



## 7 policy recommendations for the Deep South/Patani

Policy recommendations for political parties concerning the Southern Border Provinces

By Peace Survey Network

February 2019

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These policy recommendations for the Southern Border Provinces were derived from four public surveys on the peace process<sup>1</sup> (Peace Survey), which were carried out in the region between February 2016 and September 2018 covering a total sample group of 6,321 persons.<sup>2</sup> Respondents were recruited using Systematic Random Sampling at the household level to ensure equal representation of people from all walks of life.

The survey series was conducted in order to gauge the opinions and attitudes of people in the Southern Border Provinces at different points in time, with the hope that the findings could be used to help support peacebuilding and democratization efforts. The survey findings offer some insights concerning the needs of the local population. As such, it provides key stakeholders with an evidence-based to support policy formulation, thereby making use of credible research findings to help develop and expand the political space.

The survey covers standards of living as well as attitudes towards the causes of the conflict, peacebuilding efforts, and potential solutions for the future. Up until now, only a quarter of the population (25.6%) think that the situation has improved, whereas one fifth (21.7%) think that it has deteriorated. Nearly half (42.6%) find that the situation remains the same. The responses suggest that existing efforts to resolve the conflict have failed to produce much in the way of positive change. It points to the need for changes in policy that political parties should be aware of.

The following seven recommendations have been extracted from the survey results;

- 1. Promote peace dialogue as a key measure to resolve the political conflict;**
- 2. Speed up efforts to protect civilians from violence and human rights violations;**

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<sup>1</sup> A nonviolent process to resolve conflicts based on collaboration of stakeholders, and which includes peace dialogue between the government and members of the armed resistance movement.

<sup>2</sup> Data analysed in this report was taken from two sources; (1) a summary of findings from the four public surveys covering a sample population of 6,321 persons and; (2) findings from the latest (4<sup>th</sup>) survey covering a sample population of 1,609 persons.

3. Review the efficacy of existing drug policies and promptly establish mechanisms to investigate violence;
4. Review the region's development budget and evaluate its impact;
5. Reform the education system to improve the quality of education and ensure it reflects local identities;
6. Promote a decentralized governance structure that caters to the unique characteristics of the region;
7. Give people the space to debate politically sensitive issues without fear of harassment by any one party.

## Recommendation 1

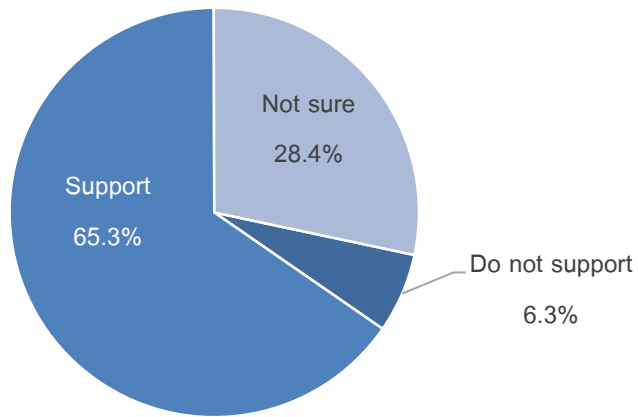
### Promote peace dialogue as a key measure to resolve the political conflict

- The ongoing peace dialogue has broad implications for the local population. It has been conducted openly for the past six years and is included in the national agenda. However, only 55.4% of respondents know about the peace dialogue with 41.8% actively following its progress. Thus it appears that the local population's awareness of this process is somewhat limited.
- Nonetheless, when asked whether they support the use of dialogue/negotiation to resolve the conflict, most respondents across all identity groups voiced their support (65.4%). Only 6.3% said they did not support the process. It should be noted that 28.4% said they were not sure. *(See Graphs no. 1-7)*
- Based on the above responses, it seems that respondents consider **dialogue to be a legitimate means to resolve the problem. As such, the state, the movement, and other relevant stakeholders must ensure that the public are better informed about the process and its progress.** For those who are unsure if they support dialogue, efforts should be made by those involved in the dialogue process to demonstrate the benefits of dialogue and its potential to produce positive change.
- The three parties perceived to be the most instrumental to peacebuilding are ranked as follows; (1) the government (34.0%); (2) religious leaders (16.4%); and (3) educational institutions (10.4%). *(Graph no. 8)*
- Both Buddhist and Muslim respondents ranked the government as most instrumental to peacebuilding. Muslims respondents then identified religious leaders as second, and educational institutions third. By contrast, Buddhist respondents identified local politicians and administrative officials as second and third groups most instrumental to peacebuilding after the government.

- To create an effective and successful peacebuilding process then, **the government must ensure that religious leaders, educational institutions, local politicians and administrative officials play a role since these groups are also considered to be important drivers for peace. The government must not only focus on peace dialogue/negotiation.**
- As for the dialogue process, respondents identified the **five most concerning issues** with respect to the process. These issues are as follows; (1) it cannot really stop the violence; (2) it exacerbates the situation; (3) one of the parties fails to honor the agreement; (4) one of the parties does not truly listen to the other; and (5) one of the parties does not show respect to the other. (*Graph no. 9*). It seems that respondents' primary concerns are to do with the way that parties approach the peace dialogue. If the parties are not sincere, then dialogue cannot be considered an effective way to end the violence.
- Such concerns can dent people's **faith** in the ongoing peace dialogue. As many as 33.5% of respondents do not trust the current process compared with the 22.8% that do. The remaining 43.7% feel indifferent towards the process.
- **All stakeholders must ensure the local population's concerns are taken into consideration if the dialogue process is to be legitimate, sustainable, and effective. At the dialogue table, emphasis must be placed on mutual respect and each parties' demands must be heard by the other side.** Muslim respondents, in particular, highlighted the issue of mutual respect and being heard.
- Despite the concerns and the lack of trust in the current process, 64.4% of respondents, across all identity groups, were **hopeful** that a peace deal could be reached in the next five years.

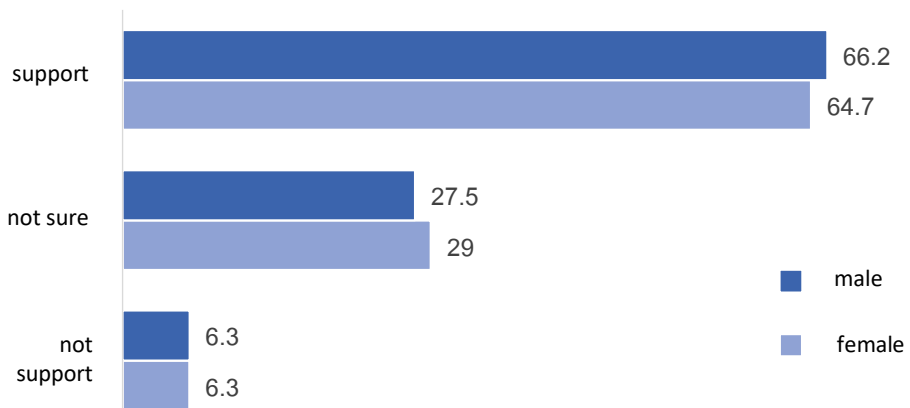
Graph no. 1

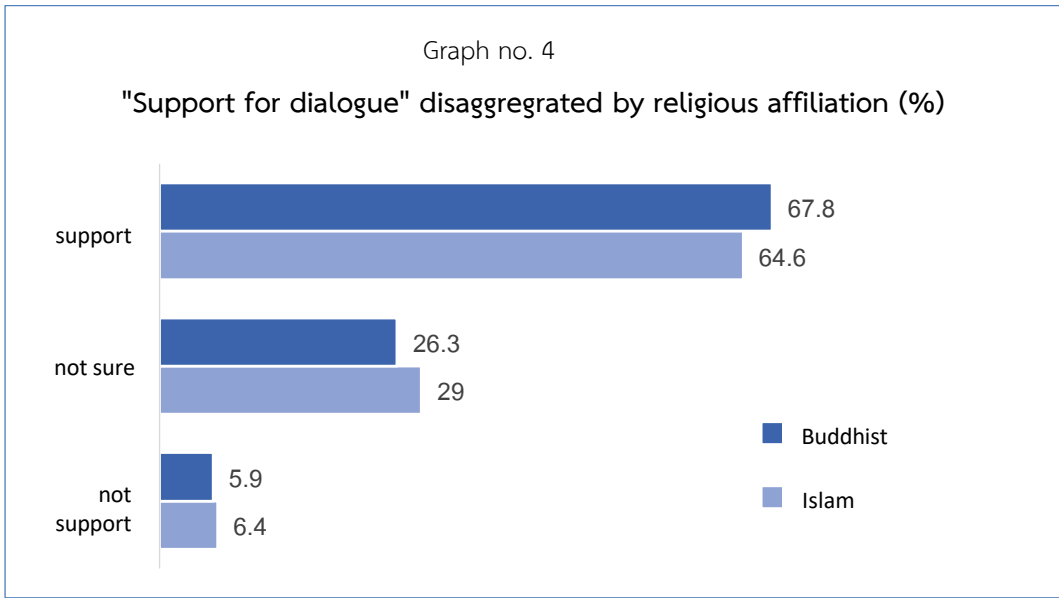
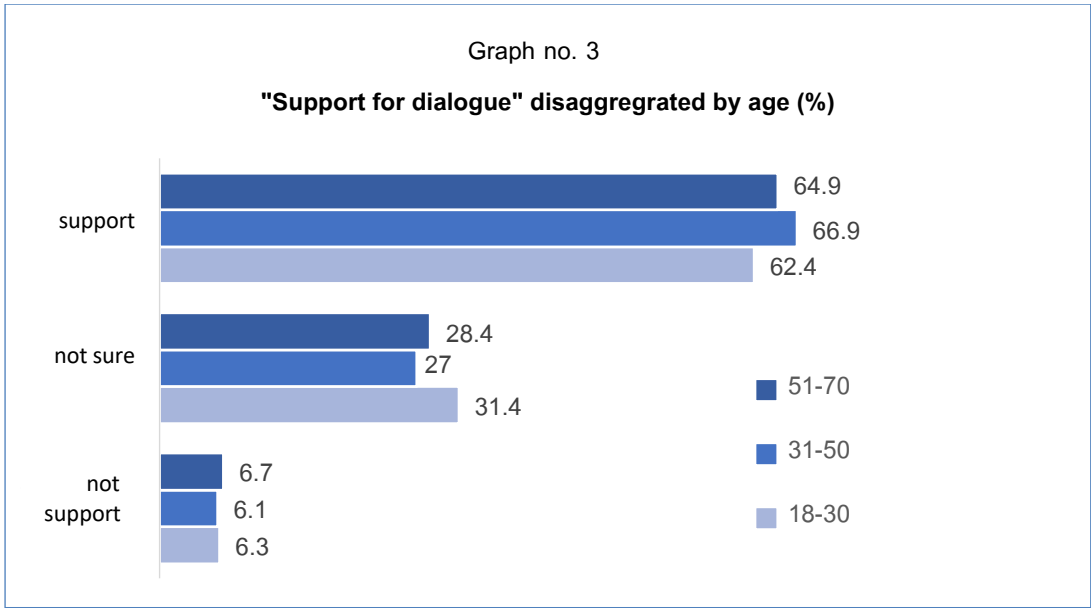
**"Support for dialogue/negotiation as a means to resolve the conflict"**



Graph no. 2

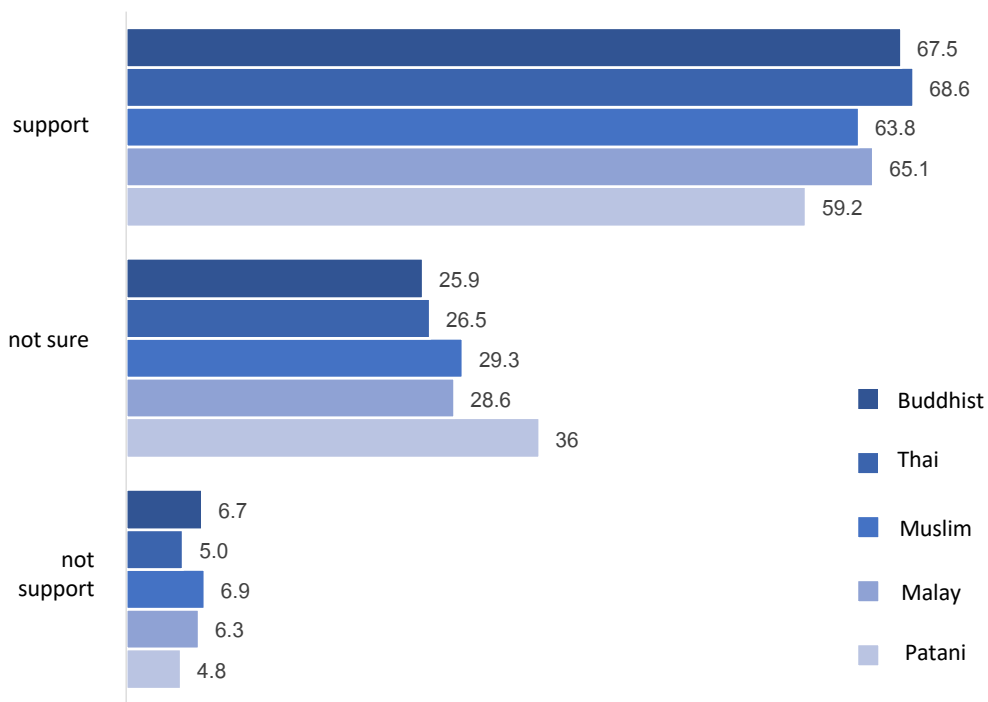
**"Support for dialogue" disaggregated by gender (%)**





Graph no. 5

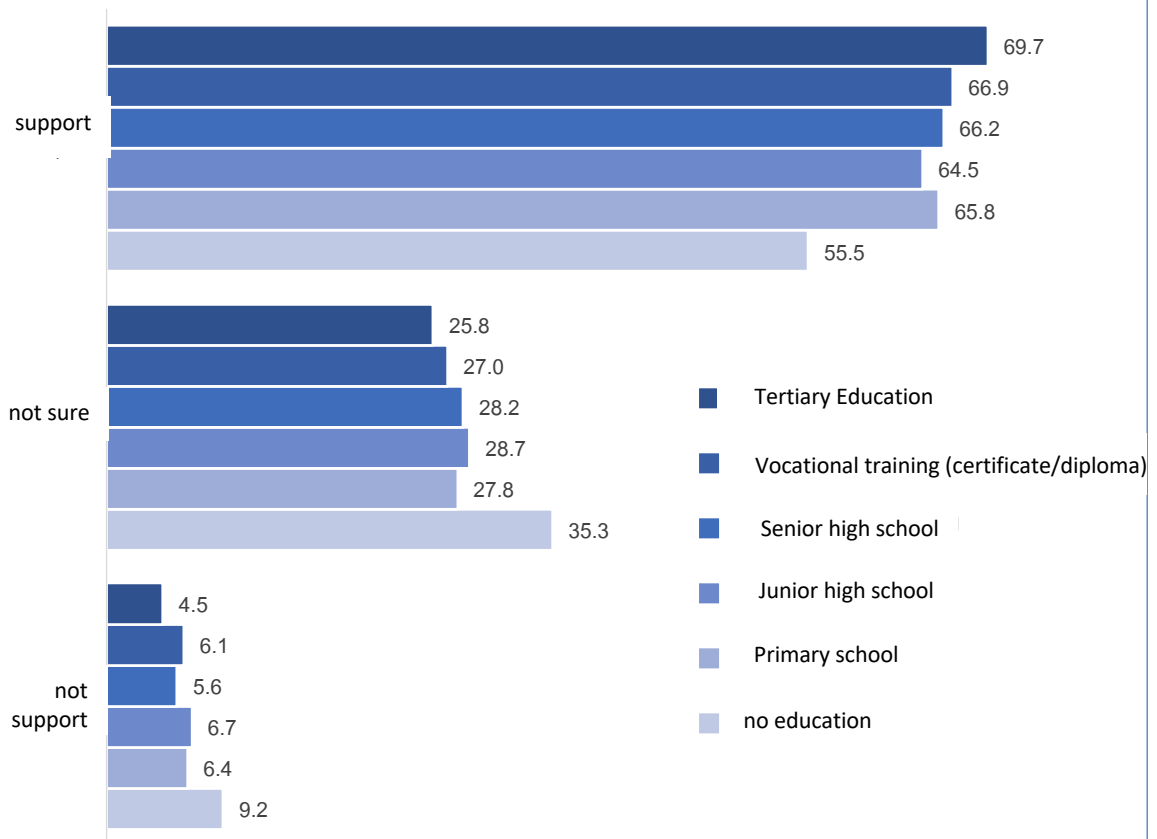
**"Support for dialogue" disaggregated by identity (self-ascribed) (%)**





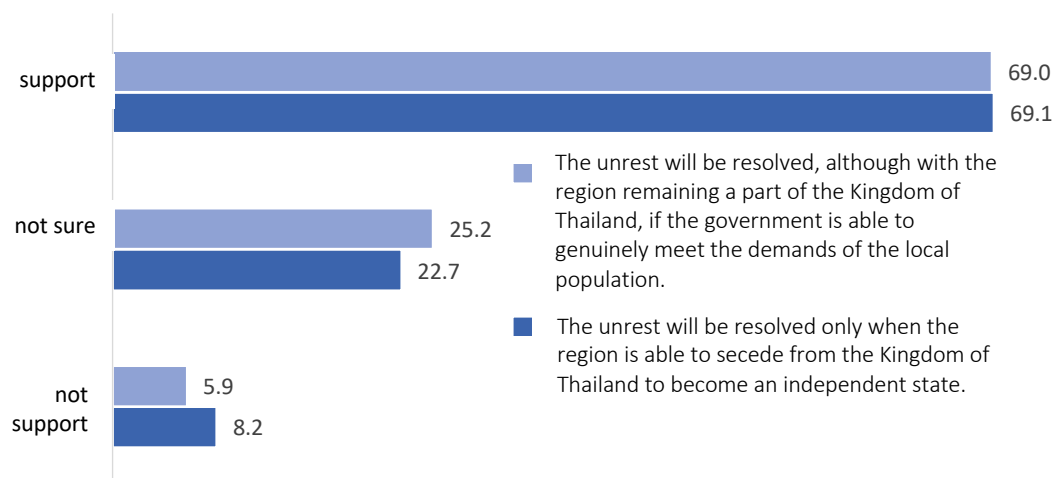
Graph no. 6

"Support for dialogue" disaggregated by level of general education (%)



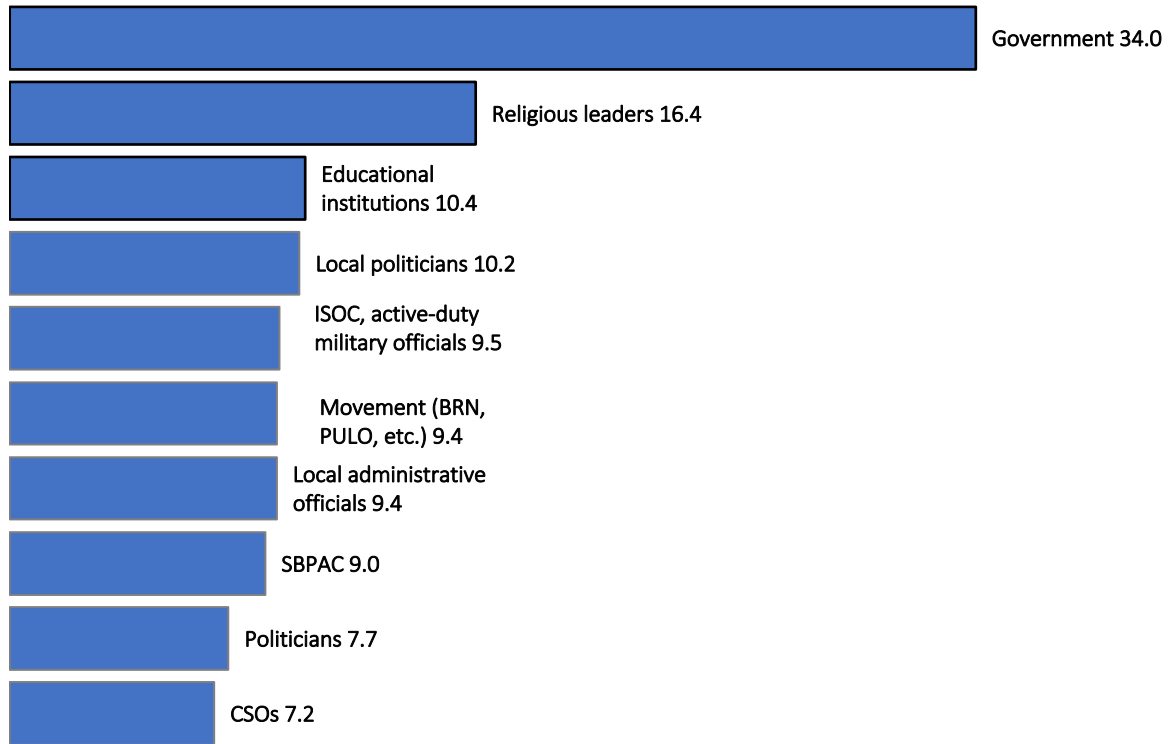
Graph no. 7

Support for dialogue disaggregated according to the different attitudes concerning the final outcome of the dialogue process (%)



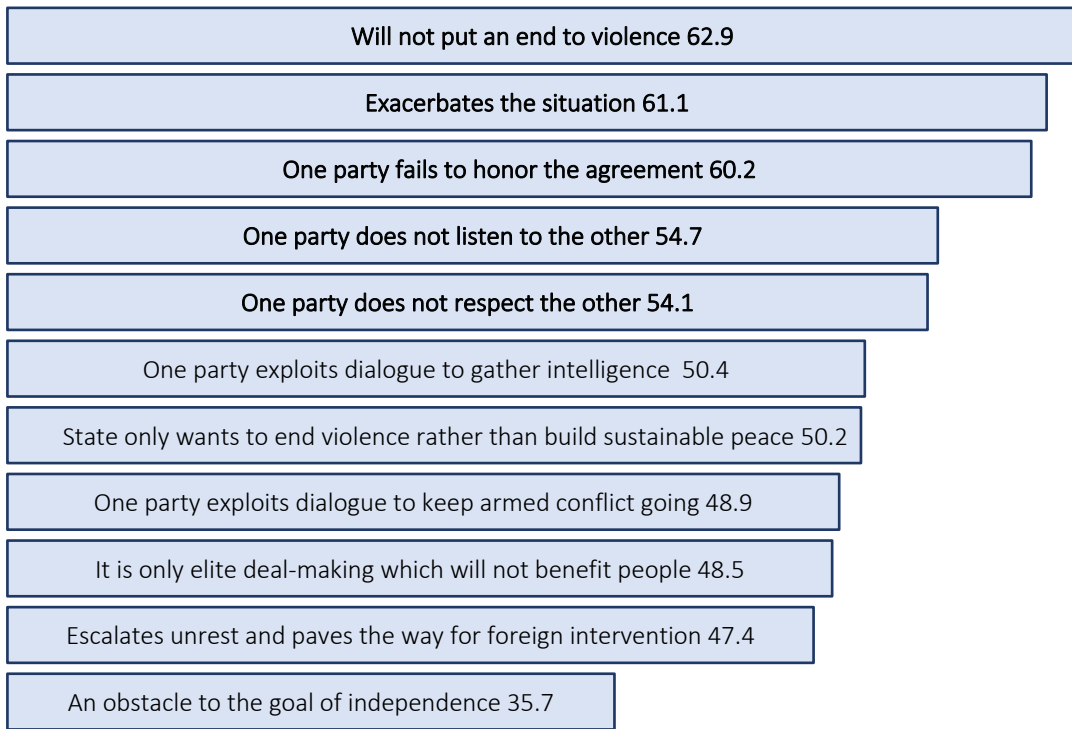
Graph no. 8

10 actors ranked as most important instrumental to peacebuilding (%)



Graph no. 9

**Concerns regarding the peace dialogue process (%)**



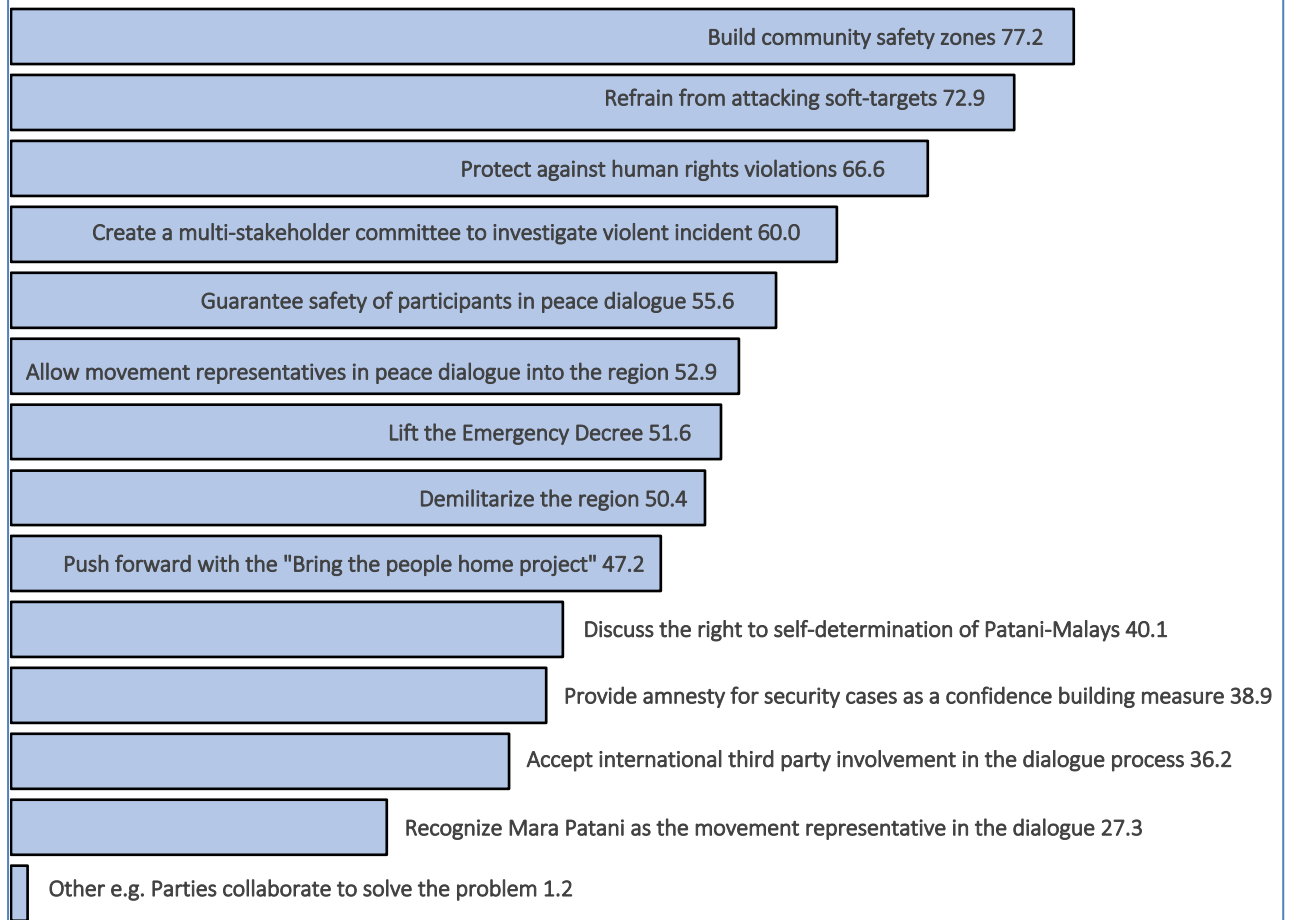
## Recommendation 2

### Speed up efforts to protect civilians from violence and human rights violations

- The latest survey (conducted in mid-2018 with a sample group of 1,609 persons) found that respondents across religions agreed that priority measures or actions that should be taken by the government and the movement to produce positive change were: (1) establish community safety zones; (2) avoid violence against soft-targets; (3) prevent and protect against human rights violations; and (4) create a multi-stakeholder committee to investigate violent incidents (*Graph no. 10*).
- Additional responses on the topic of **community safety zones** highlighted the importance of ensuring the safety of civilians (soft targets) and ensuring that public places (i.e. schools, markets, hospitals, places of worship) are free of violence. At the same time, it is important that communities also have a say in charting their own development.
- On the issue of **human rights**, respondents ranked the three most serious infringements as: (1) random searches and photographing without a given justification; (2) torture in custody; and (3) cordon and search of villages.
- It should be noted that the same measures and policies might yield different responses between Buddhists and Muslims. For example, when passing checkpoints, Muslims often feel unsafe and feel their rights are being infringed upon. However, the presence of checkpoints tends to make Buddhists feel safer. Policies must therefore be sensitive to such differences.
- The **most pressing issue that needs to be addressed from the perspective of respondents is to ensure that civilians are free from physical violence and intimidation**. It is vital that policies and measures strike an acceptable balance of these different factors. In addition, it is important that credible mechanisms are developed to investigate cases of violent incidents.

Graph no. 10

**Actions or measures that should be prioritised to bring about positive changes in the region (4th survey)**



### Recommendation 3

## **Review the efficacy of existing drug policies and promptly establish mechanisms to investigate violence**

- According to the latest survey, **illicit drugs** have become one of the most pertinent issues for respondents. 70.9% find it necessary to deal with the illicit drug problem in order to bring an end to violence in the long run. Respondents across gender, religion, and language shared similar views on this issue.
- A number of respondents believe narcotics syndicates are also involved in perpetuating the unrest, aside from the movement and government officials. This makes violence in the region a complex and protracted phenomenon, particularly since violent incidents are not claimed. Thus, to address the violence, it is necessary to prioritize the issue of illicit drugs together with issues such as political competition, conflict of interest, and resolution of political conflicts.
- More than 60% of respondents have differing views as to the causes of violence (government officials wanting to prolong the stalemate, organised criminal and narcotics syndicates, discriminatory government policies, distorted historical narratives, and Siam's colonization of Patani), all of which reflect the complex nature of the conflict.
- Based on the above, it is important that when violent incidents occur, particularly those that are highly contentious, **the state has a mechanism to transparently investigate incidents, one that is acceptable to all parties (Information Clearing House).**<sup>3</sup> This would help establish the facts and help to identify appropriate solutions. At the same time, it would guard against either party being able to take advantage of the uncertainty.

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<sup>3</sup> A collaborative process to investigate issues or incidents with the participation of all stakeholders in order to resolve controversial issues, avoid jumping the gun and ensure a well-rounded and fair judgment.

## Recommendation 4

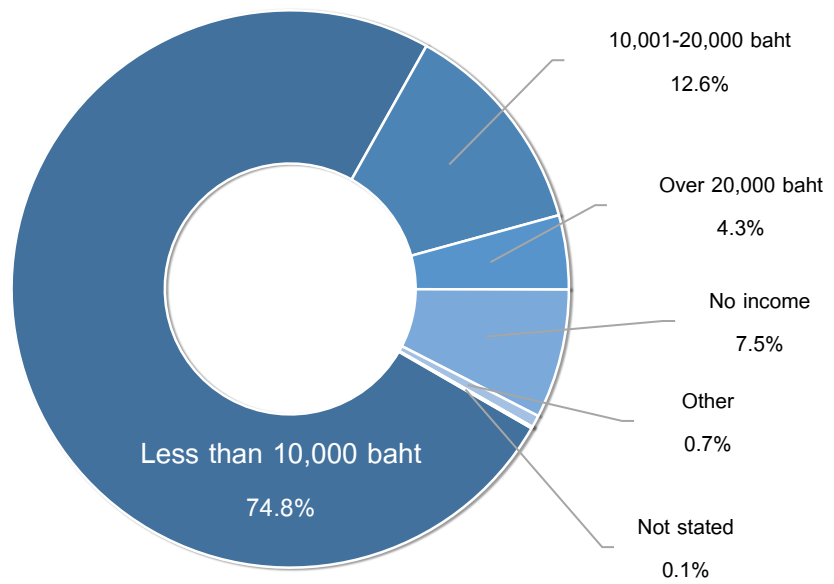
### Review the region's development budget and evaluate its impact

- According to the latest survey, **livelihood support and income generation** are the second most important issue (after illicit drugs) that respondents (68.5%) think should be addressed to facilitate a sustainable resolution of the violence.
- Respondents' social and economic data indicate poor standard of living and low economic wellbeing. Most respondents (74.8%) earn less than 10,000 baht per month and 7.5% do not earn any income at all. (*Graph no. 11*)
- Income levels of respondents do not correlate with their level of education. Even among those who have completed university education, 33.9% earn less than 10,000 baht per month. By contrast, according to the Bank of Thailand, the average monthly income in 2017 for one person with an undergraduate qualification is 23,090.68 baht per month.<sup>4</sup>
- The discrepancy between the low income levels reported in the surveys and the fact that more than 130 billion baht has been invested in the area for development over the past fifteen years raises the following questions; **what is the impact of the government's development budget on the region and how much does it meet the needs of the local population?**

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<sup>4</sup> Calculated from average earnings disaggregated by education for the four quarters of 2017, "average wage earning disaggregated by education", <http://www2.bot.or.th/statistics/ReportPage.aspx?reportID=666&language=th>, accessed 6 January 2019

Graph 11  
Monthly income





## Recommendation 5

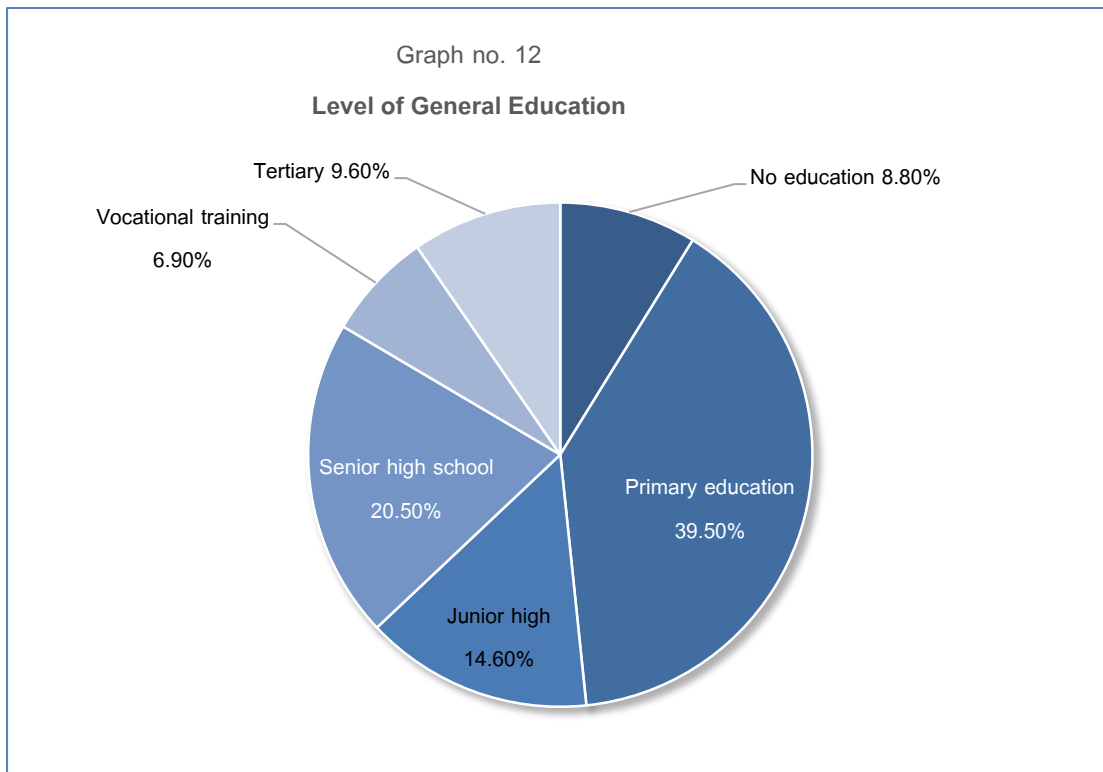
### **Reform the education system to improve quality and to ensure it reflects local cultural identities**

- There is notable religious and linguistic diversity among the population of the Southern Border Provinces. Respondents self-identified as follows; Muslim (48.0%); Malay (19.3%); Buddhist (7.1%). The language(s) most commonly found to be spoken at home was; Malay (59.6%); Central and Southern Thai (25.6%); and Malay mixed with Thai (13.4%).
- According to the survey findings, Muslims appear to have completed a lower level of General Education than Buddhists, Christians and others. Similarly, it was found that respondents from Malay-speaking families were more likely to have completed a lower level of General Education than respondents from families speaking Central or Southern Thai or Malay mixed with Thai.
- The findings indicate **that levels of educational attainment are correlated with ethnic and religious identities. Respondents flagged this as an important issue.** 40.6% of respondents in the latest survey recommend education reform to better reflect the local way of life and culture as necessary for the sustainable resolution of the conflict.
- **Education quality in the Deep South continues to be ranked the lowest in the country.** The education sub-index of the Office of National Economic and Social Advisory Council's (NESAC) 2017 Human Progress Index ranked Narathiwat as having the lowest quality of education (77<sup>th</sup>), while Pattani and Yala were ranked 76<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> respectively.
- Moreover, according to UNESCO's 2017 – 2018 Global Education Monitoring Report, 50% of primary school students in Thailand were not taught in the language used in their family homes.<sup>5</sup> This has an impact on the quality of education received by the students.

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<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, 2017/2018 Global Education Monitoring Report: Thailand highlights, 24 Oct. 2017, p.191. (Accessed on 28 January 2019) <http://www.adeanet.org/en/system/files/259338e.pdf>

- Thus, not only is it necessary to **take into account the quality of education in the region, it is also important to ensure that the public education system adequately reflects the diverse identities and cultures.** Care must be taken to avoid upsetting the local population. Educational institutions are regarded as one manifestation of local identity and command a substantial amount of respect. Any interference or perceived transgression against these exemplars of local identity could lead to a backlash against the state and a further loss of trust.



## Recommendation 6

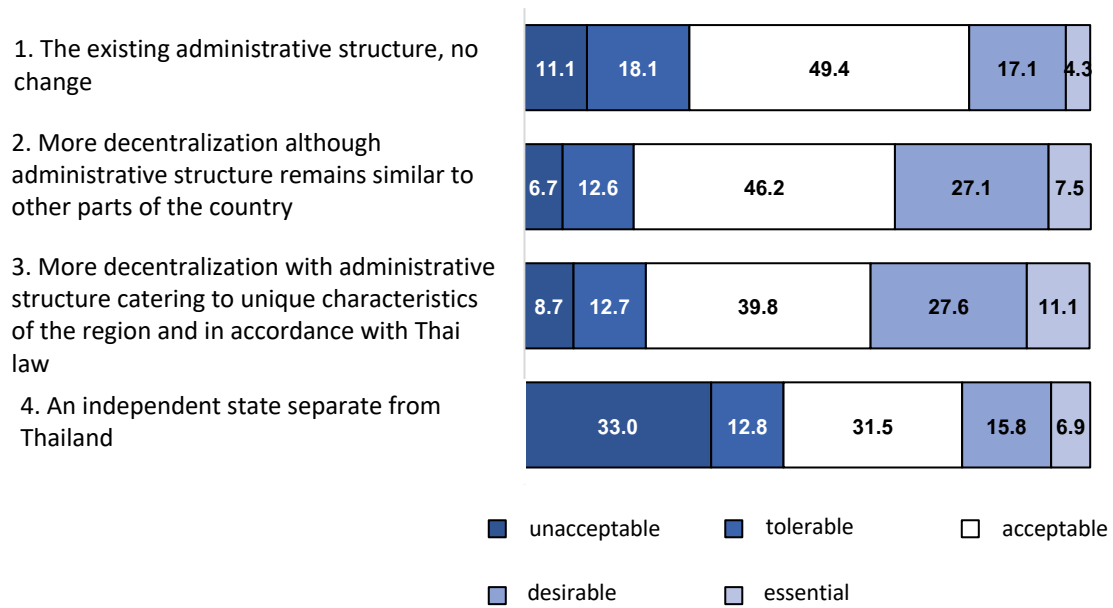
### Promote a decentralized governance structure that caters to the unique characteristics of the region

- Questions around the region’s governance are particularly sensitive and there can be some reluctance to express opinions on this matter. Many respondents chose not to answer or replied “don’t know” (altogether about 1,500-2,500 persons or 25-40%) to the question on governance. Many responded that each administrative structure was “acceptable” (approximately 1,200-2,300 persons or 18-37%). (*Graph no. 13*)
- Of those *who did choose to answer* this question regardless of religion, the language spoken at home, income, or occupation, respondents indicated that they **would like to see a change in administrative governance**. In short, respondents indicated a desire for more of a say for the local population via greater political and administrative decentralization.
  - 38.7% of respondents chose “greater decentralization based on an administrative structure catering to the unique characteristics of the region.”
  - 34.6% of respondents chose “greater decentralization while retaining an administrative structure similar to other parts of the country”
- Among those who chose to answer this question, 29.2% said they “could not accept” the existing administrative structure. Whilst any attempt to transform the region into an independent state would likely face fierce opposition from a large portion of the population (45.8%), among those who answered this question, there was a clear expression of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Together with those expressing the desire for an independent state, this group outweighed the proportion of respondents who expressed satisfaction with the current administrative arrangements.
- Looking at the four options presented to the respondents, decentralization catering to the unique characteristics of the region was ranked first, followed by more decentralization while retaining administrative structure similar to other parts of the country, followed by independence. The current administrative structure was the least desirable scenario suggesting an overall desire for change among those who chose to respond.

- Nonetheless, the present findings merely suggest an inclination towards decentralization with the adaptation of the administrative structure to cater to the unique characteristics of the region, although the details have yet to be elaborated.

Graph 13

Attitude towards various forms of governance (% of those who choose to answer)



## Recommendation 7

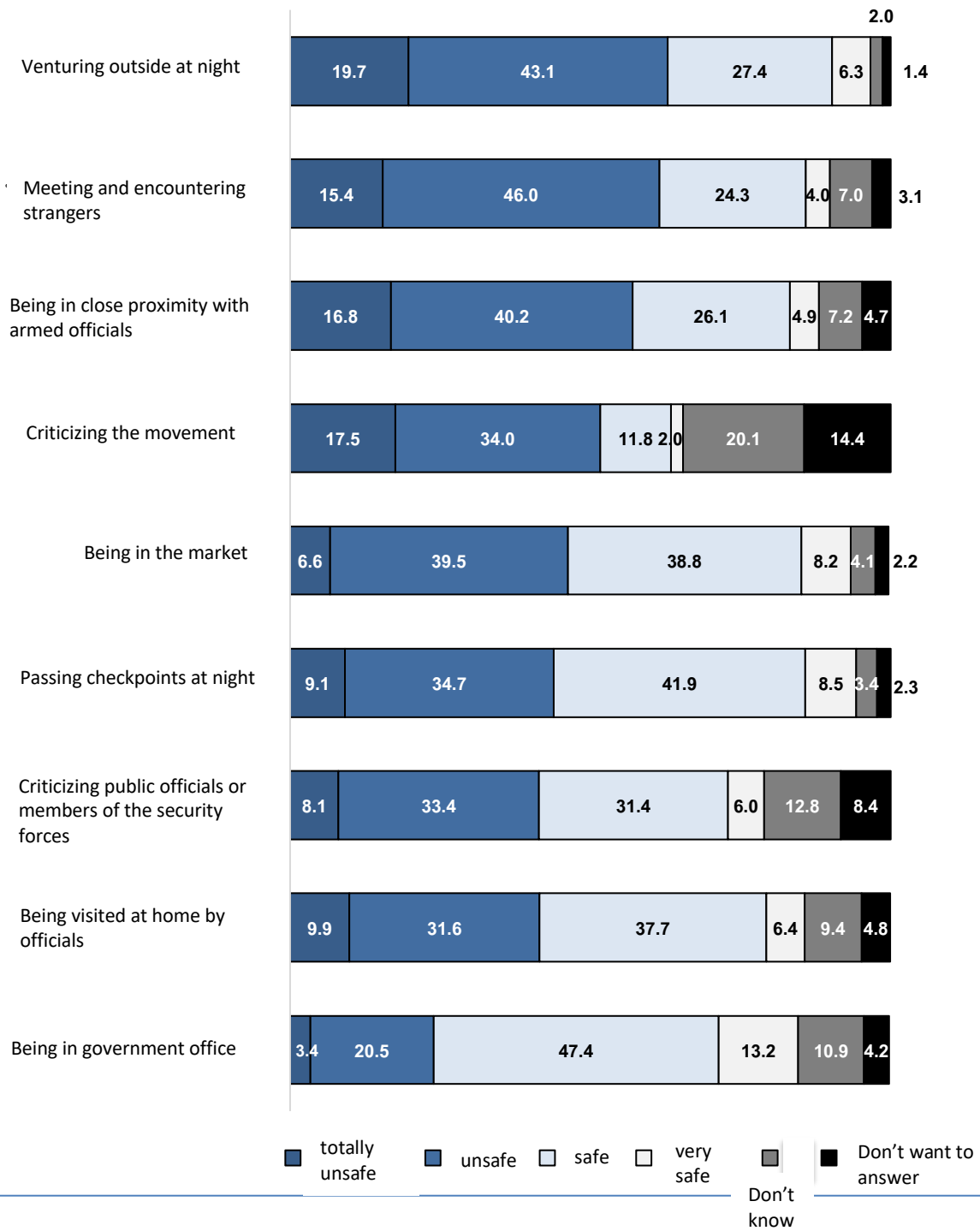
### **Give people the space to debate politically sensitive issues without fear of harassment by any one party**

- In the midst of an armed conflict, even **ordinary activities can trigger a sense of insecurity among the local population.**
- According to the surveys, a high proportion of respondents **“feel unsafe”** in the following situations; if they encounter strangers (61.4%), if they have to express an opinion on the struggle to liberate Patani (51.5%), if they find themselves in close proximity with government security forces (51.0%), if they have to express an opinion about government, government officials or security forces (41.5%) and if they are visited at home by the officials (41.5%). (*Graph no. 14*)
- Meanwhile, a major finding from the four surveys is the disproportionately high number of respondents who “prefer not to answer” or “do not know”. These responses could be interpreted as a **“silent voice”** especially with respect to particularly sensitive questions. These responses occurred most frequently when asked about the main goals of the armed resistance movement (54.6%); when asked whether the violence could be attributed to Siam’s colonization of Patani” (46.4%); when asked about views on political goals or independence” (42.9%); and when asked whether the violence could be attributed to government officials who profit from the protracted conflict environment (41.2%), etc. (*Graph no. 15*)
- **The silent voice on such topics is indicative of the sensitivity of these topics and reflects the fact that people feel unsafe or uncomfortable discussing them.** These topics can be grouped as follows; (1) positive or negative statements about the conflict parties; (2) controversial views regarding the cause of violence (i.e. historical contestation between Siam and Patani or the profitability of sustained conflict for government officials); and (3) political goals of independence or changes in governance structure.

- Potentially the most sensitive topic is that of political goals. According to an in-depth analysis of data, it was found that **even those who attributed the violence to Siam’s colonization of Patani did not necessarily then advocate for independence as the sole solution to the conflict.** In fact those who chose the colonization explanation also tended to identify decentralization as an acceptable solution to the conflict. This reflects that the question of political goals can be answered in various different forms. (*Graph no. 16*)
- Therefore, **it is necessary to ensure people have “spaces” where they can share their opinions freely without being subject to surveillance, harassment or stigmatization from any party.** Such spaces may include public forums, political demonstrations, online media, or the expression of symbolic actions.
- **The more space people have to express themselves, the more alternatives can be considered to ensure a rich debate over feasible solutions.** Providing such spaces would also benefit the state and the movement as they would also then be aware of the real concerns and demands made by various groups of people. This in turn could help generate a mutually acceptable solution for all parties.

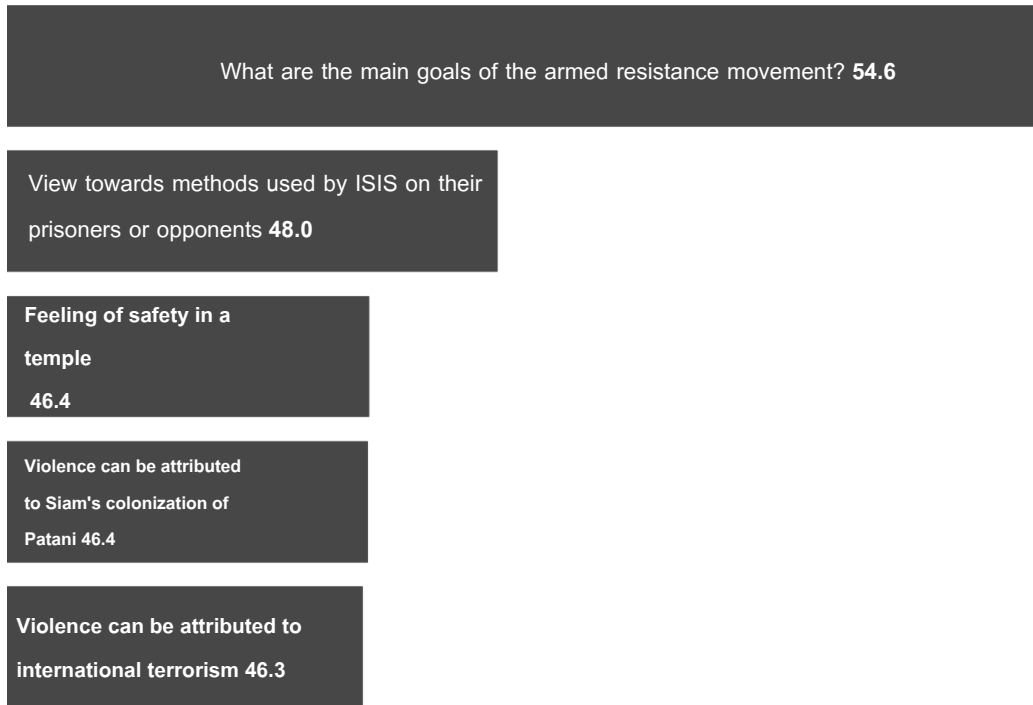
Graph 14

Feelings of safety in different situations



Graph no. 15

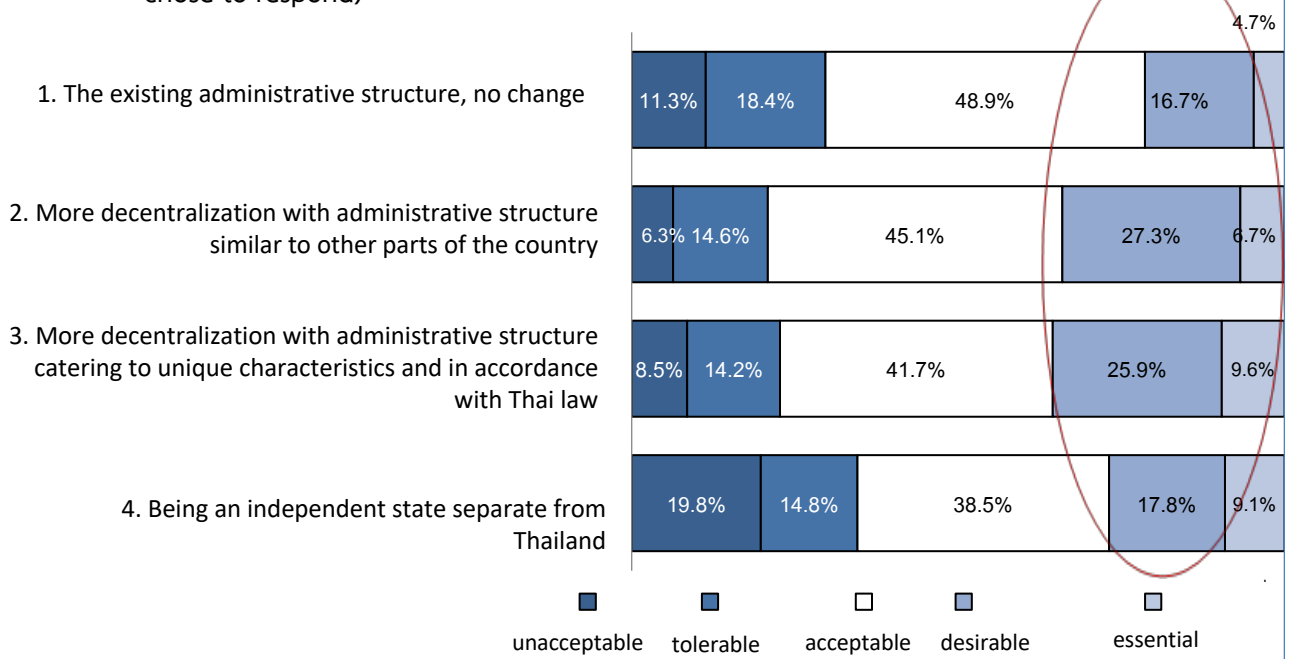
Questions with the highest occurrence of “don't know” and “prefer not to answer” responses (%)





Graph no. 16

Preferences for different forms of governance among those who support the view that violence can be attributed to Siam's colonization of Patani (% of those who chose to respond)



## Background information

### 1. Team

The PEACE SURVEY was made possible through the collaboration of 20 organizations<sup>6</sup> with diverse backgrounds and political standpoints from within and outside the Southern Border Provinces.

### 2. Project

The PEACE SURVEY is a series of public surveys conducted in the Southern Border Provinces on the peacebuilding process. Respondents were asked about (1) their standard of living, and their attitude toward (2) the causes of the conflict, (3) peacebuilding efforts, and (4) various options to help resolve the conflict.

### 3. Rationale

Past efforts to resolve the conflict in the southern border conflict have seen relevant stakeholders from the government, the movement and civil society, all insisting that the solutions should rest with the local population. The PEACE SURVEY team uses unbiased sampling in an attempt to make the voices of “the people” heard and to gauge their views regarding the most appropriate measures needed to resolve the conflict.

### 4. Methodology

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<sup>6</sup> The network of 20 organizations includes: Princess of Naradhiwas University’s Academy of Islamic and Arabic Studies; Fatoni University’s Islamic Institute; Yala Rajabhat University’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; Prince of Songkhla University’s Faculty of Science and Technology, Pattani Campus; Prince of Songkhla University’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pattani Campus; Prince of Songkhla University’s Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD), Pattani Campus; Prince of Songkhla University’s Center for the Study and Development of Peace Communication, Pattani Campus; Prince of Songkhla University’s College of Islamic Studies, Pattani Campus; Deep South Watch; Civil Society Council of Southernmost Thailand; Prince of Songkhla University’s Faculty of Management Sciences, Hat Yai Campus; Prince of Songkhla University’s Faculty of Medicine’s Institute of Research and Development for Health of Southern Thailand (RDH), Hat Yai Campus; Prince of Songkhla University’s Institute for Peace Studies, Hat Yai Campus; Walailak University’s Center of Excellence on Women and Social Security; Mahidol University’s Faculty of Science’s Centre of Excellence in Mathematics; Mahidol University’s Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia; Thammasat University’s Peace Information Center; Peace Resource Collaborative (PRC); and King Prajadiphok Institute’s Office of Peace and Governance.

Buddhist and Muslim activists, academics and government officials brainstormed a list of questions to come up with a comprehensive set that covered topics and issues relevant to the conflict and its resolution. The questionnaire was reviewed and vetted through a rigorous academic process. The Systematic Random Sampling method was used to identify the sample group and was applied to data from the Ministry of Interior's Community Development Department's 2017 Basic Necessity database. This ensured that all sub-groups within the study population had an equal chance of being selected. Next, a simple random sampling was carried out first at the sub-district level, then at the village level, and finally at household level. Respectively based on a simple random sampling and only covering the actual residents in each household.

## 5. Sample groups

The sample group are residents of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and the four districts (Chana, Thepha, Natawee and Sabayoi) of Songkhla. Four surveys were conducted covering a sample population of 6,321 persons broken down as follows;

- 1<sup>st</sup> survey covered 1,559 persons (Feb–March 2016)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> survey covered 1,570 persons (July–Aug 2016)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> survey covered 1,583 persons (April–May 2017)
- 4<sup>th</sup> survey covered 1,609 persons (Aug–Sept 2018)

The sample group in the four surveys can be differentiated according to the following sub-categories;

(1) **Gender** - 55.8% of respondents are female and 44.2% are male.

(2) **Age** – The average age of respondents is 43.32 years old.

(3) **Religion** – The majority of respondents are Muslim (77.7%), followed by Buddhists (21.7%), and with a very small proportion that are Christian (0.1%).

(4) **Language spoken at home** - Most respondents speak Malay in the home (60.4%), followed by Thai (26%), and finally Malay mixed with Thai (13.6%).

## **(5) Education**

**General Education** – Level of general education completed was as follows; completed primary Islamic education (39.5%), completed junior high school or senior high school (14.6 and 20.5 % respectively), completed tertiary education (9.6%), no education (8.8%), and completed vocational training (6.9%).

**Religious Education** – A number of Muslim respondents have completed Ibtidai, primary education or Tadikas (39.5%), closely followed by those with no religious education (34.3%), Mutawasit and Sanawi (21.8%), Pondok school (3.1) and Islamic tertiary education (0.4%). Among Buddhist respondents, a small proportion have completed Pali education (0.7%).

## **(6) Occupation**

Respondents' occupations were as follows; farmer (38.6%), temporary worker (19.7%), retiree (10%), merchant, businessperson, or private employee (7.3%), unemployed (5.9%), government official (5%), self-employed (4.6%), Ustaz, scholar or teacher (2.4%), student (2.3%), religious leader (0.3%), politician (0.2%) or other (2.6%).

## **(7) Monthly income –**

The majority of respondents earn less than 10,000 baht per month (75.4%). Next were respondents who earn between 10,001 and 20,000 baht (12.7%), followed by respondents who earn no income (7.6%), and finally, those earning higher than 20,000 baht (4.3%).

Map 1: Sample Survey Area for the four Peace Surveys

