



April 2024



Summary report of countrywide women's consultations

Photo: UN Women/Sayed Habib Bidel

Background

This report presents the perspectives of women across Afghanistan on their current situation and priorities. Since its military takeover in August 2021, the Taliban (referred to herein since that date as the de facto authorities (DFA)) has issued a series of decrees that have systematically removed women from public life and decision-making positions in almost all sectors, and banned them from pursuing secondary and higher level education. The resulting impact on the mental and physical health of women in Afghanistan, and on the fabric of Afghan society at large, is unprecedented.

Since August 2022, the United Nations Entity for Women and Gender Equality (UN Women), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) have jointly undertaken quarterly consultations with a wide spectrum of Afghan women, inviting respondents to weigh in on the issues impacting their lives.¹ These consultations flag women's priorities and requests to the DFA and contribute to internationally mandated requirements to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of Afghan women in any discussions concerning the future of Afghanistan, in line with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda,² [the UNAMA mandate](#),³ and key United Nations (UN) policy documents – including the [Independent Assessment](#)⁴ undertaken in 2023 by the Special Coordinator for Afghanistan appointed by the UN Secretary-General and the subsequent [UNSC Resolution 2721](#).⁵

1 UN Women, UNAMA and IOM consult Afghan women inside the country on a quarterly basis ahead of Security Council meetings. Reports on previous consultations include [February 2024](#), [December 2023](#), [September 2023](#), [June 2023](#), [March 2023](#), and [August 2022](#).

2 For UN policy documents and more information detailing UN commitment to the WPS Agenda is available here, see: UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. [Gender, Women, Peace and Security](#).

3 For more information on the mandate of UNAMA, see: UNAMA. [Mandate](#).

4 See: UNSC (United Nations Security Council). 2023. [Letter dated 8 November 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council](#). S/2023/856.

5 The UNAMA mandate was renewed by [UNSC Resolution 2678](#).

Methodology

The latest round of quarterly consultations took place between 17 and 29 April 2024. UN Women, IOM and UNAMA convened online and in-person group consultations and conducted individual telesurveys, together reaching 888 Afghan women across 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.⁶ In-person consultations were undertaken across provinces, with safety considerations in mind, giving Afghan women the rare opportunity to come together, share their challenges with other women and have their experiences heard by international actors. The women engaged in this way reflected upon the three months preceding the consultations; providing details on their particular experiences, views on international engagement with their country, and recommendations to improve the realization of women's rights. Topics covered include a mixture of recurrent and new topics. These consultation reports analyse persistent general trends over time among those women consulted. Between 24-31 per cent of women consulted between December 2023 – April 2024 had participated in at least one previous consultation.

This process allowed a wide spectrum of Afghan women to be reached: women residing in urban (60 per cent of respondents), rural (20 per cent) and peri-urban (15 per cent) areas; women heads of households (35 per cent); internally displaced (15 per cent) and returnee (8 per cent) women; employed (43 per cent) and unemployed (51 per cent) women; and women living with disabilities (7 per cent). One-third of women consulted had also participated in previous consultation rounds.

Consultations were also piloted with 64 men across 14 provinces, to facilitate complementary analysis on gender disparities in the situation of Afghan men and women, while garnering Afghan men's insights, priorities and recommendations related to women's rights. The men consulted hold similar identity markers to those women consulted, reaching men living in urban (66 per cent), rural (16 per cent) and peri-urban (19 per cent) areas; internally displaced (20 per cent) and returnee (14 per cent) men; employed (56 per cent) and unemployed (44 per cent) men; and men living with disabilities (8 per cent).

Key findings

"A year ago, there was more hope, but now the reality is disheartening."

- Consistent with findings from previous consultations, women highlighted that they **had not frequently engaged with local authorities** on issues important to them, with 80 per cent noting that they did not once engage with local authorities during the previous three-month period and 16 per cent saying they had. By contrast, the share of men who indicated meeting with local authorities at least once during the previous three months was over three times that for women, at 53 per cent.
- Only two per cent of women consulted indicated that they had "good" or "full" **influence on community decision-making bodies**, compared with 18 per cent of men. This is a continuation of negligible figures, where in the previous consultation only 1 per cent of women noted such influence at the community level. Women highlighted that they are often excluded from public meetings and unable to directly engage with local authorities, forced to instead rely upon male family and community members to advocate on their behalf. Women raised the point that reliance on men to share their views risked normalizing their erasure from multiple levels of decision-making.
- Women reported disproportionately **low access to both formal and informal dispute resolution mechanisms** (3 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively), compared to men consulted, 50 per cent of whom reported access to both formal and informal dispute resolution. Women indicated that they are excluded from influencing their lives at all points of decision-making – unable to influence the rules imposed upon them, nor hold others to account for violations or enforce those few rights granted by the DFA.
- Alarming, in an increase since January 2024, 64 per cent of **women consulted indicated feeling "not at all" safe** leaving home by themselves, compared to 2 per cent of men.⁷ In this vein, **men indicated that their feeling**

⁶ All provinces were reached, except for Uruzgan, where flooding prevented participants from attending in-person consultations held for the Southern Region in Kandahar.

⁷ In January 2024, 57 per cent of women consulted indicated feeling "not at all" safe leaving home by themselves.

of safety drops markedly when in public with a female family member, aligning with women’s comments that they are targeted by DFA authorities and community members for being out in public.⁸

- Reflecting upon **obstacles to accessing service provision at the local level**, women consulted urged the DFA to prioritize inclusive community engagement in local decision-making processes and service delivery design, including by establishing local women’s platforms and publicizing municipal planning.
- Both Afghan women and men felt that the international community should put in place formal mechanisms to guarantee **women’s inclusion in international decision-making forums** discussing the future of Afghanistan. Most of the women and men consulted said that this could be done using at least one of the following modalities: a 50 per cent quota for women representatives among Afghan delegates, an Afghan women’s delegation to be present at any international forums discussing Afghanistan, and establishment of a women’s advisory body to the international community.
- Many of the Afghan women and men consulted stated that **to improve conditions for women, the international community should “facilitate for women to talk directly with the DFA”** (45 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively). Among those, both women and men broadly rejected “recognition of the DFA” (only 4 per cent and 3 per cent supported such recognition, respectively).

Modalities for women’s inclusion in international decision-making forums

Afghan women to make up at least half of all Afghan participants (quota)



Afghan women’s delegation to present alongside any taliban delegation



Afghan women’s advisory group to advise the international community



The international community adequately represents the interests of Afghan women in international forums

WOMEN 19%



MEN 27%



The DFA adequately represents the interests of Afghan women in international forums

WOMEN 6%

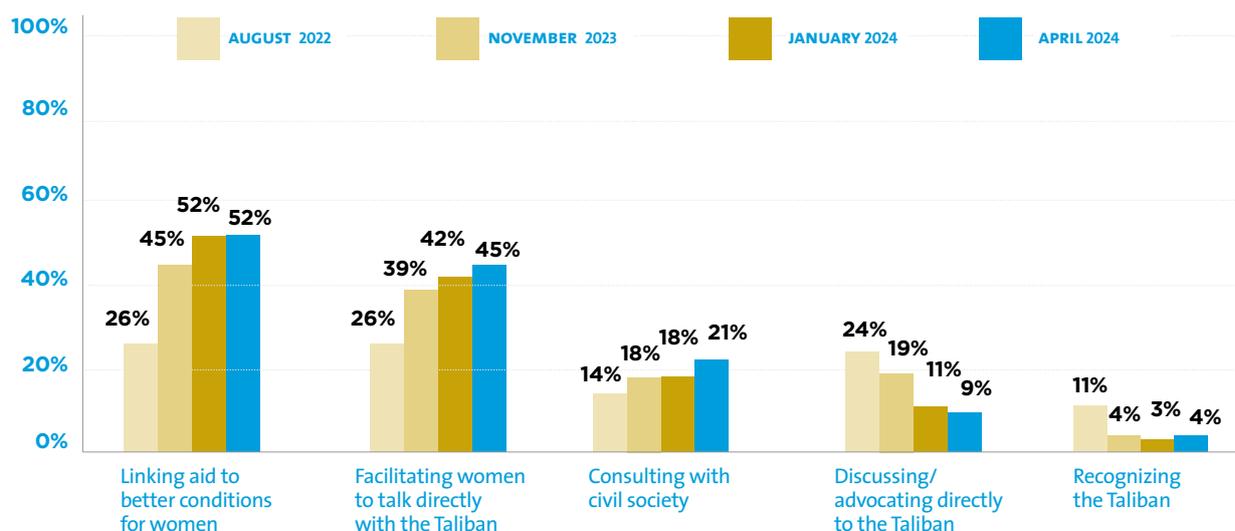


MEN 6%



⁸ In response to the question, *Do you feel safe leaving home by yourself?*, men responded “totally” (75 per cent), “somewhat” (23 per cent), and “not at all” (2 per cent). In comparison, to the question *Do you feel safe leaving home with a female family member?*, men responded “totally” (31 per cent), “somewhat” (63 per cent), and “not at all” (6 per cent).

Women believe the international community should improve conditions for women by:



Findings



Influence and engagement

“While my family is open-minded, the fear of societal backlash outweighs their desire to see me succeed.”

Women consulted highlighted that they rarely engage with local DFA officials (or local authorities) on issues important to them. Eighty per cent noted that they had not engaged with local authorities during the three-month period covered by this round of UN Women-UNAMA-IOM consultations – January through March 2024.⁹ This lack of engagement was particularly stark in the Central Highlands,¹⁰ Southern Region and South-Eastern Region (98 per cent, 95 per cent, and 92 per cent, respectively), in contrast to the Capital Region (59 per cent). Only 16 per cent of the women consulted indicated having engaged with local authorities once or more within the same time frame, in comparison with 53 per cent of men consulted.

The rate with which women engaged with local authorities once or more was highest in the Capital Region (26 per cent) and the Western Region (22 per cent), highlighting regional variations. A number of reasons were cited for not being able to meet with the DFA on issues important to them – for example, they are denied entry to DFA buildings or refused to be seen by de facto officials; indeed, some women whom were given appointments reported that the officials themselves faced repercussions for meeting with them.

Some men and women consulted noted that issues specifically affecting individuals or other broad segments of the community (for example, children) are easier for men to broach with the DFA. Yet, engaging the DFA on governance issues or requests for structural change, such as around the restrictions on girls education beyond sixth grade and women’s representation, are interpreted through the lens of perceived opposition to the DFA and thus are extremely difficult to raise, even for men. Even community and religious leaders raising such issues face negative repercussions.

Many women and men highlighted that engagement with the DFA is most commonly and effectively done through influential individuals, such as male community or religious leaders with personal relationships with local DFA officials. The reliance upon personal relationships to access powerholders – who generally represent the societal status quo – works to entrench existing systems of power and reinforces the marginalization of those who do not enjoy such access. This is a societal issue that cuts across marginalized groups, also affecting men from these groups. One of the most common ways for women to

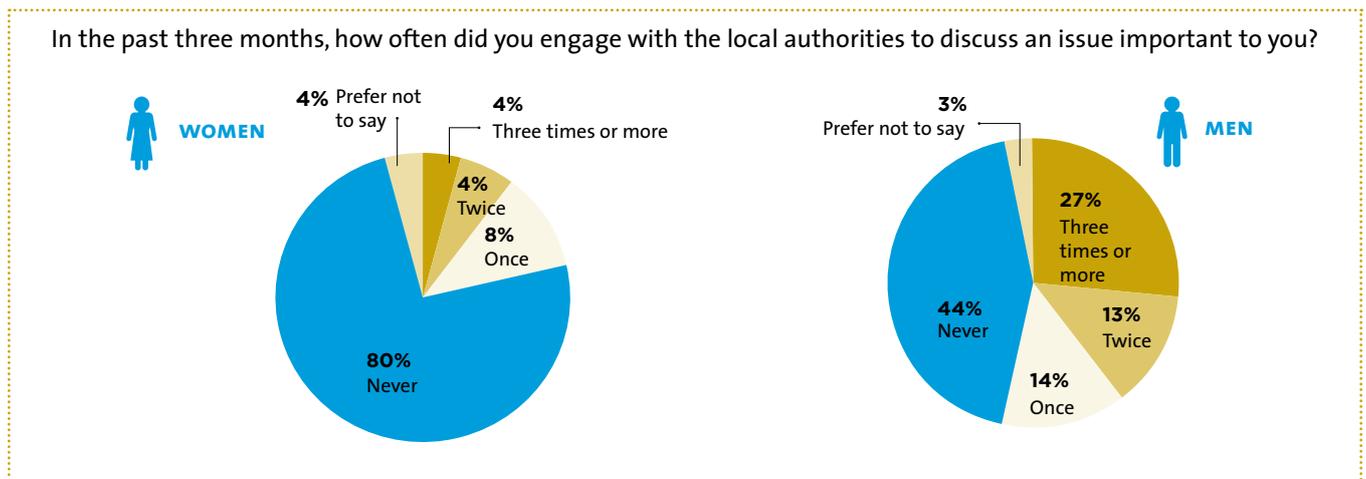
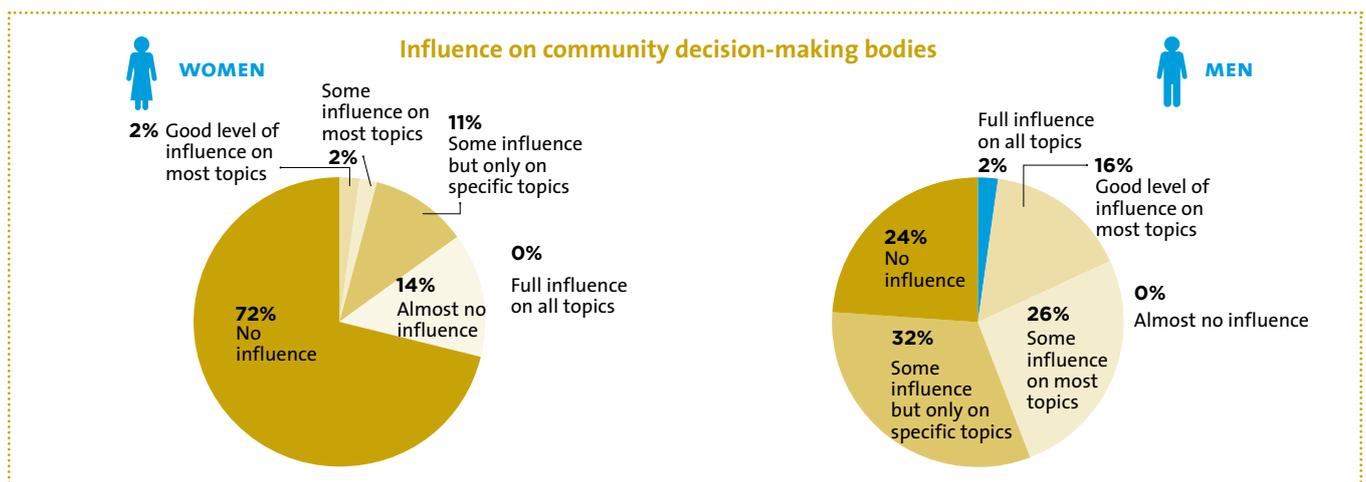
⁹ In comparison, 44 per cent of men reported that they “never” engaged local authorities to discuss issues important to them.

¹⁰ In the Central Highlands Region, 76 per cent of the respondents identified as Hazara and 24 per cent identified as Tajik, demonstrating the intersection of ethnicity and gender in access to decision makers, in a context where the de facto authorities are almost exclusively Pashtun and have a history of violence and discrimination against other ethnic groups.

work through local leaders is to first petition their head of household to in turn petition a community leader, calling them then to appeal to either a community decision-making body or local DFA officials directly. At each turn, the risks are high that women’s needs and requests are jettisoned. More perversely, the DFA’s actions have intentionally created an environment where the potential benefits of advocating for themselves is outweighed by the risk of actual harm. The application of this ‘minimax’ rule, in effect, means that women and their male allies often do not even raise issues as the request to improve the situation for women becomes the excuse used by the DFA to further restrict and violate their rights.¹¹

The other channel for decision-making in the current context is through local *shura* councils – in which women are typically excluded from participating. Only two per cent of women consulted indicated feeling they had “good” or “full” influence on community decision-making bodies, compared with 18 per cent of men. Some women noted that older women (above 50 years of age) within the community were more likely to be perceived to have a right to participate in local council meetings, demonstrating the intersection of gender and age hierarchies.

Women consulted reported gender disparities in access to formal dispute resolution and informal dispute resolution mechanisms. Women’s self-reported access to these avenues was three per cent and seven per cent respectively, compared to 50 per cent among men (for both). This leaves women without avenues to address grievances effectively, notwithstanding concerns around how sensitive issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) are handled. Even in areas where women theoretically possess rights, such as those ostensibly guaranteed by the DFA,¹² the absence of accessible dispute resolution undermines the enforcement and realization of those few rights granted by the DFA.



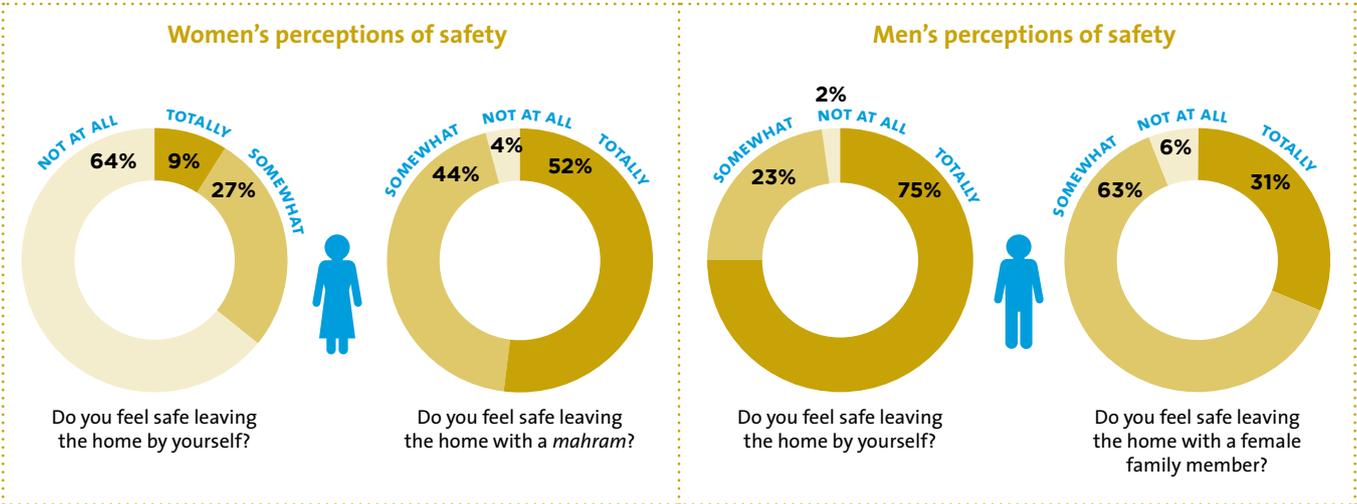
11 The minimax rule is a decision-making strategy applied in scenarios involving risk and uncertainty. It aims to minimize the maximum possible loss or harm that could occur. In the context of Afghanistan under the Taliban, the maximum harm includes the physical integrity, safety and dignity of individual women as well as Afghan women at large.

12 In December 2021, the DFA issued a decree on family law issues, banning forced marriage of women, prohibiting the practice of *baad*, granting inheritance rights to widows, and ordering men whom have several wives to be fair to each of them. Most women consulted noted that the decree is not being implemented, in particular, having continued to observe forced marriages in their communities, including to Taliban officials. Some women consulted had not heard of the December 2021 decree.

Perceptions of safety

While the women consulted tended to agree that state security in Afghanistan has improved since the Taliban’s military takeover, they highlighted a distinction between state and human security and safety. Alarming, 64 per cent of women consulted indicated that they do “not at all” feel safe leaving their home by themselves, compared to two per cent of men. Conversely, only nine per cent of women consulted indicated feeling “totally” safe leaving home alone, compared to 75 per cent of men. While the risk of women becoming caught up in a bombing or armed attack carried out by the Taliban or another armed actor has decreased since August 2021, it has been replaced by other forms of targeted harassment, threats and violence by the DFA and consolidation of harmful social norms which heighten risks of GBV for women.

Affirming reports from women that they are directly targeted by DFA authorities and community members when out in public, men indicated that their feeling of safety when leaving home drops markedly when accompanied by a female family member.¹³ This heightened sense of vulnerability underscores the gendered nature of safety concerns and the way in which the DFA has made men responsible for violations of restrictions by women and girls in their family.¹⁴ This leaves men feeling both insecure and forced to adopt a more controlling and conservative worldview. While a significantly larger number of women indicated feeling safer when leaving home with a *mahram*¹⁵ (compared to doing so alone), men, on the other hand, indicated feeling indirectly exposed to some of the gendered harassment and threats of violence when in public with female family members.



Service delivery

Those women consulted broadly agreed that service provision has deteriorated under the DFA, alongside an increase in taxation. The perceptions among those women and men consulted as to the level of the DFA’s service provision to women differed significantly. A greater share of men perceived that women had access to services, highlighting a difference between men’s perceptions and understanding of the situation for women and the complexities and challenges of their lived experience.¹⁶

Men reported higher access to service provision across education, mental health support and health, compared to women, indicating a widening gender gap in access.¹⁷ While, in theory, health services remain accessible to women,¹⁸ the quality of

13 In response to the question, *Do you feel safe leaving home by yourself?*, men responded “totally” (75 per cent), “somewhat” (23 per cent), and “not at all” (2 per cent). In comparison, to the question *Do you feel safe leaving home with a female family member?*, men responded “totally” (31 per cent), “somewhat” (63 per cent), and “not at all” (6 per cent).

14 The hijab decree issued by the DFA specifically made a woman’s *mahram* responsible for policing her clothing.

15 Ninety-six per cent of women consulted indicated feeling “totally” or “somewhat” safe when accompanied by a *mahram*.

16 The breakdown of responses between men and women as to whether the DFA provides services to women was as follows: health services (70 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively); formal dispute resolution (e.g. courts) (50 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively); informal dispute resolution (e.g. community-led resolution, shuras); (45 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively); mental health support (20 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively); emergency shelter/temporary housing (9 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively); unemployment support (5 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively); and education (3 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively).

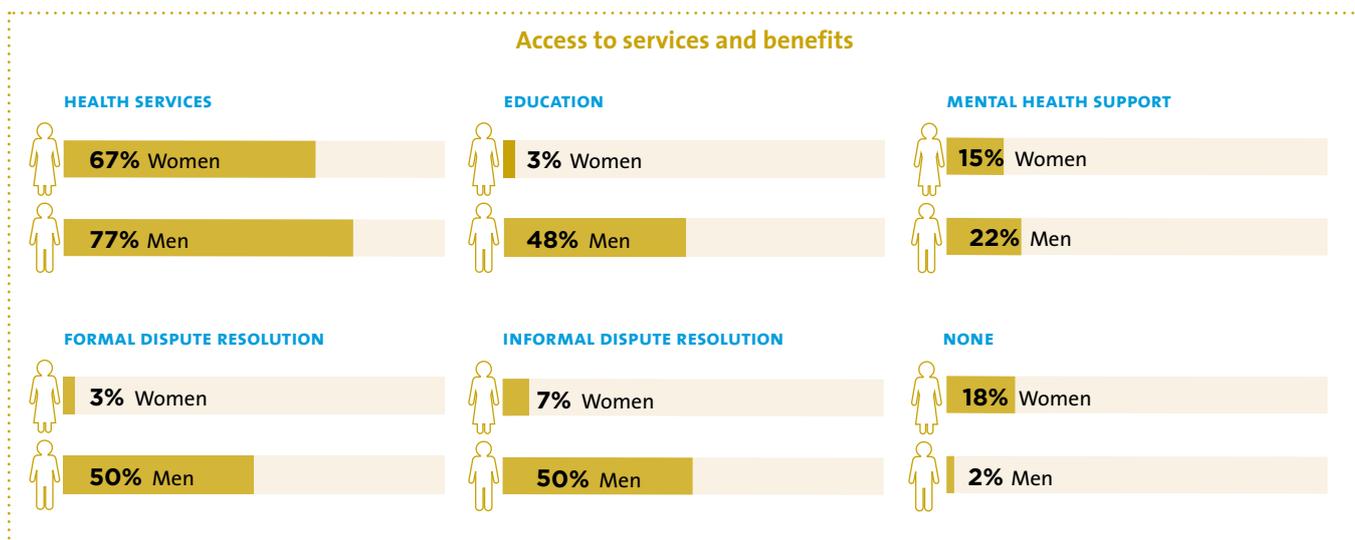
17 In reporting on service provision by the DFA, men reported higher provision of education (50 per cent, compared with 2 per cent of women reporting this), mental health support services (23 per cent, compared with 11 per cent), and health services (77 per cent, compared with 61 per cent).

18 Noting that clinics may be open to women, yet safety concerns, mobility restrictions, fear of DFA harassment, and restrictive, patriarchal cultural norms all work together to reduce women’s actual use of the services that still exist.

services has continued to deteriorate, as outlined in greater detail in previous consultations reports where women noted the increasing medication prices and restrictions targeting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which limit the number and accessibility of service providers.¹⁹ Education bans and restrictions on freedom of movement are likely to only further reduce access to health services for women and girls, as the pipeline for health care professionals produces a dwindling number of Afghan women qualified in this area.

Women consulted noted positively that municipal construction works had been undertaken, leading to perceived improvement in conditions. Specifically, cities were perceived to be cleaner and electricity more readily available compared to under the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Equitable and effective delivery of improved services, according to the women consulted, requires that the DFA prioritize inclusive community engagement in decision-making processes and service delivery design, including by establishing local women’s platforms to hear directly from women, publicizing municipal plans and monitoring the implementation of projects. During the consultations, those men who indicated engaging with local authorities highlighted the need for the appointment of qualified and competent officials, noting that, at present, this is rarely the case.

Moreover, women urged the DFA to lift restrictions on women’s mobility, education and employment – which both increase women’s need for social services and reduce their access to them. In the same vein, women and men alike called for the removal of all restrictions on NGOs that curtail their ability to delivery essential and life-saving services. The obstacles for women to engage with national civil society organizations, as well as international organizations and UN actors, were highlighted by findings showing that men were over three times more likely than women to engage with these entities.²⁰



19 UN Women, IOM, UNAMA. 2024. [Summary report of countrywide consultations with Afghan women.](#)

20 The breakdown in this regard was as follows: for women consulted indicated not once engaging with national civil society/NGO actors (73 per cent) or international NGOs and the United Nations (76 per cent) – compared with 38 per cent and 48 per cent for men, respectively. In contrast, 44 per cent of men indicated engaging with national civil society/NGO actors two times or more, with 28 per cent indicating engagement with international NGOs and the United Nations, compared with 11 per cent and 8 per cent of women, respectively.



“The weight of these circumstances leads to a daily struggle with despair and fear, a constant headache that refuses to dissipate.”

The indications in regard to the mental health of those women and men consulted paints a devastating picture. Most women self-reported that their mental health (feelings of anxiety, isolation, depression) was “very bad” (40 per cent) or “bad” (28 per cent). Only 10 per cent of the women consulted indicated feeling that their mental health was “good” or “very good”, compared with 29 per cent of men. Following a pattern observed in previous consultations, women continued during this round to emphasize that their mental health had deteriorated compared to the previous consultation period.

Despite this continued decline in mental health, there are indications that the rate at which women reported deterioration in this area is slowing – results in this regard, from the successive consultations undertaken, indicate a steady lessening of the figures of this latest round of consultations, wherein 65 per cent of women noted that their mental health had become “significantly” or “a bit” worse, compared to 91 per cent in March 2023. Mental health remains a critical issue for Afghan women and men, with the trend potentially indicating that normalization of poor mental health is occurring or that women’s mental health has reached a nadir.

Women consulted during this round also noted the negative impact on their mental health of the alleged speech by Hibatullah Akhundzada, the self-declared supreme leader of Afghanistan under DFA rule, circulated by the media on 23 March 2024 promising the enforcement of flogging and stoning of women as part of the DFA’s “fight for humanity” and protection of women against Western concepts of women’s rights.²¹ Women and men consulted across Afghanistan highlighted how this statement increased women’s sense of despondence and hopelessness, and reduced their self-confidence and courage. The speech was noted to be feeding into the emboldening of DFA members and reinforcing a sense of superiority and impunity in their treatment of women.

Indications of the mental health of the men consulted were observed to be characterized by greater variance than those observed for women, although similar percentages reported their mental health as falling into the “very bad” through “good” categories,²² with no men evaluating their mental health as “very good”. Despite showing greater variation than the sample of women consulted, men indicated similar deterioration of their mental health over time, with 27 per cent noting that their mental health had “gotten significantly worse” and 13 per cent indicating that it had “gotten a bit worse” during the previous three months.

The system of restrictive decrees suppressing individual freedoms and rights, accompanied by arbitrary and brutal enforcement, is combining with economic hardship to naturally also take a toll on the mental health of Afghan men. Against the backdrop of systematic abolition of women’s rights, male family members take on the role of women’s support while facing their own challenges, such as economic struggles and mental health and security concerns.

Despite the strain on relationships and the enforcement of restrictive norms, male relatives often provide practical and emotional support for the women around them, accompanying women outside the home, facilitating access to education and job opportunities where they can, and consoling them when they despair. This underscores the strength of family bonds, despite the understanding that this support must be limited to inside the home (due to the risks men take in contravening the DFA policies or social norms). Notwithstanding, the women consulted did continue to note declining influence in the household and among their extended families.²³

21 Hayat, B. 2024. [“Taliban leader suggests implementing Sharia law could lead to stoning, beating of women.”](#) Amu TV. Afghanistan. 24 March 2024.

22 The breakdown of the men respondents indications in this regard: “very bad” – 23 per cent; “bad” – 27 per cent; “okay” – 21 per cent; “good” – 29 per cent; “very good” – 0 per cent.

23 Perceived household influence among women rapidly declined, from 90 per cent in January 2023 to 32 per cent in January 2024 and 28 per cent in April 2024. Perceived influence of women respondents among their extended family saw a similar decline, from 34 per cent in January 2023 to 7 per cent in April 2024.

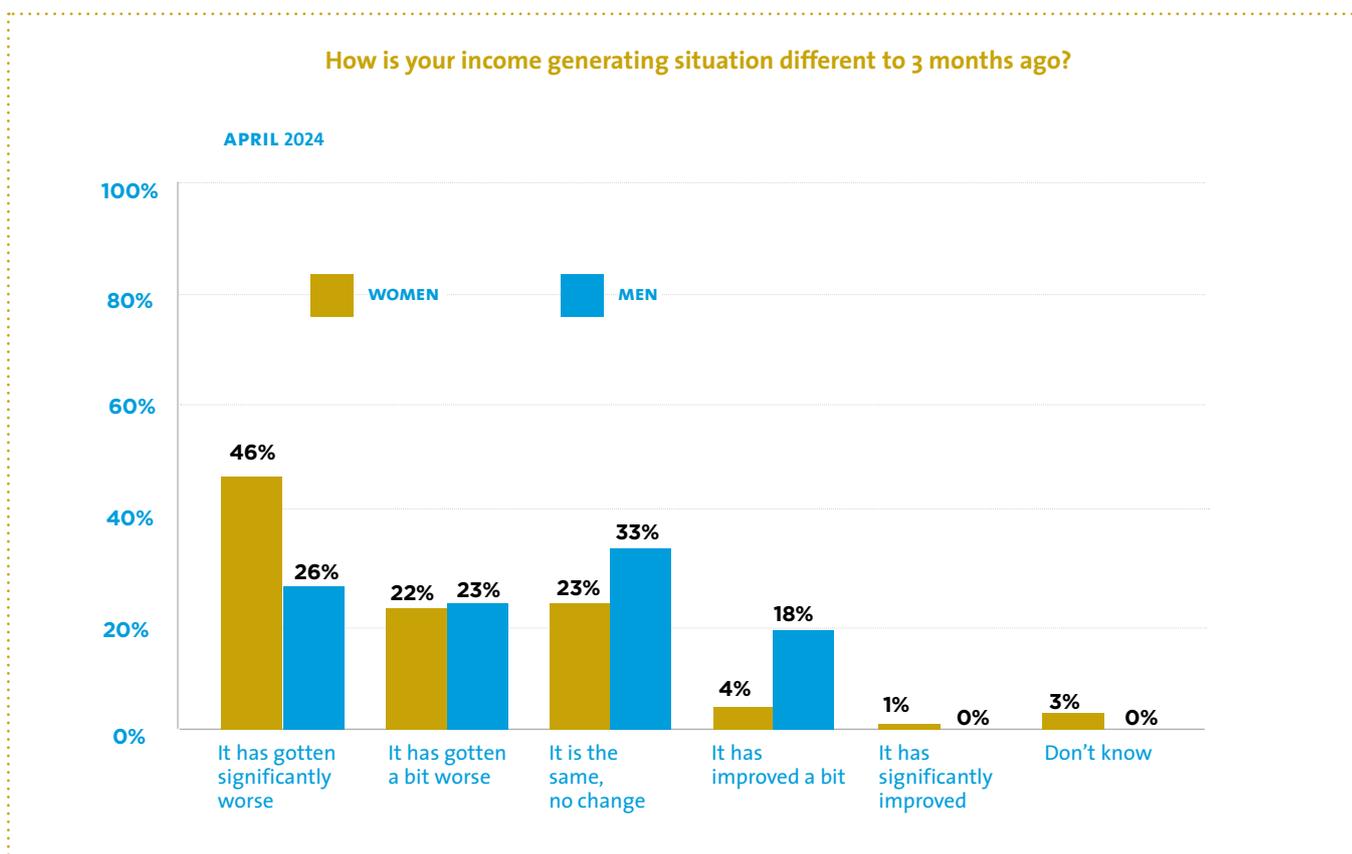
Consultations also paint a divergent picture of men and women’s perceptions of their familial relationships. Forty-two per cent of women consulted indicated that their relationships with male family members had deteriorated, compared with 22 per cent of men. Women consulted described how economic strain was increasing tensions in the household and noted the conservative shift in male family members’ attitudes to women’s freedoms in line with restrictive DFA policies. This disparity, unsurprisingly, indicates that women are more affected by – and aware of – the way in which gendered restrictions negatively impact their relationships with male family members.

Income generation

This round of consultations indicate a striking gender disparity in the financial landscape of those consulted, with 70 per cent of Afghan women reporting a worsening income situation during the previous three months, compared to 49 per cent of men. Moreover, women indicated facing additional hurdles in accessing financial support mechanisms, as highlighted by the relatively low share of women taking out loans (13 per cent) and receiving remittances (22 per cent), compared to their male counterparts (27 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively).

Ongoing efforts to improve economic conditions in Afghanistan must be accompanied by interventions to address the inequity in access to financial support services. Women respondents indicated facing gendered challenges in taking out loans, particularly in fronting collateral; for example, some estimates suggest that less than five per cent of land ownership documents include the name of female family members.²⁴

Perversely, women’s financial insecurity was noted as one of the main reasons for money lenders to not lend money to women. Under the current restrictions, women’s employment opportunities have been considerably reduced, increasing the perceived likelihood that they would default on loans.²⁵ Women consulted noted the impact which restrictions have on their movement, reducing their ability to travel to financial and exchange offices, particularly in rural areas. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the prevailing gendered barriers to financial inclusion and economic empowerment of Afghanistan’s women.



24 Housing, Land and Property Task Force Afghanistan. 2020. [A Brief Guide to Women’s Land Rights in Afghanistan](#).

25 This point was noted by both women and men consulted.



“The disparity is glaring: a man with no education or experience is deemed superior to a woman with a successful career and higher education. This reality is a painful reflection of the ongoing challenges faced by women in Afghanistan.”

The consultations reveal a strong consensus among both Afghan women and men that the international community should put in place mechanisms that guarantee and set standards around the participation of Afghan women in international decision-making forums. Afghans consulted indicated feeling that the DFA and the international community cannot represent the views of Afghan women, emphasizing the importance of establishing direct and indirect participation modalities in international decision-making processes concerning Afghanistan's future.

The promotion of three inclusion mechanisms was broadly agreed upon by the men and women consulted.²⁶ First, 59 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men consulted indicated a desire to see a quota of 50 per cent for women representatives among Afghan participants in any discussions on Afghanistan's future. Second, approximately half of those consulted showed a preference for a standalone women's delegation as a means of countering the extreme exclusion of Afghan women from political and public decision-making. Third, exactly half of women and half of men consulted highlighted that a women's advisory body to the international community could enable the incorporation of Afghan women's perspectives and expertise into international decision-making.²⁷

Afghan women were more likely to prioritize approaches which put women in the room with the DFA, and less likely to want the international community to advocate on their behalf. The consultations showed a shared belief among the Afghan women and men consulted that, if conditions for women are to be improved, the international community will need to “facilitate for women to talk directly with the DFA” (45 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively). The desire of Afghan women to be heard is only increasing as the situation for them deteriorates: the number of women requesting direct talks with the DFA has steadily increased from 26 per cent in August 2022 to 39 per cent in November 2023 to 45 per cent in January 2024.²⁸ Only nine per cent of women consulted prioritized direct talks and advocacy by the international community with the DFA, compared with 17 per cent of men. The consultations also indicated a shared belief among Afghan women and men that “recognition of the DFA” would not improve conditions for Afghan women.²⁹

A large proportion of those women consulted during this round of UN Women-IOM-UNAMA consultations urged the international community to ensure that women are present in international forums and able to represent the needs and experiences of all Afghan women. In this regard, the consultations highlighted criticism of the handpicking of Afghan participants in international decision-making forums, noting that, instead, civil society networks could be used to develop selection procedures to choose optimally suitable representatives. Significantly, approximately one quarter of both women and men consulted (21 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively) indicated feeling that international engagement with civil society was key to improving conditions for Afghanistan's women.

26 In 92 per cent of the one-on-one interviews with women, the respondent chose at least one of the modalities outlined. Focus group discussions with men and women have also consistently highlighted the importance of these modalities.

27 The breakdown of responses by women and men in the regard: a 50 per cent quota for women representatives (59 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively); an Afghan women's delegation present at international decision-making forums on Afghanistan (49 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively); and a women's advisory body to the international community (50 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively).

28 Data sourced from August 2022 is from a separate survey on Afghan women's key priorities conducted by DROPS, available at: <https://www.bishnaw.com/survey/15-sep-2022>.

29 The Afghan women and men consulted broadly rejected “recognition of the Taliban” as a means to improve the conditions for women in Afghanistan, with only four per cent and three per cent, respectively, indicating support for this action.

Recommendations

Afghan women specifically urged the DFA to:

- Prioritize inclusive community engagement in local decision-making processes and service delivery design, including by establishing local women's platforms and publicizing municipal planning.
- Remove restrictions on the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls in Afghanistan particularly those limiting the civil and political rights of women and girls.
- Ensure equality and non-discrimination in access to local decision-making bodies and services, including, inter alia, essential services and formal and informal dispute resolutions bodies.
- Remove restrictions on NGOs who would otherwise be able to delivery essential and life-saving services to Afghans across the country.
- Establish permanent women's councils to discuss and share women's needs and requests with local DFA decision makers, without fear of reprisal or repercussion.

Afghan women specifically urged the international community to:

Advocate and engage on the future of Afghanistan

- Put in place mechanisms which guarantee the participation of Afghan women in international decision-making forums, including through both direct and indirect participation modalities.
- Ensure that Afghan women are in the room during any discussions concerning the future of Afghanistan, including by facilitating the entry of women directly into talks with the DFA.
- Prioritize women's rights and gender inequities as critical cross-cutting issues in any discussions on the future of Afghanistan.

Funding and programming

- Ensure that ongoing efforts to improve economic conditions in Afghanistan are accompanied by targeted interventions to address gendered inequities in any consequent benefits, including access to financial support services.