

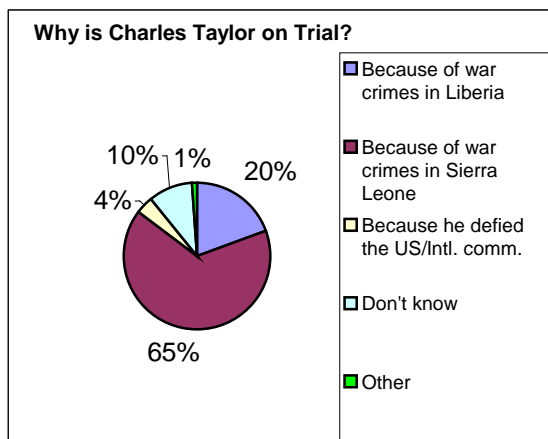
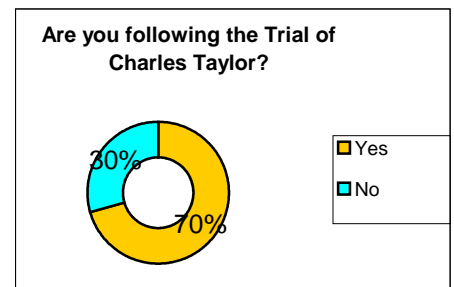
Public Polling in Liberia on Perceptions of the Charles Taylor Trial in The Hague

SFCG is an international NGO with a mission to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches towards cooperative solutions. In Liberia, SFCG operates Talking Drum Studio, a multi media production studio, and a complementary outreach project to strengthen participation and inclusion in consolidating peace in the country. Recently, SFCG conducted a poll of Liberian citizens to sound public opinions and views of Charles Taylor’s trial before the special tribunal for war crimes, a crucial issue in the processes of national reconciliation, justice, and recovery from the civil war. A total of 497 respondents, from all segments of Liberian society, were queried about their views of the Charles Taylor trial.

The results from the polling questions were encouraging, and showed that Liberians are actively engaged in following the developments and are also well informed as to its purpose and nature. In addition, the public has a overwhelmingly positive view of the trial and its fairness. A significant gap was found between male and female respondents in their perceptions of the trial’s fairness, with significantly more women feeling unsure about the question. Liberia media outlets seem to be successfully conveying news and information on the trial to allow Liberian citizens to remain engaged and form knowledgeable opinions.

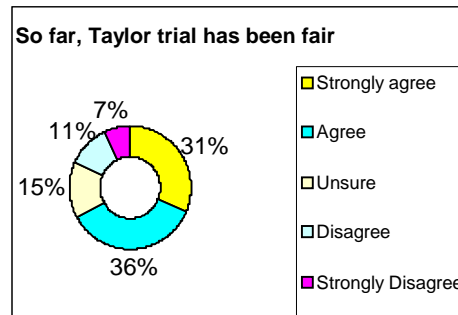
Specifically, the key findings from the survey revealed the following:

- A large majority of Liberians actively follow the events of the Charles Taylor trial (70%). This indicates that the trial of the former president, and the civil war and other instability and violence associated with his regime, continues to be a central issue of public interest and relevance in post-war Liberian society.

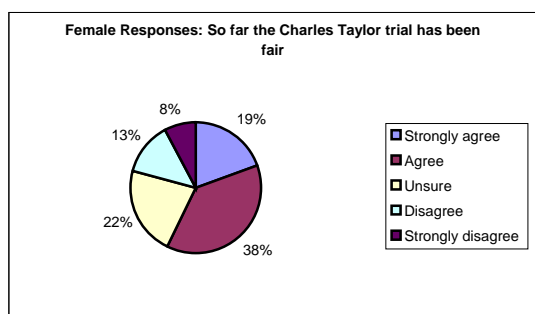


- When asked why Charles Taylor is on trial, an overwhelming percentage of respondents identified the correct reason behind Taylor’s trial (65%) before the Special Tribunal for War Crimes in Sierra Leone. This response shows that Liberians are not only following the trial’s developments, but are also well informed as to the specific purpose of the trial. 1 in 5 respondents, however, said that Taylor is on trial because of war crimes in Liberia.

- A large majority (67%) agrees or strongly agrees that Charles Taylor’s trial has been fair, while only 18% report it as unfair. The survey reveals a high degree of confidence among the Liberian public in the fairness of Taylor’s trial at the special tribunal. Combined with the evidence that respondents are generally well informed about the trial, these results are encouraging to media and other organizations seeking to keep Liberians informed and aware of the trial’s purpose and nature, as well as engaged and interested in the trial’s developments.



- Female respondents are far more uncertain of the trial’s fairness than males (22% vs. 8%). This is perhaps a sign of an information disparity between male and females, leaving women less able to develop an informed opinion on the trial itself. Media workers may need to consciously target the coverage of the trial toward a female audience in order to address such a potential problem. This could also indicate a larger inequality between men and women in terms of political and national current events awareness – potentially, another major obstacle to the realization of an inclusive and participatory Liberian society.



- While a majority of both male and female respondents reported the trial as fair, more men had a stronger opinion (41%) than women (19%).
- Slightly more female respondents said that the trial was unfair (21% vs. 16%).

