

# Americans want to

## Poll finds ownership remains part of dream

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Homeownership is still an essential part of the American Dream, particularly in the South.

Fifty-six percent of the Southern residents who responded to a TD Bank Home Buyer Poll expressed that sentiment, while 63 percent in this region said they plan on owning a home

in the near future.

The bank surveyed more than 1,300 consumers across the U.S. in an attempt "to better understand the perceptions and attitudes surrounding homeownership, specifically examining the attitudes of current renters and prospective homeowners, as well as past and present homeowners."

The results overall reveal that "aspirations of homeownership" are still very much alive

in the U.S," the bank said.

"There's no denying buying a home is a pivotal point in a person's life. Our survey tells us that people are looking to buy homes, and attitudes towards homeownership have continued to remain positive over the years," said Michael Copley, executive vice president, retail lending, TD Bank.

Greenville's Alesha Miller

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# own homes



## HOMES

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and Maria Gonzalez-Arevalo, both 31, weren't among those surveyed, but their attitudes toward homeownership are similar to the responses given to the bank. Both are single mothers preparing to become homeowners.

TD's poll found that 59 percent of the people from the South that do not currently own a home feel that family and children are essential in defining the American Dream to-

day; 58 percent say a stable career is vital and 55 percent say owning a home is essential.

"I think it's a dream for everyone to buy a house. It's a big step," said Arevalo, mother of three children ages seven, eight, and 12. "It's important for your esteem and your children. It's like you're finally getting a life."

Miller said, "No matter what your income level is, whether you have kids or you don't have kids everybody has to have a home to live in. A home is something that everybody wants and needs."

TD Bank's poll comes on the heels of a reported 3.4 percent increase in nationwide

home sales and a 9.9 percent rise in sales of new single-family homes.

Twenty-seven percent of the homeowners in TD Bank's poll said finding a good opportunity is what prompted them to consider buying their first home.

According to Freddie Mac, the national average commitment rate for a 30-year, conventional, fixed-rate mortgage dropped to 3.91 percent in April from 3.95 percent in March. The rate was 4.84 percent in April 2011.

Jim Gillespie, chief executive officer of Coldwell Banker Real Estate, said housing has been in the eye of the economic storm. But, he said, a study the company conducted with psychotherapist Robi Ludwig "underscores that Americans remain bullish on homeownership and have not forgotten the inherent, emotional reasons that make our homes precious to us - in tough times or not."

Homeownership is even more important in this economy, says Miller. So many people are losing their homes that when you do have the option of having one "you feel that much more successful," she said.

Miller is pursuing the purchase of the home her grandfather built for its sentimental value, but wants to have a home of her own for her children, ages two and four.

There was a time when Miller didn't see homeownership as an option for herself. Her income was about \$200 a month and she was working a part-time job.

She said agencies such as the Greenville Housing Fund and the Greenville Human Relations Commission changed her mindset.

"They sent me to people who could help me find a job and helped me rebuild my credit," she said. "They've always been positive and even the days when I thought well, 'OK. This is just out of my reach,' they pushed me to believe I could."

Arevalo says one day the thought came to her mind that if she can pay "plenty of rent" then "why not pay for my own house?"

"It's important because it's like my future and the the future of my children and my stability," she said. "It's a big step."