



Climate Change & Youth Mental Health

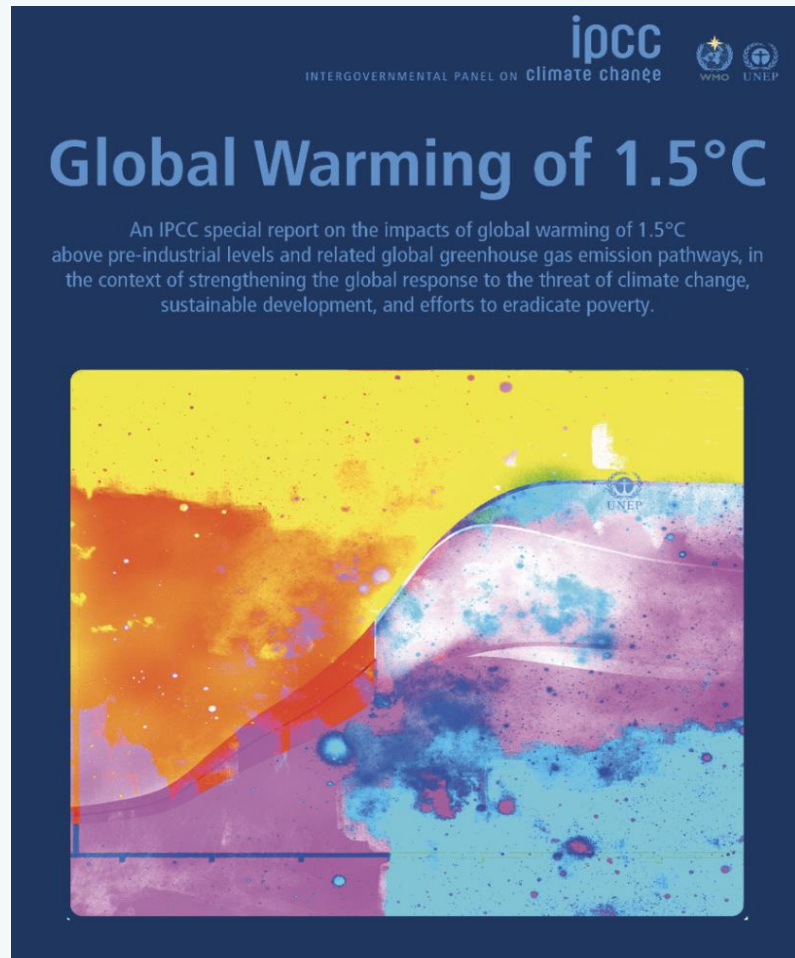
Impacts & Opportunities for Action

January 21st, 2025

Swelen Andari

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6 years ago...



🕒 This article is more than 6 years old

We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN

Urgent changes needed to cut risk of extreme heat, drought, floods and poverty, says IPCC

● [Overwhelmed by climate change? Here's what you can do](#)



📷 A firefighter battles a fire in California. The world is currently 1C warmer than preindustrial levels. Photograph: Ringo HW Chiu/AP



INTRODUCING

COMMON HORIZON  HORIZON COMMUN

Building power from coast to coast to coast to win climate solutions that make our lives better.



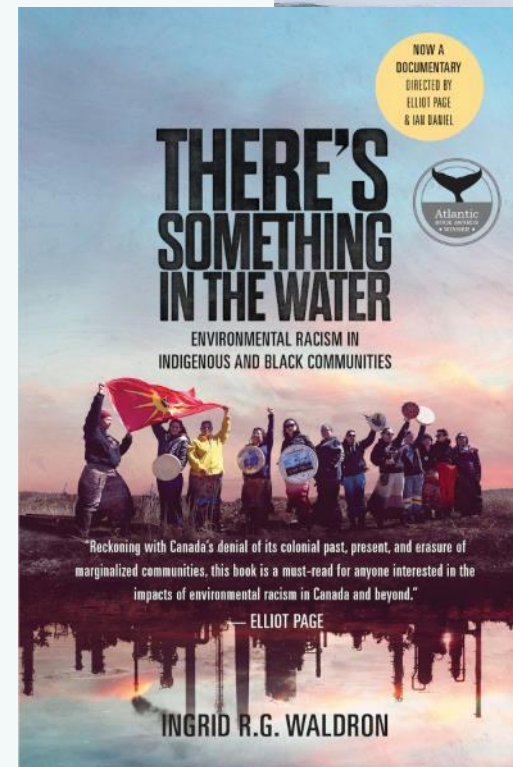
“Climate change exacerbates many social and environmental risk factors for mental health and psychosocial problems, and can lead to emotional distress, the development of new mental health conditions and a worsening situation for people already living with these conditions.”

WHO, 2022

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Climate Change as a 'Threat Multiplier'

- Reinforcement of systemic inequities
- Amplification of colonial violence and racism
- Climate justice is essential



“Indigenous knowledge is not uniform across the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and cannot be separated from the people who hold it. It is embodied.

At the same time, there are some common principles across these knowledge systems which some suggest are important in the context of addressing climate change. For example, the concepts of relationality and stewardship carry teachings that all living things are interconnected and therefore must be respected and cared for.”

Climate Atlas of Canada

Climate action and policy must be Indigenous-led, youth leaders say in new report

'I ... hope together we can leave a beautiful future for our children,' participant says



Stephanie Cram · CBC News · Posted: Jun 21, 2024 4:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: June 21



Grassy Narrows First Nation is a community that has experienced what some people call environmental racism. The Wabigoon River has high levels of mercury, due to a nearby paper mill. (Submitted by Allan Lissner)



© Credit: Shutterstock.com, ID 1306025184

Canada.ca

Government of Canada Releases New Report Showing the Impacts of Climate Change and Necessity of Indigenous-Led Climate Change Adaptation

From: Natural Resources Canada

News release

May 7, 2024 Ottawa, Ontario Natural Resources Canada

“Young people have a unique positionality in relation to the mental and emotional dimensions of climate change: They have contributed the least to the crisis, they are and will be disproportionately impacted, and they have limited opportunities and invaluable perspectives for influencing action”

Galway & Field, 2023

Climate change can have ‘lifelong impacts’ on young people’s mental health, report says

By Giri Viswanathan, CNN

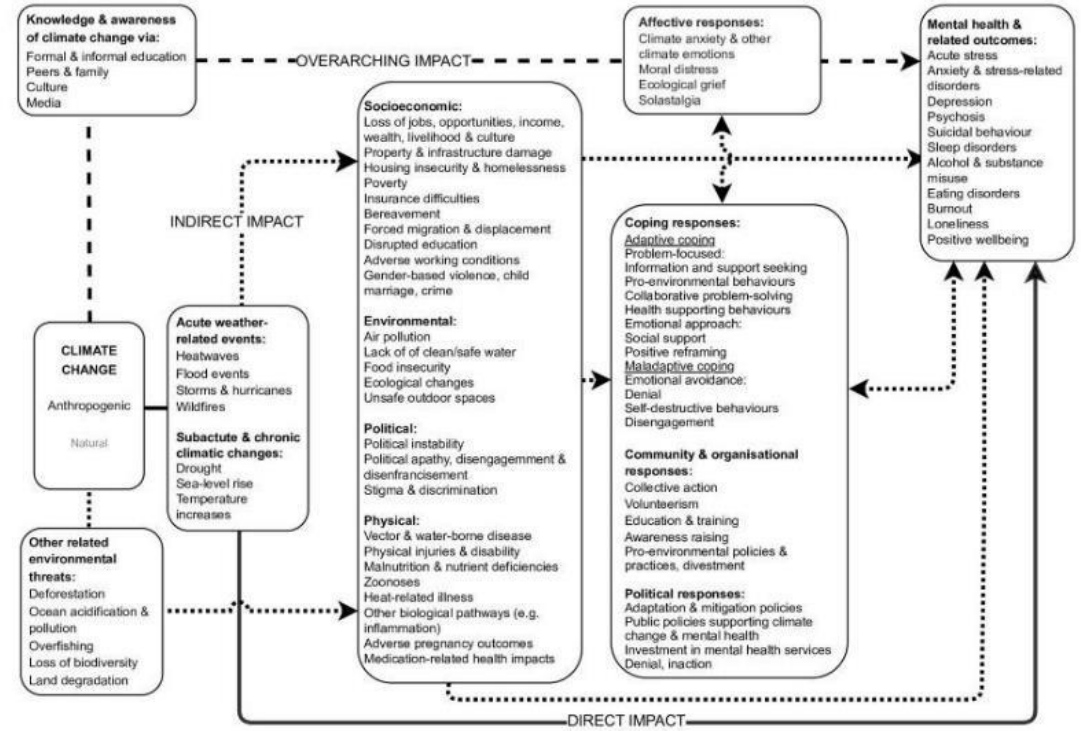
🕒 4 minute read · Updated 9:45 AM EDT, Wed October 11, 2023



Young people are more likely to be alarmed or concerned about the perceived failure of governments or authority figures to act on climate change. Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty Images

Climate Change and Youth Mental Health

- Direct
- Indirect
- Overarching



Many factors relating to existing societal inequities can moderate these pathways (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, Indigenous status, disability)

Pathways between climate change and mental health
 Claire L Niedzwiedz et al. J Epidemiol Community Health doi:10.1136/jech-2024-222716

Direct Impacts

- **Exposure to extreme weather events and chronic climatic changes may have acute effects on mental health**
- Subclinical anxiety > PTSD, suicidality, substance abuse, depression, other factors (e.g., violence, insomnia, nightmares).
- Substantial implications for **brain development**



Review

Climate change and its implications for developing brains – In utero to youth: A scoping review

Sean A. Kidd ^{a b}  , Jessica Gong ^c , Alessandro Massazza ^d ,
Mariya Bezgrebelna ^a , Yali Zhang ^e , Shakoor Hajat ^d 

Indirect Impacts

- Socioeconomic
- Environmental
- Political

🕒 SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Government inaction on climate change linked to psychological distress in young people

by University of Bath



CLIMATE CRISIS AND INSTITUTIONAL BETRAYAL INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO RISING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG CHILDREN

People-Powered Justice

August 26, 2024



Genesis v. EPA youth plaintiffs

Overarching Impacts

“Abstract knowledge of climate change may be as important for mental health as observing local changes in the environment”

Niedzwiedz et al., 2024

If you would like to learn more about emotions youth feel about climate change, this figure does an excellent job:

Permanent URL:

https://serc.carleton.edu/download/images/264659/emotions_climate_change2022_1665588652369721281.webp

Originally uploaded in [CLEAN:Teaching Climate and Energy:Tools for Educators:Climate Mental Health](#).

Provenance: Ami-Nacu-Schmidt, CIRES, University of Colorado Boulder

Data from: Hickman et al. 2021:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2542519621002783>

% of students in Ontario
depressed about the
future because of climate
change

44.5%

OSDUHS 2023

A recent Canadian survey of 1,000 young
Canadians aged 16 to 25 found:

56% reported feeling **afraid, sad, anxious and
powerless about climate change;**

78% said that **climate change affects their
overall mental health;**

73% reported that **the future is frightening
because of climate change.**

(Galway & Field, 2023)

“The impacts of climate events weaken people's capacity to take the necessary actions to prevent further warming, because how battered people feel determines how well they can build a more sustainable world.”

Dr. Britt Wray

Director, CIRCLE | Community-minded Interventions for Resilience, Climate Leadership and Emotional wellbeing

Stanford University

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What are we to do about it?

There is a lot that we can do about it.

Protective Factors

- Design solutions with co-benefits for MH, climate action, reduction of inequities and Truth and Reconciliation
- Intersectoral and transdisciplinary collaboration
- Centre cultural relevance, youth leadership and inclusion of lived expertise
- Build climate and mental health literacy across youth providers
- Foster inner and collective resilience from a trauma-informed lens
- Facilitate land-based healing and connection with nature
- Build place-based connections and a sense of community belonging
- Build community preparedness
- Foster collective agency

Hayes, et al. (2022)

Lawrance, E., Thompson, R., Fontana, G., & Jennings, N. (2021)

Social Capital



Illustration Credit: Hanifa Abdul-Hameed

Nature Connection & Land-Based Healing



Illustration Credit: Burcu Koleli

Collaboration & Co-Benefits



Illustration Credit: Burcu Koleli

Contact Us

No One Left Behind

Join our team

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Your Care

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Professionals

Climate Change and Mental Health

“ **These challenges might seem overwhelming, but CAMH is committed to action.**”



Adapting The Work that Reconnects - Active Hope with and for Youth

“Passive hope is about waiting for external agencies to bring about what we desire. Active Hope is about becoming active participants in bringing about what we hope for. Active Hope is a practice.”

Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone (2022)

youth
wellness
hubs
ONTARIO

carrefours
bien-être
pour les jeunes
DE L'ONTARIO


CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

camh Margaret and Wallace McCain
Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health

Illustration credit: [Dori Midnight](#)

Our Journey at CAMH



Our Guiding Principles

- Foster relationships grounded in reciprocity, trust and authenticity
- Centre the relationship between climate change and mental health
- Pursue viable action
- Hold space for stories that build emotional connections and inspire action
- Ground relationships in physical spaces and places
- Foster connections to collective climate action
- Integrate and amplify diverse perspectives and knowledge systems

Our Vision

The Mental Health and Climate Response Initiative will advance climate adaptation and mitigation solutions within CAMH and across related systems that address the mental health impacts and social inequities stemming from the climate crisis.

Through multi-disciplinary research, education and partnerships, the initiative will lead in shaping policies and interventions at all levels, from local communities to the global community.

Objective #1:
Address mental health impacts of climate change for CAMH patients

Objective #2:
Address mental health impacts of climate change on population health

Objective #3:
Prepare for extreme weather emergencies

Thank you!

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