SPARC
Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises

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REPORT

RECOVERING FROM CIVIL WAR

Evidence from a decade of recovery in Northern Uganda

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Acknowledgements

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About SPARC

Climate change, armed conflict, environmental fragility and weak governance and the impact these have on natural resource-based livelihoods are among the key drivers of both crisis and poverty for communities in some of the world's most vulnerable and conflict-affected countries.

Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) aims to generate evidence and address knowledge gaps to build the resilience of millions of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers in these communities in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

We strive to create impact by using research and evidence to develop knowledge that improves how the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), donors, nongovernmental organisations, local and national governments and civil society can empower these communities in the context of climate change.

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ACRONYMS

FCS	Food Consumption Score
LC1	Local Council 1 Chairperson
LC3	Local Council 3 (sub-county)
LC5	Local District Councils
LDU	Local Defence Unit
MSI	Morris Score Index
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
SCG	Senior Citizens' Grant
WFP	World Food Programme
UPDF	Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This report presents the results of the fourth wave of a panel survey that has been tracking change in people's lives in Northern Uganda for over a decade.

In 2013, the first round of a panel survey was conducted by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)[1] in northern Uganda with the goal of following changes in:

- people's livelihoods and well-being
- their access to, and satisfaction with, basic services (education, health, water), social protection and livelihood assistance
- their relationships with and perceptions of governance processes, practices and political actors.

Subsequent rounds or 'waves' of the research were carried out in 2015 (Wave 2) and in 2018 (Wave 3). Panel research in post-conflict settings is rare. Interviewing the same households repeatedly over several years gives a longitudinal view ('trajectories') and thus a much better understanding of change processes than normal or cross-sectional surveys (where different households are interviewed each time). The Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) research programme decided to capitalise on this rich dataset and to continue the monitoring into a fourth wave (Wave 4).

Research for all waves was done between the months of January and March i.e. shortly after harvests when the food security situation would be expected to be at its best.

Interviewing in Wave 4 reached 1,497 households out of an original sample in Wave 1 of 1,853. This was representative of the Acholi and Lango sub-regions in northern Uganda, home to approximately 3.63 million people, and the two sub-regions most affected by the Government of Uganda and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) armed conflict. This report outlines findings from Wave 4.

Wave 1 was carried out five years after the end of the civil war in Uganda at a time when many people were still housed in displacement camps. Life was just beginning to recover from over a decade of devastation. Significant progress might have been expected in the recovery of the local economy and socially, as well as in feelings of security and rebuilt trust in the state and its institutions. However, progress in most dimensions has been quite limited.

1 SLRC was a research consortium led by ODI and financed by the UK government through the Department for International Development (DFID). The first three waves of the panel survey were conducted in collaboration with Tufts University.

Livelihoods and well-being

Just 4% more households had livelihood sources associated with a higher economic level in Wave 4 than in Wave 3. The panel nature of the survey shows this small increase hides movement up and down: 13% of households 'moved up' since Wave 3 (and 31% of households have moved up since Wave 1), but these rises are matched by those falling into livelihoods associated with lower well-being (9% since Wave 3 and 28% since Wave 1)

More people now own livestock but in general asset ownership has only increased a little, and mainly due to technological change – mobile phones and small solar phone chargers are now more affordable for most people than a decade ago. Economic change is related to increasing economic inequality, with a gap in the ownership of wealth between urban (higher) and rural (lower) populations having been created since Wave 1.

The longitudinal panel nature of the study shows that those who had the highest wealth (in asset ownership) in 2013 have remained in the highest group across all waves, whilst poorer households have remained poorer. Food security has been more difficult to analyse. The panel survey was set up using indicators that were commonly used by humanitarian agencies such as the Food Consumption Score (FCS). This indicator has shown almost no improvement over the last decade. However, given the FCS suggests that 90% of the population still have a diet that is unacceptable **by humanitarian standards**, this requires further investigation. It raises questions about an indicator that reports such a high level of unacceptability in this context.

Access to basic services, social protection and livelihood assistance

Access to health care remains low and has worsened over the four waves. Nearly half of households reported being unable to access treatment for routine illnesses or injuries, mainly because it was not available at their local health care provider. The situation for serious illnesses was worse (58% being unable to access necessary health care).

With regards to education, some improvements were seen in school enrolment, particularly in more equal access to schooling for girls and boys. However a small reduction in the frequency of school attendance was recorded since Wave 1, but a slight improvement since Wave 3. After costs, most of the decline since Wave 1 was attributed by respondents to domestic chores (for 29% of girls, but also including 13% of boys) and to the need for children to work.

Wave 4 took place after a 22-month closure of schools due to COVID-19. Many children (17%) did not return to school after COVID-19. Although many respondents said this was due to costs rather than a result of school closures, over half of the drop-out was attributed to reasons potentially linked to COVID-19, such as a child having become pregnant or being married during closure, being too old to go back to school or finding it too hard to go back after such an extended break.

Thus, COVID-19 does seem to have curtailed education for nearly 10% of children in the region. The government has put great emphasis on technical and vocational training to achieve economic growth, but this is currently restricted by availability.

Limited progress has been made in expanding social protection provision over the past decade, with the exception of the old-age pension or Senior Citizens' Grant, which has now been rolled out nationally and reaches 8% of all households. However, coverage is very patchy, with 14% of households receiving the grant in some districts and only 3% in others. Demographic factors do not explain this discrepancy, indicating a need to ensure a more rights-based approach towards entitlements to social protection.

The number of people who reported problems with basic services, especially water and education, has fallen. A major change has occurred in what happens when there are problems: people are now far more likely to complain and complaints are now roughly twice as likely to lead to action compared with Wave 1. Assistance was given in response to over half of complaints related to water and education, and 45% of those related to health care. This compares with around 30% for all sectors in Wave 1 and 40% in Wave 3.

Governance processes, practices and political actors

There has been no improvement in people's experience of crime or in perceptions of safety within their own communities, with only half the population feeling 'very safe' in their own villages. The trend across previous waves of people feeling less safe in areas populated by other ethnic groups has continued into Wave 4, and a quarter of people reported a lower score for safety in Wave 4 than in Wave 1.

The most worrying findings were arguably related to notions of a social contract between citizens and the state, other ethnic groups or tribes, and broader societal relationships. Only 30% of respondents said they have great trust in people from other ethnic groups or tribes, and a quarter would not welcome them into their village. Relating to conflict and violence, most people said that the use of violence in society could be justified, e.g. to defend people of one's own tribe or to force a government to change policy.

Attitudes to government as a whole were more difficult to interpret. It is hard to ascertain how far the findings are an artefact of the way in which questions were asked. Attitudes to government remain negative wave on wave, but when comparing the answers across the waves that people have given about their current perceptions, attitudes seem to have become less negative: local government has a rating[2] of -30%, but this is an improvement on -47% in Wave 1. Central government's rating of -34% is down from -54% in Wave 1 and from -50% in Wave 3. However, when asked to compare government now and at the time of the previous waves (i.e. three years previously), more people said that local and central government had got worse than had got better.

Policy implications

Policy implications that emerge from this study include the following:

- Poverty reduction cannot happen without paying attention to growing economic inequality. Assistance has been skewed to the better-off, and there has been almost no economic mobility. Addressing this should be a priority.

- People are becoming more vocal and this has led to more responsive service delivery. Support to services has often focused on the supply side, but building up the countervailing power of citizens to demand services as an entitlement is an important complement. This requires long-term investment.

- Social tensions, in particular between ethnic groups, should be an explicit area of attention.

2 The difference between the number having a positive perception and those with a negative perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

Post-conflict recovery is a process than encompasses household livelihoods and the economy, state institutions, including service delivery, and social and political relations. These all interact, but not always in obvious or expected ways. The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium which ran from 2011 to 2019 was established to understand these processes better.

Its work included a panel survey in five countries,[3] tracking changes in the lives of a few hundred households in each country relating to their livelihoods, their experiences of service delivery and assistance, and attitudes of trust and political legitimacy (Mallet and Slater, 2017; Sturge et al., 2017). The first round of the survey was conducted in northern Uganda in 2013 (Mazurana et al., 2014), with subsequent rounds, interviewing the same households, in 2015 (Marshak et al., 2017) and in 2018 (Marshak et al., 2019).

SPARC[4] is a research programme whose study area covers the dryland belt across the north of the African continent from Mauritania to Somalia, within which most of the countries continue to be affected by conflicts. Uganda, though, is a rare example of a genuine post-conflict situation in the study countries. Panel surveys are a rare resource, especially in countries in or recovering from conflict. There are few studies which have been able to follow post-conflict processes over more than a decade, and so SPARC has taken the opportunity provided by this baseline material to examine how these trajectories in livelihoods, state services and perceptions of the state have developed in the subsequent years.

This report presents the findings of the fourth wave of the panel survey conducted in 2022, and examines changes which have occurred across the four waves since 2013.

1.1 Background to northern Uganda

Northern Uganda suffered from a civil war between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from 1986 to 2006. The brutal war affected the entire Acholi sub-region and large parts of Lango sub-region (Figure 1), leaving more than 100,000 people killed, almost the entire rural population of over two million forcibly displaced, and the local economy destroyed. These two sub-regions in northern Uganda continue to face immense challenges, despite millions of dollars in aid and numerous post-war development programmes.

Over the last decade and a half, the country as a whole has shown some economic recovery from the various conflicts that had engulfed it over the previous four decades. National poverty rates fell by more than half in the last three decades (UBOS, 2021; World Bank, 2016).

3 Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

4 The Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) is a research programme funded by FCDO, running from 2020 to 2025.

However, rates of the chronically poor remain very much higher in northern Uganda, at 22% compared to 11% in the east, 5% in the west and just 0.5% in the central region (UBOS, 2021). Scores on a Multidimensional Poverty Index are also much higher in the north: Acholi and Lango sub-regions have multidimensional poverty rates of 64% and 57% respectively, compared to Kampala at 0.4% and the central zone, which is between 18% and 30%.

Primary school completion is among the lowest in the world, and the rate of youth unemployment is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2016). In the north, 35% of all households are headed by women, which is the highest rate in the country (UBOS, 2013).

Female-headed and widow-headed households experience far greater vulnerability to land disputes, asset theft, and forms of legal marginalisation (Mazurana et al., 2014; Levine, 2016). Uganda continues to score poorly on the global Corruption Perceptions Index at just 26/100 and ranking 142 out of 176 countries in 2022 (Transparency International, n.d.). Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 55% below 18 and a total of 78% under 30 years (UBOS, 2016).

FIGURE 1: MAP OF UGANDA

Source: Ochen and Primus (2023).

2. METHODOLOGY

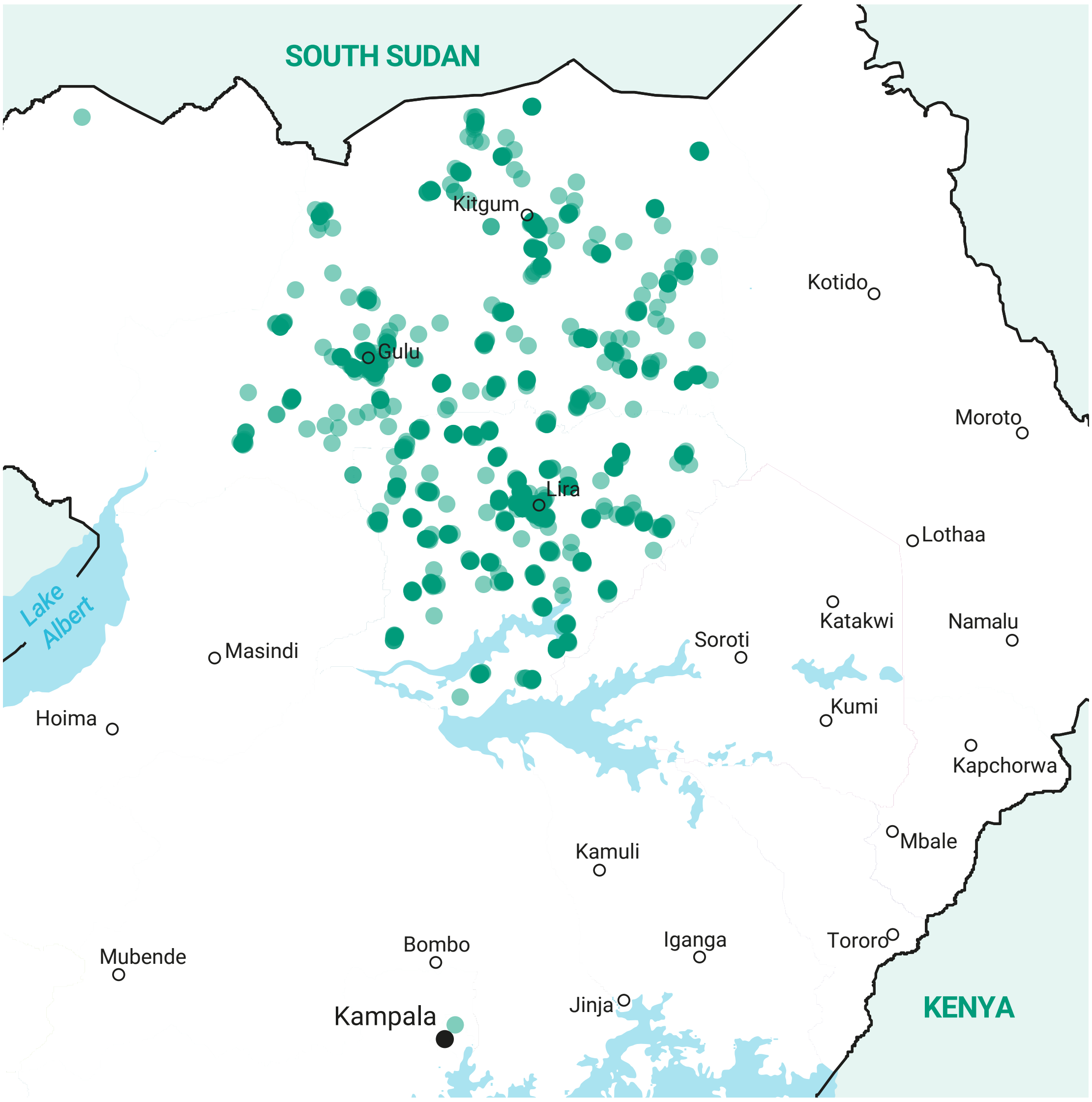
The panel survey followed the trajectories of individual households and respondents from 2013 to 2022, generating information about change over time in:

- livelihoods and well-being (income-generating activities, asset portfolios, food security, constraining and enabling factors within the broader institutional and geographical context)
- access to and satisfaction with basic services (education, health, water) and transfers (social protection and livelihood assistance)
- relationships with and perceptions of governance processes, practices and political actors.

The 2013 baseline survey in Uganda was conducted in January and February 2013; the second round in January–March 2015; and the third wave February–March 2018. The latest, fourth survey wave was conducted in April–June 2022 in two phases. Most households were interviewed in April, but further work continued in May–June 2022 to track those who were missing. Some modules were added to the survey instrument over the course of the four waves. In this most recent wave, a module was added on social relationships (see below). Because there is no baseline for these questions, for this subject the survey serves as a cross-sectional survey and not a panel survey.

The 2013 baseline survey was designed with a sample size that provided a buffer of 20% to account for future non-response. Attrition, or non-response, was 16% in 2015, 18% in 2018 and reached 19% in 2022, i.e. within the tolerance threshold of the survey design to maintain significance. The total sample size in Wave 4 was 1,497 households. The analysis for the present data used non-response weights in order to restore the Wave 4 sample to the original sample size to eliminate bias from analytical findings both in descriptive and inferential statistics. The sample is representative of approximately 1.5 million people in Acholi and 2.1 million people in Lango, for a total of 3.6 million people covering the two sub-regions.

FIGURE 2: MAP OF SURVEY AREAS IN NORTHERN UGANDA



Source: Authors.

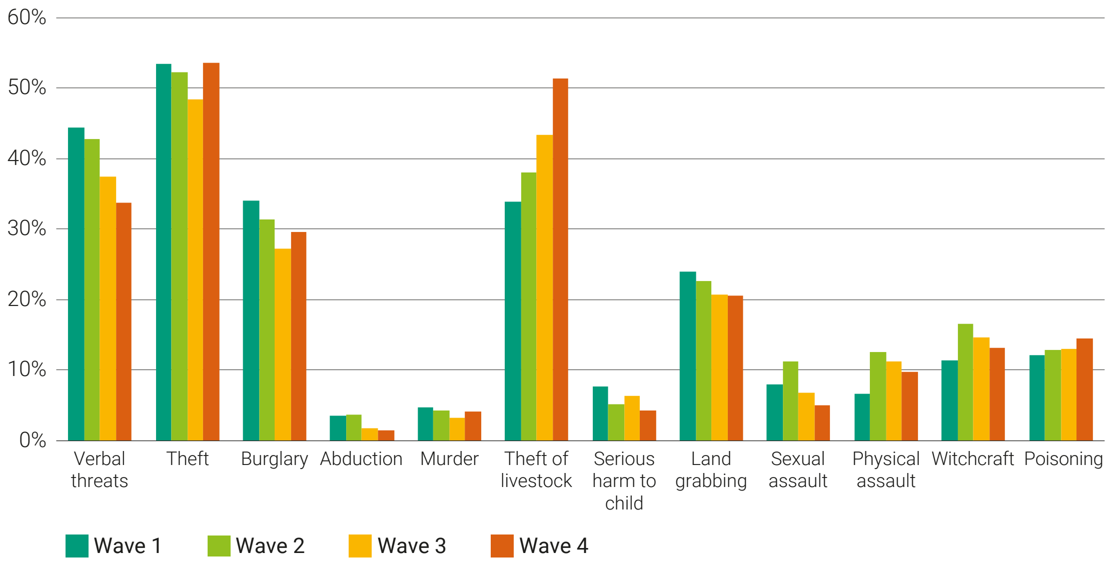
3. CRIME, SHOCKS AND SAFETY

3.1 Changes in experience of crime

Overall, the picture of experience of crimes has not changed hugely over the last decade (see Figure 3). The greatest change in reported crime was theft of livestock, reported by 34% of households in 2013, rising to 44% of households in Wave 3 and to 51% in Wave 4.[5] The proportion of households reporting that they were victims of any kind of crime over the past three years slightly increased between the waves. Levels of aggression and conflict in society remain high. In every wave, over 20% of all households have reported suffering from land grabbing in the previous three years. More than a third of households reported experiencing verbal threats in the previous three years (see Figure 3).

Some caution may be needed with regard to the reliability of these responses. Murder and abduction were reported as having been experienced over the past three years by 4% and 1.5% of households respectively. If accurate, such a murder rate across the two sub-regions would be almost double the murder rate in the city with the highest murder rate in the world in 2022.[6] This is unlikely. Explanations may be that reports of murder and abduction were mentioned even when they referred to the civil war period, i.e. outside the stipulated three-year recall period, or that people were thinking of crimes not experienced by their immediate household. It is unclear, though, how far such explanations would extend to all other reported crimes and how far they too suffer from possible over-reporting.

FIGURE 3: PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING HAVING EXPERIENCED CRIME IN PREVIOUS THREE YEARS, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

5 Unless otherwise stated, whenever figures are used to describe a change between waves, the differences between the figures are statistically significant at p=0.05 or below, i.e. there is less than a 5% chance that the difference found in the sample does not reflect a difference in the overall population.

6 There were 181 murders per 100,000 people in 2022 in Colima, Mexico, a centre of violence between drug gangs (El Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la Justicia Penal). This would equate to 3.2% of households suffering a murder over a three-year period if the household size is six on average.

3.2 Experience of shocks

Several shocks continued to affect households over time. Shocks included: climatic, health, economic/assets, death and other losses.

In comparison to Wave 3, households reported experiencing slightly more shocks (from 3.45 per household to 3.6), although there was no significant increase from Wave 2. Bad weather, death in the family and sudden health problems all increased in Wave 4 (see Table 1).[7] Crop and livestock disease dropped from 90% in Wave 3 to 76% in Wave 4. Price rises were a major problem in every wave, but in 2021 and 2022, a prolonged dry spell and delayed onset of the rains reduced food production prospects in parts of Lango and Acholi sub-region, leading to high food prices (FEWS NET 2022, 2021; Katongole, 2021). This is in addition to the global impact of COVID-19, which contributed to the rise in inflation and prices of essential goods.

TABLE 1: SHOCKS EXPERIENCED, BY WAVE

Type of shock	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Sudden health problem	30%	35%***	26%***	30%
Long-term health problem	26%	28%**	27%	24%**
Death of a family member	20%***	13%***	13%***	16%
Inflation price hikes	60%***	58%***	66%	84%***
Job loss of a family member	3%	2%	3%	3%
Land disputes	24%	24%	27%	26%
COVID-19 restrictions				79%
Crops/livestock disease	70%***	71%***	90%***	76%***
Bad weather	80%***	80%***	90%***	92%***
Fire in house	13%	13%	13%	12%
Other shock	1%***	2%	4%***	4%***
Total number of shocks per household	3.2***	3.1***	3.5***	3.6***

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% compared to Wave 2 and Wave 3.

Source: Authors.

Taken together, the data on crime and on shocks show that life remains precarious, with a very high incidence of crime, disputes and conflict and of other external shocks. This picture shows no strong improving trend during the post-war recovery over the four waves.

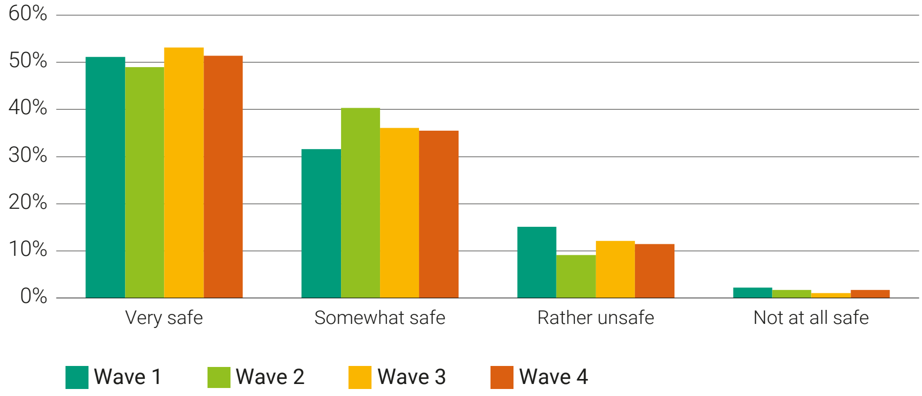
7 Any statement in the report that the prevalence of a parameter has increased (or decreased) means that the increase in reports was statistically significant, unless otherwise indicated.

3.3 Perception of safety

The study looked at the perception of safety within people's own villages, outside their villages and in the districts of neighbouring tribes or ethnic groups, i.e. moving outside of either the Acholi or Lango sub-regions.

Perceptions of safety within the village in each sub-region have not improved since 2012 (Figure 4), with only around half the population continuing to feel very safe in their own village, and 13% continuing to feel somewhat or very unsafe.

FIGURE 4: PERCEPTION OF SAFETY IN VILLAGE, BY WAVE

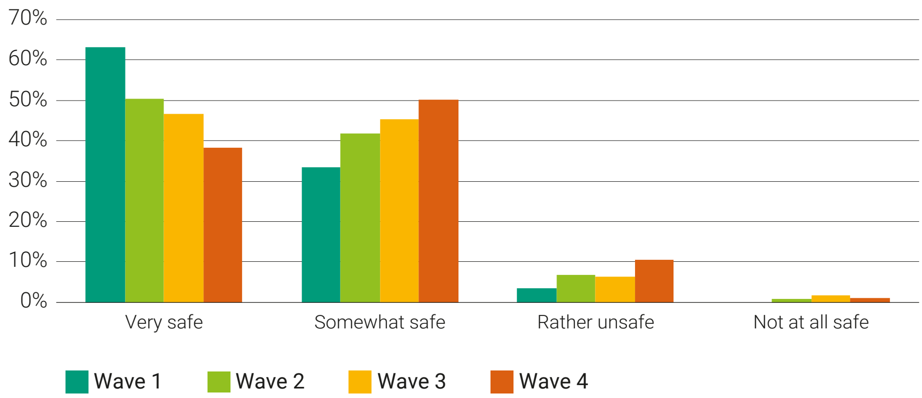


Source: Authors.

Figures for feelings of safety outside the village but within their ethnic sub-region are very similar and also changed little over the past decade. The number of people who feel not at all safe outside their village continues to be lower than those who feel very unsafe in their village.

Perceptions of safety outside the sub-region have deteriorated markedly over the four waves (Figure 5 and Table 2). From over 60% of people feeling very safe in Wave 1, by Wave 4 only 38% of people felt very safe. There has been a constant rise in the numbers of people feeling somewhat or very unsafe, just 3% in Wave 1 to 12% in Wave 4. In every wave, more people have reported their feelings of safety getting worse than those who report it getting better (Table 2).

FIGURE 5: PERCEPTION OF SAFETY IN DISTRICTS OF OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

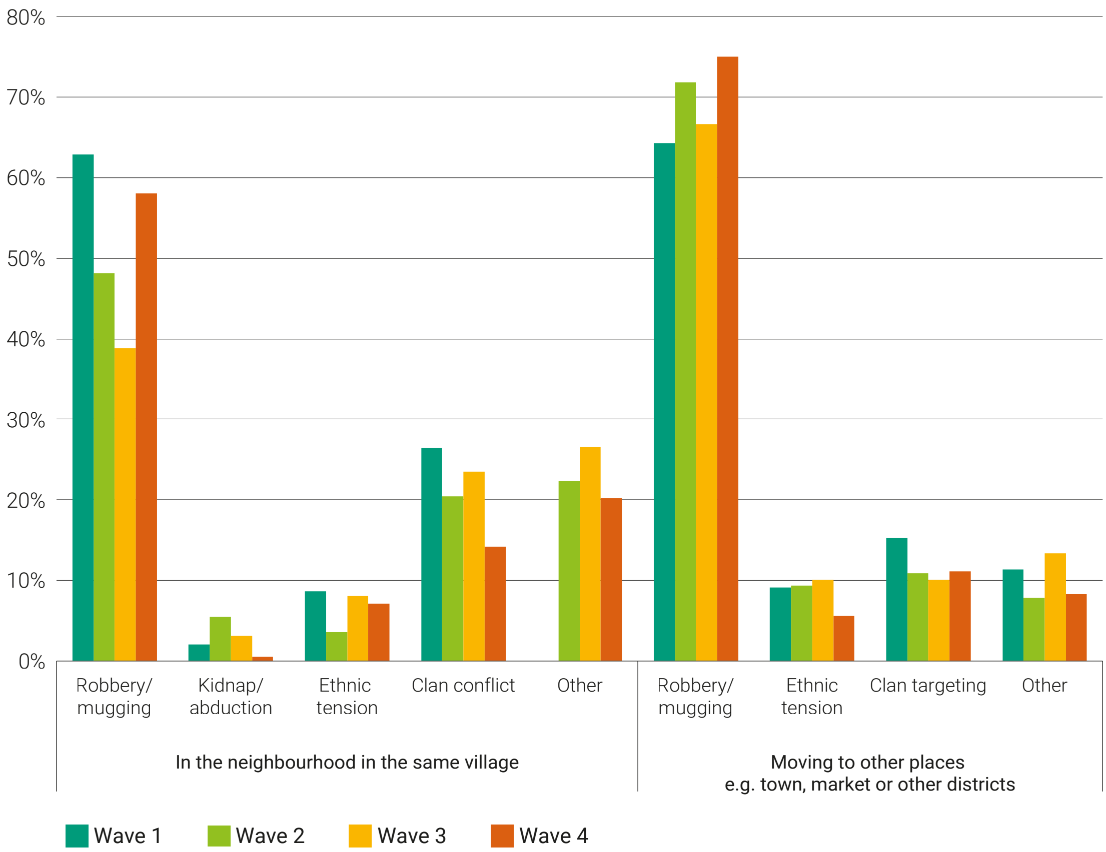
TABLE 2: CHANGES IN PERCEPTION OF SAFETY OUTSIDE PEOPLE'S OWN SUB-REGION

Change in answers between waves	Wave 1–2 %	Wave 2–3 %	Wave 3–4 %
Score deteriorated	32	27	34
Same answer	51	49	42
Score improved	17	25	24
Net change	*-15*	*-2*	*-9*

Source: Authors.

Robbery remains by far the main fear in both nearby and further off places. The proportion of respondents who expressed fear of robbery or mugging while moving to other neighbouring districts increased from 65% in Wave 1 to 75% in Wave 4. In the last two waves, fear of robbery in the village increased by 20 percentage points (38% to 59%). This may be due at least in part to rising insecurity in Karamoja sub-region (bordering on both Acholi and Lango sub-regions to the east) which has also left districts bordering Karamoja insecure, although fear of robbery when travelling to markets or to town has not increased so much.

FIGURE 6: TYPES OF SECURITY THREATS, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

4. LIVELIHOODS

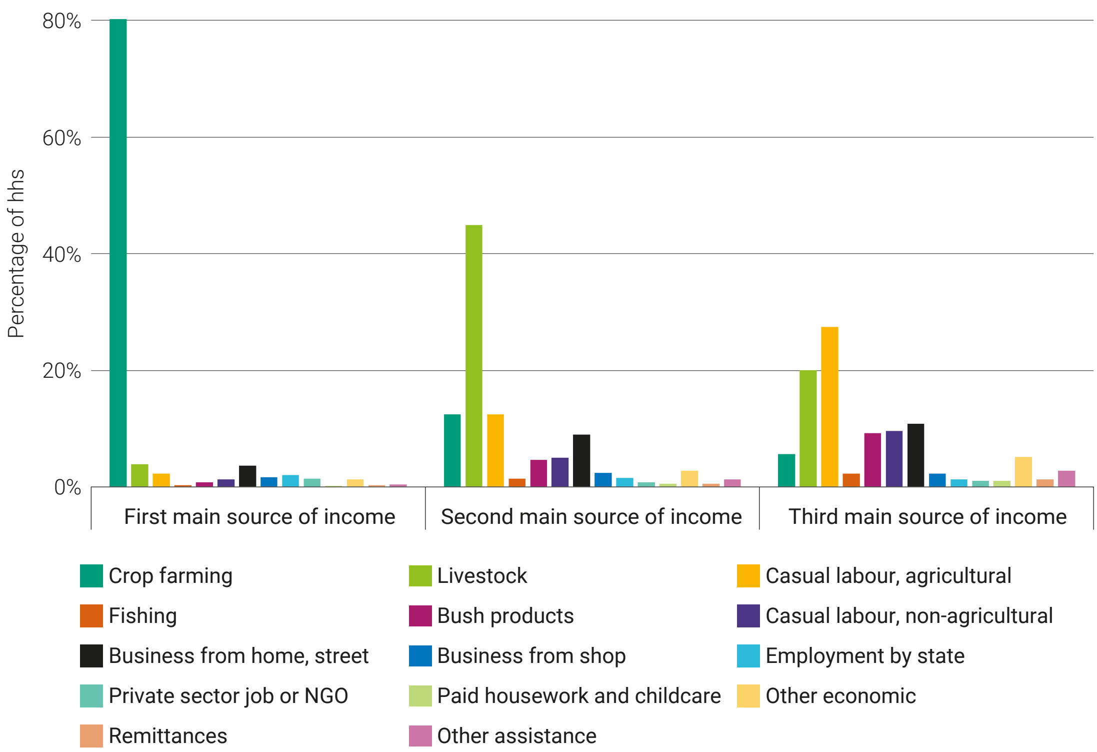
4.1 Source of livelihoods

The study used two tools for measuring livelihood strategies: 1) the main *activities* of each of the household members aged six and above, and 2) the main source of household's *income*. Because the study is drawn from a panel analysis, each individual household could be tracked separately.

Approximately 80% of households relied mainly on crop farming, selling agricultural products to generate household income. Few households relied mainly on keeping livestock (4%), small businesses (e.g. home-run business, or selling in the market or street) (4%) or on casual agricultural labour (2%). Almost 5% rely on the most precarious sources of income which do not demand any capital as their most important income source (i.e. casual labour of any kind or the exploitation of bush products, e.g. firewood collection), and a further 22% rely on these as their second most important income source.

Close to half (45%) of households living from crop farming had livestock as the second most important supplement to their household income. Casual agricultural labour (13%), crop farming (12%) and small businesses (9%) were other common second sources of income. Casual agricultural labour was also the most common third source of income. Figure 7 shows the huge reliance on food and cash income sources related to agriculture. There are very limited opportunities for most people to earn a living from non-farm income.

FIGURE 7: TOP THREE MOST IMPORTANT HOUSEHOLD INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES



Source: Authors.

Correlation analysis shows some patterns in households' major sources of income, where one more-lucrative opportunity is correlated with, and presumably enables, other more-lucrative economic activities.

1. Crop farming and casual agricultural labour are not only closely linked to each other but are also associated with lower level of wealth (see below).

2. Households whose first income source is livestock were more likely to engage in business in a shop as a secondary income. Such households are more likely to have higher wealth levels than those who relied on cultivation.

3. Households where a member was employed by the state were likely also to own a business and to own livestock.

4. Households having home/street or market business as their most important source of income were more likely to engage in shop business or livestock as second and third most important income source respectively.

5. Households with a shop or trading from home as their most important income sources were more likely to have a family member engaged in another business selling in the market or street. They were also more likely to have a member employed formally in the private sector.

4.2 Changes in livelihood activities over time

The panel nature of the survey makes it possible to track changes in an individual household's livelihood activities over time, independently of changes in the overall prevalence of those activities. Broadly, the changes have been few, considering that the decade over which they took place is seen as the phase of economic recovery after a civil war that destroyed the local economy and agricultural production. Over 75% of households relied mostly on crop farming in all four waves.

Between 2018 and 2022, the prevalence of households for whom livestock keeping was a main or secondary activity (an economic activity associated with higher incomes) remained the same, evidence of the lack of development of the livestock sector overall. However, panel analysis shows that underneath this unchanging figure, 4% of households succeeded in developing their livestock keeping, whilst exactly the same proportion saw their livestock keeping fall back to a secondary livelihood source. This reminds us that unchanging prevalence masks movement up and down for different households. Other studies from Uganda have shown that stable poverty rates can hide how many are constantly moving in and out of poverty, in a phenomenon known as 'churning'.[8]

Some changes can be interpreted positively, at least to the extent that they are (statistically) associated with higher levels of wealth. More people are living from a shop business (from 0.7% in Wave 3 to 1.4% in Wave 4) and from formal employment by the state (0.6% to 1.2%). Using the statistical associations of livelihood strategies with wealth levels, we can typify each household as having no change, a move to a 'higher' livelihood strategy or a move

8 For example, Hulme et al. (2001); Lwanga-Ntalea and McClean (2004); Scott et al. (2014).

to a ‘lower’ livelihood strategy. (No judgements are being made about any other aspects of livelihood strategies and no conclusions can be drawn from these changes about the economic position of the individual households.) As Table 3 shows, after a small overall negative change from Wave 1 to Wave 2, there has since been a small increase in the use of livelihood strategies that are more positively associated with wealth.

TABLE 3: CHANGES IN LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES BY INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS, AS JUDGED BY ASSOCIATION OF INCOME SOURCE WITH WEALTH, BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS

	W1–W2	W2–W3	W3–W4
No change	82	79	77
"Higher" livelihood strategy	7	11	13
"Lower" livelihood strategy	10	9	9
Net change	*-3*	*2*	*4*

Note: the changes classified as ‘higher’ were: from crops to livestock; from casual labour to farming; from farming to business; from farming to formal employment. The changes classified as lower were: from livestock to crops; from business to farming; from formal employment to farming.

Source: Authors.

4.3 Household asset ownership

It is assumed that most wealth is held in the form of physical assets rather than in monetary form (e.g. bank savings or investments). Asset holdings were measured using the Morris Score Index (MSI) as a proxy (Morris et al., 1999). MSI is a weighted asset indicator that weights each asset according to the frequency with which the asset is owned, i.e. rarely owned assets are scored higher than those owned by most people.

A higher MSI score indicates greater household wealth. As shown in Table 4, MSI increased in every wave, rising from 29 in Wave 1 to 40 in Wave 4. As detailed below, the increases in MSI were largely due to wider ownership of assets that had previously been more rarely owned, such as mobile phones (now owned by three-quarters of households), small solar panels for charging mobile phones (previously owned by 5% but now by half of all households), motorbikes and livestock (Table 5).

Ownership of the first two of these are the result of the spread of mobile connectivity to rural areas, technological change, and a huge increase in affordability – a 6W solar charger can now be purchased in Uganda for under $15.

TABLE 4: MORRIS SCORE OF ASSET OWNERSHIP, BY WAVE

Waves	1 (2013)	2 (2015)	3 (2018)	4 (2022)
Average MSI	29	33	36	40
Difference from previous wave	-	3	3	4

Source: Authors.

TABLE 5: ASSET OWNERSHIP, BY WAVE

Household assets (%)	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
1. Hand tools	94%	94%	94%	97%
2. Mattress	73%	81%	87%	87%
3. Small livestock (e.g. poultry)	76%	80%	80%	78%
4. Hand tools for cutting (machete)	72%	79%	81%	81%
5. Medium-sized livestock (e.g. goats)	60%	62%	66%	65%
6. Radio	57%	56%	53%	49%
7. Mobile phone	53%	58%	65%	74%
8. Bicycle or wheelbarrow	53%	57%	55%	51%
9. Large livestock (e.g. cattle, donkeys)	33%	38%	43%	44%
10. Plough	17%	21%	24%	30%
11. Motorbike (or car)	5%	7%	7%	12%
12. Solar panel/solar phone charger	5%	14%	33%	51%
13. Generator	2%	2%	1%	1%
14. Powered machines (e.g. tiller)	1%	1%	1%	1%
15. Cart for donkey or oxen	0%	0%	0%	2%

Source: Authors.

4.4 Determinants of household inequality

Statistical analysis shows the factors most correlated with differences in asset wealth (though it cannot prove a causal connection). The gap between urban and rural areas has increased markedly over the four waves (see Table 6). Other factors associated with greater asset holdings are: higher levels of education of the household head; larger household size; and different economic activity of the household, as described above.[9] There is also an inverse relationship with exposure to shocks and crimes. Of these, only the positive association with household size might not be expected, and the explanation is not obvious. It may simply reflect the fact that larger households are reporting on the assets accumulated by a larger number of people, i.e. the figure represents an asset wealth per household, and not an asset wealth per person.

TABLE 6: DIFFERENCE IN ASSET HOLDINGS BY MORRIS SCORE, RURAL AND URBAN HOUSEHOLDS, BY WAVE

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Urban	30.9	43.6	38.7	45.9
Rural	29.5	32.3	35.2	38.7

Source: Authors.

9 See note under Table 3.

The panel nature of the study allowed us to see that the overall improvement in asset wealth was not due to mobility across economic groups.

Households with the lowest wealth in 2013 largely remained in this category across all survey waves. The overall increase in their asset score was due to the greater prevalence of assets previously owned only by the wealthier (see above). Those in the highest wealth bracket in 2013 also remained in the highest group across all waves.

4.5 Migration and remittances

Migration and remittances continue to play a small role in northern Uganda throughout the four waves of survey.

4.5.1 Migration

Overall, 11% of households in the two sub-regions had at least one member living in another part of the country or, more rarely, outside Uganda. More households now have a member who migrated elsewhere in Uganda in the previous three years (from 6% in Wave 3 to 10% in Wave 4), but fewer have a member who migrated outside Uganda in the previous 3 years (from 1.5% to 1.2%). This may be related to COVID-19. The majority of people migrating internally moved within northern Uganda (54%) or to Kampala (25%). Migration outside east Africa formed only 3% of the total migration. The common reasons for migration were cited as for work (61%), schooling (20%) and marriage (14%).

4.5.2 Remittances

Since 2013, remittances in northern Uganda have not increased, and the overall frequency remains very low in 2022 (5%). This constitutes less than half (42%) of households with a migrant member. Remittances were almost always in money (96%) but there was often a reciprocal exchange, with half of those households sending food items to the migrant member. Monetary remittances mainly went towards the payment of school fees in the rural areas.

COVID-19 affected the receipt of remittances, and many households who normally received remittances reported not receiving any during COVID-19 lockdown (59% in Acholi and 32% in Lango).

TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WHO MIGRATED AND RECEIVED REMITTANCES IN PREVIOUS THREE YEARS, BY WAVE

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Households received remittances in the previous two years	5.7%	2.6%	2.9%	5.1%
Household member migrated abroad in previous three years	1.1%	2.8%	1.5%	1.2%
Household member migrated within Uganda in previous three years	2.9%	4.1%	5.5%	10.3%

Source: Authors.

4.6 Household food security

Food consumption is established using recall of food groups eaten and their frequency, in the previous seven days. This allows for analysis both using household dietary diversity and using the Food Consumption Score (FCS). FCS is a proxy indicator for food consumption, a composite score based on dietary diversity, but combining scores with the frequency with which each food group is eaten over the previous seven days, and where different food groups are weighted differently.[10]

The amount of food consumed is **not** measured, and so FCS is not a direct indicator of nutritional intake. There is no scientific evidence for establishing thresholds in FCS. The World Food Programme (WFP) tends to equate scores under 21 with dietary intake that they call 'poor'; 22–35 as 'borderline'; and over 35 as 'acceptable'. But there is no study linking these thresholds to nutritional status and caution should be exercised in interpreting the classification within any given dietary culture.

FCS is a very short-term indicator and it would be expected to vary seasonally. All four waves of the survey were conducted at a similar time of the year, enabling some cross-wave comparability. Very little improvement has been seen in household food access as measured by FCS from waves 1 to 4.

During this period, the average FCS fluctuated between 25.4 and 27.7, scores that were considered to fall at the low end of borderline. Only 1 in 10 households had an FCS regarded by WFP as acceptable (over 35). Acholi has seen a steady but very slow increase in the scores: in Lango, the scores reduced between Wave 1 and Wave 3, and only in Wave 4 did they show any (small but statistically significant) increase (Table 8).

TABLE 8: FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE, BY SUB-REGION AND WAVE

Sub-region	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
LANGO	27.9	26.5	27.4	28.7
ACHOLI	24.8	25.1	26.3	26.7

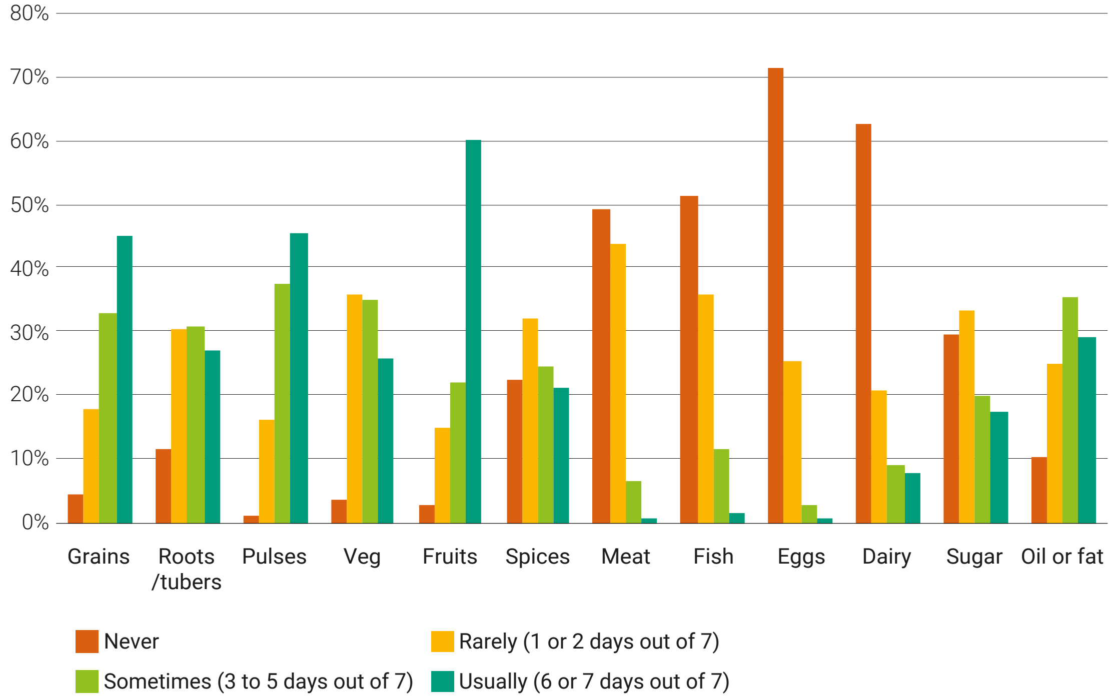
Source: Authors.

A significant improvement in the food consumption score over time was seen among households near fishing sites.

Looking more narrowly at dietary diversity, in the seven days prior to the survey, half of the households had eaten no animal protein.

10 WFP, 2015.

FIGURE 8: FREQUENCY OF FOOD CONSUMPTION OF FOOD GROUPS IN PRECEDING SEVEN DAYS, APRIL 2022



Source: Authors.

The findings raise questions about the use of FCS. Although poverty levels have remained high in northern Uganda, particularly in comparison to the rest of the country, the area cannot be said to be facing any kind of humanitarian emergency. Questions need to be asked about an indicator that reports that 90% of households in a stable situation without any emergency had a food consumption that fell below a threshold of what would be acceptable in a humanitarian crisis.

5. STATE SERVICES (HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WATER)

5.1 Health services

The study looked at several measures of health service access that included; access to health care for routine and for serious illnesses; availability of medicine and of personnel; waiting time; and the perception of the quality of health services.

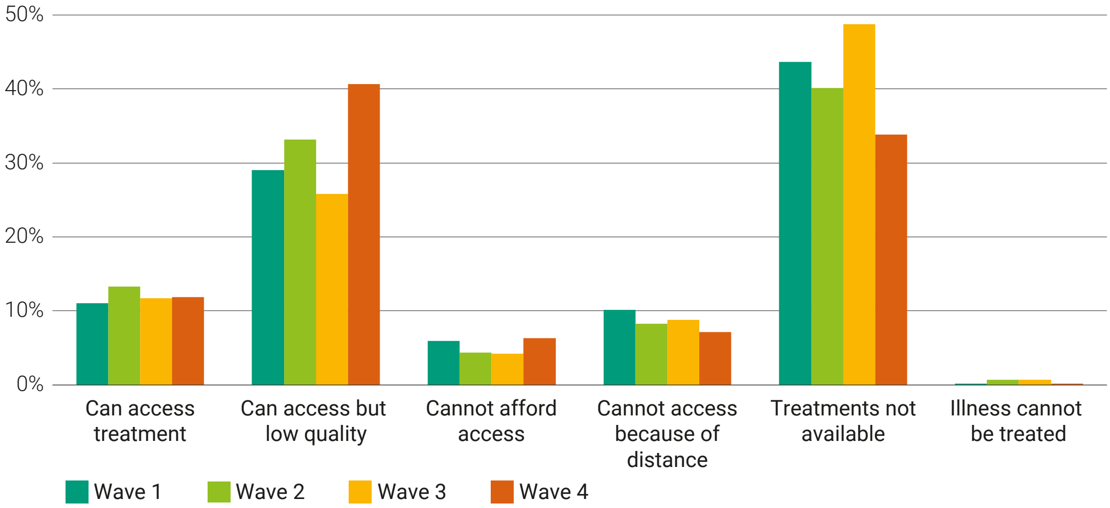
5.1.1 Access and quality

Access to health care remains extremely low and has worsened over the four waves. Just 12% of people reported that they were properly able to access the health care they needed for routine illnesses and only 7% for serious illnesses and injuries (Figures 9 and 10). Meanwhile, 47% could not access treatment for routine illnesses, mainly because the treatment was not available, but for some because of cost constraints or distance. For serious illnesses, the figures were worse, with 58% unable to access treatment, again, mainly because the treatments were not available.

There has been a slight increase in people saying that they could access treatment for routine illness, but this was entirely made up of those reporting that treatment was of poor quality. Those reporting having some access to care for serious illnesses is slightly lower in Wave 4 than in Wave 1, even including those with access to poor quality care, but the difference is not statistically significant.

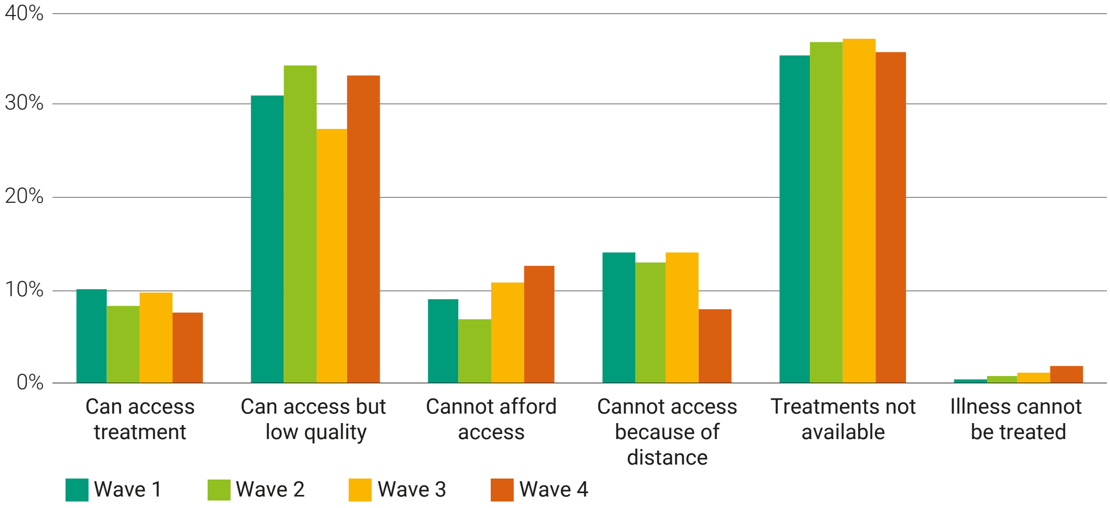
People's perceptions of medical services for both routine and serious illnesses were worse in Wave 4 than in Wave 3. Poor service for routine illness was reported by 40% of respondents (up from 26% in Wave 3) and for serious illnesses by 33% (up from 27%).

FIGURE 9: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR ROUTINE ILLNESSES AND INJURIES, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

FIGURE 10: ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR SERIOUS ILLNESSES AND INJURIES, BY WAVE



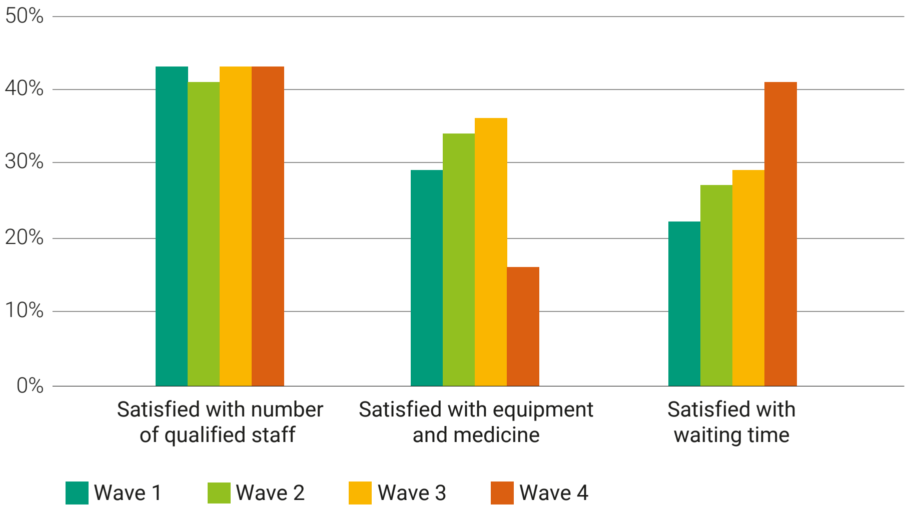
Source: Authors.

5.1.2 Satisfaction with health services

Overall, respondents' satisfaction with health services also appears to have deteriorated. Respondents ranked their satisfaction with three key variables of health service access: availability of medicine/equipment, the number of qualified medical staff at the facility where they normally seek care, and waiting time whilst at the facility. There was no significant improvement in any of these variables in Wave 4. Only 42% were satisfied with the number and quality of staff, and satisfaction with the equipment and availability of drugs fell sharply in Wave 4 to just 16%.

The majority of households reported that they did not have to pay official or 'unofficial' fees (90% and 93% respectively) to access health services, with no significant difference between Lango and Acholi sub-regions. Respondents did not feel that COVID-19 had had a high impact on the provision of health services, except for problems due to restriction of movements, reported by 77% of respondents.

FIGURE 11: SATISFACTION WITH HEALTH SERVICE PROVISIONS, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

5.2 Education services

Changes in education services were assessed only for households with children of school age and on the following parameters: frequency of school attendance, separately for boys and for girls; drop-out and its causes; infrequent attendance; and the availability and accessibility of youth skilling programmes. We also looked at possible impacts of COVID-19 on school drop-out, asking retrospectively about lockdown effects on resumption of schooling.

5.2.1 Access: school enrolment

Uptake of education services was high overall: 80% of households had at least one child enrolled in or attending school, continuing the slight increase seen with each wave (see Table 9). Following the closure of schools during the COVID-19 epidemic, there was a sudden rise in the number of girls never attending school (7%) that was not seen for boys, for whom it was only 1% (see Figure 12).

TABLE 9: HOUSEHOLDS HAVING CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL, BY WAVE

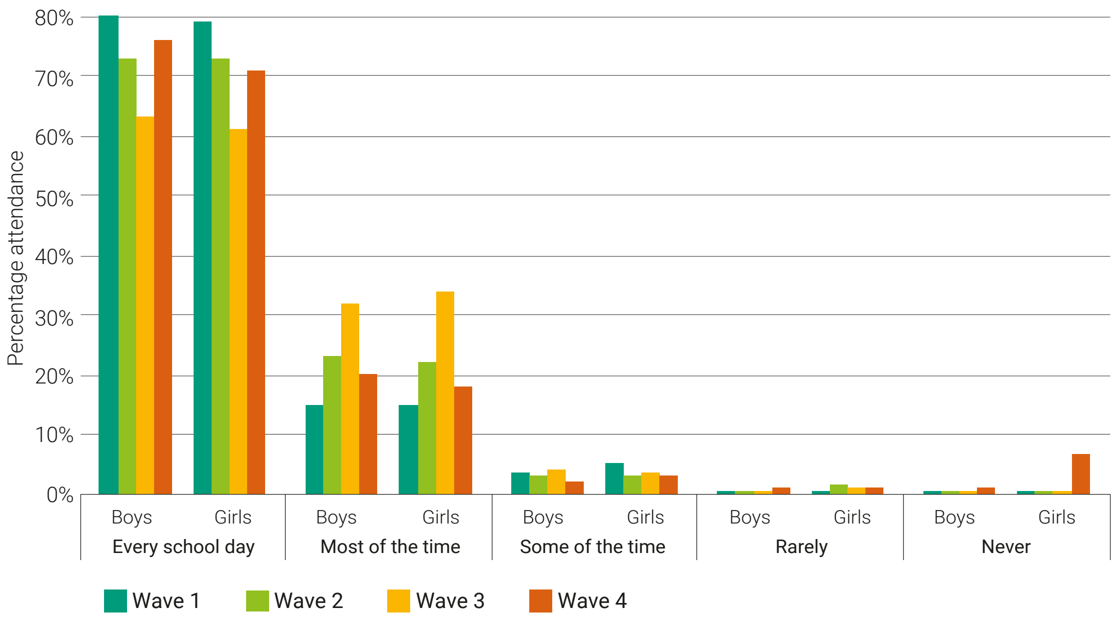
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
No	27%***	24%	22%	20%***
Yes, boy(s) only		17%***	14%***	16%***
Yes, girl(s) only		11%***	14%***	10%***
Yes, boy(s) and girl(s)		47%***	50%***	54%***

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% compared to Wave 2 and Wave 3.

Source: Authors.

Analysis of attendance shows that fewer than three-quarters of those enrolled in school actually attended every day. This is a small recovery after the decrease in regular attendance in Wave 3. The small gender difference in attendance figures widened slightly, with (reported) regular attendance for boys rising from 63% to 76% and for girls, from 61% to 71%.

FIGURE 12: REGULARITY OF ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL FOR BOYS AND GIRLS, BY WAVE



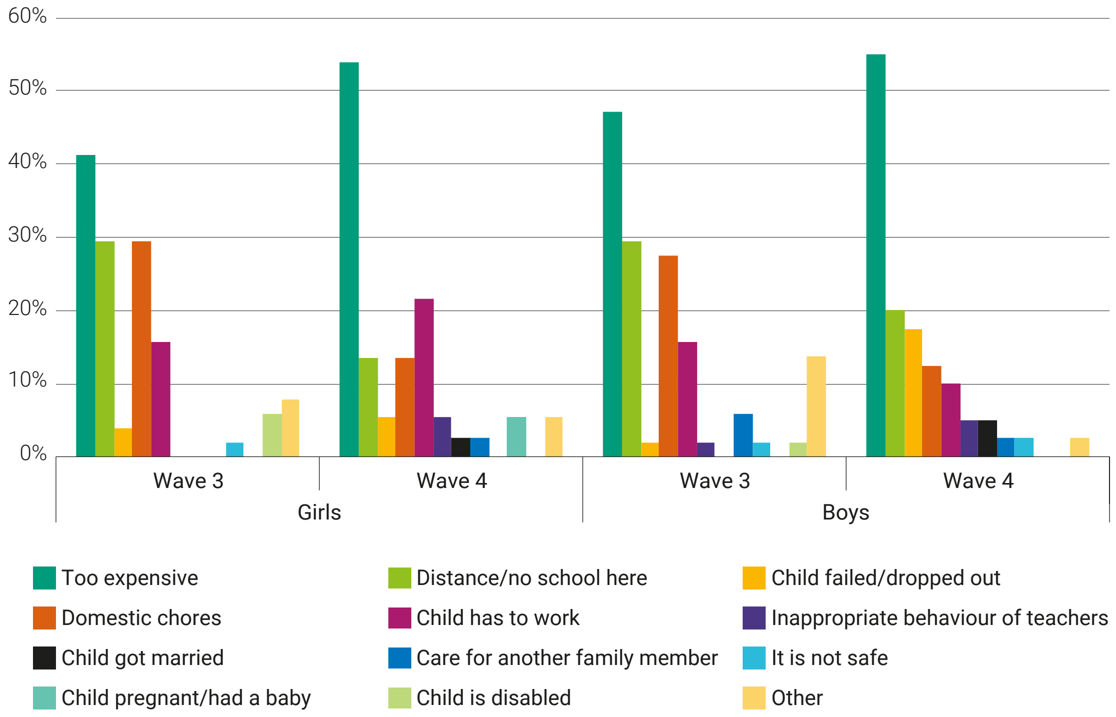
Source: Authors.

5.2.2 Reasons for changes in school attendance

Various reasons were given for school drop-out and infrequent attendance. The increased cost of school fees and other related expenditures was by far the main reason given for drop-out. In the last two waves, among households reporting non-attendance of a child, those attributing this to the high costs increased from 44% in Wave 3 to 55% in Wave 4. The other most common reasons were distance to school, children's domestic duties, and drop-out due to failure in school (see Figure 13). Different reasons were given for boys and for girls. Girls were more likely to have to work (the cause of 22% of non-attendance for girls compared to 10% for boys).

Domestic duties as a reason for non-attendance was another option separate from needing to work. This was very similar for boys and girls at 13% and 14% respectively. Boys and girls were equally likely not to attend because of the need to care for another family member (3%). Some reasons for non-attendance were given which had not been mentioned in Wave 3, including (child) marriage (higher for boys at 5% than for girls at 3%), the inappropriate (sexual) behaviour of teachers towards children, and pregnancy or childbirth. Increased drop-out among boys was more likely to be because of failure at school than for girls.

FIGURE 13: REASONS FOR IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

5.2.3 COVID-19 and school attendance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Uganda enforced school closure for 22 months between 2020 and 2022, the longest in the world. After such a long break, it was feared many children would not go back to education. School-age children from 83% of households returned to school after the end of restrictions. Of the 17% of households where children did not return to school, most respondents did not specify COVID-19 and school closures as being the reason for this (see above). However, several reasons that did relate to school closure included pregnancy, (child) marriage, the feeling of being too old to return to the previous class, having become engaged in other activities and a loss of interest in education (see Table 10). COVID-related explanations thus accounted for just under half of all reasons given, or close to 10% of all children's education being curtailed after lockdown.

TABLE 10: WHY CHILDREN WERE UNABLE TO RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER COVID-19

Multiple responses recorded	%
1. Increased cost due to COVID-19	41%
2. Other reasons	16%
3. Pregnancy, childbirth	14%
4. Child got married	13%
5. Too old to go back to school	13%
6. Too hard after a long time of closure	12%
7. Started something else during lockdown	12%
8. Child had to work for family income	8%
9. Child failed or dropped out	7%
10. Domestic chores	5%
11. Care for another family member	2%
12. Child is disabled	2%
13. Child care responsibility	1%
14. Community attitude towards girls' education	1%

Source: Authors.

5.2.4 Youth skills training programme

The government has prioritised vocational skills for youth, rolling out a programme of establishing district level centres across the country under the Presidential Initiative for Skilling Youth. In Wave 4, we asked about the existence of skill training programmes for youth, whether under this initiative or from any other service provider.

Just 42% of all the households in the two sub-regions reported that skills training programmes for youth were available in their area. Where available, the courses that most people knew about were traditional vocational trades: tailoring (known about by 93% of respondents), carpentry (53%), motor vehicle technology (46%) and bricklaying (43%).

Ten percent of households had enrolled a boy in a skills training programme, and 11% had enrolled a girl. Constraints to enrolment included the long distance to the available centres (83% of those not enrolling children), the cost (14%) and the lack of capital for starting a business after learning a trade (5%).

These findings raise some questions about the ability to effect rural transformation through a vocational training strategy. Skills training is still only available to a minority of households and it is doubtful how far the local economy can offer enough demand for the services of many people qualified in a very narrow set of skills and with very little capital to start up self-employment.

6. SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LIVELIHOOD ASSISTANCE

Social protection refers to a wide range of measures that states take to protect people in particular need, from a legal minimum wage and statutory sick pay to a range of payments made in different circumstances, such as old age, disability or for parents or carers with young children. The social protection benefits included in this study were: old-age pensions, retirement pensions, free food assistance and any other food or cash transfers received.

The old-age pension, or Senior Citizens' Grant (SCG), is a form of social assistance, i.e. non-contributory, for those over 65. Coverage of the SCG programme has been expanding nationally since Wave 1, and by 2020 it had reached all the surveyed districts. Retirement pensions are a form of social insurance, i.e. they are based on contributions made during employment. They are therefore not available in Uganda to those who have not been formally employed.

The forms of 'livelihood assistance' covered in the survey were: the free provision of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and tools); agricultural extension services, including training and marketing; seed money for revolving funds (savings and credit); non-agricultural services, including training and marketing; and any other project that helped the household with their livelihood. It is believed that these represent the majority of social assistance or safety net support available to people in the area.

Provision of social protection services was low. The old-age pension, SCG, was the most commonly received social welfare benefit, but this went to just 8% of households (a significant increase however from 1% in Wave 1 when the grant was only just being rolled out). Coverage still appears to be patchy. In some districts, SCG reached 13%–14% of households (Kole, Apac), whereas in others only 3% (Gulu, Kitgum). This does not reflect a difference in the prevalence of senior citizens in households across the two districts of Acholi and Lango. There has been no change in the provision of the (contribution-based) retirement pensions (1% of households).

TABLE 11: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS BENEFITING FROM SOCIAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE OR LIVELIHOOD ASSISTANCE, 2013–2022

Transfers and services	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Social protection assistance				
Free food assistance	1%***	1%***	5%***	3%
Old-age pension	1%***	4%	6%***	8%***
Retirement pension	0%	1%	1%	1%**
Other social protection transfer	1%	2%**	2%*	1%
Livelihood assistance				
Seeds/fertiliser/pesticide/tools	7%	3%	6%	4%*
Agricultural extension services	7%**	5%***	6%**	12%***
Seed money for revolving fund	6%***	11%***	9%	11%***
Non-agricultural services	1%	3%	3%	4%***
Other livelihood assistance	3%	3%	2%	1%**

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% compared to Wave 2 and Wave 3.

Source: Authors.

Households received other forms of livelihood support services. Extension and credit funds had both increased markedly since Wave 3, with 12% of households in receipt of agricultural extension services in Wave 4 and 11% benefiting from seed money for revolving credit funds, usually provided through village groups for savings and credit. Again, coverage is very uneven ranging from over 30% provided with grant funds in Otuke district, compared with just 3% in Agago district.

Both extension and funds for credit are provided and/or funded by a range of actors, including government and international donors; agricultural extension services are also provided by local and national NGOs. The longitudinal panel analysis of livelihood support clearly showed that receipt of loans or grants from seed money correlated highly with households already having greater asset wealth and better food security. Livelihood support is thus targeted away from those in poverty, and is therefore likely to have little or no impact on poverty and a negative impact on inequality.

7. GOVERNANCE

A wide range of issues are covered in the survey under the heading of 'governance'. This includes the responsiveness of state services, and people's ability to hold them to account or to have grievances resolved; people's perceptions that local and central government care about their views and priorities; and levels of trust in a range of state institutions.

7.1 Government services and complaints

This section looks at the responsiveness of state services, including people's ability to voice complaints and how they were dealt with.

Over half of households reported having had problems with health care, education and/or water services. Health care represented the highest percentage of complaints, and was the only service not to see a decline in problems over the decade.

TABLE 12: PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT HAD SERVICE-RELATED PROBLEMS, BY WAVE

Type of service	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Health	60%	51%***	63%***	61%
Education	43%***	35%***	44%***	33%***
Water	47%***	39%***	44%*	37%***
Other service	10%***	3%	5%***	3%

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Source: Authors.

The percentages of men and women who reported experiencing problems with different services were of similar levels. The differences in percentages between men and of women were only statistically significant in relation to education and social protection. Even then, the differences were small. They were greater between urban (fewer problems) and rural households (more problems).

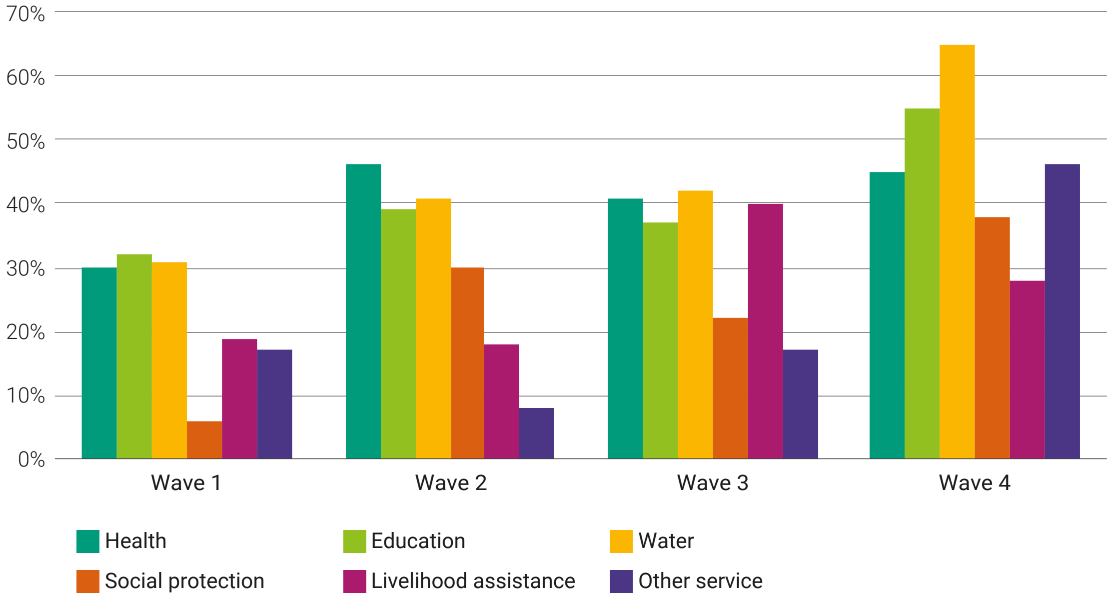
TABLE 13: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS WITH DIFFERENT SERVICES, BY SEX

Problems with service (%)	Male	Female
Health	65	60
Education	36	32
Water	39	36
Social protection	4	6
Livelihood assistance	12	12

Source: Authors.

Over time, people have become more likely to report complaints. For all the services, the Local Council 1 Chairperson ('LC1')[11] was the most common place to register a formal complaint. There has been a steep decline across the waves of the numbers taking their complaints to NGOs, and in particular to international agencies, as their presence and profile decreased after the end of the conflict. Across all sectors, the proportion of complainants who felt that their complaint was effectively dealt with has increased progressively across the decade, though this remains lowest for health services (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14: PROPORTION OF COMPLAINTS WITH SERVICES RECEIVING HELP FROM THE AUTHORITIES, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

7.2 Perceptions of central and local government

The survey asked about perceptions of local and of central government with regard to whether people felt government reflected their priorities and how far they felt government cared about them and their opinions. Local government was explained as government in the sub-county (Local Council 3) and the district (Local Council 5).[12]

The data present a confusing picture because change in perceptions of governance can be measured in two ways. People in each wave were asked how far they felt that local (and central) government cared about their priorities and reflected their opinions. Comparing their answers across waves can be called 'changes in perception'. They were also asked whether they felt that standards of governance had improved or declined, which we could call their 'perceptions of changes'.

11 Local Council 1 is the lowest administrative unit in Uganda, comprising of a village in rural areas or a neighbourhood in urban areas. LC1s are *de facto* involved in many matters, including in local dispute resolution, though frequently beyond their legal jurisdiction.

12 The sub-county is the lowest administrative level for the organisation of local government services. There is no civil service below LC3.

However the two methods of assessing change give contradictory results. People were slightly more inclined to be positive about local government than in previous waves (i.e. the measure of change in perceptions is positive), and yet more people felt that things had got worse than had got better (i.e. perception of changes is negative). This apparent contradiction appears to be an artefact of the way in which questions were asked. It raises wider questions about the reliability of drawing conclusions about attitudes and perceptions from surveys.

Tables 14 and 15 show changes across the waves for the different measures of governance.

TABLE 14: CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECISIONS, BY WAVE

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
To what extent do local government decisions reflect your priorities?				
Never or almost never	60%***	54%**	54%**	45%***
Only in some areas	27%***	34%	32%	39%***
Always or to a large extent	13%	13%	14%	15%
Net perception (positive minus negative)	-47%	-41%	-40%	-30%
Do you agree that local government cares about you and your opinions, yes or no?				
Yes	40%***	45%	43%	48%***
Compared to three years ago, do you think local government cares less or more about your opinion?				
The same	–	52%***	50%	45%***
More	–	20%**	16%**	19%
Less	–	28%***	34%	36%***

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Source: Authors.

The survey did not look for any causal explanations of people's attitudes, but the panel nature of the study does allow us to see a correlation between perceptions of local government and some other factors. For example, those with the worst perception of local government had the lowest asset wealth, were more likely to earn a living from crop farming, and to have poorer food consumption scores. Households that had experienced problems with basic services were also more likely to have worse perceptions of local government and to say that local government cared less about them compared to three years ago.

Positive perceptions of local government were correlated with having received at least one social protection benefit. Positive views of local government also correlated positively with the wealth of households, with households living in urban locations, and with those who were employed by the state.

Overall views of central government were similarly negative to those of local government (see Table 15). Almost half of all respondents continue to believe that decisions of central government rarely or never reflect their priorities, compared with just 15% who said they always or to a large extent do. There is the same contradiction between a positive 'change in perceptions' with a negative 'perception of changes' with regards to central government.

As with perceptions of local government, positive perceptions correlated with greater wealth and receipt of livelihood support (itself correlated with greater wealth).

TABLE 15: HOW RESPONDENTS FEEL ABOUT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DECISIONS, BY WAVE

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
To what extent do central government decisions reflect your priorities?				
Never or almost never	66%***	54%***	62%***	49%***
Only in some areas	22%***	31%**	26%**	36%***
Always or to a large extent	12%***	15%***	12%	15%***
Net perception (positive minus negative)	-54%	-39%	-50%	-34%
Change in net perception from previous wave		+15%	-11%	+16%
Compared to three years ago, do you think central government cares less or more about your opinion?				
The same	–	50%***	47%	45%**
More	–	25%***	18%***	21%
Less	–	25%***	34%***	34%***
Net change	–	-25%	-13%	-11%

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Source: Authors.

7.3 State legitimacy

In this section, we looked at how people think about the state generally, including regarding involvement in political protest, and trust in different institutions. These questions were only asked in Waves 3 and 4.

7.3.1 Political participation and protest

In both the sub-regions of Lango and Acholi, the vast majority of respondents (over 90%) reported having voted in the two previous national presidential elections in both Waves 3 and 4. Choosing to vote can be seen as active participation in politics and an indicator of engagement with the state through the state's established political processes. Continued high voter participation could thus be interpreted positively.

Some caution is needed in interpreting the findings, however. Official statistics show that voter turnout across the northern region was below 60%, and Otuke was the only district surveyed where participation reached 70% (Uganda Elections Data Portal, n.d.). Sampling for the survey was designed to be random in a selection of households not individuals. It is possible that household heads or those who offered themselves for interviewing were more likely than others in the household to have voted. It also seems likely that, for whatever reason, reported behaviour may not correspond with actual behaviour for all respondents.

Respondents reporting occurrence of any protests in the previous three years reduced from 18% in Wave 3 to 10% in Wave 4. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in January 2021, just over a year before the Wave 4 survey was conducted, and had previously been held in 2016, two years before the Wave 3 survey. In Acholi, 2.7% of respondents reported having taken part in protests, much higher than in Lango (0.8%). Most of the reported protests were related to the electoral process.

Those who reported having protested or to be likely to protest were more inclined to distrust the security organs such as the army (UPDF) or Local Defence Units (LDU), the police and Resident District Commissioner (RDC) (see 7.3.2).[13] They were also more likely to believe in the independence of customary institutions[14] and to disagree with the idea that the government has a right to tap citizens' phone calls and emails, or with the state's right to insist that the customary institutions carry out the will of the state (see 7.3.3).

TABLE 16: PARTICIPATION IN PROTEST, BY WAVE AND SUB-REGION

	Wave 3		Wave 4	
	Lango	Acholi	Lango	Acholi
Has taken part in protest in previous 3 years	0.4%	5%	1%	3%
Very likely to take part in any protest	12%	10%	10%**	7%**
Likely to take part	15%	15%	11%	9%
Unsure	17%***	7%***	12%***	6%***
Unlikely	26%***	12%***	25%***	15%***
Very unlikely	30%***	57%***	41***	64%***
Voted in the 2016 national elections	93%**	90%**	94%**	91%**

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Source: Authors.

7.3.2 Perceptions of legality of the state

Respondents trust the elected chairperson of the Local District Councils (LC5) and RDC more than the security organs or the formal courts. The level of trust for most of the institutions improved compared to the previous survey wave.

13 The RDC is not part of elected local government. The RDC is the Presidential appointee in the district, exercising power on behalf of the president, with jurisdiction over security matters. The de facto power that they yield does not always coincide with the constitutional limits of their authority.

14 Respondents were asked whether they believed that customary institutions had a duty to implement the will of the government if they received any state funding.

TABLE 17: TRUST FOR THE STATE SECURITY ORGANS, BY WAVE

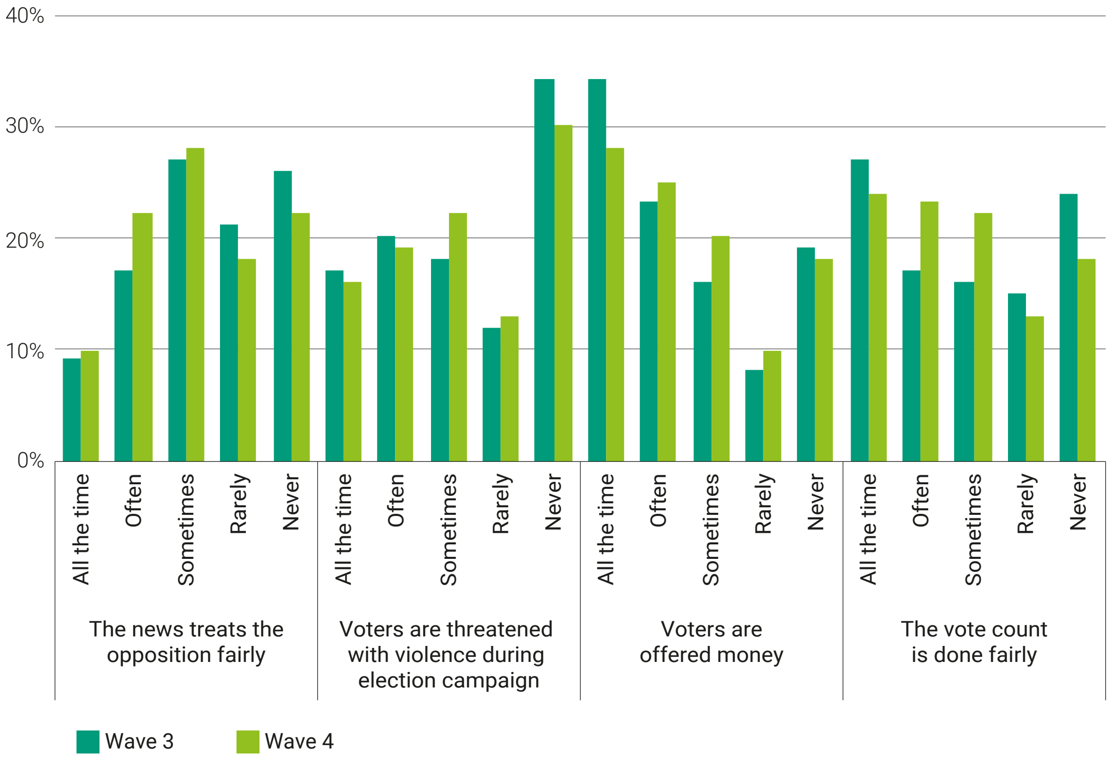
	UPDF/LDU		The police		Formal courts		RDC		LCV	
Wave	W3	W4	W3	W4	W3	W4	W3	W4	W3	W4
Completely trust	16%	16%	7%	7%	5%	5%	7%	6%	15%	14%
Trust	51%	53%	40%	40%	45%	42%	51%	59%	55%	62%
Neither trust nor distrust	16%	17%	2%	2%	19%	24%	19%	17%	14%	14%
Distrust	12%	10%	19%	19%	18%	21%	17%	15%	11%	8%
Completely distrust	5%	3%	15%	15%	13%	8%	6%	3%	4%	2%
Trust/trust deficit	**50%**	**56%**	**13%**	**13%**	**19%**	**18%**	**35%**	**47%**	**55%**	**66%**

Note: The trust/trust deficit percentage is the % giving a positive or very positive response minus those giving a negative or very negative response.

Source: Authors.

The perception of respondents about election processes was generally negative. Less than half of the sample had positive opinions about the treatment of opposition, violence during elections, voter bribery and the counting of votes. Views were similar in Wave 3 and 4: fewer felt that votes were always counted fairly (down from 27% in Wave 3 to just 24% in Wave 4) though fewer also felt that they were *never* counted fairly (down from 24% in Wave 3 to 18% in Wave 4) (see Figure 15 for more details).

FIGURE 15: PERCEPTION OF ELECTION PROCESS, BY WAVE



Source: Authors.

7.3.3 Perceptions of powers and roles of the state

Respondents were asked what they felt about laws regarding customary institutions, communication privacy, public gatherings and parenting rights. Specifically respondents were asked whether it is justifiable for the state to demand the following.

1. **If the state provides financial support to the customary institutions, then they must implement the state's will**. The majority disagreed, and the proportion who strongly disagreed increased from 13% in Wave 3 to 21% in Wave 4.

2. **The state should punish any parent who fails to send their children to school**. The majority agreed or strongly agreed; but there was a reduction from 46% strongly supporting the law in Wave 3 to 34% in Wave 4.

3. **The police should arrest anybody who participates in an assembly not approved by the police**.[15] A majority (54%) agreed with the statement in Wave 4 compared to 49% in Wave 3.

4. **The state has the right to listen to people's calls or read their emails in order to protect the citizens**. A majority (57%) of respondents disagreed with this, and support declined from 39% in Wave 3 to 31% in Wave 4.

TABLE 18: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE POWERS AND ROLE OF THE STATE

		Wave 3	Wave 4
If customary institutions receive financial support from the state, they should implement the will of the state.	Strongly agree	11%***	7%***
	Agree	29%	26%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14%	16%
	Disagree	34%*	31%*
	Strongly disagree	13%***	21%***
If a parent does not send their child to school, the state should punish the parent.	Strongly agree	46%***	34%***
	Agree	33%***	40%***
	Neither agree nor disagree	10%***	13%***
	Disagree	8%	9%
	Strongly disagree	2%**	4%**
If someone participates in an assembly not approved by the police, the police should arrest them.	Strongly agree	17%**	14%**
	Agree	32%***	40%***
	Neither agree nor disagree	16%	16%
	Disagree	23%	20%
	Strongly disagree	12%**	10%**
The government has the right to listen to people's phone calls and read their emails to protect the Ugandan people.	Strongly agree	14%***	6%***
	Agree	25%	25%
	Neither agree nor disagree	12%	12%
	Disagree	25%*	29%*
	Strongly disagree	24%***	28%***

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Source: Authors.

15 The Supreme Court has ruled that political assembly should not be subject to police approval, although the police do – unconstitutionally – continue to ban protests and political gatherings.

7.3.4 Political priorities

Security remained the most commonly cited political priority for the country (31%) in Wave 4, although the economy was mentioned by far more people than in Wave 3 (20% compared to just 7%). Unity was mentioned most often as people's second priority (25%), ahead of the economy (23%) and security (16%). State services were a top priority for only 17%, unchanged since Wave 3.

TABLE 19: PRIORITY GOALS FOR THE STATE, BY WAVE

	Most important goals		Second most important goals	
Goals for the state	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 3	Wave 4
National defence	5%	5%	11%**	13%**
Unity	14%	15%	16%***	25%***
The economy	7%***	20%***	25%	23%
Security	30%	31%	14%**	16%**
Services	17%	17%	12%**	10%**
Land management	13%***	4%***	19%***	9%***
Infrastructure	13%***	7%***	13%***	7%***

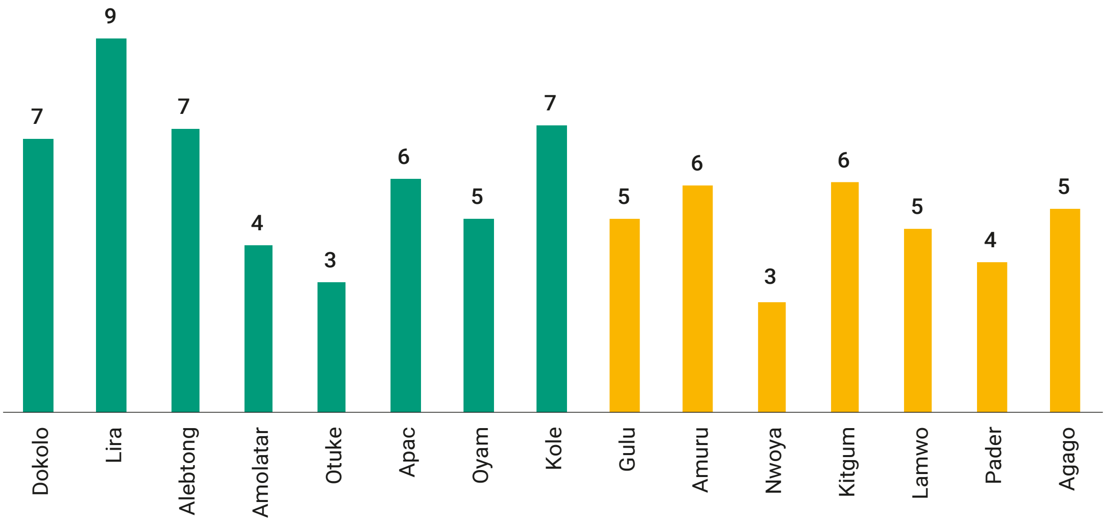
Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%.

Source: Authors.

8. SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE

This module looked at the relationships people in each community had with each other and with people in other communities. Respondents were asked how many people they could turn to for help beyond their immediate family if they had a problem and needed assistance. We refer to this here as their assistance network or, for short, just 'network'. On average, respondents had assistance networks of six people, though this varied between districts from an average of 9 (Lira) to 3 (Nwoya and Otuke). People had larger networks on average in Lango (5.6) than in Acholi (4.1). Meanwhile, 3% of people reported not being able to turn to anyone at all for help at a time of need.

FIGURE 16: AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY FROM WHOM ASSISTANCE COULD BE SOUGHT, BY DISTRICT



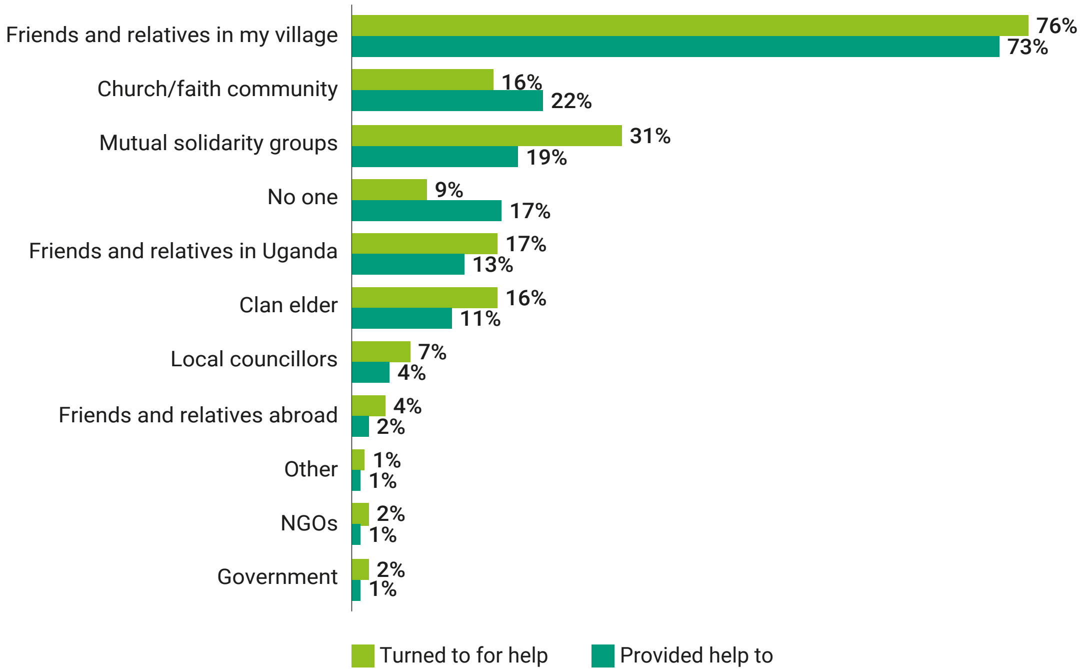
Note: Districts in Lango are shaded green, districts in Acholi are shaded yellow.

Source: Authors.

Furthermore, 40% of people in Wave 4 reported that their network had remained the same over the past 12 months, compared to 33% who said it had grown and 25% who said it had become smaller.

Questions were also asked about where people had actually sought help in the previous 12 months, whether or not they had received it, and whether they had given assistance of different kinds to others. The most reliable source of help (i.e. those from whom it was most likely to be given when requested) came from nearby friends and relatives. A total of 77% of respondents had received help of different kinds from within the village in the previous 12 months. Churches were very reliable in providing help even without being asked, and were the second most frequent source of assistance. Community groups were often asked (by 31% of households) but were less able to respond (to 19% of households). Overall, very few respondents turned to friends and relatives who were outside their districts or abroad for help.

FIGURE 17: PROVIDERS OF HELP IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

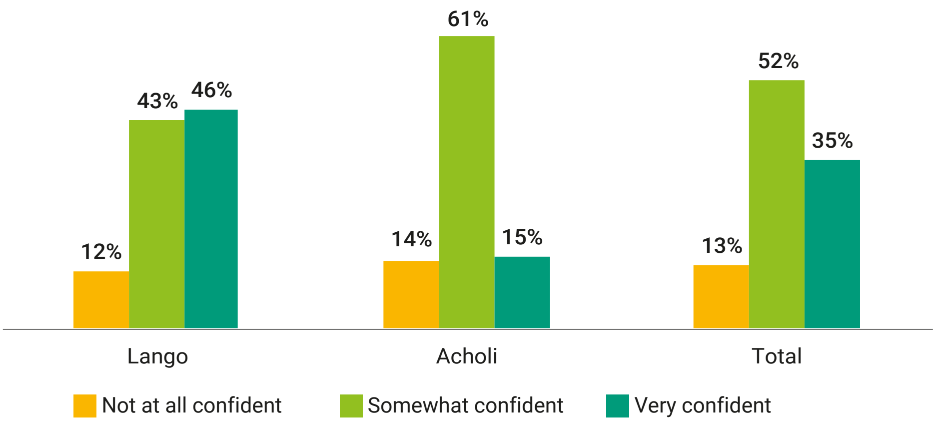


Source: Authors.

8.1 Reliability of social networks

Respondents were asked to state how confident they would be of receiving help from anyone in the next 12 months. On average, 87% were sure or fairly sure that they could get support if needed. People were a little less confident in Acholi, with the majority (61%) only being 'somewhat confident' rather than very confident (15%). This compared to Lango where 43% were somewhat confident, and 46% very confident. Those with larger networks expressed greater confidence of receiving support.

FIGURE 18: STATUS OF CONFIDENCE TO GET HELP FROM SOMEONE IF NEEDED, BY SUB-REGION

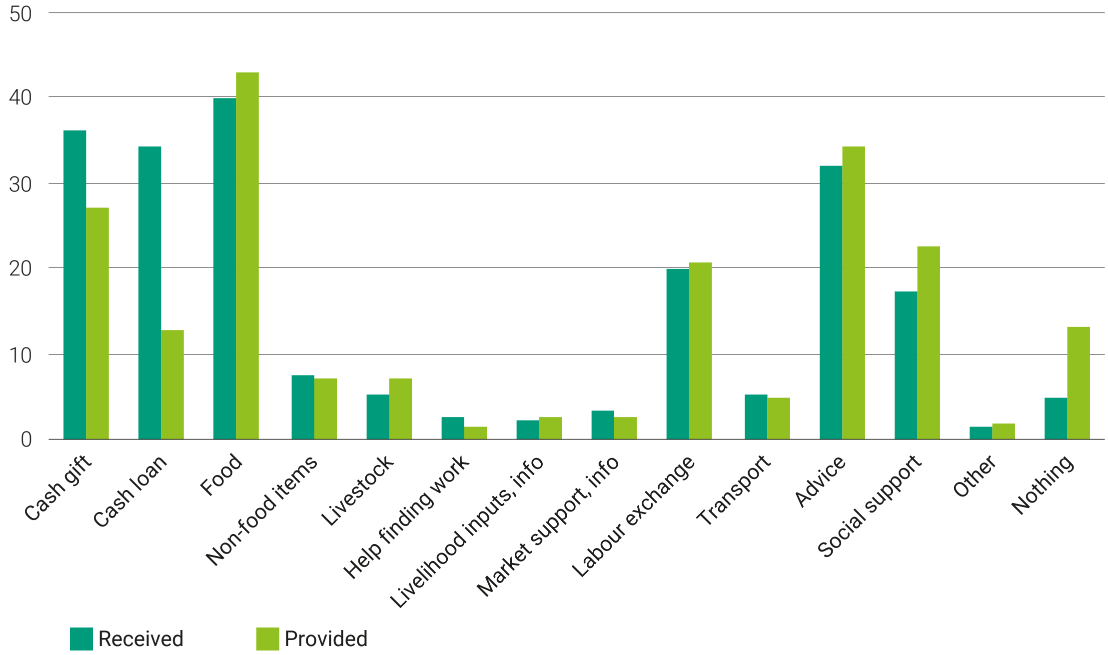


Source: Authors.

8.2 Kind of help received from and provided to the network

Figure 19 shows the different ways in which people helped each other in Wave 4 in the previous 12 months. Food was the most common assistance sought (by 43%). Money was more likely to be given without any expectation to pay it back, with 27% taking gifts of money compared to 13% receiving money as loans to be repaid.

FIGURE 19: KINDS OF ASSISTANCE RECEIVED AND PROVIDED IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS



Source: Authors.

8.3 Social relationships

Social relationships were assessed by looking at the strength of relationships with people in their own community and with people from other communities. This section also examined people's attitudes towards violence in society.

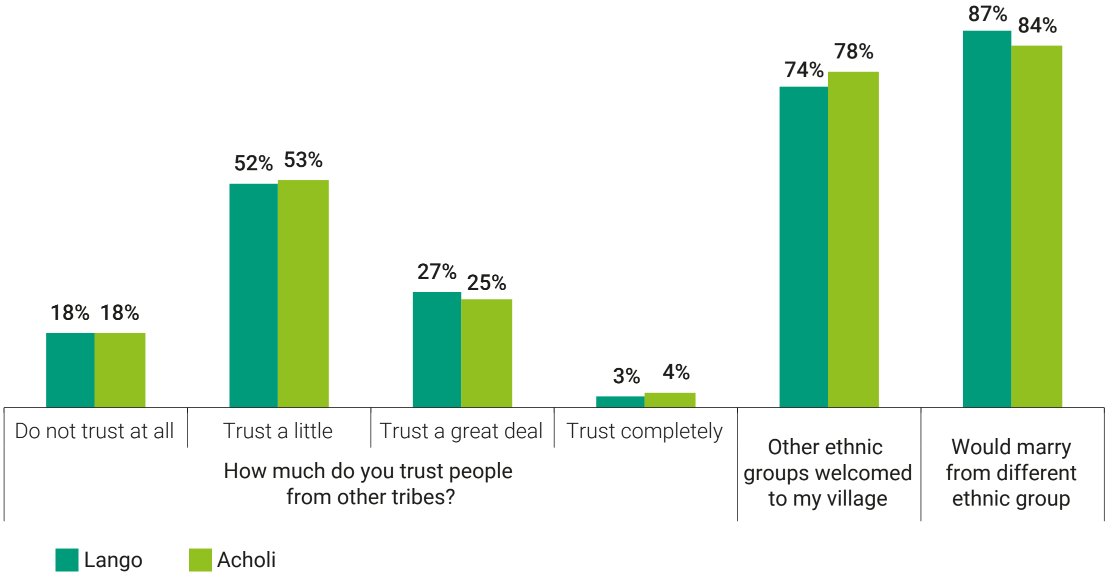
The majority of people (60%) strongly believed in the social responsibility of all village members to help in villages activities. This was slightly stronger in Lango (65%) than in Acholi (54%). Of all respondents, 62% said that everyone in their village felt a part of the village community. Those who said that everyone felt part of their village were less likely to have experienced violence or to believe in the justification to retaliate violently (see Figure 21).

8.4 Trust and peaceful co-existence

Respondents were asked to share their opinion on the level of unity and trust beyond ethnic boundaries. One quarter of people did not believe that people from other ethnic groups should be accepted in their village. More people were willing to accept someone from another tribe into their family through marriage than to be accepted in their village (see Figure 20).

However, general trust in people of other tribes was very low. Only 30% trusted people from other tribes (completely or a great deal) and 70% had no or very little trust. Those who felt that people from other tribes should be accepted in their village or family were less likely to justify violence, e.g. to believe that violence was ever justifiable to defend one's religion. The differences between Acholi and Lango were very small.

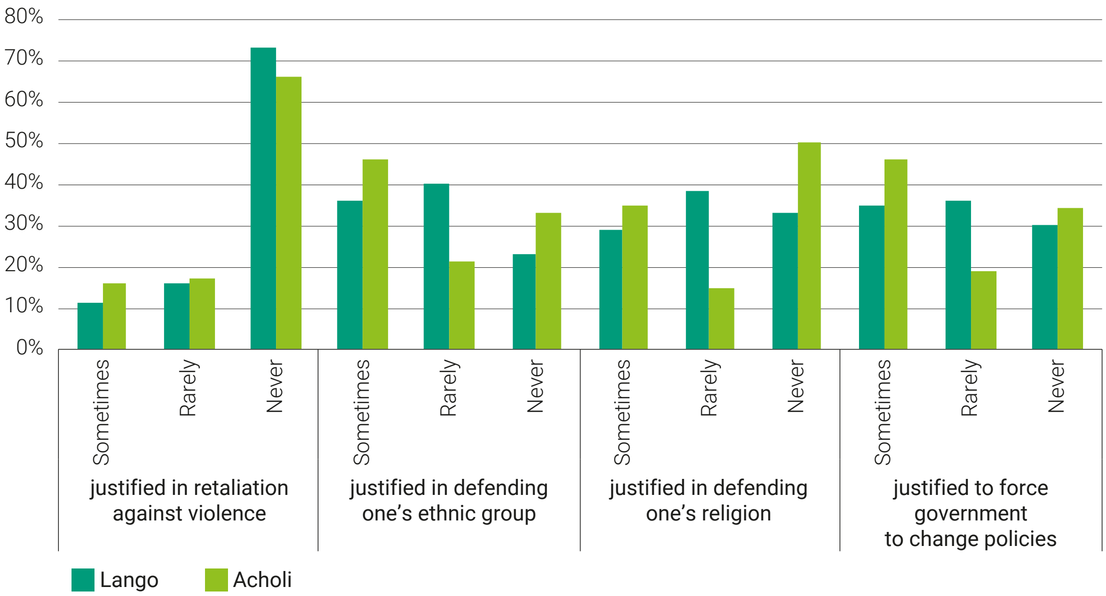
FIGURE 20: TRUST FOR OTHER TRIBES, BY SUB-REGION



Source: Authors.

The majority of people accepted that some use of violence was justified in society. More than a quarter felt that violence as retaliation within the village could be justified. Two-thirds believed violence could be justified to defend one's tribe (77% in Lango, 68% in Acholi) or to force the government to change its policies (70% in Lango, 64% in Acholi).

FIGURE 21: PERCEPTION OF JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE, BY SUB-REGION



Source: Authors.

9. CONCLUSIONS

While analysis of the individual findings is given in each section, observations pertaining to the research in its entirety can be made on three broad themes:

- Post-conflict recovery
- Psychological change and perceptions of the state
- Methodological challenges.

9.1 Post-conflict recovery

The first round of the northern Uganda panel survey was conducted five years after the end of the civil war in Uganda at a time when many people were still housed in displacement camps as life was beginning to recover from over a decade of devastation. Ten years later, perceptions of change remain much more limited than might have been hoped after a decade of considerable investment, the reintegration of the economy of northern Uganda into the national economy, and the absence of war. Although economic recovery has been partial, in that the region still lags far behind the rest of the country, it is particularly worrying how much a broad trajectory of admittedly slow progress has stalled in the years between the third and fourth survey waves (2018–2022).

Livelihoods have shown little change since 2013. Asset ownership has increased, but this is largely related to technological changes which have made certain assets much cheaper and affordable to the majority – in particular mobile phones and small solar powered charging units. In other words, this is not evidence that development investments have been successful. A relatively small percentage of people have experienced progress, moving from reliance on selling their unskilled labour or rain-fed farming dependent on manual labour, to more profitable enterprises. But this is almost matched by the number falling back into livelihoods associated with greater poverty.

Some of the standard models of development programming do not deal with poverty churning, but seem to assume that once households have received inputs (institutional, technical or material) to progress economically, they are set on a fixed upwards trajectory. Those interested in poverty and resilience should pay as much attention to the reasons why people fall back into poverty as they do to the factors that help people escape from it.

Limited progress in service delivery has also been disappointing. Enrolment in school has increased a little, but attendance at school is lower than in the first wave in 2012. The small minority of people saying that the health care they needed was accessible to them in the first wave has also not improved.

It is not possible for a survey such as ours to diagnose the causes of failure, and how far they may be related, for example, to an inadequate level of investment for the size of the task in hand, or to flawed models of development. The survey does, though, give some cause for alarm.

Most worryingly, even the limited economic progress that there has been has had limited impact on the prevalence of poverty, because the signs are that progress was a result of growing inequality rather than being broad-based. Assets were disproportionately accumulated by those who already had more; and an urban–rural divide has been created since 2012 and continues to grow.

Development investments are exacerbating inequality because they have been very skewed towards the better off. Given how much of development investment is funded by international donors and partners, it is perhaps surprising that this situation has been allowed to continue over more than a decade.

9.2 Psychological change and perceptions of the state

The low level of trust in state institutions has been discussed in Section 7. This part of the survey has also shown that more people felt that governance at both local and national levels was getting worse than that it was improving. This expression of dissatisfaction should, though, be seen as part of a broader story of a growing voice and level of expectation among respondents, as seen by people taking advantage of their rights to make complaints.

As noted in Section 6, the preponderance of people feeling that there was a negative trend in governance contrasted with slightly higher scores in Wave 4 in 2022 compared to how people saw the state of governance in Wave 3 in 2018. A similar picture emerges when looking at attitudes towards service delivery. Although the situation may not have improved greatly, it has not deteriorated – and yet more people are now complaining about its failings.

This suggests that the standard that people expect has risen and/or that they are increasingly unwilling to accept standards that fall below a certain level. Moreover, they feel they are entitled to services meeting minimum standards and not only that they have a right to complain but also that it is worthwhile complaining.

Increasing expression of dissatisfaction with the state can thus be seen to reflect a growing legitimacy of (some) state institutions – but where that legitimacy is conditional on the state meeting its obligations under an implicit social contract between state and citizen. This inevitably places greater demand on institutions. But it is a sign of progress: the findings show that the more opportunities people felt they had to raise grievances, the more positive were their sentiments towards service delivery and governance.

9.3 Methodological challenges

As the previous paragraphs show, trying to assess changes in perceptions of satisfaction with governance is complicated by the fact that perceptions are a moving target in that expectations change over time. This is just one of the methodological challenges revealed by close inspection of the data.

Surveys producing quantitative data are often seen as the best possible research tool in countries where publicly held data are limited (e.g. on economic activity, household incomes, etc.). This though relies on basic assumptions about the reliability of people's responses. Findings from this survey suggest that survey instruments need to be designed in ways that build in ongoing checks on such assumptions. Where it has been possible to make these checks and verify data in our survey, we have often found a mismatch and those assumptions to be compromised. Most of the issues covered by our questions could not, though, be independently verified by secondary sources.

For example, the high degree of divergence between reported voting behaviour in the 2021 elections and the district averages of actual voting suggest that either the sample of respondents was far from representative or, which is more likely, responses did not match behaviour. Highly implausible reports of violence and murder (see Section 3) are further examples where the findings should almost certainly not be taken at face value.

These inaccuracies have arisen in a survey where there was no obvious cause of bias or incentive for respondents not to respond honestly. Given the extent to which decision-making is influenced by large-scale surveys, often seen as a research gold standard, more investigation is needed to understand when and where responses can indeed be relied upon.

10. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Statistical analysis can draw attention to the association between different factors, thereby highlighting areas where more knowledge and understanding is needed. But it does not on its own prove any causal links. The policy recommendations from a survey such as this are therefore limited and specific prescriptions cannot easily be made.

This study can, though, draw attention to the following:

- Assistance has been targeted away from the poorest, rather than at the poorest. This may be one reason for growing economic inequality and the almost total lack of mobility between economic classes. Poverty reduction requires an explicit focus on economic mobility, inequality and in particular, a growing divide between rural and urban populations. This has been absent.

- People's expectations of services are increasing and they are becoming more vocal in demanding rights, and this has led to more responsive service delivery. Support to services has often been given only on the supply side, but building up the countervailing power of citizens to demand services as a right to which they are entitled is an important complement to building the capacity of those responsible for their delivery. While this may place a greater burden on state institutions, it increases their own legitimacy, and it is therefore an important long-term investment.

- Social tensions, in particular between ethnic groups, and acceptance that violence can in certain situations be justified, are worryingly high. These demand urgent attention.

- Close monitoring is needed of the real coverage of state programmes at local level, including health service provision, the Senior Citizen's Grant (SCG) and vocational education. Access to health care has hardly improved over the last decade. SCG is almost certainly failing to reach most of those who are entitled to it in some districts. Technical or vocational training are only available to a small minority of young people. The policy discourse should reflect these realities.

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Cover: Kodet Abraham harvests fodder that he has grown for his livestock, Karamoja, Uganda, 2021. Image by Ezra Millstein / Mercy Corps

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