



# IWPS

انستیتیوت مطالعات جنگ و صلح

The Institute of War and  
Peace Studies

# THE AFGHAN PEOPLE'S PEACE PERCEPTION SURVEY

*(Expectations – Priorities – Needs)*

# 2020

THE INSTITUTE OF WAR  
AND PEACE STUDIES  
( I W P S )

## AFGHANISTAN MAP



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## **The Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS)**

The Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS) is a non-profit think-do-tank based in Kabul with a focus on strategic and defense studies as well as peace and conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

IWPS consists of Board of Directors, Senior Management and a team of experts including prominent researcher and academics on national and international peace and security studies. It conducts in-depth and overarching research and advocacy projects through which it aims to influence policies and shape public opinion. IWPS is the leading and first of its kind think-do-tank focusing on issues of war and peace through offering practical and evidence-based solutions.

It places high emphasis on integrity and high quality research. We strive to provide the best quality research products that are relevant to war and peace studies in Afghanistan and beyond in an efficient and cost-effective manner with the highest level of integrity.

## **List of Abbreviations**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>IWPS</b>   | Institute of War and Peace Studies                |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nations                                    |
| <b>TAF</b>    | The Asia Foundation                               |
| <b>UNAMA</b>  | United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan |
| <b>EU</b>     | European Union                                    |
| <b>GIROA</b>  | Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan |
| <b>WB</b>     | World Bank  |
| <b>IMF</b>    | International Monetary Fund                       |
| <b>USIP</b>   | United States Institute of Peace                  |
| <b>USFORA</b> | United States Forces Afghanistan                  |
| <b>RSM</b>    | Resolute Support Mission                          |
| <b>NATO</b>   | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                |
| <b>NDS</b>    | National Directorate of Security                  |
| <b>ANDSF</b>  | Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces  |

## **List of Terminologies**

### ***Political Settlement***

refers to the non-violent way of ending the conflict through a peace process.

### ***Military Means***

refers to the use of violence and security forces to militarily defeat the Taliban and its allies.

### ***Civil War***

refers to the break-down of the state and inter-fighting of armed militias over power, resources and state capture as experienced in the 1990s.

### ***Islamic Republic***

Islamic republic was defined to the respondents through their historical memory which means the prevailing political system (*Afghanistan post 2001*).

### ***Islamic Emirate***

Islamic Emirate was defined to the respondents based on their historical memory i.e. the political system of the Taliban regime (*Afghanistan 1996-2001*).

### ***Mixed System***

Mixed system was defined as the best qualities of both the Islamic Republic and the Islamic Emirate.

### ***No Education***

refers to individuals who have not attended any formal, informal or religious educational institution i.e. can not read and write.

### ***Islamic Studies/Madrasa***

refers to individuals who have attended a madrasa or the local mosque for basic to advanced religious education.

### ***Modern Education***

refers to individuals who have attended the formal education system from primary to high school and above.

***Government-led negotiations***

refers to the centrality of the Afghan government and her representatives in any peace talks.

***Non –Government led negotiations***

refers to the centrality of the Afghan political parties and groups alongwith their representatives in any peace talks.

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## **Acknowledgement**

This is the first survey of the Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS). The survey was led by a management team in Kabul with over 48 enumerators across 34 provinces of Afghanistan who gathered the data with utmost integrity, honesty and professionalism.

Firstly, IWPS owes a great debt to the people of Afghanistan who agreed to be interviewed on the set of questions posed to them. Secondly, we thank each one of those enumerators who against many odds including risking their lives went out of their way with little incentive to interview Afghans from across all walks of life for this vital peace perception survey.

We would also like to thank provincial and district officials for their assistance in the conduct of this survey in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

And a special thanks to our colleagues at *StratComm Focus Consulting Inc.* for leading the data collection and cleansing and providing means and resources to conduct this survey.

## **Foreword**

All wars end in peace. The current Afghan conflict is in a stalemate and definitely does not have a victor. Peace making and peace building requires sacrifice and comes with a cost. Therefore it requires compromise and patience from all parties to the conflict.

This perception survey wants to serve as the reference point to collect, analyze and present the views of common Afghans to the Afghan political elite and our international partners in an objective, apolitical and professional manner on the needs, priorities and expectations of the Afghan people from any peace deal with the Taliban.

The main aim of this perception survey is to reach out to all of Afghanistan especially the rural areas and ask them questions on important and critical matters facing the Afghan peace process in order to collect, collate, analyze and present their voice to the rest of Afghanistan and the international community.

Peace comes with a cost and requires sacrifice, patience and farsight from all Afghans and their international partners. In this survey, we intend to collect the voices of Afghans on what those costs and sacrifices should be and how it should be made. This helps us to steer away the narratives on peace from the Afghan elite and foreign envoys and hear out the voices of common Afghans who lives in the farthest areas of Afghanistan.

The Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS) strives to make this survey as a flagship peace perception survey that serves as a regular platform for the voices of all of Afghanistan but more specifically rural areas on the major challenges and opportunities on the way to peace.

## **Board of Directors**

### **The Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS)**

## Executive Summary

The Afghan war does not have a military solution. Peace is high on the agenda of all the internal and external stakeholders within the Afghan peace arena. After many years of war, the United States has taken the unusual step of direct talks with the Taliban with the aim to end the Afghan conflict; withdraw US/NATO troops through a peace deal and leave a good legacy behind in the form of stability and a sustainable order.

While foreign envoys and Afghan politicians have been carrying out shuttle diplomacy for peace in various capitals of the world but the voices of the common Afghans has been missing from the discourse on the Afghan peace. The prevailing discourse on peace within and without Afghanistan has been elite driven and urban centric with a heavy foreign influence. In this survey, we have gone directly to a significant sample size of the Afghan people and asked them some major and vital questions facing the Afghan peace process. The questionnaire posed a set of ten (10) questions facing the Afghan peace talks which covered key questions such as how can Afghanistan achieve peace? Should US and NATO forces leave Afghanistan after a peace deal? What will happen to the Afghan government after the withdrawal of foreign forces without a peace deal? And who should lead the peace negotiations with the Taliban? The complete survey questionnaire is provided in *Annex 3*.

A national sample of 5,038 Afghan respondents aged between two categories of (*18-40 years old*) and (*40 and above*) were surveyed in local languages including Dari and Pashto between November 23 to December 20, 2019 across 34 provinces taking gender, education, occupation, rural and urban divide into account. Of the overall respondents, 1,764 are female (35%) respondents, and the remaining 3,274 (65%) are male respondents. Of the total of 5,038 - 3,043 (60%) respondents surveyed from rural areas while 1,995 (40%) were from urban areas. Of the total 5,038 respondents, 3,074 (61%) respondents were interviewed online and the remaining 1,964 (39%) survey participants were interviewed in person using paper-based questionnaire. Of the total respondents around some 410 respondents (8%) were back-checked through phone calls to ensure data quality and legitimacy. A detailed methodology can be found in *section 2*.

In this survey, it is important to highlight some of its key findings as below:

1. According to this survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) believe in a political settlement of this conflict as compared to (20%) who believe in the military solution to achieve peace. This means that the majority of Afghans believe that the current Afghan war does not have a military solution but ultimately peace can be achieved through a political settlement.
2. The survey also asked what should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks post peace deal. Overall, the survey findings shows that over half (57%) of respondents across Afghanistan believe that the Taliban should force the foreign fighters in their ranks to leave

the country after a peace deal is reached. While, (43%) of respondents believe that the foreign fighters in the ranks of the Taliban should stay in Afghanistan after a peace deal.

3. This survey also inquired the respondents about the critical question of presence of US/NATO forces in Afghanistan. Based on the survey results more than one-third (46%) of respondents hold the opinion that US and NATO forces should leave Afghanistan after a peace deal is reached. Whereas, a little more than one-third (33%) of respondents say they should not leave.
4. When asked about the fate of the Afghan government in case of a sudden and unexpected withdrawal of foreign forces without a peace deal - there is a sharp divide among the respondents. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) say that a civil war will erupt and the Afghan government will not be able to sustain. Whereas, almost half of the respondents (48%) believe that the Afghan government will hold in such circumstances.
5. Another one of the significant questions which this survey probed was on the venue for peace talks. A clear majority of Afghans (61%) believe that the Afghan peace talks should take place inside Afghanistan whereas only a comparatively smaller percentage (22%) say that such talks should take place outside of the country.
6. In a follow up question, the survey also asked those respondents who preferred that peace talks should be held outside of Afghanistan: where the peace talks should take place? The results are interesting - the majority of the respondents preferred that in case peace talks are held outside of the country, it should be held in Islamic countries (44%) followed by the region (33%) (*Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, China and Russia*) with US (15%) and Europe (7%) coming after the region respectively as a preferred venues for peace talks.
7. This survey also asked Afghans from across the country to say if the US Special Envoy for Peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, is the right person to facilitate the Afghan peace talks. While, 41% of the respondents say he is the right person for the job with only 39% who think otherwise. There is also a significant percentage (20%) of respondents who simply doesn't have a view about it.
8. One of the vital questions facing the Afghan peace talks is the opinion of Afghans over the political system. Based on the survey results, an overwhelming majority (68%) of the survey respondents prefer an *Islamic Republic* over an *Islamic Emirate* (13%). In this survey, during the data collection the term *Islamic Republic* was defined to the respondents through their historical memory which means the survey respondents were asked that based on their experience whether they preferred the current political system or that of during the Taliban regime i.e. *Islamic Emirate* as they experienced it. Whereas, a *mixed system* was defined as the best qualities of both the Islamic Republic and Islamic Emirate.

9. Women consists almost half of the Afghan population and the Taliban policies vis-a-vis women plus the concerns of the donor nations with regards to the protection of women's rights has been a major topic in the Afghan peace talks. For this reason, the survey collected data on the opinion of Afghans across the country on whether Afghan women should be present in the Afghan peace talks. The overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) supported the presence of women in the Afghan peace talks whereas only a minor percentage (17%) opposed it.
10. One of the biggest obstacles to the intra-Afghan dialogue has been the role of the Afghan government in the peace talks. In this survey, we probed this question and the result is significant. The survey findings shows that a clear majority of the respondents (65%) believe that the Afghan government should lead peace negotiations with the Taliban which is followed by 21% of the respondents who say non-governmental actors should lead the peace negotiations.

All of these questions are further analyzed with factoring-in various other variables such as age, education, region and gender among others in both *Section 3* and *Annex 1* of this report.

*Section 1*

**INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The prevalent discourse on the Afghan peace process is very elite and urban centric. The voices of the common Afghans is missing in the current discourse on the Afghan peace talks and more specifically the voice of rural Afghanistan seems to be neglected who is caught in the crossfire and pays the highest price in this war. It is for this reason that the Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS) decided to reach out to the Afghans living beyond urban centers with a significant sample size i.e. 5,038 interviewees through a random survey and asked them some critical question facing the Afghan peace process. The purpose of such a survey was to gear away the prevalent discourse on peace from the narratives of the Afghan leaders and foreign envoys to that of common Afghans i.e. to hear out their needs, priorities and concerns on such important issues as the political system, the solution to the current Afghan conflict, women's representation in the peace process and the fate of many foreign fighters who are fighting under the umbrella of the Afghan Taliban.

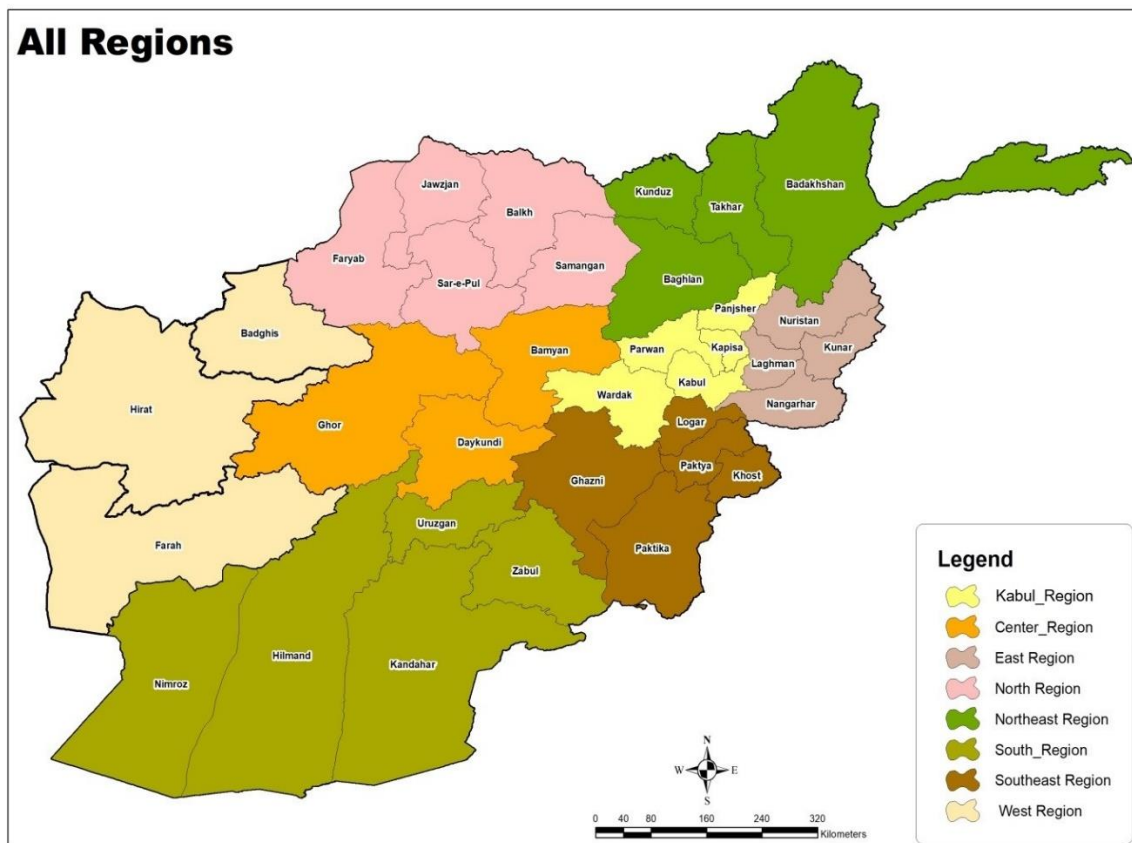
After compiling and analyzing the data from enumerators, the results and findings were surprising but equally reassuring which challenges many of the assumptions and narratives prevalent in the Afghan media, diplomatic circles and among Afghan elites. For example, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents believe that the ongoing Afghan conflict does not have a military solution and/or a clear majority of Afghans back the representation of Afghan women in the peace talks. Furthermore, it is important to notice that Afghans are divided over the question of presence of US/NATO forces in Afghanistan.

This is the first survey of its kind which specifically focuses on the perceptions of the Afghan people over the peace process and the key questions facing it. It aims to refer to the Afghan people and go beyond elite and urban centric narratives to hear out Afghanistan in its entirety on how do they feel about the conditions, structures, processes (if any) of the Afghan peace talks and some of the key challenges that faces the ongoing talks.

### *The Regions of this Survey*

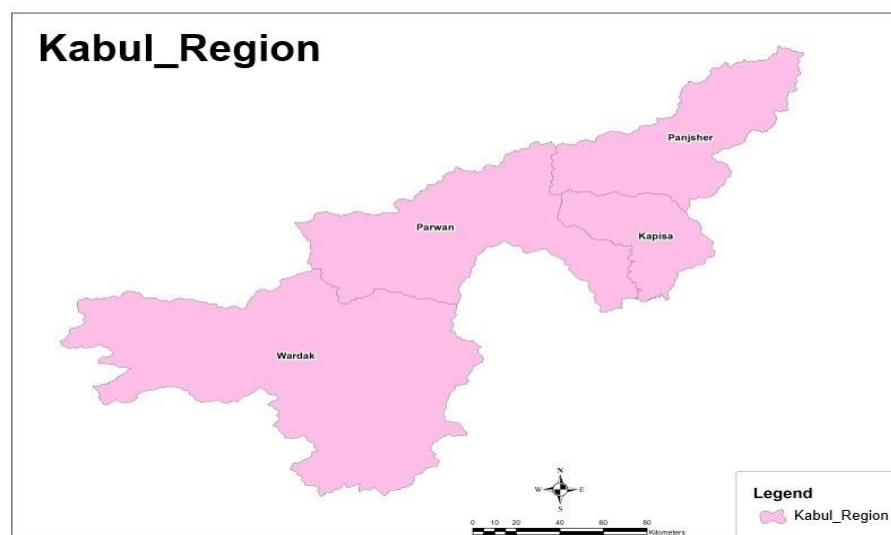
In this survey we have divided Afghanistan into eight (8) regions – Kabul Region, East, Southeast, South, Central, West, North and Northeast. This regional division of Afghanistan was based on the IDLG's "*Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Citizen-Centered Governance – A roadmap for subnational Reform*". The map below illustrates this regional division:





**MAP 1.**

It is worth pointing out that Kabul Region includes Kabul and its neighboring provinces i.e. Kapisa, Panjshir and Parwan for the purposes of this survey. This is illustrated further in the map below:



**MAP 2.**

### *The Need for this Survey*

The need for this survey was felt when the board of directors of IWPS convened for an informal discussion on peace. The board felt that there was a big vacuum of systematically-collected evidence-based views of common Afghans over the ongoing peace process except the few government driven handpicked jirgas. Therefore, there was a dire need to go out to the provinces and hear people's voices on critical issues about peace. It was equally important to note that often times different players in the Afghan peace arena operated under the assumptions and/or papers drafted in foreign capitals for them with little or no input from common Afghans. This survey tends to be that data driven and evidence-based reference point to many researchers, academics, policy makers and practitioners on the Afghan peace for the voices of the Afghan people on peace.

More specifically, this survey was needed:

- It is a survey specifically focused on peace and aims to capture the perception of all Afghans from all walks of life with a focus on Afghans living in rural areas on their expectations, needs and priorities from peace talks.
- This survey is run by the Afghans for the Afghans with little or no input from external players.
- IWPS only collects, analyzes and presents the data in this survey. We are an independent, apolitical and non-government organization dedicated for the cause of peace and does not pursue the agenda of any domestic or foreign players in the Afghan peace talks. Our sole aim is to capture the views and opinions of Afghans from all walks of life from across the country.
- This survey is intentionally designed as short, succinct and easy to understand to address some of the hot and critical topics facing the ongoing peace talks in the country. This way, it will be easier to understand and interpret the data.
- Our mantra in this survey is that *"We collect. You interpret."* which ensures our impartiality, objectivity and neutrality in the entire survey process of data collection, cleansing and analyses.
- And finally, this will not be a one-time survey and will continue for many years to come until peace is achieved and through this perception survey we aim to capture the views

and opinions of not only Afghans in urban centers but also rural Afghanistan to hear out their concerns, priorities and needs for peace in Afghanistan.

#### *What to Expect from this Survey*

This survey aims to fill a vacuum i.e. individual voices of the Afghan people on the Afghan peace process and more specifically what do Afghans (*rural and urban dwellers*) have to say about the critical issues i.e. political system, future of the constitution, role of women etc throughout the peace talks. Furthermore, we would like this report to serve as the periodic voices of the Afghan people on peace talks, negotiations, potential peace agreement and beyond.

When a reader opens up this survey report - he/she should expect the following:

- a solid survey capturing the voices of a significant sample size of the Afghan people on critical matters facing the Afghan peace process.
- professionalism, objectivity and neutrality in data collection, cleaning and analysis.
- the voice of rural Afghanistan who are the main victims of this war on the Afghan peace process.
- the voice of the Afghan women and youth on peace.
- specific policy recommendations for all parties to this conflict on the trends of the perceptions of the Afghan people on peace.
- and finally a regional breakdown of the voices of the Afghan people on critical matters facing the Afghan peace talks.

#### *The Limitations of this Perception Survey*

This perception survey has the following limitations:

- the enumerators of this survey could not go to the Taliban-controlled areas for security reasons.
- our definition of urban centers i.e. cities is provincial capitals whereas our definition of rural areas are the districts of Afghanistan.

- While we aimed for a 50% female interviewees but for security, social and political reasons we only achieved 35% female participation for this survey which is still a considerable percentage.
- all of our enumerators were not professional surveyors but a considerable majority of them had previous training and experience of conducting surveys and interviews.
- one of the challenges during this survey was access to internet in some parts of Afghanistan to fill in the survey questionnaires online. In those areas we conducted paper based interviews which was later on entered into the online application in areas where internet was accessible.

*Section 2*

**METHODOLOGY**

## METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS). Sampling, field work, data collection, data cleaning and analysis, and report writing were carried out by a team of professional researchers and academics based in Kabul. The descriptive analysis of the data in this survey has been carried out using STATA v. 15.

Interviews were conducted in person, in Dari and Pashto, among a national sample of 5,038 Afghan adults of 18 years and above during November 23 to December 20, 2019. In the sampling process, sampling points were distributed proportional to population size in each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces stratified by urban and rural areas. Population parameters were based on projections from the Afghan National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) latest data.

Interviews, which averaged 7 minutes, were conducted by 48 enumerators (8 female and 40 male) in 34 provinces of Afghanistan. All interviewers were residents of the provinces and districts where the interviews were conducted. All interviewers were trained and the vast majority of these interviewers had previous experience with survey data collection. Of the 5,178 completed interviews, 410 (8%) were controlled with telephone back-checks by the supervisory team and 54 (1%) with direct supervision from the central office during field work.

The enumerators interviewed 5,038 men and women face to face in 34 provinces. Of these, 1,764 are female (35%) interviewees and the remaining of 3,274 (65%) are male interviewees. Of the total, 3,043 (60%) participants were rural and 1,995 (40%) were urban respondents. Of the total 5,038 respondents, 3,074 (61%) respondents were interviewed online and the remaining 1,964 (39%) survey participants were interviewed in person using paper-based questionnaire.

All completed interviews were subjected to logical controls conducted at IWPS office in Kabul with 140 of the initial 5,178 interviews rejected for failing quality-control tests and measures making the final sample 5,038.

### *Survey Questionnaire*

The IWPS peace experts arranged multiple rounds of meetings as a result of which the research team developed a comprehensive list of questions which are considered to be vital for the Afghan peace process.

The proposed list of questions were reviewed to ensure they are in conformity with international standards. These standards entail ensuring that questions are simple and easy to understand; do not contain double negatives; contextualized locally and are not leading the respondents; and that response match question's wordings.

Prior to commencing the field work, the questionnaire went through seven (7) rounds of reviews and revisions. The *Afghan People's Peace Perception Survey* questionnaire includes topics such as opinions on ways to achieve peace; what should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks; what will happen to the Afghan government if international troops leave without reaching a peace deal; Zalmay Khalilzad's role as the facilitator for peace talks; women's role in the Afghan peace talks; and finally who should lead the peace process. Of the total questions, ten (8) were demographic questions and ten (10) were peace process oriented questions.

Finally, after the questionnaire review an online tool was developed to make sure the data is collected in real time as the survey interviews were happening. The questionnaire was then placed within the online tool. This online tool has been made available to the surveyors to be used on smartphones. As this platform worked on internet only, the data was collected manually through paper-based questionnaire and entered into main online dataset later on in places where the internet was not accessible.

### *Sample and Data Collection*

The *Afghan People's Peace Perception Survey* aimed to gather data from over 5,038 men and women at and above 18 years of age from 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The sample size of this survey has been 5,038 considering a 95% confidence interval and a margin of error of 5%. In addition, the data was analyzed based on age, education, gender among others and the sampling strategy aimed to stratify participants by province and rural and urban stratas as provided by the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA).

The surveyors interviewed 5,038 men and women face to face in 34 provinces. Of the total sample, 1,764 are female (35%) interviewees and the remaining of 3,274 (65%) are male interviewees. Of the total 5,038 - 3,043 (60%) interviews were rural residents and 1,995 (40%) were in urban residents. The survey field work was carried out between November 23 and December 20, 2019.

### *Data Quality Check*

After the data collection process was completed, the data cleansing process and quality controls of the dataset was carried out by the IWPS's *Data Analysts* to check abnormal data patterns and duplicates that imply an interview was not properly conducted by an enumerator.

The quality check entailed the following two (2) measures:

**Measure 1: Equality Measure** – compares interviews for similarities, grouped by interviewer, within sampling point, province or any other variable. Typically, interviews with an average of 90% or higher similarities were marked for further investigation.

*Measure 2: **Duplicates Measure*** – compares cases across all interviewers and respondents to check for similarity rates. This test would flag any pair of interviews that are similar to each other. Typically, any cases that have a similarity rate of 95% or higher were flagged for further investigation.

Any interview that did not pass any of the data quality measures was pulled out for additional investigation. If the interview did not pass the investigation it was dropped from the final data set before analysis. Overall, a total of 140 interviews were dropped from the dataset due to low quality and duplications.



*Section 3*

**DATA ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS**

### 3.1. Data Analysis and Key Findings

The survey questionnaire was designed to address vital questions which are currently predominant within the Afghan peace discourse and to get them to common Afghans from all walks of life across the country to capture their views. Therefore, we designed ten (10) questions in this survey to keep it simple and straightforward for both analytical as well as for easy understanding for our random respondents. The full set of questionnaire can be found in the *Annex 3* of this report.

Each question is analyzed on a main variable followed by detailed analysis through breakdown by factors such as age, education, rural-urban divide as well as regional breakdown. Further analysis on each question by chart is also carried out which can be found in *Annex 1* of this report.

#### Q1: In your opinion, how can Afghanistan achieve peace?

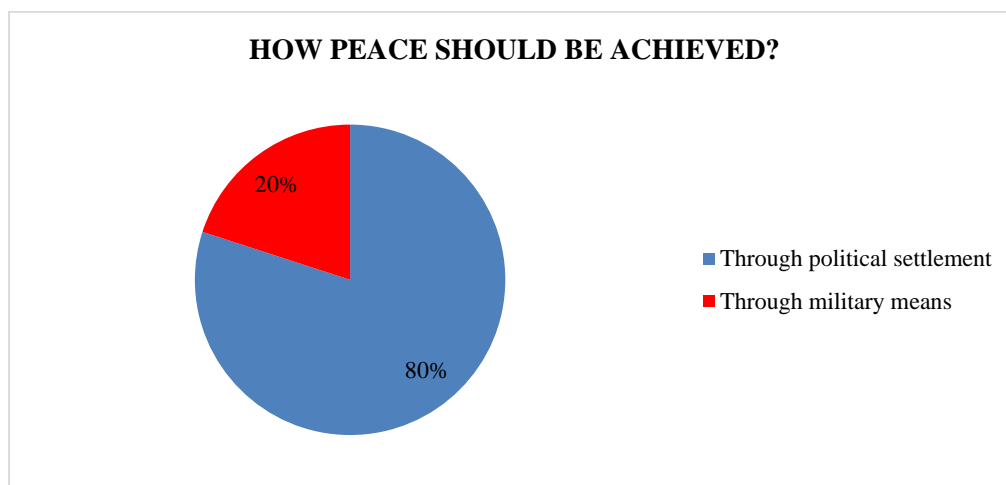


Figure 1

According to this survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) believe in a political settlement of this conflict as compared to (20%) who believe in the military solution to achieve peace. This means that the majority of Afghans believe that the current Afghan conflict does not have a military solution but ultimately peace can be achieved through a political settlement. In this question, we refer to “*political settlement*” as a non-violent way of ending the conflict through a peace process. Whereas, the term “*military means*” refer to using violence and security forces to militarily defeat the Taliban and its allies to bring peace to Afghanistan.

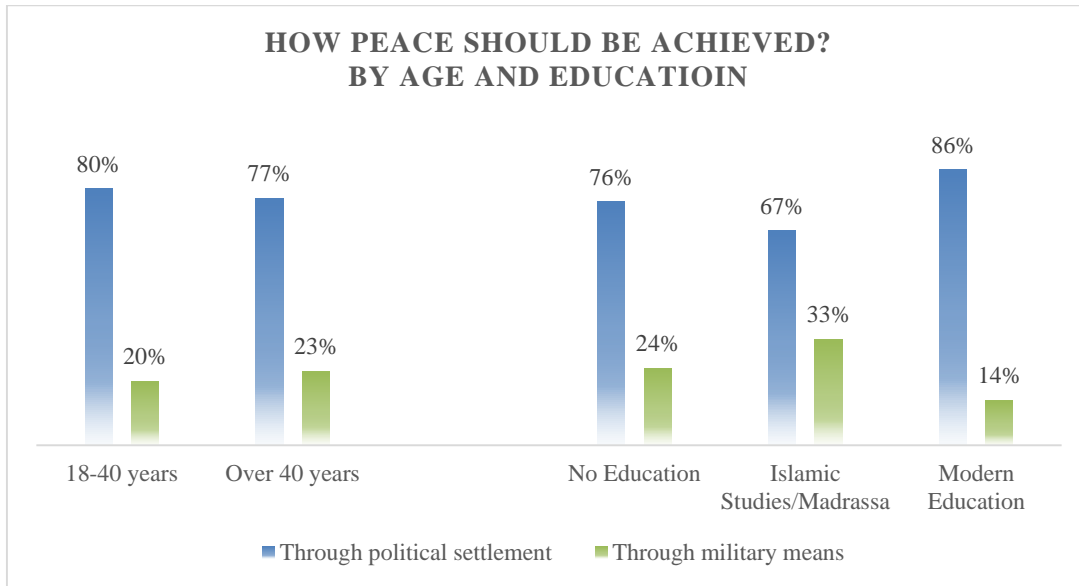


Figure 2

Moreover, the question was further analyzed by age and education factors wherein by age factor- the data does not show significant margin of difference in the responses whereas by education the survey shows interesting margins of differences in different education categories. For example, (86%) of respondents with modern education believe that peace can be achieved through political settlement. This is followed by (76%) no education and (67%) modern education. This clearly shows that across different categories of education, the majority of respondents believe in a political settlement to achieve peace in Afghanistan.

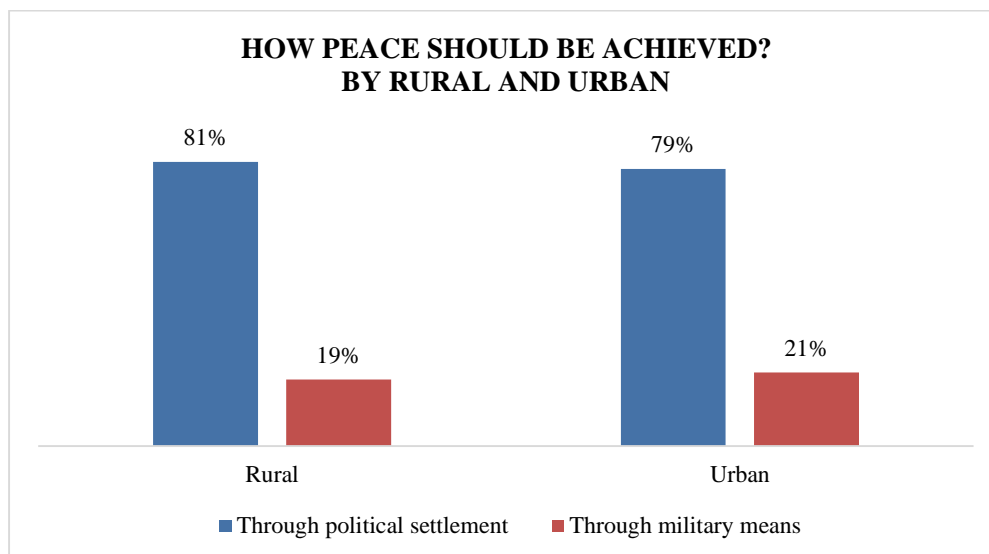
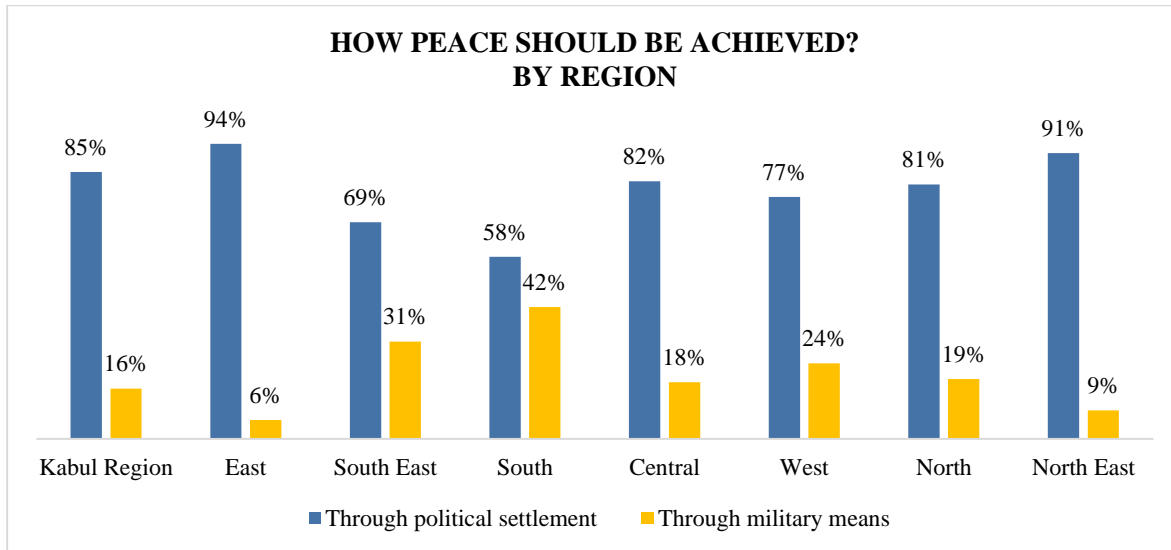


Figure 3

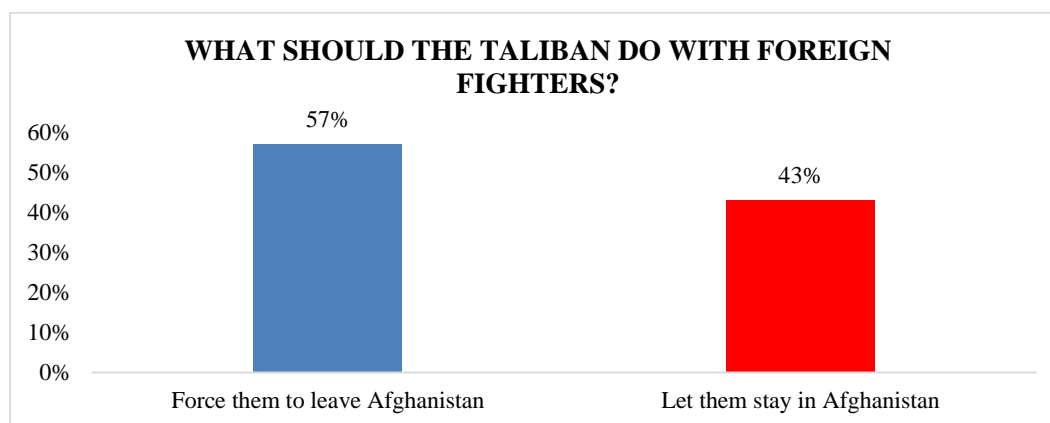
In addition, the survey finds that there is a consensus both in rural and urban Afghanistan on achieving peace through political settlement.



*Figure 4*

While, there is a consensus across Afghanistan to achieve peace through political settlement. However, it is interesting to note that there are significant regional variations in response to this question. For example, in eastern and northeastern Afghanistan (respectively 94% and 91%) the overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that peace can be achieved through political settlement whereas in south and south-eastern Afghanistan (respectively 42% and 31%) there are also significant number of respondents who prefer military means to achieve peace in the country.

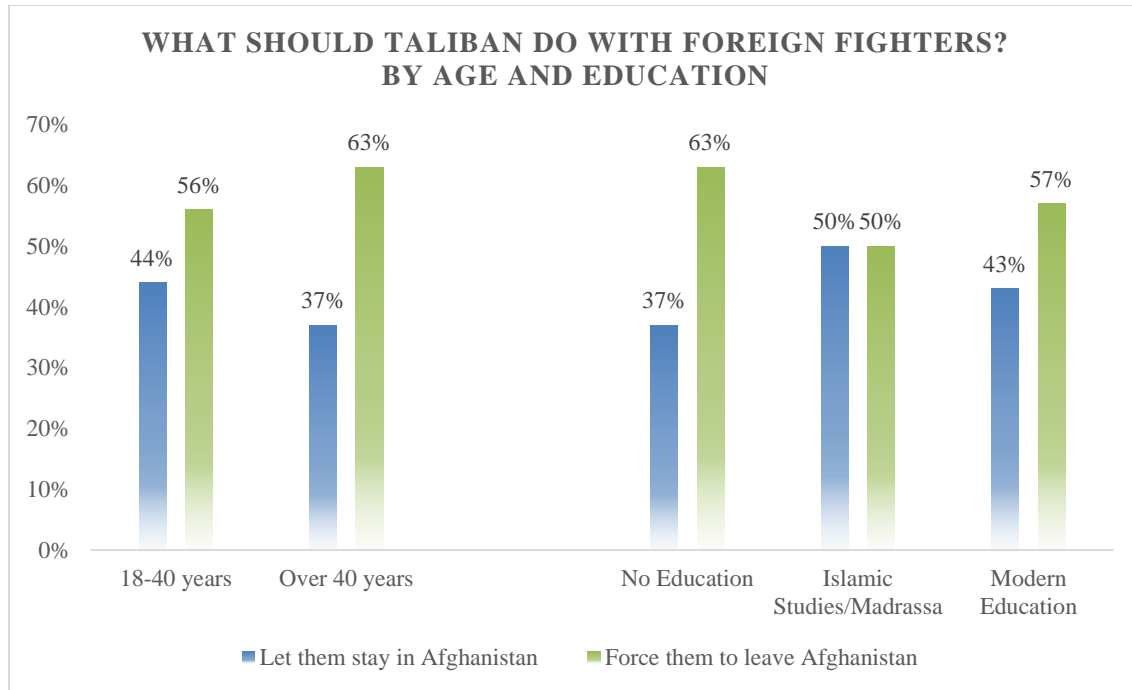
**Q2. What should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks after a peace deal is reached?**



*Figure 5*

In addition to asking how peace can be achieved, the survey also asked what should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks post peace deal. Overall, the survey results show that over

half (57%) of our respondents across Afghanistan believes that the Taliban should force the foreign fighters in their ranks to leave the country after a peace deal is reached. While, 43% of the respondents believe that the foreign fighters in the ranks of the Taliban should stay in Afghanistan after a peace deal.



*Figure 6*

The data shows interesting variations across education categories specifically those with Islamic education who are almost divided equally on the question of whether the Taliban should force foreign fighters to leave (50%) or stay (50%) in Afghanistan. This is followed by an interesting variation of opinion in age groups on this question. But the data shows that the majority of Afghans, particularly those who are above 40 years old (63%) believe that foreign fighters in the ranks of the Taliban should be forced to leave Afghanistan after a peace deal is reached between the conflict parties.

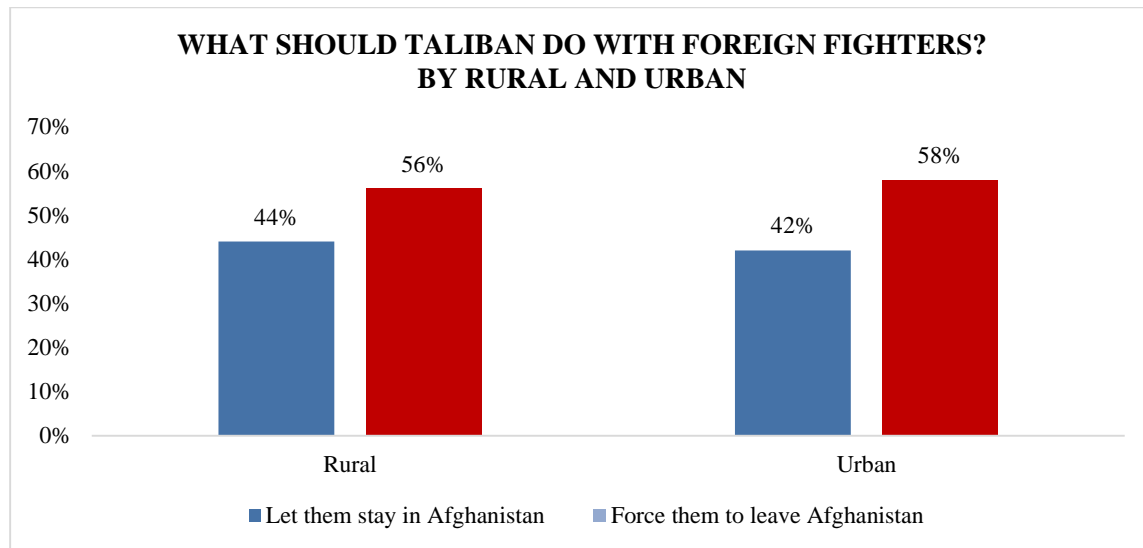


Figure 7

Furthermore, there seems to be a consensus between rural and urban (respectively 56% and 58%) Afghanistan on the question of what should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks after a peace deal is reached. The respondents in both rural and urban Afghanistan want them to leave the country after a peace deal is reached.

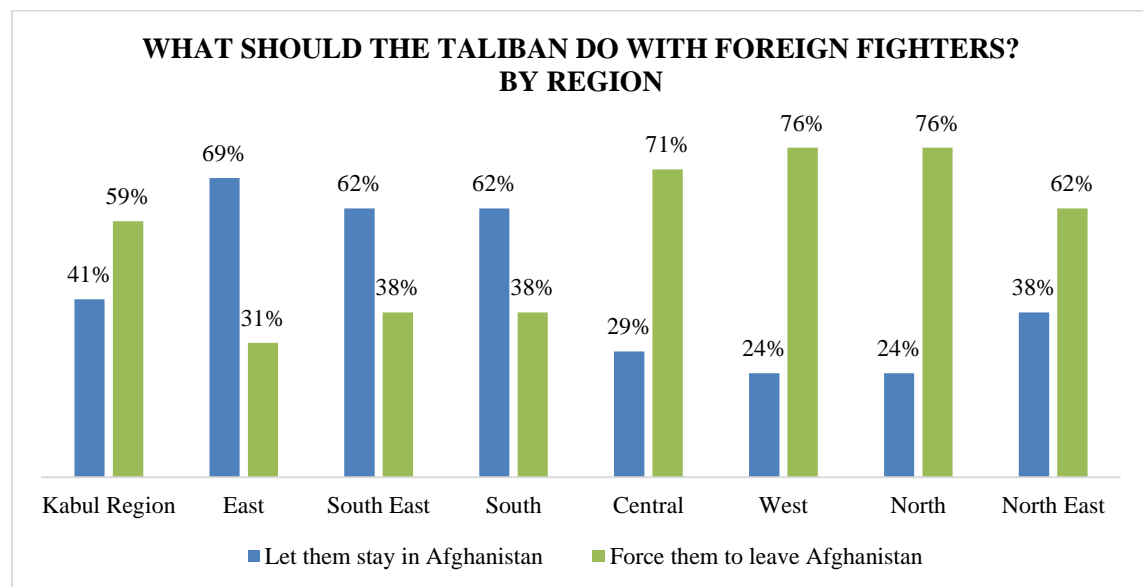


Figure 8

However, the regional breakdown of this question shows significant regional variations in response to this important question. While - central, western, northern and northeastern Afghanistan overwhelmingly believe that the Taliban needs to force foreign fighters in their ranks to leave Afghanistan but it seems that in eastern, south-eastern and southern Afghanistan there is significant support for these foreign fighters to stay in the country post peace deal.

### Q3: Should US and NATO forces leave Afghanistan after a peace deal?

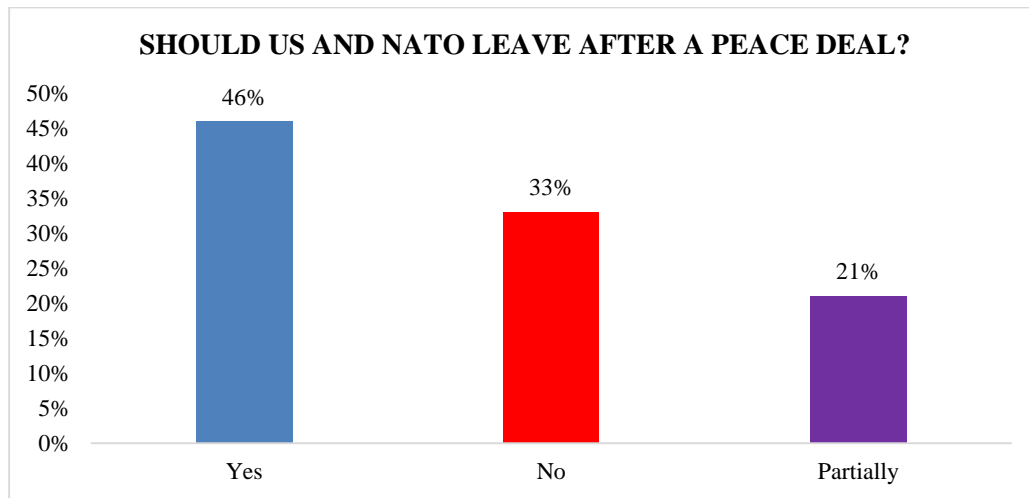


Figure 9

One of the important demands of the Taliban in the ongoing peace process is the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country. The survey inquired the respondents about this vital question. Based on the findings of this survey, more than one-third (46%) of respondents are of the opinion that US and NATO forces should leave Afghanistan post a peace deal whereas a little more than one-third (33%) of the respondents say they should not leave.

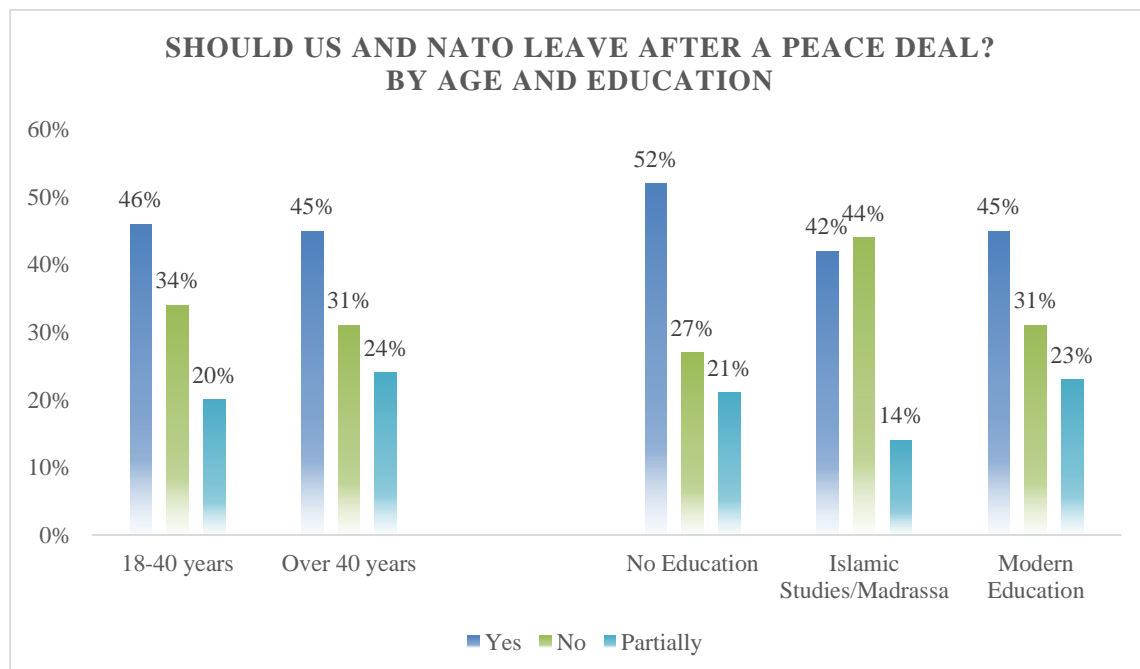


Figure 10

When we factored-in different age groups in this question, there doesn't seem to be a significant margin of difference across different age stratas. However, looking at the differences across various educational categories, the survey shows an interesting finding. For instance, those with Islamic education are significantly more likely (44%) to say that NATO should not leave Afghanistan post peace deal compared to those with modern education (31%) and no education (27%).

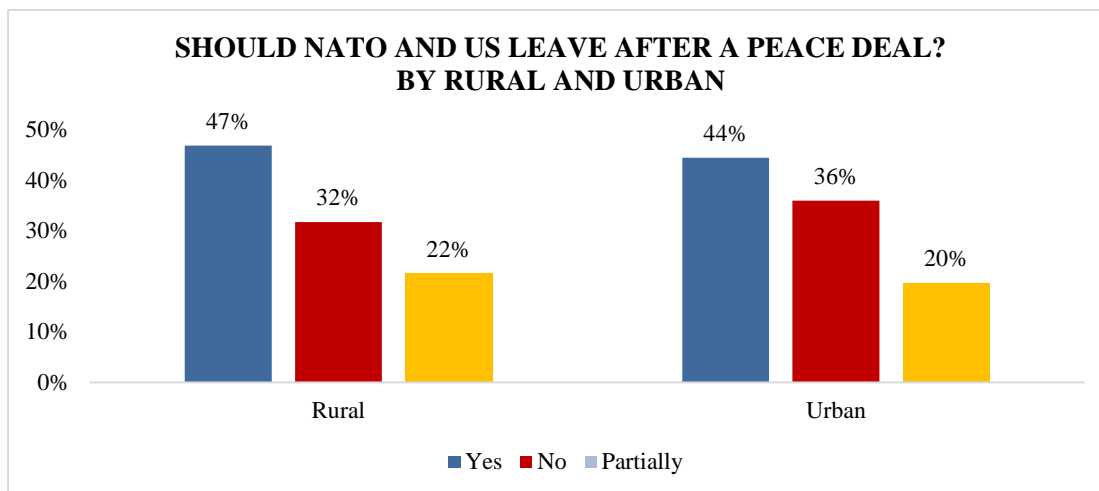


Figure 11

When we further analyzed this question across rural-urban divide, there seems to be no significant variations in response to this question.

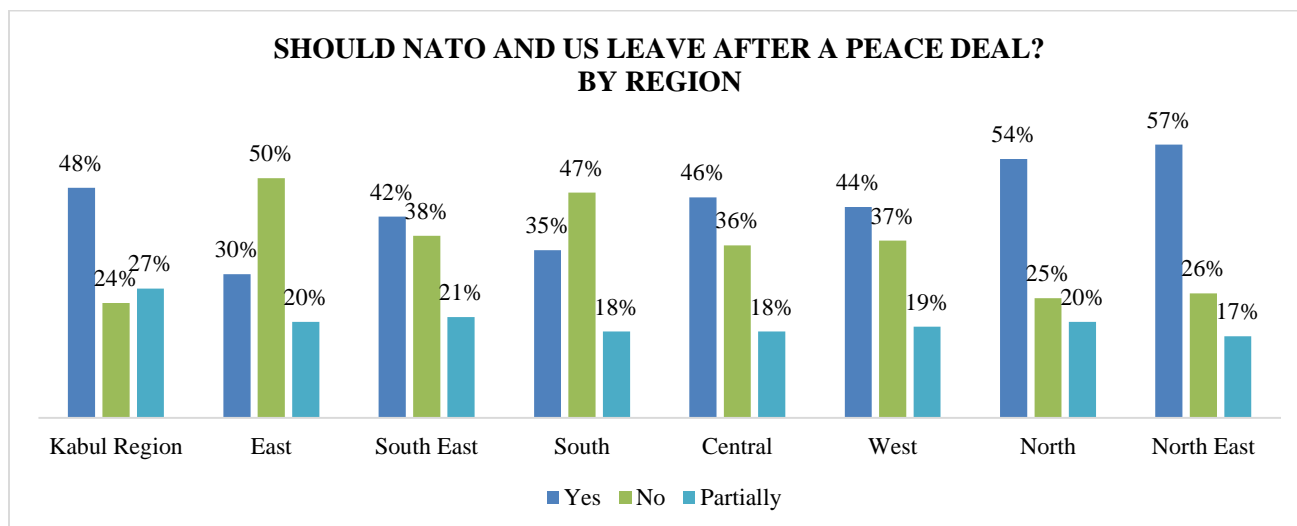


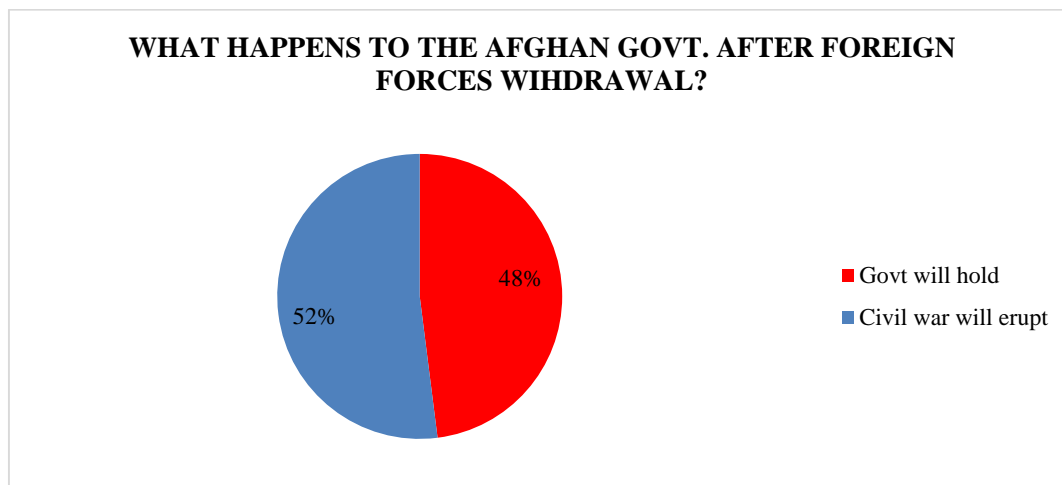
Figure 12



Breaking down the data by region, the survey findings show that the respondents in northern and north-eastern Afghanistan are most likely to say that foreign forces should leave (54% and 57% respectively), while those in eastern and southern Afghanistan are least likely to think this way (30% and 35% respectively).

However, it is interesting to note the regional variations in response to this question. For example, the respondents in eastern (50%) and southern (47%) Afghanistan say that US and NATO forces should stay in the country after a potential peace deal is reached, whereas, the respondents in northern (54%) and northeastern (57%) Afghanistan say that US and NATO forces should leave Afghanistan after a peace deal.

**Q4 What will happen to the Afghan government after the withdrawal of foreign forces without a peace deal?**



*Figure 13*

When asked about the fate of the Afghan government in case of a sudden and unexpected withdrawal of foreign forces without a peace deal, there is a sharp divide amongst the respondents. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) say that a civil war will erupt and the Afghan government will not be able to sustain. Whereas, almost half of the respondents (48%) believe that the Afghan government will hold in such circumstances.

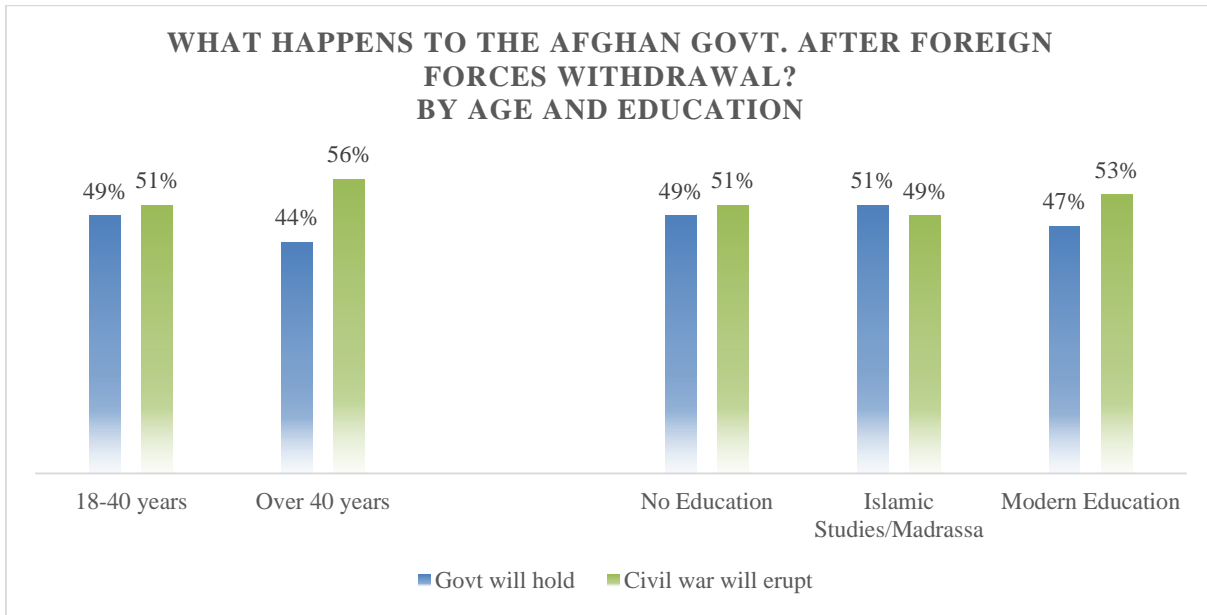


Figure 14

There seems to be a stark division amongst the survey respondents over the sustainability of the Afghan Government in case of a sudden withdrawal of foreign forces in the absence of a peace deal. We can clearly see that Afghans over the age of 40 have a stronger (56%) sense of insecurity (*maybe due to the experience of soviet withdrawal*) on the survival of the Afghan state in case of a no deal as compared to younger Afghans (51%).

Next, looking at the differences by education- those with modern education (53%) are slightly more likely to believe that civil war will erupt if the foreign forces leave without reaching a peace deal than those with no education (51%) and Islamic education (49%).

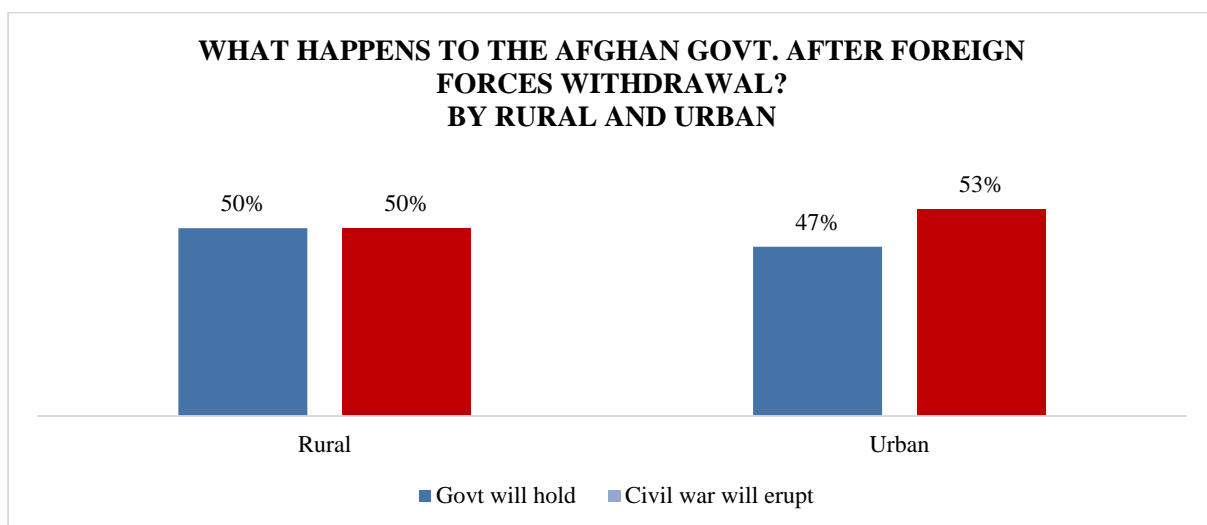


Figure 15

The data from the respondents of this survey shows slight variations among rural and urban Afghanistan on the question of the survivability of the Afghan state in the unexpected event of foreign forces withdrawal without a peace deal. For example, the respondents in rural Afghanistan is equally divided over the question of the survivability of the Afghan government as compared to respondents living in urban areas who believe with a tiny margin of difference (6%) that civil war will erupt if foreign forces withdraw without a peace deal.

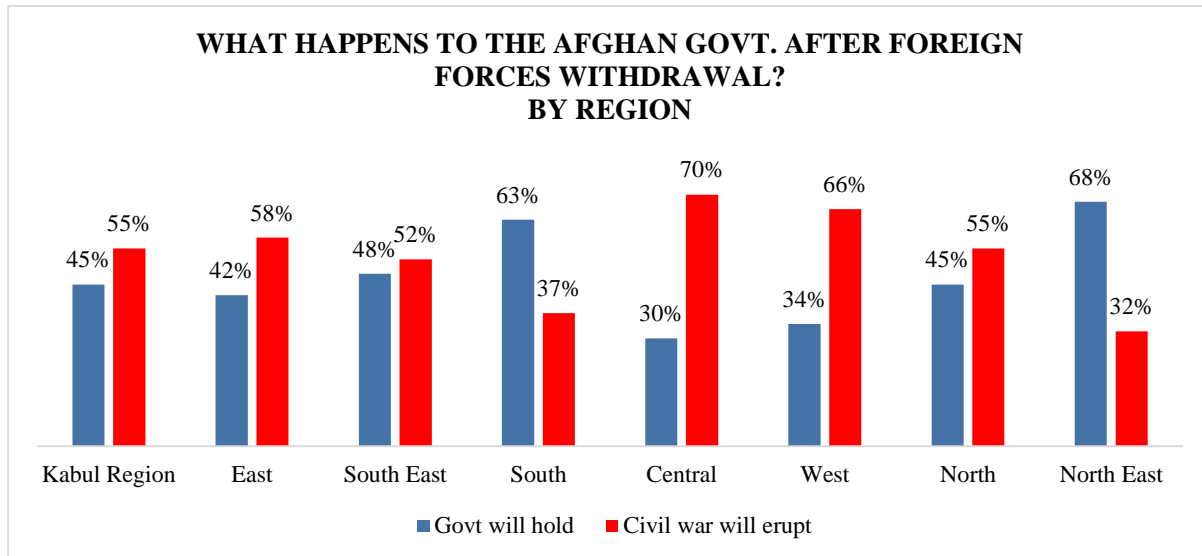


Figure 16

It is interesting to note the regional variations to this question. For example, the respondents in south and northeastern Afghanistan are significantly more likely (63% and 68% respectively) to say that government will hold after foreign forces withdrawal without reaching a peace deal while those in central and western Afghanistan are least likely to say this (30% and 34% respectively).

#### Q5: Where the peace talks should take place?

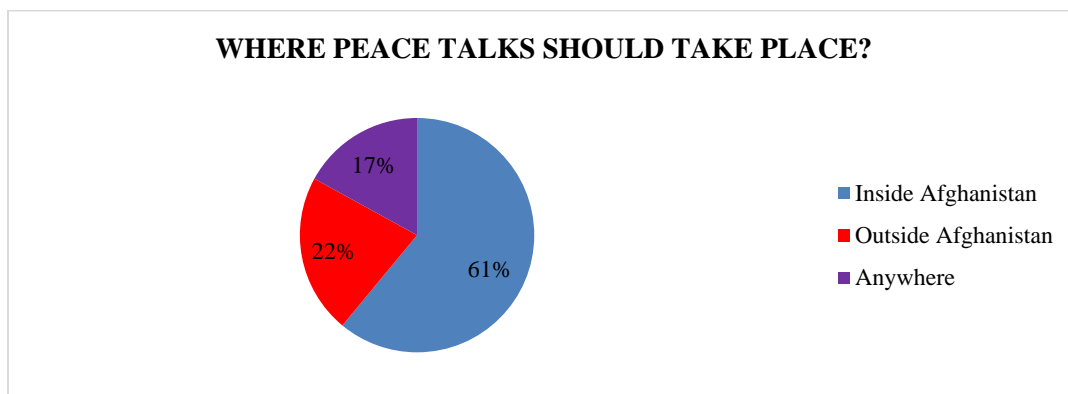


Figure 17

Another one of the significant questions which this survey probed was on the suitability of the venue for peace talks. A clear majority of the respondents (61%) believe that the Afghan peace talks should take place inside Afghanistan whereas comparatively smaller percentage (22%) say such talks should take place outside of the country.

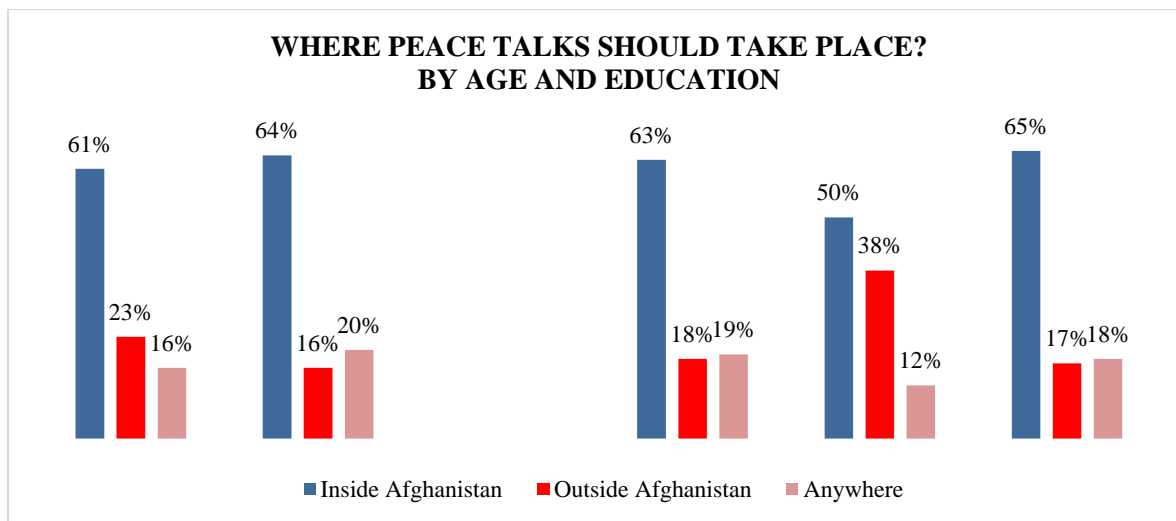


Figure 18

According to the survey data, those with modern education and no education (65% and 63% respectively) are significantly more likely to say that peace talks should take place inside Afghanistan than those with Islamic education (50%).

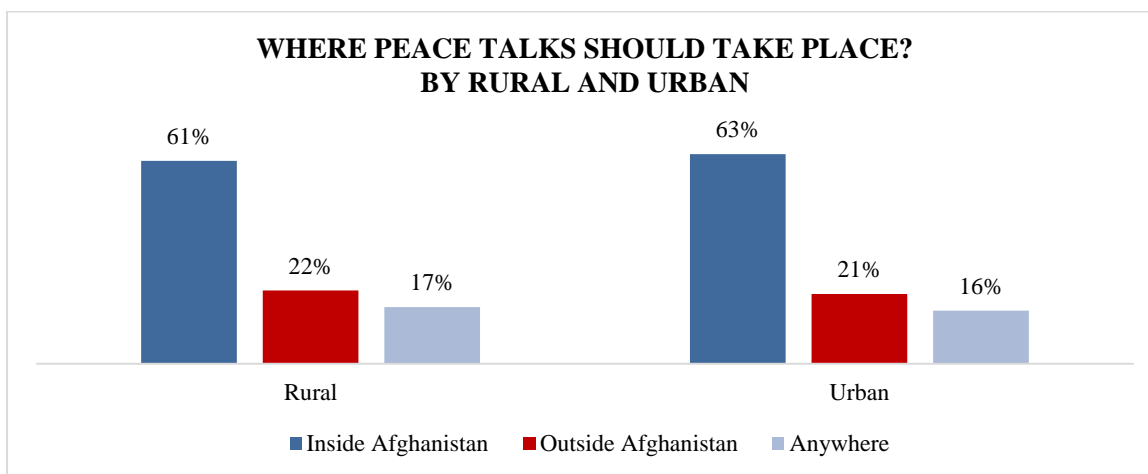


Figure 19

There seems to be a consensus amongst the respondents in rural and urban Afghanistan (above 60%) that peace talks should take place inside the country with only minor support (above 20%) for any venue outside of the country.

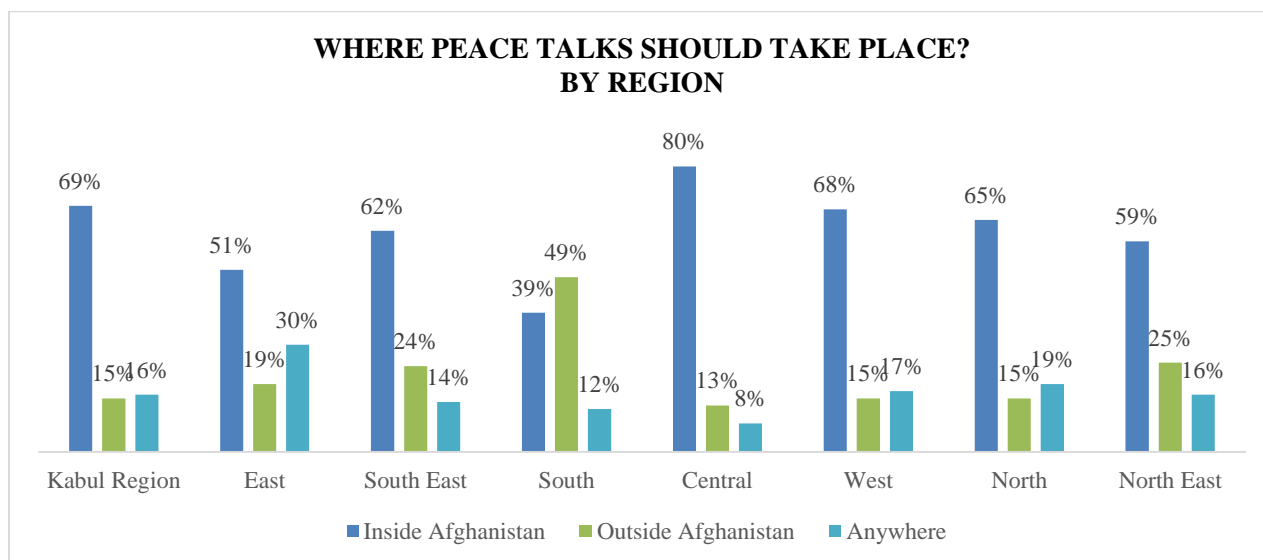


Figure 20

The regional breakdown of the survey bears consistent results with only one outlier. In this survey over half of respondents (above 50%) across all regions say that the venue for peace talks should be inside Afghanistan with the exception of southern region (39%).

**Q6: If outside Afghanistan, where is better?**

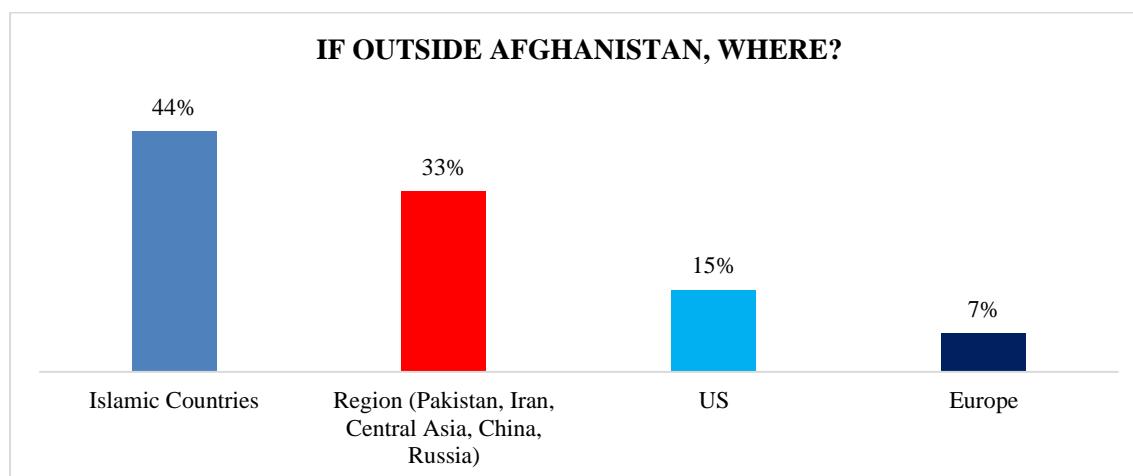


Figure 21

In a follow up question, the survey asked those respondents who preferred that peace talks should be held outside of Afghanistan: where should the peace talks take place? The results are interesting- the majority of the respondents preferred that in case peace talks are held outside of the country, it should be held in Islamic countries (*Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emarite, Qatar,*

Egypt) (44%) followed by the region (*Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, China and Russia*) with US and Europe coming after the region respectively as a preferred venues for peace talks.

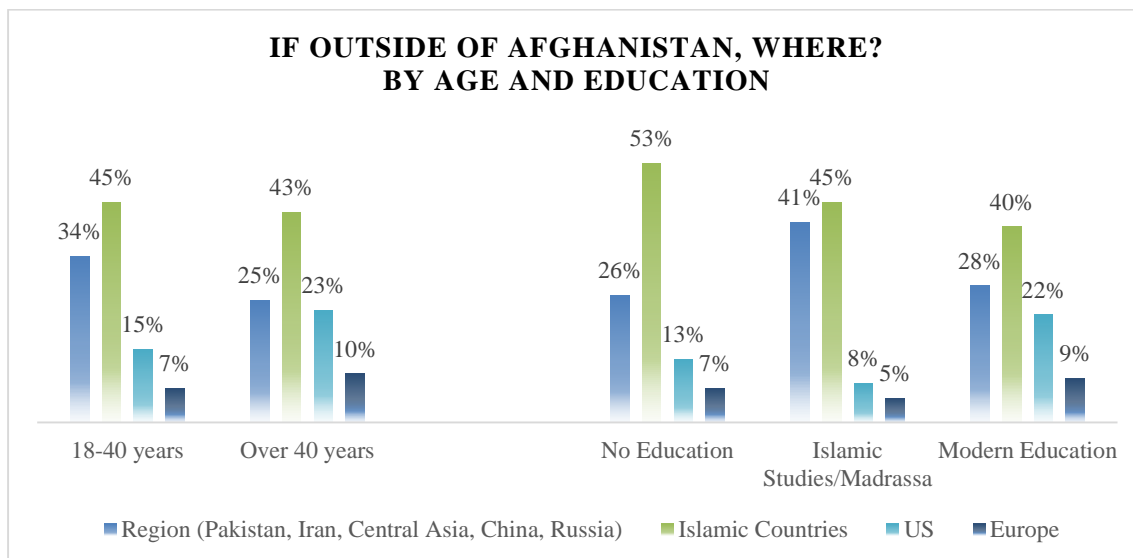


Figure 22

The majority of respondents of this survey prefer the peace talks to be held in an Islamic country in case it is held outside of the country. There is no variation in data in this regard when it comes to age and education but there is a data twist, those with no education (53%) and Islamic education (45%) are more likely to say that peace talks should be held in Islamic countries while those with modern education are more likely to say that peace talks should be held in Europe and the US (22% and 9% respectively).

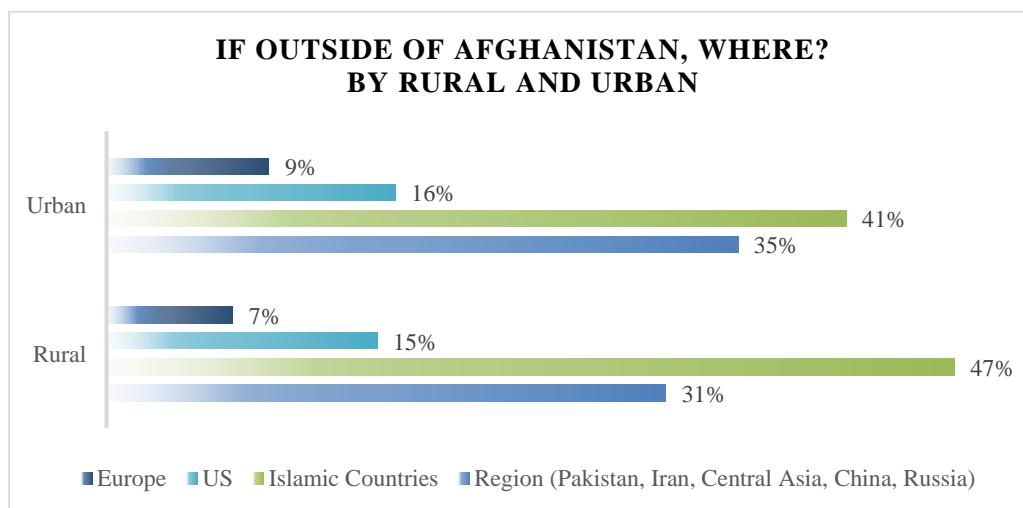


Figure 23

Furthermore, based on survey results there seems to be also a consensus among rural and urban respondents on the venue for peace talks i.e. Islamic countries followed by the region.

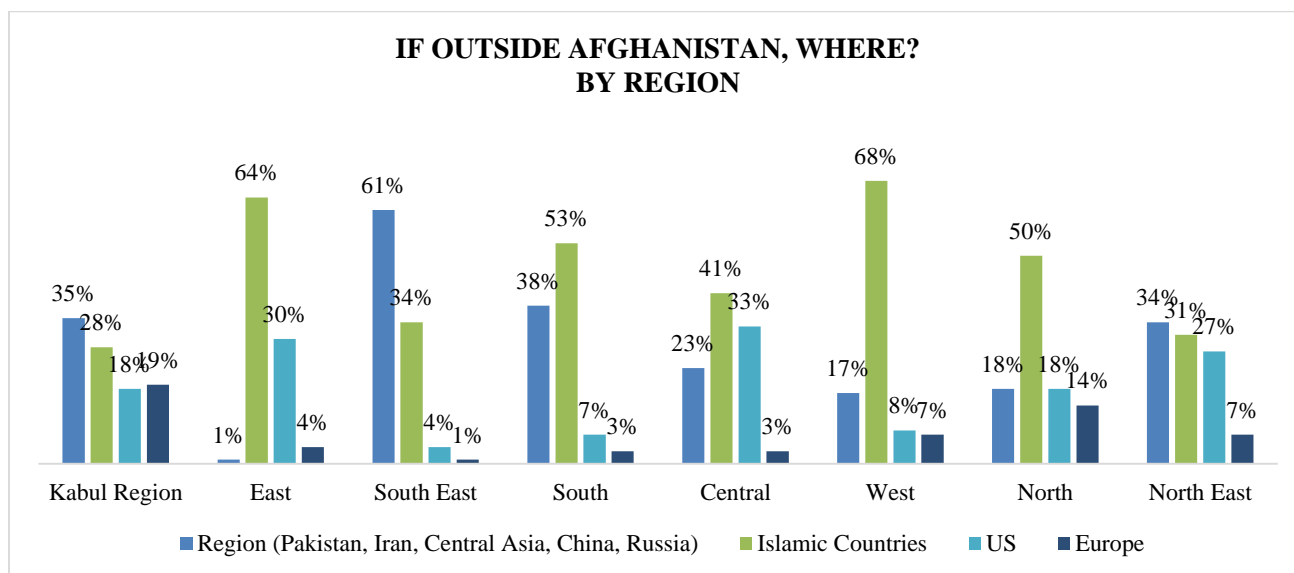


Figure 24

The regional breakdown for this survey question indicates that the majority (i.e. in west and east by 68% and 64% respectively) of the respondents across the regions of Afghanistan prefer Islamic countries with only few respondents from the capital, northeastern and southeastern Afghanistan who oppose the idea.

**Q7: Is Zalmay Khalilzad the right person to facilitate the peace negotiations between the Taliban and the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan?**

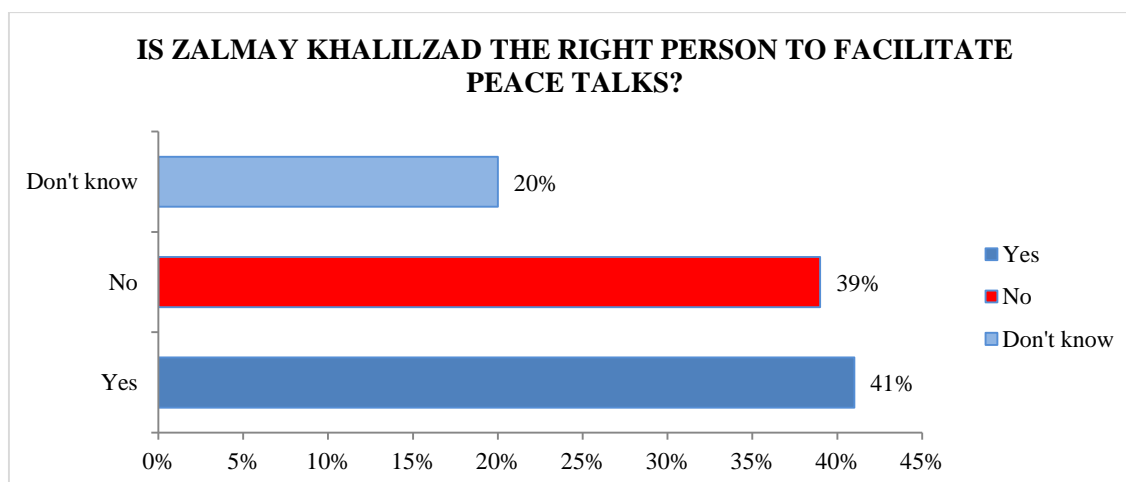


Figure 25

This survey also asked Afghans from across the country to say if the US Special Envoy for Peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, is the right person to facilitate the Afghan peace talks. While, 41% of the

respondents say he is the right person for the job with only 39% who think otherwise. There is also a significant percentage (20%) of Afghans who simply doesn't have a view about it.

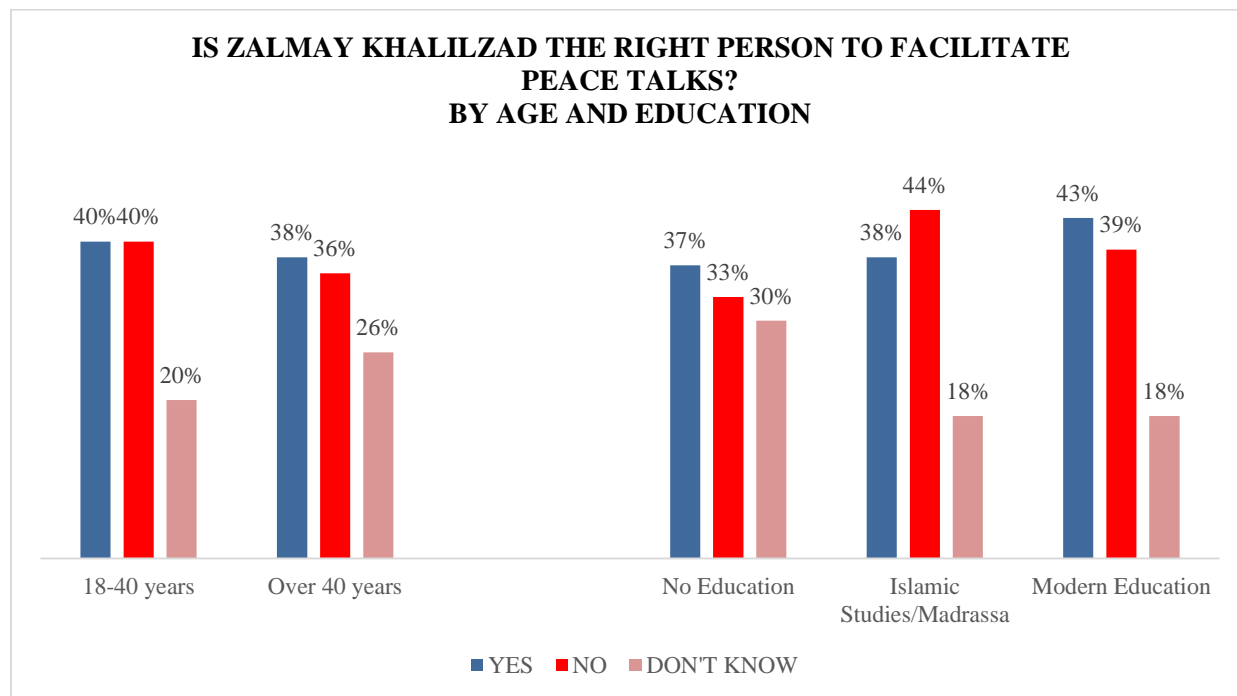


Figure 26

When we factored-in the age group in this survey question, the survey data shows that both age categories (respectively 40% and 38%) approves of his role as the a facilitator of the Afghan peace talks.

Next examining the survey results by education, the respondents with Islamic studies (38%) and with modern education (43%) approves of his role as a facilitator in the Afghan peace process.

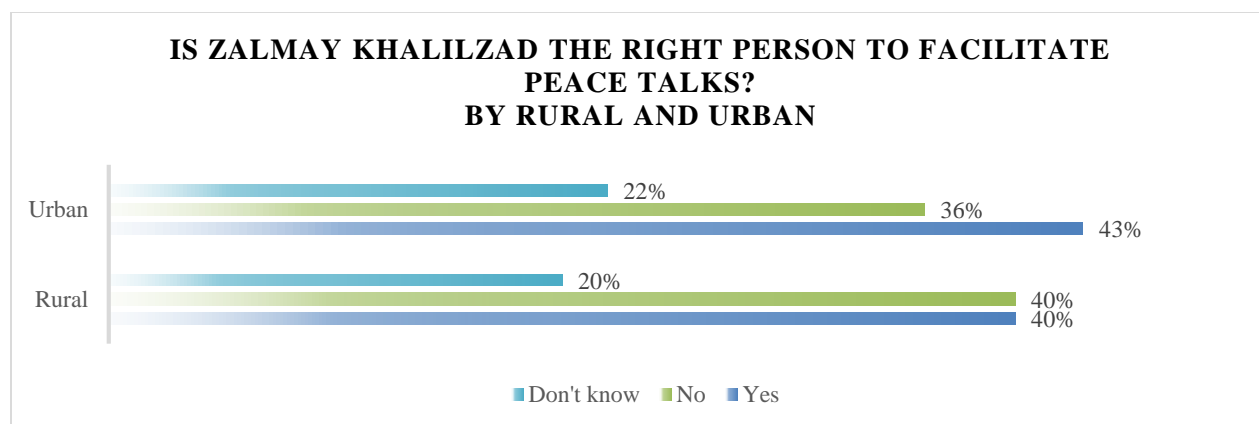


Figure 27



It is interesting to note that the survey data shows that while the respondents in rural Afghanistan (40%) think that Zalmay Khalilzad is the right man to facilitate Afghan peace talks but the respondents in urban Afghanistan (43%) are optimistic about his role in the Afghan peace process.

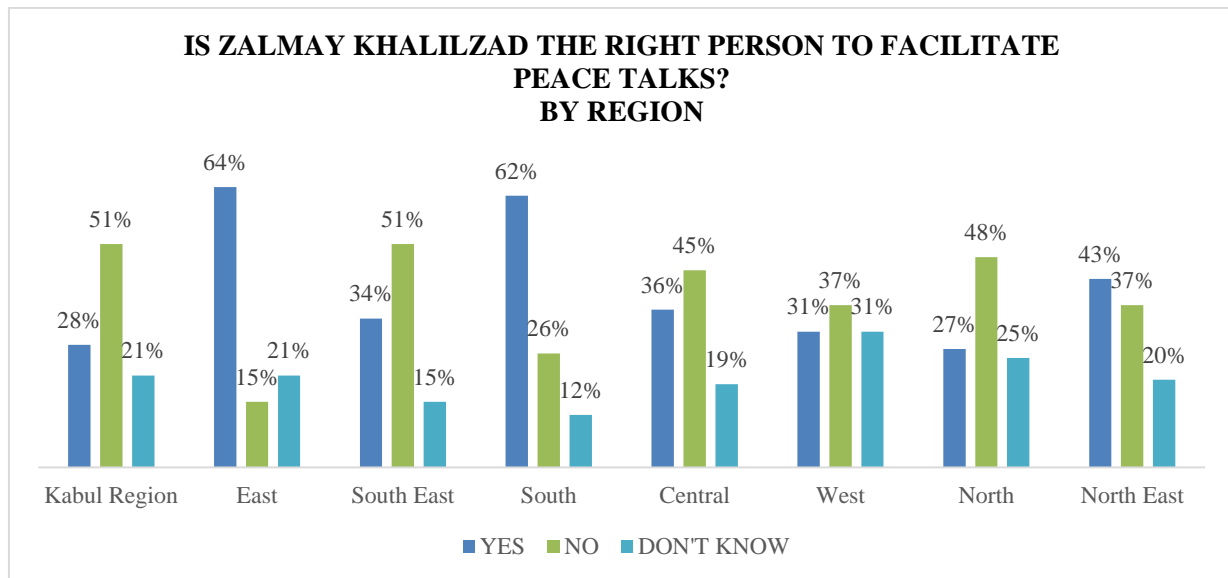


Figure 28

It seems that the US Special Envoy for Peace, Zalmay Khalilzad, enjoys a positive opinion in east, south and northeastern Afghanistan (64%, 62% and 43% respectively) whereas he is seen with lesser support in southeastern, northern and central Afghanistan (34%, 27% and 36% respectively).

**Q8: What political system you prefer in order to achieve peace?**

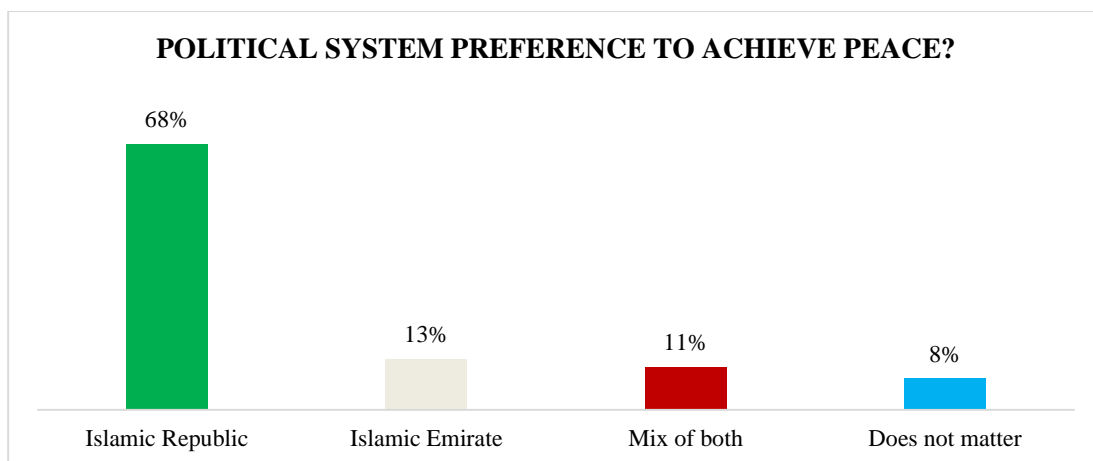


Figure 29

One of the vital questions facing the Afghan peace talks is the opinion of Afghans over the political system. Based on the survey results, an overwhelming majority (68%) of the survey respondents prefer an *Islamic Republic* over an *Islamic Emirate* (13%). In this survey, during the data collection process the term *Islamic Republic* was defined to the respondents through their historical memory which means the survey respondents were asked that based on their experience whether they preferred the current political system or that of during the Taliban regime i.e. *Islamic Emirate*. Whereas, a *mixed system* was defined as the best qualities of both the Islamic Republic and Islamic Emirate.

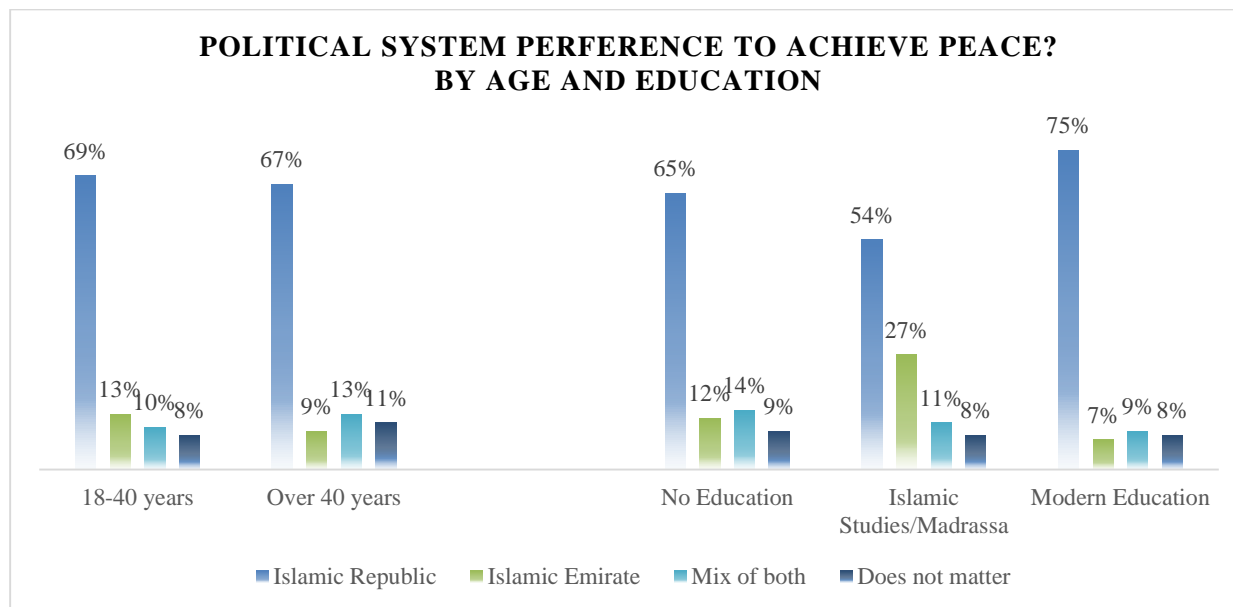


Figure 30

The data breakdown by age and education shows a significant majority (respectively 69%, 75%) of respondents across different stratas in both factors i.e. age and education prefer *Islamic Republic* over an *Islamic Emirate* in Afghanistan. It is noteworthy that respondents with Islamic education (54%) also prefer an Islamic Republic.

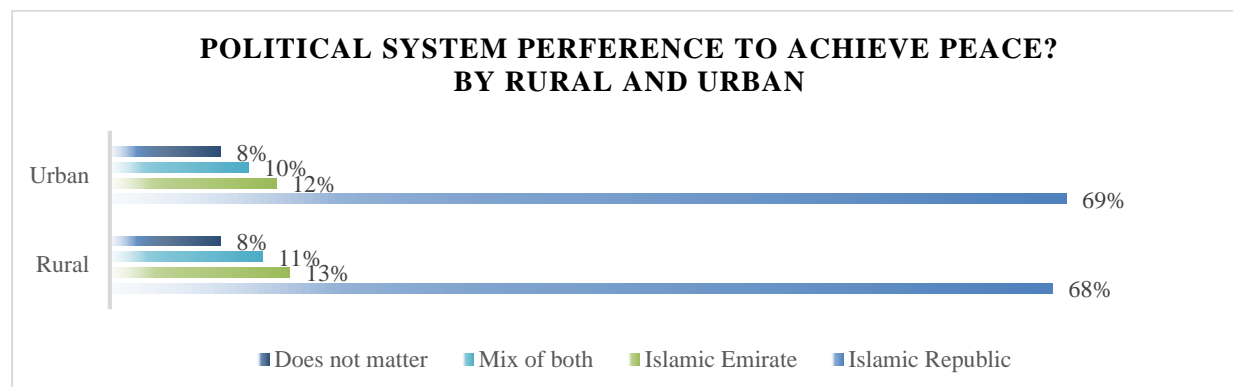


Figure 31

When the survey respondents in rural and urban Afghanistan were asked about what political system they prefer, the majority of respondents both in rural and urban areas say they prefer *Islamic Republic* over an *Islamic Emirate*.

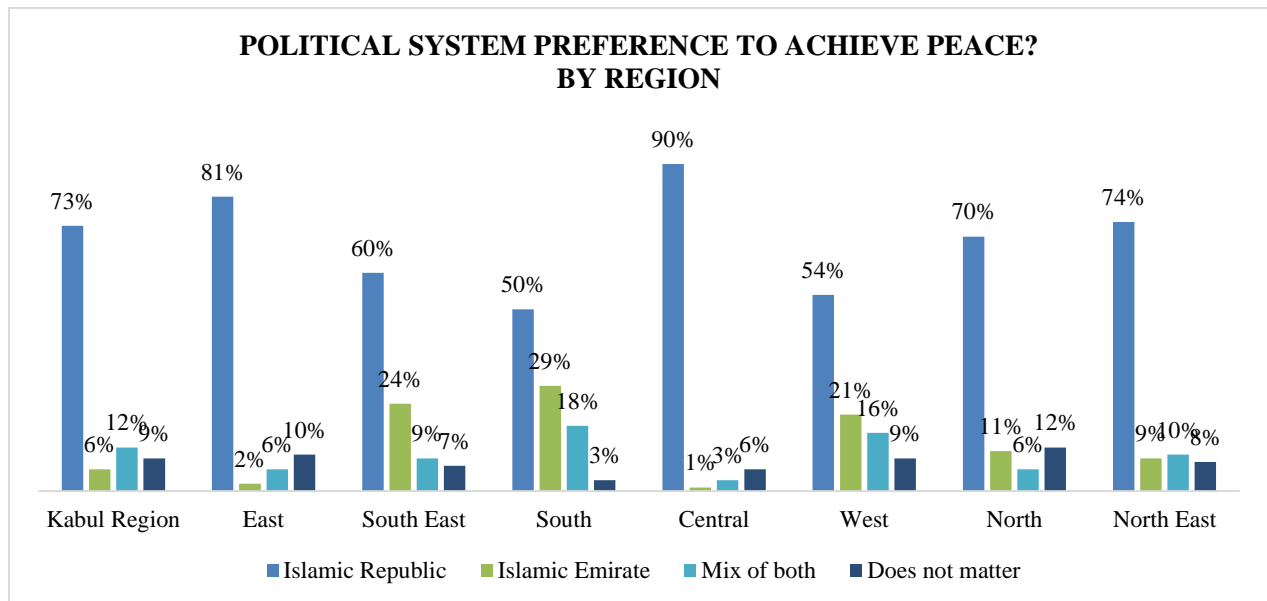


Figure 32

Regionally, there is a consensus (above 50%) that the majority of survey respondents across different regions of Afghanistan preferred an *Islamic Republic* over an *Islamic Emirate*. It is noteworthy to see that in south and southeastern Afghanistan there is some level of support for an Islamic Emirate (24% and 29% respectively) than other regions.

#### Q9. Should women be represented in the peace negotiations?

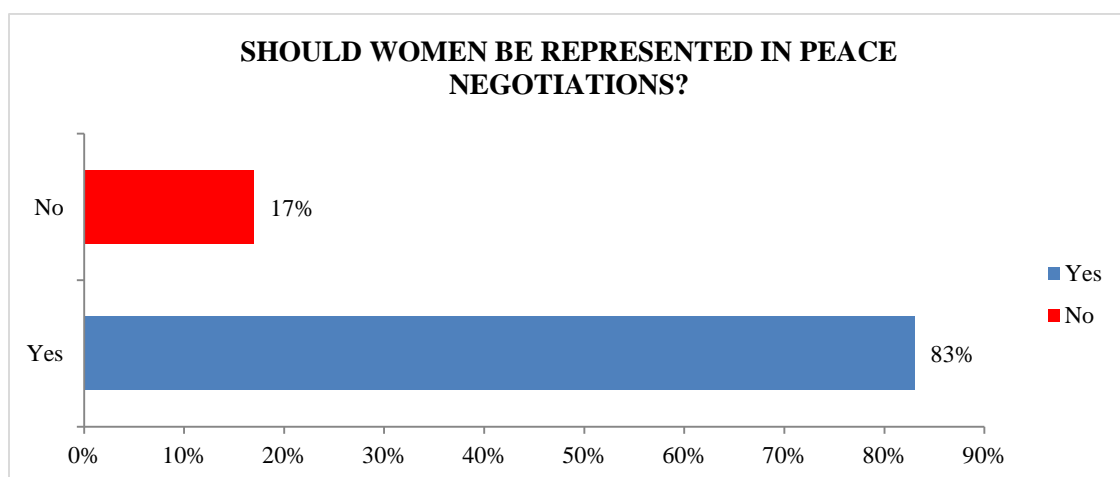


Figure 33

Women consists almost half of the Afghan population and the Taliban policies vis-a-vis women plus the concerns of the donor nations with regards to the protection of Afghan women's rights has been a major topic in the Afghan peace talks. For this reason, the survey collected data on the opinion of Afghans across the country on whether Afghan women should be present in the Afghan peace talks. According to this survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) supported the presence of women in the Afghan peace talks whereas only a minor percentage (17%) opposed it.

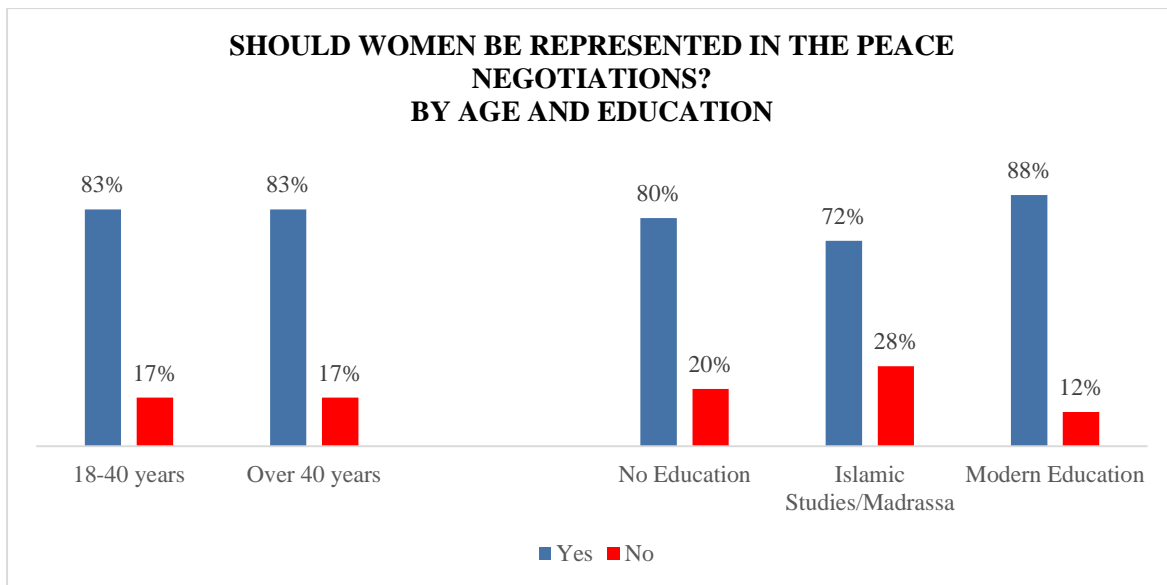


Figure 34

Examining the data by age and education factors - there is a strong support among all age groups and education categories including Islamic education for the presence of women in the Afghan peace talks.

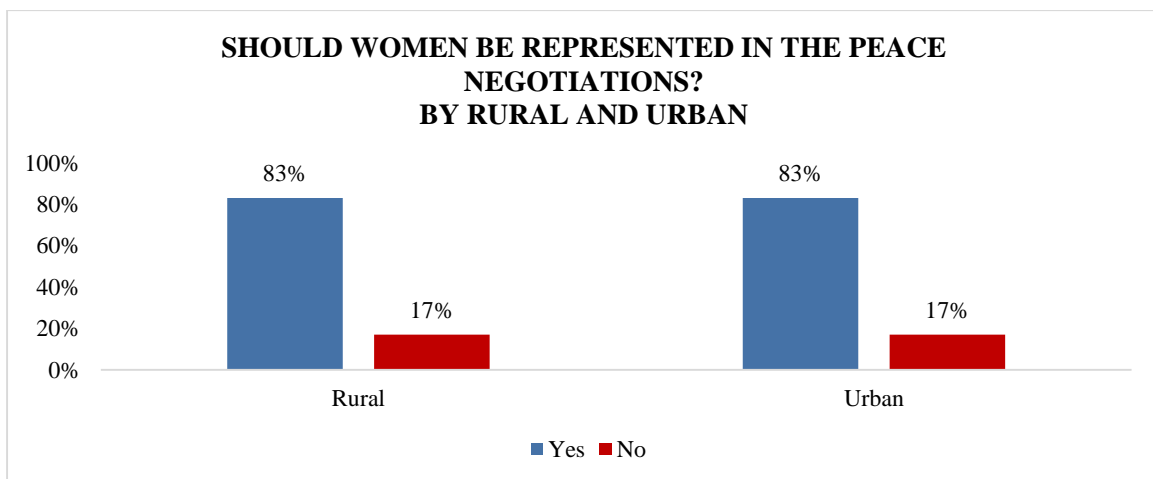


Figure 35

Furthermore, there seems to be also strong support for the women's presence in the Afghan peace talks both in rural and urban Afghanistan (83% and 17% respectively).

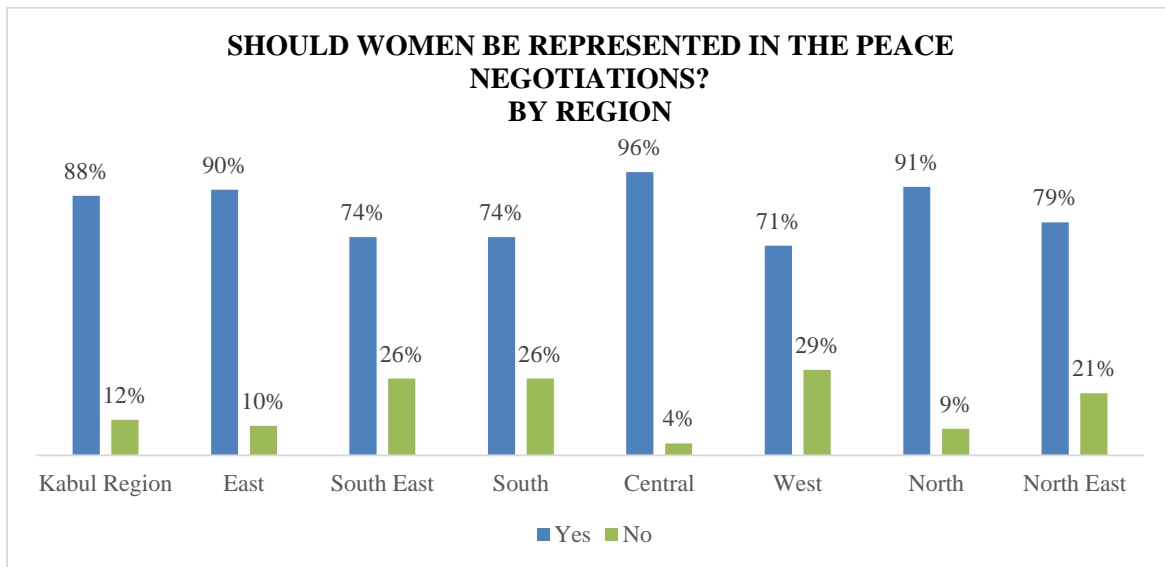


Figure 36

In addition, it is also important to notice that there is also a strong support for the presence of women in the Afghan peace talks across different regions of Afghanistan. We can only note minor variations in west (29%), south and southeastern Afghanistan (26% each).

#### Q10. Who should lead the peace negotiations with the Taliban?

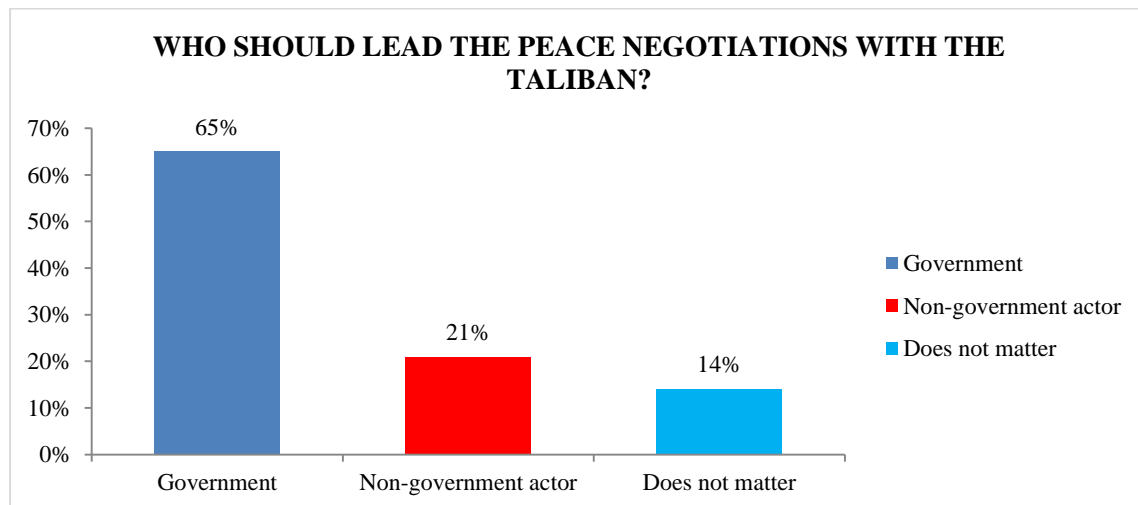


Figure 37

One of the biggest obstacles for the intra-Afghan dialogue has been the role of the Afghan government in the peace talks. In this survey, we probed this question and the result is significant. The survey findings shows that a clear majority of the respondents (65%) believe that the Afghan government should lead peace negotiations with the Taliban followed by (21%) of the respondents who say non-governmental actors should lead the peace negotiations.

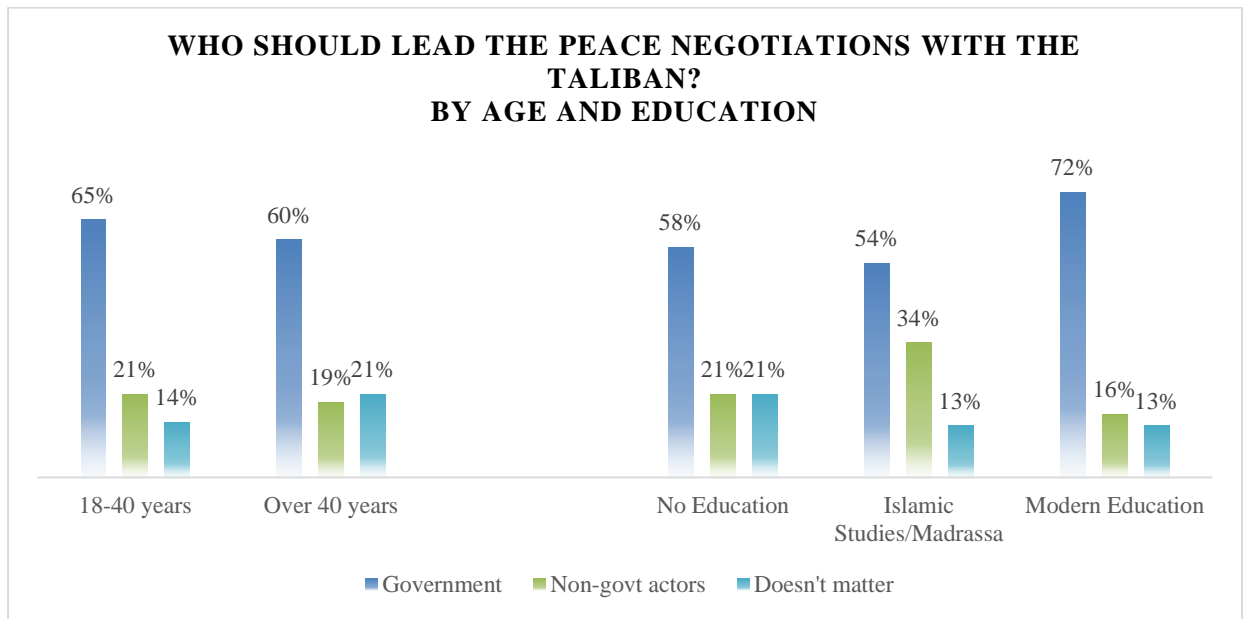


Figure 38

Additionally, the data was further disaggregated by age and education. It still shows a significant number of respondents from across different age groups and levels of education (over 50%) to support a Government-led peace talks with the Taliban, although we can see that (34%) of the respondents with Islamic education favor non-government led peace talks.

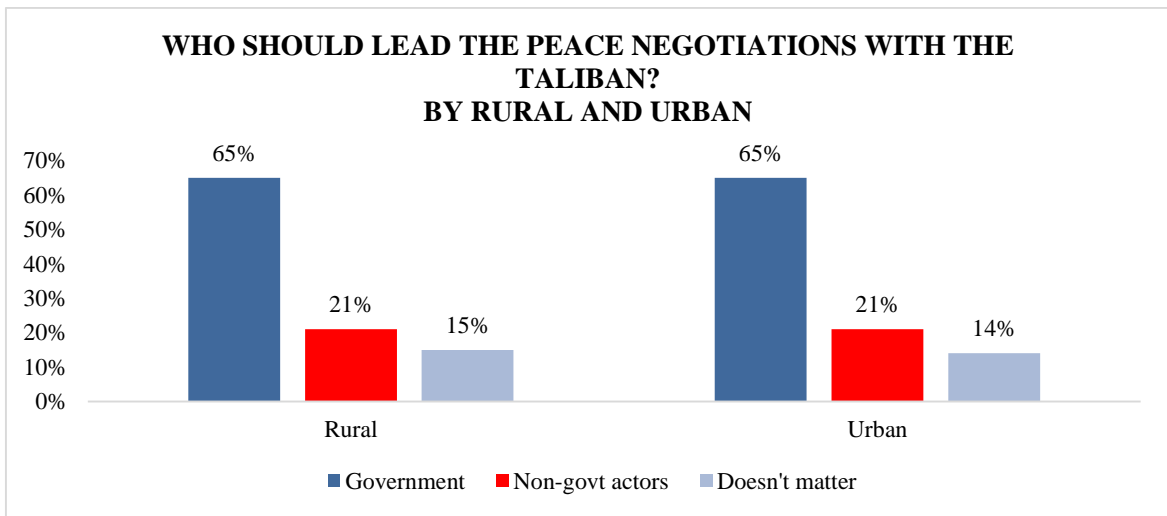
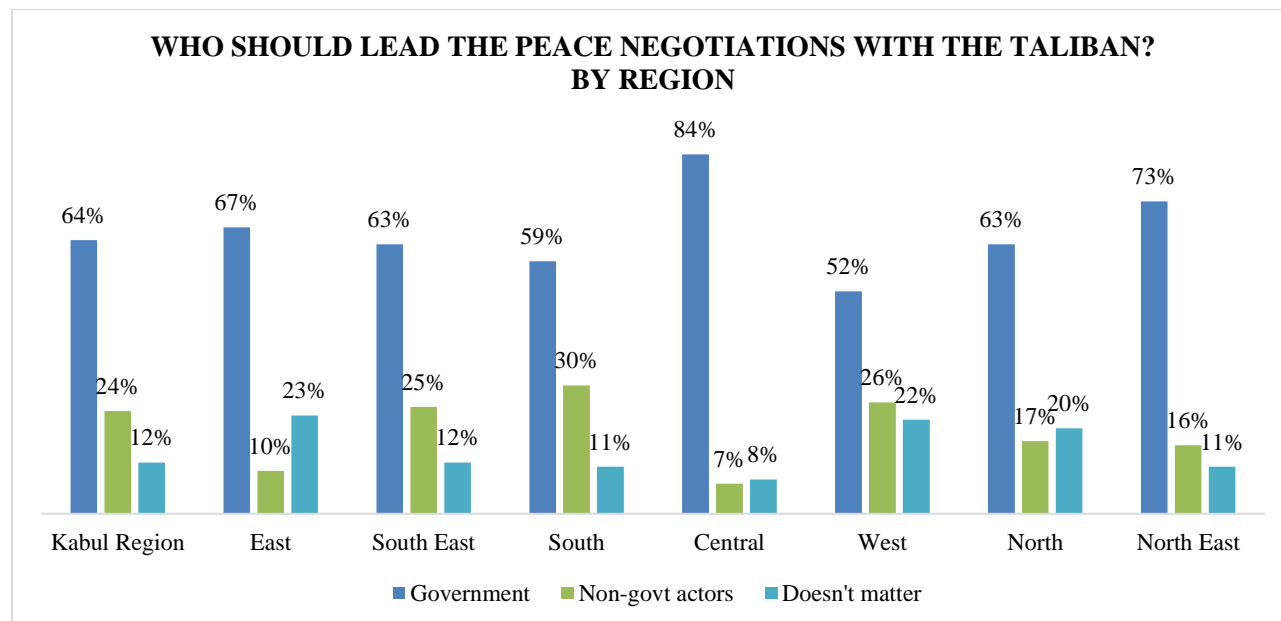


Figure 39

Moreover, by geography an overwhelming majority (65%) of respondents both in rural and urban areas believe that the Afghan government should lead the peace negotiations with the Taliban while only (21%) equally in rural and urban areas who say that the non-government actors should lead the peace negotiations.



*Figure 40*

When the survey respondents were asked about who should lead the peace talks with the Taliban, surprisingly across all eight (8) regions of Afghanistan the majority of them believe that the government should lead the peace talks with (84%) the highest in central region and (52%) the lowest in western provinces.

*Section 4*

***CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS***



#### 4.1. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The Afghan war will ultimately end with a political settlement. This survey is unique because unlike others it specifically focuses on capturing the perceptions of the Afghan public on critical matters over the Afghan peace process. Moreover, this survey fills an important vacuum i.e. bringing the voices of common Afghans to the peace table.

As we conducted this survey throughout Afghanistan (*34 provinces*) and asked over 5,038 Afghans some of the key questions to any peace deals, we found out that many Afghans hold strong opinions about peace. For them, peace and an end to violence is the top most priority as our survey results show. Furthermore, our enumerators also found that except the government channels and some of the jirgas held by the Afghan government - there is no independent, impartial and neutral platform that regularly collects the needs, priorities and expectations of common Afghans from across the country as the peace talks moves forward and factor those within any peace deal. Sadly, the prevalent peace narrative is either government dominated and/or driven by foreign envoys.

As we conducted this survey we found out the following four (4) major trends on peace across Afghanistan:

- An overwhelming majority of Afghans believe both in urban and rural areas that the current Afghan war does not have a military solution but requires a political settlement.
- Many Afghans fear that in the absence of a peace deal with the Taliban, the Afghan government might as very well collapse and an ensuing possible civil war could erupt.
- There is also a consensus amongst Afghans that any peace talks with the Taliban should be government-led than non-government-led actors i.e. political parties, groups and personalities cannot lead peace talks.
- and finally, the majority of the respondents of this survey believe that foreign fighters who operate under the umbrella of the Taliban should be forced to leave Afghanistan once a peace deal is reached.

Based on the findings of this survey, IWPS has the following recommendations to the Afghan Government, the Taliban and the International Community:

##### *To the Afghan Government:*

- hear and integrate the voices of common Afghans especially rural Afghanistan within a peace deal. Moreover, move away from an elite and urban centric peace narrative.
- majority of Afghans are in support of the *Islamic Republic*.

- mobilize the political elite not only in Kabul but the general public at the grassroots level in support of peace and peacemaking efforts.
- majority of the respondents interviewed in this survey calls for the peace talks to take place inside Afghanistan and be government-led.

*To the Taliban:*

- An overwhelming majority of Afghans interviewed in this survey believe that war is not the solution and only a political settlement can end the current Afghan war.
- majority of the respondents are in support of the *Islamic Republic*.
- a clear majority of our respondents call for the presence of Afghan women in the peace talks.
- finally, the foreign fighters operating in your ranks have no place in Afghanistan and should be forced to leave once a peace deal is reached.

*To the international community:*

- it is critical to capture the needs, expectations and opinions of common Afghans living in the farthest areas of the country on peace through regular peace perception surveys as we go along the road of peace for Afghanistan.
- majority of Afghans are in support of the *Islamic Republic*.
- Afghans are very weary of a quick and rushed peace deal.

**[END]**

## **Annexes**

## Annex 1: Breakdown of charts based on Gender, Employment Status, and Provinces

### Q1. In your opinion, how can Afghanistan achieve peace?

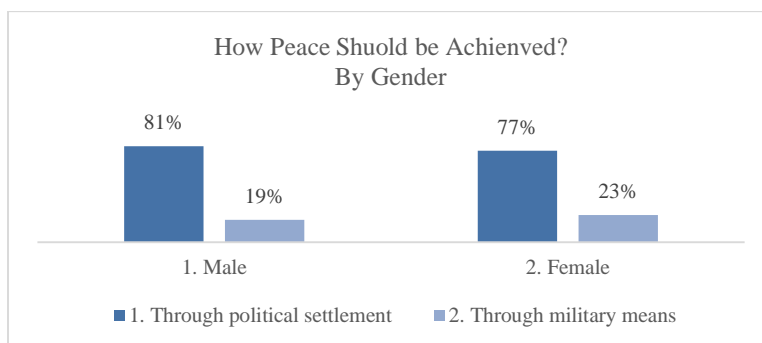


Figure 1

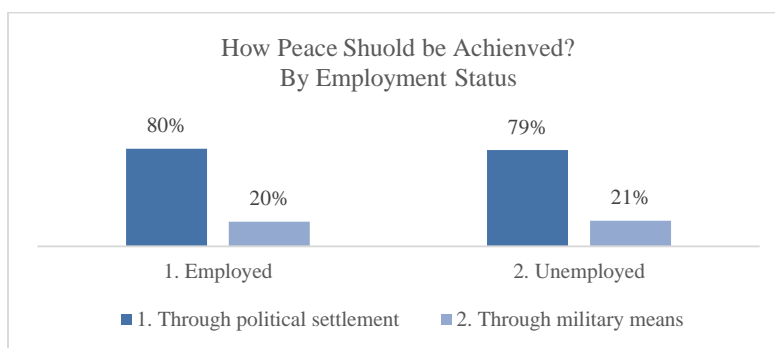


Figure 2

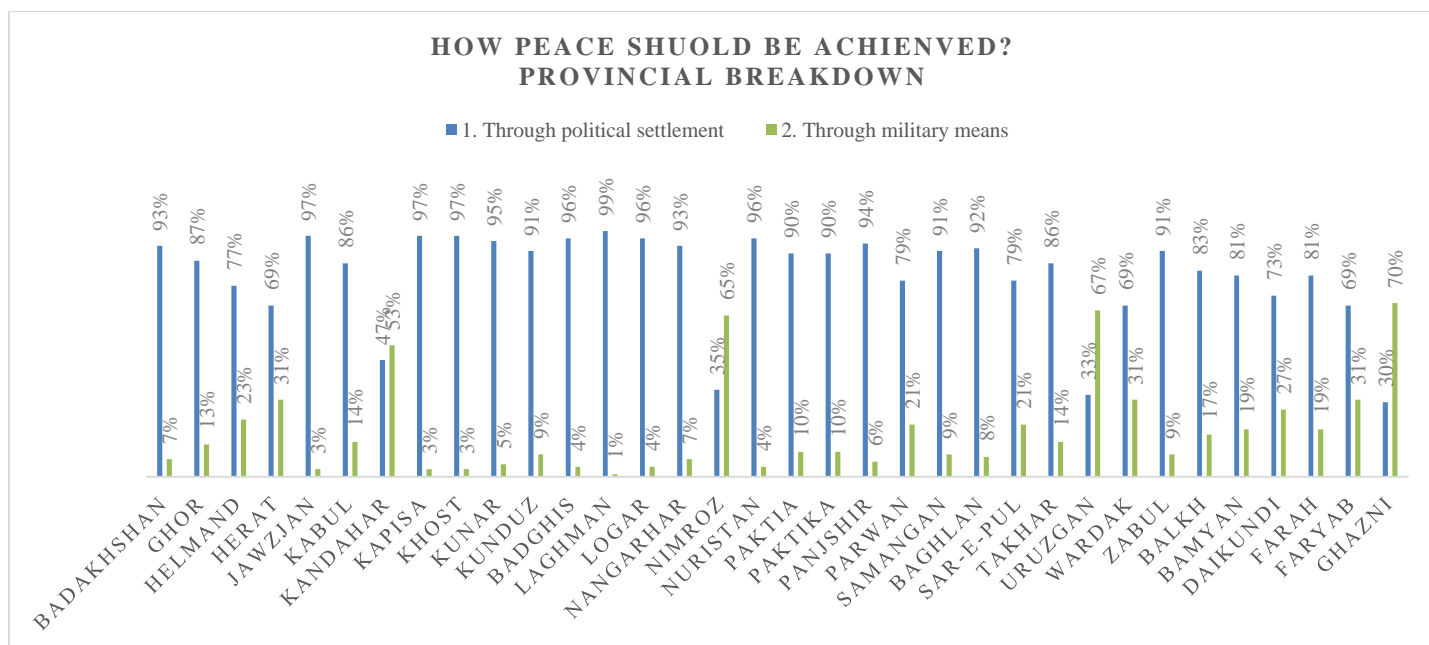


Figure 3

## Q2. What should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks after a peace deal is reached?

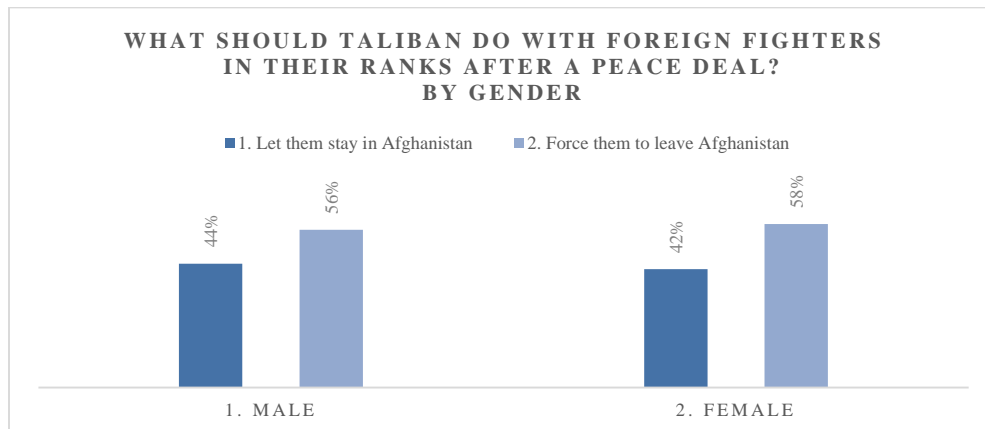


Figure 4

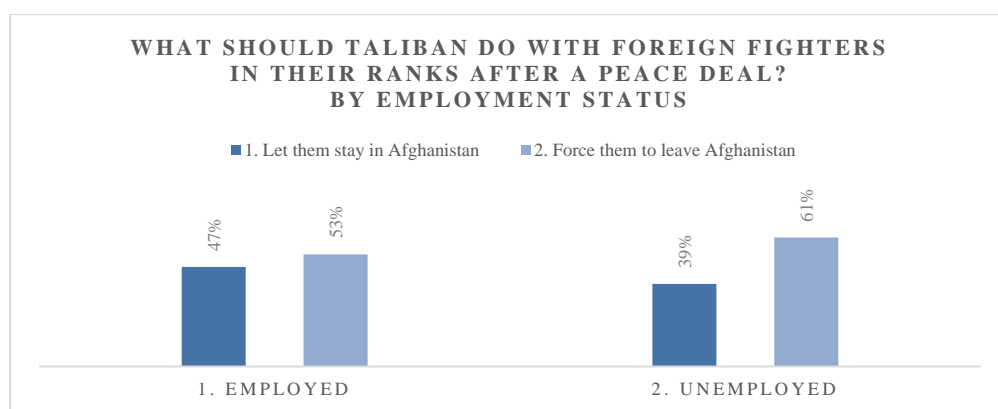


Figure 5

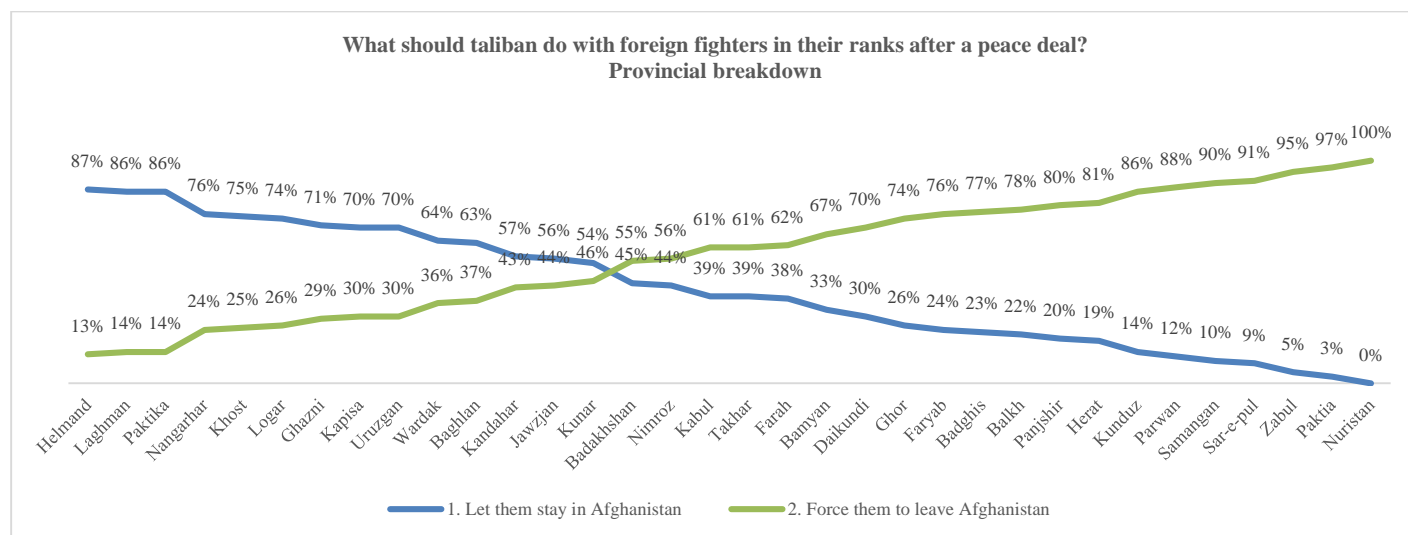


Figure 6

### Q3. Should US and NATO forces leave Afghanistan after a peace deal?

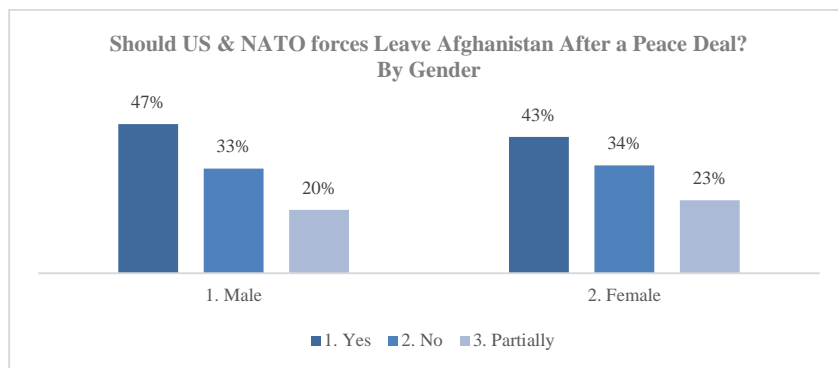


Figure 7

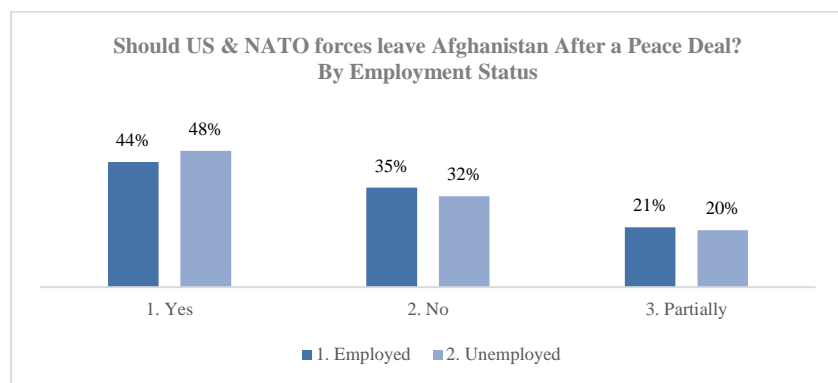


Figure 8

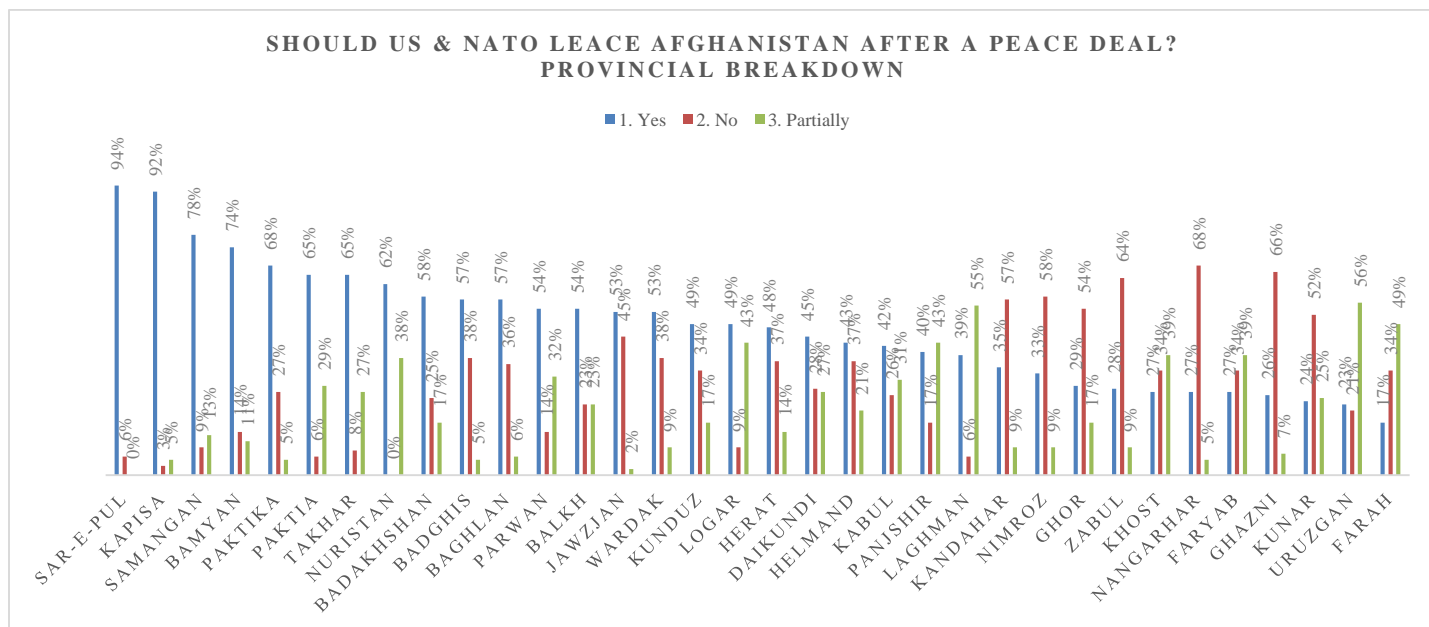


Figure 9

**Q4. What will happen to the Afghan government after the withdrawal of foreign forces without a peace deal?**

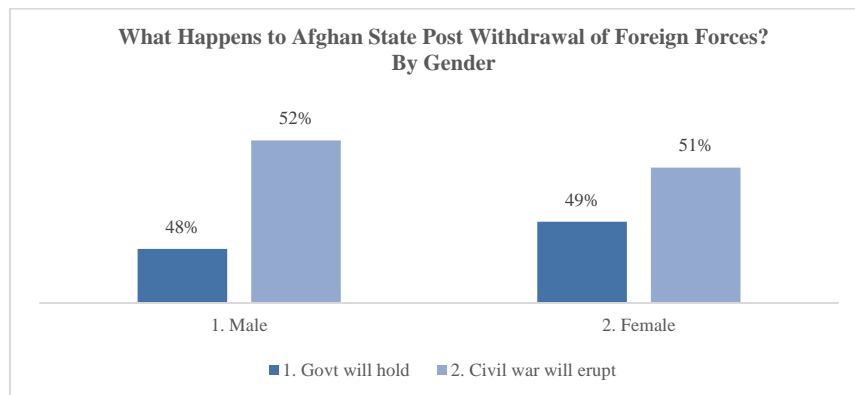


Figure 10

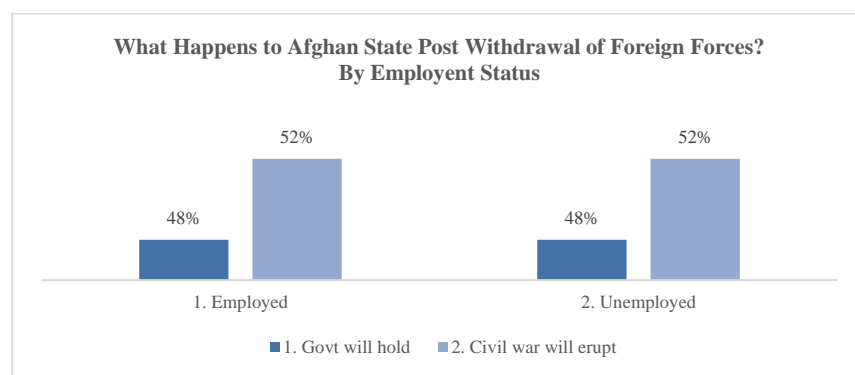


Figure 11

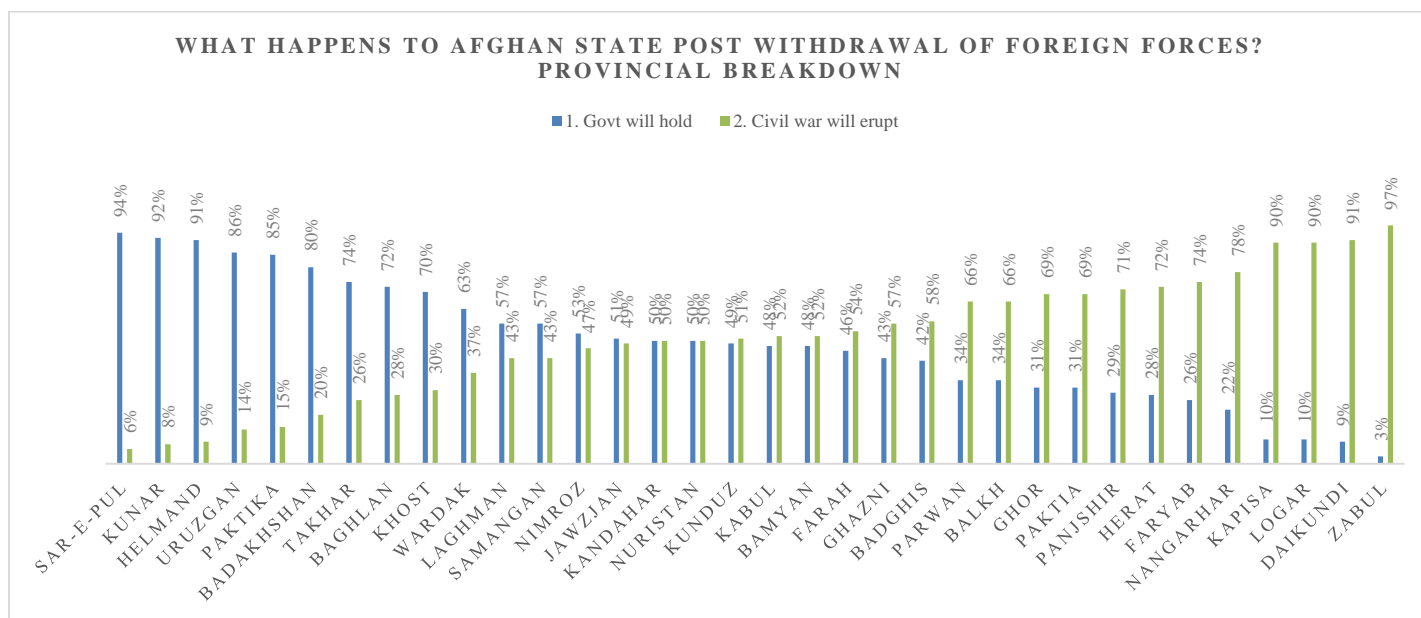


Figure 12

## Q5. Where should the peace talks take place?

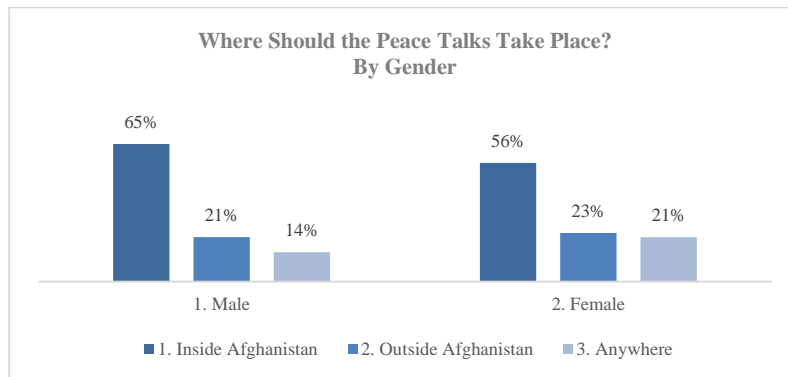


Figure 13

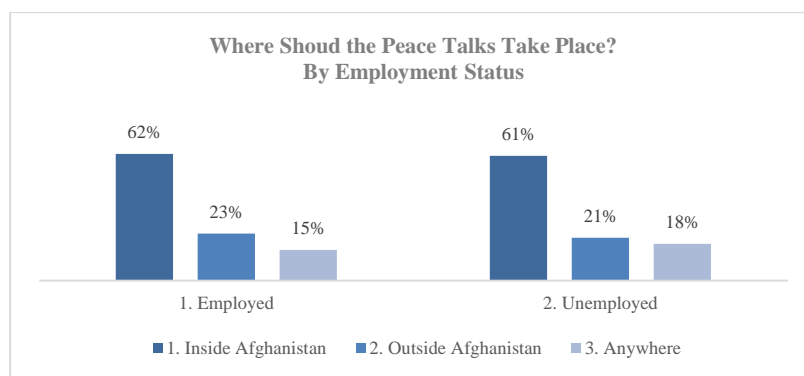


Figure 14

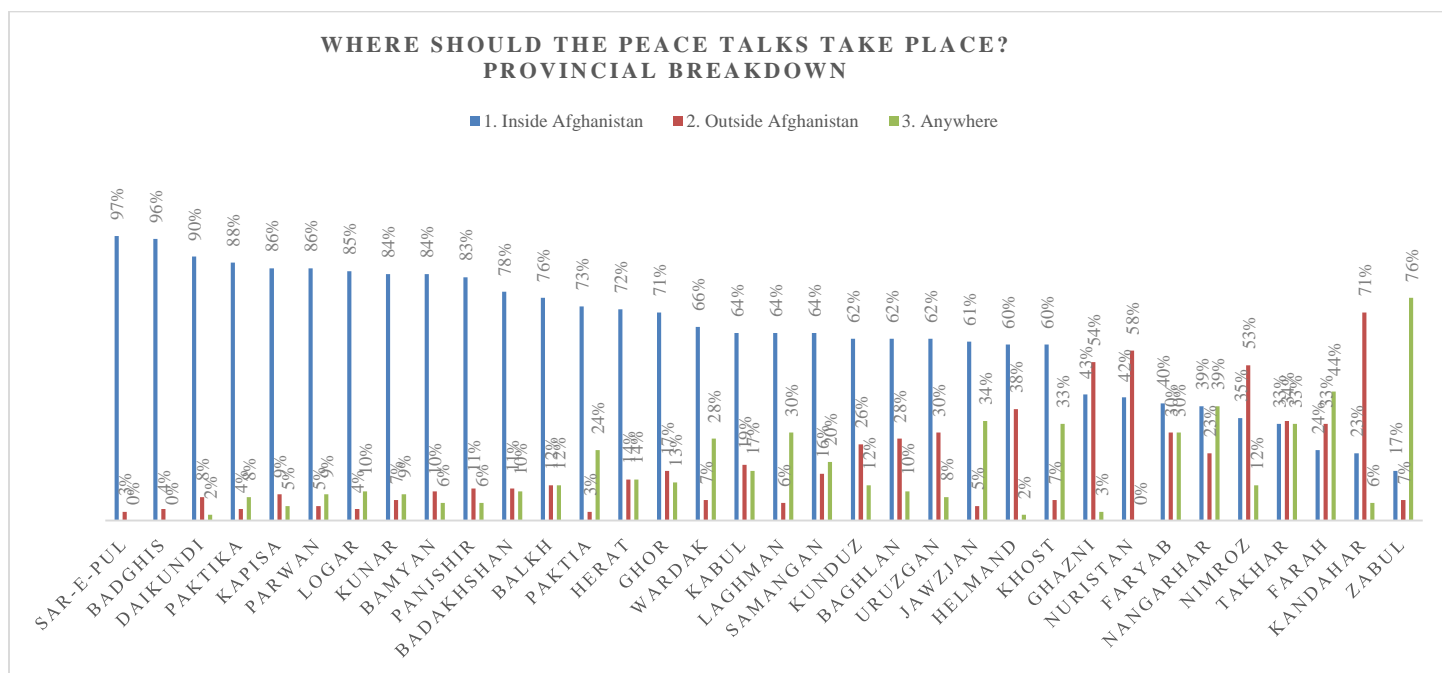


Figure 15



## Q6. If outside Afghanistan, where is better?

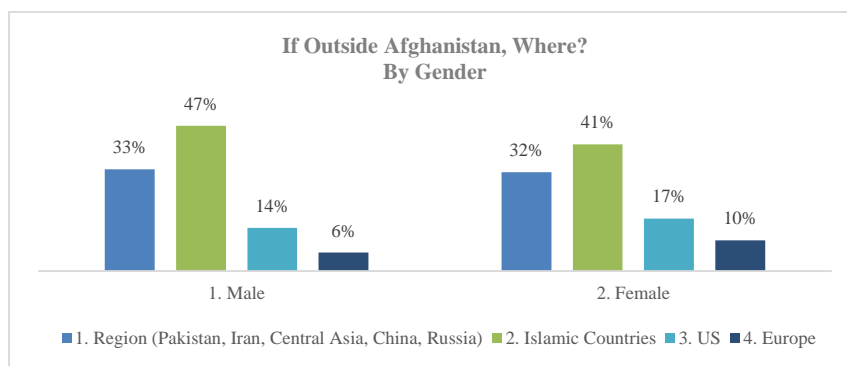


Figure 16

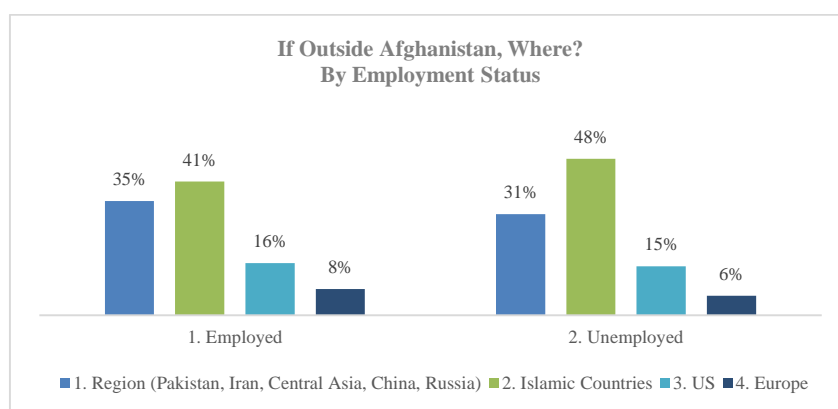


Figure 17

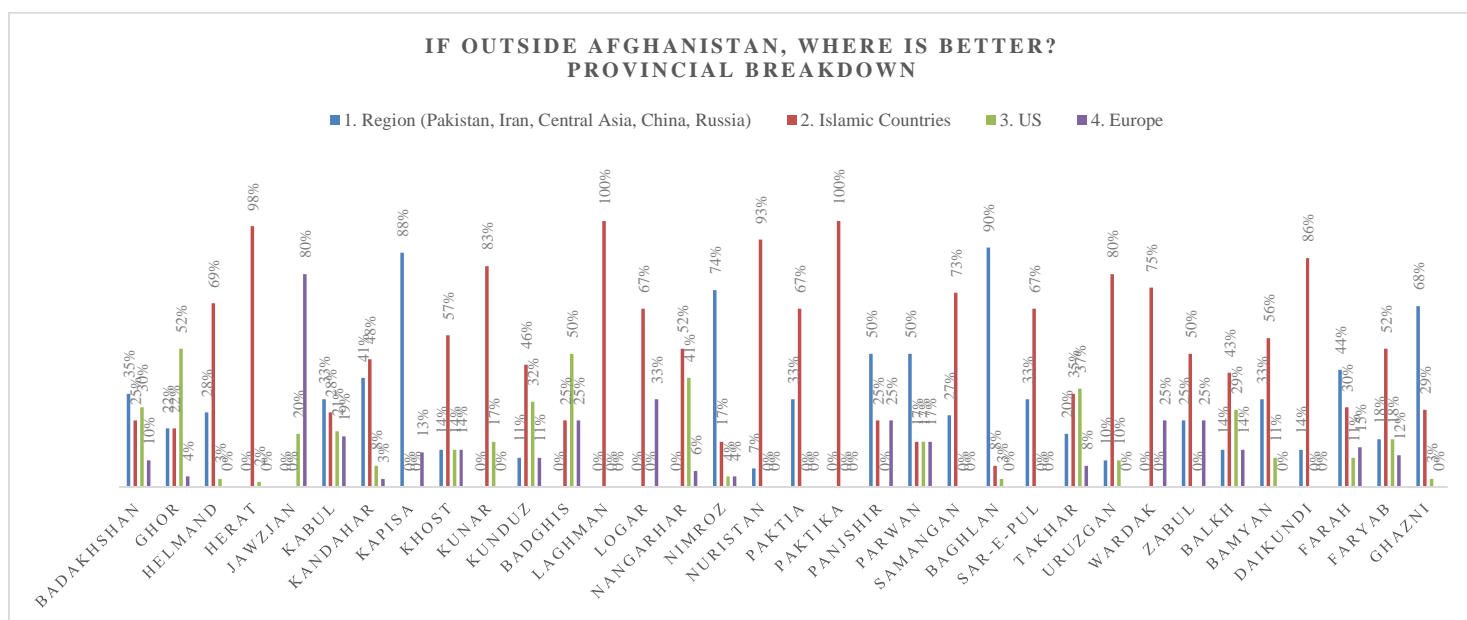


Figure 18

## Q7. Is Zalmay Khalilzad the right person to facilitate the peace talks?

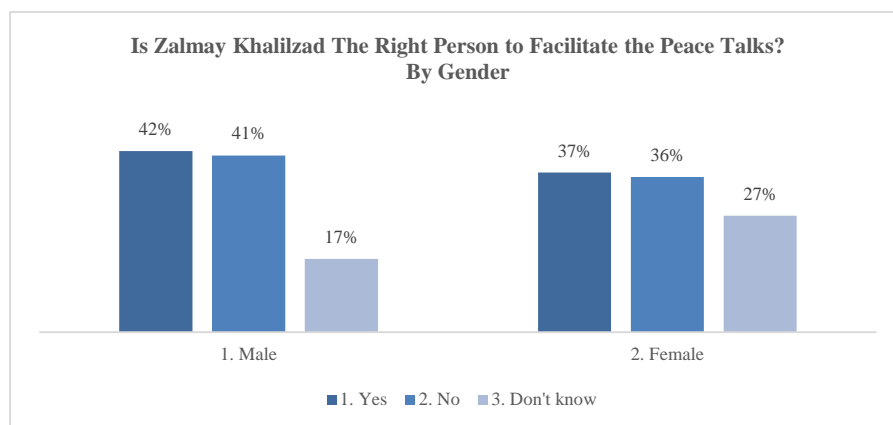


Figure 19

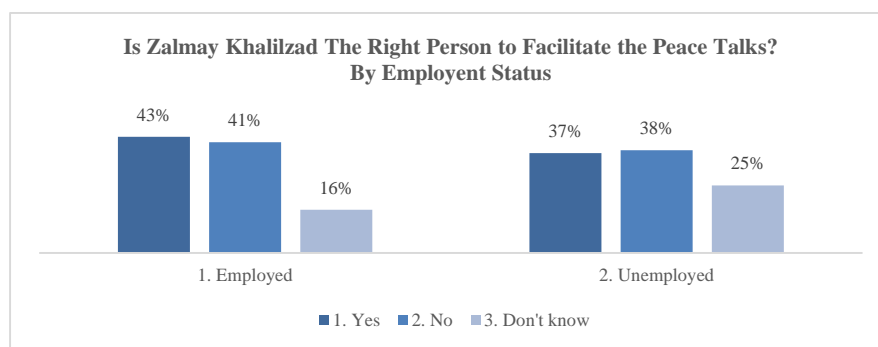


Figure 20

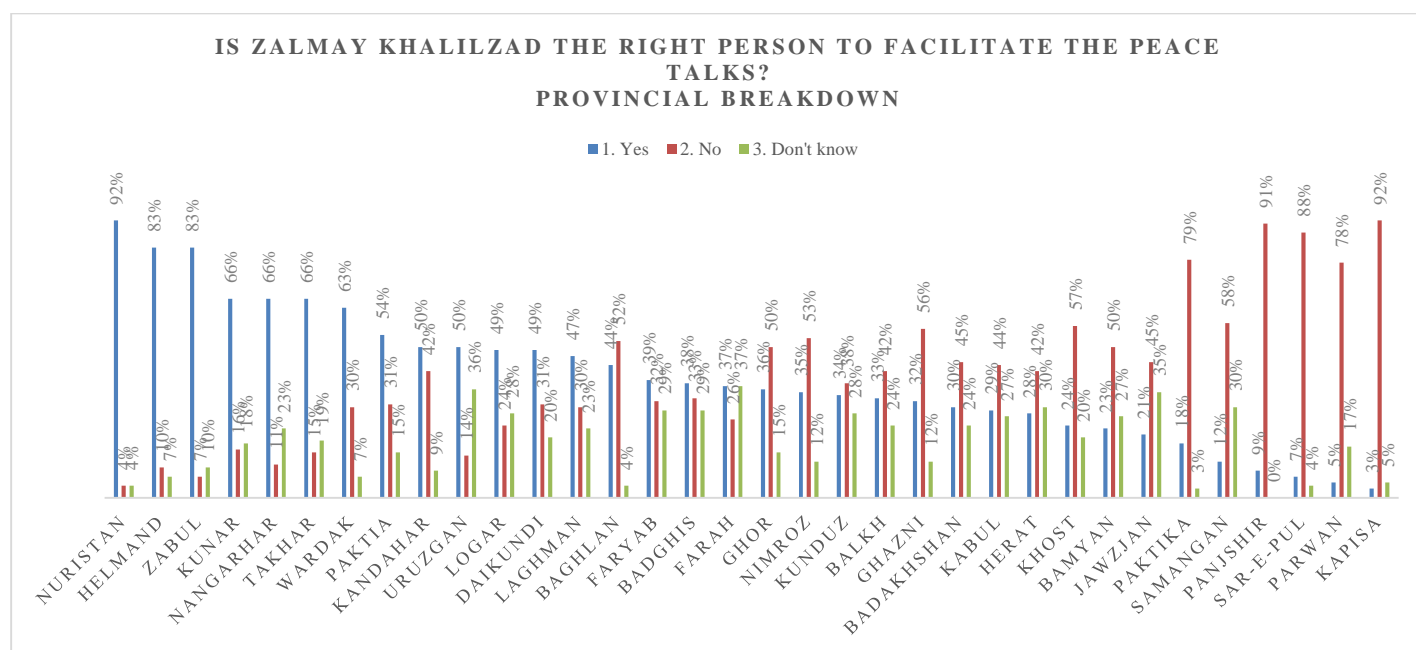


Figure 21

**Q8. What political system you prefer in order to achieve peace?**

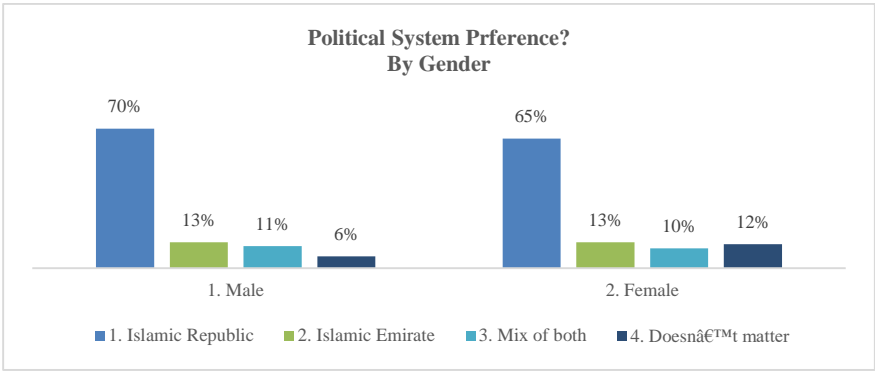


Figure 22

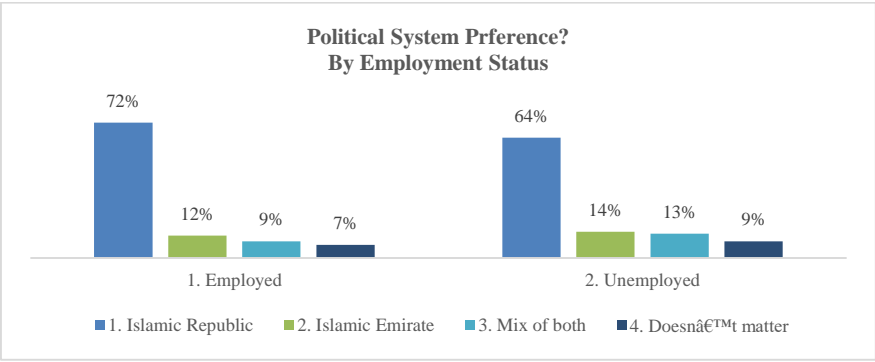


Figure 23

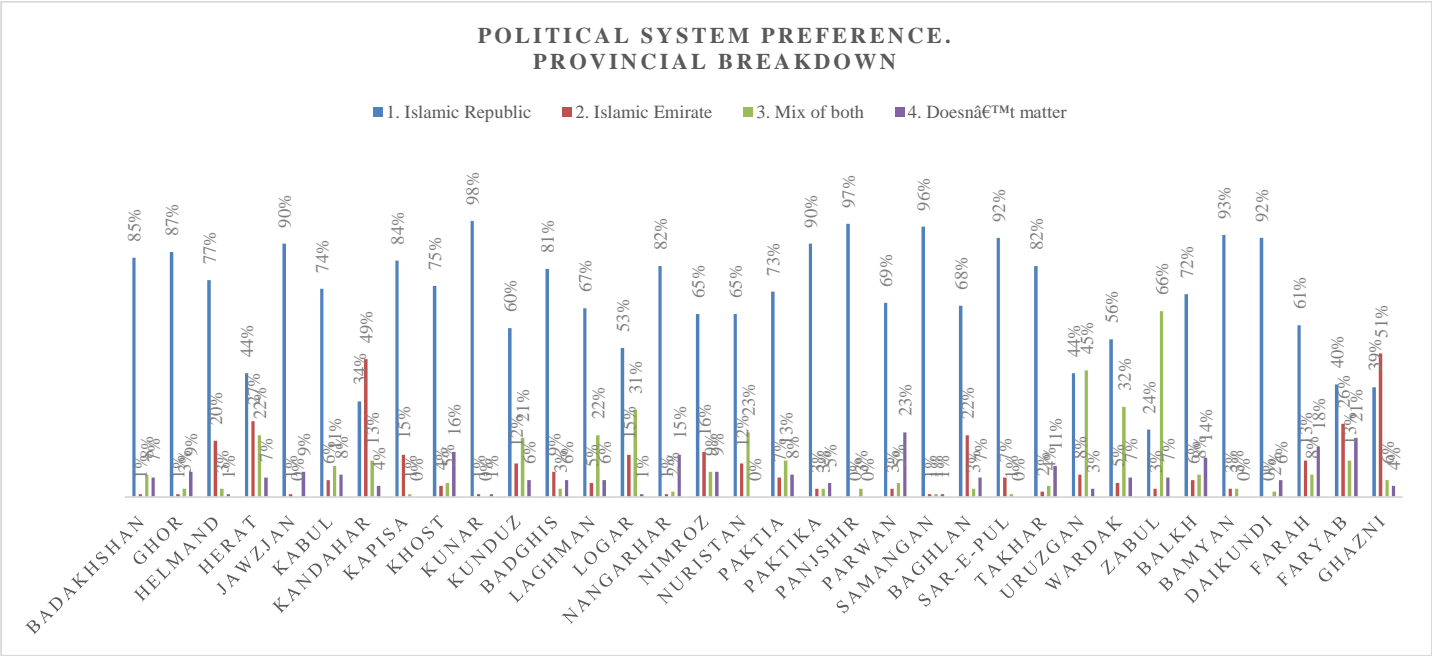


Figure 24

## Q9. Should women be represented in the peace negotiations?

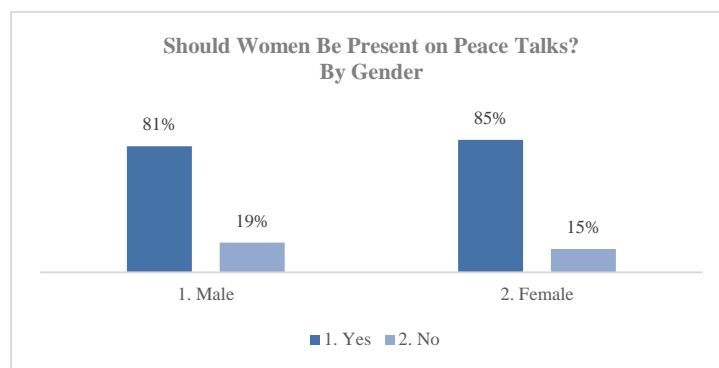


Figure 25

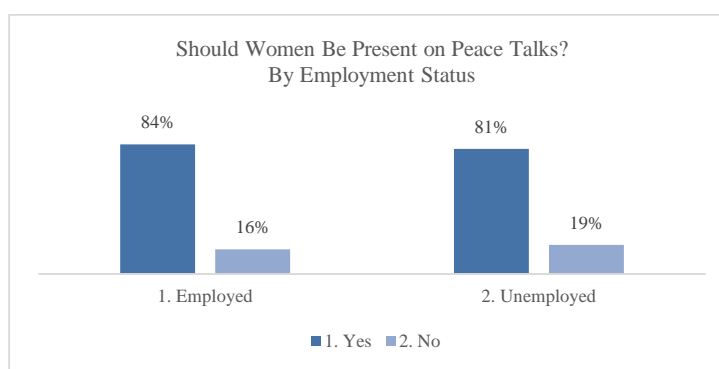


Figure 26

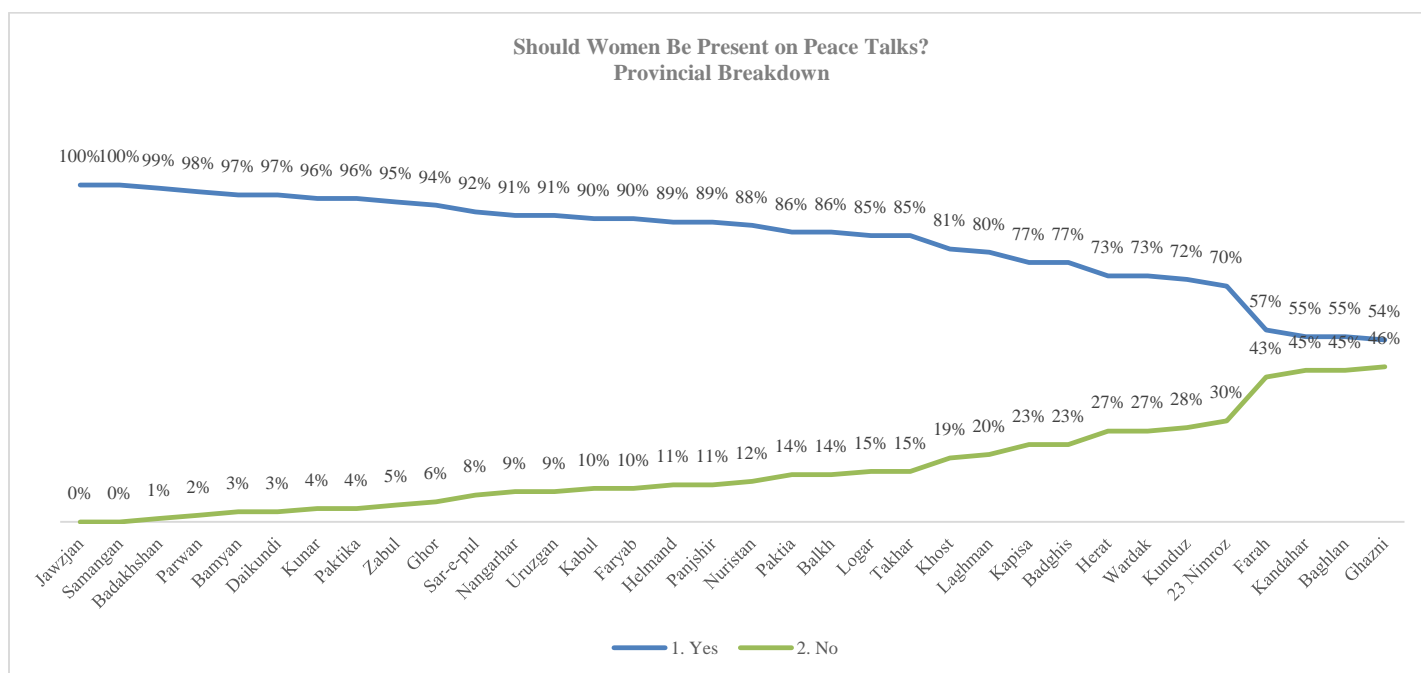


Figure 27

## Q.10: Who should lead the peace negotiations with the Taliban?

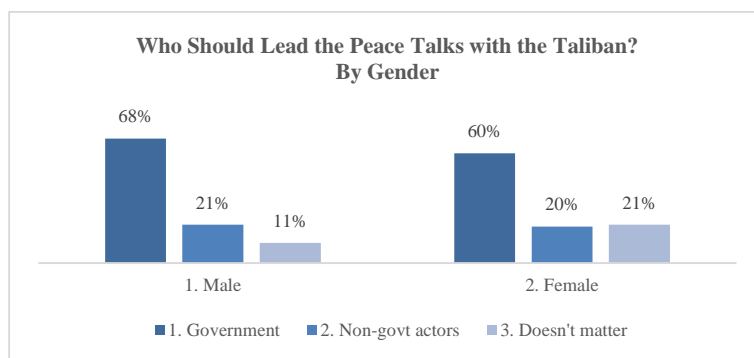


Figure 28

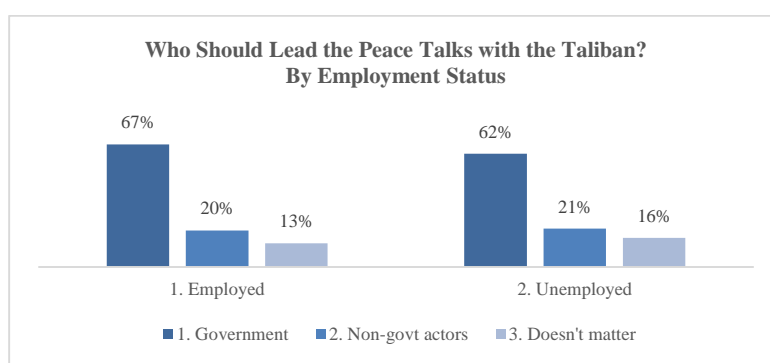


Figure 29

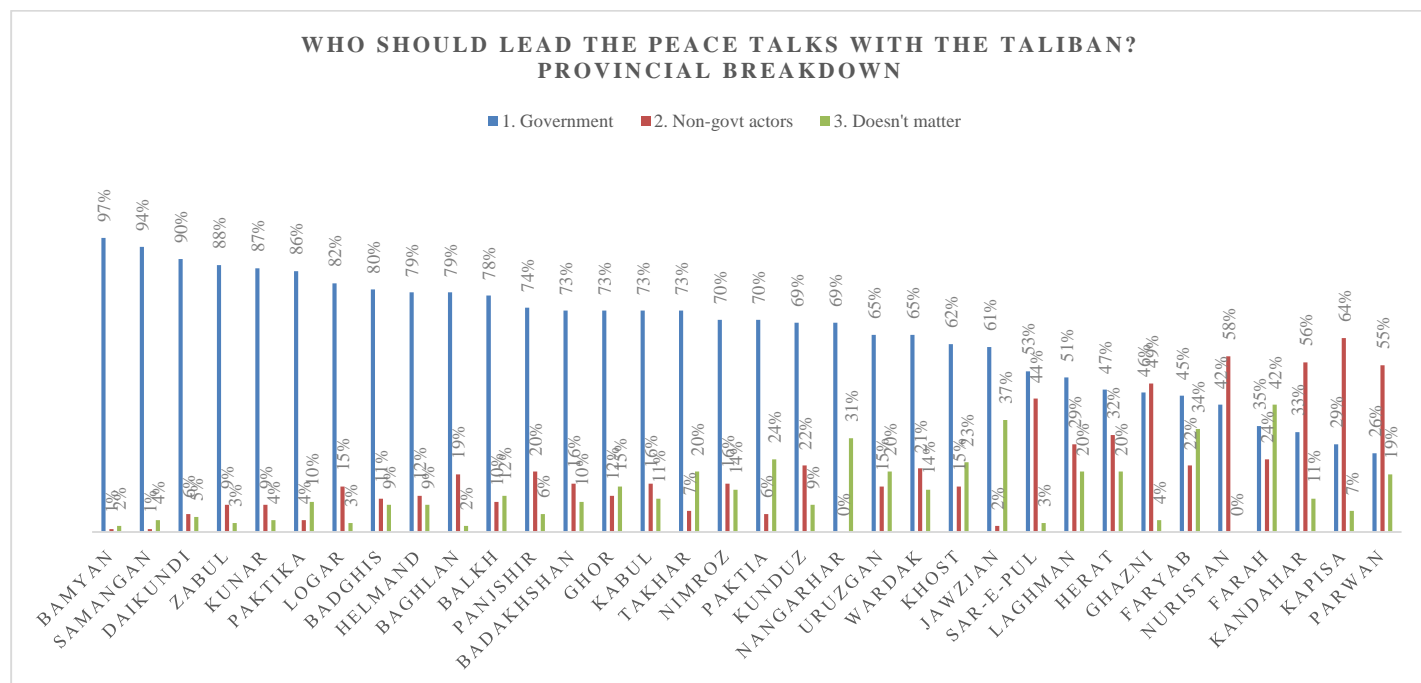


Figure 30

*Annex 2. Table of Population Ratio by Provinces*

| <b>Province</b> | <b>Portion in Total Population</b> | <b>Sample size/Province</b> | <b>No. of Enumerators/Province</b> |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Badakhshan      | 3.50%                              | 175                         | 1                                  |
| Badghis         | 1.80%                              | 92                          | 1                                  |
| Baghlan         | 3.30%                              | 165                         | 1                                  |
| Balkh           | 4.90%                              | 245                         | 2                                  |
| Bamyan          | 1.50%                              | 75                          | 1                                  |
| Daikundi        | 1.70%                              | 85                          | 1                                  |
| Farah           | 1.90%                              | 95                          | 1                                  |
| Faryab          | 3.70%                              | 185                         | 2                                  |
| Ghazni          | 4.50%                              | 225                         | 2                                  |
| Ghor            | 2.50%                              | 125                         | 1                                  |
| Helmand         | 3.40%                              | 170                         | 2                                  |
| Herat           | 6.90%                              | 345                         | 1                                  |
| Jawzjan         | 2.00%                              | 100                         | 8                                  |
| Kabul           | 16.10%                             | 805                         | 2                                  |
| Kandahar        | 4.50%                              | 225                         | 1                                  |
| Kapisa          | 1.60%                              | 80                          | 1                                  |

|              |             |              |           |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| Khost        | 2.10%       | 105          | 1         |
| Kunar        | 1.70%       | 85           | 1         |
| Kunduz       | 4.30%       | 215          | 1         |
| Laghman      | 1.60%       | 80           | 1         |
| Logar        | 1.40%       | 70           | 3         |
| Nangarhar    | 5.60%       | 280          | 1         |
| Nimroz       | 0.60%       | 30           | 1         |
| Nuristan     | 0.50%       | 26           | 1         |
| Paktia       | 2.00%       | 100          | 1         |
| Paktika      | 1.60%       | 80           | 1         |
| Panjshir     | 0.60%       | 30           | 1         |
| Parwan       | 2.40%       | 120          | 1         |
| Samangan     | 1.40%       | 70           | 1         |
| Sar-e-pul    | 2.10%       | 106          | 1         |
| Takhar       | 3.60%       | 180          | 1         |
| Uruzgan      | 1.30%       | 65           | 1         |
| Wardak       | 2.20%       | 110          | 1         |
| Zabul        | 1.10%       | 56           | 1         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>5,000</b> | <b>48</b> |

### *Annex 3: The Survey Questionnaire*

#### **Demographic Data:**

Age:

- a. 18 – 40 years
- b. 40 and above

Gender:

- a. Male
- b. Female

Education:

- a. No Education
- b. Islamic Studies/Madrassa
- c. Modern Education

Occupation:

- a. Employed
- b. Unemployed
- a.

Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Questions:**

1. In your opinion, how can Afghanistan achieve peace?
  - a. Through political settlement
  - b. Through military means
  
2. What should the Taliban do with foreign fighters in their ranks and file and those outside their group after a peace deal is reached?
  - a. Let them stay in Afghanistan
  - b. Force them to leave Afghanistan
  
3. Should US and NATO forces leave Afghanistan after a peace deal?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Partially



4. What will happen to the Afghan government after withdrawal of foreign forces without a peace deal?
  - a. Govt will hold
  - b. Civil war will erupt
5. Where the peace talks should take place?
  - a. Inside Afghanistan
  - b. Outside Afghanistan
  - c. Anywhere
6. If outside Afghanistan, where is better?
  - a. Region (Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, China, Russia)
  - b. Islamic Countries
  - c. US
  - d. Europe
7. Is Zalmay Khalilzad the right person to facilitate the peace negotiations between the Taliban and the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I don't know
8. What political system you prefer in order to achieve peace?
  - a. Islamic Republic
  - b. Islamic Emirate
  - c. Mix of both
  - d. Doesn't matter
9. Should women be represented in the peace negotiations?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
10. Who should lead the peace negotiations with the Taliban?
  - a. Government
  - b. Non-govt actors
  - c. Doesn't matter

## THE INSTITUTE OF WAR AND PEACE STUDIES(IWPS)

The Institute of War and Peace Studies (IWPS) is a non-profit think-do-tank based in Kabul with a focus on strategic and defense studies as well as peace and conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

IWPS consists of Board of Directors, Senior Management and a team of experts including prominent researcher and academics on national and international peace and security studies. It conducts in-depth and overarching research and advocacy projects through which it aims to influence policies and shape public opinion. IWPS is the leading and first of its kind think-do-tank focusing on issues of war and peace through offering practical and evidence-based solutions.

## MESSAGE

Peace comes with a cost and requires sacrifice, patience and farsight from all Afghans and their international partners. In this survey, we intend to collect the voices of Afghans on what those costs and sacrifices should be and how it should be made. This helps us to steer away the narratives on peace from the Afghan elite and foreign envoys and hear out the voices of common Afghans who lives in the farthest areas of Afghanistan.

