2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census

Thematic Report on

Education and Literacy

June 2024

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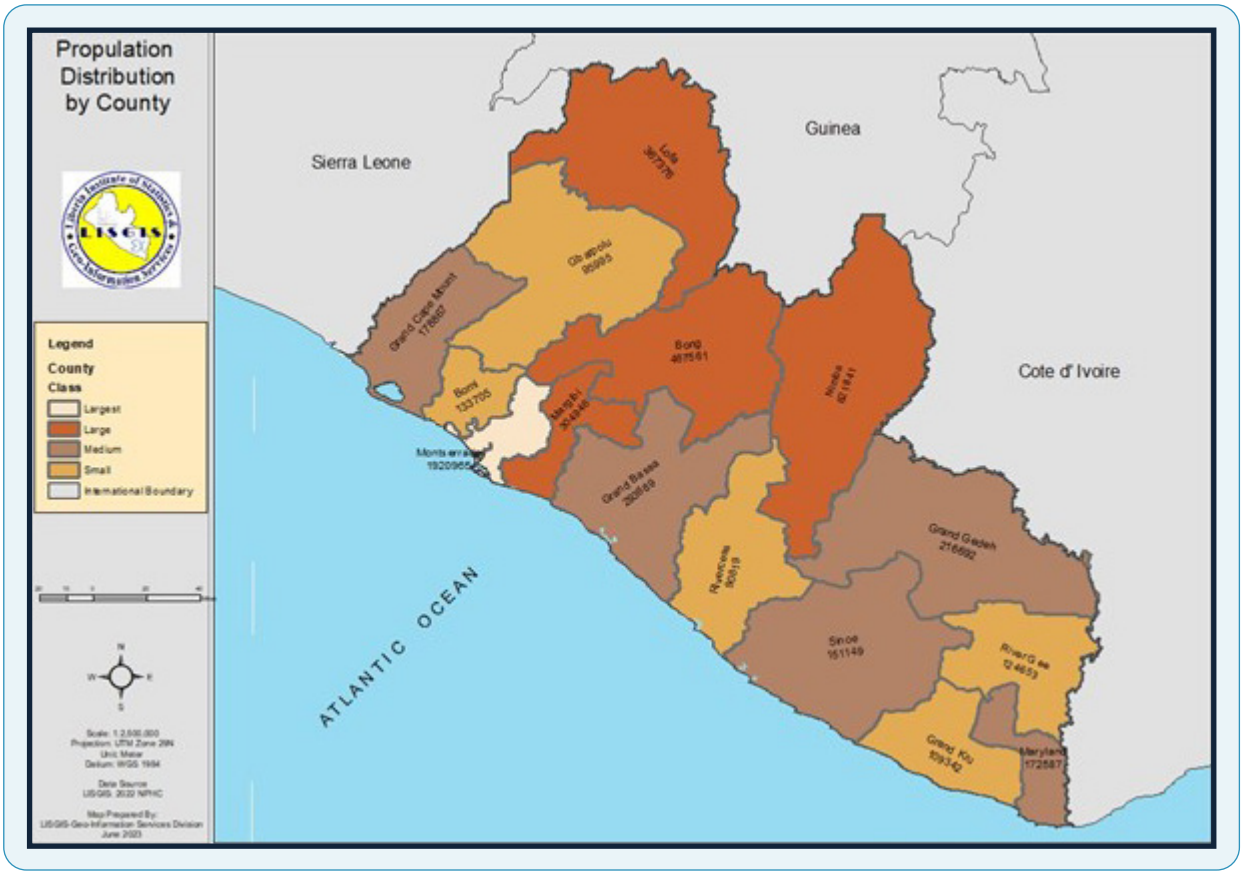
Administrative map of Liberia



Foreword

The 2022 National Population and Housing Census is the fifth and first digital census with the full deployment of ICT techniques and followed the UN Recommended Principles for the 2020 round of censuses. The basis for the conduct of the census is Article 39 of the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia. On October 10, 2022, the Government of Liberia initiated "an Act Authorizing the Executive Branch of Government to conduct the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census".

Hence, following the successful implementation of the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census, the Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) produced 14 thematic reports. These reports summarized the country's demographic, social, and economic sectors. The publication of the thematic reports is consistent with the United Nations (UN) International Standards of releasing National Census results and thematic reports.

The 14 thematic reports form a primary source of socio-economic and demographic data at various levels and provide relevant information to foster national development, good governance, and resource distribution. The results presented in this thematic report will form a solid basis for the successes and challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as support the implementation of the development of the Africa Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want; Transforming Our World and other national and international programs.

I am pleased that the thematic reports helped to guide our national development plan. I would like to appreciate the support received from development partners and individuals during the entire process of writing the thematic report.

On behalf of the Census Commission and Board of Directors of LISGIS, I thank the Government of Liberia and our development partners for providing the required resources for conducting the census. Thanks also go to the national and international experts who worked very hard to complete these thematic reports.

Special appreciation for the success of the census goes to Hon. Samuel D. Tweah, Jr., former Chairman of the Census Commission, the Census Commission, the Steering Committee, the Census Secretariat, other national and international experts, census staff, and all respondents who provided the required information as well as all stakeholders for their commitment, motivation, and support to the National Population and Housing Census process.

I look forward to the continued support and guidance of development partners to engender sustainable development in our country.

Hon. Dehpue Y. Zuo
Deputy Minister for Economic Management
& Chairman of the Board
Ministry of Finance and Development Planning

Preface

The Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) conducted the fifth and first fully digital census in November 2022. The 2022 National Population and Housing Census data was collected using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology. Data were collected using tablets and later transmitted to LISGIS's server electronically.

The 14 thematic areas identified provide a comprehensive understanding of the population. These thematic areas are a) Population Distribution and Size b) Children, Adolescents, and Youth c) People with disabilities and older people d) Migration and Urbanization e) Labor force and Employment, f) Education, and Literacy g) Agricultural Population, h) Non-monetary poverty i) Housing conditions and facilities j) Mortality, k) Fertility, l) Marriages/Nuptiality, m) Gender Dimensions, and n) Population Projections. I would also like to thank the national and international experts for preparing the thematic reports.

Though the Government contributed immense resources to the 2022 National Census exercise, the requirements were enormous and beyond the capacity of the Government and LISGIS. It is with pleasure that we recognize and appreciate the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Swedish Government, the World Bank, the United States Aid for International Development (USAID), the Irish Government, the Government of Ghana, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners whose timely and continuous interventions gave stimulus to the execution of the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census including the preparation of the reports.

Special gratitude goes to the general public for their cooperation and support. We are indebted to personnel and the management of LISGIS, national and international experts, supervisors, and enumerators for successfully conducting the 2022 National Population and Housing Census.

Richard F. Ngafuan
Director General
LISGIS

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List of abbreviations

ECE	Early Childhood Education
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ILO	International Labour Organization
JSE	Junior Secondary Education
LPHC	Liberia Population and Housing Census
MOE	Ministry of Education
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
SSE	Senior Secondary Education
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive summary

The thematic report on education and literacy is one of the reports of the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census. The census collected information on the educational characteristics of the population, and these data are useful for assessing the recovery and performance of the Liberian education sector since the country transitioned into a state of peace and stability in 2003. A thematic report on education and literacy using data from the 2022 LPHC is, therefore, important to provide the overall picture of the educational characteristics of the population, and indicators, which can be used to measure progress in education outcomes moving forward. Counties that are lagging behind in education outcomes can be identified and targeted policies and strategies adopted to close the inequalities in the provision of educational resources.

School attendance status of the population

Out of the estimated population 3 years and older of 4,792,744, a third (33.4 per cent) has never attended school, and a little over a third (35.6 per cent) is currently in school. The proportion that has completed a level of schooling is less than one-fifth (17.3 per cent) of the population, while over one-tenth (13.6 per cent) of the population dropped out.

The proportion of the female population that has no schooling (37.8 per cent) is significantly higher than their male counterparts (29.1 per cent), but there is virtually no difference by sex among the population currently attending school (around 35 per cent). By locality of residence, the rural population that has never attended school (48.8 per cent) is almost two and half times that of the urban (20.5 per cent). Conversely, the proportion currently in school is significantly higher in the urban localities (42.4 per cent) compared to the rural (27.5 per cent). The proportion of the population that has completed a level of education in urban localities (24.6 per cent) is almost three times higher than that of the rural population. Higher school dropout is also recorded in more rural localities (15.0 per cent) than urban (12.5 per cent).

By county, Montserrado has the best school attendance indicators. The county has the lowest proportion of the population that has never attended school (19.7 per cent), the largest currently attending school (40.4 per cent) and the highest proportions completed (27.4 per cent). Counties with poor school attendance and completion rates include Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount and River Cess.

Distance to school is a significant factor affecting school attendance and dropout rates. About 60 per cent of urban households can access a primary school within less than 20 minutes walking, compared to less than half of the rural households. A higher proportion of urban households can also access a primary school at a walking distance within 20-39 minutes than rural households. It is also seen that while less than 5 per cent of urban households cannot access a primary school in less than one hour by walking, one in five rural households face this challenge.

Educational attainment status of the population

A little over a third (35.8 per cent) of the population have not attained any level of education. There is disparity between the sexes with males (31.4 per cent) having a lower proportion than females (40.2 per cent). The proportion that has attained a level of education reduces from primary school upwards, with a very low tertiary education attainment (4.4 per cent). In general, the male population has better educational attainment than females.

About half of the rural population (50.8 per cent) has not attained any level of education compared to less than a quarter of the urban. The urban population has higher proportion of attainment than the rural at all educational levels and the gap widens with higher level of educational progression. The proportion of the urban (7.0%) population that has attained tertiary education is more than five times that for the rural (1.3 per cent) population.

Montserrado County (8.3 per cent) has the highest proportion of the population that had attained tertiary level education. Margibi (3.9 per cent), Maryland (3.0 per cent), Bomi (2.4 per cent) and Grand Cape Mount (2.4 per cent) are counties that have between 2.0 per cent and 4.0 per cent of their population having attained tertiary level. The remaining counties have below 2.0 per cent of the population having attained the higher end of the education spectrum. For the secondary level attainment category,

Montserrado County (33.1 per cent) again has the highest proportion of the population in that category compared to the other counties. Grand Gedeh (24.6 per cent), Maryland (22.5 per cent) and Margibi (22.3 per cent) are the other counties that have more than 20 per cent of the population attaining secondary school level education. The rest have less than 20 per cent in this category. Grand Bassa, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and River Cess have more than half of the population 5 years and older having attained no level of education.

Analysis of the links between educational attainment and the work activity status showed a positive relation between higher education and salary/wage work and a positive relation between lower educational attainment and own-account (self-employed) work. About a third of those who have attained tertiary level education are employed in salary/wage work compared to a quarter of those with secondary level attainment and only 14.3 per cent among those who have attained primary school level education. About three in five (60.3 per cent) of those who have no education are in own-account work compared to 28.6 per cent among those who have attained tertiary level education.

Literacy status of the population

The national literacy rate of the population 15 years and older is 58.6 per cent. The rate for the urban (70.9 per cent) population is significantly higher than that of the rural (43.8 per cent). Generally, younger age cohorts demonstrate higher rates of literacy than older age cohorts. The proportion of the literate population reduces with age from 15-19 years to older ages, except some few age cohorts of males that showed irregular trends.

Montserrado (74 per cent) has the highest proportion of literate population, followed by Maryland (61 per cent), while Grand Cape Mount (42.0 per cent) has the lowest literacy rate. Seven counties have literate population between 50 per cent and 60 per cent, while six counties have literate population below 50 per cent.

Among the literate household heads in the country, as high as 91.9 per cent of them have their wards currently attending school compared to 40.1 per cent of the not literate household heads. Majority of the not literate household heads (56.2 per cent) have their wards never attended school. The proportion of household heads whose wards completed a level of education is higher for the literate (3.6 per cent) than the not literate (1.1 per cent).

Among the literate household heads in the urban localities, 92.5 per cent have their wards currently attending school compared to 52.5 per cent of their counterparts who are not literate. About nine in 10 (90.8 per cent) literate household heads in the rural areas have their wards currently attending school compared to 31.0 per cent among those who are not literate.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Education is a fundamental driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. A well-educated workforce is more productive, which can attract foreign investment and stimulate economic development. Improved literacy rates can also open up job opportunities and improve livelihoods for the population. Education and literacy are crucial for developing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, considering that an educated population is better equipped to participate in the global job market and compete effectively. When the population is literate, each individual will be able to access and apply information, fostering innovation and technological progress. A workforce with strong educational foundations is more likely to contribute to the development of advanced industries.

Liberia has faced numerous challenges, including civil wars and economic instability, which have hindered the development of its educational system. The economy completely came to a halt after 14 years of debilitating civil conflict, which claimed an estimated 270,000 lives (UNDP, 2010). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, n.d.), the conflict also destroyed or damaged close to 60 per cent of school buildings, including water and sanitation facilities which are key to keeping children, especially girls, in school. Teachers fled the country or took up other forms of employment.

In 2003, Liberia transitioned to a state of peace and stability. Since the advent of peace, Liberia has made significant gains in human development. However, the country's human development indicators remain low relative to neighbouring countries. Liberia is one of the countries with the lowest literacy rates in Africa. In September 2009, many children born after the end of 14 years of civil war entered classrooms across Liberia for the first time. Two reports on educational outcomes confirm the mess in the educational system created by the war. The Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (2014) reported that among adult women who attended secondary school (or higher), only 35 per cent could read a complete sentence. Romero et al. (2017) reported of Net Primary Enrolment Rate of 38 per cent.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) and its development partners, recognizing this pivotal moment in Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction, made every effort to fulfil the mandate of providing all Liberians with the opportunity to access and complete affordable education of acceptable quality, relevance and appropriateness that meets their needs and that of the nation. Significant progress has been made in the education sector since the end of the conflict. According to UNICEF Liberia Country Office Annual Report for 2015, close to 1.4 million children were registered in pre-primary, primary and high school in 2015. In addition, the MOE, UNICEF and other partners teamed up and continue to repair or build new classrooms, train teachers, revise curricula and develop policies and plans for the education sector.

As at 2019, access to high-quality education remained low. UNICEF summarized in its 2019 Annual Report (Item 12) that "Access to high-quality education is challenging, with high rates of overage enrolment, dropouts, out-of-school children and many teachers do not possess the basic literacy skills necessary to teach. Government spending on education remains low and many schools lack access to water, functional toilets or even stable buildings (cement construction). Unsurprisingly, learning outcomes for children are generally poor".

UNICEF and education partners continued to advocate with stakeholders to support alternative education opportunities and other strategic interventions for children still out of school who either have never enrolled in school, dropped out, or who enrolled in school in an age-inappropriate grade (overage)[1]. For Example, UNICEF and the World Bank in 2019, prioritized the promotion of preschool education in four under-served counties resulting in reaching 7,204 children (3,672 boys, 3,532 girls) gaining access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) against a target of 5,553. In line with UNICEF's strategy to increase access to high-quality education, 5,357 county facilitators, teachers and caregivers were trained to deliver learner-centred and gender-responsive pedagogy at different levels (UNICEF 2019 Country Office Annual Report).

1 UNICEF Liberia Country Office Annual Report 2019

The Government of Liberia, through the MOE, collects educational statistics to monitor and manage the education system. The latest one is the Liberia Education Statistics Report of 2021-2022. Schools and other educational institutions regularly report data on students, teachers, expenditures and physical facilities. However, such data typically provide limited information on the individual characteristics of pupils (such as age, sex and residence), and little information on the characteristics of their households. Moreover, as school-based surveys and censuses focus on children who attend school, there is no information on the individual characteristics and family backgrounds of children who do not attend school.

Population censuses and surveys can provide national-level sources of data on adult educational attainment and literacy and allow comparisons by different household characteristics. Since the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census (LPHC) collected information on all enumerated persons which included education characteristics, it can be used to assess the recovery and performance of the Liberian education sector since the country transitioned into a state of peace and stability in 2003. The census administrative data can be used to evaluate the influence and effectiveness of policies, interventions and investments by the Government and development partners like the World Bank. Analysis of the census data can inform the development of new strategic priorities, plans and policies in Liberia's education system.

Goal 4 of the SDGs relates to education and training and is to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". A thematic report on education and literacy using data from the 2022 LPHC is, therefore, important to provide the overall picture of the educational characteristics of the population, and indicators which can be used to measure progress in education moving forward. Counties that are lagging behind in education outcomes can be identified and targeted policies and strategies adopted to close the inequalities in the provision of education resources.

1.2 Reconstructing the education system in Liberia: Policies and programmes

Post-war recovery and reconstruction efforts prioritized securing peace and improving the economic infrastructure of the country. Rebuilding the education system was one of many urgent, competing national development priorities. The Government targeted the strengthening of the education policy framework with key legislation (i.e., Education Act, 2011), establishment of county school systems, increasing the number of schools and building capacity of teachers.

The 2011 Education Reform Act is the overarching law guiding the education sector in Liberia, replacing the Education Law of 2001, and establishing free and compulsory basic education. The act has nine main objectives: (1) ensuring the provision of high-quality education to every citizen at every educational level; (2) promoting equal access to education opportunities for all, without discrimination; (3) promoting public confidence in the educational system; (4) decentralizing the education system; (5) promoting and protecting human rights with respect to access and opportunities for high-quality education; (6) reducing illiteracy; (7) promoting gender equity and equality throughout the educational system; (8) producing citizens with the necessary skills for country development; and (9) ensuring adequate governance and management of the education sector.

Several development partners supported the Government's efforts to address these challenges, with the World Bank (2010, 2016) and USAID (2013; 2014; 2016) supporting teacher training and the provision of basic education. UNICEF and the European Union have also been active development partners in this sector.

To address the issue of access to education, there have been a wide array of education providers operating in Liberia over the years, in the form of public, mission-sponsored, concession-sponsored, private sector, public-private partnership and community-funded self-help schools.

There was a shift in focus along the line from the post-conflict goal of increasing access to a more balanced approach that focuses on improving quality as well. While the Government of Liberia's Agenda for Transformation (a medium term economic growth and development strategy, 2012-2017) prioritizes "equal access to high-quality and free compulsory basic education and to a variety of post-basic education and training opportunities that lead to an improved livelihood and/or tertiary education" (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 2012: 88), the MOE's 2016 "Getting to Best" Strategic Plan (G2B) began to focus attention on quality, prioritizing professionalizing principals and teachers, improving school quality, and monitoring and accounting for progress in a three-year action plan based on G2B.

Other policies and programmes that have elements of improving the education sector are:

i. The regional Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025 is a comprehensive 10-year education strategy with the aim to develop high-quality education systems to ultimately provide the African continent with the knowledge, skills and innovation needed to promote sustainable development and achieve the vision of the African Union.

ii. The MOE's commitment to inclusive education is detailed in the 2018 Inclusive Education Policy, with the goal to "expand and enable the education management and delivery services to respond to the diverse needs of learners in Liberia".

iii. The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018–2023, is the second of a series of national development plans under the Liberia 2030 Vision Framework. Pillar 1 of the PAPD – Power to the People – involves provision of education, health, youth development and social protection, with the planned education-related outcome of achieving more inclusive and higher-quality education with greater access to technical, vocational and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) training for all Liberians. Another key Pillar 1 outcome is to reduce gender inequality and empower women and girls. Specific strategies are laid out for ECE, primary, junior high, secondary and tertiary levels, as well as for adult learners.

iv. The 2019 National School Health Policy was developed with the intention of providing a legal framework to create an enabling environment for stakeholder engagement in the delivery of high-quality school-based health services.

v. The National Career Guidance and Psychosocial Counselling Policy for Liberian Schools (2019), further elaborates the conceptual and governance framework for creating a positive, enabling environment for teaching and learning and promoting students' well-being.

The latest of the education sector policies is the Education Sector Plan (ESP), which was launched in August 2022. The ESP sets out three key goals for the education sector during the plan period, which are to:

i. Ensure equal, disability-inclusive access to high-quality education and training for all, at all levels, with special attention to county imbalances, gender equality, and disadvantaged groups (increase equitable access).

ii. Develop capable citizens who possess skills that meet the demands of the labour market, and that contribute to national development and prosperity (enhance the quality and relevance of teaching and learning).

iii. Improve educational management and leadership that enhance efficient and effective delivery and system resilience (strengthen efficiency).

1.3 Objectives of the report

The main objective of the report is to document the educational characteristics of the Liberian population.

The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the school attendance and completion status of the population.

ii. Estimate literacy rates among different age groups, sex and counties with a focus on identifying disparities.

iii. Examine the impact of distance on school attendance.

iv. Recommend actions for addressing any gaps observed.

1.4 Methodology

The main source of data is the 2022 LPHC. Few references have been made to the thematic report on education and literacy prepared using the 2008 LPHC.

Proportions and rates are the main analytical tools used in the presentation of results. These are used to establish differentials by age group, sex and county. Results are presented in tables, and graphs are used for easier identification of differentials and trends. Age matters a lot in school enrolment, especially at the basic level. Therefore, age groupings based on the country's laws for entry into a level of the educational system have been used to analyse school attendance.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Educational attainment linked to the type of occupation and industry of employment gives a very important picture of utilization of the labour force in the different sectors of the economy. This information is also very important for curricula design and areas that the authorities should intervene to get the required trained people to work in the different sectors of the economy. However, data on occupation

and industry of employment are not available for such analysis. Links between educational attainment and employment outcomes for young adults (25-34 years) could not be analysed.

Changes in the age thresholds for the different levels of education make it difficult in comparing data of 2022 with that of 2008. On literacy, data was collected only on literacy in the English language. During the civil war, part of the population was displaced to Guinea and La Cote d'Ivoire, both French-speaking countries. Some might have learned the language. Literacy in the local language was also not considered in the questionnaire design for the 2022 Census.

1.6 Organization of the report

The report is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory part of the report where the background and context, objectives and methodology are presented. Chapter 2 is on the school attendance status of the population. Analysis on the school attendance status of the different segments of the population, including sex, locality of residence and county is presented in this chapter. Reasons for the differences in school attendance are also discussed. The Chapter 3 presents analysis of the educational attainment of the population. The relationship between educational attainment and the type of work activity is explored here. Chapter 4 focuses on literacy status of the population. The relationship between literacy of household heads and school attendance status is examined. The last chapter presents the conclusion, policy implications and recommendations.

Chapter 2: School attendance of the population

2.1 Introduction

According to UNESCO[2], school attendance is attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or programme, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education at the time of the census or, if the census is taken during the vacation period at the end of the school year, during the last school year.

In the 2022 LPHC, school attendance status was categorized into four: never attended; completed; dropout; and currently attending. Dropout is the withdrawal from the formal educational system, before completing the last grade of the education type. A student is "currently attending" if they are attending an instructional programme approved by the state, district and/or school.

Many researchers have found that determinants of children's schooling are the parents' schooling, age of children, school infrastructure, distance to facility, religion and urban residency (Sackey, 2007). While considering all these determinants in the analysis on school attendance, religion and clan/ethnicity have been excluded. This is because, in the present-day Liberia, ethnicity is less relevant than regional identity, as an ethnic group in one part of the country often has very different interests and networks compared to the same group in another part of the country (Herbert, 2014). Liberia is a Secular State (1986 Constitution of Liberia), where internationally acclaimed religious tolerance prevails. There is religious harmony, and no discrimination along religious lines is entertained. Therefore, there is no need to analyse education on religious lines.

2.2 The composition of the population in relation to school attendance

It is estimated that out of the population 3 years and older of 4,792,744, a third have never attended school, and a little over a third are currently in school (Table 1). The proportion that has completed a level of schooling is less than one-fifth (17.3 per cent) of the population, while over one-tenth of the population dropped out.

The proportion of the female population that has no schooling is significantly higher than their male counterparts, but there is virtually no difference by sex in the proportions of the population currently attending school (Table 1). The proportion of the male population that has completed a level of schooling is higher than the females by 7.2 percentage points as well as that for dropouts by 1.4 percentage points.

Almost half of the rural population have never attended school compared to a fifth of the urban population (Table 1). The urban areas have a significantly higher proportion of their population currently attending school compared to the rural areas. The proportion that has completed school in the urban (24.6 per cent) localities is almost three times that of the rural (8.8 per cent). The proportion that dropped out in the rural (15.0 per cent) area is higher than in the urban (12.5 per cent).

2 UNESCO IIEP Learning website https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/glossary/school-attendance

Table 1: School attendance status of the population 3 years and older by sex and locality of residence

School attendance	Sex		Locality		National
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	
Never attended	29.1	37.8	20.5	48.8	33.4
Completed	20.9	13.7	24.6	8.8	17.3
Drop-out	14.3	12.9	12.5	15.0	13.6
Currently attending	35.7	35.5	42.4	27.5	35.6
Population	2,404,077	2,388,667	2,603,352	2,189,392	4,792,744

School attendance status of the population by county is presented in Table 2 (refer to Appendix Table A1 for actual population figures). Four counties have more than half of their population reported as never attended school, namely, Grand Bassa (54.6 per cent), Bong (53.0 per cent), Grand Cape Mount (50.4 per cent) and Gbarpolu (50.1 per cent). Monsterrado (19.7 per cent) has the lowest proportion of the population that has never attended school among the counties. All the counties have dropout rates above 10 per cent except Lofa (9.8 per cent). River Cees has the highest proportion of school dropout, which is one in five (20.1 per cent).

Table 2: School attendance status of the population 3 years and older by county

County	Never attended	Completed	Drop-out	Currently attending	Total
Bomi	41.5	10.5	15.0	33.0	125,672
Bong	53.0	9.9	12.2	24.9	438,856
Gbarpolu	50.1	8.3	16.5	25.0	90,480
Grand Bassa	54.6	8.8	13.4	23.3	274,176
Grand Cape Mount	50.4	11.6	12.6	25.5	170,357
Grand Gedeh	36.2	15.0	16.1	32.8	208,069
Grand Kru	40.0	12.6	15.2	32.3	103,757
Lofa	46.7	9.2	9.8	34.2	348,999
Margibi	34.3	16.5	14.0	35.2	287,669
Maryland	33.4	12.6	14.7	39.3	164,294
Montserrado	19.7	27.4	12.5	40.4	1,820,399
Nimba	36.5	11.4	14.7	37.4	577,544
River Cess	48.4	6.7	20.1	24.8	84,395
River Gee	40.0	10.5	17.9	31.6	118,031
Sinoe	41.5	12.2	15.7	30.6	142,529

Among the counties, Montserrado (27.4 per cent) has the highest proportion of the population having completed a level of education (Table 2). Five of the counties have less than 10 per cent of the population having completed an educational level. Again, Montserrado (40.4 per cent) leads in the proportion of "currently attending school" population, followed closely by Maryland (39.3 per cent) while Grand Bassa (23.3 per cent) has the least. Grand Bassa (54.6 per cent) also has the highest proportion of the "never attended" population.

The high proportion of the never attended population, the low completion rate and comparatively high dropout rate of the older population can be explained partly by the civil war or recent improvement in access to education in the country.

2.3 School attendance at selected age groupings

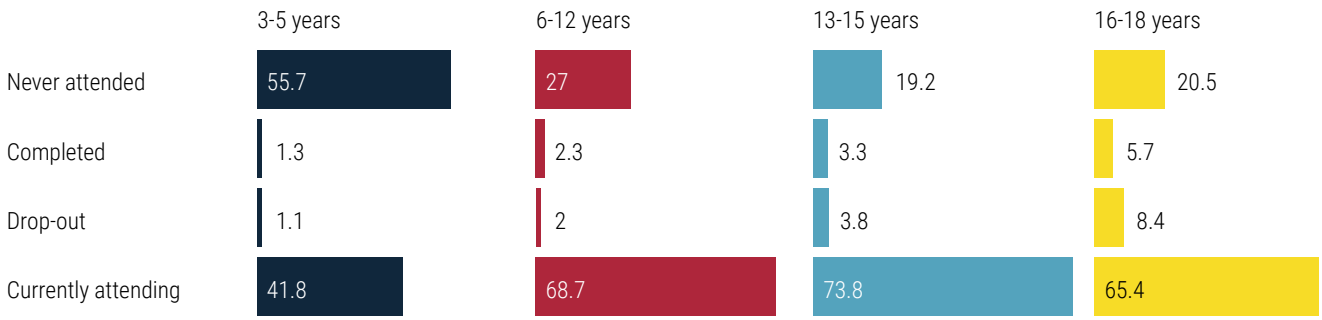
Analysing school attendance status by age groupings is important because (i) it identifies age groups that need targeted attendance interventions (ii) it provides understanding of the barriers to school attendance pertaining to the age groups and (iii) it provides early warning systems in the education sector.

Age groupings used for the analysis in this section are informed by the Liberian education system. The official school age starts from age 3 years. ECE comprises Nursery, Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten. It is meant for the teaching of children from age three (3) to five (5) years old. Primary Education is the level of education that consists of full-time formal schooling provided for children from age six (6) to age eleven (11). It is expected to be free and compulsory for all children of the age range for such school level and accessible for all pupils within the Public School System. Junior Secondary Education (JSE) comprises the first three years of schooling at the secondary level and is compulsory for all children. It is expected to begin at age 12 years and end at age 14 years. Senior Secondary Education (SSE) schooling begins at about age 15 years and ends at age 17 years.

In practice, the recommended ages to accessing these different levels of education are not strictly adhered to. For the purpose of this report, the age categorizations are 3-5; 6-12; 13-15; and 16-18 years. One major limitation of the analysis by these age groupings is that Liberia's education system has undergone some interruptions in the past that have affected the ages of entry of the school-age population. The civil war, Ebola and COVID-19 led to closure of schools, and that has the tendency to make some children enter an education level as overage pupils/students.

The school attendance status of children of schoolgoing age by specified age groups is displayed in Figure 1. For the children 3-5 years who should be in ECE, more than half have never attended and only about two in five are currently attending school. The proportion of the never attended category reduces with age and school level up to age 13-15 years, which is the free and compulsory education level. For instance, the never attended proportion in ages 6-12 years (primary school age) is significantly lower than the ECE group, but higher than the JSE group (13-15 years). This trend reflects in the increasing proportion of children currently attending from age 3-5 years to age 13-15 years and then drops at age 16-18 years. The dropout proportions also increase with age and level.

Figure 1: School attendance status of the population by category of school age



A variety of factors cause irregular attendance and difficulty in attending primary school. For the low enrolment at the preschool level at the prescribed age, it may be due to distance to the school, considering their age. Secondly, overage enrolment as a consequence of late entry into that level and lack of enforcement of the age-appropriate enrolment policy can be another reason. Gross enrolment rates of more than 100 per cent appear at all levels of the basic education level as revealed by the Education Statistics Report of 2021/22 of the MOE. The overage issue starts at the ECE level, with knock-on effects that then filter all the way up the system, negatively impacting both internal efficiency in the MOE and lowering returns on investment at the household level (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Sex disaggregated school attendance status is shown in Table 3. The proportion of males who have never attended school at all the age groups is higher than that for females except for the 16-18-year group that has almost the same proportions. This is also true for dropouts. The proportion of females currently attending school at all the age groups is higher than the males.

Development partners such as UNICEF and Global Partnership on Education can trace the increase in school attendance to interventions. The latter supports the MOE to increase girls' enrolment and retention at the primary level. The support comes in the form of provision of bags, school uniforms, sanitary pads and raincoats to pupils. This also has the potential to enrol their younger siblings in ECE because they are no longer available to act as care givers for their younger siblings.

Another reason identified by UNESCO (2015) is that many male children participate in labour activities, such as working on their family's land, which their family may depend on for survival. The UNESCO report found out that even if this labour does not prohibit them from attending school all together, combining work and school has been shown to increase absenteeism and reduce educational performance, often leading to school dropout.

Table 3: School attendance status of the population by sex and age category of schooling

School attendance	3-5 years		6-12 years		13-15 years		16-18 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Never attended	56.5	54.9	28.1	25.9	20.1	18.2	20.0	20.9
Completed	1.3	1.3	2.3	2.3	3.3	3.3	5.7	5.6
Drop-out	1.2	1.1	2.1	1.9	3.9	3.6	7.4	9.5
Currently attending	40.9	42.7	67.5	69.9	72.7	74.9	66.9	64.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Population	**188,115**	**193,362**	**431,459**	**431,419**	**190,525**	**191,235**	**189,577**	**192,699**

There are big disparities in school attendance status between the urban and rural population at all the reference age groups (Table 4). The children of ages 3-5 years who have never gone to school in rural (70 per cent) localities is proportionately higher compared to that of the urban (41.6 per cent). The difference, however, narrows with increasing age. Conversely, the proportion of children currently attending school in urban localities is proportionately higher than that of rural localities at all the age categories.

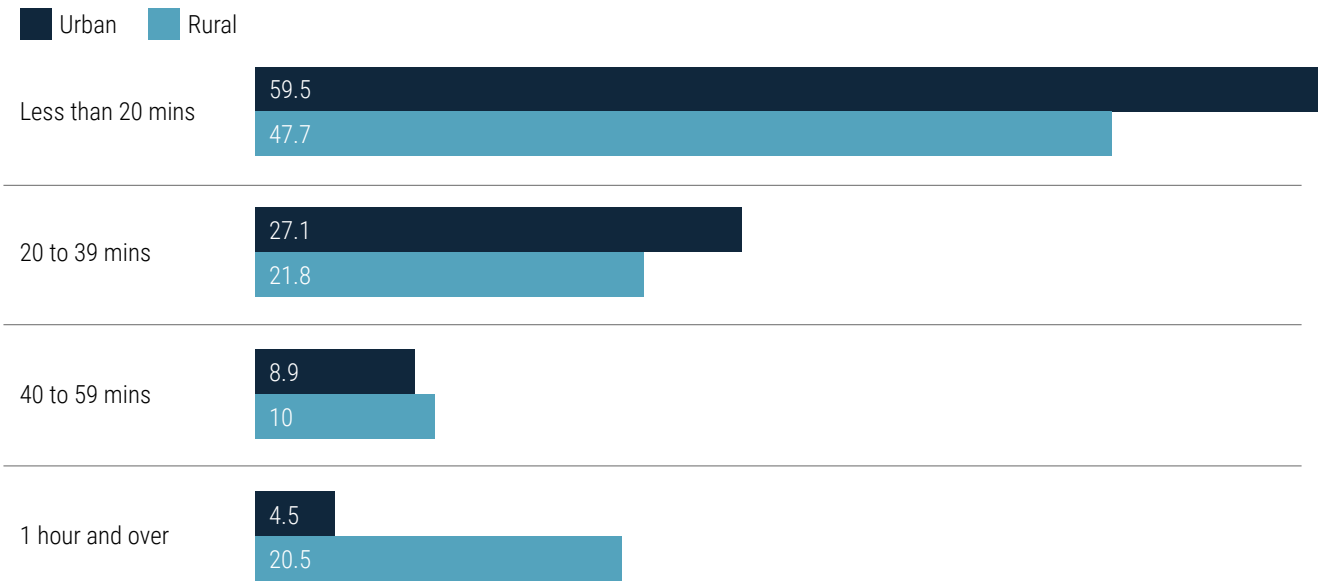
Table 4: School attendance status of the population by sex, age category of schooling and locality of residence

School attendance	3-5 years		6-12 years		13-15 years		16-18 years	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Never attended	41.6	70.0	16.1	40.0	11.1	30.1	11.8	32.7
Completed	1.9	0.7	3.0	1.4	4.0	2.2	7.3	3.4
Drop-out	1.2	1.1	1.9	2.2	3.2	4.6	6.9	10.6
Currently attending	55.3	28.2	79.0	56.4	81.6	63.1	74.0	53.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Population	**192,561**	**188,916**	**470,259**	**392,619**	**219,965**	**161,795**	**223,436**	**158,840**

Distance to school is a significant factor affecting school attendance and dropout rates. Long distances increase the opportunity costs of children attending school, can tire out children making it more difficult for them to learn, and can also potentially place them in vulnerable situations (Theunyck, 2002). The 2022 LPHC collected information on the time taken to walk to the nearest primary school and the results by locality of residence are presented in Figure 2.

About 60 per cent of urban households can access a primary school within less than 20 minutes walking, compared to less than half of the rural households. A higher proportion of urban households can also access a primary school at a walking distance within 20-39 minutes than rural households. It is also seen that while less than five per cent of urban households cannot access a primary school in less than one hour by walking, one in five rural households face this challenge. This clearly shows the huge challenge rural households are confronted with in accessing primary schools compared to urban households in Liberia.

Figure 2: Time to walk to the nearest primary school by locality of residence



If ECEs are attached to primary schools then it will be difficult for children of ages 3-5 years to walk to schools beyond certain walking distances. They have to grow to certain ages before they can access the facilities. According to the MOE, 42.5 per cent of all ECE pupils during the 2021/22 academic year were over-aged. They were in ECE classes but above age 5 years.

2.4 School attendance of selected age groupings and county of residence

The school attendance status of selected age groups by county is presented in Table 5. Three counties, namely, Bong, Grand Bassa and River Cess, have more than 70 per cent of the population aged 3-5 years never attended school. The remaining counties (Bomi, Margibi, Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Nimba, Grand Kru, River Gee, Grand Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu) have proportions ranging between 56 per cent and 68 per cent of that age group in the "never attended" category, except Montserrado, which has 37 per cent in that age category. River Cess (40.9 per cent), Bong (45.8 per cent), and Grand Bassa (49.2 per cent) are also the three counties with the highest proportion of the "never attended" category at the primary school age (6-12 years). At ages 13-15 years and 16-18 years, Grand Cape Mount (30.3 per cent and 36.2 per cent), Bong (34.0 per cent and 35.9 per cent) and Grand Bassa (38.1 per cent and 39.4 per cent) have the highest proportions "never attended" school compared to all the counties.

Across all the counties, Montserrado has the highest proportion of the population "currently attending" school at all the levels of education under consideration while Grand Bassa has the lowest proportion in all the categories currently attending school.

Table 5: School attendance status of the population by category of school age and county

Age group	School attendance	Bomi	Bong	Gbarpolu	Grand Bassa	Grand Cape Mount	Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Lofa	Margibi	Maryland	Montserrado	Nimba	River Cess	River Gee	Sinoe
3-5	Never attended	56.7	74.9	67.3	77.7	65.7	57.6	64.5	59.9	56.9	58.2	37.0	60.4	77.2	65.6	68.3
	Completed	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.2	0.6	0.9	1.5	0.7	2.2	1.0	0.2	0.6	0.9
	Drop-out	1.3	1.1	1.9	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.7	1.1	1.6	0.9	1.2	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.3
	Currently attending	41.5	23.1	30.3	20.9	32.3	40.2	34.2	38.1	39.9	40.3	59.6	37.6	21.7	32.7	29.5
6-12	Never attended	24.9	45.8	38.7	49.2	38.2	28.6	35.3	32.9	26.5	26.4	13.6	27.6	40.9	34.8	36.4
	Completed	0.9	2.0	0.9	0.9	1.1	2.1	1.3	1.5	2.1	1.1	3.5	2.0	0.6	0.9	1.8
	Drop-out	2.4	2.2	2.8	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.7	2.0	2.6	1.7	2.0	1.7	2.6	2.0	2.5
	Currently attending	71.9	50.0	57.6	47.6	58.7	67.5	61.6	63.6	68.8	70.8	80.9	68.7	55.9	62.2	59.3
13-15	Never attended	16.4	34.0	29.4	38.1	30.3	20.7	25.1	26.5	18.8	18.4	9.5	18.4	26.8	23.6	27.6
	Completed	1.3	3.4	1.5	1.3	2.4	3.2	2.4	2.2	3.0	1.7	4.6	3.0	1.1	2.0	2.6
	Drop-out	4.4	4.7	5.5	4.8	4. 6	3.7	3.7	3.9	4.7	3.4	3.2	3.2	6.0	3.7	4.6
	Currently attending	77.9	58.0	63.5	55.8	62.6	72.3	68.7	67.4	73.5	76.4	82.8	75.5	66.0	70.8	65.3
16-18	Never attended	20.1	35.9	32.3	39.4	36.2	21.0	27.0	28.3	18.9	18.0	10.2	20.1	28.7	26.0	27.9
	Completed	2.7	4.2	3.0	2.2	4.1	5.8	3.8	3.5	5.4	3.0	8.6	4.4	1.9	2.8	3.8
	Drop-out	11.6	9.5	13.1	10.1	9.6	8.1	9.5	7.8	9.2	7.9	7.0	8.4	16.3	9.9	9.8
	Currently attending	65.5	50.3	51.7	48.3	50.1	65.1	59.7	60.4	66.6	71.1	74.2	67.1	53.0	61.3	58.6

The spatial distribution of schools is generally uneven in most counties in Liberia, thus limiting access to formal education at the primary and secondary level. As discussed earlier, the distance to school is a major factor impeding children's school attendance. Schools may be too far away for some children to travel safely. It is evident in Table 6 that Grand Bassa which has the highest proportion of children never attended school and consequently the lowest proportion of the population currently attending school, has a third of households (33.4 per cent) walking for one hour or more to be able to access a primary school. River Cess (24.8 per cent) and Bong (18.8 per cent) counties, which also recorded high proportions of children "never attended" school, have high proportions of households that can access a primary school by walking for one hour or more. In contrast, Montserrado County (5.2 per cent) has the lowest proportion of households that have to walk long distance of one hour or more before accessing a primary school with Grand Bassa (33.4 per cent) as the highest.

Table 6: Household access to the nearest primary school by walking by county (per cent)

County	Less than 20 mins	20 to 39 mins	40 to 59 mins	1 hour or over	Total	Total no. of households
Bomi	49.2	25.7	8.7	16.4	100.0	38,591
Bong	47.3	23.2	10.7	18.8	100.0	110,099
Gbarpolu	58.9	17.5	5.9	17.6	100.0	22,411
Grand Bassa	35.8	19.3	11.5	33.4	100.0	69,287
Grand Cape Mount	52.2	24.7	8.9	14.2	100.0	45,170
Grand Gedeh	47.8	26.8	9.6	15.7	100.0	43,663
Grand Kru	46.2	32.8	9.1	11.9	100.0	20,604
Lofa	52.3	24.3	10.6	12.8	100.0	75,260
Margibi	42.3	30.2	12.9	14.6	100.0	72,276
Maryland	48.2	30.2	13.2	8.4	100.0	37,214
Montserrado	62.4	24.3	8.1	5.2	100.0	449,910
Nimba	55.1	28.0	9.4	7.5	100.0	127,951
River Cess	55.8	13.7	5.7	24.8	100.0	21,087
River Gee	54.1	23.2	10.0	12.8	100.0	23,906
Sinoe	53.1	21.7	9.0	16.1	100.0	29,843

Spatial distribution of schools has emerged a strong factor in school attendance. Putting up schools within reach of the school-age population has the potential to reduce the number of children not in school.

The findings in this chapter can well be summarized by UNICEF's report on education in Liberia. UNICEF's 2019 Liberia Country Office Annual Report claimed Liberia has the highest concentration of out-of-school children, with more than half of primary and lower secondary school-age children either not enrolled or enrolled in grade which is inappropriate for their age (overage).

Chapter 3: Educational attainment of the population

3.1 Introduction

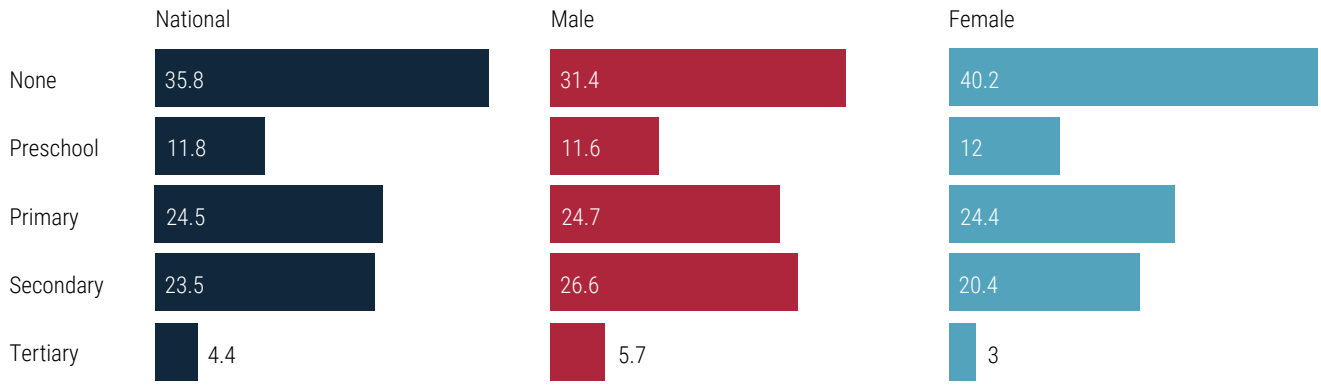
Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed. This is distinct from the level of schooling that an individual is attending. Data on educational attainment are used to provide information on the educational skills of the work force. This indicator also helps planners to decide on the best strategies to communicate with the population.

There is a range of possible explanations for why individuals reach different levels of school attainment. They include physical or physiological explanations, family and background characteristics such as the ability of parents to assist with education, differences in the spatial distribution of schools and quality of schools and teachers, etc.

3.2 Composition of the population and level of education completed

Educational attainment status of the population 5 years and older by sex is shown in Figure 3. A little over a third (35.8 per cent) of the population have not attained any level of education. The proportion that has attained a level of education reduces from primary school upwards, with a very low (4.4 per cent) tertiary education attainment. There is disparity between the sexes in the proportions for the no education attainment population, with males (31.4 per cent) having a lower proportion of this category than females (40.2 per cent). There is, however, virtually no difference between the sexes with regard to primary school attainment. In contrast, a little over a quarter of the male population has attained secondary school status compared to a fifth of the female population. Tertiary school attainment among the male (5.7 per cent) population is higher than females (3.0 per cent). In general, the male population has better educational attainment than females.

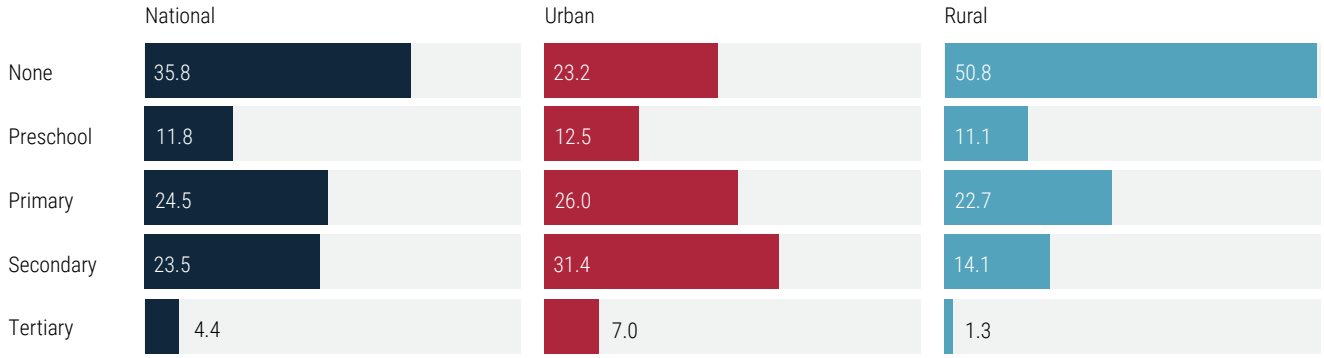
Figure 3: Educational attainment of the population 5 years and older by sex



About half of the rural population has not attained any level of education compared to less than a quarter of the urban population (Figure 4). As the educational level progresses, the disparity in educational attainment between the localities also widens. The urban population has higher proportion of attainment at all educational levels than the rural and the gap widens with higher level of educational progression. The proportion of the urban (7.0 per cent) population that has attained tertiary education is more than five times that for the rural (1.3 per cent).

For the population that has attained some level of education, the proportion of secondary school attainment (31.4 per cent) is the highest for the urban (22.7 per cent) population while primary is the highest for the rural (22.7 per cent) population.

Figure 4: Educational attainment of the population 5 years and older by locality



3.3 Level of education completed and county of residence

Montserrado County (8.3 per cent) has the highest proportion of the population that had attained tertiary level education, revealing a significant gap between the county and the remaining counties (Table 7) (Refer to Appendix Table A2 for actual population figures). Margibi (3.9 per cent), Maryland (3.0 per cent), Bomi (2.4 per cent) and Grand Cape Mount (2.4 per cent) are counties that have between 2.0 and 4.0 per cent of the population having attained tertiary level. The remaining counties have below 2.0 per cent of the population having attained the highest end of the education spectrum.

In the secondary level attainment category, Montserrado County (33.1 per cent) again has the highest proportion of the population in that category compared to the other counties. Grand Gedeh (24.6 per cent), Maryland (22.5 per cent) and Margibi (22.3 per cent) are the other counties that have higher than 20 per cent of their population that has attained secondary school. The rest have less than 20 per cent in this category.

With primary education level attainment, only Montserrado County has lower proportion of the population in that category than the proportion with secondary education level attained. All the other counties have higher proportions with primary education attainment than secondary education.

Grand Bassa (56.4 per cent), Bong (55.1 per cent), Grand Cape Mount (52.3 per cent), Gbarpolu (52.0 per cent) and River Cess (50.3 per cent) have more than half of the population 5 years and older not having attained any level of education (Table 7). Four counties recorded between 40 and 49 per cent for this category, namely, Lofa (48.9 per cent), Bomi (44.1 per cent), Sinoe (43.6 per cent), Grand Kru (42.7 per cent), and River Gee (42.3 per cent). Montserrado has the lowest proportion (22.1 per cent) in this category.

For all the population that have attained some level of education (excluding the no attainment category), the proportion that has primary school education attainment is the higher across all the counties apart from Montserrado County that has secondary school as the level attained by the highest proportion of the population.

Table 7: Education attainment of the population 5 years and older by county

County	None	Preschool	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Population
Bomi	44.1	11.7	23.9	17.8	2.4	125,672
Bong	55.1	11.4	18.6	13.1	1.8	438,856
Gbarpolu	52.0	8.8	23.0	14.6	1.6	90,480
Grand Bassa	56.4	8.9	18.9	13.8	1.9	274,176
Grand Cape Mount	52.3	7.8	19.9	17.6	2.4	170,357

Grand Gedeh	37.9	10.0	25.6	24.6	1.9	208,069
Grand Kru	42.7	12.0	26.4	17.8	1.1	103,757
Lofa	48.9	10.1	23.7	15.7	1.7	348,999
Margibi	37.2	10.9	25.5	22.5	3.9	287,669
Maryland	35.9	12.0	26.7	22.3	3.0	164,294
Montserrado	22.1	11.5	25.0	33.1	8.3	1,820,399
Nimba	39.3	16.0	25.6	17.4	1.8	577,544
River Cess	50.3	13.0	22.9	12.7	1.2	84,395
River Gee	42.3	12.8	25.3	18.5	1.1	118,031
Sinoe	43.6	9.8	27.0	18.2	1.5	142,529

The education attainment picture exhibited by the counties in Table 7 shows a clear linkage to the school attendance outcomes in the counties in the previous chapter (Table 2). That is, poor school attendance is directly linked to lower education attainment. The counties that have higher proportions of the population that have never attended school and with higher dropouts also recorded higher proportions of the population with no level of education attained.

Montserrado County (33.1 per cent secondary and 8.2 per cent tertiary education attainment) has the highest proportion of well-educated population compared to the other counties. The county is better placed because it hosts the national capital, Monrovia. It has the best education infrastructure in the country which attracts people who want to acquire higher education. After migrating to acquire higher education, most of them stay and search for jobs which match their qualifications. The Montserrado County alone possesses half of all higher educational institutions in the country, all found in Monrovia and its surrounding areas (ESP, 2022/23 to 2026/27).

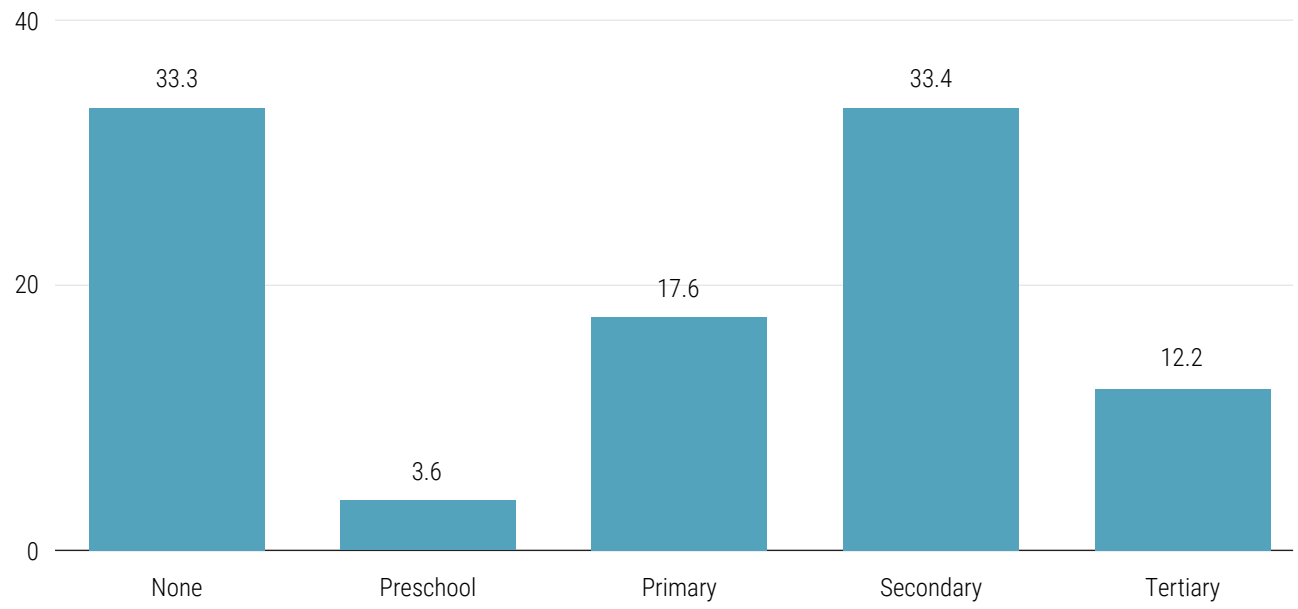
Monsterrado County has 70.4 per cent of the population that has attained tertiary level of education. Explanations typically highlight the success of capital cities like Monrovia that attract well-educated and skilled individuals from elsewhere, both by offering higher wages and superior consumption amenities such as electricity and potable water.

3.4 Educational attainment and work activity

The analysis in this section is based on the population 5 years and older who reported they performed some form of economic activity in the seven days prior to the census. This population, therefore, excludes those who had work to go to, but for one reason or other, did not do any work seven days prior to the census. This includes those on holidays and sick leave.

Figure 5 has information on the distribution of the population that performed some form of economic activity prior to the census by educational attainment (refer to Appendix Table A3 for actual population counts). The employed population consists of a third each of persons with no educational attainment and secondary education level attainment, while 17.6 per cent and 12.2 per cent of them have attained primary school and tertiary levels, respectively. The smallest proportion is those who have attained preschool level of education.

Figure 5: Per cent of the population 5 years and older that are economically engaged by educational attainment status



There appears to be a clear positive correlation between level of education attained and labour force participation in most countries. The higher the educational level attained the more likely a person will work in a salary/paid employment. Conversely, the lower one's educational level of attainment the more likely the person will be in self-employed or informal sector work.

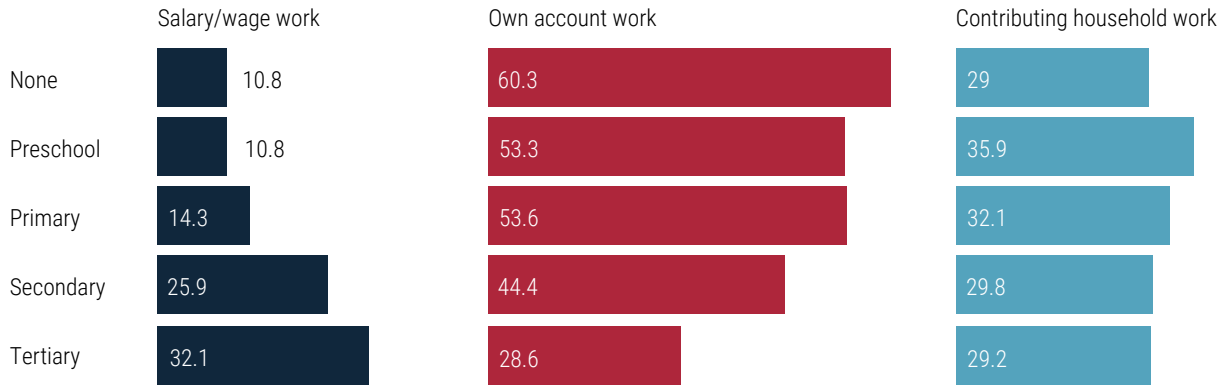
Figure 6 presents the proportions engaged in the three types of work by each level of educational attainment. The link between higher education and wage employment appears particularly pronounced as shown in Figure 6. The proportion of the population employed in salary/wage work increases with higher educational attainment. About a third of those who have attained tertiary education level are employed in salary/wage work compared to a quarter of those with secondary level attainment and only 14.3 per cent among those who have attained primary school level education. For others with no education or preschool education, just about 11 per cent are in salary/wage employment.

Persons with lower level of educational attainment are more likely to be working in non-salary/wage jobs (own-account work). As high as 60.3 per cent of those who have no education are in own-account work compared to 28.6 per cent among those with tertiary education level attainment. The proportion working in "own-account work", therefore, decreases with higher educational attainment.

However, it should be noted that the own-account category (self-employment) also captures those running their own enterprises, with or without hired labour. The small share of tertiary level educated adults in self-employment may also be suggestive of low levels of entrepreneurship among the employed population.

The population that has completed preschool has the highest proportion of contributory household workers compared to the other school attainment levels. This is followed by the primary school attainment category. The proportions of contributory family workers for the none, secondary and tertiary attainment are about the same.

Figure 6: Per cent of the population by educational attainment and work activity status



The distribution of the population within each education attainment level by work activity is shown in Table 8. The difference between the information in Table 8 and Figure 5 is that Table 8 looks at the proportion of each educational attainment by work status and locality of residence while Figure 5 examines the proportion of the population engaged in economic activity by educational attainment at the national level.

For those who have attained no education level, 10.8 per cent work as salary/wage workers, 60.3 per cent in own-account work, and the remaining in contributing household work. This means, majority of the population with no education attainment level are own-account workers. The proportion of urban dwellers in the no education attainment category who are engaged in salary/wage work is higher (17.0 per cent) than their rural counterparts (8.2 per cent). Most of the salary/wage workers in the rural areas are paid farm hands in rubber plantations, timber and unskilled mine work. Though majority of urban dwellers (52.1 per cent) with no education attainment are in own-account work, the proportion is much higher for the rural dwellers (63.6 per cent). Own-account work includes farming which is practised more in the rural areas. The proportion of contributing family workers is slightly higher in the urban (30.9 per cent) localities than rural (28.2 per cent).

The distribution of workers with preschool education attainment by work activity shows that 10.8 per cent are engaged in salary/wage work. The highest proportion is found in own-account work (53.3 per cent), with a little above a third (35.9 per cent) engaged in contributing household work. By urban and rural divide, the proportion of urban population engaged in salary/wage work (16.8 per cent) is more than double that of rural (7.7 per cent). The story is different when it comes to own-account work, as the proportion of the rural workers (57.1 per cent) is larger than the urban (45.8 per cent). The proportion in the contributing household work is slightly higher for urban (37.3 per cent) areas compared to rural (35.2 per cent).

Salary/wage workers constitute 14.3 per cent of the primary education attainment population that performed some form of economic activity. The proportion of own-account workers is 53.6 per cent while the contributory household workers form 32.1 per cent. The proportion of urban dwellers who have attained primary education and are engaged in salary/wage work (19.9 per cent) is higher than the rural counterparts (10.5 per cent). The reverse is observed with the own-account work as the rural proportion (58.0 per cent) is higher than the urban (46.9 per cent). Like the other two education attainment categories already discussed, the contributing household worker proportion is slightly higher for the urban (33.1 per cent) than the rural (31.5 per cent).

About a quarter (25.9 per cent) of secondary education attainers are engaged in salary/wage work, 44.4 per cent in own-account work and a little less than a third (29.8 per cent) in contributing household work. The urban-rural distribution pattern for those who have attained secondary level is the same as the three education attainment categories already discussed. Proportions are higher for urban in salary/wage and contributing household work, while rural proportion is higher for own-account work (Table 8).

The distribution pattern is different for workers who have attained tertiary education compared to the other education attainment categories. The highest proportion of workers who have attained tertiary education is found in salary/wage work (42.2 per cent), followed by contributing household work

(29.2 per cent), and the lowest proportion found in own-account work 28.6 per cent). The comparison between urban and rural areas suggests a similar pattern as was observed in the other education attainment categories.

Table 8: Distribution of the population by educational attainment, work activity status and locality of residence

Level	Salary/wage work (%)			Own-account work (%)			Contributing house hold work (%)			Population		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
None	17.0	8.2	10.8	52.1	63.6	60.3	30.9	28.2	29.0	193,056	467,154	660,210
Preschool	16.8	7.7	10.8	45.8	57.1	53.3	37.3	35.2	35.9	24,107	46,951	71,058
Primary	19.9	10.5	14.3	46.9	58.0	53.6	33.1	31.5	32.1	139,633	209,881	349,514
Secondary	28.9	20.0	25.9	40.8	51.1	44.4	30.2	28.9	29.8	434,418	228,218	662,636
Tertiary	42.9	38.4	42.2	27.6	34.1	28.6	29.5	27.5	29.2	204,840	36,443	241,283

There is an observable trend in some of the work activity categories. The proportion engaged in salary/wage work increases with upward progression by level of educational attainment, that is, 10.8 per cent for the no education attainment to 42.2 per cent at the tertiary education attainment. This implies that those who have invested the most time in education are generally also most likely to be engaged in a salary/wage work. The link between higher education and wage employment appears particularly pronounced, although it is observed that even a little education appears important in terms of improving chances of wage employment (UNESCO, 2014), as seen with the difference in the proportions in wage employment between primary and lower levels of education.

Exactly the opposite pattern prevails for the own-account category (non-wage employment), as the proportion of workers reduces with progression in education attainment level: from 60.3 per cent for no education attainment to 28.6 per cent for tertiary education attainment. People with lower levels of educational attainment are much more likely to be working in jobs without wages (UNESCO, 2014). However, there are some exceptions to these generalized conclusions, as tertiary level graduates may engage in own-account work in order not to be idle, or prefer to be self-employed based on the skills acquired at the university.

According to the ILO[3], employees (that is, employed persons holding paid employment jobs - salary/wage workers) represent the category of status in employment usually associated with more job security, and better working conditions in general, whereas own-account workers and contributing family workers constitute two categories of status in employment regarded as vulnerable employment. This implies the population that has attained higher education level is more likely to be engaged in jobs that promise job security and better working conditions. It also means the majority of the working population (own-account and contributory family workers) is in vulnerable employment.

However, although this is true in general terms, the ILO cautions that while the share of own-account workers and contributing family workers is a valuable and reasonable proxy to measure vulnerability, it is nevertheless an imperfect one. This is because, there are some employees who lack basic elements of decent work (such as not being covered by social security and/or social dialogue) while some own-account workers and contributing family workers are not in a precarious or vulnerable situation.

Another observation is that, irrespective of the education attainment status, higher proportions are recorded for the urban population engaged in salary/wage work compared to the rural counterparts. A number of primary export commodities – iron ore, rubber and timber –account for almost all formal sector employment in the rural areas. The same pattern is also recorded for the contributing household work category. For the own-account category, higher proportions are recorded for the rural population compared to the urban for all education attainment categories.

3 Posted on ILO's (ILOSTAT) website dated June 16, 2018 and titled "Paid employment versus vulnerable exployment". Paid employment vs vulnerable employment - ILOSTAT

Chapter 4: Literacy status of the population

4.1 Introduction

The United Nations (2015, p. 236) defines "a literate person as one who can both read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life. An illiterate person is one who cannot, with understanding, both read and write such a statement".

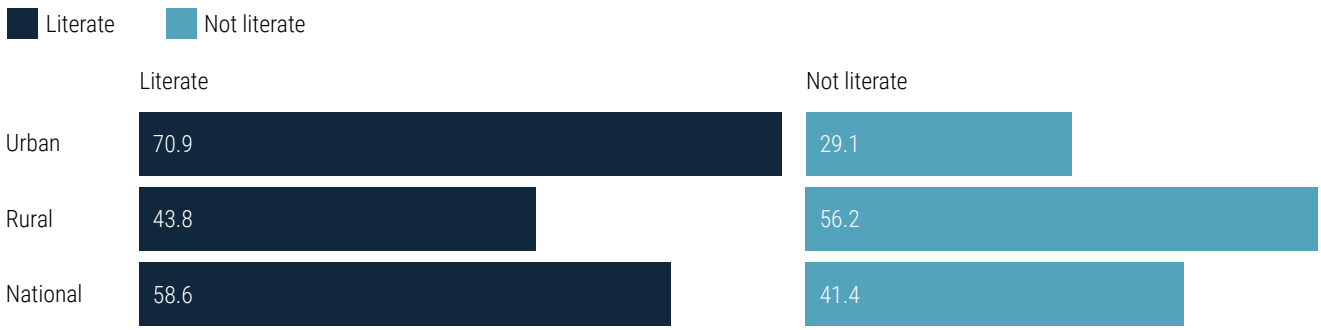
"Literacy is very important – many would say a human right. A good quality basic education equips pupils with literacy skills for life and further learning; literate parents are more likely to keep their children healthy and send their children to school; literate people are better able to access other education and employment opportunities; and, collectively, literate societies are better geared to meet development challenges" (UNESCO, 2008, p.9).

This section examines the literacy status of the population. Analysis extends further to establishing links between literacy status of household heads and education outcomes of the children of schoolgoing age.

4.2 Literacy status and locality of residence

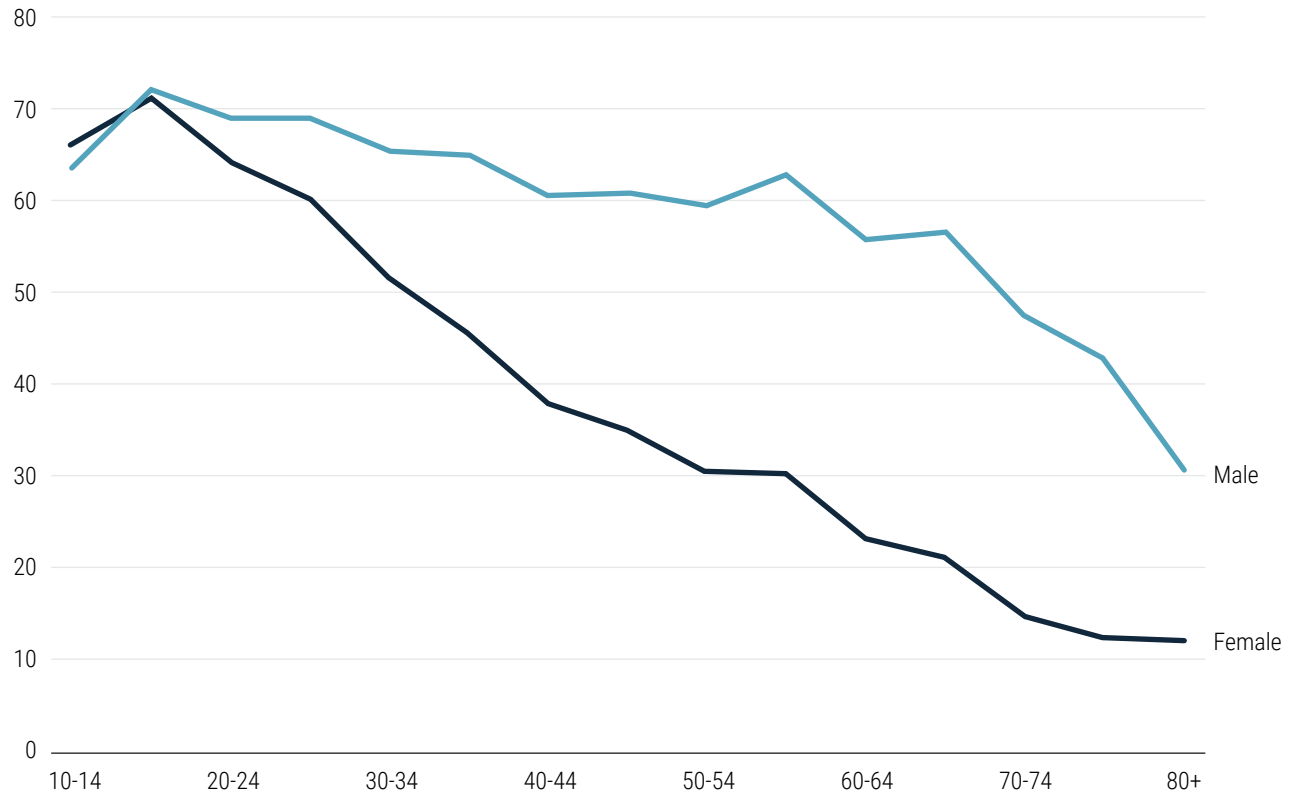
The national literacy rate of the population 15 years and older is 58.6 per cent (Figure 7). The rate for the urban (70.9 per cent) population is significantly higher than that of the rural (43.8 per cent). More than half of the rural population is not literate. This has serious implications for information delivery through posters and other materials that need to be read with understanding.

Figure 7: Per cent Literate population 15 years and older by locality



The literacy status of the population by age and sex is shown in Figure 8 (refer to Appendix Table A4 for the actual population counts). Generally, younger age cohorts demonstrate higher rates of literacy than older age cohorts. The proportion of the literate population reduces with age from 15-19 years to older ages, except some few age cohorts of males that recorded irregular patterns. Apart from the 10-14 age group, males are more literate in all age groups than females. It should be noted, however, that the impact of the civil war is a factor in the comparatively poor literacy rate of the generation that was of schoolgoing age during the war period.

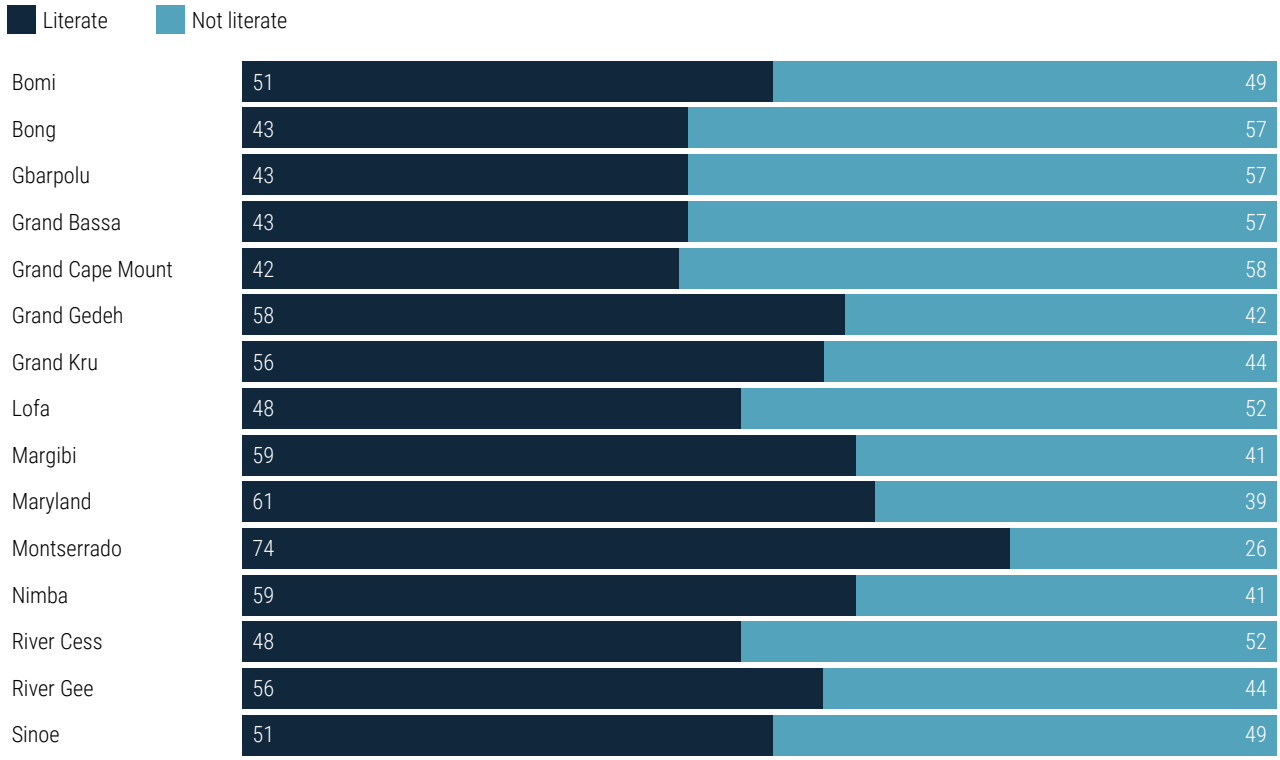
Figure 8: Literacy status of the population 10 years and older by age group and sex



4.3 Literate population and county of residence

Literacy attainment among the counties (Figure 9) varies and shows significant inequality by county (refer to Appendix Table A5 for the population counts). Montserrado (74 per cent) has the highest proportion of literate population, followed by Maryland (61 per cent), while Grand Cape Mount (42.0 per cent) has the lowest literacy rate. Seven counties have literate population between 50 per cent and 60 per cent, while six counties have literate population below 50 per cent.

Figure 9: Literacy status of the population 10 years and older by county



The counties that have literate population less than 50 per cent all have higher proportions of their population never attended school (Table 2) and not attained any educational level (Table 8). Therefore, the literacy statuses of the population of the counties reflect the educational outcomes discussed in earlier chapters. The analysis provides good information for educational planning in the counties.

4.4 Household heads' literacy status and school attendance of household members of basic schoolgoing age

Most research on family background of children of schoolgoing age has focused on the structural factors of families, such as parents' educational level, economic activity status and income. Research shows that socioeconomic status, most commonly measured by parental education and income, is a powerful predictor of school achievement and dropout from school (Schmid and Garrels, 2021).

The literacy status of the household heads of the population 3-15 years (regarded as basic school age, i.e., ECE to JSE) is cross-tabulated against the school attendance status of the children of that age. This is to establish whether the literacy status of the head of household is a predictor of child's school attendance status. The results are found in Table 9.

Among the literate household heads in the country, as high as 91.9 per cent of them have their wards currently attending school compared to 40.1 per cent of the not literate household heads. More than half (56.2 per cent) of the not literate household heads have their wards never attended school. The proportion of household heads whose wards drop out is slightly higher (2.6 per cent) for the not literate than the literate (2.3 per cent). On the other hand, the proportion of household heads whose wards completed a level of education is higher for the literate (3.6 per cent) than not literate (1.1 per cent).

Among the literate household heads in the urban localities, more nine in ten (92.5 per cent) have their wards[4] currently attending school compared 52.5 per cent of their counterparts who are not literate. Only 1.6 per cent of the urban literate household heads have their wards in the "never attended" category compared to 42.8 per cent of the not literate household heads. The proportion of urban not literate household heads whose wards drop out is also higher than among their literate counterparts.

4 "Ward" is used here instead of child because a household head may have different kinds of kids who may not be his/her children, like grandchild and other family members.

About nine in 10 (90.8 per cent) literate household heads in the rural areas have their wards currently attending school compared to 31.0 per cent among those who are not literate. It is also the case that only 3.1 per cent of the literate heads of household in rural areas have their wards never attended school while for the not literate heads of household, the proportion is as high as 66.1 per cent. The proportion of household heads whose wards drop out of school is, however, higher for rural literate household heads (3.3 per cent) than the not literate (2.3 per cent). Also, the proportion of rural household heads whose wards completed a level of education is higher for the literate (2.7 per cent) than the not literate (0.7 per cent).

Table 9: Literacy status of heads of households by school attendance status of children 3-15 years and locality of residence

Locality	School attendance status of child	Literacy status of head of house hold	
		Literate	Not literate
Urban	Never attended	1.6	42.8
	Completed	4.0	1.7
	Drop-out	1.8	3.0
	Currently attending	92.5	52.5
	Total	100.0	100.0
	Population	**495,345**	**259,519**
Rural	Never attended	3.1	66.1
	Completed	2.7	0.7
	Drop-out	3.3	2.3
	Currently attending	90.8	31.0
	Total	100.0	100.0
	Population	**262,318**	**353,941**
National	Never attended	2.1	56.2
	Completed	3.6	1.1
	Drop-out	2.3	2.6
	Currently attending	91.9	40.1
	Total	100.0	100.0
	Population	**757,663**	**613,460**

The analysis clearly shows that, irrespective of locality of residence, a literate household head is most likely to send the ward to school than a non-literate head. This makes literacy of head of household a predictor of school attendance for children. It must be noted, however, that there may be other reasons that could prevent heads of household from sending their wards to school other than their literacy status. From the analysis in the previous chapters, distance to the school (availability) and the age of the child if it is not safe for him/her to go to school alone (accessibility) are important factors of consideration.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, policy implications and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The proportion of the total population that has never attended school is high (a third of the population). The proportion of the female population with no schooling is higher than the males. The proportion of the population of children of schoolgoing age that is not in school is equally high. Two main obstacles to school attendance have been identified, namely, distance to school (spatial distribution) and literacy status of the head of household or parent.

Locality differences exist as far as children's school attendance and attainment are concerned. Residing in urban areas, relative to rural areas, not only reduces the chances of children not going to school, but also increases the schooling levels to be attained. Children residing in rural areas, well known for relatively higher incidence of poverty, are more likely not to go to school, and when they do, are likely to have lower educational attainments. Similarly, counties that have higher proportions of their population living in urban settlements such as Montserrado (91.7 per cent), Maryland (61.5 per cent) and Margibi (55.9 per cent)[5], have better school attendance outcomes compared with others with larger rural population.

Wards of household heads or parents who are not literate or have no schooling whatsoever face the worst educational prospects, while those who have literate household heads or parents have by far the better educational prospects. Holding other factors constant, higher levels of parental education tend to reduce the probability of children not attending school.

The school attendance outcomes are translated into the education attainment and literacy outcomes of the society. The analysis shows that localities and counties that have better school attendance outcomes have better education attainment and literacy outcomes.

Tertiary education attainment is very low, and this has serious implications on the quality of the workforce. For those who completed secondary level education, only 19 per cent continue to acquire a tertiary degree.

Monrovia's status as the national capital and situated in Montserrado County, has skewed educational resources into that county relative to the other counties. This is not surprising, because modern Liberia has been built around Monrovia, attracting more people from the other counties to either look for jobs or seek for better education.

5.2 Policy implications and recommendations

Identifying inequalities in the provision of educational facilities and their driving mechanisms is crucial in reducing inequality in the education sector. There are marked disparities in Liberia's educational outcomes that manifest in terms of gender and geographic location. The under-served areas have low school attendance outcomes with high proportions of children remaining out of school because they have never enrolled or dropped out of school. The phenomenon of no schooling and dropping out of school has serious socioeconomic implications such as unemployment and its related social vices, and increased dependency ratio.

Addressing inequality requires investment in infrastructure, more high-quality teachers, financial support, and promoting diversity and inclusion. An equitable education system provides all students with the resources to succeed. It is important to study perceived educational barriers as these can prevent youth from formulating or pursuing particular education aspirations.

Currently, the ESP 2022/23-2026/25 has been launched to improve quality, equity and inclusive education, in order to put Liberia in a position to achieve its SDGs on Education (SDG 4), that is, 'Ensure inclusive and equitable high-quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

5 From the thematic report on Migration and Urbanization

The ESP has identified almost all the problems that this thematic analysis has revealed. The plan has outlined programmes to integrate and reintegrate out-of-school children through return-to-school strategies and programmes. There is the urgent need for the country to consider educational equality and narrow the urban-rural education gap in the rapid development of the economy.

The low tertiary education attainment is an area that should receive equal attention because of advantages of a well-developed tertiary education system. Studies by Hansen and Ng (2016) show that increasing the proportion of the population holding a degree will better prepare people for success and a higher standard of living in this rapidly changing economy. The low tertiary education attainment of the population should be a concern in this changing nature of global economy. The world is in a period of transition where manual labour, by-and-large, is becoming obsolete as many industries are increasingly substituting capital for labour. With Liberia's economy heavily dependent on natural resource exports, growing human capital and improving the society's capacity for innovation through education is one of the ways to diversify the economy. Training people to the tertiary level is a way to increase one's skills and marketability in securing a job in the new economic landscape.

In contexts of conflict and displacement, higher education is also reported to be an important tool to rebuild countries affected by conflicts and promote peacebuilding (Oketch et al., 2014).

Support to education by development partners usually do not cover tertiary education. This means the Government has to find ways of making tertiary education accessible and relevant to the population. Scholarships to brilliant but needy students should be promoted. E-learning is also encouraged.

Over-concentration of educational facilities in Monrovia and its environs also has its own problems. The area will continue to attract migrants and problems associated with high population concentration at the national capital will need to be addressed with a sense of urgency.

Suggestions for improvement in the questionnaire

The language of literacy was limited to only English. It is important to collect information on literacy in other languages especially the local languages. The country shares borders with two French-speaking countries, and data on literacy in French should be considered in any survey or census.

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Appendix

Table A1: Population 3 years and older by school attendance status and county

County	Never attended	Completed	Drop-out	Currently attending	Total
Bomi	52,118	13,213	18,812	41,529	125,672
Bong	232,550	43,603	53,552	109,151	438,856
Gbarpolu	45,315	7,555	14,963	22,647	90,480
Grand Bassa	149,624	24,058	36,734	63,760	274,176
Grand Cape Mount	85,779	19,690	21,467	43,421	170,357
Grand Gedeh	75,250	31,114	33,419	68,286	208,069
Grand Kru	41,482	13,032	15,743	33,500	103,757
Lofa	163,004	32,207	34,367	119,421	348,999
Margibi	98,689	47,507	40,156	101,317	287,669
Maryland	54,822	20,773	24,091	64,608	164,294
Montserrado	358,191	498,308	228,282	735,618	1,820,399
Nimba	210,919	65,649	84,968	216,008	577,544
River Cess	40,848	5,663	16,930	20,954	84,395
River Gee	47,205	12,376	21,152	37,298	118,031
Sinoe	59,166	17,366	22,351	43,646	142,529

Table A2 Education attainment of the population by county

County	None	Preschool	Primary	Secondary	University	Other tertiary	Total
Bomi	55,438	14,759	30,075	22,387	2,816	197	125,672
Bong	241,828	50,083	81,444	57,550	7,533	418	438,856
Gbarpolu	47,056	7,991	20,816	13,213	1,264	140	90,480
Grand Bassa	154,615	24,430	51,951	37,953	5,033	194	274,176
Grand Cape Mount	89,128	13,264	33,839	29,964	3,870	292	170,357
Grand Gedeh	78,814	20,746	53,248	51,246	3,736	279	208,069
Grand Kru	44,346	12,400	27,392	18,432	1,119	68	103,757
Lofa	170,549	35,131	82,667	54,845	5,248	559	348,999
Margibi	107,109	31,337	73,443	64,640	10,699	441	287,669
Maryland	58,961	19,777	43,878	36,710	4,688	280	164,294
Montserrado	401,694	209,256	455,408	602,078	144,598	7,365	1,820,399
Nimba	226,767	92,404	147,579	100,209	10,148	437	577,544
River Cess	42,447	10,970	19,305	10,683	943	47	84,395
River Gee	49,978	15,150	29,842	21,809	1,203	49	118,031
Sinoe	62,136	13,924	38,498	25,875	1,977	119	142,529

Table A3: Distribution of the population 5 years and older by education attainment, work status and locality of residence

Level	Salary			Own-account			Contributing household work			National		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
None	32,774	38,315	71,089	100,588	297,291	397,879	59,694	131,548	191,242	193,056	467,154	660,210
Preschool	4,053	3,609	7,662	11,051	26,830	37,881	9,003	16,512	25,515	24,107	46,951	71,058
Primary	27,798	22,076	49,874	65,557	121,777	187,334	46,278	66,028	112,306	139,633	209,881	349,514
Secondary	125,713	45,686	171,399	177,459	116,508	293,967	131,246	66,024	197,270	434,418	228,218	662,636
Tertiary	87,852	13,980	101,832	56,613	12,423	69,036	60,375	10,040	70,415	204,840	36,443	241,283
Total	**278,190**	**123,666**	**401,856**	**411,268**	**574,829**	**986,097**	**306,596**	**290,152**	**596,748**	**996,054**	**988,647**	**1,984,701**

Table A4: Literacy status of the population 10 years and older by sex and age group

Age group	Male			Female			Total		
	Literate	Not literate	Total	Literate	Not literate	Total	Literate	Not literate	Total
10-14	201,345	115,374	316,719	208,692	107,211	315,903	410,037	222,585	632,622
15-19	227,138	88,481	315,619	229,670	93,174	322,844	456,808	181,655	638,463
20-24	202,680	91,216	293,896	196,495	109,145	305,640	399,175	200,361	599,536
25-29	147,178	66,324	213,502	136,951	90,481	227,432	284,129	156,805	440,934
30-34	143,486	75,737	219,223	113,086	105,751	218,837	256,572	181,488	438,060
35-39	110,521	59,777	170,298	76,391	91,043	167,434	186,912	150,820	337,732
40-44	103,546	67,322	170,868	53,543	87,417	140,960	157,089	154,739	311,828
45-49	60,922	39,284	100,206	30,020	55,763	85,783	90,942	95,047	185,989
50-54	57,027	38,839	95,866	24,117	54,591	78,708	81,144	93,430	174,574
55-59	30,334	17,973	48,307	12,362	28,580	40,942	42,696	46,553	89,249
60-64	26,734	21,154	47,888	9,595	31,564	41,159	36,329	52,718	89,047
65-69	14,851	11,437	26,288	4,770	17,727	22,497	19,621	29,164	48,785
70-74	10,011	11,083	21,094	3,013	17,328	20,341	13,024	28,411	41,435
75-79	4,116	5,495	9,611	1,240	8,648	9,888	5,356	14,143	19,499
80+	5,281	11,935	17,216	2,497	18,165	20,662	7,778	30,100	37,878
Total	**1,345,170**	**721,431**	**2,066,601**	**1,102,442**	**916,588**	**2,019,030**	**2,447,612**	**1,638,019**	**4,085,631**

Table A5: Literacy status of the population 10 years and older by sex and county

County	Male			Female			Total		
	Literate	Not literate	Total	Literate	Not literate	Total	Literate	Not literate	Total
Bomi	30,334	22,242	52,576	22,433	27,916	50,349	52,767	50,158	102,925
Bong	89,619	91,022	180,641	66,161	111,510	177,671	155,780	202,532	358,312
Grand Bassa	55,165	59,682	114,847	39,746	68,390	108,136	94,911	128,072	222,983
Grand Cape Mount	36,119	41,636	77,755	24,062	40,328	64,390	60,181	81,964	142,145
Grand Gedeh	58,991	37,520	96,511	43,619	38,271	81,890	102,610	75,791	178,401
Grand Kru	28,370	16,868	45,238	19,412	20,992	40,404	47,782	37,860	85,642
Lofa	77,474	63,825	141,299	57,516	84,347	141,863	134,990	148,172	283,162
Margibi	76,892	42,424	119,316	62,723	55,583	118,306	139,615	98,007	237,622
Maryland	45,359	22,630	67,989	36,342	30,173	66,515	81,701	52,803	134,504
Montserrado	589,234	160,742	749,976	540,996	233,939	774,935	1,130,230	394,681	1,524,911
Nimba	148,284	80,776	229,060	118,420	108,379	226,799	266,704	189,155	455,859
River Cess	20,586	15,300	35,886	12,196	19,641	31,837	32,782	34,941	67,723
Sinoe	35,772	27,119	62,891	24,250	31,311	55,561	60,022	58,430	118,452
River Gee	32,830	19,658	52,488	22,491	23,568	46,059	55,321	43,226	98,547
Gbarpolu	20,141	19,987	40,128	12,075	22,240	34,315	32,216	42,227	74,443
Total	**1,345,170**	**721,431**	**2,066,601**	**1,102,442**	**916,588**	**2,019,030**	**2,447,612**	**1,638,019**	**4,085,631**