

# ELECTIONS 2023 LIBERIA

LEON  
Liberia Elections Observation Network

## A PRE-ELECTION BASELINE SURVEY

The Late Sando Momotai



LEON's Surveyor



[www.leonobservation.org](http://www.leonobservation.org)



Russell Avenue and 16th Street intersection

## Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	iii
Executive Summary.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Methodology.....	1
1.2. Objective and Scope of the Survey.....	2
1.3. Demographics of Respondents.....	2
2. Key Findings.....	4
2.1. Voters’ Intent.....	4
2.2. Electors’ Attitude and Perspectives on the 2023 Elections.....	8
2.3. Views on State / Observer Institutions Preparedness.....	12
2.4. Media and Elections.....	15
2.5. Governance and the Economy.....	17
3.0. Recommendations.....	18
4.0. About LEON.....	19
5.0. Tribute.....	20

## **Acronyms**

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
DEA	Drugs Enforcement Agency
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youths
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission
LCP	Liberia Crusaders for Peace
LIS	Liberia Immigration Service
LEON	Liberia Elections Observation Network
NEC	National Elections Commission
ODK	Open Data Kit
ONA	Organizational Network Analysis

## Executive Summary

Building on previous surveys conducted by LEON to independently understand the knowledge levels, views, and understanding of voters nationwide, this pre-election baseline survey is commissioned with the following objectives: a. To understand various influences and rationale as well as factors that impact on voters's decision-making as the country approaches the 2023 General and Presidential Elections, and b. To provide policymakers with information that could be used to improve on the electoral process leading up to the 2023 elections.

The survey employed a sample of 2,380 respondents drawn from NEC's latest final voter registry (2020) using a confidence interval of 95% with a 2% margin of error to ensure reliability. The demographic alignment of each county was weighed by the county's percentage contribution to the NEC voter roll of 2020. LEON deployed 150 enumerators in all 73 electoral districts. Each enumerator was required to interview 17 respondents in their assigned enumeration area. Data was collected through the ODK application and transmitted to an online database software ONA. The study used the quantitative method of randomized systematic sampling. Each household was surveyed from a starting point and with a random interval of every 15 households. To protect the rights of respondents, interviewees were asked to sign a predefined survey consent form before participating in the study. A little over ten percent of respondents were first-time voters.

The survey highlights that a large majority of registered voters are keen on following preparations leading up to the conduct of the elections and will be voting on elections day. The survey data shows that a good proportion of respondents believe the National Elections Commission (NEC) is prepared to conduct the 2023 General and Presidential Elections. Combined, 78% of those interviewed during the survey said the NEC is prepared or very prepared to conduct the 2023 elections.

Respondents named the army as the security agency they feel most secured with in terms of providing security for the election with the police and immigration services a close second and third. A reasonable percentage of those interviewed said the army, police, and immigration services are prepared or very prepared to secure the elections. Respondents expressed that elections monitoring groups are very prepared to monitor the 2023 elections.

For governance over the economy, most respondents think the government is not doing well, and only a small percentage think the government doing very well. The same finding goes for government performance on job creation, where most of the respondents think job creation under the administration is either bad or very bad. Healthcare services were also seen as bad and very bad by most respondents the survey data shows.

Our findings indicate that a very large proportion of respondents do not trust the media reporting on the elections, citing that the media is not balanced, not credible, are partisan or alleging that the media take bribes. Most respondents said social media has huge influence on the elections.

On vote buying, respondents noted that political party candidates, independents and supporters all offer money or gifts in exchange of votes but noted that vote buying is wrong and punishable. Most respondents said they would not accept if a candidate or party official were to offer money or gifts in return for their vote, but a good minority said they would by justifying reasons for taking the money as either "its free money," "it's the country's money," "I need the money," or "politicians are corrupt."

## 1. Introduction

Liberia will conduct General and Presidential Elections on October 10, 2023. Unlike past elections since the end of the civil war in 2005, the 2023 elections will be conducted under the full administration of the NEC with funding from the Government of Liberia. Ahead of the October polls, an independent assessment of the political, social, and economic environment of the country is essential to understanding democratic variables that may impact the outcome of the polls thus giving heads-up to state institutions and interested parties regarding Liberians' perspectives on key issues leading up to the elections. The NEC, the security sector, and the media are among the institutions being assessed in this report.

The survey builds on previous surveys LEON has conducted to understand electorates knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes toward an election. This report contains key findings highlighting citizens' assessment of pre-election institutions and the environment. Data enumeration was conducted between April 12-15, 2023.

### 1.1. Methodology

The survey employed a sample of 2,380 respondents drawn from NEC's latest final voter registry (2020) using a confidence interval of 95% with a 2% margin of error to ensure our findings are highly reliable. The demographic alignment of each county was weighed by the county's percentage contribution to the NEC voter roll of 2020. LEON deployed 150 enumerators in all 73 electoral districts. Each enumerator was required to interview 17 respondents in their assigned enumeration area. Data was collected through the ODK application and transmitted to an online database software ONA. The study used the quantitative method of randomized systematic sampling to conduct the survey. Each household was surveyed from a starting point and with a random interval of every 15 households. To protect the rights of respondents, interviewees were asked to sign a predefined survey consent form before participating in the study.

**Table 1: Demographical Alignment Chart<sup>1</sup>**

County	Respondents	Enumerators	Number of Surveys	Surveys per County
Bomi	85	5	17	85
Bong	238	14	17	238
Gbarpolu	68	4	17	68
Grand Bassa	170	10	17	170
Grand Cape Mount	68	4	17	68
Grand Gedeh	68	4	17	68
Grand Kru	51	3	17	51
Lofa	187	11	17	187
Margibi	187	11	17	187
Maryland	68	4	17	68
Montserrado	867	51	17	867
Nimba	323	19	17	323
River Gee	51	3	17	51

<sup>1</sup> Overage for data cleaning purposes

County	Respondents	Enumerators	Number of Surveys	Surveys per County
Rivercess	51	3	17	51
Sinoe	68	4	17	68
	<b>2,550</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>2,550</b>

Source: LEON

### 1.2. Objective and Scope of the Survey

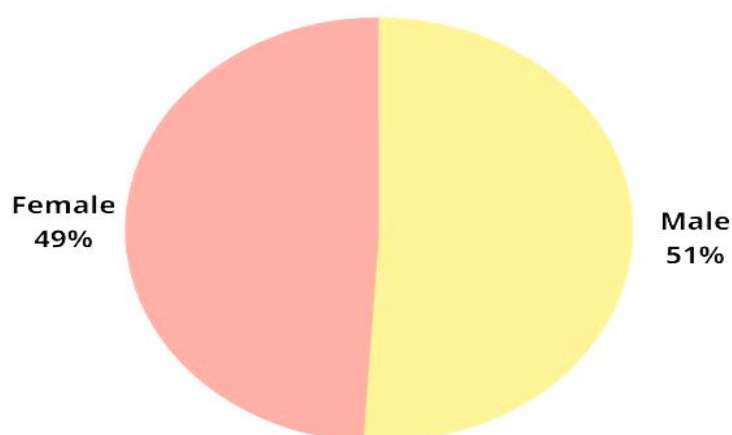
The survey seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Assess the knowledge, attitude, behavior, and practices of electors for the 2023 general election.
- To measure electors' likelihood to vote and their opinion on the 2023 elections, including expectations of integrity.
- To understand information sources on the electoral process by the voters.
- To understand how the voters view the NEC in terms of its efforts to conduct free credible and fair elections.
- To elicit views on political parties and their participation in the election.
- To measure electors' satisfaction with Liberian democracy and political efficacy.
- To explore electors' views toward marginalized groups involved in politics.

### 1.3. Demographics of Respondents

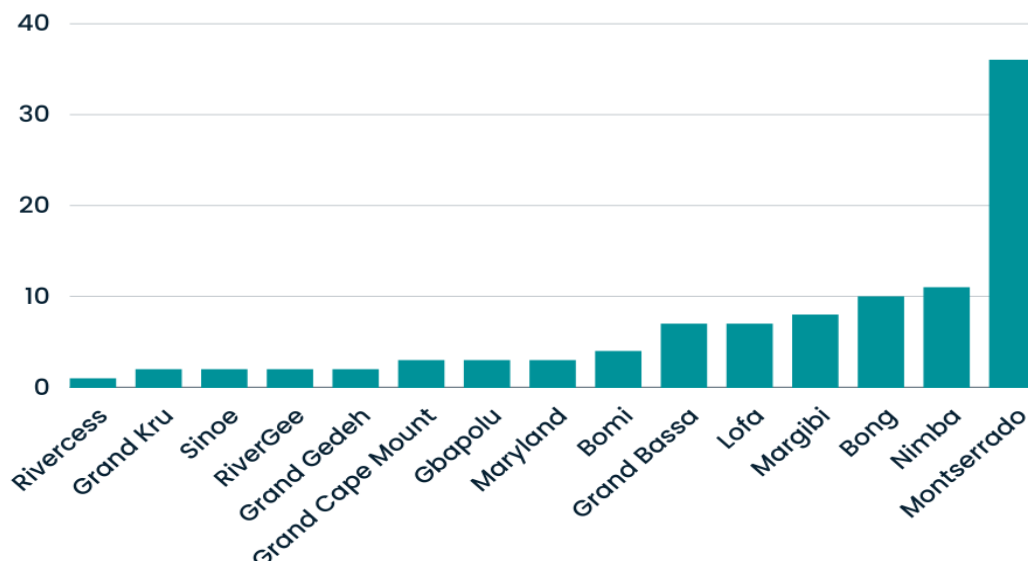
A little over half of the respondents interviewed (51%) were males and 49% were females as seen in figure 1.0 below.

**Figure 1: Sex of Respondents | Liberia | 2023**

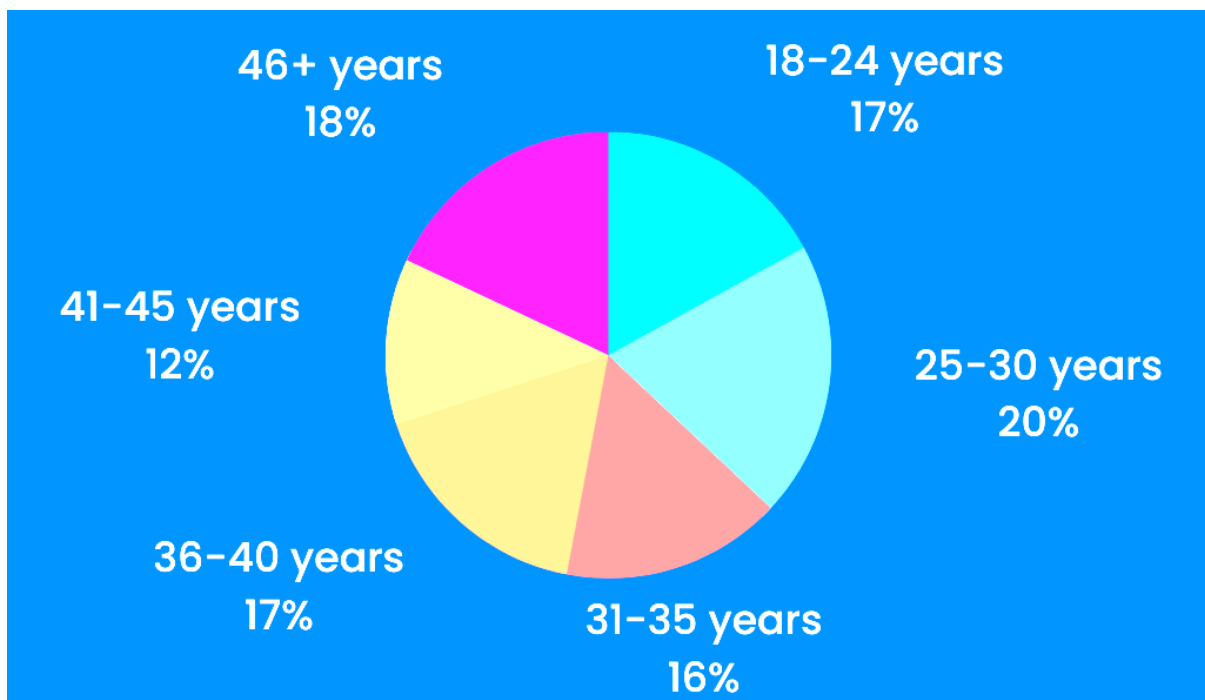


Correspondingly, in figure 2.0 below, Montserrado accounted for 36% of respondents, followed by Nimba at 11%, Bong at 10% while Rivercess accounted for the least with 1% of all respondents.

**Figure 2: Percentage Representation of Respondent Per County | Liberia | 2023**



**Figure 3: Age Categories of Respondents | Liberia | 2023**



As seen in figure 3.0, almost half of all respondents were youth between the ages 18-35 years constituting 49% of the respondents. Most female respondents were between the ages 18-35, whereas most male respondents fell between the ages 36-40 and above.



## 2. Key Findings

### 2.1. Voters' Intent

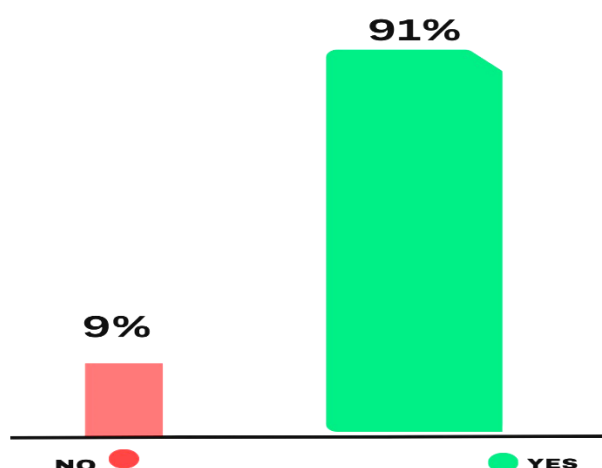
#### Reflection: High Electors' Interest in following Elections Preparation and in Voting

Most respondents (91%) expressed interest in following preparations for the 2023 elections. The data indicates that 87% of respondents had some experience voting in public elections: Of which when asked how many legislative elections they had voted in, 23% said they had voted two - three times, 16% said they had voted 4 times, 13% said they had voted 7 times, 10% said they had voted one time. Every citizen of Liberia who has attained the age of eighteen (18) years or older, may register as a voter, except one who has been judicially declared to be incompetent or of unsound mind or one who has been legally disenfranchised because of conviction of an infamous crime and has not been restored to citizenship.<sup>2</sup>

97% of respondents who said they would follow the election preparation process also said they would register to vote in the 2023 general and presidential elections. 98% of respondents who said they were intending to register to vote in the election also said they would vote in the upcoming general and presidential elections. Patriotism ranked high as reason for choosing to vote in the upcoming election. 38% of respondents who said they would vote justified by one of the following: "it's my right to vote", 13% said, "I'm a Liberian," while another 13% said "it's my civic duty" although 33% responded that they are voting because they "want change." Some respondents however indicated a lack of interest in following the election preparation process. 49% of respondents who said they were not intending to follow the election preparation process cited "no interest" as the reason and 28% cited "limited information" on the election as the reasons for their non-intention to follow the election process.

Other respondents indicated that they would not be voting in the election. Reasons cited for not voting: 33% indicated "nothing would change", 30% cited "corruption", 20% cited "other" as their reason while 11% said the ruling party is not doing well among others.

**Figure 4: Interest in following Preparations for the Elections | Liberia | 2023**

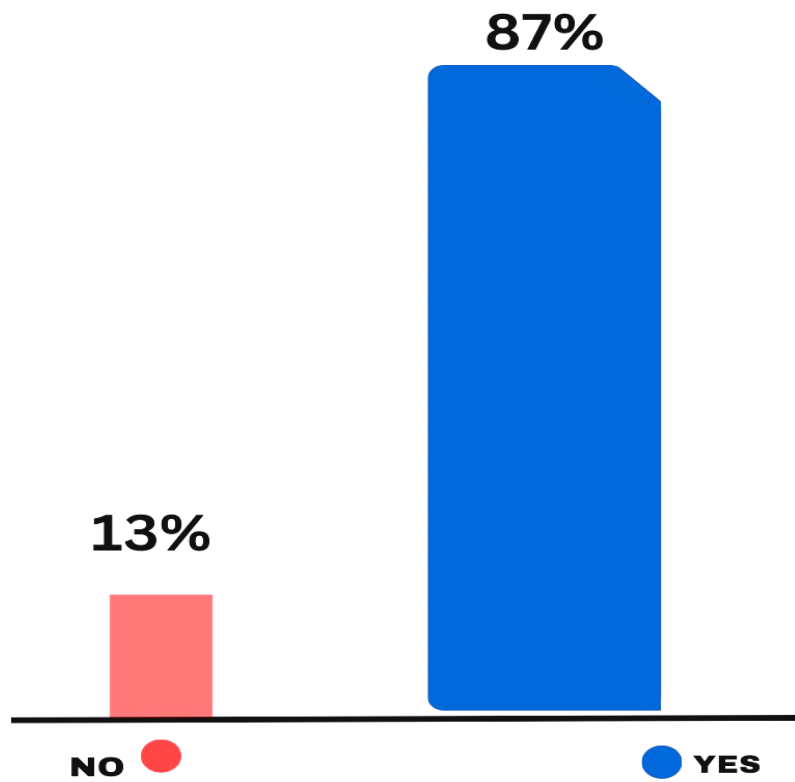


*Respondents were asked: Do you intend to follow preparations for the 2023 elections?*

<sup>2</sup> [NEW-ELECTIONS-LAW.pdf \(liblaw.org\)](#)

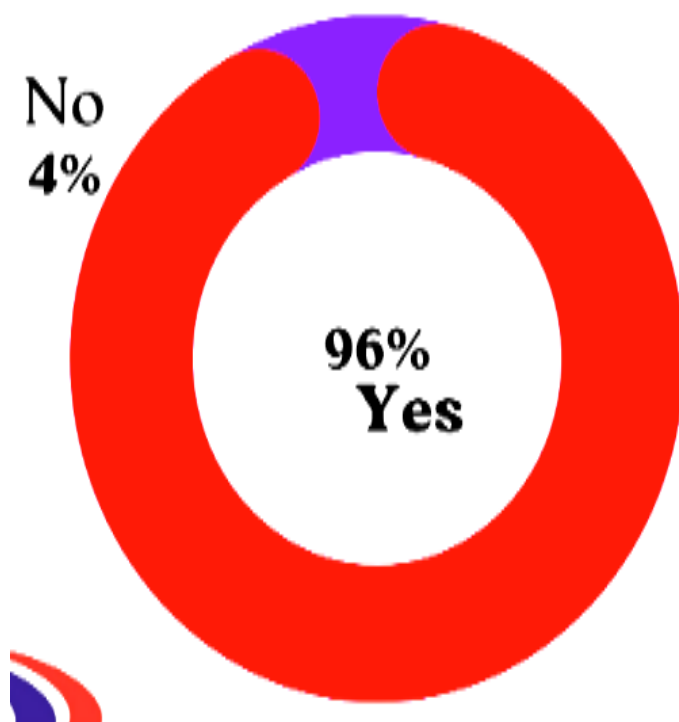


**Figure 5: Electors' Experience with Voting | Liberia | 2023**



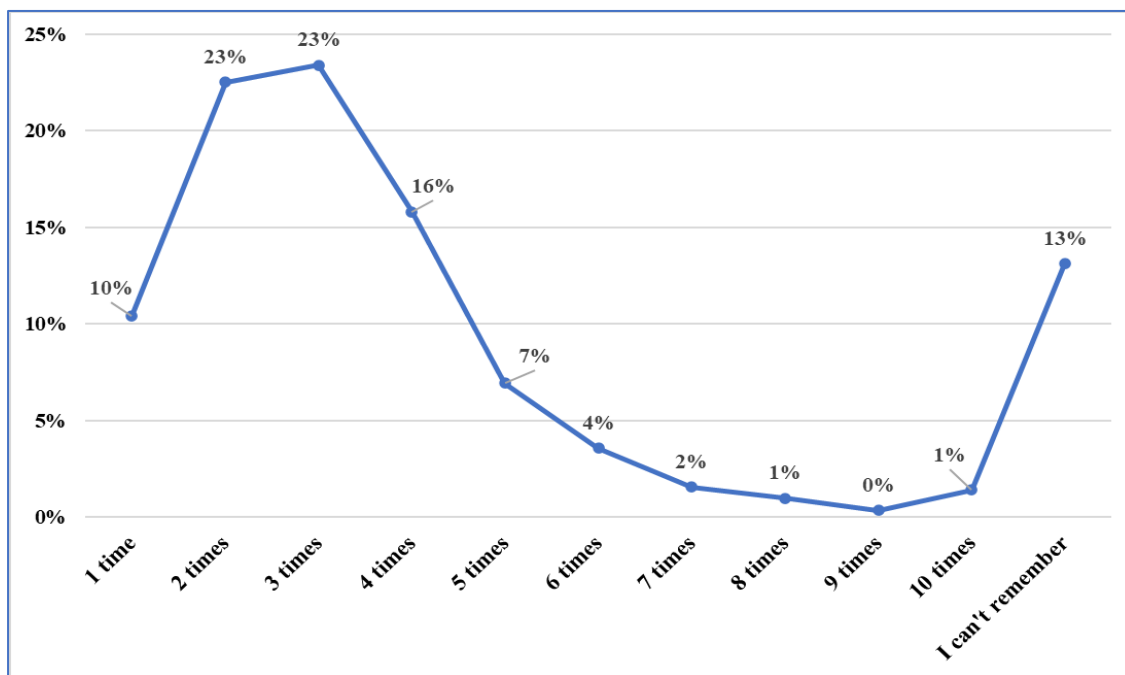
*Respondents were asked: Have you voted before?*

**Figure 6: Electors' Experience with Voting (continue) | Liberia | 2023**



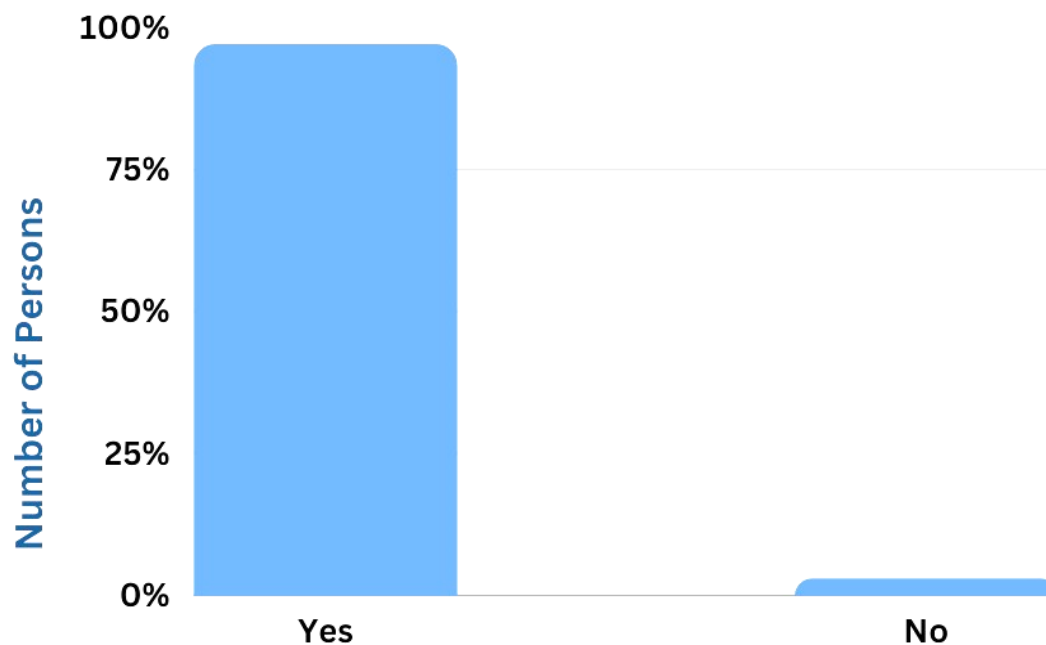
*Respondents were asked: If no to the question above, are you a first-time voter?*

**Figure 7: Electors' Experience with Voting (cont.) | Liberia | 2023**



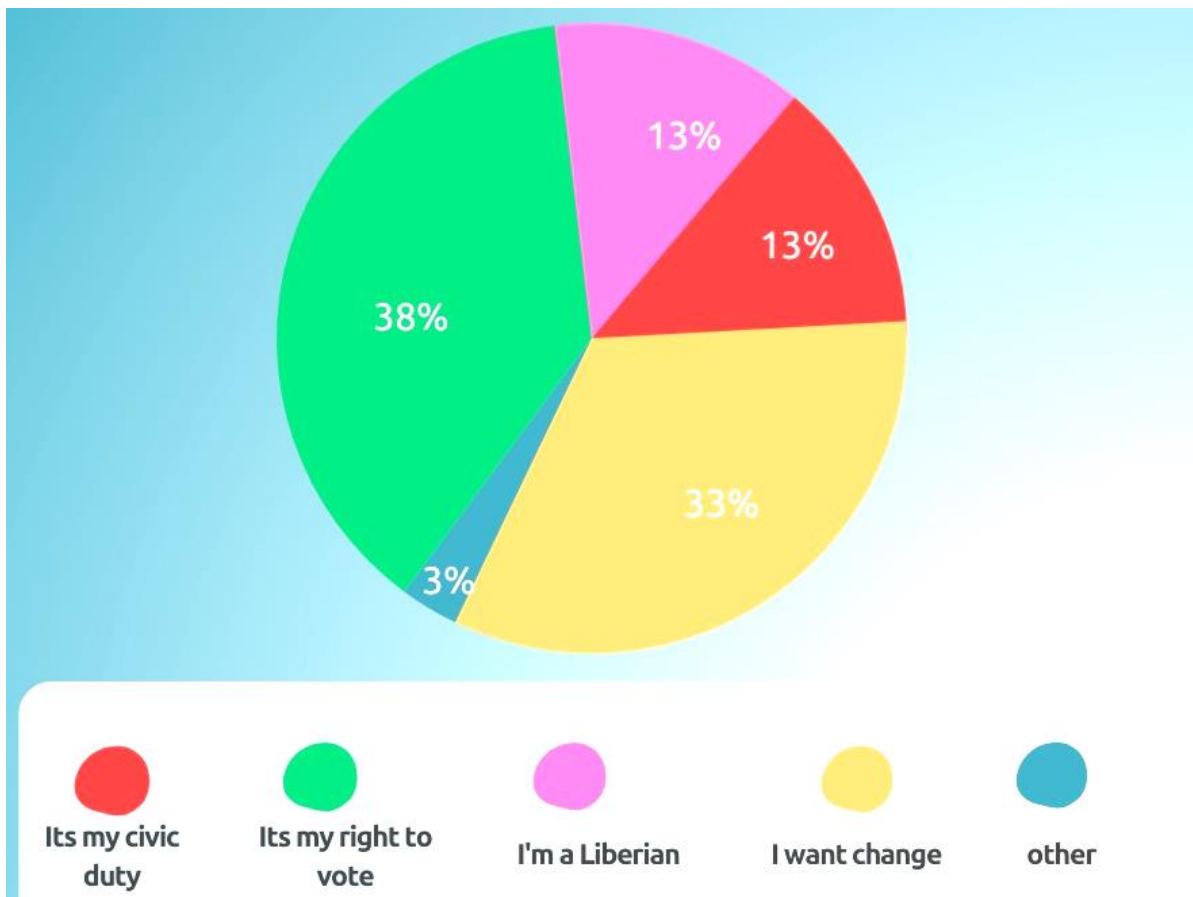
*Respondents were asked: How many times have you voted?*

**Figure 8: Electors' Intent to Register to Vote | Liberia | 2023**



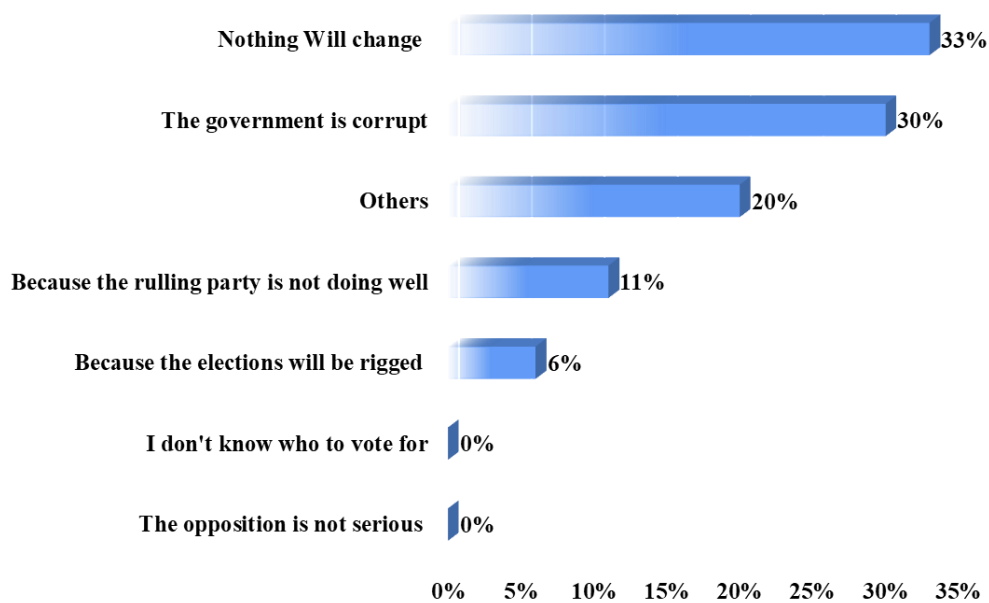
*Respondents were asked: Do you intend to register to vote in the 2023 elections?*

**Figure 9: Electors' Reason for Voting | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: Why are you voting?*

**Figure 10: Electors' Reason for Not Voting | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: Why are you not voting?*

## 2.2. Electors' Attitude and Perspectives on the 2023 Elections

### Reflection: Liberians Suspect Vote Buying but Majority Would Not Accept Money or Gifts for Their Vote

Liberians noted high suspicion on the integrity of the ballot relative to vote buying. 61% of respondents think that vote buying occurs in elections and 39% think vote buying does not occur. The suspicion of vote buying falls on political party candidates (36%), independents (30%) and supporters (26%). The rest said they do not know who buys votes. While that recognition of vote buying in elections persist, respondents (80%) do not agree that a voter should accept money or gifts in return for his/her vote.

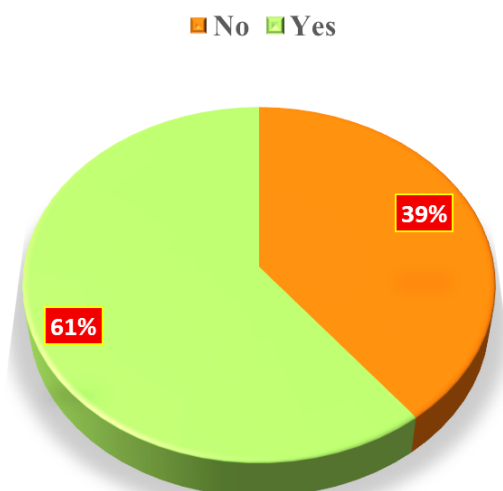
On the specific question of whether the respondent would accept money or gifts in exchange for his/her vote, 69% of respondents said they would not accept money or gifts as inducement to vote for anyone the remaining 31% said they would. For those who said they would accept money or gifts, they gave the following reasons: "it's free money" (37%), 24% said the money offered belongs to the country, 17% said they needed money and 16% said politicians are corrupt therefore their (politicians' money) should be eaten by voters. 6% listed "other" reasons.

Concerning the secrecy of the ballot, 57% of the respondents said it was not likely for powerful people to find out who a voter votes for, and 28% said it was not very likely to happen. 7% believed it was very likely to happen while 8% said it was somewhat likely that powerful people would find out.

Over half of respondents, 55%, said there were pre-campaign activities taking place in their communities. 35% of respondents named political party candidates as the perpetrators of pre-campaign activities, 34% named supporters of candidates, and 31% pointed at independent candidates for pre-campaigning.

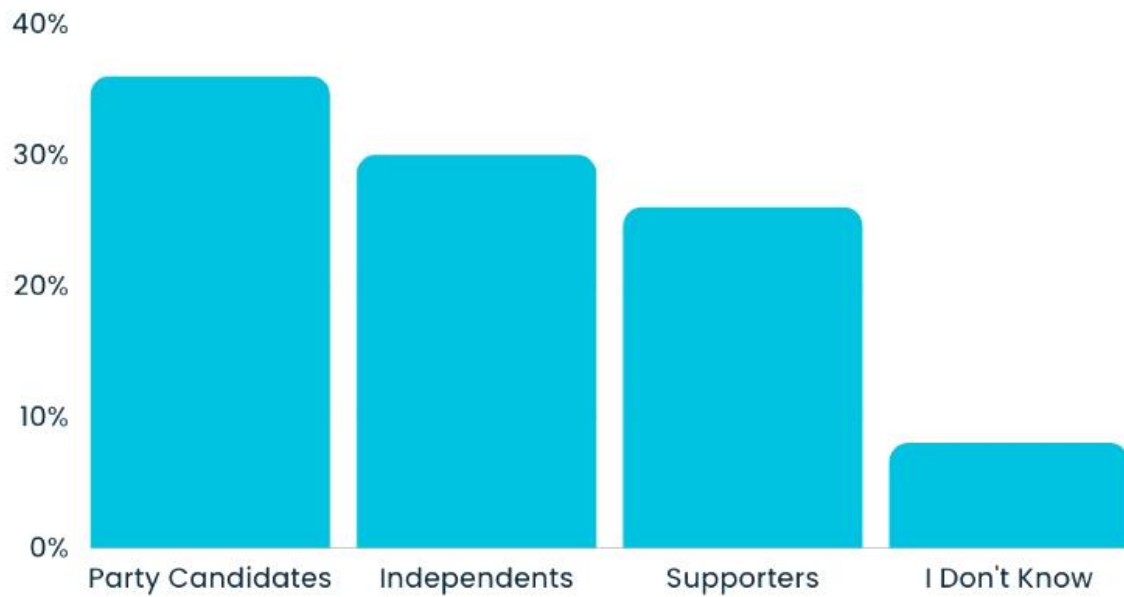
Regarding violence in the elections, 48% of respondents do not agree that the elections will be violent, 34% said they do not know, 18% thinks there will be some form of violence in the elections. A good minority of respondents (42%) expressed fear of being affected by political violence during elections.

**Figure 11: Electors' Perspective on Vote Buying | Liberia | 2023**



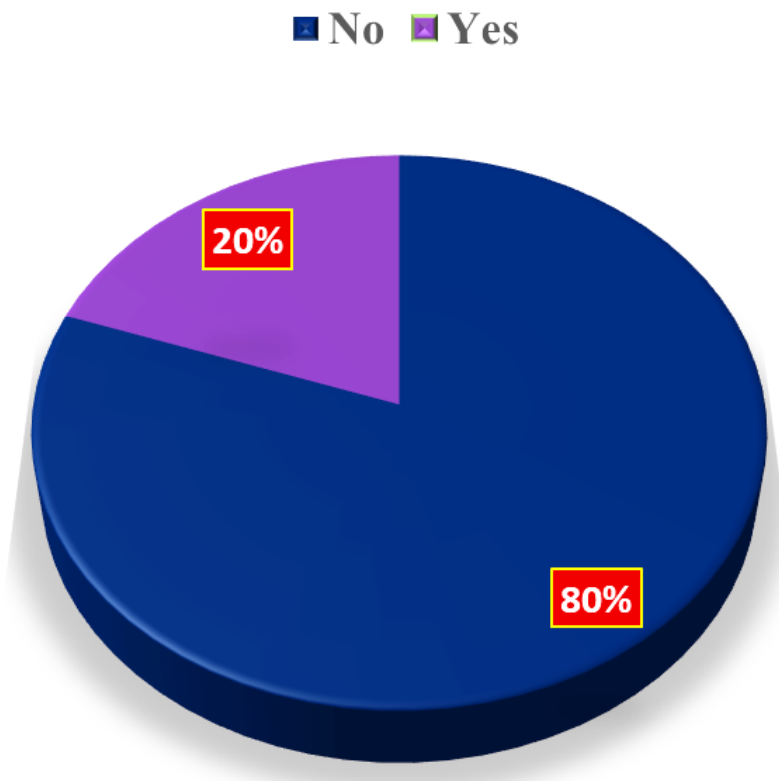
*Respondents were asked: Do you think vote buying occurs during elections?*

**Figure 12: Who Buys the Vote? | Liberia | 2023**



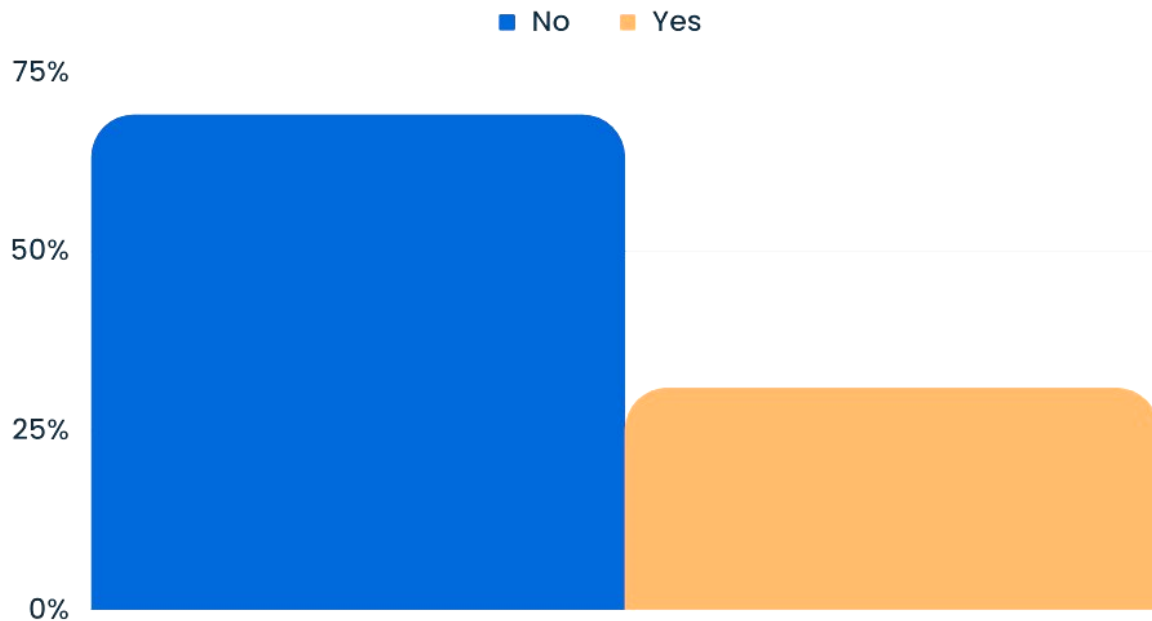
*Respondents were asked: Who do you think engages in vote buying?*

**Figure 13: Should Voters Accept Money or Gift in Exchange of Vote? | Liberia | 2023**



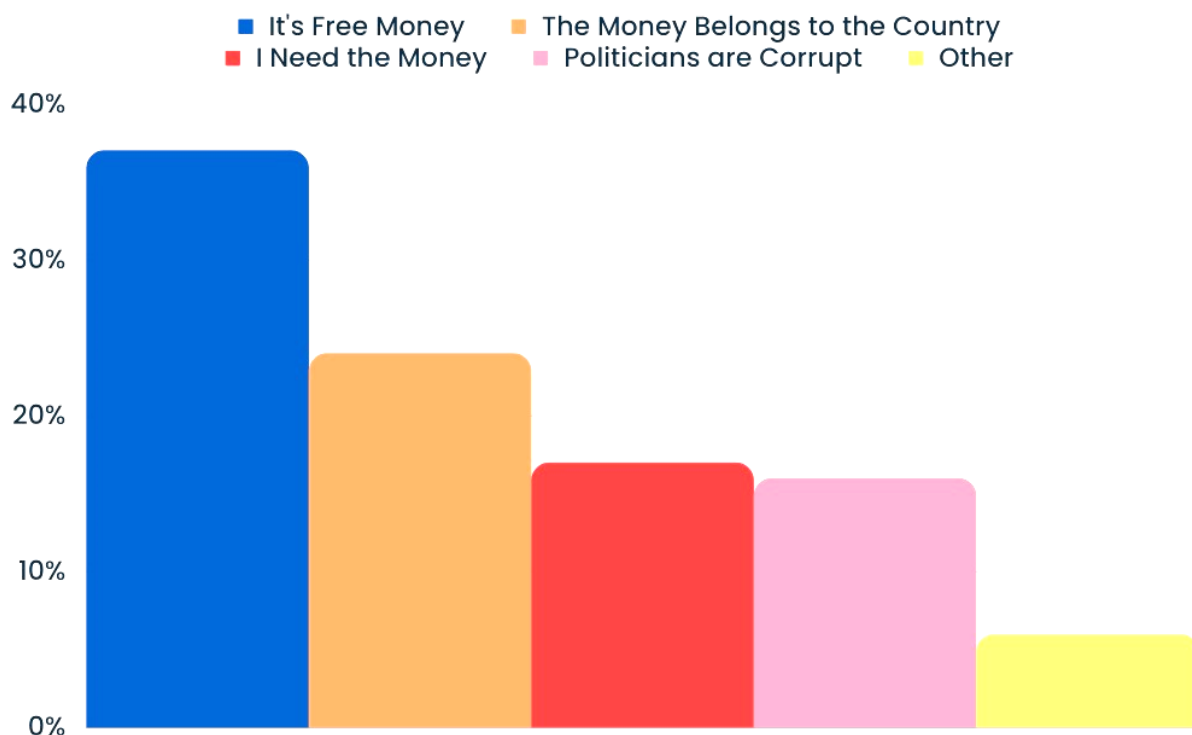
*Respondents were asked: Should a voter accept money or gift in exchange for his/ her vote?*

**Figure 14: Would the Respondent Accept Money or Gift to Vote for a Candidate? | Liberia | 2023**



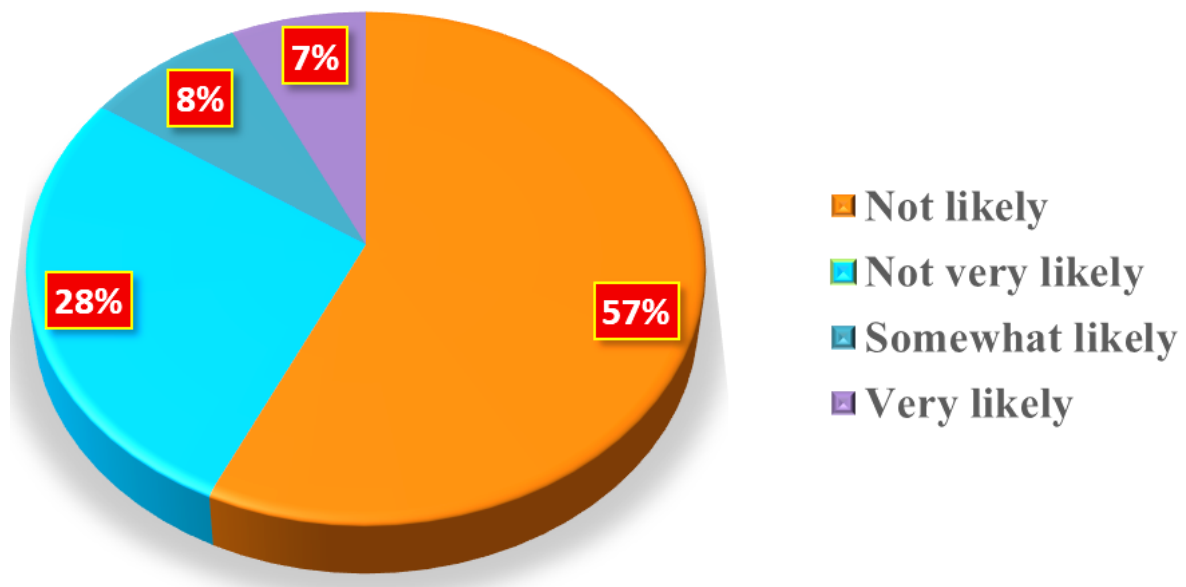
*Respondents were asked: Would you accept money or gift in exchange of your vote?*

**Figure 15: Reasons for Accepting Money | Liberia | 2023**



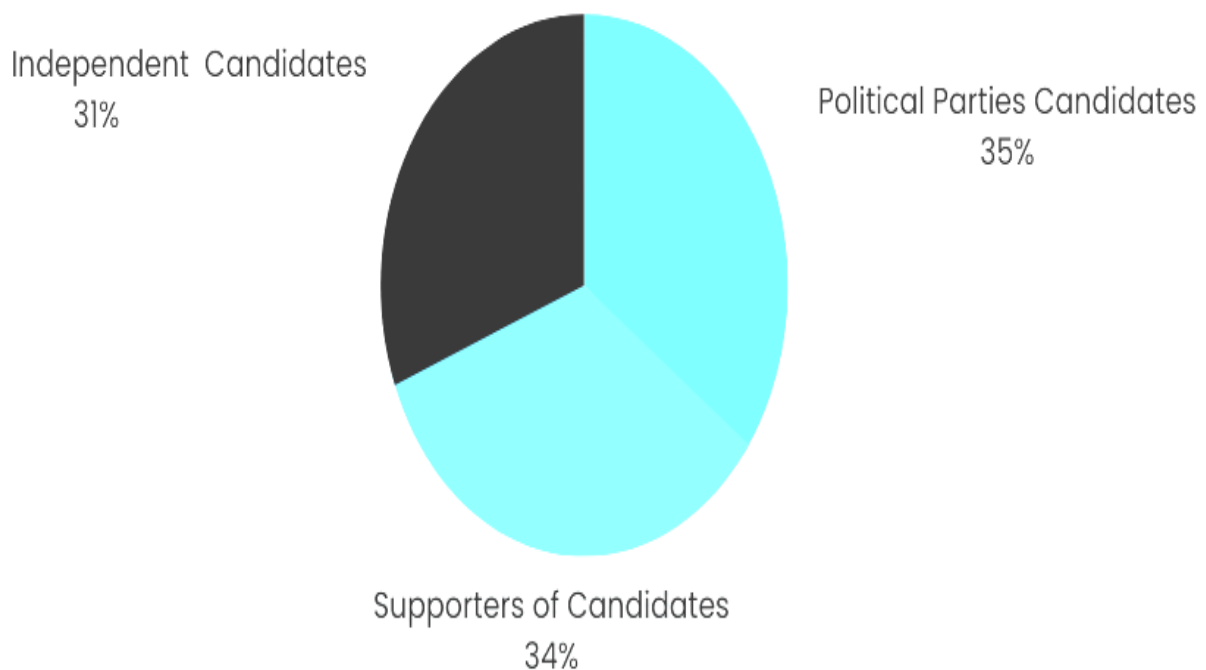
*Respondents were asked: Why would you accept money in exchange of your vote?*

**Figure 16: Secrecy of the Ballot | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: In your opinion, even though you voted in secret, do you think powerful people could find out who you voted for?*

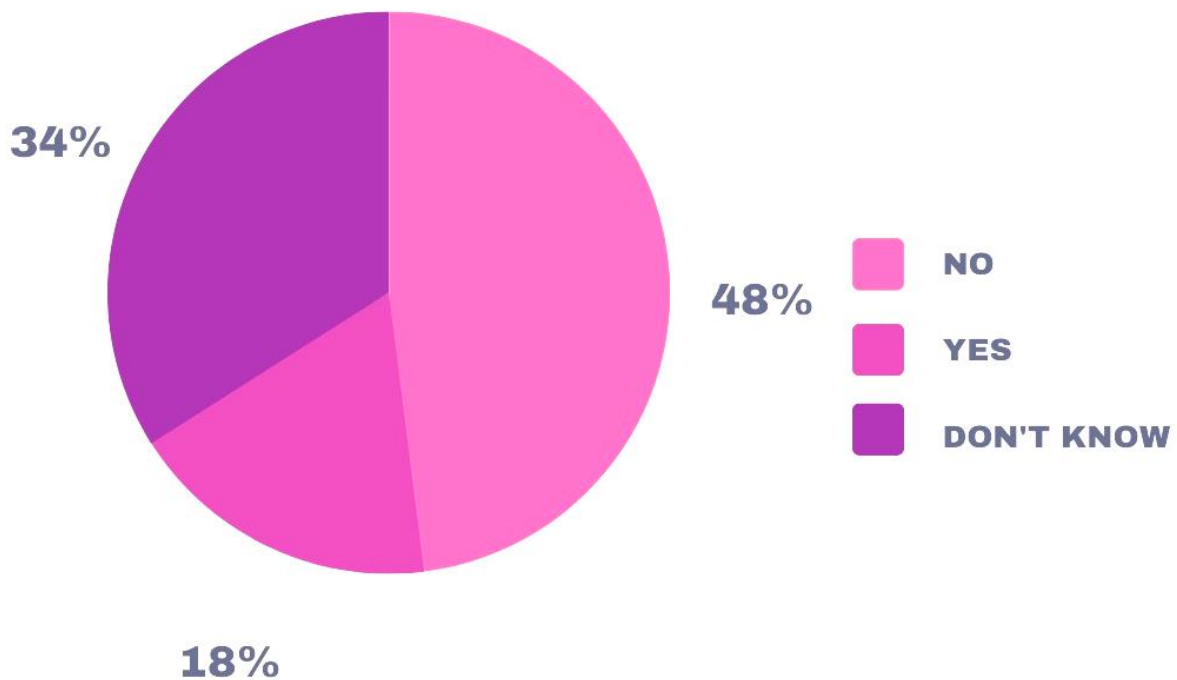
**Figure 17: Group(s) Responsible for Pre-Campaigning | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: In your opinion, who is responsible for carrying out pre-campaign activities?*



**Figure 18: Respondents' Thought on the Occurrence of Violence in the Elections | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: In your opinion, will the elections be violent?*

### 2.3.Views on State / Observer Institutions Preparedness

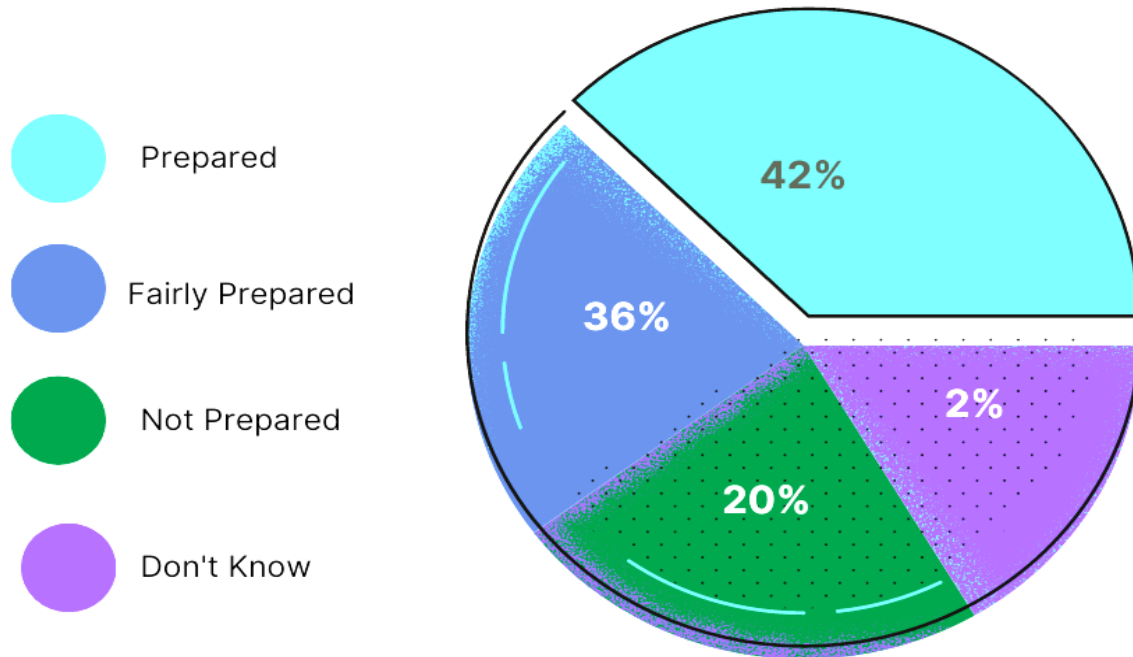
#### Reflection: Respondents Think NEC, Security Institutions and Election Observer Groups are Prepared for the Elections

On the EMB's preparedness to conduct the upcoming polls, 78% of those interviewed agreed that NEC is either prepared or very prepared to conduct the 2023 elections. 20% said NEC is not prepared while 2% said they didn't know. Other stakeholders assessed during the survey were citizens observer groups and security institutions. 48% of respondents graded elections observer groups as very prepared, 31% graded them as prepared, 4% graded as somewhat prepared, 6% said observer groups were not prepared while 11% of respondents said they did not know.

On security institutions responsible for manning the elections. 42% of respondents rated the police as very prepared for the 2023 elections, 30% rated the police as prepared, 5% responded that the police were somewhat prepared, 11% think the police is not prepared and 12% of respondents said they did not know of police preparedness. Respondents' views on the Armed Forces of Liberia's (AFL) preparedness are similarly high. 46% rated the army as very prepared, 27% rated the army as prepared, 5% said the army was somewhat prepared, 16% said they did not know, while 6% said the army was not prepared. On the Liberia Immigration Services' (LIS) preparedness to provide security for the elections, 69% of respondents indicated that the Service is either very prepared or prepared, 7% graded the Service as somewhat prepared, 9% graded the Service as not prepared while 15% said they did not know. On the question of which security agency respondents were more secured with, 39% of respondents said they feel secured with the army compared to 32% who chose the police,

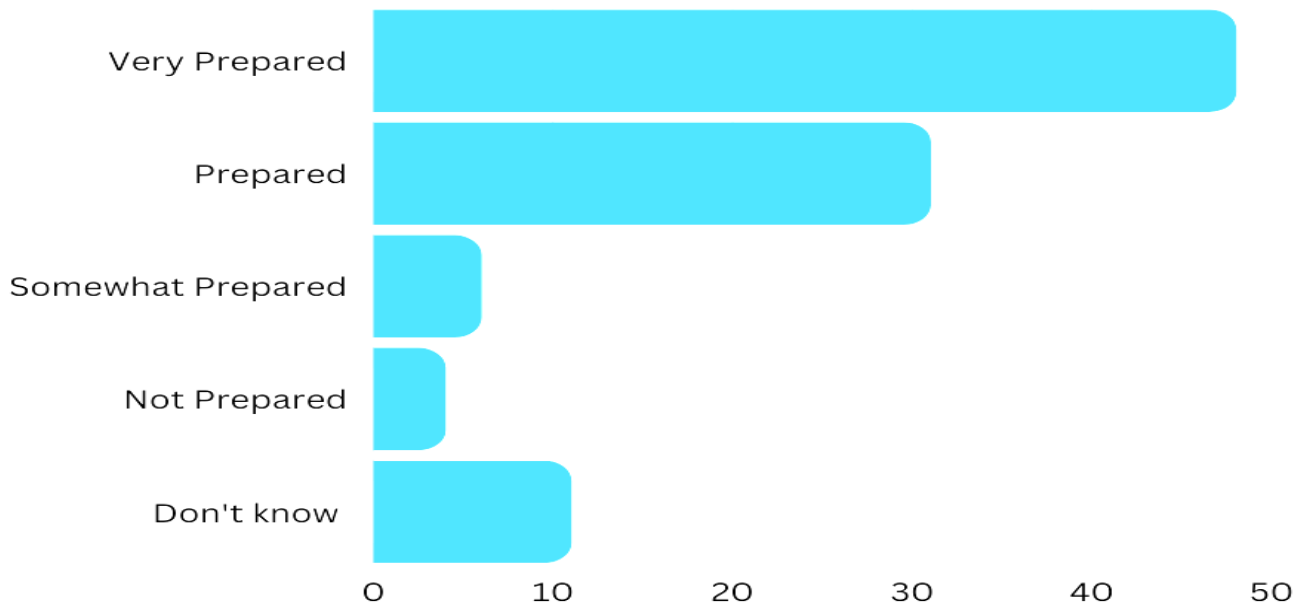
and 19% who said the LIS. 8% of respondents feel secure with the Drugs Enforcement Agency (DEA) while 2% chose the boy's scout.

**Figure 19: NEC's Preparedness | Liberia | 2023**



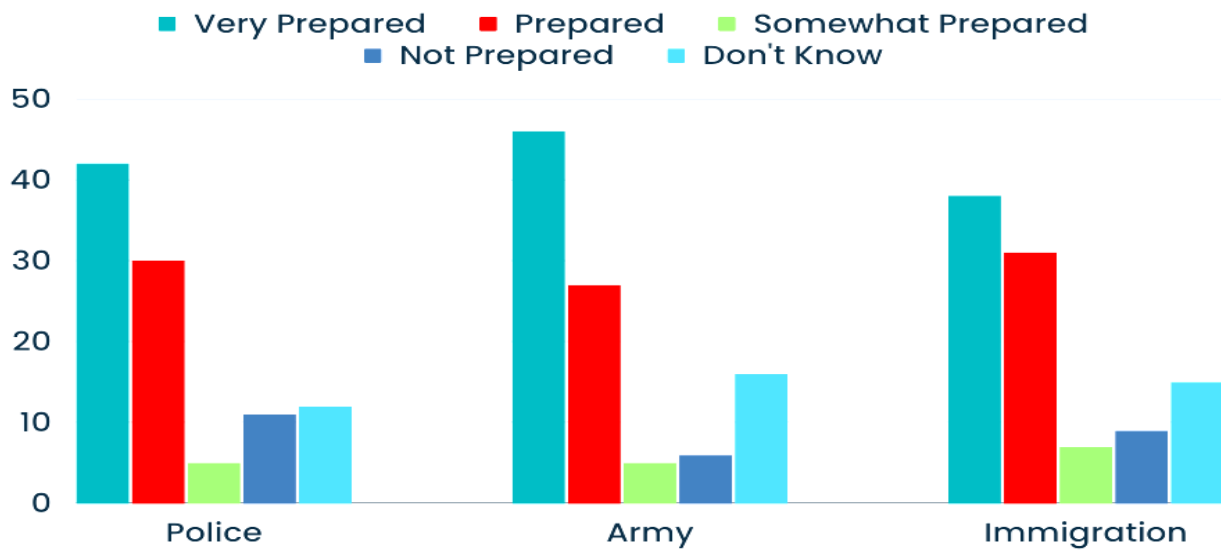
*Respondents were asked: In your opinion, is the NEC prepared to conduct the elections?*

**Figure 20: Citizen Observer Groups Preparedness | Liberia | 2023**



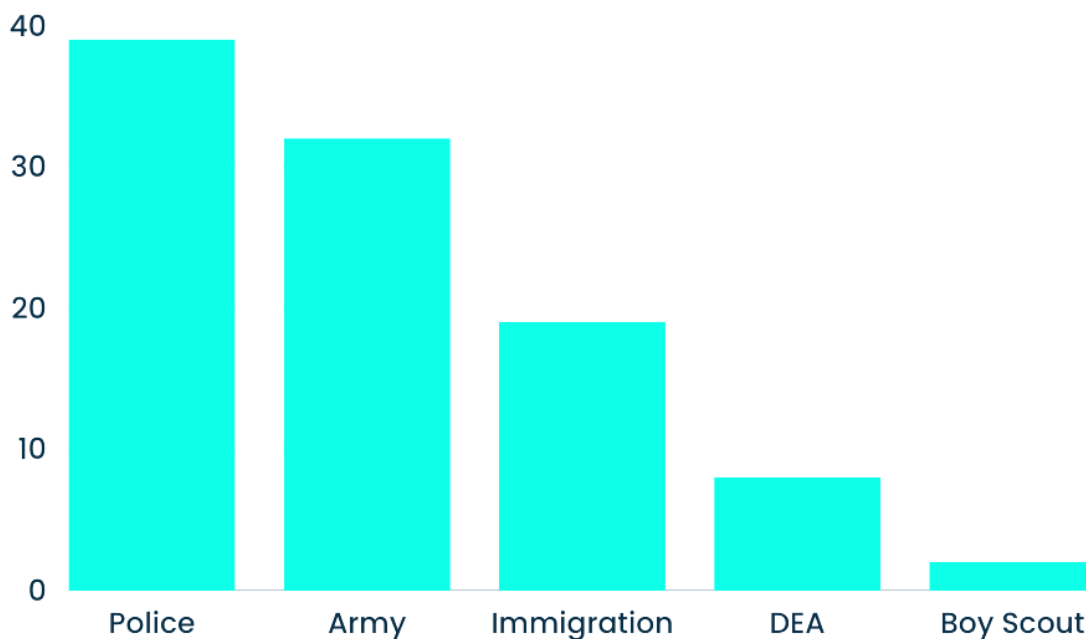
*Respondents were asked: In your opinion, are citizen observer groups prepared to monitor the elections?*

**Figure 21: State Security Preparedness | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: In your opinion, are state security agencies prepared to provide security for the elections?*

**Figure 22: Feeling of Security with State Security Agencies | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: Which security agency do you feel more secured with for the elections?*

## 2.4. Media and Elections

### Reflections: Trust in the Media Low. Radio an important Vehicle for Election Information Dissemination but Social Media’s Influence on Elections Thought to Be Huge

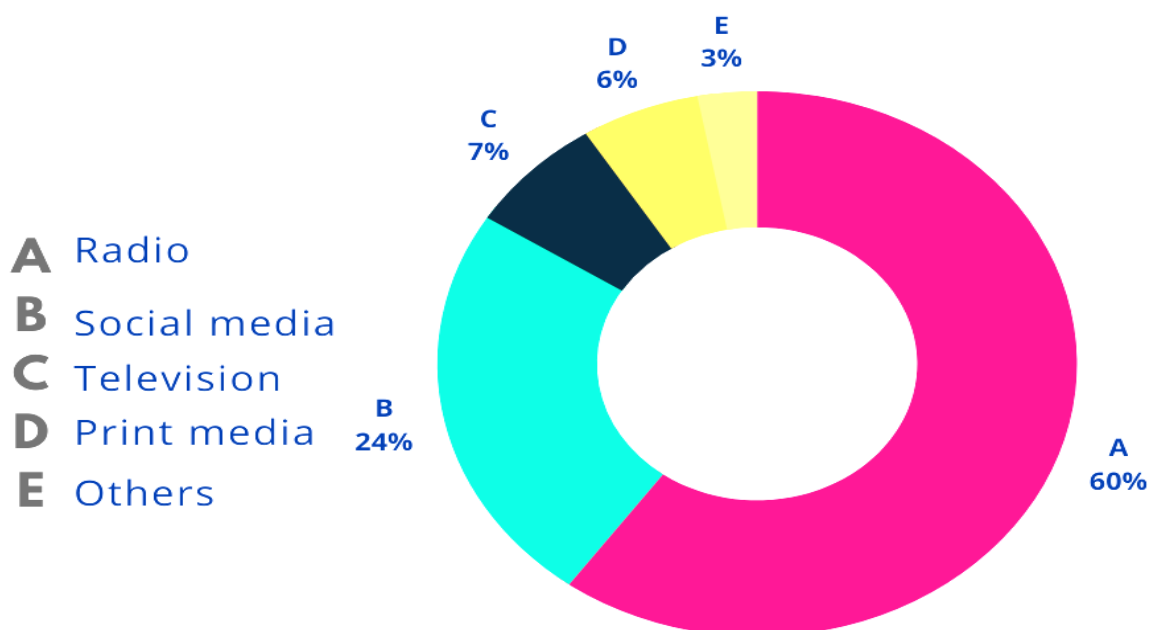
Respondents were asked whether they follow news on the elections. 69% of respondents said they do not follow 31% said they did. 60% of respondents who said they follow elections news said they follow through radio, 24% indicated they follow through social media, 7% said they follow through television, 6% said they follow through the print media and 3% said others.

In rating the influence of various media sources, 47% of respondents said the newspaper has a great influence on the elections, 35% believe it has only little influence, and 18% believe it does not have much influence. Regarding social media’s influence on the elections, 78% of the respondents said social media will have a great influence on the upcoming elections, 16% said social media will have little influence, and 6% felt social media does not have much influence. Although most respondents noted they follow new about the elections via radio, a minority 36% of respondents said radio has a great influence on the elections, 29% think radio has only a little influence, and 35% felt radio does not have much influence on the upcoming elections.

Trust in the media is noted as low. 75% of respondents said they do not trust the media reporting on elections. Only 25% said they trust the media reporting on the elections. 45% of the respondents who said they don’t trust the media said the media is not balanced as reason, 21% said it’s not credible, 18% said the media takes bribes, and 16% said the media is partisan.

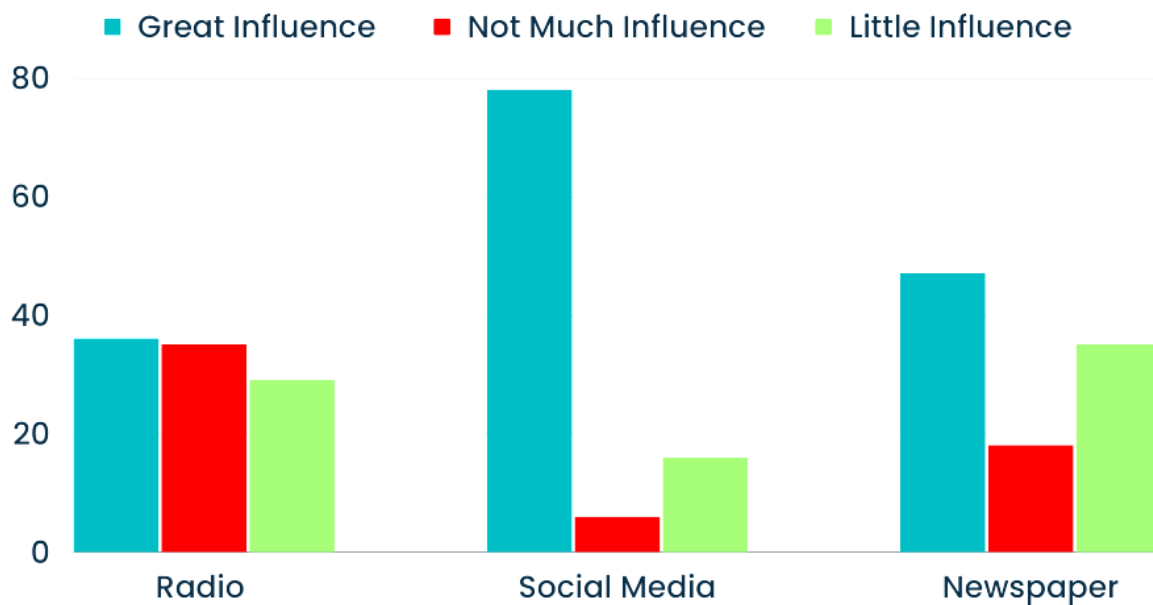
On how the media presents women politicians, 55% of respondents said the media presents female politicians as good and 18% said the media presented females “very good.” 13% said the media’s presentment was bad, 10% said they did not know, 4% said the media present female politicians as very bad.

**Figure 23: Sources of Elections News for Respondents | Liberia | 2023**



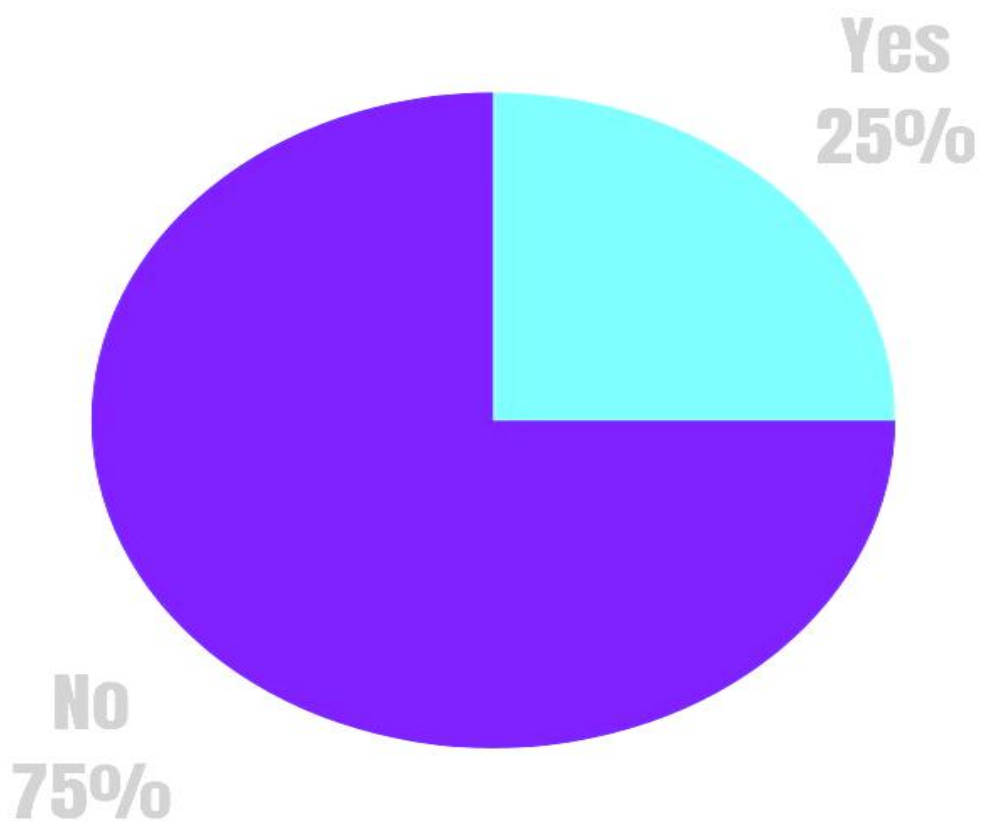
*Respondents were asked: On which platform do you follow news on the elections?*

**Figure 24: Influence of Various Media Platforms | Liberia | 2023**



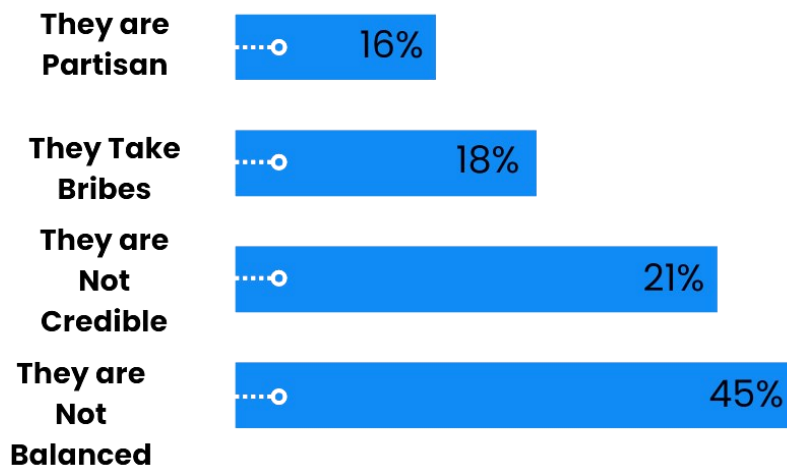
*Respondents were asked: Kindly rate the influence of media platforms on elections.*

**Figure 25: Respondents' Trust in Media Reporting | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: Do you trust the media reporting on elections?*

**Figure 26: Reason for Limited Trust in Media Reporting | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: Why do you not trust media reporting on elections?*

### 2.5. Governance and the Economy

#### Reflection: The Majority Questions Governance Over the Economy, Job Creation, and Basic Health Services

Key governance and economic indicators tend to tilt elections one way or another. 55% of the respondents rated governance over the economy as either bad or very bad, 21% indicated governance over the economy as good and 18% rated governance over the economy as very good. 33% of respondents rated job creation as bad, 30% rated job creation as very bad while the minority beg to differ. 12% rated job creation as very good while 19% indicated that job creation was good. 30% of respondents rated basic health services as bad, 28% rated basic health services as very bad while 22% and 14% rated basic health services as good and very good respectively.

**Figure 27: Respondents View on the Economy, Job Creation and Health | Liberia | 2023**



*Respondents were asked: How do you rate government performance on the economy, job creation and the health sector?*

### 3.0. Recommendations

Based on the survey results, LEON proffers these recommendations to the following institutions:

- a. The National Elections Commission
  - ❖ That the National Elections Commission increase information sharing on activities of the pending October 10, 2023, General and President Elections for increase public confidence in the electoral process and encourage apathetic register voters to vote.
  - ❖ That the NEC coordinates with other relevant institutions to enforce the campaign finance laws with specific objective to address vote buying in elections.
- b. Political Parties
  - ❖ That political parties adhere to the electoral law by refraining from campaigning outside of the election timetable.
  - ❖ That political parties, party and independent candidates, and their supporters desist from vote buying and other forms of bribery in the elections.
  - ❖ That political party participate in civic and voter education activities encouraging citizens to get out and vote on election day.
- c. State Security Agencies
  - ❖ That the police increase public awareness of its preparedness to provide security for the 2023 General and Presidential elections.
  - ❖ That the joint security develops and issue a comprehensive Standard Operation Procedure aimed at raising public confidence in the ability of state security to provide full security of the elections
  - ❖ That the Liberia Immigration Service-LIS increase its visibility and public trust during these election periods.
- d. The National Government
  - ❖ That the Government provide the needed budgetary support to NEC and state security agencies to ensure and secure their preparedness for the elections.
  - ❖ That the Government improves its strategy for sustainable job creation, improved health services, and the general governance of the state.
- e. Election Observer Groups
  - ❖ To continue to independently observe, educate, and informed Liberians on election regulation and democracy-related developments to ensure accountability, transparency, and credibility in all electoral processes.
  - ❖ That Election Monitoring groups always maintain a straight non-partisan posture during observation activities.



- ❖ That Election Monitoring Groups always report impartially and accurately to maintain public confidence and trust in the election process.

f. The Media

That the media strive to be balanced in its reportage, avoid bribery and partisan reporting but also deliberate falsification of information around elections.

g. Citizens

- ❖ That citizens who are involved in taking money or gifts in return for their vote refrain from such acts and other forms of anti-democratic practices.
- ❖ That citizens turn out and vote to ensure leaders are elected to improve the social economic conditions of Liberia.
- ❖ That eligible voters follow the electoral process to be informed about election-related development and to make an important national decision by voting the right leaders in office.

#### **4.0. About LEON**

LEON is a network of the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY); the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled; the Liberia Crusaders for Peace (LCP), and the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC). Since 2017, LEON has developed into one of Liberia's primary and most respected organizations operating in the democracy and governance space and has successfully conducted a range of activities, including legislative monitoring, social monitoring, reporting on violence against women in politics, citizen perception surveys and advocating for election reform.

## 5.0. Tribute



### In Loving Memory: A Tribute to Our Dear Colleague and Workmate Sando Momotai

It is with heavy hearts and profound sadness that we expressed in these lines our tribute to our beloved workmate, Sando Momotai. We woke up to the sad news of her death on April 21, 2023, after attending the training and conducting this Pre-elections baseline survey. SANGAY attended the training program, armed with so much enthusiasm and an unwavering dedication to her work. She was determined to acquire new skills to conduct the pre-election baseline survey, demonstrating her commitment to making a meaningful impact in our society. Little did we know that this would be the last chapter in her incredible journey.

During her time with us, Sando Momotai demonstrated unparalleled professionalism, a thirst for knowledge, and an unyielding passion for her work. She approached every task with unwavering dedication, seeking perfection in even the smallest details. As we reflect upon Sando's legacy, let us remember the unwavering determination she exhibited in the face of adversity. She embraced challenges as opportunities for growth and approached every setback with resilience. Sando Momotai's unwavering commitment to her goals serves as a powerful reminder for us to persevere in the pursuit of our own dreams.

Today, we mourn the loss of our dear friend and colleague. We grieve the memories left unmade and the conversations left unsaid. But let us also celebrate the beautiful impact that Sando Momotai had on our lives. She taught us the importance of passion, dedication, and kindness.

In the days to come, as we continue our work, let us honor Sando Momotai memory by embodying the qualities that defined them. Let us strive for excellence in our tasks, uplift one another, and approach challenges with unwavering determination. In doing so, we will ensure that Sando Momotai spirit lives on within each of us.

Though we say goodbye to our dear workmate today, her memory will forever remain etched in our hearts. Farewell, dear friend, farewell our dear surveyor. Thank you for your contribution to bettering our democracy. Rest in peace!!!!!!

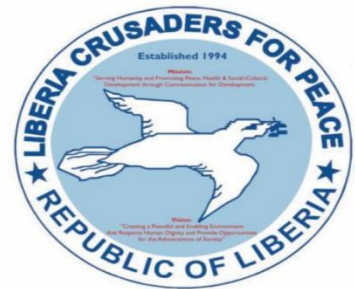
With love and heartfelt condolences, we remain:

The Liberia Elections Observation Network-LEON

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