

# Final report

Afghan Citizen Perception Survey

BY

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## Contents

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<b>CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
A. SAMPLE POPULATION .....	8
<i>Selecting the provinces.....</i>	8
<i>Selecting districts and villages.....</i>	10
B. PRESENTATION OF THE SAMPLE .....	11
C. DEVELOPING THE DATA COLLECTION TOOL .....	12
D. RECRUITING AND TRAINING THE FIELD TEAM.....	12
E. DATA COLLECTION.....	13
F. METHOD FOR WEIGHTING AND ANALYSIS .....	13
<b>PART 1 - PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY AND WELL-BEING .....</b>	<b>16</b>
A. PERCEPTION OF WHO IS IN CONTROL.....	16
B. TRUST IN THE AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES .....	18
C. PERCEPTION OF LIVING CONDITIONS.....	20
<b>PART 2 – PRIORITIZATION OF PERCEIVED ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN AFGHANISTAN.....</b>	<b>22</b>
A. RECOGNIZED ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN PROVIDING FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN.....	23
B. LITTLE SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHAN DOMESTIC POLITICS.....	24
C. PERCEIVED ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS WITH THE TALIBAN 27	
<b>PART 3 - PERCEPTIONS OF THE TALIBAN’S MOTIVATIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF PEOPLE’S SUPPORT TO THE MOVEMENT .....</b>	<b>29</b>
A. PERCEPTIONS OF THE TALIBAN’S OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVATIONS .....	29
B. PERCEPTIONS OVER THE TALIBAN AS A GOVERNMENT.....	30
<i>The possible future role of the Taliban in governance.....</i>	30
C. PERCEPTIONS OF THE TALIBAN’S CAPACITY AND WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE.....	32
1. <i>Popular acceptance of an agreement.....</i>	32
<i>People’s expectations of a potential agreement.....</i>	33
<i>People’s perception of the Taliban’s willingness to respect an agreement .....</i>	33
<b>ANNEX 1 – QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>	<b>36</b>

## Executive summary

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ATR conducted in depth quantitative research with more than 4,200 respondents in different regions to shed light on dominant perceptions of the Taliban, of state control, as well as the role of the international community in Afghanistan in the future. 18 districts and 9 cities were selected so as to be representative of the country's diverse geographic, socioeconomic, tribal and ethnic contexts. Several of the locations surveyed as well as the subject matter itself added a significant element of danger to the researchers. Utilizing the depth of ATR's network and experience, full risk mitigation measures were integrated into the research methodology to minimize the danger to field staff.

### Percentage who see the government as being in control

- **Nationwide** 80%
- **North** 93% - **South** 73%
- **Rural** 83% - **Urban** 96%
- **Men** 86% - **Women** 74%

Virtually all respondents report that the government is in control in their area. In some limited areas of the rural south, as many as 62% of rural respondents report that territorial control is *shared* with the Taliban.

Rural respondents in the south area are *less* willing, however, by a 14 point margin, than urban residents in the south to see the Taliban govern their area or the rest of the country. Findings suggest that in the rural south—traditionally regarded as the bastion for Taliban support—the violent tactics employed by the insurgents have been counterproductive and eroded their support base among the local populace.

#### Key figures

- ✓ The government is seen as being in control (93.7% of respondents in the north and 73.1% in the south)
- ✓ Among the rural residents in the south, as many as 61.8% believe that the Taliban also retain power in their area
- ✓ Perceptions of state control are higher in urban areas: (99.2% in the north and 98.9% in the south). Government control is less tangible in rural areas in the south (70.4%). In Zabul, the government is the least visible (58.8% identify the government as being in control)

**Box 1:** Afghans' perception of who controls their area – Summary of findings

### Trust in Afghan National Security Forces

- **Nationwide** (ANA 72%, ANP 64%)
- **North** (ANA 60%, ANP 53%) - **South** (ANA 62%, ANP 51%)
- **Rural** (ANA 61%, ANP 52%) - **Urban** (ANA 64%, ANP 60%)
- **Men** (ANA 62%, ANP 54%) - **Women** (ANA 82%, ANP 74%)

Across the country there is strong trust in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). Levels of support are largely consistent across the countries north and south. Women are much more trusting of these two security institutions, with results 20 percentage points higher than in the corresponding male groups. 16.4% of respondents in the south and 5% in the north qualify the ANA as untrustworthy, and 22.7% in the south and 5.3% in the north feel similarly about the ANP.

### Perception of living conditions

- **Nationwide** (better 64%, same 20%, worse 15%)
- **North** (better 73%, same 22%, worse 4%) - **South** (better 29%, same 32%, worse 33%)
- **Rural** (better 55%, same 26%, worse 15%) - **Urban** (better 65%, same 16%, worse 18%)
- **Men** (better 58%, same 24%, worse 16%) - **Women** (better 70%, same 16%, worse 14%)

Overall, Afghans believe their living conditions have improved over the last 10 years. This trend is particularly prevalent among women, as well as among residents of the north. A notable exception is the south, where the majority of those polled believe that their living conditions have stayed the same or deteriorated over the last 10 years. Only 29% of residents believe that their living conditions have improved over the last 10 years, compared to 33% reporting worsening conditions. Because of greater levels of insecurity and violence, many areas of the south could not benefit from social and economic development.

#### Key figures

- ✓ 40 percentage point difference between the north (73%) and the south (29%) in the perception of their respective living conditions.
- ✓ A significant amount of respondents report stagnating or deteriorating living conditions in the south in the last ten years
- ✓ In the south, urban residents are more pessimistic than rural residents (24 percentage point difference)
- ✓ Women in the south are 32.3% to report better conditions, 37% similar conditions, and 30.7% worse conditions.

#### Box 2: Perception of living conditions – Summary of findings

**Prioritization of perceived roles of the international community** (Respondents could select only two options of five)

- **Nationwide** (development 32%, elections 19%, assist the ANSF 35%, negotiation 15%, none 20%)
- **North** (development 45%, elections 41%, assist the ANSF 41%, negotiation 12%, none 12%)
- **South** (development 46%, elections 6%, assist the ANSF 39%, negotiation 13%, none 37%)
- **Rural** (development 45%, elections 26%, assist the ANSF 41%, negotiation 13%, none 28%)
- **Urban** (development 45%, elections 21%, assist the ANSF 29%, negotiation 12%, none 54%)
- **Men** (development 39%, elections 25%, assist the ANSF 37%, negotiation 13%, none 28%)
- **Women** (development 24%, elections 13%, assist the ANSF 33%, negotiation 17%, none 11%)

Support for the international community providing development assistance and assistance to the ANSF is largely consistent nationwide. However, there is less agreement on political issues, namely the elections and the negotiations with the Taliban. Only the north strongly supports the role of international community in providing assistance to the elections process (41% in the north compared to 6% in the south, mention this option as one of the two they prioritize).

By asking respondents to select only two options, findings indicate respondents' *strongest* preferences regarding the international community's involvement rather than an exhaustive list of sectors Afghans would like the international community to support. It does not attempt to determine an absolute number for any one sector.

Rural Afghans in the south, who are more exposed to the violence of the insurgency, are slightly more willing to see the international community facilitate negotiations (around 13% compared to approximately 5% in urban areas in the south). And if they had a choice, a relatively small number of rural Afghans would like to see Arab countries taking up this role (22.3% in rural areas compared to 11% in cities). People in the north are the most likely to envisage a role for the UN (37.1%) while people in the south—most of whom live in provinces that border countries accused of supporting the insurgency—would prefer neighboring countries to be involved in peace talks.

#### Key figures

- ✓ 72% of respondents favor the international community playing a continuing role in Afghanistan. Perception of need for financial assistance and development from the international community is similar in the south and north (around 45%)
- ✓ Only 1.9% of urban respondents in the south mention support for elections as something the international community should involve itself in.
- ✓ In the north, 40.9% of respondents are supportive of the international community support for the elections
- ✓ Rural people in the South are the most inclined to see the international community playing a role in support of the negotiations for the peace process, even if the proportion remains low (14.1% in the rural south compared to 2.5% in the urban south)

**Box 3:** Perceived appropriate role of the international community - Summary of findings

#### Willingness to have the Taliban govern in their area or the whole country

- **Nationwide** (no 61%, yes 7%)
- **North**<sup>1</sup> (no 59%, yes 3%) **South** (no 28%, yes 27%)
- **Urban** (no 61%, yes 12%); **Rural** (no 47%, yes 13%)
- **Men** (no 51%, yes 13%); **Women** (no 71%, yes 2%)

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<sup>1</sup> Complications in accessing female respondents in some areas resulted in some sample sizes being insufficient identify trends that were statistically significant. Thus disaggregation by rural and urban demographics refers *only* to male respondents.

While some Afghans can envision the Taliban eventually joining the government (i.e. more than 50% of southern men), most are firmly opposed to the Taliban having any role in government. This is the case for close to 60% of male citizens in the north, 86.7% of the women in the north and close to 80% of Kabuli women.

Rural people in the south are divided between; (i) pro-Taliban who expect the group to govern the country (25.6%), (ii) people opposing Taliban who envisage no future role for the insurgent group (29.7%) and (iii) the advocate of a solution of compromise under which the Taliban would join the existing government (36.2%).

Overall, there is little support for including the Taliban in the election process.

#### Key figures: Little support for Taliban to govern the country

- ✓ Only 12.7% of male respondents in the country and 1.6% of female respondents would like to see the Taliban governing the entire country.
- ✓ 2% in the north would like to see the Taliban governing their area or the country, while as many as 32.6% of urban respondents in the south and 25.6% of rural respondents favor this option

#### Key figures: Timely elections more important than negotiations

- ✓ 73.4% nationwide oppose delaying the elections in order to make sure the Taliban are included in the process
- ✓ Respondents in southern areas are more inclined to prioritize peace talks over the tenure of the elections (54.3% in the south, 11.9% in the north)

**Box 4:** Afghans' willingness to have the Taliban take power – Summary of findings

#### **Perceptions of the Taliban's motivations for fighting**

- **Nationwide** (change the government 31%, against the foreign occupation 26%, puppets of other countries 45%, unemployment 23%)
- **North** (change the government 33%, against the foreign occupation 29%, puppets of other countries 48% unemployment 32%) - **South** (change the government 48%, against the foreign occupation 30%, puppets of other countries 38%, unemployment 29%)
- **Urban** (change the government 35%, against the foreign occupation 22%, puppets of other countries 61%, unemployment 40%) - **Rural** (change the government 42%, against the foreign occupation 30%, puppets of other countries 42%, unemployment 30%)
- **Men** (change the government 40%, against the foreign occupation 28%, puppets of other countries 47%, unemployment 33%) - **Women** (change the government 22%, against the foreign occupation 23%, puppets of other countries 42%, unemployment 13%)

The most common answer to this question (45% of respondents) was that the Taliban fight as proxies for other countries. This is significant in that the relative majority of Afghans do not perceive the Taliban to be acting in accordance with their rhetoric; that the movement exists to fight against the presence of international forces or "foreign occupation" of Afghanistan. Only 26% of respondents thought the Taliban were fighting such an "occupation".

Residents of the north are less inclined to believe in the political motivations of the Taliban, compared to the south (33.2% of people in the north believe that the Taliban fight to change the regime and the legal framework, while as many as 48.3% think similarly in the south). Opinions in Kabul are similar to the northern part of the country, with 60.2% of male respondents and 44.9% of female respondents declaring the Taliban were fighting because they were "puppets of other countries".

#### **Perceived willingness of the Taliban to respect a deal**

- **Nationwide** (no 49%, yes 11%)
- **North** (no 40%, yes 14%) - **South** (no 58%, yes 11%)
- **Urban** (no 46%, yes 17%) - **Rural** (no 45%, yes 14%)
- **Men** (no 45%, yes 15%) - **Women** (no 50%, yes 6%)

There is a widespread desire for a peace agreement with the Taliban (62.9% in the South and 28.0% in the North). But, paradoxically, skepticism towards the idea that they will respect such a deal is even more widespread, even in the south where higher levels of trust from the population toward the Taliban were expected. Almost half of the Afghans do not believe the Taliban would respect a peace deal should one be reached with the government. What is noteworthy is that this distrust is more prominent in the south, where 90% of urban residents do not believe the Taliban would respect a peace agreement.

Key figures: People generally want a deal, but paradoxically, do not trust the Taliban to respect it

- ✓ Just under one person in three in the north supports such an agreement.
- ✓ In some provinces, respondents clearly state that they would be ready to take up arms if such an agreement was made (for example, Parwan: 40.2%).
- ✓ The south is very much in favor of an agreement between the Taliban and the government (82.6% for urban people and 60.8% for rural people)
- ✓ Despite this wish for peace, there is deep pessimism in the south about the Taliban respecting such an agreement. As many as 89.6% of urban residents in the south do not believe the Taliban will respect any agreement they might sign. Residents of Kandahar province are almost unanimously skeptical of the Taliban keeping such an agreement (95.8%)

**Box 5:** Perceived willingness of the Taliban to respect a deal - Summary of findings

## Methodology

### A. Sample population

In order to ensure that the sample be representative of the entire population, ATR set the following criteria to select provinces and districts that offer distinctive characteristics:

#### *Selecting the provinces*

Selected provinces cover the *main cultural / economic regions*. Each region presents different levels of tribal cohesiveness, ethnic diversity and different historical background. In each province, ATR collected data in *two rural districts* and in *an urban center*.

**Table 1:** Profile of provinces where the survey took place

Province	Region	Characteristics
<b>Paktya</b>	Southeast region	Population mostly Pashtun. Tribal area at the border with Pakistan, history marked by a strong tribal structure and a very light footprint of the central state formalized through a specific agreement between the State and the tribes which was in force during part of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century (for instance granting young men from the province an exemption from conscription). The province is / was home of some prominent leaders, including the Communist President Dr. Najibullah and one of the main insurgent leaders, Jalaluddin Haqqani.
<b>Kunar</b>	East region	Population mostly Pashtun. Tribal area, mostly mountainous. A province bordering Pakistan, Kunar has been the theatre of intense combats during the war. Around ten international military bases have been established there since 2001. Since the withdrawal of the foreign forces, the Taliban insurgency has spread again all over the province, which is a key transit route for militants from Pakistan.
<b>Zabul</b>	South region	Pashtun dominant population, with high confrontation between various Ghilzai tribes. Zabul was not considered a priority for the international military and therefore violence has remained very localized. The Taliban in Zabul have embedded networks of supporters dating back to the jihad against the Soviets, which were then reactivated after 2001. Power is mainly dispersed among a large number of minor commanders and their support networks.
<b>Kandahar</b>	South region	Mostly Pashtun population, with Tajik, Hazara and Sayed communities, located in the provincial capital. Kandahar is the chief commercial center of the south, due to its location at the junction of highways from Kabul, Herat and Quetta. Kandahar is considered the birthplace of the Taliban in Afghanistan (The Quetta Shura Taliban leadership are all Kandaharis), as well as the birthplace of most Afghan leaders for centuries. One of the most prominent families and key political actors are the Karzai. Other main actors in Kandahar are the local power brokers in control of weapons, money and foreign support, making up an oligarchy maintaining influence through their networks and militias.

<b>Takhar</b>	Northeast	Takhar is predominantly populated by Uzbeks and Tajiks along with a Pashtun minority. The province was a major frontline during the jihad and the civil war, notably due to its proximity to the Tajikistan border. Since 2001, the province has remained under control of mujahidin commanders of the Northern Alliance and their militias. The Taliban have increased their presence in Takhar along with their expansion in the north from 2008 on. Their presence still remains limited compared to neighboring Kunduz province.
<b>Balkh</b>	North region	Balkh has a majority of Tajiks and Pashtuns, and significant minority groups of Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Arabs and Baluchis. The capture of Mazar-e Sharif by the Taliban was accompanied by extreme violence and widespread killings, conducted between 1997 and 1998 by the Taliban and numerous commanders allied with them. The post-2001 era was marked by the rise in power of the Governor Atta, who, despite underlying ethnic and political divisions, managed to keep the province under close control and to lead one of the most significant development processes in the country.
<b>Ghor (rural only)</b>	West region	Isolated mountainous and multi-ethnic province (Tajiks, Hazaras, Aimaq, Uzbeks and Pashtuns mostly), among the poorest in the country, characterized by a high presence of strongmen and armed groups. Low presence of police and of the state in general benefited commanders-and their militias ruling over their fiefdoms on one hand—and on the other hand insurgents, who may increasingly find shelter in the province.
<b>Herat (urban only)</b>	West region	Herat province is the regional center of the Western part of the country. It borders Iran and Turkmenistan and has one of the most flourishing economies in the country. It is a multi-ethnic province, mostly composed of Tajiks, Pashtuns and Hazaras.
<b>Parwan</b>	Central region	Mostly Tajik, with pockets of Pashtuns notably in the Ghorband Valley. Parwan is strategically located at the door of the central provinces, providing passage on the highway from the capital to Mazar-e Sharif and Central Asia. Parwan was a front line in fighting between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban in the late 1990s. At this time, the Taliban applied a scorched earth policy, which led to massive displacement of the population. As of 2011, the insurgents had made inroads into the Shamali plain. Local Commanders, mostly from the Northern Alliance are still very influential in the province.
<b>Baghlan</b>	Northeast	Mostly Tajik, with Uzbek, Ismaelis, Hazara and Pashtun minorities. Baghlan is located in a central position crossed by some of the most strategic road connections of the country, and therefore was heavily contested during the 1980s. The Salang Pass served as a key logistics route for the Soviets, connecting Kabul to the north, and thus as a strategic target for the resistance. The Taliban insurgency is contained in the Pashtun-dominated districts of the province
<b>Kabul (urban only)</b>	Capital	Political and economic capital of Afghanistan. A multi-ethnic city, Kabul has grown from 500,000 people before 2001 to over three million. Having a large, educated middle class. Kabul usually leads in arts and culture. It also tends toward a less conservative lifestyle than other areas of Afghanistan.

The provinces selected for interviews with men represent 41.4% of the total male population and are fully representative of the country, covering all regions, as well as areas that have international borders, and others that are remote from any major economic hubs.

The provinces selected for interviews with women represent 29.7% of the total female population. They cover a wide spectrum of contexts in which Afghan women live, including extremely conservative areas (Paktya, Kandahar) and relatively liberal areas (Kabul and to some extent Herat).

### **Selecting districts and villages**

#### *Rural sample*

- Selected districts cover poor and remote areas as well as areas with a relatively better economic situation
- Selected districts include districts with tribal homogeneity and heterogeneity
- Selected districts present various topographic specificities

**Table 2:** Presentation of districts where the survey took place

Provinces	Districts	Topography	Major ethnic group(s)
<b>Paktya</b>	Dand-i-Patan	Semi-mountainous	Pashtun
	Zurmat	Plain mostly	Pashtun
<b>Kunar</b>	Khas Kunar	Mountainous	Pashtun
	Pesh Dara	Mountainous	Pashtun and Pashai
<b>Zabul</b>	Shahjoy	Plain mostly	Pashtun
	Shomulzai	Plain mostly	Pashtun
<b>Kandahar</b>	Spin Boldak	Plain	Pashtun
	Panj Wayi	Plain / desert	Pashtun
<b>Takhar</b>	Dasht-i-Qala	Plain	Uzbek -majority, Tajik (Pashtun minority)
	Rustaq	Plain / low mountains	Uzbek and Tajik
<b>Baghlan</b>	Nahrin	Plain / low mountains	Tajik (small pockets of Pashtun)
	Doshi	Mountainous	Ismaelis
<b>Ghor</b>	Charghcharan	Mountainous	Tajik
	Shorak	Mountainous	Tajik
<b>Balkh</b>	Chahar Bolak	Plain	Mixed
	Sholgara	Semi-mountainous	Mixed: Pashtun, Tajik
<b>Parwan</b>	Jabul Seraj	Semi-mountainous	Tajiks
	Bagram	Plain	Tajik in great majority

In each district, surveyors travelled to four villages in different *parts* of the districts. Guidelines were set as follows:

- The first village was located around five kilometers away, south or west from the district center;

- The second village was located at least twenty kilometers away, east or north from the district center;
- The third village was located between five and ten kilometers away, east or north of the district center;
- The fourth area was the district center.

#### *Urban sample*

In addition, ATR worked in the following cities to record urban people's perception:

**Table 3:** Presentation of the cities in which the survey took place

City	Ethnic groups
<b>Kandahar city</b>	Primarily Pashtun with several minority groups (Tajiks, Sayed, Hazaras)
<b>Gardez</b>	Pashtun (with a small Tajik community)
<b>Qalat</b>	Pashtun
<b>Assadabad</b>	Pashtun
<b>Taloqan</b>	Tajik and Uzbek (and a Pashtun minority)
<b>Pul-i-Khumri</b>	Mixed: Tajik, Pashtun, and to a lesser extend Hazara and Uzbek (and other minorities)
<b>Herat</b>	Tajik and Hazara (and a Pashtun minority)
<b>Mazar-i-Sharif</b>	Mixed: Tajik (big majority), Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen, Pashtun
<b>Charikar</b>	Tajik majority

## **B. Presentation of the sample**

The total of respondents in the sample is 4219:

- 3038 men (including 1448 respondents between 18 and 29 years of age and 1590 above 30 years of age)
- 1180 women (including 611 aged between 18 and 29 years of age and 569 above 30 years of age).

The first age group (between 18 and 29 years old) represents around 45% of the adult population in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> With the youth representing an increasing proportion of the overall population, the country's social fabric is currently undergoing significant change. Most of the country's youth have now spent more years liberated from the Taliban regime than underneath it. An exponential expansion of domestic media has accompanied a rapid uptake of new communication technology, bringing an increased exposure to external influences.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

<sup>3</sup> The rollout of communication technology has not been equitable geographically however and has largely been focused on urban centers and highly populated rural areas. Media penetration in remote insecure areas is far lower.

**Table 4:** Presentation of the sample size per province, areas and gender<sup>4</sup>

Province	Men			Women	Overall
	Urban	Rural	Total		
<b>Baghlan</b>	105	163	268	-	268
<b>Balkh</b>	106	159	265	-	265
<b>Ghor</b>	-	159	159	-	159
<b>Herat</b>	112	-	112	214	326
<b>Parwan</b>	110	220	330	217	547
<b>Takhar</b>	104	161	265	-	265
<b>Kandahar</b>	198	177	375	210	585
<b>Kunar</b>	101	195	296	-	296
<b>Paktya</b>	188	203	391	252	643
<b>Zabul</b>	108	200	308	-	308
<b>Kabul</b>	269	-	269	287	556
<b>Total</b>	<b>1401</b>	<b>1637</b>	<b>3038</b>	<b>1180</b>	<b>4218</b>

The size of the sample allows for a disaggregation by gender (male and female), settlement (urban and rural), by age (above and below 30 years old) and between two regions (north and south) with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of maximum five.

### C. Developing the data collection tool

First, a draft questionnaire was designed. Subsequently, several drafts were piloted with ATR's Afghan staff, as well as with people randomly selected from several public locations in Kabul. The final draft was then refined, whilst the Pashtu and Dari translations were also tested and edited several times. The questionnaire is attached as Annex 1.

### D. Recruiting and training the field team

Sixteen male and six female surveyors were recruited from surveyors who had already worked for ATR consulting, and through two different trusted networks for the most insecure districts of the south and east. Half of the male surveyors in Paktya, Kunar and Zabul were from a strong tribal network, and the other half were part of a religious network of preachers. The surveyors were recruited firstly on their capacity to access the areas of the survey. Women surveyors in the south were accompanied by their mahrams (male chaperones) during traveling time, but administered the survey to women on their own.

Two training sessions of three days were held in Kabul, one in Pashto for Pashto-speaking surveyors, and one in Dari for bilingual or Dari-speaking surveyors. During the training, each surveyor covering the most dangerous areas was trained to memorize the questionnaire by heart and to repeatedly administer it through role-plays. The training did not take place in the ATR office so to ensure surveyors were not associated with the expatriate staff.

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<sup>4</sup> Disaggregation by Rural & Urban demographics was conducted only with male respondents.

## E. Data collection

The questionnaire comprised fifteen questions; both close ended questions, and multi-choice questions. It is sufficiently short for surveyors to learn it by heart and be able to register responses through easy codes. The questionnaire was translated in Dari and Pashtu and was piloted with different people before and during the training.

Respondents were selected randomly in shops, mosques, on their farmlands, on the road etc. Random sampling techniques included surveyors interviewing every fifth person they came across on the road/path. In the most insecure areas, respondents were not interviewed in a public place to reduce exposure for both the surveyor and respondent, but were invited to follow the surveyor in a nearby shop or house whose owner the surveyor knew, in order to administer the survey in a less conspicuous manner.

Data was recorded in two different ways in the north and the south. In the north surveyors carried the questionnaires with them to administer the survey. In the major parts of the south, the surveys were designed to fit inside a small notebook. In the most insecure areas of the south, surveyors administered questions—and all corresponding options, which the surveyors had memorized during the training—to the respondent, and then recorded the responses in a notebook once in a safe location. All surveys were sorted through a coding system.

Data collection began on September 26th 2013, and lasted twelve days. ATR's monitor for the south was a permanent staff member, originally from Paktya. He had access, through his network, to all areas targeted in the survey. The monitor traveled to all southern provinces, no matter how insecure, to check if activities were conducted according to ATR standards of quality. In the north, the field monitor traveled to all provinces, with the exception of Ghor, because of its remoteness and short duration of the survey duration.

All respondents in the survey spoke on terms of anonymity. Each interview lasted around five to ten minutes and was conducted in Dari or Pashto.

## F. Method for weighting and analysis

Because quotas were applied, raw data needed to be weighted before it could be analyzed. First, it was necessary to decide which levels of analysis were relevant for this study. From an initial consideration of the data it was apparent that there was a very clear division in terms of results between the provinces that are mostly insecure and Pashtu-speaking on the one hand, and on the other hand provinces which are more often multi-ethnic and where security is generally better. It was thus decided to conduct an initial analysis that would juxtapose the two main regions of Afghanistan (referred to in this document as north and south – see [Table 5: Description of north and south regions](#) below). As Kabul could not be associated with either of the two regions, it was analyzed separately.

Within the male sample, disaggregating results by age reveals little variance between the two groups. It was thus considered irrelevant to analyze each separately. On the contrary, the variance between urban and rural respondents was highly significant in some questions, thus the analysis was focused on this divide accordingly.

### *Weighting rural and urban populations*

Prior to conducting the analysis it was necessary to weight urban and rural respondents<sup>5</sup> in each province, as the urban population was overrepresented in the sample. Such groups who were under-represented were attributed a weight larger than 1, and those which were over-represented were attributed a weight smaller than 1. The table below (Table 6: **Example of sample weighting**) provides an example of weighting rural and urban samples. In order to determine the weight of rural and urban population in each province, population estimates of the Central Statistics Organization (CSO, population estimation 2012-13) were used.<sup>6</sup> Finding reliable estimates of demographics in Afghanistan is a challenge; CSO is the most commonly cited source in the country, an important consideration when comparing the results of this study with others.

**Table 5:** Description of north and south regions

North	South
Mostly multi-ethnic, including large minorities, leading to a diversity of cultures, languages and historical references	Great majority of Pashtun, sharing a common language (even if Dari is also used in several parts), a number of cultural similarities, including some of the main pillars of pashtunwali. <sup>7</sup>
General stability, with more or less significant pockets of instability	General instability, with more or less significant pockets of stability

After weighting the urban and rural population per province, it was possible to draw conclusions on specific trends by province. Given the sample at times was insufficient to attain a standard confidence level; a confidence level was added for each specific province in footnotes.

**Table 6:** Example of sample weighting

Baghlan province	Population Proportion	Sample Proportion	Population/Sample	Weight
Urban residents	19.8%	39.2%	=19.8/39.2	<b>0.51</b>
Rural residents	80.2%	60.8%	=80.2/60.8	<b>1.32</b>

### *Weighting population of two regions (north and south)*

At the outset it was necessary to define the two main regions of the country. Any arbitrary division is dubious, thus the study grouped provinces that shared similar traits. The criteria for defining provinces as either north or south are expressed below.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Urban and rural population weighting was done only within the male sample, due to issues stemming from the sensitivity of the topic and the insecurity of the locations surveyed; the sample of rural women was insufficient to allow for disaggregation that was statistically significant.

<sup>6</sup> For 2012-2013, the CSO estimates that the total settled population in Afghanistan reaches 25.5 million, including 19.4 million in rural areas and 6.1 million in urban areas. This does not include nomadic population and Afghans living abroad.

<sup>7</sup> Pashtun culture is based on pashtunwali, a code of conduct of the tribes that emphasizes honor, hospitality, the inviolability of women and land, and revenge. The central term in pashtunwali is *nang* which expresses honor and shame, dignity, courage and bravery. The code also sets the framework for the right, and sometimes the obligation, of the victim to retaliate if offended.

<sup>8</sup> A few provinces could be classified in both categories (Ghazni or Nimroz for instance, both host a lot of different communities). They were put in the south category because of their geographic proximity to the other provinces of this group.

Based on these criteria, what is referred to as 'the north' in this report include 18 provinces, including Faryab, Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul, Samangan, Balkh, Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Panjsher, Parwan, Kapisa, Bamyān, Daikundi, Herat, Ghor, Badghis and Farah.

The area referred to as 'the south' in this report refers to 15 provinces, including, Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul, Paktika, Paktya, Khost, Ghazni, Wardak, Logar, Laghman, Nuristan, Nangarhar and Kunar.

The category 'north' thus encompasses the west, the center and the north of the country, whilst the category 'south' includes the east and the south of Afghanistan.

The rural sample of each province was weighted based on the proportion of the rural population of the said province relatively to the total rural population of the provinces of the region (north / south). The same formula was applied for urban populations.

Testing the north/south model of analysis.

We found that, using the north/south model for analysis, that many results did not fit this rubric. It is true that it is the frame of reference that has been mostly used to understand conflict in Afghanistan, including in parts of this study. But we found a much more complex picture. There happen to be several "souths" and several "norths". The assumption of a country divided into large ethnic blocks (North-South) is oversimplifying and misleading, pointing to the conclusion that it is a divider, but not the only one.

It is true that there are particular dynamics to some areas/provinces in the country. But these dynamics are mostly reflective of the context of security and local conflicts (contingencies rather than causes). For instance, we identified specific trends in the rural areas of the south: a lower proportion of people report that the government is in control; but also, a lesser support for the Taliban to be in power (closer to so-called "northern" attitudes). We believe this is due to the well-known fact that the rural population has been the most affected by the conflict.

#### *Obtaining National statistics*

In order to obtain national statistics the results for men in the north and the south were weighted, based on CSO population figures, and aggregated. The national results for women from the north and south were weighted in the same way and then aggregated with the results of the men. Results of men and women were weighted based on their respective share within the overall Afghan population, again using CSO population figures as a reference.

It is important to note that, as the women's sample is smaller than that of the men's and because women were accessible in fewer provinces, the national statistics that aggregate both men and women have a higher margin of error than those that only include men.

## PART 1 - Perceptions of security and well-being

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- ⇒ The Government is seen as being in control in the north, by close to 93.7% of respondents.
- ⇒ Rural residents in the south are less likely to identify the government as controlling their area (70.4%).
- ⇒ Rural residents in the south feel that the government and the Taliban area in constant competition to control these rural areas. Indeed, as many as 61.8% of these respondents believe that the Taliban also retain power in their area.
- ⇒ Female respondents in the South given that they predominantly come from relatively secure areas, are much more optimistic (5.1% consider the Taliban as being in control of their area).
- ⇒ The Afghan Security Forces enjoy a relatively high level of trust with around 60% of Afghans who trust the ANA completely and over 50% who trust the ANP completely.
- ⇒ The level of distrust is high in very insecure areas, where the Afghan National Security Forces have been unable to stop the insurgency and where they have conducted unpopular activities (night raids and numerous arrests).
- ⇒ There is a significant difference in people's perception on their living conditions between people living in the Northern provinces and people living in the Southern ones, the latter being much more critical of the low level of progress.

### A. Perception of who is in control

The government is perceived as the major actor in control in all areas of the country. However, reports of government control tend to be more pronounced in the north than in the south. Results also show that in many provinces, non-state actors—including armed groups—coexist with the government and exercise *de facto* control over some parts of the territory. This coexistence does not necessarily involve violent confrontations and in most cases is derived from the brokering of agreements and informal truces characterized by a degree of fluidity. As a result, who has authority in a certain area may often be ambiguous or subject to change depending on the circumstances.

Perceptions of state control are higher in urban areas: 99.2% of urban respondents in the north and 98.9% in the south perceive the government to be in control. Unsurprisingly, the government's presence is less tangible in rural areas, especially in the rural south, where 70.4% report the government is in control. Almost as many (61.8% of rural respondents in the south) believe that this power is shared with the Taliban. In Zabul,<sup>9</sup> the government is perceived as the least visible, with only 58.8% of respondents identifying the government as being in control.

The difference between women from the north and the south is not significant: 71% and 67.1% respectively report that the government is in control.

Kabuli respondents were slightly less likely than the national urban average to perceive the government as in control of the area; with 92.9% of Kabuli male respondents and 98.6% of Kabuli female respondents stating this.

If the government is widely perceived as in control of the country, non-state actors use force outside of state authority to exert territorial control. The “people” are the main non-state actor doing so in the north and the urban south, while the Taliban are the main non-state actor in the rural south.

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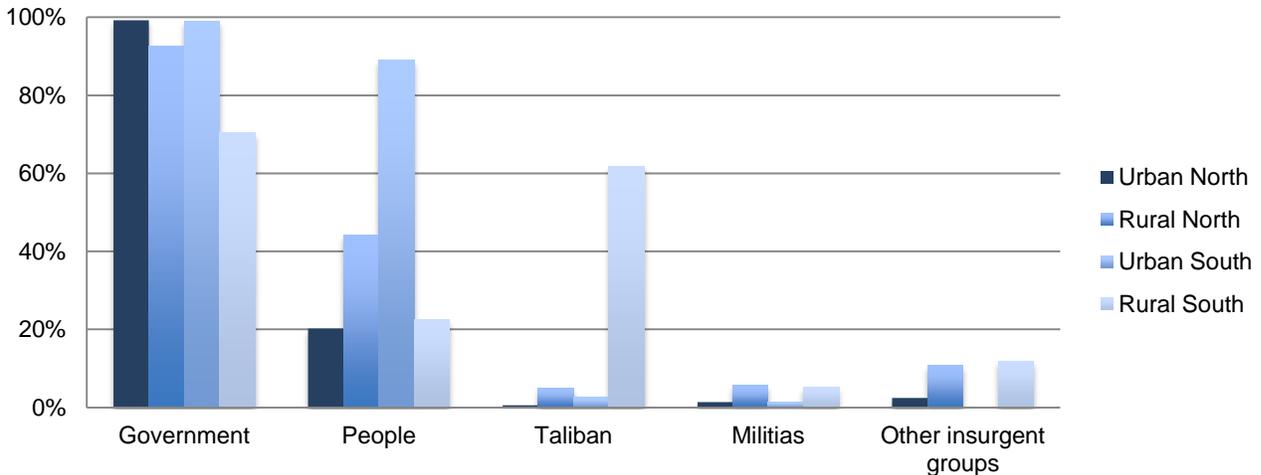
<sup>9</sup> Confidence interval: 5.58

The response “the people” refers to several possible entities:

- The authority of the local notables or “elders” or local customary decision-making entities called a *shura* (council) or a *jirga* (assembly).
- Most likely the case in urban areas such as Kandahar city, “the people” may refer to influential power-brokers who have the informal support from people, often via patronage networks.

In the urban south, the “government” and “the people” are reported to retain control to a similar degree. 98.9% and 89.1% respectively.

*In your area, who has the control at the moment? (Two answers possible) - Male respondents*



**Figure 1:** Perception of which actors is in control - Male respondents

In the rural south, the Taliban are the second most likely to be perceived as being in control (61.8%).

Zabul<sup>10</sup> (74%) and Kandahar province (54.9%) are the only provinces where the majority of respondents reported that the Taliban were in control. In Kunar<sup>11</sup> and Paktya<sup>12</sup> 42% and 36.7% of respondents respectively reported that the Taliban were in control.

It is interesting to note that as many as 10% of Kabuli respondents<sup>13</sup> list the Taliban as being in control of their area. While the center of Kabul is occasionally the stage of attacks against high-profile figures or buildings, one might infer that perceptions of Taliban control in the capital are disproportionately high given limited levels of insurgent activity.

Results also tend to show that in the north, the Taliban are not in control of a single large section of territory, but rather smaller areas interspersed between areas under government control.

<sup>10</sup> Confidence interval: 5.58

<sup>11</sup> Confidence interval: 5.69

<sup>12</sup> Confidence interval: 4.91

<sup>13</sup> While only urban residents were interviewed in Kabul, some of the surveys were administered on the urban periphery of the city, in areas where the majority of inhabitants are from Logar and Wardak. These communities tend to be more susceptible to Taliban rhetoric than more urbanized Kabuli residents, and perceive that the Taliban have infiltrated the area via certain families. The Taliban’s capacity to spread fear within these communities could account for the higher proportion who perceives the Taliban to be in control in their area.

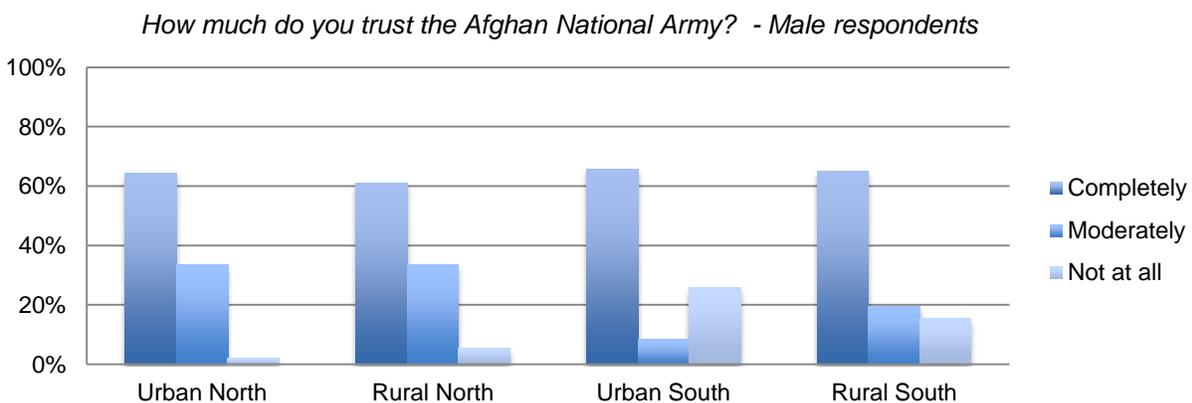
Other insurgent groups (predominantly Hezb-i-Islami and the Haqqani network) are generally little reported to have control in Afghanistan. Given that the networks of the insurgent groups in Afghanistan are complex, heterogeneous, and often intertwined, it is probable that respondents did not differentiate the Taliban from other groups. Other insurgent groups were mentioned mostly in the rural areas of the country (in the north 6.3% and in the south 4.7%). Ghor (56%) in the north, and to a lesser extent in Zabul (18.2%) and Kandahar province (9.3%).

In the rural areas of the country, pro-government militias were actively supported to fight the Taliban in the absence of security forces. As a result they are reported as having control in the rural north (5.6%) and in the rural south (5.1%). 14.9% of respondents in Kunar and 13.3% in Zabul responded that “militias” were in control.

## B. Trust in the Afghan National Security Forces<sup>14</sup>

Over 60% of male respondents in the survey declared trusting completely the ANA, and just over 50% the ANP. In this regard, there is no major difference between respondents in the urban and rural areas, nor is there a significant difference between respondents of the north and the south. However in the rural and urban south, there is a higher proportion of respondents who report distrusting the ANA (respectively 15.7% and 23.5%) and ANP (respectively 22.5% and 24.7%) than in the rural and urban north (below 6% in all categories).

Women are much more inclined to report trusting the ANSF: 80.1% of women in the north and 88.4% women in the south said they trusted the ANA very much, while 67.2% of men in the north and 87.5% of men in the south declared to have the same level of trust of the ANP, bearing in mind that in most cases in Afghan society women are less exposed to the ANSF than men.



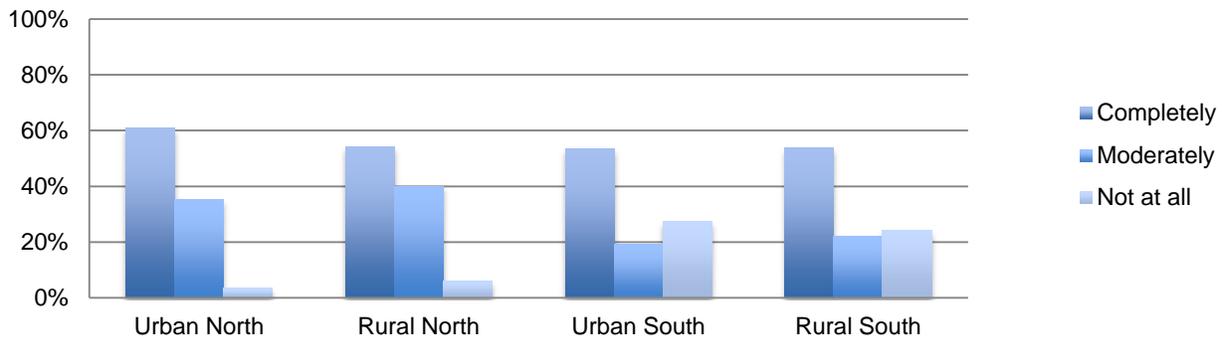
**Figure 2:** Trust in the ANA - Male respondents

Generally, the fact that residents in the South are more likely to report distrusting the ANSF could be attributed to several factors. Northern Afghanistan did not receive the same level of military “surge” as in the south. Protracted counterinsurgency efforts were mostly focused on core provinces of the south and

<sup>14</sup> The level of trust in the Afghan Local Police [ALP – group of militiamen, in principle drawn from the community, paid and trained by the ISAF to ensure security in their village or group of villages] was not measured in the survey because it is not operating in all provinces in which the survey was conducted.

east. Both ANSF and international forces led around 300 night operations a month<sup>15</sup> mostly in the south and east, arguably the most controversial counterinsurgency tactic, along with what was widely perceived as arbitrary arrests, sparking widespread anger amongst the civilian population. The backlash in the civilian population was particularly observable in Pashtun areas, where an extremely rigid set of cultural norms maintain the sacredness of the home and women's quarters. While the training provided to the ANSF has certainly increased security overall, some counter-insurgency tactics (night raids for instance) are considered a threat for south and southeastern rural Afghans.

*How much do you trust the Afghan National Police? - Male respondents*



**Figure 3:** Trust in the ANP - Male respondents.

Several conclusions may be drawn from a person returning the response “not at all” to the question of trust of the ANSF:

- It could be indicative of the abuse the populace has suffered at the hands of the ANSF misusing their authority, including corruption and extortion—which is more commonly reported in the case of the Afghan National Police—and night raids, more commonly reported in the case of the Afghan National Army.
- It could be indicative of the very low level of confidence that civilians have in the ANSF to ensure security in the country.
- It could signal a low estimate, in some parts of the country, of the legitimacy of the government, especially in tandem with allied militaries, of using force.

Trust in the ANA and ANP is the highest in Balkh<sup>16</sup> (82.9% and 79.3% respectively) and the lowest in Baghlan<sup>17</sup> (35.5% and 34% respectively).

The ANA is generally more trusted than the ANP, by, on average, approximately 10 percentage points in terms of the reported confidence of the populace in the ANP. More respondents declared distrusting the ANP than the ANA: only in three provinces (Kandahar, Zabul and Ghor) did more than 10% of respondents report that they did not trust the ANA at all. The level of distrust is much higher for the ANP. This is especially true in the six provinces that are considered the most insecure in the sample: Paktya (27.7%), Kandahar province (26.5%), Zabul (17.8%) and Kunar (11%) in the south; Takhar (11.6%) and

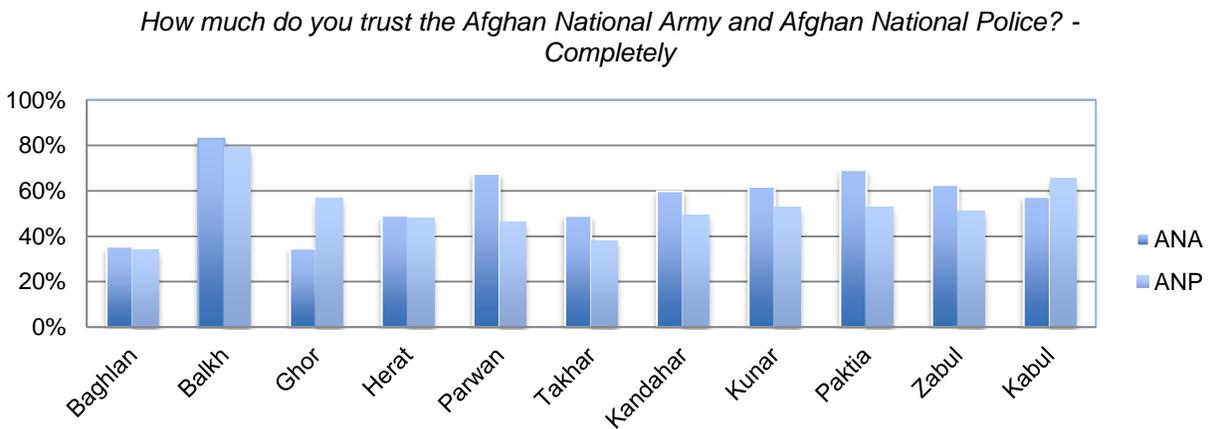
<sup>15</sup> UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Afghanistan: Mid-Year Report 2011, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2011. Newer statistics on night raids are unavailable. For more information on nighttime kill and capture operations, see: *Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office, The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of the Night Raid Surge on Afghan Civilians*, September 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Confidence interval: 6.02

<sup>17</sup> Confidence interval: 5.98

Ghor (11.3%) in the north.

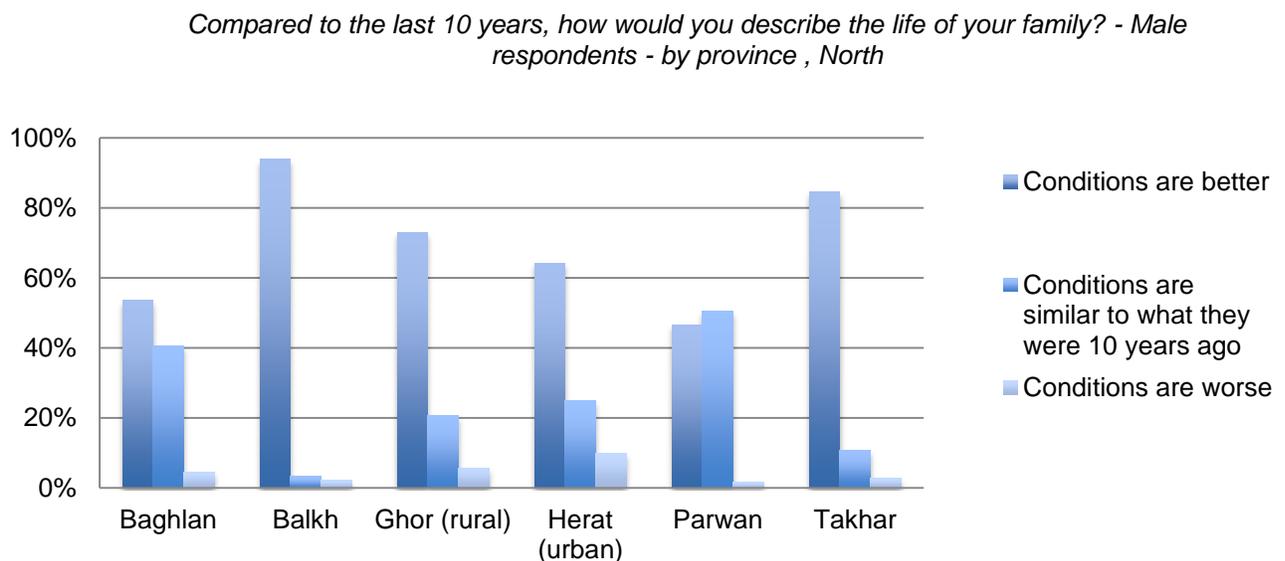
In Kabul only, respondents declared trusting the ANP (65.4%) more than the ANA (57.4%). This probably has to do with the fact that the ANA is much less visible in Kabul than in other parts of the country.



**Figure 4:** Ratio of male respondents trusting completely the ANA and ANP

### C. Perception of living conditions

Results show that northern and southern respondents perceive that their living conditions have followed different trajectories over the course of the last ten years. There is a 40 percentage point difference between the two regions, with the north being much more optimistic than the south.



**Figure 5:** Perceptions of living conditions - Male respondents

In the north, 72.8% of urban and 72.9% of rural male respondents report having experienced improved

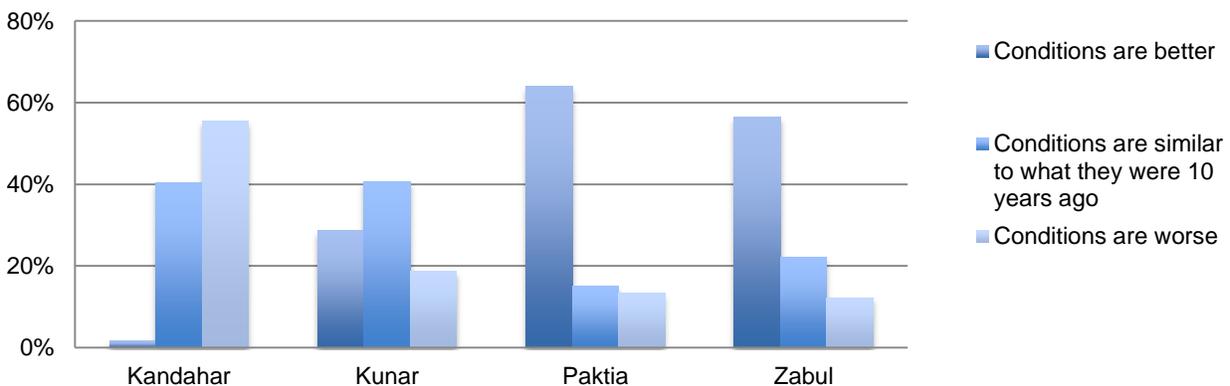
living conditions, while 91.4% of women report similar trends. The provinces where respondents felt their living conditions were most improved were Balkh (94%) and Takhar<sup>18</sup> (84.6%).

In contrast, a significant proportion of respondents report stagnating or deteriorating living conditions in the south for the last ten years. 30.9% of male respondents in the rural areas state that conditions of life have worsened over the last ten years, while 31.3% of rural respondents and 38.8% of urban respondents report that conditions are similar. Interestingly, urban residents in the south are more pessimistic than rural residents. Only 6.9% of them report that their living conditions have improved (against 31.3% in rural areas) while as many as 50.2% believe their situation has deteriorated (against 30.9% of rural respondents).

32.3% of women in the south report improved conditions, 37% similar conditions, and 30.7% worse conditions, figures that are consistent with men’s results.

It is noteworthy that 55.5% of respondents from Kandahar province report that their standard of living has declined, while hardly any (1.8%) report an improved situation.

*Compared to the last 10 years, how would you describe the life of your family? - Male respondents, by province, South*



**Figure 6:** Perceptions of living conditions, by province - Male respondents in the south

In Kabul, 74.7% of male respondents and 87.1% of female respondents—all urban—report improvements in their standard of living over the last ten years.

<sup>18</sup> Confidence interval for both Balkh and Takhar: 6.02

## PART 2 – Prioritization of perceived role of the international community in Afghanistan

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- ⇒ Overall in Afghanistan, 72% of respondents favor the international community playing a continuing role in Afghanistan. If one excludes Kabulis, who tend to be less in favor of international involvement because they are more confident about their ability to develop the country by themselves, the number goes to 81%.
- ⇒ The provision of financial support / development and the support to the ANSF rank as the first two priorities
- ⇒ In the south, people predominantly prefer that negotiations be conducted solely by the Afghan government, with 50.3% of respondents rejecting any support from other countries.
- ⇒ The involvement of the United Nations or neighboring countries in the peace process would be relatively well accepted, with a preference for the UN in the north, and for neighboring countries in the south.
- ⇒ The involvement of Western countries in the process is strongly rejected by residents in the south, with only 2% in favor.

Respondents were asked to select the two roles they thought were most appropriate for the international community to play. The exact question was: For the moment, what do you think should be the role of the international community in Afghanistan (select the most important two choices): 1) Providing financial support / development. 2) Supporting the elections 3) Supporting the Afghanistan National Security Forces 4) Supporting the negotiation process with the Taliban. 5) None of this. The international community should not be involved in Afghanistan. 6) I do not know<sup>19</sup>. Those who chose option 5 or 6, only gave one answer, rather than two. 64% of respondents (and as many as 72% outside Kabul) clearly affirm their support to a continued civilian presence of the international community and 27.9% (18.9% outside Kabul) rejected any future involvement of the international community.

The provision of financial support / development and the support to the ANSF rank as the first two priorities. However, 36.9% of respondents in the south, as compared to 12.4% in the north, said that the international community should not be involved in Afghanistan at all.

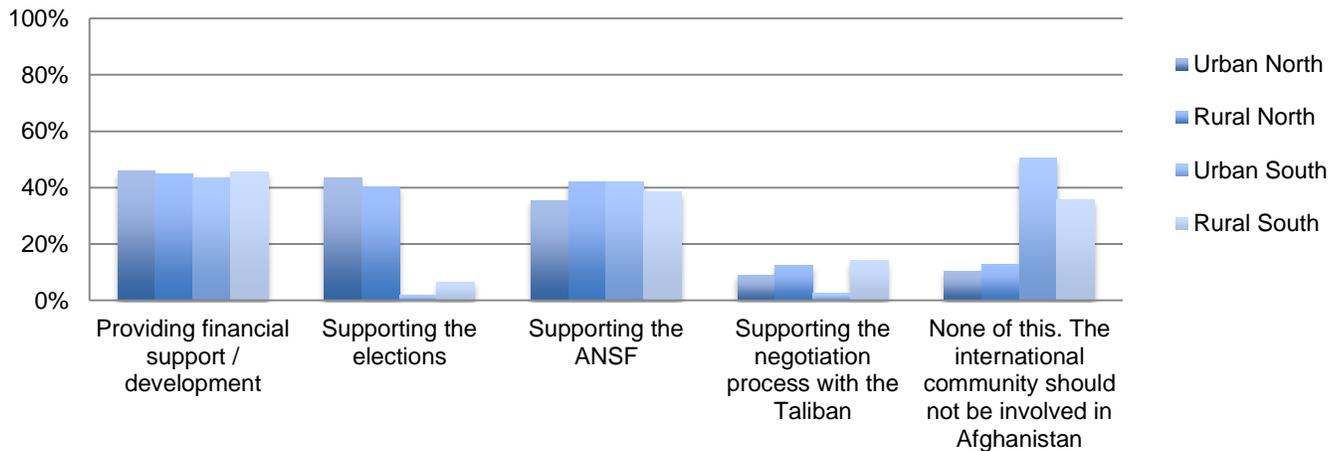
Respondents across rural and urban areas consistently prioritized continued financial support and development assistance (around 45% prioritized this in each category of respondents). Respondents' support for the international community's continued support of the ANSF was largely consistent across the north and south of the country (40.9% in the north and 38.8% in the south).

There is, however, a north / south divide on the question of the international support to the election process: only 6.2% of the country's south, compared to 40.9% in the north – prioritized such support. The difference may be derived from the increased instances of fraud in the south during the last presidential elections and a corresponding disillusionment in the electoral process among the local populace.

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<sup>19</sup> Respondents who chose option “None of this” or “I do not know”, only gave one answer, rather than two.

*For the moment, what do you think should be the main role of the international community in Afghanistan? - Male respondents*



**Figure 7:** Perception of the most critical role of the international community in Afghanistan - Male respondents

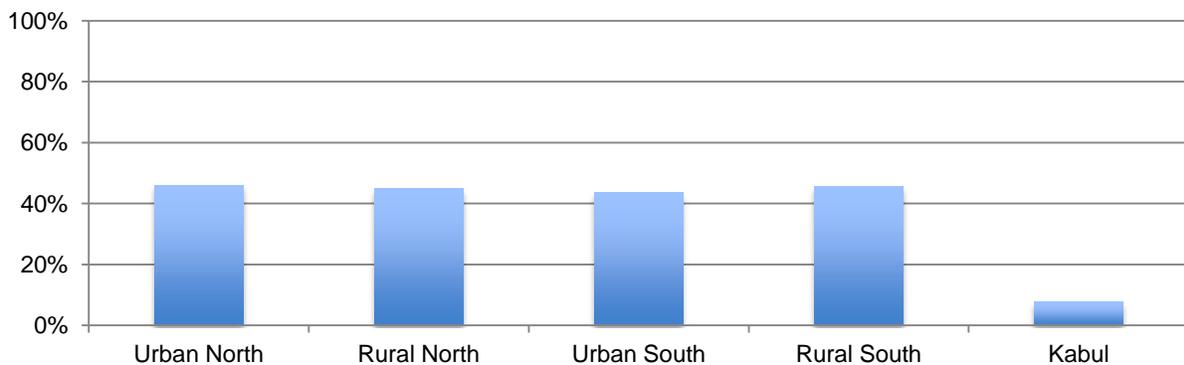
A very low proportion of respondents declared that the international community should support the negotiation process with the Taliban (12% in the north and 13% in the south). Results for women are similar to men, with very slight differences between northern and southern respondents. It is clear that Afghans want an Afghan-led peace process, rather than having a negotiation over the head of the Afghan government, i.e. directly with Western countries.

**A. Recognized role of the international community in providing financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan**

*Financial assistance for development*

The demand for financial assistance and development from the international community is similar in the south and in the north.

*Providing financial support / development - Male respondents*



**Figure 8:** Respondents identifying financial support as a priority for the international community - Disaggregated results

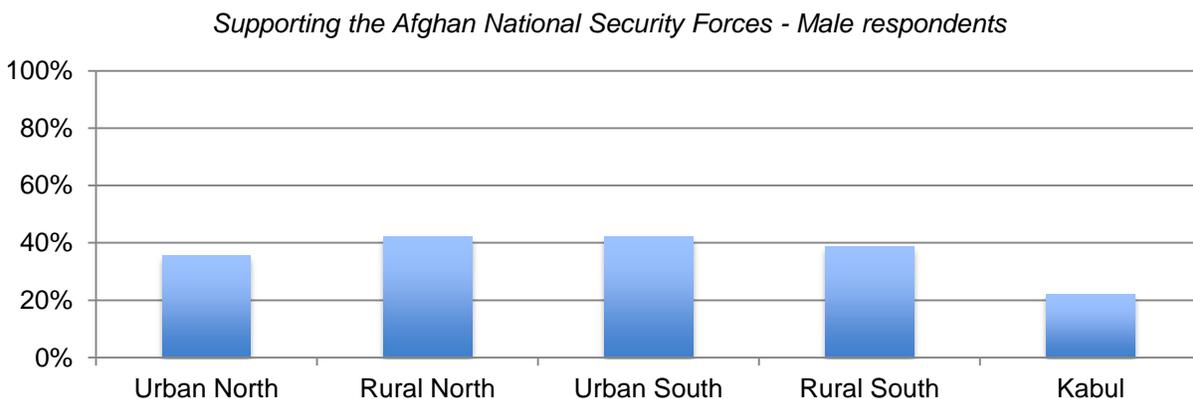
As an illustration of the high demand for assistance from the international community, 64.6% and 62% of male respondents in areas as different from each other as Balkh (north) and Paktya (southeast) respectively were in favor of such support. In Kabul, the rate is astonishingly low—only 7.8%. This can be attributed to several factors:

- Kabul has undergone the most important social and economic changes in the last ten years, after having suffered the trauma of destruction during the civil war. This capacity to establish from scratch a bustling capital which remains relatively—at least compared to the rest of the country—peaceful and prosperous, explains the sense of pride Kabuli people possess.
- Historically, Kabul residents have always adopted a very different way of life than the rest of the country, developing a modern city and the confidence that it can rule the country.
- This self-confidence is reinforced by the success of the Afghan private sector in the city, which has built most infrastructure and has provided access to social services and culture.

28.8% of female respondents in the north are supportive of the international community as a development actor in Afghanistan compared to 17.3% in the south.

#### *Technical assistance to the ANSF*

Overall, respondents from across the provinces were supportive of the international community's continued support of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the security transition underway since 2011. Support to the ANSF entails financial support as well as training/mentoring to the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police.



**Figure 9:** Respondents identifying support to the ANSF as a priority for the international community - Disaggregated results

The majority of women both in north, south and Kabul support the involvement of the international community in training the ANSF (respectively 31.6%, 33.4% and 35.2%).

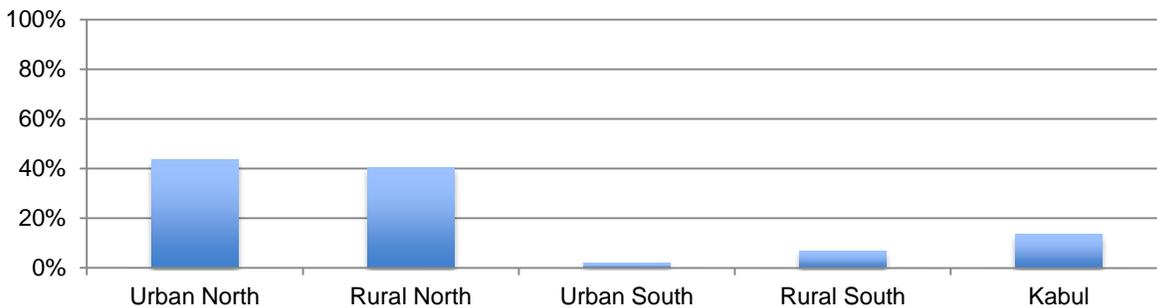
## **B. Little support for international involvement in Afghan domestic politics**

#### *Providing Support for the elections*

Respondents living in the south showed little support for the international community to play a role in influencing political developments in the country, especially as far as the elections are concerned. Only 1.9% of urban respondents in the south mention this as a role the international community should take on. Respondents in the north are much more in favor of such support, with on average 40.9% of respondents supportive of the international community's involvement in the elections.

The below figure encapsulates the dramatic difference between the north and south in support for foreign involvement in the elections. Whilst in the north 34.7% of male respondents in urban areas and 25.7% of those in rural areas are supportive of international involvement, in the south only 0.9% of urban respondents and 6% of rural respondents share this view.

*Supporting the elections - Male respondents*



**Figure 10:** Respondents identifying support to the elections as a priority for the international community - Disaggregated results

11.2% of female respondents in the north and south combined support the involvement of the international community in the elections, while 23.3% of Kabuli respondents do so.

It must be taken into account that “supporting the elections” might have been interpreted in different ways according to the respondent. Potential interpretations could include:

- The international community politically supports the tenure of elections and plays the role of an observer.
- The international community supports certain candidates over others in the elections.
- The international community interferes in the results of the elections.

Results are indicative of a widespread fear in the south that interference from foreigners in the elections could lead to a power distribution that will marginalize certain groups of the population.

The particularly low support in the south for international involvement in elections could be attributed to several factors:

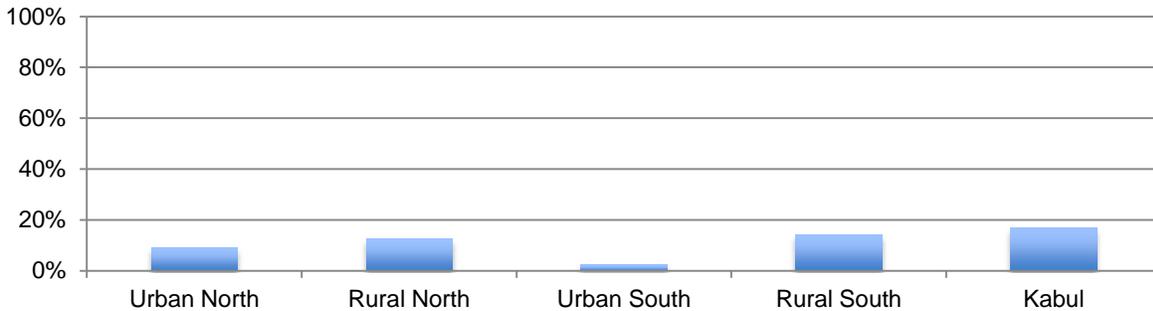
- In the 2009 election the south recorded a very high rate of fraud, more than in most other areas of the country. Conspiracy theories are prevalent. One of the rumors that regularly circulates regarding the the perpetrators of this fraud, for example, is that some powerful Western countries—most often said to be the US or the UK—transported ballot boxes stuffed into their helicopters.
- Because of the level of insecurity, fewer people have experienced voting in the south than in the rest of Afghanistan. There are thus a lot of myths and uncertainty regarding the elections.
- Block-voting and proxy-voting are very common in tribal and conservative areas, two practices often publicly condemned by the international community, although voting as a group for a protective patron makes sense in the context of Afghan culture.
- Residents in the south are more likely to associate the international community with the military, rather than peaceful development or support for the civilian sector.

Respondents in the southern provinces of Kandahar, Zabul and Paktya were 1.3%, 3% and 5% respectively likely to support the role of the international community in the elections, while respondents in the northern provinces showed more support; Balkh (68.8%), Ghor (rural respondents only - 45.3%), Baghlan (37.7%), Herat (urban respondents only: 34.8%) and Takhar (31.1%).

*Supporting the negotiation process with the Taliban*

When asked to prioritize which role the international community should play in Afghanistan, very few respondents selected “support to the negotiation process with the Taliban”. However, when directly asked about which countries should be involved in mediating the negotiations, respondents expressed pronounced opinions (See below Part 3: [Perceptions on the Taliban’s motivations and assessment of people’s support to the movement.](#)).

*Supporting the negotiation process with the Taliban - Male respondents*



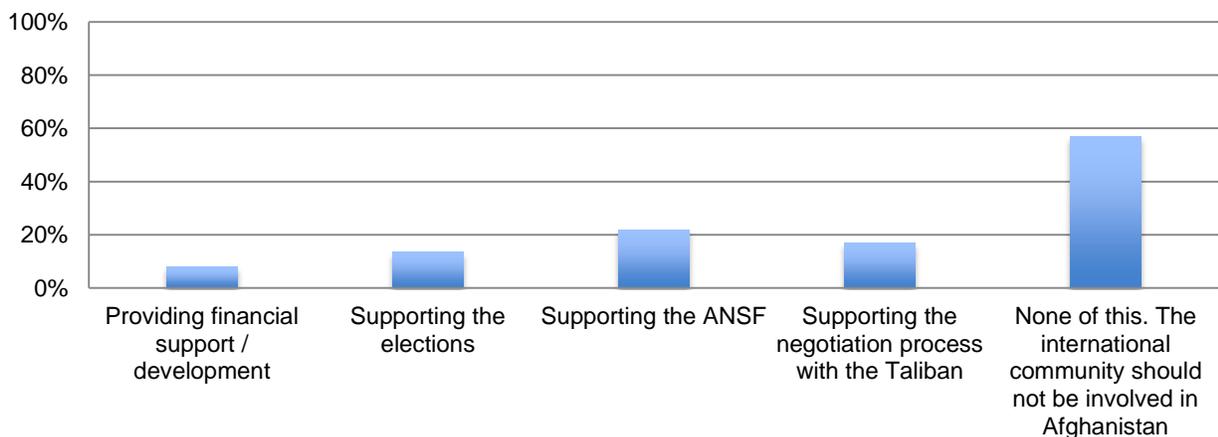
**Figure 11:** Respondents identifying support to the negotiation process with the Taliban as a priority for the international community - Disaggregated results

Rural people are the most inclined to see the international community playing a role in support of the negotiations for the peace process, but the proportion of supporters remains low, with only 14.1% of respondents in the rural south. It appears there is a correlation between an increased exposure to the violence of the insurgency and support for the involvement of the international community in negotiation process.

18.1% of female respondents across the north and the south agreed to international support for negotiations with the Taliban, while only 10.8% of female respondents in Kabul did so.

The results showed that the strongest rejection of international involvement in Afghan politics was in Kabul. Unlike in all other regions where the survey took place, urban respondents of Kabul were 56.9% to report that the international community should not involve itself at all in Afghanistan. (Reasons for these outside figures were discussed in [Recognized role of the international community in providing financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan](#), Part 2A above.)

*For the moment, what do you think should be the role of the international community in Afghanistan? - Kabul male respondents*



**Figure 12:** Perception of the most critical role of the international community in Afghanistan – Kabul male respondents

### C. Perceived role of the international community in the negotiation process with the Taliban

The two most popular choices for the residents of the north, whether they live in rural or urban areas, include the United Nations (40.2% for the urban and 36.5% for rural people), and Afghanistan on its own (31.3% and 32% respectively), rejecting the involvement of any outside country's involvement in conducting the negotiations. The involvement of neighboring countries comes as the third option with an average of 27.6% of northern respondents choosing this:

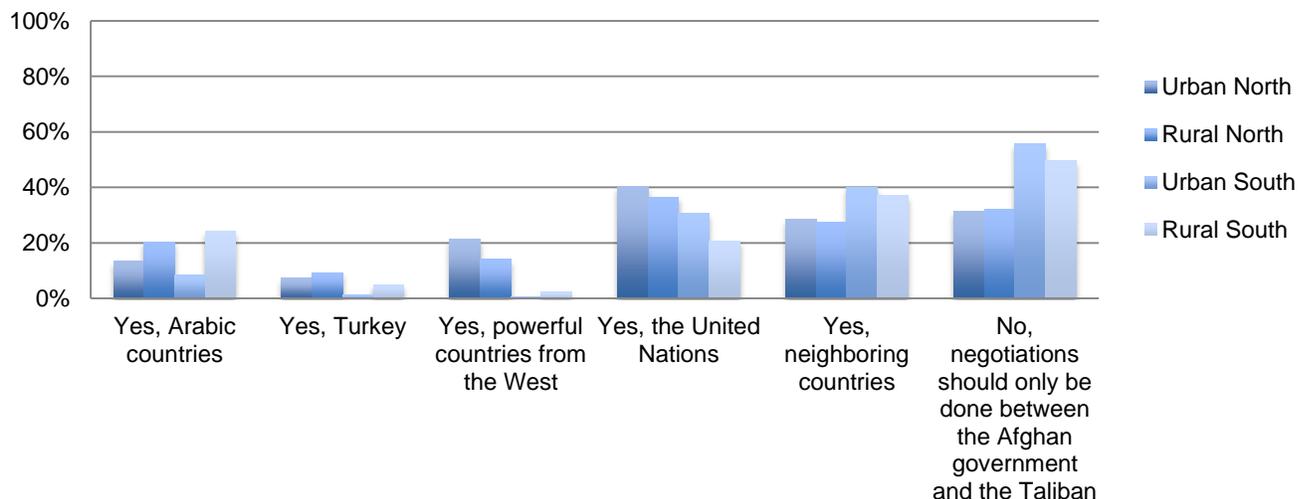
In the south, the majority of respondents (50.3%) prefer to not see any involvement from foreign countries in the negotiation process. Their second choice (with 37.4%) is to accept support from neighboring countries.

Trends are similar in Kabul, where 72.4% of male respondents and 47.7% of female respondents are of the opinion that negotiations should only take place between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

The rural population is more in favor of the involvement of Arab countries than urban people (24.1% in the south and 20.4% in the north, compared to 8.4% or urban people in the south and 13.5% in the north). Three factors may account for this;

- Rural residents are generally more sensitive to the argument that Islam should have a prominent role in political and social issues;
- In rural areas, many people migrate to countries of the Gulf to find jobs or run businesses. Therefore they have more links with Arab countries.
- One such link is funding flows. Much large investment from the governments of Arab countries, or, more often from wealthy individuals in those countries, has been invested in more conservative areas, specifically for the purpose of establishing Wahhabi madrassas (religious schools teaching a very fundamentalist version of Islam).

*Do you think the international community should be part of the negotiations with the Taliban, and if yes, which countries? (two responses possible) - Male respondents*



**Figure 13:** Perception of the international community involvement in negotiations with the Taliban - Male respondents

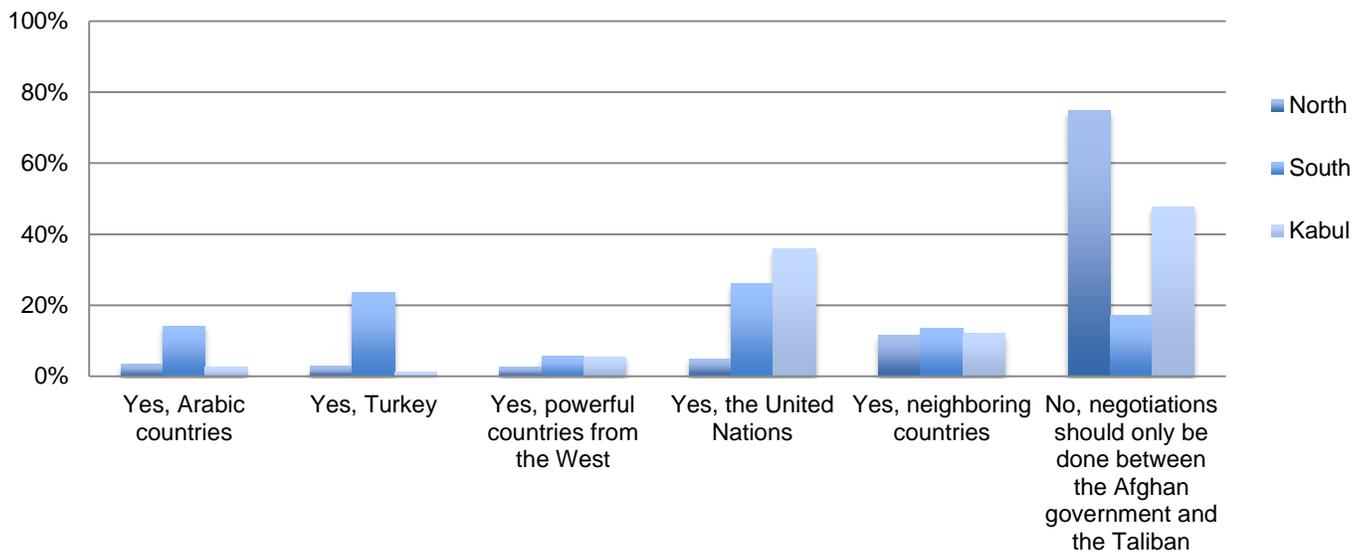
Popular support for the United Nations as a mediator in the negotiations with the Taliban, especially in the urban areas, can be explained by the fact that the UN political office, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), has maintained long term presence in the country, notably in many of the cities

represented in the survey, such as Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Kandahar city, and Gardez in Paktya. Interestingly, a report released by United States Institute for Peace in 2010, before the talks happened, suggested that insurgents did not actually trust the UN to be involved as mediators, and indeed “widely regard the United Nations as pursuing a U.S. agenda”.<sup>20</sup>

While Turkey is often seen positively by the Afghan population, it is not perceived as a potential strong mediator in the process of establishing dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Women have an even lower perception of external involvement in negotiations with the Taliban. The UN is the only actor that is somewhat envisaged as a potential mediator.

*Do you think the international community should be part of the negotiations with the Taliban, and if yes, which countries? (two responses possible) - Female respondents*



**Figure 14:** Perception of international community involvement in negotiations with the Taliban - Female respondents

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR%20256%20-%20Dangerous%20liaisons%20with%20the%20Afghan%20Taliban.pdf>

## PART 3 - Perceptions of the Taliban's motivations and assessment of people's support to the movement

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- ⇒ 12.8% of Afghan men and 1.6% of Afghan women want the Taliban to govern the country. Overall, only 7.2% of the Afghan population would like to see the Taliban assume control completely.
- ⇒ As many as 71% of Afghan women do not even accept the Taliban to be part of the government under the current constitution.
- ⇒ 44.6% of Afghan men and 25.8% Afghan women are ready to accept a deal between the government and the Taliban.
- ⇒ However, only 15% of male respondents and 6% of female respondents believe that the Taliban would respect a deal.

### A. Perceptions of the Taliban's objectives and motivations

There are no decisively marked trends among people's responses as to why the Taliban fight. All four options were selected by at least 30% respondents in each region.<sup>21</sup>

However, a greater proportion of respondents in the north stressed the role of other countries in influencing the Taliban (48.3% of men and 52.3% of women). The urban population of the north has an even stronger perception of the role of other countries in supporting the Taliban, with as many as 65% of respondents selecting this option. Consequently, residents of the north are less inclined to believe in the political motivations of the Taliban, compared to the south. 33.2% of people in the north believe that the Taliban fight to change the regime and the legal framework, while as many as 48.3% think similarly in the south. Opinions in Kabul are similar to the northern part of the country, with 60.2% of male respondents and 44.9% of female respondents declaring the Taliban were fighting because they were "puppets of other countries".

In the southern provinces of Kunar<sup>22</sup> and Zabul,<sup>23</sup> a large majority of respondents perceived the Taliban's fight as sincere, motivated predominantly by political and religious considerations (84.7% and 68.7% respectively), whereas in Paktya,<sup>24</sup> another southern province, the majority (69.7%) qualified the Taliban as "puppets of other countries", implying that they are not a group representing uniquely intra-Afghan disagreements, but also a proxy force, being directed and logistically supported by other countries.

"Taliban" is a blanket term, and both the term and the people it names represent different groups with varying objectives, tactics and supporters, everything from jihadists, to disaffected rural youth with real grievances, to criminals who use the term Taliban to spread fear. Thus their motivations are diverse and complex, and are seen as such by the Afghan public. What the Taliban preach as a movement can differ from what a local insurgent thinks he is fighting for. Similarly, the Taliban's objectives, as put into action, can be variously interpreted.

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<sup>21</sup> Respondents could select up to two responses to this question.

<sup>22</sup> Confidence interval: 5.69

<sup>23</sup> Confidence interval: 5.58

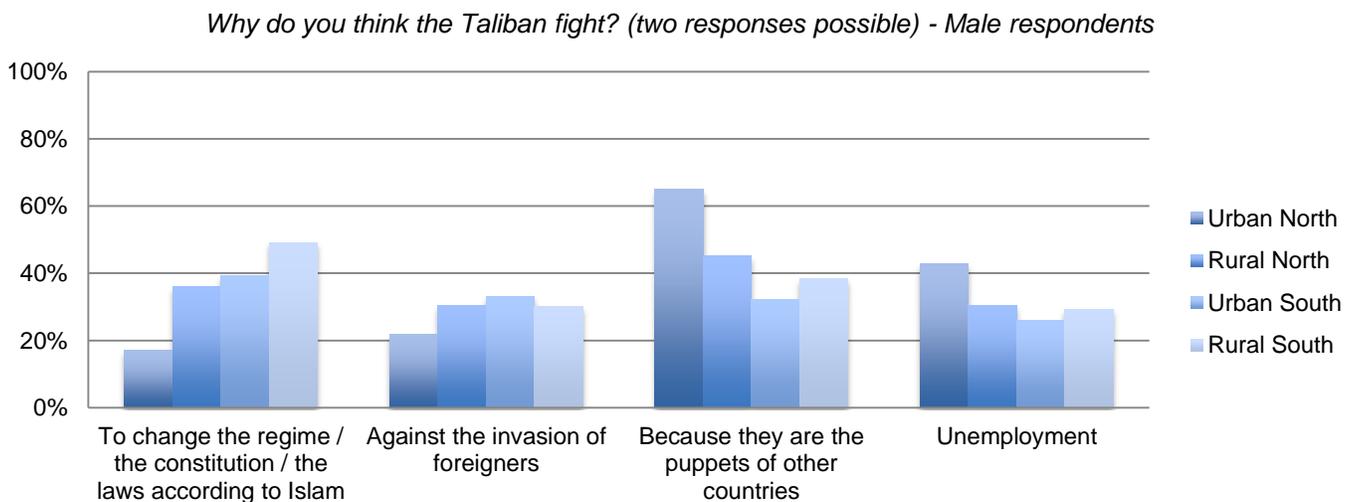
<sup>24</sup> Confidence interval: 4.95

The most prominent aspect of the Taliban’s jihad rhetoric is the resistance to the military occupation of foreign forces in Afghanistan, which is in line with an Afghan historic narrative of repelling successive invading armies. The withdrawal of foreign forces has also been a pre-requisite for the Taliban leader Mullah Omar to enter into negotiations with the Afghan government. This objective might well imply another goal, which is to oppose those who threaten Afghan and Islamic value systems.

The latter argument supports the hypothesis put forward by a USIP report of 2010 according to which Taliban demand that the constitution be altered “is probably attributable to their belief that the constitution was engineered by Western powers and their aversion to aspects of democracy as currently manifested in Afghanistan, rather than any profound objections to the constitutional framework”<sup>25</sup>. In brief, the opposition to the constitution is targeting more the process under which it was drafted than the content itself.

The answer “change the regime / the constitution / the laws according to Islam” also expresses recognition that the Taliban fight a state of affairs in the country characterized by rampant corruption, lack of justice and impunity.

Unemployment is a contributing factor in motivating individuals to join the Taliban. Indeed, limited socio-economic opportunities such as is the case in much of Afghanistan, especially in rural areas have been shown to create an enabling environment for where young men are more likely to participate in political violence.



**Figure 15:** Perceptions on the Taliban's motivations for fighting - Male respondents

## B. Perceptions over the Taliban as a government

### *The possible future role of the Taliban in governance*

The divide between the north and the south is striking when considering the question: “Do you want the Taliban to govern your area?” Only 2% of people in the north would like to see the Taliban governing their

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR%20256%20-%20Dangerous%20liaisons%20with%20the%20Afghan%20Taliban.pdf>

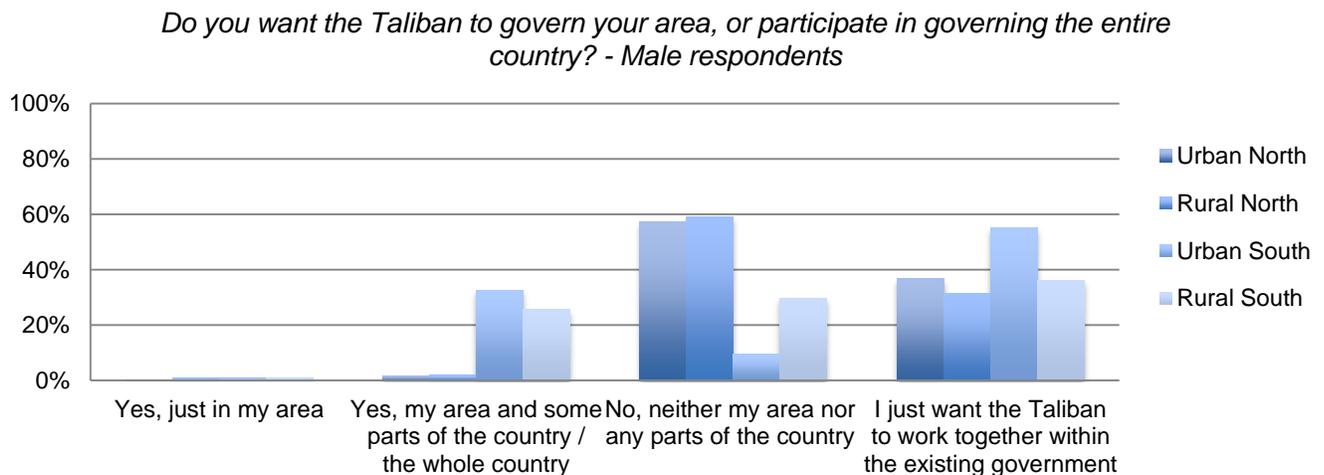
area and the rest of the country, while as many as 32.6% of urban respondents in the south and 25.6% of rural respondents favor this option. The divide between the north and the south is also visible among women, with 86.7% women in the north opposing the Taliban’s involvement in government, compared to only 45.1% of women in the south.

Yet, even in the south, a large majority of people prefers to see a less prominent role for the Taliban as an independent entity, either wishing the Taliban to join the existing government or disappear from the political scene. The culmination of the results of these two options shows that as many as 64.7% urban people and 65.9% of rural ones in the south reject the very idea that the Taliban govern their area or the country as a whole.

Residents of Herat (urban – 75%), Parwan (79.8%), Kabul (76.2%), and to a lesser extent Takhar (62.4%) and Paktya (63.7%) are less inclined to have the Taliban gain any role in governing the country, not even through joining the existing government. All of these provinces have specific reasons to strongly reject the Taliban:

- Herat city was captured very early on (in 1995) during the war against the Taliban, forcing a large proportion of the population to flee.
- The two most violent frontlines in the war against the Taliban were located in Parwan and Takhar provinces. The Taliban razed entire areas in Parwan, provoking massive displacement in both provinces.
- Paktya still hosts a great number of Taliban fighters, but this support is more opportunistic than ideological. The tribes (which remain very powerful in Paktya) have traditionally been ideologically opposed to the Taliban’s practice of attempting to replace the use of the Pashtunwali with Sharia Law. In many districts, this has been seen as an attempt to take away power from the tribes.

Urban residents are more inclined to favor a power-sharing agreement with the Taliban within the existing government than rural respondents: 36.7% of urban respondents in the north and 55.1% in the south, compared to 31.6% of rural respondents in the north and 36.2% in the south.



**Figure 16:** Perception of the possible role of the Taliban in governance - Male respondents

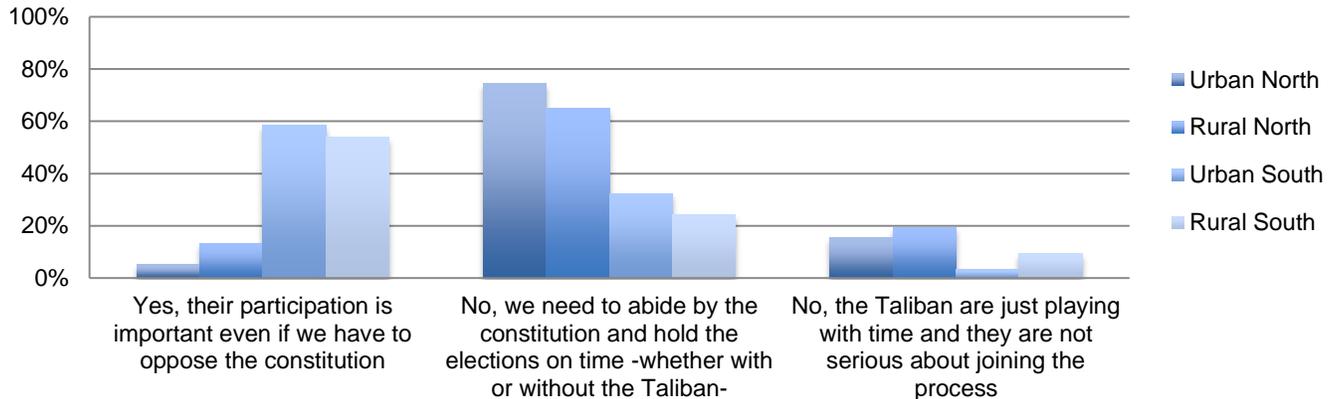
*The impact of negotiations with the Taliban on the election process*

Similar to the above perceptions about a possible Taliban government, there is an observable trend showing a clear division between south and north. Respondents in southern areas are more inclined to prioritize peace talks over the timely holding of elections, in order to make sure the Taliban are included in

the process, while on the contrary, the overwhelming majority of respondents in the north—90% in urban areas and 84.1% in rural areas<sup>26</sup>—are not prepared to postpone the elections to ensure participation of the Taliban. Regarding this issue, 94.7% of women in the north opposed delaying the elections compared to 52.8% in the south.

Kabuli respondents are almost equally divided between supporting the inclusion of the Taliban in the elections (37.7%) and rejecting it (34.3%).

*Should our elections be postponed so to give peace talks time, so that the Taliban may participate in the process? - Male respondents*



**Figure 17:** Respondents' willingness to postpone the elections for allowing Taliban participation - Male respondents

### C. Perceptions of the Taliban’s capacity and willingness to negotiate

#### 1. Popular acceptance of a possible agreement

Once again, the question of an agreement between the Taliban and the Government divides the country. The south, especially the urban population, is very much in favor of such an outcome (82.6% for urban people, and 60.8% for rural people), while fewer than one in three people in the north support such an agreement (average 28% for the northern region).

The divide becomes more tangible when cumulating the results of the two responses which reject an agreement with the Taliban ('We do not want that' and 'We will not accept and might even fight against such deal'). In the north, 26.4% (urban) and 39% (rural) clearly reject the idea. This opinion is shared by only 10% of respondents in the south. In some provinces, respondents clearly state that they would be ready to take up arms if such an agreement was made. This is the case especially for Parwan (40.2%) and Balkh (22.2%).

Women in the north and to a greater extent in Kabul are strongly opposed to the idea of an agreement between the government and the Taliban (respectively 57.8% and 61.7%), while 13% of women in the south share this opinion.

It should be taken into consideration the relatively high proportion of respondents in the north who do not express opinions on this question: an average of 33.9% in the north responded "It does not really matter" or "I don't know", while 14.5% in the south chose non-responsive options.

<sup>26</sup> These results cumulate to responses ('No, we need to abide by the Constitution' and 'No, the Taliban are just playing with time')

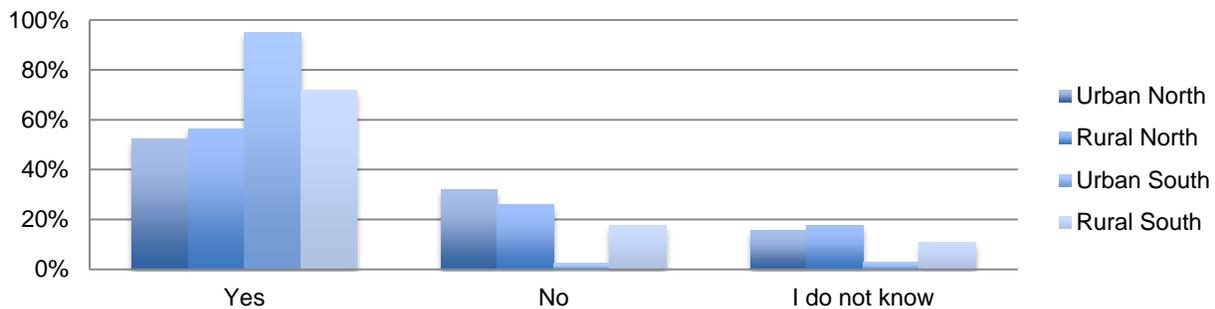
*People’s expectations of a potential agreement*

Despite the general opposition from the north to see the Taliban gain more power, they remain relatively optimistic that a positive deal can be done, however they remain much more doubtful than residents from the south. An average of 55.8% of respondents in the north believe that a constructive agreement can be reached between the government and the Taliban, compared to 74.1% of respondents in the south. The divide is even more pronounced when looking specifically at the urban south where almost 95% of the respondents are optimistic.

These results are interesting in so far as they show that citizens feel that the government will be able to negotiate an agreement which is favorable to of the Afghan population. This demonstrates a certain level of optimism and it implies that people find the government sufficiently strong and credible to conduct negotiations in the interest of the people.

But the fact that the negotiations have so far been held in secret possibly limits the extent to which people have faith that an agreement will be reached in their interests. Indeed, the lack of transparency and openness in the negotiation process, so far, especially since the Afghan government itself has been essentially sidelined, may reinforce the perception that power-brokers in the negotiations are serving their own interests rather than those of the people of Afghanistan.

*Do you believe that it is possible that the Government and the Taliban reach a deal that is good for ordinary Afghans through negotiations? - Male respondents*



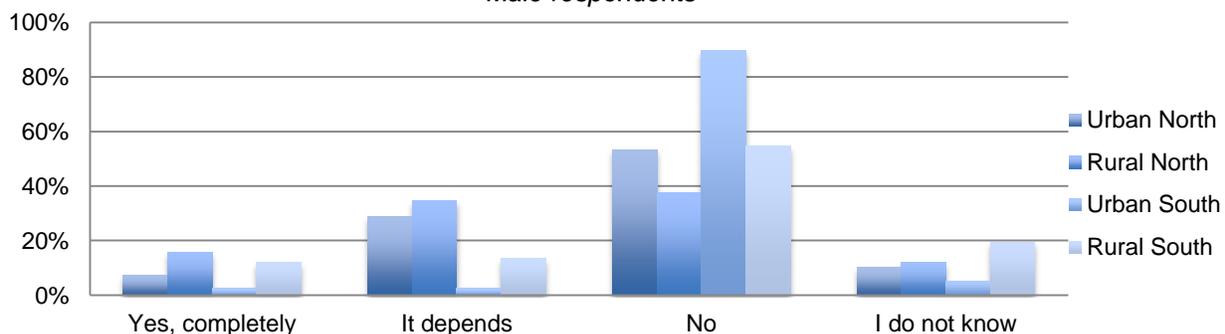
**Figure 18:** Perception of the possibility of a deal with the Taliban which is good for Afghans - Male respondents

*People’s perception of the Taliban’s willingness to respect an agreement*

Afghans are much less optimistic when it comes to trusting the Taliban to actually respect the terms of an agreement. Notably, the south has even less confidence in the Taliban’s honesty than people in the north. As many as 89.6% of urban residents in the south do not believe the Taliban will respect any agreement they might sign. Residents of Kandahar province are almost unanimously skeptical of the Taliban (95.8%), an interesting fact when considering that Kandahar is considered the bastion of support for the movement. Only 37.6% of rural areas in the north are so skeptical.

Except for people in Ghor<sup>27</sup> (all rural) where 49.7% of respondents believe the Taliban would implement any agreement they manage to reach with the government, in all provinces there are less than 1 person in 4 who trust the Taliban to keep their part of the bargain.

*If there is a deal, do you trust that the Taliban will respect it? - Male respondents*

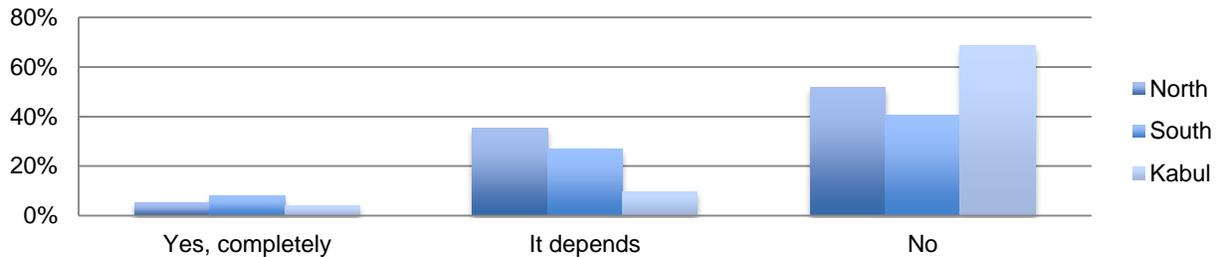


**Figure 19:** Level of trust in the Taliban’s capacity to respect a deal - Male respondents

Less than 10% of women across the country trust the Taliban to respect the terms of an agreement brokered after negotiations. Kabuli women are particularly distrustful of the Taliban (68.6%).

Again a noteworthy proportion of respondents did not express opinions on the matter, especially in rural areas of the south.

*If there is a deal, do you trust that the Taliban will respect it?*  
 - Female respondents



**Figure 21:** Level of trust in the Taliban's capacity to respect a deal - Female respondents

Given the heterogeneity of the Taliban movement and the different degrees of fundamentalism in different subgroups, it is possible that there is a large amount of skepticism regarding decisions taken by the leadership involved in the negotiations being upheld unanimously by the entire Taliban. In addition, people's estimation of the negotiations likely depends on who exactly is represented on both sides of the negotiating table. One notable assumption from some observers is that the Taliban "represent" the southern Pashtun as a whole, or at least a large part of them. The findings of this study would seem to debunk such assumptions.

Rejections of an agreement may also be revealing of Afghans' suspicions of the negotiation process itself, and its supporters. Given the process is openly backed by the international community and integrated into the political agenda of most Western governments, it is foreseeable that the populace perceives the negotiations as a means of asserting foreign control over Afghan affairs.

This sentiment was echoed in a USIP policy paper, which argued that widespread *mistrust* is the biggest obstacle to negotiations<sup>28</sup>. The results of this survey are supportive of this conclusion and highlight the challenge of conducting successful negotiations in such a context. Furthermore, the results raise the question of what the government of Afghanistan, the international community, and civil society can do to rebuild trust and consensus.

## CONCLUSION

Despite variations between various groups, which are mostly inherent to the context in which people live, this study shows that Afghans want peace, preferably with little to no governing role for the Taliban. These findings also reveal a certain level of confusion and fear in the Afghan populace over two main issues:

- How will this peace process be pursued? Afghan citizens question the need to include the

<sup>28</sup> Matt Waldman, "Navigating Negotiations in Afghanistan", Peace Brief, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), September 13, 2010.

Taliban within the government and show little trust in their capacity to respect a deal.

\* How will Afghanistan stand on its feet and retain and strengthen its sovereignty? This is a critical aspect visible throughout the study. Afghans generally reject the involvement of the West in Afghan politics (in elections, and negotiations with the insurgency) and are very aware of neighboring countries supporting the insurgency and wonder why nothing has been done about this (in their view). In the meantime, they do long for a strong Afghanistan, since they wish for continuing support from the international community to develop the country and build Afghan security forces.

The government institution Afghans trust most is the ANA. The ANA, being a multi-ethnic, national, modern institution, seems best to reflect the direction Afghans would like to see their government ultimately move, This desire for a stable and sovereign Afghanistan confirms that in many ways, there is ground for thinking there is more unity in Afghanistan than thought, and that this unity might be promoted.

## Annex 1 – Questionnaire

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<b>Province:</b>	<b>District:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Village / City:</b>	<b>City area:</b>	<b>Other:</b>

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

.....

3. Occupation

- Has a job
- Housewife
- Unemployed / retired
- Student
- I do not want to respond

4. In your area, who has the control at the moment? (2 responses possible)

- Taliban
- Other insurgent groups (HIG, Haqqani network etc.)
- Government
- Pro-government militias
- The people
- I do not know

5. For the moment, what do you think should be the role of the international community in Afghanistan (select the most important two choices):

- Providing financial support / development
- Supporting the elections
- Supporting the Afghanistan National Security Forces
- Supporting the negotiation process with the Taliban
- None of this. The international community should not be involved in Afghanistan
- I do not know

6. How much do you trust the Afghan National Army:

- Completely
- Moderately

- Not at all
- I do not know

7. How much do you trust the Afghan National Police:

- Completely
- Moderately
- Not at all
- I do not know

8. Why do you think the Taliban fight? (2 responses possible)

- To change the regime / the constitution / the laws according to Islam
- Against the invasion of foreigners
- Because they are the puppets of other countries
- Unemployment
- I do not know

9. Do you think the international community should be part of the negotiations with the Taliban, and if yes, which countries? (2 responses possible)

- Yes, Arab countries
- Yes, Turkey
- Yes, powerful countries from the west
- Yes, the United Nations
- Yes, neighboring countries
- No, negotiations should only be done between the Afghan government and the Taliban
- I do not know

10. Do you want the Taliban to govern your area, or participate in governing the entire country?

- Yes, just my area
- Yes, my area and some parts of the country / whole country
- No, neither my area nor any part of the country
- I just want the Taliban to work together and within the existing government
- I do not know

11. Do you believe that it is possible that the Government and the Taliban reach a deal that is good for ordinary Afghans through negotiations?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

12. What do you think would be the reaction of your family / community if the Taliban makes a deal with the Government?

- We do not want that
- We will not accept and could even fight against such deal
- We would be supportive
- It depends under which conditions the deal is made
- It does not really matter / neutral

I do not know

13. If there is a deal, do you trust that the Taliban will respect it?

- Yes, completely
- It depends
- No
- I do not know

14. Compared to the last 10 years, how would you describe the life of your family?

- It is better
- It is similar to 10 years ago
- It is worse
- I do not know

15. Should our elections be postponed so to give peace talks time, so that the Taliban may participate in the process?

- No. The Taliban are just playing for time and they are not serious about joining the process
- No, we need to abide by the constitution and hold the elections on time – with or without the Taliban
- Yes their participation is important even if we have to go against our constitution