Armed violence kills and injures millions of people a year, undermining social and economic development and well-being in affected countries around the world. Armed violence can be seen clearly in the humanitarian crisis of open conflict, yet it can be even more destructive in non-conflict countries.

Alongside poverty, economic crisis and climate change, armed violence presents a critical challenge to the global goals of humanitarian protection, poverty reduction, and development. Governments, civil society and international organisations are increasing their efforts to address the problem of armed violence – through the Geneva Declaration, the Oslo Commitments, the OECD-DAC, and the UN General Assembly, amongst others.

In order to act effectively, more evidence is needed to show what drives armed violence, how it happens, and how it can be stopped. This report contributes to that body of evidence.

Glossary

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia	**LUEHW**	Liberians United to Expose Hidden Weapons
AOAV	Action on Armed Violence	**NCDS**	National Capacity Development Strategy
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development	**NEC**	National Elections Commission
AVRP	Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention	**NEPI**	National Ex-combatants Peacebuilding Initiative
BCR	Bureau for Corrections and Rehabilitation	**NGO**	Non-Government Organisation
CCJRE	Center for Criminal Justice Research and Education	**ODA**	Official Development Assistance
CIA	US Central Intelligence Agency	**OECD**	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	**OECD-DAC**	OECD-Development Assistance Committee
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of People with Disability	**PRS**	Poverty Reduction Strategy
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration	**PTSD**	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	**QUNO**	Quaker UN Office
EU	European Union	**SAS**	Small Arms Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	**SSR**	Security Sector Reform
GNI	Gross National Income	**TRC**	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ICG	International Crisis Group	**UN**	United Nations
IMF	International Monetary Fund	**UNMIL**	UN Mission in Liberia
LANSA	Liberian Network on Small Arms	**USAID**	United States Agency for International Development
LiNCSA	Liberian National Commission on Small Arms	**WANEP**	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
LISGIS	Liberian Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services	**WHO**	World Health Organisation
LNP	Liberian National Police		

Contents

Executive Summary

This report documents perceptions and experiences of armed violence in Greater Monrovia,[1] the capital city of Liberia. It is based on household surveys completed in the spring of 2010, as part of a nationwide armed violence assessment conducted in collaboration with the Small Arms Survey (SAS) and the Liberian Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS). Additional qualitative data contributing to the analysis are taken from community focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews, and from analysis of mainstream Liberian media.

PRINCIPAL AMONG THE FINDINGS PRESENTED IN THE REPORT ARE:

- Armed violence and perceptions of insecurity remain high in Liberia, eight years after the country's formal peace agreement. Although significant progress has been made in socio-economic recovery and security sector reform, violence – both actual and potential – remains just under the surface of the daily experience of Monrovian life. Over 60% of residents are worried about becoming a victim of armed violence, and almost 25% of households have experienced actual victimisation. Such insecurity poses an immediate humanitarian problem as well as a serious threat to social and economic activities, to productivity, and to private sector investment confidence.

- Liberia challenges the conventional policy and aid paradigm of 'conflict' and 'post-conflict' states. The data suggest that Liberia remains in an intermediate or limbo phase characterized by progress away from outright conflict, but also powerful residual levels of ongoing criminal violence, as well as interpersonal and sexual violence, and sporadic incidence of rioting. Together, these make up a socio-economic and political landscape in which return to more organized conflict conditions (as a result, for example, of sharp economic shock[2] or contested electoral process) could happen quickly and at significant scale.

- The principal type of armed violence experienced by Monrovians is economic crime, primarily in the form of night-time robbery targeting victims in their homes. Secondary forms of armed violence include interpersonal violence such as fighting and intimidation. Sexual violence, while commonly acknowledged to be a serious problem, appears to be chronically under-reported and arguably under-acknowledged in Liberian society.

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1   Hereafter, 'Monrovia'.
2   Although Liberia's economic performance has been improving in the last 5 years – with overall debt reduced from $4.9bn to $1.8bn between 2007 and 2009, inflation down between 2007 and 2010, GDP growth and tax revenues increasing, and foreign direct investment expected to flow back in-country after declining in 2009 – the economic revitalization pillar of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-11) indicates continuing fragility both with regard to vulnerability to further downturn in the global economic outlook, and sub-optimal performance in domestic agriculture and food production sectors (IMF, 2010; Adolfo, 2010). Any further adverse impacts in the global economy could significantly increase the risk of a return to wider armed violence in Liberia and the region. Liberia remains heavily dependent on Official Development Assistance (ODA); fluctuations and volatility in aid have been associated with increased risk of violence onset. Donors should be mindful of this in planning strategic support for the country through the period of the 2011 elections and beyond.

- Insecurity and victimisation are unevenly distributed, both within the country as a whole (with Monrovia experiencing considerable higher violence than the 15 counties), and within the capital itself (where certain neighbourhoods appear to bear the brunt of violence and crime). This 'lumpy' distribution of the problem of armed violence suggests the need for better, more localised data showing where violence happens, by whom and to whom (that is, identifying 'hot spots'), as the basis for cost-effective and appropriate targeting of security, humanitarian and development interventions. To be effective, responses across the humanitarian, security and development fields need to be more clearly and coherently integrated, supported by aid finance and national development planning.

- Small arms and light weapons constitute a small part of the total distribution of weapons used in armed violence (20% of incidents) – with bladed weapons, homemade and agricultural implements being a much larger element. This has implications for a weapons-specific approach to armed violence, insofar as conventional concentration on mechanical weapons – primarily in the form of small arms – is necessary but not in and of itself sufficient to address the problem here.

- The Government of Liberia is achieving significant streamlining and strengthening in security sector capacity and function (in particular the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberian National Police (LNP)). However, the extent to which these and associated institutions are able to provide security and related justice at the local community level remains somewhat weak.

The survey finds that *security* is not the highest priority concern among household survey respondents. Access to basic amenities and services (specifically, electricity, water and sanitation, and healthcare) is cited as top priority.[3] However, it should not be inferred from this that insecurity is no longer an issue in Monrovia. Rather, our survey suggests that serious ongoing insecurity and violence – at a rate of nearly one in four households – is experienced through the prism of a wider, and apparently chronic struggle for daily subsistence.

This is not simply a matter of income poverty,[4] but a poverty of inclusion, of rights and, as a consequence, of avenues to individual, household and community opportunity. Policy-makers and practitioners interested in peacebuilding in Monrovia and Liberia should recognise, as a matter of priority, that this toxic triad – a continuing failure to meet such common expectations as water, lighting and healthcare, combined with continuing weakness in the provision of security and justice, and the continuing prevalence of everyday violence – could worryingly easily turn current criminal and interpersonal violence into more organised and politicised forms.

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3   'Security' is ranked fourth as the first of three concerns. Understood in combination, though, these priorities support the broader concept of 'human security' as policy language and practice.
4   Armed violence is not clearly associated with absolute levels of poverty; it is much more clearly associated with relative poverty, perceptions of inequity, and systematic exclusion from opportunities, resources and services.

Background

The Republic of Liberia lies on the coast of West Africa, south of Sierra Leone, bordering Guinea inland to the east, and north of Cote d'Ivoire. Established in 1847, Liberia sits at the heart of a complex regional web of ethnic groupings and identities which subsist beneath, and clearly shape, post-colonial political factionalisation and the growth of resource-based contests. Whilst Liberia is the subject of this report, and the bearer of a uniquely tragic recent history, it must be recognised that the states of West Africa – in particular along the Mano River Basin – are bound together in deeply-rooted indigenous and popular relations that flow freely across the region, largely unimpeded by national boundaries, whether positively in the form of trade and growth, or negatively in the form of violence and destruction (Sawyer, 2004).[5] What happens in Liberia reverberates in the region as a whole.

MAP 1. REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

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5   Security Council Special Research Report no.1: Emerging security threats in West Africa, 2 May 2011.

From 1989 to 2003, Liberia experienced 14 years of widespread, chronic and vicious armed violence – including two periods of all-out civil war. Accounts of the violence are brutal, involving crimes against humanity, public torture, amputation, cannibalism, rape, and mass execution. The lives of average Liberians were devastated. Families were displaced; recruitment of child soldiers was commonplace. In total, of a population of three or so million, the conflict claimed between 150,000 and 250,000 lives, displacing nearly one and a half million individuals (Wolf, 2005). The legacy is a country struggling to recover economically, institutionally and psychosocially (Mbadlanyana & Onouha, 2009).

Following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra in 2003, however, Liberians have worked with striking success to rebuild their lives, their economy and a viable political system. A transitional Government of Liberia, supported by ECOWAS and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), was established in 2003. UNMIL supported the implementation of a rapid Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programme in 2004, disarming and decommissioning some 101,495 individuals.[6] A revitalised democratic process was managed by the newly-established National Elections Committee (NEC) in 2005, and Africa's first female head of state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated as President in January 2006.[7]

At around the same time, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established, in accordance with the mandate of the CPA, to "provide a forum [to] address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences…to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation."[8] Following four years of testimonies, the TRC delivered its final report and recommendations in 2009. Questions regarding the security implications of general amnesty offers established through the TRC, and current contests with respect to the political implications of the TRC's findings persist, with the potential through the 2011 elections and beyond to feed new dynamics of instability and risk of return to violence (Harris & Lappin, 2010; Schmid, 2009; Pham, 2006).

Considerable progress has been made by the Government of Liberia, working with UNMIL and international partners, to implement security sector reform (SSR). Working substantively with the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberian National Police (LNP), as well as a range of associated security and justice agencies and entities, progress has been made in building capacity and restoring trust in the principal security actors – though it should be noted that much of the early progress focused on Monrovia and urban centres, with considerably less extension into the rural sector in the counties (IMF, 2010; Gompert et al., 2007; Ebo, 2005). The National Capacity Development Strategy (NCDS) acknowledges that, while important advances have been made, these key actors remain under-resourced, lacking the capacity to fulfil the aims and responsibilities of a fully functioning security sector.

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6   http://unmil.org/1content.asp?ccat=history&zdoc=1. http://www.unidir.org/pdf/EU_background_papers/EU_BGP_10.pdf. The DDRR process in Liberia has been subjected to some legitimate criticism. However, demobilization and disarmament were achieved to a significant extent within the first few years of the peace agreement. Longer-term residual issues relating to absorption of ex-combatants into meaningful employment or livelihoods, both in Monrovia and in the rural sector more widely, remain only partially addressed.

7   Elections, whilst contributory to the general process of improving governance, accountability and popular political participation, remain a potential flash point in mid-2011.

8   http://trcofliberia.org/

In 2008, the Government of Liberia, again with the support of international partners, launched a new Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and, more recently, the NCDS. These strategies aim to improve national security and stability by progressing Liberia through post-conflict status into recovery, with a particular emphasis on economic transformation, development of the Liberian workforce, and sustainability. The Government of Liberia recognises the persistence of violence in the everyday lives of Liberians, the PRS characterising the remaining risk thus: **"though the threat of an armed conflict has reduced, increases in armed robbery and related secondary crimes (particularly rape) and vigilantism are significant threats to individual and community security."**[9]

Liberia shows that the cessation of civil conflict cannot be equated with the end of violence (World Bank, 2011a). Indeed, Liberia exemplifies the utility of 'armed violence' as a conceptual framing, allowing researchers, analysts, policy-makers and practitioners to understand and address the full range of weapon-related harm happening in a country, whether classed as at war or not. By taking a public health approach, led by the empirical evidence of death and injury rather than the political nomenclatures of 'conflict', 'post-conflict' or 'crime', the armed violence lens promotes protection of civilians and citizen security in all situations, and encourages the better integration of humanitarian, security, development and human rights instruments and approaches in so doing.

"We are relaxed from the tension of war, but yet we are still in violence… the mindset is that things are supposed to be all right because there is no war, but things are not going the way we think that they should go."

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9   Liberian National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, p.53 April 2008 to June 2011.

A busy day in Waterside Market Downtown Monrovia.

Survey methodology

This report assesses armed violence and related insecurity in Liberia's capital, Monrovia, between 2009 and 2010. It is based on primary data collection methods including a household survey, community focus group discussions, and key stakeholder interviews with government, non-government and international organisation actors.

One of the greatest challenges in ascertaining, understanding and acting on armed violence in Liberia – as in many affected countries – is the lack of accurate and reliable data to inform programming and violence reduction initiatives (World Bank, 2011a). A number of local and international NGOs are working to improve data on aspects of Liberia's security situation. However, greater empirical understanding of the issues in Liberia is vital if more effective armed violence reduction and prevention (AVRP) is to be achieved. The purpose of this assessment is to contribute to that body of data. As such, the report serves as a platform on which to build more systematic national armed violence measurement and monitoring.[10]

DEFINING ARMED VIOLENCE
This report uses the OECD definition of armed violence – "*the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death or psychosocial harm, which undermines development*" (OECD-DAC, 2009).[11] It also draws on WHO's ecological framework for understanding violence (WHO, 2002). However, global definitions often require adaptation to capture local specificities. As such, as will be seen in the following sections, much of the assessment, analysis and discussion in this report is presented in four categories of armed violence, adapted from within the WHO model. They are: 'economically-motivated armed violence'; 'interpersonal violence'; 'sexual and gender-based violence'; and 'mob justice'.[12]

The phenomena classed as 'armed violence' in the report include both real incidents and perceptions of threat. This is considered especially important in definitional terms since firmly-held perceptions can be as strongly influential in their social and economic impact on households and, therefore, the behaviour of individuals and communities, as actualised violence (WHO, 2008).

The report takes, from the outset, a broad-spectrum view of what constitutes 'armed' in armed violence. This is guided primarily by the experiences of Liberians as reported through the household survey and qualitative data gathering processes. Although small arms and light weapons are clearly a distinct issue in countries such as Liberia, a significant weight of attention is given to non-mechanical arms such as bladed weapons, often doubling as domestic or agricultural tools, since these constitute the largest category of weapons used in violence in the survey.

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10 A Liberian Armed Violence Observatory was established, with the support of AOAV and the Government of Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a range of national government and civil society counterparts in early 2011.
11 This is consistent with definition adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2009 (UN/64/228).
12 These categories are based on the primary forms of reported violence in the survey data. Economically-motivated armed violence, here, includes: land disputes (1%), house break-ins (5%) and robbery/theft (46%); interpersonal violence includes: spontaneous killing (0.5%), intentional killing (1%), assault/beating (6%), fighting (11%) and threat/intimidation (16%); sexual violence includes: domestic violence (2%) and rape/sexual assault (4%).

FOCUS ON MONROVIA

The survey focuses on the perceptions and experience of violence in Monrovia, the country's capital and the nation's economic, political and administrative hub. Prior to the civil wars, Monrovia was a burgeoning West African metropolis, with infrastructure developing to serve a population of 400,000, (roughly one-fifth of the total population of the time).[13] Conflict, when it came, ravaged the city's infrastructure, its planning processes, governance structures and social service facilities. Paradoxically, in the same period, perceptions of comparatively better economic and security conditions in the urban sector encouraged in-migration from the predominantly rural counties both during and after the war. By the 2008 census, the population of Monrovia had increased to 1,010,470 residents – just short of one-third of the population.[14]

MAP 2: GREATER MONROVIA

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13 See: http://www.atlapedia.com/online/countries/liberia.htm and 2008 census
14 2008 census results; UN-HABITAT estimates that around 60% of Liberians live in urban settlements across the country as a whole.

The combination of deteriorating governance and infrastructure, and rapidly increasing population resulted in overcrowding, food insecurity, unemployment, and chronically inadequate social services, including housing, sanitation, water and electricity supplies, road and traffic management, healthcare and education.[15] Recent comparative analyses carried out by AOAV and SAS show that Monrovia experiences significantly higher rates of armed violence and violent crime when compared with both urban and rural sectors in the counties. These conditions make Monrovia an important focus of study, both for an understanding of armed violence in Liberia, as well as an understanding of armed violence in the context of conflict recovery, development and rapid urbanisation more broadly (World Bank, 2011b; UNSC, 2011; Blattman & Jamison, 2009; Jaye, 2002).

A MULTI-LEVEL METHODOLOGY

The research that informs this report combines quantitative and qualitative data, drawn from a combination of research methods including: a comprehensive household survey of Monrovia; a series of community-level semi-structured focus group discussions; a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders; and a systematic review of media coverage of armed violence in major national print media outlets. Armed violence is a complex and nuanced set of phenomena, including perceived threat and associated insecurity as well as actualised use of weapons and incidence of attacks. As such, a composite methodology including both epidemiological enumeration of the problem as well as assessment of perceptions and perspectives was deemed optimal.

The household survey was conducted in spring 2010. It was implemented in coordination with Liberian Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and Small Arms Survey (SAS), who conducted a concurrent survey of Liberia's counties. Questionnaire format, research team guidelines and training were developed and provided collaboratively by AOAV and SAS; LISGIS provided enumerators, field supervisors and data entry officers. The survey was implemented in agreed Enumeration Areas (EA) across Greater Monrovia, using a random walk sampling strategy in each neighbourhood, with the household as a basic unit of measurement and response. A total of 960 surveys were collected. Responses were coded and data-based. Data were then reviewed and cleaned. Outlier responses, where feasible, were consolidated within alternate categories. Invalid responses greater than or equal to 5% and non-responses greater than or equal to 25% were removed. Following verification, a total of 851 surveys remained for analysis. All responses were weighted to reflect proportionality within the Monrovia dataset to the Liberian population as a whole.[16] Weighting was based on location, tribe, gender, religion, and age. All results in this report were calculated with weights applied.

Focus group discussions were conducted with residents of 16 neighbourhoods in Monrovia. Using desk research and consultation with Monrovian counterparts, neighbourhoods were selected according to a perceived concentration of risk for and/or experience of violence. The discussions were intended as a means to gain a more in-depth understanding of popular experiences and perceptions of armed violence, including incidence, impact, and coping strategies of residents.

Discussions were conducted using a semi-structured interview method so that similar topics were covered across all discussion groups, allowing residents to express their varied experiences and opinions, and allowing them to convey relevant thoughts that may be outside of the interviewers' experience or survey questionnaire, while still maintaining a focus on the subject matter. Discussions explored the prevalence and types of violence experienced, demographics of perpetrators and victims, weapon use, security mechanisms, and strategies to address violence. A total of 8-12 people were included in each group.

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15 Greater Monrovia Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey, Government of Liberia and the UN, December 2006.
16 Referencing the 2008 national census.

Semi-structured interviews, based on a standard questionnaire form, were conducted with representatives of a range of relevant organisations and institutions in Monrovia. Interviews were arranged with representatives of government agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders including: the Ministries of Gender and Justice, the Liberian National Police and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LiNCSA), Youth Crime Watch, the National Ex-combatants Peacebuilding Initiative (NEPI), Liberians United to Expose Hidden Weapons (LUEHW), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Liberia Community Policing Forum, the Center for Criminal Justice Research and Education (CCJRE) and Redemption Hospital.[17]

In parallel with the survey, discussion groups and interviews, an analysis was carried out of news media covering armed violent incidents in Liberia at a national level. This offers a complementary insight into the way armed violence is perceived and portrayed – and into the ways portrayal can inform popular concerns, policy trajectories and, ultimately, responsive interventions.[18] Three major national newspapers (*The Enquirer, The Democrat and The Observer*) were analysed from November 2007 to April 2010. Reports indicating a violent incident were annotated and recorded.[19] For each report, researchers recorded details in a standardised database, including fields for: event date, time, location, victim and perpetrator demographics, type of event, and weapon used. To ensure consistency of report inclusion and details recorded, a manual for media analysis was developed, loosely following the Taback-Coupland model.[20] Researchers underwent training prior to conducting the analysis.

THE PROBLEM OF DATA

It should be noted that, as with many other affected countries, Liberia does not hold high-quality national data on problems falling under the umbrella category of armed violence. Absence of, or weak capacity to gather, analyse and use data on armed violence is one of the principal barriers to more effective policy and programming to reduce and prevent the problem (World Bank, 2011a). In the case of Liberia, data on aspects of armed violence are collected and held in various (paper/electronic) forms, at different administrative levels within the country. Major data holders include: the LNP, including units such as the Drugs Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR); the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Gender; the Liberian National Commission on Small Arms, and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Additionally, media houses retain material covering incidents of armed violence and can, along with local and international NGOs, as well as in-country academic institutions, be a valuable source of information on armed violence.

Building a more coherent, national monitoring system to capture the scale, distribution, pattern and hence nature of the problem of armed violence in Liberia, should be a priority both for local actors and international actors offering them support.

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17 While the opinions expressed by representatives do not necessarily represent the official position of the organisation for which they work, key informants were a valuable source of information due to their direct professional engagement with and experience of armed violence in the city.
18 Where the media discourse of armed violence departs from the empirical experience of the population, or excessively focuses on a particular form, this can have a distinct distorting effect on official responses and the rational use of resources for intervention. By the same virtue, where media reporting is accurate and responsible, it can form a powerful tool for increasing public awareness of the problem and pressure for effective policy response.
19 Editorials and opinion pieces were not included.
20 Taback N & Coupland R (2005). Towards collation and modelling of the global cost of armed violence on civilians. Med. Confl. Surviv. 2005; 21:19-27.

Survey findings.

1. Armed Violence in Monrovia: reality & perception

This section sets out the main empirical findings, with regard to actual experience of armed violence among residents of Monrovia, and the perceptions of insecurity they have in relation to those experiences.

A substantial majority of the capital's residents (61.4%) reported being concerned that someone in their household may become a victim of violence (graph 1). This indicates a relatively high level of anxiety for personal security among Monrovians.

GRAPH 1

DO YOU WORRY THAT SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD MAY BECOME A VICTIM OF CRIME OR VIOLENCE?

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 193,344.57
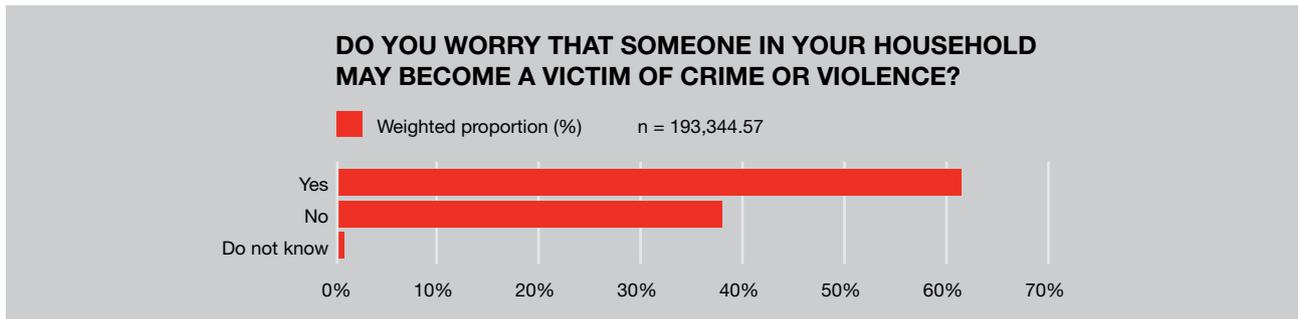
Nearly one in four households reported victimization by a crime or violent encounter in the year prior to the survey (graph 2). Over half of these (56%) reported being victimized more than once during the period.

GRAPH 2

HAS A MEMBER OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD BEEN A VICTIM OF CRIME OR VIOLENT ENCOUNTER IN THE PAST ONE YEAR?

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 193,344.57
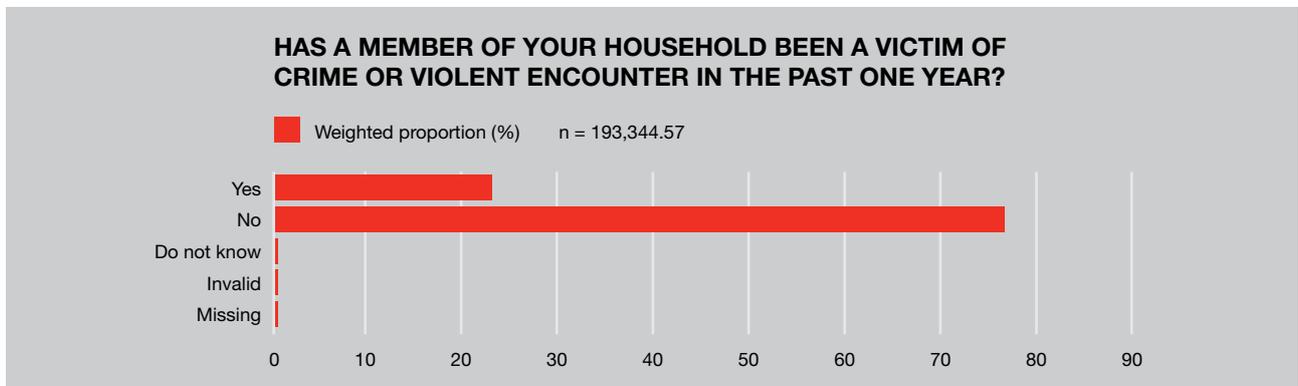
While very few victims were killed during these encounters (graph 3), a significant number (44%) reported one or more household members being physically injured.

GRAPH 3

WAS THE VICTIM INJURED OR KILLED?

Weighted proportion (%) (multiple answers)   n = 44,269.85
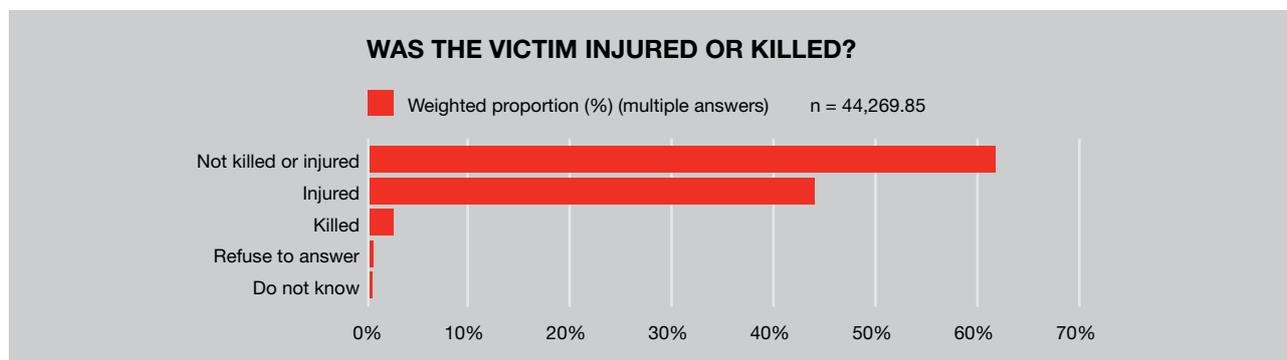
Overall, the survey data suggest a realistic general awareness among respondents of the level, types and dynamics of violence occurring in Monrovia, with reported perceptions of insecurity closely mirroring actual incidents experienced. There was a clear consistency between respondents' own experiences of violence and their fear of prospective insecurity. Respondents who had been victimised in their or a friend's home reported significantly greater levels of insecurity in their home at night (64%) compared with the level of concern among households that had not experienced violence in the preceding year (36%). People who experienced victimisation outside the home – that is, in the street, in the market place etc – were more likely to report considerably higher levels of feelings of safety in their own homes (averaging 58%) (table 1).

TABLE 1

HAS HOUSEHOLD EXPERIENCED A VIOLENT INCIDENT WITHIN THE PAST YEAR?

Does not feel safe in home at night   Feels safe in home at night, or has no opinion

(total weighted incidents)

No	**36% / 64%**
Yes	**64% / 36%**

Incident reported above occurred:

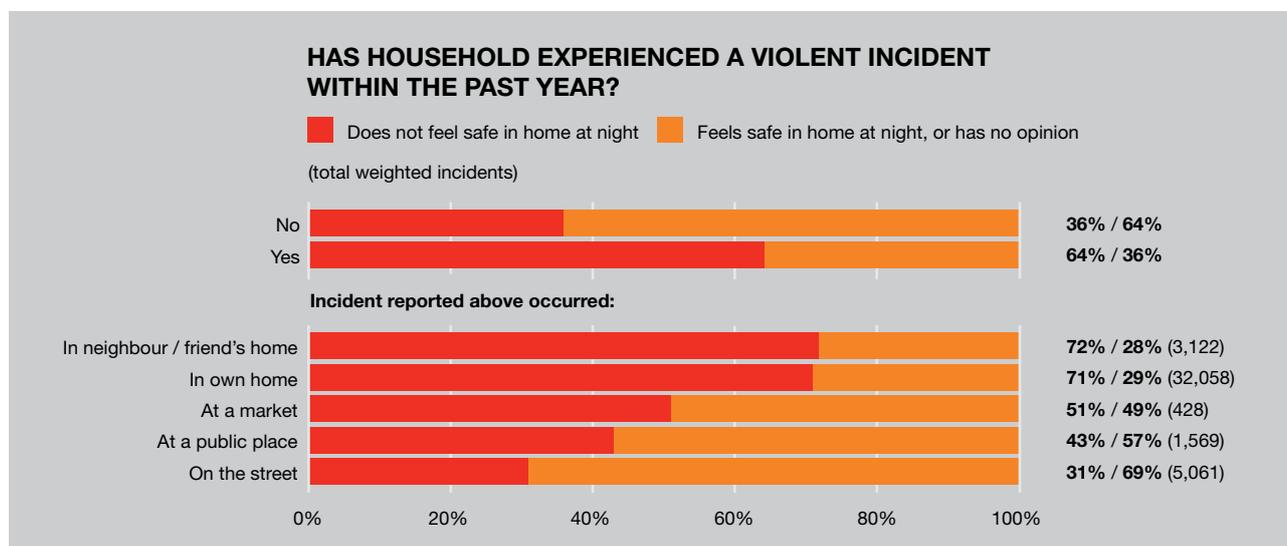|	
In neighbour / friend's home	**72% / 28%** (3,122)
In own home	**71% / 29%** (32,058)
At a market	**51% / 49%** (428)
At a public place	**43% / 57%** (1,569)
On the street	**31% / 69%** (5,061)

At one level, this is an entirely intuitive finding – people who have experienced armed violence and criminality frequently harbour elevated levels of insecurity. People who have not, feel generally more secure. But it is possible that the very clearly demarcated differential experience between those exposed and those not exposed to armed violence maps onto different 'micro-geographies' of insecurity within the Liberian capital – where some neighbourhoods in Monrovia are relatively safe, and are known to be so, while others are hot-spots for violence and crime, with a commensurately insecure residential population. This is borne out by some of the localised focus group discussions and requires further research and analysis, since it has a bearing on how armed violence reduction and prevention interventions for Monrovia should be designed and deployed, and on how policies and programmes may be designed to strengthen social cohesion both within and between neighbourhoods.
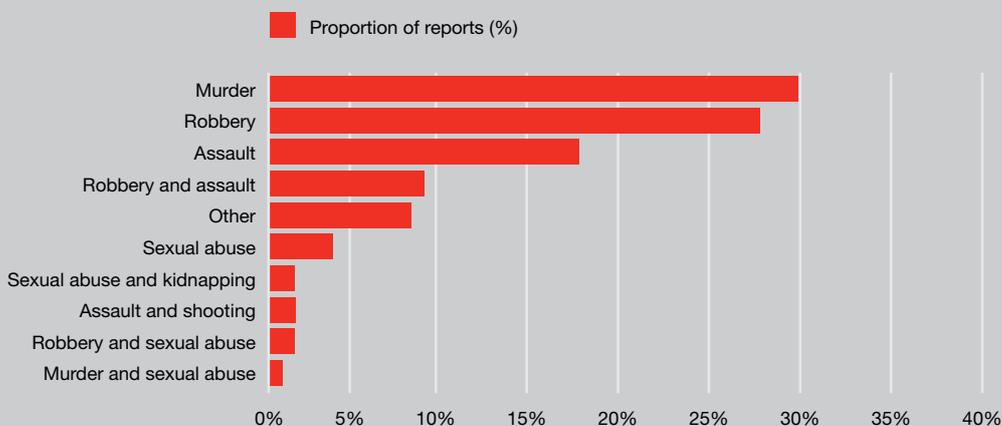
BOX 1: ARMED VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA

Reporting on armed violence in the media significantly influences public perceptions of risk and security. This feeds popular concern and pressure for action and thus, ultimately, public policy-making on the issue. Where the media discourse on armed violence is accurate, it can be invaluable in raising awareness and prompting action. Where media discourse is inaccurate, or biased in favour of certain forms of violence, reportage can distort perceptions and mislead policy. In the media analysis conducted for this assessment, a total of 209 violence-focused news stories were identified between November 2007 and April 2010. Just under three quarters of the events reported (138) occurred in Monrovia.

For both economically-motivated armed violence (incidents of robbery and theft) and interpersonal violence, there was a close fit between characteristics covered in media stories and survey findings of household experience. News stories confirmed the majority of robberies reported occurred in the victim's home (63%), the majority of incidents involved weapon use (89%), and none of the victims were reported to know their attackers. There was, however, a tendency in the media to report use of firearms at a higher rate than was seen in the survey (50% versus 28% respectively) and victim injuries (42% of robberies resulting in injury in the media compared to 31% in the survey). For interpersonal incidents, some news story characteristics correspond closely with survey results, for example, the rate of weapon use (58% of media reports and 56% of survey results), injury rates (46% of victims experience injuries for media reports and 48% for survey results), and the equal likelihood for incidents to occur during the day or night.

In three respects, however, media reporting of armed violence diverges starkly from experiences recorded in the survey. First, murder constituted almost a third (30%) of all news reports (graph 4), compared with only 2% of such fatal incidents reported by households (the latter being consistent with recent data from the Liberian National Police). It is not unlikely that this reflects an appetite in news reporting for more lurid aspects of violence; indeed, media reports were found to contain higher levels of injury and death than were found in the household survey.

GRAPH 4

REPORTS OF VIOLENCE RECORDED FROM LIBERIAN MEDIA

■ Proportion of reports (%)

Second, roughly one in six media stories on armed violence is characterised as 'mob justice' or mob violence. This is higher than the rate recorded in the household survey, though both are lower than the scale of reference in interviews. While the actual rates of collective and communal violence appear to be relatively low, there is clearly a prevailing concern for this type of violence, not least perhaps since it can flare up quickly (as has been seen in a number of cases), and can be seen to reflect the potential for wider instability and return to more organised violence among communities with outstanding and unresolved issues of grievance as well as often very limited access to formal processes of dispute resolution and justice.

Third, sexual and gender-based violence are largely absent from media coverage of armed violence and insecurity in Liberia, mirroring what we suspect is significant under-reporting of the phenomenon in the survey. This is explored further below, but arguably constitutes a priority issue with regard to the need to amplify public awareness and official recognition of gendered, sexual and domestic violence in the country. Where sexual violence was reported, media coverage was consistent with survey reports, including: the predominant occurrence of incidents in the home; the majority of perpetrators being known to victims; low levels of weapon use; and a majority of victims being young and female.

An issue that emerges clearly from this analysis is that there is need for AVRP stakeholders to work with media at the level of editorial policy-making as much as at the level of journalistic practice. Editorial choices about how armed violence is represented in media reporting is key to building accurate public awareness and hence appropriate pressure on government policy-making and intervention.

**Billboard promoting the progress achieved by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.**

2. Armed violence and insecurity: primary types and characteristics

This section explores four primary forms of armed violence distinguished in the combined household survey and qualitative research, working, as noted earlier, within a broad taxonomy of violence set out in WHO's ecological model, and focusing on: economically-motivated crime; interpersonal violence; sexual and gender-based violence; & 'mob justice'.[21]

2.1 ECONOMICALLY-MOTIVATED ARMED VIOLENCE

Theft and robbery – broadly characterised as economically-motivated – are the most common forms of armed violence experienced in Monrovia (graph 5). Nearly 80% of survey respondents who worried about their household security cited concerns about robbery and theft as their major source of insecurity (45% specifically cited 'armed robbery').[22]

GRAPH 5

TYPE OF VIOLENCE / CRIME EXPERIENCED

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 44,269.85
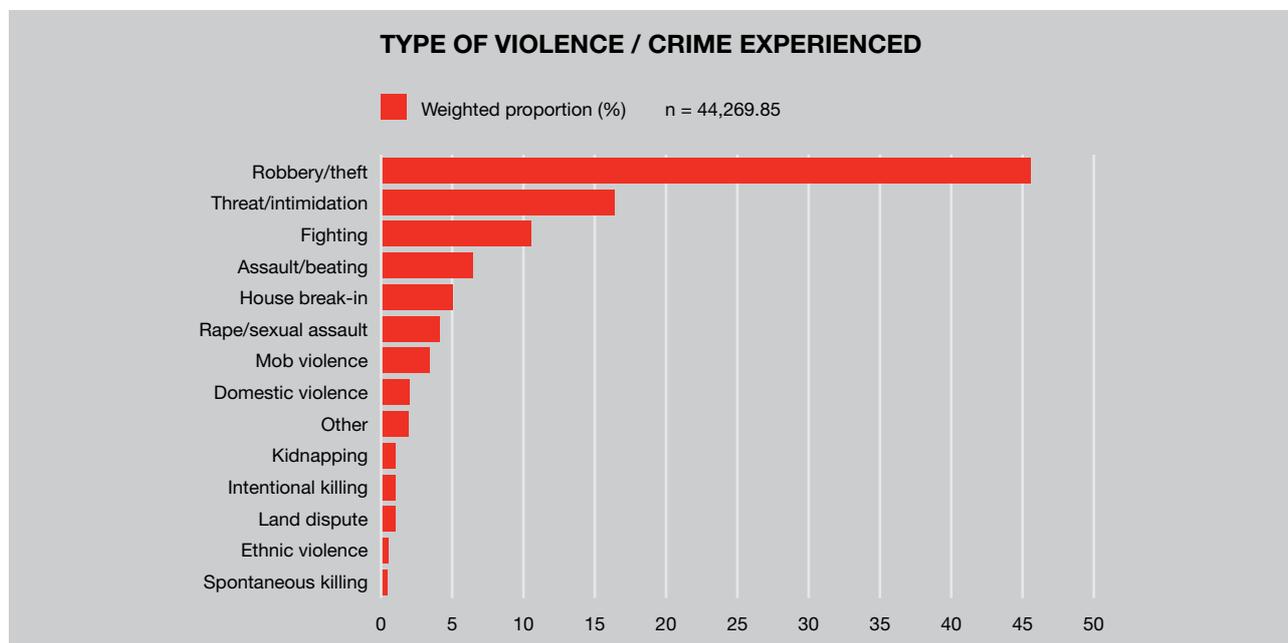
Compared with other forms of violence – in particular interpersonal and sexual violence – economically-motivated violence is characterised by a relatively high use of weapons (70%) (graph 6). Working assumptions here may be that sexual – often familial and domestic – violence depends somewhat less on the extension of physical force offered by a weapon, while the often unpremeditated nature of interpersonal violence (for example, fighting in public places during weekends and holidays) explains somewhat lower (though still significant) levels of weapon use.

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21 It should be noted that these are recognised as imperfect categories which overlap with one another, and should not be taken as exhaustively inclusive of all incidents of violence occurring in Monrovia.
22 Moreover, where incidents of 'mob justice' were reported, 77% were triggered by accusations of theft or robbery.

GRAPH 6

COMPARATIVE USE OF WEAPONS BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED

Legend: Weapon · No weapon · Unknown · Invalid

Economic (n = 22,840.71) · Interpersonal (n = 15,440.53) · Sexual (n = 2,715.68)
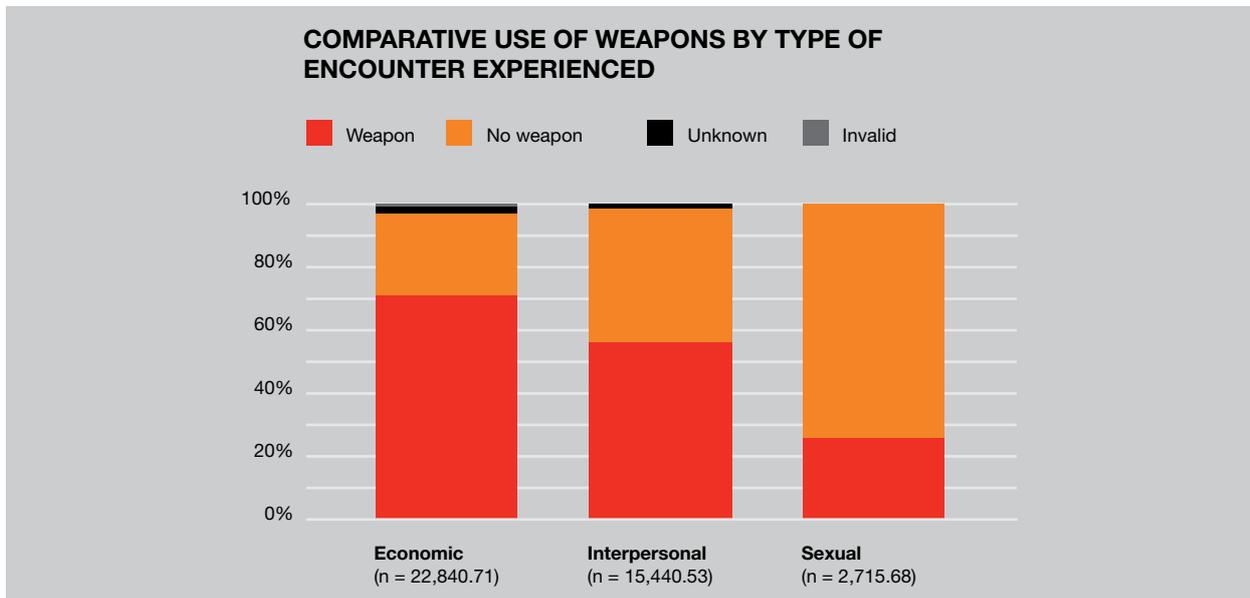
The vast majority of economically motivated armed violence incidents (primarily household robberies) are committed at night (81%), with 83% of incidents occurring in the victim's own home (graph 7). In areas where this form of armed violence is common, the consequences for chronic insecurity among victimised and at-r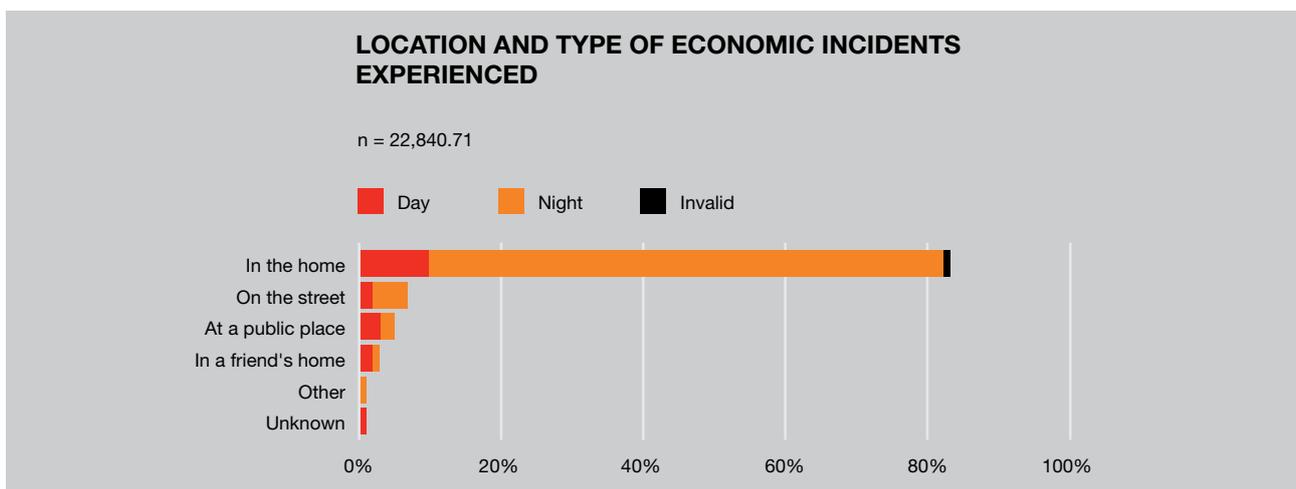isk householders are clear. So far as this is the case, a focus on increasing electrical lighting, as well as enhancing night-time security presence in highly-affected neighbourhoods are obvious options for first-line preventive intervention (ICG, 2009).

GRAPH 7

LOCATION AND TYPE OF ECONOMIC INCIDENTS EXPERIENCED

n = 22,840.71

Legend: Day · Night · Invalid

In the home · On the street · At a public place · In a friend's home · Other · Unknown

Economically-motivated armed violence appears rarely to result in fatalities.[23] However, almost a third of incidents result in physical injury to the victim(s). In discussions with residents, violence was perceived to be an inevitable aspect of economically-motivated crime, since valuables would not readily be handed over without the threat or act of violence. However, in addition to enacting violence to achieve financial aims, some perpetrators of economic crime appear to commit superfluous acts of violence, including acts of sexual and physical assault, and the abuse of victims who lack valuables to hand over.

23 This is consistent with LNP data.

In almost all reported incidents of economically-motivated armed violence, victims reported that they did not know the perpetrators (91%). Victims of interpersonal violent encounters such as assaults or fights, and sexual violence, have a considerably higher tendency to know their aggressors (graph 8).

GRAPH 8

COMPARATIVE FAMILIARITY WITH ATTACKER BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED
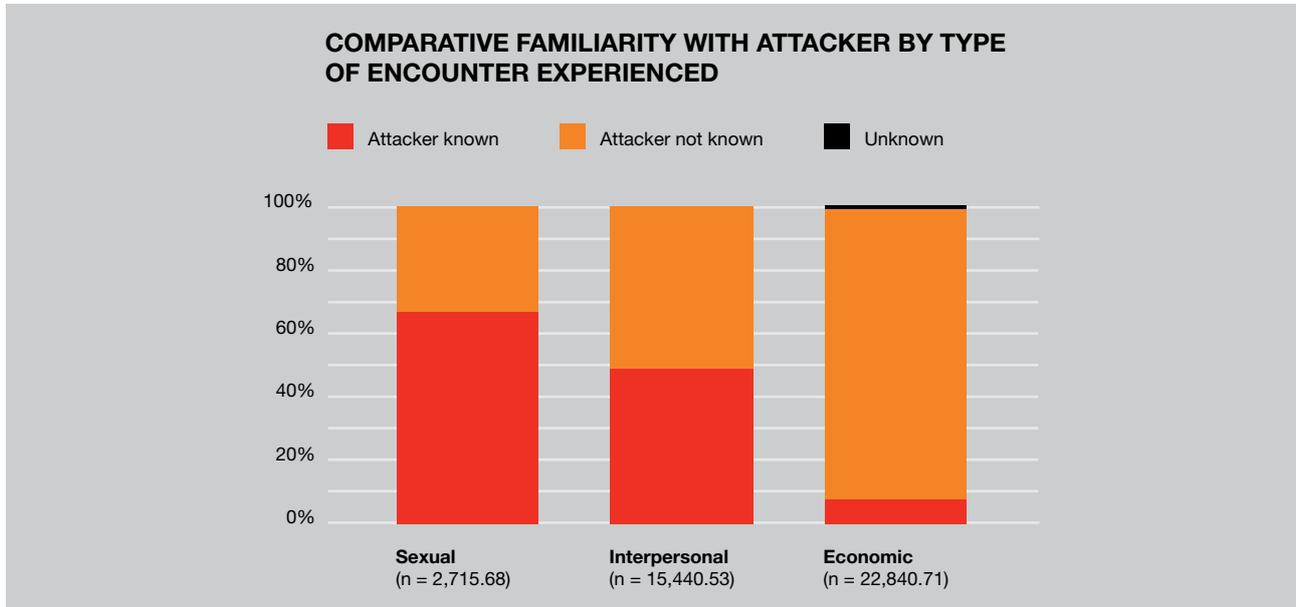
According to key stakeholders and focus group participants, persistent poverty and unemployment are important drivers of economically-motivated armed violence in their communities. In one illustrative case, residents of Center Street noted a steep decline in previously prolific rates of household robbery during the period in which a local road construction project was being implemented. This was reportedly due to illegal nightly removal of copper pipes by the usual perpetrators of armed robberies.[24] Residents stressed that they expected the respite from armed robberies to be temporary and that thefts would resume again on completion of the road works.

With an estimated 85% formal unemployment rate in Liberia[25] it is perhaps not surprising that some Liberians resort to weapons and violence to support their livelihoods – not least since, in interviews, residents commonly felt that the ready use of violence for financial gain reflected enduring, widespread and unaddressed trauma and attitudes hanging over from Liberia's conflicts.

"Once you find people not meeting their social and daily needs, once you see that people are not employed [and] unable to take care of their families... they move into these violent acts"
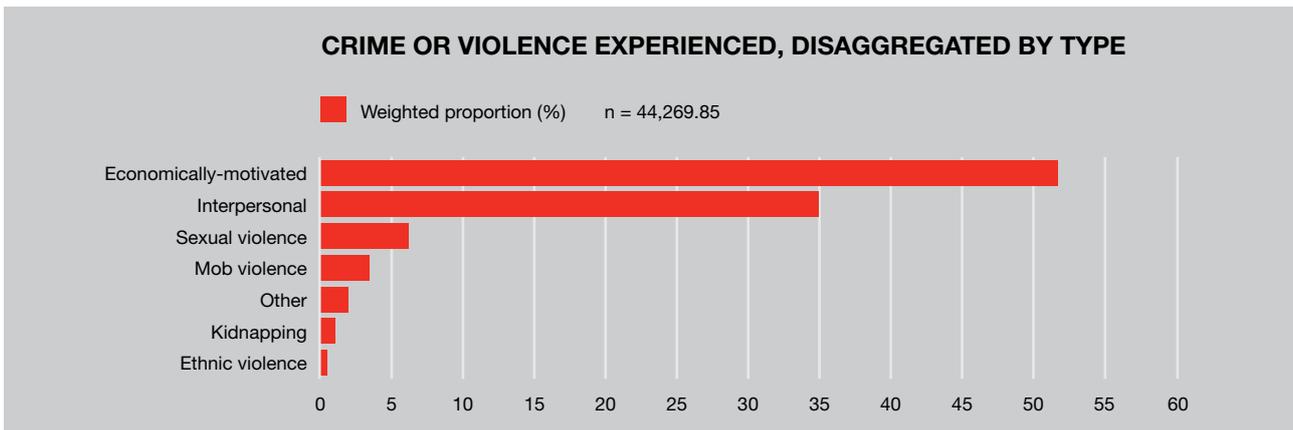
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24 Copper pipes can be sold for significant amounts of cash and apparently served as a much more lucrative and reliable source of income than household robberies.
25 According to the 2008 census. These data are discussed in more detail in section 3.

2.2 INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

A second prominent category of concern in the household survey was the more generalised incidence of threats, intimidation, assaults, fights and (limited) killings (graph 9). According to the survey, it is the category of interpersonal violence that is most likely to result in physical injury to victims (graph 10).

GRAPH 9

CRIME OR VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED, DISAGGREGATED BY TYPE

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 44,269.85

Category	
Economically-motivated	~52
Interpersonal	~35
Sexual violence	~6
Mob violence	~3
Other	~2
Kidnapping	~1
Ethnic violence	~0.5

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35   40   45   50   55   60

GRAPH 10

COMPARATIVE INJURY RATES BY TYPE OF
ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED

Injury   No injury   Killed   Unknown   Invalid

	Interpersonal (n = 15,440.53)	Sexual (n = 2,715.68)	Economic (n = 22,840.71)

Interpersonal violence occurs most frequently within the household, with weapons being used in over half of encounters. Interpersonal violence is more or less equally likely to occur during the day or night (graph 11), and equally likely to be enacted against both known and unknown victims. This may suggest that a significant part of the category of interpersonal violence captured in the Monrovia survey is impulsive rather than planned, an insight which has a bearing on the types of – e.g. psychosocial and behavioural – interventions that might be considered potentially appropriate and effective in reducing and preventing it.

GRAPH 11

LOCATION AND TIME OF INTERPERSONAL
INCIDENT EXPERIENCED
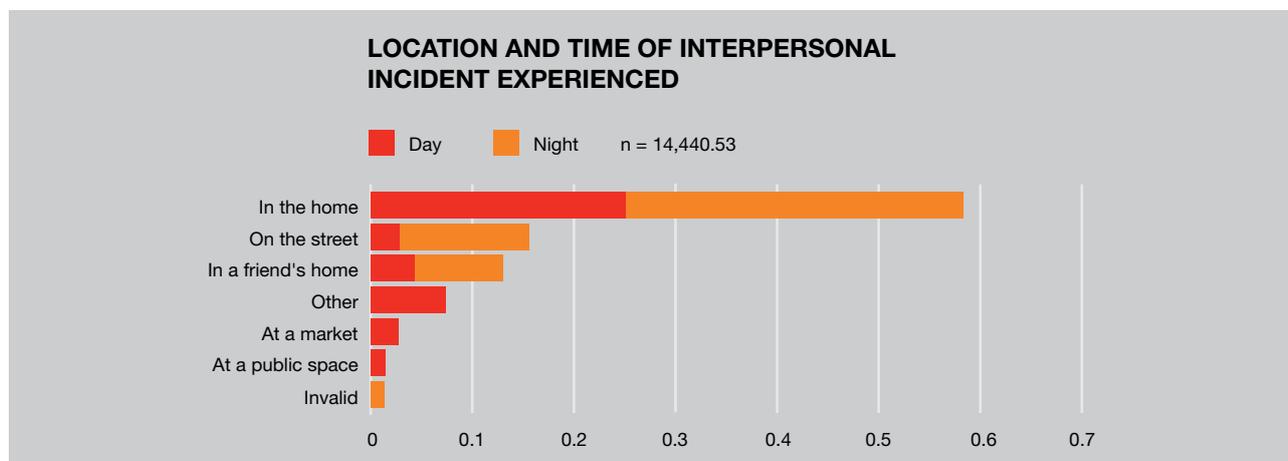
Assaults and fights were rated as the second greatest security concern among residents, with nearly 25% of survey respondents listing this as their top priority concern and nearly 40% mentioning this as a concern overall. Similarly, when reporting on encounters experienced, the second, third and fourth most common incidents were interpersonal encounters, including threats/intimidation, fighting and assault/beating. Approximately a third (35%) of reported incidents of violence were interpersonal in nature.[26] Interpersonal violence can, in some contexts, seem somewhat random and incidental – the consequence of fractious local relations and chaotic local norms. However, with rising levels of intensity, interpersonal violence constitutes not only an affront to citizen's safety, but also a marker of wider social fragility. "[I]n countries struggling to rebuild after conflict, high levels of interpersonal violence represent a serious risk of relapse" (World Bank, 2011a)
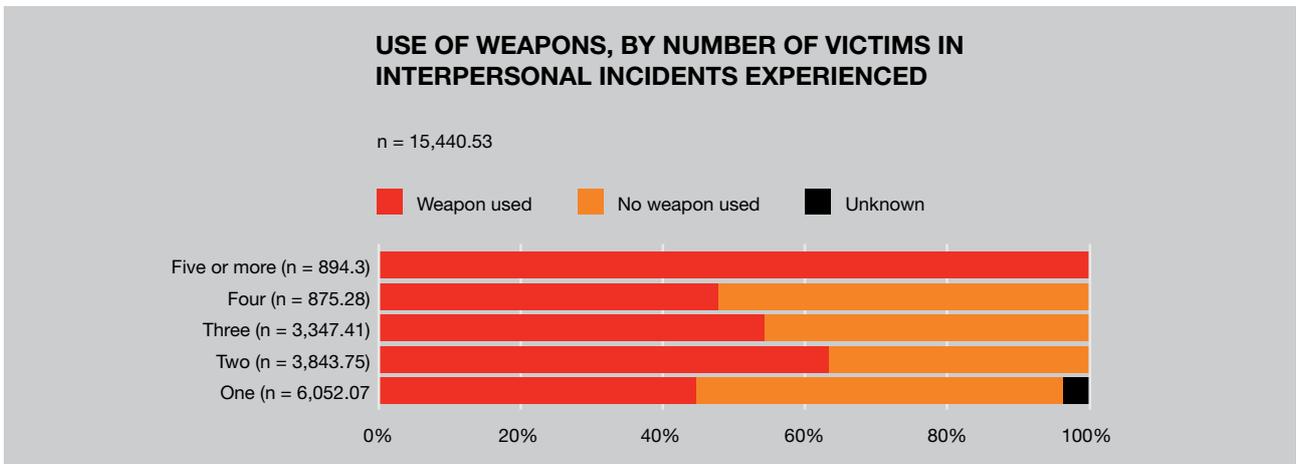
A weapon was used in over half of interpersonal incidents reported, the most common being a bladed instrument (57%), followed by homemade weapons and blunt objects. Perpetrators were more likely to use weapons in interpersonal incidents if the victim was unknown to the attacker[27] and weapon use was slightly more likely when victims were male or of both sexes.[28] Perpetrators were equally likely to use weapons where there were four or fewer victims. Interestingly, perpetrators of interpersonal violence were much more likely to use weapons where there were five or more victims (graph 12). This suggests a potential overlap in Monrovia between larger scale incidents of violence, and greater perceived utility of weapons. Although not in evidence from the data at this point, this should be observed in the future as the possible indication of more organized or gang-style violence.

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26 The highest proportion of interpersonal incidents reported was 'threats/intimidation'. Respondents may be referring to spells or witchcraft commonly believed to cause physical harm in Liberia. Center Street residents referred to 'goa' (an illness attributed to bewitching) as an experience of violence. UNMIL Reports on the Human Rights Situation in Liberia regularly report on the practice of witchcraft and the threats to security this can pose among groups.
27 A weapon was used in 48% of interpersonal incidents when the perpetrator was known to the victim and in 64% of incidents where the perpetrator was unknown.
28 A weapon was used in 15% of cases where the victim(s) were female, 19% of cases where the victim(s) were male and 25% of incidents where both sexes were victimised.

GRAPH 12

USE OF WEAPONS, BY NUMBER OF VICTIMS IN INTERPERSONAL INCIDENTS EXPERIENCED

n = 15,440.53

■ Weapon used   ■ No weapon used   ■ Unknown

Five or more (n = 894.3)
Four (n = 875.28)
Three (n = 3,347.41)
Two (n = 3,843.75)
One (n = 6,052.07

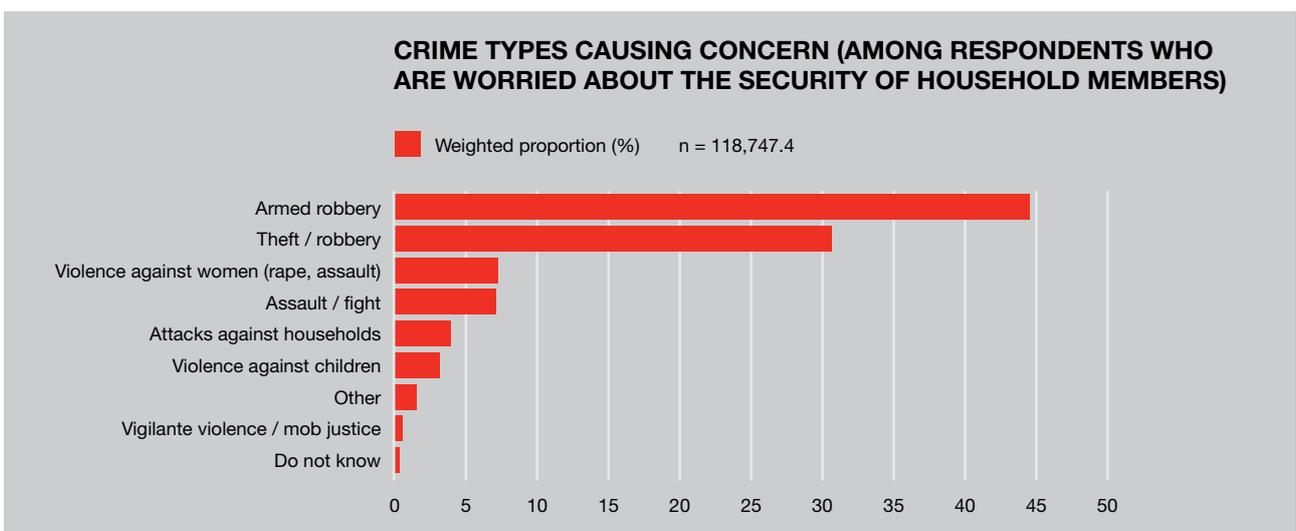0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

With the data collected, it remains difficult to pinpoint motivations behind interpersonal violence (though risk factors are somewhat clearer from qualitative interview data, see below). Several, likely inter-connected, factors leading to increased levels of interpersonal violence in Monrovia were identified by informants, including: lasting trauma and experiences of extreme violence during the conflict; conditions of deprivation and under-resourced living conditions; widespread unemployment and lack of job opportunities; and high incidence of drug and alcohol abuse.

2.3 SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Repeated input from informants and stakeholder interviews and discussion groups, as well as wider secondary material, suggest that sexual, gender-based and domestic violence, including rape, sexual exploitation and assault, are common in Liberia, and widespread in Monrovia.[29] Yet this central element of armed violence in particular, and social violence more broadly, constitutes a startlingly small fraction of the total of residents' concerns captured in the household survey (graph 13).

GRAPH 13

CRIME TYPES CAUSING CONCERN (AMONG RESPONDENTS WHO ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE SECURITY OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS)

■ Weighted proportion (%)   n = 118,747.4

Armed robbery
Theft / robbery
Violence against women (rape, assault)
Assault / fight
Attacks against households
Violence against children
Other
Vigilante violence / mob justice
Do not know

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35   40   45   50

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29 This may be in part an inheritance from the intensive brutalization and sexual exploitation of women and girls during the period of the conflict (Swiss et al., 1998).

Sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia generally, and in Monrovia specifically, will remain hard to quantify with certainty due to what appears to be widespread under-reporting. Such under-reporting undermines targeted programming to reduce incidence of such violence and to tailor victim assistance support services. And continuing lack of victim recognition and support may itself perpetuate under-reporting.

Victims of sexual and gender-based violence are primarily young females. In most cases, victims report knowing the perpetrator. According to the Ministry of Gender, sexual exploitation is very high, with sexual violence, particularly rape, common.[30] Sexual exploitation is associated with relatively high school drop-out rates among girls. Child trafficking is reported to be a growing problem in Monrovia, with guardians allegedly sexually abusing children from the counties whose families hand over care of the children on the promise of education and improved life chances.[31]

Although there is widespread agreement that sexual violence is a significant issue, the household survey revealed neither a high concern for, nor high reported incidence of, sexual violence. Of the 61% of respondents who worry about the security of household members, only 7% included concerns about sexual violence. When asked what the most serious security concerns were in residents' neighbourhoods, only 9% selected violence against women. Of those who reported violence in the 12 months leading up to the survey, only 4% included a report of sexual violence and a further 2% reported experience of domestic violence.

Notwithstanding the low rate of overall reporting, some characteristics of sexual and gender-based violence are possible to determine from the positive reporting responses. These cannot be taken to be statistically robust, but may provide some insight into the nature of these forms of violence in Monrovia. The majority (67%) of those who were affected by sexual violence knew their attacker, and were much more likely to know their attacker than for other types of incidents (graph 14).

GRAPH 14

COMPARATIVE FAMILIARITY WITH ATTACKER BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED
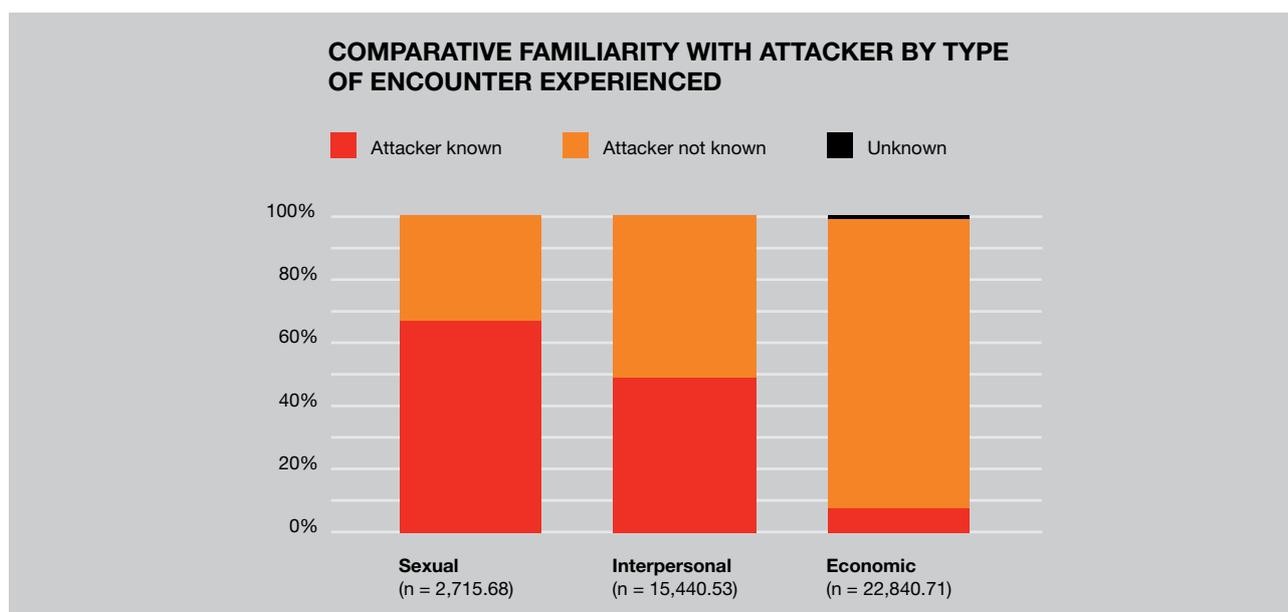
The majority of incidents occurred during the night and the vast majority occurred in the victim's own home (83%); a further 9% occurred in a friend or neighbour's home (graph 15).

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30 Relative to a total of 4,362 violent crimes reported via the LNP during 2010, the Ministry of Gender lists some 2,844 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, including 1,765 rapes between January 2009 and June 2010. Clearly the significance of sexual and gender-based violence as a proportion of all violence – even given assumptions with respect to under-reporting in both data-sets – is much greater than the household survey data allow.
31 According to the Liberian Network on Small Arms (LANSA) it is not uncommon for women to be offered jobs in exchange for sex. WANEP stated that rape has increased since the war, and is increasingly being perpetrated against children.

GRAPH 15

LOCATION AND TIME OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED
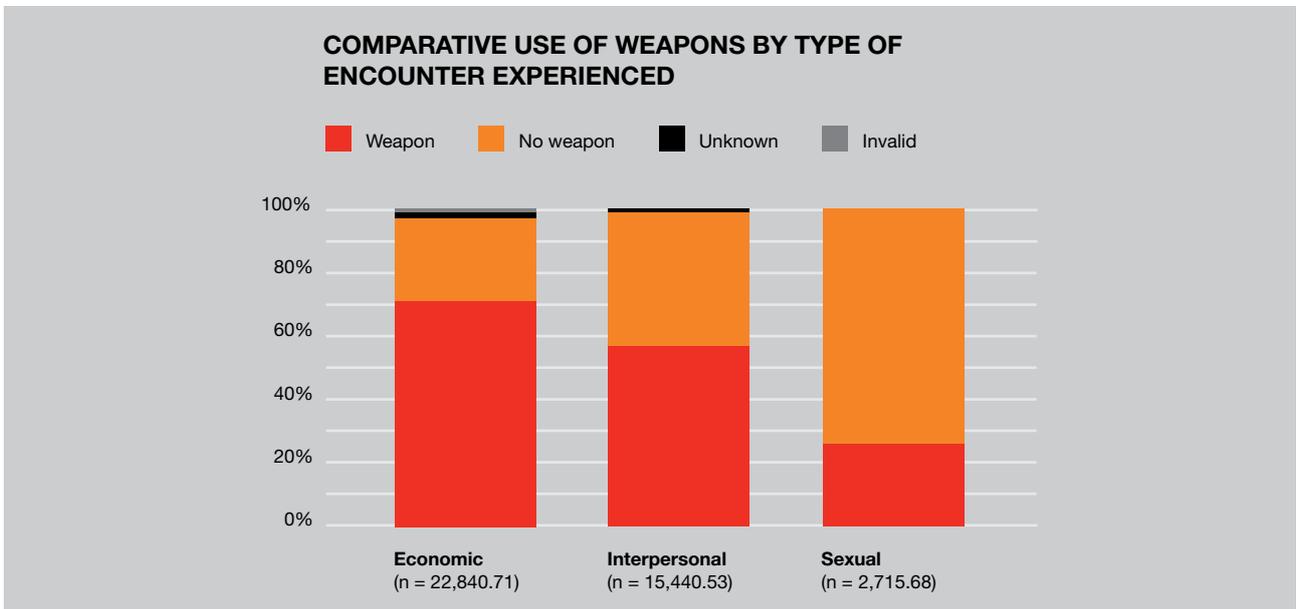
■ Day   ■ Night   n = 2,715.68

On the beach
In a friend's home
In the home

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
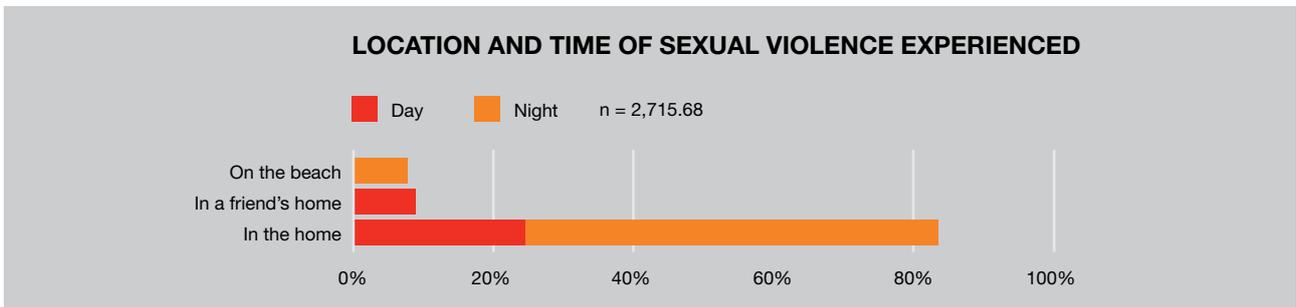
Use of weapons in incidents of sexual violence is comparatively low (26% of incidents) (graph 16).

GRAPH 16

COMPARATIVE USE OF WEAPONS BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED

■ Weapon   ■ No weapon   ■ Unknown   ■ Invalid

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%

Economic
(n = 22,840.71)

Interpersonal
(n = 15,440.53)

Sexual
(n = 2,715.68)

Further, where victims of sexual violence know their attackers, a weapon is used in only 13% of cases, while in cases where the victim does not know the attacker, weapon use jumps to 51% (graph 17).

GRAPH 17

WEAPON USAGE AND FAMILIARITY WITH ATTACKER FOR INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED

■ Weapon used   ■ No weapon used

Attacker unknown
Attacker known

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
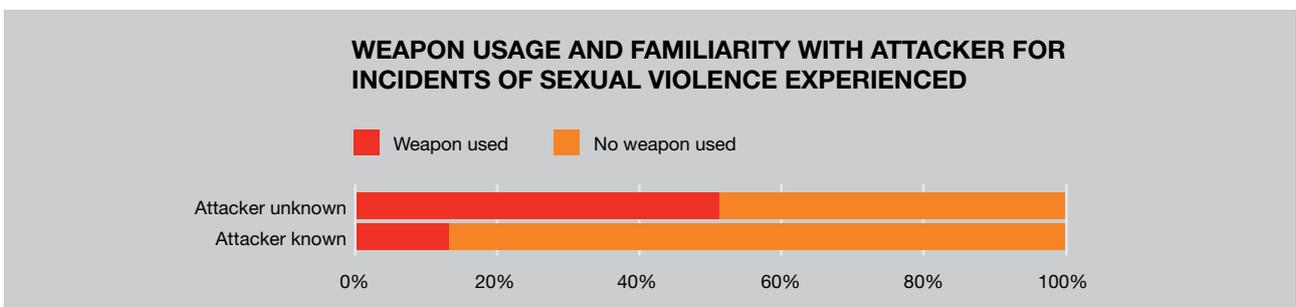
Informants in interviews and focus groups shed useful light on the nature of under-reporting sexual and gender-based violence in Monrovia. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) suggested that victims of rape are generally

unwilling to report the incident to the police – the West Africa Network for Environment and Peace (WANEP) noting the considerable stigma that still attaches to those who have been raped. As a result, according to the LNP, people prefer to settle incidents of sexual violence privately without police involvement. Liberians United to Expose Hidden Weapons (LUEHW) estimate that only 10% of rape cases are brought to the attention of authorities. The Ministry of Gender stress that stigma and under-reporting, contextualised by a lack of open dialogue about the issue, mean that those who are victimised often do not deal legally or emotionally with the trauma. There is considerable anecdotal evidence that victims can be offered, and accept, money from the aggressor to forget about an assault.

Social and economic pressures on women and girls can exacerbate public silence around sexual and gender-based violence. According to the Ministry of Gender, women fear loss of economic livelihood and social support if they report domestic violence or sexual abuse by partners, guardians or caregivers. On the other hand, families may sometimes accept sexual exploitation of household members where an economic reward is offered. It was commonly felt among discussion group and interview respondents that children and youth are the primary target of sexual violence, with a number reporting a rise in cases of child trafficking, in particular from the counties to Monrovia, often with the promise of access to education.

Along with psychological, sexual and reproductive health impacts, sexual violence is associated with elevated rates of unwanted pregnancy, increasingly among younger adolescent girls, which in turn can contribute to household deprivation and exposure to risks of transgenerational violence. What is clear from the data collected in this survey, is that sexual and gender-based forms of violence continue to present a major humanitarian, human rights and development challenge confronting Liberian society, communities themselves, the government and donors. Greater awareness and public dialogue may well be the first step in effectively understanding and addressing that challenge.

> "If it's like rape, most people don't want to discuss it, most women don't want to discuss it, they don't want anybody to know about that, about them."

2.4 'MOB JUSTICE'

Collective violence – largely of a form conducted in public spaces by groups from a particular community or neighbourhood – was a common point of reference for respondents discussing armed violence and insecurity in Monrovia. Often described as 'mob violence' or 'mob justice', these incidents exemplify a somewhat gruesome communitarian strategy to take control of justice where it is perceived to have failed in more formal terms.

The actual incidence of mob violence is inconclusive based on this study (between low rates of reporting in the household survey, but high rates of reference in qualitative and media analyses). The discursive power of the topic, and the potential for significant and rapidly escalating violence involved, however, make it a worthwhile area to explore as part of this armed violence survey and follow-on work.

Discussion of mob justice among interview and focus group respondents fell, broadly, into two forms. First, a situation where an unknown person (a 'rogue') is identified by community members in their neighbourhood. In such instances, violence may be instigated without a crime actually having been observed – in other words, violence derived from suspicion of outsiders. Second, a situation in which an individual is suspected of having

committed a crime. In this case, community members react by attacking the suspect in place of alerting the police. The first type, then, appears to be a rudimentary form of community protection, while the second appears more concentrated on direct application of retributive (or perhaps even restorative) justice. In both cases, it is the absence of formal institutions of security and justice that underpins the violent behaviour. Equally, both forms appear to speak to a strength of bonding social capital (among community members enacting violence) but a problem of weak bridging capital (between community members and individuals from other areas or neighbourhoods). Building inter-community links within Monrovia may be an intervention strategy to explore where this kind of mob behaviour can be identified.

Despite intense interest in mob violence, the evidence collected during this research suggests that the actual prevalence of such violence may be exaggerated. Two incidents – clearly prominent in popular consciousness – were raised in multiple discussions.[32] The household survey results also cast some doubt on the scale of mob violence. Around a third of respondents reported an incident having occurred in their community within the past 6 months (with injury in half the cases and death in one quarter of them). Yet only 3% of respondents cited mob violence directly affecting their household in the 12 months leading up to the survey.

Further, the details of the cases experienced do not all seem to be representative of the types of mob violence described in focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews, where anonymous mobs spontaneously enact justice on suspected criminals. Only two of the cases occurred in a public place and five occurred within the victim's own home or a friend's home. In four of the seven cases, the attackers were known to the victims, and for over half the cases, the number of attackers was approximately equal to the number of victims. In five of the cases, the victims were injured and in two of the cases, the victims were not physically harmed. None of the victims were killed during these incidents.

The Center for Criminal Justice Research and Education (CCJRE) and LNP both acknowledge that mob justice – or the popular imagination of mob justice – is, to some extent, the result of perceived failings in the policing and justice sectors. However, the Ministry of Justice believes that such violence can be seen as the result of popular misconceptions with regard to the way the system is designed to function, and the process of justice this entails. For example, discussion group participants frequently complained that suspected perpetrators caught and handed over to the police are often seen soon afterwards walking freely on the street. This leads to the perception that justice is not being fulfilled, or that LNP or court representatives have been corrupted. By the same virtue, lack of familiarity with court proceedings can result in cases being dropped where the victim, as plaintiff, fails to return for evidentiary hearings, possibly believing that apprehension denotes conviction. It seems clear that greater public understanding of the function and process of policing and the judiciary would support greater community confidence in security sector performance.

> "The person who the crime was perpetrated against… they don't go back. They don't know the system… The citizens and public have to be educated about the court proceedings."

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32 The first was an incident in Monrovia where a police officer reportedly shot a suspect for resisting arrest, triggering a group of residents to attack the officer, pour petrol on him and burn the man to death. The second was a series of violent rampages in Voinjama, Lofa County, where the mysterious death of a young woman sparked a series of revenge-motivated violent riots, enacted by religiously and ethnically aligned groups, resulting in several deaths and infrastructural damage to religious buildings. Both cases are clearly harrowing examples of violence, but the fact that these two cases were recurring themes suggests that the reality of mob violence is embellished by the common knowledge and topicality of cases. Colourful descriptions of these incidents in media reports may also contribute to the interest in mob violence.
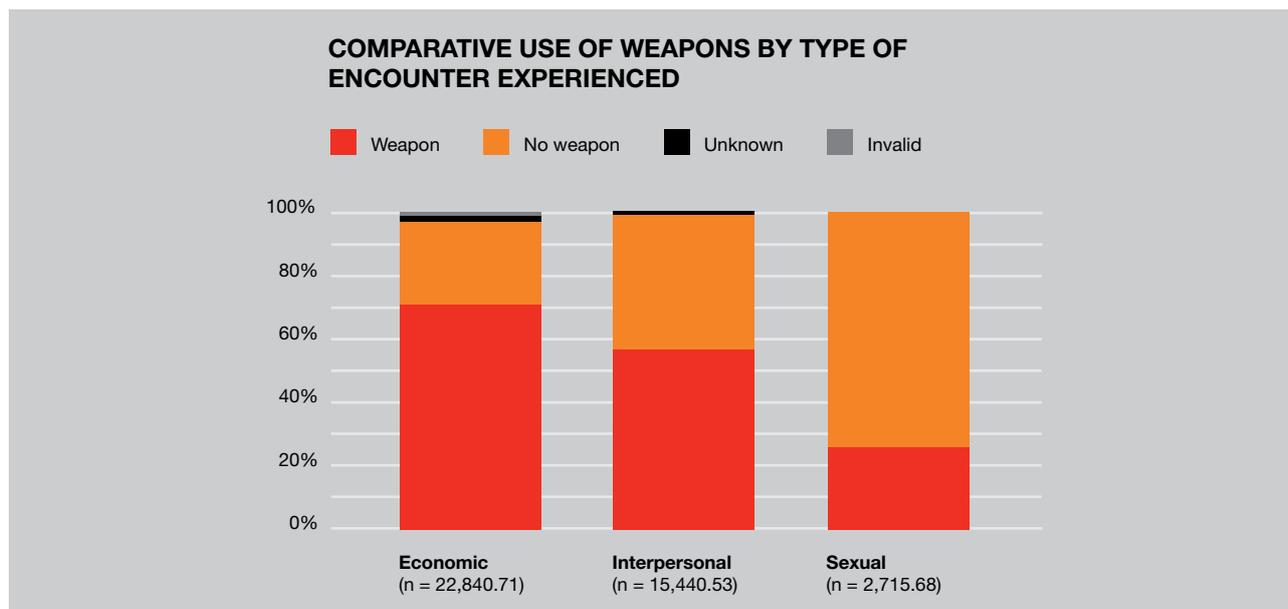
3. Understanding Armed Violence: weapons, people, institutions

This section looks at the principal vectors of armed violence and insecurity in Monrovia – focusing, as the OECD does, on the triangle of 'weapons, people, and institutions' (OECD, 2009).[33]

3.1 WEAPONS

Weapons were used in the majority (62%) of violent incidents recorded in the household survey, with higher rates of use for economically-motivated crime than for interpersonal incidents, and considerably lower for sexual and gender-based violence (as discussed above) (graph 18).

GRAPH 18

COMPARATIVE USE OF WEAPONS BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED

Weapon   No weapon   Unknown   Invalid

Economic (n = 22,840.71)   Interpersonal (n = 15,440.53)   Sexual (n = 2,715.68)
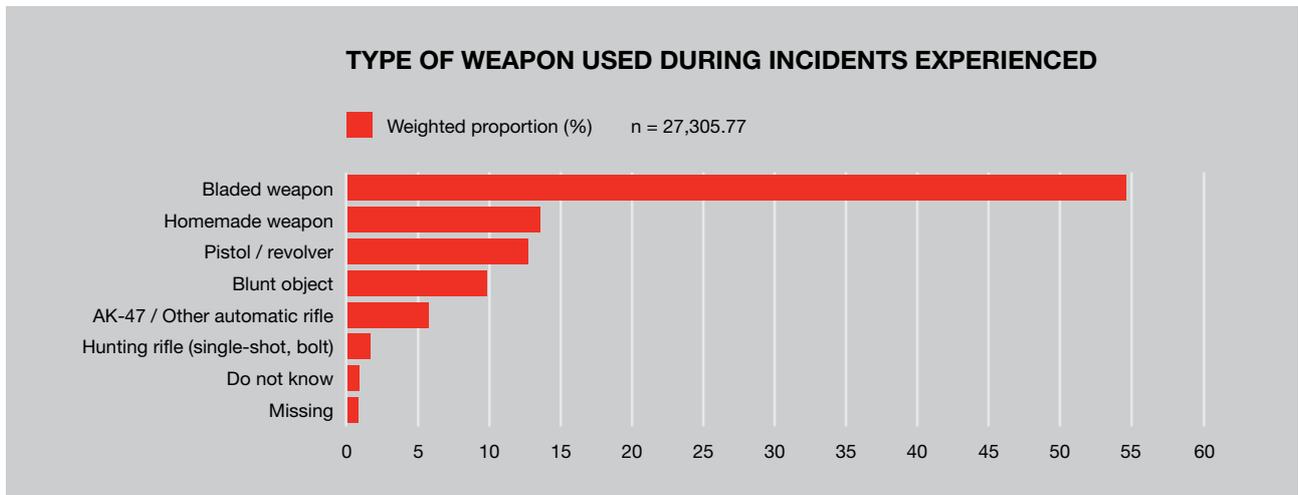
Weapons were reported to be used in the majority of thefts and robberies (72%). But of these incidents, 69% involved non-mechanical bladed weapons (knives, cutlasses, agricultural implements) and blunt objects. Overall, firearms were used in a significant minority (20.2%) of reported incidents of armed violence (graph 19).[34]

GRAPH 19

TYPE OF WEAPON USED DURING INCIDENTS EXPERIENCED

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 27,305.77

- Bladed weapon
- Homemade weapon
- Pistol / revolver
- Blunt object
- AK-47 / Other automatic rifle
- Hunting rifle (single-shot, bolt)
- Do not know
- Missing

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35   40   45   50   55   60

Twenty-eight percent of economically-motivated armed violence incidents involved the use of firearms of some description, the majority being described as pistols or revolvers (graph 20).

GRAPH 20

WEAPONS USED IN THEFTS AND ROBBERIES EXPERIENCED

n = 15,559.53

- Bladed weapon
- Homemade weapon
- Blunt weapon
- Pistol / revolver
- Hunting rifle
- AK47

- Invalid
- Unknown
- Firearms
- Manual weapons

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%
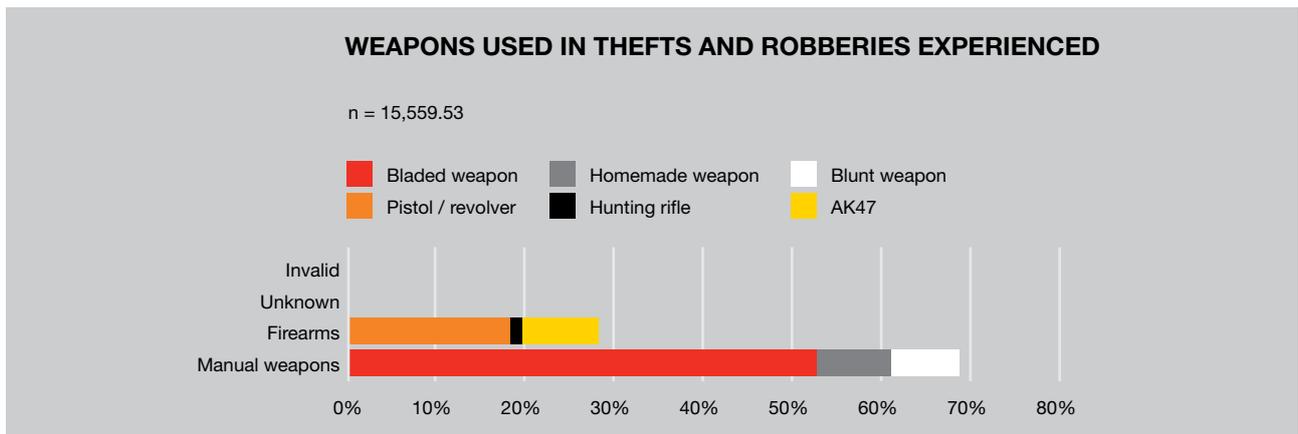
But informants widely agreed that non-mechanical, manual weapons are the principal weapon of choice, partly (for example in the case of night-time household robbery) because t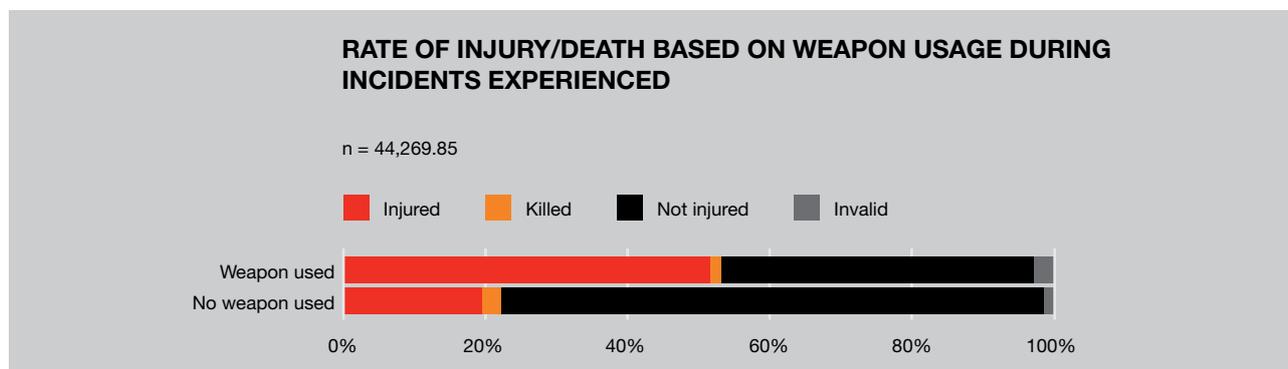hey are seen as 'silent weapons', referring to their inconspicuous nature and the ability of carriers to remain unsuspicious to neighbourhood watch groups or security personnel. When asked which types of weapons were most commonly used in their neighbourhoods, only 11% of respondents cited firearms.

Across all types of armed violence, the rate of injury and death is significantly higher when a weapon is involved. Among recorded incidents, 53% of victims were injured or killed when a weapon was present, whereas 23% were injured or killed when no weapon was present (graph 21).

GRAPH 21

RATE OF INJURY/DEATH BASED ON WEAPON USAGE DURING INCIDENTS EXPERIENCED

n = 44,269.85

Injured   Killed   Not injured   Invalid

In focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews, reference was frequently made to the use of cutlasses in armed violence in Monrovia.[35] Injury data from Redemption Hospital show the most common injuries admitted resulting from violent incidents were stab wounds.

Only 2% of respondents freely admitted to firearm ownership in their households. A further 2% admitted that they were unsure whether there were firearms in their household. Of the small proportion who admit to owning a gun, the majority (56%) were owned for work purposes; 38% for protection purposes; and 6% reported as left over from the war. The reasons provided by those who claim not to own a firearm include a dislike for guns, a belief that guns are dangerous, and the understanding that it is illegal to own a gun.
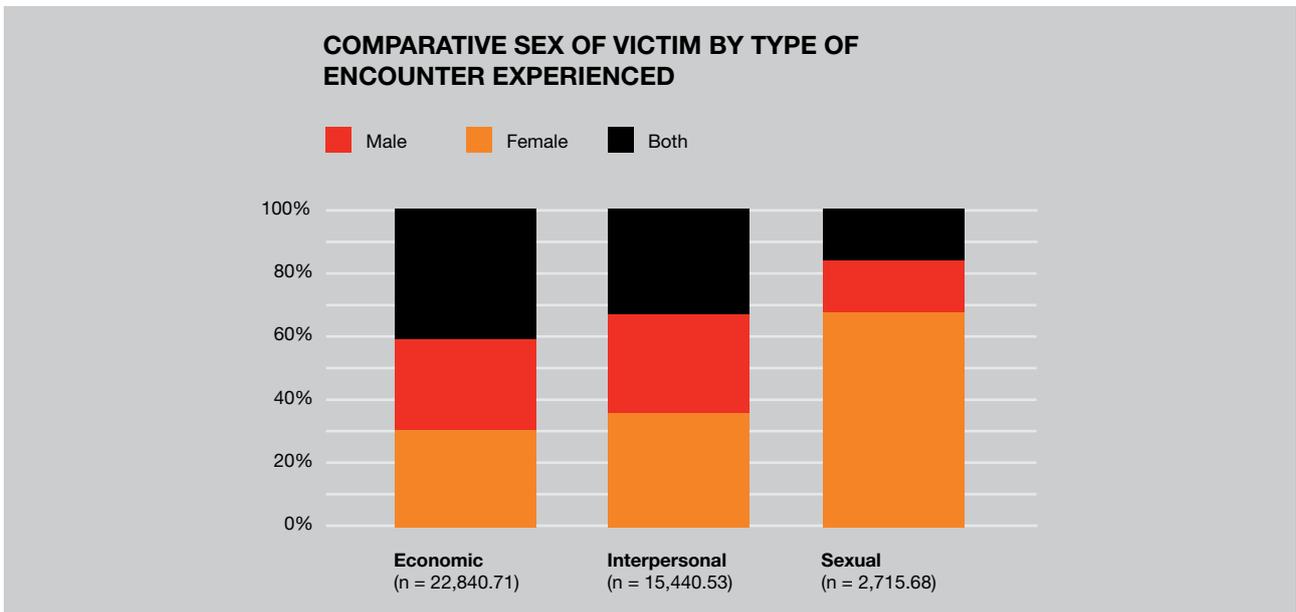
Overall, the weapons most commonly used to inflict harm in Monrovia are bladed weapons, agricultural tools and homemade weapons. An important implication of this finding is that interventions aimed at controlling access to, demand for and use of firearms (specifically, for example, small arms), whilst undoubtedly beneficial, will not in and of themselves fully address the weapon types favoured in the major part of armed violence and insecurity in Monrovia. And since it is arguably impossible to impose effective controls on non-mechanical weapons which serve dual uses in agriculture, cooking and household life, interventions to reduce and prevent armed violence with 'silent weapons' will need to target the underlying conditions motivating perpetrators, as well as targeting availability and perceived utility of weapons themselves.

3.2 VICTIMS

A somewhat surprising result of the Monrovia household survey was that, with the exception of sexual and gender-based violence, men and women appeared to be more or less equally victimised in incidents of economic and interpersonal violence (graph 22). This may be partially explained by a possible overlap between 'interpersonal' and 'gender-based' violence, where domestic violence enacted predominantly by men against women is folded into wider forms of interpersonal violence (such as street fighting and the activities of small gangs where the predominance among perpetrators and victims may more often be male). Further, economically-motivated crime – in particular armed robbery and theft from households at night – would likely victimise male and female household members in relatively equal measure. Clearly, however, in the case of Monrovia, the data do not at this point show the classical male-on-male predominance in both victim and perpetrator categories, seen in other contexts of political, organised criminal and gang-related armed violence (Geneva Declaration, 2008).

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35 The cutlass, similar to the machete, is a common agricultural implement in Liberia.

GRAPH 22

COMPARATIVE SEX OF VICTIM BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCED

■ Male   ■ Female   ■ Both

Economic
(n = 22,840.71)

Interpersonal
(n = 15,440.53)

Sexual
(n = 2,715.68)

In terms of age, victims of armed violence fall, broadly, into a fairly common pattern of distribution, rising in the teens to a peak from mid-20s to mid-30s, and then tailing off somewhat in later age (graph 23).

GRAPH 23

AGE OF VICITIMS

◆ Weighted proportion   n = 44,269.85

Weighted proportion

Age
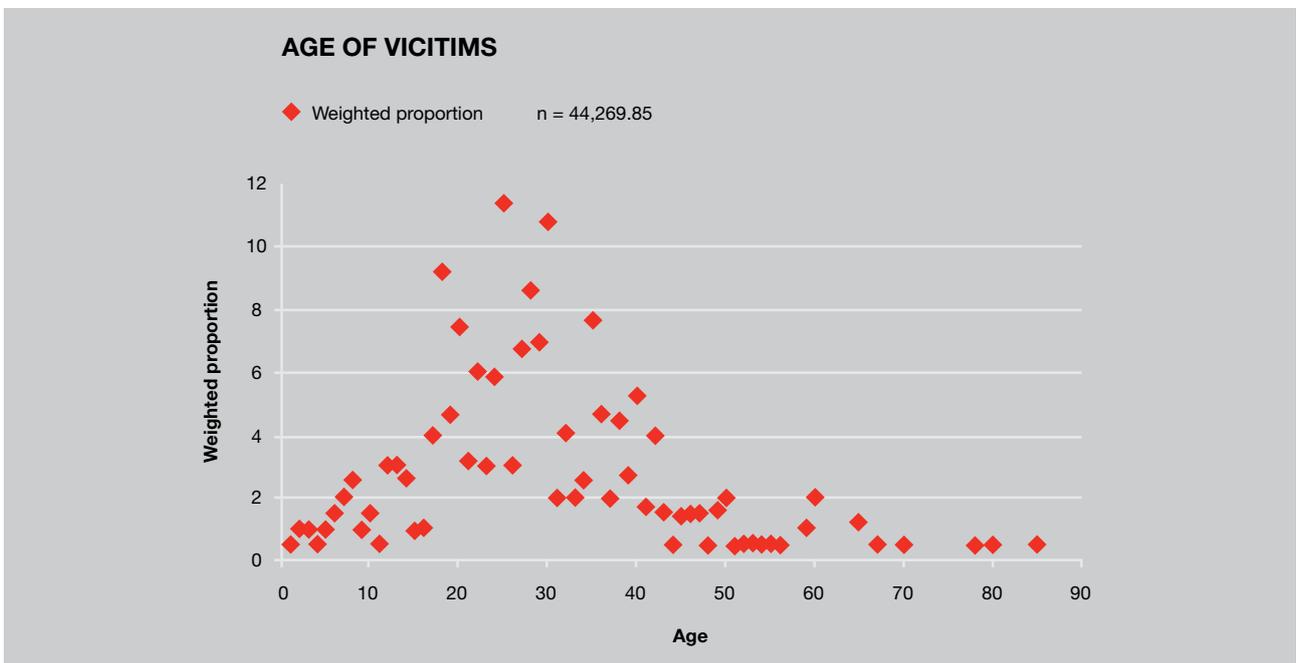
However, in the case of sexual violence, the vast majority of primarily female victims as reported in the household survey were youths. Almost 40% were aged 16 or under, with a further 45% aged 17-30 (graph 24).

GRAPH 24

AGE OF INDIVIDUALS VICTIMIZED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 4,088.54

Age	
Under 16 years	39
17-30	45
Over 30	5
Invalid	5.5
Unknown	5
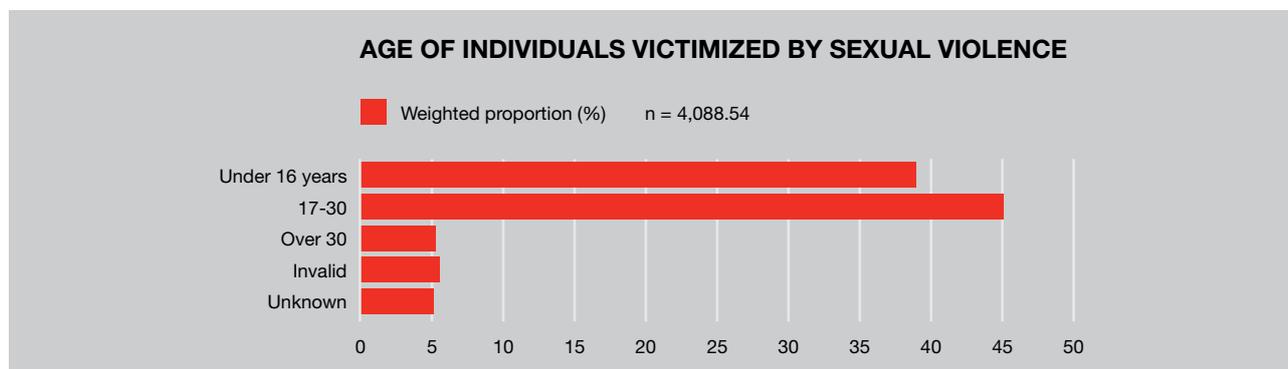
There is a concern that sexual assault and exploitation in Monrovia may be targeting younger girls – possibly including girls coming into the capital city either as a result of prior displacement or as a deliberate strategy for survival or advancement on the part of their parents or guardians. Attitudes to gender and violence in Liberia appear still to be under the long shadow of the war. However, rural-urban flows and sexual exploitation are also part of the wider dynamic of rapid urbanization (especially in contexts of weak local governance and security).

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Armed violence, and the insecurity it causes, are not evenly spread throughout Monrovia. Some central areas, perhaps unsurprisingly, enjoy relatively high levels of security and low incidence of violence. Other neighbourhoods appear to live under concentrated, intensive and repetitive threat. Data from the household survey allow us, for example, to contrast New Georgia Estate where 80% of households report being concerned about becoming victims of armed violence, with Mamba Point, where 80% of households report feeling secure. Although distinct patterning was difficult to discern from the numbers of household respondents and the somewhat fluid neighbourhood/community demarcations within Monrovia, it was clear that some areas of the city scored much more highly than the average for exposure to violence and levels of household insecurity.[36] Further research highlighting the conditions in individual neighbourhoods could provide the basis for more rigorous and potentially more effective (and cost-efficient) targeting of armed violence reduction and prevention programmes and investments in identified hot spots.

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36 Other neighbourhoods scoring particularly highly on perceived insecurity and exposure to armed violence were: Pipeline, Center Street, 72nd Street, Duala Market, Chicken Soup, Grand Cess, Johnsonville Road B, Lagoon West, Little White Chapel, Stockton Creek, Zinc Camp and Saye Town.

BOX 2: EFFECTS OF ARMED VIOLENCE IN MONROVIA

During the period of conflict, and in its aftermath, Liberia's national economy was largely destroyed. From 1979 to 2006, the country's GDP fell by a staggering 91%. Between 2000 and 2005, government revenue fell to less than $85 million per annum, constituting public spending of around $25 per person per year (Radelet, 2007).[37] Between 1987 and 2005 agricultural productivity plummeted, endangering both national income and public food security. Rubber production fell by 31%, rice by 73%, and cassava by 35% (ibid.). Basic services and infrastructure were wiped out, including paved roads, bridges, and water and sanitation systems. Services in health and education all but ceased. The effects of this economic collapse continue to reverberate across the country today. The insecurity and incidence of armed violence we see in Liberia now emerges, at least in part, out of desperate household circumstances, rather than some innate criminality – and risks feeding further impoverishment and instability in the future.

One of the most obvious effects of ongoing armed violence is the physical injuries sustained by victims. Forty four percent of victims recorded in the household survey suffered some form of physical harm. Weapons significantly increased risk of injury. The most common injuries identified by residents were stab wounds and cuts, which correspond to the reportedly common use of bladed weapons in violent incidents.

A death in the household – especially that of a breadwinner – can be emotionally and financially catastrophic for the family. Injuries can be costly with regard to immediate and longer-term healthcare, again depleting critical household resources. Violent sexual incidents can result in unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection including HIV/AIDS, and longer-term physical and psychological trauma (Ward & March, 2006).[38]

Interestingly, notwithstanding often painful and severe physical injuries, many in survey focus groups felt that physical impacts were a secondary concern when compared with the economic, psychological and social effects of armed violence.

Survey respondents described inability to sleep in their homes at night due to fear of violence and criminal activity. Residents of Duala and Center Street said that people were afraid to walk through the neighbourhood at night for fear of being victimized.[39] Residents of Pipeline believe that the high incidence of violence results in a lack of trust among community members.[40]

The direct economic effects of ongoing armed violence identified by Monrovian residents include the loss of property associated with theft and robbery – but also the consequent decline in economic status of victims and their households. A comprehensive food and

Motorcycle taxis: A common transportation option in Monrovia.

37 All '$' values given in the report are US currency.
38 Residents of Pipeline, for example, report that teenage pregnancies resulting from rape are common in their community.
39 One focus group participant from Center Street stated that he had witnessed five brutal acts of violence first-hand and that these experiences instil fear in residents and prevent them from walking freely through their community.
40 Some added that they were hesitant to speak openly about the issue for fear of being overheard by perpetrators and being attacked as a consequence.

nutrition survey conducted in Greater Monrovia in 2006 determined that there was a direct association between the experience of violent events such as theft and a decrease in the number and/or portion size of meals consumed by victims and families.[41]

Armed violence can have a devastating psychosocial effect on individuals and their capacity to socialize as communities. Liberians continue to live with the collective memory of a horrific conflict. 96% of them report having had direct personal experience of the war, with some 69% losing a family member (ICRC, 2009). This is the backdrop against which they are trying to recover peaceful lives. Yet the psychosocial echoes of past violence remain and, without appropriate intervention, are likely to be self-perpetuating. Many respondents view unaddressed trauma from the war as a key driver of current violence.

The persistent threat of violence and crime also causes social fragmentation within families. Rates of child abandonment by traumatized or under-resourced parents were commonly reported, as were rates of children leaving homes where they felt unsafe due to chronic abuse. Indeed, victims can become perpetrators when injury results in loss of employment, and ongoing financial responsibilities prompt individuals concerned to resort to theft. Residents of Center Street claimed that parents sometimes send children out of their community to live with relatives in an attempt to prevent them from becoming involved with local groups of youths who exhibit violent and anti-social behaviour.

According to focus groups and stakeholder interviewees, incidence of armed violence can damage the viability of communities and neighbourhoods themselves, causing localized unemployment,

triggering outward migration, and discouraging inward economic investment (further limiting employment opportunities). Where armed violence in the capital is perceived to be reflective of a common problem across communities, localized incidents can adversely affect the national economy, causing investment flight, reducing national income and growth, and further retarding development.

Many survey respondents noted the damage to social cohesion that armed violence can cause, describing low levels of esteem households have for their communities and their frustration at experiencing stigmatization by outsiders. Residents of Center Street and 72nd Street admitted that because their communities are notorious for being violent, they refrain from telling people their real address. Residents of Pipeline stated that family members decline to visit them due to fear of violence and the stigmatization associated with their community. Some respondents felt that municipal services, including policing, were limited in their neighbourhoods due to rates of violence.[42]

"Once violence affects the family, it affects the community, and then the nation – it affects the economy by stopping investors from coming… you have a dysfunctional society because people are engulfed in violence"

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41 Greater Monrovia Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey, Government of Liberia and the UN, Dec. 2006.
42 A resident of Center Street, for example, claimed that the community receives fewer waste removal services because the government officials see people living in the neighbourhood as "half human beings". By contrast, residents of 72nd Street felt that police use excessive force in their community due to perceptions that residents are generally liable to be criminals.

3.3 PERPETRATORS

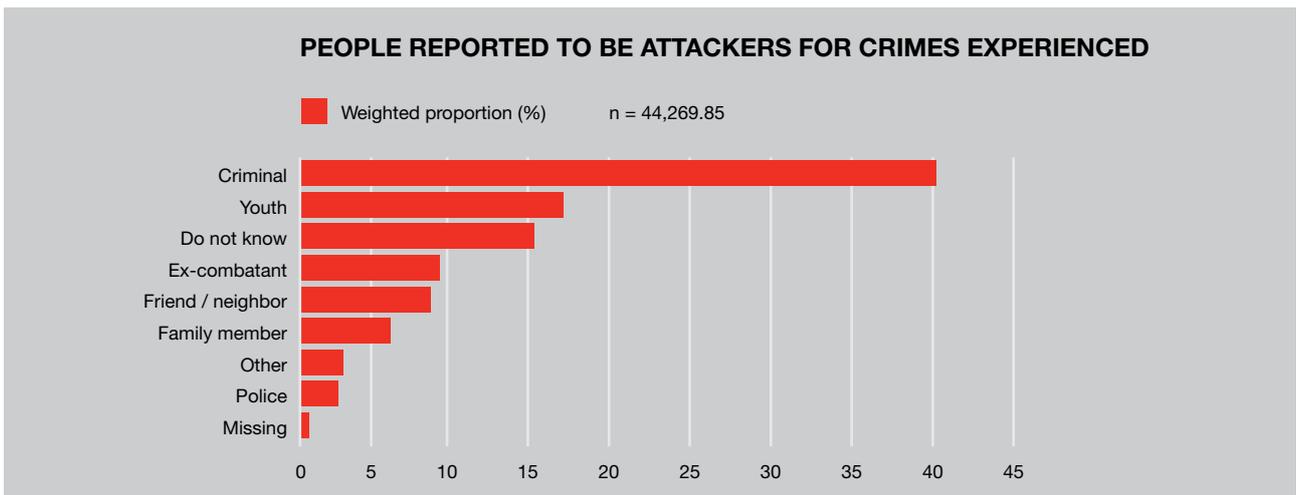Data on perpetrators is often in short supply. This is true in Monrovia as elsewhere. Improving data on perpetrators is a key requirement if armed violence and insecurity in the city and the country more widely are to be properly understood and effectively acted upon. In the survey, most respondents identified what might be called the 'usual suspects' – primarily focusing on three categories of alleged perpetrator: youth, criminals, and ex-combatants (graphs 25 and 26).

GRAPH 25

PEOPLE PERCEIVED TO BE MOST COMMONLY INVOLVED IN
CAUSING CRIME OR VIOLENCE (MULTIPLE ANSWERS, UNRANKED)

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 193,344.57

Category	
Youths	41
Criminals	40
Ex-combatant	14
Do not know	5
Invalid	4
Other	3
Men	2
Missing	2
Women	1
Motorcycle	1
Refuse to answer	
Police	
Military	

GRAPH 26

PEOPLE REPORTED TO BE ATTACKERS FOR CRIMES EXPERIENCED

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 44,269.85

Category	
Criminal	40
Youth	17
Do not know	15
Ex-combatant	10
Friend / neighbor	9
Family member	6
Other	3
Police	3
Missing	1

The emphasis on 'criminals' as principal producers of armed violence in Greater Monrovia is, in one respect, to be expected; the category is self-referential. However, the emphasis on violence as criminality may reflect a popular sense in Monrovia that armed violence is rooted in the broader and continuing problem of weak security and justice services within affected communities.
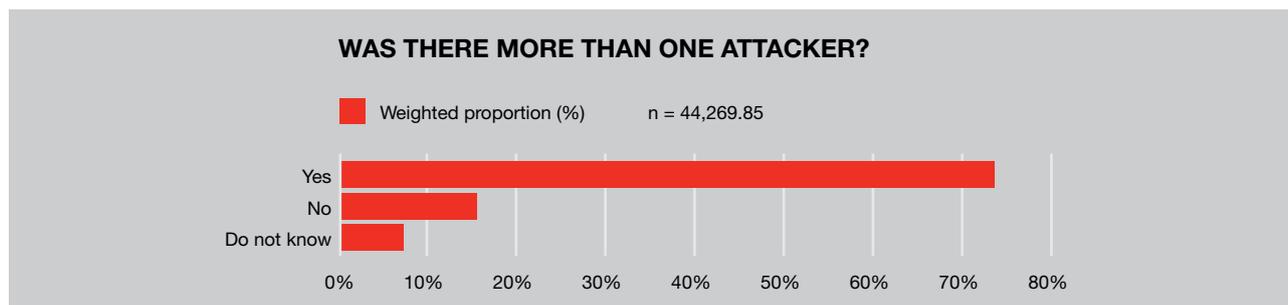
Beyond 'criminals', youth were frequently cited as responsible for a significant proportion of violence in communities. Focus group participants from Duala Community identified gambling and drug use as factors associated with youth violence. Youth Crime Watch and residents of Buzzi Quarter suggested that large numbers of orphaned or abandoned children during the war had resulted in high levels of homeless youth, without education, vocational skills or familial support, who resort to violence and criminality to survive (Adolfo, 2010). WANEP, the Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA) and Liberian Community Policing Forums (LCPF) suggested, as has been noted elsewhere, that young Liberians are simply reproducing what they were taught during the periods of conflict and that, without psychosocial rehabilitation, education, training or job opportunities, they continue to rely on violence to survive in the post-war period. Indeed, extensive use of weapons and violence can itself be seen as a strategy to enhance security among at-risk groups, in particular where they and their families are further hampered by chronic lack of basic services and amenities (Bøås & Hatloy, 2008).

There are clear indications that males are the main perpetrators of violent incidents in Monrovia. Official LNP data on crimes recorded between October 2009 and June 2010 (for all Liberia) reported that 81% of perpetrators were male. For violent incidents reported in Liberian media from November 2007 to April 2010, 59% of perpetrators were male, 2% were female, and 9% included both sexes.[43] Most discussions in stakeholder interviews and focus groups also described young male perpetrators. Some mention was made of female perpetrators, but their involvement was described as limited and mostly involving interpersonal encounters with other women.

Although ex-combatants were identified as actual or suspected perpetrators of armed violence (with respondents citing continuing war trauma and insufficient rehabilitation and reintegration as perpetuating factors), there was evident ambivalence about the scale of the role they play. Only 13% of respondents in the household survey identified ex-combatants as the most common perpetrators of violence and crime. For reports of incidents actually experienced, only 9% of respondents indicated that ex-combatants had been the perpetrators. 'Youth' and 'ex-combatant' were frequently grouped together as a single category.

The survey also suggested that a majority of armed violence incidents involved multiple perpetrators (graph 27). While Monrovia does not have a notorious gang culture, there is some evidence to suggest that groups informally take shape to commit violent crimes, armed robberies in particular. But there are further indications that more substantial – and potentially permanent – organized groups are beginning to form. Residents of Pipeline frequently referred to a group called the Black Money Boys as known perpetrators of robberies in their neighbourhood. Residents of Buzzi Quarter talked about a group called the Ikasaba who are thought to have been perpetrating crimes as recently as 2008, but who have since disbanded. These early indications may provide the basis for preventive intervention, identifying at-risk youth groups and offering alternative activities or opportunities for them. But care should be taken not to further alienate and criminalize young people congregating innocently.

GRAPH 27

WAS THERE MORE THAN ONE ATTACKER?

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 44,269.85

Yes
No
Do not know

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

"At night you see those that have been caught and even if you visit the police station and you go into the criminal investigation unit you see the pictures that are posted up of possible suspects are all adolescents"

3.4 INSTITUTIONS[44]

Certain types of institutions can play a central role nationally and locally in reducing insecurity and preventing armed violence – largely under the heading of the 'security sector'. Here we refer primarily to institutions that provide security and protection, rather than to the broader concept of social institutions (such as governance, provision of and access to livelihood opportunities etc.) which, where weak or absent, can provoke armed violence, but where strong and positively oriented to popular developmental requirements, can reduce risk factors and prevent violence.[45]

Security-related institutions should actively reduce the risk and incidence of armed violence. But they should also, in an integrated fashion, play a role in addressing the impact of violence by supporting victims to deal personally and legally with the effects of violence, as well as providing a fair and comprehensive system of justice to manage perpetrators.

Security has taken a prominent role in Liberia's process of recovery (Bøås & Stig, 2010; IMF, 2010). However, 'hard security' (in the sense of state capacity to coerce citizens), without complementary 'human security' (in the sense of satisfactory community and household perceptions of protection, opportunities for household livelihood growth, and access to rights) does not necessarily create the conditions for sustainable social stability.[46] To-date, the concept of 'security' in post-CPA Liberia has not been fully embedded in the development agenda, as can be seen from the substantial difference in attention to and investment in security sector reform (SSR) and basic amenities and services in poor neighbourhoods (Bøås & Stig, 2010)).[47] An excessive focus on securitisation in recovery and development can be counterproductive, creating tensions between formal governmental and security institutions and people's wider expectations of livelihood opportunity and improving living standards (Schmid, 2009; Jennings, 2008; Malan, 2008[48]).

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44 'Institutions' in the context of armed violence can be construed in two distinct but overlapping forms: first, underlying social arrangements (for example, forms of inequality or exclusion, weak formal employment sector and high rates of precarious employment, popular practices to do with substance abuse, and gender relations) that are associated with increased risk of armed violence; second, entities and organizations mandated to provide protection and security under the government of a country. This section focuses on the latter, with attention to addressing the drivers of armed violence given in the final section of the report.
45 The systematic exclusion of a large part of the Liberian population from the benefits of natural resource wealth and related economic growth was a major factor in the origins of the conflict (Radelet, 2007).
46 See, for example, the shift from 'mano dura' to 'mano amiga' ('friendly hand') approaches in Central America.
47 Jaye, T. Liberia: Parliamentary Oversight and Lessons Learned from Internationalized Security Sector Reform http://www.cic.nyu.edu/peacebuilding/docs/Liberia_SSR.pdf
48 Malan M, http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA478500, March 2008
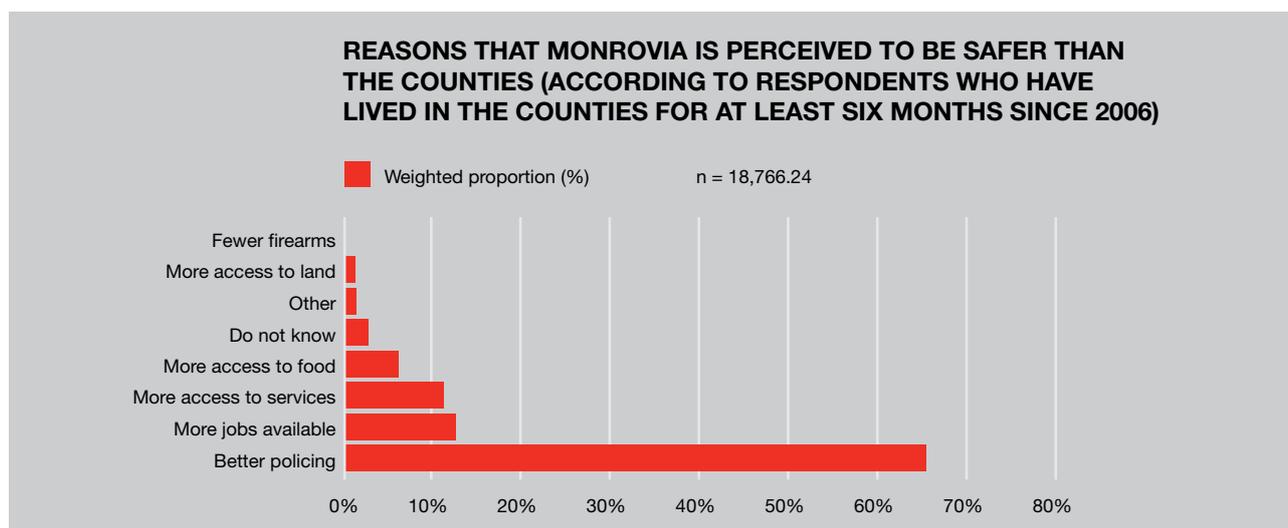
3.5 SECURITY AND JUSTICE

Reforming and streamlining Liberia's security agencies – with a major focus on the Liberian National Police and the Armed Forces of Liberia – has been a centrepiece of the country's recovery process (Gompert & Stearns, 2006). The LNP, with the armed Emergency Response Unit (ERU), is the official response agency for incidents of crime and violence in Monrovia.[49]

Public acknowledgement of the positive role of the LNP has been growing. The household survey revealed strong support for LNP leadership in providing community security. Of the nearly 95% of residents who would seek help if they experienced a crime or violent encounter, 92% would seek police assistance. A significant majority expressed a preference for pursuing security and justice via the LNP rather than through other informal or traditional community mechanisms. This is, to some extent, an artefact of the relatively prominent presence of LNP personnel in Monrovia compared with counties, where reliance on traditional systems of dispute resolution and justice remains high. Of those who felt that Monrovia provided better security than the counties, 65% of respondents reported that this was due to better policing in Monrovia.

GRAPH 28

REASONS THAT MONROVIA IS PERCEIVED TO BE SAFER THAN THE COUNTIES (ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE LIVED IN THE COUNTIES FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS SINCE 2006)

Weighted proportion (%)   n = 18,766.24

Key stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions supported the expectation of the LNP to provide security. However, despite strong buy-in and support for the function, residents provided numerous grievances based on their experience with, or observations of, police response. These grievances broadly fit into two categories. The first involves the limited capacity of police; the second, a critique of the justice system or its constituent processes.

Respondents reported that the LNP was severely constrained with regard to responsiveness as well as capacity to pursue investigation and case preparation for trial. This was the result of very limited personnel (nationally, LNP still operates at a ratio close to 1 officer for every 800 head of population (IMF, 2010)), lack of transportation, communications equipment, and personal protection equipment (Kantor & Persson, 2010). As a result, groups claimed that police often ask residents to pay for their transportation costs to visit a crime scene, frequently arrive hours after an incident occurred (which makes the apprehension of a suspect or recovery of stolen goods unlikely), and lack the protective equipment to deal with violent incidents. Residents explained that, in consequence, they often decline to report acts of violence or to pursue restitutive process.

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49 Although this section refers manly to the LNP and justice sector, it should be noted that there is considerable agreement that reform of the AFL has been a significant success in Liberia. Indeed, whilst noting its primary role in protecting the country from external threats, the AFL has taken on a strong and ostensibly positive institutional interest in armed violence reduction and prevention more widely (personal communication, February 2011).

LNP personnel corroborated the problems around resource constraints, stating that they lack specialist training (e.g. for dealing with cases of sexual violence or for conducting crime scene investigation), that they are not fully equipped to deal with violent criminals during incidents such as armed robberies, and that they lack logistical support including communications equipment and vehicles. As a result, the LNP acknowledged that people seek alternative forms of justice such as vigilantism. According to the LNP, where police are able to patrol at night, crimes such as armed robbery significantly decrease.

Respondents reported high levels of concern about corruption in the police and judiciary. Some residents witnessed police officers taking drugs with youth in ghettos or taking bribes. However, most grievances seem to stem from the way that perpetrators are processed through the justice system. Residents frequently, and almost unanimously claimed that when suspects are apprehended, they are soon seen apparently at liberty again. As a consequence, most residents believed that it is easy to pay for one's release from the justice system, and as a result, lacked trust in the police and judiciary.

The LNP and Ministry of Justice appeared to be well aware of the lack of trust residents have in their institutions. However, they claim that the problem stems from a lack of understanding in the system, which prevents the course of justice being fully implemented. They claimed that residents lack an understanding of bail pending trial. They also claimed that residents do not understand the trial process itself, and the requirement for victims to attend to provide evidence in court. Both LNP and Ministry of Justice strongly promote information campaigns on the roles and responsibilities of parties in a trial, and to raise awareness of the justice process. The Ministry of Justice also advocates the development of stronger relationships between communities and the LNP to build mutual understanding and trust.

3.6 COMMUNITY SECURITISATION

Where formal agencies like the LNP are deficient, it is perhaps unsurprising that communities periodically take security into their own hands. It should be noted, though, that this kind of self-help security can very easily adopt a more sinister and threatening form of locally-organised violence quite similar, ultimately, to militia formations resonant of the conflict. Residents in some neighbourhoods choose to form vigilante groups to supplant or augment the role of the formal security sector.[50] The Ministry of Justice explained that vigilante groups – initially encouraged by the government – began to form in the post-war period before the LNP was re-established (Baker, 2007). These vigilante groups are semi-formal in structure, generally requiring membership and participation in the planning and implementation of activities. Groups may take various forms, but are generally characterised by strategic proactive collaborations that target suspected perpetrators of crime, usually through aggressive or violent means.

According to the household survey, 55% of residents have taken measures to improve their household security, and 19% of these residents have joined a vigilante group. Further, of the 64% of residents who would like to take additional measures to improve household security, 19% would like to join a vigilante group. Overall, this means that 11% of the total population of Monrovia has already joined a vigilante group and a further 12% aspire to join one.[51]

Almost all residents cited concerns with vigilantism, in particular seeing increased security risks inherent in such action. Instead, some communities report establishing coordinated security alert and response systems (sometimes called peace councils). Under these mechanisms, residents respond to a victim's call for help in a large group, while at the same time organising calls to the police. Peace councils can also serve as a platform for dispute resolution to prevent disputes from escalating into violence.

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50 Vigilantism is understood, in this report, as a somewhat different phenomenon from mob justice.
51 It should be noted that the most popular measures taken by survey respondents to enhance their security were defensive additions to the household (bars on windows etc.). In other words, the general trend was to increase protection within the homestead, with less overall interest shown in enhancing security in the public spaces in neighbourhoods. Building collective sense of safety and community cohesion will require a stronger emphasise, in neighbourhood investments and programmes, on improving safety in public spaces in Monrovia.

Some survey respondents mentioned neighbourhood watch functions which serve to monitor crime and violence. For example, in 72nd Street, a community watch team stays awake throughout the night, stationed at various community entry points to monitor for criminal activity or suspect behaviour. There is some evidence that such neighbourhood watch functions can be effective in deterring criminal and violent activity (Baker, 2010). It would appear that positive elements of community security include an emphasis on collective public monitoring (in particular at night), as well as collective organisational approaches that can control for the problem of arbitrary violence.

Several communities stated that community leaders can play an important role in dispute resolution among residents. In Duala, Buzzi Quarter, 72nd Street and Pipeline, for example, community leaders may even withdraw cases from court to resolve disputes at the community level. Various other community mechanisms are being trialled directly by communities, or with assistance from civil society organisations. Youth Crime Watch, for example, work with young people to prevent crime in their schools and communities and to provide mechanisms for safe and anonymous incident reporting.[52]

Community Policing Forums were established by the LNP in partnership with UNMIL to extend policing capacity in communities lacking ample police presence. There are 102 forums in Monrovia, and a further 205 throughout Liberia.[53] The programme is implemented by identifying forum leaders in each community to act as a bridge to exchange information between the LNP and communities. Ideally, community representatives provide information on rates of crime and violence, and general observations of community security. In turn, the LNP provides information on preventive security mechanisms, strategies on responding to incidents and reporting incidents to the police. Although a popular form of community-level security programming, CPFs were only mentioned in one of the focus group discussions. Further work is needed to demonstrate both how they may support armed violence reduction and prevention. For example, it is possible that CPFs could help to broker between more traditional conceptions of crime and punishment within communities, and the growth of official, state-supplied security and justice processes.

Whilst the role of the LNP is moving in a positive direction, its capacity and function at community level remain somewhat weak. Increasing presence – with capacity to act preventively as well as simply reactively – and increasing community-level engagement are potentially productive ways to build the public understanding and trust that are critical to strengthening the LNP's positive role in armed violence reduction.

52 Other examples include Radio Crime Watch programmes for reporting crimes, church interventions, women's groups and youth groups.
53 http://unmil.org/1content.asp?ccat=unpolrr

3.7 UNITED NATIONS

The UN deployed to Liberia following the CPA, establishing the Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003. UNMIL's mandate is to support various peacekeeping and peacebuilding mechanisms, including support to implementation of the ceasefire agreement, human rights assistance, security reform, and humanitarian protection. As part of its mandate, UNMIL aims: "without prejudice to the efforts of the government, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities."[54] United Nations Police (UNPOL) have provided assistance and guidance in monitoring and restructuring the LNP, including in particular training programmes, and limited operational support.

The UN did not figure prominently in discussions with residents as a direct security actor. This may reflect, appropriately, the mission's supporting role in capacity building with minimal operational implementation. However, a number of respondents noted that areas where UN personnel do not patrol tend to be less secure, whilst others asserted that UN personnel sometimes refused to enter insecure areas. As UNMIL draws down in the coming period, the true capacity of national security sector actors is likely to be put to the test.

> "Yes you try to go to the police, but even if you go…
> the police say they have no car, are not armed,
> they are not protected."

UNMIL Headquarters in Central Monrovia.

BOX 3: DRIVERS OF ARMED VIOLENCE IN MONROVIA

While security sector actors can mitigate incidents of armed violence as and where they happen, primary prevention (that is prevention before the fact) is often the more cost-effective approach. Primary prevention comes from identifying and addressing the critical underlying factors – the social institutions mentioned earlier – that are known to increase the risk of violent outbreaks. Three critical risk factors were commonly identified as drivers of armed violence in Monrovia – residual trauma from the war; use of stimulants (largely alcohol and drugs); and impoverishment, with specific reference to endemic unemployment. These are not, it can be assumed, the only drivers of armed violence in the capital city, but they are certainly prominent ones in the minds and experiences of Monrovians.

WAR TRAUMA

Nearly all survey participants cited lasting trauma from the war as a contributory factor in the prevailing threat and rate of incidence of armed violence. One legacy of the conflict is an abundance of homeless children and adolescents who lack family or guardians. This is due largely to deaths and displacement during the war, but the Ministry of Gender explained that the abandonment of children in the post-war period continues to be high: "we are living in a very traumatized society …wives and children are being abandoned…children are not being cared for…husbands go and never return."

The Ministry of Justice believes that Liberia needs expert psychologists to come and de-traumatise the population. Many respondents agreed that a powerful contributing factor to ongoing armed violence and broader violence in the community emanates from the fact that although the war is over, there is no mechanism in place to get people moving on (Medeiros, 2007).[55] It is highly likely that psychosocial and mental health issues, resulting from the conflict and ongoing insecurity, are widespread but largely neglected in Liberia (Galea et al., 2010; Pedersen, 2002).

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Drug use can be a way of preparing for crime and violence, possibly reflecting widespread use of narcotics during the war. Drug use was frequently cited by survey respondents and informants as a risk factor leading to, or exacerbating, violence and aggressive behaviour. A number of neighbourhood focus groups indicated that they believed there was a proliferation of drugs in their communities, including the use and sale of cocaine (or coco), heroin (dugee or duji), opium and marijuana.[56] A number of areas around Monrovia ('ghettos') are known as places where drugs can be found, including in drinks and snack foods like kanyan.[57] Some residents noted that their neighbourhoods had started to attract drug users, particularly youths who congregate in groups and have a tendency to become violent, with reports of drug use starting among school-age children.

IMPOVERISHMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The substantial proportion of economically-motivated crime in armed violence in Monrovia strongly suggests that financial need or advancement are significant factors. Residents frequently cited poverty, unemployment – and, critically, lack of training or education to gain employment – as drivers of violence.

Accurate demographic data are limited in Liberia, making it difficult to determine true rates of poverty and unemployment. In March 2011 the Ministry of Labour's 2010 Report announced a 95% unemployment rate.[58] However, this should be treated with some caution since it only accounts for formal employment. The most frequently cited unemployment rate is 85%, estimated in 2003, but again this similarly omits informal types of employment.[59] A calculation of poverty rates conducted by LISGIS in 2007 is perhaps a better measure of economic status, since the analysis takes into account access to food in place of formal employment rates. The LISGIS study

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55 Recent survey work on mental health in Liberia following the conflict suggests that almost half of all respondents in a national assessment met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Johnson et al. 2008).
56 Consistent with an upsurge in drug traffic through the region in recent years.
57 A Liberian snack made of sugar, farina and peanuts.
58 Ministry of Labour 2010 Annual Report.
59 CIA World Factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/li.html

estimated that 58% of Monrovians are living below the poverty line.[60] WANEP note that "as long as there are no activities, or programmes, or job opportunities created for young people to continue to be busy, there will be space for them to perpetuate violence…Their basic needs are not met, so what can they be expected to do? They resort to armed robbery; they resort to mugging."

Responses to the household survey show that, among those who believe Monrovia is less safe than life in the counties (for recently in-migrating families), the major reason given (scoring highest as an aggregation of 1st, 2nd and 3rd priorities) was the limited number of available jobs (graph 29). Further, of those who believe increasing population levels in Monrovia contribute to increased violence, the primary reason given (44%) was increased competition for jobs.

GRAPH 29

IF MONROVIA IS LESS SAFE THAN THE COUNTIES, WHAT ARE THE THREE MAIN REASONS?

Weighted proportion of responses (up to three ranked responses per respondent)

■ Series 1   ■ Series 2   ■ Series 3   n = 14,726.41
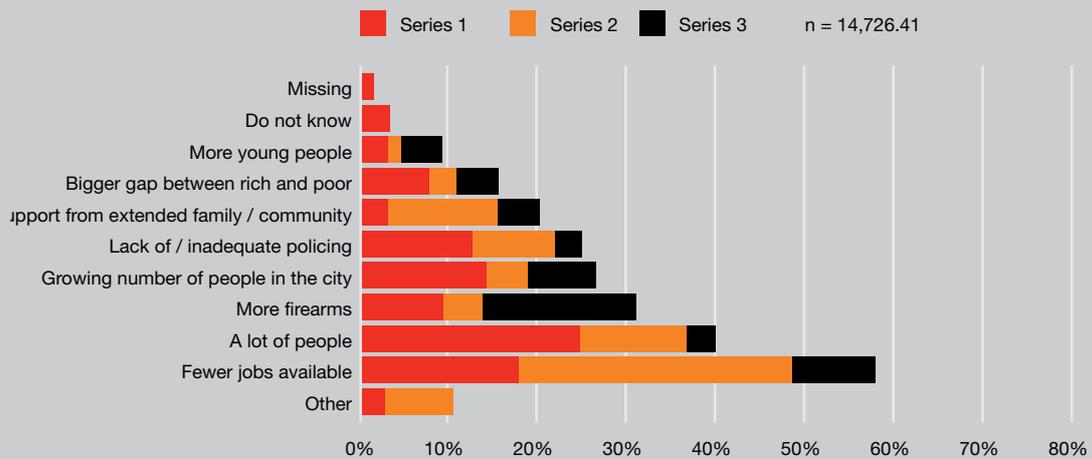
Poverty can increase risk of exposure to sexual violence, where young girls are reported being trafficked and abused in exchange for money and where, in some instances, families may accept such abuse in exchange for a means of survival.

> "…lack of job opportunities, lack of know-how, lack of skills and knowledge, lack of funds…have pushed them more into criminal activities. So as long as those problems are not solved we will always run the risk of having high crime rate and violence in Liberia."

4. Conclusion and avenues for action

This survey has shown that insecurity and armed violence persist in Monrovia in 2010. The data show that crime – primarily violent, often armed, property crime – is the major problem in the capital right now, but that there are continuing issues of violence against women, interpersonal violence and occasional rioting (with some evidence of ad hoc gang formation). These are embedded in wider conditions of historical and largely unaddressed psychosocial trauma, security sector weakness (especially in terms of public confidence and proactive outreach), and popularly-resented exclusion of communities from access to basic services. There is some evidence that this combination of destabilising conditions is more densely concentrated in certain neighbourhoods.

But the survey also shows a country making clear efforts to regain structural security. These efforts will require finance; and they will require the deployment of an integrated, multi-sectoral and evidence-based package of interventions to reduce the humanitarian burden of armed violence, and maximize the developmental dividend of peace (Willman & Makisaka, 2011). This implies complementary roles for national government working with Liberian civil society, supported by donors and international partners.

Such a package of AVRP interventions will likely include both 'direct' and 'indirect' approaches.[61] In the remainder of this final section, avenues for action based on survey evidence are offered (following, as before, the OECD model of 'weapons, people, institutions').[62] In each area of action, a few boxed examples of reported and, in many cases evidence-based, intervention are given. Contextualising and organising such actions, we suggest, are four 'dimensions' of an integrated AVRP approach.

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61 'Direct' AVRP programmes commonly target proximal and intermediate risk factors (such as the weapons themselves, crime prevention and the provision of security sector services, and the reduction in individual and behavioural risk factors such as alcohol and drugs abuse). 'Indirect' AVRP programmes tend to target more distal or structural risk factors, arising out of broader social, economic and developmental policies and the living conditions people experience as a result (including access to training, livelihood opportunities and employment, equitable access to basic services in e.g. health and education, and reduction in exclusion and perceptions of inequity among and between groups).
62 This reflects the approach taken in WHO's World Report on Violence and Health, which prioritizes a range of individual, familial, local, community and national actions, including: increasing safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and caregivers; reducing availability and abuse of alcohol; reducing access to lethal means; improving life skills and enhancing opportunities for children and youth; promoting gender equality and empowering women; changing cultural norms that support violence; improving criminal justice systems; improving social welfare systems; reducing social distance between conflicting groups; & reducing economic inequality and concentrated poverty (WHO, 2008).

CRITICAL DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATED ARMED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION IN MONROVIA

The overview of armed violence and insecurity in Monrovia emerging from this survey report points to four critical dimensions that can help structure and integrate the range of AVRP interventions needed.

First, more information is needed. Building systematic national and local collection of data on armed violence serves three important roles – reaffirming national government responsibility and accountability when it comes to providing protection and security for its citizens; understanding where and why violence is happening as the basis for intervention design; and feeding national awareness, debate and dialogue about armed violence as a major humanitarian, public health, and development issue.

Second, effective intervention needs to integrate work on different risk factors, from availability of weapons, through psychosocial and behavioural trauma, to family dysfunction, and the wider conditions of social and economic exclusion that make armed violence a more appealing route to livelihood and status. However, it is recognised that, especially with scarce resources, everything cannot be done everywhere, hence:

Third, the full integrated package of interventions should be applied, first, in targeted areas or neighbourhoods where data show that armed violence, or principal risk factors for armed violence, are highest.

Fourth, the integrated package of interventions should be designed so as to be capable of evaluation on a regular basis, showing rates and trends of armed violence in programme areas. Evaluation should assess both the actual rates of victimisation, and the levels of perceived insecurity in targeted communities.

WEAPONS

Liberia underwent a formal disarmament process after the war from 2004. However, given the reported scale of weapons recovery (and the quality of weapons surrendered) it is possible that a significant number of small arms and light weapons (SALW) remain in circulation in the country. Although this survey suggests that small arms constitute a relatively modest element of the problem of armed violence in Monrovia, it would be unwise to assume that SALW are no longer an issue for Liberia.[63]

There is currently no legislative instrument covering small arms in Liberia. Legal controls on public weapons ownership and holding can have a positive impact on public disarmament and firearms-related violence. **A draft Liberian bill on small arms** is in process as of February 2011, and should support an approach to weapons access and ownership that is intelligible to the population at large, and liable therefore to attract reasonable levels of compliance and enforcement.

Alongside stronger legislation, there is an argument that Liberia might benefit from **a new round of weapons amnesties**. When organized voluntarily, backed by clear public education and awareness, and complemented by compensation for victims of armed violence, such amnesties can be effective in retrieving significant numbers of weapons.

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63 Not least given recent anecdotal evidence of arms flowing from Liberia to Cote d'Ivoire during the contested 2011 election process there, suggesting either that Liberia continues to operate as a conduit for regional illicit arms flows, or that in-country arms supplies remain significant if officially unacknowledged.

A vital complement to retrieving and securing publicly held SALW is the capacity of the security sector itself in **conventional weapons management and disposal**. A large part of illicit weapons in global circulation comes out of poor official storage and handling (Geneva Declaration, 2008). Liberia will reduce its vulnerability to the threat of SALW by continuing to strengthen controls on cross-border flows, but also domestic capacity to retain, securely store, and ultimately destroy surplus weaponry.[64]

Following new weapons legislation in Brazil in 2003, firearms-related homicide fell by an estimated 8.8% (Bellisetal., 2010). Options for increased control include minimum age for weapons ownership, ban on specific weapon types (important for maintaining legitimate ownership among, e.g. hunting households and communities), licensing, restrictions on weapons carrying in public places (see, for example, the 'Arms-free Municipalities' programme in El Salvador), and safe gun storage (a good example of which can be seen in the community security programme run by Danish Demining Group in Somaliland). Successful examples of gun amnesties can be found in recent experiences in, for example, South Africa and Croatia (Willman & Makisaka, 2011; Bellis et al., 2010).

However, the survey clearly shows that the large part of armed violence happening in Monrovia is carried out with non-mechanical (that is bladed, or agricultural) weapons. Legislation and legal restrictions on ownership and use are implausible. In these cases, attention must be paid to the underlying drivers that cause people to pick up weapons and act violently.

VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

Victims of armed violence in Monrovia, and Liberia more widely, include both those who have suffered (and continue to suffer) as a result of the period of conflict, and those who are presently exposed to the threat and use of weapons to commit crime, injure and kill. Victimisation includes physical injury and psychological trauma, but also wider negative impacts on community security and socio-economic development.[65]

It is important to understand that in conflict-affected countries like Liberia, perpetrators can also be viewed as, in a sense, victims. Whether as child soldiers, forced recruits, or camp followers during the conflict, or as marginalised communities struggling to achieve legitimate livelihoods in the process of national recovery, those who perpetrated violence, and those who continue to perpetrate violence, should be included as key actors in interventions for armed violence reduction – not solely through criminal and penal processes, but through assistance programmes that address the root causes of ongoing violent behaviour (for example trauma, poor socialisation skills, lack of education, inability to access vocational, employment and income-earning opportunities), and focus on re-inclusion and rehabilitation.

Services to victims of armed violence are rare across Liberia. Medical and health services are primarily funded through donor aid, with contributions from the government.[66] The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare aims to **extend basic healthcare to all Liberians**, but at present an estimated 35% of all health spending is funded directly by residents at the time of care.[67] The requirement to produce funds rapidly when treatment for violent

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64 Helping Liberia to comply with its international obligations under, e.g. the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN Document A/CONF.192/15).
65 This framing of armed violence victimization and victim assistance is consistent with definitions set out in international humanitarian law (e.g. the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions), but also in international human rights law (e.g. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD)).
66 Connor C (2011). Health Financing in Low-Income Countries: The Liberia Case, Health Systems 20/20, USAID.
67 There is some recourse to free healthcare through public facilities in Monrovia. Redemption Hospital, for example, provides free medical care, but treatment options are limited to minor injuries and mental healthcare is not offered.

injury is required may be a barrier to accessing medical care and can threaten the financial status of under resourced households.[68]

Survey respondents confirmed that victims of violent injury are normally required to cover their own medical treatment costs. This was the case, for example, for a resident of the Buzzi Quarter focus group who was stabbed in the stomach while being attacked by a group of youths in his neighbourhood. He underwent two surgeries as a result and paid $100 at a local clinic for treatment. Sudden medical fees such as these can have catastrophic impact on households, considering an estimated 58% of Monrovians live below the poverty line and Liberia's per capita GNI stood at a little over $160 per year in 2008.[69] The economic impact on affected households may also serve to perpetuate crime and violence, particularly when the injured individual is normally involved in income generation, and is temporarily or permanently unable to work.

Rehabilitative medical services for those left with physical disability in the capital are negligible (Blattman & Jamison, 2009) and **physio-therapeutic support**, combined with **small-scale cash transfer and/or skills training projects** aimed at this excluded group would constitute both humanitarian responsibility and practical development opportunity.

Given the high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder in Liberia (Johnson et al., 2008), it is concerning that psychological counselling for victims and witnesses of violence is generally unavailable across Monrovia.[70] Key stakeholders and focus group participants were united in stressing the importance of counselling to recover from the enduring psychological trauma of 14 years of brutal violence. In particular, residents indicated that ex-combatants and youth who were raised and socialised during the conflict, lack sensitivity to violence.

Ex-combatants were felt to have had inadequate opportunity to recover psychologically through the DDRR process. Young Monrovians who grew up during the conflict had, in many cases, had little or no education, and severely disrupted family lives, leading to limited ability to engage with productive employment and skills development. Many young Liberians were also subject to ongoing triggers of violence, producing further trauma, including sexual abuse, domestic abuse, abandonment, and encouragement by parents, guardians or peers to generate income through illegal and violent means. It was felt that trauma counselling and sensitisation to violence among at-risk youth should therefore take into account not only war trauma experienced, but also continued experiences of violence.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare's programme to extend **mental health services into communities should be supported, for example through increased investment in small healthcare outreach** facilities (Silove, 2004).

Levels of drug addiction in Liberia – possibly rolling over from the conflict – are considered to be high (Adolfo, 2010). While drug use was not statistically measured in this research, discussion with residents indicated that drugs and alcohol play a role in increasing aggression and violence of robberies and other violent incidents. Efforts will be needed to **reduce drug trafficking** into or through Liberia,[71] as well as clear and well-enforced national narcotics laws. In a more immediate sense, restrictions on sale of alcohol in Monrovia (possibly targeted at weekends and/or public holidays) could be effective in **reducing alcohol** as a factor in, in particular, interpersonal and domestic violence and violence against women.

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68 Health Systems 20/20. Apr, 2011. Health Systems Report: Liberia. Bethesda, MD: Health Systems 20/20 project, Abt Associates Inc. http://healthsystems2020.healthsystemsdatabase.org/
69 http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Liberia. Per capita GDP (in 2010 US$) is estimated at around $500 (PPP), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2004.html.
70 It should be noted that while war trauma is statistically higher among ex-combatants, non-combatants also suffer similar symptoms. Of 44% of all adults displaying symptoms of PTSD, 57% were ex-combatants but 37% were non-combatants.
71 With an estimated $500 million generated by illicit trade in cocaine in Liberia in 2010, incentives for government to clamp down on the trade may be weak in some areas (Adolfo, 2010).

There are a number of examples of physical and psychosocial rehabilitation programming, providing peer-support among ex-combatants in the initial instance, but subsequently extending to wider affected groups of armed violence victims and survivors. Examples include the Trauma, Health and Reconciliation Services (THARS) and the Training Center for the Development of Former Combatants (CEDAC) in Burundi (QUNO/ Communidad Segura, 2010). AOAV has managed training centres with ex-combatants and war-affected communities in Liberia since 2006, offering a combination of vocational training courses in agricultural livelihoods, with basic life-skills (numeracy, literacy) training and psychosocial counselling.

It should be noted that where psychosocial trauma is widespread and embedded in households and communities, provision of psychosocial counselling services should not be designed according to an international 'cookie-cutter' model, but rather tailored to local coping strategies already in evidence. As importantly, psychosocial services should be folded into a wider programme of practical interventions to improve social and material conditions in poor neighbourhoods to reduce the effect of 'daily stressors' (such as lack of basic amenities, income, work options) (Pupavac, 2001; Miller & Rasmussen 2010). Community-level interventions to improve access to basic amenities, services and socio-economic opportunity are addressed later on.

FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

Focus group participants and key stakeholders agreed that there is a cyclical relationship between violence and dysfunction within family units in Monrovia. **Chronic domestic violence** creates low self-esteem and trauma among those who are abused. It may cause alienated parents to abandon children, and may inspire children to leave violent homes for life on the street. Abandoned and homeless children, who lack family support, education and training, often resort to crime and violence to survive, and often become socialised into groups of youths relying on crime and violence.

Programming to reduce the incidence of sexual and domestic violence and to support trauma recovery among those who are victimised would support those directly affected by abuse, and would also reduce the rate of child abandonment and runaways. Curbing the number of children who become homeless would significantly reduce the expanding groups of disaffected youths relying on crime and violence to survive. Additionally, programming to work with homeless youth who are vulnerable to engaging in crime and violence should provide means and support for legal livelihood alternatives, employment skills training, as well as providing psycho-social counselling to recover from trauma and habitual violent behaviour.
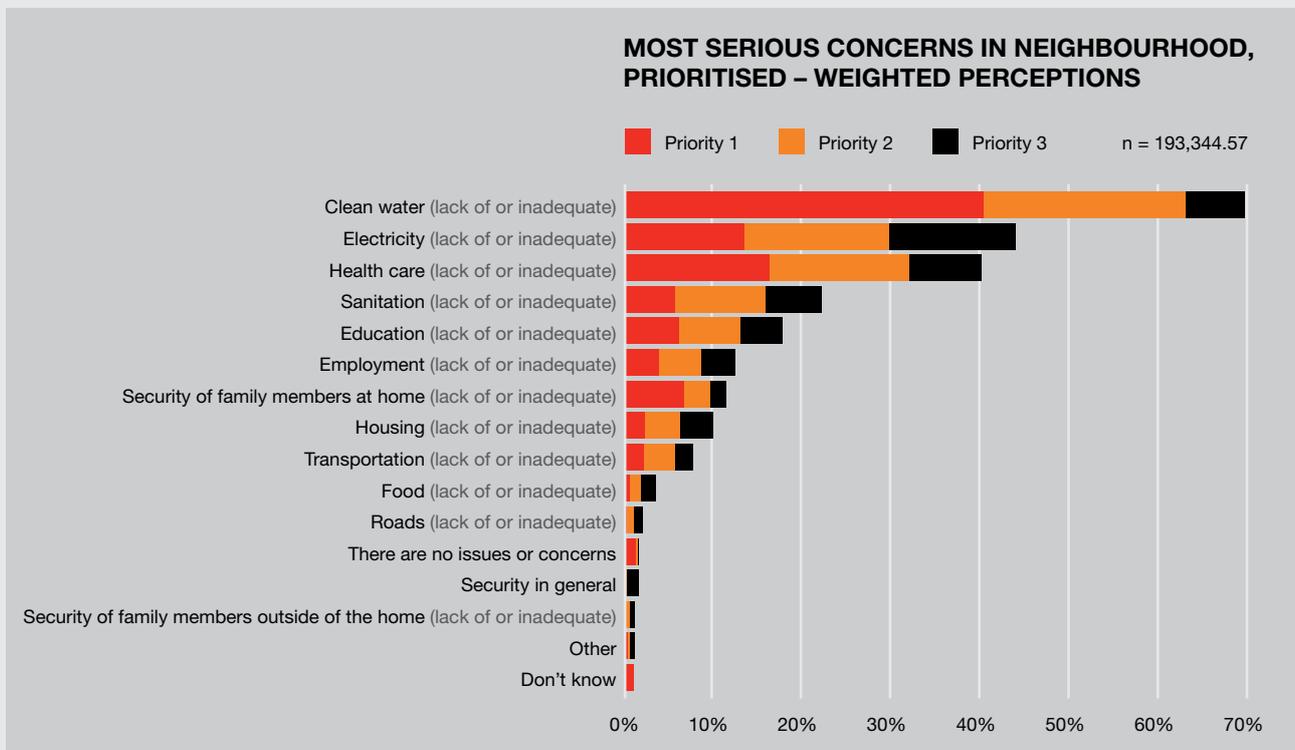
Alongside family counselling and parenting awareness programmes, interventions to mitigate extreme household poverty can reduce violence within households. There is some evidence, for example from the Oportunidades programme in Mexico, that small-scale cash transfers targeted at poor households, as part of a wider set of intervention measures, can have an effect in reducing women's exposure to domestic violence (Bobonis et al., 2009).

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Survey respondents, focus group participants and key stakeholders showed high levels of commitment to participating in **collective community solutions** to the problem of armed violence. Residents in heavily affected neighbourhoods expressed determination to improve community cohesion. They identified community leaders as key to organisation of intra-neighbourhood services, such as youth centres for outreach and counselling, as well as adjudication of neighbourhood penalties for violent or disruptive behaviour.[72]

Efforts to address psychosocial and behavioural factors are likely to be more effective in reducing people's propensity for violence where they are integrated with **improvements in the material circumstances in which poor communities live** (as noted earlier). Concern for a lack of basic amenities and services – principally water and sanitation, electricity and healthcare – emerged clearly in the Monrovia survey as priorities for the city's neighbourhoods (graph 30).

GRAPH 30

MOST SERIOUS CONCERNS IN NEIGHBOURHOOD, PRIORITISED – WEIGHTED PERCEPTIONS

Priority 1　　Priority 2　　Priority 3　　n = 193,344.57

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72 It should be noted that there are concerns about neighbourhoods taking a kind of parallel legal process into their own hands, since this can quickly become indistinguishable from vigilantism, and can be co-opted by unelected and unrepresentative neighbourhood groups. However, it is a more practical option than the minority view among residents that violent offenders should be expelled from their neighbourhood.

There is a wide range examples of inter- and intra-community dialogue projects – for example the Amani Communities of Africa in Kibera around the time of the violently contested Kenyan elections in 2007 (Quno/Communidad Segura, 2010); and the Peace Committees that have been operationalised in recent years in South Africa (Willman & Makisaka, 2011)).

A number of community-based programmes to improve basic living conditions have been integrated with wider violence prevention and reduction efforts. The Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation under the Cross (MI-PAREC) in Burundi, for example, combines improving local services with the wider process of DDRR. Intersos in Central-Southern Somalia provide educational services to marginalised households in some of the most violence-prone parts of the country. Viva Rio in Haiti work alongside violence-affected communities to strengthen basic services including water management, solid waste disposal, and healthcare.

Marginally reducing the economic poverty of the most impoverished households – through conditional cash transfers, for example – has been trialled as a component in mitigating the impacts of past armed violence, and simultaneously reducing the risks of further violence in the future. For example, the Juntos programme in Peru, launched in 2005, was specifically designed to address some of the vulnerabilities of those who had been most affected by the political violence (Jones et al., 2007).[73] Indeed, programmes to enhance social protection, including targeted poverty mitigation initiatives like cash transfer, are increasingly being included as a useful policy and programming tool in post-conflict recovery and armed violence prevention (Holmes and Uphadya, 2009).

COMMUNITY SECURITY

Communities look to the LNP to provide protection where violence erupts or criminality pervades. The survey captured an increasing willingness to rely on the security services, but a persistent gap between public expectations and security sector performance. With support from the UN Peacebuilding Commission, it is likely that Liberia will continue to roll out security sector reform over the coming period, including the establishment of five regional 'hubs' designed to provide security and justice services across the country. These are positive steps.

However, a critical aspect of security sector functioning in Monrovia and Liberia more widely, is the need to **strengthen the operational links on the ground between security providers and the public** in their communities.[74] This requires increased presence of police in affected communities. It requires police presence targeted on 'hot-spots' of high violence, crime and perceived insecurity. And it requires shared problem identification between police and community representatives.[75]

In terms of judicial process, survey respondents focused on the need for greater public awareness, but also on the need for swifter and clearer process. "One of the core challenges present in the Justice Sector is the difficulty in scaling up the capacity and resources to meet the demand for due process within the population. The current and emerging caseload that is in backlog across multiple institutions in the formal Justice Sector reflects an overstretched system."[76] An estimated 10% of inmates in prison in Monrovia have been convicted. Long periods of incarceration can breed resentment which, combined with a lack of rehabilitative opportunities, can produce cohorts of, primarily, young males vulnerable to recruitment to crime and violence.

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73 Results, as noted in a separate example earlier, included a reduction in domestic violence.
74 In its National Capacity Development Strategy, the Liberian Government states: "Human and institutional capacity investments in the security sector will need to focus not only on skills development, but also address any issues of corruption and insufficient motivation/discipline in the security workforce to reinforce the legitimacy of the state and a just relationship between the state and civilians."
75 The Community Policing Forums have been a good first step in this respect, but residents noted that CPFs are not designed well to act preventively.
76 Liberian National Capacity Development Strategy, p.67.

Clearly, **increasing the capacity of the LNP and the penal system** through increased investment in personnel, operational equipment and capacity, is central to further progress.[77] Equally, improving **public awareness** of, for example, judicial process, would help people to understand how justice is intended to work, and to play their role fully in that process. This includes providing public education on the relative roles of traditional and formal justice systems, and the relationship between them as official systems of security are strengthened.

Some countries in Latin America, including Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, and Costa Rica, have established '*Casas de Justicia*' ('Houses of Justice') to provide information on legal processes and the working of the justice system to enhance people's understanding of their rights under the law. These houses can also serve as conflict resolution services, including professionals from various sectors, such as educators, psychologists, lawyers, and police officers (QUNO/Communidad Segura, 2010).

A number of targeted, problem-specific police-community collaborations have been tried in countries affected by armed violence, including Brazil (the Fica Vivo project) and Costa Rica, where perceptions of insecurity fell from 36% to 19% (QUNO/Communidad Segura, 2010). The Centre d'Alerte et de Prévention des Conflits (CENAP) runs a similar programme in Burundi, while Sou da Paz, in Brazil, organises participatory local planning (focused on arms reduction, but capable of wider application) with various state counterparts including the national police, the army, and the Ministry of Justice.

Survey respondents and discussion participants felt that clearly demarcated judicial process working with young offenders would help in strengthening early rehabilitation and reduce the risk of violent youth becoming more hardened through the formal prison system. An example of this can be found in the collaboration in Lima, Peru, between NGOs and the Commissariat of the Police to establish the 'Casa de la Juventud' model, which provides discrete treatment for juveniles in detention.

Some progress has been made in enhancing police responsiveness to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. However, reporting remains chronically low (Schia & de Carvalho, 2009). As a preliminary step, a nationwide public awareness campaign-driving recognition of the problem into the public domain would be worthwhile, backed by well-resourced local centres for reporting, advice, counselling and treatment. Work by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Cote d'Ivoire using radio programmes to publicise the problem of domestic violence was found to be effective in disseminating information, and in influencing public attitudes (Willman & Makisaka, 2011).

EMPLOYMENT

Both the government and the international community acknowledge a link between employment rates and security in Liberia. Following the conflict, UNDP's 2006 National Human Development Report for Liberia noted that: "employment and development are essential for security: if large sections of the community do not have a livelihood, they will remain vulnerable to violence or instability."[78] The 2008-11 Poverty Reduction Strategy confirms that: "**rapid job creation** is central to maintaining security (especially jobs aimed at the conflict-affected youth)."[79]

Although a clear empirical relationship between un- or under-employment and risk of [armed] violence has not been fully established, it has been recognized that armed violence (as combat, as status, as income generation)

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can be viewed as an occupation with value (McLeod & Dávalos, 2008; Kay, 2000). In a complementary fashion therefore, creation of legitimate employment or livelihood opportunities can be a useful policy and programming option for re-directing the energies of the un- or under-employed (both men and women), including ex-combatants through forms of DDRR but extending the principle to the wider community of at-risk young people supporting recovery from conflict, as well as mitigating a powerful armed violence risk factor more generally.[80]

Creating reasonably extensive employment programmes to absorb a population who have missed much of their education, are experiencing behavioural and mental health problems as a consequence of trauma, and have little in the way of socialized (life) skills, is a considerable challenge. Yet it may be vital to the future chances of avoiding relapse into violence in Monrovia and Liberia more broadly.

The Liberian private sector is not – yet – in a position to absorb available under-utilised labour. Liberian youth do not have, in many instances, experience of working, nor often do they have requisite technical skills. **Public employment programmes, based on basic skills education** (literacy, numeracy, social and life skills) and more **targeted vocational skills training** (corresponding with identified labour demands in e.g. rural concessions, urban and rural infrastructure recovery, construction and mining) are key to ensuring higher levels of absorption of ex-combatants and the wider community of war-affected young people – thus reducing the stock of poor, excluded and often resentful young men and women who constitute the tinder that could light a new Liberian conflict.

Over time, private sector actors may be expected to take over an increasing proportion of formal employment, so that these public programmes can be targeted on especially poor or marginalised areas, with cash transfer, food for work, or other conditional incentives-based interventions for the hard-to-reach. The costs of such public programmes may be considered to be off-set by the alternative costs associated with large and persistent un- and under-employment among young males in particular where this risks resulting in persistently high levels of crime, violence and community insecurity, and the possibility of a return to more organized conflict.

"Cambodia, Mozambique, Uganda and Vietnam for example have managed to create jobs and reduce poverty. Though these are still poor countries, incomes are rising much faster than pre-conflict suggesting they have broken out of the poverty-conflict trap. Ethiopia, El Salvador and Rwanda have also shown signs of sustained growth, though in some cases the rural poor have not benefitted from recovery and the economy has not matched its pre-conflict performance" (McLeod & Dávalos, 2008).

Capacity-building, including training, education and job opportunities, should be inclusive of all groups to ensure that differing opportunities do not widen socio-economic divisions or deteriorate tensions. The National Human Development Report stated that considering Liberia's civil wars were instigated by social divisions and marginalisation, capacity-building initiatives and opportunities must be broad-based and inclusive to ensure peace and stability.[81] Employment benefits to employees can break down competitive tensions between ethnic or regional groups, whilst at the same time reducing the attractiveness of higher-risk rent-seeking associated with criminality, gang activity or even return to war economy behaviour. Such programmes should be supported by aid rather than by domestic taxation.

Monrovians are very clear about the role that poverty and unemployment play in insecurity. Support to vocational training was popular, as well as the provision of daily-hire and longer-term employment opportunities.

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80 Unemployment has been identified as a factor motivating crime and violence in urban areas in Latin America, to the extent that homicide and level of economic activity appear to correlate counter-cyclically (Heinemann & Verner, 2006).
81 UNDP Liberia Human Development Report 2006 pp.12,14.

Vocational training should be combined with life-skills training (in numeracy and literacy, for example). Any employment training programmes should include psychosocial components to help improve job performance and maintenance of employment. Individuals who lack education and skills training are not in the habit of regularly attending school, training institutions, or a place of employment.[82]

Amongst donors, there is growing recognition of the potential of employment to absorb and re-direct youth energy that otherwise remains available for recruitment to violence. AusAID, for example, incorporate employment generation as a legitimate element of support to countries emerging from conflict. "Development assistance is one of the most effective foreign policy tools to reduce the incidence and severity of conflict. While aid is not a panacea, it can create disincentives for people to resort to violence and provide alternatives to conflict through, for example, dispute resolution. It can also help to generate employment, particularly for disenchanted youth."[83]

"Creating employment can be a particularly effective way of maintaining the peace."

NATIONAL INITIATIVE

The Government of Liberia is undertaking measures to reduce poverty and improve security, and acknowledges the strong relationship between security and development. Many of the interventions set out above will require, at minimum, government approval. More likely in most cases, they will require active government involvement, financial and in-kind contribution, and legislative or policy backing (for example on weapons control measures, or on national capacity, training and employment).

Critical for national capacity to back, support and enact measures to reduce and prevent armed violence in Monrovia (and ultimately across Liberia) are three key inputs.

First, the government will require solid, **reliable data** on the problem of armed violence – where it is happening, to whom, by whom, with what weapons, and why. A study in five African countries showed that absence of data was a significant barrier to effective action (Zaval & Hazen, 2009). Liberia has various sources of data on armed violence; however they are not yet fully integrated into a single usable monitoring system. A Liberian Armed Violence Observatory is being developed as of 2010. The Liberian government has shown considerable support for improving data on armed violence; the next step is to see data fed into national and local policy-making and programmes.

Second, the government should support national **public awareness** campaigns to raise the profile of the problem of armed violence, sending the message that armed violence can be addressed, reduced and prevented, and that the government is serious about providing support to public safety and neighbourhood protection.[84]

Third, as Liberia remains reliant on aid for a significant portion of its national income, donors must be ready to support explicit attention to the problem of armed violence in the government's national **development planning** strategies and instruments. Alongside aid, private sector actors should be prepared to show transparently how their investments in Liberia comply with national laws and policies, and are engineered in such a way as to act preventively on the risks of insecurity and armed violence.

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82 UNDP Liberia Human Development Report 2006 describes a need for "creating a competent and motivated cadre of people that will guarantee a high level of productivity and growth" p.27.
83 http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/ausaid_peace.pdf.
84 Perhaps the clearest priority for national awareness raising is the problem of sexual, gender-based and domestic violence; in addition, a more targeted educational approach could be taken to raising understanding of violence and the judicial process in Liberia.

Manufacturing security doors and windows in Sinkor, Monrovia.

TARGETING

The range of programmes set out in this report is challenging and, at first glance, costly for a country at Liberia's stage of recovery. It is important therefore to recognise the need to target programmes (and underlying resources) at specified areas (whether these are defined as 'communities', 'neighbourhoods' or other local spaces) where armed violence – actual or threatened – is highest.

In the same way that armed violence itself occurs unevenly within a given space (Raleigh & Hegre, 2005; Bourguignon, 1999), the factors that drive up risk of violence are unevenly distributed. While poverty itself is not necessarily a driver of armed violence, relative deprivation – which becomes starkly visible in fast-growing capital cities such as Monrovia – is. Targeting resources – be that through assistance to victims, household cash transfers, community services enhancement or community policing – can help efficiently to address the problems that provoke violence and remove them at the root.

Policy-makers and practitioners interested in armed violence reduction and prevention in Monrovia could choose highly-affected/high-risk neighbourhoods such as those identified in this survey for a package of integrated interventions, as a first step.

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1   An impromptu market stall on Broad Street, Central Monrovia
2   Shopping for Beauty Products; Corner of Randel and Broad Street
3   A Busy day on Broad Street; Central Monrovia