

2012

Security, Environment and Opportunities in West Point – A Community-led Urban Early-Warning and Empowerment Project



Early Warning Early Response (EWER) Working Group

Monrovia, Liberia
July, 2012

Project Contributing Organizations:

Action on Armed Violence
Catholic Justice and Peace Commission
Liberia Peacebuilding Office
Youth Crime Watch
with support from Humanity United and Trust Africa

Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	4
2. Introduction	5
3. West Point – The area.....	6
4. Data gathering methodology and community preparation.....	6
5. Data input	7
6. Focus groups	7
7. Findings of the report – by section	7
8. Background demographic.....	8
8.1 Gender	8
8.2. Age	9
8.3. Tribe.....	9
8.4. Religion	9
8.5. Occupation.....	10
8.6. Income	11
8.7. Employment and Economic Situation	11
9. Security and safety.....	13
9.1. Most serious concerns.....	13
9.2. What do you consider the safety level of your neighborhood to be?.....	17

9.3.	Percentage of people who worry they will become a victim of crime or violence	17
9.4.	Security compared to a year ago.....	17
9.5.	Which type of crime are you most worried about?	18
9.6.	Items normally stolen	20
9.7.	Do you worry more about males or females in your household becoming the victims of violence?	20
9.8.	How do times of year affect security in the neighborhood?.....	20
9.10.	Victims of crime	22
9.11.	Perpetrators of crime	23
10.	Environment.....	26
10.1	Erosion	26
10.2	Most common manmade disasters	28
10.3	Migration and the influx of people.....	29
11.	Security provision.....	30
12.	Special projects	33
12.1.	Child laborers	33
12.2.	Fishermen	34
12.3.	Marketers.....	35
12.4.	Motorcycle drivers	37
13.	Early Warning Forecasting – What does this report tell us?	38
14.	Risks, Recommendations and Lessons Learnt – West Point	40

1. Executive Summary

In the view of many Liberians, West Point does not have a good reputation in Liberia. Anecdotally, the members of the research team heard Monrovia refer to West Point as a criminal safe haven and a home to 'bad people'. This contrasted greatly with the experiences of the research team when they visited the area, and the stigmatization did not seem to respond to any empirical knowledge. The findings of the report essentially paint the picture of a community suffering with the burdens of extreme poverty, overcrowding, lack of economic opportunity and the challenges that go with it. However, this is not the full picture. According to the data, the situation in West Point is improving, people are able to find work, and there is a high influx of people into the community due to its proximity to downtown Monrovia and the opportunity to live in the area regardless of your economic income. Whilst significant crime levels in the area must be acknowledged, these mostly appear to be economically motivated thefts and are understood in this context i.e. someone stealing goods due to lack of other income opportunities. Furthermore, the major concerns in the area relate to a lack of social services such as lack of employment opportunities for youth, healthcare, family planning and education rather than crime and violence. Whilst these are clearly pre-cursors for security problems and wider conflict issues, as an early warning document this report presents them as warning signs rather than existent conflicts.

The research findings also revealed high levels of awareness among the population of the issues that are affecting them. For example, open defecation was referred to frequently as the source of illnesses, with prevalent knowledge of how diseases- both water and air borne- are transmitted. But people reportedly do not have

alternatives, due to the lack of services available. From an early warning perspective, the combination of this knowledge and the perceived inaction of government and the international community are a volatile combination. Furthermore, West Point's poverty levels are particularly stark in light of their more affluent neighbor Mamba Point, and in consideration of it being home to the Liberia Electricity Company power plant, an irony given that the majority of West Point must live without power.

The intention of the report was to gather empirical data from West Point, but also to gain understanding and insight into the issues being faced by the population, in order to analyze them from an early warning perspective. The picture generated was of a people looking forward to a positive future, but facing major challenges with their current access to services. There is a high level of understanding of how processes should be managed (e.g. sanitation) and lack of alternatives to the way things are currently managed, which must be a source of great frustration. Put at its bleakest, residents reported giving their children dirty water to drink because there was nothing else available, despite the fact that they understand the effects of unclean water on health. Security itself is perceived to be improving, with the major trends being economically motivated crime enacted by young people who are unable to secure jobs and are thus driven to steal.

It is the advice of the committee who worked on this report that organizations wishing to conduct projects in the area should coordinate strongly with the community, who have shown in their responses to our questionnaire that they are well aware of possible solutions to their problems and are also in the best position to advise. Additionally, it is suggested that organizations getting involved in the area should take care to coordinate with one another,

integrating their approaches. There are many challenges in West Point, and poor attempts at coordination or planning could result in heightened security problems if people feel that their area is not receiving the benefits of the project.

2. Introduction

This research was conducted by the Justice and Peace Commission, Youth Crime Watch Liberia and Action on Armed Violence (formerly Landmine Action), three organizations forming part of the Early Warning Early Response (EWER) Working Group, and was coordinated by the Liberia Peace Building Office. This group aims to identify potential hot issues and tensions which arise in Liberia and to respond to these before conflict escalates.

West Point has been considered a troubled area of Monrovia, which experiences high levels of crime and violence, but lacked any empirical research into the levels, types, or characteristics of crime and violence. This troubled perception of the area made it a key concern for the EWER Working Group, but data was first needed in order to know where to direct efforts. The Peace Building Office mobilized funds from Trust Africa and coordinated the overall project and once the study was completed, other members of the EWER group were involved in the design and implementation of the project work.

The research aimed to identify some of the issues facing the West Point community with the objective of gathering information to help design projects which will be useful to the area with local volunteers and community leaders integrated into the project.



Note: Map boundaries are approximated based on a sketch of the area.

3. West Point – The area

People began to populate the area where West Point now lies in 1952, and it was administratively formed as a township in 1960, taking its name from a military academy in New York. The area is situated between the Atlantic Ocean and Montserrado River. Its population, estimated to be between 50,000 and 60,000¹ people, has a high reliance on the local fishing trade. There are several Government buildings in the township, including a police station, a magisterial court, a branch of the Drugs Enforcement Agency and the National Security Association. According to the Township Commissioner, the residents in the area are primarily squatters, with no legal rights to the land. However, it is possible to obtain a 'Squatters Permit' from the administrative office, which grants a certain level of legitimacy to the dweller. However, the lack of a central database permit records means that residents must present original copies of their documentation in the event of land disputes.

A rumor that the government intends to clear the township has been circulating for many years now. However, preliminary investigations with the Ministry of Public Works have revealed no such plans, and President Johnson Sirleaf also made a pledge to the citizens of West Point during the 2011 general election campaign that there was no plan to move them. During the research project, one focus group participant did mention that he wished for an estate to be built and the residents to be moved. However, this was met with vehement disagreement from other group members. It seems unlikely that the administration of moving 60,000 people is something on the agenda. The potential forced evacuation of the area remains an issue of contention, and was raised as a potential flashpoint during the group discussions.

¹ Figure taken from a conversation with the Township Commissioner.

4. Data gathering methodology and community preparation

The implementing partners requested permission and support from community leaders to operate in West Point by holding a Town Hall meeting prior to the start of the research. In addition, media outreach was conducted in order to sensitize the wider West Point community on the research, with four radio stations running jingles in the week preceding the study. The efforts to engage the community before starting the research were well received, particularly the opportunity for community leaders to question the objectives and methodology. For example there was a disagreement over how the youth volunteers had been recruited but this was resolved amicably and easily through open communication and transparency by the research partners who explained that they were acting in good faith.

The household survey was conducted from 31 January to 3 February 2012. The survey was enumerated by 32 youth volunteers who were recruited from the West Point area. The volunteers were sensitized and trained in data collection through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire had 30 questions, with a mix of open and closed questions to facilitate the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. A total of 686 questionnaires were completed, with each volunteer being asked to carry out a minimum of 20. A representative from the EWER Working Group was present in the West Point area throughout to show commitment to the project, which was highly appreciated by the volunteers, and to deal with possible tensions around the survey. In the end no tensions arose. A long-term volunteer with JPC coordinated operations from the ground.

Household surveys were collected across the 8 districts of West Point (401-406, Kru Beach and New West Point; see West Point Map

above) and separately with Special Project groups, which included motorcycle (pen-pen) drivers, child laborers, marketers and fishermen/fishmongers. Seven teams of four youth volunteers collected a total of 585 questionnaires across the districts. Sampling was conducted by household number, with odd numbers being selected. Wherein a house was not numbered, the next person in a household with an odd number was interviewed. An additional team was assigned to the special projects, and collected a total of 101 questionnaires. For the special projects, sampling was simply done at random depending on availability of subjects.

5. Data input

The data from all questionnaires was manually input by personnel from AOAV and JPC into a Microsoft Excel database with graphing and tabling capacities designed in. It was thus possible to review trends appearing in the data as they were input. For open questions, answers were input exactly as written on the questionnaire, except for in circumstances where answers were illegible or clear spelling mistakes were visible. In this circumstance, spellings and occasionally grammar would be adjusted to allow for comprehensibility of the information.

6. Focus groups

In addition to the household survey, meetings were held with the elder's council, the Township Commissioner and his Deputy. A focus group discussion was held with the elder's council, and religious leaders were also invited to come to a discussion. However, only two participants from the religious leaders actually attended. As work continues, more efforts will be made to engage with the religious community, particularly in light of the recommendations made by

Reverend Sam G. Wah, who cogently argued that the church is one of the key actors for change in the community.

Meetings and group discussions were held with community representatives following data collection. Household survey results were presented to the groups for discussion, with a particular focus on participants' reactions to the findings and early warning issues which they considered to be prevalent. The groups were given the opportunity to provide criticism and feedback regarding the study and to review the draft report before its publication. Dialogue was transcribed and incorporated into the report findings.

7. Findings of the report – by section

Sections 8 to 11 below present research findings and analysis for each of the household survey questions. The graphs presented in these sections, unless otherwise stated, are based on community survey data from the eight Districts of West Point, with the special projects data excluded. The special projects findings are reported separately in section 12.

Survey results were disaggregated by various fields such as gender, age and location in order to draw out patterns according to specific variants. While no significant trends were identified for demographic variants, high levels of differentiation did arise according to the geographic area where the data was collected. Follow-up meetings were held with the eight volunteer team captains to discuss the strong geographic differences in findings. The results were met with little or no surprise by the captains, who explained that certain areas of West Point were considered to be much safer than others. A similar level of awareness was demonstrated during the focus group discussions. For example, district 405, which holds the relatively wealthy fishing community of Fanti Town, was perceived to be a

relatively quiet and safe area. One person stated that the area is so safe that the women can sleep outside at night to mind their fish. On a walking tour of West Point, the researchers observed a tangible difference between the area surrounding the main road and the fish drying area in District 405, which had more space available for fish-smoking vats, fewer people in the streets and a quieter atmosphere.

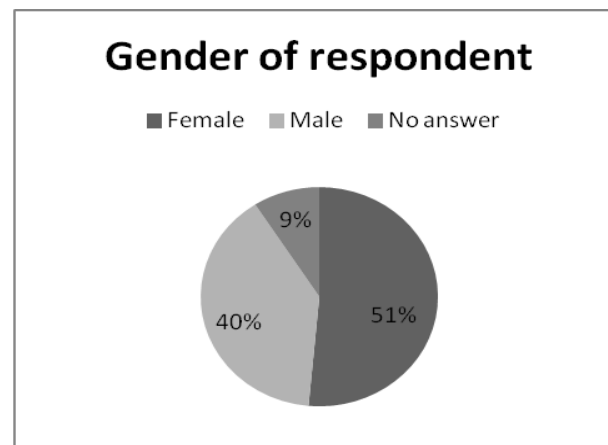
The presence of video clubs was generally considered to have a negative impact on a community's safety. The lack of a video club in District 405 was considered to contribute to its 'civility'. When this matter was explored in the focus group discussions, it was argued that parents had a tendency to stay out late at the video clubs, leaving their children (who do not go to school) alone at home. The clubs were perceived to: cause a disruption to family life, be the source of arguments (resulting, for example, from meals being prepared late), and generally degrade the social fabric of the community.

In contrast to the areas with a perceived high level of security, West Point has certain areas reported to be insecure and inhabited by criminal gangs. During a walking tour of West Point, the researchers observed a marked shift in the behavior of local coordinators in certain areas, responding to an increased perception of insecurity. In certain areas the local coordinator arranged for the international visitors to walk in the middle of the group, with volunteers on either side, due to the perception that they would be worth robbing. Kru Beach and New West Point in particular were found to have negative reputations within the township. The team captains explained that these areas are unsafe at night, and that residents cope by going to bed early to avoid being out on the street. In Kru Beach, there is an area referred to as Death Row, which is notoriously dangerous and reportedly experiences extremely high levels of robbery.

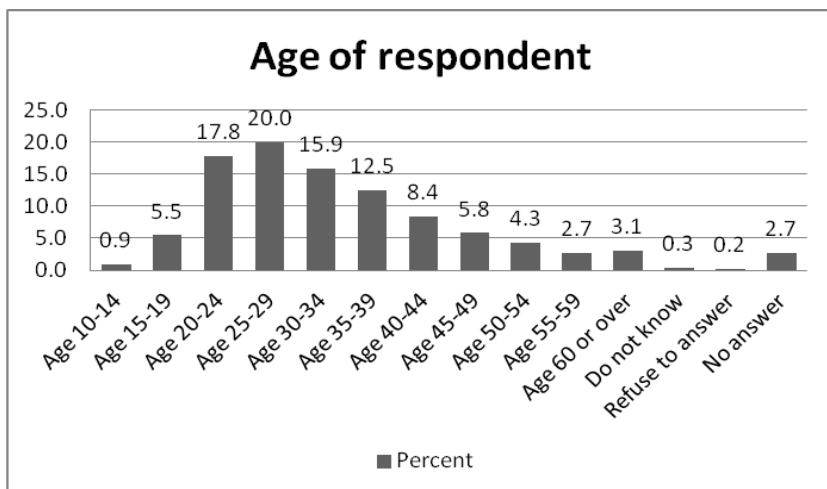
Finally, an established hierarchy between the administrative areas was identified, which would be an interesting topic for future research. This hierarchy should be taken into account when considering project design and improved service provision. While most projects will aim to prioritize benefits to the most vulnerable populations, projects should at the same time be sensitive to local geographic distinctions and demonstrate fairness in selection criteria across the Districts and neighborhoods.

8. Background demographic

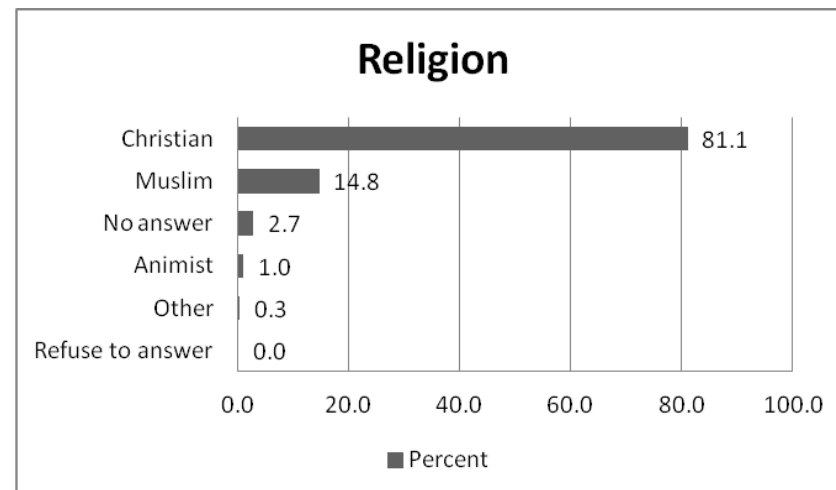
8.1 *Gender* - Overall the gender split of respondents was fairly even, with 51% of respondents listed as female, 40% as male and 9% unknown. This did not vary greatly across districts, although it was noted for the special projects that a higher proportion of child laborers were female, and all motorcycle drivers were male. Within the fishermen/fishmonger demographic, there was an almost even split of respondents according to gender.



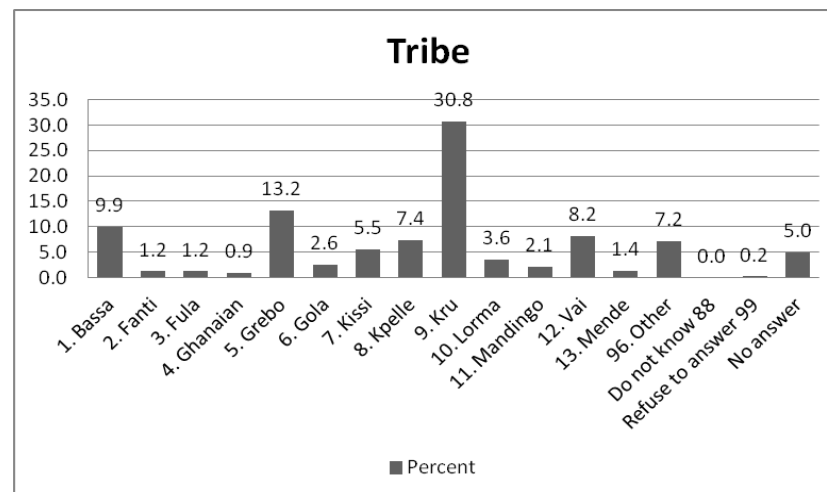
8.2. *Age* –Most survey respondents (20 %) were aged 25-29, and overall 53.7% of respondents were aged 20-34 . This youthful demographic of respondents was anticipated. Overall Liberia’s population is youthful, and West Point is itself a young settlement and community, in particular the Kru Beach and New West Point areas. It should also be noted that children are mostly not represented in these figures. There is no up-to-date census data for West Point but simple observation indicates that the population of children in the area is very high.



8.3. *Tribe* – The Kru tribe was the most strongly represented within West Point at 30.8% of respondents overall. Grebo, Bassa, Vai and Kpelle tribes were also well represented across West Point. The Grebo tribe population was proportionately higher in District 406 and Kru Beach, and the Kissi tribe population was proportionately higher in the Kru Beach area. It should be also noted that the term ‘Fanti’ is often considered synonymous with Ghanaian nationality, although not in 100% of cases.



8.4. *Religion*- Christianity is the predominant religion in all areas of West Point (81.1%), with Muslims overall representing 14.8%. In Districts 402 and 403 the percentage of Muslim respondents was higher and in 405 much lower, suggesting that religious communities may prefer to live together.

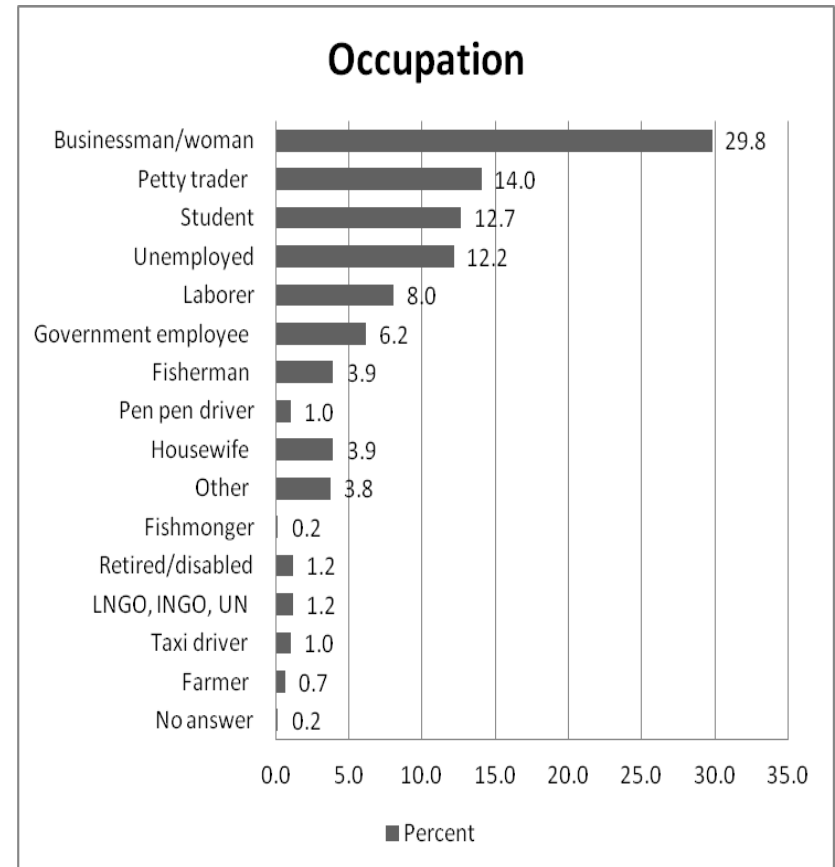


8.5. *Occupation* – The highest percentage of respondents reported to be businessmen or businesswomen (29.8%), followed by petty traders (14.0%). It is likely that there will be some overlap in these categories. A further 12.7% of respondents were students. Overall, only 12.2% of respondents reported to be unemployed, which is surprising considering the high unemployment rate across Liberia, and the perceptions of West Point being an impoverished area of Monrovia. In the presentation of survey findings to the volunteer team captains, there was some surprise at unemployment being ranked so low. There are several possible explanations for this result. Firstly, in some cases, it transpired that among those who reported to be laborers or petty traders, their work was not consistent with this category in practice. In other cases, it transpired that despite training in a certain profession, the individuals were not actually working.

In other cases, it is likely that although respondents reported being employed, their income is relatively low. As seen in section 8.6 below, only 18.4% of respondents report an income above 4,000 LD or 57 USD a month). On the positive side, this is in some way explained by the high number of students, who ordinarily responded that they did not make an income themselves, so it may be that the low levels of income/apparent high levels of employment contradiction is in some way explained by the number of people currently in higher education. One of the survey team captains commented that part of the reason behind West Point’s current popularity was its proximity to the university, allowing students without transportation money to walk to school.

Proportionally overall however, these two groups will be under-represented as those in the ‘special projects’ section will not fall

into either of these categories. It should also be noticed, that even for those who labeled themselves as laborers or petty traders, it sometimes transpired that their work was not consistent or that despite training as a laborer, for example, they were not actually working.

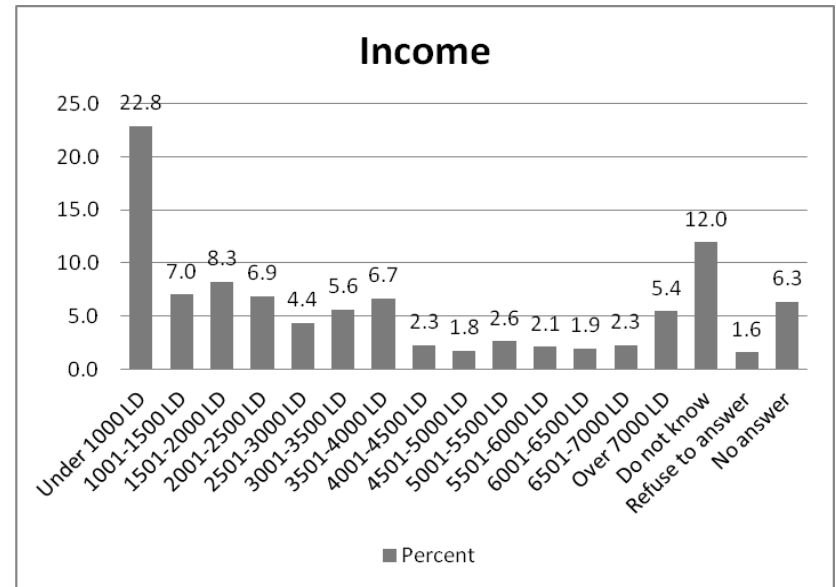


This explains how a township which is suffering from high levels of poverty appears to have relatively high rates of employment. In the presentation of findings to the volunteer team captains, there was

some surprise at unemployment being ranked so low, and indeed it seems unlikely that in a poor area so few would be unemployed. On the positive side, this is in some way explained by the high number of students, who ordinarily responded that they did not make an income themselves, so it may be that the low levels of income/apparent high levels of employment contradiction is in some way explained by the number of people currently in higher education.

8.6. *Income* –The income reported among households in West Point was low. However, it is possible that some respondents reported individual income, rather than household income. For example, there were instances where a partner or parent was reported to bring money into the home, but income was still reported in the lowest category (below 1,000 LD or approximately 14 USD. 1 USD=70 LD) Individual or personal income may be a better category to use in future questionnaires, with further information being gathered on perceptions of economic and employment security. Aside from the 19.9% who did not state or know their income, those claiming a household income of more than 4000LD (approximately \$57 USD) per month only account for 18.55% of respondents. In contrast 61.7% of respondents reported an income under 4,000 LD with almost a quarter (22.8%) of all respondents reporting an income under 1,000 LD (14USD) per month. Assuming that the income reported supports more than one person, well over half of West Point residents are living below the benchmark extreme poverty.

For future studies it will be important to include clarification of how many dependents live on the income reported. However, the next section provides an insight into residents’ perceptions of their economic situation.



8.7. *Employment and Economic Situation* – Given the low level of income reported by West Point inhabitants, it is perhaps surprising that only slightly more than half (54%) of respondents referred to their economic situation as ‘bad.’ Several respondents stated that although their own situation was good or bad, they could see a difference in their communities. Among those who saw their economic or employment situation as being ‘good,’ they frequently referred to the lack of opportunities for the wider community. For example, one respondent stated: *“employment situation is fine but other people are finding it hard to service. No job in the township.”*

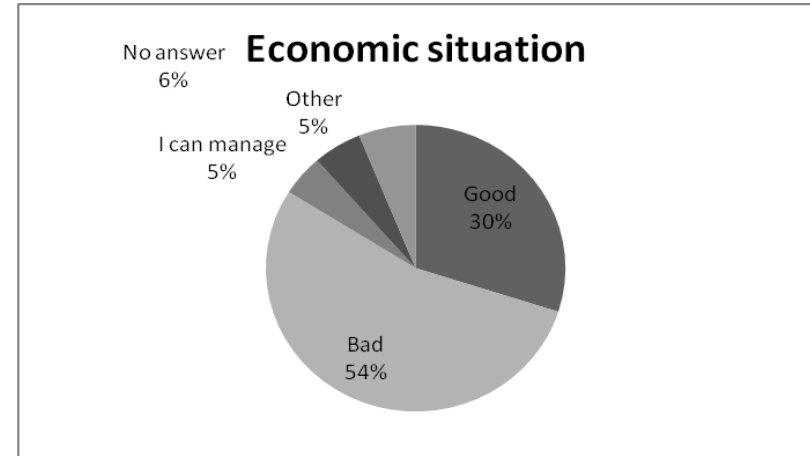
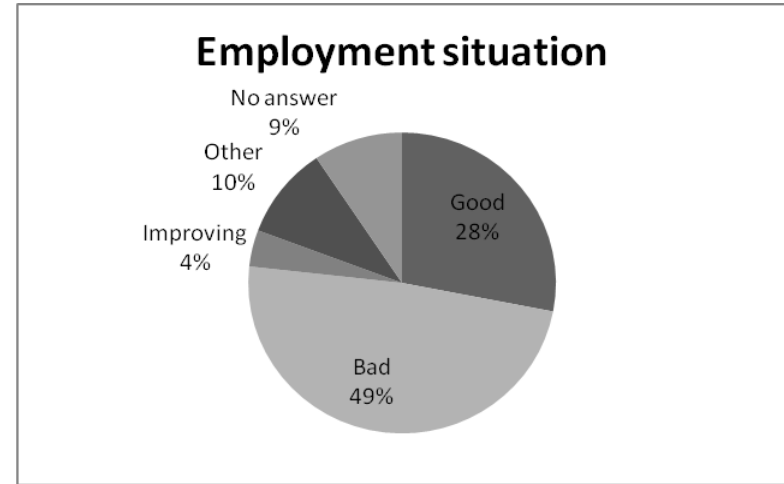
However, although a few respondents reported that they did not have a job themselves, they found the overall economic environment to be encouraging. In addition, some respondents noted in the open questions that the situation seemed to be

improving. Respondents from district 403 generally reported more negative perceptions, with 73% reporting their employment situation to be poor, and 67% reporting the same of their economic situation.

“Not fine. We went to school for better job, better shelter but we see nothing of that kind.”

The lack of employment opportunities were directly linked to criminal activity during the focus groups discussions. The elders’ council made pleas for both schools and vocational training centers to address the problem. The point was raised by the elders’ council that there were few legal livelihood options for residents in the absence of employment opportunities. Furthermore, when work is available, it is poorly paid and likely to be unskilled labor, such as loading trucks in the Freeport area. Given the absence of well-paid livelihood opportunities, criminal activity is often perceived to be a better paid and simpler option. The UN reportedly employed people in West Point to clean the area for \$1 per day, which was perceived by the focus group participants to be insufficient pay to offset criminal activity. One group leader stated: *“Some people are actually responding by going to work, but others are still saying ‘One dollar per day? I mean, I can go out there, steal from somebody and make more than a dollar per day.’* The Ministry of Labor was also criticized as not acting in the community’s interests.

However, positive examples of employment generation initiatives were also given. The Maritime Commission was mentioned to have developed positive projects and one participant stated that a women’s sewing cooperative had produced positive results.



9. Security and safety

9.1. *Most serious concerns* – This question allowed respondents to report on their three most serious concerns (in priority order) in West Point, with answers ranging from security concerns to provision of social services. Lack of electricity, education, health care and clean water came in as strong concerns. Access to family planning was a lower priority. Violent crime as a primary concern was selected by 14% of respondents, but was selected by very few respondents as a second or third priority. Violent crime was a significant factor in New West Point in particular, with 32% of respondents listing it as a primary concern. Overall this suggests that social services are the priority area for concentration in most areas, with few people overall even considering violent crime as one of their top three concerns. However, in New West Point, crime is considered to be so serious that it is ranked as a priority issue. Once again, this bears out the evidence that geographic location in the township significantly affects security level.

Lack of access to education was the most common first response. It was frequently mentioned that there is no high school in the area and that the government schools are not free.

“Our community is lacking adequate education because the government school that is in our community is not free. Parents are still paying money to send their children there while others do not have (money).”

Concerns were also raised in questionnaire responses about the standard of teaching with the argument sometimes made that qualified teachers were not paid enough to make them stay. This was supported in the findings of the focus group, where elders

appealed for high schools in the area to enable residents of the township to gain further education. This was related to the desire to position West Pointers at a higher socio-economic standing, including representation in government. Young girls were cited as being particularly vulnerable to leaving school early, which was reportedly related to young pregnancies and the perceived erosion of social values which saw young children pursuing livelihoods rather than education. Participants of the group discussions claimed that some girls were engaging in prostitution in order to pay their school fees. One participant said he knew of girls who were going to Broad Street at night to engage in the sex trade so that they could pay for their education. Education is meant to be freely provided in Liberia, but the reality is that fees are still expected. Focus group participants reported the following:

“I am working for only \$100 US per month. Can you imagine? I have to eat, I have to tend to my wife, I have to tend to my children... You don't go to private school because you can't afford, and you want your children to learn at all cost! So you have to end up sending your children to government school. And government school now are full of problem. There are no government school in fact in Liberia, because every day we pay money for our children. Every subject, time for test, you pay \$25 for each subject. For each student. Can you imagine that? When you don't pay \$25 for each subject they are putting your child out. Then they are coming to say there is free education in Liberia, it's false. There is no free education... I register my son at the school in West Point, \$950, before my daughter can enroll in government school. They have their own uniform. You pay for the uniform \$750, they don't allow you to buy your own uniform... That's the biggest problem we facing in this country.”

Sanitation and clean water were frequently mentioned during the open question sections, and a high awareness of the causal linkages between these issues was demonstrated.

“None of the houses here have latrines, even bathroom, so some people build a little bathroom beside the house which flows out the bathing water to another house and people step in it. People also get sick from it. They get infection from the bathwater. They go to the private bathrooms or latrines built over the river and we pay 10LD to bathe and 5LD to use the latrine. Others also use the beach, which makes many of us to suffer from running stomach”

There was a proportionately higher level of concern among residents of Kru Beach and district 405, which are located in close proximity to the ocean and river, thus increasing the districts’ vulnerability to problems associated with inadequate sanitation and access to clean water. Many respondents highlighted the lack of water pumps in West Point. Residents must buy water being carried in from other parts of town. Prices per gallon reportedly varied between 40 and 70 LD, depending on the seasonal availability. Strong concerns were raised about the quality of the water supply. Wheel barrow boys who deliver and sell the water for trade were accused by several respondents of mixing the clean water with well water, thus leading to various diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and malaria. These findings were strongly supported in focus group discussions.

“We are really suffering from drinking water. The water is taken from a distance and brought here. We pay 40LD for gallon. The water is also not safe. Sometimes they mix it with the well water. Once you drink it you can tell. And we also have problems here with the well water, when you take a bath from it you will start to experience skin diseases and your body will sometime itch a lot.”

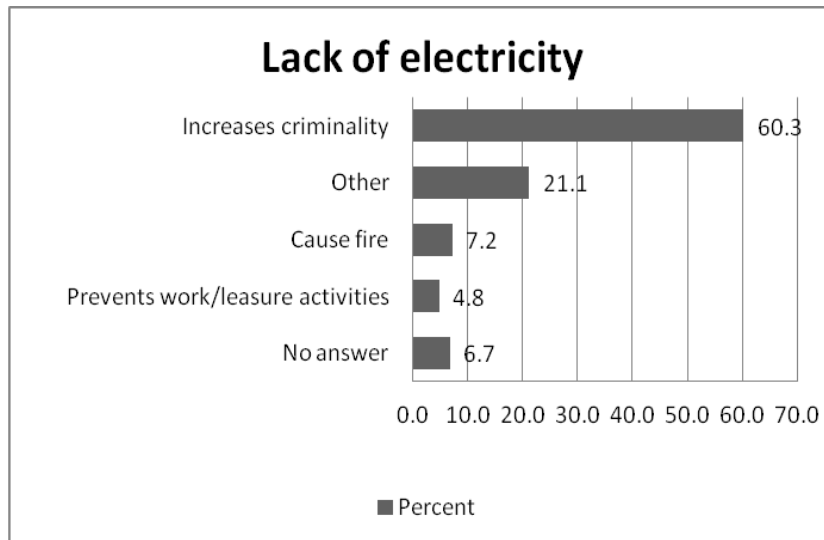
Residents demonstrated a high level of knowledge on water born diseases and means of transmission. For example, several residents mentioned the transmission of diseases by insects the water pollution caused by public defecation near well sites. It was frequently pointed out that there were no alternatives. Public bathrooms are available but for a fee of 5 LD to use the latrine and 10 LD to take a bath, which is beyond the budget of most residents.

“Because West Point is too big and we don't have a hospital here. The people that are living here are too much. Sometimes when we get sick they are taken from here to a bigger hospital sometimes before they reach the hospital the person dies because we don't have better hospital here. Another thing is that our young girls do not have any information about the family planning so we need a health educator here.”

The lack of health care services was cited as a major concern by many survey respondents and in all of the focus group discussions. There is a clinic located in West Point but it is described as poorly equipped with insufficient staffing and drug supplies.

Residents reported a requirement to take people suffering from severe sicknesses to better resourced clinics outside West Point due to the basic treatment facilities at the West Point clinic. A family planning center is a strong priority need for the area. The desire for this center was frequently raised with a concern for girls who are discontinuing their education due to pregnancy, and further, their inability to take care of their children. The Township Commissioner also raised this as a concern, positing that overcrowding contributed to the issue. He also explained that ‘mothers and fathers’ sometimes

send their children out on to the streets late in the evening, exposing them to adult behavior at a young age, which he believed contributed to underage sex and young pregnancy.



The lack of electricity featuring so prominently in the data was unanticipated. Further analysis of the open questions revealed a connection between increased criminality and lack of light. Darkness was considered to be a major factor in increasing the incidence of night time robbery and violent crime. Electricity is largely not available in West Point except through the hire of private generators.² While there is a certain amount of street lighting on the main thoroughfares of the township, the lighting does not reach between the houses and is lacking on secondary roads and routes. Consequently, residents reported that as a result of this, perpetrators are able to use the darkness for cover.

² Shop and business owners may use a generator and link other residents up to their supply for a fee.

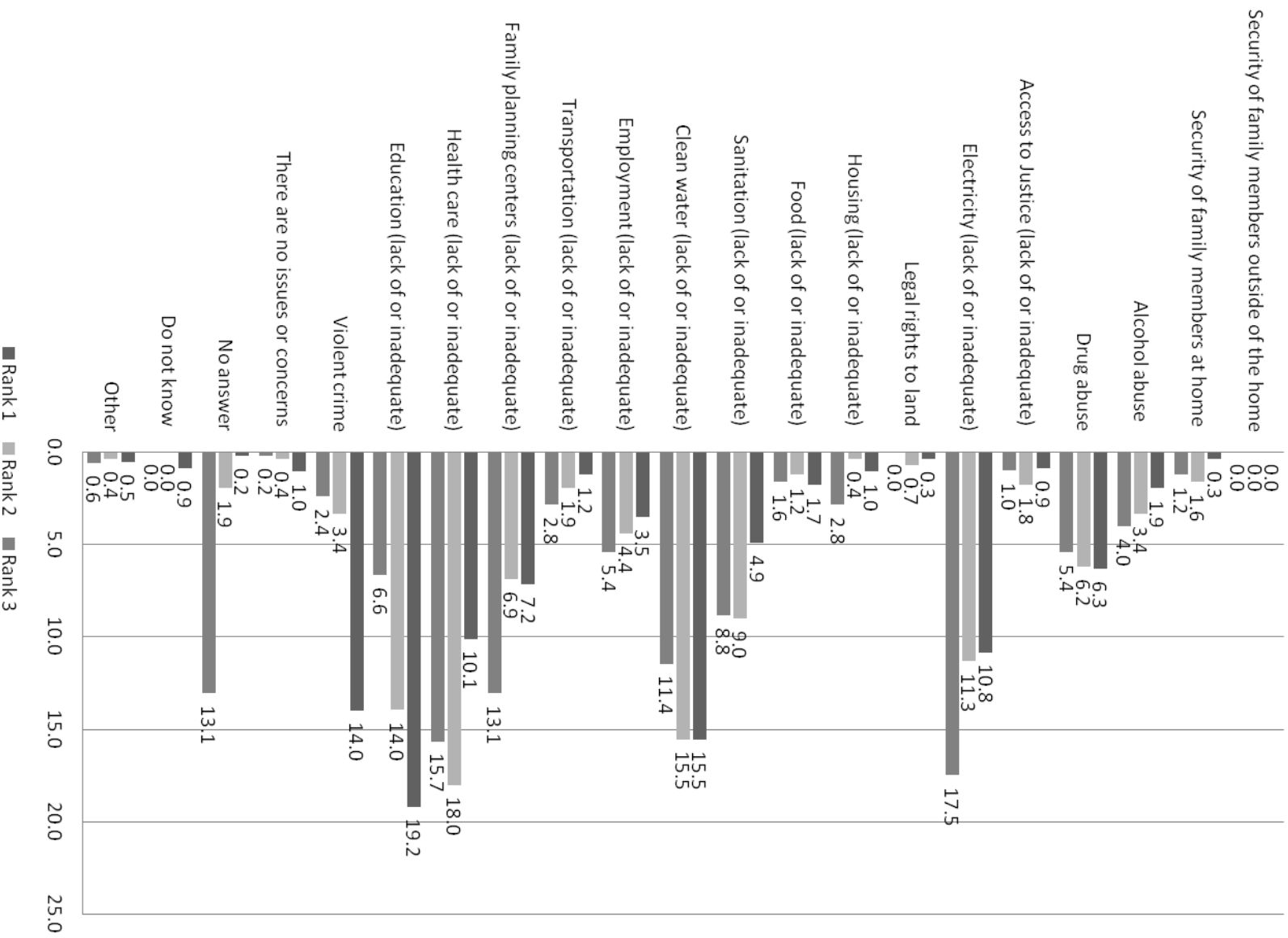
In addition to increased criminality, complaints were made by some respondents that the police do not patrol at night. This was in contradiction to some answers we received from some respondents that the police do patrol at night times, but on the roads, not between the houses. It is likely that and the lack of light in the areas off the main road (and the poor equipment provision) contribute greatly to the reluctance of police to patrol between houses.

Another result of the lack of electricity was that it results in people using candles for lighting, which in turn can result in fires. This was mentioned in 7.2% of the open answers, and appeared as a much larger trend in later sections.

“The lack of electricity is a very big problem as in itself is a serious reason why crime rates increase by the day because when there is light everywhere criminals will be afraid to invade people's homes.”

Fishermen and motorcycle (pen-pen) drivers, reported abuse of alcohol and drugs to be the primary issue of concern. Overall, respondents were concerned with young people engaging in drinking alcohol and taking drugs in particular. This is expanded on further in section 12, covering the special projects.

Most serious concerns

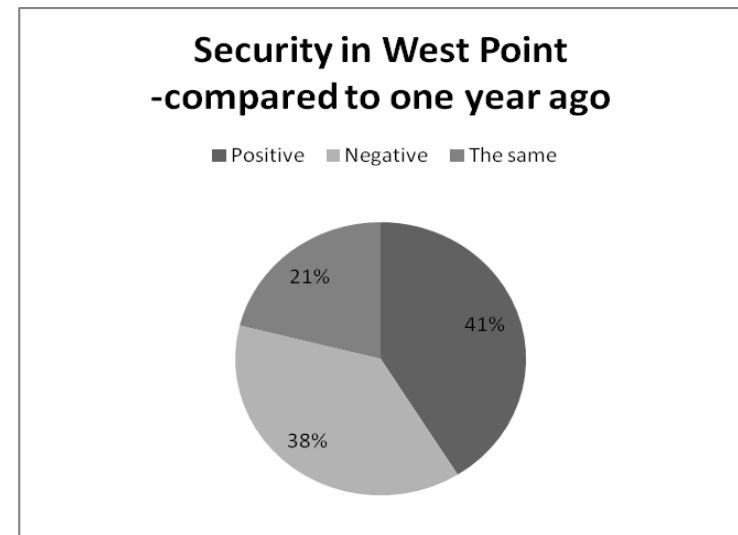
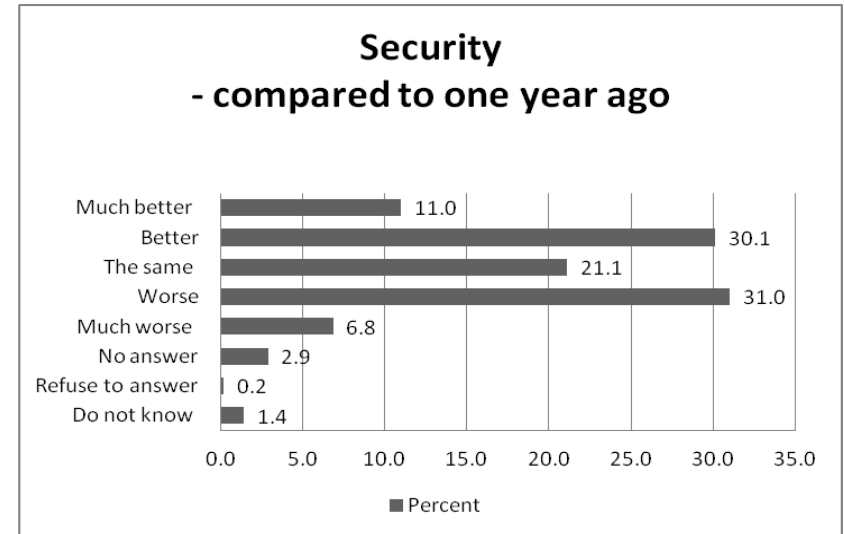


9.2. *What do you consider the safety level of your neighborhood to be?* Most respondents (64%) considered their neighborhood to be unsafe, with 23% claiming it was safe and 13% responding neutrally.

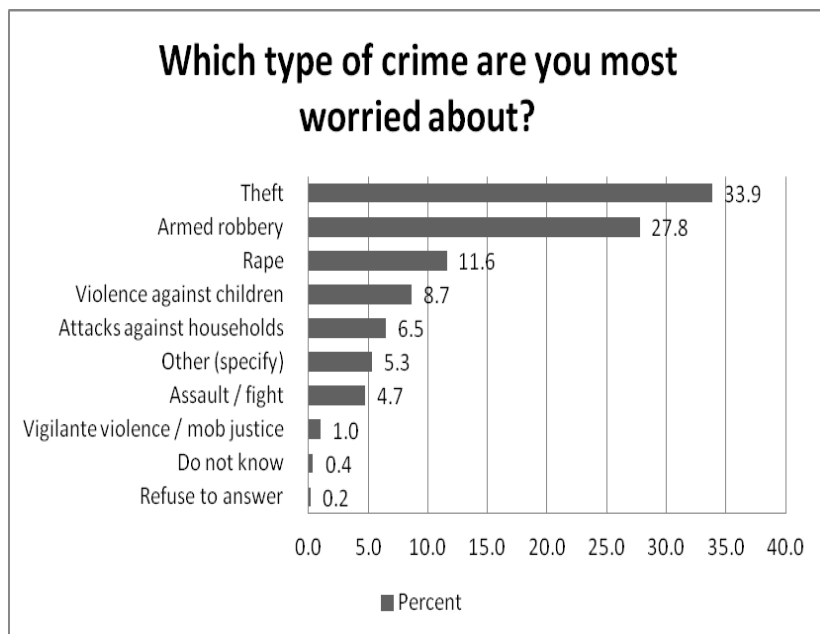
9.3. *Percentage of people who worry they will become a victim of crime or violence* – The response to this question was overwhelmingly negative. 87% of respondents stated that they worry about becoming a victim of crime. District 406 and Kru Beach were in contrast with this trend, with around three quarters of respondents in both areas reporting high levels of confidence in their security. It should be noted that this question may be somewhat misleading, with the question presenting a psychological bias, leading respondents to favor reporting a concern about their security situation. It should be noted however, that in the most secure cities in the world people still take measures to secure their houses and avoid walking down dark streets at night through worry they will become a victim of crime. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that while 87% of West Point residents reported a concern for becoming a victim of crime, only 61% of residents across Monrovia reported a concern in response to the same question (from Monrovia Baseline Assessment of Armed Violence conducted in 2010).

9.4. *Security compared to a year ago* – Around 60% of respondents answered that the security situation compared to a year ago was either ‘better’ or ‘worse’(rather than the extremes of ‘much better/worse’) in roughly equal proportions. The ‘same’ level of security was reported by 21.1% of respondents, suggesting that for the majority of residents in the area, there has not been an extreme swing in the security situation. The answers are almost exactly

balanced on either side, with a slight lean towards a positive improvement to the level of security.



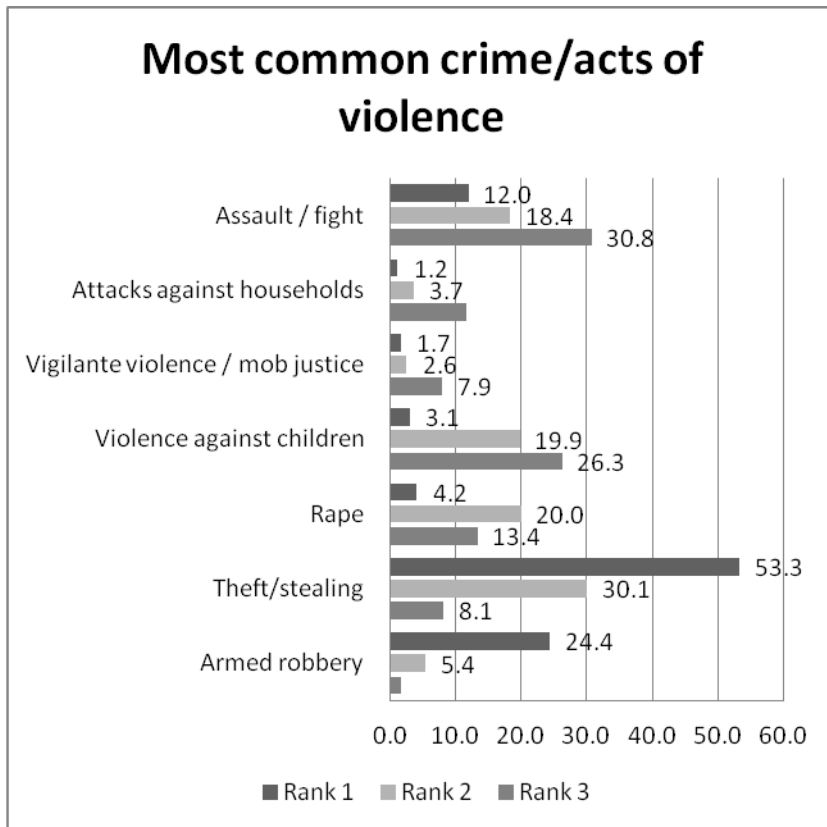
The geographical difference in perceptions of security was striking. Residents of districts 401, 402 and New West Point generally reported a declining security situation. Residents of district 403 reported a mix of responses stating either ‘better’ or ‘worse’ levels of security (rather than the much better or, much worse, or the same). Residents of district 404 largely reported the situation to be remaining the same. District 405 on the other hand had a stronger inclination toward the security situation improving, and a majority (59%) of Kru Beach respondents reported their security to be better than the previous year. Interestingly, Kru Beach reported a strong negative perception of the economic situation, so in this area it can be concluded that there is not a perceived connection between a poor economic situation and insecurity.



9.5. *Which type of crime are you most worried about?* – Theft and armed robbery were the primary first priority answers to this question. It is likely that, to a certain extent, these are conceived as the same category of crime, suggesting that theft and robbery are a strong issue of concern, with 77.7% listing one of these as their primary concern regarding crime. If this question is repeated in future projects, rephrasing should be considered. Similarly, ‘assault against households’ accounted for 6.5% of answers, which may also overlap with armed robbery. In this report, ‘armed robbery’ refers to any robbery which is committed with a weapon, not necessarily a firearm. A single event could easily fit into multiple categories, making it difficult for respondents and analysts determining a relevant distinction.

Once again, trends emerged when the data is disaggregated by district as follows:

- Area 401 – Attacks against households was the primary concern
- Area 402 – Armed robbery came in at 50.6% and theft at 23.4%. Whilst there is likely to be overlap, in these categories, this might suggest a higher incidence of weapon use (and violence) in crimes involving theft.
- Area 403 – Rape was the primary concern for a third of respondents in this area. Only 11.6% reported rape to be a concern overall among the rest of survey respondents,
- Area 405 – Rape was a primary concern for over 30% of residents (in comparison to 11.6%) overall among all West Point residents. New West Point – Violence against children was a major concern in this area, at approximately 20% of responses.



These largely corresponded to the types of crime people were most worried about, the contrast being that assaults and fights came in higher as the second or third choice for most common instances. The trends continued in terms of the geographic trends, for example Area 403 having a higher number of respondents (33.8%) who considered rape to be one of the most common crimes in the area.

We can conclude that the most problematic crimes perpetrated in the area are considered to be those involving theft from households.

Theft and armed robbery were the primary concerns and the most common forms of crimes. This was result was supported during focus group discussions.

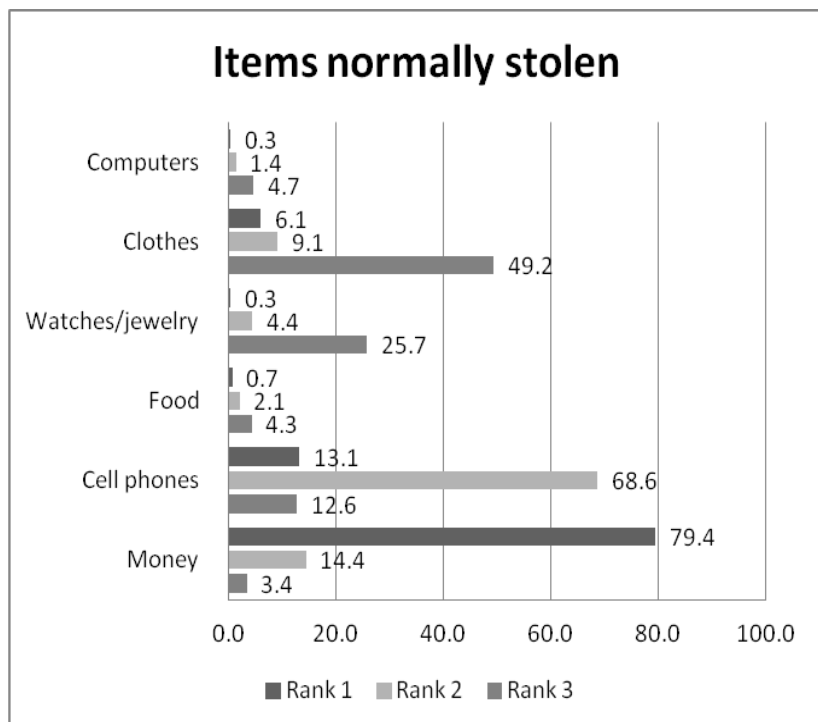
“You don’t carry phone in your hand in West Point, you know? You don’t hang your clothes out and go away from your clothes... you don’t count money on your porch.... When they know you are counting money they will come to your house.”

Alarmingly, violence such as assault, rape and violence against children also make significant appearances in the data. Although during one of the group discussions, rape was said to be declining. Also during these discussions, the way that women were dressing was blamed for an instance of rape, the thinking being that the dress code was designed to elicit sexual desire from men. Several participants expressed the wish that women and girl children were made to dress more conservatively.

Violence against children was interpreted differently by of the participants of the group discussion, as being neglect of children which was seen to be rife by most group participants. In general, a lack of family values was perceived as the root of many of the problems, people not looking after their children during the days, only asking their whereabouts late at night. Criminal activity within the family is seen as largely tolerated, and the prevalent view during discussions was that parents had lost control of their children.

These are perhaps predictable trends, with economic motivation likely to be the driving force behind many crimes committed in the area. This opinion is later supported by many of the open answers regarding why crime is perpetrated in the area where a high proportion of respondents pointed to a lack of alternative options for

survival leading people to perpetrate crime, solely in order to live. Violent crimes such as rape or assault were more commonly related to drug or alcohol abuse in the responses (see below for expanded account).



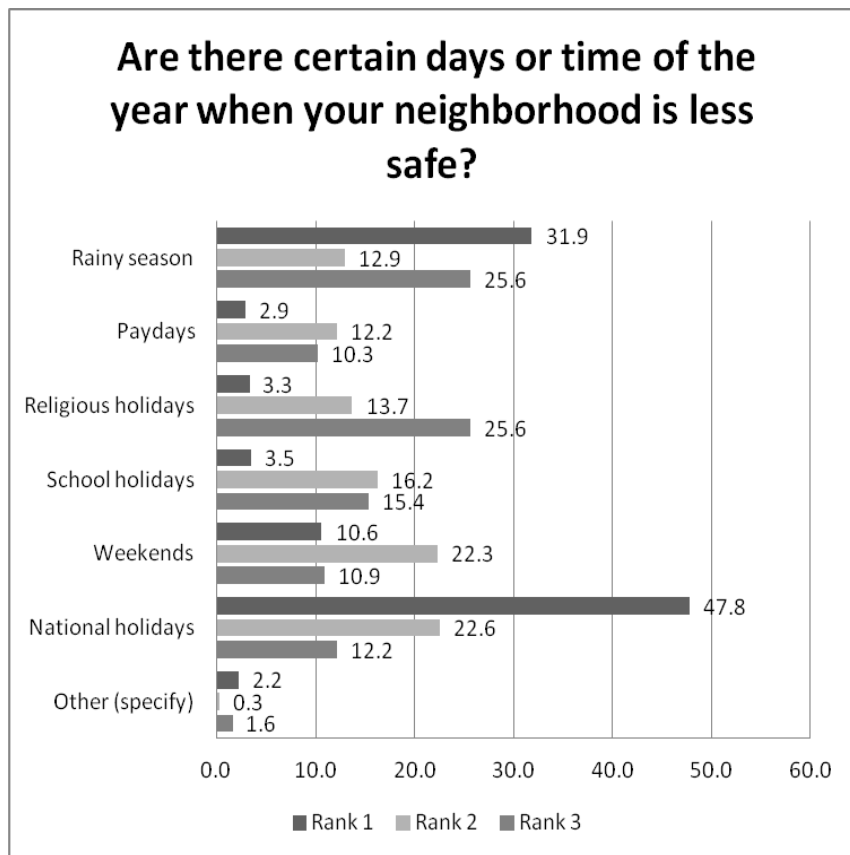
9.6. *Items normally stolen* Following on from the trend in our data that the theft of property (whether armed or not) is the primary concern and common crime in West Point, frequently attributed to lack of alternative means of generating income, the fact that money was considered to be the main item stolen (79.4% of respondents ranking it number one as most often stolen) is expected, as is the fact that cell-phones and clothes come in second and third respectively. In contrast, the theft of food was listed lowest of the named

categories. The conclusion drawn from this is that whilst poverty and very low income is a major issue facing West Point, it is not at the level where starvation is a problem. This is borne out in other responses where the provision of social services and employment were major concerns in contrast to immediate survival needs.

9.7. *Do you worry more about males or females in your household becoming the victims of violence?* Approximately three times the number of respondents were concerned more about women than men being the victims of crime or violence (28%), but around two thirds (62%) said that they worried about both sexes equally. In district 403, where rape was listed far higher than the average (30%), a corresponding rise in concern was found for females being victims of crime, with almost half the respondents saying they felt more concern for the women and girls in the household. In terms of data bias, it should once again be recognized that Liberia has received a great amount of international intervention in the area of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and gender equality. Due to the high levels of SGBV during the civil war and the rise of international awareness in this area, efforts in addressing these issues have formed a high part of many organizations programs' in preceding years and may account for a positive bias towards consideration of females as victims of crime and violence. For future studies, it may also be worthwhile asking about children as a separate category, especially considering the prevalence of violence against children as a primary concern in a couple of the district areas (listed above).

9.8. *How do times of year affect security in the neighborhood?* It was anticipated that rainy season and certain public holidays might be times of extra tension in the area, and this hypothesis was supported in the results. 87% of respondents answered that certain

days or times of year did affect the security, national holidays (47.8%) and rainy season (31.9%) coming in as the highest primary factors for this.



In later meetings with the volunteers, they were asked for explanations for these trends. The responses we were given were surprisingly simple, in that during rainy season people go to bed earlier and sleep more soundly, making it easier for thieves to rob them. This is especially likely due to the noise the rain makes on the

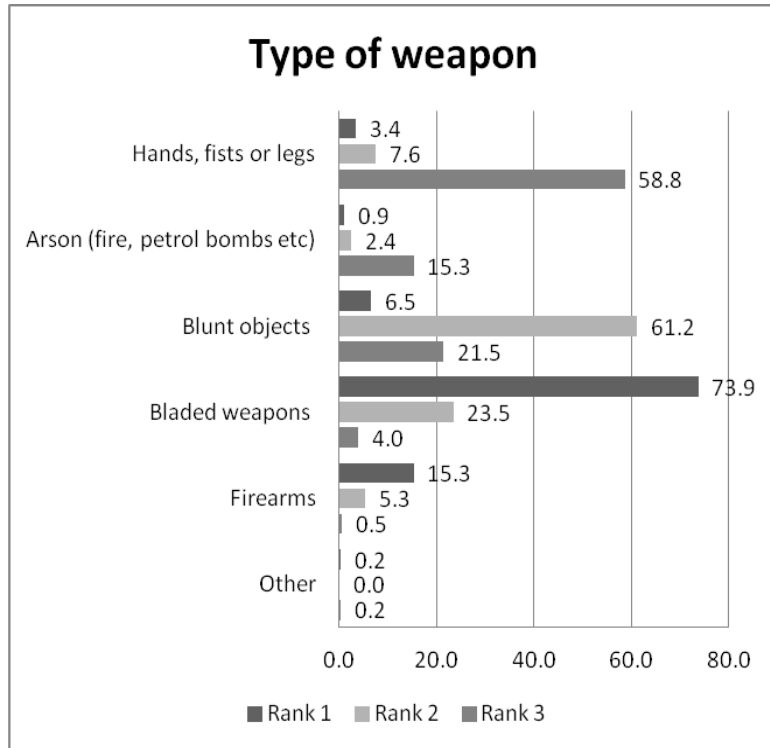
zinc roofs, disguising criminal activity. Similar reasons were given for national holidays, with people drinking and then going into a deep sleep, or being out later at night leaving their possessions vulnerable to theft.

Due to the overcrowding in the area and the effect of sea erosion on the population, high rainfall would affect households. In the open questions, respondents frequently mentioned that the encroachment of the sea on their territory could lead to displacement, which in turn leads to associated increase in crowding and poverty. National holidays are often the occasions for widespread celebration, leading to increase in alcohol intake and can result in accidents or violence. It should be noted that there is no data to support this, merely the anecdotal experience of researchers. However, it seems likely given the correlation or concerns about drug and alcohol abuse reported directly as part of the data in later sections that heightened states of excitement combined with substance abuse in an over-populated area experiencing extreme poverty would increase tensions in the township. Paydays, weekends and school holidays also featured highly in the responses.

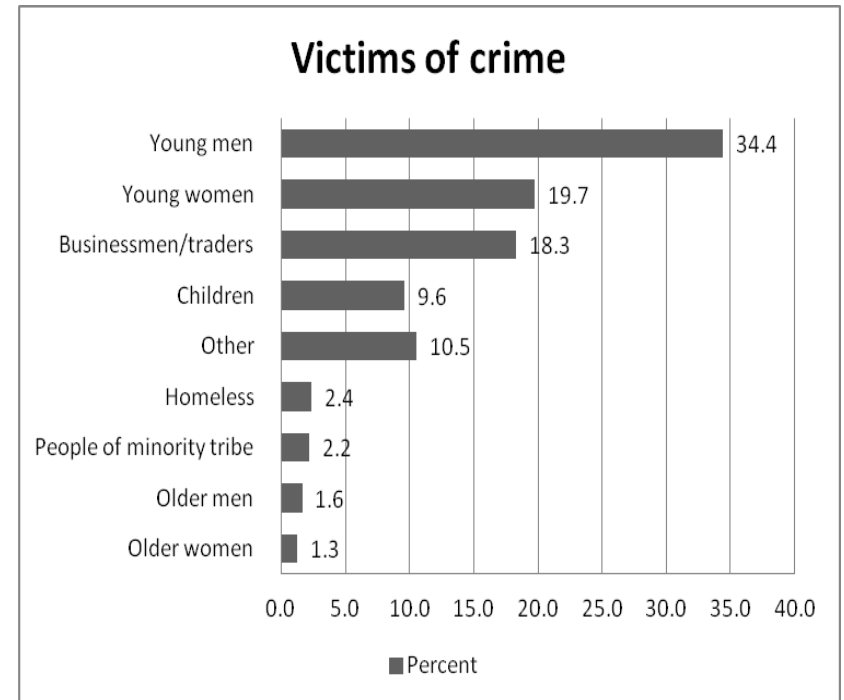
9.9. Type of Weapon - The overwhelming trend for this was bladed weapons ranking first, blunt objects second and hands, fists or legs third. These ranks stayed fairly constant in all geographical districts and are also in line with armed violence surveys recently conducted in Monrovia³. However, in Area 406 and Kru Beach, the use of firearms was ranked much higher, being mentioned by a third of those in Area 406 and over half in Kru Beach. It would be worthwhile to look into potential ghettoized areas within these

³ Monrovia – An assessment of armed violence and insecurity in the Liberian capital. Action on Armed Violence 2010

districts to see if the perpetration of armed crime can be attributed to any particular group.

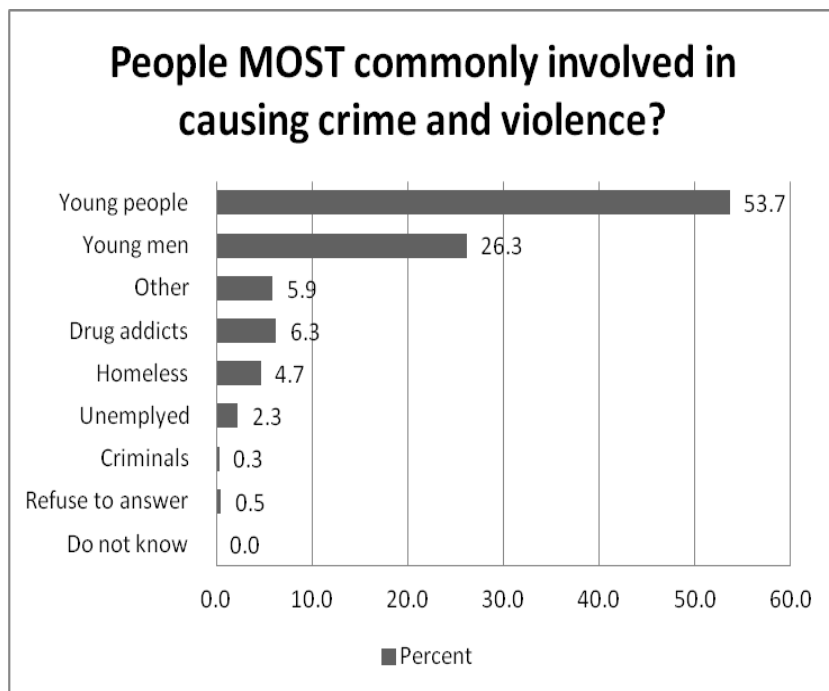


9.10. *Victims of crime* - Geographical differences in the data were once again very strong here. However, overall, young men and women were listed as the primary categories who were victims of crime. This is interesting, given that if we correlate it with the most common crimes, as it suggests that the young men and women are more likely to have money, cell-phones and clothes worth stealing. Geographical trends can be presented as follows:



- 401 – Much higher proportions of business men or traders, although they were not more represented in terms of occupation in that area nor were they a majority of businessmen or traders themselves.
- 402 – Children were mentioned by almost a quarter of respondents in contrast to only a tenth of respondents overall as being victims of crime.
- 403/404 and Kru Beach – Women were mentioned by 10% more of respondents – this corresponds in particular with 403 where rape was mentioned as a more common crime of concern.

9.11. *Perpetrators of crime* - The majority of respondents identified young people as the ones most commonly involved in crime and violence. A significant number stated 'boys and girls' or 'young men and women' indicating that women also engage in acts of crime and violence.



It is noteworthy that high levels of empathy and understanding were shown towards perpetrators of crime and violence. The trend identified in the above findings, that economic motivations for crime (mainly theft) are the most common, is borne out in the attitude towards people carrying out these crimes.

“Because there is no job to do and no one to help them. They want to help themselves but nothing to do and get money so they have to be engaged in crime and violence”

Most frequently, lack of alternative options to generate income were mentioned. These also appeared in the earlier questions regarding the employment situation, and particularly young people were seen as the victims of lack of social services and vocational opportunities. Whilst it was also argued in some cases that children had been ‘made used to money’ by parents, or wanted ‘fast money’ or to avoid working for income, largely people’s inability to find alternative work was attributed to their turn to crime.

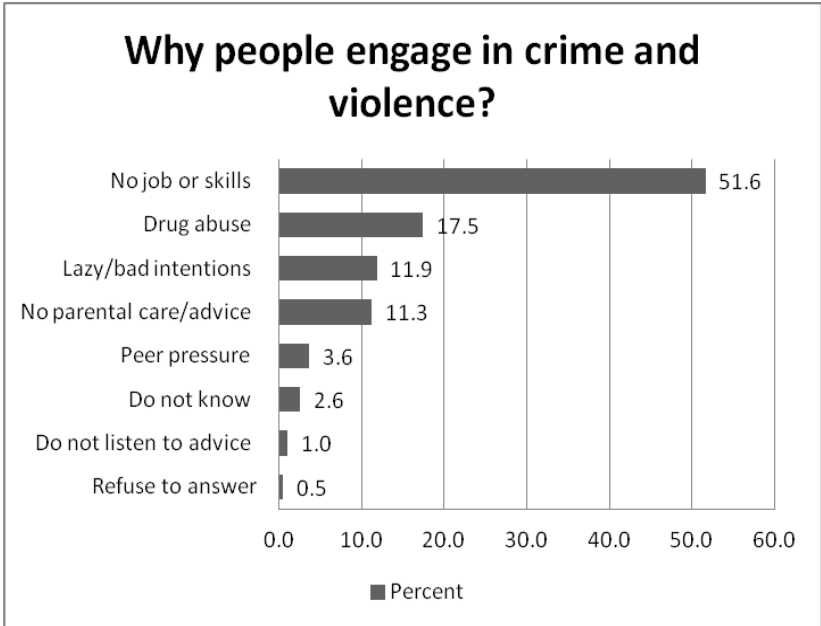
“These people are not doing anything so they use their time to smoke, drink and take in drugs. Young people are most commonly engaged and seen in these acts. I also say this from my own experience I has in the early 2003.”

Even in responses where anti-social behavior of young people was the primary crime mentioned, this was often related to lack of parental or social support, as well as being led astray by their peers. In general, a high level of social understanding of the issues which can lead to the perpetration of crime (both economic and social) in an impoverished and overcrowded area was displayed. It may be that as many respondents fell into the demographic of young people living below the poverty line, they have had similar experiences themselves and identify strongly with this.

The problems relating to the rehabilitation of young people involved in criminality are complex. One of the participants from the group discussions appealed for counselors to be brought in to the area to talk to young people and reintegrate them. However, there is also reluctance to engage with this group, due to stigmatization of them as ‘rogues’ or ‘bad people’.

Substance abuse and addiction were also linked to criminal activity, both in the questionnaires and during the focus group discussions, with the chairman of the elders’ council saying that the rampant narcotics trade is driving much of the illegality in West Point, as well as attracting criminals from other areas. Drug-based activities and trading are conducted in the open after dark, no attempt being made to hide it. Concern was also voiced that this resulted in it attracting children, hoping to get some share of the money. Frighteningly, it was also said that a local street snack was also sometimes laced with drugs with the intention of getting children to become addicted. During discussions, ex-combatants were linked to drug use.

‘This civil war we fought in Liberia, the children used to the guns, they play with money and many of them in the army... government never give them anything good.... And at the final analysis the government can see you and give you \$540 US and say ‘You go home. The war is over’. Many of our children died during the war, so these guys, they don’t have anything good from the Liberian people, they begin to go astray. They begin to go in the street to create problem. They take drugs. They don’t feel no pain. They don’t think, they don’t even know what they are doing. They are frustrated.’



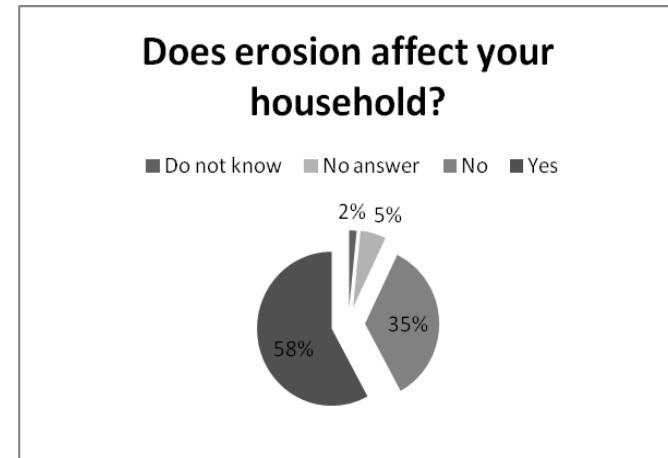
“Some of them are very lazy. Some of them have a good background or parents but they choose to live that life by choice and don't want to listen to anyone. While others do this because of their living condition that is hardship just to survive”

During the focus group discussions, it became clear that theft was a group activity, with criminal gangs who would share what they had stolen. It also seems that the spoils are shared out again at a familial and social level, which may also account for the understanding attitude of people towards the perpetration of crime. One participant described how if an individual had successfully stolen something in Waterside, you would see them running back into West Point and people running behind them to get their share. Family ties and social benefits being prioritized over the reporting of a crime were also mentioned in group discussions as a barrier to combating criminality in the area.

Geographical spotlight - Kru Beach and New West Point are areas of particular interest considering their history as part of the West Point area. New West Point is the most recent area of settlement, dealing with a significant influx of people as the area stabilizes. Prior to its establishment, Kru Beach was the youngest area. As with any place dealing with transitory populations and overcrowding, the newest areas can be the sites for the greatest unrest in terms of social cohesion and security. Therefore, we should look to these two areas to observe their trends in particular. Kru Beach reported favorably on issues concerning security such as violent crime and on how their security compared to a year ago. However, they also had negative responses to the economic situation. What this may tell us is that economic security becomes higher in the priorities once the more traditional ideas of safety and security are satisfied.

10. Environment

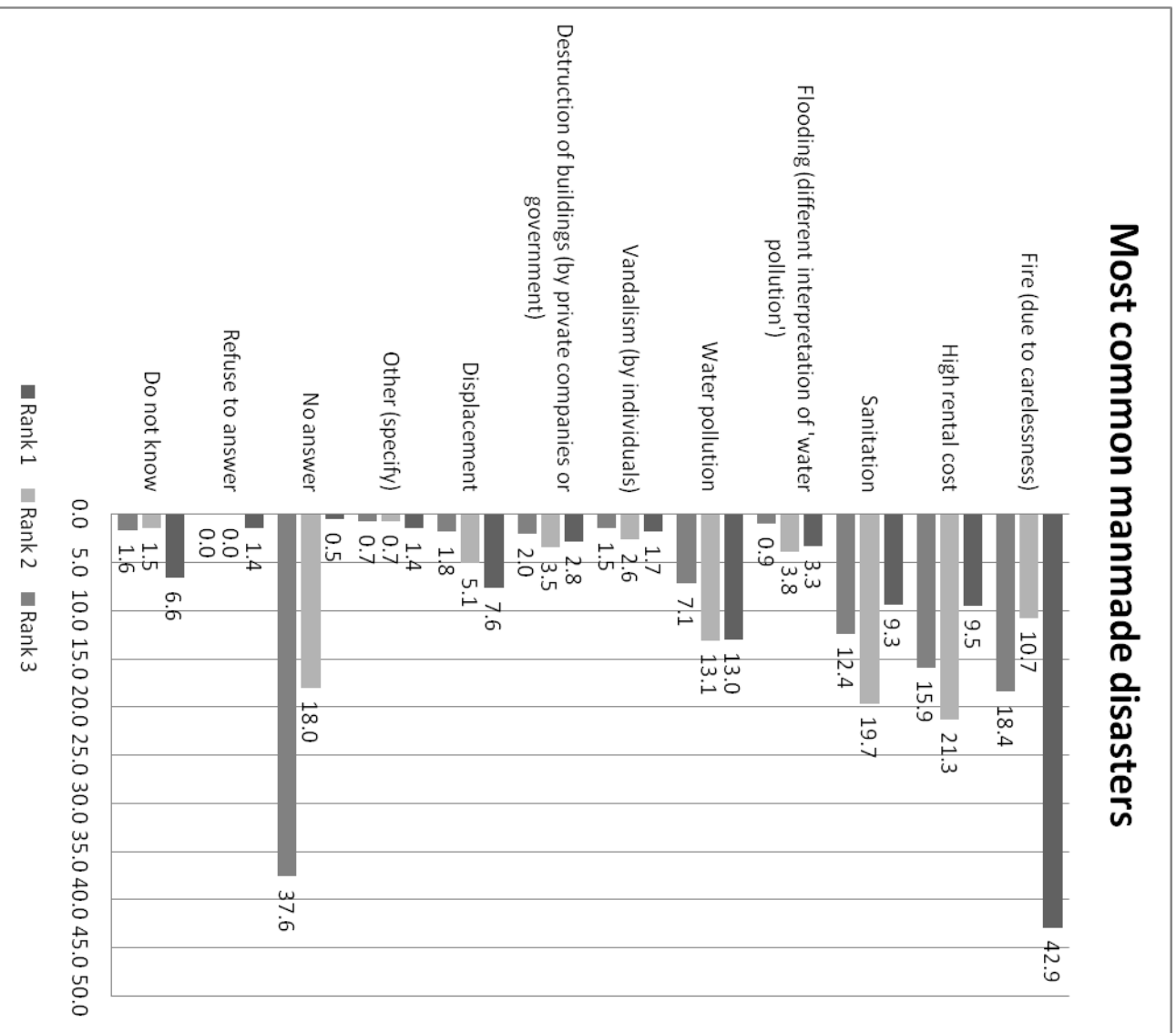
10.1 Erosion - 58% believe that erosion affects their household. Again there were some geographical differences here. Of the special project over 80% of the respondents in all four groups stated that erosion affects their household. The table below shows the percentage of people in each area who believe their household is affected by erosion (note that the number of questionnaires conducted in each area is uneven). There was no open question in relation to this but many respondents mentioned erosion in terms of sea erosion, heavy rainfall and sand mining under the category of water pollution in another open question.



New West Point is a new area of the township and is likely to be home to many of the most vulnerable groups. We can deduce this to be the area which is taking the population overspill pushing people literally into the sea. It is unlikely that if they had the financial option to move somewhere more environmentally secure that they would choose to expose themselves to such a geographic risk. The population of fishermen is also much lower in this area showing that the choice to live so close to the sea is not based on trade. As one respondent said of the influence of influx and migration: *"It brings us too much hardship and suffering. The interior there is no more place and still everyone wants to come here and live free life"*

Area	Percent 'yes'
401	73%
402	66%
403	59%
404	44%
405	65%
406	73%
Kru Beach	46%
New West Point	93%

Most common manmade disasters



10.2 Most common manmade disasters – Fire burning down houses was the most common manmade disaster in West Point. As stated in section 9 this is closely linked to the lack of electricity and the majority of respondents explained the scenario as people lighting candles at home and then either forgetting about it, leaving the house or falling asleep, leaving the candle to burn down.

“It is usually caused by candle due to the carelessness of our women and children. And many times children or babies die in the fire. Another thing that causes the burning of houses is frying and leaving the oil on the fire to get something or start to have misunderstanding with someone outside. They lose focus on the oil. And one house don't burn here alone, many also follows because the houses are together.”

Others mentioned carelessness with cooking fires and keeping gas at home. The fact that houses in West Point are very close together, making it easy for fires to spread, was also highlighted by several respondents. A few also mentioned that due to the narrow road it is difficult for fire trucks to reach the fire in time, if at all. Several respondents mentioned that this leads to devastating consequences.

“Affects me and the community because fire burn the house that caused me to become a childless man without house anymore all because of fire.”

Water pollution is also a serious issue which again is linked to lack of clean water and sanitation. However, several respondents had a different interpretation and in the open question that followed described it as heavy rainfall and sea erosion destroying the houses.

Although this is not strictly speaking a manmade disaster, some had linked it to sand mining causing the sea to encroach on the beaches and eventually the houses. In later discussions it was argued that even where wells were sunk the water would be dirty, once again dependent on the area. Some areas were suitable for sinking a well and getting clean water whereas in others it would be salty and/or dirty. Further discussion was also held regarding the difference between the quality of drinking water in contrast to the water used for washing yourself or clothes.

High rental cost was also frequently featured. A zinc house was quoted to cost \$10-15 and a block house \$15-20. It appears that most respondents listing this issue do not own their own house or the land it sits on but instead rents from a landlord. Respondents often complained that the landlords kept increasing the rent but did not do any maintenance work on the house. Many people were forced to move when they could no longer afford the rent. Several called for the government to bring cement and other building materials prices down as well as put pressure on landlords.

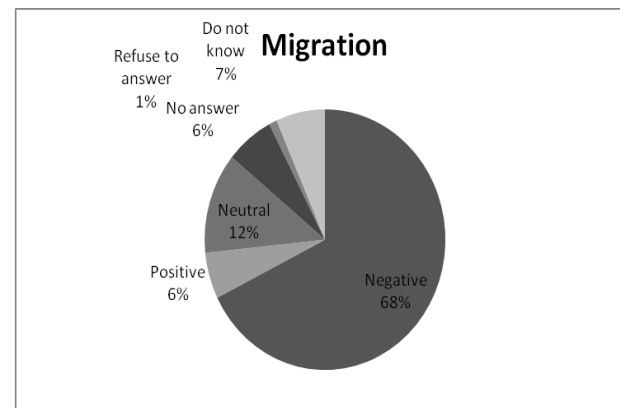
“It affects us when it comes to shelter and it makes the community populated and hard to find room. So when the landlords or landladies see these things happening they increase the rent, especially when 3 or 4 persons really want the room. This is what we are facing here.”

As expanded on in other sections, migration was named as the reason behind high prices and rent increase as well as overcrowding within accommodation, with several respondents stating 6-7 people in one room. One respondent even reported 10-20.

10.3 Migration and the influx of people – Despite a lack of social services, West Point is a popular place; as two respondents expressed it; “More people are coming in here due to the good business situation and the livelihood of this place. “While people don't want to even leave this place because they get money from the fishing here. So this is really increasing the population here. It is even making rent to increase and many to stay with friends and relatives who have rooms” and “..... Many people love to live here so whether the land lords increase the rent cost, they still pay”.

In conversations held after the survey with volunteers and also with the Township Commissioner, a contradictory point was made regarding the rental in West Point, also related to the cost of transportation. The Commissioner said that residents of Gardnersville and Paynesville are migrating to West Point due to its proximity to facilities in town, including the university. It was also frequently mentioned in discussions with the volunteers that West Point was the place where you could rely on being able to survive economically, maybe being able to rent a place for \$5 per month. The suggestion was that West Point was the area where you could economically survive, no matter how little you had. This seems in contradiction to the responses indicating unmanageable rental increases. However, two factors can account for this. Firstly, West Point rental fees should be considered relative to other areas around Monrovia; Mamba Point and Sinkor in particular being cited by the Commissioner. These areas are considered ‘diplomatic’ and rent holds a much higher price tag in these places. Secondly, the price an individual pays should be considered in the context of who is sharing the accommodation. For the rental costs being outlines earlier in the reports, prices quoted were most often for a room or building. For those in desperate situations, or without alternative options who are sharing several to a room, it is easily possible to pay \$5 or less as an individual.

However the vast majority of West Pointers view migration and the influx of people negatively (68%) while only 6% have a positive attitude, mainly



referring to new trades and skills coming into the community. The main answers given on how migration affects West Point were that it increases crime and brings in hunger and shortage of food, over-population which in turn bring rent costs up. A great deal of suspicion towards newcomers was also evident in the answers as people felt their behavior and habits were strange and were worried about who they were and what their intentions for coming were. There was also concern about the disintegration of the community with skills and ‘good people’ being lost and replaced with ‘bad people’. During focus group discussions it was also argued that much of the criminality being perpetrated in the area was in fact the work of outsiders with people coming into the township to engage in illegal activities during the night and then returning home to their own communities. It was acknowledged that West Point citizens were also involved, but it was argued that much of the criminality was being sustained by external influence. In one instance it was also linked with sanitation, with people from a foreign tribe being identified as dirty, wasting water in front of their houses.

“I feel very bad about migration and influx of people in our community because all of the ghettos in our community are owned by peopled who just came to the community and are spoiling our young people”

11. Security provision

11.1 46% of the people in West Point are unsatisfied with the provision of security. 35% are satisfied while the remaining 19% of respondents gave no answer or stated that security was ok but needs improvement or that it is uneven meaning that the police is unreliable and does not respond to all calls.

"I do not report to police because the police charge us registration fees and sometimes the police don't even follow you when you report to them. Criminals pay for their release and so there is no need to complain of report. Police don't arrest certain people in certain places at certain times especially after 11 pm."

It appears that the majority of people in West Point recognize the police as the institution responsible for security. However when interviewees were asked who they would seek help from the police is not always the first choice and only 55.2% rank the police as number one. It appears that people still call on their family and neighbors for help (36.7%). Many respondents reported that the police demand money before starting to investigate a crime. In a later conversation with the Township Commissioner, he related that the security provision in the area is lacking due to stresses on the judicial system, with people being unaware of their rights and the need to follow-up on cases.

He also maintained that the security sector relies on information coming in from the public, so whilst crimes are not reported, it limits the work they are able to do. The Deputy Commissioner and elders during the group discussions said that a large part of the problem concerning people not reporting crimes was their social involvement

with the perpetrators. Many people would turn a blind eye to criminal activities if they were committed by a friend or relative, or would actively seek the person out in order to get their share of the benefit. During the focus group discussion, the lack of parental responsibility taken for the criminal activities of young people was lamented, and the argument made that until parents reported their own children to the police the security situation could not be expected to improve.

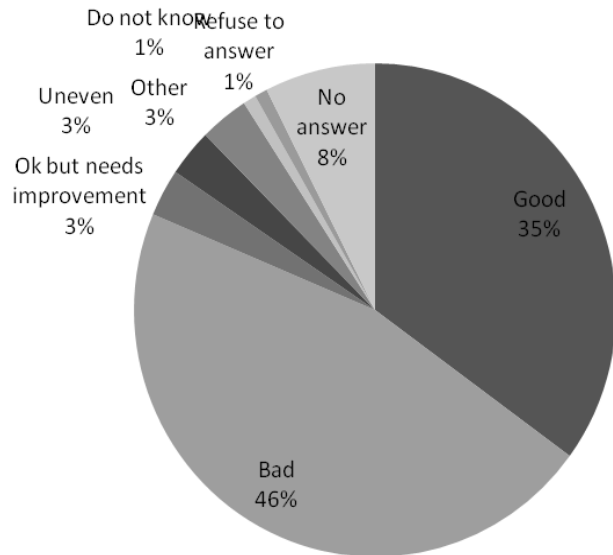
"At night it is most dangerous. When they call upon them they don't come to your call. They would say it is late. So you will have to come home and settle things yourself and call your neighbors."

One participant said that parents will be sitting on the street, witnessing their children jacking phones and will not take action. Paradoxically, the challenges being faced are frequently due to overcrowding in prisons over civil disputes, with under reporting of criminal cases with people choosing instead to 'compromise' or settle these out of court. There is also a lack of police visibility during the night as people report that the police do not respond to crimes at night or patrol at night and if they do so they stay on the roads with the streetlights and do not move between the houses.

"If something happened I would like to report to the police. I feel safe about the provision of security in my community. I say this because if something bad happens to me I called on them and they came right away."

People with a more positive outlook mentioned that the police were working hard or that they were trying their best. A few respondents also believed that the police force is ill equipped and does not have the material or resources to deal with crime.

How do you feel about the provision of security?



“The provision of security here is not fine because those who we consider our protectors are not doing their work. They are not really providing security for us. We are always unsafe at night because they cannot patrol around. If you encounter a crime or violent incident if you call on them they always telling you they don't have guns and other protective weapons.”

There were also some conflicting answers where some had listed the police as where to seek help but in an open question mentioned that they would not report crime to the police for various reasons stated above. Respondents also sometimes reported on a smaller scale that they feared reprisal of perpetrators if they reported them and then

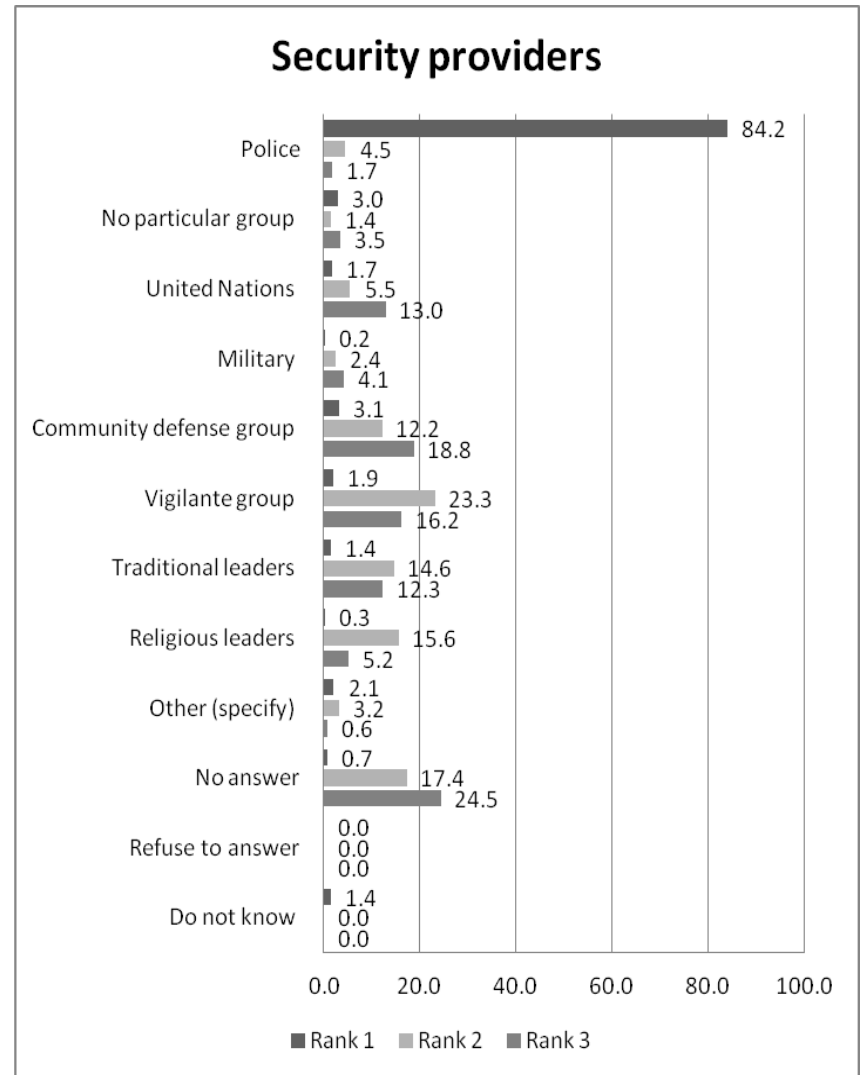
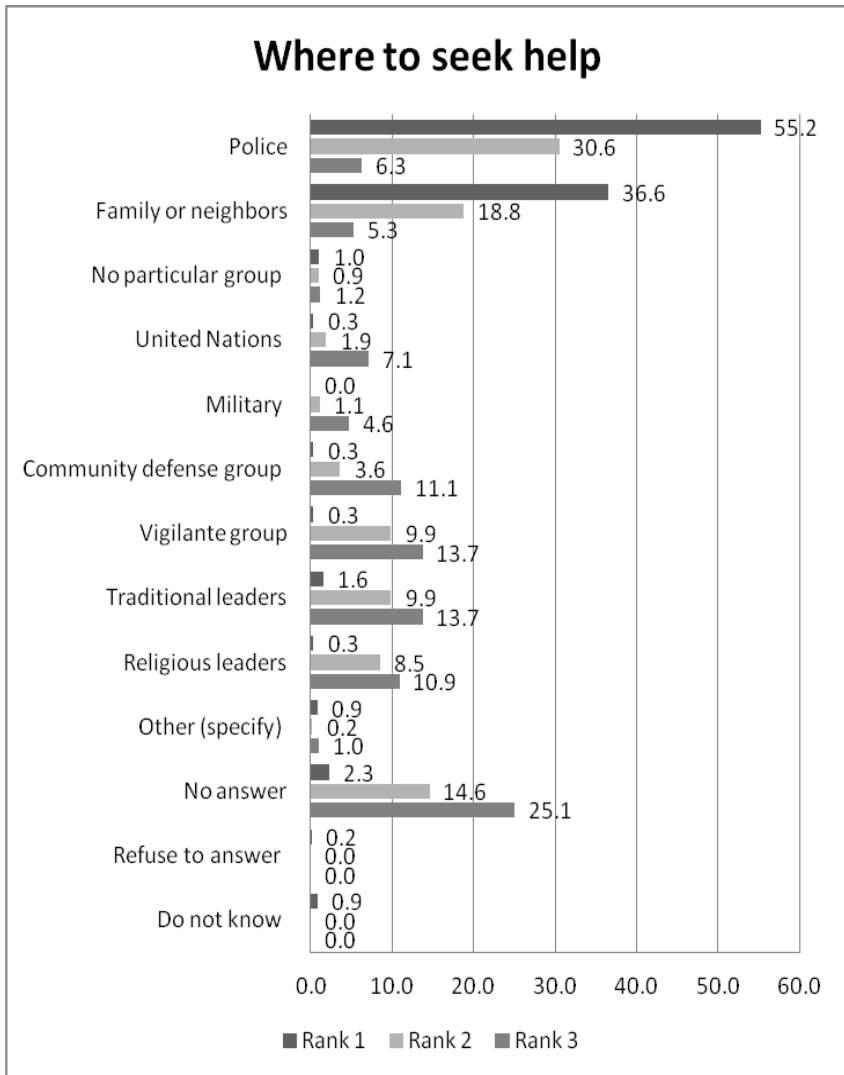
later were released. This was also given as the reason that people did not come to the aid of someone being stolen from.

‘...that's the ugly thing we find now in Liberia. When they are stealing from somebody, people that see them taking your thing, they will not talk. Because when they will talk they will gash them, they will do something to them.’

There were also some accusations of the police working together with the criminals. However, during the discussions with the Commissioner's office, it was argued that cases where criminals were freed were frequently because no follow-up was done by the complainant, resulting in lack of evidence. Due to little understanding of the system, people are not pursuing their own cases, believing afterwards that the legal system simply freed the person they had reported due to corruption or incompetence.

‘They say, ‘You who carried me to the police station! I will deal with you!’

Vigilante and community defense groups have also been formed within the township and attitudes towards these when mentioned were overwhelmingly positive. It seemed to be the opinion that these groups were plugging gaps in the formal security system. During the focus groups, one participant mentioned that he was himself patrolling the beaches at night, and had asked for assistance from the police, but that this had not been forthcoming. Neither would the community around the area give him assistance, even if he called out when he saw wrongdoing. He claims he is armed with a cutlass to discourage the thieves, but from an early warning perspective it would clearly be desirable to have any forceful intervention managed by the proper authorities and in accordance with the law.



“For security provision I think it is a little bit ok as compared to past governments. Even though they don't patrol at night they handle cases well. When it is night, we the residents provide security for ourselves here. But other neighborhoods have vigilante groups who patrol at night voluntarily.”

12. Special projects

As mentioned above, whilst little empirical information is available on West Point, it has a reputation as a hotspot in Monrovia. Incidents such as the aftermath of the November 7 riots during the run-off in the Liberia 2011 Elections provides further evidence for the potential for tensions to erupt in the area. In considering this, a decision was made to include groups who are traditionally considered vulnerable to manipulation into violent acts. Throughout Monrovia, youth (in particular motorcycle drivers) are considered as volatile and as being behind many of the violent acts in the region. Clearly, motorcycle drivers are dependent on being on the street in order to generate their income, meaning they would be unlikely to be represented by a survey which was household-based and conducted during daylight hours. This conclusion led to the identification of other special groups which might not be represented in a household survey, but who as stakeholders might either suffer from vulnerability to particular types of crime or who might have a particular perspective on the prevailing security situation. From these issues, special project groups were selected to try and include respondents who could have been marginalized in previous studies to ensure that their views were represented.

For each of the below groups only trends which were not prevalent in the overall data are discussed, highlighting where opinions and perceptions differ from the West Point average.

12.1. Child laborers

For the purposes of this study, the age of children is considered to be below 18 years old, and working on the streets selling goods. The special project on child laborers in West Point revealed that a majority of the children were girls (58%) and also a higher proportion were Muslim (25%). The majority of children responded that they were overall happy with their employment and economic situation; 75% and 71% respectively which is well above the West Point average. However several respondents also said they felt excluded from opportunities and expressed a lack of control of the money they were making and no appreciation for their contribution to the household.

"I feel bad because I am not in school. I am selling everyday while my friends are in school"

"I feel fine because from this market my mother can get good food for us and pay rental, school fees and do other things".

It should be noted that whilst child labor is prevalent in the area in the more formal sense outlined above (children selling on the street rather than being in school), during the focus group discussions it was also clear that many children who were not sent out by their families to work would still be 'chasing after money' rather than going to school. Examples were given such as children running to the beach in the morning to get \$5 to \$10 LD from the Fanti fisherman coming in with their catches. It was argued that parents were not able to control their children, as they were not able to provide for them, making even small money too great a temptation.

Despite this, the overall impression was enjoyment of economic autonomy even as a minor which contrasts with a general Western polemic against child labor. This is not to say that the child's right to education should be violated. However, the need for children to be contributing members of the household in an impoverished environment should be incorporated into social projects arising from this data. The majority of respondents stated that the income helped to pay for their school fees and occasionally for their siblings.

"I feel fine with my employment situation because I don't have to wait for someone to give me money before I do things from my market. I sell and it helps me do many things, like for example my brothers and sisters are in school and from this market I pay my house rental."

"I feel very bad because my mother is not appreciative. For every time I come from selling if I bring some of the market back she can get vexed with me. Those are the situations that I face with my mother."

It appeared that most children worked together with their parents at the market. They were also more satisfied with the security in West Point as 95% claimed that security was better compared to one year ago and 91% considered their neighborhood to be safe. However, they considered children to be the main victims of crime and stated that crimes were committed due to drug abuse or due to laziness or bad intentions. 95% responded that their household was affected by erosion and water pollution was also ranked as the most common manmade disaster. In terms of security providers 95% would seek help

from their parents or neighbors before going to the police. It is however natural for children to alert their parents first. 100% recognized the police as responsible for security in the area.

These findings largely contradict the opinion held by the Township Commissioner, who asserts that the children found laboring in the area have often been trafficked from rural areas and are not living with their biological parents, but rather have been transported to the area as 'bread-baskets' for the families they are staying with. One possible source of misunderstanding could be the use of language in the country in terms of family members. Frequently older women or men may be referred to as 'mother/auntie' or 'father/uncle' respectively, despite a non-existent or more distant biological linkage. However, our findings rather suggest that the child laborers were part of a family unit and their money was used partly for themselves and partly to assist with household bills and school fees. The Commissioner also argued that children being sent out to sell on the streets may be told not to come home until their 'market is finished', i.e. they have sold all their goods, resulting in their being out late and exposed to inappropriate activities. This opinion was supported in a later discussion with the EWER Working Group, who also asserted that children may be sent out late at night to gather water, putting them at risk of violent crime.

12.2. Fishermen

As stated earlier, within the fishermen community, there was an almost even gender split, but all women were named as fishmongers, and all fishermen were male. 100% of respondents were Christian and generally older than the West Point average. The Kpelle and Bassa tribe were also slightly more represented within this group. Judging from the answers on the question about income, the group earned on average around 3500-4500 LD per month which is much higher than

the typical West Point income. 14.3% also earned more than 7000 LD per month. 57% felt that their employment situation was good. Nevertheless exactly the same percentage (57%) still feels that their economic situation is bad.

Drug and alcohol abuse was the main concerns for this group with usual issues such as lack of health care, sanitation and education ranking much lower.

"I feel happy because drug smokers are arrested by the police everyday in my area and taken to jail"

The lack of family planning centers was also high on the list. *"No center in West Point. Many girls get pregnant and sometimes try to destroy it, in doing so it leads to their death. So girls are at risk"*. In addition to this, young women were identified as the main victims of crime (95%) and rape, together with armed robbery, also appeared as the crime people were most worried about. However, rape was not listed as one of the most common crime; instead violence against children was perceived to be more prevalent. The group identified young people as the main perpetrators of crime and violence and the reason for engaging in criminal acts was due to laziness or bad intentions (39.1%) and drug abuse (43.5%). Only 8.7% chose the option 'no job or skills' which is the answer given by the vast majority of the other respondents. Further studies might want to look at the concern about rape in comparison to its occurrence.

81% believe that erosion affect their household and lack of sanitation and water pollution were the main manmade disasters in the community. In addition, sand mining on the beaches was a common rank three answer (57%).

The fishermen community recognized the police as responsible for security in the area but only 10% would seek help or report crime to the police. 90% would seek help from friends or neighbors, revealing a strong distrust in the police force. Even so 100% felt good about the provision of security and 100% of respondents believed security to be better that one year ago. 29% considered the neighborhood to be safe and the remaining 71% that it was neither safe nor unsafe.

The fact that 100% feel happy about security but at the same time seem to have little faith in the police causes some confusion which may need further investigation. It is possible that when speaking to security they are referring to groups other than the police as many of the open questions state *"they help reduce crime.."* and *"I see them walking around the area"*.

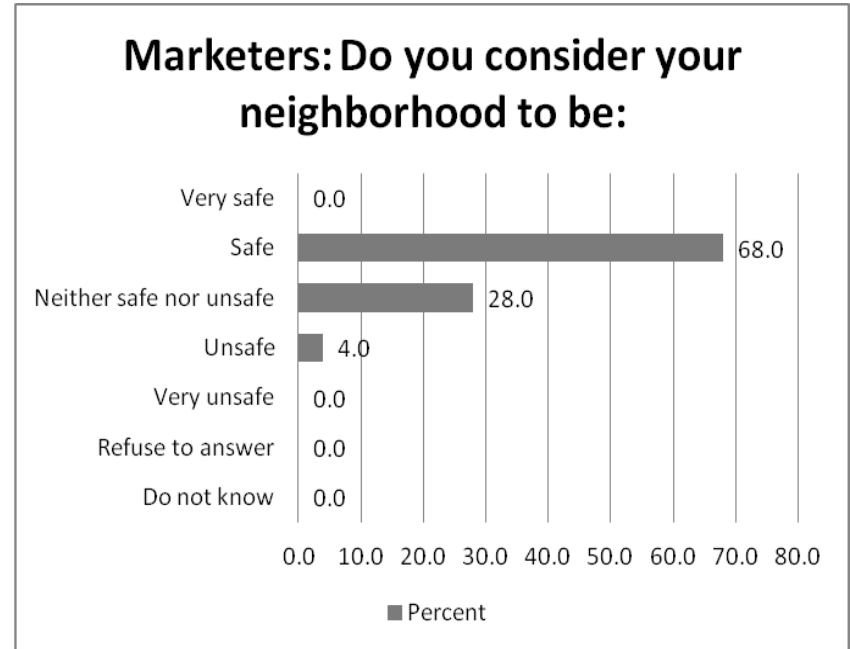
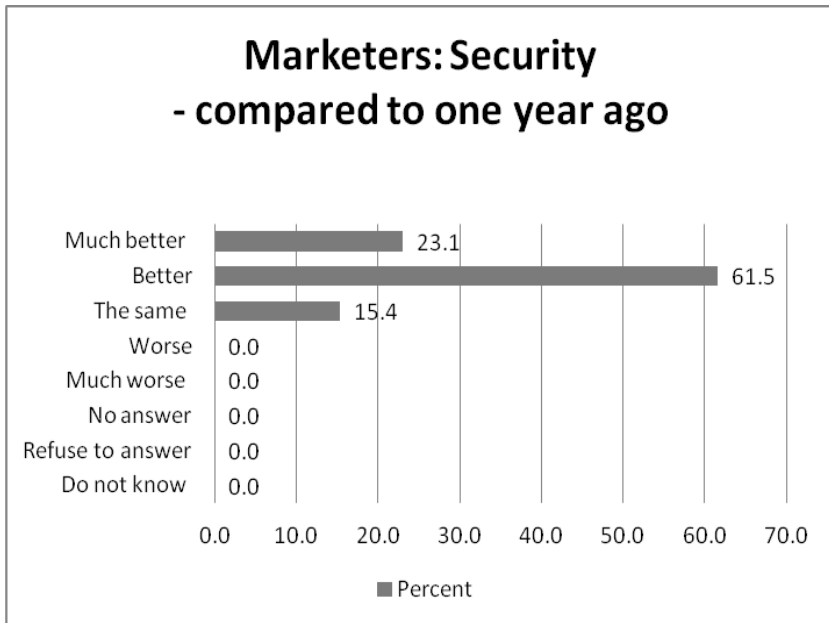
"I feel happy because we have our own police station and the commission officer that provides ways for us to work with our police and those boys that help while the police is unavailable."

12.3. Marketers

Marketers in West Point are slightly older than the average and are 30.8% Muslim. They have a low income as all respondents stated they earned less than 3500 LD per month and also perceived their employment and economic situation to be bad (85% for both). Several respondents highlighted the need for the Government of Liberia to take action against unemployment *"the employment situation is very high and poor. Because 75 % of the citizen in not employed in the countries that one cause problem in the country and we need help from government to strengthen and providing job for the people in the countries"*.

The lack of a family planning centers was the main issue of concern and virtually all respondents highlighted the risks of teenage pregnancy. This issue was followed by lack of health care and education.

85% thought security had improved compared to one year ago and 23.1% thought security was much better, 61% better and 15.4% that it was the same. 68% believed the community to be safe with only 4% considering it unsafe. 92% were still worried about becoming a victim of crime. They were more concerned about young men falling victim to crime and violence and identified the perpetrators as young people without jobs or skills.

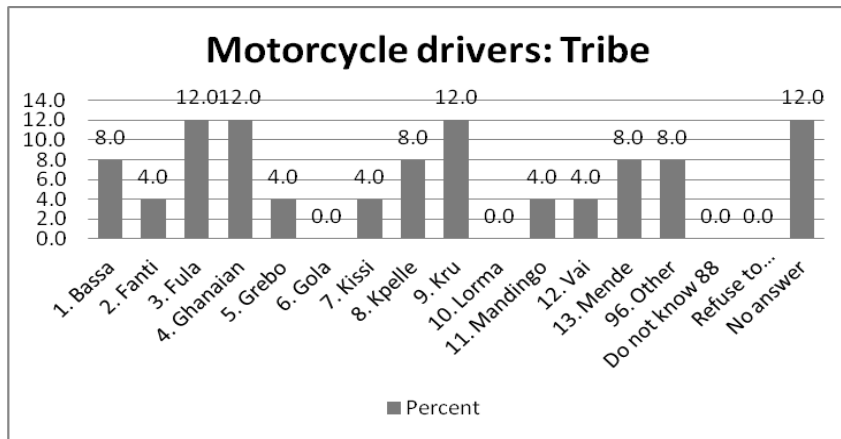


81% stated that erosion affects their household and the most common manmade disasters were fires, high rental cost and lack of sanitation.

100% of marketer respondents identified the police as security providers and 84 % would seek police help if in need. Vigilante groups and community defense groups were ranked as second and third at around 70%. Yet, 46% still thought the provision of security was bad with 38% stating it was good. Regarding the view of the police, answers were quite different where some stated that the police and the criminals were working together while others thought the police officers were working hard.

12.4. Motorcycle drivers

The special project on motorcycle drivers, or pen-pen drivers, in West Point revealed that drivers are male (92% and 8% no answer), are 20-35 years old, to a larger extent Muslim (36%) and belong to other tribes than the average West Point demographic. They have generally a low income where the majority stated they earned less than 4000 LD/month and in terms of how they feel about their employment or economic situation it is more or less in line with the West Point average.



It should be noted that the data collection for this project was particularly challenging. As trade is based on ad hoc requests for customers and also dependent on the driver continually moving to search for clientele, the volunteers for this project found it very difficult to collect the answers to open questions. Faced with this a practical decision was made to just go through the closed questions in order to gather as much quantifiable data as possible. It may be that for future studies it will be required to consider interviewing this group on a Sunday, or making an advance appointment at their convenience in order to collect the full complement of answers.

Violent crime is ranked first overwhelmingly high in comparison as the most serious concern (88%) followed by alcohol abuse and drug abuse. With regards to the latter two issues there was a correlation with religion. All Muslim drivers had given either alcohol abuse or drug abuse as one or more of their three main concerns. However, of all respondents concerned with these two issues there was an even split between Christians and Muslims.

"Violence and crime is very common due to lack of police or anybody taking control of the security at night so this makes them more open to the violence. So our people are too unsafe from these violence crimes."

50% feel their community is unsafe ('safe' 42% and 'the same' 8%) but 58% think security has improved compared to one year ago. Businessmen were identified as the main victims of violence (96%) and young people were the main perpetrators of violence and crime (73.7%) due to lack of job or skills (71.4%).

"The thieves are arm with bad weapon to attack us at night so i can't ride at night, i get my daily report by 8:00 i can run short distance to have some money for food."

88% held that erosion affected their household and fire, sanitation and water pollution ranked highest in terms of manmade disasters. High rental cost was the most commonly issue ranked second (84%).

A lack of trust in the formal security institutions is revealed in that despite the majority identifying the police as responsible for security, only 12% would seek police help before family or neighbors. Several mentioned that there is no police patrol at night.

13. Early Warning Forecasting – What does this report tell us?

Following a consultation session with the Early Warning Early Response (EWER) Working Group, in addition to the below risks and recommendations section, certain triggers for the escalation of violence can be found. It should be noted that most of the problems being faced in West Point are not unique to the township, further indicating that its reputation may be unfair. In that case, why should it be considered as a special case, or worthy of additional attention in terms of its security situation?

The findings of this report show a population living in impoverished conditions, with little access to social services such as health care. It faces environmental hazards from sea erosion, and the close-built nature of houses results in fires being a major risk with a small scale accident with a cooking pot or candle resulting in the destruction of several homes and on occasion, fatalities, as emergency services cannot reach the inhabitants.

However, with these problems, West Point is still taking in a high number of new residents, which seems a paradox. However, West Point represents an unparalleled availability within Monrovia. It is in close proximity to resources and markets in downtown Monrovia, is a long walk from the University campus and yet it is possible to pay a very small amount of rent if you are willing to live in cramped conditions. Due to the economic strife facing the majority of Liberians, this will continue to make the township irresistibly attractive, resulting in the over-crowding worsening and competition for scarce resources escalating. This factor, in combination with its proximity to affluent areas and resources such as electricity which the majority of the population is denied is likely to build resentment. Whilst sympathy is

currently being shown to criminals who have no other course but theft in order to survive, this will not last indefinitely for a population under pressure.

The influx of people means that overcrowding will continue to apply increasing pressure on the area, and negative attitudes to outsiders could also lead to tensions erupting. For example, as was pointed out in the group discussions, if someone is put out of their home in favor of a 'foreigner', this could lead to serious resentment, particularly as population pressure increases.

Aside from the clear early warning indications that are presented above, this information gives us clear signs that any project designed in the area must be carefully thought through and designed in conjunction with the community rather than implemented from above. If resources or services are placed in one area, or are seen as unjustly distributed, this could cause major unrest in an area already under strain. For example, a hand-pump built in one area which is giving free, clean water might see a rush of inhabitants trying to get this resource, running the well dry and causing commotion in the process. Similar care should be taken with public policy, even that which seems self-evident. Community leadership mismanagement was also a concern raised during the focus group discussions. One participant urged that any financial management be conducted by the NGOs or government agencies implementing development in the area to prevent it being siphoned off for other purposes. Another member also argued that heads of community seeing a resource they could have themselves is likely to present problems.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the youth in the area, who were both perceived as most likely to perpetrate crime and most likely to be its victim. Once again, the concept of a 'lost generation' is

encountered with the feeling that the youth have little recourse except to crime. The implication of this is that the community at large might be sympathetic to youth programs, recognizing the benefit of this to the community at large.

Drug and alcohol abuse were also listed as major concerns, with substance abuse holding clear links to erratic and violent behavior. Once again, when combined with the over-crowding and competition for scarce resources, this can be considered a risk factor for early warning. In fact, this along with other variables herein mentioned align with findings from the EWER WG risk assessment which identifies land, border, youth issues and drug abuse as the highest risk factors. Here, we see the issues of drugs and youth standing out. If one also factors in over-crowdedness, land issues, which may not be so significant at the moment, are bound to become more prominent if steps are not taken now to deal with the situation. Considering the ghetto-nature of those considered as criminals or drug abusers, we can interpret the geographic collectivity of these groups as a risk as well. Particularly for young people coming into the area, it is suggested that they are vulnerable to being drawn into these activities.

14. Risks, Recommendations and Lessons Learnt – West Point

For Future studies

- To do the study with two communities, having the volunteers go into each others' areas. This could be combined with peacebuilding efforts and also takes away a further element of bias in data gathering. Whilst researchers in their own community might have a priority for what needs to be developed there, this is minimized if they are operating in another area. Furthermore, it also allows the questionnaire respondent another layer of anonymity, by making it less likely they will encounter their interviewer on the street the following day.
- To increase the amount of time for training. Particularly with open questions, some interviewers struggled to record all the information. It was our experience that researchers would make notes on their legal pads and then transcribe the data afterwards. This could result in some answers being formulaic, but showed a great deal of respect for the materials being handed out. In future we should take this into consideration in terms of how best to design usable materials.
- Clear explanation and glossary of terms. For example, 'armed robbery' and 'erosion' require clear definitions to avoid blurring the findings. Overall, the findings of this study should be revisited to allow us to see where clarification is required.
- A component investigating the types of crime undergone in urban areas can also be introduced in future studies, if sensitivity training is given to volunteers. It was our experience in West Point that the volunteers took their role seriously and carried it out in a disciplined manner. However, when dealing with particularly sensitive cases such as real life experience of violent crime, they should be equipped with the necessary skills and referral mechanisms to deal with this.

For project design

- West Point is facing a variety of problems in terms of its security and basic provision of social services. However, it is still proving a desirable area to move, with high levels of population influx reported. This, in turn, is causing problems with rent increasing and the township's people being pushed further and further towards the sea as with New West Point and Kru Beach. Newer populations are also facing different types of security problems as evidenced above and the increase in numbers puts pressure on the community overall with rental increase and even less access to social services. Any project designed must take these factors into account, not only in terms of the services they provide, but also that if the area is seen as getting assistance, it may become more attractive to people wanting to move there. This could again result in further over-crowding, and eventually the pricing out of the people who currently live there.
- It is recommended that a coordinated group of NGOs and government figures from different disciplines collaborate for working in West Point, to produce integrated rather than parallel projects to address its issues. Community members as well as community leaders should be involved in all design processes from the offset.
- It is vital that any projects designed are done so in consultation with the community. Whilst it is clearly impractical to suggest that the entire population is consulted, every effort should be made to include representatives from as many sectors of society as possible. Clear community structures do exist in West Point, such as tribal leaders, fishermen's unions, administrative office of the commissioner as well as grassroots representatives from women's groups, motorcycle drivers etc. It is very important that these systems are engaged and able to feed in to project design from the earliest stages. It is further suggested that Do No Harm or similar conflict sensitivity analysis is conducted before any intervention is commenced.

- Some methods of compromising between a child's right to education and the need for families to have economic income brought in by their children needs to be found. A balance needs to be struck which acknowledges the reality that most of the child laborers reported being happy to contribute to their home. However, children engaging in prostitution in order to pay school fees is unacceptable, and it is important that all children are given access to truly free education in the area.
- In general, human rights based approaches should be balanced with traditional and cultural methods of community management.
- All projects being engaged in should incorporate a behavioral change component, to facilitate community management of systems which have been set up. It was frequently mentioned that sanitation systems have been established in the township and then fell into ruin. In order to guard against this happening in the future, the previous step of community involvement in planning should be observed, with clear structures for management of resources given to be established in the community. Those assigned to maintain the project after exit phase should be assisted with the skills to carry this out, with behavioral change programs to help buttress these.

With our sincerest and most heartfelt thanks to the volunteers who worked so hard to collect the information we needed to make this report. This work is dedicated to them:

Abraham S. Jalloh
Agnes Nyeswah
Allison S. Kofa
Ansu B. Kamara
Beatrice D. Swen
Catherine Jolo
Charles K. Toe
Chris K. Weah
Don Smith
E Joseph S Tugbeh
Edward D Weah
Emmanuel Seah
Eugenia Thomas
Ganteh A. Toe
George Y. Glaye II
Henrietta A. Bentum
Jacob T. Nagbe
Jesleen D. Chea
Jestina Washington
Kromah Sekou
Leo T. Wreh
Lucy Brownell
M. Mark Farinson Jr.
Martha H. Elliott
Moses K. Wilson
Neona Paye
Philip N. Bartu
Precious T. Koffa
Stephen P. Nmah
Summa McGill
Theresa T. Tweh
Wesseh Doe

Our deepest esteem and respect also to the community leaders who have inputted extensively to this report and granted us permission to conduct the research in their Township. Honorable gentleman, thank you again for your assistance:

Sanpha A. Kromah – Chairman – Elders Council, West Point
Jack Hneh Moore – Member of the Elders Council
Jackson W. Toe
Fallah Tumbay
Henry Wolloh
Johnson Teah
Sunday S. Wiah Senior
Daniel D. Tweh Senior
John D. Nimely
James Fallah
Harris Asunh
Reverend Sam G. Wah
Vasco Peewee Mulbah



Volunteers with certificates - photo by Emily White