

# **Survey Report of the Opinions of the New Generations on the Deep South Conflict<sup>1</sup>**

Written by

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been translated by the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations

## Part 1: Objective

Conducted from May 18 to June 4, 2020, this survey is a collaborative effort of two academic institutes, the Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversities (CSCD)<sup>2</sup> and Peace Resource Collaborative (PRC),<sup>3</sup> to understand the opinions that young people aged 18-25 in major cities in Thailand's four regions have on the conflict in the southern border provinces.

The survey was designed to explore specifically the opinions of the new generations because the century-long conflict in the southern region will take at least a decade to find a solution and until that time, the younger generations are the key stakeholder in the decision making process. In addition, the problem in the southern border provinces affects and involves not only the local but also the government which, in principle, needs to consider opinions and sentiments of citizens in other provinces as well as those in the area in order to find common ground and a solution. Therefore, the young generations living outside the area were chosen as respondents of this survey.

The survey result informs readers of the perspectives of the younger generations living outside the area, and compares them with the results of five peace surveys<sup>4</sup> about the perspectives of the people in the southern border provinces on the peace process. The results of both surveys should reflect the direction for the solution most people deem appropriate, and yield beneficial information for stakeholders for further consideration in policy decisions.

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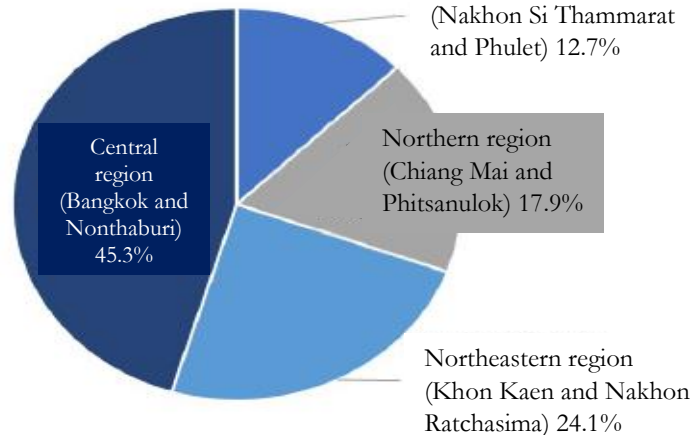
<sup>2</sup> Visit <http://cscd.psu.ac.th/th> for more information about the organization.

<sup>3</sup> Visit [www.peaceresourcecollaborative.org](http://www.peaceresourcecollaborative.org) for more information about the organization.

<sup>4</sup> Peace survey is a collaboration of 24 academic institutes inside and outside the area of the southern border provinces to understand the perspectives of the local people on the peace process in the area. The first survey was conducted in February 2016 and continued until the fifth survey in October 2019. Visit <https://peaceresourcecollaborative.org/publication/report> to read the complete survey report from the first to the fifth survey.

## Part 2: General information of the respondents

Chart 1: The respondents divided by region (%)



In this survey, **2,005 young people aged 18-25, living in major cities in four regions across the country** were selected from the “Online Panel” database of Dynata<sup>5</sup> with the purposive sampling method. The majority (45.3%) of the respondents lived in the central region (Bangkok and Nonthaburi) followed by 24.1% in the northeast (Khon Kaen and Nakhon Ratchasima), 17.9% in the north (Chiang Mai and Phitsanulok), and 12.7% in the south (Nakhon Si Thammarat and Phuket)<sup>6</sup>. Overall, these respondents came from 68 provinces across the country<sup>7</sup>.

In addition, thanks to the database of Dynata, all of the respondents shared some key common features: urban new generations, ability to access the internet, and skills in using electronic gadgets (necessary for participating in the online questionnaire). When interpreting the survey result, it is important to be keep in mind these characteristics of the respondents as they may affect the representativeness of the sample group.

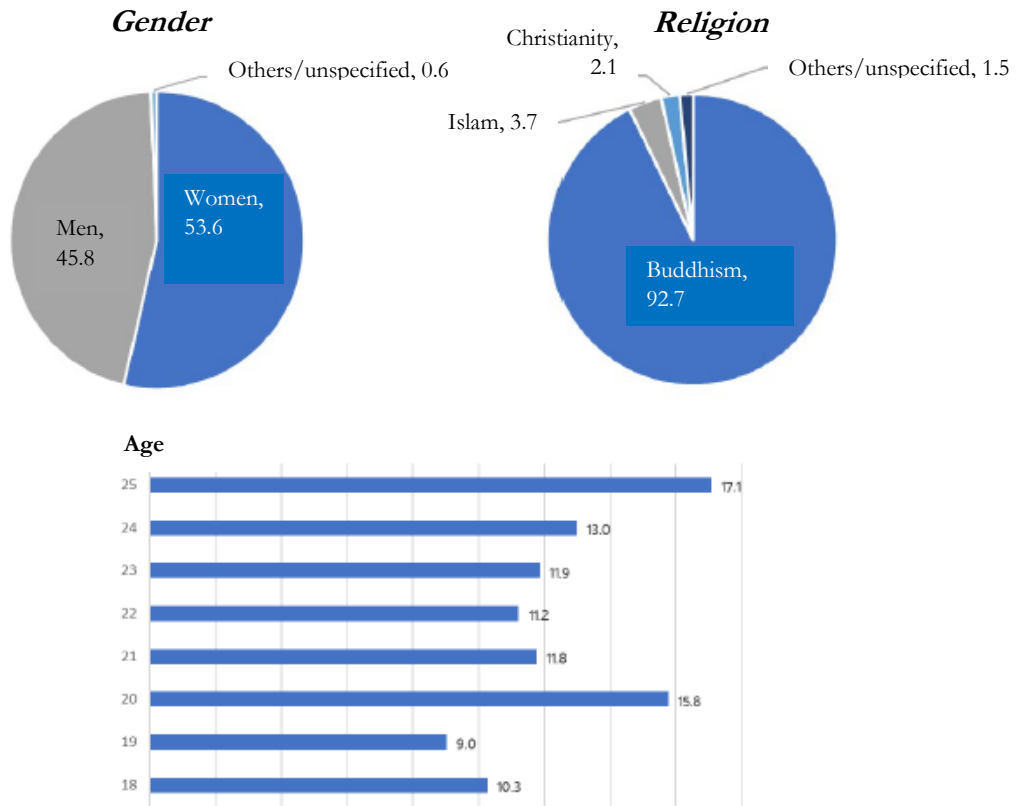
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<sup>5</sup> Dynata is a market research company headquartered in the United States and has databases of people in 44 countries around the world who voluntarily registered with the company as members of the Online Panel to participate in the sampling process for opinion polls. In Thailand, 606,000 people registered in the Online Panel as of 2019. See more details at [www.dynata.com](http://www.dynata.com). Although online surveys are widely used, one drawback is that its representativeness is not as accurate as the systematic random sampling.

<sup>6</sup> To determine the number of respondents from each region, the research team factored in the population density of the major cities of each region and the numbers of Online Panel members registered with the company. The calculation resulted in the numbers of the sample group in the decreasing order as follows: 750 people from Bangkok, 259 from Chiang Mai, 254 from Khon Kaen, 230 from Nakhon Ratchasima, 155 from Nakhon Si Thammarat, 159 from Nonthaburi, 100 from Phitsanulok, and 98 from Phuket – a total of 2,005 respondents.

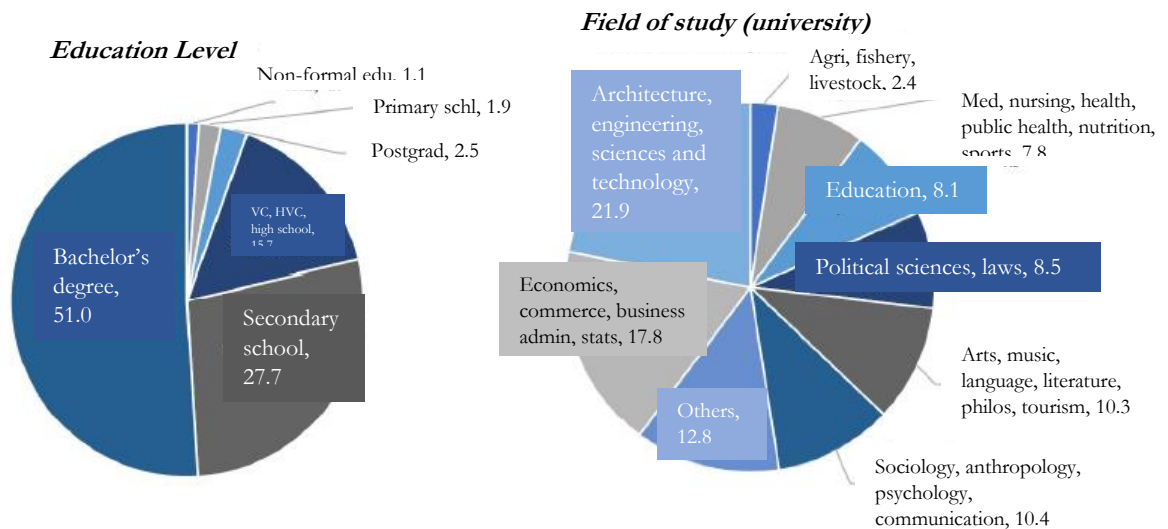
<sup>7</sup> The Online Panel members from Mae Hong Son, Lamphun, Lopburi, Nakhon Nayok, Ang Thong and Ranong did not fit the criteria, and those in the three southernmost provinces, namely Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, were not the target group of this survey which aimed at exploring the opinions of people outside the area.

**Chart 2: The respondents classified by gender, religion, and age (%)**



More than half of the respondents (53.6%) were women, and the rest were men (45.8%), including 0.6% of others/unspecified genders. Almost all of them were Buddhists (92.7%) followed by Muslims (3.7%), Christians (2.1%) and others/unspecified religions (1.5%). The average age was 22 with the proportions of the 25-year-old and the 20-year-old being greater than other age groups.

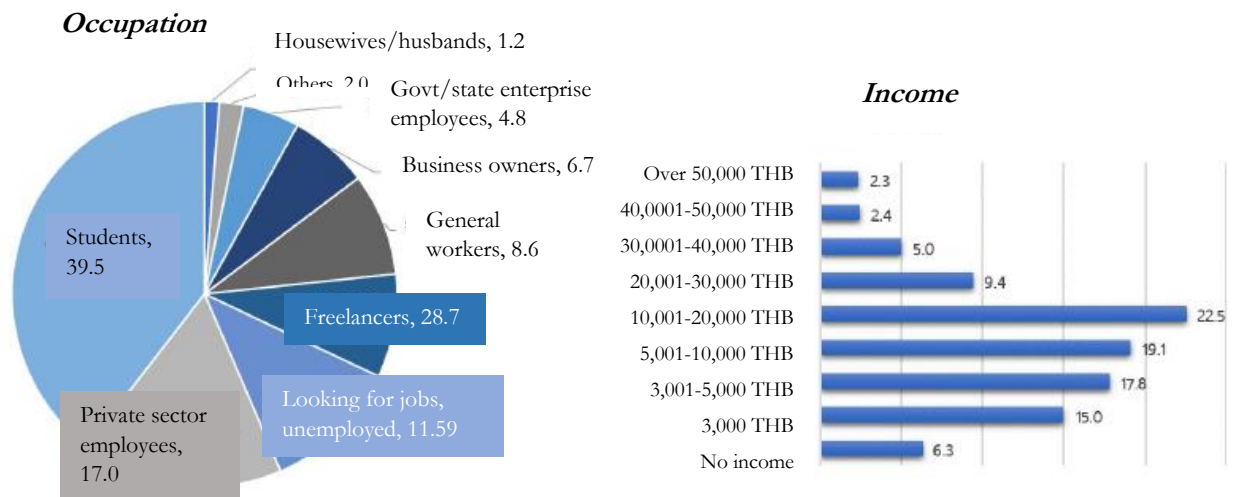
**Chart 3: The respondents classified by education level and field (%)**



About half of the respondents held bachelor's degrees (51%) followed by secondary school diplomas (27.7%), vocational certificates/high vocational certificates/high school diplomas (15.7%), postgraduate certificates (2.5%), and primary school certificates and non-formal education certificates (1.1%).

For those who were studying or already completed bachelor's degrees or higher, their areas of study were architecture, engineering, sciences and technology (21.9%) followed by economics, commerce, business administration, statistics (17.8%), others (12.8%), social sciences, anthropology, psychology, communications (10.4%), arts, music, language, literature, philosophy, tourism (10.3%), political sciences, laws (8.5%), education (8.1%), medicine, nursing, health, public health, nutrition, sports (7.8%) and agriculture, fisheries, livestock (2.4%).

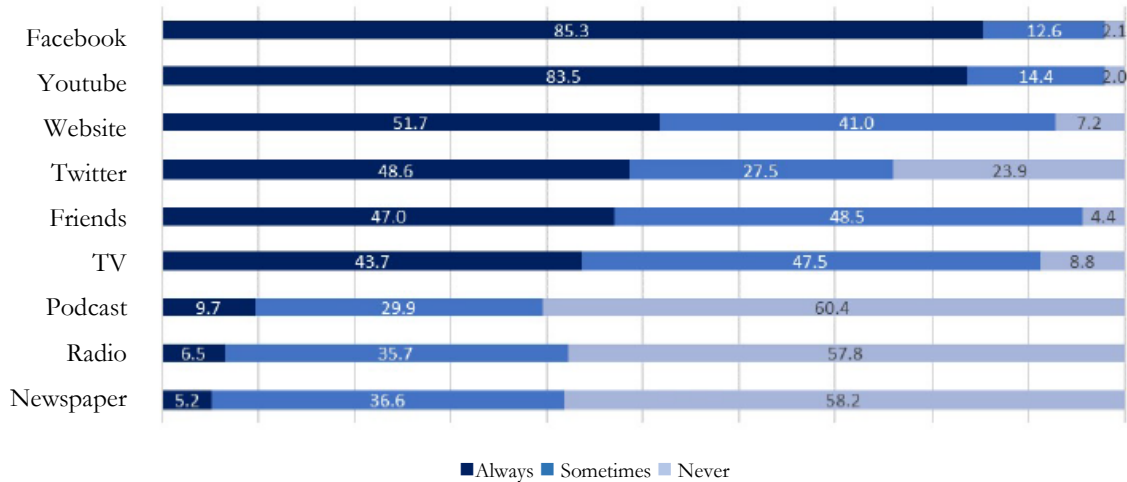
**Chart 4: The respondents classified by occupation and income (%)**



Regarding the occupation of the respondents, **university students accounted for 39.5%**, followed by private company employees (17%), those looking for jobs/the unemployed (11.5%), the self-employed/freelancers (8.7%), general workers/laborers/service workers (8.6%), business owners (6.7%), civil servants/government employees/state enterprise employees (4.8%), others (2%), and housewives/househusbands (1.2%)

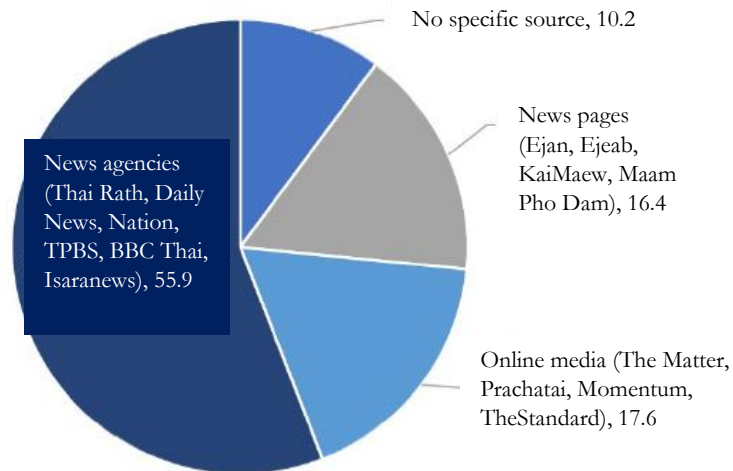
In terms of monthly incomes (covering all sources, such as family, scholarship and/or work), **most of the respondents (22.5%) made approximately 10,001-20,0000 baht per month**, followed by those who made around 5,001-10,000 baht (19.1%), 3,001-5,000 baht (17.8%), lower than 3,000 baht (15%), 20,001-30,000 baht (9.4%) no income (6.4%), 30,0001-40,000 baht (5%), 40,0001-50,000 baht (2.4%) and the smallest group consisted of those who made more than 50,0001 baht (2.3%). This information indicates that most of the respondents are middle-to-high income earners.

**Chart 5: Use of media to follow news (%)**



The media used by most of the respondents were Facebook and YouTube (85.3% and 83.5%, respectively) while more than half of them never read newspapers or listened to the radio (58.2% and 57.8%, respectively). As a result, it could be inferred that the most efficient method to communicate with the new generations is online media, such as Facebook, YouTube, websites, or Twitter while radio and newspapers could not directly reach the target group.

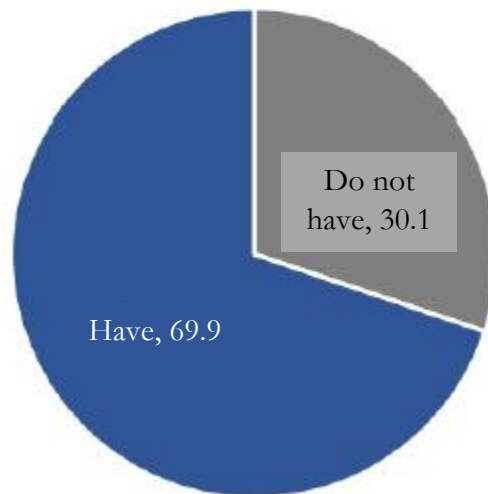
**Chart 6: News sources followed (%)**



When asked to name the news sources they followed the most frequently, the majority of the respondents (55.9%) still followed news from mainstream news agencies, such as Thai Rath, Daily News, Nation, Thai PBS, BBC Thai, or Isaranews Agency, etc. The second most popular news sources are online media such as The Matter, Prachatai, Momentum, or The Standard, etc. (17.6%), and news pages such as Ejan, Ejeab, Kai Maew, or Maam Pho Dam, etc. are followed by 16.4% of the respondents. The remaining 10.2% did not follow any specific source.

However, when considering the relationship between the respondents' education levels and their behaviors in following news sources, it was found that the higher the education level, the more likely they were to follow online media. The two variables have a significant statistical correlation of 0.000<sup>8</sup>.

**Chart 7: Friends of different religions (%)**



Regarding the interaction with people of different religions, **most of the respondents (69.9%) had close friends of different religions**. Considering the relationship between education and income levels and having close friends of different religions, it was found that the higher education and income levels, the more likely the respondents were to meet or interact with people who were different from themselves. The two variables have a significant statistical correlation of 0.000.

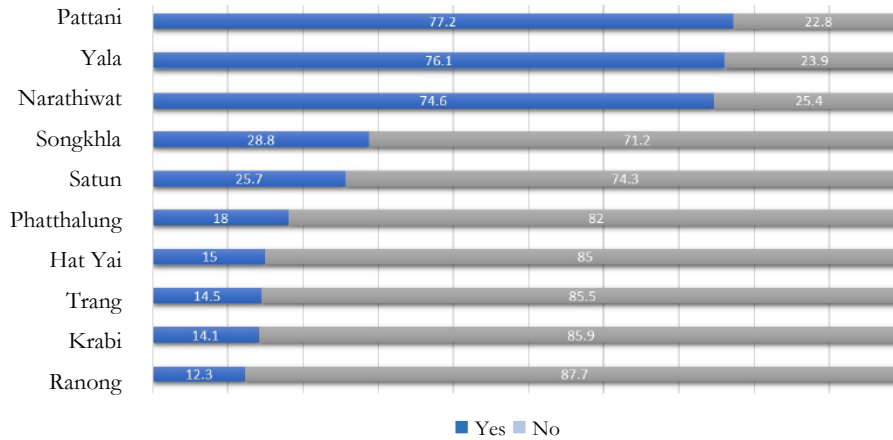
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<sup>8</sup> The statistical significance of 0.000 means that there is a 0% chance that a correlation of such variables is just a coincidence. That is to say, the likelihood of discrepancies in this relationship is very small or virtually none.

### Part 3: Opinions on the problems and situations in the southern border provinces

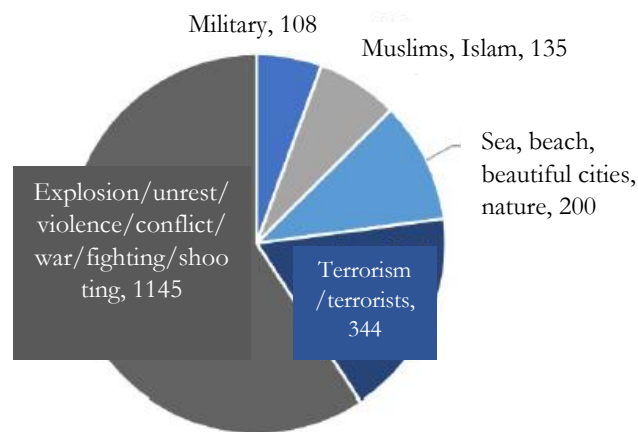
This section illustrates the result of the opinion poll on the problem and situation in the southern border provinces. The survey sought to find out both the opinions and the facts that people know about the issue. The survey began by asking the respondents the most basic question – which provinces are considered the southern border provinces?

**Chart 8: The provinces of Thailand’s Deep South (%)**



More than 70% of the respondents provided the correct answer which was Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Only few respondents mentioned other provinces or Hat Yai district.

**Chart 9: What comes to mind when hearing ‘southern border provinces’ (No. of answers)**



Next, the respondents were asked to write no more than 140 characters<sup>9</sup> what came to their mind when they heard the word “southern border provinces.” The research team analyzed the answers and found that the top 5 responses were as follows:

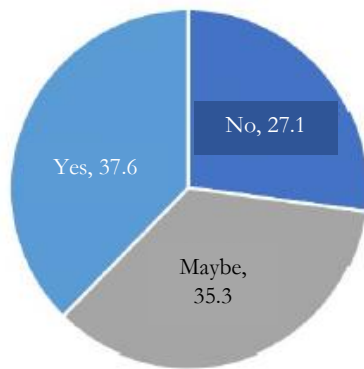
<sup>9</sup>This is an open question. The respondents could use more than one word in their answers (but no more than 140 characters), resulting in more words than the number of respondents.



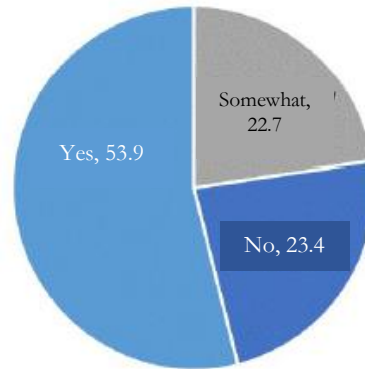
1) the impression of violence, such as explosion, unrest, conflict, war, fighting, or gunfire, 2) terrorism or terrorists, 3) the beauty of nature and the cities, 4) the Muslims or Islam, and 5) the military. The term “southern bandits” coined by some mainstream media outlets, especially newspapers, came at the number six. The sentiment of most of the respondents was mainly influenced by the violent incidents despite the fact that such events have been decreasing considerably in the past five years.

**Chart 10: Interest in visiting Deep South and in following news about the area (%)**

*Interested in visiting the area*



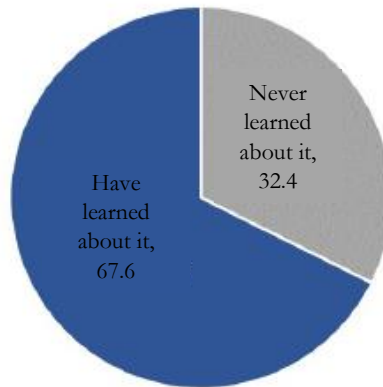
*Interested in following the news*



When asked if they would like to visit the area if they were given an opportunity, the respondents gave various answers – yes, maybe, and no – of similar percentages. The largest group of the three was those who were interested (37.6%). **When combined those who hesitated and those who clearly showed no intention to visit the area, the proportion was 62.4%**, which was consistent with the answers of the previous question in which the image of the southern border provinces in the mind of most people was violence.

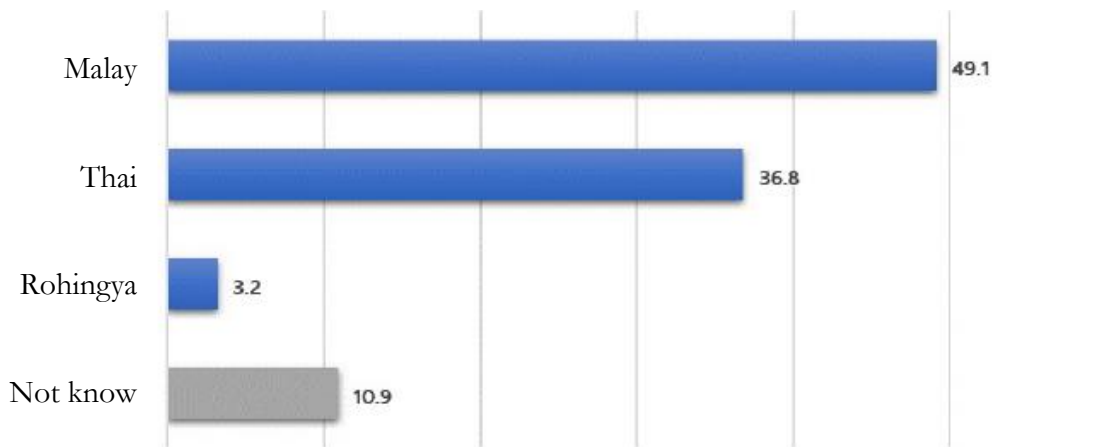
However, even most of them hesitated and did not want to go, **about half of the respondents (53.9%) said that they were interested in following the news** about the situation there. 23.4% were not interested and 22.7% were somewhat interested. Taking into account the relationship between the interest in visiting the area and the interest in following the situation, it became clear that people interested in following the news were more likely to visit the southern border provinces than those who were not interested in following the news. The statistical correlation is 0.000.

**Chart 11: The problem of the southern border provinces in classrooms (%)**



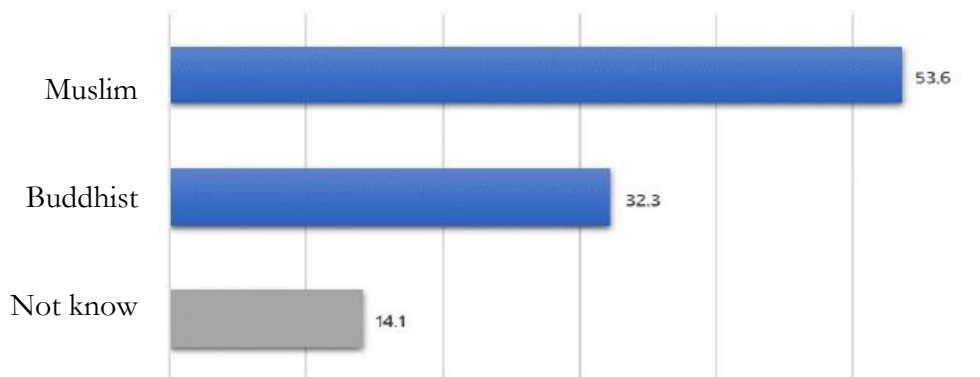
Most of the respondents (67.6%) had learned of the problem of the southern border provinces in school while the remaining 32.4% had never studied it. About basic facts, such as provinces in the Deep South or the major ethnicity of the local, the respondents who had learned about the southern border provinces in class were more likely to answer both questions correctly with a statistical correlation of 0.000.

**Chart 12: Understanding of ethnicities of people in the Deep South (%)**



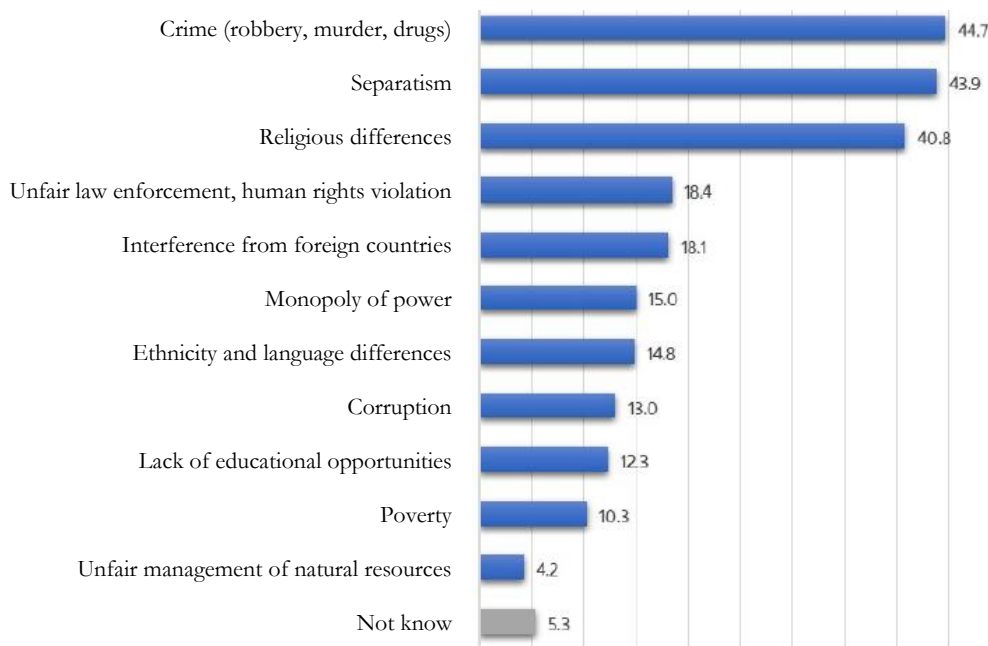
When asked what the major ethnicity of the local in the southern border provinces was, almost half of the respondents (49.1%) answered correctly that it was Malay. There were, however, quite a number of respondents (36.8%) who thought that the majority of the people in the area were Thai nationals. The remaining 3.2% said they were Rohingya, and 10.9% did not know.

**Chart 13: Understanding of the largest group of casualties from violence in the Deep South (%)**



More than half of the respondents (53.6%) provided the correct answer that the largest group of people who were killed in violent incidents in the southern border provinces were **Muslims**<sup>10</sup> while 32.3% said they were Buddhists and 14.1% did not know. This reflects that most of the respondents understood the factual information of the situation.

**Chart 14: Perspectives on the main problem of the Deep South (%)**

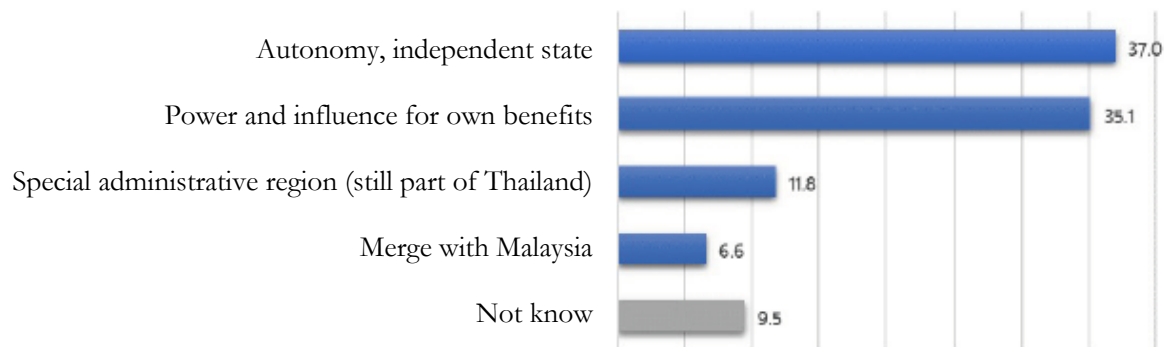


<sup>10</sup> The database of violent incidents by Deep South Watch reveals that 2,754 Buddhists and 4,233 Muslims were killed in the violent incidents from January 2004 June 2020.

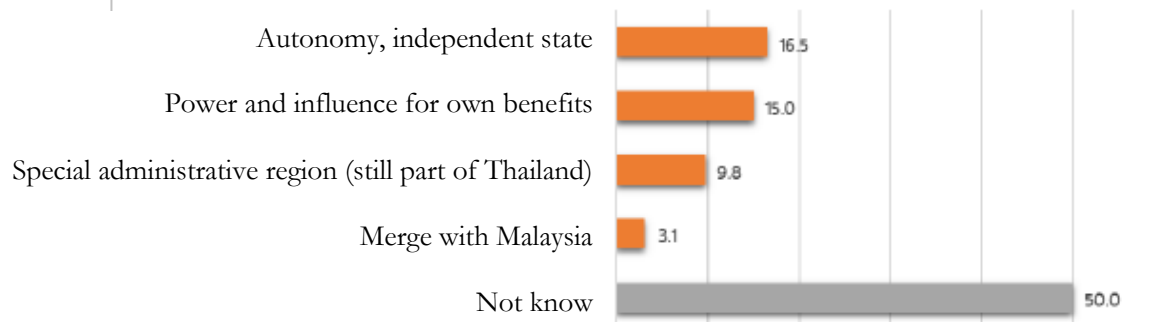
When asked to choose three main conflicts in the Deep South, **the top three choices that the respondents chose were crime, separatism, and religious differences** (44.7%, 43.9%, and 40.8%, respectively), followed by unfair law enforcement and human rights violations (18.4%) and foreign intervention (18.1%). Fewer respondents (15% and 14.8%) chose monopoly of power, and ethnic differences, respectively. The less chosen choices were corruption, lack of educational opportunities, and poverty, and the least selected choice was unfair management of natural resources and environment (13%, 12.3%, 10.3%, and 4.2%, respectively). **5.3% of the respondents said they did not know.**

**Chart 15: Perspectives on the goal of instigators (%)**

*Perspectives of young generations outside the area*



*Perspectives of the people in the area from Peace Survey*

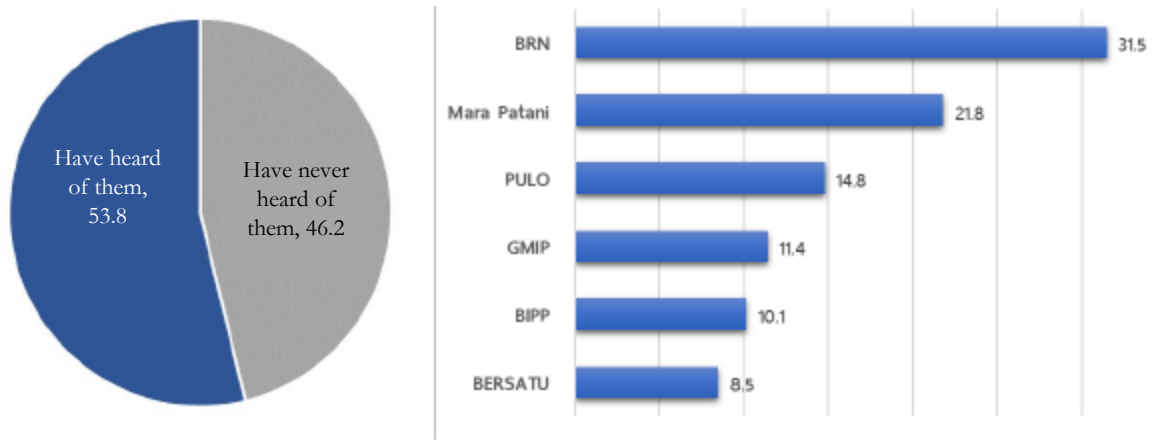


To provide a complete picture of the answers to this question – the goal of the instigators – and some of the following questions, the research team compared the Peace Survey<sup>11</sup> results of the people in the southern border provinces who were asked the same questions in order to see the differences in the perspectives of people outside and inside the area on the same issue.

<sup>11</sup> The result came from the 5<sup>th</sup> survey of 1,637 people in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and four districts in Songkhla Province (Chana, Thepha, Na Thawi and Saba Yoi) from September 11 to October 15, 2019 using systematic random sampling at the household level. The complete survey report is available at <https://peaceresourcecollaborative.org/publication/report>

To the question of what the goal of the instigators is, **37% and 35.1% of the young generation respondents living outside the area said that the instigators demanded independence/separation from Thailand, or power and influence for their own benefits, respectively.** This is followed by 11.8% of the respondents who said they wanted a special administrative region while still being part of Thailand. 6.6% said that they wanted to be part of Malaysia, and 9.6% did not know. **The people in the area showed similar views** despite being in smaller proportion. However, one observation is that the number of people in the area who did not know or did not want to answer was much higher (50%), which could be interpreted in many ways. It could be that they really did not know or felt unsafe to answer.

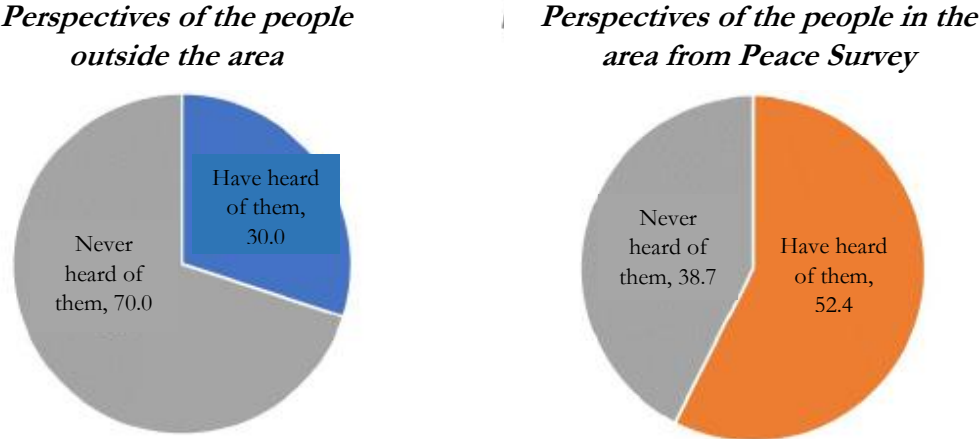
**Chart 16: Knowledge of activist organizations in the area (%)**



**About half (53.8%) of those surveyed had heard of local activist organizations,** and the remaining half (46.2%) had never heard of any group. For those who had, **BRN was the most known** by 31.5% of the respondents, followed by MARA Patani (21.8%), PULO (14.8%), GMIP (11.4%), BIPP (10.1%), and finally BERSATU (8.5%)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The full names of each group are as follows: BRN – Barisan Revolusi Nasional, MARA Patani – Majelis Syura Patani, PULO – Patani United Liberation Organization, GMIP – Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani, BIPP – Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani, and BERSATU – Barisan Bersatu Kemerdekaan Patani. In addition, MARA Patani and BERSATU serve as umbrella organizations that engage other groups in their missions. BERSATU is no longer active.

Chart 17: Knowledge of the peace talks between the government and local organizations (%)



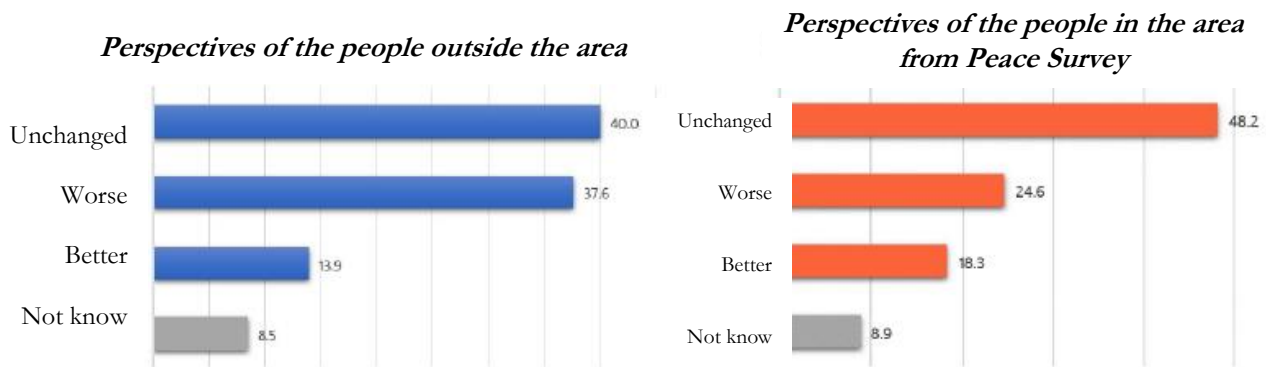
When asked if they had ever heard of the talks between the government and the local movement, **a large number of young non-local respondents (70%) said they had never heard of the talks** and 30% said yes. In comparison, a greater percentage of local residents had heard of the news (52.4%) and 38.7% had never heard of it. The talk officially started and was announced to the public seven years ago in February 2013.<sup>13</sup>

**Part 4: Solutions**

<sup>13</sup> To access the details of the talks between the government and the local movement throughout the period of seven years, visit <https://peaceresourcecollaborative.org/deep-south/deepsouthpatani-peace-process/7years>

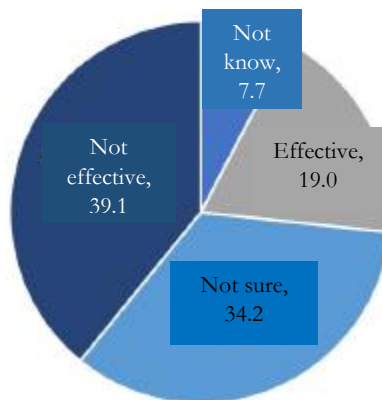
This section consists of a series of questions about solutions to the problem. The questions explored the respondents' perspectives on the government's current problem solving efforts and measures/policies believed to help resolve the conflict.

**Chart 18: Changes in the Thailand's Deep South situation during the current government (%)**



Nearly half (40%) of the non-local respondents thought that the problem of the southern region remained unchanged, but 37.6% of them thought that the problem worsened while 13.9% saw improvement. 8.5% said they did not know. **This view was in line with the opinion of the local residents.** It is interesting that, compared to the perspective of the local people, the non-local were more negative about the situation.

**Chart 19: The cost-effectiveness of the budget dedicated to solving the Deep South's problem (%)**

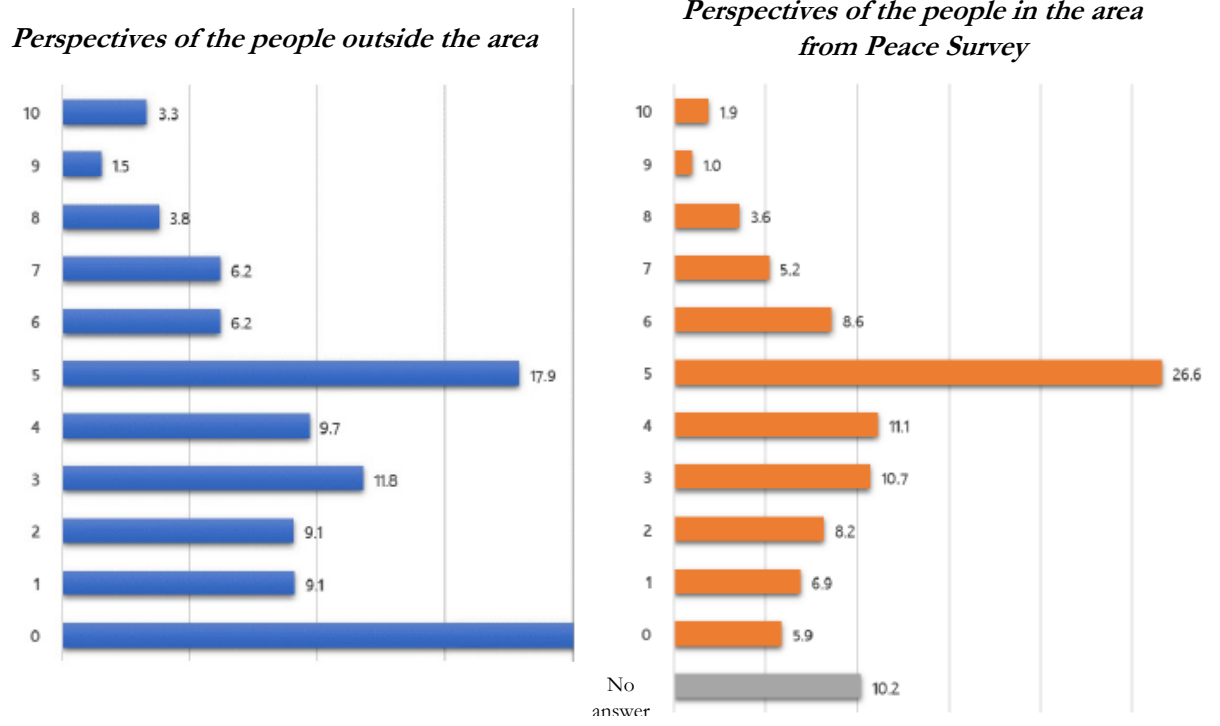


When asked whether the 36 billion baht budget<sup>14</sup> allocated to solving the problem of the southern region was worth it, **39.1% said it was not worth it** while 34.2% were unsure, and 19% thought it was worthwhile. The remaining 7.7% said they did not know. If we combine the percentages

<sup>14</sup> Information from the Extraordinary General Meeting of the House of Representatives to consider the budget bill for the fiscal year 2020 on October 18, 2019. See more details at <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-50093938>. The budget of 36 billion baht is calculated from the budget for the integrated work plan to resolve the problem in the southern border provinces and other relevant budgets.

of those who were unsure and those who believed that it was not worth it, they would account for 73%, which is quite high.

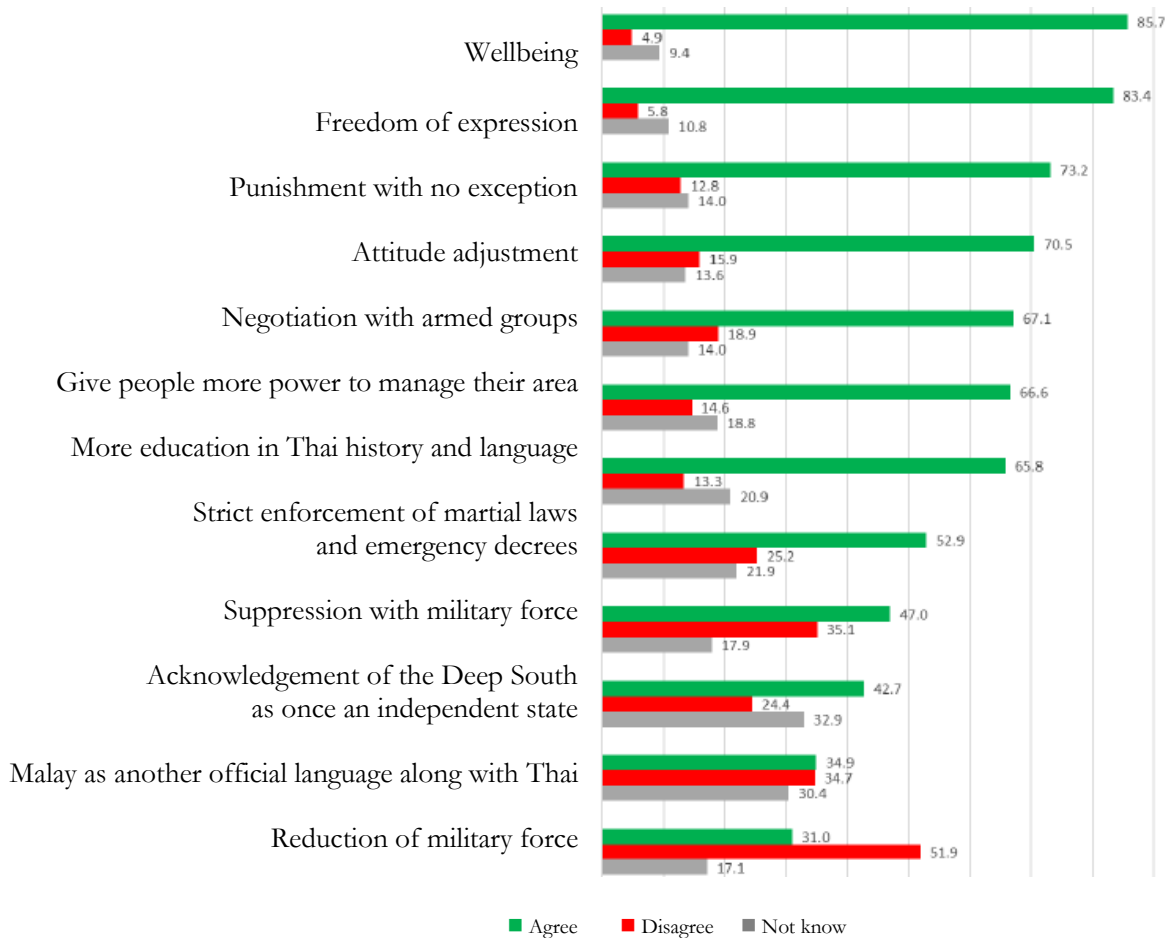
**Chart 20: Rate government's performance in solving the Deep South's problem (%)**



The young non-local respondents rated the current government on solving the problems in the Deep South at 3.49 while the local residents rated it at 4.21 out of 10. The female non-local respondents rated the government significantly lower than men did with a significant statistical value of 0.000.



**Chart 21: Perspectives on problem solving measures in the Deep South (%)**



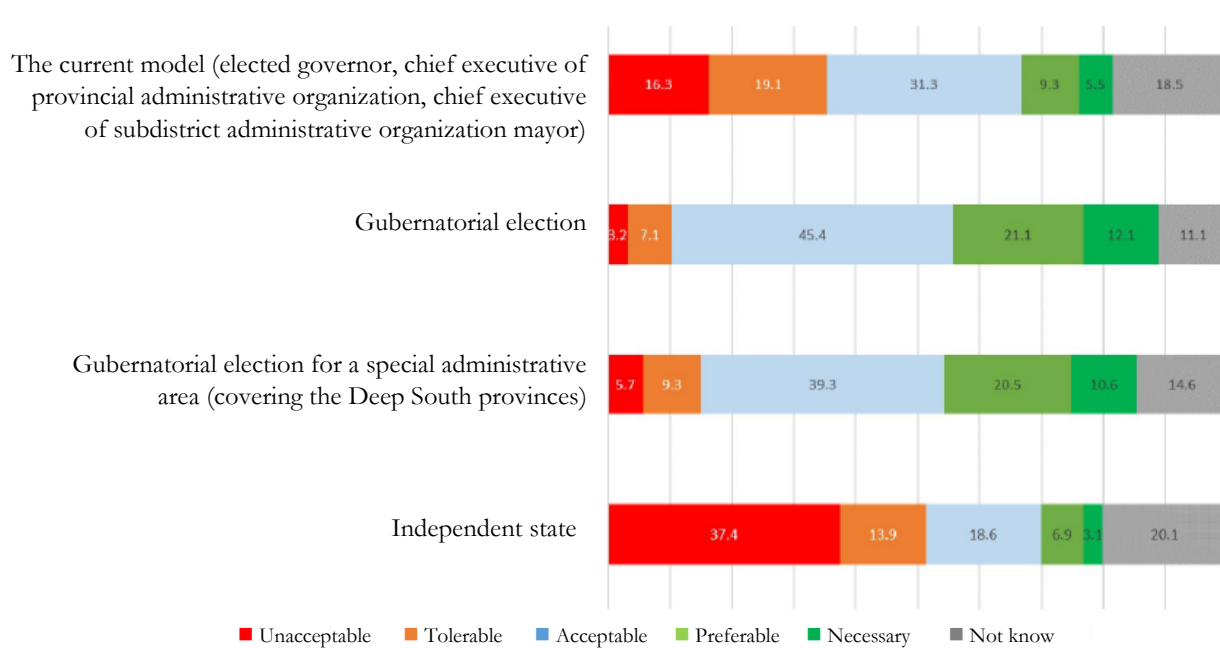
Of all these measures/policies to solve the problem of the Deep South, **the top 3 measures that the respondents agreed with were 1) ensure wellbeing and livelihood (85.7%) 2) allow people to have more freedom to express their political opinion (83.4%) and 3) punish government officials who committed offenses without exception (73.2%)**. The measures/policies that the respondents **most disagreed with was the reduction of military force (51.9%)**

**The use of Malay as an official language along with the Thai language is the most conflicted issue.** The percentages of the respondents who agreed and disagreed with the issue were nearly the same (34.9% and 34.7%, respectively), and were similar to those who said they were not sure (30.4%). Another issue which received the equally divided opinions was the military involvement, namely the use of military force (47% agreed and 35.1% disagreed) and the military cut (31% agreed 51.9% disagreed).

Another measure/policy that many respondents were unsure whether to agree or disagree with, aside from the issue of including Malay as another official language (30.4%), is the historical acknowledgement that the southern border provinces was once an independent state (32.9%).

From the results above, an overall observation could be made that the new generations living outside the area paid as much attention to quality of life, wellbeing as to freedom of political expression, which is a non-violent political approach. Moreover, even though half of the respondents saw that the military force in the area should not be reduced, many thought that military force should not be used to resolve the situation. Both groups agreed that government officials who committed offenses must be punished by law with no exceptions. However, when it comes to identity, such as language and history, which is one of the most important aspects of the resolution, many respondents were unsure about how it should be settled. This reflects a tendency among the respondents to weigh information from different sides before making a decision.

**Chart 22: Administrative models as a promising solution (%)**

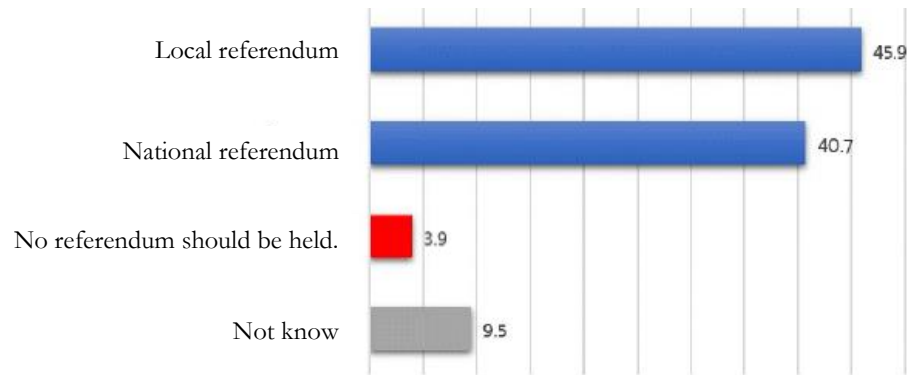


When asked about the administrative model that could be a solution to the problem, **most respondents (33.2%) viewed that the most promising solution was a gubernatorial election**, followed by 31.1% who chose a gubernatorial election for a special administrative region (31.1%). 14.7% believed the current administrative system should remain, and 10% suggested an independent state.

**The solution that was unacceptable to most of the respondents (41.3%) was the independent state (41.3%)**, followed by no change at all (35.4%). Likewise, both choices received the highest percentages of “I don’t know” responses at 20.1% and 18.5%, respectively.

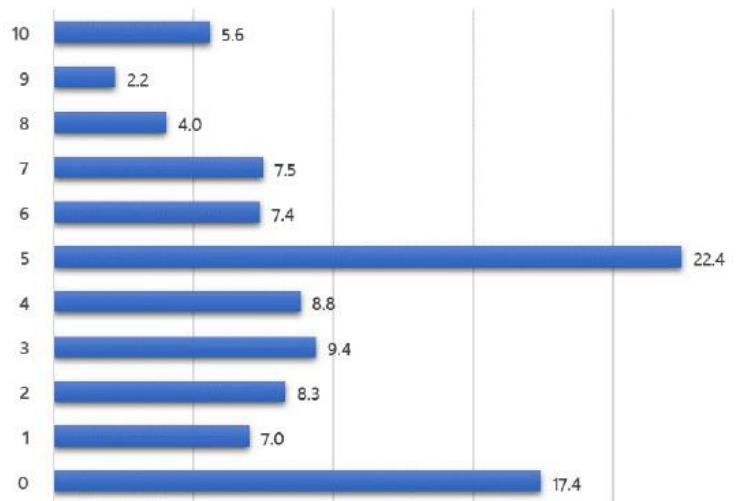
It can be seen that the independent state and the status quo which are the extreme of both ends were seen by many respondents as unpromising solutions to the problem. Most of them chose a compromising model, in which local people could have more say in the local administration than they do now and exercise it through the gubernatorial election while the area still remains part of the country, not an independent state.

**Chart 23: Referendum model to solve the Deep South’s problem (%)**



To the question of what kind of referendum on the Deep South solution they would like to see, **the majority (45.9%) said the referendum should only involve people in the southern border provinces. However, a similar percentage (40.7%) said that the referendum should be open to everyone in the country.** The variable group (9.5%) said they did not know, and 3.9% firmly stated that no referendum should be held.

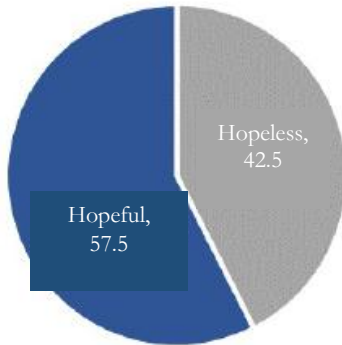
**Chart 24: How much should you be involved in solving the Deep South’s problem? (%)**



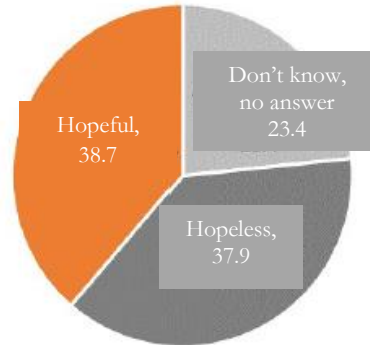
However, when asked how much they themselves should participate in solving the problem in the south on the scale of 1 to 10, half of the respondents (50.9%) did not think they should be highly involved. **The mean score of involvement was 4.04 out of 10.** Moreover, when considering the relationship between the level of self-involvement and the referendum model, it was found that those who perceived a high level of self-engagement in problem solving were likely to choose a nationwide referendum model. The two variables have a significant statistical correlation of 0.000, which could be interpreted that a referendum was seen by people outside the area as a concrete way through which they could participate in the problem solving.

**Chart 25: Hope for peace in the Deep South in the next five years (%)**

*Perspectives of the people outside the area*



*Perspectives of the people in the area from Peace Survey*



Finally, when asked if they hoped for peace to be established in the south in the next five years, **more than half of the respondents outside of the area (57.5%) felt hopeful**, but 42.5% felt hopeless. In comparison, **the local people seemed to be less hopeful** and expressed mixed feelings – hopeful, hopeless, and did not know – in similar proportions (38.7%, 37.9%, and 23.4%, respectively). Overall, however, many people, both outside and in the area, hoped for peace in the south in the next five years.