

## APA Official Actions

# Position Statement on Mental Health and Climate Change

Approved by the Board of Trustees, March 2023

Approved by the Assembly, November 2022

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

### Issue:

People with mental illness are disproportionately impacted by the consequences of climate change. Half of young adults in America now state that the distress they feel about climate change is affecting their daily lives,<sup>1</sup> and the majority of Americans now endorse feeling “very” or “somewhat” worried about climate change<sup>2</sup>. Psychiatrists are uniquely positioned to help address the mental health effects of climate change, to reduce barriers to addressing climate change such as denial and behavioral passivity, and to enhance efforts to communicate the mental health risks of climate change through mechanisms that result in sustained behavioral change. As advocates for mental health and for people with mental illness, psychiatrists have an important role to play in efforts to control the adverse effects of climate change.

### APA Position:

**Climate change poses a significant and growing threat to public health in general and to mental health in particular. Research funding on the impacts of climate change on mental health, utilization of mental health services, and the development of cost-effective supportive interventions is essential. Efforts should be aimed at reducing the progression of climate change, enhancing infrastructure, and developing a response plan to address the mental health effects of climate-related weather events. In addition, reducing the carbon footprint of medical practice and professional organizations and encouraging pro-environmental policy reform and social action are health related efforts that may especially protect those with mental illness and people in underrepresented and marginalized communities.**

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1. American Psychological Association. Majority Of US Adults Believe Climate Change Is Most Important Issue Today [Press release] <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2020/02/climate-change>. Published 2020. Accessed January 17, 2023.
2. Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Carman, J., Neyens, L., Marlon, J., Lacroix, K., & Goldberg, M. Dramatic Increase In Public Beliefs And Worries About Climate Change. Yale

University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/dramatic-increase-in-public-beliefs-and-worries-about-climate-change/>. Published 2021. Accessed January 17, 2023.