SURVEY FINDINGS ON CHALLENGES AFFECTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN LIBERIA

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Acronyms

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AWP	Advocacy for Women Participation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FDGs	Focus Group Decisions
GEPP	Gender Equality in Political Parties
GSWPP	Government Support Women Political Participation
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
LSGR	Liberia Shape Gender Relations
LWPF	Liberia Women Political Forum
NEC	National Election Commission
ODK	OpenDataKit
PCA	Prevailing Culture Assumption
PDGG	Participatory Development and Good Governance
PRES	Proportional Representation Electoral System
QRM	Quantitative Research Method
RDC	Retrospective Data Collection
SEO	Social-Economic Opportunities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSM	Systematic Sampling Methodology
SSI	Sampling Strategy Indicate
SMS	Short Message Service
WPR	Woman Political Representation
WWC	Women Wing Chairs

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Executive Summary

The Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON) conducted a nationwide survey in May 2022 to gain a better understanding of the experiences of women's, participation in political and electoral processes of Liberia including an understanding of socio-economic opportunities and challenges, educational background, and interest in or barriers to involvement in democratic spaces. This survey also aimed to ascertain how this information can best be used to strengthen and inform recommendations to key stakeholders and influence increased women participation in electoral and political processes across community and government levels.

The survey was conducted throughout Liberia, across seventy-three (73) electoral districts in all fifteen (15) counties. The survey methodology included two different approaches: a quantitative approach, which focused on the numerical values and relationships among responses to the survey questionnaires, and a qualitative approach, which focused on obtaining descriptive and conceptual data through first-hand experience interviews and focus group discussions. The survey involved a quantitative sample size of 5,273 participants from ages eighteen (18) and above. The qualitative study included key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Nine (9) focus group discussions were conducted across seven (7) counties: Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, and Grand Gedeh Counties. Two (2) key informant interviews were conducted in each county's capital.

This dual-method technique provided a more in-depth understanding the size and populations of those impacted, as well background to challenges faced and the reasoning behind certain responses. Using this methodology also allowed LEON to make targeted recommendations to various, integral stakeholders which address root causes, shifting perceptions, and capacity. These recommendations can be used to advise potential programming, coordination, policies and procedures, and activities meant to increase women accessibility within Liberia's political, electoral, and democratic field.

The survey results yielded some findings that will be useful to key stakeholders advocating for women inclusion in political and electoral processes. Among them is that 88% of respondents noted that they have an interest in women contesting for election positions, and 3,804 respondents feel that they can talk to women who participate in politics. While the survey did not reveal anything surprising about inhibitors to women's political participation, it contextualized surveyors and discussants' beliefs around said inhibitors. For instance, although culture and traditions can be viewed as a barrier to women's involvement, survey results showed that if women were given the same resources and opportunities as men, respondents believed that they would do just as well as in the political space.

LEON recommends that stakeholders work towards programs that address women's access to resources including, but not limited to, providing small start-up funds, training to improve women's fundraising skills, garnering mutual funds, and reducing NEC and party registration fees for women.

The findings also illustrated that more females would vote for women in community elections than males. In addition, the survey also found that 81.2% of respondents' acknowledgment that political parties are more likely to nominate men on the ballot than women. While these findings are both reflective of existing data, it reinforces the necessity for a gender quota during the next general election, transparent candidate recruitment processes among parties, and increased awareness of the importance of women's participation in community governance amongst men to shift perceptions[1]. There should also be additional support to foster women's active participation through fair representation in the media during campaigning, speech writing and public speaking training, and increasing educational access, particularly around civic education.

One finding that concerns LEON is that a small majority of respondents (58%) are satisfied with current female representation in the Legislature, even though female representation in the Legislature remains at 6.6%. This speaks to the need to improved citizens' understanding of representative democracy and the beneficial impact of increasing women's representation in politics and overall decision-making. This can be done through educational programming involving media engagement, newsletters, and spotlighting women's engagement to democracy and Liberia's larger society.

Another point of consternation for LEON is the continued issue of safety concerns as a reason for why women should not participate in politics and elections. Local and international stakeholders must provide skills trainings on safety protocols for female aspirants, in addition to parties proactively drafting and promoting non-violent campaign messaging and denouncing gender-based hate speech and misinformation to their supporters. The above are some of the key findings and recommendations that came out of the survey, the rest can be found within the rest of this report.

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1. During the survey there was a bill before the House of Representatives that sought to strengthen the vague language in the current New Electoral Law that provides for a 30% quota system.

Background of the Survey

The under-representation of women constitutes a serious democratic deficit, which undermines the legitimacy of the contemporary democratic ideal. Women have and continue to face numerous challenges when exercising their political rights in Liberia. Despite notable, positive developments in post-conflict Liberia, including having a female president for twelve years and women accounting for more than half of the population, women remain largely underrepresented in decision-making and governance processes. Liberia, which elected the first female president in Africa, created a positive "demonstration effect" that was assumed to considerably improve conditions for the future political participation of women. However, in Liberia, women's representation in the parliament remains very low, with only seven (7) members in the low house and two (2) in the upper house.

Women are affected by the prevailing cultural assumptions and stereotypical views in society. Men are assumed to have primary responsibility for activities in the public sphere, economy, and political life while women have primary responsibility for the private sphere of home and family. These stereotypes are used to justify and maintain systemic and oppressive power dynamics between men and women.

Politics and governance involve all aspects of power: who has power, what power relations exist, how power is exercised, the institutions of power, how they operate, what policies and laws are churned out from these institutions, and what impact these laws and policies have on people. Through the patriarchal powers vested within these institutions, men become the "directors" of most public enterprises –and the "face" of politics and governance. Electoral processes are not only about institutions of power and who occupies them. It is also about how that power is exercised and the outcomes. Women's lack of participation renders them non-citizens in decision-making. The outcomes of policies reinforce their inferior status, and data shows that women are still underrepresented in achieving gender parity in Liberia. Women's equal participation is necessary for Liberia's development and sustainability. A retrospective data collection by archives on women who participated in the elections during the past twenty years has shown under-representation of women in parliament which is far from 30% representation. This underrepresentation reflects data on the sex of candidates on the ballot in Liberia. Table 1 below shows analysis of the ratio of male to female candidates per county between 2005 and 2022.

Table 1: Ratio of Male to Female Candidates Per County 2005-2022 (Representative and Senatorial Elections)

County	Total Number of Candidates	Number of Female Candidates	The ratio of Male to Female
Bomi	200	21	10:1
Bong	279	36	8:1
Gbarpolu	120	16	8:1
Grand Bassa	210	25	8:1
Grand Cape Mount	122	17	7:1
Grand Gedeh	134	12	11:1
Grand Kru	103	6	17:1
Lofa	197	28	7:1
Margibi	203	23	9:1
Maryland	120	12	10:1
Montserrado	898	121	7:1
Nimba	347	36	10:1
RiverCess	147	9	16:1
River Gee	114	12	10:1
Sinoe	127	13	10:1
Total	**3321**	**387**	**9:1**

Table 1. Source: National Election Commission of Liberia

Reading Table 1 above shows that since 2005, on nationwide average, for every woman candidate, there are 8 more men on the ballot. Liberian voters are "spoiled for choice" with a bias towards men.

It is not then surprising that underrepresentation of women on the ballot is reflected on political party tickets. The nationwide average is similar to political parties and narrower for independents where women have represented 20% of independent candidates on the ballot since 2005. (see Table 2 below).

>>Background of the Survey

Table 2: Political Parties, Independents and Female Representation on the Ballot

Category	Number of Candidates	Number of Female Candidates	The ratio of Male to Female
Political Party	2948	311	9:1
Independent	373	76	5:1
Total	**3321**	**387**	**9:1**

Table 2. *Source: National Election Commission of Liberia.*

In Table 3 below, its reflects that by category, on average, women in Liberia are seen less on senatorial tickets than that of the House of Representatives or the presidency.

Table 3: Ratio of Male to Female Candidates Per Category of Elections

Election	Number of Candidates	The number of Female Candidates Contested	The ratio of Male to Female
Presidential Elections	58	12	5:1
Senatorial elections	710	61	12:1
Representative elections	2611	326	8:1
Total	**3379**	**399**	**8:1**

Table 3: *Source: National Election Commission of Liberia.*

Table 4 below unsurprisingly shows Montserrado (121) with the highest number of female candidates. Bong and Nimba counties come in second with 36 candidates each followed by Lofa, Margibi and Grand Bassa counties. Counties in the southeast of the country perform poorly in terms of female candidates on the ballot. In presidential election years (2005, 2011 & 2017), women representation on the ballot dropped from 105 female candidates in 2005 to 93 candidates in 2011 and a jump to 156 candidates in 2017. Yet, women representation in parliament dropped from 14% in 2005 to under 11% in 2017.

Table 4: Women Contested Candidates by County and Year

County	2005	2008	2009	2011	2012	2014	2015	2017	2020	2021	2022	Total
Bomi	6			5		3		5	1	1		21
Bong	16			9		1		10				36
Gbarpolu	5			4				6	1			16
Grand Bassa	7			5				12	1			25
Grand Cape												
Mount	4			6		2		5				17
Grand Gedeh	4			2		1		5				12
Grand Kru	2			1		1		2				6
Lofa	8			6		1	2	10			1	28
Margibi	6	1		4		2		10				23
Maryland	4			3				5				12
Montserrado	25		3	30	2	3		58				121
Nimba	6			10		1		18		1		36
River Cess	2			1		3	1	2				9
River Gee	3			3				6				12
Sinoe	7			4				2				13
Total	**105**	**1**	**3**	**93**	**2**	**18**	**3**	**156**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**387**

Table 4: *Source: National Election Commission of Liberia*

These numbers do not reflect an inclusive democratic political space. This is despite Liberia being a signatory to several international treaties and conventions that obligates it to respect and protect the rights of women, including women's political participation. Liberia has ratified or become a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[2], the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[3], and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women[4]. Liberia is also a signatory of The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a landmark document for advancing the rights of women and gender equality worldwide agreed upon during the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's Goal #10 is "Women in Power and Decision-making." Paragraph 181 of the Declaration states that "Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be considered."[5] There is an obligation to protect, respect, and advance the rights of women to participate in the political and democratic sphere in accordance with international best practices and norms. This survey gathers information that evaluates challenges to women's political participation and inhibitors to their decision-making to inform and generate recommendations to promote participation.

In line with the foregoing the survey aimed to gather empirical data that helps LEON's stakeholders to develop a deeper understanding and insights into the experiences of the diverse groups of women in participating in electoral and political processes of the country including how socio-economic opportunities and challenges, ideologies, and hopes and aspirations affect these. Furthermore, the survey aimed at getting information that helps to better understand how the differences in experiences and access to opportunities, facilities, and resources between women and men in Liberia shape gender relations in the country and influence agency among women, particularly their participation in electoral and political activities at both local and national levels. In addition to contributing to LEON project investments, the empirical data from this research will be used by various actors, including both State and Non-State actors, to develop appropriate interventions to address women's exclusion in both electoral and political processes of the country. Moreover, the study sought to examine key barriers or positive interventions that hinder or support women's participation.

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2. The United Nations General Assembly. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Treaty Series, 999,* 171, Art. 3, "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant" (Ratified by Liberia 22 September 2004).
3. The United Nations. "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." Treaty Series 1249 (1988): 13. states: "Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country." (Acceded by Liberia on 17 July 1984).
4. UN General Assembly, Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 20 December 1952 (Signed by Liberia on 9 December 1953.
5. United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995, para 181.

Objective Scope of the Study

The research assessed, identified, and documented the situation with respect to women's participation in political and electoral processes in Liberia.

Principal Objective of the Study

1. This survey was aimed at broadening partners' understanding of the different groups of women living in different parts of the country and their needs, aspirations, opportunities, and challenges as it relates to participation in electoral and political processes.

2. To establish empirical facts about women's knowledge about and participation in electoral and political engagement opportunities available to them, as well as their rights, roles, and responsibilities as citizens, including those provided for by the Constitution and legislative framework of Liberia.

3. The survey sought to develop a nuanced understanding of how various political, social, and economic factors, including the structural, institutional, policy, cultural, and belief systems constrain or promote women's participation in electoral and political processes.

4. Through this survey and its analysis, LEON sought to develop solid recommendations to address factors constraining women's progress and to promote women's development in the political, and electoral spheres.

5. Understanding the views of voters and their attitudes towards women candidates and political representatives because voters are the key to electing women to politics.

6. This survey sought to understand the political context, particularly how political parties act as barriers to or supporters of women standing as candidates and getting elected. Political parties play a very crucial role in the political representation of women. They are gatekeepers for women who aspire to be candidates. They can act as barriers to preventing enablers to secure an increase in women's political representation.

7. Understand the performance of women elected candidates in the Legislature.

Methodology of the Study

LEON's findings were received through a mixed-method approach:

- a qualitative and quantitative research method. The study was conducted across 73 electoral districts in all 15 counties of Liberia.
- A quantitative research method with a sample size of 5,273 participants from ages 18 and above.

The qualitative study included key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD). Nine (9) focus group discussions were conducted across seven (7) counties: Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, and Grand Gedeh Counties. Two (2) key informant interviews were conducted in each county's capital.

Design of the Study
The above sampling methodologies were used in this study. For the qualitative survey, a systematic sampling methodology was used. In every district, a selected enumeration area was selected with no removable structure as a starting point and a random interval for every (10) household. For the qualitative survey, the probability sampling method was used to randomly select participants for the study. This sampling strategy indicates that the study aims to access information that provides an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by those who have experienced it (Stacey, 1969; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Accordingly, a population of women was identified, consistent with the purpose of the study and the demography of the study.

Question Template
Questions were drafted to provide a structure to the study and to ensure that the data and information collected allowed for comparisons to be made. The template I specified asking questions directly to respondents from key areas the study sought to understand. Template II specified questions in a focus group discussion pathway and in-depth interviews with key women that stood as candidates, who were either successful in getting elected or not, including senior women in a political party which will give actual constraining factors on women.

The results and responses to Template II, the quantitative study, are classified into qualifiers including:
- 10 is Few, which quantifies less than a third of discussants.
- 24 is Some, which quantifies approximately half of discussants.
- 32 is Most, which quantifies more than half of discussants.

Data Management
LEON collected data from the field through OpenDataKit which interfaces with NEMO's open-source data collection and reporting system. Equipped with NEMO, enumerators submitted data via Android devices, Short Message Service, or directly online in real-time from the field. The NEMO server ensured data quality control and storage for respondent confidentiality. Quality of data control processes through LEON was conducted through a geo-positioning system, where a quality control officer conducted a back check of enumerators and ensured the sampling methodology was ahead in our sampling interval of respondents.

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY
Demographic Sampled

Table 5. Gender of Respondent

Gender of the study

Ratio

2,424 Male (46%)   2,849 Female (54%)
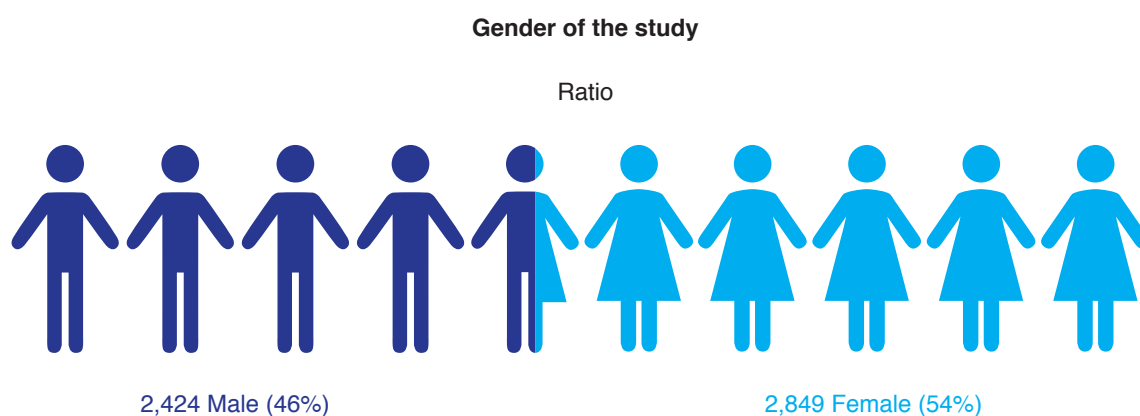
>>Methodology of the Study

	Female	Male	Total
Bomi	139	101	240
Bong	287	259	546
Cape Mount	157	100	257
Gbarpolu	121	117	238
Grand Bassa	205	186	391
Grand Gedeh	125	115	240
Grand Kru	94	46	140
Lofa	199	183	382
Margibi	213	169	382
Maryland	121	119	240
Montserrado	552	451	1003
Nimba	341	281	622
Rivercess	73	67	140
RiverGee	111	111	222
Sinoe	111	119	230

Figure 1.0

The table and figure above illustrate the survey interviewed 5,273 respondents:, 54% or 2,849 females responded, and 46% or 2,424 men responded to the study. More women were interviewed throughout the study. The study also reveals that within the sample size of 5273 respondents there were more women interviewed from Grand Bassa, Bong, Montserrado, and Nimba counties.

Peri Urban — 1066 (20%)
Rural — 2022 (38%)
Urban — 2185 (42%)
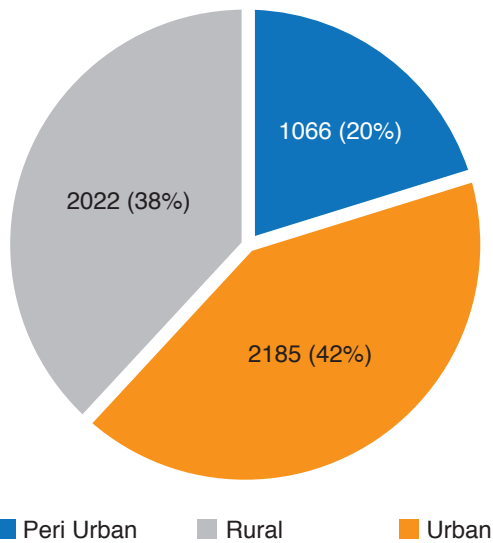
Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 shows more interviews were conducted in urban and peri-urban areas than in rural areas within the study.

Age of respondents

Age	Male	Female
41+	10.92%	13.48%
36-40	7.28%	9.52%
30-35	9.39%	11.44%
24-29	8.61%	12.29%
23-18	6.32%	8.46%
17Yrs	0.89%	1.40%

Figure 1.2

Figure 1.2 illustrates that among the 5,273 respondents to the surveys: 23% of them were between the ages of 24 and 29 years old, 21% were between the ages of 30 and 35 years old, and 20% were 41 years old or older. This shows that the survey largely reached the young adult and middle-aged demographic. The survey also revealed that across all ages women responded more than men.

Key Findings

The Qualitative survey takes several factors into consideration to determine what barriers or support impacts women's political perception (including education, women's experience, and satisfaction with representation) as well as the perceptions around inclusive laws and gender disparities among elected officials. The survey results are detailed below, depicted in graphs.

Section I: Education Level

According to Pew Research Center and Investopedia, it has been proven that education and training can help improve people's potential socioeconomic status and employment prospects, as well as open new opportunities in various industries. Educational attainment and progression 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-of-school children, more than one million children (1,072,493) are classified as out-of-school by UNICEF. More than half of these children (53% or 571,535) are physically out of school, while the remaining 47% (or 500,958) are in school at the primary and junior high levels, but at risk of dropping out of school.[6] As such the survey also sought to look at the education levels of respondents and how this might impact women's political participation.

Education Level Attained by Respondent

MALE		FEMALE
University Completed	85	48 University Completed
Trade School	38	35 Trade School
Some Primary Schooling	213	264 Some Primary Schooling
Some College/University	128	102 Some College/University
High School Completed	551	466 High School Completed
Primary Completed	280	254 Primary Completed
Post Secondary Qualification	110	67 Post Secondary Qualification
Post Garduate Degree	19	10 Post Garduate Degree
No formal Schooling	27	39 No formal Schooling
Intermediate/sdome high school	274	257 Intermediate/sdome high school

Figure 1.3

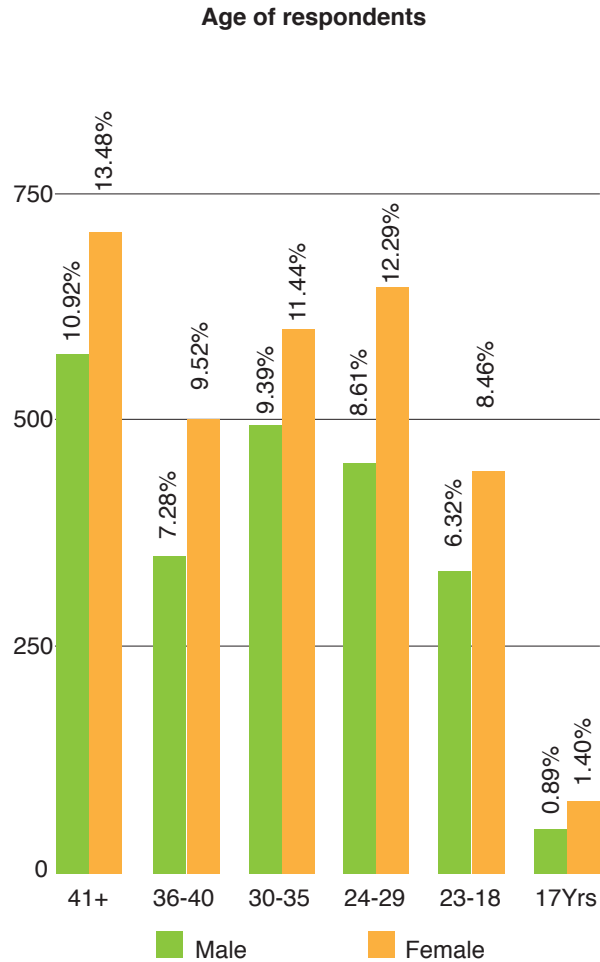Of the 5,273 people interviewed, 3,267, or 68% indicated that they could read or write. When aggregated by gender the survey shows that 53% of male respondents and 47% of female respondents could read and write. Furthermore, 16% of males have little to no formal education, while 22% of females have little to no formal education. Generally, there are more males at each level of education than females. This finding suggests that most respondents interviewed had at least some level of education and could read and write as opposed to those with no formal education.

Section II. Experience in Politics and Elections

Election day is a pivotal moment in the democratic experience of citizens as it provides an opportunity for people to cast their votes and have their voices included in the democratic process. A democracy cannot exist without credible and fair elections. A credible and fairly run election ensures equality and inclusion as each citizen is given the chance to submit one vote. Decision-making based on a majority vote is also important to an electoral process because it ensures that the rights of citizens are not disenfranchised and involves the political will.

6. https://www.unicef.org/liberia/basic-education
2. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/05/03/the-future-of-jobs-and-jobs-training/
3. https://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/09/education-training-advantages.asp

>>Key Findings

In this section, we offer our findings on the decision to vote and important factors that influence the respondents' experiences in an election, such as the number of men taking part in elections, opportunities for women to be voted into important positions, and the decision-making processes within political parties, and general feelings about politics.

Are you serving in any of these positions now or have you served in any of these positions before?
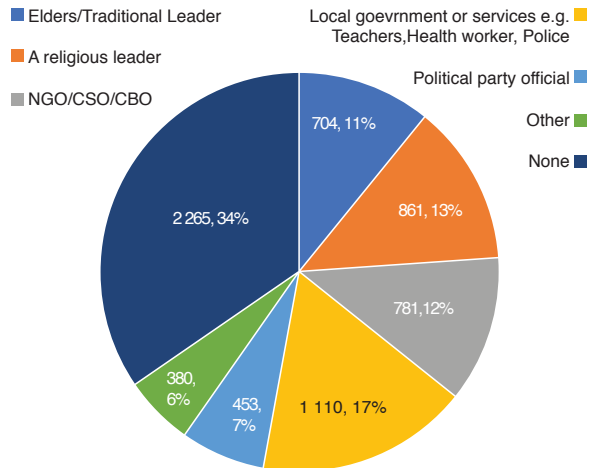
Figure 1.4.

Respondents were asked whether they have ever served in any of the specified positions in the past or present. Most survey respondents said they have never served in any of these positions, 18% said they have served in local government positions, and 7.3% have served in political parties. Respondents could select more than one position. Based on the disaggregated data on women's participation in decision-making and electoral processes, of the 5,273 respondents surveyed, 3% of females served in political parties as officials

Interest in Politics
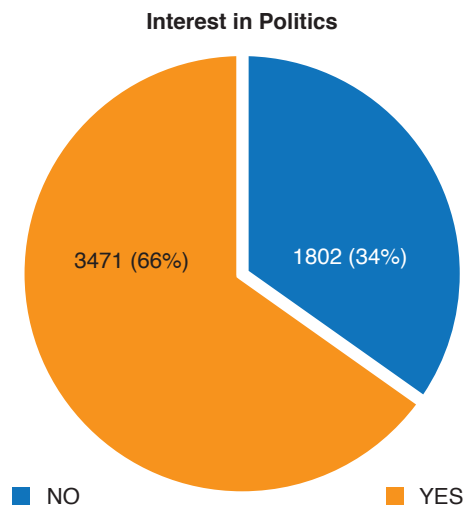
Figure 2.0

Figure 2.0. Respondents were asked about their experience in politics. The survey revealed that 66% of respondents indicated that they have an interest in politics.

Figure 2.1

Satisfaction with current female Representation
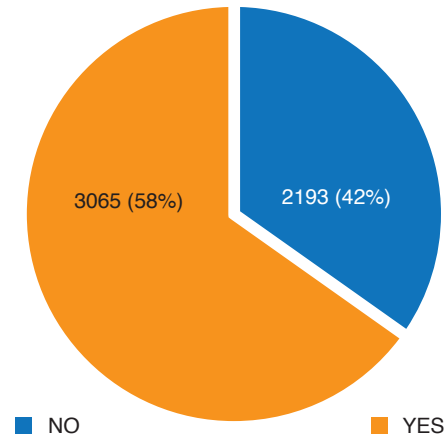
Figure 2.1

In Figure 2.1., respondents were asked about their satisfaction with current female representation. With current national female representation under 10%, 42% of respondents are dissatisfied with the current female representation..

Do females have a role in community governance?
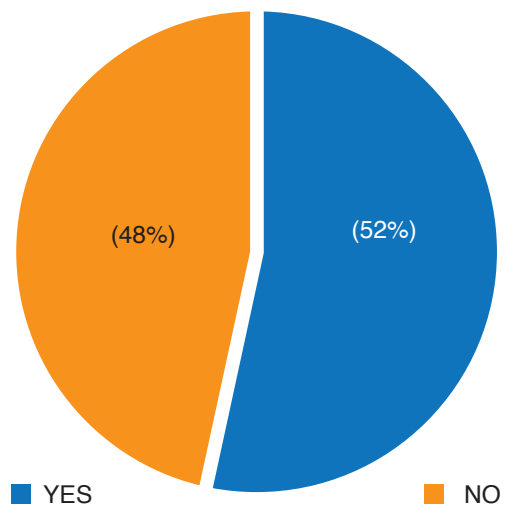
Figure 2.2

Figure 2.2. Respondents were asked a closed-ended question about their opinion regarding women's roles in the government within the community they live in. Interestingly, 52% believed that females did not have a role within the previous governments of the community/ area they live.

Figure 2.0

Do you think an election is Men's job

661 (13%)   4612 (87%)

■ NO   ■ YES
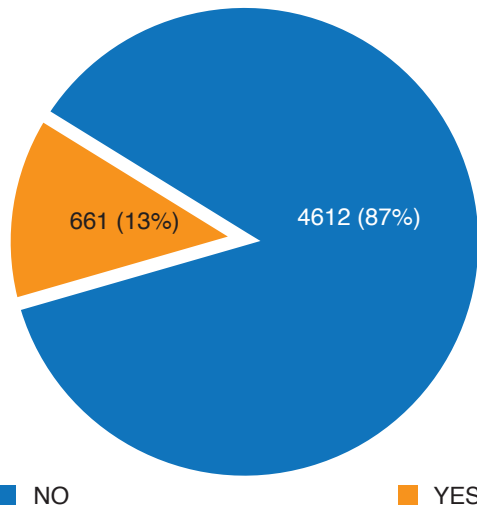
Figure 2.3

In figure 2.3, respondents were asked their thoughts on whether elected positions are "men jobs." 87% of respondent believe that participation in elections is not only for men or a man's job.

Interest in women contesting in election

4624 (88%)   649 (12%)

■ NO   ■ YES

Figure 2.4

Respondents were asked of their interest in women contesting elections in figure 2.4. 88% of respondents said YES, they have interest in women contesting elections.

Is your community leader working for women's development and their rights

3299 (63%)   1974 (37%)

■ NO   ■ YES

Figure 2.5

Respondents were asked in figure 2.5 their opinion of whether community leader work to support women rights and development. The survey reveals that 3,299 of respondents answered "YES, community leaders work for women's development and their rights," to the above question.

If a woman was dhosen to run for local elections in your community, will you vote for her

Yes   2061
      2604

No   363
      245

■ Female   ■ Male
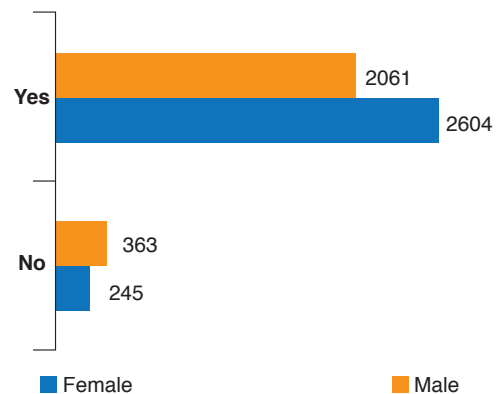
Figure 2.6

In Figure 2.6. respondents were asked whether they would vote for a woman on the ballot of a community election. 89% of respondents answered, YES, they would choose a woman if she ran for local elections in their community." The majority of those who said NO, 608, being men.

Section III. Perception of Women's Political Participation.

Citizen perception is pivotal to guaranteeing women can participate within political, democratic, and electoral spaces. If society feels that women do not belong then women's engagement will be limited, regardless of the gender of those who hold this belief. Men who have this assumption might serve as blockers to women, whereas women who hold onto this belief are unlikely to put themselves forward for leadership roles in this area. It is important to evaluate citizens' opinions around gender and politics and the reasonings behind some of those opinions or held beliefs as they can shape societal standards including government intervention and policies. Respondents were asked the following questions in an open-ended manner, meaning no potential answers were given to respondents.

Do you think voting for women in elections is good
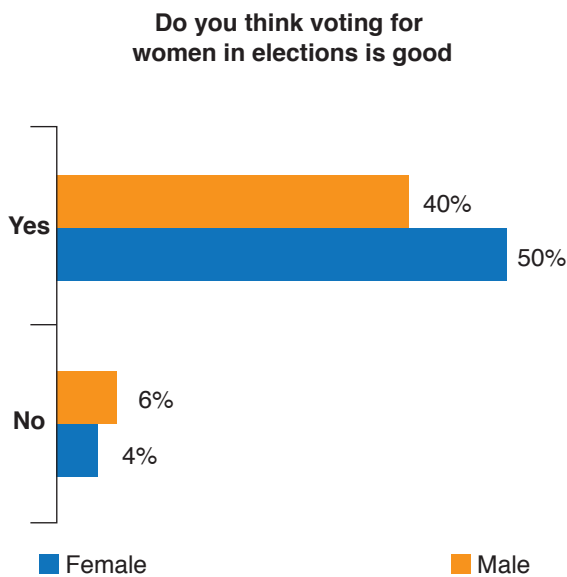
Figure 3.0

In figure 3.0., respondents were asked their opinion of whether voting for women is good. The survey shows 4,734, making 90% of respondents are in favor of voting for women in elections. Of the 10% that said no, man at 6%, were in the majority.

Do you think there are more women taking part in elections than men?
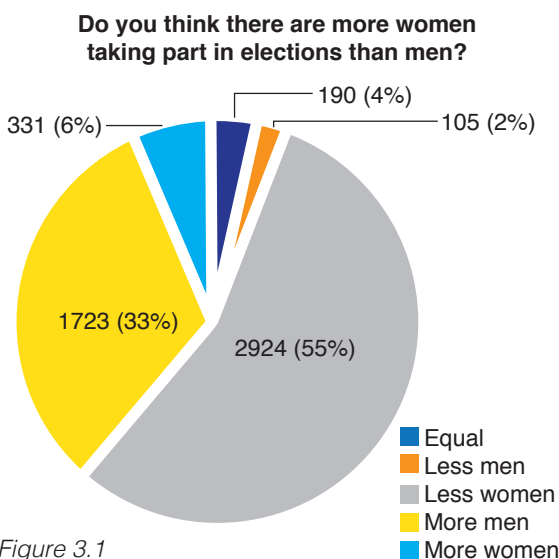
Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1. In the survey sample size of 5,273, over half the respondents (2,924) reported that in their opinion, fewer women take part in elections than men. This does not reflect the inclusiveness of women's participation in elections.

Do you think a women should become president, Representative, or Senator in Liberia
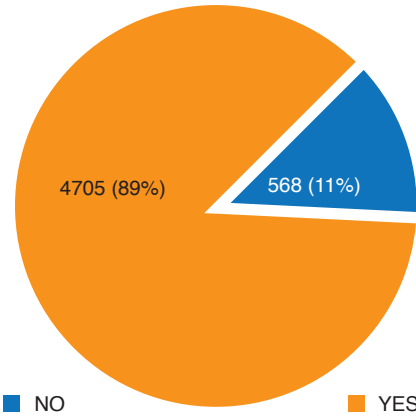
Figure 3.2

Respondents were asked in Figure 3.1. their thoughts on whether more women take part in elections than men. In the survey sample size of 4,647 respondents, over half the respondents (2,924) 62%, reported that in their opinion, fewer women take part in elections than men. This does not reflect the inclusiveness of women's participation in elections. As for Figure 3.2., where respondents were asked whether women should serve in elected position, out of the 5,273 respondents, 89% of respondents think that women should become President, Representative, or Senator in Liberia; whereas 11% respondents said that women should not become President, Representative, or Senator.

When deciding which candidate to vote for in elections, what would you want or see in the person?
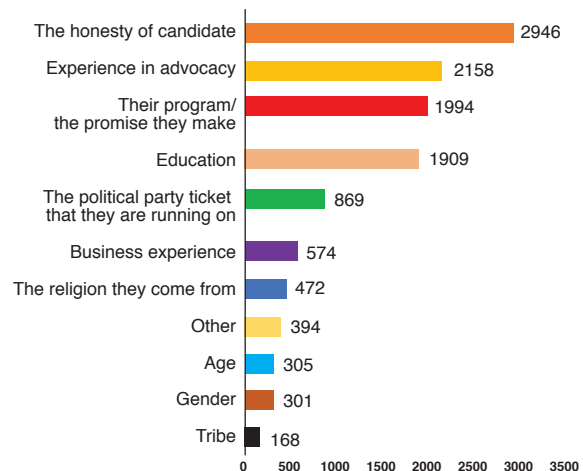
Figure 3.3

Respondents were asked in Figure 3.3 what quality(ies) they look for most when voting a candidate. Candidates' honesty, experience with advocacy, promises mad and education shown highest. Religion and political party ticket were medium standards while age, gender and tribe were shown to be lesser factors.

Should women be part of decision making process in a political party

463 (9%)

4810 (91%)

■ NO   ■ YES
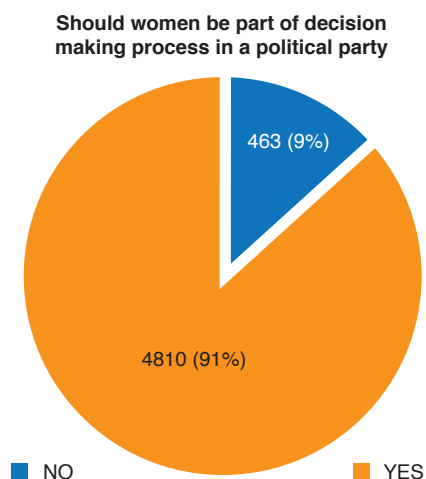
Figure 3.4

Respondents were asked in figure 3.4. whether women should be part of decision making in political parties. Respondents indicated that in a close-ended response 4810, constituting 91% said YES that should take part in decision making in the party they are part of while 463 constituting 9% said NO, they should not be a part.

In past election, more female candidate was not voted for? What do you think is the problem.

1189 (23%)   1153 (22%)

703 (13%)   1638 (31%)

590 (11%)

■ Because it is against tradition
■ Because they are weak
■ Because their job is to take care of the home
■ Because they do not represent well
■ Other
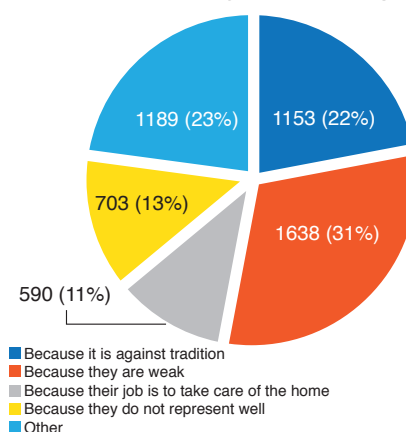
Figure 3.5

In figure 3.5, respondents were asked about their opinions regarding past elections and the reasons more female candidates were not voted into office. Of the 5273 respondents interviewed by enumerators, 1,638 (which constitutes 31%, think women) are weak; 1189 equating to 23% were of the belief that their job is to take care of the home,1,153, equating to 22%, believe it is because it is against tradition, 703 equating to13%.

Section IV. AGREE or DISAGREE Statements:

Reasons why fewer women elected in office than men.

A series of reasons were given for why there are fewer women in elected offices than men and respondents were asked to respond whether they agreed or disagreed.

Table 6: Reason(s) for Fewer Elected Women

| In Liberia, there are different reasons given for the fact that there are fewer women than men in elected office. Which, if any of the following statements do you agree with?				
	Agree Responses	**%**	**Disagree Responses**	**%**
Political parties are more likely to nominate men than women	4284	81.2%	989	18.8%
Family duties don't allow women time to run for office.	2507	47.5%	2766	52.5%
Liberians are more likely to vote for men than women.	4361	82.7%	912	17.3%
Women have less access to resources to campaign	3437	65.2%	1836	34.8%
Women are less interested in politics than men.	3508	66.5%	1765	33.5%
There are not enough qualified women for elected office.	2338	44.3%	2935	55.7%
Women elected to public office do not speak up for the people.	2158	40.9%	3115	59.1%

Table 6.0. reflects a series of questions asked to survey respondents about different statements given for fewer women than men in elected office. Most respondents agreed that political parties are more likely to nominate men than women. When asked whether family duties prohibited women time to run for office, most respondents disagreed. Notably, three questions relating to women's full participation in the electoral process were considered. First, 82.7% of respondents answered fewer women than men are in elected office because Liberians are more likely to vote for men than women. 65.2% of respondents answered that there are less women than men in elected office because women have less access to resources to campaign. Similarly, 66.5% of respondents feel that less women are in elected office than men due to women's lack of interest in politics.

Section V. YES or NO Statements Closest to Respondents' Opinion about Electoral Process/Laws

Should there be laws for increasing the participationof females in the cabinet or in the Electoral process
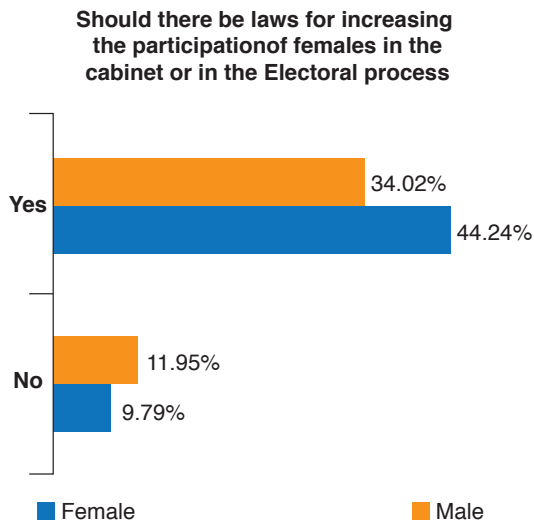
Figure 4.0

Respondent were asked in figure 4.0 on whether there should be laws for increasing participation of females in cabinet and electoral processes, the survey shows that of the 5,273 respondents interviewed in all 73 electoral districts, 4,127 believe there should be a law to increase the participation of female candidates in the cabinet and electoral process, 44.2% of females and 34% of males agreed with this proposal.

Should there be laws increasing feamles in the cabinet or in the Electoral Process?
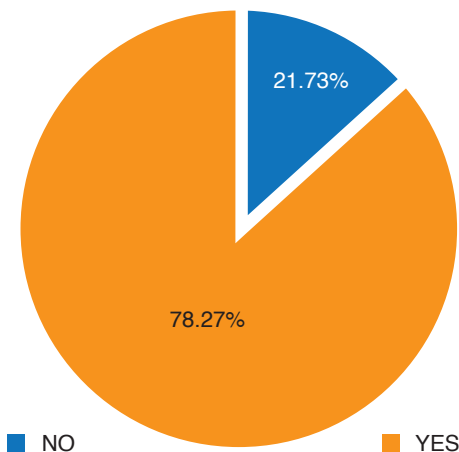
Figure 4.1

In (figure 4.1), 4,361 respondents making up 78.27% of respondents agree that there should be laws increasing females in Cabinet or in electoral processes.

In your mind what problems are faced by women in getting into politics
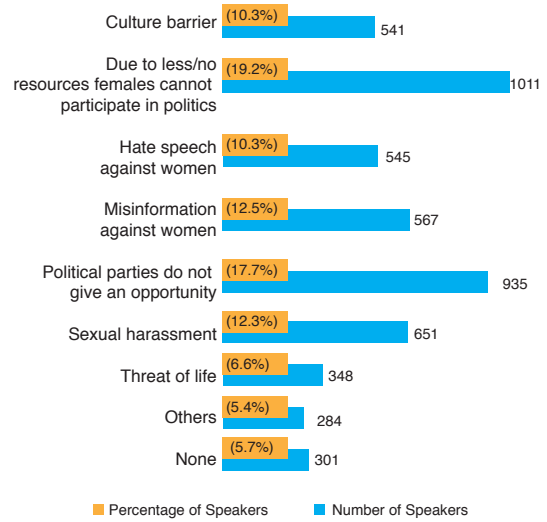
Figure 4.2.
Respondents were asked about their opinions on problems faced by women getting into politics. 1,011 or 19.2% of respondents indicated that due to decreased or no resources, women cannot participate in politics. Also, 17.7% think that political parties do not give an opportunity to women. 12.5% also think that misinformation against women has become a barrier to women getting into politics. Additionally, 12.3% believe that sexual harassment is a problem, 10.3% think that hate speech against women is an issue, and another 10.3% believe that cultural barriers cause problems for women getting into politics.

In your mind what decisions should be taken for women's participation in politics?
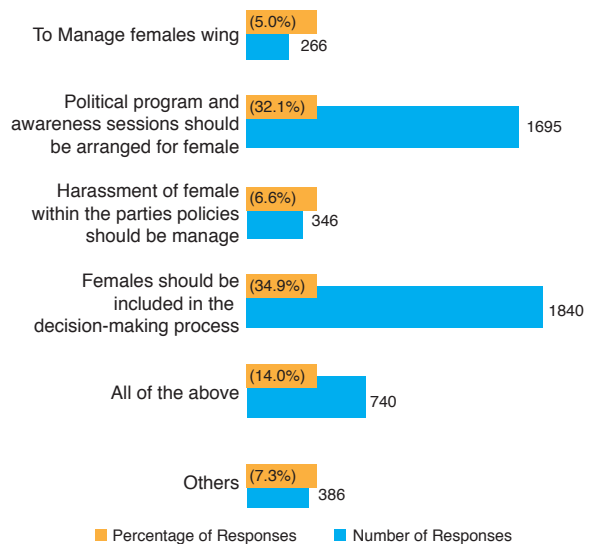
Figure 4.3. Respondents were again asked to answer in an open-ended manner and give their opinion on what decisions should be taken for women's political participation (Figure 4.3) While some respondents said they agreed with all the above (14%), the majority think that women should be included in decision-making and political program and awareness sessions should be arranged for women to be included in decision making.

Have you ever told yourself or a woman that she should not run for elected position

No — 2479 (Female), 2054 (Male)

Yes — 370 (Female), 370 (Male)

■ Female   ■ Male
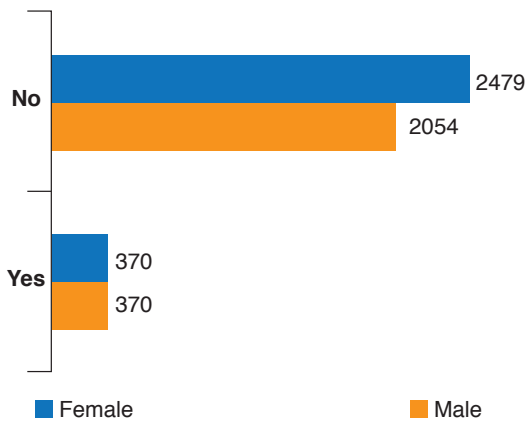
Figure 4.4.

Survey respondents were asked whether they have ever told a woman not to run for elected positions. Most survey respondents 4533 or 86% indicated that they have not told a woman not to run for an elected position. However, 740 respondents or 14% of the total 5,273 respondents have asked a woman to not run.

This graph further explains Figure 4.2 where (19.2%) respondents indicated that due to limited or no resources females should not participate into politics.

If yes, why did you tell her not to run for election?

260
250 — Because I don't think women should run for office
202 — She was a family member and i was scared of her safety
189 — She was a family member and i was scared of the family
143 — She was a family member and it is not right for a woman in my family to run
133 — I didn't think she had the education to run
104 — She was not a family member but i was still scared for her safety
59 — I didn't think she had the money to run
58 — I thought she should focus on her family
44 — Other
43
20
1

Figure 4.5.

Respondents were asked about their opinion regarding why women were told not to run for elections. The survey revealed that the 740 respondents who told women not to run for elections give several, different reasons. 348 of respondents surveyed indicated the threat of life women faced getting into politics was the reason

they told a woman not to run for elections Among the 740, 33.8 % have told a woman not to run for election because of family safety. While 35.1% think women should not participate in running for election and 19.3% think women do not have the right education. Another 14.1% also think women do not have the money to run for elections.

Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.

Male — 82.3% (Yes), 17.7% (No)

Female — 88.3% (Yes), 11.7% (No)

■ No   ■ Yes
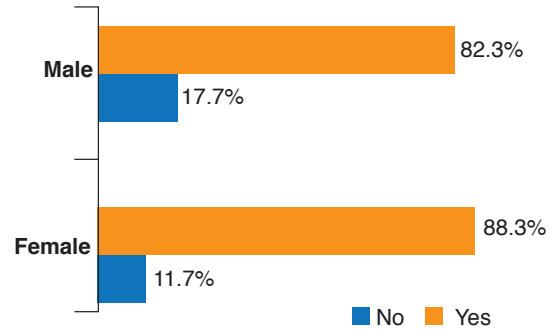
Figure 4.6

Respondents were asked their opinion regarding women having the same chance of being elected to a political office as men. Most female and male respondents (88.3%) said YES, they feel women should be given the same chance of being elected as men in political office. This corroborates Table 4.1 which establishes that 78.3% of respondents think there should be laws increasing the participation of females in the cabinet or in the electoral process.

Men make better political leader than women and should be elected rather than women

Male — 47.4% (Yes), 52.6% (No)

Female — 33.6% (Yes), 61.4% (No)

■ No   ■ Yes
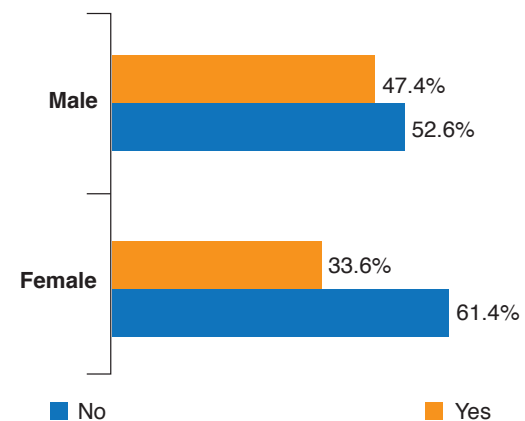
Figure 4.7

Respondents were asked in figure 4.7 whether men make better political leaders than women. Interestingly, there is a common perception that citizens or voters believe that men make better political decisions. However, from surveying the 5,273 respondents, 52.6% of men and 61.4% of women indicated that NO, men do not make better political leaders than women and should therefore be elected instead of women.

Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interviews Findings

Eight focus group discussions were facilitated with a total of 56 participants. Each focus group discussion (FGD) was held with seven to eight participants. The focus groups were conducted with students from high school, youth leaders, community leaders, people with disabilities (PWDs), teachers, and long-term, women community members in both urban and rural areas. twelve key informant interviews were also conducted, which included male and female political party chairs, women in elected positions, political party Women wing chairs, and women who had contested elections before. All focus group and key informant interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The recording was transcribed verbatim and translated into standard English. Transcribed FGDs and Key informant interviews were deconstructed for analysis using the software Atlast. Ti. The results and responses depicted below are categorized by the following qualifiers:

* 10 is Few, which quantifies less than a third of discussants.
* 24 is Some, which quantifies approximately half of discussants.
* 32 is Most, which quantifies more than half of discussants.

Respondent Demographic:

Respondents were selected for focus group discussion and key informant interviews from a cross-section of the population and a balanced geography location of both urban and rural.

Table 7: Distribution of Focus Group Discussion participants

Group Profile	County	Male	Female	Total	Urban	Rural
• Students (High School)	Upper Montserrado	3	4	7	0	7
• Youth Leader	Lower Montserrado	4	3	7	7	0
	Bomi	4	3	7	2	5
• A woman	Lofa (Foya)	4	3	7	4	3
• Community Leader	Lofa (Voinjama)	3	4	7	4	3
• Traditional Leader	Nimba	3	4	7	3	4
	Grand Bassa	3	4	7	7	0
	Grand Cape Mount	4	3	7	3	4

Table 8: Distribution of Key Informant Interviews

| County	Participants
Bomi	• Women's Chairs in Political Party • Political Party Chairperson
Grand Bassa	• Woman In Elected Positions in the Legislature • Women contested elections before
Lofa	• Woman In Elected Positions in the Legislature • Women Wing Chair in Political Party in the County
Nimba	• Women contested elections before (Legislature • Political Party Chairperson
Grand Gedeh	• Political Party Chairperson • Women Wing Chair for Political party
Montserrado	• Political Party Chairman
Grand Cape Mount	• Woman who contested election

Questionnaire Development:

The questionnaire was developed and constructed to meet the understanding and glean information from a wide scope of respondents on women's political participation and the factors that influence women's participation. The principal component of the questionnaire focused on the following:

* Factors perceived as a barrier that women faced in your party during and after the election.
* Agreement with the proposed amendment to the new election law of 30% of women's representation
* What Influenced Voter perception
* Challenges faced in the Political nominations process
* Overall agreement/disagreement with certain key statements surrounding women's political participation.

Key Findings

Perception of Women being Good as compared to Men in Leadership

The gender norms that exist in the Liberian society follow a traditional and conservative pattern, and they are connected to the larger structures of economy, legal framework, and religion. The understanding of the gender binary in this context defines "real men" to be those that are heads of households, who are the breadwinners of and take control of their families, and who are the primary decision-makers. This notion of being a "real man"- is also understood as a part of a gendered hierarchy, in which men have the right to control and use violence. On the other end of the binary, gendered norms about what it means to be a "real woman" are conflated with submissiveness, pride, and dignity, taking care of the family and domestic duties, and therefore regulated to the private sphere, with limitations on her mobility, appearance, and behavior.[7] Based on these traditional and sometimes religious beliefs in Liberia, though women make up half of the population, they are grossly underrepresented in politics, as evidenced by (7) seats in the lower house and (2) in the upper house.

Nevertheless, information gathered from focus group discussants showed that most of the discussants perceive women to be as good as men in leading the community, while very few people disagreed. In a follow-up question as to why they disagreed, most of them mentioned beliefs that women are subject to men, while two other persons mentioned concern that if you encourage women's leadership, the benefit will go to the husband's home and not to the general good of their constituents.

On the question of whether the discussants would vote for a woman for elected office, the majority (92%) of the discussants said "yes," while 8% revealed that they were not going to vote for a woman candidate. The dominant reason given for which some discussants said they were not likely to vote for a woman candidate was because they said women candidates are mostly incompetent. Others said that women candidates are disobedient and selfish.

Reason Discussant are Unlikely to Vote for Women Candidate
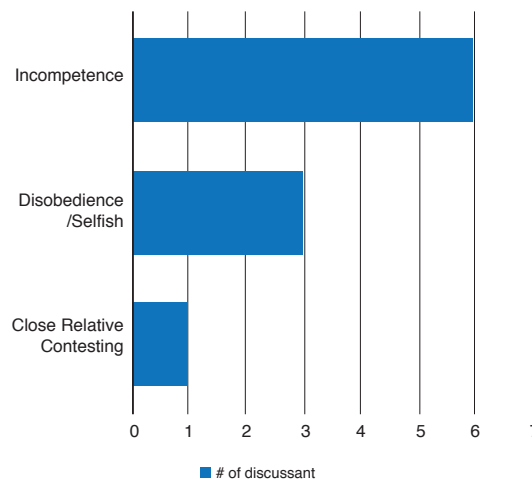
Figure 5.0

As for those that said they were likely to vote for women candidates, the majority argued that women have good inherent skills in leadership. They mostly cited home management as an example of women's good skills. There were fewer mentions of women's patience and tolerance for which discussants were likely to vote for a woman candidate.

Reason likely to Vote for Women Candidate
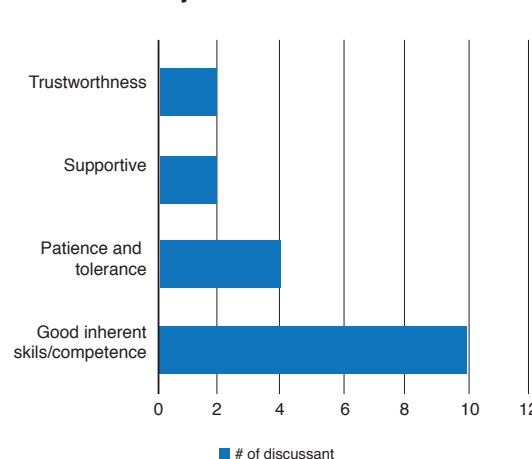
Figure 5.1

When asked whether having women in politics create problems? The majority (58%) of the discussant disagreed while others (42%) perceived women in politics create problems. The reason given by those that believe women in politics create problems dominantly claimed that when a woman is involved with politics, she will neglect her domestic responsibilities while few others said women are prone to making poor political decisions.

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7. A study on gender norms and masculinities in Liberia, March 2019, Marie Nilsson and Selima Consulting

> *Women participating in politics, creates problems to some extent. If I have a wife who should cook but, decides to get into politics, who then, will play that role?"*

~ Focus Group Discussant ~

Perception of Women's Skills compared to Men

Findings from the most recent Demography and Household Survey (2019 -2020) revealed a disparity in the educational attainment of women and men in Liberia. Women have completed a median of 1 year of school, while men have completed a median of 3.5 years.[8] These ingrained inequalities reflect on the skill level of women and men in all spheres of life. However, the majority (84%) of the participants agreed that women have the same skills as men. Few participants that disagreed argued that there are physical requirements that women usually cannot compete with men, while others counter-argued that when women and men attained the same level of education, they will acquire the same skill set.

Barriers Impeding Women's Desire for Leadership

Despite progress made to encourage women's participation in politics, there are still challenges that women faced in attaining government positions, representative bodies, and political processes. The National Women Conference is one of the platforms that bring women from various sectors together to discuss women's agenda and work towards involving more women in politics. Before and during the October 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections, the Ministry collaborated with the Liberia Women's Political Forum (LWPF) and political parties to ensure more female candidates were elected to the House of Representatives. As a result of these collaborations, 163 female candidates, including one female presidential and two female vice-presidential candidates were duly registered by the National Election Commission (NEC) to contest as candidates in the October 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections. Currently, women comprise 12.3% of members in the House of Representatives and make up 0% of members in the Senate.[9] Liberian women are still representative as leaders and elected officials and continue to struggle with adequate representation and inclusion in political processes.

Word cloud key words from FGDs and KIIs

8. Demography and Household Survey 2019-2020 Report
9. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Women in National Parliaments. The situation as of 1 February 2019. Available at: http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (last accessed 31/05/2019)

During this study, most participants in focus group discussions mentioned tradition, cultural and religious beliefs as the primary impediment to women's ascendency to leadership. Few of the discussants said incompetence was hindering women's leadership while other reasons were mentioned fewer times.

Barriers to Women desired for Leadership

From the perspective of the key informants, barriers to women's participation vary. Challenges experienced by women who participated in previous elections were lack of financial opportunity to campaign, no support from other women, traditional restrictions.
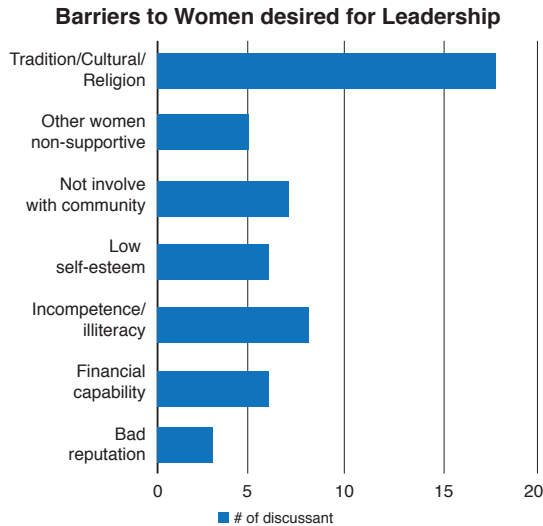
Constituent Influence by Women's Speech

Political speech is an important tool for politicians to inspire, inform, and embolden constituents. What a politician shares through speech can increase people's interest in their agenda, strengthen their image, and inspire people to share opinions and agree with their ideas. Nevertheless, the long-existing patriarchal system in which only men were allowed to speak on behalf of families and communities, even on issues concerning women, disenfranchises most women of eloquence in public speaking; which is required for a political campaign.

In the study, focus group discussants were asked whether a woman's speech has changed their view about women in politics and/or as leaders of communities. All 56 participants indicated that they have once listened to a woman speak, and that speech changed their perception of women in politics. Most of the participants mentioned the former president, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

> **"** *…Traditions from the foundation of our country have stopped women from getting involved in leadership activities. Even though, women have tried to get on par with men in this modern time. Women have been kept in the back thus, limiting them to the kitchen and taking care of children as their sole responsibilities"*
>
> **~ Focus Group discussant, Ganta ~**

" *Yes! I listened to some women in politics like for example, in order of the by-election, there was a lady called Pee Bae, that woman was very sound in speaking and most of the things that she used to talk to us, she used to tell us and you know she had "contact", but because of "cash violence", she was brought down, but she was really qualified for that position, because she had a lot of good ideas we could give her that opportunity changes were going to come in but because of the poverty and cash violence came in, she could not"*

~ Focus Group Discussant, Montserrado ~

Women's Participation in the 2023 Election

As the term for some elected positions will be expiring in 2023 including the presidency and vice presidency, Liberians are expected to go to the poll in October 2023 to vote for the president, the vice president, and representatives. Participants in focus group discussions were asked about their views on women's participation in the 2023 election and whether they were in any way encouraging women to partake.

Most of the participants affirmed that they were supporting women's participation by creating awareness, mobilizing women to participate, and in some instances, strategizing how to engage the communities. In response to the question of whether they were likely to vote for a woman candidate, 92% of the participants said "Yes" while very few people said they were unlikely to vote for a woman candidate in 2023. The most grounded reason given for not voting women for a candidate was incompetence, followed by women's "disobedience/selfishness.".

Reason some participants are unlikely to vote for women candidate in 2023

Figure 5.3   ■ # of discussant
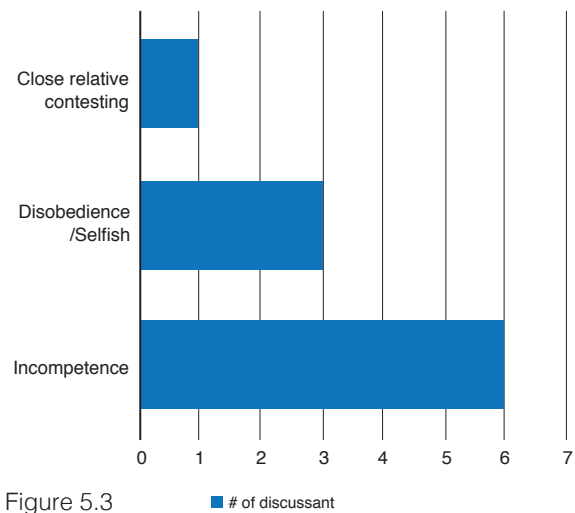
Perception of Women's ability to govern

Participants largely agreed that women could govern. They supported their argument by mentioning some prominent women who excelled in leadership positions, such as the former president. Participants shared that women have some good inherent skills in governance because they were tolerant and patient, however, not all participants agreed with the view that women can govern. The few people that disagreed said women were emotional and could make poor decisions based on gossip.

> **"** *Yes, I will say having women in politics will create problem because women whenever they are in a position, they have "other ways" coming around you, you will have a secretary, you will have an assistant, you will have the person who take care of your office. That person probably could be a woman who will always want to listen to gossip, so for this reason whenever you in the position you will always want to take an upper hand, to accept gossip"*

~ Focus Group discussant, Montserrado ~

Strategies to prevent violence against women

In response to the question, "what strategies will you propose to prevent violence against women in politics at the local level?" Most of the discussants suggested that sensitization should be carried out to enlighten the community about women's participation in decision-making positions while few others suggested the need to enact laws that will protect women in politics.

Suggestion of how to stop violence against women in politics
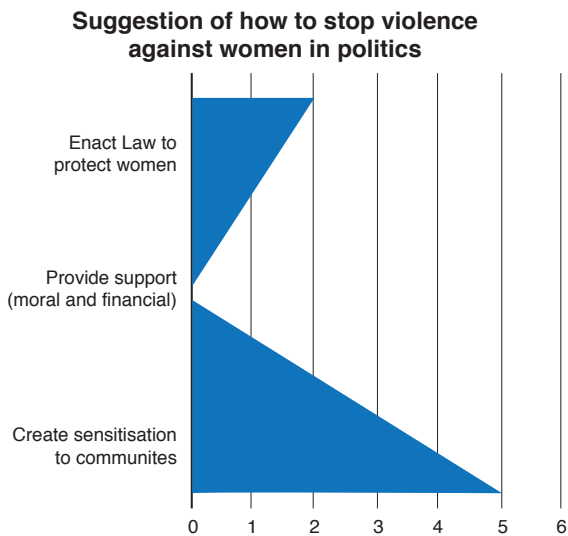
Enactment of Section 4.5 of the Election Law (30% gender representation)

The Government of Liberia has committed to increasing the political participation of women at the national and local levels to reach a target of 30% by 2023.[10] Furthermore, to increase the number of women in politics and decision-making positions, Liberia has signed and ratified several international and regional human rights instruments. These include the UN Convention on the CEDAW, the ICCPR, and the ACHPR, but also the protocol to the ACHPR-PW, the ACDEG, and the PDGG, among others.

In the country, there has been a proposal to amend Section 4.5 (1b) of the Election law which provides that *"A political party or coalition in its submission to the commission, of its list of candidates for an election, should endeavor to ensure that the governing body and its list of candidates have no less than 30% of its member from each gender."*

Given this provision, discussants were asked about their thoughts on this legislation requiring no less than 30 percent of party members from each gender. The participants unilaterally agreed that it is important to have gender equality in political parties. However, some of the discussants welcomed the idea with uncertainty, reasoning that, though it is good to have women in political parties, they should be women that are cognizant of the local tradition while others mentioned that they should be competent women.

A political party or coalition in its submission to the commission, list of candidates has no less than 30% of its member from each gender
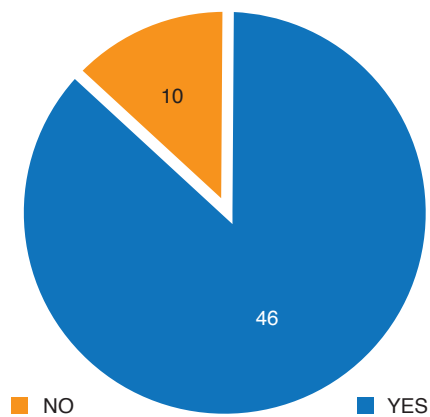

Figure 5.5

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10. High National Level Target in the National Development: Plan Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2023)

Change of mind because of Focus Group Discussion

All 56 participants in the focus group discussions shared that their minds were shifted because of what they learned from the exercise. They now see women's political participation in a positive light. Despite the previously dominant view that women are supposed to be followers, at the end of the discussions, a participant noted that women have the right to pursue their potential.

Participants said they would encourage women to participate in the interest of the country. Some participants will also encourage women whether they are contesting at the local or national level. They went further to say, they will create more awareness of women's political participation and motivate women to step forward. Others said that they think that women will get more support if they can step forward to participate in the electoral process as a candidate.

What approaches have not worked or worked less well and what strategies could be adopted to enhance women's political participation in Liberia?

Encouraging women's participation in politics is a popular strategy for political parties in Liberia. It is also an approach that fulfills three (3) of the Sustainable Development Goals: #5 Gender Equality, #10 Reduced Inequality, and #16 Peace and Justice Strong Institutions.[11] However, political parties usually involve women to just meet the gender requirement of the election law, and as an instrument to gaining women's vote.

There are some general strategies that research has proven to be effective in increasing women's political participation which include:
"
1. Advocacy for Women Participation,
2. Develop competency of women candidate
3. Government support for women's political participation,
4. Increase women's access to political institutions,
5. Establish Proportional Representation Electoral Systems
6. Establish Quota Systems
7. Increase Political Party Support for Women
8. Reduce Violence against Women in Politics
9. Tracking Women's Representation
10. Transform Attitudes"[12]

Key informants participating in this study were asked what approaches have not worked or worked less well and what strategies could be adopted to enhance women's political participation in Liberia. Respondents said, clustering women in auxiliary groups of a political party such as "Women Wing" or "Girls Brigade" is another form of discrimination that has not worked in increasing women's active participation in politics.

> " I think holding women back in the name of Women Wing is not helping women come out to contest for positions. This only make women to be supporters of men while these men go for the elected office positions. I think it's about time that women are equally treated by being in main line of the party rather than being inauxiliaries. Our voices need to be heard but not from the back"

~ Chairlady of a Political Party ~

11. UN General Assembly, Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015
12. World Federation of United Nations Associations, "Increasing Women's Political Participation A Primer on Best Practices," wfuna_-_best_practices_for_increasing_women_s_political_participation_d....pdf

Another respondent added that political parties have not been supportive of their women candidates as compared to men candidates because of a preconceived notion that women are unlikely to win. Even though women are being featured on the party's ticket, the requisite support is not given.

What approaches have worked well to increase women's political participation and leadership in Liberia?

Gender mainstreaming mechanism built - into most national policies was the dominant view among study participants as to what approaches have worked well in increasing women's political participation and leadership in Liberia. Most respondents mentioned the bill to revise the election law as a way forward to making it compulsory for political parties to consider at least 30% of women's inclusion. Another view frequently mentioned was that a female role model in politics, such as the former President and the current Vice President, has helped motivate women to participate in politics. The prominence of these women influenced other women to become members of political parties and pursue elected offices.

What would be the most effective ways of changing the public's attitude towards women's political participation amongst both men and women, girls, and boys?

Key informants were asked about the most effective ways that they think could change the public attitudes towards women's political participation. Most of the respondents mentioned that creating public awareness was the best way to change people's perceptions of women's leadership or participation in politics. In addition to that, some people shared that women's eloquence and engagement with the community will also help in shifting the mindset of the population, especially men.

Why are women more poorly represented in an elected position?

Many obstacles stop women from being involved with decision-making at all levels of society. Women who face violence, poverty, and discrimination are more likely to be excluded from decision-making. Barriers such as discriminatory laws, lack of education, and greater caring responsibilities all restrict women from becoming leaders or voting in elections.

To investigate these issues in the Liberian context, key informants were asked what they thought was causing women's poor representation in an elected position. One of the dominant views about why women do not contest elected positions is the lack of confidence to withstand the menaces and bullying that are experienced by a politician. The Liberian society perceives women to be weaker, therefore, to shield them from the awful experience perpetrated during elections, they are often excluded from partaking which led to underrepresentation in an elected position. Other respondents mentioned the lack of support from political parties. It was revealed that though political parties featured women candidates to meet the gender requirements, there is little support to influence their winning. The issue of women not supporting each other was also a reason given for why women were poorly represented in elected positions.

Suggestions
There were a few additional suggestions provided by the study participants. They are listed here:
- Proposed amendment to the Election Law should be accelerated and implemented.
- More sensitizations should be conducted to encourage women's participation in politics.
- Discrimination against minority groups should be eradicated.
- Gender Balance should be considered at all levels of the organigram.
- Appointment to the county government (i.e. Superintendent, and other chiefs) should be done in consultation with the communities.
- Women in politics should support one another.
- LEON should share the findings of this study with appropriate stakeholders.

> **"Lack of political will from political parties' executives to support female at elected positiions, as well as lack of adequate resources on the part of women themselves. Also, women themselves are not supportive of each other during electoral processes. Again, some women don't have self-confidence most especially females inthe rural part of the country"**

~ Women who contested in previous election ~

Synthesis of Results

As aforementioned, education and training can vastly improve employment prospects and earning potential, as well as improve communication and problem-solving skills. This, in turn, can increase opportunities for escaping poverty and gaining access to positions that have been traditionally reserved for men. The survey noted there was a discrepancy between levels of education obtained along gender lines (see figure: 1.3 survey education level attained by respondents). Approximately 6% more men can read and write and have formal schooling. However, a majority of participants in the Demography and Household Survey shared the belief that if women acquire the same level of education as men, then they would have the same skill set. Eliminating barriers to education among women will help improve the skill set and potentially change perspectives around women's involvement in politics.

In addition to barriers to education, cultural norms are often believed to play a role in the availability of women to participate in the political space, voting power, and decision-making processes within political parties. Traditional perceptions assume that women's roles should be relegated to domestic, child-rearing, and home management; however, many survey participants responded counter to the prevailing traditional and religious beliefs. The survey respondents within both the qualitative and quantitative data reflected an interest in politics and dissatisfaction with the female representation in politics. Approximately half of the respondents do not believe that women have participated in government within the communities they live in, but almost 90% do not perceive politics solely as a man's role and would vote for a woman.

Furthermore, both the surveys and group discussions highlighted similar barriers to women's participation. Including lack of resources for women, lack of opportunity among political parties, misinformation, sexual harassment, and cultural barriers. However, interestingly, qualitatively traditional, and cultural norms were cited as the major inhibitor of women's involvement in the political and electoral space, but quantitatively lack of resources and opportunity was determined to be the major obstacle to women's participation. More specifically, a larger portion of participants in the qualitative study suggested that women participating in politics would cause problems due to neglect of household duties and some also noted that women make poor political decisions. This contradicts the quantitative study's findings significantly. However, across the board, the likelihood of women's incompetence was the least likely reason to prohibit women's participation or not voting.

Generally, both the quantitative and qualitative survey findings suggested that most respondents believe that women should be given equal opportunity to run for elections and should be allocated specific resources to be able to participate in electoral processes. Furthermore, the quantitative study yielded results that state most men and women do not believe that men are inherently more qualified or make better political decisions. Most respondents believe that if women were afforded the same education, opportunities, and resources, they would be equipped to lead in the political space and the respondents would vote for them if they were qualified. This illustrates that there is not a lack of interest, political will, or constituents that bar women's political participation, but rather means. This deviates from a widespread perception that culture, tradition, or even lack of time due to domesticity is the largest cause for lack of women's political participation. Instead, the question becomes how to improve access to education, increase resources for women, and generate opportunities among political parties. Cultural and tradition might be correlated to or an underlying factor for why women have less education, which in turn might cause a lack of employment prospects and thus, reduced funding and resources to campaign for leadership roles. However, it is also possible that less government programming and structures is what causes this issue.

Within the quantitative study, it was discovered that participants were already supporting women's participation by creating awareness, mobilizing women to participate, and strategizing on how to engage the communities in advance of the 2023 elections. This type of community organizing is vital to ensuring inclusive political participation. It is important that officials within larger government positions and the democratic space reflect the zeal and efforts depicted by community organizers. Within both the qualitative and quantitative study, participants supported the proposal of enacting laws that increase women's political participation and the safety of women who participate in the political space. Shifting cultural norms and women's advocacy movements allow for more freedom in political spaces.

Several obstacles have been identified that inhibit women's political participation, including socio-economic, cultural, and educational barriers. Lack of programming to support women, education, and

skills, and coordination among groups or political parties also impact women's political participation. However, women's presence in government and the political space is vital because it can help reshape the political agenda, promote women's interests, and influence decision-making and procedures. It is also clear that through constructive dialogue and focus group discussions, perceptions were shifted. Women's participation and its importance can be amplified in Liberia through targeted media strategies, facilitating dialogues, execution of gender-sensitive legislation, and reinforcing women's networks and civil society organizations.

The participation and percentages of women within leadership roles and the government are still lacking. There is a need for an ongoing campaign for gender parity and women's increased participation. The survey yielded results and informed the lessons and recommendations listed below. He implementation of these recommendations will help elevate women, increase their roles in important decision-making positions, decrease gender disparities, and generate visibility for women in politics.

Recommendations for Key Stakeholders

Recommendations for the NEC and Government

- The NEC and Government should initiate gender-sensitive governance reforms to advance gender equality within public policy. Through policy and legislative reform, women can be equipped to take up decision-making positions. These reforms will help increase women's direct engagement and public decision-making. Additionally, training should be conducted to shift perspectives and ensure that elected officials advance gender parity.

- The Liberian government should also increase and improve on civic education, representative democracy, and understanding of gender norms in all public schools.

- The Liberian government should also develop media programs and coordinate with media to highlight the life and achievements of prominent and historical Liberian women.

- The Liberian Government should institutionalize budgetary support for female aspirants and advance legislation and policies that decrease the cost to register for legislative seats and associated expenses.

Recommendations for Political Parties

- One more confirmative information coming out of the survey is 81.2% of respondents' acknowledgment that political parties are more likely to nominate men on the ballot than women. This is indicative of the existing data and supports the need for progressive efforts by civil society and international partners to introduce a gender quota during the next general election. Political parties should institute transparent rules for recruiting candidates. However, as aforementioned, a quota is not enough to ensure active participation. While the quota will be used to guarantee the inclusion of women on ballots, additional efforts should be made to support and hear ideas from women in political parties and ensure that they are represented fairly throughout campaigning. This can be done through regular media engagements such as radio, newspaper, and television interviews and programming.

- The safety of female aspirants and their family members ranked high amongst reasons while respondents would advise women not to run for elected office. Anecdotal evidence exists in the country of how female aspirants and their family members have been subjected to abuse and ridicule for daring to contest elected seats. This may be a contributing factor to why respondents would advise female aspirants not to run for office.

Creating a safe environment for women aspirants should be a programmatic theme to increase women's participation in politics. As such, it would also be useful for all political party leaders to take a strong stance against gender-based bullying and hate speech perpetuated via social media.

Recommendations for the Liberian Media

- The Liberian media should highlight women's presence in the Legislature through data, interpretation, and analysis. This will help raise awareness among the population about the lack of representation and women's presence.

- The Liberian media should promote equity in opportunity for female aspirants to be heard and provide affirmative means for female aspirants' presence in the media through initiatives like calendar-based (e.g. bi-weekly or monthly) spotlight interview.

- The Liberian media should plan and promote programs, newsletters, and articles that raise awareness about women's representation in the Legislature.

- The media should highlight election violence as a barrier to women political participation and develop and release messages that promote violence-free elections.

Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations and the International Community

- The overarching reasons were given by respondents for why women should not be elected point to the perceived lack of experience by women aspirants (87.19%). This finding is also reflected in respondents' perception that women's traditional roles account for the reasons why more females were not voted into office during past elections. Here, it would be important for stakeholders to develop programs that highlight women aspirants' work experience and their contributions to their communities and society in general. These programs should reflect changing gender norms and benefits for equity in representation in a democratic society. Key qualities highlighted during the FGDs as reasons why the majority would vote for women can be brought to bear in awareness raising. These qualities of women include trustworthiness, supportiveness, patience and tolerance, and good inherent skills and competence.

- The survey established women's access to resources as another barrier to women's political participation. LEON recommends that

stakeholders work towards programs that address women's access to resources including, but not limited to, providing small start-up funds, training to improve women's fundraising skills, establishing women's coalitions, and garnering mutual funds; in addition to other capacity deficits such as providing technical skills for strategic planning, campaigning, networking, and getting out the vote on elections day.

- A major and concerning finding of this survey is that a slight majority of respondents (58%) are satisfied with current female representation in the Legislature. Given that the actual representation figure is very low at 6.6%, there is a great need to increase citizens' understanding of representative democracy, the harmful effects of marginalization of women in politics, and the beneficial impact of increasing women's representation in politics and overall decision-making. This could be accomplished through sharing impactful data on how other democracies have benefitted from improving women's representation in parliament and stakeholders could "bring it home" by highlighting some of the very useful engagements of current and past female lawmakers. LEON deems that if adequate and specific voter education is not conducted, our and stakeholders' work on ensuring meaningful gender representation on the ballot will prove not-so-useful with respect to the election results. Interestingly, 87% of respondents think that elected positions are not only jobs for men and 88% have an interest in women contesting in elections. There is also recognition that fewer women than men contest elected seats, so there is some hope.

- Women's speech comes out as a supporting reason why discussants would change their minds and vote for a woman. Stakeholders and partners can develop programs to build female aspirants' capacity for speech writing and to build women's confidence in speech making.

- Some discussants cited safety concerns as a reason for why women should not participate in politics and elections. It would be useful for local and international stakeholders to provide skills trainings on safety protocols for female aspirants, in addition to drafting and promoting non-violent campaigns messaging.

Recommendations for Community Members
- The findings showed that more females than males would vote for women in community elections. These findings might be signaling that at the community level, stakeholders need to create more awareness of the importance of women's participation in community governance amongst men. One way to shift perceptions of men is through targeted civic education that also shares impactful data on how democracies have benefitted from improving women's representation. Another way is to organize women's groups where women can freely discuss issues and ideas that they can later bring before community leaders during town hall meetings. This will help increase awareness, illustrate the relevance of amplifying voices, as well as assist with improving public speaking skills.

- From the FGDs, a major barrier to women's political participation came out as traditional barriers, specifically within religion and culture. Stakeholders should work closely with traditional and religious leaders to endorse women candidates to serve as a counter-narrative reflecting the listening and watching population that women's political participation is in tandem with religion and culture.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:   MAP OF ENUMERATION AREA

Appendix 2: Participant Inform Consent

Hello. My name is _____ I am conducting research for an organization called Liberia Election Observation Network. (LEON)

There will be no benefit to speaking with you today, and no payment for participation. The purpose of this study is to assess, identify and document the situation concerning women's participation in political and electoral processes in Liberia

Everything you say will remain confidential, and we will not collect information that could be used to identify you. I will be taking notes as we speak, which will help us to analyze the data from your responses. However, I will not share these notes with anyone outside of the research team.

This discussion may last between one and a half hours, and you are free to not answer a question should you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions. It is important to make sure we hear what you want to say, therefore we hope you can stay for the whole discussion. There is no wrong answer. Our goal is to have a discussion with lots of different opinions. We also want you to speak up.

To cover everything, we might have to interrupt you and move to the next question or make sure that someone else gets a chance to talk in the short time we're together. Before we start, do you agree to participate in this study?

Name of Participant: _____

Age of Participants: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion on Women's Political Participation in Election

Moderator Name:	Type of Study:	
Co-Moderator:	Start Time:	End Time:
County:	Town/Village/Community of Study:	
District:	# Of Male:	# Of Female:

Survey Findings on Challenges Affecting Women's participation in electoral processes in Liberia

Perception of women's political participation in elections: Agreed and Disagreed:
What do you think about the following statements?
a.   "Women are just as good as men in leading the community."
b.   "I would vote for a woman for elected office."
c.   "Having women in politics creates problems."

1. Do you believe that women have the same skills as men do to lead? If yes, do you think you can vote for a woman in a future election?
2. What would make you not vote for a woman?
3. Do you think there is a cultural practice that stops women from participating/ running in elections? Why?
4. What do you think were barriers to women participating in the past elections in your district?
5. has you encouraged women to be part of elections? How?
6. Perception of women as political leaders
7. Have you listened to a woman in politics speaks? If yes, did that change how you view women in politics and as leaders in your community? Why? Or why not?
8. Do the community see women as good leaders?
9. What factors are limiting women's participation at the local level? And what are your suggestions to improve women's leadership at the local level?
10. Do you think women should be a part of the elections in 2023? how are you supporting women now to be ready for 2023?
11. What do you think of women's ability to govern? Please explain with examples
12. What strategies would you propose to prevent violence against women in politics at the local level?
13. Do you think that having legislation that requires a minimum of 30% of candidates from each gender (through an amendment to section 4.5 of the new election law) would translate into more women's representation in the legislature? Why?
14. Has answering these questions changed your attitude toward women's political participation? How?

Appendix 4: Key Informants Interview on Women Political Participation in Election

QUESTIONS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES CHAIRMAN/ chairlady

Moderator Name:		Type of Study:	
Co-Moderator:		Start Time:	End Time:
County:		Town/Village/Community of Study:	
District:		# Of Male:	# Of Female:

1. Women are underrepresented in the house of Representatives. What do you think is responsible for this under-representation?
2. In Liberia there are different reasons given for the fact that there are fewer women than men in elected office. Do your party consider helping women for election? How?
3. When deciding which candidate to represent the party in elections, what importance does the party look for? Does the part take into consideration the voice of women in party primaries?
4. In your opinion, who should be more involved in politics? Why?
5. Do you agree with the proposed amendment to the new election law, that there should be 30% of females represented on the final list presented to NEC for election? If yes, why? If not, why?
6. Do your party support women's 30% representation in the House of Representatives? How? What condition does your party have in supporting this 30% representation? Is your party considering nominating a female in elections?
7. If there was an equal balance of men and women in elected office, what would there be..........?
8. In your opinion, what decisions/steps should be taken to increase woman's participation in politics?
9. What needs to be in place for political parties to be more likely to advance a woman into a leadership position?
10. What approaches have not worked or worked less well? And what strategies could be adopted to enhance women's political participation in Liberia?

Appendix 5: QUESTION'S FOR WOMEN CHAIRPERSON

Moderator Name:		Type of Study:	
Co-Moderator:		Start Time:	End Time:
County:		Town/Village/Community of Study:	
District:		# Of Male:	# Of Female:

:

1. Do your party support women? If not, why does your party not support women?
2. Do women in the women's wing of your party consider contesting in an election in Liberia? If some, why?

3. Does your party consider women for party nomination? If not, what challenges do they face in the party nomination process? What are the challenges these women face in representing the party in elections?
4. What are the barriers that women faced in your party during and after the election?
5. What approaches have worked well to increase women's political participation and leadership in Liberia?
6. Thinking of your own political rights, has your party ever done anything that might affect women's political participation?
7. Do you support women's 30% representation in the House of Representatives? If yes, why? If not, why?

Appendix 6: Questions for Women In Elected Positions

Moderator Name:	Type of Study:	
Co-Moderator:	Start Time:	End Time:
County:	Town/Village/Community of Study:	
District:	# Of Male:	# Of Female:

1. What opportunities enabled you to progress in your political career? What decision did you consider before running for elections?
2. What were the challenges that you faced when you ran for election(s) (a) Family (b). Community (c) male contestants (e)Political parties? Do women have equal access to media (TV, radio, social media) resources? Are women and men portrayed equally in the media?
3. What financial resources were you able to draw on for your campaign? (Personal, Family, Community, Corporate) Do women candidates need to engage in vote-buying to run successful campaigns?
4. When you ran for election, did you get nominated on your party ticket for elections? What barriers did you encounter before your nomination to the party ticket? If not, please explain the strategy used during this time. If not, why? What barrier do women face in getting to represent their party in elections?
5. If yes, what challenges did you encounter during the campaign?
6. How do Liberians in general view men and women's primary roles? Has this view changed? Why do you think there has been a change? PROBE: How do religious and cultural beliefs/ perceptions around women's and men's roles in the political, professional, and community spheres affect women's political participation?
7. Are women able to decide whether to vote or campaign free of influence from male family members?
8. What barriers, if any, did you face when you first became politically active and then as you progressed in your political career? What challenges do you face as an independent candidate during and after the election?
9. Do you support women's 30% representation in the House of Representatives? If yes,
10. Why are women more poorly represented by men in an elected position?
11. In your opinion what decisions/steps should be taken to increase women in elected positions?
12. What would be the most effective ways of changing the public's attitude towards women's political participation amongst both men and women, girls, and boys?

Appendix 7: Women Who Contested Elections Before

Moderator Name:	Type of Study:	
Co-Moderator:	Start Time:	End Time:
County:	Town/Village/Community of Study:	
District:	# Of Male:	# Of Female:

1. What opportunities enabled you to progress in your political career? What decision did you consider before running for elections?
2. When you ran for election, did you get nominated on your party ticket for elections? If yes, what challenges did you encounter during the campaign? What barrier did you encounter before your nomination to the party ticket? If not, why? What barrier do women face in getting to represent their party in elections?
3. What barriers, if any, did you face when you first became politically active and then as you progressed in your political career? What challenges do you face as a candidate during and after the election?
4. What were the challenges that you faced went you ran for election(s) (a) Family (b). Community (c) male contestants (e)Political parties? Do women have equal access to media (TV, radio, social media) resources? Are women and men portrayed equally in the media?
5. Do women candidates need to engage in vote-buying to run successful campaigns?
6. Thinking of your own political rights, has your party ever done anything that might affect women's political participation?
7. Has Hearing about electoral violence ever stopped you from participating in elections?
8. Do you support women's 30% representation in the House of Representatives? If yes,
9. Why are women more poorly represented in an elected position?
10. In your opinion what decisions/steps should be taken to increase women in elected positions?
11. What would be the most effective ways of changing the public's attitude towards women's political participation amongst both men and women, girls, and boys?

About LEON

The Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON) 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). LEON has the overall goal to meaningfully contribute to the democratization process in Liberia by providing an avenue for civil society to participate in monitoring and observing the 2017 election process in Liberia with a focus on inclusion of marginalized groups including women, youth and persons with disabilities.

LEON commenced activities in June 2017 with funding from the Swedish Cooperation and technical assistance from the Carter Center. LEON observed the general elections in 2017 and five by elections through 2018 to date. LEON has been advocating issues of electoral and constitutional reform, has been monitoring the National Legislature since July 2019, and has conducted six nationwide surveys. LEON is grateful for the support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Liberia and the technical assistance from the Carter Center Democracy Program Liberia who made this survey possible.

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