

Community Policing, Crime Patterns, and Social Control in Sierra Leone: A Sociological Analysis of National Crime Trends (2022–2023)

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Abstract- *The study looked at general community policing and crime behaviors trends, as well as the circumstances that encourage crime, the frequency of crime, and crime within Sierra Leone's six regions in relation to the policing supervision. Using authorized annual police data, the analysis of Crime situation in Sierra Leone most frequently and the region where certain offences occurred were investigated. Through the promotion of close collaboration between police officers and community residents, community-based law enforcement seeks to strengthen ties between the police and the community while preventing crime and maintaining public safety. In Sierra Leone, community policing has adopted as a key approach to addressing the country's high crime rates, which have exacerbated by years of civil war and political instability. In Sierra Leone, community policing has been associated with a decrease in reported crimes and an increase in public satisfaction with the police. The table, pie chart and bar chart in the study analyzed the number of crime committed in different region in Sierra Leone By working closely with community members, police officers have been able to identify and address the root causes of criminal activity, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and healthcare. Meanwhile, Sierra Leone police remains a hub for the prevention planning and implementation to stop organized crime in the region. Community policing can have a positive impact on crime rates by improving community-police relationships and increasing public trust in the police.*

Keywords: *community, policing, crime, sociological, relationship, government, local people, organized.*

I. INTRODUCTION

For the purpose to combat crime, communities in Sierra Leone set up a variety of informal patrolling systems in addition to the state police. In the context of rising crime rates, these community-initiated policing strategies typically result from a perception of the state's inability to offer security and protection.

Many of these organizations have strong community links, enjoy considerable legitimacy, and frequently cooperate closely with the official police. These groups are frequently referred to as "vigilantes" in the literature, but this obscures their diversity. Four categories of "vigilante" or informal policing institutions are distinguished in this paper: state-sponsored, ethnic, religious, and community/neighborhood watch. It ought to have mentioned that the phrase "informal policing" has issues. These groups are essential components of many communities' lived experiences, while frequently being "informal" in regard to the modern state. In fact, they frequently have cultural roots and are a component of established criminal justice systems.

The objective of community police work is to strengthen the bonds between law enforcement and the communities they protect. Since the civil war ended in 2002, it has become more and more popular in Sierra Leone as the nation attempts to restore public confidence in its police. By encouraging interaction and cooperation between law enforcement personnel and community members, community policing attempts to prevent crime. Among the many types of crime that this nation faces are assault, crimes relating to property, and misdemeanors involving minors.

A poor legal system, cultural influences, adolescent exclusion, and socioeconomic circumstances are some of the reasons that contribute to crime trends. Initiatives for neighborhood law enforcement have demonstrated promise in tackling these problems by encouraging preventative actions as opposed to reactive ones. Establishing credibility, cooperative solving issues, enhanced visibility, dissemination of

knowledge and initiatives, and community empowerment are some of the main effects.

It is commonly believed that the state is solely responsible for policing activities, which include maintaining security and order, preventing and responding to criminal conduct, and using coercion in these capacities. But in many parts of the world, policing is actually done by a variety of organizations separate from the state police; in other words, policing is more than just "what the police do". However, the widespread use of non-state police in democracies has sparked intense discussion over the proper course of action to take in reaction.

But there are still obstacles to overcome, like a lack of resources, opposition from established institutions, and environmental concerns. The lack of resources in many police agencies might make implementation difficult. Historical imbalances or divergent perspectives on power may cause traditional leaders to oppose police intervention. Without continuous assistance from governmental bodies or foreign organizations, it may be challenging to guarantee sustained dedication from police personnel or individuals in the community. To sum up, community-based law enforcement in Sierra Leone is a big step in the right direction for raising public safety and lowering crime rates. However, for it to be completely effective, persistent issues need to be resolved. Sustaining advancements in crime prevention initiatives nationwide will need ongoing assessment of neighborhood needs in conjunction with flexible tactics.

What is Community Policing?

In Sierra Leone, community policing has been a part of law enforcement tactics. A full-service policing strategy emphasizes building relationships with local's people. Building relationships with the community they work, lowering antisocial behavior, and addressing low-level crimes in conjunction with residents are the three main objectives of community policing. By spending a lot of time guarding the same area, officers are able to have a thorough awareness of the needs and problems of the community.

In order to forestall criminal activity, police departments and the communities that they serve have a partnership known as "community prevention and policing" (Greenwood, Peter W., & Joan Petersilia, 1977). In order to improve public safety and lower crime, this strategy places a high priority on collaboration, communication, and cooperation amongst the police and the public. The goal of community policing is to involve residents in the detection and settlement of local crime issues. It focuses on fostering relationships between community residents and law enforcement in order to address the underlying causes of crime, boost public trust in the police, and make every individual's neighborhood safer. This strategy promotes neighborhood involvement, driven issue resolution, and a tailored solution to meet the unique requirements of each community.

However, public members bear responsibilities for both maintaining and preventing crime in addition to the security apparatus. Without the combined efforts of the public, the security establishment in Sierra Leone would face enormous challenges in the fight against crime. Prior to, during, and after the multi-tier elections scheduled for June 24, 2023, both the general population and security forces stepped up their joint efforts to combat criminal activity. The identification and settlement of community problems through collaboration between law enforcement and the community is known as community policing (SLP, 2023).

To adapt to the new ideas on crime avoidance and control, involvement of the community in resolving issues, and the vital role officers on patrol play in community policing, the police department must undergo major organizational changes (Sherman et al., 1989). The local patrol officer works with the police department to help residents organize resources and services so they may improve the standard of life and deal with issues. Members of the community express their worries, offer guidance, and act to resolve these issues. All parties involved must put in a lot of effort, be patient, understanding, and creative in order to create a fruitful collaboration (ibid). It will certainly take a while to overcome the lethargy and skepticism in some areas before genuine links can be made.

The foundation that holds cohesive local alliance and problem-solving abilities is trust. Enforcement agencies may build solid relationships with the community and achieve positive outcomes by building a foundation of trust. Policing cannot succeed if the public does not trust the police (Trojanowicz et al., 1983).

What distinguishes community policing from traditional policing?

Community policing differs from traditional policing in several key aspects:

- **Philosophy and Approach:**

Community policing: aims to reduce criminal activity by fostering connections with the community, inscribe the underlying causes of crime, and coordinating law execution with locals.
Traditional Policing: This type of policing mostly entails law enforcement personnel operating on their own to pinpoint and resolve community issues following events.

- **Engagement with Community:**

Community Policing: In order to understand local challenges and provide customized answers, community policing entails actively engaging with a variety of community stakeholders, including companies, citizens, schools, and organisations.
Traditional Policing: Traditional policing usually causes a divide among authorities and the communities they serve because of its more reactive strategy and possible disrespect for relationships with the community.

- **Problem-Solving Methodology:**

Community policing: Promotes trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the public by focusing on proactive problem-solving and tackling social issues before they turn into criminal activity.
Traditional policing: Usually more reactive, reacting to crimes as they happen without necessarily exploring underlying community issues or working closely with local people or organisations.

- **Relationship Building:**

Community Policing: By fostering trust and positive relationships between law enforcement and the

community, community security aims to increase mutual respect and empathy between the two parties.
Traditional Policing: May be more dependent on force and enforcement measures, which could cause tensions with the community because of the perception of harsh methods.

- **Prevention vs. Response:** While traditional policing typically responds to illegal act after they occur, community policing seeks to prevent crime before it occurs by interacting with citizens and addressing underlying causes.

- **Establishing a conservative Social Environment:** By cooperating and finding solutions to issues, neighborhood law enforcement aims to create a secure social environment.

- **Engagement with Residents:** This entails interacting with locals to determine the kind of crimes that are most common and to rank law enforcement initiatives according to community feedback.

- **Participation of Residents:** Community crime prevention urges citizens to actively participate in preserving neighborhood safety by working with law enforcement. Fundamentally, community policing fosters a relationship between the public and law enforcement, promoting collaboration, trust, and preventative actions to deter crime.

The concept of Sierra Leonean community policing
Community policing in Sierra Leone seeks to reduce crime and unrest by carefully examining the characteristics of local problems and then putting appropriate remedies in place. The designated "community" of a patrol officer must be a limited, well-defined geographic area. In order to provide efficient service, beat layout should preserve as much of the unique physical and sociological characteristics of neighborhoods as feasible.

In Sierra Leone, proactive measures to improve cooperation between law execution and the communities they serve are known as community policing. This tactic is essential in nations like Sierra Leone, where the public-police relationship has been strained by historical events like civil war and post-conflict issues. In order to put community policing into

practice, tactics such creating local Police-Community Relations Committees (PCRCs) are used. These committees act as forums for communication, cooperation, and problem-solving. Town hall meetings, neighbourhood patrols, outreach initiatives, and other forms of community involvement assist close the trust gap between the public and police enforcement, fostering better collaboration, communication, and trust.

For authorities as well as the populations they serve, neighbourhood law enforcement in Sierra Leone offers various advantages. Police can develop more successful anti-crime methods by gaining substantial insights into local problems and worries through grassroots involvement in crime reduction initiatives. It also promotes favourable opinions and trust by humanising justice system personnel. However, there are obstacles to community surveillance in Sierra Leone, including a lack of funding, poor police department instruction, cultural differences, and mistrust from the general public as well as law enforcement. It will need a consistent effort from all parties involved—government officials, members of civil society organisations, and foreign allies—to overcome these obstacles.

Patrol officers interact with individuals in society as a whole particularly and constitute the main suppliers of the authorities. They will handle the majority of the community's regular police demands as part of neighborhoods law enforcement initiatives, with assistance from relevant government and civic institutions, police officers units, and direct superiors. It will be the duty of the command team and management at the highest levels to make sure that the organization as a whole supports surveillance officer efforts.

Optimizing positive interactions among detectives and residents is essential for successful public safety. While patrol automobiles are one way to deliver police protection, police agencies can also add "mini-stations" and conduct stroll, cycling, motorbike, and equestrian patrols in addition to automobile patrols to further connect with residents. Regular discussions and sessions will give both law enforcement and

residents a chance to discuss issues and come up with solutions.

Continuous police engagements on a similar schedule and route will make them recognisable to the community and increase their awareness of its daily operations. This greater presence of law enforcement is a first step towards building community trust and lowering crime-related anxiety, both of which contribute to neighborhoods security. If neighborhoods individuals want to take an active role in policing, fear must be removed. If people believe that what they say will put their own lives in danger, they won't take any measure.

Communities might have a wide variety of customs, values, and problems, despite the fact police services are focused on location, particularly in urban regions. A group that comprises people is composed of more than just the residents of the neighborhood and the entire town. Religious organizations, educational institutions, medical facilities, social organizations, public and private organizations, and local staff are all significant components of the larger community.

The security and peace of mind of the neighborhoods are important concerns for those who work in the area or come for artistic or leisure visits. By such as these "associations" of affinity" in initiatives to tackle issues of theft and disturbance, the local pool of resources can be increased. The priorities and challenges will differ both within and between these circles of interest. Particular areas that are interesting are enduring and are based on race, ethnicity, or industrial boundaries, as well as a shared past, congregation, or educational institution.

As new problems are identified and solved, others appear and evolve. Conflicting factions within a community may sometimes resort to violent conflict. Intra-community conflict has traditionally been common in metropolitan settings, especially during times due to population flight and changing demographics. As important as the community's common experiences are its internal conflicts. Police must accept their existence in order to create the cooperative relationships needed to maintain law and order, give people a false sense of security, and lower

crime. It is crucial for police to build enduring relationships with all segments of the public and concentrate on the main issues of civic life.

Comprehending the Function of Community Police in Sierra Leone

This relationship served as the basic organizational foundation for police action, but for a variety of causes, the police eventually lost sight of it. Scholars have linked the departure of cops from their communities to a national push for formalization and a government agency overhaul effort that started in the initial decade of the century. In an effort to combat corruption, police supervisors often rearranged and rotated the schedules of their officers.

In addition, the management implemented a focus control approach to guarantee adherence to operational standards and promote objectivity and knowledge among specialists. Technological advancements also made this socioeconomic gap worse. The days of the amiable walk-around cop were overshadowed by the growing importance of automobiles. By the 1970s, police were able to respond to situations more rapidly thanks to 911 procedures, which allowed for instant phone calls with government officials. However, for a while, the police were overburdened with calls for assistance, which prevented them from stopping atrocities. Due to more complex the field of communication technology, calls could be answered rapidly, so detectives had for reacting to aid requested quickly.

By taking calls, police officers were able to engage with the community less frequently. The decline in human relationships with the police can also be linked to the use of technology. Important employees, like inspectors, began to focus more on analytics than on the work they did or the individuals they helped. Prompt reaction became a goal in and of itself because computers produced statistics regarding different types of crimes or trends, totaled offenses, improved transmitting effectiveness, and determined the length and result of police response. Another approach employed to further sour relations between the populace and security forces was irregular patrols. In an effort to deter burglars, police advised them to alter their routes frequently.

However, those living nearby also lost the capacity to forecast whether they would finally be able to contact the local police. At the height of police seclusion, people believed that professionals knew the most, that participation in the community in crime management wasn't necessary, and that expertise was expanding.

There was a drive to end corruption in the police force, give professionalization first priority, and develop new technology innovations during a time of rising crime and profound social change. Every member of the police force faced challenges with interaction because of the ethnically and anthropologically diverse people they served. In several towns, officers and the populace had become so alienated from others that what remained existed a "us against them" ethos. As one observer of urban scenes put it, "The authorities represent the ones that imprison you if you fail to provide them cash," the relationship between the police and society as a whole is becoming worse. In Sierra Leone, for example, community surveillance is crucial to enhancing safety for everyone, fostering community trust in authorities, and promoting community engagement in crime prevention and redress. Developing an effective connection with the local population, knowing about challenges that impact it, and working together to address safety issues locally are the responsibilities of community members and policemen.

Community justice in Sierra Leone is an aggressive strategy where law enforcement officers work extensively with members of the general public to identify problems, offer solutions, and establish strategies to prevent crimes. This idea emphasizes problem-solving abilities and partnership to make neighborhoods less vulnerable to threats to security. One of the primary duties of community police in Sierra Leone is to close the disparity in communication that divides the general populace and the application of the law. Through trust-building and open communication, community police officers may gather vital intelligence, quickly learn about criminal behavior, and mobilize assistance with preventative programmes.

Furthermore, community police officers play a critical role in promoting mediation and conflict resolution in

nearby communities. By mediating conflicts, addressing grievances, and promoting neighborhoods communication, they help keep conflicts from becoming violent and promote social cohesion. Moreover, giving residents the resources they require to take responsibility for their own dependability and safety is the aim of local law enforcement in Sierra Leone. Through awareness actions, educational initiatives, and strengthening capacities projects, municipal police officers give localities the know-how and abilities they need to protect themselves, denounce crimes, and cooperate with law enforcement to uphold public order.

The community policing's guiding principles

During one thinks of fundamental tenets the initial thing that comes to mind is the rules of behavior that a person should follow when fulfilling their respective official duties. It streamlines discipline-wide principles related to neighborhoods policing, especially the change of values needed to adapt policemen to these changing times. The objectives of the organization, its policies, and the actions of its staff must all be consistent with the ideals ingrained in its culture. Values are the guiding concepts that influence how an organization operates and how its employees behave. The most important ones are those that specify the group's overarching objectives. They encourage continued investments in the institution's economic endeavor and provide the institution with a cause to remain for those who are members and those who are not members. They affect governance and the need for the group to make reliable choices. They also list the actions of the institution's senior management and its responses to the regularity and caliber of work produced by its employees. Realizing that how they behave are enhancing rather than degrading the organization's effectiveness, staff members are better equipped to use their autonomy and make informed decisions.

A concise statement of the institution's values and objectives makes it simpler to guarantee that concepts are converted into suitable actions and behaviors. Such a statement must indicate the values to which all of its components are dedicated. Public acceptance and accountability can be achieved by disseminating the aforementioned statement both inside and outside of

the police organization. Well-defined norms are crucial for allocating responsibility where it belongs, as well as for obtaining and organizing resources and assistance, whenever there is a shift to a community policing system, in which the police, the local government, and neighbors collaborate to identify issues, address them, and hold people accountable.

One of the most important aspects of community safety is the application of police concepts, which include citizen participation in issues that directly affect safety and quality of life. As a result, the legal system division's culture shifts to one wholly committed to planning and overseeing departmental operations in a way that aligns with these goals and places a high priority on community engagement.

Regarding community policing to function, a clear, discernible link between values and behaviors must be established. Values that seem abstract at first look can be given a practical meaning by creating a performance monitoring system. Community police are guided by the following principles: trust, cooperation, communication, ingenuity, integrity, creativity, accountability, reverence, and a wider devotion to the safety and security of the public. A succinct mission statement reflecting these values will serve as the foundation for assessment procedures that match behaviors and actions with the goals of community policing. Staff, the municipality, and residents will be informed of this statement of objectives extensively.

Understanding crime

Attempts to explain the roots of unlawful activity and incorrect interpersonal conduct are abundant in the record. The Hammurabi code of ethics, which regulates "bad" behavior, originated in ancient Babylonia some 3,700 years ago. European colonists in North America in the second quarter of the century that followed equated sin with criminality, thinking that people who broke social norms or the law were plagued by evil spirits. In the settling, unsocial behavior required prompt, sometimes violent, retaliation from individuals who disobeyed social rules.

Crime can have a big impact on a community's overall well-being, overall level of daily existence, and stability. It is crucial to understand the causes, consequences, and workable prevention measures associated with neighborhoods offences in order to guarantee everybody resides in a secure and stable group. There are many different motivations for committing crimes, including pride, retaliation, envy, money, or fury. Some decide to conduct a crime and carefully consider every move they take with the objective to reduce danger and maximize reward. These people are in charge of their behavior; some even believe that being a victim of crime is better than a regular job due to their believe that executing crimes brings more thrills, recognition, and benefits—at least up until they get caught. Some people get an intense boost after committing a dangerous crime. Certain individuals are hasty lawbreakers who are motivated by fear or rage. Community crime is influenced by several factors, including social cohesion, the effectiveness of law enforcement, the variety of employment and schooling, the frequency of substance abuse, mental health issues, and problems with illicit drug use. High levels of deprivation, alienation, joblessness, and a lack of social support systems can all contribute to an environment that is conducive to criminal activity. Cliques, drug-selling rings, and other forms of organized criminal organisations can also increase a municipality's level of crime.

In the case of Sierra Leone, for example, the brutal past of the country—typified by a civil war that lasted ten years and that ended in 2002—is where community crime first emerged. The conflict not only destroyed social structures and weakened law enforcement, but it also left a trail of inequality, deprivation, and pain in its wake. In Sierra Leone, West Africa, unemployment and poverty are two major causes of a widespread criminal activity. According to the World Bank, unemployment is still very common and over 50% individuals live below the poverty line. In order to survive, these pressures usually push people to engage in criminal activities including drug trafficking, prostitution, and robbery. The Sierra Leonean law enforcement system has several obstacles, including a lack of resources, poor training, and corruption. These challenges contribute to the prevalence of apathy,

inadequate prosecution, as well as inadequate conviction clearance rates in criminal proceedings. As a result, offenders usually commit crimes without thinking about the consequences, which makes collective crime worse

With more than 60% of its population under 25, Sierra Leone has one among the youthful populations globally. The advancement of the nation is faced with both opportunities and challenges due to this demographic profile. Several young individuals pose a risk of engaging in unlawful activities if they do not receive appropriate schooling, skill training, and work chances. Disputes between tribes and regions are another factor in communal behavior in Sierra Leone. The scarcity of resources and disagreements over politics have fueled long-standing conflicts between various tribes for generations. These conflicts usually result in violent altercations, property destruction, and community dislocation, all of which contribute to the continuous cycle of criminal activity and violence. Dishonesty is pervasive in Sierra Leone's governmental institutions, endangering openness and legal compliance. Inadequate accountability systems enable corrupt officials to function unchallenged, fostering an environment that encourages the expansion of illicit activity.

Crime situation in Sierra Leone

The crime rate in Sierra Leone is a major worry for locals as well as tourists. The city has a high rate of violent crimes, especially in Aberdeen, Jui Junction, Mountain cut community, Waterloo and Lumley Beach. These crimes include assault. Due to a lack of resources, neighborhoods law enforcement frequently encounters difficulties that make it difficult to respond effectively to significant criminal situations. Protests and demonstrations can occasionally turn violent, raising the municipality's stability hazards. Acts of violence like house incursions, break-ins, forced burglaries, and robberies are on the rise in Sierra Leone. The theft of goods pockets, cellphones, and identities are examples of minor offences; these occur most frequently in bars and restaurants and on the ship to Lungi International Airport. Invasion of residences by organized armed gangs using stealth tactics are frequent, and they usually target Westerners. Inaccuracies and malfeasance provide difficulties for

security forces in Sierra Leone, and police probes are sometimes drawn out or sluggish. It is important that locals and guests stay mindful of the environment.

In light of heightened nocturnal hazards, safety advice includes travelling outside the area only during the day, adopting caution like locking possessions, minimizing badly paved roads, and remaining alert for possible dangers. With regard to safety worries, the U.S. Embassy may not be able to provide immediate assistance beyond Sierra Leone at night. As the name implies, there are a number of offences that fall under this category and are related to maintaining the benefit of the community order.

Although most of the offences are not significant in nature, the possibility of imprisonment remains for most of them. Inappropriate language acquisition, conduct that is illegal, malicious and profane publicity troubled, etc. are among the greatest frequent societal infractions. It should be mentioned that the aforementioned violations can only be committed in public spaces. Compared to 898 in 2022, 1,435 of these offenses were committed in 2023. According to the 2023 police report, the Eastern Region had the highest number of incidents (36), next to the North West Region (122), and Freetown (1,208). The different regions and instances linked to this offense are depicted in the graph below.

Basic sociological convictions of community policing and crime

Community surveillance is a cooperative approach between authorities and the community to handle violence and safety issues. In an attempt to improve trust, increase the effectiveness of legal proceedings, and fortify interactions among officers and the people, initiatives relating to community policing have been implemented in Sierra Leone. This approach prioritizes problem solving in a proactive manner, encouraging community engagement, and establishing collaborative relationships to prevent crime and address its root causes. An essential sociological concept related to local law enforcement in Sierra Leone is multifaceted security mechanisms. These partnerships require the participation of actors from both sides with the objective to sustain security and order.

The context of community surveillance in Sierra Leone that is covered in the sources emphasizes the importance of mixed culture in ensuring safety even more. To understand the role of community police in Sierra Leone, one might employ a variety of sociological perspectives that shed light on the relationship between law enforcement, constrained communities, and criminality in that country. When discussing criminality and neighborhood security in Sierra Leone, a couple of basic sociological perspectives are relevant:

- i. Social Control Theory: The philosophy of social control examines the means by which society maintains order and prevents divergence in human behaviour. This idea might look at how community-policing initiatives in Sierra Leone aim to strengthen amicable norms of society by empowering residents to monitor and address criminal activity in their neighborhoods. It would assess the degree to which these strategies fostered a sense of collective responsibility for public safety.

In Sierra Leone, several concerns related to criminal activity, physical assault, and social disorder have been addressed through the implementation of local law enforcement and municipal policing techniques. By encouraging engagement between law enforcement and the community's residents, community policing aims to increase confidence, interactions, and engagement in the community's battle towards crime.

Social Control Theory's Effect on Sierra Leone's Community Policing Several important factors are taken into consideration when using the concept of social control with regard to community law enforcement in Sierra Leone:

- Social Bonds: In accordance with the social control theory, having strong social ties is linked to a decreased probability of criminal action. Building a relationship of mutual confidence and respect between police personnel and community members might be beneficial in Sierra Leone's indigenous policing framework. Social links may help reduce crime by encouraging positive

relationships and a sense of shared responsibility for others' protection.

- Norms and Values: Social control theory emphasizes the importance of shared norms and values in regulating behavior within society. In Sierra Leone, community-policing programmes often focus on promoting pro-social behaviours such as respect for the law, amicable dispute resolution, and cooperation with law enforcement. By means of community engagement initiatives as well as education initiatives, community-policing endeavours seek to strengthen these basic values and cultivate a legal adherence culture, ultimately impacting public perceptions of criminal activity.
- Informal Social Control: Another aspect of social control theory that applies to community policing in Sierra Leone is the concept of informal social control mechanisms. These include peer pressure, unofficial networks, and community group surveillance, every one of which have the ability to force individuals to adhere to customs of society. By reporting suspicious behaviour, mediating potential conflicts, and actively taking part in community policing initiatives, residents can support enforcement agencies' preventative programmes and contribute to preserving unofficial social control.

- ii. Structural-Functionalism: This assertion of view concentrates on the manner in which different societal groups work together to maintain social order. In the backdrop of grassroots law enforcement in Sierra Leone, structural-functionalism would look into the manner in which local residents and police officers collaborate to forestall and control crime. It would emphasize how community connections enhance safety and reduce crime rates. The relationship between community police and violence in Sierra Leone will be examined from the perspective of structural-functionalism, emphasizing how these components contribute to the stability and efficient functioning of society overall. Structural-functionalism is a sociological paradigm that emphasizes how different society elements work together to maintain social order and stability.
- iii.

In this perspective, law enforcement functions are integrated into local communities and social cohesiveness is promoted through local law enforcement in Sierra Leone. The emphasis would be on the way that local policing initiatives, such as Local Policing Partnership Boards (LPPBs), address underlying socioeconomic problems in order to build social bonds, enhance public confidence in law enforcement, and ultimately reduce crime rates.

Structural-functionalism would likely stress the significance of civic policing in fostering cooperation between various social elements, including law enforcement agencies, municipalities, and community members. It would draw attention to the various manners in which these collaborations help maintain social order, settle conflicts amicably, and improve social conditions in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, from the perspective of structural functionalism, offence in Sierra Leone might be viewed as an imbalance or glitch in the systematic functioning of the community. Community policing activities might be seen as a remedy to this disarray, aiming to restore symmetry within communities by resolving the root causes of crime and deviance. Since community policing engages residents in efforts to prevent crime and interactions with local authority structures, it is congruent with the pragmatic goal of maintaining social stability.

Conflict Theory: Power dynamics and social inequalities are examined by conflict theory. This vantage point of view might highlight disputes that occur in Sierra Leone among marginalised people and the police, especially in rural regions where there may be limited means of obtaining resources and the legal system. It might address issues like bias, the misuse of authority, and corruption in the police force, all of which affect the frequency of crimes and the relationship between the general population and law enforcement.

The dynamics at play are best understood through using Conflict Theory to offence and community security in Sierra Leone. Within this framework, the interaction amongst crime, organisations, and law enforcement could be viewed via the sociological perspective of conflict theory, which views society as

a conglomeration of groups fighting for scarce resources. Through community policing, officers and neighborhood residents in Sierra Leone collaborate to address security-related issues. From the standpoint of conflict theory, this tactic can be seen as an attempt by government officials to maintain control and deal with internal dissatisfaction in communities. Neighborhood police initiatives could display power dynamics that mirror structural tensions and disparities within Sierra Leonean society.

Conflict Theory examination of violence in Sierra Leone can help identify historical roots of societal inequities, political discontent, and anger. The model states that in addition to personal choices, societal pressures like limited supplies and income disparity affect crime.

There might be an effect if conflict theory is used to Sierra Leone's community-policing strategies. Law enforcement agencies may prioritize maintaining security and control over addressing the root reasons for crime, which could worsen friction within the police and impoverished neighbourhoods. Moreover, variations in the distribution of power and resources may affect the degree to which community policing programmes succeed across the country.

- iv. Symbolic Interactionism: This point of view focuses on how individuals interpret social interactions, meanings, and symbols. In the context of public safety in Sierra Leone, symbolic interactionism would look at how ordinary people's willingness to work with the authorities is determined by their opinions of the judiciary, their degree of confidence in that influence, and cultural expectations. It would consider how shared comprehension and interaction between people and police personnel affect efforts to prevent crime.

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective that sheds insight on how individuals interpret symbols and give meaning to their social connections. It can be used to delinquency and community security in Sierra Leone. By examining people's perceptions of law enforcement, crime prevention, and criminal behaviour in their communities through their

engagement with and perceptions of symbols, symbolic interactionism can be used to combat community police and crime in Sierra Leone. By examining how residents engage with authorities as emblems of authority and security, public safety in Sierra Leone can be studied from the standpoint of symbolic interactionism. In order to effectively combat crime, efforts to promote community policing can be impacted by the connection that police officers have with members of the general population, the communication strategies that both parties employ, and the symbolic meanings associated with police activity in neighbourhoods.

Moreover, symbolic interactionism sheds light on how Sierra Leoneans interpret symbols associated with crime in their social surroundings, such as frightful incidents or criminal activities. To further understand how these interactions affect the public's impression of assurance, the function of law enforcement, and society's overall reaction to criminal behavior, symbolic interactionism can be used to analyze the subjective viewpoints of culprits, witnesses, and perpetrators. By using symbolic interactions to crime analysis and community policing, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the complex social dynamics at work in the communities impacted by crime in Sierra Leone.

This perspective standpoint can offer crucial insights into the difficulties of preventing crime through collaborative efforts among municipal governments and residents by emphasising the symbolic meanings connected to criminal behavior, outreach strategies, and prosecution techniques.

By highlighting how interpersonal links, cultural importance, and shared understandings influence how local communities respond to illegal activity and law enforcement strategies, symbolic interactionism offers a distinctive viewpoint on crime and community safety in Sierra Leone. Scholars can learn more about the intricate factors influencing criminal reactions, social participation, and law enforcement tactics in Sierra Leone by studying the essay on sociological approaches to the situation of community policing in that country.

Components of Community Policing

Municipal cooperation and problem solutions are the two complimentary fundamental elements of community police work. In order to create an interpersonal alliance, detectives must establish goodwill with residents, incorporate citizens in the effort to improve crime preventative measures, and combine their own assets with the resources of the community for tackling the most pressing issues that residents of the neighborhoods are facing. The act of identifying the unique concerns of a community and determining the best solutions to mitigate those issues is known as solving issues.

Local law enforcement is not an indicator that law enforcement is less significant or that it is no longer the primary responsibility of the government. However, by using the resources and expertise that are already available in the community, police will be relieved of some of their duties. Members of the local government, social care providers, teachers, businesses, and religious organizations will all be responsible for finding workable solutions to problems that jeopardize the safety and security of the area.

Deployment of Personnel

Track responsibilities and regular or extended shifts are necessary if patrol police are to establish long-lasting and productive ties with the community. Community policing relies on this stability. Furthermore, in order to preserve the integrity of the current neighborhoods and encourage community cooperation, it is critical to appropriately construct community boundaries. A comprehensive workload analysis across shifts and regions is required to guide staff deployment. In this assessment, information from every community covering the following areas should be taken into account:

- a. The type and prevalence of service requests;
- b. The type and incidence of illicit activities.
- c. The projected duration of reaction.
- d. The estimated time needed for community partnership and
- e. Problem-solving activities.

Some agencies will need to increase the number of officers assigned to patrol duties and change the

current patrol allocations. Reviewing criminal probe units may be required to determine whether activities are being used, allowing some police to return to patrol. Amateurs may be hired for support positions that don't require law enforcement experience in order to switch police personnel to neighborhood surveillance.

Supervision

Constant supervision is necessary for effective community policing. Monitoring will be compromised if sergeants' or colleagues' schedules simply align with those of the patrol officers. Close collaboration between detectives and their supervisors is just as important to effective community surveillance as the officer's rapport with the community. "The mindset that law-enforcement personnel are required to be controlled by authority at each step must be abandoned," even if patrol officers require constant monitoring. Supervisors ought to serve as coordinators, incentives, and mentors. The comprehensive methodology for addressing issues used by community police can improve departmental level contact and interaction. Middle-level executives will be serving as an additional layer of oversight for officers on patrol once they are included in the approach to solving issues.

Supervisors assist detectives in meeting a range of duties expectations by serving as liaisons, interfering, and offering suitable extra support. The following are some of the duties associated with community policing that primary supervisors and mid-level leaders have:

- i. Supervising the development of beat profiles.
- ii. Preserving the sanity of the beat.
- iii. Developing, implementing, and overseeing problem-solving mechanisms in collaboration with law enforcement and community stakeholders; developing a system for the distribution and application of resources.

Evaluating the outcomes and offering comments on the successes and advancements made in tackling the issues of chaos and crime. In addition, managers ought to involve patrol officers in the managerial process, promote unity among the group, and help staff members realize their full potential. Mid-level

executives need to remove obstacles that stand in the way of issue resolution and achieving objectives. They need to take on more duty for organizing strategies, learn how to lead interdisciplinary groups and be willing to participate in getting the community interested in preventative crime initiatives.

Regular meetings with employees by mid-level managers are a good way to go over goals, actions, and outcomes. Police officers, management, and residents should provide gauges of performance for them to use when assessing the success or failure of initiatives, programmes, or responses. It is the duty of managers to improve the work that their employees do by providing guidance, granting authority, and supervising instruction and training. In order to give updates, ask for advice, and contribute to the development of community-wide policies to combat disorder and crime, they must additionally frequently communicate with their superiors.

Human Resource Development

The successful application of community policing requires training. Instruction should help foster agreement, resoluteness, and cohesion within and beyond the police organization by outlining and reinforcing any modifications being made to organizational standards and policies. It is recommended that local policing competencies be incorporated into training curriculum rather than being approached as an independent training programme element. Local policing curricula should include management and interpersonal skills that encourage community involvement in order to improve law enforcement strategies. Effective problem-solving, motivational, and team-building techniques must be taught to all employees.

Training should cover the full autonomy as well as civilian employees who can assist the bureau of police in enhancing the caliber of its media relations message, recruiting community members to attend meetings, and incorporating contemporary technologies into its service-oriented daily operations. Those in management and supervisory roles should be the first people coached because they may feel that their authority is being undermined by the organization's shifted priorities. More significantly,

those they are supervising must be capable count on them to communicate and understand the novel concepts.

Urban area and rural area Resources

The ability of municipalities to achieve effective incorporation is a prerequisite for municipal policing's long-term effectiveness in revolutionizing the legal field. Administrators, both chosen and designated, are required to be aware of and involved in the development of the law enforcement agency's implementation strategy. Congressional officials, city executives, mayors, and other levels of government executives cannot just participate in this process passively; individuals must lead the local extension of this trend towards "charitable government." Politicians and social workers must figure out how to focus all of their financial backing on these pressing social issues, just as law enforcement must decide how best to handle and resolve cases of violent behavior and criminal activity.

Local security can serve as a catalyst to more efficiently activate staff at all three levels, even though governmental organizations are not prepared to address every problem in the modern world. Cooperation between a police agency and elected officials is essential since detectives and managers may regularly ask local government agencies for assistance with services like health and cleanliness. They can begin preparing their employees for the surge of new service needs and help secure their financial backing by keeping in regular communication with the executives of government organizations.

Institutions and nongovernmental organisations make up yet another crucial component of the community. Regarding community policing initiatives, the chief or constable ought to seek the aid of these private organisations. Representatives from these groups were invited by one department to take part in neighborhood-focused police training sessions. The makeup of teams capable of solving problems may include members of society at large, authorities, and social institutions, or it may be limited to officers, subject to the type and extent of the issue being handled. Every partner in local law enforcement who

participate to the solution-finding procedure must have close working relationships with the department, and clear protocols that support the efficient use of resources must be put in place. An exhaustive list of public and private resources is something that all members of the police organization may help with. Names, locations, contact information, and a summary of the services offered should all be on this list. For the purpose of providing community members with references, patrol personnel, administrators, and dispatchers should have easy access to this documentation.

The trends and patterns of crime in Sierra Leone

A number of disparate but connected hypotheses, including as the possibilities, hotspot location, routine activity, conduct, and criminal pattern concepts, seem to be supported by the patterns and trends of robberies in Sierra Leone. Among other things, the theories claim that criminal incidents are transient, regionally dispersed, or grouped rather than arranged at random. According to the ideas, criminal activity and juvenile probation are related to the special qualities and traits of the physical setting in which they take place (Bernburg et al., 2001). In other words, crime rates and their occurrences change not just between areas but even within a single city or region. At every level of sociocultural classification, certain geographic areas record more offenses than others, suggesting that they may have a simple subculture or a complex society. Arthur and Marenin (1995) concluded that patterns in behavior can be measured by the sameness or extent across time when analyzing crime in emerging nations.

As per Arthur and Marenin's (1995) findings, a variety of factors, such as financial situations, can cause variations in the mix of crimes across different regions, cities, and areas within a region or city. As a result, research has attempted to define the extent of crime in each culture, the amount of a certain crime that happened during particular periods and seasons, and the amount of a particular crime that happened across centuries, a period of years, a few months several days, minutes, hours, and even seconds in a particular society. In addition, researchers are curious about the kinds of crimes that happen regularly or

seldom in each specific area, neighbourhood, district, and street block under study (Brantingham, 1997).

According to Brantingham (1991), a crime is committed when four basic but necessary elements come together: the law, the perpetrator, the target, and a place, area, or location. The final depth, the focus of investigation of the connection between the physical setting and crime, is the specific point in the continuum of space and time that occurs when all three aspects connect for an act of crime to occur. Together, the four could provide an overall explanation of criminal commission. As such, locations of crime, along with the days, months, and hours at which a crime is committed, become crucial factors to consider while debating the causes of crime as well as preventative measures and guidelines. Whenever particular crimes and locations of crime are examined, along with situations, activity backdrops, likely crime templates, causing incidents, and broadening factors that affect an offender's eagerness or a desire to perform a particular act, similarities—or lack thereof—occur. These can be used to understand crime patterns.

According to the criminal pattern theory, people form mental models of the interpersonal and physical settings in which they live via the course of their regular daily tasks (Brantingham, 1993a). According to Brantingham (1993a), the chance influences a person's behaviours, attitudes, and life decisions, even though perpetrators' everyday actions determine the places and times they are most inclined to commit crimes, victims' lifestyles can change trends in crime and territorial organising, and illicit conduct can be encouraged. As a result, people's daily routines, activities, and lifestyles require an overlap of enticing criminals in time and space, as well as the readily accessible "hot products," or suitable or vulnerable targets, for which the lack of competent authorities increases or facilitates the possibility that a crime will be devoted (Felson, 2009; Hollis, Felson, & Welsh, 2013). Individuals in Sierra Leone were obviously vulnerable because to their regular daily activities, habits and routines, which either made them more attractive to robbers or made them easier to target. It is possible to characterise the perpetrators as opportunists who exploited the victims' weaknesses

and the absence of competent guardians—particularly the absence of police and, in multiple instances, eyewitness presence—to steal from them.

Some were operating bullion vans that moved money from one banking institution to another in the same city or across the country. Additional victims included bus and taxi drivers who were either sought out because it was believed they had cash on them or enlisted by the attackers, as well as cocoa growers who had paid after exchanging their goods. It's possible that increased retail trade in Sierra Leone, the resulting high volume of passengers and cargo carrying precious cash, and certain people's conspicuous displays of wealth may have increased their susceptibility to robbery.

Demographic and background characteristics of offenders

Numerous studies have linked criminality to age and gender. Therefore, when analyzing trends and patterns in crime, it is crucial to take into account the demographic makeup and gender of a community (Agnew; Brantingham; Kennedy and Sampson). Brantingham & Brantingham (1993, p. 270) state that a number of factors affect the circulation, trends, and pattern of crime. Age, sex, income, the location of one's home, friends' homes, workplace, schools, places to eat, drink, and shop, and the socio-geographic and physical features of a place, such as highways or transit routes, are some of these factors.

Research indicates that victimisation by crime is not arbitrary, but rather impacted by the daily routines and lives of both possible perpetrators and victims. The theory of routine activities highlights that the most potent predictors of trends in criminal activity, geographic patterns, and distribution are age, racial or ethnic background, gender, and marital status. People's traditional daily routines and activities affect how much they might be subjected to determined

violators (Cohen; Lynch and Miethe). The majority of the suspects lacked an academic background, were unmarried, had no steady job, and had no trustworthy addresses. There were noticeable disparities amongst the perpetrators in terms of the kinds of hostages or objectives they targeted and the kinds of neighbourhoods they targeted.

For instance, the incidence of robberies was strongly correlated with being young, male, and possessing little to no formal education. While 56% of suspects over the age of thirty-two primarily targeted convenience stores, gas stations, and other commercial and residential establishments, 79% of robbery defendants under the age of twenty-six functioned on the roadways. The shooting suspects (64%) and those who were using violence and causing harm (55%) were all between the ages of 18 and 29, despite the fact that the murder suspects' average lifespan was twenty-four. Furthermore, 87% of the assault cases were males around the ages of 18 and 32.

Comparative Study of 2022 and 2023 Crime Rates by Region

Depending on information gathered by law enforcement organizations, these official publications offer comprehensive details on crime rates, trends, and patterns throughout Sierra Leone. They are essential resources for comprehending the nation's crime situation. We may evaluate how the split of crime rates in Sierra Leone's various areas has altered between 2022 and 2023 by comparing these reports from the two years. This investigation will shed light on any changes in the trends and concentrations of crime throughout the nation throughout this time. To compare the crime rate per region in Sierra Leone for 2022 and 2023, we will analyze the data provided in the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) Crime Statistics Reports for both years.

The table below shows Regional Crime Rate in 2022 and 2023

Regional Crime Rate in 2022 and 2023				
Region	Crime rate		No of cases reported	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
East	11.00%	10.00%	3,587	3,048

North	14.00%	17.00%	4,795	5,180
South	11.00%	11.00%	3,553	3,275
West	64.00%	62.00%	21,222	18,988
Total	100%	100%	33,157	30,491

SLP -Crime Statistics, 2023.

Based on the MTPHC's provisional report 2021, with an approximate population of 7,548,702, 33,157 cases registered, resulting in a crime rate of 0.39%. Comparably, with the population of 7,548,702. 30,491 cases in total reported in 2023, yielding a crime rate of 0.35%. The reported number of crimes in the country for 2023 was 0.4% lower than that in 2022. Sierra Leone's crime rate has drastically dropped over time. We may evaluate the changes in the pattern of crime rates in Sierra Leone's various region from 2022 to 2023 by comparing the two years. Any changes in the patterns and proportions of crime around the nation throughout this time will be revealed by this analysis. Regional Percentage of cases most committed in communities of Sierra Leone

To determine the regional proportion of occurrences that are most commonly committed in Sierra Leone, we can examine the noteworthy crime statistics included in the police report for 2023. Numerous crimes and human rights abuses that occurred in the country during that period are listed in the report. Unlawful or unfair executions; harsh prison conditions; disparaging treatment or punishment by the appropriate governmental entity or its agents; unfair arrest or detention; disruption of protests; government corruption; and a failure to disclose gender-based violence are among the critical human rights issues in Sierra Leone, according to the report. These figures demonstrate how widespread misbehaviour and human rights violations were in Sierra Leone over the time period covered by the report. These crimes include killings, mistreatment by officials, violence against underprivileged people, and corruption.

Although the report does not include exact numbers for every type of crime committed in Sierra Leone, it does provide a comprehensive overview of the many issues related to criminal activity and human rights violations in the country. Therefore, without precise

information on the provincial percentages of various types of crimes committed in Sierra Leone, it is challenging to provide a thorough analysis by area based solely on the data provided in the 2022 National Reports on the Protection of Human Rights Violations for Sierra Leone. Some of the most common crimes in Sierra Leone are listed below.

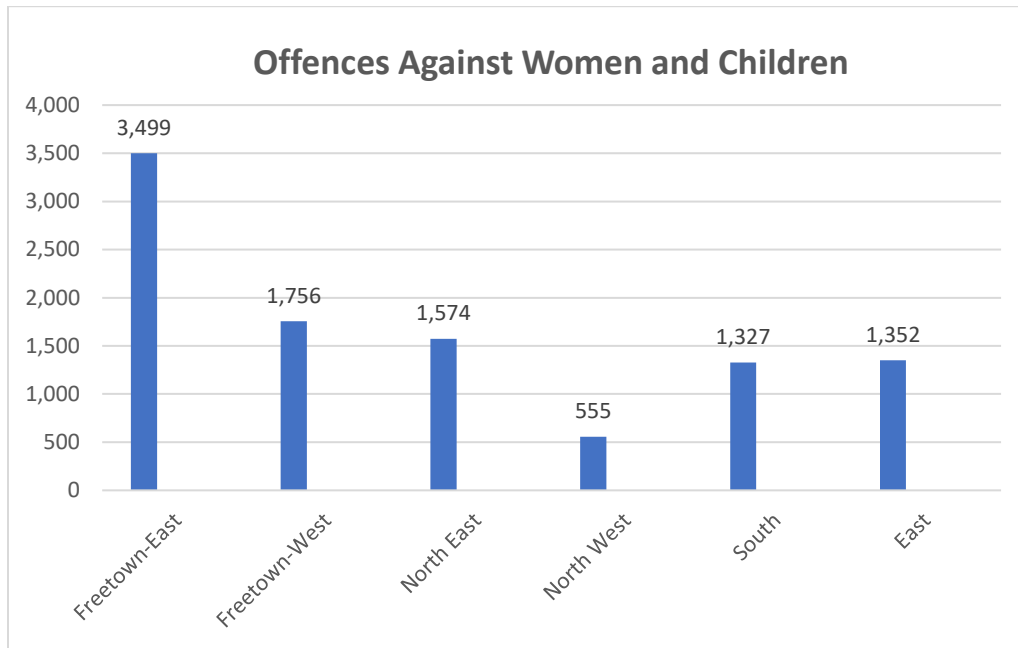
1. Regional Breakdown of offences against Women and Children

Crimes involving women and children are a serious problem in Sierra Leone, mostly because of gender-based assault (GBV), which encompasses structural, psychological, economic, sexual, and domestic abuse. A comprehensive strategy is required to solve this problem, taking into account how linked various forms of violence are. For women and girls pursuing justice, there are several avenues accessible, including institutional and informal judicial systems.

Case handling platforms should be established, logistical and technical aid for courts and law enforcement agencies should be pushed for, policy fulfilment strategies should be improved, psychosocial support services should be improved, land for safe homes should be allocated, GBV protocols should be included in health packages, safe home operations should be promoted, and gender equality and the empowerment of women acts should be developed. There are consequences associated with assaulting women and children at all societal levels, making it a major public health concern. While everyone is at risk from violence, women and children are especially vulnerable to abuse because they frequently lack the resources to protect themselves or have fewer rights than other groups. various communities consider various forms of violence to be economically or legally acceptable, which increases the risks that women and children confront. 10,063 incidents of crimes towards women and children have been documented nationwide in the 2023 crime report. The chart below shows that with 3,499 instances, Freetown

East had the highest number of this infraction, followed by 1,756 crime in Freetown West.

Bar chart showing the offences against Women and Children



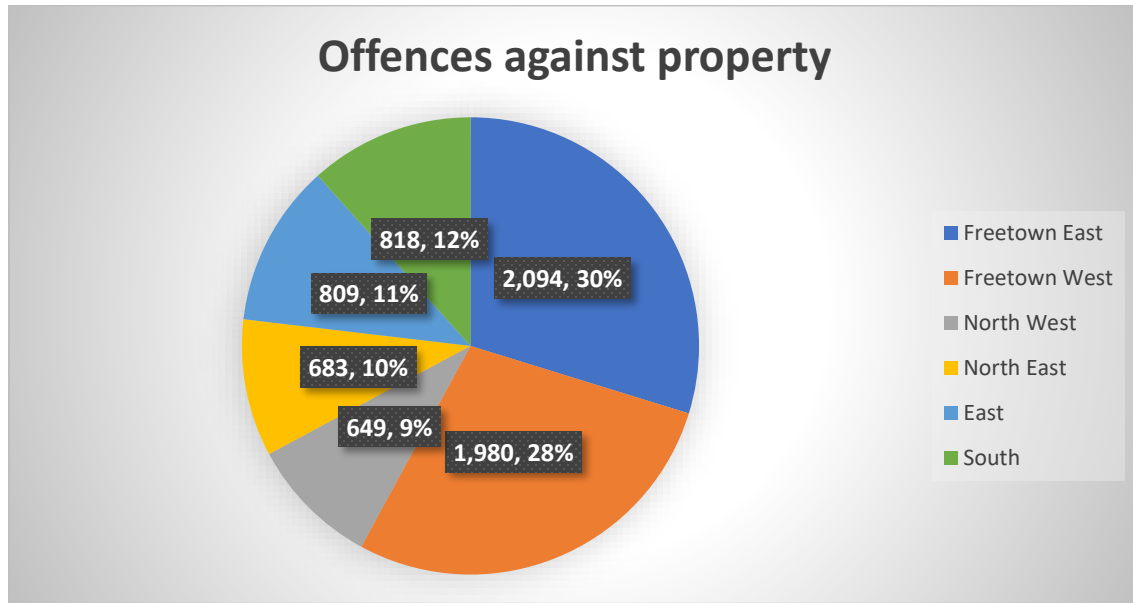
SLP -Crime Statistics, 2023.

2. Regional Breakdown of offences Against Property
The destruction of another person's property or the taking of an item from an owner against that person's will are considered crimes against property. Many other crimes intentionally deny someone of their property, including theft by deceit, accepting stolen goods, pillaging, trespassing, and willful destruction of property, among others. In 2023, police looked into 7,033 crimes involving property. Sierra Leonean law covers property-related offenses, such as theft, robbery, and burglary.

The Larceny Act of 1916 lays forth the rules for theft penalties as well as the processes for investigations and prosecutions. The Penal Code lists offences such

as burglary, robbery, and intentional property destruction. Due process is guaranteed in the justice system for criminals by the legislation known as the Criminal Procedure Act of 1965. Intellectual property rights are protected by the Trademarks Act and the Copyright Act, which also offer sanctions against breach. All things considered, Sierra Leone's extensive legal system upholds equal treatment throughout the court system for criminal offences and safeguards people's rights to their property. Depending on how serious the offence was, there are fines and/or jail time as possible punishments.

Pie chart showing offences against property



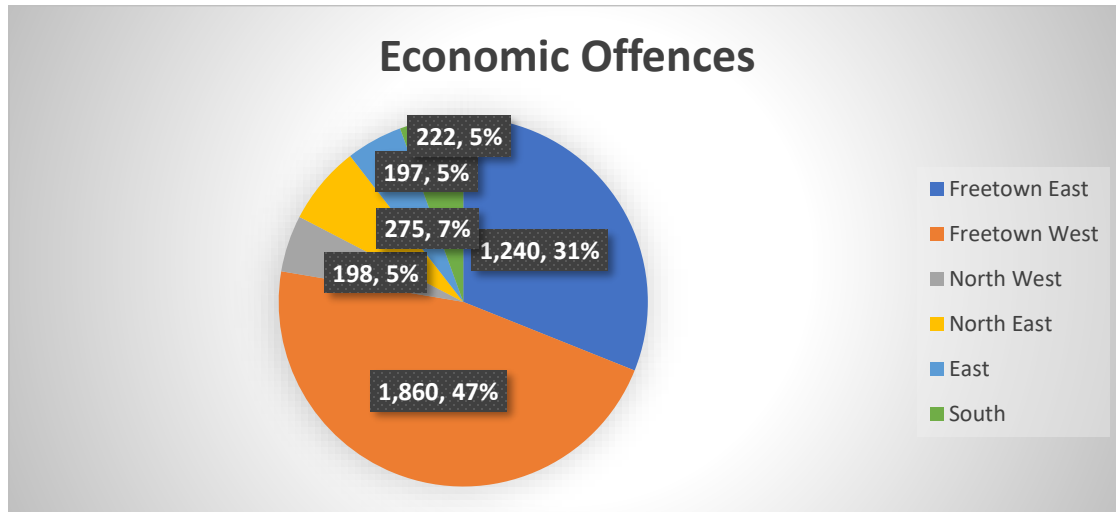
SLP -Crime Statistics, 2023.

3. Regional Breakdown of Economic Offences Economic

Crimes include all offenses that arise during the course of any commercial or economic activity. In addition to creating financial losses to certain individuals, these actions also jeopardize national security and the economy. Cash laundering, financial scams, narcotics trafficking, currency infringement, and fraud are a few of these crimes. 3,992 economic offenses were reported and investigated in 2023. In Freetown East, 1,240 cases were reported, 1,860 in Freetown West, 275 in North East, 198 in the northwest, 222 in South, and 197 in the Eastern. All of these cases were investigated.

The economy offences, specifically corruption, have been a major problem for Sierra Leone's campaigns against corruption. Anti-graft activists have expressed concerns and questions about the minimum penalties for charges in anti-corruption cases. They contend that

harsher penalties are required to dissuade people from participating in corrupt activities and to alter public perceptions of corruption the avoidance and eradication. Since it guarantees that offenders bear serious consequences for their acts, appropriate penalty for corruption charges is viewed as an essential instrument in the fight against corrupt behavior. The harshness of the punishment issued by the courts determines how efficient of deterrence since they influence public attitudes and views regarding corruption. Legal systems place a strong emphasis on human behavior because they aim to control and govern how people behave in society. Sociological viewpoints emphasize that crime functions as a tool for social control and transformation, and that aberrant behavior is an infringement upon accepted standards. One particularly dangerous type of crime that threatens the integrity and stability of society is corruption.



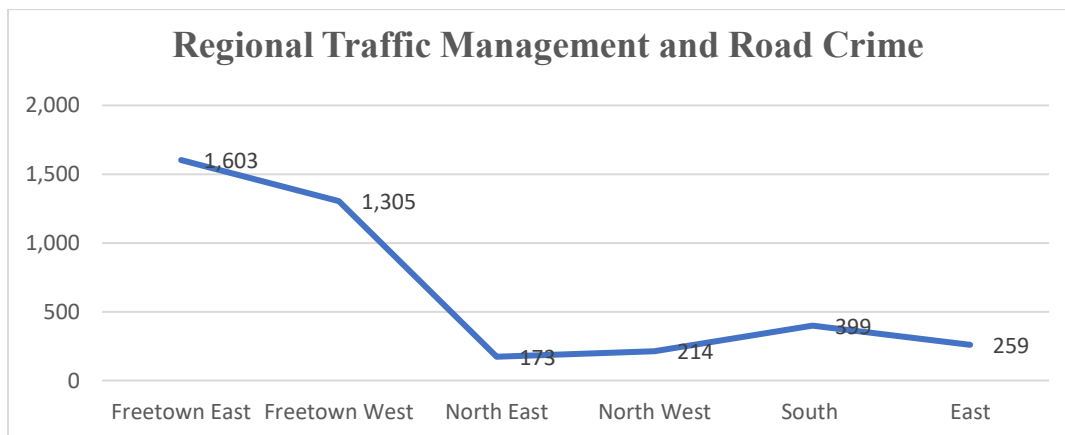
SLP -Crime Statistics, 2023.

4. Regional Breakdown of Road Traffic Accident Cases

Criminal offences pertaining to behaviour on the roadways are known as road traffic offences. They encompass a variety of behaviours, such as particular acts (such as using a phone while driving) and generally subpar driving practices (such as reckless driving). 3,953 road traffic cases were reported in the 2023 crime report; of them, 1,603 crimes were reported by Freetown East, 1,305 cases by Freetown West, 214 cases by North West, 173 cases by North East, 399 cases by South, and 259 instances by East. Sierra Leone faces a significant road traffic accident issue, causing loss of life, injuries, and financial implications. More than 150 accidents were reported during 2006 and 2015, with more than 40% taking place in Freetown.

The ratio of deaths to events in the country is 2.4. In order to put effective accident reduction programmes into action, it is essential to comprehend the geographical spread of traffic accidents. However, there may be more incidents as a result of underreporting and insufficient data collection methods. Encouraging road users, automobiles, safe roads, and post-crash treatments are all part of better road safety management. Systems for immediate medical attention must be efficient. Extensive measures, such as improvements to the infrastructure, regulations enforcement, car security standard conformity and public awareness campaigns, are used to address road safety concerns.

Bar chart showing the offences against Women and Children



SLP -Crime Statistics, 2023.

5. Regional Breakdown of Robbery with Violence Cases

This is an instance where a criminal or perpetrator tries to steal valuables from a victim by using or threatening to use violent force against them. 115 instances of this crime were reported in 2023 as opposed to 111 in 2022. The table below breaks down the number of Robberies with Violence cases across the six (6) regions. In Sierra Leone, violent robberies pose a serious danger to local safety and security and carry substantial hazards to both individuals and communities. For law enforcement organisations and legislators to create successful strategies for dealing with this crime, they must have an extensive knowledge of the characteristics and patterns of these incidents.

The victims are put in greater danger in these situations, which have been identified by the Sierra Leone Police and frequently include the use of force or threat of force. Law enforcement activities may be impacted by patterns, locations, population trends, and emerging patterns that can be identified through the analysis of these instances. To successfully avoid and cope with robbery with violence events, this information can guide specific approaches, resource allocation, and involvement from the community programmes. Understanding the socioeconomic factors associated with violent robberies might help policymakers implement comprehensive policies to address root causes such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

Table Outlining Robbery with Violence Cases by Region

Regional Breakdown of Robbery with Violence Cases		
Region	No. of cases	Percent
Freetown-East	36	30%
Freetown -West	26	22%
South	7	6.00%
North East	10	8.69%
North West	4	3.47%
East	32	27%
Total	115	100%

6. Regional Breakdown of Robbery with Aggravation Aggravated

Robbery with aggravation is a serious criminal offense in Sierra Leone, involving the use of violence, threats, or intimidation to cause harm or instill fear in the victim. This aggravating factor distinguishes it from simple robbery and leads to more severe penalties upon conviction. The crime is considered grave due to the violent nature of the act and potential harm inflicted on victims. In the case of four individuals accused of robbery with aggravation, the use of weapons and injuries to victims demonstrates the seriousness of the offense. The accused faced multiple charges related to robbery with aggravation, assault, wounding, and other offenses due to the violent and harmful nature of their actions. The commitment of

these accused individuals to the High Court indicates sufficient evidence to warrant a trial at a higher judicial level. Robbery with aggravation poses significant risks to public safety and security, and the legal system in Sierra Leone takes such offenses seriously to ensure justice for victims and maintain law and order. A robbery is defined as an act of theft committed in the most severe conditions. Typically, this means that an unsafe weapon was used in the robbery or the culprit seriously injured the victim. In 2023, 121 incidences of Robbery with Aggravation were documented. In comparison to other regions of Sierra Leone, the Western Area has a higher rate of this offence. proportions and numbers of Robbery with worsening cases for all areas are displayed in the table below.

Table showing Regional Breakdown of Robbery with Aggravation Aggravated

Regional Breakdown of Robbery with Aggravation		
Region	No. of cases	Percent
Freetown-East	53	43%
Freetown -West	28	23%
South	14	11.58%
North East	9	7.43%
North West	0	0.00%
East	17	14%
Total	121	100%

7. Regional Breakdown of Assault on Police Cases

Assaults on police officers in Sierra Leone are a significant issue affecting law enforcement and public safety. The problem is influenced by high crime rates, limited resources for law enforcement agencies, and underlying social and economic issues. High crime rates create a dangerous environment for law enforcement officers, especially in urban areas like Freetown. Local police often lack the necessary resources, including training, equipment, and manpower, to effectively deal with serious criminal incidents. Socioeconomic issues like poverty, unemployment, and inequality can also contribute to tensions between law enforcement and the community, leading to violence against police

officers. Assaults on police officers not only pose immediate risks to the safety and well-being of law enforcement personnel but also have broader implications for public safety and the rule of law. Improving law enforcement skills, increasing community involvement, addressing the underlying causes of crime and violence, and encouraging transparency within the criminal justice system are all essential components of a holistic strategy to address this issue. Assault is a crime, and the court takes it more seriously when a police officer is attacked while carrying out his official duties. This is known as aggravated assault. In 2023, there were 70 recorded incidents of this offense, compared to 94 in 2022.

Table showing the Regional Breakdown of Assault on Police Cases

Regional Breakdown of Assault on Police Cases		
Region	No of cases	Percent
Freetown-East	24	34%
Freetown -West	17	26%
South	10	13.00%
North East	7	8.00%
North West	4	0.00%
East	8	15%
Total	70	100%

8. Regional breakdown of murder cases

The below table shows regions and numbers of murder cases recorded in the respective regions in 2023 crime year. From the table, 167 cases of murder were reported in Sierra Leone. Freetown West region recorded 62, Freetown east region recorded 22,

Southern region recorded 21 cases of murder cases, followed by Eastern region with 30 cases, North East region reported 26 cases. North West recorded the least murder cases with 6 cases only.

Table showing the regional breakdown of murder cases

Regional Breakdown of Murder Cases		
Region	No of cases	Percent
Freetown-East	22	13%
Freetown -West	62	37%
South	21	12.00%
North East	26	15.00%
North West	6	3.60%
East	30	17%
Total	167	100%

Prevalent of Norms of Behavioral patterns in Sierra Leone

The institutional institutions and established behavioral norms influence crime trends in Sierra Leone's capital city. To maintain security and enforce the law in the city, formal agencies such as the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) are crucial. However, these governmental entities do have challenges that impact patterns in crime. The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) is responsible for enforcing the law and combating criminal activities in Sierra Leone. Despite efforts to preserve security, allegations have been made about police force abuses, such as the use of excessive force during public demonstrations. It has been seen by observers that police officers are not well-versed in calming down crowds and human rights problems, which can fuel tensions and possibly intensify criminal activity.

Inconsistencies of Sierra Leone justice system result in packed prisons and detention facilities. Inmates may become more tense due to extreme circumstances in these infrastructure, such as a shortage of food, a shortage of beds poor hygienic conditions, and a lack of medical attention. As seen by events like the riot at Pademba Road Correctional Centre, these circumstances may cause unrest within correctional facilities. Crime trends in Sierra Leone are also influenced by prevalent behavioural norms. How people commit crimes can be influenced by socioeconomic variables, cultural norms, and public opinions on law enforcement. Poverty, inequality, and a lack of opportunities are some of the factors that can push people to turn to criminal activity in order to survive or grow. Furthermore, how crimes are reported

or handled in the community may be influenced by cultural norms and views of authority. The degree of trust that people have in established organisations, such as the police, might differ depending on previous interactions or beliefs about bribery and punishment. This may have an impact on collaboration with authorities and impede attempts to successfully battle crime.

Police-Community Relationship in Sierra Leone

The relationships between authorities and the community are an essential part of modern policing that ensures successful and efficient law enforcement. A good relationship between the police and the populations that they serve leads to improved crime reporting, more open communication, and increased trust. According to the National Police Foundation, these results are essential for reducing crime and enhancing security. A healthy police-community relationship is even more crucial in light of Sierra Leone's unique challenges, including its high rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime. Community protection schemes are a collection of tactics intended to boost community involvement in law enforcement operations. They entail law enforcement and neighbourhood members collaborating to detect and resolve issues that impact the well-being of the population.

These programs have been successful in reducing crime, strengthening ties between the police and the community, and increasing public trust in the police in Sierra Leone (SLP, 2022).

Interactions between the police and the community they serve are known as police community relations. These linkages may have a significant impact on community security and privacy, either positively or negatively. While positive relationships between the police and the community can facilitate crime reporting, promote communication, and increase trust, negative relationships can lead to miscommunication, fear, and hostility. By organizing community events, taking part in outreach programs, and instructing law enforcement officers in community policing methods, the SLP in Sierra Leone has made a concerted effort to improve relations between the police and the community (SLP, 2022).

Mutual Understanding and Trust between policing and community

Understanding trust and understanding between authorities and the community are essential to creating a safe and peaceful society. When people trust the police, they are more likely to report crimes, help with investigations, and provide important information that can help solve crimes. The public may even begin conducting crimes themselves and become less likely to report crimes or cooperate with prosecutions if they have little faith in the police. The SLP in Sierra Leone has worked hard to build mutual understanding and trust with the people by organizing community events, speaking with local leaders, and training police officers in communication and cultural knowledge (SLP, 2022).

There are still a lot of problems, including high unemployment, destitution, and crime rates, despite the SLP's efforts to improve relations between the authorities and the population. These problems can create distrust, fear, and hostility, which can hinder positive relationships between the police and the public. Historical factors that may have an impact on the relationship between the police and the community include the Civil Conflict's lasting effects and incidents of police brutality. To overcome these challenges, the SLP needs to continue engaging with the community, train police officers in community surveillance methods, and address the root causes of poverty and violence in Sierra Leone.

In the end, the SLP in Sierra Leone has put a lot of effort into improving community relations with the police, which is a crucial aspect of modern policing. The sexual orientation division of the State and Local Affairs Directorate is responsible for ensuring that the SLP's operations follow the guidelines of the state's policing agreements, which are based on local policing needs. Mutual understanding, trust, and efforts to advance community policing are necessary for the development of positive relationships between the police and the public. However, a number economic problems persist, including high unemployment, poverty, and crime rates, as well as the aftermath of the civil war and police brutality.

Impact of Community Crime in Sierra Leone

Social crimes have an effect not just on the most immediate victims but also on the entire town or neighbourhood. It may cause locals to become more fearful, lower property prices, fewer prospects for job creation, and a general deterioration in the well-being of the community. In addition, people—especially children and fragile populations—can experience lasting emotional effects from being exposed to violent and criminal behaviour. The increased number of organised cliques along with gangs in vulnerable cities like Sierra Leone has contributed to a culture of violence, including incidents like rape, murder, and other violent assaults, and killings. This scenario creates a grave danger to individual's safety and peace within the communities at large. Community crime has a major detrimental effect on Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone, and resulted in an increase in illicit behaviour and violence, especially among the younger generation (ibid).

A high proportion of youth joblessness, a lack of chances for constructive participation, and recruitment tactics that entice vulnerable kids to join in illicit activities have all contributed to the rise in violent behaviour and criminal activity. It is alarming that this mindset of violence is spreading, particularly as election season draws near and political campaigns get underway. Initiatives to involve young leaders in the community in the creation and coordination of Dialogue Forums are among the measures taken to address these issues. These discussion boards provide a forum for figuring out what has to be prioritised, comprehending the underlying reasons why young people join cliques and gangs, and raising awareness of the dangers of doing so (SLP, 2023).

The objectives of the initiative are to decrease the number of young people joining organised crime groups, find jobs for young people who are at risk, and lower the general rate of criminal activity and assault in the neighbourhoods. The initiative intends to lessen the effects on neighbourhood crime in Sierra Leone by offering education, supporting vulnerable adolescents in transitioning into more positive routes, and organising publicity campaigns.

Prevention Strategies

Effective prevention strategies aim to address the root causes of crime in a community and promote proactive measures to reduce criminal activity. Cooperation and trust in the battle against local crime can be enhanced by community security initiatives that fortify relationships between communities and security services. Participating in career training programs, educational opportunities, behavioral healthcare programs, and substance addiction recovery can also help lower the risk factors associated with criminal behavior. To increase public safety and build community trust in law enforcement, Sierra Leone's capital must implement efficient monitoring and crime prevention strategies. To deal with these problems, a number of important tactics can be used:

- **Community Engagement and Partnership:** A key component of effective community safety is forging solid alliances with locals. It is recommended that law enforcement authorities in Sierra Leone establish proactive relationships with elected officials, citizens, and organisations in order to foster confidence, obtain knowledge, and work together on reducing crime. The main objectives of community policing should be to solve neighbourhood issues, build goodwill among neighbours, and include locals in problem-solving initiatives.
- **Problem-Oriented Policing:** Using problem-based law enforcement techniques can assist in addressing certain criminal challenges in Sierra Leone. To find underlying issues and provide focused interventions, law enforcement organisations should thoroughly study crime trends and hotspots. Problem-driven law enforcement can have better long-lasting results in reducing crime by concentrating on the fundamental causes of crime and collaborating with citizens to develop solutions.
- **Focused Deterrence:** Combating violent criminal activity in Sierra Leone can be aided by the implementation of targeted deterrence tactics. Law enforcement agencies can focus interventions on high-risk persons who have engaged in illicit behaviours and offer assistance programmes to help them avoid the consequences of crime through discovering these individuals. Focused deterrence strategies that have

been successful in lowering the rate of gun violence in other contexts, like ceasefire operations and Collective Violence Intervention (CVI), might be modified for application in Sierra Leone.

- **Illegal Gun-Carrying Reduction:** In order to stop violence linked to guns in Sierra Leone, it is imperative that the issue of illicit gun possession be addressed. Law enforcement organisations should put policies in place to deter unlawful gun ownership by focusing enforcement efforts on high-risk persons and areas. The frequency of drugs and weapons in the community can be efficiently decreased while minimising unexpected consequences by prioritising efficiency in law enforcement efforts and refraining from excessive measures.

Enhancing Shooting Clearance Rates: In Sierra Leone, increasing the amount of convictions for gunshot cases is crucial to holding perpetrators responsible and giving the families of the victims closure. Law enforcement organisations should place a high priority on conducting in-depth investigations, devote funds to improving their investigative capacities, and make sure that all those affected, regardless of their past or present situation, are treated with understanding and compassion in their case handling. Authorities can boost public confidence in the legal system and prevent such violent acts by raising clearance rates.

Enforcement agencies can work towards establishing a safer environment, lowering crime rates, and promoting better relationships between law enforcement and the public by putting into practice a combination of these preventive methods that are specifically suited to the requirements and obstacles faced by communities in Sierra Leone.

II. CONCLUSION

A multifaceted strategy involving cooperation between many stakeholders, such as governmental organisations, non-profits, businesses, schools, and people, is needed to combat community crime. Communities may build safer settings where people can thrive by dealing with the fundamental social factors of offence and putting evidence-based preventative methods into practice. With its notable

economic success, Sierra Leone is still seen as a ray of light in a region beset by poverty, inequality, ethnic conflict, and civil unrest. The nation has shown resilience in the face of hardships similar to those faced by some of its neighbours in recent decades. But at the same time, the country's democratic system is fracturing, making its institutions and people extremely susceptible to the impact caused by organized crime and the rise of incorporated "mafias." These include an increasingly costly voter turnout process, a lacklustre duty of care system, and a number of issues relating to the political system and governance. As the frequent disclosures of official participation in drug trafficking increase, so does the tying of opposing parties to organized crime, including drug trafficking. This undermines the credibility of official as well as non-official governance structures. Concerns about the possibility that illegal finance is supporting important political processes are not greatly allayed by the lax laws governing asset disclosure, campaign financing, and political party fundraising. On the other hand, there is a limited amount of public space available for non-confrontational policy-oriented discussion of these concerns; higher education institutions and civil society organisations are finding that their ability to publicly address these kinds of problems is becoming more and more limited. Similar to numerous nations grappling with intricate issues, Sierra Leone is devoid of the necessary institutional strength and structures to address organised crime. Strongly ingrained system of patronage and a lack of financial, human, and logistical resources limit institutions. Limited interagency collaboration exists, and the judicial system's and specialised agencies' staff lacks the necessary experience to handle the various forms of organised crime that have surfaced in the nation. Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be much political will behind incorporating robust balances of power within the formal and customary governing structures now in place in order to dissociate them from organised crime. Regarding Sierra Leone's longer-term development prospects, the latter will be crucial. However, in the interim, the nation continues to function as a regional centre for the organisation and execution of organised crime.

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