ECO ANXIETY REPORT

FRANCE

2023

iRIS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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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

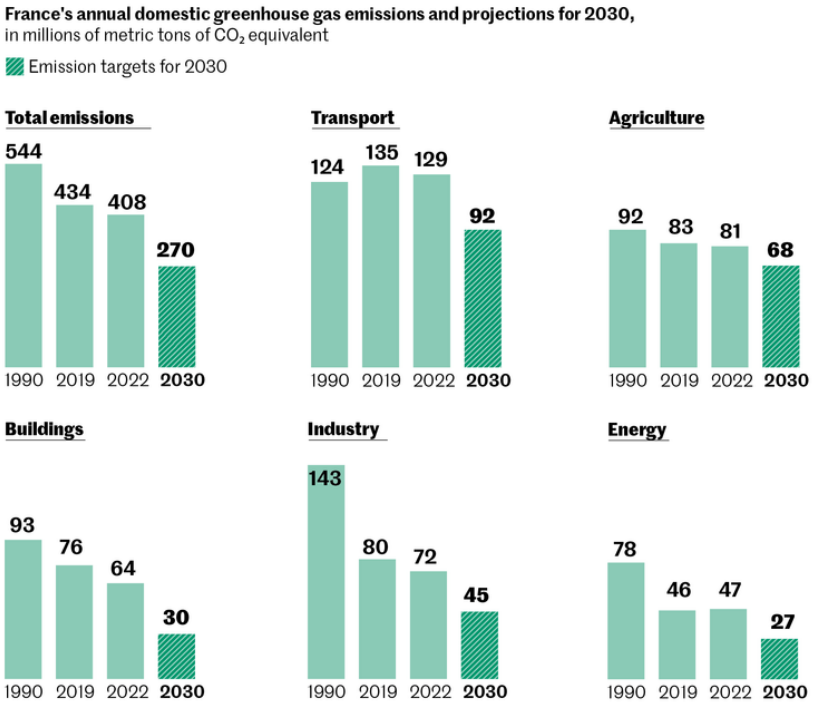
The target group of the French national report are citizens of France and/or people (ages 18-50) that are/have been experiencing climate change in the country.

Climate change impacts in France

Overall, mainland France enjoys a temperate climate. However, regions experience climates that vary according to their latitude, altitude and their proximity to the sea and to the three major mountain ranges (Pyrenees, Massif Central, Alps). There are five main types of climates in mainland France: oceanic, altered oceanic, semi-continental, mountainous, and Mediterranean. (World Bank, 2023)

Greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions in France, like many developed nations, are intricately tied to industrial activities, energy production, and transportation. The French commitment to nuclear energy has positioned it as a leader in low-carbon electricity generation. Nuclear power provides a significant share of the country's energy mix, offering a relatively clean alternative to traditional fossil fuels. However, this approach also prompts ongoing debates about the long-term environmental and safety implications associated with nuclear energy. The French government unveiled a plan to accelerate cuts to its greenhouse gas emissions, targeting a reduction of 50% by 2030 compared with 1990 levels.



Source : Secrétariat général à la planification écologique
Le Monde infographic

Source: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2023/05/22/france-presents-new-more-ambitious-emissions-cutting-plan_6027602_114.html

Climate change impacts in France

Extreme weather events

In the last decade, France has been thrust into the tumultuous forefront of climate change, grappling with a series of extreme weather events that have left an indelible mark on its diverse landscapes and tested the resilience of its communities. From scorching heatwaves to catastrophic floods and unpredictable storms, the French experience of climate change is no longer a distant threat but a tangible reality reshaping the nation's environmental narrative.

One of the most dramatic episodes unfolded during the summer of 2019 when France experienced an unprecedented heatwave. Temperature records shattered as the mercury soared beyond 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in some regions. Paris, normally associated with its romantic boulevards and charming bistros, transformed into a furnace, and the nation collectively held its breath as the heatwave strained infrastructure, challenged public health, and posed new questions about the sustainability of urban living in the face of a warming climate.

France's picturesque countryside, adorned with vineyards and rolling hills, has not been spared from the impacts of climate change. The wine industry, a symbol of French heritage, faced significant challenges as rising temperatures and shifting precipitation patterns altered the traditional grape-growing regions. Winemakers in Burgundy and Bordeaux grappled with the delicate balance of preserving centuries-old viticulture practices while adapting to a climate that seemed determined to rewrite the rules.

In addition to heatwaves, France experienced devastating floods that shook communities and tested the effectiveness of its flood defenses. The Aude River flooding in 2018, for example, resulted in tragic consequences as torrential rains overwhelmed riverbanks and infrastructure, leading to loss of life and extensive property damage. This event underscored the vulnerability of certain regions to increasingly intense and unpredictable precipitation patterns, leaving communities on high alert for the next deluge.

The French Riviera, known for its glamorous beaches and azure waters, faced the wrath of extreme weather as well. In 2020, the region experienced Storm Alex, a powerful Mediterranean hurricane that unleashed torrential rains, triggering flash floods and landslides. The picturesque town of Nice witnessed scenes of devastation as rivers burst their banks and mountainous terrain succumbed to the force of the water, highlighting the complex interactions between climate change and extreme weather events in coastal areas

Survey results

LOCATION

Urban Area 77%

Rural Area 23%

EDUCATION

Elementary School Degree 0%

High School's Degree 3%

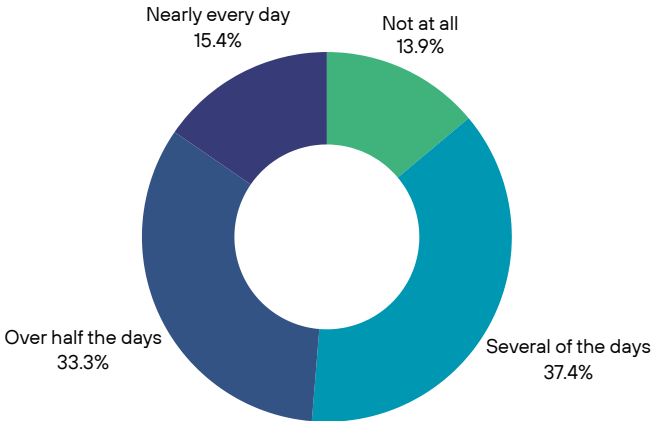
Bachelor's Degree 59%

Master's Degree or higher 38%

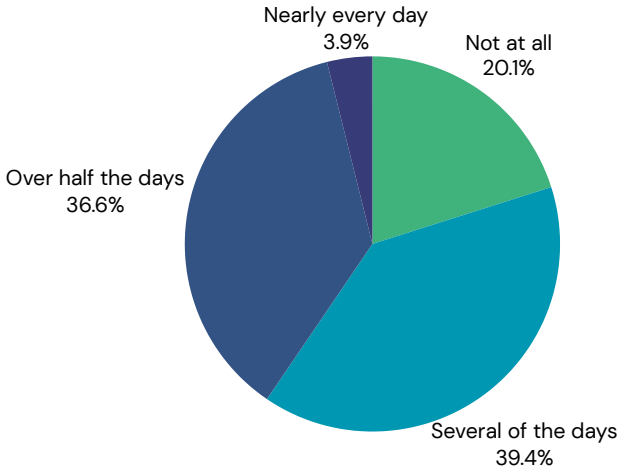
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

"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



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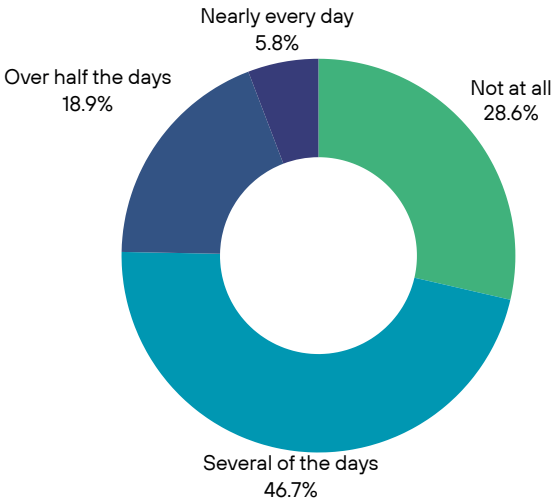
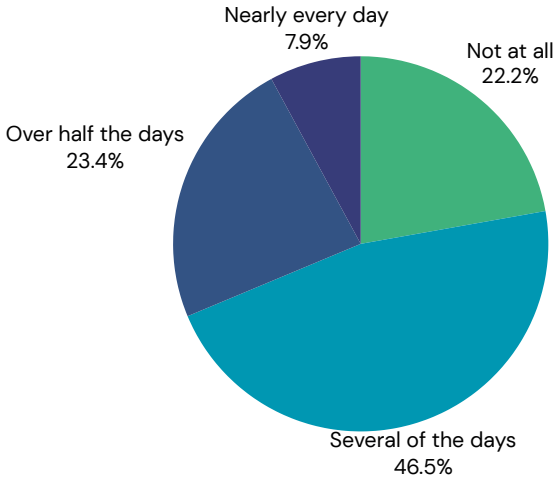
Worrying too much



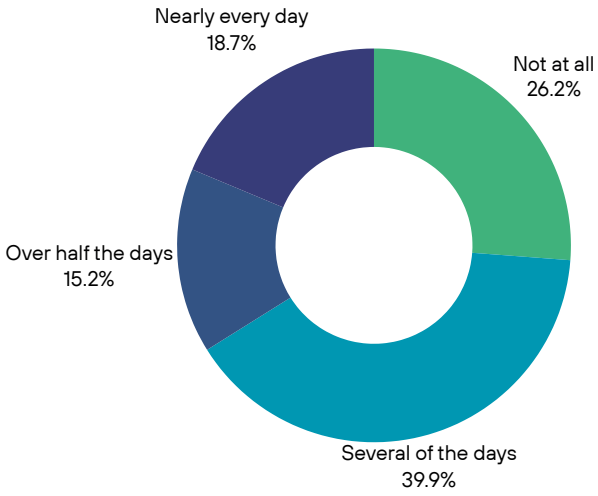
Feeling afraid



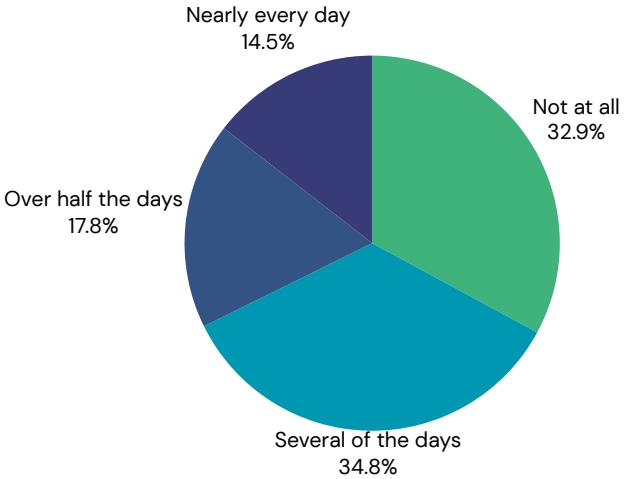
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

"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



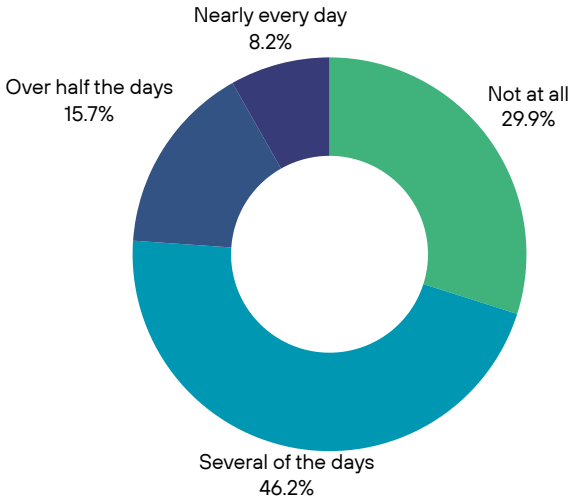
Unable to stop thinking about past events related to climate change



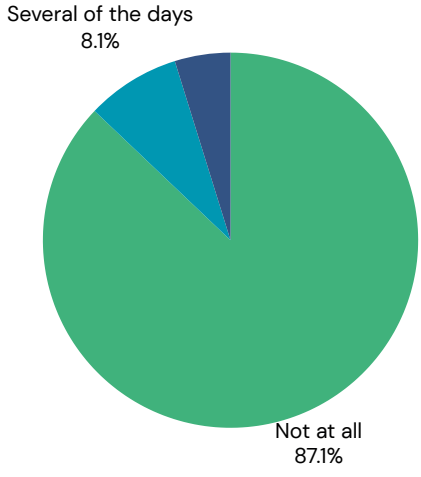
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

"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



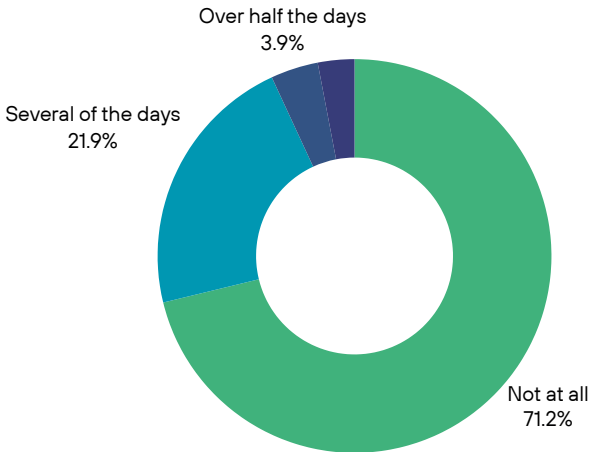
Difficulty sleeping



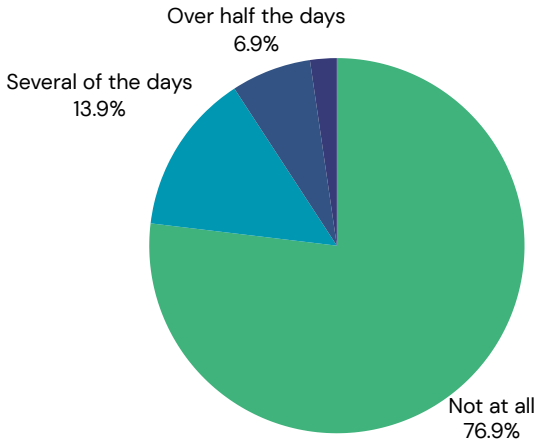
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

"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



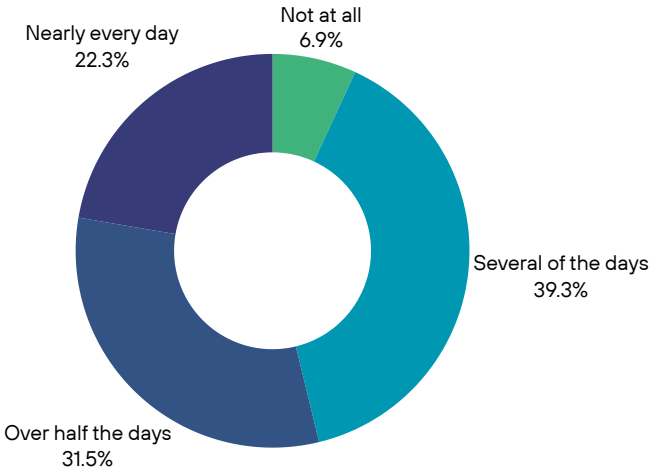
Difficulty working and/or studying



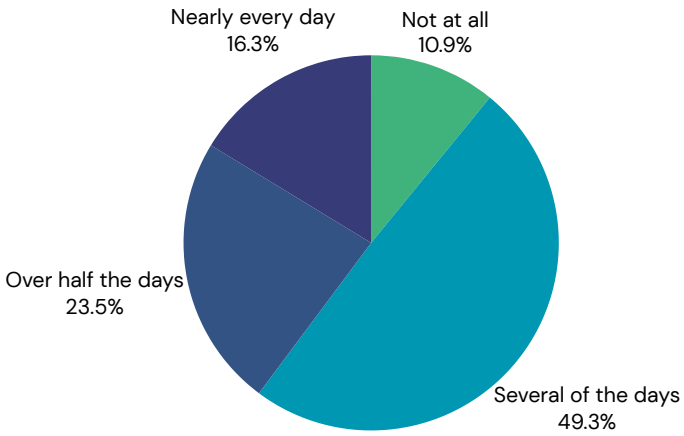
Survey results: The Hogg Scale

"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



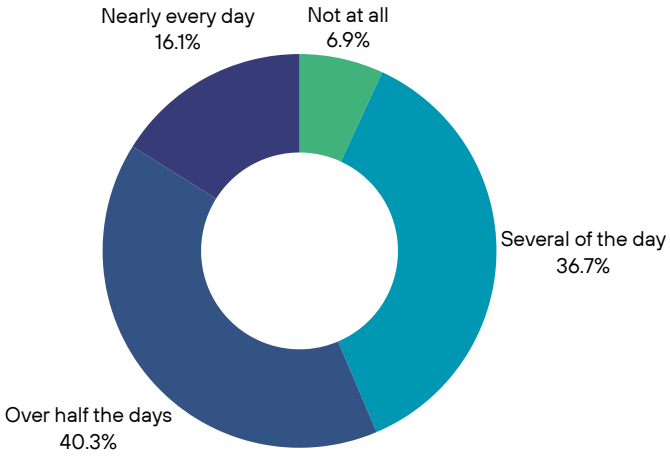
Feeling anxious about your personal responsibility to help address environmental problems



Survey results: The Hogg Scale and Beliefs about climate change

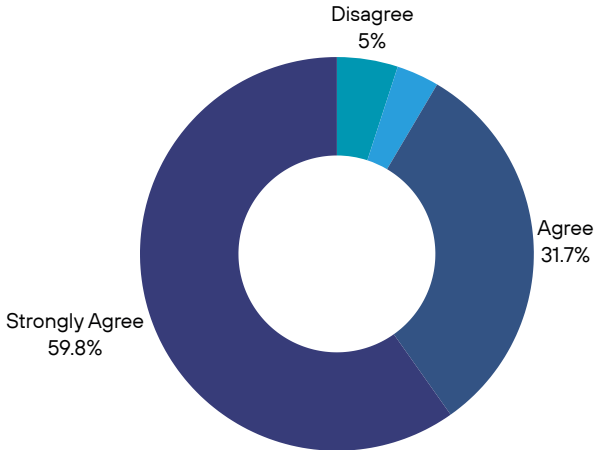
"Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems, when thinking about climate change and other global environmental conditions (e.g., global warming, ecological degradation, resource depletion, species extinction, ozone hole, pollution of the oceans, deforestation)?

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



Beliefs about Climate Change

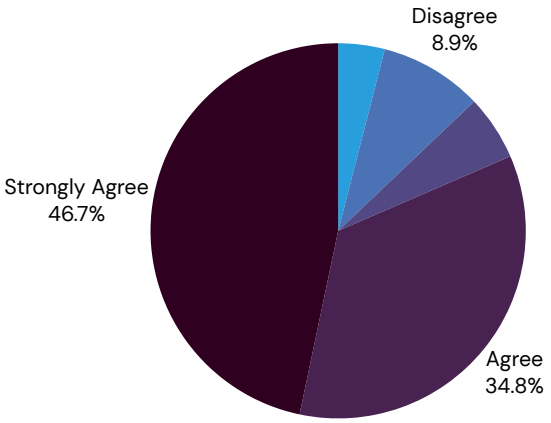
Climate change is real



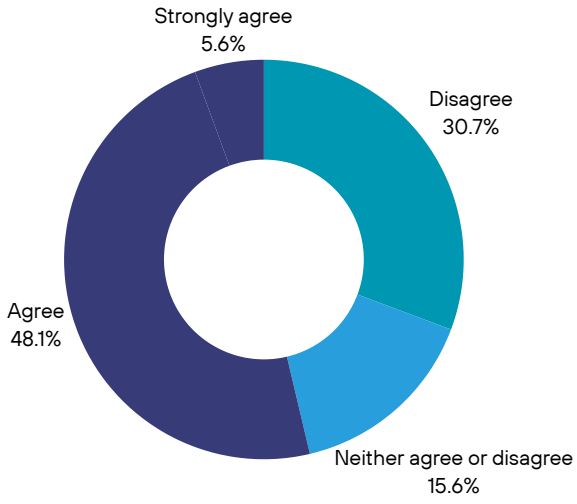
Survey results: Beliefs about climate change

Beliefs about Climate Change

Climate change is caused by humans

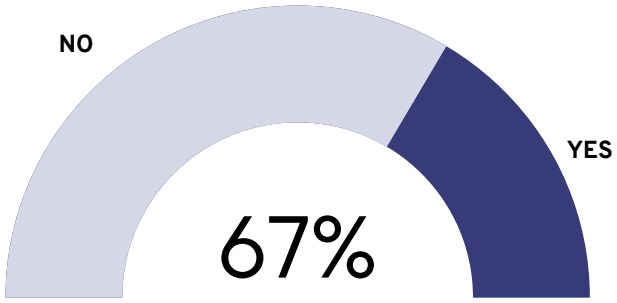


Climate change is reversible



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 discource

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

- Floodings
- Wildfires
- Heatwaves

Key Conclusions

Our research reveals a notable prevalence of eco-anxiety among the French 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 interconnection 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 correlated with eco-anxiety. It is important that the 77% of the respondents are urban residents and they are exhibited higher levels of eco-anxiety compared to their rural counterparts. Additionally, we address that eco-anxiety can be experienced via media and public discourse, since the 87% 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 heatwaves 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 France 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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