



Monrovia, Liberia
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News release

Liberians want a voice in choosing their county superintendents, new Afrobarometer study shows

A large majority of Liberians want their county superintendents to be elected directly by the citizens instead of being appointed by the president, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

Under the current appointment system, relatively few citizens say they contact their county superintendents to discuss problems or share their views, and popular trust in county superintendents is low compared to other leaders. Public approval of their job performance declined compared to 2018.

For years, citizens have advocated for Article 56 of the Liberian Constitution to be amended to make the position of county superintendent elective. Supporters say letting voters choose local leaders improves accountability and responsiveness.

The study also shows that most Liberians believe that counties should be given a share of revenues collected by the central government and that they would use additional resources wisely for development and better services.

Key findings

- Almost eight in 10 Liberians say county superintendents should be directly elected by voters, including 62% who “agree strongly” with this view (Figure 1).
- Only about one in four citizens (23%) say they contacted their county superintendents during the previous year to discuss a problem or share their views, a lower contact rate than for traditional leaders (50%), political party officials (34%), members of the House of Representatives (32%), and senators (26%).
- Only a quarter (24%) of Liberians say they trust their county superintendents “a lot” or “somewhat.” Along with members of the House of Representatives (23%) and senators (21%), county superintendents are considered less trustworthy than many other officials (Figure 3).
- Only a quarter (26%) of citizens “approve” or “strongly approve” of the performance of their county superintendents, representing a significant decline compared to 2018 (44%) (Figure 4).
- A large majority (76%) of citizens “agree” or “strongly agree” that each county should be given a share of the revenue that the central government collects in that county (Figure 5).
 - A similar proportion (79%) believe that if county administrations are given more resources, citizens can count on them to use the resources wisely to improve local development and access to services.

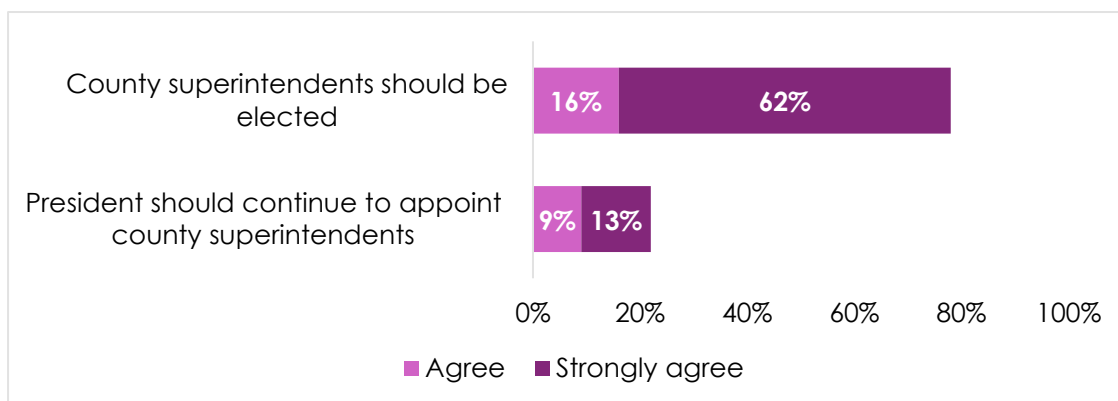
Afrobarometer surveys

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, and Round 8 surveys are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Liberia, led by the Center for Democratic Governance, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Liberians between October and December 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 standard surveys were conducted in Liberia in 2008, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

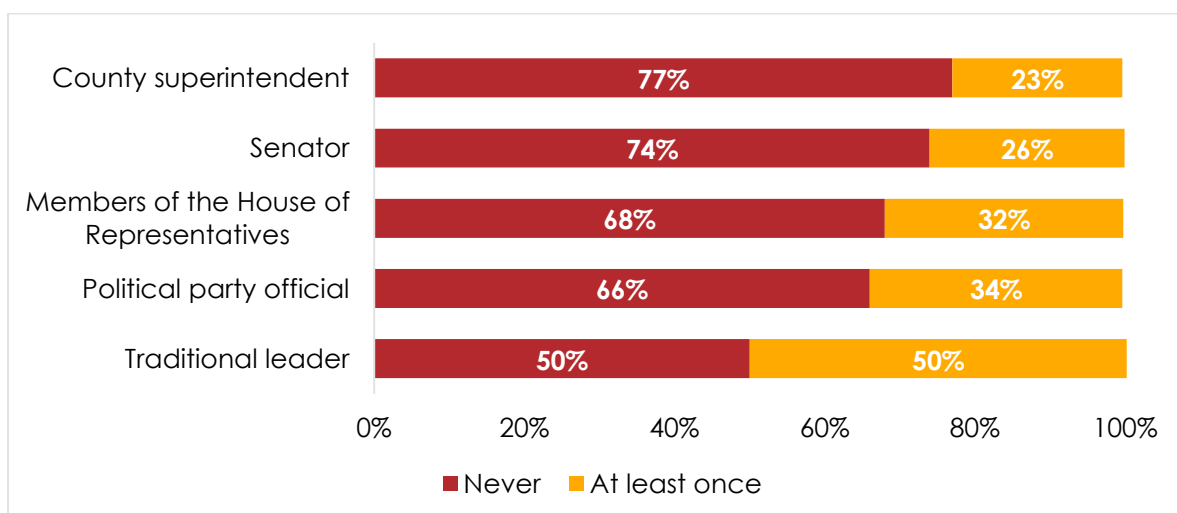
Charts

Figure 1: Should county superintendents be elected or appointed by government?
 | Liberia | 2020



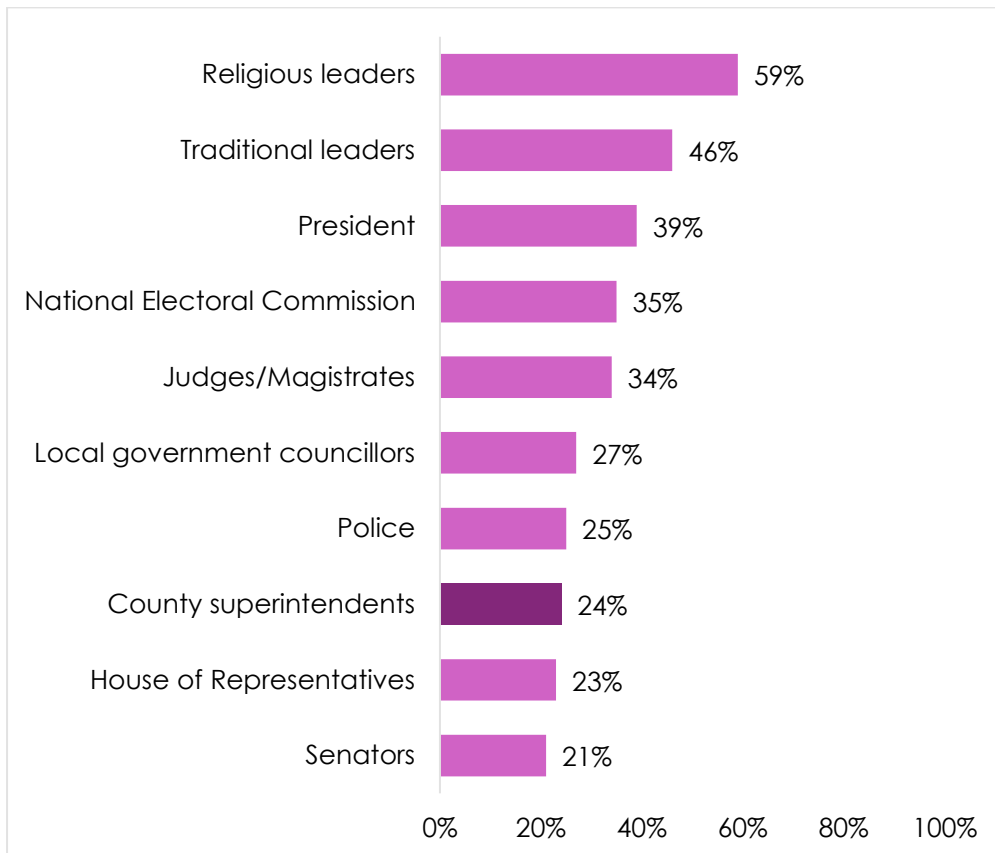
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: County superintendents should be directly elected by voters.
 Statement 2: The president should continue to appoint county superintendents.

Figure 2: Contact with leaders | Liberia | 2020



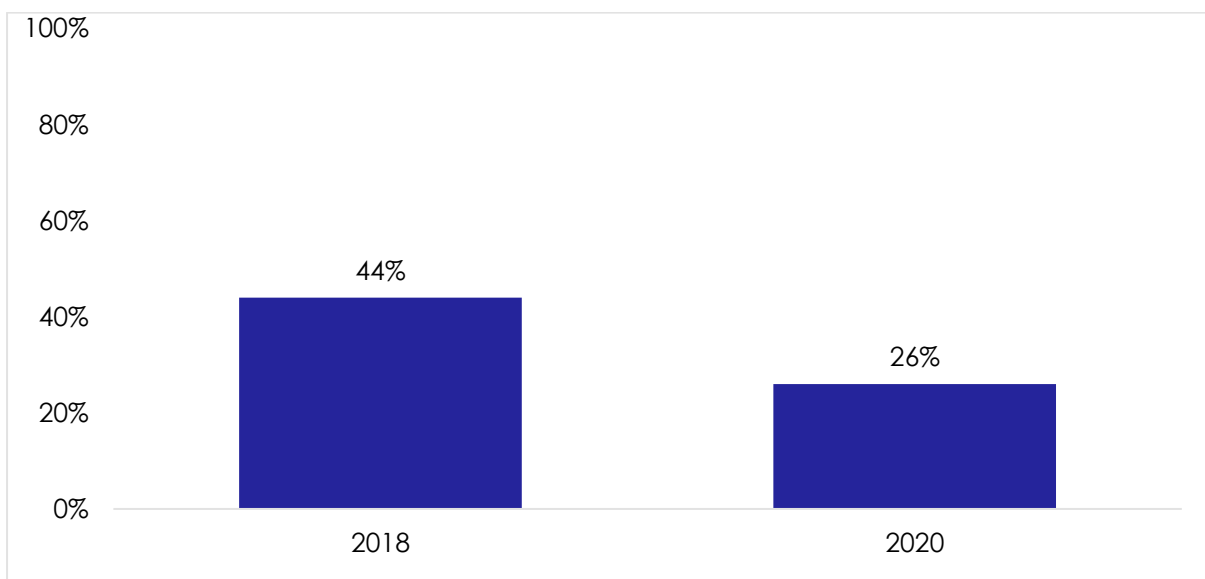
Respondents were asked: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?

Figure 3: Trust in officials | Liberia | 2020



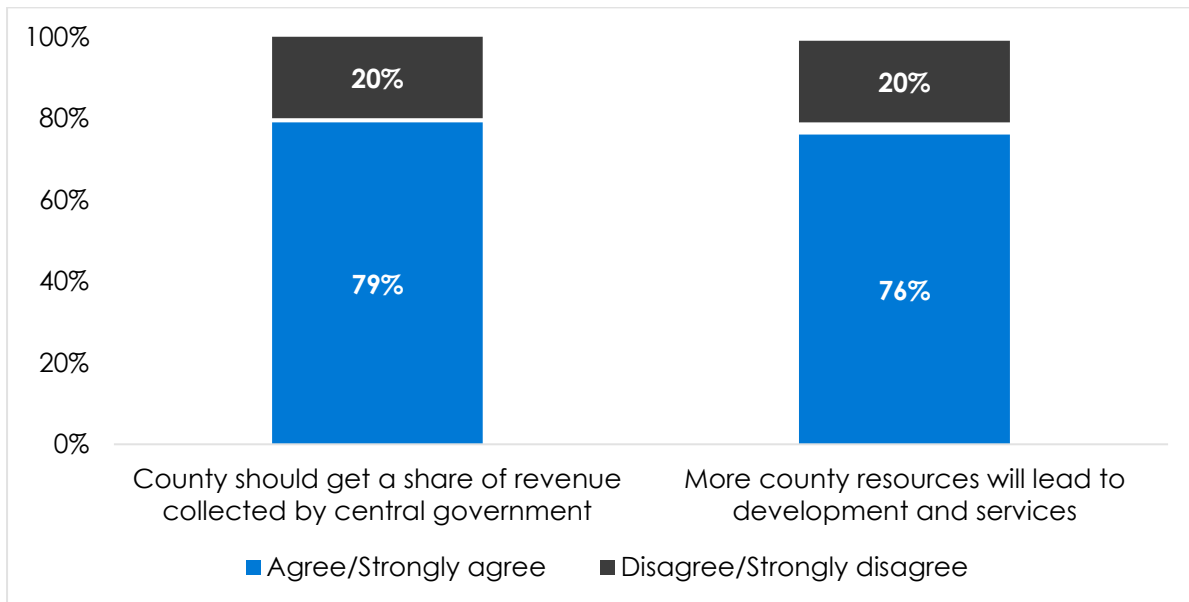
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "a lot" or "somewhat")

Figure 4: Approval of county superintendent's performance | Liberia | 2020



Respondents were asked: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your county superintendent? (% who "approve" or "strongly approve")

Figure 5: Views on local government resources | Liberia | 2020



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you disagree or agree with each of the following statements:

Each county should be given a share of the revenue collected by central government in that county.

If county administrations are given more resources, citizens can count on them to use the resources wisely to improve local development and access to services.

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