

# Report

November 2022



## PERCEPTIONS, VULNERABILITIES, AND PREVENTION

Violent Extremism Threat Assessment in  
Selected Regions of the Southern Libyan  
Borderlands and North-Western Nigeria





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November 2022



A joint publication of the United Nations Development Programme and the Small Arms Survey, with support from the governments of the Netherlands and Sweden

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## Cover photo

A Tuareg man sits on a rock in the Tadrart Akakus, east of Ghat, Libya. 8 December 2005.

Source: Bertrand Rieger/Hemis

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## About the Small Arms Survey

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The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policymakers, researchers, and civil society. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and is an associated programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

The Survey has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, and criminology, and collaborates with a network of researchers, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries. Research for this Report benefited from the expert inputs and network of the Security Assessment in North Africa (SANA), which is a multi-year project of the Small Arms Survey to support those engaged in building a more secure environment in North Africa and the Sahel-Sahara region.

For more information, please visit:

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# About the United Nations Development Programme

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# Foreword

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Violent extremism remains one of the major threats and challenges to peace and development, owing to its destructive consequences and widening geographical scope. Recent years have witnessed a surge in violent extremism in many parts of Africa, especially across the Sahel belt. Its economic impact in several states and communities in the Sahel, and its consequences for transformational development outcomes remain severe.

The 2015 UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism highlights that many of the drivers and conditions that are conducive to violent extremism relate to the development space. Accordingly, the actors operating in this space have a crucial role to play in preventing and tackling violent extremism threats and drivers. This role is critical and complementary to security-centered counter-terrorism measures.

Many actors are developing and implementing programmes and initiatives that directly address violent extremism. Yet there is limited information and empirical data on the effectiveness of programming on preventing violent extremism. This dearth of empirical data reflects a critical gap not only for risk-informed and conflict-sensitive programming, but also, more broadly, for the mainstreaming of prevention of violent extremism (PVE) across development engagements.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is acknowledged as a leading actor in the field of PVE in Africa through its Regional PVE Project, which has operated in 22 African countries since 2016. The Africa-wide multi-stakeholder initiative, *Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach*, works with national governments, regional institutions, civil society, and faith-based institutions to achieve collective PVE outcomes, while also contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its dynamics, through improved knowledge and data production.

In 2017, UNDP launched the report *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives, and the Tipping Point for Recruitment*, which was designed to address gaps and support evidence-based policies and programming, including through the generation of information on the recruits' perspective on the incentives and drivers of violent extremism.

The report highlighted that while attacks in cities tend to draw attention, violent extremism often takes root in remote areas — peripheral in development terms and often borderlands connecting two or more states — where the inhabitants suffer from political, social, and economic marginalization. Individuals from marginalized borderlands are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups, due to the activities of various armed non-state actors and the limited reach of state institutions.

The expansion of Islamic State (IS) operations into the borderlands in southern Libya and the tenfold increase in attacks in the Sahel since 2007 pose a major threat to human security, development, and stability in the region. The international community raised this concern at the Berlin Conference on Libya on 20 January 2020, calling for bolder preventive engagements in addressing the re-emergence of violent extremism in the region. In this context, UNDP recognized that further research is pivotal to the scaling up of conflict-sensitive and evidence-based interventions in such complex environments. This is essential to better guide cross-border preventive action that would increase social cohesion, sustain development, and ensure pathways to peace and prosperity.

This study provides a renewed empirical understanding, based on primary data, of the risk factors that drive violent extremism in the southern Libya border region. It puts an emphasis on the need for deep and sustained investments in addressing economic deprivation, ethnic contestations and discrimination, cross-border organized crime and other governance challenges as critical risk factors that could exacerbate violent extremism if left unaddressed. Therefore, development actors must continue to work in a coordinated manner to address the structural and pull factors of transnational violent extremism and help build resilient communities against violent extremism across Chad, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan.

We express our deep appreciation to the Regional PVE Project for Africa, which is a joint initiative of the UNDP Regional Bureaus of Africa and the Arab States, in spotlighting the evolving situation in the southern Libya borderlands through this report, aptly entitled *Perceptions, Vulnerabilities, and Prevention: Violent Extremism Threat Assessment in Selected Regions of the Southern Libyan Borderlands and North-Western Nigeria*. It is our hope that the findings and recommendations of the report will enhance programming, and lay the foundation for enhanced policy engagement in addressing the threat and drivers of violent extremism in this region and beyond.



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## List of abbreviations and acronyms

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<b>CT</b>	Counter-terrorism
<b>CVE</b>	Countering violent extremism
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>ISWAP</b>	Islamic State in West Africa Province
<b>PVE</b>	Preventing violent extremism
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution

## Executive summary

The 2017 *Journey to Extremism in Africa* report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that individuals raised in marginalized borderlands can be especially vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups. The Sahel is home to a number of such borderlands, with the movement and activities of various armed groups, the absence of strong state institutions, and the prevalence of disarmed communities characterizing its territory. Potentially, the combination of these factors makes the subregion more exposed to risk and worthy of further consideration.

Among the Sahelian border regions, Libya's frontiers seem to offer particularly favourable conditions for the expansion of violent extremist groups. Following the defeat of the non-state armed group Islamic State (IS) in the Libyan city of Sirte in 2016, violent extremist combatants headed towards the south of the country, raising concerns over the stability of border regions within Libya; in neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Sudan; and as far as Nigeria, where weapons of suspected Libyan origin have been used in episodes of violence. The Libyan borderlands, much like the broader Sahel region, are characterized by limited access to public services, weak political institutions, porous borders, multiple direct military interventions, the presence of armed groups, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and meddling by regional and global powers—all of which contribute to an increased risk of violent extremism.

This Report therefore seeks to better understand the dynamics of these risk factors in the southern Libya border region. It relies on quantitative surveys of people's perceptions of factors (or drivers), actors, and values associated with violent extremism. A total of 6,852 interviews were undertaken in selected border regions of northern Chad, southern Libya, north-eastern Niger, north-western Nigeria, and western Sudan between December 2020 and July 2021.

The Report tackles violent extremism through the lens of affected—or potentially affected—local societies, and aims to inform policymaking and programming from a prevention perspective. It does this by analysing the exposure of communities in the surveyed border regions to seven drivers of violent extremism examined in this study: (1) hardship and deprivation; (2) lack of adequate security and justice; (3) limited access to basic services; (4) the growing importance of ethnic or religious identities; (5) chronic instability and insecurity; (6) blocked political participation and the influence of non-state armed groups; and (7) the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. While these drivers—taken in isolation—may not necessarily trigger violent extremism, violent extremist groups can instrumentalize perceptions of marginalization and discrimination and weave them together into a simplifying narrative that can act as a catalyst for violence.

Furthermore, the Report examines the interviewees' knowledge of recruitment strategies employed by a variety of armed groups in their communities, as well as their attitude towards specific violent extremist groups and associated values. By shedding light on

populations' perceptions, the Report highlights some common trends across the borderlands, and provides some granular understanding on specific challenges. Although violent extremist groups did not necessarily control territory in the areas surveyed, the analysis suggests that the situation has the potential to deteriorate quickly if action is not taken to prevent people from reaching a potential 'tipping point'.

## Key findings

- Hardship and deprivation represent major challenges in the surveyed border regions of the Sahel. In Niger and Sudan, 71 and 56 per cent of respondents, respectively, rated their lives negatively. More than half of the respondents in all five countries declared having had 'often' or 'sometimes' no cash income in the year preceding the study.
- Discrimination and marginalization along ethnic, tribal, or religious lines were most strongly felt in Nigeria and Sudan. The situation in Sudan is particularly noteworthy as respondents also reported comparatively limited access to basic services. The combination of these two drivers is of particular concern from a prevention of violent extremism (PVE) perspective as it can fuel and exacerbate grievances.
- Residents of the border communities expressed complex and nuanced perceptions of the state's ability to provide security and justice. While respondents in Libya, Nigeria, and Sudan were particularly disgruntled with the government, but relatively less so with the security forces, the opposite appeared to hold true in Chad and Niger. All the case studies indicated that trust in security forces was slightly higher when security provision involved both local (state or non-state) and national or federal forces.
- Perceptions of stability and security varied greatly across the case studies. In Nigeria, 61 per cent of respondents felt insecure or very insecure in their neighbourhoods, compared with only 12 per cent in Niger, 17 per cent in Libya, 21 per cent in Chad, and 38 per cent in Sudan.
- Perceptions of small arms also varied significantly across the case studies, with respondents in Nigeria and Sudan reporting the highest levels of proliferation. The sources of weapons cited by respondents included the illegal market, the legal market, craft production, inheritance, state authorities, and employers. The survey results suggest that outbound trafficking of small arms from Libya to neighbouring countries surpassed weapons inflows.
- A significant 19 per cent of respondents in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan reported being aware of recruitment by local or foreign armed groups in their communities. Furthermore, 11 per cent claimed to be aware of recruitment by violent extremist groups in their areas.

- The recruits of local and foreign armed groups were fairly evenly divided between men and women, with only slightly more men and boys than women and girls. The roles that respondents assigned to women and girls within these groups were less consistent, however. In Chad, the most frequently cited role for women was that of combatant (16 per cent), while only a negligible proportion of Nigerian respondents assigned this role to women.
- Around three per cent of respondents in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan had not only extremely favourable views of mainstream violent extremist groups, but also particularly severe grudges against a range of institutions, communities, and organizations—including state, non-state, and international entities. Notably, this subset also displayed a strong level of support for violence against civilians and showed high levels of willingness to die for a leader.
- Respondents in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan expressed varying levels of support for or resentment towards well-known violent extremist groups, such as IS, al-Qaeda, or al-Shabaab. Sudanese respondents were the most likely to assert that individuals or groups are sometimes justified in killing civilians (52 per cent), followed by those in Nigeria (32 per cent), Chad (22 per cent), and Niger (17 per cent).

## Policy and programmatic observations

The following policy observations draw on the research findings and are based on in-depth consultations with UNDP regional and country teams, and target policymakers and practitioners working to prevent and address armed violence and violent extremism in the subregion covered in this study. While member states, the UN, and international development partners may already be implementing similar recommendations in specific contexts, the following list is meant to serve as a call for more systematic action in the region.

### Hardship and deprivation

- Member states,<sup>1</sup> the UN, and international development partners should consider the broader humanitarian–development–peace nexus when designing PVE interventions in the border communities. Programming should be context specific in order to deliver activities in an integrated manner and to support sustainable resilience in targeted communities.
- Member states should ensure that national strategic plans and public expenditures create economic opportunities, expand resources, and commit to a long-term development vision for women and men in marginalized border regions.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should focus on enhancing community resilience, supporting capacity development to create

economic activities, and diversifying livelihood activities for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including youth and women.

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should promote livelihood recovery and sustainability programmes using tools such as UNDP's 3×6 Approach and Prevention Offer, as well as the 'leave no one behind' promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNDP's 3×6 Approach is an innovative UNDP programme promoting sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable and crisis-affected groups, such as those affected by disasters or conflict. The Prevention Offer is a corporate effort to articulate UNDP's prevention and peacebuilding ambition and to promote the adoption of a strong development lens that calls for early and large-scale action in crisis prevention and peacebuilding.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should consider programming that aims to shift norms, including within the dowry system, whereby social and political capital is attributed to married men (and, to a limited extent, married women).
- Member states should consider investing in economic activities and income-generating projects related to the cross-border trade, and specific support should be provided to informal cross-border traders by encouraging the formalization of their trades or business as well as facilitating their access to markets and ability to engage in productive economic activities.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should provide short-term and conflict-sensitive 'gap filler' support—such as community development projects, affordable credit to allow youth to start their own businesses, and cash income assistance—while continuing to invest in longer-term development visions and plans. Social protection systems in the borderlands should not only provide immediate or short-term support to young persons but also aim to stimulate socio-economic recovery in niche trade areas to disincentivize the recruitment of young persons to violent extremist groups.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should support follow-up assessments on alternative sources of livelihoods in border areas where cash income is limited or periodically interrupted in order to identify possible entry points for reducing local populations' vulnerability to hardship and deprivation.

### **Lack of adequate security and justice**

- Member states, with the support of international development partners and in partnership with civil society organizations (CSOs), should ensure that security sector and wider criminal justice system reform initiatives tackle the trust and legitimacy deficits of specific security and justice institutions. This includes prioritizing community-based policing and security provision mechanisms, such as civilian-

military engagement, and developing communication and trust-building interventions in communities facing higher perceptions of discrimination. Such initiatives should be explicitly linked to gender-related legal provisions and national policies (such as UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 national action plans), and work towards greater representation of women in the defence and security forces, including through the provision of training to these forces on protecting women's rights and preventing gender-based violence (GBV).

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should establish and implement early warning mechanisms that capture and monitor the threats, risks, and perceptions of insecurity in communities, as well as levels of trust in key security providers and justice institutions. They should also develop early response systems that promote interaction between military and civilian actors at the community level to achieve more complementary, effective, and sustainable responses to violent extremist narratives and ideologies.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners, with the support of CSOs, should sponsor community-led engagement and dialogue to address the social cohesion challenges created by the complex mobility in border regions, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion and building resilient communities against violent extremism.
- Member states, the UN, international development partners, and CSOs should design and implement projects in partnership with diverse groups of women, men, girls, and boys to end impunity for GBV; to ensure that the security and justice needs of all women, men, girls, and boys are met; and to improve access to justice and public services for survivors of GBV.

### **Limited access to basic services**

- Member states should ensure the transparent and equal distribution of resources and access to basic services across the country, paying particular attention to remote areas and cross-border communities who feel marginalized and become vulnerable to the exploitation, narratives, and propaganda of violent extremist groups. In parallel, communities should be included in the management of natural resources at the local level and informed of resource distribution and policies. The UN and international development partners should ensure that support to government institutions is context specific and conflict sensitive so that it does not exacerbate perceptions of marginalization and discrimination among border communities.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should consider integrating PVE interventions into broader regional and development stabilization efforts from an early stage to prevent extremist groups from taking advantage of a vacuum or lack of state services.



- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should consider mapping the geospatial distribution of public expenditures as a way to create political momentum to increase coverage of marginalized border areas and population groups, including female-headed households, single women, youth, persons who suffer discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and ethnic and religious minorities. They should also consider appropriate practices with respect to supporting sustainable development in areas of limited statehood and to fulfilling or renewing the social contract through partnerships in service delivery with other stakeholders, including non-state actors such as community leaders.
- Member states should ensure the provision of compulsory education for all girls and boys in at-risk areas—as per Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)—together with social protection interventions to ensure attendance at school, particularly in remote areas outside of the centre or capital.

### **The growing importance of ethnic and religious identities**

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should expand and support initiatives that aim to improve transparency in and oversight of schools, including the curricula.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should invest in the development of gender-inclusive, community-led governance systems that provide transparent and accountable leadership of religious affairs, as well as capitalize on the important role that religious teaching can play as a source of resilience and support increased religious literacy among at-risk groups.
- Member states, in coordination with the UN, international development partners, CSOs, and religious and community leaders, should initiate and implement gender-inclusive interventions that encourage interfaith and intercommunal dialogue, provide a space for equal participation of women, and lead to concrete outcomes for communities, such as their involvement in local community development plans that can be supported by the governments.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should engage with Quranic schools and religious leaders, besides other stakeholders, as entry points for developing national and regional PVE strategies in partnership with mothers and fathers, including programmes to encourage religious and ethnic tolerance as well as to identify key areas of reform in Quranic schools to improve the delivery of quality education.

### **Blocked political participation**

- Member states should take necessary actions, including changing policies and practices, to tackle sensitive citizenship and voting issues among women and men in border communities.

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners, in partnership with media outlets and experts, should support free and responsible press or media initiatives or interventions that aim to prevent and mitigate hate speech and the perpetuation of rigid notions of masculinity as well as to raise awareness of violent extremism threats and risks. These efforts should include explicit messaging to support women’s equality and prevent women’s marginalization.
- Member states should facilitate and encourage participation in political debates through participatory processes that are inclusive of youth and lead to the adoption of local community development plans.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should consider sponsoring and nourishing a civil society-led and gender-inclusive culture of debate to make processes more inclusive and build strong partnerships with CSOs to design and implement development plans or programmes more effectively.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should actively address the marginalization of women from political processes, including by reserving places for women on councils, actively promoting women’s meaningful participation as candidates and election officials, and incorporating specific provisions to enable women’s voices to be heard at political media events such as candidate debates and election campaign activities.

### **Proliferation of small arms and light weapons**

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should promote and design context-specific and conflict-sensitive responses to arms proliferation, while ensuring that interventions are harmonized and coordinated across communities and borders in ways that not only limit violent extremist groups’ access to arms, but also prevent potential unintended harmful effects (such as by ensuring that interventions do not inadvertently create incentives for cross-border arms trafficking).
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should undertake rapid assessments of the risks associated with small arms, as perceived by the most exposed communities, as well as of arms smuggling or trafficking—besides other illegal activities—as a means of financing the activities of violent extremist groups.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should design and support initiatives that mitigate the risks to communities (such as by developing awareness-raising programmes on firearms security and safety and providing alternatives to arms possession as a means of protection and livelihood) while acknowledging that weapons collection may not be realistic in the short term in areas with high levels of insecurity.
- Member states, the UN, and the international community should support efforts to hamper violent extremist armed groups’ access to small arms, in line with UNSCR 1970 of 2011 establishing the arms embargo on Libya.

## Recruitment by armed groups

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should prioritize PVE interventions in areas that are highly dependent on the cross-border trade.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should design and implement strategies that tackle the specific vulnerabilities and perceptions of men and women as possible recruits of armed groups (including both violent extremist and other groups), drawing from collaborative research aimed at understanding why women and men join extremist groups. Strategies may include creating economic opportunities in partnership with small businesses and engaging youth, community leaders, and other relevant influential leaders.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners, in partnership with media outlets and religious leaders, should develop alternative narratives and messages to counter the online discourse and recruitment strategies of violent extremist groups.
- Member states should encourage and promote borderland trade initiatives to increase and ensure the safety of legitimate cross-border trade, while preventing it from being exploited by violent extremist groups.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should support the outcomes of the Berlin Conference and the Libya Political Dialogue agreement related to the withdrawal process of foreign armed groups in the region (for example, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission Action Plan), particularly the reintegration process of fighters into their country or communities of origin to prevent them from joining violent extremist groups.

## Affinity towards violent extremism

- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should prioritize PVE efforts in areas with relatively stronger affinity towards violent extremism, and without any stigmatization of population groups, particularly focusing on media campaigns and raising awareness among communities, in partnership with CSOs, media outlets, religious leaders, education institutions, and research institutes or universities.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should support community-led mentoring and trauma-counselling services, as well as mental health and psychosocial support initiatives in the affected communities.
- Member states, the UN, and international development partners should design and implement alternative and counter-messaging programmes that are highly tailored to a particular context and culture, emphasizing peer-group influences, mothers and fathers, religious leaders, and Quranic schools as entry points. The programmes

can leverage the perspectives and voices of former recruits—including respondents from UNDP’s 2017 *Journey to Extremism* study who deradicalized or disengaged—as conduits for counter-messaging. Such initiatives should take into consideration good practices established through deradicalization programmes implemented in countries in the region and beyond, including the need to empower locally owned, community-based reconciliation and reintegration efforts.

- In order to triangulate findings and increase knowledge on risks factors, member states, the UN, and international development partners should support follow-up studies targeting individuals from border areas who have joined violent extremist groups.

“The survey assessed respondents’ perceptions of some of the main drivers of violent extremism identified in the relevant literature, knowledge of recruitment by armed groups, and views on values and actors associated with violent extremism.”

## Introduction

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In 2017, UNDP published the *Journey to Extremism in Africa* report, which analysed the incentives and drivers of violent extremism, as expressed by the recruits of violent extremist groups surveyed for the study. Among the report's main findings was that the place of birth of these individuals—which was often found to be in marginalized areas and borderlands—played an important role in shaping their worldview and vulnerability to violent extremism (UNDP, 2017a, p. 4). Indeed, violent extremist groups can 'logistically exploit relatively "ungoverned" terrain' such as remote borderlands, while also developing 'compelling narratives that speak to the grievances of communities living in neglected circumstances' (p. 33). Many of the recruits joined violent extremist groups rapidly after their first contact with the group, illustrating the depth of their vulnerability to recruitment (p. 6).

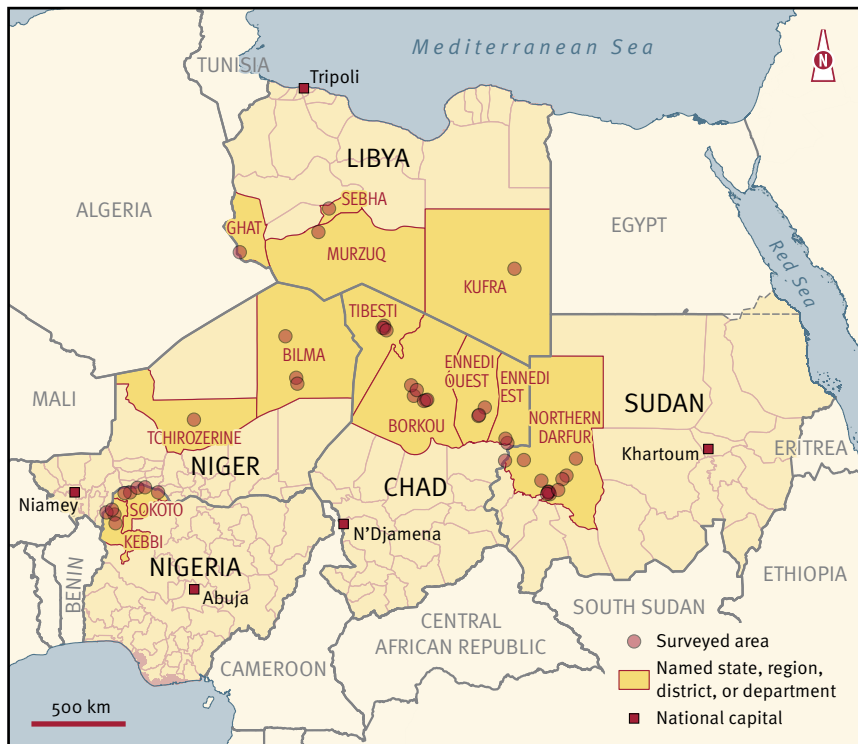
These dynamics are visibly at play in the southern Libya borderlands, and notably in Libya, which offered a particularly favourable environment for the development of violent extremist groups due to the lack of a central government, weak political institutions, porous borders, multiple direct military interventions, and indirect meddling by regional and global powers (Marshall and Cole, 2014). According to a report by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, by December 2013, Libya was among the top five countries sending foreign fighters to Syria (Zelin, 2013). Post-revolution Libya became the site of the 'fourth largest mobilization of foreign fighters' in modern jihadist history (Zelin, 2018). Since 2011, Libya has been at the centre of multiple phenomena that have destabilized the central Sahel region, such as cross-border trafficking and smuggling of human beings, the illicit trade of weapons, and the harbouring of terrorist-designated groups (Romanet Perroux, 2020).

Previous research undertaken by the Small Arms Survey highlighted that the crackdown on migrant smuggling in countries such as Chad, Niger, and Sudan has impacted the livelihoods of local communities who depend on the informal trade, putting them at risk of turning to 'banditry, drug trafficking, rebellion, or jihadism' (Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2018, p. 13). Similarly, terrorist-designated organizations (see Box 1.1) that have destabilized northern Mali since 2013 have expanded their reach, both within Mali and across borders towards Burkina Faso and Niger (ICG, 2021a). Furthermore, after IS's defeat in Sirte, Libya, in late 2016, concerns have grown over reports of violent extremist combatants heading towards the south of the country and the Salvador Pass at the Libya–Niger–Algeria tri-border, and continuing into the Sahel more generally (Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2018, p. 35). In Nigeria, while violent extremist groups have been primarily active in the country's north-east, the north-west has also seen a spike in the presence and activities of such groups since 2011. Groups in the north-west procure their weapons both domestically and through cross-border trafficking, reportedly from as far away as Libya (CAR, 2020, p. 5; ICG, 2020b). This presence and the frequent movements of various armed groups, the absence of strong state institutions, and the overall marginalization of territories make Libya's southern borderlands potentially vulnerable to recruitment and expansion by violent extremist organizations.

This Report presents the results of a study commissioned by UNDP on community perceptions of the main drivers of violent extremism (see Section 2.2) in selected border areas of northern Chad, southern Libya, north-eastern Niger, north-western Nigeria, and western Sudan (see Map 1). In total, this study presents the views of 6,852 respondents. Local partners in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan were recruited by UNDP country offices and administered a standard questionnaire, developed by the Small Arms Survey, to a randomized sample of 5,492 respondents from the local population. Part of this questionnaire was also integrated into a local governance survey carried out by UNDP’s Libya office with 1,360 interviewees in Libya’s southern cities and towns. The surveyed border regions in the five case studies were selected as they were deemed to be potentially vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups due to the prevailing socio-economic conditions, the marginalization of communities, and concerns surrounding the reported movement and activities of members of violent extremist groups.

The survey assessed respondents’ perceptions of some of the main drivers of violent extremism identified in the relevant literature, knowledge of recruitment by armed groups,

**Map 1** Surveyed borderland regions



Base map data source: OpenStreetMap

and views on values and actors associated with violent extremism. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- How vulnerable are the surveyed border communities to violent extremism based on their exposure to the main drivers of such extremism, and how do these vulnerabilities compare across the five case studies?
- What appear to be the main potential drivers for recruitment by violent extremist groups in these border areas?
- Are perceptions of these issues among the general population different from those of more ‘radical’ respondents?
- What is the nexus between these factors, violent extremism, and small arms (trafficking and prevalence)?
- What are the policy implications of these findings, notably with respect to strengthening the resilience of communities to recruitment by violent extremist groups?

The Report relies on surveys of the general population’s perceptions of factors, actors, and values that are relevant to the understanding of violent extremism. This means that the analysis of armed group recruitment patterns, for instance, is based on the general population’s indirect knowledge of these practices rather than interviews with incarcerated members of violent extremist groups—the latter approach having been used in UNDP’s previous *Journey to Extremism in Africa* report. Practical and security concerns related to researching and accessing members of violent extremist groups in this region—concerns that were discussed at length with UNDP and the local research teams—partly explain this methodological choice.

More crucially, the Report’s focus was to assess border communities’ exposure to different drivers of violent extremism from a prevention perspective, with a view to informing policymaking and programming in this domain. While these drivers—taken in isolation—may not necessarily trigger violent extremism, violent extremist groups can instrumentalize perceptions of marginalization and discrimination and weave them together into a simplifying narrative that can act as a catalyst for violence (Allan et al., 2015, pp. 22, 31). By interviewing the general population, the Report also addresses the one-dimensional nature of literature on security and violent extremism by examining these issues from the lens of affected—or potentially affected—local societies (Mohamedou, 2017, p. 9).

The Report comprises six main sections. The first three sections provide contextual background for the southern Libya borderlands, a succinct literature review on the pathways to and drivers of violent extremism, and a description of the methodology used for this study. The fourth section presents border communities’ perceptions of selected drivers of violence extremism, with a focus on seven dimensions that are of particular relevance to the cross-border areas:



- hardship and deprivation;
- lack of adequate state-provided security and justice;
- government inability to provide basic services;
- the growth of ethnic and/or religious identities;
- chronic instability and insecurity;
- blocked political participation and the influence of non-state armed groups; and
- illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The fifth section examines the trends and patterns of recruitment by armed groups in general and by violent extremist groups more specifically as reported by the survey respondents. The final section reviews the interviewees' perceptions of violent extremist groups and attitudes towards a set of values generally associated with violent extremism. The Report also includes several 'data spotlight' boxes that make it possible to compare perceptions in relative terms across the different case studies and according to variables such as gender and age (see Boxes 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1). The conclusion discusses the implications of the study's findings for PVE policy and programming. ●

### Box 1.1 Terminology

Consistent with the *Journey to Extremism in Africa* study, this Report uses the following definitions and key terms:

#### **Violent extremism**

Violent extremism is a context-specific phenomenon and therefore has no universal definition. It is not bound by a particular religion, geographic area, nationality, ethnicity, or ideology, but tends to be politicized in nature.<sup>2</sup> The 2015 UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism notes that it:

*[. . .] considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism. Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief (UNGA, 2015, p. 1).*

#### **Radicalization**

The concept of radicalization is increasingly seen as unsatisfactory for explaining why and how individuals join violent extremist groups, given that many individuals may hold 'radical' views without then perpetrating violent acts. This study therefore defines *recruitment* in its broadest sense to include informal and even self-initiated processes, while radicalization is seen as a possible pre-condition for recruitment, although this may not always be the case. ▶

## Terrorism

As with violent extremism, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. At the political level, this reflects the difficulty in agreeing on a basis for determining when the use of violence (including the perpetrator, target, and goal) is legitimate. The UN provides the following description of terrorism: ‘Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public [ . . . ]’ (UNGA, 1995).

### Non-state armed groups

In this Report, non-state armed groups are broadly understood as groups that have the capacity to challenge the state’s monopoly of legitimate violence (Florquin and Berman, 2005, p. 1; Policzer, 2004). *Terrorist-designated armed groups* are those listed as such by the UN Security Council (UNSC, n.d.). Given the lack of a universal definition and contextual approach described above, *violent extremist groups* are not defined precisely in this Report; instead, the survey questionnaire left it to the respondents to identify which groups they viewed as violent extremist, unless they were asked to provide their views on specific terrorist-designated organizations.

### Counter-terrorism (CT)

The term counter-terrorism is used to refer to military operations; adopting legislative and policing frameworks to control, repress, and track terrorist activities; training, equipping, and reorganizing national security forces and intelligence services; and enhancing border surveillance and checkpoints (Mahmoud, 2016).

### Countering violent extremism (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE)

The CT agenda has evolved over the past decade into a broader strategic approach that incorporates non-military responses aimed at disrupting the activities of violent extremist groups and preventing their expansion, while also considering the enabling environments in which violent extremism flourishes (UNGA, 2015). Multilateral, regional, and national CVE and PVE initiatives have emerged and often include strategic communications, media, education, and community policing activities, although different approaches are apparent across agencies (Fink and Bhulai, 2016). A distinction can usefully be drawn between CVE, which is focused on countering the activities of existing violent extremists, and PVE, which is focused on preventing the further spread of violent extremism. In practice, however, initiatives will frequently take a combined approach and work on both aspects.

Source: Elaborated from UNDP (2017a, p. 19) and the other cited sources.

“The countries and border areas surveyed for this Report share common security and socio-economic features as well as interconnected vulnerabilities.”

## 1. Contextual background

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The countries and border areas surveyed for this Report share common security and socio-economic features as well as interconnected vulnerabilities. These areas are impacted by high levels of poverty, poor access to public services, low literacy rates, dependency on agriculture and informal economies, insecurity, and the presence of armed groups (see Table 1.1). Although these regions' local economies often benefit from natural resources such as oil, gas, or gold, they are routinely affected by armed conflict, which is dominated by powerful economic elites and instrumentalized to gain power or facilitate corruption. Resources are therefore unable to trickle down to communities to impact people's lives positively. Additionally, several of these countries are experiencing unpredictable political transitions. The overall instability and lack of opportunities for youth have provided violent extremist groups with opportunities to operate and expand in parts of the region.

## 1.1 Chad

While Chad's economy relies heavily on oil production, one-third of the country's wealth is held by the richest 10 per cent of the population (Tubiana and Debos, 2017, p. 31). The state's lack of socio-economic investment in the north and east of Chad has contributed to the marginalization and securitization of these regions. Desertification also contributes to communal tensions between pastoralists and farmers in northern Chad (IFAD, 2015; Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017). In 2019, competition for land and power was a cause of intercommunal conflict, while violent extremist groups threatened the border communities that relied on the informal cross-border trade as a source of livelihood. As a result of these developments, local vigilante groups formed to provide 'protection' and 'self-defence' (CEP, n.d.). Eastern Chad in particular, which borders Sudan's Darfur region, has been particularly affected by conflict and instability in its recent history (ICG, 2019).

In this context, violent extremist groups may be able to leverage various factors—such as economic vulnerability, social and political marginalization, social networks, ideology and exposure to extremist propaganda, and proximity to conflict—when attempting to recruit from the country's young population (Darden, 2019). Violent extremist groups active in Chad tend to use weapons that are already circulating in the country as a result of past conflicts. Boko Haram, for example, is believed to have acquired most of its initial equipment in this way (CEP, n.d.). Socio-cultural drivers that promote the ownership of firearms by boys and men, as well as the skills required to handle them, as signs of bravery and responsibility also contribute to the proliferation of small arms in the country (Alusala, 2007). The proliferation of small arms in Chad is further exacerbated by arms trafficking from neighbouring countries. Between 2011 and 2013, for instance, easy access to Libyan weapons contributed to the militarization of Chadian Teda society (Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017).

**Table 1.1** Contextual security and socio-economic indicators of the surveyed countries

Country	Population <sup>a</sup>	Literacy rate (aged 15 and older)	Population below the poverty line	Human Development Index (rank) <sup>b</sup>	Freedom House rating of political rights and civil liberties <sup>c</sup>	Estimated civilian firearms holdings per 100 population <sup>d</sup>	Global Terrorism Index <sup>e</sup>
Chad	17,414,108	22.30%	42.30%	0.398 (187)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Total score: 17</li> <li>● Status: 'not free'</li> <li>● Political rights: 3</li> <li>● Civil liberties: 14</li> </ul>	1.01	4.83
Libya	7,017,224	91.00%	33.00%	0.724 (105)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Total score: 9</li> <li>● Status: 'not free'</li> <li>● Political rights: 1</li> <li>● Civil liberties: 8</li> </ul>	13.28	6.25
Niger	23,605,767	35.10%	40.80%	0.394 (189)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Total score: 48</li> <li>● Status: 'partly free'</li> <li>● Political rights: 20</li> <li>● Civil liberties: 28</li> </ul>	0.54	5.62
Nigeria	219,463,862	62.00%	40.10%	0.539 (161)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Total score: 45</li> <li>● Status: 'partly free'</li> <li>● Political rights: 21</li> <li>● Civil liberties: 24</li> </ul>	3.21	8.31
Sudan	46,751,152	60.70%	46.50%	0.510 (170)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Total score: 17</li> <li>● Status: 'not free'</li> <li>● Political rights: 2</li> <li>● Civil liberties: 15</li> </ul>	6.57	5.40

Notes: a. Estimates based on the CIA's World Factbook, accessed July 2021. b. The 2020 Human Development Report attributes a score ranking between 0 and 1 to 189 countries and territories. c. The maximum number of points is 40 for political rights, and 60 for civil liberties. d. Figures based on the Small Arms Survey's estimates for 2017. e. Based on the 2020 Global Terrorism Index. A score of ten represents a very high impact of terrorism; zero represents no impact from terrorism.

Sources: CIA (2021); Freedom House (n.d.); IEP (2020); Small Arms Survey (2018); UNDP (2020)

## 1.2 Libya

Since the fall of Qaddafi in 2011, Libya has witnessed multiple transitional governments. A range of armed groups have both provided security and intensified insecurity for the local population. Armed groups also engaged in armed violence over the control of strategic points such as banks, transport hubs, and smuggling routes (Lacher and al-Idrissi, 2018). In the wake of the 2014 civil war, the fragile and fragmented security situation led to the emergence of violent extremist groups in some parts of the country. Taking advantage of the city's marginalization and labelling as pro-Qaddafi by other revolutionary groups, IS captured the city of Sirte and claimed it as its primary base in North Africa in 2015–16 (Varvelli and Mezran, 2017; Mundy, 2018, p. 134). Cyrenaica also witnessed the growth of hard-line Islamist militias, such as Ansar al-Shariah, the Shura Council of Islamic Youth, and the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade. In Derna, the emergence of IS was due to the influx of jihadi returnees from Syria (Fitzgerald and Toaldo, 2016; Warner et al., 2021). While violent extremist groups remained a minority in the overall spectrum of armed actors in Libya, their actions were particularly visible and destabilizing because of the violent tactics employed during attacks (Mundy, 2018, p. 144).

Competition over control of the country's informal trading routes has also led to intercommunal conflict between border communities, which in turn allowed violent extremist groups to exploit this instability and become active in some border areas. IS, in particular, claimed a presence in the south of Libya and reportedly carried out multiple attacks in 2021 (UNSC, 2021, p. 2; Murray, 2017). IS also took advantage of the border with Sudan to allow fighters from Afghanistan, Syria, and Sudan to enter Libya (Marcuzzi and Pack, 2020, p. 13). Emerging evidence suggests that IS has used drug trafficking and sales to finance its operations in Libya, and the country's long borders with Algeria and Niger make it challenging to stop trafficking activities in this region (Mangan, 2020, p. 26; Wehrey, 2017, p. 11). As Qaddafi's weapons stockpile used to be one of the largest in the African continent, small arms were routinely trafficked from Libya into other conflict zones in the region, particularly between 2012 and 2014 (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2019, p. 50; CAR, 2016, p. 5). While the extent to which violent extremist groups have been actively involved in arms trafficking remains unclear, their military capabilities have certainly benefited from the overall availability of weapons in Libya itself (ICCT, 2021). The situation is unlikely to improve as the arms embargo imposed on Libya continues to be violated by parties involved in the conflict (UNSC, 2021).

## 1.3 Niger

Niger suffers from desertification and a lack of socio-economic opportunities for the population. In rural areas, the population has limited access to basic public services—52 per cent of the population have access to a water source—and youth unemployment

is about 80 per cent (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020a; ICG, 2020a). While Niger is known for its mining resources, and specifically uranium, the youth labour market is highly dependent on illicit economies, including the trafficking of migrants, gold mining, and illegal drugs (ICG, 2020a, p. 3). Criminal and violent extremist groups exploit mining in the borderland areas for financial gain, and exacerbate local conflicts and violence to destabilize the state (IPSS, 2021, p. 2). Niger has also experienced coups and changes to its constitution, which have left government institutions fragile (IPSS, 2021, pp. 2–3).

Weak governance, lack of development, and poor access to basic services in the north have led to several Tuareg rebellions in the past six decades (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020a; de TESSIÈRES, 2018). Ethnic and regional tensions still play a role in Niger, as demonstrated by the formation of ethnically or tribally defined armed groups for protection or violent retaliation (de TESSIÈRES, 2018). Niger is currently exposed to a range of security threats, including armed robbery, smuggling, trafficking, and violent extremism, notably in the borderland areas (IPSS, 2021, p. 3; de TESSIÈRES, 2018, p. 34). The regions that border Mali and Nigeria, in particular, have been the target of attacks by violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) (ICG, 2021b). Niger has also been used as a route for transporting weapons between the region's conflict hotspots. Illicit proliferation of small arms tends to depend on the severity of the security situation in Niger, instances of weapons diversion, attacks against military bases by violent extremist groups, and trafficking from Libya (de TESSIÈRES, 2018, p. 10).

## 1.4 Nigeria

Traditionally, agriculture provided employment and a satisfactory livelihood for the majority of the Nigerian population. Oil fields were discovered in 1953 and petroleum exports have since become the primary sector of Nigeria's economy, with agriculture suffering as a result (ICG, 2017; 2020b). Protracted conflict in different regions of the country further affected the availability of livestock and crops as local sources of livelihood (ICG, 2020b). The government has sought to move away from its oil dependency by liberalizing and privatizing its economy, but unemployment is a growing problem, particularly in the north-west (ICG, 2020b; World Bank, 2021a). The discovery of gold has generated new sources of livelihoods in these regions, with illegal miners and non-state armed groups often reaping the benefits (ICG, 2020b). Illegal mining was estimated to represent about 80 per cent of all mining activities in the north-west (Ogbonnaya, 2020).

The security situation in Nigeria has deteriorated in recent years due to electoral violence, sectarian clashes, and Islamist militancy (ICG, 2020b). Nigeria has 374 ethnic groups, and regions and cities remain largely segregated along ethno-religious lines



A Hausa-Fulani farmer and his son work at a farm in Sokoto State, Nigeria. 22 April 2019.  
Source: Luis Tato/AFP



(ArcGIS Hub, 2018; NPC, 2014, p. 2). The north-west of the country is affected by conflict between Fulani herders and Hausa farmers over resources, as well as by violence perpetuated by a range of armed groups, including jihadists, vigilantes, criminal gangs, and herder-allied groups (ICG, 2020b). Reports suggest that Boko Haram—although mainly present in the north-east—has collaborated at some level with other armed groups in the north-west to carry out kidnappings for financial gain (ACAPS, 2021). Terrorist-designated groups operating in Nigeria include Ansaru, Boko Haram, and ISWAP (ACAPS, 2021; ICG, 2020b). Ansaru entices members of local armed groups to join its ranks by offering or selling them AK-47 rifles at a low market price; some of these recruits are reportedly sent to Libya for combat training (ICG, 2020b, p. 12). ISWAP offers its recruits livelihood support and stipends. The spike in jihadist presence and activities in Nigeria’s north-west could eventually connect the Islamic insurgencies of the central Sahel with the insurgency in the Lake Chad region and in Nigeria’s north-east (ICG, 2020b). Armed groups in the north-west use a combination of locally manufactured firearms as well as factory-produced small arms that are both trafficked from other countries including—but not limited to—neighbouring countries, or diverted from within Nigeria (CAR, 2020, p. 5).<sup>3</sup>

## 1.5 Sudan

Following the fall of the al-Bashir regime in 2019, Sudan continues to experience a troubled political transition marked by military coups and popular protest (Sayigh, 2021). In recent years, the Sudanese government has devoted more resources to military expenditure than to basic public services such as education and health, which typically constitute less than 10 per cent of the national budget (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020b). The Darfur region is particularly marginalized with poor access to public health services, and its population relies primarily on pastoralism and agriculture as sources of livelihood (Sudanzoom, 2020; UNAMID, 2013; UNEP, n.d.). Seasonal migrant work as well as drugs and weapons trafficking have become alternative sources of income in the past decade (Dabanga, 2016; 2018; 2019; IOM, 2021). Given the continuing political instability in Khartoum, the plight of marginalized people in remote regions such as Darfur appears unlikely to improve in the short term.

Like several of the other borderland regions surveyed in this Report, Darfur has a long history of deadly conflict, and continues to be affected by violence between herders and farmers as well as between ethnic groups. Intercommunal conflict, arms proliferation, and banditry contribute to the region’s overall instability and lawlessness (Akhbar Sudan, 2020; Dabanga, 2021; World Bank, 2021b). Previous research into the motivations for joining violent extremist groups in five regions of Sudan—including Darfur—found that the three main drivers are economic motives, ideological beliefs, and support to the so-called Caliphate. In Darfur, 29 per cent of recruits joined violent extremist for

economic reasons (UNDP, 2017b, p. 28). The fragile situation is further exacerbated by the availability of small arms, which are widely held by non-state actors in the region (Lewis, 2009). Sudan has a domestic arms industry for ammunition, small arms, and armoured vehicles, and weapons and ammunition diverted from the national stockpile have been found in the hands of armed groups both within and outside Sudan (Dabanga, 2014; HSBA, 2014; Leff and LeBrun, 2014). ●



The Report intends to inform policymakers and practitioners about factors of particular concern that could be prioritized to enhance communities' resilience to violent extremism.”

## 2. Literature review

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Several conceptual frameworks derived from case studies of Islamist, nationalist, or leftist and right-wing groups aim to explain why people join violent extremist groups. This section reviews some of the main frameworks developed in the literature and then examines the ‘push-and-pull’ model of drivers of violent extremism used in the subsequent analysis.

## 2.1 Conceptual frameworks on violent extremism

The best known existing conceptual frameworks for understanding the pathways that lead to violent extremism include Randy Borum’s ‘terrorist mindset’ model (2014); the stairway model developed by Fathali M. Moghaddam (2005); the pyramid model, exemplified by the work of Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko (2008); and James Khalil’s three pathways or 3P model (2017).

According to forensic psychologist Randy Borum, the process of becoming mentally prepared to use extremist violence comprises four cognitive stages: (1) identifying a negative circumstance or event (such as marginalization, lack of law and order, poverty, unemployment, or insecurity); (2) framing the circumstance or event as an injustice; (3) blaming the circumstance or event on a specific person or group; and (4) holding the person or group responsible for creating the unjust situation and perceiving them as evil (Borum, 2011; 2014). The emphasis is placed almost exclusively on the push factors of poverty, political or socio-economic neglect or exclusion, insecurity, or any other undesirable condition. The only fundamentally relevant pull factor in this case is an enabling narrative that presents violent extremism as a solution to these problems.

Moghaddam’s ‘stairway’ conceptualizes the pathway to violent extremism as a five-floor building, populated by progressively fewer people as one approaches the top floor. The first floor is populated by a vast group of people who consider that ‘perceptions of fairness are what matter the most’, rather than lived experience (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 163). On the second floor, individuals’ perceptions of their opportunities to improve their situation and of procedural justice determine their behaviour. Those who are actively looking to ‘physically displace aggression’ climb the stairs from the second to the third floor, where they may engage ‘in the extremist morality of isolated, secretive organizations dedicated to changing the world by any means’ (p. 165). Individuals on the fourth floor are members of a terrorist organization who, on the fifth and final floor, prepare to commit acts of terrorist violence in the name of their chosen cause. On floors three to five, mobilization is conceptualized as the result of contact with fellow extremists and entrapment by violent extremist organizations.

Underlying both Borum and Moghaddam’s models is the assumption that violent extremists start out as members of the ‘non-violent extremist’ majority, and that attitudes or psychological processes can explain an individual’s journey to committing violent

terrorist acts. The pyramid model of violent extremism also supports this thesis. In this analogy, violent extremists are conceptualized as the apex of the pyramid, while the base is composed of those who are sympathetic to the cause. Between the base and the apex, 'higher levels of the pyramid are associated with decreased numbers but increased radicalization of beliefs, feelings and behaviors' (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008, p. 417). One weakness of this model is its linear nature: individuals move up and down the pyramid in a particular order from more to less radical.

James Khalil's '3P model' recognizes that many individuals engaged in violent extremism are not 'true believers', and that individuals find themselves at different stages of the linear models outlined above at different times or simultaneously. According to this framework, 'extremists', 'supporters of violent extremism', and 'contributors to violence' constitute three distinct and overlapping categories of actors. The former 'maintain "extreme" ideological, political or socio-economic values, but may or may not support violence in the pursuit of these ideals' (Khalil, 2017, p. 42). The second is a subset of the first and is made up of those individuals who support both 'extreme' values and the use of violent means but do not commit violence themselves. Finally, 'contributors to violence' engage in active or support roles in the perpetration of violence, but may or may not be 'true believers'. Some in this category may engage in violence in pursuit of various goals, such as economic gain, status, adventure, belonging, or security (p. 43). In the same vein, Khalil recognizes that the three pathways are often not linear and that there are a number of possible trajectories that may lead individuals to violent extremism.

## 2.2 The drivers of violent extremism

With these different conceptualizations of the 'pathways' to violent extremism in mind, the next subsection draws on a brief review of the literature on push-and-pull factors, otherwise known as 'drivers' of violent extremism. While 'pathways' describe an individual's trajectory according to a unique combination of cognitive, behavioural, individual, structural, and circumstantial variables, push-and-pull factors are useful concepts for understanding which factors may lead individuals to the path of violent extremism. While recognizing that each pathway is different, this study concentrates on the drivers of violent extremism (such as external factors) in order to assess the general population's exposure to these drivers and examine their attitudes and vulnerability towards violent extremism.

An extensive Royal United Services Institute review of literature conducted in 2015 conceptualizes push-and-pull factors as a pyramid moving from the macro level at the base (at the national or community level), to the meso level in the centre (smaller communities or identity groups), to the micro level at the apex (the individual) (Allan

et al., 2015). The literature stresses the relationship between violent extremism and political factors, and the importance of social and psychological factors concerning group and individual identity. Push factors are mainly found at the macro level<sup>4</sup> (country or community) and are broadly characterized by governance failures or political grievances—as well as economic grievances or marginalization, which play a more modest role. At the meso level, social and cultural pull factors primarily relate to religious or ethnic group identity. At the micro level, individuals are swayed by various pull factors related to processes of socialization into violence, cognitive vulnerabilities, and in some cases ideological training.

The Report does not provide an exhaustive overview of drivers but focuses on those that are of particular relevance to the context of the southern Libyan borderlands:

- **Hardship and deprivation** (including unemployment and resulting social frustration among young people). The lack of economic opportunities and poverty—usually higher in disenfranchised and marginalized communities—combined with a young population presents violent extremist and other types of armed groups<sup>5</sup> with the opportunity to attract recruits motivated by economic incentives such as salaries. Economic motivation is also driven by societal expectations of achieving manhood through economic gain or marriage, which serve as a label of social status and recognition (UNICRI, 2020; Khalil et al., 2019).
- **Government inability to provide basic services.** Governments in the Sahel borderlands tend to prioritize hard security measures over the development of health and education systems and socio-economic development (UNICRI, 2020, p. xi). This potentially creates space for armed groups to step in and fill these gaps in health-care and education, as well as to fulfil other community welfare needs.
- **Lack of adequate state-provided security and justice.** Resentment of the state’s poor provision of security and justice that is exacerbated by abusive, extortionist, and repressive practices by security forces and the justice systems can motivate people to join violent extremist groups (Elworthy and Rifkind, 2005, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 36). Quantitative studies have shown that the state’s instability—including when in transition—is a strong predictor of terrorist attacks (Gelfand et al., 2013, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 22). Whether a state is repressive or democratic, its strength and characteristics are significant in explaining not only terrorism but also violent extremism (Allan et al., 2015, p. 22; Tilly, 2003, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 2). Securitized measures often lead to the disruption of economic-generating activities—especially in borderlands—which pushes individuals closer to joining armed groups (UNICRI, 2020, p. 40).
- **The growing importance of ethnic and/or religious identities.** Armed groups can instrumentalize ethnic and/or religious identities when inequality and institutionalized discrimination coincide with ethnic or religious fault lines in society. Violent extremist groups may compete with loyalties to the state when charismatic leaders

are able to instrumentalize identity and incorporate it into a narrative that justifies the use of violence against a particular group (Allan et al., 2015, pp. 21, 47). Violent extremist groups exploit identity-based conflict, community grievances, and fault lines and fractures within society (World Bank Group and United Nations, 2018, p. 191). Furthermore, in weak or failed states, religious or ethnic identity is easily instrumentalized by violent extremist groups (Allan et al., 2015, p. 22).

- **Chronic instability and insecurity.** Both instability and insecurity can drive violent extremism by enabling armed groups to implant themselves locally and fill existing gaps, even if only in the short term.
- **Blocked political participation.** Civil society's inability to enact positive change through non-violent means creates space for **armed groups** to thrive. Exclusion from engaging in political processes by the state and its elitist circles accumulates grievances that are frequently exploited by violent extremist groups. The state and the elite's monopoly over resources and power often stems from corruption and nepotism. The exclusion of some communities from political processes provides space for non-state armed groups to build alternative narratives and to fill existing gaps in state institutions, while potentially pushing people to seek change by engaging in violent extremism (Schmid, 2006, cited in Allan et al., 2015; UNICRI, 2020, pp. 31–34).
- **Illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.** In marginalized areas where the state is unable to provide security, local populations may take security into their own hands by arming themselves for self-protection or to participate in power struggles. Gender norms may also encourage young men to acquire firearms as a symbol of manhood and to protect their family, community, and livelihood. When such perceptions coincide with an abundant supply of arms, due to armed conflict and trafficking, small arms proliferation can worsen, which in turn can facilitate the escalation of additional local conflicts. It can also create fertile ground for violent extremist groups to step in as an alternative source of order, while also representing a source of arms for violent extremist groups through illegal sales, looting, or battlefield capture (Florquin, 2019; ICCT, 2021).

Membership in a violent extremist group may represent an alternative route to address grievances as it offers:

- a shared identity, which can provide a sense of connectedness and meaning;
- security (including socio-economic security through the provision of a salary, and safety in the case of coerced individuals);
- agency (depending on the position of the individual in the group);
- purpose (not only for true believers in extremist ideology, but also for social reasons such as the provision of a certain standing—often including the possibility to marry and meet cultural standards of 'male' adulthood); and

- recognition (from within the group but also sometimes from outside the group depending on the level of support it enjoys among civilians) (Allan et al., 2015; Burton, 1990; Max-Neef, 1991).

This Report examines the surveyed communities' exposure to the above seven broad dimensions of drivers of violent extremism. By identifying exposure to these drivers in the region, the Report intends to inform policymakers and practitioners about factors of particular concern that could be prioritized to enhance communities' resilience to violent extremism. Gender also modulates both experience and understanding of grievances, deprivation, positive incentive, identity, violent ideologies, and social processes, as well as the culturally, socially, and politically acceptable possibilities open to an individual in response to these circumstances.<sup>6</sup> Attention was therefore given to mainstreaming gender in the research questionnaire and analysis. ●



“The selected regions were chosen on the basis of previous research suggesting their potential vulnerability to violent extremism . . . Overall, the study relies on a sample of 6,852 respondents.”

### 3. Methodology

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To measure public perceptions of the push-and-pull factors of violent extremism and linkages with small arms availability and trafficking in the targeted border regions, UNDP contracted the Small Arms Survey to design a regional survey methodology using a randomized sampling method and quantitative questionnaire. The relevant UNDP country offices identified and recruited local partners to undertake fieldwork in northern Chad, southern Libya, north-eastern Niger, north-western Nigeria, and western Sudan (see Map 1). The selected regions were chosen on the basis of previous research suggesting their potential vulnerability to violent extremism,<sup>7</sup> as well as inputs from and consultations with UNDP country teams and local research partners. In Nigeria, for instance, while the north-east is arguably the most affected by violent extremist groups at present, the north-west was selected due to rising concerns about the spread of violent extremism and reported cross-border arms flows, which combined provide strong justification for adopting a preventative approach (CAR, 2020, pp. 5, 7; ICG, 2020b).

Overall, the study relies on a sample of 6,852 respondents undertaken in the areas identified in Map 1. Valid interviews were carried out with 5,492 people aged 15 and older in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan using a ‘regional questionnaire’ administered during face-to-face interviews at the respondents’ homes. In addition, part of the regional questionnaire was integrated into a local governance survey administered to 1,360 respondents in southern Libyan cities and towns. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the local partners who undertook the fieldwork, as well as the focus regions and sample sizes in each country.

The Small Arms Survey provided remote technical guidance and support to the local teams administering the four-country regional questionnaire, which included virtual training with each group of supervisors and real-time troubleshooting for the field teams through direct communication on WhatsApp groups. Each country team used guidelines provided by the Small Arms Survey to design a randomized household sampling method for surveying between 1,000 and 1,500 respondents per country (see Table 3.1). The personnel administering the questionnaires in the field recorded responses using tablets that enabled them to access the regional questionnaire on the KoBo Collect platform.<sup>8</sup> The respondent in each household was selected randomly through the KoBo Collect software, taking into account the number, age, and gender of household members (see Tables 3.2 and 3.4). The use of tablets allowed the teams to upload responses to the KoBo server as soon as they could secure a network connection and enabled the Small Arms Survey to detect potential issues during the data collection process and work with the field teams to address them.<sup>9</sup> The questionnaire was first piloted in Sudan—excluding some questions on state security forces and armed groups as described below—and then replicated in the relevant local languages in Chad, Nigeria, and Niger.<sup>10</sup>

A number of challenges were encountered in the course of the research. Due to the travel restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Small Arms Survey could

**Table 3.1** The fieldwork at a glance

Country	Local partner or lead consultant	Regions/districts/ states surveyed	Sample size (number of cases prior to exclusions)	Dates of fieldwork	Language of questionnaire and notes
Chad	Bureau de Conseils, de Formations, de Recherches et d'Études (BUCOFRE), Centre de Recherche en Anthropologie et Sciences Humaines (CRASH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Borkou</li> <li>● Ennedi Ouest</li> <li>● Ennedi Est</li> <li>● Tibesti</li> </ul>	1,226 (1,516)	4–17 March 2021	French questionnaire administered in local languages by the enumerators.
Libya (baseline survey)	North African Policy Initiative (NAPI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ghat</li> <li>● Kufra</li> <li>● Murzuq</li> <li>● Sebha</li> </ul>	1,360 (340 per locality; stratified by age, gender, and neighbourhood)	25 December 2020–15 April 2021	Arabic questionnaire, neighbourhood-based sampling methodology and questionnaire integrating questions related to local governance and violent extremism.
Libya (purposive survey)	NAPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ghat</li> <li>● Kufra</li> <li>● Murzuq</li> <li>● Sebha</li> </ul>	56 (14 per locality), purposive sampling among local peace-builders	11 April–19 June 2021	Arabic questionnaire, purposive methodology and questionnaire integrating questions related to local governance and violent extremism.
Niger	Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur la Migration et l'Extrémisme Violent au Sahel (CERMEV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agadez (Bilma and Tchirozerine departments)</li> </ul>	1,162 (1,242)	22 June–15 July 2021	French questionnaire, administered in local languages by the enumerators.
Nigeria	Professor Anthony Obayi Omyishi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sokoto</li> <li>● Kebbi</li> </ul>	1,643 (1,755)	17 April–21 May 2021	Hausa questionnaire, translated based on the English questionnaire.
Sudan	Badya Centre for Integrated Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Northern Darfur</li> </ul>	1,461 (1,480)	4–20 January 2021	Arabic questionnaire, part of the questionnaire had to be removed at the authorities' request.

only provide guidance, training, and technical support remotely, which required additional time and effort to engage with partners. It also made it difficult to assess the extent to which the local teams fully understood and integrated the regional research guidelines.

While the use of tablets guaranteed the standardization of the data entry in the case studies, and made it possible to detect issues early enough to address them during the fieldwork, connectivity issues in some of the surveyed areas sometimes led to a delay in uploading responses. In some cases, problems with underperforming survey-administering personnel could therefore only be detected after the fact; as a result, a fairly large number of interviews had to be dismissed and redone to achieve acceptable results. Overall, out of the 5,993 interviews conducted in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan, 501 were excluded, with 5,492 retained for the analysis. Excluded interviews included those carried out in an unrealistically short time (that is, in less than 15 minutes). Interviews with a very high non-response rate (that is, questionnaires for which 40 per cent or more of the questions were answered by ‘don’t know’ or ‘refused to answer’) were also excluded. Likewise, interviews that were concluded in less than 20 minutes and for which more than 15 per cent of questions triggered non-responses were not included.

Obtaining the necessary permissions from authorities was another challenge, since questions surrounding armed groups as well as victimization to armed attacks were seen as sensitive. This was the case in Sudan, where the authorities requested that 22 questions dealing with state security forces and armed groups be removed from the questionnaire—a request that the research team had to comply with. In Niger, insecurity in the surveyed areas meant that the teams needed to travel between major local towns in weekly convoys organized by the security forces, which slowed down the pace of the research. In both Nigeria and Sudan, security incidents in some areas led the teams either to pause the data collection process until conditions improved or to select different localities for conducting the interviews. Overall, the exercise required much flexibility and patience from the Small Arms Survey and the local teams on the timing and location of the fieldwork, and UNDP’s support proved critical in solving various challenges encountered throughout the process.

In the case of Libya, the research was merged with a local governance survey. This local governance and violent extremism research was based on a sample of 2,400 respondents in 7 Libyan municipalities (340 per locality), 1,360 of whom were in the southern cities and towns of Ghat, Kufra, Murzuq, and Sebha. As the local teams considered that a household-based sampling approach would yield unsatisfactory results,<sup>11</sup> they generated a sample of neighbourhoods<sup>12</sup> and randomly selected respondents through direct contact with individuals in locations such as schools, cafes, shops, universities, co-working spaces, and other public places. All interview locations were recorded together with the survey responses and plotted on a map of the city to ensure a geographical balance.

**Table 3.2** Sample distribution by country and age group

	15–24	25–39	40–49	50+	Do not know/ Refuse to answer
Chad	16%	46%	18%	13%	7%
Libya	27%	35%	27%	11%	0%
Niger	13%	47%	18%	22%	1%
Nigeria	13%	53%	10%	17%	6%
Sudan	13%	45%	23%	16%	3%
Full sample	16%	44%	19%	16%	6%

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Table 3.3** Sample distribution by country and working status

	Full-time	Part-time	Not working but looking for work	Retired	Not working and not looking for work	Student	Home- maker	Do not know/ Refuse to answer
Chad	14%	20%	17%	4%	6%	6%	24%	10%
Libya	19%	30%	14%	5%	3%	20%	9%	1%
Niger	18%	17%	25%	4%	6%	2%	27%	3%
Nigeria	26%	20%	15%	2%	12%	5%	16%	3%
Sudan	22%	19%	18%	2%	3%	10%	22%	4%
Full sample	20%	21%	17%	3%	6%	9%	19%	4%

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Table 3.4** Sample distribution by country and sex

	Female	Male
Chad	50%	50%
Libya	50%	50%
Niger	47%	53%
Nigeria	49%	51%
Sudan	40%	60%
Full sample	47%	53%

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

This survey was stratified by age, gender, and neighbourhood in each locality. In addition, given the level of insecurity in Libya, many questions were considered too sensitive by local researchers to be asked to the general population. In an effort to collect data on these questions, an additional survey of 14 individuals in each city was carried out using a longer survey questionnaire that included the more sensitive questions. These individuals were purposefully selected among the members of each local research team, and among local ‘mediators’ working with the EU-UNDP National Reconciliation Project in Libya and other such figures. The small size of this survey sample and the purposive method used to select the respondents mean the findings and statistics cannot be considered representative. The data from this small, more detailed survey should only be used as broad indications.

The different nature of questionnaires and methodological approaches used in Libya should therefore be kept in mind when comparing regional and Libya data. For instance, the Libyan sample contains higher proportions of young people aged 15–24 and students than the other case studies (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). Where tables and figures presented in this Report show data for all five countries, a note is added to remind the reader to interpret the Libya numbers with caution due to the different sampling approach used. ●

“Overall, the surveyed border communities displayed different patterns of exposure to the seven identified drivers and factors of violent extremism.”

## **4. Border communities' vulnerabilities to the drivers of violent extremism**

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This section reviews results on the surveyed border communities' perceptions of the seven dimensions of the drivers of violent extremism highlighted in the literature review and considered particularly relevant to the context of the southern Libya borderlands:

- hardship and deprivation;
- lack of adequate state-provided security and justice;
- government inability to provide basic services;
- the growing importance of ethnic and/or religious identities;
- chronic instability and insecurity;
- blocked political participation and the influence of non-state armed groups; and
- illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

## 4.1 Hardship and deprivation

Hardship and deprivation can—but does not always—drive violent extremism (Allan et al., 2015, p. 43; UNICRI, 2020, p. xii).<sup>13</sup> There is also some evidence that violent extremist groups widely recruit among unemployed young men with frustrated aspirations and little stake in society in certain settings, such as the Sahel and North Africa (Allan et al., 2015, p. 45).

Respondents in Niger and Sudan scored the lowest in evaluations of their quality of life, with 71 and 56 per cent of respondents feeling dissatisfied with their lives, respectively (see Figure 4.1). More than half of respondents in Chad, Libya, and Nigeria valued their lives positively. In Libya, when asked, ‘How do you feel about your life now, on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life)?’, people living in the two main southern Libyan localities of Sebha and Kufra were noticeably less satisfied than those living in the other five research localities (5.8 and 6.1, respectively, compared with an average of 6.6 across all seven municipalities). Comparing this data with responses to a similar question posed by the World Values Survey in 2014, the two southern Libyan localities where the level of satisfaction appears to have degraded the most are Kufra and Sebha (Inglehart et al., 2014).

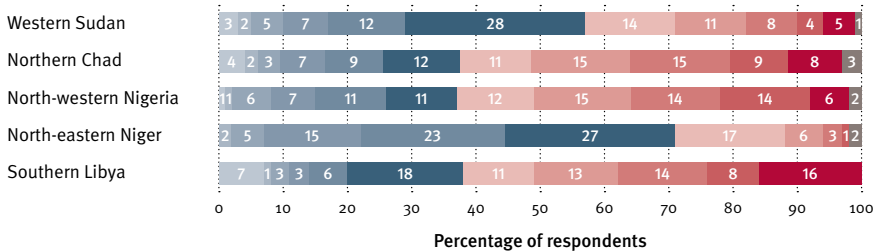
Results related to life satisfaction mostly align with respondents' perceptions of their happiness during childhood: Niger ranked last, while in the other four countries the majority of respondents had positive perceptions of that period of their life. In Libya, 78 per cent of respondents had positive perceptions of their childhood—the highest score among the five case studies. Murzuq and Kufra, both remote locations in the south, ranked the lowest in Libya.

For individual-level drivers such as this one, however, the prevalence of outliers—that is, the number of individuals who rated their childhood as much less happy than everyone



**Figure 4.1** How do you feel about your life now, on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life)?

● 0 (Worst possible life) ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10 (Best possible life)  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer



Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

else’s—can matter more than the average. In Libya—based on the full national sample (including northern localities)—although the average answer on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life) was 6.6, 39 individuals out of 2,329 chose 0, which means that they rated their childhood as the worst possible. These answers were far from being equally distributed among Libyan localities; the majority (25) came from respondents in Kufra, where 7.4 per cent of respondents gave the lowest possible score.

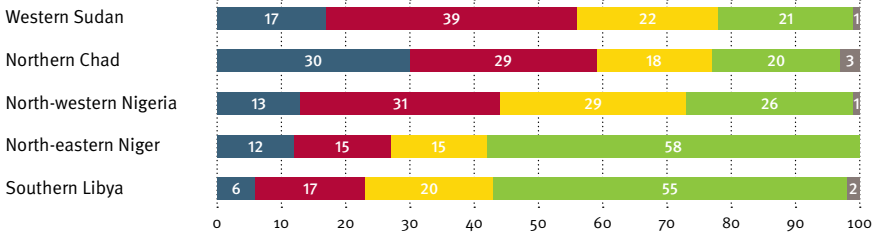
The Libya survey also took a closer look at individuals who had an absolute negative outlook on their childhood by analysing the extent to which their answers to other key questions were also markedly negative. In fact, individuals who rated their childhood as the worst possible also indicated that their father was less present during their childhood (6.2 on a scale from 0 to 10, compared to an average of 8.1 for the rest of the respondents). These individuals also had a more negative outlook on life—4.2 compared to 6.6 for the other respondents, on a scale ranging from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life). These linkages stress the importance of both a happy childhood and the presence of a father on the outlook on life. In addition, these individuals also reported higher levels of hardship across all four categories (that is, food, shelter, money, and water).

More than half of respondents in all five countries declared having ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ had no cash income in the previous 12 months, while more than a third faced shortages of clean water. Niger, together with Libya, fared better than the other case studies with respect to access to food, shelter, and clean water in the last 12 months (see Figure 4.2). While women and men were equally likely to experience deprivation from food, shelter, and clean water, female respondents were somewhat more likely to

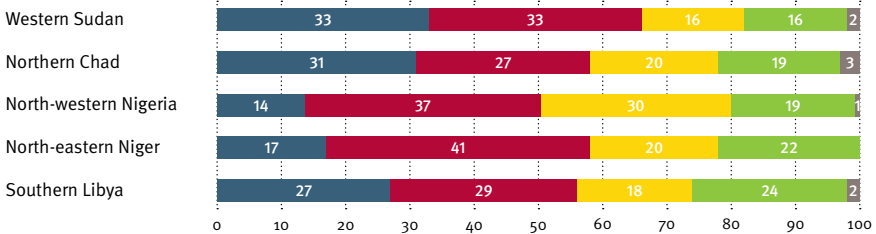
**Figure 4.2** In the last 12 months, how often have you or your family...?

● Often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

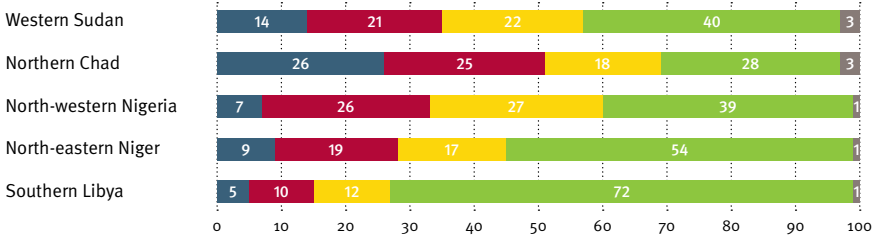
**Gone without enough food to eat**



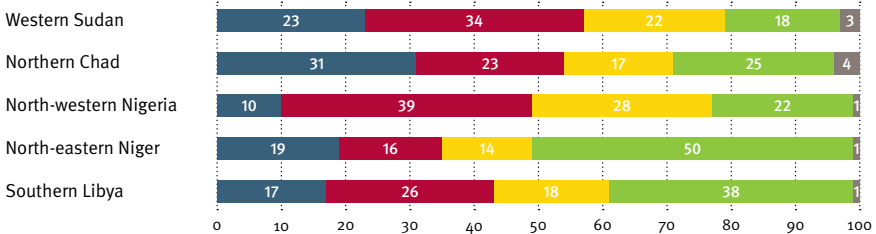
**Gone without a cash income**



**Gone without a safe shelter over your head**



**Gone without enough clean water for home use**



Percentage of respondents

Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

indicate having had no cash income at some point over the past year (61 per cent said this happened often or sometimes, compared with 55 per cent of men in the whole survey sample).

More than half of respondents in all case studies except Libya received extra income from sources other than their regular work. Mosques were important alternative sources of income in Nigeria, Sudan, and Chad, but not in Niger and Libya (see Figure 4.3).

In Libya, respondents in southern localities clearly face a markedly higher level of hardship than Libyans in the other surveyed localities. More specifically, inhabitants of Kufra endure the highest level of hardship compared to the other localities, followed by Sebha. Kufra is also the only locality where inhabitants report not having enough food to eat more often than ‘rarely’. Kufra also has the highest rate of respondents struggling to find a place to live. Kufra inhabitants, along with those in Ghat, Murzuq, and Sebha, also seem to struggle economically more than those in other localities. Lastly, inhabitants of Kufra and Sebha report struggling most often with access to clean water for home use (see Table 4.1).

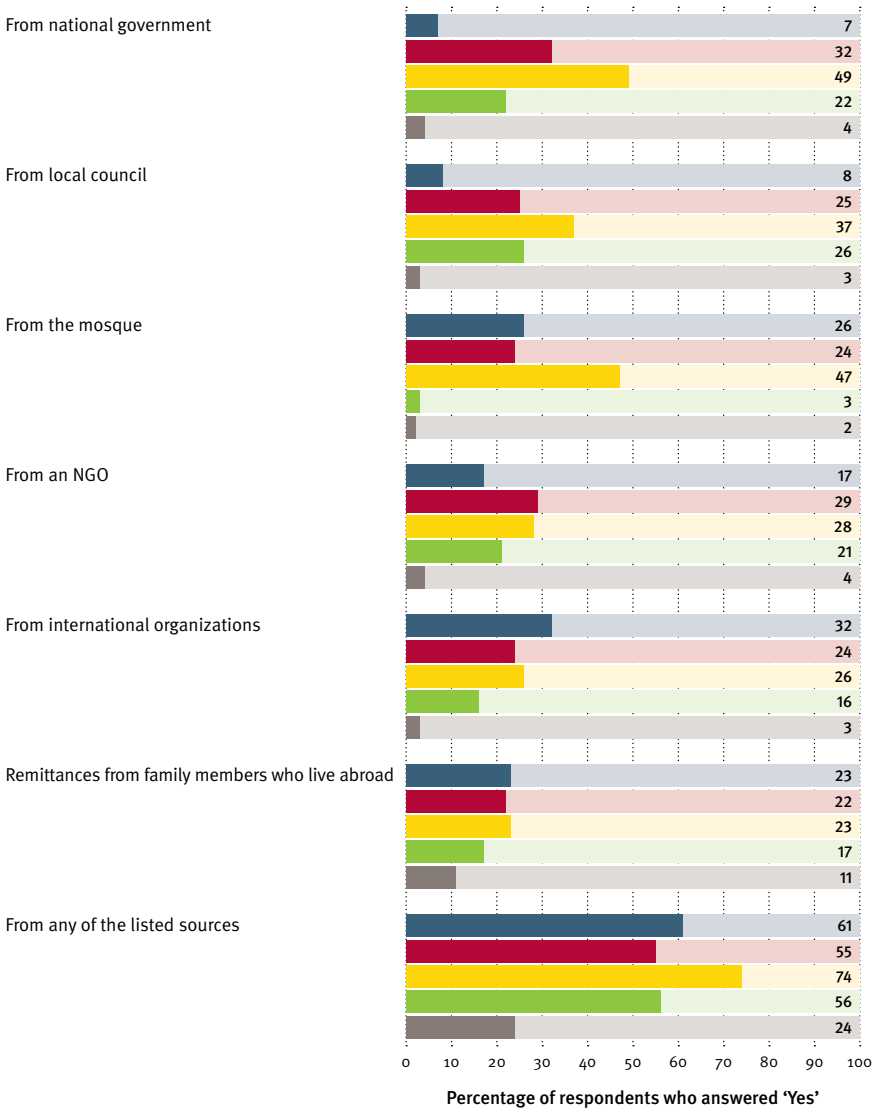
According to the literature, the lack of economic opportunities and poverty—usually higher in disenfranchised and marginalized communities—in areas with a high percentage of young populations may enable violent extremist groups to attract recruits motivated by economic incentives such as salaries. Economic motivation is also driven by societal expectations of achieving manhood through economic gain or marriage, which serve as a label of social status and recognition (UNICRI, 2020, pp. 39–40).

Marriage merits particular attention when considering the drivers of violent extremism; in most societies, especially traditional ones, marriage is an important achievement—one that can lead to relatively more freedom and authority for both men and women. In traditional societies such as Libya, marriage imposes a high economic threshold for men; aspiring bridegrooms must have a home in which the couple will live after the marriage and enough money to provide a dowry to the future wife to support her in the event that she should become widowed or in case of divorce. Recruiters of violent extremist groups can instrumentalize the inability to marry by offering easy money or the opportunity to marry women who support violent extremist ideology—as illustrated by the number of females who join IS in Syria (Jaffer, 2015; Montgomery, 2015; Watkinson, 2016).

The majority of survey respondents in all five countries—and particularly in Sudan (91 per cent), Libya (88 per cent), and Nigeria (79 per cent)—reported that too many youth were leaving their communities to seek a better life (see Figure 4.4). While this concern applied mainly to young men—men were also more likely to be unmarried in the survey area (23 per cent, compared with 18 per cent of women)—a non-negligible proportion of respondents in Chad, Libya, Nigeria, and Sudan reported that this was also a problem for young women (ranging from 3 per cent in Libya to 8 per cent in Nigeria) or for both young men and young women (ranging from 15 per cent in Chad to 24 per

**Figure 4.3** In the last 12 months, did your family get any extra income besides their work income? From whom?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria ● North-eastern Niger ● Southern Libya



Base: All respondents

Note: Multiple answers allowed. See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Table 4.1** Self-reported level of hardship in Libya

	Kufra	Bani Walid*	Ghat	Misrata*	Murzuq	Sebha	Zuware*	Average
Aggregated hardship	1.4	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.4	0.8
Not enough food	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.1	0.5
No money	1.8	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.8	0.9	1.3
No place to live	0.8	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.3
Not enough clean water for home use	1.6	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.7	1.0

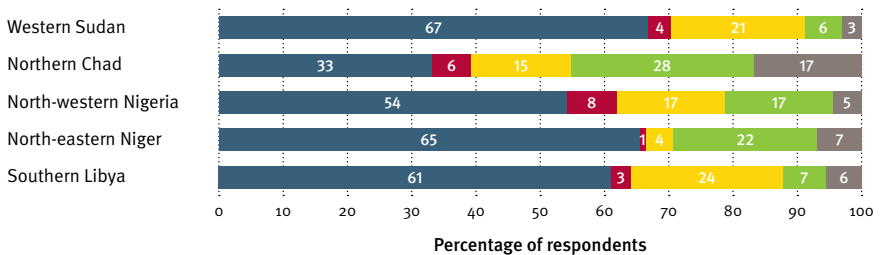
Note: Scale ranges from 0 (never experienced this hardship) to 3 (often experienced this hardship).

\* Data for Bani Walid, Misrata, and Zuware is provided here for comparative purposes but these cities are not included in the main data set of borderland regions discussed in the rest of the Report.

cent in Libya). The low prospect of marriage may be one of the motivations for young people leaving the communities. While the question was raised slightly differently in the Libya questionnaire, more than half of respondents in the other four countries felt it was very or fairly difficult for young people in their communities to get married, and particularly so in Sudan and Niger. North Darfur was the most problematic in this regard—a quarter of the male respondents were unmarried and 75 per cent of them reported some barrier, mostly that they could not afford to get married.

**Figure 4.4** Would you say that nowadays too many youth are leaving this community to seek a better life elsewhere?

- Yes, primarily young men ● Yes, primarily young women ● Yes, all youth ● No
- Do not know/Refuse to answer



Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



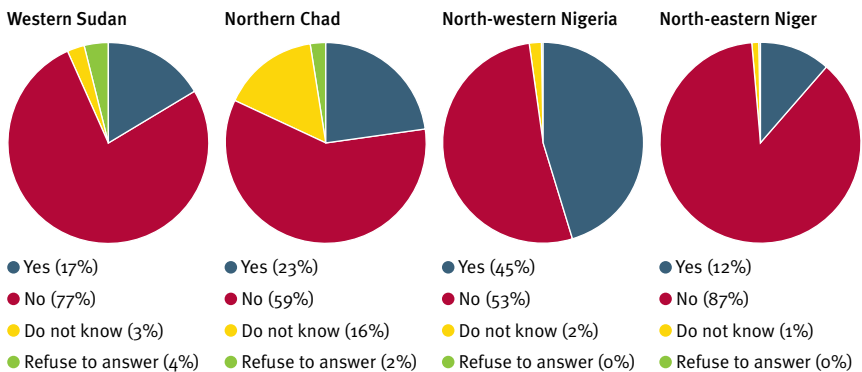
A Bedouin woman pulls water in the Ennedi plateau, Chad. 29 December 2018.  
Source: Michael Runkel/Alamy Images

The difficult living conditions in Libya affect men and women equally; however, their impact on marriage weighs more on men. In the midst of prolonged economic hardship faced by Libyans, many men struggle to meet the economic threshold imposed by marriage. This is evident in the baseline survey, which asked the following question: ‘Can you tell me if any of the following applies to you?’ The option ‘My partner and/or I do not have the money to get married’ was chosen by 16 per cent of unmarried male respondents, whereas only 7 per cent of unmarried female respondents chose this response. Conversely, 23 per cent of female respondents indicate that there are no qualified partners available, compared to 16 per cent of male respondents.<sup>14</sup>

In all five case studies, only a minority of respondents reported having travelled to neighbouring countries over the previous year. The main exception was Nigeria, where 56 per cent of respondents reported having travelled at least once to Niger, which appears to be related to the fact that the surveyed Nigeria communities are located very close to the border with Niger (see Map 1). Cross-border trade is an activity for some of the respondents and their families in the four regional case studies, and particularly so in Nigeria (45 per cent of respondents) (see Figure 4.5). Traders reported having to pay armed groups for safe passage, notably in Sudan and Nigeria, which illustrates the risks involved in this livelihood.

Similarly, the proportion of those who travelled abroad was the highest in the border communities of north-western Nigeria (see Figure 4.6). Nearly two-thirds of Nigerian respondents indicated that they had travelled to another country over the 12 months preceding the interview, and more than half of them had visited Niger, just across the

**Figure 4.5** Is your family involved in cross-border trade?

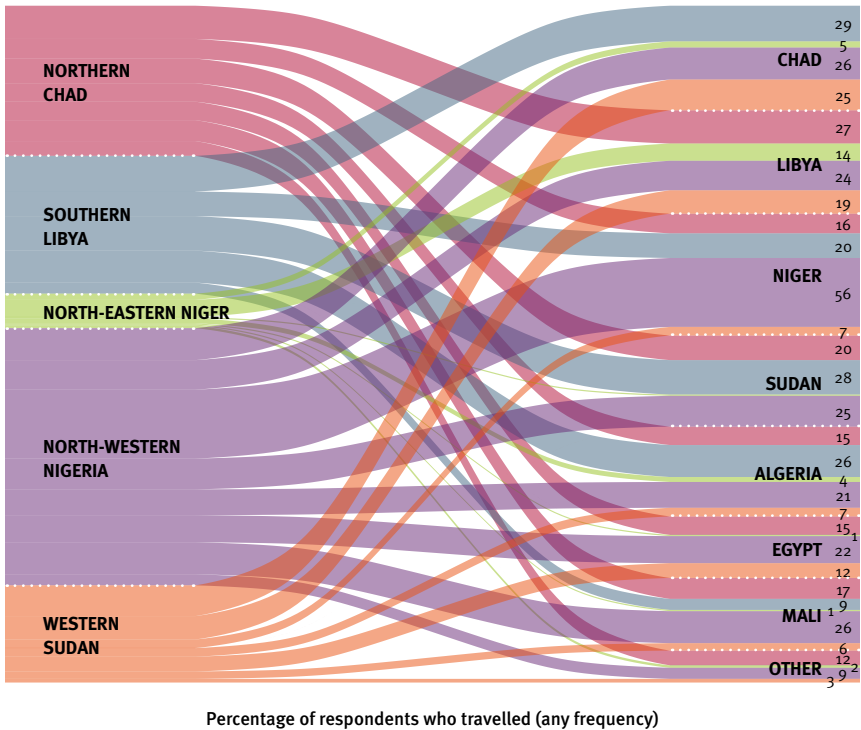


Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.6** Have you travelled to these countries in the last year?\*



Base: All respondents

Note: \* The second part of the question was: 'If so, how many times in the last 12 months: once, two–three times, or more often?'. See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

border. The proportion of those who had travelled abroad was also fairly high in southern Libya: 46 per cent said they had travelled to Chad, Sudan, Algeria, Niger, or, to a lesser extent, Mali over the past year. Conversely, only 18 per cent of those interviewed in northern Niger told enumerators that they had visited another country over the past year.

In each region, males were more likely to have travelled abroad than females. For example, 25 per cent of the men and only 11 per cent of women in Niger said they had travelled abroad in the past year. The difference became smaller but remained significant as the proportion of international travellers increased. The gender gap was also apparent in Nigeria, where nearly 7 out of 10 men, but less than 6 out of 10 women, had visited another country in the year preceding the interview.



## 4.2 Lack of adequate state-provided security and justice

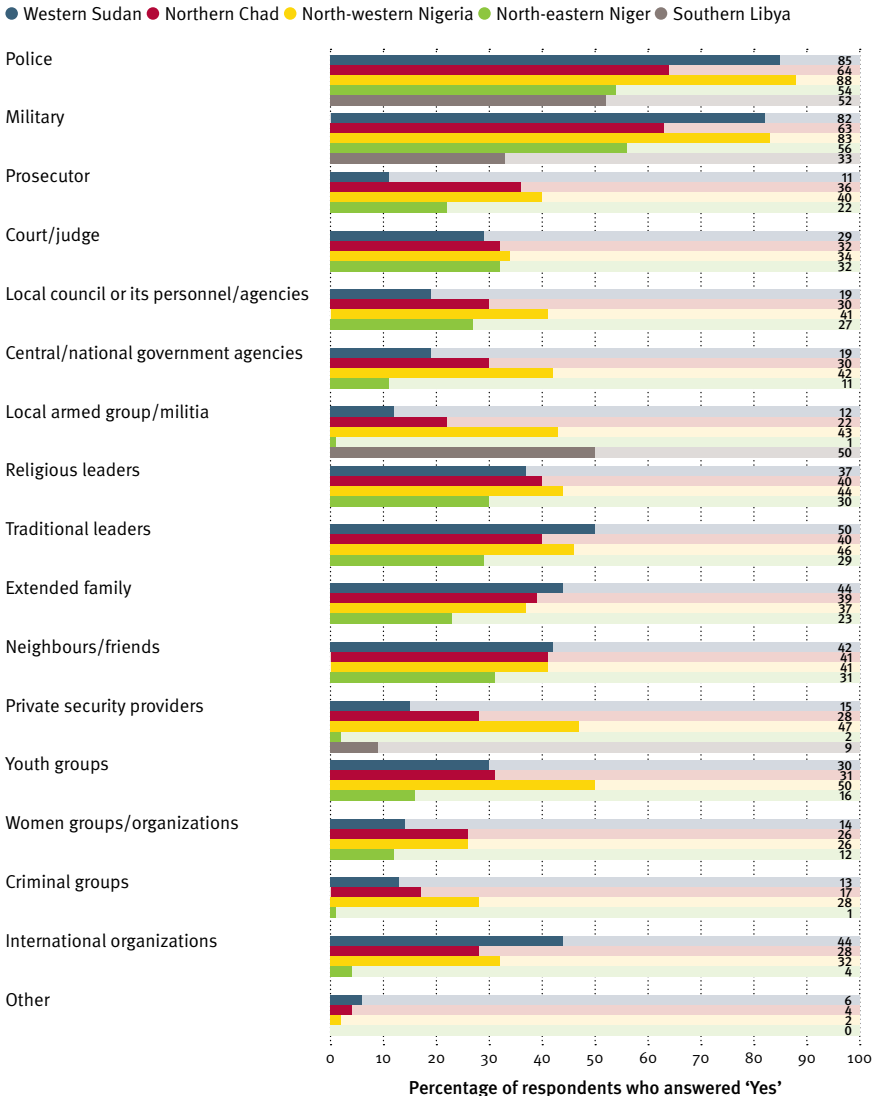
A driver of violent extremism that is particularly palpable in the Sahelian region is the inability of states to provide security and justice, and people's experience of oppressive security sector institutions. Resentment of the state's poor provision of security and justice can motivate people to join violent extremist groups (Elworthy and Rifkind, 2005, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 36). Securitized and repressive measures often lead to the disruption of income-generating activities—especially in borderlands—which pushes individuals closer to joining armed groups (UNICRI, 2020, p. 40). When it occurs along religious and ethnic lines—whether voluntarily or not—shared victimization can lead to shared narratives that depict the state as the root cause of multiple sources of resentment, which in turn contribute to the emergence of violent extremism.

Survey results underscore the complex and nuanced perceptions of the state in the surveyed border regions. As illustrated in Figure 4.35, while respondents in Libya, Nigeria, and Sudan were particularly discontent with the government, but relatively less so with the security forces, the opposite appeared to hold true in Chad and Niger. The respondents therefore appear to have specific views on and experiences of different state institutions, which warrant close examination.

Respondents in all five countries identified the police and military as the main providers of security in their neighbourhoods, although comparatively less so in Libya, Niger, and Chad (see Figure 4.7). In Libya, results vary greatly among the four southern localities in which research was carried out. While the majority of interviewees in Ghat and Kufra indicated that both the police and the military provided security in their neighbourhood, only a minority did so in Murzuq, and even fewer in Sebha. This last locality also ranks the lowest among all seven Libyan municipalities surveyed in terms of perception of security. Almost all respondents in Sebha believe that security forces are unable to protect their community from the threats it faces. They indicate that security forces in Sebha do not have adequate equipment to confront violent extremist groups, that security forces are often afraid to confront these groups, and that some members of security forces either collaborate with or are members of violent extremist groups.

Respondents in Niger and Chad rated their security forces more negatively than their Nigerian, Sudanese, and Libyan counterparts, the majority of whom felt that the security forces did a fairly or very good job at preventing crime and violence (see Figure 4.8). All the case studies indicated that trust in security forces was slightly higher when security provision involved both local (state or non-state) and national or federal forces, rather than only local or national forces. Respondents who reported such mixed security arrangements in their neighbourhoods were also more likely to report feeling safer at security checkpoints, and that crime control had recently improved.

**Figure 4.7** What are the institutions/groups/individuals that provide security to your neighborhood?



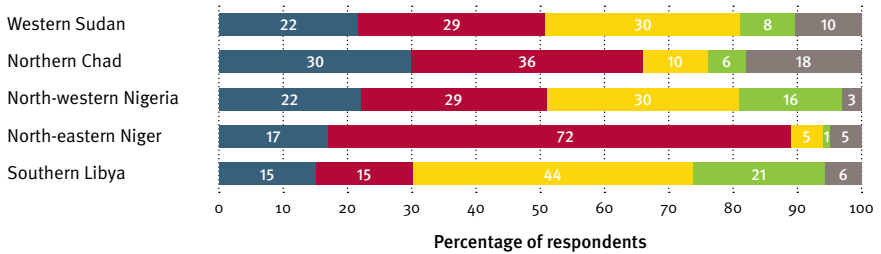
Base: All respondents

Note: Multiple answers allowed. Respondents from Libya were only presented with the options 'Police', 'Military', 'Local armed group/militia', and 'Private security providers'. See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.8** What is your perception of the overall ability of the security forces to prevent and control crime and violence in this community?

- They do a very poor job
- They do a fairly poor job
- They do a fairly good job
- They do a very good job
- Do not know/Refuse to answer



Base: All respondents

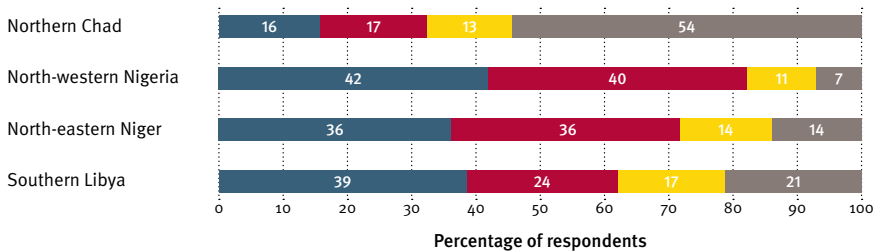
Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

Perceptions of the effectiveness of security forces do not appear to correlate with the degree of representation of local communities within these institutions. Figure 4.9 shows how similar proportions of respondents (between 36 and 42 per cent) in Libya, Niger, and Nigeria reported that most or all of the security forces personnel are local. The data is only partial, however, as the same question elicited a high non-response rate in Chad (54 per cent) and had to be removed from the Sudan questionnaire. When asked specifically about the youth, more than two-thirds of respondents in Niger (75 per cent)

**Figure 4.9** Are people from this community well represented in the security force(s) in this area?

- Yes, all or most of them are local
- Yes, some of them are local
- No, none or very few of them are local
- Do not know/Refuse to answer



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Sudan)

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

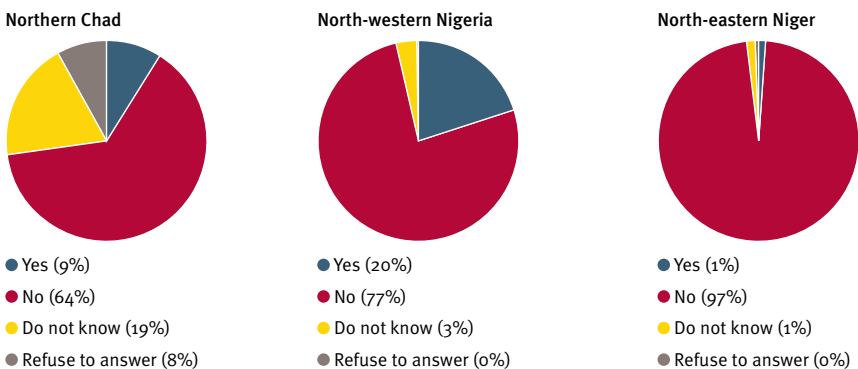
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

and Nigeria (70 per cent) felt young people, and in particular young men from the community, were well represented in the security forces operating in their area, compared with only 40 per cent in Chad. This question could not be asked to the general population samples in Libya and Sudan.

Governments in the Sahel tend to prioritize hard security measures over the development of health and education systems and socio-economic development (UNICRI, 2020, p. xi). Nigeria and Chad saw 20 per cent and nine per cent of respondents, respectively, report that their families had been personally affected by violence perpetrated by the national or foreign governments (see Figure 4.10). While this may suggest that securitized interventions are an important concern in these two countries, results were much lower in Niger (less than one per cent) and the question could not be asked in Sudan.

While the existence of grievances alone does not necessarily lead to violent extremism, shared experiences of discrimination or exclusion, or perceived grievances, can be more easily woven together into a single, simplifying narrative that can act as a catalyst (Kruglanski et al., 2009, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 31). Survey respondents reported exposure to various types of discrimination. Overall, Nigerian and Sudanese respondents appear to have experienced more discrimination and harassment in the 12 months preceding their interviews compared with those in Chad and Niger (see Figure 4.11). Gender was the most frequently reported form of discrimination and harassment in Nigeria and Niger; in Niger, in particular, men were more likely to report gender-based discrimination and harassment. In Sudan, ethnicity was the most reported form of

**Figure 4.10** Were you, or someone in your immediate family, personally affected by violence perpetrated by national or foreign governments that attacked civilians in this community?



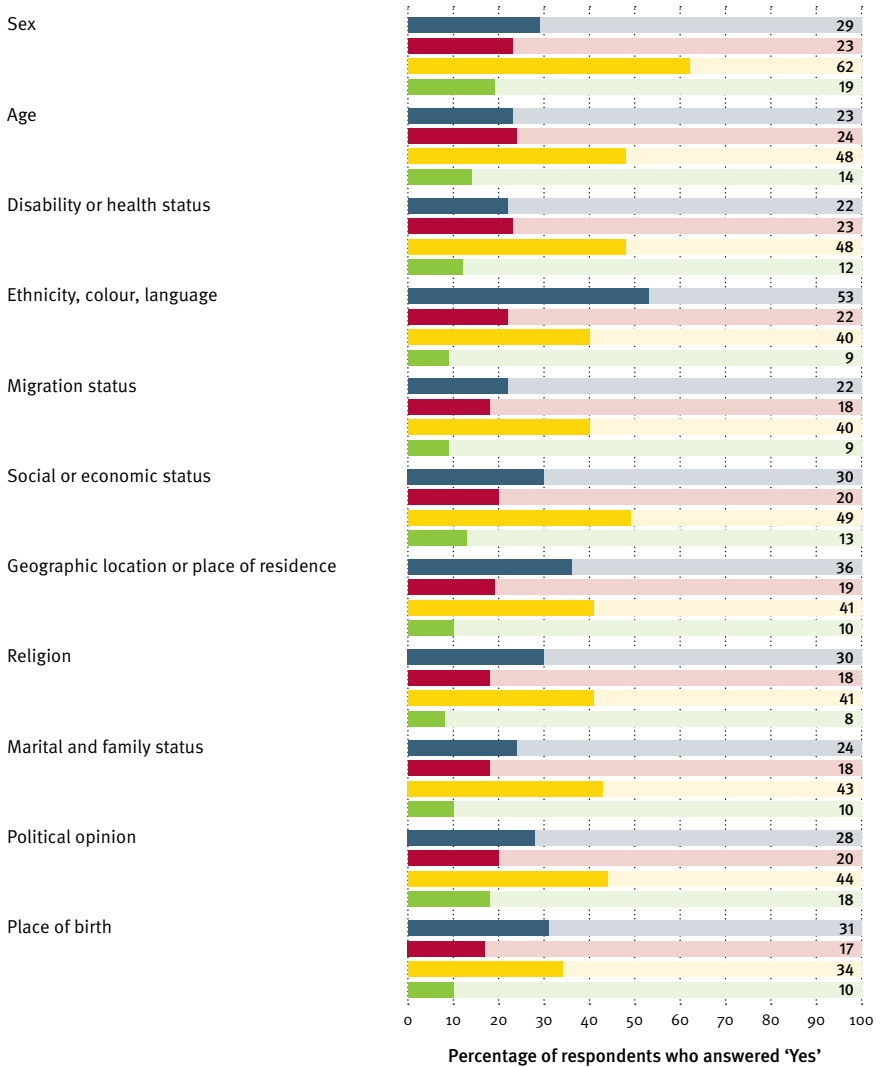
Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya and Sudan)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.11** In this country, have you personally experienced any form of discrimination or harassment during the last 12 months, based on any of the following grounds?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria ● North-eastern Niger



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

discrimination, and in Chad it was age. In Chad, young respondents—men and women alike—reported higher rates of discrimination than older age groups.

### **4.3 Government inability to provide basic services**

Government inability to provide basic services can drive conflict when it allows armed groups to step in and fill these gaps in healthcare and education, as well as to fulfil other community welfare needs. The state's instability—including when in transition—is a strong predictor of terrorist attack, as quantitative studies have shown (Gelfand et al., 2013, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 22).

Access to basic services varied across countries. According to respondents in Sudan and, to a lesser extent, in northern Chad and Niger, access to electricity, development projects, roads, railroads, and airports, as well as to emergency services, was extremely limited (see Figure 4.12). The situation was comparatively better in Nigeria.

Lack of access to basic services contributes to marginalization, which can in turn feed into grievances and a sense of injustice if such marginalization is aligned with ethnicity, identity, or religion. Respondents in Nigeria and Sudan were the most likely to feel that their ethnicity, tribe, or religion was marginalized or neglected in their communities as well as in their countries as a whole (see Figure 4.13). The Sudan case study is noteworthy as it indicates a combination of both comparatively limited access to basic services and the perceived marginalization of people along identity lines, which is of particular concern from a PVE perspective.

### **4.4 Growing importance of ethnic and/or religious identities**

Individuals who have limited knowledge of religion are more susceptible to accepting extreme interpretations. Underdeveloped communities can sometimes lack an education system that is well-funded by the state, and this enables religious schools and other non-state actors to provide an alternative form of education. The curricula implemented by such actors is not always designed to prepare members of the community with technical skills or knowledge that will help them in the job market, which may in turn isolate them from the general population (UNICRI, 2020, p. 41). Due to lack of resources, the increase in Quranic schools in communities does not translate into religious knowledge, which leaves the educators free to interpret the text and the teachings subjectively (p. 42), and can facilitate radicalization as well as a disregard for women's rights (p. 43).

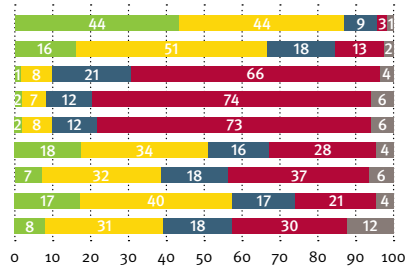
Overall, Libyan respondents were much more dissatisfied with the quality of available education services (more than two-thirds were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied) than respondents in the other case studies (between 20 and 34 per cent were dissatisfied

**Figure 4.12** To what extent do the members of this community have access to each of these services, as provided by the government?

● Mostly yes ● Sometimes yes ● Mostly not ● Never ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

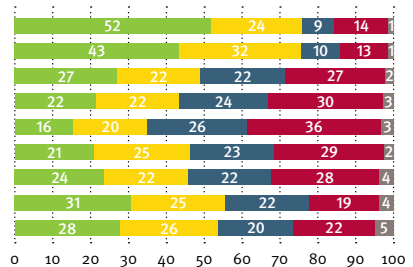
**Western Sudan**

Education  
 Healthcare  
 Electricity  
 Development projects  
 Roads, railroads, airports  
 Clean water  
 Emergency services when needed, such as disaster relief  
 Security  
 Justice/resolution of disputes



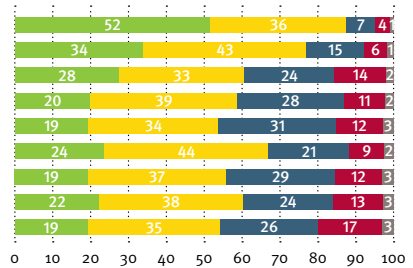
**Northern Chad**

Education  
 Healthcare  
 Electricity  
 Development projects  
 Roads, railroads, airports  
 Clean water  
 Emergency services when needed, such as disaster relief  
 Security  
 Justice/resolution of disputes



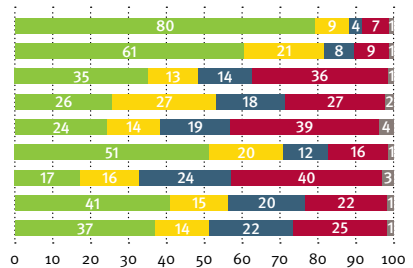
**North-western Nigeria**

Education  
 Healthcare  
 Electricity  
 Development projects  
 Roads, railroads, airports  
 Clean water  
 Emergency services when needed, such as disaster relief  
 Security  
 Justice/resolution of disputes



**North-eastern Niger**

Education  
 Healthcare  
 Electricity  
 Development projects  
 Roads, railroads, airports  
 Clean water  
 Emergency services when needed, such as disaster relief  
 Security  
 Justice/resolution of disputes



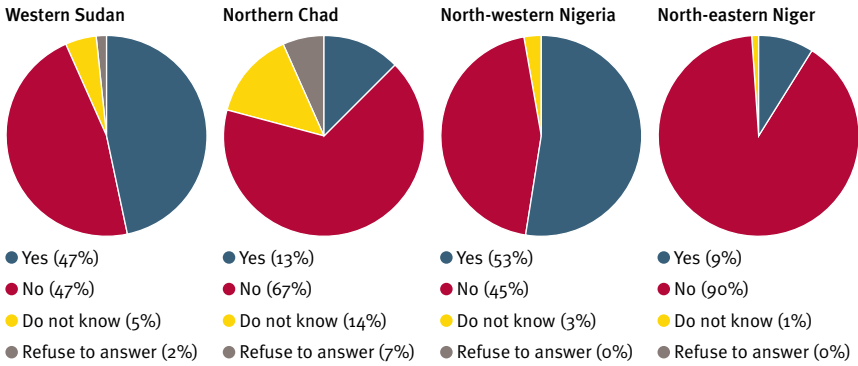
Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

Percentage of respondents

**Figure 4.13** Are people from your ethnicity/tribe/religion marginalized or neglected in the city or village you live in?



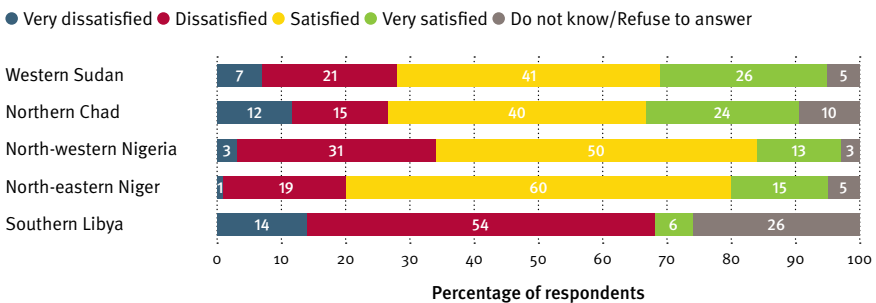
Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

or very dissatisfied) (see Figure 4.14). The high rate of discontent in Libya may be linked to the specific characteristics of this country’s sample: the predominantly urban, young, and more affluent group of respondents may have elevated expectations related to public services that are more difficult to satisfy than for general population respondents in the other countries. In the other four case studies, public schools were the main providers of education identified. Levels of public schooling were comparatively lower in Chad than in the other three surveyed countries (see Figure 4.15). Quranic schools

**Figure 4.14** Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of the education services that are available for the child(ren) in your household?



Base: Respondents with at least one child aged 6–14 in their household

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

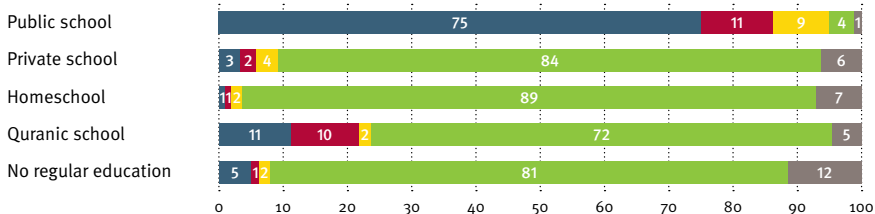
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



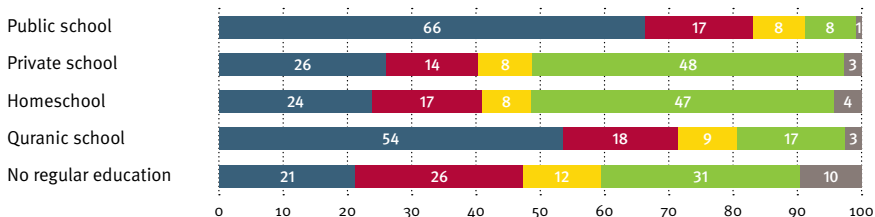
**Figure 4.15** What kind of education do the boys and girls aged 6–14 in your household currently receive?

● Girls and boys ● Boys only ● Girls only ● No ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

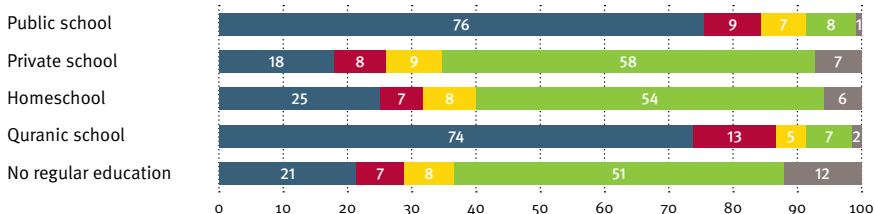
**Western Sudan**



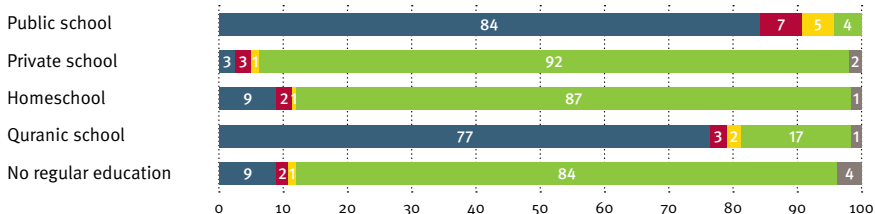
**Northern Chad**



**North-western Nigeria**



**North-eastern Niger**



Percentage of respondents

Base: Respondents with at least one child aged 6–14 in their household (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



A cleric teaches at an Islamic school near the main market of Agadez, Niger. 24 May 2015.  
Source: Akintunde Akinleye/Reuters

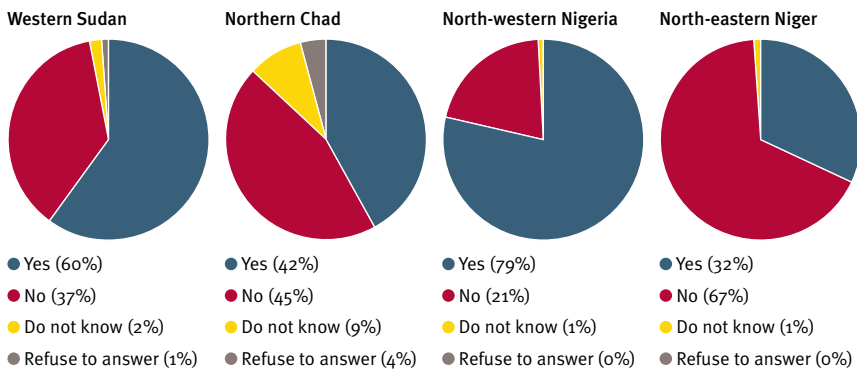


appeared to be the second main form of schooling after public schools in all four case studies, although rates of Quranic schooling were comparatively much lower in Sudan.

On the other hand, more respondents in Nigeria and Sudan (79 and 60 per cent) reported studying Islamic teachings than in Chad and Niger (42 and 32 per cent) (see Figure 4.16). In all five case studies, more than half of respondents agreed or agreed completely with the statement that the only acceptable religion is theirs (see Figure 4.17). This view was held particularly strongly in Sudan (79 per cent) and Libya (78 per cent). Looking at the regional case studies, more respondents in Sudan (57 per cent) and Nigeria (50 per cent) reported following specific sheikhs or religious approaches. Respondents in Nigeria were also more likely to declare that they did not enjoy having online discussions with people who hold different ideas and values.

The literature also warns that violent extremist groups exploit identity-based conflict and community grievances, and instrumentalize fault lines and fractures within society (World Bank Group and United Nations, 2018, p. 191). Furthermore, in weak or failed states, religious or ethnic identity is easily utilized by violent extremist groups (Allan et al., 2015, p. 22). Perceptions of oppression along ethnic, religious, or identity lines therefore provide valuable insight into the relevance of this driver in the surveyed southern Libya borderlands. About half of respondents in Nigeria (47 per cent) and Libya (49 per cent) felt that people from their ethnicity, tribe, or religion were oppressed in the city or village where they lived—compared with 37 per cent in Sudan, 10 per cent in Chad, and even less (7 per cent) in Niger (see Figure 4.18).

**Figure 4.16** Was there a period in which you studied Islamic teachings or Sharia law after you completed school?\*



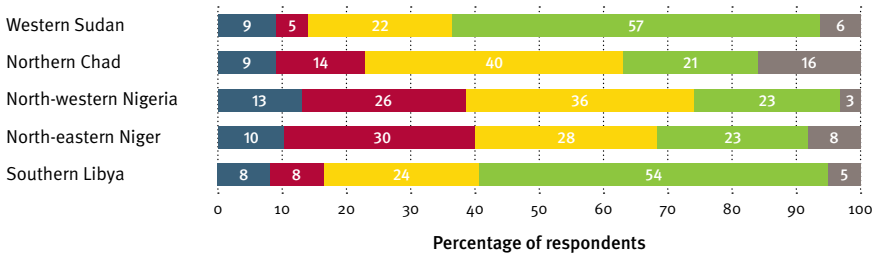
Base: Muslim respondents only (question not asked in Libya)

Note: \* The second part of the question was: 'It could be in a group, at the mosque, in an organized programme, or by yourself for example by watching videos on this topic.' Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.17** To what extent do you agree with this statement: ‘The only acceptable religion is my religion’?

● Disagree completely ● Disagree ● Agree ● Agree completely ● Do not know/Refuse to answer



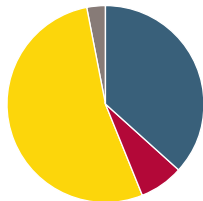
Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

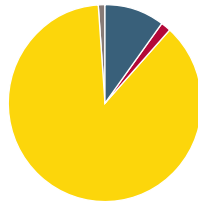
**Figure 4.18** And would you say [that people from your ethnicity/tribe/religion] are oppressed in the city or village you live in?

**Western Sudan**



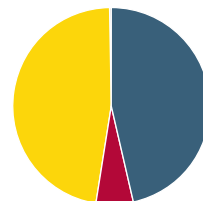
● Yes (37%) ● No (7%)  
 ● Not disadvantaged (53%)  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer (3%)

**Northern Chad**



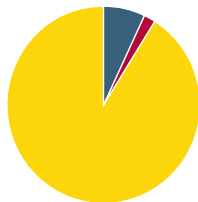
● Yes (10%) ● No (2%)  
 ● Not disadvantaged (87%)  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer (1%)

**North-western Nigeria**



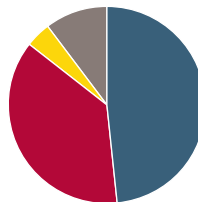
● Yes (47%) ● No (6%)  
 ● Not disadvantaged (47%)  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer (0%)

**North-eastern Niger**



● Yes (7%) ● No (2%)  
 ● Not disadvantaged (91%)  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer (0%)

**Southern Libya**



● Yes (49%) ● No (37%)  
 ● Not disadvantaged (4%)  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer (10%)

Base: All respondents

Notes:

For Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan, this question was only asked to respondents who declared that people from their ethnicity, religion, or identity were marginalized in their village or city.

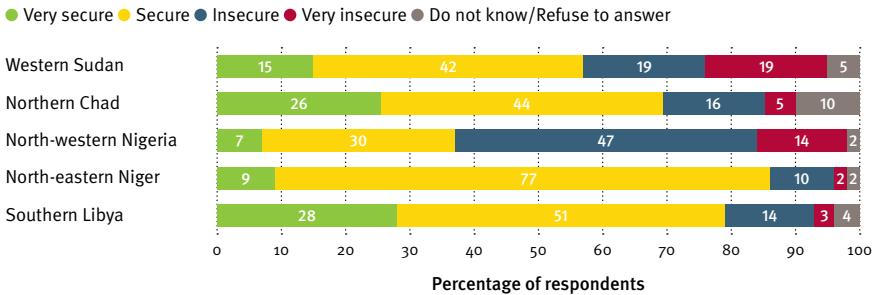
See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

## 4.5 Chronic instability and insecurity

A chronic lack of stability and security can drive violent extremism by enabling armed groups to implant themselves locally and fill existing gaps, even if only in the short term (Gelfand et al., 2013, cited in Allan et al., 2015, p. 22). In general, respondents in Nigeria perceived higher levels of insecurity in their neighbourhoods than in the other four case studies: 61 per cent of respondents in Nigeria felt insecure or very insecure in their neighbourhoods compared with only 38 per cent in Sudan, 21 per cent in Chad, 17 per cent in Libya, and 12 per cent in Niger (see Figure 4.19). Almost half (47 per cent) of respondents in Nigeria also felt that security in their neighbourhoods had become worse over the previous 12 months, compared with 24 per cent in Niger, 22 per cent in Chad, 19 per cent in Sudan, and 12 per cent in Libya (see Figure 4.20). The most common types of security

**Figure 4.19** How secure do you feel these days in your neighbourhood?

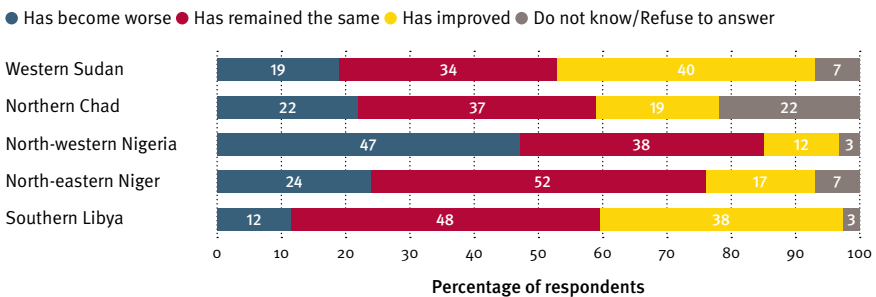


Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.20** How is the security in your neighbourhood now, compared to 12 months ago?



Base: All respondents

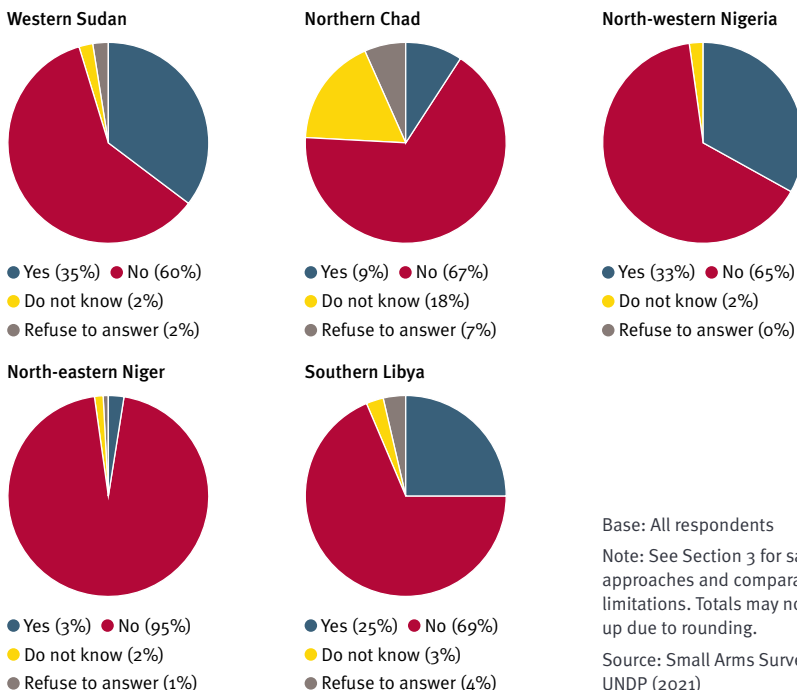
Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

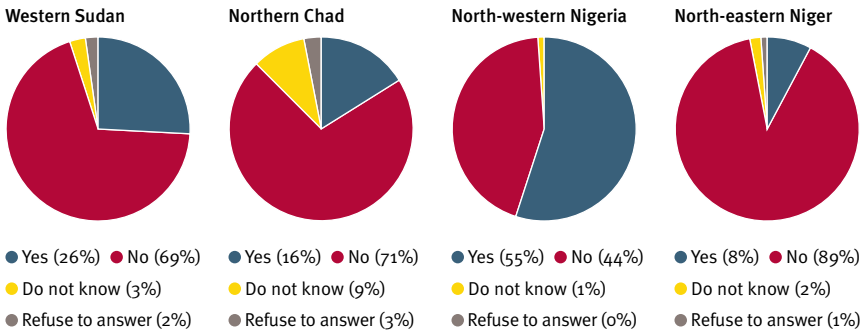
incidents identified in Nigeria were kidnappings (42 per cent said they occurred frequently or very frequently), armed robbery (36 per cent), and murder (35 per cent), followed by sexual assault (32 per cent). In Chad, the most common incident was street aggression or assault (16 per cent). In Sudan, it was trafficking (such as human and drug trafficking) (30 per cent); in Niger, car theft or carjacking (6 per cent); and in Libya, burglary and car theft and carjacking (both at 16 per cent). Respondents generally identified attacks and robberies by armed bandits as the main risk facing traders in their communities.

Respondents in Nigeria, Sudan, and Libya reported more systematically the presence of armed groups threatening their communities (47, 41, and 40 per cent, respectively). Respondents in the first two countries were also more likely to report unarmed civilians in their communities being subjected to armed attacks by any actor (state and non-state). About a third of respondents in Sudan (35 per cent) and Nigeria (33 per cent) reported their family or themselves being personally affected by violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups, followed by Libya with 25 per cent (see Figure 4.21). The proportion was much lower in Chad (9 per cent) and Niger (3 per cent).

**Figure 4.21** Were you, or someone in your immediate family, personally affected by violence perpetrated by armed groups (not counting national and foreign governments) that attacked civilians in this community?



**Figure 4.22** Did you experience any kind of violence over the past 12 months that you think was related to your gender?



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

In Libya, these questions could only be asked to 14 selected respondents per locality. The answers provided by the 56 individuals in the southern Libya localities indicate that violence committed by armed groups primarily targets adult men. The main driver of conflict appears to be inter- and intra-tribal conflicts. Among the four surveyed southern Libyan localities (Ghat, Kufra, Murzuq, and Sebha), Murzuq appears to be the one with the highest incidence of attacks on civilians in the last two years.

Respondents in Nigeria were much more likely to report having experienced violence related to their gender in the previous 12 months (55 per cent) than those in Sudan (26 per cent), Chad (16 per cent), and Niger (8 per cent) (see Figure 4.22). Male respondents were more likely to report such violence in three of the five countries—Chad, Niger, and Nigeria—where this question was asked.

## 4.6 Blocked political participation and the influence of non-state armed groups

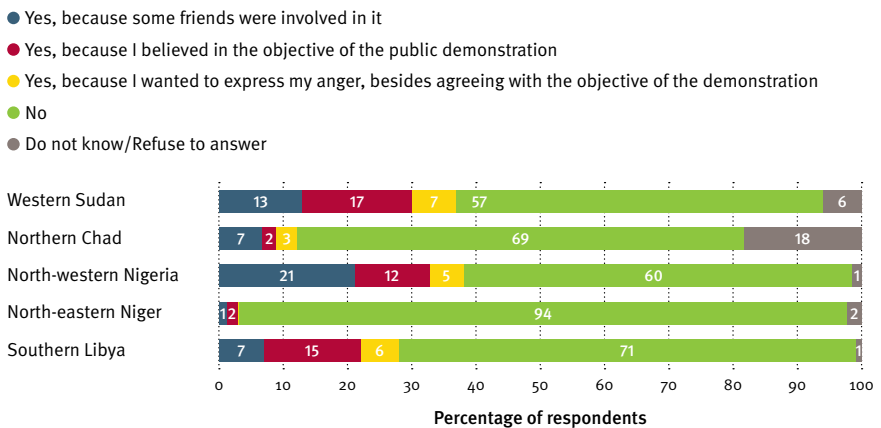
Blocked political participation is found to drive violent extremism by creating grievances, but—like other factors—cannot alone explain the emergence of violent extremist groups; however, exclusion from engaging in political processes exacerbates grievances that are frequently exploited by other actors, including violent extremist groups. An elite’s monopoly over resources and power through corruption and nepotism excludes some communities from political processes and can motivate people to seek change, including through violent means (Schmid, 2006, cited in Allan et al., 2015; UNICRI, 2020).



ID cards are usually required to participate in formal electoral processes, as well as to access many state services and welfare support. More than one-third of respondents in Sudan (51 per cent), Chad (37 per cent), and Libya (33 per cent) said they did not have a valid ID card or passport, compared with fewer than 20 per cent of respondents in both Niger and Nigeria. This issue is particularly relevant in Libya, where national ID cards are also necessary to access employment, to travel, and to benefit from free services such as education and medical care. In short, possessing a national ID card is a prerequisite for benefiting from citizenship rights and, more broadly, for being recognized as a Libyan. Thousands of Libyans are denied a national ID card, particularly in southern Libya. The problem of denied citizenship is most acute among the Tubu and other non-Arab minorities—such as Tuareg and Ahali (all in southern Libya)—as well as Libyans from the town of Tawergha, in north-western Libya. Most of the Libyans who struggle with these issues are Tubu or Tuareg subgroups who have come to Libya from Chad, Mali, and Niger in the last 50 years, and settled in makeshift houses in the suburbs of some southern cities, such as Sebha and Obari. Over time, discrimination in these neighbourhoods has increased and inhabitants have experienced lower levels of services and higher levels of criminality. Consequently, these neighbourhoods have become privileged recruitment areas for violent extremist groups.<sup>15</sup>

In the other four case studies, a sizable minority of respondents reported not being legally allowed to vote in national elections (ranging from 11 per cent in Nigeria to 21 per cent in Chad). Significantly more Sudanese respondents reported not having voted in

**Figure 4.23** Have you participated in any public demonstration, march, or sit-in in the last six months?



Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

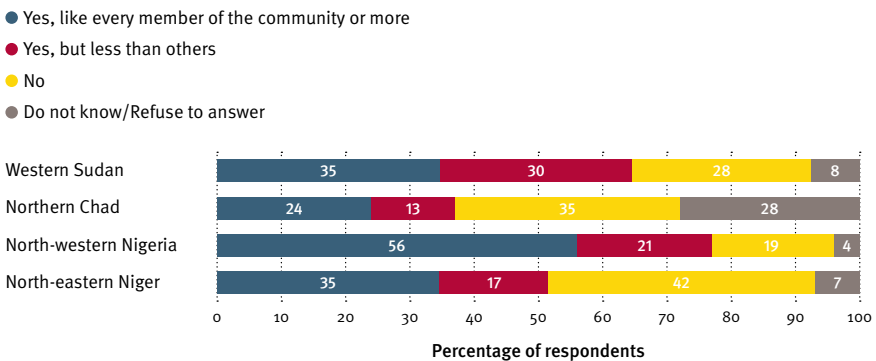
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

the last national and municipal elections (62 per cent), while Niger had the highest rate of participation in such elections (97 per cent). The majority of respondents in Libya (86 per cent), Nigeria (60 per cent), and Sudan (52 per cent) stated that they regularly discuss—at least once a week—political matters and the performance of the local and national governments. In contrast, only 22 and 29 per cent of respondents in Chad and Niger shared this view, respectively. Respondents in Chad (12 per cent) and Niger (3 per cent) were also the least likely to report having participated in public demonstrations, marches, or sit-ins in the previous six months (see Figure 4.23), which suggests that there may be less space for these communities to engage freely in political discussions.

In the four regional case studies—Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan—respondents in Chad and Niger reported less involvement in decision-making processes that impact their community’s future (see Figure 4.24). On the other hand, respondents in Sudan and Nigeria felt more strongly than Chadian and Nigerien respondents that women and youth were under-represented in leadership, community, and political roles.

Blocked political participation, combined with limited access to security, justice, and other basic services from government sources, can provide non-state armed groups with opportunities to fill gaps in these domains. The survey results suggest that this is indeed happening in the surveyed borderlands, although to varying degrees. A non-negligible proportion of the interviewees identified a range of roles played by non-state actors to fill the gaps left unaddressed by the state in their communities. With the exception of Niger, respondents in the other four case studies identified local armed groups and militia as providers of security—ranging from 12 per cent in Sudan to 50 per cent in Libya (see Figure 4.7). Criminal groups were also considered providers of security in

**Figure 4.24** Do you feel involved in decision-making processes that impact your community’s future?



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

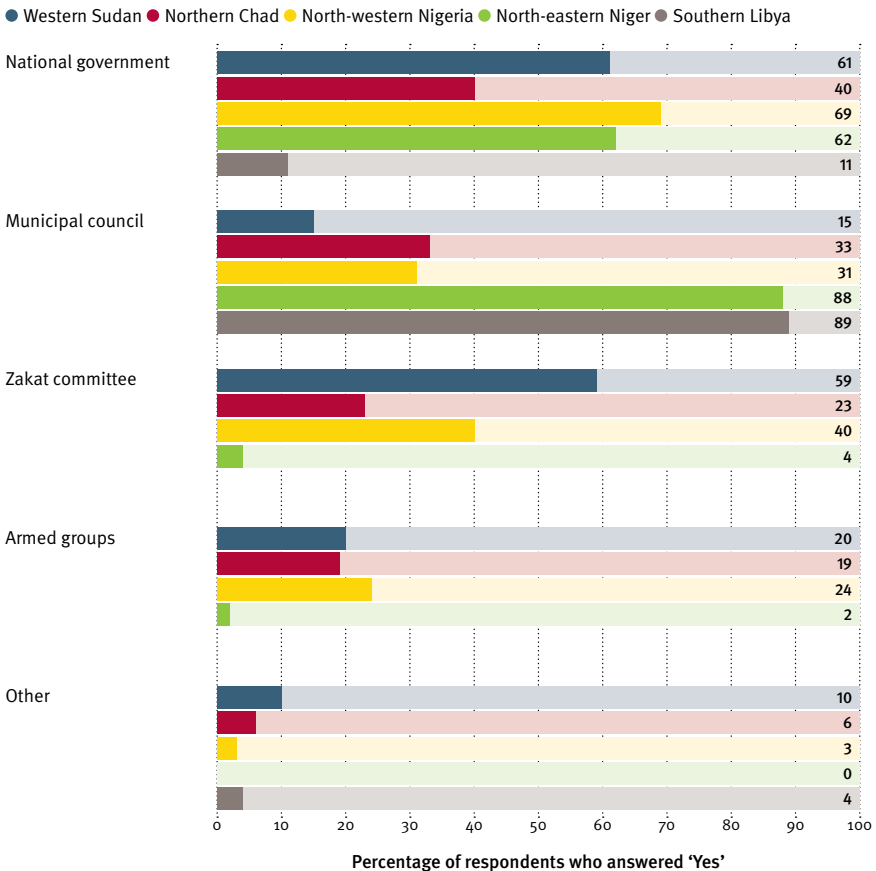
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



Sudanese women carrying baskets in North Darfur, Sudan. 9 February 2017.  
Source: Ashraf Shazly/AFP

Chad, Nigeria, and Sudan. Non-state entities, including armed groups, reportedly collected taxes in Chad, Nigeria, and Sudan, but only marginally in Niger and not at all in Libya (see Figure 4.25). Greater proportions of respondents in Nigeria and Chad (when compared with Niger only as this question was not asked in Sudan) assessed that armed groups played economic roles in their communities, including potentially positive roles such as providing protection, owning businesses, and providing cash income (see Figure 4.26). The response rate to this question in Niger was particularly high, however,

**Figure 4.25** Who collects taxes or fees that people and small businesses usually have to pay in this community?



Base: All respondents

Note: Multiple answers allowed. Respondents from Libya were only presented with the options 'National government', 'Municipal council', and 'Other'. See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.26** Regarding the role of this/these armed group(s), how much do you agree with the following propositions?

● 1 (Completely disagree) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Completely agree) ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

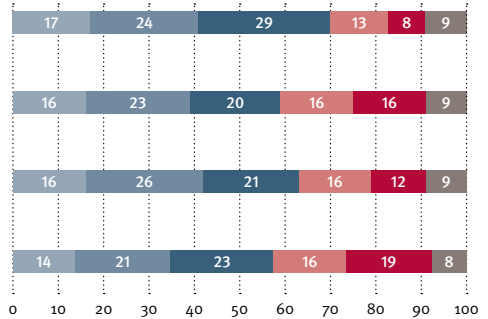
**Northern Chad**

They economically exploit the community, for example by taking illegal taxes, via widespread kidnappings, or via extortion of businesses.

They help the local economy and livelihoods by providing protection from rival armed groups or from the state.

They own businesses or have direct links with business leaders in the community, in joint profit-seeking schemes.

They provide cash income for a lot of people in the community.



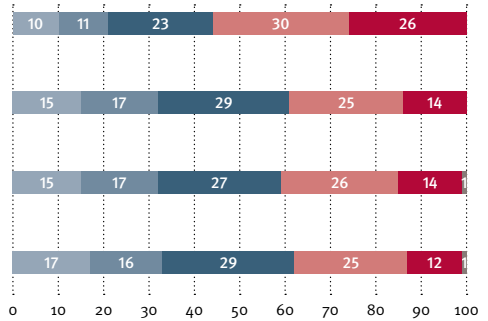
**North-western Nigeria**

They economically exploit the community, for example by taking illegal taxes, via widespread kidnappings, or via extortion of businesses.

They help the local economy and livelihoods by providing protection from rival armed groups or from the state.

They own businesses or have direct links with business leaders in the community, in joint profit-seeking schemes.

They provide cash income for a lot of people in the community.



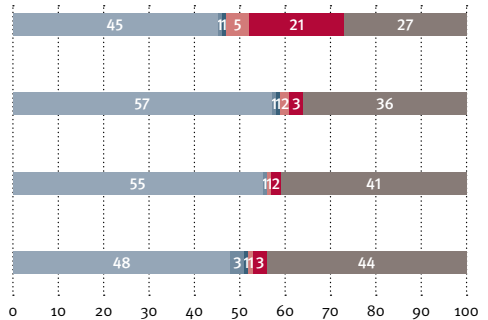
**North-eastern Niger**

They economically exploit the community, for example by taking illegal taxes, via widespread kidnappings, or via extortion of businesses.

They help the local economy and livelihoods by providing protection from rival armed groups or from the state.

They own businesses or have direct links with business leaders in the community, in joint profit-seeking schemes.

They provide cash income for a lot of people in the community.



Percentage of respondents

Base: Respondents who answered 'Yes' to the question 'Are there any groups in the area that threaten this community with force?' Question not asked in Libya and Sudan.

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

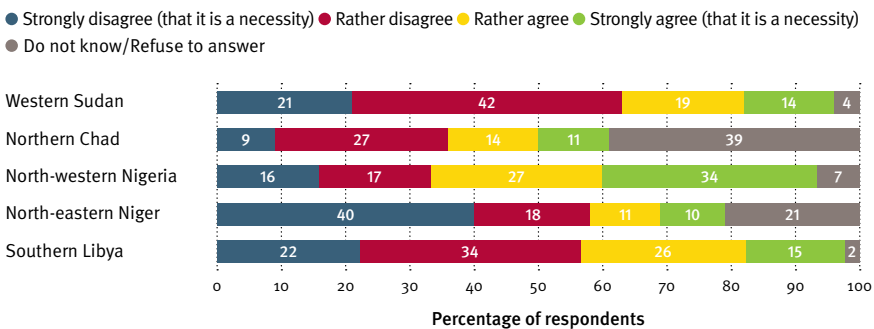
so the results for this country should be interpreted with caution. The number of positive roles fulfilled by armed groups in the surveyed areas illustrates how these communities are potentially vulnerable to extremist groups who may seek to exploit grievances and lack of access to basic services. Among the 56 individuals who were asked about the role of armed of groups in their communities, only a fraction of the respondents answered, except in Sebha, where all respondents but one answered. They almost unanimously indicated that armed groups economically exploit the community by imposing illegal taxes, through kidnappings or by extorting money from businesses.

### 4.7 Illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons

Perceptions of firearms varied across the case studies. While the majority of Nigerian respondents (61 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that possessing a firearm was a necessity in their area, most of the interviewees in other case studies did not share this view. Indeed, only 41 per cent of Libyan, 33 per cent of Sudanese, 25 per cent of Chadian, and 21 per cent of Nigerien respondents agreed or strongly agreed that firearms were necessary (see Figure 4.27). With respect to the civilian use of firearms to protect themselves from attacks, respondents in Libya reported that this type of event happened more frequently (26 per cent stated that an event had occurred in the last week or month) than in Nigeria (25 per cent), Sudan (21 per cent), Chad (17 per cent), and Niger (5 per cent).

Out of the four regional case studies—the Libya questionnaire is excluded as these questions were omitted—Nigeria and Sudan stood out as the countries with the highest

**Figure 4.27** Some people think that having firearms in this area is a necessity, others disagree. How about you?



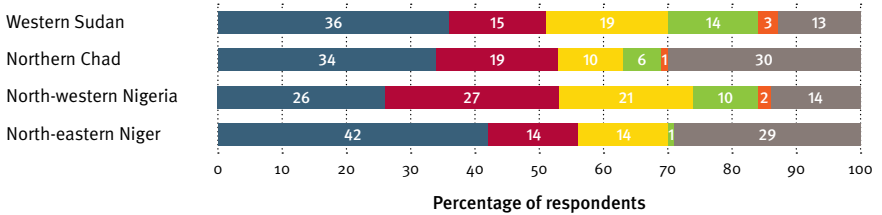
Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.28** In your opinion, are there many people who have guns/firearms in this community?

● No, none ● Yes, very few ● Yes, some ● Yes, many ● Yes, almost all  
 ● Do not know/Refuse to answer



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

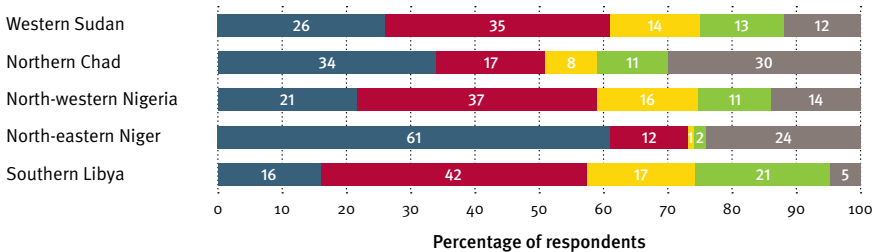
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

reported rate of firearms ownership. Respondents in these countries reported higher levels of firearms ownership in their communities (see Figure 4.28) and were also more likely to believe that small arms were easy to acquire. More respondents in these two countries also stated that their own households owned one or more firearms: the self-reported gun ownership rates were 23 per cent in Sudan, 19 per cent in Nigeria, 11 per cent in Chad, and only 1 per cent in Niger.

Respondents in Chad (20 per cent) and Nigeria (18 per cent) reported higher numbers of people carrying firearms for work purposes than respondents in Sudan (13 per cent), Libya (10 per cent), and Niger (1 per cent). Libyan respondents were the most likely to

**Figure 4.29** How often do you see civilians, that is people who do not belong to the state security forces (police or military), openly carrying a firearm in this area?

● Never ● Rarely ● Every week ● Every day ● Do not know/Refuse to answer



Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

report that people who do not belong to the security forces openly carry firearms (38 per cent of respondents said this occurred every week or day in their community), followed by Nigeria and Sudan (both at 27 per cent), Chad (19 per cent), and Niger (3 per cent) (see Figure 4.29). Chad and Niger also had higher rates of non-response to this question. Additionally, 55 per cent of respondents in both Nigeria and Sudan said traders try to minimize security risks by arming themselves. This is more than in Chad (31 per cent) and Niger (14 per cent) (this question was not asked in Libya).

The main reported sources of firearms were the illicit market for Chad (20 per cent), Niger (31 per cent), and Sudan (60 per cent), and licensed dealers for Nigeria (65 per cent, followed closely by local manufacturers and gunsmiths, at 58 per cent) (see Figure 4.30). The following main foreign countries of origin for the weapons were identified: Niger and Chad for Nigeria; Egypt and Sudan for Libya; Chad and Libya for Sudan; Libya and Sudan for Chad; and Libya and Chad for Niger (see Figure 4.31). Respondents also reported outflows of firearms to other countries, notably from Sudan and Chad to Libya, from Nigeria to Niger, and from Niger to Libya and Mali (see Figure 4.32).

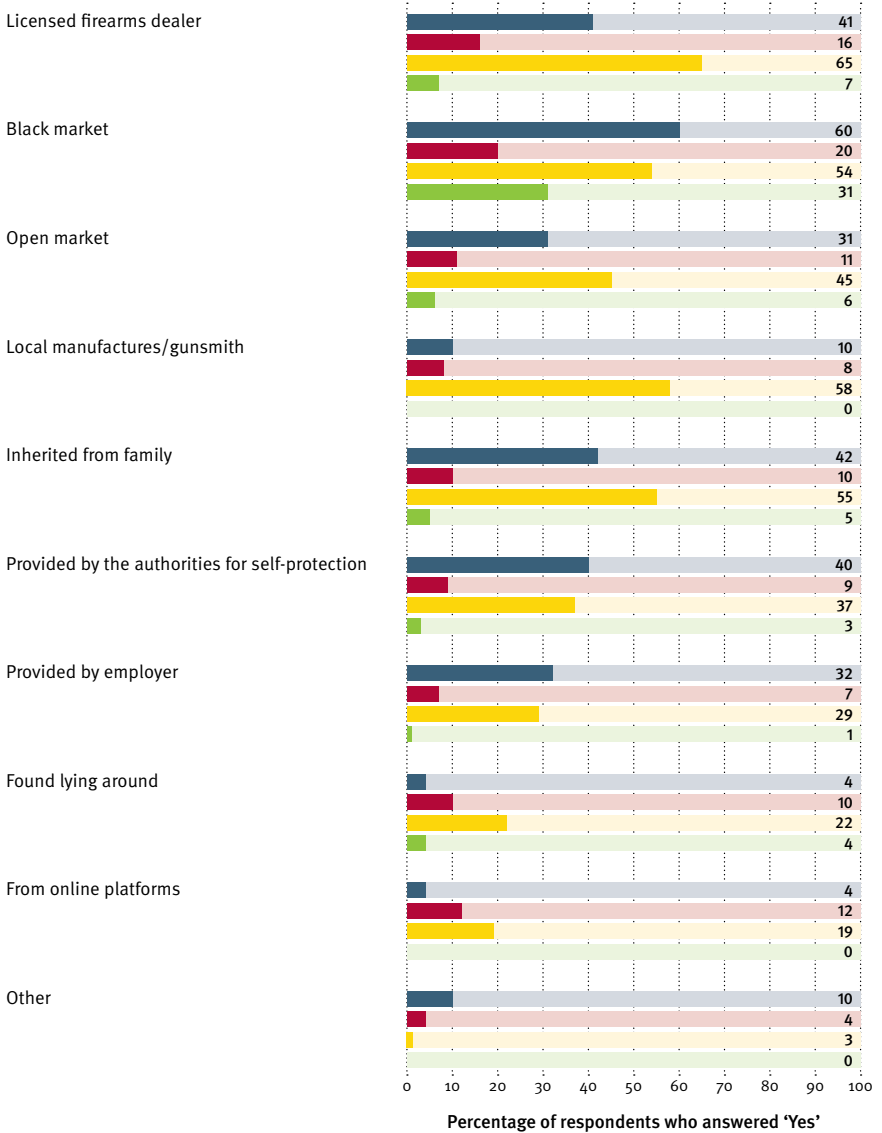
Regarding perceived arms flows—that is, where arms within the local community are sourced or traded to—members of the public understandably had fairly limited information. About 30 to 40 per cent of respondents overall could not give an answer (the precise figure depending on the country asked). Respondents who were personally involved in cross-border trade were able to answer the question more confidently: only about 10–15 per cent in that group did not know where weapons came from or were traded to. This suggests that weapons trading is indeed part of the local import–export activities that cross-border traders are at least aware of. The directions of the arms flows may be established by comparing countries as origins of inflows and destinations of outflows.

Overall, the general population believes there to be a balance between weapon exports and imports in most countries of the region, except for Libya, which is generally perceived as a net exporter (see Figures 4.31 and 4.32). For example, 54 per cent of Sudanese respondents reported that firearms arrived in their area from Libya, while significantly fewer, 40 per cent, thought that firearms from their local area were exported to Libya. It is also noteworthy that respondents in Sudan were much more likely to anticipate arms arriving from Chad (59 per cent) than to assessing Chad as a destination point for arms (43 per cent). To a lesser extent, the same imbalance could be observed in the case of Sudan vis-à-vis Mali and Niger. About half of respondents in North Darfur believed that the arms trade in their local area targets domestic locations, making the latter the main category of outflows from Western Sudan. Algeria and Egypt were reported to be net importers of arms from Sudan (they are seen to receive more flows of arms from Western Sudan than the other way around). The other location where the outflow of arms was considered to be primarily directed to domestic locations was Nigeria.



**Figure 4.30** Where do you think people obtain or purchase their firearms?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria ● North-eastern Niger

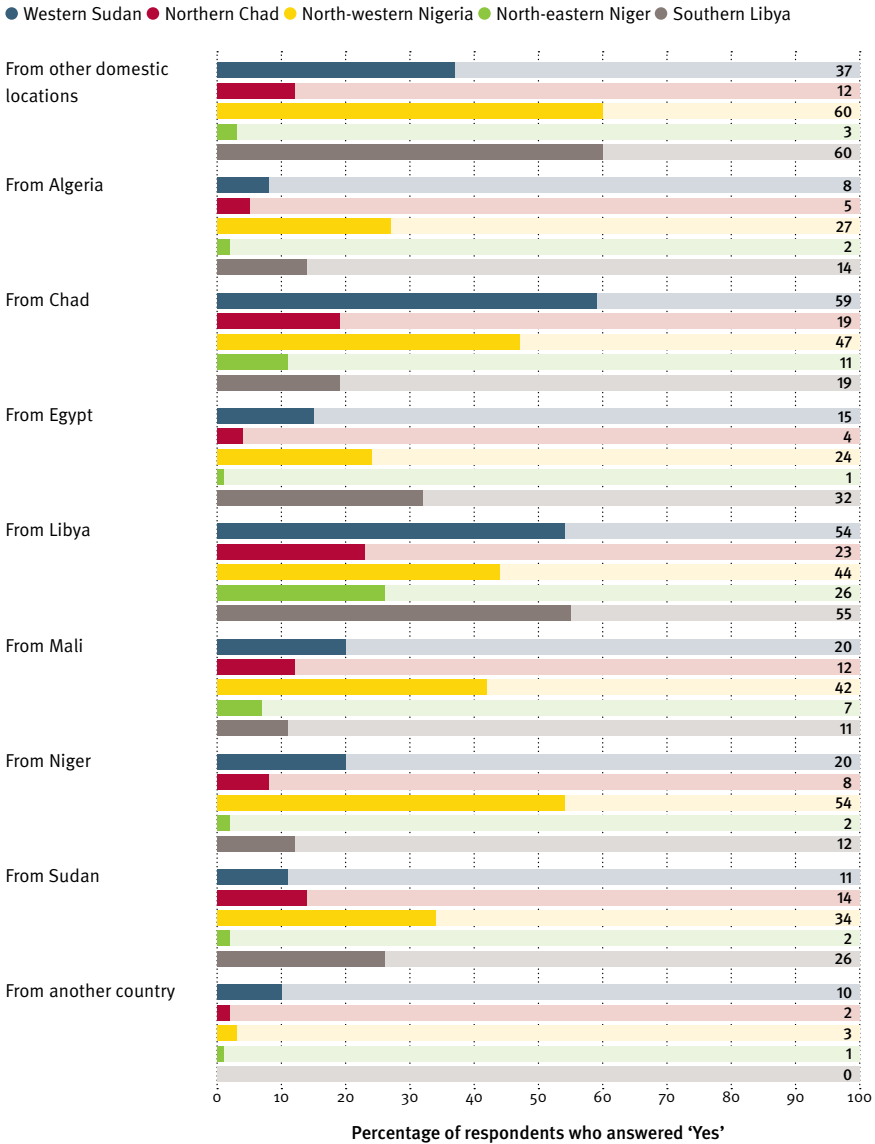


Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.31** As far as you know, from which countries are firearms coming to this area?



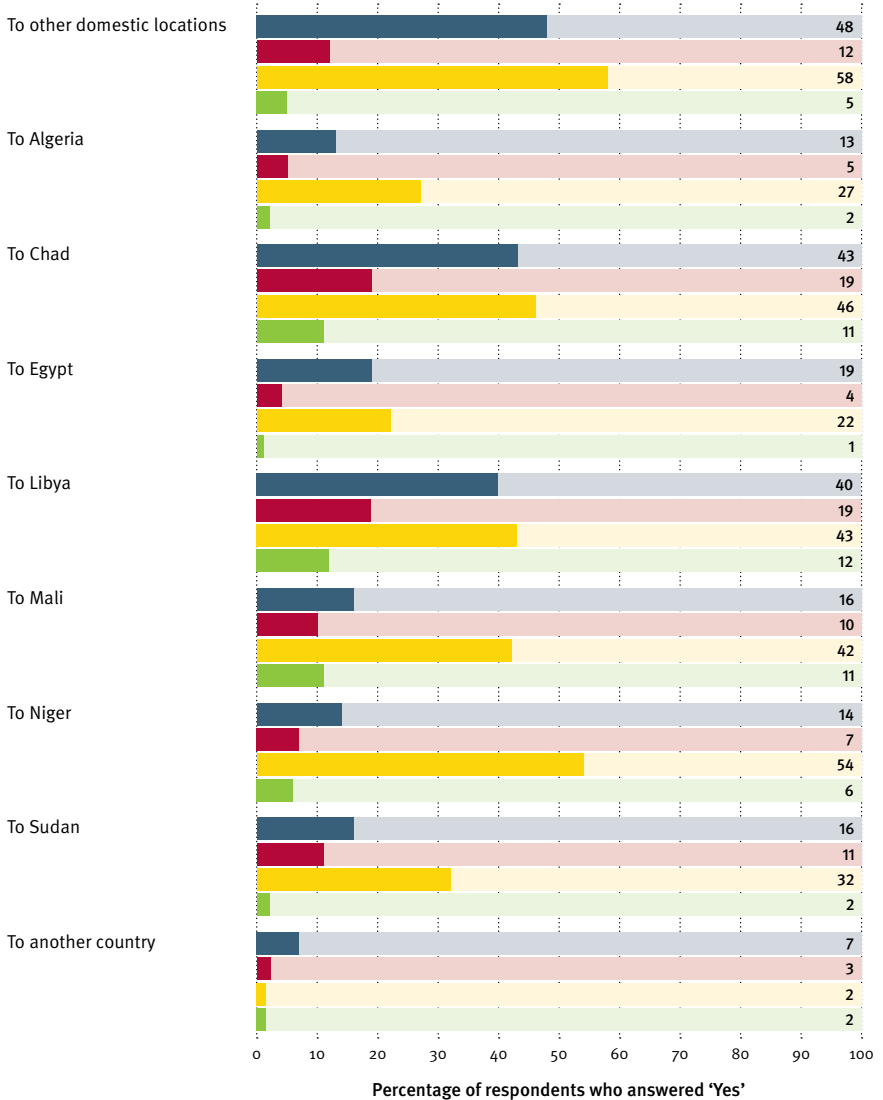
Base: All respondents

Note: Multiple answers allowed. See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.32** And which countries do you think traders in this community deliver firearms to?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria ● North-eastern Niger



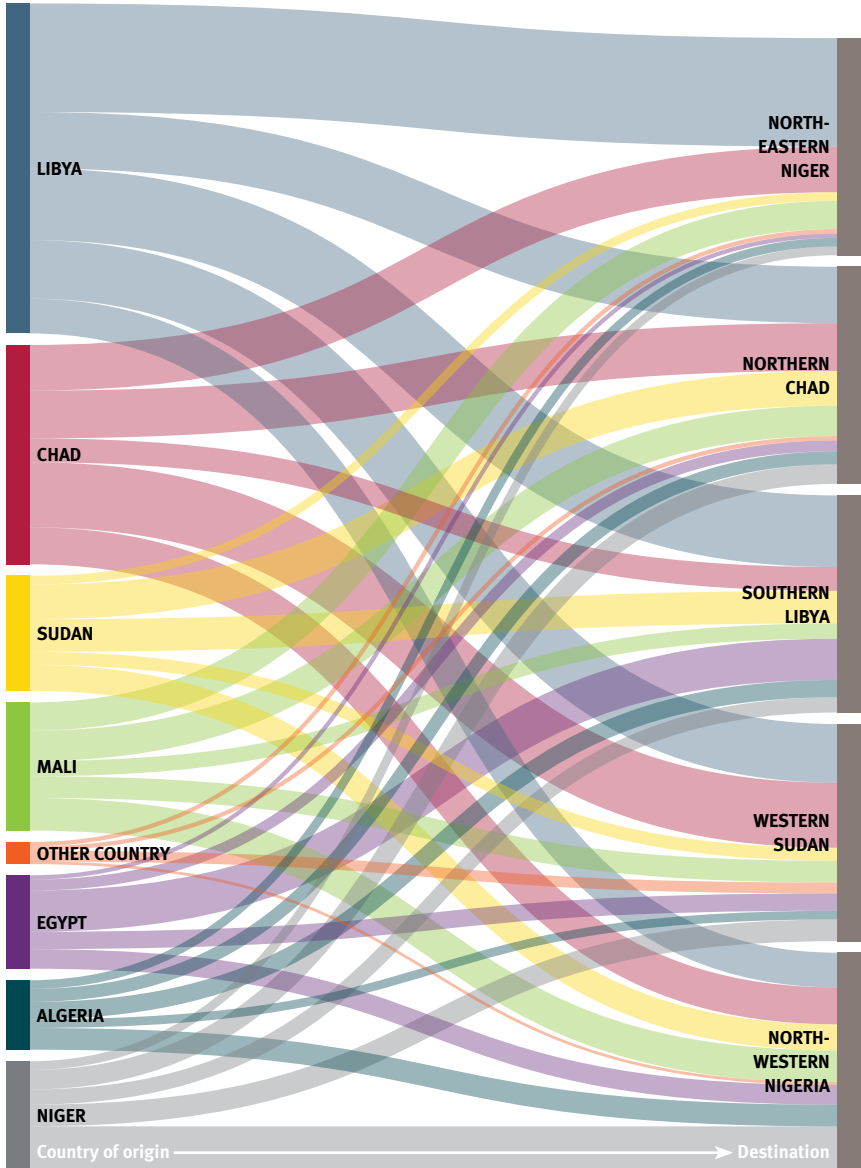
Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

Outbound trafficking from Libya was already significant following the 2011 armed conflict and the looting of its national stockpiles; however, these outflows seemed to decrease in subsequent years, in part due to the resumption of conflict in 2014 and increased demand for weapons in Libya itself (Small Arms Survey and AU, 2019, p. 50). Additional research would be needed to ascertain whether Libya became a significant source of weapons trafficked to neighbouring countries again in 2021, as the survey results suggest. Libya is considered to be more likely to send weapons abroad than to be a recipient of arms shipments from the surveyed locations (see Figures 4.33 and 4.34). This does not mean that Libya is not perceived as an important destination of arms transfers—in fact, Libya was also the most frequently mentioned foreign recipient of arms trade among Nigerien and Chadian respondents. Firearms trading is widespread in Libya—including firearms transferred from Libya to the wider region. The 56 southern Libyan respondents selected to respond to the in-depth purposive survey believe that traders deliver firearms mainly to Chad, Niger, and Sudan; Chad appears to be the country where Libyan traders channel the most firearms, especially according to Sebha and Kufra respondents. It is worth noting that Libya has hosted armed opposition groups from Chad and Sudan, particularly since 2011 (Tubiana and Gramizzi, 2017). ●

**Figure 4.33** Reported arms flows to the regions surveyed

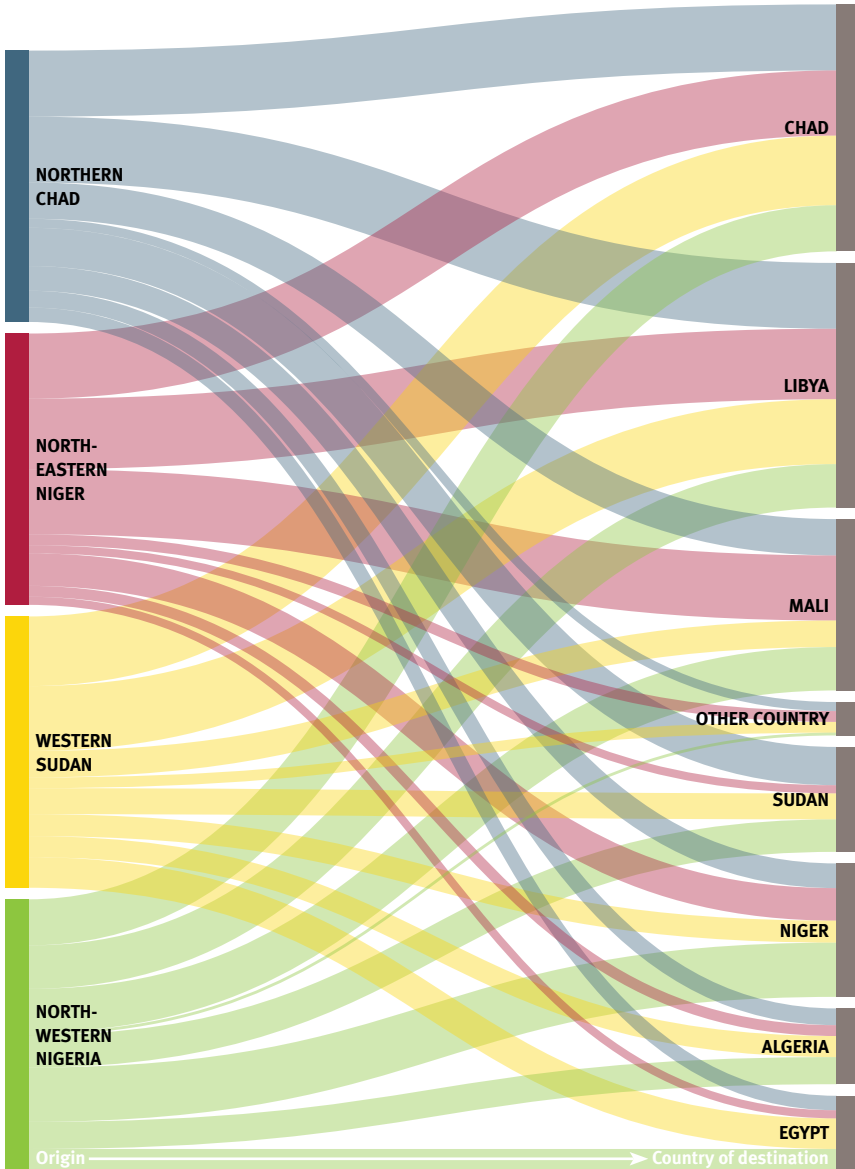


Base: All respondents

Note: Values in this chart are standardized so that the emphasis is on the relative weight of the countries of origin. The raw percentages are provided in Figures 4.31–32.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.34** Reported arms flows from the regions surveyed



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Values in this chart are standardized so that the emphasis is on the relative weight of the countries of destination. The raw percentages are provided in Figures 4.31–32.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

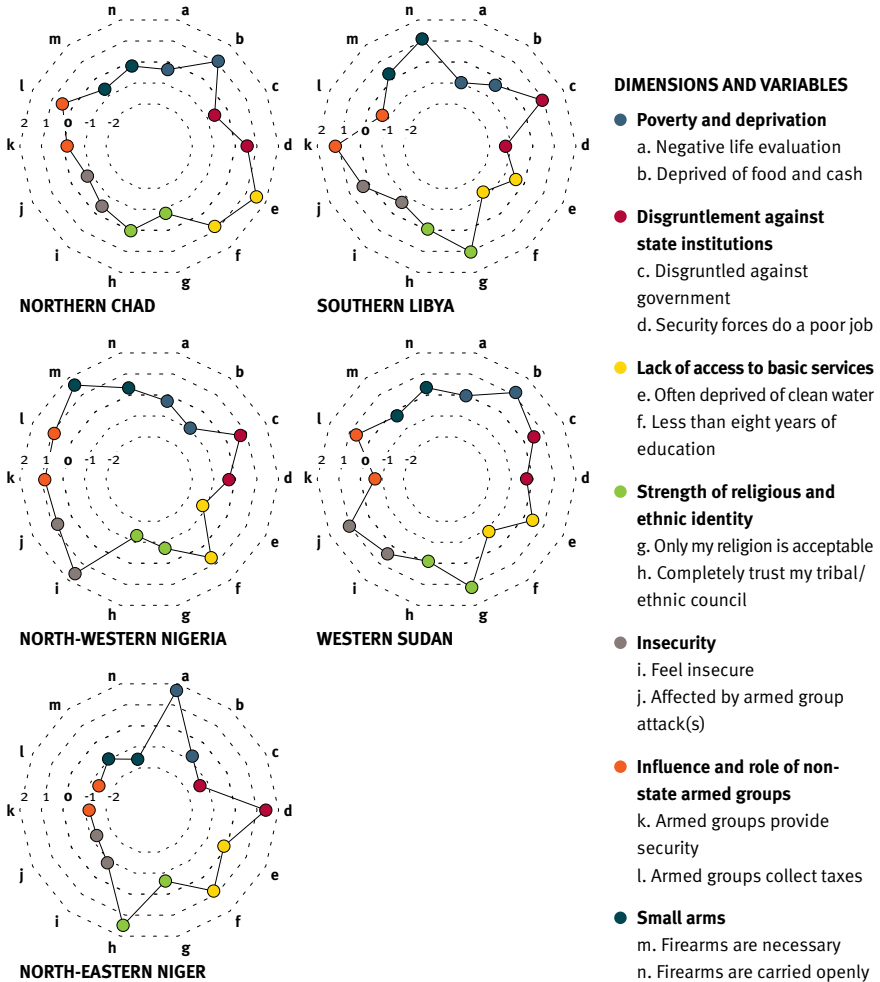
### **Box 4.1** Data spotlight on exposure to the drivers of violent extremism by case study

Overall, the surveyed border communities displayed different patterns of exposure to the seven identified drivers and factors of violent extremism. Figures 4.35–4.38 below help visualize these patterns through spider charts showing the responses in a standardized way that allows for comparison. The middle (or o) dotted circle represents the mean of the scores; circles above or below this score reflect responses that fall above or below the average. These figures, along with subsequent visualizations in the Report, are provided to illustrate the big picture. More detailed comparative analysis of the results of the regional questionnaires—including of the greater range of questions asked in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan—is provided in Sections 4–6.

The outer concentric circles in Figure 4.35 reflect high values and thus higher exposure to the drivers of violent extremism than in the other surveyed countries. Conversely, lower scores towards the inner concentric circles suggest lower exposure to the driver. For example, Niger stands out with lower-than-average perceptions of small arms availability, influence of armed groups, and insecurity, while Nigeria’s scores for these three dimensions are higher than other countries.

Figures 4.36–4.38 disaggregate results by gender and age of respondent, as well as by the type of community surveyed (urban or rural). The disaggregated data suggests a complex relationship between these three variables (gender, age, and type of community) and respondents’ perceptions of the drivers of violent extremism. While the charts do not suggest any overall linear associations or causal relationships, in some cases the selected variables seem to influence perceptions of these factors. This is the case, for instance, in Nigeria, where respondents aged 50 or older as well as those living in rural areas scored higher than others in relation to several drivers, notably perceptions of insecurity, the role and influence of armed groups, and small arms availability (see Figure 4.37). The questions selected for each dimension were asked in all five countries, including in Libya where the research team used a different sampling approach.

**Figure 4.35** Overall perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism\*



Base: All respondents

Notes:

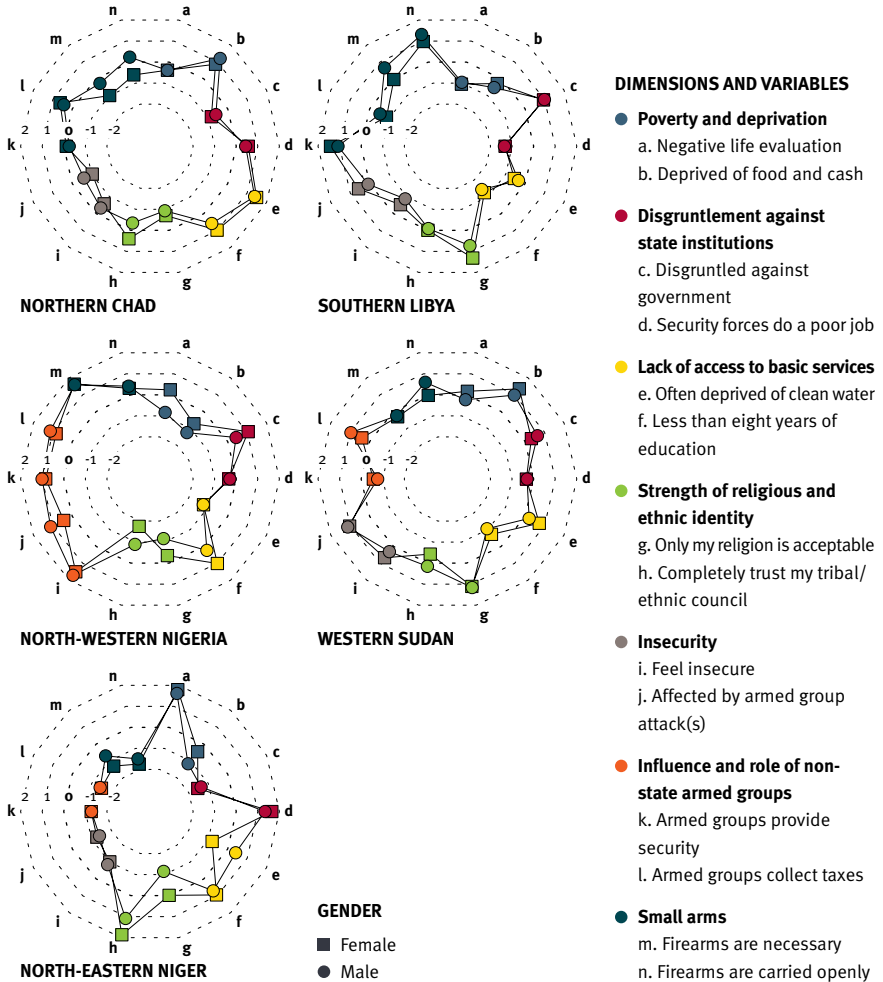
Values are expressed in standardized Z scores. A standardized Z score indicates how far from the mean a data point is, or by how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean for the five countries,<sup>16</sup> which is represented by the middle dotted line (0 score). These scores allow for a visual comparison of how answers to different questions and in different countries compare on a single scale.

\* See section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



**Figure 4.36** Perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism by gender\*



Base: All respondents

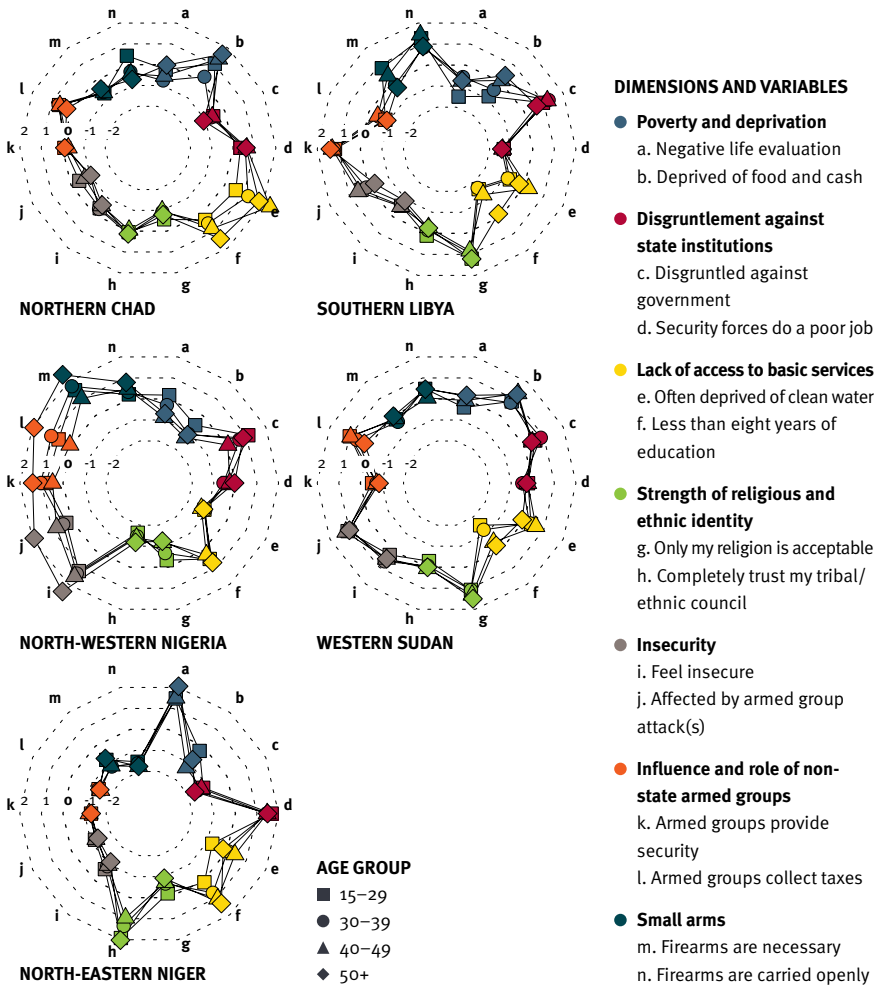
Notes:

Values are expressed in standardized Z scores. A standardized Z score indicates how far from the mean a data point is, or by how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean for the five countries, which is represented by the middle dotted line (0 score). These scores allow for a visual comparison of how answers to different questions and in different countries compare on a single scale.

\* See section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.37** Perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism by age group\*



Base: All respondents

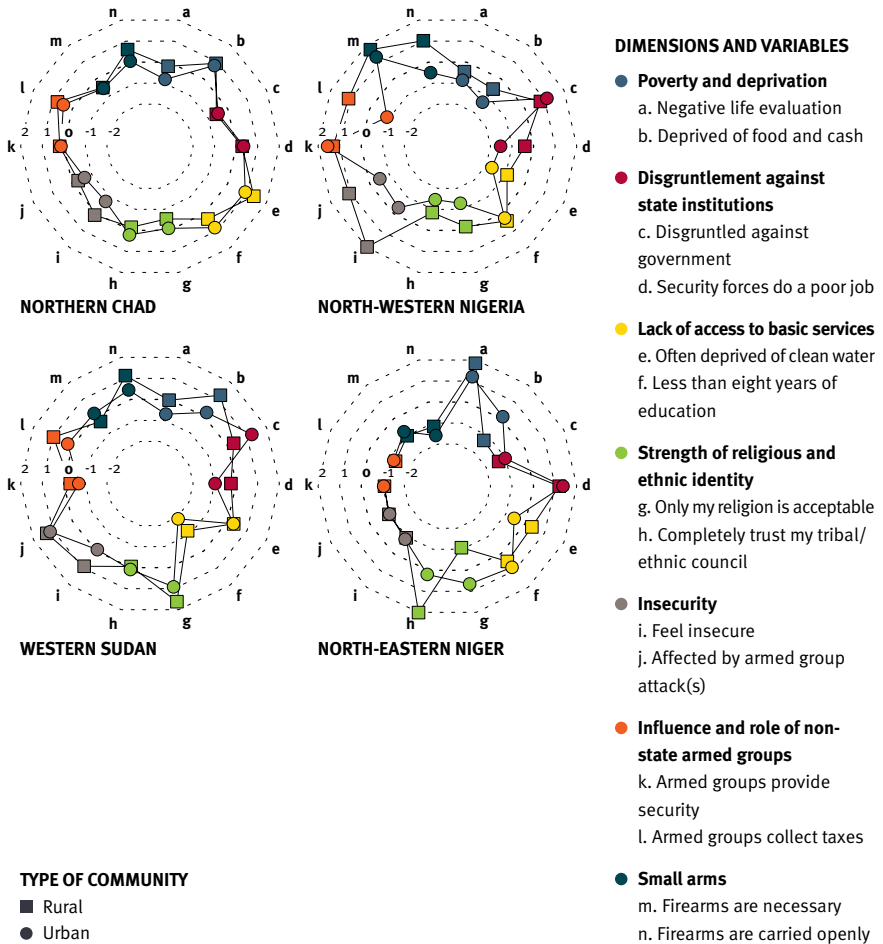
Notes:

Values are expressed in standardized Z scores. A standardized Z score indicates how far from the mean a data point is, or by how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean for the five countries, which is represented by the middle dotted line (0 score). These scores allow for a visual comparison of how answers to different questions and in different countries compare on a single scale.

\* See section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 4.38** Perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism by type of community



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note:

Values are expressed in standardized Z scores. A standardized Z score indicates how far from the mean a data point is, or by how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean for the five countries, which is represented by the middle dotted line (0 score). These scores allow for a visual comparison of how answers to different questions and in different countries compare on a single scale.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)





Reported recruitment by armed groups in the surveyed communities was clearly related to the extent to which cross-border trade was a local source of livelihood.”

## 5. Reported recruitment by armed groups

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This section analyses results relating to reported recruitment by armed groups in the respondents' communities and households. A section of the questionnaire for Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan asked respondents whether they were aware of armed groups—local, foreign, and violent extremist—attempting to recruit people from their community and household. The data presented here therefore provides information on the general profile of the people recruited and the recruitment strategies used by these armed groups, as perceived by the respondents who reported having knowledge of these activities. The questionnaire did not ask whether these respondents were themselves members of or affiliated with armed groups, so the analysis should be carefully interpreted as indirect knowledge of the activities of armed groups in the surveyed areas.

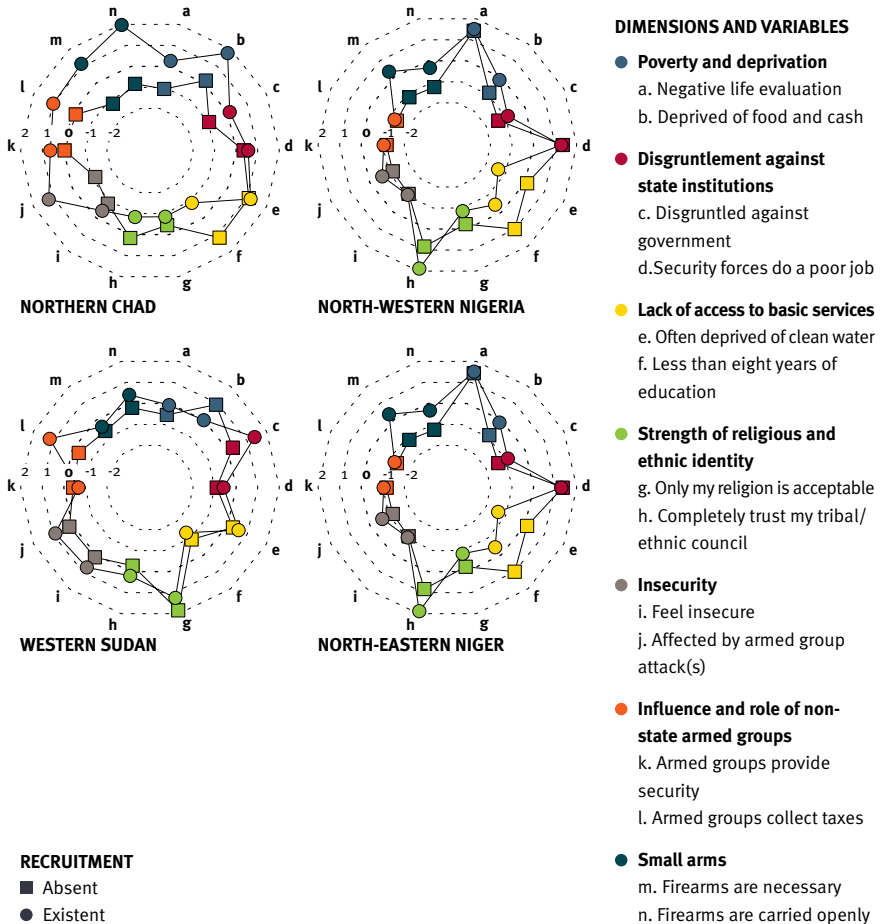
## 5.1 Recruitment by local and foreign armed groups

In total, 1,052 respondents—representing 19 per cent of the sample for the four countries—reported being aware of recruitment by local or foreign armed groups in their communities. Among those who reported such recruitment, 42 per cent indicated that the armed groups had attempted to recruit them personally. Respondents in Nigeria and Sudan reported more recruitment in their communities (35 and 23 per cent of respondents, respectively) than respondents in Chad and Niger (10 and 2 per cent, respectively) (see Figure 5.2). A greater proportion of respondents in Nigeria and Chad, however, reported that such recruitment concerned themselves or someone in their household, followed by Sudan and Niger (see Figure 5.3). The most cited recruitment strategy used by these groups was offering economic advantages, such as a high salary—

### **Box 5.1** Data spotlight on exposure to the drivers of violent extremism based on whether armed groups recruit in the community

Figure 5.1 illustrates perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism depending on whether armed groups were reported to have recruited members in the respondents' communities. Recruitment was considered present when interviewees responded 'yes' to the question, 'Are you aware of any local or foreign armed group trying to recruit people from [their] community?', and absent when they responded 'no'. Figure 5.1 shows only limited differences in how the respondents in Chad and Niger, based on whether recruitment by armed groups was reported in their community, perceived their exposure to the selected drivers of violent extremism. In Nigeria, however, respondents living in communities where such recruitment occurred also generally reported greater exposure to 11 of the 14 selected indicators of drivers of violent extremism.

**Figure 5.1** Perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism, disaggregated by whether recruitment by local or foreign armed groups was reported in their communities



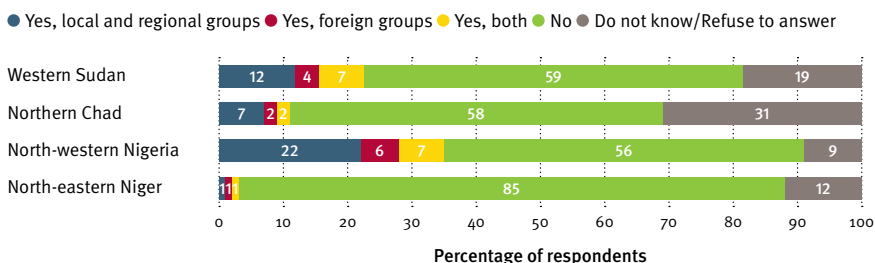
Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note:

Values are expressed in standardized Z scores. A standardized Z score indicates how far from the mean a data point is, or by how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean for the five countries, which is represented by the middle dotted line (0 score). These scores allow for a visual comparison of how answers to different questions and in different countries compare on a single scale.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 5.2** Are you aware of any local or foreign armed groups trying to recruit people from this community?



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

a strategy also frequently cited in Sudan, Niger, and Nigeria. Recruitment through tribal links was the most frequently cited strategy in Chad and regularly cited in the other three countries. Forceful recruitment tactics, such as abduction, coercion, or threats, appeared to be used mainly in Nigeria (see Figure 5.4).

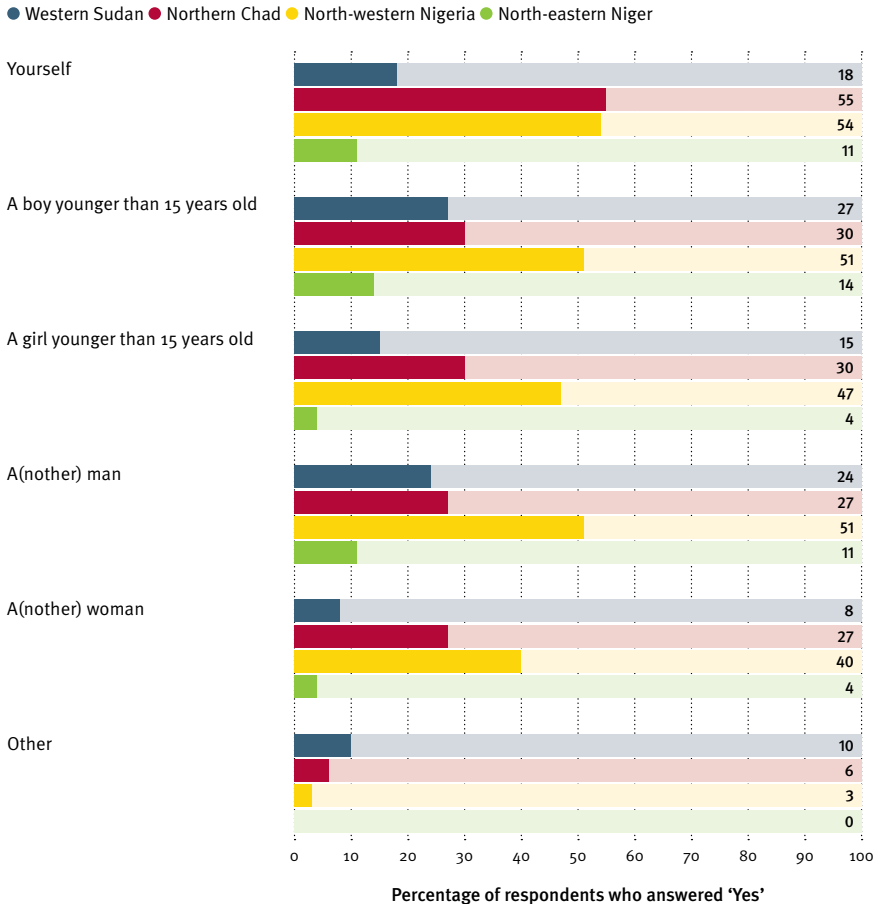
These questions were deemed too sensitive to ask in the quantitative survey in southern Libya; even among the small sample of respondents selected from local mediators, one-third declined to answer them. Among those who did, only inhabitants of southern localities indicated that armed groups had tried to recruit people from their community. Among these 14 respondents, out of the 56 respondents in the four southern Libyan localities, 12 indicated local and regional groups, whereas only 2 indicated foreign groups. Only 15 respondents (out of 56) responded to a question about the recruitment strategies adopted by foreign armed groups. The most frequently cited strategies were the offer of economic advantages (11), followed by close friends and personal networks (9) and the internet (7). Other less cited strategies were tribal links (5), an influential leader (3), the prospect of marriage (3) or adventure (3), coercion (1), and abduction (1).

Among the respondents aware of recruitment by armed groups, 40 per cent of those in Nigeria reported the use of the internet as a recruitment tactic, followed by 23 per cent in Chad, 10 per cent in Sudan, and zero per cent in Niger (see Figure 5.4). Social media facilitates online networking as survey participants in all countries reported relatively widespread use of social media platforms, ranging from 36 per cent in Niger to 89 per cent in Libya—although the high rate in Libya is likely to be linked to the higher proportion of young, educated respondents in that sample (see Figure 5.5).

Perceptions of armed groups’ recruitment strategies varied slightly depending on whether the respondent was a man or a woman. Male respondents were more likely to



**Figure 5.3** Have any of these groups ever tried to recruit you or someone from your household?



Base: Respondents aware of local or foreign armed groups trying to recruit people from their community (see Figure 5.2). Question not asked in Libya.

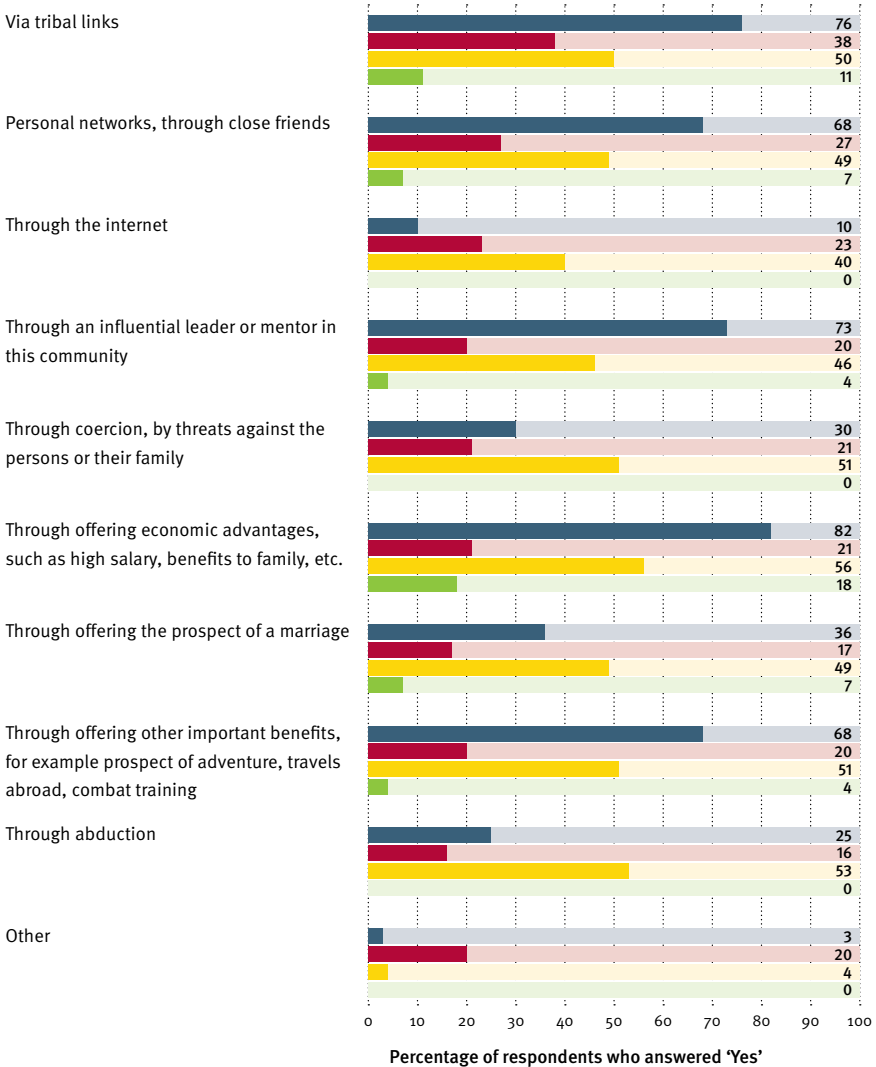
Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

report knowledge of female recruits than female respondents. Women were also slightly less likely than men to report armed groups having attempted to recruit them personally (see Figure 5.6). When asked about their knowledge of actual recruitment by armed groups, on average, respondents reported that more than twice as many men were recruited than women.

**Figure 5.4** How do local or foreign armed groups try to recruit people from this community?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria ● North-eastern Niger

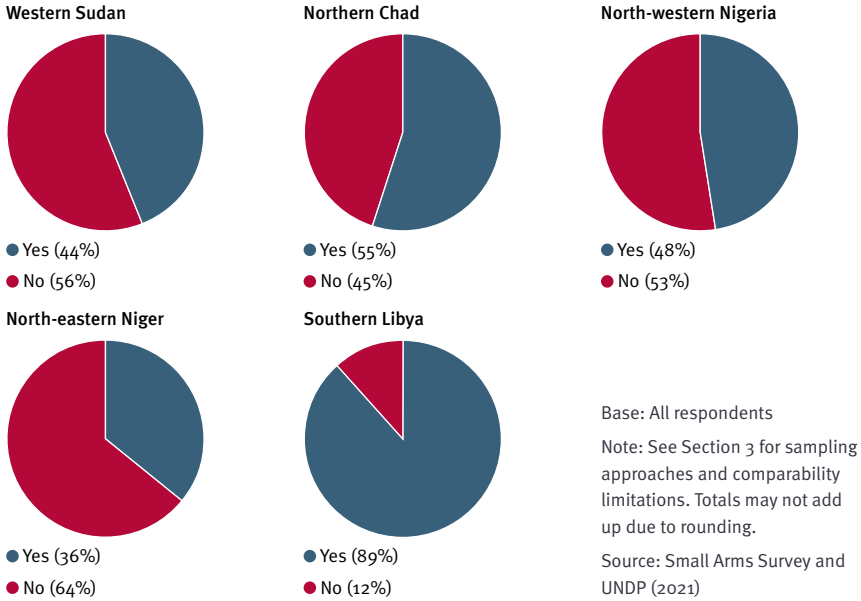


Base: Respondents aware of local or foreign armed groups trying to recruit people from their community (see Figure 5.2). Question not asked in Libya.

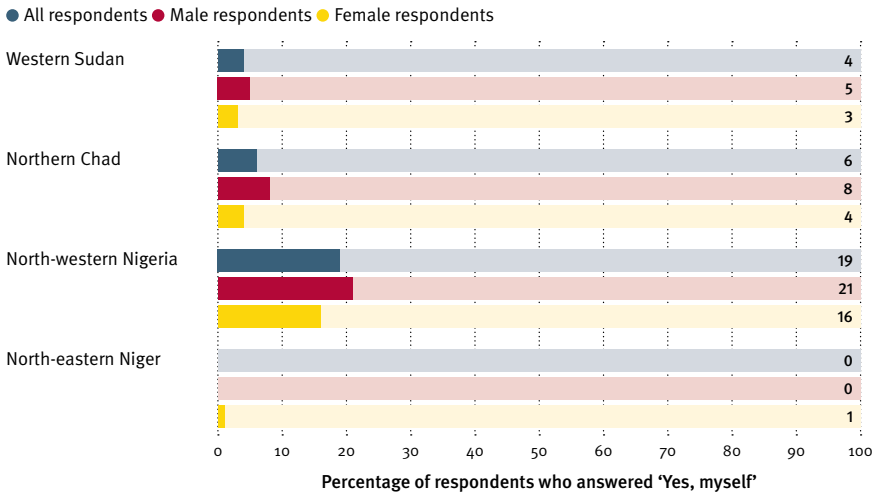
Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 5.5** Are you personally on any social media or chat platform?



**Figure 5.6** Have any of these groups ever tried to recruit you or someone from your household?



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

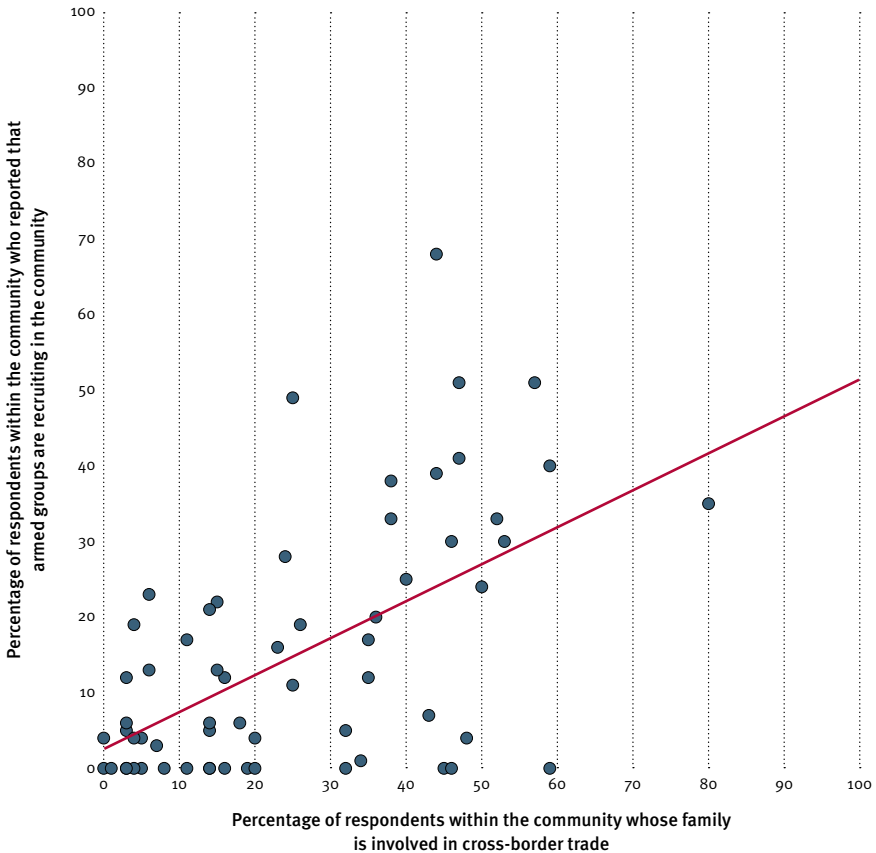


A truck heading to Niger transports goods and migrants near Murzuq, Libya. 24 November 2015.  
Source: Tom Westcott/The New Humanitarian



Reported recruitment by armed groups in the surveyed communities was clearly related to the extent to which cross-border trade was a local source of livelihood (see Figure 5.7). Family involvement in cross-border trade was also strongly linked to reported recruitment by armed groups in the community and to frequent cross-border travels in the community, suggesting that these activities happen in parallel.

**Figure 5.7** Correlation between communities' involvement in cross-border trade and armed group recruitment



Base: All respondents aggregated on community level (question not asked in Libya)

Note:  $R^2$  value for armed groups recruiting in the community = 0.60.  $R^2$  is a measure of the extent to which a dependent variable (for example, the percentage of respondents aware of armed groups recruiting in their community) is explained by an independent variable (for example, the percentage of respondents with family members who participate in cross-border trade in their community). If the  $R^2$  of a model is 0.60, 60 per cent of the dependent variable 'behaviour' is explained by the independent variable, signalling a clear association between the two phenomena.

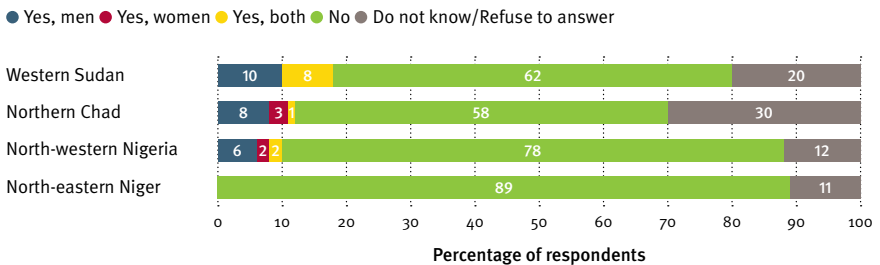
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

## 5.2 Recruitment by violent extremist groups

Respondents from the four regional case studies—Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan—were less knowledgeable about people joining violent extremist groups than they were about recruitment by local and foreign armed groups. Of all the respondents in the sample, 578 (or 11 per cent) reported being aware of recruitment by violent extremist groups in their area and provided information on the general profile of the recruits. This was the case for 18 per cent of respondents in Sudan, 12 per cent in Chad, 10 per cent in Nigeria, and zero per cent in Niger (see Figure 5.8). For Chad, Nigeria, and Sudan, most respondents reported recruitment within their own country (74, 86, and 78 per cent, respectively). The main countries that the recruits were reportedly sent to included, in descending order of importance, Sudan, Libya, and Chad for Sudanese respondents; Chad, Libya, and Mali for Chadian respondents; and Nigeria, Libya, Chad, and Iraq for Nigerian respondents (see Figure 5.9).<sup>17</sup>

The reported recruits were fairly evenly divided between males and females, with only slightly more men and boys than women and girls. A relatively high proportion of respondents in Nigeria thought that women from their community could play roles in extremist armed groups—including providing training (31 per cent) and logistics and domestic support (46 per cent), and as collectors of financial resources (44 per cent), intelligence gatherers (43 per cent), and combatants (40 per cent) (see Figure 5.10). In Sudan, the main roles identified were logistics and domestic services (55 per cent), followed by financial support and intelligence gathering (both at 48 per cent). In Chad, the most frequently cited role for women was that of combatant (16 per cent), while only a negligible proportion of Nigerian respondents assigned any of these roles to women.

**Figure 5.8** Are you personally aware of any men or women from this area who joined an extremist armed group in the past five years?



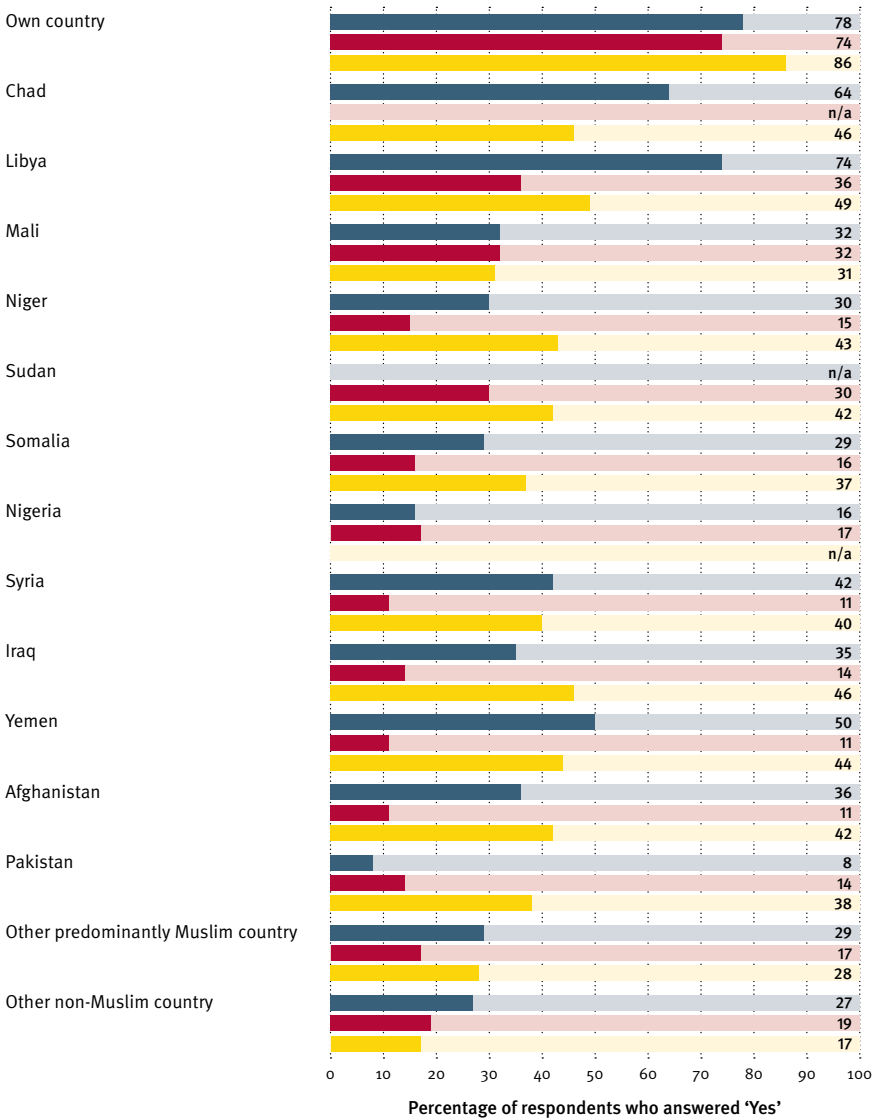
Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 5.9** In which country/ies [did they go to join the armed group]?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria



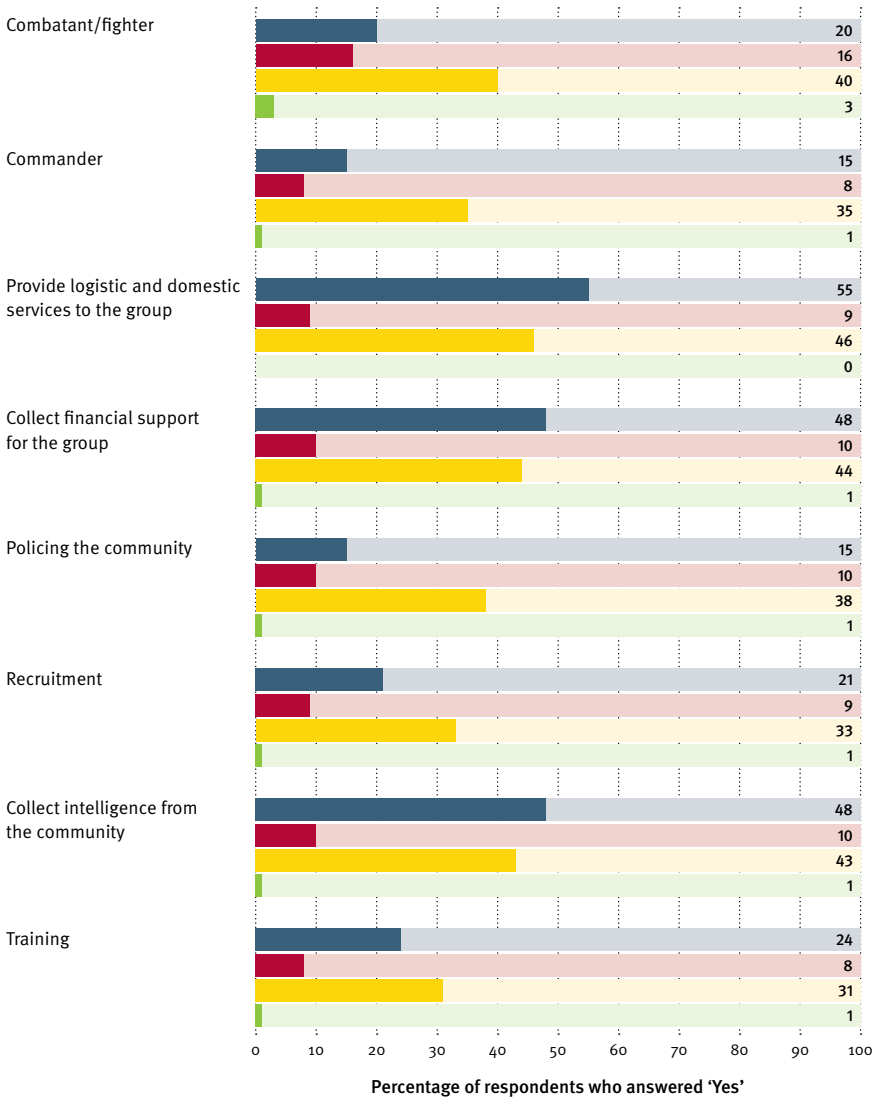
Base: Respondents who answered 'Yes' to the question 'Are you personally aware of any men or women from this area who joined an extremist armed group in the past five years?' (see Figure 5.8). This question was not asked in Libya and the number of observations in Niger was too low to analyse.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



**Figure 5.10** As far as you know, could females from this community take any of the following roles in extremist armed groups?

● Western Sudan ● Northern Chad ● North-western Nigeria ● North-eastern Niger



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

Among the 56 selected respondents from southern Libyan localities, the only localities in which some respondents indicated that women could be fighters and commanders were Sebha (7 out of 14 for both roles) and Kufra (2 and 4, respectively, out of 14). Similarly, 30 per cent of all selected respondents, most of whom were in Sebha and Kufra (15 out of 21), indicated that women could collect financial support for armed groups. ●



Overall, respondents in Libya, Nigeria, and Sudan were more disgruntled with a range of institutions, communities, and organizations—including state, non-state, and international entities—than interviewees in Chad and Niger.”

## 6. Affinity towards violent extremist groups and values

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**A**s the research was based on a general population survey, it did not include interviews with known members of violent extremist groups and was therefore unable to directly examine the link between active membership in an extremist group and perceptions of the main drivers of violent extremism. The survey did, however, ask respondents questions about their level of discontent with a number of institutions and actors, as well as their views—positive or negative—on well-known groups designated as terrorist organizations. Responses to these questions provide a measure of the respondent’s level of sympathy for and support to a number of actors and ideas that are commonly associated with violent extremism.

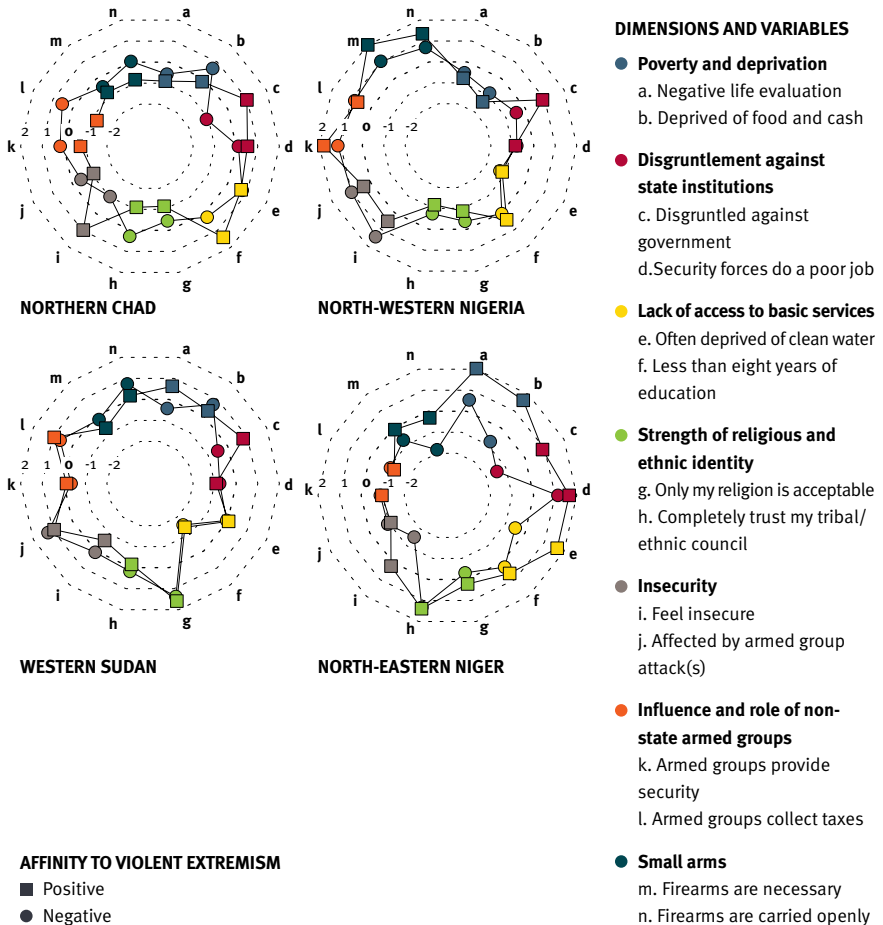
## 6.1 Perceptions of violent extremist groups

Perceptions of well-known violent extremist groups, such as IS, al-Qaeda, and al-Shabaab, were inconsistent across the four main case studies. Respondents in Chad, in particular, did not strongly associate these groups with any of the proposed positive and negative qualifiers displayed in Figure 6.2.<sup>18</sup> In the other three countries, most respondents agreed that these groups were ‘violent’, ‘dangerous’, and ‘evil’. Yet in all four countries, a non-negligible proportion of respondents felt that the groups were ‘righteous’ (31 per cent in Nigeria provided a score of 4 or 5, 22 per cent in Niger, 17 per cent in Sudan, and 16 per cent in Chad) and ‘just’ (30 per cent in Nigeria, 15 per cent

### **Box 6.1** Data spotlight on exposure to the drivers of violent extremism based on respondents’ affinity towards violent extremism

Figure 6.1 illustrates perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism based on whether the respondents appeared to strongly support values (notably those opposing the ‘system’ and other perceived enemies of violent extremist causes) and actors (such as IS, al-Qaeda, or al-Shabaab) associated with violent extremism. Some of the respondents from the four main regional case studies—Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan—displayed particularly strong support for such views and actors; those with a strong ‘positive’ affinity to violent extremism are considered here as a subset of the sample (see also Figure 6.2). Some, but not all, of the case studies revealed interesting patterns suggesting the lack of a systematic relationship overall between affinity to and drivers of violent extremism. In Niger, however, respondents who had positive perceptions of violent extremism tended to report higher exposure to most of the drivers of violent extremism under consideration, with the exception of the influence of armed groups in their communities. In other countries the relationship is much more mixed: while the perceptions of the main drivers tend to vary depending on the respondent’s affinity to violent extremism, they do not always follow the same pattern.

**Figure 6.1** Perceptions of selected drivers of violent extremism based on respondents' affinity to violent extremism



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Notes:

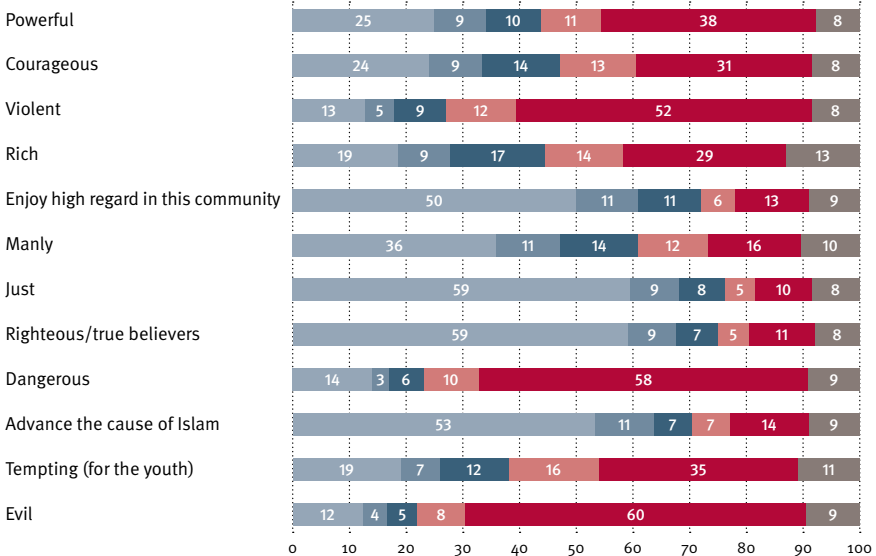
Values are expressed in standardized Z scores. A standardized Z score indicates how far from the mean a data point is, or by how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean for the four countries, which is represented by the middle dotted line (0 score). These scores allow for a visual comparison of how answers to different questions and in different countries compare on a single scale.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

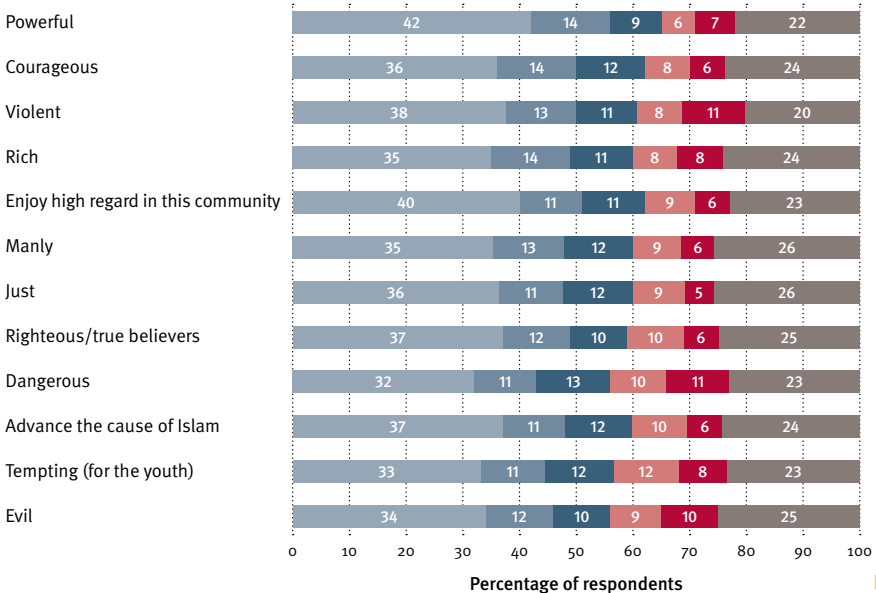
**Figure 6.2** When thinking of, for example, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Daesh/IS/ISIS, or al-Shabaab, to what extent do you think the following apply?

● 1 (Does not apply at all) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Applies completely) ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

**Western Sudan**



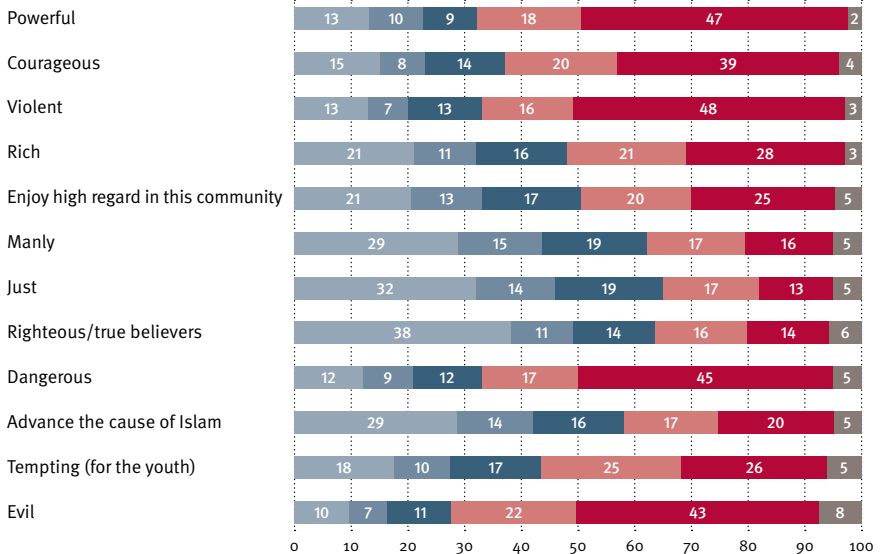
**Northern Chad**



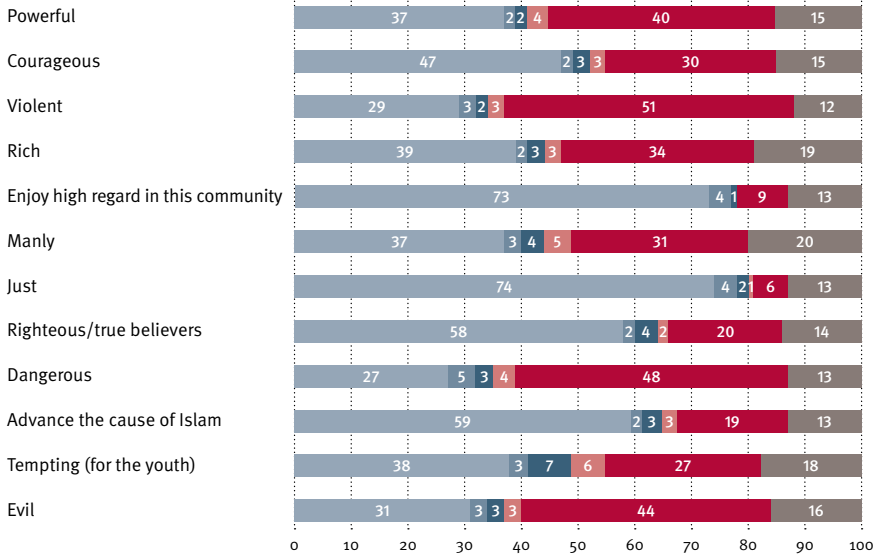
► **Figure 6.2 Continued**

● 1 (Does not apply at all) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Applies completely) ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

**North-western Nigeria**



**North-eastern Niger**



Percentage of respondents

Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya). Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

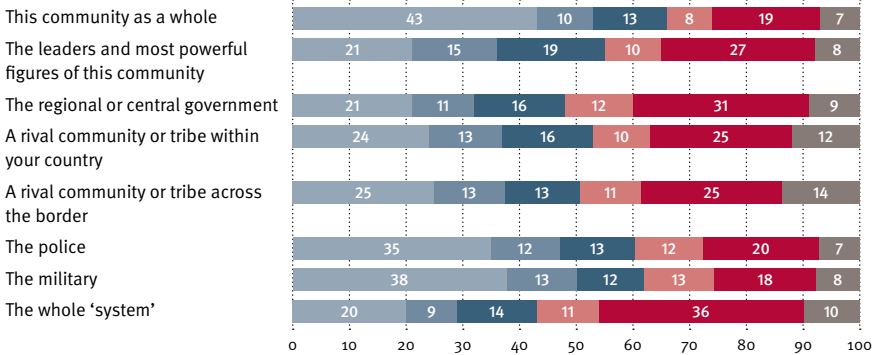
in Sudan, 14 per cent in Chad, and 7 per cent in Niger). When asked whether it is better that these groups exist, Nigerian respondents were the most likely to respond positively (16 per cent), followed by Chadian (8 per cent), Nigerien (5 per cent), and Sudanese respondents (4 per cent).

In Libya, based on the answers provided by the 56 respondents selected from the four southern localities, it seems that Libyans have negative opinions about violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram, al-Qaeda, and IS, characterizing them mainly as violent and dangerous; however, respondents from Ghat and particularly Kufra consistently appear to have a less negative attitude towards these terrorist-designated groups. Nevertheless, due to the small sample size and the purposive method of respondent selection, these responses should be taken as broad indications only.

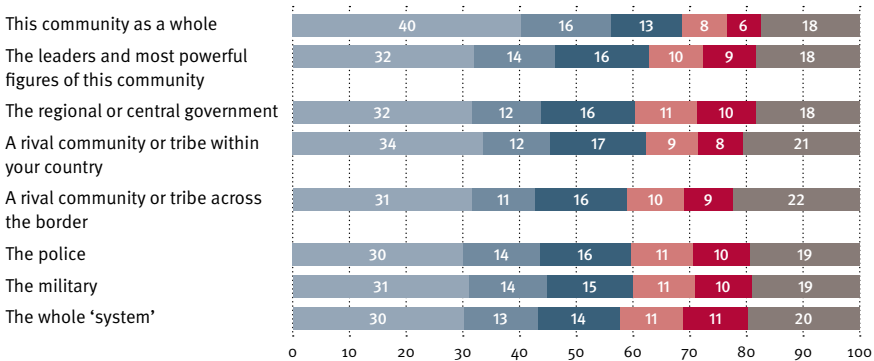
**Figure 6.3** Are you particularly angry/disgruntled/disaffectionate with any of the following?

● 1 (Not at all) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Extremely) ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

**Western Sudan**



**Northern Chad**



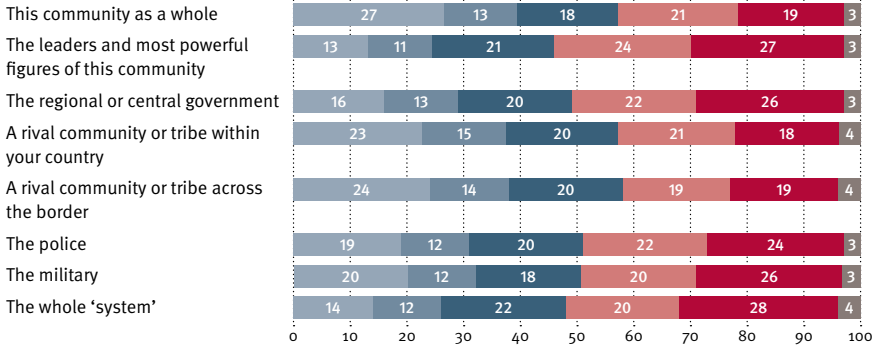
Percentage of respondents



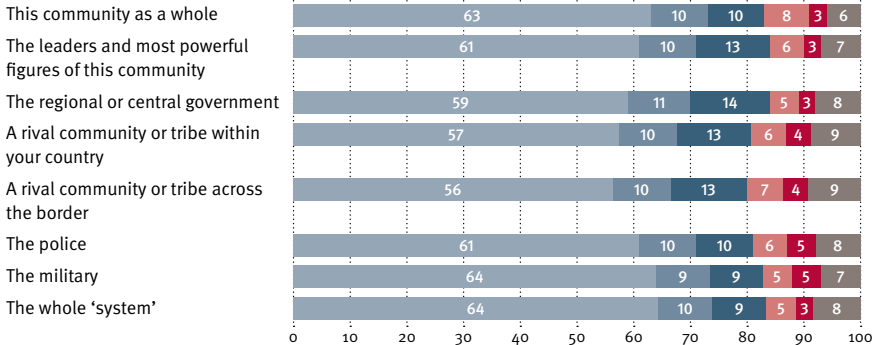
► **Figure 6.3 Continued**

● 1 (Not at all) ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 (Extremely) ● Do not know/Refuse to answer

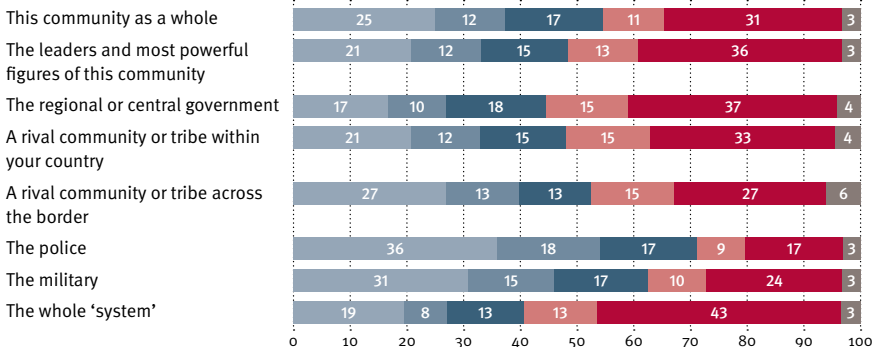
**North-western Nigeria**



**North-eastern Niger**



**Southern Libya**



Percentage of respondents

Base: All respondents.

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

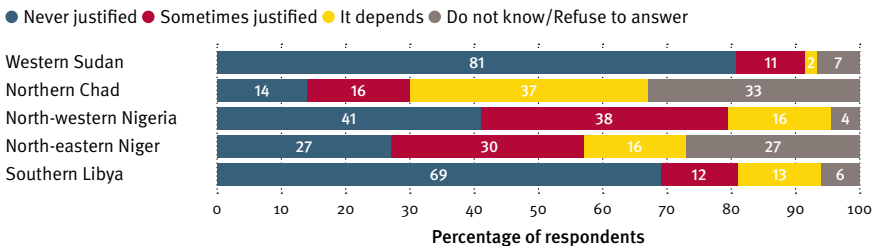
Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

## 6.2 Perceptions of values associated with violent extremism

The questionnaire addressed perceptions of a set of values that can be associated with violent extremism, including respondents' views on institutions that are frequently portrayed by violent extremist groups as enemies, opinions about the killing of civilians, and readiness to die for a variety of causes.

Overall, respondents in Libya, Nigeria, and Sudan were more disgruntled with a range of institutions, communities, and organizations—including state, non-state, and international entities—than interviewees in Chad and Niger (see Figure 6.3). Respondents in Libya, Sudan, and Nigeria seemed particularly angry towards ‘the whole system’ (43, 36, and 28 per cent, respectively, were ‘extremely angry’).

**Figure 6.4** Some people think that for the military to target and kill civilians is sometimes justified, while others think that kind of violence is never justified. Which is your opinion?

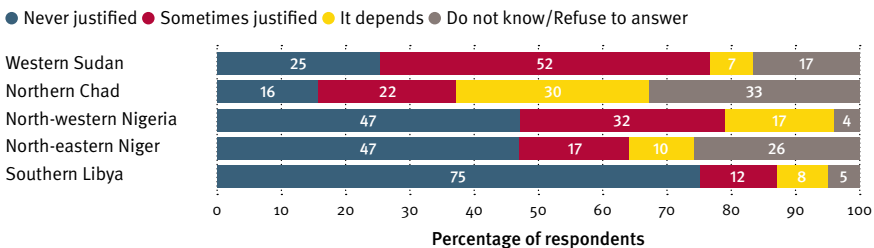


Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 6.5** Some people think that for an individual person or a small group of persons to target and kill civilians is sometimes justified, while others think that kind of violence is never justified. Which is your opinion?



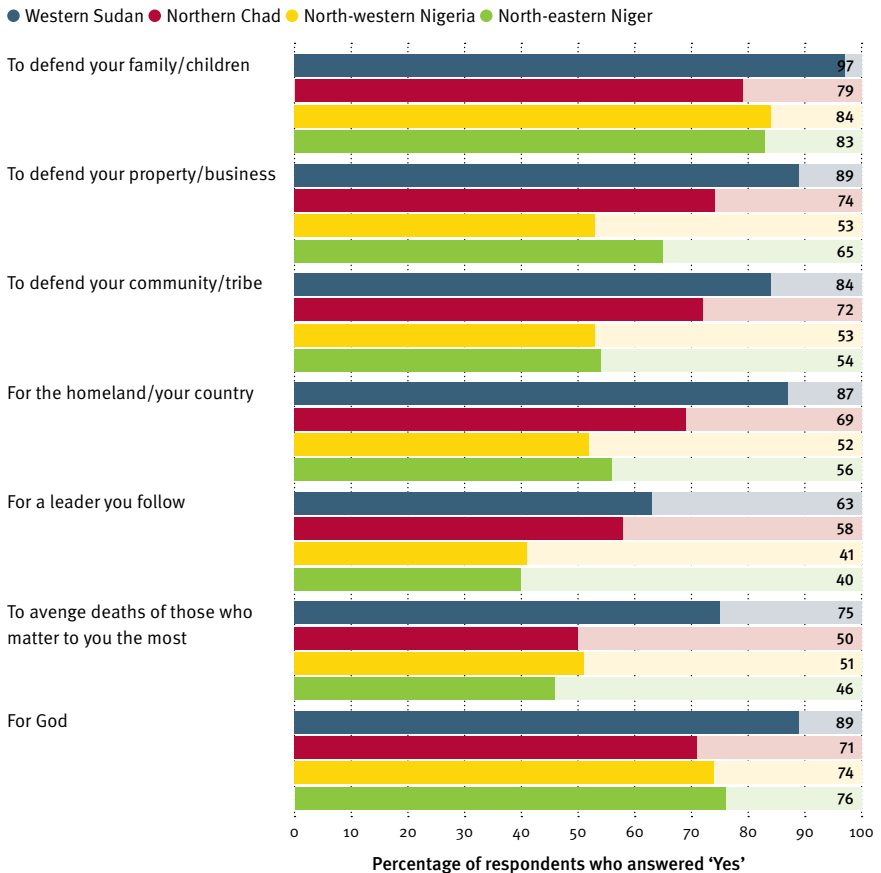
Base: All respondents

Note: See Section 3 for sampling approaches and comparability limitations. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

Views regarding the killing of civilians are inconsistent across the cases studies. More respondents in Nigeria (38 per cent) and Niger (30 per cent) than in Chad (16 per cent), Libya (12 per cent), and Sudan (11 per cent) believed that it was sometimes justified for the military to kill civilians (see Figure 6.4). Attitudes towards the killing of civilians by individuals or groups, however, show a different picture. In Sudan and Chad, these killings were viewed more positively than killings by the military. Respondents in Sudan showed the strongest support for such practices (52 per cent felt they are sometimes justified), followed by Nigeria (32 per cent), Chad (22 per cent), Niger (17 per cent), and Libya (12 per cent) (see Figure 6.5).

**Figure 6.6** Which of these would you be personally ready to die for?

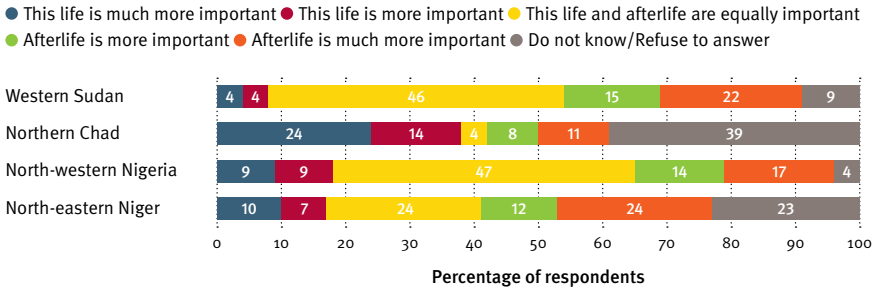


Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

**Figure 6.7** Do you value this life and the afterlife the same way and are you working towards both equally?



Base: All respondents (question not asked in Libya)

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

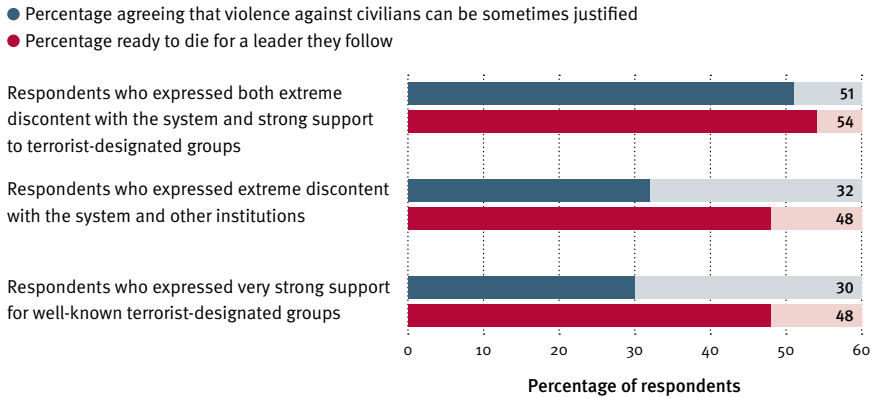
Most respondents expressed a willingness to die for a range of causes. The most commonly cited causes were to defend their family and children (ranging from 83 per cent in Niger to 97 per cent in Sudan) or ‘for God’ (ranging from 71 per cent in Chad to 89 per cent in Sudan). A majority of respondents in Sudan (63 per cent) and Chad (58 per cent) stated being ready to die for a leader they follow (see Figure 6.6). Respondents’ views on the importance of their current life on earth compared with their ‘life’ after death may also be a relevant factor. Respondents who valued their afterlife more than their current life outnumbered those who did not in Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan (see Figure 6.7). In Chad, however, a significant proportion of interviewees (39 per cent) did not respond to this question or indicated that they valued their current life more than their afterlife (38 per cent).

### 6.3 Affinity towards violent extremism

Taken in isolation, expressing support for violent extremist groups or for certain values associated with violent extremism does not necessarily equate to being a violent extremist. Individuals who show very strong support for these ideals can, however, be considered especially extreme in their views and merit particular scrutiny.

A small but non-negligible proportion of respondents in the four main case studies held particularly strong views with respect to discontent with the system and other institutions<sup>19</sup> and expressed support for well-known terrorist-designated organizations.<sup>20</sup> For instance, 179 respondents from the four countries covered in the regional survey had not only extremely favourable views of mainstream violent extremist groups, but also particularly severe grudges against the system. Remarkably, this subset also displays

**Figure 6.8** Is this extremism indeed ‘violent’?



Base: See endnotes 19 and 20.

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)

a high level of both support for violence against civilians (51 per cent) and willingness to die for a leader (54 per cent) (see Figure 6.8).

At the country level, the proportion of respondents displaying strong support for violent extremist organizations and a high level of discontent with national and international actors and institutions—and therefore possessing a mindset that could be considered as close to violent extremism—was highest in Nigeria (nearly 6 per cent), followed by Sudan (3 per cent), Chad (2 per cent), and Niger (below 2 per cent) (see Table 6.1). In Niger and Sudan, younger respondents, and especially young men, were more likely to express opinions suggesting an affinity towards violent extremism. On the other hand, in Chad and Nigeria, the 40–49-year-old cohort showed the highest affinity. Nigeria was the only case study where women had a higher level of affinity towards violent extremism than men.

At the community level, respondents with a strong affinity towards violent extremism were particularly concentrated in eight Chadian localities that reached or exceeded the threshold of three per cent of respondents sharing these views. The threshold was also reached in six Nigerian and six Sudanese communities compared with one community in Niger. As shown in Box 6.1, the more radical respondents in Niger tended to report higher exposure to many of the drivers of violent extremism compared with non-radical respondents. This relationship did not extend to the other case studies, however. ●

**Table 6.1** Prevalence of affinity to violent extremism by case study, age group, and sex of respondents

Location	Age groups	Sex of respondents		
		Males	Females	All
Northern Chad	15–24	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%
	25–39	2.8%	1.9%	2.3%
	40–49	5.8%	1.0%	3.7%
	50+	0.0%	2.6%	1.3%
	All respondents	2.8%	1.5%	2.1%
North-eastern Niger	15–24	5.6%	3.0%	3.9%
	25–39	1.2%	0.3%	0.7%
	40–49	2.2%	3.0%	2.5%
	50+	0.6%	1.1%	0.8%
	All respondents	1.6%	1.3%	1.5%
North-western Nigeria	15–24	6.8%	6.9%	6.9%
	25–39	5.1%	5.0%	5.0%
	40–49	8.1%	12.5%	9.4%
	50+	3.0%	8.3%	4.6%
	All respondents	5.3%	6.3%	5.8%
Western Sudan	15–24	6.3%	5.4%	5.8%
	25–39	3.8%	1.8%	2.9%
	40–49	2.2%	0.0%	1.5%
	50+	1.8%	3.3%	2.2%
	All respondents	3.2%	2.2%	2.8%
<b>Total</b>	15–24	5.0%	4.4%	4.6%
	25–39	3.5%	2.6%	3.0%
	40–49	4.1%	2.8%	3.7%
	50+	1.6%	3.9%	2.4%
	All respondents	3.4%	3.1%	3.3%

Source: Small Arms Survey and UNDP (2021)



Although violent extremist groups did not necessarily control territory in the areas surveyed, the study suggests that the situation in the southern Libya borderlands has the potential to deteriorate quickly if action is not taken.”

## Conclusion

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This Report examined public perceptions of the push-and-pull factors—or drivers—of violent extremism in the southern Libya borderlands and their linkages with respondents’ knowledge of recruitment by armed groups and degrees of affinity towards violent extremism. Overall, 6,852 people aged 15 and older were interviewed in border regions of northern Chad, southern Libya, north-western Nigeria, north-eastern Niger, and western Sudan, providing a unique regional sample for analysis. Poverty, hardship and deprivation, discontent with state institutions, lack of access to basic services, ethnic and religious identities, insecurity, blocked political participation, and small arms availability are among the key factors of vulnerability to violent extremism discussed in depth in the study.

The Report’s context-specific findings should help practitioners in the fields of development and PVE prioritize their interventions effectively to address the most pressing vulnerabilities in each of the surveyed border regions. More encompassing implications for policy and programming also emerge from the study and confirm several of the conclusions of the previous *Journey to Extremism in Africa* report (UNDP, 2017a, pp. 7–9). Hardship and deprivation represent major challenges in southern Libya’s border regions, including significant challenges for the life prospects of individuals born and raised in these areas. Such marginalization is even more problematic from a PVE perspective when it is exacerbated along ethnic, tribal, or religious lines, as was evident in some of this Report’s case studies. Programmes to support families and education in these regions therefore need to pay particular attention to preventing the widening of existing gaps between different identity groups, at the risk of being counterproductive from a PVE perspective.

Residents of the border communities expressed complex and nuanced perceptions of the state’s ability to provide security and justice. Interventions aiming to upgrade the quality and accountability of state institutions need to carefully consider these views and the performance of various institutions and agencies, which is often inconsistent and requires adapted forms of engagement. Perceptions of insecurity, the presence of armed groups, and the availability of small arms also varied greatly across the case studies. Insecurity can drive violent extremism by enabling armed groups to implant themselves locally and fill existing gaps. Security-focused interventions targeting armed groups may exacerbate local grievances, however, if these efforts fail to respect the human rights of local populations and pose a threat to their livelihoods. Practitioners therefore need to skilfully navigate the need to improve security in the Sahel’s border regions without jeopardizing local sources of livelihood, which often depend on the informal trade and other activities that can be strongly affected by counter-trafficking measures.

Although violent extremist groups did not necessarily control territory in the areas surveyed, the study suggests that the situation in the southern Libya borderlands has the potential to deteriorate quickly if action is not taken. A significant 19 per cent of respondents in Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan reported being aware of recruitment by



local or foreign armed groups in their communities, while 11 per cent declared being aware of recruitment by violent extremist groups. Moreover, recruitment by armed groups appears to be more common in areas that are more dependent on the cross-border trade. Around three per cent of respondents from the border regions of these four countries had not only extremely favourable views of mainstream violent extremist groups, but also particularly severe grudges against a range of institutions, communities, and organizations—perceptions which, when combined, often also coincided with unusual levels of support for the killing of civilians. Although these views are shared by only a small minority of the surveyed communities, they illustrate the importance of tackling the drivers of violent extremism in the region in a comprehensive manner in order to prevent larger numbers of people from reaching the potential ‘tipping point’ of violent extremism. ●

## Endnotes

- 1 The member states covered by the assessment were Chad, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan.
- 2 For a discussion on the definition of violent extremism, see, for instance, UNICRI (2020, pp. 11–12).
- 3 See also Nowak and Gsell (2018).
- 4 Push factors can also exist at the group or community and individual level. For instance, victims of torture by security forces may hold grievances that push them towards joining a violent extremist group.
- 5 See, for example, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and their arguments regarding the explanatory power of economic variables such as inequality in accounting for the occurrence of rebellion and civil war.
- 6 A 2019 report based on a survey conducted in all three regions of Libya (including in the southern city of Sebha), for instance, ‘revealed that attitudes supporting or condoning violence against women are the only statistically significant factor positively associated with support for violent extremism’ (UN Women, 2019, p. 19).
- 7 See, for instance, Tubiana and Gramizzi (2017; 2018).
- 8 KoBo Collect is a software that offers tools to facilitate field data collection and analysis.
- 9 In Sudan, the team did not use tablets for the data gathering but instead recorded responses on paper, before relying on laptops and tablets for the data entry.
- 10 The outline of the questionnaire is available in Annexe 1 in this Report.
- 11 The Libyan field researchers in southern Libyan localities indicated that attempting to carry out survey interviews in households would have been both dangerous and unreliable, given the high level of refusal rate and the lack of privacy provided by households they observed during previous surveys undertaken in the area.
- 12 The Libya research team sampled neighbourhoods in each city by using triangulated existing population data sets with satellite images and remote sensing geographic information system (GIS) techniques. In particular, the research team used the following sources of data: (1) the 2020 Libya Common Operational Dataset provided by the Libyan Bureau of Statistics and UN OCHA (these are population projections based on Libya’s last census, which was carried out in 2006); (2) neighbourhood maps for each municipality, and population breakdowns by neighbourhood provided by Libya’s Central Commission of Municipal Council Elections (CCMCE); and (3) population estimates inferred by the EU and by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) from recent, high-resolution satellite images.

- 13 Recruitment by violent extremist groups tends to exploit grievances, marginalization, and injustices experienced by communities, which makes them and their members vulnerable to violent extremism (UNICRI, 2020, p. xii). The relationship between hardship and violent extremism is not, however, systematic; some studies have highlighted the lack of clear correlations as well as the role of well-off individuals as perpetrators of violent extremism in some contexts (Allan et al., 2015, p. 43; Thiessen, 2019).
- 14 See also UNDP (2021).
- 15 Written correspondence with Jean-Louis Romanet Perroux, 18 January 2022, based on fieldwork and interviews with Libyan informants undertaken in 2018, 2020, and 2021. See also UNDP (2021).
- 16 By the definition of a Z score, the mean is equal to zero, and the positive and negative values refer to the number of standard deviations. These are relative measurements used to compare the different countries and questions when the raw scores cannot be compared on a single scale.
- 17 This question was also deemed too sensitive to be asked in the large baseline survey in Libya. Among the 56 respondents to the purposive survey carried out in southern Libyan localities, only one respondent (from Kufra) said they knew of someone from their area who had joined an extremist armed group in the last five years. More respondents answered the question about the country in which Libyan individuals had joined an extremist armed group: 11 indicated Libya; 5 indicated Syria; 2 indicated Iraq, Sudan, or Yemen; and only 1 indicated Mali, Niger, or Somalia.
- 18 The relatively high rate of non-response in Chad, as well as Chadian respondents' rather similar patterns of response across the categories, suggests possible issues with their understanding of this question. These results should therefore be interpreted with caution.
- 19 Respondents who said they were 'completely disgruntled' with 6 or more of the 11 institutions and actors tested are defined as such.
- 20 Respondents who share at least two of the following five opinions regarding international violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram, IS, al-Qaeda, or al-Shabaab: it 'applies completely' that these groups are (1) just, (2) righteous, or (3) advance the cause of Islam and 'does not apply at all' that these groups are (4) evil and (5) dangerous.

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# Annexe 1:

## Survey questionnaire outline

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### **Consent form**

### **Respondent background**

### **Socio-economic background**

- Life evaluation
- Economic status of respondent
- Basic services
- Passport, ID, voting status, and travel
- Identity

### **Community characteristics**

- Social cohesion
- Community marginalization
- Security
- Governance
- Economy and trade
- Women and youth in the community

### **Small arms and light weapons**

- Weapons in the community
- Weapons trade in the area
- Firearm ownership

### **Community experience with armed groups**

- Armed groups in the area
- Recruitment

### **Personal perceptions, dispositions, and values that potentially impact C/PVE**

- Personal victimization by armed groups
- Disaffection
- Image of violent extremist groups and their members
- Values

### **Interview evaluation**

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The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence whose mandate is to generate impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge on all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It is the principal international source of expertise, information, and analysis on small arms and armed violence issues, and acts as a resource for governments, policy-makers, researchers, and civil society. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and is an associated programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

The Survey has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, and criminology, and collaborates with a network of researchers, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

Research for this Report benefited from the expert inputs and network of the Security Assessment in North Africa (SANA), a multi-year project of the Small Arms Survey supporting those engaged in building a more secure environment in North Africa and the Sahel-Sahara region.

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