

## *Will eco-emotions be a major mental health issue in the years to come?*

"Identifying Types of Eco-Anxiety, Eco-Guilt, Eco-Grief, and Eco-Coping in a Climate-Sensitive Population: A Qualitative Study" is a study carried out by C. Ágoston *et al.*, and published in 2022 by the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. The purpose of this article is to define various emotions linked to the environmental situation, known as "eco-emotions", and to highlight their impact. La Fabrique Écologique retains three key points from this article:

**#1** Eco-emotions refer to feelings that overcome people in the face of the ecological crisis. The authors list four main types of eco-emotions:

- Eco-anxiety, which is a particular type of stress associated with environmental issues;
- Eco-guilt, which arises when people understand they have not met standards for behaviour that exist in society or that they have set for themselves;
- Eco-debt, which is a response to a loss linked to the physical destruction of the environment or to anticipated future degradation;
- Eco-adaptation, which brings together various adaptive strategies for managing eco-emotions and reinforcing pro-environmental behaviour.

The aim of this article is to provide a definition and in-depth qualitative analysis of the psychological phenomena associated with climate change, in order to facilitate support for populations sensitive to this issue.

**#2** The authors emphasise the complexity of those emotions, which are subdivided into subtypes leading to different behaviours. For example, one sub-type of eco-guilt is self-criticism, which presents as a tendency to improve individual behaviours in order to reduce the environmental impact. Another

sub-type of eco-guilt is 'prophetic individual responsibility'. Also associated with a more environmentally friendly behaviour, prophetic individual responsibility translates into a sudden understanding of the impact of humanity or of one's own impact on the environment.

**#3** Several types of mechanism for adapting to eco-emotions have been identified by the authors. A first example is adopting new behaviours in daily life, or planning to do so. Another strategy is confrontation, which involves trying to persuade others to change their behaviour, even if this means creating interpersonal conflict. While both adaptation mechanisms are symptomatic of greater ecological commitment, the study shows that the former often goes hand in hand with a reduction in negative emotions, whereas confrontation tends to intensify them.

### *Situation in France*

Although eco-emotions are not yet listed as pathologies in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), according to an Ifop survey (2022), 67% of French people say they feel fearful about the future of the planet. 34% of them believe their eco-emotions have an impact on their day-to-day mental health. This impact is seen as considerable by 11% of French people, as well as by 20% of women aged between 25 and 34, who are particularly affected.

### *The opinion of Pauline Bureau, the Vice-Chair of "La Fabrique Écologique"*

Admitting that eco-emotions are real means admitting that human well-being and the human psyche are intimately linked to the health of the planet: it means taking a step towards a more symbiotic representation of our relationship with the environment, an absolutely promising concept.