

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Key Findings

Just over half of respondents (52%) say Afghanistan is moving in the right direction, up from 46% in 2011. It is important to note, however, that as in other years some of the originally identified survey sampling points had to be replaced in 2012 for security reasons, thus respondents living in highly insecure areas (who might be more pessimistic about the overall direction of the country) are likely to be underrepresented.

The most commonly cited reasons for optimism are good security (41%) and reconstruction/rebuilding (35%), followed by the opening of schools for girls (14%), improvement in the education system (13%), and having an active Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) (13%). Insecurity (39%) is the most commonly cited reason for pessimism. Security thus remains the most significant factor in shaping Afghans' assessment of progress in the country.

People surveyed identify insecurity (including attacks, violence, and terrorism) (28%), unemployment (27%) and corruption (25%) as the three biggest problems facing Afghanistan as a whole. Insecurity is more frequently cited in the West (37%), Central/Hazarajat (36%) and the South East (35%) than in other regions. Numerous respondents in the Central/Kabul (40%), Central/Hazarajat (33%), North West (31%) and North East (30%) regions identify unemployment as the biggest problem, and in Central/Kabul, the North West and North East, it was cited more frequently than any other problem.

Unemployment is also identified as one of the biggest problems at the local level, cited by 29% of respondents. Other critical local-level problems include lack of electricity (25%), roads (20%) and drinking water (18%).

Nearly half (48%) of those surveyed report fearing for their personal safety or for that of their families, with 15% reporting that they are often fearful and 33% reporting that they are sometimes fearful. However, the overall proportion of people with fears about safety dropped eight percentage points this year, from 56% in 2011. The percentage of Afghans surveyed who rarely or never fear for their personal/family safety has also increased in nearly all regions, with the highest level in Central/Hazarajat (84%). The exception is the West, where it dropped from 38% in 2011 to 34% in 2012.

There has been a drop in the proportion of respondents who have experienced violence or crime in the past year (from 22% in 2011 to 16% in 2012), with decreases in all regions except Central/Kabul and the South West. Significant declines were seen in the North East (from 23% to 11%), East (26% to 18%), West (24% to 16%), North West (15% to 9%) and Central/Hazarajat (7% to 1%). People in rural (18%) areas were more likely than people in urban (10%) areas to have experienced violence or crime this year.

The most common form of crime experienced by Afghans surveyed is physical attacks/beatings (29%). Nine percent reported being a victim of a suicide attack, a figure which is at its highest since 2007, representing a notable increase. Among those who experienced violence or crime, more men (55%) than women (48%) said they reported it to the authorities. Relatively more people in rural areas say they report crime or violence (54%) than do their urban (41%) counterparts.

More than half of respondents say they have no fear participating in resolving problems in their community (57%) and encountering an ANA (55%) or ANP (51%) officer. However, 54% report having some level of fear to vote in a national election, and 69% have some level of fear participating in a peaceful demonstration, including 28% who say they would have a lot of fear. Nearly one quarter (23%) said they would have a lot of fear to run for public office.

Survey findings show that Afghans' support for peace and reconciliation remain very high in 2012, as it has been in previous years. A large majority of respondents (81%) agree with the government's national reconciliation and negotiation efforts, with 38% strongly in favor. Although majority within all ethnic groups are in favor of the government's reconciliation efforts and negotiation with the armed opposition, a relatively higher number of Pashtuns (85%) and Uzbeks (84%) are supportive of this endeavor. Support is relatively higher in the East (91%), North East (86%) and South West (84%).

A majority of respondents say they have no sympathy at all (63%) with armed opposition groups in Afghanistan, while 10% say they have a lot of sympathy and 20% say they have some level of sympathy. Over time, there has been a decline in the number of people who sympathize (either a lot or little) with these armed opposition groups that use violence. While the 2012 figures are fairly similar to 2011, there has been a noticeable decline from 2011 to 2012 in the proportion of Afghans with no sympathy for armed opposition groups in a few regions, including Central/Kabul (74% to 70%), the West (60% to 56%) and the South West (61% to 55%). Among those who express a high level of sympathy toward the armed opposition groups, 34% say it is because these groups are Afghans, while a similar proportion (33%) says it is because they are Muslims.

Over half of respondents (53%) reported that their families are more prosperous today than they were during the Taliban era. Fewer than one third (31%) say they are less prosperous. A higher proportion of urban residents (66%) than rural residents (49%) report that their families are more prosperous today, and more rural residents (34%) than urban residents (22%) say that they are less prosperous.

Half of all respondents (50%) say their household financial wellbeing has improved during the past year, and half (51%) say that access to schools has improved. When asked about their household health and quality of their diet, roughly equal percentages say they have improved (42% and 41%, respectively) or stayed the same (46% for each). More than half of respondents (51%) say the availability of products in the market and the condition of their house/dwelling has stayed the same, and 14% say it is worse. Sizeable numbers of Afghans report that their electricity supply (32%) and employment opportunities (28%) have gotten worse over the past year.

More than two thirds (70%) of respondents say the employment situation in their local area is quite bad or very bad, suggesting that the government's efforts to improve job availability have not yet borne fruit. Sixty-two percent are dissatisfied with the supply of electricity in their local area. At the same time, more than three quarters of respondents (77%) report that availability of education is quite good or very good in their local area, followed by clean drinking water (76%), the security situation (74%) and freedom of movement (72%). Comparison of 2007 to 2012 data shows that, with the exception of the availability of jobs, the availability of the rest of the services has generally improved since 2007/2008, with some fluctuation in between. The greatest perceived improvement has been in the area of clean drinking water, for which satisfaction rose 14 percentage points from 2008 to 2012.

More than half of those surveyed are aware of development projects related to education (53%) and reconstruction/building of roads and bridges (50%). Afghans have also noticed projects to improve the drinking water supply (43%), deliver healthcare (38%), build mosques (29%) and improve the electricity supply (22%). Generally, awareness about development projects is higher in the East, South West and South East than in the Central/Hazarajat, Central/Kabul and North East regions.

Among those who indicated awareness of such development projects, more than one third (35%) say the United States has provided the most aid in their local area. Respondents also identified Germany (9%), Japan (9%), Australia (5%), India (4%), Turkey (3%), and Sweden (3%), and other aid providers to a lesser degree. Germany was identified by a relatively higher proportion of people in the North East (30%), and a relatively high proportion of respondents in the Central/Hazarajat (21%) and East (15%) regions identified Japan. Australia was named by a higher proportion of people in the Central/Hazarajat (10%) and Central/Kabul (8%) regions. India was more frequently identified in the East (7%), South West (7%) and South East (6%). The United Kingdom was identified most often in the South West (6%), but named infrequently in other regions. Likewise, 10% of respondents in the South West identify Canada as a major aid provider.

Regarding public confidence in public institutions and other important bodies, respondents continue to express the highest levels of confidence in the Afghan National Army (ANA) (with 93% of respondents saying they have a fair amount or a great deal of confidence) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) (with 82% of respondents expressing some level of confidence in them). However, while public confidence in the ANA has been modestly rising over time (from 87% in 2006 to 93% in 2012), public confidence in the ANP has slightly decreased over time (from 86% in 2006 to 82% in 2012). There is some evidence that people's confidence in these two bodies is correlated with their level of fear when encountering ANP and ANA officers. Electronic media (e.g., radio, television) is the third most trusted institution (75%), followed by religious leaders (74%). Institutions with the lowest levels of public confidence include national and international nongovernmental institutions (NGOs) (54% and 53%, respectively), the government justice system (50%), political parties (46%) and local militias (39%).

Three quarters (75%) of respondents give central government performance a positive assessment, including 15% who say it is doing a very good job and 60% who say it is doing a somewhat good job. Over time, an increasing number of people report satisfaction with the way the central government is carrying out its responsibilities. In several substantive areas, Afghans' positive assessment of government performance is at its highest point since 2010, including in education (89%), security provision (70%) and maintaining relations with neighboring countries (55%).

The most frequently cited achievements of central government are a better education system (28%), establishing peace and security (24%) and reconstruction (21%), with some variation across regions.

The most frequently reported failings of central government are administrative corruption (32%), insecurity (23%) and lack of job opportunities (18%). Twelve percent of respondents identified suicide attacks, followed by weak government (9%), failure to remove the Taliban (8%), a weak economy (8%), removing drugs (7%), a bad education system (5%) and injustice (5%).

A high proportion of respondents say they think their provincial government is doing a good job, with particularly highly positive assessments in the Central/Hazarajat (88%), North East (88%), West (86%) and North West (83%) regions. While still quite high, respondents positive assessment of the performance of provincial government in the South West (71%) and South East (73%) is lower than in other regions.

More than seven out of 10 respondents (72%) say the Afghan Parliament is addressing the problems of ordinary Afghans. Just over half (59%) say they think that their own members of parliament (MPs) are addressing the major problems of their constituency. The same proportion (59%) say their provincial council (PC) members are addressing the major problems of their community. Less than one fifth of respondents (18%) reported contacting their MP for help with a problem, with men (22%) more likely to have done so than women (14%). Twenty-two percent reported contacting a PC member for assistance, with twice as many men doing so than women.

Respondents received a brief explanation about the role of the recently formed community development councils (CDCs), and about half of respondents (48%) say they are aware of a CDC in their area, while nearly the same proportion (49%) is not. Awareness of CDCs is noticeably higher among men (53%) than women (43%).

The majority of Afghans surveyed say they think corruption is a major problem in all facets of life and at all levels of government. More than half of respondents say corruption is a major problem in their neighborhood (52%), in their daily life (56%) and in their local authorities (60%). More than two thirds say that corruption is a major problem in their provincial government (70%) and in Afghanistan as a whole (79%). Perceptions that corruption is a major problem in Afghanistan as a whole and at the provincial level are at their highest points since 2006, and perceptions that corruption is a major problem at the level of local authorities and the neighborhood, too, have been steadily rising.

Regarding different forms of corruption, nearly half (47%) of respondents say that they are most affected by administrative corruption, followed by bribes (17%), moral corruption (14%), court corruption (9%), police corruption (8%) and corruption in the education system (4%). Around one third of respondents reported encountering corruption (bribery) when seeking public healthcare services (36%), applying for jobs (34%), interacting with the judiciary/courts (34%), receiving official documents (32%) and dealing with the ANP (31%). The lowest reported experience with bribery is with the ANA (18%).

Forty-three percent of Afghans surveyed say the government is doing about right in fighting corruption, while 40% say it is not doing enough to fight corruption.

About one quarter (24%) of respondents say they feel safer to express their opinions this year than last year. One sixth (16%) feel less safe, and more than half (56%) say they feel as safe as they did one year ago. More than one third of respondents in Central/Hazarajat (34%) say people feel safer expressing their opinions today than they did a year ago, but only 18% in the North West think so.

This year, respondents identify a more diverse range of reasons for why freedom of expression has improved. Half (50%) attribute it to good security conditions in their area, more than one third (39%) say it is due to the legal guarantee of freedom of speech, and 13% attribute it to peace and democracy and the presence of the ANP and ANA. Smaller percentages identified good government, unity among people, better education, removal of the Taliban, freedom of the press and respect for human rights as reasons why people now feel safer expressing their opinions.

More than half (52%) of respondents say they feel they can influence government decisions by participating in political processes, including 14% who say they can have a lot of influence and 38% who say they can have some influence. However, 24% feel that they have no influence at all.

More than two fifths of respondents (43%) say religious leaders consider the public interest more than personal interests when making decisions and policies, and a similar proportion (42%) say the same about government employees. Afghans are the most skeptical about the ability of court officials (28%), international NGO staff (27%), donor institutions (27%) and national NGO staff (24%) to serve the public interest rather than their own interests.

About two thirds of respondents (64%) say they think it is generally not acceptable to talk negatively about the government in public, including 20% who strongly agree. The highest proportion of people who think it is not acceptable to publicly criticize the government are from the Central/Hazarajat (70%) region, and the highest percentage of respondents who disagree are from the South East (41%).

Eighty percent of respondents agree that the government should allow peaceful opposition, and 83% agree that everyone should have equal rights under law, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion.

When asked an open-ended question about what personal benefits they believe they will gain from democracy in Afghanistan, 30% said peace, 29% said freedom and 20% said good security. Other popular responses were rights and law (15%), Islamic democracy (14%), less corruption (13%), a government of the people (12%) and more job opportunities (12%).

More than two thirds (69%) of Afghans surveyed say that religious leaders should be consulted on local problems, while just over a quarter (28%) say that politics and religion should not mix.

A majority of respondents (58%) say they think the 2010 parliamentary elections were free and fair, while more than one third (37%) say they were not. There is large difference between rural and urban respondents; sixty-one percent of rural respondents say that the past parliamentary elections were free and fair, while just under half of urban respondents (45%) say they were.

More than four fifths of respondents (84%) say they think Afghans should choose their leaders through regular, open and honest elections rather than adopt other methods for choosing the country's leaders. Seventy-two percent of Afghans surveyed agree that the president should be limited to serving no more than two terms in office.

One fourth of respondents (25%) say political parties mostly serve the interest of the country as a whole, while 18% say they serve the interests of broad layers of society. Sizeable numbers say political parties serve group/personal interests (16%), regional interests (15%) and ethnic interests (15%).

Respondents were asked which statement they agree with more: “Members of parliament represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the president does not agree” or, “Since the president represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what parliament thinks.” More than two thirds of respondents (70%) agree with the first statement.

In 2012, fewer than one fifth of respondents (19%) reported referring a personal or community dispute to a third party for assistance. More rural respondents (20%) report taking their disputes for resolution than their urban counterparts (14%). Twenty-one percent of men report taking their dispute to be resolved, compared to 16% of women. Higher proportions of people accessed formal and informal dispute resolution mechanisms in the South East (27%), South West (24%) and West (23%) regions. Very few people in the Central/Hazarajat (7%) region say they sought assistance with a dispute.

The most common type of dispute by far is over land (22%). Among those who sought assistance with their disputes, most approached a local shura or jirga for resolution (59%). A substantial proportion took their dispute to a local malik/khan (30%), a sub-national government institution such as the district authority (25%), mullah (25%), friends and family (25%), other government agencies (15%), community development council (15%), and provincial governor/authorities (13%). Nearly one quarter of respondents say they approached the ANP (22%), while 11% say they approached the ANA.

When asked to assess the state courts, more than two thirds of respondents (68%) say they believe that state courts are fair and trusted, including 21% who strongly agree with this statement. More than half of respondents (55%) say that state courts follow the local norms and values of the Afghan people. A majority says that state courts treat men and women equally (59%) and are effective at delivering justice (56%). However, fewer than half of respondents (42%) say they think state courts resolve cases in a timely, prompt manner.

More than four fifths (86%) of respondents say they agree that local shuras/jirgas are fair and trusted. Around three quarters agree that local shuras/jirgas follow local norms and values (74%) and are effective at delivering justice (75%). Just under three quarters say that local shuras/jirgas resolve cases promptly (70%). The survey also shows that a significant majority of respondents (70%) think that the local shuras/jirgas should include women as members.

Almost one third of respondents (29%) identify lack of education and/or illiteracy as the biggest problem faced by women. Ten percent cite the lack of rights/women’s rights, 8% say domestic violence, 6% say forced marriage/dowry, 5% say general healthcare and 4% say poverty. Since 2006, lack of education and illiteracy have consistently been identified as the biggest problem for women in Afghanistan, these figures have been stable since 2007 (29% in 2007, 28% in 2008, 30% in 2009, 31% in 2010 and 25% in 2011) with a small drop in 2011 and rose back in 2012.

Nearly nine in 10 respondents (87%) agree that women and men should have equal educational opportunities, including 48% who strongly agree. Two thirds of Afghans surveyed say they think women should be allowed to work outside the home. Survey findings reveal a substantial difference between men and women's attitudes in this regard. Four fifths of female respondents (80%) say women should be allowed to work outside the home compared to just over half (55%) of men who say so. Significantly more urban respondents agree (81%) than their rural counterparts (61%).

More than half (53%) of respondents say women should decide for themselves when it comes to voting. Twenty-six percent say that men should advise women on how to vote, and 20% say women should decide for themselves but in consultation with men.

Forty-five percent of respondents say that men and women should have equal representation in political leadership positions. Forty-three percent say that leadership positions should be mostly for men, while 11% say that leadership positions should be mostly for women. There is a discrepancy between the opinions of male and female respondents on this issue: 56% of women, say there should be equal representation in political leadership, while 37% of men say this. More than half of men (53%) say that political leadership positions should be mostly for men, while 14% of female respondents say that leadership positions should be mostly for women.

The survey reveals that more than four fifths (80%) of Afghan households own a functioning radio in their households, with a higher level in rural (83%) than urban (73%) areas. A higher proportion of urban residents report owning other communication technologies. While almost three quarters (71%) of Afghans surveyed own mobile phones, 94% people in urban areas own one compared to 63% in rural areas. More than half of respondents (52%) say they own a TV set, but there is a large difference in ownership between urban residents (92%) and rural residents (40%). A small percentage of Afghans reported having computers in their households (12%), with many more in urban households (34%) than rural households (5%). Fixed phone line ownership remains low in Afghanistan (3%), but four times as many urban residents report (8%) owning fixed land line phones compared to their rural counterparts (2%).

Ownership of all forms of communication technology, with the exception of radio, has been rising steadily since 2007, but radio continues to be the leading form of communication technology in Afghanistan, according to survey findings. Mobile phone ownership has seen a large increase over time, from 42% in 2007 to 71% in 2012. TV ownership has gone from 37% in 2007 to 52% in 2012. Computer ownership is still low, but has been rising steadily since its 2008 level of 5%.

While more than three quarters of respondents (77%) say they listen to the radio, more men (83%) report listening to the radio than women (69%). Radio listenership is higher in rural areas (80%) compared to urban areas (65%). In 2012, half of respondents say they watch television, and slightly more women (54%) watch television than men (47%). A disproportionately higher number of people in urban areas (91%) watch television than people in rural (38%) areas.

Forty-three percent of respondents say that radio is their main source of information. The use of television as a primary source of news and information increased from 28% in 2011 to 38% in 2012. Fourteen percent of respondents get news and information from their friends and family and one in 25 (4%) receives news and information through religious leaders or the mosque. Around 1% of Afghans gets news and information through newspapers/magazines, and less than 1% from the internet.

1.2 Summary

In 2012 a majority of Afghans surveyed say they believe things in Afghanistan are moving in the right direction. This is up from previous years. The Central/Hazarajat, South West, East, North East, North West and South East regions are the most optimistic.

The feelings of Afghans about whether the country is moving in the right direction continue to be heavily influenced by their perceptions of the security situation. Among those who are optimistic, improved security was the most frequently cited reason, followed by reconstruction and rebuilding. Likewise, those who are more pessimistic about the direction of the country most often attribute their pessimism to concerns about insecurity.

Out of a wide range of issues mentioned, insecurity (including attacks, violence and terrorism) was identified by the largest proportion of respondents as the biggest problem facing Afghanistan today, and it has consistently held this ranking since 2007. People living in the West, Central/Hazarajat, and South East regions were more likely to cite insecurity than people in other regions.

While many Afghans still say that they often or sometimes fear for their personal or family safety, the overall proportion of people surveyed who say they have fears about safety dropped eight percentage points this year from 2011. The percentage of respondents who report rarely fearing for the safety and security of themselves and their families shows an upward trend from 2008 through 2012, and the percentage of those who say they never fear for their personal or family safety and security has increased in 2012 compared to the past two years. The percentage of respondents who rarely or never fear for their personal or family safety has increased in nearly all regions. People in the Central/Hazarajat region report the lowest level of fear about personal and family safety in 2012, but the North East, South East, South West and North West regions saw the largest increase over 2011 in the proportion of people who rarely or never fear for their safety. The proportion of respondents in the West who say they feel safe dropped slightly this year.

Overall satisfaction with local security conditions has steadily increased since 2008, and satisfaction with freedom of movement has increased since 2010. A high proportion of people currently rate their local security situation and freedom of movement as “quite good” or “very good,” and people surveyed in the Central/Hazarajat, North East, North West and Central/Kabul regions are even more satisfied with their security conditions than people in other regions.

Survey findings show that overall, fewer Afghans say they experienced violence or crime over the past year than in 2011, with particularly notable declines in violence and crime in the North East, East, West, North West and Central/Hazarajat regions. In most regions, the reported experience with crime and violence is at

its lowest point since 2008. The most common form of crime experienced was physical attacks or beatings, occurring mostly between neighbors or within the family. However, the proportion of Afghans who reported direct experience with suicide attacks, while still not very high compared to other types of crime, increased in 2012 and is at its highest point since 2007. Suicide attacks reportedly affected a greater proportion of Afghans in the North West and South West than other regions. Respondents in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to report having experienced violence or crime this year. Many crimes and forms of violence continue to go unreported, but those who did report it most often approached the ANP or local shuras/elders. Men were more likely to report crime than women, and people living in rural areas were more likely to report the crimes than people in urban areas. For the first time in this survey, the Taliban were the most frequently cited cause of crime in the country, followed closely by unemployment.

Despite these perceived improvements in the security situation, a large number of Afghans surveyed continue to report that they would have some level of fear participating in various hypothetical situations. A slight majority say they are not afraid to get involved in resolving problems in their community or encounter the ANA or ANP. However, a large proportion of people say they are afraid (whether somewhat, or very) to encounter international forces or travel around the country, and well over half are afraid to participate in a peaceful demonstration or run for public office. Around half of respondents have fear when voting in a national election. Generally, levels of fear to participate in these types of public activities are highest in the South West, the East, the South East and the West. Women are more afraid than men in all of these situations, with the exception of encounters with the ANP, for which fear is equal among men and women. Levels of fear to engage in these various activities are lower in 2012 than in 2010, but still higher than in the four previous years.

There has been no notable increase in the proportion of respondents who say they feel safer today than they did a year ago in expressing their opinions; most report feeling as safe as they did last year. Relatively more respondents in Central/Hazarajat region say they feel safer expressing their opinions today, and relatively fewer people in the North West say they feel safer than they did a year ago. Among those who feel safer expressing their opinions, many attribute it to good security conditions in their area and to the legal guarantee of freedom of speech, and those who feel people are hesitant to express their opinions consistently attribute it to poor security conditions.

A very high proportion of respondents continue to express confidence in the two main national institutions responsible for security: the ANA and the ANP, with a slightly higher level of confidence in the ANA in 2012. Public confidence in the ANA has been modestly rising over time, while public confidence in the ANP has slightly declined. Some Afghans who say they are optimistic about the overall direction of the country cite the existence of an active ANA and ANP as a reason for their optimism. People's assessment of the operational capacity of the ANA and ANP across a number of dimensions is generally quite positive, and even more so for the ANA. The area where a notable proportion of respondents have some level of doubt is in the ability of the ANA and ANP to operate without the support of foreign troops. These perceptions of Afghanistan's security institutions have been consistent over time.

The survey shows that Afghans' support for peace and reconciliation remains very high, with a large majority across all ethnic groups and in all regions in agreement with the government's efforts in the area of national

reconciliation and negotiation with armed opposition groups. The level of support from people in the Central/Hazarajat region notably increased from 2011 to 2012. Over time, there has been an overall decline in the number of people who sympathize (either a lot or little) with armed opposition groups; well over half of respondents have no sympathy at all for them. However, in 2012 there was a slight increase in sympathy among people surveyed in select regions, including Central/Kabul, the West and the South West. Overall, respondents are quite supportive of the government's efforts to provide material assistance to those who lay down arms and express willingness to reintegrate into society. The consistent high level of support for the government's efforts in the area of reconciliation and reintegration suggests that an overwhelming proportion of the Afghan respondents want a political solution to the conflict in the country, rather than merely a military one.

A slight majority of Afghans surveyed say that their families are more prosperous today than they were during the Taliban era, but the proportion is noticeably higher than in 2010 and 2011. A higher proportion of urban dwellers than rural dwellers consider themselves more prosperous, as do a higher proportion of people in the Central/Hazarajat and Central/Kabul regions relative to other regions, suggesting that the distribution of prosperity in the post-Taliban period has been uneven. Interestingly, more women than men say they are more prosperous today than they were under the Taliban.

Two areas in which most Afghans report improvements over the past year include overall household financial wellbeing and access to schools. Conversely, sizeable numbers of respondents say that their electricity supply and employment opportunities have deteriorated over the past year: in each of these areas, more respondents say it is getting worse than say it's improving. Unemployment and electricity are also most frequently cited by respondents as the biggest local-level problem they face, and lack of job opportunities is often mentioned as the biggest failing of central government. In the Central/Kabul, North West and North East regions unemployment was the issue most frequently cited as the biggest problem facing Afghanistan today.

However, it is apparent that Afghans who were surveyed are seeing improvements over time in a range of other areas that affect their day-to-day lives. Each year, an increasing number of Afghans report an improvement over the previous year in their schools, financial wellbeing, health, diet, products available in the market, house/dwelling and employment opportunities. Electricity supply is the one area where perceptions of improvements have been relatively flat.

Respondents' level of satisfaction with many basic services in their local area has improved since 2007/2008, with some fluctuation in between. People consistently give the availability of education high marks. Education is also the most frequently cited accomplishment of the central government, and people who are optimistic about the overall direction of the country fairly often identify the opening of schools for girls and improvement in the education system as reasons for optimism. Satisfaction with clean drinking water is also high and has risen by 14 percentage points over the past four years. The proportion of people who rank their local clinics/hospitals, availability of medicine, water for irrigation and even electricity as "quite good" or "very good" is lower overall, but it has increased over time. Respondents are consistently least satisfied with the availability of jobs.

Regarding development efforts in the country, the survey reveals that the types of projects most visible to ordinary Afghans are related to education and reconstruction/building of roads and bridges. Respondents

also commonly cite education and reconstruction/rebuilding as the most important accomplishments of the central government. Afghans are also aware (to a lesser degree) of projects to improve the drinking water supply, deliver healthcare, build mosques and improve the electricity supply. Based on public awareness, such development projects appear to be more numerous and visible in the East, South West and South East regions.

Afghans are more likely to attribute most types of development projects primarily to the efforts of the Afghan government than to foreign donor agencies, with the exception of projects involving de-mining and humanitarian aid. Respondents most frequently identify the United States as the largest provider of aid in their local area, but in select regions sizeable numbers also identify other donors, such as Germany (the North East), Japan (Central/Hazarajat and the East), Australia (Central/Hazarajat and Central/Kabul) and Canada (South West).

When asked to state their level of confidence in various public institutions and other important bodies, Afghans consistently rate several institutions (for example, the ANA, the ANP, religious leaders, the media and shuras/jirgas) higher than they rate several key governance bodies, although confidence in many of these bodies is modestly rising over time. In 2012, respondents have slightly more confidence in provincial government than they do in parliament, the public administration, municipalities and government ministers. Institutions with the lowest levels of public confidence include national and international NGOs, the judiciary, political parties and local militias.

Despite the fact that many Afghans express more limited confidence in some of these government institutions, overall they say they are quite pleased with their current performance. A high proportion of Afghans surveyed give central government performance a positive assessment, and over time an increasing number of people report satisfaction with the way the central government is carrying out its responsibilities. Regions with a notably lower-than-average proportion of respondents providing a positive assessment of government include the South East and West. In several substantive areas, Afghans' positive assessment of government performance is at its highest point since 2010, including education, security provision and maintaining relations with neighboring countries. Positive public opinion about Afghanistan's relations with the international community also rose from 2011 to 2012. However, today more than half of Afghans surveyed say that the government is doing a poor job of fighting corruption, creating jobs and reviving/developing the economy.

An even higher proportion of respondents say their provincial government is doing a good job, with particularly positive assessments in the Central/Hazarajat, North East, West and North West regions. Assessment of provincial government performance has gradually improved in most regions from 2009 to 2011, with the exceptions of the East and South East.

Well over half of those surveyed in urban areas gave a positive assessment of the performance of municipal authorities, with particularly favorable assessments in the South East and North East regions. Satisfaction with municipal authorities in 2012 is higher than in any previous year. While the overall satisfaction level rose marginally from 2011 to 2012, in several regions satisfaction increased dramatically, including the North East, North West and South East. Conversely, the level of satisfaction with municipal authorities declined sharply in Central/Kabul, and to a more moderate degree in the South West. A similar proportion of people in rural areas provide a positive assessment of their district authorities' performance, and district authorities receive

particularly high marks in Central/Hazarajat and the North East. While the overall satisfaction level with district authorities slightly increased in 2012, there are apparent decreases in many regions; the average was pulled up by sizeable increases in satisfaction in the South East and Central/Hazarajat.

A high proportion of Afghans surveyed say the parliament is addressing the problems of the Afghan people, but smaller proportions (although still a majority) say that their own MPs and provincial council members are addressing the major problems of their constituencies. Only a small proportion of Afghans report contacting their MPs or provincial council members for assistance, and men are more likely to do so than women. Regarding the recently formed CDCs, survey findings show equal proportions of Afghans are aware and unaware of them, and men are noticeably more aware than women. Among those who are aware of the CDCs, satisfaction with CDC performance is high.

Afghans surveyed say they are very concerned about corruption; over the past three years, respondents have ranked corruption among the top three problems facing Afghanistan today, and this year administrative corruption was the most frequently mentioned failing of central government. A majority say corruption is a major problem in their neighborhood, in their daily life and in their local authorities, and this proportion is rising over time. An even larger number of Afghans say that corruption is a major problem at the level of their provincial government and in Afghanistan as a whole, and in 2012 such perceptions are at their highest point yet. A sizeable number of respondents reported paying a bribe last year when seeking public healthcare services, applying for a job, dealing with the judiciary/courts, obtaining official documents and when dealing with the ANP. Although reported bribery is slightly lower this year than in 2011, it is still higher than in 2010 and previous years. People appear to be more concerned about and affected by administrative corruption than other forms of corruption. Somewhat surprisingly given these findings, a good number of Afghans surveyed say the government is making about the right level of effort to fight corruption. However, an equal proportion say it is not doing enough.

The overall proportion of respondents who say they can have some or a lot of influence over government policies and decisions by participating in political processes (defined as personal efficacy in this survey) has gradually and steadily declined since 2008. The highest perceived level of personal efficacy is in the East, and the lowest is in Central/Kabul.

Support for equal rights for all Afghans and for peaceful opposition (while quite high today) was at an even higher point in 2006, and reached its lowest point in 2009. Support for these concepts in 2012 is slightly higher than 2009. The proportion of people surveyed who say they think it is generally not acceptable to talk negatively about the government in public, which rose from 2009-2011, dropped in 2012. The highest proportion of people who say it is not acceptable to publicly criticize the government are from the Central/Hazarajat region, and the highest proportion who disagree are from the South East. When asked about the potential benefits of democracy, respondents consistently cite such abstract principles as peace and freedom. This year, however, there was increased emphasis on the more practical benefits of democracy, such as good security and job opportunities.

A majority of respondents say that the 2010 parliamentary elections were free and fair, but urbanites are more

skeptical than their rural counterparts. Those who say they are skeptical about the 2012 election are most likely to attribute it to electoral fraud. Confidence in the Independent Elections Commission is at its highest point since 2008, up slightly from 2011, and it is fairly widely recognized by respondents as the institution responsible for elections in Afghanistan. While over half of Afghans surveyed were able to correctly identify the date of the next presidential election (2014), there are still large numbers of people who are unaware of the actual date, pointing to a need for ongoing civic and electoral education.

There is strong support among respondents for several basic democratic concepts, including voting their own mind at the ballot box (rather than basing one's vote on what the community thinks); choosing their leaders through regular, open and honest elections (rather than adopting other methods); limiting the president to no more than two terms in office; and having parliament (as a representative body) make laws for the country, even if the president doesn't agree.

However, respondents are a bit more divided on other issues related to democracy, including the question of whether it is a good and necessary thing to have many political parties in Afghanistan (and indeed, they consistently rank political parties as one of the least trusted institutions), and whether the president, as the top elected official, should be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.

Afghans who were surveyed are supportive of regular consultation with religious leaders on the problems facing a community, consistent with the high level of confidence that they have in their religious leaders and the relatively high proportion of people who think religious leaders consider the public interest more than personal interests when making decisions and policies. In 2012, the proportion of respondents who say religious leaders should be consulted on local problems was about equal to 2011 and slightly higher than in several previous years.

When faced with a problem or dispute that they are not able to resolve on their own, respondents say they refer their problems to a wide range of institutions for resolution, but most often to the local shura/jirga. Over time, disputes over land have regularly been the most common problem for which communities seek dispute resolution, although infrastructure-related disputes (particularly related to water and electricity) are also common, and were particularly common in the Central/Hazarajat region in 2012. The survey reveals an overall modest upward trend in people's use of state courts for dispute resolution (particularly in urban areas), indicating that these courts may be becoming more accessible to people and that the reach of the state is expanding.

Shuras/jirgas continue to be the most trusted, accessible conflict resolution mechanisms for most Afghans surveyed, particularly in rural areas. When asked to rate shuras/jirgas and state courts along several dimensions, people consistently give shuras/jirgas a more positive assessment. While a majority agree with most positive statements provided for both of these institutions, a higher proportion say that shuras/jirgas are fair and trusted, follow local norms and values, are effective at delivering justice and resolve cases promptly. Fewer than half of respondents say they think state courts resolve cases in a timely manner. There was a discernible sharp increase in 2012 in the proportion of people who say they believe that state courts are fair and trusted, and also an increase in the proportion of people who say shuras/jirgas are fair and trusted, but a slight decline in positive perceptions for both institutions across all other dimensions from 2011 to 2012.

People report overall higher satisfaction levels with the final outcome of shura/jirga proceedings than with state court processes.

Since 2006, lack of education and illiteracy have consistently been identified by both men and women as the biggest problem facing Afghan women, these figures are steady and stable since 2007 with a small drop in 2011 and rose back in 2012, with a slight increase in 2012. The second most commonly cited challenge is job opportunities. Other issues of concern include rights, domestic violence, forced marriage/dowry, healthcare and poverty. Women were more likely than men to identify job opportunities as a critical issue facing Afghan women, and people in the North East and North West regions are particularly concerned about this issue. The Directorate of Women's Affairs is by far the institution most frequently named by Afghans in the survey as a place where women can go for assistance with their problems, and in 2012 it was identified at twice the rate as in 2011. However, a large majority of survey respondents were not able to name an institution that helps women.

A large majority of respondents say that women and men should have equal opportunities in education. A smaller but still sizeable majority say women should be allowed to work outside the home, although women are much more likely to agree than men, and urban dwellers are much more likely to agree than people in rural areas. Afghans are more divided on the issue of women's political participation. While just over half say that women should decide for themselves how to vote, many say that men should play some role in advising or influencing women's choices at the ballot box. Public opinion is similarly divided on the question of gender balance in political leadership. Nearly equal proportions of Afghans surveyed say that men and women should be equally represented in political leadership positions, and that such leadership positions should be mostly for men. Women respondents feel more strongly about equal representation than their male counterparts. A sizeable majority of respondents say that the local shuras/jirgas should include women as members.

The survey shows that over time, there has been a slow but steady decline in the percentage of Afghans who say women should be allowed to work outside the home and who say women and men should be equally represented in political leadership positions.

Afghans surveyed have a high level of trust in electronic media (e.g., radio, television); it ranks among the top three most trusted institutions in the country. Radio ownership and listenership is high, particularly in rural areas, and radio is most Afghans' main source of news and information. However, ownership and use of other forms of communication technology, including mobile phones and television, has been rising steadily since 2007. Television is now approaching radio as a primary source of news and information. Proliferation of mobile phones and television has been more rapid in urban areas due to a more steady electricity supply. Computer ownership is still quite low but rising, and is largely limited to urban households. Very few Afghans get their news and information from the internet, newspapers, and magazines, but friends, family members, and religious leaders/mosques continue to be additional important sources of news and information for some.

1.3 Restrictions on survey field work and replacement of sampling points for security reasons

As was the case in previous years, in 2012 there were restrictions on the movement of survey researchers due to security, logistical challenges, and natural disasters that made it impossible for them to reach some of

the districts identified through the random sampling process. In 2012, 323 of the 1,055 sampling points had to be replaced with other sampling points in the same region through random sampling method. Insecurity and frequent fighting in some provinces caused 168 sampling points (or 16%) to be replaced (accounting for just over half of the total replacements). This was the same percentage as in 2010 (16%). Restrictions on the movement of survey researchers due to security concerns considerably increased in 2012. In 2010, 16% of the sampling points were replaced, compared to 11% in 2011. It is worth noting that this year each sample point consists of 6 respondents while the number of respondents in previous years were 8 or 10 per sample point.

Replacement of sampling points due to security problems (Appendix 2: Methodology) COMPARISON OF 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 AND 2012.

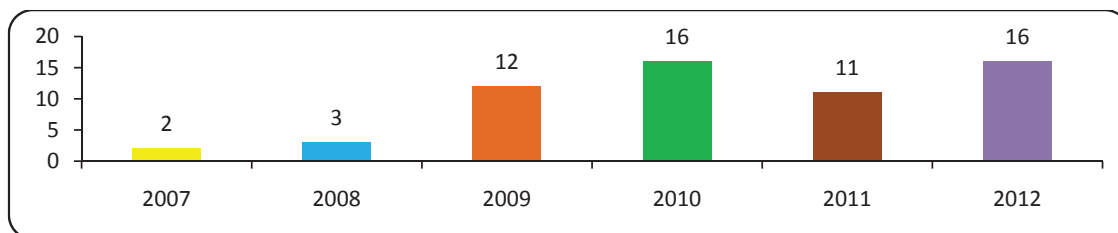


Fig 1.1

Replacement of sampling points due to various problems (Appendix 2: Methodology) BY VARIOUS REASONS

Total Sampling Points 1,055	Count (%)	Versus total replacement (%)	Versus all sample points (%)
Security	168	52	16
Transportation problems	43	13	4
Village was not found	42	13	4
Remoteness	26	8	2
Weather	24	7	2
Surveyors were not allowed	10	3	1
Other	10	3	1
Total replacement	323		31

The replacement of 168 out of 1,055 sampling points for security reasons means that some areas with high levels of insecurity could not be accessed by the field survey team. This, in turn, means that the opinions of those living in insecure areas are likely to be underrepresented in survey findings. This year, the total number of sampling points is 25% higher than in 2011, 2010 and 2009. This is at ACSOR's recommendation to spread sampling points more widely and decrease the margin of error.

The deterioration of the security situation in the country began to have a significant impact on the survey fieldwork beginning in 2009. In 2007, only 11 of the 626 sampling points had to be replaced because the areas were inaccessible due to security problems (i.e., 2% of all sampling points). Nine of the 11 replacements were made in just two regions: the South East and South West. The situation was similar in 2008, when 18 of the 659 sampling points were replaced due to security problems (i.e., 3% of all sampling points). These replacements were again mainly concentrated in the South East and South West. The other replacements

were distributed among seven of the eight regions (with no replacements in the North West).

However, in 2009 the number of security-related replacements of survey sampling points increased fourfold, from 3% in 2008 to 12% in 2009. One hundred and two of the 823 random sampling points were inaccessible to survey researchers due to insecurity, and replacements were required in all regions. In addition, the number of insecure areas that could not be accessed tripled in the South East and the South West, and rose even more dramatically in all other regions.

In 2010, the situation deteriorated further. One hundred and thirty eight of the 825 random sampling points were inaccessible to survey researchers due to security problems (16% of all sampling points). Again the number of replacements rose significantly in most regions. The regions most affected were the South East, South West, and the East. The Central/Hazarajat region was the only region where no replacements were made due to security problems.

In 2011, the situation improved somewhat. Ninety-five of the 876 sampling points had to be replaced due to security reasons (11% of all sampling points). The regions most severely affected were the South East (23 replacements), East (20 replacements), Central/Kabul (17 replacements) and North West (16 replacements). Eight replacements were made in the South West, seven in the North East and four in the West. As was the case in 2010, in 2011 no replacements were made for security reasons in the Central/Hazarajat region.

In 2012, the security situation deteriorated to the 2010 level. Many of those regions that had been relatively calm and peaceful were affected by insecurity this year. As noted above, out of 1,055 total sample points, 168 sampling points had to be replaced for security reasons (16% of all sampling points). The regions most significantly affected were the East (35 replacements) and West (33 replacements). This represents a substantial increase in the number of replacements for the West, which (other than Central/Hazarajat) was the lowest last year (four replacements). This year, Central/Kabul and the South East had 29 replacements each, with three to 14 replacements in the remaining regions. The fewest replacements were made in Central Hazarajat (three replacements), a region that did not require replacements for the past two years. The provinces with the highest number of replacements for security reasons are in the Central/Kabul region (Logar, 17 replacements), the East (Kunar, 15 replacements, and Laghman, 10 replacements) and the South East (Ghazni, 13 replacements).

Actual number of replacements of sampling points due to security problems (See Appendix 2: Methodology) ALL AND BY REGION COMPARISON OF 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 AND 2012

Year	No. of sample points replaced for security reasons (%)	Total no. of sample points (%)	Central/Kabul (%)	East (%)	South East (%)	South West (%)	West (%)	North East	Central/Hazarajat (%)	North West (%)
2007	11	-	1	0	6	3	1	0	0	0
2008	18	-	1	2	6	5	2	1	1	0
2009	102	882	13	14	18	17	14	11	2	13
2010	138	885	10	21	28	24	12	23	0	20
2011	95	876	17	20	20	8	4	7	0	16
2012	168	1055	29	35	29	14	33	13	3	12

Actual number of replacements of sampling points due to various problems (See Appendix 2: Methodology) BY REGION

Number of sam- pling points replaced for various reasons	Security (%)	Transporta- tion problems (%)	Village was not found (%)	Remote- ness (%)	Weather (%)	Surveyors were not allowed (%)	Other (%)
Central/Kabul	29	6	9	0	0	5	7
East	35	3	3	1	1	0	0
South East	29	0	1	0	0	1	0
South West	14	0	1	0	0	0	0
West	33	7	9	0	6	2	0
North East	13	17	12	11	9	0	0
Central/Hazarajat	3	2	2	6	0	0	1
North West	12	8	5	8	8	2	2
Total	168	43	42	26	24	10	10

As was also the case last year, female surveyors could not be deployed in Paktika province due to the worsen- ing security situation. Because women were barred from conducting interviews, no female respondents were included in the sample in this province. However, this year in Zabul province (a second province where no female surveyors were able to be deployed in 2011), 5% of respondents are women.

The decline in the number of women respondents since 2007, when half of the respondents were women, has leveled off. In 2012, 44% of the respondents are women, while 56% of the respondents are men, repre- senting a 12 percentage point gender gap and a 6 percentage point decrease in women representation's in the survey since 2007. This gap may be reflected in the survey results.

Percentage of male and female respondents in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 AND 2012

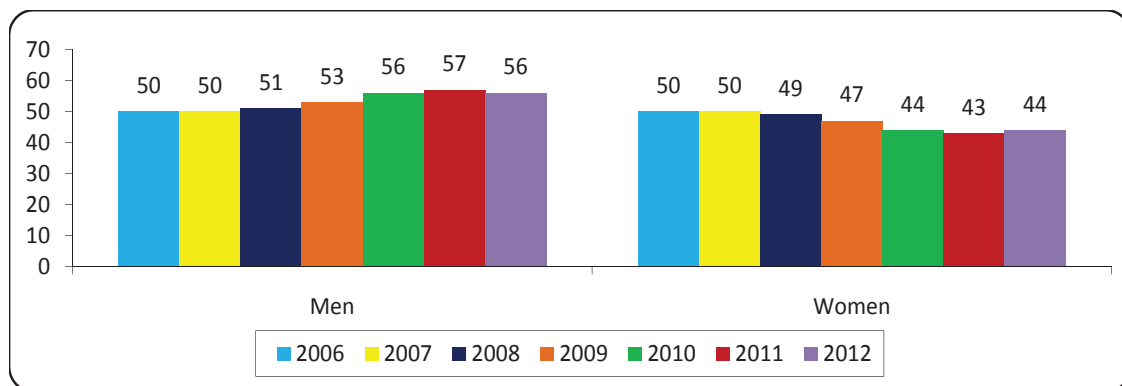


Fig 1.2