

Female Factor survey hopes to pioneer legislative changes

Building on the *Elle* France and *Elle* Italy surveys, *Elle* in South Africa will release a special edition of its magazine that reveals interesting insights of women in South Africa.



This is a culmination of an 18-month journey into the hearts and minds of over 2 500 independent women, who contributed through the online and print survey and hundreds more who told their stories at editors' breakfasts and round-table discussions in three cities across the country.

The aim, according to *Elle* features editor, Annelize Visser, "was to learn as much as we could about South African women and to help bring about change that would make us all happier, safer, surer, stronger."

In addition to a quantifiable statistical study, *Elle* employed storytelling and debate stimulated by relevant editorial in specific subjects in the magazine to engage South African women in a conversation about issues influencing their lives - from female sexuality and perceptions about appearance to equal opportunities in the workplace and beyond.

French legislative changes prove power of survey

In 1970, *Elle* France launched the Current State of Women survey that culminated in 13 proposals to government and a historical gathering at Versailles. Historic laws followed. By 2010 when *Elle* France revived the survey to establish how far women had advanced, the magazine's influence had reportedly grown to reach 4.5 million readers via 42 international editions, including the South African edition.

In the spirit of the magazine's guiding principle, 'style with substance', *Elle* South Africa has now spearheaded a survey that echoes both the landmarks of the past and similar recent surveys conducted by *Elle* France and *Elle* Italy.

The ultimate goal of Female Factor is to pioneer legislative changes in areas identified by South African women. Having created a national dialogue about the issues faced by women, the project will conclude in the presentation of the Female

Factor Report to the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

"South African women have a legacy of activism and we've seen the re-emergence of strong women in the socio-political sphere and the reigniting of civil society with the recently held local government elections," said Jackie Burger, editor of *Elle SA*.

South African content marks Woman's Day

With content that extends from a modern definition of sisterhood, issues of gender inequality, being a working mother, sexual health and freedom, surviving crime, life as an HIV-positive woman in South Africa and the question of true beauty, the Female Factor survey results are informative, and at times controversial.

With resonating stats such as that 35% of respondents said sexual freedom meant having diverse sexual experiences, while 27% said it meant deciding to have a baby when the time was right - this is the truth about what women in South Africa think and feel, which modern women can't afford to miss.

On 9 August, as the country once again celebrates Women's Day and in honour of women across the country, the special issue will offer insights into the survey data and provide a comprehensive look at what still needs to change to improve the quality of life of women in our country.

It grapples with some uneasy topics that are relevant to women on all levels of society and, by embracing 'style with substance' through their support for the Female Factor, participants have undoubtedly helped write the next chapter in the history of South African women.

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