

## The Plus 94 Research Panel Poll Series

### Great Expectations for 2012

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#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess New Year optimism going into 2012. Plus 94 conducted this research study against a backdrop of positive economic data from Stellenbosch Bureau for Economic Research that revised South Africa's gross domestic product growth forecast from 3.4% to 3.8%. The reason for the upward revision is due in part to consumer spending that was higher than expected. The survey sample was drawn from a dedicated Plus 94 Research panel. The survey was conducted by means of email invitations and completion of the questionnaires online by panel members. The final sample was 292 respondents.

Albert Bandura in his work on Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory stated that "individuals possess a self-system that enables them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This self-system houses one's cognitive and affective structures and includes the abilities to symbolize, learn from others, plan alternative strategies, regulate one's own behavior, and engage in self-reflection. It also plays a prominent role in providing reference mechanisms and a set of sub functions for perceiving, regulating, and evaluating behavior, which results from the interplay between the self-system and external environmental sources of influence." With this in mind, it was important to establish what South Africans had in mind prior to the dawn of 2012. The study was conducted in December 2011 and a small portion of it in the first week of 2012.

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## The Year that was

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction levels with how 2011 had gone for them. Significantly, 56% of them were satisfied with their fortunes last year. Females (59%) were more satisfied with 2011 than males (52%). Some one in four were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with 2011, while a further 20% was by their own admission disappointed with the year. Looked at retrospectively, the most important priorities were family and work, or business. Results show that work and business had improved the most in 2011 (46%). Other critical areas that experienced an improvement were social life (37%), relationships (38%), family (36%), income (34%) and education (24%). Some 14% of the sample said that nothing had improved.

## 2012 The Year Ahead and what respondents Hoped for

A total of 98% of the sample were optimistic regarding their prospects in 2012. This was in spite of the Mayan calendar's association with the prediction that 2012 was going to mark the end of the world. Instead, 83% did not believe this doomsday prediction, with 14% being uncertain of it. There was still a 3% of the sample that agreed with the prediction that the world would end in 2012.

Broadly, expectations held going into 2012 could be summed in the form of a wish list of things that needed to happen in order for the anticipated happiness to be attained. Key components of the 2012 wish list were improvements in:

1. Income and finances (77%);
  2. Work and business (75%);
  3. Education (61% );
  4. Relationships and marriage (51%);
  5. Family (47%) and ;
  6. Social life and friendship (35%).
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Priorities for 2012 were a balanced bouquet of financial, self-improvement and social interaction targets. Be that as it may, it is clear that the financial side of the respondents was the most important, resulting in the prioritization of either work or business, with education perhaps being a long term mechanism for improving income prospects. It is noteworthy that the emotional side of the human being was illustrated by the need to dedicate some significant time to relationships, family, friends and marriage.

## Conclusion

Panel members were largely satisfied with 2011 and looked forward to 2012 being a much better year. This would particularly apply to the 45% that saw 2011 either indifferently or generally as a bad year. While family life and relationships were discernibly more important in 2011, the main emphasis for 2012 was going to be on finances, work, business and education, with relationships receding to a somewhat support role to the respondents' commercial and self-improvement appetites. The study showed that South Africans are a positive group of people. Despite 45% of them not being entirely satisfied with 2011, optimism levels for 2012 were as high as 98%. Even the doomsday prophecy was not enough to dampen such optimism, and was in fact dismissed as a myth. Given Albert Bandurain's theory on the impact of perceptions on outcomes, 2012 does promise to be a satisfactory year.

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