صداهای زنان برای صلح همه‌شمول و پایدار
د ټول‌شموله او ثباتي سولې لپاره د ښځو غږونه
Women's Voices for an Inclusive and Sustainable Peace

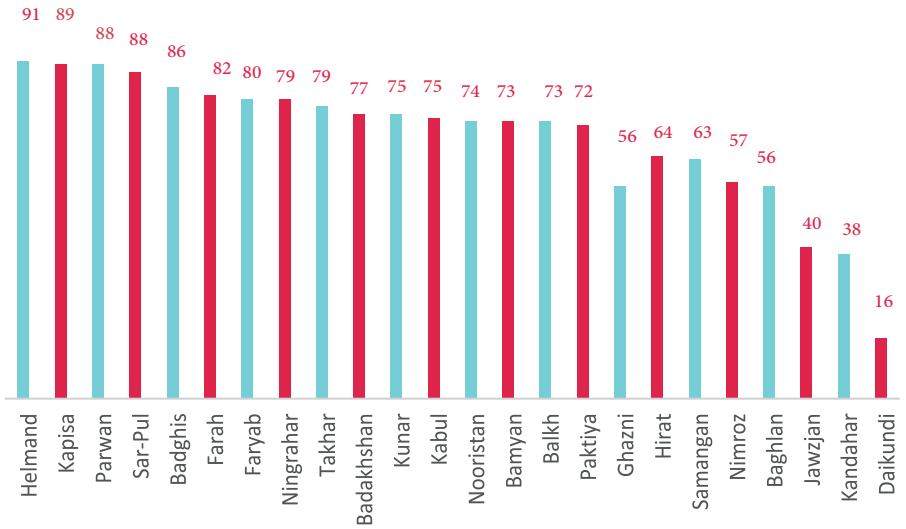
WOMEN'S PEACE BRIEF – June 2024

Afghan Women's Opinions on Primary Education in Afghanistan

Summary:

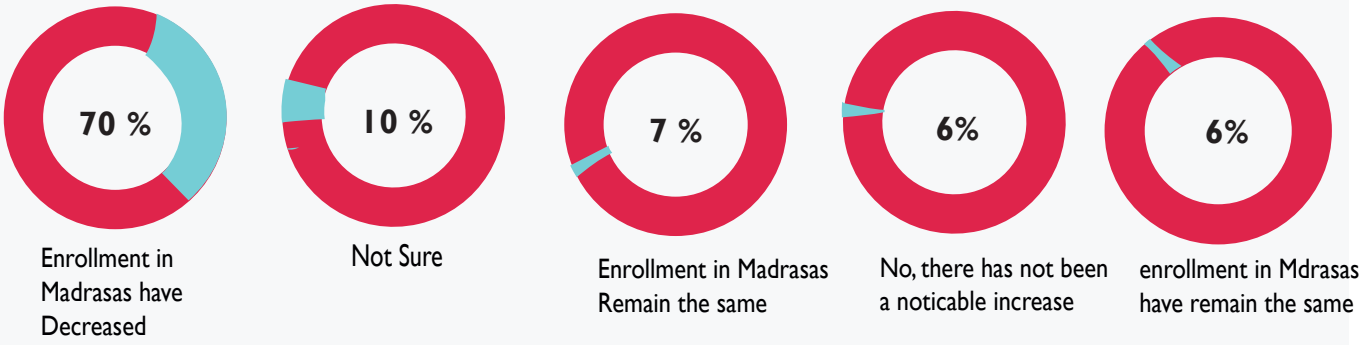
- **5,603** women from **29**[1] provinces in Afghanistan were polled on how they perceived the availability, nature, and quality of primary school-level education for girls in the country.
- **(87%)** said families were willing to send their daughters to primary school, while **(70%)** observed that more families were starting to send their school-aged daughters to madrassas.
- **(39%)** of respondents rated the quality of education in primary schools as good, while **(9%)** said it was poor, and **(7%)** said it was very poor
- Respondents identified current norms and restrictions under the Taliban **(29%)**, insecurity **(24%)**, and lack of financial resources **(21%)** as the leading reasons influencing parents' decisions not to send their daughters to primary school.
- Cultural norms and restrictions were identified as a major consideration across all regions.
  Insecurity was identified as a major consideration in northern and central provinces.
  Lack of financial resources was also identified as a major consideration in northern and central provinces.
- Only **(4%)** of respondents cited the quality of education as a barrier to sending their daughters to primary school, while **(12%)** pointed to limited access to primary schools.

Percieved Increase in Primary Schools and Girls enrollment in Madrasas

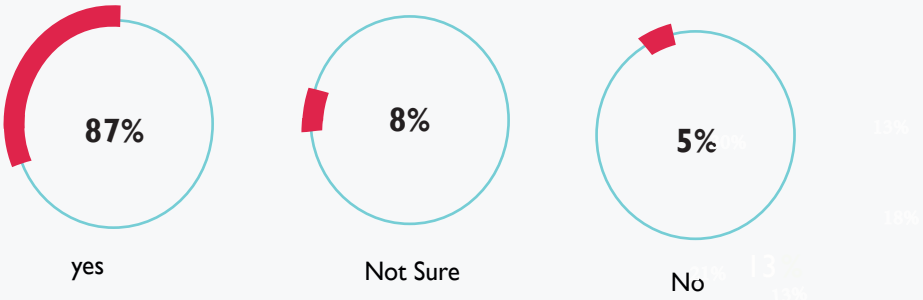


1 *Provinces polled Balkh, Bamyan, Badghis, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Daykundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Kunar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Nimruz, Nuristan, Panjshir, Paktiya, Parwan, Laghma, Logar, Samagan, Sar-e pol, and Takhar.*

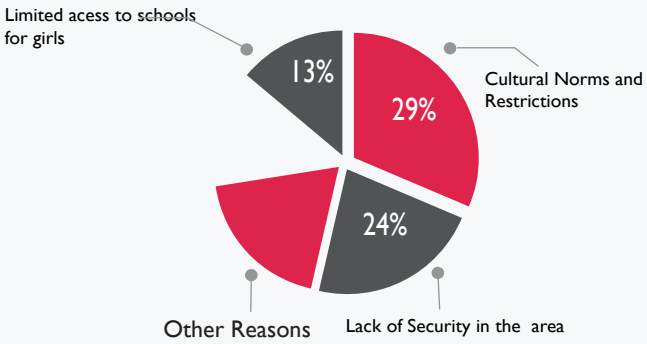
Question 1 Post-2021, have more families begun to send their school-aged daughters to madrassas?



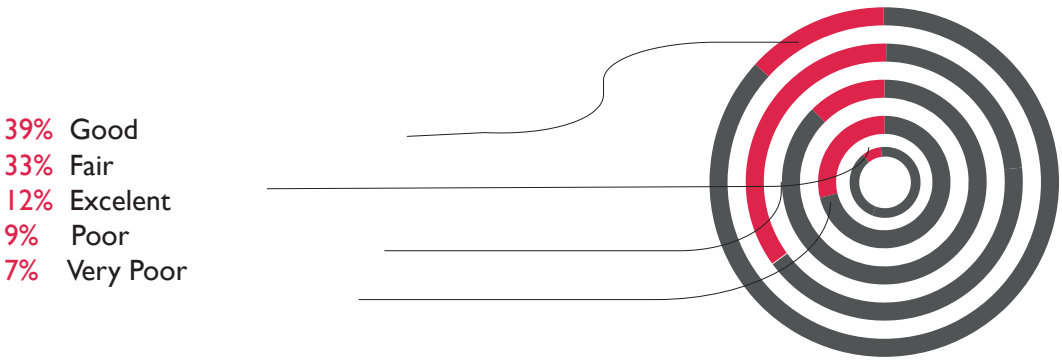
Question 2 In your province, are families willing to send their daughters to primary school?



Question 3 What is the main reason for families deciding not to send their daughters to primary school?



Question 4 In your province, how would you rate the quality of education in public schools?



Summary of Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted across 25[2] provinces with 448 female participants from Bishnaw's Women Peace Circles to explore factors influencing family decisions on girls' access to primary school, the shift toward madrassas, and changes in educational quality since the Taliban's takeover. Participants highlighted a declining number of regular schools, many of which can no longer certify female students beyond the 6th grade, while madrassas offer certification up to the 12th grade.[3]

Across all provinces, there is a shared reality: professional educators are leaving, leading to a decline in both educational availability and quality. The Taliban has actively promoted madrassas as the preferred educational path, influencing families by offering madrassa diplomas that promise higher accreditation and potentially better professional opportunities for students. A participant from Baghlan observed that funding has significantly shifted from regular schools to madrassas, prompting many families to opt for this educational path. "There has been a notable shift in the allocation of funding, with budgets previously designated for schools now redirected to madrassas." However, participants expressed concern that the value of any diploma is uncertain under a regime that severely restricts women's rights to work or take on any other meaningful public role.

In many regions, madrassas are often the only educational option, as regular primary schools have either closed or are too far away, particularly in remote areas. Economic issues, harassment, and intimidation along school routes further deter families from sending their daughters to any educational institution. One participant from Daykundi exclaimed, "Harassment and intimidation of students along the school route, coupled with ongoing economic issues, have led to a situation where girls are not attending schools." Insecurity was another significant concern, especially in provinces with large Hazara populations, like Daykundi and Bamyan, where families face additional security risks. "The continued widespread presence of the Taliban in cities also has a negative impact in sending girls to school" said the participant from Daykundi.

Alternatively, some families, concerned with the social isolation and psychological distress experienced by girls unable to attend primary school for the reasons mentioned above, have turned to madrassas as a means of providing social interaction and offering their daughters a future beyond marriage. However, participants' views on the content and quality of madrassa education varied widely. In provinces such as Bamyan, participants observed changes in the religious curriculum, particularly in Shiite-dominated areas, where Shiite jurisprudence has been replaced with Hanafi jurisprudence. "The only difference [between primary schools and madrassas] is the increased number of [madrassas], which can now be found in almost every alley, often managed by non-professionals," said a participant from Paktiya. Some regions, such as Helmand and Kandahar, report the inclusion of subjects like English, computer studies, and social studies alongside religious education to address gaps left by the absence of primary schools. Others, such as Herat and Samangan, reported a sole focus on religious education, with no scientific subjects being taught. A participant from Herat "confirmed that no scientific subjects have been added to the curriculum; only religious subjects are taught." A Takhar participant also noted "a noticeable shift towards a stricter and more religiously focused curriculum in madrassas." But variation could be stark even within provinces like Parwan and Jawzjan where the curriculum and quality of teaching could vary greatly based on teacher skills, madrassa location, and educator salary.

Overall, while the madrassa diploma offers a glimmer of hope for families seeking to secure a future for their daughters, it has also reinforced the Taliban's agenda of prioritizing religious education over a more balanced curriculum. Both the FGDs and survey results indicate that families in Afghanistan still prefer sending their daughters to public schools rather than madrassas. However, the Taliban have created social, economic, and security conditions that have either explicitly or implicitly pressured families to opt for a madrassa education for their daughters instead of a formal education

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2 *Focus group discussions were held in Balkh, Bamyan, Badghis, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Daykundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Helmand, Herat, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar,Nengrahar ,Kapisa, Kunar, Kunduz, Nimruz, Nuristan, Paktiya, Parwan, Samagan, Sar-e pol, and Takhar.*

3 *Afghanistan's madrasa system under the Taliban." Centre for Information Resilience. November 7th, 2023. https://www.info-res.org/post/afghanistan-s-madrasa-system-under-the-taliban*

Methodology:

BISHNAW combines a community-based approach with digital research tools to capture the experiences and opinions of women and girls in real-time across diverse provinces in Afghanistan . In this brief, the online polling survey featured 4 multiple-choice, closed-ended questions. A snowball sampling approach was adopted and 2458 respondents wee surveyed over the age of 18 and in 29 provinces. Face-to-face key-informant-interviews (KIIs), featuring 4 multiple-choice closed-ended questions using a purposive sampling approach interviewed 3145 respondents in 25 provinces.[4] Lastly, FGDs were conducted with 448 participants in the same 25 provinces as the KIIs , where 13-20 members of Bishnaw's Women's Peace Circles participated.

Bishnaw's methodology was designed to allow for the inclusion and participation of diverse women representing all demographic and regional backgrounds. In this survey, data from 17 provinces including Badghis, Badakhshan, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nimruz, Nuristan, Paktiya, Parwan, Takhar, Sar-e pul, Kunduz, and Kapisa met or surpassed the 90% confidence level threshold for representativeness.

About Bishnaw:

Bishnaw is powered by the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS). It is a digital platform that captures the voices of women and girls in Afghanistan in real-time and on a diversity of topics. Reflected in its name, BISHNAW means 'listen' in Dari and was created to ensure that the process of 'listening' to Afghan women is not seen as a one-off event but as an integral part of all national and international discussions, platforms, and decision-making processes.

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4 Balkh, Bamyan, Badghis, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Daykundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Helmand, Herat, Jowzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Kunar, Kunduz, Nimruz, Nuristan, Nengrahar, Paktiya, Parwan, Samagan, Sar-e pol, and Takhar.