However, Ghana is actively striving to diversify its energy mix and transition toward cleaner and more sustainable sources. Investment in renewable energy, including solar and wind power projects, aims to reduce the carbon intensity of the energy sector and mitigate the environmental impact of power generation.

The deforestation and land-use change associated with agriculture also contribute to Ghana's emissions profile. The expansion of agricultural activities, including cocoa cultivation, has led to the clearing of forests, releasing stored carbon into the atmosphere. In response, the government has implemented policies to promote sustainable land management, afforestation, and agroforestry practices, striking a balance between agricultural productivity and environmental conservation.

In total, 31.3% of GHG emissions in Ghana are subject to a positive Net Effective Carbon Rate (ECR) in 2021, unchanged since 2018. Ghana does not levy an explicit carbon price. Fuel excise taxes, an implicit form of carbon pricing, cover 32.3% of emissions in 2021, unchanged since 2018. Fossil fuel subsidies cover 1.4% of emissions in 2021, unchanged since 2018 (OECD, 2022).

Climate change impacts in Ghana

Extreme weather events

Ghana has been thrust into the spotlight of climate change, facing a crescendo of extreme weather events that echo the urgent call for adaptation and resilience. From intense floods to prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall patterns, the nation is navigating the complex rhythms of a changing climate that test the mettle of its communities and the adaptability of its landscapes.

One poignant example of Ghana's climate ordeal unfolded in 2015 when the country experienced unprecedented flooding, particularly in the capital city, Accra. Torrential rains overwhelmed drainage systems, leading to widespread inundation and devastating consequences. The resulting loss of lives and property underscored the vulnerability of urban centers to the intensified rainfall associated with climate change.

Conversely, the northern regions of Ghana faced a different challenge in the form of prolonged droughts. The erratic nature of rainfall, coupled with rising temperatures, has led to water scarcity and strained agricultural activities. Communities dependent on rain-fed agriculture, particularly in the Upper East and Upper West regions, grappled with the harsh reality of changing precipitation patterns, affecting food security and livelihoods.

The coastal areas of Ghana, including cities like Cape Coast and Takoradi, have been witnesses to the impacts of rising sea levels and storm surges. Erosion of shorelines and saltwater intrusion have posed threats to both communities and ecosystems, highlighting the interconnected nature of climate change impacts on land and sea.

Survey results

LOCATION



Urban Area



Rural Area



EDUCATION

Elementary School Degree  0%

High School's Degree  81%

Bachelor's Degree  19%

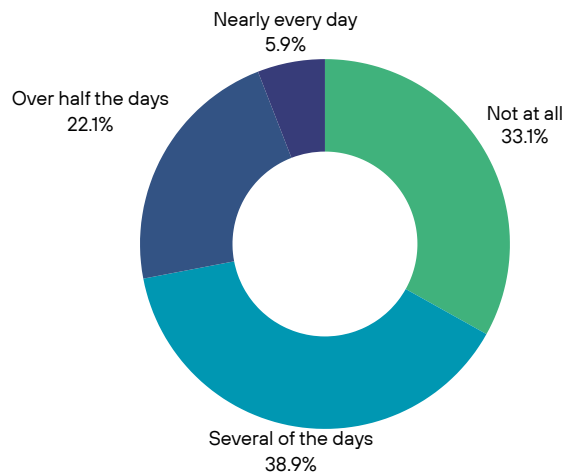
Master's Degree or higher  0%

Survey results: The Hogg Scale

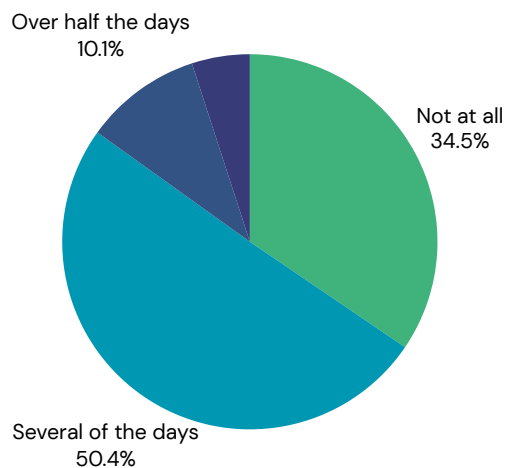
“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?

Response scale: 0 = not at all, 1 = several of the days, 2 = over half the days, 3 = nearly every day.

Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge



Not being able to stop or control worrying

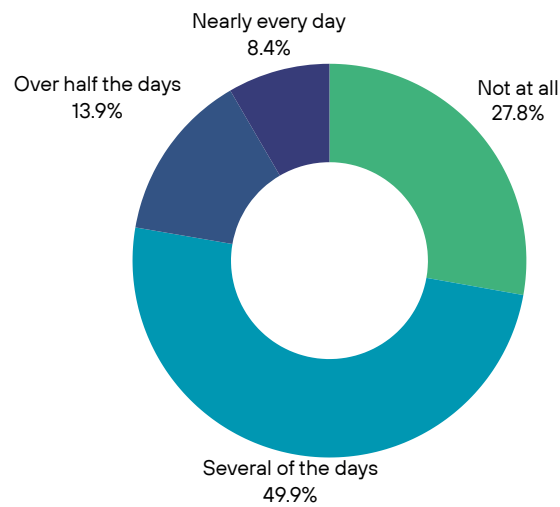


Survey results: The Hogg Scale

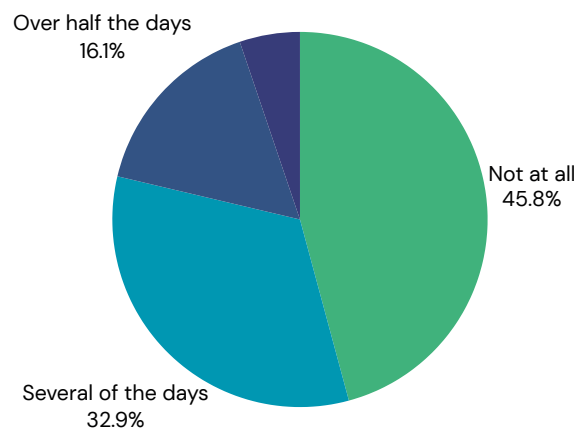
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Worrying too much



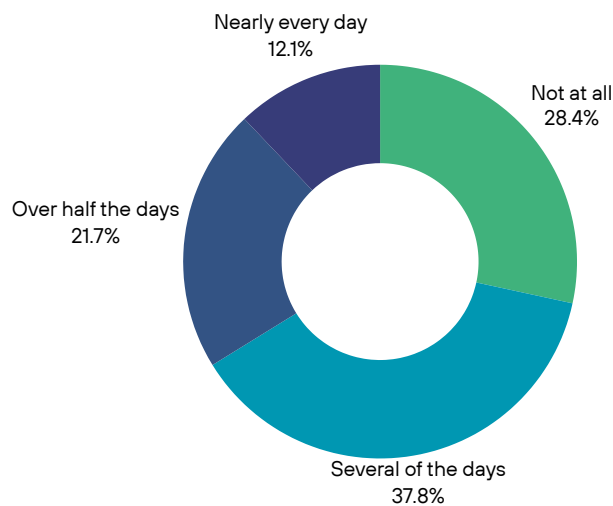
Feeling afraid



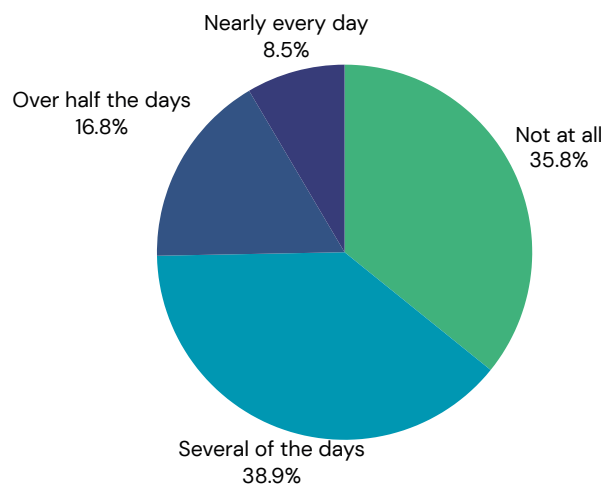
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?

Unable to stop thinking about future climate change and other global environmental problems



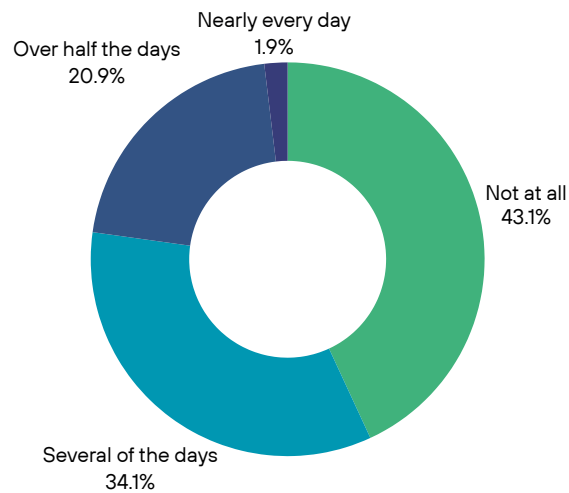
Unable to stop thinking about past events related to climate change



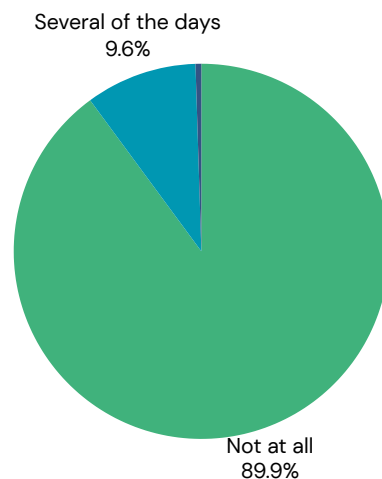
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?

Unable to stop thinking about losses to the environment



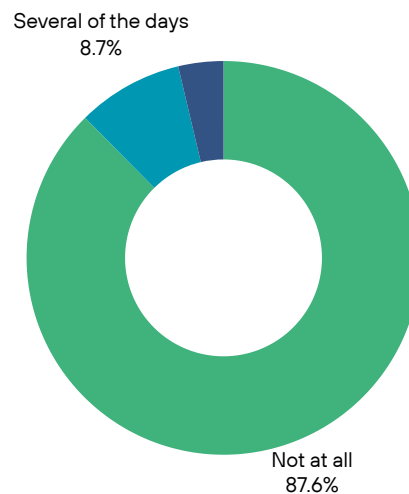
Difficulty sleeping



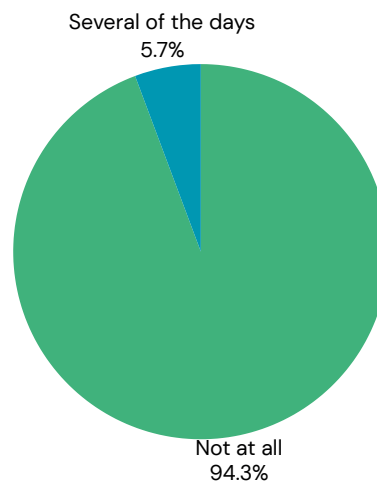
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?”

Difficulty enjoying social situations with family and friends



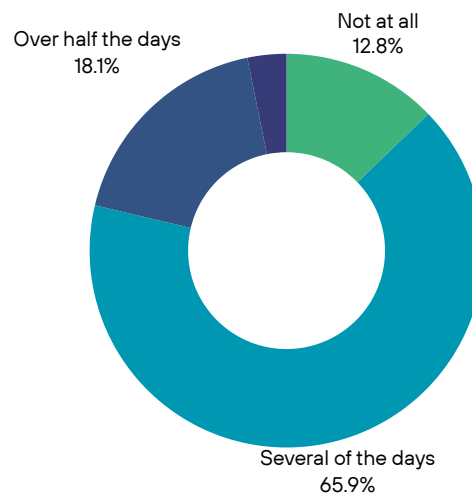
Difficulty working and/or studying



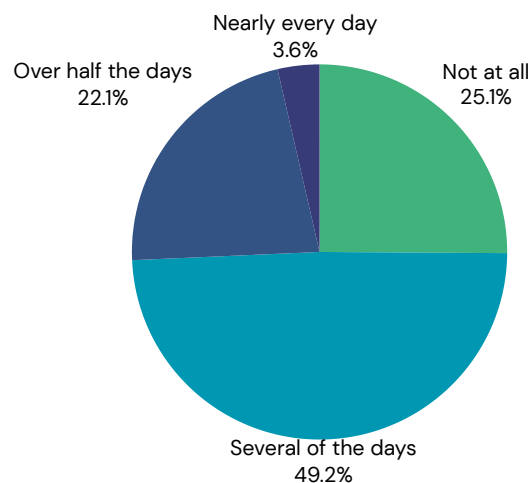
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?”

Feeling anxious about the impact of your personal behaviours on the earth



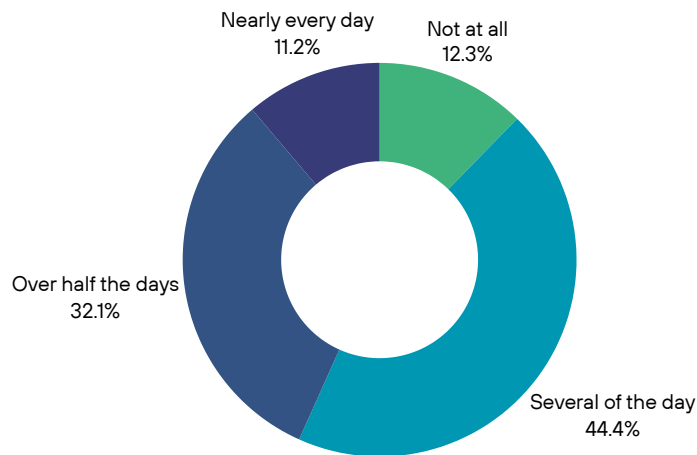
Feeling anxious about your personal responsibility to help address environmental problems



Survey results: The Hogg Scale and Beliefs about climate change

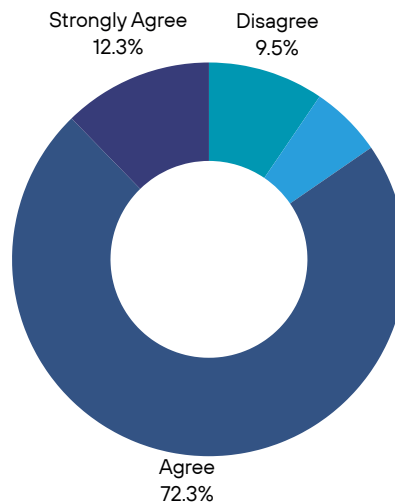
“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?

Feeling anxious that your personal behaviours will do little to help fix the problem



Beliefs about Climate Change

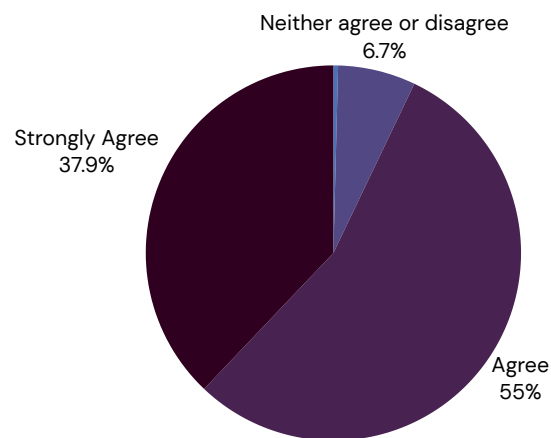
Climate change is real



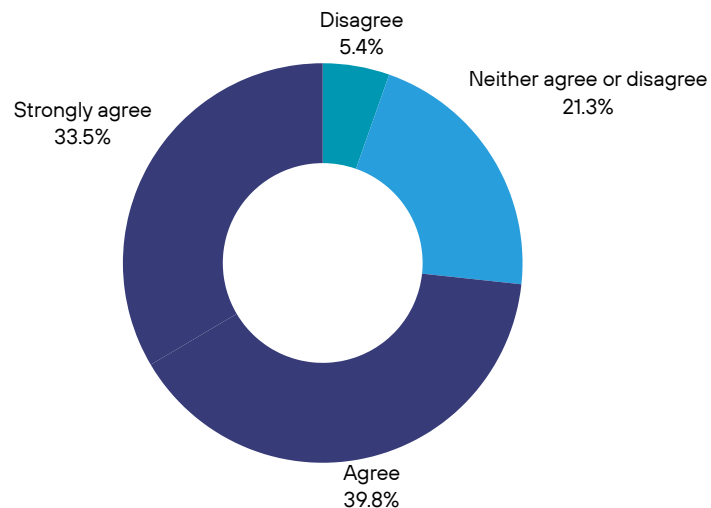
Survey results: Beliefs about climate change

Beliefs about Climate Change

Climate change is caused by humans

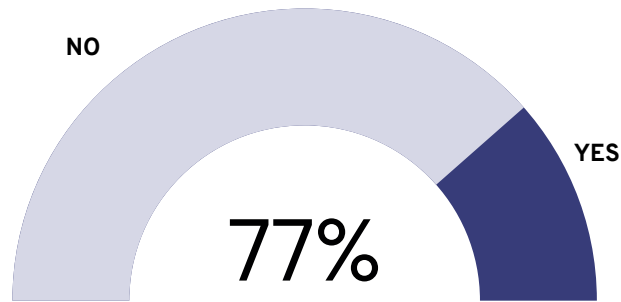


Climate change is reversible



Survey results: Beliefs about climate change

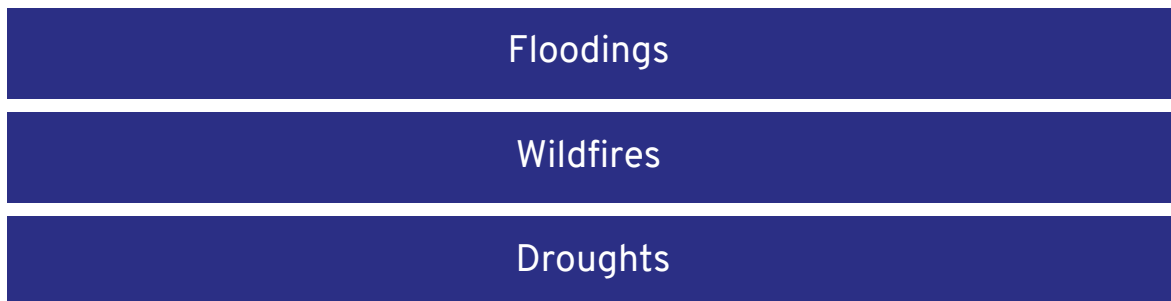
Do you have direct experience of environmental crisis?



I am experiencing climate crisis indirectly via the media or public discourse



Which climate disaster made you feel nervous (in your country or globally), if any



Key Conclusions

Our research reveals a notable prevalence of eco-anxiety among the Ghanaian population, reporting varying degrees of eco-anxiety. This underscores the significance of the issue and the need for further investigation and intervention.

In terms of the interplay between eco-anxiety and specific variables, significant differences in eco-anxiety rates were observed across various demographics. Notably, the geographical location of participants was strongly linked with eco-anxiety. It is important that the 54% of the respondents are urban residents and they are exhibited higher levels of eco-anxiety compared to their rural counterparts. Additionally, while a slight interrelation with education was observed, we address that eco-anxiety can be experienced via media and public discourse, since the 56% has expressed that is experiencing eco-anxiety indirectly. This indicates that the media and information consumption play a substantial role in shaping eco-anxiety levels since participants who reported frequent exposure to alarming environmental news or content experienced higher levels of eco-anxiety. Simultaneously, the study found a strong interplay between eco-anxiety and heightened concerns about environmental issues. Respondents who expressed high levels of eco-anxiety consistently cited factors and events such as wildfires, ice melting, and droughts as major sources of distress.

The findings of this research underscore the urgency for policymakers to address eco-anxiety as a public health concern. Developing sustainable environmental policies, educational campaigns, and psychological support services can help mitigate eco-anxiety and its associated mental health issues. This study provides a foundation for future research on eco-anxiety. However, further investigations into the long-term consequences of eco-anxiety, the effectiveness of interventions, and potential policy changes are essential for a comprehensive understanding of this emerging issue.

In conclusion, our research highlights the significant eco-anxiety rates in Ghana and the need for multidisciplinary efforts to address this concern. Addressing eco-anxiety is not only crucial for the mental well-being of individuals but also for the sustainable future.

Disclaimer:

This report provides an intention of the eco-anxiety rates in the country and cannot be generalised since the survey is not responded by a representative sample comparing to the country's population.

References

World Bank. (2023). Climate Data Historical - Ghana. Climate Knowledge Portal. Retrieved from <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/ghana/climate-data-historical#:~:text=Ghana's%20climate%20is%20tropical%20and,May%20and%20lasts%20until%20September.>

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