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September 2022

IT'S MY
PLANET TOO







Eco-anxiety & distress

We live with an awful uncertainty about whether we will take sufficient, sustained, effective action in time to reduce the spread of the more extreme impacts already appearing globally

Congruent & healthy response to the reality we are facing

But for children & young people it is also linked to adult action/inaction – relational trauma

The capacity to be in touch with external reality has long been regarded as an indication of mental health and conversely not having that capacity regarded as mentally unhealthy

How are we
responding to this
cognitively &
emotionally?

Emotional climate

Emotional bio-
diversity

Internal & External
activism

- 
- Eco-anxiety
 - Grief & Solastalgia
 - Hope & Hopeless
 - Anger
 - Blame
 - Frustration
 - Guilt & Shame
 - Sadness & Grief
 - Fantasies of rescue
 - Apocalyptic Fantasies
 - Defensiveness, Avoidance, Denial, Delay & Disavowal
 - Nihilism
 - Despair

Psychosocial climate anxiety scale (Hickman 2020)

- The scale differentiates between different levels of climate anxiety from mild, to medium, significant, severe, to critical.
- As people first become aware of climate change there is a tendency to start at the milder end, progressing towards severe and critical as they become increasingly informed and aware.
- Sometimes people have a sudden and more shocking awakening and go from relatively unaware to severe or critical rapidly, which tends to lead to a psychological crisis.
- The crisis can be accompanied by a breakdown of existing beliefs, securities, trust in other people and in the world generally.
- Based on clinical case studies the scale is useful in differentiating between levels of suffering and disruption to daily life.

Psychosocial climate anxiety scale

Mild – feelings of upset are transient & can respond to reassurance, focus on optimism & hope in others (maybe ungrounded)

Medium – upset more frequently, doubt in 'others' capacity to take action, making some changes in lifestyle

Significant – minimal defenses against anxiety, harder to mitigate distress, guilt & shame, little faith in others to take action, significant impact on relationships

Severe – intrusive thoughts, sleep affected, struggle to get any respite, anticipation of human extinction, no belief in others ability to care, may be unable to work

Critical - Suicidal. Loss of personal security - severe

Dreams & reality & climate anxiety

- Dreams (nightmares) of having to kill pets, children or elderly parents as food sources run out and social breakdown threatens social order, or of being killed themselves by parents or older siblings.
- Dreams that their parents have collected drugs so the family could commit suicide together.
- Dreams about fuel shortages leading to them being unable to travel to get to loved ones (parents, partners, family) or to safety more generally (breaking down in unknown places and being threatened by strangers who live there).

Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey (2021)

Hickman, C. Marks, L. Pihkala, P. Clayton, S. Lewandowski, E. Mayall, E. Wray, B. Mellor, C. Susteren, L.

Lancet Planetary Health

- Distress about climate change is associated with young people perceiving that they have no future, that humanity is doomed, that governments are failing to respond adequately, and with feelings of betrayal and abandonment by governments and adults.
- Climate change and government inaction are chronic stressors which have significant, long-lasting and incremental negative implications for the mental health of children and young people.
- The failure of governments to adequately address climate change and the impact on younger generations potentially constitutes moral injury.
- Nations must respond to protect the mental health of children and young people by engaging in ethical, collective, policy-based action against climate change.

10,000 Children and Young people, aged 16 – 25

Australia

Brazil

Finland

France

India

Nigeria

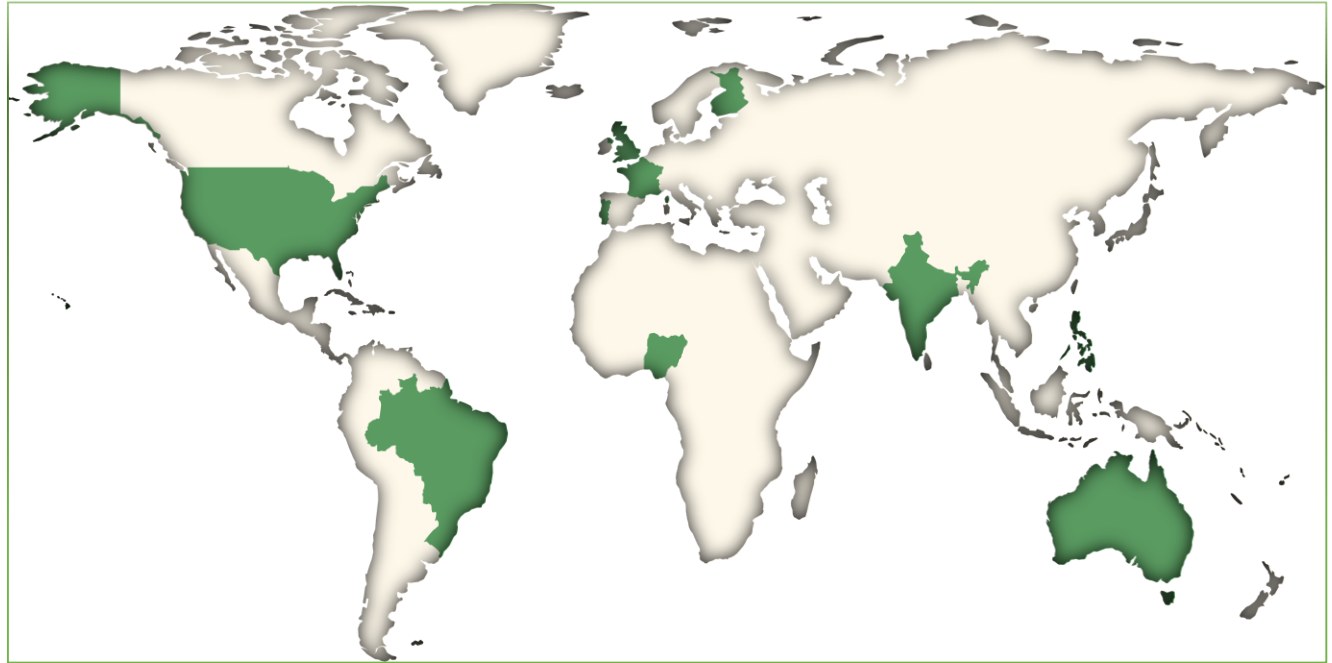
Philippines

Portugal

UK

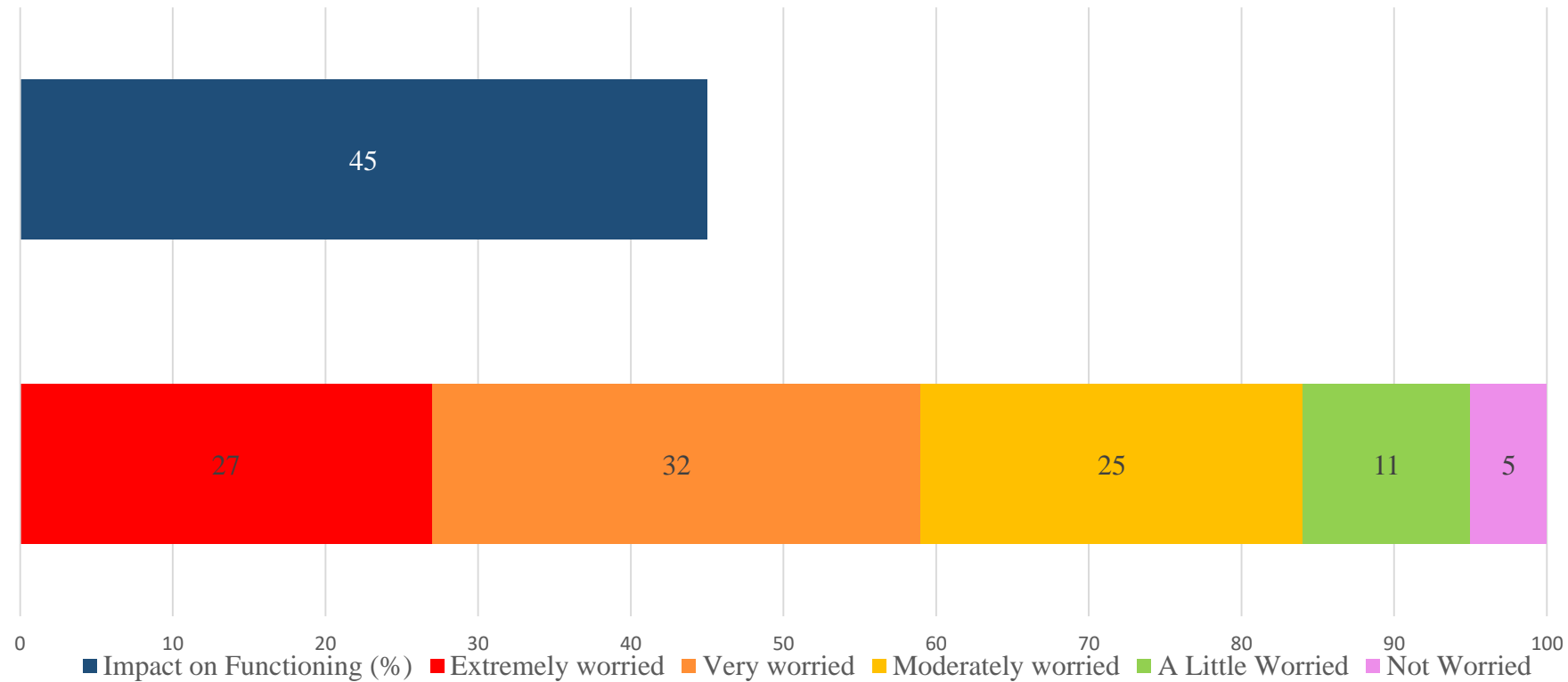
USA

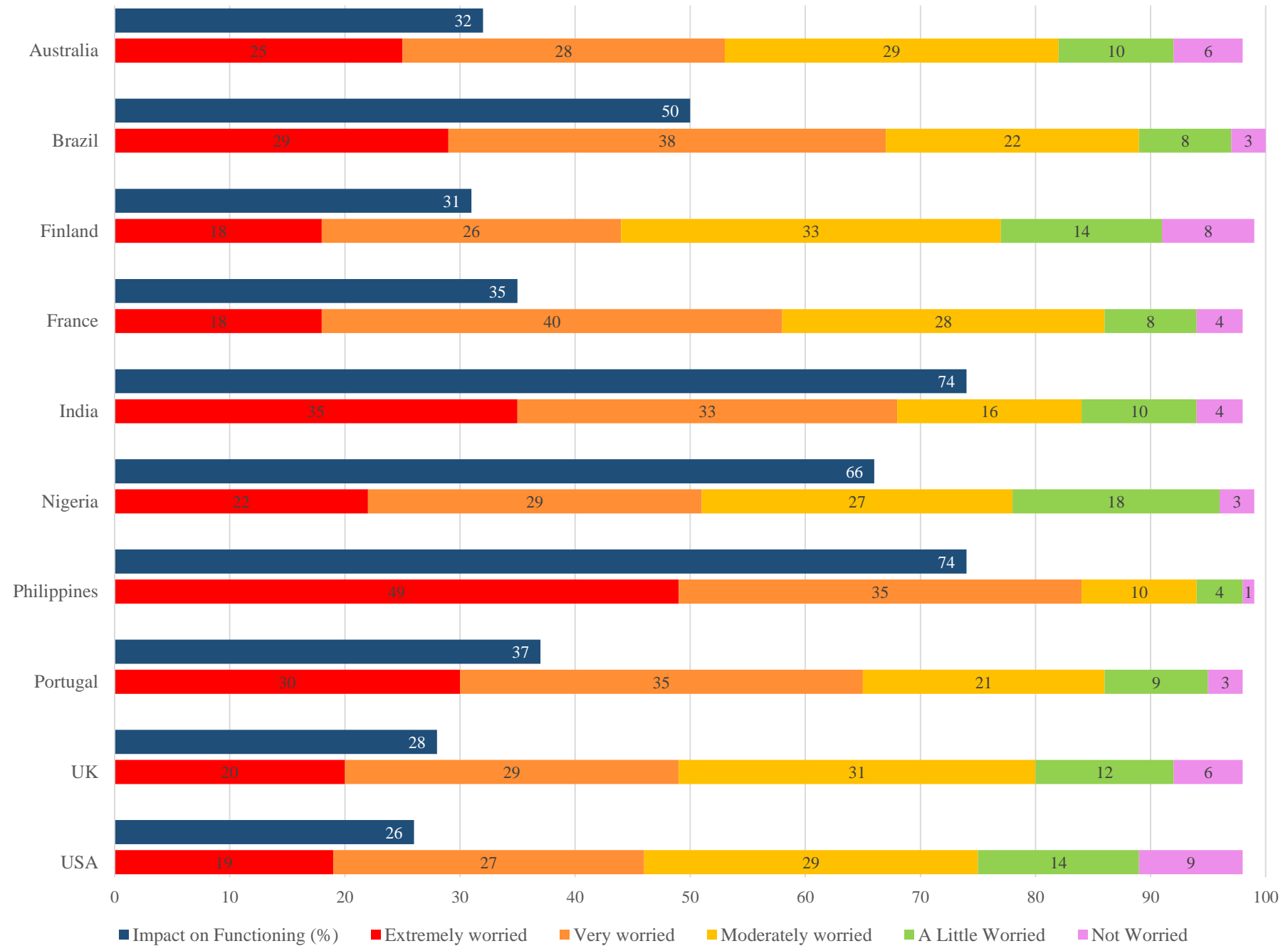
Representative samples from each country



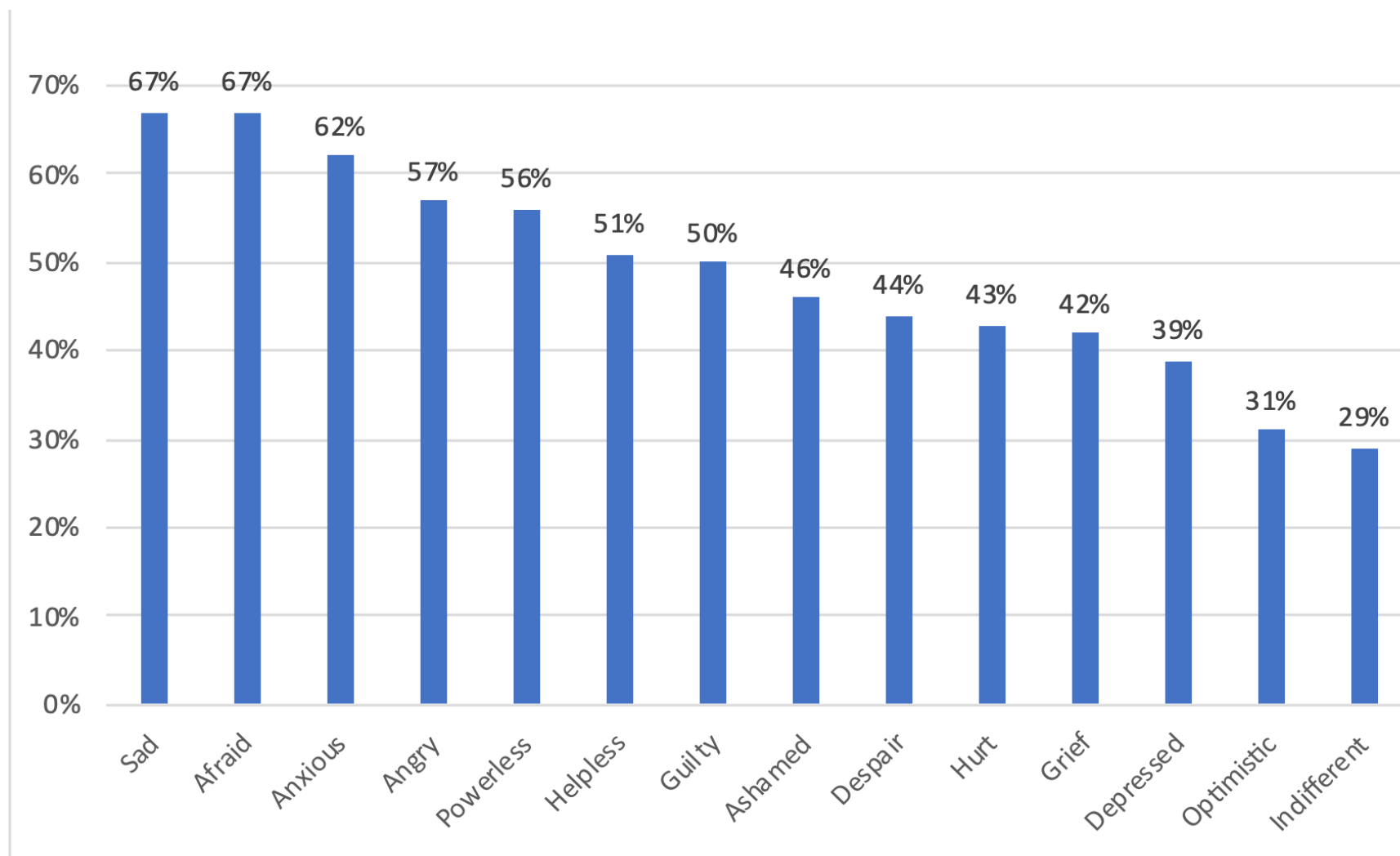
8 out of 10 children and young people across the world, including UK, **worry that climate change is threatening people and the planet**

45% report **negative impact on daily functioning** (eating, concentrating, work, school, sleeping, spending time in nature, playing, having fun, relationships). In the **UK this is 28%.**





Climate change makes me feel... (% worldwide)



Eight out of ten (83% worldwide -
80% UK - 92% Philippines) think
that **people have failed to take
care of the planet**

Three quarters (or more) think
that **the future is frightening**

75% Worldwide

73% UK

70% Nigeria

92% Philippines

Over half think that **humanity is doomed**

56% Worldwide

51% UK

42% Nigeria

73% Philippines

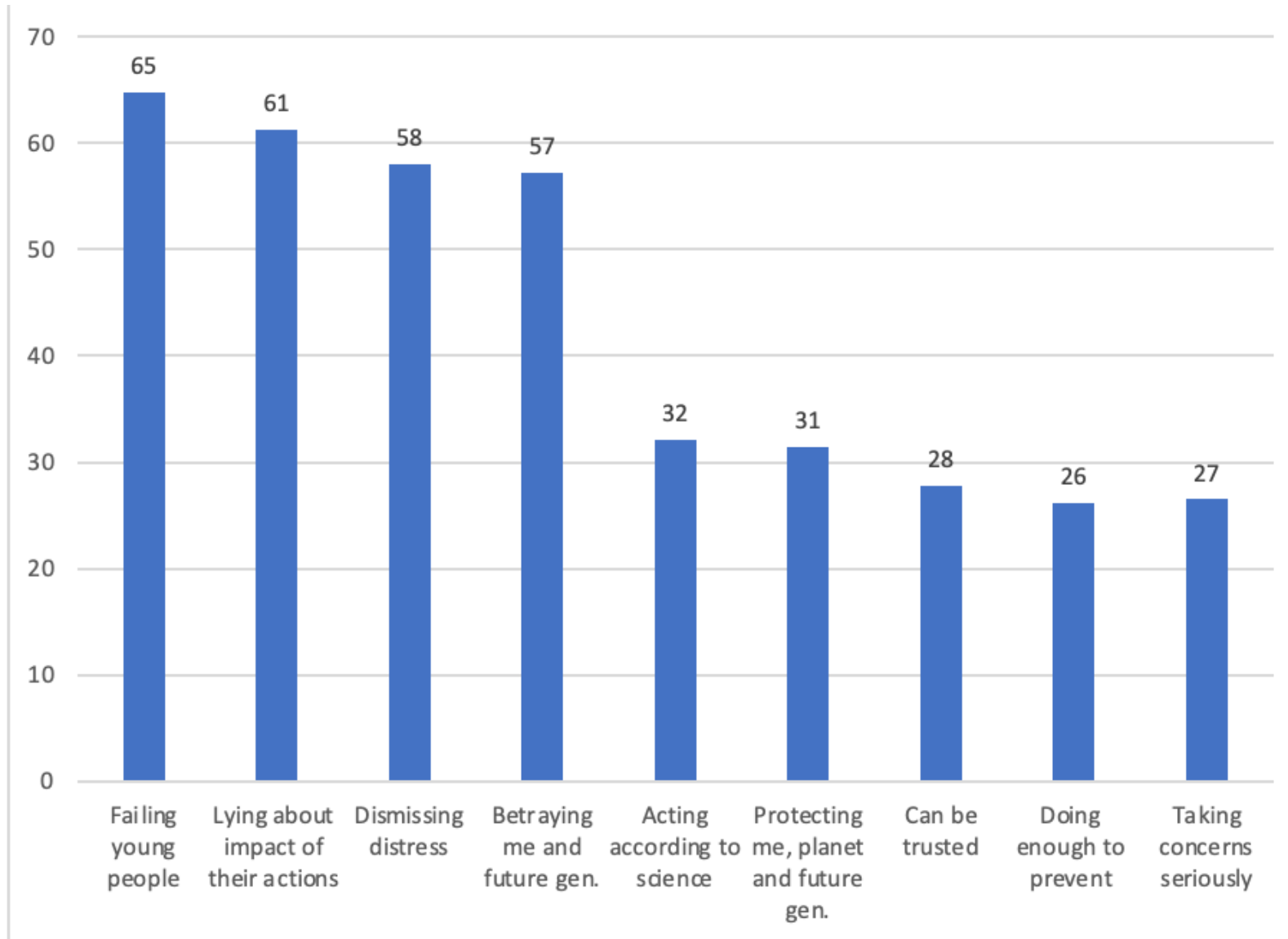
Children and young people reported they have been dismissed or ignored by other people when they try to talk about climate change

Worldwide and in the UK (48%)

Nigeria (66%)

Philippines (51%)

In relation to climate change, I believe that my government / other governments are (UK respondents)



Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey

Caroline Hickman

Dr Liz Marks

Dr Panu Pihkala

Prof Susan Clayton

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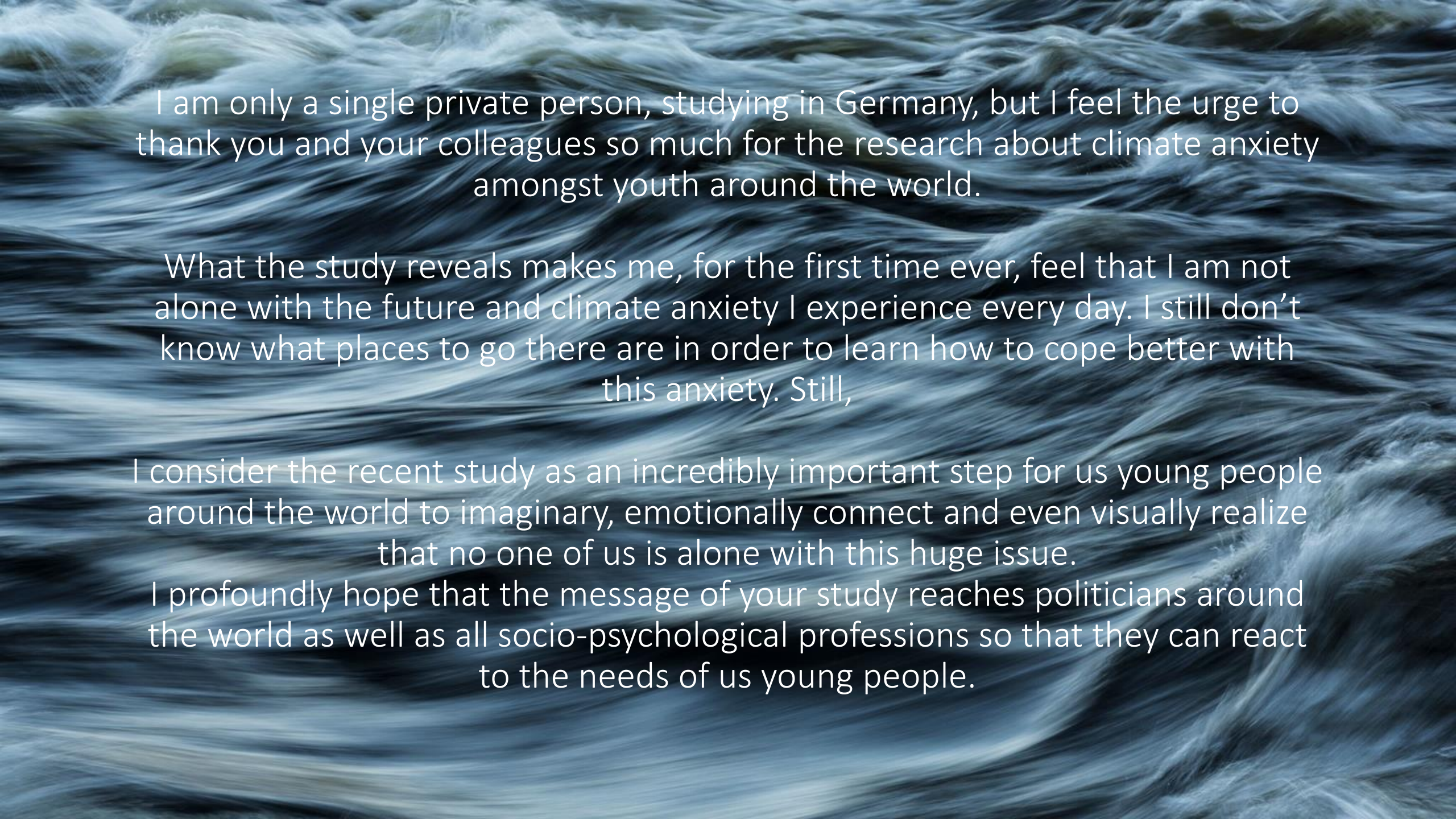
Elouise Mayall

Dr Britt Wray

Dr Catriona Mellor

Dr Lise van Susteren





I am only a single private person, studying in Germany, but I feel the urge to thank you and your colleagues so much for the research about climate anxiety amongst youth around the world.

What the study reveals makes me, for the first time ever, feel that I am not alone with the future and climate anxiety I experience every day. I still don't know what places to go there are in order to learn how to cope better with this anxiety. Still,

I consider the recent study as an incredibly important step for us young people around the world to imaginarily, emotionally connect and even visually realize that no one of us is alone with this huge issue.

I profoundly hope that the message of your study reaches politicians around the world as well as all socio-psychological professions so that they can react to the needs of us young people.

Climate crisis as a human rights issue

‘By endangering and harming fundamental human needs, the climate crisis is also a human rights issue.

Legal bodies recognise an intersection between human rights, climate change, and climate anxiety.

Subjecting young people to climate anxiety and moral injury can be regarded as cruel, inhuman, degrading, or even torturous.

(Hickman & Marks et al 2021, p871)



Psychosocial Solutions

- Face our denial
- Come to terms with our irrationality (human)
- Get under the surface of our feelings
- Make a place for feelings in technical solutions
- Confront narcissistic entitlement
- Needs vs wants
- Grieve what we have done & lost
- Understand and confront apathy in a realistic way (CC is not distant from us – optimism bias)
- Loss of old ways of living (and defensive shells)
- Examine, understand & repair our relationship with the natural world



Staying with the Trouble

Making Kin in the
Chthulucene

Donna J Haraway

- Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent responses to devastating events
- As well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places

- *mortal critters entwined
in myriad unfinished
configurations of places,
times, matters, meanings*

