Freetown, Sierra Leone
20 June 2025

News release

Government performance, including handling of corruption, draws criticism from Sierra Leoneans

A majority of Sierra Leoneans say their government is performing well on key public services such as security, education, and health care, but give poor marks on job creation, improving living standards of the poor, and tackling financial inequality, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Survey findings reveal mixed assessments of the government's overall economic performance. Though perceptions of efforts to manage inflation have improved in recent years, approval has declined on key indicators such as job creation and poverty reduction since 2022.

Fewer than half of citizens think the government is doing a good job of fighting corruption. Nearly three-fourths of Sierra Leoneans say "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt. Half say the same about business executives, members of Parliament (MPs), and tax officials. Citizens also feel unsafe reporting corruption. Only three in 10 believe they can report corrupt acts without fear of retaliation, while a majority say doing so risks negative consequences.

Key findings

- A majority of citizens express satisfaction with the government's efforts to prevent or resolve conflicts (72%), address educational needs (69%), reduce crime (64%), and improve basic health services (53%) (Figure 1).
    - But fewer than one in four respondents approve of its performance on narrowing gaps between rich and poor (14%), creating jobs (22%), providing a reliable supply of electricity (24%), and improving living standards of the poor (24%).
- Approval ratings on a number of indicators of government economic performance have declined compared to 2022, including improving living standards of the poor, creating jobs, and narrowing the gap between rich and poor (Figure 2).
    - However, perceptions of the government's efforts to tackle inflation have improved over the last three years.
- Almost three-fourths (73%) of citizens say "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt, while about half see widespread corruption among business executives (51%), MPs (49%), and tax officials (49%) (Figure 3).
- Only three in 10 Sierra Leoneans (30%) believe that people can report corruption without fear of retaliation, a decline of 4 percentage points compared to 2022 (Figure 4). Seven in 10 (69%) say people risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they report incidents of corruption to the authorities.

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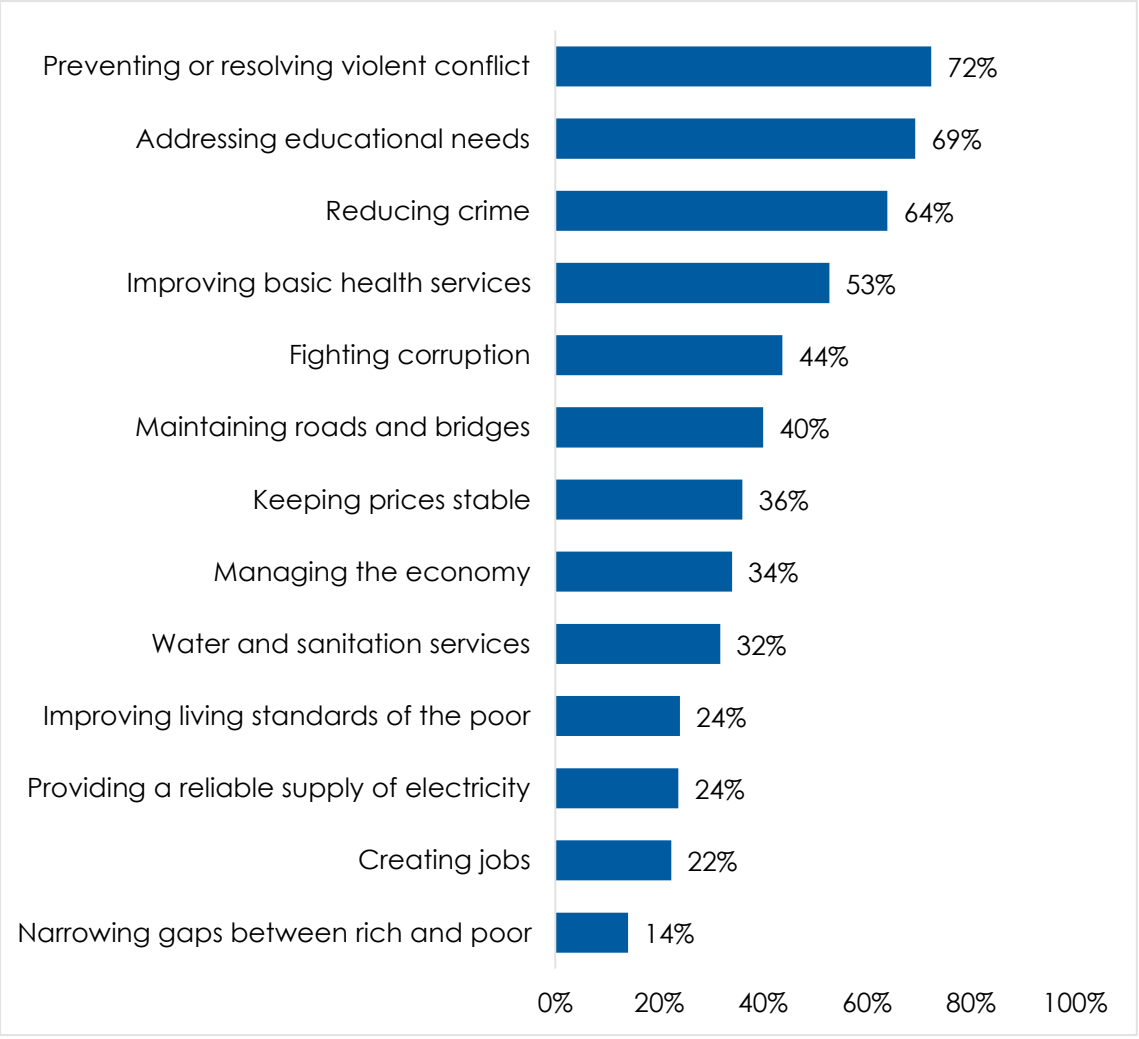
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys were launched in January 2024. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Sierra Leone, led by the Institute for Governance Reform, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Sierra Leoneans in March-April 2025. 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 Sierra Leone in 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020, and 2022.

Charts

Figure 1: Approval ratings for government performance | Sierra Leone | 2025



Respondents were asked: *How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")*

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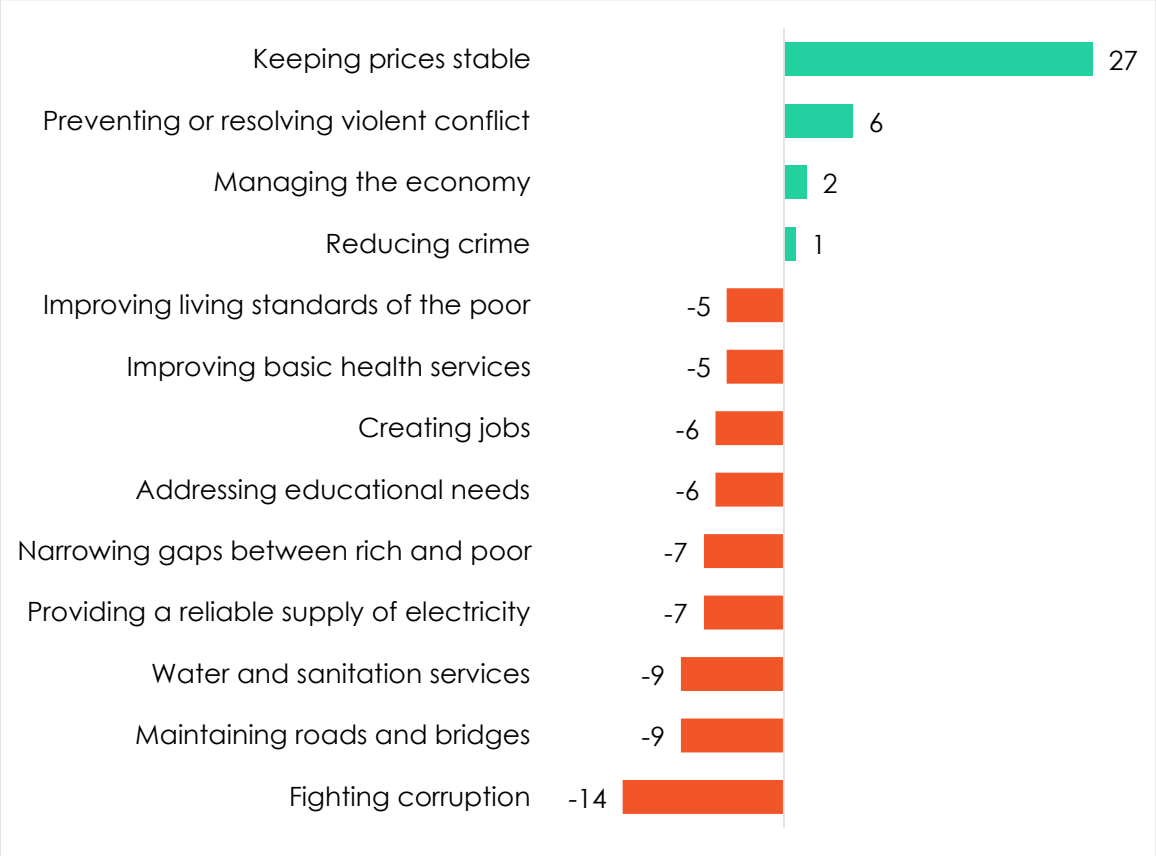
Figure 2: Changes in approval of government performance | Sierra Leone | 2022-2025



Respondents were asked: *How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (The figure shows changes (in percentage points) between 2022 and 2025 in the proportion of citizens who say the government has handled these issues "fairly well" or "very well.")*

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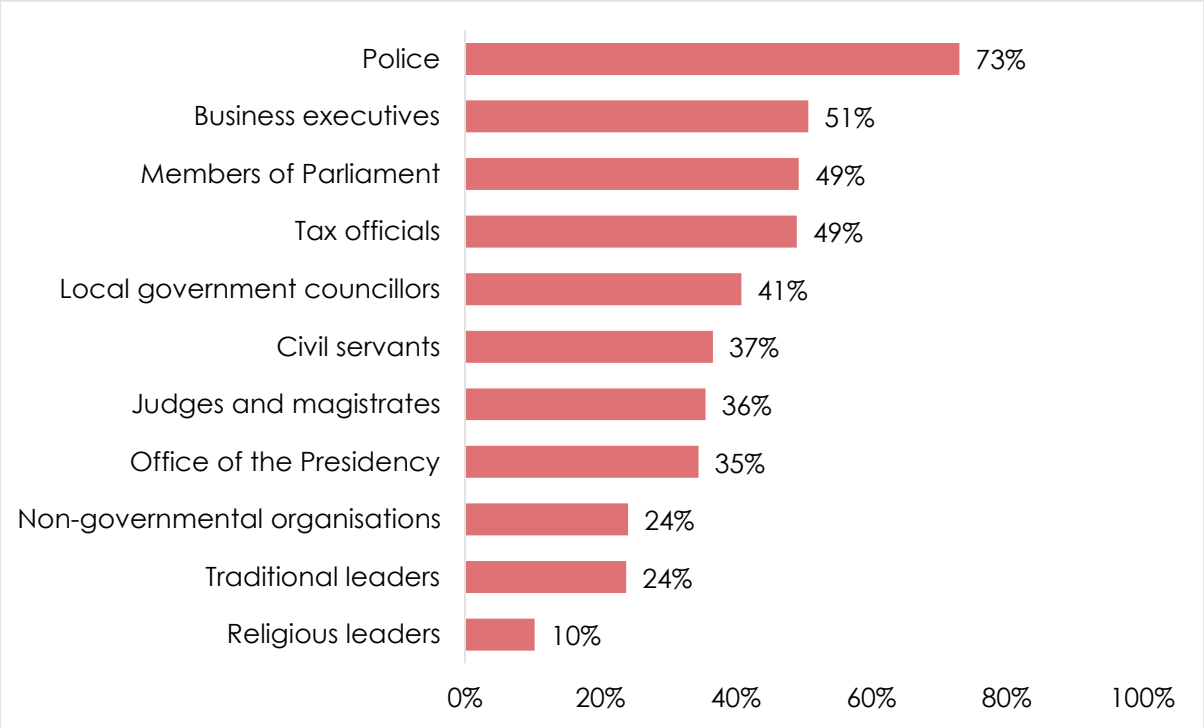
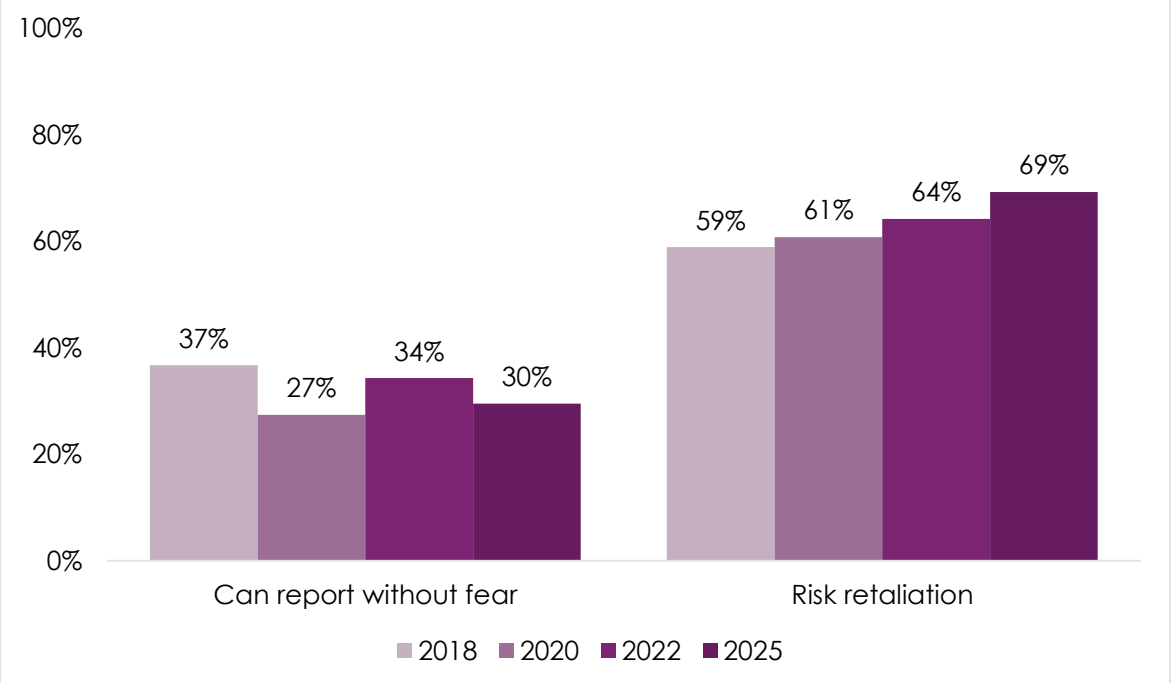
Figure 3: Who is corrupt? | Sierra Leone | 2025



Respondents were asked: *How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")*

Figure 4: Risk of retaliation for reporting corruption | Sierra Leone | 2018-2025



Respondents were asked: *In this country, can ordinary people report incidents of corruption without fear, or do they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they speak out?*

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