

Unheard Voices

Afghan Views on the Challenges of the Peace Process



A report from Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO)

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Glossary

ALP (Afghan Local Police)

ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces)

ANSO (Afghanistan NGO Security Office)

APRP (Afghan Peace & Reintegration Programme)

CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)

HiG (Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin)

HPC (High Peace Council)

IMF (International Military Forces)

NDS (National Directorate of Security)

PJSTs (Provincial Joint Secretariat Teams)

PPRCs (Provincial Peace & Reconciliation Councils)

US (United States)

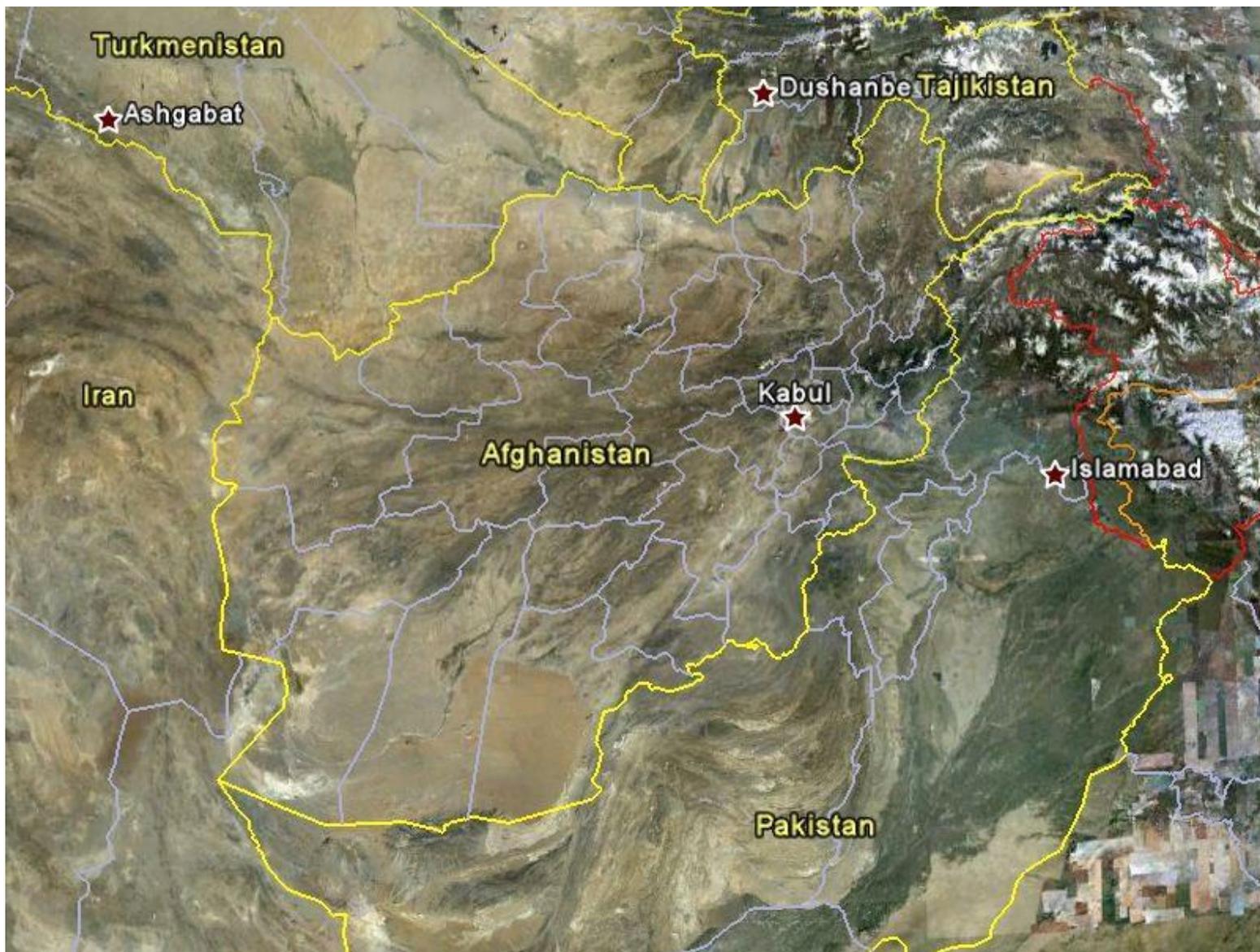


Figure 1: Map of Afghanistan

Executive Summary

More than a year since the inauguration of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), the twin-track process aimed at reintegration of opposition fighters and political reconciliation of national opposition groups has seen limited gains and a general absence of credibility among the Afghan population.

The process lacks fundamental input from the Afghan population, upon whom the success or failure of any peace process will rest. In order to fill this gap and establish exactly what the affected population's attitude towards the process is, PTRO undertook a survey of 4,763 respondents across 16 provinces, with a representative selection from each region of the country.

PTRO's findings reveal that a high level of awareness and support for a political settlement in general masks confusion over the details, fear of the consequences, disagreement over the participants, and distrust of the structures. Certain views were coloured by specific local dynamics and others were met with much more consensus.

The different aspects of the APRP, and the definition of the terms used, were often misunderstood or conflated with other elements. Reconciliation and reintegration were seen by a large number of respondents as identical in their process and aims, although other respondents had a very good grasp of both concepts. This lack of understanding was often a corollary of the number and visibility of reintegration events in a particular area – provinces such as Badghis and Herat have experienced a wave of reintegration events and the population is consequently very well aware of the programme.

Support for both government and Taliban conditions for talks were high, with a significant proportion of respondents supportive of both sides' preconditions. In this, as in some other answers, there was a notable divergence of opinion between provinces - in some areas of Helmand respondents were vehemently opposed to any concessions to the Taliban.

Overall, the concept of a peace process appeared to hold little concern, with 85% of respondents stating that they had no fears. However, when pushed further, it emerged that a significant minority feared that a political settlement would lead to a loss of fundamental rights or freedoms. This fear was more pronounced for female and Hazara respondents overall, but only marginally. However, women in some of the more insecure provinces were twice as likely to fear their rights being restricted as the male population.

Ethnic divisions were not apparent in some of the broader questions concerning the peace process where there was a consensus of support. However, Hazara opposition to Taliban conditions and Tajik support for the HPC were two areas where ethnic differences were obvious, and it appears that even though there is widespread agreement on the need for a political settlement, views differed by ethnicity on the details and structure of the process. While all wanted peace there were clear divisions on how this could be achieved.

The credibility of the reintegration programme to date is severely damaged, with more than 50% of the population viewing reintegrees as simply criminals, and the common concern that the voice of the

affected communities was neither considered nor heard. People wished to see criminals rejected from the reintegration programme and face some form of justice.

People had clear views on the main obstacles to peace and Pakistan and Iran were identified by the majority of respondents as the dominant obstacle. Wariness about foreign interference extended to the international military forces in Afghanistan, who were seen as an obstacle to peace by many, but also recognised by some as playing an important stabilising role. A majority of respondents also expressed scepticism about the willingness of the Taliban leadership to engage in negotiations.

Further, a lack of government credibility and honesty in the process were viewed as significant obstacles, while government reform was cited as one of the main preconditions to a successful reintegration programme. It was therefore apparent that steps to increase credibility and the legitimacy of both the peace process and the authorities leading it are crucial for many respondents.

Social leaders enjoyed a good deal of support and people wanted them to have a role in the peace process. The involvement of community elders and religious leaders was seen by many as vital to lead reconciliation efforts, and while the current configuration of the HPC was highly criticised, local communities strongly supported an increased role for local leaders to address their problems.

Finally, respondents were overwhelmingly hopeful for the peace process, despite the many challenges it faces, and it was apparent that people were tired of the fighting. Despite the very real differences in approaches as well as the specific, location-informed wishes of the people, there appeared to be a pragmatic attitude towards the peace process which can help to provide support for making steps forward in the APRP.

Introduction

In June 2010 Hamid Karzai launched the Afghan Peace & Reintegration Program (APRP) with the aim of bringing peace through a dual strategy of **reintegration** of “foot soldiers, small groups and local leaders” as well as focusing on the leadership of the insurgency with the aim of reaching a political settlement and consolidated peace through **reconciliation**.

The process has until recently been met with somewhat limited success and the credibility of both elements, but specifically the reintegration efforts, of the programme has been brought into question by some observers. Efforts towards reconciliation, despite some previous criticism, appear to be gaining greater momentum in the first two months of 2012. There have been many reports of ‘talks about talks’ but as of yet no direct talks publically reported. Recent news that the Taliban have accepted an offer to open a political office in Qatar, and that the Taliban political wing are open to talks, have been heralded as strong steps towards peace negotiations. The international community have introduced confidence-building measures and make-weights to create the right conditions for talks; these include the removal of some Taliban members from the UN Security Council’s list of sanctioned individuals, named for resolution 1267, and the division of this list into separate Al Qaeda and Taliban elements. At the time of writing the US also appears to be contemplating the release of some senior Taliban leaders from Guantanamo; something that it had previously ruled out. In addition, the recent declaration of ‘victory’ issued by the Taliban leadership has been interpreted by some as a positive sign and an attempt to sell talks to their rank and file¹.

Despite this recent progress, the multiple preliminary contacts made towards reconciliation have at times been muddled and lacking in coherence. The numerous layers and differing actors have made it unclear who is ultimately leading the process, and the Afghan government has at times been unhappy with the perception it is being sidelined². Some also question the lack of concessions from the insurgent leadership, with a belief by some opponents that the current approach is one of appeasement as opposed to meaningful talks. As a result it appears that consensus as to the best approach to negotiations is lacking and that, despite some progress, huge challenges remain. These have been brought into sharp relief with the Taliban announcement of the suspension of talks.

Meanwhile the attempt to “turn” or reintegrate battlefield commanders and have them rejoin the government has been marked by a sluggish take up and capture by criminal elements in some districts and provinces. PTRO were able to track much of the initial progress in early 2011 and noted a lack of government delivery, a lack of sufficient vetting of candidates and the misuse of the system by political elites. Such activities have led to a trust-deficit in the process within the Afghan population, and as such the current reintegration process appears to be following in the footsteps of failed reintegration predecessors.

¹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/taliban-says-it-will-open-qatar-office-for-talks-with-us/2012/01/03/gIQAgP5sXP_story_1.html

² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8978024/Afghan-government-would-accept-Taliban-office-in-Qatar.html> (accessed 11th January 2012)

What is clear for all is that there is a need for a successful peace process; all parties both inside and outside of Afghanistan have begun to recognise that a military solution to the conflict does not exist and that political reconciliation or a peace settlement is the only viable remaining option. The Taliban themselves have recently claimed that they have consistently said “the United States will never achieve its goal of militarily subjugating the Afghans” and added that “the ‘Islamic Emirate’ believes in a peaceful settlement of the conflict.”³

Despite such assertions it is difficult to know exactly what the Taliban and their supporting groups actually want from peace negotiations. They have articulated clearly their wish for international forces to leave the country and therefore, at the very least, a timetable for the withdrawal of international troops is vital. They have also made consistent demands for prisoner releases (from both international and Afghan custody), specifically through the recent insistence that five Taliban commanders be freed from Guantanamo Bay prison. However, beyond vague messages regarding Sharia law there is little clarity, particularly about issues of concern to certain sectors of civil society, such as democratic freedoms, freedom of expression, religious tolerance and women’s rights.

Analysts⁴ suggest that an eventual agreement would involve some form of power-sharing, the withdrawal of IMF, commitment from the Taliban to cut ties with international terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, the incorporation of Sharia law into government, an increased role for the religious Ulema in Afghanistan, and finally some form of government reform and improvement. Despite such ideas, one must exercise caution in prescribing too much. It is highly apparent that peace will not be easy to achieve and primarily that it will require strong leadership on the part of both the Taliban and the Afghan government⁵. The ability for such leadership to emerge, during a period of growing fragmentation within both camps, remains unclear and poses tough questions for the potential success of the peace process.

The APRP was designed to be an Afghan government-led process; the process was to be led in consultation with both international partners but also crucially with Afghan civil society. The process purports to listen to the voices of Afghans and to follow a course to peace which they supported, and in addition the primary institutional objective includes the development of civil society capacity in peace-building and conflict resolution methods⁶. However, to date, there appears to have been a fundamental lack of input from the Afghan population. Further there has been a dearth of analysis on what the

³ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/316315/edging-closer-taliban-insurgents-drop-precondition-for-peace-talks/> (accessed 16th January 2012)

⁴ Waldman (October 2010) “Dangerous Liaisons with the Afghan Taliban: The feasibility and Risks of Negotiations” Special Report, USIP, Washington DC, 16pp; Brahimi, L. & Pickering, T. R., “Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace”, The Report of the Century Foundation International Task Force on Afghanistan in its Regional and Multilateral Dimensions, 2011. <http://tcf.org/publications/pdfs/afghanistan-negotiating-peace/AfghanTCFTaskForce%20BookComplete.pdf> (accessed 16th January 2012)

⁵ Bergen (May 2011) “Don’t count on a peace deal with the Taliban” CNN Opinion, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-05-24/opinion/bergen.taliban.talks_1_taliban-leader-taliban-foreign-ministry-islamic-emirate?s=PM:OPINION (accessed 11th November 2011)

⁶ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan National Security Council, D & R Commission, “Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) Programme Document”, July 2010, paragraph 5.

Afghan population want to see from the peace process, how they view the structures of the APRP and how they wish for the process to move forward.

Peace and conflict are often understood and experienced at a very local level within Afghanistan, and the causes of conflict often manifest themselves locally. Understanding community views on reconciliation should be vital for both the Afghan government and the supporting international community. In order to bring these voices to the fore, and to answer some of the questions posed above, PTRO conducted a national survey, interviewing 4,763 individuals, both men and women, across 16 provinces and 48 districts of Afghanistan during the months of July and August 2011. This report is a summary of the survey findings.

The report begins with a brief introduction of the APRP process to date, followed by an in-depth description of the methodology and the sample population. Section 4 of the paper describes the understanding that the survey respondents demonstrated towards the peace process, while section 5 addresses the immediate fears and challenges that the population have regarding the unfolding process. Section 6 is spent analysing the views of the Afghan survey respondents towards specific aspects of the APRP structure and the main obstacles to its implementation before Chapter 7 discusses what the collective views of the Afghan population mean for the future of the process. Finally the report concludes with the key findings of the survey.

The hope is that this paper will add valuable context to the emerging narrative on the peace process and will help all interested parties to gauge the views of the Afghan population and incorporate them fully and sensitively into the peace process. Ultimately, this paper speaks to the need to fully incorporate Afghan dialogues into any potential peace settlement.

Context & Progress of the APRP

“..I once again call upon the Taliban to come back to their soil and not to create challenges for this country and for themselves either. Anyone who dies from any side is the son of this soil. Either he is from your side or ours, he is the son of this country. So let’s get rid of all these killings and build this soil”

President Hamid Karzai opening the National Consultative Peace Jirga; 2nd June 2010

The war in Afghanistan has become increasingly violent and entrenched year on year; the Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) report that the first six months of 2011 saw the most insurgent attacks to date and that 2011 saw a 14% increase in opposition group attacks across the country⁷. Further, the UN recently reported that the conflict has seen civilian casualties rise for the fifth consecutive year with an increase of 8% from last year⁸. To all intents and purposes the war has increased in intensity and ANSO suggest that it has entered a period of “perpetually escalating stalemate” in which the Taliban lack the necessary military might to defeat the Afghan and international forces, but are also too fluid and well supported to be removed by force themselves. As a result, much of the fighting is more about winning the propaganda war than achieving concrete military objectives, and in this regard the effectiveness of Taliban activities place them in the ascendancy.

This situation has combined with tremendous political pressures in home capitals of the international community, resulting in the 2014 proposed end date for the foreign combat role in Afghanistan. As such, the ‘end game’ has seemingly been drawn up and the insurgent factions at times have appeared content that they can wait out the present ramp-up in ISAF operations. As a result the Taliban have gained in confidence and some analysts now suggest that they are in a much stronger position than the government and the international community. The situation, however, remains complex, fluid and rigorously contested.

In an attempt to tackle such uncertainty the Afghan government and the international community in Afghanistan have begun to focus attention on an ‘Afghan led’ political settlement to the current conflict, the hope being that political settlement can bring an end to the present hostilities and allow Afghanistan to maintain stability post-2014. The success of the peace process is, therefore, not only important to internal actors such as the Afghan government, but also to regional and international actors.

The Structures of the APRP

Following months of closed-door discussions and following an endorsement by the National Consultative Peace Jirga in June 2010, the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) was officially launched by President Karzai in the middle of 2010. The programme was quickly endorsed by members of the international community who pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to get the programme up and running.

⁷ ANSO “ANSO Quarterly Data Report; Q4 2012” <http://www.ngosafety.org/store/files/ANSO%20Q4%202011.pdf> (accessed 10.02.2011)

⁸ UN (2012) “Civilian casualty numbers in Afghanistan rise again” <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41143&Cr=Afghan&Cr1> (accessed 06.02.2012)

The APRP is led by the High Peace Council (HPC) and implemented by the Joint Secretariat under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). These bodies are supported by the provincial and district governors who, according to the program documentation, should play a pivotal role in coordinating support. In the provinces Provincial Peace & Reintegration Committees (PPRCs) and the Provincial Joint Secretariat Teams (PJSTs) are currently being stood-up to help in the programme delivery of the APRP⁹.

The APRP is designed to be split into two broad categories; the first is pitched at the operational level and focuses on local peace processes involving the bulk of the insurgency through reintegration of the foot soldiers, small groups and local leaders. The second aims to impact the strategic and political levels with focus on the leadership of the insurgency.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation aims to bring a peace agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the insurgent leadership. The hope is that the conflicting parties will be able to reach a settlement that will allow both sides to enter some form of mutually acceptable government structure and therefore the fighting will cease. There are obvious concerns around this process expressed by many different actors within Afghanistan, and many question whether the time is right for such negotiations.

To-date a number of initiatives and developments have taken place in the initial stages of approaching the Taliban over peace negotiations. There have been multiple reports of 'talks about talks' but few concrete negotiations reported in the public domain, further it is evident at this early stage that many parties are involved in the dialogue. Efforts towards negotiation are not new. The Karzai administration has made some attempt throughout its time in office, and in 2007 and 2008 serious efforts were being made to negotiate with the Taliban, with the Saudi government holding talks with Afghans close to the Quetta-based Taliban leadership. Since then there have been rounds of talks with some of the reconciled former Taliban figures such as Mullah Zaeef and Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil by the UN in Dubai during 2010. Talks also took place in the Maldives in January 2010 between Hibz-i Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) figures and actors close to the Taliban, and from mid-2011 there were reports of talks between US officials and Taryab Agha, a representative of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, in Germany. Underlying these efforts has been an official track in which talks with regional powers and other interested parties are likely to have taken place.

Confidence building measures which have taken place during 2011 have also been commonly referred to as 'progress' by officials from the international community; the splitting of the UN's 1267 list into separate Al Qaeda and Taliban elements and the removal from the list of some Taliban members were all seen as positive signs that lay the way for meaningful talks.

Such movements have been spurred on by signs that elements of the Taliban have been interested in talks and 2011 saw private expressions of interest from a significant number of senior Taliban members in talks and/or reconciliation. Such interest has become much more formalised in recent months with the announcement by the US that Qatar has agreed to host a political office for the Taliban, effectively a

⁹ Interview with international official, Kabul 2011

base from where direct talks with Taliban envoys, and the acceptance of such an initiative by the Taliban leadership. The Taliban leadership have also issued statements acknowledging their interest in peace negotiations and a willingness to negotiate with the US over withdrawal.

However, despite the recent positive steps it is apparent that challenges remain. The recent Taliban statement, with no reference to negotiating with the Afghan government, was interpreted by some as a snub to the Afghan government, and now it appears that the Taliban have suspended all talks due to a perceived lack of consistency from the US negotiators. While agreeing to the Qatar office, the Afghan government, through the HPC, have released an eleven-point plan for official engagement with the Taliban. The plan is the clearest articulation of the government's intentions to-date but reiterates a number of preconditions to potential talks. The statement outlines that negotiations with the Taliban could begin only after they stop violence against civilians, cut ties to al-Qaeda, and accept the Afghan constitution which guarantees civil rights and liberties, including rights for women. The statement also noted that any peace process would have to have the support of Pakistan since members of the insurgent group were based there. Regarding the Qatar office, the HPC state that it must only be used for negotiations, not as a political platform, and that the war must cease before negotiations start. The conditions further outline that the achievements of the last decade must remain untouched¹⁰. The plan therefore imposes a number of conditions on talks which require a Taliban response.

This plan has been interpreted as an attempt by the Afghan government to wrest control of the peace talks from the external influence of the US, Germany and Qatar, who had a leading role in negotiations for the opening of the Taliban liaison office. While many believe that there is a need for direct negotiations between the US and the Taliban, as they are both primary belligerents to the conflict, there is concern that the Afghan government must not be excluded. The challenge will be balancing the most effective strategy with the need to keep all parties involved, especially if the Taliban refuse to recognise the Afghan government in negotiations. The recent demand by the Taliban to have prisoners released from Guantanamo Bay in order to live in Qatar is a further demonstration of their negotiation stance being oriented to the US.

To date talks have been shrouded in secrecy which has often sidelined crucial actors. Initial talks in Dubai were met with a strong reaction from Pakistan who arrested Mullah Baradar, the Taliban number two, in February 2010, and many felt they acted in order to send the message that no talks could take place without their involvement. While Pakistan has been quiet on the recent events it is clear that they have an important role to be balanced in any potential negotiations. Further, the talks in Germany during 2011 appeared to have very little Afghan involvement during their inception, creating tensions and suspicion between the international community and the Afghan government. These internal tensions are compounded by a situation in which hard facts remain elusive and there is limited consensus on the 'best' way forward.

International conferences on the issue, Istanbul and Bonn in late 2011, have yet to forge the regional cooperation needed for the peace talks to succeed. Direct threats to the peace process remain, a point

¹⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8978024/Afghan-government-would-accept-Taliban-office-in-Qatar.html> (accessed 11th January 2012)

strongly underscored by the assassination of Professor Barahuddin Rabbani, the previous head of the HPC, and the severe injury of Masoom Stanekzai, the CEO of the Joint Secretariat, in September 2011. These events shocked the international community and Afghan government alike, and directly stalled the process before the recent progress. Such threats remain and it is clear that at times the reconciliation efforts are lacking unity and face many potential saboteurs. Despite recent progress huge challenges remain and clear positions remain to be drawn – there is a long way to go before any meaningful peace can be achieved.

Reintegration

Alongside reconciliation efforts, the Afghan government, in conjunction with the international community, is rigorously pursuing reintegration. Reintegration is designed to reach out to mid- and low-level insurgent commanders who are active on the ground, with the hope of creating local stability while national political reconciliation is also sought. The programme offers to provide commanders with an amnesty to join the government and asks them to sign a waiver at the outset, in which they commit to respect for the principles of the constitution, cut ties with terrorist groups and to lay down their arms¹¹. Despite the focus of the programme lying with the reintegrees, the programme aims to benefit Afghan communities which are willing to accept reintegrating insurgents back into society. The reintegration process is split into 3 stages; the first, **social outreach, confidence building & negotiation** aims for provincial and district leaders to reach out to insurgent groups and convince them to reintegrate, while also providing communities an opportunity to voice their concerns regarding individual groups of reintegrees. This phase is followed by a 90- day period of **demobilization**, during which the reintegree is registered, signs various declarations and is eligible for amnesty while being protected by state security structures. The final stage, stage 3, is called **consolidation of peace**, in which reintegrees return to their communities and the entire community is subject to conflict recovery and rehabilitation through training and development programmes.

Reviewing the progress one year after its inception, at the time of the PTRO survey, it is clear that the impact of reintegration has been mixed and progress has been slow. ISAF report that as of August 2011 2,357 official reintegrees had entered the process, with the majority of these individuals (90%) coming from the north and west of the country – not the traditional heartlands of the insurgency.¹² This number is a small percentage of the estimated active Taliban insurgency, and further, evidence collected by PTRO in early 2011 suggests that the credibility of many of the reintegrees can be called into question.¹³ As a result reintegration is not having the desired impact and is failing to stabilise the most insecure areas of the country. Debate remains over whether reintegration should precede, occur in parallel or follow success in reconciliation, however, it is clear that reintegration will only gain genuine support when it begins to deliver on the programmatic aims. At the moment the programme appears to be following in the footsteps of its failed predecessors.

¹¹ Interview with international official, Kabul 2010

¹² Data from ISAF (August 2011)

¹³ PTRO research monitoring reintegration events in four provinces in the north and west of the country during late 2010 and early 2011.

Methodology

The aim of the study was to achieve a broad based understanding of the views of a representative cross-section of the Afghan population about peace and reconciliation. For this purpose a multi-stage sampling framework was utilised. First, due to an absence of reliable census information about the entire population, respondents were sampled geographically in a way as to be able to obtain a relatively representative mix of the different ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Site selection was designed along the major geographic regions of Afghanistan ---North, North-East, North-West, Central, Hazarajat, East, South-East and South. Within these regions provinces were selected according to levels of accessibility (both security and physical access), PTRO's organisational strengths (i.e. if we had worked there before) and further the prominence of the province in each region (PTRO deliberately selected the 'regional hubs' of Mazar City, Herat City, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar). Finally, in selection of provinces, PTRO also considered the level of current APRP activities and selected some provinces where known reintegration events were unfolding.

This selection criteria led to a slight bias in the selection of provinces away from the central region, while access issues due to insecurity precluded a more rigorous coverage of areas in the south (Uruzgan, Nimroz & Zabul), as well as the east (Nuristan & Khost). However, as depicted on the map below (Figure 2) this still provided a relatively comprehensive coverage of the country and ensured that different communities, ethnicities and demographics were surveyed. Within each province three districts were sampled. The provincial centre was selected in all instances, followed by two distinctive districts using the following criteria: ethnic/tribal composition, economic profile, urban-rural landscape, accessibility (geographical), and finally security restrictions. The full list of the 48 districts surveyed is attached in Appendix 2: Full list of provinces & districts surveyed.

The following 16 provinces were surveyed:

Region	Province
North-East	Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakshan
North	Balkh, Jawzjan
North-West	Badghis, Faryab
West	Herat
Central	Kabul
Hazarajat/Central highlands	Bamyan, Daikundi
East	Nangarhar, Paktia, Laghman
South	Helmand, Kandahar

Table 1: Survey provinces

Sampling Frame

Within each province PTRO aimed to interview 300 adult¹⁴ respondents; with 100 respondents interviewed in each target district. PTRO deliberately made no concession for differing population sizes across both provinces and districts in order to simplify the research process and structure the approach clearly for our research teams. Instead the aim of the study was to get a broad overview of opinions which were directly comparable in number between distinct geographical areas.

The respondents were sampled from at least 6 distinct research points in each district; generally this included the district centre and 5 villages beyond the confines of the centre and in more remote rural locations. The decision on which specific communities to survey was decided in conjunction with PTRO hired local facilitators from each district who knew the terrain and could ensure that the relevant communities were secure and that access would be possible. The aim of this sampling frame was to ensure that representatives of both rural and urban areas were interviewed within each district; in addition the selected villages were chosen to be ethnically and socio-economically distinct by the local facilitator.

The sampling of respondents was carried out on a semi random basis where possible, and using a combination of judgement and convenience sampling frames in other more insecure locations.¹⁵ In the secure and urban locations researchers were directed to public gathering points such as mosques, bus stations and local markets in order to conduct the surveys. Researchers deliberately sought out respondents who reflected the nature of the population in each research point and therefore judged the sample set accordingly. In rural communities, and especially in insecure districts, the researchers required the permission of community leaders, be they elders or religious leaders, in order access village populations. This meant that semi-random selection was not possible and instead the research teams were guided by the community leader and the local facilitator in selecting the most appropriate respondents who best represented the community itself.

Within these sampled frames every effort was made by the PTRO research teams to ensure that respondents were broadly representative of the district and provincial populations and therefore that

¹⁴ PTRO aimed to speak to respondents over the age of 18. Despite the fact that large proportion of the Afghan population is under the age of 18 years PTRO deemed that the nature of the research and the questions would be better served only directed at adult respondents.

¹⁵ It is worthy of note that the value of a fully random sample in Afghanistan is relatively limited as the dearth of demographic data and the lack of a census means that research organisations do not have the basic data they need to make a random sample. As such the credibility of data is more significantly demonstrated through having a broad number of interviews. A sample size of over 100 per district ensures a low margin of error. A random sample also has no way to control for social desirability bias, in which respondents answer questions with what they feel the interviewer wants to hear, this has been estimated at as high as 50% in Afghanistan by some analysts. **Convenience sampling** is used in exploratory research where the researcher is interested in getting an inexpensive approximation of the truth. As the name implies, the sample is selected because they are convenient.

Judgment sampling is a common non-probability method. The researcher selects the sample based on judgment. This is usually an extension of convenience sampling; For example, a researcher may decide to draw the entire sample from one "representative" city, even though the population includes all cities. The technique requires confidence that the chosen sample is truly representative of the entire population.

no single tribe, occupation or age was dominant. The local understanding of PTRO facilitators, working under the oversight of the experienced Kabul based research teams, was vital in ensuring such representativeness. Further respondents were also selected owing to their willingness to participate in the survey and their openness to questioning – ultimately it was down to the respondent whether they wished to be interviewed.

In all locations PTRO research teams hired and trained female field researchers in order to incorporate the view of women into the survey. However, accessing women proved difficult outside of the urban centres meaning that the majority of women were from the urban or semi-urban areas (see methodological challenges below).

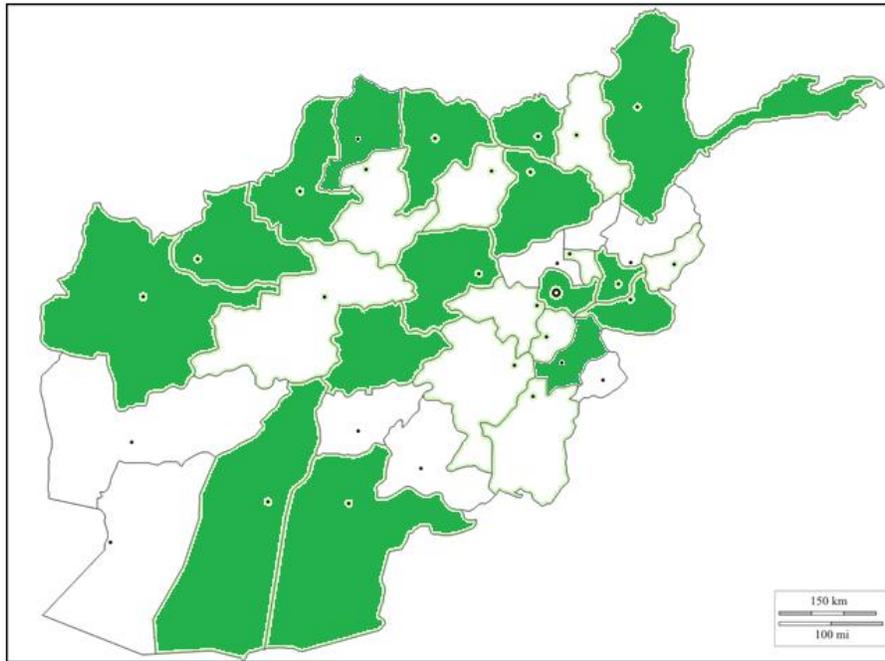


Figure 2: Provincial coverage

Sample population

During the months of July and August 2011 PTRO successfully collected the views of 4,763 Afghans across the 16 provinces. Across the 4,763 respondents a total of 20% were female respondents, providing an acceptable coverage, given the cultural and security restrictions on interviewing women in conservative locations. The mean age of respondents was 35.9 years (one year higher for men and three years lower for women). The frequency of ages and range of ethnicities and professions can be seen in Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5 below.

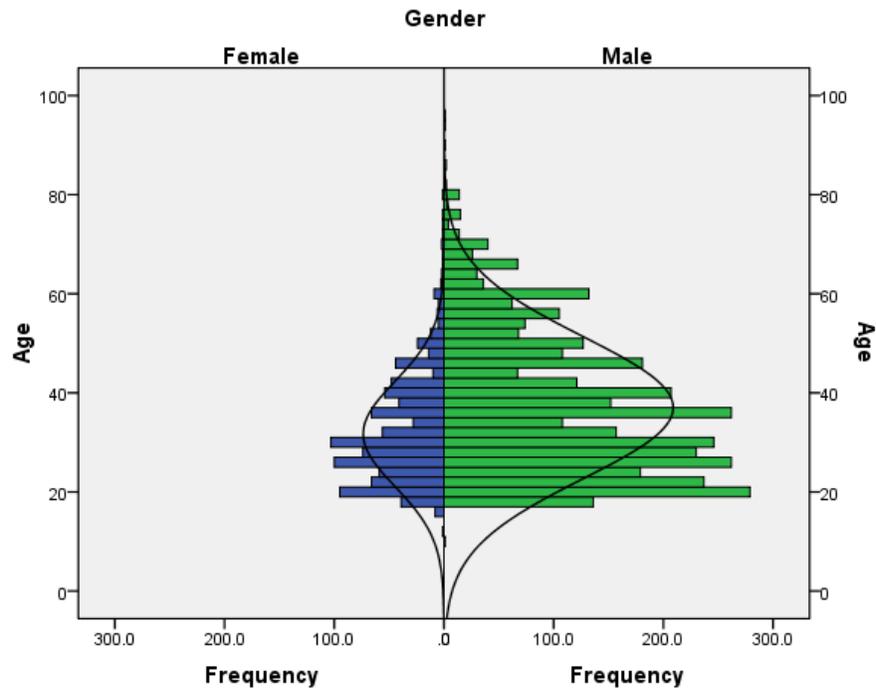


Figure 3: Respondent age distribution

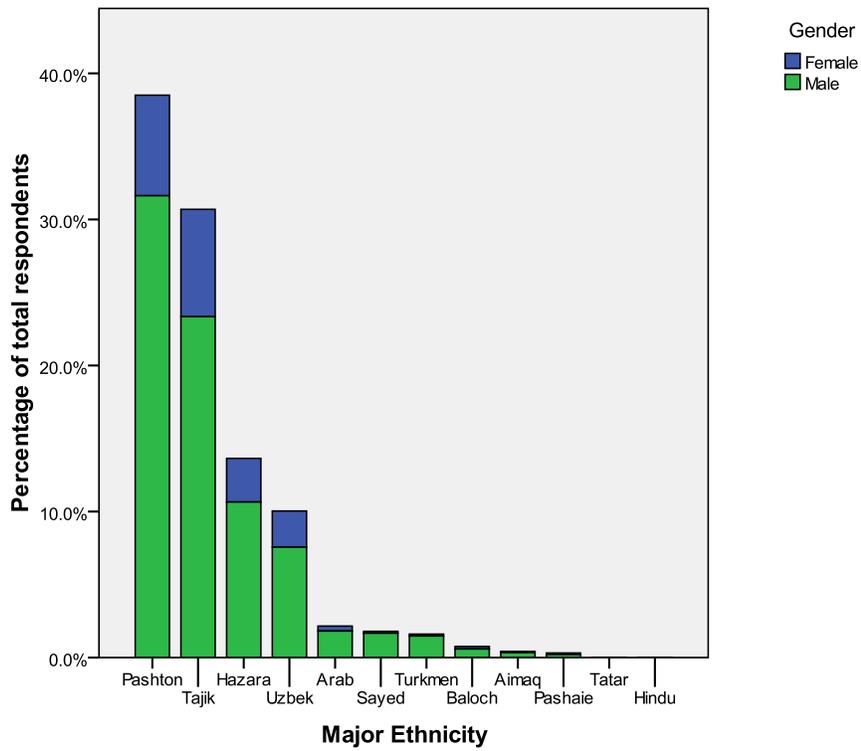


Figure 4: Respondent ethnicity

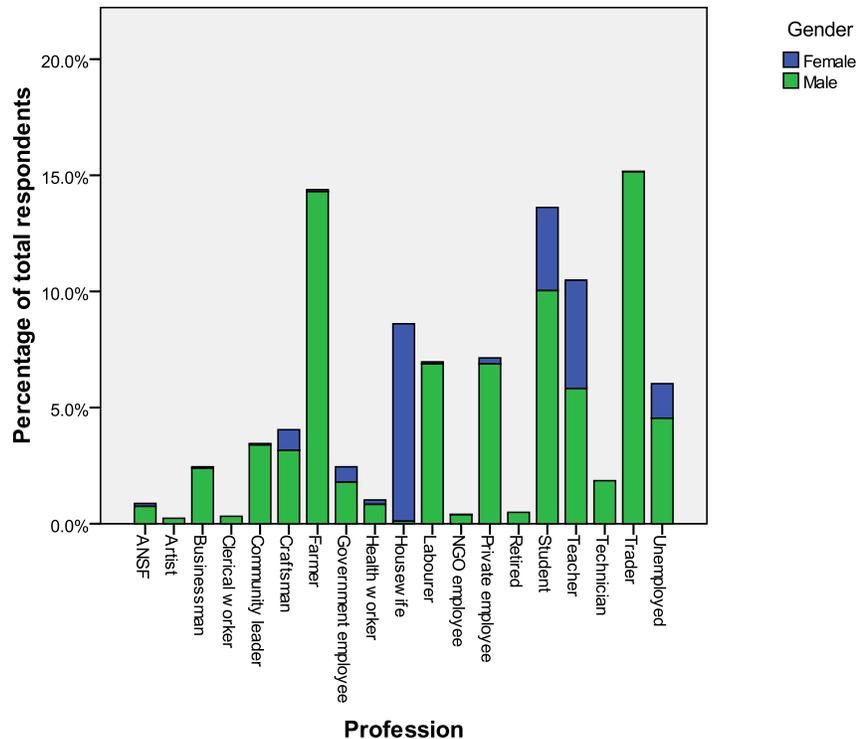


Figure 5: Respondent professions

When compared to existing estimates of demographics, PTRO achieved a sample population which is broadly comparable. The CIA World factbook lists the ethnic breakdown as 42% Pashtun, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimaq 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, other 4%.¹⁶, while this survey's ethnic breakdown was 39% Pashtun, 31% Tajik, 14% Hazara, 10% Uzbek, 0.5% Aimaq, 2% Turkmen, 1% Baloch. This highlights that while PTRO have potentially under represented the Aimaq population, the major ethnicities are broadly in keeping with common estimates of the ethnic make-up.

Further, the breakdown by age, with the majority of respondents between the ages of 20-40 years of age, is broadly representative of the adult population in Afghanistan, highlighted by the fewer respondents above 60 years of age. The professions of respondents were varied with both rural and urban livelihoods represented. It should also be noted that this list is unlikely to be exhaustive as many of the respondents will have held multiple jobs as part of their coping strategies. The sample capture of students is particularly high and potentially represents a bias in the sample approach as the young age of some of the researchers is likely to have introduced a slight preference for interviewing their peers. However, overall the age and professions are varied.

Insecurity in many of the districts restricted access to some of the most remote and rural areas during the field collection. This meant that, despite the strong efforts of the research teams, the remote areas which were surveyed were selected because their particular security situation could guarantee access. Overall this meant that outside of the provincial centres and interviews with displaced peoples, the

¹⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed 1st January 2012)

sample population was lacking a large number of respondents who currently live in insurgent controlled communities. However, this does not exclude the opinions of people living in highly insecure and openly contested communities and districts.

Monitoring and checking of data collection

In the field the research teams were monitored extensively by PTRO management staff and further monitored in two provinces by the donor organisation. Monitoring by PTRO management involved the research manager travelling to the field sites in order to oversee the data collection and to ensure that correct procedures were being followed. Further, the research teams from Kabul monitored the activities of field facilitators, both coaching and physically overseeing their activities in the communities. Only when a certain level of confidence had been achieved were the field facilitators allowed to operate without supervision. Daily checks on the surveyors were carried out by telephone from the programme manager in Kabul in order to follow the speed of data collection and to note the locations of the research. The donor sent a monitoring team to both Badakhshan and Herat province and these teams joined the PTRO researchers for three days of interviews.

Once data was collected, the field teams were debriefed back in Kabul by the programme manager. The debrief allowed the research teams to report their feedback and specifically to comment on any methodological challenges which had not been previously addressed. The debrief process also allowed the programme manager to ask probing questions regarding the research environment, participant responses and the overall trends from both provinces and regions. These summary findings were triangulated against the submitted and translated survey forms in order to match the two and check the integrity of the data.

Translation spot checks were undertaken by the research manager and a simple data comparison through MS Excel and SPSS statistics software was used in order to check for any duplicates or recurring trends. Any data found to be lacking the necessary quality, either through multiple missing fields or inconsistent answers, was rejected and, time permitting, the research teams were made to collect the findings once again – in total 13 survey forms were rejected from 4,776 collected and 40 were collected for a second time due to a lack of coherent data entry.

Limitations to the methodology

A national survey of this nature is not carried out without challenges and a number of difficulties were experienced during the field research process. Primarily there was great difficulty ensuring staff safety and access to all the selected research districts. Despite the pre-selection of sites due to their accessibility, as well as the completion of security assessments by the research coordinator prior to all research trips, a number of planned districts needed to be changed due to periods of flux in security conditions. Significantly, access to Sar-e Pul was deemed too dangerous for staff members and the entire province was substituted with Jawzjan in the north of Afghanistan. Despite efforts to ensure security the research team still suffered incidents of intimidation and accusations of spying.

As mentioned, there was difficulty in accessing women outside of the urban centres due to a reluctance in some communities to allow women residents to speak with unfamiliar female researchers, and because of the inability of PTRO's female researchers to travel far afield owing to concerns with security

expressed by their family members. Despite the use of *maharams*¹⁷, women researchers were still unable to travel to the more remote communities and the survey resources, as well as cultural constraints, did not allow local hiring of women at a community level. Research activities were also, at times, restricted by the government authorities who required PTRO research teams to have a letter of authority for the research from the High Peace Council (HPC). However, such a letter of authority proved difficult to obtain and as a result the research teams had some difficulty with government offices and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) approaching research enumerators.

¹⁷ An accompanying male, usually a family member or husband.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Community understandings of the APRP

Survey responses highlight that the peace process faces major obstacles in terms of citizens' understanding. In general, the decision of the government to initiate a peace and reintegration process enjoys a high level of recognition, but many people do not have a clear idea of the specific objectives of the APRP program, its beneficiaries or its activities.

The survey results point to a significant level of confusion over definition of the terms used within the peace process and a lack of precise knowledge on the exact aims of the APRP. Many respondents reported that both 'reconciliation' and 'reintegration' meant the same thing or that they did not know the difference between them, although some others did note that there was a difference in the groups each was aimed at. Within the population who had an understanding of the terms, reintegration was generally perceived to involve the "bringing home" of local armed opposition groups (often including some notion of surrender or submission), whereas reconciliation was seen as the larger, national process towards a comprehensive peace deal, including opposition groups joining the government and the recognition of their demands. To many respondents, reconciliation appears to convey an attitude of forgiveness, and there was indication that people want to see a just and Islamic settlement to the conflict.

There was also a lack of clarity over the chronology of the processes within the APRP, with some people saying that reintegration only happens *after* reconciliation, but is permanent, as opposed to reconciliation, which is seen as only lasting for a finite amount of time. In general the survey results highlight that the two terms are often conflated when they are not understood to mean, respectively, the process by which negotiated unity is achieved at the national (and international) level, and through which local communities accept former fighters back to live and work in their own communities.

A larger percentage of men than women have heard of the APRP, but only marginally so (76% of men as opposed to 65% of women, see Figure 26). This conceals a wide variety amongst the different provinces, however, and although a majority of men answered positively in all but one province (Bamyan), a far larger proportion of women in many provinces have no knowledge of the process. More than 95% of female respondents have heard of the process in Badghis, Baghlan and Herat; this correlates with the high number of reintegration events and activities within their provincial centres that all three of these provinces have seen. Elsewhere, in areas with comparatively fewer active reintegration events, less than 50% of female respondents in Badakhshan, Bamyan, Kabul, Kunduz and Paktia answered positively, highlighting a lack of awareness of the programme (see Figure 7). In other areas, women were very well informed, and in fact in Badghis, a marginally larger proportion of female respondents were aware of the process than males.

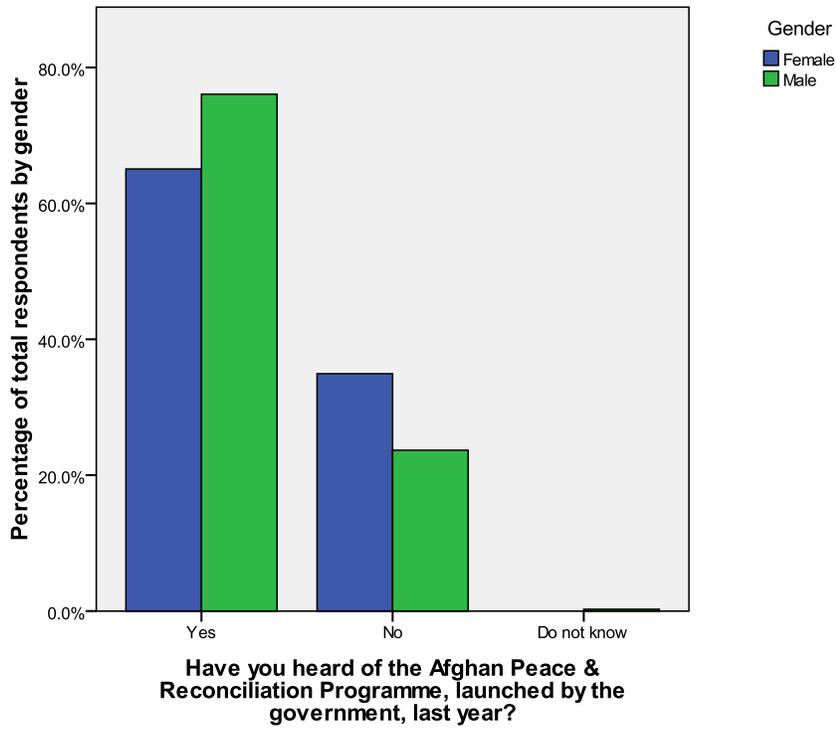


Figure 6: Awareness of the APRP by gender

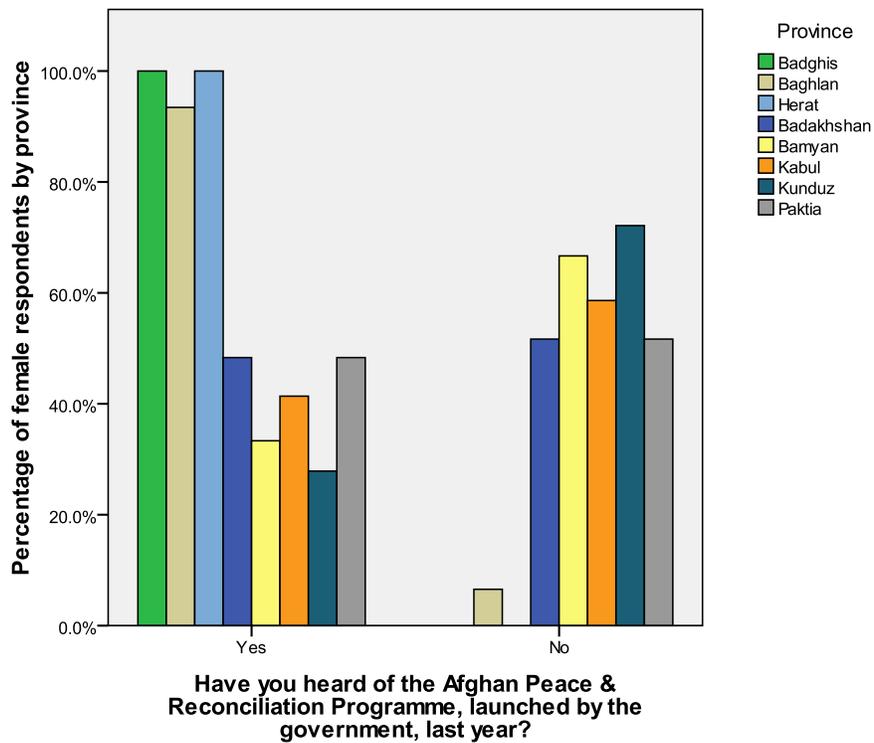


Figure 7: Female awareness of the APRP by province

In addition to the lack of local reintegration events, the relative social isolation of many women, and their exclusion from political and community decision-making¹⁸, might lead to them being less well informed about political developments. Although the APRP has been publicised through national media, particularly via public radio networks, and through the activities of provincial peace councils, women's access to information is more limited because their social interaction is often curtailed to include only close family members. This may be a product of social conservatism or insecurity (e.g. in Paktia), or the remoteness of the location (e.g. in Badakhshan), or it could be that women are simply more honest about their lack of knowledge, thus providing the regional variation seen in the survey results.

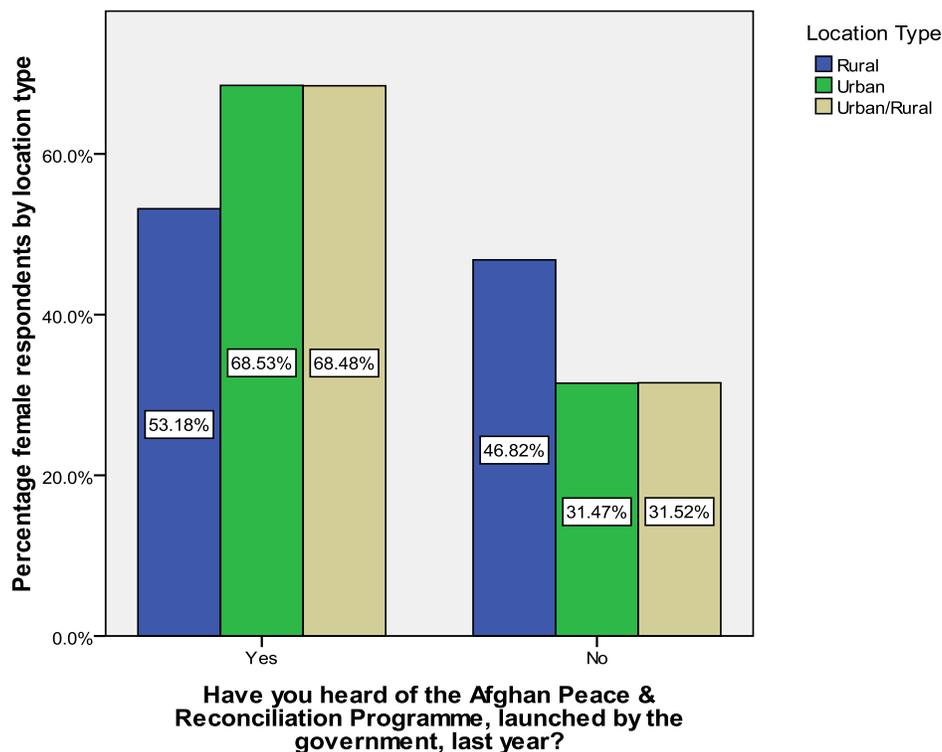


Figure 8: Female awareness of the APRP

The survey results suggest that this trend is more pronounced in rural communities, where traditional social and community-level structures leave less room for females' contribution towards affairs traditionally monopolised by men. 53% of women in rural areas were aware of the process, compared with 69% of women in urban locations (see Figure 8). This marginal difference was replicated across the male population, albeit to a lesser extent. The comparative lack of knowledge in the rural areas may also be linked to the activities of the relevant government ministries involved in the APRP. To date, many of the 'APRP roadshows' have been held in provincial centres where much of the registration of incoming

¹⁸ Ali Wardak, STATE AND NON-STATE JUSTICE SYSTEMS IN AFGHANISTAN: THE NEED FOR SYNERGY, THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW VOLUME 32, ISSUE 5; see especially Figure 4: Representation at local *Jirgas* and *Shuras*; <http://www.law.upenn.edu/journals/jil/articles/volume32/issue5/Wardak32U.Pa.J.Int%27IL.1305%282011%29.pdf>

reintegers has also been located. There is therefore a certain bias towards urban centres, and a larger proportion of respondents from district centres have an awareness of the APRP (79% of men, 71% of women) than respondents in outlying districts (75% of men, 61% of women). Differences in all of these are small, however, and in general, overall awareness of the APRP is good.

Support for the process

A huge majority of respondents, over 95%, were either supportive or very supportive of the reconciliation programme, with most reporting that the time is now right for reconciliation to occur. Female respondents’ support was marginally more muted than that of their male counterparts, but only to the extent that a higher proportion were “somewhat” rather than “very” supportive of the process.

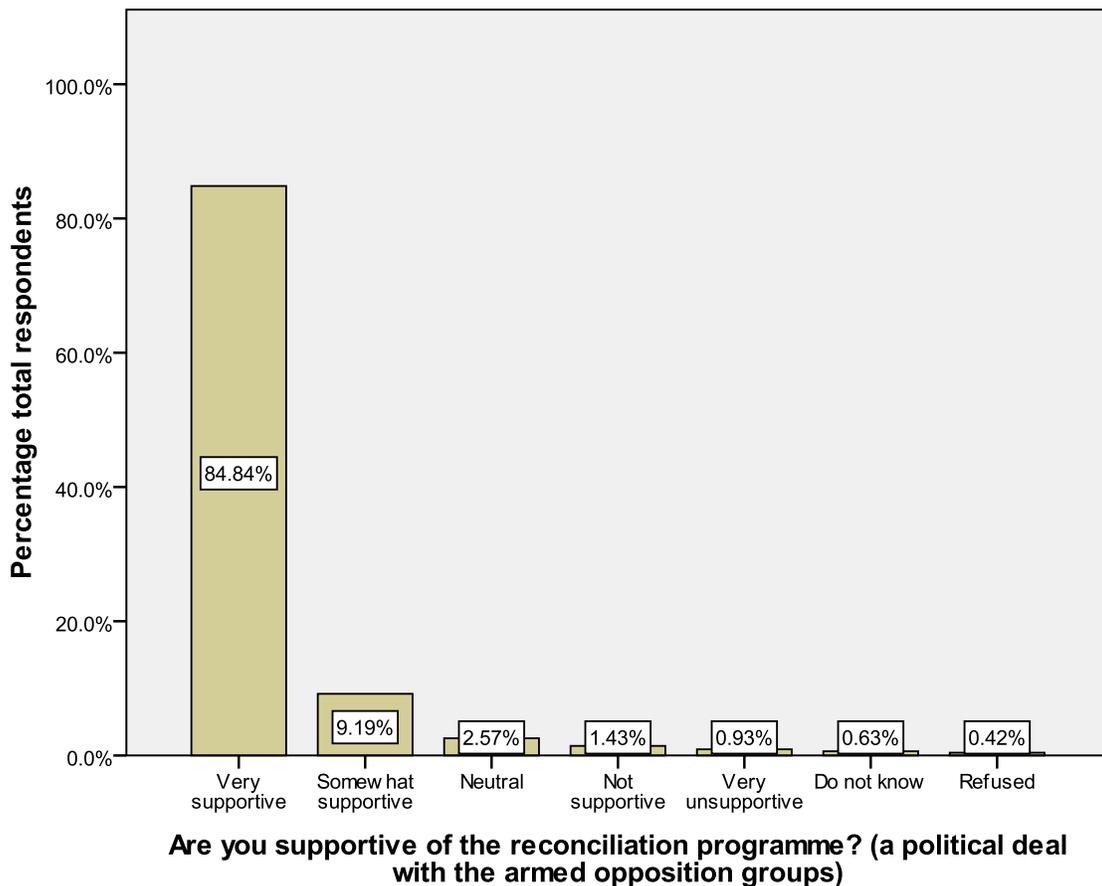


Figure 9: Support for reconciliation

Respondents were asked to select between three preferred ways for the current conflict to be brought to an end: accepting all the Taliban demands, defeating the Taliban and other groups militarily, or reaching a mutually acceptable political settlement. Overall, there was strong support for a mutually acceptable political settlement to the conflict. Of the male respondents, Helmand showed the lowest support for this position at just above 50% (see Table 2).

Female respondents have a much more varied attitude towards strategies to end the conflict, and answers were much more evenly spread. In Helmand nearly 60% of female respondents were in favour of accepting all of the Taliban's demands, and in Jawzjan almost 50% of female respondents saw defeating the Taliban and other groups by military means as the way to end the conflict (see Table 2). In contrast, only 17% of male respondents in Helmand had the same opinion (accepting the Taliban's demands), and less than 8% of males in Jawzjan held the same view (militarily defeating the Taliban).

This shows that among males there is much more uniformity in the acceptance of a mutually agreeable settlement as an end to the conflict, and that female respondents demonstrate much more polarisation in their viewpoints, as expressed during the survey, of how the conflict should end. This may be due to a combination of factors: that women are more honest in giving their opinions, or that they feel (particularly in northern provinces) that they have more to lose from an agreed settlement which would necessarily include some elements of Taliban governance.

For both males and female respondents, those who had heard about the APRP were more likely to support an agreed settlement than those who had no knowledge of it (82% of males who had heard of the APRP as opposed to 76% of those who had not, and 64% of females who knew about the APRP in contrast to 38% of those who did not).

How do you want the current armed conflict between the government and the Taliban insurgents to end?

Province		Accepting all the Taliban demands (% provincial respondents)	Defeating the Taliban and other groups militarily	Reaching a mutually acceptable political settlement
Badakhshan	Female	1.7%	30.0%	56.7%
	Male	2.1%	5.0%	89.1%
Badghis	Female	23.3%	1.7%	75.0%
	Male	7.1%	3.4%	85.7%
Baghlan	Female	8.2%	21.3%	63.9%
	Male	4.7%	1.7%	91.9%
Balkh	Female	22.0%	39.0%	39.0%
	Male	2.1%	4.2%	90.0%
Bamyan	Female	10.1%	36.2%	39.1%
	Male	1.3%	15.4%	75.4%
Daikundi	Female	10.0%	20.0%	70.0%
	Male	6.7%	19.6%	70.8%
Faryab	Female	10.5%	5.3%	80.7%
	Male	1.2%	7.4%	89.7%
Helmand	Female	59.0%	11.5%	26.2%
	Male	17.6%	12.0%	50.6%
Herat	Female	14.9%		85.1%
	Male	3.7%	5.1%	88.8%
Jawzjan	Female	1.7%	49.2%	22.0%
	Male	1.3%	7.6%	84.7%
Kabul	Female	3.3%	38.3%	48.3%
	Male	18.4%	3.3%	71.7%
Kandahar	Female	11.7%	25.0%	61.7%
	Male	15.1%	0.8%	74.5%
Kunduz	Female	37.7%	14.8%	24.6%
	Male	7.5%	5.0%	84.9%
Laghman	Female	10.0%	5.0%	58.3%
	Male	3.3%	0.4%	90.8%
Nangarhar	Female	1.7%	3.3%	60.0%
	Male	7.1%	0.4%	84.5%
Paktia	Female	16.7%	18.3%	61.7%
	Male	23.8%	3.8%	66.5%

Table 2: Ending the conflict (results by province and gender)

	North/South ¹⁹				Major Ethnicity						District Type			
	North		South		Pashton		Tajik		Hazara		Provincial Centre		Outlying	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Accepting all the Taliban demands	3.7%	15.1%	16.1%	35.5%	12.5%	19.1%	5.0%	16.1%	4.2%	8.5%	7.7%	16.9%	7.5%	14.2%
Defeating the Taliban and other groups militarily	4.9%	23.0%	6.3%	18.2%	3.3%	12.6%	4.0%	20.2%	16.5%	29.8%	6.0%	22.1%	5.9%	18.7%
Reaching a mutually acceptable political settlement	87.7%	51.4%	62.1%	43.8%	76.2%	58.2%	86.7%	53.3%	74.2%	54.6%	78.6%	54.4%	81.2%	54.5%

Table 3: Ending the conflict (by location, ethnicity and gender)

¹⁹ For this categorisation, provinces in the North included Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan and Kunduz. Those categorised as South were Helmand and Kandahar.

Support was generally articulated in overarching sentiments that the time is right for reconciliation, although when asked to elaborate, respondents' reasons were sometimes vague and lacking focus. Reasons most often stemmed from a general weariness of war allied to hope that a return to normality, together with improvements in security and development, would swiftly follow any reconciliation agreement. In certain provinces respondents noted that security had already been established, and that therefore political developments would be almost inevitable. These responses came from Baghlan, Badakhshan and Bamyan, some of the provinces that currently suffer the least amount of insecurity. The responses to this question can therefore be characterised as "localised" – respondents' views are coloured by the particular local environment and unencumbered by the wider, national political and security situation. For instance, a respondent in Bamyan, while acknowledging that "of course we have a little war in some places", stated that the current level of war is not severe enough to represent an obstacle to the peace process. Such sentiments are not found in areas of acute insecurity.

However, the relationship between local insecurity and perception of a peace process appears to be more nuanced. A closer look at the correlation between basic attitudes to reconciliation and the security of each district yields no direct relationship; there is no significant difference between areas where there is heightened insecurity and those that enjoy more stability. In the same way, there is no significant correlation in the overall levels of support for the APRP and levels of insecurity in different districts across the country (see Figure 10). Therefore it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions that the security environment across the country defines respondents' optimism towards the reconciliation process. However, at a very local level it may shape their understandings of the obstacles and the varying routes to consolidated peace. A full analysis of these localised trends would require a more in-depth and focussed study.

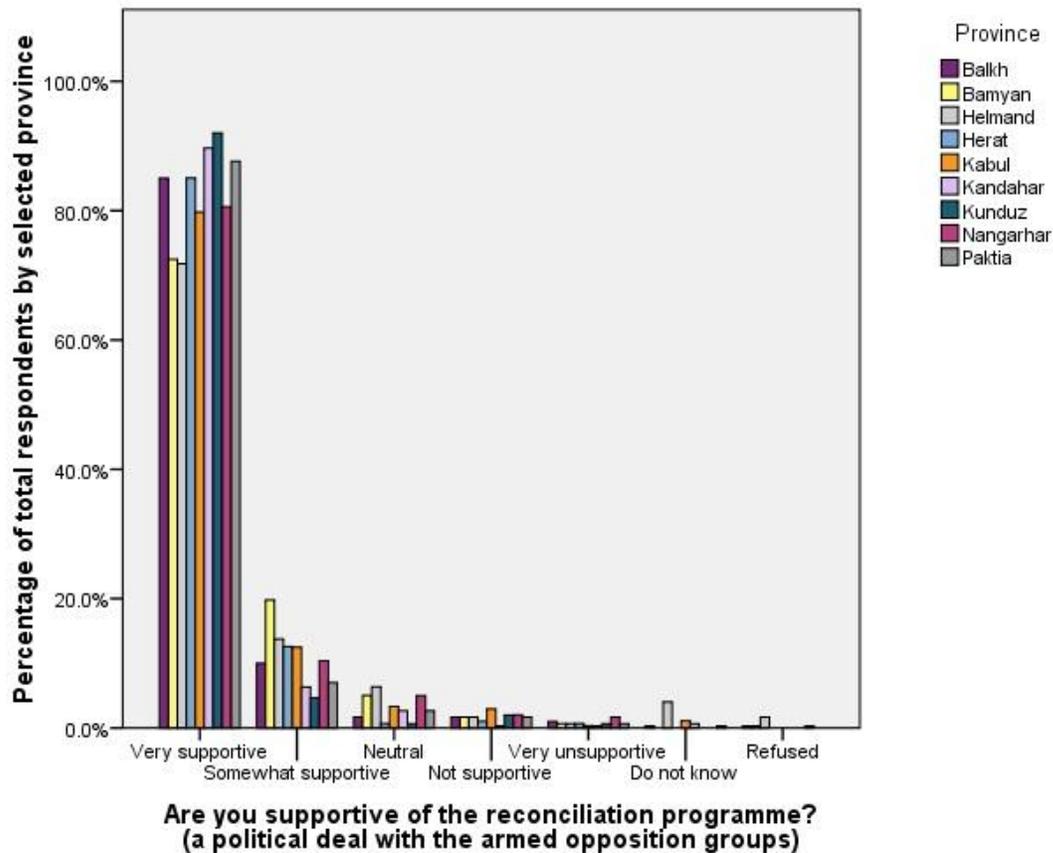


Figure 10: APRP support by selected province

More particularly, some respondents in their qualitative answers alluded to the presence of international troops as a reason for hope that the process could move forward – these people felt that without their presence, arranging and implementing negotiations between the warring parties would be impossible. This is a view not shared within all sections of the survey population and negative views regarding the role of the international troop presence in Afghanistan are discussed later in the paper. Overall it appears that individual notions towards the peace process are formed locally and therefore conflicting views are common. The role of international forces is both a point of contention and seen as a necessary element of the emerging process. Again, this is elaborated later in this paper.

Of those who claimed that the time is not right for talks, although only 12% of respondents, multiple specific reasons were put forward, from the unwillingness of the Taliban to compromise, to the continued presence of foreign forces; and from the weakness of the current government to interference by foreign entities opposed to any settlement. Although people are broadly in favour of reconciliation and a settlement to the conflict, it appears that most are unsure about the efforts made to date, what reconciliation and settlement would actually look like, and even current comparative levels of security across the country.

Support for government and opposition groups

When questioned on the pre-conditions for talks, 84% of respondents judge the government's demands on insurgent groups as acceptable, and 59% accept the insurgents' demands. Looking more closely at those who support the government's conditions, although 42% do not support the conditions of the Taliban, a majority of this group (56%) also support the Taliban's prerequisite for the start of any negotiations (see Table 6). Similarly, of those who support the Taliban's condition, 82% also support the government's. While majority support for the Taliban's condition could be seen as a reaction to unpopular conduct by the IMF (such as night raids), and support for the government could stem from opposition to intransigent Taliban behaviour, overlapping support can more optimistically be seen as giving both the government and opposition groups a certain amount of leeway - to afford negotiating parties the popular political "space" necessary to begin talks aimed at ending the conflict.

The government has set conditions for the armed opposition groups to begin peace talks; these are to lay down their weapons, cut ties with Al Qaeda and to accept the Afghan Constitution. Do you support these conditions? (% by category)														
	North/South		Selected Provinces							Major Ethnicity			District Type	
	North	South	Ba dakhshan	Ba dghis	Fa ryab	Balkh	Hel mand	Kandaha r	Paktia	Pash ton	Tajik	Ha za ra	Provincial Centre	Outlying
Yes	87.3%	72.2%	86.0%	95.0%	95.0%	87.3%	80.2%	64.3%	57.3%	73.7%	88.2%	90.5%	83.9%	83.1%
No	10.7%	26.9%	12.7%	4.7%	5.0%	10.7%	19.5%	34.3%	42.7%	24.4%	10.1%	8.4%	15.1%	14.9%

Table 4: Support for Government conditions

The Taliban have clearly stated that they would not enter into negotiations with the government unless all the International Forces leave Afghanistan, do you support this condition? (% by category)														
	North/South		Selected Provinces							Major Ethnicity			District Type	
	North	South	Ba dakhshan	Ba dghis	Fa ryab	Balkh	Hel mand	Kandaha r	Paktia	Pash ton	Tajik	Ha za ra	Provincial Centre	Outlying
Yes	60.4%	51.5%	58.0%	41.1%	56.3%	64.0%	32.6%	70.3%	73.0%	64.9%	58.7%	34.7%	52.2%	60.7%
No	36.5%	47.0%	39.7%	58.2%	42.3%	32.0%	67.1%	27.0%	27.0%	32.9%	38.6%	63.6%	45.5%	36.8%

Table 5: Support for Taliban conditions

A majority of respondents from the Hazara ethnic group displayed a clear opposition to the Taliban's position, in stark contrast to respondents of all other ethnicities. Pashton respondents exhibited the most support for the Taliban's position, although only by a small margin over Tajiks. In contrast to other provinces, the majority of respondents in Badghis, Bamyan, Daikundi and Helmand do not support the Taliban conditions, although these provinces do not demonstrate more support for the governments'. In Bamyan, respondents cite their mistrust of the Taliban and their fear of civil war should foreign forces leave as the rationale for opposing the Taliban's negotiating position. Support for the government's conditions is lowest in the provinces of Paktia and Kandahar, although still a majority opinion (57% and 64%, respectively). These provinces also record the highest level of support for the Taliban's condition (73% and 70%), the highest provincial levels of opposition to the government (albeit a minority of respondents - 43% and 34%), and the lowest opposition to the Taliban's position (27% for both – see Table 4 and Table 5).

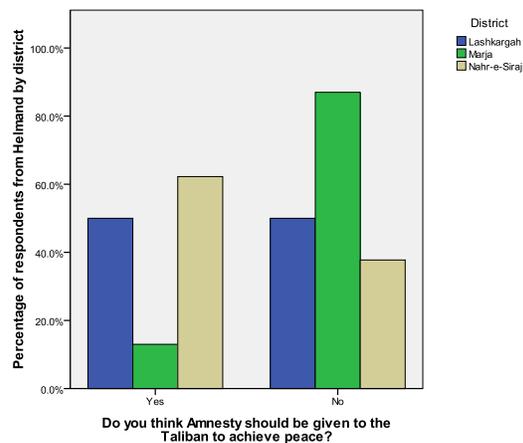
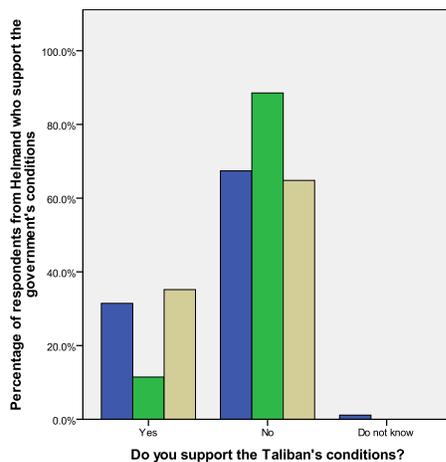
	The government has set conditions for the armed opposition groups to begin peace talks; these are to lay down their weapons, cut ties with Al Qaeda and to accept the Afghan Constitution. Do you support these conditions? (% total respondents)		
		Yes	No
All Respondents		83.4%	15.0%
The Taliban have clearly stated that they would not enter into negotiations with the government unless all the International Forces leave Afghanistan, do you support this condition? (% within previous answer)	Yes	56.3%	68.2%
	No	41.6%	30.7%

	The Taliban have clearly stated that they would not enter into negotiations with the government unless all the International Forces leave Afghanistan, do you support this condition? (% total respondents)		
		Yes	No
All Respondents		57.9%	39.7%
The government has set conditions for the armed opposition groups to begin peace talks; these are to lay down their weapons, cut ties with Al Qaeda and to accept the Afghan Constitution. Do you support these conditions? (% within previous answer)	Yes	81.2%	87.8%
	No	17.7%	11.6%

Table 6: Support for preconditions

In Helmand, there was a notable correlation between those people who supported the government’s position and those who opposed the Taliban’s, with over 60% of all respondents backing the government’s but not the Taliban’s demands. In addition, support for the government’s position amongst Helmandi respondents was allied with a distrust of the Taliban, and more than 60% of those who backed the government were opposed to any amnesty for the Taliban. Looking more closely at Helmand province, respondents in Marjah, a highly contested and previously Taliban controlled district, support for the government and active opposition to the Taliban are striking in their popularity – nearly 90% want no amnesty for the Taliban and do not support their preconditions, and more than 95% support the government’s position. However, this polarisation does not manifest itself in a desire for military victory over the Taliban, with 97% of Marjah’s respondents very supportive of the peace process, and more than 50% wanting to see a mutually acceptable political settlement. This could be indicative of the unprecedented scale of the conflict seen in the district and potentially a reaction to the behaviour of the Taliban whilst Marjah was under their control.

It is apparent that the local context in Marjah of recent stabilisation following many years of contest and Taliban control has coloured local perceptions and opinions on the national peace process. This is a marked contrast to other areas, such as Laghman, Badakhshan, and Kunduz, where the overwhelming majority of respondents support both a Taliban amnesty and the government’s negotiating position. Unfortunately, the unique set of circumstances in Marjah does not allow comparison across the research sites and such strong consensus was not seen elsewhere.



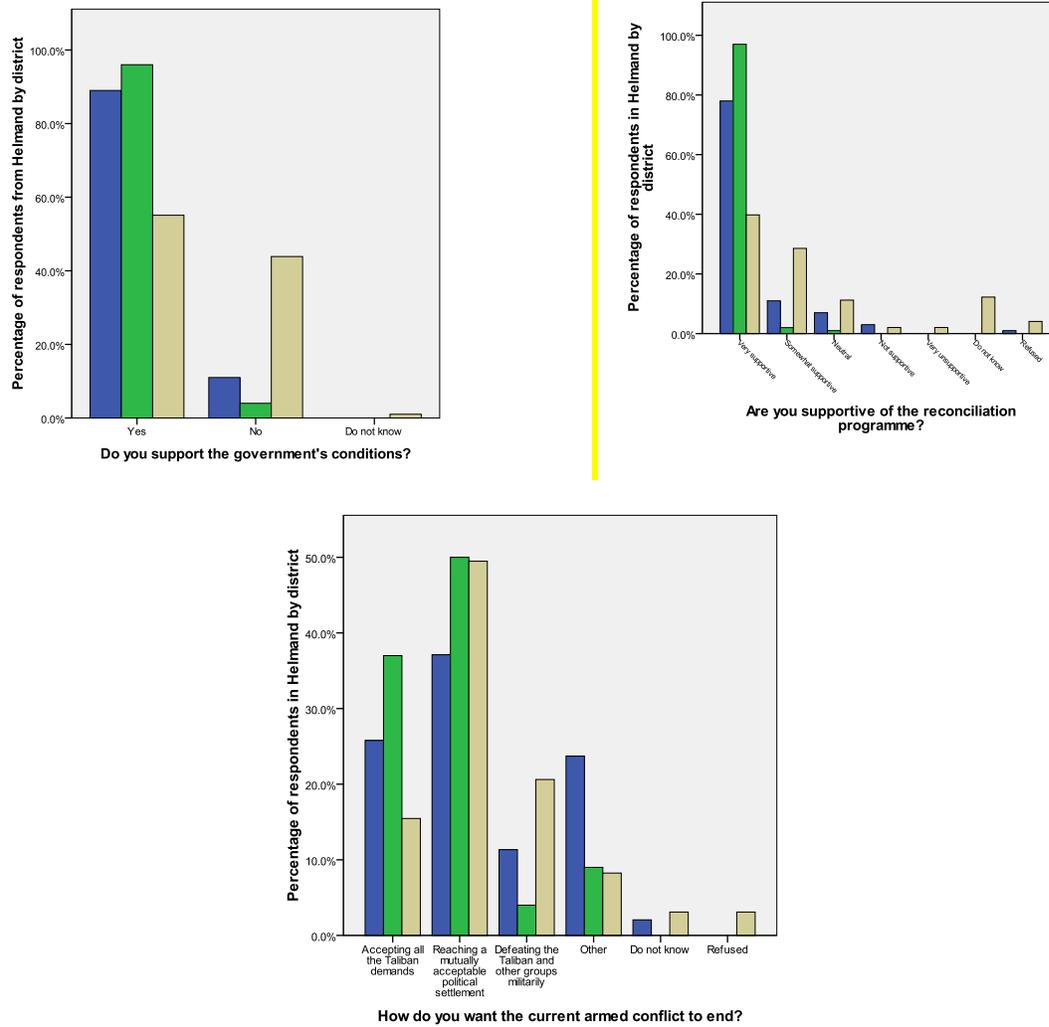


Figure 11: Attitudes to reconciliation in Helmand province

Viability of negotiations

Overall opinion is divided over whether the Taliban, both locally and through the Pakistan-based leadership, would be willing to join the process. Most respondents (61%) thought that the insurgent leadership would not be willing while local groups would be, but there were some notable exceptions. In Helmand, mistrust in the Taliban is strongly in evidence, with a majority stating that both the leadership (a huge majority of respondents) and local insurgent groups (marginally) would not want to join the process (see Figure 12).

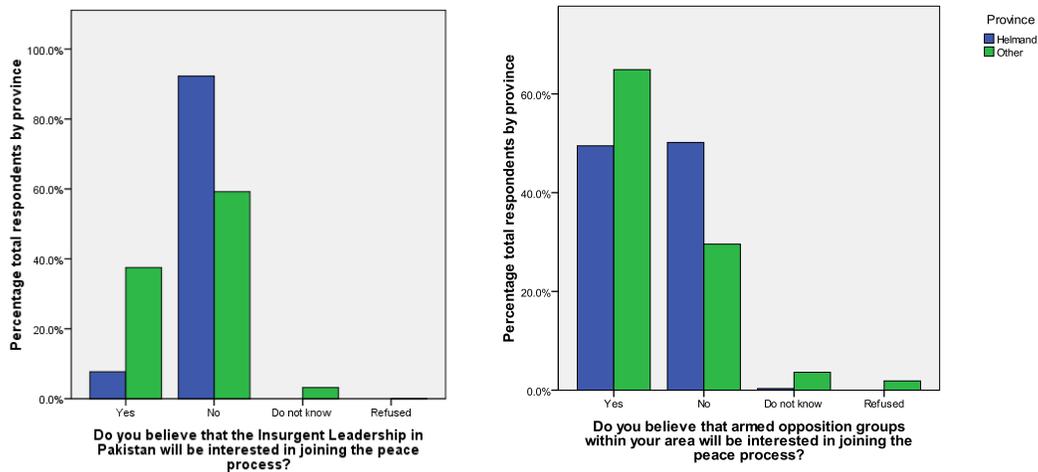


Figure 12: Perception of the willingness of opposition groups to join the process

When asked what would need to happen before groups would reintegrate, there is a wide range of ideas, albeit with differing levels of support. Nationally opinions varied evenly between the various steps that respondents imagined would need to be taken before local insurgent groups felt able to join the peace process. In general, however, most of the selected options centred on what the government could do better, e.g. improvements in the government, delivery of reintegration promises and reconciliation itself. This onus on government initiative reflects people's feelings that the state should demonstrate credibility in the process and must be willing to improve in its capabilities, service delivery and willingness to compromise in order to convince insurgent groups to consider peace negotiations.

On the same question, there was distinct regional variation in opinion, with respondents in the north and west more likely to demand government improvements (43% and 29% of respondents respectively in each region), and participants from the Hazarajat region more likely to recommend reconciliation (25%) or Taliban acceptance of the constitution (14%) as opposed to withdrawal of international forces, changing the constitution to reflect the Taliban's wishes, or the disarming of insurgent groups. The cutting of Taliban ties to Al Qaeda was not generally cited as an important condition towards the reintegration of local opposition groups (see Figure 13). In some ways this is not surprising, as most Al Qaeda links are with groups based in Pakistan rather than with local groups in Afghanistan.

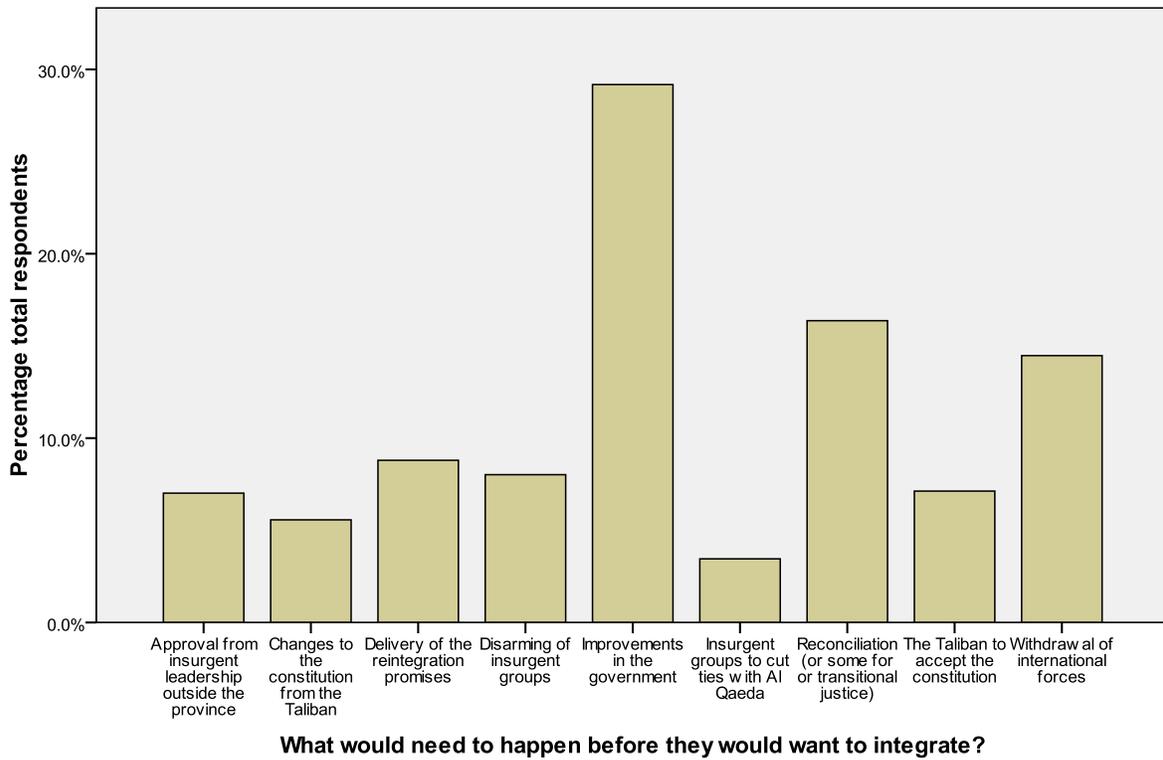


Figure 13: Reintegration preconditions

Respondents in Laghman answered overwhelmingly that they thought both local groups (86% of respondents) and leadership (70%) would like to join the process; a result that was consistent across the three survey districts within the province. This could reflect local conditions which have influenced thinking within the province, as Laghman has now seen the impact of a provincial governor who has embraced reintegration and vocalised the role and importance of peace negotiations. As a result, reintegration events have occurred, and it would make sense that residents in Laghman are therefore more optimistic given the open nature of the provincial government to the insurgent elements.

A majority of overall survey respondents did not perceive the Taliban as autonomous and able to enter into negotiations, although again there was provincial variation in responses. In Badghis and Bamyán a majority thought that the insurgents could act autonomously (see Table 7). Those that felt the Taliban lacked autonomy were clear in pointing towards the influence of Pakistan and many respondents alluded to the Taliban being ‘controlled by outsiders’ with reference to multiple parties, including Pakistan, the ISI in Pakistan, Iran, ISAF, Saudi Arabia, USA and the UK. The array of perceived competing and influential external actors points towards public sentiment that Afghanistan is being used to play out the wars of other nations. It also goes some way to explain the many competing narratives and rumours which abound and inform public positions.

Do you believe that the Taliban and other armed opposition groups have the autonomy to enter into peace negotiations?														
	North/South		Selected Provinces							Major Ethnicity			District Type	
	North	South	Badakhshan	Badghis	Faryab	Baghlan	Bamyan	Herat	Paktia	Pashton	Tajik	Hazara	Provincial Centre	Outlying
Yes	36.0%	40.6%	44.3%	58.5%	22.0%	25.4%	52.3%	33.3%	49.7%	40.2%	38.0%	41.9%	37.7%	37.9%
No	58.8%	56.2%	52.3%	36.5%	76.0%	71.6%	46.0%	57.9%	49.7%	56.1%	57.4%	56.3%	59.2%	57.6%

Table 7: Perception of Taliban autonomy

Respondents were fairly evenly divided on the strength of the government's position going into peace talks. 39% believe that the government is negotiating from a position of strength, and 25% judge that they are negotiating from a position of weakness. 30% consider that the government's position is neither strong nor weak.

When analysing the answers by ethnicity, no ethnic group was more likely than the others to view the government as weak or strong. Instead the distinctions appeared to be provincial in nature and perhaps related to the shared experience of respondents within their individual provinces. These findings once again point to the importance of local conditions in forming the views of the local population, and there are significant provincial differences.

Respondents from Badghis province are overwhelmingly of the opinion that the government is negotiating from a position of strength (72%, followed by Kandahar at 51% and Daikundi at 45%—majority Pashton and Hazara, respectively), but this finding does not extend to all Tajiks, who overall had a very similar opinion of the strength of the government's negotiating position (at 41%) to that of Pashtons (37%) and Hazaras (37%). This could be explained by the relative proliferation of reintegration events in Badghis province, giving respondents the impression that government overtures to insurgent groups are having some success in persuading them to stop fighting. In contrast, in Paktia and Kabul a higher proportion of respondents believed that the government's position was weak (see Table 8). In Paktia this could be related to a general absence of effective government, and the porous nature of the border with Pakistan which allows anti-government groups free access to and from the province, thus giving the impression of weak government authority. Respondents in Kabul are generally more sceptical, and this attitude, together with the nationally focussed views in the capital, and the diverse nature of political actors, could lead to an exacerbated impression of government weakness.

Do you believe the government are negotiating from a position of strength or a position of weakness? (% by category)													
	North/South		Selected Provinces						Major Ethnicity			District Type	
	North	South	Badghis	Kandahar	Daikundi	Helmand	Kabul	Paktia	Pashton	Tajik	Hazara	Provincial Centre	Outlying
Strength	41.2%	45.5%	71.6%	50.7%	45.0%	40.3%	23.8%	26.0%	36.8%	40.6%	36.8%	38.6%	38.6%
Equal	33.2%	17.1%	17.1%	14.0%	25.7%	20.1%	24.2%	21.7%	25.9%	29.5%	32.9%	29.5%	30.2%
Weakness	20.6%	27.4%	10.0%	23.1%	25.3%	31.9%	41.4%	45.7%	29.9%	24.1%	24.2%	24.3%	25.2%

Table 8: Perception of the government's negotiating position

High level Taliban were considered the most important group to include in the peace and reconciliation process in all provinces. The local security dynamics appeared to shape responses with almost 70% of respondents in Helmand pointing to their participation as vital to the process. Other provinces provided further answers in line with the activities of opposition groups in their areas; for instance Hizb-i Islami were seen as the most important group in Nangarhar, and the Haqqani network alongside Hizb-i Islami were viewed as primary in Paktia. Interestingly, many survey participants in Paktia made more than one suggestion in answer to this question, a reflection of the proliferation of groups and the direct effect that they have on the residents of Paktia province (see Figure 14).

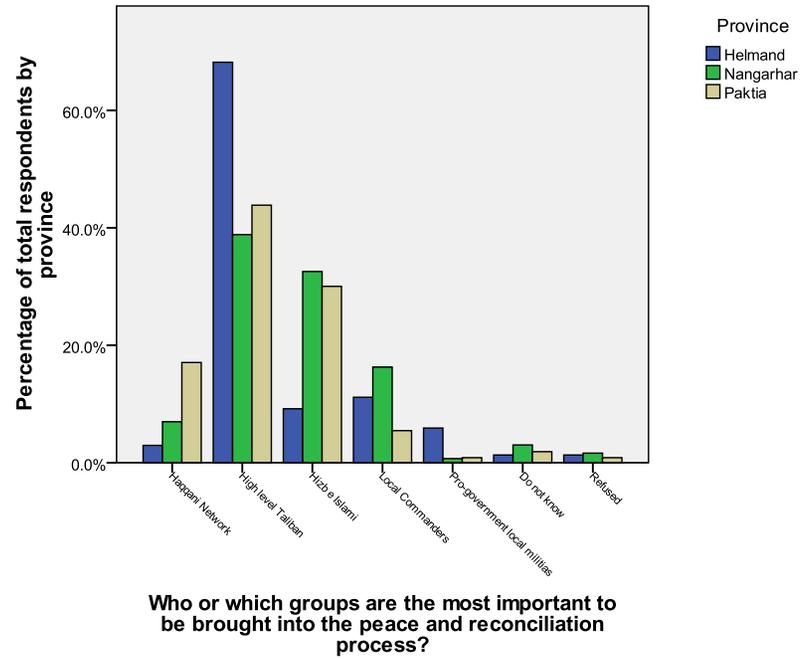


Figure 14: Important groups to include

Fears & Challenges

When discussing respondents’ fears about the peace process, the *idea* of a reconciliation and reintegration process enjoys almost universal support, with more than 85% saying that they have no fears about the process. This is consistent across ethnicities, regions, gender and rural-urban splits. This lack of fear for the process itself chimes with the previously-stated optimism that many respondents felt.

However, this result masks some deep divisions by location and by gender, and in certain locations fears about a loss of rights was substantial. Nationally 45% of women believe that Taliban participation in the peace process would lead to restrictions on rights and freedoms, as opposed to 38% of men. This finding was particularly high in five provinces (Helmand, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Nangarhar and Paktia) where the number of women who thought that their rights would be restricted was 75% (see Figure 15). In the same provinces only 35% of men shared this opinion (Figure 16). This result is most pronounced in the Marjah district of Helmand, where 90% of female respondents think that their rights will be circumscribed. This variation in female opinion is in marked contrast to the opinions of men, between 65 and 70% of whom do not believe that significant rights and freedoms would be curtailed under Taliban participation in peace process. Again, there was little sign of differences in opinion based on ethnicity. For example, 43% of Hazara respondents thought that a peace settlement would lead to a loss of fundamental values, compared with 40% of respondents overall.

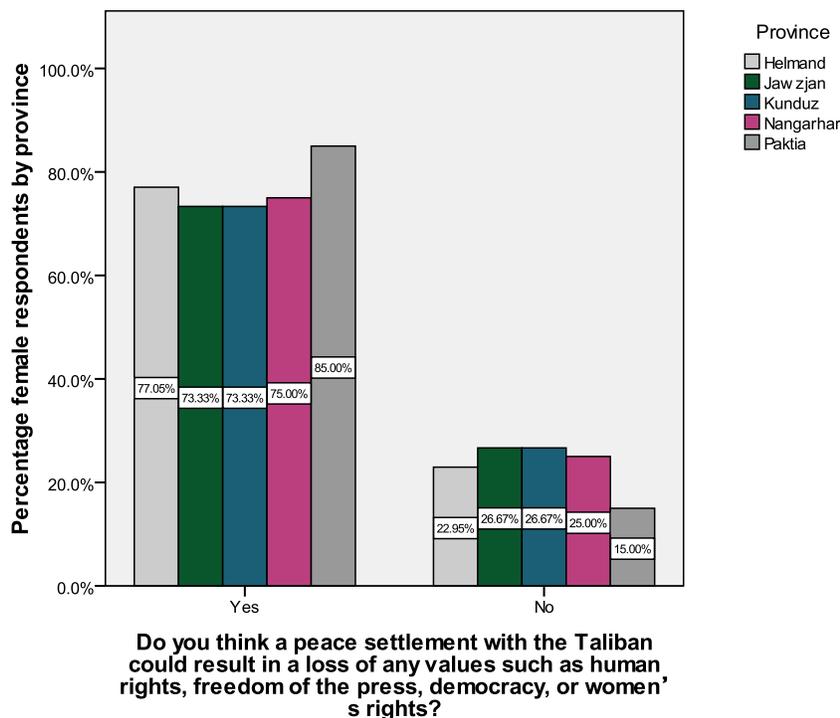


Figure 15: Loss of rights - women

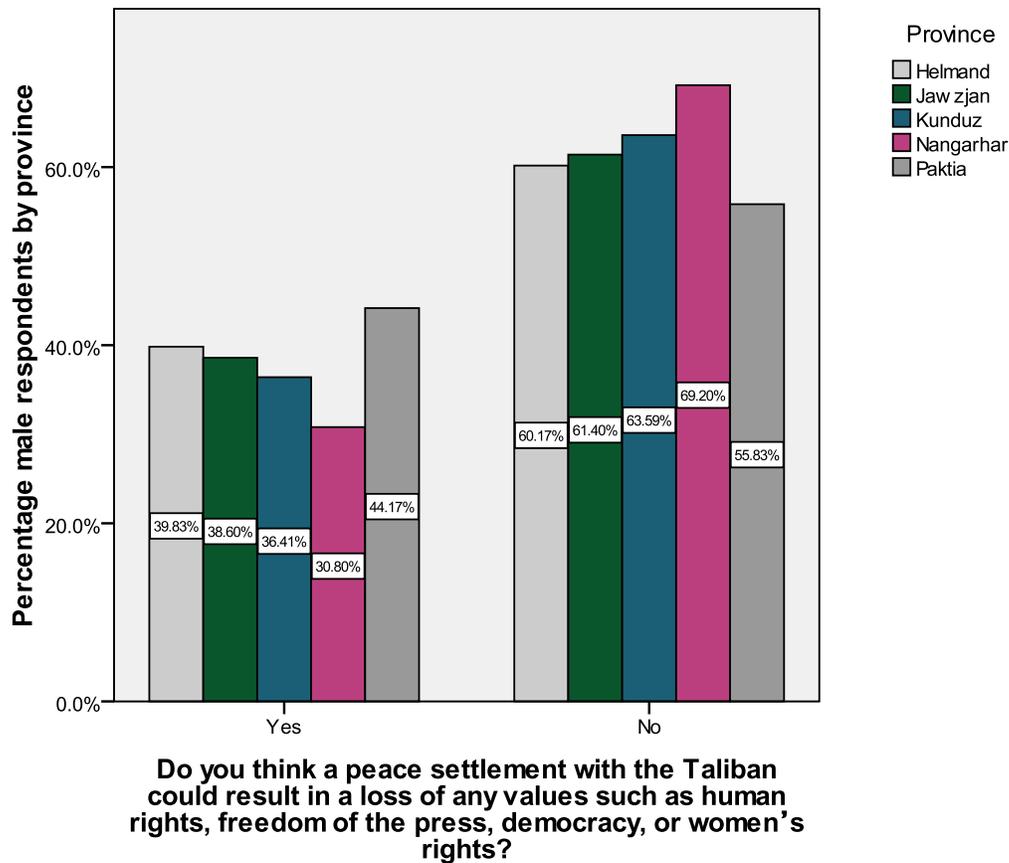


Figure 16: Loss of rights - men

Very few respondents believed that the potential for ethnic conflicts would increase due to the peace process. This finding was also consistent across gender and location, although there were slightly more Hazara respondents who thought that ethnic conflict would be exacerbated, particularly in Daikundi. Even here, though, this measured only slightly more than 25%.

Challenges: Reintegration

Respondents questioned the credibility of the reintegration programme by identifying the vast majority of 'reintegrees' as criminals; more than 50% of respondents overall (see Figure 17). This was once again split provincially and it was apparent that respondents from Herat more closely affiliated the returning fighters with Mullah Omar Taliban membership. The perception of reintegrees as criminals is compounded by the lack of say that communities felt they have had in the process; while in Faryab and Badghis it appeared that the community were consulted regarding the reintegration, in Nangarhar the majority of respondents noted that they had no say in the events. This lack of voice or representation is indicative of the negative views surrounding the process within the strategic eastern province.

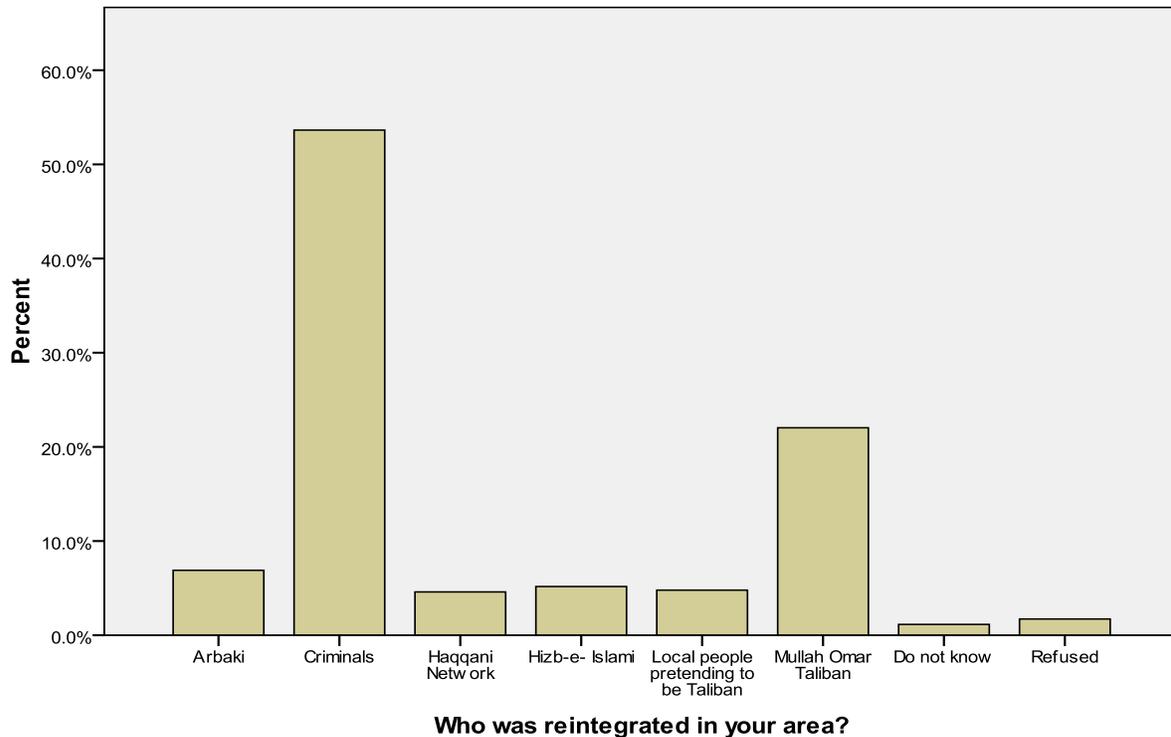


Figure 17: Reintegration groups

Despite ISAF reports of 2,357 reintegrees having entered the programme by August 2011 the survey data suggests that the activities have had limited impact on public perception, and very few respondents are aware of them. This is likely due in part to the size of individual events in quite disparate locations, and it is notable that 89% of respondents in Badghis were aware of reintegration and 34% were aware in both Kunduz & Laghman, whereas in areas where there were fewer reintegration events there was consequently less awareness. Events in these three provinces are sizeable and it therefore appears that the number of reintegrees entering the process needs to be significant before populations are able to readily identify events that have happened. Where reintegration events have occurred there is also a better understanding of the APRP itself, although respondents in all areas were more aware of the process overall than they were of reintegration specifically. This suggests that reintegration events could help raise awareness of both reintegration and the APRP itself.

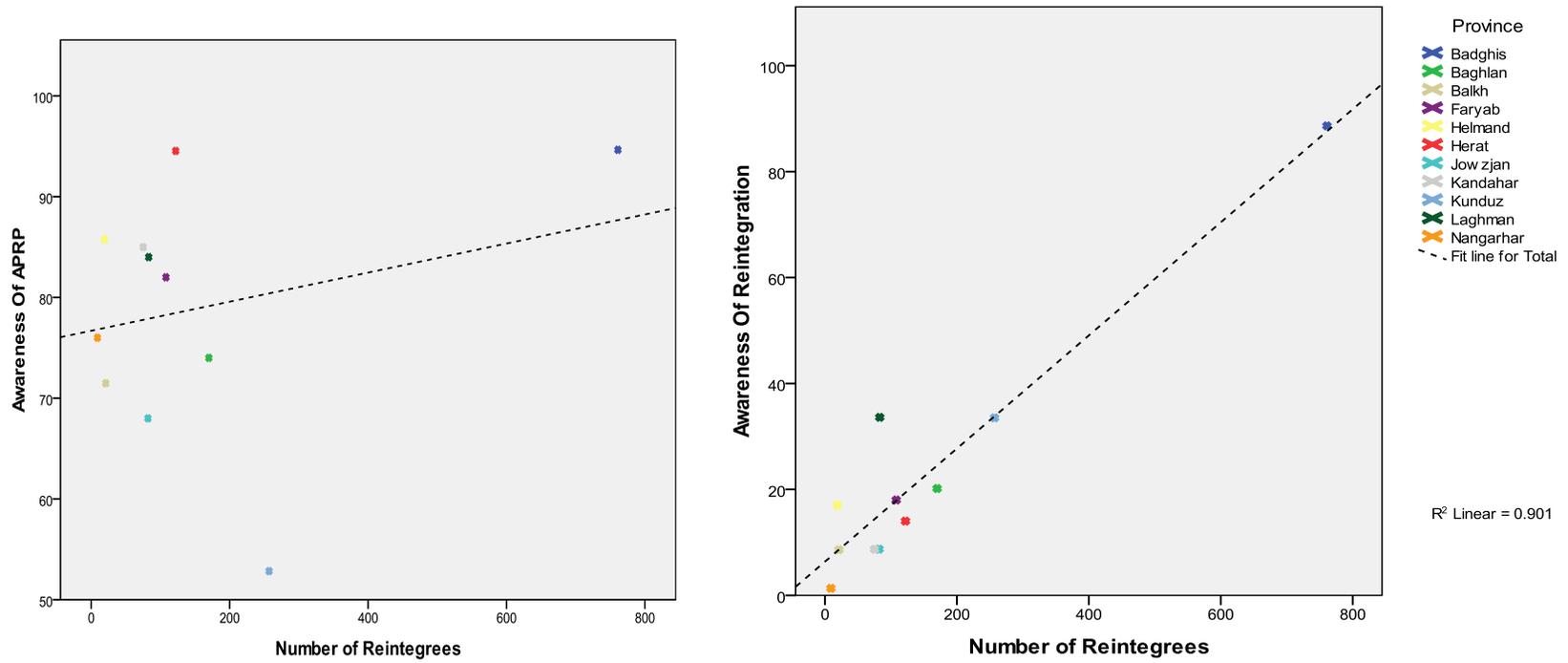


Figure 18: Awareness of the APRP

Within reintegration affected provinces there were mixed reviews regarding community involvement in the reintegration process and also whether it had led to any positive changes. Almost 80% of the respondents who identified reintegration events in their own province reported that security had subsequently improved; most notably in Badghis, Faryab and Daikundi. Respondents in both Helmand and Nangarhar tended to state that security had not improved, although this finding should be viewed with caution due to the limited size of the reintegration effort in these areas.

The findings from the community survey point toward the failure of the reintegration element of the APRP to reach out and convince the right people to join. It also indicates that the present reintegration process is repeating some of the same mistakes as the preceding reintegration programmes in Afghanistan which have manifestly failed. 54% of respondents overall wanted to prevent criminals joining the process and as a result the current perception by survey respondents that reintegration events have been captured by criminals threatens to undermine any credibility of the reintegration element of the APRP.

Challenges: Reconciliation

Respondents showed a clear desire for those they do not wish to see reconciled to instead face justice: more than 50% wanted to see trials, 14% wanted to see the death penalty, 11% called for imprisonment and another 11% wanted to see certain groups or individuals removed from the community (see Figure 19). This highlights the need for community involvement in decisions about which groups and individuals should be offered reconciliation. At present the government is offering an amnesty for any individual who agrees to reconcile. While there is strong support for amnesties, “in order to bring peace”, these findings suggest that respondents may have some red lines about who should be reconciled, and who should be excluded. At present there is little opportunity for communities themselves to be involved in such decisions, since the government fears this would be too great a deterrent for insurgents considering reconciliation. Consequently if there are groups or individuals that Afghans would like to see facing criminal justice, rather than be offered reconciliation and amnesties, there is not at present an adequate mechanism for this.

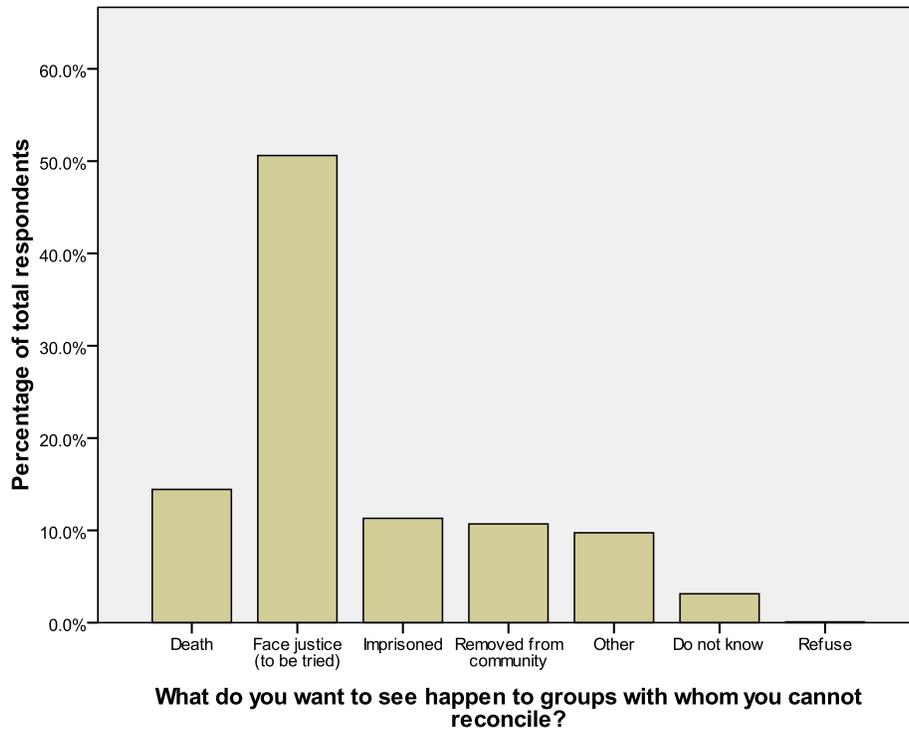


Figure 19: Consequences of not reconciling

Obstacles to Success

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions on how they viewed the current structures of the peace process and what they thought were the main obstacles to its success. Despite having limited knowledge of the exact mechanisms of the APRP, respondents were able to demonstrate nuanced opinions on who should be engaged in the peace efforts and where obstacles lay.

Four dominant obstacles to the peace process were identified:

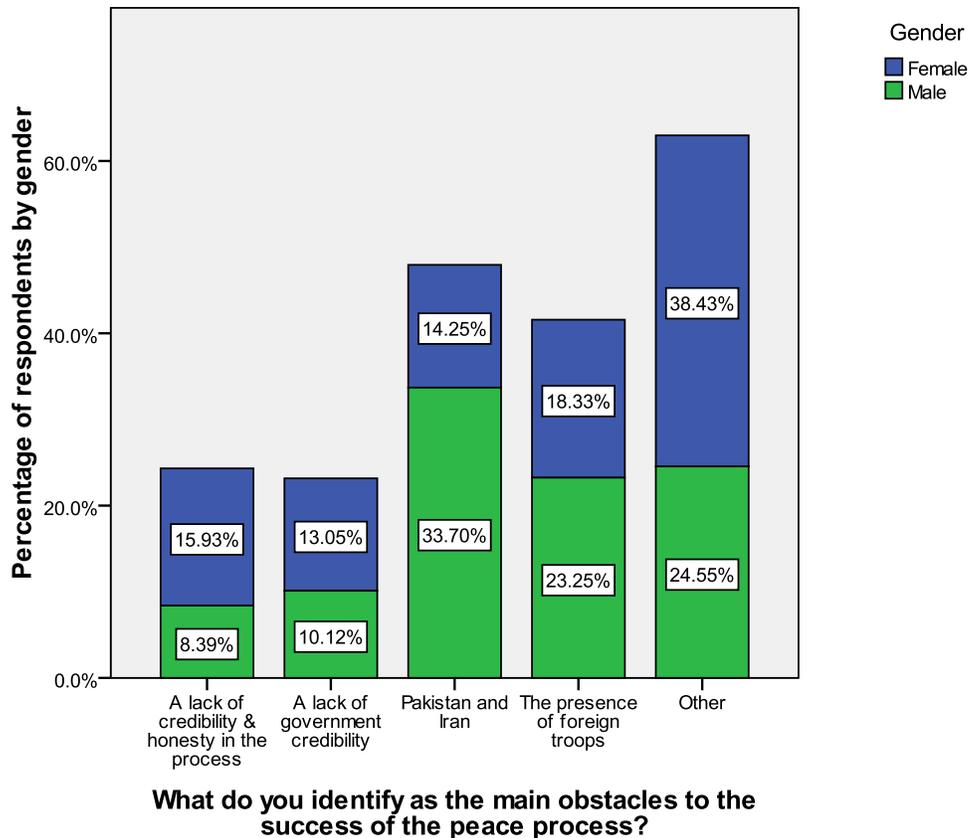


Figure 20: Obstacles to success²⁰

The identification of Pakistan and Iran as the major obstacle speaks to public sentiments that much of the Afghan conflict and the route to peace are beyond their immediate control. It is apparent that respondents believe external actors and regional powers are waging a proxy war within their borders, and more specifically that these regional neighbours hold key roles going into any peace talks. Further the identification of “the presence of international foreign troops” as the second largest obstade is also indicative of the Afghan population seeing outside countries as having important roles to play in any peace talks and that the physical presence of IMF is seen as a potential obstacle to peace. Many

²⁰ The “Other” classification is an amalgamation of all the other options in answer to this question. A full list can be found in the questionnaire, question 18 (Appendix 1).

respondents recounted rumours and held negative sentiments towards the international forces, and were deeply suspicious of their presence in Afghanistan. This sentiment was shared across all ethnicities, with slightly fewer ethnic Hazara respondents identifying the IMF presence as an impediment, and further had no identifiable rural-urban or gender disparities.

Survey respondents pointed towards government deficiency as a major obstacle to the peace process, and a lack of government credibility alongside a lack of honesty in the process was the third highest ranked obstacle to the peace process. Women in particular held the view that the process and/or government lacked credibility and therefore presented a challenge to the trajectory towards peace (24% and 23% respectively), and respondents commonly referred to the process being designed for people to 'fill their own pockets' as opposed to bringing peace. Programmatic activities to date have clearly not helped to erase local suspicion while rumours which continue to abound regarding corruption and poor practices within the APRP compound public sentiments.

Leadership

Survey participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to the leadership of the efforts associated with the HPC and how they wished the process to be led. Respondents were able to demonstrate well informed views over the current leadership. Overall 54% of respondents believed that the makeup of the HPC was correct and 33% believed it was incorrect. Some 13% stated they did not know or refused to answer – perhaps speaking both to a lack of information and a fear regarding criticising the government body. There is a significant north/south split in opinion about the structure of the HPC, with northerners much more supportive of the HPC membership (65% in the north as opposed to 40% in the south). This is also reflected in the provincial results, and to a certain extent the results by ethnicity, with Pashton and Tajik support reflecting almost exactly the percentage support divided by north and south. There is very little difference in support for the structure of the HPC between provincial urban centres and more rural outlying districts (see Table 9).

Many of the respondents who stated that there were problems with the membership of the HPC pointed towards the presence of former President Rabbani as the head of the body as a major concern (the survey took place prior to Rabbani's assassination in September 2011). Some questioned how, as an enemy of the Taliban, he could hope to bring peace with the insurgent groups. This sentiment was particularly strong in the ethnically Pashton and Hazara communities – unsurprising given Rabbani's role as the most senior Tajik leader in Afghanistan. Tajik respondents were much more satisfied with the structure of the HPC than Pashtons, and were marginally more willing to give their opinion about the council (see Figure 21). Pashtons and Hazaras were overall much more critical of the HPC than the other major ethnic groups in Afghanistan; ethnic Hazara respondents pointed towards the lack of ethnic diversity in the HPC and believed that it only represented 'one tribe', while Pashtun communities tended to point out the flaws of the HPC leadership and the belief that many of the members were former warlords who were only working to serve their own benefits. Some of those that did not agree with the structure voiced opinions that the HPC needed to be led by an impartial and Islamic leader.

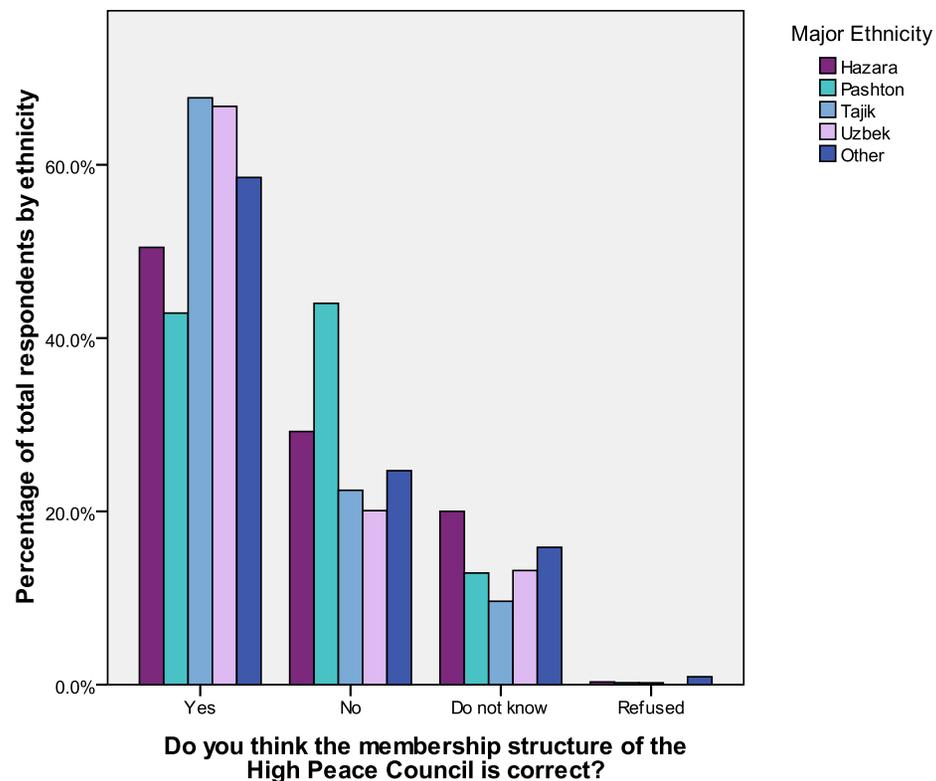


Figure 21: Structure of the HPC

Do you think the membership of the HPC is the 'correct' structure? (% by category)														
	North/South		Selected Provinces							Major Ethnicity			District Type	
	North	South	Ba dakhshan	Badghis	Fa ryab	Balkh	Helmand	Kandahar	Paktia	Pashton	Tajik	Ha zara	Provincial Centre	Outlying
Yes	65.1%	36.5%	76.3%	73.6%	67.7%	66.0%	31.5%	41.3%	24.7%	41.9%	65.9%	50.1%	53.1%	54.2%
No	22.0%	44.8%	17.0%	18.1%	19.0%	25.7%	48.3%	41.3%	58.7	43.0%	21.8%	29.0%	32.7%	30.0%

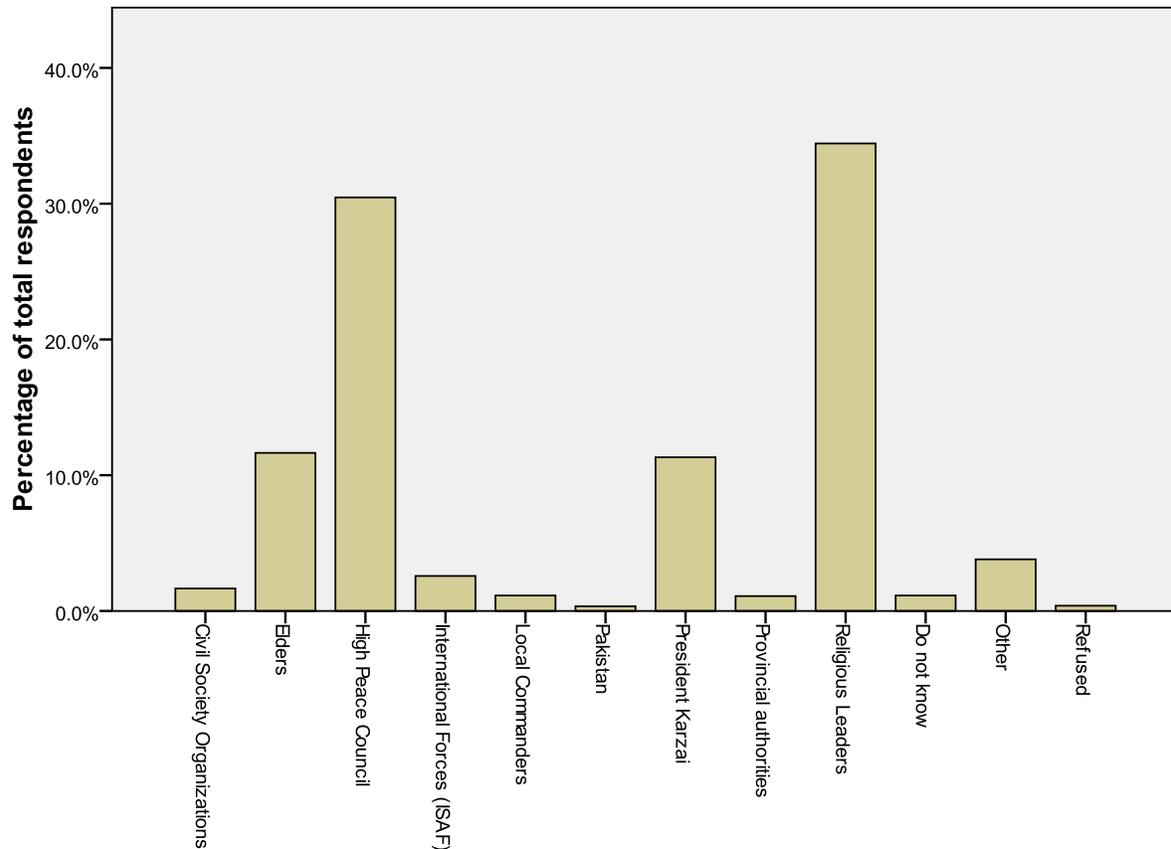
Table 9: Structure of the HPC

These views towards the HPC are one of the few overt indications of ethnic tension within the survey respondents. The HPC appears to have become a somewhat polarising body and the strong support that the former leadership of Professor Rabbani enjoyed with Tajik respondents is a sign that they want their leaders closely involved into any prospective peace process. Likewise the greater expression of doubt and scepticism from Pashton communities especially, may indicate that the communities fear a non-Pashton leadership will mean that their wishes will not be met. Many Pashton respondents also pointed to a lack of impartiality at the top of the HPC and specifically that Professor Rabbani would not be accepted by both the Taliban and HiG, the two most important groups in reconciliation efforts. The ethnic divisions demonstrated by respondents also provide a geographical or regional disparity and it is apparent that across the northern and western regions of Afghanistan there was broad support for the HPC and the structure of the APRP.

Such ethnic divisions are not unexpected given historical ethnic tensions and previous atrocities carried out by all sides, but run counter to the cross-ethnic support seen in many other questions concerning the peace process. As such it is apparent that, despite very broad support for the peace process and negotiations with insurgent factions, distinct ethnic groups, often affiliated to political parties, want peace to be managed or led by people most closely affiliated to their standpoint. Simply put, the majority of respondents wanted peace, but were divided on how to go about it.

Despite 31% of respondents believing that the membership of the HPC was not correct, the council was still seen as having an important role to play, with 30% of respondents identifying it as the body which should be leading peace negotiations (see Figure 22). Within the group that thought the HPC membership was correct, 39% believed that the same body should lead the process.

A slightly higher proportion of respondents felt that religious leaders rather than the HPC were the correct actors to lead a successful peace process forward (34% compared to 30%). This sentiment was most keenly felt in the southern and north-eastern provinces and there was a clear preference for religious leaders to take a leading role within the Pashtun community. On the other hand, Tajik respondents most readily identified the HPC, potentially due to the fact that at the time of questioning the council was being led by Professor Rabbani.



Who do you believe should be responsible for leading the reconciliation efforts?

Figure 22: Leadership responsibility

The survey findings point towards limited support for government structures at a provincial level to be involved in leading the peace process, with just 2% identifying provincial authorities as suitable to lead the process. Such findings are challenging as despite the low standing of the provincial authorities there will be an important role for this level of government to play through the PPRCs & PJSTs.

Spoilers

The Afghan population surveyed were acutely aware of the possibility of spoilers, both internal and external. 82% could identify potential spoilers or groups who were trying to ‘sabotage’ the process. 43% of those identified Pakistan as the number one spoiler in the process; Pakistan was followed by Iran (23%) and ISAF (15%). The Taliban were the fourth most identified spoiler, representing the main ‘internal’ spoiler, and registering only 7% of the total respondents (see Figure 23). The identification of spoilers as being mostly external to Afghanistan again points towards the lack of control that the Afghan population feel that they have over the present conflict. Respondents differed both regionally and ethnically, and notably ethnic Hazara respondents identified the Taliban as the most important spoiler of the peace process behind Pakistan and Iran. Such findings speak towards the ill feeling that Hazaras have towards them due to atrocities and marginalisation suffered by Hazaras at the hands of the

Taliban. Such findings points towards meaningful ethnic tensions and mistrust which need to be considered in the process.

Regionally it was apparent that the higher percentage of respondents in the west of Afghanistan, who share a border with Iran, identified Iran as a spoiler to the process. In the border provinces of the east as with much of the rest of the country Pakistan was deemed to be the major spoiler.

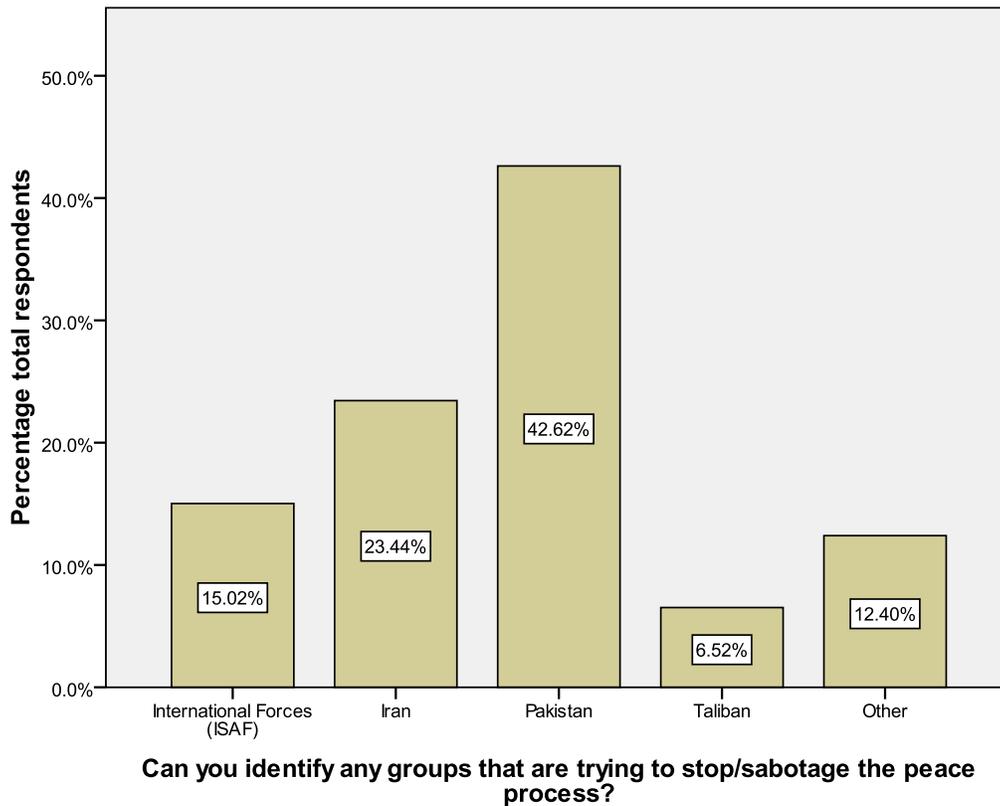


Figure 23: Spoilers

The identification of ISAF, by 15% of the survey respondents, as a spoiler within the peace process reinforces the earlier identification of suspicion and distrust from a segment of the Afghan population towards the IMF. From narrative answers attached to such views, it appears that of those Afghans who expressed mistrust of IMF, many have reservations over the stated reasons for the international presence in Afghanistan and it was common to hear that the international forces only killed innocent people and it would be better if they simply left.

How the Afghan public would bring peace

Although divisions remain, segments of the Afghan population appear to have formed a reasonable understanding of how they want peace to be brought and who they feel should be involved in bringing peace. As noted, 34% of the survey respondents feel that religious leaders should be leading the process and a further 12% believe local elders should be leading the process. The Afghan population appear to want trusted people to take a role in the decision making process and with many questions over the

credibility of the government agencies, ISAF and regional players, there is an immediate focus on trusted social leaders.

When asked for more detail concerning how respondents would bring peace, should they be responsible for leading the process, many alluded to the fact that they would accept Taliban demands, reinforcing the finding that 58% support the Taliban's demand for the withdrawal of international troops (see Table 4). While no single answer represented a widely-held opinion, some answers occurred with notable regularity and without prompting from research staff. These included the implication that some respondents would go further than simply agreeing to the removal of foreign forces, and would be willing to accept changes to the constitution, the offer of government posts, prisoner releases and amnesties in order to get Taliban members to stop fighting. Others also discussed the need for the Taliban to disarm and to stop their attacks for peace to occur. In addition, some respondents spoke of their desire for the whole process to be framed as part of an "Islamic" peace, as the Taliban were identified as brothers in Islam, and much of the tone of many of the respondents' narrative answers was towards appeasing the Taliban. Once again, while not a majority view, these unprompted responses were recorded with notable regularity.

Of note, however, was that there was very little consensus in the exact steps towards peace from the survey respondents. Indeed, many respondents were at a loss to suggest viable ways for reconciliation to occur and many said that there was nothing that they could do – in essence that they did not have any role in the peace process. With this in mind people naturally looked to the government for solutions, but there was also recognition among some respondents that the government lacked the legitimacy to effectively deliver in peace talks. This view was underscored by the opinion of some respondents that an impartial mediator could assist in the route towards peace, and some of the Afghan population appeared to believe the use of an Arab country could be viable. From many of the narrative survey answers, it was evident that a strong Islamic understanding of peace set in the context of traditional Afghan culture should be woven into any narrative of peace that emerges from the process. It was also clear that some sections of the Afghan population would like to see the ISAF presence in Afghanistan used as a bargaining chip within the negotiations.

Conclusion: The future of the peace process

Over 90% of respondents were hopeful for the future of a peace process (see Figure 24), appearing to view it as a necessary step to end the conflict, as opposed to one side achieving outright military victory. While respondents expressed a range of concerns about the methods and obstacles to peace, they are overwhelmingly open to a peace process. It appears people recognise that any negotiated settlement is much more favourable than the other alternatives - protracted stalemate, civil war or the Taliban taking over the government - and this feeling manifests itself in the widespread position that people are “tired” of the war and therefore much more willing to consider opportunities for negotiation. However, this does not mean peace at any cost: the conditions laid down by the government were overwhelmingly supported by respondents – with 84% wanting to see the Taliban and other insurgent groups stop fighting, sever ties with Al Qaeda, and accept the constitution. There was also high support (59%) for the Taliban demand for a withdrawal of international forces.

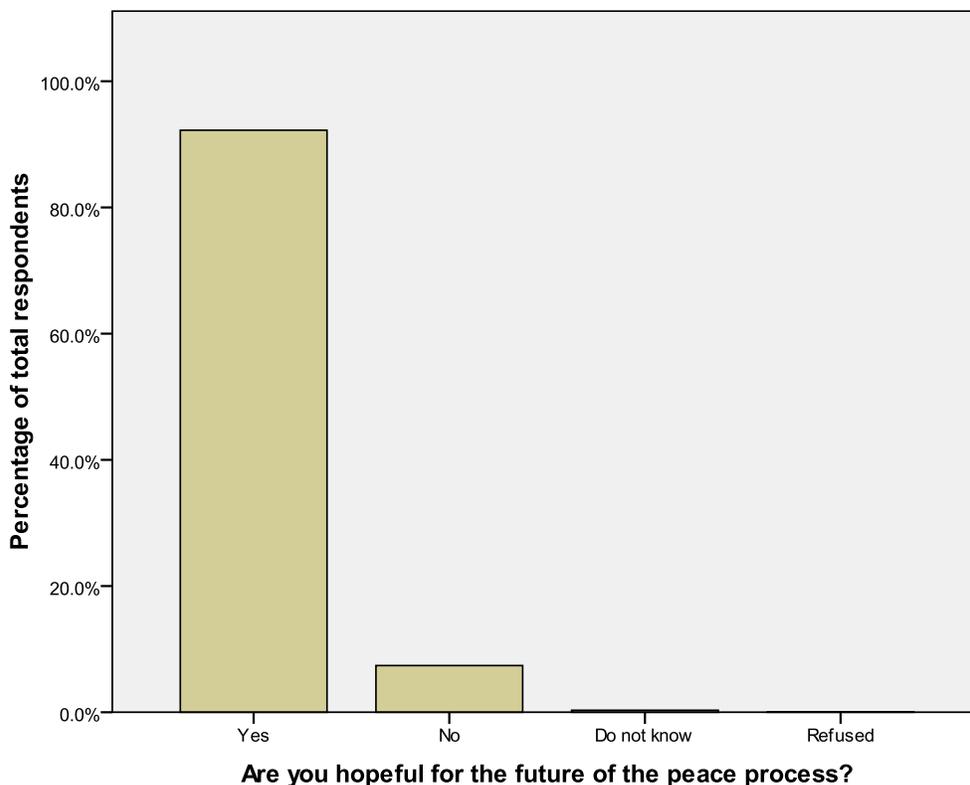


Figure 24: Hope for the peace process

Respondents generally expressed a hopeful outlook for the prospects of a peace process across ethnicity, gender and rural/urban locations, although 40% of respondents also fear a loss of rights. Significant obstacles were identified: more than 50% doubted that the Taliban leadership want a peace process. Significant numbers identified a lack of government credibility and honesty as an obstacle, there are significant concerns about appropriate government leadership of the process, and interference by external actors is identified as the major stumbling block (primarily Pakistan, followed by Iran, and international forces). Many people hoped that an end to the violence would bring gains in

education, employment, development, and prosperity. In contrast, a sizeable minority remained unclear as to what exactly they thought the outcomes could be.

Some respondents also pointed to the participation in the reintegration process of some local opposition groups as a source of optimism for the process itself; a very visible indication of what local implementation of the reintegration plan could achieve. However, a majority of respondents also said that the reintegration process was rewarding criminals, rather than insurgent groups.

Those who were not hopeful about the process had several different reasons for being less than optimistic, including that foreign interference from neighbouring countries was unlikely to stop, and that there is a general lack of trust between the different groups. Expectations of the High Peace Council specifically were generally negative, with many people stating that the membership as it is will never achieve anything, because many of the members were thieves who had “blood on their hands”.

A notable finding of the survey was that local community views are coloured by two separate narratives. At the national and regional level the Afghan community appeared to identify a raft of challenges and the main spoilers to a potential peace process, while locally the Afghan communities surveyed were able to identify the solutions and the trusted characters integral to peace. Locally, specific conditions in localities such as Marjah and Qadis, in Helmand and Badghis, showed very distinctive perspectives on the process.

Despite the obstacles and concerns, the hope for peace is genuine, and should encourage all parties to the conflict to work harder to listen to the range of Afghan views, and ensure greater community involvement in the process. Most Afghans seem hopeful that a peaceful solution to the conflict can be found, provided that preconditions are adhered to and spoilers are restrained. As a result the present moment appears to be an opportune time for the government to consult widely with the people, to ensure that all Afghans can support efforts to reach an acceptable political settlement. To do so will result in a more stable peace deal, which could finally help to bring the past 30 years of war to an end.

Key findings

- In spite of the very real obstacles to peace, Afghans are exceptionally hopeful for a future without conflict. This is a view shared irrespective of ethnicity, location, security situation and gender.
- A clear majority of respondents (84%) supported the government's preconditions for the Taliban – that they stop fighting, sever ties with Al Qaeda, and support the constitution. A significant majority (59%) supported the Taliban demand for the withdrawal of foreign forces.
- Despite this overall support for the process, divisions were evident over exactly how peace should be achieved, and differences in the approach and detail of the APRP were apparent between ethnicities, genders, and geographic locations. Simply put, the majority of respondents wanted peace, but were divided on how to go about it, and significant differences remain in attitudes towards the prescribed APRP structures.
- Many people see the obstacles to the peace process as external to the country, whereas solutions are more readily identified as internal. Locally, specific conditions in localities such as Marjah and Qadis, in Helmand and Badghis, showed distinct perspectives on questions related to Taliban demands and government strength respectively.
- While respondents are overwhelmingly supportive of a political settlement, 40% of all respondents fear that it will result in a loss of rights. These fears were more acute for women, and while overall they were only marginally more fearful, in some insecure provinces (Helmand, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Nagarhar and Paktia) the proportion of women with this fear was approaching double the proportion of men. The most extreme case was in Marjah district, where 90% of women feared a loss of rights.
- 61% of respondents doubted that the Taliban leadership was interested in reconciliation. However, a similar percentage, 64%, of respondents recognised that armed opposition groups in their area would be interested in reconciling.
- Many respondents questioned the credibility of the reintegration programme. More than 50% of all respondents see reintegration events as mostly benefiting criminals. This result also varied by province, with respondents in Herat more likely to associate reintegrees with Mullah Omar Taliban (50%), and those in Helmand and Laghman more likely to identify them as criminals (75%).
- The major obstacles to the process were consistently identified, and two thirds of all respondents identified either Pakistan or Iran as the biggest spoilers. These results differed slightly between ethnicities and regions: Hazara respondents more readily identify the Taliban as spoilers, in the east of the country more accuse Pakistan, and in the west, Iran.
- The suspicion of "foreigners" also includes the International forces, but although they are seen as a significant obstacle to the peace process, they are at the same time recognised as playing a crucial stabilising role.

-
- Improvements in the government were seen as critical to the success of the process, with 27% stating that it would be a prerequisite for the reintegration of armed groups. Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents (20% altogether) identified the lack of credibility of both the government and the process itself as major problems.
 - Communication of every element of the APRP appeared to be lacking, demonstrated by the absence of a clear understanding of the process, particularly in isolated communities. This allows hearsay and rumour to take a much more prominent role, and threatens the credibility of the programme and the institutions involved.

The majority of respondents reported that solutions to the myriad problems associated with the APRP should involve the extensive engagement of local trusted social actors. Religious leaders were most often cited as a credible group to be responsible for leading the peace process. While many respondents believed that the high peace council was the correct body to lead the process they also had strong reservations about the membership structure.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Basic Information

Gender:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Profession:

Province:

District

Village:

Peace and reconciliation process

- 1) Have you heard of the Afghan Peace & Reintegration Programme, launched by the government, last year?
YES/NO

- 2) What do you understand by the distinction between 'reintegration' and 'reconciliation'?

- 3) How do you want the current armed conflict between the government and the Taliban insurgents to end?
 - a. Defeating the Taliban and other groups militarily ()
 - b. Accepting all the Taliban demands ()
 - c. Reaching a mutually acceptable political settlement ()
 - d. Other _____
 - 98 Do not know ()
 - 99 Refused ()

- 4) Are you supportive of the reconciliation programme? (a political deal with the armed opposition groups)
 - a. Very supportive ()
 - b. Somewhat supportive ()
 - c. Neutral ()
 - d. Not supportive ()
 - e. Very unsupportive ()
 - 98 Do not know ()
 - 99 Refused ()

- 5) Do you think the time is right for reconciliation?
YES/NO
Please explain why?

-
- 6) The government has set conditions for the armed opposition groups to begin peace talks; these are; to lay down their weapons, cut ties with Al Qaeda and to accept the Afghan Constitution. Do you support these conditions?
Yes/No
Please explain.
- 7) The Taliban have clearly stated that they would not enter into negotiations and peace talks with the government unless all the International Forces leave Afghanistan, do you support this condition?
Yes/No
Please explain.
- 8) Do you think Amnesty should be given to the Taliban to achieve peace?
Yes/No
Why/why not?
- 9) Do you believe that the Insurgent Leadership in Pakistan will be interested in joining the peace process?
YES/NO
- 10) Do you believe that armed opposition groups within your area will be interested in joining the peace process?
Yes/No
- If no, what would need to happen before they would want to reintegrate?
- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Reconciliation (or some form of transitional justice) | () |
| b. Improvements in the government | () |
| c. Approval from insurgent leadership outside the province | () |
| d. Withdrawal of international forces | () |
| e. Delivery of the reintegration promises | () |
| f. Complete withdrawal of foreign troops | () |
| g. Changes to the constitution from the Taliban | () |
| h. The Taliban to accept the constitution | () |
| i. Disarming of insurgent groups | () |
| j. Insurgent groups to cut ties with Al Qaeda | () |
| k. Other | _____ |
| 98 Do not know | () |
| 99 Refused | () |

11) Do you believe that the Taliban and other armed opposition groups have the autonomy to enter into peace negotiations?

Yes/No

Please explain

12) Do you believe the government are negotiating from a position of strength or a position of weakness?

- a. Strength
- b. Weakness
- c. Equal
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

13) Who or which groups are the most important to be brought into the peace and reconciliation process?

- a. Local Commanders
- b. High level Taliban
- c. Hizb e Islami
- d. Haqqani Network
- e. Pro-government local militias
- f. Others _____
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

14) Do you have any fears about the reconciliation process?

YES/NO

If **Yes**, what are your biggest fears?

15) Do you think a peace settlement with the Taliban could result in a loss of any values such as human rights, freedom of the press, democracy, or women's rights?

Yes/No

If yes, which values are under threat?

16) Do you fear that the peace process could lead to ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan?

YES/NO

Please explain.

17) Who do you feel benefits most from the peace process? (please tick all that apply)

- a. The Afghan Government
- b. The Afghan population

-
- c. Insurgent groups
 - d. The international community
 - e. Local powerholders/commanders
 - f. Local criminal groups
 - g. Others _____
 - 98 Do not know
 - 99 Refused

18) What do you identify as the main obstacles to the success of the peace process?

- a. A lack of credibility & honesty in the process
- b. A lack of government willingness
- c. A lack of government credibility
- d. The presence of foreign troops
- e. A lack of international community support
- f. A lack of Taliban willingness
- g. A lack of support from the population
- h. Irreconcilable positions/demands
- i. Lack of security/guarantees
- j. A lack of credibility & honesty in the process
- k. Pakistan and Iran
- l. Other _____
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

19) If you were a part of the reconciliation efforts, how would you go about getting commanders and anti-government elements to stop fighting and join the government?
Please explain?

20) Who do you believe should be responsible for leading the reconciliation efforts?

- a. President Karzai
- b. High Peace Council
- c. International Forces (ISAF)
- d. Provincial authorities
- e. Civil Society Organizations
- f. Religious Leaders
- g. Elders
- h. Local Commanders
- i. Pakistan
- j. Other
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

21) Can you identify any groups that are trying to stop the peace process?

YES/NO

If **Yes**, who? (select multiple options if necessary)

- a) President Karzai
- b) High Peace Council
- c) International Forces (ISAF)
- d) Provincial governors
- e) District Governors
- f) Religious Leaders
- g) Elders
- h) Local Commanders
- i) Taliban
- j) Militias
- k) Arbakai
- l) Pakistan
- m) Iran
- n) Others
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

22) Do you think the membership structure of the High Peace Council is correct? Can you think of any problems within the High Peace Council structure?

Reintegration

23) Have any reintegration (joining of the armed groups with the government or back into civilian life) events taken place within your area?

YES/NO

24) If yes who was reintegrated in your area?

- a. Mullah Omar Taliban
- b. Hizb-e- Islami
- c. Haqqani Network
- d. Criminals
- e. Arbaki
- f. Local people pretending to be Taliban
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

Please explain

25) If reintegration has happened in your area, has it improved the security in your area?

Yes/No

26) Did the community have the opportunity to approve the reintegration of these individuals?

Yes/No

27) If yes, who in the community had the opportunity to approve the reintegration of these individuals?

- a. All community members
- b. Religious leaders
- c. Elders
- d. MPs or government officials
- e. Local powerholders/commanders
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

28) Is there any person or any groups that you would not be willing to reconcile with?

YES/NO

If **Yes**, Who should be excluded from reconciliation process?

- a. Mullah Omar Taliban
- b. Hizb-e- Islami
- c. Haqqani Network
- d. Criminals
- e. Arbaki
- f. Local people pretending to be Taliban
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

And Why?

- a) Because they have committed serious crimes
- b) Because they are criminals
- c) Because they are opposed to my ethnicity/tribe
- d) Because they are opposed to my religion
- e) Because they are opposed to women's rights
- f) Because they are opposed to democracy
- g) Others
- 98 Do not know
- 99 Refused

29) What do you want to see happen to groups with whom you cannot reconcile?

- a. Face justice (to be tried)
- b. Removed from community
- c. Imprisoned
- d. Death
- e. Other _____
 - 98 Do not know
 - 99 Refused

Going forward with the peace & reconciliation

30) What do you hope the peace process will achieve?

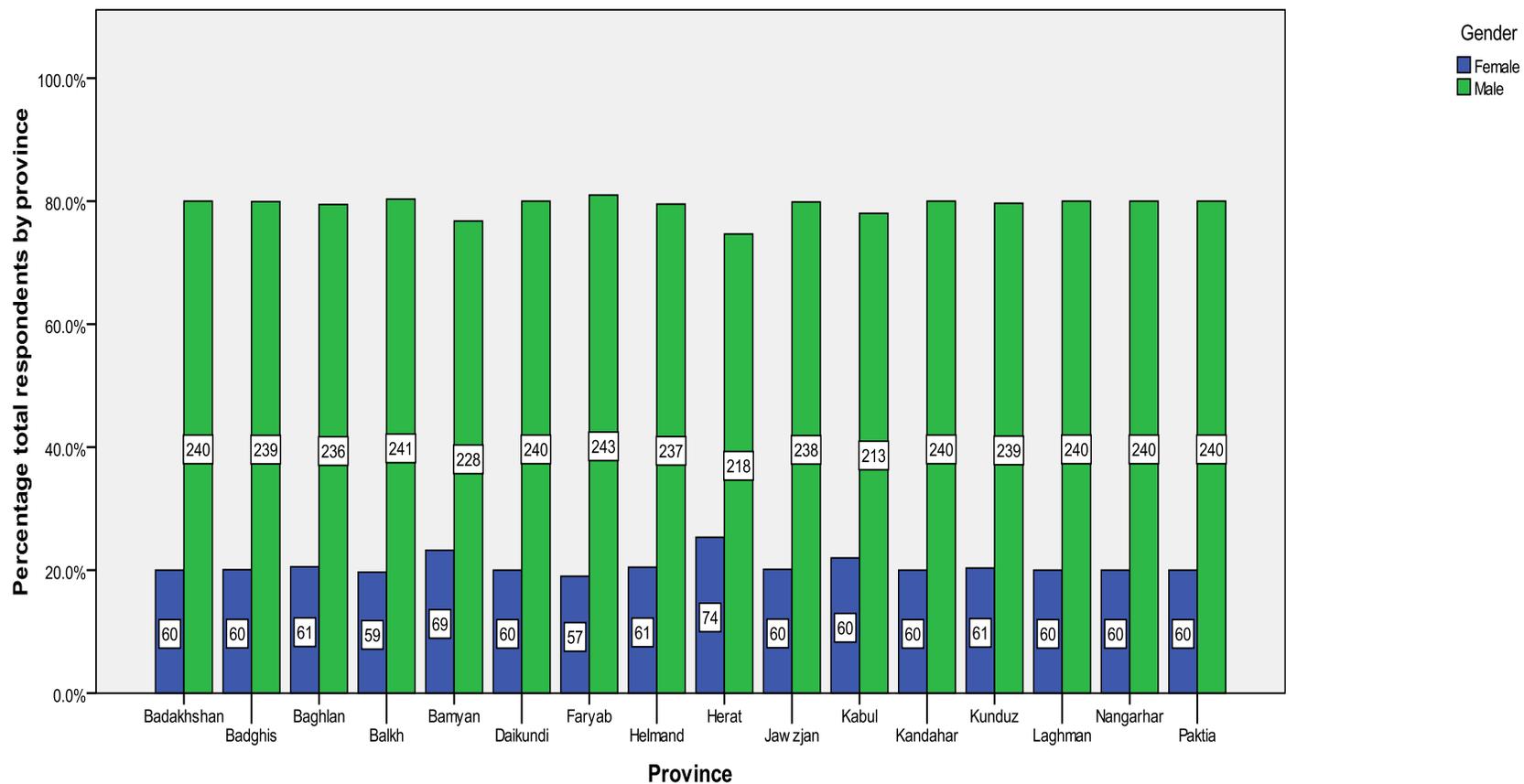
31) Are you hopeful for the peace process in the future?

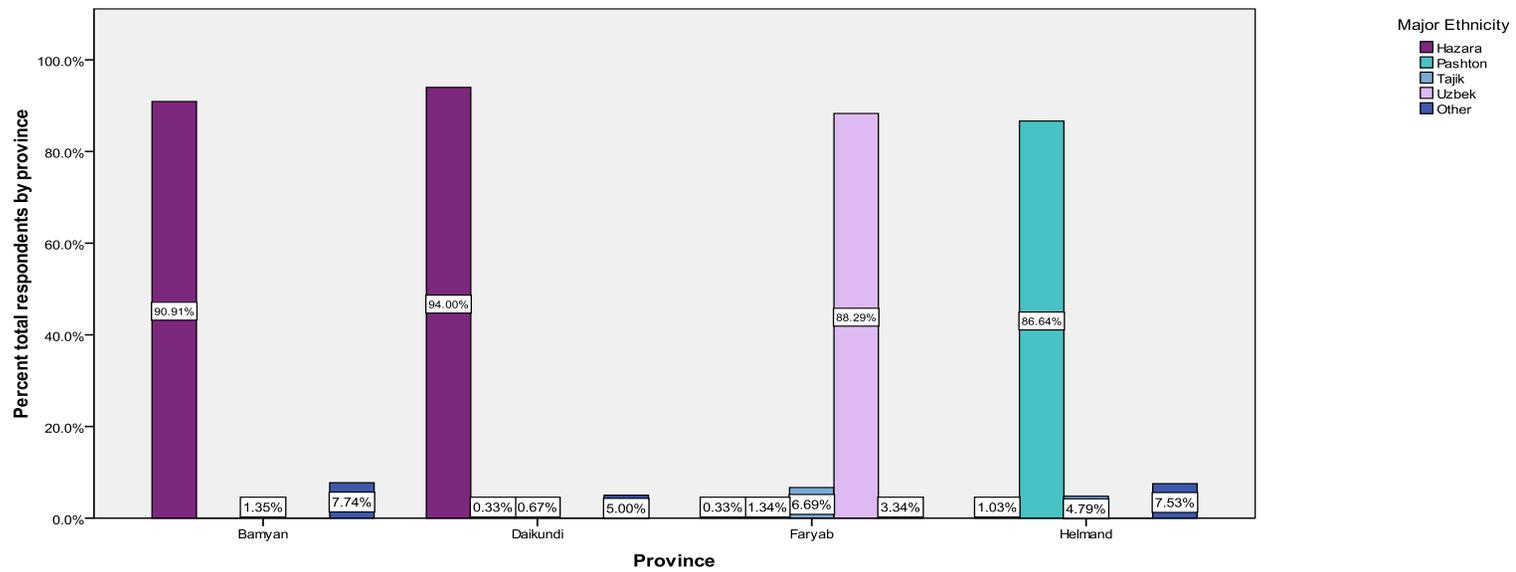
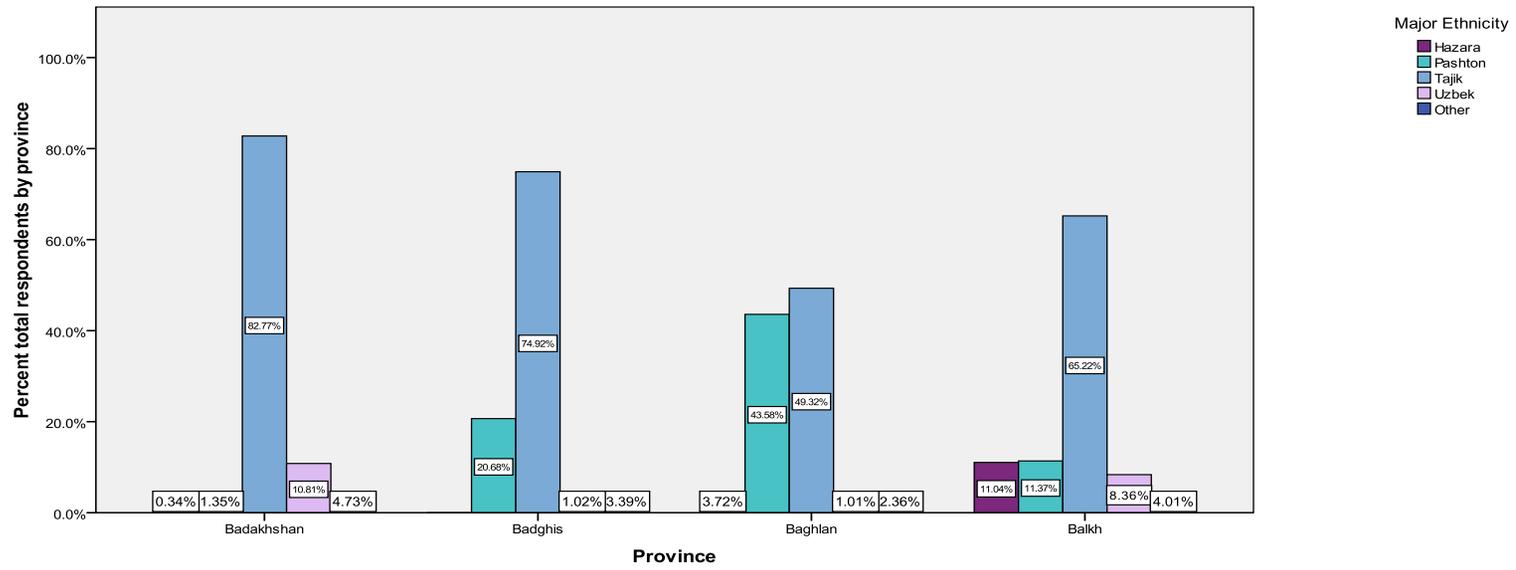
Appendix 2: Full list of provinces & districts surveyed

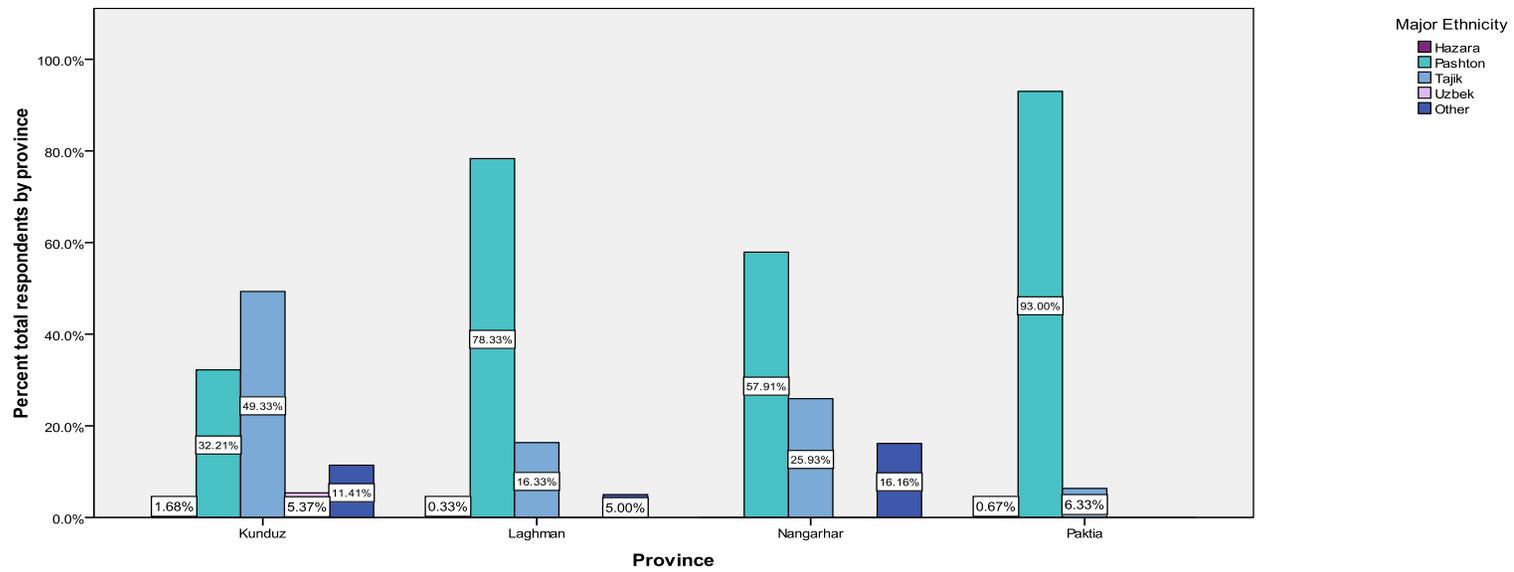
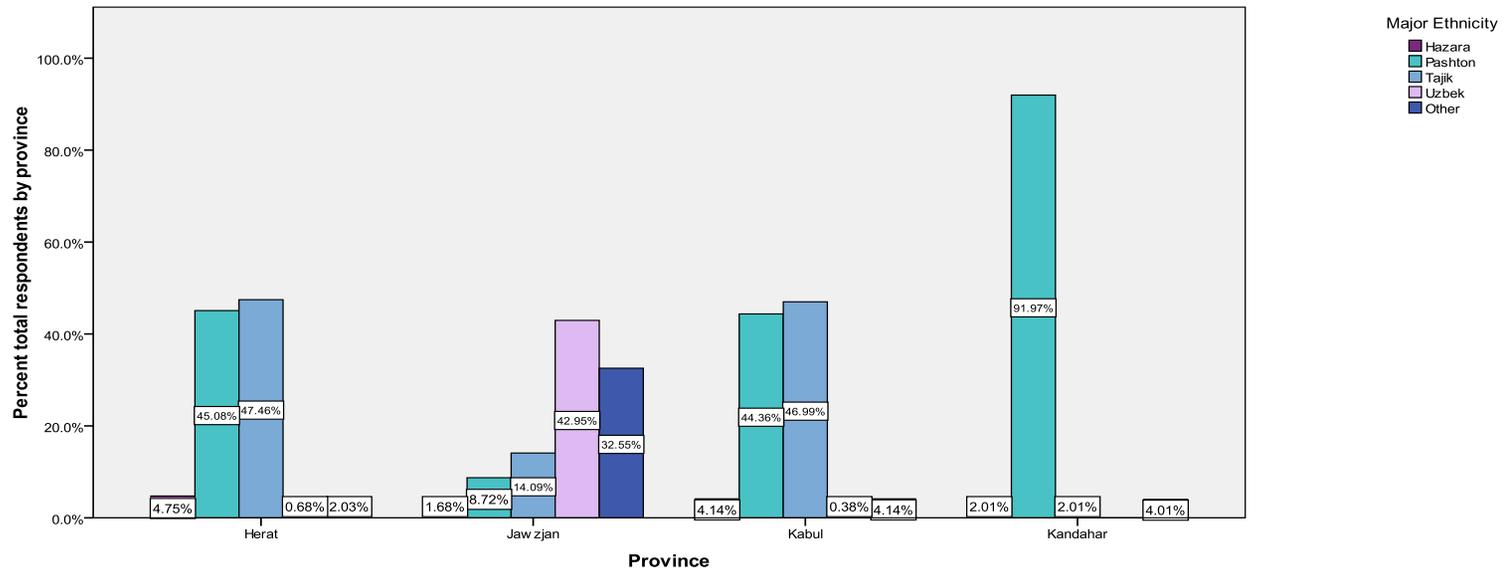
Province	District	Number of interviews completed			
		Unrecorded	Men	Women	Total
Badakshan	Faizabad		80	20	100
	Kishm		80	20	100
	Baharak		80	20	100
Badghis	Qala-i Naw		79	20	99
	Qadis		80	20	100
	Muqur		80	20	100
Baghlan	Pol-i Khumri		80	20	100
	Dahana-i Ghorī		80	20	100
	Baghlan-i Jadid	2	76	21	99
Balkh	Mazar-i Sharif		81	19	100
	Dehdadi		80	20	100
	Nahri Shahi		80	20	100
Bamyan	Bamyan City	1	70	29	100
	Shebar		80	20	100
	Yakawlang		78	20	98
Daikundi	Nili		100	19	99
	Shahristan		100	21	101
	Miramor		100	20	100
Faryab	Maimana		80	20	100
	Khwaja Sabz Posh-i Wali		80	20	100
	Pashtun Kot		83	17	100
Helmand	Lashkargah		79	21	100
	Marja		80	20	100
	Nahr-i Saraj		78	20	98
Herat	Herat City	5	73	22	100
	Guzera		88	12	100

	Karrukh		57	40	97
Jowzjan	Sheberghan		80	20	100
	Aqchah		80	20	100
	Khwaja Dukoh		78	20	98
Kabul	Kabul City		44	40	84
	Surobi		93	0	93
	Kalakan		76	20	96
Kandahar	Kandahar City		80	20	100
	Spin Boldak		80	20	100
	Dand		80	20	100
Kunduz	Kunduz City		80	20	100
	Iman Sahib		79	21	100
	Khan Abad		80	20	100
Laghman	Mehterlam		80	20	100
	Qarghayee		80	20	100
	Alishing		80	20	100
Nangarhar	Jalalabad		80	20	100
	Behsud		80	20	100
	Surkh Rud		80	20	100
Paktia	Gardez		80	20	100
	Ahmadaba		80	20	100
	Jaji		80	20	100

Appendix 3: Gender and ethnic breakdown of respondents









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