

Survey reveals 'eco-anxiety' over climate crisis

November 3 2021



The survey revealed 78 per cent of people reported some level of fear about climate change Pic: Glacier in Europe. Credit: Alistair Keely, University of York

A majority of people believe that climate change will have a more significant effect on humanity than will COVID-19, according to a survey involving the University of York.

The survey, carried out as part of a study into "eco-anxiety" by the University of York and Global Future thinktank, revealed that overall, 78 percent of people reported some level of fear about climate change, with 41 percent reporting being very much or extremely fearful.

The survey is published as hundreds of world leaders gather in Glasgow for COP26 to discuss the climate. The two-week summit is seen as crucial if climate change is to be brought under control.

Concerns

Fear about climate change is high amongst all classes with 42 percent of middle and upper-class people reporting high levels of concern compared to 39 percent amongst working class groups, the survey showed.

Nearly half (43 percent) of people living in London, the east and southeast of England reported high levels of fear regarding climate change, compared to 38 percent of those living in the north and the midlands.

The [survey](#) also revealed that women remain significantly more anxious about climate change (45 percent) than men (36 percent), and are more likely to change their behavior.

The authors of the report say that people are skeptical about the impact their personal lifestyle changes can make. They are more likely to blame industrialized nations, corporations and consumer culture for climate change than individuals.

Priorities

Dr. Pavlos Vasilopoulos, politics lecturer at the University of York and one of the authors, said: "These findings contest commonly held views that the environment is only an issue for the southern middle class.

"Instead, [climate](#) change appears to be becoming more similar to issues such as unemployment or crime, which are recognized as priorities by the majority and are used to evaluate government performance."

Rowenna Davis, director of Global Future, said: "Everyone—rich and poor, young and old, north and south, men and women—is suffering eco-anxiety. Therefore, some cynical politicians who seek to use wedge issues like petrol prices to divide the public are not only wrong, they are also making a strategic error.

"Whoever hopes to win the next election will need to win the 'red wall.' This will mean responding to concerns these voters actually hold rather than perceptions of them. From our research, this must include a meaningful response to [climate change](#)."

Provided by University of York

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