

New Poll of Freetown on three Burning Issues:

Dividing the Capital into multiple local councils, electricity supply, and Managing Funeral Processions in a Congested City

October 2025

The SLPP-led government is pushing three major reforms that will have significant implications on how Sierra Leone's capital city is managed overall, traffic congestion and improving electricity supply. A new citywide public opinion survey of approximately 1,072 adult residents, conducted between 9th and 12th October, is the first structured feedback from Freetown residents on some of the key elements of the reforms for the attention of both the central government and the Freetown City Council. The poll reveals that most Freetown residents are unaware of the government's proposal to split the city into multiple municipal councils, but among those aware, the plan is very unpopular. Additionally, the survey finds that a majority of city's the residents believe electricity services improved over the past year.

a. Summary

- Only 32% of Freetown residents say they have heard of the government's plan to divide the city into multiple municipal administrative units. Of the nearly one-third of residents who have heard of the plan, a significant majority (62%) disagree or strongly disagree with the government's proposal to divide the city into multiple municipal management units.
- Three in four (76%) Freetonians say that the electricity supply in October 2025 is better than it was a year ago. However, many challenges were reported. An overwhelming majority (90%) mentioned high tariffs, and low and unstable voltage (67%) as the most important issues to address to improve electricity service.
- Over half (54%) of Freetown residents want the grand send-offs and funeral processions that mark the city's traditional methods of honouring the dead to continue, compared to just one-third (33%) that call for burial practice reform, or a complete ban on processions (8%).

b. Dividing Freetown into Multiple Municipal Management Units

The survey reveals a significant gap in the awareness and understanding of the government's proposal to split Freetown into multiple local council units. Fewer than one-third of Freetown residents (32%) have heard about the government's reform proposal, while 68% remain unaware of any plan to do so. Awareness is highest in central Freetown, where nearly half (48%) say they have heard about these plans.¹

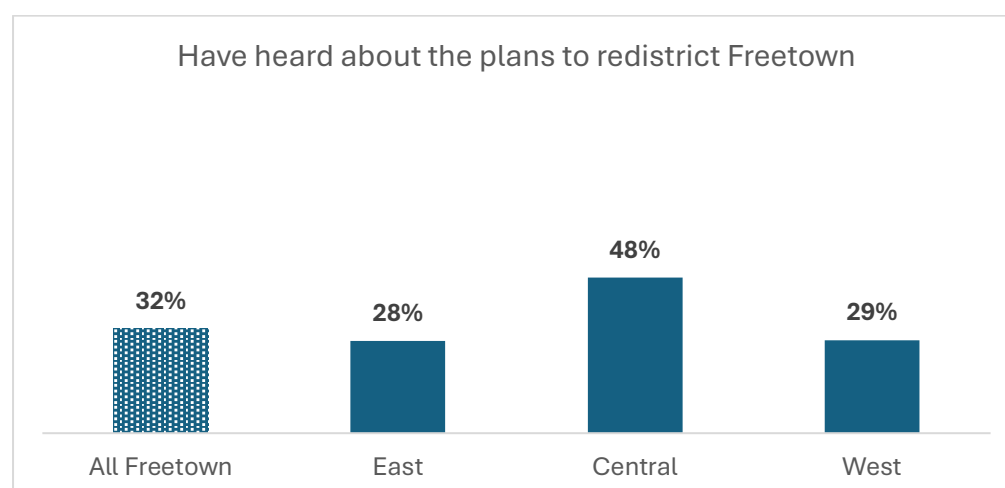


Figure 1: Awareness of Redistricting Plans

¹ Regional subsamples throughout this analysis are n=205 for Central Freetown, n=539 of East and n=328 for West, with margins of error of $\pm 6.9\%$, $\pm 4.2\%$ and ± 5.4 respectively, at 95% confidence level.

While awareness is low, a significant majority (62%) of those who had heard of the plans “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the government’s proposal to divide the city into multiple municipal management units.²

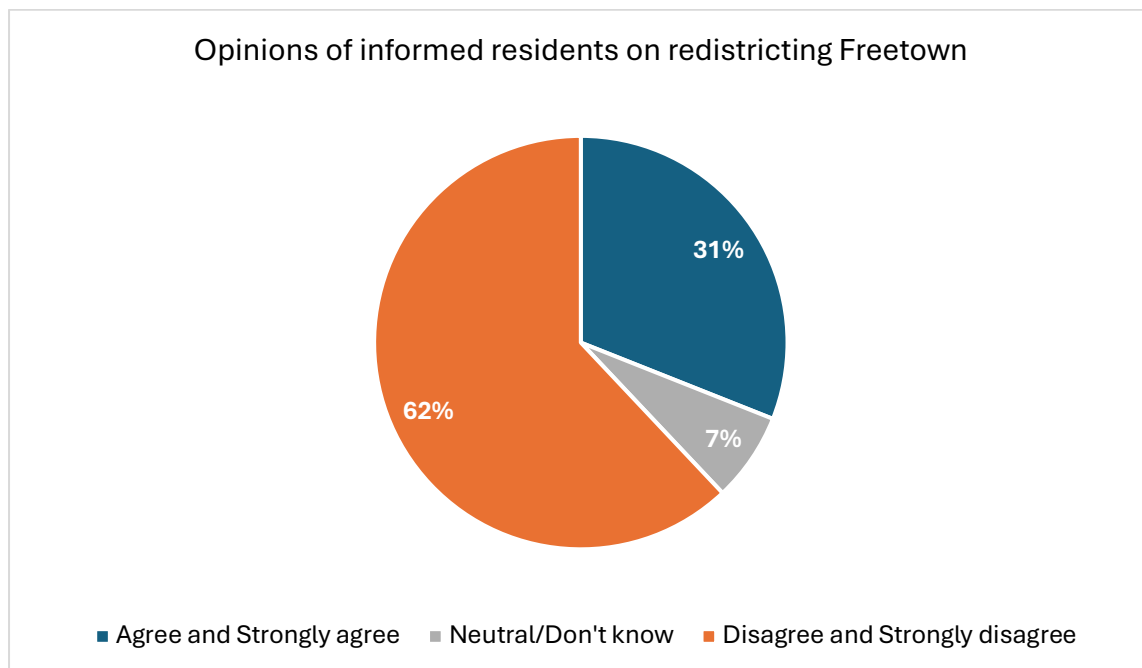


Figure 2: Opinion on Redistricting Plans

When offered specific governance options to all respondents, residents showed a clear preference for keeping the status quo.

- 57% preferred keeping Freetown City Council undivided, with no change to how it currently governance structure.
- 30% supported creating smaller councils under the supervision of one Freetown City Council.
- Only 13% favored establishing smaller city councils with the complete abolishment of the Freetown City Council

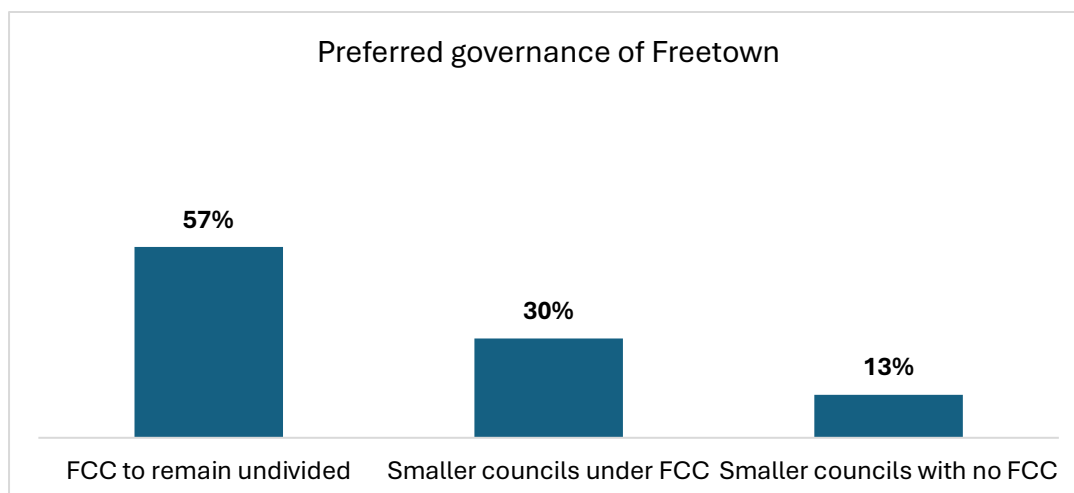


Figure 3: Preferred Government Structure Options

² Respondents who reported awareness of government plan is n=345, resulting in a margin of error of $\pm 5.3\%$. This self-reported awareness is higher among men (65%) than women (35%). The survey approximates $\pm 11\%$ margin of error for gender differences in this subsample.

c. Perceptions of Electricity Supply

Across Freetown, 76% of residents reported experiencing an improvement in the overall electricity situation compared to a year ago. Only 12% said the situation remained the same, while another 12% indicated conditions had worsened. Relatively affluent communities in the Westend of Freetown (83%) were most likely to report improved electricity services compared to communities in the Central (77%) and Eastend (71%) of Freetown, where deprivation is historically higher.

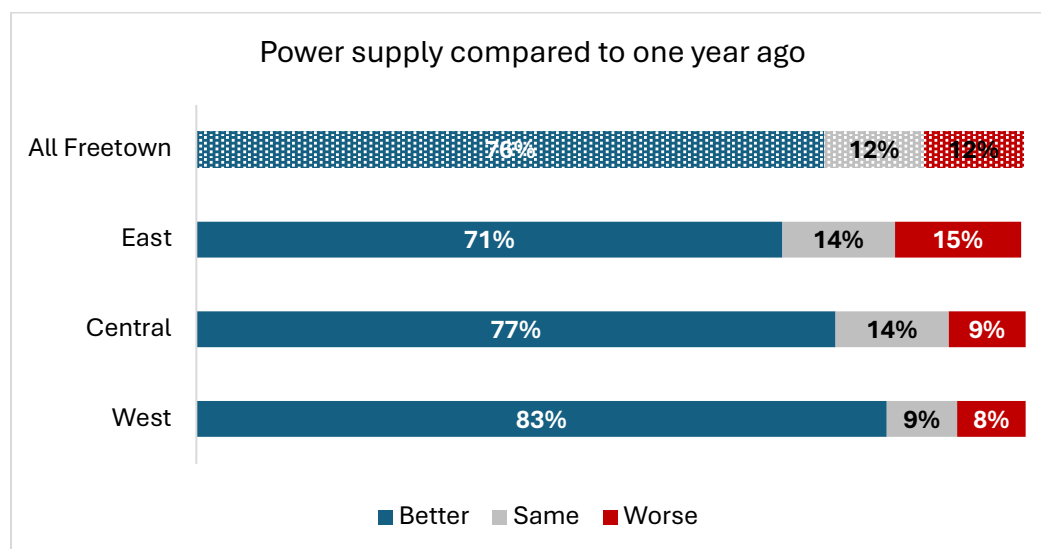


Figure 4: Electricity Situation Compared to One Year Ago

However, residents identified several critical areas requiring urgent attention. The cost of electricity emerged as an overwhelming concern that citizens felt the government should address, with 90% of respondents citing high tariffs as a major issue. Voltage instability was the second most frequently mentioned issue, by nearly seven-in-ten residents (67%). Other significant concerns included: power theft (36%); corruption among Electricity Distribution and Supply Agency (EDSA) staff (34%); unpaid bills by consumers (24%) and the failures of government offices to pay their bills (21%).

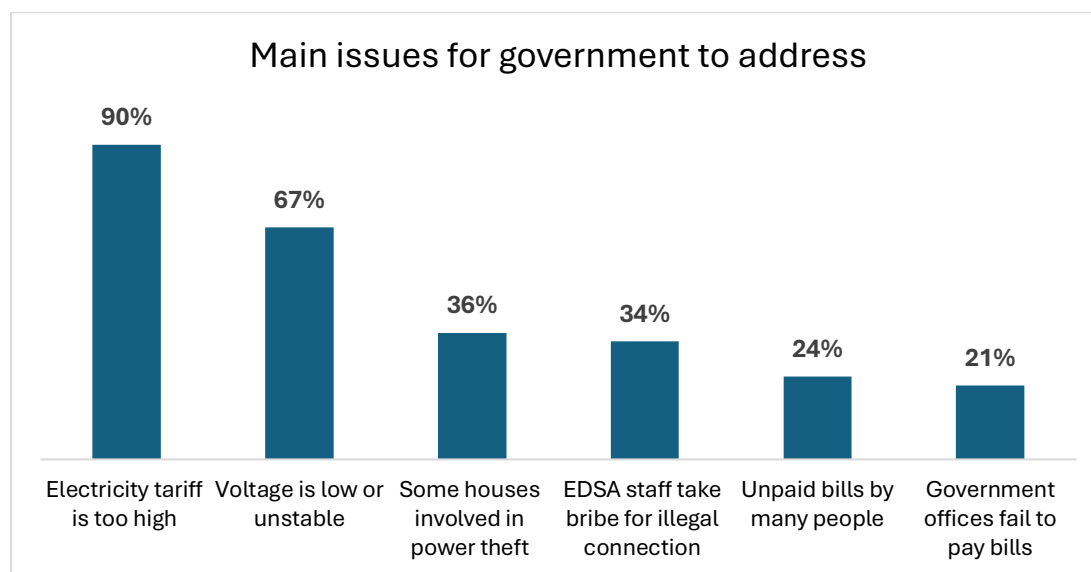


Figure 5: Main Issues to Address to Improve in Electricity Services

d. Managing Funeral Processions in the City

Freetonians were also surveyed about ways to manage funeral processions in light of the persistent traffic congestion in the city. Slightly over half (54%) of city residents favour the continuation of current practices, where motorcades and pedestrians slowly process with the dead to cemeteries as a final act of respect to loved ones. The remaining 46% would prefer modifications to how Freetown handles burials to lessen traffic impact. One-third (33%) of respondents support introducing limited restrictions on routes and procession times to improve traffic flow; 5% advocate for only vehicles to process to cemeteries, while 8% endorse a complete ban on funeral processions.

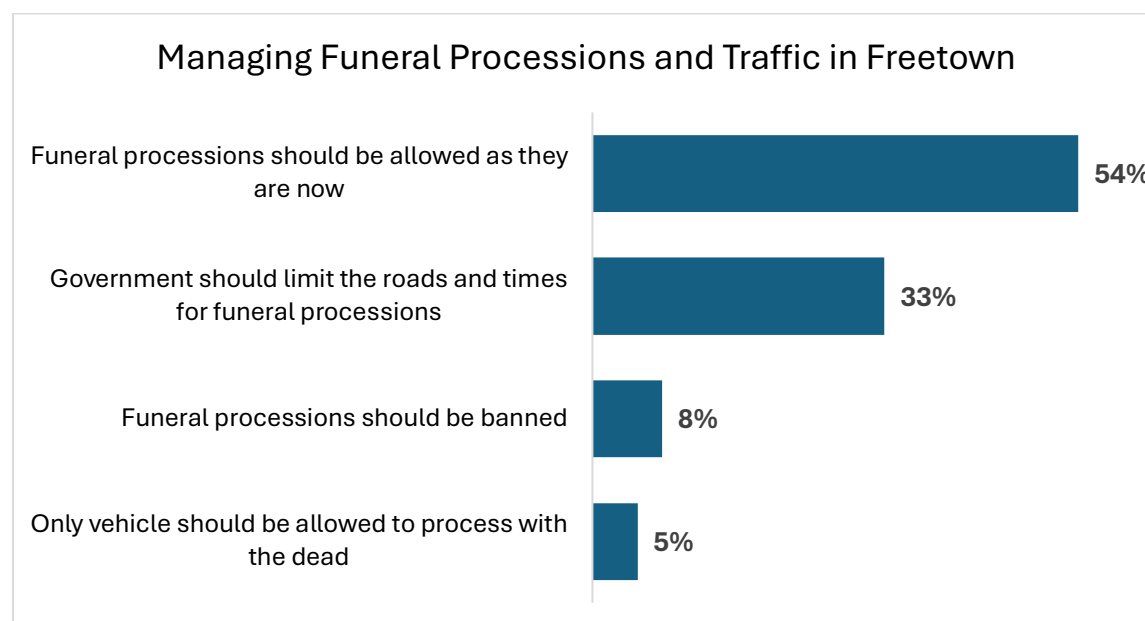


Figure 6: Opinions on Funeral Procession Regulations

e. Methodology

The poll was conducted by the Institute for Governance Reform between the 9th and 12th of October 2025. The survey included 1,072 respondents aged 18 and above, providing a representative sample of Freetown's estimated population with a margin of error of +/-3% at the 95% confidence level.

Multi-stage cluster sampling was employed, with enumeration areas selected proportionate to ward and administrative area population sizes according to available official data. The sample was carefully balanced by gender to reflect Freetown's demographic composition. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in Krio in respondents' homes using electronic data capture technology. Comprehensive data quality assurance measures were implemented, including both remote and on-field supervision, as well as back-checking of interviews to ensure accuracy and reliability.

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