

Climate Change and Mental Health

Climate change poses serious risks to mental health and wellbeing, concludes a WHO policy brief released in June 2022. Climate change can lead to job loss, force people to relocate, and harm social connections in the community, all of these can have mental health consequences. In addition, fear of the effects of climate change and related consequences to society and individual wellbeing can cause anxiety and distress.

There is an onus on governments in relation to the impacts of climate change on mental health. WHO recommends the following:

- Integrate climate considerations with mental health programs
- Integrate mental health support with climate action
- Build upon global commitments
- Develop community-based approaches to reduce vulnerabilities
- Close the large funding gap that exists for mental health and psychosocial support

Resource Links

- **Extreme Heat Poses a Threat to Mental Health**

[Extreme Heat Poses a Threat to Mental Health](#)

This Insight+ article highlights the growing mental health risks linked to extreme heat, urging recognition of heat as a legitimate mental health concern and calling for climate-resilient mental health planning in Australia.

- **People's Mental Health Goes Downhill After Repeated Climate Disasters – it's an Issue of Social Equity**

[People's Mental Health Goes Downhill After Repeated Climate Disasters – it's an Issue of Social Equity](#)

This news article reports on a study published in The Lancet Public Health, which used ten years of national data to show that people exposed to multiple disasters experience more severe and lasting mental health impacts.

- **How Climate Change Affects Mental Health in Australia**

[How Climate Change Affects Mental Health in Australia](#)

Climate-related mental health challenges are increasing, with children, young people, and First Nation communities most at risk. This report, published by Doctors for the Environment

Australia, calls for urgent action across all levels of government, including investment to expand the mental health workforce.

- **Climate anxiety**

- [Gen Z's Climate Anxiety is Real and Needs Action](#)

- This [study](#) was published in Sustainable Earth Reviews. The study surveyed Australian university students belonging to Gen Z (people born between 1995 and 2010) about climate change. More than 80 per cent reported being concerned or very concerned. Climate anxiety refers to people who have concerns about climate change manifest as disturbing thoughts and overwhelming distress about the future.

- **Reconnection: Meeting the Climate Crisis Inside Out**

- [Download.ashx \(themindfulnessinitiative.org\)](#)

- This fascinating report by Swedish think tank program Contemplative Sustainable Futures explores the link – currently completely overlooked entirely by mainstream approaches – between the cognitive and emotional foundations of conscious connection, and posits that a human crisis of relationship, from self, others and nature, is at the root of the climate crisis. The report discusses the potential for mindfulness and compassion practices to be developed into powerful enablers of reconnection, fostering both greater resilience and more appropriate responses to global sustainability crises.

- **Effects of Extreme Weather Events on Mental Health – UK**

- [Effect of Extreme Weather Events on Mental Health: A Narrative Synthesis and Meta-Analysis for the UK - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

- There is increasing evidence that extreme weather conditions have an impact on mental health for people in the UK with those experiencing storm or flood damage to their home having poorer mental health. This is the case even in temperate regions such as the United Kingdom (UK) where flooding and heat waves are forecast to become more common.

- **Correlating heatwaves and relative humidity with suicide**

- [Correlating heatwaves and relative humidity with suicide \(fatal intentional self-harm\) \(nature.com\)](#)

- This article investigates the correlation between heatwaves and/or relative humidity and suicide (fatal intentional self-harm) on a global scale. The study found that relative humidity showed a more significant correlation with suicide compared to heatwaves and that both younger age groups and women seemed to be more significantly affected by changes in humidity and heatwave counts in comparison with the rest of the population.

- **The influence of weather on the course of bipolar disorder**

[The influence of weather on the course of bipolar disorder: A systematic review - ScienceDirect](#)

A total of 24 articles were selected for qualitative synthesis. The most studied meteorological variables were temperature and sunlight, and the most studied clinical outcomes were hospital admissions. Significant correlations were found between temperature and sunlight and clinical outcomes. Higher temperatures may trigger bipolar disorder relapses that require hospital admission, and higher exposures to sunlight may increase the risk of manic episodes.

- **Climate anxiety in children and young people – study 2021**

[Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey - ScienceDirect](#)

Around 10 000 children and young people (aged 16–25 years) in ten countries were surveyed. Data was collected on participants' thoughts and feelings about climate change, and government responses to climate change. Respondents across all countries were worried about climate change (59% were very or extremely worried and 84% were at least moderately worried).