

Britons growing more anxious, fueling downturn: study

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Britons are becoming more anxious due to worries ranging from terrorism to bird flu -- and the general air of anxiety is adding to the economic crisis, a study said Tuesday.

More than three quarters of people -- 77 percent -- said they thought the world was a more frightening place than 10 years ago, while over seven million Britons had [anxiety](#) problems, said the report by Mental Health Foundation.

Reasons for increased fear include terrorist threats, health scares, warnings by pressure groups, politicians' use of 'worst case scenarios' and even 24-hour rolling news, constantly highlighting dangers and risks.

Measures aimed at tackling crime and terrorism -- such as a rise in the use of CCTV security cameras -- were failing to quell fears and could be adding to them, said the report.

"This report suggests that we are becoming more fearful as a nation... people perceive our world as having become more frightening and frightened," said the authors of the report, *In the Face of Fear*.

The global economic crisis was also generating anxiety: 49 percent of people said they were worried about money, and 66 percent were fearful about the current financial situation in general.

"We have experienced an unprecedented number of enquiries since the

beginning of the year from people seeking help, largely due to the economic crisis," said Nicky Lidbetter, chief executive of Anxiety UK.

But the reverse was also true: general anxiety was partly driving the economic crisis because emotion overrode logical thinking, warned the Mental Health Foundation, a charity aimed at helping reduce mental illnesses.

"Individuals and institutions -- keen to protect themselves -- are now too afraid to lend, spend and invest, despite the fact that these actions could assist in ending the [recession](#)," said the report.

"Rising levels of fear in the UK are contributing to the current [economic crisis](#) and hindering efforts to escape it," it added.

Anxiety could also lead to physical health problems, including heart disease, gastrointestinal troubles, asthma and allergies, while people with anxiety problems were four times as likely to have high blood pressure.

Unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking, drinking too much and poor diet, were also linked to anxiety.

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