

ECO ANXIETY REPORT

ITALY

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

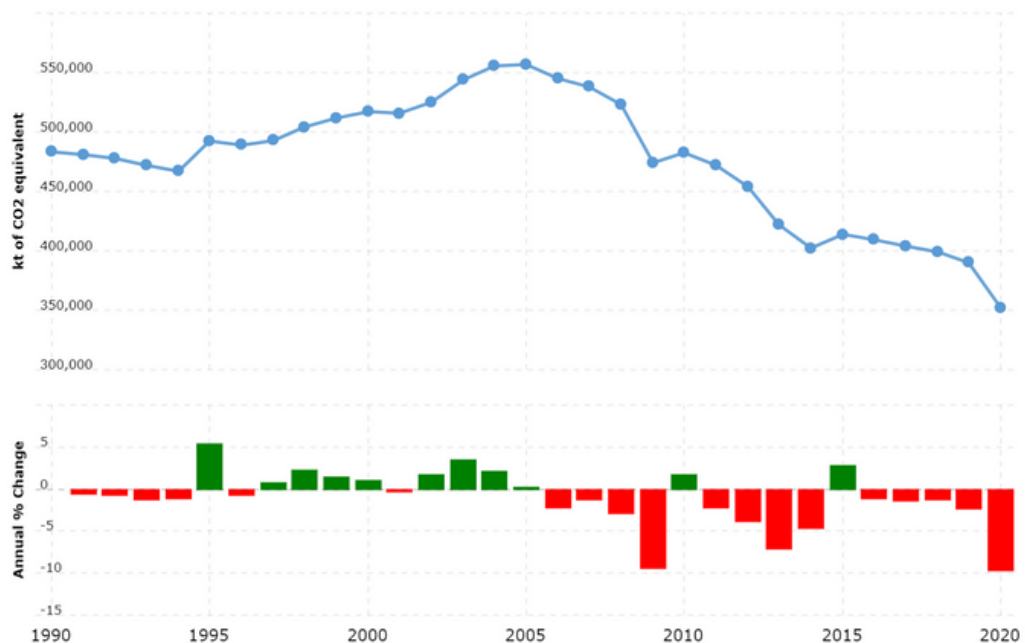
The target group of the Italian national report are citizens of Italy and/or people (ages 18-50) that are/have been experiencing climate change in the country.

Climate change impacts in Italy

The Italian peninsula lies between latitudes 47°N and 35° N and longitudes 6° and 18° E, it is nearly in the middle of the temperate area of the boreal hemisphere. Being Italy surrounded by sea, Italy’s climate is temperate Mediterranean. Italy’s climate is formally divided in four types, characterized by specific features: Alpine climate, dominant in Alps and northern and central Apennines, characterized by night and winter low temperatures and moist summer; Mediterranean climate, in the island and in the southern Italy, characterized by mild temperatures and moist winter; Peninsular climate, peculiar of the central part of the peninsula, characterized by mild temperatures along the coast and in the prompt hinterland (in the middle where the altitude is high there is an alpine climate), moist in spring and autumn; and Po valley climate, with low temperatures in the winter, high in the summer, moist in the spring and autumn. (World Bank, 2023).

Greenhouse gas emissions

In 2021, approximated domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Italy were 404.8 MtCO₂-eq, 6.2% higher compared to 2020 but 3.2% below pre-pandemic levels. Overall, net domestic emissions, including the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector, were 28.6% lower than 1990 levels.



Macrotrends. Italy Carbon (CO₂) Emissions 1990-2023. Macrotrends. Retrieved November 13, 2023, from Lake Akgol in eastern Turkey's Van Province on June 7. Typically home to thousands of birds, the lake dried up this summer. OZKAN BILGIN / ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

Climate change impacts in Italy

Extreme weather events

Over the past decade, the Italian nation has grappled with a series of extreme weather events that have left an indelible mark on its cities, coastlines, and countryside. One of the most dramatic events unfolded in 2011 when Italy faced unprecedented heatwaves and drought. The Po River, a vital waterway for northern Italy, saw water levels drop to alarming lows, impacting navigation, agriculture, and energy production. The heatwaves, with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), not only strained the nation's energy infrastructure but also posed significant health risks, prompting Italy to confront the immediate consequences of a warming climate.

In 2014, Venice experienced a historic flood known as "acqua alta" or high water. The rising waters inundated St. Mark's Square and many of the city's landmarks, causing extensive damage. While Venice is no stranger to high tides, the 2014 event was exceptional, fueling concerns about the increased frequency and intensity of extreme tidal events exacerbated by sea-level rise.

Wildfires, fueled by prolonged periods of drought and high temperatures, have become a recurrent threat in southern Italy. In 2017, wildfires swept through the coastal areas of Calabria and Sicily, consuming vast expanses of forests and threatening local communities. The increasing frequency of wildfires raises concerns about the resilience of Italy's ecosystems and the effectiveness of firefighting efforts in the face of changing climate conditions.

Finally, Italy has experienced record heat on 2023, with temperatures 0.67C higher than the historical average since researchers started collecting data over 200 years ago. In four northern regions of the country, temperatures were 0.86C above the historical average, making 2023 the second-hottest year since 1800 in the region.

Survey results

LOCATION



Urban Area



Rural Area



EDUCATION

Elementary School Degree  0%

High School's Degree  18%

Bachelor's Degree  28%

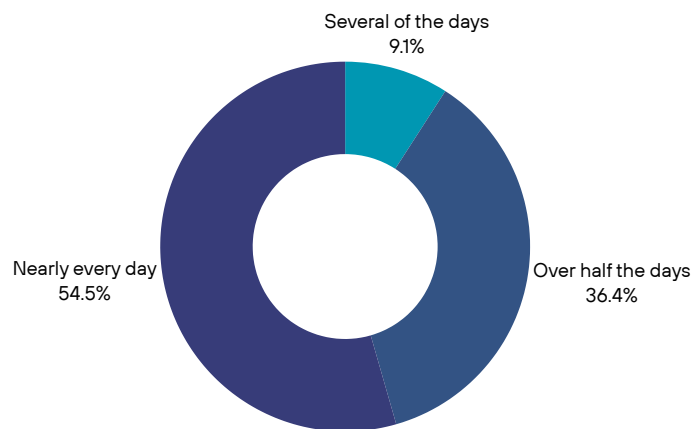
Master's Degree or higher  54%

Survey results: The Hogg Scale

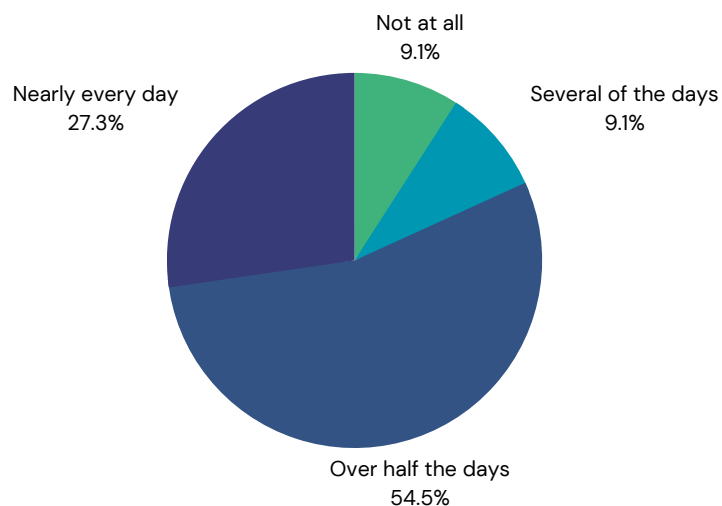
“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?

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

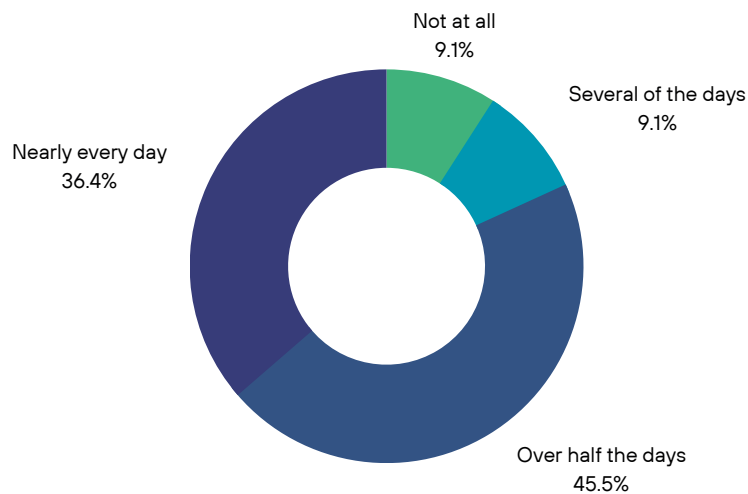


Survey results: The Hogg Scale

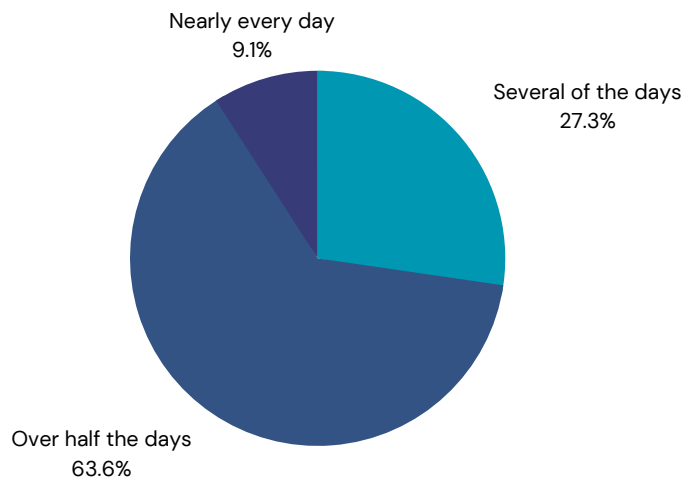
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Worrying too much



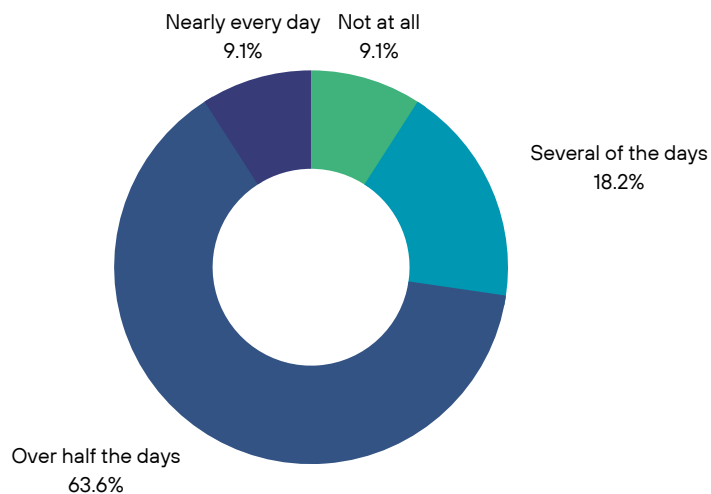
Feeling afraid



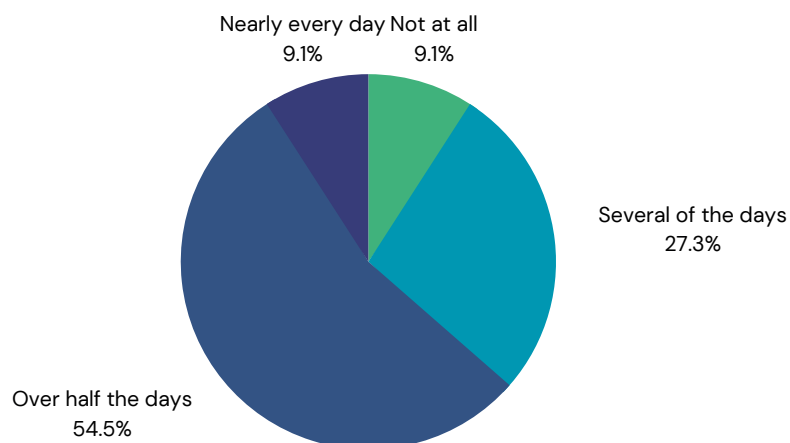
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“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



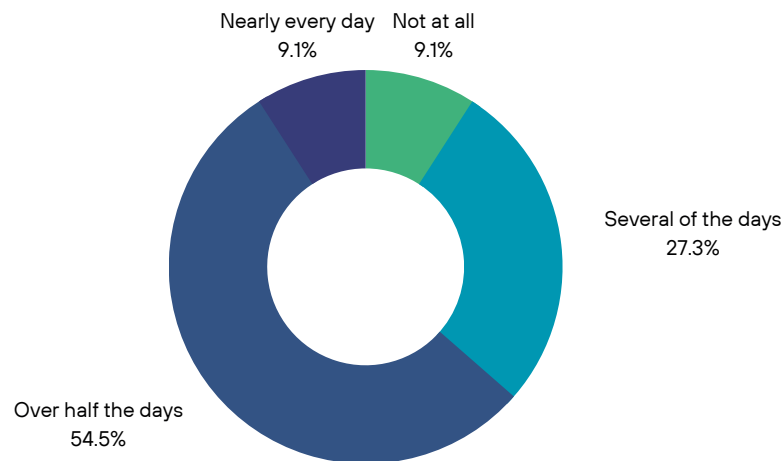
Unable to stop thinking about past events related to climate change



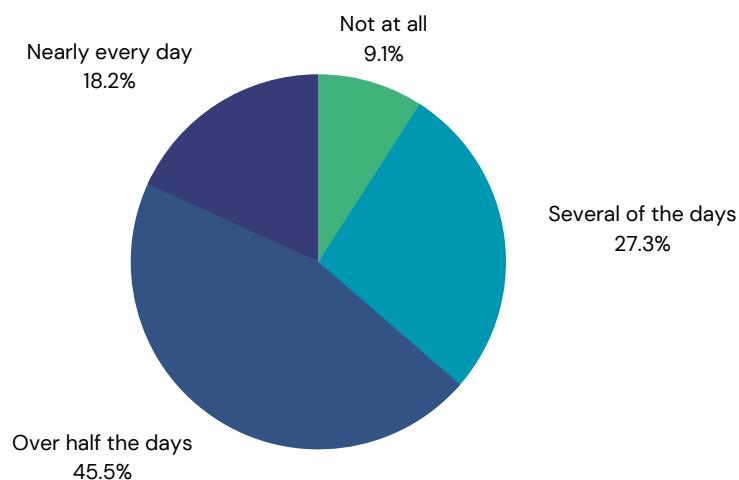
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“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



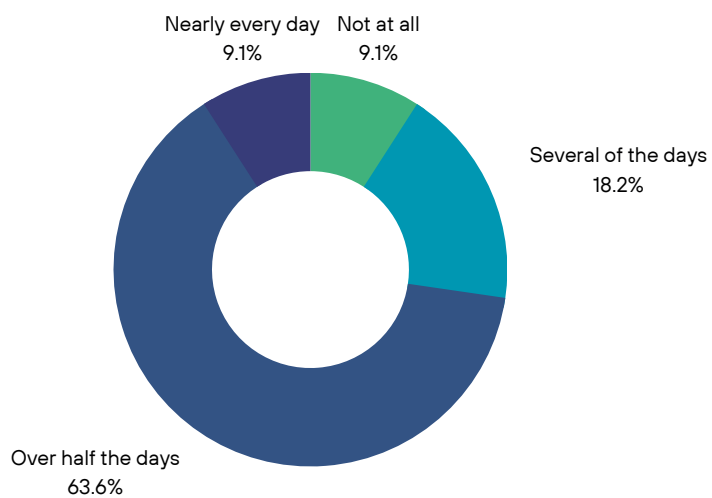
Difficulty sleeping



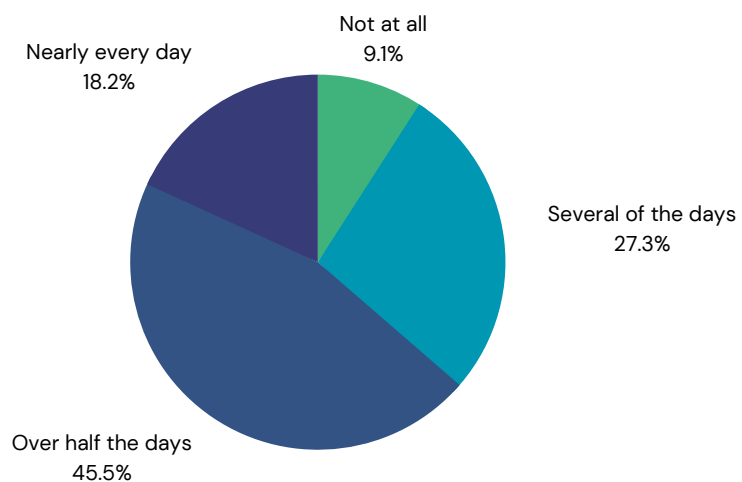
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“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



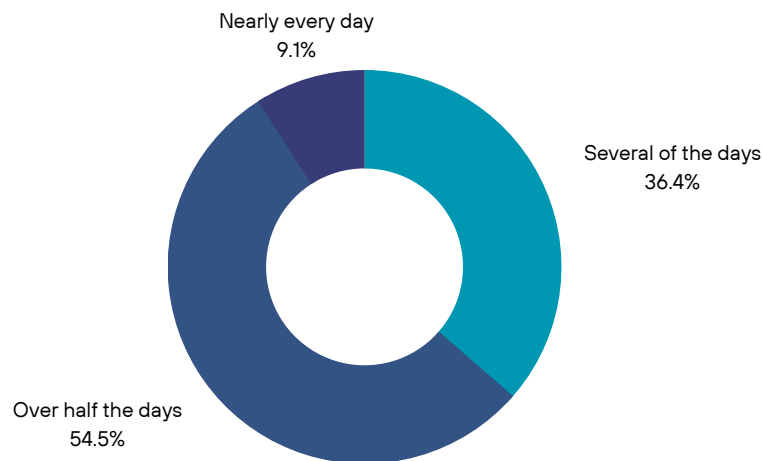
Difficulty working and/or studying



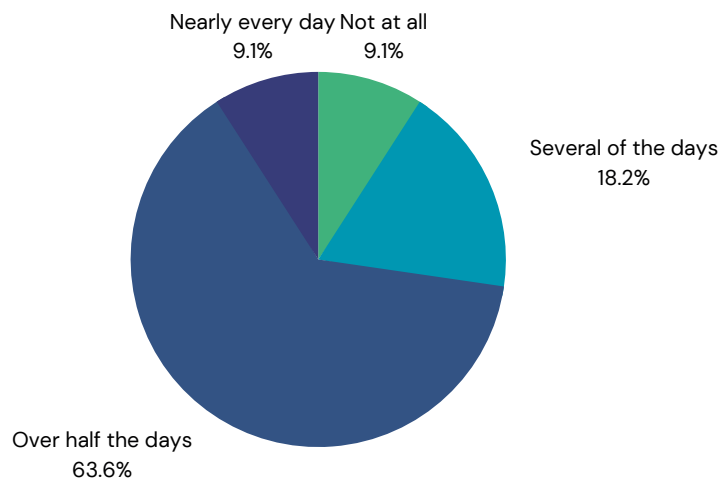
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

“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



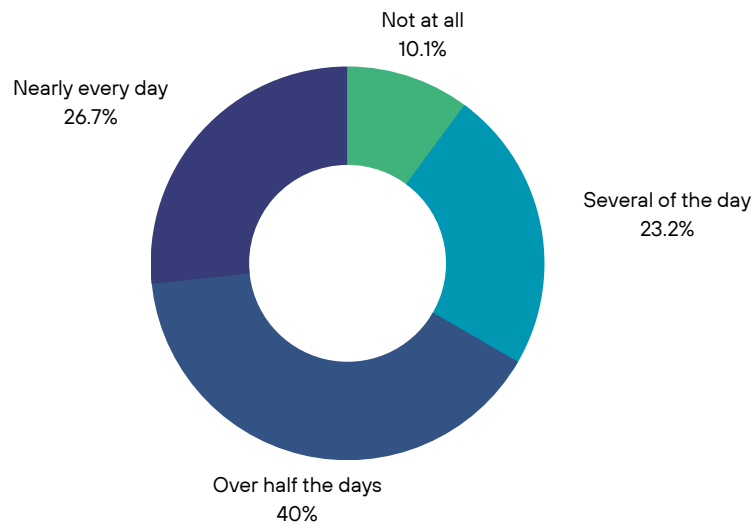
Feeling anxious about your personal responsibility to help address environmental problems



Survey results: The Hogg Scale and Beliefs about climate change

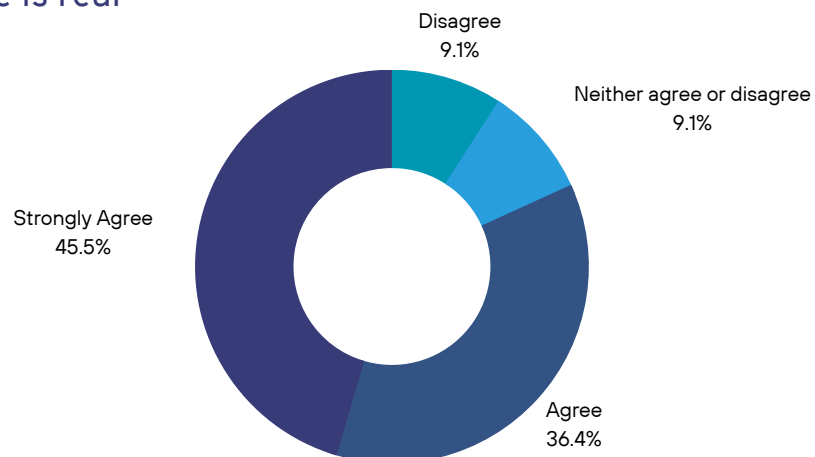
“Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?”

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



Beliefs about Climate Change

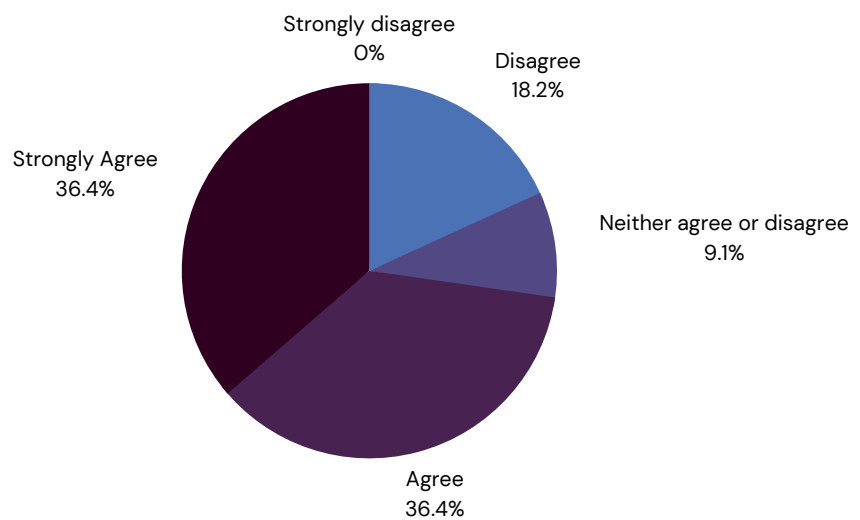
Climate change is real



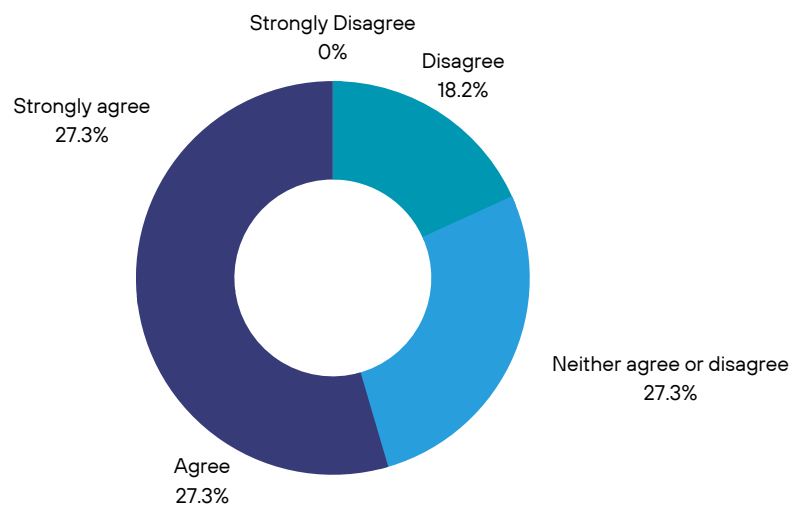
Survey results: Beliefs about climate change

Beliefs about Climate Change

Climate change is caused by humans

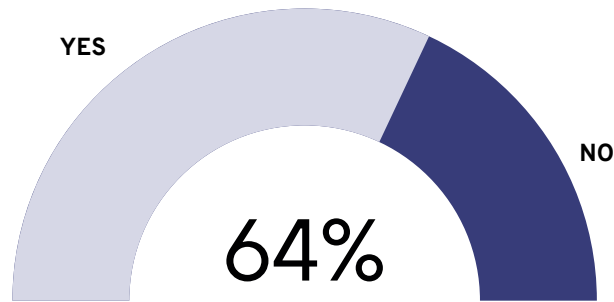


Climate change is reversible



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 Italian 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 interconnected with eco-anxiety. It is important that the 55% of the respondents are urban residents and they are exhibited higher levels of eco-anxiety compared to their rural counterparts. Additionally, while a slight with education was observed, we address that eco-anxiety can be experienced via media and public discourse, since the 91% has expressed that is experiencing eco-anxiety indirectly. This fact 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 interconnection 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, floodings, 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 Italy 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

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