



Climate and Sustainability Task Force Kickoff

August 29, 2023



Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Background
3. Mandate and Parameters
4. Q&A



Background: What led to this Task Force

- 2018: Coalesced Green Teams to build sustainability vision
- 2019: Proposed new PSB Core value: Sustainability
- 2020: School Committee members asked to pledge
- 2021 (June): Uninhabitable Earth
- 2021 (Fall): BHS student petition of School Committee
- 2022 (June): Francesca & Roger presented to SC
- 2022-23: SC passes **Sustainability Policy**
- Past and ongoing educator initiatives: KEEP Club, Environmental Action Club, GreenZine Brookline...

Sustainability Pledge (highlights)

- **Reduce adverse environmental impacts in all school related activity:** greenhouse gas emissions in buildings, expand composting, sustainable procurement of supplies, transportation planning to and from schools.
- **Provide sustainability education:** all students learn about human impacts on ecosystems, experience outdoor education, including gardening; SC members will direct the Superintendent and the Office of Teaching and Learning to work with Curriculum Coordinators and teachers, to develop.
- **Improve the health and wellness of staff and students:** Sourcing healthy and local foods and more plant-based consumption; advocate for Safe Routes to School (including bicycle safety curriculum).

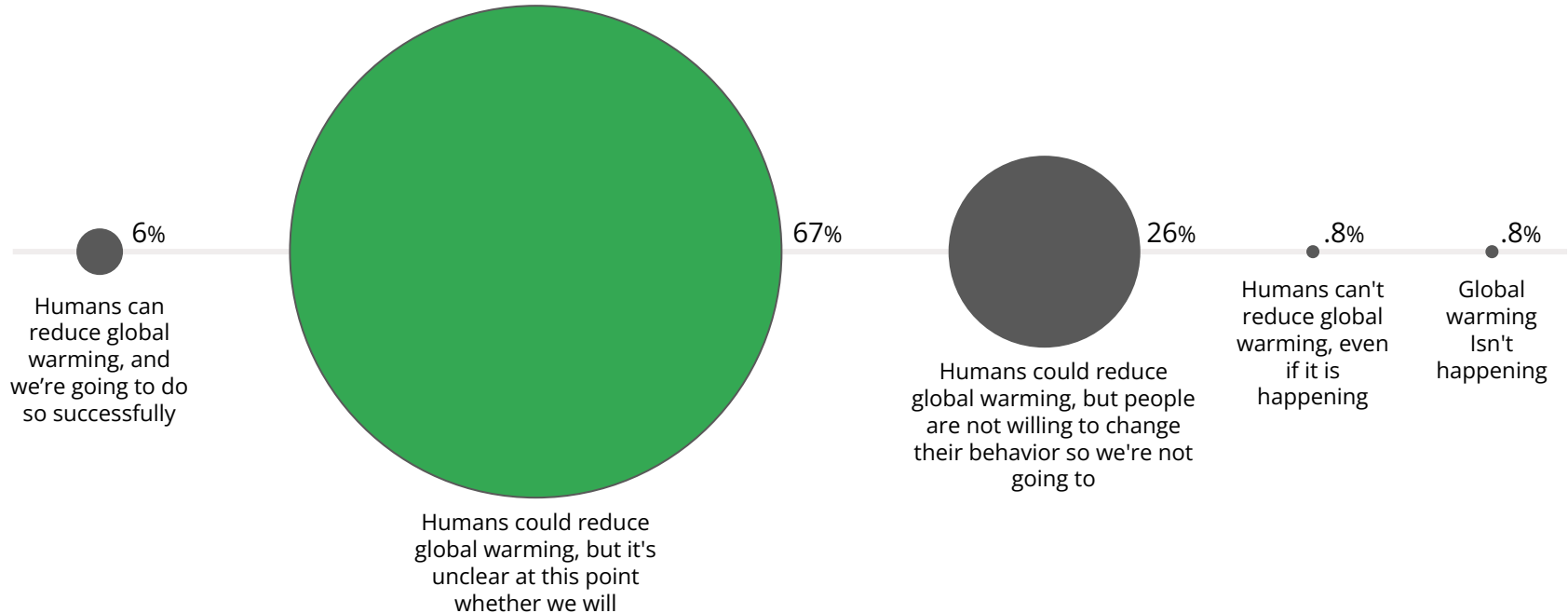
Background: How students feel

- Sea level and coral death
- Heat
- Glacial melt
- Race and class disparity
- Nationalism and democratic atrophy
- Mental health



Nearly all BHS students are not confident global warming will be stopped

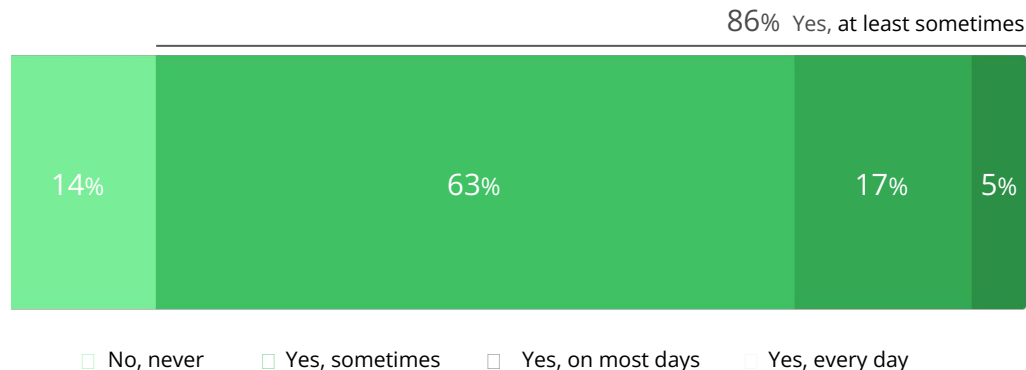
VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Nearly 9-in-10 BHS students have thought about climate change and for 1-in-5, it's on their minds "most days"...

CLIMATE CHANGE'S PRIMACY

In the past month, have you thought about climate change?



0.25

0.50

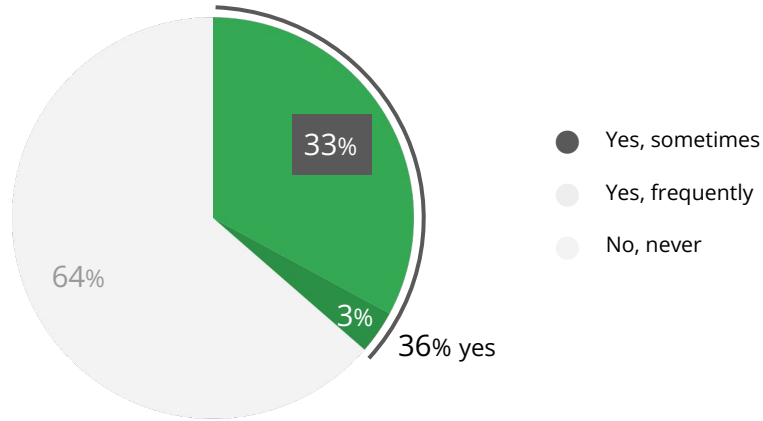
0.75

...and it's taking a toll

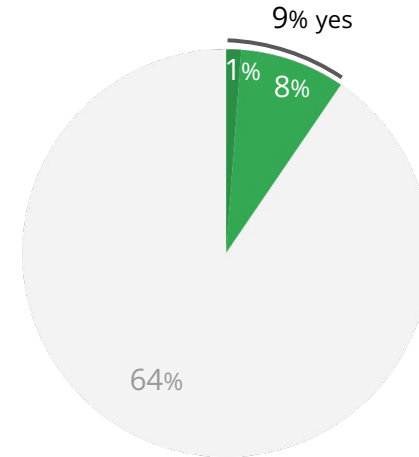
Over 1-in-3 BHS students say climate change negatively impacts their mental health at least sometimes and 1-in-10 report it inhibits their ability to perform normally in school.

CLIMATE CHANGE'S IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH & WELL BEING

In the past month, have you had thoughts or feelings about climate change that negatively impact your mental health or emotional well being, or cause you anxiety or depression?

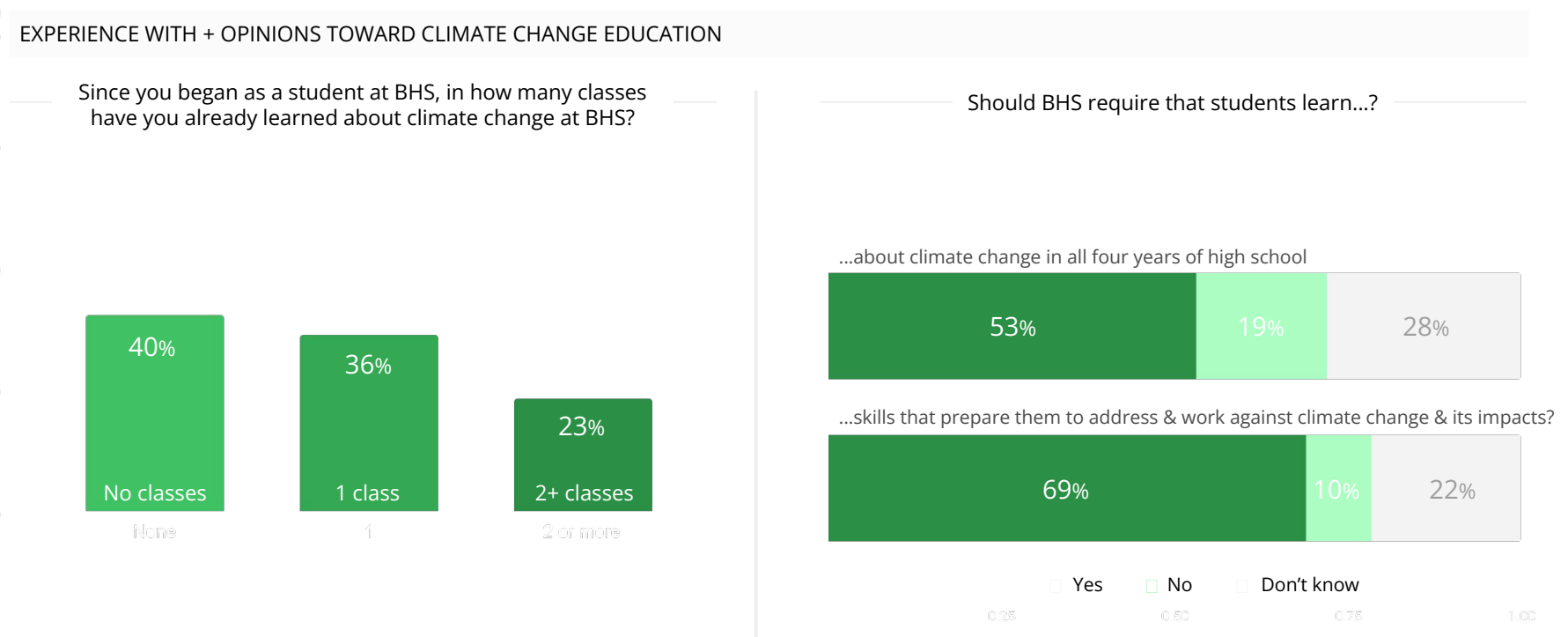


In the past month, have you had thoughts or feelings about climate change that interfere with your ability to function normally in school?



Demand for climate change education exceeds offerings

Just under a quarter of BHS students report learning about climate change in 2 or more classes, while twice as many would like BHS to require students take climate change classes all four years.



Climate crisis=mental health crisis

BHS data validated internationally

MAKING THE CONNECTION:

Climate Changes Mental Health

The burning of fossil fuels causes the release of carbon dioxide, which builds up in the atmosphere and causes Earth's temperature to rise—this is climate change. Released into the air, harming our health in the last century, with recent years being our warmest on record, climate change is altering our weather patterns, not just temperature but also precipitation. Droughts, wildfires, intense storms, heat waves, and sea level rise are all examples of social, agricultural, and economic effects that affect our physical health but can also harm our mental health.

FAST FACTS

- More than **40 million adults** in the U.S. suffer from a **mental illness**.
- Victims of natural disasters are at an **increased risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicide**.
- **25-50%** of people exposed to an extreme weather disaster are at risk of adverse mental health effects.
- **Up to 54% of adults and 45% of children** experience mental health issues.

Curr Psychiatry Rep, 2018 Apr 11;20(5):35. doi: 10.1007/s11920-018-0896-9.

The Psychological Effects of Climate Change on Children.

Burke SEL¹, Sanson AV², Van Hoon J³.

Author information

Abstract

PURPOSE OF REVIEW: We review recent evidence on the psychological effects of climate change, indirect impacts, and discuss children's psychological adaptation to climate change.

RECENT FINDINGS: Both the direct and flow-on effects of climate change place children at risk of PTSD, depression, anxiety, phobias, sleep disorders, attachment disorders, and substance use. Children also exhibit high levels of concern about the future, which can lead to emotional and behavioral problems. Children's exposure to adverse adult mental health outcomes. Children also exhibit high levels of concern about the future, which can lead to emotional and behavioral problems. Children's exposure to adverse adult mental health outcomes. Children also exhibit high levels of concern about the future, which can lead to emotional and behavioral problems.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents; Children; Climate change; Coping; Environmental engagement; Mental health

PMID: 29637319 DOI: 10.1007/s11920-018-0896-9

[Indexed for MEDLINE]



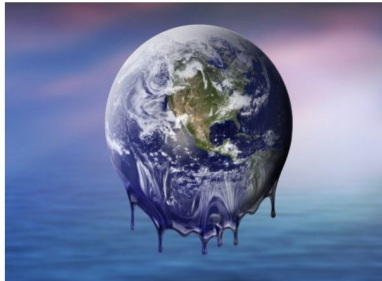
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News Research Topics Conventions Journals Observer Magazine

Observer > 2017 > February > Global Warming and Violent Behavior



Global Warming and Violent Behavior

Courtney Plante and Craig A. Anderson

TAGS: AGGRESSION|BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE|ENVIRONMENT|INTERGROUP RELATIONS|SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS|VIOLENCE

Environmental scientists from multiple disciplines have overwhelmingly acknowledged human-driven climate change as fact. Similarly indisputable is the fact that the effects of rising temperatures will be global in scope and resoundingly negative: droughts, coastal city flooding, decreased food production, and extreme weather, to name just a few. What you may not have considered, however, are some of the subtler psychological and social consequences of rapid climate change — including aggression and violent conflict. A growing body of evidence shows that rapid global warming can (and is) increasing violent behavior in three different ways.

Immediate Effect of Heat Stress on Aggression and Violence

When people get uncomfortably hot, their tempers, irritability, and likelihood of physical aggression and violence increase. This is perhaps best demonstrated in a series of laboratory studies conducted by APS Fellow Craig A. Anderson and his colleagues (Anderson 1989, 2001; Anderson & Anderson 1984, 1996, 1998).

Finding: >45% 16-25 yr. olds across 10 countries (including the US) report that their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning.

Source: “Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey,” [The Lancet](#), 2021

PSB Sustainability Policy

The catalyst for this Task Force was the passage of the PSB Sustainability Policy on 10/27/22. It states that

“The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) values sustainability and is committed to practices that support a healthy environment for present and future generations, and inspire students to be good stewards of the Earth and its people. The District will prioritize conservation of resources, carbon neutrality, and environmental education in concert with fiscal responsibility, health, and safety.” These areas include:

- Education and Engagement
- Energy and High Performance School Buildings:
- Schoolyards
- Food Services
- Waste
- Transportation

Mandate

The mandate of the Task Force is to:

1. Inventory town assets (initiatives, organizations, activities, investments, funded positions) already working in this area, identifying those that PSB can partner with, leverage, or scale to achieve relevant objectives of the Sustainability Policy;
2. Issue recommendations for PSB actions (such as further policies, coordination mechanisms, or investments) to achieve relevant objectives of the Sustainability Policy; and
3. Present these inventories and recommendations to the School Committee and other interested stakeholders for possible action.

Parameters

1. Recommendations should be realistic. If a group recommends an investment, it should identify possible sources of funding.
2. Recommendations should identify potential sources of leverage. Ideally it should link to assets identified in the inventory.
3. Recommendations should be sustainable, unless they aim to be catalytic.

Q&A

