

DEEPENING DEMOCRACY IN SIERRA LEONE

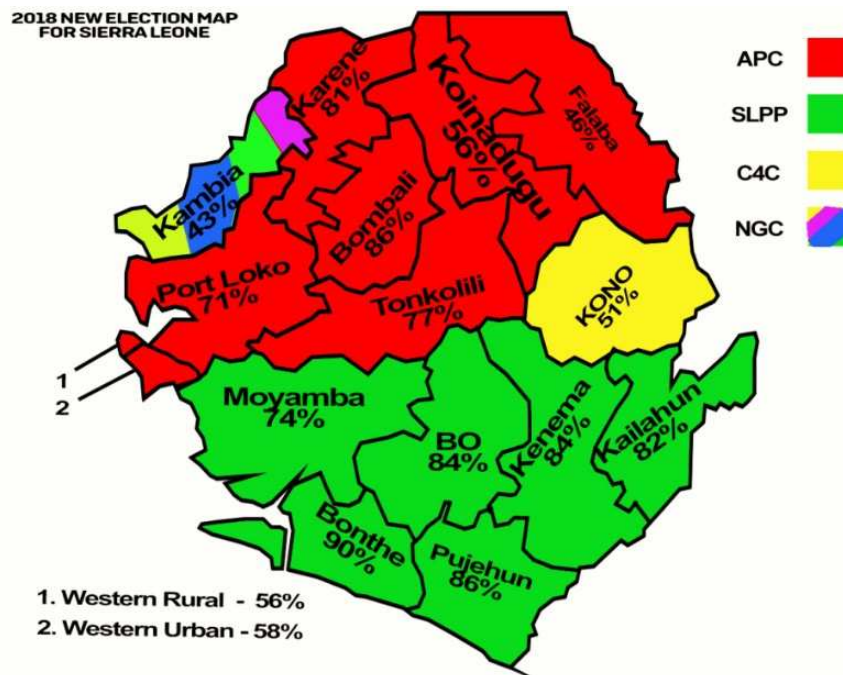
Changing Attitudes and Perceptions About Politics And Elections

A report prepared by:
Institute for Governance Reform: www.igrsl.org



DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE:

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT POLITICS AND ELECTIONS



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Foreword

I am pleased to present this third iteration of the citizens Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP III) study report as part of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium project for free, fair and peaceful elections in Sierra Leone with funding from DFID. The KAP studies are intended to gauge citizens behaviors, perceptions and practices towards democratic consolidation and the March 7 general elections in Sierra Leone.

Elections are deeply fraught in Sierra Leone. Well documented evidences of post-independence elections supported tales of violence, electoral malpractices, vote buying, lack of trust in security institutions, international observers and elections management bodies, and sustained marginalization of sections of the society. The two dominant political parties: The All Peoples Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) are divided on ethno-regional lines and the winner-takes-all culture has been a driving feature of resource distribution. This situation has resulted in resentment among affected population and lack of trust in state institutions.

During the March 7, 2018, general elections, our Consortium sought to work with others to change the narrative. With 16 political parties vying for the highest office in the land, citizens were presented the opportunity to replace the Ernest Bai Koroma administration through meaningful and peaceful election. Over 84 percent of Sierra Leoneans participated in the electoral process, and citizen groups including women, youth and persons with disability, for the first time introduced innovative ways of bringing their issues on the political agenda. There were various town hall meetings, Presidential, Women, Youth and lower-level debates, round table meetings, political rallies and campaigns, radio and TV talk shows, use of social media for voter education all joining up to change the narrative ethnic based politics and make elections meaningful.

This third citizens Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP III) study titled: Deepening Democracy in Sierra Leone, measures the collective results of the interventions of partners on citizens perception and attitudes towards democracy. We are particularly thankful to the 3,960 respondents from 396 polling centers nationwide who participated in the study and provided relevant data that informed the study. Key informant interviews (KII) and Focus Group discussions (FGDs) also enriched the data.

I want to particularly thank the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) for taking the lead in producing this document as part of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium efforts; which we hope will contribute to informed policy decisions and actions. I would more specifically congratulate members of the Consortium including Institute for Governance Reform, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 50-50 Group, National Election Watch, Campaign for Good Governance, Independent Radio Network and Search For Common Ground as the lead partner for a job well done on these elections.

In closing, let me reaffirm that, this study represents the views of citizens and presents an undiluted data on citizens knowledge, attitudes and practices after the March 7 and 31, 2018 elections. The KAP studies have been useful guide for the work of political parties, EMBs, citizen groups, researchers and development partners. I am therefore confident that users of this data will find the results useful in improving governance as well as the quality of future elections



Joseph Jimmy Sankaituah
Country Director
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improved governance remains central to the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone and its economic development effort. Local and international support for democracy consolidation has increased over the last 15 years which is culminating in increased demands by citizens for democracy, accountability, civil liberties and the rule of law. Sierra Leone is deepening its democracy – this was evident in the landmark presidential, parliamentary, local council and mayoral elections held in March 2018 which ushered in the second peaceful change of government in the country's 20 years of multiparty rule. Over three million voters registered (1,654,228 females and 1,524,435 males) with approximately 84 percent of them voting for all 16 presidential aspirants (14 men, 2 women), 795 parliamentary aspirants and over 2000 local council aspirants.

This report presents findings from an in-depth study of citizens knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) towards politics and elections. It is the third in a series of KAP studies conducted over a period of 15 months to benchmark the work of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium (STDC) as they implement a range of activities in fulfilment of their project goal of achieving free, fair and peaceful elections in Sierra Leone. Essentially the study explains how citizens' attitudes (positive and negative) towards politics and trust in the electoral process is shaped by a number of underlying variables including: the institutional behavior of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and political parties; the practice of non-inclusive politics especially for women, youth and persons living with disabilities (PWDs); the use of violence, money, incumbency, and policy base information to mobilise voters; and how the elections agenda itself is shaped by both policy demands from citizens from below and policy platforms of political parties/actors from above.

Indeed, electoral processes are entwined with their environments. The quality of elections and the degree of citizen participation in governance lie in the deep-rooted structural factors which shape voter and institutional behaviors. In Sierra Leone ethno-regional politics, electoral violence, and vote-buying have been well documented together with the role of political parties, EMBs and incumbents which shape the terrain in which politics and elections are practiced. In the period leading to the 2018 elections Sierra Leone was engulfed by an Ebola epidemic and there were accusations of corruption of the funds. Reports of violence, vote-buying and the distribution of gifts in return for votes were recorded. New districts and chiefdoms were created in the stronghold of the ruling party². There were accusations of the selective application of justice to disqualify certain candidates was reported in the campaign period and on polling day.

There were great positives that distinguish the 2018 elections from previous elections. For the first-time citizens produced a policy document (the Citizens Manifesto and the PWD agenda) to set the agenda for conversations on the elections and made strong calls for the inclusion of women, youth and PWDs. The use of social media increased voter access to information and a presidential debate was held for the first time. Participation of the Sierra Leonean Diaspora was unprecedented. About half of the 17 political parties were new parties which members of the Diaspora used to press demands for political reforms.

To measure the impact of these investments, citizen participation and the quality of elections, this research randomly targeted 3960 respondents from 396 polling centers nationwide. The

² Throughout this report, ruling party refers to the APC that was the former governing party (2007 to 2018) and now the main opposition. Reference to the opposition indicate SLPP, the current governing party that was previously in the opposition

results of this research are intended to measure the impact of the work of the STDC and to provide recommendations to improve the quality of future elections. The main findings are as follows:

1.1. Citizens perceptions of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and related institutions

- A. In spite of the challenges they faced, voter perceptions of the work of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) were generally positive with up to 81 percent of respondents stating that the NEC counted their ballots fairly. Perceptions about NEC improved from 68 percent in March 2017 to 81 percent.
- B. The Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) continues to be the least known of the EMBs with many voters unaware of its mandate and operations. The inability of the institution to enforce compliance or sanction non-conforming parties along with a lack of resources were major impediments to its effective operations as well as responsible for its overall low rating.
- C. Given the strained relationship between civil society actors and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in the run-up and the course of the elections, the SLP obtained a surprisingly high approval rating, with 69.4 percent of all respondents indicating a belief that the police were able to provide a secure environment during elections. While the national average is high, with five districts reporting over 80 percent of respondents that were happy with police performance, levels of trust in the police were lower in five others which reported between 50-60 percent: Falaba (51.3 percent), Western Urban (55.7 percent), Western Rural (58.2 percent), Port Loko (59.7 percent), and Kenema (60.9 percent).

1.2. Perceptions of the Media, Civil Society and the International Community

- A. About 59.7 percent of female and 68.4 of male respondents cited the radio as their most trusted source of information for making voting choices.
- B. The study shows that 85.5 percent of respondents affirmed that civil society organizations (CSOs) played a neutral role during the 2018 elections. Trust levels in the activities of CSOs are higher in districts like Kono (96.8 percent), Bonthe (95.0 percent), Western Rural (94.2 percent), and Koinadugu (91.4 percent).
- C. The survey indicated that up to 78.8 percent of citizens believed that the international community played a neutral role in the elections. However, there was some regional variation, with higher figures reported in districts such as Kono (96.8 percent), Bonthe (95.0 percent), and Bo (92.1 percent) and considerably lower in Karene (43.2 percent) and Bombali (67.1 percent). Regionally, the international community enjoyed slightly lower approval ratings in many areas in the North and Northwestern districts of the country where key informants believed that they helped to decide the elections in the Sierra Leone People's Party's (SLPP) favour.

1.3. Voter Behaviors and Perceptions about Politics

- A. About 91 percent of respondents believe elections could make a difference in the way Sierra Leone is run. The remarkably high (84 percent) voter turn-out in the 2018 elections emphatically demonstrates the readiness of citizens to participate in democratic processes.
- B. Most respondents (87.2 percent) confirmed that they supported a particular political party. However, voter support for political parties vary by regions. More respondents in the South (95 percent) and the East (90.6 percent) indicated preference for a particular party than those in the West and North-Western regions.
- C. There was a drop in the number of voters (from 67 in March 2017 to 61.8 percent in June 2018) who said they supported the same party they voted in 2012. SLPP stronghold districts such as Pujehun (83.2 percent, Bo (81 percent), Bonthe and (79.6 percent)

showed the strongest allegiance to their parties while in all swing districts (Western area and Kono) and competitive districts (Koinadugu, Karene and Kambia) only 41 to 53 percent of 2012 voters voted for the same party they voted for in previous elections.

- D. About 55.1 percent of all voters stated that they voted based on the campaign/manifesto promises of the candidate. Nearly 74 percent of voters who opted for the National Grand Coalition's (NGC), Alhaji Dr. Kande Kolleh Yumkella said they voted for him because of his experience, honesty and message, while nearly three out of every five SLPP voters said they supported the Bio ticket because of experience, honesty and message. The All People's Congress's (APC) Samura Kamara stood at 46.7%.
- E. While ethnicity remains a key variable in determining votes, the study observed an increasing number of respondents using other calculations, further demonstrating a growing positive shift in the voting calculus of citizens. Despite deliberate attempts to mobilise voters on identity lines, the election was largely seen as a referendum on the governing party's ten-year rule. A good number of voters with origins from ruling party controlled districts in the Northern and Western regions, came out and voted for opposition parties resulting in significant drop in votes for the APC and loss of parliamentary and local seats in the regions.

1.4. Influence of Money

- A. About 27.5 percent of voters said they witnessed vote-buying or directly received money gifts from politicians in return for their votes.
- B. Vote-buying was particularly prevalent in districts such as Falaba, Kabala, Kono and Kambia. In these districts respondents named primarily, prominent businessmen, recipients of government contracts, who distributed money and promised to construct a football field among other benefits for youth as well as micro finance schemes for business women in return for votes.

1.5. Impact of Information flow and the Presidential debate

- A. Almost 64 percent of voters identified the radio as their most important source of information during the elections. This is followed by information from trusted relatives and family members—family heads, spouses and/or children (11.8 percent), followed closely by political party outreach and sensitization tours (7.2 percent). The influence of television is still relatively low, with only 5 percent of respondents citing it as crucial in election choices.
- B. Nationally, only 41.6 percent of respondents watched the Presidential debate, compared to 54.4 percent who did not. Western Urban (64.1 percent), Bombali (53.3 percent) and Bo (48.5 percent), are the top three districts that closely followed the debate, while Falaba, Koinadugu and Western Rural recorded low numbers of people to have followed the debate.
- C. The debates were more influential among highly educated people such as those with some university education (90 percent), university education completed (85 percent), post graduates (80 percent), and post-secondary school education (72 percent) than low literate groups.
- D. Nearly three out of ten voters who watched/followed the debate said the debate helped them decide who to vote for while 69.4 percent said they already knew who they would vote for in the 2018 polls; and thus the debate did not make much difference in their voting calculus.

1.6. Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

1.6.1. Women

- A. Political parties continue to be gate keepers for women's political participation. While 65 percent of respondents said they are ready to vote for a woman as president, the main

political parties did not put a woman on the ballot. Similarly, 77 percent of respondents indicated a readiness to vote for a woman for MP, with 73 percent indicating that the reason they did not vote for a woman was because their party's candidate was a man.

- B. Women continue to show higher levels of likelihood of supporting each other: a total of 72.3 percent of women said that they would vote for a woman as president, compared to 57.7 percent of men.
- C. Only 12.3 percent of MPs are women. Women performed slightly better at the local council level. Nationally, 86 women (17.6 percent) out of a total of 488 councilors were elected in these elections. Only six districts elected over 20 percent women councilors: Bombali, Kailahun, Kenema, Kono and Port Loko; however, at least one woman was elected councilor in all districts except Pujehun.
- D. There are more women MPs and councilors elected under the APC ticket than SLPP. The APC has 48 female councilors out of 231 (20.8 percent), while the SLPP has 28 women councilors out of 195, or 14.3 percent.

1.6.2. Persons With Disability (PWD)

- A. Perceptions about PWDs improved slightly as a result of the concerted public education programmes around the PWD agenda. About 24.6 percent of respondents said they would be ready to vote for a PWD for president compared to 67.2 percent that said no.
- B. Again, there was slightly more readiness to vote for a PWD in the comparatively lower positions of MP and mayor (28.1 percent) compared to president.
- C. Most respondents stated that they did not actually vote for any PWDs during the elections, citing that they were either not their party's candidate (30 percent), or that there was no PWD on the ballot (46 percent).

1.6.3. Attitudes towards youth

- A. A considerable number of youth were nominated for their party's symbol although far less were actually elected. Of the 792 candidates nationwide, 297 (almost 37.5 percent) were under 35 years, although only 12 were successful in securing those seats.
- B. The APC party elected the most youth MPs: seven out of the 12 MPs under 35 years, while the SLPP elected 4 and the Coalition for Change (C4C) has 1.

1.7. Violence and Elections

- A. Compared to other democracies in the sub-region, electoral violence was generally low in 2018. Only 5.2 percent of respondents, reported experiencing violence personally whilst close to ten percent (9.6 percent) saw or heard of someone else being harassed.
- B. The forms of violence reported range from verbal insults and hate messages, to beating, wounding, arson and a few cases of killing. The highest reports of political harassment were recorded in Kono (13 percent) in the Eastern region followed by Koinadugu, Bombali, Kambia and Port Loko.
- C. Our enumerators recorded 61 alleged incidences of wounding occasioned by beating and/or stabbing or arson. Instances of violence were generally underreported as respondents appeared scared to divulge details for fear of reprisals. About 61.3 percent of alleged victims simply said they did not remember who the perpetrators were.
- D. About 28 percent of respondents place the blame for electoral violence on both the APC and SLPP. However, a good proportion of respondents (34 percent) blamed the APC for initiating violence whereas 24 percent believe that the SLPP are the main culprits. While the APC was generally blamed for pre-election and polling day incidences, particularly those occurring in the Western Area, the Northern and North-Western districts, the SLPP was named largely in post-election violence incidences occurring in the South and Eastern regions and the Western Area.

- E. The most pervasive driver of election-related violence is impunity. Opposition supporters interviewed in Port Loko and Kambia complained that in some situations they were made out to be culprits when they went to the police to report intimidation by the ruling party. While the SLP have made efforts to show neutrality in the elections, failure to impartially respond to complaints of violence by some of their colleagues is contributing to the perception and atmosphere of impunity.

1.8. Policy Priorities

- A. Education (22.3 percent) emerged as the most important problem that citizens want the new government to address, followed closely by water scarcity (21.3 percent).
- B. The economy was ranked as the third most important problem citizens want addressed with more than 14 percent of respondents citing the rising cost of basic commodities and the devaluation of the local currency as major concerns.

1.9. Recommendations

- A. GoSL and NEC must have a conversation on election financing, with steps taken to make all election components more affordable for parties, candidates and the country in general. Steps could include putting a cap on political party expenditures in campaign financing. A reduction in monies spent on holding elections can also reduce reliance on international funding for EMBs as well as election security.
- B. State agencies/actors must remain non-partisan and professional, and those that do not should be judged in the appropriate courts.
- C. Legal reforms should be implemented that regulate a number of components in the election cycle. These include: A) constitutional review and amendment to indicate a set date for elections; B) laws on campaign financing that mandate, among other things, limits in expenditure as well as possibly set aside a common fund for all parties; C) mandating asset declaration/publication regime for aspiring candidates.
- D. PPRC must have stronger institutional capacity to regulate political parties enshrined within the law. Aspects for regulation should include sanctioning parties that do not meet gender quotas, (including parties' own quotas), parties engaging sponsoring political violence, among other components.
- E. GoSL should also invest in developing institutional capacity of political parties to promote and increase women's participation as well as to engage in policy formulation
- F. Steps must be taken to increase women's participation in the political process. This will start with expediting the passage of the 30% Quota into law and instituting a mechanism for implementation as well as sanctions for noncompliance. GoSL and development partners could correspondingly support programmes to increase women's political competitiveness including access to economic opportunities, justice and education.
- G. Noting that the worst cases of elections violence are committed by gangs of unemployed youths, recruited by politicians, strategies to address election-related violence should include ways to gainfully occupy or rehabilitate youth so that they do not fall prey to political mobilization. Additionally, youth should have greater access to civic education programmes to dissuade them from violence.
- H. The GoSL and its partners should adopt zero tolerance policies for electoral violence by investigating and punishing cases of violence reported during the 2018 elections.
- I. The role of the PPRC, SLP, CSOs and international partners in setting up an early warning system which identified election-related conflict prone areas such as Kono, Kenema, Kambia and Freetown was useful in diffusing tensions, although in some cases intervention came too late. We recommend that activities of agencies handling early warning systems should be front-loaded to the early stages of the electoral cycle before grievances develop further.

2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Patterns of ethnic mobilization in voting have long been identified as a prominent feature in writing about elections and politics in Sierra Leone. Two concrete voting blocs are often identified, with the APC seen to have strongholds in districts in the North of the country. The SLPP on the other hand are seen to be strong in the South and East. At the same time, there has been a counter narrative with scholars noting that ethnic mobilization is not the sole indicator of voter support, pointing to some regions and districts in Sierra Leone where voting affiliations are more fluid and less driven by ethnicity. Voter choices are also shaped by information about and from candidates. These two considerations formed the basis of the original KAP study design and the collection of quantitative data. Party performance in the last three elections were used to divide the 14 districts across the country into three distinct strata: swing, competitive and party strongholds, while the study population was drawn from the 2012 voter registration list, which provided an existing population from which a random sample could be selected.

However, in a distinctive shift from KAP I, this study also incorporated data from Sierra Leone's recent de-amalgamation and redistricting exercises to divide the survey sample frame into the country's 16 districts—taking into account the two newly created districts of Falaba in the Northern region and Karene in the also newly created North-West region. Additionally, this study utilized the 2018 registration database to draw up the study population thereby removing some of the limitations encountered during the KAP I study, including difficulty of tracking down respondents. A more up-to-date study population generally provided a more accurate and reliable framework for data collection. This redesign also eliminated the need for the random selection of young and unregistered voters and all the inherent errors associated with the process.

One drawback however, in this slight methodological change is some challenges in making meaningful and realistic comparisons with the outputs from the KAP I study since in reality, the study populations are technically different.

Special attention was also given to the views of excluded groups: women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Views from these categories were collected through thirty Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and eighteen focus group discussions (FGDs).

2.1.1. JUSTIFICATION FOR METHODOLOGY RE-DESIGN

As referenced above, there was some deviation in methodology from KAP I, especially in the selection of the study population and in the classification of the sampling frame. This was necessitated by several technical and logistical limitations encountered in the first study as well as a changing geographical terrain as detailed below:

1. Data was not collected in some of the sampled Voter Registration Centers (VRCs) in KAP1 due to a number of reasons including inaccessibility of terrain once in the field, the death or movement of respondents given amount of time passed, wrong addresses recorded in the voter register, as well as the non-existence of VRCs that appeared on paper, or had been mis-named. Initially, two replacement-registered voters were

provided to the data collection teams, but this was later increased to seven. On average, four replacements were used per VRC.

2. The electoral geography of Sierra Leone had changed significantly following the recently completed constituency delimitations, chiefdom de-amalgamation and redistricting that resulted in the creation of new constituencies, chiefdoms and districts.
3. There were challenges in locating young first-time voters and un-registered voters (particularly in areas where voter registration rates were very high) in some communities, while in others, additional people from these categories were interviewed. Eight percent of VRCs had no young people respondents interviewed, while 19 percent of VRCs had no un-registered voter respondents. 84 percent of VRCs had between one and three young persons interviewed while 79 percent of VRCs registered between one to three un-registered voter respondents interviewed.

2.1.2. SAMPLING METHOD

This study broadly categorized respondents into the country's 16 districts, which were then further divided by electoral constituencies, which are generally proportional to the size and population of the districts. A two-phase sampling approach was then employed:

- A) Phase One: random selection of VRCs. A VRC serves as a hub for the registration of all eligible voters within a community. It also serves as a polling centre on polling day. VRCs are generally situated taking into consideration population size/spread and geographical conditions. The idea is to locate VRCs in areas from which voters could reasonably walk to cast their votes on Election Day. In the 2018 elections, there were 3300 VRCs in the country distributed proportionally across the 16 districts. Within every district, every constituency was sampled. Within every constituency, three VRCs were randomly selected. The NEC provided an electronic copy of the sampling frame, which is based on the 2018 electoral register. Using a spreadsheet containing the complete list of VRCs, with geographical information and the number of voters registered at each centre, we computed and randomly selected a total of 396 VRCs, 126 more than in the first KAP survey. This corresponds to three VRCs in each of the 132 electoral constituencies in the country. A constituency can typically have between 10 and 20 VRCs.

- B) Phase Two: random selection of registered voters

Once the VRCS were selected, the second stage involved selecting targeted respondents. The method involved randomly selecting voter IDs from the 2018 electronic electoral database provided by the NEC using Excel's random selection technique. The median number of voters per VRC is 691, with the majority of 2018 VRCs ranging between 300 and 2300 voters. VRCs in urban areas tend to be larger.

Within each constituency, individual VRCs were selected using probability proportional to size (this ensured that each registered voter within a district had approximately the same probability of being selected). For the selected VRCs, the NEC provided the final voters' register for the VRC, containing the name, address, date of birth, occupation, and photo of each registered voter for the VRC. Within each VRC, ten targeted registered voters and four potential replacement registered voters were selected, using random sampling.

Table 1 Survey Deployment Plan

Districts	Category of district	No of Constituencies	No of VRCs	No of respondents per VRC	Total No of Respondents
Kailahun	Competitive	10	30	10	300
Kenema	Stronghold	11	33	10	330
Kono	Swing	9	27	10	270
Bombali	Stronghold	8	24	10	240
Falaba	Competitive	4	12	10	120
Kambia	Competitive	6	18	10	180
Karena	Stronghold	5	15	10	150
Koinadugu	Competitive	4	12	10	120
Port Loko	Stronghold	10	30	10	300
Tonkolili	Stronghold	10	30	10	300
Bo	Stronghold	11	33	10	330
Bonthe	Stronghold	4	12	10	120
Moyamba	Stronghold	6	18	10	180
Pujehun	Stronghold	6	18	10	180
Western Rural	Swing	8	24	10	240
Western Urban	Swing	20	60	10	600
NATIONAL		132	396	160	3960

Also, unlike the first study which required a supplementary sampling of young and unregistered voters³, this study drew its sampling frame exclusively from the 2018 register.

2.2. RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

In this section, we analyse the general and social characteristics of respondents. For the purposes of this analysis, general characteristics shall include such variables as the age, gender, district and regional distribution of respondents while social characteristics comprise the educational and occupational status of respondents. In particular, we endeavour to compare these figures, where possible, with the national averages.

As shown in table 1 below, in terms of its geographic spread, this study is representative of the national district and regional voter registration figures. In other words, the number of respondents per district/region is directly proportional to the number of registered voters. The only deviations from these patterns are found in the Western Rural and Western Urban districts which appear to be slightly under sampled. A possible explanation for this deviation is that these areas have a high population density and therefore a low constituency to voter ratio. That is, the number of constituencies to voters is small compared to the national average. Since analyses are district based, the overall effect of this discrepancy will not be sufficient to affect the results of the survey. Moreover, other known characteristics of the survey such as respondents' gender distribution directly mirrors the National Electoral Commission's (NEC) voter registration figures.

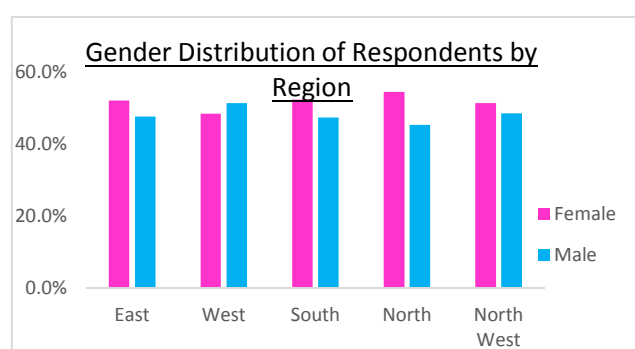
³Young voters were those between the ages of 17 and 22 in March 2017 who were too young to vote in 2012 but eligible for the March 2018 elections while unregistered voters comprise those who were eligible in 2012 but did not register.

The Eastern region accounts for the highest number of respondents (22.8 percent) followed closely by the West with 21.1 percent. The region with the lowest number of respondents is the newly created North-West region comprising Kambia, Port Loko and Karene. This was also the region with the lowest number of registered voters in the 2018 elections.

2.2.1. GENDER

The distribution of respondents by gender shows that 52 percent are females and 48 percent are males, similar to the voting population.

Figure 1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Region



Three Million, One Hundred and Seventy-Eight Thousand Six Hundred and Sixty-Three (3,178,663) Sierra Leoneans registered to vote in the March 2018 elections, according to figures published on the NEC website. Of these, 1,654,228 (52 percent) are females while 1,524,435 (48 percent) are males. The chart below shows the regional distribution of respondents by gender.

The gender composition of respondents across the five regions was consistent, with the exception of the western region, which reported more male respondents.

2.2.2. AGE

Since the survey targeted persons who had voted in the 2018 elections, respondents had to be at least 18 years old. Eighteen is the constitutional voting age in Sierra Leone.

Persons aged 24 to 35 constitute the largest group of respondents in the survey. They make up close to 36 percent of the total number of respondents. 18 to 23 year olds—persons likely to be first time voters—accounted for approximately 18 percent of the total number of respondents. Altogether, youths (18 to 35 year olds) comprised more than 50 percent of survey respondents. Although data on the age distribution of registered voters is not available, the 2015 Population and Housing Census puts the number of Sierra Leoneans under 35 years at almost 80 percent of the population. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that youths (15 to 35) comprise one third of the country's population.

Table 2 Age Disaggregation of Respondents

Age Distribution of 2018 Voters	
Age Bracket	Yes
18-23	18.2
24-35	35.5
36-45	20.9
46-59	16.1
60+	9.3

Persons aged 36 to 45, and who are generally the most economically active population group, constitute nearly 21 percent of respondents making them the second largest set of respondents. Senior citizens (those who are 60 years and above) constituted only 9 percent of respondents.

2.2.3. EDUCATION

The study asked respondents to state their highest level of education attained which was broadly categorized into eleven categories: No formal schooling, Apprenticeship, Religious schooling, Some primary schooling, Primary school completed, Some secondary schooling, Secondary school completed, Post-secondary qualifications other than university, Some university, University completed, and Post-graduate qualifications.

Table 3 Distribution of Respondents Education Levels

Education	Respondents
No formal schooling	39.50
Some secondary schooling	19.66
Secondary school completed	10.32
Some primary schooling	7.90
Religious schooling	6.49
Primary school completed	6.16
Post-secondary other than university	3.05
Some university	2.60
University completed	2.04
Apprenticeship	1.94
Post-graduate	0.25
Don't know	0.08

Not surprisingly, nearly 63 percent of respondents are low-literate. Nearly 40 percent of respondents stated that they had no formal education at all. About 14 percent of respondents had either completed or received some primary education. A total of 6.5 percent of respondents had gone through some form of religious education, which refers generally to some Quranic or Islam-based education. About 2 percent of respondents had received some apprenticeship training.

The number of respondents who had either completed or attended university stood at around 5 percent; 3 percent of respondents said they had acquired some form of post-secondary qualifications other than a university degree. These are mostly holders of teaching/nursing certificates or those who had attained ordinary or advanced college diplomas.

Among those who had attained some form of formal education, respondents who had some secondary education constituted the largest group: Nearly 20 percent of respondents said they had received some secondary schooling while another 10.3 percent said they completed secondary school. The education level of respondents is tabulated above (see Table 3).

A regional breakdown shows that 25.4 percent of respondents who had no formal education were from the Eastern region, 23.3 percent were from the North, while the South accounted for about 21 percent. The West and North-West regions respectively constituted 11.1 percent and 19.2 percent of illiterate respondents.

2.2.4. OCCUPATION

As expected, the majority of respondents said they were engaged in subsistence farming (36.3 percent). Nearly 16 percent of respondents said they were students while another 15 percent of respondents reported that they were engaged as traders/hawkers/vendors. About 3 percent of respondents reported being unemployed or had no regular source of income.

3. PERCEPTIONS OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES AND ASSOCIATED AGENCIES

Election Management Bodies (EMBs) lie at the epicenter of electoral management and are therefore crucial in ensuring electoral integrity, inclusive politics, peaceful elections and ultimately contributing to deepening democracy in Sierra Leone. Electoral integrity entails a set of norms and regulations to be established and enforced, in order to ensure professionalism, ethics, accountability and transparency. This section looks in detail at the role of the NEC, the Security Agencies, the Courts including local level mediation, Civil Society, Media and the International Community in ensuring free, fair and peaceful elections. Questions covered in this module cover respondent perceptions on the effectiveness and professionalism of these agencies.

3.1. NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (NEC)

The study asked two questions about voter perceptions about the NEC: (A) whether respondents believed their votes were counted fairly; and (B) whether they believed the entire electoral process was fair. Voter perceptions of the NEC were generally positive in the third KAP Study. This is consistent with the positive image the NEC enjoyed during the first and second KAP studies. During the first iteration of the Citizens' Perception Study, up to 68 percent of respondents interviewed believed that NEC would count their votes fairly.⁴ This rating actually increased to 77.3 percent in the second KAP Study.⁵ At the time, the NEC was the most favorably viewed of all institutions that were managing elections.

Crucially, since that time, the NEC has successfully overseen the 2018 multi-tier elections. On the question of whether the NEC counted ballots freely and fairly, up to 81 percent of respondents interviewed responded in the affirmative (see Table 4 below). Positive perceptions of the NEC were high particularly in (now ruling) Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) strongholds: Kailahun (98.7 percent), Bonthe (97.5 percent), Moyamba (95.4 percent), and Bo (94.1 percent). However, the NEC's approval ratings dropped considerably in districts widely perceived as strongholds of the (now current opposition and former government) All Peoples' Congress (APC) party. These include Karene (59.5 percent), Bombali (63.3 percent), and Falaba (64.2 percent). One possible reason for this is the hotly contested nature of these elections. The SLPP's Bio won the polls by a slim margin of 51.8 percent to APC Samura Kamara's 48 percent.⁶ In the aftermath of the first round of elections, the two parties and their supporters accused each other of electoral malpractice and vote rigging, and social media was rife with pictures of spoiled ballots, ballot stuffing and over-voting accusations. Given the closeness of the results and the slim margin of victory, it is not surprising that regional averages show that a higher percentage of respondents in the southern and eastern regions were more likely to believe that the NEC counted votes freely and fairly (91.7 and 92.2 percent respectively). This is in marked contrast with the North and Northwestern regions which recorded 68.4 percent and 70.5 percent voter confidence in the NEC, respectively. Although Western Area registered higher positive ratings of the NEC at 78 percent, this is still below the figures in the South and East. Nevertheless, even with the difference in numbers, they point to an overwhelmingly positive rating on the NEC's management of the process.

⁴ 1st KAP Study, IGR/STFDC, May 2017

⁵ Presidential Election Results 2018: Lessons Learnt and Implications for the Runoff and Democracy Building, Policy Brief, IGR, March 2018

⁶ <http://necsl2018.org/election-results/>

Table 4: District level voter perceptions of whether the NEC counted ballots fairly

District	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion	Unsure
<i>Karene</i>	59.50	10.10	8.80	0.70	20.90
<i>Bombali</i>	63.30	17.10	14.60	0.00	5.00
<i>Falaba</i>	64.20	3.30	15.80	1.70	15.00
<i>Port Loko</i>	69.70	14.30	6.00	0.70	9.30
<i>Tonkolili</i>	70.70	4.00	10.40	0.30	14.50
<i>Western Urban</i>	72.40	8.80	9.10	1.90	7.90
<i>Koinadugu</i>	77.60	11.20	6.00	0.00	5.20
<i>Pujehun</i>	80.00	4.90	11.90	0.00	3.20
<i>Kambia</i>	81.10	7.20	2.80	0.00	8.90
<i>Kono</i>	88.80	4.70	2.20	0.70	3.60
<i>Kenema</i>	89.10	6.70	2.10	0.90	1.20
<i>Western Rural</i>	91.80	1.60	3.30	1.60	1.60
<i>Bo</i>	94.10	2.40	0.30	0.00	3.20
<i>Moyamba</i>	95.40	1.10	2.30	0.60	0.60
<i>Bonthe</i>	97.50	0.00	0.80	0.00	1.70
<i>Kailahun</i>	98.70	0.30	1.00	0.00	0.00
National	81.00	6.40	5.90	0.70	6.00

The high approval of the NEC is in line with other positive commendations of the institution; for example, the European Union Observer Mission noted that “The NEC fulfilled its constitutional duties as it conducted elections in a competent and impartial manner. It managed to defend its independence despite numerous operational challenges and enormous political pressure which frequently threatened to disrupt the elections process”.⁷

Responses on perceptions of the NEC were similar to voter responses on the question of whether they felt the 2018 elections were free and fair. Again, the pattern of responses showed that people in the (current) ruling party⁸ strongholds were more likely to respond affirmatively compared to those in (current) opposition strongholds, with percentage distributions similar to responses assessing the NEC’s performance. Most respondents (81.2 percent) said that the 2018 elections were free and fair, compared to only 6.4 percent that responded in the negative. However, while 93.6 percent and 92.7 percent of respondents in the Eastern and Southern regions respectively expressed their satisfaction with the conduct of the elections, these figures drop down to 70.8 percent, 66.2 percent and 77.4 percent respectively for the North, Northwest and Western regions.

Table 5: Regional distribution of voter perceptions of electoral freedom and fairness of elections

Region	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion	Unsure
<i>North</i>	68.40	9.10	11.90	0.40	10.20
<i>North West</i>	70.50	11.30	5.70	0.50	11.90
<i>West</i>	78.00	6.70	7.40	1.80	6.10
<i>South</i>	91.70	2.30	3.40	0.10	2.40
<i>East</i>	92.20	4.00	1.80	0.60	1.50

⁷ EU Elections Observation Mission 2018 Report

⁸ For the purposes of this report reference to the ruling party means the SLPP, the current sitting government, while opposition refers to the APC, the former ruling party.

The main sources of dissatisfaction with the electoral process were the counting of ballots (68.5 percent) and announcement of results (10 percent). Again, the identification of these two issues as the main sources of contention is unsurprising. There were complaints both about the tabulation of results and release of data, with some believing that the piecemeal release of results (25 percent, 50 percent, 75 percent etc.) could be misleading, while others found the process too slow and subject to data manipulation.

Despite these pressures, the results indicate that the majority of Sierra Leoneans believed the polls to be free and fair. While the elements of what constitutes a free and fair process are open to different interpretations, anecdotal evidence suggests that the reasons for this high rating were due to the largely peaceful elections, and the fact that power changed hands without much conflict. Even in opposition strongholds, field researchers reported that even where people felt that the results were not necessarily reflective of the true figures, they accepted the outcome as it was seen to now be the turn of the other party to be in power. In other words, power alternation was understood as good for peace in the country.

3.2. POLITICAL PARTIES REGISTRATION COMMISSION

There was little change in voter perceptions of the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC). Similar to other KAP studies it was clear that the PPRC is less known, save in areas like Kenema and Western Urban, where it had been visible in handling intra-party conflicts in the SLPP in the former, and issues between different political parties in the latter. In the first KAP, just 30 percent of respondents expressed trust in the PPRC. This can be attributed to a range of factors, including a lower profile. The PPRC has faced challenges, including financial constraints and difficulties in enforcing its mandate. For example, on the 8th of January 2018, the PPRC issued a press release calling on the Citizens Democratic Party (CDP) to remove all billboards bearing the inscription “Allah is one”⁹. The party ignored this dictate. Again, on the 20th of February 2018, the PPRC called on the then-ruling APC to remove all billboards with the insignia “Krios for APC”¹⁰. This too was ignored. The inability of the institution to enforce compliance or sanction non-conforming parties, along with a lack of resources, have likely been major impediments to the effective working of the PPRC as well as responsible for its overall low rating among respondents.

3.3. THE SIERRA LEONE POLICE

Given the strained relationship between citizens and the police in the run-up to, and the course of, the elections, the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) obtained a surprisingly high approval rating,¹¹ with 69.4 percent of all respondents interviewed indicating a belief that the SLP were able to provide a secure environment during elections. This nearly doubled from the 40 percent of positive responses received in the first KAP. Possible reasons for this high rating could be linked again to the overall perception that elections were free and fair, despite some incidences of violence. Enumerators, in their debrief, communicated that most people based their evaluations on the conduct of the SLP on polling day in the first and second round of polls, and linked their ability to cast their votes without problems to the SLP providing a secure

⁹ <http://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/newly-formed-islamist-cdp-party-in-sierra-leone-falls-foul-of-election-campaign-rules/>

¹⁰ <http://apanews.net/en/pays/sierra-leone-sierra-leone/news/sierra-leones-ruling-party-warned-against-ethnic-politicking>

¹¹ <https://awoko.org/.../sierra-leone-news-political-parties-condemn-ban-on-vehicular-m...>

environment for them to do so, rather than indicating a generalized perception of trust in the SLP.

While the national average is high, with five districts reporting over 80 percent of respondents that were happy with the SLP's performance (see table 6 below), levels of trust in the SLP were lower in five others which reported between 50-60 percent satisfaction: Falaba (51.3 percent), Western Urban (55.7 percent), Western Rural (58.2 percent), Port Loko (59.7 percent), and Kenema (60.9 percent). In Kenema and the Western Area, the clash between the SLP and SLPP supporters, and the debates that raged on the ban on vehicular movement on polling day, especially in the Western Area, could have affected approval ratings of the SLP. In Falaba respondents named specific security officers who they felt were not responsive to complaints about tampering with ballot boxes after counting. Arrests were made of NEC staff in Falaba. In addition, the presence of security personnel inside polling stations during the presidential run-off elections might have created tension and fear in some voters. Nevertheless, overall, perceptions of SLP performance were overwhelmingly positive, which some key informants have also attributed to the change in government, and possible sentiment that this will have positive implications on police governance and behavior.

Table 6: Voter perceptions of police neutrality by district

District	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion
<i>Moyamba</i>	90.90	2.30	4.60	2.30
<i>Bonthe</i>	88.00	9.50	2.50	0.00
<i>Bo</i>	85.90	12.90	1.20	0.00
<i>Pujehun</i>	80.80	14.90	4.30	0.00
<i>Kailahun</i>	80.00	16.70	2.30	1.00
<i>Tonkolili</i>	71.60	24.30	4.10	0.00
<i>Kambia</i>	67.90	27.70	3.90	0.50
<i>Karene</i>	64.80	23.00	8.80	3.40
<i>Koinadugu</i>	63.80	32.70	2.60	0.90
<i>Bombali</i>	63.70	25.50	10.80	0.00
<i>Kono</i>	62.70	34.10	1.80	1.40
<i>Kenema</i>	60.90	30.30	7.90	0.90
<i>Port Loko</i>	59.70	33.00	6.70	0.70
<i>Western Rural</i>	58.20	34.10	6.90	0.80
<i>Western Urban</i>	55.70	33.40	7.70	3.20
<i>Falaba</i>	51.30	37.80	10.00	0.90
National	69.10	24.50	5.30	1.00

3.4. THE ELECTORAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Overall the data indicate positive rankings of the courts, with a majority of respondents (78.4 percent) saying that they believed the courts would handle election disputes in a fair manner. This is a vast improvement from the first KAP Study in March 2017, when only 38.6 percent of respondents believed that the courts would handle election disputes fairly. Similarly, a study conducted by International Republican Institute (IRI) several weeks before the election showed that only 32 percent held a highly positive view of the judiciary.¹² It appears that many respondents in rural areas understood the courts to include chiefs and informal justice providers

¹² Sierra Leone Public Opinion Survey, Center for Insights in Survey Research, February 2018

who were resolving multiple minor disputes locally. In KAP 1, only the formal courts were considered

Again, it was observed that largely ruling party strongholds, especially districts in the Southern Region, viewed the courts more positively than those in opposition strongholds. Bonthe (95 percent), Moyamba (90.9 percent), Pujehun (90.8 percent), all recorded very favourable perceptions of the willingness of the courts to handle election disputes fairly. On the other hand, court approval ratings diminished in the Western area, Kenema, Falaba and Kambia districts. This is partly indicative of a broader trend where residents in the ruling party were more likely to express a belief in both institutions and praise their performance, compared to those in opposition strongholds. This is symptomatic of the larger context against which politics is played in Sierra Leone, where politics can in some cases be seen as a zero-sum game, with those in the opposition perceiving the system to be rigged against them and one in which they are less likely to benefit.

Of further influence, particularly in the Western area and Kambia districts, might have been the high-profile petition and injunction cases involving the dual nationality of the leader of the National Grand Coalition (NGC) and injunction applications to restrain the NEC from running the runoff election. Many of these petitions and counter petitions were launched in the run up to the elections and in its aftermath as well. As the EU Election Observer Mission Report¹³ noted:

The framework regulating electoral complaints and appeals does not provide for timely adjudications. Parliamentary and local council nominations cannot be challenged in court before Election Day and timeframes for dealing with presidential nomination challenges are very tight, allowing procedures to continue past polling day. Post first-round court proceedings created legal uncertainty leaving the NEC exposed to challenges and reducing the electorate's confidence in the process.

Table 7: Voter perceptions of the neutrality of the courts by district

District	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion
<i>Bonthe</i>	95.00	2.50	2.50	0.00
<i>Moyamba</i>	90.90	2.30	4.50	2.30
<i>Pujehun</i>	90.80	4.90	4.30	0.00
<i>Koinadugu</i>	88.80	1.70	8.60	0.90
<i>Kailahun</i>	88.00	4.70	6.40	1.00
<i>Port Loko</i>	87.60	5.00	6.70	0.70
<i>Bo</i>	85.90	12.90	1.20	0.00
<i>Karene</i>	83.80	4.10	8.70	3.40
<i>Bombali</i>	83.80	12.50	3.70	0.00
<i>Kono</i>	75.70	21.10	1.80	1.40
<i>Tonkolili</i>	74.60	21.40	4.00	0.00
<i>Kambia</i>	73.90	21.70	3.80	0.60
<i>Falaba</i>	73.30	0.90	25.00	0.80
<i>Kenema</i>	67.90	26.30	4.90	0.90
<i>Western Rural</i>	62.20	34.10	2.90	0.80
<i>Western Urban</i>	58.60	30.50	7.70	3.20
National	80.05	12.91	6.04	1.00

¹³ European Union Election Observation Mission, Preliminary Statement, March 9, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_eom_sierra_leone_preliminary_statement090318_1.pdf.

As has been noted, public perceptions of chiefs and chieftaincy relations in specific chiefdoms in these districts might have also influenced public opinions of respondents seeking justice in informal courts in rural areas.

3.5. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs)

Sierra Leone has a long tradition of vibrant civil society institutions that are involved in elections and advocacy for reforms (EUOM Report: 2018). During the 2018 elections cycle, a host of civil society consortia, bodies and institutions were engaged not just in the build-up, but crucially, during and after the elections. One of the key civil society organisations involved in elections monitoring and management is the National Elections Watch (NEW),¹⁴ a coalition of civil society organizations that began operations during the 1997 Sierra Leonean Presidential elections. Since 2008, the NEW has established itself as a respected network of over 375 organizations working in a decentralized structure across Sierra Leone. The scope of activities of the general body of civil society organizations (CSOs) ranged from elections observation, and advocacy for policy reforms, to campaigning for increased participation of socially excluded and marginalized groups in the country.

In the first KAP Study, voter perceptions on the effectiveness of CSOs were largely positive, with 67 percent of respondents trusting that civil society would play a neutral role in elections. This increased to 85.5 percent in this present study, with only 3.5 percent of respondents saying they did not trust them, and 9.8 percent of respondents unsure about their neutrality during the elections (see Table 8 below). Trust levels in the activities of CSOs were higher in districts like Bonthe (95.0 percent), Kono (96.8 percent), Western Rural (94.2 percent) and Koinadugu (91.4 percent). It is worth noting that in most, if not all of these districts, CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (two categories that are indistinguishable for many) are very active, providing various forms of development assistance to communities. However, in APC controlled areas like Western Urban (76.1 percent), Karene (66.2 percent) and Bombali (50.8 percent), rating levels were lower, possibly indicating greater disapproval of CSOs' endorsement of the election results as credible. Freetown residents in particular would have been aware of CSOs as there was considerable engagement of these organisations on both radio and television, in defense of the electoral process. Consortia such as the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium¹⁵, Strengthening Electoral Accountability and Governance (SEAG) Consortium and a host of other civil society organizations all made considerable strides in promoting civic education, advocating for policy reforms, holding stakeholders to account and making calls for increased participation of youth, women and persons with disabilities. Several CSOs focused their attention on violence prevention. For example, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the Women's Situation Room (WSR) both sought to project the solidarity of women across West Africa and beyond in promoting peace through vigilant observation and activism.¹⁶

Thus, despite concerns about the partisan nature of some members of civil society, and the commonplace practice to associate civil society with a particular political party, based on the positions they hold or the advocacy engagements on which they embark, the increased levels of trust reported in this KAP show that, overall, they were perceived well. As the EU observer mission also noted, CSOs played a largely positive role, preaching nonviolence as well as reminding political parties of their responsibilities towards building national cohesion. The NEW

¹⁴ NEW, was a member of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium along with five other organisations, including IGR, under whose aegis this study was conducted

¹⁵ IGR is a member of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium which is supported by UKAid.

¹⁶ Carter Center Election Observation Report, March 2018.

in particular helped to cement trust in the elections results when their published Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT) results validated NEC's official results as credible.

Table 8: Voter perceptions of the neutrality of CSOs by district

District	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion
Kono	96.80	0.70	2.20	0.40
Bonthe	95.00	0.80	4.20	0.00
Western rural	94.20	0.80	4.50	0.40
Pujehun	92.50	5.00	2.10	0.40
Bo	92.40	2.60	4.70	0.30
Koinadugu	91.40	3.40	5.20	0.00
Moyamba	90.90	0.60	4.60	4.00
Kambia	90.60	6.10	3.30	0.00
Kenema	90.60	5.50	3.60	0.30
Port loko	88.00	5.70	6.00	0.30
Tonkolili	86.90	1.00	12.10	0.00
Falaba	85.00	2.50	10.80	1.70
Kailahun	83.30	1.00	15.70	0.00
Western urban	76.10	6.70	14.00	3.20
Karene	66.20	4.10	23.60	6.10
Bombali	50.80	4.30	44.90	0.00
National	85.50	3.50	9.80	1.10

3.6. THE MEDIA

Perceptions of the media have been mixed in Sierra Leone, particularly around elections. In 2012, for example, many observers were critical of the media and did not believe they provided a level playing field for all candidates, particularly the state broadcasting station.¹⁷ However, in KAP 1, a majority of respondents believed that the media played a positive role in ensuring the views of all parties were heard. This positive perception persisted in this present KAP as well, where a majority of respondents cited the radio as their most trusted source of information for making voting choices (59.7 percent of females and 68.4 of male respondents). Family was the next frequently cited, with women citing that they relied on family members more than men (16.5 percent and 6.3 percent respectively).

Out of this, the Southern region leads the way with 77.8 percent, followed by the Northwest (67.5 percent), and then East (62.8 percent), and North (57.5 percent), with the Western Area rounding the list with 54.7 percent. The proliferation of media institutions, especially radio and newspapers and the increased awareness levels within the citizenry in the Western region might explain the relatively critical position and lens with which respondents in the Western area viewed the media.

On the question of the fairness and accessibility of local media, with particular reference to radio and television to all political parties, 81.0 percent of all respondents interviewed were impressed with the role the media played during the elections. Positive perceptions of the media were higher in Kono (97.5 percent), Bo (95.6 percent), Bonthe (89.1 percent), and Pujehun (89.2 percent). However, the media faces a perception challenge in districts like Koinadugu (41.4 percent) and Falaba (55.8 percent). It is interesting to note that positive ratings of the media are lower in APC strongholds.

¹⁷ EU OM Report, 2012

Table 9: Citizens Perception of fairness and accessibility of local media

District	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion	Not sure
Kono	97.50	1.10	0.70	0.70	0.00
Bo	95.60	0.90	2.60	0.00	0.90
Pujehun	89.20	0.50	10.30	0.00	0.00
Bonthe	89.10	0.80	9.20	0.00	0.80
Kenema	88.40	6.70	4.00	0.60	0.30
Moyamba	87.40	0.60	7.40	4.60	0.00
Kailahun	84.30	1.00	14.00	0.00	0.70
Kambia	81.70	3.30	15.00	0.00	0.00
Western Rural	80.20	3.70	12.30	0.40	3.30
Tonkolili	79.80	0.30	19.90	0.00	0.00
Western Urban	76.80	4.90	14.00	2.20	2.20
Bombali	73.30	6.70	19.20	0.00	0.80
Port Loko	72.30	3.00	21.70	0.70	2.30
Karene	71.60	1.40	15.50	2.00	9.50
Falaba	55.80	1.70	40.80	1.70	0.00
Koinadugu	41.40	9.50	41.40	1.70	6.00
National	81.00	3.00	13.60	0.90	1.50

Although the media, like many other institutions, continues to face recurrent challenges, including irresponsibility of certain media practitioners, outdated laws which restrict the media space, and the lack of an effective framework to hold erring media operatives accountable, overall community radio stations, and to a lesser extent, newspapers and TV were instrumental in voter education and educating the public. AYV TV, for example, collaborated with CSOs to organize a historic presidential debate in February 2018. While listenership and viewership were limited to areas with television and radio coverage, with only 41.6 percent of respondents reporting that they watched the debate compared to 54.4 that did not (See table 10), it nevertheless influenced some voter choices for president, with nearly 30 percent of respondents indicating that the debate helped them decide who to vote for (See Table 12). The lower access of women to information is reflected in their lower numbers that reported access to radio as well as the debate, as well as their higher reliance on family members to inform their candidate selection.

Table 10 Distribution of Respondents Who Watched the Presidential Debate

Did you watch presidential debate	
<i>I can't remember</i>	4.0
No	54.4
Yes	41.6

Table 11 Regional Distribution of Respondents Who Watched the Presidential Debate

Region	I can't remember	No	Yes
East	6.0	54.4	39.7
North	2.3	66.6	31.0
North West	6.5	53.0	40.5
South	3.2	53.1	43.7
West	2.3	45.3	52.4
National	4.0	54.4	41.6

Table 12: The impact of the Debate on Voters

Impact of Debate	
<i>The debate helped me decide who to vote for</i>	29.5
<i>I already knew who I was voting for so, the debate did not change anything</i>	69.4
<i>No opinion</i>	1.2

The EU also affirmed the media in their evaluation report writing that “during the campaign period, the monitored media regularly covered the election process and candidates in a variety of programmes. The presidential debate gave voters the opportunity to compare political platforms of six key candidates.”¹⁸

3.7. VOTER PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The international community continues to play a significant role in Sierra Leone’s democratic processes. While funding for EMBs and elections are derived largely from the government, the international community makes significant financial, technical and logistical contributions to elections in the country. International support to elections gives donors a stake in the electoral process. Support for elections comes with demands for adherence to international principles of electoral integrity. While international support promotes adherence to electoral integrity and inclusive politics, it comes at a cost. Foreign demands on electoral conduct can be portrayed by some interest groups/parties as a western imposition or as robbing local group, organisations and institutions of ownership. This notion was particularly evident when the incumbent accused external actors of supporting opposition parties to promote regime change.

The survey therefore asked if voters trust the neutrality of the international community in the elections. Up to 78.8 percent of citizens believed that the international community played a neutral role in the elections, although there was some variation by district, with higher figures reported in districts such as Kono (96.8 percent), Bonthe (95.0 percent), and Bo (92.1 percent) and considerably lower perceptions of neutrality reported in Karene (43.2 percent) and Bombali (67.1 percent). In general, the international community enjoyed slightly lower approval ratings in many areas in the North and Northwestern districts of the country where some respondents believed that they helped to decide the elections in the SLPP’s favour, according to enumerator reports during debriefing sessions. Such concerns were also echoed by senior officials of the now opposition APC who accused members of the international community of bias in handling issues during the elections following the final electoral results announcement.

¹⁸ European Union Election Observation Mission, Preliminary Statement, March 9, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_eom_sierra_leone_preliminary_statement090318_1.pdf.

Table 13: Citizens perception of the neutrality of the international community

District	Yes	No	Don't know	No opinion
<i>Kono</i>	96.80	1.10	1.80	0.30
<i>Bonthe</i>	95.00	0.00	3.40	1.60
<i>Moyamba</i>	94.30	0.00	2.90	2.80
<i>Bo</i>	92.10	3.80	2.90	1.20
<i>Kenema</i>	87.20	4.90	7.00	0.90
<i>Western Rural</i>	82.80	13.10	2.50	1.60
<i>Kailahun</i>	80.90	0.70	17.70	0.70
<i>Kambia</i>	80.60	7.20	11.10	1.10
<i>Port Loko</i>	78.30	14.70	5.70	1.30
<i>Koinadugu</i>	75.00	14.70	10.30	0.00
<i>Western Urban</i>	74.70	10.10	12.70	2.50
<i>Falaba</i>	73.30	3.30	21.70	1.70
<i>Tonkolili</i>	70.10	13.40	16.50	0.00
<i>Pujehun</i>	69.70	3.80	26.50	0.00
<i>Bombali</i>	67.10	27.90	5.00	0.00
<i>Karene</i>	43.20	14.20	35.20	7.40
National	78.82	8.31	11.43	1.44

Not only was the international community active during the run-up to the elections, they also provided considerable funding and other support to the electoral process itself . For instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was instrumental in preventive diplomacy. The EU Observer Mission noted that during the elections, the government failed to provide any funds for voter education and these had to be provided as an emergency solution by the international community. Members of the international community also took part as election observers, including the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, EU, Carter Centre, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, among others. In addition to their observation role, some helped to mediate directly and defray potentially explosive situations. One example was when the SLPP situation room was invaded by security operatives on the suspicion of hacking following the close of the March 7 polls. The head of the ECOWAS Observer Mission, H.E John Dramani Mahama stepped in to defuse a potentially volatile situation.¹⁹ The West Africa sub-region threw its full weight behind the electoral process with Nigeria donating equipment and Ghana and Liberia leading preventive diplomacy efforts including negotiating with presidential aspirants and political parties to respect the outcome of the elections.

4. VOTER BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT POLITICS

This section closely examines voter behaviours in the 2018 elections and seeks to understand citizen's comprehension, perceptions and attitudes towards politics and political leaders. More specifically, we examine the demographic distribution of the 2018 voters, their perceptions about current leaders, the influence of civic education and policy messages on voter behaviours versus money and gifts from political parties. We analyse how key policy interventions such as the Presidential Debate helped shape voting decisions and patterns. We note that the districts of Sierra Leone are experiencing varying patterns, pressures and outcomes. Some districts are becoming more tolerant and open to alternative views, while others, especially mono-ethnic communities are under immense pressure to remain less open. However, overall, the 2018 elections show that Sierra Leone has made progress in deepening democracy, as reflected by some indicators including increased democratic debates, peaceful campaigns, civil society engagement and respect for human rights and the rule of law, and civil liberties. However, democracy remains vulnerable, and requires greater institutional and procedural certainty to be consolidated.

4.1 Overview of Voting Behavior

About 16 percent of registered voters did not vote. When asked the reason why they did not vote a good number (27.4 percent) reported that they were not in their communities at the time of voting.

Table 14 Reasons for not Voting

Top Reasons for Not Voting	%
<i>I traveled</i>	27.4
<i>Health issues</i>	17.7
<i>Refused to answer</i>	16.1
<i>Someone voted for me/belief of the community</i>	14.5
<i>Voting will not change my condition</i>	8.1
<i>I was unable to vote</i>	6.5
<i>There were no good candidates</i>	1.6
<i>I lost my voter card</i>	1.6
<i>No voter ID</i>	1.6
<i>Voting is not for people like me</i>	1.6
<i>Afraid of violence in my community</i>	1.6

KIIs attributed this high number of people who were not in their communities on polling day to uncertainties on election date. A year to the elections there were campaigns for extension of the tenure of the president which was followed by delay in announcement of election date. Nearly 18 percent said they had health issues. One in every seven people who did not vote said either someone voted for them or on behalf of their community.

4.1.1. Age Distribution of Party Supporters/Voters

The survey also asked respondents about their choice of presidential candidates in the first round of the poll. Based on official results of the NEC the leading aspirants were Julius Maada Bio – SLPP– (43.3 percent); Samura Kamara – APC – (42.7 percent); Yumkella Kande – NGC

– (6.9 percent) and Samuel Sam-Sumana – C4C – 87,720 (3.5 percent). The survey's results mirrors the NEC's published results (see table below). The survey shows that about half of first-time voters voted for the SLPP. This is not surprising. The SLPP campaigned on a strong message of free education and presented a relatively young presidential ticket compared to its main contender, the APC. A large share of NGC voters were also youth. Over half of voters above 60 years voted for the APC.

Table 15 Distribution of Voting Patterns by Age of Respondents

Age	SLPP	APC	NGC	C4C	OTHERS
18-23	51.30	33.70	12.00	2.80	0.30
24-35	44.30	42.80	8.70	3.80	0.50
36-45	49.90	40.90	5.80	3.10	0.30
46-59	41.00	40.70	4.60	8.40	5.30
60+	37.30	54.70	4.50	3.60	0.00
National	44.70	42.56	7.12	4.34	1.28

4.1.1 Citizen Perceptions About Democracy

The remarkably high (82 percent) voter turn-out in the 2018 elections emphatically demonstrates the willingness of citizens to participate in democratic processes. Many Sierra Leoneans view voting as a fundamental right and obligation, which they must always exercise. Additionally, a growing number of citizens are expressing their core belief in the power of democracy. When asked whether they thought elections could make a difference in the way Sierra Leone was governed, ninety-one percent (91 percent) of respondents said yes. The table below shows that almost as many men (92 percent) as women (90 percent) share this belief. This represents a significant positive shift in voter perceptions over a period of about one year. In the first KAP study conducted in March 2017, about seventy-nine percent (79 percent) of citizens held this view.

Table 16 Opinion on Democracy

Opinions on Democracy	Gender		Overall
	Female	Male	
Elections can make a difference in how my country is being run	90.0	91.8	90.9
Elections do not lead to any changes in how my country is being run	3.6	3.6	3.6
No opinion	6.4	4.6	5.5

Increased support for democracy is understandable. Sierra Leone returned to democracy in 1996 after 23 years of a one party system followed by four years of military rule. The Constitution stipulates a five-year term for every elected government and that no president can rule for more than two terms. In the 2007 elections, citizens registered their desire for change. Those elections brought in Ernest Bai Koroma's All People's Congress (APC). After two terms in office, the 2018 elections gave voters another opportunity to examine whether they should continue with the APC or choose a fresh party.

The study documented regional variation in views about the importance of democracy. For the Southern and Eastern regions, where the ruling SLPP secured the majority of its votes,

enumerators during debrief sessions indicated that many respondents stated that democratic elections helped put an end to their regional exclusion. There was a growing feeling of exclusion in those two regions, especially in districts such as Kono, where residents felt their hometown brother, Sam Sumana, was illegally sacked as Vice President; in Kenema where CSOs had written an open letter to ex-President Koroma accusing his administration of depriving the district of road infrastructure projects; and Pujehun where an agricultural company had grabbed land from many landowners. We noted a growing sense of confidence among voters that citizens now fully reserve the power to exercise their right to replace an administration through the ballot box.

Again, in debriefing sessions, enumerators reported that respondents from the Northern region, the base of the then ruling APC, said that even though they were not happy that their party lost power, the fact that the elections made way for a peaceful transfer of power, means that democracy can guarantee national stability. There are clear justifications for the Northern region to be concerned about peace and stability. The region received some internally displaced people following post-election violence in Kono and there were tensions in key districts – Falaba, Kambia, Koinadugu and Tonkolili (see details on the section on violence) during polls and in the period awaiting results.

The Western Area, considered largely to be a swing district, also recorded large numbers of respondents that indicated a belief that elections can make a difference. Votes in the Western area also seem to indicate an electorate responsive to various media reports on corruption²⁰ and the lack of respect for law and order. Votes that the APC recorded in the region during the 2012 elections went down from 75 percent to 56 percent in 2018.

4.1.2. Changing Support for Political Parties

A number of scholars as well as followers of politics in Sierra Leone have argued that ethnicity and regionalism are the primary considerations that motivate how people vote in Sierra Leone. Two political parties, the SLPP and APC have dominated the politics of Sierra Leone since independence and largely practice identity politics. Part of the objectives of the Standing Together for Democracy Consortium (STDC) was to change political behaviours and increase consideration for policy in the calculus of voters. This section examines the major factors that motivated voter leanings in the 2018 elections and seems to indicate declining reliance on ethnicity to inform voter choices.

When respondents were asked if they support any party, 87.2 percent responded in the affirmative. This is similar to the percentage of people in the March 2017 KAP who admitted to supporting a particular party. It is however interesting to note that regional support for political parties varies. Respondents in the South (95 percent) and the East (90.6 percent) showed stronger support for a political party than those in the West and North-Western regions.

In the KAP study of March 2017, 73 percent of 2012 registered voters said they would vote for their party's presidential candidate in the 2018 election. However, When asked the same question in June 2018 after the elections, only 61.8 percent of voters reported that they voted for the same party's presidential candidate in both the 2012 and 2018 elections. About 13 percent stated they were first-time voters while 21.6 categorically stated that they voted for a different party this time. SLPP stronghold districts such as Pujehun (83.2 percent, Bo (81

²⁰ There were reports of misappropriation of Ebola funds, Mudslide funds involving to ranking officials. Transparency International rated Sierra Leone top on its Bribery Index in 2013.

percent), Bonthe (79.6 percent) and Kailahun (75.6 percent) showed the strongest ongoing allegiance to their parties while in all swing districts (Western area and Kono) and the competitive districts of Koinadugu, Karene and Kambia only 41 to 53 percent of 2012 voters voted for the same party in 2018 as in 2012.

Table 17 Do you support any party?

Region	Yes	No	Refused to answer/Prefer not to say	Don't know
<i>East</i>	90.6	6.2	2.8	0.4
<i>North</i>	86.9	9.6	1.8	1.7
<i>North West</i>	79.9	13.5	5.7	0.8
<i>South</i>	95.7	2.4	1.8	0.0
<i>West</i>	81.0	11.8	6.8	0.4
National	87.2	8.4	3.7	0.6

These shifts in attitudes and practices can be attributed to the power of information. The introduction of new players who campaigned vigorously in swing districts and competitive areas and the effective use of civic education messages through the radio, music, social media, and candidate town hall debates all appear to have influenced voter electoral choices and attitudes in the past twelve months. As we illustrate later under the section on Electoral Violence, most incidences of violence occurred in districts and communities that experienced the biggest shifts in mind sets and voter choices.

Table 18 Did you vote for the party you voted in 2012

District	Yes	Don't remember	No	Not applicable (first time voter)	Prefer not to say
<i>Pujehun</i>	83.2	0.4	6.2	9.8	0.4
<i>Bo</i>	81.0	0.0	7.0	11.7	0.3
<i>Bonthe</i>	79.6	0.0	3.5	16.0	0.9
<i>Bombali</i>	75.6	0.0	8.3	15.4	0.7
<i>Kenema</i>	73.0	3.5	8.9	14.0	0.6
<i>Moyamba</i>	68.4	0.0	16.0	14.5	1.2
<i>Kailahun</i>	67.3	0.0	17.2	13.9	1.7
<i>Port Loko</i>	65.2	0.7	19.1	14.7	0.3
<i>Tonkolili</i>	64.8	1.0	19.2	14.1	1.0
<i>Western Rural</i>	53.1	2.6	24.0	13.6	6.8
<i>Western Urban</i>	52.8	0.8	31.0	10.5	4.9
<i>Koinadugu</i>	49.3	1.8	35.4	13.6	0.0
<i>Kono</i>	47.9	1.8	36.3	11.8	2.2
<i>Karene</i>	46.4	10.3	26.7	13.1	3.4
<i>Kambia</i>	41.2	3.4	41.6	12.2	1.7
<i>Falaba</i>	40.7	0.0	46.1	13.2	0.0
National	61.8	1.6	21.6	13.3	1.6

Sierra Leone ran a four-tier election for president, parliament, local council and mayoral candidates. The study reveals that 73.8 percent of voters cast their votes for candidates from the same party, while 21 percent voted for more than one political party, usually distributing their vote-share for the four different positions between several parties. As expected, between 70 to 95 percent of voters in SLPP and APC stronghold districts voted for all candidates from the

same party while an average of 33 percent of voters in swing and competitive districts split their votes among the various parties – one party for president and a different party for parliamentary and/or local council. Nearly 22 percent of respondents in Karene district, the hometown of the APC presidential candidate refused to comment on their voting pattern.

Table 19: Sharing of votes among party candidates in the 4-tier election

District	All candidates I voted for are from the same party	Prefer not to say	I voted one party for president and a different party for parliamentary and/or local council	None of the above	Don't know
<i>Bonthe</i>	95.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Moyamba</i>	93.1	0.0	5.7	0.0	1.1
<i>Pujehun</i>	92.4	0.0	5.4	1.6	0.5
<i>Tonkolili</i>	85.5	1.3	12.5	0.3	0.3
<i>Kenema</i>	85.4	4.0	8.8	1.2	0.6
<i>Bo</i>	82.1	0.0	17.9	0.0	0.0
<i>Kailahun</i>	75.6	0.3	21.1	0.0	3.0
<i>Bombali</i>	71.7	4.2	22.1	1.3	0.8
<i>Port Loko</i>	69.3	2.7	25.0	2.3	0.7
<i>Western Urban</i>	68.9	1.3	23.1	1.0	5.7
<i>Western Rural</i>	65.8	0.8	30.0	2.5	0.8
<i>Kambia</i>	64.4	0.6	31.7	0.6	2.8
<i>Karene</i>	63.5	21.6	9.5	4.1	1.4
<i>Kono</i>	57.4	3.6	36.5	1.1	1.4
<i>Koinadugu</i>	53.4	0.0	41.4	5.2	0.0
<i>Falaba</i>	47.5	0.8	50.0	0.8	0.8
National	73.8	2.3	21.0	1.2	1.7

4.1.3. Voting Calculus

A number of factors were considered when voters made their choices. Respondents were asked what was the primary motivation influencing their vote. The policies and programmes of a candidate/party featured as the most important consideration in the 2018 elections. About 55.1 percent of all voters stated that they voted based on the campaign/manifesto promises of the candidate. Political parties presented highly experienced candidates to the electorate. The SLPP was represented by a former military ruler of Sierra Leone, the APC was represented by an accomplished practitioner who has served as Minister of Finance, Minister of Foreign affairs, Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone and staff of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the NGC presented a diplomat that has served at the highest level of the United Nations – Under Secretary of the UN. Finally, the Coalition 4 Change (C4C) was represented by a former Vice President of the country.

4.1.4. Policy Based Voting

Nearly 74 percent of voters who opted for the NGC's, Alhaji Dr. Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella said they voted for him because of his experience, honesty and message. While nearly 60 percent SLPP voter said they supported the Bio ticket because of experience, honesty and message, about 46.7 percent of APC voters voted Samura Kamara for the same reason.

The C4C candidate had the largest (21.8 percent) share of voters who supported his bid due to their shared ethnic backgrounds. Voters in Bonthe and Kono —came out as the most ethnically conscious with 15.2% and 11.8% of voters in those two districts stating that a candidate's

ethnicity was the most important consideration for them when voting for president during the 2018 elections.

Table 20: Registered Voters

District	Registered voters 2018	% of national	Sample size
Kono	186,095	5.9%	7.0%
Kailahun	165,753	5.2%	7.5%
Kenema	280,141	8.8%	8.3%
	631,989	19.9%	22.8%
Koinadugu	84,293	2.7%	2.9%
Bombali	187,664	5.9%	6.1%
Tonkolili	204,231	6.4%	7.5%
Falaba	65,761	2.1%	3.0%
	541,949	17.1%	19.5%
Kambia	155,484	4.9%	4.5%
Port Loko	233,962	7.4%	7.6%
Karene	101,160	3.2%	3.7%
	490,606	15.4%	15.9%
Moyamba	147,041	4.6%	4.4%
Bonthe	92,183	2.9%	3.0%
Bo	284,348	8.9%	8.6%
Pujehun	101,160	3.2%	4.7%
	624,732	19.7%	20.7%
Western rural	282,358	8.9%	6.1%
Western urban	606,939	19.1%	15.0%
	889,297	28.0%	21.1%

While ethnicity continues to be a primary consideration for voters, policy calculations seem to be gaining momentum in the conversations on elections as Fridy and M'Cormack-Hale have noted elsewhere²¹. There were quite a number of billboards, radio and TV ads portraying policy positions on education, corruption and other issues. Political parties organised high profile events around the launch of party manifestos. A little over 4 percent of voters chose the Bio ticket because they felt the SLPP had a greater chance of winning.

Table 21 Reasons for Choices of Presidential Candidates

Reasons for Presidential Choice	Party Choice for President				
	APC	SLPP	NGC	C4C	Total
Experience, commitment, honesty and message of candidate	46.7	58.9	73.6	41.2	55.1
Candidate is my party's choice	32.6	22.6	11.1	23.5	22.5
Candidate promised to do something for my community	11.2	6.2	2.9	5.9	6.6
Candidate is a member of my ethnic group	0.6	2	1.1	21.8	6.4
Candidate is family choice (parent/spouse)	3.6	2.8	3.9	1.7	3.0
Other considerations	2	2.5	5	1.7	2.7
Candidate had greater chance of winning	1.4	4.2	1.4	0	1.8
Candidate is the choice of my chief/local leader	1.5	0.4	0.4	3.4	1.4
Personally know candidate	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.6
Candidate gave me gift	0.1				0.0

²¹ Fridy, Kevin and Fredline M'Cormack-Hale. "Sierra Leone's 2007 Elections: Monumental and More of the Same," *African Studies Quarterly*, 12 (4): 39-57, 2011.

Table 22: Voting Considerations by Gender

Considerations When Voting by Gender		
	Female	Male
Policies and programmes of candidate and the party	51.8	58.9
Candidate is my party's choice	35.7	29.7
Candidate had the best chance of winning	6.9	6.6
Candidate is a member of my ethnic group	2.8	2.8
Other	2.8	2.1

Table 21 above shows that ethnicity is the least important consideration for voters. While some of these results can likely be attributed to a desire on the part of voters to express the most socially desirable response, the high figures do seem to indicate that policies played a strong role in these elections as well. These results run counter to the predominant view on elections in Sierra Leone, which is that ethnicity is the primary calculus shaping voter choices. In addition, as argued in another paper,²² human security and livelihood considerations were also dominant issues for Sierra Leone voters and these considerations were stronger among voters in swing and competitive districts.²³

Table 23 Presidential Results 2007, 2012, Round 1 - 2018

District	2007		2012		2018		APC % Change 2012 to 2018	SLPP % Change 2012 to 2018
	APC	SLPP	APC	SLPP	APC	SLPP		
Kailahun	9.4	90.6	22.6	73.3	10.5	81.9	-53.5	11.7
Kenema	16.9	83.1	18.7	77.9	11.0	83.8	-41.1	7.4
Kono	41.5	58.6	58.2	37.1	20.1	21.5	-65.4	42.0
Bombali	89.9	10.1	93.2	4.4	86.2	8.5	-7.5	93.1
Koinadugu	64.6	35.4	86.4	9.1	56.3	27.2	-34.8	198.1
Tonkolili	88.7	11.3	92.6	4.4	76.7	9.8	-17.1	122.2
Kambia	80.9	19.1	82.2	13.0	39.3	10.2	-48.9	21.5
Port Loko	88.2	11.9	90.2	5.6	71.3	9.3	-20.9	66.7
Bo	26.0	74.0	16.7	77.1	10.3	83.7	-38.3	8.5
Bonthe	41.4	58.6	11.7	80.6	4.6	89.8	-60.6	11.4
Moyamba	34.7	65.3	26.2	65.3	17.9	73.5	-31.6	12.5
Pujehun	7.0	93.0	15.5	74.7	7.9	86.1	-49.0	15.2
Western Rural	68.3	31.7	74.3	23.4	55.8	34.7	-24.8	48.2
Western Urban	70.8	29.2	71.4	27.3	57.8	33.1	-19	21.2
National	54.6	45.4	58.7	37.4	42.7	43.3	-27.2	15.8

²² IGR – Analysis of the 2018 Election Results – March 2018.

²³ Standing Together for Democracy Consortium - KAP survey classified swing districts as those that satisfy two conditions: (1) They changed allegiance between parties in presidential elections in 2002, 2007, 2012 and (2) the margin of defeat in the last election in 2012 is less than 55%. These include Western rural and Western Urban and Kono. Competitive districts satisfy only two conditions: Kabala, Kailahun, Kambia and Moyamba. Party stronghold districts satisfy none of these conditions in the last three elections. These include opposition SLPP districts of Bo, Bonthe, Kenema and Pujehun and ruling party APC areas of Bombali, Port Loko, Tonkolili,

The table above shows that voting patterns are largely consistent with this data. (See table above illustrating the performance of political parties by district). The argument can be made that APC lost votes in a number of areas due to voters' calculations on various issues. Put another way, voters rejected the APC because the APC failed to address issues they deemed important. Consider the following examples: In the swing district of Kono, MP candidates campaigned on two issues: Unfair dismissals: The sacking of former VP Samuel Sam Sumana and Emerson Lamina, the former Mayor of Kono; and the pledge to hold mining companies to account. Emerson Lamina who won the MP seat for C4C during the elections was dismissed as mayor of Kono under the APC party, with several newspaper articles reporting that his dismissal was due to his stance against Koidu Holdings: he had taken them to court over non-payment of appropriate mining royalties to Koidu city. While the perception that APC had wronged a "son of the soil" undoubtedly entered the calculus of voters, it is likely that the issue of mismanagement of mining revenue was a contributing factor as well. C4C won almost all parliamentary seats in the district in this current election. The ruling APC lost over 65 percent of the votes it had earned in Kono in 2007, forcing the party to a distant third.

Voters across the six opposition controlled districts in the south and east, namely, Bo, Moyamba, Bonthe, Pujehun, Kenema and Kailahun, all complained about perceived marginalisation and exclusion under the ruling party in the last 10 years. Overall, APC performance dropped by an average of 53 percent in the opposition stronghold of Southern and Eastern Sierra Leone: for example, they dropped by 60 percent in Bonthe, 53 percent in Kailahun and 41 percent in Kenema.

In Pujehun, where SLPP increased its presidential votes from 74.7 percent in 2012 to 86.1 percent in 2018, land issues have been a source of concern. One independent candidate, Honorable Siaka Sama combined forces with four other land rights campaigners. Collectively, they contested for one MP position and four local council seats as independent candidates in Malen chiefdom where large scale land acquisition by SOCFIN, a Belgian agricultural company, has given rise to grievances. The five men had accused the local Paramount Chief of colluding with the central government and SOCFIN to provide peasant farmers with unfair deals. The region has high rates of poverty, despite agricultural wealth and there have been several reports of human rights abuses, with confrontations reported between landowners in Malen and the local police in Pujehun. Although Pujehun is seen as a stronghold for the SLPP, Sama and three others were able to win as independent candidates, arguably as a result of the role they played in advocating for land rights. There is considerable expectation for Sama and his colleagues to promote land reforms in the next parliament.

The salience of policy issues can also be seen in the Northern region where new districts and chiefdoms were created few months to the polls. APC lost nearly 30 percent of its votes in the northern region with Kambia (48 percent fall), Koinadugu (34.8 percent fall), and Port Loko (18.9 percent fall) accounting for the highest losses. Three issues dominated the campaign in the northern region: (a) livelihood security, (b) the fallout following Koroma's handpicking of a candidate in the last party primaries in Makeni, which some northern figures viewed as the over-personalization of power; and (c) the emergence of Kandeh Yumkella with a strong message of change. While again, the argument can be made that ethnicity played a role (for example, Yumkella is from Kambia and some areas in the North were upset that candidates from their area were not picked), voters switched over to SLPP in communities such as Bumbuna in Tonkolili where residents were concerned over the fact that the Hydro-Electric Dam based at

Bumbuna consistently failed to supply power to their community but provided power to President Koroma's hometown, Makeni free of cost for over a year.

In the Western Area (Freetown and environs) where government made visible improvements in road construction, the ruling party lost just over 20 percent of its 75 percent of votes earned in 2012, and the opposition made significant inroads into their electoral majority, by 36 percent on average. Many political analysts blame the comparatively poor showing of the ruling party in Freetown on a series of policy failures including lawlessness, corruption scandals and poor service delivery, particularly in the education and water sectors, both of which were cited as serious concerns for Freetown in the March 2017 KAP study. The opposition campaigned on education and the promotion of law and order in Freetown, which appears to have paid off, with SLPP taking four of the 28 seats in the Western Area that had been previously entirely controlled by the ruling party. Considering the ruling party's financial investment in the campaign, perhaps the heaviest in the history of Sierra Leone's democracy, the APC's decline in vote share can be seen as a considerable shift toward issue-based voting in Sierra Leone. It is safe to conclude that it would not have been possible for SLPP to win four seats in Freetown by relying only on voters with southeastern origin. All SLPP candidates who won in Freetown are homegrown Freetonians or of northern descent.

4.1.5. *The Dynamics of Ethnicity in the 2018 Elections*

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of voting patterns by ethnicity further demonstrates the diminishing salience of ethnicity in voting considerations. Historically, Sierra Leone politics has relied heavily on ethnic mobilisation of votes by the two dominant parties: the SLPP and the APC. The SLPP for the most part draws a majority of its support from the Mende ethnic group in the South and East, while the APC draws primarily from another majority ethnic group, the Temnes from the North and Western regions. The two dominant tribes are roughly equivalent in size and together make up 62 percent of the population. Each group tries to mobilise smaller ethnic groups such as the Fullas, Limbas, Kissis within their respective regions to increase its chance of winning.

Table 24 Party choices of voters by ethnicity

Ethnicity	PARTY CHOICE					I'll rather not disclose	Did not vote
	SLPP	APC	NGC	C4C	OTHERS		
Susu	33.30	19.60	41.70	1.00	0.00	2.30	2.10
Madingo	50.50	26.30	17.90	1.10	0.00	4.20	0.00
Loko	15.20	65.20	13.60	0.00	0.00	6.10	0.00
Kuranko	32.40	44.40	12.70	4.90	0.00	3.50	2.10
Krio	34.50	41.20	12.40	4.10	0.50	5.70	1.50
Yalunka	27.90	52.50	11.50	0.00	3.30	3.30	1.60
Fulla	49.60	24.90	9.90	0.40	0.80	12.90	1.60
Temne	15.90	66.80	8.00	0.30	0.80	7.00	1.30
Sherbro	84.80	6.50	4.30	0.00	0.00	2.20	2.20
Limba	13.70	73.80	2.60	0.30	0.30	7.00	3.20
Mende	86.90	7.10	2.40	0.10	0.10	1.80	1.80
Kono	24.70	15.20	2.00	49.50	0.00	6.60	2.00
Kissi	84.50	6.00	1.20	0.00	0.00	6.00	2.40
National	40.93	39.97	8.68	4.05	0.39	4.64	1.45

In the 2018 elections presidential aspirants from APC and SLPP were from the two dominant ethnic groups. Both parties selected vice-presidential candidates from minority Fullah groups to balance the ticket, the first time that either party had a Fullah candidate on the presidential ticket. Other presidential candidates from the two other parties rounding off the top four were

from minority ethnic groups: with Yumkella of NGC from the Susu group and C4C's Sam Sumana from the Kono group.

If ethnicity had been the only voting consideration, one would have expected all Temnes to vote APC and all Mendes to vote SLPP; and an even split of the Fullah vote among the two parties. Instead, it would appear that despite the continuing salience of ethnicity, the 2018 election was largely a referendum on the ruling party. Nearly 16 percent of Temne voters voted for the SLPP compared to only seven percent of Mende voters that voted for the APC presidential candidate. About half of all Fullas largely based in APC strongholds voted SLPP while only 24 percent voted for the APC. The SLPP also carried a large share of Northern based ethnic minorities such as the Madingos (50.5 percent), Susu (33.3 percent) and Koranko (32 percent). The decision of these groups, largely APC voters, to join the SLPP, reflects rational calculations by some voters rather than ethnic considerations alone.

Recognising this loss of minority votes in the Northern region, some elites reacted by employing identity-based politics to mobilise voters in the Northern region ahead of the second round of voting. Some ruling party officials tried to stoke tensions by suggesting that voters in the South and East were motivated primarily by ethnic considerations as reflected in the large numbers who voted for Bio, and suggested that the North should do the same.

4.2. The Influence of Money on Voters

From financing delegates in marathon party primaries, to financing campaign ads and providing money and gifts to large crowds and opinion leaders, election financing was a significant resource drain for politicians. Election financing is particularly important for a country that has consistently been at the bottom of the Human Development Index for decades. A large proportion of the electorate is income poor and over 40 percent have no formal schooling. Finance can be vital to electoral competition. Money can enable parties and candidates to be competitive in elections and can also distort the electoral process. In the last 20 years of competitive party politics, ruling parties tend to command more resources (than other parties) owing to their access to state resources. Access to campaign resources in parties is also skewed, and women and youth are usually at a disadvantage, which militate against the ability of many citizens to compete fairly for power and leadership. Questions in this section are therefore aligned to the Consortium's broader campaign for making elections meaningful and affordable. There was a general belief within the programme team that when the cost of elections is affordable, it will minimize corruption in governance. Campaign financing is particularly important for a country where the risk of corruption is high.

Political finance remains under-regulated in Sierra Leone — and fund-raising by parties and candidates is largely unsupervised. For example, complaints from opposition parties about China donating a seven-story building to the ruling party as their national headquarters and reports of numerous business deals struck between China and Sierra Leone in the lead up to elections did not result in any discussion, penalty or sanction from the political party regulatory body — the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC). Two weeks before the polls, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and China signed a controversial contract for the construction of a \$318 Million airport which did not go through mandatory parliamentary approval. Amidst accusations of providing campaign materials for the ruling party, there were pictures of Chinese nationals and the Chinese flag in ruling party campaign rallies. The PPRC did not take action on these accusations.

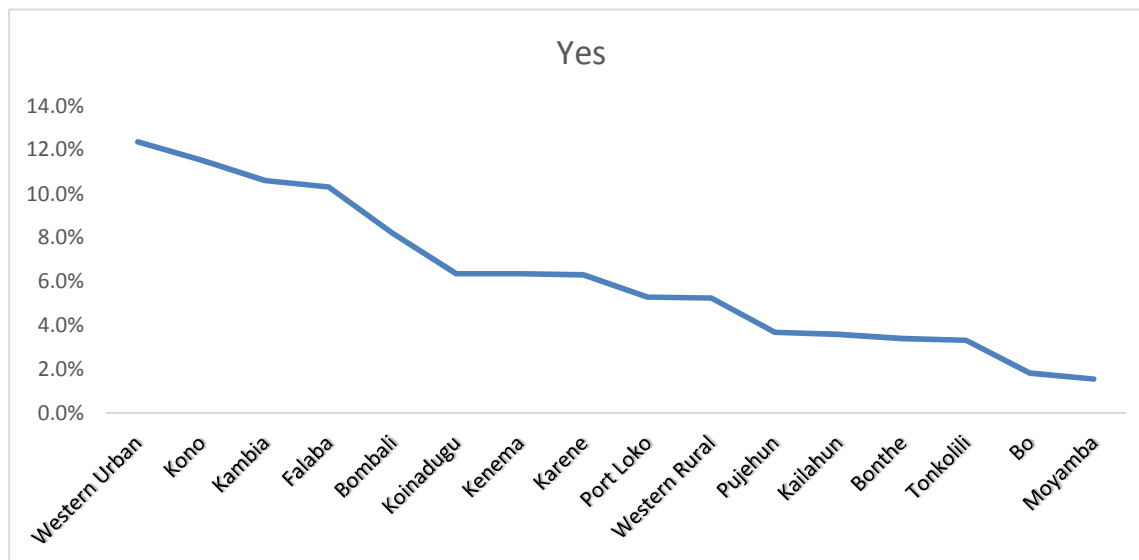


Figure 2 Vote Buying in the 2018 Elections

The survey asked if voters received direct cash or gifts in return for their votes. About 27.5 percent of voters said they witnessed vote-buying (a measure of respondents who personally admitted to receiving gifts), whereas 66.7 percent of voters said that they did not witness any such instances, and nearly 6 percent of respondents stated that they preferred not to say. When asked if they personally received money/gifts in exchange for votes, only 10 percent of voters responded in the affirmative. This means that only one out of three voters who witnessed vote-buying personally received gifts. However, given the sensitive nature of this question, one can assume that respondents find it easier to say that others have accepted gifts than to admit to personally taking gifts themselves. Thus, it is likely that the true figure is under-reported.

There were many photos making rounds on social media of a government minister, a presidential aspirant and political party campaign teams making cash payments to voters. Respondents also reported that there were particular business contractors of the government who provided tangible goods and materials in places like Falaba, Kabala, Kono and Kambia in return for votes. For example, in Falaba and Kabala a businessman who is the recipient of a multi-million dollar road construction contract was reported to have promised to construct a football field and roads in return for votes. There are also media reports of payments made to certain chiefs to mobilise votes for a political party.

Western Urban and Kono—both swing districts—appear to have been the most fertile ground for politically motivated elections spending during the elections. Among respondents in the Western Urban district, which consists of the capital Freetown and its environs, 12.4 percent of respondents witnessed vote-buying. The same number of voters stated that they personally received money/gifts in exchange for their vote. Kono district recorded the highest cases of voters who stated that they personally received gifts/money.

The districts with the least prevalence of vote-buying according to this study are Kailahun, Pujehun, Bonthe, and Moyamba. While this survey did not specifically ask respondents to identify which party or candidate offered them bribes for votes, a separate question required voters to specify their reasoning for selecting a particular candidate. This revealed that only

0.1% of voted for the incumbent All People's Congress, Dr. Samura Kamara because he/his party offered them money/gifts; No other aspirant's name or political party was mentioned by respondents.

Many key experts interviewed said that the 2018 election has arguably been the most expensive for many parties since the country's return to multi-party rule. However, although resources shaped the political competition for the period, they did not automatically lead to victory. The ruling party which undoubtedly spent the most resources, lost the election. As can be seen in subsequent sections, other variables such as the popularity of party candidates, the track record of the regime and organisational capacity of the opposition SLPP campaign also played a role.

4.3. Influence of Information on the 2018 Election

Increasing citizens access to information was an important area of work for the Consortium. The Standing Together for Democracy Consortium (STDC) project was driven by the logic that access to information empowers the electorate to be well-informed about political processes with due regard for their best interests: to elect political office holders; to participate in decision-making processes on the implementation of laws and policies; and to hold public officials accountable for their acts or omissions in the execution of their duties. For this reason consideration of the right to access information was a priority from the outset of the project. A citizen's KAP study was conducted a year ahead of the election to establish a baseline of knowledge, identify the barriers to information and the opportunities to address this. The results of the study were shared through multiple channels including music by top hitting local musicians. A citizen movement "My Vote, My Life" was established and consultations among 720 groups culminated in a Citizen's Manifesto which was a synthesis of the aspirations of voters to guide the conversation and engagements on elections. The first ever presidential debate was organised in Freetown while at least 50 percent of MP constituencies had town hall debates. All of the key Consortium partners made wide use of community radio, community meetings, social media and TV to engage the electorate. According to some observers, the 2018 election period provided the largest access of information to citizens since 1996.

The next section analyses citizen access to information and its effects on voter behaviors and attitudes towards elections. We take a closer look at the impact of the presidential debate on voter choices.

4.3.1. Sources of Information for Decision-Making In the 2018 Elections

Traditional media continues to play a dominant role in information dissemination in Sierra Leone, with radio in particular playing a prominent role. Almost 64 percent of voters stated that radio was their most important source of information during the elections. Direct information from trusted relatives and family members—family heads, spouses and/or children were described as the second most popular source of election-related information (11.7percent) followed closely by political parties' outreach and sensitization tours (7.22 percent). Television was mentioned by less than 5 percent of respondents. This is unsurprising considering the low penetration of TV channels, particularly in rural areas. The influence of chiefs and religious leaders appears to have declined ---- dropping from 15 percent of voter who trust chiefs as the most trusted source of information to 3 percent over the course of a year. Internet-based media such as Facebook and WhatsApp are even less utilized with only 1.92 percent of voters

identifying them as major sources of reliable information. The National Commission for Democracy and newspapers seem to have the least influence on voters.

Table 25 Party Choice for President in First Round

<i>Party Choice for President in First Round</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>North West</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>National</i>
<i>Radio</i>	62.80	57.50	67.50	77.80	54.70	64.06
<i>My family head/my spouse/My children</i>	8.70	13.00	14.40	10.40	12.40	11.78
<i>Political party candidates/officials</i>	14.40	8.10	1.30	4.50	7.80	7.22
<i>TV</i>	2.90	2.90	2.40	2.30	13.90	4.88
<i>My friends</i>	2.90	5.10	6.40	1.00	3.80	3.84
<i>Chief/religious leader</i>	1.70	7.80	3.00	2.50	0.40	3.08
<i>Social media</i>	1.40	0.30	3.10	0.40	3.30	1.92
<i>NEC</i>	3.20	3.20	1.30	0.60	0.60	1.78
<i>Youth/women's leader</i>	0.70	1.20	0.30	0.00	0.80	0.60
<i>Other</i>	1.02	1.00	0.50	0.50	1.01	0.88
<i>Newspaper</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80	0.16
<i>National Commission for Democracy</i>	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.04

4.3.2. The Presidential Debate – Coverage and Impact

In the run up to the 2018 elections, Sierra Leone historically held a debating session that attracted the participation of the major political parties. To understand the impact the debate had on voting choices, voters were first asked if they watched the presidential debate. 54.4 percent of respondents said they did not, compared to the 41.6 percent who did. Western Urban (64.1 percent), Bombali (53.3 percent) and Bo (48.5 percent), are the top three districts that closely followed the debate. Conversely, Falaba, Koinadugu and Western Rural districts recorded low numbers of people who watched the debate.

Table 26 Did you watch presidential debate

<i>Did you watch presidential debate</i>			
<i>District</i>	<i>I can't remember</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Western Urban</i>	3.2	32.7	64.1
<i>Bombali</i>	2.5	44.2	53.3
<i>Bo</i>	1.5	50.0	48.5
<i>Port Loko</i>	0.3	52.2	47.5
<i>Bonthe</i>	10.1	42.9	47.1
<i>Moyamba</i>	3.4	50.3	46.3
<i>Kono</i>	3.2	51.3	45.5
<i>Kailahun</i>	5.0	52.2	42.8
<i>Kambia</i>	8.3	56.7	35.0
<i>Karene</i>	16.9	50.0	33.1
<i>Kenema</i>	9.1	59.0	31.9
<i>Pujehun</i>	1.6	68.1	30.3
<i>Tonkolili</i>	0.7	70.7	28.6
<i>Western Rural</i>	0.0	76.1	23.9
<i>Falaba</i>	7.5	79.2	13.3
<i>Koinadugu</i>	0.9	89.7	9.5
<i>National</i>	4.0	54.4	41.6

Highly educated voters were more responsive to the debate than low literate groups. Using the educational status categories previously outlined, the study identified the following percentages of voters with at least some level of higher education that watched the debate: some university (90 percent), university completed (85 percent), post graduates (80 percent), and post-secondary school (72 percent). See table below.

Table 27 Did you watch presidential debate

Education	I can't remember	No	Yes
Some university	1.00	8.70	90.30
University completed	1.20	13.60	85.20
Post-graduate	10.00	10.00	80.00
Post-secondary qualifications other than university	2.50	25.20	72.30
Secondary school completed	2.70	29.70	67.60
Some secondary schooling	3.90	43.60	52.50
Apprenticeship	6.50	51.90	41.60
Grand Total	4.00	54.40	41.60
Primary school completed	4.10	55.70	40.20
Some primary schooling	7.10	54.80	38.10
Don't know	33.30	33.30	33.30
Religious schooling	6.60	62.50	30.90
No formal schooling	3.60	72.30	24.10

Nearly three out of ten voters who watched/followed the debate said the debate helped them decide who to vote for while 69.4 percent said they already knew who they would vote for in the 2018 polls, so the debate did not make any difference at all.

A more thorough analysis reveals that the SLPP candidate in the elections made the biggest gains from the debate: almost 48 percent of respondents who said the debate helped them decide whom to vote

for indicated that they voted for Julius Maada Bio. The All People's Congress Samura Kamara benefited from 26.7 percent of such votes while Yumkella's NGC received 18.2 percent. Voter response to Bio's performance is understandable. While Yumkella is largely regarded as a gifted orator, Bio was not viewed in that light. In fact, three weeks prior to the debate Bio gave a disappointing performance in an interview on the BBC Focus on Africa programme, which his opponents used effectively to highlight his weaknesses. He therefore went into the debate night as an underdog. His performance was a surprise. One respondent said that had Bio stayed out of the debate he would not have made the impact on voters that won him the elections.

Table 28 Impact of the debate

District	The debate helped me decide who to vote for	I already knew who I was voting for so, the debate did not change anything	No opinion
Kambia	44.4	54.0	1.6
Bo	39.3	60.7	0.0
Bonthe	37.5	60.7	1.8
Karene	36.7	63.3	0.0
Kenema	34.3	57.1	8.6
Kailahun	32.8	67.2	0.0
Western Rural	31.0	69.0	0.0
Kono	30.2	67.5	2.4
Western Urban	29.9	70.1	0.0
Tonkolili	29.4	70.6	0.0
Koinadugu	27.3	72.7	0.0
Bombali	23.4	75.0	1.6
Pujehun	19.6	78.6	1.8
Port Loko	18.3	81.0	0.7
Falaba	12.5	81.3	6.3
Moyamba	12.3	87.7	0.0
National	29.5	69.4	1.2

5. VOTER PERCEPTION ABOUT POLITICAL LEADERS

5.1. Voter Perceptions of Political Leaders

Responses to questions of trust in the newly elected leaders –the president, members of parliament and local councilors –are useful for gauging citizens' perceptions about the new administration. With over 80 percent of MP and Councilors not regaining their seats in the 2018 elections, citizen trust in leadership is at an all-time low. Citizens are critical players in national development. Therefore, trust in leadership is vital for the country's stability as well as constructive engagement on policies and programmes in the next five years.

Table 29 Trust in the new President How much do you trust the new president

District	A lot	Don't know/ Haven't heard enough	Just a little	Not at all	Refused to answer
<i>Bonthe</i>	90.5	7.8	1.7	0.0	0.0
<i>Moyamba</i>	90.1	7.6	1.7	0.0	0.6
<i>Kailahun</i>	88.3	8.7	2.7	0.3	0.0
<i>Pujehun</i>	77.9	16.2	5.4	0.0	0.5
<i>Kenema</i>	77.2	9.7	8.2	3.0	1.8
<i>Bo</i>	72.7	15.8	11.5	0.0	0.0
<i>Kambia</i>	61.0	18.9	16.3	2.8	0.0
<i>Koinadugu</i>	59.5	15.5	16.4	8.6	0.0
<i>Port Loko</i>	59.0	14.3	17.3	7.3	2.0
<i>Western Urban</i>	57.9	13.3	20.4	5.7	2.7
<i>Kono</i>	55.6	9.7	24.2	9.0	1.4
<i>Western Rural</i>	55.6	19.3	19.3	3.3	2.5
<i>Falaba</i>	51.7	12.5	16.7	18.3	0.8
<i>Karene</i>	46.6	33.1	8.8	8.8	2.7
<i>Bombali</i>	38.8	24.2	32.5	3.8	0.8
<i>Tonkolili</i>	25.9	37.0	33.3	3.0	0.7
National	59.9	18.7	15.9	4.2	1.2

5.5.1. Trust of the New President

This KAP study asked respondents to state their level of trust for the new president. About 60 percent of respondents said they trusted the new president a lot with numbers rising significantly in districts considered to be strongholds of the new president's party. In the APC stronghold districts of Karene, Bombali and Tonkolili, trust in the new president dipped considerably with less than 50 percent of voters in those districts expressing little trust in the new president.

5.5.2. Trust in New MPs

A little over 60 percent of respondents expressed that they had a lot of trust for newly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) while one in every four respondents had little or no trust at all. MPs in ruling party-controlled districts seemed to enjoy greater trust than their counterparts in opposition areas.

Table 30 How much do you trust your new MP

District	A lot	Don't know/ Haven't heard enough	Just a little	Not at all	Refused to answer
Bonthe	92.3	2.7	5.0	0.0	0.0
Kailahun	88.2	1.7	9.2	0.8	0.0
Moyamba	78.9	1.1	14.3	5.1	0.6
Kenema	77.8	4.9	9.7	4.3	3.3
Falaba	74.2	4.2	17.5	4.2	0.0
Pujehun	67.0	22.7	6.5	3.2	0.5
Koinadugu	62.9	15.5	19.8	1.7	0.0
Port Loko	62.7	9.7	21.3	5.0	1.3
Bo	57.6	8.8	32.1	1.5	0.0
Karene	54.1	19.6	20.3	2.0	4.1
Kambia	53.9	10.6	27.8	7.2	0.6
Tonkolili	50.8	25.6	20.5	2.7	0.3
Bombali	49.6	20.0	27.9	2.5	0.0
Western Urban	48.5	17.2	30.3	2.4	1.7
Kono	46.2	18.1	14.1	21.7	0.0
Western Rural	42.0	26.7	28.0	2.9	0.4
National	60.8	13.7	20.4	4.2	0.9

Table 31 The new Parliament has 146 members in total. The table below shows the composition:

Party/ Grouping	Male MPs	Female	MP with Visible Disability	Total MPs	Total % in Parliament	1st Inning	2nd/ 3rd Inning
APC	60	8	1-Male	68	47		
SLPP	43	6	1-Male	49	33		
C4C	7	1	1-Male	8	5		
NGC	4	0		4	3		
Independents	2	1		3	2		
Paramount Chiefs (14Districts)	12	2		14	10		
Total	128	18	3	146	100	113	33

5.5.3. Trust in Local Councilors

Compared to results from the first KAP study, trust in councilors has improved significantly. However, citizens' trust for councilors is low compared to other elected officials (58.4 percent). In KAP I, only 17 percent of respondents expressed a lot of trust in their councilors. 23 percent said "just a little" while the majority, about 43 percent of respondents said they had no trust in their councilors at all.

Councilors	Inning(%)	Experience as councilors	%
Never previously served	63.7	1 - 3 years	0.6
No data	10.5	3 -5 years	9.4
Previously served	25.8	More than 5 years	15.6

Table 32 How much do you trust your new Local Council

How much do you trust your new Local Council					
District	A lot	Don't know/ Haven't heard enough	Just a little	Not at all	Refused to answer
Moyamba	81.1	0.6	13.7	4.0	0.6
Kenema	78.7	4.3	10.9	3.0	3.0
Bonthe	77.3	10.1	11.8	0.8	0.0
Falaba	75.8	2.5	19.2	2.5	0.0
Kailahun	73.2	3.0	23.4	0.0	0.3
Pujehun	68.1	22.2	8.6	0.0	1.1
Bo	60.6	14.4	24.1	0.9	0.0
Port Loko	58.7	9.3	24.7	6.0	1.3
Koinadugu	56.0	19.0	20.7	3.4	0.9
Karene	52.7	27.7	15.5	3.4	0.7
Bombali	51.3	22.1	24.2	2.5	0.0
Kambia	50.6	8.9	33.3	6.1	1.1
Tonkolili	49.8	23.6	24.9	1.7	0.0
Western Urban	46.1	18.7	30.5	3.4	1.3
Kono	44.8	18.8	14.4	21.7	0.4
Western Rural	40.7	22.2	30.9	5.8	0.4
National	58.4	14.5	22.1	4.2	0.8

Table 33 Qualification of Councilors

Level of Education	East	North	North West	South	West	Grand Total
Junior Secondary Schooling	0.9	4.9	2.4	0.9	2.6	2.3
No formal Education	0.0	0.0	1.2	2.6	0.0	0.8
Not available	10.1	18.4	7.1	4.3	13.2	10.5
Post graduate degree	0.9	1.9	2.4	0.9	2.6	1.6
Post Sec. qualification other than degree	51.4	51.5	59.5	50.9	39.5	50.8
Primary School completed	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.2
Some Senior Secondary Schooling	2.8	0.0	1.2	4.3	2.6	2.3
Senior Secondary Schooling completed	29.4	14.6	17.9	24.1	21.1	21.7
University	4.6	8.7	8.3	11.2	18.4	9.8
Grand Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

6. EXCLUDED SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS: WOMEN, YOUTH, & PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (PWD)

Questions in this section largely replicate those from the first KAP and were intended to follow up on the willingness to vote for various categories of marginalised groups, in light of activities geared to increasing their participation. Thus, this section gauges citizens' readiness to elect women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), as well as the ability of such marginalized groups to exercise their rights to vote. It also looks at their performance in the polls through examining tangible results: that is, how well women, youth and PWDs performed in the elections through assessing the numbers elected, against the numbers within these groups that ran for positions. Results in this section will be provided by category in the following order: women, PWDs and youth.

6.1. Women in the Electorate

6.1.1. Women in Parliament

The status of women in politics in Sierra Leone is extremely poor. Prior to the 2018 elections, Sierra Leone ranked among the countries with the lowest number of elected women parliamentarians at 144 of 192. This poor performance is in line with a range of other gender indicators: Sierra Leone's score on the Gender Development Index for 2016 is 0.871, with a human development index rank of (179), only several spots from the bottom.²⁴ The 2018 election results continues this trend, including that of declining representation in parliament. While the 2002 elections saw 18 women elected to parliament, this number dropped to 17 in 2007, and 15 in 2012 (out of a total of 112 elected parliamentarians, excluding paramount chief parliamentarians), bringing the average to 13.4 percent.²⁵ In 2018, although overall numbers of women increased marginally to 17, this is because the total number of parliamentarians also increased from 112 to 132 (excluding the paramount chief MPs which would take it to 148), and the overall percentage of female representation is therefore slightly lower at 12.8 percent (see Table 33).

Table 34 Women in Parliament: 2012 versus 2018

Gender	2012 Parliament		2018 Parliament		
	MPs	%	MPs	%	
Female	15	13	17	13	Moreover, candidature turnover is high -- of the 15 women in parliament in 2012, only two of them received their party's nomination in 2018 and retained their seats. The results show that parties are integral to women winning as will be discussed later in the last section, and conclusion and policy recommendations which examine the implications of these results on future programming.
Male	97	87	115	87	

Although the overall numbers of women in parliament are low, there are party-based differences. One of three independent candidates was a woman (33 percent). The SLPP and C4C have the same percentage of women in parliament (12.5 percent) while the APC has the highest number of women percentage-wise (13.2 percent).

Table 35 Distribution of women in parliament by party

Party	Female	Total	% Female
APC	9	68	13.2%
C4C	1	8	12.5%
IND	1	3	33.3%
NGC	0	4	0.0%
SLPP	6	49	12.5%
National	17	132	13.0%

²⁴ Gender development index, accessed from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GDI>, April 12, 2017

²⁵ Fredline M'Cormack-Hale, "Going Beyond Numbers: Reframing Substantive Representation of Women Parliamentarians in Post-War Sierra Leone," in "The Politics of Women's Empowerment in Post-War Sierra Leone: Contradictions, Successes, and Challenges," *African and Asian Studies*, 14 (2015): 85-107.

6.1.2. Women in Local Council

Women performed slightly better at the local council level. Nationally, 86 women out of a total of 488 councilors were elected in this past election or 17.6 percent. While only six districts elected over 20 percent women councilors (see Table 35 below): Bombali, Kailahun, Kenema, Kono and Port Loko; at least one woman was elected councilor in all districts except Pujehun. Two women out of seven were elected mayors, one in Bombali and one in Freetown, the latter a historic undertaking last achieved only once before in 1980. However, only one woman was elected as District Chair, in Tonkolili, out of 15 chairperson positions.

Table 36 Number of women councillors elected by district

District	Female	Male	Grand Total	Percentage
<i>Bo</i>	5	37	42	11.90
<i>Bombali</i>	9	27	36	25.00
<i>Bonthe</i>	4	25	29	13.79
<i>Falaba</i>	1	17	18	5.56
<i>Kailahun</i>	6	23	29	20.69
<i>Kambia</i>	3	20	23	13.04
<i>Karene</i>	2	19	21	9.52
<i>Kenema</i>	11	32	43	25.58
<i>Koinadugu</i>	3	15	18	16.67
<i>Kono</i>	9	31	40	22.50
<i>Moyamba</i>	2	20	22	9.09
<i>Port Loko</i>	8	32	40	20.00
<i>Pujehun</i>		23	23	0.00
<i>Tonkolili</i>	3	26	29	10.34
<i>Western Rural</i>	3	24	27	11.11
<i>Western Urban</i>	17	31	48	35.42
National	86	402	488	17.62

There were more women councilors elected under the APC ticket than SLPP. The APC has 48 female councilors out of 231(20.8 percent), while the SLPP has 28 women councilors out of 195, or 14.3 percent. Smaller parties are more likely to take a chance on women, and C4C actually has the highest percentage of female councilors (22 percent), while NGC has 9.5 percent.

Table 37 Gender of Elected Councilors by Political Party

Political Party	Female	Male	Total
<i>APC</i>	48	183	231
<i>C4C</i>	8	29	37
<i>IND</i>	0	4	4
<i>NGC</i>	2	19	21
<i>SLPP</i>	28	167	195
Grand Total	86	402	488

6.1.3. Political Appointments: Cabinet

Table 38 Women Cabinet Members as Percentage of Entire Cabinet

Gender	Ministers & Deputies	%
Female	12	21.05
Male	45	78.95
Grand Total	57	100

Despite commitments in the party's Manifesto, the "New Direction", to pass a bill enshrining a 30 percent quota in parliament and mandating political parties to commit to a threshold for women in executive, local council and parliamentary positions, initial SLPP political appointments show little follow through and ministerial appointments for women have also been low. Compared to four female ministers and seven deputy Ministers out of 25 in Koroma's final government, Bio has appointed seven full women Ministers out of 30 (23 percent), and 5 deputy ministers out of 25 (20 percent). Although this is better than the three out of 24 cabinet (12.5 percent) positions given to women after Koroma first took office in 2007, it still falls well short of 30 percent. Out of a total of 55 ministerial and deputy ministerial appointments made so far, only 12 are women, representing 21.8 percent (see table 37 below).

6.2. Voter Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Women

6.2.1. Willingness to Vote for a Woman

Responses to questions that collectively try to assess willingness to vote for women continue to be at variance with the actual numbers of women elected. A majority of respondents continue to indicate, at least in survey responses, that they would be willing to vote for women, consistent with the results of the first KAP. In the first KAP, a high percentage (nearly 80 percent) of respondents answered affirmatively to the question, "should women should have an equal chance of being elected to political office as men?" Similarly, in this present survey, more respondents believed that women should have the same chance of being elected with 85.6 female respondents agreeing with the statement compared to 72.8 percent men (see Table 31).

Table 39 Women Should Have the Same Chance of being elected to political offices as men

Women Should Have the Same Chance of being elected to political offices as men		
	Female	Male
Agree	85.6	72.8
Disagree	11.6	23.8
Don't know	2.2	2.5
Refused to answer	0.6	0.9

Along the same lines, respondents indicated a general willingness to vote for a woman for either president or MP although there was greater openness to voting for a woman MP than president. Again, this was consistent across the two surveys. In the first KAP, 72.6 percent of respondents stated that they were willing to vote for a woman as president, compared to 27.4 percent that stated no. The numbers in this survey went up to 81 percent of respondents who were willing to vote for a woman for MP, compared to 16.9 percent that said no.

6.2.2. Voter Attitudes Towards Women Hold Various Elected Offices

Although the overall number of respondents who said they were willing to vote for a woman decreased for this round of surveys, they are nevertheless still largely positive. 65 percent of respondents were willing to vote for a woman as president, (down from 72.6 percent) while 77 percent were ready to vote for a woman for MP (down from 81 percent). Similarly, high numbers

Table 40: 'Would you ever vote for a woman as president?'

	Female	Male
<i>Don't know</i>	5.4	6.3
<i>No</i>	21.0	34.3
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	1.3	1.7
<i>Yes</i>	72.3	57.7

were recorded for Mayoral and Councilor positions (76 and 78 percent respectively, as per Table 39 below).

Table 40: Percentage of Respondents who will vote for a woman (various positions)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to say
<i>Will you ever vote for a woman as president?</i>	65	27	6	2
<i>Will you ever vote for a woman as MP?</i>	77	17	5	1
<i>Will you ever vote for a woman as Mayor/Chair?</i>	76	19	4	1
<i>Will you ever vote for a woman as Councilor?</i>	78	17	4	1

Similar to KAP 1, there are gender differences that indicate that women are readier to support their counterparts than men were to vote for women (see Table 40). For example, a total of 72.3 percent of women said that they would vote for a woman as president, compared to 57.7 percent of men. In KAP 1, 87.8 percent of women stated that they would be willing to vote for a woman for president compared to 62.6 percent of men.

Despite these seemingly positive numbers, women failed again to perform well in the polls. Moreover, these numbers show a decline when compared to the first KAP, although they are still high. There are several possible related reasons for this. First, the phrasing of the question could have elicited some response bias, with respondents providing the answer they thought was socially desirable. A similar study by the International Republican Institute (IRI) undertaken just weeks before the election shows much lower positive response rates to a differently phrased question assessing support for women. To the question, "All qualifications being equal, would you be willing to vote for a woman candidate against her male counterpart?" 44 percent of respondents said they would not be willing to vote for a woman. This question measures more willingness to vote for women when they are up against male candidates, rather than simply assessing the readiness to vote for a woman. Results showed that when women were held up against male candidates, voters appeared to be more willing to vote for the male candidate.

Despite the lower numbers, there were still a majority of respondents (54 percent) that said they would vote for a woman (with or without reservations). Additionally, the finding that women were readier to support women was consistent in this study: 38 percent of women said they would not be willing to vote for a woman against a male counterpart compared to 50 percent of men. Moreover, when considered in conjunction with responses that reveal that party loyalty still commands a significant number of votes, it is likely that if the party nominated a woman in a stronghold, party loyalty would be a better predictor of vote share than gender. Finally, the lower numbers could also indicate that while in the abstract, there might be willingness to vote for women, the actual selection of candidates can impact survey responses. Given that few women were selected as candidates both for presidential and parliamentary positions, this could have affected survey responses. To the question on whether respondents did in fact vote for a woman, only 1.7 percent of respondents indicated voting for a female presidential candidate, while female MP aspirants did only marginally better at 12.7 percent. There were more votes for women at the local council level, with 18.8 percent of respondents indicating that they voted for a female Mayor/Chairperson, and 16.3 percent indicating they voted for a female councilor.

Thus, in theory, while respondents indicated a willingness to vote for women, in practice, most respondents did not actually vote for women as Table 40 shows below:

Table 41 Percentage of Respondents who said they voted for women in a variety of positions

	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to say
Voted for a female presidential candidate?	1.7	93.3	3.7	1.3
Voted for a female MP aspirant?	12.7	82.8	3.2	1.3
Voted for any female Mayor/Chairperson?	18.8	77.3	2.8	1.1
Voted for any female councilor?	16.3	79.8	3.0	0.9

6.2.3. Political Parties Not Supporting Women Candidates

The reasons provided by respondents for not voting for women reinforce the perception that the lack of women candidates was a main contributing reason for not voting for women. When asked why they did not vote for a woman either at the parliamentary or presidential level, the most frequent response was because their party's candidate was male (75 percent, Table 41). This reinforces the need for political parties to show a genuine commitment to nominating women, not just for any parliamentary seats, but particularly in regions where they have strong support. Other culturally oriented reasons such as religion, or simply discriminatory attitudes toward women were expressed much less often than one would imagine given the low numbers of women elected. Only 2.4 percent of respondents said they did not believe women should be in politics, 17 percent found it culturally wrong, and 1.3 percent said it was against their religion.

Table 42: Reasons for not voting a female presidential aspirant

<i>My party's candidate was a man</i>	75.3
<i>A woman had no chance of winning/I did not want to waste my vote</i>	8.5
<i>I voted for the better candidate</i>	6.1
<i>No reason whatsoever</i>	2.8
<i>I do not believe women should be in politics</i>	2.4
<i>Voting for a woman is culturally wrong</i>	1.7
<i>Voting for a woman is against my religion</i>	1.3
<i>Not aware of any female candidates</i>	1.2
<i>Other reasons</i>	0.7

The data also suggests that positive prior experiences with women candidates increases the likelihood that voters will be ready to vote for a woman again. For example, in KAP 1, Moyamba and Kailahun were two districts wherein citizens expressed a readiness to vote for a woman as well as overall positively assessed women politicians. Feedback sessions with enumerators indicated that this was due to positive experiences with past female politicians. This experience appears to bear out because in this current KAP, we see relatively high numbers of voters that indicated that they voted for women candidates in these two districts. In Moyamba, 16.8 percent of respondents indicated that they voted for a woman MP, while in Kailahun, 17.7 percent of respondents indicated that they voted for women members of parliament, while 31.1 percent said they voted for a female councilor (See Table 42). Election results in Kailahun show that two female MPs were elected, and six female councilors out of 29, while Moyamba elected one female MP and two female councilors out of 22. While more in-depth, qualitative research would be helpful to explore in greater detail the factors that contribute to women being elected in both these communities, it would appear that positive prior experiences is a contributing factor.

Table 43: Percentage of voters who said they voted for a woman candidate by district

District	Voted for a female/presidential aspirant	Voted for a female MP	No of women MPs elected	Voted for a female Mayor/ Chairperson	Voted for a female Councilor
Bo	2.4	27.4	2	0.9	19.4
Bombali	6.3	21.0	1	42.9	29.8
Bonthe	4.5	24.1	1	0.9	4.5
Falaba	4.3	4.3	0	2.6	6.0
Kailahun	1.0	17.7	2	1.7	31.1
Kambia	2.2	3.9	0	1.1	10.1
Karene	3.4	19.3	1	6.2	23.4
Kenema	6.0	12.7	1	13.0	25.9
Koinadugu	3.5	9.7	0	0.9	21.2
Kono	6.3	11.1	1	7.4	22.9
Moyamba	2.3	16.8	1	1.2	3.5
Port Loko	5.5	7.2	0	13.7	12.0
Pujehun	2.8	2.8	0	1.7	1.7
Tonkolili	0.7	7.5	2	44.2	3.1
Western Rural	3.0	5.1	2	12.8	3.4
Western Urban	1.2	9.3	3	55.8	18.1

Overall however, unfortunately, despite concerted campaigns by women's groups, civil society actors and so on, women fared poorly in this electoral process, in light of the low numbers of women that were nominated to run for their party. Additionally, women continue to face discrimination and harassment and there were several cases reported by women aspirants of abuse, threats of intimidation and physical violence. However, while these continue to be reasons for women to not go into politics, they cannot fully explain the poor numbers of women nominated, given that when women were given the symbol in what is perceived as party strongholds, more often than not they succeeded.

6.2.4. Implications of findings for women's political participation

The findings reinforce the conclusions raised in the last KAP that although there remains some bias against voting for women candidates, there is some level of openness as indicated by the numbers of respondents that said they would be willing to vote for women (see tables above) and that women can and do support themselves.

To address this issue of women in politics, there needs to be a reframing of current approaches. First, given that women often are marginalized, identification and training of women candidates needs to start well before the elections. Women need resources to campaign effectively, which is often an area that donors are loathe to fund, fearing the appearance of preferential treatment to some candidates over others.

Crucially, there has to be concerted advocacy and action with political parties, without whom, women will be unable to compete in the first place. The finding, that many voters did not vote for a woman because their party's candidate was a man, suggests that if parties nominated women, particularly, in party strongholds, there is a high likelihood that these women will be successful. Thus, this reinforces the need for political parties to show commitment to nominating women, particularly in regions where they enjoy strong support. Practically speaking, the new government has expressed a desire in their manifesto to make parties commit to a threshold of 30 percent for women in key positions, as well as to pass laws that would mandate 30 percent

women's representation. These commitments should be made a priority for advocacy and implementation.

At the same time, the success of a female independent candidate in Kailahun, against a male incumbent, shows the importance of having good candidates that have strong support and well developed constituencies, including women. This suggests that women who have been elected into various positions need to be supported to do well. Our prior KAP research showed that in communities that had experienced a competent woman leader, generalized support for women was also high. Helping women politicians to succeed will have positive knock on effects on women more generally, including within parties as it could motivate them to pick women candidates who are perceived as strong, as well as help women who decide to run independently. The results of the election, particularly in Pujehun and Kailahun show that despite supposed party strongholds, citizens increasingly are also judging performance. Thus, two SLPP incumbents lost their seats in Kailahun to independent candidates, while an independent candidate was able to secure a seat in Pujehun, which was otherwise dominated by SLPP.

Given the cost of politics, and the amount of money spent, it is also important to continue with information sensitisation regarding the 'proper' role of MPs, local councils etc. to help reduce the exorbitant cost of politics, which too often mitigates against women. Citizens' unrealistic expectations of personalized gain from their elected officials and the attendant financial burdens are ones that women in particular are less able to meet, given their lower access to resources and to money in general. This can be addressed through the reintroduction of civic education within the curriculum at all levels of primary and secondary education.

Finally, NGOs could work to support women politicians as well as provide increased opportunities for women to participate in civic participation activities, including providing monitoring and oversight of service delivery and other activities, as this can also help ensure that women's voices and perspectives are included in development plans.

6.3. Attitudes toward People with Disabilities

Questions in this section aimed primarily to understand whether there had been any changes in perceptions toward people with disabilities (PWDs), from the readiness to vote for PWDs for political positions to perceptions about their rights and abilities to participate in the electoral process as voters. In the first KAP, there was resistance to PWDs, with a majority of respondents (77.7 percent) stating that they would not want to vote for PWDs for president compared to only 18.7 percent of respondents that stated they would. While there was still resistance to PWDs, it would appear that there was an increase in the number of people that said they would vote for a PWD. In this current KAP, 24.6 percent of respondents said they would be ready to vote for a PWD for president compared to 67.2 percent that said no. To a point, one party, the NGC, translated its manifesto into brail.

Again, there was slightly more readiness to vote for a PWD in lower positions of MP and mayor (28.1 percent) compared to president. Possible reasons for the six-point increase could be the advocacy by the Consortium, particularly WFD in working with PWDs to decrease resistance to their leadership.

Table 44: Readiness to Vote for a PWD

Readiness to Vote for a PWD	Yes	No	Don't know
PWD as President:	24.6	67.2	8.1
PWD as MP:	28.1	65.8	6.1
PWD as MAYOR:	28.1	65.8	6.1

While the national average for any of the positions was between 24-28 percent, there was some variation, with three districts in particular exhibiting much lower averages across the three positions. For these districts, the percentage of positive responses for the position of president were as follows: Bonthe (10.9 percent); Kailahun (4.3 percent) and Moyamba (4.6 percent). Further qualitative research in these districts would be useful to help understand reasons for these low figures as well as to identify opportunities for sustained advocacy and campaigning for PWD rights.

The survey also asked respondents whether they actually voted for PWDs in the various positions. Unsurprisingly, the responses were even lower, indicative of the fact that few PWDs were given the symbol to represent their parties. The most frequently cited reason for not voting for a PWD was that they were either not the party's candidate (30 percent), or that there was no PWD on the ballot (46 percent). At the same time, responses in the "other" category (2 percent), shows that there is still much work that needs to be done regarding sensitization of the ability of PWDs to perform, as many of the responses had a common theme: the belief that PWDs would be unable to work effectively because of their disability. Samples of responses included, "He/she cannot represent him or herself," "He needs more help than us," and "Because they will not be able to do anything."

6.4. Attitudes toward Youth

The first KAP illustrated that contrary to attitudes toward PWDs, many people expressed a willingness to vote for youth, believing that they could be good leaders, with only 6.1 percent of respondents believing that youth could not be good leaders.

Youth did relatively well in the elections. A considerable number of youth were nominated for their party's symbol although less were actually elected. Of the 792 candidates nationwide, 297 (almost 37.5%) were under 35 years. However, only 12 managed to secure those seats (nine percent). The APC party elected the most youth MPs: seven out of the 12, while SLPP elected four and the Coalition for Change (C4C) has elected one.

By some accounts, these elections have been the best showing for youth than any other election. This was reflected in the number of respondents that mentioned that they had voted for a youth for a political position, with more responding affirmatively for the position of councilor (28.6 percent) than MP (14.7 percent) and Mayor/District Council Chair (6.4 percent) as illustrated in Table 44 below.

Table 45 Age distribution of MPS

Age Bucket	Number of aspirants	of National
18-27	65	8
28-35	232	29
36-45	221	28
46-55	169	21
>55	105	13
National	792	

Similar to women, the biggest predictor of success in the elections was competing on the ticket of one of the major parties.

Table 46: Voting for Young People in Various Positions

	Voted Under 35 as MP?	Voted Under 35 as Mayor/District Council Chair?	Voted Under 35 as Councilor?
Don't know	22.9	22.9	22.5
No	60.2	68.7	46.8
Not applicable	1.2	1.4	1.3
Refuse to answer	1.0	0.7	0.8
Yes	14.7	6.4	28.6

Some districts were more likely to vote for youth than others, with high performing districts including, Bo, Bombali, Karene, Koinadugu, Kono, Pujehun, Tonkolili and Western Rural (see Table 46 below).

Table 47: Voting for Young People by district

District	Voted for a youth MP	Voted for a youth Mayor/Chairperson	Voted for a youth as Councilor
Bo	14.1	1.5	40.0
Bombali	18.5	10.9	39.5
Bonthe	0.9	0.0	32.1
Falaba	5.2	0.9	5.2
Kailahun	4.3	0.3	17.4
Kambia	8.9	1.7	35.2
Karene	53.1	35.9	55.9
Kenema	8.5	2.2	16.5
Koinadugu	16.8	0.0	35.4
Kono	27.7	15.9	30.3
Moyamba	1.7	2.3	8.7
Port Loko	6.8	2.4	20.2
Pujehun	13.8	2.8	31.5
Tonkolili	19.0	5.1	59.2
Western Rural	31.9	28.9	42.1
Western Urban	11.5	1.9	11.2
National	14.7	6.4	28.6

Further research into the candidates that ran in these communities and the numbers of youth actually elected will help to provide information that can be useful for building and expanding on these numbers, to help identify some of the components that have contributed to their success that can be replicated and expanded on through target programming by CSOs, NGOs and other stakeholders. Similarly, research should be conducted in communities with little or no youth votes, again to identify key factors that can be further addressed through appropriate measures.

7. THE DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

This section evaluates the peaceful conduct of the 2018 elections in light of investments made to improve the quality of the elections. Questions in this module therefore capture citizens' experiences of violence and harassment in the pre-election, polling day and post-election periods. The study noted that compared to other democracies in the Sub-region, electoral violence was generally low in 2018 but should be properly managed to prevent further conflict. The point was underscored by the EU Observer report which noted that the campaign was generally free of hate speech, but regionalism and/or tribalism became a major factor in the run-off campaign.

Noting that words such as violence and harassment are used interchangeably by ordinary people, the study agreed on a definition which helped enumerators standardize the questions in framing interviews to multiple ethnic groups on the field. We defined political harassment as repeated verbal or physical behaviour meant to offend, humiliate, intimidate or create a hostile environment for someone or a group of people holding a certain political belief; whereas political violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against person(s) holding certain political beliefs that results in psychological harm, injury or in some cases death. On the basis of these definitions, the survey recorded a number of these incidences and concluded that there were at least 120 cases of wounding and five election related deaths in the 2018 election.

We also note that a number of credible institutions²⁶ carried out tracking of violence and harassment throughout the campaign, polling day and post-election periods. Data generated by these institutions were compared with the primary data from this research to form the body of conclusions of this section.

VOICES AND VIEWS FROM THE FIELD

1. "In Bendugu, Tonkolili district a boy (SLPP supporter) was beaten and his teeth broken. In Magburaka, Issa Kamara was assaulted after the SLPP victory, in a scuffle between police and SLPP supporters. Also, NGC supporters were physically assaulted."
2. "In Bo city, following the elections, a NEC official was assaulted by SLPP supporters for delay in posting results."
3. "In Kenema (Venima village) a woman was beaten, stabbed and her house set on fire by people who believed she was APC."
4. "In Freetown five election related killings were reported. Four involves opposition supporters and one journalist".
5. "In Kailahun, two people reportedly shot on orders of Minister of Local Government.
6. "In Makeni rubbing of faeces on homes of opposition supporters, attack on the Madingo Chief were notable instances of violence."
7. "In Port Loko, thugs were reportedly sponsored by a government officials, to harass opposition supporters. Madam Gogra was attacked and her premises vandalized."
8. "In Tonko Limba, Kambia district Demoh was beaten and stripped naked."

7.1. Harassment of Voters

The study asked whether respondents faced any form harassment. Only 5.2 percent of respondents, nationwide, reported experiencing violence on their persons whilst close to ten percent (9.6 percent) saw or heard of someone else being harassed. The forms of violence reported were insults, hate messages, beatings, wounding, arson and a few cases of murder.

²⁶ International Election observers and local and regional networks such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Women's Situation Room, National Elections Watch, Sierra Leone Decides platform and IGR carried out conflict tracking right through the election.

The inset above provides some examples of cases of violence. Our enumerators recorded 61 alleged incidences of wounding occasioned by beating and/or stabbing or arson. The highest reports of political harassment were recorded in Kono (13 percent) in the Eastern region followed by Koinadugu, Bombali, Kambia and Port Loko all in the Northern region. Comparatively low levels of violence were reported in all four districts in the South region: Moyamba, Bonthe, Pujehun and Bo districts. During debriefing sessions, enumerators reported that instances of violence were generally underreported as respondents were scared to divulge details for fear of reprisals.

District	Was victim of harassment	Saw/heard of someone being harassed
Kono	13.10	24.90
Koinadugu	11.10	18.10
Bombali	9.40	8.80
Kambia	7.40	10.20
Port loko	7.20	11.30
Karene	6.30	12.20
Tonkolili	5.60	12.10
Falaba	4.20	7.80
Western urban	4.10	10.30
Western rural	3.80	6.60
Kenema	3.30	4.30
Kailahun	2.70	7.70
Bo	2.20	3.50
Pujehun	1.90	6.90
Bonthe	0.60	1.80
Moyamba	0.40	1.70
National	5.20	9.60

Table 48 Experiences of Harassment and Violence

Reports of high levels of harassment in Kono are understandable. Communities in Kono district had experienced years of bitter rivalry between political groups supporting the ruling party which culminated in the sacking of Vice President Sam Sumana and the Mayor of Koidu. The two sacked officials later teamed up to establish a Kono- based ethnic party in the lead up the 2018 elections. Enumerators recorded instances of arrests of opposition Kono town youth activists by the then Resident Minister. Although polling Day itself was largely peaceful, there were reports of people fleeing key hotspots recorded in Masabendu and Sewafe chiefdoms to become internally displaced in neighboring Masingbi in Tonkolili.

As far as regional spread goes, there were 10 incidents in the Western Area, nine in the North, 14 in the Northwest, 12 in the Southern region and 16 in the East. There were a few alleged cases of fatalities, notably in the Western Area. However, some of these have not been independently verified. Although the overall numbers of violence appear low, debriefing sessions with enumerators suggest that incidences of violence were largely under-reported. Thus, these estimates are very conservative, with many respondents generally apprehensive about speaking on violence. There are several reasons for this. In some cases, violence was being perpetrated by supporters of the former ruling party; now that they are in the opposition, it would appear that they are loath to talk about incidents that they sponsored. At the same time, there appears to be a desire to move on, and put the violence committed during the

elections behind. Also violence itself is a sensitive topic, and respondents perhaps were afraid to discuss these incidents lest they put themselves at risk.

There appears to be a pattern to the violence, with APC generally being blamed for pre-election and polling day incidences, particularly those occurring in the Western Area, and the Northern and North-Western districts; In the north, in particular, our researchers noted violence and intimidation of opposition SLPP supporters, especially in Makeni and Kamalo. Notable instances of violence included the rubbing of faeces on opposition supporters' homes as well an attack on the Madingo Chief in Bombali on the other hand. SLPP was named largely in post-election violence incidences occurring in the South and Eastern regions and the western Area. There was some exception to this however, in Kailahun and Kono District where APC officials like Maya Kaikai and Karamoh Kabah were directly named as sponsors of violence during the elections, In Falaba-Constituency 039, there was tension among the Fula ethnic group in relation to their support of the two major parties.

Our data also shows that women suffered more political harassment (52 percent) in the 2018 Elections. This data corresponds with the Women Situation Room (WSR) Call Centre analysis of the 2018 First round election. This WSR analysis registered 36 percent of 407 calls as violent incidents under the following categories: Physical violence/ attack on opponents (17 percent), clashes among political parties (7 percent), harassment and intimidation (5 percent), tensions/unrests (4 percent) and vandalism (3 percent). WSR figures for electoral offences reported during the Presidential run-off dropped by 58.47 percent from 407 to 169²⁷ reported incidences.

We noted that most of these incidents were reported to the SLP, with the majority of respondents reporting that there was a lack of follow-up after that, especially where they concerned ruling party officials.

7.1.1. The Perpetrators of Harassment and Violence

Understanding and dealing with perpetrators of political violence is crucial to ensure the prevention of a repetition of the incidences and the improvement of the integrity of future elections. Sierra Leone has a long history of the partisanship of state agencies (police, intelligence forces and the army) and the political mobilization of unemployed youth that fuel electoral violence. In the lead up to the 2018 elections there were complaints by opposition parties against state agencies, especially the SLP, for promoting the incumbent party by repressing other parties. Attacks on opposition supporters in Lunsar, Kono, Port Loko, Kambia and Freetown were not investigated and punished, while members of the opposition could be arrested for minor infractions – for example, the leader of the opposition Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) was arrested for possessing a taser, when it is not clear that this is an arrestable offence. Where state agencies are not seen as neutral and parties are able to mobilise youth for electoral violence this can serve to undermine the capacity of the state to address electoral violence. Some could argue that it can also possibly increase the potential for election rigging, particularly if state agencies are seen to support the incumbent party.

Respondents were asked to identify the perpetrators of violence in their communities (see table below). Not surprisingly, 61.3 percent simply said they did not remember who the perpetrators

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Women Situation Room- Sierra Leone, March 2018 Elections Call Centre Analyses

were. This is consistent with previous research, where respondents were afraid to associate persons and sectors like the police, the military, party officials, community elders and government officials with violence, for fear of reprisals. While most respondents indicated that they did not remember who the perpetrators of violence were, for those that could identify actors, nearly a quarter (21.3 percent) of respondents across the country named youth as the main perpetrators of violence.

Pujehun youths were the most violent (39.0 percent), followed by Western Area (32.9 percent). One possible explanation for this is that Pujehun youth over the years have become increasingly active over the years as they in particular have been key in mounting challenges against a Belgian agricultural company ... SOCFIN for land grabbing. In the Western Area, key informant interviews recorded three cases of arson/ vandalism (a house and 2 cars) belonging to the chairperson of the opposition party in Waterloo before the elections by youth leaders.

However, in the main opposition district of Kenema, where there were post-election clashes between youth and the police, nearly one in every five respondents blamed the Police for the violence in the district – the highest score blaming police in the survey. The relationship between youth in Kenema and the SLP leadership had reached rock bottom. Key informants blamed the SLP leadership for instituting repressive measures to quiet dissent in Kenema and Bo where disapproval of the SLP was high.

Table 49: Categories of people named in violence

District	Don't remember	Youths	Ordinary people	Police officers	Party elders	Community elders	Other	Soldiers	Government officials	Chiefs
Pujehun	44.1	39.0	5.1	1.7	5.1	0.0	1.7	1.7	0.0	1.7
Koinadugu	39.6	33.3	4.2	0.0	12.5	4.2	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Western Rural	51.5	32.9	1.8	9.6	1.8	1.8	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0
Bo	40.9	31.8	9.1	9.8	0.0	4.1	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bombali	46.9	22.7	4.7	3.1	12.3	6.2	0.0	3.1	0.5	0.5
Kono	50.0	25.8	7.5	5.0	5.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Western Urban	59.9	23.4	10.9	4.2	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Karene	54.3	22.9	2.9	5.7	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Port Loko	67.3	20.6	0.9	3.7	2.8	0.9	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.9
Kailahun	60.0	16.9	1.5	3.1	18.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tonkolili	66.3	15.4	7.7	1.9	0.0	1.0	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0
Falaba	81.1	13.5	2.7	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Kambia	72.1	11.5	3.3	4.9	4.9	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.6	0.0
Bonthe	89.5	10.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Kenema	64.0	6.9	2.3	19.9	3.1	2.3	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0
Moyamba	80.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
National	61.3	21.3	4.6	4.6	3.7	1.8	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.3

The leadership of the SLP in the two districts were immediately changed with the change of government. Soldiers were also mentioned in violence incidences in Tonkolili and Bombali. Enumerators recorded reports of harassment in communities around Teko Barracks in Makeni and Yeleh in Tonkolili. Party elders were specifically named in Moyamba (20 percent), Kailahun (18.5 percent), Koinadugu (12.5 percent) and Bombali (12.3 percent) for instituting violence.

Ordinary citizens were also involved in promoting violence. Key informants recounted incidences where video footage of genocide in Rwanda were screened in Kambia, Bombali, Port Loko and Karine by some political enthusiasts claiming that they were attacks on ethnic

Temnes living in Bo and Kenema. In one instance tensions flared among residents of Mambolo after an old Rwandan clip showing a mob attack on a woman wearing red went viral. There was also footage of a political meeting in Karene, threatening to fish out all those who dared to vote for the SLPP in the second round.

7.2. Drivers of Violence in the 2018 Elections.

Electoral systems are often entwined with their environments. The causes of election-related violence can lie in deep-rooted structural factors and short-term “triggers” during the electoral process itself. IGR’s Cost of Politics²⁸ paper highlights some of the major drivers of politically motivated violence which blames political violence and divisions on the nature of economic exclusion, high youth unemployment, impunity and the partisan conduct of state institutions. This research went beyond the broad categorisation of the drivers of violence to look into citizen perceptions of the role of specific political parties in promoting violence.

Respondents were asked the question: which party do think was behind the violence meted on members of your community. For many residents, violence was largely associated with the two largest parties, the APC and the SLPP. While 28 percent of respondents found that both parties were responsible, 34 percent blamed the APC while 24 percent blamed the SLPP. Smaller parties like the NGC and C4C were rarely associated with electoral violence. Thus, interestingly, while the larger number of respondents that associated incidents of violence with the ruling party, is indicative of the general thought that the incumbent party tends to have more advantages, including access to state-sponsored instruments of violence, the former SLPP opposition was also implicated. Although further research is necessary to identify whether indeed, most incidents of violence by the SLPP were post election-win, and APC ones, before and during the elections, it suggests that where support of political parties tends toward regional bifurcation, violence against ‘the other,’ however conceptualized, can be expected within these strongholds. It would also appear that the most pervasive driver of election-related violence in Sierra Leone is impunity based on the legalized Thuggery” sponsored by incumbent regimes.

Table 50: Main Drivers of Violence

District	APC only	SLPP only	NGC only	C4C only	APC & SLPP	APC & C4C	SLPP & C4C	APC, SLPP & NGC	OTHERS
Bo	21	64	0	0	14	0	0	0	0
Bombali	17	34	10	2	22	2	0	2	10
Bonthe	75	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Falaba	43	29	0	0	0	14	0	0	14
Kailahun	7	29	0	0	25	0	0	7	32
Kambia	58	21	0	0	13	0	0	0	8
Karene	37	43	0	0	17	0	0	3	0
Kenema	63	30	2	0	0	2	0	0	2
Koinadugu	62	19	0	0	12	4	0	4	0
Kono	40	19	4	4	4	7	17	0	6
Moyamba	67	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Port Loko	14	32	0	0	51	0	0	2	1
Pujehun	36	36	0	0	11	0	0	0	17
Tonkolili	25	10	0	0	58	0	0	0	8
Western Rural	18	12	0	0	55	0	0	11	4
Western Urban	53	18	0	0	17	0	0	3	9
National	34	24	1	1	28	1	2	3	7

²⁸ Understanding Drivers of Violence and Divisions in Sierra Leone: Critical Perspectives of Governance Vol VII

A closer look at the nature of violence reveals the role of information in leading to dramatic changes in mindset and electoral behaviors. According to the second KAP report in December 2017, approximately 25 percent of voters noted that they were willing to vote for new parties, while 23 percent of the surveyed population stated that they might not vote for the political parties they voted for in 2012. These changes in mindsets in emerging completion in certain political strongholds generated competition and tensions at the community level. This report shows an interesting relationship between competition and political violence. To illustrate this relationship, we compared data on violence reported on radio, newspapers, and social media forums with the official election results of polling centers. IGR agreed on a definition of competition to mean: polling centers where one candidate of a particular party cannot secure more than 60 percent of the votes.

We discovered that in 69 percent of the 3,300 polling centers that candidates/parties secured more than 60 percent of the vote, whereas in 31 percent of polling centers no candidates/parties secured above 60 percent. This second category of polling centers are therefore classified as competitive areas. A majority of these center were located in the Western Area, Kambia, Koinadugu, Falaba, and Kono in the East where opposition SLPP, NGC and C4C made significant inroads to the point winning MP constituencies and entire local council seats in some districts.

Table 51: Centres with one party scoring 60 and above in presidential elections in round 1

DISTRICT	Total Number of centers	Centers with one party scoring 60% and above	Percentage
<i>Bonthe</i>	129	122	94.6
<i>Bo</i>	300	270	90.0
<i>Bombali</i>	219	193	88.1
<i>Kenema</i>	337	294	87.2
<i>Pujehun</i>	174	149	85.6
<i>Tonkolili</i>	233	183	78.5
<i>Moyamba</i>	218	171	78.4
<i>Kailahun</i>	222	172	77.5
<i>Karene</i>	155	113	72.9
<i>P/Loko</i>	271	189	69.7
<i>Kambia</i>	171	75	43.9
<i>Kono</i>	228	97	42.5
<i>Koinadugu</i>	131	53	40.5
<i>Falaba</i>	127	51	40.2
<i>Wester Rural</i>	129	51	39.5
<i>Western Urban</i>	256	94	36.7
National	3300	2277	69.0

Violence was reported in a majority of communities where individuals had shifted party affiliations. These communities will require close supervision in the runoff polls. Table 3 highlights a competitive centre where at least one of the non-winning parties received minimum of 15 percent of the total valid votes, which further reinforces a similar view of the communities identified above.

Table 52 A competitive centre, where at least one of the non-winning parties gets a minimum of 15 of the total valid votes

DISTRICT	SLPP	APC	NGC	C4C
	270	0	0	0
Bombali	2	191	0	0
Bonthe	122	0	0	0
Falaba	17	31	3	0
Kailahun	172	0	0	0
Kambia	9	29	37	0
Karene	2	106	5	0
Kenema	293	1	0	0
Koinadugu	4	47	2	0
Kono	7	8	0	82
Moyamba	146	24	0	0
P/loko	0	189	0	0
Pujehun	149	0	0	0
Tonkolili	5	178	0	0
W/rural	0	51	0	0
W/urban	0	94	0	0
Total	1198	949	47	82
%	36.3	28.8	1.4	2.5

A more detailed look at the existing data on violence reveals that extremism has thrived in a context of impunity where law enforcement agencies have turned a blind eye to violent acts committed by certain political actors. The December KAP study showed that 51 percent of respondents trust the police to handle election security fairly. At least half of the country state that they do not trust the SLP. Opposition supporters interviewed in Port Loko and Kambia complained that in some situations they were made out to be culprits when they went to the police to report intimidation by the ruling party. While the SLP have made efforts to show neutrality in the elections, failure to impartially respond to complaints of violence by a few of their colleagues is contributing to the perception and atmosphere of impunity.

8. Citizen's Policy Priorities

One of the biggest impacts of the public education activities organised by political parties, the NEC and CSOs was the shift in citizen's policy priorities. As stated earlier the number of citizens who said the policies and programmes of political parties were the greatest determinant for their electoral choices increased from 40 percent in March 2017 to 57 percent in March 2018. Water was the main policy choice of voters in KAP I. This section looks at the key policy priorities of voters in the 2018 elections.

8.1. Topmost Priorities of Voters by District

Education emerged as the most important problem that citizens want the new government to address with half of the 16 districts (especially Koinadugu, Kenema and Bo) raising the issue as their most pressing priority. About 22.3 percent of all respondents cited education as the most pressing problem their communities face. This was followed closely by water scarcity (21.3 percent) especially in Freetown (52 percent), Western Rural (41 percent) and Bombali (32 percent) districts. The economy was ranked as the third most important problem citizens want addressed with more than 14 percent of respondents (especially in Kono, which exhibited 30.3 percent) citing the lack of jobs and rising cost of basic commodities as major concerns.

Table 53: Policy Priorities of Voters

District	Education	Water	Economy	Infrastructure	Health	Farming	Transportation	Good governance, civil/political rights, justice	Electricity	Housing	Others Issues
Bo	26.2	8.8	13.8	15.0	17.6	4.1	6.2	0.0	4.7	1.8	1.8
Bombali	13.3	32.1	11.3	7.9	7.5	18.8	4.6	0.8	0.0	0.4	3.3
Bonthe	17.6	9.2	8.4	22.7	19.3	5.9	3.4	4.8	0.8	0.2	7.6
Falaba	21.7	23.3	10.0	21.7	19.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.0
Kailahun	17.1	20.4	10.0	23.4	15.1	2.3	5.4	0.3	0.3	2.0	3.7
Kambia	25.6	23.3	12.8	8.9	7.8	11.1	1.7	3.3	1.7	1.1	2.8
Karene	29.1	2.7	6.8	37.8	13.5	4.1	2.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	2.0
Kenema	37.1	3.0	10.9	14.6	7.0	9.7	10.6	5.2	0.0	0.6	1.2
Koinadugu	50.0	9.5	0.9	6.9	16.4	1.7	12.9	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0
Kono	17.3	11.2	30.3	14.1	10.8	8.7	2.5	2.2	0.4	0.0	2.5
Moyamba	25.1	1.7	22.3	33.1	11.4	1.7	0.0	2.3	1.7	0.6	0.0
Port Loko	24.0	21.3	21.3	3.7	8.7	10.0	3.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	7.7
Pujehun	24.9	4.9	21.6	5.9	2.7	21.6	1.6	0.0	3.8	1.6	11.4
Tonkolili	25.9	22.6	7.1	2.4	17.5	10.8	5.7	0.7	0.0	0.3	7.1
Western Rural	20.6	41.2	19.3	3.7	3.7	0.4	2.5	4.9	1.2	1.8	1.6
Western Urban	9.9	52.4	11.3	4.6	6.4	0.2	1.5	4.5	3.2	4.3	1.7
National	22.3	21.7	14.1	12.3	10.7	6.7	4.0	2.0	1.5	1.0	3.6

Improved infrastructure and better healthcare completed the list of the five most important problems that Sierra Leoneans face. About 12.3 percent of respondents, especially in remote districts such as Karene (37.8 percent) Moyamba (33.1 percent) and Bonthe (22.7 percent) mentioned that the new government should construct/rehabilitate roads, build markets, bridges, and public toilets to improve the infrastructure in their communities.

10.7 percent of citizens identified healthcare as a key policy priority for the new government. These respondents want improved access to health facilities as well as better access to and availability of essential drugs and treatments for common illnesses. As shown in the table

above, farming, public transportation, and governance—access to justice and the enjoyment of civil/political liberties—are all issues that citizens want prioritised.

Similarly, the problem of hunger was most prevalent in Port Loko, Pujehun and Tonkolili. More than 90 percent of concerns over the lack of food came from those three districts.

It is easy to see why Western Area places a high priority on water. Freetown's water crisis has been a major concern for citizens for decades. The city's major water supply source, the Guma dam, which supplies up to 83 million litres a day, is grossly overstretched, mainly due to the rapid increase population in Freetown since the end of the civil war in 2002. Education, on the other hand, topped the list of citizen's priorities because the SLPP campaigned on a populist policy of providing free education. This highlights that policy priorities for citizens are generated in both top-down and bottom-up directions, with water scarcity informing this as a priority area from the bottom-up, and the influence that political party campaigning can have on citizen understandings of governance needs from the top-down, through the prominence of education as part of the SLPP campaign platform.

8.2. Policy Priorities by Gender

Men as well as women seem to be bothered by the same issues. However, health is more of a concern to females. Nearly 12 percent of female respondents want the government to focus on healthcare making it the fourth most important concern among women. Among male respondents, the figure was much lower at 9.4%

Table 54: Citizens Policy Priorities by Gender

Top Community Priorities by Gender				
	Priorities	Female	Male	National
	Education	22.6	22.0	22.3
	Water	22.3	21.0	21.7
	Economy	14.0	14.2	14.1
	Infrastructure	10.6	14.2	12.3
	Health	11.9	9.4	10.7
	Farming	6.5	6.9	6.7
	Transportation	3.9	4.1	4.0
	Good governance, civil/political rights, justice	1.9	2.1	2.0
	Electricity	1.7	1.3	1.5
	Housing	1.1	0.8	1.0
	Others, specify	3.4	3.9	3.6

8.3. Policy Priorities of Different Age Categories

A very interesting variation in term of policy priorities is seen among the age categories sampled. Persons aged 18 to 23 years and those aged 36 to 45, cited education as their number one priority. For all other age categories, access to water was more important. In fact, for senior citizens, respondents aged 60 and over, health and education were just as equally important. It appears that education was most important to persons of school going age (18 to 23) and those who invariably pay the bills, assuming that the 36 to 45 age bracket constitute the most economically active group and comprise mostly parents and guardians.

Table 55 Citizens Policy Priorities by Age

Policy Priority	18-23	24-35	36-45	46-59	60+	National
Education	35.6	19.8	20.3	19.5	14.8	22.3
Water	19.9	25.2	20	20.6	17.5	21.7
Economy	10.5	14.2	16	15.3	14.6	14.1
Infrastructure	11.4	11.4	13.3	13.7	13.2	12.3
Health	8	10.5	11	11.6	14.8	10.7
Farming	3.7	5.9	7.4	8.3	11.1	6.7
Transportation	3.3	3.9	4.2	3.3	7	4
Others, specify	2.9	4.3	3.3	4.1	2.7	3.6
Good governance	1.7	2.4	1.6	2	2.4	2
Electricity	2.2	1.4	1.8	0.8	0.8	1.5
Housing	0.8	1	1.2	0.8	1.1	1

8.4. Recommendations for Improving on Elections

One component of the KAP III survey included a targeted reform questionnaire, wherein respondents were asked to express agreement or disagreement on three major issues, for the purposes of generating feedback on areas to improve the quality of future elections. The three issues in the questionnaire were: asset declaration by presidential candidates, having a ceiling on elections spending and issues around candidature fees.

Table 56 Voter Perceptions on Key Policy Reform Recommendations

Policy questions	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	No opinion/ refused to answer
1. Public Declaration of Asset of presidential aspirants before being sworn into office	87.10	4.20	7.70	1.00
2. Limit on Elections Spending	66.10	15.30	16.30	2.20
2. Candidature fees for aspirants should be reduced	58.70	18.80	20.10	2.40

8.4.1. Publication of Assets

On whether elected officials should make public their assets before being sworn into office 87.1 percent of respondents stated that they would like to see their leaders' assets being published. In the first KAP study, the number of citizens who expressed this view was 79.1%. The increase in number of voters wanting the publication of assets is understandable. Corruption was high on the agenda of opposition parties right through the campaign period. Asset declaration was a prominent message throughout the elections. This was pushed in part by pressure from civil society leaders through the Citizens' Manifesto, which made emphatic calls for presidential aspirants in particular to publish their assets before the polls. While several political leaders made commitments, it was the leader of the Alliance Democratic Party, Mohamed Kamarainba Mansaray, who made history by becoming the first politician in Sierra Leone's history to publish his assets. Currently, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Act stipulates that public officials must declare their assets within three months of taking up office and are also required to make yearly declarations of their income. The major issue with this legal arrangement is that asset declarations made to the Anti-Corruption Commission are bound by strict secrecy and confidentiality clauses. This study and those done before it suggests that voters want this to change.

8.4.2. Limits on Elections Spending

Policies on campaign financing are underdeveloped in Sierra Leone – vote-buying and massive crowd mobilizations for political rallies continue to be a major feature of elections. A policy brief by IGR, *Cost of politics in Sierra Leone*, shows the harmful effects of the high cost of attaining power on the quality of governance and accountability when politicians take office. Against this background, voters were asked whether they agreed with campaigns to place a limit on the amount of money political leaders and/or their parties can spend in elections. The majority of respondents, about 66 percent, said they agree while 15.3 percent said they do not. A significant 16.2 percent of respondents said they do not know while 2.2 percent refused to express an opinion.

Calls for putting a limit on elections spending cut across several of the districts but is most prominently expressed by respondents in the Western Urban (Freetown), Kambia, Kailahun, Kono, Bo and Moyamba districts. In contrast, districts such as Koinadugu, Falaba, Bombali and Karene recorded lower respondents that called for a limit on campaign expenditures. Interviews with key informants from these districts revealed that voter bribery was high and many residents tend to see it as a way for politicians to redistribute wealth.

Table 57 Should there be a limit on amount politicians spend of elections?

<i>District</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>No opinion/refused to answer</i>
<i>Western Urban</i>	80.6	7.7	8.8	2.9
<i>Kambia</i>	76.7	9.4	13.9	0.0
<i>Kailahun</i>	76.6	12.7	9.0	1.7
<i>Kono</i>	76.2	18.4	5.4	0.0
<i>Bo</i>	73.8	16.2	6.5	3.5
<i>Moyamba</i>	73.7	1.1	22.3	2.9
<i>Port Loko</i>	68.3	18.7	12.7	0.3
<i>Tonkolili</i>	66.0	3.7	29.6	0.7
<i>Bonthe</i>	63.9	28.6	7.6	0.0
<i>Pujehun</i>	58.9	17.3	17.8	5.9
<i>Kenema</i>	55.8	28.4	14.9	0.9
<i>Western Rural</i>	54.3	10.7	24.3	10.7
<i>Karene</i>	54.1	16.9	27.0	2.0
<i>Bombali</i>	47.7	32.2	19.7	0.4
<i>Falaba</i>	47.5	26.7	25.8	0.0
<i>Koinadugu</i>	25.9	9.5	62.1	2.6
<i>National</i>	66.1	15.3	16.3	2.2

8.4.3. Reduction of Candidature Fees

This was the most contentious of the three issues. Overall, only 58.7 percent of respondents agree that there should be a reduction in nomination fees for political elections. During the debriefing sessions with enumerators, it was apparent that many citizens believe persons vying for political offices should be able to afford the cost, no matter what it is. On a district basis, Kono, Kailahun, Bonthe, Western Urban and Kenema are the top five districts in terms of agreement with this proposal while Bombali, Kambia and Port Loko expressed the strongest disapproval.

8. DEEPENING DEMOCRACY – THE WAY FORWARD

This report, in conjunction with its predecessors, reveals that there is legitimate cause for optimism for democratic development in Sierra Leone. High voter turnout in 2018 continues the trend of citizen enthusiasm for, and commitment to, political participation through voting, and this most recent KAP study has observed that an impressive 91 percent of respondents believe that elections can in fact impact governance. The belief that voting is both a fundamental right and responsibility for citizens has clearly taken root, reflecting a growing faith in democracy and the role and impact of civic participation. Significantly, this study has also observed the decreasing salience of ethnicity as a key determinant of voting behaviour, which further demonstrates a growing positive shift in the voting calculus of citizens. Ethnic-based voting has long been identified by scholars as a fundamental obstacle to genuine democratic advancement, and underscores the role that perceptions of corruption and impunity have on political considerations of citizens. Instead, policy considerations are gaining momentum in deciding party choices among voters.

Yet, despite these significant positive advances and findings, Sierra Leone remains a fragile democracy, and this study has observed the persistence of genuine obstacles and threats to its peaceful and democratic advancement, that must be overcome to truly move away from a fragile post-conflict state to a consolidated democracy. Since the introduction of multiparty state in 1996 Sierra Leone has seen incumbent governments placed under tremendous pressure to hold on to power because of the fear of what would happen if a new government were to win power and to secure access to the resources that come with winning state power. Transition elections such as 2007 and 2018 therefore became highly charged, approached with a deadly serious and aggressive mentality. The work of EMBs is critical to ensuring successful elections, and in this respect, the poor functioning and low citizen perceptions of the PPRC signal that there is still much work to be done in ensuring the effective facilitation, monitoring and accountability of electoral processes. Additionally, the participation of women in elections, as voters and candidates, remains low and needs to be addressed in order to ensure not just full citizenry participation in democracy-building, but also that women's concerns and priorities appear in the development agenda. Impunity for electoral violence also remains rife, and contributes to an atmosphere of corruption and an ineffective justice apparatus. To deepen democracy and improve the quality of elections, we recommend the following:

- A. GoSL and NEC must have a conversation on election financing, with steps taken to make all election components more affordable for parties, candidates and the country in general. Steps could include putting a cap on political party expenditures in campaign financing. A reduction in monies spent on holding elections can also reduce reliance on international funding for EMBs as well as election security.
- B. State agencies/actors must remain non-partisan and professional, and those that do not should be judged in the appropriate courts.
- C. Legal reforms should be implemented that regulate a number of components in the election cycle. These include: A) constitutional review and amendment to indicate a set date for elections; B) laws on campaign financing that mandate, among other things, limits in expenditure as well as possibly set aside a common fund for all parties; C) mandating asset declaration/publication regime for aspiring candidates.
- D. PPRC must have stronger institutional capacity to regulate political parties enshrined within the law. Aspects for regulation should include sanctioning parties that do not meet gender quotas, (including parties' own quotas), parties engaging sponsoring political violence, among other components.

- E. GoSL and partners should also invest in developing institutional capacity of political parties to promote and increase women's participation as well as to engage in policy formulation
- F. Steps must be taken to increase women's participation in the political process. This will start with expediting the passage of the 30% Quota into law and instituting a mechanism for implementation as well as sanctions for non compliance. GoSL and development partners could correspondingly support programmes to increase women's political competitiveness including access to economic opportunities, justice and education.
- G. Noting that the worst cases of elections violence are committed by gangs of unemployed youths, recruited by politicians, strategies to address election-related violence should include ways to gainfully occupy or rehabilitate youth so that they do not fall prey to political mobilization. Additionally, youth should have greater access to civic education programmes to dissuade them from violence.
- H. The GoSL and its partners should adopt zero tolerance policies for electoral violence by investigating and punishing cases of violence reported during the 2018 elections.
- I. The role of the PPRC, SLP, CSOs and international partners in setting up an early warning system which identified election-related conflict prone areas such as Kono, Kenema, Kambia and Freetown was useful in diffusing tensions, although in some cases intervention came too late. We recommend that activities of agencies handling early warning systems should be front-loaded to the early stages of the electoral cycle before grievances develop further.