Safety
in Afghan
Cities

Jalalabad, Nangarhar

Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding Programme (AUPP)

Independent Directorate of Local Governance
Islamice Republic of Afghanistan

Ministry of
Urban Development and Housing
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
MUDH

Kabul Municipality
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Kingdom of the Netherlands

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and Cooperation SDC**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy and programme experiences from different countries have shown the correlation between government legitimacy, stability and peace. Provision of basic services and infrastructure, fairness in service delivery (especially toward vulnerable groups), and inclusive and transparent governance processes are all factors that contribute toward creating state legitimacy. This establishes people's trust in their government and helps to build stable societies.

The Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding Programme (AUPP) addresses this complex relationship between governance and peace. This three-year programme (2015-18) on urban safety is currently being implemented by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, with technical assistance from UN-Habitat and funding support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The goal of the programme is to improve government legitimacy through fostering conditions where urban residents have increased trust in their local governments' capacity to uphold rights and to achieve safe and inclusive cities.

This report presents public perceptions on urban safety in Afghanistan by examining data from AUPP's eight target cities: Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Herat, Kunduz, Nili, Bamyan and Farah. Two sources of data have been used to develop this report: (i) quantitative data from a baseline survey conducted in November-December 2015 and (ii) supplementary qualitative data gathered in focus group discussions in July 2016.

This report describes people's opinion on safety and stability in Afghanistan by highlighting four dimensions of the issue:

1. Current perceptions on the state of urban safety at the national, city, neighbourhood and individual levels.

2. Awareness of rights and engagement with local authorities, which demonstrate the level of trust that people have in their government.

3. Provision of municipal and police services, particularly safety services and services for vulnerable groups, as measures of government responsiveness.

4. Changes needed to improve safety in cities, particularly to address the challenges faced by vulnerable and marginalised people.

Key findings of the report are:

• People are generally positive about the situation in their cities and neighbourhoods. But this optimism diminishes at the national level. While 52% of survey respondents felt that their city is heading in the right direction, only 27% thought that Afghanistan is moving in the right direction. Furthermore, 82% of respondents felt safe in their neighbourhood, which decreased to 72% in relation to feeling safe in their city.

• Though conflict-related issues are expected to dominate the safety discourse in Afghanistan, people's definition of safety is more varied. Responses on what people considered to be the biggest threats to their neighbourhood revealed environmental hazards (48%), traffic/road safety (40%) and crime (41%) as the top challenges, with terrorism/war (23%) coming in at the fourth position. When asked about the major factors affecting long-term stability, survey respondents identified economic factors (55%) and terrorism/war (25%). Environmental issues (9%) and housing concerns (5%) occupied very low third and fourth positions.

• Urban residents have high levels of fear for their safety and low confidence in the police to protect them. The highest proportion of survey respondents (44%) reported that they always or often fear for their personal and family's safety. Though over half of them identified the Afghan National Police as being responsible for safety in their neighbourhood, under 15% had reported a violent act to them in the past year. There was no direct relationship between people's feeling of fear and how often they saw police officials or whether they thought that the police took their concerns seriously, reinforcing the lack of public confidence in the police.

• People are aware of their rights, but they don't engage much with their local authorities. Over a quarter of respondents identified the right to access basic services and over half identified political rights as the basic rights that Afghans are entitled to. But only 15% of respondents had interacted with their municipality in the six months prior to the survey. The level of interaction with police officers was also found to be

low (11%). A minority of respondents (11%) felt that they had influence over decisions made by the municipality. In addition, a high percentage of respondents (43%) did not feel safe expressing opinions about the municipality.

• Satisfaction with municipal service delivery is very low. The majority of survey respondents noted that municipalities either delivered very little or no services, with many people finding Community Development Councils or *Shuras* to be more effective in providing basic services. A very low percentage of people surveyed (less than 5% in any city) thought that making a request or complaint to the municipality would improve service delivery.

• Government responsiveness on safety problems, especially those faced by vulnerable groups, is rated poorly by people. Less than half of respondents (31%) reported that they felt the municipality and police addressed safety concerns effectively. Similarly, more than 60% of respondents felt that municipalities had no or very little ability to achieve safe cities. Only 23% of respondents thought police officials addressed the needs of vulnerable people, which was even weaker (13%) in the case of municipalities.

• Addressing urban safety in Afghanistan requires multi-faceted responses. Survey results revealed generally similar trends between male and female respondents. However, there were large variances when data was disaggregated among the eight surveyed cities, depending on their security and economic conditions. When respondents were asked what municipalities could do to better support vulnerable groups, answers were almost evenly split between holding meetings with them (30%), and making social (37%) and economic (31%) assistance available. For both women and children, respondents thought staying at home was the best way to ensure their safety. Related to this, respondents asked for improvements in physical conditions, such as the provision of public spaces and safer roads, to increase their safety in cities.

Community-municipality-police consultation, Nili, Daikundi

BACKGROUND

A. Safety and Peacebuilding

As laid out in Afghanistan's National Priority Plan for Local Governance, good governance forms the foundation for long-term stability by meeting people's expectations regarding the achievements of core government responsibilities, including adequate service and security provision through inclusive and democratic processes.[1]

Research undertaken under the many stabilisation and peacebuilding programmes that have been implemented in the last decade in Afghanistan and other fragile states consistently highlight the close ties between people's perception toward government and peace. The DFID Practice Paper *Building Peaceful States and Society* explains the link as follows: "Strong state-society relations are critical to building effective, legitimate states and durable, positive peace".[2] To build this state-society relation, the UK aid agency suggests focusing on developing core state functions (including security, law and justice) and responding to public expectations (including on security).

In the same vein, the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has integrated support to governance and service delivery as part of its main funding focus in order to prevent fragile states from relapsing into conflict. An evaluation of the PBF support to Burundi notes: "Public administration and social services, delivered in an effective and equitable manner, can address grievances that underlie or trigger violent conflict and offer a means for the state to reach out to society and rebuild its legitimacy and systems of accountability".[3]

On the contrary, lack of government capacity to live up to citizen expectations can have serious consequences for government legitimacy and, as a result, security and stability. It is, therefore, important to look at the current state of safety in cities with respect to not only the provision of safety services but also governance capacity, and develop strategies to improve both these conditions.

B. Programme Information

UN-Habitat has been working with communities in Afghanistan since 1992. UN-Habitat's work in urban and rural areas of Afghanistan is based on the principle that the best way to achieve sustainable and cost-effective development is through assisting communities to plan and implement development activities that they have clearly identified as their own priorities.

The Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding Programme (AUPP) is a three-year programme (2015-18) being implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Kabul Municipality and the Ministry of Interior, with technical support from UN-Habitat. The goal of AUPP is to improve government legitimacy through fostering conditions where urban citizens have increased trust in their local governments' capacity to uphold rights and achieve safe, secure and inclusive cities.

To achieve this goal, AUPP focuses on the vital linkage between state-society relations, developing awareness on rights and duties of both municipal actors and communities. More specifically, AUPP's approach concentrates on enhancing safety through the principles of participation and inclusiveness, creating an enabling environment for governance and urban safety, and increasing municipal capacity to ensure safety for all residents, especially the most vulnerable. The program focuses on eight of the country's most strategic cities: Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Farah, Nili, Kunduz and Bamyan.

By concentrating on the urban terrain of peacebuilding and state-building, the programme strengthens the production of public goods, especially safety; improves local government responsiveness and accountability; and strengthens partnerships with communities and civil society, contributing to solidarity and collective efficacy – all of which are central to the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.[4]

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1. National Priority Programme for Local Governance, Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, http://stabilityinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/NPPLG-program-proposal-30612-Final.pdf
2. Building Peaceful States and Societies, DFID Practice Paper, 2010, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67694/Building-peaceful-states-and-societies.pdf
3. Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, 2014, http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-May-UN-PBF.pdf
4. New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, http://www.pbsbdialogue.org/media/filer_public/07/69/07692de0-3557-494e-918e-18df00e9ef73/the_new_deal.pdf

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two main data sources were used to develop this report: the findings of a quantitative survey implemented by UN-Habitat and supplementary qualitative data collected by the author.

A. Quantitative Questionnaire

UN-Habitat developed a quantitative tool to gather data and administered the survey in November-December 2015. The survey was conducted in all eight target cities within the scope of AUPP's work. The results were provided to the author and a total of 14,209 household responses were analysed for this study.

The survey was analysed for overall trends (data with no disaggregation), as well as trends by city and sex. This was done through descriptive statistics analysed using STATA 13.

B. Qualitative Data

To contextualise the quantitative data, five focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in July 2016:

Kabul (1 male and 1 female FGD)

Mazar-e-Sharif (1 female FGD)

Herat (1 male FGD)

Jalalabad (1 male FGD)

The FGD tool was developed based on the AUPP logframe and consultations with stakeholders in UN-Habitat. Questions were translated into Dari and Pashtu, and then back translated into English, to ensure that the intent of questions carried through the process.

While the household surveys formed the backbone of the findings and analysis, qualitative data allowed for more in-depth information to explain the quantitative findings in more detail. Quotes from the FGDs have been included in different sections of the study to support conclusions drawn from the quantitative analysis.

Table 1: Survey Breakdown

	Households Surveyed	Men	Women
Bamyan	1,234	475	753
Farah	769	465	301
Herat	2,934	907	2,007
Jalalabad	1,693	1,039	643
Kabul	2,820	1,520	1,297
Kunduz	2,073	823	1,230
Mazar	1,790	767	1,011
Nili	896	479	417
Total	**14,209**	**6,475**	**7,659**

PERCEPTIONS ON SAFETY

This section examines people's feelings on safety in relation to the country as a whole, as well as their cities and neighbourhoods.

A. Community Safety

Survey respondents were more positive about the direction that their respective cities are moving in as compared to Afghanistan as a nation. Overall, 52% of respondents reported that they felt their cities were progressing in the right direction. In comparison, only 27% of respondents reported that Afghanistan was moving in the right direction. Differences when disaggregated by gender were small, with males slightly more positive than women about the direction of Afghanistan (29% and 26% respectively) but slightly less positive about the direction of their cities (51% and 53% respectively).

While the trend remained similar in all cities (i.e. respondents were more optimistic about the direction their city is heading in than the country), the degree of positivity and relative difference between the two indicators varied widely between cities. While respondents in Farah felt that the situation was only slightly better in their city as compared to Afghanistan in general (53% and 52% respectively), possibly because of widespread unrest within the city, those in Mazar-e-Sharif were far more positive about the direction their city was moving in as compared to the nation as a whole (86% and 18% respectively), again possibly because Mazar-e-Sharif is

relatively stable in terms of security. The degree of positivity concerning cities also varied widely with as few as 24% of Kunduz respondents reporting that the city was going in the right direction, which could be based on insurgent attacks and the continuing threat faced by the city, compared to 86% in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The consistently more positive responses concerning the direction of respondents' cities as compared to Afghanistan as a nation could indicate higher confidence in safety and security at more localised levels, which is supported by positive trends overall as questions honed in at the neighbourhood level. Even as 72% of respondents overall reported that they felt safe in their city, 82% reported that they felt safe in their neighbourhood. When disaggregated by gender, both males and females were more positive about their neighbourhood (83% and 81% respectively) compared to their city (75% and 70% respectively).

However, this general trend did not hold when disaggregated by city. Respondents in Bamyan, Nili, Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif reported slightly higher feelings of safety in their city compared to their neighbourhood. The variation of the results in Bamyan and Nili compared to the national trend could be explained by the fact that the two cities are too small for properly differentiating the municipality into specific neighbourhoods. These trends could also reflect the level of personal security. In Kunduz and Farah, both provinces widely contested by insurgent groups, respondents were

Figure 1: Positive perception about direction of Afghanistan and cities
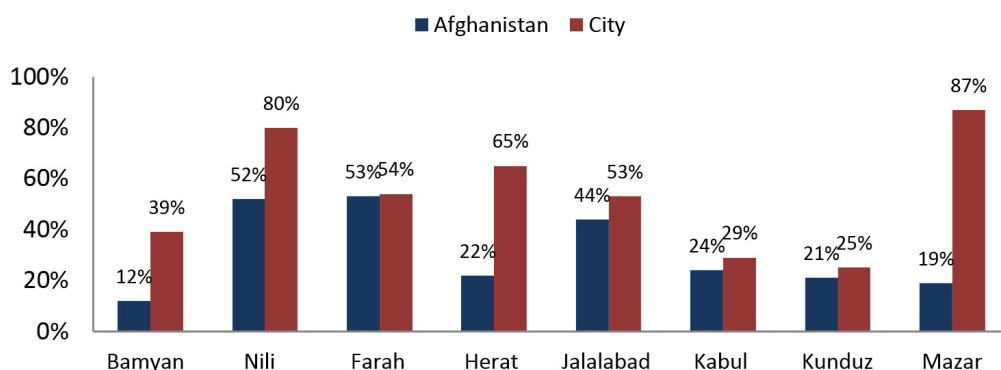
Figure 2: Feeling of safety in your city and neighbourhood

■ City ■ Neighbourhood

City	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Average
City	72%	94%	61%	75%	67%	54%	68%	96%	72%
Neighbourhood	68%	90%	77%	85%	63%	84%	88%	91%	82%
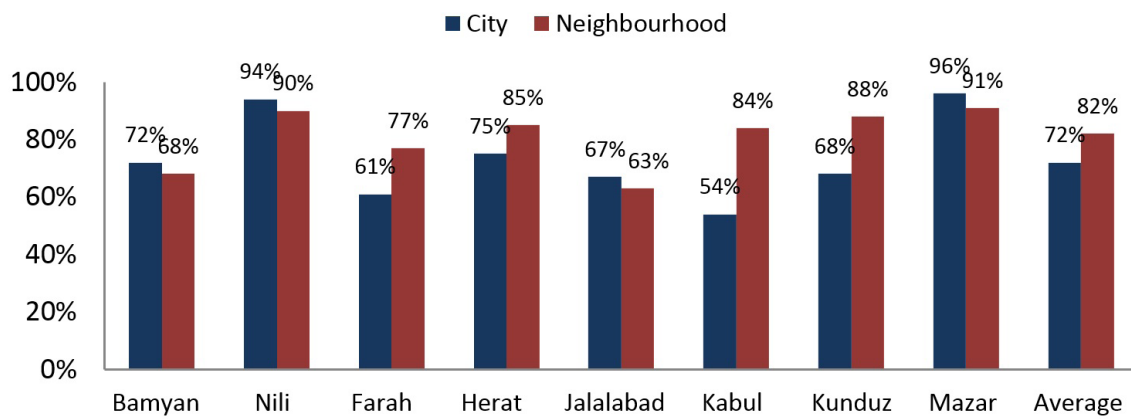
more negative about the direction of their city compared to those living in more stable cities such as Mazar-e-Sharif and Nili. Responses to questions concerning what respondents considered to be the biggest threats to safety within their neighbourhoods demonstrated that their understanding of safety and security is much wider than the risks related to conflict and crime. Responses focused more on environmental hazards and traffic/road safety than on threats such as terrorism/war and kidnapping.

Figure 3: What are the biggest threats to safety in your neighbourhood?

Traffic/road safety	Non-violent crime by a stranger	Violent crime by a stranger	Assault by a family member	Environmental hazards	Structural hazards	Police/Government Harassment	Terrorism/war	Kidnapping	Other
40%	29%	12%	1%	48%	18%	2%	23%	12%	2%
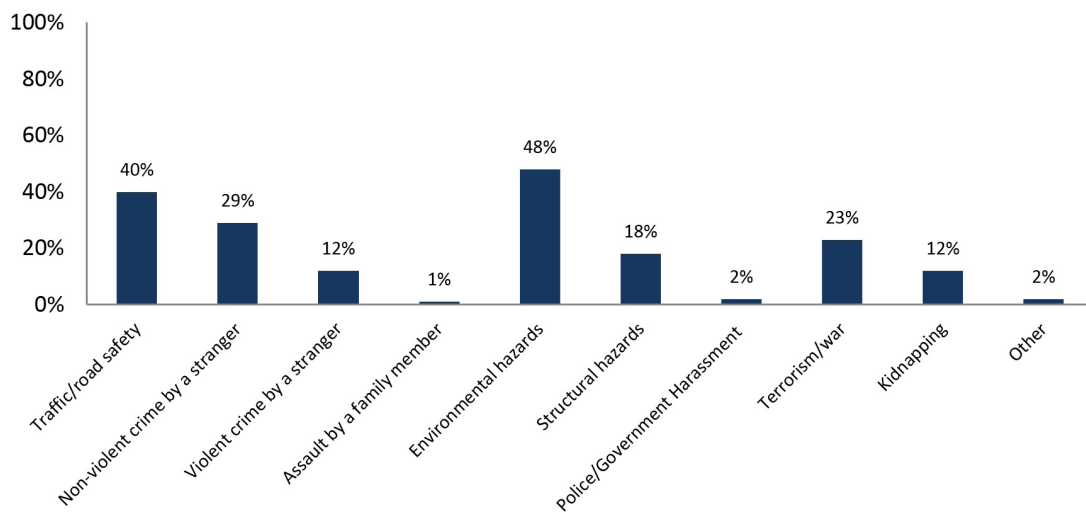
While terrorism/war was selected as the fourth choice out of ten options, this option was mostly listed by respondents in Farah, Jalalabad and Kunduz, likely due to the fact that military operations by both government and anti-government forces have occurred on a larger scale and much closer to the city centre relative to other AUPP cities. Risks related to environment and infrastructure were ranked higher in cities where immediate war-related threats are less acute. For example 69% of respondents in Bamyan prioritised traffic and road safety compared to only 22% in Farah.

Relatively stronger perceptions of safety and overall direction of cities could be a reflection of the driving factors behind urbanisation, where populations migrate based on expectations of better living conditions, particularly in terms of service provision and security, due to stronger government presence. This was almost uniformly reflected in FGDs, where respondents expressed a preference for urban areas largely based on more access to services.

"The city is safer than the rural areas because the government doesn't exist [in rural areas] and they have many problems but there are many facilities in the city such as education, businesses, security and the problems of the people can be resolved more quickly."

-Unemployed, Male, Kabul

"In the rural areas they have more green areas and less pollution but compared to the cities there are no clinics, hospitals and the government does not respond to issues raised by citizens."

-Housewife, Female, Mazar-e-Sharif

B. Personal Safety

As many as 44% of the respondents (highest proportion) reported that they "always" or "often" feared for their personal and family's safety.

When disaggregated by city, the frequency of reported fear varied widely, with 71% of Kabul residents surveyed reporting that they "always" feared for their safety compared to 17% of respondents in Mazar-e-Sharif and only 11% of respondents in Nili. The heightened level of fear in Kabul could be the result of both the public nature and visibility of insurgent attacks in universities, supermarkets and public demonstrations, which have created a sense of vulnerability in people. Furthermore, expectations of government-provided security are much higher in Kabul, the seat of the central government and the recipient of the lion's share of international funding.

Table 2: What would you consider to be the biggest threats to safety in your neighbourhood? (Up to three choices permitted from list)

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Traffic/road safety	69%	45%	22%	63%	32%	16%	38%	39%	40%
Non-violent crime by a stranger	37%	24%	26%	39%	27%	33%	32%	3%	29%
Violent crime by stranger	13%	28%	13%	10%	14%	14%	13%	1%	12%
Assault by family member	1%	1%	0%	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Environmental hazards	84%	73%	1%	65%	19%	34%	32%	71%	48%
Structural hazards	46%	25%	1%	13%	11%	12%	10%	35%	18%
Harassment by police or government officials	1%	0%	1%	2%	5%	2%	3%	0%	2%
Terrorism/war related attacks	2%	1%	44%	12%	42%	30%	50%	2%	23%
Kidnapping	3%	2%	34%	16%	14%	14%	11%	1%	12%
Other	3%	0%	1%	0%	5%	1%	5%	0%	2%

Figure 4: Fear for personal or family safety

Rarely/Never
21%

Always/Often
44%

Sometimes
35%

Kabul city, Kabul
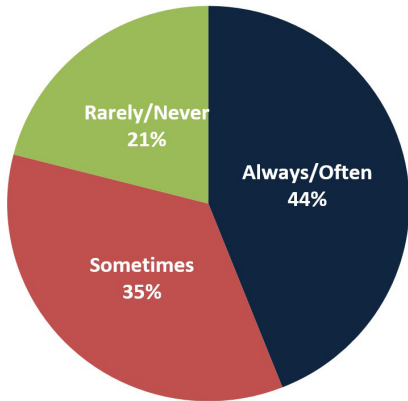
Overall, perceptions were similar between male and female respondents when it came to reporting that they "always" feared for their safety (13% and 12% respectively). Gender disaggregation revealed a significant variation of over three percentage points only in two cities, Herat and Kabul, where there were nine and ten percentage point differences respectively between males and females.

Figure 5: How often do you fear for personal or family safety?

■ Always/Often   ■ Sometimes   ■ Rarely/Never

	Bamyan	Nil	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Average
Always/Often	34%	12%	52%	46%	44%	71%	43%	16%	44%
Sometimes	48%	44%	43%	35%	37%	15%	40%	43%	35%
Rarely/Never	18%	44%	5%	19%	20%	14%	17%	41%	21%
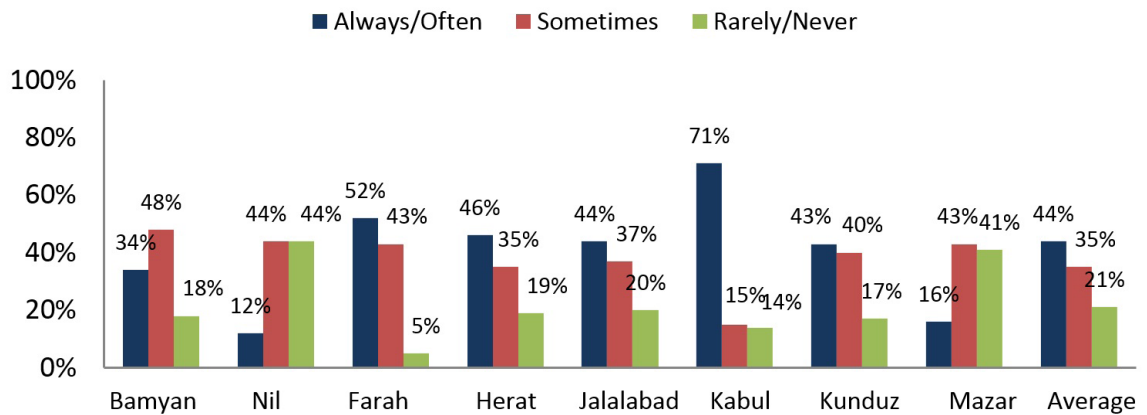
Figure 6: "Always" fear for personal or family safety
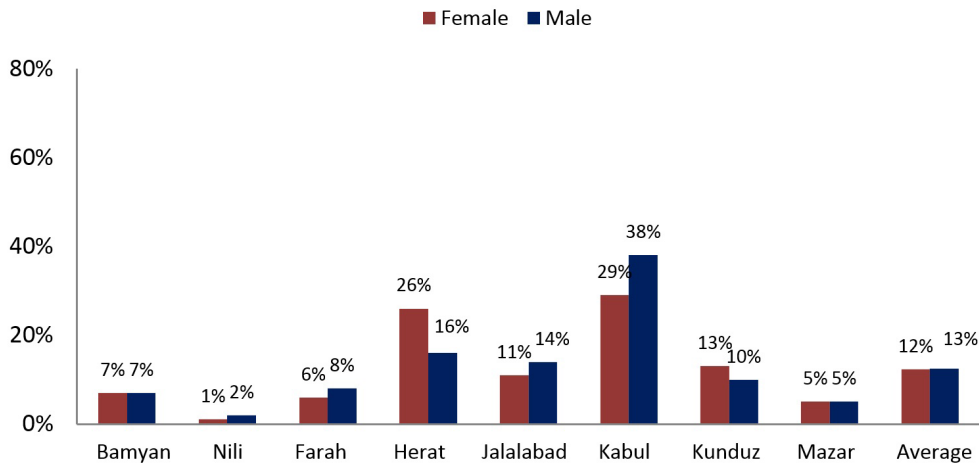
Despite relatively high responses on fear for safety, reports of self or family members experiencing a violent act in the past year were low (under 15% overall), indicating that these two factors are not tied directly. This again highlights the need to widen the concept of safety beyond physical threats. For example, 71% of respondents in Kabul reported "always" or "often" fearing for their safety, while only 4% of these respondents reported that they or anyone in their family had been the victim of a violent or criminal act in the past year. Underscoring the difference in how people understand safety from one city to another, in Jalalabad, 43% of respondents (close to 30 percentage points lower than in Kabul) reported that they "always" or "often" feared for their safety, while 14% of respondents (10 percentage points higher than in Kabul) reported having experienced a violent attack directly or through their family.

When asked who is responsible for safety in their neighbourhood, over half of the respondents noted the Afghan National Police. However, there was no clear relationship between fear for safety and frequency of seeing police officers in respondents' neighbourhoods. Indeed, respondents who said they saw the police regularly (on a daily or weekly basis) were almost as likely to fear for their safety "always/often" than they were to "rarely/never" fear for their safety.

Figure 7: Relationship between frequency of seeing police officers and frequency of fear for personal/family safety
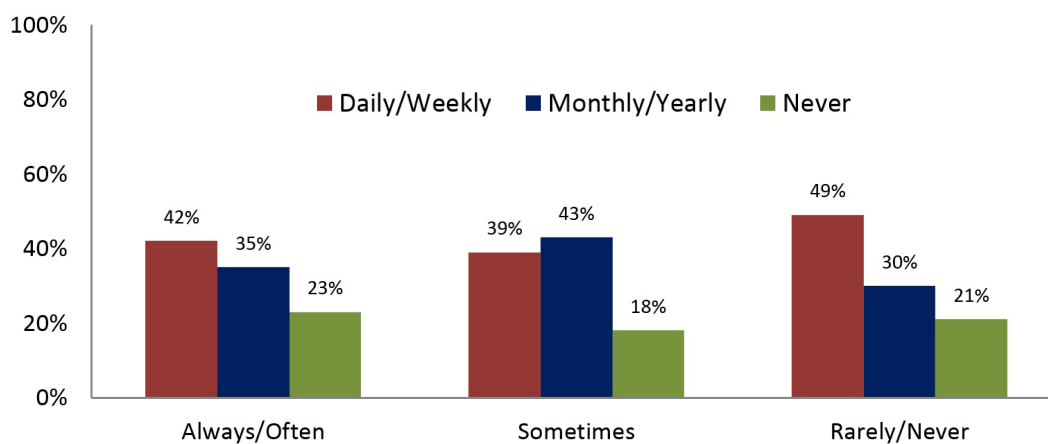
There was also no direct relationship between frequency of fear and whether people thought that the police took their safety concerns seriously, reinforcing the lack of public confidence in police forces. The absence of this relationship held between male and female respondents as well as between different cities surveyed. This indicates that the mere presence of police officers in a neighbourhood is not sufficient to instill a sense of confidence among people in their capacity to manage the security situation, which leads to the assumption that the police is expected to show a more significant level of activity to raise the perception of safety among residents.

Figure 8: Relationship between fear for safety and feeling that police take safety concerns seriously

Nili, Daikundi
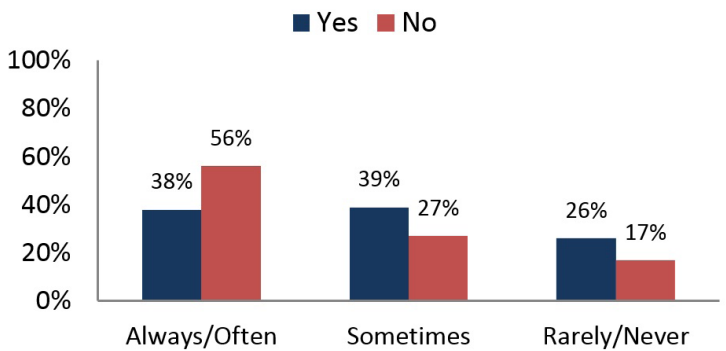
ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This section analyses citizens' understanding of their rights, and relations between local authorities (municipalities and police) and communities.

A. Rights' Awareness

The AUPP survey asked respondents to identify the basic rights that they felt every Afghan citizen is entitled to. From responses to this question, a "Rights' Awareness Index" was established.[5] Females were only marginally less aware of their rights (3.2%) compared to their male counterparts (3.3%).

Despite low index scores on average, respondents demonstrated a high awareness of a few specific rights: voting/participation in elections, freedom of expression, and health and education services.

When disaggregated by city, trends were consistent when it came to awareness of these three rights (voting/participation in elections, freedom of expression, and health and education services), except Kabul and Jalalabad, where a significantly lower proportion of respondents (34% and 31% respectively) listed voting/participating in elections as a basic right.

Figure 9: Rights' awareness index

Figure 10: Identification of rights for Afghan citizens
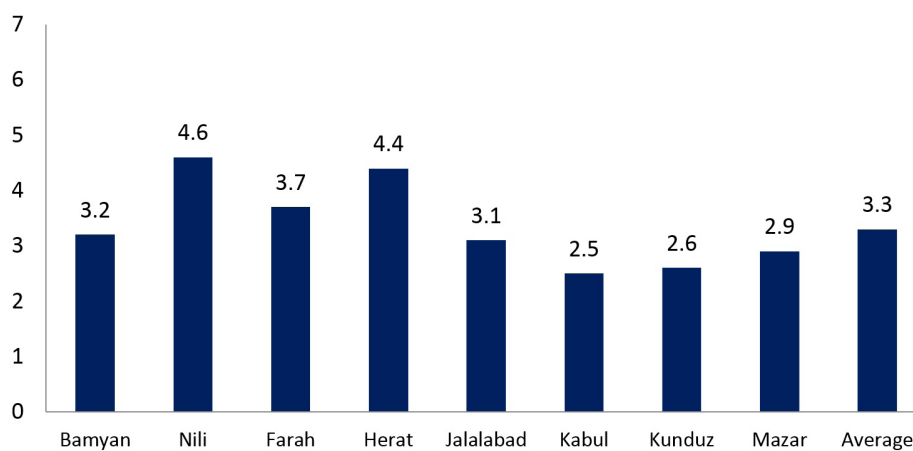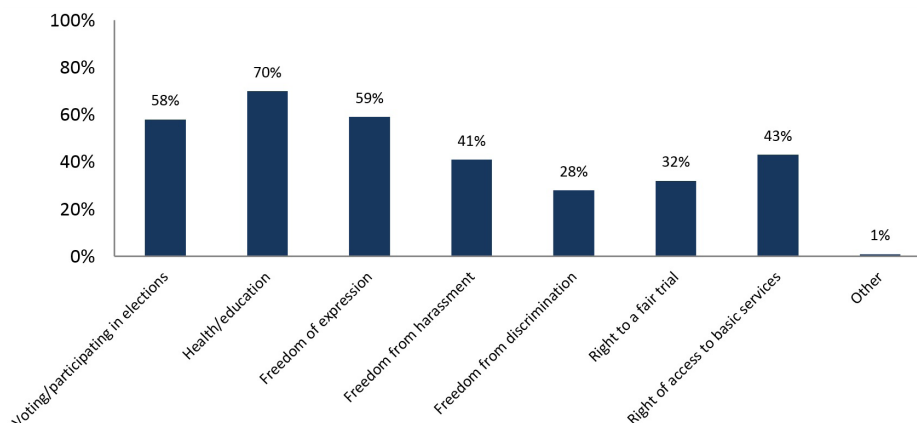

5. The Rights' Awareness Index was created by analysing how many of the seven rights listed in the survey could be identified by respondents. The index is scored from 0-7.

Identification of other rights varied widely across provinces. For instance, only 9% of Kabul respondents identified freedom from discrimination as a basic right in Afghanistan, while almost half (47%) of Nili respondents did so. Similarly, 52% of Nili respondents were aware of their right to a fair trial, while only 13% had an awareness of this right in Mazar-e-Sharif.

"As an Afghan we have the right to freedom, cultural rights, rule of law, political rights and economic rights."

-CDC Member, Male, Herat

"First, I have the right to take part in the elections, second the government should provide me the opportunity for education, third, I have to have a house in Afghanistan to live in. It is my right to have security and work opportunities."

-Shura Secretary, Male, Jalalabad

"This is something clear that anyone who lives somewhere has the right to live and has the right to freedom of speech, right to education, health, security, electricity and work."

-Secretary of Shura, Male, Jalalabad

Despite these variances, the fact that over a quarter of respondents identified the right to access basic services and over half identified political rights indicates an awareness of the social contract between governments and citizens. The failure of public institutions to respect these fundamental rights may have a direct effect on their legitimacy and, as a result, lead to instability and insecurity. This awareness was also reflected in FGD responses.

Community Development Council meeting, Kabul

Table 3: As an Afghan, what basic rights do you believe you are entitled to? (Multiple responses allowed)

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Voting/participating in elections	63%	87%	87%	72%	31%	34%	51%	76%	58%
Health/education	75%	82%	80%	74%	65%	66%	71%	61%	70%
Freedom of expression	55%	81%	63%	70%	63%	51%	51%	50%	59%
Freedom from harassment	39%	55%	39%	69%	31%	22%	24%	49%	41%
Freedom from discrimination	16%	47%	38%	62%	26%	9%	12%	17%	28%
Right to a fair trial	23%	52%	43%	46%	48%	23%	22%	13%	32%
Right of access to basic services	45%	59%	40%	50%	44%	45%	33%	26%	43%
Other	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%

B. Community Engagement with Municipality and Police

The level of direct interaction between municipalities and their constituents was found to be limited in the target cities. Overall, 15% of respondents stated that they had interacted with their municipality in the six months prior to the survey. Males were slightly more likely to report interactions with the municipality (18%) compared to females (13%). Of those who reported having interacted with the municipality, the most common type of interaction related to discussing a neighbourhood issue (73%).

When disaggregated by city, there were large variances in the types of interaction reported, which may be indicative of the relative importance of certain issues and the role of municipal governments. While discussions on neighbourhood issues was the top reason listed for interactions with the municipality in

all cities surveyed, with results ranging from 48% in Mazar-e-Sharif to 94% in Herat, this seemed to be distinctly less relevant in Kabul (21%) and Nili (20%). Land issues seemed to be more important in Nili, where 73% of respondents discussed this issue with municipal authorities within the six months preceding the survey. In Mazar-e-Sharif, this issue was reported only at 26%. In other cities, less than 10% of respondents reported this type of interaction with the municipality.

These trends were largely similar when disaggregated by gender, though females were slightly more likely to receive assistance after an emergency while males were slightly more likely to greet a municipal officer on the street.

Figure 11: Type of interaction reported by those who had an interaction with the municipality in past six months
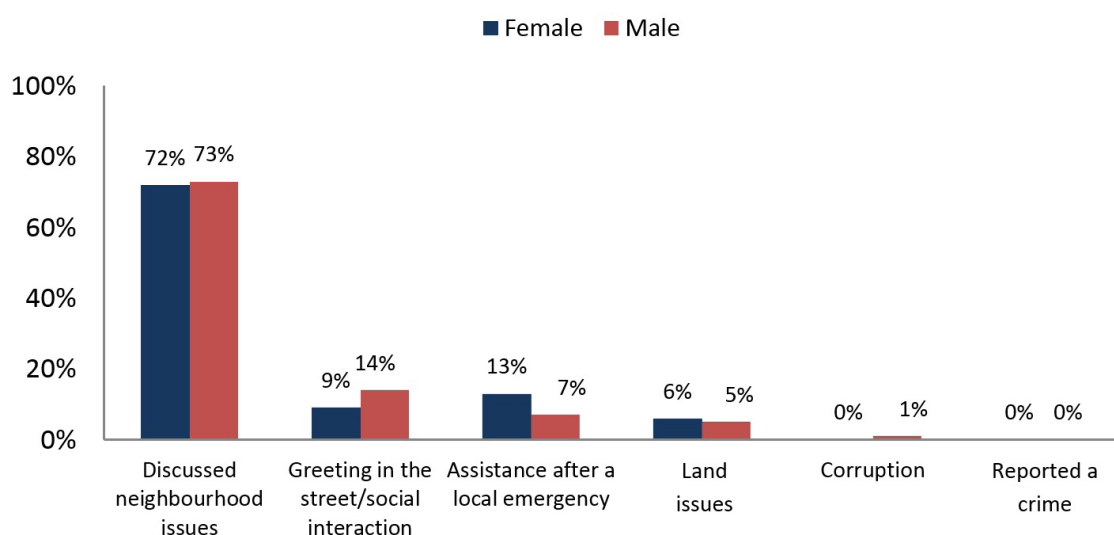
Table 4: Type of interaction with the municipalities in the past six months

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Discussed neighbourhood issues	91%	20%	66%	94%	82%	21%	54%	48%	72%
Greeting in street/social interaction	2%	5%	29%	2%	15%	4%	41%	11%	12%
Assistance after a local emergency	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	74%	4%	15%	10%
Land issues	6%	73%	0%	3%	0%	1%	1%	26%	6%
Corruption	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Reported a crime	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%

Levels of interaction with police officers were found to be low, with only 11% of respondents reporting that they had interacted with the police in the six months preceding the survey. Males reported more interaction (13%) compared to female respondents (9%). When disaggregated by city, respondents in Kunduz were more likely to report an interaction with the police in the past six months (22%) compared to less than 15% in all other cities surveyed, which could be an indicator of the volatile security situation in the city.

The types of interaction with the police were similar across cities, with greetings or social interactions as the top-reported interaction across all cities. However, Kabul was the exception, where most interactions related to assistance after an emergency (listed as the top reason by 44% of respondents). The two other main reasons cited for contacting the police related to reporting a crime and discussing neighbourhood safety. A maximum of 26% of respondents in any city listed one of these two reasons.

Figure 12: Type of interaction with the police in the past six months
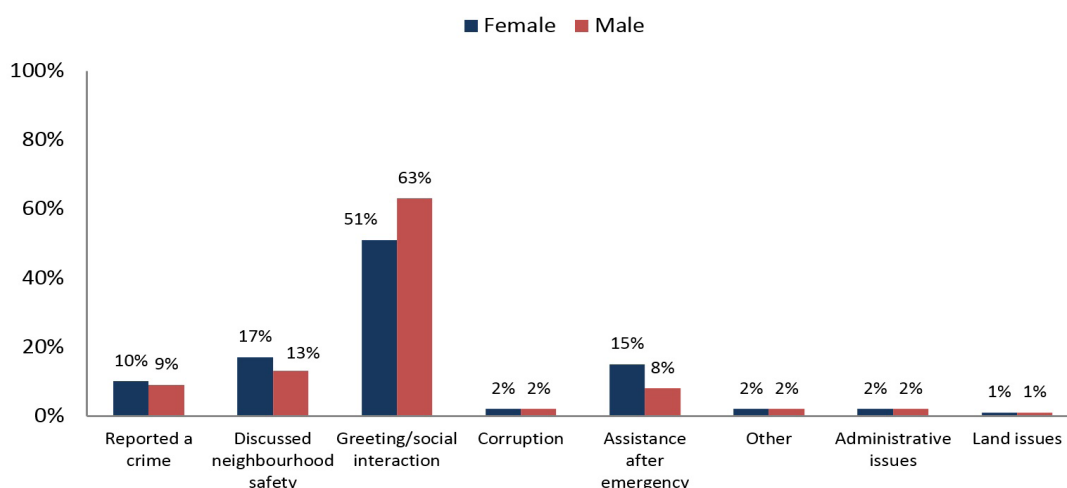
The types of interaction with the police were generally the same between males and females. The exception was a higher percentage of males reporting that they would greet or have other social interactions with police officers (63% versus 51% respectively), while more females reported receiving assistance after an emergency (15% versus 8% respectively).

In comparing rates of municipal versus police interactions, a higher trend of interactions with municipalities was observed.

Interactions with the municipality were significantly higher than with the police in Bamyan (23% and 13% respectively), Herat (24% and 9% respectively), and Jalalabad (26% and 13% respectively). In Kunduz, however, interactions with the police (22%) were noticeably higher than with the municipality (17%), a difference that can probably be explained by an increased presence of and outreach from police forces following the fall of Kunduz to the Taliban in late 2015.

Table 5: Type of interaction with the police in the past six months

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Reported a crime	5%	3%	26%	11%	17%	18%	2%	10%	9%
Discussed neighbourhood safety	13%	8%	19%	16%	8%	18%	14%	26%	15%
Greeting/social interaction	79%	84%	39%	54%	55%	16%	78%	37%	58%
Corruption	1%	0%	13%	0%	8%	1%	1%	0%	2%
Assistance after emergency	1%	2%	1%	8%	5%	44%	2%	7%	11%
Administrative issues	1%	1%	2%	6%	6%	0%	1%	0%	2%
Land issues	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	10%	1%
Other	0%	1%	0%	4%	0%	2%	1%	10%	2%

Figure 13: Interactions with the municipality and police in the past six months
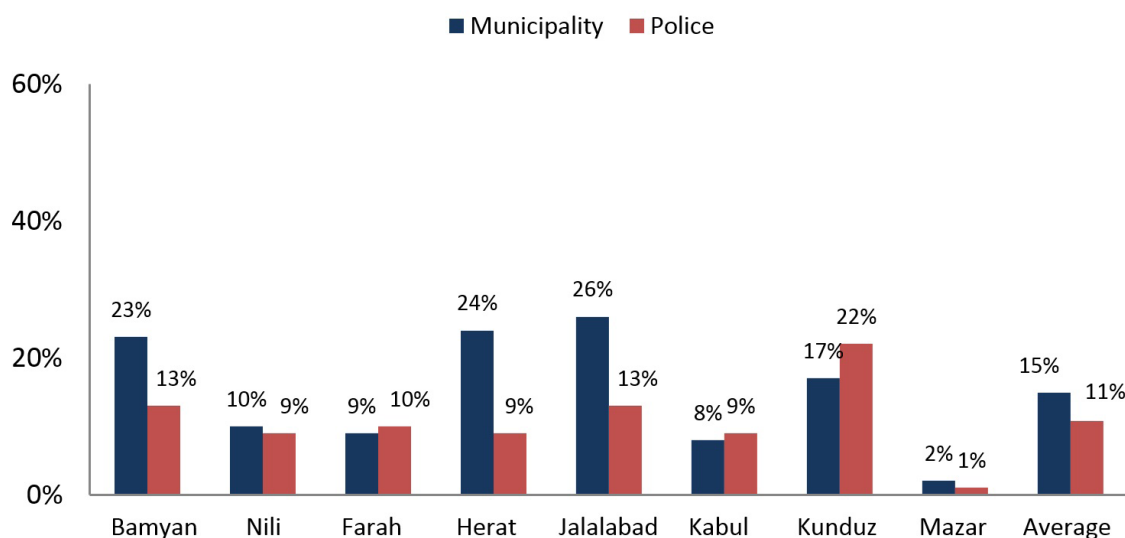
Only a minority of respondents (11%) felt that they had influence over decisions made by the municipality. The difference of perceptions regarding citizens' capacity to influence municipal decisions between male and female was marginal, with 12% females reporting that they had "quite a bit" or "a great deal" of influence over the municipality as compared to 10% men. However, when disaggregated by city, variations were significant. Respondents were particularly pessimistic in Farah, where only 10% of respondents reported that they could "somewhat" or "quite a bit/a great deal" influence decisions at the municipal level. On the other hand, in Kunduz, this was reported by 51% of respondents.

A high percentage of respondents reported feeling "very little" or "not at all" safe in expressing opinions about the municipality (43%). Male and female perceptions of safety when expressing opinions about the municipality were very similar, though females were slightly less likely to say they felt "very little" or "not at all" safe in expressing their opinions compared to males (41% and 45% respectively). Like other variables in this study, disaggregating by city reveals more diversity in respondents' opinions.

Figure 14: Do you feel you can influence municipality decision?

Legend: Not at all/very little ■ Somewhat ■ Quite a bit/a great deal

City	Not at all/very little	Somewhat	Quite a bit/a great deal
Bamyan	78%	18%	4%
Nili	52%	22%	26%
Farah	90%	8%	2%
Herat	66%	25%	9%
Jalalabad	58%	22%	20%
Kabul	71%	24%	5%
Kunduz	49%	34%	17%
Mazar-e-Sharif	56%	30%	14%
Average	64%	25%	11%
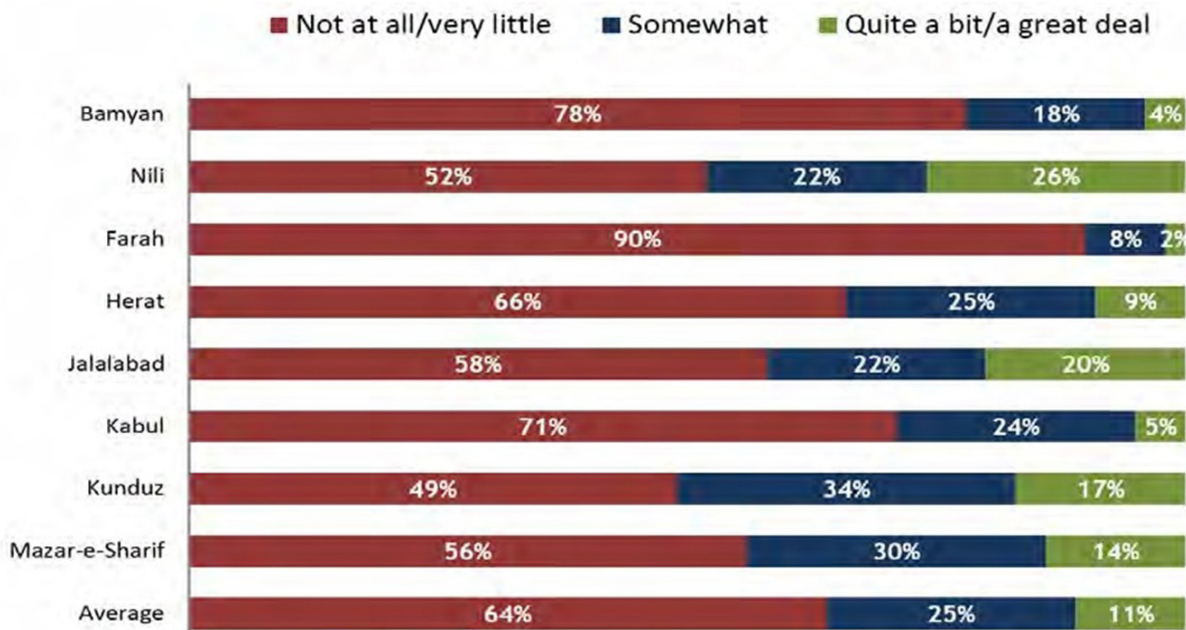
Figure 15: Do you feel safe expressing your opinion about the municipality?
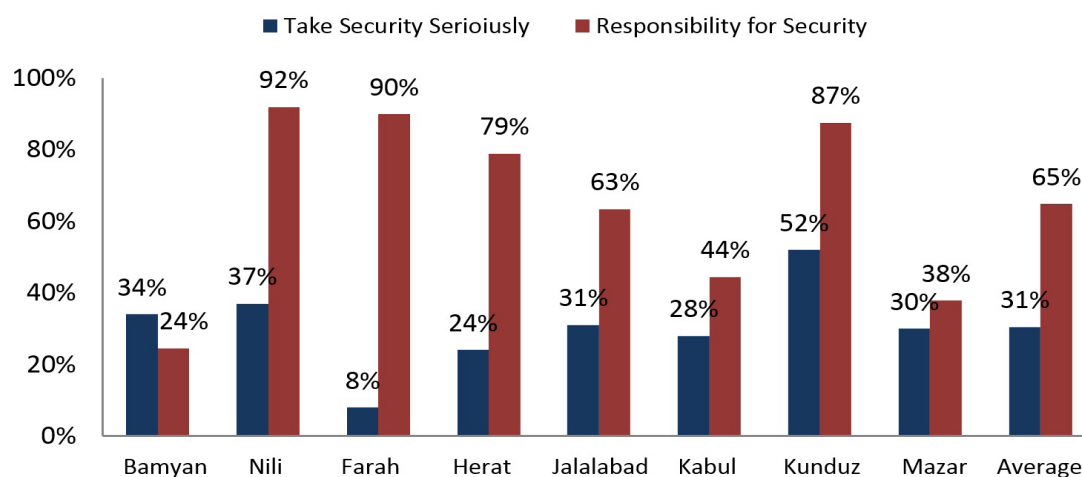
The level of perceived safety in expressing opinions about the municipality appears to be somewhat related to perceived ability to influence the municipality. Those that feel very safe expressing their opinion about the municipality are nearly twice as likely to feel that they can influence the municipality. Conversely, those that report feeling very unsafe expressing their opinions about the municipality are twice as likely to report having little or no influence on municipal decisions. The trend was nearly identical when disaggregated by gender. This trend did not hold when data was disaggregated by city, which could be attributed to local politics and the various avenues residents use to influence municipal decisions.

Figure 16: Relationship between feeling of safety in expressing opinions about the municipality and ability to influence the municipality
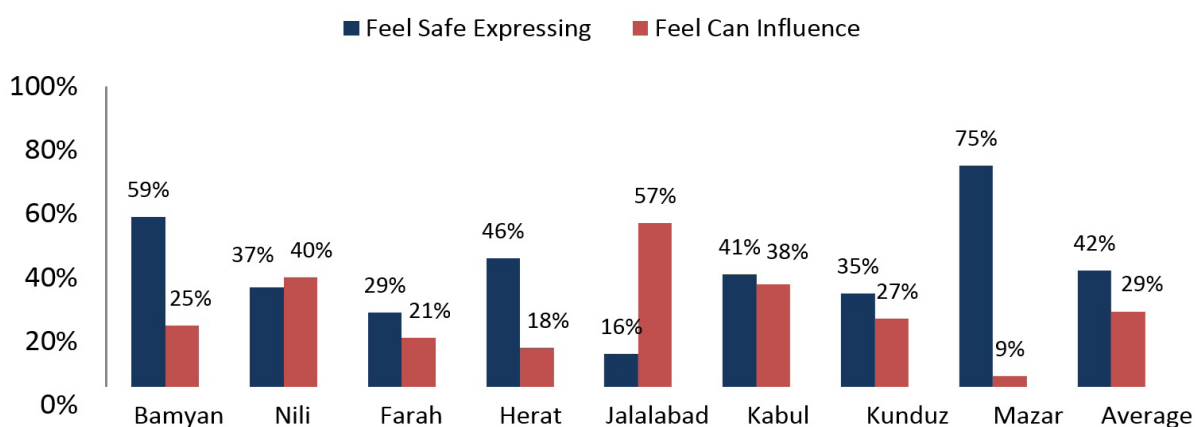
PROVISION OF SERVICES

This section analyses respondents' perception on how local duty-bearers (municipal administrations and police) fullfil their obligations, including provision of services and inclusive governance.

A. Municipal Services

Perceptions on service delivery were negative with the majority of survey respondents reporting that municipalities either delivered "very little" or "not at all" in terms of basic services. The exception was Kunduz, where the high level of internally displaced people (IDPs) from war-torn rural areas with almost non-existent service delivery might have brought a positive influence as they are more easily satisfied with the level of service delivery in the provincial capital.

Respondents who reported receiving municipal services, which was very low overall and concentrated in some cities, were asked to list the type of services they had received in the month preceding the survey. The highest percentage of respondents (34%) reported that the municipality had been involved in waste collection, followed by 13% who reported receiving electricity and 10% who reported receiving water.

While over half of respondents in Bamyan, Farah and Jalalabad reported municipal waste collection, this service was reported to be nearly non-existent in Nili (4%) and Herat (3%), or at least if the service existed, it was not attributed to the municipality.

City cleaning campaign, Herat

Figure 17: Municipal service delivery

Legend: Not at all/very little · Somewhat · Quite a bit/a great deal

City	Not at all/very little	Somewhat	Quite a bit/a great deal
Bamyan	69%	12%	19%
Nili	65%	25%	10%
Farah	64%	30%	7%
Herat	71%	18%	11%
Jalalabad	53%	26%	21%
Kabul	62%	25%	13%
Kunduz	30%	43%	27%
Mazar	58%	28%	14%
Average	58%	26%	16%
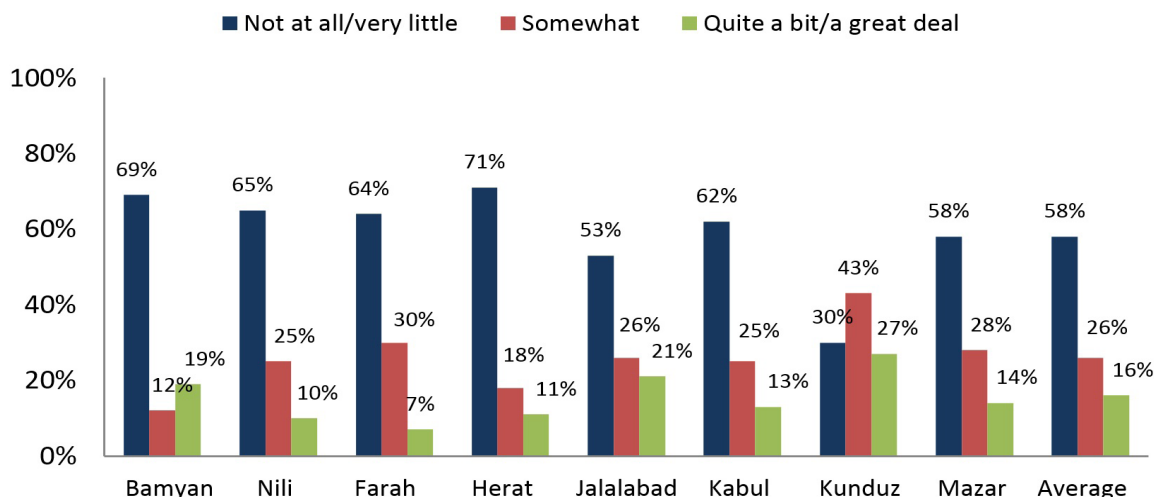
The perceived lack of municipal services among survey respondents was supported by qualitative evidence from the FGDs. Many participants focused on local Community Development Councils (CDCs) and *Shuras* as more effective bodies for service delivery rather than the municipality. This finding seems to indicate that when municipal services are inadequate, there may be other local governance structures that are better equipped to deal with community demands.

"The municipality should implement the master plan in the city because there are many buildings which are not based on the plan of the municipality. They should consider the need for a sewerage system and also there should be running water in the city and a way to bring all the dirt of the city to one place."

-Secretary of Shura, Male, Jalalabad

"The municipality has not done any activities here but they collect the money. Everything has been done by the people."

-CDC Member, Male, Herat

"If anyone wants to work for us then they should bring water to the community because the municipality hasn't done anything so far and whatever is being done for us is thanks to the Shura."

-Retired, Male, Kabul

When respondents were asked if they believed they got the same or different services than their neighbours, 46% felt that service provision was delivered on an equitable basis.

Of those who thought that they had received different services (either better or worse), the top reasons given for this disparity were power within the community/city (28%), social standing (25%), familiarity with municipal officers (20%), or wealth (20%). Overall, the vast majority of respondents who felt that service delivery was unequal did not feel that making a request or complaint to the municipality had any effect on service delivery.

Table 6: Services received from the municipality in the past six months

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Waste collection	59%	4%	86%	3%	53%	46%	49%	11%	34%
Water	1%	0%	1%	1%	15%	1%	49%	3%	10%
Electricity	0%	0%	0%	1%	45%	0%	49%	1%	13%
Infrastructure repair/maintenance	4%	0%	1%	9%	8%	1%	14%	5%	6%
Meeting with municipal officers about neighbourhood	1%	0%	2%	6%	5%	1%	15%	1%	4%
Rehabilitation/construction	4%	2%	3%	8%	14%	0%	8%	4%	6%
Administrative services	7%	2%	0%	3%	21%	0%	3%	1%	5%

Figure 18: If service delivery is different, what is the main reason?
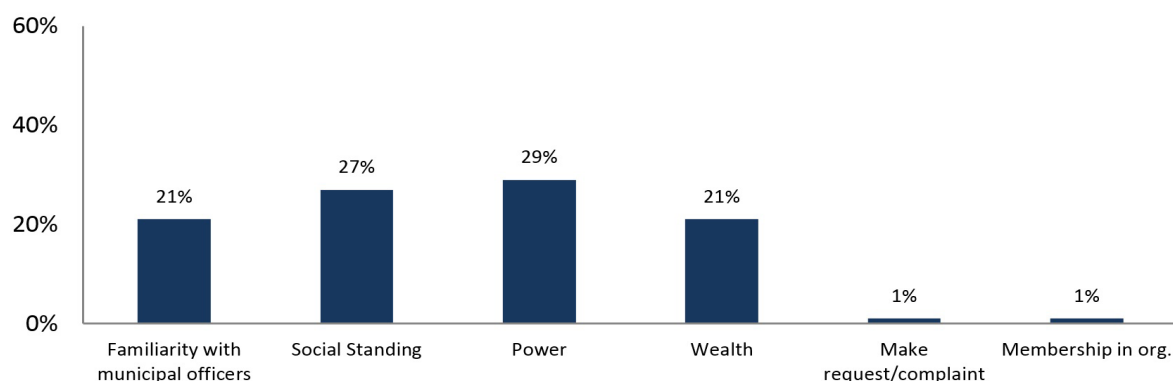
Trends largely held across gender, with males slightly more likely to think that power within the city/community (32% and 22% respectively) or wealth (26% and 19% respectively) were reasons for different service delivery as compared to females. On the other hand, females were more likely than males to think that social standing in the neighbourhood was the reason for different service delivery (32% versus 22% respectively).

Differences by city were slightly more varied. While nearly half of the respondents in Nili, Farah and Jalalabad thought that familiarity with municipal officers influenced service delivery, less than a quarter of respondents in all other cities listed this factor. On the other hand, respondents in Kabul and Kunduz were more inclined to select social standing as the main reason for unequal service delivery.

Overall, making a request or complaint to the municipality was reported to have a negligible effect on service delivery across all cities (less than 5% in any city). Despite nearly half of the respondents reporting equitable service delivery, the low expected influence of direct contact with the municipality indicates that respondents expect formalised channels of complaint to be ineffective. In comparison, respondents seemed to have more confidence in informal means to influence municipal service provision, either through familiarity with municipal staff, wealth, power or social standing.

Table 7: If service delivery is different, what is the main reason?

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Familiarity with municipal officers	21%	50%	42%	16%	44%	5%	14%	6%	5%
Social standing	21%	20%	12%	30%	5%	40%	54%	13%	27%
Power	46%	27%	31%	34%	13%	14%	22%	62%	58%
Wealth	11%	2%	9%	16%	34%	39%	5%	19%	2%
Make request/complaint	1%	0%	4%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%
Membership in organisation	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

For instance, from survey results, respondents in Nili and Farah believed that personal connections to municipal officers may be the most efficient way to gain services, while respondents in Bamyan and Mazar-e-Sharif believed that power was more effective.

The influence of wealth was also discussed in FGDs, where IDPs were mentioned as a particularly marginalised group for service delivery.

"If rich families request something it's done quickly. Nobody is taking care of the poor areas."

-CDC member, Female, Kabul

"The municipality hasn't offered services to the IDPs because they don't think about them."

-Head of Shura, Male, Jalalabad

"Municipal services are not the same for IDPs. They are mostly living in unplanned areas. There are less services in unplanned areas."

-Student, Female, Mazar-e-Sharif

B. Safety Services

When asked who is responsible for safety in one's neighbourhood, the majority (59%) believed this responsibility lies with the Afghan National Police (ANP). In contrast, only 3% of respondents noted that this role was reserved for the government in general (referring to the civil administration). The other top response was traditional leaders, for example *Wakili Gozars* (23%). In Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, traditional elders seem to have strongly retained their power and their ability to use it as they were seen as the most responsible actor for providing safety in neighbourhoods (52% and 62% respectively).

When disaggregated by city, these trends largely held, with the exception of Bamyan, where 42% of respondents allocated safety as the responsibility of neighbours (compared to less than 10% of respondents from any other city), while only 16% felt this was the ANP's responsibility (compared to over 35% of respondents from all other cities). Trends also largely held across gender, though males were more likely to allocate responsibility to the ANP (65%) compared to female respondents (51%).

Table 8: Who is responsible for safety in your neighbourhood?

|	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Neighbours	43%	7%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	5%
Traditional leaders	31%	0%	2%	19%	20%	52%	8%	62%	29%
Afghan National Police	17%	92%	90%	79%	67%	45%	72%	37%	60%
Afghan National Army	0%	1%	5%	1%	1%	1%	8%	0%	2%
Taliban/AGEs	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Local militia/commander	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Religious leader	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Government	8%	0%	0%	0%	9%	1%	11%	1%	4%
Others	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

In general, actors to whom respondents attributed responsibility for safety were also the ones with whom they reported discussing safety issues. Disaggregation by city revealed the emergence of two very distinct groups of actors. On the one hand, there were actors who are not part of the government/administration and included a wide spectrum of people, from neighbours, traditional leaders, religious leaders, local militias/commanders and Taliban/Anti-Government Elements. On the other hand, state actors included the civil administration, ANP and the Afghan National Army. In Bamyan and Mazar-e-Sharif, the influence of the municipal government and police dominated, while respondents in Nili and Farah were more likely to put responsibility for and discuss safety with "non-state actors" rather than with government actors.

It should be noted that Afghan law authorises and even encourages traditional leaders to solve disputes that are not of a criminal nature. Such disputes could arise over land or domestic issues, and are more common than criminal incidents. Furthermore, traditional leaders are often better equipped to solve issues with stronger knowledge of and proximity to the local community as compared to civil servants. Yet, reliance on traditional forums for safety could also reflect a lack of responsiveness of state actors, which could lead to frustration among citizens and increased tensions between communities and government officials.

In the FGDs, many participants emphasised that the allocation of responsibility for conflict resolution was largely determined by the type of conflict. Respondents stated that smaller conflicts were dealt with by "non-state actors" like religious leaders, neighbours and CDCs. If conflicts were not resolved at this level or were of a larger scale, municipalities and police officials were involved.

Figure 19: Responsibility for safety versus discussion about safety issues
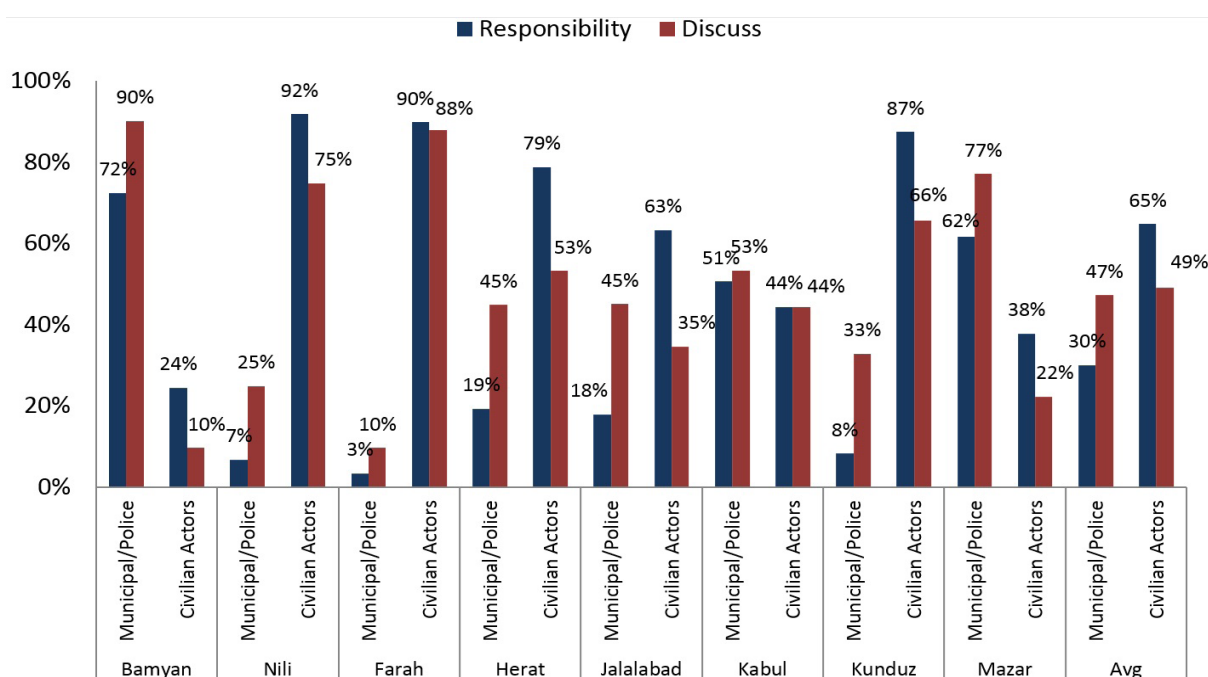
"Different types of conflict go to female CDC members. These include family conflicts and they try their best to solve them. If they don't want to resolve the problem then they are referred to other departments e.g. NGOs, human rights department or police."
-CDC Member, Female, Mazar-e-Sharif

"The first person we go to is the Wakili Gozar because he is aware of all the families in the neighbourhood. Who is coming, who is going, what types of problem. We connect with the head of CDC, and through them we reach high levels of government."
-Housewife, Female, Kabul

"Conflicts are being resolved by Wakili Gozars, the elders of the area and local Shuras. If they can't resolve the problem then they refer it to the government."
*-Wakili Gozar, Male, Kabul*

"The Shuras hold quarterly meetings with the people to ask about problems and create solutions. People go to the police when it gets very bad."

-Unemployed, Male, Herat

When asked how well the municipality and police address issues that affect the safety of their area, respondent assessments were negative. Less than half of all respondents (31%) reported that they felt the municipality and police addressed safety concerns effectively. Similarly, more than 60% of respondents felt that the municipality had "no" or "very little" ability to achieve safe cities. Males were more negative (65%) as compared to women (57%).

Figure 20: Municipal and police responsibility for safety compared to responsiveness to safety needs
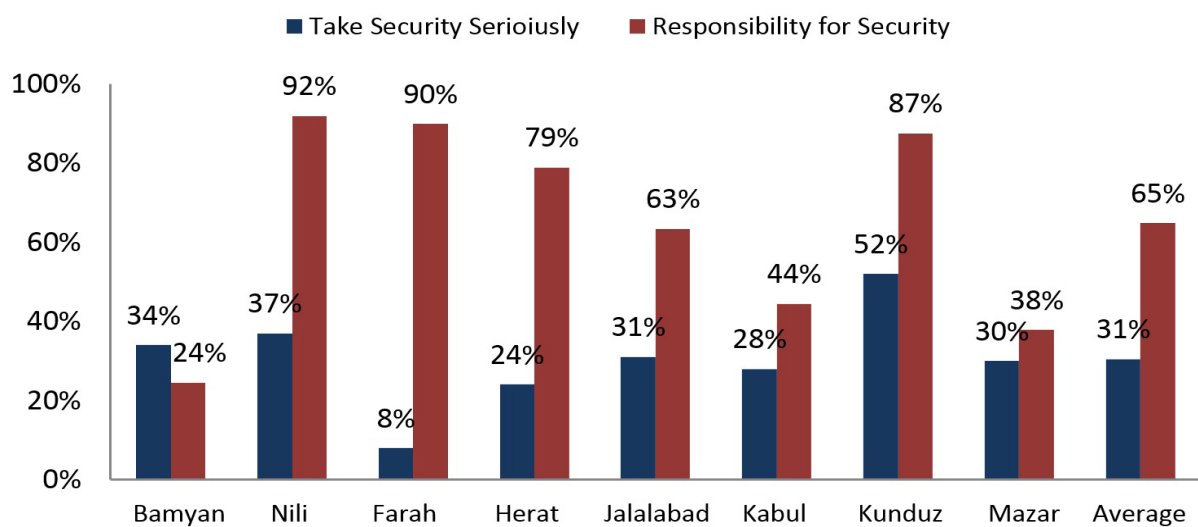
When disaggregated by city, Kunduz was the only city in which over 50% of the respondents noted that the authorities are responsive to safety problems. This positive perception could be explained by the recovery of the city from Taliban forces at the time of the survey.

In Farah, where the government has had less success in maintaining security, the confidence level in the municipality's ability to achieve safety was the lowest.

Survey responses indicated that a large majority of people did not know about any plans for improving safety in their neighbourhoods (69%). Males were slightly more likely to report that they had knowledge of plans to improve safety (21%) compared to female respondents (17%). When disaggregated by city, the trend was similar. The highest percentage of respondents that reported knowledge of a neighbourhood safety improvement plan were in Herat (33%) and Mazar-e-Sharif (27%). Twenty per cent or less of respondents in all other cities were aware of any plans in place.

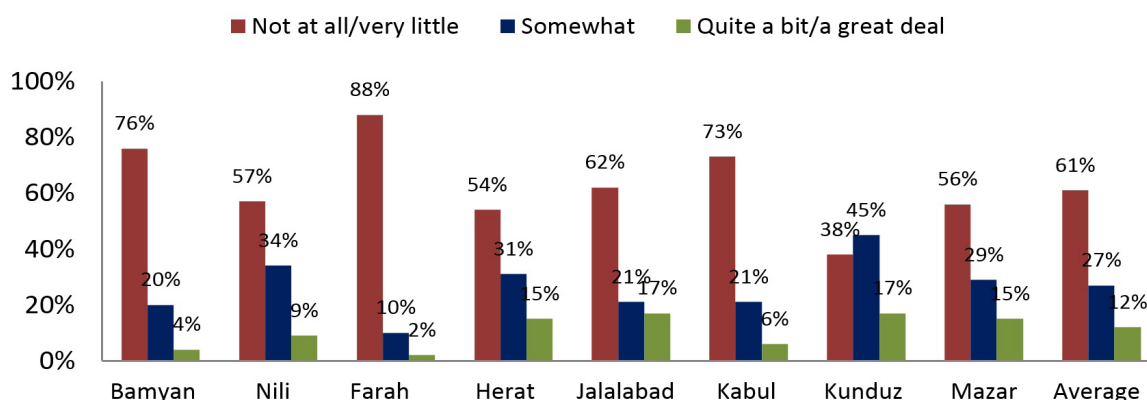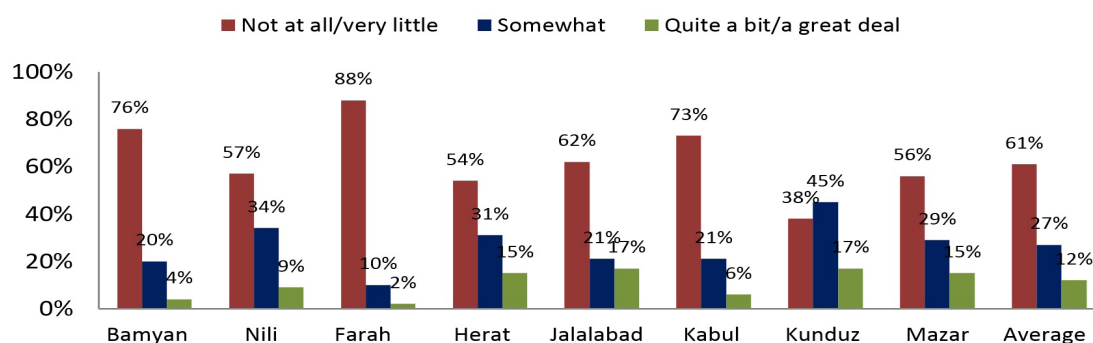Figure 21: Do you trust municipalites to achieve safe cities? (by city)

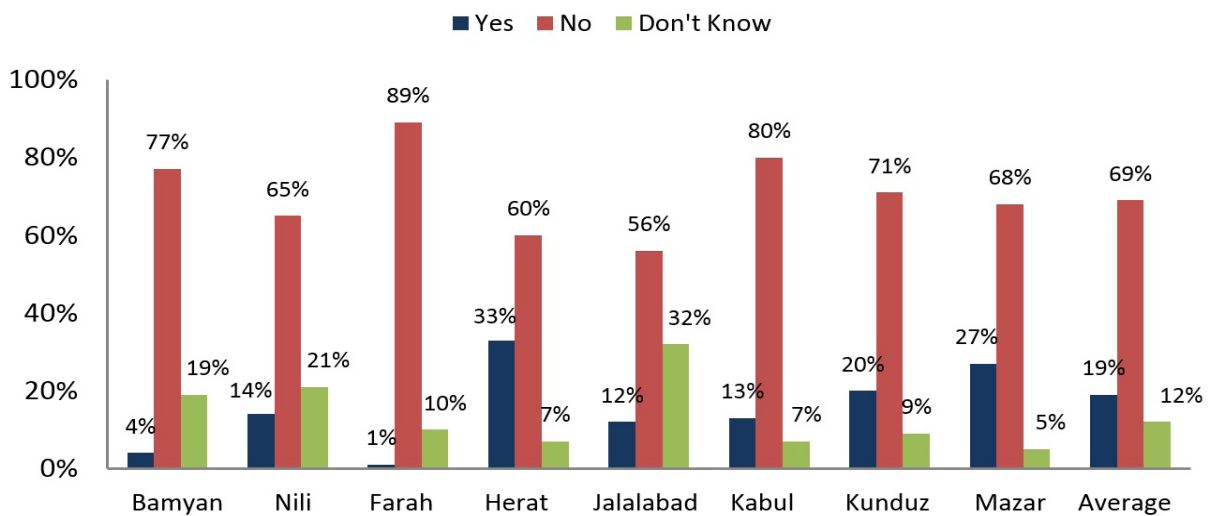Figure 22: Do you trust municipalities to achieve safe cities? (by gender)

C. Services for Vulnerable Groups

The majority of survey respondents identified youth (54%), people without regular work (53%) and women (52%) as the most vulnerable groups. The elderly (31%), uneducated (38%) and disabled were selected to a lesser extent. Recognition of minorities as a vulnerable group was extremely low (8%). Overall, trends stayed the same when disaggregated by gender.

When disaggregated by city, identification of the top three vulnerable groups revealed some differences. Over 50% of respondents in all cities identified women as one of the top three vulnerable groups. As many as 52% of respondents in Jalalabad, however, identified IDPs and returnees as the top vulnerable group, compared to a maximum of 35% of respondents in all other cities. A likely reason for this is the fact that Nangarhar has been severely affected by an influx of IDPs as conflict related to ISIS-affiliated groups and their actions against rival non-state armed groups, primarily the Taliban, have caused a caused an influx of displaced persons into Jalalabad.[6] The city also hosts a large part of the returnee population from Pakistan.[7]

Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh

Figure 23: Are you aware of any plans to improve safety in your neighbourhood?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't Know

City	Yes	No	Don't Know
Bamyan	4%	77%	19%
Nili	14%	65%	21%
Farah	1%	89%	10%
Herat	33%	60%	7%
Jalalabad	12%	56%	32%
Kabul	13%	80%	7%
Kunduz	20%	71%	9%
Mazar	27%	68%	5%
Average	19%	69%	12%

6. "UNHCR Afghanistan—End Year Report on Conflict-induced Displacement – 2015," UNHCR, December 2015 http://www.acbar.org/upload/1462077777441.pdf
7. Even though Pakistan had not started systematically sending back Afghan refugees to Afghanistan at the time of data collection, the flow of returnees settling in Jalalabad, at least temporarily, has been high for the last decade.

On average, both municipal (13%) and police (23%) responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable people were reported to be very low. However, police were often reported to be more responsive than municipalities by 10 percentage points or more.

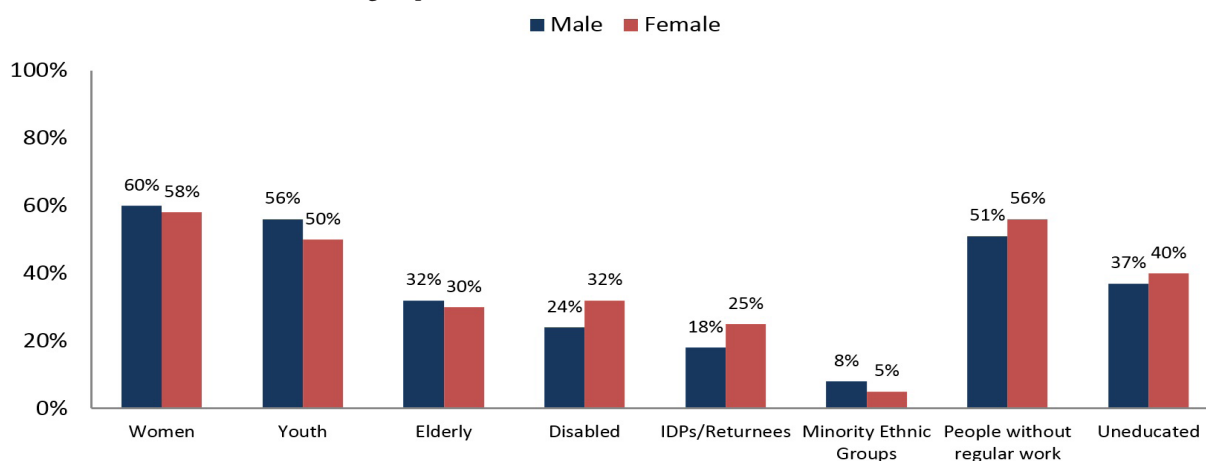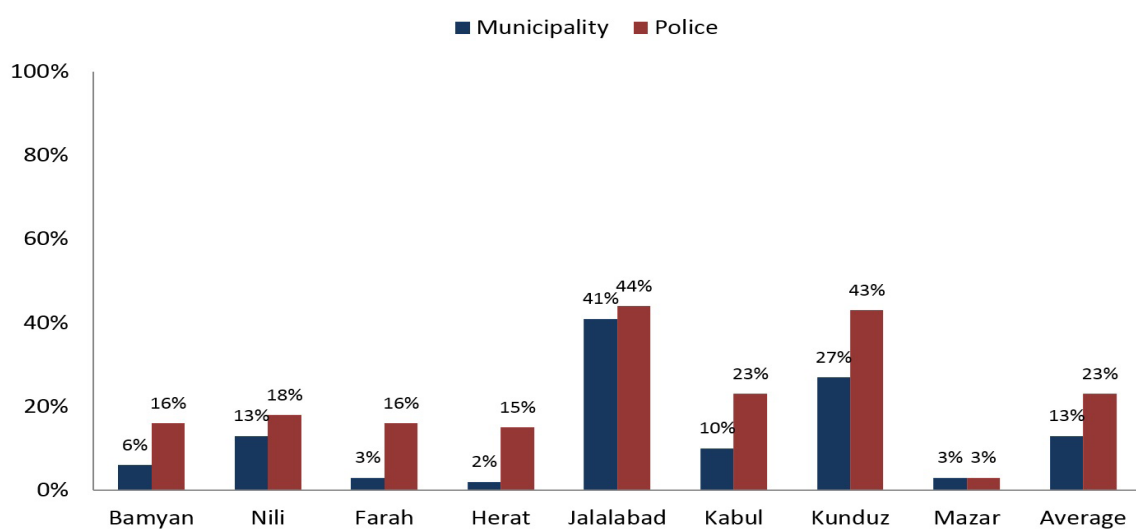Figure 24: Identification of most vulnerable groups

Table 9: Identification of most vulnerable groups

	Women	Youth	Elderly	Disabled	IDPs/ Returnees	Minorities	Without regular work	Uneducated
Bamyan	66%	51%	48%	39%	10%	17%	54%	46%
Nili	79%	31%	36%	56%	32%	3%	35%	30%
Farah	62%	65%	29%	44%	18%	10%	43%	24%
Herat	52%	54%	37%	29%	11%	5%	60%	37%
Jalalabad	20%	43%	42%	48%	52%	6%	44%	35%
Kabul	54%	57%	14%	6%	12%	5%	60%	40%
Kunduz	52%	70%	27%	22%	35%	12%	39%	22%
Mazar	50%	48%	28%	20%	14%	2%	68%	66%

Figure 25: Are the needs of vulnerable groups being addressed?

■ Municipality ■ Police

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Average
Municipality	6%	13%	3%	2%	41%	10%	27%	3%	13%
Police	16%	18%	16%	15%	44%	23%	43%	3%	23%

Jalalabad, Nangarhar

ENHANCING SAFETY IN CITIES

A. Need for Diverse Responses

Though personal security is an important facet of safety for many urban residents in Afghanistan, a myriad of other influences impact safety perceptions and should be considered when devising strategies to improve safety in cities.

This diversity in people's conception of safety is highlighted by responses on the major factors affecting long-term stability and well-being. The top concerns identified, which also serve as indicators for improving safety and stability, were economic factors (55%) and terrorism/war (25%). In contrast, land tenure security and food insecurity were rarely reported by respondents (1% each).

The dominance of economic factors was echoed in the FGDs. Participants reported that unemployment and poverty caused conflicts between richer and poorer neighbours as the former felt that they were contributing more to community development. Participants also noted discrimination against poor and unemployed urban residents as there is a negative perception of them being prone to crimes such as theft due to their economic situation.

"The main reasons for conflicts are unemployment and poverty."

-Head of Shura, Male, Jalalabad

"Poverty is an issue because in some areas one neighbour is richer, with good facilities, and another neighbour is poorer. Rich people say things to poor people about what they have and this can cause problems."
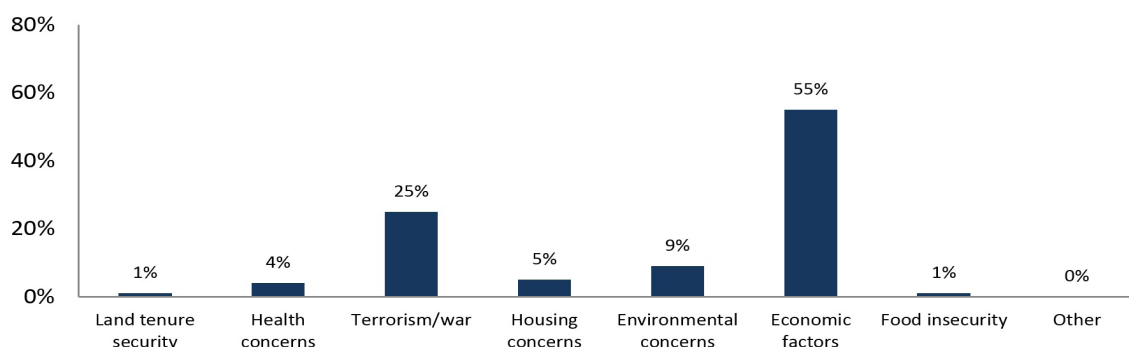
-Student, Female, Mazar-e-Sharif

"Where the economic situation of people is good, there will be no fight."

-Community Elder, Male, Kabul

Farah

Figure 26: What do you think are the biggest threats to long-term stability and well-being for you and your family?

When disaggregated by city, threats related to war/terrorism were higher in insecure provinces such as Kunduz (57%) and Farah (53%). This can be compared to relatively low perceptions of this threat in more secure provinces like Nili (1%) and Mazar-e-Sharif (4%). Residents in Nili and Mazar-e-Sharif focused more on economic factors (71% and 58% respectively) as compared to Kunduz (26%).

Many FGD respondents stated the need to establish stronger links between local authorities and people to solve safety and security issues.

"We need solidarity and communication to improve security. This means good communication with high levels of government and accepting each other. We must have good solidarity among us and work together to solve each other's problems."

-CDC member, Female, Kabul

"We must remove the distance between people and government. The local Shuras should create a bridge between the government and people, and solve this problem through meetings and seminars."

-Shura member, Male, Jalalabad

"The municipality should coordinate better with the police to understand each other's needs."

-CDC Member, Male, Herat

"Good contact between the police and people makes the city safe. If there is an issue then they can come and help us."

-Housewife, Female, Mazar-e-Sharif

## B. Support for Vulnerable Groups

Asked what the municipality could do to better support vulnerable groups, respondents were almost evenly split, with 30% saying that the best strategy would be to hold meetings with them to understand their needs, 37% noting social service assistance should be provided and 31% asking for economic assistance. Responses were almost the same when disaggregated by gender.

However, when data was disaggregated by city, emphasis was placed on different strategies. While the majority of respondents in Bamyan and Nili suggested holding meetings with vulnerable groups, economic services were highly favoured in Kabul.

Table 10: What do you think are the biggest threats to long-term stability and well-being for you and your family?

	Bamyan	Nili	Farah	Herat	Jalalabad	Kabul	Kunduz	Mazar	Avg.
Land tenure security	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Health concerns	3%	9%	5%	1%	0%	10%	1%	6%	4%
Terrorism/war	44%	1%	53%	11%	13%	30%	57%	4%	25%
Housing concerns	5%	3%	5%	6%	1%	4%	3%	8%	5%
Environmental concerns	5%	12%	4%	10%	1%	4%	12%	20%	9%
Economic factors	42%	71%	30%	71%	82%	50%	26%	58%	55%
Food insecurity	0%	4%	3%	1%	2%	1%	0%	4%	1%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 27: What could the municipality do to better support vulnerable groups?

■ Meetings to understand needs   ■ Social Services   ■ Economic Assistance
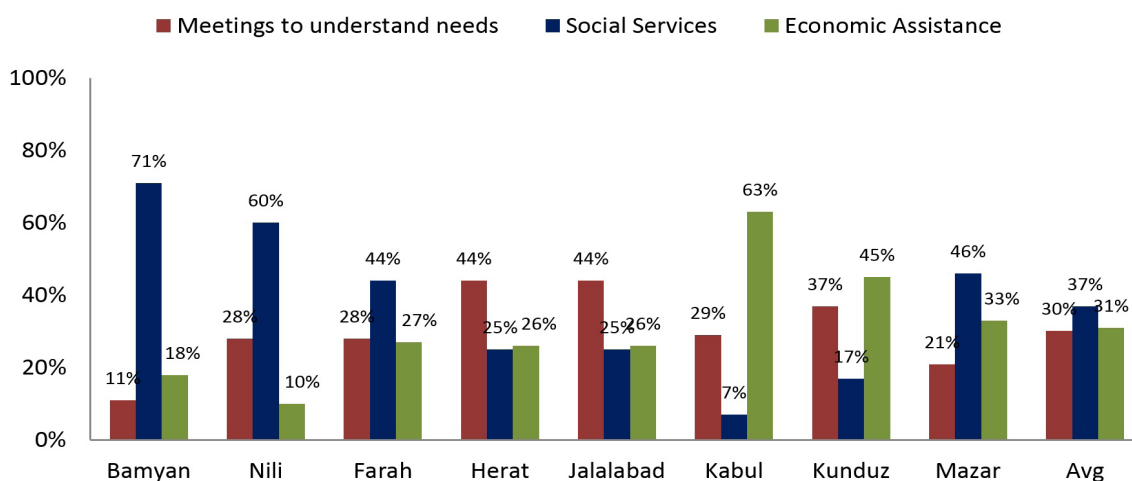
The heterogeneous factors defining safety were also apparent when respondents were asked what could improve safety for women. With the exception of Bamyan, responses indicated that staying at home was the best way to increase safety for women. Related to this, there was a strong preference for improving the physical environment and structures, such as the provision of safe spaces, as well as a desire for more police, particularly in insecure provinces such as Farah and Kunduz.

Figure 28: What can improve safety for women?
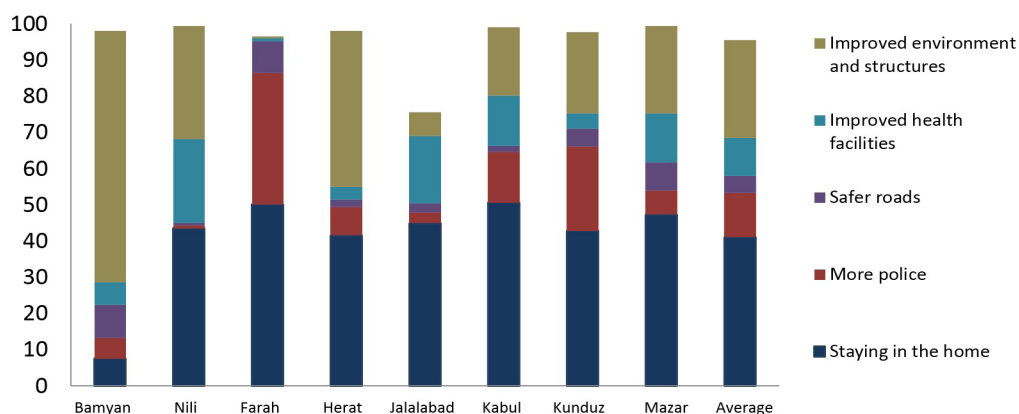
These results were broadly mirrored when respondents were asked what could improve safety for children. The focus was on staying at home as the best strategy for keeping children safe and, as an elaboration of this issue, the need for safer roads and improved infrastructure.

Focus group participants also underscored the need for creating safe social and recreational spaces for women and children.

"A secure place where we can talk and have picnics is the most important need for women."

-Student, Female, Kabul,

"There are no playgrounds for kids and this causes conflicts. For example, they play in front of someone's house and the ball hits the door, then there is a problem."

-Housewife, Female, Mazar-e-Sharif,

"There is one park in Jalalabad, made by Gul Agha Sherzai, where women and children can go on Wednesdays. It is managed by the police, and there are no restrictions on women and children. If we make such parks in every zone of the city, it would be good for families."

-Secretary of Shura, Male, Jalalabad,

Bamyan

Figure 29: What can improve safety for children?
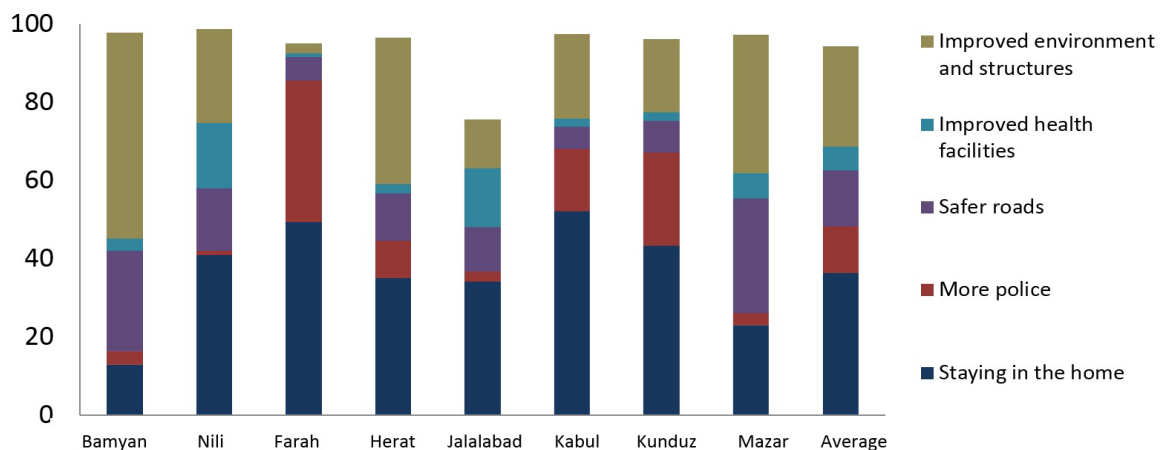
CONCLUSION

This report illustrates that safety in Afghan cities is negatively impacted by inadequate public services as well as weak governance.

People are more positive about the situation in their cities and neighbourhoods rather than their country. While protection from crime and conflict is important, urban residents perceive safety as encompassing many dimensions beyond personal security. This is reflected in their prioritisation of safety issues such as economic security and public infrastructure.

There is low public confidence in both municipalities and the police to make cities safer. There is also low level of engagement with municipal and police officials, and general pessimism about citizens' ability to influence those in power or to achieve more equitable service delivery by bringing complaints to them.

Urban safety needs differ widely across cities considering differences in security conditions and economic development. Ultimately, responding to these needs requires stronger local governance so that the voices of all people, especially the marginalised and excluded, can be heard for improving Afghanistan's urban future.

Kunduz

Herat

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