

Gallup International End of Year Poll

Many countries in the world, but notably none in Western Europe, are optimistic that the coming year will be better than 2004 according to a new survey released today by Gallup International. The survey was conducted in November and December in more than 65 countries and comprising interviews with 60,000 citizens across the world.

The most optimistic countries from last year (Hong Kong, UN administered Kosovo and Georgia) are again found in the list of the most optimistic countries; indeed, UN administered Kosovo has been amongst the most optimistic countries for the last 4 years, demonstrating that peacekeeping brings both stability and optimism.

Prospects in Asia Pacific are generally considered better, particularly in the Chinese cities of Beijing and Hong Kong where seven out of ten citizens (70%) think 2005 will be a better year than 2004 but this is also true in Vietnam (72%), which, along with Tunisia, is the most optimistic country in the world.

Citizens of the US are also upbeat about prospects for 2005 –two thirds (65%) feel that the coming year will be a better one than 2004 and a third (31%) are optimistic that 2005 will be a year of economic prosperity, although they are not so positive about prospects for international peace in 2005 which is understandable, given the current situation in Iraq.

Top Optimists 2005 will be better than 2004	
Tunisia/Vietnam	72%
Georgia	71%
Beijing/Hong Kong/Kuwait	70%
UN Kosovo	67%
Panama	66%
USA	65%
Australia	61%
Argentina/New Zealand	60%

Again similar to last year's results, no West European countries are included amongst the most optimistic countries, perhaps reflecting the political strains within Europe that marked 2004 but also indicating the lack of improvement in economic circumstances many countries feel will prevail in the coming year.

Conversely, two Members of the EU are found in the list of most pessimistic countries – Greece where just under half (48%) believe 2005 will be worse and Netherlands, where the figure is 4 out of 10 (41%). It is not surprising that the Philippines is the most pessimistic country included in the survey – interviewing was conducted throughout the time of the recent weather events which caused devastation and deaths in the country.

Perhaps of more surprise is the inclusion of South Korea amongst the most pessimistic about prospects for 2005 as this view is not shared by other countries in the Asia Pacific region. 45% of South Koreans felt that 2005 would be a worse year than 2004 but this is due to fears about the economy – where more than six out of ten (62%) 2005 would be a year of economic difficulty and seven out of ten (70%) foresee unemployment rising.

Top 5 Pessimists 2005 will be worse than 2004	
Philippines	52%
Greece	48%
Korea	45%
Serbia	43%
Netherlands	41%

The threat of unemployment continues to hang over most West Europeans, many of whom see their own jobs as less safe than last year and industrial unrest and unemployment generally set to rise in 2005. But there are some exceptions in West Europe: Scandinavians, particularly are optimistic - more than half of all Danes (52%), half the Norwegians (49%) and 4 in 10 Finns (40%) interviewed felt 2005 would be a better year and were also less pessimistic about economic prosperity and employment prospects. Interestingly, more than one in three in the UK (36%) also feel 2005 will be better than 2004 although a quarter of those interviewed (26%) thought 2005 would be a year of economic difficulties. In Germany, economic prospects continue to be gloomy with just under half (48%) feeling 2005 will be a year of economic difficulty and two thirds (68%) fearing unemployment will increase.

Elsewhere, many Latin American and African countries are more upbeat about economic prospects than last year, whilst prospects in Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific are more divided with some countries feeling 2005 will bring economic prosperity whilst others fear difficulties.

Many countries in all regions are pessimistic about prospects for international peace in the coming year, with few believing that 2005 will be a peaceful year, more or less free of international dispute and the majority thinking the year will be a troubled one internationally. This is particularly strongly felt in Western Europe where more than half of those interviewed in Netherlands (58%), UK (57%), Spain (55%) and Switzerland (54%) thought 2005 would be a troubled year with much international discord – the highest in the world, as only two countries outside this region (Guatemala 52% and Paraguay 56%) attain similar proportions.

In the USA, 44% feel it will be a troubled year internationally but almost half (48%) think things will remain the same and 6% are optimistic that 2005 will be free if international disputes.

(Ends)

Editors note:

The Gallup International Association, registered in Zurich was established in 1947 by George H Gallup and his European colleagues. It has member agencies in 60 countries across the world, conducting opinion and market research in more than 100 countries.

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For further information on the 2004 results or individual countries, please see website www.gallup-international.com