

A Survey of the Afghan People

News Release

For Immediate Release

Asia Foundation Releases 2011 Survey of the Afghan People

*More Afghans say country is headed in wrong direction;
poll of 6,300 citizens covers security, reconciliation, governance, economy*

Kabul, Afghanistan—November 15, 2011—While nearly half (46%) of Afghans say their country is moving in the right direction, more respondents than at any time since The Asia Foundation began polling there in 2004 say Afghanistan is headed in the wrong direction. According to the poll of 6,348 Afghan citizens released today by The Asia Foundation, more than a third (35%) of those polled say things are moving in the wrong direction citing insecurity (including attacks, violence, and terrorism) as the main reason for pessimism.

At the same time, the survey reflects progress in day-to-day needs being met, with respondents citing the highest levels of satisfaction with access to education, drinking water, and health services. Sympathy for armed opposition groups declined dramatically this year, reaching its lowest level since the series of surveys began. Forty-three percent of respondents also report improvements in the financial well-being of their household, a slight increase from 2010.

[Afghanistan in 2011: A Survey of the Afghan People](http://asiafoundation.org/ag2011poll) is the seventh poll conducted by The Asia Foundation in Afghanistan and is the broadest and most comprehensive public opinion poll conducted in the country. Face-to-face interviews took place between July 2, 2011 and August 1, 2011 in all 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The complete survey report is available at <http://asiafoundation.org/ag2011poll>.

Designed as a barometer of Afghan public opinion to inform national leaders, scholars, donors, and the policymaking community, the survey report explores the Afghan perspective on national mood, security, reconciliation and reintegration, economy, development and service delivery, governance, corruption, political participation, justice systems, women in society, and access to information.

“Security is the biggest problem for Afghans,” said Asia Foundation president David D. Arnold. “Afghans told the Asia Foundation that issues of security and conflict influence their perceptions about the future. We are encouraged by higher levels of satisfaction in access to education, drinking water, health services, and growing confidence in the role of public institutions.” He continued: “The priority now is to integrate these findings into

useful guideposts for future development efforts by the Afghanistan government and the international community.”

Findings from the 2011 survey include:

- Overall, 35% of Afghan citizens in 2011 say the country is moving in the wrong direction – an increase of 8% from 2010. The main reason cited for pessimism is insecurity, reported by 45% of the respondents who say that the country is moving in the wrong direction. This is followed by corruption (16%), bad government (15%), and unemployment (13%).
- This year, despite economic, political, and security challenges facing Afghanistan, nearly half of the respondents (46%) say that things in the country are moving in the right direction, a slight decline in 2011 but still higher than previous years. The main reason for optimism is reconstruction/rebuilding, cited by 40% of respondents who say the country is moving in the right direction. Good security (39%) and improvement in the education system (16%) are other factors cited for optimism in 2011.
- Insecurity (including attacks, violence, and terrorism) is identified as the biggest problem in Afghanistan by over a third of respondents (38%), followed by unemployment (23%), and corruption (21%)
- In 2011, support for the government’s peace, reconciliation, and negotiation efforts with armed opposition groups remains very high (82%), suggesting that a substantial proportion of the Afghan public is in favor of a political solution to the ongoing conflict in the country, rather than a purely military one. However, the number of respondents who say they sympathize with the motivations of the Taliban reached its lowest level in 2011: support has fallen from 56% in 2009 and 40% in 2010 to 29% in 2011.
- Forty-three percent of respondents report improvement of the financial wellbeing of their household (compared to 42% in 2010 and 31% in 2009). Reaching its highest levels in 2011, the majority of respondents report satisfaction with the availability of most basic services, including education for children (73%), clean drinking water (70%), and the availability of clinics and hospitals (57%).
- The biggest problems facing women in Afghanistan in 2011 are the lack of education and/or illiteracy (25%), the lack of rights (15%), domestic violence (9%), forced marriage/dowry (8%), general healthcare (8%), and poverty (8%).

In order to provide contextual analysis of the 2011 survey findings, The Asia Foundation is currently developing a companion volume for release in early 2012. Contributing authors will include academics and policymakers from the Afghan and international communities.

Held to the highest and most rigorous standards of social science research, the 2011 survey is a product of The Asia Foundation, with funding support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The survey's key findings, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and multimedia offerings are also available on our website. We welcome you to interact with us on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/AsiaFoundation> and on Twitter at: [@Asia_Foundation](https://twitter.com/Asia_Foundation).

ABOUT THE ASIA FOUNDATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The Asia Foundation began operating in Afghanistan in 1954 and re-opened its Kabul office in 2002. Since then, the Foundation has assisted Afghan efforts to rebuild the country and accelerate development. Programs focus on governance, law, and civil society, including support for the development of a new constitution and national voter registration, civic education, and government-media relations. The Foundation provides long-term support and technical assistance to key governmental institutions responsible for the executive branch, parliamentary affairs, agriculture, and sub-national government. Other programs focus on women's empowerment and education.

ABOUT THE ASIA FOUNDATION

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. The Foundation supports Asian initiatives to improve governance, law, and civil society; women's empowerment; economic reform and development; the environment; and regional cooperation. Drawing on nearly 60 years of experience in Asia, the Foundation collaborates with private and public partners to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges, and policy research.

With 18 offices throughout Asia, an office in Washington, DC, and its headquarters in San Francisco, the Foundation addresses these issues on both a country and regional level. In 2010, the Foundation provided more than \$98 million in program support and distributed nearly one million books and journals valued at over \$42 million.

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