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Report: Youth Views on the Environment and Mental Health

PREPARED FOR
United Nations
Development
Programme
Accelerator Lab in
Barbados & the
Eastern Caribbean

PREPARED BY
U-Report Barbados



Report

**BARBADOS
VOICE MATTERS**



Barbados & the
Eastern Caribbean
accelerator
lab

IMAGE BY REBECCA CLARKE/
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OVERVIEW

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, U-Report Barbados launched a poll asking youth for their views on the impacts of climate change on mental health. The poll was released in October 2022 after a series of dialogues between the two parties.

This poll is neither the first to touch on mental health nor the environment, but the first effort to link the two concepts in Barbados using the U - Report platform. In 2021, U-Report Barbados released two polls investigating youth views on the Paris Agreement, and on lived impacts of climate change, such as water shortages. Mental health has also been a topic of recent polls, once in collaboration with the Barbados Community College on student wellbeing, and in 2021 in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

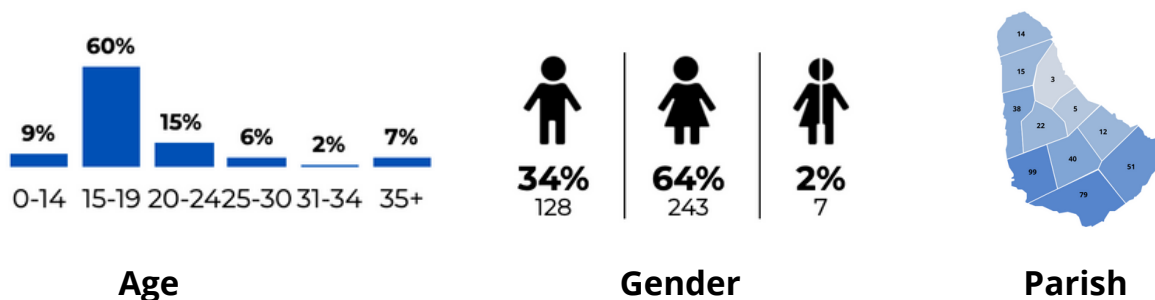
Through discussions between the UNDP Accelerator Lab and U-Report Barbados, it was determined that this poll on Climate Change and Mental Health would precede further discussions about climate change and the future of work. The UNDP Accelerator Lab is interested in how the youth are conceiving of the environment and their future, particularly seeing that 63% of the Caribbean population is under 30.

It is the intention that the anonymized results of this poll will be shared with the relevant policymakers to chart a more inclusive path forward, whereby young people have a say in addressing environmental issues.

The 'Mental Health and Climate Change' poll was constructed by the Research and Poll Development Team of U-Report Barbados and subjected to wider review by the U-Report Barbados Steering Committee and representatives from the UNDP Accelerator Lab. The poll was strategically released in proximity to World Mental Health Day, which is recognized annually on October 10th.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS

378 persons responded to the 'Mental Health and Climate Change' Poll. The breakdown of respondents by age, gender, and parish is shown below.



POLL RESPONSES

A complete list of the questions asked in the poll can be found in the Appendix. The questions generally asked respondents about their concerns regarding the natural environment, the quality of their mental health, and whether linkages between climate change and mental health had ever been considered. This section highlights major findings from the poll responses.

58% of respondents were concerned or very concerned about the current state of the natural environment.

This figure rises to 88% when including individuals who are at least *somewhat concerned* about the environment. (Shown in Figure 1).

When asked whether they were concerned about the *future* of the environment, 93% of all respondents were at least somewhat concerned — 5% more than those concerned about its *current state*.

Moreover, 44% were very concerned, 13% more than those very concerned about its *current state* (Shown in Figure 2).

When disaggregated by age, more than half of the respondents aged 20+ were *very concerned* about the future of the environment.

Notably, no respondent aged 20+ stated that they were not concerned in some way about the future of the environment (Shown in Figure 3).

Figure 1

Share of total respondents concerned about the current state of the environment, where they live (Question 3):

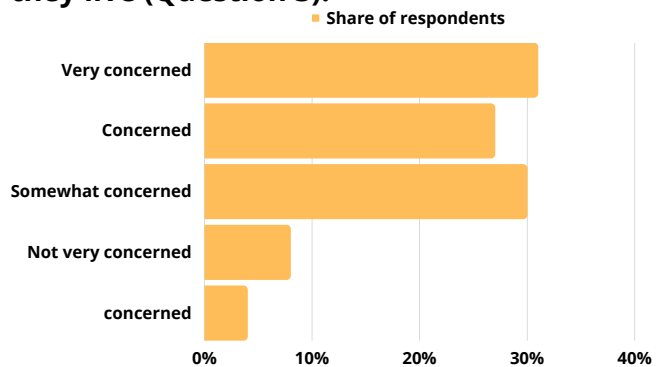


Figure 2

Share of total respondents concerned about the future of the environment, where they live (Question 4):

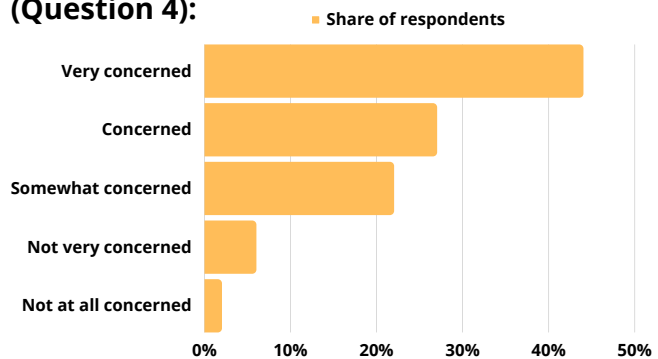
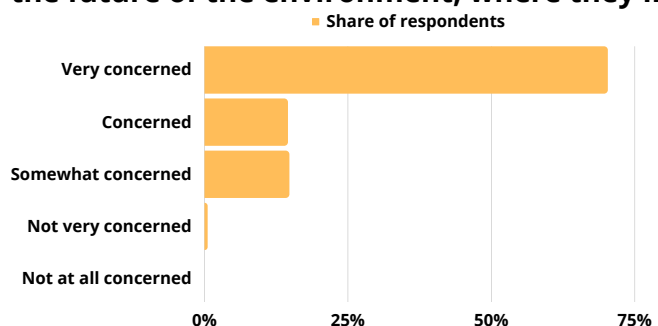


Figure 3

Share of respondents aged 20+ concerned about the future of the environment, where they live:



Following the initial inquiry regarding individuals' general concern about the environment, we asked whether specific impacts of climate change were affecting their mental health. Given the context of the Caribbean region, examples of sea level rise and more intense storms were offered.

Roughly half (51%) of the respondents stated that the impacts of climate change negatively affect their mental health. (Shown in Figure 4).

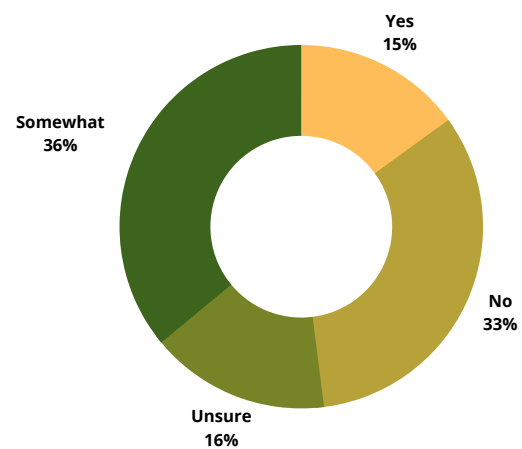
Respondents in the youngest age groups (under 25) were most unsure about the impacts of climate change on their mental health.

One quarter of respondents under 14 stated that they were unsure; 17% were unsure in the 15-19 category; and 15% were unsure in the 20-24 age category.

In the 25-30 and 31-34 age groups, no one was unsure, and only 7% were unsure in the 35+ category.

Overall response: Do the impacts of climate change (e.g. sea level rise, intensified storms) affect your mental health negatively? (Question 5)

Figure 4



When asked *which impacts* of climate change they were most anxious/ concerned about experiencing (Question 6 &7), [intense hurricanes/storms](#) and [droughts/water shortages](#) were most frequently mentioned.

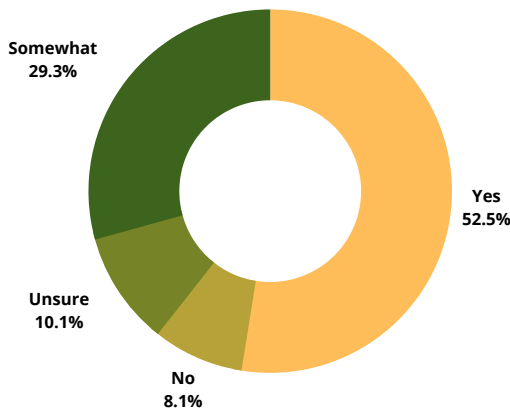
Compared to younger age groups - where two to three specific impacts were specified - 80% of respondents in the 35+ age group cited that they were anxious about all potential impacts, including:

- [Intense hurricanes/ storms](#)
- [Droughts/ water shortages](#)
- [Flooding](#)
- [Food Shortages](#)
- [Beach Erosion](#)
- [Land Erosion](#)
- [Diseases](#)

The subsequent cluster of questions focussed on the *positive impacts* of the environment on individuals' mental health.

Overall response: Does interacting with the natural environment in your country improve, or have a positive impact on, your mental health? (Question 8)

Figure 5



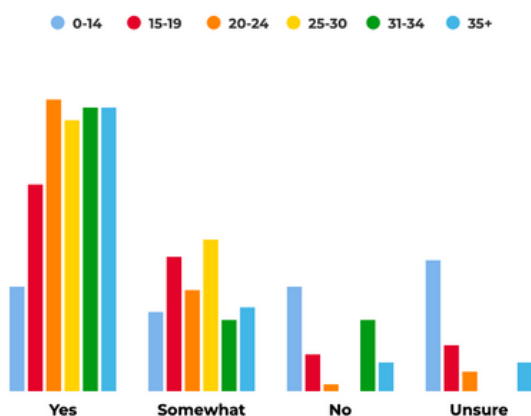
The overwhelming majority of respondents — 81% — shared that the natural environment positively impacts their mental health. (Shown in Figure 5).

Individuals were roughly **30% more certain** of the **positive impacts** of the environment on their mental health, when compared to being asked about the negative impacts (Figure 4).

Moreover, the share of individuals who reported being "uncertain" about the impacts of the environment on their mental health was lower when asked about positive impacts.

Response by age group: Does interacting with the natural environment in your country improve, or have a positive impact on, your mental health?

Figure 6



There is a significant difference in sentiment by age group, with younger age groups showing more uncertainty than older ones.

Individuals were split in the 14 & under age group, with 25% stating 'yes' — interacting with the natural environment has a positive impact on mental health, and 25% stating 'no'. 31% of this age group was unsure.

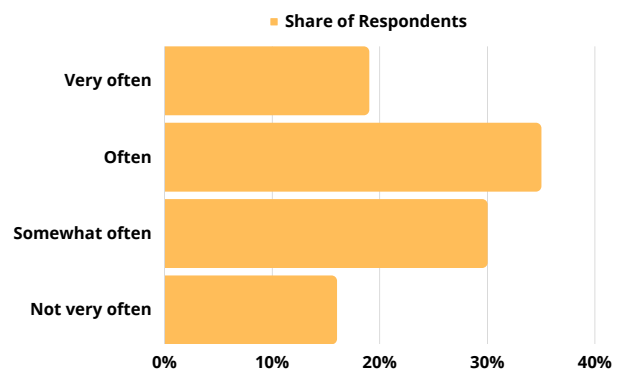
The share of individuals who answered 'yes' almost doubles in the 15-19 age group — 49% — and increases even more in the older groups.

In an open-ended question (Question 9), respondents were asked to give examples of ways that they use or interact with the natural environment to improve their mental health. Then, they were asked to state how frequently they engaged in the activity/activities mentioned (Shown in Figure 7).

- go for a drive
- swimming
- go to the beach
- gardening
- watch the sunset
- picnics
- freediving
- walks
- hiking
- admire scenery
- clean up garbage
- listen to the breeze

Frequency of participation in the activities mentioned above (Question 10):

Figure 7



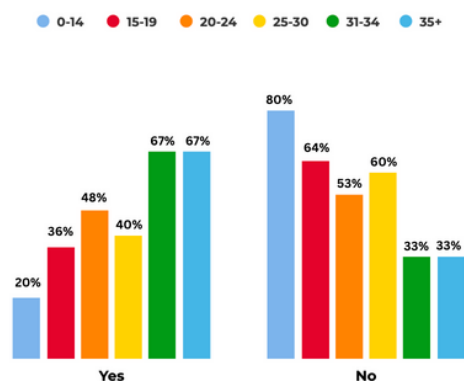
At the end of the poll, we asked the U-Reporters whether they had *ever considered the link between the impacts of climate change and their mental health*.

Overall results: Have you ever considered the link between the impacts of climate change on your mental health? (Question 11)

Figure 8



Figure 9



CONCLUSIONS & THE WAY FORWARD

The findings from this poll paint a picture of how the youth are conceiving of the environment and how climate change is impacting their mental health. As evidenced by the poll responses, Barbadian youth are not immune to the impacts of climate change, and they admit that their concern about the future of the environment has negative effects on their mental health. The youth are facing a dilemma whereby they currently turn to the natural environment to improve their wellbeing, yet the increasing uncertainty about the future of the environment is having negative effects on their mental health. Poor mental health can impact individuals ability to learn and make positive life choices, and thus safeguarding the environment and optimizing conditions for wellbeing should be a priority for leaders in the region.

Rooted in the results of this poll, two action areas were quickly identified that could support Barbadian youth struggling with the impacts of climate change:

1. Protect the natural landscape
2. Educate the youth about alternative outlets to improve mental health

Are there any others that we can add here based on the WHO policy brief? Perhaps on adaptation and mitigation?

Approaches to address the mental health and psychosocial impacts of climate

change must be implemented with urgency

Joint recommendations to MHPSS and climate change actors

Strengthening the link between mental health and climate change is an opportunity to create a more holistic and coordinated response.

Given the human impacts of climate change, mental health and psychosocial well-being need to be one of the main focuses of climate action.

Mental health and Climate Change: Policy Brief (who.int)

or maybe on joining a youth community like Let's Unpack it in BBD etc

APPENDIX

OVERVIEW: QUESTIONS

1. Ready to start?

- a) Yes
- b) No

2. Where would you prefer to take this poll?

- a) Beach
- b) Fishing Village
- c) Botanical Garden
- d) Boat
- e) Submarine
- f) Underwater Robot

3. Overall, how concerned are you about the current state of the environment (where you live)?

- a) Very concerned
- b) Somewhat concerned
- c) Concerned
- d) Not very concerned
- e) Not at all concerned

4. How concerned are you about the future of the environment, where you live?

- a) Very concerned
- b) Somewhat concerned
- c) Concerned
- d) Not very concerned
- e) Not at all concerned

5. Do the impacts of climate change (e.g. sea level rise, intensified storms) affect your mental health negatively?

- a) Yes
- b) Somewhat
- c) No
- d) Unsure

6. Which impact of climate change are you most concerned or anxious about experiencing?

- a) Intense hurricanes/ storms
- b) Droughts/ water shortages
- c) Flooding
- d) Food shortages
- e) Beach erosion
- f) land erosion
- g) Diseases
- h) None of the above
- i) All of the above
- j) Other

7. Which impact of climate change are you most concerned or anxious about experiencing?

(Open response)

8. Does interacting with the natural environment in your country improve or have a positive impact on your mental health?

- a) Yes
- b) Somewhat
- c) No
- d) Unsure

9. State one way you usually use/interact with the natural environment to improve your mental health?

(Open response)

10. How often do you participate in the activity mentioned in your last response?

- a) Very often
- b) Often
- c) Somewhat often
- d) Not very often

11. Before taking this poll, have you ever considered the link between the impacts of climate change on your mental health?

- a) Yes
- b) No