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## Individual Approaches to Futures Thinking and Decision Making

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of a second international web-based survey designed to gather data about how individuals approach thinking about their futures and making decisions regarding their futures. Five hundred and five respondents from 38 countries participated in the survey. Similar to the first survey, the sample has gender, age and religious diversity but is not representative with respect to education, income and race/ethnicity. The results suggest that the external environment provides a great deal of stimuli for people to think about the future (e.g., special occasions like New Years day, birthdays, and funerals). Individuals tend to think about the future more in the morning, and just before bed. Overall, most respondents experience happiness, confidence, and lightness when thinking about the future. Respondents employ many different approaches to thinking about the future, such as relying on personal past experiences, imagining future situations, and relying on their personal intuitions. Most respondents do not pattern their futures decision making on decisions made by others or on tradition. Most respondents believe that their thinking about the future is very worthwhile; most develop plans and take decisive action as a result of their efforts. About three quarters of the respondents report that they are able to predict their personal futures at least one-half of the time. Most respondents face few barriers to thinking about the future, although many reported it would be nice to have more energy, be able to concentrate better, and be able to better organize their thoughts. Females report that thinking about the future is a more emotional experience than it is for males. Males, on the other hand, have more confidence in their futures-oriented decision making abilities. Age plays a big part in how individuals relate to and think about the future. Younger respondents think more about the future more times during the day and find thinking about the future more fearful and anxious. They also pattern their decisions more on those made by others and older individuals. Older respondents tend to rely a great deal upon their lifetime of experiences and worry less about the future. Middle-aged respondents report worrying more about financial and career issues and report that thinking about the future can be emotionally draining.

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