Perception of Policing in Liberia

LEON
Liberia Elections Observation Network

LIBERIA NATIONAL POLICE
RJL

Contents

Acronyms

LNP	Liberia National Police
PPS	Police Perception Survey
LEON	Liberia Elections Observation Network
PSD	Professional Standard Division
NEC	National Election Commission
ODK	Open Data Kit
CRD	Complaint Review Board
NPHS	National Population and Housing Census
CCRB	Civilian Complaint Review Board
HR	Human Rights
GOL	Government of Liberia
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
COPE	Community Policing Effort
CCR	Community Crime Response
CRM	Criminal Procedure Methods
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CPL	Criminal Procedure Law

Figures

Executive Summary

The Liberian National Police (LNP), with technical support from the Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON), commissioned this survey in the latter quarter of 2022 with objective to help the LNP appreciate citizens opinion about police's performance on its roles and responsibilities including assessing citizens knowledge of remedial processes within the institution.

The survey employed quantitative data collection and analysis methods using a sample size of 2,399 respondents nationwide (15 counties). The confidence level is 95%, with a 2% margin of error. 47% of respondents were male and 53% were female. Selected participants were aged 18 and above. A one-stage stratified method was employed to achieve the representation of equal probability in randomly selecting one household member for participation using a household member list and Kish grid.

Our analysis of respondent's view shows mixed perception of the police in key indicator areas. In the category of respondents' trust in the police, 67% of respondents responded positively. Of those reporting trust, 24% of women reported having very high trust, 62% reported having high trust and 14% reported having low trust in the police. By geography, above 50% of respondents in Bong, Grand Cape Mount and almost all southeastern counties reported high trust in the police. Rivercess, Nimba, Montserrado, Gbarpolu, Margibi, Lofa and Bomi Counties reported lower trust in the police. It is important that the police emphasize on improving its image in counties with lower public perception of the police which by comparison, cover a good magnitude of the population.

On police and community relations in fighting crime, 54% of respondents rated police and community relationship as either good or very good. Despite this otherwise positive view of police community relations in fighting crime, 71% of respondents rated the police response to crime between slow and very slow. Pertaining to the right of accused persons, nearly a third (59%) of those surveyed said the police does not read suspects their rights before arrest as required by law and 55% of respondents indicated that the police held suspects in holding cells beyond the allowable 48 hours.

Protection of people's rights is one of the key functions of policing. In this category, slightly above half of those surveyed (53%) reflected that the police respect the rights of people. When scrutinizing public perception of police performance during elections, 67% of respondents said they were satisfied. 72% of respondents rated police performance on election day satisfactorily.

A key finding of this survey is how the people surveyed reported knowing very little about the police's complaints procedures. For example, 65% of respondents did not know of the Professional Standards Division (PSD) of the LNP; of the 35% who reported knowing of the PSD, 13% were not aware of its functions. Even more respondents, 75%, reported not knowing about the existence of the Complaints Review Board. Improving police awareness of the importance of adhering to the law whilst performing their functions and introducing strategies that provide greater citizens awareness of the several structures within the police where citizens' concerns can be heard may assist in addressing the more pressing outcomes of this survey.

Background the Study

To "serve and protect" goes the renowned motto of the Liberia National Police. This responsibility to act in the public's interest is subsumed in the general principles of the amended instrument establishing the LNP.[1] Within those principles is an outline of some of the key elements of protection: the rights of people, community, society, victims, and their properties. Much more, this act in the public's interest is to be accomplished in a "non-partisan" manner. However, the LNP's performance on its founding principles has had mixed reviews. Several reports and anecdotes have noted that the LNP has helped secure lives, limps, and property through robust responses to armed robbery and investigation of theft of property, assault, sexual and gender-based violence, and murder cases. In addition, the LNP has also helped strengthen the country's democracy by building its relationships with political and other civic actors, protecting public political demonstrations, and securing the ballot process through close collaboration with the National Elections Commission (NEC).

For every good the LNP reportedly does, reports of ill-performance remain persistent. Findings by international and local organizations show that public perception of the LNP has remained low in two key areas: efficacy and image. For efficacy, the LNP's ability to adequately perform its roles and responsibilities has been heavily questioned. For image, the LNP's deportment towards citizens, and its fair, impartial administration of justice is indicted as pronounced by high-level reports finding the Liberian citizens perceive the LNP to be especially corrupt.

This LNP 2022 nationwide Public Perception Survey takes a cue from previous studies and anecdotes mentioned above and seeks a more robust and in-depth understanding of citizens' perceptions of how the police have performed in their core roles and responsibilities of protecting and securing people's rights.

The objectives of the survey include but are not limited to the followings:

- To help the LNP identify what the public perceives as its strength in terms of service delivery.
- To help the LNP identify what the public perceives as its weaknesses.
- To assess public satisfaction or dissatisfaction with policing.

The findings of the survey will serve these principal purposes.
1. Provide robust evidence for policymakers and deepen their understanding of citizens' perceptions. and attitudes toward the LNP.
2. Serve as learning points to help improve police performance during the 2023 elections.
3. To help inform policies and programs in the police sustainability plan
4. Conform the national government on policy reform.

Methodology of the study

Conducted as part of an omnibus study,[2] this survey used quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The study was conducted nationwide across all 73 electoral districts in the 15 counties. Using a sample size of 2,399 respondents from the voter registry, a confidence level of 95%, and a margin of error of 2%, participants were aged 18 and above.

Members of the LNP actively prepared questionnaires and took part in data collection and analysis.

The study used a systematic sampling methodology. In every district, an enumeration area was randomly selected with no removable structure as a starting point with a random interval for every (10) household to sample. A one-stage stratified method was employed to achieve the representation of equal probability in randomly selecting one household member for participation using a household member list and Kish grid.

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[1] Liberia National Police Act of 2015

[2] This study was conducted as one component of the Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON)/ Carter Center Innovation Hub survey on data driven election reform.

Background the Study (continued)

Questions were drafted to provide a structure to the study and to ensure that the data and information collected allowed for cross-comparisons to be made. The template specifically asked questions about the respondents' demography and then the respondent's perception of the police, police response to the community, police relationship, and rights.

Respondents' Gender

Figure 1.0 above shows slightly more women (53%) than men (47%) responded to the survey. The relative balance in respondents' gender is indicative of the robustness of the selected sampling framework.

Age of Respondents

Male 1196 (47%)   Female 1230 (53%)

Figure 1.0

Age Group	Male	Female
40 & Above	338	237
36 - 40	258	245
31 - 35	271	252
26 - 30	248	231
21 - 25	153	163

Male   Female
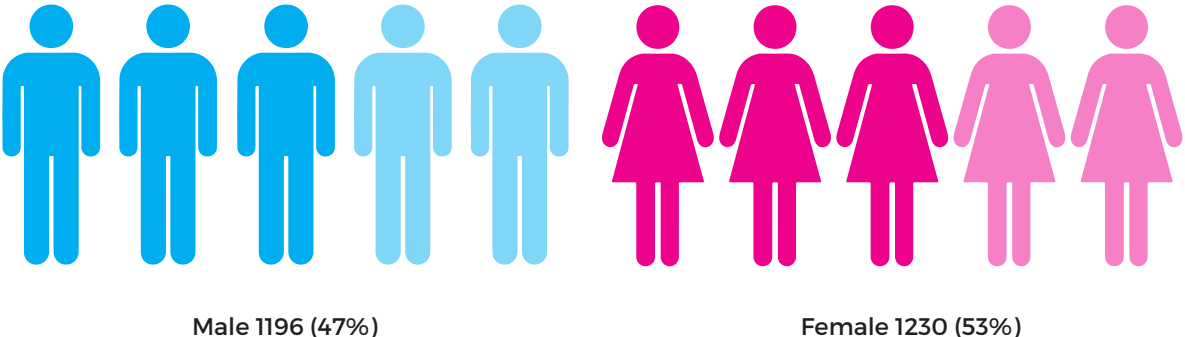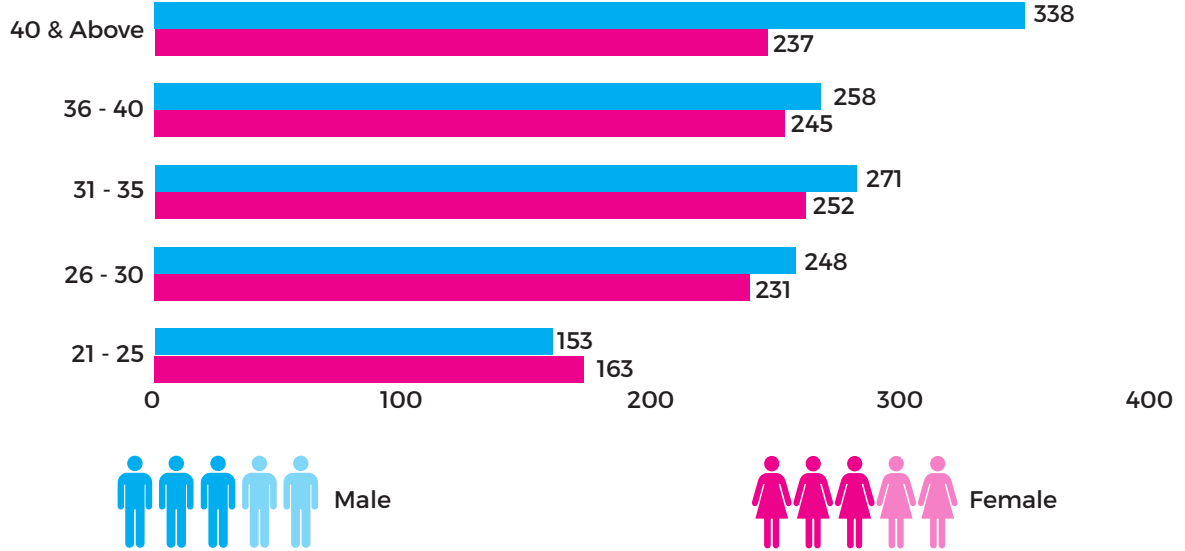
Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 illustrates that respondents were relatively spread across all age groups. Surprisingly, age 18-20 was not captured in the survey.

Background the Study (continued)

Sampling Size Per County

	Female	Male	Total
Bomi	53	33	86
Bong	120	102	222
Gbarpolu	35	33	68
Grand Bassa	83	77	160
Grand Cape Mount	34	36	70
Grand Gedeh	31	37	68
Grand Kru	19	15	34
Lofa	101	87	188
Margibi	108	96	204
Maryland	21	30	51
Montserrado	389	392	783
Nimba	180	149	329
River Cess	21	29	50
River Gee	12	23	35
Sinoe	23	31	54
TOTAL	1,230	1,169	2,399

Table 1.0

The table and figure above illustrate a weighted demographic selection of respondents based on the National Population and Housing Census of 2008 which is the latest available census data.

Data Management

Survey data was collected using the Open Data Kit (odk) software interfaced with NEMO open-source data collection and reporting system. Equipped with NEMO, enumerators submitted filled-out questionnaires via

Android devices, SMS, or directly into the data aggregation platform. Using NEMO ensured data quality, control, and proper storage that helps protect confidentiality.

Key Findings

Section I: Police Interaction with Citizens

Do you trust the police?

In figure 2.0, respondents were asked about their trust in the police. 67% of respondents (1,616 persons) said they trust the police whereas (33%) of respondents (783 persons) said they do not trust the police.
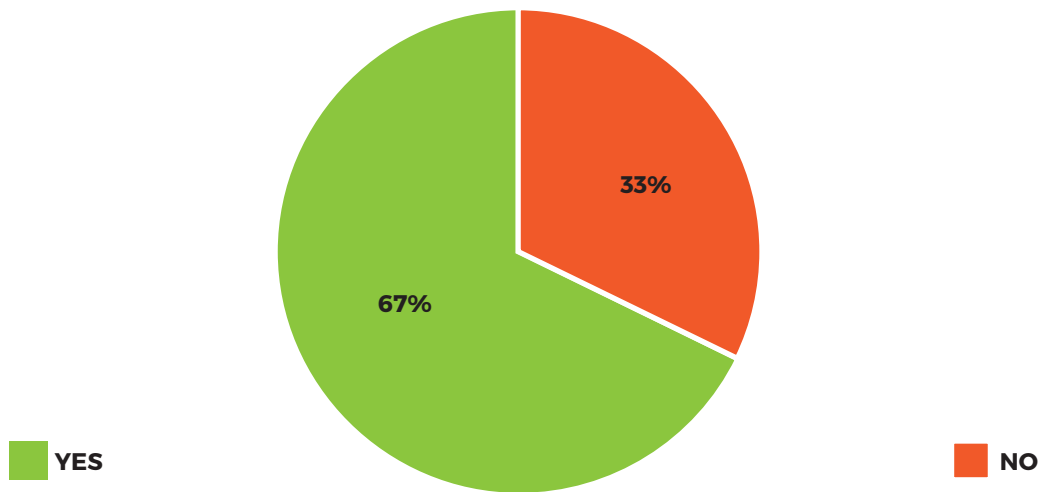

Figure 2.0

If your answer to the question above is "YES," to what extent do you trust the police?

Of the 1,616 respondents who answered that they trust the police, 17% reported very high trust in the police; 68% (1,097 respondents) reported that they have high trust in the police; 15% of respondents reported that their trust in the police is low.
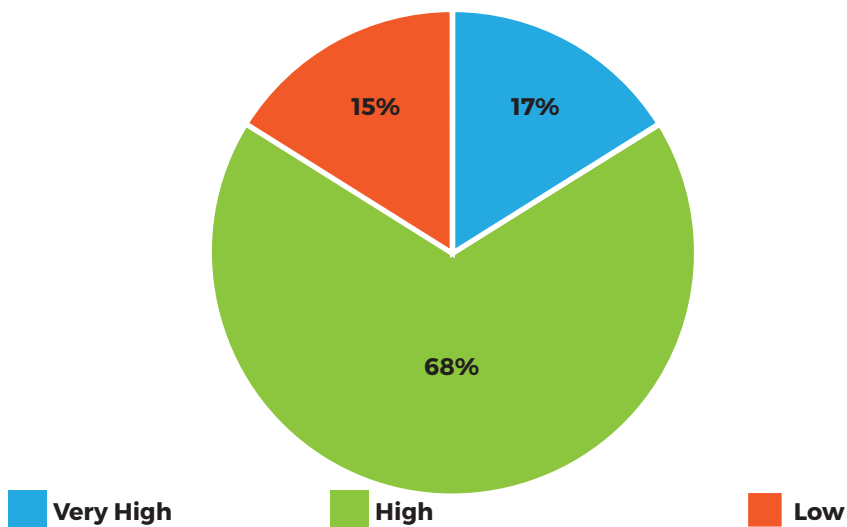

Figure 2.1

Key Findings (continued)

Trust in the police by gender

Of the 1,616 respondents who indicated they trust the police as noted in figure 2.1, 24% of women reported very high trust in the police with men at 18%. Men were slightly more positive in the "high" trust assessment of the police than women. 5% more men reported high trust in the police as compared to women (67% male and 62% female). Of those reporting low trust in the police,15% are male and 14% are female.
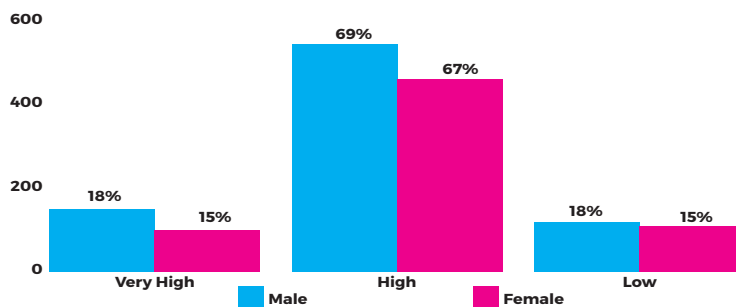

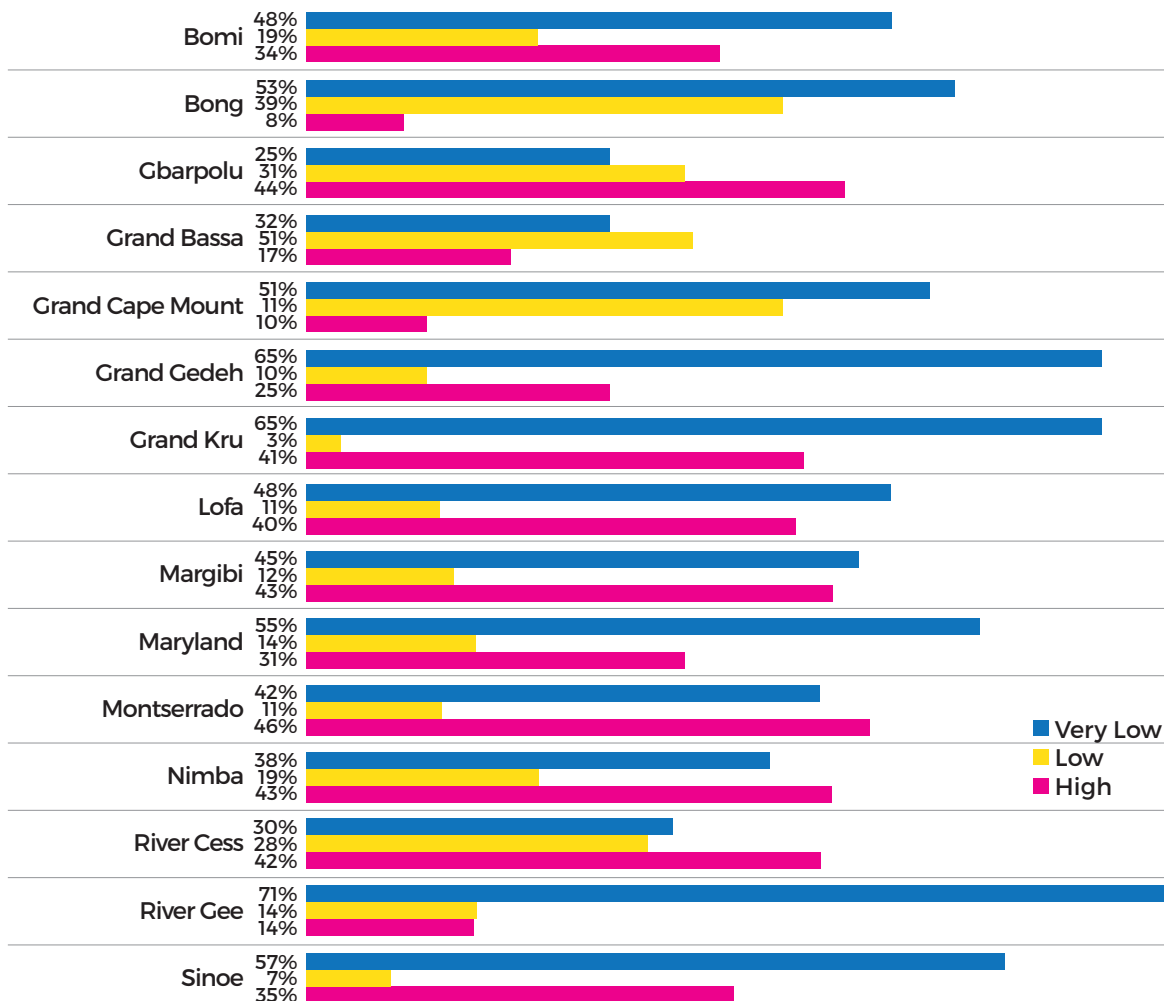**Figure 2.2**

Trust in Police by County

Figure 2.3

Of 1,097 people who responded that they have "high" trust in the police, Bong, Grand Cape Mount and almost all southeastern counties reported high trust in the police. Rivercess, Nimba, Montserrado, Gbarpolu, Margibi, Lofa and Bomi Counties reported lower trust in the police.

Key Findings (continued)

Confidence in Liberia National Police

How Confident are you with the Liberia National Police?

Respondents were asked about how confident they were with the Liberia National Police, 46% of the respondents stated that they are "confident" in the police, and 24% were neutral. A Significant number of respondents representing 22% of the respondents replied they do not have confidence in the police and 8% were "very confident" in the police.
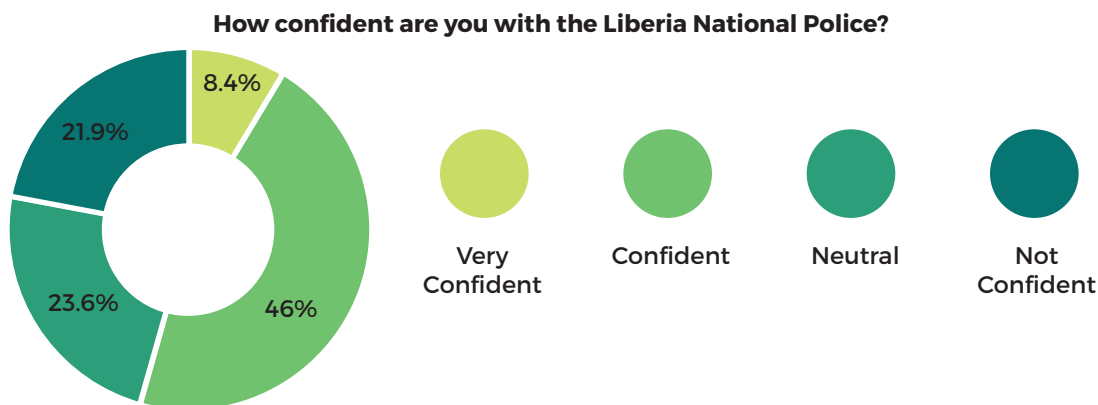
How confident are you with the Liberia National Police?

Figure 2.4

Section II. Knowledge of Police Complaints Mechanism

Knowledge about the Professional Standard Division of the Liberia National Police

Respondents were asked about their knowledge of the police's Professional Standard Division.[3] Findings reveal that 65% of respondents indicated that they do not know about the Division while 35% responded that they have knowledge of the Police Standard Division.

Do you know about the Professional Standard Division of the Liberia National Police
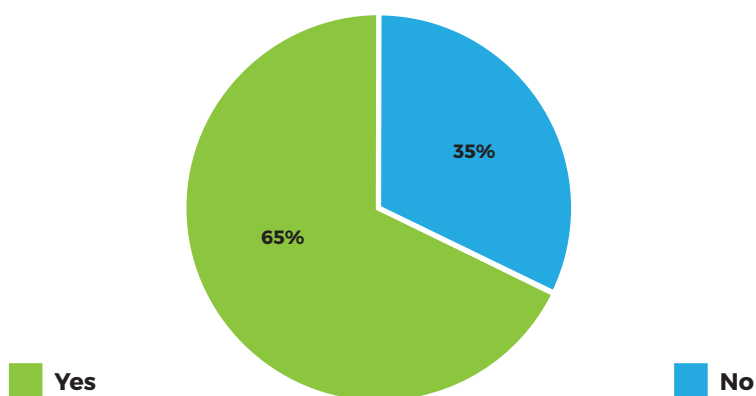

Figure 2.5

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[3] The Professional Standard Division of the LNP is responsible to take public complaints and investigate allege police misconduct.

Key Findings (continued)

If YES, do you know about the function of the Professional Standard Division of the Liberia National Police?

In figure 2.6 of the 35% of respondents who reported knowledge of the PSD, 87% said they were aware of the function of the PSD. of the Liberia National police. while 112 respondents (13%) said they are not aware of the function of the PSD.
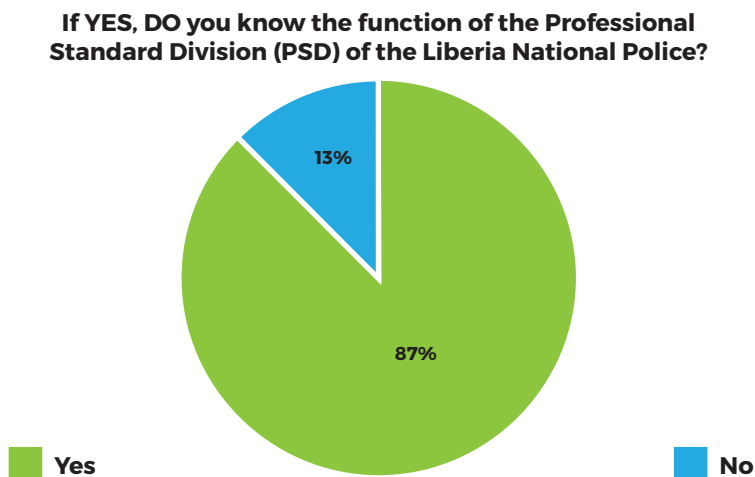
If YES, DO you know the function of the Professional Standard Division (PSD) of the Liberia National Police?

■ Yes   ■ No

Figure 2.6

Knowledge about the Civilian Complaints Review Board

Do you know about the Civilian Complaints Review board?

Respondents were asked if they know the Complaint Review Board[4] of the Liberia National Police. The survey reveals that 75% of respondents (1,790 persons) indicated that they do not know about the police's Civilian Review Board and 25% responded they are aware of the Board.
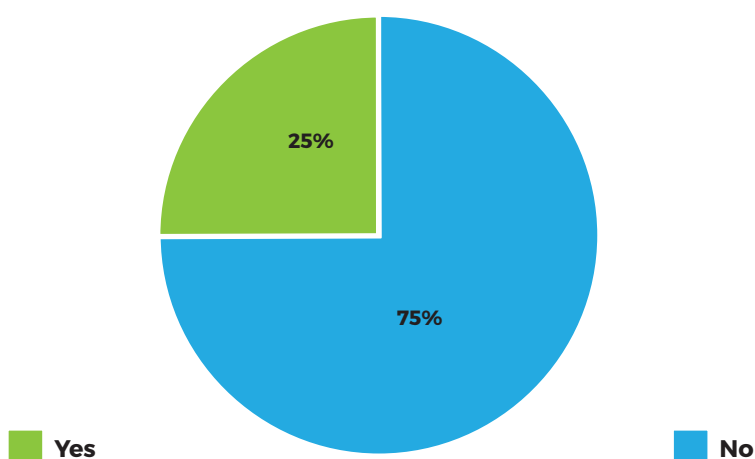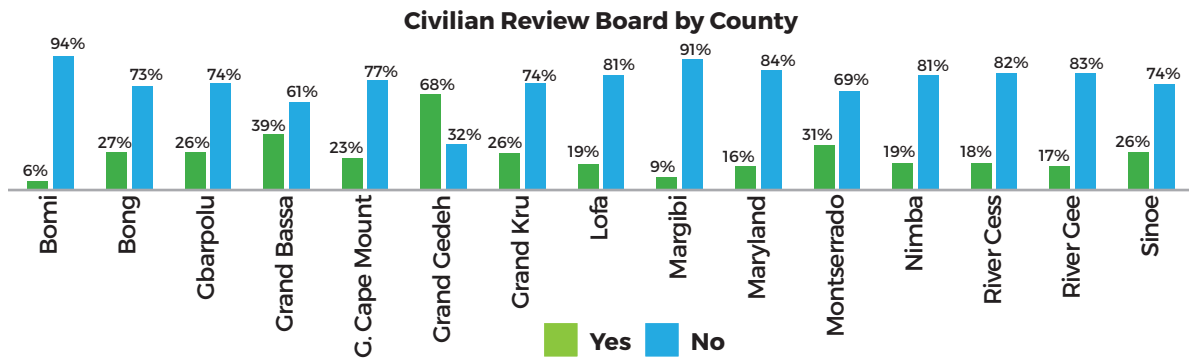

■ Yes   ■ No

Figure 2.7

_____
[4] The CRB is the appellate level to the Professional Standard Division.

Key Findings (continued)

Knowledge of the Civilian Complaints Review Board by County

Civilian Review Board by County


Legend: ■ Yes ■ No

Figure 2.8

Of the 1,790 respondents in figure 2.7 who indicated that they do not know about the Complaints Review Board, a good majority in 14 counties except Grand Gedeh reflected this limitation.

Section III. Police Performance during execution of their duties

During a suspect's arrest, how do you rate police performance?

- Excellent 5%
- Very Good 8.9%
- Good 49%
- Poor 29.1%
- Very Poor 1.9%
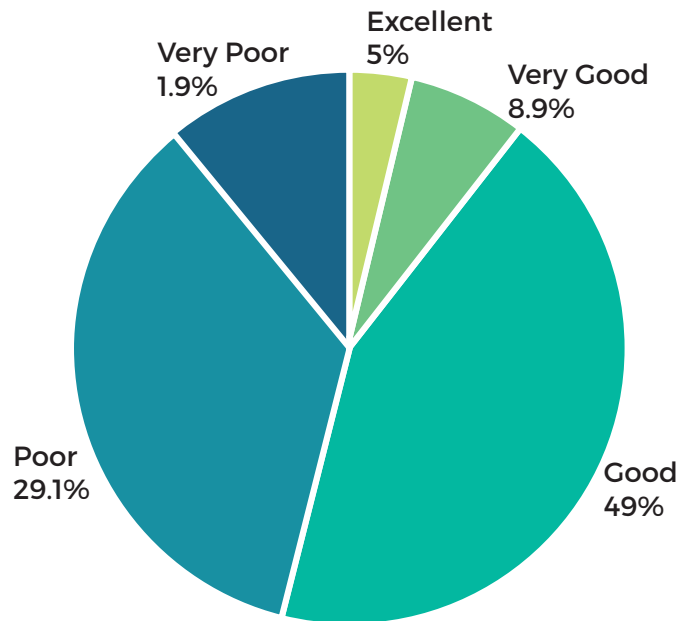
Figure 2.9

Respondents were asked to rate police performance of the police during an arrest. 5% of respondent's police performance during arrest as "excellent;" 9% reported police performance as "very good;" 1,170 respondents, constituting 49% rated police performance as "good;" 29% of respondents indicated police performance as "poor;" and 8% of respondents indicated police performance as "very poor."

Key Findings (continued)

Confidence in police prevention of crime by geography

Of the 2,399 respondents interviewed across all electoral districts, 435 respondents from the peri- urban area (2% excellent, 42% good, 35% poor, 10% very good, and 11% said they have very poor confidence level), respondents in a remote area (3% said excellent, 37% good, 47% poor, 10% very good, and 7% said very poor confidence level) 743 respondents in rural indicate the following (7% excellent, 47% good, 26% poor, 15% very good, and 5% very poor confidence level), 1,161 respondents indicate the following (6% excellent, 41% good, 31% poor, 10% very good, and 12% very poor confidence level in police prevention of crime.
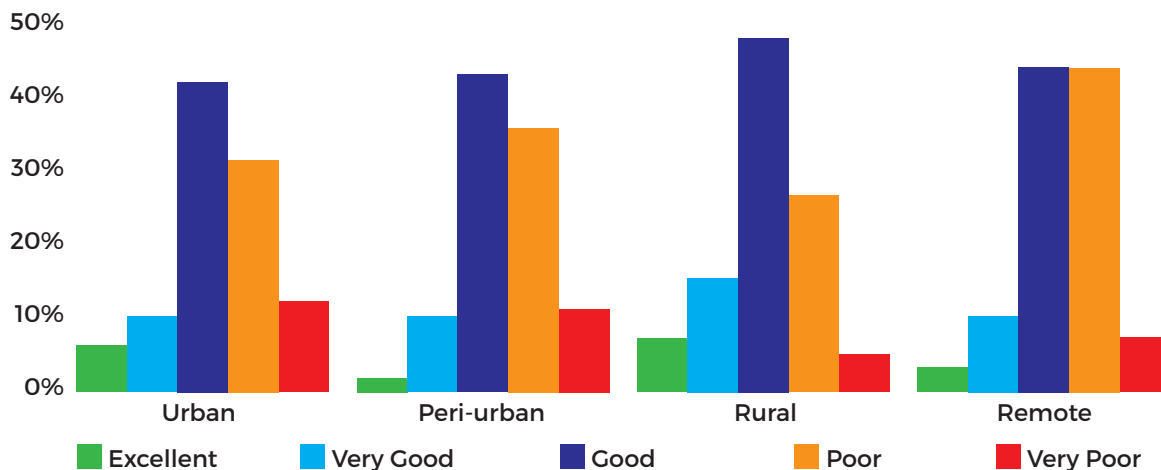

Figure 3.0

During an arrest, do the police read citizens their rights?

In figure 3.1 above, respondents were asked whether the police read citizens their right to remain silent and to seek counsel during an arrest. The survey shows that 1,412 respondents (59%) indicated that the police do not read citizens their rights, while 41%) of respondents said the police read out the rights of suspects during an arrest.
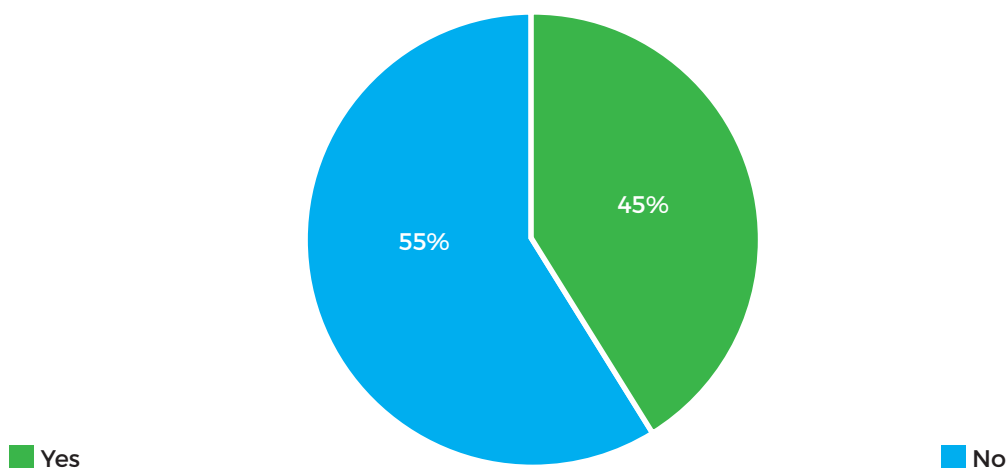

Figure 3.1

Key Findings (continued)

What could you say is the relationship between the police and drivers?

Respondents were asked in figure 3.2 how they see the police relationships with drivers in traffic. Respondents constituting 52% (1,258 persons) said that police relationships with drivers in traffic are friendly, 38% said police relationship with drivers in traffic is not friendly, and 10% said police relationship with drivers in traffic is very friendly.
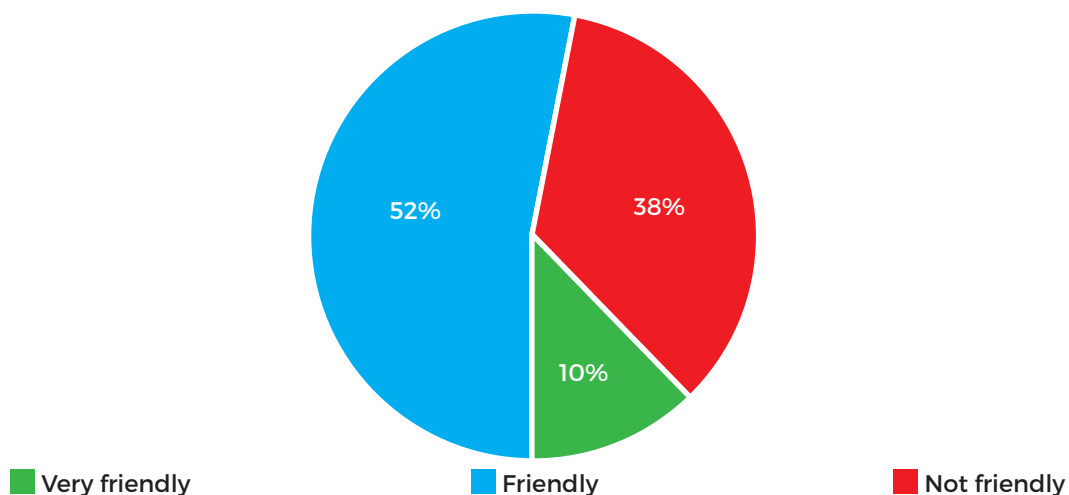

Figure 3.2

Do you think the police respect the law and do not keep suspects beyond 48 hours without charge?

Respondents were asked in figure 3.3 if the police were adhering to the 48 hours constitutional clause/provision beyond which you cannot keep a suspect without charge, and 55% of respondents indicated that the police are not adhering to the 48 hours constitutional clause/ provision. While 45% of respondents indicated that the police are adhering to the 48 hours constitutional clause/ provision.
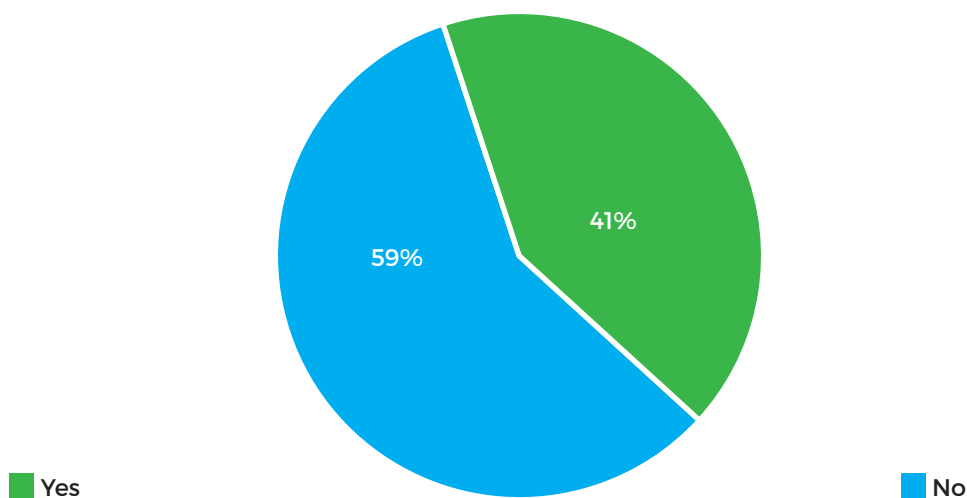

Figure 3.3

Key Findings (continued)

Do you think the police respect human rights?

Respondents were asked if the police respect human rights. Of the 2399 responses, 1,119, (47%) indicated "YES" the police respect human rights, 582 (24%) indicated "NO" and 698 respondents (29%) indicated "to some extent", the police respect human rights.

🟩 Yes	🟥 No	🟦 To some extend
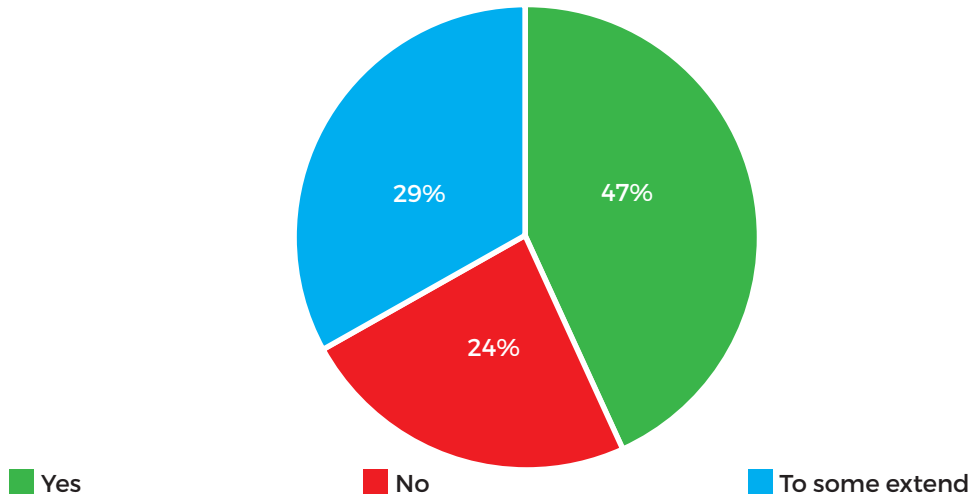
Figure 3.4

Section IV: Police Response to Crime:

How do you rate the Liberia National Police's Relationship with the community in fighting crime?

Respondents were asked a closed-ended question about how they rate the LNP's relationship with the community in fighting crime. 44% of respondents rate the police relationship in fighting crime as good, and 31% rate the police relationship with the community as poor. Whereas 10% rate the police as very good and 10% rate the police as very poor in their relationship with the community in fighting crime.

Figure 4.0

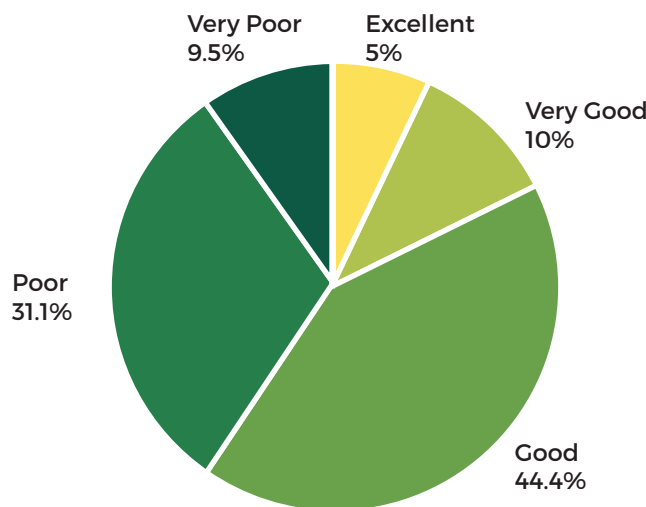# Key Findings (continued)

How do you rate the police response to crime?

Respondents were asked a closed-ended question about how the rate police responded to crime. Interestingly, 53% of the respondents rate the police response to crime as slow, and 24% rate the police response to crime as quick. Whereas 18% rate the police as very slow and 5% rate the police as very quick in response to crime.

Figure 4.1

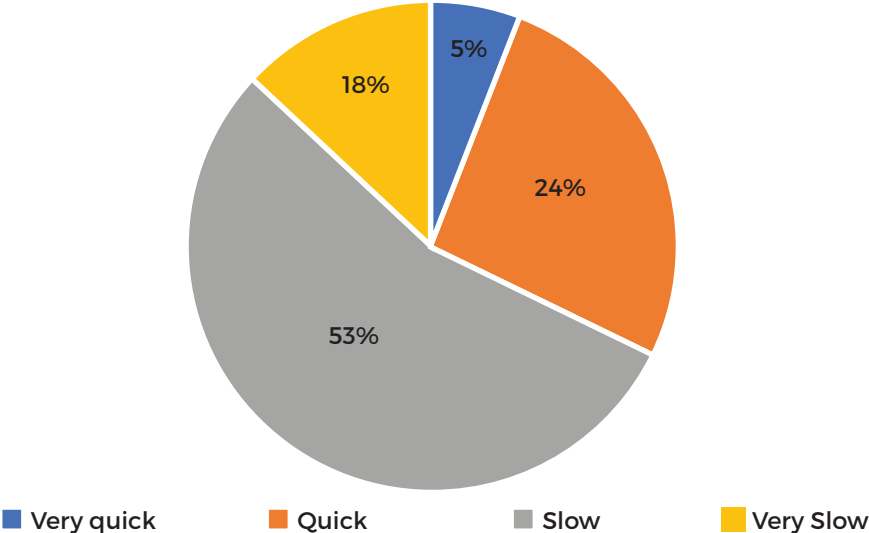**How do you rate the police night operation to fight crime?**

On how they rate the police night operation to fight crime 30% of Respondents indicate that police are somehow effective in their operation to fight crime, 44% of respondents indicate that police are ineffective in their operation to fight crime at night, and 22% of respondents indicate that police are effective in fighting crime at night.
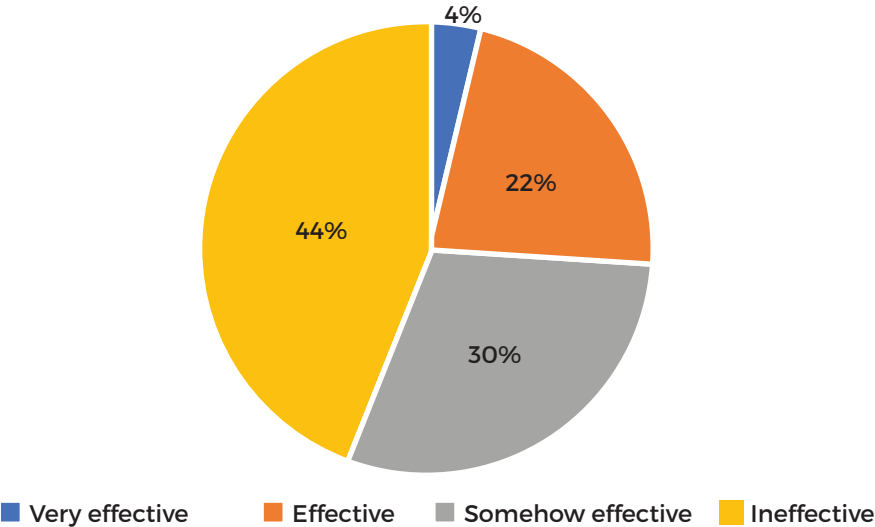

Figure 4.2

Key Findings (continued)

How confident are you in the performance of the Liberia National Police in terms of crime prevention?

The survey illustrates that out of 2,399 respondents that were interviewed, survey findings indicate that 42% (1,001) of respondents are confident of the performance of the police whereas, 754, (31%) said they don't trust the police.
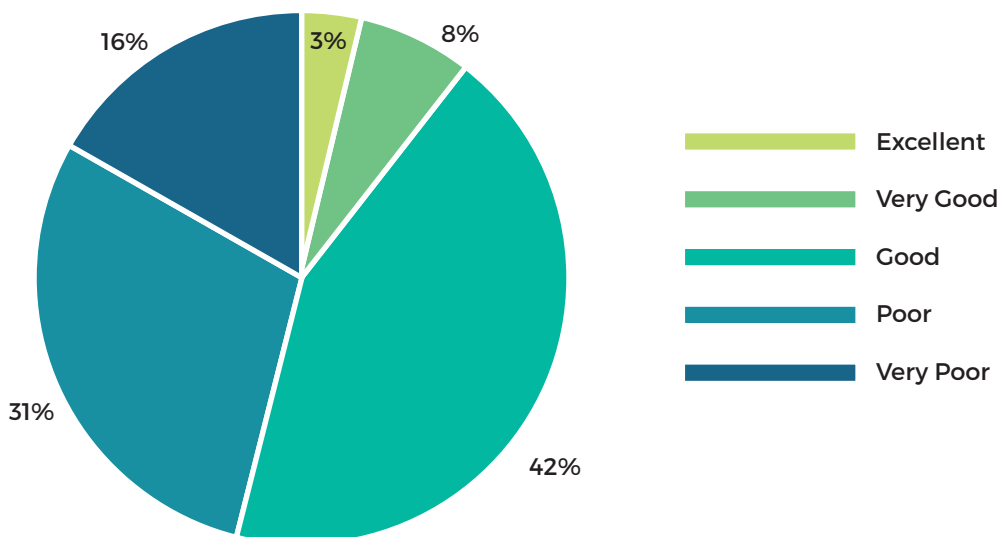
Figure 4.3

How do you see the police response time to emergency calls?

Respondents were asked a closed-ended question on how they see police response time to crime. Interestingly, 40% of the respondents rate the police response to an emergency call as slow, and 29% rate the police response to an emergency call as very slow. Whereas 15% rate the police response to emergencies as fast and 10% rate the policeresponse to an emergency call as very fast.
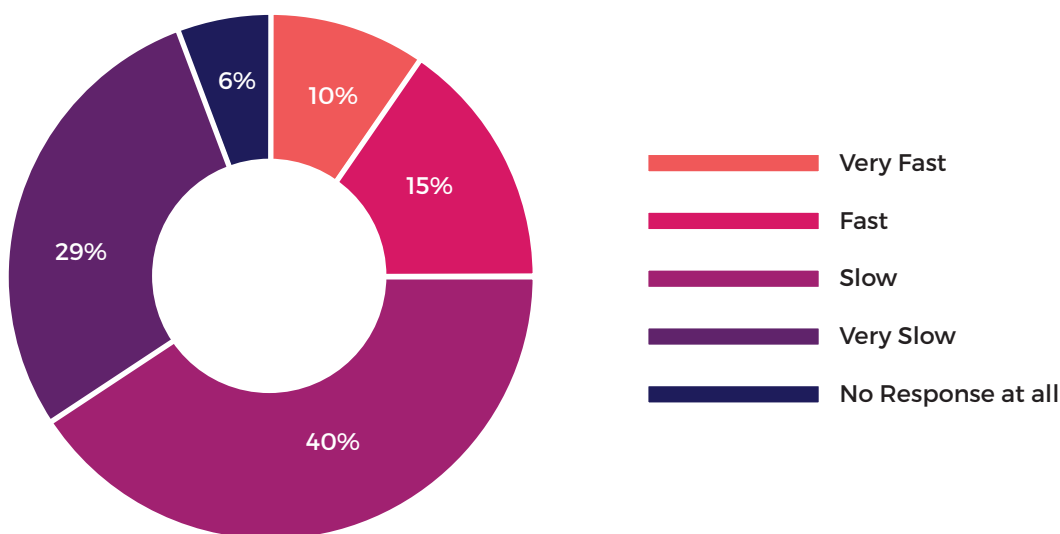
Figure 4.4

Key Findings (continued)

How do you see the police in preventing violence?

Respondents were asked how they see the police in preventing violence. Of those surveyed, 42% of the respondents said they see the police as good at preventing crime. Fewer of the respondents, 23%, indicated that they see the police as poor in preventing violence. 18% feel it's fair and 7% were positive.
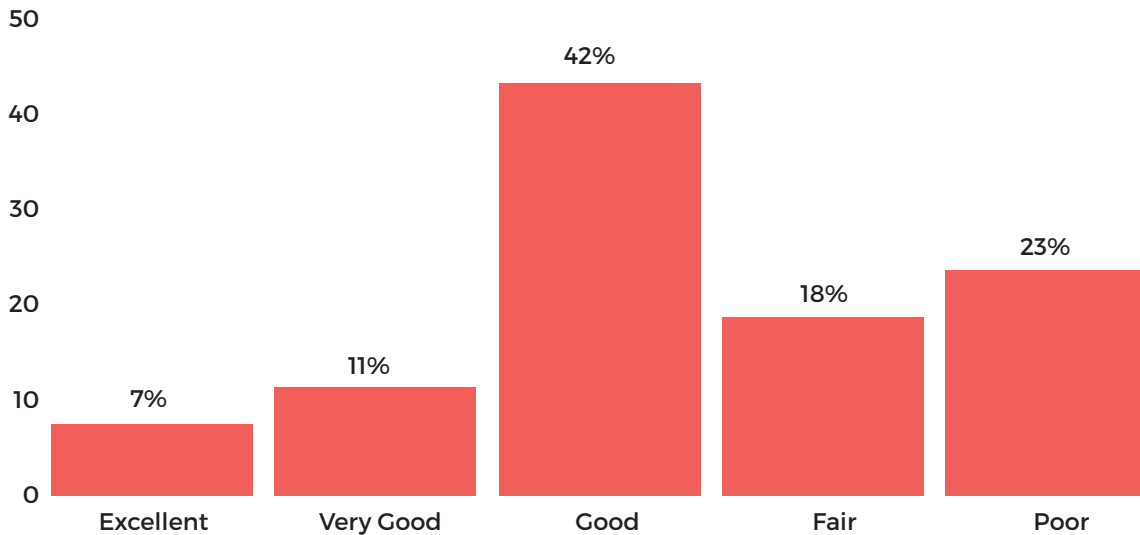
Figure 4.5

Section V: Police and Election

How do you rate the overall performance of the police during elections?

In figure 5.0., respondents were asked how they rate the overall performance of the police during the elections. 1,124, (47%) respondents rate the police overall performance as good, 384 (16%) rate the police fairly, 374, (15%) rate the police as poor, 333 (14%) rate the police performance as very good, and184, (8%) rate the police excellently.

Figure 5.0

Key Findings (continued)

How do you see the police performance during the election campaign?

In figure 5.1., respondents were asked about their satisfaction with police performance during the campaign period. 1,147, (48%) respondents rate the police's overall performance during the campaign period as good, 393 (16%) rate the police poorly, 376, (16%) rate the police fairly, 313 (13%) rate the police performance as very good, and 170, (7%) rate the police excellently.

Figure 5.1

How do you score the police performance on election day?

Asked how they score the police performance on election day, 1,180, (49%) respondents rate the police's overall performance on election day as good, 340 (14%) rate the police poorly, 340, (14%) rate the police fairly, 328 (14%) rate the police performance as very good, and 211, (9%) rate the police excellently.
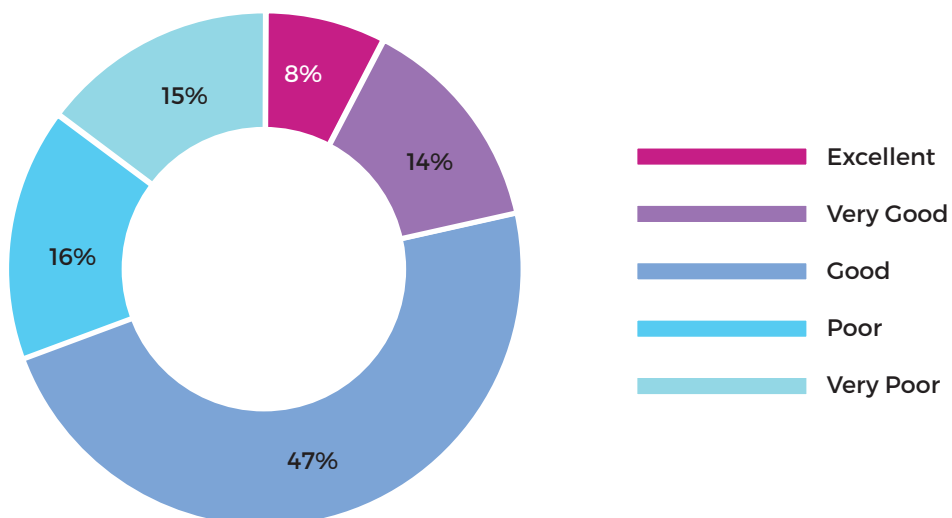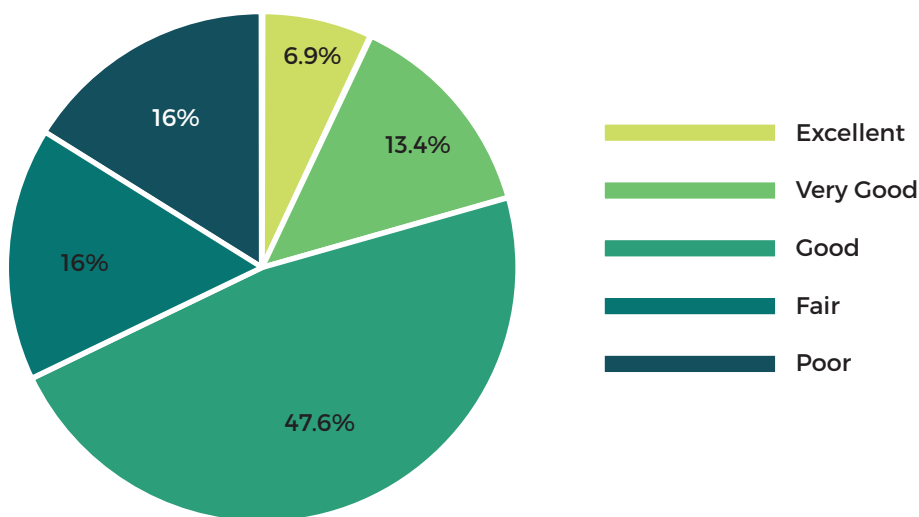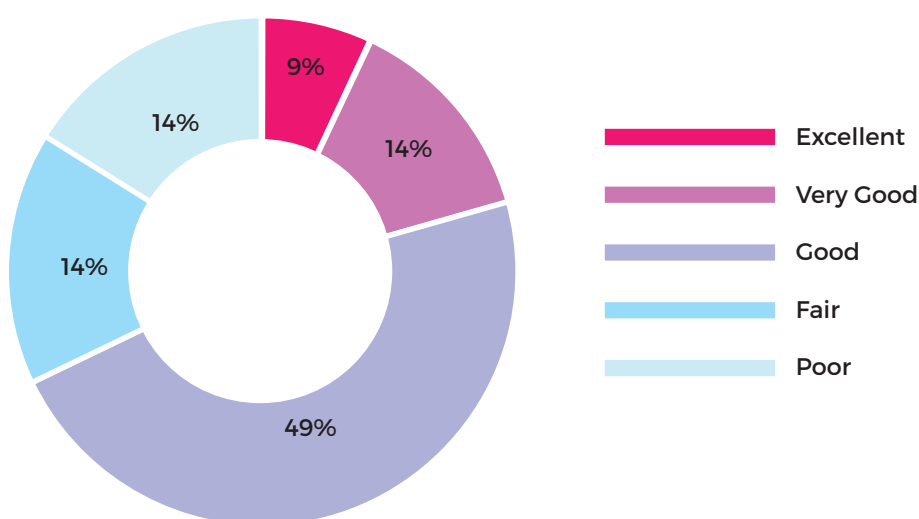

Figure 5.2

Perception of Policing in Liberia

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings above present an interesting picture of how those surveyed perceive the Liberia National Police. It is important that the police and its stakeholders consider these findings in a broader public perception scope. The public seem to generally have trust in the police's ability to perform with a slight appreciation of its respect for human rights, its efforts to safeguard elections, and police-community relationship in fighting crime. Yet, the findings show that citizens perceive the police to be slow in its response to crime, that citizens feel the police do not respect the rights of suspects and would more likely than not, hold suspects beyond the 48 hours allowed under the law. The need for improving public knowledge of police complaints mechanisms and how they can access it comes out strong under this report. Our recommendations are thus:

The Government

- That the government of Liberia increases its support to the police for continuous engagement with, and protection of, the electoral processes. This is in terms of logistics and manpower.
- That the government of Liberia through the Ministry of Justice provide additional criminal procedure awareness training to police officers throughout the country.
- That the government of Liberia through the Ministry of Justice should establish clear performance indicators for policing based on community satisfaction and perception surveys such as this. This will allow policymakers to establish benchmarks to improve satisfaction and perception over time, aligned with policy strategies and community policing efforts aimed at improving some of the negative perceptions.
- That the government of Liberia provide logistical support to the police to improve its community- crime response.
- That the government of Liberia provide budgetary support to the LNP for public awareness on its internal complaints' mechanisms and bodies.
- As the first step the LNP must be congratulated for conducting this survey and resources must be availed for them in the future to undertake relevant survey-based data collection about perceptions, experiences, and attitudes.

The Liberia National Police

- That the LNP works to improve citizen trust in the police in these counties: Rivercess, Nimba, Montserrado, Gbarpolu, Margibi, Lofa, and Bomi Counties.
- That the LNP work on improving citizen perception of its criminal procedure methods at the police station and suspect arrest levels by ensuring that police officers are aware that they are obligated to respect the rule of law.
- That the public information division of the police takes responsibility for increasing public awareness on complaints mechanisms within the police.
- That the police places greater emphasis on community crime response by budgeting to ensure same.
- The LNP should develop "learning agendas" to establish cycles of continuous evaluation and improvement informed by this survey.
- Integration of advanced human rights training into the police curriculum must immediately be rolled out.
- Focusing on media output into action and outcome-focused messages drive confidence. These messages need to inform and reassure people that the LNP is here and is maintaining order and safety where people live and work.
- Police visibility should be increased especially in town centers, events, and problem areas.

# Conclusion and Recommendations (continued)

Civil Society Organizations

- Civil society organizations increase collaboration and coordination with the police during elections observation.
- Civil society organizations help to highlight more positive aspects of police performance.
- Civil society organizations support capacity building for the police for greater awareness and application of the Criminal procedure Law.
- That civil society organizations help to advocate for improvement in budgetary support to police in elections and the police response to community crime.

The CRB

- Timely investigation and ruling in citizens' complaints against personnel of the LNP is a critical component for increasing or cementing community and police relationships.
- Publicity on how civilians can access its services especially its rules of procedure for how complaints are received and processed, and feedback relayed to the complainants.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Geo-Coordinates of Survey Location

Police Perception Coordinate Map
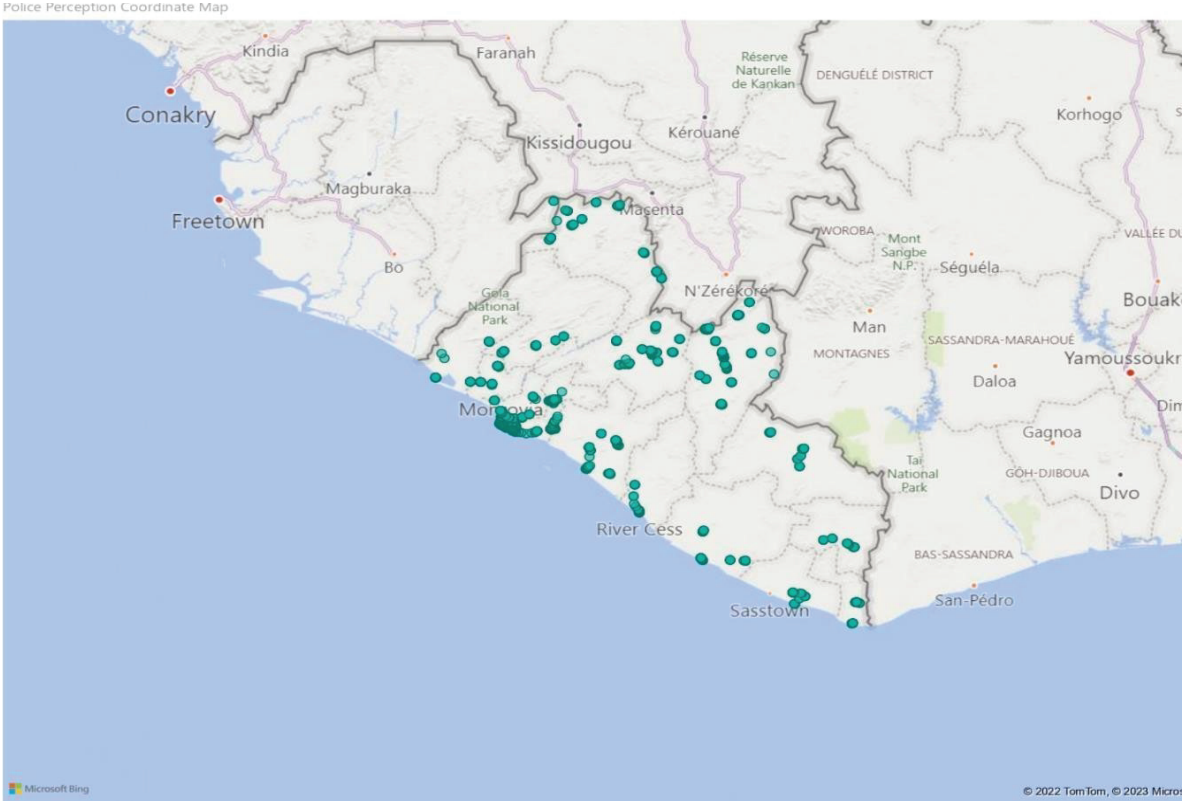
Appendix 2: Police Perception Survey Questionnaire

Demography Section

1. Counties? (a) Montserrado (b) Bomi (c) Bong (d) Sinoe (e) Maryland (f) Lofa (g) Gbarpolu (h) Grand Bassa (i) Rivercess (j) RiverGee (k) Grand Kru (l) Grand Gedeh (m) Grand Cape Mount (n) Nimba (o) Margibi

2. District - 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17

3. Location (a) Urban (b) Rural (c) Peri-Urban

4. Gender (a) Male (b) Female

5. Age? (a) 21-25 years (b) 26-30 years (c) 31-35 years (d) 36-40 years (d) 41+

6. Education/ (a) Elementary (b) Junior high (c) Senior high (d) Trade school (e) Certificate (f) University student (g) University Degree (h) Master program Student (i) Master's degree

Police Interaction with Citizens

7. Do you trust the police? (a) Yes b) No

    1b, If yes, to what extent? (a) Very high b) High c)
    Low Trust in the police by gender? (a) Very High (b) High (c) Low

8. Trust in the police by county? (a) Very Low (b) Low (c) High

9. How confident are you in Liberia National Police (a) Very Confident (b) Confident (c) Neutral (d) No Confident

Knowledge of Police Complaints Mechanism

10. Knowledge about the professional Standard Division of the Liberia National Police

    (a) Yes (b) No

11. Do you know the function of the Professional Standard Division (PSD) of the Liberia National Police (LNP)? Hint:(To accept complaints from citizens; To investigate the police officer and to recommend decisions from the investigation (a) Yes (No)

12. Do you know about the Civilian Oversight Complain Board (COCB)? HINT: Are responsible for the received complaint from citizens' decision made from an investigation by Professional Standard Division (a) Yes (No)

13. Knowledge of the Civilian Complaints Review Board by County? (Yes) (No)

Police Performance during the execution of their duties

14. During a suspect's arrest, how do you rate police performance?

(a) Excellent (b) Very Good (c) Good (d) Poor (e) Very Poor

15. Confidence in the police prevention of crime by geography. (a) Peri-Urban (b) Remote (c) Rural (d) Urban

16. During an arrest, do the police read citizens their rights? (a) Yes (No)

17. What could you say is the relationship between the police and drivers? (a) Very friendly (b) Friendly (c) Not Friendly

18. Do you think the police respect the law and do not keep suspects beyond 48 hours without charge?

(a) Yes (No)

19. Do you think the police respect human rights? (Yes)

Police Response to Crime

20. How do you rate the Liberia National Police's Relationship with the community in fighting crime? (a) Excellent (b) Very good (c) Good (d) Very Poor (e)Poor

21. How do you rate the police response to crime? (a) Very quick (b) Quick (c) Slow (d) Very Slow

22. How do you rate the police night operation to fight crime? (a) Very Effective (b) Effective (c) Somehow effective (e) Ineffective

23. How confident are you in the performance of the Liberia National Police in crime prevention? (a) Excellent (b) Good (c) Poor (d) Very good (e) Very Poor

24. How do you see the police response time in emergency calls? Very Fast (b) Fast (c) Very slow (d) Slow (e) No response at all

25. How do you see the police in preventing violence? (a) Excellent (b) Very Good (c) Good (d) Fair (e) Poor Police and Election

26. How do you rate the overall performance of the police during election? (a) Excellent (b) Very Good (c) Good (d) Fair (e) Poor

27. How do you see the police performance during the election campaign? (a) Excellent (b) Very Good (c) Good (d) Fair (e) Poor

28. How do you score the police performance on election day? (a) Excellent (b) Very Good (c) Good (d) Fair (e) Poor