



Afghan Futures: A National Public Opinion Survey

November 5, 2015



D³ Systems, Inc.



INTRODUCTION

D3 Systems, Inc. and ACSOR Surveys are releasing the results of our most recent survey conducted as part of our self-funded Afghan Futures series. The survey investigates the broad variety of challenges facing Afghanistan as the unity government led by President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah marks its one-year anniversary since the peaceful resolution of the presidential election. The broad sense of optimism found in the period just after the election has weakened as the government attempts to jump start a weak economy dependent on a shrinking international presence, maintain security after taking the lead from coalition forces, face down Taliban territorial gains, and address the appearance of Da'esh (ISIS) in various parts of the country. The survey results reveal a public frustrated with the lack of progress and less confident that the unity government will be able to bring about solutions without significant assistance from the international community.

Afghan Futures is conducted by D3 and ACSOR Surveys as a public service to contribute to the dialogue about the aspirations and concerns of Afghans. The project began in 2010 and this survey represents the eighth iteration of the polls. Results are based on in-person interviews conducted September 15 to 20, 2015, in Dari and Pashto, among a random national sample of 2,066 Afghan adults in all thirty four provinces of Afghanistan.



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THE POST-ELECTION HONEYMOON IS OVER

Assessment of the Unity Government

Almost a year into Hamid Karzai’s second term as President in May 2010, 63 percent of Afghans said the country was headed in the right direction.¹ In contrast, almost a year into the current unity government, just 23 percent say Afghanistan is headed in right direction, which is sharply down from 61 percent when the unity government was agreed upon in September 2014. It is safe to say that the honeymoon period for President Ashraf Ghani’s presidency is over and was short lived. Afghans are very pessimistic about the current government and the future of the country. Not surprisingly, residents of Kabul are the most pessimistic about the direction Afghanistan is headed in. They live at ground zero of the national government and see on a daily basis the corruption and lack of improvement. As Table 1 shows, however, no one across the country is very optimistic about Afghanistan’s current path.

Table 1: Right Direction/Wrong Direction by REGION

	Capital	East	North	West	Southwest	South
Right Direction	11%	27%	21%	26%	35%	30%
Wrong Direction	79%	51%	54%	49%	44%	49%

The current year has been a very trying period for Afghanistan. This year saw the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) take control of securing Afghanistan and have experienced a casualty rate that many military experts say is unsustainable. The Taliban have been very active since announcing their spring season offensive and have taken territory across Afghanistan, including areas in the North they could not control even when they were in power. When asked if the Taliban has grown stronger, weaker, or stayed the same over the past 12 months, more than half (52%) of Afghans report that ‘the Taliban is growing stronger’, the highest it has been since the Afghan Futures survey series began in 2010.

Failure to Act

President Ghani’s favorability ratings have dropped from 87 percent in November 2014, to 49 percent in September 2015. Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah does not fare any better: he dropped from 76 percent favorable² to 41 percent. The shift is likely due in part to the fact that Ghani and Abdullah have stopped being candidates making campaign promises while seeking office and are now part of the government system with all of its long-standing problems. Every

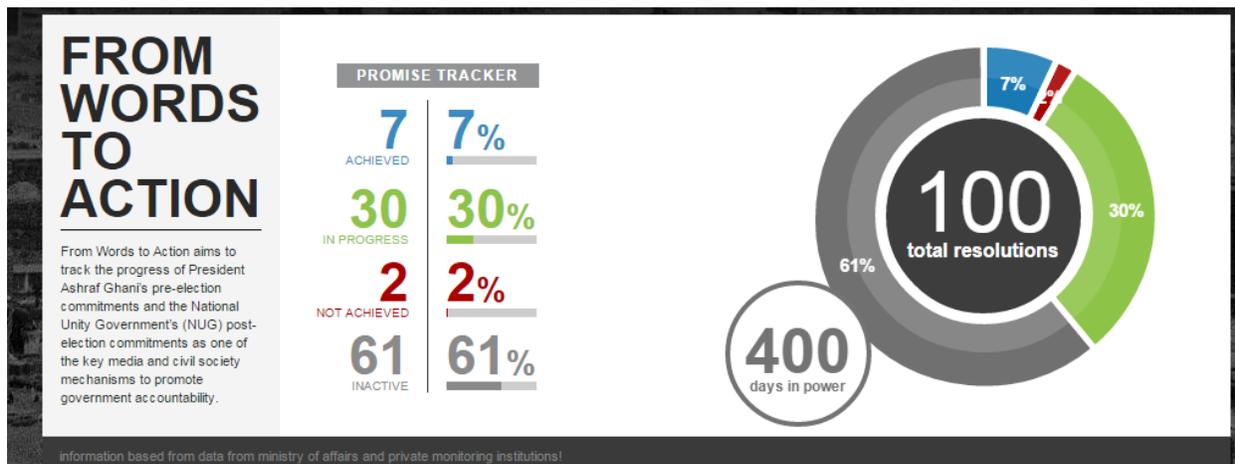
¹ Data is from Wave 1 of Afghan Futures survey series.

² Favorability ratings are based on a combination of “very” and “somewhat” favorable responses.

incoming candidate around the world has seen a drop in their favorability ratings when they took on the responsibilities of their office and started making decisions, however, the low ratings for the leaders of the Afghan unity government are exacerbated by poor security, continued corruption, a faltering economy, and an executive branch and parliament that are slow to act on important issues.

The unity government failed to hold the Wolesi Jirga elections in 2015 and was forced to extend the five year terms of all of the Wolesi Jirga members indefinitely.³ The parliamentary elections have been delayed because of disputes about the allocation of Wolesi Jirga seats.⁴ High ranking officials from Ghani's camp have walked out of the Election Commission.⁵

The Afghan media has continued to hold the government's feet to the fire. ToloNews even started a website that tracks government resolutions and their status. After 400 days in power, only 7 resolutions have been achieved, and that includes officially making Abdullah Abdullah the Chief Executive.



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³ Johnson, Kay. "Afghan Leader Extends Parliament's Term, Promises Election Date." Reuters. June 19, 2015. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/06/19/afghanistan-parliament-idINKBN0OZ20U20150619>.

⁴ "...reform proposals is the setting aside of 83 seats for political parties with a national constituency — essentially meaning that party leaders in Kabul would get to choose candidates for those seats based on the votes the party gets throughout all provinces" Mashal, Mujib. "Afghanistan's Electoral Reform Plan Is Met With Skepticism." *The New York Times*. August 31, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/01/world/asia/afghanistans-electoral-reform-plan-is-met-with-skepticism.html?_r=1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <http://govmeter.tolonews.com/>

The story is no better for the unity government when it comes to security; after the dust settled on the attack on Kunduz City, many Kunduz residents turned their ire towards Kabul. Many of Kunduz's residents blame the unity government for not providing adequate security for protection from the Taliban, warlords, and other various AGEs.⁷

The Afghan Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports the national unemployment rate as 25 percent, but other sources put it as high as 35 percent.⁸ Three out of four Afghans in the current Afghan Futures survey report that the economic and job opportunities in their area are bad. Respondents are split on their ability to afford the things that they want or need; slightly more than half (52%) rate their ability to afford what they need as good, while 48 percent say it's bad. Less than half of Afghans report being able to afford the food they need (49%) or the fuel they need (49%).

As a reflection of diminishing confidence in GIRoA, Afghans are now saying that the elections were fraudulent, from 44 percent saying the elections were fair in November 2014 to only 23 percent in September 2015. Now less than half (45%) approve of the power sharing agreement compared to 87 percent in November 2014.⁹ An even more telling sign that support for the unity government has weakened is both Pashtuns (Ghani's base) and Tajiks (Abdullah's base) now disapprove of the agreement with 57 percent of Pashtuns saying they disapprove of the power sharing agreement and 56 percent of Tajiks disapproving.

Afghans are split on whether Ghani and Abdullah can maintain their power sharing agreement with 47 percent saying they will maintain it and 47 percent saying that it will come apart. If the power sharing agreement were to come apart, more than a quarter (26%) of Afghans believe someone other than Ghani or Abdullah will prevail as the country's leader, which is up from only 3 percent in November 2014.

⁷ Shaheed, Anisa. "Kunduz Families Accuse Government Of Breaking Election Promises." Afghanistan News-TOLONews.com. October 11, 2015. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21828-kunduz-families-accuse-govt-of-breaking-election-promises>.

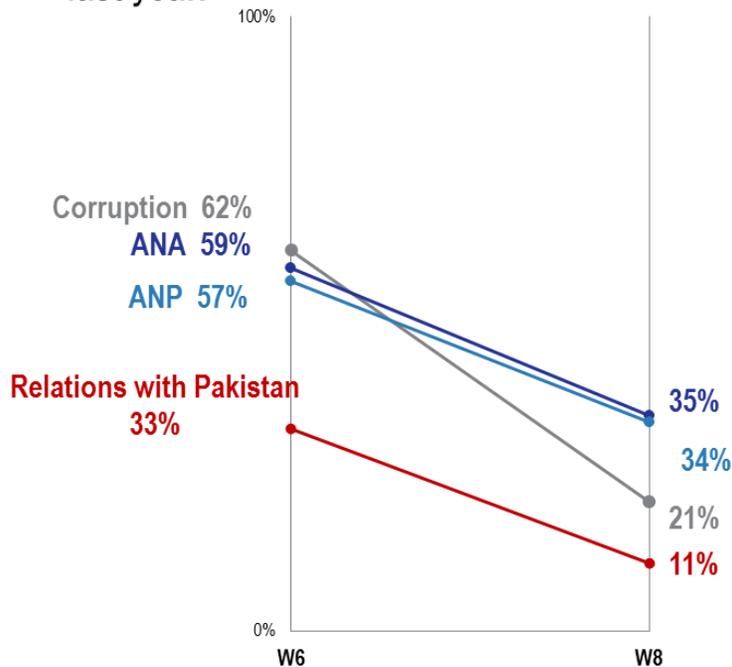
⁸ Latifi, Ali M. "For Displaced Afghans, Extended U.S. Troop Presence Offers Little Solace." Latimes.com. November 1, 2015. <http://www.latimes.com/world/afghanistan-pakistan/la-fg-afghanistan-us-20151101-story.html>.

⁹ Approval ratings are based on a combination of "strongly" and "somewhat" approve responses.

Right after the unity government was announced, Afghans seemed very optimistic about the future of Afghanistan reporting that problems related to corruption, the ANA, the ANP, and relations with Pakistan would all overwhelmingly get better. That is no longer the case: when asked if corruption will be better, worse, or stay the same in the next six months only 21 percent said better compared to 62 percent in November 2014. It is the same with perceptions of ANA and ANP effectiveness: 35 percent think the ANA will get better in the next six months down from 59 percent, and impressions that the ANP will improve fell from 57 percent to 34 percent. Only 11 percent of Afghans believe that relations with Pakistan will get better in

the next six months and 59 percent say it will get worse. This is not surprising since relations between the two countries have been tense since the December 2014 attack by the Taliban on the Pakistan military academy and Pakistan's decision to deport millions of Afghan refugees back to Afghanistan.

When asked whether the effectiveness of ANA, effectiveness of ANP, corruption, and relations with Pakistan will be better, worse, or stay the same in the next six months, those that said 'better' dropped almost in half from last year.



Moving Forward

While these numbers are a clear warning sign for GIROA and its partners, Afghans still overwhelmingly (86%) prefer the current government to the Taliban running the country. When asked about supporting or opposing the presence of various groups in Afghanistan, support¹⁰ for 'fighters from the Taliban' has dropped from 22 percent to 12 percent, and support for 'Jihadi fighters from other countries' has dropped from 31 percent to 16 percent. The Afghan public is weary of the fighting and despite giving it low ratings still sees the unity government as its best hope for achieving peace and security compared to other options such as the Taliban or warlords.

However, the unity government is facing serious hurdles in the future. President Ghani and his unity government have yet to announce a comprehensive economic plan that addresses current employment issues and the looming unemployment that is likely to result as the cottage industry generated by international forces draws down. The government thus far has not fully answered a rejuvenated Taliban that threatens more and more districts, and deadlines for the parliamentary elections continue to pass by without a resolution due to power struggles within the unity government. Simply put, the unity government needs some big wins to gain the support of the people back and, unfortunately for Afghans, but fortunately for the government, there are plenty of areas they can improve upon. The unity government needs to be seen as a driving force in bolstering the economy, strengthening ANDSF, and stopping infighting in the government to create a functional system capable of delivering services to its constituents.

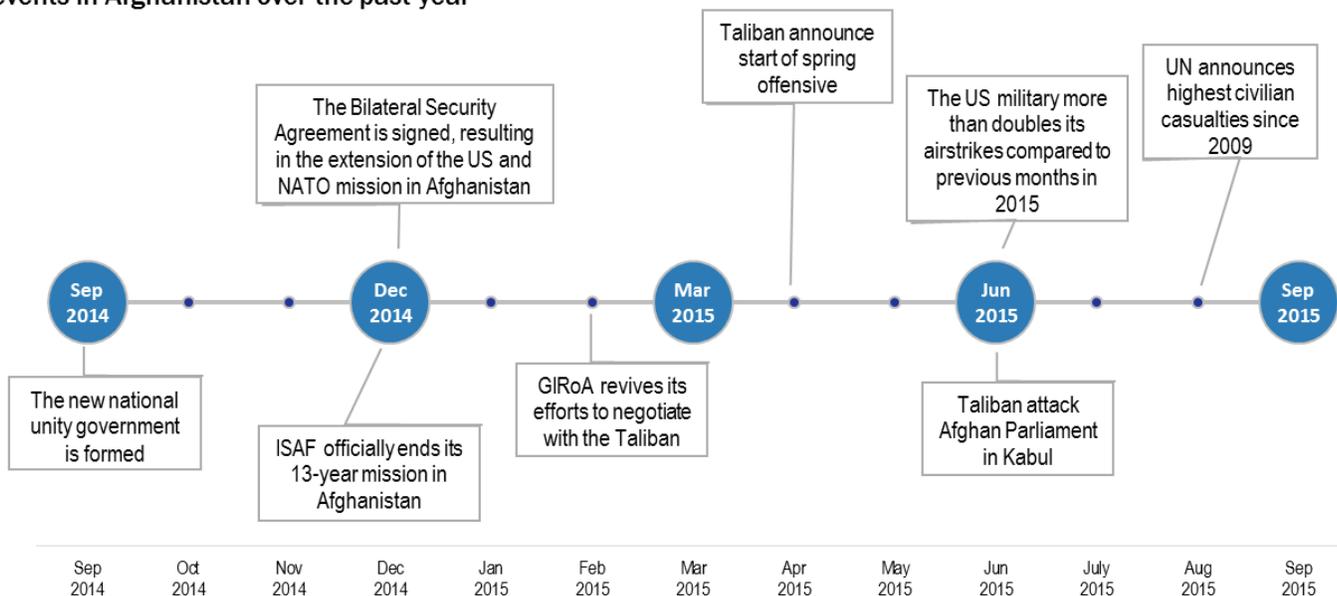
¹⁰ Support ratings are based on a combination of "strongly" and "somewhat" support responses.



THE IMPACT OF ECONOMY AND SECURITY ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT

Of the many events that occurred in Afghanistan over the last year (November 2014- September 2015), two of the most salient are the official end of ISAF’s mission in Afghanistan (December 2014) and the start of the 2015 fighting season, which has been one of the bloodiest in the past thirteen years. These events have impacted the economic and security situation in Afghanistan and have consequently affected Afghans’ perceptions of the government.

Key events in Afghanistan over the past year



Key Findings

- Since November 2014, there has been a significant increase in the number of Afghans who think the country is headed in the wrong direction. Fifty-five percent of Afghans now think the country is headed in the wrong direction (23% in Nov 2014).
- There has been a 13 percentage point increase in the proportion of Afghans who think that Afghanistan's economy is 'poor' (Nov 2014 – 28%, Sep 2015 - 41%).
- Afghans' belief that their overall quality of life is 'good' declined 19 percentage points from November 2014 (73%) to September 2015 (54%).
- Fifty-two percent of Afghans say the Taliban has grown stronger in the last year. This is an 18 percentage point increase from responses provided in November 2014 (34%).
- Seventy-four percent of Afghans have heard of Da'esh. Of those who have heard of Da'esh, 72 percent say they are concerned that Da'esh will take over territory in their area.

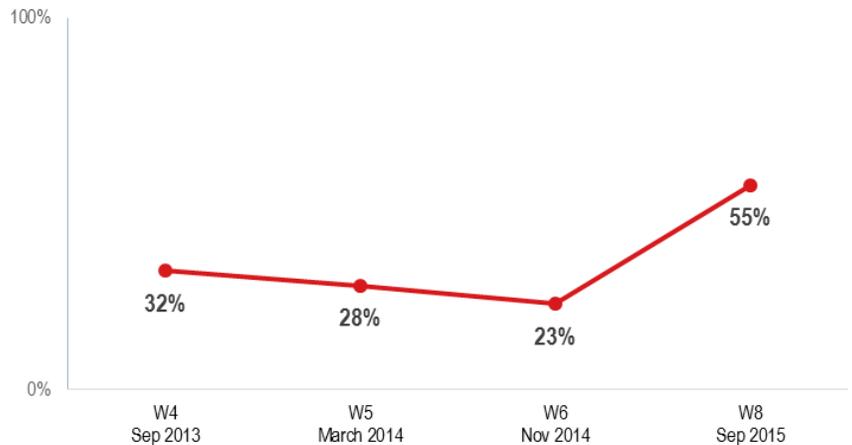
Conditions in the Village and Economy

Data for Wave 6 (November 2014) of the Afghan Futures Survey were collected two months after Afghanistan's National Unity Government was formed and Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah decided to run the country jointly with Ghani serving as President and Abdullah as Chief Executive Officer. For many Afghans, this signaled the end of a tenuous five-month waiting period that was fraught with allegations of cheating, fighting and demonstrations, and prolonged election audits. Afghans were happy that the country had a new government and they were optimistic about the future. Accordingly, in November 2014, 61 percent of Afghans thought that the country was going in the right direction. Support for President Ghani and CEO Abdullah was also high, with 86 percent saying they had favorable views of Ghani and 76 percent saying they had favorable views of Abdullah.

Since the unity government was formed, most Afghans feel it has made little progress. After a year in office, cabinet member selection is incomplete and the parliamentary elections have been put on hold. The lack of progress in the government may be related to increasingly publicized disagreements and infighting between President Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah, resulting in more negative opinions of the government. Opinions may have also been affected by worsening security. In the past year, civilian and military casualties have climbed and the Taliban has strengthened its offensive and taken over many areas that have been previously controlled by the government. Consequently, Afghans are less optimistic and previous positive opinions of the government have evaporated.

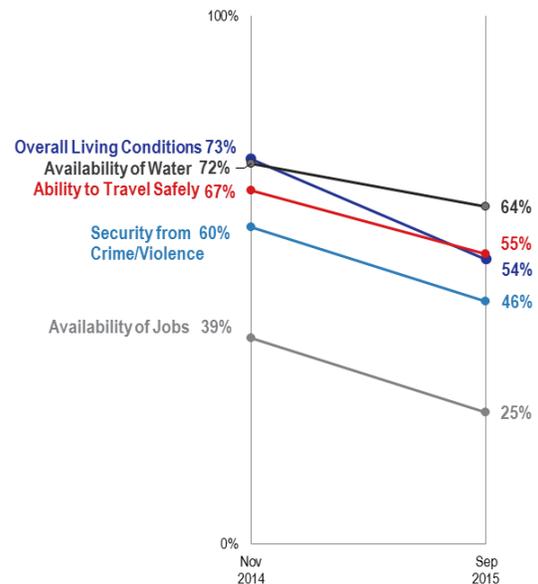
Data collected in September 2015 show a substantial decrease in positive perceptions of the government. The majority (55%) now say the country is headed in the wrong direction compared to just 23 percent in November 2014. Consistent with negative views of the direction the country is going, half or more now have an unfavorable opinion of President Ghani (50%) and Chief Executive Abdullah (58%).

Opinions about the direction the country is going have shifted. Over half now say the country is headed in the **wrong direction**.



Economic hardships have impacted Afghans' views of the government. Prior to ISAF ending its mission in December 2014 and restructuring as the smaller Resolute Support (RS) Mission, thousands of Afghans worked in support roles for international forces. When ISAF troops began to leave Afghanistan and military bases around the country started to close, many jobs also left the country.¹¹ This left a gap in the economy that the Afghan government has not been able to fill. The economic impact of the drawdown of international security forces has been felt across the country. It has been made worse by a surge in Afghan returnees from Pakistan. Many of the returnees have been unable to find shelter or work because of insecurity in their villages.^{12 13}

Over the past ten months perceptions about the conditions in the village being 'good' have decreased. Overall living conditions and security from crime and violence have declined the most.



In Afghan Futures Wave 8 (September 2015), 41 percent of Afghans say Afghanistan's

¹¹ Barakat, Sultan and Brooke Smith-Windsor. "Post-ISAF Afghanistan: The Early Months." The Brookings Institution, February, 2015. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2015/05/bdc-afghanistan-nato-report/bdc-nato-event-report.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2015).

¹² UNHCR. "Country operations profile - Afghanistan." <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486eb6.html> (accessed October 25, 2015).

¹³ Daniel, Frank J. "Coming home to war: Afghan refugees return reluctantly from Pakistan." Reuters.com. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/04/us-afghanistan-refugees-pakistan-idUSKCN0R32K420150904> (accessed September 3, 2015).

economy is poor compared to 28% in November 2014. Similarly, when asked about the economic opportunities in the area where they live, 75 percent of Afghans say the availability of jobs is bad, an increase since November 2014 when 60 percent reported negative views about the availability of jobs.¹⁴ Residents in Paktia (71%), Kabul (70%), Daykundi (69%), and Parwan (65%) report that the country's economy is poor more frequently than Afghans in other provinces.

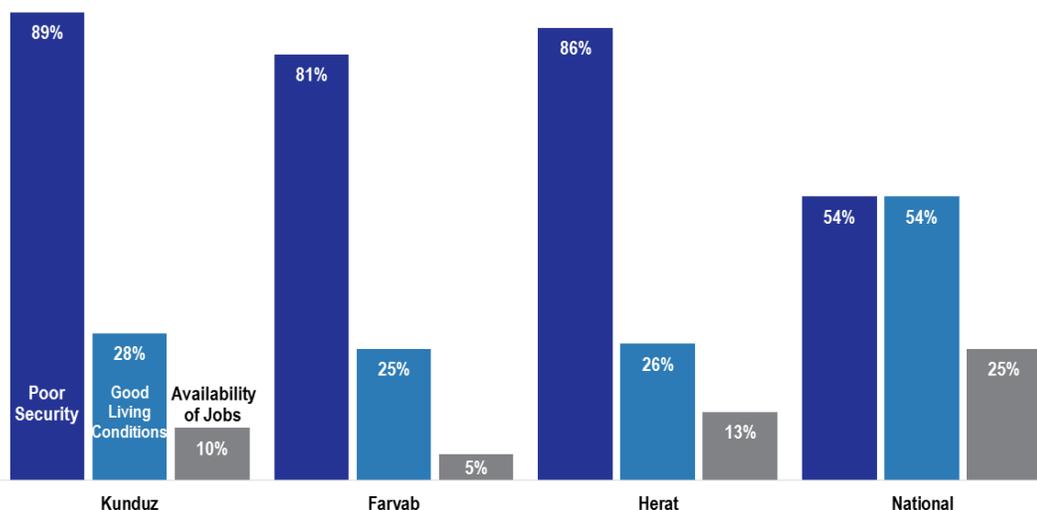
Negative perceptions of the Afghan economy in general do not always equate to poor household financial conditions. Parwan is the exception, where a majority of residents say that both Afghanistan's economy and their household's financial situation are poor. Across the country, 42 percent say their household's financial situation is moderate, 31 percent say it is poor, and 27 percent say it is good or excellent. Afghans in Parwan (58%), Logar (53%) and Zabul (50%) most often say the financial situation of their household is 'poor.' The weak economy and lack of jobs created hardships for many Afghans and had a negative effect on their overall living conditions. Nevertheless, the majority of Afghans say the availability of food (61%) and water (64%) is good. However, the availability of clean drinking water is reported to have decreased from 72 percent in November 2014 to 64 percent in September 2015.

Afghans' opinions of services in their village impacts how they assess their overall living conditions. In September 2014, when the availability of services was rated as 'good' by the plurality of Afghans, opinions about living conditions were also positive – nearly three-fourths (73%) said their living conditions were good. This has declined to 54 percent in the current wave. People typically blame the government for decreases in the availability of services. Thus, consistent with the decline in perceptions of the availability of jobs and water, we also see a substantial decrease in the percentage of Afghans with the view that the country is going in the right direction.

Exploratory regression analysis shows that perceptions of the economy impact views of the government. Afghans who say their household financial situation and Afghanistan's financial situation is good or excellent are more likely to say the country is headed in the right direction. Accordingly, Afghans who say their household financial situation and Afghanistan's economic situation are bad are more likely to say the country is headed in the wrong direction (Appendix A).

¹⁴ The availability of jobs is reported as a combination of "very" and "somewhat" responses.

Afghans in provinces that most frequently report **poor security** from crime and violence report having **good living conditions** and **availability of jobs** less frequently than Afghans overall. This trend is most pronounced in Kunduz, Faryab and Herat.



A Spearman’s Rho correlation was conducted to explore the relationship between security, the availability of jobs and food, overall living conditions, and Afghans’ ability to afford the items they need. The test showed a significant correlation ($p < .01$) between the variables (see Appendix B). This indicates that areas that are less secure also face hardships in terms of economic opportunities. Of Afghans who report that security from crime and violence is ‘very bad’ ($n=380$), 62 percent also say that the availability of jobs is ‘very bad’ in their area and nearly one third (31%) say they have difficulty affording the things they want and need. A similar trend is seen among Afghans who say security from the Taliban and other armed groups is ‘very bad’ ($n=436$), of whom 57 percent say living conditions are very bad and 34 percent say they have difficulty affording the things they want and need.

As the Taliban continue their offensive and the presence of other insurgent groups such as Da’esh continues to increase, it is likely that security will continue to deteriorate, making overall living conditions even more difficult for Afghans. If the government is not able to make progress in the areas of economy and security, its approval rating will likely continue to decline.

Perceptions of Security

In December 2014, ISAF officially ended its mission in Afghanistan and started drawing down the number of troops to support the smaller Resolute Support mission. The current fighting season is the first fighting period since 2001 that the Afghan security forces have led security operations in Afghanistan. To date, things have not gone well. The current fighting season has been described as one of the bloodiest in the last decade. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), there has been a 23 percent increase in casualties among women and a 13 percent increase in casualties among children, compared to the previous year.¹⁵ Insurgents have also taken control of areas that were previously held by the government. Many areas in the north, south, and around Kabul have experienced an increase in Taliban presence especially in areas including, but not limited to, districts in Kunduz, Badakhshan, Helmand, Herat, and rural areas of Kabul.

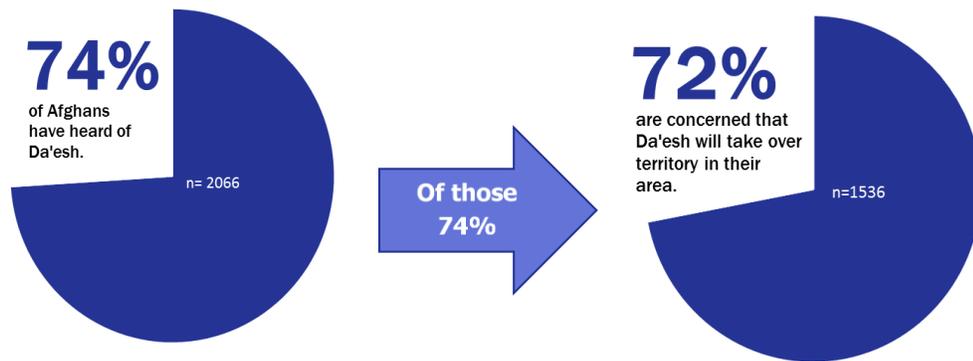
Consistent with the Taliban offensive and fighting around the country, there has been a decline in security. In November 2014, only 39 percent said security from crime and violence was bad, but, in September of 2015, more than half (54%) say security from crime and violence is bad. Fifty-five percent also say security from the Taliban and other armed groups is bad. Areas most likely to report poor security from crime and violence are Kunduz (89%), Herat (86%), Faryab (81%), and Nangarhar (77%). Similarly, residents in Nangarhar (90%), Kunduz (84%), and Herat (84%) say security from the Taliban and other armed groups is poor. This is consistent with reports of increased insurgency presence, drone strikes, and fighting in these provinces.

Over the last few months, various drone strikes have been conducted in Nangarhar in an effort to address insurgent activities. In the month leading up to the Afghan Futures Wave 8 fieldwork (September 2015), drone strikes were conducted in various districts in Nangarhar, including Achin, Haskamina, and Sherzad. In Faryab, insurgents have attacked Afghan military convoys and attempted to kill Afghanistan's First Vice President, Abdul Dostum. Kunduz has also been hit hard by the Taliban. By July, the Taliban controlled at least 80 villages in the province.¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that opinions about security presented here were collected prior to the Taliban taking over Kunduz City. Opinions about security and the government will be affected by this incident and may turn even more negative. However, some qualitative discussion with D3 subsidiary ACSOR-Surveys' field team members suggests that attitudes about the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces may improve now that Kunduz is back under government control.

¹⁵ UNAMA. "Civilian casualties remain at record high levels in first half of 2015." <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16289&LangID=E> (accessed November 3, 2015).

¹⁶ Tolo News. "Taliban seize control of several villages in Kunduz." <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/20636-taliban-seize-control-of-several-villages-in-kunduz-officials> (accessed October 29, 2015).

In November 2014, 34 percent of Afghans felt the Taliban was growing stronger. By September 2015, 52 percent of Afghans said the Taliban had grown stronger. Residents in several provinces report with high frequency that the Taliban has grown stronger over the last year. Afghans in Daykundi (91%), Zabul (82%), Kunduz (74%), Faryab (73%), and Wardak (70%) most often say that the Taliban has grown stronger. These areas also have reported increased insurgent presence and fighting in their area. Da'esh is also a concern for Afghans. Three-fourths of Afghans say they have heard of Da'esh. Of those who have heard of Da'esh (n=1,536), 72 percent say they are concerned that Da'esh will take over territory in their area.



Afghans believe that securing the country is the responsibility of the government. Thus, when security worsens, so do perceptions of the government. Exploratory regression analysis reveals that Afghans' concerns that Da'esh will take control over territory in their area does not impact views of the direction the country is going. Nevertheless, views about the Taliban do affect opinions about the direction of the country. Afghans who say the Taliban are becoming stronger and that security from violence and crime is bad are more likely to say the country is going in the wrong direction (Appendix A, Model 1). It is possible that concerns about Da'esh taking over territory do not impact views about the direction Afghanistan is going because Afghans' experiences of Da'esh remain relatively few. Many Afghans hear about the group through media, but few have actually experienced Da'esh presence or activities in their area. Conversely, the Taliban has had a long standing presence in Afghanistan and they have made large gains in recent months. Thus, the threat of the Taliban getting stronger and taking over territory in the country is perceived as more real than the threat of Da'esh doing the same.

Appendix A: Regression Analysis

Regression Model: Opinions of the direction the country is going, security and conditions in the village

q1NET ~ q19_NET - + q5a_NET - + q5b_NET - + q38_NET - + q39_NET - + m6 - + d9a_NET - + q2a_NET - + q2b_NET - + q2c_NET - + q2d_NET -

	B	SE	Sig	95% CI for odds ratio		
				Odds Ratio	Lower	Upper
(Intercept -	-3.72	0.22	*	0.02	0.02	0.04
q19_NET – Taliban Weaker/Same NET	0.42	0.15	*	1.53	1.15	2.03
q5a_NET – Ghani Favorable NET	0.67	0.19	*	1.96	1.34	2.87
q5b_NET – Abdullah Favorable NET	0.31	0.17		1.36	0.97	1.92
q38_NET – Afg economy Excellent/Good	0.37	0.17	*	1.45	1.05	2.01
q39_NET – HH economy Excellent/Good	0.52	0.16	*	1.68	1.23	2.3
m6 - Urban	-0.42	0.19	*	0.66	0.45	0.96
d9a_NET - Tajik	-0.41	0.18	*	0.66	0.46	0.95
d9a_NET - Uzbek	-0.07	0.3		0.93	0.52	1.66
d9a_NET - Hazara	-0.21	0.39		0.81	0.38	1.73
d9a_NET - Other/Unknown	-1.22	0.54	*	0.29	0.1	0.85
q2a_NET – Overall living conditions Good NET	1.31	0.18	*	3.72	2.59	5.34
q2b_NET – security from crime/violence Good NET	0.64	0.18	*	1.9	1.35	2.68
q2c_NET – availability of jobs Good NET	0.59	0.14	*	1.81	1.38	2.37
q2d_NET - infrastructure Good NET	0.67	0.19	*	1.95	1.36	2.81

Appendix B: Correlations

Correlation between security, the availability of jobs and food, overall living conditions, and Afghans' ability to afford the items they need

		How would you rate the following... Security from crime and violence	How would you rate the following... Security from the Taliban and other armed groups	Would you rate the following... Your living conditions overall	Would you rate the following... The availability of jobs / economic opportunities	How would you rate the following... The availability of food	How would you rate the following... Your ability to afford the price of things you want and need	
Spearman's rho	How would you rate the following... Security from crime and violence	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.440**	.515**	.282**	.266**	.240**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989
	How would you rate the following... Security from the Taliban and other armed groups	Correlation Coefficient	.440**	1.000	.208**	.139**	.269**	.269**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989
	Would you rate the following... Your living conditions overall	Correlation Coefficient	.515**	.208**	1.000	.414**	.336**	.401**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
		N	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989
	Would you rate the following... The availability of jobs / economic opportunities	Correlation Coefficient	.282**	.139**	.414**	1.000	.241**	.304**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
		N	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989
	How would you rate the following... The availability of food	Correlation Coefficient	.266**	.269**	.336**	.241**	1.000	.435**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
		N	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989
	How would you rate the following... Your ability to afford the price of things you want and need	Correlation Coefficient	.240**	.269**	.401**	.304**	.435**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
		N	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989	1989

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TALIBAN AND DA'ESH: A GROWING CHALLENGE TO AFGHAN SECURITY

On September 28, 2015, Taliban forces launched a multi-front attack on the city of Kunduz, forcing the retreat of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and displacing thousands of residents. The Taliban held much of Kunduz for two weeks until a joint military effort by ANDSF, U.S., and coalition forces dislodged the remaining fighters.¹⁷ In nearby Badakhshan province, the Taliban had already expanded its territory through its conquest of Wurduj district.¹⁸



At the same time, Kabulis queued at passport and visa offices in an attempt to escape the Taliban's violent summer offensive that saw multiple bombing attacks in the capital targeting civilians, police, and remaining U.N. and international troop contingents. In the north, Vice President Dostum's August campaign in Faryab to rout foreign fighters unraveled necessitating his return to the region¹⁹ in October to lead the military campaign against insurgents.²⁰ In the south, the Taliban's conquest of Musa Qala and Sangin districts in Helmand province prompted

¹⁷ Goldstein, Joseph. "Taliban Overrun Remote District in Northeastern Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, June 6, 2015. Accessed November 2, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/world/asia/taliban-overrun-remote-district-in-northeastern-afghanistan.html>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hashemi, Mohamed Reza. "Dostum Motivates Troops in Jawzjan." TOLO News. October 20, 2015. Accessed October 20, 2015. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21969-dostum-motivates-troops-in-jawzjan>.

²⁰ Ibrahimkhail, Shakila. "Dostum Arrives at Faryab Frontline." TOLO News. August 21, 2015. Accessed August 21, 2015. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21013-dostum-arrives-at-faryab-frontline>.

the redeployment of British special forces and engendered the announcement of plans to extend the duration of British presence in Afghanistan.^{21,22}

News reports now suggest that the fighting has reached Helmand's provincial capital, Lashkar Gah²³, where a Taliban victory would effectuate control of Helmand province. In the east, the rise of Da'esh has led to internecine conflict amongst the Taliban, Da'esh, local militias, and government forces putting civilians in the middle of the conflict and leading to the mass displacement of residents.^{24,25} In response to these developments, the Obama administration announced that nearly ten thousand U.S. military troops would remain in Afghanistan until the end of his term.²⁶

²¹ Stanekzai, Mohammed. "U.S. Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan, Taliban Grab District." Reuters. August 26, 2015. Accessed August 26, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/26/us-afghanistan-attack-idUSKCN0QV13E20150826>.

²² Brown, Larisa. "Back to Hel: British Special Forces Are Set to Return to Helmand in Desperate Bid to Defeat Resurgent Taliban." Daily Mail, October 15, 2015. Accessed October 15, 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3274531/British-special-forces-set-return-Helmand-desperate-bid-defeat-resurgent-Taliban.html>.

²³ Rasmussen, Sune. "Taliban Threaten Southern Afghan City of Lashkar Gah." The Guardian. October 20, 2015. Accessed October 20, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/20/taliban-threaten-southern-afghan-city-of-lashkar-gah>.

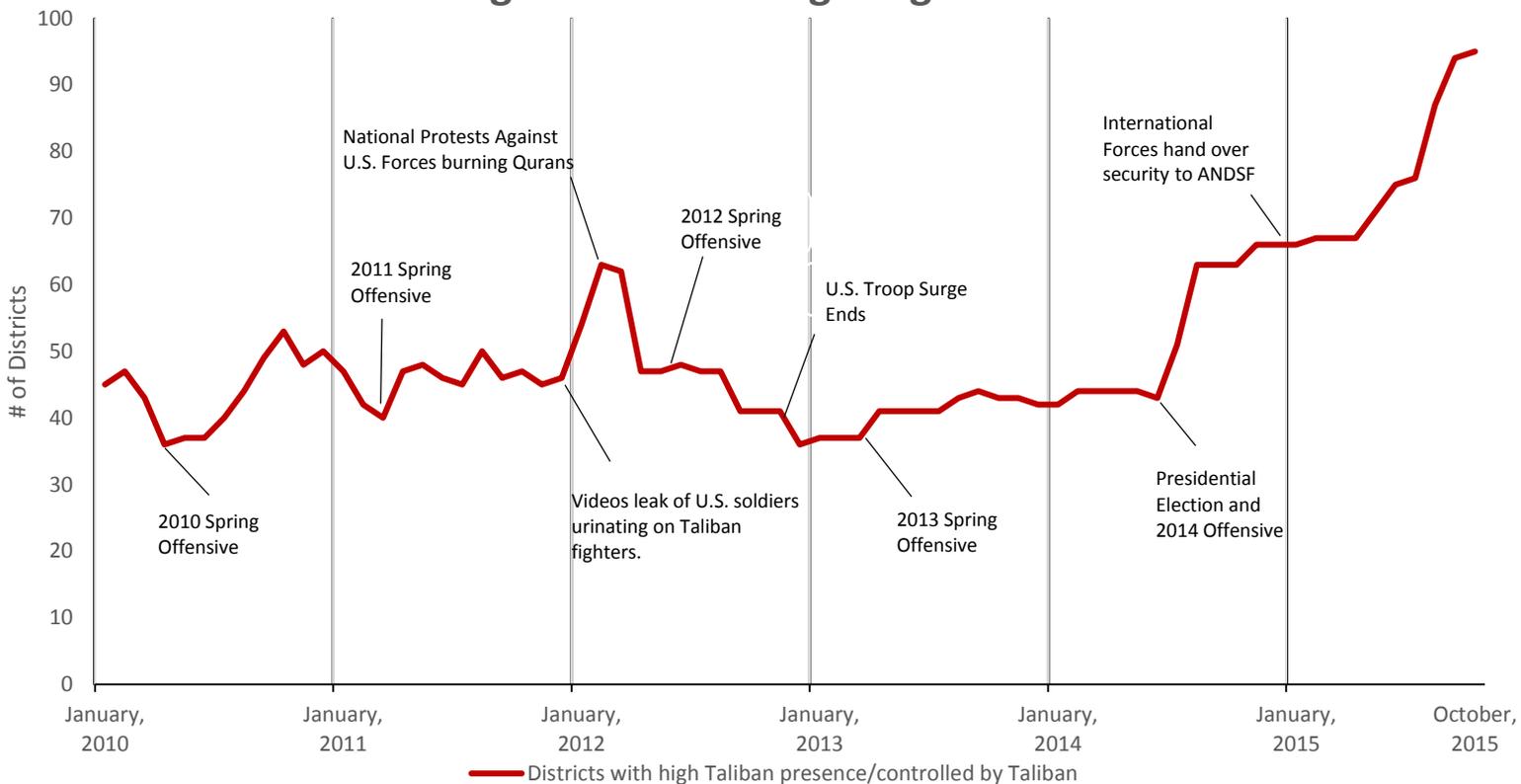
²⁴ Ibrahimkhail, Shakila. "Nangarhar Residents Consider Taking Up Arms To Fight Insurgents." TOLO News. September 18, 2015. Accessed September 18, 2015. <http://mobile.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21454-nangarhar-residents-consider-taking-up-arms-to-fight-insurgents>.

²⁵ "Hundreds of Families Displaced After Taliban and Daesh Clash in Nangarhar." TOLO News. June 15, 2015. Accessed June 15, 2015. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/20021-hundreds-of-families-displaced-after-taliban-and-daesh-clash-in-nangarhar>.

²⁶ Rosenberg, Matthew. "In Reversal, Obama Says U.S. Soldiers Will Stay in Afghanistan to 2017." *The New York Times*, October 15, 2015. Accessed October 15, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?_r=0.

While a continued international military presence may improve security in the short-term, the Ghani administration has an uphill battle to win back the confidence of the Afghan population. The 2015 Afghan Futures Survey reveals growing dissatisfaction with the security situation in Afghanistan and provides insight into the presence of and opinions towards Da'esh in Afghanistan. The interviews were conducted in September 2015, prior to the fall of Kunduz, and it is likely that since that time perceptions of security and the government have further deteriorated. The recapture of Kunduz may improve some perceptions of ANDSF capability, but overall confidence that the government will be able to win a protracted conflict or force the Taliban to the negotiating table have likely been harmed.

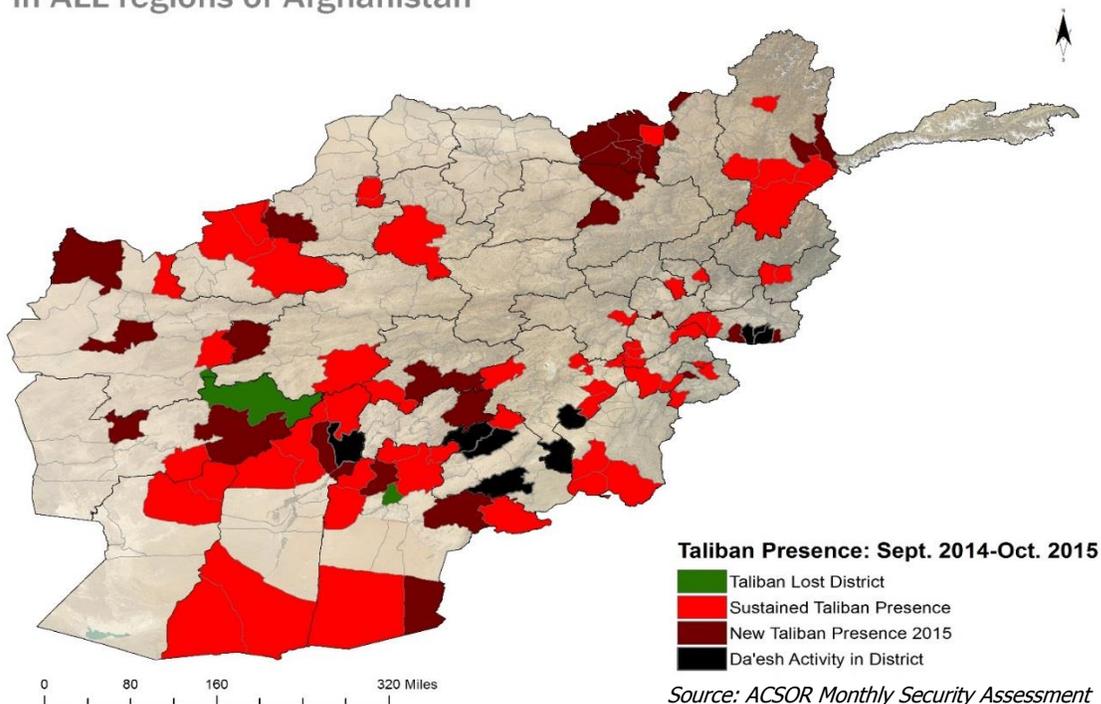
The Taliban's 2014 offensive began a **momentum shift** that has continued through to the 2015 fighting season



The Taliban's Public Relations Victory

The drawdown of international troops in 2015 was accompanied by a rise in Taliban and anti-government activity throughout the country. However, the scale and the success of the offensive seems to have been stronger than anticipated. According to the *Long War Journal*, the Taliban now controls or contests 70 districts within Afghanistan.²⁷ These areas of control mirror D3 subsidiary ACSOR-Surveys' qualitative monthly district accessibility assessments but,²⁸ as of October 2015, ACSOR's reports indicate that the Taliban actually is present in or controls approximately 90 of the 409²⁹ districts in Afghanistan. The expansion of territory under Taliban influence is not localized to a particular region of the country although the south and central regions have seen the largest increases in Taliban and Da'esh presence.

Since the 2015 security handover, the Taliban has gained ground in ALL regions of Afghanistan



²⁷ Roggio, Bill, and Caleb Weiss. "Taliban Controls or Contests Scores of Districts in Afghanistan." *The Long War Journal*. October 5, 2015. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/taliban-controls-or-contests-scores-of-districts-in-afghanistan.php>.

²⁸ To protect the safety of ACSOR interviewers and supervisors, ACSOR conducts a monthly security assessment for each district of Afghanistan to determine which districts should be avoided due to concerns for interviewer safety and security. ACSOR managers speak with supervisors for each province and discuss the security situation within each district and reasons for insecurity.

²⁹ The number of districts is taken from the CSO 2015-2016 results. Urban Kabul districts are aggregated into one district.

This shift in momentum has been a massive propaganda victory for the Taliban. Results from the 2015 Afghan Futures Survey reveal that only 23 percent of Afghans now believe the country is headed in the right direction. This is down from 61 percent in November 2014, which reflected increased optimism following the presidential election. This decrease is fueled by a confluence of factors including poor perceptions of the current administration, worsening security, and a loss of jobs caused by declining donor spending.³⁰



Photo Credit: Nazir Ekhlash of ACSOR

From a security perspective, the increasingly pessimistic views of the direction of the country are driven in part by Afghan's perceptions of a lack of rule of law, a resurgent Taliban, and public perceptions that security forces suffer from a lack of training, insufficient access to equipment, and corruption. When asked about security from crime and violence in their village or neighborhood, 46 percent state that security is "good", down from 60 percent in 2014. The diminished security situation is being felt mostly by rural Afghans outside the capital, with 42 percent of those living outside of Kabul stating that security from crime and violence is good compared to 68 percent of those living in Kabul province.

Similarly, the proportion believing security from the Taliban and other armed groups is "good" is down from 62 percent in 2014 to 45 percent in 2015. Again, those living outside the capital are feeling the impact of a Taliban push, with 41 percent of those living outside Kabul stating that

³⁰ Robertson, Nic. "Failing Afghan Economy Helping Taliban Return to Power - CNN.com." CNN. October 9, 2015. Accessed October 9, 2015. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/09/asia/afghanistan-kabul-taliban-robertson/>.

security from the Taliban and other armed groups is “good” compared to 66 percent of those living in Kabul.

In addition to pessimism about the country’s current security situation, Afghans are not optimistic about the ANDSF’s ability to provide security in the coming year. The survey results show that 24 percent of Afghans believe that a year from now their security from the Taliban and other armed groups will be better, while 26 percent believe security from crime and violence will be better. These figures are down from 53 percent and 58 percent, respectively, in the 2014 survey.

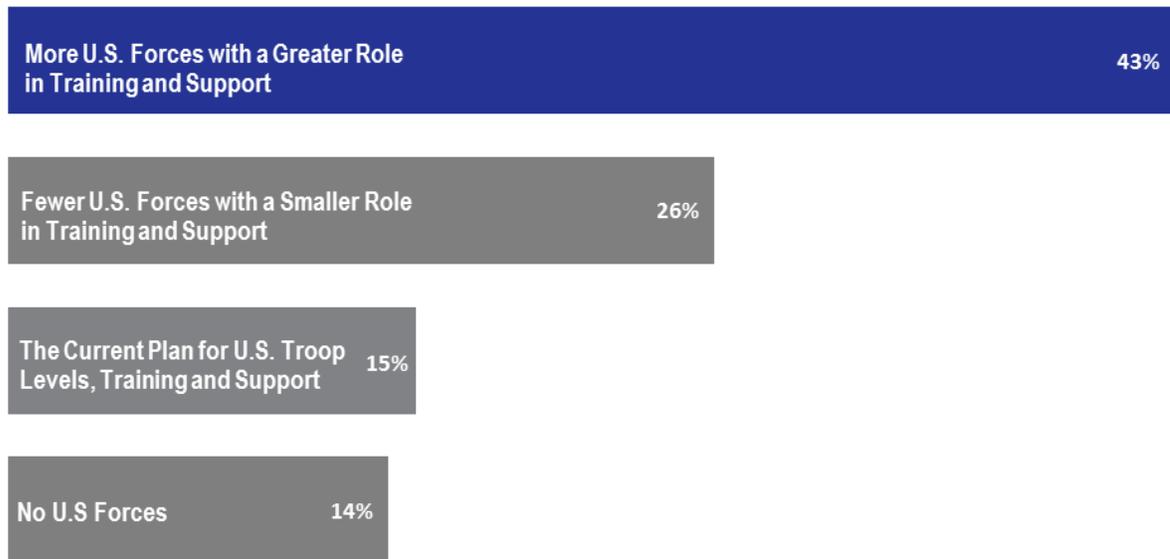


Photo Credit: Nazir Ekhlash of ACSOR

This rapid degeneration of the security situation has shifted perspectives on the strength of the Taliban. Currently, slightly more than half of Afghans (52%) believe that the Taliban has grown stronger over the last 12 months, up from 33 percent in November 2014. This shift in perception is not confined to one area of the country, with no region of the country having less than 40 percent of the population believing the Taliban has grown stronger. Additionally, there is no difference in perceptions of the increased Taliban strength between men and women, or urban and rural respondents.

The rapid increase in terrain controlled by the Taliban has shaken confidence in the ability of the ANDSF. Prior to the 2015 security transition, nearly three out of four Afghans believed that the ANDSF had the training necessary to protect Afghanistan. With the reduction in forces and assistance, only 56 percent of Afghans now believe the ANDSF have the training necessary to protect the country. Afghans believe that international forces should be involved in training Afghan security forces past 2016. Survey results indicate that 57 percent of Afghans believe that international forces should have a “major role” in training and 30 percent believe that international forces should have a “minor role”. Furthermore, 64 percent believe that international forces should provide equipment to security forces. This desire for international support for the ANDSF translates into support for U.S. military forces and other coalition forces in the country. In fact, 68 percent of Afghans support the presence of U.S. military forces in their country and only 14 percent of Afghans believe that there should be no U.S. forces in Afghanistan. However, it must be noted that the Southwest region, only half (51%) of the residents support the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and 64 percent of residents want to see a reduction or total withdrawal of U.S. troops.

A plurality of Afghans would like to see an increase U.S. forces and an increased role in training and support for counter-insurgancy in Afghanistan.



In addition to the belief that the ANDSF needs more training, Afghans are concerned about rampant corruption within the security forces. The 2015 Afghan Futures data shows that 73 percent of Afghans believe that corruption in the police force in their area is a large or moderate problem, a finding that is consistent with previous iterations of the Afghan Futures Survey. These views of corruption are supported by recent reports of commanding officers creating “ghost soldiers” as a means to collect additional money.³¹ Morale within the security forces is also low as new payment schemes make it difficult to collect salaries and threats against ANDSF members’ families has led to mass desertion, particularly amongst the Afghan police force.³²

³¹ Hicks, Josh. "U.S. Might Be Paying 'ghost Workers' in Afghanistan." *Washington Post*, March 20, 2014. Accessed March 20, 2014. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/federal-eye/wp/2014/03/20/u-s-might-be-paying-ghost-workers-in-afghanistan-security-forces/>.

³² Smith, Josh. "Tide of Desertions — among Highest in Recent History — Strains Afghan Forces." *Stars and Stripes*, September 3, 2015. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/tide-of-desertions-among-highest-in-recent-history-strains-afghan-forces-1.366071>.

Reports of Da'esh Presence May Be Exaggerated, But Should Not Be Ignored

Soon after the handover of responsibility for security to the ANDSF in January, Afghan media outlets reported beheadings, kidnappings, and sightings of Da'esh flags almost weekly. The group rapidly established a presence in Zabul and Nangarhar provinces. To date, Da'esh is reported to have killed an estimated 600 or more civilians and displaced several hundred more in Nangarhar province alone.³³ The most brazen of these attacks was a suicide bombing in Jalalabad that killed 34 and injured more than 100 civilians.³⁴ In Zabul province, Da'esh reportedly abducted and executed 30 ethnic Hazaras on the Kabul-Kandahar road. These high profile attacks have established Da'esh as a destabilizing force in these two provinces.

Of the three quarters of Afghans who have heard of Da'esh, less than 3% state that people in their community have a positive view of the group.

The emergence of Da'esh in Afghanistan has led to an intricate web of allies and enemies. In response to the security threat Da'esh poses and fearing a rapid unfettered military advance like the one seen by Da'esh in Iraq, the ANDSF and the U.S. launched large scale offensives in Nangarhar and Zabul. In addition to support for the ANDSF, the U.S. has launched drone strikes targeting Da'esh strongholds and key leaders.³⁵ Fearing a challenge to their power in the region, especially after news was revealed of the death of Mullah Omar, the Taliban launched its own offensive against Da'esh forces in the areas of their historic power base. Other groups such as Hezb-i-Islami and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan have attempted to ride the coattails of Da'esh and have pledged allegiances and provide fighters, resources, and safe-havens.

As in Iraq, Da'esh has launched a media campaign to demonstrate its strength and instill fear in the population. Since first emerging in Afghanistan in 2015, Da'esh followed this strategy by posting videos showing its fighters beheading civilians and members of the Taliban.³⁶ In the most grisly of these videos, Da'esh planted explosives in the ground and made victims sit on them before detonating them.³⁷ Survey data show that this messaging campaign is reaching the general

³³ Sahil, Mirwais. "Daesh Kills 600 Afghans, Operate Prisons in Nangarhar." TOLO News. September 10, 2015. Accessed September 10, 2015. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21326-daesh-kills-600-afghans-operate-prisons-in-nangarhar>.

³⁴ TOLO News. "Daesh Claims Responsibility For Deadly Jalalabad Attack." TOLO News. April 18, 2015. Accessed April 18, 2015. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/19114-daesh-claims-responsibility-for-deadly-jalalabad-attack>.

³⁵ Khan, Ismail. "ISIS Leaders Reported Killed in Drone Strike in Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, July 9, 2015. Accessed July 9, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/10/world/asia/us-drone-strike-said-to-kill-gul-zaman-and-shahidullah-shahid-of-islamic-state.html?_r=0.

³⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). "Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict." United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. August 1, 2015. Accessed August 28, 2015.

³⁷ "PressTV. "ISIL Releases Gruesome Execution Video." Press TV. August 10, 2015. Accessed November 3, 2015. <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2015/08/10/424096/ISIL-Afghanistan-Taliban-Pakistan-terrorist-group>.

population as 74 percent of Afghans report that they have heard of Da'esh. Of Afghans aware of Da'esh (n=1,536), one quarter have watched Da'esh videos via mobile phone or the Internet.

Da'esh's fear campaign appears to be working and Da'esh has become a particular concern to the Afghan population. Of the 74 percent of Afghans that have heard of Da'esh, 72 percent are concerned that Da'esh will successfully take control of territory in their area. This concern is not concentrated in one area with a majority of Afghans in almost all regions of the country fearing Da'esh capturing territory in their area. This concern was felt firsthand during the fieldwork in which ACSOR data collection staff were reported by villagers and arrested under suspicion of conducting work for Da'esh. All data collection staff were later released without incident.

While Afghans fear Da'esh, they do not support the group. To elicit Afghans' views of Da'esh, respondents were asked an indirect question about the general opinion of their community towards Da'esh. Results indicate that, of Afghans who have heard of Da'esh, just 4 percent state that people in their community generally have a positive opinion of Da'esh. When those who reported negative opinions of Da'esh were asked the reason for these opinions, the top two responses are that Da'esh is killing innocent people (50%) and that members of Da'esh are not real Muslims (15%). Conversely, of those who report that people in their community have a positive opinion of Da'esh (n=60), a plurality (28%) state that it is because Da'esh implements Islamic rules properly.

In addition to showing the violent tactics of the group, the Da'esh media campaign has attempted to demonstrate a formidable countrywide presence. A recent United Nations report stated that Da'esh has an established presence in 25 of 34 provinces. However, the actual number of Da'esh contingents is unknown and current estimates suggest that there are 2,000 to 3,000 Da'esh militants in the country.³⁸

In an effort to understand the extent of Da'esh presence in Afghanistan, the 2015 Afghan Futures Survey asked respondents a series of yes/no questions about whether they had seen common propaganda items in their area in the past six months. Propaganda items included sermons supporting Da'esh, Da'esh black flags, Da'esh graffiti, Da'esh media (DVDs, pamphlets, audio/video cassettes, radio broadcasts), night letters, and members of Da'esh (fighters, recruiters, etc.).³⁹ The total number of items to which respondents stated "yes" were summed.⁴⁰ If the respondent had not heard of Da'esh, he/she was given a score of 0 items seen or heard. Results from this analysis were averaged at the provincial level.

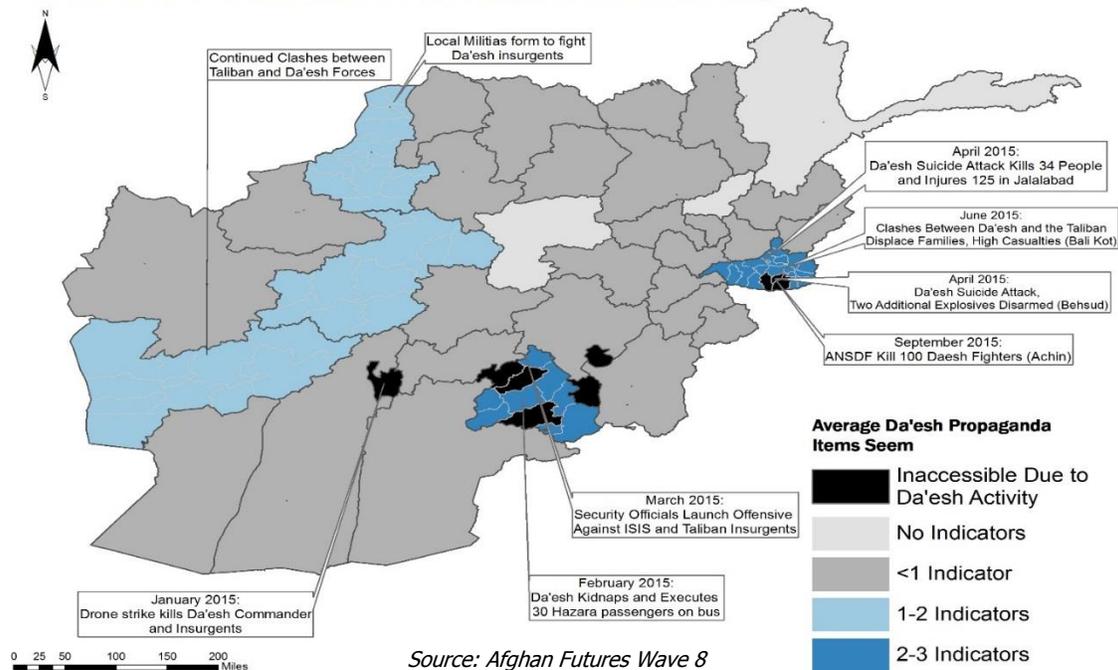
³⁸ Zahid, Noor. "IS Website Highlights Increased Militant Presence in Afghanistan." Voice of America. October 28, 2015. Accessed October 28, 2015. <http://m.voanews.com/a/is-website-highlights-increased-militant-presence-in-afghanistan/3026845.html>.

³⁹ The propaganda items selected for this question were based on previous ACSOR research.

⁴⁰ As internet videos are not indicative of a physical presence in the province, this item was left out of the final count analysis.

An argument can be made that these results will be distorted since data collectors' access to some districts is limited. However, results from this analysis are reflective of news reporting and ANDSF military operations, with residents of Nangarhar seeing an average of just over three Da'esh propaganda materials and residents of Zabul being exposed to an average of two items. As such, these results can be interpreted to some extent as indicators of a concentrated Da'esh presence and operations in particular provinces.

Indicators of Da'esh are highest in Nangarhar and Zabul but there are indications of a western front forming



Viewing other provinces in this light, the provinces of Faryab, Farah, and Ghor in the western region of the country show signs of increased Da'esh activity. This phenomenon may be driven in part by an influx of foreign fighters from Uzbekistan and the recent allegiance between Da'esh and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.⁴¹ While other provinces saw at least some level of Da'esh presence, it does not seem to indicate a level that would currently be a threat to Afghan security. For example, residents of Kabul have been exposed to Da'esh graffiti⁴² but this has not

⁴¹ Cahall, Bailey, and Neeli Shah. "IMU Members Pledge Support to ISIS; Pakistani Delegation Heads to Saudi Arabia; Gujarat Passes Contentious Anti-Terror Bill." *Foreign Policy*. March 31, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2015. http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/31/imu-members-pledge-support-to-isis-pakistani-delegation-heads-to-saudi-arabia-gujarat-passes-contentious-anti-terror-bill/?wp_login_redirect=0.

⁴² Rahimi, Sangar (SangarRahimi) ""@euamiri: ISIS graffiti on Kabul university wall? It says "long live Daesh". #Kabul #Afghanistan #ISIS " October 20, 2014, 5:18 AM, Tweet

translated into a Da'esh power base in the province. Only in the provinces of Badakhshan, Bamyan, and Panjshir have no respondents reported seeing indicators of Da'esh.

Table 1: Indicators of Da'esh

	Have seen	Have Not Seen Item	Have Not Heard of Da'esh
Physical Da'esh Media (DVDs, pamphlets, audio/video cassettes, radio broadcasts)	17%	56%	
Black Da'esh Flags	16%	58%	26%
Da'esh Graffiti	7%	66%	
Sermons Supporting Da'esh	7%	66%	
Night Letters	6%	67%	
Members of Da'esh	5%	68%	

*Figures will not sum to 100% due to exclusion of non-response and rounding

In addition to using reported exposure to Da'esh propaganda as a proxy for relative presence of Da'esh in provinces, it can also be used to understand whom these campaigns are targeting. An exploratory regression analysis was conducted with the count of Da'esh activities used as the dependent variable. Independent variables that were significant would help reveal any segments of the population that are predicted to receive more or less Da'esh propaganda. Afghans receiving more Da'esh materials might be targets of Da'esh's media campaign and recruitment wing.

Da'esh propaganda is reaching poorly educated, low income Pashtun youth living in insecure border provinces in the east.

Results from exploratory regression analysis indicate that the Da'esh propaganda campaign is reaching its intended targets. Those who are predicted to have greater exposure to Da'esh propaganda items are poorly educated, low-income Pashtun youths living in the border regions in eastern Afghanistan. Furthermore, these target audiences are living in insecure areas who see the national government as corrupt and are willing to cede certain provinces to the Taliban if negotiations require such conditions for a peace settlement to be reached. Needless to say, these results are troubling as many of these residents may see Da'esh as a means of securing an income or as a way to mount an offensive against a central government perceived as being corrupt.

Conclusion

The Afghan government would suffer greatly from another year like 2015, which saw the highest level of Taliban control since ACSOR began district-level accessibility tracking in 2010. In the

coming months, the 2015 fighting season will come to an end. This will give the Afghan government and ANDSF time to reassess their strategy and potentially reverse some of the Taliban's gains. While reports suggest that Da'esh is a growing problem, its presence is primarily confined to Nangarhar and Zabul. However, its growth in the western provinces should be addressed to prevent Da'esh from gaining strength on multiple fronts.

The bigger threat to Afghan security is the resurgence of the Taliban in the south and southeast portions of the country. More than 90 percent of the Afghans surveyed do not want to return to Taliban rule, but they are caught between a government stating that they will punish any that assist the anti-government elements and the Taliban stating they will kill those who do not provide assistance. Which side one supports is not simply about a preference for either side's views or form of government, but is potentially a calculated decision of how to reduce risk to oneself, and one's family and community. Unlike the Taliban, the authority of the central government is built upon a mandate from the population. If perceptions that the government is collapsing increase, then the legitimacy of the central government may come into question prompting portions of the population to join or support the side they believe is destined to win the battle. In order for this fragile government to survive, it must turn the tide in the public relations battle and buttress the public perception of its legitimacy.

Appendix: Regression Analysis

Survey: Linear regression

Number of strata	=	65	Number of obs	=	2,029
Number of PSUs	=	146	Population size	=	2,027.7479
			Design df	=	81
			F(17, 65)	=	6.85
			Prob > F	=	0.0000
			R-squared	=	0.2215

summdaesh	Linearized					[95% Conf. Interval]	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t			
pashdum	.2028367	.0614974	3.30	0.001	.0804762	.3251972	
income	-.0680959	.0244468	-2.79	0.007	-.1167373	-.0194545	
region							
2. Eastern	1.361154	.2799248	4.86	0.000	.8041918	1.918117	
3. South Central	-.0822048	.1093117	-0.75	0.454	-.2997007	.1352912	
4. South Western	-.0995015	.1998698	-0.50	0.620	-.4971798	.2981768	
5. Western	.0868946	.1257758	0.69	0.492	-.1633598	.3371489	
6. Northern	.126602	.1095531	1.16	0.251	-.0913742	.3445783	
7. Central/Hazarjat	.2699904	.1321232	2.04	0.044	.0071066	.5328741	
cede	.2806975	.1124133	2.50	0.015	.0570303	.5043647	
security	-.2840388	.0654493	-4.34	0.000	-.4142623	-.1538153	
crplcl	-.1466472	.0856073	-1.71	0.091	-.3169788	.0236845	
crppol	-.114572	.0807912	-1.42	0.160	-.2753212	.0461772	
crpnat	.208925	.1008356	2.07	0.041	.0082939	.4095562	
quallife	.0160485	.0061085	2.63	0.010	.0038945	.0282025	
educdum	-.1772205	.0677145	-2.62	0.011	-.3119513	-.0424898	
age	-.0039072	.0019013	-2.05	0.043	-.0076902	-.0001241	
urbrur	-.1593698	.1114419	-1.43	0.157	-.3811041	.0623646	
_cons	.4439061	.1983481	2.24	0.028	.0492556	.8385566	

Note: Strata with single sampling unit centered at overall mean.

Variable Description

Pashdum: A binary indicator variable, where Tajik and all other ethnicities are set as the reference category. Pashtun is set as the other category.

Income: This categorical variable of respondent's monthly household income was assumed to be a continuous variable.

Region: A categorical indicator variable for regional area, where Kabul is the reference category.

Cede: A binary indicator variable, where unwillingness to cede provinces as a condition of negotiations is set as the reference category. Pashtun is set as the other category.

Security: A binary indicator variable for levels of perceived security from crime and violence of the police in the area, where "somewhat bad" or "very bad" security is the reference category.

Crplcl: A binary indicator variable for perceived government corruption in the area, where corruption is a "small problem or no problem at all" is the reference category.

CrpPol: A binary indicator variable for levels of perceived corruption of the police in the area, where corruption is a "small problem or no problem at all" is the reference category.

Crpnat: A binary indicator variable for levels of perceived corruption in the national government, where corruption is a "small problem or no problem at all" is the reference category.

Quallife: An index of the Q2 battery list (excluding security from crime and violence). High scores equate to a better quality of life.

Educ dum: A binary indicator variable for educational attainment, where no education is the reference category.

Age: Respondent's reported or estimated age.

UrbRur: A binary indicator variable for urban/rural status, where urban is a reference category.



AFGHAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS AND RECONCILIATION WITH THE TALIBAN

For nearly a decade, the Afghan government and the international community have been attempting to end the country's long-running conflict through a peace agreement with the Taliban. These efforts have met with little success: violence continues and, despite meetings between Taliban and Afghan government representatives in Pakistan and China in 2015,⁴³ a negotiated settlement remains far off.⁴⁴ Despite frustration with the Afghan government, the Taliban remain unpopular with the Afghan people and, while willingness still exists to make concessions in exchange for a peace agreement, support for such concessions has been steadily falling.

Taliban Seen as Less Moderate as They Gain Strength

For the first time in the Afghan Futures Survey series, a majority of Afghans feel that the Taliban are gaining in strength: the 2015 survey found that 52 percent believe the Taliban have gained strength over the past 12 months, 23 percent feel they have grown weaker, and 24 percent think their strength level has stayed the same. This represents a noticeable increase from the November 2014 survey, when only 34 percent perceived the Taliban to have gained in strength over the previous 12 months.

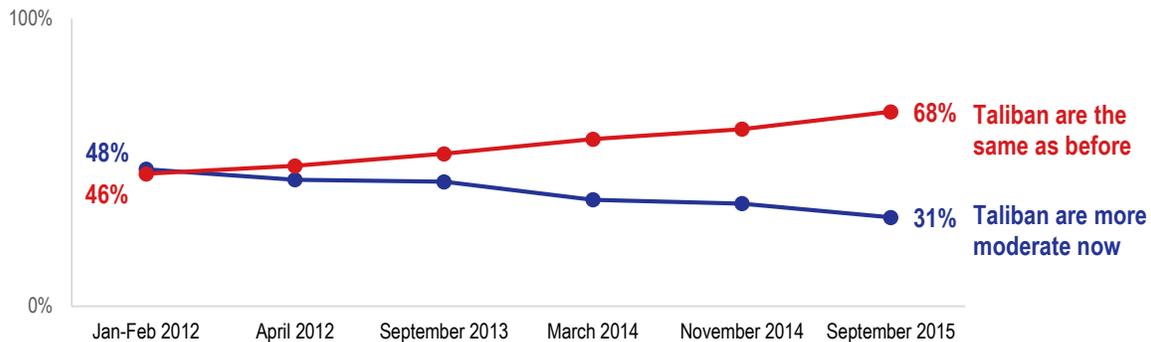
It is not difficult to see why most Afghans believe the Taliban have been growing stronger: 2015 has seen the worst civilian and ANDSF casualties in Afghanistan since the international intervention in 2001, and the Taliban have gained control of territory in the Northern provinces where they previously had relatively little presence. The Afghan military and police had difficulty holding on to rural district centers during the summer fighting season, and October 2015 saw the Taliban's greatest success since their fall from power in 2001: the capture of Kunduz. The ANDSF was able to regain control of the city with NATO air and ground support after several days, but the speed with which the city fell, the difficulty that the ANDSF had in taking it back, and the Taliban's coordination of simultaneous attacks and road blockages in neighboring provinces, showed a high level of skill and sophistication, which delayed ANDSF reinforcement and

⁴³ Khan, Ismail. "Afghanistan and Taliban to Hold Second Round of Talks, Pakistani Officials Say." *The New York Times*, July 28, 2015. Accessed October 28, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/world/asia/afghanistan-and-taliban-to-hold-second-round-of-talks-pakistani-officials-say.html?_r=0.

⁴⁴ Winterbotham, Emily. "Afghanistan's Peace Process: A Long Road Ahead." *The Diplomat*, July 20, 2015. Accessed October 30, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/afghanistans-peace-process-a-long-road-ahead/>.

resupply.⁴⁵ Although this event happened after the conclusion of the 2015 Afghan Futures fieldwork, the stage had been set long before and the dynamics that led to it were well in progress: the Taliban had spent the previous six months of the summer fighting season securing a foothold in the rural districts around the city, largely surrounding it.⁴⁶

Afghans have become less likely to perceive the Taliban as more moderate.



As the Taliban gain in strength, Afghans are less likely to see them as more moderate: 31 percent of respondents expressed this view in 2015, down from 36 percent who felt this way in November 2014, and down sharply from the 48 percent who believed the Taliban were becoming more moderate in 2012. It may be that as the Taliban make territorial gains and more Afghans are able to see their presence and actions firsthand, the actions of its fighters make it more difficult for Afghans to believe that it has become more moderate. The decentralized Taliban command structure in the absence of Mullah Omar’s authority may be allowing younger, more radical junior commanders to undertake extreme and violent actions that alienate a population which might otherwise be sympathetic, or at least willing to compromise, and make concessions to bring the long decades of war to an end. Also, a more successful, resurgent Taliban may see less incentive to moderate itself in order to gain public support when they have achieved more through offensive action.

⁴⁵ Rubin, Alissa J. “Afghan Forces Rally in Kunduz, but Fight Is Far From Decided.” *The New York Times*, October 1, 2015. Accessed October 28, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/02/world/asia/kunduz-taliban-afghanistan.html>.

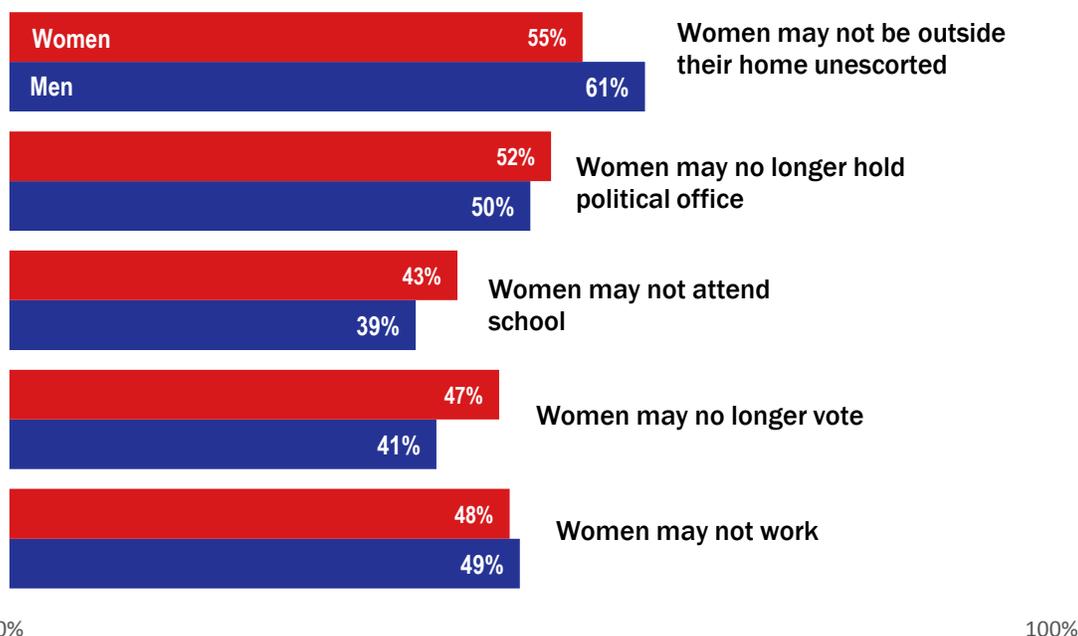
⁴⁶ Ali, Obaid. “The 2015 Insurgency in the North (3): The fall and recapture of Kunduz.” *www.Afghan Analysts.org*. October 16, 2015. Accessed November 1, 2015. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-2015-insurgency-in-the-north-3-the-fall-and-recapture-of-kunduz/>.

Fewer Afghans are Willing to Make Concessions to Taliban

Although the Taliban are seen as becoming stronger, attitudes against them appear to be hardening and fewer Afghans indicate that they are willing to make concessions for a peace agreement. While most Afghans remain willing to make concessions to the Taliban in exchange for peace, support for concessions in exchange for an end to fighting has fallen from the highs found in September 2013, and for the most part remains at levels similar to what they were in late 2014.

Respondents were asked about their willingness to accept various limitations on women's rights in exchange for a peace agreement with the Taliban. The percentage who would be "very" or "somewhat" willing to accept a peace agreement between the government and Taliban under which women were not allowed outside of their homes unescorted has fallen from 65 percent in late 2014 to 58 percent in fall 2015. Support for an agreement under which women are not allowed to attend school fell to 41 percent in the 2015 Survey, down from 46 percent in November 2014, and down further from 53 percent in September 2013.

Women are more likely than **men** to accept certain limitations on their rights in exchange for a peace agreement with the Taliban. There were also noticeable differences in the share of the population that would be willing to accept an agreement under which:



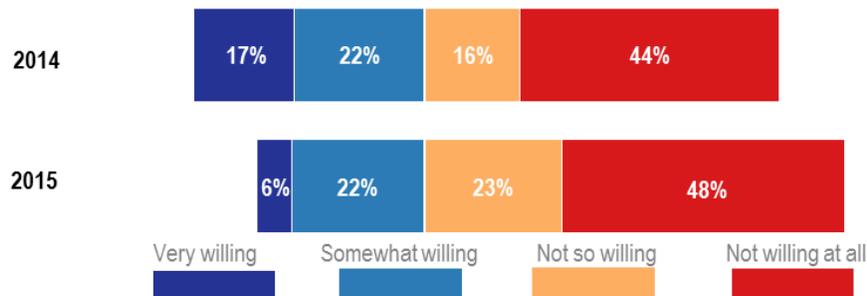
Women remain more willing than men to accept some limitations on their rights in exchange for a peace settlement with the Taliban: women were slightly more willing than men to accept an agreement under which they would not be allowed to attend school or vote, while men were more willing to accept an agreement under which women would not be allowed to leave their

home unescorted. Support for an agreement under which women would not be allowed to leave their home was highest overall, while support for an agreement under which women could not attend school was lowest.

Willingness to make other concessions to the Taliban has been falling since the early waves of the Afghan Futures survey series: as of September 2015, 67 percent of Afghans support allowing the Taliban to hold political office if they agree to stop fighting, down from a high of 75 percent in 2012. Support for allowing the Taliban to join the ANDSF as part of a negotiated peace agreement has fallen sharply, from 59 percent in late 2014 to 45 percent in September 2015, with a majority now unwilling to make this concession (53% “not so willing” or “not willing at all”). Support for such concessions varies widely among the country’s major ethnic groups: among the country’s four largest ethnic groups, Pashtuns are most likely to support negotiating a settlement that allows the Taliban to hold political office (73%), while Tajiks (65%), Hazaras (57%), and Uzbeks (56%) are less likely to support such an agreement.

Support for ceding control over certain provinces to the Taliban has also fallen: only 28 percent would now be “very” or “somewhat” willing to make such a concession, compared with 39 percent who were willing in November 2014. Seventy-one percent are less willing, with 48 percent not being willing at all. Willingness to allow the Taliban to hold political office as part of a peace deal remains higher, with 67 percent feeling that the government should negotiate an agreement in which they are allowed to hold office, though support for this has fallen from a high of 75 percent in April 2012.

Willingness to cede control over certain provinces to the Taliban has dropped.



Afghans Continue to Prefer Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to Taliban

Although support for the government has fallen somewhat, Afghans continue to prefer that the country be ruled by the current government rather than the Taliban: 86 percent prefer the government to the Taliban, down from 92 percent in the 2014 Survey. There has been a small rise in preference for Taliban rule, which now sits at 6 percent, up from 4 percent at the end of 2014, but the basic fact that the vast majority of the Afghan people prefer the current government over a return of the Taliban has not changed.

While the Taliban's battlefield gains and leadership transition do not appear to have secured them much public support, they also do not seem to be bringing a negotiated peace any closer. Previous surveys in the Afghan Futures series have also revealed a dynamic in which the majority of the Afghan public is growing less willing to make concessions to the Taliban in exchange for a peace agreement. This may reflect frustration with the peace process, but it may also be an indication that these trends are creating a dynamic whereas the Taliban gains territory and inflicts ever-higher casualties, the Afghan public will become less willing to negotiate with them or to support government efforts to reach a settlement. Neither a negotiated settlement nor an outright victory by either side appears likely in the short or medium term, and Afghanistan's long conflict seems likely to continue for many years to come.



AFGHAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION AND RETURNEES

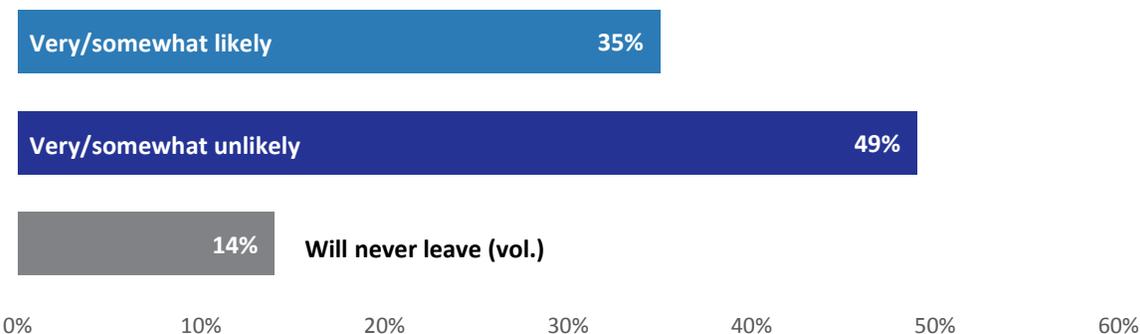
Although often overshadowed by ongoing violence and corruption, the issues of migrants, refugees, and returnees continue to present a major challenge for Afghanistan. Two dynamics have emerged over the past year which merit examination. While more than three decades of war have already caused millions of Afghans to flee abroad, mostly to Pakistan and Iran, but also to Europe, the Gulf States, and North America, evidence indicates that as the Taliban gains strength and the Islamic State, also known as Da'esh, makes inroads into Afghanistan, more Afghans are contemplating leaving, or already attempting to flee the country. Secondly, at the same time, Pakistan has stepped up its repatriation of unregistered Afghan refugees amid intensifying violence on its side of the border. Having nowhere else to go, the refugees are returning to Afghanistan at a time of economic decline and limited job opportunities. Further complicating matters, these crises are taking place amid an environment of diminishing foreign aid and waning international interest in Afghanistan.

The actual numbers of refugees and migrants are uncertain, but it is clear that large numbers of people are involved. As of 2014, there were 1.6 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, with possibly another 1.5 million unregistered.⁴⁷ Population flows back and forth across the border to escape violence or search for work are frequent and difficult to track with any precision. Both the Afghan and Pakistani governments have difficulty controlling their border regions, a prime example being the lawless state of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) on the Pakistani side of the border.

⁴⁷ Blank, Jonah, Christopher Clary and Brian Nichiporuk. Drivers of Long-Term Insecurity and Instability in Pakistan: Urbanization. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014.
http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR644. Also available in print form.

Intentions to Migrate

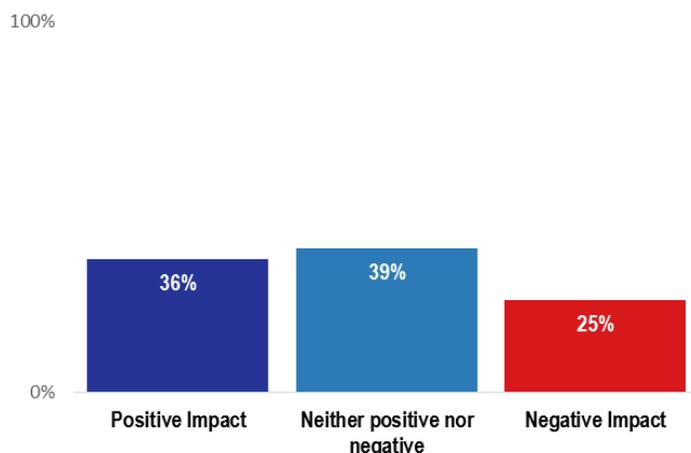
Over a third of Afghans say it is **very or somewhat likely** that they or a family member will attempt to leave the country in the next six months, almost half say it is **unlikely**, and **14%** say they will never leave.



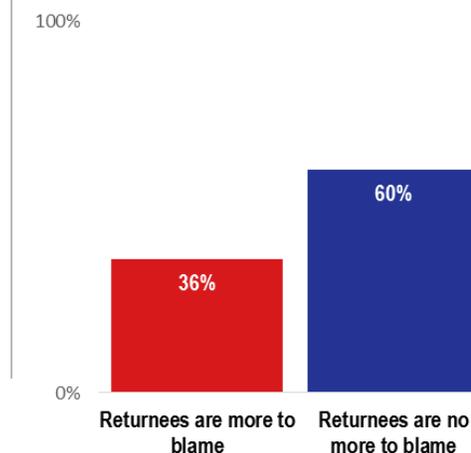
The 2015 Afghan Futures Survey included questions about migration for the first time. When asked how likely it was that the respondent or a family member would attempt to leave Afghanistan within the next six months, 8 percent say it was “very likely”, while 27 percent say it was “somewhat likely”. Forty-nine percent said it was “very” or “somewhat” unlikely, and 14 percent say they would never leave. Respondents were also asked about their views on returnees, and views were mixed: 29 percent feel that returnees were having a “very” or “somewhat” positive impact, 25 percent say returnees were having a “very” or “somewhat” negative impact, and 39 percent report those who have returned as having neither a positive nor a negative impact. When asked whether or not returnees were more or less to blame than other groups for economic problems in Afghanistan, 36 percent say returnees were more to blame, while 60 percent said that returnees were no more to blame than other groups.

Likely Determinants of Migration

Afghans are split as to the economic impact of returnees.



Most Afghans do not blame returnees for economic problems more than other groups.



Exploratory logistic regression was used to evaluate determinants of possible future migrant status using variables captured in the latest wave of Afghan Futures.⁴⁸

The first model seeks to identify likely determinants of future migrant status, based on respondents' perceptions of Taliban strengthening, concern about Da'esh, household economic status, and ethnicity (coded as Other/Unknown vs. Hazara for this model).

Many of the migrants seeking to reach Europe are Afghan, and a large number are from the country's Hazara minority.⁴⁹ The Hazara suffered terribly under Taliban rule in the late 1990s and early 2000s. An Afghan of Hazara ethnicity is 1.74 times more likely than members of the country's other ethnic groups to say that they or someone in their family is considering leaving the country in the coming six months. Due to their Shia faith and different physical appearance from other Afghans, Hazara are especially at risk from violence by Da'esh and the Taliban, especially considering their history as an oppressed minority in Afghanistan. Indeed, Afghans who are concerned about Da'esh gaining territory are 1.66 times more likely to have plans to migrate. However, the expectation that the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) might fail was not a significant factor in explaining plans to migrate.⁵⁰ This suggests that while there is worry that the Unity Government will fail, this concern is not strong enough to prompt Afghans to consider leaving the country.

An Afghan of Hazara ethnicity is 1.74 times more likely than members of the country's other ethnic groups to say that they or someone in their family is considering leaving the country in the coming six months.

⁴⁸ For this analysis, binary net variables for all independent and dependent variables were recoded based off of the original variables from the survey for use in the modeling. The complex design is accounted for in the exploratory models through the survey package in R. Three multi-variable logistic regression models fitted with variables of interest using stepwise Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). Significant predictors at the $\alpha=0.05$ level are included in the final fitted models. The fitted logistic regression model can be expressed as follows: $\text{Migration_Status} \sim \text{Taliban_Stronger} + \text{Daesh_Concern} + \text{Financial_Sit} + \text{Hazara_Ethnicity}$

⁴⁹ Kuzmez, Kevin. "Desperate journeys: Persecuted Hazara flee Afghanistan." Al Jazeera.com. November 1, 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/10/desperate-journeys-persecuted-hazara-flee-afghanistan-151026101701042.html> (accessed November 1, 2015).

⁵⁰ These factors were also included in an initial model, but were ultimately removed according to the stepwise AIC. The initial exploratory model was $\text{Migration_Status} \sim \text{Expects_NUG_Failure} + \text{Taliban_Stronger} + \text{Daesh_Concern} + \text{Financial_Sit} + \text{Nat_Economy_Sit} + \text{Hazara_Ethnicity}$

Afghans who report excellent or good household financial situations are more likely to have plans to leave the country than those with a fair or poor financial situation. A possible explanation is that those with a better financial situation are more likely to have the means to leave the country if the security situation deteriorates, whereas those with fewer financial resources will be more or less trapped. Another possible explanation is that those with higher financial status are more likely to have relatives already living abroad, who might be able to help them emigrate and establish themselves in another country.

Afghans who report excellent or good household financial situations are more likely to have plans to leave the country than those with a fair or poor financial situation.

The second model seeks to ascertain determinants of views of whether returnees are having a positive or negative effect.⁵¹ The results of this model are not particularly surprising: respondents who rate *Afghanistan's* economy as excellent or good are significantly more likely to think that returnees from other countries are having a positive impact, and those who rate their *household's* financial situation as good or excellent are also more likely to think their impact is positive. Those who rate their household's financial situation as "excellent" (3% of the total sample) are most likely to say that migrants are having a "very" or "somewhat" *positive* impact (51%), while those who describe their household's financial situation as "poor" (31% of the total sample) are most likely to say that migrants are having a "very" or "somewhat" *negative* impact (34%). These results are not surprising in the context of a slowing economy and high unemployment: those with more precarious financial situations are most likely to feel negatively about migrants because they are most likely to be in direct competition with them for jobs and resources.

Those with more precarious financial situations are most likely to feel negatively about migrants because they are most likely to be in direct competition with them for jobs and resources.

In contrast, according to the model, ethnicity is not a predictive factor for views on the economic impact of returnees: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and others are not more or less likely to think that returnees were having a positive effect.⁵² This may suggest that no one ethnic group feels itself to be disproportionately impacted by returnees. This suggests that views towards returnees are driven more by economic rather than ethnic motivations.

⁵¹ The final fitted model can be expressed with the following equation: $\text{Migrant_Impact} \sim \text{Financial_Sit} + \text{Nat_Economy_Sit} + \text{Pashtun_Ethnicity}$

⁵² The initial exploratory model was $\text{Migrant_Impact} \sim \text{Financial_Sit} + \text{Blame_Migrants} + \text{Nat_Economy_Sit} + \text{Pashtun_Ethnicity} + \text{Employment_Status}$. Some factors were removed from the model according to the stepwise AIC.

The third and final model seeks to identify factors which might lead respondents to believe that returnees are more to blame for economic problems than other groups.⁵³ Respondents who describe their household's financial situation as excellent or good are more likely to blame returnees for economic problems than those who describe their situation as fair or poor. The seemingly contradictory finding that those with a better financial situation are more likely to think that returnees are having a positive impact while at the same time believing that they are more to blame for economic problems may be due to confounding variables, but identifying these will require further exploratory modeling. One possible explanation is that respondents who are financially better off may believe that migrants are more to blame for economic problems than others, but still feel that their presence is a net positive, perhaps just not as positive as other groups. These findings may also reflect the experience of many less prosperous Afghans as internally displaced people or refugees, who may have had to move in search of safety, arable land, water, or other goods essential to life, and who therefore have sympathy for returnees. In fact, some may even be in a difficult financial situation because they themselves have been forced to migrate.

Views on the economic situation in Afghanistan as a whole are not a significant factor in determining views on whether refugees are more to blame than others for economic problems. Among the country's ethnic groups, only Uzbeks are significantly more likely than Pashtuns to blame returnees more than other groups for economic problems. Tajiks, Hazaras, and others are not significantly more or less likely to do so.⁵⁴

⁵³ The model is expressed as follows: $\text{Blame_Migrants} \sim \text{Financial_Sit} + \text{Nat_Economy_Sit} + \text{Pashtun_Ethnicity}$

⁵⁴ The initial exploratory model was $\text{Blame_Migrants} \sim \text{Financial_Sit} + \text{Migrant_Impact} + \text{Nat_Economy_Sit} + \text{Pashtun_Ethnicity} + \text{Employment_Status}$. Some factors were removed from the model according to the stepwise AIC.

Appendix: Logistic Regression Models

Model 1: Determinants of Migration Status

Migration_Status ~ as_factor(q19_NET) + as_factor(q28_NET) + as_factor(q39_NET) + hazara_NET

	B	SE	Sig	95% CI for odds ratio		
				Odds Ratio	Lower	Upper
(Intercept)	-1.13	0.14	*	0.32	0.25	0.43
(q19_NET)Grown stronger	0.17	0.13		1.18	0.91	1.53
(q28_NET)Concerned	0.51	0.17	*	1.66	1.18	2.34
(q39_NET)Excellent/Good	0.36	0.13	*	1.44	1.11	1.86
hazara_NET	0.55	0.21	*	1.74	1.15	2.63

Model 2: Impact of Returnees

Migrant_Impact ~ as_factor(q38_NET) + as_factor(q39_NET) + as_factor(d9a_NET)

	B	SE	Sig	95% CI for odds ratio		
				Odds Ratio	Lower	Upper
(Intercept)	0.25	0.03	*	1.28	1.22	1.35
(q38_NET)Excellent/Good	0.21	0.04	*	1.23	1.14	1.33
(q39_NET)Excellent/Good	0.1	0.03	*	1.1	1.03	1.18
(d9a_NET)Tajik	-0.04	0.03		0.96	0.9	1.03
(d9a_NET)Uzbek	-0.07	0.06		0.93	0.83	1.04
(d9a_NET)Hazara	0.09	0.05		1.1	1	1.21
(d9a_NET)Other/Unknown	-0.08	0.06		0.93	0.83	1.03

Model 3: Blame Returnees for Economic Problems

Blame_Migrants ~ as_factor(q38_NET) + as_factor(q39_NET) + as_factor(d9a_NET)

	B	SE	Sig	95% CI for odds ratio		
				Odds Ratio	Lower	Upper
(Intercept)	1.31	0.03	*	3.72	3.52	3.92
as_factor(q38_NET)Excellent/Good	0.05	0.03		1.05	0.99	1.13
as_factor(q39_NET)Excellent/Good	0.08	0.03	*	1.08	1.02	1.14
as_factor(d9a_NET)Tajik	0.03	0.03		1.03	0.96	1.1
as_factor(d9a_NET)Uzbek	0.11	0.05	*	1.11	1	1.23
as_factor(d9a_NET)Hazara	0.11	0.09		1.11	0.93	1.33
as_factor(d9a_NET)Other/Unknown	-			0.89	0.77	1.04



AFGHAN OPINION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Women's rights in Afghanistan have fluctuated under different rulers since the 20th century: from Daoud Khan to the mujahedeen to the Taliban to the Karzai Administration. Perspectives on improvements or setbacks have been measured in numerous gender inequality and gap indices: Afghanistan continues to be among the lowest ranked countries in terms of gender equality.⁵⁵

Quantitative metrics, indices, and factors measuring the rights and freedoms of Afghan women – and qualitative scholarly research and journalism documenting Afghan women – are readily available. However, more public opinion research on the rights of women from the perspective of Afghan women is needed to better understand whether the situation for women in Afghanistan has improved. Furthermore, data of the opinions – directly from the viewpoints of Afghan women and men – are needed to understand the future of gender equality in Afghanistan.

Taking into consideration cultural, gender, religious, and political norms, Afghan Futures – a longitudinal data collection effort sponsored by D3 and its subsidiary ACSOR-Surveys – has collected public opinion data from Afghan men and women on the status, security of and violence against, and autonomy of women in Afghanistan.

The results rely on rigorously and statistically randomized sampling methodologies to create an unbiased dataset of the opinions from over 2,000 Afghans, urban and rural, ages 18 years old and older, across all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Looking back to 2007, the main question for this research is, “has the situation for women in Afghanistan changed, how, and what are the attitudes and opinions regarding the future of equality, empowerment, and access for women?”

⁵⁵ Afghanistan ranked in the bottom ten countries from 2008 to 2012. See United Nations Development Program. “Human Development Reports: Gender Inequality Index (GII).” <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>. World Economic Forum. “Global Gender Gap Report.” <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>.

Key Findings

This report examines Afghans' opinions of the status of women, equality between genders, empowerment of women, and security and violence facing Afghan women.

- The results indicate that gender gaps continue to persist in literacy and employment.
- Inequalities are perceived to still exist in access to holding political office, employment, and protection from violence.
- Survey results suggest that violence against women persists within the home.
- Afghan women are willing to cede rights in order for fighting to stop between the Taliban and the government.



Status of Women in Afghanistan

In the 2015 Afghan Futures Survey, gaps between men and women persist in Afghanistan (see Table 1): more women than men are illiterate, and fewer women are working full time and more are unemployed, compared to Afghan men.

Table 1: Gender Gaps (Nationwide)

	Men (n=1057)	Women (n=1009)
Education (D5)		
Illiterate	42%	70%
College graduate	5%	2%
Employment (D6)		
Working full time	50%	1%
Housewife/Unemployed	13%	89%

A gap also persists between urban and rural women in terms of education: 72 percent of rural women versus 60 percent of urban women are illiterate; less than 1 percent of rural women versus 6 percent of urban women are college graduates.

Access to employment opportunities, protection from violence, access to healthcare, and access to education are the top issues that both men and women agree are facing women in Afghanistan today.

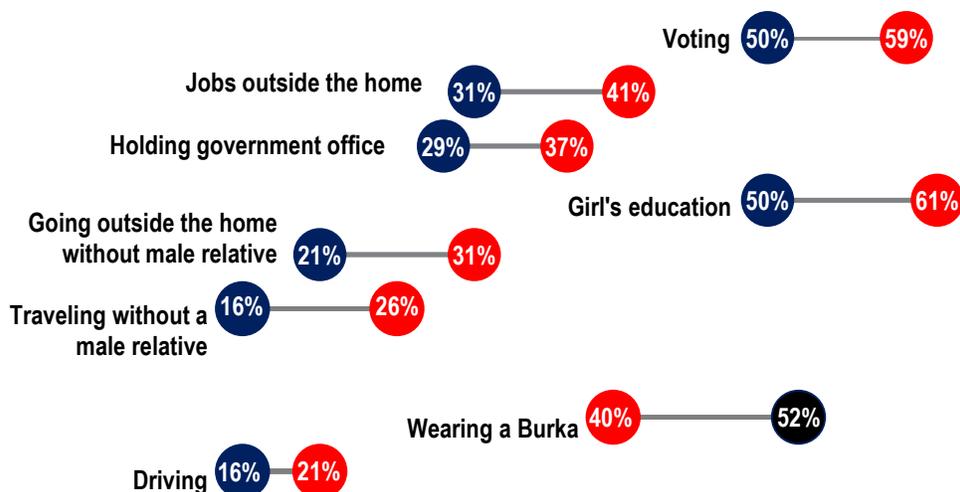
Respondents were asked whether or not they support women voting, holding jobs outside the home, holding government office, girl's education, accompaniment by male relatives, wearing a burka, and driving. Overall, 86 percent of the respondents – male and female – support⁵⁶ women voting; 71 percent support women holding jobs outside the home; 68 percent support women holding government office; 85 percent support girls' education; and 75 percent support wearing a burka. Less supported activities are going outside the home (but within the village) without a male relative at 60 percent, traveling outside the village alone at 51 percent, and driving at 46 percent.

A gap of nearly 10% exists between the attitudes of Afghan women and men regarding women's right to vote, to work outside the home, to hold government offices, and for girls' education.

⁵⁶ Data for support is reported as a combination of strongly and somewhat.

Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be strongly supportive of women’s involvement in eight scenarios – with an approximately 10 percentage point gap between women and men. Female respondents are less likely than male respondents to strongly support women wearing a burka, with a 12 percentage point gap between the genders.

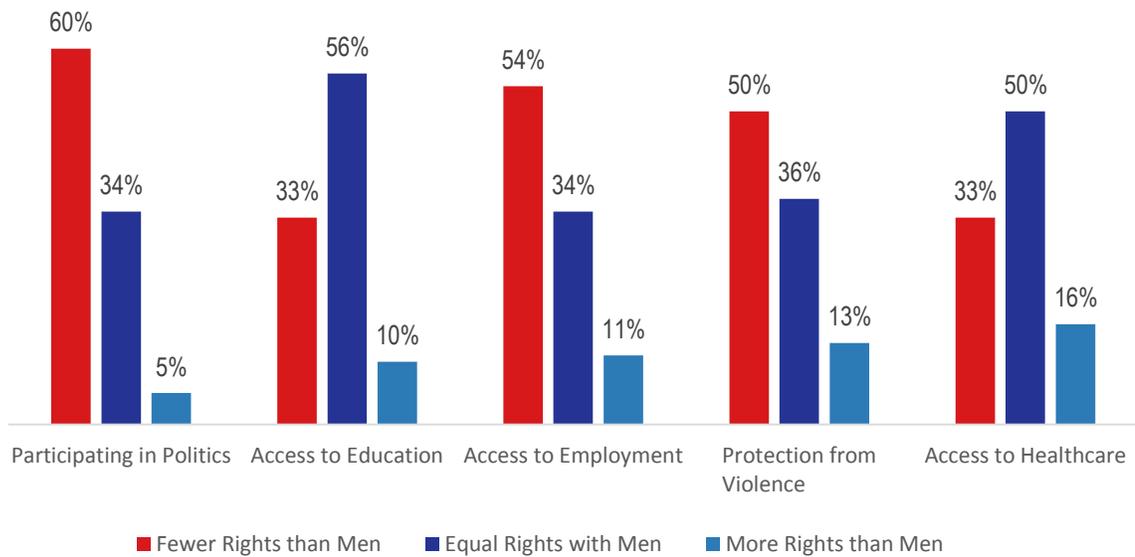
Gaps in attitudes: **women** are more likely than **men** to be strongly supportive of the following freedoms & rights for Afghan women.



When respondents were asked if they believe women in Afghanistan have fewer rights than men, the same or equal rights, or more rights than men, the results show that women are perceived to have fewer rights than men when it comes to participating in politics, access to employment, and protection from violence (see figure below). Only with access to education and access to health care do the results suggest gender equality. A possible reason half or more Afghans perceive women to have equal access to education and healthcare may be related to the large number of international aid programs targeted at improving female education and maternal health.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ United States Agency for International Development. "Frequently Asked Questions." Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed October 30, 2015. <https://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/frequently-asked-questions>. Since 2002, the American people have provided the Afghan people with more than \$17 billion dollars in development assistance. Education and health were a key focus of this aid, specifically targeted at girls to get an education and to build health facilities for women and children.

Perceptions Of Equality: The Rights Of Women Compared To Men



Violence against Women in Afghanistan

According to Al Jazeera, almost nine of ten Afghan women face [some form] of violence, and Afghanistan is ranked as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be born a woman.⁵⁸ This compares to the 2015 Afghan Futures finding that nearly five out of ten female respondents know someone who has been physically beaten by her husband. According to the 2015 Afghan Futures Survey, 36 percent of Afghans think that violence against women in Afghanistan is increasing. Women are more likely than men to say that violence against women is increasing (40% women compared to 32% men).

36% of Afghans think that violence against women in Afghanistan is increasing.

40% of Afghan women report that the level of violence against women is increasing.

⁵⁸ "Afghanistan: No Country for Women." Al Jazeera English. Accessed October 29, 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/101east/2015/06/afghanistan-country-women-150630115111987.html>.

One reason for this is that violence against women occurs primarily within the home.⁵⁹ D3/ACSOR employs gender matching of female interviewers with female respondents, and our female interviewers were able to ask sensitive questions on this topic:

- 44 percent of Afghans overall believe that men mistreat their wives 'very often' or 'sometimes' in their district, however, 48 percent of women report that this happens 'very often' or 'sometimes'.
- 61 percent of Afghans say that family members should intervene if a man mistreats his wife, but only 32 percent of Afghans say that women who are abused should be able to leave in order to protect themselves as opposed to staying with their family no matter what.
- The majority (64%) of women agree that women who are abused should stay with their family no matter what; and, 47 percent of women in this survey report personally knowing someone who has been physically beaten by her husband.

Five in ten female respondents report knowing someone who has been physically beaten by her husband.

Only asked of women by female interviewers.

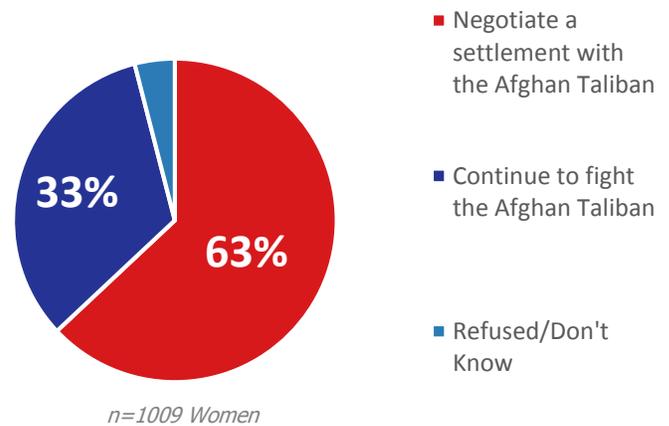
The effects of security and violence in the community due to the ongoing conflict with the Taliban have had an impact on the attitudes of Afghan women. Despite the assumption that Afghan women need "more freedoms and rights" to alleviate austere conditions – like those presented above – the Afghan Futures results suggest that women are willing to make concessions in obtaining those freedoms or rights in exchange for a negotiated peace with anti-government elements that would bring stability. In March 2014, the majority of women were willing to cede these rights for a negotiated peace settlement between the government and the Taliban. However, by 2015, fewer women seem to be willing to cede their rights:

- 55% of Afghan women in 2015, compared to 66% in 2014, are somewhat or very willing to accept not being able to be outside of the home unescorted
- 48% of Afghan women in 2015, compared to 58% in 2014, are somewhat or very willing to accept no longer working
- 43% of Afghan women in 2015, compared to 51% in 2014, are somewhat or very willing to accept no longer attending school

⁵⁹ Ibid.

- 52% of Afghan women in 2015, compared to 57% in 2014, are somewhat or very willing to accept no longer holding political office.

Only in the case of 'no longer voting,' were 49 percent of Afghan women willing to concede the right in 2014, and 47 percent in 2015. This is the only right where a majority of Afghan women were not willing to cede the right in 2014 or 2015. Afghan Futures data shows that 63 percent of Afghan women agree that the government should negotiate a settlement in which the Afghan Taliban are allowed to hold political office if they agree to stop fighting.



Future Research

The Afghan Futures dataset from 2015 has additional information regarding empowerment and decision-making. Topics include household decision-making, financial independence, and reproductive autonomy can be examined. This analytical write-up provides a snap-shot of the major gender gaps between men and women persisting and Afghanistan in topical areas such as education, healthcare, and perceptions of violence against women. D3 and ACSOR will be further exploring these themes in our continued research in Afghanistan.



METHODOLOGY STATEMENT

Afghan Futures is self-funded by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR), a D3 Systems, Inc. subsidiary. Results are based on in-person interviews conducted in Dari and Pashto among a random national sample of 2,066 Afghan adults from September 15-20, 2015.

The survey explores Afghans' living conditions; political, social, and economic concerns; post-election perceptions; views on migration, Da'esh, and women's issues. Its aim is to enrich public understanding of the concerns and issues facing Afghan citizens.

One hundred and eight districts across Afghanistan's 34 provinces were randomly selected as primary sampling units (PSUs), proportional to population size, with urban/rural stratification. Settlements or neighborhoods within randomly selected districts were chosen by simple random sampling. Two hundred and sixty four sample points were assigned, one for male interviews (carried out by male interviewers only), one for female interviews (carried out by female interviewers only) in each of the 132 PSUs.

Of the 424 potential PSUs in the country, 102 were inaccessible for security or transportation reasons and 81 were closed to female interviewers, resulting in non-coverage of 16 percent of Afghan men, 28 percent of women, or 22 percent of the population overall.

Of the 108 primary sampling units drawn, 19 male PSUs and 15 female PSUs were replaced at the time of sampling due to security. At the settlement level, 23 of the 264 sampling points were randomly replaced within the same districts because of transportation difficulties, 42 for security reasons and 10 because they couldn't be located.

Households were sampled via the random route/random walk method and respondents within households were selected via Kish grid. Interviews were conducted by 231 trained Afghan interviewers, 121 women and 110 men, with an average interview length of 32 minutes.

Supervisors monitored four percent of interviews in-person and back-checked an additional 17 percent. All completed questionnaires were subjected to logic and patterning controls, with 46 of them rejected; and, as a further quality-control measure, double-entry was performed on a random 15 percent in the data stage.

Weights are composed of the base or design weights, a non-response weight adjusting for non-response by gender, and a post stratification weight using region by gender population estimates as the targets. All population estimates use the 2016 population projections from the Afghan Central Statistics Office.

The survey's contact rate was 88 percent and its cooperation rate was 94 percent, for an overall response rate of 83 percent. The full sample has a margin of sampling error of 2.90 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including a design effect of 1.813.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ A **contact rate** is the proportion of all cases in which some responsible member of the housing unit was reached by the survey. A **cooperation rate** is the proportion of all cases interviewed of all eligible units ever contacted. A **response rate** is the number of completed interviews divided by the number of eligible reporting units in the sample. More information on contact, cooperation and response rates may be found at www.aapor.org.