

Getting Involved with Climate Change: Using Psychology to Make a Difference

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NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | APA WEBINAR

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APA CE Speaker Disclosures

There is no content in these presentations which present a conflict of interest, nor where the presenters have a financial interest.

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AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Addressing the Climate Crisis An Action Plan for Psychologists

REPORT OF THE APA TASK FORCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Approved by the APA
Council of Representatives,
February, 2022

Posted online at
<https://www.apa.org/science/about/publications/climate-crisis-action-plan.pdf>

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GAS	SYMBOL	CONTENT
Nitrogen	N ₂	78.084%
Oxygen	O ₂	20.946%
Argon	Ar	0.934%
Carbon dioxide	CO ₂	0.042%
Neon	Ne	18.182 parts per million
Helium	He	5.24 parts per million
Methane	CH ₄	1.92 parts per million
Krypton	Kr	1.14 parts per million
Hydrogen	H ₂	0.55 parts per million
Nitrous oxide	N ₂ O	0.33 parts per million
Carbon monoxide	CO	0.10 parts per million
Xenon	Xe	0.09 parts per million
Ozone	O ₃	0.07 parts per million
Nitrogen dioxide	NO ₂	0.02 parts per million

<https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/atmosphere>

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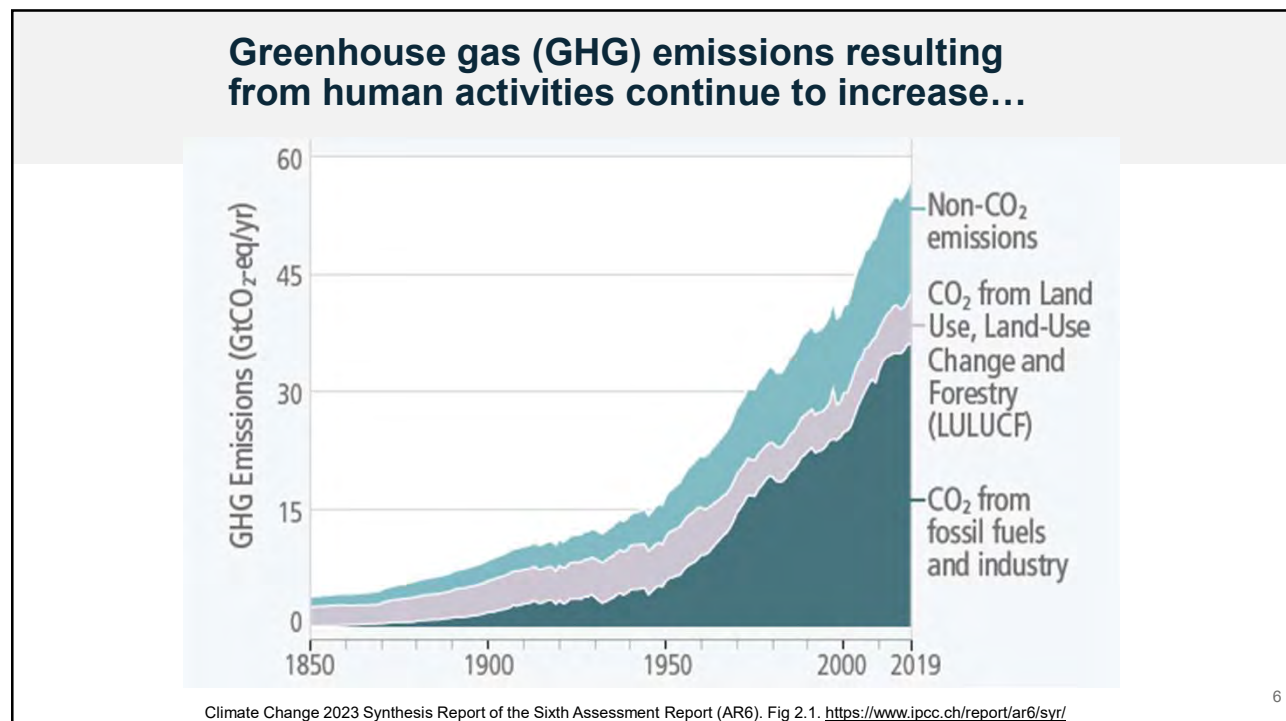
Chemical makeup of the atmosphere EXCLUDING water vapor

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The greenhouse effect: airborne molecules with more than two atoms are good at absorbing radiation

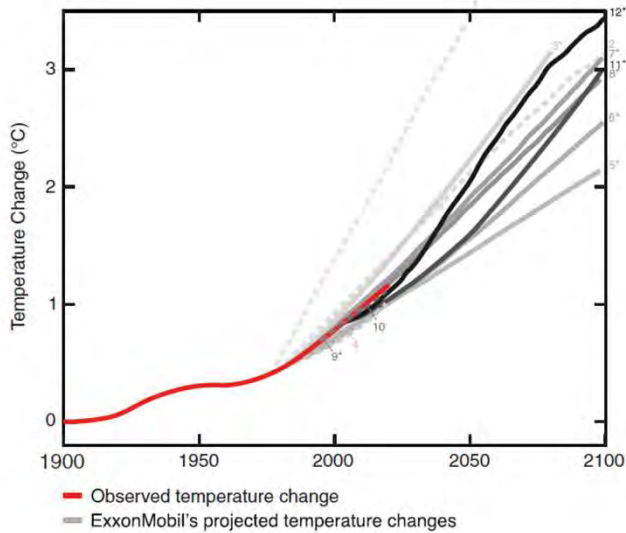
<https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/atmosphere>

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...and temperatures go up



Global warming projections reported by ExxonMobil scientists in internal documents between 1977 and 2003

Shades of gray scale with model start dates, from earliest (1977: lightest) to latest (2003: darkest)

Supran, G., Rahmstorf, S., & Oreskes, N. (2023). *Science*, 379(6628), eabk0063.

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/01/harvard-led-analysis-finds-exxonmobil-internal-research-accurately-predicted-climate-change/>

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Yes, it's us

Expert credibility in climate change

William R. L. Anderegg^{a,1}, James W. Prall^b, Jacob Harold^c, and Stephen H. Schneider^{a,d,1}

^aDepartment of Biology, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305; ^bElectrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada M5S 3G4; ^cWilliam and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Palo Alto, CA 94025; and ^dWoods Institute for the Environment, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305

Contributed by Stephen H. Schneider, April 9, 2010 (sent for review December 22, 2009)

Although preliminary estimates from published literature and expert surveys suggest striking agreement among climate scientists on the tenets of anthropogenic climate change (ACC), the American public expresses substantial doubt about both the anthropogenic cause and the level of scientific agreement underpinning ACC. A broad analysis of the climate scientist community itself, the distribution of credibility of dissenting researchers relative to agreeing researchers, and the level of agreement among top climate experts has not been conducted and would inform future ACC discussions. Here, we use an extensive dataset of 1,372 climate researchers and their publication and citation data to show that (i) 97–98% of the climate researchers most actively publishing in the field surveyed here support the tenets of ACC outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and (ii) the relative climate expertise and scientific prominence of the researchers unconvinced of ACC are substantially below that of the convinced researchers.

citation analyses | climate denier | expertise | publication analysis | scientific prominence

Preliminary reviews of scientific literature and surveys of climate scientists indicate striking agreement with the primary conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): anthropogenic greenhouse gases have been responsible for “most” of the “significant” warming of the Earth’s surface

climate change skeptics and contrarians in that we primarily focus on researchers that have published extensively in the climate field, although we consider all skeptics/contrarians that have signed prominent statements concerning ACC (6–8). Such expert analysis can illuminate public and policy discussions about ACC and the extent of consensus in the expert scientific community.

We compiled a database of 1,372 climate researchers based on authorship of scientific assessment reports and membership on multisignatory statements about ACC (*SI Materials and Methods*). We tallied the number of climate-relevant publications authored or coauthored by each researcher (defined here as *expertise*) and counted the number of citations for each of the researcher’s four highest-cited papers (defined here as *prominence*) using Google Scholar. We then imposed an a priori criterion that a researcher must have authored a minimum of 20 climate publications to be considered a climate researcher, thus reducing the database to 908 researchers. Varying this minimum publication cutoff did not materially alter results (*Materials and Methods*).

We ranked researchers based on the total number of climate publications authored. Though our compiled researcher list is not comprehensive nor designed to be representative of the entire climate science community, we have drawn researchers from the most high-profile reports and public statements about ACC. Therefore, we have likely compiled the strongest and most credentialed researchers in CE and UE groups. Citation and publication analyses

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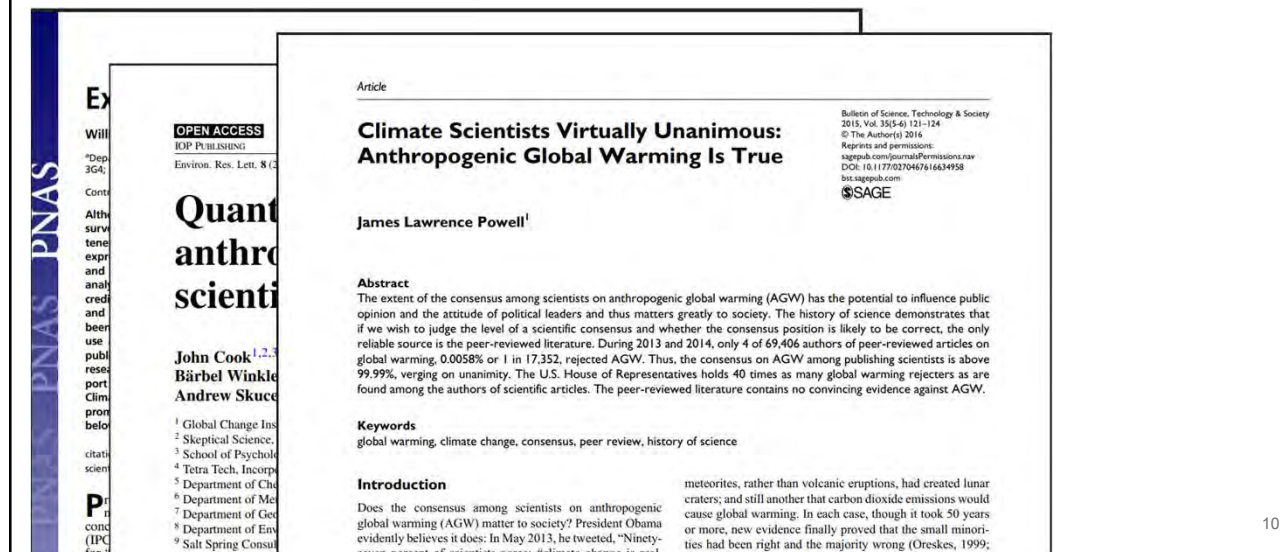
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Yes, it's us



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Yes, it's us



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Yes, it's us

PNAS

Quant anthro scienti

John Cook^{1,2,3}
Bärbel Winkle
Andrew Skuce

¹ Global Change Ins
² Skeptical Science,
³ School of Psychol
⁴ Tetra Tech, Incorp
⁵ Department of Che
⁶ Department of Me
⁷ Department of Geo
⁸ Department of Env
⁹ Salt Spring Consu

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH LETTERS

LETTER

Greater than 99% consensus on human caused climate change in the peer-reviewed scientific literature

Mark Lynas^{1,*}, Benjamin Z Houlton² and Simon Perry³

¹ Visiting Fellow, Cornell University, Global Development, Alliance for Science, B75 Mann Library, Ithaca, NY 14850, United States of America
² Cornell University, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Department of Global Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850, United States of America
³ Alliance for Science, Ithaca, NY 14850, United States of America
^{*} Author to whom any correspondence should be addressed.
E-mail: ml866@cornell.edu

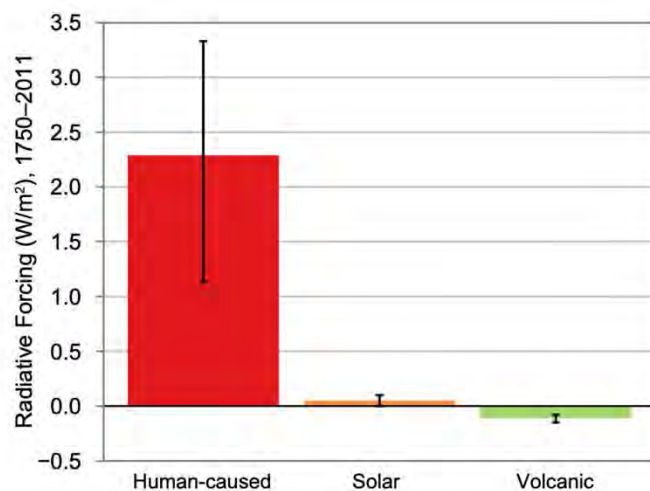
Keywords: global warming, climate change, scientific consensus
Supplementary material for this article is available [online](#)

Abstract
While controls over the Earth's climate system have undergone rigorous hypothesis-testing since the 1800s, questions over the scientific consensus of the role of human activities in modern climate change continue to arise in public settings. We update previous efforts to quantify the scientific consensus on climate change by searching the recent literature for papers sceptical of anthropogenic-caused global warming. From a dataset of 88125 climate-related papers published since 2012, when this question was last addressed comprehensively, we examine a randomized subset of 3000 such publications. We also use a second sample-weighted approach that was

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It's pretty much only us

Human Activities Are the Primary Driver of Recent Global Temperature Rise



USGCRP, 2017: *Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume 1*. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 470 pp., <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/19486>

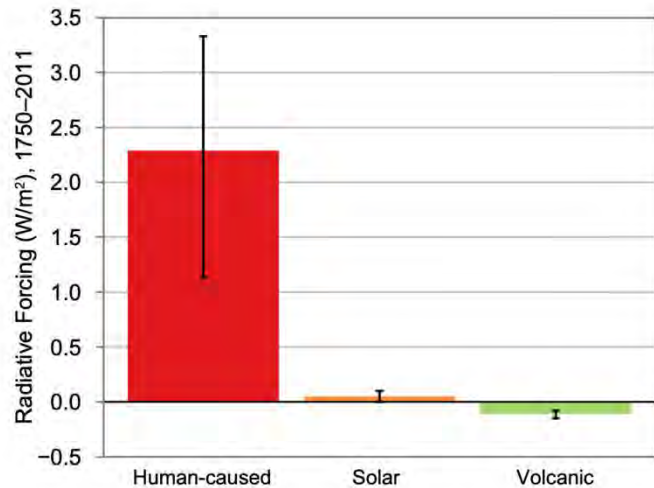
12

It's pretty much only us

“[T]he best estimate of the anthropogenic contribution to the observed surface warming of 2.23°F for 2015-2024, relative to 1850-1900, is 100%.”

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2025. *Effects of Human-Caused Greenhouse Gas Emissions on U.S. Climate, Health, and Welfare*. <https://doi.org/10.17226/29239>.

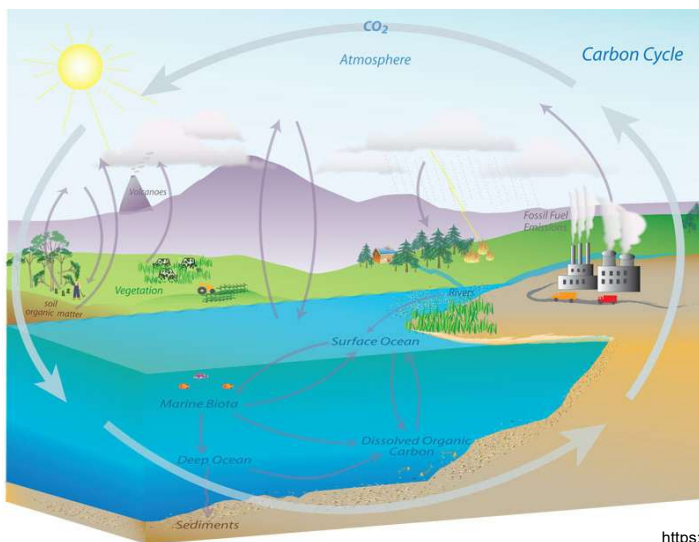
Human Activities Are the Primary Driver of Recent Global Temperature Rise



USGCRP, 2017: *Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume 1*. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 470 pp., <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/19486>

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Carbon doesn't get created or destroyed, it cycles...very slowly

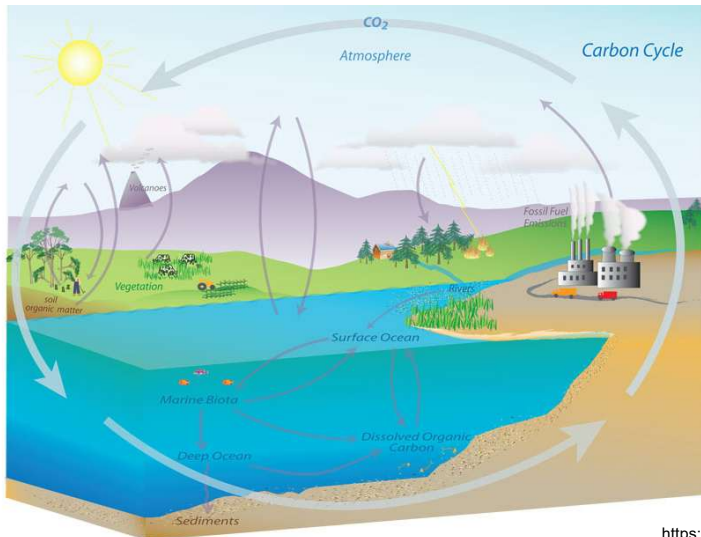


<https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/carbon-cycle>

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Carbon doesn't get created or destroyed, it cycles...very slowly



“[C]limate effects of CO_2 releases to the atmosphere will persist for tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of years into the future.”

Archer, D., Eby, M., Brovkin, V., Ridgwell, A., Cao, L., Mikolajewicz, U., ... & Tokos, K. (2009). Atmospheric lifetime of fossil fuel carbon dioxide. *Annual review of earth and planetary sciences*, 37(1), 117-134.

<https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/carbon-cycle>

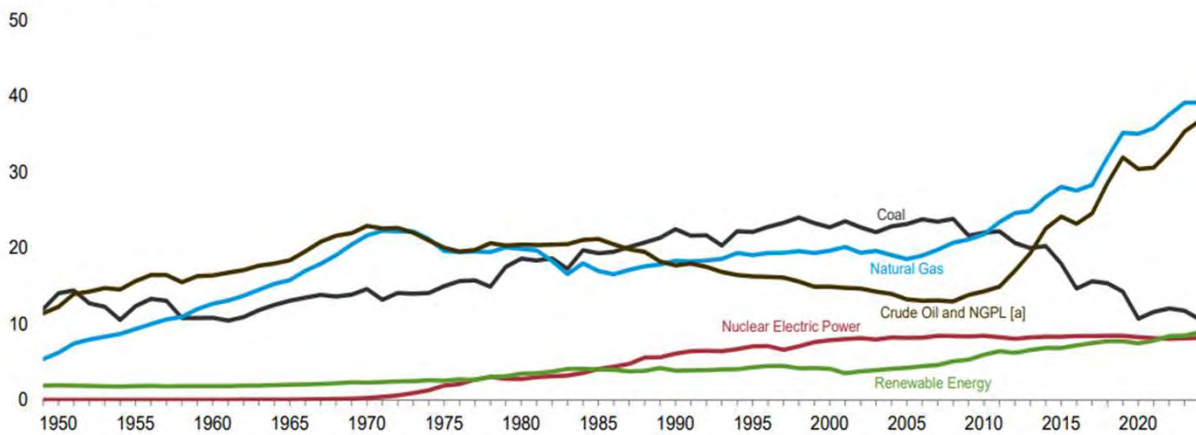
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U.S. Primary Energy Production

(Quadrillion Btu)

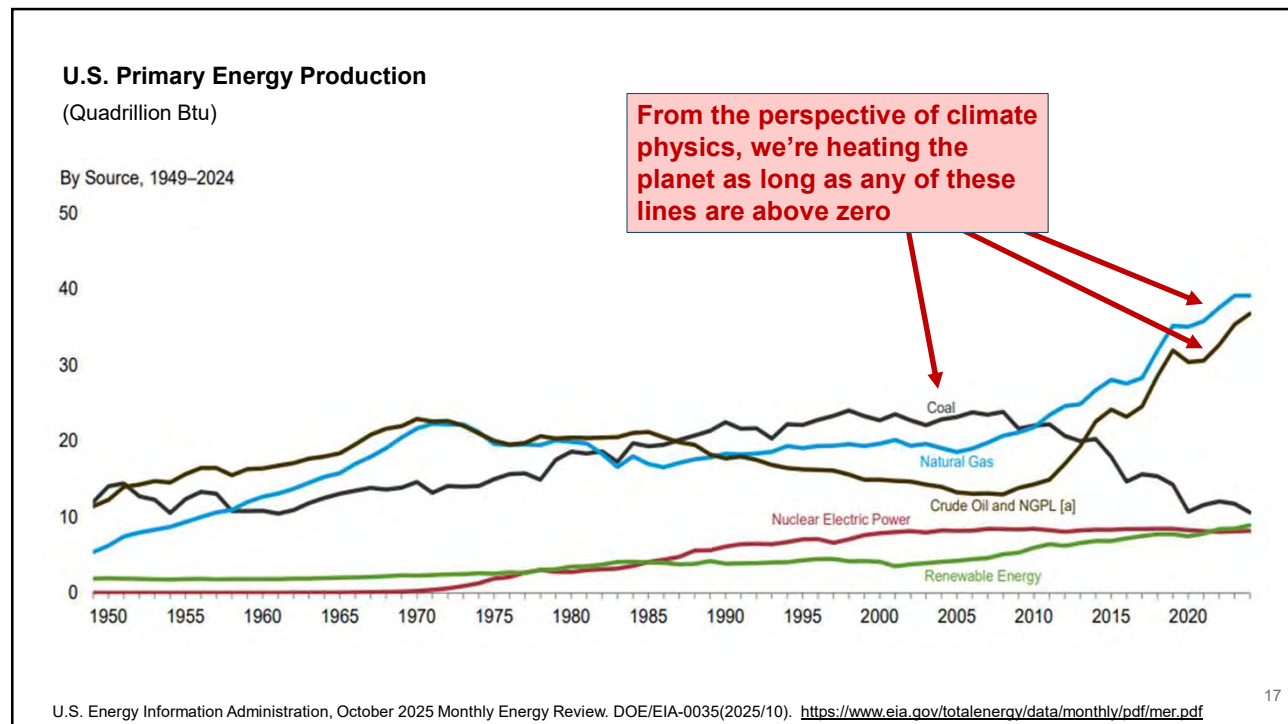
By Source, 1949–2024



U.S. Energy Information Administration, October 2025 Monthly Energy Review. DOE/EIA-0035(2025/10). <https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/pdf/mer.pdf>

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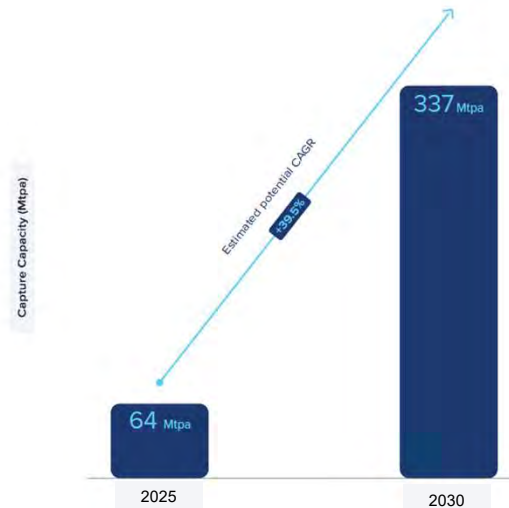
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Will technology save us?

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Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)

Potential CO₂ capture capacity 2025-2030, based on entire Co2RE project database pipeline



“Mtpa” = megatonnes (million metric tons) per year

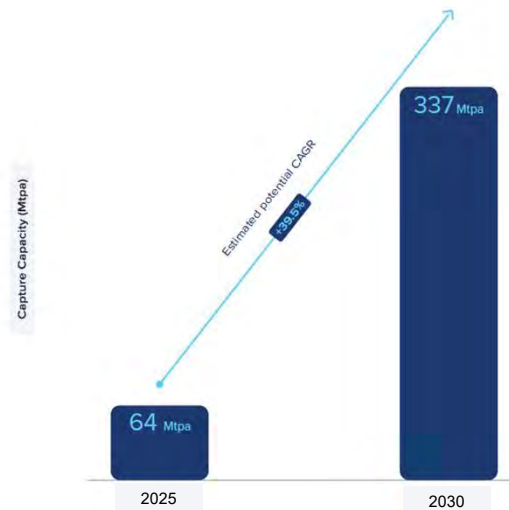
Global CCS Institute. <https://www.globalccsinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Global-Status-of-CCS-2025-report-9-October.pdf>

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2024 Fossil CO₂ emissions:
~37 GtCO₂ = **gigatonnes**
(**billion** metric tons)

Potential CO₂ capture capacity 2025-2030, based on entire Co2RE project database pipeline



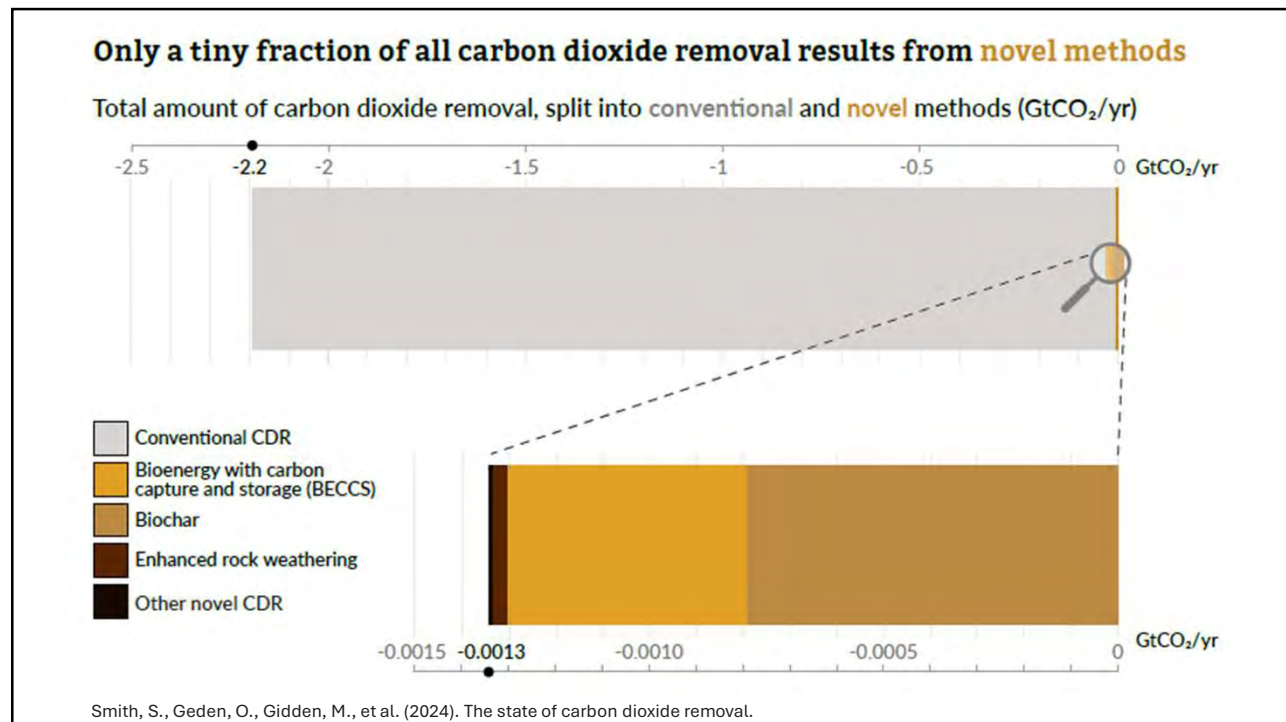
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Global CCS Institute. <https://www.globalccsinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Global-Status-of-CCS-2025-report-9-October.pdf>

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Friedlingstein, P., O'Sullivan, M., Jones, et al. (2024). *Earth System Science Data Discussions*, 2024, 1-133.

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Carbon Dioxide Removal vs. Food

“[M]any countries plan to rely on substantial levels of CDR, including enhanced land carbon sinks. ...

We find that 990 (892-1087) million ha [hectares] of land would be required to meet the aggregate CDR commitments in country climate pledges from 2020 to 2060. This area is in addition to land already counted towards climate targets....

The aggregate land area is larger than the United States of America..., or equivalent to two-thirds of the global cropland area....”

(emphasis added)

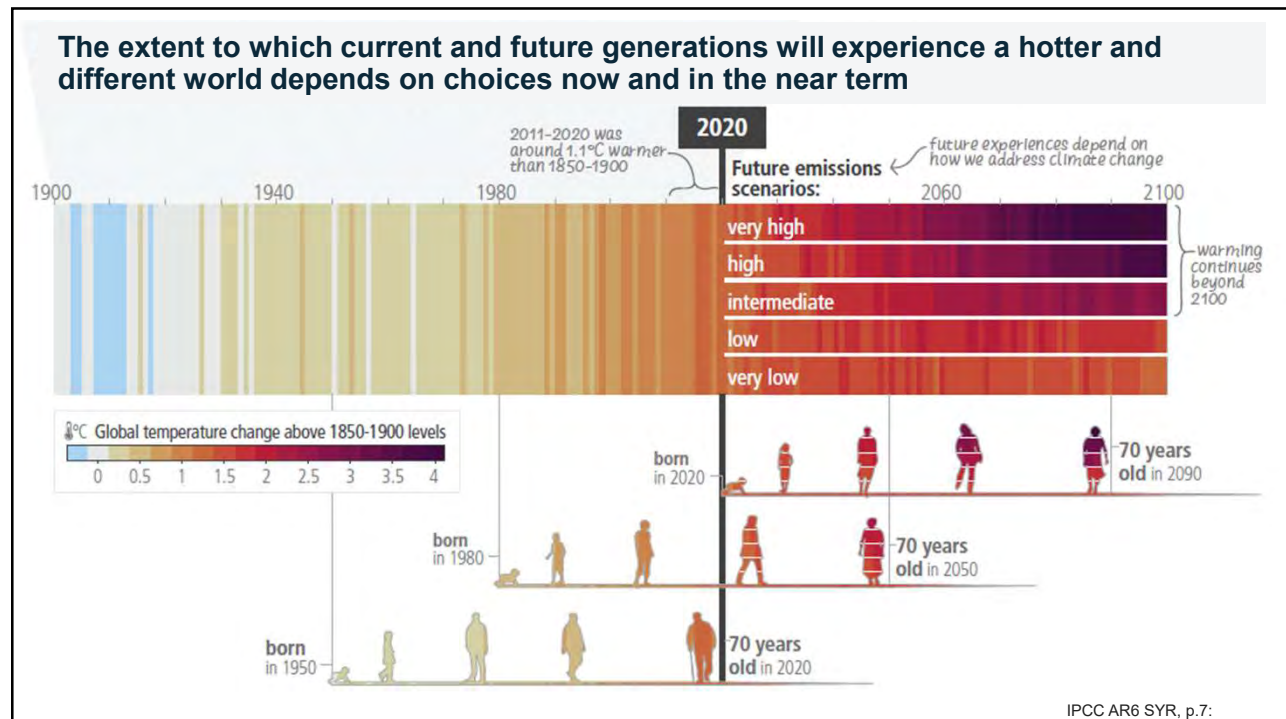
Dooley, K., Christiansen, K. L., Lund, J. F., et al. (2024). *Nature Communications*, 15(1), 9118.

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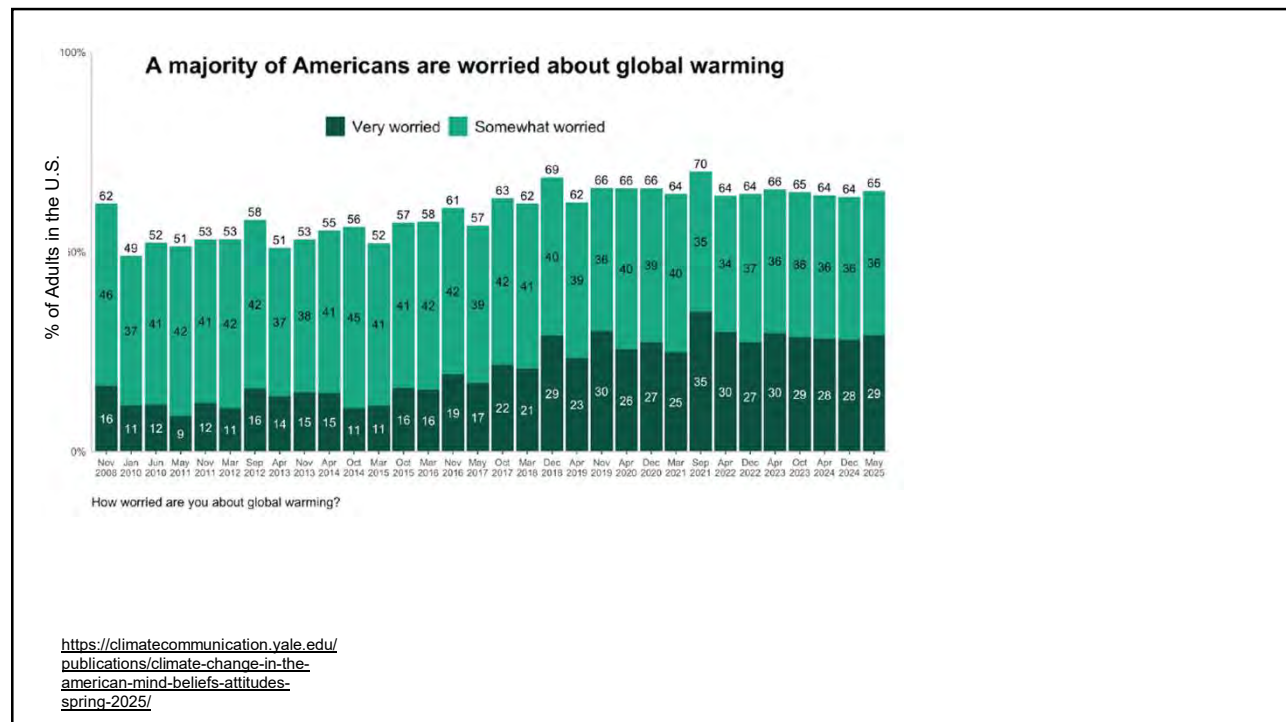
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There are no easy options left.

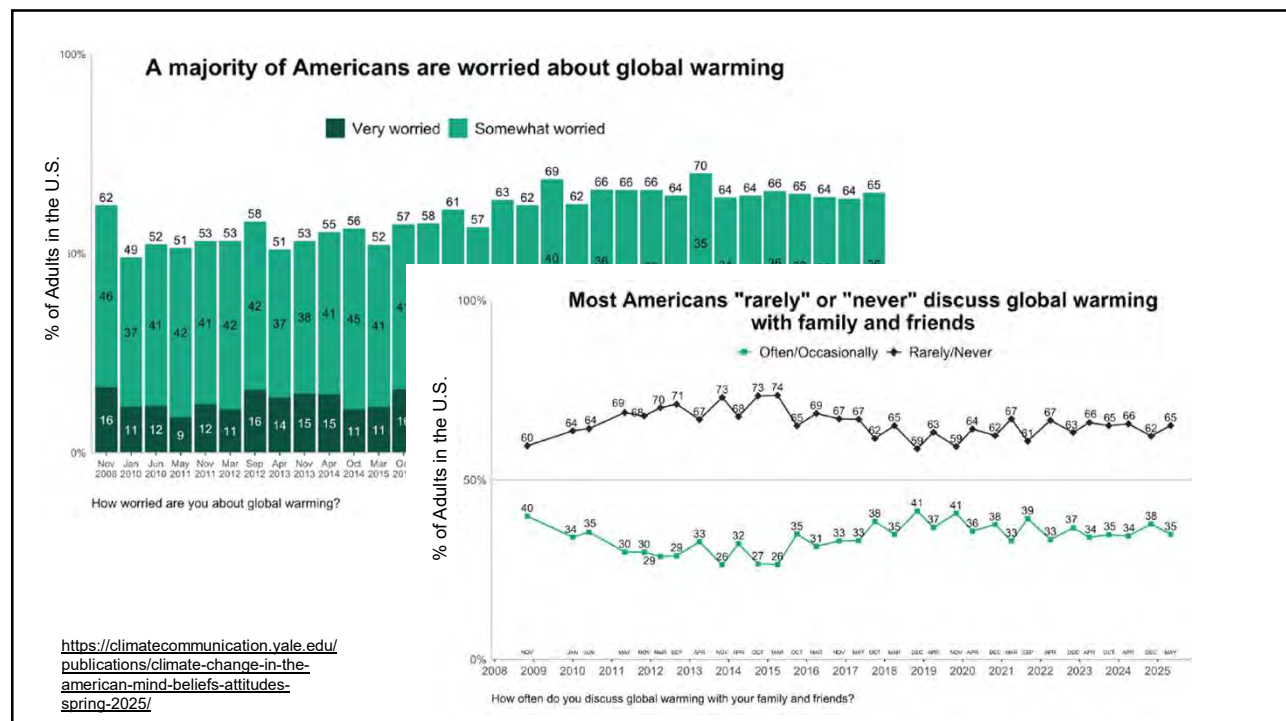
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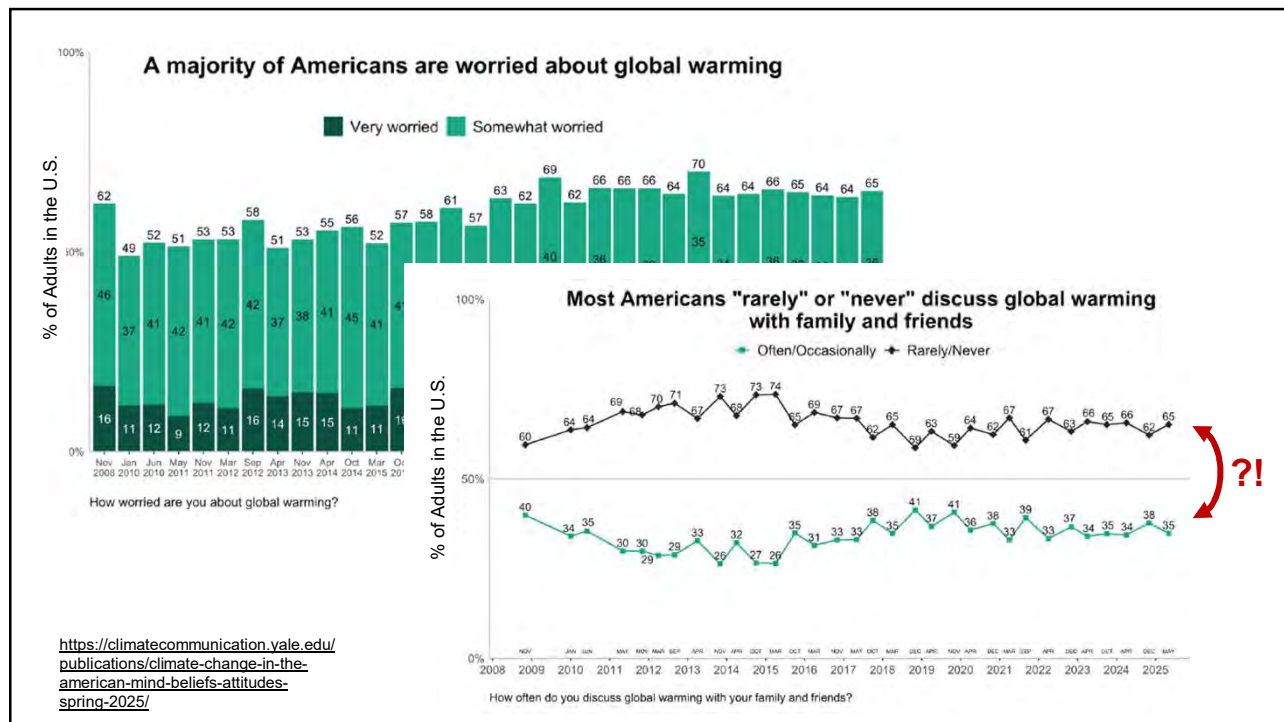
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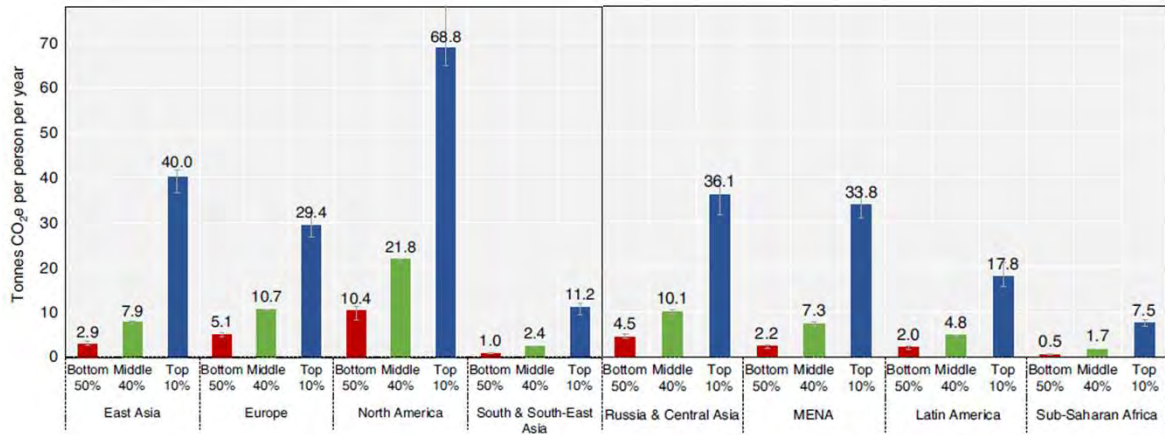
Reducing emissions: personal and system-level changes

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Extreme Inequality in Emissions

Fig. 1 | Per-capita emissions by group in 2019 (tCO₂e per capita).

Per-capita emissions include emissions from domestic consumption, public and private investments, and imports and exports of carbon embedded in goods and services traded with the rest of the world.

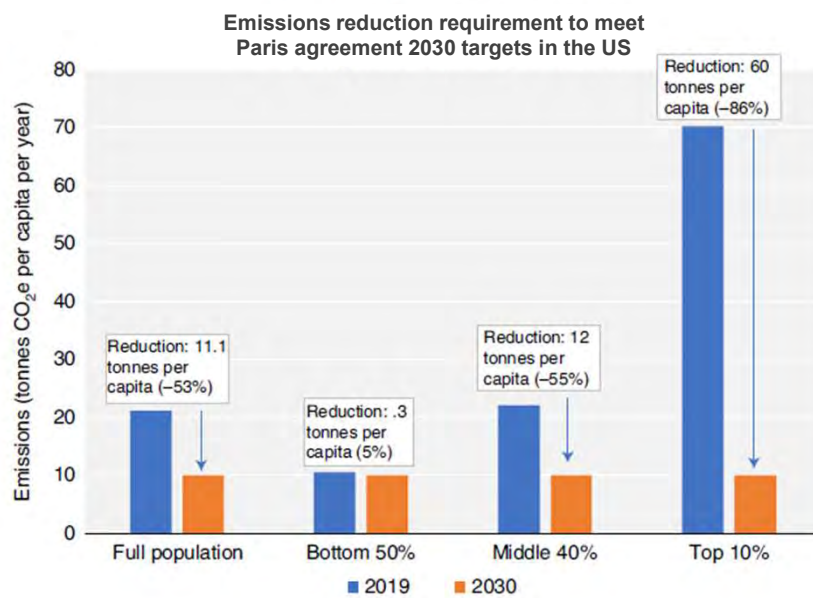


Chancel, L. (2022). *Nature Sustainability*, 5(11), 931-938.

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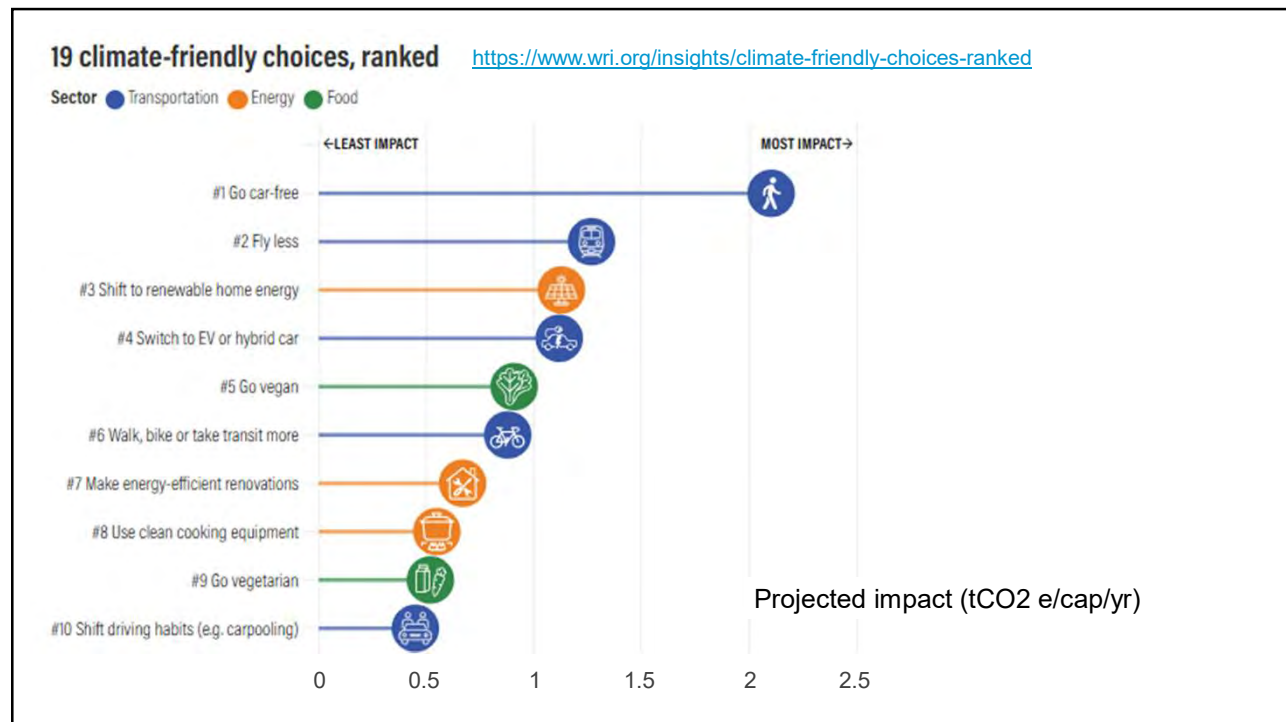
Some of us need to do more than others



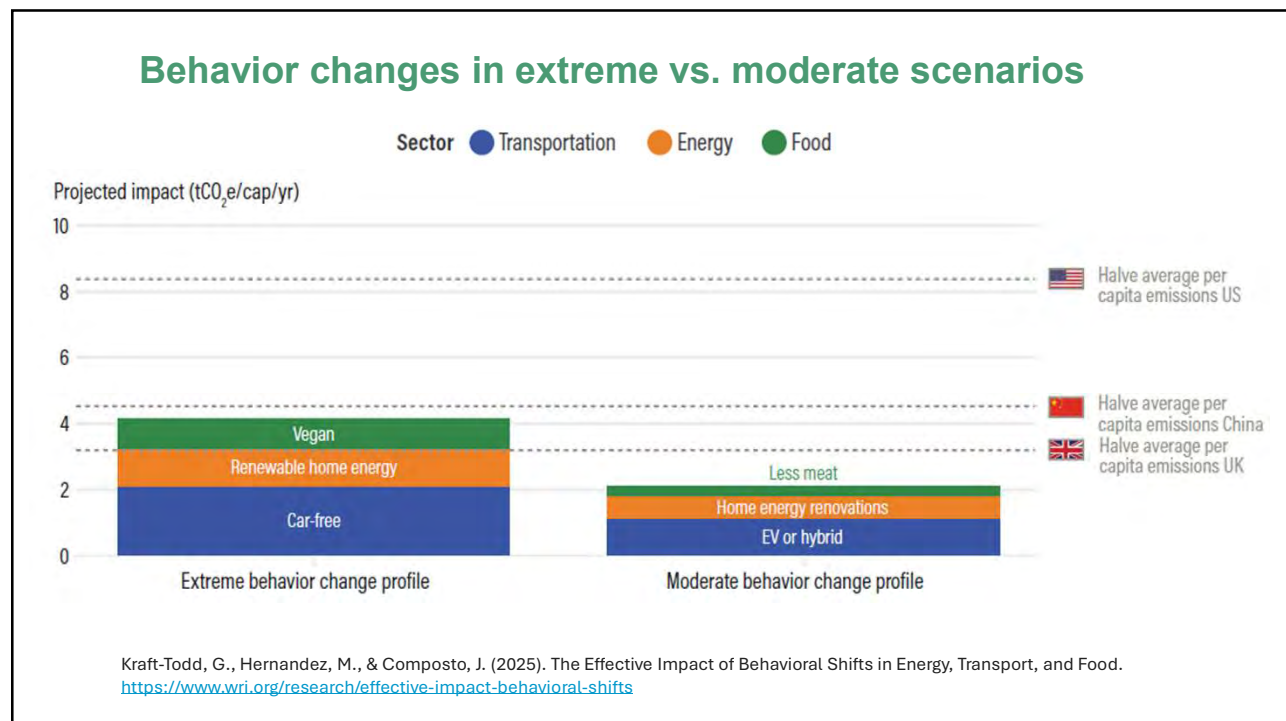
Chancel, L. (2022). *Global carbon inequality over 1990–2019. Nature Sustainability*, 5(11), 931-938.

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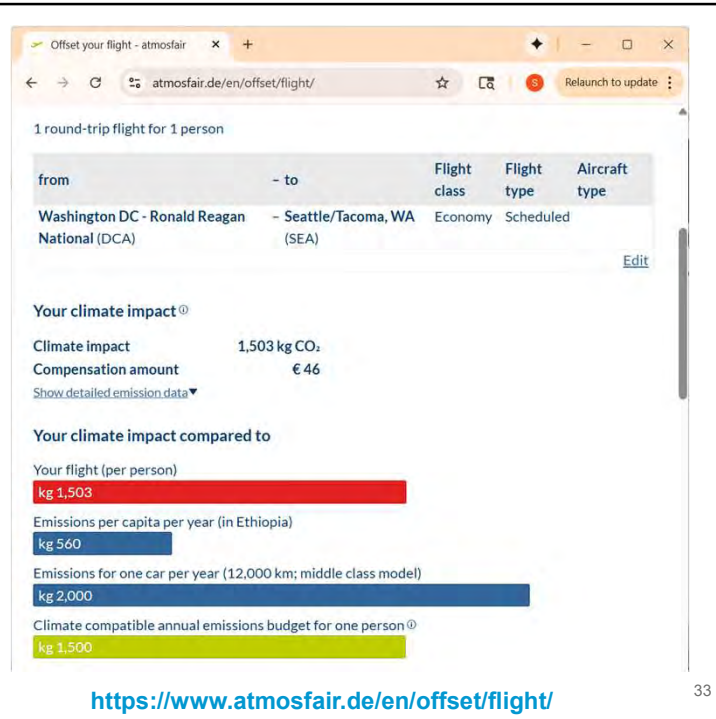
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**The Core Answer:
Systems Change**

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The Core Answer: Systems Change

“Addressing Climate Change: State and Local Policy Opportunities” webinar posted at
<https://www.apaservices.org/advocacy/issues/climate-change/index>

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Alexandria, VA Free Fares Program



After program launched September, 2021:

- Ridership more than doubled from August 2021 to August 2023
- 54% of DASH riders were new, with 62% of new riders saying free fares had an impact
- 53% of current riders reported riding DASH more often
- Savings were realized with termination of cash collection, discontinuation of DASH smartphone app, reduced labor resources for farebox maintenance, cancellation of capital project to install new fareboxes

https://www.dashbus.com/wp-content/uploads/DASH-Fare-Free-Program-Report-2023_FINAL.pdf

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Advocacy Strategy

In either order...

1. Attend a meeting
2. Find a partner, group, and issue to work with/on

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Top 3 reasons people give for not engaging in political advocacy on global warming¹ – and why you shouldn't believe them

Nobody has ever asked me to

1. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-politics-policy-spring-2025/>

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Top 3 reasons people give for not engaging in political advocacy on global warming¹ – and why you shouldn't believe them

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1. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-politics-policy-spring-2025/>

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Top 3 reasons people give for not engaging in political advocacy on global warming¹ – and why you shouldn't believe them

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I'm not an activist

If asking our government to work for us is activism, we should all be "activists"!

1. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-politics-policy-spring-2025/>

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5 Tips for Speaking at a Hearing

1. Know the time limit (usually ~2-3 minutes)
2. Write your remarks ahead of time, and feel free to read directly from them
3. Practice and time yourself beforehand
4. Ask a friend to review your remarks
5. It's okay to be nervous; it gets easier each time

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Climate and mental health impacts

Susan Clayton, PhD
The College of Wooster

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Pathways for climate change to affect mental health

Acute events

- Storms, wildfires, floods

Chronic changes

- Increased heat, rising sea levels, changing patterns of precipitation, loss of biodiversity, impaired air quality

Indirect impacts

- Displacement, threats to physical health, threats to economic wellbeing

Impacts of perceptions

- Existential anxiety about an uncertain future

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Acute impacts: Extreme weather events

- PTSD, depression, general anxiety
- Suicide
- Misuse of drugs and alcohol
- Sleep disorders



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Chronic changes

Higher temperatures associated with

- Increases in suicide
- Increases in psychiatric hospitalization
- Increases in aggression
- Decreases in happiness and positive mood

Recognizing a broad definition of wellbeing:

- Heat also impairs performance on some work and cognitive tasks

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Chronic changes

- **Air pollution** also has impacts on mental health
- Exposure to poor air quality can have long-term and cumulative impacts

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Indirect impacts

- Involuntary displacement, loss of home and community
 - Economic loss, damage to the social determinants of health
 - Physical health impacts
 - Food insecurity
- All are associated with threats to mental health

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Impacts of perceptions

"my feelings had almost a physical manifestation – I felt stress, panic"

"I was depressed and disempowered... I stopped eating properly"

"I would get to the stage where I would freeze"

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Climate anxiety

Anxiety can be adaptive.

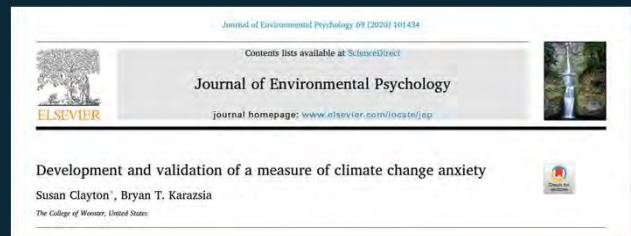
It becomes a mental health problem when associated with functional impairment

- Cognitions and emotions

“thinking about climate change makes it difficult for me to concentrate”

- Behaviors

“my concerns about climate change interfere with my ability to have fun”



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Impacts on social relationships

After acute events

- E.g., relationship difficulties
- Domestic and interpersonal violence

Effects of heat

- Increased aggression
- Decreased prosocial behavior

Impacts of perceptions

- Thinking about climate change has been linked to negative attitudes toward outgroups
- Climate anxiety has been associated with poor parenting in one study, controlling for general anxiety

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Inequities of impact

- Vulnerability of experience
 - Geographically vulnerable: the global South. Redlined communities
 - First responders. Agricultural workers.
- Physiologically vulnerable
 - The elderly, those already suffering from mental illness, people with disabilities
- Economically vulnerable
 - Substandard housing. Fewer resources for adaptation and recovery.
- Socially vulnerable
 - Inadequate access to information and influence.

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The vulnerability of children

Dependent on

- developmental stage
- pre-existing vulnerabilities
- resources for resilience



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- Impacts of preterm birth
- Vicarious impacts due to dependence on others
- Less good at regulating body temperature
- Potential for longterm impacts of disrupted schooling
- Potential for longterm impacts of trauma

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Other emotional responses

- Grief, guilt, anger... will be further discussed by my colleagues
- Moral distress
 - Due to inequity
 - › Of hazards
 - › Of benefits
 - › Of inclusion and power
 - Due to lack of balance between responsibility and harm

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Moral emotions

- Guilt, shame, pride, anger, contempt
- In a 2021 global study of 10,000 young people, 50% said they felt guilt, 46% said they felt ashamed; more than 50% reported feeling angry
- People in the global South are more likely to report anger

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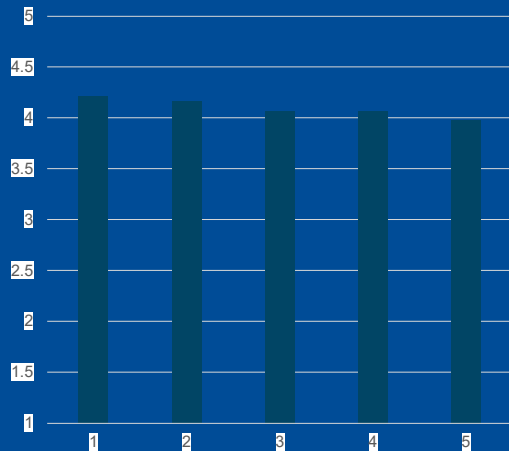
Moral injury

- Witnessing or participating in unethical behavior
- Disappointment or disillusionment with authority figure
- “a betrayal of what’s right, by someone who holds legitimate authority, in a high-stakes situation” (based on work with veterans)
- Consequence can be loss of faith or meaning, as well as self-blame or self-related negative emotions
- Depression, anxiety, anger, self-harm, re-experiencing, and social problems are secondary symptoms.

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Agreement with items assessing moral distress



- 1) Human actions that drive species to extinction are immoral. 4.21 (1-5 scale)
- 2) Big business and industry are violating ethical standards by failing to protect the environment. 4.16
- 3) It is unfair that future generations will have to cope with climate changes caused by previous generations. 4.07
- 4) It is wrong for people to behave in ways that harm the planet when less harmful alternatives are available. 4.07
- 5) By failing to take sufficient action to address climate change, governments are failing in their responsibility to protect their citizens. 3.98

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Impacts on fundamental perceptions

- Threats to identity
 - Place identity
 - Occupational identity
 - Cultural identity
- Loss of stability and security

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References

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- Manczak, E. M., Miller, J. G., & Gotlib, I. H. (2022). Census tract ambient ozone predicts trajectories of depressive symptoms in adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 58(3), 485–492

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Experiencing Climate Impacts

Gale M. Sinatra, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California

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My Background

- Chaired the APA Climate Change Task Force
 - The Task Force produced a report that is available online:
 - www.apa.org/science/about/publications/climate-crisis-action-plan.pdf
- My research focuses on climate education and communication and public understanding of science
- I also lost my home in the Easton Canyon Fire in January 2025

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Mental Health Challenges for Climate Disaster Survivors

- Going to share a brief video of myself and members of my community sharing their struggles with mental health after the fire took our homes and our community

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCz_GwRF3n4

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The Emotional Aspects of Climate Change

Laura Carter Robinson, Psy.D.
Clinical Psychologist

Humanity&Planet

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Why climate change matters for mental health professionals

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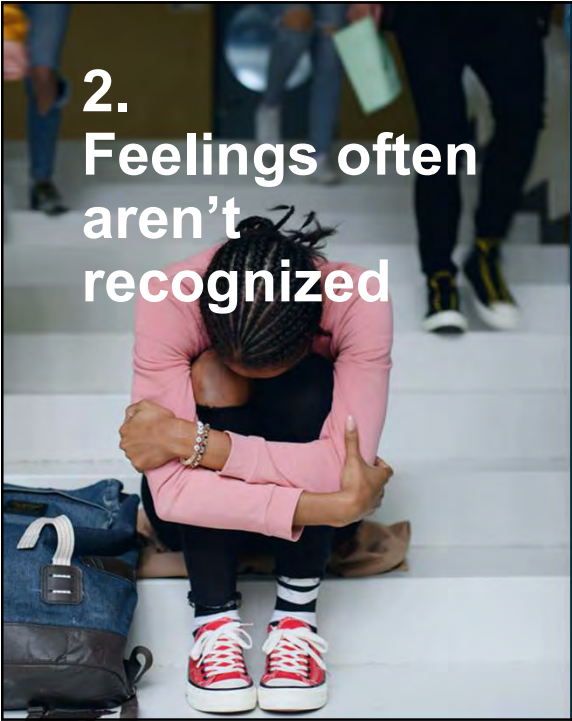
1. Clinical levels of climate distress

Americans screened with a climate-modified GAD-2 and PHQ-2:

- 7% exceeded clinical cutoffs
 - › 17% Hispanic/Latino
 - › 5% Black
 - › 5% White
 - › 10% Gen Z + Millennials
 - › 8% Gen X
 - › 3% Boomers and older

Uppalapati, S., Ballew, M., Campbell, E., et al. (2023). Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

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2. Feelings often aren't recognized

- Young people ages 16-25 who have tried to talk to others about climate change have been dismissed or ignored:
 - › 48% globally ¹
 - › 58% in the U.S. ²
- Common for patients to feel invalidated and pathologized

¹ Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., et al. (2021). *Lancet Planetary Health* 5 (12), E863-E873; ² Lewandowski, Clayton, et al. (2024). *Lancet Planetary Health* 8(11): e879-e893.

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3. The need already exists

Talking with a therapist about
climate change:

- 2% already doing so
- 2% definitely interested
- 5% would probably be interested
 - › 15% Hispanic/Latino
 - › 3% Black
 - › 2% White

Uppalapati, S., Ballew, M., Campbell, E., et al. (2023). Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

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4. Practitioners aren't ready

Study of Minnesota mental health
practitioners, $N = 517$:

67% felt unprepared to discuss
climate change with patients

Hoppe, B., Prussia, L., Manning, C., et al., (2023). *Ecopsychology*, 13-25.

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By addressing climate change, clinicians...

... name reality and avoid perpetuating the bystander effect

...serve as a resource to help humankind during its greatest global challenge

... avoid harm that results from ignoring people's experiences

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Feelings and beliefs about climate change

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Gen Z

In the U.S.

- **85%** at least moderately worried
- **58%** “Climate change will threaten my life”
- **66%** “Climate change will make my life worse”
- **76%** “The future is frightening”

¹ Lewandowski, Clayton, et al. (2024). *Lancet Planetary Health* 8(11): e879-e893.

75

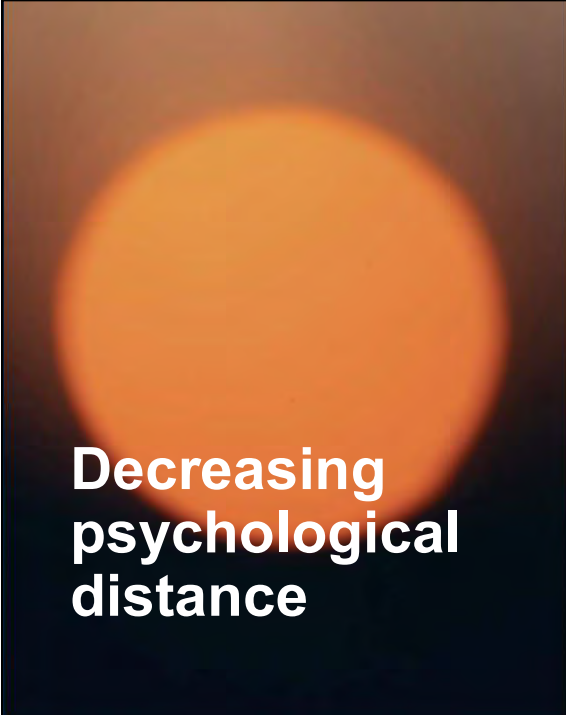


Children

- Experience fear, anxiety, anger, despair, and other emotions
- Worried in daily lives
- Concerned about biodiversity loss, extreme weather, pollution, and more
- Worried about their own and others' future
- Indigenous youth or others with strong ties to land highly affected

Leger-Goodes, T., Malboeuf-Hurtubise, C., Mastine, T., et al. (2022) *Frontiers in Psychology* (13); Spiteri, J., (2025). *Journal of Childhood, Education & Society* 6(2), 230-248.

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Decreasing psychological distance

Worldwide, 2024: ¹

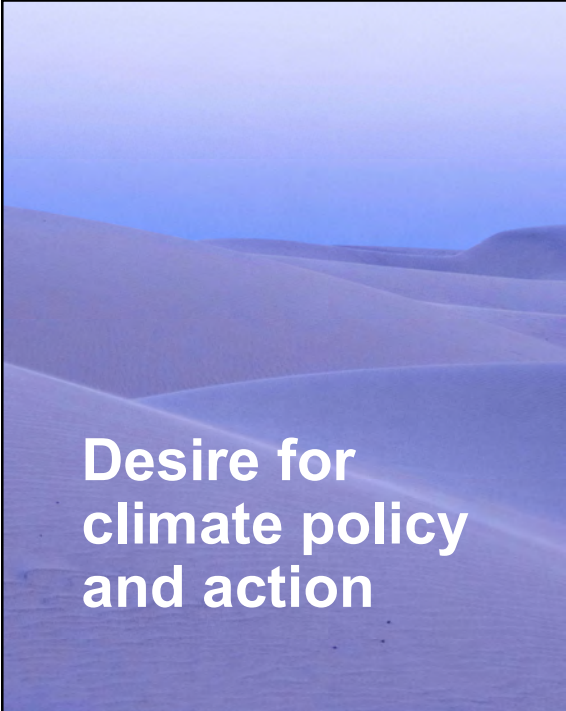
- 53% of people **more worried** about climate change than in 2023
- 15% less worried

U.S., July 2025: ²

- Because of “increased temperatures, leading to heat waves and extreme heat”:
 - › 86% of Americans **more concerned** about climate change
 - › 97% of Democrats
 - › 79% of Republicans
 - › 83% of Independents

¹ Peoples' Climate Vote 2024, UN Development Programme;
² Speiser, M., Ishaq, M. (July 2025). American Climate Perspectives Survey 2025.

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Desire for climate policy and action

Globally in 2024:

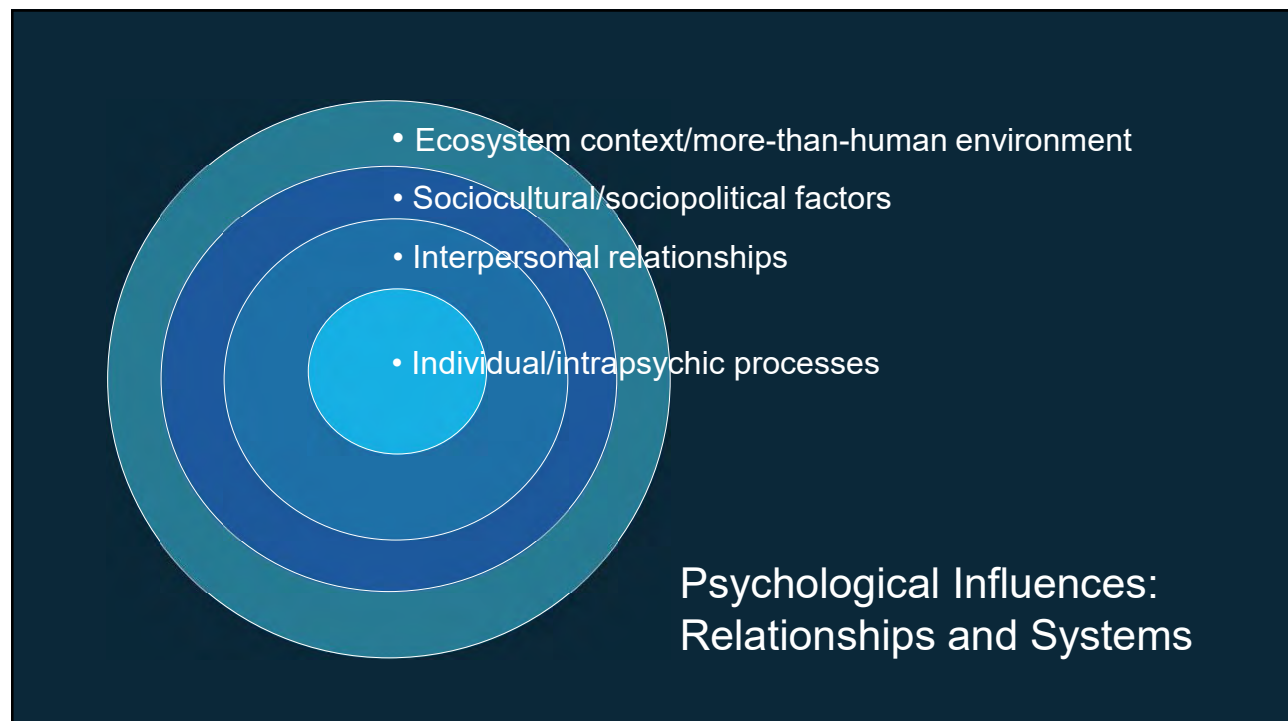
- 80% of people want more climate action from their countries
- 78% of people want more protection for people at risk from extreme weather

Peoples' Climate Vote 2024, UN Development Programme.

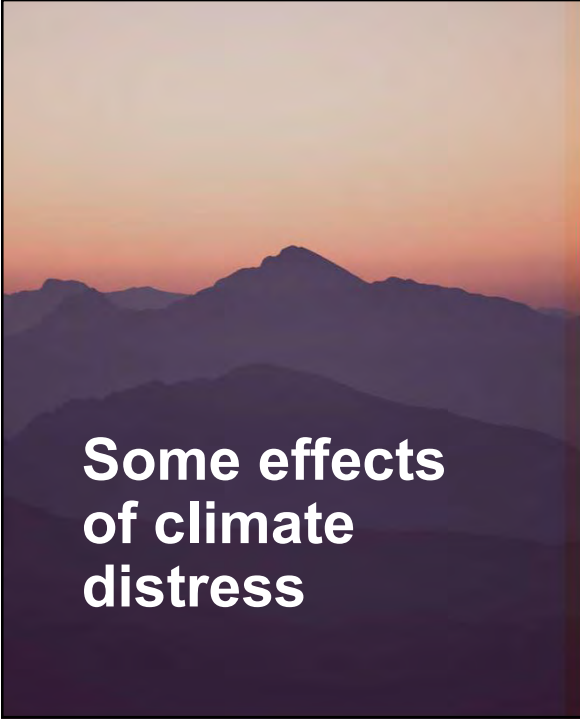
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Climate distress in context

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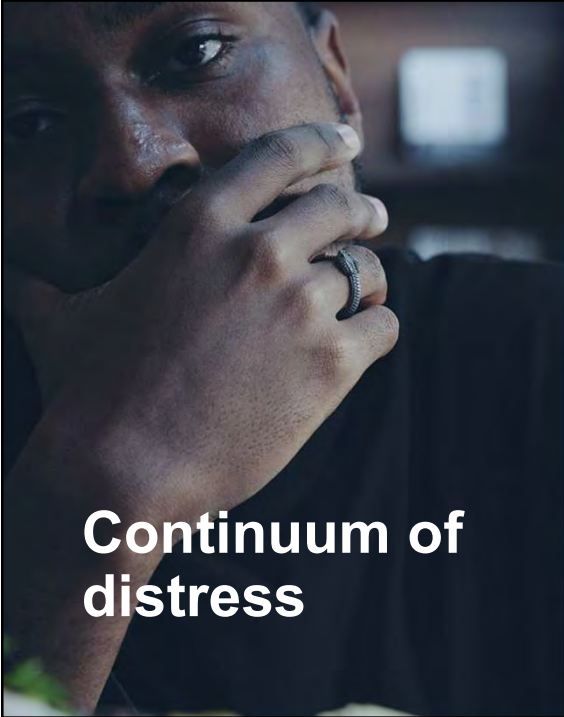


Some effects of climate distress

- Deactivation
 - › Doomism
 - › Eco-paralysis
- Activation
 - › Anger
 - › Anxiety

Clayton, D., & Parnes, M. F. (2025); Ogunbode, C.A., Doran, R., Hanss, D., et al. (2022).

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Continuum of distress

- Climate distress:
 - › understandable and adaptive response
 - › but functioning adversely affected for some
- Vulnerabilities like systemic inequalities and pre-existing diagnoses interact with climate concerns

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Clinical assessment: Hickman's descriptive eco-anxiety scale (partial)

Mild	Some distress (less than weekly)
Moderate	Distress weekly; stronger feelings
Significant	Daily distress; some intrusive thoughts; hesitancy to have children
Severe	Terror, not anxiety; climate preoccupation; certain about societal collapse; expect extinction
Critical	Significant effect on daily functioning; panic; overwhelm; self-harm; suicidality

Hickman, C. (2024). *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 77(1), 356–368.

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Clinical considerations

- Case conceptualization:
 - › connecting clinical presentation with causes and contexts
- Some aims of climate therapy:
 - › to provide space for emotional experience
 - › to build and strengthen capacities for individual and collective resilience, efficacy, and agency
- Climate therapy is **not**:
 - › designed to eliminate adaptive anxiety and distress while systemic dysfunction (anthropogenic climate change) is unchanged

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Clinical Applications of Climate Psychology

Leslie Davenport

California Institute of Integral Studies

NOVEMBER 19, 2025 | APA WEBINAR



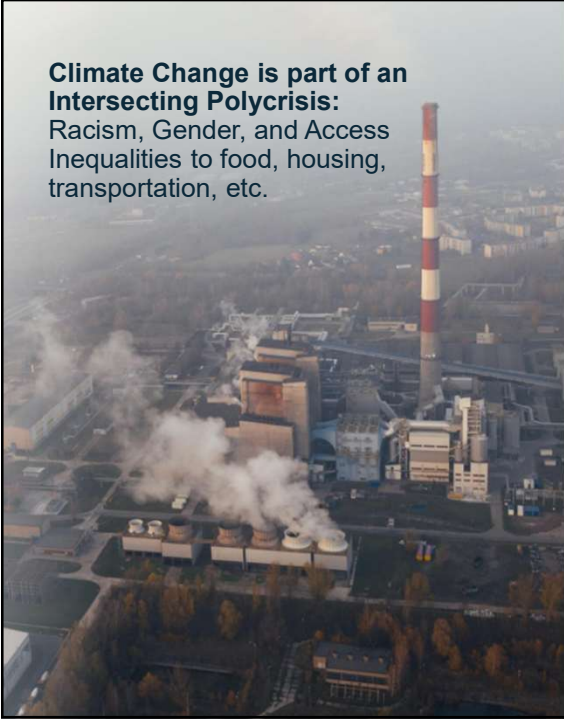
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The elephant in the therapy room



Whether as direct disruption or an amplifying backdrop of stress, climate change is shaping all our lives. Our imperative is to name it and welcome it into therapeutic work.

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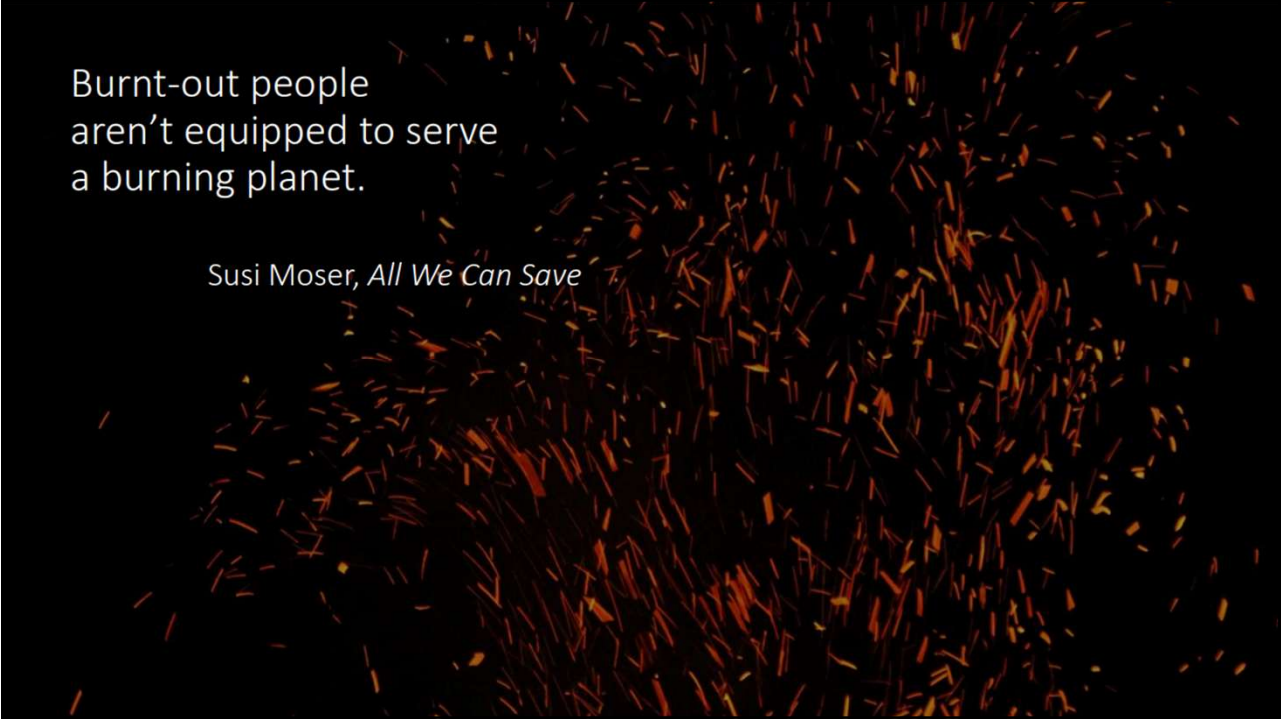
Climate Change is part of an Intersecting Polycrisis: Racism, Gender, and Access Inequalities to food, housing, transportation, etc.

Social Justice issues are inseparable from climate impacts, solutions, and treatment considerations. Those who are least responsible often suffer the most severe consequences and have fewer resources.

Factors that influence the form, intensity, and types of emotions:

- Geography
- Social/Community Currency
- Financial Security/Resources
- Generational
- Underlying Psychological Vulnerabilities
- Exposure to the Distress of Others
- Exposure to Climate Information

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Burnt-out people aren't equipped to serve a burning planet.

Susi Moser, *All We Can Save*

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You already have many of the tools, whatever your theoretical orientation

- Helping work through defenses
- Working with distorted thoughts to influence behavior
- Processing grief and complex emotions
- Navigating lifestyle changes
- Facilitating potentially polarizing conversations into opportunities for understanding and progress

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What else is needed?



- Explicit social justice component
- Including an intake/assessment
- Compounded emotional responses and amplifiers
- Enduring and escalating stress: emotions rise in tandem with climate impacts
- Integrating external strategies
- Reactivating dormant capacities

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Recognizing Clinical Presentations of Eco-Distress

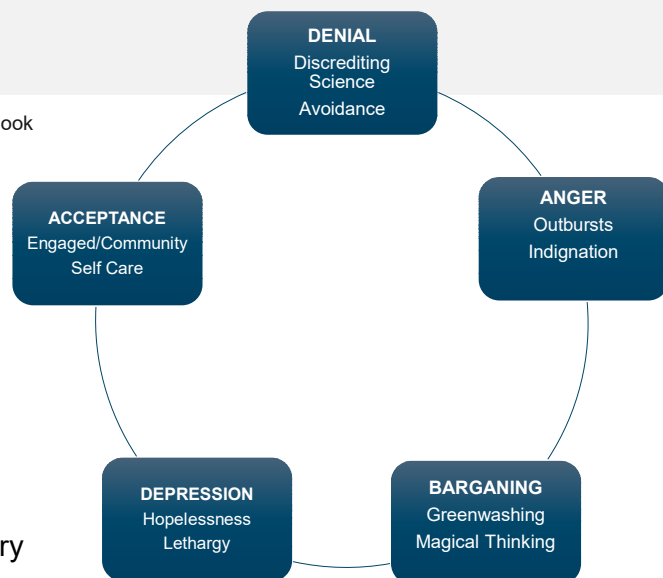
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Climate Grief

Not intended to be a definitive model, but a reminder to look at familiar clinical presentations through a climate lens.

Many types of losses

- Anticipatory
- Disenfranchised/Ambiguous
- Loss of Place/Culture
- Layered/Complex Losses
- Loss of Biodiversity
- Loss of Future
- Existential Loss of Trust – Moral Injury



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Climate Disruptions and Maladaptive Responses

FIGHT

- Solution Aversion
- Paradoxical Environmental Numbness

FLIGHT

- Personal Greenwashing
- Unrealistic Optimism

FREEZE

- Ambivalence

FAWN/APPEASING

- Lacking Self-Care/Boundaries in Advocacy Work
- Avoiding Difficult Conversations

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Integrating Internal & External Strategies

Self-regulation strategies are essential in addressing climate-related distress, as they mitigate overwhelm, reduce the risk of burnout, and foster a sense of agency. However, attending only to intrapsychic regulation without engaging in collective or systemic change risks reinforcing avoidance and leaving the root sources of distress unaddressed.

Internal Strategies

- Self Regulation, Emotional Intelligence and Resilience, Exploration of Narratives

External Strategies

- Finding ways to participate in creating a safer, healthier world for all. Using one's skills and interests within an existing sphere of influence. It can also include limiting media: doomscrolling and social media. Group connection.

Practical Support

- Knowing the evacuation routes in a fire or flood-prone area, decisions about where to live, or whether to start a family.

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Internal Strategies

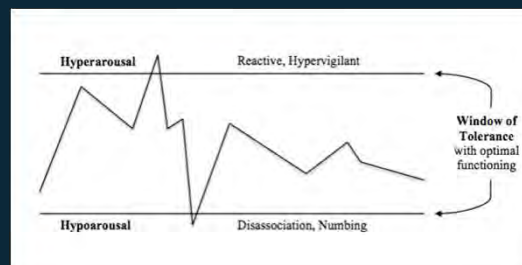
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Internal:

Practices to grow
our window of
tolerance

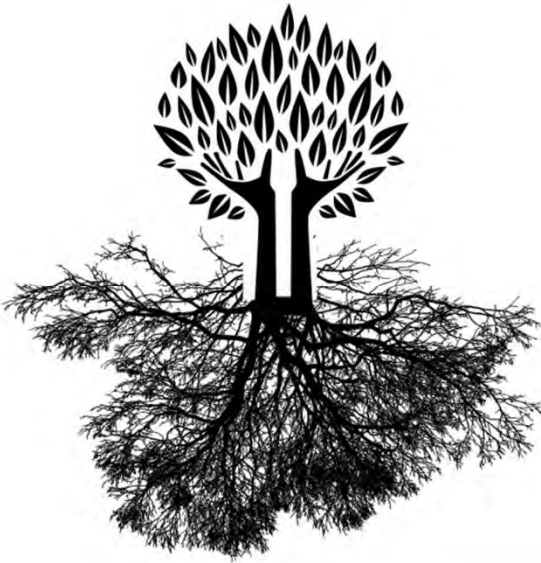
Based on the work of Dr. Dan Siegel

Zone of Resilience



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Growing Up & Growing Down

“We need to not only **grow up** in the climate crisis by cultivating our imaginative, creative, determined and hopeful capacities, we also need to **grow down** by building our tolerance for guilt, shame, anxiety and depression.”

Caroline Hickman
University of Bath, UK

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Emotional Resiliency

Conventional definition: The ability to “bounce back” from a stressful experience.

Redefined in the face of climate breakdown:
Emotional resiliency is cultivating the ability to remain present, open-minded, and empathic, in the face of increasing stress--the ability to bear witness to and be with more.

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External Strategies

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External: Johnson's Venn Diagram



Ayana Elizabeth Johnson is a Marine biologist and policy expert, and the co-founder of the All We Can Save Project and author of *What if We Get it Right?*

Her inspiration for the diagram is the Japanese concept of *Ikigai*: the feeling of fulfillment when people pursue their passions.

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External: Redefining Activism



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Intake and Assessment

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First Intake Question

The places where I feel most at home are...

Note: This can include places in nature or indoor, with particular groups, cultural connections – wherever you feel the greatest sense being yourself, safely, and belonging.

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Second Intake Question

When you hear about what is happening in the world, including climate change, do you feel...



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Assessment

Narratives: Internal and External

- How do you talk about it with others?
- What do you tell yourself?
- Beliefs – agency

Personal Impacts and Self-care

- How pervasive
- Intensity
- What ways?

Somatic

- Physical symptoms

Triggers

- What concerns/bothers you the most?

Relationship to media/news

Engagement/community

What would make the biggest difference?



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Transformation



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Underutilized Capacities 1/2

1. Creativity and Imagination

Envisioning futures beyond business-as-usual, not only in technology but in culture, economics, and social systems.

Supporting “imaginative resilience:” the ability to see possibilities even amid disruption.

2. Emotional and Psychological Literacy

Recognizing and working with grief, fear, and eco-anxiety rather than suppressing them.

Cultivating empathy and compassion as motivators for collective action.

3. Systems Thinking/Interconnections

Seeing interconnections between ecological, social, and psychological systems.

Moving from linear “fixes” toward understanding feedback loops, unintended consequences, and leverage points.

4. Moral Imagination and Ethical Foresight

Expanding our sense of responsibility to future generations, non-human life, and ecosystems.

Developing the courage to act from principles even when outcomes are uncertain.

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Underutilized Capacities 2/2

5. Relational and Collaborative Capacity

Strengthening the “muscles” of dialogue, conflict transformation, and co-creation.

Building trust and reciprocity across differences to mobilize collective efficacy.

Shifting from hyper-individualism to collective networks and community.

6. Intuition and Embodied Awareness

Listening to somatic signals and ecological intuition of the more-than-human world as guides in uncertain terrain.

Reconnecting with nature through contemplative or ecopsychology practices.

7. Courage and Radical Hope

The willingness to face daunting truths without denial.

Sustaining hope not as optimism, but as commitment to act even in uncertainty (Ojala, 2012).

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We're the ones we've been waiting for

Most therapists don't yet know how to work with climate change, but this is a rapidly growing movement, urgently needed, and full of people who care. Join us!

