



# Unmasking the Shadows: Perceptions of Violence Against Women and Girls in Sierra Leone.

Findings to our survey on *“Attitudes and Mindset Towards Women and Girl’s Protection and Ending Violence in Sierra Leone.”*

## Social and Economic Impact:

Respondents highlighted the stifling of women's participation and contributions in social and economic spheres.

## Cultural and Traditional Practices:

Mention of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and cultural silence pointed toward deep-rooted traditional practices perpetuating violence.

## Political Participation:

The survey also highlighted the restraint of women and girls from actively engaging and participating in political spheres was highlighted.



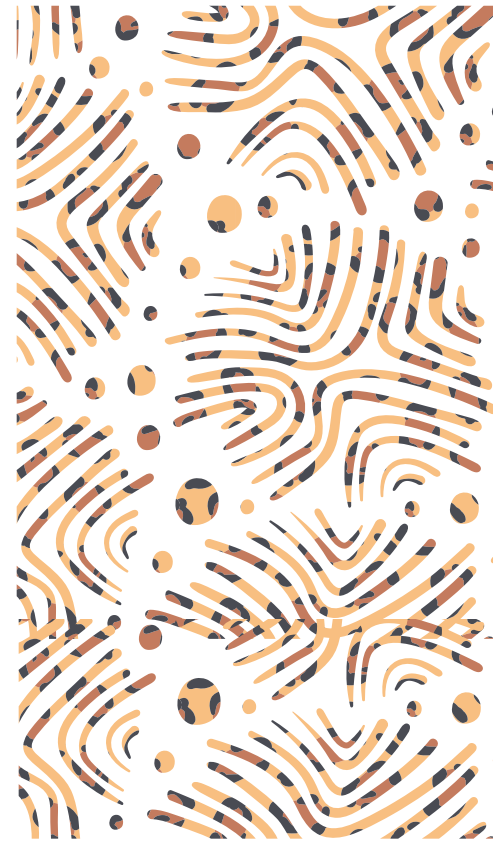
## Introduction

### **Unmasking the Shadows: Perceptions of Violence Against Women and Girls in Sierra Leone.**

In Sierra Leone, violence against women and girls is a critical yet often unspoken issue. We at A Girl At A Time Sierra Leone conducted an in-depth survey as part of our "Protect Women and Girls, Protect Our Future!" campaign, revealing a multifaceted picture of hope and concern.

With the objective to shed light on this pressing issue violence and the perceptions surrounding it, we wanted to gauge attitudes and beliefs towards women and girl's protection and the role of various stakeholders in ending this violence.

The survey highlights the collective responsibility of governmental bodies, communities, NGOs, and individuals in curbing this menace. The report provides a comprehensive analysis and a pathway for stakeholders to work towards eradicating violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone.







## Overview

The impact of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is significant for communities in Sierra Leone. It affects social, economic, educational, psychological, and intergenerational aspects of the community, as shown by varied perspectives and implications expressed.

### Themes identified include:

1. The social and economic impact of violence against women and girls (VAWG), such as constraints on education and employment opportunities, perpetuation of poverty, and limited participation in social and economic spheres.
2. Repeated mentions of psychological consequences such as fear, low self-esteem, and mental health issues, alongside concerns about physical health, including injuries, STIs, and other health complications.
3. Responses highlighted the inter-generational and familial impact of violence against women and girls (VAWG), with some noting its cyclical nature, potentially influencing future generations as perpetrators or victims. VAWG was also recognized as a determinant of broken family structures and disrupted home environments.
4. VAWG erodes trust, solidarity, and cohesion within communities, undermining women's involvement in community development and nation-building. It leads to unsustainability in developmental strides due to the incapacitation of a significant demographic.

5. Challenges in addressing violence against women and girls include weak law enforcement, inadequate laws, overburdened justice systems, and underreporting, indicating systemic issues.
6. Cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and early marriage perpetuate violence against women and girls.
7. VAWG can lead to dropping out of school, negatively impacting the education and potential of women and girls.
8. Insecurity and unsafe environments are pressing issues in personal and professional lives. Prioritizing safety fosters a more peaceful and secure future.
9. The concept of victims being silenced or stifled was brought to the fore, indicating a societal issue where victims might feel unsupported or unheard.
10. The restraint of women and girls from actively engaging and participating in political spheres was highlighted.



The insightful responses from 84 participants spotlight the urgent need for comprehensive interventions aimed at curtailing VAWG in Sierra Leone.

While various aspects require attention, the interconnectedness of the identified themes necessitates a holistic approach to sufficiently address and eradicate VAWG and its pervasive impacts on communities.

Addressing such a deeply-rooted problem necessitates a multi-pronged strategy that engages various sectors of society, including legal systems, educational institutions, and communities.

### Key Insights:

**Pervasiveness:** The diverse responses emphasize that VAWG is a pervasive issue that significantly impacts the societal fabric of communities in Sierra Leone.

**Multifaceted Impact:** The effect of VAWG is multifaceted, infiltrating numerous aspects of communal life and development.

**Cycle of Violence:** The responses affirm that VAWG is not only a current-issue problem but also one that potentially perpetuates a cycle of violence and social issues across generations.

**Systemic Challenges:** Several responses underscore systemic issues in adequately addressing VAWG, spanning from legal frameworks to cultural practices and systemic gender inequality.







## 1 Age demographics of respondents

### Total Responses:

The chart shown below is based on a sample of 84 responses.

### Majority Age Groups:

The age group with the highest number of responses is 26-35 years with 29 respondents, which is 34.5% of the total responses.

This is closely followed by the 46-55 age group with 27 respondents, accounting for 32.1% of the total.

### Minority Age Groups:

The age group with the lowest number of responses is 18-25 years, with only 6 respondents or 7.1% of the total responses.

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The age group with the lowest number of responses is 18-25 years, with only 6 respondents or 7.1% of the total responses.

The age groups 36-45 and 56 and above both have 11 respondents each, which is 13.1% of the total responses for each group.

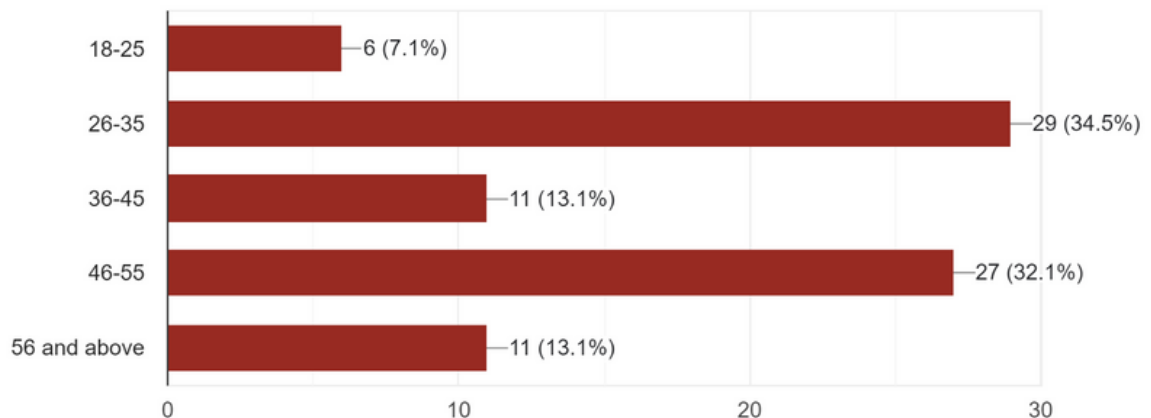
### Observations:

The data suggests that the majority of respondents fall within the middle-aged range, specifically between 26-55 years. Young adults (18-25) are the least represented in this sample.

The age groups 36-45 and 56 and above have an equal number of respondents, which is interesting as one might expect a natural decline in the number of respondents as age increases.

### Demographic Information (optional but helpful for analysis): 1. Age:

84 responses





## 2 Gender Breakdown

Out of the 84 respondents of the survey:

- **53.6% identified as Female**, representing a slight majority.
- **46.4% identified as Male**, making up almost half of the participants.
- There were no respondents, or a negligible number, who chose the "Prefer not to say" option regarding their gender.

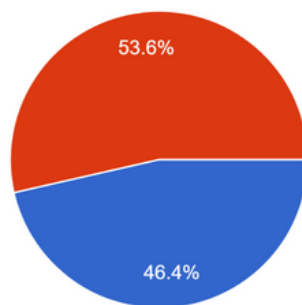
In summary, the survey's gender distribution is almost even between male and female participants, with females being slightly more represented.

This gender distribution is a great representation of equality and inclusivity.

It's important to note that gender identity is a personal and unique experience, and this survey only captures a small snapshot of the population.



2. Gender:  
84 responses



- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say





## 8 Respondents by location

The survey responses represent a diverse group of individuals hailing from both Sierra Leonean and international locations.

Here's a breakdown:

### **Freetown:**

The capital and largest city of Sierra Leone, Freetown, emerges as a primary location for many respondents. Several participants have also mentioned specific neighborhoods or areas within Freetown, emphasizing its significance in the survey.

**Bo:** Bo, the second-largest city in Sierra Leone, also features prominently among the respondents. The variety in Bo's mentions, ranging from specific streets to a general mention of the city, indicates a broad representation from this location.

**Makeni :** Makeni, another principal city in Sierra Leone, has a notable presence among the respondents. With several specific mentions, it's evident that the city and its surroundings are well-represented.

**Port Loko :** Respondents from Port Loko, a district in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone, further highlight the nationwide coverage of the survey.

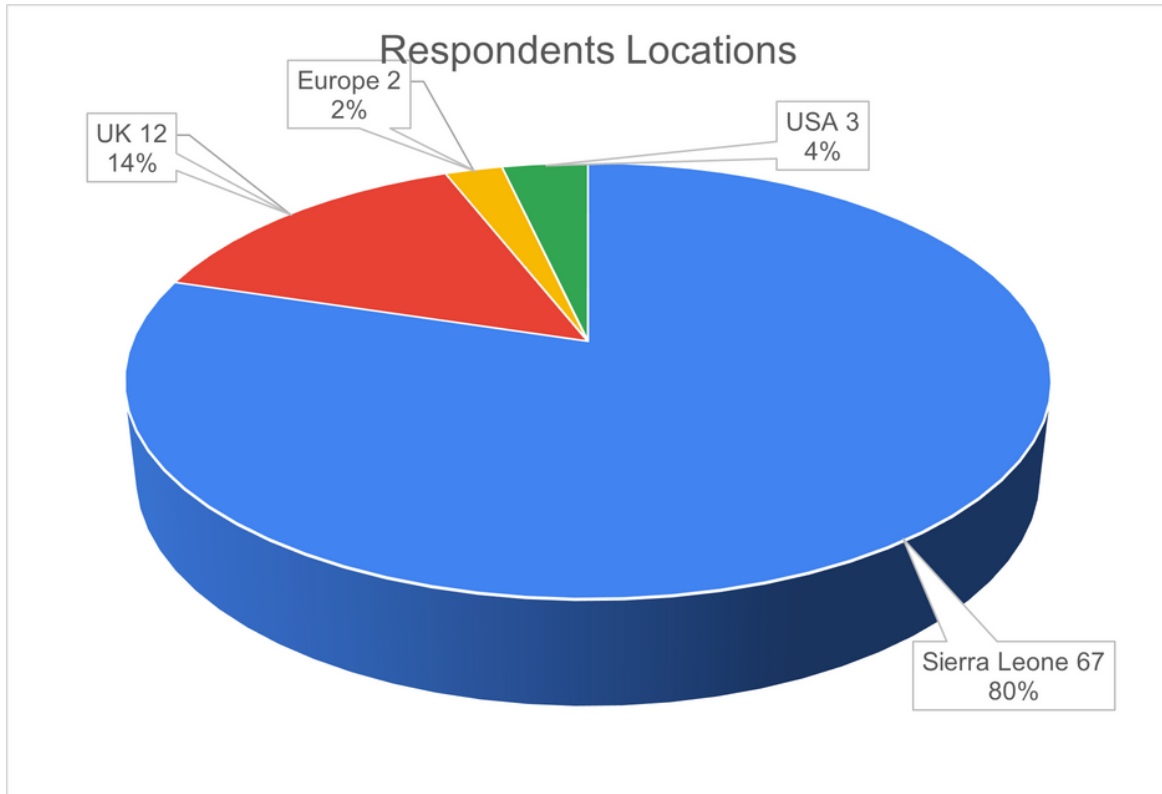
**Other Sierra Leonean Locations:** The survey captures a spectrum of responses from various regions, including Kenema, Taiama Kori Chiefdom, Koinadugu, Magburaka, and more. These diverse mentions underscore the survey's extensive reach within Sierra Leone.

**United Kingdom :** There's a significant representation from the UK, with mentions of cities like London, Manchester, and Ipswich. This international participation suggests a diaspora connection or interest in the survey's topic.



**Map of Sierra Leone**





**United States :**

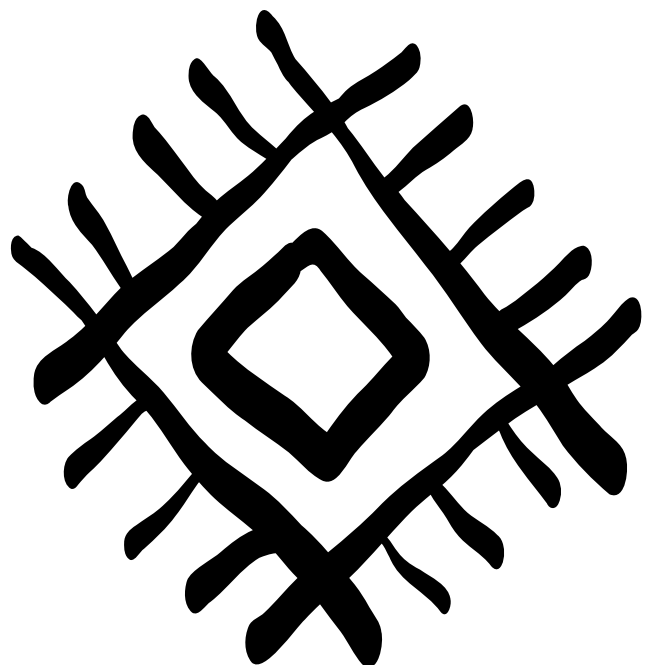
Responses from locations like Virginia, NYC, and a general mention of the Sierra Leonean diaspora in the USA point towards a North American connection or interest group.

**Other International Locations :**

Locations such as Senegal and (potentially) the Netherlands are also represented, although on a smaller scale, indicating a broader international interest or connection to the survey's topic.

In summary, the survey has successfully engaged a wide spectrum of respondents from various locations within Sierra Leone, reflecting its national significance.

Additionally, the participation from international locations emphasizes the global relevance or diaspora engagement concerning the topic of women and girl's protection and ending violence in Sierra Leone.



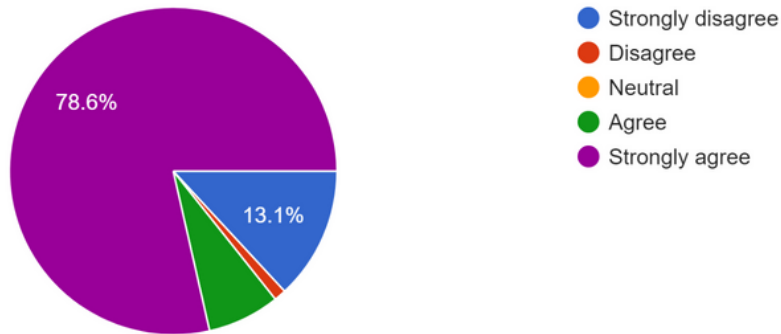




#### 4 How strongly do you agree with the statement "Every woman and girl in Sierra Leone deserves to live without fear and violence"?

4. How strongly do you agree with the statement "Every woman and girl in Sierra Leone live without fear and violence"?

84 responses



A significant majority, 78.6%, strongly disagree with the statement.

This indicates that a large portion of the respondents believes that women and girls in Sierra Leone do not live without fear and violence.

In summary, the data suggests that there is a predominant belief among the respondents that women and girls in Sierra Leone face challenges related to fear and violence.

Further studies or surveys might help in delving deeper into the reasons and nuances behind this perception.

The results of the survey are concerning and highlight the urgent need for action to address the issue of gender-based violence in Sierra Leone.

It is important to listen to the voices of the respondents and take their experiences and perceptions seriously.

Women and girls in Sierra Leone should be able to live free from fear and violence and have access to the support and resources they need to stay safe and thrive.

Efforts to address gender-based violence must be comprehensive and involve the government, civil society organizations, and individuals at all levels.

This includes initiatives to improve access to justice, provide support services for survivors, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. By working together, we can create a safer and more inclusive society for all.





## 5 Do you believe violence against women and girls is a significant concern in Sierra Leone?

An overwhelming majority of respondents believe that violence against women and girls is indeed a significant concern in the context mentioned. This indicates a strong consensus on the issue and showcases the perceived severity and prevalence of the concern.

### Overview:

The chart presents a clear and compelling visual representation that the vast majority of respondents (94%) believe that violence against women and girls is a significant concern.

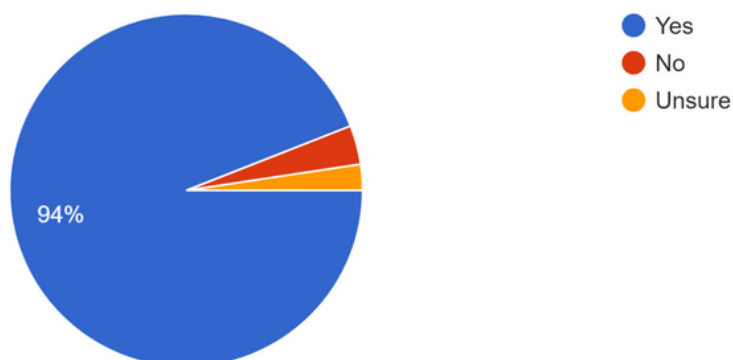
We must also recognize that this issue affects women and girls from all walks of life, including those from marginalized communities.

It is important that we take intersectionality into account when addressing this issue and work towards creating a society where all women and girls feel safe and valued.

It is encouraging to see that there is a strong consensus on the importance of this issue.

Let us continue to work together towards a world where violence against women and girls is no longer a concern.

5. Do you believe violence against women and girls is a significant concern in S  
84 responses





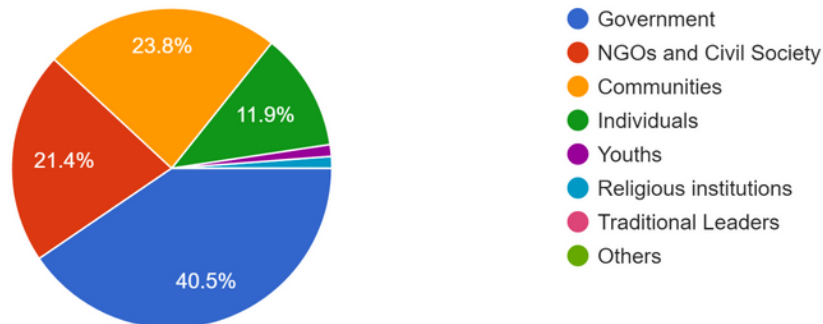


## 6 Who do you believe plays the most critical role in ending violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone?

1. The chart represents the perceptions of 84 respondents on who they believe plays the most critical role in ending violence against women in Sierra Leone.
2. The **"Government"** has the highest proportion, with 40.5% of respondents indicating it as the most crucial player.
3. NGOs and Civil Society are the second most significant at 23.8%, followed closely by "Communities" at 21.4%.
4. Other entities like Individuals, Youths, Religious institutions, Traditional Leaders, and Others have smaller proportions.



6. Who do you believe plays the most critical role in ending violence against women in Sierra Leone?  
84 responses



The majority of respondents are inclined to believe that larger, structured entities like the Government, NGOs, and local Communities bear the most responsibility in ending violence against women in Sierra Leone.

However, it's also noteworthy that a segment of the population sees the power of individuals and grassroots efforts in driving this positive change. Respondents believe communities themselves hold the power to bring about this change.



## 7 In your opinion, how does violence against women and girls affect communities in Sierra Leone?

The survey found that violence against women and girls (VAWG) has profound and pervasive effects on victims and society, hampering socio-economic progress and perpetuating harmful practices.

Weak legal frameworks and cultural barriers compound the issue.

The survey identified that a multi-dimensional approach, including legal reform, education, victim support, and community dialogue will help in challenging societal norms.

Urgent action is needed to mitigate and ultimately eradicate VAWG in the region.

Violence against women and girls is a global issue that requires a multi-dimensional approach.

Legal reform, education, victim support, and community dialogue are crucial to addressing this problem.

Weak legal frameworks and lack of education can make it difficult to prosecute perpetrators and protect victims.

Victim support services aid in healing from physical and emotional trauma, while community discussions can break down cultural barriers that perpetuate violence.

A combination of approaches is necessary to eliminate this pervasive problem.





## 8 Have you or someone you know personally been impacted by violence against women and girls?

The responses from 83 respondents chart effectively highlights a concerning prevalence of violence against women and girls in the represented community or group.

It underscores the necessity for community awareness, education, and intervention initiatives.

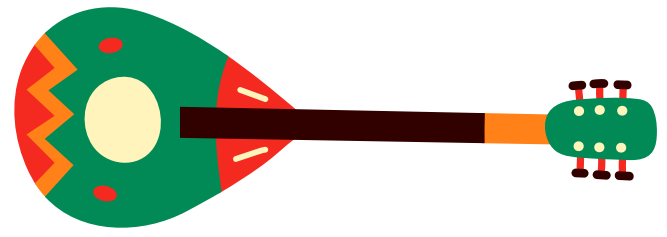
A significant majority of the respondents, almost 4 out of every 5 individuals, indicated that they or someone they know personally has been impacted by violence against women and girls.

This is an alarming statistic, suggesting that violence against women and girls is a pervasive issue in the represented community or the group surveyed.

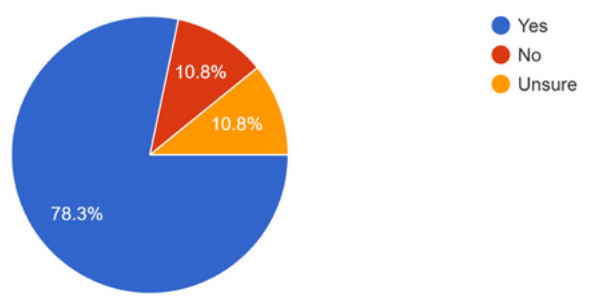
Survey results show an urgent need for community education and intervention to address violence against women and girls.

Creating a safe and inclusive environment for all requires educating ourselves and others on the signs of violence and effective intervention.

Through collective actions and awareness, we can bring an end to this cycle of violence and create a better future.



8. Have you or someone you know personally been impacted by violence against women and girls?  
83 responses





## 9 Do you think there are sufficient resources and support available for victims of violence in Sierra Leone?

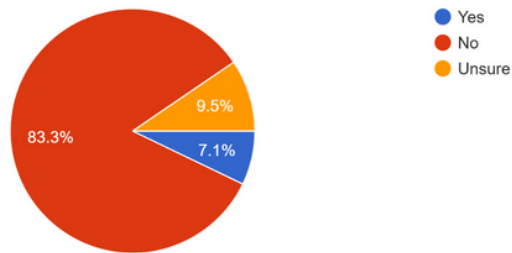
### Overview of Resources and Support for Violence Victims in Sierra Leone

The chart showcases the opinions of 84 participants on the adequacy of resources and support for victims of violence in Sierra Leone.

A notable 83.3% believe that the current resources and support are insufficient. Conversely, only 9.5% feel that there are adequate provisions in place.

Additionally, 7.1% of respondents remain uncertain on the matter. The predominant sentiment indicates a need for enhanced resources and initiatives to better assist victims of violence in the region.

9. Do you think there are sufficient resources and support available for victims of violence in Sierra Leone?  
84 responses







## 10 What steps do you think should be prioritized to tackle violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone?

Addressing such a deeply-rooted problem necessitates a multi-pronged strategy that engages various sectors of society, including legal systems, educational institutions, and communities.

However, the success of these steps will largely depend on strategic implementation, continuous monitoring, and adaptations to ensure they effectively meet the needs of women and girls in various contexts within Sierra Leone.

Multiple strategies that can be employed to combat violence against women and girls, including:

- Legislative and Policy Initiatives,
- Educational and Awareness campaigns,
- Economic and Social Empowerment,
- Community Engagement and Sensitization,
- Support Services,
- Data utilization and Research,
- Collaboration across various sectors, and changing social norms.

Consolidating similar points, providing detailed implementation strategies, including technology, addressing cultural and societal norms, involving men as allies, ensuring survivor-centric approaches, and identifying and mitigating barriers are essential for effective implementation.

Efforts must prioritize the well-being, dignity, and rights of survivors and understand and address barriers that prevent women from reporting violence or accessing support.

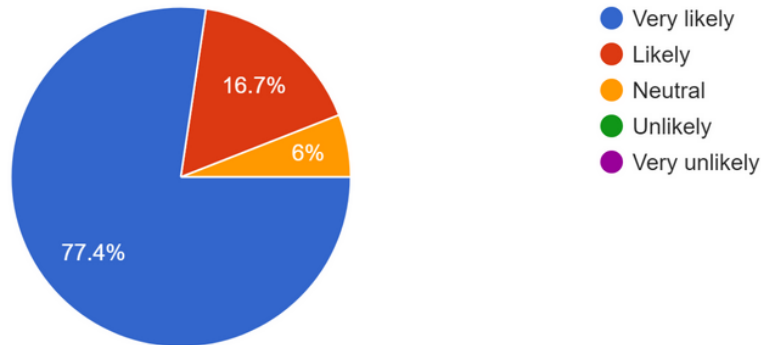




## 11 How likely are you to participate in community programs or initiatives aimed at ending violence against women and girls?

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84 responses



The chart depicts the willingness of 84 respondents to engage in community programs or initiatives geared towards countering violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone.

A substantial majority, 77.4%, indicated they are "very likely" to participate, signifying strong community commitment.

Additionally, 16.7% are "likely" to join such efforts, while a smaller proportion, 6%, remain "neutral" on the matter.

Conversely, minimal resistance or hesitation is observed, with only negligible percentages labeling their involvement as "unlikely" or "very unlikely".





## ①② What more can be done to raise awareness about the importance of protecting women and girls and ending violence in Sierra Leone?

Most of responses highlighted that in raising awareness about protecting women and girls in Sierra Leone we must include the recognition of the need for a holistic approach, community involvement, legal frameworks and enforcement, involvement of men and boys, and multiple platforms for awareness.

Areas for improvement include:

- Coordination and Strategy
- Integration,
- specificity and feasibility,
- measurement and evaluation,
- support for survivors,
- cultural and social consideration, and
- stakeholder collaboration.

Some responses lacked clear action items or strategies.

The responses also indicated that it is crucial to approach potential deterrents such as publicly available predator lists with caution considering legal, ethical, and privacy issues.

Strategies need to be comprehensive, multifaceted, culturally sensitive, and grounded in the socio-cultural and legal contexts of Sierra Leone to be effective and sustainable.







## Conclusion

A survey conducted in Sierra Leone highlights a lack of adequate resources and support systems for victims of violence against women and girls.

Despite this, the community is supportive of change, with a majority expressing a willingness to participate in initiatives to counteract violence.

This community engagement presents an opportunity for positive intervention towards a safer environment.

With the right resources and support, Sierra Leone's community is poised to make significant strides towards this goal.

## Recommendations

### Infrastructure Development:

Invest in developing more robust support systems and resources for victims of violence, such as shelters, helplines, and counseling centers.

### Community Engagement:

Leverage the community's willingness by organizing awareness campaigns and workshops to further educate the public on the importance of women and girl's protection.

### Collaboration:

Partner with NGOs and international organizations that specialize in women's rights and protection to gain insights, resources, and expertise.

### Legal Framework:

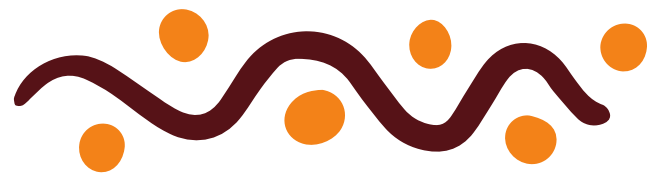
Review and strengthen the existing legal framework to ensure stricter enforcement against perpetrators of violence towards women and girls.

### Skill Development:

Organize training programs for law enforcement, medical personnel, and community leaders to handle cases of violence against women with sensitivity and expertise.

### Feedback Mechanism:

Establish a feedback system where the community can report gaps in support systems, share success stories, and provide suggestions for continuous improvement.



## Appreciations

Many thanks to all our respondents that took part in this survey. We appreciate your participation and contributions.

We also would like to take this opportunity to thank our team who compiled this report.