SIERRA LEONE: Hate Speech and Elections.

ABSTRACT
The most prevalent platform on which Sierra Leoneans hear hate speech is social media (58%). Only two out of ten respondents say they hear hate speech on radio, while 10% mention political party meetings.

SierraPoll Survey
Hate Speech and Elections.

Date generated: July 2022

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1 Methodology

IGR collected opinions on Citizen's perceptions of hate speech generally, as part of efforts to understand potential hotspots or issues during election time. Hate speech has emerged as a concern in Sierra Leone politics in recent years, and as a possible driver of violence during elections. We explored hate speech in this poll, with questions covering whether citizens were familiar with hate speech and had heard it, the types of hate speech encountered and the platforms in which hate speech was heard. The charts presented in this report provide the findings of the survey on the prevalence of hate speech in communities across the country.

The survey data was collected through in-person interviews at all bye-election wards and some wards that were bye-elections did not take place. IGR surveyed 1,176 individuals. This provides a margin of error at the national level of ±1%. IGR collected 8 observations from each ward that is within the sampling frame. The total number of wards covered in the survey was 147 within 94 constituencies.

IGR assigned survey collectors (i.e., "enumerators") to at least 6 wards in each district. The enumerators then collected data from eight households around each ward. The enumerators collected data electronically using tablet computers and smart phones. The enumerators alternated respondents' gender, used a random assignment for the member of the household to interview, and applied a "random walk" approach (usually interviewing every fifth house) to establish the distance between households.
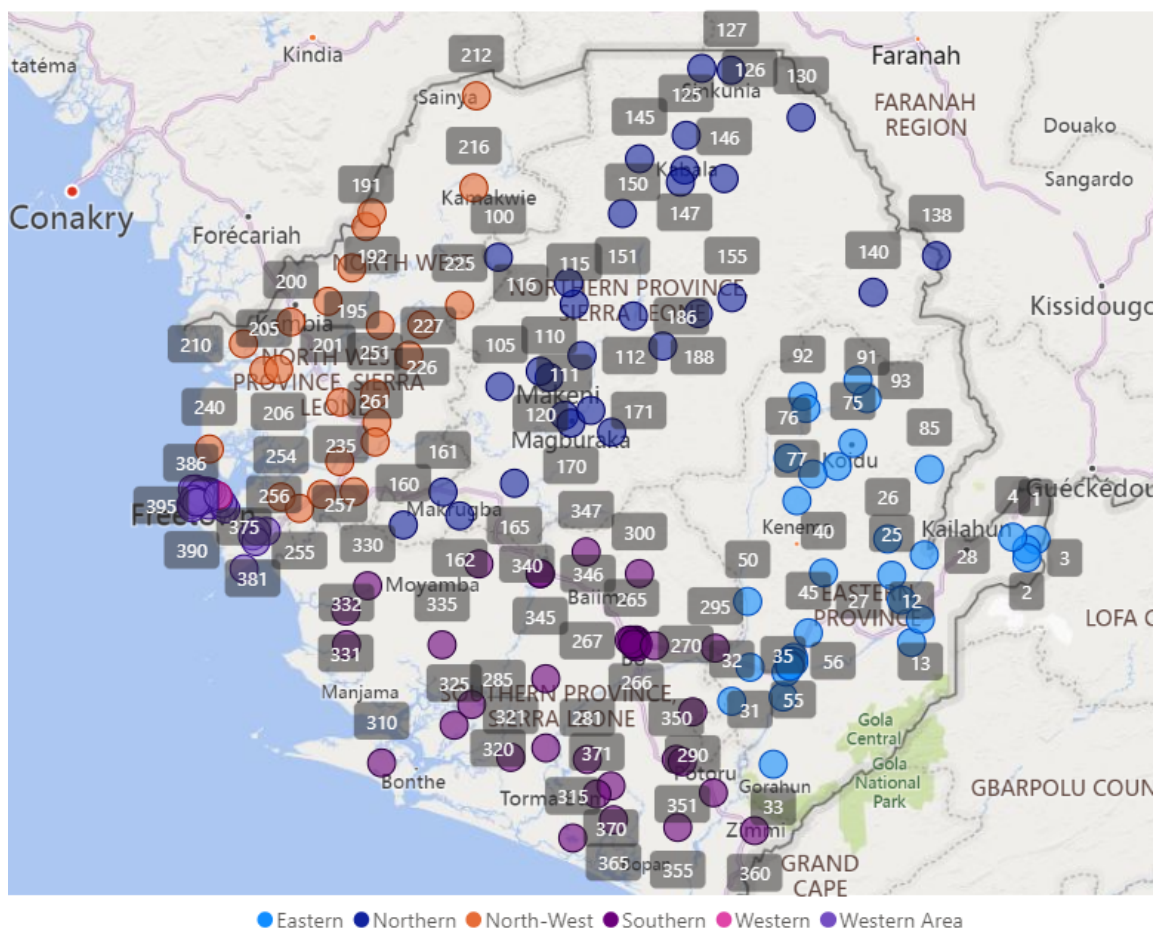

Figure 1: Locations (Wards) where IGR collected surveys 3

2   Analysis

Hate speech was noted as a concern by respondents, with at least one-third saying that they had heard hate speech uttered against a group of people because of their gender or ethnicity. However, more men (36%) than women (30%) said they had heard of hate speech (Figure 3). The most prevalent platform in which respondents had heard hate speech was social media (58%). Only two out of ten respondents said they heard hate speech on radio, while 10% mentioned political party meetings (Figure 4).

We also wanted to understand the nature of hate speech. We asked respondents to differentiate between hate speech directed toward an individual and hate speech that called people to engage in acts of violence. Respondents were more likely to say they heard hate speech against an individual (35%) (Figure 5) than speech that encouraged violence (30%) (Figure 7). In both cases however, again, social media was seen to be the most prevalent source for hate speech (Figures 6 and 8), followed by the radio.

3. Charts

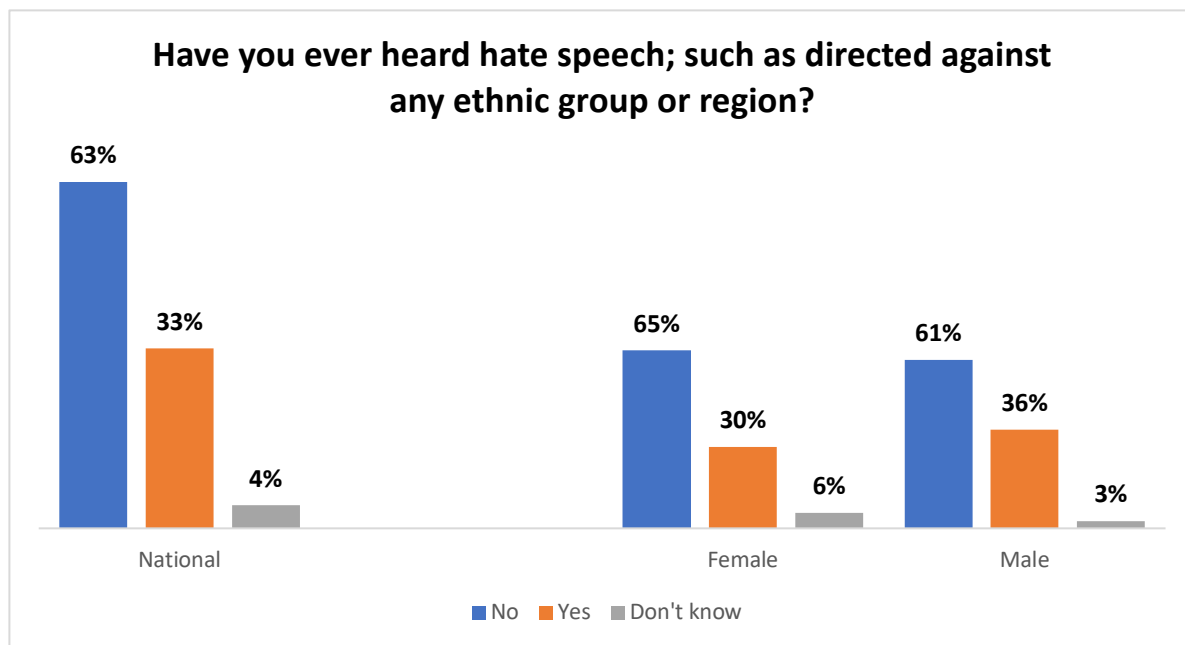Hate Speech against an Ethnic Group/Region

Have you ever heard hate speech; such as directed against any ethnic group or region?

Figure 3: *Respondents were asked:* *Have you ever heard hate speech; such as directed against any ethnic group or region? By which we mean, abusive words directed against a group of people because of their gender or ethnicity?*

Platform for Hate Speech

If yes, on what platform?

- Social media: **58%**
- Radio: **20%**
- Other: **12%**
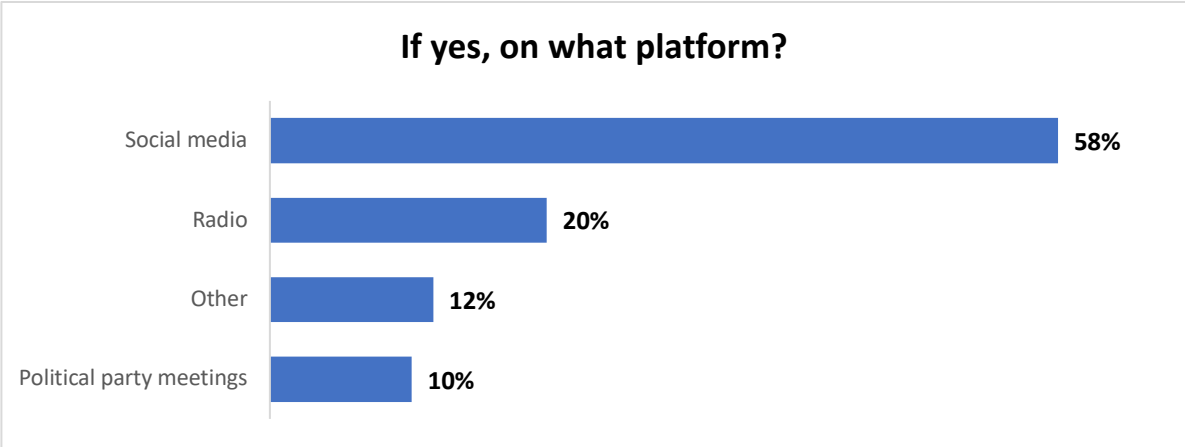- Political party meetings: **10%**

Figure 4: *Respondents were asked: Have you ever heard hate speech; such as directed against any ethnic group or region? By which we mean, abusive words directed against a group of people because of their gender or ethnicity?*
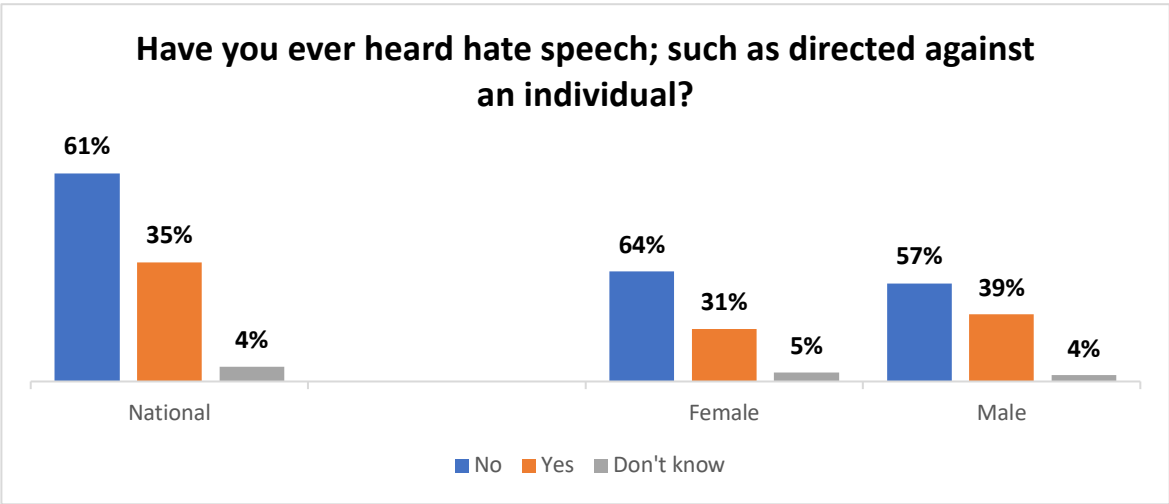
Heard Hate Speech against an individual

Have you ever heard hate speech; such as directed against an individual?

	No	Yes	Don't know
National	61%	35%	4%
Female	64%	31%	5%
Male	57%	39%	4%

Figure 5: *Respondents were asked: Have you ever heard hate speech; such as directed against an individual?*

Platform: Hate Speech Against an Individual

On what platform?

- Social media: **57%**
- Radio: **16%**
- Other: **14%**
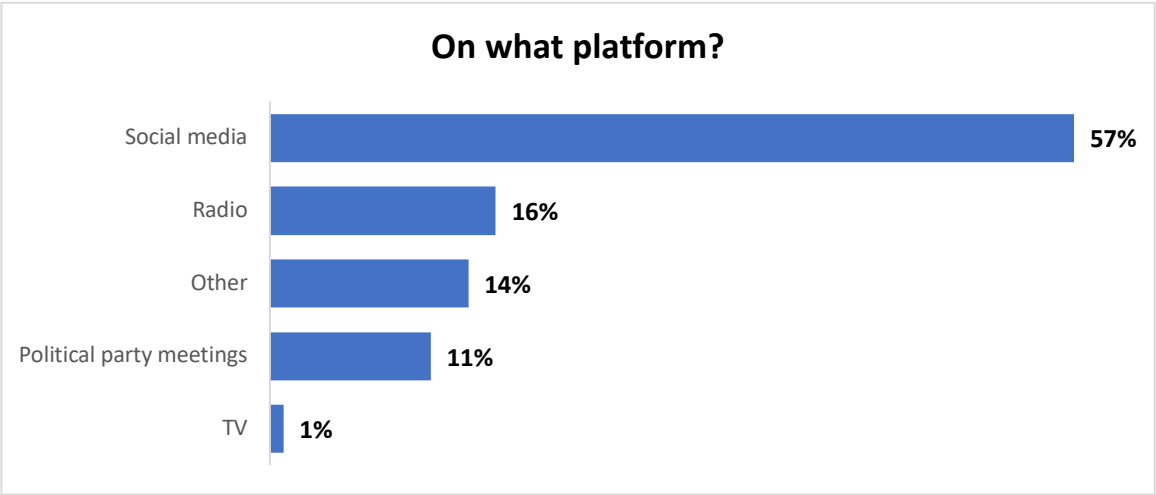- Political party meetings: **11%**
- TV: **1%**

Figure 6: *Respondents were asked: Have you ever heard hate speech; such as directed against an individual?*
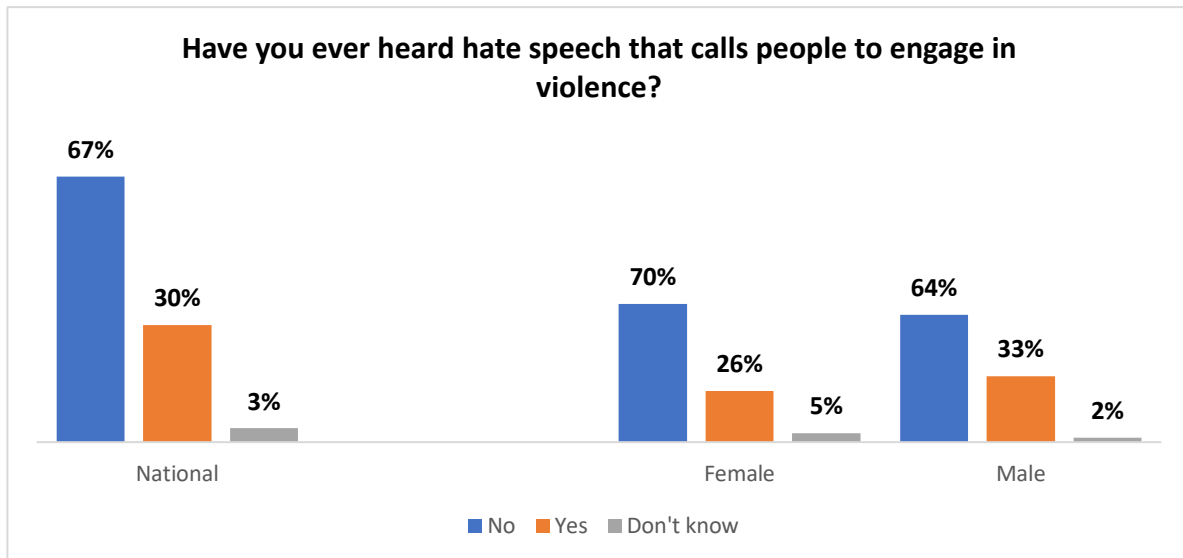
Heard Hate Speech Encouraging Violence

Have you ever heard hate speech that calls people to engage in violence?

Figure 7: *Respondents were asked: Have you ever heard hate speech that calls people to engage in violence?*

Platform: Hate Speech Encouraging Violence
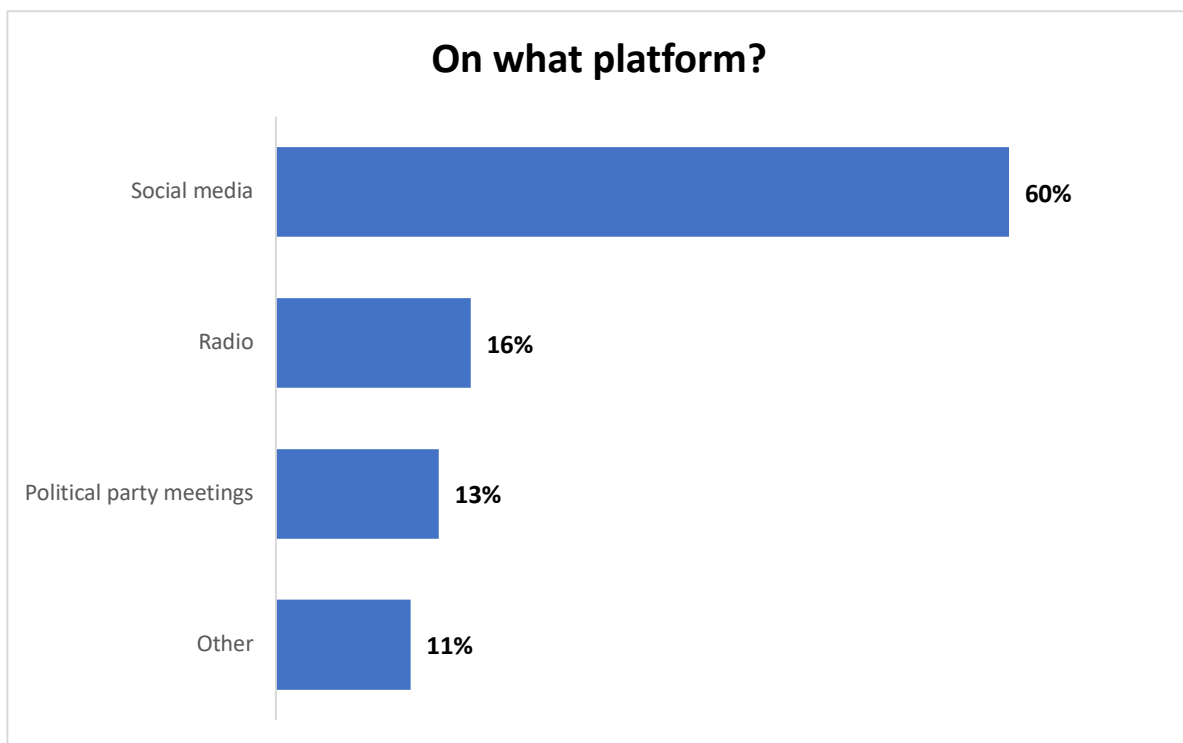

On what platform?

Figure 8: *Respondents were asked: Have you ever heard hate speech that calls people to engage in violence?*