



# Illicit Weapons and Gun Violence in Afghanistan: The Impact on Women's Lives

AFGHAN WOMEN'S NETWORK  
DECEMBER 2020





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

The strategic priorities of the Network centre on three principles:

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

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

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Manufactured in Afghanistan

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
BOMCA	Border Management Programme in Central Asia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IARCSC	Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoIA	Ministry of Interior Affairs
NDS	National Directorate of Security
PeM	Police-e-Mardumi
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
UNPoA	United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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# BACKGROUND

Afghanistan has one of the highest per capita concentrations of guns in the world, the human consequences of which cannot be measured in number of deaths and injuries alone. Gun culture become deeply embedded in the national psyche, and the presence of firearms has a fundamental impact on democracy, development, women's safety, and security.

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development,<sup>1</sup> a diplomatic initiative aimed at addressing the interconnections between armed violence and development, was signed by Afghanistan in 2006.<sup>2</sup> Although the incidence of armed conflict worldwide has declined in recent years, the number of people killed by armed violence has not. More than 740,000 men, women, and children die each year because of armed violence. Armed violence affects all societies, all countries and people from all walks of lives. The aim of the countries signatory to the Declaration is to strengthen their efforts to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programmes into national, regional, and multilateral development frameworks and strategies. The Geneva Declaration is the strongest political statement to date addressing the impact of armed violence within the development context.

On 21 July 2001, Afghanistan committed to a consensus decision of the United Nations to adopt, support and implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA).<sup>3</sup> However, in National Reports submitted by Afghanistan to the United Nations from 2001 to 2010, a history of substantive cooperation with civil society in support of UNPoA activities was not apparent.

Afghanistan's Law of Firearms, Ammunitions and Explosives<sup>4</sup> was introduced and approved by the Council of Ministers on 21 June 2005. It comprises three chapters and 16 articles. The Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoIA) are charged with implementing the Law throughout Afghanistan. The estimated total number of guns (both licit and illicit) held by civilians in Afghanistan is 4,270,000. The estimated rate of private gun ownership (both licit and illicit) per 100 people in Afghanistan is 12.5.<sup>5</sup>

As evidenced by both the academic studies and the reality on ground, it is clear that women and children are the groups most affected by conflict. The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and its members thus concentrate on women's rights in family affairs, rapid response to cases of violence against women, and women's access to legal protection. This includes monitoring amendments and the implementation of women's rights laws, such as the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the national Afghan Family Law, the Shia Personal Status Law, and the Shelter Regulation Law. AWN also implements awareness raising initiatives in the community, while conducting advocacy and lobbying to influence decisions favourable to women's rights.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.genevadeclaration.org/>

<sup>2</sup>GunPolicy. 2020. "Afghanistan — Gun Facts, Figures and the Law." <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/afghanistan>.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/salw/programme-of-action/#:~:text=Under%20the%20Programme%20of%20Action,engage%20%in%20cooperation%20and%20assistance.>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.kakaradvocates.com/data/Afghan20%Laws/English/The20%Law20%of%20Firearms2%C2%Ammunitions20and20Explosives20-%20English.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through this research report, the Afghan Women's Network aims to expand the broader context and discussion on the impact of armed conflict, so as to spark debate on the legal frameworks that exist concerning small arms and light weapons (SALW). A further aim of the research is to identify, classify, and document their impact, and that of illicit weapons, on women's lives in both urban and non-urban areas.

Women play diverse roles in the context of armed conflict; as culturally designated caregivers, women must struggle to support their families and keep their households together while the breadwinners fight, or are apprehended or killed. Women and girls are equally affected in a fragile environment where social services and other basic needs becomes harder/impossible to fulfil. As a primary provider, women are exposed to further abuse.

In the context of Afghanistan, women are not only subjected to violence due directly to armed conflict, but also encounter other kinds of violence in their daily life. Women are more likely than men to be killed or injured by intimate partners, through honour killings, homicides, assaults, and sexual abuse. Each form of violence contributes to inequality and continuous gender-based violence across Afghanistan, in both urban and rural settings. The shadow of war and ongoing armed conflict continue to have devastating impacts on both men and women.

Decades of conflict have brought weapons into Afghanistan from across the world. It has been estimated that there are at least 10 million small arms inside the country, worth between 6\$ billion and 8\$ billion. Fourteen main types of weapons—particularly small arms—have fueled the conflict during its various stages.

The methodology of this research included both qualitative and quantitative data gathering and methods of analysis. This report and its findings are informed by a structured survey questionnaire, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) targeting women, relevant government officials, civil society organizations (CSOs), community members and other relevant stakeholders. A total 726 women were interviewed across eight provinces through using an individual survey (Annex I). Fifty-five representatives from government, CSOs and local communities were also interviewed using pre-defined research questions.

Some **key findings** of the research:

- An overwhelming majority of the women (590 from the 726 total) interviewed agree that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) must implement gender-sensitive disarmament policies to remove illicit small arms and light weapons in both urban and non-urban areas.
- The majority of women (463 of 726) stated that they do not feel safe having weapons in their home. The availability of illicit weapons has led to increased anxiety and fear that such weapons could easily be used against them. Many examples and personal experiences



involving close family members and other people in the community using illicit weapons to threaten and abuse women were shared by respondents.

- Some 37 per cent (267 of 726) of women surveyed did not feel safe raising their voice or speaking up for basic human and women's rights in the knowledge that there was an illicit weapon in their home. When asked why this was so, respondents explained that family members, including brothers, husbands and fathers, use weapons to threaten and stop them from pursuing education or playing active roles in society, beyond the role of housewife.

**Key recommendations are summarized below.**

#### **Recommendations to the GoIRA:**

1. Effectively implement disarmament plans or policies and expand control over large rural areas not currently under your control, areas where the illicit weapons business is flourishing. Secondly, with the support of local tribal Shuras and communities, national authorities at both the central and provincial levels should begin the disarmament of rural and urban areas;
2. The national, subnational and community levels of government should include women in decision-making roles—across the areas of planning, implementation and monitoring of the strategies on disarmament;
3. Recruit more women for decision-making roles in law enforcement entities, such as the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Defense (MoD), and the National Directorate of Security (NDS) as women can best support women's interests on gender-sensitive disarmament. More importantly, given the sensitivity of the topic, adequate protection measures must be taken to ensure women can fully participate in these disarmament and security strategies. This should especially ensure that women's peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts are not undermined by their participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process;
4. The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) should maintain the gender balance in recruitment of civil servants across all provinces. Recruiting more women for governmental offices will translate into a corresponding willingness among women to rely on the local government, judicial and law enforcement systems to report violence against women;
5. Produce a revised national disarmament plan or policy on illicit weapons and implement this throughout the country;
6. Most of the illicit weapons present in the country are not manufactured in Afghanistan, but rather are smuggled in illegally. Therefore, the GoIRA should tighten its grip on the illegal trade of weapons in Afghanistan and target its roots within the country. Border control systems should also be enhanced i.e. join more regional programmes like Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) initiative, to reduce the illegal trade of illicit weapons and speed up the process for registering weapons, making them easily traceable;
7. Initiate and run a countrywide awareness campaign about the negative impacts of illicit weapons and the consequences of their illegal possession through national and local media platforms as well as CSOs;

8. Partner with communities, tribal elders and (especially) religious leaders to campaign against the possession and use of illicit weapons by forming provincial joint committees to steer the direction and mandate of the campaign;
9. Strengthen the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) in order to pressure local powerbrokers to disband private militias;
10. Establish an incentive programme for those who voluntarily give up their illicit weapons, e.g. an annual amnesty period during which people can hand over their illicit, unregistered weapons without fear of any consequences. Local authorities should also decide what they will do with these weapons, to avoid their recirculation/onward trade among communities/authorities.

#### **Recommendations to the International Community:**

1. Harmonize scattered small projects and greatly expand the partnership with the GoIRA, implementing a countrywide, unified and fully supported plan for disarmament of illicit weapons (necessitating better coordination and systematic support to the national authorities);
2. Convince the GoIRA to enhance law enforcement to assure that no one enjoys immunity or impunity concerning possession of illicit arms, in neither rural nor urban areas by activating GoIRA's established method and channels;
3. Provide technical support to the GoIRA in enhancing border police control systems, so as to target and reduce illicit weapons trading routes for example training on using equipment or method, as well as, sharing lessons learned and good practices;
4. Explore together with the GoIRA the root causes of illicit trade, including illicit weapons origination by supporting certain institutions that are already studying this topic whose funding could be boosted or its work bolstered by government-international support.

#### **Recommendations to CSOs:**

1. Develop and extend the awareness campaigns on the negative impacts of illicit weapons on the public well-being. The awareness campaigns should be carried out in partnership with local Shuras, which could issue recommendations to their local and provincial authorities on how to solve the issues;
2. Partner with local police/Police-e-Mardumi (PeM) to play an active role in identifying people, local political figures, government officials and institutions that disrupt or oppose the disarmament plans, and share this information with relevant government entities.

#### **Recommendations to Local Communities:**

1. Stand shoulder to shoulder with the GoIRA and other partners to ensure smooth implementation of disarmament plans on illicit weapons;
2. Volunteer to give up illicit weapons and actively support the GoIRA disarmament plans;
3. Help the government in enhancing and building trustworthy PeM units in the provinces and provide support during the identification and arrest of people who possess/carry illicit weapons or are involved in the purchase/sale of such weapons.

# INTRODUCTION

Women play diverse roles in the context of armed conflicts; as culturally designated caregivers, women must struggle to support their families and keep their households together while the breadwinners fight or are apprehended or killed. Women and girls are equally affected in a fragile environment where social services and other basic needs become harder/impossible to fulfil. As a primary provider, women are further exposed to abuse.

In the context of Afghanistan, women are not only subjected to violence directly due to armed conflict, but also encounter other kinds of violence in their daily life. Women are more likely than men to be killed or injured by intimate partners, through honour killings, homicides, assaults, and sexual abuse. Each form of violence contributes to inequality and continuous gender-based violence across Afghanistan, in both urban and rural settings. The shadow of war and ongoing armed conflict continue to have devastating impacts on both men and women.

As a combined result of the conflict since the 1980s and poor government law enforcement on illicit weapons, many groups, individuals, and local powerbrokers in Afghanistan armed themselves and began trafficking, usurping lands, looting homes, abusing women and girls, and violating human rights. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, illegal militias, and groups started in late 2003. The central aim of the initiative was to collect and reduce illegal weapons and disarm the armed groups. However, the lack of a peace agreement has made it difficult to achieve sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).

Through this research report, AWN aims to spark debate on the existing legal framework on SALW. As such, the aim of this report is to identify, classify, and document the impact of illicit weapons on the lives of women in urban and rural areas.

The research summarizes the key issues, instruments, and frameworks, offering a reassessment and recommendations for future gender-sensitive disarmament and demilitarization that elevates the role of women alongside relevant national and international institutions.

# METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research included the use of both qualitative and quantitative data gathering and methodological analyses. The research team placed a strong focus on gathering qualitative data from the primary group of respondents: Women in rural and urban areas. Other stakeholders—CSOs, community representatives, government officials—were consulted in order to obtain their frank opinions and impressions on the impact that illicit weapons and gun violence has on women’s lives.

The study used the most common data collection methods, such as a structured survey questionnaire, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions targeting women, relevant government officials, CSOs, community members, and other relevant stakeholders.

## SAMPLING AND COVERAGE

The research team used a random sampling strategy, focusing on eight provinces; targeting women in each province to acquire their direct feedback and opinions regarding the impact of illicit weapons and gun violence on their lives.

**TABLE I**

**Geographic Coverage of the Survey**

#	Province	# of Women Interviewed Using Survey Questionnaire
1	Paktia	100
2	Herat	84
3	Nangarhar	50*
4	Balkh	82
5	Kabul	100
6	Kunduz	104
7	Bamyan	101
8	Kandahar	105
Total		726

\*A comparatively smaller sample size, but the number of KIs was higher than elsewhere  
The random sampling strategy was adapted to ensure that the research respondents were sufficiently representative of the population, drawing opinions on the impact of illicit weapons and gun violence on women’s lives.

Two subsets of questions (Annex I) were developed and administered to attain the feedback and opinions of CSOs, community members and relevant government officials on the subject matter. Both KIs and FGDs were conducted in each province, reaching 17 government official and 38 CSO representatives.

The research team targeted the following government offices as part of the data collection:

- 1. Provincial Directorate of Women’s Affairs
- 2. Gender Department of Provincial Headquarters
- 3. Provincial Judges/Justice Department Representatives or Attorney General’s Provincial Office

### LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

One of the challenges the research team faced was the unwillingness of governmental officials to share complete information with the provincial researchers. In most instances, officials were unwilling to participate in an interview on this subject.

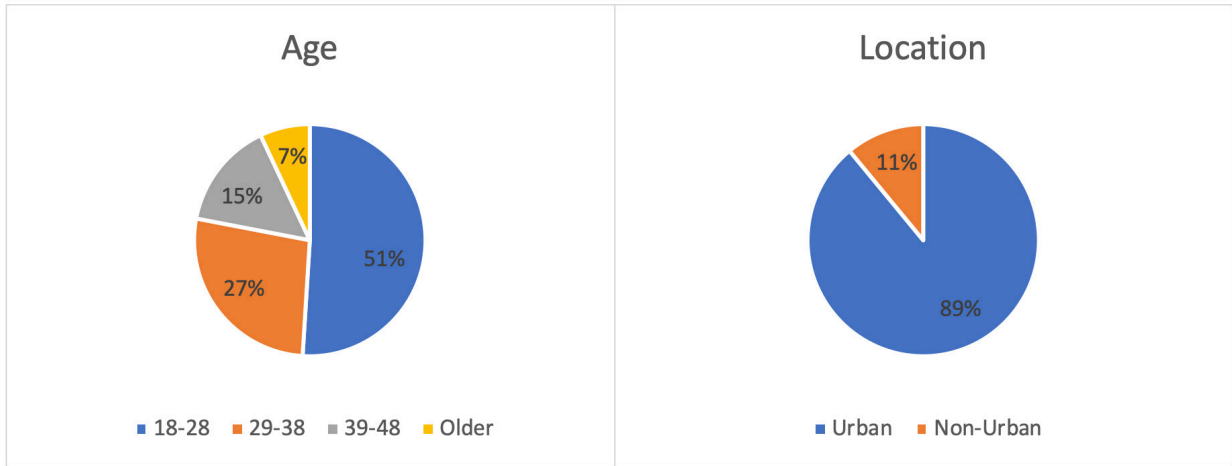
This reluctance can be attributed to the sensitivity of the research topic, linking the violence, threats, and intimidation directly faced by women to the presence of weapons—despite the protection and privacy protocols adopted by the interviewers. The interviewers also faced challenges in terms of some women being very careful in their responses, particularly when disclosing/sharing information related to domestic violence.

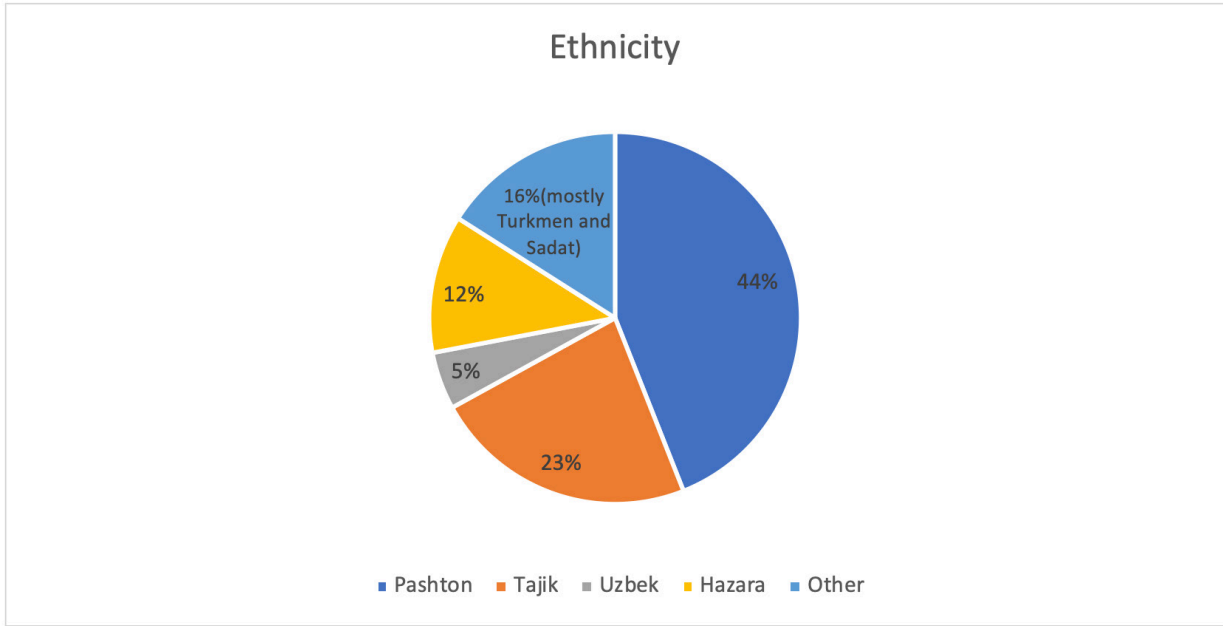
## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The survey questionnaire was administered in all eight provinces targeted, covering a total of 726 women from rural and urban areas. It is important to mention that this figure does not include FGDs and KIs with other stakeholders, such as government representatives, CSOs, and community representatives (provincial, district and village Shura members or influential tribal elders).

FIGURE I

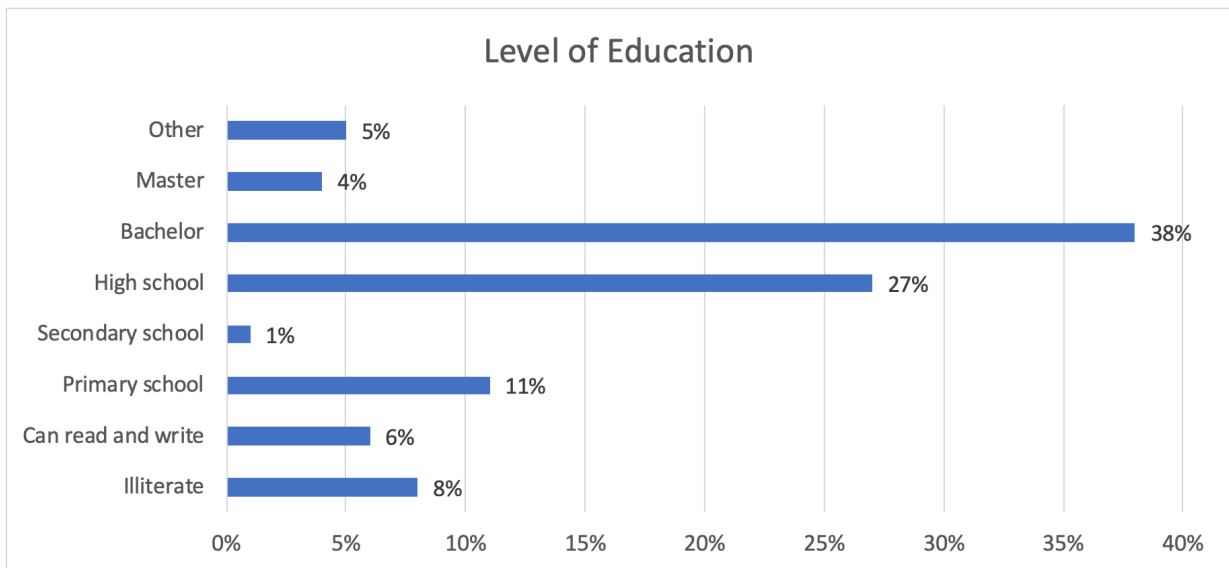
Breakdown of Respondents, by Age, Location and Ethnicity





**FIGURE 2**

**Breakdown of Respondents, by Level of Education**



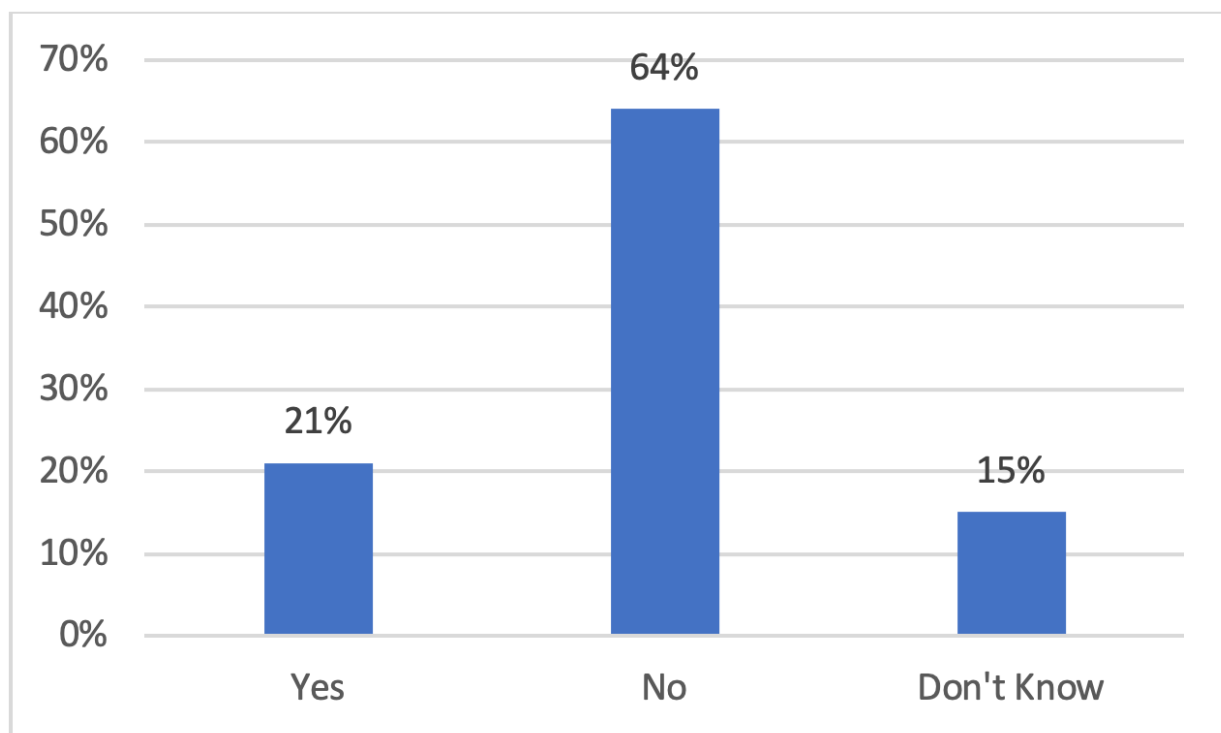
## KEY FINDINGS

As indicated in the graph below, the majority of women (463 of the 726 respondents) stated that they do not feel safe when there are weapons in their home. The availability of illicit weapons led to increased anxiety and fear, because the weapons could easily be used against the respondent. Many examples and personal experiences of close family members and other people in the community using illicit weapons to threaten and abuse women were shared by respondents.

Conversely, 21 per cent of the women interviewed indicated feeling safe when there was a weapon in their home; weapons possession was seen as boosting personal security from robbery and other criminal activities.

**FIGURE 3**

**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**

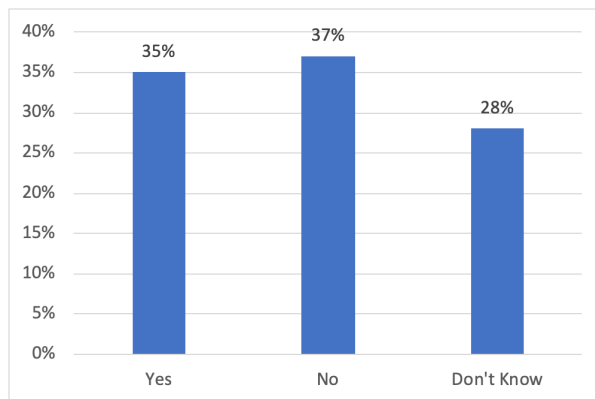


A total 37 per cent (267 of 726) of women did not feel safe raising their voice or speaking up for their basic human and women's rights, knowing that there was an illicit weapon in their home. When asked why this was so, respondents explained that family members, including brothers, husbands and fathers, use weapons to threaten and stop them from pursuing education or playing an active role in society, beyond the role of housewife.

A sizeable 28 per cent of women (208) chose to remain neutral ("Don't know") on this question.

**FIGURE 4**

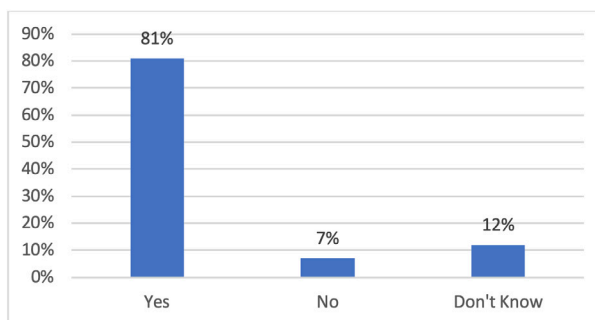
**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**



As shown in the graph below, an overwhelming majority of the women interviewed (590 out of 726) agreed that the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament policies to reduce the number of illicit small arms and light weapons in both urban and non-urban areas.

**FIGURE 5**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



## **ANALYSIS BY PROVINCE**

A total of eight regional provinces were targeted in this research. The researcher conducted a thorough analysis of each province separately and the findings are provided as below.

### **PAKTIA PROVINCE**

In Paktia Province, a total 105 women were interviewed by the Afghan Women’s Network provincial research team, using an individual survey questionnaire.

#### **Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons**

As illustrated in the graph below, the majority of women interviewed have faced various types of domestic violence during the course of their lives, including physical, mental or psychological violence. Only 30 per cent reported that they had not faced any type of domestic violence.

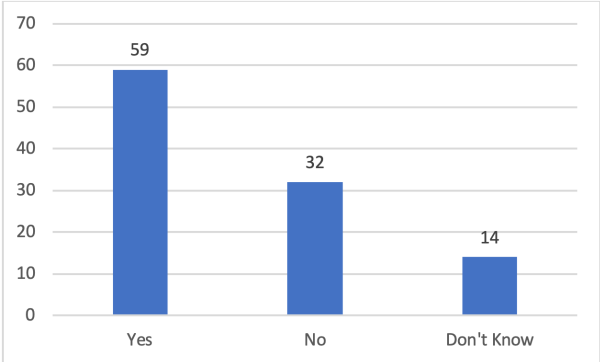


Respondents were also asked to describe the situation in which they had faced violence (emotional, physical or psychological). Some of the women stated that they were beaten by family members to prevent them from attending school. Others reported that psychological violence or abuse of women is commonplace in Paktia Province, as traditionally the local society is male-dominated, and women’s rights are considered unimportant.

Many reported that domestic violence involved illicit weapons such as pistols and AK47s.

**FIGURE 6**

**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**

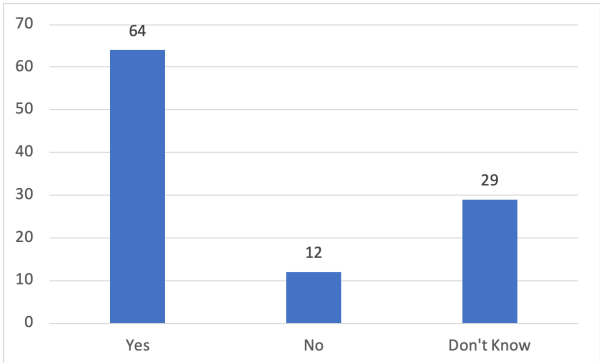


As shown in the graph below, 61 per cent of the women interviewed in Paktia Province reported being threatened by family members, tribal elders or other people in their community. A mere 11 per cent said that they had not received threats from within their community.

The majority of those women threatened reported being threatened with pistols and AK47s by members of their society, such as close family members, street boys/youngsters, tribal elders or even local religious leaders.

**FIGURE 7**

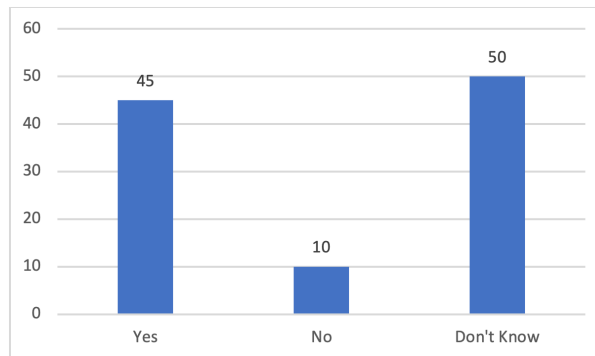
**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



When asked whether they had seen other women being threatened in the community, 47 per cent of the women interviewed indicated a “Don’t know” response, while 43 per cent said that they know women who have been threatened in the community, and some of whom have faced dire consequences, including suicide.

**FIGURE 8**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

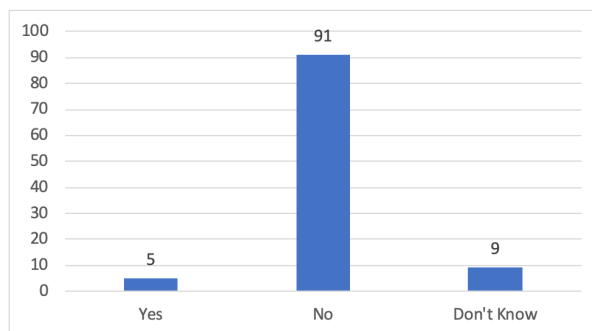


**I. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons**

As indicated in the graph below, the vast majority (87 per cent) of women interviewed in Paktia Province said that they do not feel safe when there is an illicit weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 9**

**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**

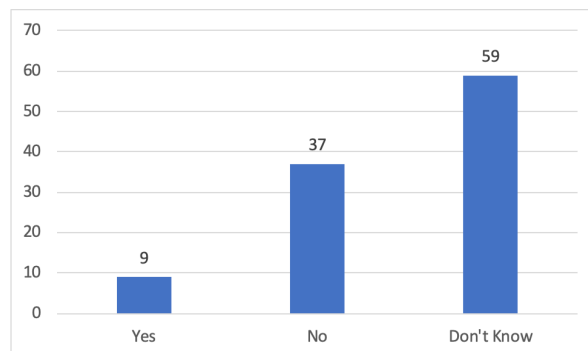


As illustrated in the graph below, 35 per cent of women interviewed stated that they do not feel safe raising their voice or speaking up for their basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in their home. A majority of those women who indicated not feeling safe in this regard related fear and anxiety concerning the availability of weapons in their home, because it could be used to suppress them at any time. Some 56 per cent of women responded with “Don’t know,” unsure as to the context and what would be the actual consequences if they did raise their voice.

Some interviewers observed that respondents were unwilling to answer “Yes” due to the sensitive nature of the question and chose the neutral response.

**FIGURE 10**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**



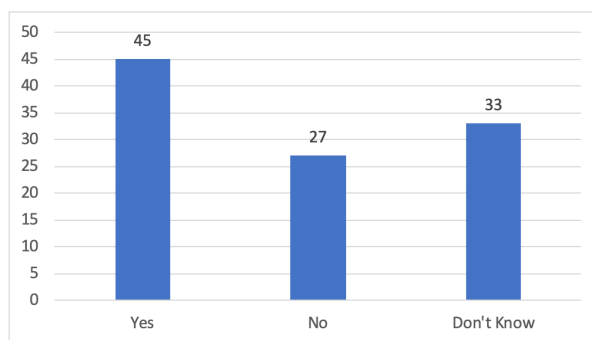
## 2. Women’s access to work/employment and illicit weapons

In response to the question on whether the availability of small weapons in the home would enable family members to stop the respondent from taking up employment, 42 per cent of women stated “Yes,” with 31 per cent indicating a “Don’t know” response.

In one instance, a woman stated, “We can’t even go to a shrine without permission, let alone going to an office for employment or seeking a job.” Most respondents said that the availability of illicit weapons in the home contributes to their fear and anxiety, and that they therefore do not continue their education or take other active roles in society, beyond the role of housewife.

**FIGURE 11**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**



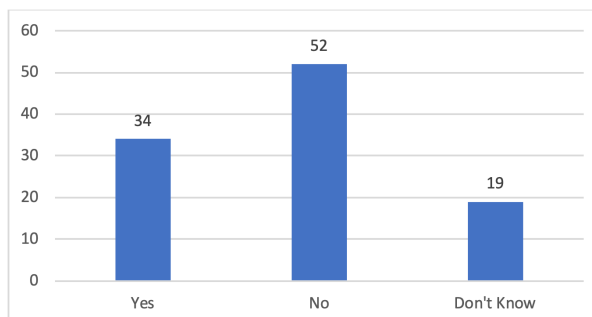
## 3. Women’s trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons.

Strikingly, nearly one half of respondents, 49.5 per cent, stated that they do not trust the local government or judicial system when facing violence involving small arms or light weapons. On the other hand, 32 per cent of those women interviewed indicated trust in the local government/judicial system. Eighteen per cent of respondents were not sure whether they could rely on the local government/judicial system.

When asked why they cannot trust officials from the local government/judicial system, respondents cited reasons such as corruption, discrimination against women, and sexual harassment in government offices if they realize that a woman desperately needs help.

**FIGURE 12**

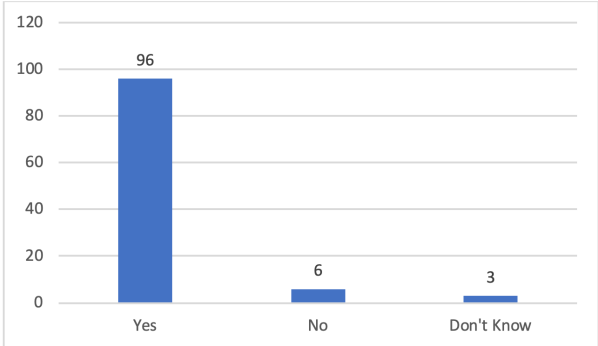
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



As depicted in the figure below, an absolute majority (91 per cent) of the women interviewed stated that, for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans in rural and urban areas.

**FIGURE 13**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



**HERAT PROVINCE**

In Herat Province, a total 82 women were interviewed by the AWN provincial research team using the individual survey questionnaire.

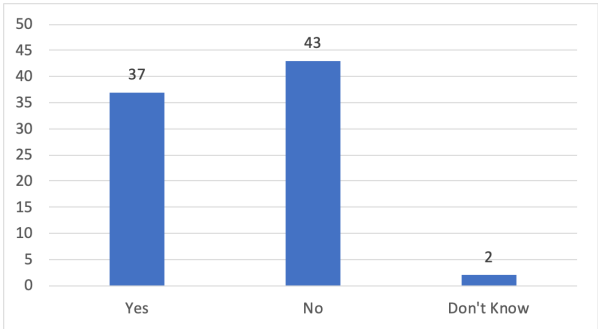
**I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons**

Over half (52 per cent) of the women interviewed stated that they had not faced domestic violence of any type, while 45 per cent reported otherwise.

Mostly, those women who said “Yes” to this question added that they faced domestic violence from family members—fathers, brothers, husbands. In one instance, a woman stated that she was beaten because her husband was a drug addict.

**FIGURE 14**

**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**

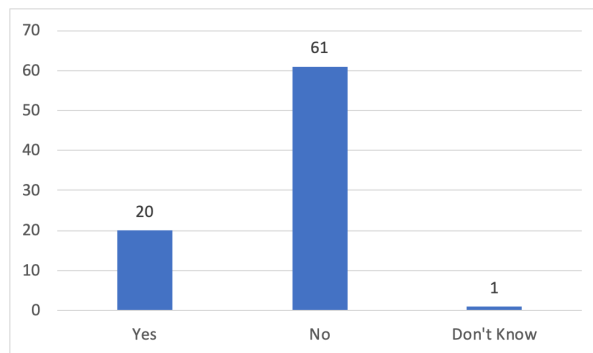


As can be seen from the graph below, only 24 per cent of the women interviewed reported being threatened by family members, tribal elders or other people in the community. A majority, some 74 per cent, said that they had not been threatened in the community.

The most common form of threat used against women was verbal abuse, which in some instances involved an illicit weapon such as a pistol.

**FIGURE 15**

**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



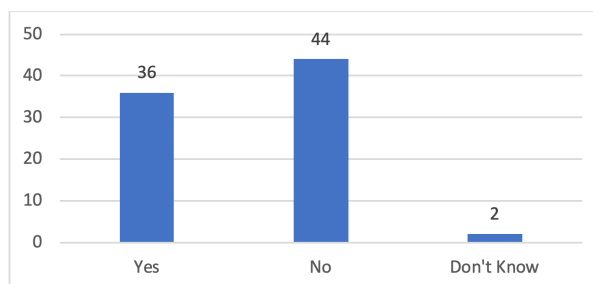
When asked whether they had seen other women being threatened in their community, 54 per cent of women in Herat Province indicated a “No” response, while 44 per cent said that they know women who have been threatened in the community (by various persons).

Going into real-life examples or situations they had witnessed, the most common types of cases involved women being threatened and harassed on the street, and threats on the lives of family members—for taking a job, going to school.

In one particular instance, a woman stated that her neighbor, a drug addict, threatens and beats his wife using illicit weapons. In another example, a woman shared her experience of being threatened with a pistol by her husband because she asked for a divorce.

**FIGURE 16**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

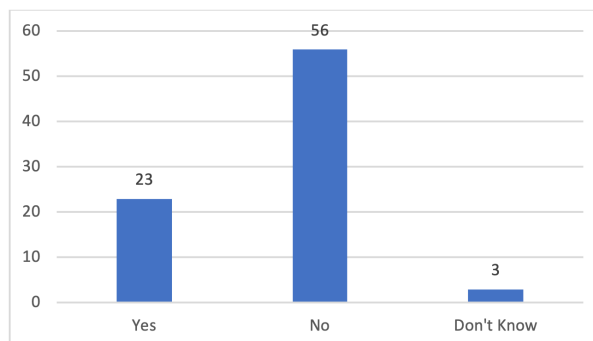


## 2. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons

As indicated in the graph below, the majority (68 per cent) of women interviewed in Herat Province said that they do not feel safe when there is an illicit weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 17**

**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**

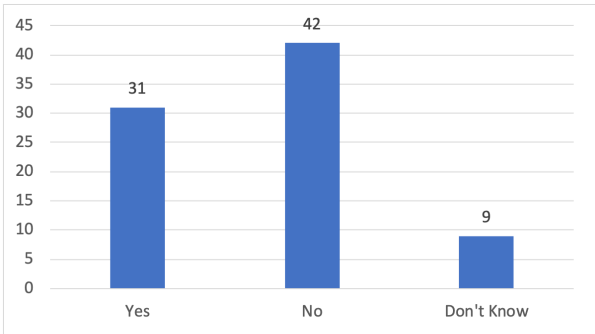


As can be seen in the graph below, 51 per cent of the women interviewed stated that they do not feel safe raising their voice or speaking up for their basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in their home. Conversely, thirty-seven per cent of respondents in Herat Province stated that they feel safe even if there is a weapon in their home.

Some women said that having weapons at home is good for their physical security, from criminal gangs in the area. Others emphasized that the presence of weapons really has a direct impact on them as women, because such weapons could easily be used when male family members become angry, especially against women. By way of summary, most of those women interviewed expressed fear and anxiety over having weapons in the house because men are very sensitive regarding women’s roles outside the home.

**FIGURE 18**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**



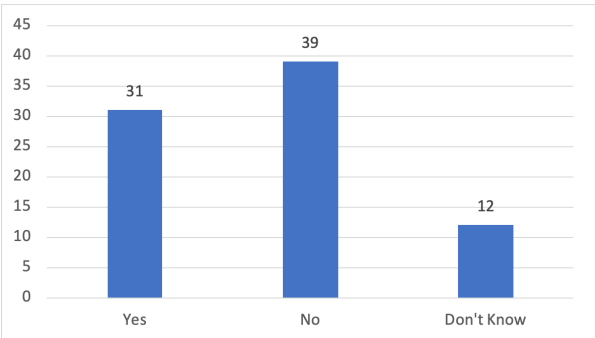
**3. Women’s access to work/employment and illicit weapons**

In response to the question on whether availability of small weapons in their homes would enable family members to stop them from taking up employment, 38 per cent of the women stated “Yes”, while 47 per cent indicated a “No” response.

One particular woman stated that she has the support of her mother and is therefore not afraid of other members of the family even if an illicit weapon is available at home. In other instances, respondents stressed that weapons at home would directly discourage them from working in an office or seeking employment, because the local community is very sensitive towards working women and therefore if anything goes wrong, weapons at home could easily be used against them, potentially costing them their life.

**FIGURE 19**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**



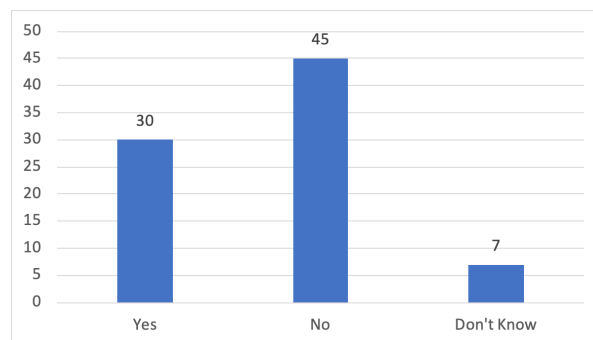
#### 4. Women's trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons

Over half of respondents (55 per cent) stated that they do not trust the local government/judicial system when facing violence involving light weapons. On the other hand, 36 per cent of women did trust the local government/judicial system; 8 per cent of respondents were not sure whether they could rely on the government/judicial system.

One of the main reasons respondents indicated for not trusting or relying on the local government/judicial system is widespread systematic corruption within the system.

**FIGURE 20**

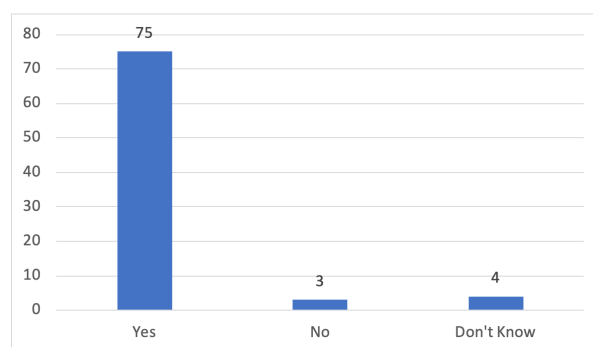
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



As depicted in the graph below, an absolute majority (91 per cent) of the women interviewed in Herat Province agreed that, for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans in both rural and urban areas.

**FIGURE 21**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



## NANGARHAR PROVINCE

In Nangarhar Province, a total of 50 women were interviewed by the AWN provincial research team, again using the individual survey questionnaire.

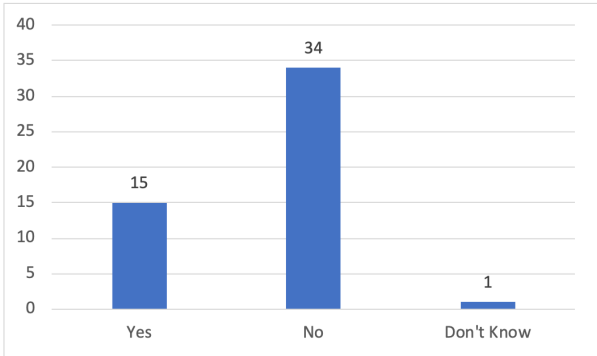
### I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons

As indicated in the figure below, 68 per cent of the women interviewed stated that they had not faced domestic violence of any type. On the other hand, 30 per cent reported domestic violence. In one instance, a woman related being shot in the leg with an illicit weapon. Others who had faced some type of domestic violence categorized it into verbal abuse and beatings. In most cases,

the reason for this violence was to forcefully prevent the respondent from attending school or continuing their education.

**FIGURE 22**

**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**

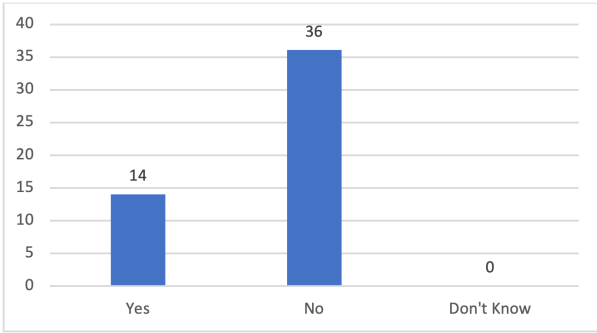


Only 24 per cent of the women interviewed in Nangarhar Province stated that they had been threatened by either a family member or any other person in the community. More than 50 per cent of the women had never received any such threats.

Of the 24 per cent who had received threats, some of these respondents indicated that it involved an illicit weapon such as a pistol; while in most other cases where a weapon was present, this was a knife rather than a firearm. The degree of relation of these people to the women threatened included close family members—and in some cases, tribal elders.

**FIGURE 23**

**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



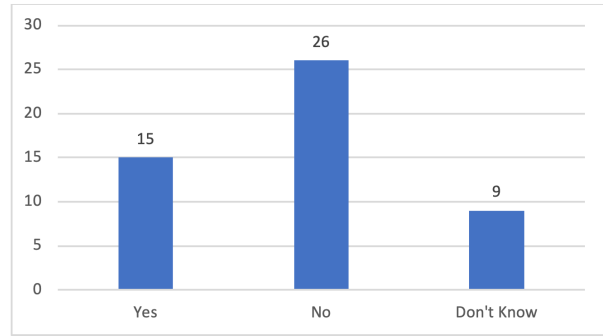
In follow-up questions on domestic violence, women were asked if they had seen another women in their community being threatened using illicit weapon. The majority of the respondents in Nangarhar Province reported that they had not seen any occurrence of this nature.

Examples of such incidents as described by the women interviewed included a brother beating his sister with an illicit weapon because she wanted to go to school. However, in most of these cases, knives appear to have been the type of weapon used to threaten women and girls.



**FIGURE 24**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

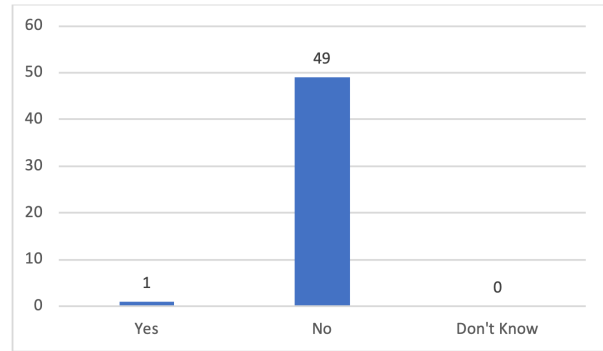


**2. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons**

Among those women interviewed in Nangarhar Province, an overwhelming majority (98 per cent) did not feel safe when there was a weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 25**

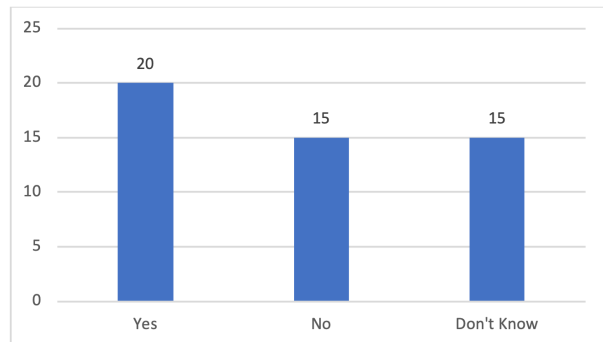
**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**



As shown in the graph below, 40 per cent of respondents said that they felt safe raising their voice in defence of their rights, knowing that there was a weapon in their home. The remaining 60 per cent either felt unsafe in this regard or were not sure whether this would have a negative impact on their well-being.

**FIGURE 26**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**

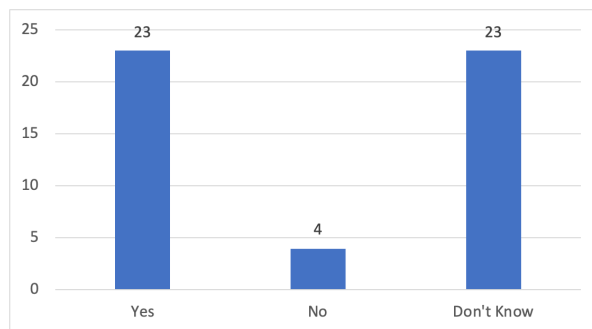


### 3. Women's access to work/employment and illicit weapons

A proportion approaching half of the women interviewed in Nangarhar Province, 46 per cent, believe that the availability of illicit weapons in their home would enable family members to stop them from taking up employment. A lowly eight per cent believed that the availability of illicit weapons in their house would not affect their access to working in an office or gaining employment.

**FIGURE 27**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**

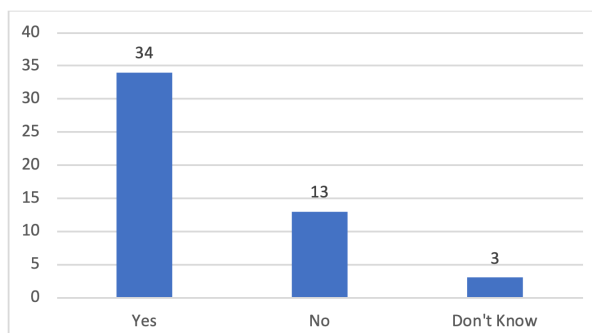


### 4. Women's trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons

In Nangarhar Province, 68 per cent of women believe that they could rely on local government or the judicial system to protect them if they were being threatened with or suffering abuse involving illicit weapons. Only 26 per cent showed a lack of trust in such a scenario, citing reasons of corruption and gender discrimination in government offices.

**FIGURE 28**

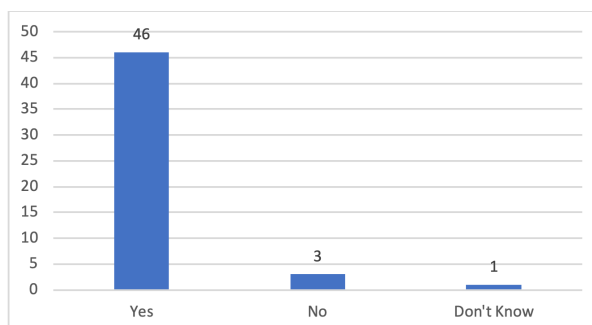
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



The overwhelming majority of women interviewed in Nangarhar Province agreed that for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's illicit weapons.

**FIGURE 29**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



## BALKH PROVINCE

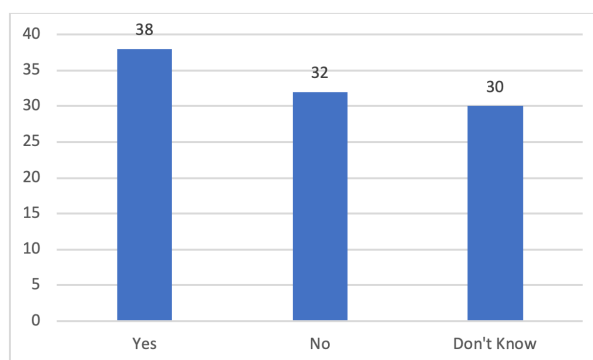
A total of 100 women were interviewed in Balkh Province by the AWN provincial research team, using the individual survey questionnaire.

### I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons

As shown in the figure below, a large proportion (38 per cent) of the women interviewed had faced domestic violence of some type in their home, sometimes involving illicit weapons such as AK47s and pistols. While 32 per cent stated that they had not faced any type of domestic violence, the remaining 30 per cent were not sure if they had ever faced any domestic violence, or presumably did not want to disclose such information as part of the interview.

**FIGURE 30**

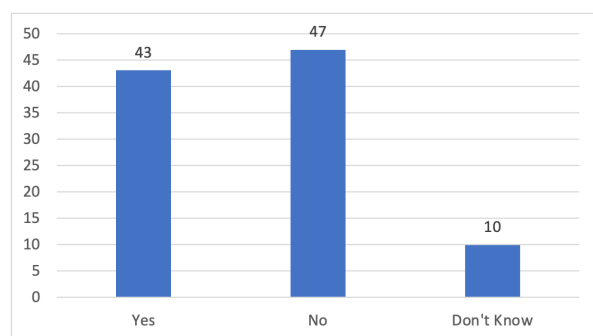
**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**



Forty-three per cent of the women interviewed had been threatened by either a family member or another member of the community. In most such cases, the women were threatened and beaten. On the other hand, 47 per cent of women in Balkh Province indicated never having been threatened by anyone in their community.

**FIGURE 31**

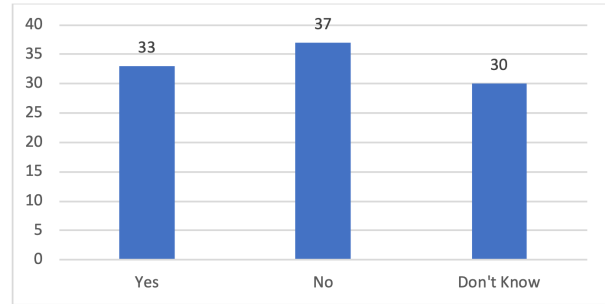
**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



In Balkh Province, 33 per cent of women had seen other women threatened with illicit weapons. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents said that could not recall any incident of this nature. In one case, a friend of a woman interviewed had been consistently beaten and abused by her husband, a drug addict, which ultimately led the woman to commit suicide.

**FIGURE 32**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

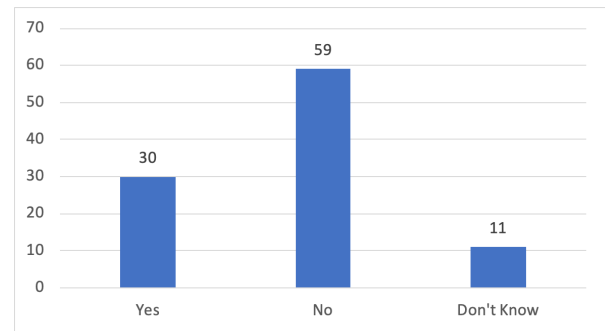


**2. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons**

As depicted in the figure below, the majority of women (59 per cent) said that they do not feel safe when there is an illicit weapon in their home, while 30 per cent indicated feeling safe even if there is a weapon in their home. The remaining 11 per cent opted for the “Don’t know” response.

**FIGURE 33**

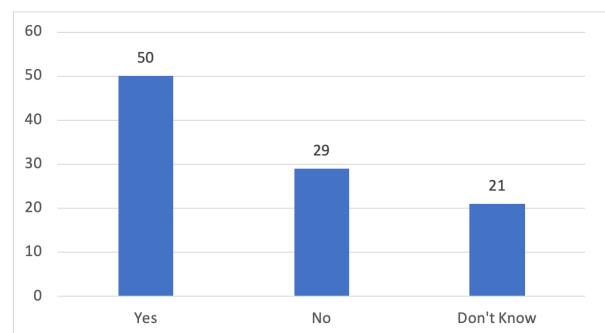
**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**



In Balkh Province, exactly half of the women interviewed felt safe raising their voice in defense of their rights, knowing that there was a weapon in their home. Only 29 per cent said that they felt unsafe doing so.

**FIGURE 34**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**



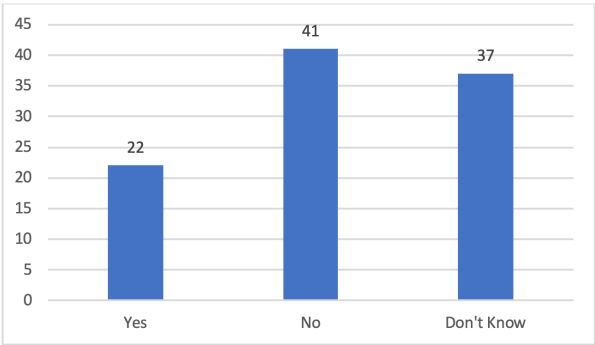
**3. Women’s access to work/employment and illicit weapons**

Only 22 per cent of the women interviewed reported that the availability of illicit weapons in their home would enable family members to stop them from working. The remaining 78 per cent chose either the “No” or the “Don’t know” response.

Most of those women who were asked about the availability of illicit weapons in their home stated that it is good for their personal and keeping their home secure from criminal gangs.

**FIGURE 35**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**

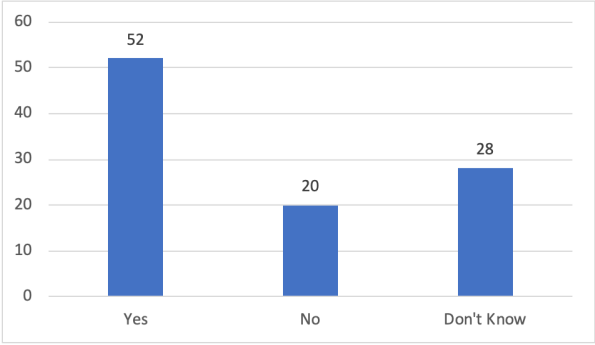


**4. Women’s trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons**

As can be seen in the figure below, in Balkh Province over half (52 per cent) of women indicated that they could rely on the local government or judicial system if they faced violence with a deadly weapon. Twenty per cent said that they could not trust the local government or judicial system if such unfortunate circumstances were to arise, citing widespread corruption as the reason for their lack of trust. The remaining 28 per cent indicated a “Don’t know” response in this regard.

**FIGURE 36**

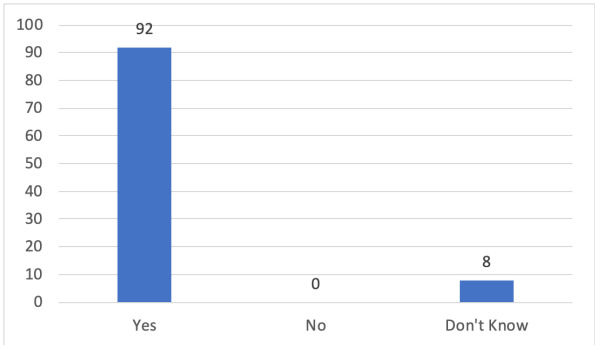
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



In Balkh Province, an absolute majority (92 per cent) of the women interviewed agreed that, for the safety of women, the GolRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans in both rural and urban areas.

**FIGURE 37**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



## KABUL PROVINCE

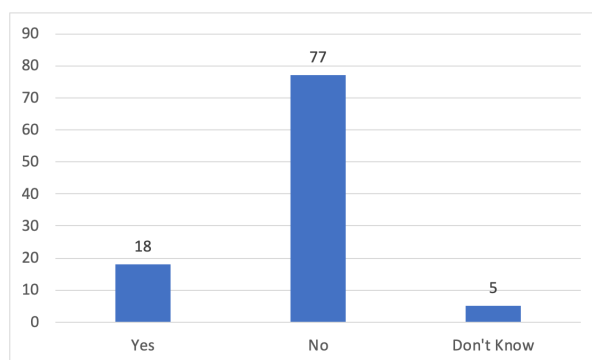
In Kabul Province, a total of 100 women were interviewed by the AWN provincial research team using the same individual survey questionnaire.

### I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons

As shown in the figure below, a majority of the women interviewed had not faced any type of domestic violence, such as physical, mental or psychological violence. Only 18 per cent of respondents reported facing domestic violence.

**FIGURE 38**

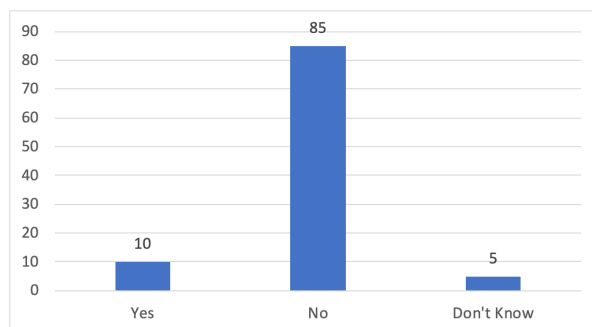
**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**



As indicated in the figure below, the absolute majority (85 per cent) of women interviewed in Kabul Province stated that they had not been threatened by family members, tribal elders or other people in the community. Conversely, 10 per cent of women did indicate having been threatened.

**FIGURE 39**

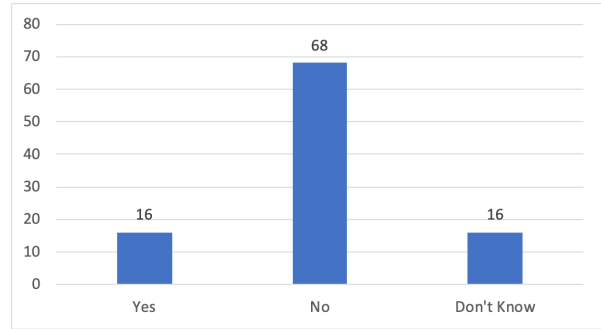
**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



When asked whether they had seen other women in the community being threatened with weapons, 68 per cent of the women reported that they had never seen any woman being threatened, while 16 per cent stated that they know women in the community who have been threatened.

**FIGURE 40**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

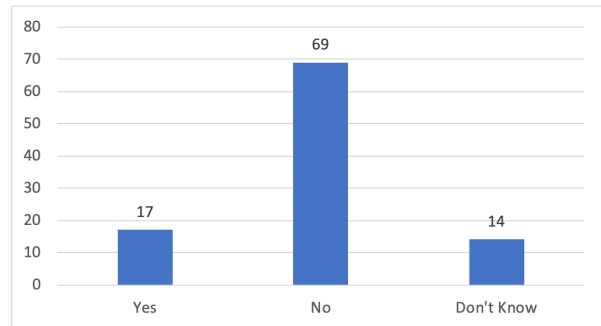


**2. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons**

As indicated in the figure below, the majority of women (69 per cent) interviewed in Kabul Province said that they do not feel safe when there is an illicit weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 41**

**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**

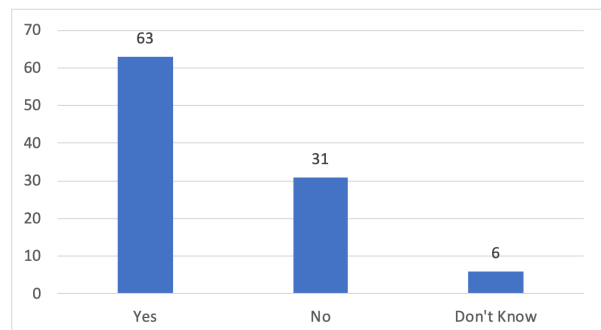


The graph below illustrates that 63 per cent of the women interviewed stated that they do feel safe raising their voice or speaking up for their basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in their home; with several respondents adding that their family is educated and therefore realize that women must have access to their rights, unlike the old traditional ways.

In Kabul Province, 31 per cent of women did not feel safe and expressed anxiety and fear regarding the availability of illicit weapons in their home.

**FIGURE 42**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**

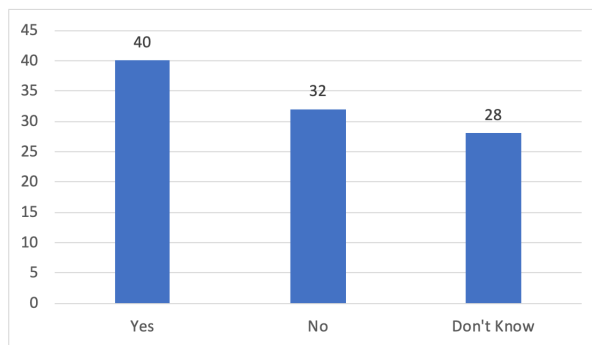


### 3. Women’s access to work/employment and illicit weapons

In response to the question on whether availability of small weapons in their homes would enable family members to stop them from taking up employment, 40 per cent of women in Kabul Province answered “Yes”, while 32 per cent chose the “No” response.

**FIGURE 43**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**

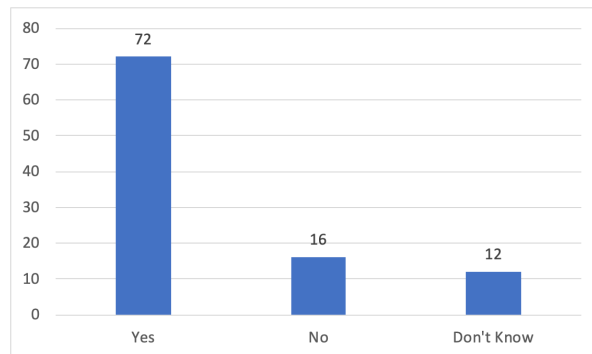


### 4. Women’s trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons

As shown in the graph below, the majority (72 per cent) of women interviewed in Kabul Province stated that they would trust the local government/judicial system to protect their rights when faced with violence involving illicit weapons. On the other hand, 16 per cent of the women indicated not trusting the local government/judicial system. A further 12 per cent of respondents said they were not sure whether they could rely on the local government/judicial system in this regard.

**FIGURE 44**

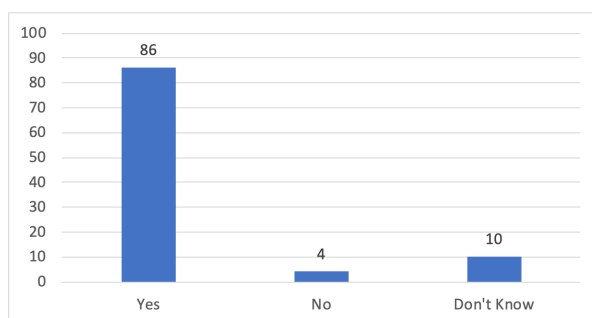
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



As depicted in the graph below, an absolute majority (86 per cent) of the women interviewed agreed that, for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans in rural and urban areas and take away people’s illicit small arms.

**FIGURE 45**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**





## KUNDUZ PROVINCE

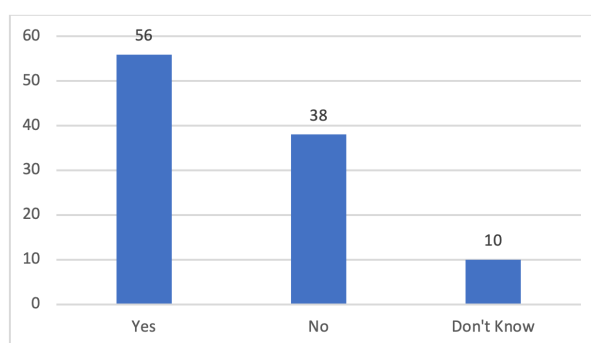
In the north of the country, in Kunduz Province, a total of 104 women were interviewed by the AWN provincial research team, using the individual survey questionnaire.

### I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons

As visualized in the bar chart below, 54 per cent of the women interviewed stated having faced domestic violence of various types, including psychological and physical violence. For the most part, the perpetrators of said domestic violence were close family members, such as husbands, brothers and fathers. By contrast, 37 per cent of women interviewed in Kunduz Province indicated never having faced any form of domestic violence.

**FIGURE 46**

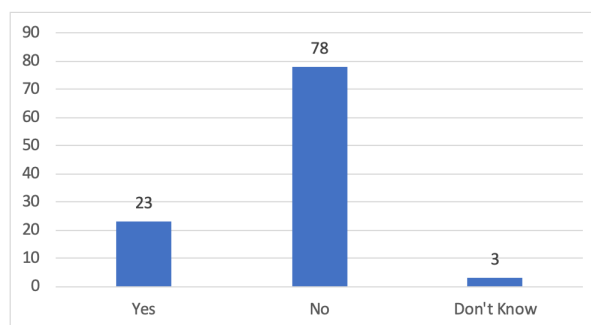
**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**



As shown in the graph below, only 22 per cent of the women reported being threatened by family members, tribal elders, or other people in the community. An absolute majority of 75 per cent said that they had never received any such threats.

**FIGURE 47**

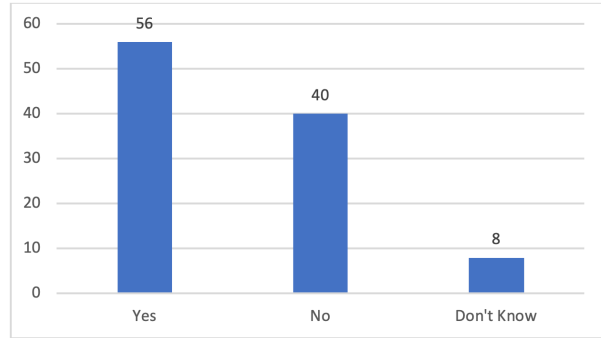
**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



In Kunduz Province, 54 per cent of the women respondents reported that they had witnessed incidents where women being threatened in the community by various persons, and which involved illicit weapons. A further 38 per cent of the women had never witnessed such an incident.

**FIGURE 48**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

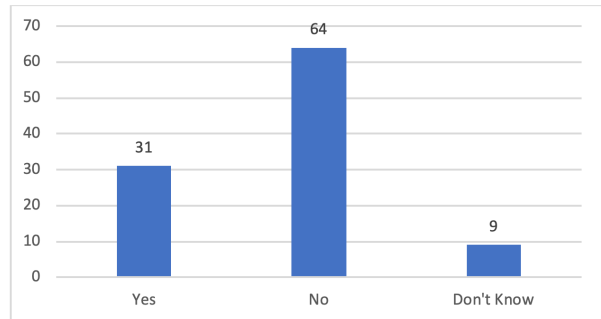


**2. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons**

As indicated in the graph below, the majority of the women (62 per cent) interviewed in Kunduz Province said that they do not feel safe when there is an illicit weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 49**

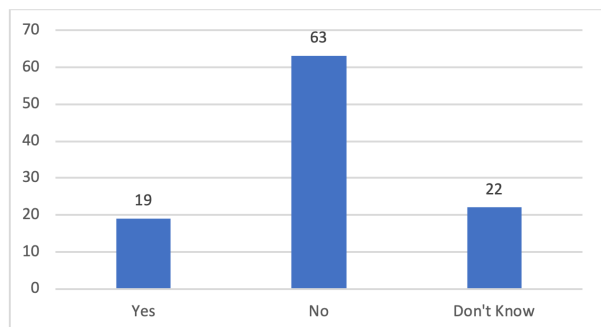
**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**



As indicated in the bar chart below, 61 per cent of women interviewed stated that they do not feel safe raising their voice or speaking up for their basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in their home. Summarizing the reasons for the situations they had faced, most women expressed fear and anxiety at having weapons in the house because men are very sensitive regarding women and how they conduct themselves.

**FIGURE 50**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**

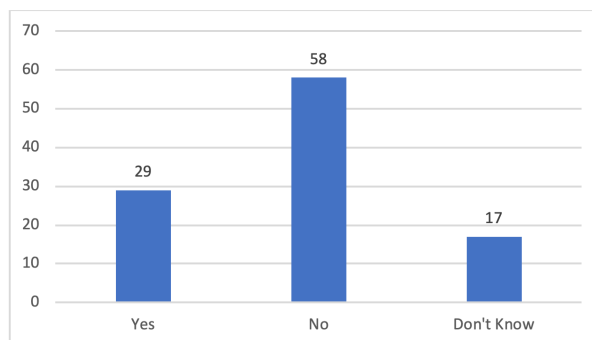


### 3. Women’s access to work/employment and illicit weapons

As can be seen in the graph below, in response to the question on whether the availability of small weapons in the home would enable family members to stop them from taking up employment, 28 per cent of the women interviewed indicated “Yes” and 56 per cent indicated “No.”

**FIGURE 51**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**

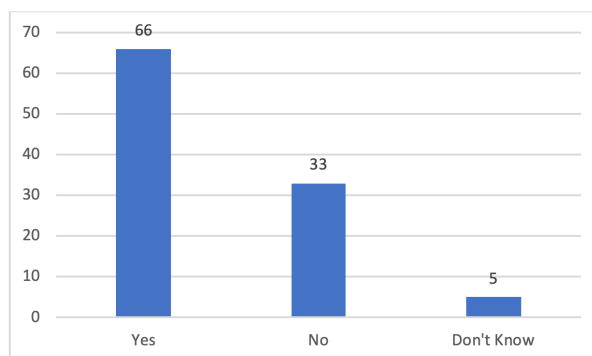


### 4. Women’s trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons

Some 63 per cent of the women stated that they trust the local government/judicial system when facing violence involving light weapons. On the other hand, 32 per cent of respondents did not trust the local government/judicial system.

**FIGURE 52**

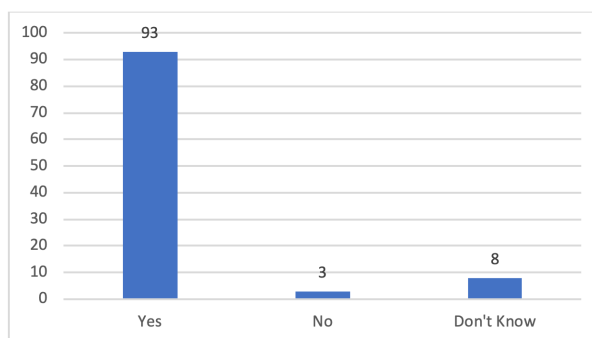
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



As can be clearly seen in the bar chart below, an absolute majority (89.4 per cent) of the women interviewed in Kunduz Province agreed that, for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans, in rural and urban areas alike.

**FIGURE 53**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



## BAMYAN PROVINCE

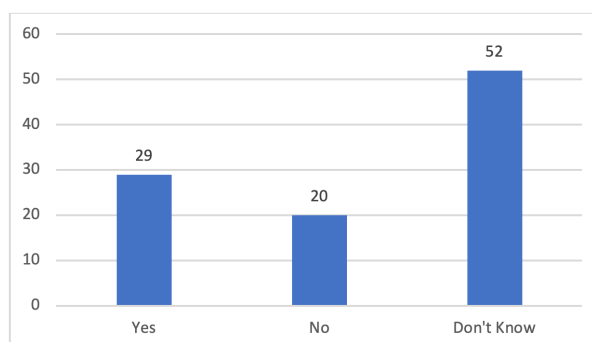
In Bamyan Province, a total of 101 women were interviewed by the AWN provincial research team, using the individual survey questionnaire.

### I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons

As indicated in the graph below, 29 per cent of the women interviewed stated that they had faced domestic violence. On the other hand, 51 per cent, for reasons unknown, chose to answer to this question by indicating the “Don’t know” response.

**FIGURE 54**

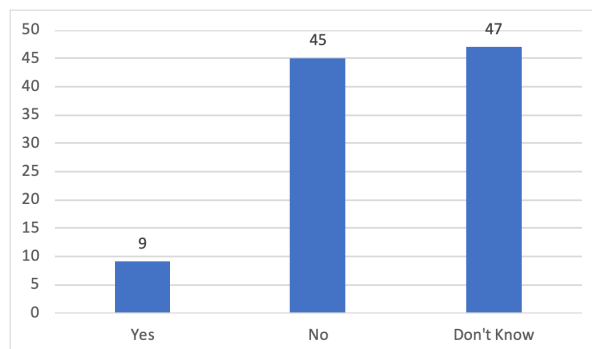
**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**



Only nine per cent of the women interviewed in Bamyan Province stated that they had been threatened by either a family member or any other person in the community. However, 47 per cent of the women answered this question by choosing the “Don’t know” response; again, for reasons unknown to the survey team.

**FIGURE 55**

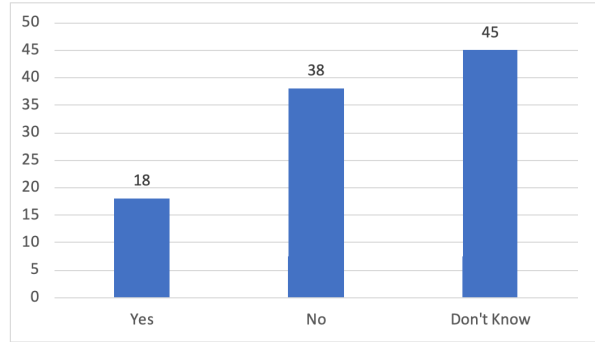
**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



In follow-up questions on domestic violence, respondents were asked if they had seen another women in their community being threatened with illicit weapons. Only 18 per cent of the women reported that they had indeed seen any such incidents.

**FIGURE 56**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**

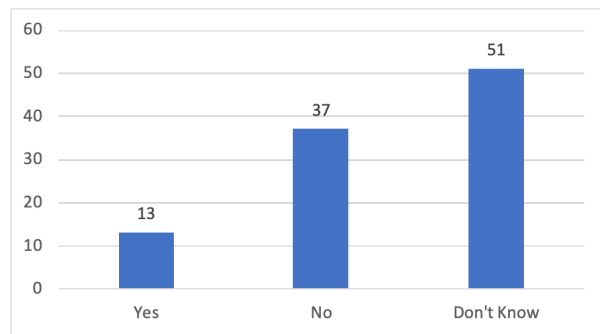


**2. Women’s (sense of) safety and illicit weapons**

Among those women interviewed in Bamyán Province, only 37 per cent felt unsafe if there was a weapon in their home. Again, the majority of respondents chose not to share their feelings concerning their personal safety as pertaining to the presence of illicit weapons in the home.

**FIGURE 57**

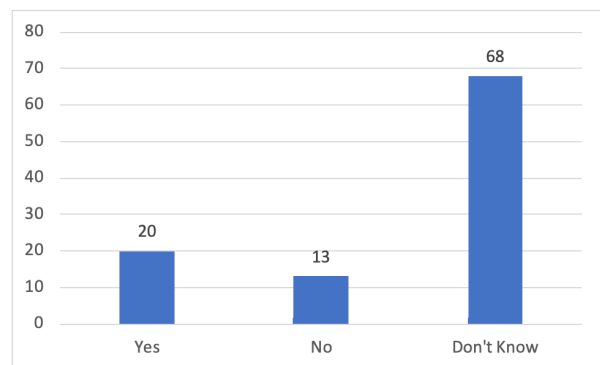
**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**



As shown in the figure below, a majority of women chose the “Don’t know” response when asked if they felt safe raising their voice in defense of their basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there was a weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 58**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women’s rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**

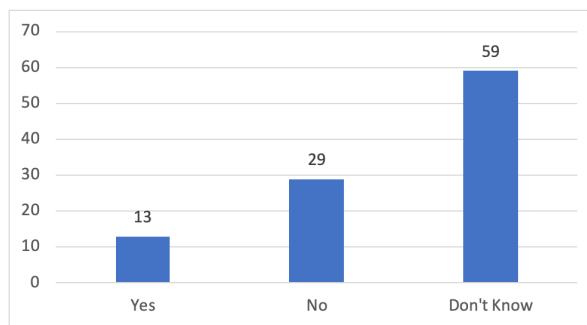


### 3. Women’s access to work/employment and illicit weapons

In Bamyan Province, the majority of women also chose the “Don’t know” response to the question on family members potentially using small or light weapons to prevent from taking up work outside the home. Only 13 per cent of women stated that the availability of illicit weapons would enable family members to stop them from taking up employment.

**FIGURE 59**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**

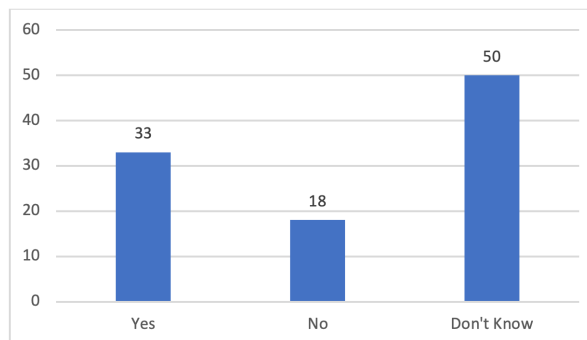


### 4. Women’s trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons

Thirty-three per cent of women interviewed in Bamyan Province believed that they could rely on the local government or judicial system to protect them if they were suffering threats or abuse that involved illicit weapons. Only 18 per cent showed a lack of trust in local government in such a scenario, citing reasons of corruption and gender discrimination in government offices. Fifty per cent of the respondents chose to respond to this question with the “Don’t know” option.

**FIGURE 60**

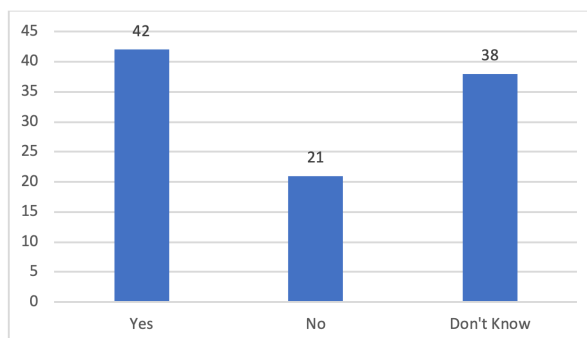
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



In Bamyan Province, 42 per cent of the respondents agreed that, for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s illicit weapons.

**FIGURE 61**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



## KANDAHAR PROVINCE

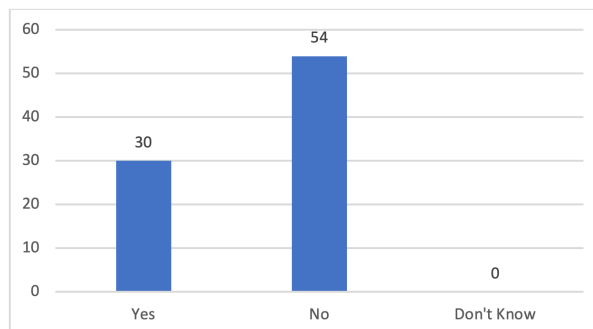
As regards Kandahar Province, a total of 84 women were interviewed by the AWN provincial research team (using the same individual survey questionnaire).

### I. Domestic violence against women and illicit weapons

As indicated in the graph below, in Kandahar Province a majority of the women interviewed did not face any domestic violence. However, 36 per cent did report incidents of domestic violence.

**FIGURE 62**

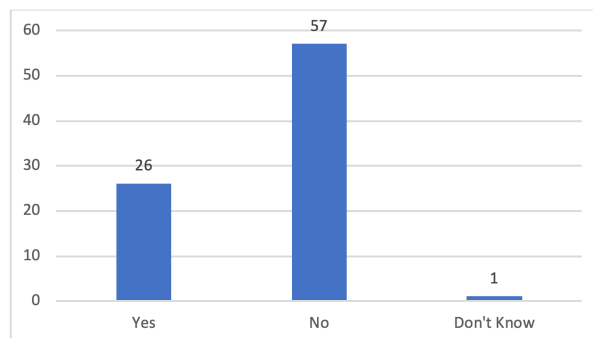
**Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?**



Sixty-eight per cent of the women in Kandahar Province had never been threatened by anyone within their family/community. Only 31 per cent faced threats from either family members or persons in the community where access to education was a major reason for the threats.

**FIGURE 63**

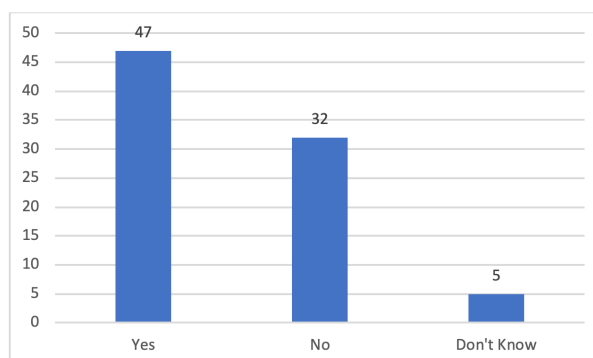
**Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?**



As shown in the below graph, a majority (56 per cent) of the women interviewed had seen other women being threatened with illicit weapons. A further 38 per cent of respondents could not recall any incident of this nature.

**FIGURE 64**

**Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?**



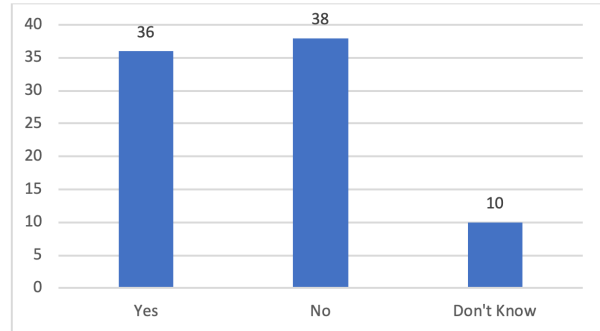
Author: Mohammad Rateb Shaheed

## 2. Women's (sense of) safety and illicit weapons

As depicted in the image below, 45 per cent said that they do not feel safe when there is an illicit weapon in their home. A further 42 per cent indicated feeling safe even if there is a weapon in their home.

**FIGURE 65**

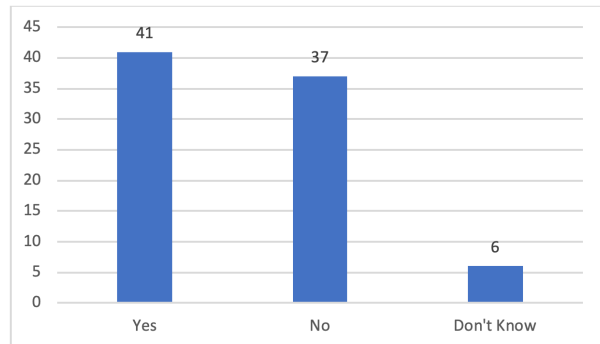
**As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?**



In Kandahar Province, 49 per cent of the women interviewed felt safe raising their voice in defense of their rights, knowing that there was a weapon in their home; 44 per cent felt unsafe doing so.

**FIGURE 66**

**Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for your basic human and women's rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?**

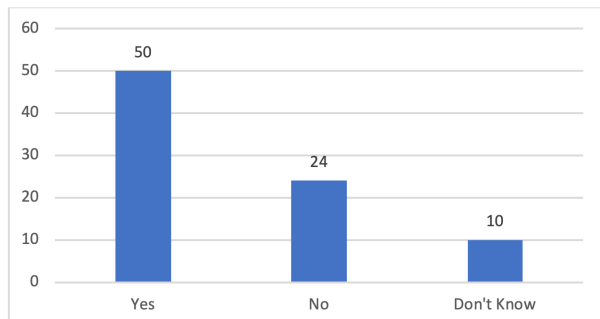


## 3. Women's access to work/employment and illicit weapons

The majority (60 per cent) of women respondents reported that the availability of illicit weapons in their home would enable family members to stop them from working.

**FIGURE 67**

**Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?**



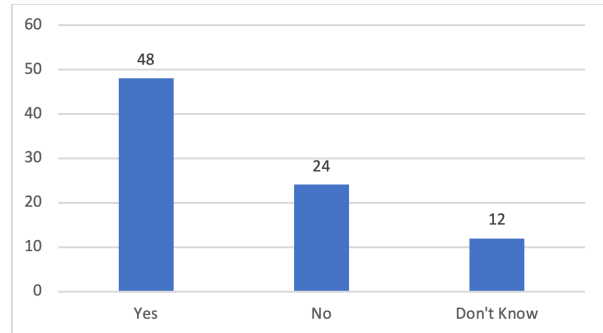


#### 4. Women's trust in the local government/judicial system and illicit weapons

As shown in below graph, in Kandahar Province some 57 per cent of women indicated that they could rely on the local government or judicial system if they faced violence. Over a quarter of respondents, 29 per cent, stated that they would not trust the local government or judicial system if such an unfortunate situation were to transpire.

**FIGURE 68**

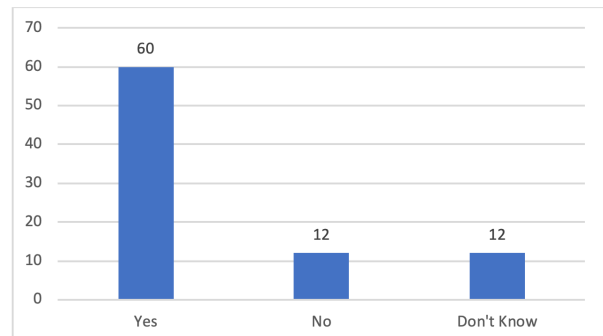
**Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?**



As indicated in the graph below, in Kandahar Province, a majority (71 per cent) of the women interviewed agreed that, for the safety of women, the GoIRA must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans in rural and urban areas.

**FIGURE 69**

**For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's small arm and light weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?**



# MAJOR CHALLENGES AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ILLICIT WEAPONS ON WOMEN'S LIVES

Nearly 800 women, government representatives, CSOs and community elders were interviewed across eight Afghan provinces. Each respondent was asked questions on challenges faced by women in relation to the availability and use of illicit weapons, as well as the negative impacts such weapons have on the lives of the women of Afghanistan.

A summary of insights contributed by respondents is provided below.

1. Afghanistan is a traditional society and therefore the sensitivities towards women are much more intense. Every time a woman has the courage to ask or advocate for her rights, such as the right to education, basic health or participation in work or public life, they potentially face threats as well as physical and psychological abuse. In most cases, illicit weapons are used as part of this intimidation. Therefore, the availability of illicit weapons is one of the greatest challenges to women's empowerment in Afghanistan.
2. The presence of illicit weapons in almost every home discourages women because of the structure of Afghan patriarchal society—the will of the elders and men are the law that governs women rights, and the tool used to enforce this will is illicit weapons. Guns and other weapons are thus symbols of power and control, and as such are used by men to intimidate and harass women who are seen to violate the expected social or gender norms.
3. The availability of and easy access to illicit weapons causes fear and terror at the community level, and ultimately creates an enabling environment for men to abuse, torture and terrorize women and girls. One pertinent example of this is honour killing.
4. The availability and use of illicit weapons negatively impact women more than men. Often when an illicit weapon is available in the home it stops women from pursuing their ambitions; for example, a woman may not have access to education or basic health care, or freedom to develop her career. More importantly, women seen to defy the norms (claiming public spaces without express permission), e.g. peacebuilders and human rights activities, are more at risk due to the presence of weapons.
5. Sexual harassment of women and girls frequently occurs on the street, perpetrated by criminally minded youngsters and other men, often showcasing their illicit weapons in the process.
6. One of the major impacts illicit weapons has on women's lives and well-being is that women live in constant fear and anxiety, because these illicit weapons could be easily used to threaten or physically abuse them.
7. The use and widespread availability of illicit weapons is a major tool used to abuse, torture and threaten women, which results in their inability to further their education, seek employment, etc.
8. Illicit weapons contribute to the rise in the number of cases of violence against women, sexual harassment and physical abuse of women, reduction in women's and girls' access to education

and the overall limiting of the roles played by women in society.

9. In the long-term, the presence of illicit weapons results in deteriorating mental health among Afghan women, leading to conditions such as depression, fear and anxiety.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

All our respondents (women, governmental representatives, CSOs and community elders) were encouraged to provide recommendations for effective implementation of countrywide gender-sensitive disarmament plans. Their key recommendations for the Government of Afghanistan, the international community, CSOs and the wider public are summarized below.

### **Recommendations to the GoIRA:**

1. Effectively implement disarmament plans or policies, and expand control over large rural areas not currently under your control, areas where the illicit weapons business is flourishing. Secondly, with the support of local tribal Shuras and communities, national authorities at both the central and provincial levels should begin the disarmament of rural and urban areas;
2. The national, subnational and community levels of government should include women in decision-making roles—across the areas of planning, implementation and monitoring of the strategies on disarmament;
3. Recruit more women for decision-making roles in law enforcement entities, such as the MoIA, the MoD, and the NDS, as women can best support women's interests on gender-sensitive disarmament. More importantly, given the sensitivity of the topic, adequate protection measures must be taken to ensure women can fully participate in these disarmament and security strategies. This should especially ensure that women's peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts are not undermined by their participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process;
4. The IARCSC should maintain the gender balance in recruitment of civil servants across all provinces. Recruiting more women for governmental offices will translate into a corresponding willingness among women to rely on the local government, judicial and law enforcement systems to report violence against women;
5. Produce a revised national disarmament plan or policy on illicit weapons and implement this throughout the country;
6. Most of the illicit weapons present in the country are not manufactured in Afghanistan, but rather are smuggled in illegally. Therefore, the GoIRA should tighten its grip on the illegal trade of weapons in Afghanistan and target its roots within the country. Border control systems should also be enhanced i.e. join more regional programmes like BOMCA initiative, to reduce the illegal trade of illicit weapons and speed up the process for registering weapons, making them easily traceable;
7. Initiate and run a countrywide awareness campaign about the negative impacts of illicit weapons and the consequences of their illegal possession through national and local media platforms as well as CSOs;
8. Partner with communities, tribal elders and (especially) religious leaders to campaign against

the possession and use of illicit weapons by forming provincial joint committees to steer the direction and mandate of the campaign;

9. Strengthen the ANA and the ANP in order to pressure local powerbrokers to disband private militias;
10. Establish an incentive programme for those who voluntarily give up their illicit weapons, e.g. an annual amnesty period during which people can hand over their illicit, unregistered weapons without fear of any consequences. Local authorities should also decide what they will do with these weapons, to avoid their recirculation/onward trade among communities/authorities.

### **Recommendations to the International Community:**

1. Harmonize scattered small projects and greatly expand the partnership with the GoIRA, implementing a countrywide, unified and fully supported plan for disarmament of illicit weapons (necessitating better coordination and systematic support to the national authorities);
2. Convince the GoIRA to enhance law enforcement to assure that no one enjoys immunity or impunity concerning possession of illicit arms, in neither rural nor urban areas by activating GoIRA's established method and channels.
3. Provide technical support to the GoIRA in enhancing border police control systems, so as to target and reduce illicit weapons trading routes for example training on using equipment or method, as well as, sharing lessons learned and good practices;
4. Explore together with the GoIRA the root causes of illicit trade, including illicit weapons origination by supporting certain institutions that are already studying this topic whose funding could be boosted or its work bolstered by government-international support.

### **Recommendations to CSOs:**

5. 1. Develop and extend the awareness campaigns on the negative impacts of illicit weapons on the public well-being. The awareness campaigns should be carried out in partnership with local Shuras, which could issue recommendations to their local and provincial authorities on how to solve the issues;
6. 2. Partner with local police/PeMs to play an active role in identifying people, local political figures, government officials and institutions that disrupt or oppose the disarmament plans, and share this information with relevant government entities.

### **Recommendations to Local Communities:**

1. Stand shoulder to shoulder with the GoIRA and other partners to ensure smooth implementation of disarmament plans on illicit weapons;
2. Volunteer to give up illicit weapons and actively support the GoIRA disarmament plans;
3. Help the government in enhancing and building trusted PeM units in the provinces and provide support during the identification and arrest of people who possess/carry illicit weapons or are involved in the purchase/sale of such illicit weapons.

# ANNEX I – RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES AND QUESTIONS

## RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE - A

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

#### TARGET: WOMEN

Hello, my name is (\_\_\_\_\_) from the Afghan Women’s Network. The Network is conducting a survey on the impact of small and light arms on women in Afghanistan, with the support of UN Women. This consent form asks you to allow the researcher to record and view the interview and use your comments to enhance understanding on the topic.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will not be any negative consequences. The survey asks questions about your experiences and perceptions of violence, which may, at times, be difficult to answer. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you are free to stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question(s). The information that you share with us will be analysed collectively with the information collected from hundreds of other women across eight provinces and will remain anonymous and be kept entirely confidential.

The interview will take between 30 and 45 minutes.

By agreeing to proceed, you are indicating that you have read the above description of the study, are over the age of 18, and agree to the terms as described.

Do you agree to participate in the interview? 1) Yes  2) No

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Age: 49 ,  48–39 ,  38–29 ,  28–18 or older

Gender: Male  or Female

Ethnicity: Pashtun  , Tajik  , Uzbek  , Hazara  , Turkmen  , Sadat  , Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: Cannot read and write  , can read and write  , primary school  , secondary school  , high school  , Bachelor’s  , Master’s  , Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Province, Urban  OR Non-Urban

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever faced domestic violence of any type (physical, emotional, psychological)?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

a) If yes, please explain why.

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b) If yes, did it involve illicit weapons (guns of any type – name the weapon)

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2. Have you ever been threatened by family members, tribal elders or any other person in the community?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

a) If yes, did it involve a weapon of any type? \_\_\_\_\_

-----

b) If yes, what was your relation to the person who threatened you? \_\_\_\_\_

-----

3. Have you ever seen another woman being threatened by a person using small arms or light weapons?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

a) If yes, please explain the situation.

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4. As an Afghan woman, do you feel safe if there is a weapon in your home?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

5. Do you feel safe raising your voice or speaking up for basic human and women's rights, knowing that there is a weapon in your home?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

6. Do you think the availability of small arms or light weapons in your home would enable family members to stop you from working in an office?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

a) If yes, please explain why.

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b) If no, why not?

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7. Can you rely on local government/judicial officials to defend you after being threatened or abused by a family member or another person using small arms or light weapons?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

c) If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. For the safety of women, do you agree that the Government of Afghanistan must implement gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's small arms and lights weapons, in both urban and non-urban areas?

YES  – NO  – DON'T KNOW

9. What types of violence against women involving the use of illegal small arms/light weapons are registered in your area? Please name the types of cases.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

10. In your opinion, as an Afghan woman, what are the negative impacts of having small arms or light weapons in the home?

**OPEN-ENDED**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What are your recommendations for implementing gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's small arms and light weapons in urban and non-urban areas?

**OPEN-ENDED**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE - B**  
**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**  
**TARGET GROUP: CSOs, COMMUNITY ELDERS**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Representing: CSOs/Community elders

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

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. In your opinion, what are the negative impacts of illicit small arms/light weapons possession on the lives of people, at the community level?
2. In your opinion, what are the negative impacts of illicit small arms/light weapons possession on the lives of women and girls in particular?
3. In your opinion, what are the challenges women and girls face in regard to the availability of illicit small arms/light weapons in the home?
4. Do you think the availability of illegal small arms/light weapons in the home discourages or stops women and girls from equal participation in social life? For example, in regard to taking up full-time employment, education, etc.
5. Please elaborate on what steps have so far been taken by the government and CSOs in regard to gender-sensitive disarmament throughout Afghanistan?
6. What are your recommendations for the government, CSOs and the international community on implementing gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people’s small arms or light weapons in urban and non-urban areas?
  - a) Recommendations to the Government: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Recommendations to the International Community: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Recommendations to CSOs: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) Recommendations to Local Communities: \_\_\_\_\_

## RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE - C

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

#### TARGET GROUP: GOVERNMENT

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/Ministry Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Which national laws, policies and other tools strictly ban the storage and use of illegal weapons?

a) If any, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

b) If such laws and policies do exist, what practical steps have been taken to ensure implementation on the ground?

2. What are the common categories of cases of violence registered with government offices involving the use of illegal small arms/light weapons, at the district and national levels?

Category 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Category 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Category 3: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the government commitments to international treaties or bodies that ban the use of illegal small arms/light weapons?

a) If any, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

b) If such commitments exist, what practical steps have been taken to ensure implementation on the ground?

4. What challenges does the government face in implementing laws and policies restricting the use of small arms/light weapons in Afghanistan?

5. In your opinion, what are the causal factors that prevent the government from stopping the flourishing business of illegal small arms/light weapons in Afghanistan?

6. Please elaborate on what steps have so far been taken by the government and CSOs in regard to gender-sensitive disarmament throughout Afghanistan?

7. What are your recommendations for implementing gender-sensitive disarmament plans to take away people's small arms and light weapons in urban and non-urban areas?



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