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SURVEY ON YOUTH PROSPECTS AND ATTITUDES

Drawn from 6400 respondents aged 11-34, interviewed between January 24 and February 7 2020

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SURVEY ON YOUTH PROSPECTS AND ATTITUDES

Executive Summary

The survey was conducted by the Liberia Election Observation Network (LEON) between January 24 and February 7, 2020 to find out some basic facts about when young people are likely to leave school, what sort of job prospects they might have depending on their educational level, what sort of job prospects they would like to have, and what might encourage them to go further with their education. As well as surveying a random selection of young people, LEON also conducted surveys of particularly marginalised youths - sex workers and drug users - to find out their specific attitudes, behaviour's and needs. A total of 6400 young people between the ages of 11 and 34 were interviewed for this survey of whom 666 were sex workers, 1378 were drug users and 4356 were randomly selected in areas where young people congregate.

The survey found that a lot of young people do not have the required education needed to be gainfully employed with 43% of men and 38% of women having little or no formal education. Only 15% of respondents were employed, and the figure was even lower amongst drug users and sex workers. This lack of prospects was cited as a major factor in drug use and seeking sex work, especially among minors. Young people generally thought that having A higher level of education would help them get a job although for some they said they would have to relocate since there were no jobs in the area. Almost 60% of respondents said they would return to school if education was free.

LEON, therefore, recommends that the government of Liberia expand investment in education, especially in rural areas, as well as provide access to education and training for the most vulnerable, cost-excluded youth, including improving the quality of education and addressing the skills gaps to allow young men and women to meet market needs better.

Thirty one respondents age 11 to 14 said they were employed, which is against the Decent Work Act prohibition against child labour. While the Government of Liberia has increased the protection offered to children, effective enforcement of such laws remains a serious challenge. A particular problem is a lack of awareness among lawmakers and parents about the risks and potential ramifications of harmful forms of child labor.

Almost 37% of young men and 25% of young women were members of a political party and these percentages were higher over the age of 20, with almost half of 30 to 34 year olds involved in a political party. Since political activism is a popular activity for young people, political parties have

a duty to treat them with respect. LEON has observed that the leaders of County level youth wings tend to be male and that political parties have a tendency to use unemployed youth when they need a crowd rather than involve them meaningfully in decision-making.

Almost 73% of respondents said they had sex for the first time between the ages of 15 to 19 and 16.6% had sex between the ages of 10 to 14, indicating that a large percentage of Liberians are having sex while under the age of consent. 9% of girls and 3% of men reported having been forced to have sex at some time in their life.

Having completed at least primary education or having a formal employment were found to be factors that would lower the likelihood of a young person becoming involved in sex work. The survey showed that young people decides to engage in sex work to meet a range of needs due to the limited options that they have.

Sex work was found to be a very vulnerable occupation with 36% of sex workers reporting that they had been forced to have sex and 80% saying that they had been physically hurt or sexually abused on a regular basis while providing sex services. Almost 60% of sex workers said they had done drugs before or while providing sexual services.

In the general population, 55% of men and 50% of women had used alcohol, of him 64% had their first drink between the ages of 15 and 19 but 22% had their first drink between the ages of 10 and 14. On the positive side, only six persons (3%) of the randomly selected respondents surveyed had used drugs.

For drug users the vast majority were introduced to drugs below the age of 19 with 16% having used drugs between the ages of 10 to 14. Marijuana was by far the drug most used but opium, tramadol and cocaine also scored highly. Almost 2/3 of respondents interviewed in drug user areas said that they considered themselves to be addicted, however they showed a willingness to get into rehabilitation programmes, get counselling or getaway from their current set of friends as means to getting clean. getting a job was also seen as key to getting away from drug use.

It is therefore clear to LEON that improved opportunities for education and pathways to work will help young people avoid the traps of sex work or drugs. easily accessible pathways into rehabilitation programmes and to get people away from their current circle need to be available to help people who are engaged in sex work or drug abuse.

LEON, which 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.

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Background:

A critical time of life for young people is during their youth when they start to realize their dreams, expect their economic freedom, and find their place in society. Some factors, such as high unemployment rate, low-quality jobs, and inequalities among various marginalized groups, exacerbate the vulnerability of young people.

Liberia, a young country with more than one-third of its population between the age of 15 and 35, has 85 percent of youth unemployment, according to the United Nations, confirmed by this survey. The civil wars, amongst other factors referenced in this survey, impacted Liberia's economy resulting in the widespread unemployment of young people. Youth unemployment and underemployment pose a huge cost for Liberia in terms of economic, societal growth, and politics.

While Liberia has made significant gains in human development, its human development indicators, however, remain low in comparison to most other countries. Liberia continues to have one of the lowest human development indexes in the world, ranking 176 out of 188 countries in 2019 (UN Human Development Report 2015). Poverty remains a significant socioeconomic issue, with nearly 70% of the population in Liberia living on less than \$1.90 per day, 20 percentage points higher than other developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Organizations representing youth in Liberia express frustration with the absence of government services provided to young people to improve their lives and opportunities for advancement.

Massive youth unemployment constitutes a real security concern, and there have been many instances of their being paid to participate in demonstrations, voter registration often trucking them from one place to another, and negative political party activity. There are also concerns about the number of young people becoming involved in drug use and sex work. Given the significant role that young people can play in driving the economy and the country, a national policy needs to be developed to skill these youths into the mainstream.

Too frequently, young people are excluded by decision-makers-to the detriment of young people themselves and future generations. In order to empower and enable young people to become drivers of change, it is crucial to understand the challenges faced by disadvantaged, marginalized youth, using data from censuses, demographics, and surveys such as this, among other sources.

Objectives:

The survey aimed to assess how youth are affected by certain issues such as educational attainment, job prospects and other aspirations. It also assesses their involvement in politics and political parties. We looked at the scale and importance of different issues faced by youth and ascertain what solutions they are interested in to inform government, NGOs, and donors of potential sustainable actions to create better outcomes for young people on these issues.

The survey aimed to get a representative sample of young people from all walks of life across Liberia. LEON also specifically targeted venues for sex workers and areas known to be frequented by drug users in order to capture the views and experience of the most marginalized and desperate young people. These were treated as separate samples in this analysis to retain the representative portrait of the lives and needs of other young people.

LEON, through this survey and its analysis, sought to understand the reasons why these young people got into sex work, drug abuse, or both. This survey also aims to discern if marginalized youths want to get out of their current living situation (drugs or sex work) and, the best ways to help them get back into the mainstream.

Finally, the survey seeks to identify ways to promote youth development by improving young people's prospects through education, employment, and social rehabilitation.

Methodology:

The results of LEON's survey on Marginalized Youth was based on face to face qualitative interviews with 6,400 citizens across Liberia's 15 counties from January 24, 2020 to February 7, 2020. Surveyors were given randomly selected villages or towns and were instructed to go to areas known to be frequented by young people such as football pitches, entertainment centers, intellectual centers, beaches, and school campuses. For this survey, there was a maximum of 5 interviews to be chosen randomly in each location. Where a child was under the age of 16 and a parent was present, parental consent was gained.

For the sex worker and drug user samples these were conducted in cities and mining towns.

Interviewees were aged 11-34, following the Liberian Revised National Youth Policy (2012-2017), which culturally and socially recognizes Youth as persons ages 15 to 35 and surveyors were instructed to get roughly equal numbers of male and female participants.

The interviewees were selected based on a mixed methodology of randomized cluster sampling and stratified sampling. To capture diverse information, some interviewees were selected at random in places where youths gather. Stratified sampling was used within county capitals—where college campuses, drug use, and sex work is more common—to ensure that the survey’s sample included both young people who are especially marginalized and those who are doing well. The results are representative of the experiences and opinions of these youths.

The core of the survey was uniform across groups. The standardized survey interviews comprised questions that were generalized around a person’s background, education, employment, family, and beliefs. However, if an interviewee answers yes to taking drugs, or yes to sex work, additional questions come up. This additional classification of a respondent extended the survey by 10 minutes, or 20 if they answer yes to both drug use and sex work. The survey questions for both drug users and sex workers were tailored towards their specific experiences and opinions.

Methodology varied slightly between the different groups, for both interviewers and interviewees. Sex workers and drug users interviews received different, area-specific informed consent forms. Long Term Observers (LTOs) conducting interviews with these groups also received tailored instructions on how to properly conduct their interviews.

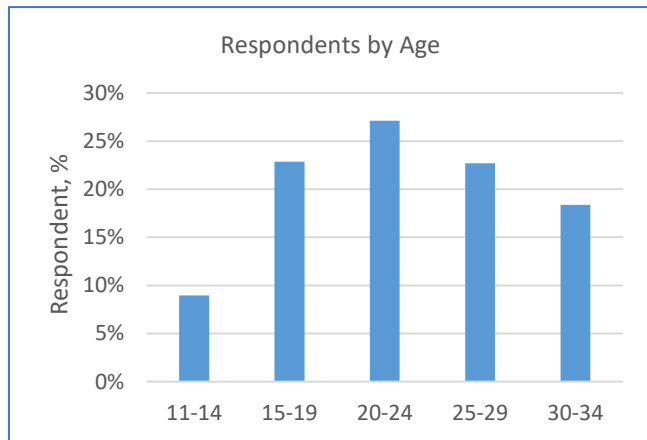
During the conduct of this survey, safety of both the interviewers and the interviewees was paramount, and, as such, both parties were made aware of various safety measures. Through the informed consent forms, interviewees were told of the protection brought by the anonymity of their responses and private questioning. Interviewers were encouraged to prioritize their safety by communicating clearly and taking multiple precautionary measures, which included not bringing their smartphones or valuables to interviews.

The authors (LEON) of this report designed the survey, edited the data, and conducted the analysis.

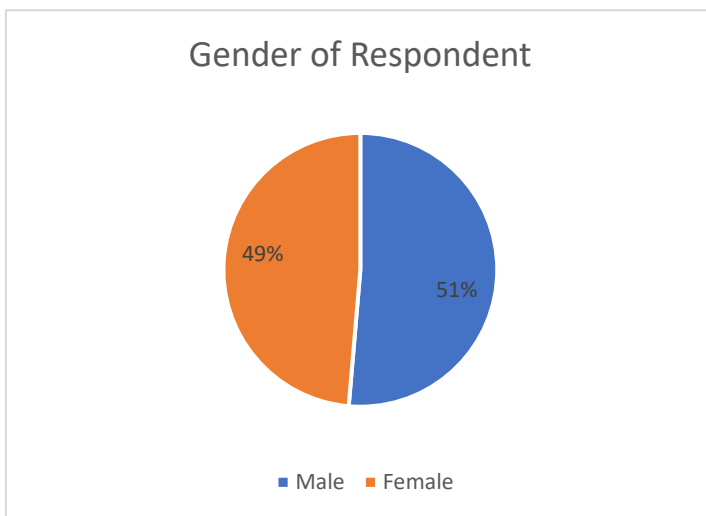
Survey Results

It is important to note a few things pertaining to the analysis of the data before viewing the results. When gender was not identified by respondents, data points were left out. Age groups are not consistent throughout the survey; questions that ask the participant for an integer age shows many outliers and differing responses. In this analysis, outliers were removed, and age groups were re-coded. Additionally, for qualitative questions (questions in which respondents provided open-ended responses, which were then coded) counts of each unique response were added to determine which keywords appeared most frequently.

Demographics

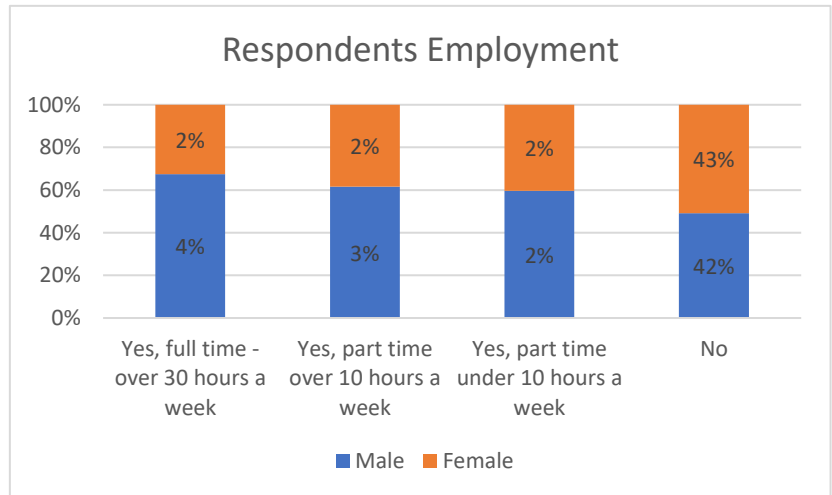


The majority of respondents were between the ages of 20-24, accounting for 27.1% of the respondents. Followed by age groups 15-19 and 25-29, which made up 22.9% and 22.7% of the respondents, respectively.

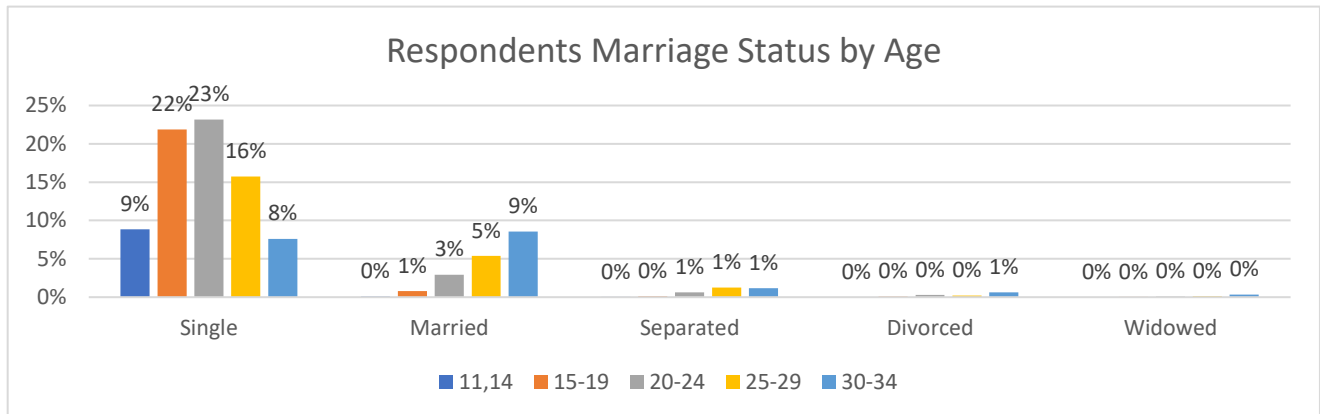


Of the respondents, 48.6% identified as female and 51.3% identified as male. Surveyors were trained to ensure that roughly equal numbers of men and women were surveyed. Some respondents either did not respond or identify with a gender. Of the respondents, 634 (9.9%) were people with a disability.

Additionally, 43% of women and 42% of men surveyed were unemployed, which accounts for 5,452 respondents in total. Only 4.3% of women and 6% of men, (417 people combined), were working full time.



The overwhelming majority of respondents were single (77.7% of the women and 76.8% of the men). Worryingly, 55 or 1% of the under 15s interviewed are married. There was no appreciable difference between men and women in their marital status

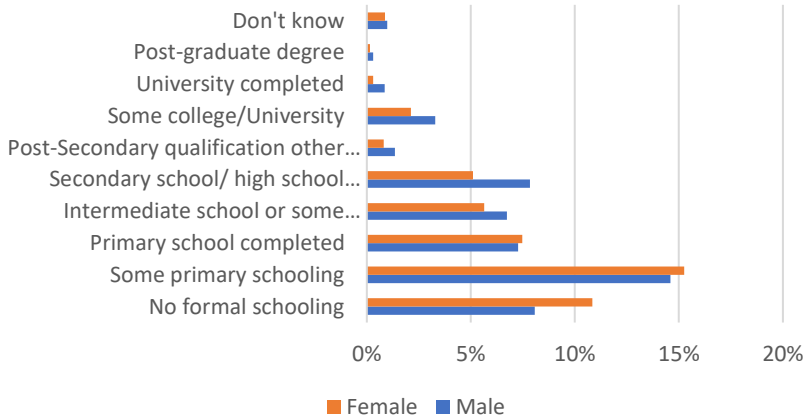


Section I: Education and Work Prospects

Education and training improve young people's potential prosperity and employment prospects and open up new opportunities in various industries. Educational attainment and progress can have a positive influence on young people's health, marriage and childbearing decisions, social capital, and quality of life. According to UNICEF, Liberia has one of the world's highest levels of out-school children, with an estimated 15 to 20 percent of 6–14-year-olds who are not in school, and only 54 percent of children complete primary education.¹

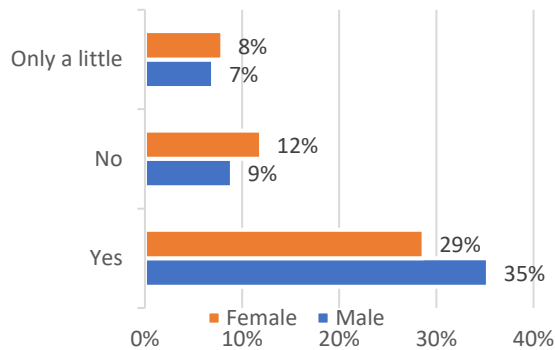
¹ Liberia, UNICEF. "Basic Education." *UNICEF Liberia*, 2020, www.unicef.org/liberia/basic_education.

Education level attained by respondents

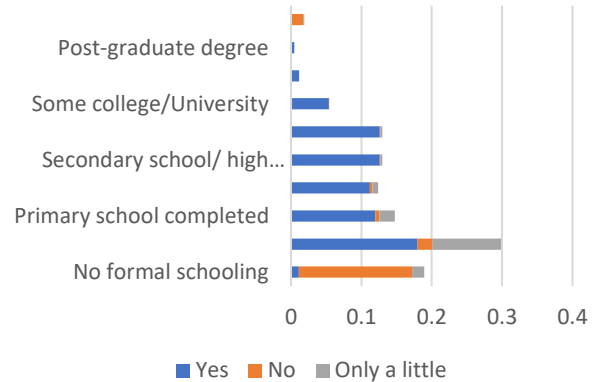


Of the 6,400 people interviewed, 8% of males and 11% of females do not have formal schooling. 43% of males 38% of females have little or no formal education. Generally, there are more males in each level of education to females. The majority of respondents who have at least some primary schooling or more education could read and write well while those with no formal schooling could not.

Literacy of Respondent



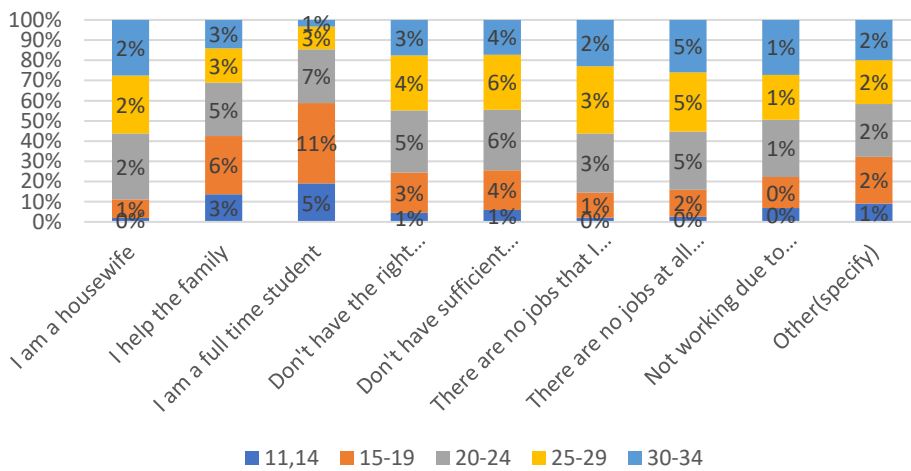
Respondent Literacy by Education



The survey shows that out of the 6,400 respondents, 35% of males could read and write, while only 29% of females could read. Females are more likely to be completely illiterate than males. Illiteracy rose substantially to 25% of all drug users and 30% of sex workers indicating that an inability to read and write is a substantial factor in driving youth towards these activities. Illiteracy was largely prevalent amongst young people with no formal schooling. Youths who had some primary school education or had completed primary school were largely able to read and write.

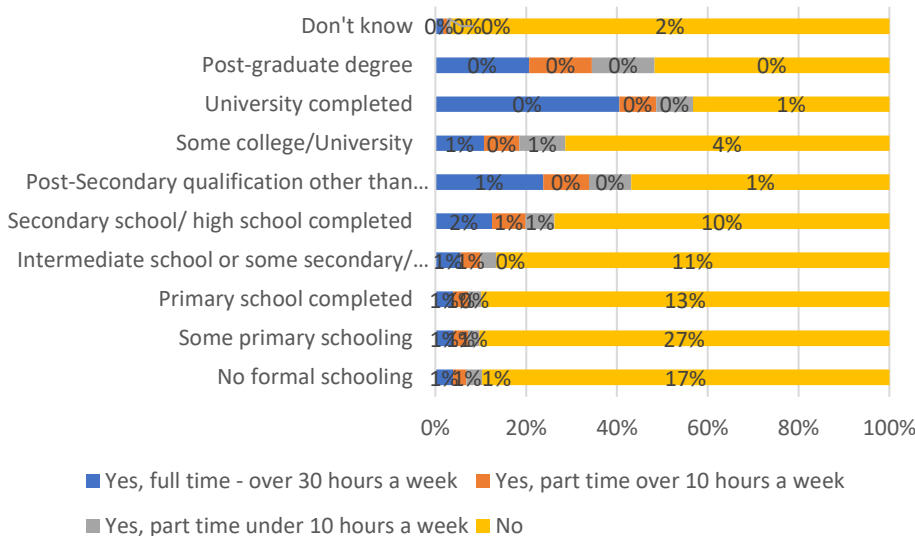
Notably, 85% (5,455) of the total respondents said they were unemployed, . Overall, 43% of women (2,765) and 42% of men (2,680) surveyed were un-employed. The figure rose to 91% of sex workers And 89% of drug users being unemployed.

Q29. Reason for not working by Age Group



Main reasons for not working were: Being a full-time student, while 21% said they did not have sufficient school qualifications to be gainfully employed. The survey also demonstrated that a person's education level affects the type of job they have.

Q22. Education level by Q26. Are you Employed?



Of the 943 interviewees that are employed, 889 people (13.8% of the overall sample size) specified their type of employment. 18.9% of those overall respondents are teachers, nurses, police officers, security, or army affiliated, with agriculture and fisheries being the second most popular with 18.8% of the employed respondents. Most popular jobs by education level: Agriculture and fisheries is the most popular industry

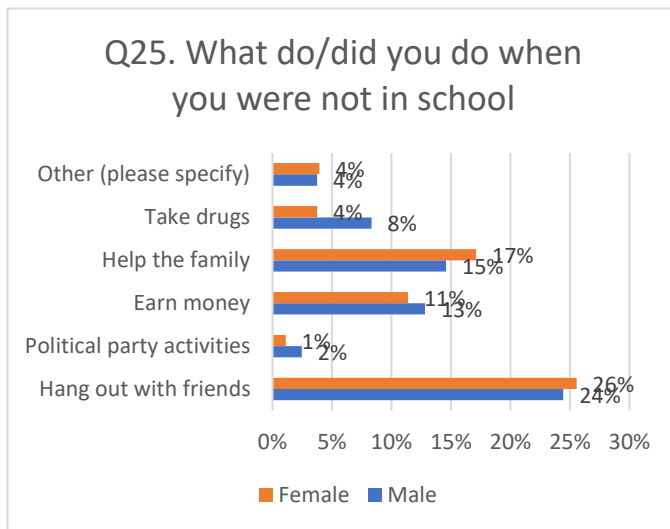
to work in for those with no formal schooling, some primary schooling, or completed primary schooling. Being a teacher, nurse, policeman, security or army affiliated are the most popular jobs for people who have intermediate school or some secondary/high school education, secondary school/high school completed, a post-secondary qualification other than university, some college/university, and university completed. This profession is equally as popular as being a manager, accountant, lawyer, doctor, or professor for the respondents with post-graduate degrees. Of these education levels, having some primary school education was associated with the highest level of unemployment (13%). In contrast, there were no unemployed respondent with post-secondary qualification other than university, had university completed, or received a post-graduate degree showing a strong link between being educated and being employed.

801 female respondents connected their unemployment to being a full-time student. Secondary to this reason was helping the family, which 678 women cited. Being a full-time student was the main reason cited for unemployment for respondents aged 11-24.

For respondents aged 25-29, not having sufficient school qualifications was their primary reason for being unemployed. For respondents aged 30-34, the primary reason for unemployment was no jobs at all in the area. For the few that said they were employed, 31 respondents within the age of 11-14 said they were employed, indicating child labor, which is against the Decent Work Act that prohibits employment of children younger than the age of 15.

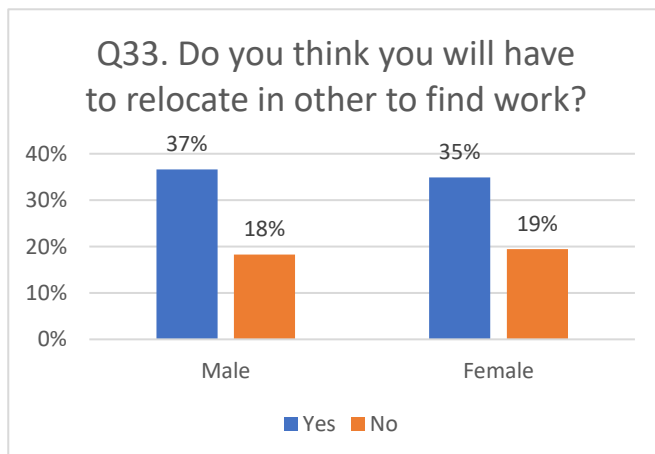
When asked what training they would find useful for getting a job, male respondents most often cited a university degree (19.3%), while the women cited better reading and writing skills/High school diploma (19.4%). Overall, a university degree and better reading and writing skills/high school diploma were the top listed useful trainings, with 1,610 respondents selecting the first and 1,427 respondents selecting the second.

Extracurricular Activities



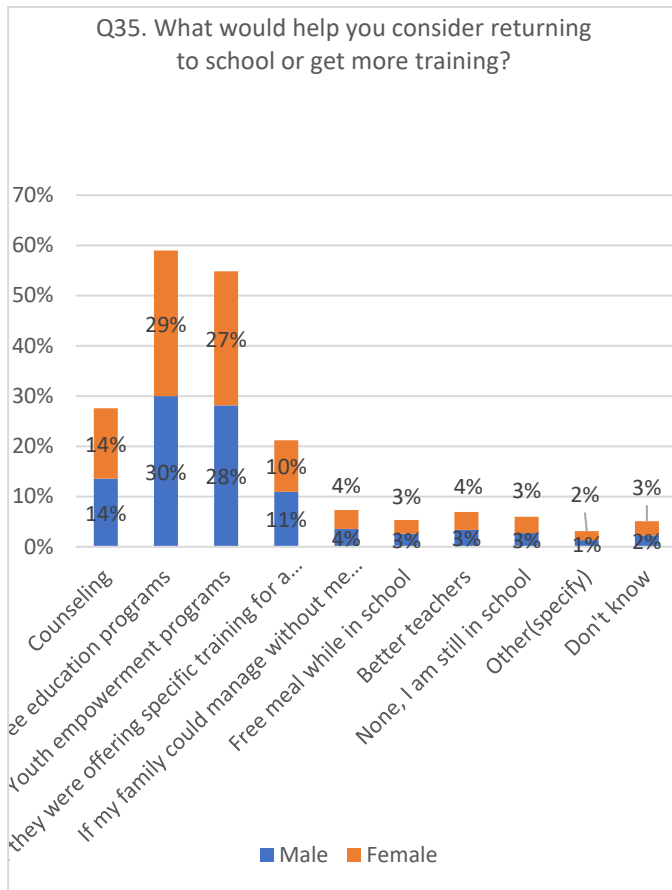
The survey revealed that 21% of respondents surveyed cut classes a lot, rising to 46% amongst drug users. Of the people who admitted to regularly 24% of males and 26% of females hang out with friends outside of school. When they are not working, or in school, 32% of respondents are at home, while video clubs and sports fields are the next most popular places, with 4% male and 4% female of respondents going there, respectively. 12% of non drug users or sex workers said they took drugs while they were not in school.

Future Prospects



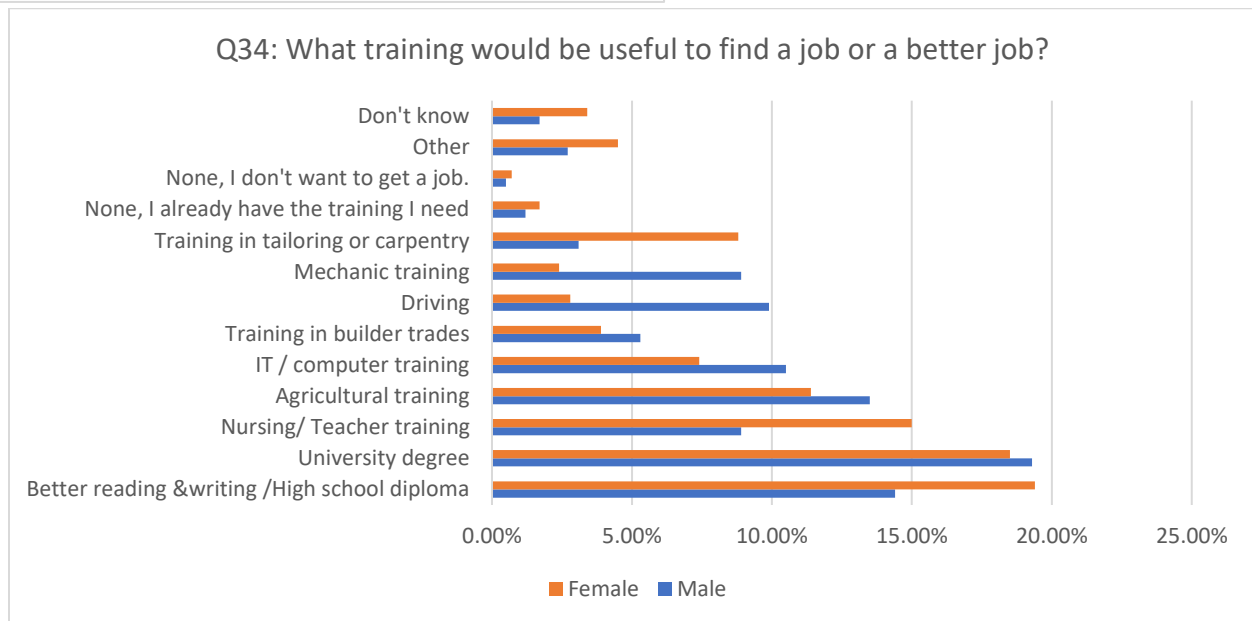
The survey also asked if girls and boys have equal opportunities to get an education in Liberia to which 73.2% of females and 75% of men agreed or strongly agreed.

Respondents who had left school without a high school diploma were asked what would help them consider returning to school to get more training. for both girls and boys free education and youth empowerment

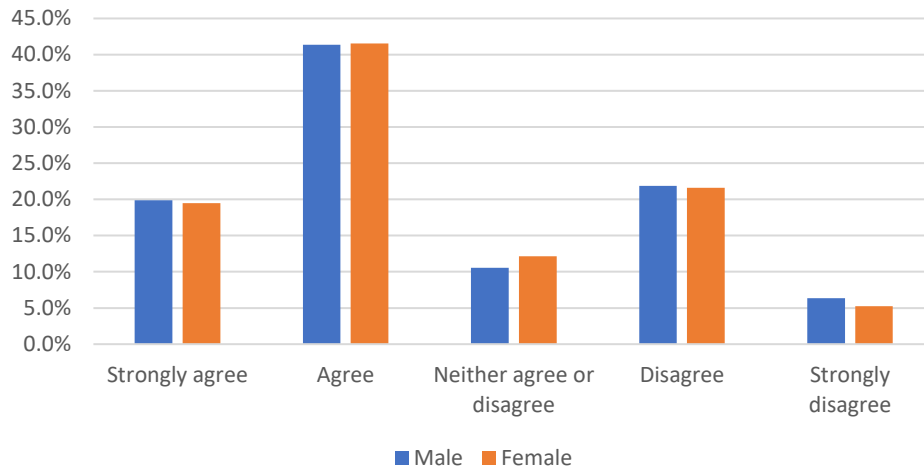


programmes were the most important followed by counselling and specific training for jobs they're interested in.

Respondents favoured higher education over practical training when asked what training would be useful in getting a job, which is possibly a reflection of how important public sector and NGO work is to Liberia's employment market. However, Agricultural training was important to both genders nursing and teachers training scored highly amongst young women and driving and mechanics scored strongly for young men. IT skills were of interest to both genders.



Q38. In our country today, young people have the opportunity to get a job that pays a wage or salary

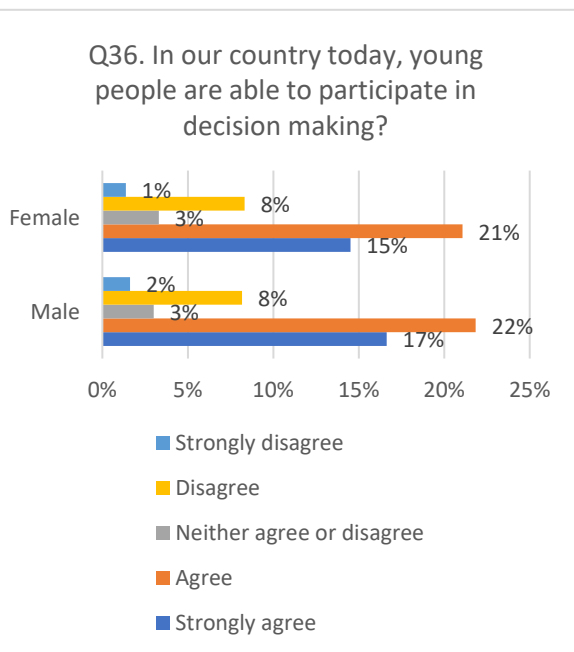


Two thirds of both young men and women either agreed or strongly agreed that young people have the opportunity to get a job in the formal sector which Could also be a driver towards their wanting to get a better education if they could afford it.

We can conclude that higher education is a determinant factor in getting a job and that without a job young people are much more likely to become drug users. A major barrier to finishing school is the cost of getting an education.

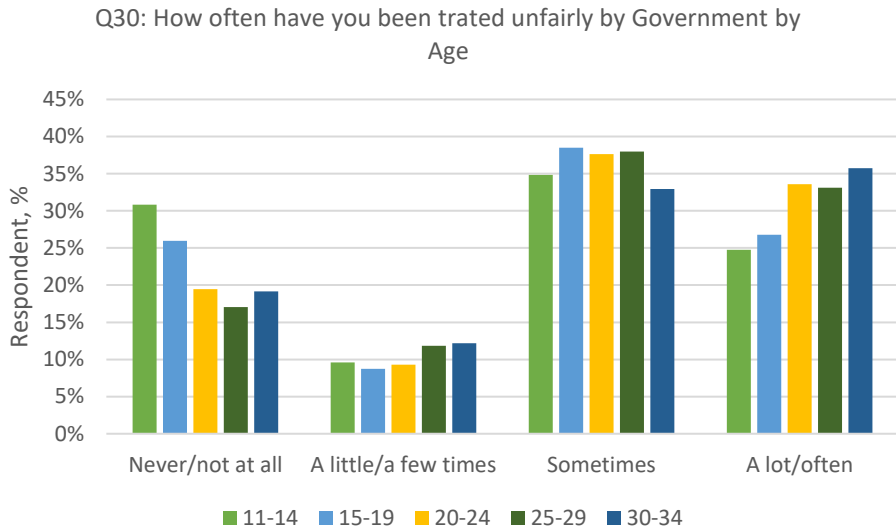
Section II: Political attitudes and Participation of young people

Through formal and informal decision-making, involving young people as decision-makers provides an opportunity for them to make powerful, important, and meaningful choices,



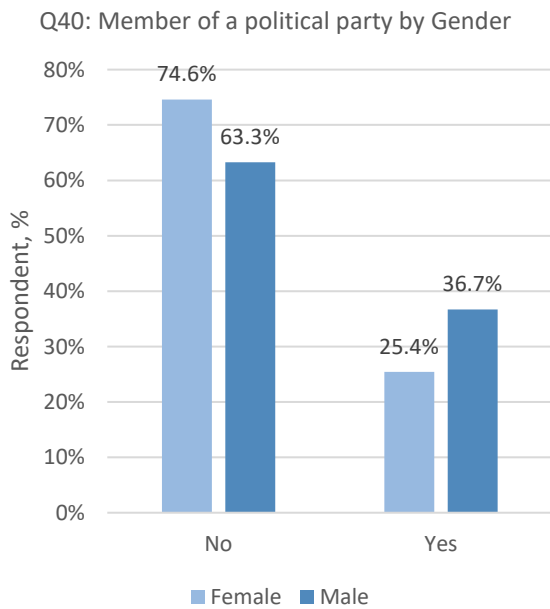
decisions, and determinations that affect themselves, their peers, their communities and the world at large. When young people participate in community development, they are more likely to support and embrace them, increasing impact. Meaningful youth participation views youth as equal partners in the decision-making process with adults.

Respondents were asked if young people can participate in decision making in Liberia, respondents overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed (76% of women and 78.7% of men). The age group that disagreed with this sentiment the most was 11-14-year olds, 17.3% of whom disagreed or disagreed strongly.

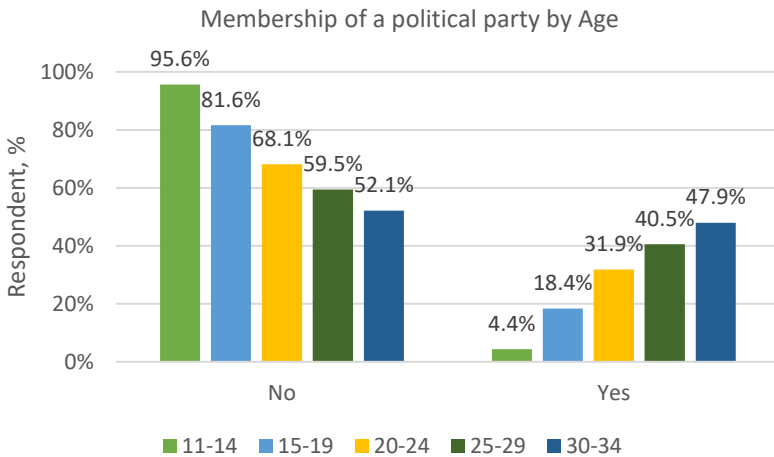


In contrast, when asked how often, if ever, they felt they had been treated unfairly by the government, men and women had very similar responses, with men reporting 1.3% more instances of government mistreatment than women. Through analyzing these responses by age, it became clear that there is a relationship between

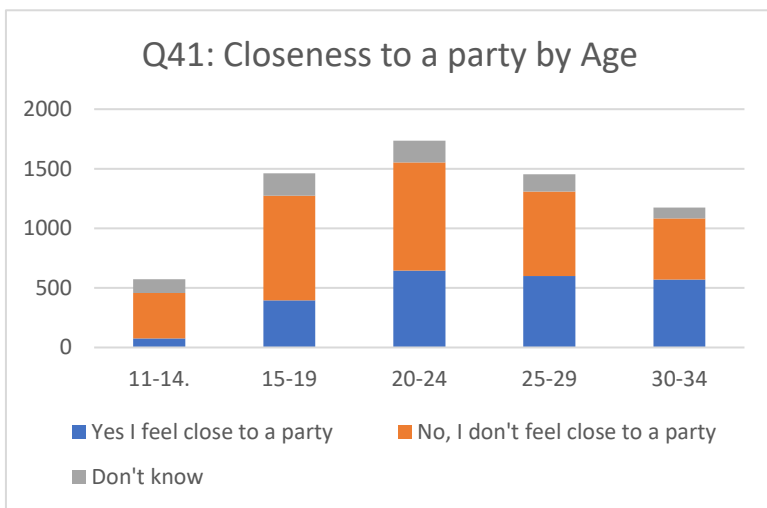
age and unfair government treatment. The age group that had the most responses for never having experienced unfair government treatment was the 11-14-year olds (30.8%). Meanwhile, those that experienced it the most often were in the 30-34 age bracket.



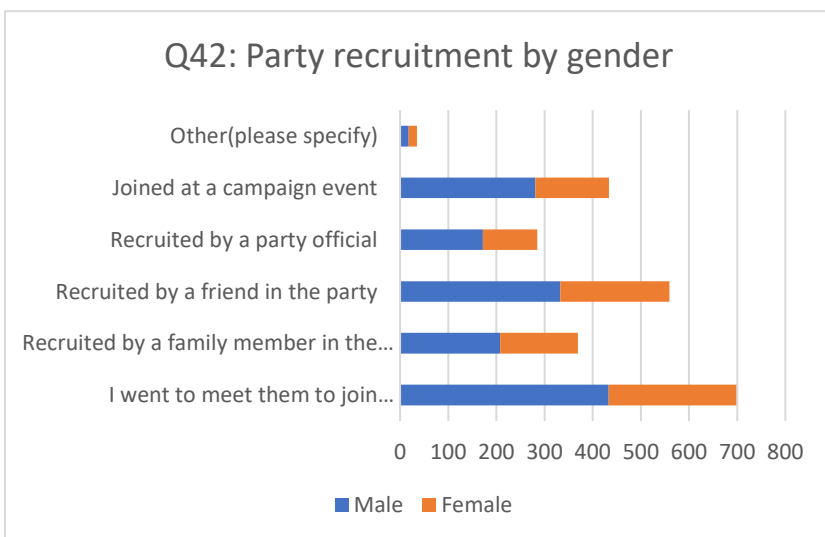
In terms of political involvement as briefly discussed earlier, male respondents were more than 10% more likely to be members of political parties than their female counterparts (36.7% of men and 25.4% of women). LEON observers have noted that leaders of County level youth wings tend to be male. Drug users were even more likely to be members of political parties (43.1%). LEON has observed political parties and candidates mobilizing out of work youth and drug users even to the extent of drugs being distributed in return for political activism.



As age increases, so does political involvement. This positive correlation can be seen with political party members making up 4.4% of 11-14-year olds, 18.4% of 15-19-year olds, 31.9% of 20-24-year olds, 40.5% of 25-29-year olds, and 47.9% of 30-34-year olds. Another positive correlation can be seen between age and closeness to one's political party.



In contrast, however, there was low interest by eligible first-time voters- 15-19-year-olds - (86.1%) and new voters - 20-24-year-olds -(68.1) not being involved with a political party. Men are also more likely to feel close to a party (21.0% vs 14.7% of females) and seek them out on their own (29.97% vs. 28.34% of females).



Across age groups, 29.3% of people joined parties on their own, with recruitment by a friend being the second most popular, making up 23.5% of respondents.

Geographically, joining parties autonomously is most common for respondents living in urban (33%), peri-urban (32.5%) and rural areas (26.8%). For those living in remote areas, being recruited into a party by a friend was most common (26.3%).

While the survey reveals that young people agree that they can participate in decision making, participation without the required skills or knowledge to make informed decisions is still lacking. Youth should not only be mobilised when they are needed for a campaign or a protest. LEON, therefore, recommends that the government of Liberia promote participation and inclusion among young people. In its efforts, the government should increase its efforts to allow young people to build the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources required to make informed decisions about their bodies, lives, families, voting, politics, society, and country.

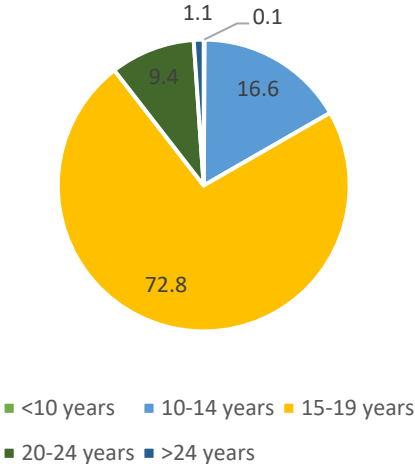
Section III: Sexual Behavior & Sex work

Although Liberian law prohibits the commercial sexual exploitation of children, young girls continued to be exploited in return for money, food, and school fees, including in commercial sex.

Respondents were asked during the survey if they had ever considered having sex for money, a job, or a school grade, female respondents said "yes" over 4 times more than their male counterparts (19.52% vs. 4.48%). In total, 754 (11.8%) respondents said they had considered trading sex for one of these things. Of those who had considered trading sex, there were just 21 children of ages 15-19, 31% were aged 20-24, 29% were 25-29 and 15% were 30-34 years old.

Overall, respondents were asked if they had ever had sex, the respondents' answers were overwhelmingly "yes" at 82.58%. Based on gender, the responses varied only by a percentage point, with female yes' at 83.1% and male yes' at 82.1%. Sexual experience increased exponentially from the 11-14-year olds (16.6% yes) to the 15-19-year olds (71.7% yes) and again to the 20-24-year olds (93.9% yes). Yet, this increase flattened to less than a 2% difference between each group after that.

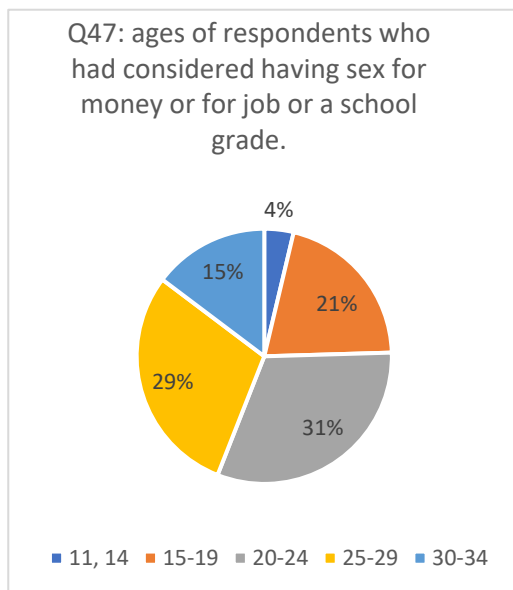
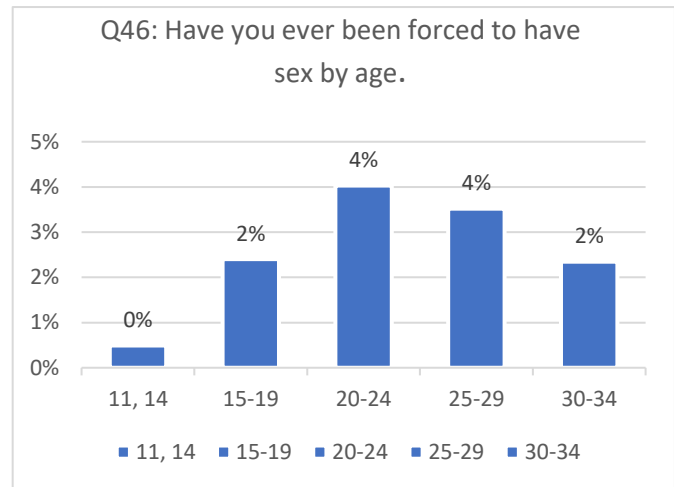
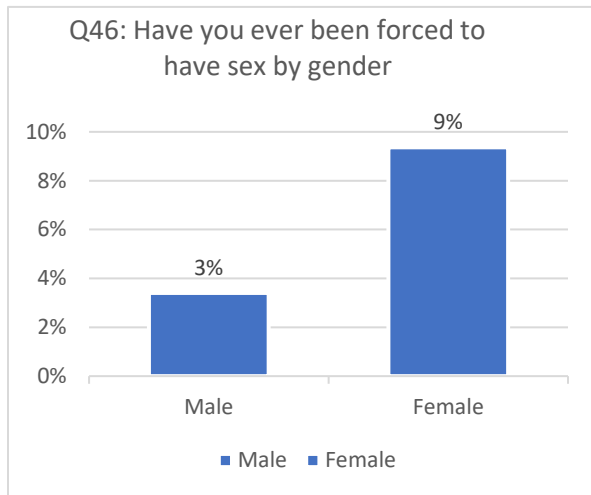
Q45: Age of Sexual Initiation



This trend of increased sexual experience with age remained true when respondents who had engaged in sex were asked about the age of their sexual initiation, with 0.1% of their first time's happening before the age of 10, 16.6% happening between the ages of 10-14, 72.8% happening between the ages of 15-19, and 9.4% between the ages of 20-24 , 1.1% after the age of 24. It has to be of concern to all Liberians that 1/4 of adolescents are having sex while under the age of consent.

When asked if they had ever been forced to have sex, 9% of women, and 3% of men said yes, showing the relative prevalence of rape, as well as the increased prominence of such issues with women.

Forced sex may happen at a very young age, though the majority of people who said they had been raped were over 20 years old. Forced sex was more prevalent in our special samples with 36.1% of sex workers and 14% of drug users reporting having been forced to have sex. Coercive sex represents a gross violation of young people’s sexual rights and increases their risk for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy.



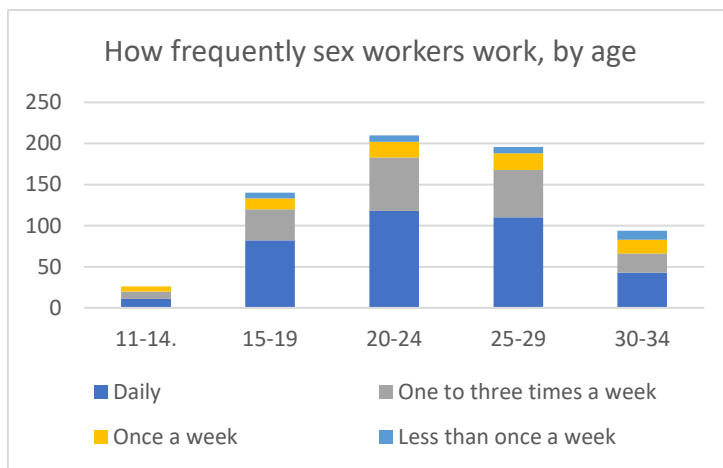
Major drivers of change in the sex industry are economic, demographic, ideological, and technological. Most people seeking paid work but cannot find it in the formal sector, look to alternatives, one of which is the sex industry. Some people move to urban areas, others to different countries in the hope of a better life. Some individuals, especially women, are forced to migrate for sex work or other forms of informal or unregulated labor.

LEON surveyors interviewed 666 sex workers in places where they work, of whom (555 were women and 109 were men. One major note is that compared to other questions in this survey, 207 respondents refused to answer whether they did sex work. In the general sample, 2.3% of respondents (113 people) also admitted to doing sex work. 14.9% of the people interviewed in drug users areas reported that they also engaged in sex work.

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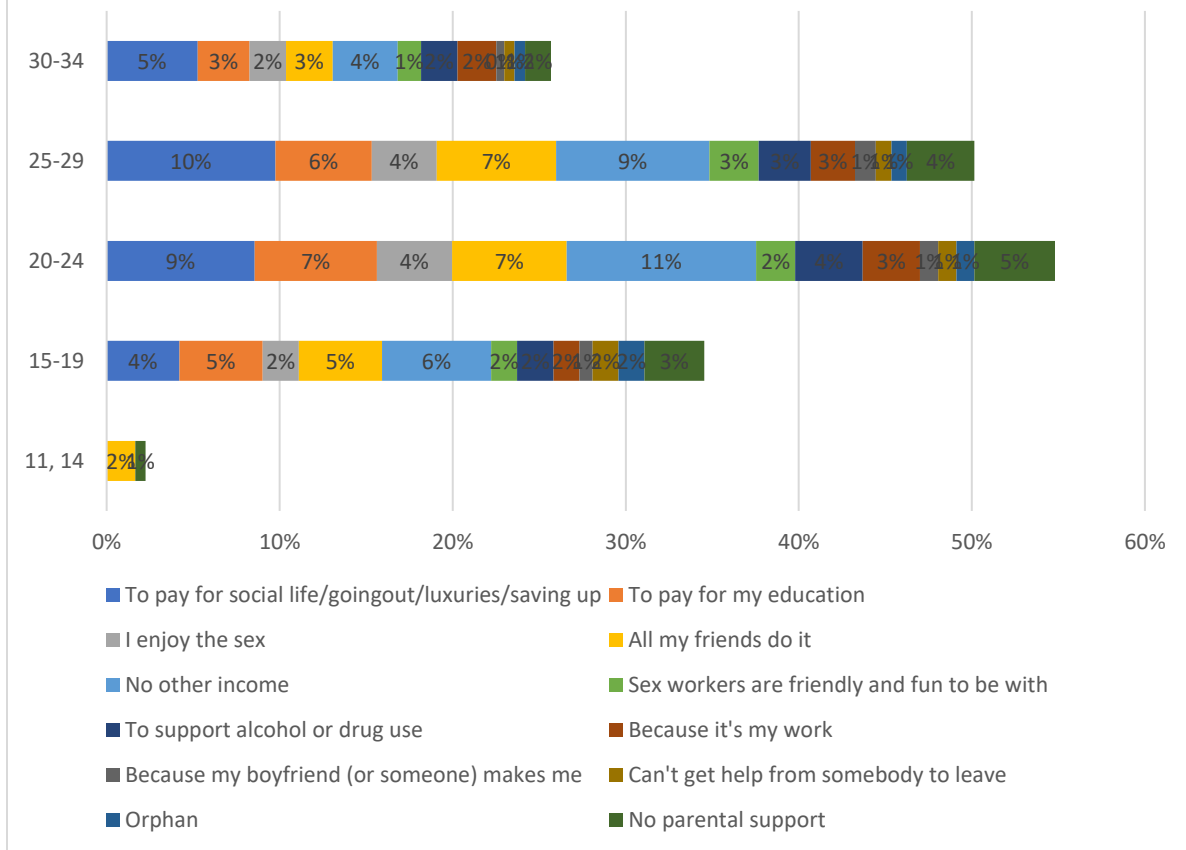
The age group with the least amount of sex workers, by far, was 11-14-year olds, but even so, 26 people interviewed were in this bracket (3.9%). The age group with the most sex workers was the 20-24-year olds, with 210 (31.5%).



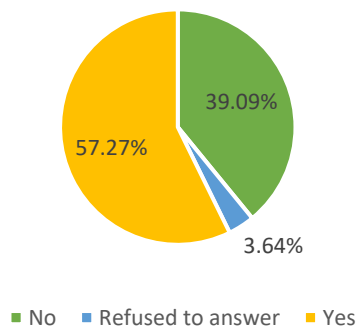
Of the 666 sex workers interviewed, over half of them are involved in sex work on a daily basis (361) about 54.2% which was the most frequent schedule type for each age group, followed by working one to three times a week. Working less than once a week is the least common option overall and by age, with only 5% of respondents saying they have this schedule. For women, working daily is the most common option (60.2%), but for men, working one to three times a week is the most popular (43.5%).

The reasons that respondents got involved in sex work are diverse. Overall, the most popular reason is that they have no other income (207 people, 17%). Other top reasons are to pay for social life (189), to pay for education (142), and because all their friends do it (151). Being an orphan and/or having no parental support is another major influencing factor in choosing sex work, as 10% of respondents identified it.

Q52. Reasons for engaging in sex work by age.



Drug Use amongst Sex Workers

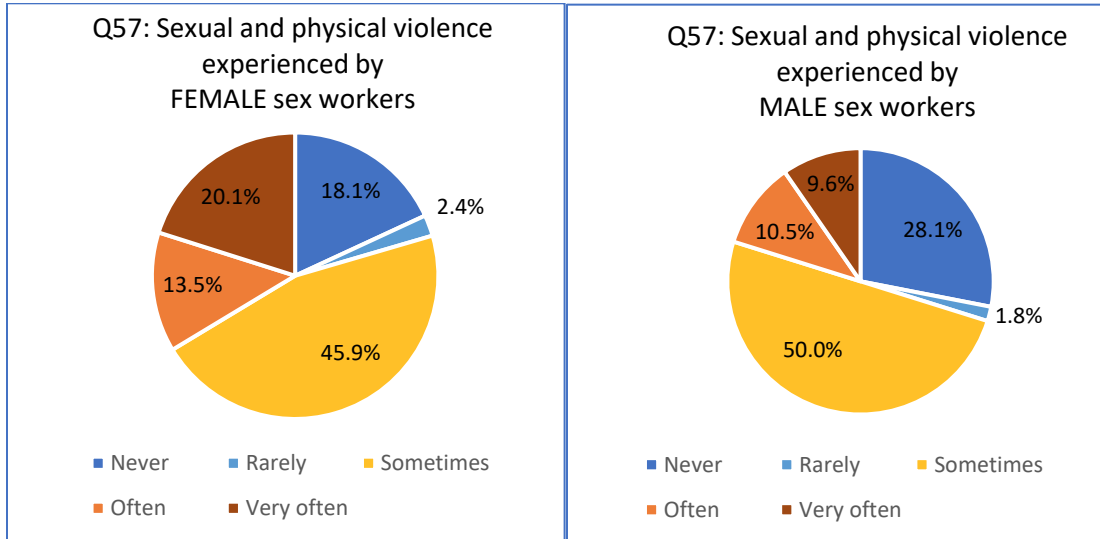


The majority of sex workers (57.3%) stated that they had done drugs before or while providing sexual services.

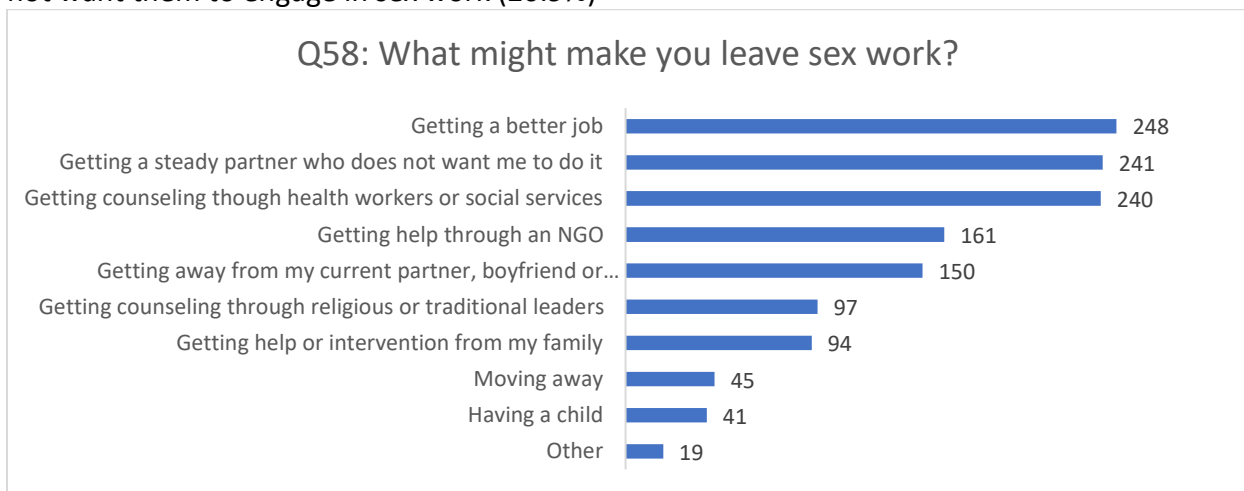
Respondents said they most commonly worked in guest houses (58.5%), in bars (38.2%), on the street (27.9%). From the clients house (24.8%), or from home (20.1%). A third said they had a boyfriend or girlfriend and of these a third said their partner lived off their earnings. 43% said their partner gave them protection. while a further 18.6% said their partner had hit them. These statements indicate just how vulnerable and open to abuse sex workers are.

Respondents also reported that physical and sexual abuse was high from clients. Only 18.1% of females and 28.1% of males stated that they had never been assaulted while providing sex services. 79.5% of female and 70.1% of male sex workers reported that they experienced this assault on a semi-regular basis or more (sometimes, often, or very often). This data shows the prevalence of assault in sex work and how female sex workers experience this

about 10% more than males. Liberian law recognizes coercive sex to include threats of violence, constitutes rape, punishable with a maximum sentence of life in prison. LEON, therefore, calls on the GOL to take reasonable steps to implement these laws and ensure the protection of these youths.



When asked what might make them leave sex work, the most popular responses were: getting a better job (248 respondents), getting a steady partner who does not want them to do it (241 people) and getting counseling through health workers or social services (240 people). Both the 11-14-year old's and 15-19-year old's identified getting counseling as their top motivating factor to leave sex work (22.8% and 20.6% of them, respectively). For respondents aged 20-24 and 30-34, their top factor for possibly exiting sex work was getting a better job (18.5% and 21.6%, respectively). The main factor listed by 25-29-year old's was getting a steady partner who does not want them to engage in sex work (20.9%)



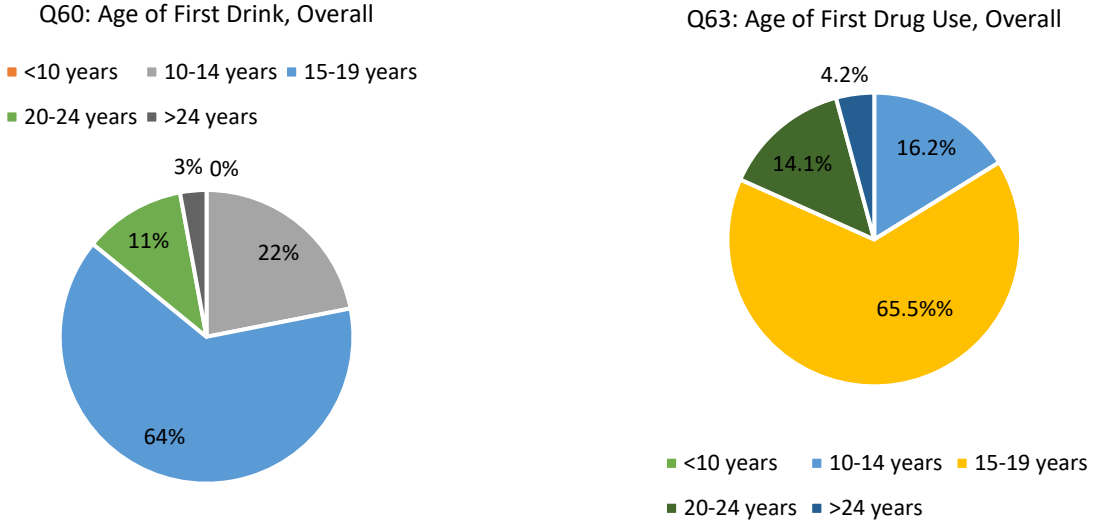
This study found that socio-demographic factors are associated with those who engage in transactional sex. Having completed at least primary education and have earned money through

formal employment were found to be protective factors against engagement in transactional sex.. The survey showed that young people are making decisions to engage in transactional sex to meet a range of needs, from the limited options they have. Vocational training was found to be vital to helping people exit the sex work industry. LEON acknowledges that there are statutory laws available that strengthened the legal protection framework that safeguards victims from commercial sexual exploitation. However, the lack of effective compliance mechanisms renders this protection mostly ineffective especially so where social welfare services remain limited.

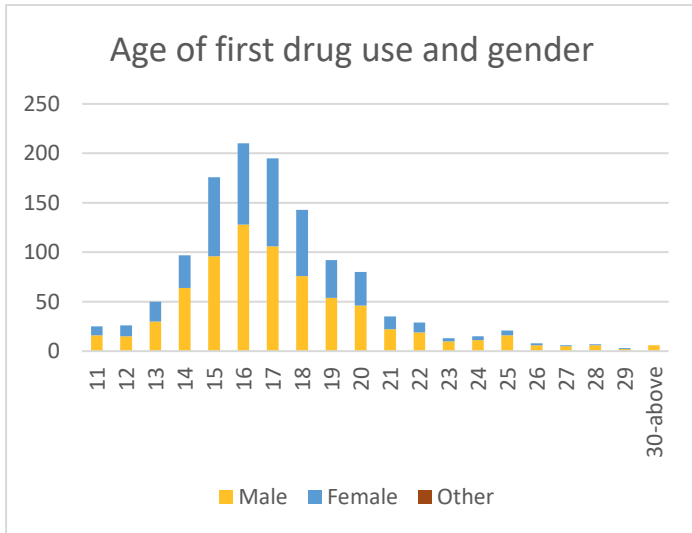
Section IV: Drug and Alcohol Use

Out of the 4630 respondents interviewed in non drug sex work areas , 43% have had alcohol to drink. 55.09% of all men and 48.99% of all women stated that they had used alcohol. Of the respondents that have used alcohol, 64% had their first drink between the ages of 15 and 19. 22% had their first drink between the ages of 10 and 14, 11% from 20 to 24, 3% after age 24 and 0% before the age of 10.

Out of the same group of 4630 respondents, 290 (6.3%) have used drugs, twice as high amongst women than men, while the overwhelmingly majority, 91.8% of people hadn't ever used drugs.

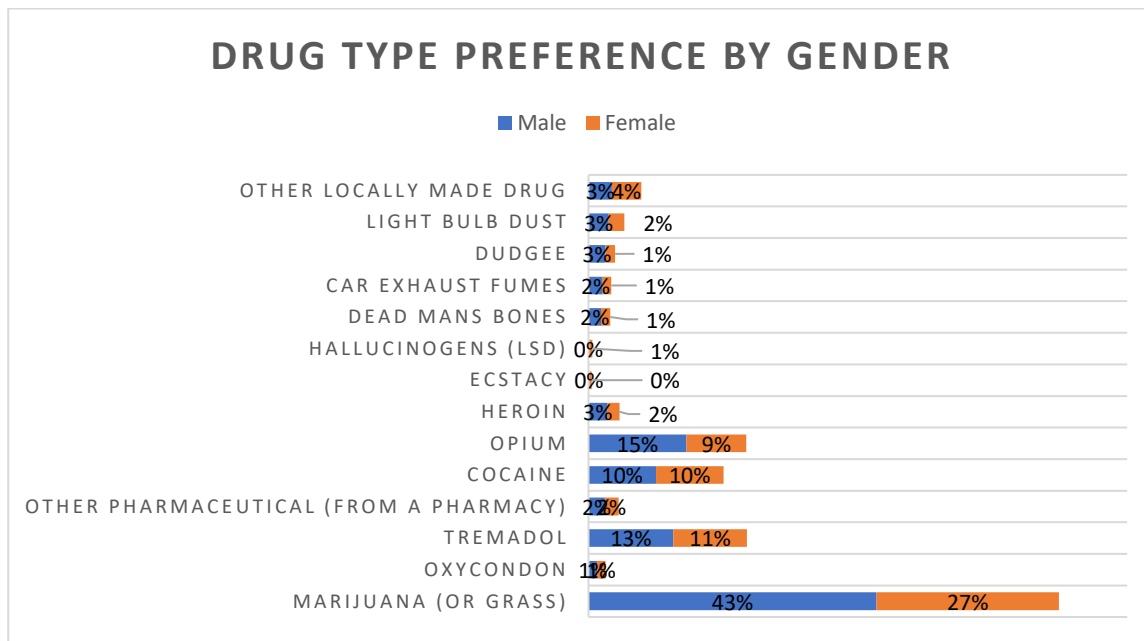


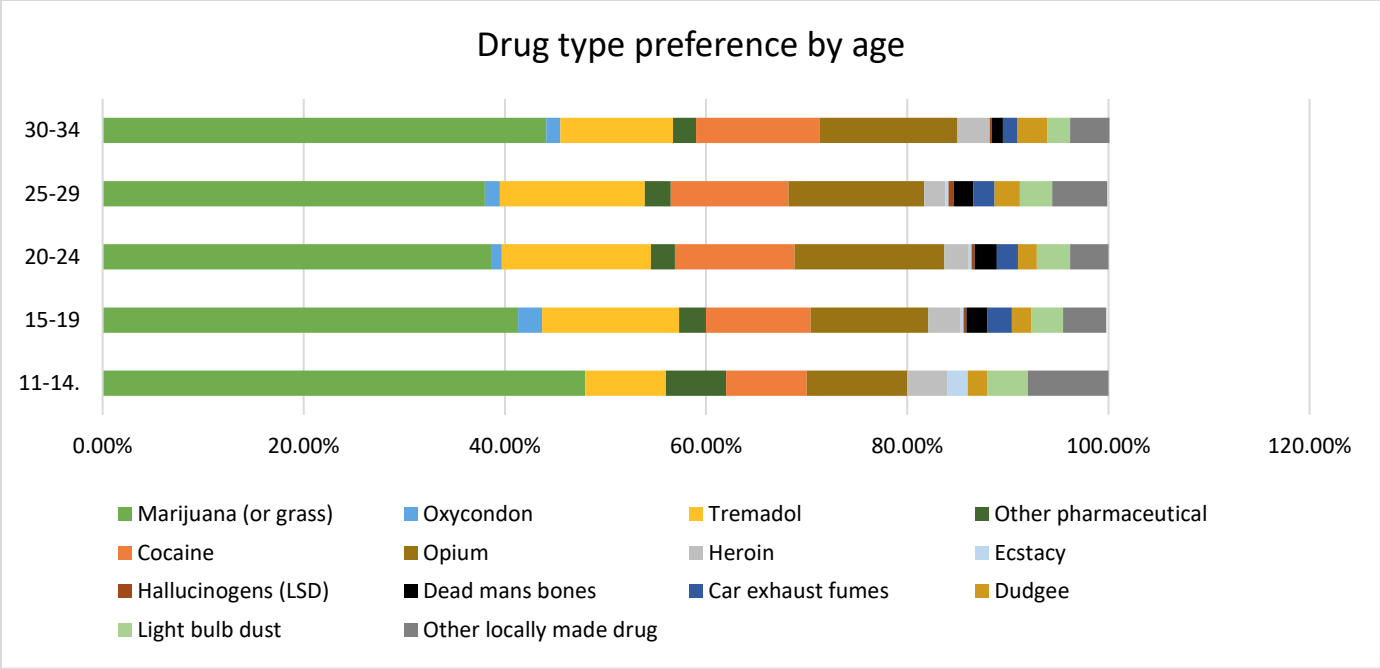
LEON surveyors went to specific areas in County capitals and mining concessions that were known to be frequented by drug users. They interviewed 1,378 drug users for this survey.



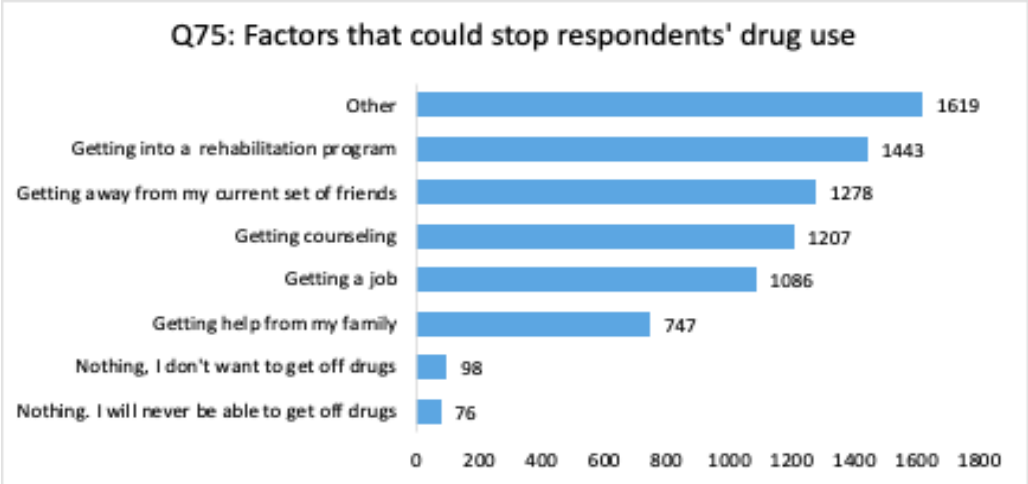
Of these interviewees, 65.5% (903) used drugs for the first time between the ages of 15 and 19 years. 16.2% (223) used drugs between the ages of 10-14 years, 14.1% (194) during the ages of 20-24 years, 4.2% (58) after age 24, and none before the age of 10. The years of 15-17, across both genders, were the most popular ages when respondents tried drugs for the first time. 44.9% of males and 50.1% of females tried drugs between the ages of 15 and 17 years.

Marijuana, with 864 mentions, was by far the drug most used by respondents. Other less popular drugs include Opium (290), Tramadol (289) and Cocaine (248). The drugs mentioned the least by users were Ecstasy (6) and Hallucinogens (7). Males use Marijuana and Opium slightly more than women do, while women use Tramadol and Cocaine slightly more than men do. Across all age groups, marijuana is the most used drug. The second most used drug for ages 11-14 is Opium (10%), for ages 15-19 it is Tramadol (13.6%), for ages 20-24 it is Opium (14.9%), for ages 25-29 it is Tramadol (14.4%), and for ages 30-34 it is Opium (13.7%).





When asked whether they consider themselves addicted to the drugs they take, 62.4% (860) of users said yes, 32.5% (448) said no, and 5.10% (71) refused to answer. When asked what would make them stop using drugs, respondents' answers varied. 21.4% of users said "other", which generally means something not covered by the other answer choices. The second highest factor cited by 19.1% of respondents was getting into a rehabilitation program. Other top-mentioned avenues were getting away from current friends (16.9%), getting counseling (16%), and getting a job (14.4%). However, 76 (1%) respondents said that they will never be able to get off drugs, while 98 (1.3%) said that they did not want to get off drugs.



Drug use and sex work cause intense marginalization and frequently leave lasting stigma that continues to impact anyone even after they have managed to leave these behaviours behind. This survey highlighted the many hardships that marginalized young people face. A promising takeaway is the respondents' optimism for change within their own lives. When sex workers were asked what might make them leave sex work, hundreds of respondents identified things like getting a better job, getting counseling, and getting help from an NGO. Similarly, when drug users were asked what would make them stop using drugs, hundreds of respondents cited rehabilitation programs, counseling, and getting a job. This is a good indication that increasing the accessibility of help channels for those in need is likely to be effective.