



A Survey of the Afghan People

AFGHANISTAN IN 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Asia Foundation



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Afghanistan in 2016: A Survey of the Afghan People is The Asia Foundation's twelfth annual public opinion survey in Afghanistan. The longest-running barometer of Afghan opinions, the *Survey* has gathered the views of more than 87,000 Afghans since 2004 and provides a longitudinal portrait of evolving public perceptions of security, the economy, governance and government services, elections, media, women's issues, and migration. Unique in its broad scope and long duration, the *Survey* tracks trend lines on questions of special interest to Afghans and the international community alike.

This year, the downward trajectory in national mood which began in 2013 has continued: in 2016, just 29.3% of Afghans say the country is moving in the right direction, the lowest level of optimism recorded in the *Survey* since it began in 2004, and down from 36.7% in 2015. While the drop in 2015 can be partly explained by post-election disappointments after the exuberance and campaign promises preceding the 2014 presidential elections, the lower optimism in 2016 appears to reflect a sustained change in sentiment related to perceptions of security, the economy, and government achievements. Early 2016 saw the failure of peace talks with the Taliban, while a recent peace agreement with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Hezb-i-Islami has not been welcomed by all Afghan political groups. Afghans appear to have less confidence in every level of government, yet they also have less desire to emigrate. Despite a worsening economic and security environment, Afghanistan has seen a high number of returnees from European countries.

This year's *Survey* polled 12,658 Afghan respondents, 52.7% of them male and 47.4% female, representing 16 ethnic groups from all 34 provinces in the country. Face-to-face interviews were conducted between August 31 and October 1 by a team of 1,003 trained Afghan enumerators matched with respondents by gender (men interviewed men and women interviewed women). All enumerators are indigenous to the provinces where they conducted interviews. Survey results have been weighted to be gender balanced and nationally representative using the most recent population data (2015–2016) released by the Afghan Central Statistics Organization. The total sample consisted of 25% urban households and 75% rural households, and this year's margin of error is $\pm 1.6\%$, based on a design effect of 3.45 and a confidence interval of 95%.

The Asia Foundation's longstanding research partner, the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research, conducted all survey fieldwork and logistics, while its parent company, D3 Systems, Inc., provided analytical and methodological support. As in the 2013, 2014, and 2015 surveys, Sayara Research conducted third-party validation of fieldwork, a best practice for survey research in challenging environments. Together with its partners, the Foundation is committed to quality-control processes guided by principles of validity and reliability. The survey data is available for further analysis at www.asiafoundation.org.

This year's *Survey* includes several new questions proposed by key users of the survey findings. New questions explore Afghans' views on what is going well in their local area, their awareness of legal rights and public defender services, Internet access, reasons to migrate, and remittances from family abroad. A question on whether respondents have a *tazkera* (national identity card) and a six-item scale used to measure the prevalence of disabilities were added. As before, the *Survey* includes measures of both fact and opinion. An in-depth discussion of the survey methodology is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

NATIONAL MOOD

- **Direction of the country.** The highest rate of optimism was recorded in 2013, when 58.2% of Afghans said the country was moving in the right direction. The downward trajectory of optimism beginning the following year has continued, and this year just 29.3% of Afghans say the country is moving in the right direction, the lowest level of optimism recorded since 2004. Residents of the Central/Kabul region report the lowest level of optimism (16.3%), followed by the North East region (25.8%), and the Central/Hazarajat region (26.4%). Meanwhile, respondents from the East are most likely to say the country is moving in the right direction (41.1%). By province, respondents are least likely to say the country is moving in the right direction in Panjshir (4.6%), Kabul (13.3%), and Parwan (16.1%).
- **Reasons for optimism.** Among Afghans who say the country is moving in the right direction, the most commonly cited reasons are reconstruction and rebuilding (32.5%), good security (26.6%), active Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) (10.4%), and newly opened schools for girls (10.3%). Rural respondents are more optimistic overall compared to urban respondents (31.7% vs. 22.2%, respectively), a pattern consistent with previous years.
- **Reasons for pessimism.** As in all years since 2007, insecurity is the reason most commonly given for why the country is moving in the wrong direction (48.8%), followed by unemployment (27.5%), corruption (14.6%), bad economy (10.4%), and bad government (8.7%). The proportions of Afghans citing insecurity, unemployment, and corruption have increased from last year by 4.2, 2.1, and 1.6 percentage points, respectively. The proportion citing bad government has decreased by 2.7 points.
- **Local mood.** The *Survey* asked respondents what is going well in their local area, and their responses echo an overall pessimism, with 30.0% saying they don't know and 17.0% saying that nothing is going well in their local area. Development reasons are most frequently cited by those who give a reason. When respondents were asked to name up to two of the biggest problems in their area, 31.5% said unemployment, and 22.7% said security issues/violence.
- **Biggest problems facing women.** When asked to name the two biggest problems facing women in their area, education/illiteracy remained the most cited problem at 36.1%, up from 20.4% in 2015. Unemployment, at 22.9%, was up significantly from 11.3% in 2015, and domestic violence was cited by 22.1%, an all-time high. As in previous years, women cited domestic violence more frequently than men.
- **Biggest problems facing youth.** Respondents were first asked in 2015 to describe the two biggest problems facing youth. Their responses have changed little since last year. A majority of respondents list unemployment (71.2%), while a minority say illiteracy (25.7%), poor economy (16.0%), or drug addiction (13.8%). Lack of higher education opportunities was a more common concern in 2015 (15.3%) compared to this year (7.9%), while lack of youth rights decreased 3.8 percentage points from last year, to 1.8% in 2016.

SECURITY

- **Fear for personal safety.** Overall, 69.8% of Afghans report sometimes, often, or always feeling fear for their personal safety, the highest level in over a decade. As in 2015, fear for personal safety is most salient in the South West region (82.0%). Within this region, Helmand stands out, with 55.4% of respondents saying they are always afraid for their personal safety, 22.6% often afraid, and 14.3% sometimes afraid. Afghans in the East region (80.1%) also report high levels of fear for personal safety. Since last year, the largest changes in perceived insecurity appears in the North East, where it rose from 57.1% to 63.2%, and in the North West, where it rose from 58.1% to 66.5%.
- **Experience and reporting of crime and violence.** In 2016, the percentage of Afghans with a family member who was a victim of crime or violence increased by 1.2 points, to 19.4%. Most frequently cited are physical assaults (35.8%), theft of livestock (20.0%), and racketeering (17.4%). Murder (13.4%) and kidnappings (12.4%) also affect Afghans substantially. Of war-related incidents, suicide attacks are the most frequently reported (15.2%). The proportion of respondents who reported their experience of a crime or violence to another party remained stable from previous years, with 64.3% saying they approached an authority outside the family in 2016. The ANP remains the preferred authority, with 50.1% of those who experienced a crime or violence reporting the incident to the ANP.
- **Perceptions of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).** A narrow majority (53.7%) say the ANA is getting better at providing security, while 20.0% say it's getting worse. On the Afghan Local Police (ALP), 39.6% say it is getting better, 26.4% say it is getting worse, and 32.6% see no change. Of the three, views of the ANP's ability to provide security appears the most mixed, with 34.6% saying better, and 30.7% saying worse.
- **Reconciliation.** Confidence that the peace process can help stabilize the country remained comparable to 2015 (62.9%). The percentage of Afghans who say they feel sympathy for armed opposition groups (AOGs) decreased 10.8 percentage points this year, from 27.5% in 2015 to 16.7% in 2016. More Afghans in 2016 perceive AOGs as motivated by the pursuit of power (23.1%) compared to 2015 (18.9%) or 2014 (15.6%).
- **Fear of encountering armed forces.** Opposition forces uniformly trigger fear among Afghans, with 93.0% reporting fear of encountering the Taliban. Afghans still consider an encounter with the ANSF to have comparatively little risk, with 44.8% reporting some or a lot of fear when encountering the ANP, roughly the same as in the previous two years. Fear of encountering the ANA was reported by 42.1% in 2016.
- **Knowledge and threat of ISIS/Daesh.** General awareness of ISIS/Daesh has increased, from 74.3% in 2015 to 81.3% this year reporting familiarity with the group. Overall, perceptions of ISIS/Daesh as a security threat decreased, from 54.2% in 2015 to 47.9% in 2016.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

- **Perception of the economy.** Among the 65.9% of Afghans this year who say the country is moving in the wrong direction, the second-most common reason for pessimism after insecurity is unemployment (27.5%). Other economic reasons for pessimism include a bad economy (10.4%), lack of reconstruction (4.8%), and high prices (2.9%). Afghans also cite the economy when things are perceived to be going well. Among the minority of Afghans (29.3%) who are optimistic about the future of the country, 53.3% cite economic reasons for optimism, including reconstruction and rebuilding (33.0%) and economic revival (9.7%).
- **Household economic situation.** When asked about their household financial situation, 36.6% say their financial situation has worsened this year, compared to 29.7% in 2015. Only 18.8% of Afghans say their household financial situation has improved in 2016, compared to 21.0% in 2015.
- **Employment.** The *Survey* asks Afghans if they are involved in any activity that generates money, and 45.0% of all respondents in 2016—80.6% of men and 9.4% of women—say that they are. Almost two-thirds of respondents (59.9%) say that employment opportunities for their households have worsened, while 31.6% say they remain unchanged, and just 7.6% say they have improved since last year.
- **Women and the economy.** After a gradual trend upward since 2009, this year only 19.1% of Afghans say that a woman contributes to their household's income, down from 22.6% in 2015. When asked if they agree that women should be allowed to work outside the home, more respondents agree in 2016 (74.0%) than ever before in the *Survey*.
- **Assets.** Compared to rural Afghans, urban Afghans are more likely to report having household appliances that require electricity, such as a television (83.2%), a refrigerator (61.4%), or a washing machine (61.4%). Rural Afghans, on the other hand, are more likely to have a bicycle (51.3%), a motorcycle (51.8%), and a sewing machine (70.9%). Household mobile phone ownership continued to rise, from 82.3% in 2015 to 88.8% in 2016, while land ownership increased from 53.7% in 2015 to 59.3% in 2016.
- **Household income.** This year, respondents report an overall average monthly household income of AFN 10,949 (USD 165), with urban areas reporting higher incomes (AFN 14,284/USD 215) than Afghans living in rural areas (AFN 9,845/USD 148). Residents in the South West region report the highest average monthly income (AFN 15,052/USD 226).

DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

- **Electricity.** This year, 43.4% say their household electricity has worsened since last year (up from 40.3% in 2015), while 13.9% say it improved (down from 15.0% in 2015). For many Afghans, access to electricity is affected by changes in the economy, including relative purchasing power for fuel and solar panels, or the affordability of electricity bills. Afghans in urban areas are significantly more likely to report improvement (22.4%) in access to electricity since last year compared to Afghans in rural areas (11.1%).

- **Health.** Healthcare access and nutrition remain two central areas of concern. When asked to describe the quality of food in their household diet compared to 12 months ago, 16.1% of Afghans say it has improved. This figure represents a nearly 25 percentage point decline from five years ago, when 40.9% reported an improvement in household food quality. Poor nutrition appears particularly severe in provinces with high rates of insurgent violence. This year in Helmand province, for example, 75.9% of respondents indicate that the quality of food in their diet has worsened in the past year, the worst of any province.
- **Education.** More than half of Afghans (52.0%) report having no formal or informal government or private education, including two-thirds (66.4%) of women and 37.7% of men. Just over half (51.0%) of women say they have never been to a government school nor a madrasa for any type of education, compared to less than a quarter of men (23.4%).
- **Awareness of development projects.** Public awareness of new development projects has increased in every category of the *Survey* since last year. More than one-third of respondents (34.3%) say they are aware of a project to build or repair roads and bridges in their community, a significant increase from last year's rate of 30.3%. Awareness is greatest in Wardak (69.4%) and Laghman (68.6%), and lowest in the Central/Hazarajat area. The biggest increase in awareness is of new mosque construction, which rose from 21.9% in 2015 to 30.8% in 2016. Across all categories of development, levels of awareness are well below peak levels in 2011, which coincided with high levels of international and military aid expenditure.

GOVERNANCE

- **Satisfaction with government performance.** Following a sharp decline in 2015, Afghan perceptions of how well government institutions do their job again declined to historically low levels in 2016. Only 49.1% of Afghans surveyed say the National Unity Government (NUG) is doing a good job, down from 57.8% in 2015. Satisfaction rates are also low for provincial governments (52.9%), municipal governments in urban areas (42.4%), and district governments in rural areas (50.7%). Women (52.7%) are slightly more likely to express satisfaction with the NUG than are men (45.4%).
- **Confidence in public institutions.** In most categories related to confidence in government and nongovernment institutions, nationwide rates in 2016 were the lowest recorded in the 10-year history of this survey. Afghans say they have the lowest levels of confidence in national government institutions, including Parliament as a whole (37.0%) and government ministries (35.6%). By comparison, Afghans express the highest levels of confidence in religious leaders (66.1%), the media (64.5%), and community shuras/jirgas (62.1%). Only 24.3% of Afghans report that their member of Parliament (MP) has done something positive for their province. When asked which issues they believe their MP cares about most, 34.7% of Afghans say personal interest, 22.2% say ethnic interests, 18.7% say provincial issues, 12.0% say district or municipal issues, and 9.8% say national issues.
- **Corruption.** There appears to be a small gap between perceptions of corruption and the experience of corruption. In 2016, nearly all Afghans say corruption is a problem in all areas of daily life, with 61.0% calling it a major problem and 28.2% saying it is a minor problem. This represents no significant change from 2015. Urban residents (72.1%) are significantly more likely than rural residents (57.3%) to see

everyday corruption as a major problem. While the perception of corruption remains unchanged since last year, however, the rate at which respondents report actual encounters with corruption in various government institutions has decreased. If this decrease continues, perceptions may eventually “catch up,” but overall perceptions do not yet show a reaction. Afghans most frequently report directly experiencing corruption in the courts and judiciary (59.5%) or the municipal and district governor’s office (58.9%). Rates of reported corruption decreased the most for the customs office, and other small but statistically significant decreases are seen for municipal government, the ANP, and the ANA.

- **Justice and dispute resolution.** As a new question in 2016, the *Survey* asked Afghans about the role that defense lawyers play in their lives. Responses indicate low levels of awareness of the kind of work defense lawyers generally do. While 74.3% of Afghans correctly identify defense lawyers as professionals who help people who have been arrested or detained, some respondents believe they manage marriage proposals (47.0%) or work in Parliament (35.3%). A majority of Afghans (79.3%) say that individuals arrested for a crime should have the right to a defense lawyer, regardless of whether they are guilty or not. When respondents are asked what kind of defense lawyer they would trust to defend their rights, 64.0% say that they would trust a government defense lawyer, followed by an independent lawyer (58.4%), a lawyer from a civil society organization (49.0%), and a lawyer from an international organization (40.1%). Use of national and local judicial institutions has remained steady over the past 10 years. Approximately one in five Afghans report that they have turned to the *Huquq* (rights) Department or a neighborhood shura/jirga to resolve a dispute in the past two years. Of those Afghans who used a dispute resolution institution, 43.5% report using a neighborhood shura/jirga.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- **Basic political freedoms.** The percentage of Afghans in 2016 who say they felt fear while voting in a national or provincial election (53.7%) shows a slight decrease compared to 2015 (56.0%). The survey data shows that women (57.5%) and rural residents (56.9%) are more likely to express fear while voting than men (50.0%) and urban residents (44.4%). Similarly, a high percentage of Afghans (71.6%) say they would feel some fear or a lot of fear participating in a peaceful demonstration, and an even higher percentage of respondents (74.7%) say they would experience some fear running for political office. Notably, in the Central/Kabul region, fear while participating in a peaceful demonstration jumped from 54.9% in 2015 to 70.6% in 2016. This change may be a response to high-profile suicide attacks on peaceful protests within Kabul city. The *Survey* also asked Afghans how safe they feel criticizing their government in public. Just over half of Afghans (54.5%) say they feel safe criticizing their government, while 44.3% say they feel somewhat unsafe or very unsafe.
- **Influence over local government.** The percentage of Afghans who believe they can affect local government decisions (44.2%) is the lowest recorded in the past decade, and continues a declining trend since a recent high in 2014, just after the presidential election. This low percentage is similar among women (41.7%) and men (44.9%), as well as residents of urban areas (40.2%) and rural areas (44.4%).
- **Religion and politics.** A majority of Afghans (57.2%) say that religious leaders should be involved in politics. This is the lowest rate in the last 10 years of the *Survey*, down from a high of 69.5% in 2011. Men

(58.4%) and women (56.1%) report similar views on the role of religious scholars in politics, although residents of rural areas (58.9%) are slightly more likely to support an active role for religious leaders in politics than residents of urban areas (52.1%).

- **Women and politics.** A majority of Afghans (88.2%) say women should be allowed to vote in elections, up slightly from 83.4% in 2009. Women (90.6%) are more likely to hold this view than men (85.8%), as are urban Afghans (94.1%) compared to rural Afghans (86.3%). This year, 56.8% of Afghans say that women should make electoral decisions independently, whereas 21.3% of respondents say men should decide for women, and 20.8% say women should decide in consultation with men. The *Survey* also asks whether respondents prefer to be represented by a man or woman in Parliament. One-third of Afghans (34.4%) say they prefer being represented by a man, 31.6% say they prefer being represented by a woman, and 33.0% say it makes no difference.
- **Attitudes towards democracy.** This year, the percentage of Afghans who express satisfaction with democracy is 55.9%, a slight decrease from 2015 (57.2%). Women (57.9%) are slightly more likely to express satisfaction with democracy than are men (53.9%). The *Survey* also asks Afghans to rate how well members of Parliament perform key duties. Just over half (54.9%) say their MPs do a good job of listening to constituents and representing their needs.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- **Sources of news and information.** As in previous years, radio remains the most common source of information, with 70.5% of respondents receiving news and information from the radio, followed by television (66.4%), mosques (47.5%), and community shuras (39.0%). Mobile phones, which 57.0% used as a source of information in 2013, are now used by only 42.1%, possibly an effect of the 10.0% tax on all phone calls introduced in 2015. Use of the Internet to obtain news and information showed a significant increase of 8.4 points, from 3.2% in 2013 to 11.6% in 2016.
- **Mobile phone ownership.** This year, respondents are asked how many members of their household have mobile phones, and in many cases, a single household has more than one phone. The overwhelming majority of respondents (89.0%) say there is at least one mobile phone in their household. When asked about personal ownership, however, only 55.9% of respondents personally own a mobile phone, including 74.3% of urban and 49.9% of rural respondents, with men twice as likely as women to have access to a mobile phone.
- **Television ownership and viewership.** TV ownership has not increased this year, possibly the consequence of a sluggish economy. Ownership is concentrated in urban areas, where electricity is more dependable, and corresponds to increased household income. The Central/Kabul region exhibits the highest TV ownership, with 53.3% of households having one TV set, followed closely by the East and South West regions. Nearly two-thirds of Afghans (64.5%) report watching TV programs. Tolo TV is the most watched network in Afghanistan, with 36.3% of viewing respondents, followed by Ariana TV (9.6%), Shamshad TV (8.9%), and Lemar TV (8.2%).

- **Access to Internet and use of social media.** Nationwide, 40.0% of respondents say they live in an area that has access to the Internet, including 32.6% of respondents in rural areas and 62.2% of respondents in urban areas. Only 11.2% of respondents say they personally have access to the Internet, which might involve a personal mobile phone with cellular Internet or some other personal means of access. Use of social media has increased in Afghanistan among politicians, youth, the private sector, and insurgents alike. Notably, three times as many men (17.0%) as women (5.5%) say they have personal access to the Internet. Barriers to Internet access include affordability, electricity, network coverage, conservative cultural views, and illiteracy.
- **Role of television in public opinion and behavior.** The *Survey* explored whether television viewership affects public perceptions in three areas: (a) support for women's rights, (b) confidence in government, and (c) perceptions of insecurity. Respondents who watch more hours of television appear more likely to support women's rights. This association also holds true in "intercept interviews," conducted with respondents from highly insecure and inaccessible areas. A simple association suggests that people who watch more television are less likely to express confidence in the National Unity Government, whereas those who listen to radio are less likely than those who do not to say that the NUG is doing a very bad job. Afghans who watch more hours of television are significantly less likely to express confidence in various levels of the Afghan government. TV viewership also affects the perception of insecurity. Respondents who watch TV are more likely to say ISIS is a threat to their area than are those who do not watch TV, and significantly more likely to report higher levels of fear for their personal safety.

WOMEN IN SOCIETY

- **Access to justice.** Women who have used the state courts are more likely than men to say that they treat men and women equally (55.4% vs. 45.3%, respectively), a finding consistent with the common perception that state courts are more protective of women's rights than the alternative, traditional justice mechanisms. Among those who say there is a place for women in their area to resolve their problems, a variety of places are cited. As in past years, the most commonly named place is the Directorate of Women's Affairs (51.1%), followed by the Human Rights Commission (8.6%), a district office (6.9%), women's shura (5.4%), or elders (4.5%).
- **Customs and tribal practices.** Overall, 65.4% of Afghans strongly disagree that the practice of *baad*, where a daughter is given to another party as a penalty or payment for some offense, is acceptable, with slightly more men than women strongly disagreeing (67.1% vs. 63.7%). Attitudes toward *baddal* reflect more ambiguity, with fewer Afghans expressing strong disagreement (45.1%). A majority of respondents (63.0%) agree that a daughter or wife is entitled to *miras*, or family inheritance, usually from a deceased father.
- **Perceptions of women's attire in public.** A third of Afghans (34.0%) say that the *burqa* (a full-body covering) is the most appropriate public dress for women, while the *niqab* (a veil that covers the full face, with the exception of the eyes) is preferred by 27.1%. Only 1.1% say that it is acceptable for women to appear in public with no head covering. There have been no significant changes here since 2015. Compared to men, women prefer more liberal public dress for women.

- **Political participation.** Afghans have divided views on the acceptability of women in political leadership positions. This year, fewer than half of Afghans overall (44.5%) say that political leadership positions should be mostly for men, while a similar percentage (42.3%) say they should be for men and women equally. More than half of men (58.3%) say that political leadership roles should be mostly for men, compared to 30.6% of women. Respondents view the idea of women in local leadership positions more favorably than national leadership roles such as a cabinet post or president.
- **Education.** This year 80.7% of Afghans say they agree that women should have the same educational opportunities as men, with 38.5% expressing strong agreement. As in past years, however, this agreement is conditional. While most Afghans agree that women can be educated in an Islamic madrasa (93.6%) and in primary school (86.1%), more than half disapprove of a woman studying outside her home province (58.1% of men and 46.9% of women) or studying abroad (69.4% of men and 57.2% of women).
- **Work.** In 2016, three-quarters of Afghans (74.0%) agreed that women should be allowed to work outside the home, a significant increase from 64.0% in 2015. Part of this increase appears to be explained by poverty and the need for additional household income. Despite rising support for women working outside the home, the percentage of Afghans who say that women contribute to household income has decreased slightly, from 22.6% in 2015 to 19.1% in 2016. Slightly more rural Afghans (20.3%) compared to urban Afghans (15.5%) say that women do contribute to household income.
- **Employment venues.** Most Afghans say they agree with the idea of women working in female-only schools (85.9%) and in hospitals or clinics (84.4%), and high numbers agree with women working in government offices (68.1%) and co-ed schools (66.6%). Just less than half of respondents approve of women working for NGOs (45.8%) or for private companies where employees are all-female (45.5%). Afghans are least likely to agree with women working in the army or police (36.5%) and in private companies where men and women work together (32.9%).

MIGRATION

- **Desire to leave Afghanistan.** Between 2011 and 2015, there was a steady increase in the number of Afghans saying that they would leave Afghanistan and live somewhere else if given the opportunity. This year, the percentage of Afghans expressing a desire to emigrate decreased significantly, from 39.9% in 2015 to 29.6% in 2016, the largest drop on record in the *Survey*. Afghans living in the Central/Kabul region (36.1%) and the North East region (37.1%) are most likely to say they would leave Afghanistan, while those in the South West region are the least likely (17.8%). There is a wide variation across provinces. Over half the respondents in Baghlan (58.6%) say they would leave Afghanistan if given the opportunity, compared to much smaller numbers in Nuristan (11.7%), Helmand (12.0%), and Zabul (14.9%). By ethnicity, the Hazaras are most likely to express a desire to emigrate (38.6%), followed by Tajiks (32.0%), while Uzbeks (28.8%) and Pashtuns (24.3%) are least likely.
- **Reasons for leaving.** Motivations to emigrate include a combination of “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors are domestic circumstances that motivate people to leave their country, such as economic, social, political, or security problems. Pull factors are external influences that attract would-be migrants to a

particular destination, such as the destination's reception and resettlement policies, or the presence there of family and friends. Respondents who say they would leave Afghanistan are asked to give two reasons. Almost three-quarters (73.6%) cite insecurity as one of two reasons, including answers such as "Taliban are killing people," "suicide attacks," "fear of ISIS/Daesh," and "kidnappings." Another 28.8% of respondents cite concerns relating to weak government. Desire to leave Afghanistan is greater among those who think the National Unity Government is doing a very bad job than among those who think it is doing a very good job (33.2% and 26.5%, respectively). More than half of Afghans (51.5%) cite unemployment as a reason they would leave the country if given the opportunity.

- **Decrease in desire to emigrate.** The decrease in stated desire to emigrate runs counter to the expectation that key push factors would increase emigration from Afghanistan. For example, compared to 2015, this *Survey* shows that Afghans' fears about personal safety have risen, their optimism about the direction of the country has fallen, and their satisfaction with the national government has dropped. One explanation is that pull factors, rather than push factors, may have greater influence on migration decision-making this year. Broader developments in the global migration context since 2015 may further explain the reduction. Primary among these changes is a significant shift in the reception policies of a number of European countries.