

NEW AMERICA
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Pakistanis Strongly Back Negotiations with Al Qaeda and Taliban over Military Action; Public Support for Al Qaeda Gaining Ground.

Nawaz Sharif and His Party Surge in Public Favor; Pakistanis Cannot Afford Flour and Blame their Government for Growing Food Crisis.

Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Pakistan before the June 2008 Pakistani By-Elections

www.TerrorFreeTomorrow.org; www.newamerica.net

In a resounding setback for American policy, Pakistanis strongly favor their own government not fighting against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, but negotiating with them instead. Public support for Al Qaeda is also gaining ground since earlier this year.

Important Parliamentary by-elections are scheduled in Pakistan for June 26th. In the first poll before the elections, our survey shows that Nawaz Sharif is now the most popular political leader in Pakistan. Mr. Sharif's party, the PML-N, would emerge as the clear winner in any national contest, far eclipsing the current largest party in Parliament, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

These are among the many findings of a new and extensive nationwide public opinion survey from May 25th to June 1st, 2008 across Pakistan, covering both urban and rural areas and all provinces. The survey, with face-to-face interviews of 1,306 Pakistanis age 18 or older and a margin of error of 3 percent, was conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow: The Center for Public Opinion, with the

New America Foundation, and field work inside Pakistan by the Pakistan Institute for Public Opinion, an affiliate of Gallup Pakistan. The survey is the third nationwide poll over the past nine months conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow and Gallup Pakistan.

Public Support for Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Bin Laden Increases; Pakistanis Decisively Favor Negotiations over Military Action

Half of all Pakistanis want their government to negotiate and not fight Al Qaeda, with less than a third saying military action by the Pakistani government against Al Qaeda is called for. (For Pakistani Taliban, 58 percent favor negotiating to 19 percent for military action.)

Pakistan is considered by most national security experts to be the home base of Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and many Taliban fighters. From a safe haven in the border areas of Pakistan, they are free to train, plan and launch attacks inside Afghanistan and elsewhere. Indeed, last week, Admiral Michael Mullen, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the planning to hit America itself with another terrorist attack is now taking place—and that it would come from Pakistan.

The new Pakistani civilian government has begun a controversial policy of negotiating with certain Pakistani Taliban fighters—though not with Al Qaeda.

In stark opposition to American policy, the Pakistani people themselves would go even further than their own government and not only negotiate with Pakistani Taliban fighters, but with both Arab Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban fighters as well, decisively opposing any military action.

Even before the latest American military incursion (which occurred after our poll was complete), a mere 12 percent of Pakistanis supported any unilateral American military action against Al Qaeda fighters inside Pakistan. Strong opposition to the US military has also intensified since earlier this year.

Favorable opinion toward Al Qaeda is mounting inside Pakistan. A third of Pakistanis now voice a positive view, nearly double the percentage from earlier this year. Similarly, for Bin Laden, 34 percent currently have a favorable opinion, up from 24 percent in January (but still below the 46 percent who thought so in August 2007). Trust for American motives has sunk to new lows: Three quarters of Pakistanis say that the real purpose of the US-led war on terror is to weaken the Muslim world and dominate Pakistan.

Significantly, when asked who was most responsible for the violence that is occurring in Pakistan today, more than half (52 percent) blame the United States—only 8 percent Al Qaeda fighters.

Despite the spate of suicide bombings that have shaken Pakistan at the apparent hands of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, Pakistanis see the United States as posing the

greatest threat to their own personal safety. 44 percent of Pakistanis think the United States poses the greatest threat to their personal safety (traditional enemy India is next at 14 percent). By contrast, a mere 6 percent feel Al Qaeda is a threat, with 4 percent the Afghan Taliban and 8 percent the Pakistani Taliban.

Pakistanis Agree with Al Qaeda Goals, but Not Tactics

Al Qaeda's considerable goodwill inside Pakistan is generated by their perceived goals, which Pakistanis say they largely share. More than any other goal, Pakistanis think that standing up to America is the goal of Bin Laden and Al Qaeda—and 57 percent agree with that Al Qaeda goal. Likewise, the most important reason for backing Al Qaeda and Bin Laden for almost two-thirds of their supporters was the perception that Al Qaeda and Bin Laden stand up to American and lead a defensive jihad against it.

Pakistanis, however, continue to oppose suicide attacks, with 14 percent thinking these attacks can often or sometimes be justified. Pakistani opposition to suicide attacks extends to whoever is the intended target, with opposition equally highest to both Pakistani and American civilians and dropping slightly for Pakistani and American military personnel.

Before Upcoming By-Elections, Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N overtake the PPP as the Most Popular Party in Pakistan

In another dramatic reversal of Pakistani public opinion, Nawaz Sharif has emerged, by far, as the most popular political leader in Pakistan today. In advance of the June 26th Parliamentary by-elections in Pakistan, a striking 86 percent of Pakistanis have a favorable opinion of Mr. Sharif, a former Pakistani Prime Minister with conservative Islamist ties that have made some American policy makers indicate concern.

Mr. Sharif has also seen a steady rise in his popularity, from 57 percent favorable in our August 2007 poll, to 74 percent in January 2008 and 86 percent today. As significantly, those with a very favorable opinion have almost doubled since January 2008 to 43 percent now—a level no other political figure in Pakistan comes even close to. (By comparison, Mr. Zardari, leader of the PPP, just has a 13% very favorable rating.)

If elections were held today, Mr. Sharif's party, the PML-N, would emerge as the clear winner, garnering 42 percent of the vote to the PPP's 32 percent. The PML-N has witnessed a significant surge in popularity. From only 15 percent saying they would vote for them in our August 2007 poll, to 25 percent in our pre-election January poll (which mirrored the actual election results), the Party today stands at 42 percent, the most popular party in Pakistan.

Pakistanis Hold their Government Responsible for the High Food and Fuel Prices; Want Independent Judiciary and Blame PPP and Musharraf for Impasse over Restoring Judges

The reasons for the rise of Mr. Sharif and the declining fortunes of others inside Pakistan can be found in widespread Pakistani discontent with the status quo.

The high cost of food and fuel is hitting ordinary Pakistanis hard. An overwhelming 86 percent of Pakistanis have faced increasing difficulty in obtaining flour for their daily food consumption—primarily because of high prices. And Pakistanis consider their own government most responsible.

Similarly, 81 percent have been affected by the high price of fuel, with again, in their view, the Pakistani government most responsible, only for fuel closely followed by American and Western oil companies.

Overall, just 20 percent of Pakistanis think their country is heading in the right direction. With the highest priority Pakistanis have for their government (even slightly higher than the economy) an independent judiciary, most Pakistanis now blame the PPP and President Musharraf for failing to restore the judges sacked by Mr. Musharraf last fall. Almost three-quarters of Pakistanis want Mr. Musharraf to resign and if he doesn't, to be removed by Parliament as President.

Dissatisfaction with the current civilian government does not mean, however, that the public wants the Pakistani military to return to political affairs. In our survey last August, 45 percent approved of the military playing a role in the political and economic affairs of the country. That number has now dropped to 28 percent, while those who disapprove have steadily risen from 46 percent last August to 64 percent now, with those strongly disapproving doubling to over half.

Opinion of the U.S. Still Negative, but Open to Change

While attitudes towards the United States and particularly the American war on terror remain strongly negative, Pakistanis say that a change in American policy toward Pakistan would bring about a stunning change in Pakistani public opinion toward the United States.

Two-thirds of Pakistanis said that policies ranging from increased American business investment, free trade, educational aid, disaster assistance, medical care/training and increased U.S. visas for Pakistanis would significantly improve their opinion of the United States.

Even more than two-thirds of Pakistanis who have favorable views of Al Qaeda and Bin Laden would significantly change their opinion of the U.S. with these new American policies.

Indeed, the number of Pakistanis who are now willing to view the United States more positively with new American actions is higher than at any other time that we have measured in our surveys.

This survey was conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow, in collaboration with the New America Foundation and field work in Pakistan by the Pakistan Institute for Public Opinion (PIPO), an affiliate of Gallup Pakistan. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with 1,306 Pakistanis age 18 or older across 131 urban and rural sampling points in all four provinces of Pakistan. The fieldwork was conducted from May 25th to June 1st, 2008.

The questionnaire consisted of 36 substantive questions, 14 demographic questions, and 23 quality control questions. Respondents were selected using a multi-stage random stratified sampling methodology. During the course of fieldwork, there were 2,255 contacts attempts made. Of these, 584 resulted in non-contacts, yielding a non-contact rate of 26%. There were 359 refusals giving the study a net response rate of 84%. The poll has a +/- 3% margin of error at the 95% confidence interval.

A full statement on survey methods, topline questions and answers and background information is available online at www.terrorfreetomorrow.org

For questions the survey, please contact:

Kenneth Ballen

President, Terror Free Tomorrow
202 274-1800 x 20
Kballen@terrorfreetomorrow.org

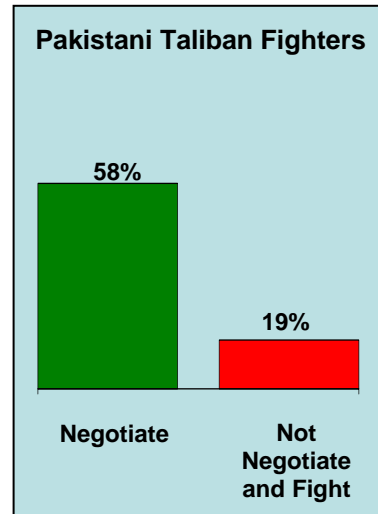
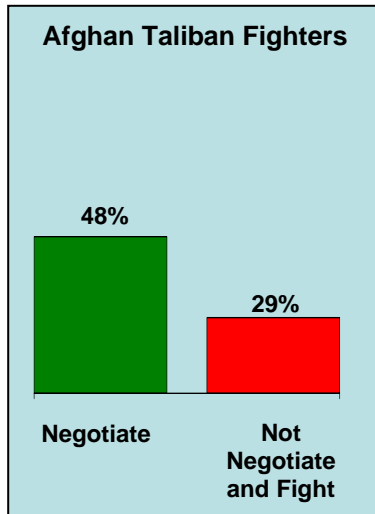
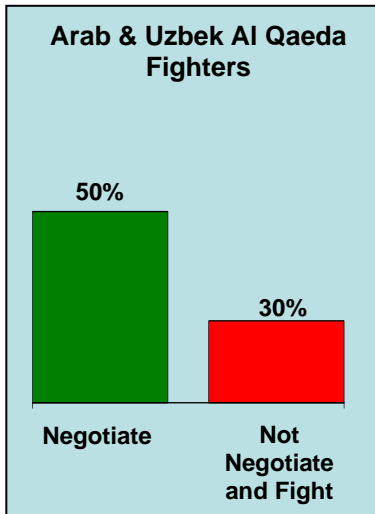
Erin Drankoski

Media Outreach Associate, New America Foundation
202-997-8727
drankoski@newamerica.net

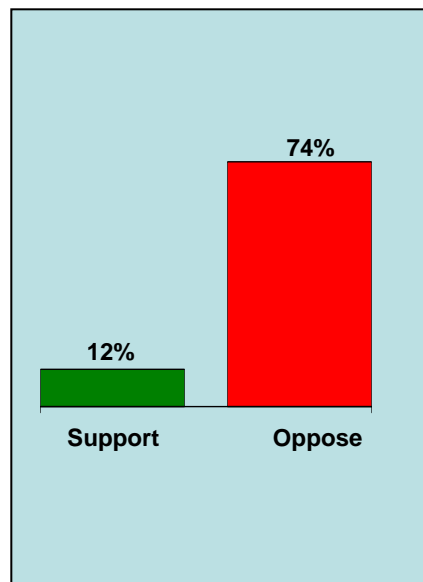
Patrick C. Doherty

Deputy Director, American Strategy Program, New America Foundation
202 986-2700
doherty@newamerica.net

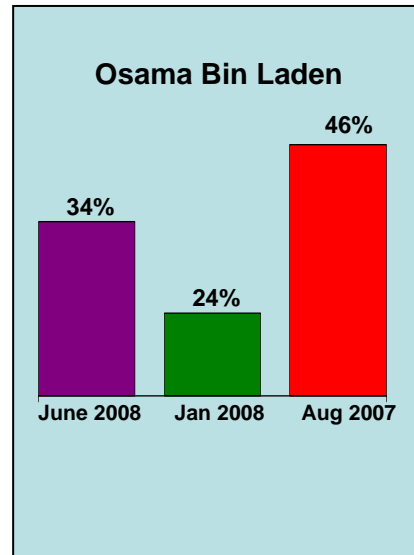
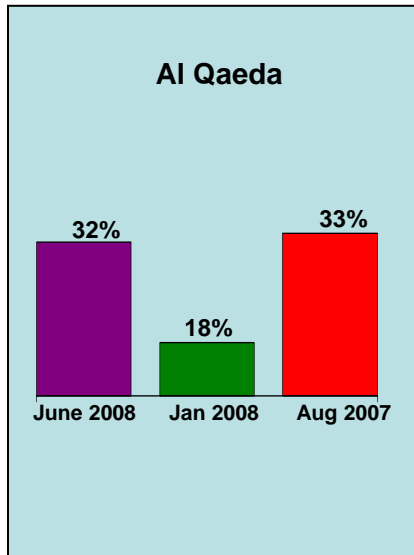
Should the Pakistani Government Negotiate with or Continue to Fight:



Pakistanis who Support/Oppose US Military Action against Al Qaeda and Taliban:



Pakistanis Who Have Favorable Opinion of:



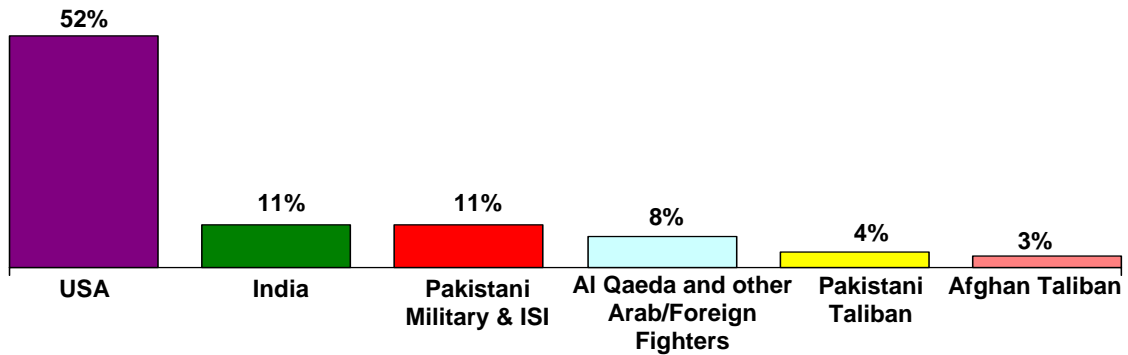
Top Goal of Al Qaeda and Bin Laden as Chosen by 80 percent of Pakistanis:

Standing up to America.

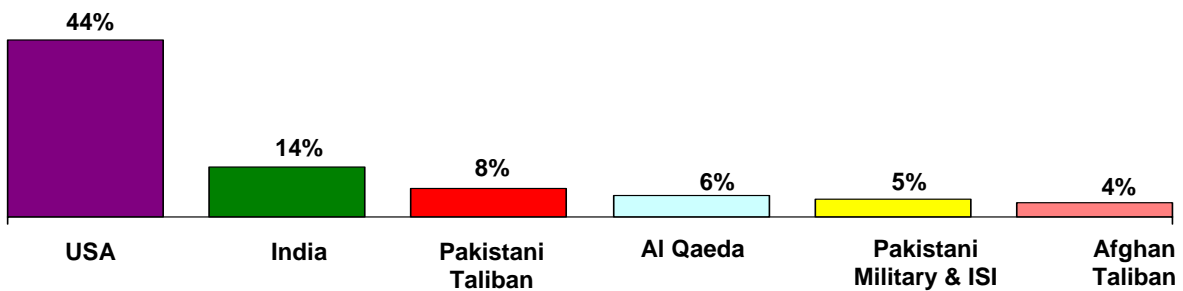
Pakistanis who agree with top Al Qaeda goal of standing up to America:

57 percent.

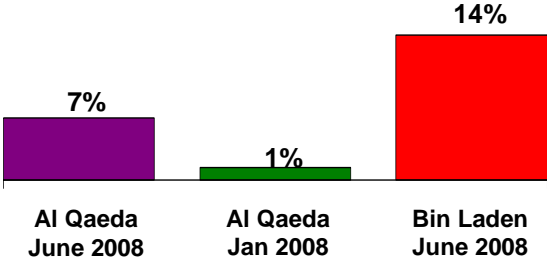
Who Do You Consider Most Responsible for the Violence that is Occurring in Pakistan Today?



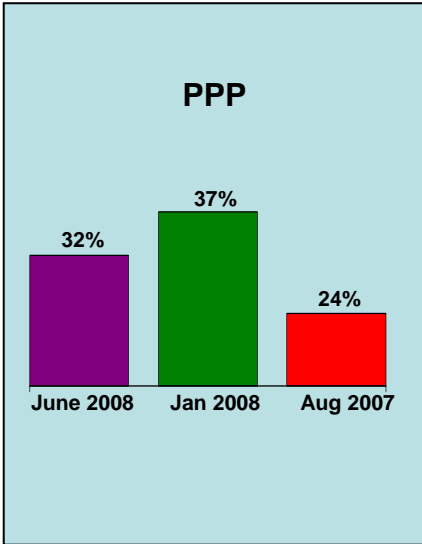
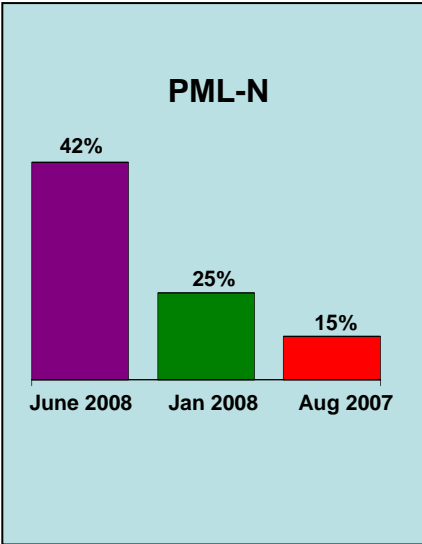
Which of the following Countries or Groups do you Think Pose the Greatest Threat to your Personal Safety?



If Al Qaeda and Bin Laden Were on the Ballot, Percent of Pakistanis Who Would Vote for Them:

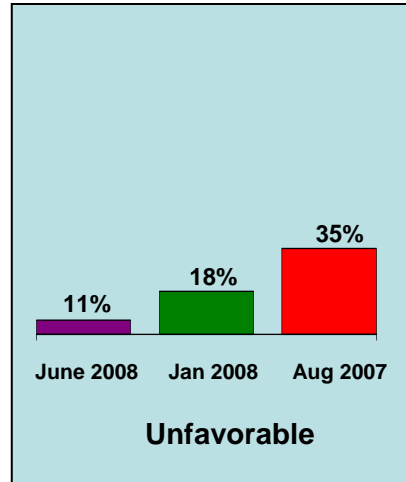
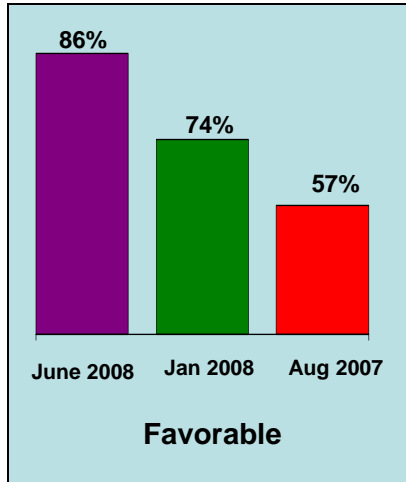


Which Party Will You Vote For?



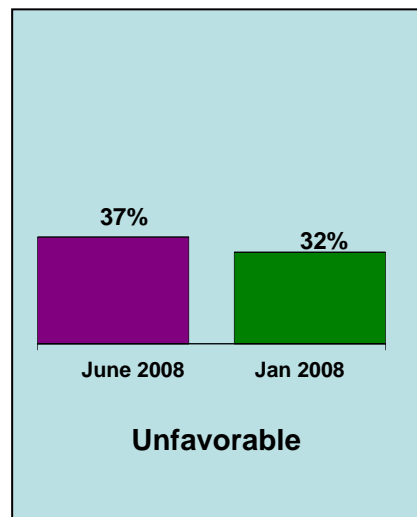
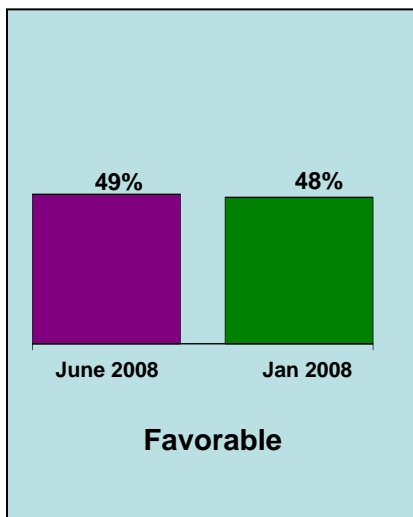
Favorable/Unfavorable Views of:

Nawaz Sharif



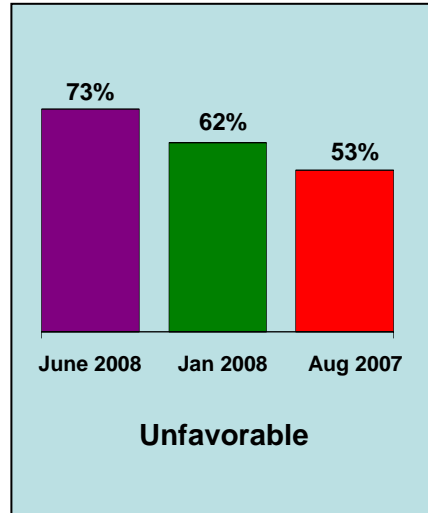
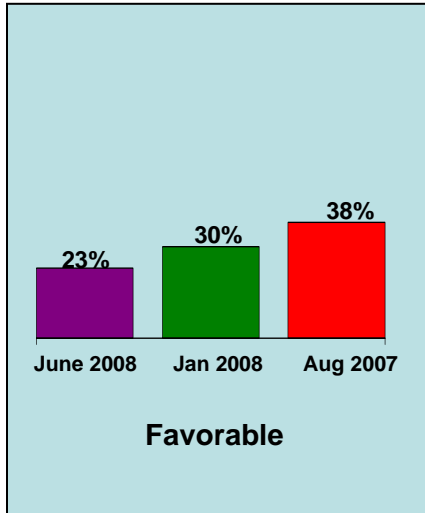
Favorable/Unfavorable Views of:

Asif Ali Zardari



Favorable/Unfavorable Views of:

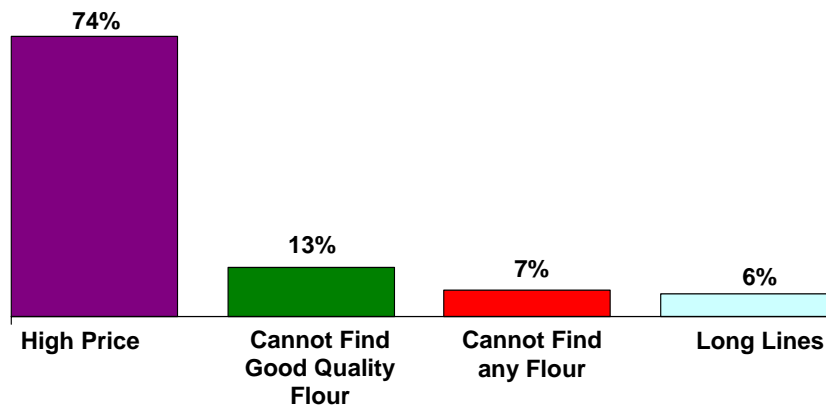
Pervez Musharraf



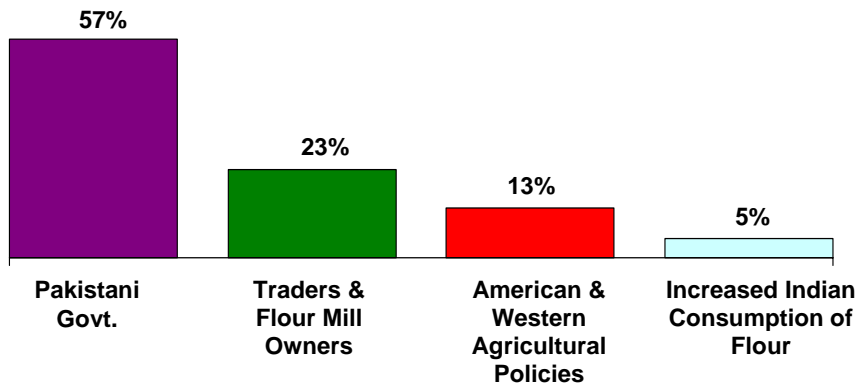
Percentage of Pakistanis Who Face Difficulty Obtaining Flour for their Daily Food Consumption:

86 percent.

The Most Important Reason Cited for the Hardship:



Who Pakistanis Think is Most Responsible for Food Hardship:



What Would Improve Pakistani Opinion of the United States?

