

ICMA Survey on Pakistan's 2026 Outlook and Public Priorities



Research and Publications Department
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan

Message from the Chairman

At ICMA, we believe real progress begins with listening. I am proud to share the ICMA Outlook Survey 2026 and Public Priorities, reflecting the voices, ideas, and hopes of people across Pakistan.

The survey highlights the energy, ambition, and commitment of citizens—from students and professionals to entrepreneurs and everyday people. It reminds us that lasting progress comes when everyone contributes and works together.

I thank all participants for sharing their perspectives. Let us turn these insights into action and make 2026 a year of opportunity, growth, and shared success.



Muhammad Yasin, FCMA

Vice President ICMA and
Chairman, Research and Publications Committee

Preamble

As Pakistan looks ahead to 2026, the ICMA Survey captures what ordinary citizens truly think and feel about the country's journey. From reflecting on 2025's highs and lows to sharing hopes, worries, and priorities for the year ahead, the survey offers a vivid window into public sentiment across key areas—economy, governance, jobs, education, public services, and international partnerships.

It also explores what people want Pakistan to stop doing, the actions they believe should be taken for lasting progress, and how individuals themselves plan to learn, grow, and contribute. Most importantly, it highlights the changes citizens feel would make daily life better for everyone.

The results provide a clear and insightful picture of public priorities, expectations, and readiness to play an active role in shaping a stronger, more stable, and opportunity-driven Pakistan in 2026.

Survey Respondents

ICMA Survey on Pakistan's 2026 Outlook was completed by a vibrant and diverse group of respondents from across the country. This included ordinary citizens, students, the middle class, and professionals from academia, business, industry, and the corporate sector. From seasoned leaders to emerging talent, these participants shared their perspectives, insights, and priorities, providing a credible, inclusive, and on-the-ground view of what people expect, worry about, and hope for as Pakistan moves into 2026.

Survey Questions

Q1: Looking Back at 2025, How would you rate Pakistan's Performance?

Q2: How do you feel about Pakistan's Economy in 2026?

Q3: What worries you the most about 2026?

Q4: What should Pakistan stop doing to create real progress in 2026?

Q5: Which actions should Pakistan take now to build a stronger 2026?

Q6: Which international relationship matters most for Pakistan in 2026?

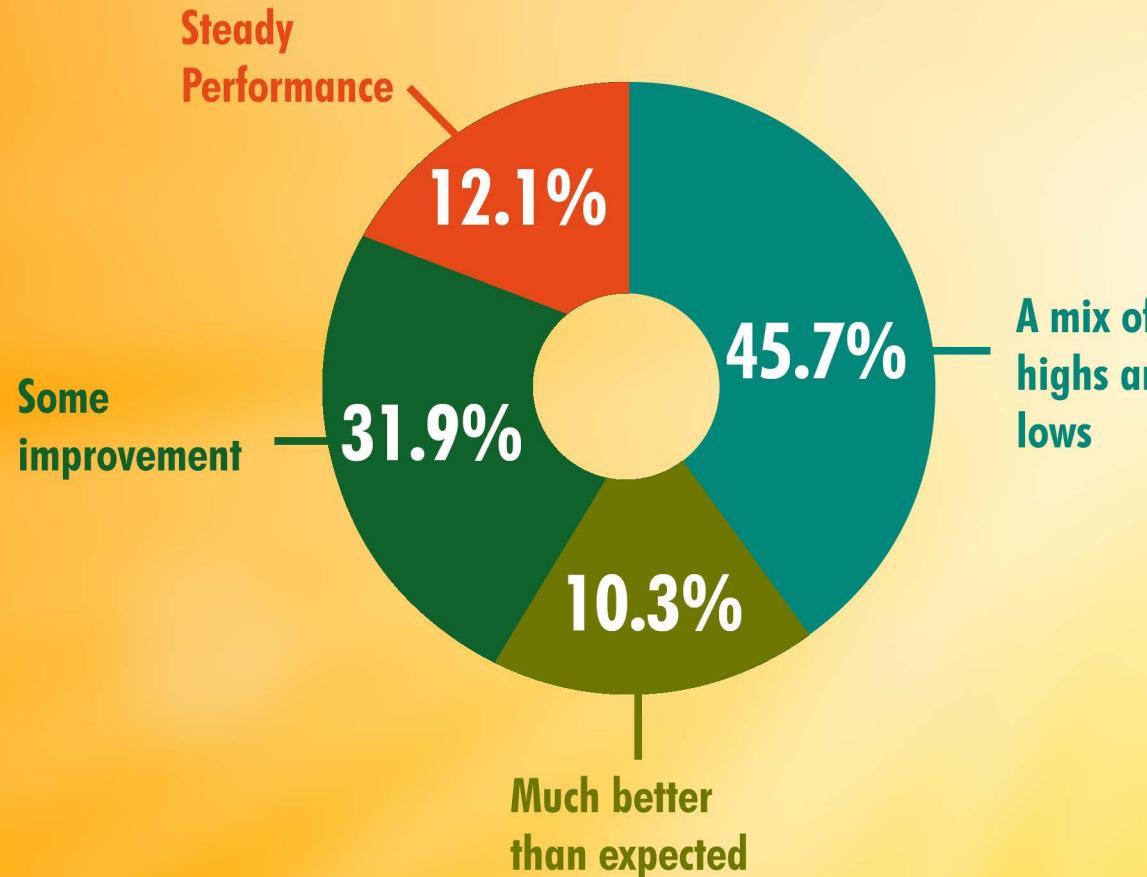
Q7: What is one thing you plan to do differently in 2026?

Q8: In the coming year, which change will most improve daily life for ordinary Pakistanis?

Survey Outcome

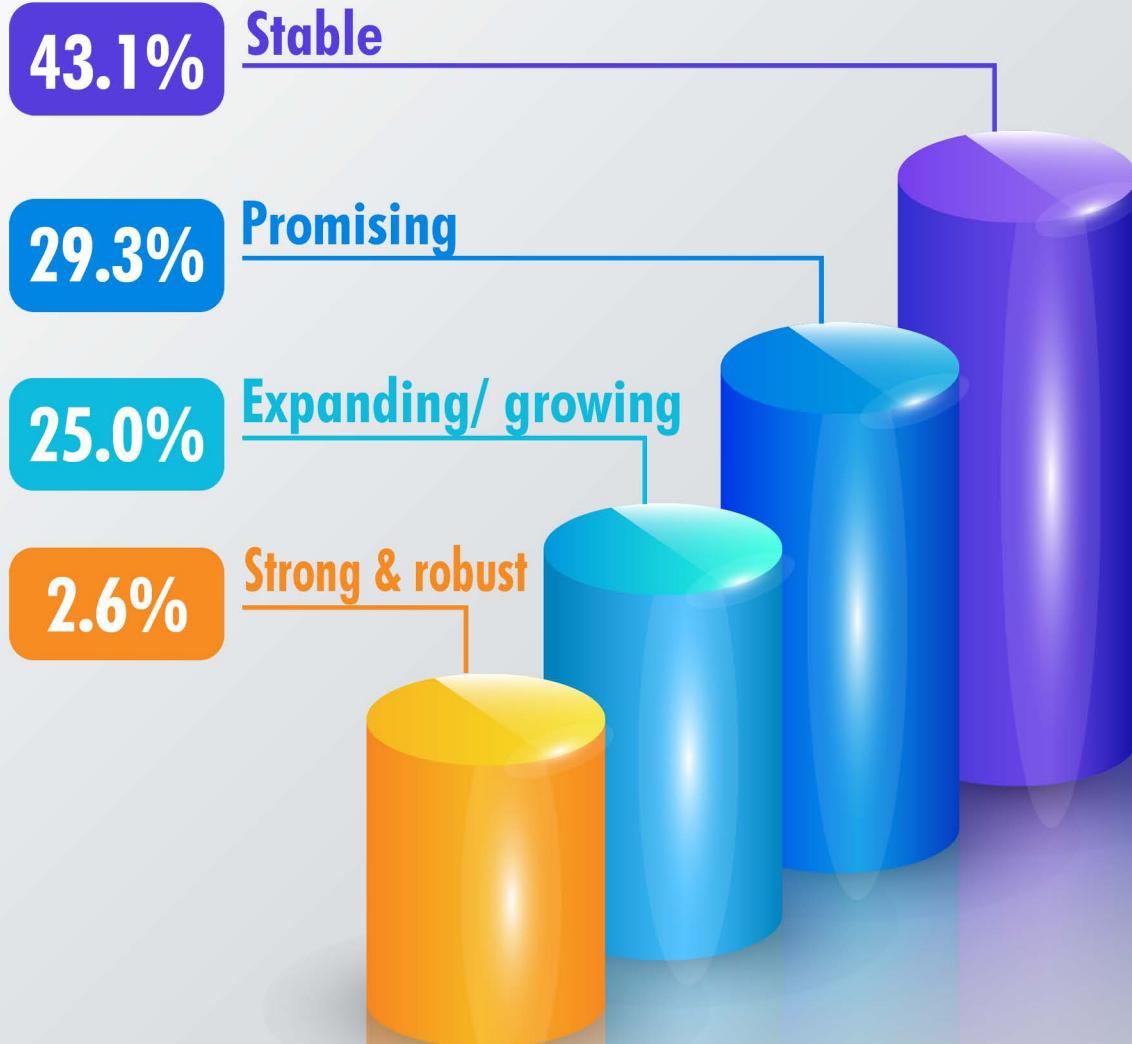
54.3%

observe Pakistan's Economy Turning a Corner in 2025



Pakistan's economy showed clear signs of a comeback in 2025, with overall 54.3% of people participating into survey acknowledges progress. This shift was driven by tangible gains: falling inflation, rising remittances, and a more stable external position. However, the recovery was uneven. 45.7% observes a turbulent year of highs and lows, held back by challenges in agriculture and ongoing fiscal constraints. While 10.3% reported a much better year than expected, only 12.1% saw steady performance, proving that broad-based growth has not yet been achieved. The bottom line: the immediate crisis is fading, but building widespread, lasting prosperity remains the essential task ahead.

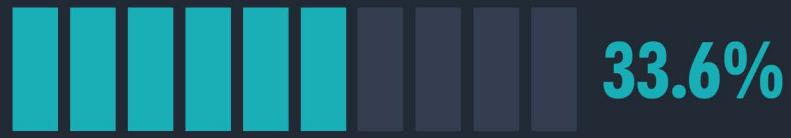
57% expect Improvement & **43%** see the Stability in 2026



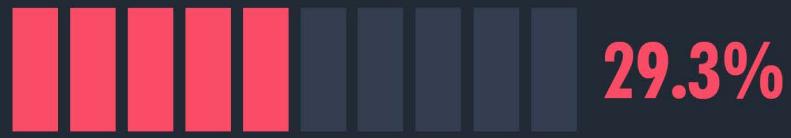
Public opinion on Pakistan's economy in 2026 shows cautious optimism. Overall, 56.9% of respondents expect improvement, whereas 43.1% who see the economy as stable. This confidence reflects falling inflation, improved external balances, and steady economic policies. In segmenting, 29.3% who describe the outlook as promising, 25% expect the economy to grow, hopeful for recovery in industry, exports, and domestic demand. Only 2.6% see the economy as strong, showing that structural challenges and weak investment remain. Overall, confidence is improving, but broad-based growth is still gradual.

90% worry about Politics, Jobs, or Inflation in 2026

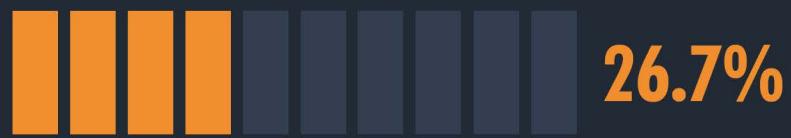
Political instability



Fewer jobs for young people



Inflation staying high



Extreme weather and climate risks

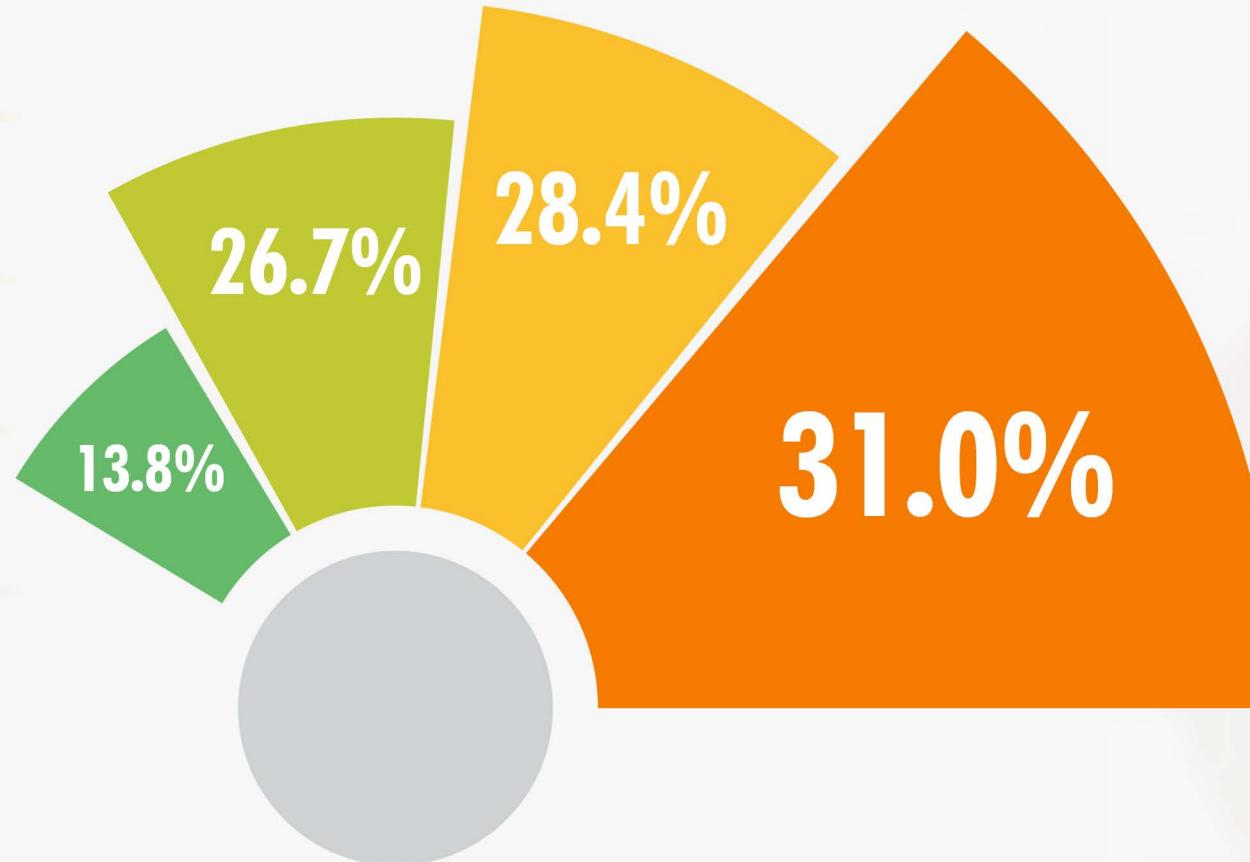


The dominant anxieties for 2026 show a public prioritizing governance and opportunity above all else. Political instability tops the list at 33.6%, reflecting concern that without steady leadership, the fragile economic recovery could stall. Youth unemployment follows at 29.3%, highlighting the urgent need for growth to create real jobs. High inflation worries 26.7%, now seen as secondary to these foundational issues. Even extreme weather (10.3%) is considered a more distant threat. The message is clear: 2026's success hinges on political cohesion and delivering tangible, inclusive opportunities.

86%

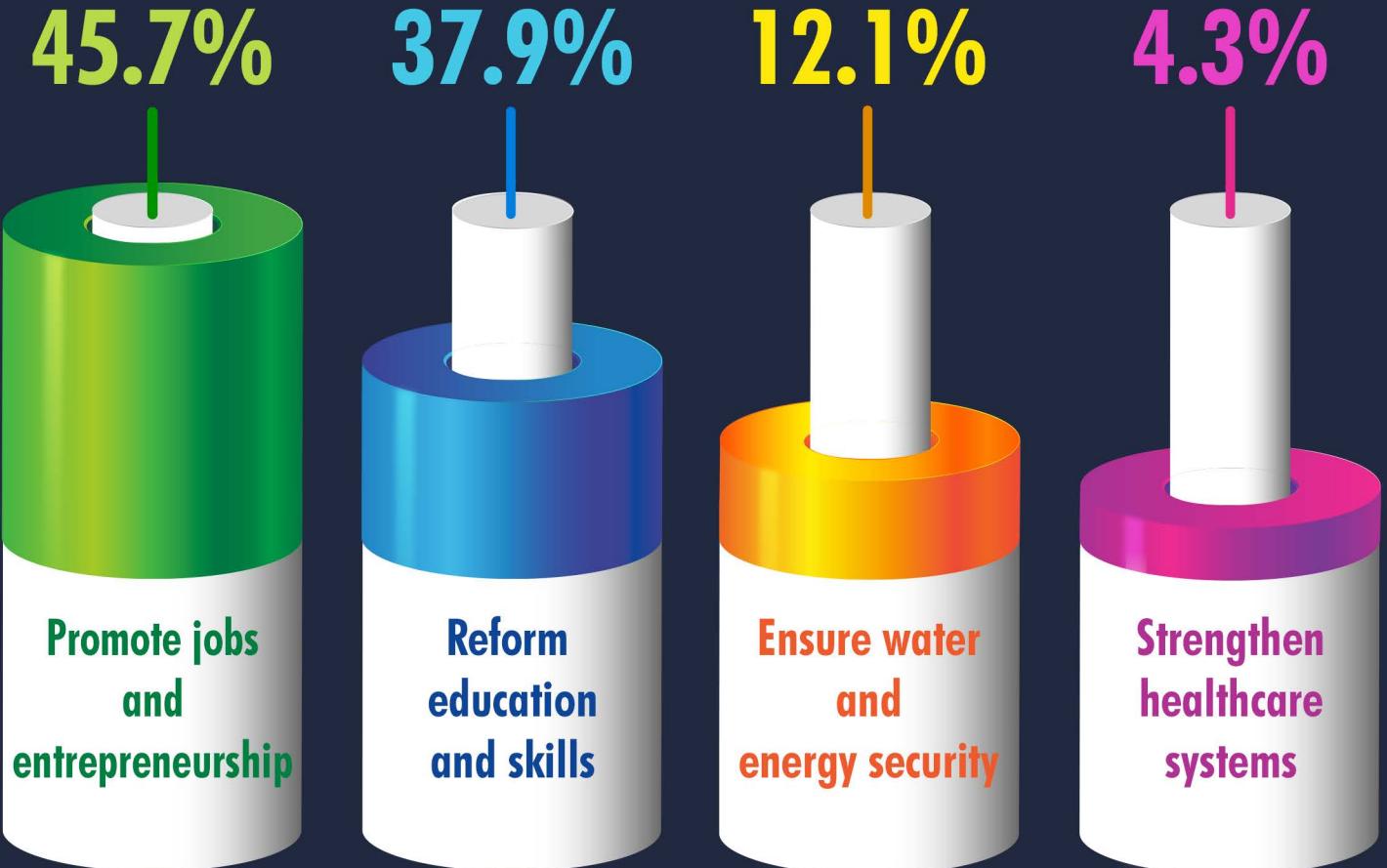
call to stop Failed Policies, Political Conflict, and Loan Reliance in 2026

- █ Repeating failed policies
- █ Fighting political battles
- █ Relying on foreign loans
- █ Neglecting public services



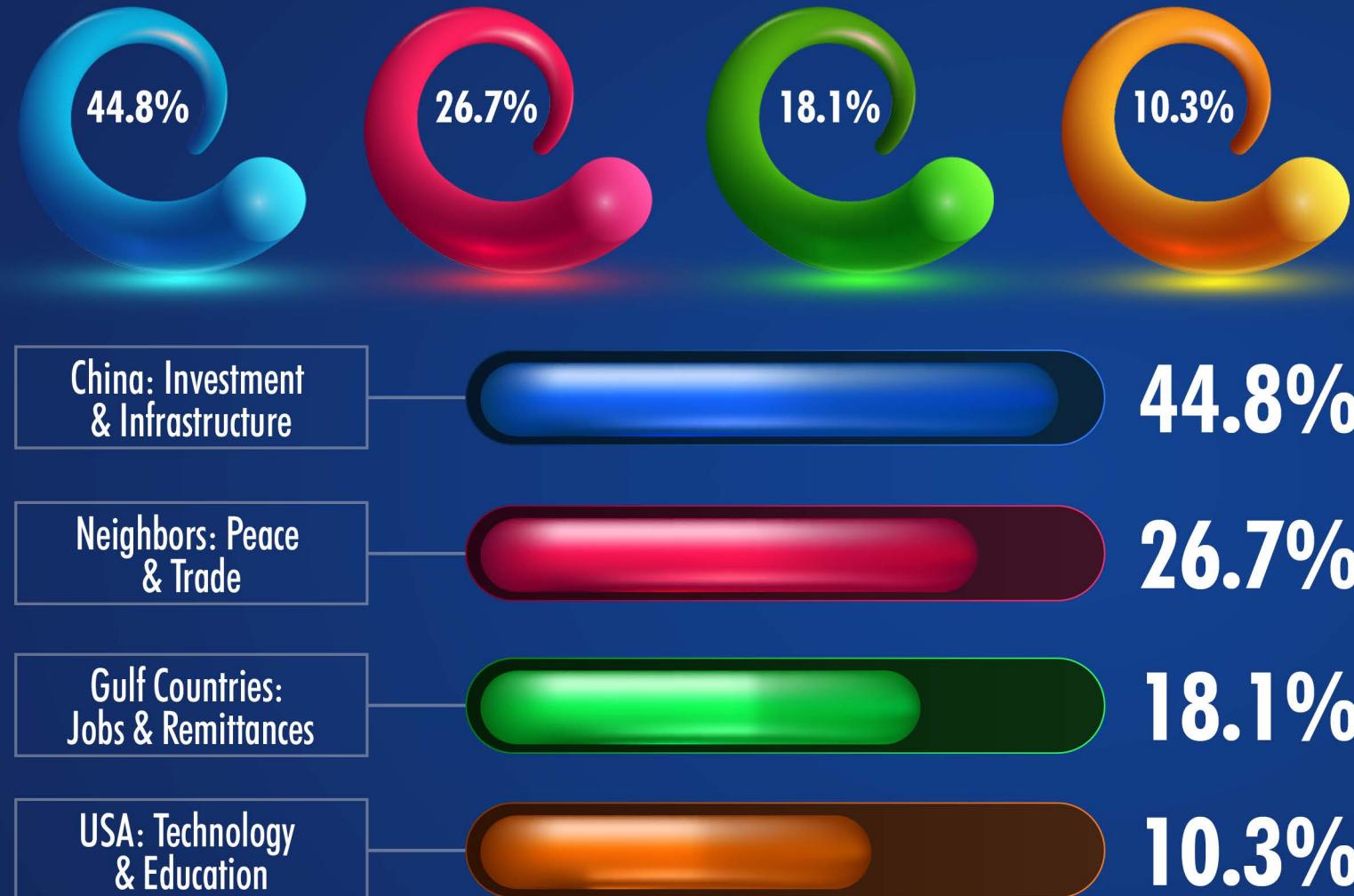
To achieve real progress in 2026, the public sends a clear message: Pakistan must break decisively from the past. Repeating failed policies tops the list at 31%, ending short-term fixes that never deliver lasting growth. Political conflict (28.4%) creates uncertainty, slows decision-making, and weakens investor confidence. Relying on foreign loans (26.7%) must be reduced to strengthen self-reliance through higher domestic revenue and exports. Neglecting public services (13.8%) like health and education must also stop. Respondents emphasize long-term planning, stable governance, and inclusive growth as essential pillars for sustainable progress.

84% call for Jobs and Education to Secure a Stronger 2026



The public mandate for 2026 is clear: people come before projects. An overwhelming 84% of respondents agree, with 45.7% calling for urgent action on job creation and 37.9% emphasizing comprehensive education and skills development to address youth unemployment and prepare a competitive workforce. Infrastructure and healthcare remain important but are seen as secondary. The public emphasizes that true progress depends not on bricks and mortar, but on widespread opportunity, skills, and inclusive growth as the foundation for a stronger 2026.

71% highlight China, Neighbors, Gulf, and USA for Key Partnerships in 2026



The survey shows that for 2026, the public wants international partnerships and economic diplomacy that bring real benefits. China leads at 44.8%, seen as important partner for investment, infrastructure, and CPEC projects. Neighboring countries follow at 26.7%, valued for peace and trade that support regional stability. Gulf countries are highlighted by 18.1% for jobs and remittances, while the USA accounts for 10.3% for technology and education. Overall, the public emphasizes investment, jobs, and useful partnerships as the key to a stronger and more stable Pakistan in 2026.

82% plan to learn Digital Skills or Start Ventures in 2026

56.9%



25.0%



12.1%

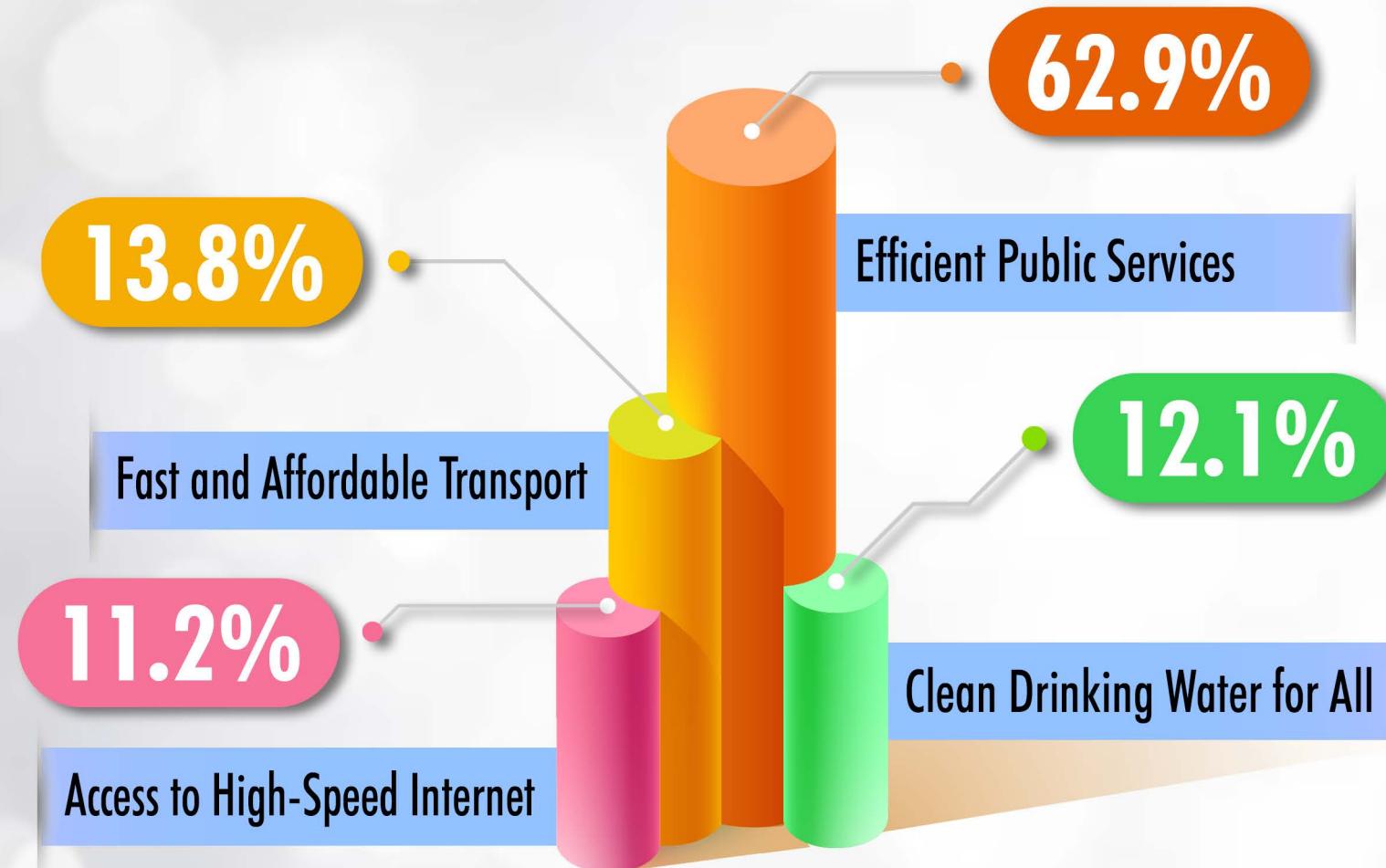


6.0%



The survey shows that people are ready to take charge of 2026 with self-reliance and action. Learning new digital skills leads at 56.9%, reflecting the need to stay ahead in a fast-changing, tech-driven world. Starting a business or project follows at 25%, highlighting bold entrepreneurial ambition and the drive to create new opportunities. Mentoring (12.1%) and volunteering (6%) remain secondary, while the main focus is on building skills, taking initiative, and boosting personal economic power. The public is clearly ready to invest in themselves to make 2026 productive, resilient, and full of opportunity.

63% prioritize Efficient Public Services to Improve Daily Life in 2026



The public has sent a clear message: governance matters more than new roads or bridges. Efficient public services lead at 62.9%, highlighting the need for faster, reliable, and transparent delivery in healthcare, education, utilities, and administrative support. Fast and affordable transport follows at 13.8%, clean drinking water at 12.1%, and high-speed internet at 11.2%. While infrastructure matters, people see slow services and red tape as the biggest daily hurdles. The mandate is clear: for ordinary Pakistanis, the most impactful change in 2026 will come from a government that works effectively for its citizens.



ICMA INTERNATIONAL lead strategically

Published by:
Research and Publications Department
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan

ICMAP Building, ST-18/C, ICMAP Avenue, Block 6, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi.

Email: rp@icmap.com.pk | Phone: +92 21 99243900 | Ext: 117



icmapdotpk



company/icmap



icmapak



www.icmap.com.pk