



The Asia Foundation

Afghanistan in 2007: A Survey of the Afghan People Key Findings

- The mood of the country continues to be optimistic with 42 percent respondents saying that things are moving in the right direction. While 24 percent think that the country is moving in the wrong direction, 25 percent have mixed feelings. In 2006, some 44 percent of the respondents said things were moving in the right direction, 21 percent said they were moving in the wrong direction and another 29 percent had mixed feelings.
- Reconstruction was cited as the single biggest reason for the country going in the right direction (39%), followed by good security (34%). Those who think the country is not moving in the right direction overwhelmingly cited insecurity (48%) followed by different aspects of bad governance and economy. In 2006, good security was cited as the biggest reason mentioned for the country going in the right direction (31%), followed by peace (29%) and disarmament (26%).
- The largest problems facing Afghanistan were identified as insecurity, unemployment, poor economy and corruption in that order, with 32 percent citing security issues as the major problem. In 2006, the major national-level problems were poor economy, uncertain security situation, slow pace of reconstruction - development, and unemployment.
- At the local level, the biggest problems identified were electricity, unemployment, water and education in that order, each cited by between 10-15 percent of the respondents. In 2006, the biggest local-level problems were identified as unemployment (34%), electricity (25%), water (18%) and poverty (18%), followed by poor economy (17%) and corruption (8%).
- Seventy-nine percent of the people felt that the government did not care what people thought while another 69 percent felt it was not acceptable to talk negatively about the government in public.
- Eighty percent felt the government was doing a good job, but most of the credit in this regard went to the education and health sectors, while the government was seen to be performing below par in employment generation, economic revival and fighting corruption.
- Perceptions towards different institutions varied widely. There was a great deal or fair amount of confidence in institutions such as the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army from more than 80 percent of the people, followed by electronic media, Shuras and Jirgas, provincial councils, international NGOs and Community Development Councils (CDCs). But, less than half of the respondents had confidence in the government's justice system, political parties and local militias.
- Only 14 percent had approached a state court or village/neighborhood-based Shura/Jirga to settle their disputes in the last two years. Of the disputes around half were related to land.

- Perception of the prevalence of corruption was higher at the national level (74%) than at the provincial (60%) or local levels (48%).
- Sixty-six percent of the respondents felt that security in their area was good or quite good, and 50 percent said they rarely or never feared for their own or their family's safety. Eighty-two percent said no one in their family had been a victim of any crime or violence during the last one year.
- Eighty percent of the people thought poppy cultivation was wrong; 50 percent of those who thought it was wrong cited religion as the reason, while 35 percent cited opium addiction. Linkages to terrorism and insecurity were cited by 10 percent or less of the people.
- Almost half of the people of Afghanistan (49%) think that their families are more prosperous today than they were during the Taliban regime. However, more than one-fourth of the people (28%) think that they are less prosperous today. In 2006, fifty-four percent of the respondents felt that they were more prosperous than they were under the Taliban regime, while 26 percent felt less prosperous, and 12 percent felt that there has been no change in their prosperity.
- Compared to two years ago, 51 percent said access to schools has improved. Situation of health of the family members has gotten better for 43 percent of the people while financial situation of the household has gotten better for 39 percent of the people.
- Democracy for most of the people of Afghanistan (51%) means freedom, followed by peace (33%). For a significant proportion of people it also means rights and law (26%) followed by government of the people (25%).
- Thirty-four percent believe that peace is the most important thing that democracy in Afghanistan will bring them personally. Others say democracy will bring freedom (30%), rights and law (23%) and government of the people (22%).
- Most of the people hold the opinion that democracy is not antithetical to Islam. Sixty-six percent believe that democracy can be Islamic while 29 percent believe that democracy challenges Islamic values.
- Sixty percent of Afghans are of the opinion that religious leaders should be consulted; only 36 percent think that politics and religion should not mix.
- Seventy-three percent of the people in Afghanistan are satisfied with the way democracy works in the country.
- Twenty-nine percent identify lack of education as the biggest problem facing women of Afghanistan today. Another 13 percent identify the lack of women's rights as the biggest problem followed by the lack of job opportunities for women (9%).
- Opposition to women in leadership positions in various political bodies ranges between 39 percent to 44 percent. The opposition is highest in national parliament (44%) and lowest in district development assembly (39%).
- For a little more than half of the people of Afghanistan (54%), radio is the source of getting information about what is happening in the country followed TV (26%). For some 14 percent it is friends, family and neighbors.

A copy of the 2007 survey can be accessed in its entirety at www.asiafoundation.org