



Women's Perspectives on the Prospect of Peace

AFGHAN WOMEN'S NETWORK – AWN



The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is a non-partisan, non-profit and non-governmental organization, working for advocacy, propagation, and capacity building for over 3,500 individual members and 125 NGOs. Its aim is to create positive changes in women's lives, such as in the social, cultural, political, law and legal realms, while maintaining Islamic values.

The strategic priorities of the Network centre on three principles:

- Women, Peace and Security
- Women's Political Participation & Leadership
- Women's Social & Legal Protection

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	9
METHODOLOGY	12
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN	12
Quality control	12
• Non-response test	12
• Pattern recognition tests	12
• Logic tests	12
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	13
MAIN FINDINGS	17
1. Women's Perceptions of the Current Peace Process.	17
2. Women's Rights and the Prospect of a Peace Agreement.	25
3. Main Sources of Information on the Peace Process.	29
CONCLUSION	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32
APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE	33
1. Main Questions	33
2. Demographic Questions	39

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IWPS	Institute of War and Peace Studies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAP	National Action Plan
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nation Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURE 1: Ethnic Groups

FIGURE 2: Level of Education

FIGURE 3: Age Distribution

FIGURE 4: Marital Status

FIGURE 5: Employment Status

FIGURE 6: Employment Status, by Age Group

FIGURE 7: Employment Status, by Level of Education

FIGURE 8: Q-1) Overall, to what extent are you optimistic or pessimistic concerning the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations?

FIGURE 9: Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?

FIGURE 10: Q-5) In your opinion, do you believe the government negotiation team is representative of all Afghan citizens?

FIGURE 11: Q-6) In your opinion, do you think the government negotiators in the intra-Afghan peace talks can represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group?

FIGURE 12: Q-6) In your opinion, do you think the government negotiators in the intra-Afghan peace talks can represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group?

FIGURE 13: Q-8) In your opinion, do you believe the female members of the Afghan government negotiation team in the intra-Afghan peace talks can accurately represent your views at the talks?

FIGURE 14: Q-9) In your opinion, do you think the female members of the Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks can defend women's rights during the talks?

FIGURE 15: Q-10) Overall, how much confidence do you have that male members of Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks will back protection of women's rights?

FIGURE 16: Q-14) Overall, in your opinion, how important is it to protect women's rights in the peace agreement with the Taliban?

FIGURE 17: Q-16) How important do you think it is to protect the following factors as part of the peace agreement?

a) Women's right to education; b) Women's right to work; c) Women's right to vote; d) Women's right to choose their life partner.

FIGURE 18: Q-17) Do you fear that the women's rights achievements of the past two decades will not be protected at the ongoing peace talks?

FIGURE 19: Q-15) If the ongoing peace talks successfully produce a peace agreement, do you think the following factors will improve, remain the same, or deteriorate?

a) Employment opportunities; b) Educational opportunities; c) Freedom of speech; d) Freedom of movement; e) Women's rights in general.

FIGURE 20: Q-18) What are your main sources of information on the ongoing peace talks? a) TV; b) Radio; c) Friends/ Family members/ Colleagues; d) Internet

FIGURE 21: Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result

in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?

TABLE 1: Number of Interviews, by Province

TABLE 2: Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?

TABLE 3: Q-10) Overall, how much confidence do you have that male members of the Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks will back protection of women's rights?

TABLE 4: Q-14) Overall, in your opinion, how important is it to protect women's rights in the peace agreement with the Taliban?

TABLE 5: Q-16) How important do you think it is to protect the following factors as part of the peace agreement? a) Women's right to education; b) Women's right to work; c) Women's right to vote; d) Women's right to choose their life partner.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly's Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation (1982),¹ the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995),² and the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000)³ on women, peace, and security (WPS) highlight and recognize the importance and vital role of women in the promotion of peace in every sphere of life, giving critical attention to women's role at all levels of decision-making. As a result, women's inclusion in peacebuilding activities has increased globally, through the development of policy frameworks on WPS.⁴

However, studies have found that women remain underrepresented in peace processes. For instance, a study by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) highlights a lack of women mediators, witnesses or signatories, and negotiators in the major peace processes worldwide.⁵ A recent case study by The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) also notes this phenomenon, pointing out that of 130 peace agreements signed between 1992 and 2014, women were signatory to only 13 of these agreements. The findings also reveal that there is a direct correlation between women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace: Peace agreements with the involvement of women are more likely to endure than agreements signed only by men.⁶

Afghanistan, as a UN Member State is committed to the UNSC Resolutions. Thus, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) developed the National Action Plan (NAP) in June 2015, following the formation of the National Unity Government, in order to implement UNSCR 1325. The priority area of the NAP is to address challenges women face in the aftermath of war and conflict in Afghanistan which aims to address issues around protection and relief and recovery services for women as well as encourage increased women's participation in peace processes.

In recent years, there have been tangible gains for the women of Afghanistan. Women have gained some of the basic rights denied them during the Taliban era, when the status of women was continuously undermined. For example, women's right to education and employment was revoked and a very strict dress code—mandatory wearing of the burqa—was enforced for women outside of the home. Women were also not allowed to leave the home without being accompanied by either a male relative or their husband.

Despite persisting conservative cultural attitudes toward women, legal frameworks defining women's roles have evolved significantly since the fall of the Taliban government. For instance, the

¹United Nations General Assembly 1982 Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation, 3 December 1982, A/RES/37/63. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/528de9544.html>.

²Fourth World Conference on Women 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf.

³United Nations Security Council 2000. Resolution 1325 (2000). [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325(2000)).

⁴International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2015. Women in Conflict and Peace. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/women-in-conflict-and-peace.pdf>.

⁵Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2019 Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes: A Toolkit <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/0/5/440735.pdf>.

⁶Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit 2020. Women's Participation in the Afghan Peace Process: A Case Study. <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/women-s-participation-afghan-peace-process-case-study-september-2020>.

Constitution of Afghanistan (2004) determines equal rights for both men and women, and states that any kind of discrimination or distinction between citizens of Afghanistan is forbidden.⁷ Many studies show that women's rights have gradually improved under the GoIRA and women are given more opportunities in education and work. The Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) was adopted in 2009, and Afghan women serve as members of parliament—several women have also been appointed as ministers. Recently, the Parliament of Afghanistan approved the inclusion of the mother's name on the Tazkira (the national identity card), which is considered a major success for Afghan women's rights activists. For the country of Afghanistan, where just two decades ago, under Taliban rule, women had no freedom in civil liberties, such progress and change are of great significance.

Nevertheless, as to what extent Afghanistan can protect these gains on women's rights—and what compromises it will have to make in the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations—is a question that remains unanswered.

Bringing together the views of over 800 Afghan women, from eight provinces⁸ and various social groups. This study aims to highlight the perspectives of the Afghan women on the peace process, to better inform political elites and decision makers of their concerns; thus, facilitating informed decisions during the intra-Afghan peace negotiations with the Taliban.

The poll detailed below gathered the views and opinions of Afghan women on various topics, including (but not limited to):

- Level of confidence on and support for the ongoing peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban;
- Importance of protecting women's rights in the peace talks;
- Women's employment and educational opportunities;
- Women's freedom of speech and movement; and
- Whether women's rights in general will improve, remain the same, or deteriorate following a peace agreement with the Taliban.

The key findings of this study can be compressed into five main points:

- Support for the path to peace can be seen in the study results, with 81 per cent of respondents indicating that they either strongly support or somewhat support the peace process. Moreover, an overwhelming majority (78 per cent) of respondents said that they are either strongly optimistic or somewhat optimistic about the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations. Similarly, the majority of respondents believe that the negotiations will result in a peace agreement between the GoIRA and the Taliban.
- Slightly more than half of respondents (52 per cent) indicated believing that the GoIRA negotiating team at the intra-Afghan peace talks represents the views and opinions of the citizens of

⁷Constitution of Afghanistan. Chapter 2, Article 22. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/404d8a594.html>.

⁸Kabul, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Bamiyan, and Paktia

Afghanistan. However, almost one third of respondents (35 per cent) stated that the government negotiators do not represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from each social and ethnic group.

- The main reasons cited for finding the government negotiation team unrepresentative were “the negotiations team prefer to pursue their personal interests”, “the negotiation team does not consult with ordinary Afghans”, and “there are only a small number of women in the negotiation team”.
- Asked to mention two main factors that should be protected at the peace talks and in any subsequent peace agreement, respondents cited women’s rights, such as the right to work and the right to education, with high frequency. These were followed by protection of the Afghan Constitution, the democratic system, freedom of speech, and freedom of press.
- The study reveals that there is a strong determination among Afghan women that women’s rights should be protected in any peace agreement between the GoIRA and the Taliban. In this regard, 88 per cent of women interviewed said that women’s right to education should be protected; followed by the right to choose one’s life partner (80 per cent), the right to work (76 per cent), and the right to vote (74 per cent).

METHODOLOGY

The study gathered the views and opinions of more than 800 Afghan women, aged 18 years or over, on topics related to their overall confidence on the peace negotiations, level of support for the ongoing talks, their opinion on the importance of protecting women's rights at the peace talks, as well as main sources of information on the negotiations taking place.

The study represents the views of Afghan women across eight provinces—Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat, Bamian, Kandahar, Balkh, Kunduz, and Paktia, covering a diverse range of ethnic groups and social statuses. (See the 'Profile of Respondents' section for detailed information.)

Data collection was implemented by AWN in October 2020 through a team of nine experienced interviewers, with each interviewer a resident of the respective province where the interviews were conducted. The main criteria for respondents to be selected for the study were that they are female, aged 18 years or older, and informed about the intra-Afghan peace process.

Questionnaire design: The questionnaire included a screening process to assess whether the respondent was aware of the peace talks, 26 main questions assessing the respondent's views on peace, and 10 demographic questions, regarding age, marital status, ethnicity, employment status, etc. Of the main questions, three questions included (typically five) sub-questions. Once the questionnaire had been developed, it underwent several rounds of reviewing by the AWN team and the UN Women Afghanistan country team, ensuring that the questionnaire aligned with the study objectives and met the required standards. The finalized version of the questionnaire was translated into both Dari and Pashto, before being distributed to the interviewers.

Quality control: Every phase of the study—review of the questionnaire by the interviewer, conducting of the interviews, and the data entry process—was monitored by the researchers to ensure timely progress of the research activities. Following the fieldwork and data entry, various tests were developed to ensure that data was collected with the highest quality. The tests used to check the quality of data were:

- **Non-response test:** This calculates the percentage of “Don't know” and “Refused” (refused to answer) responses for each case. Interviews with a non-response rate of over 40 per cent are removed from the data.
- **Pattern recognition tests:** This looks to identify similar patterns in the question matrices. Three pattern recognition tests were developed and any case with two or more failures in this test is removed from the data.
- **Logic tests:** This flags any pattern of data deception/falsification, or data entry error, by testing logical consistency of questions within each case. Various logic tests are developed and any case with two or more test failures is removed from the data.

As a result of these quality control process, a total of 17 cases were removed from the database and the analysis in this report does not draw on these cases. The table below shows the number of interviews before and after the quality checks in each province.

TABLE I

Number of Interviews, by Province

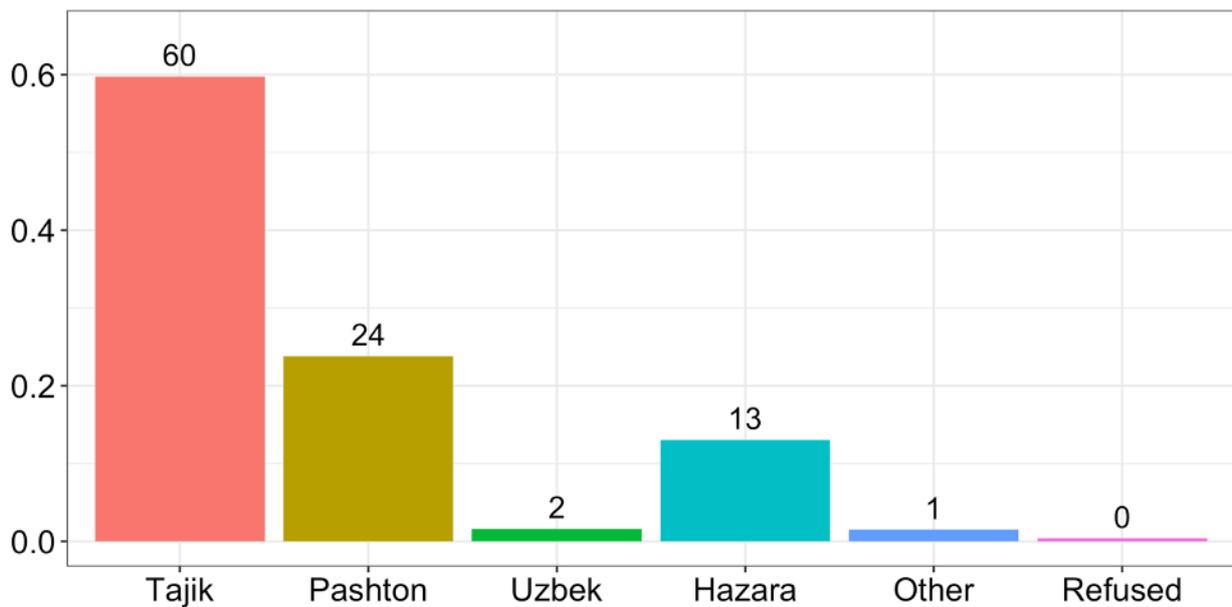
Province	# of cases before quality check	# of cases removed due to low quality	# of cases after quality check
Kabul	100	8	92
Kunduz	109	0	109
Nangarhar	109	2	107
Kandahar	99	2	97
Herat	98	1	97
Balkh	108	1	107
Bamiyan	102	2	100
Paktia	99	1	98
Total	824	17	807

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The study sample includes respondents from all major ethnic groups. Of the over 800 Afghan women who participated, 60 per cent are Tajik, 24 per cent are Pashtun, 13 per cent are Hazara, 2 per cent are Uzbek, and a further one per cent hail from other ethnic groups.

FIGURE I

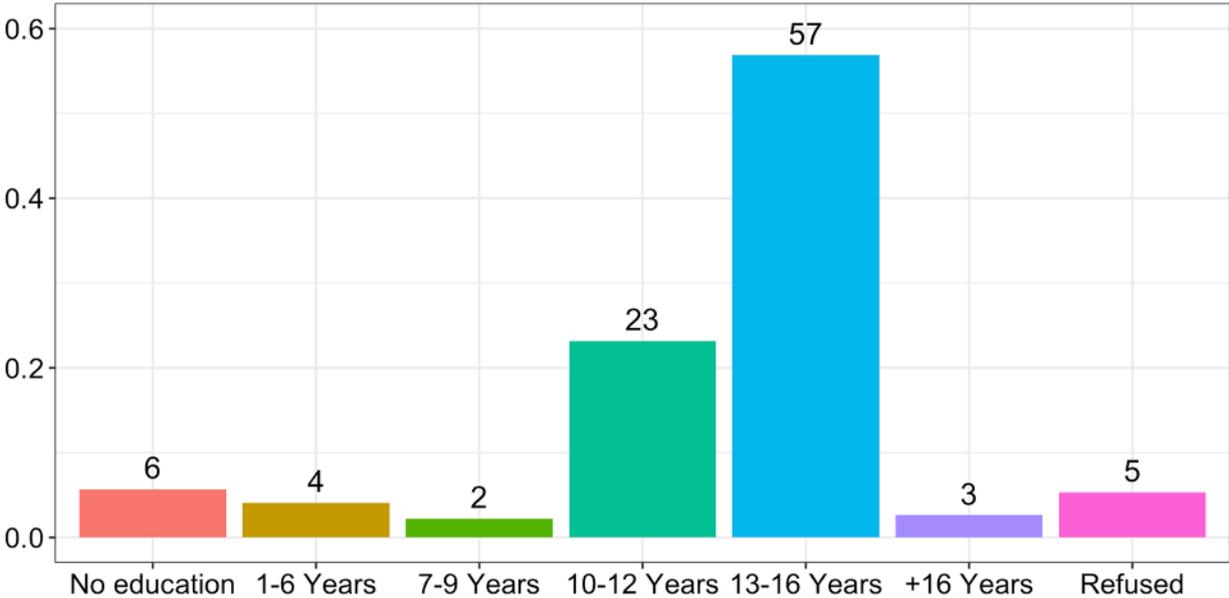
Ethnic Groups



In terms of level of education, six per cent of respondents indicated not having any formal education, four per cent had received one to six years of formal education (primary school), and two per cent received seven to nine years of formal education (secondary school). The 10-12 years of formal education bracket (high school) accounted for 23 per cent of respondents, while over half of respondents, 57 per cent, had undergone 13-14 years of formal education (Bachelor’s level), with three per cent indicating that they had more than 16 years of formal education. The data showed that respondent level of education was directly correlated with age, as those aged 18-30 years were more likely to indicate over 12 years of formal education, compared to those in the 31-40 years age group or above. In the same vein, older respondents were more likely to indicate not having any formal education.

FIGURE 2

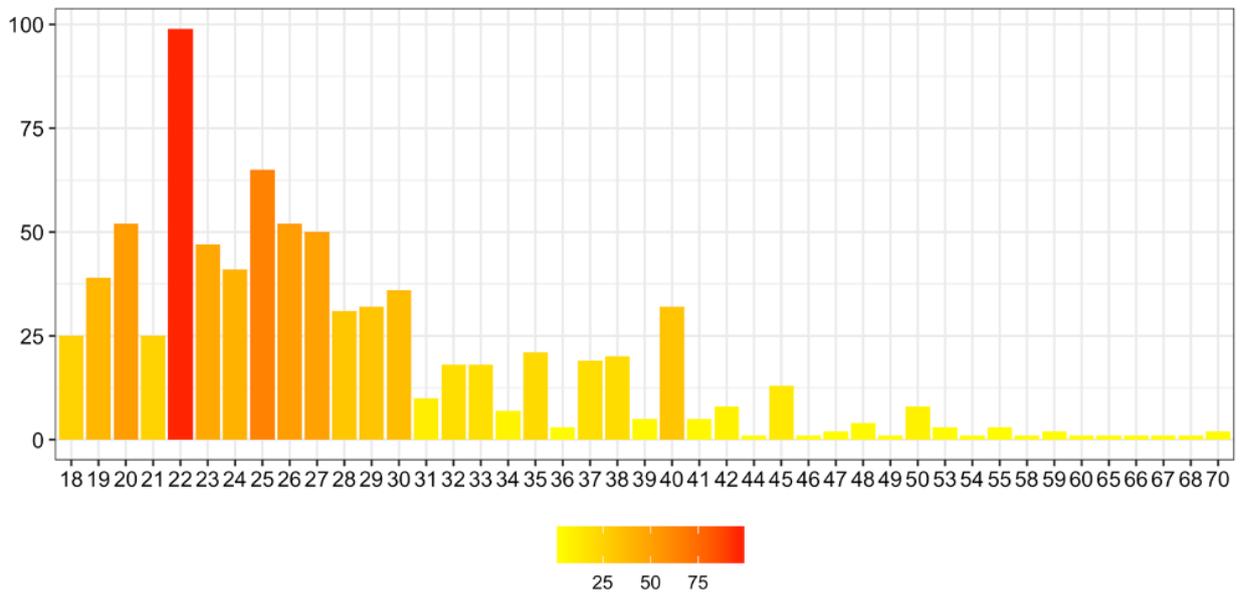
Level of Education



The sample represents Afghan women from different age groups, with an average age of 28 years; the youngest respondent was 18 years old and the oldest 70 years old. However, the distribution of the age of respondents is skewed positively (skewness = 1.7). This means that the majority of respondents are younger, while there are fewer elderly respondents.

FIGURE 3

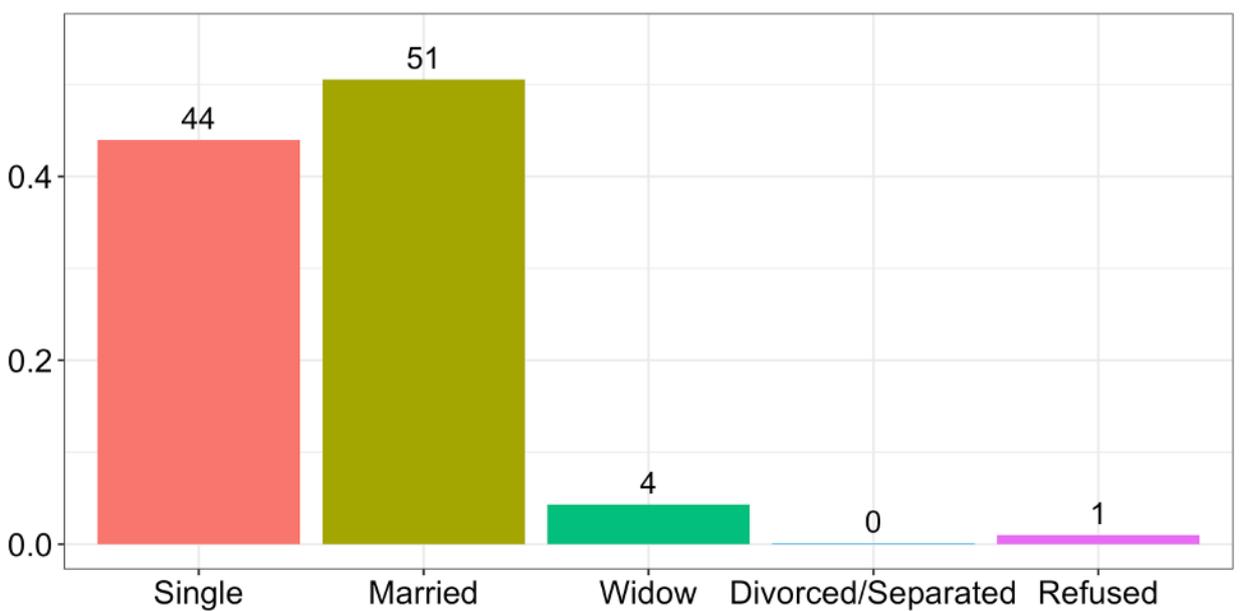
Age Distribution



The survey also asked respondents about their marital status. A little over half of respondents (51 per cent) said they are married, 44 per cent stated that they are single (44 per cent), and 4 per cent indicated that they have been widowed.

FIGURE 4

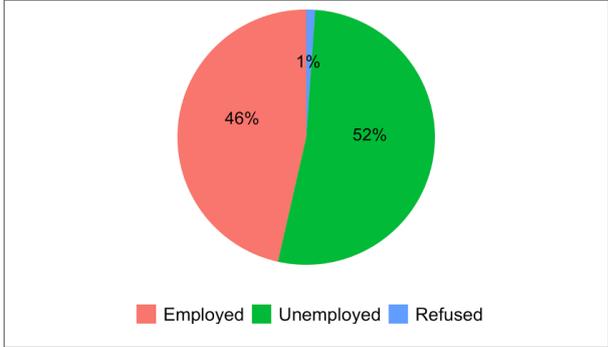
Marital Status



Concerning employment status, over half of respondents (52 per cent) stated that they do not have any income, while 46 per cent said that they are currently employed.

FIGURE 5

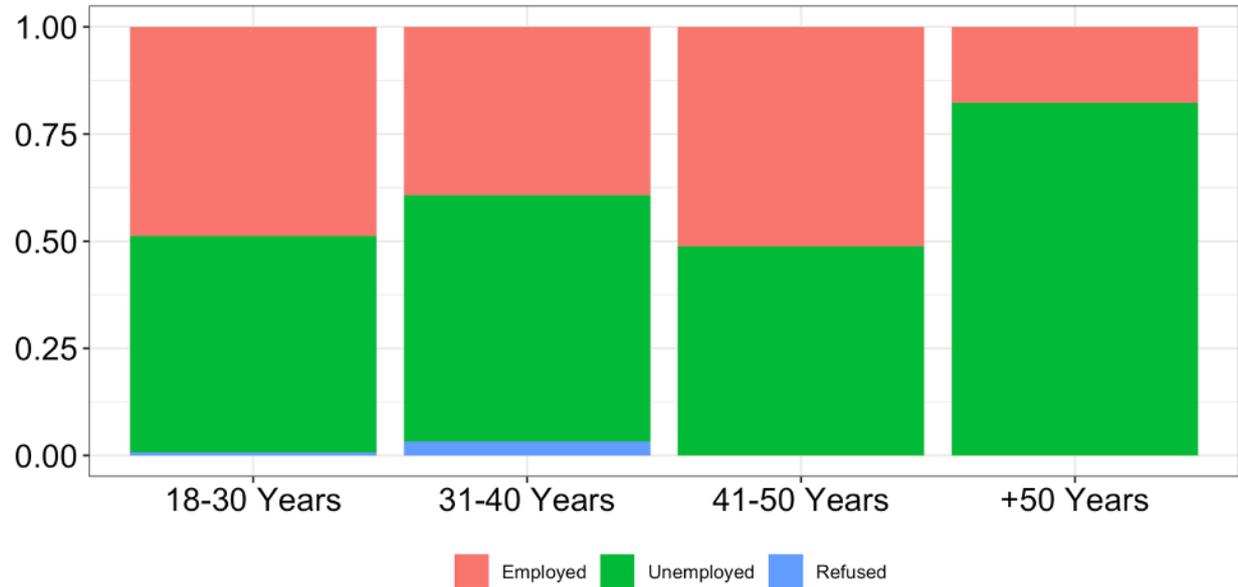
Employment Status



Employment status is directly correlated with respondent age, as those aged between 18-30 years old were more likely to indicate that they are employed, compared to those respondents aged older than 50 years (49 per cent vs. 18 per cent, respectively).

FIGURE 6

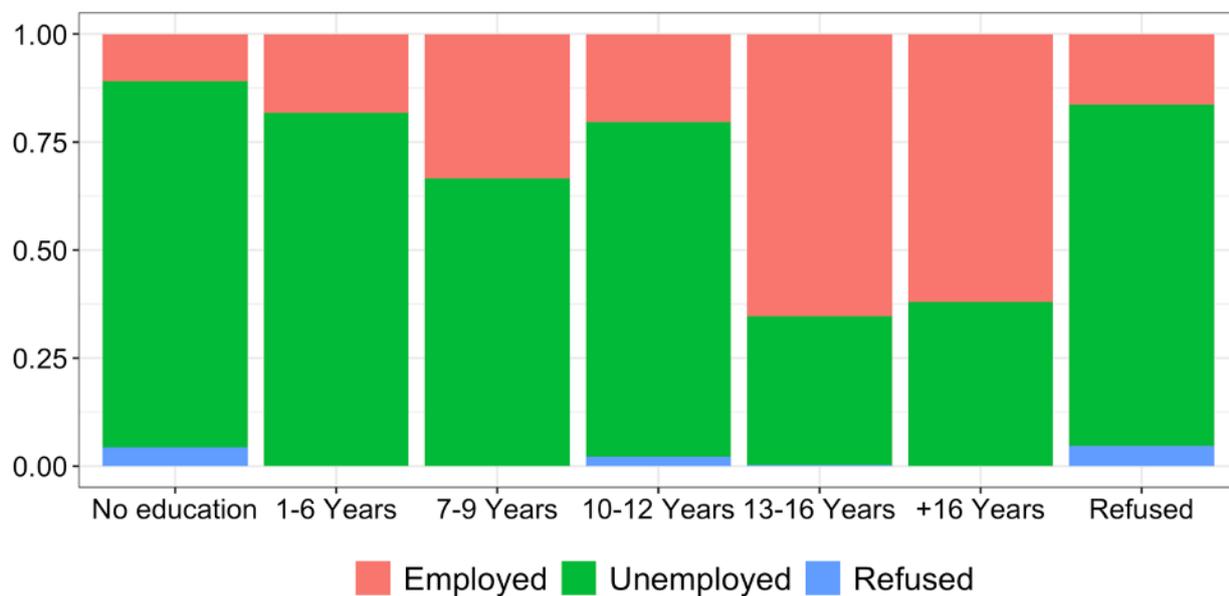
Employment Status, by Age Group



Moreover, education is a significant predictor of employment status among respondents. For instance, two thirds of respondents with Bachelor’s degree or higher said that they are employed, while this proportion drops to less than twenty per cent for those with no formal education or only primary school-level education.

FIGURE 7

Employment Status, by Level of Education



MAIN FINDINGS

On 12 September 2020, the long-awaited intra-Afghan peace talks began to present a path to ending several decades of war in Afghanistan, and those on both sides of the negotiating table will have to deal with vast difference in views on the country’s system of governance. Deciding the future of the political system of Afghanistan thus represents a significant challenge for the parties. The GoIRA backs and aims to retain the ‘Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,’ while the Taliban favours an ‘Islamic Emirate’ as the prevailing political system. Many studies indicate that an overwhelming majority of Afghan citizens favour an Islamic Republic, including a study by the Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS) that puts the proportion of Afghans in favour of an Islamic Republic at 68 per cent, versus 13 per cent in favour of an Islamic Emirate.⁹ In a recent national poll by The Asia Foundation (TAF), 73 per cent of Afghans said protecting the democratic system is important as part of the peace agreement.¹⁰

I. Women’s Perceptions of the Current Peace Process

When Afghan women were polled as to what extent they are optimistic or pessimistic concerning the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they were either strongly optimistic (56 per cent) or somewhat optimistic (22 per cent), while less than a quarter said that they were pessimistic (“somewhat pessimistic”—12 per cent, and “strongly

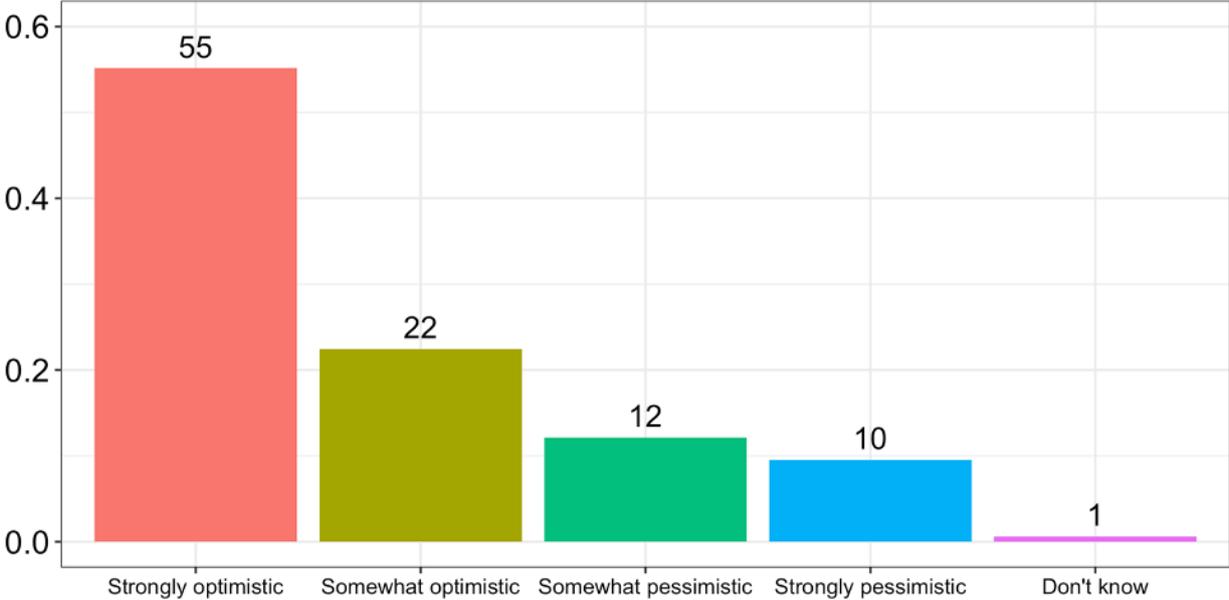
⁹Institute of War and Peace Studies / American University of Afghanistan 2020 The Afghan People’s Peace Perception Survey. <https://iwps.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/THE-AFGHAN-PEOPLES-PEACE-PERCEPTION-SURVEY-ENGLISH.pdf>

¹⁰The Asia Foundation 2019. Afghanistan in 2019: A Survey of the Afghan People. <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-in-2019-a-survey-of-the-afghan-people/>

pessimistic”—10 per cent). The findings show a direct correlation between level of education and level of optimism, as 63 per cent of respondents with 13-16 years of formal education and 67 per

FIGURE 8

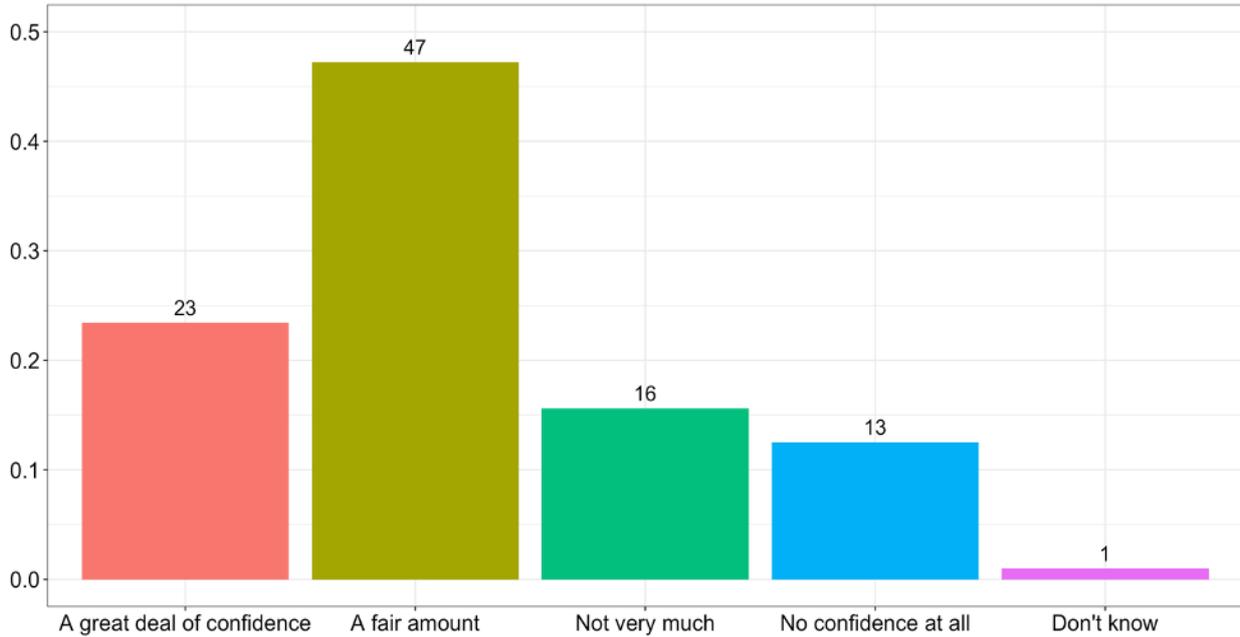
Q-1) Overall, to what extent are you optimistic or pessimistic concerning the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations?



Similarly, a majority of respondents indicated having confidence that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the GoIRA and the Taliban (“a great deal of confidence” 23 per cent; “a fair amount” 47 per cent). Thirteen per cent of respondents said they do not have confidence that the peace negotiations will result in an agreement. Level of confidence in the peace process varies across age categories. For instance, 22 per cent of those aged between 18-30 years indicated having a great deal of confidence that the ongoing talks would result in an agreement, while this proportion increases to 25 per cent among the 31-40 age group, and 28 per cent among those aged between 41-50 years.

FIGURE 9

Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?



Those respondents who indicated having either “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of confidence in the peace process varied across provinces, from 86 per cent in Kandahar to 40 per cent in Herat.

TABLE 2

Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?

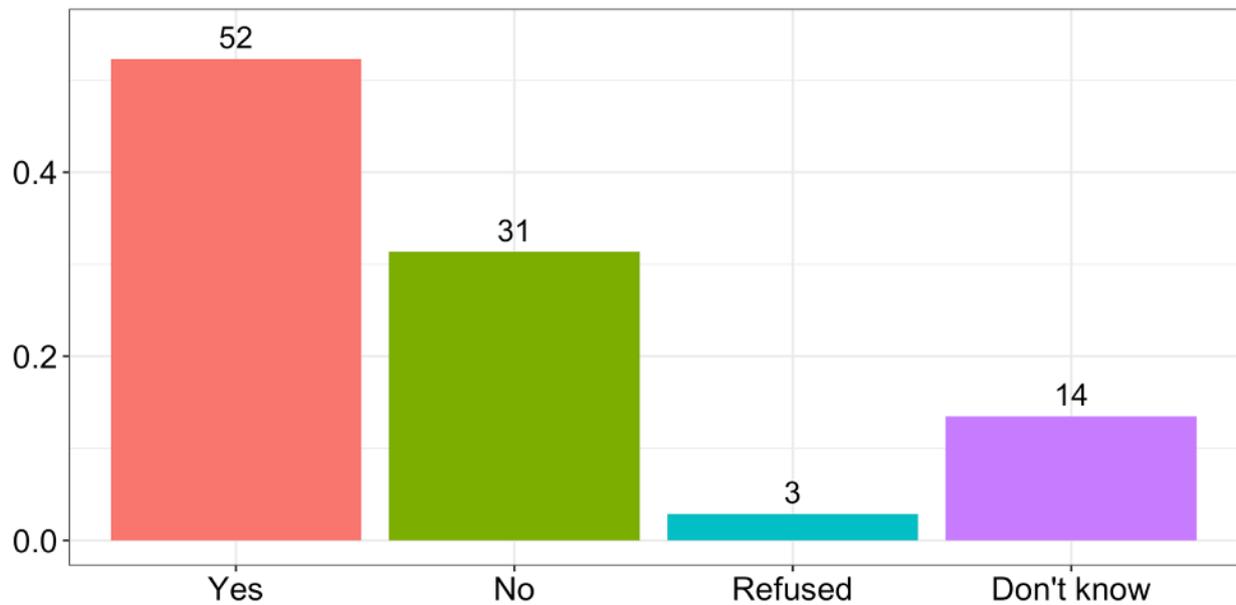
Province	A great deal of confidence	A fair amount	Not very much	No confidence at all	Refused	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Kabul	14	49	23	14	0	0
Kunduz	6	66	17	6	2	3
Nangarhar	32	48	7	13	0	1
Kandahar	34	52	8	6	0	0
Herat	6	34	41	16	0	2

Balkh	32	44	13	11	0	0
Bamiyan	33	48	7	11	0	1
Paktia	30	36	10	23	0	1

On the question of whether they believe the GoIRA negotiation team is representative of all Afghan citizens, 55 per cent of respondents answered in the positive, while slightly more than one third of respondents believe that the negotiation team is not representative of all Afghan citizens.

FIGURE 10

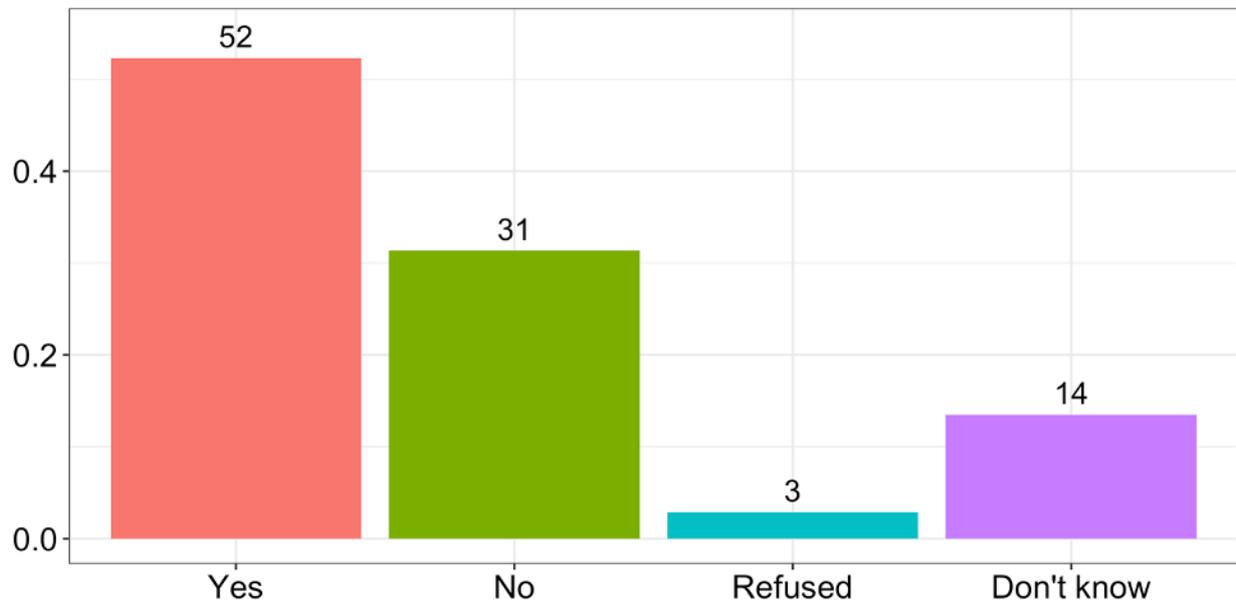
Q-5) In your opinion, do you believe the government negotiation team is representative of all Afghan citizens?



Moreover, in line with the above findings, 52 per cent of respondents said that the GoIRA negotiating team represents the views and opinions of the citizens of Afghanistan, while almost one third (31 per cent) believed that the negotiators in the intra-Afghan peace talks do not represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group. Respondents from the Tajik ethnic group were more likely to reflect this sentiment, compared to respondents from other ethnic groups (Tajik, 33 per cent; Pashtun, 30 per cent, Hazara, 28 per cent; Uzbek, 23 per cent).

FIGURE 11

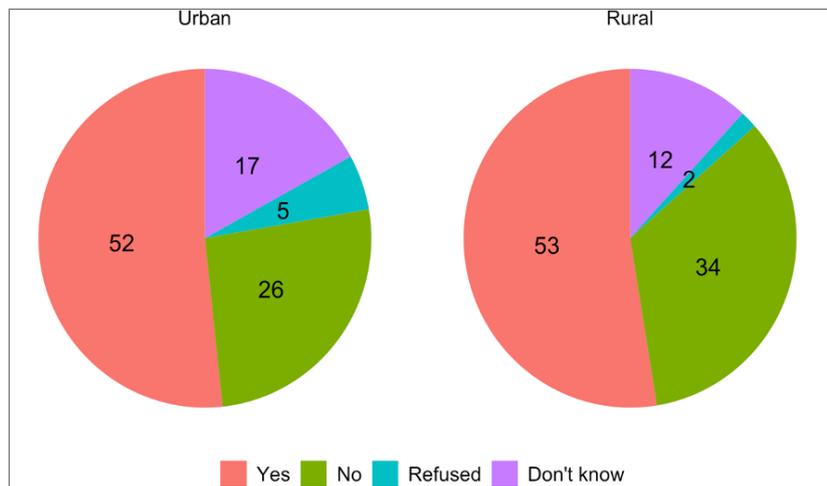
Q-6) In your opinion, do you think the government negotiators in the intra-Afghan peace talks can represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group?



Moreover, the proportion of those who indicated that the negotiation team does not represent the views of all Afghans is higher among rural dwellers (34 per cent) than those who live in urban areas (26 per cent).

FIGURE 12

Q-6) In your opinion, do you think the government negotiators in the Intra - Afghan peace talks can represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group?



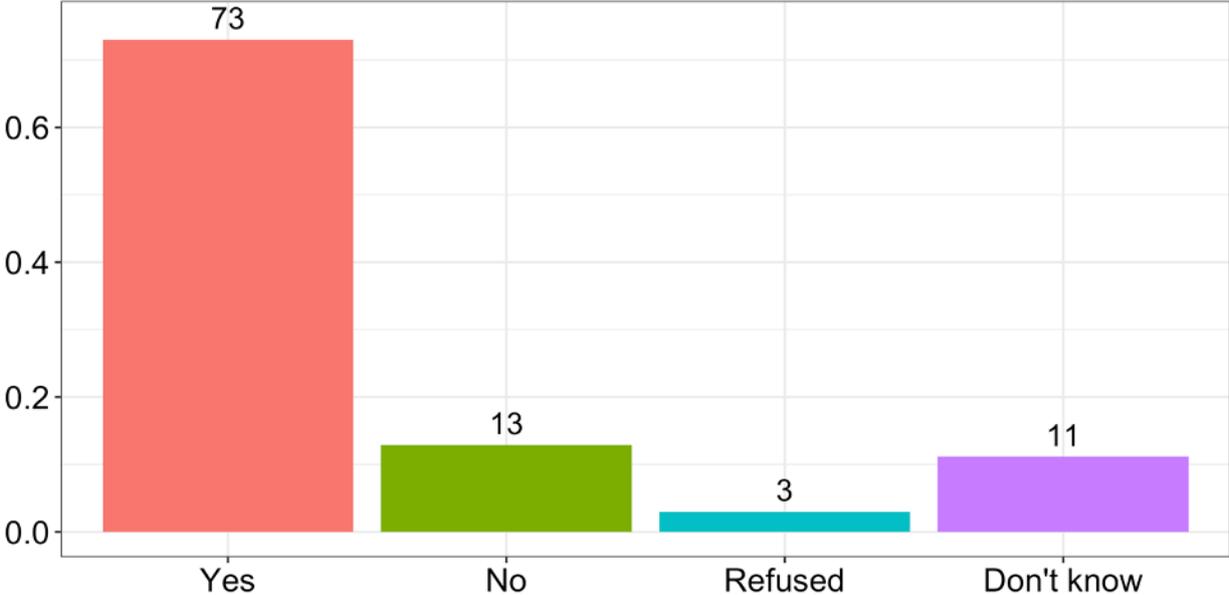
Nearly half of respondents in Herat (46 per cent), Kandahar (45 per cent), and Balkh (45 per cent) provinces said that the negotiators do not represent views of all Afghans, while this proportion was five per cent in Kunduz and 16 per cent in Paktika.

Those respondents who stated that the negotiators do not represent the views of all Afghans, from every social and ethnic group, were given a follow-up question asking them to indicate the reason for their response. Respondents cited reasons such as “the negotiations team members prefer their personal interests,” “the negotiation team does not consult with ordinary Afghans,” and “there are few females on the negotiating team.”

More specifically, when Afghan women were asked whether female members of the GoIRA negotiation team can accurately represent their views, a significant number of respondents (73 per cent) answered in the positive, with 13 per cent saying that the female members of the negotiation team cannot fulfil this role.

FIGURE 13

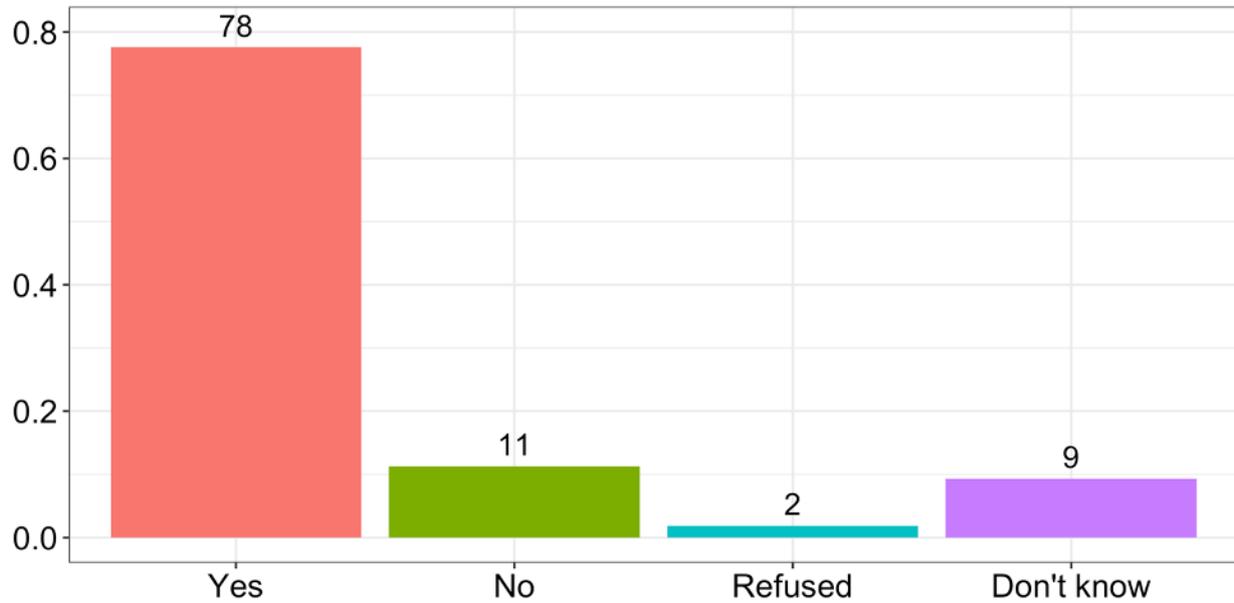
Q-8) In your opinion, do you believe the female members of the Afghan government negotiation team in the intra-Afghan peace talks can accurately represent your views at the talks?



In the same way, when asked whether female members of the government negotiation team can defend women’s right in the negotiations, 78 per cent of respondents answered “yes,” while 11 per cent answered “no.”

FIGURE 14

Q-9) In your opinion, do you think the female members of the Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks can defend women’s rights during the talks?



Additionally, when asked whether they think the male members of the Afghan government negotiation team will support protection of women’s rights, 43 per cent of respondents said that they have “a lot of confidence.” A further 31 per cent said that they have “some confidence,” while 17 per cent indicated “very little confidence” and 8 per cent said that they do not have “any confidence” in male negotiator support for protection of women’s rights in the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations.

By place of residence, the proportion of respondents expressing “a lot of confidence” in male members of the Afghan government negotiation team is higher in rural areas than in urban areas (47 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively). This proportion also varies from over 60 per cent in Nangarhar (62 per cent), Bamiyan (62 per cent), and Balkh (61 per cent), to lows of 4 per cent in Herat, 19 per cent in Kandahar, and 26 per cent in Kabul.

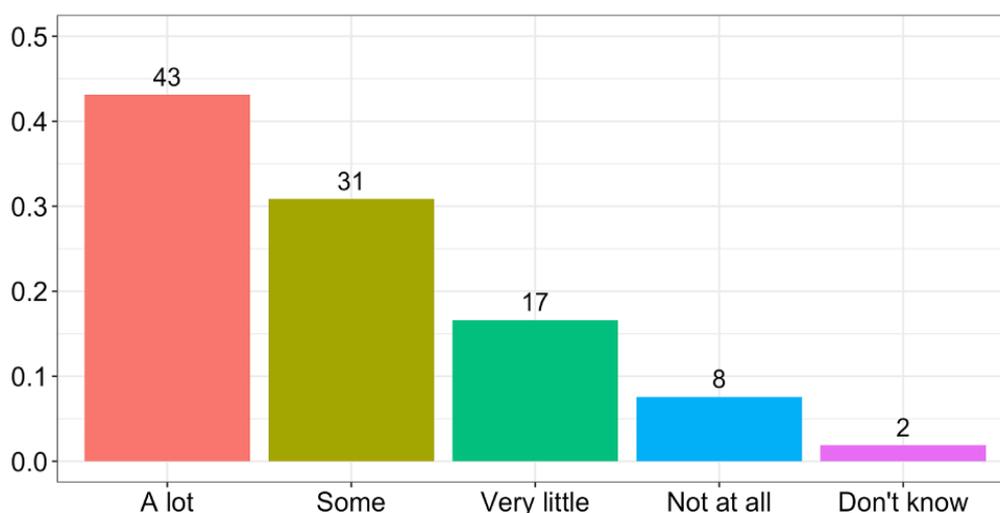
TABLE 3

Q-10) Overall, how much confidence do you have that male members of the Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks will back protection of women’s rights?

Province	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%
Nangarhar	62	26	8	1	3
Bamiyan	62	25	9	1	3
Balkh	61	27	8	1	3
Kunduz	59	33	5	1	3
Paktia	46	34	17	2	1
Kabul	26	39	25	10	0
Kandahar	19	30	20	32	0
Herat	4	34	44	15	2

FIGURE 15

Q-10) Overall, how much confidence do you have that male members of Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks will back protection of women’s rights?



Asked to identify what they felt are the most important factors to be protected during the peace talks, a majority of study participants cited women’s rights, such as the right to work and education, and the overall maintaining of Afghan women’s achievements of the past two decades. Protecting the current constitution, the democratic system, freedom of speech, freedom of press, and national interests were also among the main responses given.

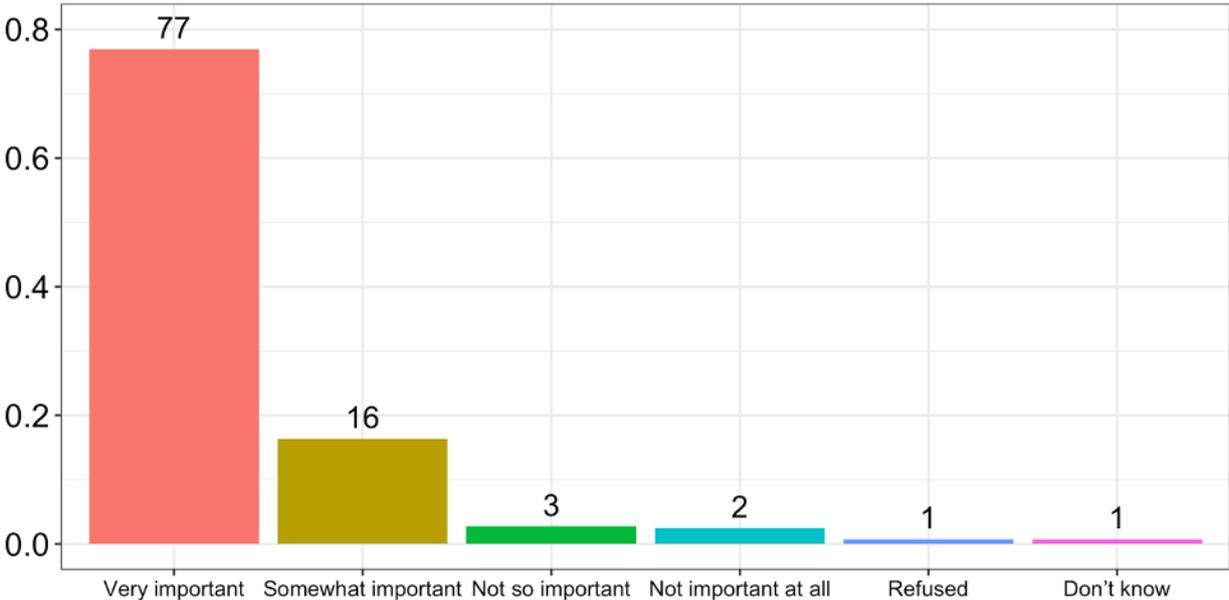
The survey also asked respondents which countries they felt would play an important role in the GoIRA successfully reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban. The majority of respondents posited the United States—followed by Pakistan, Iran, India, and Russia—in this regard. This trend can be seen across both rural and urban residents, all age groups, and all provinces.

2. Women’s Rights and the Prospect of a Peace Agreement

The findings of this study reveal that there is a strong determination among the female population of Afghanistan that women’s rights should be protected in the peace agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Nearly all respondents, a combined total of over 90 per cent, said that protecting women’s rights in any peace agreement is either very important (77 per cent) or somewhat important (16 per cent).

FIGURE 16

Q-14) Overall, in your opinion, how important is it to protect women’s rights in the peace agreement with the Taliban?



Support for protection of women’s rights was high among respondents from all age groups, every level of education, and both rural and urban areas. The table below shows the level of support for protecting women’s rights in any future peace treaty by age and level of education.

TABLE 4

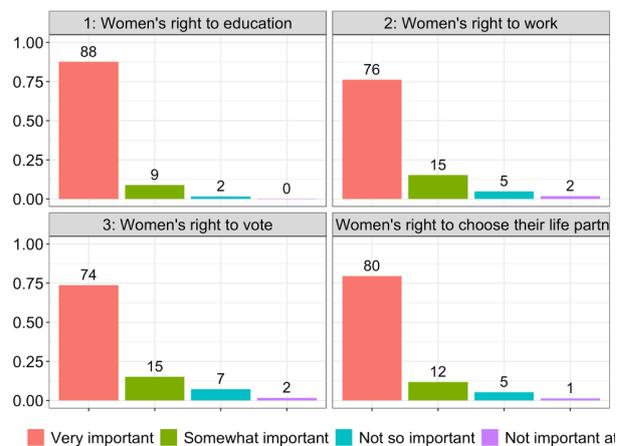
Q-14) Overall, in your opinion, how important is it to protect women’s rights in the peace agreement with the Taliban?

Response	Age				Level of Education					
	18-30 Years	31-40 Years	41-50 Years	+50 Years	No formal education	1-6 Years	7-9 Years	10-12 Years	13-16 Years	+16 Years
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very important	76	76	84	88	61	76	89	74	79	86
Somewhat important	18	14	9	6	28	18	11	18	14	10
Not so important	3	2	5	6	9	0	0	3	3	0
Not important at all	2	5	2	0	0	0	0	4	3	5
Refused	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Don't know	1	1	0	0	2	6	0	1	0	0

Similarly, an overwhelming majority of respondents felt that women’s right to education should be protected in the peace negotiation (88 per cent), followed by women’s right to choose their life partner (80 per cent), women’s right to work (76 per cent), and women’s right to vote (74 per cent).

FIGURE 17

Q-16) How important do you think it is to protect the following factors as part of the peace agreement? a) Women’s right to education; b) Women’s right to work; c) Women’s right to vote; d) Women’s right to choose their life partner.



Despite a higher level of support for women’s education overall, this is, predictably, lower among respondents with no formal education compared to those indicating university education. For example, 78 per cent of respondents with no formal education said that protecting women’s right to education is very important, compared to 90 per cent among those with 13-14 years of formal education. Similarly, support for women’s right to work is higher among respondents who are employed than those who are unemployed (80 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively). Moreover, those respondents indicating their marital status as single were more likely to note that protecting women’s right to choose their life partner is very important, compared to those who are married (88 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively).

TABLE 5

Q-16) How important do you think it is to protect the following factors as part of the peace agreement? a) Women’s right to education; b) Women’s right to work; c) Women’s right to vote; d) Women’s right to choose their life partner.

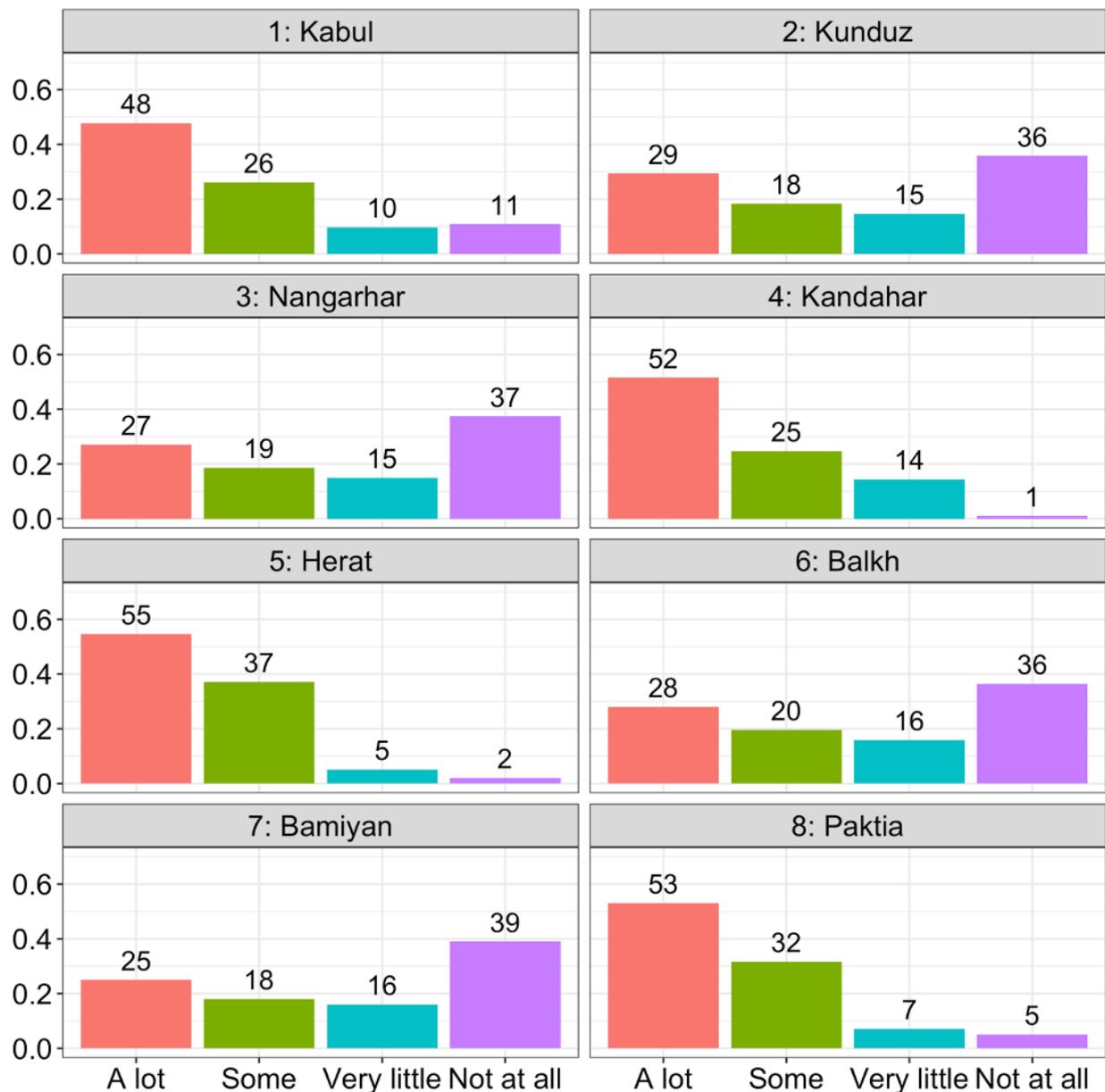
Factor	18-30 Years	31-40 Years	41-50 Years	+50 Years
	%	%	%	%
Women's right to education	89	86	86	76
Women's right to work	77	73	81	71
Women's right to vote	77	66	70	29
Women's right to choose their life partner	82	78	65	47

Amid higher levels of optimism and confidence concerning the ongoing peace negotiations with the Taliban, concerns over protecting the achievements of Afghan women during the past two decades remained significantly high among Afghan women. Nearly two thirds of respondents said that they feared losing Afghan women’s achievements in the peace negotiations (“a lot of fear,” 39 per cent, “some fear,” 24 per cent). By province, the percentage of respondents expressing “a lot of fear” in this regard is higher in Herat (55 per cent), Paktia (53 per cent), Kandahar (52 per cent), and Kabul (48%) compared to Kunduz (29 per cent), Balkh (28 per cent) Nangarhar (27 per cent) and Bamiyan (25 per cent). This proportion is also significantly higher among respondents aged 50 years or older than it is among those in the 18-30 years age group (76 per cent versus 37 per cent, respectively).

The findings show that the level of concern over protecting women’s achievement is higher among urban respondents (“a lot of fear,” 44 per cent; “some fear,” 28 per cent) than rural respondents (a lot of fear, 37 per cent; some fear, 22 per cent).

FIGURE 18

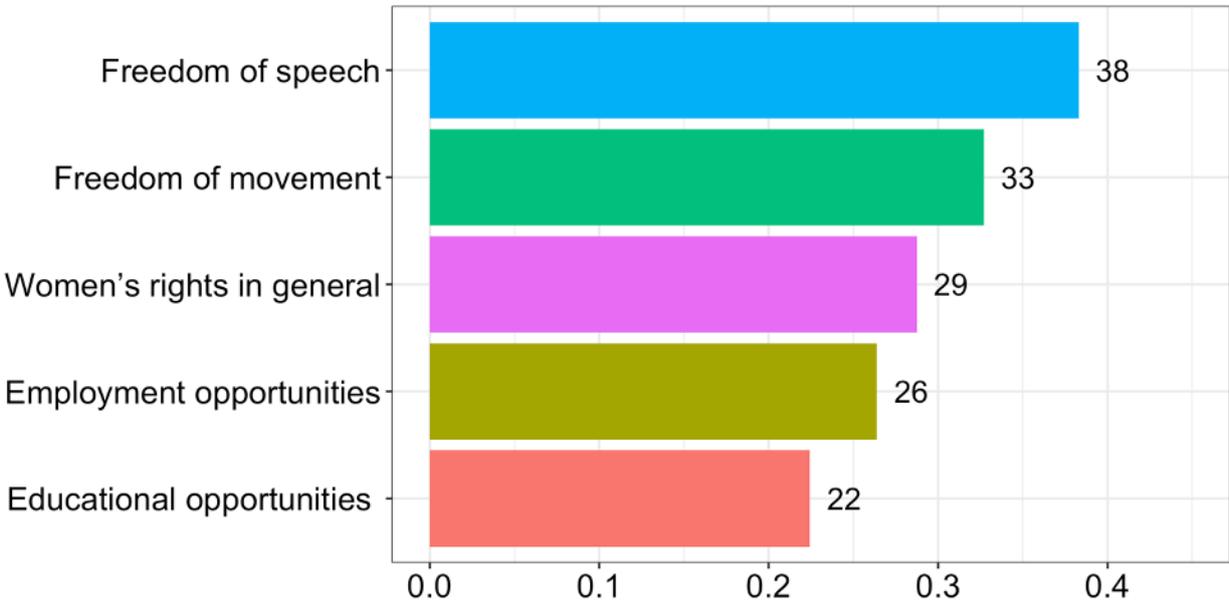
Q-17) Do you fear that the women’s rights achievements of the past two decades will not be protected at the ongoing peace talks?



Moreover, a considerable number of respondents felt that women’s rights will deteriorate if the ongoing peace talks successfully produce a peace agreement. For instance, 38 per cent of respondents said that women’s freedom of speech will deteriorate after a peace agreement, while 33 per cent predicted the same for freedom of movement. Furthermore, roughly one quarter of respondents felt that employment opportunities (26 per cent) and educational opportunities (22 per cent) for women would deteriorate after the signing of a peace agreement.

FIGURE 19

Q-15) If the ongoing peace talks successfully produce a peace agreement, do you think the following factors will improve, remain the same, or deteriorate? a) Employment opportunities; b) Educational opportunities; c) Freedom of speech; d) Freedom of movement; e) Women’s rights in general.

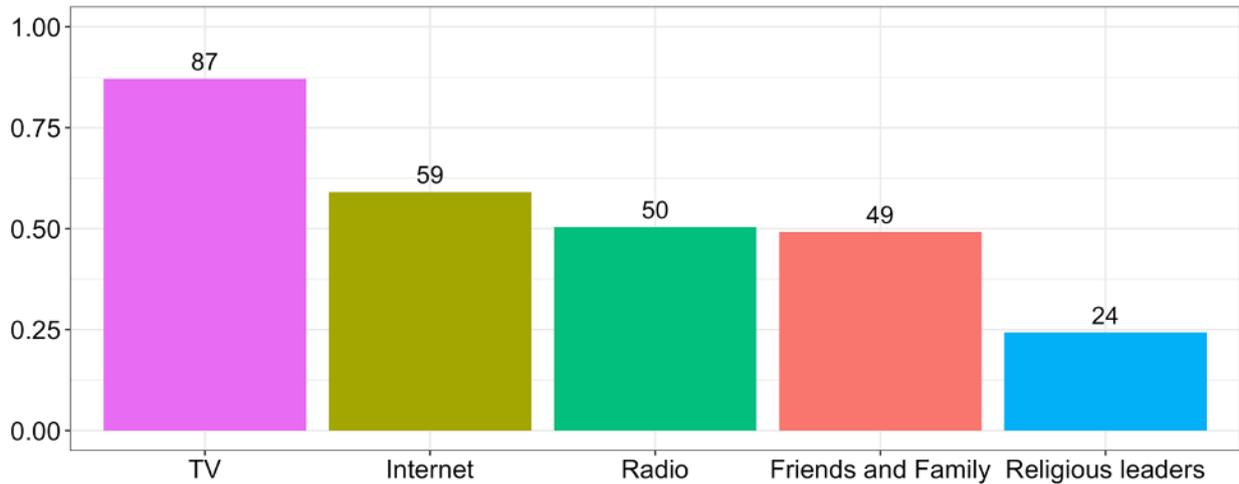


3. Main Sources of Information on the Peace Process

The survey also polled respondents regarding their main sources for obtaining information on the ongoing intra-Afghan peace process. The results show that respondents are more likely to use modern means such as TV (87 per cent) and internet (59 per cent) to attain information on the peace negotiations, with smaller proportions using traditional sources such as religious leaders (24 per cent) and friends and family members (49 per cent).

FIGURE 20

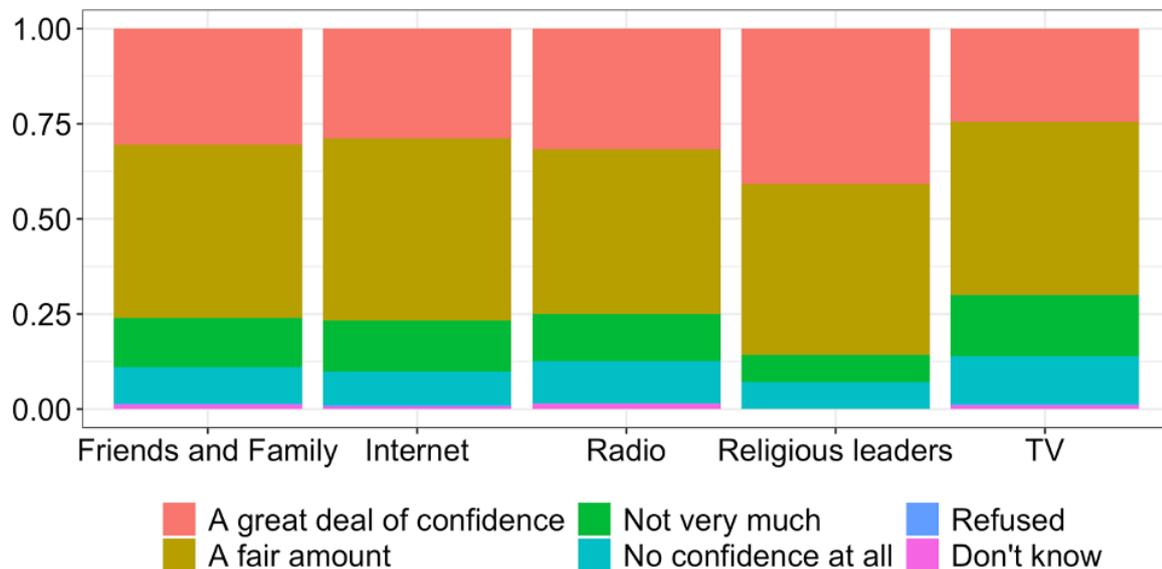
Q-18) What are your main sources of information on the ongoing peace talks? a) TV; b) Radio; c) Friends/ Family members/ Colleagues; d) Internet



When assessing the impact of these information sources on Afghan women’s perceptions of the peace process, it is worth noting that those who use traditional information sources such as religious leaders (41 per cent), radio (32 per cent), and friends and family (30 per cent) are more likely to have higher confidence in the peace process to produce an agreement between the GoIRA and the Taliban. By contrast, this proportion was 29 per cent among those citing the internet as a source of information, and 24 per cent among those who use TV to obtain such information.

FIGURE 21

Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?



Respondents who cite religious leaders as their main source of obtaining information on the peace process are more likely to be optimistic toward the intra-Afghan peace negotiations, compared to those who use internet or TV (71 per cent vs. 65 per cent vs. 57 per cent, respectively). Furthermore, those who obtain information from religious leaders are more likely to feel that the GoIRA negotiation team is representative of Afghan citizens, compared to those who use TV as their main source of information (Religious leaders, 66 per cent vs. TV, 56 per cent).

These respondents are also more likely to feel that government negotiators can represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group, in the peace talks (Religious leaders, 59 per cent vs. TV, 54 per cent); and are more likely to indicate that male members of the government negotiation team will support protection of women's rights at the talks (Religious leaders, 57 per cent vs. TV, 47 per cent). Finally, they are also generally more likely to strongly support the peace negotiations with the Taliban (Religious leaders, 61 per cent vs. TV 56, per cent).

What is clear from the above findings is that source of information is strongly correlated with the perspectives Afghan women hold on the peace process. However, one must approach this conclusion with caution, as it does not necessarily imply causation and there might be external factors that could be significantly impacting both indicators. For this reason, further detailed studies are suggested to establish a robust relationship between source of information and Afghan perspectives on the peace process.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that majority of Afghans are optimistic about the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations (“strongly optimistic” — 55 per cent and “somewhat optimistic” — 22 per cent) and a strong desire for peace can be seen in the study results with four in every five respondents indicating that they support the peace process. Nevertheless, despite higher levels of optimism and desire for peace, some 35 per cent of respondents say that the Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks is not representative of all Afghan citizens. On a follow-up question, while asking what are the main reasons the negotiation team is not representative of all Afghan citizens, top cited responses are “the negotiations team prefer to pursue their personal interests”, “the negotiation team does not consult with ordinary Afghans”, and “there are only a small number of women in the negotiation team”. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of respondents, over 90 per cent, say that protecting women’s rights in the peace negotiations is important, with a notable number of respondents concerned about Afghan women’s achievements and gains of the past two decades. For instance, 88 per cent of women interviewed said that women’s right to education should be protected; followed by the right to choose one’s life partner (80 per cent), the right to work (76 per cent), and the right to vote (74 per cent).

While the intra-Afghan negotiations receive high levels of support among Afghans, the talks are considered but the first steps on a long, difficult road to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan. The parties on both sides of the negotiating table must make compromises if a peace agreement is to be successfully reached. For this reason, it is suggested that the negotiation process be highly transparent and the details shared with the citizens of Afghanistan. In particular, any such agreement should take into consideration the extent to which ordinary Afghans are ready to compromise for the sake of an enduring peace, with exceptional consideration given to the protecting the women’s rights that Afghanistan has gained over the past two decades.

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Main Questions

Q-1) Overall, to what extent are you optimistic or pessimistic concerning the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations?

- 1) Strongly optimistic
- 2) Somewhat optimistic
- 3) Somewhat pessimistic
- 4) Strongly pessimistic
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-2) [If optimistic in Q-1] What is the main reason for your optimism concerning the ongoing peace negotiations? (Allow one response only)

Write response: _____

- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-3) [If pessimistic in Q-1] What is the main reason for your pessimism concerning the ongoing Afghan peace negotiations? (Allow one response only)

Write response: _____

- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-4) How much confidence do you have that the ongoing peace negotiations will result in an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban?

- 1) A great deal of confidence
- 2) A fair amount
- 3) Not very much
- 4) No confidence at all
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-5) In your opinion, do you believe the government negotiation team is representative of all Afghan citizens?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-6) In your opinion, do you think the government negotiators in the intra-Afghan peace talks can represent the views and opinions of all Afghan citizens, from every social and ethnic group?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-7) [If "No" in Q-6] Why do you think this is so? (Allow one response only)

Write response: _____

- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-8) In your opinion, do you believe the female members of the Afghan government negotiation team in the intra-Afghan peace talks can accurately represent your views at the talks?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-9) In your opinion, do you think the female members of the Afghan government negotiation team

at the intra-Afghan peace talks can defend women's rights during the talks?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-10) Overall, how much confidence do you have that male members of the Afghan government negotiation team at the intra-Afghan peace talks will back protection of women's rights?

- 1) A lot
- 2) Some
- 3) Very little
- 4) Not at all
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-11) What do you think are the most important factors to be protected as part of a peace agreement with the Taliban? (Allow two responses)

Write response 1: _____

Write response 2: _____

- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-12) To what extent do you support or oppose the ongoing peace talks with the Taliban?

- 1) Strongly support
- 2) Somewhat support
- 3) Somewhat oppose
- 4) Strongly oppose
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-13) Which countries do you think would play an important role in the Afghan government successfully reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban? (Allow two responses)

Write response 1: _____

Write response 2: _____

- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-14) Overall, in your opinion, how important is it to protect women's rights in the peace agreement with the Taliban?

- 1) Very important
- 2) Somewhat important
- 3) Not so important
- 4) Not important at all
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-15) If the ongoing peace talks successfully produce a peace agreement, do you think the following factors will improve, remain the same, or deteriorate:

	Improve	Remain the same	Deteriorate	Refused	Don't know
a) Employment opportunities for women	1	2	3	98	99
b) Educational opportunities for women	1	2	3	98	99
c) Women's freedom of speech	1	2	3	98	99
d) Women's freedom of movement	1	2	3	98	99
e) Women's rights in general	1	2	3	98	99

Q-16) How important do you think it is to protect the following factors as part of the peace agreement?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not so important	Not important at all	Refused	Don't know
a) Women's right to education	1	2	3	4	98	99
b) Women's right to work	1	2	3	4	98	99
c) Women's right to vote	1	2	3	4	98	99
d) Women's right to choose their life partner	1	2	3	4	98	99

Q-17) To what extent do you fear that the women's rights achievements of the past two decades will not be protected at the ongoing peace talks?

- 1) A lot
- 2) Some
- 3) Very little
- 4) Not at all
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-18) What are your main sources of information on the ongoing peace talks?

	Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
a) TV	1	2	98	99
b) Radio	1	2	98	99
c) Friends/ Family members/ Colleagues	1	2	98	99
d) Religious leaders	1	2	98	99
e) Internet	1	2	98	99

Q-19) Have either you or any female member of your household experienced any act of violence?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-20) (If "Yes" in Q-19) What kind of violence did you or the respective female member(s) of your household experience? (Allow one response, cite the most recent experience)

Write response: _____

- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-21) In your opinion, what should the government do to prevent violence against women and girls in your area/community? (Allow one response)

Write response: _____

- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-22) If you were to fall victim to any type of violence or crime, which of the following would you trust most to punish the guilty party?

- 1) Huqoq directorate
- 2) State court
- 3) Village/community-based Shura/Jirga
- 4) Others (please specify): _____
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-23) Is there a local women's Shura/Jirga in this area?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-24) (If "No" in Q-23) Do you think there should be a local women's Shura/Jirga in this area?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-25) Have either you or any female member(s) of your household ever participated in conflict resolution services in your area/community?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

Q-26) Which of the following do you think treat both men and women most equally?

- 1) Huqoq directorate
- 2) State court
- 3) Village/community Shura or Jirga
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

2. Demographic Questions

D-1) Gender of respondents (Do not ask, circle one option)

- 1. Male
- 2. Female (Only female respondents should be selected)

D-2) Age: _____ (Please estimate if unsure of exact age)

D-3) Years of formal education: _____ (Write in years)

D-4) Marital status

- 1) Single
- 2) Married
- 3) Widow
- 4) Divorced/Separated
- 98) Refused

D-5) Ethnicity of respondent (Allow one response only)

- 1) Pashtun
- 2) Tajik
- 3) Uzbek
- 4) Hazara
- 5) Others: _____ (Please specify)
- 98) Refused

D-6) Which of these languages can you speak?

- a) Dari 1) Yes 2) No
- a) Pashto 1) Yes 2) No

D-7) Are you employed?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 98) Refused

D – 8) [Ask if “Yes” in D-7] What is your occupation?

Write response: _____

- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused

D-9) [Ask if “Yes” in D-7] Can you please tell us your estimated monthly income?

Write response in AFN: _____

- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

D-10) (Ask if “Refused” or “Don't know” in D-9) If you are unsure of the exact amount of your monthly income, can you please tell us which of the following categories best describe your monthly income?

- 1) Below 5000 AFN
- 2) 5001 – 10000 AFN
- 3) 10001 – 15000 AFN
- 4) 15001 – 20000 AFN
- 5) 20001 – 25000 AFN
- 6) 25001 – 30000 AFN

- 7) 30001 – 35000 AFN
- 8) 35001 – 40000 AFN
- 9) 40001 – 45000 AFN
- 10) 45000 – 50000 AFN
- 11) Above 50000
- 97) Not asked
- 98) Refused
- 99) Don't know

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