

Does Climate Change Affect the Mental Health of Children and Young Adults?

What is Climate Change?

Refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil, and gas) which produces heat-trapping gases.



Wildfires



Air Pollution



Water Pollution



Extreme Heat



Storms & Floods



Droughts

The Impact of Climate Change:

Climate change not only contributes to the loss of species, food, and livelihood, but plays a role in the displacement, poverty rates, and degradation of individuals' physical health.

The impact of climate change is not limited to physical health. It has also been shown that it can affect mental health too.

In fact, a rise in terms such as eco-grief, climate Anxiety, and climate grief have been developed in an attempt to “describe the sense of loss or the anxiety people feel related to climate change, including the loss of a stable future.”

What These Affects Can Look Like:

Substance Abuse

Suicide

Depression

PTSD

Anxiety

“As early as 2009, the American Psychological Association (APA) noted that substance-use disorders could be a by-product of increasing rates of mental-health disorders arising in the context of climate change.”

“The economic impacts of droughts lead to increases in suicide, particularly among farmers. Further, authors of a 2018 study in the journal Nature predicted warmer temperatures could lead to as many as 40,000 additional suicides in the United States and Mexico by 2050.”

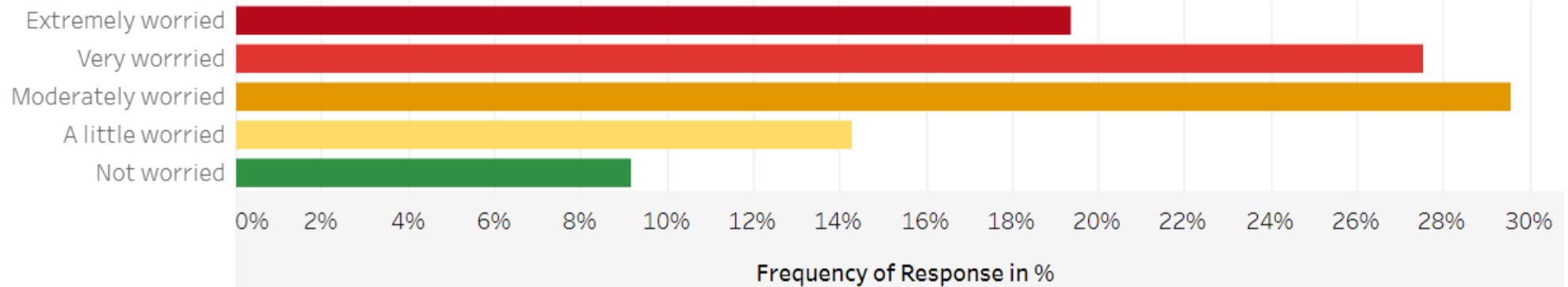
Survivors of the 2018 Camp Fire, one of the deadliest and most destructive wildfires in California history, had rates of PTSD on par with war veterans, and they were at increased risk for depression and anxiety, according to a 2021 study from the University of California–San Diego. Survivors of hurricanes and floods suffer similar rates of depression and PTSD.

Climate Change Affects on the Mental Health of U.S. Children and Young People:

A survey conducted in 2021 collected data from 10,000 children and young people from across several countries in different languages via Kantar, this study examines the relationship between the climate crisis and mental health. Eligible study participants ranged from ages 16-25 and from 10 of the selected countries (Australia, Brazil, Finland, France, India, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, the UK, and the USA).

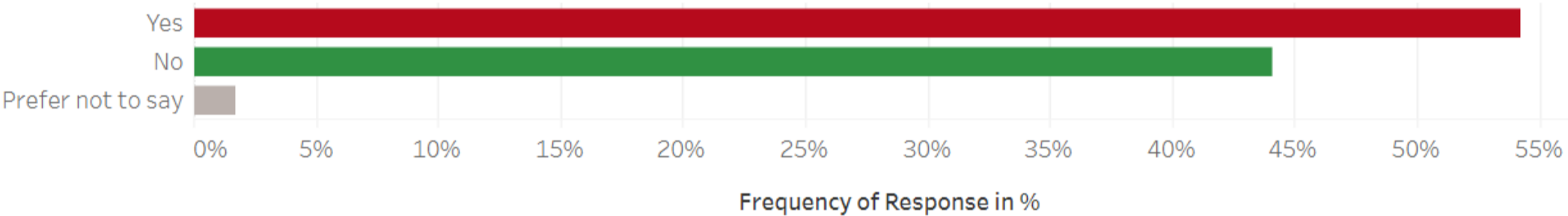
Q1) I am worried that climate change threatens people and the planet.

I am worried that c..

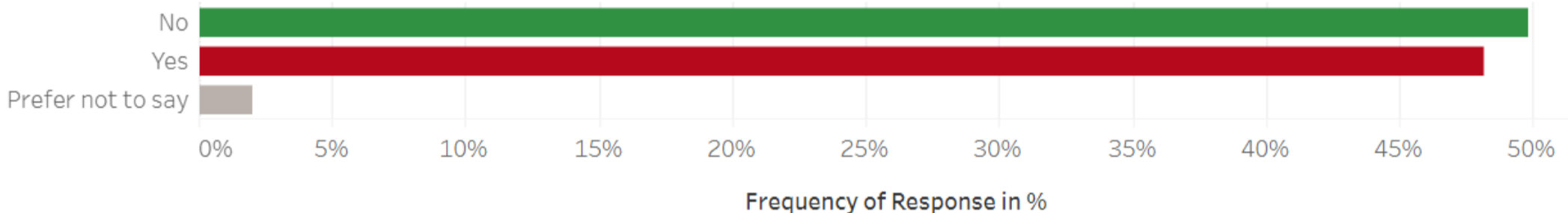


Q2) Does climate change make you feel any of the following?

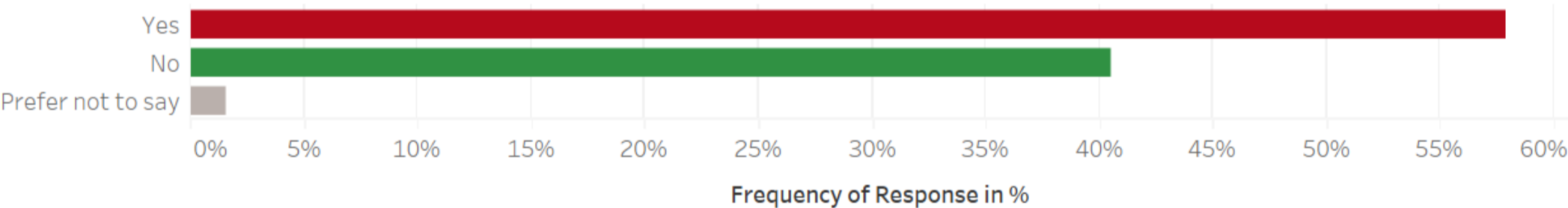
Afraid



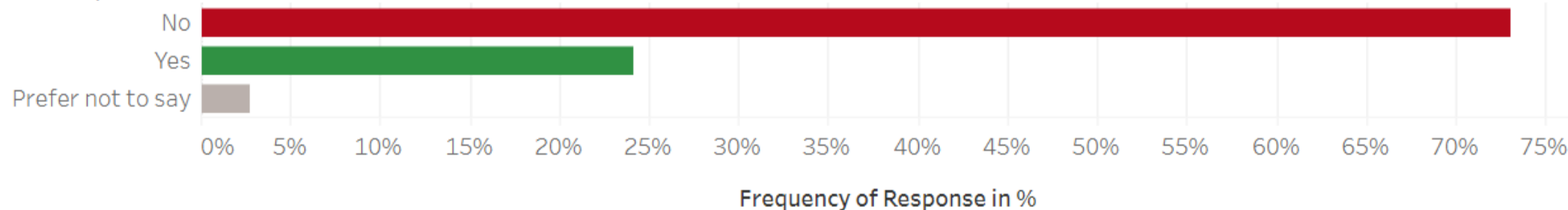
Powerless



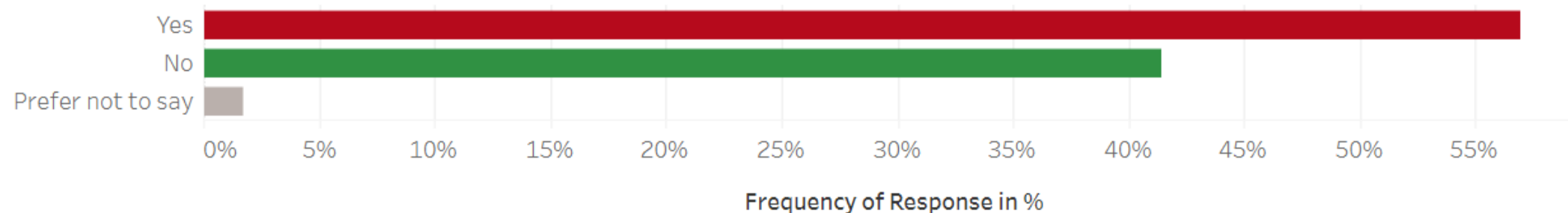
Anxious



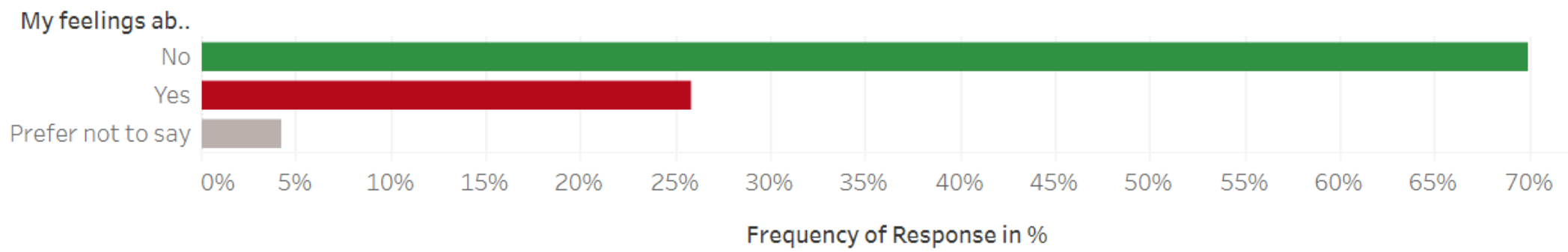
Optimistic



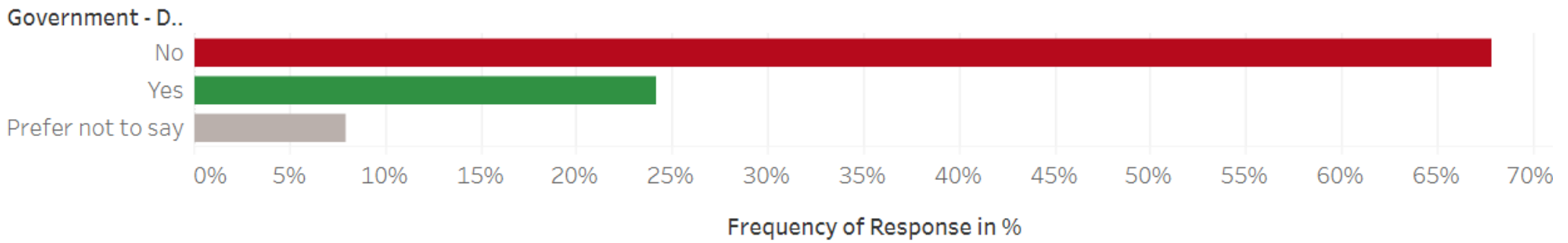
Sad



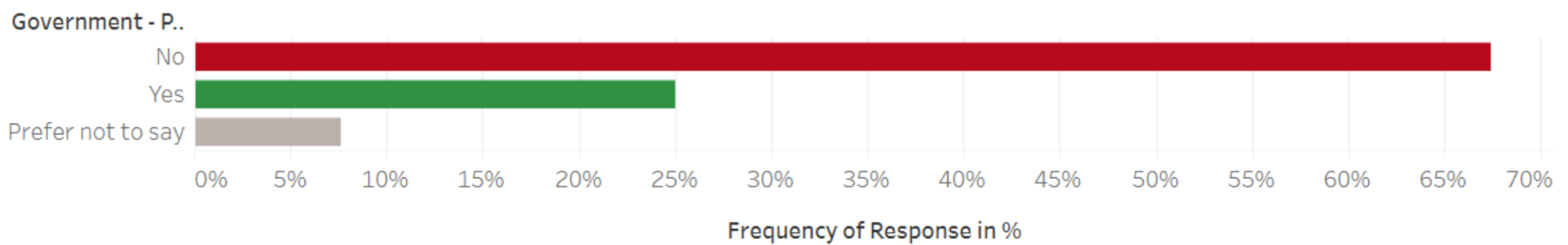
Q3) My feelings about climate change negatively affect my daily life (at least one of the following: Eating, concentrating, work, school, sleeping, spending time in nature, playing, having fun, relationships).



Q7) . In relation to climate change I believe that my government is / other governments are... Doing enough to avoid a climate catastrophe.



Q7) . In relation to climate change I believe that my government is / other governments are... Protecting me, the planet and/or future generations.



Resilience Strategies & Solutions

“Curating the bad stuff into a display of hopeless futures is just as useless when it comes to engaging people with the planet as it is with affairs of the heart. Badgering someone you love to change will not fix things. Nor can we save the world by continuing to focus on what people are doing wrong.”
(pg.9) - Elin Kelsey

Solutions are not final, perfect end points. They're ongoing processes that require monitoring and adjustment to achieve meaningful results. Solutions are directions that require constant vigilance. But the need for vigilance shouldn't prevent us from forward action. A solutions orientation to the climate crisis requires us to welcome the inevitability of making mistakes because we know that going down the wrong path on occasion is an essential part of any new creative, collaborative venture.
(pg.111) - Elin Kelsey

