

..... **2018**

T I M O R - L E S T E
C O M M U N I T Y - P O L I C E
P E R C E P T I O N S S U R V E Y

THEMATIC BRIEF — SAFETY AND SECURITY

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The Asia Foundation



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE

Background

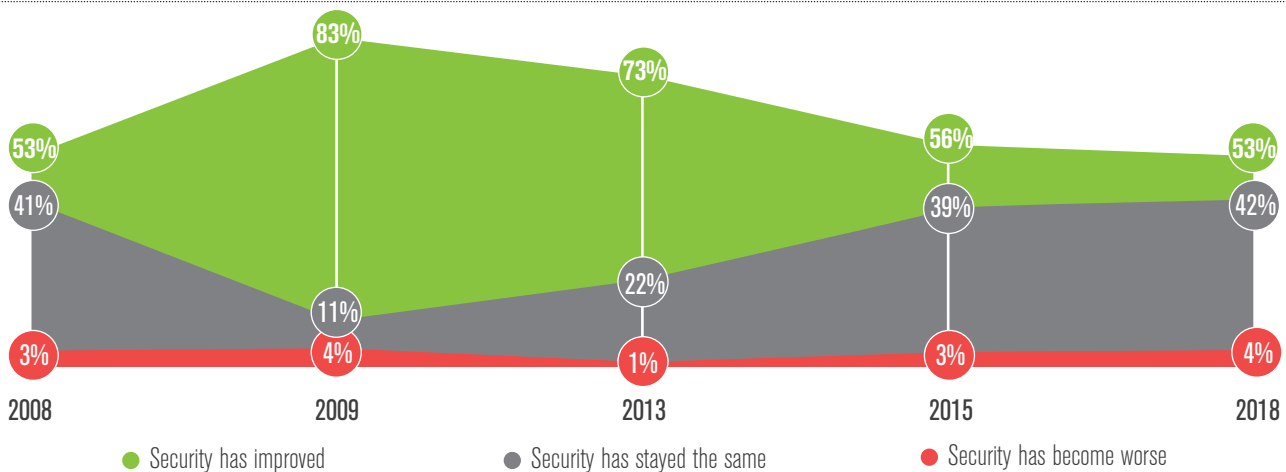
This is a review of the findings of The Asia Foundation's 2018 Timor-Leste Community Police Perceptions Survey relating to safety and security.¹ This is the fifth survey commissioned by The Asia Foundation, following surveys conducted in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2015.²

1. Security in Timor-Leste has remained stable in recent years

- 1.1 The vast majority (95%) of the public believe that the security situation in 2018 has either improved (53%) or stayed the same (42%). This positive trend follows on from the 2015 survey that had comparable results. Since the first surveys in 2008 and 2009, when there was a dramatic increase in the number of people reporting security improvements, perceptions of security have stabilized and remained very high, especially from 2015 to 2018. (Fig 1)

Figure 1

GP How would you describe the security situation in your locality compared to the previous year?



In all figures, GP refers to general public respondents, CL to community leader respondents and PNTL to respondents from the National Police of Timor-Leste (Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste)

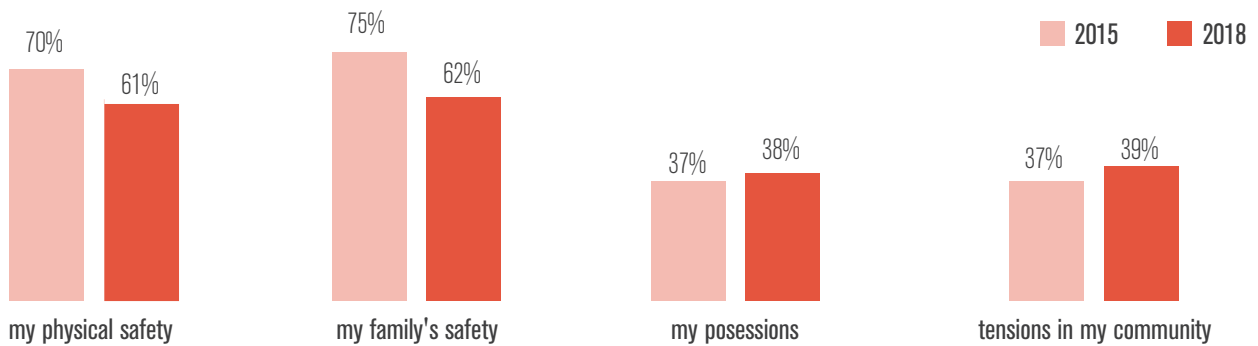
- 1.2 Similarly, there has been a positive trend reflected in a decline in people's concerns about their own safety or that of their family. The most notable decrease in concern has been "about the safety" of one's family decreasing by 13 percentage points from 75 percent in 2015 to 62 percent in 2018. There has also been a decrease in concern about physical safety from 2015 to 2018 (2015=70%, 2018=61%). Respondents continue to report similar trends between 2015 and 2018 about concerns for their possessions (2015=37%, 2018=38%) or tensions within their community (2015=37%, 2018=39%). (Fig 2)

¹ The Asia Foundation Timor Leste would like to thank everyone who contributed to this report including: Robin Perry, Selene Ceja, Bu Wilson, Carmenesa Soares, Carlito Bobo and the Timor-Leste Research and Advocacy Network. For more information about the 2018 Survey see: <http://asiafoundation.org/publication/timor-leste>.

² Survey data can be accessed through The Asia Foundation's Data Portal: <http://surveys.asiafoundation.org/>.

Figure 2

GP Do you agree (strongly or somewhat) with the following statements about safety 2015-2018.
I am worried about...



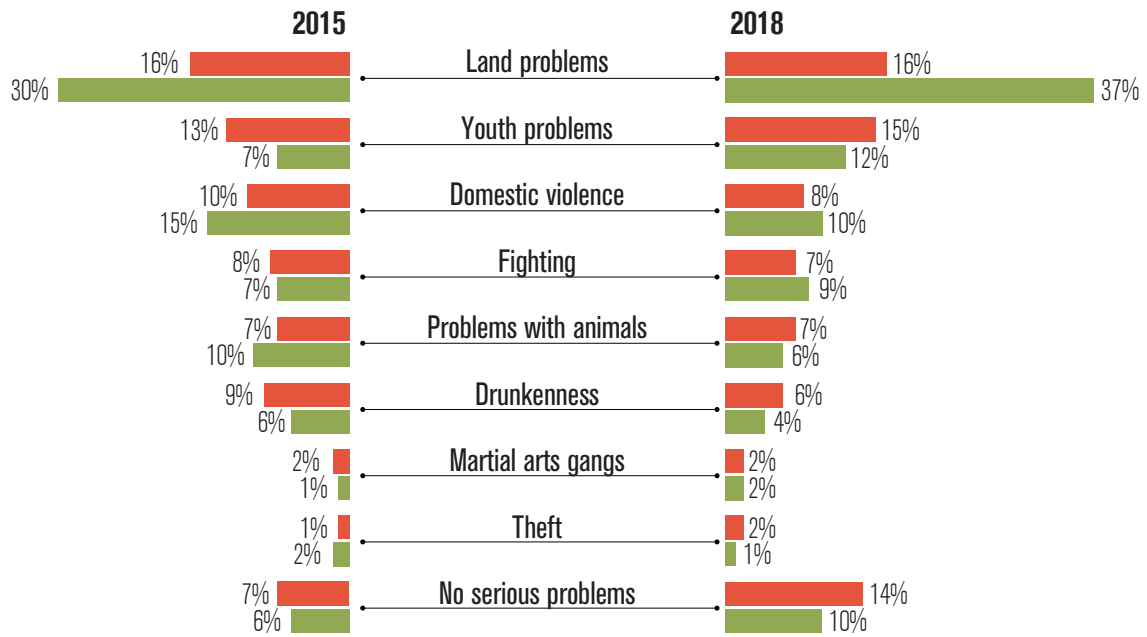
2. The most reported security challenges relate to land, domestic violence and youth

- 2.1 In 2018 the public considered land-related issues to be the most serious security challenge, followed by youth problems³ and domestic violence (DV) (land=16%, youth problems=15%, DV=8%).
Since 2009, public respondents have continually registered concerns associated with land, although the trends have remained relatively stable since 2013 (2008=NA, 2009=6%, 2013=12%, 2015=16%, 2018=16%). (Fig 3)
- 2.2 Community leaders, contrary to the public, report increases in security challenges involving land (2008=NA, 2009=19%, 2013=31%, 2015=30%, 2018=37%). In 2018, community leaders' security concerns over land (37%) were 3 times greater than their concerns with youth problems (12%) and DV (10%). (Fig 3)
- 2.3 In contrast to the public and community leaders, since 2008 PNTL have consistently identified DV as the primary security challenge facing them in the locality in which they work (2008=44%, 2009=48%, 2013=50%, 2015=34%, 2018=34%). In comparison, amongst community leaders concern over DV has decreased since 2013 (2008=6%, 2009=17%, 2013=19%, 2015=15%, 2018=10%).

³ Defined as vandalism, fighting, drinking and noisiness.

Figure 3

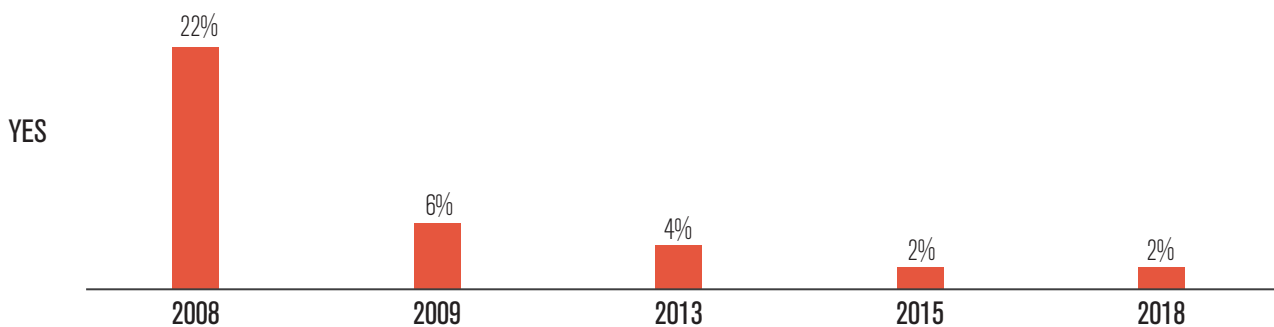
GP CL What do you consider to be the most serious security problem facing your locality today?



2.4 Very few people identify martial arts gangs (MAGs) as a security concern, with only two percent of public respondents saying that MAGs are the most serious security problem in their locality in 2018. Since 2008 there has been a dramatic decline in public concern as to MAGs (2008=22%, 2009=6%, 2013=4%, 2015=2%, 2018=2% (Fig 4)). In addition, a majority of the public (87%), community leaders (85%) and PNTL (77%) say that ‘illegal groups’⁴ are not active in their locality.

Figure 4

GP What do you consider to be the most serious security problem facing your locality today? [Martial Arts Gangs]



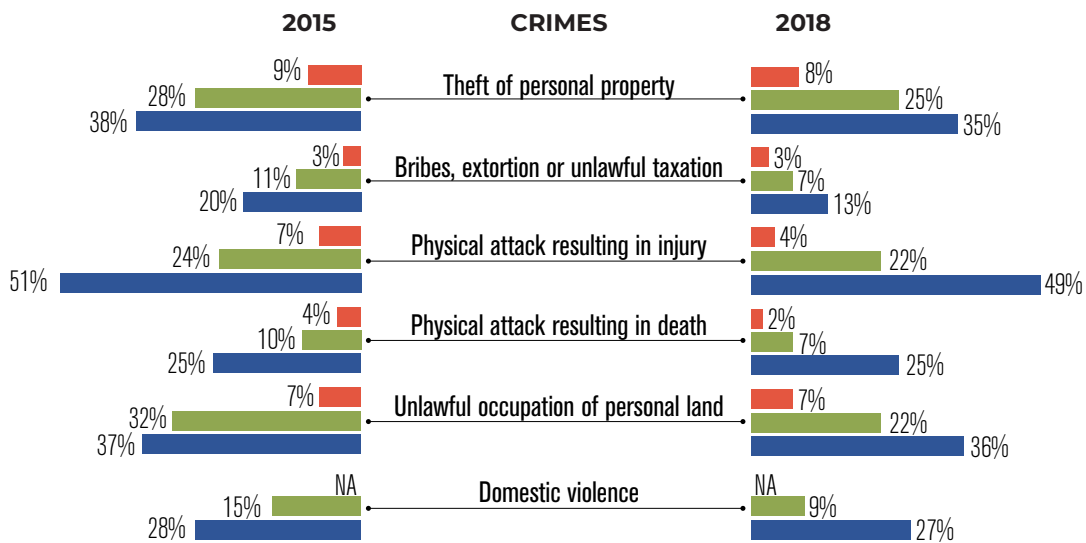
⁴ Illegal groups were defined for respondents as ‘groups that have been banned by the government or whose primary purpose is to profiteer from illegal activities’.

3. Despite positive perceptions of security, approximately one fifth of people experienced a crime in the last year, and nearly half describe themselves as involved in a communal dispute

- 3.1 In 2018 the Survey data reveals that 17 percent of the public say that they or a family member experienced at least one of the six crime types in the past year.⁵ The findings have essentially remained the same over the last ten years (2008=19%, 2009=11%, 2013=17%, 2015=19%, 2018=17%).
- 3.2 The nature of people’s general security concerns is, unsurprisingly, reflected in the specific types of crimes which they have experienced. The crimes most commonly experienced by the public (in the preceding year) were theft (8%), unlawful occupation of land (7%) and attacks resulting in injury (4%). PNTL officers indicated that the crime types which they have been most frequently responding to are very similar to the crime types most commonly experienced by the public. In 2018 PNTL most frequently attended to attacks resulting in injury (49%) and land and property-related challenges such as unlawful occupation of personal land (36%), and theft of personal property (35%). (Fig 5)

Figure 5

GP	Have you or a member of your family experienced any of the following crimes or disputes in the last year?
CL	Has the community in which you live requested your assistance on any of the following crimes or disputes in the last year?
PNTL	In the past year, have you attended any of the following crimes?



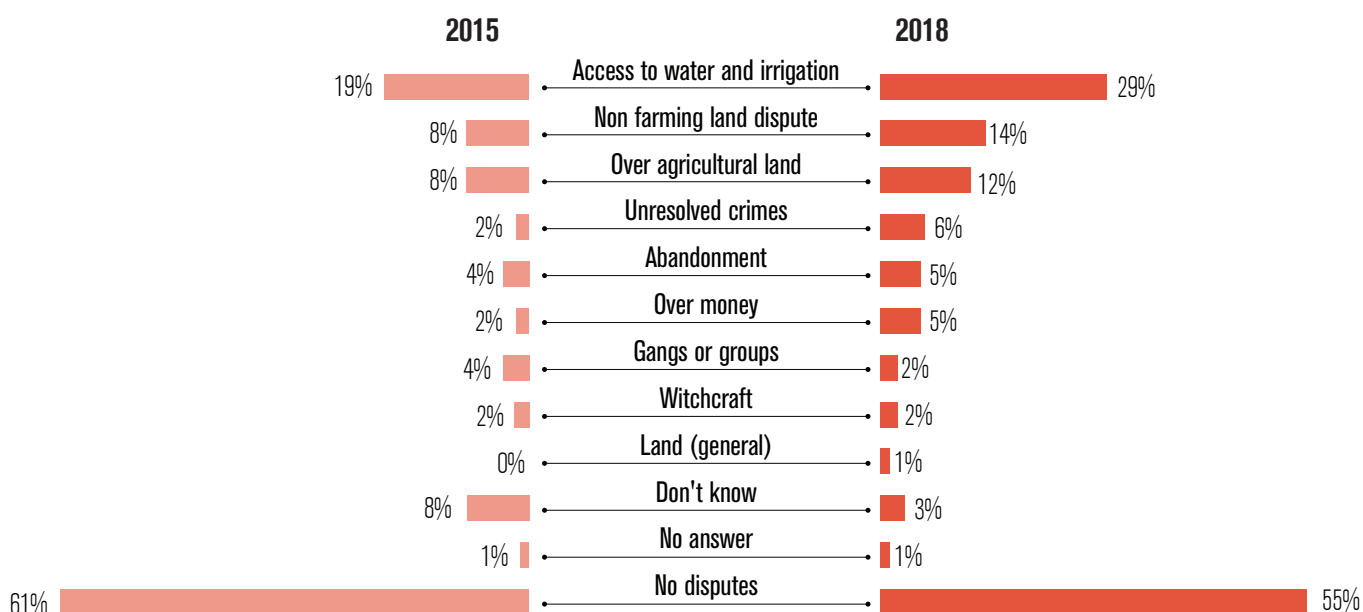
⁵ That is: theft of personal property; bribery, extortion or unlawful taxation; physical attack resulting in injury; physical attack resulting in death of a family member; unlawful occupation of personal land; and other.

3.3 It is worth noting that far fewer people report having experienced a crime (17%), in contrast to responses regarding ongoing communal disputes. Nearly half of all public respondents indicated that they had an ongoing dispute with someone else in their neighborhood, when presented with numerous types of communal disputes—ostensibly civil but with the potential to become criminal.⁶

Most disputes are land-related, if we consider access to water and irrigation to be land-related, and there has been a significant increase in these disputes since 2015. In 2018, 56 percent of the public indicated that they were involved in some kind of land dispute, compared to 35 percent in 2015. Disputes involving access to water and irrigation have increased from 19 percent to 29 percent since 2015. (Fig 6)

Figure 6

GP Do you have any ongoing disputes with anyone living in your community/neighborhood?



4. There are numerous actors and institutions playing a role in responding to security challenges

4.1. There are numerous actors and institutions playing a role in maintaining communal security. As illustrated in figure 7, community leaders are by far the most important, with approximately double the respondents indicating that community leaders have primary security responsibilities compared to PNTL, which represent the second most prominent security actor.

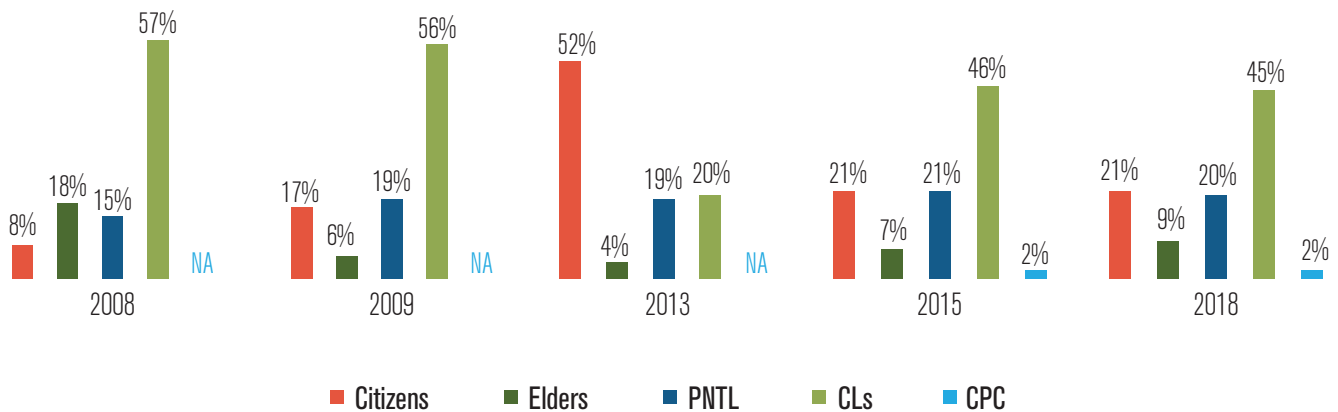
⁶ It is important to note that the surveys have avoided using legal definitions of 'crime' or 'dispute', despite this distinction having important implications under law, for the simple reason that the difference between a criminal offence and a civil dispute is often unclear for Timorese people. This is important in terms of the appropriateness of responses to commonplace crimes or disputes, which will be explored in further detail below.

While community leaders are perceived by the public to be the principal provider of security, this has declined slightly since 2008 (public: 2008=57%, 2009=57%, 2013=20%, 2015=46%, 2018=45%). The extent to which the public perceives PNTL to be the primary security provider has remained stable since 2008 (public: 2008=15%, 2009=18%, 2013=19%, 2015=21%, 2018=20%).

4.2 A significant proportion of respondents also recognize citizens, elders⁷ and Community Policing Councils (CPC) as having primary responsibility for maintaining security (Fig 7). Interestingly, there was a dramatic increase in recognition of the role of citizens in maintaining security between 2009 and 2013, and an equally dramatic decrease between 2013 and 2015 (public: 2008=8%, 2009=17%, 2013=52%, 2015=21%, 2018=21%).

Figure 7

GP In your opinion, which of the following institutions/individuals has primary responsibility for maintaining security in your locality? (%)



4.3. When asked about groups which are active in assisting the police in fighting crime in the community, respondents cited an even wider range of security actors (Fig 8). Community leaders, CPC, religious associations, NGOs, political parties and even illegal groups are seen as having a role to play in helping the police to fight crime (CPC=62%, religious associations=58%, NGOs=51%, political parties=33%, illegal groups=10%).

4.4 Community leaders, the public and the police show high and growing levels of confidence in the ability of CPC to prevent crimes and disputes. Among community leaders and public respondents who reported having a CPC in their Suku in 2018, the vast majority of both public (2015=71%, 2018=82%) and community leaders (2015=74%, 2018=86%) agree that CPC are effective at preventing the escalation of disputes and crimes.

4.5 The Dispute Resolution Thematic Brief sheds more light on how these actors are working together.

⁷ In this document, Elders refers to Lia Na'in. Lia Na'in is the commonly-used (but not the only used) designation in Timor-Leste for people—invariably men—who are broadly considered to be traditional mediators. The title originates from the Mambai language, meaning the 'owner of the words'.

Figure 8

GP Are the following groups active in the community in assisting the police in fighting crime? [yes]

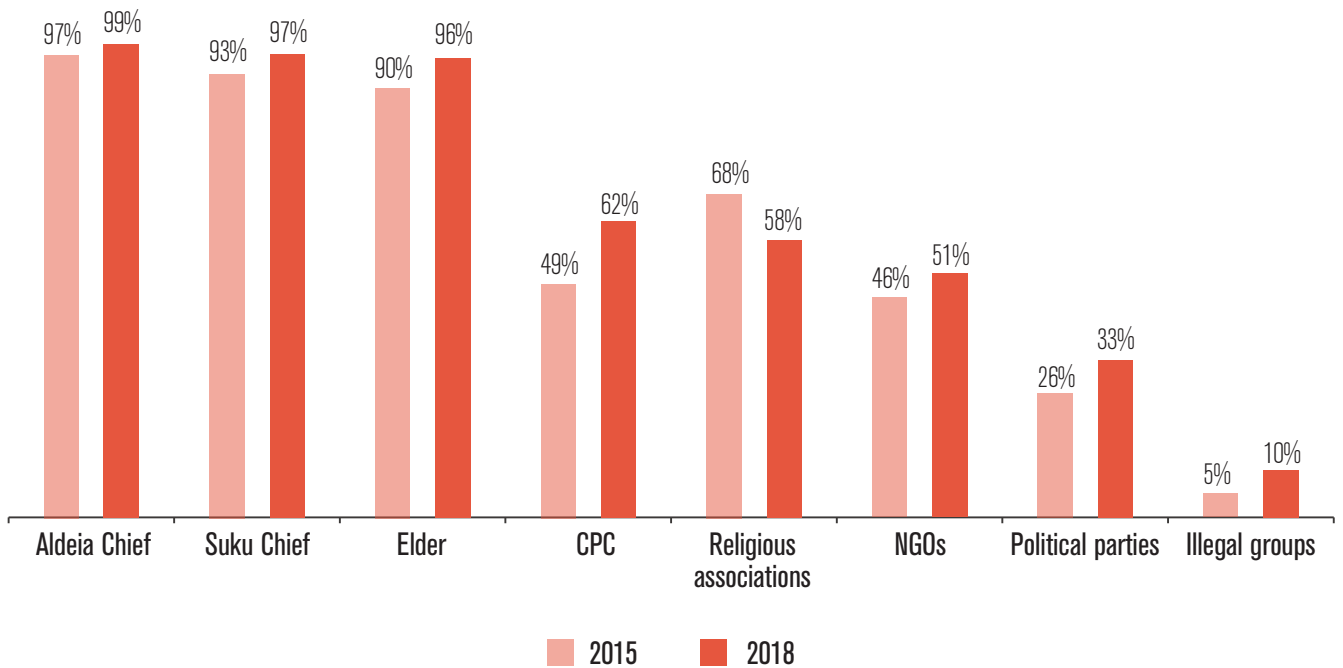
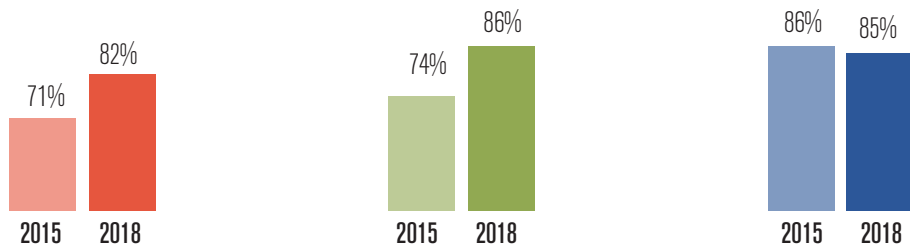


Figure 9

GP CL PNTL How effective are CPC at preventing the escalation of crime? [effective]



5 Safety and security in Timor-Leste in 2018

In summary, the findings set out above indicate that year in and year out 95 percent of people feel that security has either improved or remained the same, and overall, people feel safer. While positive perceptions of safety and security are prevalent, it is common for people to be involved in ongoing communal disputes, particularly in relation to land. The respondent’s experience of crime has remained consistent with the findings of previous surveys revealing that land disputes, domestic violence and youth problems remain topics of concern for the community. As illustrated in the 2018 Survey, land disputes are on the rise and both the public and community leaders feel that this is the greatest security challenge facing communities. Building community capacity to deal with land disputes should be a critical consideration moving forward.