

# Trillions are lost in worker productivity due to ecological anxiety and 'lie-flat' lifestyles, argues researcher

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Could nature and climate anxieties predict future social behaviors, in the same way that consumer sentiment predicts purchasing and investment?

The suggestion is made in the journal *One Earth*, by Griffith University's Professor Emeritus Ralf Buckley, in a preview of an article led by Professor Thomas Pienkowski in the UK.

Professor Buckley said the international Global Burden of Disease Study had shown that anxiety and depression were widespread and worsening.

"Economic costs are up to 16% of global GDP, with 19 days per year on average lost for every person worldwide," Professor Buckley said.

"There are many causes, and these include the current climate, biodiversity and livelihood crises. Professor Pienkowski's article points out that health-sector responses such as counseling and chemotherapies address only symptoms, not underlying [social determinants](#). Anxiety and its [economic costs](#) will therefore keep growing until we can achieve major changes in global economic and [political systems](#)."

Professor Buckley argued that we could use current types and intensities of ecoanxiety to measure people's expectations of planetary futures.

"Higher anxieties may mean that more people adopt 'lie-flat' lifestyles, with fewer children and lower financial ambitions," he said. "Lie-flat social changes at large scale are just what is needed to reduce [human impacts](#) on the Earth, before it is incapable of supporting its still-growing human population."

Therefore, Professor Buckley suggested tracking changes in the various types of eco-[anxiety](#) and matching them to lifestyle choices to predict what changes were likely to occur across the billions of people on the planet.

**More information:** Immediate economic significance of nature, climate and livelihood anxieties, *One Earth* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.oneear.2024.06.004](#)

Provided by Griffith University

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