



The Asia Foundation

..... **2018** .....

COMMUNITY POLICE  
PERCEPTIONS SURVEY  
**summary of key findings**  
.....



NEW ZEALAND  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE

# What is the CPP Survey and why is it important?

The 2018 Community Police Perceptions (CPP) Survey represents the fifth survey of its kind in Timor-Leste, with The Asia Foundation conducting its first nationwide survey on security perceptions in Timor-Leste in 2008. The Surveys were repeated in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2018.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018 over 100 questions were asked of 3,178 respondents across all 12 Municipalities and the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno through a process of random sampling. As with previous surveys, respondents were categorized into three groups – public (1,808), Police (731), Community Leaders (639) – with three distinct but very similar sets of questions for respondents in each group. The data was collected from September-October 2018.<sup>2</sup>

## Summary of key findings

Public perceptions of security have clearly improved since surveying began in 2008. This general trend of increased confidence in security is reinforced by high levels of trust, confidence in and appreciation for the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) and the increasing communal orientation of their work. At the same time, however, there is clear recognition that the PNTL need much more resources, training and professional development, particularly on the law and how it is applied.

There is a need for greater understanding of appropriate processes and clarity on roles in dispute resolution within PNTL and among community actors and the public in general. Despite positive perceptions of safety and security, there are persistently high levels of ongoing disputes within Timorese communities. There is clear evidence of high levels of collaboration between PNTL, Suku/Aldeia Chiefs<sup>3</sup> and other community leaders – both in resolving disputes and managing communal security in general.

Detailed findings related to each of these key themes will be explored in more depth through forthcoming, issue-specific briefs which will be discussed at stakeholder workshops. These will cover the topics of safety and security, dispute resolution, women and security and PNTL performance.

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**1** The authors of this report are Robin Perry, Selene Ceja and Bu Wilson. The design and layout was by Nuno Costa. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of The Asia Foundation or the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

**2** All CPP Surveys are accessible through the The Asia Foundation Data Portal: <http://surveys.asiafoundation.org/>

**3** In Timor-Leste, a Suku is a unit of administration which translates to 'village'. Suku comprise multiple Aldeia, which translates to 'hamlet'.

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

Nearly all respondents – 95% – believe that the security situation in the last year has either improved (53%) or stayed the same (42%). Between 2008 and 2009 there was a dramatic increase in the public reporting security improvements, this has since stabilized (Fig 1).

Figure 1

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



- 1.1. In 2018 the top three security problems identified by the public, community leaders, and the PNTL were land issues, youth problems<sup>4</sup> and domestic violence (DV). While the public have not substantially changed their views since 2015, community leaders increasingly identify land problems and youth problems as the most serious security problem (Fig 2).
- 1.2. Overall there has been a significant decline in people’s concerns about safety, particularly their own safety or that of their family.  
 The most notable decrease in concern has been about safety of one’s family from 75% in 2015 to 61% in 2018. There has also been a decrease in concern about physical safety (70% to 61%) from 2015 to 2018.
- 1.3. There appears to be less concern with ‘illegal groups’<sup>5</sup> and the vast majority of the public (87%), community leaders (85%) and PNTL (77%) say that illegal groups are not active in their locality. For respondents who say they are active in their locality, the four most active illegal groups are PSHT, Kera Sakti, KORKA and 7-7 (Fig 3).

<sup>4</sup> Defined as vandalism, fighting, drinking and noisiness.

<sup>5</sup> 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’.

1.4. Television is by far the most important source of security information for all respondent groups (community leaders=50%, public=38%, PNTL=36%). Radio is the next most important source of security information for the public and community leaders, while for PNTL it is the police themselves. Suku Chiefs are also a prominent source of security information (Fig 4).

Figure 2

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

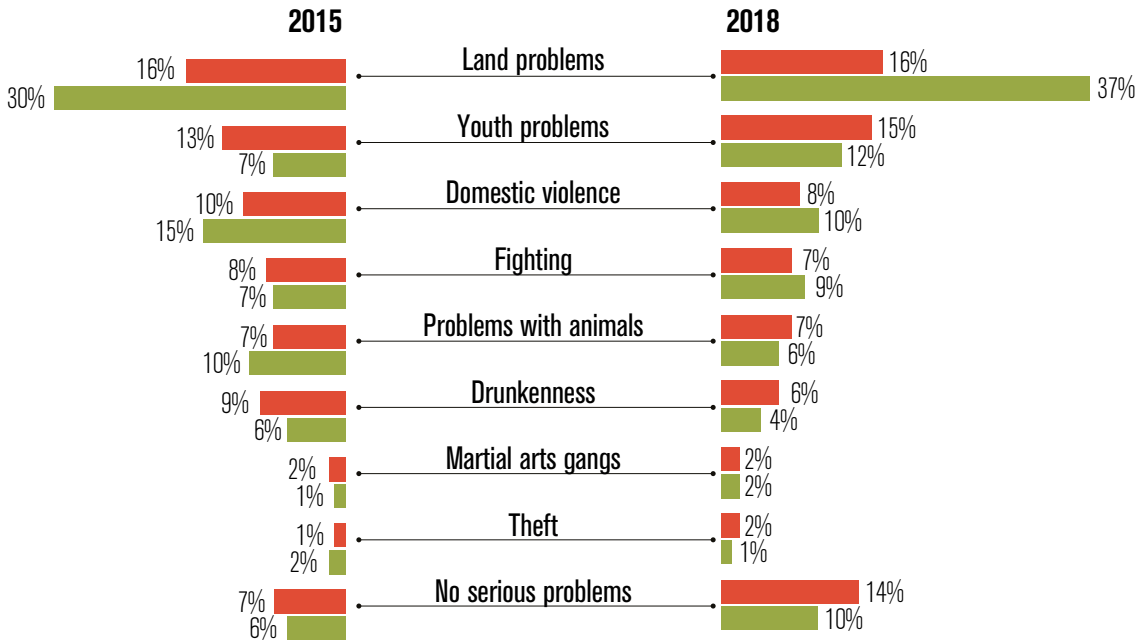


Figure 3

GP CL PNTL Which illegal groups are active in your locality (percentages are of those who indicated illegal group activity)?

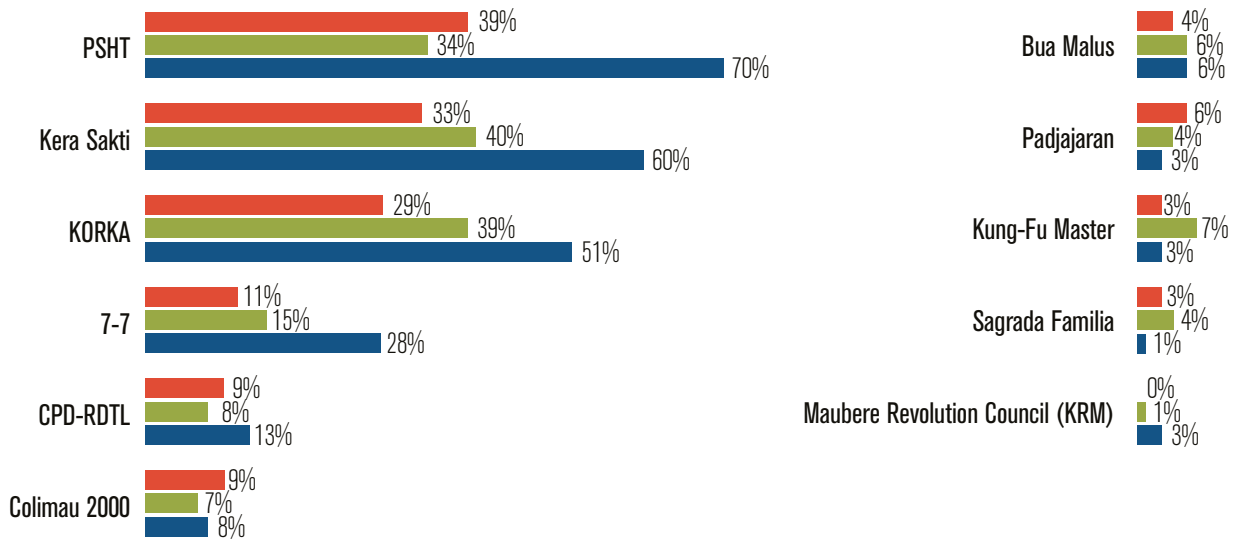
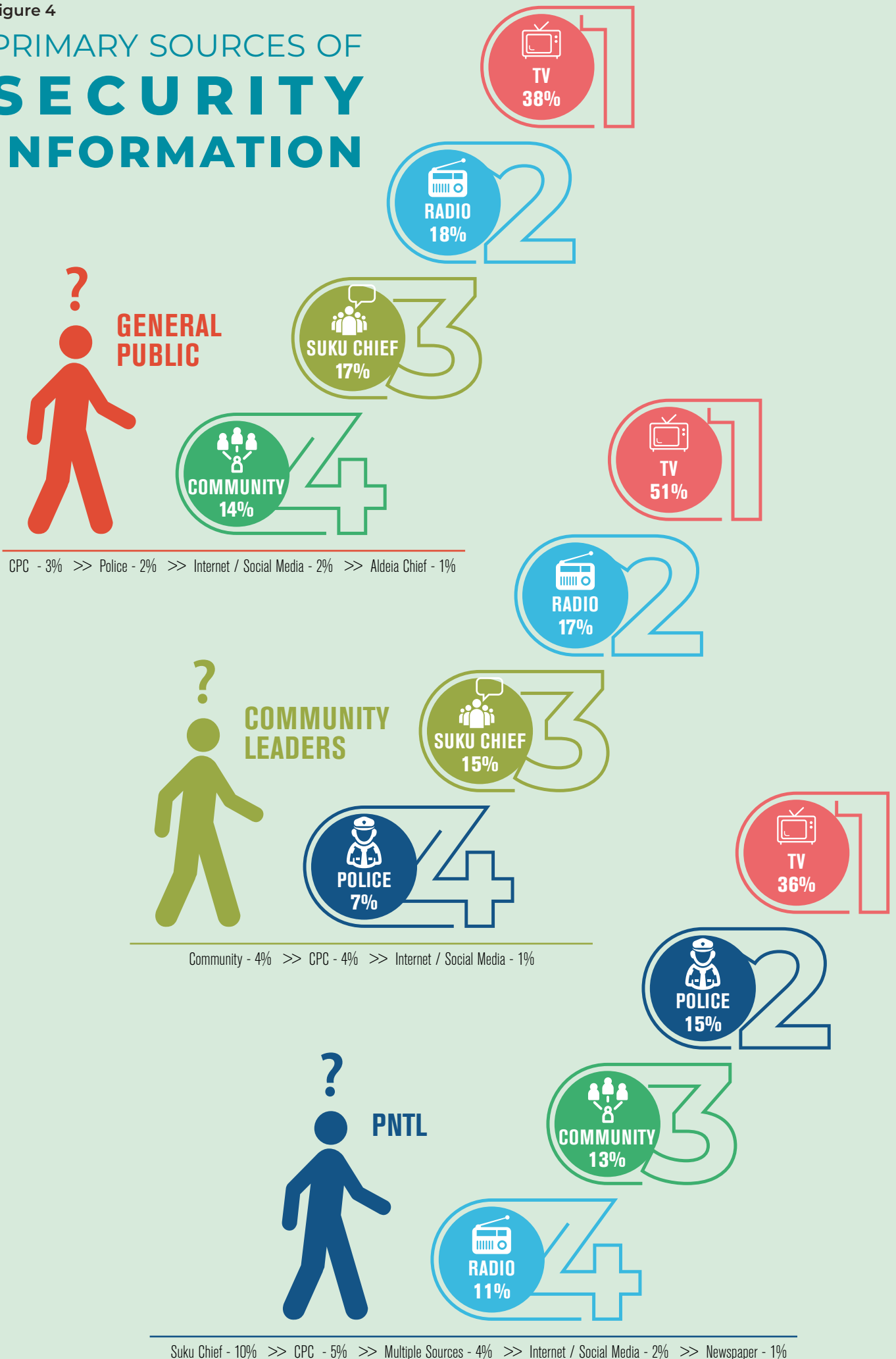


Figure 4

# PRIMARY SOURCES OF SECURITY INFORMATION



## **2. The perception of stability is also reflected in high levels of communal trust, confidence in and appreciation for the work of PNTL**

- 2.1. In 2018, 77% of the public described PNTL performance as better than a year ago. This holds steady with the results from 2015 when 79% considered that PNTL performance was better than a year ago.
- 2.2. Based on responses from members of the public who had reported a crime to PNTL in the preceding year, PNTL treat the vast majority of people they attend to with full respect and professionalism in the course of responding to or resolving disputes – from a high of 92% for land disputes to a low of 78% for attacks resulting in injury.

## **3. Although most people feel that security has improved, it is still common for people to experience disputes and crimes**

- 3.1. Most disputes are land-related, if we accept access to water and irrigation as land-related, and there has been a significant increase in these disputes since 2015. In 2018, 56% of the public indicated that they were involved in some kind of a land dispute, compared to 35% in 2015. Disputes involving access to water and irrigation have increased from 19% to 29% since 2015 (Fig 5).
- 3.2. Despite a focus on illegal groups by the media and political figures, only two percent of the public claims to have an ongoing dispute related to 'gangs' or groups.
- 3.3. Overall there has been a small but noticeable decline in respondents' experience of crimes since 2015 (Fig 6).

Figure 5

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

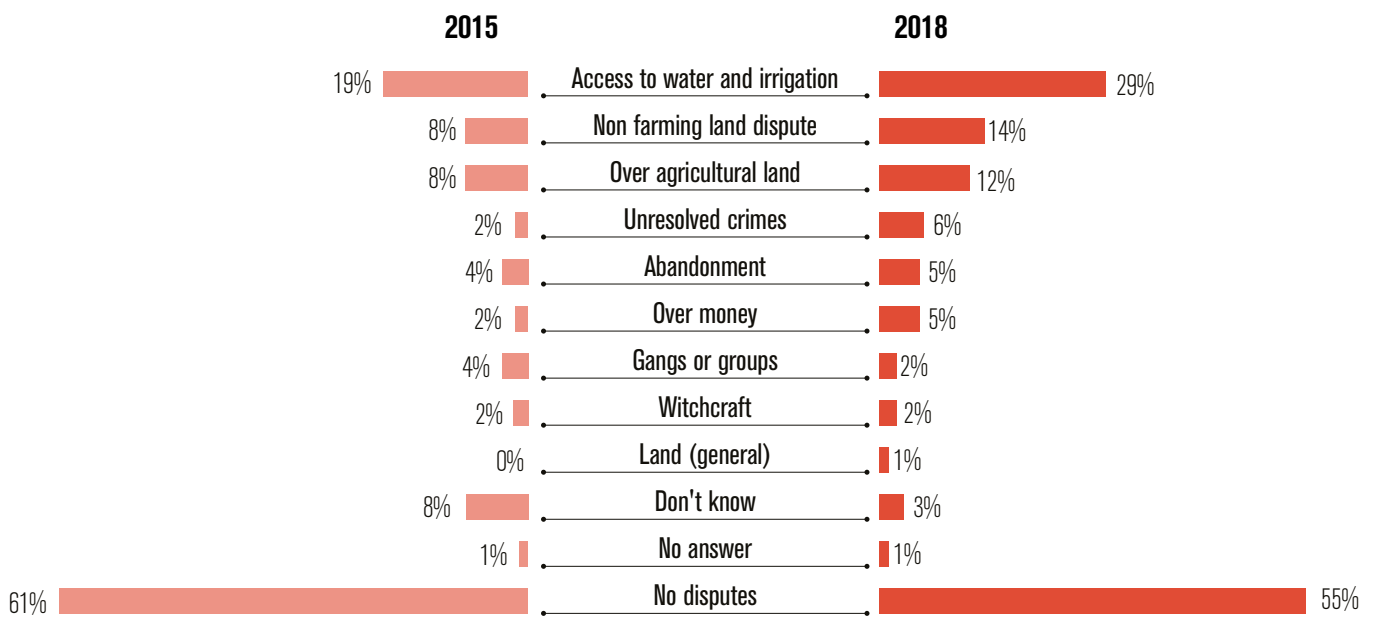
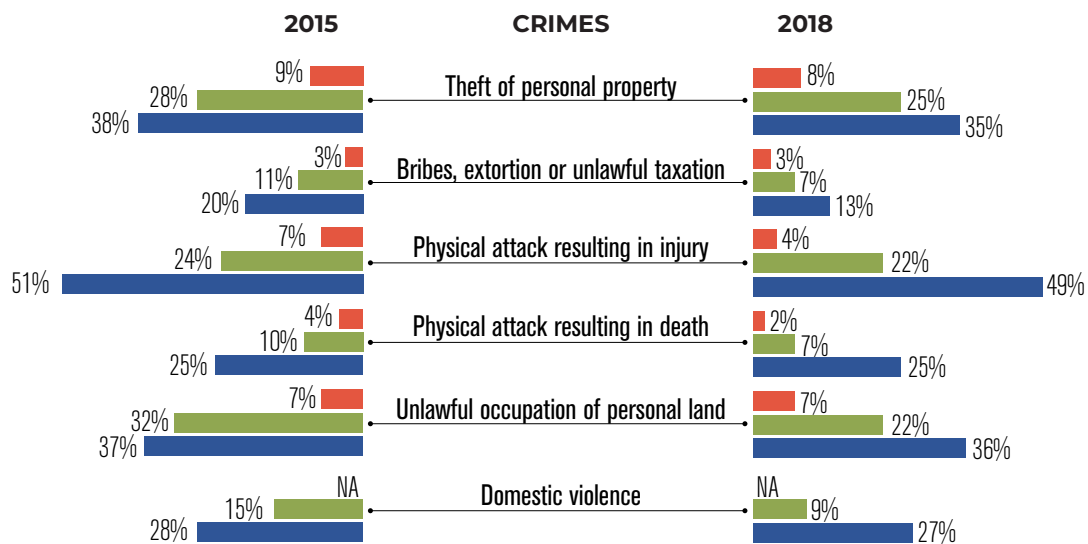


Figure 6

**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?



\* In order to protect potential victims of DV, general public respondents were not asked questions about DV.







## 4. PNTL officers and community leaders are the most common first-responders to communal security problems and disputes

4.1. In 2018, the overwhelming majority of the public (83%), community leaders (93%) and PNTL (95%) say that PNTL and citizens are working together to address security problems in their community. Although these responses are at very similar levels to 2015, they represent a sharp increase from 2013 (public=50%, community leaders=78%, PNTL=91%).

4.2. Public respondents indicated that, in general, they are much more likely to report crimes to community leaders than to PNTL.

When the public were asked whether, hypothetically, they would first report a crime to a community leader or a PNTL officer, the majority (72%) said they would report to a community leader while only 27% said they would report to PNTL. Since 2015 there has been a decrease in both the public (2015=34%, 2018=27%) and community leaders (2015=48%, 2018=39%) who say they would report first to PNTL. There has been a commensurate increase in public respondents saying they would report first to a community leader (2015=64%, 2018=72%).

4.3. At the same time, it is clear that PNTL officers are a common first point of contact for both the public and community leaders, and are the preferred first contact for serious or violent crimes (Fig 8).

4.4. Overall people who did experience a crime are equally likely to report first to PNTL as they are to community leaders.

Forty two percent of the public indicated that their first reaction to a crime they had experienced in the last year was to request assistance from PNTL, while 43% sought assistance from someone within the community. Of the latter, 32% sought help from Suku/Aldeia Chiefs, six percent from communal elders and five percent from the community in general (Fig 7). This is further illustrated by the people on the bus in Fig 11.

Figure 7

GP What was your first reaction to a crime or dispute which you experienced in the last year?

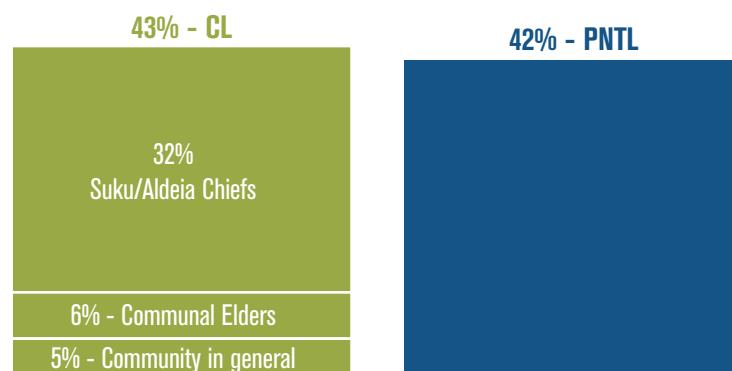
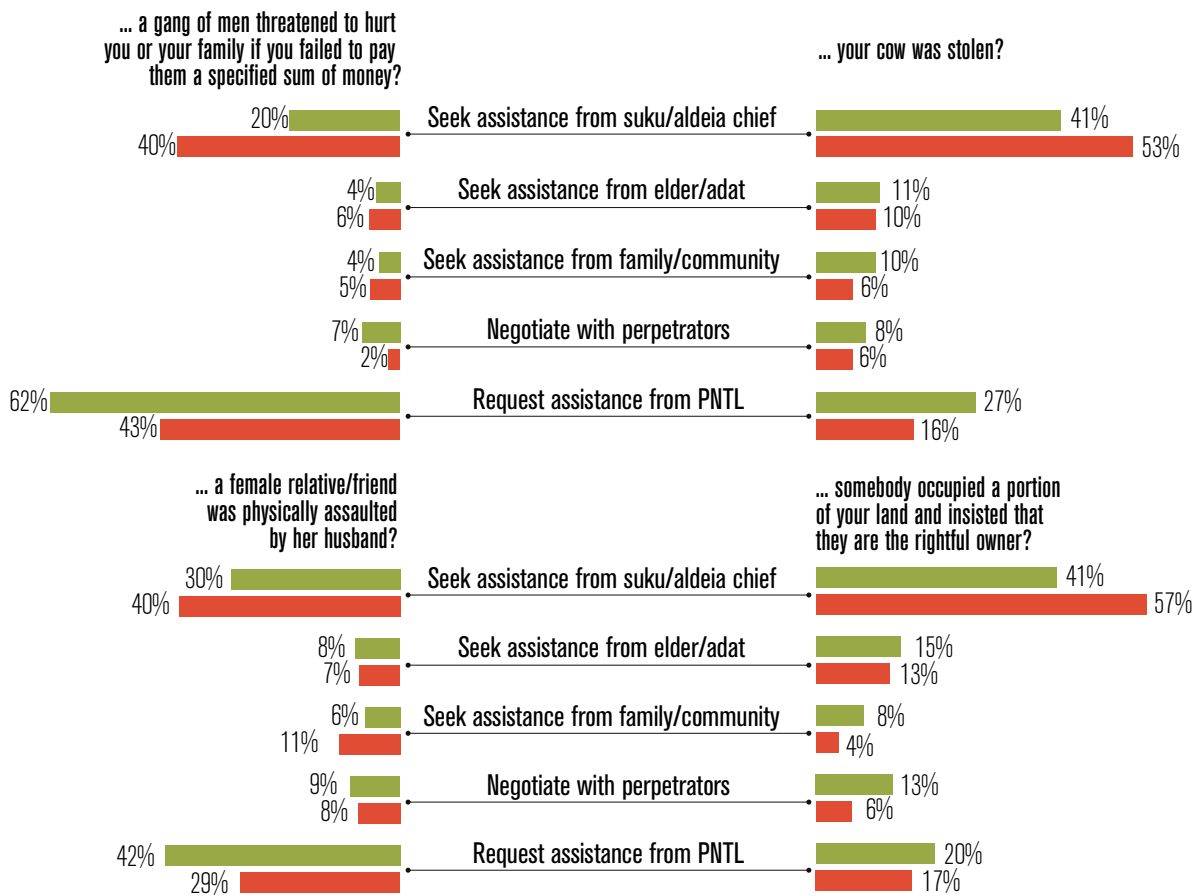


Figure 8

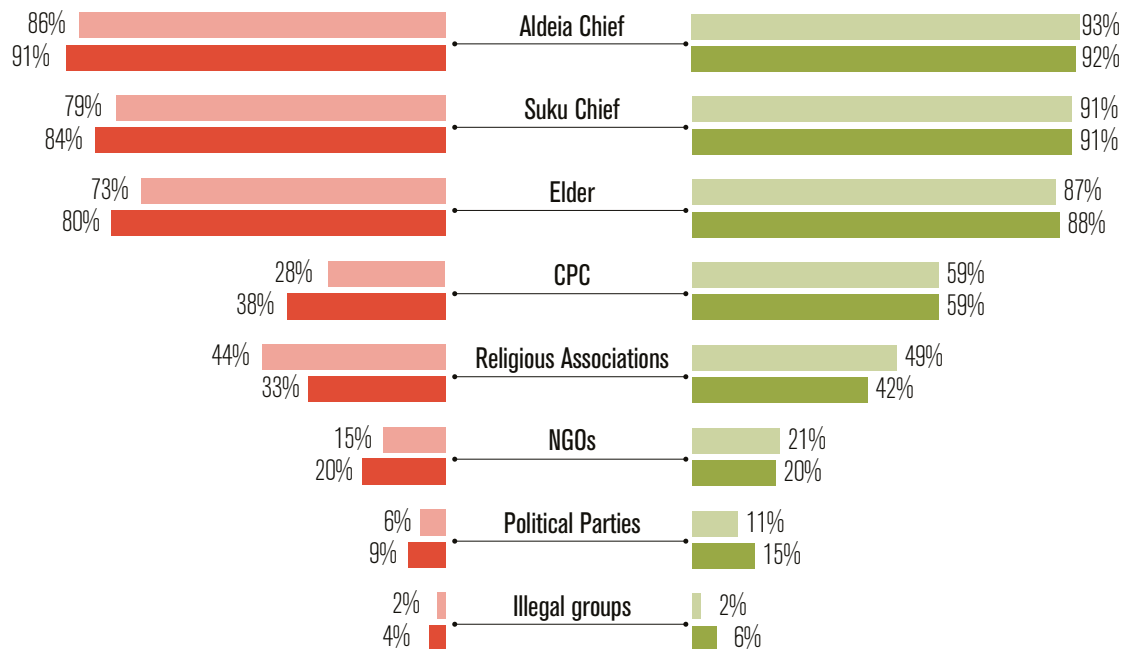
GP CL What is the first thing you would do if...



- 4.5 In 2018, the overwhelming majority of the public and community leaders recognize the role played by Suku Chiefs (public=97%, community leaders=98%), Aldeia Chiefs (public=99%, community leaders=98%) and Elders (public=96%, community leaders=98%) in maintaining security. These percentages have held steady since 2015. There are, however, various other community entities which play an important role in maintaining security, including Community Policing Councils (CPC), religious associations, NGOs and political parties (Fig 9).
- 4.6 There is growing confidence in the role of CPC. Among those public and community leader respondents who report having a CPC in their Suku in 2018, 88% of community leaders and 85% of the public say their CPC is effective at preventing crimes and disputes. There was a clear increase between 2015 and 2018 in both public (2015=71%, 2018=82%) and community leaders (2015=74%, 2018=86%) who think that CPC are effective at preventing the escalation of disputes.

Figure 9

**GP** **CL** In your opinion, which of the following groups are very active in the community in assisting the police in fighting crime in your community



GP 2015 GP 2018 CL 2015 CL 2018

## 5. PNTL and community leaders collaborate closely to resolve communal disputes

Systems and mechanisms for addressing disputes are complex, flexible and dynamic and there are numerous individuals and organisations who have a role to play in managing dispute resolution. Figure 11 indicates that these roles are heavily overlapping, and lead to intersecting pathways of assistance through informal webs of relationships based on trust and dialogue. Because of the complexity of the links between these groups, we cannot be certain exactly how they interact, and how ‘referrals’ between them take place. We can, however, be confident that referrals are not necessarily a formal, legalistic procedure. Instead, these take place spontaneously, informally and usually through existing communal relationships according to the patterns outlined below.

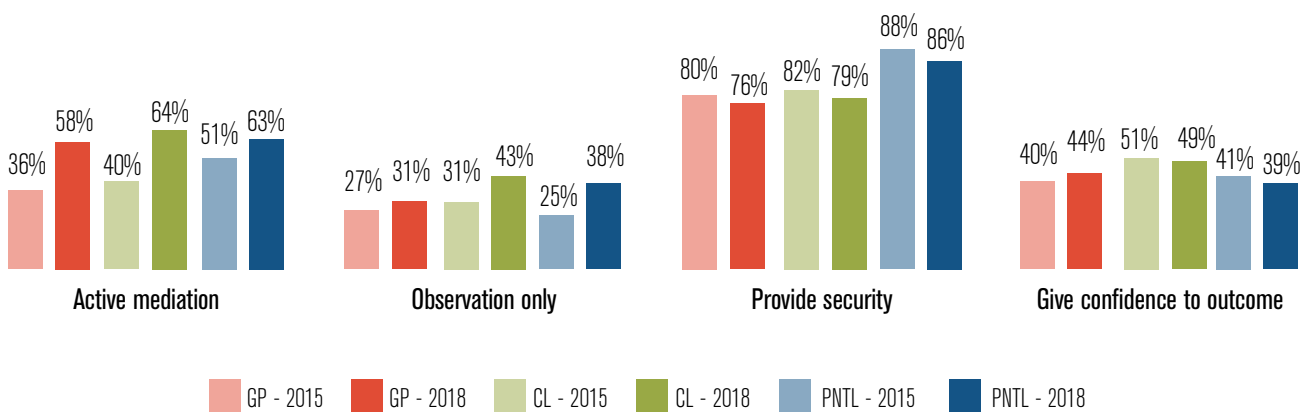
- 5.1. PNTL are heavily involved in communal dispute resolution, primarily through provision of security and active mediation.

In 2018 the majority of the public (65%) and community leaders (70%) say that PNTL are playing a role in the resolution of disputes by local community leaders. An even greater percentage of PNTL (83%) claim to be playing this role. The other main roles played by PNTL officers are to provide security, give confidence to the outcome of the resolution process and conduct observation.



Figure 10

GP CL PNTL What role do PNTL play in the resolution of disputes?



- 5.2 When public respondents have reported crimes or disputes to PNTL, these are usually resolved through mediation involving both PNTL and community leaders.<sup>6</sup> According to public and PNTL respondents, when the public seek assistance from PNTL, 64% of the time cases are resolved through mediation involving both PNTL and community leaders. There has been a significant increase (2015=36%, 2018=58%) in the number of people saying that PNTL are involved in active mediation.
- 5.3 According to public and PNTL respondents, the other common PNTL response to crimes or disputes is arrest of perpetrators (11%). These respondents also indicate that it is very rare for cases to be referred on for prosecution and investigation (2%) or to go trial (1%).
- 5.4 Of crimes or disputes reported initially to the community or referred to the community through PNTL, according to public and PNTL respondents, 75% are settled through mediation facilitated by Suku/Aldeia Chiefs,<sup>7</sup> 10% are settled by Elders and 6% through negotiation directly with the perpetrator.
- 5.5 Based on public and PNTL Survey responses, community leaders refer cases on to PNTL and PNTL to community leaders at the same rates (4%).

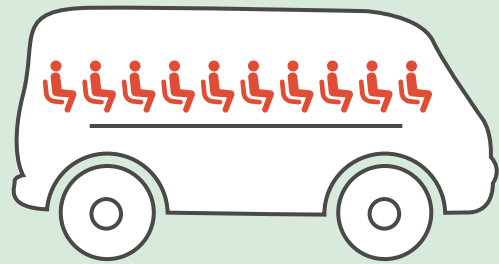
<sup>6</sup> The specific wording of the response option offered to respondents was 'settled through police and community mediation'.

<sup>7</sup> The specific wording of the response option offered to respondents was 'settled through mediation facilitated by Suku or Aldeia Chief' – similar to but distinct from the response option referred to above in footnote 6.

Figure 11

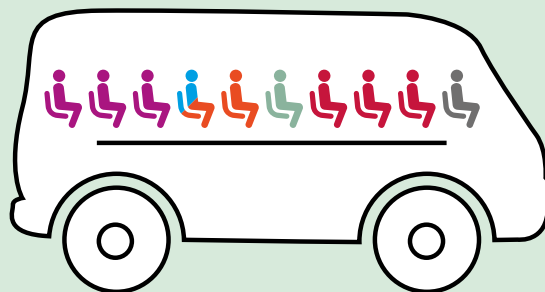
## JUSTICE SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Let's suppose that public respondents who experienced a crime in Timor-Leste in the last year are represented by



**10 people in a bus**

## WHAT CRIMES DID THEY EXPERIENCE?

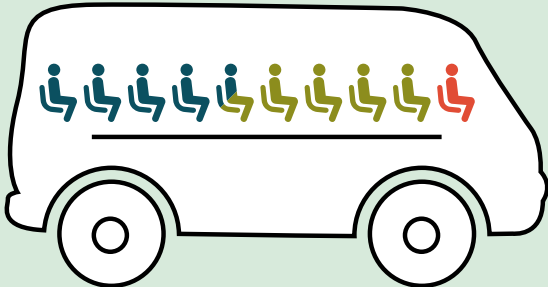


**3 land** | **0.5 attack – death** | **1.5 attack – injury** | **1 bribes & extortions** | **3 theft** | **1 other**

*\* This does not include domestic violence because public respondents were not asked about this*

# HOW DID THEY RESPOND?

Their first reaction to that crime was as follows:



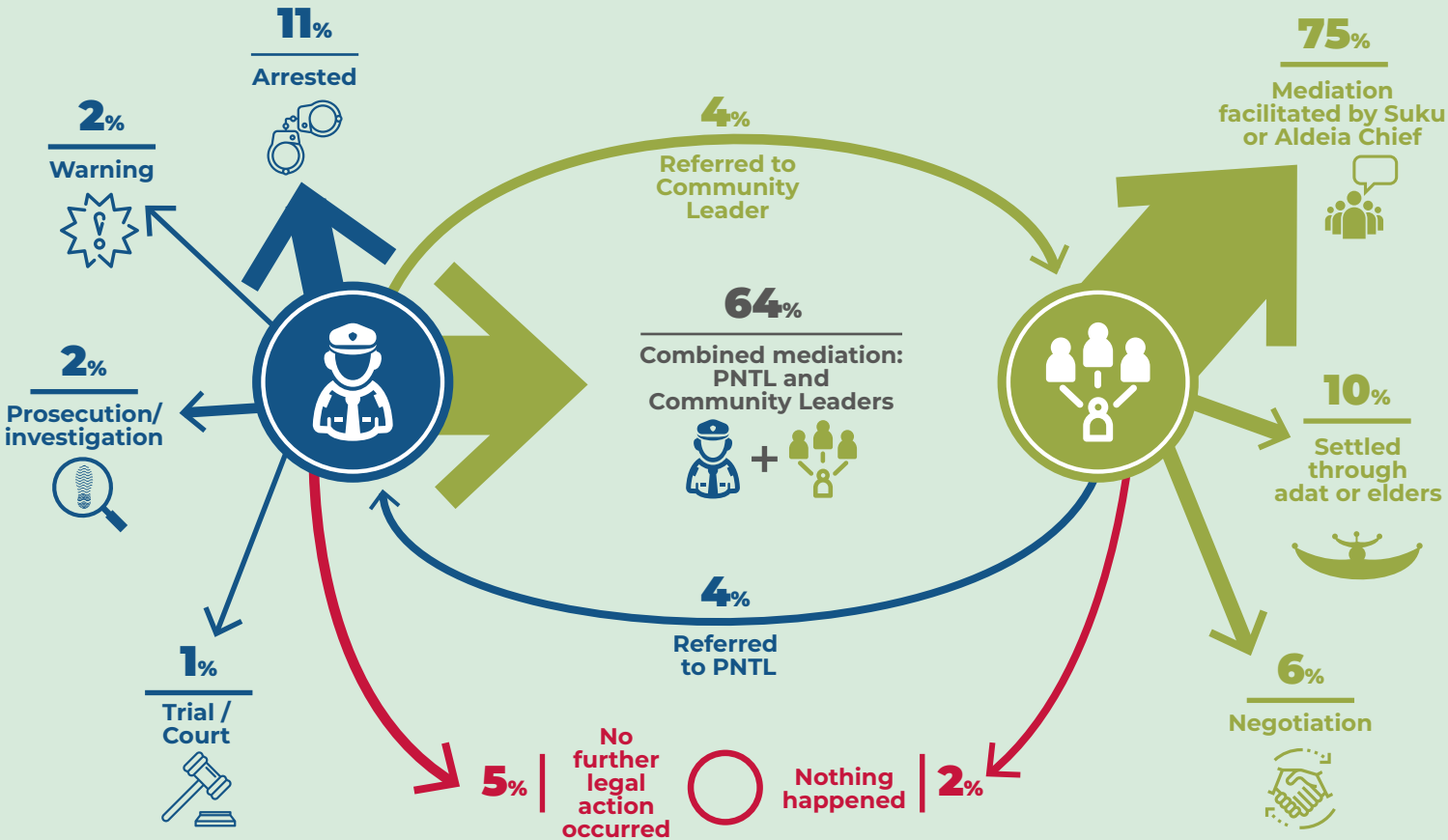
4.5 sought help from PNTL | 4.5 sought help from community | 1 other



## WHAT DID THE PNTL DO?



## WHAT DID THE COMMUNITY DO?



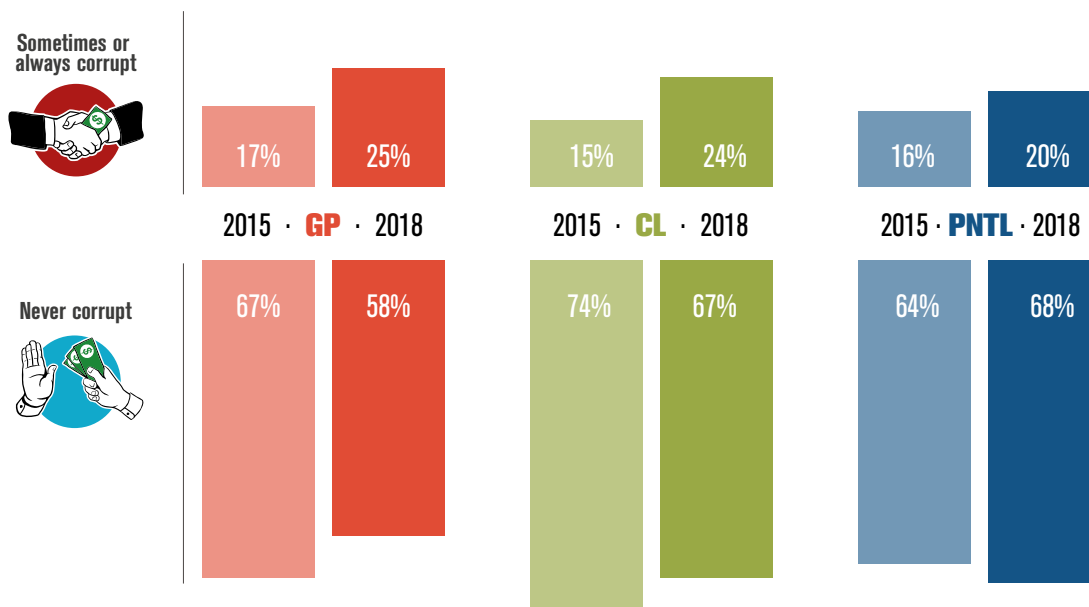
## 6. PNTL officers need to improve their understanding of what their roles and responsibilities are, and how to perform them effectively

6.1. This is best illustrated through treatment of DV cases, where multiple actors play a role in the resolution of DV cases, indicating usurpation of the role of legal process in responding to public crimes. This also indicates that in general people have more faith in customary-communal principles and practices than they do in the formal justice system.<sup>8</sup> According to the vast majority of PNTL respondents, based on their experience in handling a case in the preceding year, both PNTL officers (82%) and Suku Chiefs (78%) are involved in the final resolution of DV cases. According to a majority of PNTL (58%) and community leaders (62%), Elders are also involved in resolving DV cases. Legal aid organisations also play an important role, with a substantial minority of PNTL (18%) and community leaders (17%) indicating that they were involved in the final resolution of DV cases. On the other hand, only 0.3% of PNTL and community leaders cited a role for the courts, judges and the Public Prosecutor in the final resolution of DV cases.

Figure 12

GP CL PNTL

In terms of corruption, which of the following responses best describes the members of PNTL who serve your community?



<sup>8</sup> DV was defined and criminalized as a 'public crime' with the passage of the Law against Domestic Violence in 2010. This imposes an obligation on the state to conduct an investigation and, if there is sufficient evidence, to prosecute. It must be emphasized, however, that this does not legally preclude simultaneous mediation in parallel, within the family in accordance with more traditional approaches.

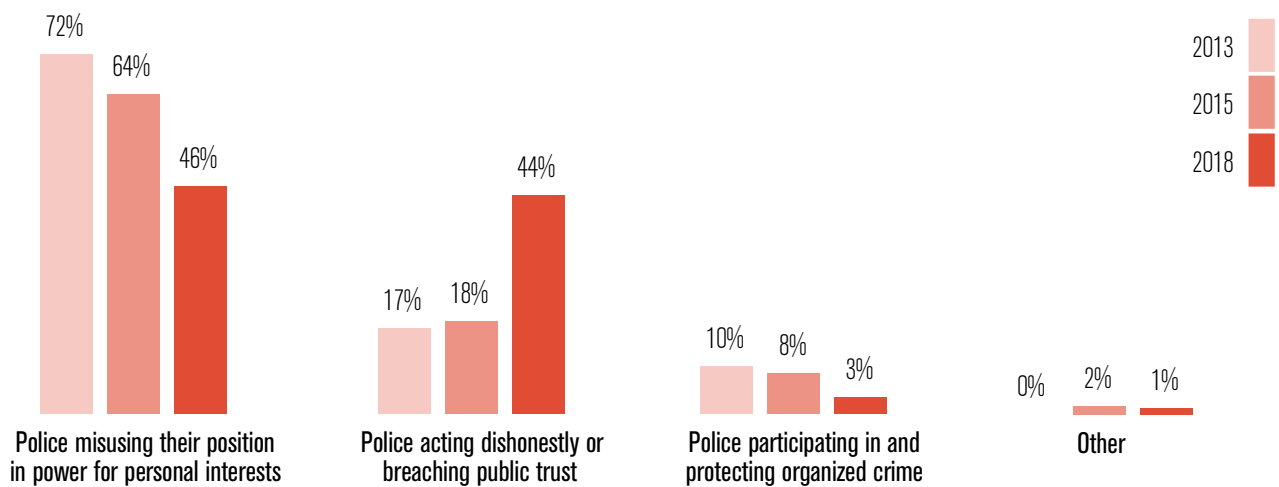


6.2. Although most people still say the PNTL are never corrupt, since 2015 there has been a significant increase, from 17% to 25%, in the percentage of the public who consider the PNTL to be corrupt (Fig 12).<sup>9</sup>

Since 2013 the public identify 'police misusing their power for personal interest' as the most common type of corruption, although this has declined dramatically over time (2013=72%, 2015=64%, 2018=46%) (Fig 13). Meanwhile, there has been a sharp increase in the public perception that believe that police acting dishonestly is the most common form of corruption (2013=17%, 2015=18%, 2018=44%).

**Figure 13**

**GP** In terms of police corruption, what do you believe is the most common type of behavior illustrated by corrupt officers?



## 7. PNTL officers face a number of challenges in undertaking their work

7.1. The biggest challenges identified by PNTL are, unsurprisingly, resource-based, relating to a lack of: human resources (66%); transportation (60%); adequate training (55%); and communications equipment (55%) (Fig 14). Since 2015 more PNTL nominate a lack of human resources as a serious challenge, while less nominate the availability of transportation.

Compared with 2015 more PNTL indicate a shortage of all types of resources, particularly in relation to fuel for vehicles (Fig 15).

7.2. Despite these challenges, job satisfaction amongst PNTL is very high with 91% of officers reporting they are happy or very happy with their job (Fig 16).

<sup>9</sup> Prior to asking respondents the question referred to in Figure 12, they were informed that '[c]orruption involves the misuse of position in power for personal interests, acting dishonestly, taking bribes, breaching public trust and/or participating in, and protecting organized crime'.

Figure 14

**PNTL** What do you consider to be the most serious challenges facing the police in the area in which you work, today?

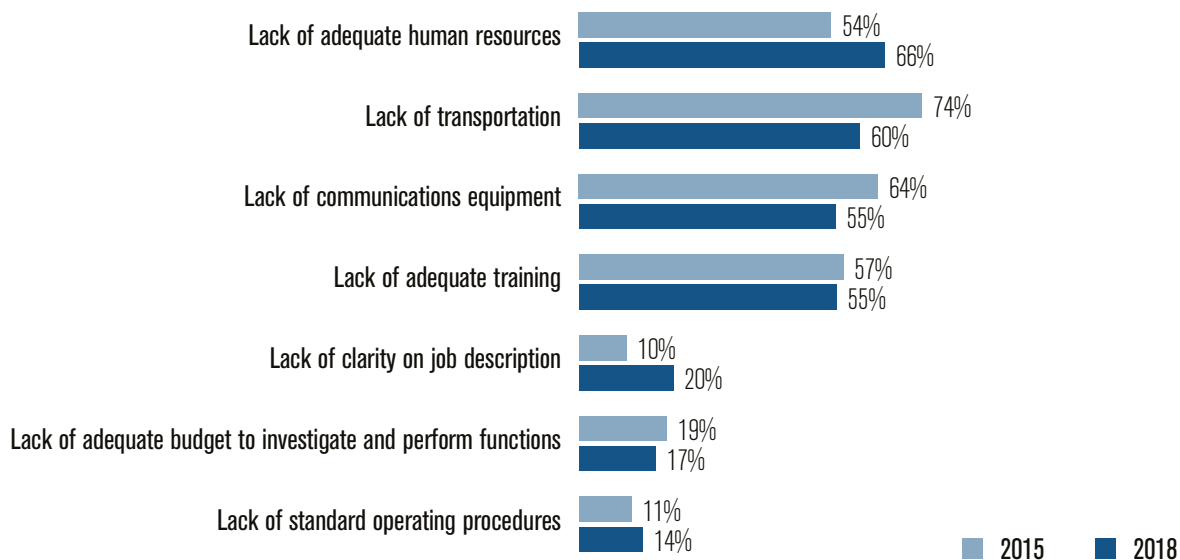


Figure 15

**PNTL** PNTL identified inadequacy of resources

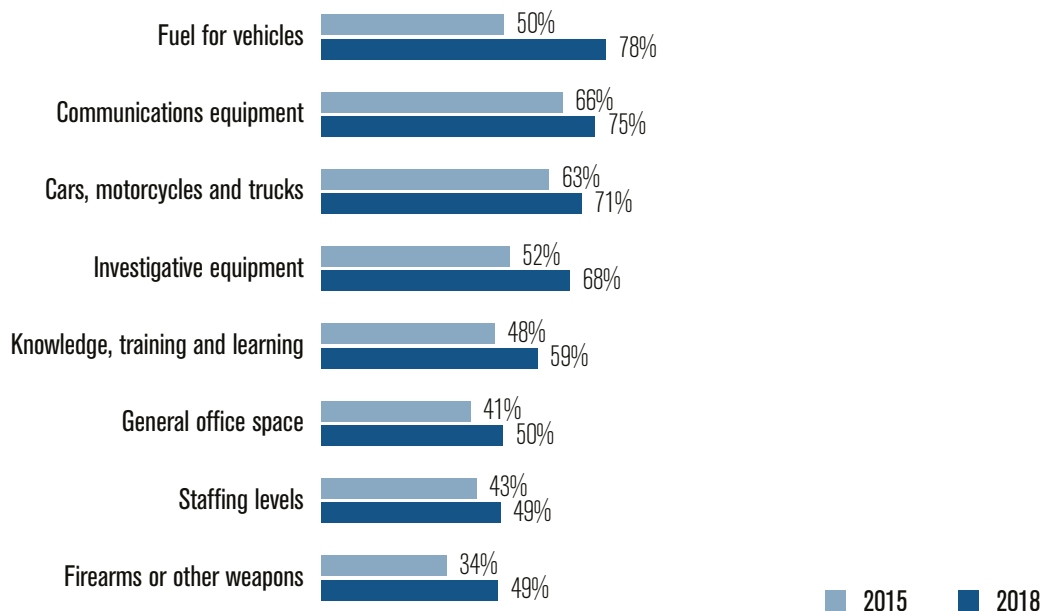


Figure 16

**PNTL** Percentage of PNTL Officers that are happy or very happy with their current job with the police







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