



STOP THE BLAME GAME: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

ABSTRACT

This maiden SIERRAPOLL presents citizens' view of the responsiveness of government, effectiveness of elected leaders across the political divide, shifts in voter preferences, building national cohesion and fighting corruption. We note that institutions in Sierra Leone are operating in an increasingly polarizing environment which makes it difficult to unite the country to achieve results. We call on authorities on all sides to stop the blame game and take responsibility for improving living conditions.

15th September 2019



SIERRAPOLL RESULTS

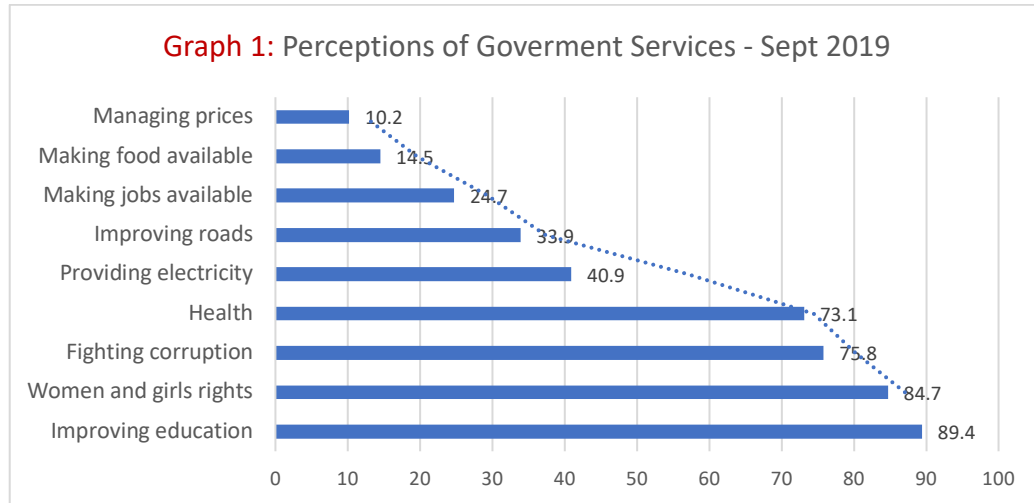
The results of this maiden SierraPoll are based on 2,200 interviews randomly conducted nationwide between September 2 – 8, 2019. A segment of this report builds on the Bio-Meter findings published four months ago on progress on President Bio's campaign promises. SierraPoll results have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. It is important to note that SierraPoll is IGR's attempt to get a real time snapshot of citizens views on policies and voters' attitudes.

1. Citizens Views on the Responsiveness of Government Services.

While unemployment, shortage of food and rising prices of essential commodities are the greatest worry for a majority of citizens, respondents generally have a positive impression of government's handling of education (89.4 percent), promoting the interests of women and girls (84.7 percent), fighting corruption (75.8 percent) and managing health services (73.1 percent). Only about 10% of citizens believe that the government is doing well in managing prices of goods. Similar low percentages were also recorded of Government's ability in making food available (14.5 percent) and providing jobs (24.7 percent). See graph 1 below.

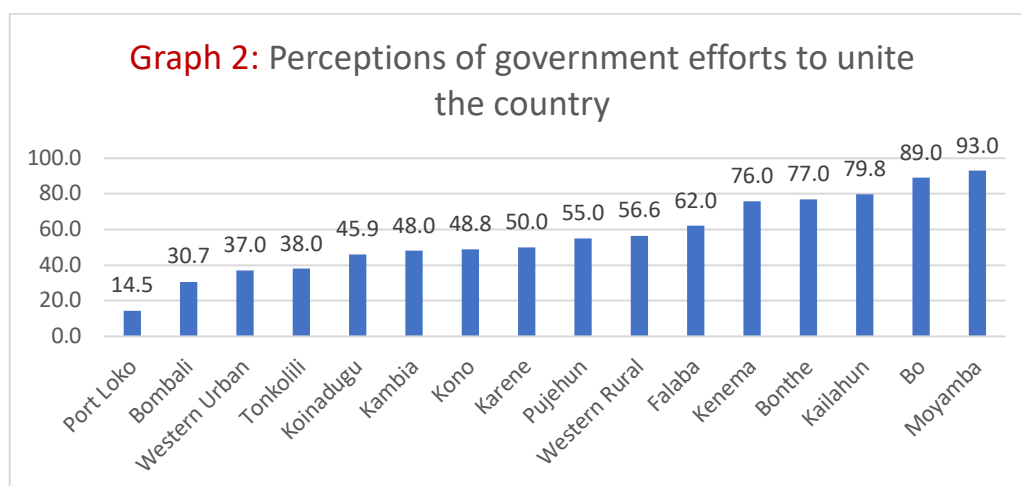


Graph 1: Perceptions of Government Services - Sept 2019



2. National Cohesion and Inclusion

All 2,200 respondents were asked whether the current administration is taking good measures to unite the country. Nationally, fifty five percent (55.1%) agree that government is making efforts to unite the country. There are very wide regional disparities in perceptions on national cohesion. Ruling party controlled districts reported greater support for government efforts to unite the country, while districts controlled by opposition parties recorded low perceptions. Port Loko, Bombali, Freetown and Tonkolili are the most concerned about government efforts to unite the country. See graph 2 below.



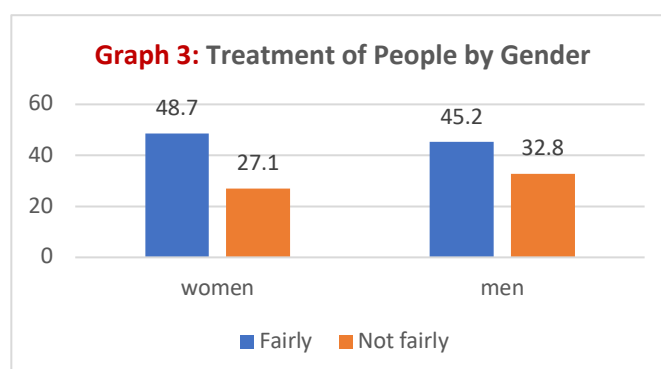
The SierraPoll also examined how people from various groups think they were being treated by the Bio administration. Nationally, 46.9 percent said they are fairly treated while 30 percent said they are not fairly treated. From our debrief with enumerators, respondents have varying interpretations of unfair treatment: ranging from perceived nonrepresentation of their groups in decision making or lack of access to state resources. The responses took political party coloration with 75 percent of respondents who voted the ruling SLPP saying they are fairly treated while voters of all other parties registered below 20 percent satisfaction of the way they are treated.

TABLE 1: HOW ARE PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE TREATED BY THE BIO GOVERNMENT

Party choice in 2018 elections	Fairly	Not fairly	Same as under the last administration	Don't know
SLPP	75.4	10.6	6.0	8.1
NGC	19.6	42.9	32.3	5.3
C4C	19.0	21.5	40.5	19.0
Others	16.9	53.6	6.3	23.2
APC	15.9	59.9	13.1	11.2
National	46.9	30.0	12.7	10.4

Perceptions of Women

When disaggregated by gender, more women (48.7 percent) believe they are fairly treated by the administration than men 45.2 percent.



3. Job Approval of Elected Leaders

3.1. Job Approval of MPs

Nine in every twenty (45.9%) Sierra Leoneans say they trust their elected members of parliament compared to 43.8 percent who said their MPs are doing a poor job. Overall, the poll shows that voters (57.4 percent) in SLPP controlled constituencies

are more satisfied with the performance of their MPs compared to citizens in other constituencies. In opposition areas, MP approval ratings registered just below 50 percent. MP approval rating has constantly declined since election in March 2018, from 58% in July 2018, to 52% in May 2019 to 45.9% in September. This trend points to a possible high turnover by 2023 if it goes unchecked.

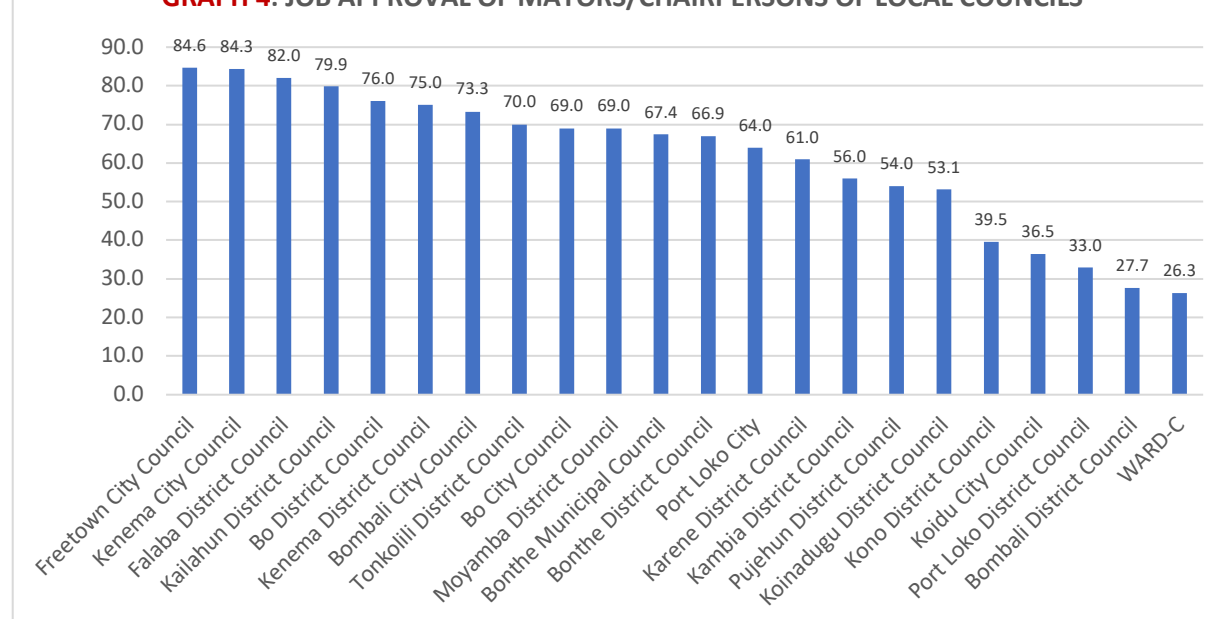
TABLE 2: DO YOU TRUST THAT YOUR MP IS DOING A GOOD JOB

MP choice in 2018 elections	Yes	No	Don't know
SLPP	57.4	34.9	7.7
APC	49.0	39.2	11.8
NGC	48.7	43.5	7.8
C4C	47.6	45.2	7.3
National	45.9	43.8	10.3

3.2. Job Approval of Mayors and Local

SierraPoll asked whether respondents believed their mayor/chairperson was doing a good job. Overall, there is a favourable national rating of local council performances, with an average score of 62.7 percent. The Freetown City Council (84.6percent), Kenema City Council (84.3 percent) and the newly created Falaba District Council (82.0 percent) all ranked highest in terms of ratings of mayor/councilor performance. Further down the scale, areas like Western Area Rural District, Bombali and Port Loko District Councils occupy the lowest rungs of the favourability rating.

GRAPH 4: JOB APPROVAL OF MAYORS/CHAIRPERSONS OF LOCAL COUNCILS



4. Shifts in Voter Preferences

Eighteen months after the last presidential elections SierraPoll asked whether voters would vote for the same party they voted for in the last elections if elections were held today. The result is broken down among the four parties in parliament which form 97% of the votes and smaller parties grouped together and categorised as others. The results show that while 78.3 percent of voters are still convinced about

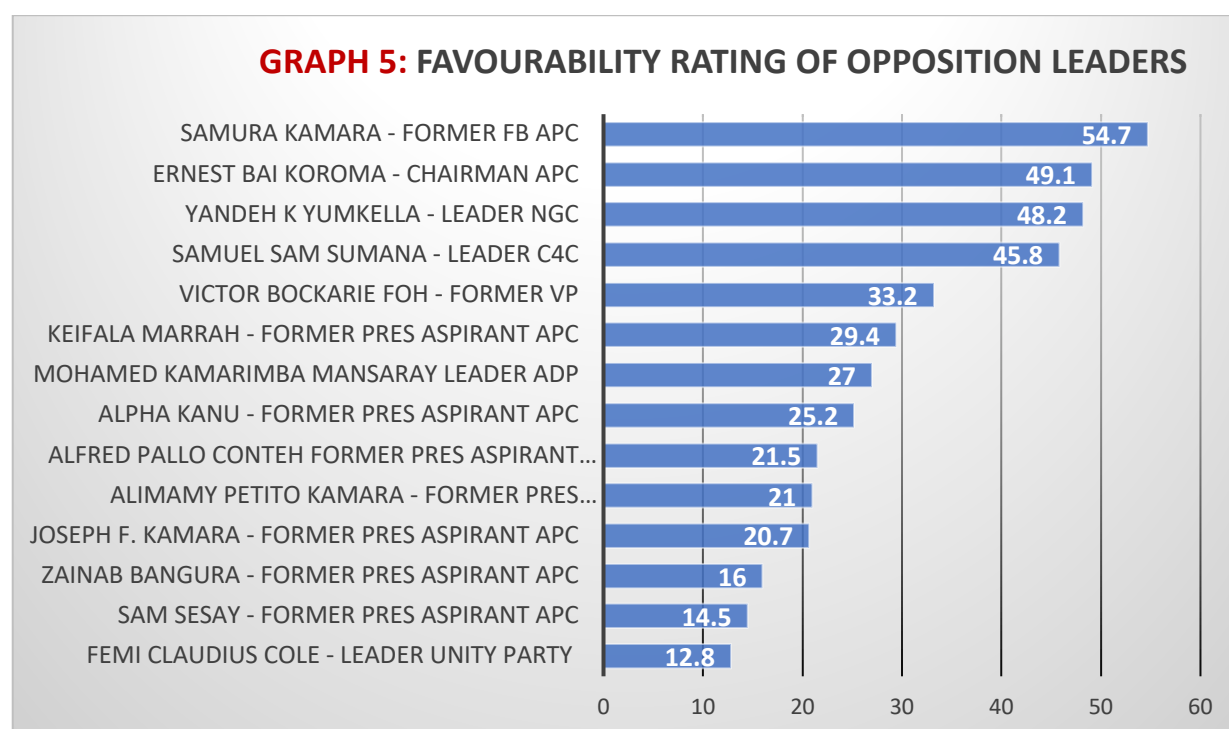
the candidates for which they voted, nearly 7 percent of voters are resolved not to vote for the same parties. While smaller parties (55.6 percent), including the NGC (27.1 percent) are taking the biggest hit, there was some movement within the two major parties, with each losing nearly six percent of

their support base. Possibly, the feelings of exclusion, increase in prices of essential commodities, general hardship in the country and the unfolding investigations into allegations of corruption are having some impact. Nevertheless, the large numbers of respondents that expressed dissatisfaction with the smaller parties suggests that Sierra Leone still maintains a dominant two party political culture despite the resentments voters may have the actions of APC and SLPP leadership. About 15 percent of respondents did not declare their voting preferences.

TABLE 3: WOULD YOU VOTE THE SAME PARTY IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD TODAY?			
Party choice in 2018	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
SLPP	81.4	5.6	12.5
C4C	79.8	2.5	17.7
APC	76.5	5.8	17.7
NGC	46.6	27.1	26.3
Others	44.4	55.6	0.0
National	78.3	6.9	14.8

5. Favorability of Opposition Leaders

Respondents were asked whether they had a favorable impression of opposition leaders. They also had the option of saying they hadn't heard of that person or had no opinion about them. Opposition leaders presented for polling include party leaders and former aspirants for presidential tickets. Dr Samura Kamara (54.7 percent) stood out as the most favorable opposition politician followed by Ex-President Koroma (49.1 percent) and Hon Kande Yumkella (48.2 percent) and HE. Sam Sumana (45.8 percent).



6. Perceptions of the Ex-President in Party Politics



The role of the immediate Ex-president Koroma as leader of an opposition party has been a source of controversy within and outside the opposition APC. SierraPoll asked whether Ex-President Koroma should continue to serve as leader of a party. On the whole, fifty-three percent said no while 23 percent said yes. The views were mixed among party supporters. HE Ernest Koroma's APC supporters are almost evenly split between those who believe he should continue (41.4 percent) to lead their party and 39.6 percent who say he should not. A majority of SLPP voters (71.3 percent) said the former president should retire from active politics.

TABLE 4: SHOULD EX-PRESIDENT KOROMA CONTINUE TO SERVE AS PARTY LEADER?

Party choice in 2018 elections	No	Yes	Don't care
SLPP	71.3	8.9	19.8
C4C	50.6	17.7	31.7
NGC	41.4	15.8	42.8
APC	39.6	41.4	19.0
National	53.2	23.0	23.8

7. Fighting Corruption

7.1. Fairness of the Commissions of Inquiry

The ongoing commission of inquiries into allegations of corruption under the outgoing administration has also been a source of contention and anxiety among certain quarters of the country. After eight months of investigations, SierraPoll asked questions to test citizens' views regarding the fairness of COI process and perceptions of the actions of the anti-corruption commissions. Nationally, 68.1 percent of citizens believe that the hearings of the COI are fair. This number shows a 14-point drop in public trust in the COI from 82% when the hearing began in January 2019¹. Unsurprisingly, the Commissions enjoy the least trust from supporters of the main opposition APC (42.7 percent), whose members are under investigation, while supporters of all other parties are less critical: (SLPP: 86.9 percent; others: 76.4 percent; NGC: 69.9 percent and C4C: 63.2 percent all indicated approval of the COI). Even with the drop, overall, a good majority of citizens are positive about the COI.



Table 5: FAIRNESS OF COI AMONG POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORTERS

Party choice in 2018 elections	Yes	No	Don't know
SLPP	86.9	2.4	10.7
Others	76.4	4.1	19.5
NGC	69.9	10.6	19.5
C4C	63.2	7.0	29.8
APC	42.2	23.7	34.1
National	68.1	10.4	21.5

¹ According to a survey conducted by IGR in January 2019

7.2. Perceptions About Recovery of Stolen Funds

SierraPoll also gathered perceptions on the approaches employed by the ACC to fight corruption. Citizens were asked whether they agreed with the approach of the ACC to settle cases out of court by asking suspects to repay monies allegedly stolen. Nationally, majority (85.3 percent) of citizens agreed that the repayment of stolen funds is an effective way to fight corruption. The measure received strong endorsement from all party supporters.

TABLE 6: SHOULD ACC ASK PEOPLE TO REPAY ALLEGED STOLEN MONIES?

Party choice in 2018	Yes	No, use other measures	Don't know
SLPP	92.3	3.2	4.5
Others	87.0	0.9	12.1
C4C	86.0	3.5	10.5
NGC	79.7	8.0	12.4
APC	75.2	5.0	19.8
National	85.3	3.9	10.8

7.3. Perceptions About Impounding of Assets

SierraPoll also asked citizens whether they agree with the measure of impounding assets by the ACC in the fight against corruption. Nationally, a majority of respondents (75.5 percent) agreed that impounding assets was an effective way to fight corruption. Bo, Freetown, Tonkolili and Moyamba constitute the districts with the highest approval ratings of this measure. On the other hand, Kambia (54 percent), Karene (53 percent) and Port Loko (49 percent) recorded the least approvals of this measure.

