

Food, fuel and power cuts keep SA middle class awake at night

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While it's been a year free from pandemic disruption, 2022 hasn't really delivered any relief from worries and stresses, but is there any light at the end of the tunnel? The global economic downturn, war in Europe and climate disasters have weighed down on the idea that there could be a post-Covid upswing. High inflation, food and fuel costs have maintained a month-by-month pressure to just get by, never mind recover losses from the lockdown years.

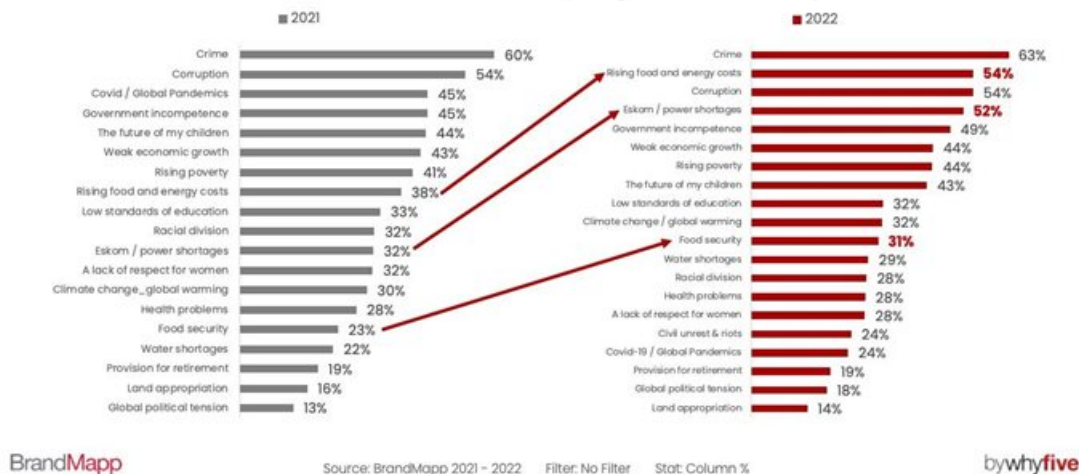


According to the last [Annual Mental State of the World Report](#), South Africa has one of the lowest mental health scores in the world, and SADAG, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group estimates that one in six South Africans suffer from mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse. Mental well-being is a critical factor impacting on our motivation and drive, as well as our capacities for adaptation and resilience.

BrandMapp, the annual survey of more than 33,000 South Africans living in households with a R10,000+ monthly income, has revealed its 2022 insights into what is keeping the country's tax-payer base tossing and turning at night. Brandon De Kock, BrandMapp's director of Storytelling says, "Despite new and different challenges arising each year, more mid to top income South Africans worry about crime than anything else, and this has not changed over the years. Even though the last time we measured it, only 8% of respondents had experienced a non-violent crime and just 7% were victims of violent crime, this year we're measuring 63% of people saying that worrying about crime keeps them awake at night. It has always been at the top of the list."

No new worries, just far bigger ones!

We remain a traumatized society BUT **we've got a few new things** keeping us awake – and rising costs is now more worrying than corruption!



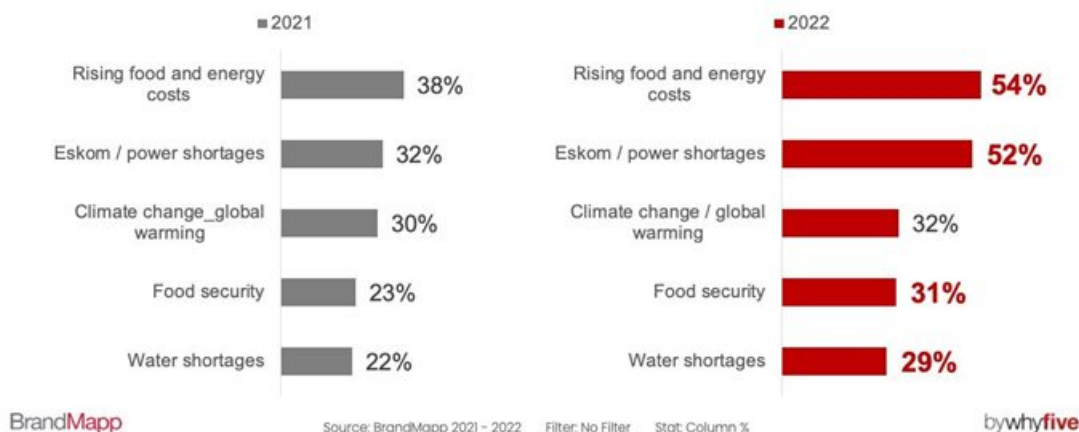
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While the perception of being under serious threat due to crime persists, in 2022 there were several shifts in what causes us to count sheep instead of sleeping well. Rising costs of food and fuel leaped up the rankings, overtaking our anxieties about corruption and there's also been a 20% spike in people worrying about Eskom's power shortages. Despite having more resources to cushion the blow of the soaring inflation the country has experienced in 2022, mid-to top-income South Africans are worried about the basics of life.

De Kock says, "What BrandMapp 2022 is showing us is that the mental stressors of mid- to top-income South Africans have intensified, with several worries moving up into top positions, while no other worries have abated. So, we are definitely more stressed out than we were during the pandemic years. Worrying about rising costs has dramatically escalated from 38 to 54%, which is totally understandable, but what's it seems like 2022 is the year when we finally all got fed up with the lights going out. With power failures now registering as a serious concern for 52% of the middle class, it suggests we've reached a breaking point with Eskom. And significantly more people are worrying about the general availability of food and water in the country."

Anxieties about water shortages on the rise

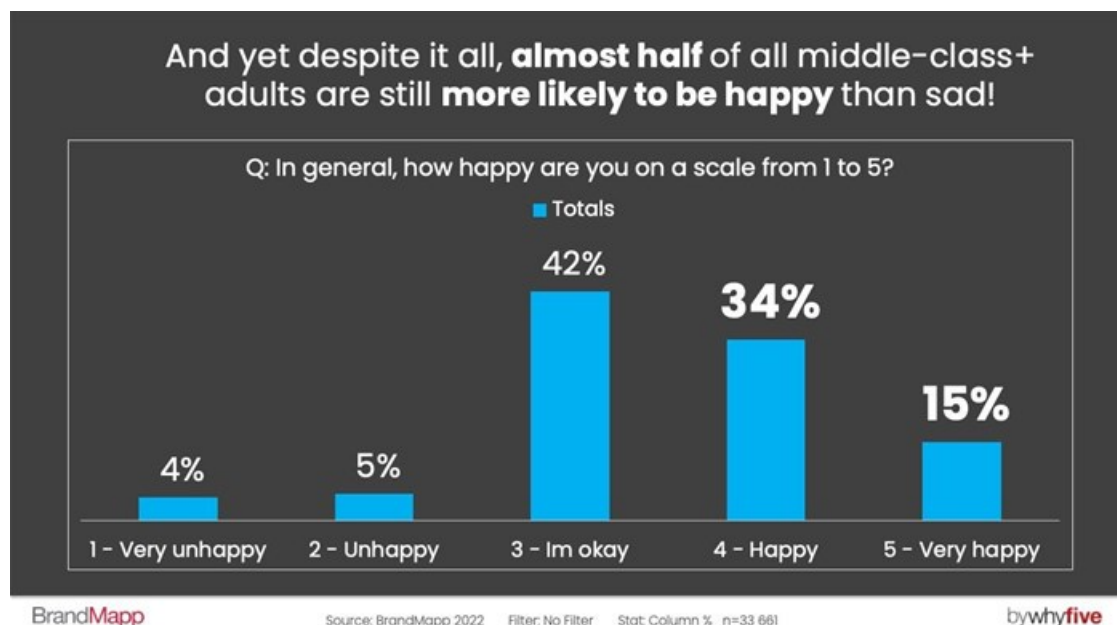
A closer look: these are significant shifts, BUT why aren't we a lot more worried about **the planet** we all rely on for survival?



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De Kock says, “It’s interesting to note that despite dramatic climate events across the globe, and severe climate stresses in the country, from droughts to floods, only 32% of mid- to top-income South Africans say that they are concerned about climate change, the greatest existential threat of our times. What we have seen in 2022, is an increased worry about water shortages particularly amongst people living in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, who have had real-life experiences due to flooding and drought, respectively. Even though these local events have been clearly linked to climate change, this hasn’t translated into a similar increase in concern for the global context.”

I’m okay, you’re okay



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South Africa is nothing if not a resilient nation, and BrandMapp 2022 reveals a sunny outlook despite the intensification of our worries. Forty-two percent (42%) of the middle class say that they’re okay, and 49% say that they are happy or very happy. Only 9% acknowledge that they are unhappy or very unhappy.

When it comes to personal well-being, almost 75% are taking action to protect their mental and emotional state. Spa treatments, massage, meditation, and herbal remedies are amongst the popular ways to relax and relieve stress. De Kock, says, “I wonder if that 1% who are micro-dosing on magic mushrooms may know something the rest of us don’t!” He may not be entirely joking. BrandMapp 2022 also confirms that 75% of mid-to-top income South Africans consume alcohol, a tried and tested way to forget your worries in the short-term, but a less successful strategy when it comes to sustainable well-being and improved mental health outcomes.

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BrandMapp is a unique South African dataset that uses a mega-sample of more than 30 000 respondents to profile the 12 million adults who live in mid to top-income households earning in excess of R10 000 per month. Now in its eighth year, the BrandMapp survey is a bespoke, independent survey that powers the WhyFive consumer insights consultancy.

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