

"Worry related to climate change among Brazilian adults"

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[2025/05/15 09:29] Elektra Panthar: Hello everyone.

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A little explanation about this service.

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The transcriptionist is Elektra Panthar.

The speakers will be identified by initials as they speak.

The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers:

MN: Maria Nieves

PK: Pecos Kidd

[2025/05/15 09:30] Inside Whisper: Hello and welcome to Virtual Ability's 2025 Mental Health Symposium.

I'm Inside of Sleep and I have chronic depression and anxiety.

I've been in SL for a little over a year, and I really appreciate the peer volunteer ran support groups and going to music clubs.

In RL I'm a administrative worker by day and artist by night.

Today I'd like to introduce Ms. Maria Nieves.

She's a practicing clinical psychologist in Brazil.

Her talk is titled: "Worry related to climate change among Brazilian adults."

Audience, please hold your questions and comments to the end, so as not to interrupt our presenter.

Welcome, Ms. Maria Nieves. The floor is yours.

[2025/05/15 09:32] Elektra Panthar: MN: Hello, everyone. Before I begin this presentation I'd like to thank Gentle Heron aka Alice and everyone here for the invite. It's a pleasure to be here to talk about this topic, that is, for me, and I hope that for more people in the world, a very important one.

So, climate anxiety in the face of climate change. I'll try to focus on the part where we, as a collective, don't freak out. After all, this congress is about managing anxiety.

I stumbled upon this topic during my last year of graduation in psychology. For me to actually graduate I needed to do research on a topic of my choice. The other author of the paper that made Alice invite me to be here, Dr Karen Jansen, was my professor and guided me through making this research (it's worth mentioning that she couldn't be here today with me due to previously scheduled appointments in the university).

It was 2022, the world had just nearly ended as we know it because of COVID. In Brazil, my country, a totally mad man, as elected president, had consistently neglected all the sanitary measures in place and we had 600 thousand people deceased. COP26 had happened on the subject of "climate change", Alice Pataxó and Txai Suruí were the new heroes for some people in my country and the new enemies for other, because they were indigenous and the two of them were talking about preserving nature, and climate crisis, and how to prevent the world from collapsing. So, if I'm being honest, I was very angry, and very sad, and very scared about the world ending and everybody dying. And I wanted to do research about it. I wanted to know how other people felt, and coped, and what they did about it.

And what I found was that there is scientific consensus that global warming is happening and anyone with access to information about climate change is potentially susceptible to experiencing an anxiety response. In literature, this anxiety response was receiving a lot of names - as often happens in new areas of research: eco-anxiety, climate anxiety, anxiety, fear, grief, eco-anger, eco-grief and so on. But one thing was already agreed upon by all researchers: such reactions should not be immediately seen as pathological, as they can serve as motivation to find solutions to mitigate climate change.

But, what is climate anxiety? (I chose this term, as many papers I read over the years use it). It could be understood as the distress and worry related to climate change. It can be connected to emotions such as fear, anger, grief, despair, guilt and shame. Substantial levels of distress related to climate change have been reported globally, specifically in children and adolescents. In 2022 a lot of research was carried on in Australia, where the young were sad, angry, and organized in activism. I found one, from there, about what the authors called eco-anger and how this emotion, and not eco-anxiety, elicits responses to mitigate climate change.

I also found studies in the Philippines, Congo, Morocco, Rwanda, Algeria, United States, and various European countries such as France, Italy, and all Scandinavia. The youth there were all very worried about their future, scared and feeling abandoned by the ones in charge.

But the study that stuck with me and even gave me the means to do my own research was the study with 10 thousand young adults across 10 countries (Australia, Brazil, Finland, France, India, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, the UK, and the USA; 1000 participants per country).

The authors created their own questionnaire to survey the subjects, recruited them online and what they wanted to know was: what are the feelings and thoughts that the young people have about climate change and how they feel about the government response to this crisis?

They found pretty much the same as everyone else: Respondents across all countries were worried about climate change, more than 50% reported feeling sad, anxious, angry,

powerless, helpless, and guilty, and many reported a high number of negative thoughts about climate change (think that the future is frightening or that they think people have failed to take care of the planet). Respondents also rated governmental responses to climate change negatively and reported greater feelings of betrayal than of reassurance. So, yes, things were very tense and scary in 2022.

Remember what I said earlier about the mad man as the president of Brazil? And the world ending? Finding all these studies made me not just want but also need to investigate what my fellow Brazilians were thinking and feeling about the climate crisis. And so I wrote an email to the authors of the study above and asked them if I could use the questionnaire they had created for my own research and they said “yes”.

But I wanted to know what the young were feeling and thinking and also what the older ones were feeling and thinking, because I wanted to compare them: me and Karen thought that the older ones would be less worried.

The participants were aged between 18-42, I asked them their gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, Brazil's region of residence, income, information source about climate change (social media, TV and radio, scientific articles), frequency of receiving climate change information (very often, often, sometimes, rarely) and perception of knowledge about climate crisis (obtained through a questionnaire created by me where I asked things like “I think human action is the main cause of the climate crisis”, “I know why the glaciers are melting”, “I think there is a link between deforestation and the climate crisis” and “I realize that every year it gets warmer and I understand the connection with the climate crisis” and the answers were “I’m sure I know” and “I’m not sure I know”).

In total, 323 subjects participated in the study. Most of the sample were women, between 18 and 26, from the South of Brazil, undergraduate, with income from one to five minimum wages and self-declared white. 88.5% were worried about climate change (69.0% very or extremely; 19.5% moderately worried), and 11.5% were not worried (or a little worried). Worry was more prevalent among subjects who most frequently received or read news related to climate change, with no difference between the sources of such news.

Moreover, people worried about climate change showed greater knowledge about the climate crisis when compared to people who were not worried. Feelings of sadness, powerlessness, fear and anxiety were reported more often among those worried about climate change. The most frequent thoughts were: “People have failed to take care of the planet”, “The future is frightening”, “My family’s security will be threatened (economic, social, physical)” and “Humanity is doomed”.

And now, what? What do we do with all this information? Is climate anxiety healthy or unhealthy? Should we be worried about the climate crisis or not? What a big life uncertainty!

In my research on the literature, I found that we don’t know yet.

Remember the Australian research I talked about? Eco-anger could be an answer: when we, humans, feel anger, it serves the purpose of showing us that we think that something unjust/unfair and wrong is happening. With just the right amount, anger serves as a motivator to action. If we don’t respond violently, anger can help us do something, change

things. Social activism, eco-activism, sometimes come about because we are angry with the way things are. Not scary, not anxious, but angry.

Another way of looking at things is that anxiety, in a similar way to anger, also functions as a motivator to action when present in the right amount. And, since anxiety and worry sometimes are related, is it ok to worry about the world ending? If climate change and the climate crisis are really happening, is there a way to not worry about it?

So, let me tell you that worrying about all this is the more human response we all can have. But this response, this worry, this anxiety, this anger, should not paralyze us in despair, and fear, and lack of hope.

We have to do something about it! We must do something about it!

Activism, recycling, talking to people about it, respecting nature, eating less meat, voting the right people, demanding action of the people in power, holding capitalism accountable, reading and understating what really is going on and spreading the word. Do what you can, change what you can, help where you can. Vote for the right people!

Because once the climate crisis is a global issue, it is urgent that Governments take real actions to mitigate and prevent the impacts of climate change, not only on people's mental health, but also on the environment as a whole.

This picture shows the biodiversity of my country, we need to fight for it

And, lastly, there's a very beautiful article called "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Eco-Apocalypse: An Existential Approach to Accepting Eco-Anxiety" that reminds us that we are all gonna die. Someday. And that is sad, very sad, but also very true.

So, instead of paralyzing ourselves in fear and anxiety, we should... live. Live the best we can, doing the best we can, knowing that we are a very large group of people and we should live in community, helping each other, listening to each other, respecting each other and fighting for the future, a better one, for all of us.

And sorry but I need to repeat myself and say it one more time: climate change is real, it is happening, feeling things about it is likely a normal response, and we all need to do all we can to mitigate it, and demand action from the ones in charge and voting in the right people, the politicians that are not mad people, that really care about the people, that don't commune with billionaires, those are the ones that, maybe, will do something real about climate change.

Thank you all very much for your attention, I'm here for questions, comments.
You are all very welcome to contact me with your questions as well.

[2025/05/15 09:45] Shaerken Changeheart (ChangeheartShaerken Resident): /me appaws!

[2025/05/15 09:45] Tom Bukowski: /me claps

[2025/05/15 09:45] Namaara MacMoragh: .•★• Applause •★•.

[2025/05/15 09:45] Buffy Beale: excellent presentation!!

[2025/05/15 09:45] Elektra Panthar: 🎵🎵🎵🎵 Applauds 🎵🎵🎵🎵

[2025/05/15 09:45] Dorie Bernstein: /me applauds

[2025/05/15 09:45] Stepin (Stepinwolf Darkstone): /me claps

[2025/05/15 09:45] Inside of Sleep (Inside Whisper): /me claps Thank you Maria :)

[2025/05/15 09:45] Brian Aviator: Wonderful presentation!

[2025/05/15 09:45] Mook Wheeler: COMMENT & QUESTION: Your points on 'eco-anger' and 'eco-anxiety' are extremely interesting. People certainly take the *least* 'outlier' action when they are *most* comfortable - i.e. they don't change jobs, accommodation, habits, lifestyles, etc, when they are happy and fulfilled. No reason to. It is reduced comfort that usually forces people to move, that pushes (big) change in people's lives.

You say eco-anger - rather than eco-anxiety - is a stronger motivator for climate action. In your research, did you find that eco-anger and eco-anxiety tend to develop in a particular sequence (e.g., anxiety first, then anger), or do they typically coexist from the outset? Such findings would have a direct impact on climate action strategies, if 'paralysis' is equated with eco-anxiety and 'action' with eco-anger. Also, did anxiety typically develop into anger, or vice-versa, or not usually? And did your research reveal any demographic or contextual patterns (e.g., age, political environment) that make people more prone to one response over the other?

[2025/05/15 09:47] Elektra Panthar: MN: not sure I can answer it, but great question! I didn't focus much on eco anger, more on eco anxiety

In people who had only eco anger or eco anger and eco anxiety, eco anger was the one that moved them to act

[2025/05/15 09:48] Zambi (Zambe Boo): co-dependency?

[2025/05/15 09:48] Elektra Panthar: MN: anxiety was more likely to stop them.

Not sure which is the order, it has been studied as a cluster in most studies

In my research we looked for demographic and contextual patterns, we found there really weren't differences

Older people weren't as worried

We weren't able to find many older people as well, so that's lacking in my research

[2025/05/15 09:50] Mook Wheeler: nods. Very interesting answer, Maria, thank you!

[2025/05/15 09:47] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): What about reusing things? part of the problem in my opinion is we have a throw away culture now. If it's outdated or breaks, throw it out and replace it. At one point this wasn't the case. the smallest scrap of fabric was re used for a quilt. Some of us here may remember the TV repair man.. Do you think if we can go back to focusing on quality and fixing what we have, this can help with climate change?

[2025/05/15 09:50] LillyLal Resident: Things aren't made to last.

Double edge sword.

[2025/05/15 09:52] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): True Lilly, but we can make them last longer and make them out of materials that when they do wear out and break can be recycled.

[2025/05/15 09:47] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): I was struck by your comment that eco-anger seems to be spurring the youth to action. All generations need to follow the lead of the young people. Get angry, do something (constructive, of course)

[2025/05/15 09:48] LillyLal Resident: Young people are trying to change the law too. They are suing to force companies to pay. It's great.

[2025/05/15 09:51] Elektra Panthar: MN: we don't have to take the blame on us if for example we don't recycle

Big tech, big companies are the most responsible, but I think we can help and we can speak up - every action we take is helpful

I love iSkye's comment, I agree, younger people are trying to push the government and bring change

I love that they are active, they are a diverse group of young people all over the world taking action

Yes, I'm not saying eco terrorism is fine but suing companies who are destroying the planet? Yes! we should help young people who are angry to change things

[2025/05/15 09:52] Rhiannon Chatnoir: I love the idea of encouraging more repair and mending

[2025/05/15 09:53] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Rhiannon: darnig seems to be a lost art.

[2025/05/15 09:52] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): here in my general area we have been dutifully sorting our trash for recycling and we learned that the recyclables weren't getting recycled. Imagine the frustration - we do our part!

[2025/05/15 09:53] Dorie Bernstein: I hope the right-to-repair movement grows a lot stronger. That involves companies changing their manufacturing processes, which is the challenge

[2025/05/15 09:53] Stealth (Cicero Kit): We can build things to last, or at least make them repairable (right to repair)

[2025/05/15 09:55] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): agreed Stealth! Perhaps drop off locations for broken tech can help too, and companies can reuse components.

[2025/05/15 09:54] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): some profit models require annual completely new versions of devices

They could do much better

[2025/05/15 09:55] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Doesn't mean the components can't be reused, like perhaps a trade in kind of thing can be done. Trade in old phone for discount for new phone. The company can reuse the materials such as the cobalt.

[2025/05/15 09:55] Elektra Panthar: MN: eco anxiety is normal but we can't let it stop us
Yes, the companies have to change the way they manufacture things

I'm very angry about the fact that people sort the trash and then they don't get recycled, it happens where I live as well

We need to keep pushing them

[2025/05/15 09:56] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Not only helping with eco change, but helping reduce other issues such as child labor in Africa.

[2025/05/15 09:58] Shiloh e. (Shiloh Emmons): Maybe we have gotten too used to being disposable societies instead of longer lasting consumer items, ones that could be repaired, or like Shaerken suggests: manufacturers need to produce things that have reusable parts.

[2025/05/15 09:58] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): Gram used to say, "Use it up, wear it out; make it do or do without."

Upcycle stuff, too.

[2025/05/15 09:59] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Sewing should go from hobby to necessary again.

But what doesn't help is factories making fabric super cheap quality. I tried to darn a friend's dress. Tried to stabilize it with stabilizer and tried again. Dress wouldn't darn, darn it! It was because it was from Temu and used the cheapest fabric possible.

[2025/05/15 09:57] Stealth (Cicero Kit): I have a question
I'll use voice

[2025/05/15 09:58] Elektra Panthar: Stealth: you're in Brazil and this regarding attitudes towards indigenous populations who are doing a crucial job into protecting the environment. What do you think about the sovereignty of the land, even where I live it should be agreed that the lands belong to the indigenous people and they protect them, but instead others infringe on these territories and destroy it.

[2025/05/15 10:00] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): Indigenous people I've spoken with have said "NOBODY owns the land. We all USE it."

[2025/05/15 10:00] Elektra Panthar: MN: yes in 2022 the madman in power was violent against the indigenous populations. We as white people stole the land from them, here in Brazil the debate is going slowly, there's a lot of grief and shame on both parts
I think the indigenous populations are the best at preserving nature, if we could adopt their practices we could make so much progress

Alice Pataxó and Txai Suruí are heroes to me and unfortunately received many death threats

It's difficult to be an activist in Brazil, and us white people need to fight alongside them, we owe it to them

[2025/05/15 10:02] Trinny Mizin: Indigenous people usually create the smallest footprint
They're better at living than us

[2025/05/15 10:01] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Not necessarily on that. One-fourth Shawnee, and my Mom is pretty much in the "Throw it out" camp instead of the "donate" camp. Natives can be just as wasteful as everyone else.

[2025/05/15 10:02] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): I like the indigenous philosophy that we are actually borrowing the land from our future generations.

[2025/05/15 10:03] Trinny Mizin: yes

[2025/05/15 10:03] Stealth (Cicero Kit): /me nods

[2025/05/15 10:03] Shiloh e. (Shiloh Emmons): Q: Do you see any comparison to the Earth movement of the 60s and 70s and current Eco Anger Eco Anxiety movement by younger eco aware youth?

[2025/05/15 10:03] Elektra Panthar: MN: good question

Now the young ones are angrier, in the 60s-70s they were more focused on the Love&Peace aspect, about stopping wars

Now the young ones are scared but also very angry, doing protests - Greta Thunberg has been arrested multiple times already and still continues fighting

Today's movements love the Earth and they are angry with us

[2025/05/15 10:05] SerenityBen Resident: There were lots of angry activists during that time period in the United States.

[2025/05/15 10:06] Namaara MacMoragh: What you say about their hearts are full of love but they are also angry. This was very true for those who protested in the 60s and 70s.
That was my experience.

[2025/05/15 10:07] Elektra Panthar: MN: the way capitalism and society work bring younger ones to anger, and not much to forgiveness and love. but I don't think they'll resort to extreme violence - they are angry but they love the planet, they use anger as a motivator to act

They want to fix things so that they can be free to love the planet

PK: we had our share of angry activists as well in the 70s but I agree that the young ones are the ones with the most to lose

[2025/05/15 10:05] G.G. (Auntie Lockjaw): hopefully their anger will not become more violence

[2025/05/15 10:06] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): G.G. it has. There are activists that have attacked the wrong thing. Like an eco activist that threw something at the Mona Lisa in protest. I forgot what it was, but thank goodness the Mona Lisa was covered by glass and protected.

[2025/05/15 10:06] LillyLal Resident: Violence may be all that the people in power understand. Am I for it, no, but I'm scared it is inevitable.

The protester knew she was covered. Damage was never the point.

[2025/05/15 10:08] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Still wrong target, and the message went over everyone's head.

[2025/05/15 10:08] LillyLal Resident: People talked about it, Zombie, THAT was the point. Young people think that the hippies have a special place in hell. All that lip service, no action.

[2025/05/15 10:08] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): Today's young people weren't THERE when the hippies were doing their thing.

[2025/05/15 10:09] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): I agree with iSkye

[2025/05/15 10:09] LillyLal Resident: Yes, that is how age works.

[2025/05/15 10:09] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): they did what they could within the framework of their philosophy and in some areas they were effective

[2025/05/15 10:09] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): and the hippies target was more against the Vietnam war.

[2025/05/15 10:09] iSkye Silvercloud (iSkye Silverweb): well not just that - we were already seeing concerns with the environment back then too

[2025/05/15 10:10] LillyLal Resident: "already seeing concerns" is a fabrication. People knew, they just decided to push it onto the young.

It was a choice. That they deserve to be ridiculed for.

[2025/05/15 10:11] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Information also didn't spread as fast as well. What was going on in California, and what was going on in Kansas would of been way different.

[2025/05/15 10:10] Rhiannon Chatnoir: in line with the repairing, have also seen resurgence of reuse, with many "no buying, free / barter groups popping up on social media and other groups

[2025/05/15 10:12] Zombie doggie (Tarquin Evermore): Rhiannon: I use an antique sewing machine, I often scour second hand stores and antique stores for sewing machine attachments to add to its collection.

[2025/05/15 10:09] Elektra Panthar: MN: in Brazil the eco movements didn't happen in the 70s, in that time we were suffering from dictatorship so we were fighting to reclaim democracy

All Latin America was fighting that issue at the time

PK: a sign of how effective your presentation was, the chat is hot with discussion!

Thank you so much, we appreciate your insights!

MN: Thank you, you guys are the best!

Thank you! you are welcome to contact me

[2025/05/15 10:11] MariaSnow77 Resident: maria.nievess@outlook.com

[2025/05/15 10:11] Namaara MacMoragh: Thank you ... Great presentation :-)

[2025/05/15 10:11] Stepin (Stepinwolf Darkstone): <https://genius.com/Bob-dylan-the-times-they-are-a-changin-lyrics>

[2025/05/15 10:11] Sonitus Randt: /me applauds!
[2025/05/15 10:11] Tricia Funizza: a p l a u s e
[2025/05/15 10:11] Stepin (Stepinwolf Darkstone): /me claps
[2025/05/15 10:11] Brian Aviator: /me applauds enthusiastically
[2025/05/15 10:12] Eme Capalini: Great job
[2025/05/15 10:12] Tricia Funizza: thank you

[2025/05/15 10:12] Elektra Panthar: leaving the references in chat as well for whoever is interested

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