

THE SIERRA LEONE 2023 ELECTIONS OPINION POLL

SIERRA LEONE'S LARGEST INDEPENDENT OPINION POLL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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The Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll was designed and implemented by Meraki Analytics SL Limited in collaboration with consortium partners – Data Mansah and SierraEye Magazine.

INTRODUCTION

Pre-election opinion polls attempt to gauge the general public's preferences for candidates or parties, allow voters to express their opinion on a large scale and are used to forecast election results. They play a crucial role in shaping the narrative of election campaigns, influencing party strategies, electoral regulation, media coverage, and the vote choices of citizens.

They also arguably influence election results – bandwagon effect, which is often more distinct the nearer the poll is to the date of the election.

What makes the Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll different from other polls?

The Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll is unique in that it is a citizen's driven initiative, led and funded by a consortium of three organisations and several well-meaning Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad.

The Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll has the added benefit of going beyond predicting who will win the election to actually exploring the attitudes, perceptions and interests of national voters. With a sample size of 6919 registered voters, the Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll is the largest national survey of citizens that allows district level inferences.

Data was electronically collected and transmitted using very robust quality control measures including background audio monitoring of interviews, high frequency checks and real-time dashboard monitoring of data by consortium partners.

Another unique selling point of the Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll is that the data, methodology and related material will be shared with the public in the interest of transparency and to promote further research and analysis by interested researchers, students and other stakeholders.

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Why is it being conducted?

Sierra Leone is set to hold its presidential elections on June 24th 2023 amid a climate of political and economic uncertainty. The current president is seeking re-election with the main opposition party expected to mount a strong challenge. However, there have been speculations that the upcoming elections could be marred by voter apathy and/or potential election-related violence. The Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll aims to assess voter readiness, attitudes, and perceptions in Sierra Leone and determine the citizen's voting preferences and the issues they would like presidential candidates to address if they win the elections.

When was the data collected?

Data collection took place between June 2nd and June 17th 2023. Data collection was done simultaneously across all districts.

OBJECTIVES

The main **objectives** of this pre-election opinion poll are to:

- 1) Evaluate the level of voter readiness for the 2023 elections.
- 2) Assess the attitudes and perceptions of voters towards the current government, opposition party, and the electoral process in general.
- 3) Determine the citizen's voting preferences and intentions, including the likelihood of abstention or protest voting.
- 4) Generate data that can be used to inform electoral reforms and policies to improve voter participation, reduce the potential for election-related violence.
- 5) Generate data to inform and enhance data-driven policy formulation and decision-making by the government.

Who designed and led the opinion poll?

The Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll was designed and implemented by Meraki Analytics SL Limited (https://meraki-sl.com/) in collaboration with the consortium partners– Data Mansah and SierraEye Magazine. Meraki Analytics is owned and led by Joel Abdulai Kallon who has several years of experience designing, implementing and analysing nationally representative surveys. Joel is a certified level Wolfram technology user, a 2023 Wolfram Scholar and is currently pursuing an MSc. in Data Science at the University of Aberdeen (UK). He is competent in the design of electronic data collection tools and applying computational thinking and advanced data science techniques to derive insights from data using tools like the Wolfram Programming Language and R among a large collection of others.

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How was the poll designed and conducted - sampling methods, weighting etc, poll size, coverage etc?

The Sierra Leone 2023 Elections Opinion Poll adopted a stratified, clustered, random sampling approach. To get district level results, we stratified the whole country into its sixteen administrative/geographic districts ensuring a representative number of respondents per district. This was achieved by initially allocating a minimum sample of 385 respondents per district and then allocating a booster sample of 1056 to the sixteen districts in the proportion/percentage of registered voters in that district with respect to the total number of registered voters nationally. This helped ensure that districts with larger numbers of registered voters had slightly more respondents in the final sample. This sampling approach produces generalizable results at the district level with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence interval. We further clustered districts into voting centers from which the same number of households and respondents were randomly sampled. To make national inferences from the data, we added survey weights to account for oversampling in smaller districts and undersampling in larger ones.

- **Sample Frame:** The sample frame consists of adult citizens – 18 years or older – who are registered to vote in Sierra Leone. Since we were unable to obtain the latest voter registration list from the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone, (it was therefore impossible to randomly pre-select respondents which would have been ideal), we conducted automated random selection of voting centres, households and eligible respondents.

- **Cluster Selection:** Within each district, we have randomly selected clusters of voting centres. The number of clusters/voting centres in each district is proportional to the population of registered voters and is based on our desired sample size of 7200 respondents. In each cluster/voting centre, we sampled 14 households/respondents in a 50/50 gender split.

- **Household Selection:** Households were randomly selected within each voting centre through an enumerator-led process. To ensure fairness, we used a systematic sampling approach by selecting every "5th" household from a predetermined starting point which was usually the voting centre.

- **Respondent Selection:** At each systematically selected household, enumerators identified eligible participants of the appropriate gender. Eligible respondents are adult Sierra Leonean males or females who registered to vote. Gender was alternated from household to household. Household members who did not meet the voting age requirement, or who did not register to vote were excluded. Respondent selection was done using a computer-automated, random selection process that was programmed into the data collection tablets.

- **Data Collection:** Data collection was done through face-to-face interviews with the selected participants using a structured questionnaire. Electronic data capture using the KoboToolbox was utilised. Highly trained enumerators visited the selected households, explained the purpose of the survey, and requested participation. The training and quality control measures ensured that interviewers followed a standardised approach, used the same questionnaire, and adhered to ethical guidelines including obtaining informed consent from each participant before conducting the interview. To ensure data quality, we employed competitive recruitment of enumerators, rigorous interviewer training, data validation checks, in-field and remote data monitoring and post-data collection cleaning procedures.

Were there challenges or limitations to collecting the data?

The sampling and data collection were confronted by several limitations and challenges including the following:

- 1) In some districts, enumerators could not meet the sampling quota because they were refused access and permission. This was the case in Bonthe Island where our enumerators reported that community leaders asked them to leave. This meant several voting centres in that part of the district could not be enumerated. Our enumerators were also prevented from conducting interviews in Gbhama village, Peje Bongre chiefdom constituency 010 in Kailahun district. Affected voting centres for that entire chiefdom had to be replaced. There were similar reported incidents in Falaba and Moyamba districts. These were, however, less serious. Enumerators were swiftly allowed to resume work when the authorities concerned spoke with the data collection management team.

- 2) We had a very high number of non-disclosures to questions about voter choices and political preferences. This presents a problem for a clear and definitive interpretation of the results.

- 3) Language barrier and difficulty understanding the elections: A minority of respondents had difficulty understanding elections-related concepts like run-off.

- 4) Challenges with getting to hard-to-reach communities.

- 5) A sense of fear in some communities/respondents might have affected their ability and willingness to honestly share their thoughts.

About the polling organisations:

Meraki Analytics
SL Ltd

Meraki Analytics (SL) Ltd. is a data and technology consulting firm that specialises in high impact operational research, technical evaluation, training, data collection digitalization, and analytics. We provide an integrated approach to data discovery, mobilisation, and analysis through the application of relevant knowledge and tools that transform data into useful insights and help our clients make impactful decisions.

datamansah

Founded by **Dr. Yakama Manty Jones,** Data Mansah is a mobile-first network of volunteers in Sierra Leone using hybrid technologies to collect, analyse and share data for economic and social good. Data Mansah uses citizen science to collect, analyse, and distribute high-frequency and other data on topical issues.

SiERRAEYE

Sierra Eye is one of Sierra Leone's leading socio-political magazines aimed at informing the public of key political, social and economic developments. Founded in 2006 by **Basita Michael.**

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