

IMPACT REPORT

Connecting Climate Minds Global Event

19 - 21 March, Barbados and online



About the Global Event

The Connecting Climate Minds Global Event was a moment for connection - across the many diverse perspectives represented in the Connecting Climate Minds community - and for celebration, as a culmination of the initiative's first year of work. The global event convened key members of the community both in person in Barbados, and on an virtual platform. Representatives came to Barbados from the seven Regional Communities of Practice spanning the Sustainable Development Goal regions, the Lived Experience Working Group, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and Imperial College London's Climate Cares Centre.

Over the course of three days, in addition to connecting and celebrating, attention was given to finalising the Global Research and Action Agenda for climate change and mental health, and collectively reflecting on how to share the project outputs and sustain the momentum that has been built for the field.

Dr Emma Lawrance, Lead of Connecting Climate Minds and the Climate Cares Centre, emphasised in her opening speech that “connection” lies at the core of the project by fostering interlinkages across people from different countries and disciplines – including and particularly those living with and responding to the mental health consequences of escalating climate hazards, and with unique resilience capacities.



Dr. Emma Lawrance speaking during the opening ceremony. Credits: Climate Cares Centre



“Being part of the event now –
I’m filled with more optimism!”

“Amazing **opportunity for conversations** around mental health and climate change intersection!”

– *In person participants*

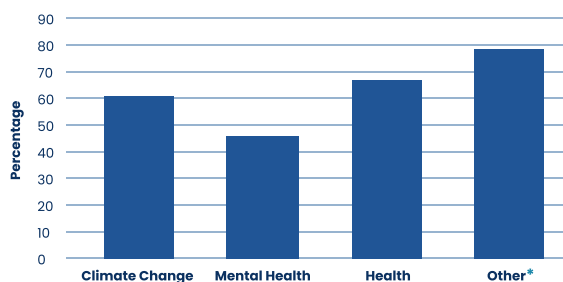
In Person Participation

Visual Representation

In Person Participants:



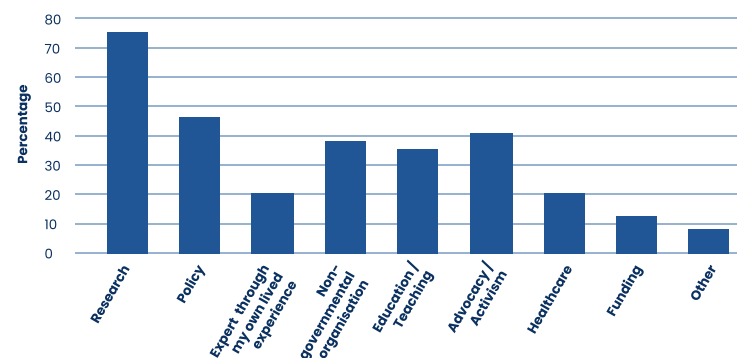
Expertise



*Other' includes expertise such as sustainable development, human rights, data science, psychology, psychiatry, social and behavioural science, neuroscience, media studies.

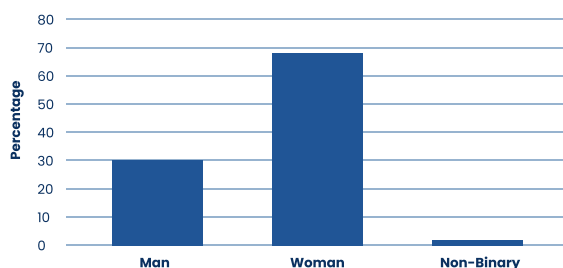
Note: participants could select more than one expertise

Sector

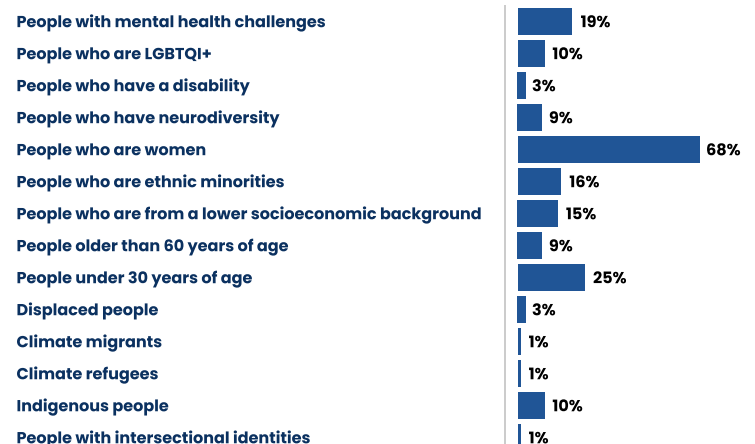


Note: participants could select more than one sector

Gender



Underrepresented/Marginalised Groups



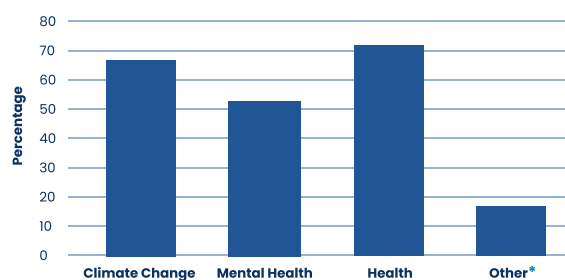
Virtual Participation

Visual Representation

Virtual Participants:



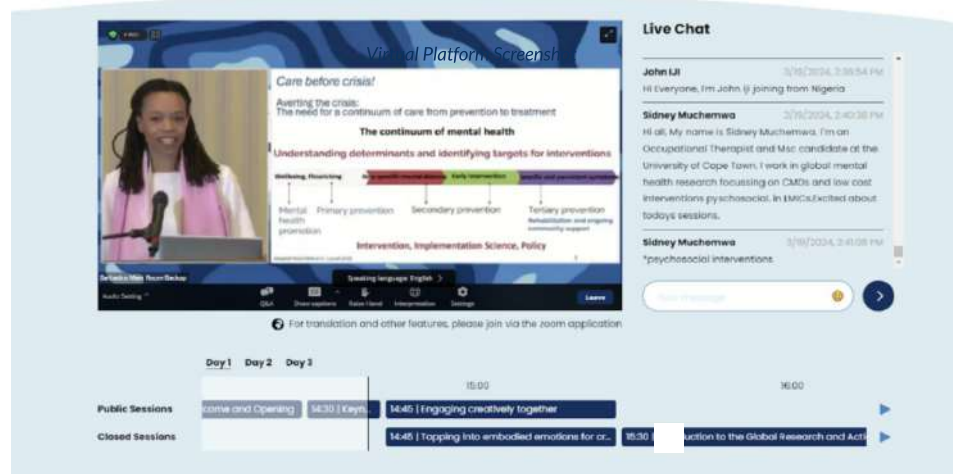
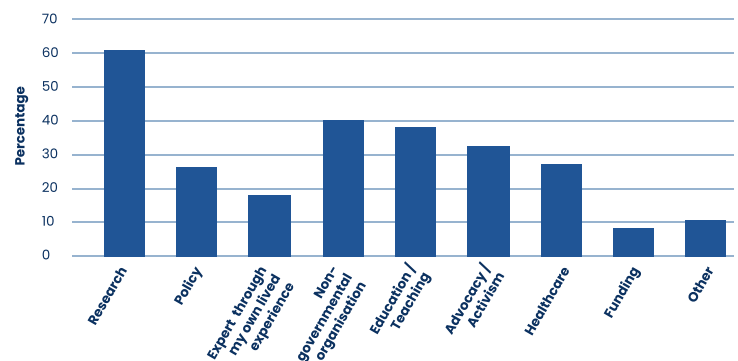
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Note: participants could select more than one expertise and sector

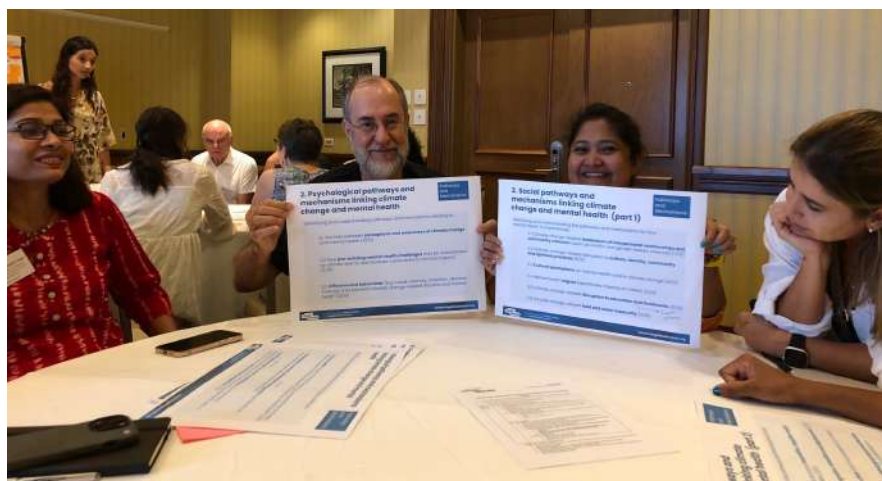
Sector



Virtual platform screenshot

Connection

The global event was not your standard conference; participants enjoyed connecting through an embodiment exercise and connection activities, use of cartoonists, sharing notes from the appreciation box, and a meditation session led by Dr. Kyle Hill and his wonderful flute play.



Participants connecting and discussing the Global Research and Action Agenda. Credit: Climate Cares Centre

“

Feeling very **inspired by the amount of energy and motivation** in the room. Great conference, even greater people!”

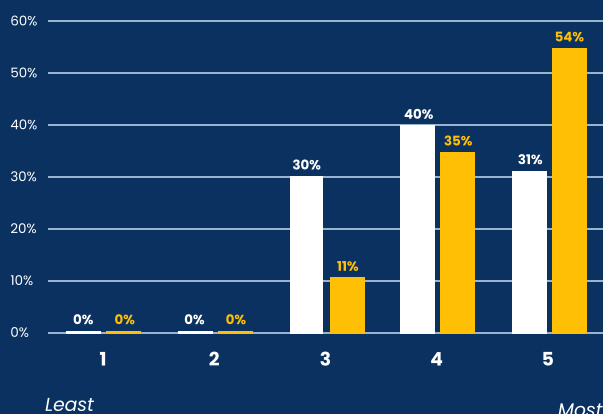
“The **meaningful conversations** that led me to understand a broad perspective and more about each region! I think it was **very necessary to have this in person connection** and foster a global network.”

“The importance of **coming together as a global community** while hearing the local voices.”

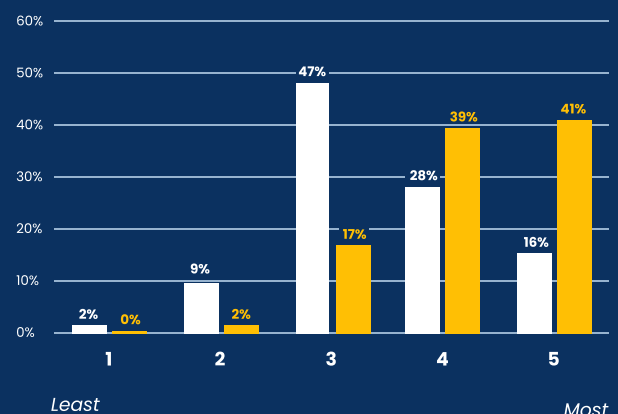
– In person participants



How are you feeling about this project's ability to accelerate valuable research and action on climate change and mental health?



How confident do you feel about the action you can take to tackle climate change related mental health issues?



BEFORE THE EVENT AFTER THE EVENT

Baseline and endline survey of both in-person and online participants.
Before the event: 58 responses. After the event: 46 responses.

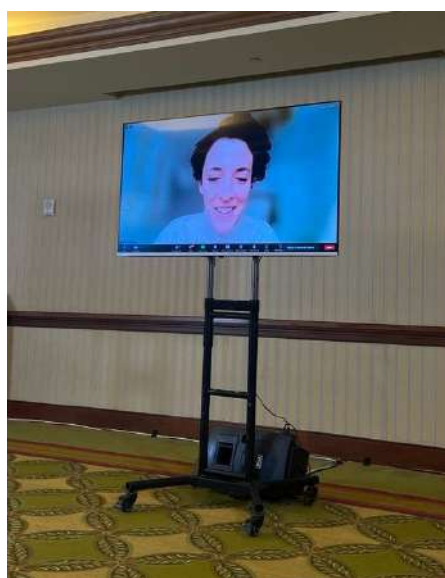
Global Event Highlights

Keynote Speeches

On day 1 of the conference, **Prof Pamela Y. Collins, MD, MPH, Bloomberg Centennial Professor & Chair, Department of Mental Health and Mental Health Chair of the CCM Advisory Board**, guided participants through a reflection on the urgent needs in global mental health, and how her work with Inuit communities highlights how our mental health is deeply interlinked with and dependent on our external context. She reminded us of the global mandate already in place in the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes the “incredibly important call to leave no one behind”. She called the Connecting Climate Minds Global Event an opportunity to move closer to that vision in a rapidly changing climate.



Prof Pamela Y. Collins keynote. Credit: Climate Cares Centre



Dr Marina Romanello addressing the participants virtually. credit: Climate Cares Centre

Dr Marina Romanello, Executive Director of the Lancet Countdown, discussed the immense importance and challenge of monitoring mental health in relation to climate change. While the global Lancet Countdown recognises the impacts of climate change on mental health and the opportunities for mental health in climate action, it has been difficult to generate relevant indicators due to the scarcity of data and lack of clear frameworks for the field. She shared analysis done by the Lancet Countdown showing reductions in online positive sentiment expression during days of extreme heat and extreme precipitation, and emphasised that the physical health consequences of the climate crisis also typically imply a mental health consequence. She emphasised the importance of investing in robust climate change and mental health research that can enable appropriate monitoring of the true costs of the climate crisis for mental health. She stressed the importance of not just knowing what is happening, but more urgently finding a solution to these mental health challenges.

Dr Kyle Hill's, Assistant Professor University of Minnesota Division of Environmental Health Sciences, closing keynote speech delved into the interplay between historic and current structural inequities, colonialism, and the mental health impacts of climate change. In sharing powerful personal experiences as a proud Indigenous man and a scholar, he touched the hearts of all in attendance and left us with much to learn and unlearn. He emphasised the correlation between positive mental health, resilience, and connections to place, environment, spirituality, cultural and traditional activities. He ended with: “The land is us, we are the land.”



Dr Kyle Hill's keynote speech. credit: Holly Campbell-Rosen

Field Trip

At a field trip to Hastings Beach, participants had the opportunity to listen to and learn from Dr Shelly-Ann Cox, Chief Fishery Officer, and Mr Carlos Ginkels from the National Conservation Committee, who spoke about the significant climate change-driven increase in sargassum seaweed. They discussed how the increased build-up of sargassum seaweed prevents local fisher people from getting out on their boats and catching fish, impacting food security. Furthermore, when sargassum seaweed decomposes, it creates a gas which causes respiratory illnesses and in some cases produces hydrogen sulphate. This makes it hard for locals, especially older people and youth, to use the beaches, reducing their access to green space, and may be particularly dangerous for pregnant women. Apart from the people living on the island being affected frequently, it is also affecting tourists which subsequently creates worry amongst those working in the tourism sector.

Dr Cox highlighted: “Every person at every social level is positively and negatively impacted by sargassum seaweed. Scientists say that sargassum seaweed is here to stay, so we need to find ways to live with it and find opportunities.” The Climate Cares Centre is grateful to Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. for their support in organising this field trip which was a great enrichment for participants to learn about the climate-related impacts on the communities living in Barbados. We thank Dr Cox and Mr Ginkels for participating in the panel discussion and sharing their wonderful insights, and Marcel Goyeneche from the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre for moderating the panel.



In-person participants at Hastings Beach listening to the panel. credit: Climate Cares Centre

Marketplace

A bustling marketplace gave Connecting Climate Minds partners an opportunity to showcase their work and culture. It was a great moment of participants connecting and learning from each other's work.



In-person participants mingling at the marketplace. Credit: Climate Cares Centre

Regional Spotlight Sessions

Each Regional Community of Practice showcased their year of collaborative efforts in moving celebrations of their unique cultures, sources of vulnerability and sources of resilience and innovation. The Regional Community Convenors were joined by representatives from their Co-convenors, Lived Experience Advisory Group members and/or Youth Ambassadors. Together, they presented a taster of their Regional Research and Action Agenda. They highlighted several research and action priorities, accompanied by powerful examples of case studies and lived experience stories. Often traditional dress was featured, with musical moments - from Gangnam style, to live Indigenous flute music from North America, to a song from the Sub-Saharan Africa region featuring local dialect from Nigeria and made specifically for Connecting Climate Minds to express the emotions associated with the climate hazards they face.

Northern Africa and Western Asia



Central and Southern Asia



Latin America and the Caribbean



Vashti-Eve Burrow, Lived Experience Advisor Latin America and the Caribbean, shared her story of surviving hurricane Dorian hitting the Bahamas in 2019.

"You may see a mango tree with a lot of blossoms and simply think about the harvest. Past me would make me think about the possibility of another Dorian, but me today I see something different. After Dorian, the mango tree in my neighbour's yard was the only tree left standing, and the following year, it bore the most beautiful blossoms. It reminds me of the resilience of the Bahamian people. That no matter the storm, we will blossom again with renewed strength and vigour"

Hear Vashti-Eve's full story and those from others [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Dr. Mercy Njeru shared a real live example of how she is working with smallholder farmers in Kenya.

"I am dealing with smallholder farmers, and I am creating interventions. Currently what we have done is 1) providing individual and group sessions, 2) creating community volunteers, we call them para therapists, that live with the farmers and who the farmers can go to as a starting point for psychological first aid, and 3) psycho educating more farmers, currently we are reaching 10.000 farmers, and we are hoping we can do more and educate them on mental health issues and provide solutions and signpost them to places where there is help."

Read more about Dr Mercy's case study and other case studies [here](#).



Eastern and South-Eastern Asia



Jasmin Irisha Jim Ilham, Youth Ambassador for Eastern and Southeastern Asia, talked about young people and climate activism.

"So let me address the elephant in the room - while you celebrate the courage of young people who fight the climate crisis, the reality is that we are also burdened with eco-anxiety and an overwhelming feeling of needing to overcome one of the world's biggest threats. Children and young people are the least responsible for causing climate change, and yet here we are, bearing the brunt of its effects. This obligation takes a toll on us mentally and emotionally, especially for those of us living in the Global South. But in the face of it all, I still have hope. And this hope urges me to ask you: How do we build psychological resilience among children and young people, so that they do not suffer from mental health challenges due to direct or indirect experience of climate-related disasters?"

Explore this and other research priorities from the Regional Research and Action Agendas [here](#).

Oceania



Europe and Northern America



Community Spotlight Session

The Lived Experience Working Group reflected on the past year and shared perspectives from the in-person and virtual dialogues run with and for youth, Indigenous Nations and Peoples and small farmer and fisher Peoples. Lead of the group, Lian Zeitz formerly of the Climate Mental Health Network, said the team worked with a heart pace rather than a head pace. They brought lived experiences into the work of CCM that might not have been valued before in previous research efforts. Whilst focussing on decolonising research, advocating for data sovereignty and emphasising the value proposition for communities.



“Humans as
**co-creators instead
of being subjects
of research**”

– Sacha Wright,
Force of Nature

Missed this spotlight session?

See [here](#) to rewatch all public sessions and click [here](#) to learn more about the different community agendas.

Continuing Momentum



All in-person participants and organising team. Credit: Climate Cares Centre

During the closing ceremony participants had the opportunity to share a commitment to action:

- I will prioritise action to drive [the] research agenda on mental health as [a] significant part of climate & health.
- I will start working in my region to include more youth in the matter and take action together.
- I will try my hardest to be consistently inclusive & participatory in all future climate mental health research - challenges and breakdown of power hierarchies.
- I will advocate for CCM + this community in all my networks.
- I will collaborate with people I met here as a result of this meeting.
- I will share resources with this community to accelerate action.

Dr Madeleine Thomson, Head of Climate Impacts and Adaptation at Wellcome shared why this topic was important to Wellcome, and how CCM had been a two way learning process **“This [Connecting Climate Minds] is the first work that Wellcome has ever done connecting two strategic programmes. As we move forward, what is clear is that we are not going to separate the mental health and climate programme. The connection has now been solidified and so there will be further activities in this space. That is important for Wellcome and we hope that other funders are going to move into this space.”**

Prof Sir David Nabarro closed the Global Event by reminding participants of the importance of centering a loving response in the work that we do. He celebrated the strength of the connections that had been built and the immense value for our fractured world. He urged others to join us: **“Think in terms of billions of climate minds and think in terms of millions of people working on this agenda. See what we are doing now as just the seed of something that spreads and spreads, like an extraordinary movement.”**

Acknowledgements

We express our heartfelt appreciation to all participants, both those who attended in person and those who joined online, for their valuable contributions and active involvement. Special thanks go to the diligent efforts of our Event Managers, Katherine DeLand and Lauren Smith, for orchestrating the logistics of the in-person components of the event.

We also extend our gratitude to Storytile, UWI TV, and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre colleagues for their seamless management of the virtual platform. We are grateful to the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc and The University of the West Indies, with a special mention to Ambassador Gillian Bristol, for their invaluable support to our event managers, particularly in coordinating on-the-ground logistics, including the field trip.

Last but certainly not least, we extend our sincere thanks to Wellcome for funding the Global Event.

Connect with all partners involved in Connecting Climate Minds and explore all project outputs on the Global Online Hub.

