



**PUBLIC PERCEPTION SURVEY ON JUSTICE AND SECURITY
IN BONG, LOFA AND NIMBA COUNTIES**

LIBERIA

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**Peacebuilding Office
Ministry of Internal Affairs
Monrovia, Liberia**

Cover photo: On the road in Nimba county, Liberia, June 2014.

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Acronyms

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
BCR	Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation
BIN	Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization
BPU	Border Patrol Unit
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EA	Enumeration Area
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
GoL	Government of Liberia
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
JSJP	Justice and Security Joint Programme
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LNP	Liberia National Police
LPP	Liberia Peacebuilding Programme
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBO	Peacebuilding Office
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PSO	Public Services Office
PSU	Police Support Unit
ROLI	Rule of Law Indicators
SGBV CU	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit
SMC	Statement of Mutual Commitments
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNPOL	United Nations Police

1. Introduction

In an effort to support Liberia's recovery and development initiatives following 14 years of civil conflict, the Government of Liberia (GoL) and the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2010 adopted the 'Statement of Mutual Commitments' (SMC) on Peacebuilding in Liberia. The SMC focuses on three key priorities: strengthening the rule of law, supporting security sector reform and promoting national reconciliation. In 2011 the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme (LPP) was developed jointly by the Government, civil society, the UN and several other international development partners to operationalize the SMC through a number of specific projects. In 2013 the current Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP) was developed for a period of 3 years.

One of the main components of the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme is the establishment of 5 Regional Justice and Security Hubs across Liberia, namely in Gbarnga, Harper, Zwedru, Buchanan and Tubmanburg. The overall objective of the Regional Hubs is to enhance justice and security through a service-centred, decentralized and holistic approach, in preparation for the drawdown of UNMIL (UN Mission in Liberia). The Gbarnga Hub, covering Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties, was officially opened in February 2013. A number of key justice and security services related to the Hubs in Zwedru and Harper are being rolled out from 2014 onwards, covering Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland counties. This is coordinated by the JSJP Programme Management Unit (PMU) based at the Ministry of Justice. Annex I shows the map of Liberia including all the 15 counties.

The Regional Hubs are intended to bring together the various justice and security institutions, enhancing the capacity of and coordination between the Liberia National Police (LNP) / Police Support Unit (PSU), Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) / Border Patrol Unit (BPU), Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR), the Prosecution Unit of the Ministry of Justice as well as the Judiciary, i.e. judges and public defenders. A Public Services Office (PSO) is being established in each hub to conduct outreach campaigns to communities and provide referral services. The PSO works closely together with civil society organizations and human rights monitors in the counties. A dedicated Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Crimes Unit is also part of the Hub concept.

In order to measure progress in a systematic manner, comprehensive baseline surveys and subsequent follow-up surveys are critical. Through this type of outcome monitoring one can assess certain changes over time in people's perceptions and knowledge of a range of issues regarding justice and security in the respective counties. The first baseline public perception survey in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties was conducted by the Liberia Peacebuilding Office (PBO) in June 2012, prior to the Gbarnga Hub's operationalization. This survey covered 1,500 household respondents. For the 5 counties to be covered by the Harper and Zwedru Hubs a baseline survey was carried out in April 2013 by the PBO with technical support from the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS).

This report presents the findings from the public perception survey conducted in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties in June 2014. The study covers a range of aspects, not only limited to the Regional Hub, in order to get a comprehensive overview of people's perceptions and knowledge of various issues regarding justice and security, as well as reconciliation, especially in the following key areas:

- 1) Security situation in communities, i.e. perceptions of crime, violence, personal safety;
- 2) Performance of security service providers, i.e. responsiveness and public confidence;
- 3) Performance of justice service providers, i.e. access to justice and public confidence;
- 4) Knowledge of Liberian laws and engagement with civil society organizations and other actors to provide awareness and advice on access to justice, alternative dispute resolution, human rights, etc.;
- 5) Knowledge of and experiences with the various services provided by the Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security Hub.

The survey was designed and coordinated by the Liberia Peacebuilding Office with technical support provided by LISGIS. The survey design and implementation were done according to professional and objective research standards to avoid any potential bias.

Based at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the PBO was established in January 2009 as the Secretariat to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Liberia. The PBO supports the Joint Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the Government of Liberia and the UN, to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Statement of Mutual Commitments, the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme and currently the Peacebuilding Priority Plan. The PBO coordinates the collaboration among all key actors in the area of peacebuilding, reconciliation, justice and security, including the various Government institutions and agencies, civil society organisations, UN Agencies and donors. In addition, the PBO provides technical advice and support in the area of project planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

In April 2014 the PBO M&E Unit developed a Concept Note setting out the objective, proposed methodology and work plan for the survey in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties. This Concept Note was shared for comments with technical experts and key stakeholders represented in the JSC and JSB (Justice and Security Board) and subsequently finalized based on the inputs provided. Given the technical expertise of LISGIS and the fruitful collaboration in conducting the 2013 perception survey in the 5 South-Eastern counties, the PBO entered into an agreement with LISGIS to provide a number of technical support services. Since LISGIS has 15 county field offices and a pool of relatively experienced interviewers, cartographers and data entry clerks from the various counties, these were sub-contracted for the fieldwork and the subsequent entering of data, thereby reducing time and transaction costs, while enhancing value for money. LISGIS also provided technical advice in printing all the detailed Enumeration Area (EA) maps, developing a data entry interface and generating a set of basic tables for further in-depth data analysis by the PBO.

2. Methodology

2.1 Survey Sample

A random stratified cluster sampling method was used for the survey to ensure the findings are representative of the population at the county level. The total sample size consisted of 1,500 interviews, considered sufficient to provide statistically representative results and allow for meaningful comparisons. The number of male and female respondents in urban and rural areas to be interviewed was determined in proportion to the overall population size per county, the ratio of male-female and urban-rural residents according to the latest available data from the 2008 Population and Housing Census conducted by LISGIS.

As primary sampling units, a total of 51 Enumeration Areas (EAs) were randomly selected, reflecting the population size of each county relative to the total population of the 3 counties combined. For clarification it is worth noting that in Liberia all districts are divided into administrative units called 'clans'. In urban areas clans are often referred to as 'communities'. These clans/communities are further sub-divided into Enumeration Areas, each of which usually comprises 80 to 120 households. All EAs have been assigned specific geographic codes that identify them uniquely in terms of their geographical location or placement within the clans/communities, district and counties.

Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) was used as a sampling technique. This commonly applied method ensures that those households in larger sites (EAs in this case) have the same probability of being included in the sample as those in smaller sites, and vice versa. This method also facilitates planning for fieldwork, because a pre-determined number of respondents are interviewed in each randomly selected EA, and teams of interviewers can be dispatched accordingly.

At the next stage, households were selected in the respective EAs. Upon entering the area, the team leaders engaged the local authorities (e.g. town chiefs, local government officials) to explain the purpose of the survey and obtain approval for conducting the interviews, which was granted in all cases. Prior to the field work, letters were sent by the Minister of Internal Affairs to all County Superintendents to notify them about the public perception survey and request their cooperation in informing the local authorities in the respective counties about the content and timing of the survey.

In all EAs the interview teams counted and listed all the households, defined as a group of people normally sleeping under the same roof and eating together. As part of the household listing a unique code was assigned to each household by marking the doorpost, as is usually done for the census and other large surveys. Subsequently, a skip interval was determined by dividing the total number of households in the EA by 30, the estimated number of interviews to be conducted per team per day. For example, if there were 100 households in a specific EA, then 100 divided by 30 would give a skip interval of 3 (rounded off), meaning that someone in every third household would be interviewed. The team would go to the third household listed, subsequently to the sixth, then the ninth, and so on until all the interviews had been conducted in that particular EA.

The final step of the sampling strategy was the selection of the interviewees (respondents). Upon entering the selected household, interviewers identified those eligible to be interviewed according to 3 criteria: the person had to be 18 years or above, living in the household for at least 6 months, and not be sick or suffering from any condition that might prevent him/her to participate in the interview. If several household members were present and meeting the 3 criteria, then interviewers randomly selected 1 person according to a standard agreed procedure.¹ Where necessary, follow-up visits ('call-backs') were made by interviewers in case none of the household members was present during the first visit.

According to good research practice informed consent was obtained from each selected household respondent before starting the interview, ensuring adherence to key principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Interviewers clearly noted respondents' oral consent on the cover page of the questionnaire. No monetary or material incentives whatsoever were offered to participate in the interviews.

2.2 Research Instruments

Indicators for the survey were drawn from the LPP Strategic Performance Management Framework² and - as in 2013 - also from the UN Rule of Law Indicators (ROLI) survey³ and the 2011 'Talking Peace' survey conducted by the Human Rights Center (HRC) of the University of California, Berkeley - School of Law⁴. In addition, a number of questions on Early Warning and Early Response Focal Points, County Peace Committees (CPCs), Land Coordination Centres (LCCs) and national reconciliation were included. Based on the identified indicators specific questions were subsequently formulated. In order to make these as clear as possible, most of the questions were formulated in Liberian English and grouped into four main sections while ensuring a logical sequencing of all the questions.

Since this was a follow-up survey to the June 2012 baseline survey done in Bong, Lofa and Nimba, the questionnaire included a fairly elaborate section on the Regional Hub to obtain a more in-depth understanding of people's knowledge, perceptions and experiences with the various Hub services since these were initiated, mostly in 2013.

When administering the survey, response options for specific questions were not read to respondents by the interviewers in order to avoid any bias. However, an exception was made for certain questions where a scaling method (Likert scale) was applied and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement, and the different options were indicated in advance (e.g. strongly agreed, agreed, somewhat agreed, not agreed, not agreed at all). The average time for administering the questionnaire was 27 minutes per interviewee. Most enumerators were familiar with the local languages in the 3 counties. Overall, 82% of the interviews were conducted in Liberian English, whereas 8% was done mostly in Gio, 3% in Mano and the rest in other local languages.

¹ The random selection procedure consisted of the interviewer writing the names of all eligible household members on separate pieces of paper, shuffling these and throwing them on the floor or on a table. Subsequently one piece of paper was picked randomly and the person whose name was written on that paper would be interviewed.

² Liberia Peacebuilding Programme (LPP), 2011, p. 22-26.

³ For more detailed information see <http://www.unrol.org>

⁴ Note that several questions on perceptions of security, security providers and access to the police in the HRC questionnaire were originally included in the 'Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in Liberia' survey conducted by IPA (Innovations for Poverty Action) and Yale University in Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh in 2009 and 2010. See <https://www.poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/liberiapatternsofconflict-yaleipa.pdf>

Based on an analysis of various options, paper questionnaires were used for data collection rather than electronic devices such as smart phones, mainly for cost-efficiency reasons. In addition, currently most interviewers in Liberia still have limited experience with such devices, and there is a likely risk of technical problems, e.g. limited coverage in most remote areas. Any devices would have had to be purchased and interviewers trained. However, for any follow-up surveys specific electronic devices, such as smart phones or Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), might be considered based on a clear value-for-money analysis.

2.3 Data Collection, Processing and Analysis

From the existing pool of interviewers and field office staff, LISGIS shortlisted 22 people who participated in a comprehensive four-day training in Gbarnga from 2 to 5 June 2014. The training, facilitated by the PBO M&E Unit and LISGIS, focused on explaining the objective and content of the survey, the methodology, the questionnaire, and applying practical interview techniques. The training included mock interviews and pilot-testing of the questionnaire with randomly selected individuals at non-sampled sites in the vicinity of the training venue in Gbarnga. After the pilot-testing the questionnaire was slightly revised to ensure optimal clarity. Subsequently the final version of the questionnaire was printed for the data collection phase.

Out of the 22 training participants a total of 16 interviewers and 4 team leaders were selected based on the following criteria: experience, accuracy, interview skills, language skills, clear handwriting, timeliness and familiarity with the respective counties as well as the local languages. A competitive process was deliberately applied to ensure the best people would be selected for the field work. Those not selected were requested to act as back-up interviewers in case of any unexpected drop-outs during the data collection phase. However, since all the teams remained complete throughout the field work there was no need to use the back-up interviewers. Team leaders were identified on the basis of merit and performance during the training. A total of 4 teams were formed on the last day of the training, making sure that as much as possible the teams were balanced in terms of male-female interviewers and their familiarity with the respective county. Three teams were assigned 13 EAs each per county, while the fourth team conducted interviews in 12 EAs across Nimba and Bong. Since it is more populated than the other 2 counties the sample included relatively more EAs in Nimba.

For the data collection phase a detailed work schedule was developed, including all responsibilities of the interview teams, maps indicating all the EAs to be covered by the survey, the targeted number of interviews per day, and the overall quality assurance process. After each day of fieldwork, team leaders held debriefing sessions with their team to discuss work progress, resolve any issues and plan the next day's work. Three Field Coordinators, including two from PBO and one from LISGIS, provided overall supervision and quality control during the data collection phase from 6 to 19 June 2014. The Coordinators followed the 4 teams into the field, reviewed samples of the completed questionnaires for any errors and discussed progress with the team leaders on a daily basis.

Upon completion of the field work, a total of 10 data entry clerks were sub-contracted by LISGIS to enter all the completed questionnaires into CSPro, a widely used software package for data entry, editing and tabulation. The data entry interface was designed during the data collection phase. Following a half-day training, data entry was carried out over a period of 8 days. Double data entry was done to minimize errors and ensure optimal quality. All

questionnaires were stored in a secure location and treated with the required confidentiality. Subsequently, a comprehensive set of tables was produced, using CSPro to tabulate the results of the 1,500 interviews. The PBO M&E Unit carried out in-depth data analysis, while also comparing the findings with other surveys such as the 2012 baseline survey, the 2011 Rule of Law Indicators survey, the 2011 Talking Peace survey and other relevant studies in order to validate the key findings.

2.4 Limitations

The survey was designed and implemented in a sound methodological and systematic manner, so as to ensure the findings would accurately represent the perceptions of the people in the 3 counties. The sampling strategy was developed based on the male-female and urban-rural ratio according to the latest available population figures from the 2008 Population and Housing Census conducted by LISGIS. Enumeration Areas, households and subsequently respondents were selected randomly to avoid any potential bias.

One point to keep in mind is that this survey, like similar studies, relies on self-reporting by respondents. Therefore, certain factors might have influenced the responses by the interviewees, for example possible misunderstanding of some questions, different interpretations, inaccurate recall of past events (e.g. for those questions asking about events during the last 12 months), or possible intentional misreporting (e.g. for sensitive questions where certain responses might have been considered as socially unacceptable). However, these type of risks were minimized by carefully designing the questionnaire to reduce any potential bias, making the various questions as clear as possible, mostly in Liberian English so that even respondents with no or limited education could easily understand them. Also, all interviews were conducted anonymously and in a private place without other household members or neighbours present. All interviewers were thoroughly trained in interview techniques and in fact all those who were randomly selected as respondents agreed to participate in the survey. Only in 6% of the cases interviewers noted that those being interviewed were somewhat reluctant to answer certain questions, but all completed the interview and generally almost all interviewees were very willing to share information without any reservations.

The value of regular public perception surveys is that these can bring to the fore certain trends and changes over time. However, a word of caution is necessary when comparing the findings of this survey with the baseline survey done in June 2012 in the same 3 counties. The initial survey, for example, had fewer and less detailed questions than the June 2014 survey. Also, the sampling procedure was not as systematic as anticipated, hence the 2012 survey findings may not have been fully representative. In addition, one cannot necessarily *attribute* certain changes in people's perceptions to - for instance, in this case - the establishment of the Regional Hub, more police patrols or an increased capacity of the justice system. Since many different factors are at play, a simple cause-effect relationship can often not be established. For example, if public confidence in the police is at a higher level compared to 2 years ago, this could be due to several factors, including possible institutional and/or behavioural changes. The provision of certain services from the Hub may have been one positively contributing factor, but it would be fairly complicated to distinguish this from the impact of all the other factors. Therefore, while certain trends and changes can indeed be observed, one needs to be careful with how to interpret these. Further in-depth analysis of the data as well as other future studies will hopefully generate even more insights into critical issues of security, peacebuilding and access to justice in Liberia.

3. Survey Findings

This chapter presents an overview of the main findings of the survey, including the following four sections: 1) Key characteristics of the survey respondents, providing the necessary context for the subsequent analysis; 2) Perceptions on security, including access to, confidence in and performance of the police; 3) Perceptions on justice, including settlement of disputes, confidence in and access to the formal and customary/traditional justice systems; 4) Knowledge and experiences with the services provided by the Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security Hub.

3.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Key characteristics of respondents by county and total

	Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Sample size (n)	466	388	646	1,500
Weighted n (%)	31%	26%	43%	100%
Urban/Rural (%)				
Urban	31%	30%	22%	27%
Rural	69%	70%	78%	73%
Sex (%)				
Male	50%	49%	50%	50%
Female	50%	51%	50%	50%
Age (years)				
18-30	38%	46%	34%	38%
31-40	26%	23%	30%	27%
41-50	15%	19%	19%	18%
51-60	9%	8%	10%	9%
60+	13%	5%	6%	8%
Religion (%)				
Christian	87%	77%	88%	85%
Muslim	7%	23%	2%	9%
Traditional/other	1%	0%	5%	2%
None	5%	0%	5%	4%
Ethnic group (%)				
Kpelle	78%	8%	1%	27%
Mano	2%	0%	47%	21%
Gio	2%	0%	45%	20%
Loma	3%	36%	1%	11%
Kissi	1%	24%	1%	7%
Gbandi	0%	23%	0%	6%
Mandingo	6%	7%	2%	4%
Bassa	4%	0%	1%	2%
Grebo	1%	0%	1%	1%
Mende	0%	1%	1%	1%
Other	2%	1%	0%	0%

Table 1 above presents the key characteristics of the respondents interviewed in the 3 counties. Cross-checking confirmed that overall the results for the key socio-economic indicators in the 3 counties are in line with the findings of the latest Population and Housing Census conducted in Liberia (2008), at least in relative terms while of course taking into account that certain changes have occurred during the last few years.

Almost 3 out of 4 people live in rural areas across the 3 counties, slightly more in Nimba (78%) than in Bong (69%) and Lofa. Overall, a significant proportion (38%) of the respondents was below 31 years of age, while 27% was between 31 and 40 years old. A total of 18% was reportedly between 41 and 50 years of age and 17% aged 51 or above. A large majority of respondents in the 3 counties identified themselves as Christian (85%), whereas 9% reported being Muslim (23% in Lofa), 2% practicing a traditional or other religion, and 4% not practicing any religion.

In terms of ethnic groups, the survey found that the Kpelle constitute the majority (78%) in Bong county, and 27% for the 3 counties combined. Loma represent about one third (36%) of the population in Lofa, followed by Kissi (24%) and Gbandi (23%). In Nimba county the Mano (47%) and Gio (46%) are the largest ethnic groups.

Table 2: Education level and main occupation by county and total

	Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Sample size (n)	466	388	646	1,500
Weighted n (%)	31%	26%	43%	100%
Education level (%)				
No formal schooling	41%	45%	31%	38%
Elementary	22%	10%	21%	19%
Junior High	17%	16%	20%	18%
High School	15%	22%	22%	20%
Vocational/Technical School	0%	2%	1%	1%
College	2%	3%	5%	3%
University	2%	2%	1%	1%
Main occupation (%)				
Self-employed	70%	56%	58%	61%
Paid employee	9%	8%	7%	8%
Full-time student	6%	16%	13%	12%
Contributing family worker	3%	5%	11%	7%
Household worker	2%	6%	2%	3%
Looking for work	2%	2%	1%	2%
Not working, not looking for work	5%	4%	3%	4%
Retired/pensioner	1%	2%	0%	1%
Other	2%	2%	3%	3%

Table 2 provides an overview of the education level and main occupation of the respondents. In terms of education, 38% of all respondents reported having no formal schooling at all, while in Lofa this was even 45%. Overall, 19% of those interviewed only had elementary education, 18% completed Junior High and 20% High School. There were some significant differences between the 3 counties. In addition, on the overall women were almost twice as likely as men (47% versus 27%) to have never benefitted from any formal education. Only 0.4% of women interviewed in the 3 counties had gone to University compared to 2.4% of men. These gender disparities are cause for serious concern.

In terms of main occupation, out of all respondents 61% reported to be self-employed. Further analysis showed that in rural areas across the 3 counties the large majority are self-employed farmers, whereas in urban areas most self-employed are involved in small businesses or petty trade, women more so than men. Out of the 8% who reported to be paid employees, common professions were teachers or other civil servants. Across the 3 counties 12% of respondents identified themselves as full-time students. The various categories for main occupation as used in the questionnaire are equivalent to the 'activity status' categories used in the Census.

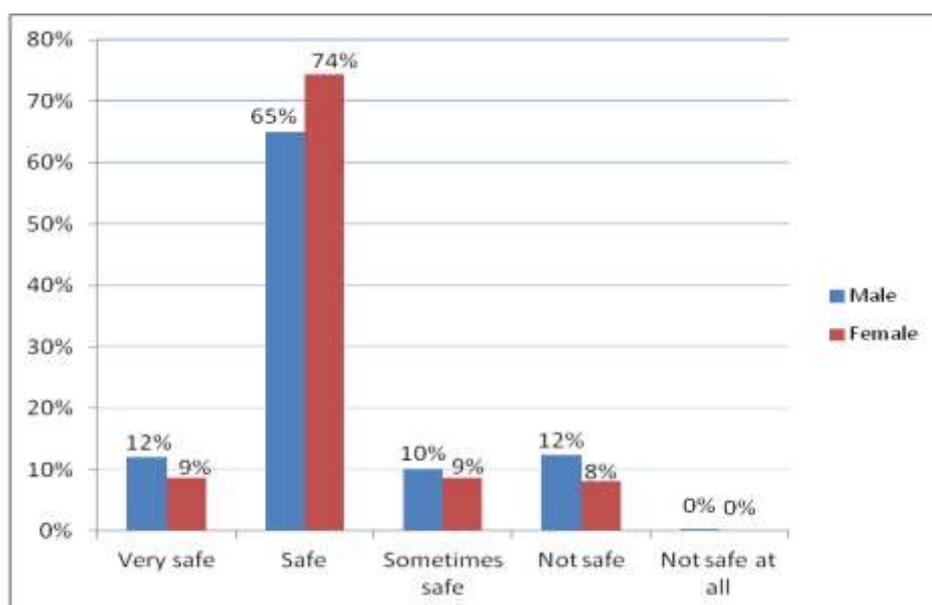
3.2 Security

Public perceptions of security matters were assessed through a total of 35 specific questions covering issues including the perceived safety in communities, main security providers, access to the police as well as people's confidence in and perceived performance of the police. Some questions regarding mob violence, early warning mechanisms and national reconciliation were also included. This section highlights the key findings.

Safety and main security providers

When asked 'How safe do you feel in your community?' a large majority (70%) of all respondents in Bong, Lofa and Nimba indicated they felt safe, while on average 10% considered their communities to be very safe. Overall, 10% of respondents reported not feeling safe. Figure 1 shows the responses disaggregated by men and women. People in rural areas (83%) felt somewhat safer than in urban areas (71%). A total of 85% of respondents in Nimba indicated they felt safe or very safe in their communities, relatively more so than in Lofa (77%) and Bong (76%).

Figure 1: General sense of safety, by male/female, total of 3 counties (%)



In a similar type of survey conducted in June 2012, a total of 65% of respondents in the same 3 counties felt safe or very safe, compared to 80% in June 2014. This seems to reflect a relatively positive improvement, but taking into account some of the limitations outlined in section 2.4 it may be premature to draw any firm conclusions from this.

In June 2014, 28% of respondents in Bong, Lofa and Nimba indicated that the security situation had improved compared to the previous year (2013), whereas 67% indicated it had remained the same and 5% said it had worsened. While there were only minor differences between men and women in this respect, 9% of urban residents perceived the situation to have worsened compared to 4% among those living in rural areas. Comparing the 3 counties,

it turned out that respondents in Lofa were relatively more optimistic about the security situation having improved (41%) than those in Nimba (27%) and Bong (18%).

When those who reported an improvement were asked for the main reason, ‘less crime’ was mentioned by 41% of respondents. The establishment of a community watch team was also cited by 19% as the main reason for an improved security situation; 21% of people in rural areas and 14% in urban areas referred to this. At the same time, 29% of urban residents and 13% of rural residents attributed their enhanced sense of security to the presence of more police. A relatively high percentage of respondents in Bong county (35%) mentioned ‘more police’ as a key factor for an improved security situation, compared to 16% in Lofa and 10% in Nimba. This might be explained by an actual increase in police presence in Bong county between 2013 and 2014, including PSU officers based at the Gbarnga Regional Hub, although this may require some further analysis.

Table 3: Main security providers in communities, by county and total of 3 counties (%)

	Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Police	40%	24%	24%	29%
Community watch team	15%	11%	53%	30%
Traditional authorities	30%	26%	23%	26%
UNMIL / UNPOL	5%	0%	4%	3%
BIN	3%	0%	4%	3%
AFL	0%	0%	0%	0%
CSOs	0%	0%	0%	0%
Myself / My family	10%	18%	5%	10%
God / Allah	23%	41%	16%	25%
Nobody	14%	11%	5%	9%
Other	1%	1%	2%	1%

Note: respondents could give multiple answers to this question so the total exceeds 100%.

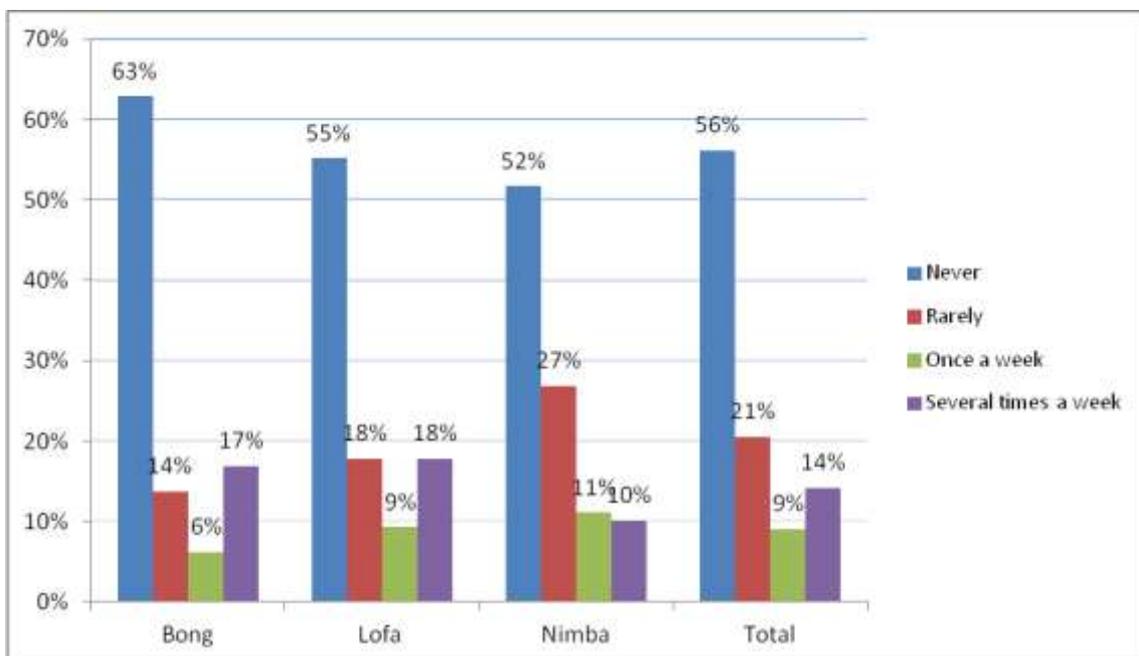
Table 3 provides an overview of responses to the question ‘who provides security in your community?’ Overall, 29% of respondents identified the police as the main provider of security in their community. Among urban residents this was more than three times as high as for people living in rural areas (57% and 18% respectively). In Bong county as much as 40% of respondents identified the police as the main security provider.

However, many people across the 3 counties mentioned community watch teams (30%) and traditional authorities (26%) as primary security providers. Especially in Nimba (53%), with many relatively remote districts, ‘vigilantes’ were found to be very common, especially in rural areas. When combined, these local/traditional security mechanisms, i.e. community watch teams and traditional leaders (together accounting for 56%), were considered almost twice as important as the police. In Bong and Nimba 5% and 4% respectively mentioned UNMIL or UNPOL among those providing security. Of concern is that 9% of respondents felt that nobody provides any security in their community, whereas 10% relied on themselves or their family. On average 25% referred to God or Allah looking after them, while in Lofa this was mentioned by as much as 41% of those interviewed. However, to put this in perspective, as shown in Figure 1 a significant majority of people in all 3 counties do feel safe or very safe in their community.

Access to the police

During the last 3 months, 14% of respondents in the 3 counties had seen the police in their community several times a week and 9% once a week. On the other hand, 21% had rarely encountered police officers in their community, and 56% had never seen any police, as shown in Figure 2. There were significant differences between urban and rural areas. For example, 35% of urban residents said they had not seen the police at all over the last 3 months, whereas this was true for 64% of rural residents. Comparing the 3 counties, it is interesting to note that although 17% of those interviewed in Bong indicated having seen the police several times, 63% also said that during the last 3 months they had never seen any police officers at all in their community.

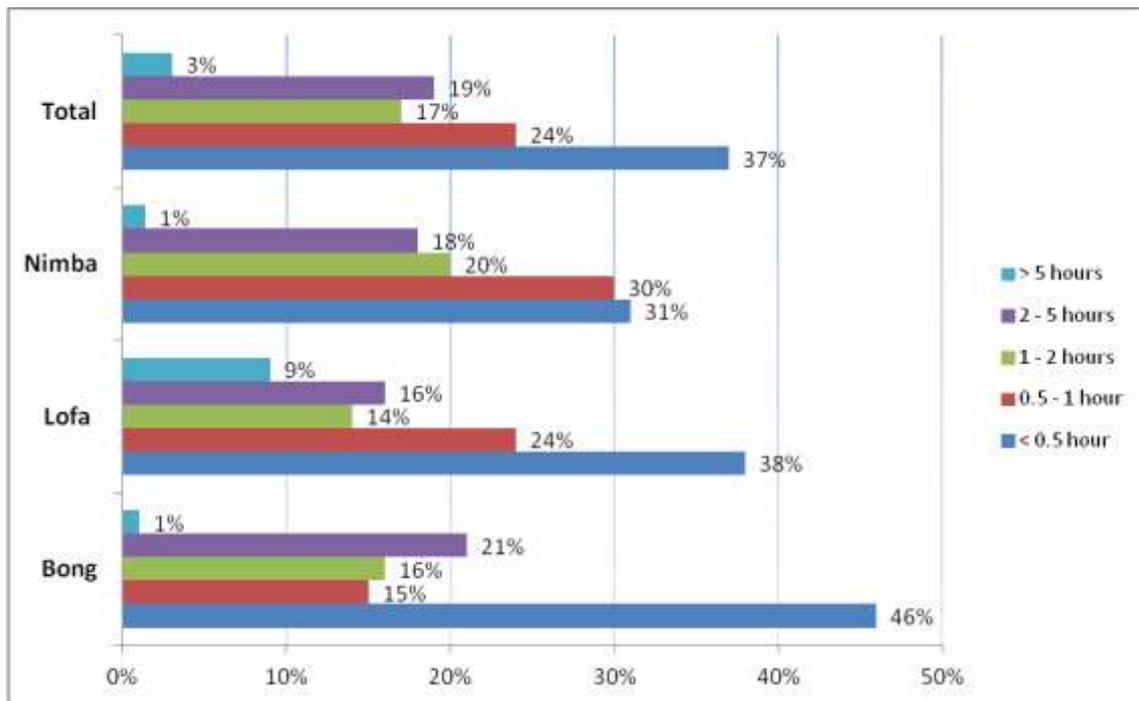
Figure 2: Frequency of police presence in communities during the last 3 months, by county and total (%)



When people were asked whether they knew how to contact the police, 52% responded positively, including 58% in Bong, 54% in Nimba and only 40% in Lofa. In general, more men (56%) than women (47%) said they knew how to get in touch with the police. As expected, it was higher in urban (62%) than in rural areas (48%). However, in response to a follow-up question only 36% of those who replied positively to the previous question, confirmed they actually knew the telephone number of a police officer in their community or another community.

A very high percentage (82%) of respondents, including 87% of men and 78% of women, reported that they knew where the nearest police station was. It was higher in urban (97%) than in rural areas (77%). In Bong and Nimba 84% of all interviewees responded positively, while in Lofa this was 71%.

Figure 3: Time it takes to reach the nearest police station, by county and total (%)



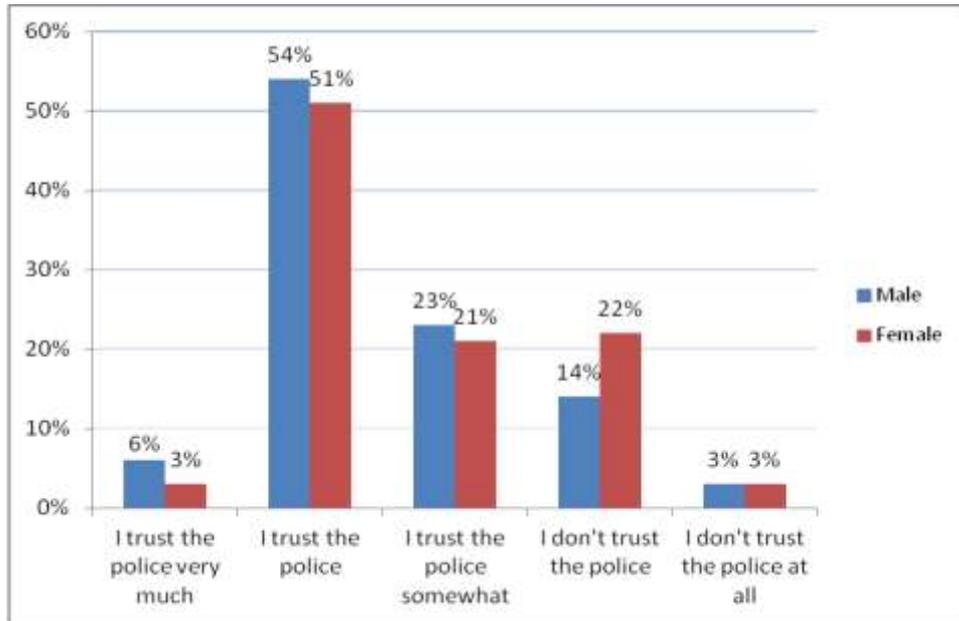
Overall, as Figure 3 shows, 37% of people who said they knew where the nearest police station was, reported that it would take them less than 30 minutes to reach it, while 24% said between 30 and 60 minutes. A total of 17% of respondents estimated it would take between 1 and 2 hours, whereas 19% said between 2 and 5 hours, with 5% indicating a travel time of more than 5 hours. Not surprisingly, a significant urban-rural disparity can be noted in the sense that almost all urban residents would take less than an hour to reach a police station, as compared to only 43% of people living in rural areas. The latter often have to spend a significant amount of time to get to the nearest police post.

As for the mode of transportation, the majority (62%) of all respondents would walk to the police station, 34% would use a motorbike taxi (*pen-pen*) and 4% a car. In urban areas 81% would walk, considering the shorter distances, whereas in rural areas this was 52%. In Nimba many respondents (48%) said they would use a *pen-pen*, which could be explained by the bad condition of many roads and the relatively long distances between villages and towns.

Public confidence in the police

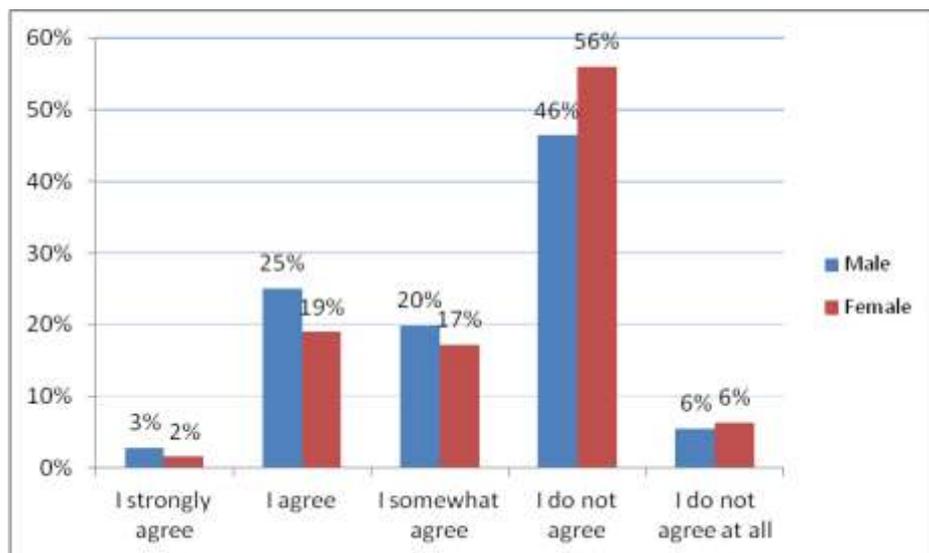
As shown in Figure 4, a majority of respondents (60% of men and 54% of women) in the 3 counties said they trust or very much trust the police in their area. However, on average 22% of the interviewees only trusted the police to some extent, while 14% of men and 22% of women displayed no trust - or no trust at all - in the police. Among urban residents 1 in 4 did not trust the police, among rural residents this was 1 in 5. People with college education across the 3 counties appeared to be less trustful of the police than those with other levels of education. In general women were somewhat more sceptical across the board. The same pattern was observed in the survey done in the South-East of Liberia during April 2013. Looking at the different counties, the findings show that people in Lofa were somewhat more distrustful of the police (29%) than in Nimba (19%) and in Bong (16%).

Figure 4: Trust in the police by male/female, total of 3 counties (%)



In order to gauge further perceptions of the police, people were asked whether in their opinion the police treat everyone the same, regardless of one's gender, tribe, religion, economic or social status. Figure 5 shows the findings for the 3 counties. A significant percentage of respondents (46% of men and 56% of women) disagreed with this statement, and 6% even strongly disagreed. As was the case with the previous question regarding trust in the police, women were generally found to be more sceptical. It is worth noting that especially respondents in Lofa (62%) strongly disagreed that the police treat everyone the same, compared to an overall average of 51% for the 3 counties combined.

Figure 5: Perception of equal treatment by the police, by male/female, total of 3 counties (%)

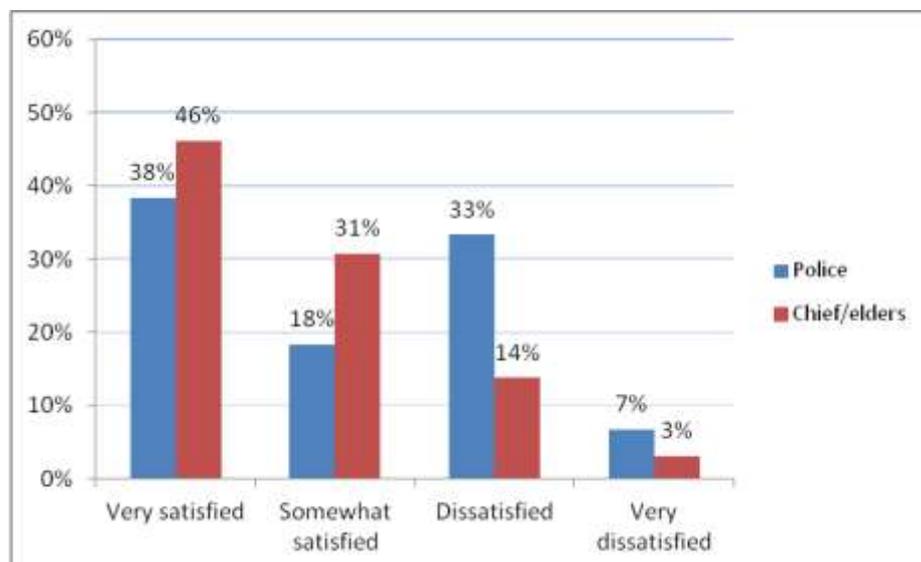


About 1 in 4 respondents (27%) was of the opinion that the police in their area were corrupt or ‘eating money’. In general, women were more critical than men, and urban residents (36%) more so than those living in rural areas (24%). Responses between counties varied quite widely, from an average 15% in Nimba to 31% in Bong and 42% in Lofa perceiving the police to be corrupt.

Performance of the police

According to the survey findings, 12% of people interviewed in the 3 counties had been the victim of a crime within the last 12 months, and 78% reported this to someone outside their family. Overall, the percentage of self-reported crime victims was higher in urban areas (15%) than in rural areas (10%). It ranged from 9% in Lofa to 10% in Nimba and 16% in Bong. Robbery or burglary was the most common type of crime reported (46%) across the 3 counties while violence was also mentioned by 25%. The latter included 18% that was attacked with a weapon and 7% that was hit without a weapon. In Bong and Lofa the reported use of a weapon was as high as 25% and 28% respectively. It is worth noting that across the 3 counties 12% of women said they had been harassed for sex within the last 12 months. This was somewhat more common in rural than urban areas, with some differences observed between counties. Overall, 3% of reported crime victims indicated they had been the victim of witchcraft.

Figure 6: Satisfaction with the response to a crime reported within the last 12 months to the police and to the chief/elders, total of 3 counties (%)



Of those victims that reported the crime, 44% went to the police, 48% reported it to the local chief or elders, and 7% to someone else. Figure 6 compares the level of satisfaction with the response by the police and that of the chief/elders. Overall, respondents were more satisfied with the way their reported crime was handled by the chief or elders than by the police. A total of 40% indicated they were not satisfied or not satisfied at all with the response by the police, as compared to 17% in terms of the response by the chief/elders. Further analysis showed that in general men and urban residents were about twice as dissatisfied with the police response as women and rural residents. As for the response to a crime reported to a

chief or elder, which predominantly occurred in rural settings, both men and women (about 3 in 4) were generally very satisfied.

One point to bear in mind is that perhaps the type of crimes reported to a chief or elders might be somewhat less serious, hence more likely to be resolved, than those crimes reported to the police, but this would require further analysis. Generally, it is not uncommon that in certain instances chiefs refer specific cases to the police, whereas the police sometimes refer cases, especially minor ones, back to chiefs. Therefore, where cases are referred back and forth, it complicates the interpretation of the findings about satisfaction with the response to a reported crime. Another factor to take into consideration is that in rural areas each community has a chief or group of elders to handle disputes, while the police in both urban and rural areas are faced with fairly limited capacity (personnel, infrastructure, etc.) to deal with crime cases. Further in-depth analysis in terms of dispute settlement can be found in Section 3.3 on Justice.

When asked whether they had ever given something (*'small thing'* in Liberian English) to the police during the last 12 months, 9% of all respondents confirmed that they had. This was somewhat higher among men (11%) than women (7%). Also, it was generally higher in urban (15%) than in rural areas (7%). There were very minor differences between the 3 counties. As for the reason why something was given to the police, common responses included a 'transportation fee' (19%), filing a complaint (18%) or for investigating a case (18%). Overall, 11% indicated it was for a fine they had to pay. Paying a transportation fee, usually fuel for the police to come by car or by motorbike, was mentioned especially by people in rural areas.

About 1 in 4 (24%) of all interviewees agreed that it is possible to avoid arrest by offering *'small thing'* to a police officer, and 2% strongly agreed. On the other hand, 54% disagreed with that statement, whereas 20% agreed to some extent that this would be possible. There were very minor differences between men and women in their response, but generally people in urban areas were more sceptical, with almost 1 in 3 agreeing to the possibility to bribe the police in order to avoid being arrested. When comparing the counties, respondents in Lofa were found to be relatively more negative than the average as 43% agreed with the statement. It is worth noting that this question was asked to all interviewees, regardless of whether they had actually experienced such a situation themselves.

All in all, 7% of respondents reported that they were specifically asked to give something to a police officer during the last 12 months. This question is slightly different than one of the previous questions since in this case it refers to police officers actively soliciting a bribe. The responses to the other question included - for example - the payment of a fine which in principle can be considered a legitimate reason, at least in most cases. A higher percentage of men (9%) than women (6%) had been asked to give something to a police officer. Among urban residents this was more frequent (12%) than among those living in rural areas (6%). In the counties it varied from 9% in Lofa to 8% in Bong and 6% in Nimba. These results largely correspond to the findings for various related questions presented previously in this section.

As part of the survey, interviewees were also asked how often they had seen police officers abusing people, either verbally or physically (*'cussing or beating'* in Liberian English). A large majority (87%) said 'never', while 7% responded that they had rarely seen this happen. Overall, 4% said they had witnessed abusive behaviour often, and 2% very often. In urban areas 81% indicated they had never seen this, compared to 90% in rural areas.

In response to the question ‘where do you go to complain if the police bother you’, 41% of respondents said they would go to the police station. This option was mentioned by 50% of urban residents. About 37% of people in rural areas said they would go to the police station whereas 30% would take it up with traditional leaders (e.g. town chief, elders). Others said they would take it to court (17% on average), but this was mostly mentioned by urban residents. Among all interviewees 9% was very pessimistic and felt that had nowhere to go to complain in such cases. Women in rural areas were relatively most pessimistic with 13% indicating that in their view they really had no place to go if the police would harass them.

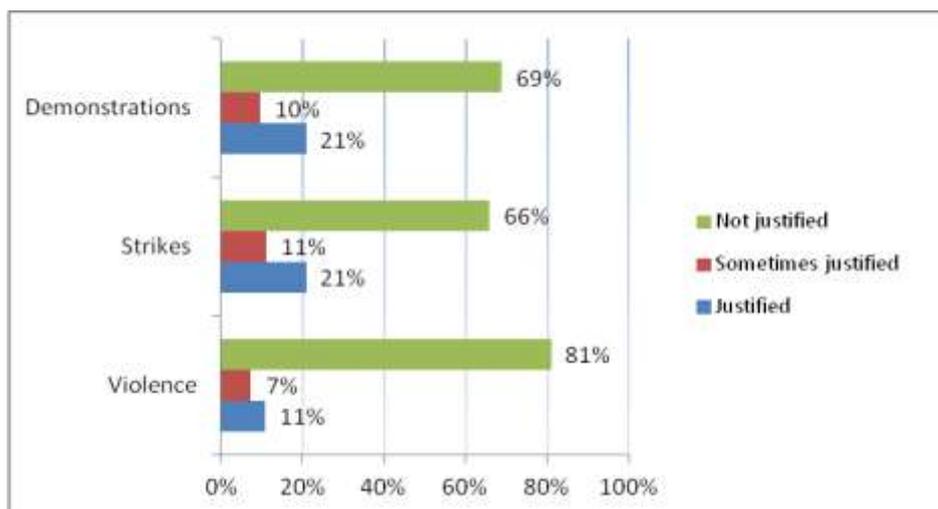
Mob violence and early warning mechanisms

A number of specific questions on mob violence, early warning mechanisms, peace and reconciliation were included in the survey to get a sense of people’s perceptions on such issues. These particular questions had not been asked in the 2012 survey in Bong, Lofa and Nimba, nor in the 2013 survey in the 5 South-Eastern counties. Figure 7 shows the responses to the following question: If Government was disregarding your rights or going against your rights, do you feel that it would be justified if some people would do the following:

- Take part in demonstrations
- Take part in strikes
- If demonstrations or strikes don’t work, would it be justified if some people use force or violence to ensure their rights are respected.

These questions were asked to everyone, regardless of whether people had experienced this. Overall, 21% of all respondents were of the opinion that demonstrations would be justified if the government would disregard people’s rights or going against their rights. In terms of strikes also 21% considered this justified.

Figure 7: Justifiability of demonstrations, strikes and violence, total of 3 counties (%)

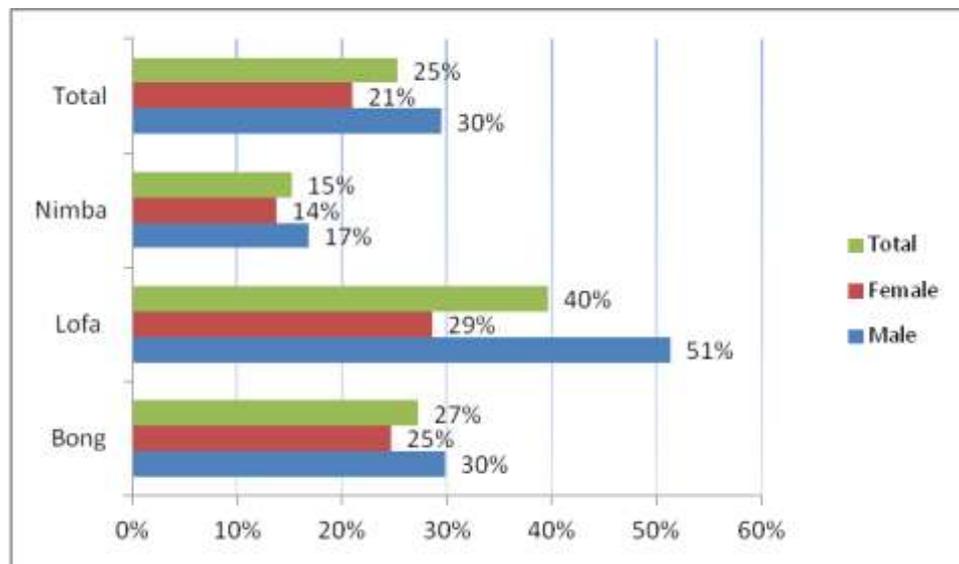


Resorting to violence when demonstrations or strikes did not yield the desired results was justified or completely justified according to 11% of respondents in the 3 counties. At the same time 7% thought this was sometimes justified, while 55% did not find this justifiable and 26% not at all. In general, 13% of men and 9% of women considered the use of violence

justified. More people in urban areas (15%) than in rural areas (10%) found it acceptable. Looking at the 3 counties, those interviewed in Bong (14%) and Lofa (12%) found mob violence to be somewhat more justified than those in Nimba (8%).

Since 2011 an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) mechanism has been set up across 7 counties in Liberia, including Montserrado, Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh and Maryland. These include community-based structures aimed at detecting threats in terms of potential violent conflicts and prevent any escalation by ensuring early response actions by the relevant institutions. In selected communities EWER Focal Points have been trained and 45 of them are currently actively collecting, analyzing, transmitting and reporting on incidents that could lead to violent conflict. During the survey interviewees were asked whether they had heard of such an EWER Focal Point in their district or county. It is worth noting that these Focal Points have not been actively ‘publicized’ in order to safeguard their personal safety given the nature of some of the issues they report on. Overall, 7% of respondents confirmed they heard of a EWER Focal Point, men (10%) more so than women (4%). Generally, urban residents (10%) were more aware of such Focal Points than those living in rural areas (6%). In Bong county 11% of respondents indicated they heard of an EWER Focal Point, as compared to 7% in Nimba and only 2% of those interviewed in Lofa. Out of those who actually heard of an EWER Focal Point 27% said they ever reported an incident that threatened peace and security in their community.

Figure 8: Knowledge of County Peace Committees, by male/female, county and total of 3 counties (%)



County Peace Committees (CPCs) are currently operational in 7 counties. Most of these were set up from 2009 onwards by UNMIL and PBO with the objective to address specific threats, prevent incidents to turn violent and mediate in particular conflicts. As shown in Figure 8, on average 1 in 4 respondents heard about the CPC in their county, men (30%) more so than women (21%), and urban residents (28%) more so than people living in rural areas (24%). It is worth noting that in Lofa as many as 40% of respondents said they heard about the CPC. In Bong this was 27% and in Nimba only 15%. One likely explanation is that the CPC in Lofa is more active than the one in Nimba. Out of those who heard of the CPC 14% said that they or a member of their community ever reported to the CPC an incident that threatened peace and

security in their community. Overall, out of the interviewees who heard of the CPC 30% knew about a local conflict that the CPC was able to resolve. This was highest in Lofa (36%) and relatively lowest in Nimba (23%).

National reconciliation

In order to get a sense of prevailing views on national reconciliation, people were asked what they thought in general should be done to ensure lasting peace and reconciliation in Liberia. Interviewees were asked to mention whatever came first to their mind, and during data processing similar types of responses were categorized. Table 4 shows that across the 3 counties many mentioned ‘uniting the different tribes’ as an important point. Those interviewed in Nimba (33%) mentioned this relatively more frequently than those in Lofa (28%) and Bong (20%).

Table 4: What people think in general should be done to ensure lasting peace and reconciliation in Liberia, by county and total (%)

	Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Unite the different tribes	20%	28%	33%	28%
Forget about the war and move on	7%	15%	8%	10%
Educate the youth so that war will not happen again	8%	10%	10%	10%
Organize Palava Hut talks in communities to reconcile people	8%	5%	10%	8%
Settle all disputes peacefully	11%	4%	7%	7%
Forgive perpetrators of war crimes	6%	3%	10%	7%
Unite the different religious groups	7%	14%	2%	7%
Provide jobs	10%	3%	3%	5%
Provide social services such as education and health care	9%	3%	1%	4%
Reduce poverty and inequality	6%	3%	2%	4%
Strengthen the police	2%	6%	1%	3%
Strengthen the army	3%	4%	1%	2%
Perpetrators of war crimes should apologize	3%	1%	1%	1%
Extend UNMIL’s mandate to stay in Liberia for several more years	1%	1%	2%	1%
Perpetrators of war crimes should be put on trial	1%	1%	1%	1%
Strengthen the judiciary	2%	1%	0%	1%
Stamp out corruption	2%	0%	1%	1%
Provide psycho-social counseling to victims of the war	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note: Interviewees were asked to mention whatever came first to their mind. Similar responses have been categorized. Some respondents gave more than 1 answer to this question so the total slightly exceeds 100%.

Other common responses were ‘to educate the youth so that war will not happen again’ (10%), and to ‘forget about the war and move on’ (10%). With respect to the latter it is worth noting that - overall - respondents in Lofa (15%) mentioned this twice as many times than those in Bong and Nimba. At the same time, interviewees in Nimba more often (10%) specifically indicated that in their opinion perpetrators of war crimes should be forgiven. They also frequently (10%) mentioned the holding of some kind of ‘palava hut talks’ in communities to reconcile people with each other. Uniting the different religious groups was important according to 14% of interviewees in Lofa, whereas this did not come to mind to

most of those in the other 2 counties. Just a few people said the police should be strengthened, up to 6% in Lofa. Only 1% particularly said that perpetrators of war crimes should be put on trial.

A number of responses relate specifically to socio-economic needs such as providing jobs and social services such as education and health care, reducing poverty and inequality, etc. In general there were no major differences between the responses to this question by men and women, and between urban and rural residents. The answers to this question just provide a snapshot of what is on people's minds when asked about ensuring peace and reconciliation. If a number of different options would have been read to the interviewees then the answers might of course have been different. The findings are nevertheless interesting for further analysis.

3.2 Justice

Through a set of 44 questions public perceptions on several issues related to justice were assessed. Specific topics included the settlement of disputes, confidence in and access to the formal and customary/traditional justice systems. People were also asked whether they knew where the nearest court is, the time taken to get there as well as perceived costs of taking a case to court. In addition, questions were asked about whether any information about the justice system and/or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms was being provided to communities and if so by whom. Finally, a series of questions were asked to assess people's basic knowledge of Liberian laws.

Dispute resolution

A total of 14% of all respondents indicated that they or their household had been involved in a dispute (*palava* in Liberian English) during the last 12 months. This was exactly the same among men and women, while it was almost similar in urban (13%) and rural areas (14%). With 18% it was highest in Lofa and lowest in Nimba (11%). In comparison, when asked the same question in 2013 almost twice as many urban residents (30%) in the 5 south-eastern counties reported having been involved in a dispute vis-à-vis 16% of those living in rural areas.

Table 5: Types of disputes respondents or their households were involved in during the last 12 months by category, total of 3 counties (%)

Type of dispute	Percentage of respondents reporting the dispute
Divorce / spousal dispute / loving problem	25%
Domestic violence	19%
Conflict about land	14%
Conflict over noise, disturbances	11%
Debt / repayment of loans / money issues	9%
Child abandonment/neglect	7%
Theft	6%
Inheritance dispute	3%
Other criminal acts (e.g. assault, kidnapping, murder)	2%
Conflict over religious belief	2%
Rape	1%
Employer/Employment related	1%
Breach of Contract	1%
Other dispute	7%

Note: respondents could give multiple answers to this question so the total exceeds 100%.

As can be seen in Table 5, the most common disputes reported were related to *loving problems* (in Liberian English) such as divorce or marriage disputes (25%), domestic violence (19%), land conflicts (14%), disputes about noise (11%) and about money/debts (9%), child neglect (7%) and theft (6%). Respondents could provide multiple answers to this question, although most people gave one answer. Certain types of disputes were mentioned

more frequently by men or women. For example, land disputes were mentioned more often by men (20%) than women (8%). Looking at the 3 counties, land was referred to as a source of conflict over the last year by 9% of respondents in Bong, 13% in Lofa and 19% in Nimba. There were significant differences between urban and rural areas. In Bong county only 6% of urban and 10% of rural residents admitted having been involved in a land dispute recently. However, in Lofa this was 23% vs. 9% and in Nimba 13% vs. 20%.

In general, women (30%) more frequently than men (21%) reported '*loving problems*' and disputes over noise (12% versus 9%). Interestingly, domestic violence was more frequently mentioned by men (22%) than by women (16%). While 9% of respondents in Bong referred to domestic violence as one of the main sources of conflict, this was 25% in Lofa and 23% in Nimba.

Most respondents (31%) who had been involved in a dispute said they first went to the mayor or town chief to settle it. This was the case for 39% of those living in rural areas and only 9% of urban residents. Overall, men (35%) were found to be more likely to go to the mayor/town chief than women (28%). Overall, 20% mentioned they went to elders or the community chairman, including 13% of men and 26% of women. On the other hand, only 12% of all those having been involved in a dispute reported going to the police, with almost twice as many urban residents (19%) doing so compared to rural residents (10%). It ranged from an average of 8% in Bong to 12% in Lofa and 16% in Nimba.

Further analysis showed that 44% of those who went to the police in an effort to settle their major dispute during the last 12 months did so because they perceived it to provide better results, whereas 36% thought the police would be faster in settling the palava than other possible institutions/persons. People who went to elders or the community chairman mainly mentioned as the main reason that in their opinion it would yield better results. Those reverting to the mayor/town chief mostly (42%) said it would be faster as the main reason. In general, proximity was only cited by 1 in 4 people who went to elders/community chairman, so apparently it is not a major determining factor in terms of the various dispute resolution mechanisms or institutions.

When asked whether people had to pay anything to resolve their dispute (among those who reported one to a particular institution or person), 29% of respondents confirmed this. Those who took their case to the Circuit Court (80%), Magistrate Court (63%), Paramount Chief (60%) and Land Commissioner (50%) were most likely to have had to pay something, followed by those who went to the police (48%), mayor/town chief (39%) and the sectional chief (33%). According to 50% of all those who paid something to the mayor/town chief this was an official fee, while 42% of people who went to the police said they paid an official fee to get the dispute resolved. However, in both cases one wonders whether it would be legal to charge whatever kind of 'dispute settlement fee'.

As a follow-up question people were asked whether the dispute was subsequently resolved and whether they were happy with the result. A large majority (77%) responded positively to the first question, and 84% of those whose disputes were resolved said they were satisfied, especially those who went to the mayor/town chief (88%) compared to 67% of those who took their case to the police.

Table 6 provides an overview of the various responses by county regarding the best place (in people's opinion) to solve 7 different types of disputes. This question was asked to all interviewees, regardless of whether or not one had actually experienced such a dispute. Only very minor differences were observed among male and female respondents, or between urban and rural areas.

Table 6: Best way to solve different types of disputes by category, by county and total of 3 counties (%)

		Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Family business	Court	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Police	2%	0%	1%	1%
	Town Chief	13%	14%	6%	10%
	Within the family	84%	85%	91%	87%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	0%	0%	1%	1%
Money business	Court	14%	12%	21%	16%
	Police	15%	19%	17%	14%
	Town Chief	27%	37%	34%	33%
	Within the family	24%	12%	12%	16%
	Within the community	16%	26%	13%	17%
	District Commissioner	0%	1%	0%	1%
	Other	4%	3%	4%	4%
Stealing business	Court	13%	4%	11%	10%
	Police	48%	45%	52%	49%
	Town Chief	24%	41%	25%	29%
	Within the family	6%	2%	3%	4%
	Within the community	6%	5%	4%	5%
	Mob justice	1%	2%	2%	2%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	2%	1%	2%	2%
Hurting palava (injury, fighting)	Court	11%	4%	17%	12%
	Police	53%	30%	55%	48%
	Town Chief	28%	48%	21%	30%
	Within the family	4%	4%	2%	3%
	Within the community	4%	14%	3%	6%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	1%	1%	1%	1%

		Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Land palava	Court	29%	26%	25%	26%
	Police	8%	5%	5%	6%
	Town Chief	26%	45%	24%	30%
	Within the family	3%	2%	2%	2%
	Within the community	2%	3%	10%	6%
	Land Commission	29%	14%	29%	25%
	Land Coordination Centre	1%	3%	1%	1%
	District Commissioner	1%	3%	1%	2%
	Mob justice	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	2%	1%	2%	2%

Rape	Court	29%	23%	57%	40%
	Police	52%	57%	33%	45%
	Town Chief	16%	17%	6%	12%
	Within the family	0%	1%	0%	1%
	Within the community	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Mob justice	0%	0%	0%	0%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	1%	1%	2%	2%

Murder	Court	33%	25%	64%	44%
	Police	52%	62%	30%	45%
	Town Chief	13%	12%	4%	9%
	Within the family	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Within the community	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Mob justice	1%	1%	0%	1%
	District Commissioner	1%	0%	0%	1%
	Other	1%	0%	1%	1%

Regarding ‘family issues’, an overwhelming majority preferred to deal with this within the family (87%), although some (10%) also referred to the town chief. Disputes over money would best be settled by the town chief according to most respondents (33%). As for stealing, most people were of the view that this should be dealt with by the police (49%) or by the town chief (29%).

For ‘hurting palavas’ (Liberian English for disputes involving injuries or fighting) most respondents agreed that these would best be handled by the police (48%) or the town chief (30%). As for land disputes, most people indicated these should preferably be taken to the town chief (30%) while about 1 in 4 mentioned the court (26%) or the Land Commission (25%). Comparing the 3 counties only 14% of people in Lofa referred to the Land Commission while 45% would take a land dispute to the town chief. Regarding rape and murder cases, there was broad agreement that these were to be taken to the police (45%) or to

court (40% and 44% respectively). Overall, very few people indicated that reverting to ‘mob justice’ (taking the law in their own hands) would be the best way to deal with any dispute. Only in cases of stealing (2%) and murder (1%) respondents mentioned mob justice.

It is worth noting that taking a matter to the police will generally not result in a final solution as such, since the police do not have the authority to act as a dispute resolution mechanism in terms of passing binding judgements, in contrast to a court or town chief. Therefore, for those types of dispute where people referred to the police, multiple interpretations are possible. Overall, this may suggest a preference to deal with such disputes through an ‘official’ rather than ‘customary’ way, and one may expect that at least part of the cases brought to the police, if indeed serious, would end up being taken to court. Another point to take into consideration, as noted previously, is that sometimes cases that are initially taken to the local chief may subsequently be referred to the police by the chief, or vice versa, i.e. the police referring cases back to the local chief.

Land disputes

Since the end of 2012 the Land Commission established - on a pilot basis - Land Coordination Centers (LCCs) in previously-identified ‘hotspot’ districts for land disputes. The 5 LCCs are in Zorzor (Lofa), Kakata (Margibi), Gbarnga (Bong), Harper (Maryland) and Ganta (Nimba). The LCCs train local officials and community members, the judiciary, and also women and youth leaders to improve their alternative dispute resolution skills. LCCs undertake specific outreach efforts to promote their services as a place where people can bring their disputes and be referred to trained dispute resolvers within the LCC network. By June 2014, 11% of those interviewed in the 3 counties knew about the LCCs, 13% of men and 9% of women. Overall, this ranged from 16% in Lofa to 12% in Bong and 7% in Nimba. This is not really surprising since most LCCs have only been operational since 2013. Half of those who said they knew what the LCC was, thought it was easy to take a land palava to the LCC. So far, only 6% had actually taken a dispute to the LCC, including 8% in Lofa, 5% in Bong and 2% in Nimba. According to those who had brought a case to the LCCs in the 3 counties, by June 2014 on average 2 out of 3 cases had been resolved. For more details on land disputes see also Table 6.

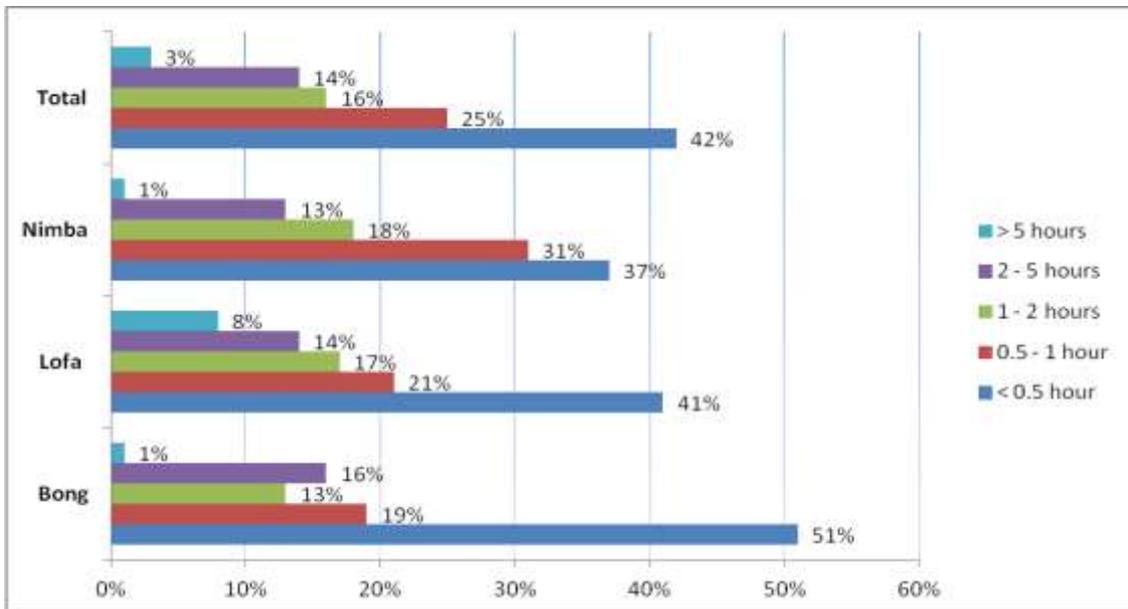
Access to courts

When asked whether they knew where the nearest court was, most respondents (87% of men and 77% of women) said they did. In urban areas (93%) it was higher than in rural areas (87%). While it was 79% in Bong and 72% in Lofa, as much as 90% of respondents in Nimba said they knew where the court was.

Figure 9 shows that 42% of those who confirmed they knew where the nearest court was reported that it would take them less than 30 minutes to reach it, while 25% said between 30 and 60 minutes. Another 16% of respondents estimated it would take between 1 and 2 hours, while 14% said between 2 to 5 hours, and 3% would have to travel more than 5 hours. As expected, almost all urban residents (97%) would take less than an hour to reach a court, as compared to 55% of people living in rural areas. Most courts are in the county capitals. Looking at the 3 counties in Figure 9, it becomes clear that in Nimba the majority of people (63%) would have to travel more than 30 minutes, taking into consideration there are relatively many remote rural areas. The large majority (70%) of all respondents who knew the nearest court would walk there, whereas 26% would use a motorbike taxi (*pen-pen*) and

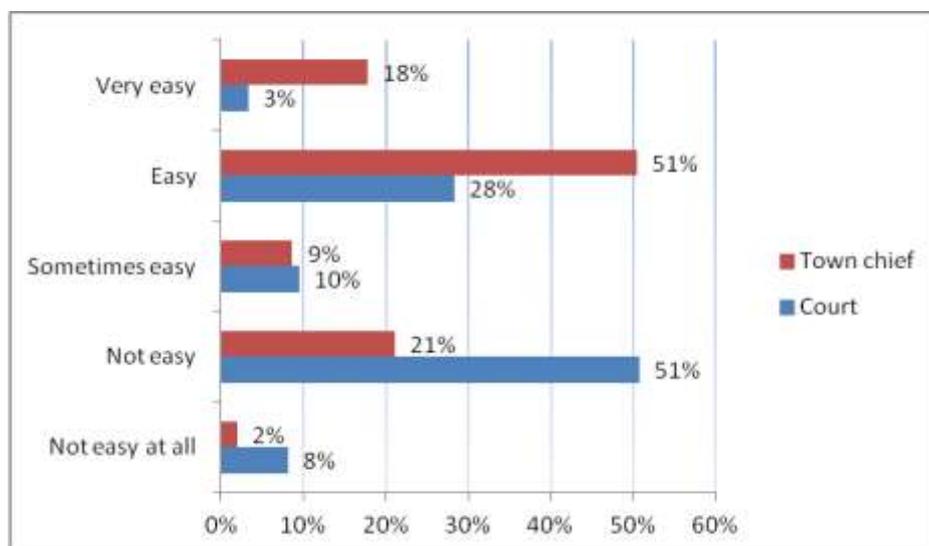
4% a car. Generally more urban (77%) than rural residents (67%) said they would walk, understandable given the relatively shorter distances to reach a court in urban areas.

Figure 9: Time it takes to reach the nearest court, by county and total (%)



In order to get an overview of the perceived access to courts vis-à-vis town chiefs, all interviewees were asked how easy or difficult it was to take a case to the court or to the town chief, regardless whether they had ever done so in practice. Figure 10 illustrates the responses for the two options. As can be seen, most people across the 3 counties thought it was much easier to access the town chief as compared to taking a case to court. A large majority of 69% of respondents indicated that it was easy (51%) or very easy (18%) to bring a case to the town chief. Men were slightly more positive about this than women. In contrast, only 31% thought it was easy or very easy to access the court, with little difference between urban and rural areas. In general, women were somewhat more sceptical than men.

Figure 10: Access to court and town chief, total of 3 counties (%)



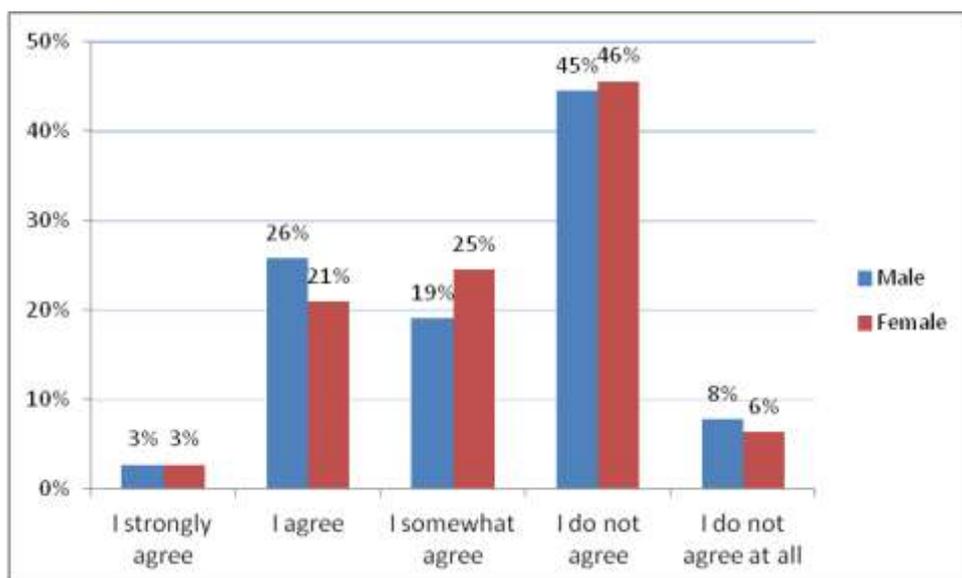
Overall, those interviewed in Bong county (49%) were significantly more positive about the access to courts than those in Lofa (27%) and Nimba (22%). However, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions from this since it may not necessarily be based on knowledge of the actual procedures to go to court, nor based on people’s own experiences in practice. At least people in Bong do seem to have a more positive perception about access to court. Perhaps some people had heard about the opening of the new Circuit Court at the Gbarnga Hub in April 2014. The awareness activities conducted (through the media, PSO, etc.) before, during and after the opening emphasized the role of the Court and that there are no fees to be paid for taking cases to court. It would be worth to continue monitoring people’s knowledge and perceptions of the court system in the counties in the months and years to come. Out of all the respondents in Bong, Lofa and Nimba only 13% said they had actually ever taken a case to court, with very minor differences across the 3 counties. Almost 1 in 3 (30%) had ever taken a case to the town chief; this was highest (38%) in Lofa.

Asked whether people thought the chief - in general - is fair towards both the complainant and the accused when dealing with a dispute, most respondents agreed (50%) or strongly agreed (15%). Men and people in rural areas were most positive about this. Those interviewed in Nimba were particularly convinced the chief is fair (71% agreed or strongly agreed) compared to only 56% in Bong.

Public confidence in the court system

A number of questions further explored people’s views about their confidence in and access to the court system. Overall, 23% agreed and 3% strongly agreed with the statement that the courts treat everyone the same, regardless of one’s gender, tribe, religion, economic or social status. However, at the same time 22% somewhat agreed, 45% did not agree and 7% did not agree at all. Figure 11 shows the different opinions of men and women. This question was asked to all interviewees to get a general idea of people’s views on this issue.

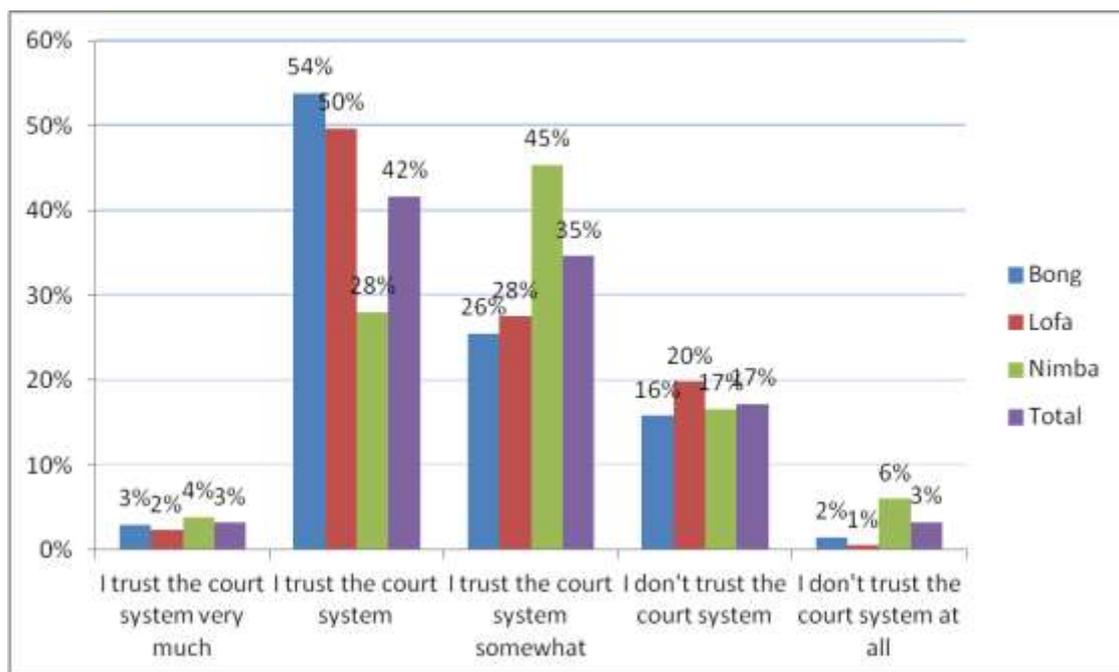
Figure 11: Perception of equal treatment by the courts, by male/female, total of 3 counties (%)



Similar to a previous question pertaining to the police, women were generally found to be somewhat more sceptical about equal treatment by the courts. Those interviewed in Bong generally had a more negative perception, with 57% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with courts treating all people the same. It is worth noting that during a similar survey in the 5 south-eastern counties in 2013 on average 36% of all interviewees disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

In response to a related question, 45% of respondents indicated they trusted the court system or trusted it very much. On the other hand, 20% did not trust the courts or not at all, whereas 35% trusted the court system to some extent. Although there was very little difference between men and women, people living in urban areas were somewhat more sceptical than those in rural areas. As indicated in Figure 12, some variation in responses was observed among the counties, with those in Bong (57%) expressing a fairly high level of trust in the courts compared to only 32% in Lofa, where many (45%) only trusted the courts to some extent. When one compares the overall response to the findings of the June 2012 survey in the same counties, there seems to be at least a slight improvement in perception, from 37% (2012) to 45% (2014) expressing trust in the court system. However, as mentioned before, one has to be careful to draw any firm conclusions from this.

Figure 12: Trust in the court system, by county and total of 3 counties (%)



With regard to a specific type of case, a majority of respondents namely 57% of women and 64% of men were of the opinion that women who have been victims of rape, sexual violence or other gender-based violence (SGBV) are able to receive a fair hearing in court. Among urban residents this was slightly higher than among those living in rural areas. Whether or not this relatively positive perception is also reflected in reality remains to be seen, and it would be interesting to take a closer look at the outcome of these types of cases in court. However, looking at the number of cases, according to data from the SGBV Crimes Unit based at the Gbarnga Hub, the year 2013 saw a total of 15 trials on SGBV cases in Bong, Lofa and Nimba

counties combined.⁵ This may seem like a limited number, but in fact this was the first time so many SGBV cases were prosecuted in the courts in this region. In 2014 so far, a total of 7 SGBV cases were prosecuted during the February and May Terms of Court.⁶ At least it appears to be a fairly encouraging sign that a majority think that SGBV victims are able to receive a fair hearing in court.

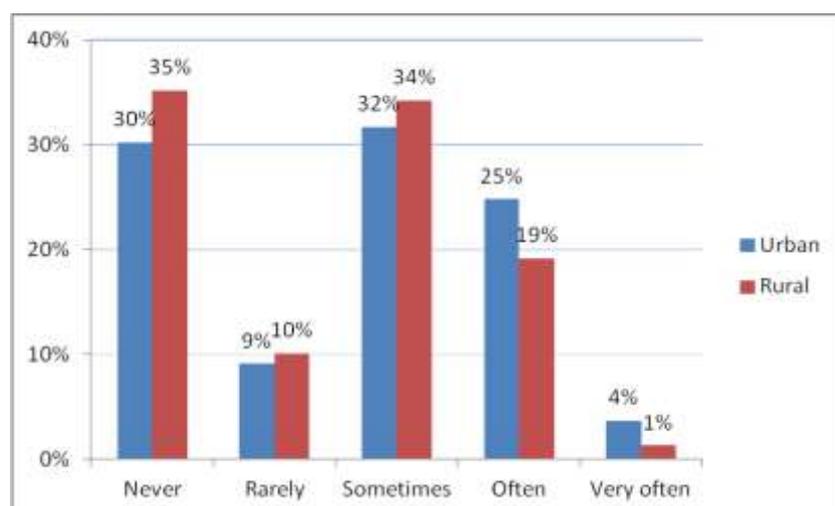
In response to the question ‘When people take others to court, what do you think they want the court to do?’ the vast majority (72%) said to ‘solve a dispute’. A total of 8% of all respondents thought people would want the court to condemn the other person to prison, whereas another 8% said they probably wanted to give the other person a punishment other than jail, and 9% said ‘to make the other person pay compensation for stolen or destroyed goods’.

Costs of the court system

One of the factors regarding accessibility to court is the actual or perceived cost. An overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) indicated that in their opinion going to court was too expensive (56%) or far too expensive (28%). In terms of the 3 counties, 78% of those interviewed in Bong felt this way, whereas 83% in Lofa and 89% in Nimba were of the opinion that going to court was unaffordable.

In response to the question, asked to all interviewees, how often they think crime victims have to pay somebody to file a complaint in court, 28% said sometimes, whereas 23% thought this would happen often and 4% said very often. While there were no major differences in views between men and women, people in Lofa and Nimba were considerably more sceptical than those in Bong.

Figure 13: Perception of the frequency of people avoiding jail or receiving less punishment by paying somebody at the court, by urban/rural, total of 3 counties (%)



⁵ See Justice & Security Joint Programme (JSJP) Progress Report for January-June 2014, p. 12-13.

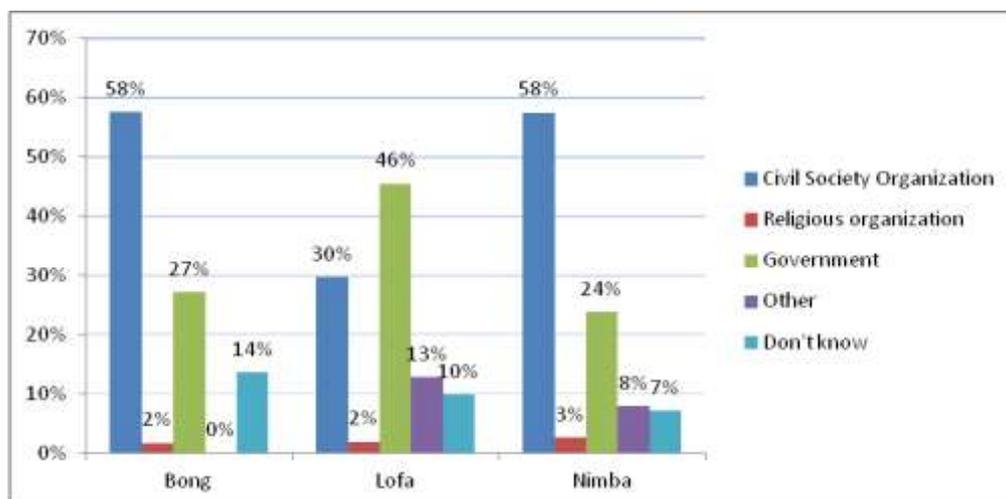
⁶ Ibid., p. 12-13.

As becomes clear from Figure 13, there was a wide range of views regarding the question ‘how often does it happen that people can avoid going to jail or get less punishment by paying somebody at the court?’ When disaggregating the findings by urban-rural, a total of 29% of urban residents thought that this would happen often or very often, compared to 20% of those living in rural areas. Generally, about 1 in 3 respondents felt that this would happen sometimes or never. As with the previous question, people in Lofa (26%) and Nimba (27%) were significantly more sceptical than those in Bong (14%) in terms of their perception of possible corrupt practices at the courts.

Overall, 18% of respondents reported that sometimes organizations are coming to their community to teach about the justice system or how to better solve disputes. Men (21%) had experienced this more often than women (15%). In rural areas this was happening according to 19% of interviewees versus 17% in urban areas. There were quite some differences between the counties in terms of these kinds of visits, with only 12% of respondents in Bong reporting this compared to 17% in Nimba and 26% in Lofa. In Bong people in urban areas had experienced this twice as many times as those in rural areas. In Nimba it was exactly the other way around.

Figure 14 shows that in most instances in Bong and Nimba (58% in both cases) civil society organizations (CSOs) came to the communities. In Lofa mostly government organizations/agencies 46% visited communities to provide information about the justice system or how best to settle disputes. In Bong and Nimba 27% and 24% of respondents respectively reported government representatives coming to their communities. On average only 2% of interviewees mentioned religious organizations. Upon further analysis of the ‘other’ responses, it became clear that many were in fact CSOs.

Figure 14: Type of organizations coming to communities to teach about the justice system or how to better solve disputes, by county (%)



Across the 3 counties, on average urban residents more frequently (51%) mentioned visits by CSOs than people living in rural areas (46%). Generally, women more so than men (52% versus 44%) reported visits by CSOs. Men on the other hand more frequently (35% versus 29%) reported government representatives coming to the community to provide information and awareness about the justice system and/or dispute settlement. The variance in responses might possibly be explained by the extent to which men and women are invited by specific

organizations (CSOs, government officials, etc.) or by other factors, such as whether they are at home or for example working their land (in rural areas) at the time when organisations come to their community.

Knowledge of Liberian laws

In order to assess people’s general knowledge of Liberian laws, a series of questions were asked to all interviewees, whereby everyone was invited to say either yes or no, regardless of whether they knew the answer for sure. While this is just a snapshot, it nevertheless provides a general idea of the extent to which people are familiar with some of the key legal provisions in the country.

As Table 7 shows, the majority of respondents demonstrated a fairly good basic knowledge of Liberian laws. Most people (88%) correctly agreed with the statement that according to Liberian law a woman has the right to become owner of property after the death of her husband or family member. A large majority also knew that under Liberian law a man needs to support his outside child (90%), that if a man forces his wife or woman to have sex then it is considered rape (85%), and that beating one’s wife or woman is a crime (86%).

Table 7: Knowledge of Liberian laws, by county and total of 3 counties (%)

Knowledge (% yes)	Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Is it true that according to Liberian law a woman has the right to become owner of property after the death of her husband or family member?	85%	84%	92%	88%
Is it true that according to Liberian law it is good to judge people by sassywood?	17%	14%	10%	13%
Is it true that according to Liberian law when you carry any case to the police you have to pay something to the police?	23%	27%	17%	18%
Is it true that according to Liberian law when you carry any criminal case to the court you have to pay something to the judge?	24%	23%	37%	30%
Is it true that according to Liberian law a man needs to support his outside child?	91%	81%	96%	90%
Is it true that according to Liberian law if a man forces his wife or woman to have sex, then it is rape?	79%	79%	92%	85%
Is it true that according to Liberian law beating your wife or woman is a crime?	81%	88%	89%	86%

On the other hand, still 13% of interviewees, incorrectly, stated that Liberian law supports trial through *sassywood*.⁷ Overall, 18% thought one has to pay something when you take a case to the police, while 30% said one needs to pay something to the judge when carrying a

⁷ The term ‘sassywood’ is used to describe a ‘trial by ordeal’ process to settle cases of theft of property, death or witchcraft/sorcery. The methods include having the alleged perpetrator drink a mixture or brew made from indigenous plants, which, if regurgitated, shows innocence, or putting the alleged perpetrator in contact with red hot metal, with a burn or retraction indicating guilt. See Ezekiel Pajibo, *Traditional Justice Mechanisms: The Liberian Case*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IIDEA (2008).

criminal case to the court. In general there were no major differences between the responses by men and women, but on certain issues men were somewhat better informed than women. In the same vein, people living in urban areas were somewhat more familiar with the various laws than those in rural areas.

Comparing the 3 counties, the findings show – for example - that those interviewed in Nimba seemed to be slightly more acquainted with Liberian law, except for the question on whether or not there is need to pay the judge for taking a criminal case to court: 37% incorrectly agreed with this. In some cases respondents in Lofa demonstrated a somewhat more limited knowledge of Liberian law than the average for the 3 counties, for example with as much as 27% being of the opinion that one has to pay something when taking a case to the police.

When comparing the findings with the 2011 Talking Peace Survey ⁸, which included the same questions, it is interesting to note that the results are very similar. While overall people apparently have a reasonably good knowledge of some of the key laws in Liberia, which is positive, on the other hand there does not seem to have been much improvement in terms of people's 'legal knowledge' over the last 3 years. Of particular concern is the fact that still quite a number of interviewees seem to believe that trial by ordeal ('*sassywood*') is acceptable, and that fees have to be paid to the police and judges simply for taking a case to the police and court respectively.

As a follow-up question people were asked where they should report a case of rape or sexual abuse of a woman or a man. While under Liberian law such cases should be reported to the police or a court, 37% of interviewees said they would report it to traditional authorities, such as chiefs or elders, who are legally not authorized to take on such cases. About 1 in 10 respondents mentioned they would report such a case to family members. Overall, 58% correctly referred to the police, whereas 17% and 22% respectively mentioned the Circuit Court and Magistrate Court. Generally, men and people living in urban areas were more likely to provide a correct response to this question. It should be noted that respondents could give multiple answers.

⁸ Vinck P, Pham PN, Kreutzer T (2011), *Talking Peace: A Population-Based Survey on Attitudes about Security, Dispute Resolution, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Liberia*, Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley, p. 64-65.

3.4 Regional Justice and Security Hub

Knowledge of the Hub

As part of the survey, people were asked whether they had heard about the Regional Justice and Security Hub. As indicated in Table 8 below, 12% confirmed they heard about the Hub. This varied from 21% in Bong county to 11% in Lofa and only 7% in Nimba. In general, more men (16%) than women (8%) had heard about the Hub, and 22% of urban residents compared to 9% in rural areas. Out of those who acknowledged they heard about the Hubs, 77% knew the location namely Gbarnga. This was lowest in Lofa with 70%, including 66% of men and 79% of women.

Since the Hub is located in Gbarnga it is understandable that people in Bong county are relatively more familiar with the Hub. Since targeted outreach and communication about the Hub only started in the course of 2013 and as the 3 counties cover a vast area, the relatively low level of knowledge is perhaps not surprising, although it clearly emphasizes that much more needs to be done in terms of raising awareness.

Table 8: Knowledge about the Regional Justice and Security Hub, by county and total of 3 counties (%)

	%	Bong	Lofa	Nimba	Total
Heard about the Hub		21%	11%	7%	12%
If yes, knows that the Hub is in Gbarnga		79%	70%	82%	77%
If yes, men who know that the Hub is in Gbarnga		82%	66%	84%	79%
If yes, women who know that the Hub is in Gbarnga		72%	79%	77%	75%

The majority of people had heard about the Hub through local radio (44%), UNMIL radio (21%) or from relatives, friends or neighbours (22%). Some also mentioned they were informed by the local police (3%), by LNP/PSU officers who came to the community on patrol (3%), during an outreach meeting organized by the Public Services Office (PSO) from the Hub (3%), or through a Civil Society Organization or NGO (2%).

When asked what they thought the Regional Hub was, 89% of respondents across the 3 counties said they did not know. This varied from 85% among men to 94% among women. The percentage of those not knowing was slightly lower in Bong (84%) than in Lofa (88%) and Nimba (94%). Overall, only 3% could more or less accurately describe what the Hub was. This was not significantly more so in Bong (4%) than in the other 2 counties (2% each). Other responses referred to a court (4%), police barracks (3%), government offices (2%) or a training centre (1%).

In response to a related question, 91% of interviewees could not mention any services provided by the Hub. Again, this was slightly lower in Bong (84%) than in Lofa (92%) and Nimba (96%). Overall, across the 3 counties, 3% of respondents, mostly in Bong, knew about the Circuit Court, which was in fact only officially opened in April 2014. About 2% mentioned regular police services by the LNP, which is incorrect, whereas only 1% referred to the Police Support Unit (PSU/LNP) rapid response to serious security incidents and 1%

mentioned training for security and justice personnel taking place at the Hub. Less than 1% mentioned legal support, referrals or services provided by the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Crimes Unit. While of course most of these services have not been operational for very long, it does show that much more awareness and outreach would be needed if people are to really benefit from this kind of support.

Only 3% had ever physically been to the Gbarnga Regional Hub, ranging from 5% of interviewees in Bong to 3% in Lofa and 2% in Nimba. Men were generally twice as likely to have visited the Hub as women. Most of those who had been to the Hub went once. The main reason was to get information about the services provided (46%), followed by a wide variety of other reasons, from bringing a case to the Circuit Court to witnessing the opening ceremony in 2013, attending a workshop or visiting friends or relatives at the Hub.

Access to the Hub

A few questions were asked in order to get a sense of how easy or difficult it is to access the Hub. Note that in terms of numbers among those who were interviewed only very few people had actually visited the Hub, so the findings are to be interpreted with some caution. A majority of those who came to the Gbarnga Hub found it easy (60%) or even very easy (15%) to find. Actually reaching the Hub from their community was considered easy or very easy (52% and 10% respectively), although 15% thought it was hard and 8% found it very hard. Once at the Hub, according to 71% it was easy to find someone to help them, whereas 6% found it very easy. Some people from Lofa and especially Nimba admitted however that it was hard or a bit hard for them to find the appropriate person or institution they came to see.

Services provided by the Hub

All the interviewees were read a list of all the various services provided by the Hub, and asked which one(s) they had ‘encountered’ or benefitted from in the last 12 months, ranging from police patrols and border patrols to legal support and other services. For the 3 counties combined on average 73% said none of these. With regard to the Border Patrol Unit (BPU) of the Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization (BIN), 14% in Bong, 38% in Lofa and 21% in Nimba said they had seen them in their community at least once during the last 12 months. Apart from seeing the police, not many people mentioned any of the other services, except some interviewees in Bong county where 5% had received information or advice from a human rights monitor, and 3% received support from the SGBV Crimes Unit. Less than 1% received support from a Public Defender or a County Attorney for a legal case.

Overall, 11% of respondents in Bong, 17% in Lofa and 13% in Nimba said a Police Support Unit (PSU) confidence patrol had come to their community during the last 12 months. However, in certain instances there might have been some confusion as to the difference between the local LNP and PSU officers, although the interviewers made an effort to explain this as clearly as possible. When looking at the number of PSU confidence patrols conducted from the Gbarnga Hub, according to the January-June 2014 JSJP Progress Report a total of 13 PSU patrols were conducted in the first half of 2014, covering 74 communities: 27 in Bong, 21 in Lofa and 26 in Nimba county.⁹ This includes patrols in areas not covered by the survey sample. Overall, one needs to take into account that the 3 counties cover quite a vast surface, and the confidence patrols only effectively started in the course of 2013.

⁹ See JSJP Progress Report for January-June 2014, p. 17-18.

Further analysis showed that according to 4% of respondents in Bong, 7% in Lofa and 1% in Nimba the PSU had come to their community to address a serious security incident (e.g. mob violence, riots, violent demonstrations) during the last 12 months. Of those interviewees who had seen the PSU address a serious security incident in their community 79% was satisfied, with 59% satisfied and 20% very satisfied, with how the PSU addressed the incident. This varied from 63% in Bong to 89% in Lofa and 80% in Nimba. PSU records showed that in 2013 PSU officers, from their base at the Gbarnga Hub, responded to 24 security incidents, whereas during the period January-June 2014 a total of 14 serious incidents in the 3 counties were responded to.¹⁰

According to this survey, 19% of interviewees who had seen the PSU in their community during the last 12 months said that they the PSU scared them as well as other people when they came to their community, whether on patrol or to address a security incident. In 28% of cases the PSU talked with them when they came by, and in 46% of the cases they talked with other people in the community. A large majority of 79% said that the PSU made them feel safer when they came to their community. Across the counties this was true according to 72% in Bong, 82% in Lofa and 83% in Nimba. All in all, 60% understood why the PSU had come to their community. This was almost the same in the 3 counties, although slightly more men than women said they understood, and in rural areas only 53% on average indicated they knew why the PSU came to their community. In that respect there still seems to be room for better communication and more outreach. Further monitoring and research would be useful in terms of identifying the impact of the PSU patrols and their interventions.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 17

4. Conclusions

This public perception survey was conducted in the 3 counties of Bong, Lofa and Nimba to assess people's views on a range of issues regarding justice, security and national reconciliation in Liberia. A total of 1,500 interviews were conducted from 6 to 19 June 2014. A random stratified cluster sampling method was applied to ensure the findings are representative of the population at the county level. The survey was designed and coordinated by the Peacebuilding Office (PBO) at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), and implemented with technical assistance from the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS).

Security

In the 3 counties, a majority of interviewees indicated they felt safe (70%) or very safe (10%) in their communities. Overall, 28% of respondents said that in their view the security situation had improved compared to the previous year, whereas 67% felt it had remained the same and 5% said it had worsened. People living in urban areas were generally somewhat more sceptical. On average, 29% of all respondents mentioned the police as the main security provider in their community. Among urban residents this was more than three times as high as for those living in rural areas. However, many people across the 3 counties mentioned community watch teams (30%) and traditional authorities (26%) as primary security providers. At the same time, 9% of respondents felt that nobody provided any security, whereas 10% relied on themselves or their family. More community policing by the LNP (Liberia National Police), where possible, may be one of the actions worth considering going forward.

Access to the police

The police presence in communities varied significantly by county. Overall, 21% of respondents indicated they rarely saw the police, while 56% had never seen a police officer in their community during the last 3 months. A majority of people (82%) said they knew where the nearest police station was, while 52% knew how to contact the police. However, a significant urban-rural divide could be noted since almost all urban residents would take less than an hour to reach a police station, as compared to 43% of those in rural areas. About 1 in 3 rural residents (32%) had to travel for more than 2 hours, with variations depending on the county and the specific location. More LNP presence in rural areas seems to be necessary.

Public confidence in the police

While a majority of respondents (60% of men and 54% of women) across the 3 counties said they trusted the police in their area, 43% of all interviewees indicated having little or no trust in the police. In terms of equal treatment, a significant percentage (51%) disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed that the police treat everyone the same, regardless of one's gender, tribe, religion, economic or social status. Women were generally found to be more sceptical. This shows the need for more concerted efforts in enhancing people's confidence in the police, through improving overall performance in terms of the quality of services provided and ensuring that the police treat all citizens with respect and integrity.

Performance of the police

According to the survey findings, 12% of people interviewed in the 3 counties had been the victim of a crime within the last 12 months, and 78% reported this to someone outside their family. Of those, 44% went to the police and 48% reported it to the local chief or elders. Overall, the percentage of crime victims was higher in urban areas (15%) than in rural areas (10%). Robbery or burglary was the most common type of crime. Most of those who had reported a crime were more satisfied with the response by the chief or elders (77%) compared to the police (56%). All in all, 33% indicated they were dissatisfied and 7% even very dissatisfied with the response by the police.

On average, 9% of all interviewees confirmed they had given something to the police during the last 12 months. This happened more in urban (15%) than in rural areas (7%). As for the reason why, common responses included a ‘transportation fee’ (19%), paying something to file a complaint (18%), for the police to investigate their case (18%) or a fine they had to pay (11%). Almost half of all respondents (46%) agreed fully or partly that it is possible to avoid arrest by offering ‘*small thing*’ to a police officer. Generally, people in urban areas (1 in 3) were more convinced about the possibility to bribe the police to avoid arrest. All in all, 7% of respondents reported that they were specifically asked to pay something to a police officer during the last year. In terms of abusive behaviour, across the 3 counties only 4% of interviewees said they had often seen police officers abusing people, either verbally or physically (*‘cussing or beating’*), while 2% indicated having witnessed this very often.

Mob violence and early warning mechanisms

Overall, 21% of all respondents were of the opinion that demonstrations would be justified if the government would disregard people’s rights or going against their rights. In terms of strikes also 21% considered this justified. Resorting to violence when demonstrations or strikes did not yield the desired results was justified or completely justified according to 11% of respondents in the 3 counties. At the same time 7% thought this was sometimes justified, while 55% did not find this justifiable and 26% not at all. In general, 13% of men and 9% of women considered the use of violence justified. More people in urban areas (15%) than in rural areas (10%) found it acceptable.

County Peace Committees (CPCs) are currently operational in Bong, Lofa, Nimba and 4 other counties. Established to prevent incidents from turning violent and to in conflicts, about 1 in 4 respondents in Bong, Lofa and Nimba had heard about the CPC in their county, men (30%) more so than women (21%). Out of those who heard of the Committee, 14% said that they or a member of their community ever reported to the CPC an incident that threatened peace and security. Overall, out of the interviewees who heard of the CPC 30% knew about a local conflict that the CPC was able to resolve. This was highest in Lofa (36%) and relatively lowest in Nimba (23%).

National reconciliation

When people were asked what they thought in general should be done to ensure lasting peace and reconciliation in Liberia, at least 1 in 4 interviewees (28%) mentioned ‘uniting the different tribes’. Other common responses were ‘to educate the youth so that war will not happen again’ (10%), and to ‘forget about the war and move on’ (10%). Some people (8%) also mentioned organizing ‘palava hut talks’ in communities to reconcile people with each

other , forgive perpetrators of war crimes (7%) and unite the different religious groups (7%). Relatively few interviewees (5% or less) referred specifically to providing jobs and social services, e.g. education and health care, or reducing poverty and inequality, as a possible way to ensure continued peace.

Justice

Dispute resolution

A total of 14% of respondents in Bong, Lofa and Nimba indicated that they or their household had been involved in a dispute (*'palava'* in Liberian English) during the last 12 months. The most common disputes reported were divorce or marriage disputes (25%), domestic violence (19%), land conflicts (14%), disputes about noise (11%) and about money/debts (9%), child neglect (7%) and theft (6%).

Most respondents (31%) who had been involved in a dispute said they first went to the mayor or town chief to settle it, men (35%) more so than women (28%). On the other hand, only 12% reported going to the police, with almost twice as many urban residents (19%) doing so compared to people living in rural areas (10%). Further analysis showed that 44% of those who went to the police did so because they perceived it to provide better results, whereas 36% thought the police would be faster in settling the dispute than other possible institutions/persons. In general, proximity was only cited by 1 in 4 people who went to elders or the community chairman, so apparently it is not a major determining factor in terms of the various dispute resolution mechanisms or institutions. An average of 29% of respondents confirmed they had to pay something to resolve their dispute.

All interviewees in the 3 counties were asked about the best place to solve 7 different types of disputes. As for 'family issues', 87% preferred to deal with this within the family, while disputes over money would best be settled by the town chief according to most respondents (33%). As for stealing, most people were of the view that this should be dealt with by the police (49%) or by the town chief (29%). For *'hurting palavas'* (disputes involving injuries or fighting) 48% of respondents indicated that these would best be handled by the police or else the town chief (30%). According to many people land disputes should preferably be taken to the town chief (30%) while 26% mentioned the court and 25% referred to the Land Commission. Regarding rape and murder cases, there was broad agreement that these were to be taken to the police (45%) or to court (40% and 44% respectively). Overall, very few people indicated that reverting to *'mob justice'* (taking the law in their own hands) would be the best way to deal with any dispute. Only in cases of stealing (2%) and murder (1%) respondents mentioned mob justice.

Land disputes

By June 2014, 11% of those interviewed in the 3 counties knew about the Land Coordination Centers (LCCs) that have been established by the Land Commission - on a pilot basis - in previously-identified 'hotspot' districts for land disputes. The relatively limited awareness can be explained by the fact that most LCCs have only been operational since 2013. The 5 LCCs are in Zorzor (Lofa), Kakata (Margibi), Gbarnga (Bong), Harper (Maryland) and Ganta (Nimba). The LCCs train local officials and community members, the judiciary, and also women and youth leaders to improve their alternative dispute resolution skills. Half of those who said they knew what the LCC was, thought it was easy to take a land palava to the LCC.

So far, only 6% had actually taken a dispute to the LCC, including 8% in Lofa, 5% in Bong and 2% in Nimba. According to those who had brought a case to the LCCs in the 3 counties, by June 2014 on average 2 out of 3 cases had been resolved.

Access to courts

A large majority of people (82%) indicated they knew where the nearest court was. However, whereas almost all urban residents would take less than an hour to reach a court, usually located in the county capitals, for many people in rural areas (45%) it meant travelling for more than an hour, especially in a county like Lofa with many remote areas. Access to courts was considered difficult by many respondents, with 31% indicating that in their view it was not easy or not easy at all to take a case to court, regardless of whether they had ever done so in practice. Overall, women were somewhat more sceptical than men in terms of perceived access to courts. In contrast, a majority (69%) of respondents felt it was easy or very easy to bring a case to the town chief. One of the factors regarding accessibility to court is the actual or perceived cost. An overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) indicated that in their opinion going to court was too expensive (56%) or far too expensive (28%).

Public confidence in the court system

In terms of trust in the court system, 45% of respondents said they trusted the court system or trusted it very much. On the other hand, 20% did not trust the courts or not at all, whereas 35% trusted the court system to some extent. Overall, 26% agreed or strongly agreed that the courts treat everyone the same. However, at the same time 22% somewhat agreed, 45% did not agree and 7% did not agree at all. With regard to a specific type of case, 57% of women and 64% of men were of the opinion that women who have been victims of rape, sexual violence or gender-based violence (SGBV) are able to receive a fair hearing in court. Whether or not this relatively positive perception is also reflected in reality remains to be seen, and it would be interesting to take a closer look at the outcome of these types of cases in court.

Across the 3 counties, on average 28% of those interviewed said that in their view crime victims sometimes have to pay somebody to file a complaint, whereas 23% thought this happened often and 4% said very often. A total of 34% of respondents indicated that sometimes people can avoid going to jail or get less punishment by paying somebody at the court. According to 21% this happens often or very often (2%).

Outreach and knowledge of Liberian laws

With regard to outreach activities, 18% of respondents in the 3 counties reported that sometimes organizations are coming to their community to teach about the justice system or how to better solve disputes. In most instances (47%) these were civil society organizations (CSOs), while in 33% of cases people came from government organizations/agencies or from religious organizations (2%). There were quite some differences between the counties in terms of these kinds of outreach activities, with only 12% of respondents in Bong reporting such visits compared to 17% in Nimba and 26% in Lofa.

In order to assess people's general knowledge of Liberian laws, a series of specific questions were asked to all interviewees. While the majority of respondents demonstrated a fairly good knowledge of some of the key legal provisions in the country, which is positive, it is also

worth noting that the findings were very similar to a comparable type of survey conducted in 2011, so there does not seem to have been much improvement in terms of people's 'legal knowledge' over the last 3 years. Of particular concern is that still 13% of interviewees seem to believe that trial by ordeal ('*sassywood*') is acceptable, and that fees have to be paid to the police (18%) and judges (30%) simply for taking a case to the police and court respectively. Some interesting differences were observed between the 3 counties.

Regional Justice and Security Hub

Knowledge of the Hub

Overall, 12% of respondents confirmed they had heard about the Regional Justice and Security Hub. This varied from 21% in Bong county to 11% in Lofa and only 7% in Nimba. In general, more men (16%) than women (8%) had heard about the Hub, and 22% of urban residents compared to 9% in rural areas. Out of those who knew of the Hub a majority heard about it through local radio (44%), UNMIL radio (21%) or from relatives, friends or neighbours (22%). Out of those who acknowledged they heard about the Hubs, 77% knew the location namely Gbarnga. Since targeted outreach and communication about the Hub only started in the course of 2013 and as the 3 counties cover a vast area, the relatively low level of knowledge is perhaps not surprising, although it clearly emphasizes that more needs to be done in terms of raising awareness.

When asked what they thought the Regional Hub was, 89% of respondents across the 3 counties said they did not know. This was slightly lower in Bong (84%) than in Lofa (88%) and Nimba (94%). Overall, only 3% could more or less accurately describe what the Hub was. In response to a related question, 91% of interviewees could not mention any services provided by the Hub. Again, this was slightly lower in Bong (84%) than in Lofa (92%) and Nimba (96%). Overall, across the 3 counties, 3% of respondents, mostly in Bong, knew about the Circuit Court, which was officially opened only in April 2014. Less than 1% of interviewees mentioned legal support, referrals or services provided by the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Crimes Unit. While most of these services have of course not been operational for very long, only since the course of 2013, it shows that much more awareness and outreach would be needed if people are to benefit from this kind of support. Only 3% of those interviewed had ever physically been to the Gbarnga Regional Hub, ranging from 5% of interviewees in Bong to 3% in Lofa and 2% in Nimba. The main reason was to get information about the services provided (46%).

Access to the Hub

Most people who visited the Gbarnga Hub, a very limited number of interviewees, found it easy (60%) or even very easy (15%) to find. Actually reaching the Hub from their community was considered easy or very easy (52% and 10% respectively), although 15% thought it was hard and 8% found it very hard. Once at the Hub, according to 71% it was easy to find someone to help them, whereas 6% found it very easy.

Services provided by the Hub

With regard to the Border Patrol Unit (BPU) of the Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization (BIN), 14% in Bong, 38% in Lofa and 21% in Nimba said they had seen them in their community at least once during the last 12 months. Overall, 11% of respondents in

Bong, 17% in Lofa and 13% in Nimba said a Police Support Unit (PSU) confidence patrol had come to their community during the last 12 months. However, one needs to take into account that the 3 counties cover quite a vast surface, and the confidence patrols only effectively started in the course of 2013.

Further analysis showed that according to 4% of respondents in Bong, 7% in Lofa and 1% in Nimba the PSU had come to their community to address a serious security incident (e.g. mob violence, riots, violent demonstrations) during the last 12 months. Of those interviewees who had seen the PSU address a serious security incident in their community 79% was satisfied with how the PSU addressed the incident. This varied from 63% in Bong to 89% in Lofa and 80% in Nimba. A large majority of 79% said that the PSU made them feel safer when they came to their community. All in all, 60% understood why the PSU had come to their community. In that respect there still seems to be room for better communication and more outreach. Further monitoring and research would be useful in terms of identifying the impact of the PSU patrols and their interventions.

Overall, the findings of this survey suggest that all key stakeholders in the justice and security sector, including Government, the Judiciary, traditional leaders as well as civil society organisations with support from the UN and other international development partners, will need to further step up efforts to continue improving people's access to and confidence in the police and the justice system. This means enhancing the quality, responsiveness and efficiency of the various justice and security service providers. Adequate capacity in terms of human and material resources at various levels is essential to ensure that key functions are performed in a transparent and accountable manner. In addition, more outreach and awareness raising by Government and civil society organisations are necessary to ensure people know how to access the justice system and how best to resolve various types of disputes, including through alternative and/or customary dispute resolution mechanisms at local level where applicable. The survey also brought to the fore some interesting perceptions on national reconciliation across Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties. Hopefully the findings of this survey can assist key stakeholders in the justice and security sector and beyond to identify specific actions in the short, medium and long term, taking into consideration the sometimes significant differences in perceptions and experiences between the various counties, rural and urban areas as well as between men and women.

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