

WPO Poll: Afghan Public Overwhelmingly Rejects al-Qaeda, Taliban

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Strongly Supports US and International Presence

Believes Pakistan Is Allowing Taliban to Operate There

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

A new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of the Afghan public finds an overwhelming majority opposes al-Qaeda and the Taliban, endorses the overthrow of the Taliban and approves of the US military presence in Afghanistan.

Eighty-one percent of Afghans said they think that al-Qaeda is having a negative influence in the world with just 6% saying that it is having a positive influence. An even higher percentage—90%—said they have an unfavorable view of Osama bin Laden, with 75% saying they have a very unfavorable view. Just 5% said they have a favorable view (2% very favorable). These levels were slightly lower in the country's war zone, the eastern and south-central part of the country: three in five (60%) in those areas had a very unfavorable view of bin Laden.

The poll was developed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes and fielded by ACSOR/D3 Systems, Inc. from November 27 to December 4, 2005, with a sample of 2,089 Afghan adults.

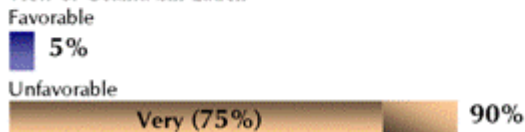
The fundamentalist Taliban that governed Afghanistan from 1996 until it was overthrown with the help of US forces in October 2001 received equally

Negative Views of Al-Qaeda

View of al-Qaeda's influence in the world



View of Osama bin Laden

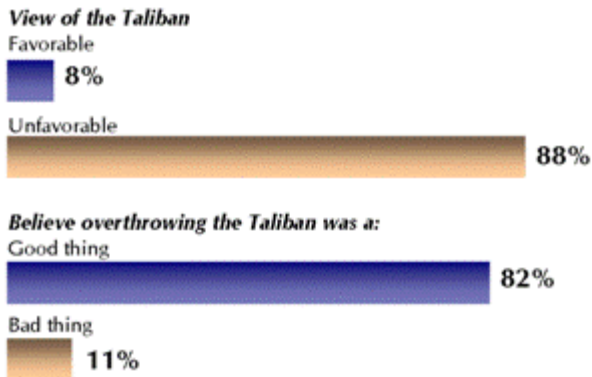


poor ratings. Eighty-eight percent said they have an unfavorable view of the Taliban (62% very unfavorable). Only 8% said they have a favorable view. In the war zone, a lesser 47% described their view of the Taliban as "very unfavorable," but 81% were unfavorable nonetheless.

Perhaps most telling, 82% said that overthrowing the Taliban government was a good thing for Afghanistan, with just 11% saying it was a bad thing. In the war zone, 71% endorsed the Taliban's overthrow while 16% saw it as a bad thing; in the north, 18% saw it as a bad thing.

These views were held by large majorities of all ethnic groups, including the large Pashtun and Tajik groups and the smaller Uzbek and Hazara groups.

Negative Views of the Taliban



The WORLD PUBLIC OPINION.ORG 1/2006 Pashtuns were less emphatic in their rejection of the Taliban, with 51% expressing a very unfavorable view of the Taliban as compared to 66-79% for the other groups.

Equally large percentages endorse the US military presence in Afghanistan. Eighty-three percent said they have a favorable view of "the US military forces in our country" (39% very favorable). Just 17% have an unfavorable view.

International agencies also get a warm endorsement. An overwhelming 93% gave the United Nations favorable ratings (57% very favorable). International agencies providing aid for reconstruction were rated as effective by 79%, with 38% saying they are very effective.

Steven Kull, director of PIPA and principal investigator of the study comments, "It is remarkable that the country that was for years subjected to the totalitarian fundamentalism of the Taliban and hosted the al Qaeda as it planned 9-11, is now overwhelmingly rejecting them and welcoming the presence of the US and international agencies. Clearly this is a positive portent for the struggle against extreme fundamentalism."

Afghans were also asked whether they approve or disapprove of US military forces "conducting operations to capture or kill al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan." This has been controversial, as Afghan civilians have at times been killed or wounded in these efforts. Nonetheless, overall 79% said they approve, with just 13% disapproving. In the east and south-central regions where most US operations take place, approval was 10 points lower at 69%, while one in five (20%) said they disapproved.

This general support for US military presence and for the overthrow of the Taliban government is also reflected in some of the most positive ratings of the United States found in the world. Eighty-one percent said that they have a favorable view of the US (40% very favorable), with just 16% giving an unfavorable rating. In the war zone, one in four (26%) had an unfavorable view of the US, but 73% were favorable.

Views of Pakistan

Pakistan and the Taliban

Think Pakistan is:

Allowing the Taliban to operate in Pakistan



Seriously trying to stop the Taliban operating in Pakistan



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Afghans do not, however, feel positively about Pakistan in general and specifically believe that, contrary to its claims, it is not pursuing the Taliban. Asked, "Do you think the Pakistan government is allowing the Taliban to operate in Pakistan, or is seriously trying to stop the Taliban from operating in Pakistan?" only 21% said they thought that Pakistan is seriously trying to stop the Taliban from operating in Pakistan, while two out of three (66%) said they believe the government is allowing the Taliban to operate in Pakistan.

This majority is even greater in the war zone, where a larger number have firsthand opportunities to observe conditions. In the eastern and south-central regions, 73% say Pakistan is allowing the Taliban to operate on Pakistani soil; only 18% see Pakistan as making serious efforts against the Taliban.

Asked their general opinion of Pakistan, 63% of Afghans said they have an unfavorable view (70% in the war zone). Just 13% said they have a favorable view.

General Situation in Country

Afghans express remarkably positive attitudes about how things are going in their country. It should, of course, be noted that over the last several decades, Afghanistan has suffered a tremendous amount of conflict, instability and repression such that their evaluations are likely influenced by comparisons to past conditions.

Asked whether their country is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction, 83% of Afghans said it is heading in the right direction. Just 11% said it is heading in the wrong direction.

Most striking, a majority rate the security situation where they are living positively, though there are important regional differences. Seventy percent said their own security situation was either excellent (21%) or good (49%). Just 30% rated it fair (25%) or poor (5%). Also in the war zone, a lesser 53% said their own security was excellent (21%) or good (32%), while 47% said it was fair (35%) or poor (12%).

The central government is viewed very positively. When a list of different authorities was read to respondents, a remarkable 55% called the central Afghan government "very effective" and another 36% said it is somewhat effective. However, given that Afghanistan remains a weak state with very limited reach over the country as a whole, it may be that Afghans were expressing their positive attitudes about the government, more than assessing its performance. President Hamid Karzai received an extraordinarily high approval rating, with 93% saying they have a favorable view of him (68% "very favorable"). There were no significant ethnic or regional variations on these two questions, which may suggest the strength of public hopes for national unity in the future.

Local leaders get ratings that are distinctly more muted, though still positive. Only 21% said they viewed local leaders as very effective, though another 43% called them somewhat effective (total: 64% effective). Thirty-two percent said they were either not very effective (20%) or not at all effective (12%). Tajiks were not quite as satisfied, with 54% rating their local leaders as very or somewhat effective. Those in the war zone were more likely to praise local leaders, with 76% calling them very (25%) or somewhat (51%) effective.

Afghans also seem to be accepting of having women in the Afghan Parliament. Respondents were asked, "As you may know, some seats in Parliament are reserved for women representatives. Do you think this is a good idea or not a good idea?" A robust 82% said they think it is a good idea, with just 13% saying it is a bad idea. Among male respondents, 77% approved.