TIMOR-LESTE SAFETY, SECURITY AND JUSTICE PERCEPTIONS SURVEY

2022

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ABOUT THE ASIA FOUNDATION
The Asia Foundation is a non-profit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region is focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international relations. In Timor-Leste, the Foundation is currently focused on strengthening governance and policy, ending violence against women, developing inclusive tourism, and promoting peace and justice.

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents the key findings of The Asia Foundation's Timor-Leste Safety, Security and Justice Perceptions Survey, 2022. The survey aimed to capture perceptions of the general public and community leaders[1] on security, safety, dispute resolution, and the Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL). It builds on four previous iterations—the community-police perceptions survey—in 2008, 2013, 2015, and 2018. An additional law and justice survey was run in 2008 and 2013, with some questions overlapping, providing additional longitudinal data.

The survey generates empirical data that can be used by policymakers, the police, researchers, and development organizations to respond to people's experiences and perceived challenges of security and justice, with a view to strengthening the human security of people in Timor-Leste. The report is structured as follows. The remainder of this introduction sets out the context for the survey, its objectives and methods, followed by a summary of key findings. The second part presents the survey findings and is structured according to four key themes explored in the survey: perceptions of safety and security; perceptions of dispute resolution and justice-seeking behavior; perceptions of how police and community leaders treat members of vulnerable groups; and perceptions of police. Finally, the conclusion makes some recommendations and points to potential ways forward.

SURVEY CONTEXT

Timor-Leste has made formidable progress in moving away from conflict and consolidating its hard-won peace.[2] A number of challenges remain, however.[3] While there is no longer significant concern about communal or national level safety and security—personal or human security remains a concern for many individuals, whose development and wellbeing are held back as a result.[4]

The 2018-2022 period (the time since the last community-police perceptions survey was administered) has been a tumultuous time for Timor-Leste. Like the rest of the world, it has weathered the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting the banning of international travel, restrictions on domestic travel, and lockdowns in parts of the country. While the full impacts of COVID-19 are still unfolding, it is clear that there have been implications for both household finance, as well as for national GDP.[5]

While still responding to the global pandemic in April 2021, Timor-Leste also suffered the worst flooding in the country in recent years. All parts of the country were affected by flash flooding and 34 people died as a result, with a further 4,212 houses destroyed and 12,378 people in Dili alone were rendered homeless.[6] Nationwide, it is estimated that 30,322 households were affected.[7] Shocks such as the pandemic and natural disasters are important influences on people's experiences of safety and wellbeing.[8]

These more striking events have happened against the background of political uncertainty. In 2018, following disputed election results, the Timor-Leste Court of Appeal confirmed the Alliance for Change and Progress (AMP) had won an absolute majority in parliament, with the former President, José Maria 'Taur Matan Ruak' Vasconcelos, becoming Prime Minister. In 2020, fractures emerged in the governing coalition, with the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) voting against the government's budget and withdrawing from the AMP. New alliances were formed to support the continuation of the AMP government, but the withdrawal of CNRT is notable given it is led by former Prime Minister and President Xanana Gusmão.[9]

These political shifts also have economic implications. While Timor-Leste retains its goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2030, the AMP government—without CNRT—is seen as less supportive of largescale infrastructure projects (favored under the CNRT government) and more likely to back basic development.[10] While efforts to diversify the economy continue, Timor-Leste remains one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world, with more than 80% of government expenditure financed by drawdowns on the Timor-Leste Petroleum Fund.[11]

This political and economic context underscores the extent to which Timor-Leste's future and development trajectory are no longer contested by violence and insecurity but by political agendas and economic policy. While this indicates the wider shift in the country towards more resilient security, it nonetheless underscores the precarity that many Timorese citizens continue to face, which contributes to their personal insecurity..

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The survey builds on and contributes to longitudinal data on security and justice in Timor-Leste to support more evidence-based and informed policymaking and program implementation. The limitations of a perceptions survey mean that this report should also be read as a jumping-off point for a range of additional research and learning questions that are best pursued through qualitative research to test and deepen the findings presented here, including to better understand how people conceptualize key terms employed throughout the survey such as safety, security, justice, resolution, retribution, and fairness. These potential research avenues will be noted throughout the report.

The survey includes a range of variables that enable disaggregation and comparison to varying degrees dependent on sample size and margins of error. Subsequently, the survey can also provide a more granular picture of gendered experiences of security and dispute resolution, or regional variation, for instance. As Timor-Leste continues to demonstrate significant resilience in terms of overall levels of security, this disaggregated view becomes more important. The most pressing questions shift from whether there is security or justice to who experiences insecurity and injustice and why. This report aims to capture some of that granularity—methodological concerns allowing.

> " *The survey builds on and contributes to longitudinal data on security and justice in Timor-Leste to support more evidence-based and informed policymaking and program implementation.*

METHODS

Survey design

The survey was designed to build on previous iterations of the community-police perceptions surveys (2008, 2013, 2015, and 2018) and the law and justice surveys of 2008 and 2013. Each of these surveys has evolved over time, reflecting the particularities of the context in Timor-Leste and The Asia Foundation's programming. This latest wave of the survey in 2022 deepens the focus on dispute resolution as The Asia Foundation's community policing programming continues to move away from institutional support to the PNTL to a stronger focus on community-level dispute resolution and how people resolve disputes and navigate justice.

Across all six waves of the survey, a large number of questions have been retained for longitudinal purposes, providing data over 14 years on evolving perceptions of security, safety, and policing. About 20 questions in the general public survey—of 83 questions in total, not including demographic questions—have been asked since the first survey wave in 2008. A further 27 questions have been asked from 2013 or 2015 onwards. Other questions are newer and were introduced in 2018 or 2022, reflecting the shift in focus of the survey from this time. This make-up of questions attempts to strike a balance between the value of longitudinal data on the one hand and the impetus for new or different information—or more appropriately worded questions—on the other.

In 2022, for the first time, the PNTL was not surveyed as a distinct sample population. It targeted two distinct population groups (the general public and community leaders) through two survey instruments. The survey questionnaire was divided into four sections: demographic information; respondent perceptions of the safety and security situation; justice-seeking behavior and dispute resolution processes; and perceptions of the PNTL and police-community cooperation.

Sampling

The 2022 survey interviewed a random, representative sample of members of the general public and community leaders aged 17 years and over from all 13 municipalities of Timor-Leste (the sampling frame was completed prior to Atauro Island being designated as Timor-Leste's 14th municipality, administratively separating it from the Dili municipality). Six municipalities were oversampled to provide representative data of the general population in those locales; this was deemed necessary given the significant regional variation in results. Because it was not feasible to oversample in every municipality, the following municipalities were selected for greater focus: Baucau, Bobonaro, and Dili (where there have historically been higher rates of disputes), Ermera (where there is believed to be strong community policing practices) and Oecusse (where there is more limited information on security and justice). This sampling means that for the general public

survey, there is a 2.3% margin of error for national-level results. In municipalities that were not oversampled, there is a margin of error of 7.3% for municipal-level results versus 5.9% in those that were oversampled. For the community leaders survey, there is a margin of error of 5.5% for national-level results, with the sample not representative at the municipal level.

TABLE 1	Sample size by survey round		
	General public	Community leaders	PNTL
2008	1040	140	246
2013	1895	467	748
2015	3520	976	899
2018	1791	639	731
2022	2805 1420 males 1385 females	350 331 males 18 females	0

Survey implementation

The survey was implemented over 39 days between November 2021 and January 2022 by 62 enumerators (43 male; 19 female) who are part of the Timor-Leste Research and Advocacy Network (TRAIN), which regularly undertakes survey implementation. Three hundred and forty-five aldeias[12] were randomly selected based on their location using SPSS Statistics software from 2,233 aldeias nationwide. Eight households were randomly selected in each aldeia, using a systematic random table with household lists provided by the chief of the aldeia or suco. A gender balance was ensured by using a Kish Grid to randomly select four male and four female respondents (over 17 years of age) from the eight randomly selected households in each aldeia.

The sheer feat of implementing such a large survey across often inhospitable terrain during the rainy season, over Christmas, and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic should not be underestimated. The enumerators traveled by motorbike (with accidents along the way), crossed rivers, slept in suco offices and the houses of hospitable strangers, and implemented surveys in the rain with tablets wrapped in plastic. It is easy when reading final reports to overlook the immense effort involved in collecting the data that informs them.

The Asia Foundation designed and coded the surveys onto Samsung Galaxy tablets, and the survey was conducted through individual face-to-face interviews with one enumerator interviewing one respondent. However, as is customary in Timor-Leste, other members of the household or community were at times present. While the presence of family and community members may have

influenced respondent answers, enumerators reported this was unlikely as discussions with others around are common practice, and sensitive questions were not asked in the presence of others.

The surveys were long. On average, they took between 45 minutes to two hours to complete. In some cases, particularly for women, interviews were paused and resumed later in the day so that respondents could attend to other duties. The length of the survey poses methodological challenges, with answers to questions later in the survey being potentially less accurate than earlier responses.

Limitations and errors

As with all surveys, the methodological approach taken has some critical limitations, and some degree of human error inevitably occurred. Methodologically, having a survey designed in English by non-Tetun speakers and then translated into Tetun by a non-subject expert creates significant room for error. This was addressed, to some extent, by:

- using the same translator that has been used to translate the community-police perceptions survey in the past;
- holding a session with the survey designers and enumerators to talk through the survey and the intent of the questions; and,
- survey designers being on hand to respond to questions or queries from the enumerators in the lead up to and during survey implementation.

However, it remains likely that some degree of slippage occurred between the English and Tetun versions of the survey. Moreover, even within the Tetun version of the survey, it was noted that some of the language is highly formalized and not the most common vernacular amongst people in Timor-Leste.

A number of errors occurred in survey implementation, which meant that some questions were not asked in the manner intended. This involved questions intended to be asked as multiple response questions responding to a list of options readout instead of being asked as single response questions–forcing respondents to select just one option instead of multiple.[13] This makes comparison with historical data more tenuous, as does the fact that in 2022, some questions were posed in new ways (albeit correctly asked by enumerators). Where this occurred is highlighted in the relevant section of the report.

The most striking error, however, related to how the question about dispute resolution pathways was asked in the general public survey. The survey first asked whether the respondent or a member of their family had experienced any of the following crimes/disputes in the past year (with a list of 16 crimes and disputes readout). The intention was for the survey to ask about the dispute

resolution pathway utilized for *each* of the crimes/disputes respondents indicated they had experienced. However, in practice, enumerators asked about the dispute resolution pathway in general terms, regardless of the number of crimes/disputes the respondent indicated they had experienced. As a result, it is impossible to know whether the dispute resolution pathway related to every crime or dispute respondents and their family members had experienced or just one of those crimes or disputes. This survey report relies only on the dispute resolution pathways reported by those respondents who had experienced *one* crime or dispute so that we can be certain that the pathway relates to a particular crime experience and ensure accurate analysis. This granular detail of how people respond to different crimes and disputes is important as dispute resolution processes become a greater central focus of security and justice in Timor-Leste.

Photo by: Solita Noronha Pereira, 2022

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The 2022 survey of community perceptions of safety and security reveals that hard-won improvements in safety and security have been maintained since the last survey in 2018. Given Timor-Leste's recent experiences with COVID-19 and the 2021 floods, maintaining and even improving respondents' perceptions of safety and security is impressive. Nonetheless, people continue to experience crime and interpersonal disputes, most typically relating to family matters, land, and animals; respondents continue to be concerned about their safety and security and that of their families. Domestic violence (DV) continues to be underreported in the survey, suggesting significant work remains to elevate understanding of DV as a community security and justice issue.

The 2022 survey findings were characterized more by continuity than substantial change, albeit some shifts were apparent. Although respondents continue to rely primarily on television for information about security, they increasingly rely upon the internet and social media, particularly young respondents. General public respondents also reported increasing reliance upon aldeia chiefs for security information, consistent with the broader finding that aldeia chiefs are the most prominent community dispute-resolution actors.

As in years past, respondents continued to perceive community leaders as having the greatest responsibility for security in their location, although it became apparent that they see aldeia chiefs as having greater responsibility than suco chiefs or lian-na'in. While people also continued to regard the PNTL as having a significant role in the maintenance of security, when asked about responsibility for the resolution of disputes and grievances, the general public respondents saw a lesser role for the PNTL; they attributed the most significant responsibility to community leaders, once again most prominently aldeia chiefs. In contrast to members of the general public, community leaders considered the PNTL to have the greatest responsibility for security in their location.

Half of all general public respondents had experienced at least one crime or dispute in the previous year; this figure was likely much higher than in previous years due to the inclusion of a broader range of crime/dispute response options. Divorce and abandonment[14] were the most common crimes/disputes experienced, followed by crop destruction by animals and land disputes. The inclusion of a broader range of crimes/disputes resulted in greater consistency (than in previous years) between what respondents *think they would do* if affected by a hypothetical crime/dispute and what respondents *did do* when affected by actual crimes/disputes. Notably, in 2018 most respondents said they would first report to a community leader if affected by a hypothetical crime/dispute, while equal numbers of people who experienced actual crimes/disputes reported to community leaders and the PNTL. In 2022, however, respondents who had actual experiences of crimes/disputes predominantly first reported to community leaders, consistent with what they thought they would do if they experienced a hypothetical crime/dispute.

Hard-won improvements in safety and security have been maintained since the last survey in 2018.

Most respondents who experienced crimes or disputes did not retaliate, but only just over half sought assistance—although assistance seeking is more common for some crimes or disputes than others. Proximity plays the strongest role in determining from whom people seek assistance. Those who seek assistance typically have their issue resolved by the first person they report to and feel they were fairly treated. Overwhelmingly, general public respondents see community leaders as the most appropriate initial avenue for reporting a crime/dispute. However, they take different matters to different types of leaders, and the degree to which they perceive a role for the PNTL varies according to the nature of the issue at hand. Community leaders report good relationships with the PNTL and see them as the most appropriate initial mechanism for reporting crimes and disputes.

Land disputes were the matters most commonly referred to others by community leaders and the matters they report finding most difficult to deal with. Community leader respondents also report finding it difficult to deal with physical attacks resulting in death and domestic violence, which they don't believe they should deal with and rightly perceive them as police matters. Given that members of the general public continue to take domestic violence to community leaders to resolve it as a first option, ongoing public education about how to address domestic violence is essential. It is a positive finding that people perceive equal treatment by police and chiefs for all; however, this seems less the case for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Transexual, and Intersex (LGBTQIA+) members of the community.

Given Timor-Leste's recent experiences with COVID-19 and the 2021 floods, maintaining and even improving perceptions of safety and security is impressive.

Community leader respondents rely heavily upon their knowledge of community traditions and customs, rather than Timorese law, to resolve crimes/disputes brought to them, typically using mediation, which assumes a range of forms. However, despite the prominent role of community leaders in dispute resolution, addressing crimes and disputes remains a collaborative endeavor; this is consistent with respondents' understanding of community policing and involves partnerships with both state and non-state actors—most notably with police but also increasingly with non-government and religious organizations, as well as veterans and martial arts groups (the presence of the latter which appears to have grown since the last survey).

Awareness of the concept of community policing continues to grow in Timor-Leste. However, fewer respondents reported having an active Community Policing Council (CPC) in their community in 2022, possibly due to more limited operations in light of COVID-19 restrictions. The high demand for increased numbers of women in the PNTL continues.

The Ofisiál Polísia Suku or Village Policing Service (OPS) plays an important role in connecting people with the broader PNTL, and community-PNTL engagement has increased since the last survey. Most people can access a police station in under an hour, and most of those who made direct contact with police received a response in under 30 minutes. These are positive findings, yet there is significant regional variation, with respondents in some areas of the country receiving substantially slower police responses and taking substantially longer to access a police station—in some cases, more than a day.

What stands out most prominently in the 2022 data is the widespread regional variation. Although minimal variations based on the demographics such as gender and age are apparent, the degree to which variation exists between municipalities suggests that where people live has a significant impact on their experiences of safety, security, and justice. Therefore, it is not easy to generalize about people's experiences at the national level because doing so masks great diversity in lived experience. Further work could draw out these sub-national variations and experiences to inform policymaking and programming.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Perceptions of safety and security are important in providing people with the confidence to participate in the life of their community and invest in their future—be that through attending school, buying property, going into business, seeking employment, or some other option. An individual's belief that they, and their families, are free from harm, danger, and threat is an important foundation for development. In a setting like Timor-Leste, where security cannot be taken for granted, given the young country's hard-won independence and the return to widespread violence in 2006, capturing citizen perceptions of safety and security is important. Moreover, people's experiences of safety and security are not consistent: men, women, girls, and boys experience safety and security differently, as do people living in different regions, vulnerable groups such as people living with disability, and the LGBTQIA+ community. For this reason, a more disaggregated view of people's varying perceptions and experiences of safety and security is essential. As in previous years, the survey did not define the terms safety and security for respondents. Thus, it would be helpful to examine how people conceptualize these terms (through qualitative research) to deepen our understanding of safety and security in Timor-Leste.

In Timor-Leste, a wide range of actors are relevant to people's perceptions of safety and security–from the PNTL to suco and aldeia chiefs to lian-na'in, veterans, and community and youth groups. This diversity means that it is useful to understand which actors people perceive as having the greatest responsibility for safety and security.
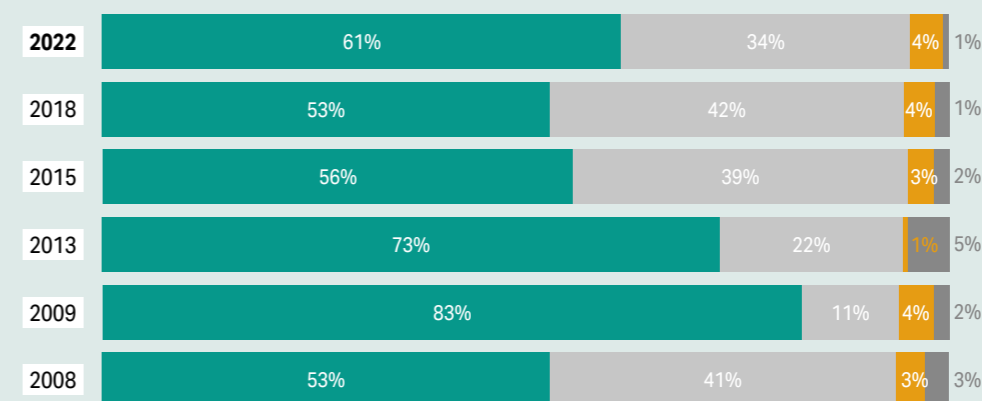
KEY FINDINGS ON SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Most respondents report that the security situation in their locality has improved compared to the previous year, although there is significant regional variation in responses.

- Although more respondents report improvements in the security situation and a greater sense of safety (compared to 2018), more respondents also express being concerned about safety and security.

- The most serious security problems facing communities were similar to those reported in previous years, with family safety and personal physical safety the primary concerns. Respondents also worried about how to resolve a dispute they have and whether resolution would be fair. More respondents (than in previous years) are worried about possessions being stolen and tensions leading to conflict.

- Respondents report accessing security information through a variety of means, with television the primary means, although there is increasing reliance upon the internet and social media.

- Respondents continue to perceive community leaders as having the greatest responsibility for security in their location. Aldeia chiefs emerge as the actor deemed to have primary responsibility for security (particularly for women), followed by the PNTL (more so outside Dili than in Dili).

Perceptions of security improvements have remained relatively stable since 2015, albeit more respondents felt that security had improved since the preceding year (61%) in 2022 than in 2018 (53%) and 2015 (56%). In 2018, only 4% of people felt that security had become worse.

> " *Perceptions of security continue to remain stable and have improved slightly.*

FIGURE 1 How would you describe the security situation in your locality compared to the previous year?

Year	Security has improved	Security has stayed the same	Security has become worse	Don't know / No answer
2022	61%	34%	4%	1%
2018	53%	42%	4%	1%
2015	56%	39%	3%	2%
2013	73%	22%	1%	5%
2009	83%	11%	4%	2%
2008	53%	41%	3%	3%

■ Security has improved
■ Security has stayed the same
■ Security has become worse
■ Don't know / No answer

Beneath this headline finding, however, there is significant regional diversity across municipalities. Perceptions that security had improved compared to the previous year were strongest in Dili (75%), Ermera (75%), Liquica (82%), and Manufahi (72%), with only 10% of respondents in Ainaro saying the situation had improved. Baucau (9%) had the highest number of respondents who said security had deteriorated in the last year. The views of community leaders differed slightly from those of the general public: 66% believed security had improved (compared to 61% of general public respondents); 28% believed it had stayed the same (compared to 34% of the general public); and 6% reported that it had become worse (compared to 4% of the general public).
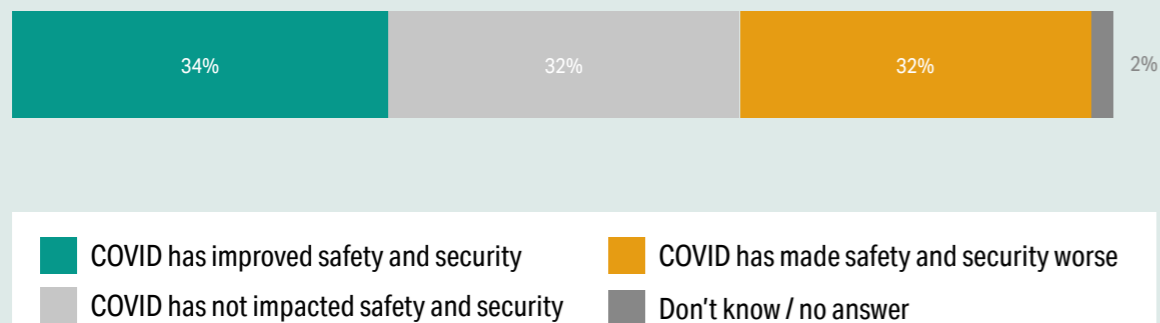
Feelings of safety have also improved—83% of respondents felt very safe or somewhat safe in the locality where they lived, up from 71% in 2018 and 78% in 2015. Community leaders report feeling very safe or somewhat safe in their locality at higher rates (88%) than the general public, also up from 75% in 2018 and 80% in 2015. Again, however, there is a significant regional variation in these findings. While 91% of respondents in Manatuto feel 'very safe', this compares with just 50% in Liquica.

Correspondingly, there has been a decrease in respondents reporting feeling very unsafe (11%), down from 18% in 2018 and 16% in 2015, albeit a notably higher percentage of respondents living in Manufahi (32%) report feeling very unsafe in their locality. This heightened sense of safety amongst general population respondents may be attributable to many communities having spent much time in lockdown, with more limited commerce, social events, and movement of people. This experience of being more confined to one's household and immediate community may have contributed to a sense of improved security. However, it is striking that the recognition of increased domestic violence during lockdowns[15] does not appear to come through in the data: more women reported feeling 'very safe' than men and fewer women reported feeling 'very unsafe' than men.

Given the widespread impact of COVID-19 on people's wellbeing and freedom of movement, the 2022 survey sought to explore whether COVID had impacted the safety and security situation in Timor-Leste. Responses were very evenly distributed; there was little to no variation between male and female respondents or between those in and outside Dili, albeit there were notable differences at the municipal level. Similar numbers of respondents (34%) felt that COVID had improved safety and security than those who felt it had made safety and security worse (32%) or had no impact (32%). Interestingly, the responses of community leaders were less evenly distributed, with a higher proportion of community leaders (38%) feeling that COVID had made safety and security worse and 31% reporting that it had improved or not impacted security.

Future research avenues: Explore the ways in which people conceptualize safety and security, as well as the drivers of higher rates of people reporting feeling 'very unsafe' in their locality in Manufahi than elsewhere in the country.

Again, regional variation is important here. In Manatuto (62%), Liquica (59%), Lautem (49%), and Viqueue (49%), roughly half to two-thirds of respondents felt COVID had improved safety and security; in comparison in Covalima (57%), Ermera (49%) and Ainaro (46%) roughly half of all respondents felt that COVID had made safety and security worse. This effect may reflect differences in local restrictions on freedom of movement. Overall, it may suggest that COVID has not had a notable impact on community members' perceptions of safety and security in their locality.

These findings are supported by the findings of the Timor-Leste COVID-19 Survey (Round 8 September 2021)[16], noting that questions about the relationship between COVID, safety, and security were posed differently. While this survey explicitly asked about the impact of COVID on safety and security, the Timor-Leste COVID-19 Survey asked people whether they felt safety and security in their communities improved or stayed the same compared to three months ago; this was not explicitly asking about the impact of COVID but asking the question about COVID specifically within the context of the survey. In that survey, most respondents reported that security had stayed the same, although responses were less evenly distributed than in the current survey, with greater numbers of respondents feeling that security had improved than in the current survey, and lower numbers of respondents feeling that security had become worse.

Photo by: Solita Noronha Pereira, 2022

FIGURE 2 **How has COVID impacted the safety and security situation in your local community?**

34%	32%	32%	2%

- ■ COVID has improved safety and security
- ■ COVID has not impacted safety and security
- ■ COVID has made safety and security worse
- ■ Don't know / no answer

FIGURE 3 **How would you describe the safety and security situation in your local community compared to before the first State of Emergency and start of COVID in March Last year? (From September 2021 COVID-19 Survey)**

Nearly all feel safety and security in their local communities improved or stayed the same compared to three months ago*

	Improved	Stayed the same	Worse
Sep 2021	15%	71%	14%
Jun 2021	31%	66%	3%
May 2021	16%	69%	15%
Feb 2021	46%	49%	5%
Dec 2020	32%	52%	16%
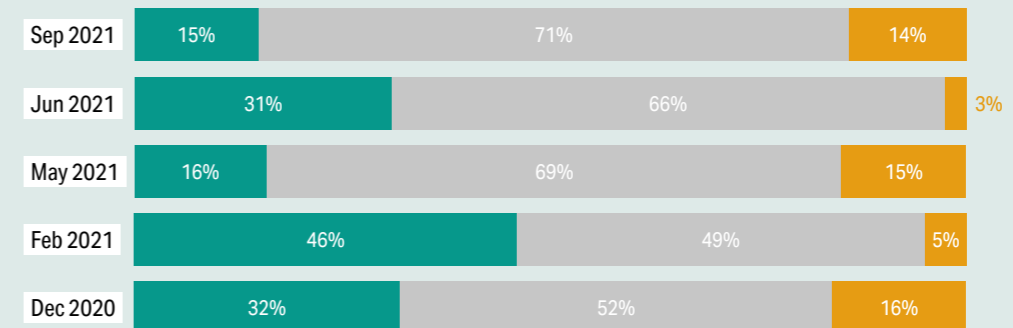
* Prior to September 2021, question wordings asked "compared to March 2020"

- ■ Improved ■ Stayed the same ■ Worse

While respondents' *feelings* about safety have improved, they simultaneously reported feeling slightly more *concerned* about their safety, with 57% feeling very or somewhat concerned about their safe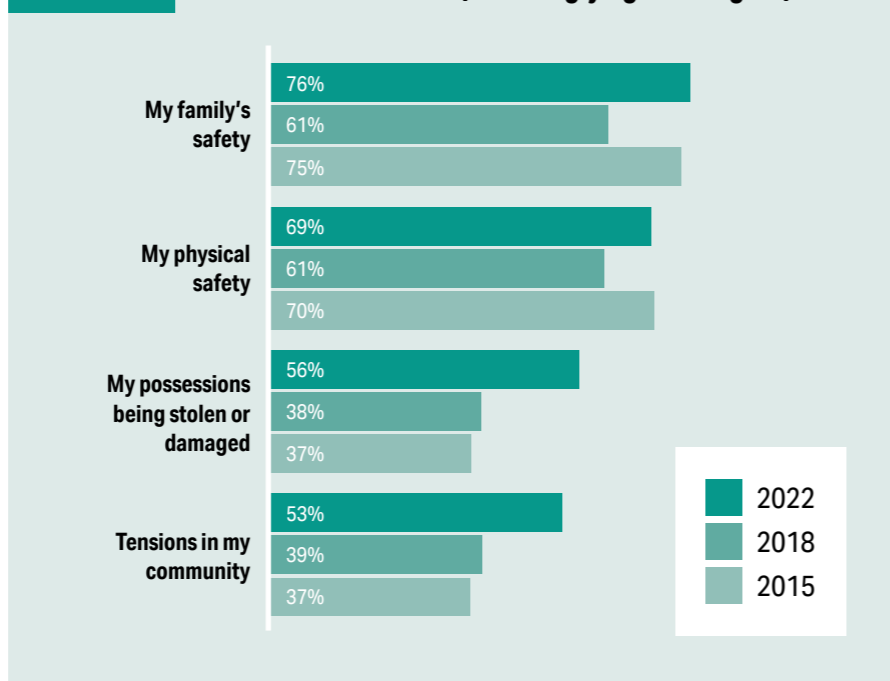ty, compared to 52% in 2018 and 51% in 2015. Community leader concerns about safety also increased, with 66% feeling very or somewhat concerned about their safety, compared to 54% in 2018 and 55% in 2015. Respondents in Dili were more concerned about their safety (57% very concerned) than those outside Dili (34% very concerned).

Respondents were most concerned about their family's safety, more so than in previous years, with 76% of people agreeing strongly or somewhat that they were concerned about their family's safety, up from 61% in 2018. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents agreed strongly or somewhat that they were worried about their physical safety, up from 61% in 2018. Whilst concerns about possessions being stolen or damaged and tensions in the community leading to conflict were less prevalent than concerns about one's family's safety and personal physical safety, both had risen considerably since 2018, with 56% of respondents agreeing (strongly or somewhat) that they were concerned about their possessions (up from 38% in 2018) and 53% agreeing (strongly or somewhat) that they were concerned about tensions leading to conflict (up from 39% in 2018).

Like members of the general public, community leader respondents were most concerned about their family's safety (73% agreed strongly or somewhat, up from 59% in 2018) and their own physical safety (68% agreed strongly or somewhat, up from 59% in 2018), and at higher rates than in 2018. As with members of the general public, while they were not as concerned about possessions and tensions in the community as they were about their family's safety and their own physical safety, community leaders in 2022 expressed markedly greater concerns about their possessions being stolen or damaged (60% agreed strongly or somewhat) than they did in 2018 (36%), and about tension in their community leading to conflict (60%, up from 36% in 2018).

It is interesting that while *feelings* of safety and security increased, *worries* about safety and security also increased across all categories of concern (physical, family, possessions, tensions in the community). In 2018, people's concerns about their physical safety and their family's safety were lower than in 2015, resulting in a positive shift reported, whilst concerns about possessions and tensions within the community were reported as remaining relatively stable. It could be that despite findings that COVID was not perceived to have impacted safety and security, people remain living in a heightened state of anxiety about life in general due to the ongoing impact of worrying about their health, the risks of vaccination, and the impact of COVID-19 on things such as their ability to buy food.[17] Residual stress and anxiety from the 2021 floods may also play a role, as might underlying concerns about continuing political tensions in the country. More qualitative research would be required to investigate what drives these higher levels of concern.

FIGURE 4 — I am worried about… (% strongly agree or agree)

My family's safety
- 76% (2022)
- 61% (2018)
- 75% (2015)

My physical safety
- 69% (2022)
- 61% (2018)
- 70% (2015)

My possessions being stolen or damaged
- 56% (2022)
- 38% (2018)
- 37% (2015)

Tensions in my community
- 53% (2022)
- 39% (2018)
- 37% (2015)

2022
2018
2015

"
Yet concerns about safety and security have increased.

In 2022, for the first time, the survey also sought to explore whether people feel worried about how they would resolve a dispute they or a family member has and about whether dispute resolution would be fair. Responses suggest that dispute resolution is something respondents worry about—69% strongly or somewhat agreed that they were worried about how they would resolve a dispute, with 70% strongly or somewhat agreeing that they were worried about whether dispute resolution would be fair. Interestingly, community leaders who play a prominent role in dispute resolution were also worried about dispute resolution, and more so than the general public, with 75% agreeing strongly or somewhat that they were worried about how they would resolve a dispute they or a member of their family had, and 74% worrying about whether the resolution would be fair. Respondents in Dili were notably more concerned (89% strongly or somewhat agreed) about whether dispute resolution would be fair than those outside of Dili (62% strongly or somewhat agreed).

When asked to consider the most serious security problem facing their locality, a greater proportion (26%) of respondents in 2022 said that there were no more problems in their area than in previous years, up from 14% in 2018 and 7% in 2015. More respondents (34%) living outside Dili said there were no problems compared to those living in Dili (3%).

While land-related issues have persistently been reported by the general public as the most serious security problem facing communities since 2015, this perception has increased from 16% in 2018 and 2015 to 23% in 2022. Community leaders also identified land-related issues as the most serious security problem in their area. As in the past, however, they have done so at markedly higher rates than the general public (38% compared with 23%). Members of the general public and community leaders ranked other security problems in slightly different ways. Following land, general public respondents identified youth problems (12% compared to 7% of community leaders) and fighting (8% compared to 6% of community leaders) as the most serious security problem facing communities. In comparison, community leaders identified disputes over animals (10% compared to 7% of the general public) and domestic violence (9% compared to 5% of the general public) as the most serious security problems after land.

Clear differences between Dili-based respondents and those living outside of Dili were apparent, particularly in relation to youth problems, which 24% of Dili-based respondents nominated as the most serious security problem facing their

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The most serious security problems facing communities were similar to those reported in previous years.
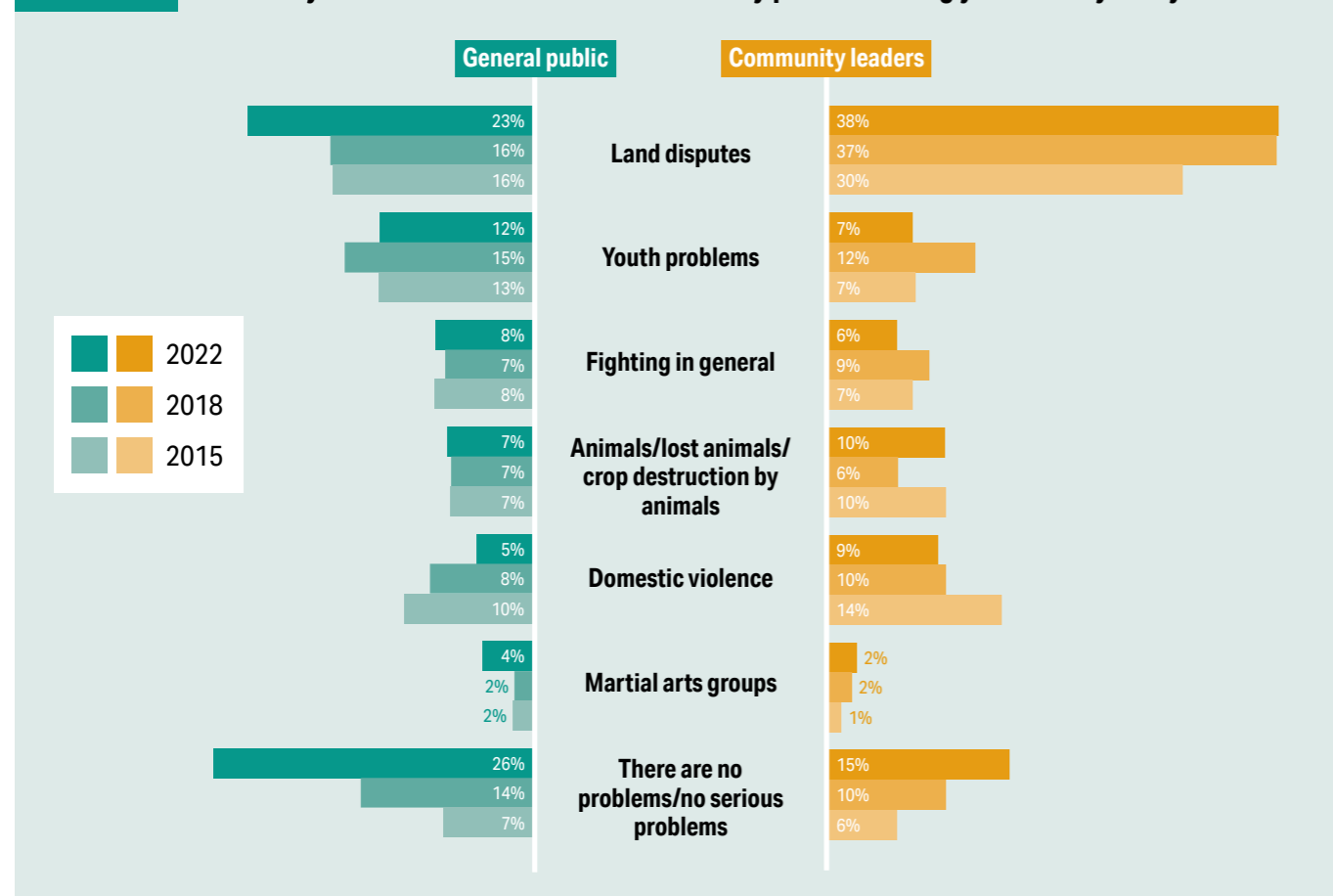

Photo by The Asia Foundation, 2015

locality, as opposed to 9% of respondents living outside of Dili. In 2022, a small number of people identified martial arts groups[18] as the most serious security problem (4% compared with 2% in 2015 and 2018), with this view more commonly held by those living in Dili (9%) than those living outside Dili (2%).

Respondents were asked about the prevalence and activity of illegal groups in their communities as historically, the question related to the 2013 law banning

FIGURE 5 What do you consider the most serious security problem facing your locality today?

	General public	Community leaders
Land disputes	23% / 16% / 16%	38% / 37% / 30%
Youth problems	12% / 15% / 13%	7% / 12% / 7%
Fighting in general	8% / 7% / 8%	6% / 9% / 7%
Animals/lost animals/ crop destruction by animals	7% / 7% / 7%	10% / 6% / 10%
Domestic violence	5% / 8% / 10%	9% / 10% / 14%
Martial arts groups	4% / 2% / 2%	2% / 2% / 1%
There are no problems/no serious problems	26% / 14% / 7%	15% / 10% / 6%

Legend: 2022 / 2018 / 2015

three martial arts groups deemed responsible for most violence.[19] Eleven percent (11%) of respondents note the presence of illegal groups in their communities, up from 5% and 10% in 2015 and 2018 respectively, with increased numbers of community leaders (19%) also believing that illegal groups are active (up from 10% in 2015 and 13.5% in 2018). Strikingly, against this national backdrop, 43% of respondents in Liquica say there are illegal groups present in their community. While only 12% of respondents nationally say that the groups are either 'very active' or 'somewhat active', 50% of respondents in Liquica report the groups as either 'very active' or 'somewhat active'.

Television continues to be the primary source of information on security, with 35% of respondents selecting it as their primary source in 2022 (as compared to 38% in 2018 and 30% in 2015). There has been a notable increase in reliance upon the internet/social
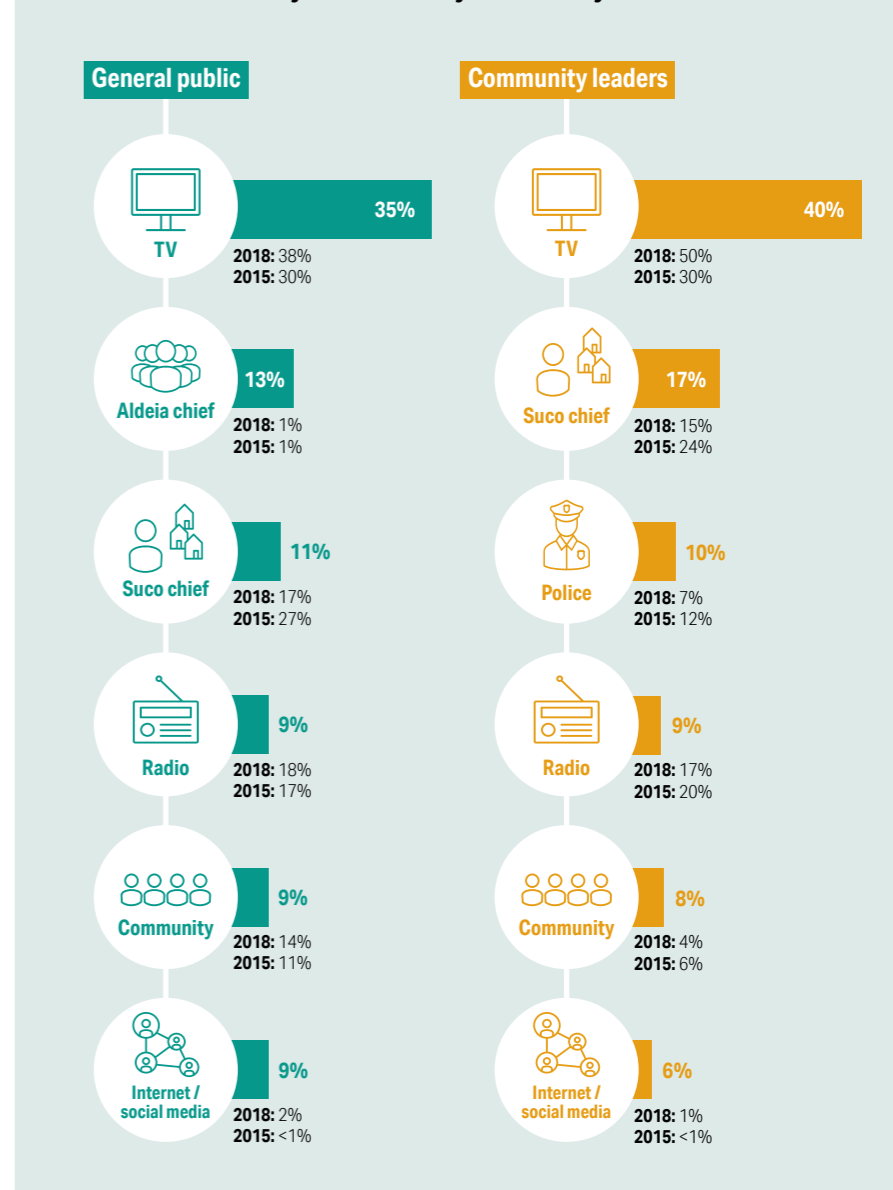
Future research avenues: Higher numbers of respondents in Liquica report that illegal groups are active in their community than respondents from elsewhere in the country. Further research may help to uncover why illegal groups appear to be more active in this municipality and what the relationship or overlap is (if any) between martial arts groups and illegal groups. It would also be useful to explore the types of problems people believe that youth are causing, including why these concerns are more prevalent in Dili than outside of Dili.

media since 2015, when less than 1% of respondents cited internet/social media as their primary source of information about the security situation in their locality, rising to 2% in 2018 and 9% in 2022. Reliance on the internet/social media as a source of information about security is more common amongst respondents aged 17-30 years old (12%) than amongst those aged 51 years and older (4%). Fewer respondents (9%) in 2022 nominated radio as their primary source of information about the security situation in their locality than in 2018 (18%) and 2015 (17%).

In 2022, responses indicate stronger reliance on aldeia chiefs (13%) for information about the local security situation, up from 1% in 2015 and 2018 respectively, with women being slightly more likely to rely on aldeia chiefs than men (16% versus 11%). Conversely, reliance on suco chiefs as a source of information about the security situation in one's locality has decreased, with only 11% citing suco chiefs as their primary information source, down from 27% and 17% in 2015 and 2018 respectively. Suco and aldeia chiefs are more heavily relied upon as a primary source of information about security outside Dili (Suco: 12% compared with 6% in Dili; Aldeia: 14% compared with 11% in Dili). However, within municipalities outside of Dili there is enormous variation (with suco chiefs being the primary source of information for 3% of respondents in Lautem and just over 23% in Manatuto and Manufahi). Those in Dili are more likely to draw on multiple sources of information on the security situation in their locality than those outside Dili (9 % compared with less than 1%), suggesting that people in Dili are more able to test information against multiple sources, essentially triangulating. By contrast, those outside Dili appear to be more dependent on information provided by a single source, heightening the importance of that source being reliable and trusted.

Community leaders also rely primarily upon television (40%) for information about the security situation in their locality. However, unlike the general public, they do not view aldeia chiefs as a primary source of security information (0% of community leaders versus 13% of the general public); they also see a greater role for suco chiefs (17%) in the provision of security information than the general public does (11%). This may be because aldeia chiefs constitute 72% of community leader respondents and are more likely to receive information from the more senior suco chiefs and pass it on to their communities.

FIGURE 6 What is your primary source of information about the security situation in your locality?

General public

Source	2022	2018	2015
TV	35%	38%	30%
Aldeia chief	13%	1%	1%
Suco chief	11%	17%	27%
Radio	9%	18%	17%
Community	9%	14%	11%
Internet / social media	9%	2%	<1%

Community leaders

Source	2022	2018	2015
TV	40%	50%	30%
Suco chief	17%	15%	24%
Police	10%	7%	12%
Radio	9%	17%	20%
Community	8%	4%	6%
Internet / social media	6%	1%	<1%

" *People access security information through a variety of means, with increasing reliance upon the internet and social media.*

Community leaders continue to be perceived by the general public as having the greatest responsibility for security in their communities. Given the program's interest in better understanding the roles different types of leaders play in community dispute resolution, the 2022 survey asked enumerators to distinguish between suco chiefs and aldeia chiefs if specifically nominated by respondents, rather than recording such responses as community leaders. This provided a more granular level of detail about who are the representatives the public perceive to have the greatest responsibility for security, with 34% nominating aldeia chiefs and 10% nominating suco chiefs. If the responses of those who nominated aldeia chiefs and suco chiefs were combined in the historical category of community leaders (44%), it is clear that community leaders continue to be perceived as having the greatest responsibility for security in communities, in line with previous survey findings (46% in 2016 and 45% in 2018)., However, it is apparent that the category of community leaders disguises notably different levels of perceived responsibility for security, with aldeia chiefs being perceived as holding significantly greater responsibility for security than suco chiefs.
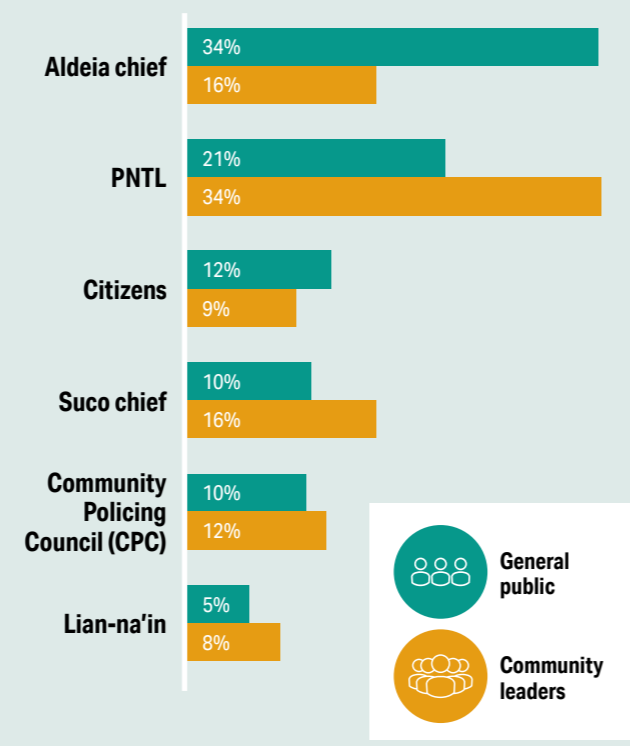
The extent to which the public perceives the PNTL to have primary responsibility for maintaining security remains relatively stable, with 21% of respondents nominating the PNTL as having primary responsibility for maintaining security in 2022, compared to 21% in 2015 and 20% in 2018. Notably, however, more respondents in 2022 nominated CPCs as having primary responsibility for maintaining security (10%) than in 2015 and 2018 (2%). Only 12% of respondents nominated citizens as having primary responsibility for maintaining security in their locality, continuing the pattern of decreased recognition of the role of citizens in maintaining security identified in 2018 (from 52% in 2013 down to 21% in 2015 and 2018).

Community leader respondents perceive a greater role for the PNTL in the maintenance of security than the general public, with 34% of community leaders stating that the PNTL has primary responsibility for maintaining security in their locality (compared to 21% of the general public) and 31% believing that community leaders (compared to 44% of the general public) have primary responsibility. Interestingly, while members of the general public made a clear distinction between the responsibilities of aldeia and suco chiefs, with 34% nominating

FIGURE 7 — Which of the following institutions/individuals has primary responsibility for maintaining security in your locality? (Top 6)

	General public	Community leaders
Aldeia chief	34%	16%
PNTL	21%	34%
Citizens	12%	9%
Suco chief	10%	16%
Community Policing Council (CPC)	10%	12%
Lian-na'in	5%	8%

aldeia chiefs as having the greatest responsibility and 10% nominating suco chiefs, community leaders allocated equal responsibility for aldeia and suco chiefs (16% each).
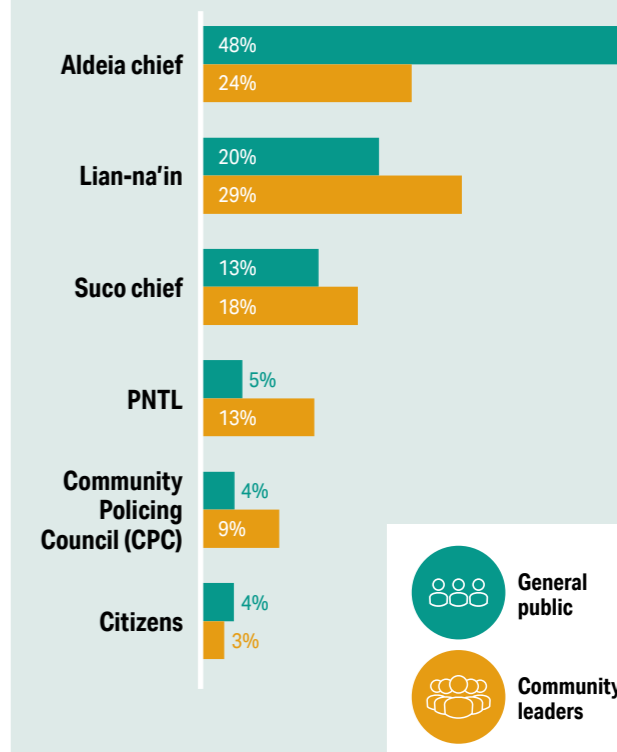
There were some notable differences between the responses of those living in and outside of Dili, and whilst small, some differences between the responses of women and men. Outside of Dili, more respondents identified suco chiefs (14%) as having primary responsibility for maintaining security than respondents living in Dili (1%), and they also perceive a greater role for the PNTL in maintaining security (24%) than those living in Dili (13%). This was particularly the case in Bobonaro, where 59% of respondents identified the PNTL as having primary responsibility for maintaining security in their locality. While those living outside Dili perceive a greater role for the PNTL than those living in Dili, those living in Dili perceive a greater role for CPCs (21%) than those living outside Dili (6%). More women identified aldeia chiefs (37%) as having primary responsibility for security than men (31%), while more men identified the PNTL (23.5%) as having primary responsibility than women (19%). This may indicate that women view authorities/leaders that are more immediately proximate to their communities (such as aldeia chiefs) to have responsibility for security, compared with men who were more likely to indicate those at a slightly further distance from their immediate neighborhoods (suco chiefs and PNTL). This might also suggest that women's experience of security concerns and issues are concentrated more on the home and immediate neighborhood, with men's at times further afield.

Beyond the prominence of aldeia chiefs, the diversity of individuals/institutions that general public respondents identified as responsible for security may also speak to the relationality of security in Timor-Leste. That is, who people rely on for security and resolving disputes or problems is likely not determined solely (or even mostly) by an individual's formal position. Rather, it is also informed by personal relationships and perceptions of who has power. This can mean that people take a matter to the PNTL because they know or are related to a particular office, or politician, respect citizen or person. This relational aspect may help to explain the wider diversity in who people perceive as responsible for security.

Complementing the analysis of respondents' perceptions about who has primary responsibility for maintaining security in their locality, respondents in 2022 were also asked who has primary responsibility for resolving disputes and grievances (the focus of the next chapter) in their locality. General public respondents overwhelmingly felt that aldeia chiefs have primary responsibility for resolving disputes and grievances (48%), with markedly fewer respondents viewing dispute and grievance resolution as the responsibility of lian-na'in (20%) and suco chiefs (13%) and very few viewing the PNTL (5%), citizens (4%) or CPCs (4%) as having responsibility for resolving disputes and grievances. The response of community leaders was notably different, with the greatest number of community leaders attributing primary responsibility for the resolution of disputes and grievances to lian-na'in (29%), followed by aldeia chiefs (24%), suco chiefs (18%), the PNTL (13%), CPCs (9%) and citizens (3%).

"
People perceive their immediate community leaders as having the greatest responsibility for security in their location.

FIGURE 8 — In your opinion, which of the following institutions/individuals has primary responsibility for resolving disputes/grievances in your locality? (Top 6)

	General public	Community leaders
Aldeia chief	48%	24%
Lian-na'in	20%	29%
Suco chief	13%	18%
PNTL	5%	13%
Community Policing Council (CPC)	4%	9%
Citizens	4%	3%

CRIME AND DISPUTE: PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCE, AND PATHWAYS

KEY FINDINGS ON CRIME AND DISPUTE: PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCE AND PATHWAYS

- Members of the general public look primarily to aldeia chiefs to help them resolve crime/dispute, while community leaders look to the PNTL.

- Divorce, abandonment, crop destruction by animals and land disputes were the most commonly experienced crimes/disputes.

- 55% of respondents who experienced multiple crimes or disputes sought assistance, while 32% who experienced one crime or dispute only sought assistance.

- There was significant regional variation in assistance seeking pathways, highlighting the highly localised nature of crime/dispute and its resolution.

- The majority of crimes/disputes are resolved by the first person to whom the matter is taken, with land matters being the most commonly referred crime/dispute.

- Most respondents feel that they are fairly treated by those to whom they take their crimes/disputes.

- Community leaders use different forms of mediation to help people address crimes/disputes, drawing heavily upon their knowledge of customary law when doing so.

People's perceptions of safety and security are in part impacted by their experience of crimes and disputes, whether it impacts them or their immediate family personally or happens within their community. In some countries, a clear distinction is made between crime and dispute, crime being an action that is deemed illegal and punishable by the State under the written law (criminal matters) and disputes being a broader category of disagreements between individuals or groups about matters that may or not constitute crimes or give rise to civil wrongs. There is, however, a significant overlap between these two concepts. In Timor-Leste, where there are multiple actors involved in the maintenance of social order (government, chiefs, lian-na'in) and the criminal law has not been consistently socialized or enforced, this distinction is not always made, with crimes, disputes, and behaviors that are deemed offensive to custom often viewed through the same lens and taken to the same people for resolution. Consequently, this survey—like past iterations of the survey—asked about crimes and disputes together and did not ask respondents to distinguish between the two concepts (although interestingly, community leaders do appear to distinguish between the two in relation to the relevant process for resolution).

Although the 2022 survey continued to use the words crime and dispute together, due to The Asia Foundation's increased focus on dispute resolution, it asked some questions differently from how they have been asked before to gain a more nuanced understanding of the avenues people use to address crimes and disputes. The survey also introduced a number of new questions specifically for community leaders to better understanding how they go about resolving crimes and disputes. This necessitated the removal of some questions to make space for an exploration of the roles, perspectives, and experiences of community leaders in dispute resolution, acknowledging that any changes made impact the ability to make comparisons with previous survey findings.

To further explore people's perceptions and experiences of resolving crimes and disputes, as in previous years, the 2022 survey asked respondents both what they **thought they would do** in response to certain matters and **what they did do** if they, in fact, experienced a crime or dispute. In the first instance, respondents were asked a hypothetical question, "what is the first thing you would do" in relation to four different crimes/disputes (theft of a cow, being threatened by a gang of men demanding money, occupation of one's land, and physical assault of a female relative/friend by her husband).

As has been the case since 2008, members of the general public showed a strong preference for seeking assistance from a suco/aldeia chief for all four crimes/disputes, although the extent of their preferences differed according to the crime/dispute. By contrast, while community leaders also preferred to seek assistance from suco/aldeia chiefs for the occupation of one's land, they were more likely to seek assistance from the police for theft of a cow, physical assault of a female relative/friend, and if threatened by a gang of men. This may suggest that community leaders do make some distinction between crimes and disputes and how they are most appropriately dealt with, at least hypothetically. It may also underline the degree to which there is an implicit and widely understood process of escalation involved in resolving disputes. Thus, people may first take matters to an aldeia or suco chief, not with the intention of those community leaders resolving the matter, but because that is the process; in order to eventually report to others, community leaders are the first entry point.[20] Further research is required to clarify this.

There is also important regional and gender variation in responses to some of the crime/dispute types. People in Dili are more likely to seek assistance from the PNTL than those outside of Dili (except in relation to someone occupying their land), and women are less likely to seek assistance from the PNTL for all crime/dispute types than men. In relation to land being occupied, Oecusse

> 66
> *People look to aldeia and suco chiefs to resolve crimes and disputes, although community leaders are more inclined to look to the PNTL.*

was the only municipality in which seeking assistance from suco/aldeia chiefs was not the highest first response, with 59% of respondents saying they would first seek assistance from a lian-na'in. This difference may be due to strong prohibitions in Oecusse on discussing land boundaries. Of interest, comparatively large numbers of respondents said that land occupation would not be a problem here/hasn't happened in Lautem (22%), Viqueque (21%), and Manatuto (18%). This is especially striking in light of land disputes being the most commonly identified security concern nationwide.

In relation to being threatened by a group of men, the most frequent first action was to seek assistance from suco/aldeia chiefs (41%), with 36% of respondents saying they would go to the PNTL, but in Dili (42%), Liquica (43%), Oecusse (42%), and Bobonaro (44%), most respondents would first request assistance from the PNTL. In Viqueque (31%) and Lautem (31%), most respondents would first go to both community leader and PNTL.

In relation to a female friend/relative being physically assaulted by her husband, requesting assistance from the PNTL was the highest first response in Bobonaro (35%), Dili (34%), Manatuto (38%), and Oecusse (40%), whilst in all other municipalities, the highest first response was to seek assistance from suco/aldeia chiefs. In Lautem, 30% of respondents said it would not be a problem here/hasn't happened, as did 20% of respondents in Viqueque. This highlights significant regional variation in people's dispute resolution preferences for domestic violence.

Analysis of people's responses to the four hypothetical questions demonstrates that members of the general public see a stronger role for police in response to being threatened by a gang of men and assault of a female by her husband

> **66**
> *Half of the population has experienced at least one crime or dispute in the previous year, with divorce and abandonment accounting for the most common experiences.*
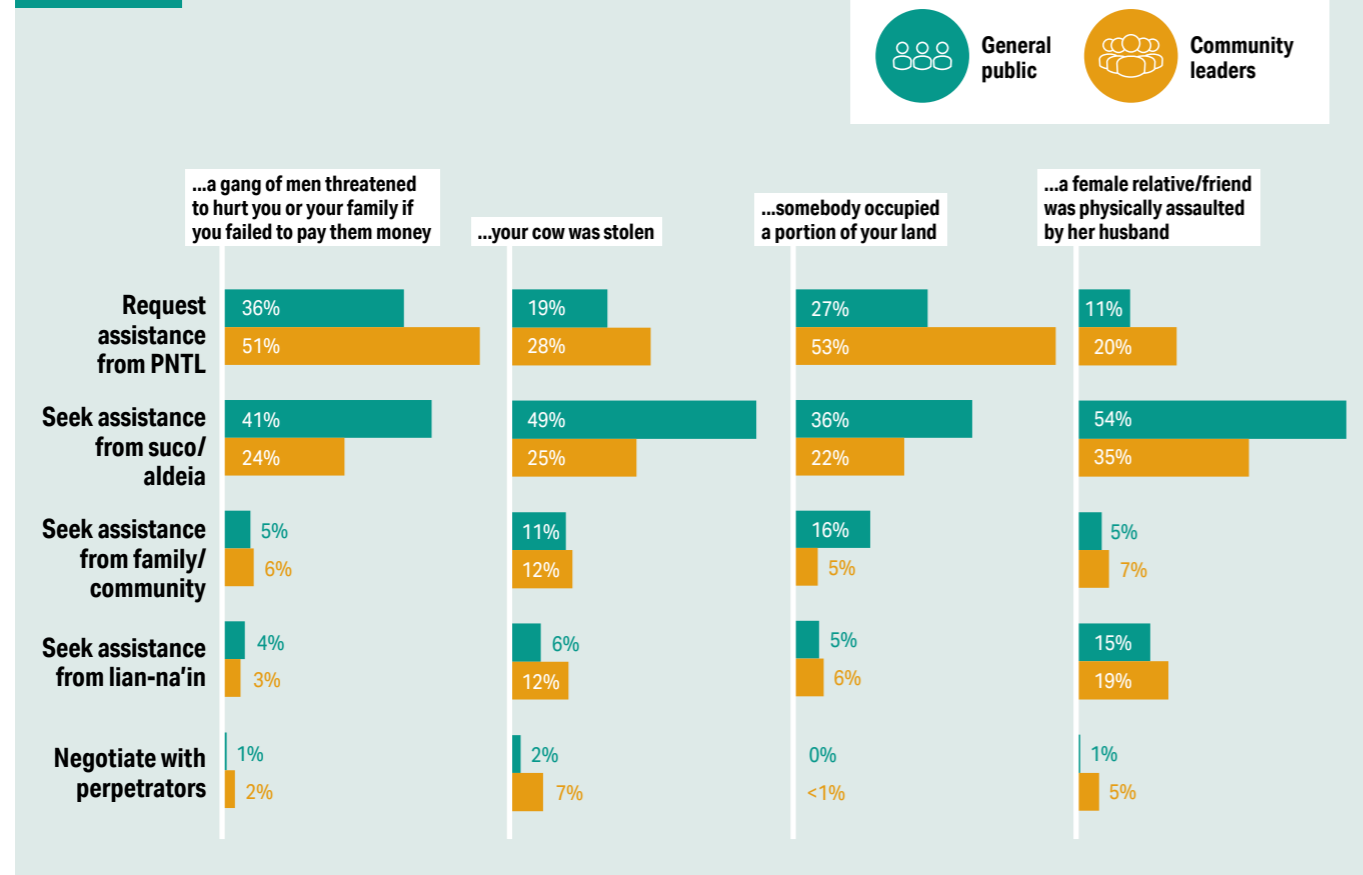
(both matters involving threatened or actual physical violence), as opposed to the theft of livestock and land matters (both matters involving property). Overall, community leaders are more inclined to take matters to the PNTL in the first instance, with the exception of land matters, although this is less the case for lian-na'in, who tend to first resort to suco/aldeia chiefs.

Understanding initial responses to crimes and disputes are one means of examining dispute resolution pathways. To contrast people's perceptions of what they **think they would do** when seeking to resolve a dispute with **what they actually do**, as in previous survey rounds, respondents were asked, "have you or a member of your family experienced any of the following in the last year", with 16 crime/dispute options being provided. Respondents were asked to respond yes to all crime/dispute options that they, or a member of their household, had experienced to develop a comprehensive understanding of the crimes/disputes people most commonly experienced. In previous years, the question was posed with only five crimes/dispute options being prompted, although respondents could refer to other crimes they had experienced. To that end, as the list of prompted options provided to respondents in 2022 was far more expansive than that offered in previous years, using this data to infer longitudinal patterns in general public experiences of crime/dispute should be approached with caution. It does, however, allow for a more nuanced understanding of the types of crimes/disputes people are experiencing. In contrast to previous years, community leaders were not asked in 2022 about their experiences of crime in order to allow time to explore other questions specifically relating to how they go about resolving crimes and disputes.

The question has been consistently (since 2008) posed as "have you or a member of your family experienced any of the following in the last year?". Whilst the inclusion of family has likely increased the number of positive responses to this question (and hence more data for analysis), the accuracy of responses to subsequent questions relating to the experience (regarding assistance sought) will likely vary depending on whether the respondent is referring to a crime/dispute they personally experienced or a crime/dispute that a family member experienced (and this distinction is not captured). This renders gender disaggregation of this question questionable, as the gender of the person who experienced the crime may not necessarily be the same as the respondent's, albeit there is limited gender-based variation in responses. Moreover, the concept of 'family' in Timor-Leste is expansive and likely extends beyond a respondent's immediate household. This means that respondents are potentially answering questions on the basis of a family member's experience of a crime or dispute whom they do not live with and may have limited detailed knowledge of. These are important caveats in understanding the responses.

FIGURE 9 **What is the first thing you would do if...**

Legend: ⬤ General public (teal) ⬤ Community leaders (orange)

	...a gang of men threatened to hurt you or your family if you failed to pay them money	...your cow was stolen	...somebody occupied a portion of your land	...a female relative/friend was physically assaulted by her husband
Request assistance from PNTL — General public	36%	19%	27%	11%
Request assistance from PNTL — Community leaders	51%	28%	53%	20%
Seek assistance from suco/aldeia — General public	41%	49%	36%	54%
Seek assistance from suco/aldeia — Community leaders	24%	25%	22%	35%
Seek assistance from family/community — General public	5%	11%	16%	5%
Seek assistance from family/community — Community leaders	6%	12%	5%	7%
Seek assistance from lian-na'in — General public	4%	6%	5%	15%
Seek assistance from lian-na'in — Community leaders	3%	12%	6%	19%
Negotiate with perpetrators — General public	1%	2%	0%	1%
Negotiate with perpetrators — Community leaders	2%	7%	<1%	5%

Photo by: Solita Noronha Pereira, 2022

Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents said that they had not experienced any crime or disputes, with 4% saying they did not know. Of those who had experienced a crime or dispute (50%), the highest number of respondents indicated divorce (18%), followed by abandonment (16%), crop destruction by animals (15%), other land dispute (not unlawful occupation of personal land, dispute over farming land or dispute about land inheritance) (14%), disputes over animals (9%), domestic violence (7%), and theft of personal property (6%). There was a limited difference between male and female responses.
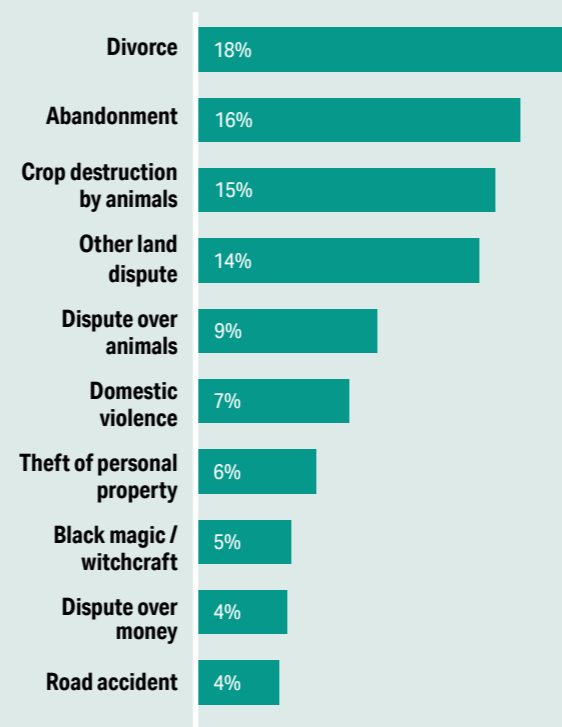
When those who reported having experienced any form of land dispute were asked to specify the form of the dispute, the majority (53%) reported somebody occupying their land. Further responses included somebody accusing the respondent of occupying their land (31%), disputes over land borders (25%), disputes over family inheritance of land (23%), and disputes over the use of farming land (20%). This is broadly consistent with the findings of 2015 and 2018, albeit there was a notable increase in respondents reporting disputes over land borders, from 8% in 2018 to 25% in 2022.

Some noteworthy regional variations are apparent. Disputes over farming land are markedly more prevalent in Lautem (40%) and Ainaro (39%) than elsewhere, with Manatuto experiencing notably higher disputes over land borders (71%) than elsewhere in the country. Being accused of occupying another's land is most reported in Oecusse (69%) and Manufahi (69%).

FIGURE 10 — **Have you or a member of your family experienced any of the following in the last year? (General public)**

Category	Percentage
Divorce	18%
Abandonment	16%
Crop destruction by animals	15%
Other land dispute	14%
Dispute over animals	9%
Domestic violence	7%
Theft of personal property	6%
Black magic / witchcraft	5%
Dispute over money	4%
Road accident	4%

Photo by: Solita Noronha Pereira, 2022

Of those involved in a crime/dispute in the past year, 65% reported that they did not retaliate. Respondents in Ainaro (10%) and Covalima (15%) had retaliated at markedly lower rates than others, with retaliation having occurred at the highest rates in Oecusse (46%), Dili (46%), Lautem (45%), and Aileu (45%), again highlighting significant regional variation throughout the country.

Of those involved in a crime/dispute in the past year, 55% of respondents sought assistance, and 42% did not. Females were slightly more likely to seek assistance (57%) than males (53%). Assistance seeking was highest in Ainaro (96%), Liquica (73%), and Viqueque (69%), and substantially lower in Manatuto (17%) and Covalima (15%). It is interesting that respondents in Ainaro reported minimal retaliation (10%) and high assistance seeking (96%), while respondents in Covalima reported both low rates of retaliation (15%) and low rates of assistance seeking (15%).

There was an intention to explore the actions that people took in relation to each of the crimes they experienced in order to develop a more granular understanding of the various ways in which people respond to and seek assistance for different types of crimes or disputes. However, due to time and environmental constraints, enumerators asked subsequent questions about reporting and resolution only once (rather than repeating them for each crime/dispute experienced, as had been intended in the survey design). Thus, how respondents who experienced more than one crime/dispute produced the answers that they did (e.g., did they reflect on a specific experience or did they conflate multiple experiences and override different actions taken?) is unknown. To that end, whilst 55% of respondents who had experienced a crime had sought assistance, we cannot paint a nuanced picture of exactly what they reported and to whom for each type of crime experienced. We can, however, make some general observations, which form the backdrop to more specific observations of what and to whom those reported who experienced only one crime/dispute (where we can be more certain that their assistance-seeking actions relate to the one crime/dispute that they reported experiencing).

Future research avenues: Given most people take crimes/disputes to community leaders, we can assume it is not a lack of access which makes people less likely to seek assistance, even if access determines their choice of whom to seek assistance from. It would be interesting to unpack why people do and do not seek assistance, for instance by contrasting high rates of assistance seeking in Ainaro with low rates of assistance seeking in Manatuto and Covalima.

"

People who experience crimes or disputes mostly do not retaliate, but only just over half seek assistance.

Photo by: Solita Noronha Pereira, 2022

Of those who experienced a crime/dispute and sought assistance, 43% first reported to an aldeia chief, followed by the PNTL (19%), a lian-na'in (10%), or suco chief (8%). Of those who first reported to the PNTL, a striking number reported (85%) doing so through their OPS.[21] When deciding who to first report to, most respondents (70%) made their choice based on the person/organization that was the easiest to access (closest), with 19% of respondents saying, "they were the most appropriate person/organization to deal with the issue". Fewer respondents made their choice on the basis of feeling comfortable with the person/organization (6%) and cost (3%). Interestingly, when asked whether they experienced any challenges when trying to resolve their matter, physically accessing assistance (48%) was the most frequently identified challenge, followed by the cost of accessing assistance (23%) and enforcement of outcome (17%).

Of the 588 respondents who experienced only one crime/dispute (where we can be clearer that their assistance-seeking behavior relates specifically to a particular crime/dispute), the crime/dispute most commonly experienced was divorce (19.5%). This was followed by 'other land dispute' (not unlawful occupation of personal land, dispute over use of farming land, or dispute about land inheritance) (18%), crop destruction by animals (12%), abandonment (11%), and domestic violence (7%).

Of those who experienced one crime only, only 49% sought assistance. Those who experienced divorce (62%) and land disputes (57%) were more likely to seek assistance than those who experienced crop destruction by animals (45%), abandonment (43%) and domestic violence (40%).

Reporting pathways varied considerably by crime/dispute type within this sample. Whilst most respondents who had experienced crop destruction by animals (59.5%), land disputes (47%), and divorce (41%) first reported the matter to an aldeia chief, those who experienced abandonment more commonly first took the matter to a suco chief (33%) and those who experienced domestic violence more commonly first took the matter to a lian-na'in (42%). Divorce was the issue most often taken first to the PNTL (37%), followed by land disputes (19%), domestic violence (14%) and abandonment (12%), with crop destruction by animals infrequently (2%) being taken to the PNTL. It is not clear why people are taking divorce to the PNTL. It may be that the PNTL is broadly perceived as an entry point into the formal justice system and that divorces are recognized as a matter requiring judicial intervention. It may also be that these cases of divorce involve domestic violence, which is more likely to be seen as a PNTL responsibility. Another explanation may be that results have been somehow affected by the way in which the word 'divorce' was translated into Tetun, although further research would be necessary to validate these potential explanations.

FIGURE 11 — Why did you take your complaint to [the first person you sought assistance from] first? (General public)

They were the easiest to access (closest)	70%
They were the most appropriate person/organization to deal with issue	19%
Felt most comfortable with this person/organization	6%
It didn't cost anything	3%
No reason	1%
Other	1%

FIGURE 12 — Did you seek assistance? (% of respondents who experienced only each crime/dispute and did seek assistance)

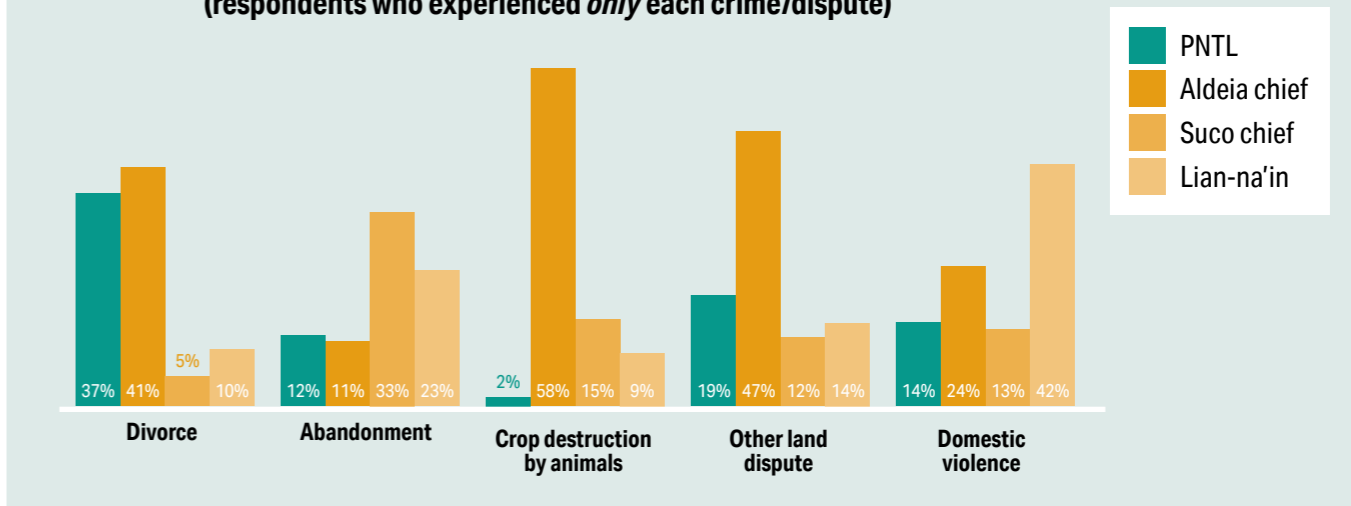|	
Divorce	62%
Other land dispute	57%
Crop destruction by animals	45%
Abandonment	53%
Domestic violence	40%
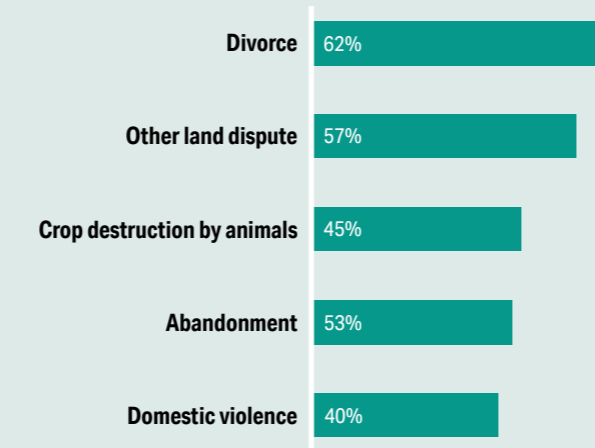
" **Proximity plays the strongest role in determining whom people seek assistance from.**

In 2018 it was reported that people were equally likely to have reported a crime/dispute they had experienced to the PNTL (43%) as they were to community leaders (43%). However, by posing the question in a different way (prompting respondents with 16 rather than five crime/dispute types), a different impression is formed, with only 21% of respondents who experienced one crime/dispute having first taken the matter to the PNTL, and 69% of respondents who experienced one crime/dispute having first taken the matter to a community leader (suco chief, aldeia chief, lian-na'in). Interestingly, the 2018 survey reported that "there is a major difference in how people actually report and how they think they would report if they experienced a crime/dispute", due to the fact that when asked the hypothetical questions, 72% said they would report to a community leader; yet of those who actually experienced a crime, equal numbers of people reported it to the PNTL and community leaders. In 2022, however, when asked about their experiences of a broader range of crimes, the gap between hypothetical and actual experiences was significantly diminished, with most respondents saying they would report to a community leader and most respondents actually reporting to a community leader. This difference could be due to the COVID context and a higher degree of reporting to local providers immediately in light of lockdowns and people spending more time at home. It may also reveal, however, a stronger commitment to resolving crimes and disputes through community leadership structures rather than the formal police. Further research would be needed to explore this in depth.

Future research avenues: Do people report to different people depending on the type of crime/dispute? Does their identity influence who they report to? What else drives their decision-making and behavior? Why are people taking divorce to the PNTL?

FIGURE 13 — Who is the first person or organization you reported to? (respondents who experienced only each crime/dispute)

Legend: PNTL, Aldeia chief, Suco chief, Lian-na'in

	PNTL	Aldeia chief	Suco chief	Lian-na'in
Divorce	37%	41%	5%	10%
Abandonment	12%	11%	33%	23%
Crop destruction by animals	2%	58%	15%	9%
Other land dispute	19%	47%	12%	14%
Domestic violence	14%	24%	13%	42%

In the majority of cases, respondents who had experienced one crime/dispute felt that they had been treated fairly by the first person to whom they took their crime/dispute (90%). Perceptions of fairness, however, varied according to who the respondent first reported to and the type of issue being dealt with. So, for example, of those who sought assistance for domestic violence, 100% felt fairly treated (regardless of whom they first reported to), while those who sought assistance for a land dispute, 86% felt fairly treated, with perceptions of fairness differing according to whom they first reported to.

Of those who first reported to a suco chief, 93% felt that they had been fairly treated, while 94% of those who first reported to the PNTL felt that they had been fairly treated, and 89% of those who first reported to an aldeia chief felt that they had been fairly treated. It is interesting that while those who first reported to an aldeia chief felt that they were slightly less fairly treated than

" **People feel fairly treated by the first person to whom they reported, and most matters are resolved by that person.**

those who had first reported to the PNTL or a suco chief, it is aldeia chiefs to whom most people first take their problems. This discrepancy may be attributable to the different types of matters people take to aldeia chiefs, the PNTL, and suco chiefs, with some matters being more easily resolved than others and resolution being conflated with satisfaction/fairness.

Most respondents reported that their crime/dispute was resolved by the first person to whom they reported (89%). This was highest for crop destruction by animals (98%), divorce (93%), and domestic violence (91%). Of those who reported abandonment, 85% had their matter resolved by the first person to whom they reported, while land disputes were markedly less frequently resolved by the first person to whom they were reported (73%). To that end, land disputes were the matters most frequently referred to others by the person to whom respondents first reported, with 11% of respondents saying the matter was neither resolved nor referred elsewhere and 10% saying it was referred elsewhere, most often to a suco chief (25%) or the courts (24%). Notably, most land disputes (47%) are taken in the first instance to aldeia chiefs.

Noting that very few referrals were made by those to whom respondents who had experienced one crime/dispute first reported, it is interesting to note that:
- matters first reported to aldeia chiefs were most commonly referred to the courts (29%) and to other aldeia chiefs (28%), and to a lesser extent to lian-na'in (15%)
- matters first reported to the PNTL were most commonly referred to another member of the PNTL (47%) and less frequently to a suco chief (20%) or aldeia chief (13%).

In 2022, community leaders were not asked about their own experiences of crime, as in previous years. Rather they were asked about the types of crimes or disputes people had brought to them seeking assistance. As with the question asked of general public respondents about experiences of crime, the question about assistance sought was posed differently in 2022 in an effort to gain a more detailed understanding of the types of crimes/disputes that people take to community leaders and how these are resolved. Family issues were the matters most frequently received by community leader respondents, with 38% having received a request for assistance with divorce and 31% having received a request for assistance in relation to abandonment. Reflecting their identification of the most serious issues impacting their community, 26% of community leaders had received a request for assistance in relation to crop destruction by animals and 23% in relation to a dispute over the use of farming land. Other frequent issues for which community leaders received a request for assistance included domestic violence (20%), disputes over animals (17%), and disputes about land inheritance (17%).

In 2022, for the first time, community leader respondents were asked, "as a leader, when a member of the community comes to you about a crime or dispute, what do you do?" Forty-one percent said, "talk to the families involved and aim to resolve within the family", followed by "talk through the issue with the complainant and provide advice on what to do" (38%), "bring disputing parties/complainant and alleged offender together to reach an outcome that they're all happy with" (37%) and 'question parties and gather evidence to adjudicate' (36%).

Community leaders were also asked, "when a member of the community comes to you about a crime or dispute, do you consider any of the following when deciding what type of help to provide them: type of crime/dispute; their relationship to you; their relationship to the other people involved; their individual human rights; Timorese law; community traditions and

Future research avenues: Further research, utilizing a larger sample of people with experience of reported disputes would be needed to establish whether these pathways are generalizable. Additionally, it would be interesting to unpack how people understand the concepts of resolution and fairness.

"

Given the significant role of community leaders in dispute resolution, it is important to better understand their roles and the way in which they make decisions.

Future research avenues: To better understand dispute resolution processes, it would be useful to further explore how community leaders make choices about how best to respond to requests for assistance, ranging from simply talking with the family involved through to more structured processes such as mediation.

custom; community harmony; other?" The most common response was community traditions and customs (45%), followed by the type of crime/dispute (41%), and Timorese law (23%).

Whilst all three types of community leaders first nominated community traditions and customs, for suco chiefs, the type of crime/dispute was almost equally as important (45% nominated community traditions and customs as compared to 44% who nominated the type of crime dispute). By contrast, lian-na'in reported that consideration of community traditions and customs (51%) played a much greater role in their decisions about what type of help to provide than the type of crime dispute (36%). Suco chiefs were also more likely to consider their relationship to the other people involved (26%) than aldeia chiefs (17%) and lian-na'in (15%), suggesting that someone's relationships/ identity may play an important role in the justice they receive. Interestingly, while only a very small part of the community leader sample (19 of 350), female community leaders placed much greater emphasis upon the type of crime/dispute and less emphasis on community traditions and custom when deciding what kind of help to provide. In order to understand whether male and female leaders resolve disputes differently, a far larger sample of female community leader respondents would be required, albeit this is unlikely given the small number of female community leaders.

The above response was reinforced by answers to the question, "when you help people to address crimes and disputes that affect them, what kind of knowledge are you drawing on?" Seventy-two percent (72%) of community leaders nominated traditional customs, values, and culture, with 10% citing personal experience and 8% government law. Lian-na'in were notably more likely to draw upon traditional customs, values, and culture

FIGURE 14 — As a leader, when a member of the community comes to you about a crime or dispute, what do you do? (Community leaders)

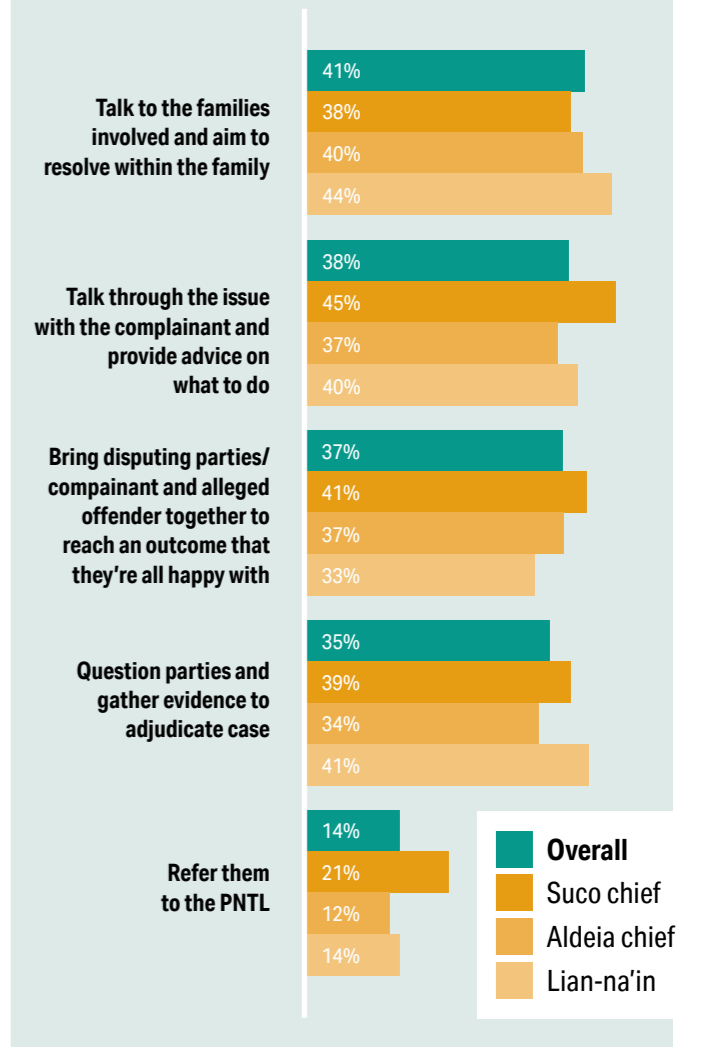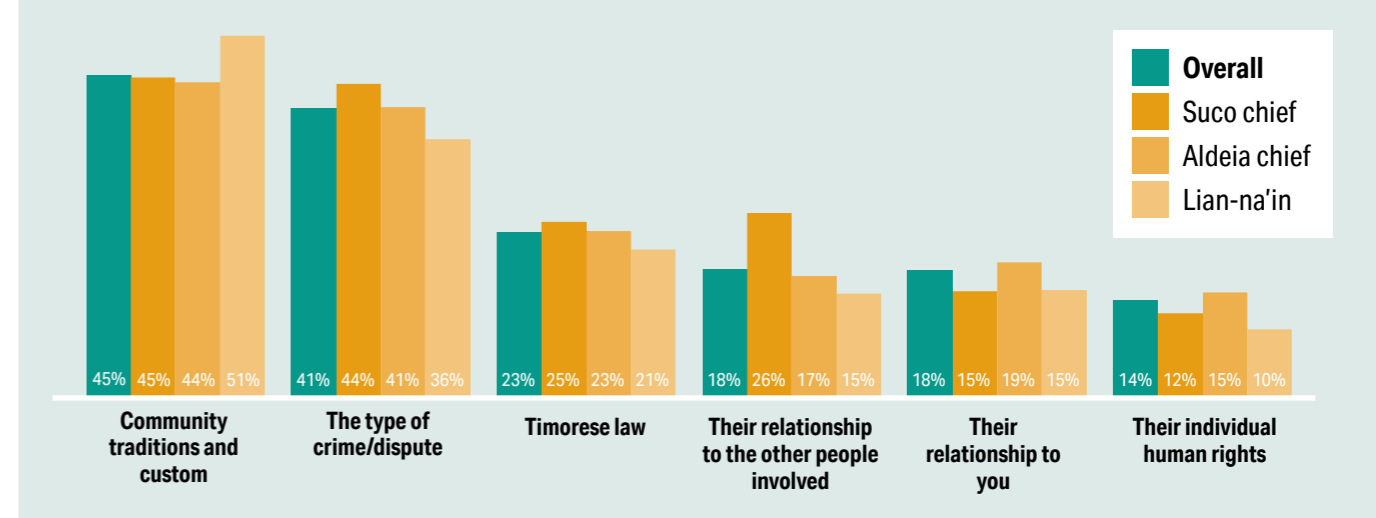|	Overall	Suco chief	Aldeia chief	Lian-na'in
Talk to the families involved and aim to resolve within the family	41%	38%	40%	44%
Talk through the issue with the complainant and provide advice on what to do	38%	45%	37%	40%
Bring disputing parties/ compainant and alleged offender together to reach an outcome that they're all happy with	37%	41%	37%	33%
Question parties and gather evidence to adjudicate case	35%	39%	34%	41%
Refer them to the PNTL	14%	21%	12%	14%

FIGURE 15 — When a member of the community comes to you about a crime or dispute, do you consider any of the following when deciding what type of help to provide them? (Community Leaders)

	Overall	Suco chief	Aldeia chief	Lian-na'in
Community traditions and custom	45%	45%	44%	51%
The type of crime/dispute	41%	44%	41%	36%
Timorese law	23%	25%	23%	21%
Their relationship to the other people involved	18%	26%	17%	15%
Their relationship to you	18%	15%	19%	15%
Their individual human rights	14%	12%	15%	10%

(79%) than suco chiefs (69%), whilst suco chiefs were more likely to draw upon personal experience (12%) as compared to lian-na'in (6%). The limited degree to which community leaders are drawing on formal laws to resolve crimes and disputes is particularly striking.[22] It is not clear if this is due to limited knowledge or understanding of the law or a preference for other norms and rules. It is also not clear which traditional customs, values, and culture they are drawing upon and, therefore, to what extent the latter cohere with or deviate from formal laws. These would be important avenues for future research.

When asked who they work with to resolve matters brought to them, the most common response from community leader respondents was OPS (41%), followed by lian-na'in (20%), aldeia chiefs (13%), and suco chiefs (13%). Suco chiefs (54%) were more likely to work with OPS than aldeia chiefs (39%) and lian-na'in (36%), with aldeia chiefs (24%) being more likely to work with lian-na'in. Community leaders characterized their relationship with the PNTL as very good (82%) and good (18%). Fewer females (70%) than males (83%) characterized the relationship as very good. Although this sample is very small, it is consistent with the finding that men are more likely than women to report to the PNTL and with findings of the 2018 survey (which asked more questions about the police), which reported that "overall, women have much less trust in the PNTL than men".

To better understand what community leaders' perceive to be the scope of their roles, they were asked if there are any types of crimes or disputes that they do not think they should deal with. Interestingly, 36% of community leaders felt that they should not deal with land disputes, this view being strongest amongst suco chiefs (44%), as compared to aldeia chiefs (35%) and lian-na'in (33%). This is consistent with the finding that land disputes are the matter most commonly referred to others (courts and suco chiefs). This finding is noteworthy given that land disputes are identified as the greatest security concern by communities and yet are an issue that community leaders do not see as their responsibility to resolve.

The next strongest response was physical attack resulting in death (22%), followed by domestic violence (19%) and physical attack resulting in injury (10%). When community leaders were asked, "why don't you think you should deal with x", they overwhelmingly said "it is a police matter" (68%), followed by 'it should be dealt with by somebody else' (10%). Interestingly, many land disputes are not police matters; thus, community leaders' perceptions about what they should and should not deal with are likely shaped by a range of factors, such as the challenge of particular matters, personal levels of comfort dealing with different matters and past positive/negative experiences.

To further unpack these nuances, community leaders were also asked two open-ended questions: "which crimes/disputes do you find most difficult to deal with and why" and "which crimes/disputes are most commonly reported to you?" The crimes/disputes community leaders reported finding most difficult to deal with were land disputes, domestic violence/ sexual assault, and physical attacks resulting in injury/ death. This is consistent with their views about the types of crimes/disputes they should not deal with and may also relate to the ongoing nature of these kinds of disputes—being issues that tend to re-emerge over time rather than being resolved with finality. Across all of these crime/dispute types, community leaders said they found these issues most difficult to deal with because it was "not their competency", whereas they explicitly framed domestic violence, sexual assault, and physical attack resulting in injury/death as also being police matters.
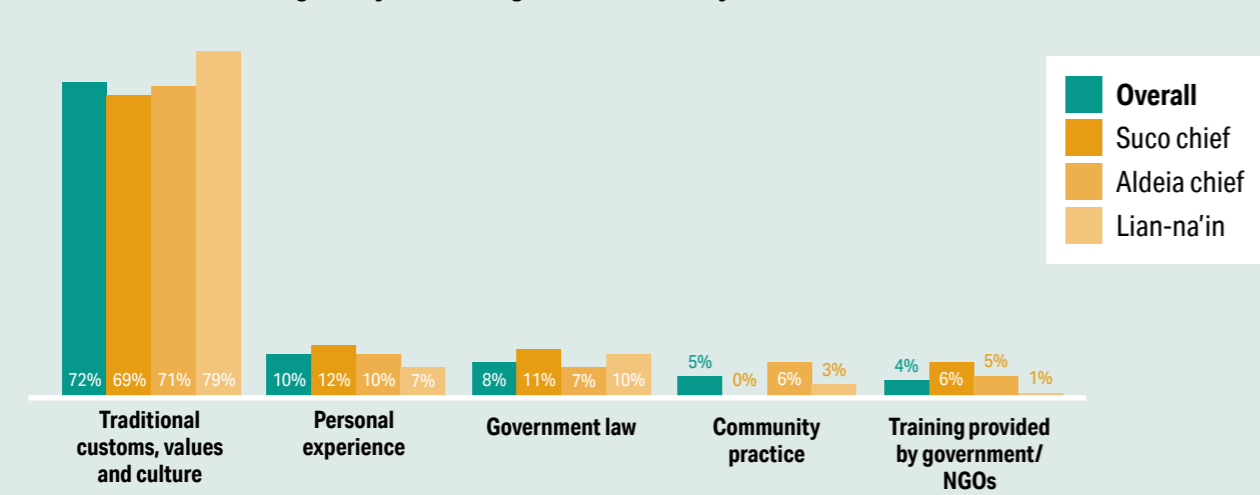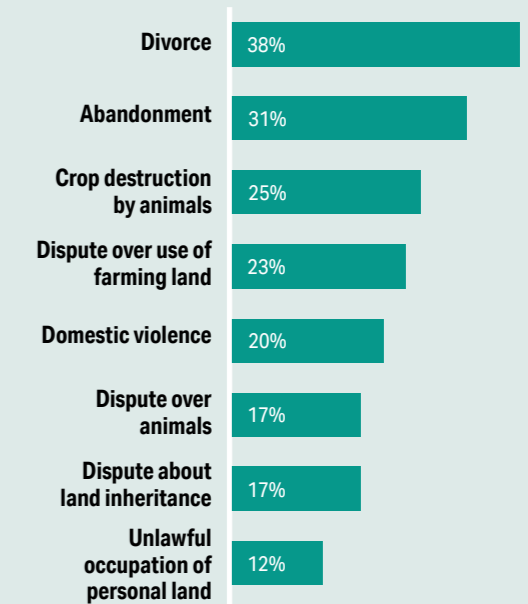
Community leader respondents reported that the kinds of crimes/disputes most commonly reported to them were animal or livestock theft, animals/livestock destroying property, fighting, domestic violence, abandonment, youth problems (drinking, fighting), land disputes, sexual assault, and drunkenness. These general reflections are consistent with their specific experiences of providing assistance. When asked, "has the community in which you live requested your assistance with any of the following crimes or disputes in the last year?", 323 of the 350 community leaders surveyed answered positively. The most common response was divorce (38%), followed by abandonment (31%), crop destruction by animals (25.5%), disputes over the use of farming land (23%), domestic violence (20%), and disputes over animals and land inheritance (each 17%).

Community leaders were asked, "thinking of the last time this happened, what is the first thing you did?". Facilitated mediation was the most common response (44%), although interestingly, there was notable variation between community leaders, with aldeia chiefs (49%) saying that they first facilitated mediation at a higher rate than lian-na'in (38%) and suco chiefs (28%). The next most common first response was to call for a community policing council mediation (25%), albeit this was less the case for aldeia chiefs (21%) than lian-na'in (36%) and suco chiefs (33%). Fewer numbers of community leaders first referred the matter to the appointed lian-na'in (16%) or to the PNTL (10%). Differences aside, mediation is clearly the most prominent mode of dealing with crime/dispute.

Those community leaders who had dealt with crimes/ disputes claim that the vast majority of crimes/disputes had been resolved (90%) and that they had been personally involved in the final resolution (90%). High numbers of community leader respondents (97%) felt that the outcome of their resolution was fair. This is consistent with both general public reports of dispute resolution outcomes (that most matters are resolved by the first person to whom they reported) and perceptions of fairness. When asked "what happens if someone isn't happy with the outcome of your assistance", responses ranged from "everyone has always accepted the results" and "if they can't accept the decision, we will try to persuade him by explaining until he may accept it", through to collaborative resolution, "if the parties are unhappy then the lian-na'in, aldeia chiefs, and the suco chief will sit together to find a fair solution" and referral, "refer it the police in order to use formal law". When asked if they report on their dispute resolution activities to anyone, 60% said no, but 39% said yes. This suggests there is significant room for expanding reporting on dispute resolution processes, as well as learning about reporting that already takes place.

Future research avenues: Noting that land disputes are a significant security concern- and most are taken in the first instance to community leaders, it would be valuable to explore why community leaders do not think they should deal with land disputes and why they find them so difficult to deal with.

FIGURE 17 **Has the community in which you live requested your assistance with any of the following crimes or disputes in the last year? (Top 8, Community leaders)**

Divorce	38%
Abandonment	31%
Crop destruction by animals	25%
Dispute over use of farming land	23%
Domestic violence	20%
Dispute over animals	17%
Dispute about land inheritance	17%
Unlawful occupation of personal land	12%

Future research avenues: It would be interesting to unpack through qualitative work how people understand the term mediation, noting that when asked what they do, most community leaders said, "talk to the families involved and aim to resolve within the family". It is likely that mediation takes a range of forms, some more formal than others.

Future research avenues: Further research could usefully explore how community leaders record and report their resolutions, as well as how they enforce their decisions or deal with rejection of the resolution outcomes.

FIGURE 16 **When you help people to address crimes and disputes that affect them, what kind of knowledge are you drawing on? (Community leaders)**

Legend:
- Overall
- Suco chief
- Aldeia chief
- Lian-na'in

	Traditional customs, values and culture	Personal experience	Government law	Community practice	Training provided by government/ NGOs
Overall	72%	10%	8%	5%	4%
Suco chief	69%	12%	11%	0%	6%
Aldeia chief	71%	10%	7%	6%	5%
Lian-na'in	79%	7%	10%	3%	1%

PERCEPTIONS OF BIAS AND FAIRNESS: VULNERABLE GROUPS

People's perceptions and experiences of safety, security, and justice are shaped by a range of factors, including but not limited to poverty, locality, gender, age, education, sexual orientation, and disability. Collectively, those who experience a lack of opportunity—including the right to live a life free of violence—are known as "vulnerable groups" and are often specifically acknowledged in national Constitutions and policy documents as requiring additional protections or special measures to ensure that they enjoy their human rights. The Constitution of Timor-Leste enshrines the general principle of universality and equality (article 16), noting that "all citizens are equal before the law, shall exercise the same rights and shall be subject to the same duties" and "no one may be discriminated against on the grounds of color, race, marital status, gender, ethnic origin, social or economic status, political or ideological convictions, religion, education or physical or mental condition". Further, the Constitution specifically acknowledges equality between women and men (article 17), child protection (article 18), youth (article 19), old age (article 20), and disabled citizens (article 21).[23]

Demographic attributes (e.g., gender and age) impact not only people's experiences of crime but also the way in which they are treated by the justice system, such as police and the courts, but also chiefs and other diverse providers. Globally, these institutions do not represent the communities they serve, being heavily male-dominated, as is the case in Timor-Leste, where females constitute 15% of the PNTL, dropping to 6% of OPS.[24] When members of the justice system are unaware of their biases and the different needs of vulnerable groups, it is difficult for them to ensure that they are fair and responsive to the needs of these groups.

As safety and security continue to improve in Timor-Leste, it is timely to examine whether people feel that different groups can meet their justice needs. The 2022 survey thus provides a valuable basis for further consideration of the experience of vulnerable groups. For the first time, in addition to continuing to gender disaggregate survey results (which over time have revealed very few gender-based differences), the 2022 survey included disability as a demographic and sought to explore people's views about the way in which women and men, people living with disability, LGBTQIA+, and youth and older people are treated by police and community leaders. Further, it sought to examine whether community leaders hold biased views towards particular groups.

An unexpectedly high number of people identified as living with a disability—43% of general public respondents and 67% of community leader respondents. Given that people typically under-report, not over-report, living with a disability, it is difficult to understand why survey respondents reported living with a disability at such high rates. By way of comparison, the 2016 Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey[25] found that among the household population age 15+, 21% of women and 22% of men reported some level of difficulty in at least one domain of functioning, most commonly the ability to see.

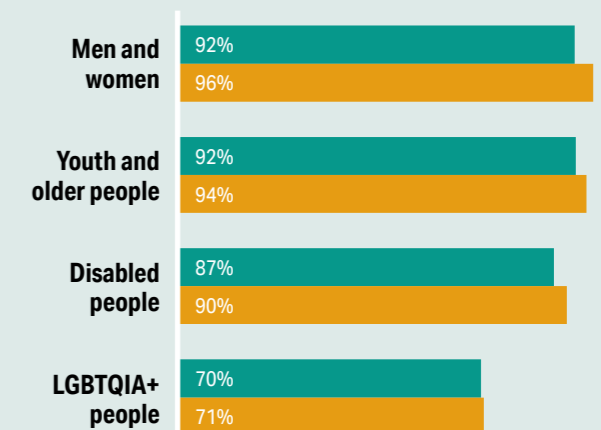## KEY FINDINGS ON PERCEPTIONS OF BIAS AND FAIRNESS: VULNERABLE GROUPS

- Vulnerable groups were generally considered to be treated the same as others by police and chiefs, although this perception was less the case in relation to LGBTQIA+ people.

- Respondents identified a need to make adjustments for the elderly and disabled so that they can access assistance to address crimes/disputes.

- Most community leader respondents feel that the testimony of people from different vulnerable groups is as reliable as the testimony of others.

- Most respondents do not think that demographic attributes (e.g. age, gender) have a large impact on the reporting pathways people choose following a crime/dispute.

The 2022 survey sought to explore whether respondents felt different groups of people are treated differently by police and chiefs, specifically women, youth, people living with disability, and LGBTQIA+ people. Most respondents felt that men and women are treated the same by police (92%) and chiefs (96%) and that youth and older people are treated the same by police (92%) and chiefs (94%). Slightly fewer people felt that people living with disability are treated the same by police (87%) and chiefs (90%), with even fewer feeling that LGBTQIA+ people are treated the same by police (70%) and chiefs (71%).[26] The lower number of people who felt that LGBTQIA+ people are treated the same by police and chiefs is partially attributed to a greater proportion of respondents being unsure (22%), rather than perceptions that LGBTQIA+ people are not treated the same. Although a 2017 study of 57 lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men in Timor-Leste found that 86% of respondents had experienced physical and physiological violence in their lifetime, suggesting that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is high.[27]

Respondents who did not feel that people were treated the same by police and chiefs were asked to explain why. Those who perceived differences in treatment offered a range of explanations, including that men and youth are treated differently because they cause more trouble, whereas women, the elderly, and people living with disability do not cause trouble. Some people noted that police only use force against men (not women) and youth (not the elderly) and that women, the elderly, and people living with disability are often "dealt with first" as a matter of priority. A number of respondents said that there were no LGBTQIA+ people living in their aldeia, which may explain the high number of respondents (22%) who said they did not know whether LGBTQIA+ people were treated the same by police and chiefs, whilst others actually identified discrimination, noting "they

> **"**
> *Vulnerable groups were generally considered to be treated the same as their counterparts by police and chiefs.*

FIGURE 18 — Are the following types of people treated the same by Police and Chiefs in your community? (% Yes, General public)

Group	Police	Chiefs
Men and women	92%	96%
Youth and older people	92%	94%
Disabled people	87%	90%
LGBTQIA+ people	70%	71%

Police   Chiefs

are discriminated against because they are different". It may be that in some aldeias there are no people who have publicly disclosed their sexuality (if not heterosexual), which in itself could suggest that discriminatory attitudes against LGBTQIA+ people are at least perceived to exist.

Whilst the question was posed to examine whether people felt that women, youth, people living with disability, and LGBTQIA+ people were discriminated against, responses suggested that people see a need for positive discrimination (or special treatment) where people may require different treatment in order to have their needs met, this being most apparent in people's perceptions about the way in which people living with a disability are treated by both the police and chiefs. A large number of community leaders (89%) said that they had received a request for assistance from a member of the community living with disability, and most (95%) said that when responding to that request, they had had to do something to make their services more accessible to that person. By way of comparison, in 2021, only 12 cases involving people identified as having a mental health condition or disability were recorded by the PNTL.

Equality of treatment was also explored from the perspective of community leaders. As a proxy to understand the potential bias of community leaders, they were asked, "in your experience of resolving disputes, do men and women provide equally reliable testimony", and "in your experience of resolving disputes, do LGBTQIA+ people provide equally reliable testimony?". While 88% of respondents felt that men and women provide equally reliable testimony, 8% felt that men's testimony tends to be more reliable than women's, and 2% felt that women's testimony tends to be more reliable than men's testimony. A far lower percentage of community leaders (59%) felt that LGBTQIA+ people and heterosexual people provide equally reliable testimony, although 35% said they 'don't know', with only 5% feeling that heterosexual people's testimony tends to be more reliable than LGBTQIA+ people's testimony. Whilst not discounting that actual bias may exist (as it does globally), this may also reflect a lack of experience in knowingly dealing with the LGBTQIA+ members of the community.

In 2022, the survey also sought to understand whether respondents felt that demographic attributes (gender and age) impacted reporting pathways, explored through the questions "do you think women report disputes and crimes to the same or different people as men" and "do you think youth report disputes and crimes to the same or different people as older people?". Most respondents felt that women report to the same people as men (81%) and that youth report to the same people as older people (81%). A small number of respondents felt that women reported to different people than men (9%) and that youth reported to different people than older people (7%), while 11% of respondents said they didn't know (for both women and youth).

In a further effort to specifically understand perceptions of youth, noting problems of social disorder are frequently attributed to them, in 2022, respondents were asked, "when you think about youth, what words come to mind?" Responses ranged from positive and aspirational reflections (contribute to development, pillar of a nation, creative, open-minded, create peace, strengthen unity) through to comments about things that youth ought to do (should help their parents, need to ensure they don't create trouble, need to motivate them, they must respect one another, need to find employment, must go to school).

Future research avenues: As 2022 was the first year in which the survey explicitly sought to understand the ways in which vulnerable groups interact with security and justice actors, the emerging data raises a number of issues that warrant further investigation. This includes the way in which people understand the term "disability", attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ members of the community, and vulnerable group members' experiences of justice-seeking.

Photo by The Asia Foundation Nabilan Program, 2015

ENGAGEMENT WITH AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PNTL

Photo: The Asia Foundation, 2015

Police can play an integral role in protecting people and property and maintaining social order. Although police play different roles in different societies, a set of core principles apply to policing in a range of contexts. These principles include the notion that the goal of policing is to prevent crime, not to punish citizens, that the key to preventing crime is earning public support, and that public support is gained by having an organization that represents the community it serves, the impartial enforcement of laws and use of force as a last resort.[28]

These principles are often compromised during times of political crisis and instability, as has historically been the case in Timor-Leste.[29] Since 2009, the PNTL has increasingly instituted community policing as the philosophy of the service, including community policing principles in the PNTL Organic Law and Strategic Plan.[30] The PNTL has also made headway in implementing community policing in practice through a range of initiatives involving the National Department of Community Policing (NCDP), PNTL Municipal Commanders, OPS, and CPCs at the community level.[31] Of course, institutional transformation is a long-term process, and embedding community policing values throughout the PNTL remains a challenge. Understanding people's trust, access, and experiences of engaging with the police are thus useful in assessing whether and how community policing is taking hold.

KEY FINDINGS ON ENGAGEMENT WITH AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PNTL

- As in previous years, survey respondents reported remarkably high levels of trust in police and continued to perceive their performance as improving, despite 15% reporting excessive use of force by police.

- Contact with police was higher than in 2018 and was primarily through an OPS, with people increasingly contacting police via their personal mobile phone numbers.

- Most respondents received a response within 30 minutes, although high numbers of people in Aileu, Viqueque, Oecusse, and Baucau reported police taking more than a day to respond to requests for assistance.

- OPS play an important role in fostering community engagement with the PNTL. Most people have an OPS in their community and most report that this makes them feel safer.

- Members of the public feel that police **presence** in their communities "is about right", an improvement on previous years, although a significant number of community leaders feel that it is "too little". Most members of the public and community leaders feel that police **involvement** "is about right".

- Police work closely with community leaders to address crime and dispute, playing a range of roles including providing security and assisting with mediation. The roles police play when supporting community leaders varies greatly across the country.

- Although awareness of the term community policing has increased, fewer respondents reported having a CPC in their community than in 2018.

More respondents in 2022 (21%) reported having had direct contact with a PNTL officer in the past year than in 2018 (16%), with 81% of people who had direct contact with a PNTL officer saying the officer was an OPS. More respondents also reported having an OPS assigned to their suco (97%) than in previous years (59% in 2015 and 85% in 2018), suggesting that the OPS play an important role in fostering police community engagement.[32] As in 2018, most of those who reported having an OPS in their suco said it made them feel safer (81% in 2022 and 83% in 2018). Interestingly, a slightly increased number of people (7%) said having an OPS in their suco made them feel less safe than in 2018 (3%).

Consistent with their stronger preference (compared to the general public) for reporting to the PNTL, a far greater number of community leaders reported having had direct contact with a PNTL officer in the past year (66%) than the general public (21%). As with general public respondents, community leader contact with the PNTL increased since 2018 (66%, up from 58%), and of those community leaders who had had direct contact with the PNTL in the past year, 94% said that the PNTL officer was an OPS, with 98% of community leaders reporting that there was an OPS assigned to their suco.

Men reported more contact with the PNTL than women (23% versus 18%), as did those in Dili compared to those outside Dili (29% versus 18%). When examined at the municipal level, considerable variation was apparent, with people in Liquica (38%), Ermera (30%), and Dili (29%) having the highest level of contact with the police, while those in Manufahi (8%), Lautem (10%), and Aileu (10%) having the lowest.

> *Contact with police was higher than in 2018, accompanied by more positive perceptions of police across multiple measures.*

When asked the main reasons they had had contact with the PNTL, most respondents said to report a crime (64% of the general public and 63% of community leaders), while others said they had attended an awareness program organized by the police (30% of the general public and 37% of community leaders), or that the police had broken up a political protest or rally in which they or a member of their family had participated (16% of the general public and 10% of community leaders). Community leader respondents were more likely than general public respondents to have contact with the police as part of a CPC activity (15% compared to 7% of the general public) and more likely to meet police undertaking routine patrols (14% compared to 9% of the general public).
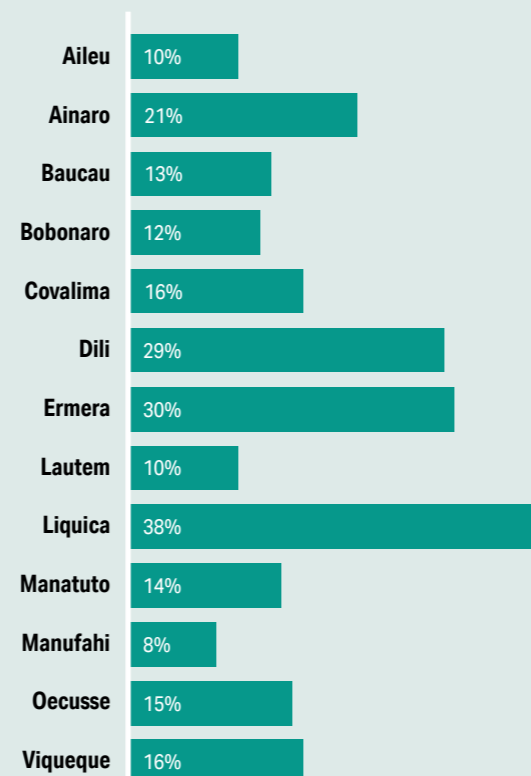
In comparison to previous years, fewer respondents in 2022 (64%) said they had contacted police to report a crime than in 2018 (74%) and 2015 (72%), and fewer reported having attended an awareness program (30%) than in 2018 (46%) and 2015 (36%). The rates of having participated in a rally broken up by police were consistent with 2018 (16% in 2022, 17% in 2018), albeit this had increased greatly since 2015 (5%). An increased number of respondents said that they had met police undertaking routine patrols (9%) than in previous years (up from 4% and 3% in 2015 and 2018, respectively), although this was notably more common in Dili (16%) than outside of Dili (6%). As in 2018, 7% of people had had contact with police as part of a CPC activity or meeting.

People are increasingly contacting the police by calling their personal mobile phone numbers, with 71% of respondents contacting police in this way in 2022, up from 52% in 2015 and 61% in 2018. Community leaders initiated contact via police officers' personal mobile phone numbers at even higher rates (91%) than members of the general public, potentially because they work closely with members of the PNTL and thus have stronger relationships with them.[33] Contacting police via their personal phones was higher outside of Dili than in Dili (77% versus 60%). These figures suggest an impressively high degree of familiarity between people and their initial points of contact within the PNTL.

Increased engagement with police is a positive development. Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents initiated contact in person by visiting a station, 13% dialed 112, and 10% contacted police through a community leader. When compared to previous years, there has been a notable decrease in people dialing 112 (13% compared to 40% in 2018 and 34% in 2015) and in people contacting police through a community leader (10% compared to 29% in 2018 and 24.5% in 2015). The fact that such engagement is primarily initiated via individual police officers' mobile phones may suggest that engagement is highly personalized and dependent on community members' familiarity with and comfort in dealing with individual officers, as opposed to the institution of the PNTL. In addition, it may point to the lack of effective response from contacting the police via the emergency number and thus a preference for contact through officers closer to the community.

As there was a desire to gain a finite understanding of police response times, questions in 2022 about police response times were asked slightly differently.

FIGURE 19 In the past year have you had any direct contact with a PNTL officer? (% Yes, General public)

Municipality	%
Aileu	10%
Ainaro	21%
Baucau	13%
Bobonaro	12%
Covalima	16%
Dili	29%
Ermera	30%
Lautem	10%
Liquica	38%
Manatuto	14%
Manufahi	8%
Oecusse	15%
Viqueque	16%

> " *People are increasingly contacting police via their personal mobile phone numbers.*

In 2022 respondents were prompted (unlike in previous years) with specific time frames; it was felt that this might help respondents make an active choice between response options rather than reflecting on the timeliness of response in an unstructured fashion. In addition, the time frame increments were altered in 2022 to be more realistic about possible response times (providing some longer time frames). Any longitudinal comparison should therefore be approached with caution, albeit it does appear that police response times have improved. The greatest number of respondents said police had responded to them between 10 and 30 minutes (42%), followed by those who said response happened in less than 10 minutes (24%) and within an hour (22%). Nine percent (9%) of respondents said it had taken longer than a day, and very few people (2%) said police had responded within the day. Interestingly, fewer respondents reported having received a response in less than 10 minutes in Dili than outside Dili (17% versus 28%).[34]

This is an improvement from past surveys. In 2022, 65% of respondents had received a response within 30 minutes, up from 35% in 2018, 49% in 2015, and 60% in 2013. Similarly, those reporting that police responded "within a day" has dropped substantially from 25% in 2013, 24% in 2015, and 38% in 2018 to just 2% in 2022.
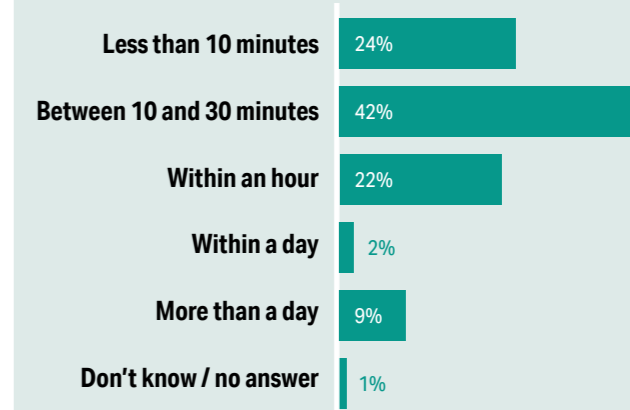
There is some important regional variation. While most of the country appears to receive a police response within 30 minutes, the following municipalities reported much higher rates of police taking "more than a day" to respond: Aileu (27%), Viqueque (19%), Oecusse (17%), and Baucau (15%).

Community leader respondents reported slower PNTL response times than members of the general public. The greatest number of community leaders (just over 32%) reported a response time of within an hour (as opposed to 22% of general public respondents), with just under 32% saying they received a response within 10 to 30 minutes (compared to 42% of general public respondents) and 22% reporting a response in less than 10 minutes (similar to the general public response of 24%).

As with the question about response times, in 2022, when respondents were asked how long it takes to get to their nearest police station, they were specifically prompted (unlike in previous years) in an effort to glean more specific responses. Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents said that they were able to get to a police station within an hour, with 26% saying between 10 and 30 minutes. Thirteen percent (13%) of respondents said within a day, whilst 13% said in less than 10 minutes. Community leader responses to this question were consistent with those of the general public.

More respondents (58%) in Dili reported being able to reach a police station in under 30 minutes than outside of Dili (32%), with 15% of those outside Dili saying it took "within a day" and 1% reporting that it took "more than a day". There was, however, significant variation at the municipal level. Only 2% of respondents in Oecusse reported being able to reach a police station "within 10 minutes", compared to 21% in Dili, while in Viqueque, 46% of respondents reported that it took "within a day" or "more than a day" to access policing. This suggests that access to policing remains quite varied across the country, depending on where people live.

FIGURE 20 How long did the PNTL take to respond to your request? (General public)

Response	%
Less than 10 minutes	24%
Between 10 and 30 minutes	42%
Within an hour	22%
Within a day	2%
More than a day	9%
Don't know / no answer	1%

> *Future research avenues: In Ainaro, 84% and in Lautem, 83% of respondents answered that the police respond in less than 10 minutes or between 10-30 minutes. These might be good sites for learning about how to improve police responsiveness.*

> " *People continue to perceive improvements in police performance and high rates of trust in police persist, despite 15% of respondents having experienced (or had a family member experience) excessive use of force by police.*

The majority of people felt that compared to a year ago, overall police performance had improved (71%), with 23% feeling that it remained the same and very few people (3%) feeling that it was worse. Of those who felt police performance had improved, the greatest number (50%) described it as "much better" than a year ago, whilst 21% described it as being "somewhat better". Respondents in Ermera, in particular, were overwhelmingly positive, with 86% feeling that police were "much better". Similar to members of the general public, most community leaders (79%) felt that compared to a year ago, overall police performance had improved.

In 2022, 99% of respondents (and just under 100% of community leaders) said they trust the police; this is consistent with the levels of trust in police that were reported in 2015 and 2018. There is little gender or regional variation, with distrust of the police being highest in Bobonaro, where 3% do not trust police. It is difficult to know whether people are reporting high levels of trust in their OPS or other immediately local officer—who is likely known to them and a member of their community - or the PNTL as an institution. Given that most people who initiate contact with the PNTL do so through the personal phone numbers of their OPS, it seems likely that community perceptions of police are highly personalized and not necessarily reflective of their trust in the institution as a whole. These high rates of trust should thus be viewed with some degree of caution in terms of what they tell us about overall impressions of the PNTL in Timor-Leste, notwithstanding the possibility that positive perceptions of effective OPS may well be contributing to increased trust in the police.

Against this backdrop of high levels of trust in police, 15% of all respondents reported that the police had used excessive force against them or a member of their family, with reported rates being higher amongst younger respondents (17% of those 18-30 years versus 13% of those over 51 years) and those in Dili (19% versus 13% outside Dili). Interestingly, slightly more community leaders (18%) than members of the general public (15%) reported that the

> **" Members of the general public feel that the level of police involvement in their communities is "about right", although community leaders feel that they have too little presence.**
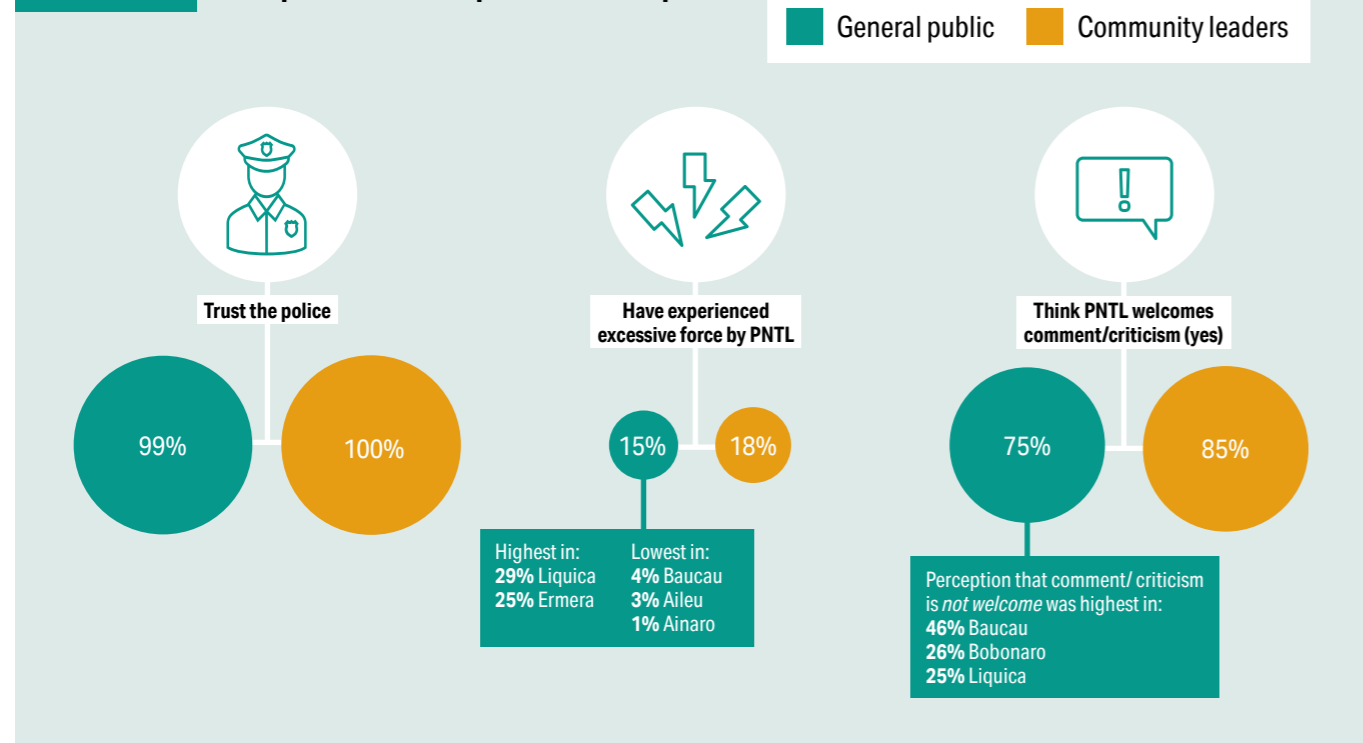
PNTL had used excessive force against them or a member of their family. This could be because community leaders reported significantly higher levels of direct contact with the PNTL (66%) than members of the general public (21%) or that they have a different view of what constitutes "excessive force". It is not known whether respondents were referring to a recent or past event.

Unlike trust in police, there was significant regional variation in reported rates of use of force, with few Ainaro (1%), Aileu (3%), and Baucau (4%) respondents reporting use of force, compared to Liquica (29%) and Ermera (25%), where more people reported excessive use of force. Few of those who experienced excessive force reported it to the PNTL (16%), with those living in Dili (21% versus 14% of those living outside of Dili), men (18% versus 14% of women), and community leaders (24% versus 16% of the general public) being more likely to report. In addition, while 75% of respondents felt that the PNTL welcomes comment or criticism from the community, 17% did not. The perception that comment or criticism is not welcome rises to 25% in Liquica, 26% in Bobonaro, and 46% in Baucau.

It is difficult to reconcile positive perceptions of police with the fact that 15% of respondents reported that police had used excessive force against them (albeit we do not know when it occurred), and 17% do not think the PNTL welcomes comment or criticism (with rates much higher in some parts of the country). Terms such as "excessive" are highly subjective and are likely interpreted differently by individual members of the community. So too, perceptions of the "reasonableness" of police use of force are often impacted by the issue at hand and community perceptions of the wrongdoer. As addressing excessive use of force by police requires attention to underreporting, it is important to understand why people do not report, which might be attributable to a range of factors including fear of reporting, lack of faith in the system (e.g., the issue will not be addressed), lack of awareness of rights, or even a view that the excessive use of force is acceptable in some circumstances. These issues warrant further exploration.

For the first time, in 2022, the majority of respondents (56%) described police presence in their communities as "about right", up from 48% in 2015 and 40% in 2018. Only 10% felt the police had too much presence in 2022 (compared with 23% and 23% in 2015 and 2018, respectively), with those in Dili (4%) being less likely to think the police had too much presence than those outside Dili (12%). In 2022, slightly fewer respondents felt that the police had too little presence in their communities (34%) than in 2018 (36%), although a large number of respondents felt that the police had too little presence in Ainaro (69%), Viqueque (54%) and Manatuto (45%). Compared to the general public, fewer community leader respondents felt that the level of police presence was "about right" (36% compared to 56% of the general public), with more feeling that was too much presence (21% compared to 10% of the general public) or too little presence (42% compared to 34%).

In addition to being asked about police presence, respondents were also asked about the PNTL involvement in their communities. As with police presence, most (59%) members of the public felt that police involvement in their communities was "about right" (compared with 41% in 2015 and 39% in 2018), a view shared by 45% of community leaders. In comparison to previous years, there was a notable decrease in respondents who felt that the police had too much involvement in their communities, with only 10% of respondents in 2022 feeling that police had too much involvement compared to 39% in 2015 and 30% in 2018. There was, however, a small increase in those who felt the police had too little involvement in their communities, with 31% of people feeling the police had too little involvement in 2022, up from 16% in 2015 and 29% in 2018. An even larger increase in the percentage of community leaders

> *Future research avenues: Given strong perceptions that the police have improved in Ermera in particular, further research might explore what has driven these perceptions, with a view to expanding good practice to other municipalities. To understand how high levels of trust in police exist alongside excessive use of force, it would be valuable to unpack community understanding of police use of force.*

> **" People see a need for increased numbers of women in policing.**

FIGURE 21 **Perceptions of and experiences with police**

■ General public ■ Community leaders

Trust the police

99% 100%

Have experienced excessive force by PNTL

15% 18%

Highest in:
29% Liquica
25% Ermera

Lowest in:
4% Baucau
3% Aileu
1% Ainaro

Think PNTL welcomes comment/criticism (yes)

75% 85%

Perception that comment/ criticism is *not welcome* was highest in:
46% Baucau
26% Bobonaro
25% Liquica

(35%) who felt that the police had too little involvement in the community was apparent, up from 20% in 2018. Regional variation was common. In Ermera, responses indicate more respondents felt police are too involved (26% said too much; 9% said too little); whereas in Ainaro (5% said too much; 48% said too little) and Viqueque (4% said too much; 40% said too little), more respondents felt police were not involved enough.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of general public respondents and 95% of community leaders felt the number of women in the police should be increased, up from 89% and 93% in 2018, respectively. Lower numbers of respondents than the national average in Bobonaro (84%), Oecusse (86%), and Baucau (87%) felt that the percentage of women in the PNTL should be increased.

In 2022, more respondents (72%) reported that police play a role in dispute resolution by local community leaders than in previous years (up from 48% in 2013, 61 % in 2015, and 65% in 2018). This finding is stronger in Dili (where 88% of people say police are involved) than outside Dili (where 67% of people say police are involved). The responses of community leaders demonstrated an even stronger view that police work with them to resolve disputes, with 89% agreeing that they are supported by the PNTL to resolve disputes, up from 70% in 2018. There is great variation at the municipal level, with 27% of respondents in Manatuto saying police are involved and 94% of respondents in Ermera saying police are involved in dispute resolution by community leaders.

This begs the question of what roles police are playing in dispute resolution processes. When asked about these roles, it was apparent that police play a wide range of roles and functions and that these differ greatly throughout the country. Most respondents (85%) said that police provide security, although

> *Police continue to play an increasing role in the resolution of disputes by community leaders.*

Future research avenues: Research to understand the role of police in dispute resolution processes would be of value. Such research would need to examine multiple sites in order to capture the significant regional variation in police roles that this survey data suggests.

FIGURE 22

Do police play any role in the resolution of disputes by community leaders? (% yes)
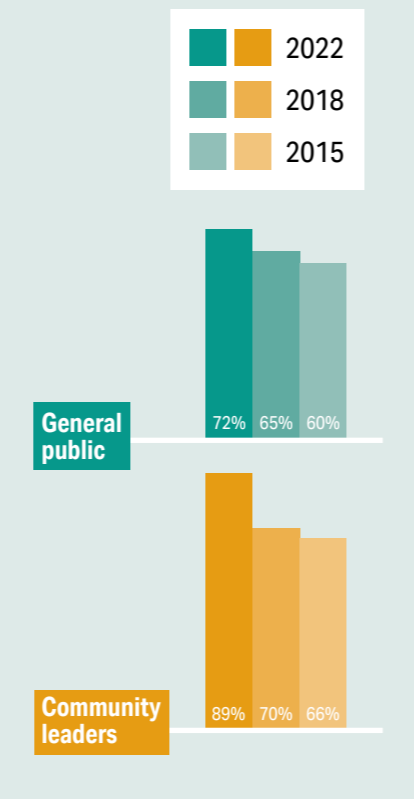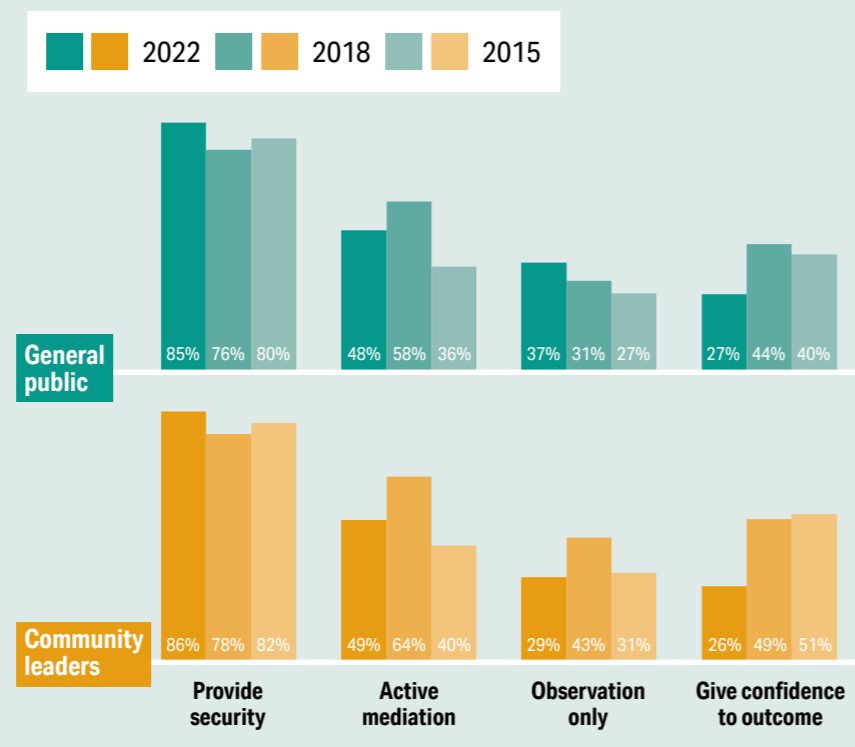
- 2022
- 2018
- 2015

General public: 72% | 65% | 60%

Community leaders: 89% | 70% | 66%

FIGURE 23 — What role do they play in the resolution of disputes?

- 2022 | 2018 | 2015

	Provide security	Active mediation	Observation only	Give confidence to outcome
General public	85% 76% 80%	48% 58% 36%	37% 31% 27%	27% 44% 40%
Community leaders	86% 78% 82%	49% 64% 40%	29% 43% 31%	26% 49% 51%

49% of respondents said that police are involved in active mediation. Thirty-seven percent (37%) said that police observe only, and 27% said they give confidence in the outcome. The responses of community leaders to this question were similar to those of the general public. Regional variation, however, is remarkable. While only 5% of respondents in Covalima say police are involved in active mediation, in Liquica, 92% of respondents said that police are involved in active mediation.

In 2022, 89% of general public respondents reported that relations between police and their community were 'good', up from 80% in 2015 and 79% in 2018. Eight percent (8%) of respondents felt that they were neither good nor bad, with only 1% feeling they were bad. Community leader respondents characterized relations between police and their community slightly more favorably than members of the general public, with 94% characterizing them as good (up from 85% in 2015 and 88% in 2018), 4% as neither good nor bad, and 1% as bad. Notably, fewer people in Manatuto (77%) and Oecusse (80%) described relations as "good". Further exploring police-community relations, 93% of respondents feel the police "serve and respect the rights of all citizens" (down from 96% and 95% in 2015 and 2018 respectively), with a similarly slight drop in numbers of community leaders (96%) who feel that the police "serve and respect the rights of all citizens" (down from 99% and 97% in 2015 and 2018, respectively).

Low numbers of respondents continue to report that police serve the interests of select groups (2%, up from less than 1% in 2015 and 2018). This rises to 4% in Dili (versus 1% outside Dili). Bobonaro is the municipality where respondents feel less like the police serve and respect the rights of all citizens compared to the rest of the country (with only 85% answering positively), while 5% felt police serve the interests of select groups and 3% felt police serve the interests of political leaders.

> *People increasingly report that citizens and police are working together to address security problems.*

In keeping with positive perceptions of police, the overwhelming majority of respondents (89% of the general public and 95% of community leaders) feel that citizens and police are working together to address security problems in their community. This is up from 84% of the general public and 92% of community leaders in 2015 and 83% of the general public and 93% of community leaders in 2018).

When asked to provide specific examples of how citizens and police work together, the most common response was "community reports crimes/disputes to police" (46%), followed by "identify/resolve problems" (39%), "resolving fighting, youth violence, drunkenness, murder" (38%), "resolving land disputes/wandering animals" (21%), and "cooperation to prevent conflict/maintain peace and security" (19%).

This collaborative relationship is consistent with increased awareness of the term community policing, with 62% of respondents in 2022 saying that they had heard the term, up from 53% in 2015 and 54% in 2022, with even higher numbers of community leader respondents (91%) being familiar

> *People continue to report that relations between police and their community are good.*

FIGURE 24

Are citizens and police working together to address security problems in your community? (% yes)

- 2022
- 2018
- 2015

General public: 89% | 83% | 84%

Community leaders: 95% | 93% | 92%
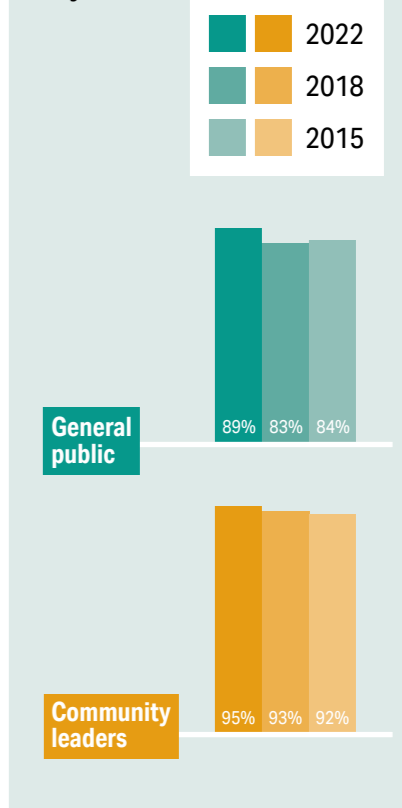
with the term. For the first time, in 2022, the survey sought to explore not only whether respondents were familiar with the term community policing but also to understand what it means to them. While some people said they were familiar with the term but did not know what it meant, there were some people who offered thoughts about the term's meaning, with the notion of working collaboratively with the community as central, and with the responses of the general public and community leaders being consistent. For example, "working together with the community", "…police that work closer to and with the community" were amongst the many descriptions emphasizing the collaborative nature of community policing, whilst other respondents directly associated the term with Community Policing Councils—"it means police that are closer to the community, such as the CPC"—and OPS, "community policing is the name for the Suco Police Officer because they are closer to the community". That community police work collaboratively with suco and aldeia chiefs was highlighted by other respondents.

It is interesting, however, that whilst awareness of the term community policing has increased, fewer respondents in 2022 (68% general public and 78% community leaders) said they had a CPC in their suco than in 2018 (88% general public and 82% community leaders). Considerably more people living in Dili (86%) said they had a CPC in their suco than those living outside of Dili (61%). Lower reporting of active CPCs may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns and restrictions, preventing many community organizations from meeting and operating. Of those respondents who said they did have a CPC in their suco, most (41%) said that undertaking community security activities (patrols, awareness-raising) was the role played by their CPC, with fewer respondents referring to hearing/resolving disputes/grievances brought by the community (17%), discussing locally relevant security issues (13%), problem identification (9%) and holding regular meetings (9%). In 2022, more respondents felt that their CPC was effective at maintaining security (89%) than in 2018 (80%), and of those respondents, notably, more felt that it was very effective (58% in 2022 versus 44% in 2018) rather than somewhat effective.

> "
> *Keeping communities safe is a collaborative endeavor involving multiple actors from both state and society.*

As in previous years, survey respondents were asked how actively a range of actors assist the police in fighting crime, including non-government organizations (NGOs), religious associations, political parties, suco chiefs, aldeia chiefs, CPCs, lian-na'in, martial arts groups, veterans, and other community members.

Consistent with responses to questions about who is responsible for and involved in addressing crime and dispute in their communities, general public respondents

FIGURE 25

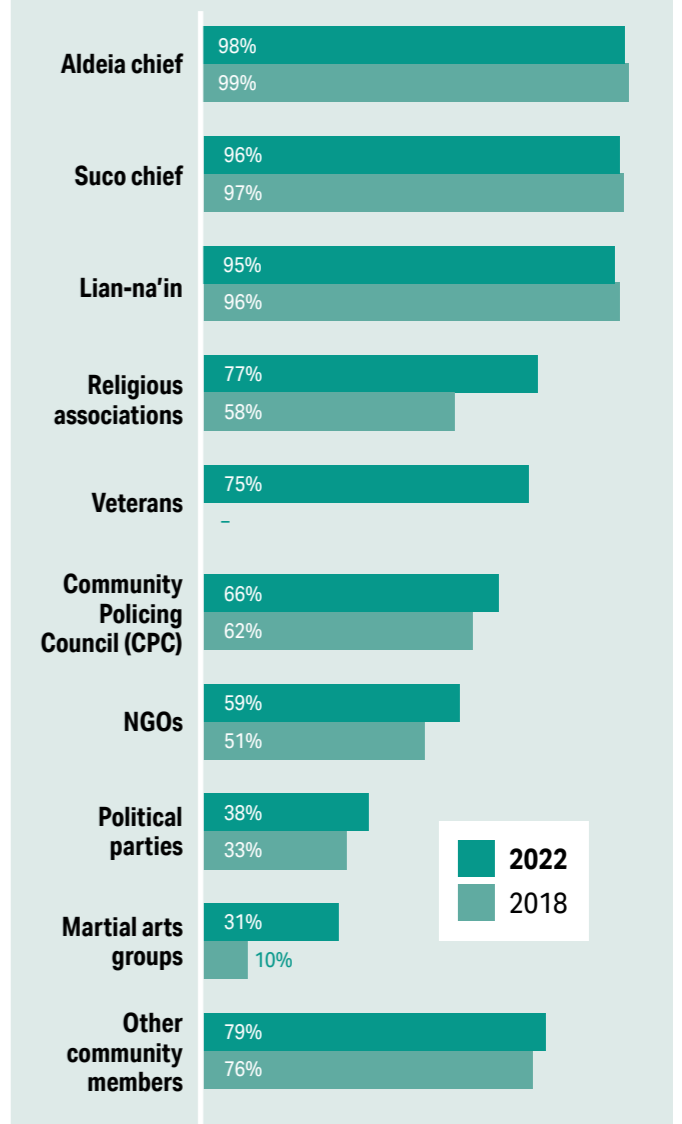**Have you ever heard the term Community Policing? (% yes)**

| 2022 | 2015 |
| 2018 | 2013 |

General public

36% | 53% | 54% | 62%

Community leaders

70% | 84% | 86% | 91%

FIGURE 26

What does the term community policing mean to you? (Top 5 themes among both general public and community leaders)

Community policing council

Police that look after community

Working with community members

Working with Suco/ Aldeia chiefs

Suco police officers (OPS)

in 2022 (as in 2015 and 2018) continued to identify community leaders (suco chiefs, aldeia chiefs, and lian-na'in) as those who most actively assist police to fight crime. Ninety-eight percent (99%) of respondents said that aldeia chiefs are active in assisting the police to fight crime, 96% said that suco chiefs are active in assisting the police to fight crime, and 95% said that lian-na'in are active in assisting police to fight crime. Interestingly, in 2022, respondents identified that NGOs, religious associations, political parties, CPCs, martial arts groups, and other community members are also playing a more active role than in previous years. Veterans were included as an option for the first time in 2022, and they appear to actively support the police, as identified by 75% of respondents. The greatest increase was in those who nominated martial arts groups (32%) as actively assisting police, compared to 10% in 2018 and 4% in 2013. The responses of community leaders were generally consistent with those of the general public.

> *Future research avenues: Notably greater numbers of people in 2022 identified illegal groups as being present and active in their communities. More people in 2022 also noted Martial Arts Groups as a security concern (though still small relative to other issues), and notably larger numbers of people in 2022 identified martial arts groups as actively assisting the police to fight crime. While not wanting to overstate the issue, these shifts in the data suggest that it may be valuable to examine the activities of martial arts groups in the contemporary context and the ways in which they both contribute to and undermine people's security.*

FIGURE 27

How active are the following groups in assisting the police to fight crime? (% very active or active, general public)

| 2022 |
| 2018 |

Group	2022	2018
Aldeia chief	98%	99%
Suco chief	96%	97%
Lian-na'in	95%	96%
Religious associations	77%	58%
Veterans	75%	–
Community Policing Council (CPC)	66%	62%
NGOs	59%	51%
Political parties	38%	33%
Martial arts groups	31%	10%
Other community members	79%	76%

CONCLUSION

This 2022 Safety, Security and Justice Perceptions Survey reveals notable improvements in many aspects of people's experiences of safety, security, and policing in Timor-Leste. It also provides a more granular understanding of the various ways in which people seek to resolve disputes and crimes, and the processes by which community leaders conduct resolution.

While the overall picture painted by the data is generally positive, the experience of vulnerable groups deserves particular attention to ensure that improvements in safety, security, and justice benefit everyone and that some are not left behind. In particular, LGBTQIA+ groups emerge as potentially facing discrimination.

Importantly, the most significant variations within the data occur by municipality rather than by age, sex, or ability. This suggests that experiences of safety, security, and justice are highly localized. Headline statistics at the national level can thus mask important sub-national variation. For policymaking and programming, this requires much more fine-grained tailoring of initiatives to the sub-national context in recognition of this variation. It also means there are important opportunities for learning at the sub-national level, in particular, to understand both positive and negative outliers and to understand what drives either better or worse outcomes and experiences in different parts of the country. Such analysis can be used to address poor outcomes and experiences and expand upon good ones.

A number of potential future research questions have been identified throughout this report. Broadly, these relate to:
- Better understanding some of the outlier experiences of safety and security by municipality; understanding what drives better and worse security experiences in different parts of the country, with a view to learning from the subnational level.
- Unpacking further people's experiences of seeking dispute resolution and how these are influenced by one's identity, the particular crime/dispute experienced and other factors, as well as how these impact decision-making along the way.
- Better understanding the process of how dispute resolution providers make decisions and resolve disputes; who is involved, and who has oversight.

In addition to these, some outstanding questions remain about how current trends and events in Timor-Leste are likely to impact people's experiences of safety, security, and access to justice. In particular, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and associated economic downturn; the political turbulence of shifting alliances, and the emergence of a younger generation of leaders who will increasingly take the reins from the independence-era leaders; increasing precarity if economic diversification beyond oil exploration is not achieved; and the likelihood of more natural disasters as the effects of climate change worsen. Monitoring these dynamics will be important for understanding what may be driving or shaping people's experiences of safety, security and justice.

Looking to the future, it is clear that community leaders remain at the heart of communities in Timor-Leste and play important primary roles both in providing security and dispute resolution functions. Supporting these leaders, monitoring their performance, and ensuring they are responsive to the communities they serve will be key to improving the safety, security, and justice of all Timorese. In addition, the PNTL is clearly emerging as a more trusted service that is viewed as broadly acting in the service of community security. Continuing to support healthy and robust police-community relationships that are inclusive and respectful of the rights of all will ensure that this positive journey continues.

Photo by Solita Noronha Pereira, 2022

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ENDNOTES

1. The survey defines community leaders as local suco (village) and aldeia (sub-village) elected leaders, as well as lian-na'in (customary leaders). Lian-na'in ('owner of the words') are customary authority figures responsible for interpreting customary law and resolving local disputes whose role has become more formalized as part of Suco Council structures following the 2009 Community Leadership Law and Suco Council Law 9/2016.

2. C. Valters, S. Dewhurst and J. De Catheu (2015) 'After the Buffaloes Clash: Moving from political violence to personal security in Timor-Leste,' Development Progress Case Study Report, London: Overseas Development Institute; D. Grenfell and B. Winch (2014) 'Local Security and Resilience in Dili, Timor-Leste,' San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation and The Centre for Global Research.

3. See for instance D. Kingsbury (2018) 'Timor-Leste's Challenged Political Process: 2016–17,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 40(1): 77-100.

4. Ibid; Nabilan (2016) 'Understanding Violence against Women and Children in Timor-Leste: Findings from the Nabilan Baseline Study – Main Report, Dili: The Asia Foundation, Available online at: https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/UnderstandingVAWTL. main.pdf, Accessed 29 April 2021.

5. World Bank (2021) 'December 2021 Timor-Leste Economic Report: Steadying the ship,' Washington, DC: World Bank; Government of Timor-Leste and United Nations (2021) 'Government and United Nations in Timor-Leste launch Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Round-2 to contribute to the COVID-19 response and recovery,' Joint News Release, 8 November 2021.

6. UN Timor-Leste (2021) 'Timor-Leste: Floods UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) Situation Report No. 11,' 16 July 2021, Available online at: https://reliefweb.int/report/timor-leste/timor-leste-floods-situation-report-no-11-16-july-2021, Accessed 20 May 2022; Australian Humanitarian Partnership (2021) 'Floods – Timor-Leste, 2021-2022,' Available online at: https://www.australianhumanitarianpartnership.org/preparedness-1/timor-leste-floods-2021, Accessed 11 April 2022.

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8. M. Futamura, C. Hobson and N. Turner (2011) 'Natural disasters and human security,' Tokyo: United Nations University.

9. M. Leach (2020) 'In Timor-Leste, failed budget sparks a political crisis,' *The Interpreter,* 20 January 2020, Available online at: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/timor-leste-failed-budget-sparks-political-crisis.

10. Bardia Rahmani (2020) 'Timor-Leste's New Kingmakers,' *The Diplomat,* Issue 67, June 2020.

11. C. Scheiner (2021) 'Timor-Leste Economic Survey: The end of petroleum income,' *Asia & The Pacific Policy Studies,* 8: 253-279.

12. In Timor-Leste, a suco is a unit of administration which roughly translates to 'village'. Suco comprise multiple aldeia, that roughly translates to 'sub-village' or 'hamlet'.

13. This impacted the following survey questions, more so in the community leaders survey than the general public. General public survey: Question: 'What role does the Community Policing Council play in your suco?'; Community leaders survey: Question: 'As a [insert leader type], when you help people to address crimes and disputes that affect them, what kind of knowledge are you drawing on?' Question: 'Who do you work with to resolve matters brought to you?' Question: 'Are there any types of crimes or disputes that you don't think you should deal with as a [insert leader type here]?' Question: 'Why don't you think you should deal with [insert crime/dispute]?' Question: 'What role does the Community Policing Council play in your suco?'.

14. Abandonment in the Timor-Leste context often refers to men leaving their wife/partner and/or children without material support. It includes paternity cases where a pregnant woman is seeking material support from someone who promised to marry her; as well as in sexual assault cases resulting in pregnancy where the perpetrator refuses to pay maintenance.

15. Spotlight Initiative (2020) 'European Union and United Nations are committed to protecting women and girls in Timor-Leste during COVID-19,' Available online at: https://spotlightinitiative.org/es/node/20236, Accessed 29 April 2022.

16. The Asia Foundation (2021) 'Timor-Leste COVID-19 Survey, Round 8 – September 2021' Available online at: https://asiafoundation.org/publication/timor-leste-covid-19-survey-round-8-september-2021/, accessed 20 April 2022.

17. The Timor-Leste COVID Survey, Round 8 – September 2021, reported that 58% of people had cut their meal size or skipped a meal because there wasn't enough money for food, with even higher numbers of people reporting an inability to buy food in May 2021 (74%) and July 2020 (70%).

18. MAGs is a term used broadly in Timor-Leste and can mean local sports/lobby groups as well as gangs with varying degrees of illegal activity. Where respondents noted MAGs as a security concern, it is likely they are referring to gang activity.

19. Illegal groups were defined in the survey as "ones that have been banned by the government or whose primary purpose is to profiteer from illegal activities." For discussion of illegal groups and martial arts groups, see The Asia Foundation (2017) 'Timor-Leste,' in *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia,* San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation, pp. 185-186.

20. See for instance Watugari Coelho Consultants (2020) 'Tesi Lian and the Law,' Summary Report, Aileu and Dili: Watugari Coelho Consultants, pp. 21-22.

21. Ofisiál Polícia Suku (OPS) are Suco Police Officers based at the suco level, with the intention of having greatest proximity to the community, especially in rural areas which have limited other police presence.

22. Interestingly, a 2018 evaluation of the OPS made a similar finding – that OPS resolve disputes and crimes brought to them not only (or even mostly) on the basis of formal laws, which are often not known or poorly understood. See Fundasaun Mahein and Hau Meni Associates (2019) 'Evaluation: PNTL Suku Policing Service (OPS), August-October 2018,' Final Report, Dili: The Asia Foundation and MFAT.

23. *Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor 2002.*

24. Timor-Leste National Police PNTL General Command (no date) *Gender Strategy: National Police of Timor-Leste 2018-2022,* Available online at: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2019/10/tl-PNTL-Gender-strategy-ENG-v-9-compressed.pdf, Accessed 23 May 2022.

25. General Directorate of Statistics (GDS) and ICF. (2018). '2016 Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey Key Findings.' Available online at: https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SR244/SR244.pdf. Accessed on 2 May 2022.

26. The responses of male and female respondents to these questions were similar.

27. I. Saeed and B. Galhos (2017) 'A Research Report on the Lives of Lesbian and Bisexual Women and Transgender Men in Timor-Leste,' Rede Feto and ASEAN SOGIE Caucus.

28. These principles are derived from those of Sir Robert Peel, who, upon establishing the London Metropolitan Police Force, sought to articulate what an ethical police force would look like. There is no authoritative source for their original expression, albeit they are widely drawn upon by policing organizations globally.

29. Human Rights Watch (2006) 'Tortured Beginnings: Police Violence and the Beginnings of Impunity in East Timor', Available online at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/04/19/tortured-beginnings/police-violence-and-beginnings-impunity-east-timor. Accessed 29 April 2022.

30. The Asia Foundation (2019) 'Community Policing in Timor-Leste,' San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation.

31. The Asia Foundation (2019) 'Community Policing in Timor-Leste,' San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation.

32. When asking this question, enumerators were prompted to explain, "a suco police officer (OPS) is a PNTL officer that is assigned to your village. He or she may live in your village or may visit on a regular basis". It is not possible to determine whether those who reported having an OPS assigned to their suco had an OPS living in their village.

33. The 2018 OPS Evaluation found that "while almost all Suku Chiefs and Aldeia Chiefs knew their OPS' number, very few community members outside of the 'top leadership' did". See Fundasaun Mahein and Hau Meni Associates (2019) 'Evaluation: PNTL Suku Policing Service (OPS)' Final Report, Dili: The Asia Foundation and MFAT, p. 11.

34. Noting that most respondents who had contacted police did so through an OPS, the 2018 OPS Evaluation provides a valuable reference point. The evaluation determined that "76% of community members report that OPS respond quickly to incidents", albeit it also found that the proximity of an OPS to the community he/she serves has a significant impact on response times. Ibid., p. 12.

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