



VOTER REGISTRATION SURVEY REPORT

September 23 2020

Executive summary

LEON conducted a nationwide survey of 8339 people between 17 and 26 August this year. The survey was conducted with a random selection of locations and households across all counties and electoral districts and give a solid representation of the population as a whole.

LEON found that 14% of the population are not registered, with the majority of these being under the age of 25 with a slight upweight amongst women. However, there are around 6% of people in other age groups who did not register during the 2019 and the main reason why they didn't register was due to lack of time. Apart from people not having registered, 21.5% said they have moved to a different electoral district and 27% said that they have lost their voter registration cards, both of which would need to come to the registration center to update their details in order to be able to vote. In total, 74% of respondents said they would need to come to the registration center to register, re-register or replace their voter card.

This is a problem since the voter registration teams will stay only three days in each location, and in most counties one voter registration location serves three voter precincts.

Of further concern is the lack of information available to the public. 41% of respondents had not heard about the update and of these only 11% knew when it would start. This was only two to three weeks prior to the start of the update. The problem is exacerbated in rural or remote locations where the much information is gathered by word of mouth and most people would have to go to a distant precinct to register or re-register. Thus, it would appear that only a small percentage of those who need registration services will be able or know to do so.

Overall, LEON is concerned that the current update will only serve a very small percentage of the people who need to update their details due to lack of going to every precinct, lack of information to the general public and lack of time.

Over 15% of all respondents said that in 2017 they had difficulty in accessing the voter registration center due to there being steps, or it being on an upper floor, or because there were trenches around the center. LEON again calls upon the NEC to address this issue for future processes and to ensure that people with disabilities and the elderly are assigned to ground level polling places in large precincts that have sites on multiple floors.

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Methodology

This survey was conducted by LEON's 238 surveyors between 17 and 28 August across all counties and all 73 electoral districts in Liberia, interviewing a total of 8339 people. Surveyors were required to travel to three locations, chosen for them from LISGIS population data. One of the locations was close to where they live and the other two were more distant. Surveyors had to give a GPS location for each location visited and these are checked to ensure that they have travelled to the correct locations. 1650 separate villages or locations were surveyed in total.

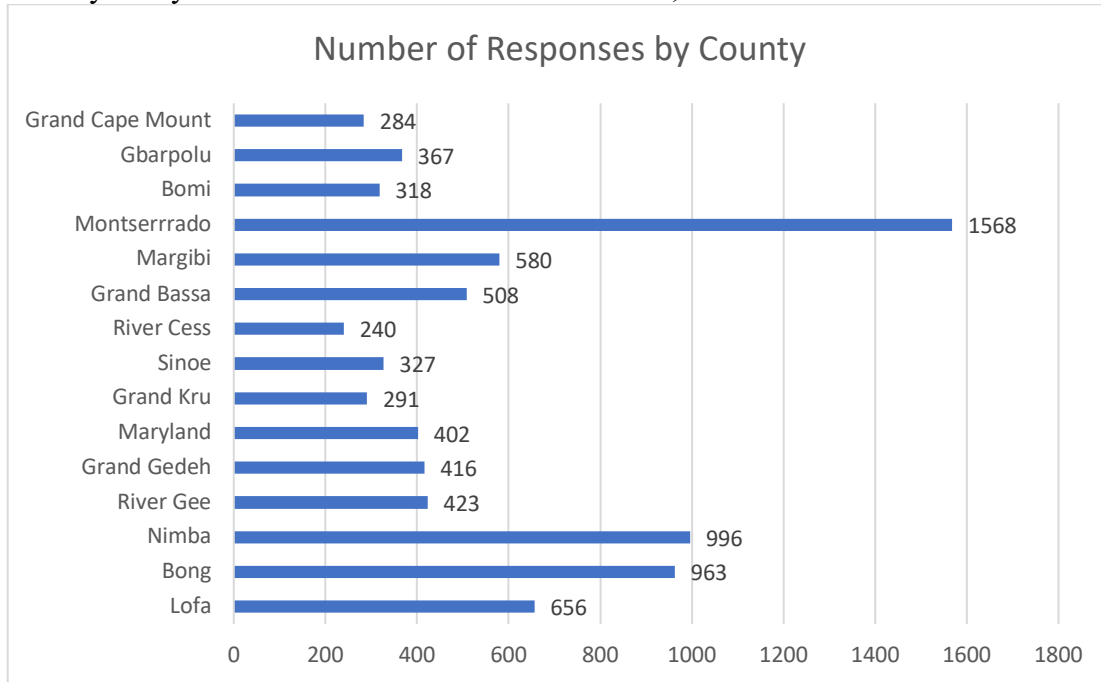
Interviews were conducted face to face and the interviewee must first give permission (informed consent). Each surveyor conducted 12 interviews in each location –totalling 36 surveys per surveyor.

Surveyors were required to randomly select the direction to start and the first house through spinning a bottle or pen. From this starting point, every 10th house was selected or every 5th in small villages. The person within each household was selected by first asking how many people over the age of 18 belong to the household and then selecting the person with the first birthday in the year. If birthdates were not known the person could be selected by drawing numbers.

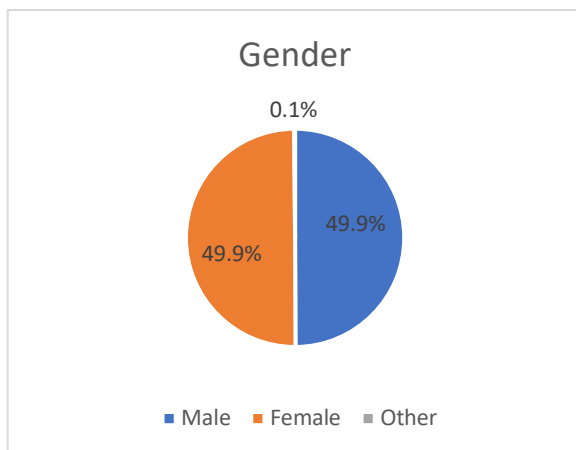
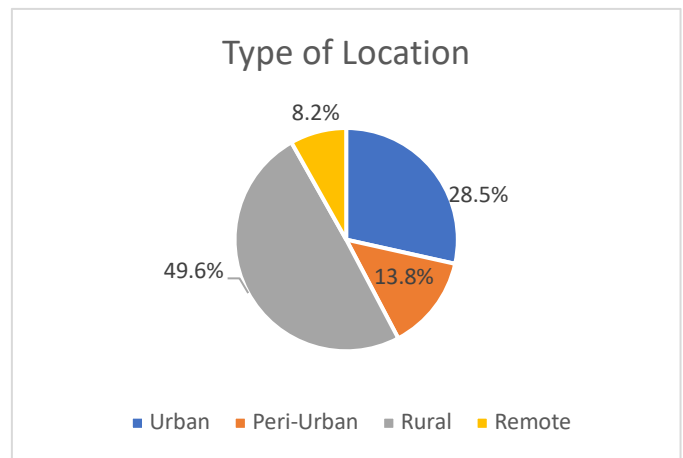
A data analysis software, ELMO, was use in analysis and ArcGIS Pro was use on creating map from GPS locations. Full details are available upon request along with the full survey questionnaire.

Demographics

LEON deployed between 3 and 4 surveyors in each of the 73 electoral districts across the country. They each conducted around 36 interviews, across three different locations.

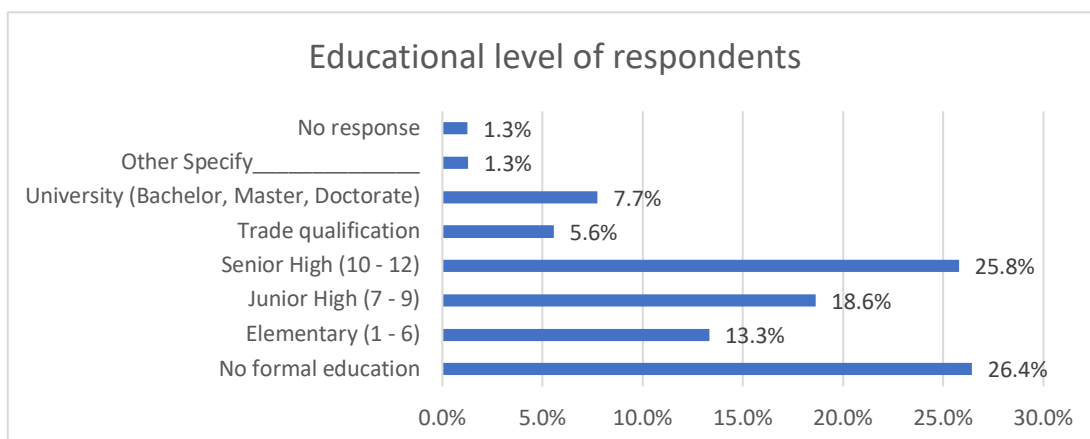
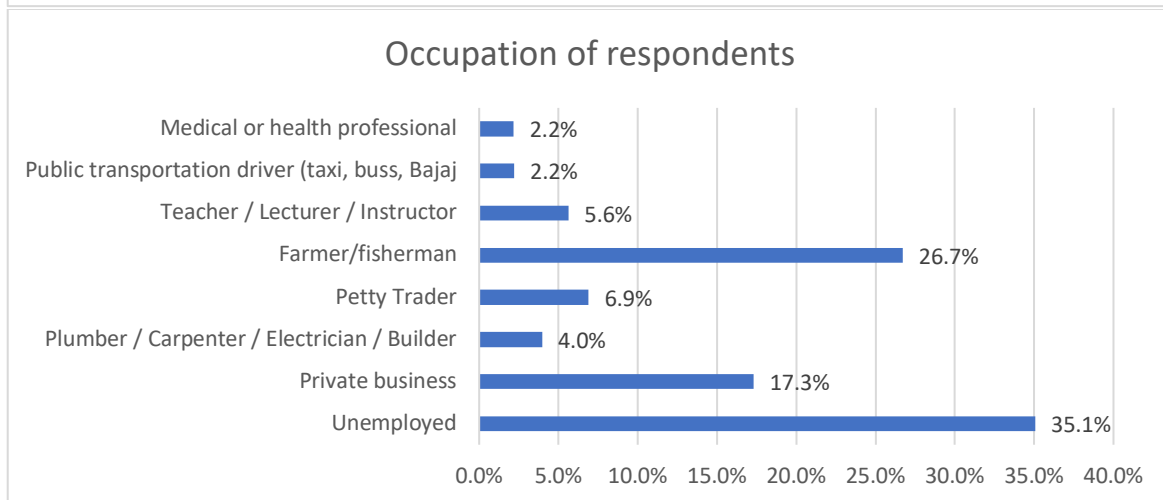
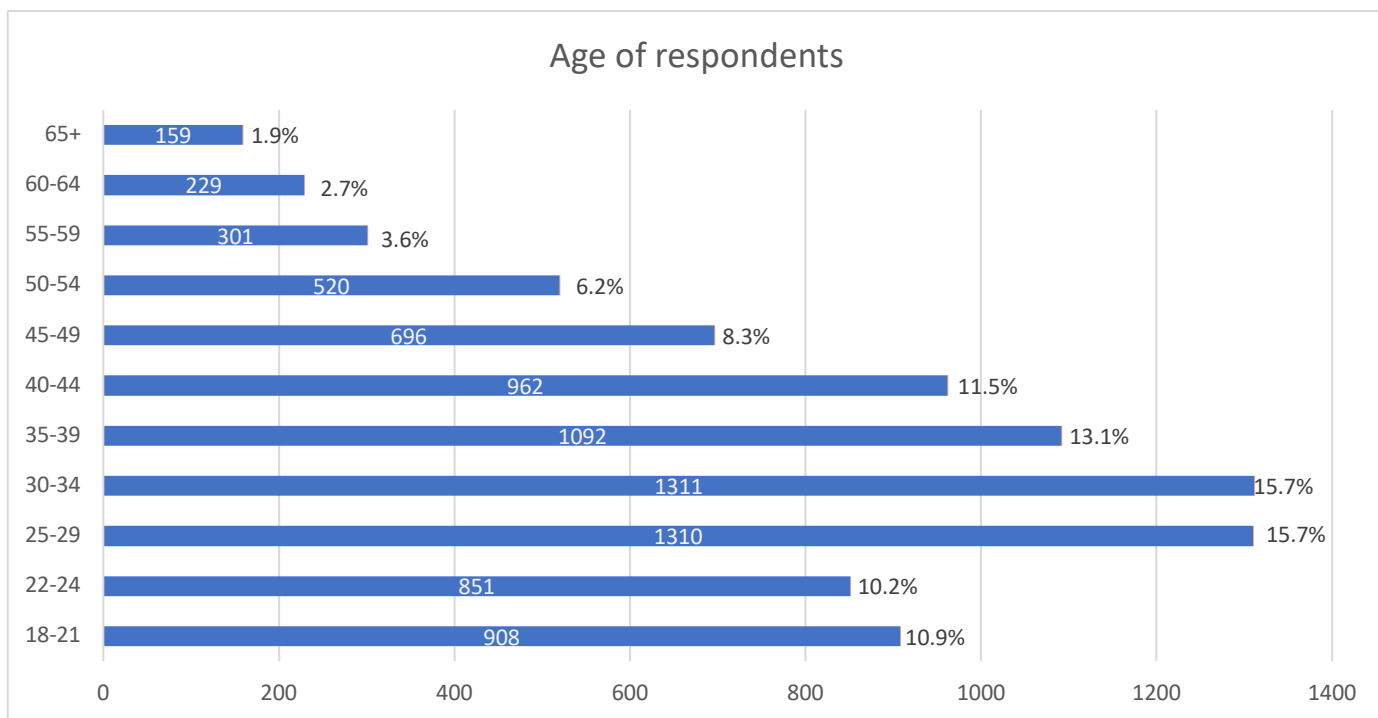


Surveyors were given randomly selected villages, based on population data from The Liberia Institute of Statistical Geo Information Services to travel to conduct the survey, ensuring that the survey areas reflect the national population distribution. Almost half the locations where surveys were conducted were rural, and just over a quarter were in urban areas.



The gender split of respondents was almost exactly half and half with just 11 respondents self identifying as 'other'.

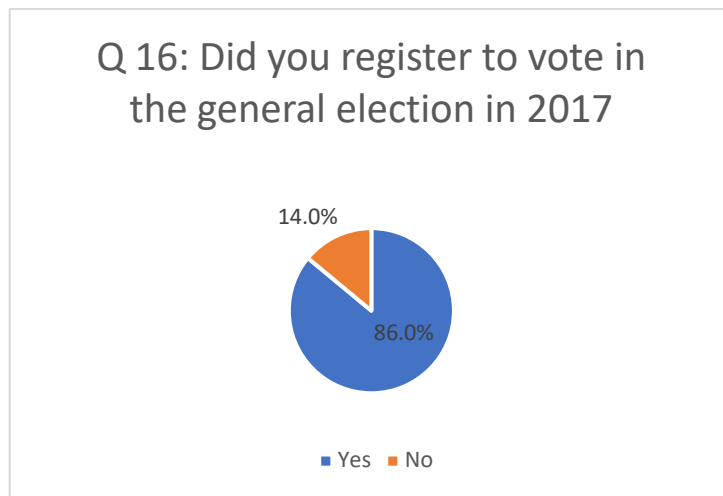
The age of respondents can also be seen to follow the likely national figures, with declining numbers for each age group. Almost 11% of respondents were aged 18-21 and will therefore be first time voters in the coming Special Senatorial Elections and Constitutional Referendum



Since the sample size is so large and representative of the national demographics, occupational and educational level data provides valuable insight into the overall population statistics of Liberia. Over a third of respondents identify as unemployed and a quarter as farmers or fishermen. Over a quarter of the population say they have no formal education.

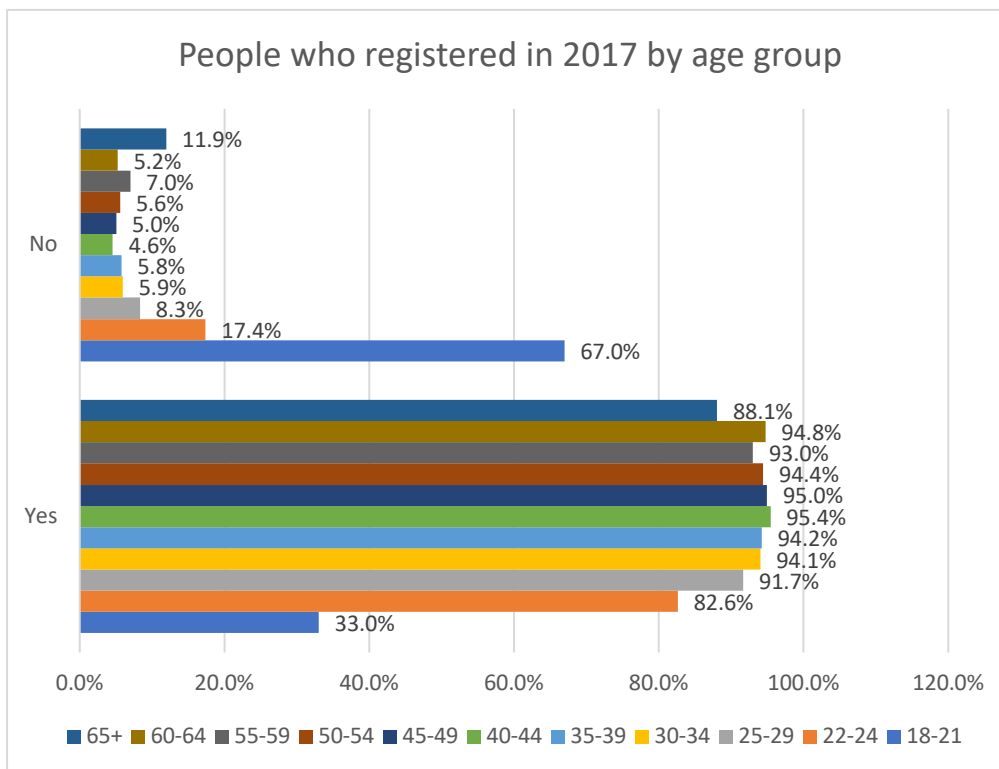
VOTER REGISTRATION SURVEY FINDINGS

Voter registration in 2017

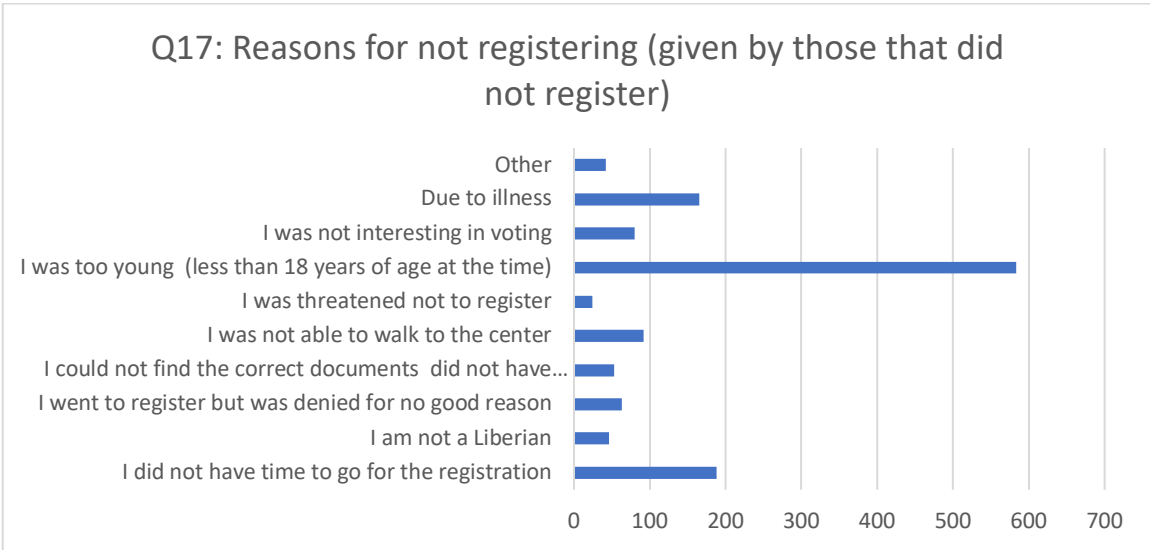


14% of all respondents nationwide did not register to vote in 2017, which was higher amongst women than men (16.6% of women are unregistered).

There was no significant difference in registration between urban and rural and urban areas.

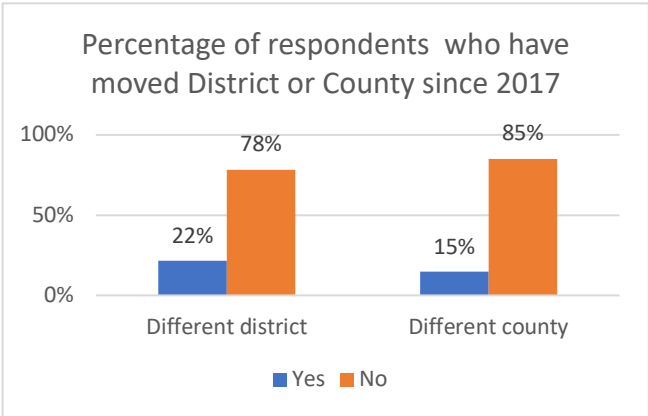


When we look at differences between age brackets only 5-6% of people over the age of 25 had not registered to vote – the biggest number of unregistered people are in the 18-21 year old and 22-25 year brackets. Concerningly, 30% of people who would not have been eligible to register in 2017 said they had registered – ie were underage when they registered.



A third of the people who were over voting age at the time of the 2017 voter registration said they did not register because they did not have time. This is concerning considering the large number of people who need to register in each location and have only three days in which to do so.

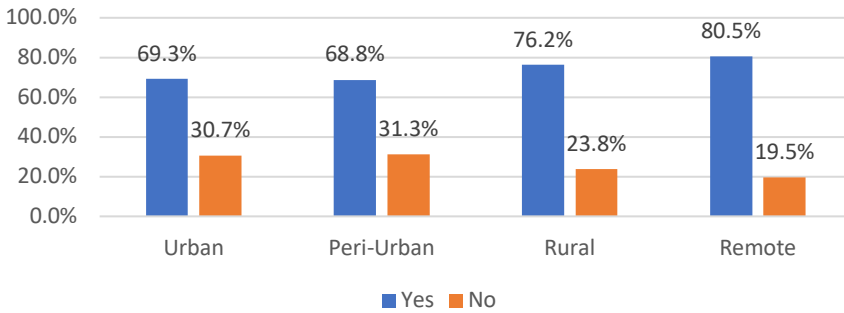
Percentages of Voters needed to go to a Voter registration center



Over a fifth of respondents that had registered to vote in 2017 have moved electoral districts since and 15% have moved county. This means they will need to de register and re register during the update in order to be able to vote in the Special senatorial elections. People in rural or remote areas were slightly more likely to have moved location than those in urban or peri urban areas.

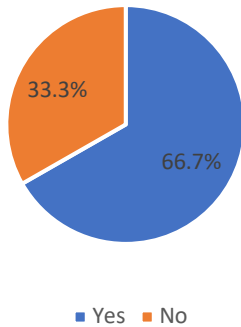
Q 21: Are you now living in a different district to where you registered in 2017? Q22: Are you now living in a different county to where you registered in 2017?

Q25: Are you planning to register, change your registration details or replace your card during the voter roll update



74% of all respondents said they would plan to register, re-register in as new location or replace their voter card during a voter registration update. This is a huge figure when the voter registration update centers are only open in each location for three days and are serving several precincts in some counties.

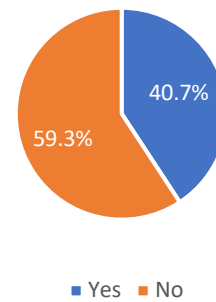
Q24: Are you planning to check that your details are correct on the voter roll during the update



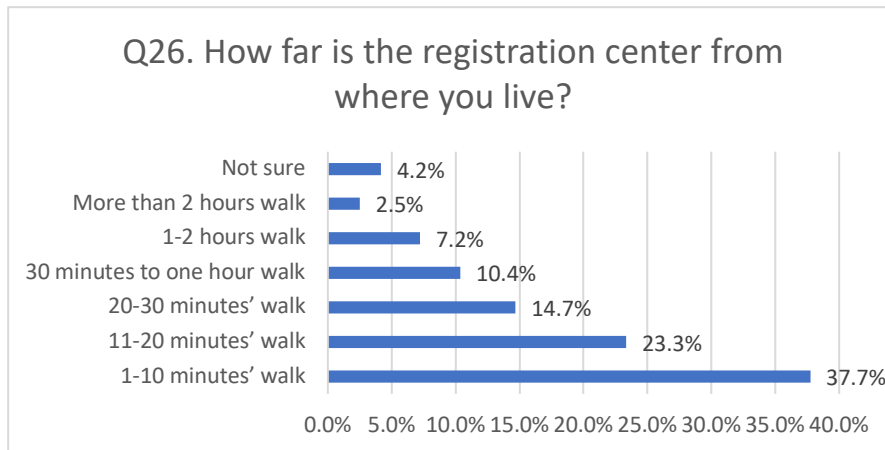
There was almost equal appetite to go to the voter registration update centers in urban and rural locations. Adding to the problem a further two thirds of voters wanted to check that their details are correct on the register.

Just over 40% of all respondents said that someone in their family has died since they registered in 2017. There is no provision in the NEC manual for voter registration staff on removing deceased people from the voter list however a third of those who said that a family had died said they would go to the registration center to remove the name. It is hard to say how many people this translates into since people will have different sizes of family. However the figure is likely to represent somewhere in excess of 4% of the total voters roll. This could also adversely affect the passage of the constitutional reform passage since two thirds of registered voters are needed to pass the legislation. There is also a risk of people voting for dead relatives which will need to be mitigated against on election day by rigorous checking of the ink on peoples fingers.

Q29: Has anyone in your family who registered in 2017 died since then?

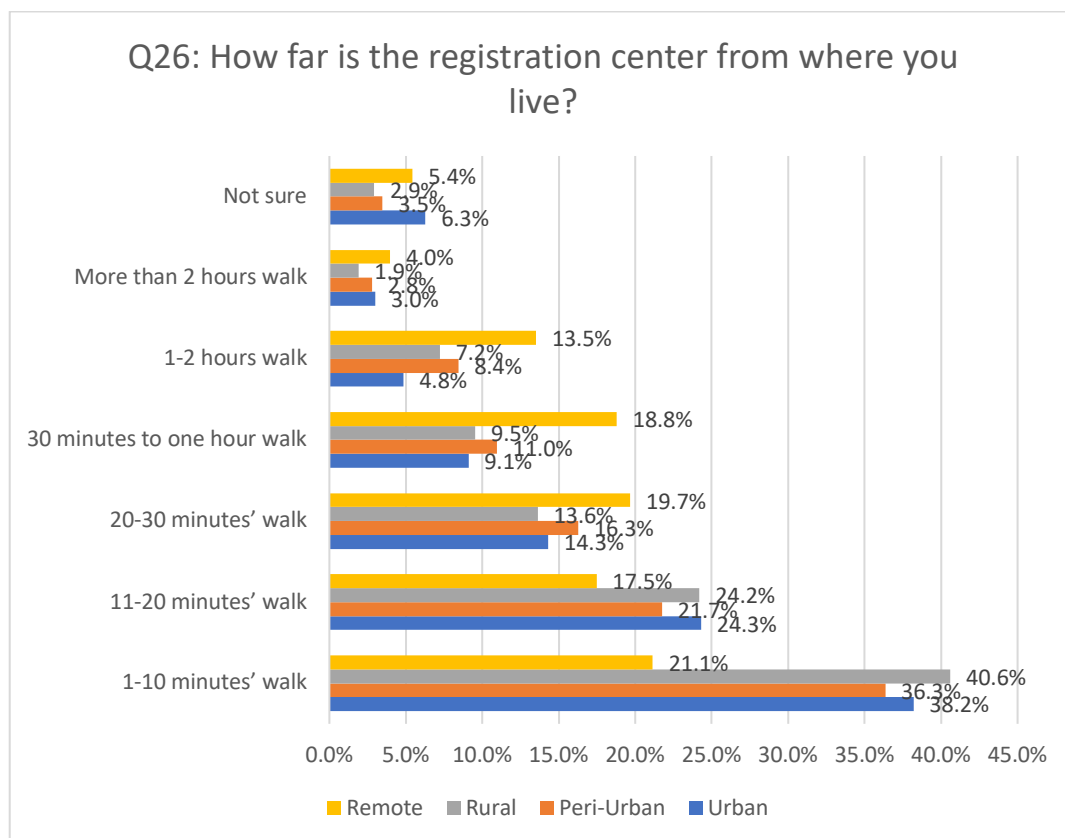


Accessibility of the Voter Registration Center



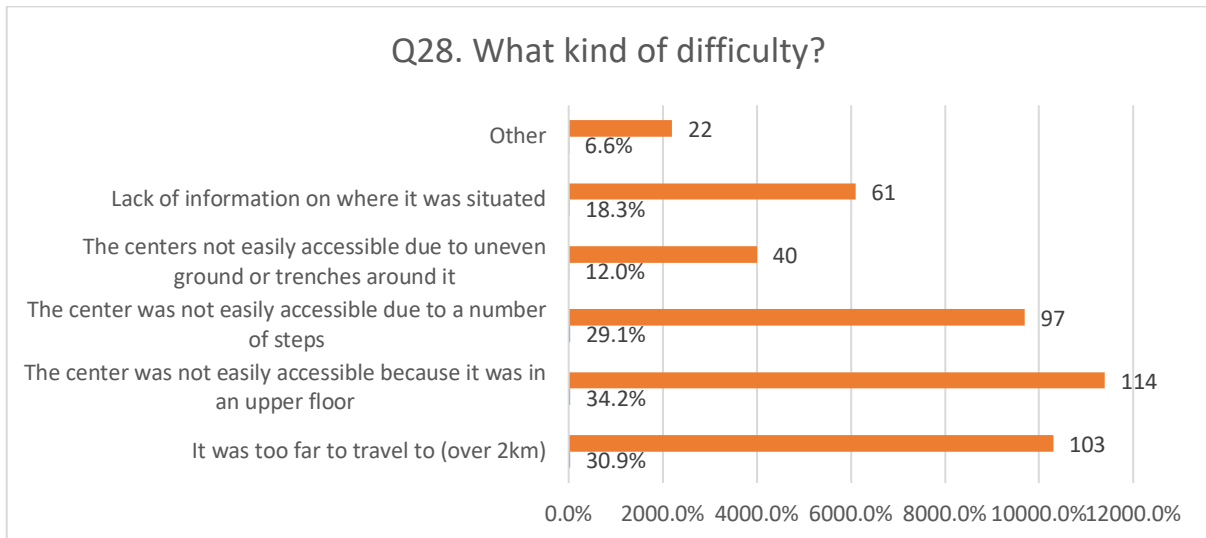
Over 20% of people interviewed live more than half an hour away from their voter registration center in 2017, rising to 36.3% if respondents living in locations classified as remote. Considering that people living in remote locations are not being visited by the current voter

registration teams, since they are only visiting one precinct in four in most counties, the current update exercise cannot be considered accessible for people except for those in the immediate vicinity of the one precinct where voter registration is happening,



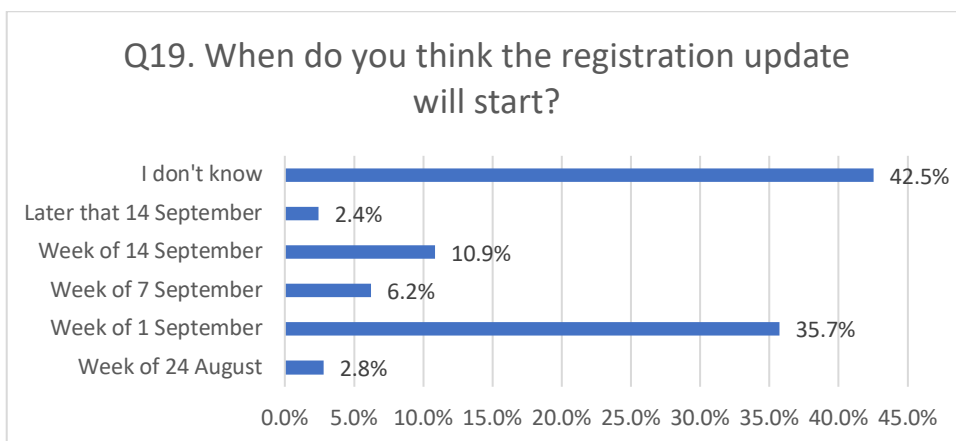
9.75% of all people surveyed said they have a disability. Almost half (48.6%) of respondents said that they had difficulty in accessing the voter registration center in 2017. 31% of these said that this was because the center was too far to travel and 18% said because there was lack of information on where the center was situated. Both of these issues are likely to be more of an issue for the voter registration update since only one four precincts will be visited outside of densely populated areas.

Two thirds of people who had difficulties (i.e. over 15% of the total number of respondents), reported that they experienced difficulties in 2017 due to there being steps, or the center was situated on an upper floor or because there were trenches around the center. LEON, NUOD and the Alliance for Disabilities have been talking to the NEC about this issue since 2016 and nothing has been done, yet again, to assign people with disabilities or the elderly to lower floor precincts.



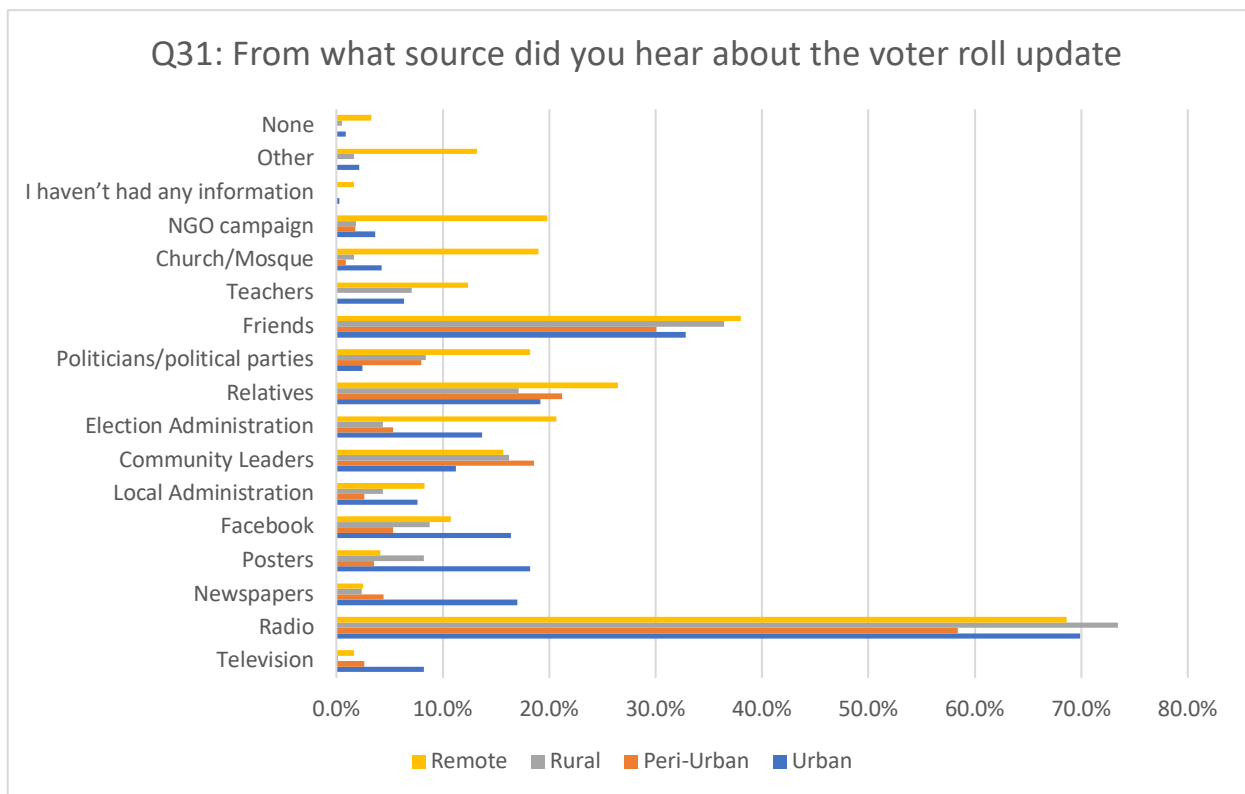
Information sources and awareness of the update

Fourty one percent of respondents had not heard about the voter register update – which is high considering that the survey was conducted between three and two weeks before the start of registration. Of those who had heard about it only 6% could give the correct starting week for the registration.

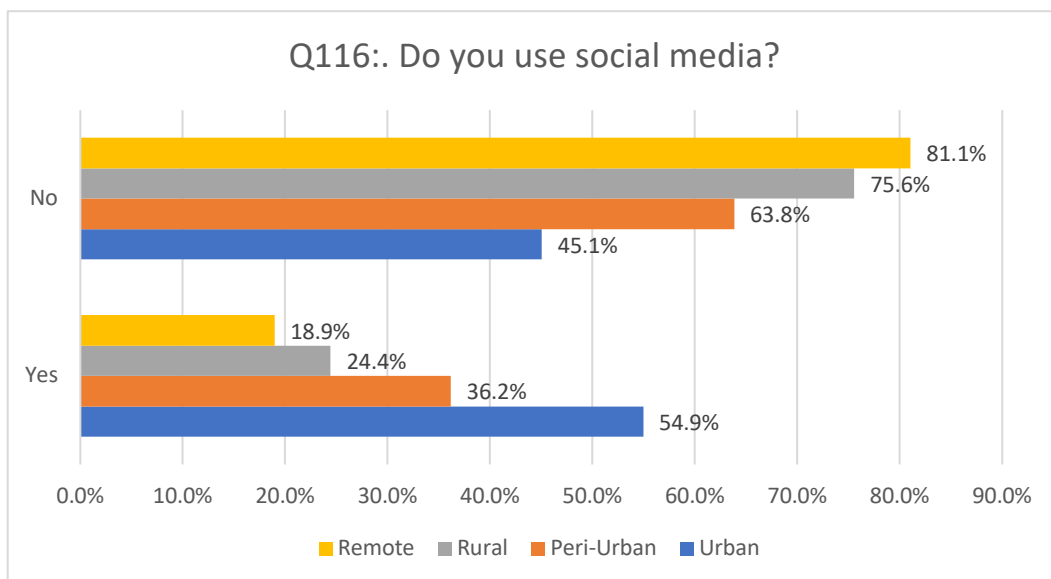


Over 70% of respondents got information on the voter registration update from Radio, which was prevalent in rural and urban areas, As might be expected Facebook, Posters and Newspapers all had penetration in urban areas – up to around 18% of respondents but very little outside of urban centers. NGOs churches and mosques replaced these media as a means of getting information in remote areas, Friends and relatives were also important across all

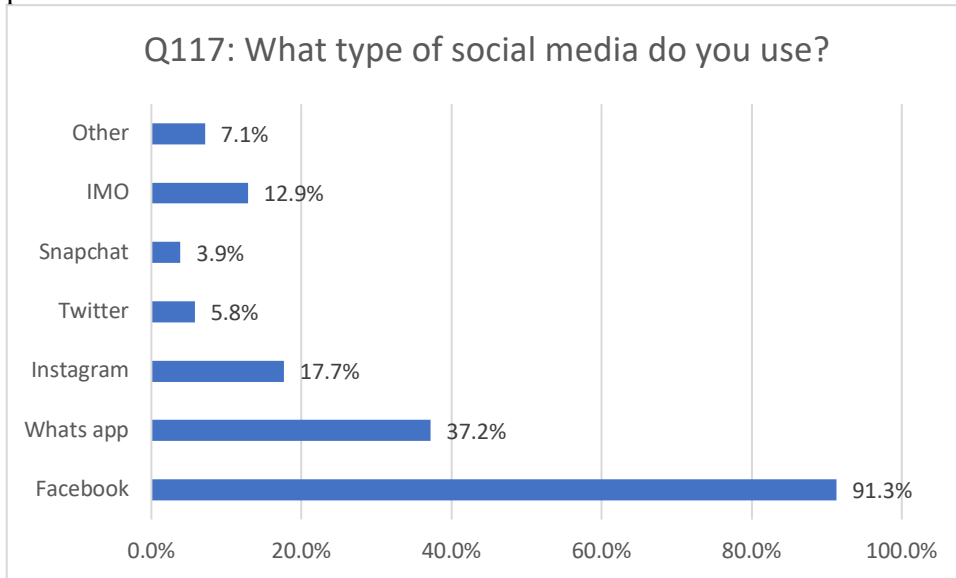
areas – which carries with it the possibility of misinformation. Community leaders were as important for information in remote areas as NGOs but also important in all other locations.



The survey also took a closer look at social media usage, since there is less information available on this emerging platform. A third of all respondents said they used social media and this rose to 55% in urban areas, indicating that is becoming an effective form of communication.

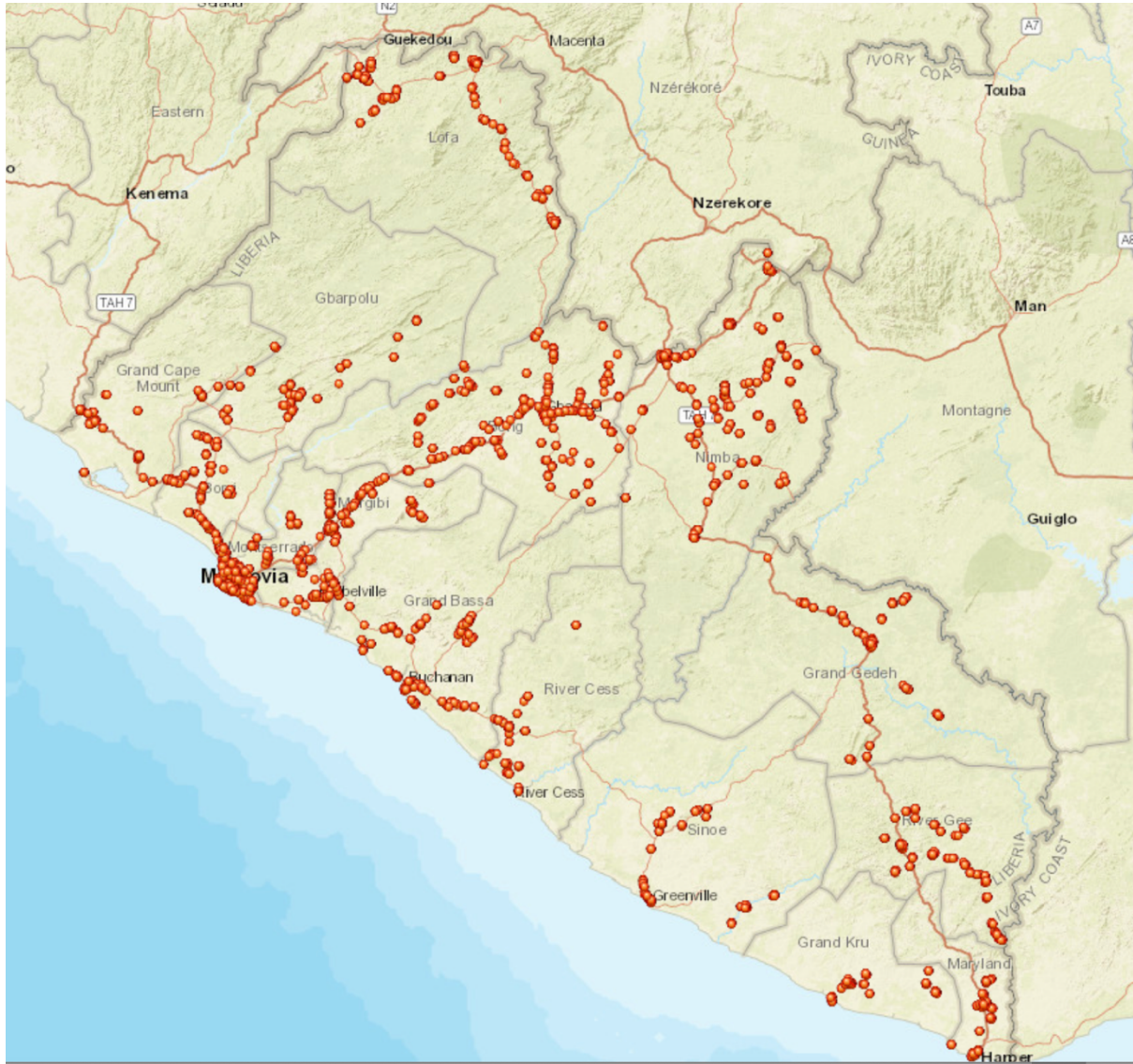


Of the respondents who said they use social media almost all of them used Facebook. Whatsapp is also growing in popularity with a third of all users using this. Twitter has low penetration.



Only 21% of respondents using social media said they follow political parties or candidates through the media so this area. However, the survey was conducted four months prior to the election so this could grow and with it the propensity for dangerous or hate speech. LEON will be monitoring the main political coalitions and leading candidates for hate speech and disinformation in the coming months.

Voter registration survey locations



ABOUT LEON

LEON launched in May 2017 is a platform of four Liberian Civil Society Organizations: The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), Liberia Crusaders for Peace (LCP), Federation of Liberia Youth (FLY) and National Union of Organizations for the Disabled (NUOD) with the goal of meaningfully contributing to democratization processes in Liberia. LEON observed the 2017 elections with over 1000 observers and has observed subsequent by-elections. LEON has a core team in Monrovia and observers stationed in all 73 electoral districts of Liberia and a further 200 surveyors. The observers are currently reporting on the voter registration update and LEON will be releasing statements based on their findings. LEON will shortly be releasing results of a major survey into Violence Against Women in Elections and Politics; and a survey knowledge of the constitutional referendum.

LEON receives technical support from the Carter Center and funding from the Swedish Cooperation for the conduct of this survey and would like to extend thanks and appreciation to both for enabling us to conduct this research.

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