



Afghan Futures survey

Afghanistan's Ethnic, Regional Divisions Produce a Dead Heat in its Presidential Race

Ethnic and regional divisions drove first-round ballot choices in Afghanistan's presidential election and point now to a dead heat in a runoff between the top two finishers, Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani. Yet large majorities of Afghans also say they can set aside their tribal preferences and accept the ultimate winner – a hopeful sign for the country's future.

A national survey in the Afghan Futures series, conducted in mid-March by [ACSOR-Surveys](#) with design and analysis by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds essentially a 50-50 split between Abdullah and Ghani among likely voters, with ethnic Pashtuns, who splintered in the first round, coalescing around Ghani. Abdullah counters with two-thirds support from Tajiks and Hazaras, two other key groups in the country's tribal mix. A fourth group, Uzbeks, broadly back Ghani.

Regardless of these divisions, at least seven in 10 Afghans say they're prepared to accept either of the two runoff candidates as the country's legitimate leader.

Preliminary results from Afghanistan's Independent Elections Commission put the first-round election April 5 at 44.9 percent for Abdullah, 31.5 percent for Ghani and 11.5 percent for Zalmay Rasul, with others in single digits. This poll, based on 2,643 face-to-face interviews in a nationwide random sample, had similar results among likely voters, 46-35-8 percent.

The runoff contest tightens because likely voters who did not support either Abdullah or Ghani in the first round favor Ghani by 57-34 percent in a two-way race. That includes a 55-31 percent advantage for Ghani among Rasul's supporters; Rasul himself endorsed Abdullah on Sunday.

While Pashtuns are a plurality of Afghans overall, the poll finds that Abdullah benefitted from higher turnout among Tajiks, who predominate in the North, as well as support in the central Hazarjat region and in Kabul. His support was far weaker in the Pashtun-dominated South.

Ghani, for his part, progresses from 49 percent support among Pashtuns in first-round preferences to 75 percent of Pashtuns in a runoff against Abdullah. Ghani, who picked former Uzbek commander Rashid Dostum as his running mate, has 60 percent support from Uzbeks, about one in 10 likely voters.

Aside from ethnic and regional divisions, the results show very few meaningful differences among other groups in support for Abdullah or Ghani – by age, sex, education, urban/rural status or a range of measures about the country’s condition or its direction. A statistical analysis conducted for this survey confirms that ethnic backgrounds and regional divisions are by far the strongest individual predictors of vote preferences, holding other potential factors constant.

Still, regardless of the strength of ethnic and regional loyalty, there is crossover voting: Abdullah wins support from a quarter of Pashtuns and four in 10 Uzbeks; Ghani, for his part, is backed by 31 percent of Tajiks and Hazaras alike.

Moreover, a broad 83 percent said they would find it very or somewhat easy to accept someone from an ethnic group other than their own as president.

The survey included several other positive results for the election, widely seen as a critical event in Afghanistan’s future stability and development. Fifty-five percent said they expected the vote to be fair and transparent – well more than the 42 percent who said that about the 2009 presidential election in a previous survey.

Perhaps most important is willingness to accept the eventual victor. Including their supporters and those who support their opponent but would respect the outcome regardless, 71 and 76 percent, respectively, said they would accept Abdullah or Ghani as the legitimate leader of Afghanistan. And 82 percent said they were very or somewhat confident that the next president would successfully unite the country around common goals.

The ongoing Afghan Futures surveys have been sponsored as a public service since 2010 by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research to track the course of public attitudes in Afghanistan. These results are based on face-to-face interviews conducted by ACSOR March 10-18, 2014, among a random national sample of 2,643 Afghans age 18 and older. Interviews were conducted in Dari and Pashto in all 34 of the country’s provinces. Including design effects, results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 2.5 points for the full sample and +/- 4 points for the sample of 1,190 likely voters.

These results were prepared for delivery Thursday, May 15, at the annual conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research in Anaheim, California. Details are available from ACSOR-Surveys and Langer Research Associates.

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Full results follow.

Afghan Futures: Full Results

1. Generally speaking, do you think things in Afghanistan today are going in the right direction, or do you think they are going in the wrong direction?

	Right direction	Wrong direction	Mixed direction (vol.)	No opinion
3/18/14	66	28	15	1

2. I would like to ask you about today's conditions in the village/neighborhood where you live. Would you rate (ITEM) as very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad in your area?

Summary Table - 3/18/14

	Good			Bad			No op.
	NET	Very	Smwt	NET	Smwt	Very	
a. The security situation	78	35	44	22	17	4	*
b. Your freedom of movement - the ability to move safely in your area or district	74	29	44	26	20	6	*
c. Your living conditions overall	67	18	49	33	26	7	*

3. If you could change one thing to make your life happier, what would it be - (more money/greater income), (better health), (better education), (better house), (larger family), (smaller family), (no change necessary) or something else?

	More money	Better health	Better educ.	Better house	Larger family	Smaller family	None	Oth.	No op.
3/18/14	30	24	27	8	2	1	4	4	1

4. Do you happen to be currently registered to vote in the elections to be held in April 2014 (Hamal 1393) or are you not registered to vote at this time?

	Yes	No	Don't know
3/18/14	76	24	*

5. (IF NOT REGISTERED) How likely is it that you will register to vote in the presidential election in the time remaining - very likely, somewhat likely, not so likely or not likely at all?

	More likely			Less likely			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
3/18/14	40	13	27	56	20	36	3

4/5 NET:

	Not registered						
	Registered	NET	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not so likely	Not at all likely	No opinion
3/18/14	76	24	3	7	5	9	1

6. How closely are you paying attention to news and information about the presidential election - very closely, somewhat closely, not so closely or not closely at all?



	More closely ---			Less closely -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
3/18/14	75	31	43	25	17	8	0

7. How likely are you to vote in the presidential election next month - would you say you definitely will vote, you probably will vote, there is some possibility of it, there is only a small possibility of it, or you definitely will not vote in the presidential election?

	Likely -----		Possibly -----			Definitely will not vote	No opin.
	NET	Definitely	Probably	NET	Some	Small	
3/18/14	75	50	25	15	10	5	10

8/9. (IF MIGHT VOTE) Please look at this list of candidates with their photos and party symbols. After I read out the list of 11 candidates for president, please tell me if the election were today, for whom would you vote? If (CANDIDATE NAMED) were not on the ballot, who would be your second choice?

	-1st choice-		-2 nd choice-	
	Likely		Likely	
	All	voters	All	voters
Dr. Abdullah Abdullah	40	46	12	12
Daoud Sultanzoy	2	2	3	3
Abdul Rahim Wardak	2	1	2	2
Abdul Qayum Karzai	3	2	4	3
Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai	36	35	21	21
Mohammad Nader Naeem	1	1	2	3
Zalmai Rasul	9	8	27	27
Eng. Qutbuddin Hilal	1	1	4	2
Mohammad Shafiq Gul Agha Sherzai	2	1	6	6
Abdul Rab Rasul Sayaf	4	4	11	12
Hedayat Amin Arsala	0	0	1	*
No opinion	*	*	7	8

10. If the election for president were only between (Dr. Abdullah Abdullah) and (Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai), for whom would you vote?

	All	lv1	lv2	lv3	lv4	lv5	lv6	lv7
Abdullah	41	47	48	48	51	50	52	53
Ghani	49	52	51	51	49	49	47	46
Would not vote (vol.)	10	NA						
No opinion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

11. (NOT ASKED ABOUT CANDIDATES NAMED IN Q8 and Q9) If (NAME OF CANDIDATE) is elected would you accept him as the legitimate leader of Afghanistan, or not?

Summary Table - 3/18/14

	Acceptable	Not acceptable	No opinion
Abdullah	57	40	3
Sultanzoy	33	65	2
Wardak	28	70	2
Karzai	38	59	3
Ghani	64	32	4
Naeem	33	64	4
Rasul	61	37	2
Hilal	29	58	3



Sherzai	37	61	3
Sayaf	41	57	2
Arsala	25	71	4

(Note: In analysis, supporters were added to each candidate's total)

12. For each item I read, please tell me how important it is to you in deciding your vote for president - is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not so important or not important at all in your vote?

Summary Table - 3/18/14

The candidate's...	-- More important --			---- Less important -----			No op.	
	NET	Extmly	Very	Smwt	NET	Not so	Not at all	
a. Plans for economic development	91	58	33	7	2	1	1	*
b. Plans for improving security	86	60	27	10	3	2	1	*
c. Views on dealing with the Taliban	68	35	33	17	14	8	6	*
d. Plans for addressing corruption	81	50	31	13	6	4	2	*
e. Views on relations with the Americans	72	36	36	17	11	7	3	1
f. Views on relations with Pakistan	60	29	31	20	20	12	8	*

13. Now, of the issues I mentioned, which is the single most important one in your vote for president - is it economic development, improving security, dealing with the Taliban, addressing corruption, relations with the Americans or relations with Pakistan?

Econ. dev.	Security	Taliban	Corruption	Rel. with Americans	Rel. with Pakistan	No opinion
3/18/14	27	41	12	15	4	*

14. On another matter, how important are the candidates' choices of their vice presidential running mates in deciding your vote for president - is this extremely important in your vote, very important, somewhat important, not so important or not important at all?

3/18/14	--- More important ---			---- Less important -----			No opinion	
	NET	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
	75	37	38	15	8	5	3	1

15. Now, thinking about the candidates' personal qualities. For each of these items, please tell me how important it is to you in deciding your vote for president - is it extremely important in your vote, very important, somewhat important, not so important or not important at all?

The candidate's...	-- More important --			---- Less important -----			No op.	
	NET	Extmly	Very	Smwt	NET	Not so	Not at all	
a. Honesty and integrity	92	68	24	6	2	1	1	*
b. Experience	85	53	32	11	4	3	1	*
c. Leadership ability	81	53	28	12	6	5	1	1

d. Level of education	83	56	27	11	5	3	2	1
e. Understanding of the problems of ordinary Afghans	84	55	29	11	4	3	1	*

16. Now, of the personal qualities I mentioned, which is the single most important one in your vote for president - is it the candidate's honesty and integrity, experience, leadership ability, level of education or how well he understands the problems of ordinary Afghans?

	Honesty/ integrity	Experience	Leadership	Education	Understanding of problems	No op.
3/18/14	40	18	19	9	13	*

17. If the person who is elected president comes from a tribal or ethnic group that is different from yours, would this be very easy for you to accept, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult or very difficult?

	----- Easy -----			----- Difficult -----			
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	No opinion
3/18/14	83	38	44	16	13	4	1

18. Would you say the next president should take the country in the same direction in which Hamid Karzai has been leading, or should the next president take the country in a new direction?

	Same direction	New direction	No opinion
3/18/14	21	77	2

19. How confident are you that the next president will be able to unite the country around common goals - are you very confident of this, somewhat confident, not so confident or not confident at all?

	--- More confident --			----- Less confident -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
3/18/14	82	29	3	17	14	3	1

20. Overall, is it your expectation that the presidential election will be fair and transparent, or do you think it will be fraudulent?

	Will be fair and transparent	Will be fraudulent	No opinion
3/18/14	55	39	6

21. How concerned are you, if at all, that security threats will prevent you from voting in the elections? Are you very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

	--- More concerned --			----- Less concerned -----			No opinion
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	
3/18/14	63	20	43	37	21	16	1

22a. For each candidate on the list, please tell me if you have heard or seen advertisements for that candidate, or not?



Summary Table - 3/18/14

	Yes	No	No opinion
Abdullah	88	11	1
Sultanzoy	45	54	1
Wardak	36	63	1
Karzai	61	38	1
Ghani	88	11	1
Naeem	35	64	1
Rasul	79	21	1
Hilal	38	51	1
Sherzai	55	45	1
Sayaf	61	39	1
Arsala	30	69	1

22b. (IF HEARD/SEEN CANDIDATE'S ADS) Have you heard or seen many advertisements for that candidate, a good amount, just some, or only a few?

Summary Table - 3/18/14

	More			Fewer			No opinion
	NET	Many	Good amount	NET	Just some	Only a few	
Abdullah	87	57	30	13	10	2	1
Sultanzoy	54	17	38	45	30	15	*
Wardak	50	17	33	48	32	17	1
Karzai	63	23	40	36	28	8	1
Ghani	87	57	30	12	10	2	1
Naeem	48	15	34	50	33	17	1
Rasul	76	41	35	22	18	4	2
Hilal	50	14	35	49	34	15	1
Sherzai	65	23	42	35	26	9	1
Sayaf	68	28	40	31	24	8	1
Arsala	43	12	30	56	33	23	2

23a. Have you personally been contacted by anyone encouraging you to vote for any of the candidates for president, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/18/14	28	69	3

23b. (IF PERSONALLY CONTACTED) Which candidates have you been encouraged to support? (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)

	Contacted by
Abdullah	14
Sultanzoy	2
Wardak	1
Karzai	3
Ghani	13
Naeem	2
Rasul	9
Hilal	2
Sherzai	3
Sayaf	5
Arsala	1
Don't know	*



24a. Are you aware of any people in this area being threatened with retaliation if they vote in the presidential election, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/18/14	11	86	3

24b. Are you aware of any people in this area being threatened with retaliation if they vote for a particular candidate in the presidential election, or not?
(New)

	Yes	No	No opinion
3/18/14	10	87	3

25. Thinking back, as you may know, some people voted in the last presidential election in 2009, and some did not vote in that election. Did you yourself happen to vote in the 2009 election, or not?

	Voted	Did not vote	No opinion
3/18/14	53	44	3

26. (IF VOTED IN 2009) Who did you vote for in the 2009 presidential election?

	3/18/14
Hamid Karzai	55
Dr. Abdullah Abdullah	24
Ramazan Bashardost	11
Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai	6
Other	1
Do not remember (vol.)/DK	3

*** END ***