



Freetown, Sierra Leone
29 September 2020

News release

Fighting corruption: A majority of Sierra Leoneans say the Commissions of Inquiry are effective, Afrobarometer study shows

A majority of Sierra Leoneans say the Commissions of Inquiry are effective in addressing corruption in the country, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

By a 4-to-1 margin, citizens also say the commissions are impartial and do not favour one party or group over another. Only about one in 10 citizens hold negative views of the commissions' impartiality and effectiveness, though about one-third say they don't know enough about the commissions to offer an opinion.

Although perceptions of increasing corruption are less common than in 2015, approval of the government's performance in fighting corruption has declined significantly. The survey also shows that a large majority of Sierra Leoneans want the media to constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption. However, citizens are increasingly concerned about the risk of retaliation when they report corruption.

After coming to power on an anti-corruption platform, President Julius Maada Bio created three Commissions of Inquiry in January 2019 to investigate acts of corruption and mismanagement under his predecessor. In the just-ended year-long investigation, the commissions identified accused persons and called for confiscation of assets and refund of allegedly stolen monies.

Key findings

- A majority (54%) of Sierra Leoneans believe that the Commissions of Inquiry help in the fight against corruption. Only one in 10 citizens (11%) disagree (Figure 1).
 - Half (50%) of Sierra Leoneans say the Commissions of Inquiry into acts of corruption are fair and impartial, while 13% disagree.
 - About one-third of respondents say they don't know enough about the commissions to assess their impartiality and effectiveness.
- Residents in the Eastern region are about twice as likely to hold positive views on the Commissions of Inquiry's impartiality and effectiveness as residents in the Northern region (Figure 2).
 - Positive views about the Commissions of Inquiry's impartiality and effectiveness increase with respondents' level of economic well-being and education.
- Four in 10 Sierra Leoneans (40%) say the level of corruption has increased over the past year, a 30-percentage-point drop since 2015 (Figure 3).
- Only about four in 10 citizens (38%) say the government is doing "fairly well" or "very well" in fighting corruption. This is a significant decrease compared to 2018 (66%), after a sharp increase from 2015 (18%) (Figure 4).

- Eight in 10 citizens (78%) want the news media to constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption. This includes 55% who “agree very strongly” with this view (Figure 5).
- Just over one in four Sierra Leoneans (28%) say people can report corruption without fear of retaliation, a 9-percentage-point decline compared to 2018.

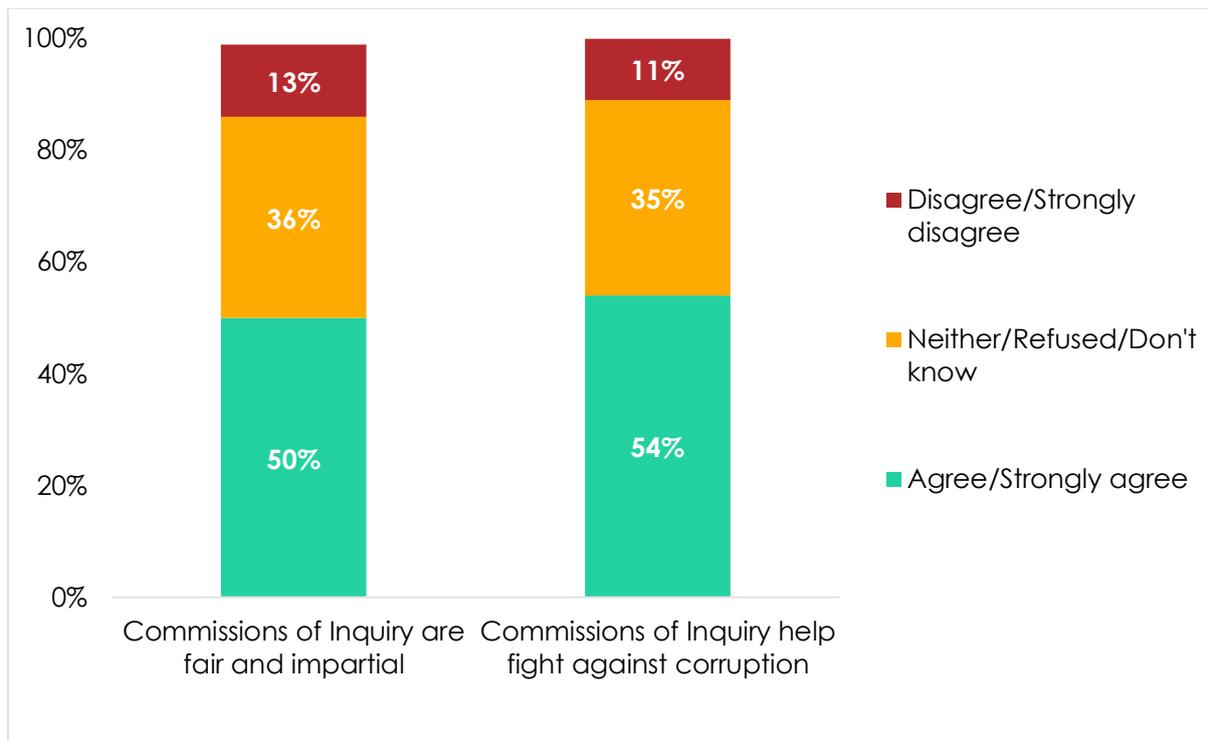
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Sierra Leone, led by the Institute for Governance Reform, interviewed 1,200 adult Sierra Leoneans in March 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Sierra Leone in 2012, 2015, and 2018.

Charts

Figure 1: Perceptions of the Commissions of Inquiry | Sierra Leone | 2020

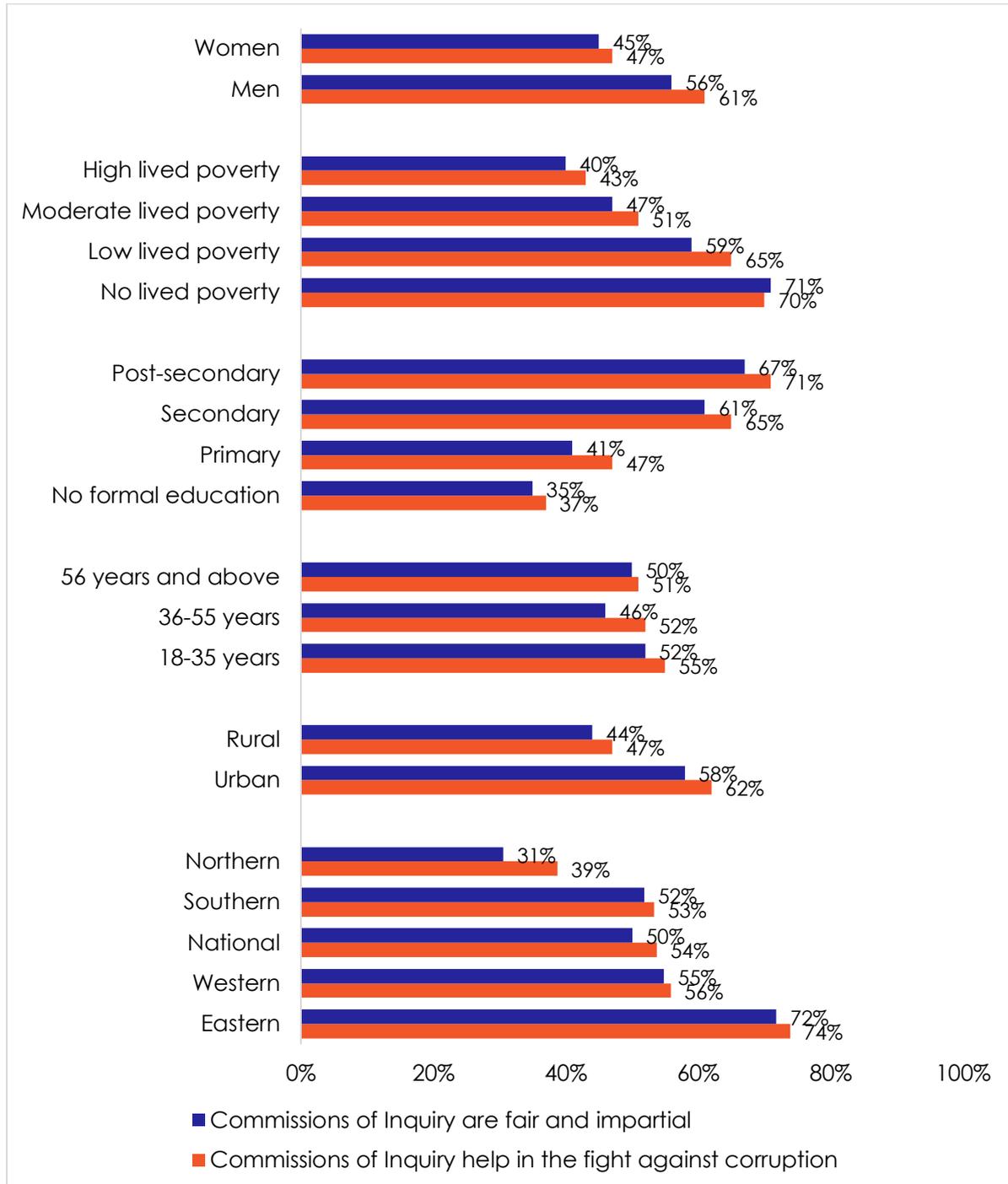


Respondents were asked: Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, or haven't you heard enough to say?

The Commissions of Inquiry are doing their work in a fair and impartial way that does not favour one party or group.

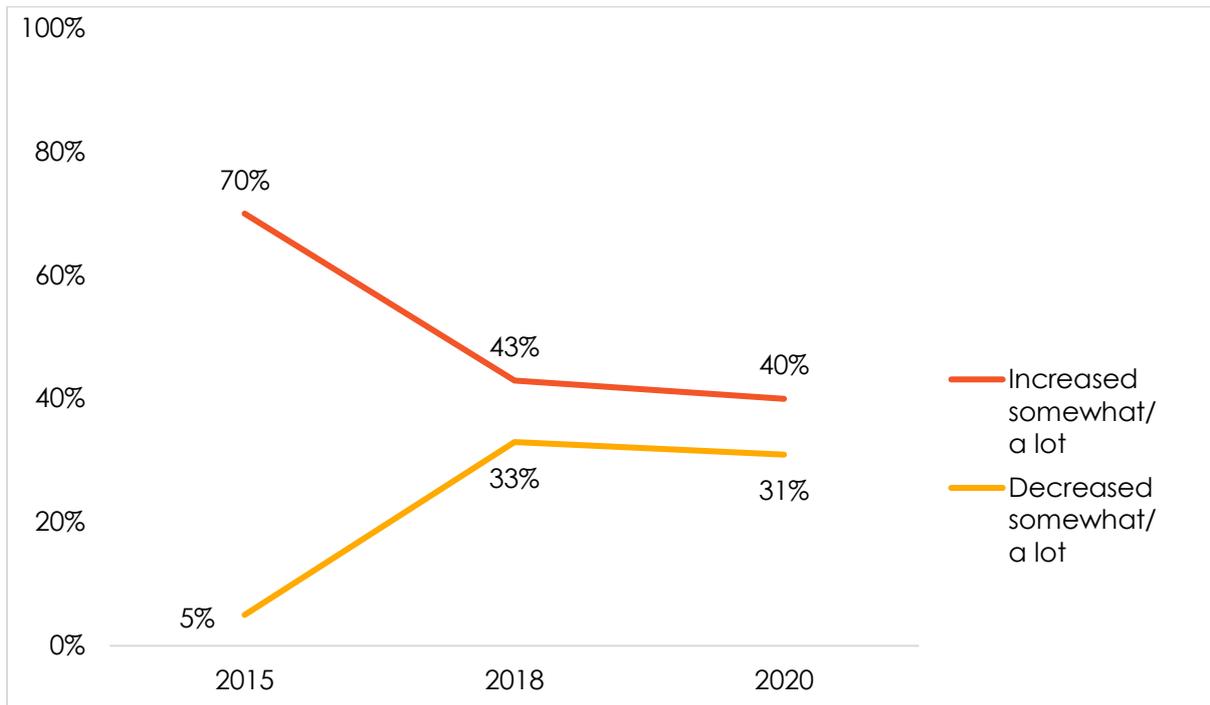
The Commissions of Inquiry are helping in the fight against corruption in Sierra Leone.

Figure 2: Perceptions of the Commissions of Inquiry | by region and socio-demographic group | Sierra Leone | 2020



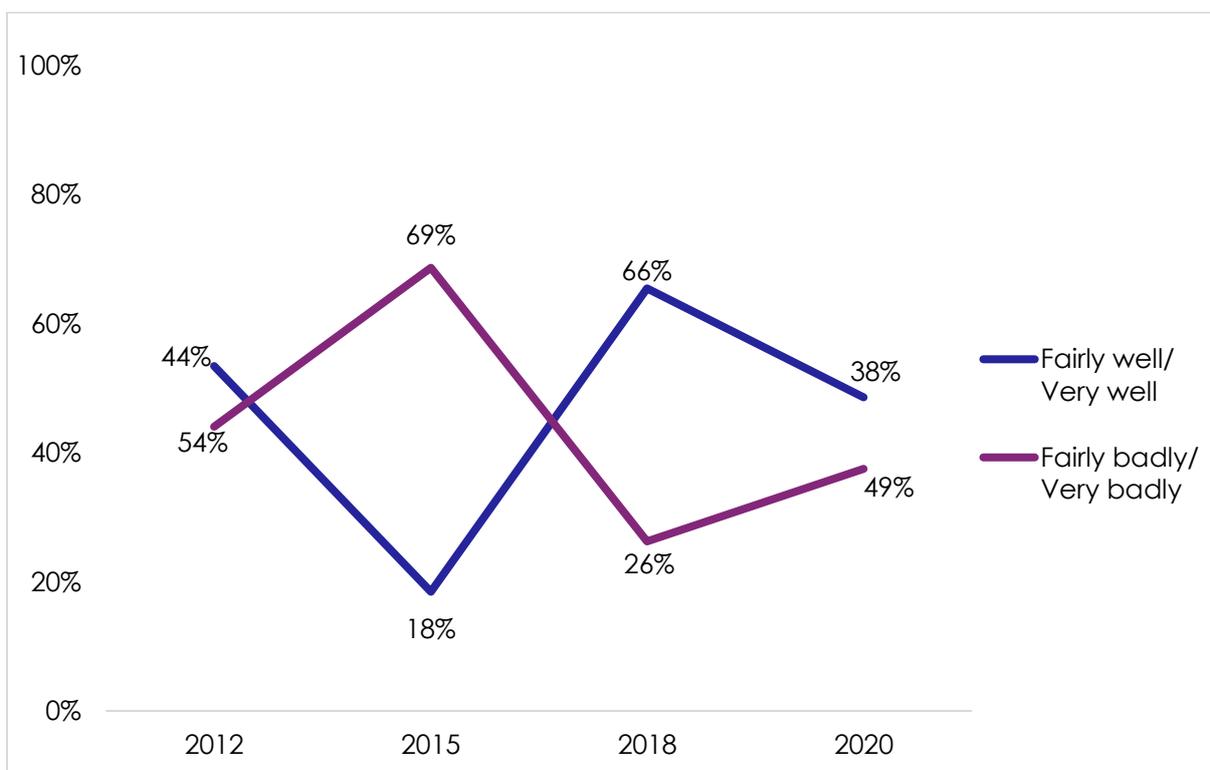
Respondents were asked: Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, or haven't you heard enough to say?
 The Commissions of Inquiry are doing their work in a fair and impartial way that does not favour one party or group.
 The Commissions of Inquiry are helping in the fight against corruption in Sierra Leone.
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Figure 3: Level of corruption over the past year | Sierra Leone | 2015-2020



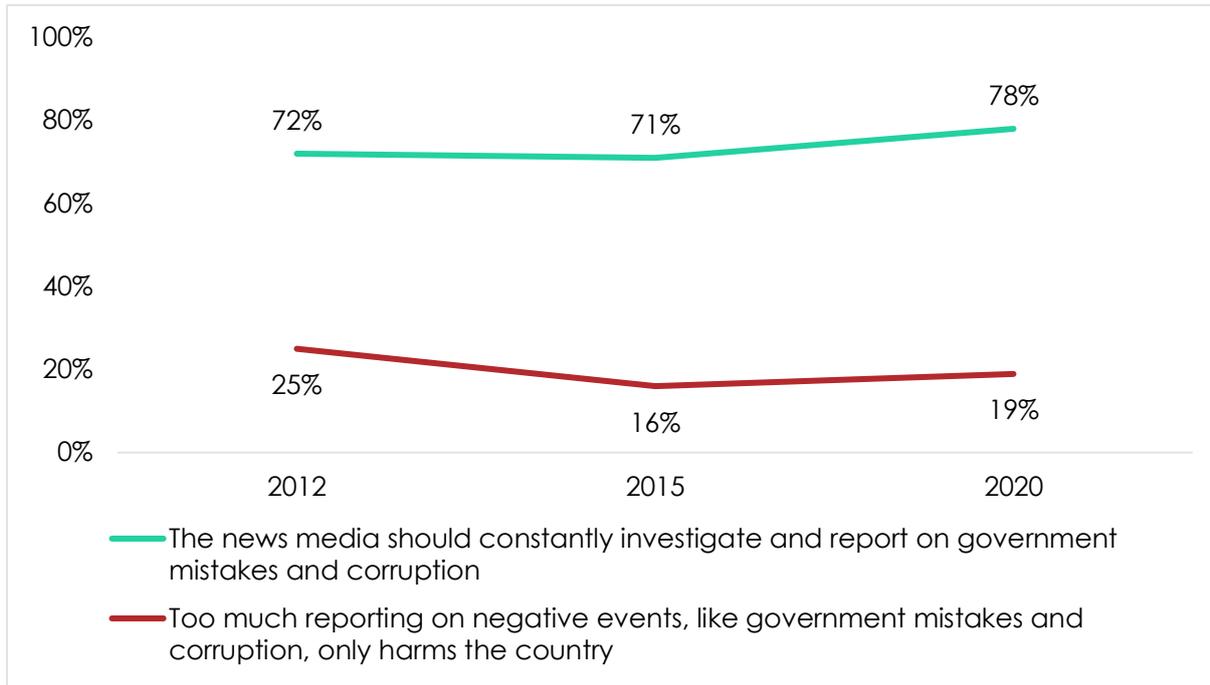
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

Figure 4: Government performance in fighting corruption | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling fighting corruption in government, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 5 : Media’s role as watchdog | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.

Statement 2: Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.

(% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

For more information, please contact:

Institute for Governance Reform
 Telephone: +23278399388
 Email: info@igrsl.org

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