



**2022** Liberia Population and Housing Census

# Thematic Report on Labour and Employment



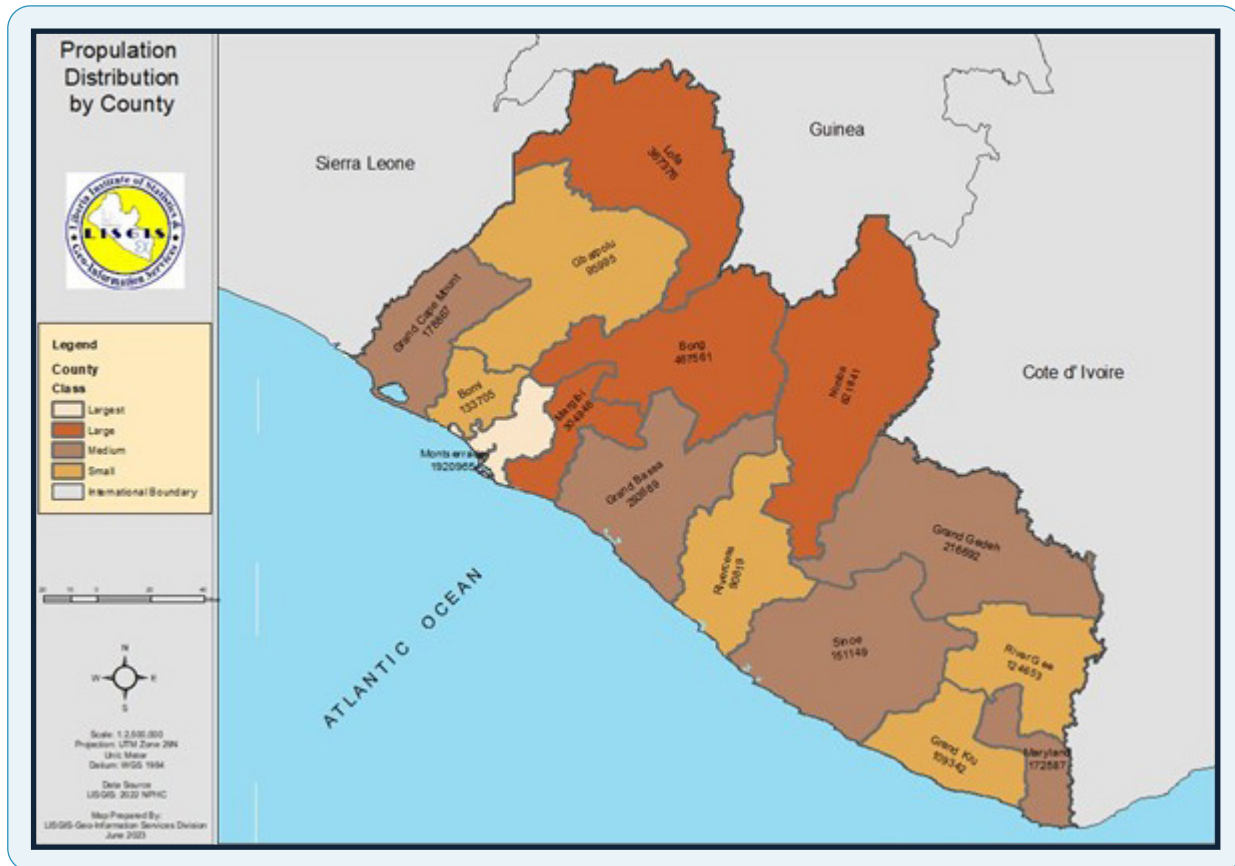
June 2024



Government  
of Ireland  
International  
Development  
Programme



# 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.

A blue ink signature of Hon. Dehpue Y. Zuo.

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

# Contents

Foreword	3
Preface	4
Contents	5
List of figures	7
List of tables	8
Abbreviations	9
Executive summary	10
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Background and context	13
1.2 Objectives	14
1.3 Methodology	14
1.4 Limitation	15
1.5 Organization of the report	15
<b>Chapter 2: Economic activity of the general population</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 Size and distribution of persons 5 years and older who participated in economic activity by sex	17
2.3 Educational characteristics of the working population 5 years and older	19
2.3.1 Literacy status of the working population 5 years and older	19
2.3.2 School attendance status of the working population 5 years and older	21
2.3.3 Education attainment status of the working population 5 years and older	21
2.4 Participation in economic activity of the population 5 years and older by locality of residence	22
2.5 Participation in economic activity of the population 5 years and older by county	24
2.5.1 Size of the working population 5 years and older by county	24
2.5.2 Composition of the workforce in the counties by work activity	25
2.6 Participation of people with disabilities in economic activities	27
<b>Chapter 3: Economic activity of the working-age population</b>	<b>30</b>
3.1 Introduction	30
3.2 Size of the working-age population by sex and locality	30
3.3 Educational characteristics of the working-age population	33
3.3.1 School attendance status of the working-age population	33
3.3.2 Educational attainment status of the working-age population	34
<b>Chapter 4: Economic activity of working children</b>	<b>38</b>
4.1 Introduction	38
4.2 Size of the working children by sex	38
4.3 Work activity of working children by locality of residence	41
4.4 Work activity of working children by county	42
4.5 School attendance status of child workers	43

<b>Chapter 5: Economic activity of the youth population</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1 Introduction	45
5.2 Size of the youth population by sex	45
5.3 Work activity of the youth by locality of residence	47
5.4 Educational characteristics of the working youth	49
5.4.1 School attendance status of the working youth	49
5.4.2 Educational attainment status of the working youth	50
<b>Chapter 6: Economic activity of the elderly population</b>	<b>54</b>
6.1 Introduction	54
6.2 Size of the elderly working population	54
6.3 Educational characteristics of the elderly working population	56
6.3.1 Literacy status of the elderly working population	56
6.3.2 Education attainment of the elderly working population	57
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusions, policy implications and recommendations</b>	<b>59</b>
7.1 Conclusions	59
7.2 Policy implications	60
7.3 Recommendations	60
7.3.1 Education	60
7.3.2 Employment	60
References	62
Appendix	64

# List of figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity status and sex	18
<b>Figure 2:</b> Composition of the working population 5 years and older (6 years and older for 2008) in 2008 and 2022	19
<b>Figure 3:</b> Composition of the working population 5 years and older by literacy status and sex	20
<b>Figure 4:</b> Distribution of the workforce 5 years and older by school attendance status	21
<b>Figure 5:</b> Distribution of the workforce 5 years and older by educational attainment status	21
<b>Figure 6:</b> Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity status of the urban population	23
<b>Figure 7:</b> Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity status of the rural population	23
<b>Figure 8:</b> Work activity status by severity of disability	29
<b>Figure 9:</b> Percentage distribution of working-age population by work activity status and sex	31
<b>Figure 10:</b> Percentage distribution of working-age population by work activity status and locality	31
<b>Figure 11:</b> Composition of the work activity status of the working-age population in 2008 and 2022	32
<b>Figure 12:</b> Composition of work activity of the working-age population in each school attendance category	34
<b>Figure 13:</b> Educational attainment status of the working-age population in 2008 and 2022	35
<b>Figure 14:</b> Composition of the work activity of the working-age population in each of the education attainment categories	37
<b>Figure 15:</b> Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 14 years by work activity status and sex	39
<b>Figure 16:</b> Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 17 years by work activity status by sex	39
<b>Figure 17:</b> Comparison of work activity status of working children between 2008 and 2022	40
<b>Figure 18:</b> Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 14 years by work activity status and locality	41
<b>Figure 19:</b> Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 17 years by work activity status by locality	42
<b>Figure 20:</b> School attendance status of working children	43
<b>Figure 21:</b> Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 24 years by work activity and sex	46
<b>Figure 22:</b> Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 35 years by work activity and sex	47
<b>Figure 23:</b> Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 24 years by work activity and locality of residence	48
<b>Figure 24:</b> Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 35 years by work activity and locality of residence	48
<b>Figure 25:</b> Composition of the work activity of the working youth population aged 15 to 24 in each of the education attainment categories	52
<b>Figure 26:</b> Composition of the work activity of the working youth population aged 15 to 35 in each of the education attainment categories	53
<b>Figure 27:</b> Distribution of the working elderly population by work activity and sex	55
<b>Figure 28:</b> Distribution of the working elderly population by work activity and sex	55
<b>Figure 29:</b> Literacy status of the elderly working population by sex	56
<b>Figure 30:</b> Literacy status of the elderly working population by work activity	57



# List of tables

<b>Table 1:</b> Work activity status of the population 5 years and older by sex	17
<b>Table 2:</b> Literacy status of the working population 5 years and older by work activity and sex	20
<b>Table 3:</b> Work activity status by education attainment of persons 5 years and older	22
<b>Table 4:</b> Work activity status of persons 5 years and older by locality of residence	22
<b>Table 5:</b> Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity and county	24
<b>Table 6:</b> Proportion of the population in the different work activities by county	25
<b>Table 7:</b> Changes in the proportion of work activity status of the working population 5 years and older (6 years and older for 2008) by county from 2008 and 2022	26
<b>Table 8:</b> Disaggregation of work activity of population 5 years and older by county and sex	27
<b>Table 9:</b> Work activity and disability severity of persons 5 years and older	28
<b>Table 10:</b> Work activity status of the working-age population by sex and locality	30
<b>Table 11:</b> Distribution of working-age population by school attendance and sex	33
<b>Table 12:</b> Distribution of work activity of the working-age population by school attendance status and sex	34
<b>Table 13:</b> Educational attainment of the working-age population by sex	35
<b>Table 14:</b> Educational attainment of the working-age population by work activity	36
<b>Table 15:</b> Working children by work activity and sex	38
<b>Table 16:</b> Working children by work activity and locality	41
<b>Table 17:</b> Work activity rate of children by county and sex	42
<b>Table 18:</b> Working children by work activity and school attendance status	44
<b>Table 19:</b> Size of the working youth by work activity status and sex	46
<b>Table 20:</b> Size of the working youth by work activity status and locality of residence	47
<b>Table 21:</b> School attendance status of the working youth by sex	49
<b>Table 22:</b> School attendance status of the working youth aged 15 to 24 by work activity and sex	50
<b>Table 23:</b> School attendance status of the working youth aged 15 to 35 by work activity and sex	50
<b>Table 24:</b> Distribution of the working youth by educational attainment and sex	51
<b>Table 25:</b> Education attainment status of the working youth aged 15 to 24 by work activity and sex	51
<b>Table 26:</b> Education attainment status of the working youth aged 15 to 35 by work activity and sex	52
<b>Table 27:</b> Size of the elderly working population by work activity status, sex and locality of residence	54
<b>Table 28:</b> Education attainment of the elderly working population by sex	57
<b>Table 29:</b> Education attainment status of the elderly working population by work activity and sex	58



# Abbreviations

<b>COVID-19</b>	Corona Virus Disease
<b>EBRD</b>	Adolescent Birth Rate
<b>ICLS</b>	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Agency
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>LISGIS</b>	Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Systems
<b>LPHC</b>	Liberia Population and Housing Census
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>PRS</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy
<b>REALISE</b>	Recovery of Economic Activity for Liberian Informal Sector Employment
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Executive summary

Statistics on labour force and employment give information on the economy's performance and the impact in terms of employment generation of economic policies and programmes and investment in human capital. The statistics provide meaningful information on the types of jobs people are doing. Census data on the economic characteristics of the population is particularly useful in preparing basic tabulations of the population by their labour market situation (employed, unemployed, outside the labour force) or activity status (student, homemaker, etc.), and some information on industry and occupation groups. This thematic report on labour and employment, which is one of the 15 thematic reports from the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census (LPHC), will be used for measuring progress against labour market targets in Liberia's national development plan as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators related to employment.

It is important to note that the 2022 LPHC failed to collect information on the full size of the labour force and other characteristics of the working population. Owing to this, estimates could not be made on the actual size of the labour force, unemployed population and population outside the labour force. Also missing in the thematic report is the occupation and industry of employment of persons who performed economic activities in the reference period.

## Economic activity of the population 5 years and older

The total number of persons 5 years and older who performed some form of economic activity 7 days prior to the census is 1,984,701 out of the total population 5 years and older of 4,700,235. This translates into activity participation rate of 42.2 per cent, with participation rate among males (47.5 per cent) higher than that of females (36.8 per cent). The activity participation rate for 2008 is 37.5 per cent, which is almost 5 percentage points lower than the 2022 figure.

Almost half (49.7 per cent) of persons who performed economic activity during the reference period are own-account workers. Contributing family workers constitute 30.1 per cent and salary/wage workers form 20.2 per cent.

The working population 5 years and older is composed of 64.3 per cent literate and 35.7 per cent non-literate. Literacy among males (71.6 per cent) is higher than that of females (54.5 per cent). Literacy among salary/wage workers is 80.7 per cent. Proportion of literate males (83.2 per cent) is higher than that of the female counterpart (75.0 per cent). There are more non-literate females (51.9 per cent) engaged in own-account work than the literate females. Males, however, have majority of persons in own-account work being literate (64.8 per cent). Literate persons dominate in contributing family work for both sexes.

For the school attendance status of persons who performed economic activity in the reference period, the largest proportion (34.4 per cent) has completed a level of education, followed by those who have never attended school (32.3 per cent). Persons who are currently in school constitute the lowest proportion of 10.9 per cent. For education attainment status, persons who have not completed any level of education and those who have attained secondary education constitute 33.3 per cent and 33.4 per cent respectively. Persons who had attained tertiary education constitute just above 10 per cent of the workforce.

Analysis of the data by locality of residence shows that, the activity participation rate is higher in rural (46.8 per cent) than urban areas (38.5 per cent). Activity participation rate is higher for males than females irrespective of the locality of residence.

The activity participation rate for the counties indicates that Lofa recorded the highest rate 61.9 per cent followed by River Cess (55.5 per cent). Maryland (33.0 per cent) recorded the lowest rate. Other counties that recorded low participation rates within the 33 to 40 per cent range are Margibi (34.6 per cent), Bomi (34.7 per cent), Nimba (37.4 per cent), Sinoe (38.7 per cent) and Gbarpolu (39.7 per cent). Montserrado, the most urbanized county, recorded a rate of 40.6 per cent.

The total population of persons with disabilities (PWDs) of ages 5 years and older enumerated in the census is 509,676, equivalent to 10.8 per cent of the total population 5 years and older. Despite the impairment, the activity participation rate of the

disabled persons with “some difficulty” (46.6 per cent) is higher than workers without a disability (41.9 per cent), and also higher than the national average (42.2 per cent). Persons with “lots of difficulty or cannot do at all” have a lower participation rate (34.9 per cent).

### Economic activity of the working-age population (15 to 64 years)

The working-age population (15 to 64 years) constitutes 63.0 per cent of the total population of Liberia. The activity rate for the working-age population is 55.3 per cent, which is higher than the 45.7 per cent recorded in 2008. The male activity rate (61.9 per cent) is significantly higher than that of the female counterparts (48.6 per cent). The activity rate is higher for rural areas (60.2 per cent) than urban areas (51.5 per cent).

Almost half (49.7 per cent) of the working-age population is engaged in own-account work. This is followed by contributing family work (29.4 per cent), with salary/wage work having about one fifth of the persons that worked. Majority (54.8 per cent) of the females are engaged in own-account work compared to 45.8 per cent of males. A quarter of males is employed in salary/wage work compared to females (14.7 per cent). The difference in proportions engaged in contributing family work between gender is not wide.

The largest proportion of the working-age population that performed economic activity has completed a level of education (35.8 per cent), while 31.4 per cent has never attended school. The males who have completed a level of education constitute the largest proportion (42.3 per cent) of the working population aged 15 to 64. In contrast, the never attended school category form the largest proportion (41.1 per cent) of the female working-age population with those that have completed a level of education (27.4 per cent) being second largest.

The majority (56.7 per cent) of persons who are engaged in salary/wage work have completed a level of education, with the male (59.0 per cent) proportion higher than the female (51.7 per cent). For own-account work, the never attended category is the largest (38.6 per cent), followed by those who have completed a level of education (27.3 per cent), dropouts (25.5 per cent) and currently attending school (8.7 per cent).

Overall, the secondary level education attainers constitute the largest proportion (35.3 per cent) of workers in the working-age group, followed by those

who have not attained any level of education (32.3 per cent). University graduates constitute 12.6 per cent. For salary/wage work, the largest proportion engaged in this work activity has secondary education (43.6 per cent), followed by university graduates (25.6 per cent). Workers with no education attainment (39.3 per cent) constitute the largest proportion of own-account workers.

### Economic activity of working children (5 to 14 years)

Out of a total population of 1,247,226 of children from ages 5 to 14, those who performed some form of economic activity was 86,063, translating into activity participation rate of 6.9 per cent. The activity rate for 2008 of 13.8 per cent is higher than that recorded in 2022, signifying a reduction of the proportion of working children. The activity rate for males (7.3 per cent) is higher than that of females (6.5 per cent). The largest proportion of the working children is engaged in own-account work in both sexes.

The proportion of working children aged 5 to 14 in urban areas engaged in salary/wage work (13.5 per cent) is higher than their rural counterparts (5.0 per cent). The majority of working children in rural areas (52.6 per cent) are engaged in own-account work compared to 36.4 per cent of urban working children. For contributing family work, higher proportion (almost half) of urban working children are engaged in this activity compared to 44.4 per cent in rural working children.

Lofa County recorded the highest activity rate of 28.3 per cent, followed by Grand Kru (16.9 per cent) and Bong (13.6 per cent). Montserrado and Margibi, the most urbanized counties, recorded low activity rates of 2.3 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively.

The school attendance status of the working children shows that, majority (51.0 per cent) of children currently in school are also working. Children who have never attended school (38.0 per cent) form the second largest working children population. Never attended school category has the largest proportion of salary/wage work, while the currently attending school category have the largest proportions in the own-account and contributing family work.

### Economic activity of the youth population (15 to 35 years)

The population in the 15 to 35 age group was 2,189,306, which is equivalent to 41.7 per cent of the total population. The activity participation rate for the 15-35 age group is 42.0 per cent. This activity



rate is higher than 38.8 per cent recorded in 2008. The participation rate for the males (45.4 per cent) is higher than that of the females (38.6 per cent).

The majority (51.1 per cent) of the population are engaged in own-account work, followed by contributing family work (30.5 per cent) and 18.4 per cent in salary/wage work. Majority of females (54.7 per cent) are found in own-account work while less than half of the male counterpart (48.8 per cent) is in this work activity. Females (31.4 per cent) are also found more in contributing family work than males (29.6 per cent). More than one fifth (22.4 per cent) of males are engaged in salary/wage work while the proportion of females is 13.8 per cent.

Activity participation rate is higher for the rural youth (49.0 per cent) than the urban youth (36.8 per cent). About three out of every five youth in the rural area are engaged in own-account work compared with a little over 2 out of 5 in the urban area. In the case of salary/wage work, 25.3 per cent of the urban youth are engaged in this work activity. This compares with 11.3 per cent in rural areas.

By educational attainment of the working youth, secondary school leavers constitute the largest proportion (38.8 per cent) and those with no education completion level constituting the second largest (29.3 per cent). Secondary school leavers constitute the largest proportion for the males (42.8 per cent) while it is the no education attainment that constitutes the largest for the females (34.8 per cent). The working youth that had completed tertiary level education constitute 7.8 per cent, comprising of 8.8 per cent males and 6.5 per cent females.

Youth engagement in salary/wage work is dominated by secondary school leavers for both sexes. The proportion of tertiary degree holders (16.4 per cent) is the second largest for the males and it is the no education attainment category for females (20.8 per cent). Almost two out of every five males in own-account work have completed secondary school education. Females with no education attainment constitute the largest proportion of own-account workers.

### Economic activity of the elderly (65 years and older)

The total population of the elderly 65 years and older in 2022 is 147,497 comprising of 50.3 per cent males and 49.7 per cent females. The number of persons that performed some form of economic activity during the reference period was 69,437, translating into an activity participation rate of 47.0 per cent.

The figure in 2008 was 41.7 per cent. The activity participation rate for the males is 61.6 per cent and that of the females is 32.3 per cent, which is far below that of the males. The activity rate for the rural elderly working population is 50.6 per cent and that of the urban is 42.7 per cent.

The majority of the elderly population (52.0 per cent) is engaged in own-account work. Contributing family work engages the second largest proportion of the elderly (29.3 per cent), with salary/wage work engaging the least (18.7 per cent). Though own-account work engages the largest proportion in both sexes, majority of females (58.2 per cent) are found in this work activity compared to 48.8 per cent of males. A little over one fifth of the elderly males (22.5 per cent) is engaged in salary/wage work. The proportion of females (11.3 per cent) engaged in this work activity is half that of their male counterparts.

By locality of residence, three out of every five elderly workers in the rural areas are found in own-account work, compared to two out of five in the urban areas. A wide difference is also observed in salary/wage work as 28.3 per cent of elderly workers in urban areas are engaged in this activity, while it is 12.2 per cent in the rural areas. The proportion of elderly workers in urban areas (31.5 per cent) engaged in contributing family work is higher than what pertains in the rural areas (27.8 per cent).

The proportion of literates (48.7 per cent) in the elderly workforce is lower than the non-literate (51.3 per cent) proportion. Comparative analysis by gender shows that majority of the elderly male working population (60.8 per cent) is literate, compared to 25.2 per cent of the female counterparts. By educational attainment, over seven out of every 10 elderly working females have not completed any level of education compared 37.3 per cent of the males. The proportion of males with tertiary education constitute 18.4 per cent compared to that of the females (6.5 per cent).

Secondary school leavers (38.8 per cent) constitute the largest proportion of males in salary/wage work, followed by tertiary level graduates (31.7 per cent). The largest proportion of female workers in salary/wage work (47.9 per cent) have not completed any level of education. The largest proportion of the elderly working population in own-account work for both sexes have not completed any level of education, with the proportion of the females (79.9 per cent) significantly higher than that of the males (58.9 per cent).

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background and context

The United Nations (2015) said, countries have recognized the central role of employment as a means of improving livelihoods, reducing poverty and promoting overall social and economic development. Thus, the importance of employment as a means of propelling economic development, social inclusion and well-being cannot be overemphasized. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the importance of decent work is highlighted in Goal 8, which aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

Liberia is a country that has faced significant challenges, including the 14-year civil war, which ended in 2003, and public health crises of Ebola in 2014 and COVID-19 in 2020. Liberia ranks low at the 176<sup>th</sup> position on the 2019 Human Development Index making it one of the poorest countries in the world. According to UNDP Liberia, only 18.1 per cent of the country’s workforce is in formal paid employment, the remaining 81.9 per cent being in the informal sector. Most jobs are concentrated in only two sectors of the economy - agriculture and informal Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), both of which face several challenges. According to FHI 360 and BRAC<sup>1</sup>, Government’s focus and dependence on extractive commodities (gold, petroleum, iron ore, as well as rubber and cocoa) has left many Liberians without the opportunity to build or demonstrate higher levels of skill required by other economic sectors. As also noted by Jones N. Williams<sup>2</sup>, “Unemployment is Liberia’s main political, social, economic, and national security problem, and if the government does not act, every facet of life and undertaking in the country will continue to be undermined”.

The Government of Liberia, development partners and non-governmental organizations have been working assiduously to support and implement policies towards the creation of decent jobs for the population. In all the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) documents, enhancing productivity and job creation have been on top of the agenda. Other programmes are the five-year IDA-funded Recovery

of Economic Activity for Liberian Informal Sector Employment (REALISE) project of 2021 which aimed at increasing access to employment opportunities for some of the most vulnerable households in the informal sector who are at risk of falling deeper into poverty; the UNDP-funded Livelihood and Employment Creation Project which aims at creation of sustainable, viable and diversified livelihood opportunities for youth, women and PWDs, strengthen enterprise development services, and support national policies and strategies that facilitate a conducive environment for a thriving local private sector, and foreign investment; Promoting Sustainable Partnership for Economic Transformation (PROSPECTS); LADA (Liberia Business Development Activity); Grow Liberia; Forest Incomes for Environmental Sustainability (FIFES) and the Youth Opportunities Project.

In this context, labour and employment statistics are key for macro-economic monitoring. They give information on the economy’s performance and the impact in terms of employment generation of economic policies and programmes and investment in human capital. The statistics provide meaningful information on the types of jobs people are doing. With the rise of evidence-based policymaking, producers of official statistics, like the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Systems (LISGIS), have been facing a growing demand for frequent statistics from multiple users and for multiple objectives.

The population census is a key source of information on the population, usually acting as the basis for a country’s official statistics on households and individuals. It is an exhaustive exercise, with universal coverage: all households in a country are contacted in the data collection phase and information on all household members is gathered.

LISGIS conducted a Population and Housing Census in 2022. Census data on the economic characteristics of the population is particularly useful in preparing basic tabulations of the population by their labour market situation (employed, unemployed, outside the labour force) or activity status (student,

<sup>1</sup> In a research paper titled “Job Demand & Employment Market Analysis” of October 2019.

<sup>2</sup> From an article titled “Putting Liberia Back To Work – Policies And Programs For Job Creation, Stronger Economic Growth, And Collective National Security” posted on Global News Network Liberia on, October 4, 2022.

homemaker, etc.), some information on industry and occupation groups. This thematic report on labour and employment will be used for measuring progress against labour market targets in the national development plan as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators related to employment. The labour and employment analysis is a crucial aspect of any census, providing valuable insights into the workforce and its characteristics within a given population, such as employment rates, occupational distribution and the demographic characteristics of the workforce.

## 1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this thematic report on labour and employment is to obtain a comprehensive data on the status of the labour market prevailing in Liberia. The specific objective of the report includes:

- Estimate the size of the labour force and its related aggregates.
- Estimate employment indicators by sex and locality of residence such as the labour force participation rate; employed and unemployed population; employment in the informal economy; school attainment; education attainment; and literacy.
- Analyse the estimates by different population groupings such as the working-age population, youth, children and the elderly and establish differences and similarities.
- Provide policy implications of the findings and propose recommendations.
- Suggests ways of improving data collection on labour and employment.

## 1.3 Methodology

Data from the 2022 LPHC is the main source of information for this report. Information from the 2008 thematic report on labour and employment has been used in comparative analysis with the 2022 figures.

Since the 2022 LPHC did not collect information on the full size of the labour force, recalculation of the figures in the 2008 thematic report to allow comparability with 2002 was done. The method used in analysing the results presented in this report is in line with the labour force framework adopted in 1982 and 1993 corresponding to the thirteenth and the fifteenth conferences of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)<sup>3</sup> held in Geneva from 19 to 28 January 1993.

The focus of the analysis is on information gathered from P25, P26 and P27 of the 2022 LPHC questionnaire. Therefore, the employment analysis has used only one variable, which was collected and processed correctly in the census (work activity status) with three categories salary/wage work, own-account work and contributing family work. Status in employment is a Core Topic according to the United Nations Principles for Population and Housing Censuses Rev 3 2017.

The limitation of the analysis is spelt out in the next section.

The work activity status is then analysed for five groups

1. Economic Activity of the General Population (5 years and above)
2. Economic Activity of the Working-Age Population (15-64 Years)
3. Economic Activity of Working Children (5-17 Years and 5 to 14 years)
4. Economic Activity of Youths (15 -35 Years and 15 to 24 years)
5. Economic Activity of the Elderly (65+ Years)

Differentials are then considered within each group for the following; Sex, Locality, County, Literacy, Educational Attainment and Disability (for General Population only).

3 Reference document titled "Revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment" and downloaded from [https://webapps.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1992/92B09\\_295\\_engl.pdf](https://webapps.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/1992/92B09_295_engl.pdf)



The formular for the activity participation rate used is as follows<sup>4</sup>:

$$\text{Participation rate} = \frac{\text{Number of persons employed in a defined population group}}{\text{Total population of the defined group}} \times 100$$

Proportions and ratios have been used for easy understanding of the actual numbers. These have been supported by charts for pictorial appreciation of the differences in the categories of interest.

References have also been made to literature and research findings to support or otherwise of the findings of this report.

## 1.4 Limitation

There are a number of limitations to the report, which makes it impossible to consider it as a complete labour force report from a population census point of view.

First, the size of the labour force is not known. To identify the employed in the reference period of measurement continued reference is made to two main groups: employed persons at work and employed persons not at work. In the case of employed persons at work, explicit reference is made to the one-hour criterion, which the 2022 LPHC used. In the case of employed persons not at work, the 2022 LPHC questionnaire did not collect any information on that. That is, questions were not asked to determine temporary absence from employment among persons in paid employment and in self-employment. Therefore, persons on annual leave, holidays, sick leave, personal leave and maternity or paternity leave, temporary interruption due to bad weather, mechanical or electrical breakdown, shortage of raw materials etc. was not captured as part of the employed. These people had jobs to go to.

Second, the size of the unemployed population cannot be estimated. No questions were asked to solicit information on persons who are available for work and are actively seeking work. These people constitute the unemployed.

Third, persons outside the labour force cannot be estimated. Once the actual size of the labour force cannot be ascertained, the proportion of the population outside the labour force cannot be estimated.

Fourth, incomplete information gathered on occupation and industry of employment. An error in skip pattern did not allow collection of information on occupation and industry of employment of those performing some form of economic activity during the reference period.

The analysis is therefore narrowly centred on persons who worked in paid employment jobs, self-employed and contributing family work. Whether these people were engaged in public or private sector is also not known.

## 1.5 Organization of the report

The report is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter is the introduction to the theme. Background and the context of the theme is explained here. The objectives and methodology used in the analysis, together with the limitations of the report are part of this chapter.

The second chapter presents the analysis of the economic activity of the general population which has been defined as the population 5 years and older. Estimates on the size of the population that performed activity using the one-hour criterion is found here. Participation rates for the different sexes, locality of residence and county of residence have been also presented. Educational characteristics of the working population and their links to the type of work activity has been explored here. Also included in this chapter is a limited analysis on economic activities of PWDs.

4 From [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_422090.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@stat/documents/publication/wcms_422090.pdf)

The analysis in Chapter Three is focused on economic activities of persons aged 15 to 64 years, which is considered as the standard working-age population by the ILO. The estimates and analysis done in Chapter Two are repeated here except coverage of counties and PWDs. The same analyses have been done for the remaining chapters. Chapter Four focuses on economic activity of children. Here analyses have been made on two groups of children:

5 to 14 years which is category of children in Liberia, and 5 to 17 years which is the ILO definition of children. Chapter Five is on the economic activity of youths. The youth population has been classified into two: 15 to 24 years which is the definition by the ILO, and 15 to 35 years which is the definition for Liberia. Chapter Six focuses on the economic activity of the elderly, defined as the population 65 years and older.

# Chapter 2: Economic activity of the general population

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the work activity of the population five years and older. The analysis has been done for the national population, disaggregated by sex, locality of residence and county of residence. Also discussed under this chapter is the work activity with regards to education attainment of the population during the reference period. The last part of the analysis is on work activity of PWDs. Work activity has been categorized into salary/wage work, own-account work and contributing family work.

As stated in the limitations of this report in Section 1.4 of the previous chapter, the 2022 LPHC failed to collect adequate data to help ascertain the actual size of the labour force, persons outside the labour force, and indicators like the unemployment rate. So, these variables and indicators are not presented in this chapter and the subsequent ones. It should be noted also, that, data used in the analysis is based on persons who were engaged in some form of

economic activity in the 7 days prior to the 2022 LPHC (that is, using the explicit reference to the one-hour criterion). Also missing is the workforce by occupational status and industry of employment.

## 2.2 Size and distribution of persons 5 years and older who participated in economic activity by sex

The total number of persons 5 years and older who performed some form of economic activity 7 days prior to the census is 1,984,701 out of the total population 5 years and older of 4,700,235 (Table 1). This translates into a participation rate of 42.2 per cent. Participation rate among males (47.5 per cent) is higher than that of females (36.8 per cent).

For the 2008 LPHC, data on employment was collected for ages 6 years and older instead of 5 years and older for the 2022 LPHC. The activity participation rate for 2008 is 37.5 per cent, which is almost 5 percentage points lower than the 2022 figure.

**Table 1: Work activity status of the population 5 years and older by sex**

Work activity status	National	Male	Female
Salary/wage	401,856	280,184	121,672
Own account	986,097	518,665	467,432
Contributing family worker	596,748	329,059	267,689
<b>Total that worked</b>	<b>1,984,701</b>	<b>1,127,908</b>	<b>856,793</b>
<b>Total population</b>	<b>4,700,235</b>	<b>2,372,295</b>	<b>2,327,940</b>
<b>Participation rate (%)</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>36.8</b>

Almost half (49.7 per cent) of persons who performed economic activity during the reference period are own-account workers (Figure 1). This is followed by contributing family workers, with salary/wage workers forming about one fifth. When it comes to the study of paid employment versus the various categories of employment, data disaggregated by sex allow us to identify the types of jobs where male or female workers are overrepresented or underrepresented.

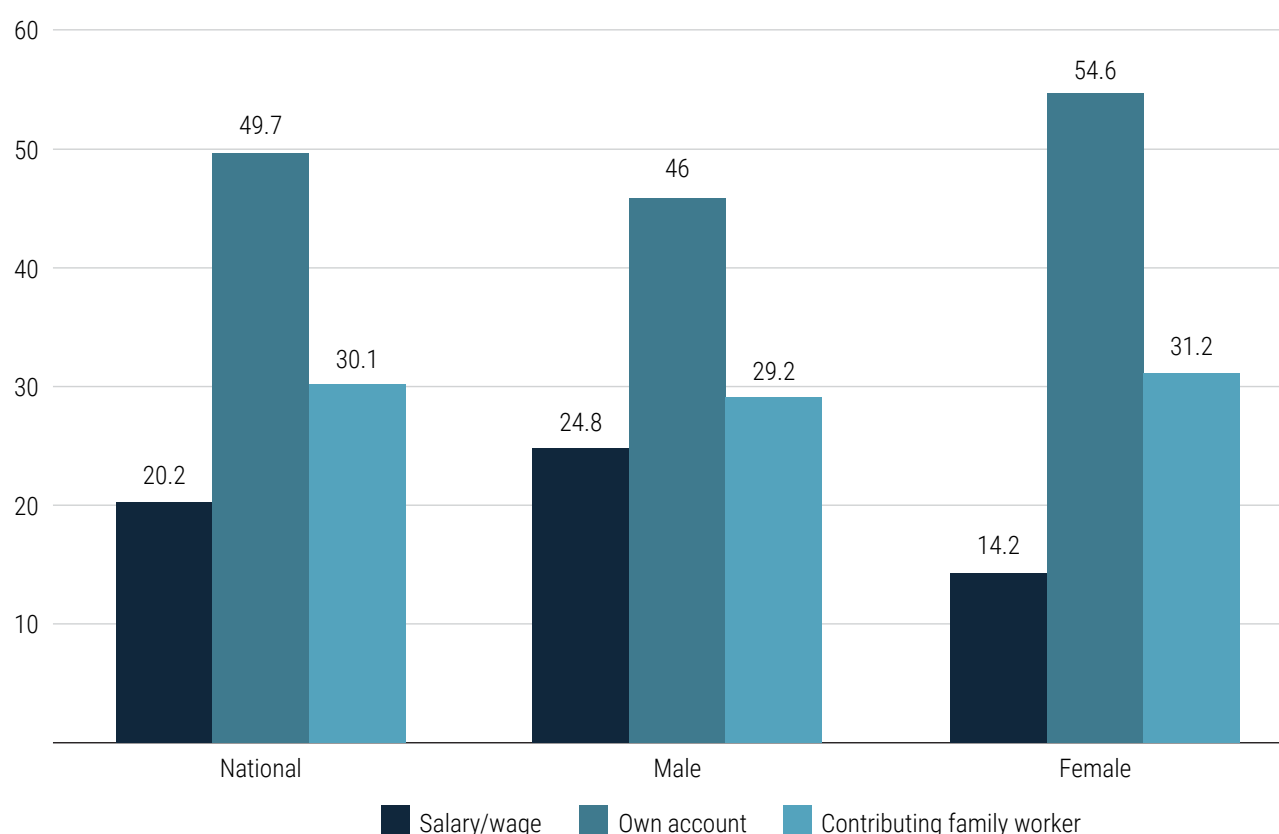
There were more males (24.8 per cent) engaged in salary/wage work than their female counterparts (14.2 per cent). For the own-account and contributing family work, more females than males participated in these activities. Thus, majority of females (54.6 per cent) participated in own-account work compared to 46.0 per cent of males.



Own-account and contributing family workers are usually regarded as vulnerable. The two groups constitute 79.8 per cent of persons who performed economic activities 7 days prior to the census. Paid employment jobs (those jobs held by employees), particularly continuous and full-time paid employment jobs, are known as the standard form of employment (ILO, 2018). As explained by the ILO (2018), employees (that is, employed persons holding paid employment jobs) 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 statuses in employment categories regarded as vulnerable employment. A further explanation by the ILO (2018; p.7) is that “although this is true in general terms, it is important to keep in mind that some employees do 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. Thus, 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”.

**Figure 1: Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity status and sex**

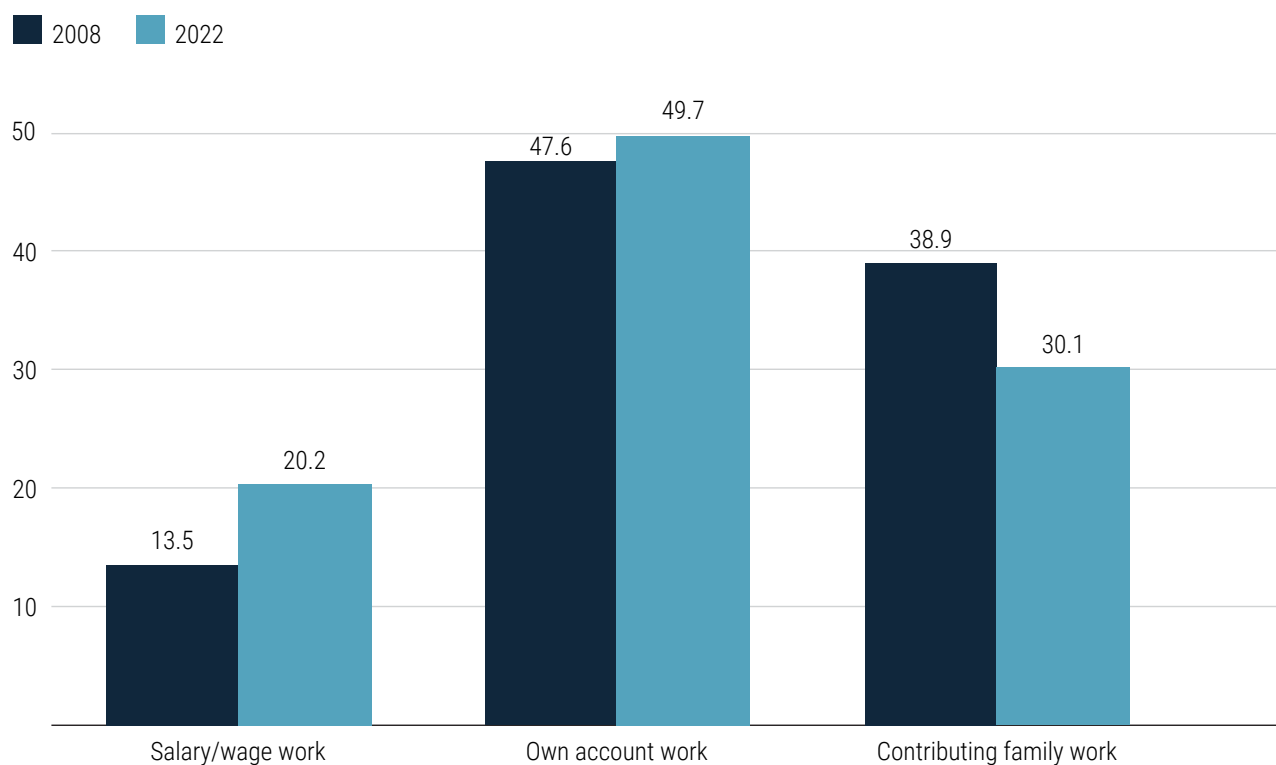


Source: Proportions estimated from Table 1

Changes in the structure of the working population 5 years and older (6 years and older for 2008) in terms of work activity status between 2008 and 2022 is shown in Figure 2. Significant changes are recorded in the proportions of the workforce in salary/wage work and contributing family work over the period. As the proportion engaged in salary/wage work increased from 13.5 per cent in 2008 to 20.2 per cent in 2022, the proportion of contributing family workers reduced from 38.9 per cent to 30.1 per cent over the same period. There is a slight increase in the proportion of own-account workers during the period.

As the country continues to recover from the civil war which ended in 2003, more jobs are being created in the formal sector. This accounts for the change in the proportion of salary/wage work. The increase in the number of children being enrolled and retained in the school system also partly explains the reduction in the proportion of contributing family workers over the period.

**Figure 2: Composition of the working population 5 years and older (6 years and older for 2008) in 2008 and 2022**



## 2.3 Educational characteristics of the working population 5 years and older

Education is one of the most important factors for the economic and social development of a country. Education contributes to labour market health, and overall national employment figures tend to move in line with educational investment. That is, the quality of the workforce is generally determined by its educational characteristics.

positions remain vacant as insufficient individuals are adequately skilled to fulfil those roles. Language and literacy skills are both essential parts of communication especially in a situation where English may not be one's first language<sup>5</sup>.

The working population 5 years and older is composed of 64.3 per cent literate and 35.7 per cent non-literate (Figure 3). Literacy among males (71.6 per cent) is higher than that of females (54.5 per cent).

### 2.3.1 Literacy status of the working population 5 years and older

As indicated by the World Literacy Foundation (2021), with the global economy moving more towards a knowledge economy, literacy is an essential skill for individuals and countries to compete in the global economy. When a high proportion of the adult population has poor literacy skills, many

<sup>5</sup> World Education Service Advisor Blog. Downloaded from <https://www.wes.org/advisor-blog/literacy-can-impact-your-career/> on June 23, 2024.

Category	Literate (%)	Illiterate (%)
Male	71.6	28.4
Female	54.5	45.5
Total	64.3	35.7

The literacy status of the population engaged in the different activities is shown in Table 2. Literacy among salary/wage workers is 80.7 per cent. Proportion of literate males (83.2 per cent) is higher than that of the female counterpart (75.0 per cent). Higher education significantly improves job prospects, particularly for formal sector employment. This explains why the proportion of literate population engaged in salary/wage work is high.

Table 2: Literacy status of the working population 5 years and older by work activity and sex

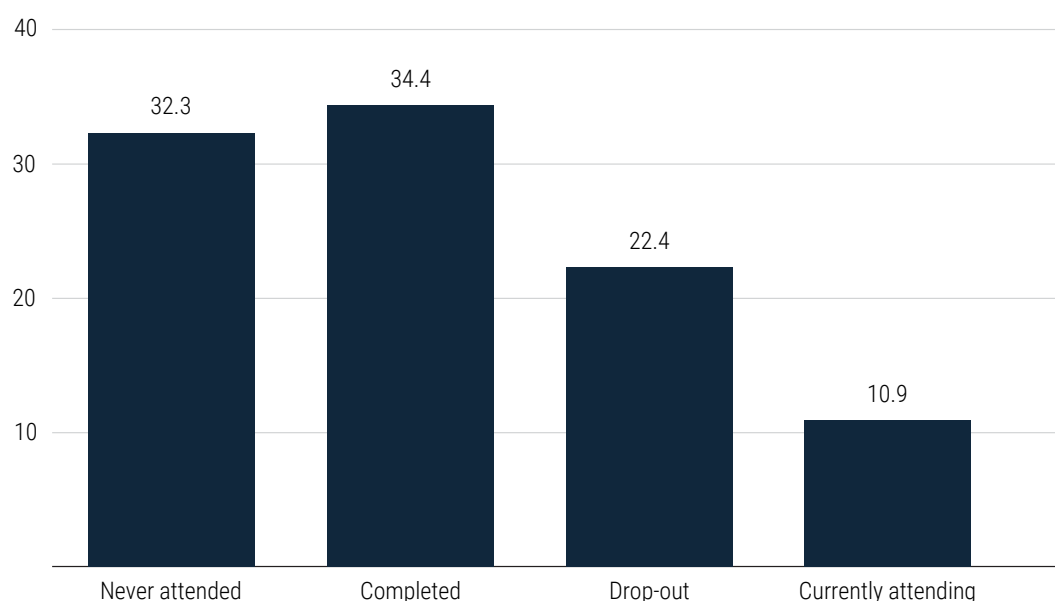
[illegible]

### 2.3.2 School attendance status of the working population 5 years and older

Figure 4 presents the composition of persons who performed economic activity by their school

attendance status. The largest proportion (34.4 per cent) has completed a level of education, followed by those who have never attended school (32.3 per cent). Persons who are currently in school constitute the lowest proportion of 10.9 per cent.

**Figure 4: Distribution of the workforce 5 years and older by school attendance status**

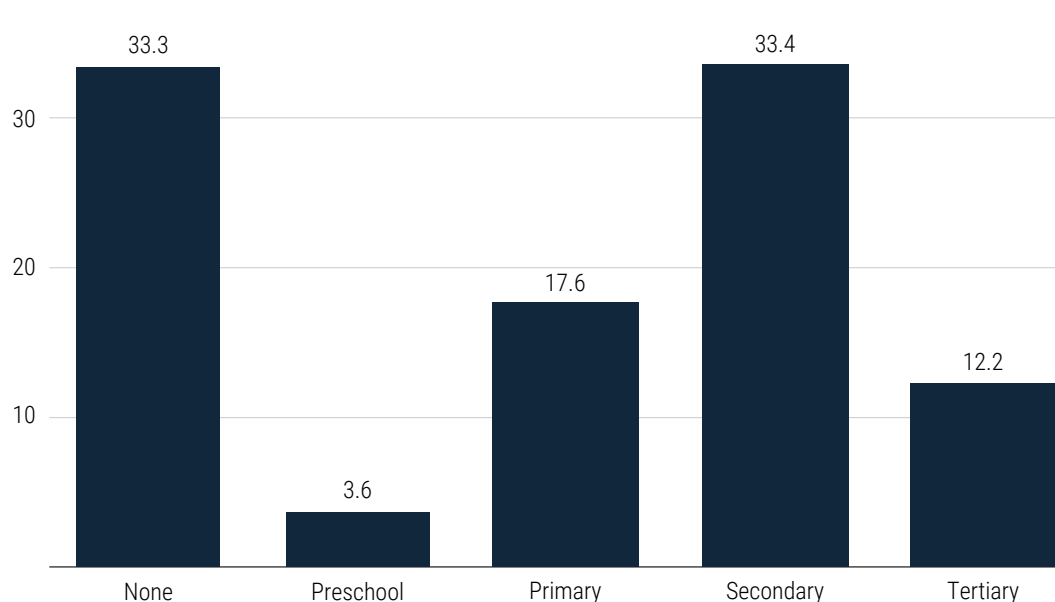


### 2.3.3 Education attainment status of the working population 5 years and older

Composition of the labour force in terms of education attainment depicts the quality of the country's workforce. Persons who have no education or have attained secondary education each had a third share

in the labour force (Figure 5). Persons who had attained tertiary education constituted just above 10 per cent of the workforce. Well-educated people are more employable and productive, earn higher wages and cope with economic shocks better. However, the proportion for Liberia is low.

**Figure 5: Distribution of the workforce 5 years and older by educational attainment status**



Further analysis of the data on educational attainment looked at the participation in each of the work activity categories. As shown in Table 3, higher levels of education attainment are linked to higher participation rate in salary/wage employment. Persons with tertiary level of education attainment are more likely to work in salary/wage employment, and the likelihood reduces down the education attainment ladder, that is, from 42.2 per cent for tertiary level attainment to 10.8 per cent for no education attainment.

Conversely, the proportion of persons engaged in own-account work is highest with persons with no

education attainment and reduces as education attainment increases. Own-account work includes farming which is practised more in the rural areas. 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.

No pattern is, however, observed with the contributing family work and education attainment as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Work activity status by education attainment of persons 5 years and older**

Education attainment	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work	Total	Population that worked
None	10.8	60.3	29.0	100.0	660,210
Preschool	10.8	53.3	35.9	100.0	71,058
Primary	14.3	53.6	32.1	100.0	349,514
Secondary	25.9	44.4	29.8	100.0	662,636
Tertiary	42.2	28.6	29.2	100.0	241,283
<b>National</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,984,701</b>

## 2.4 Participation in economic activity of the population 5 years and older by locality of residence

The population is often categorized as living either in urban centres or in rural areas. Table 4 gives the population 5 years and older who performed economic activity in urban and rural areas by sex.

The activity participation rate is higher in rural (46.8 per cent) than urban areas (38.5 per cent). Activity participation rate is higher for males than females irrespective of the locality of residence. In the rural areas, majority of males (51.2 per cent) performed some form of economic activity. Like the rural males, rural females had higher participation rate compared to their urban counterparts.

**Table 4: Work activity status of persons 5 years and older by locality of residence**

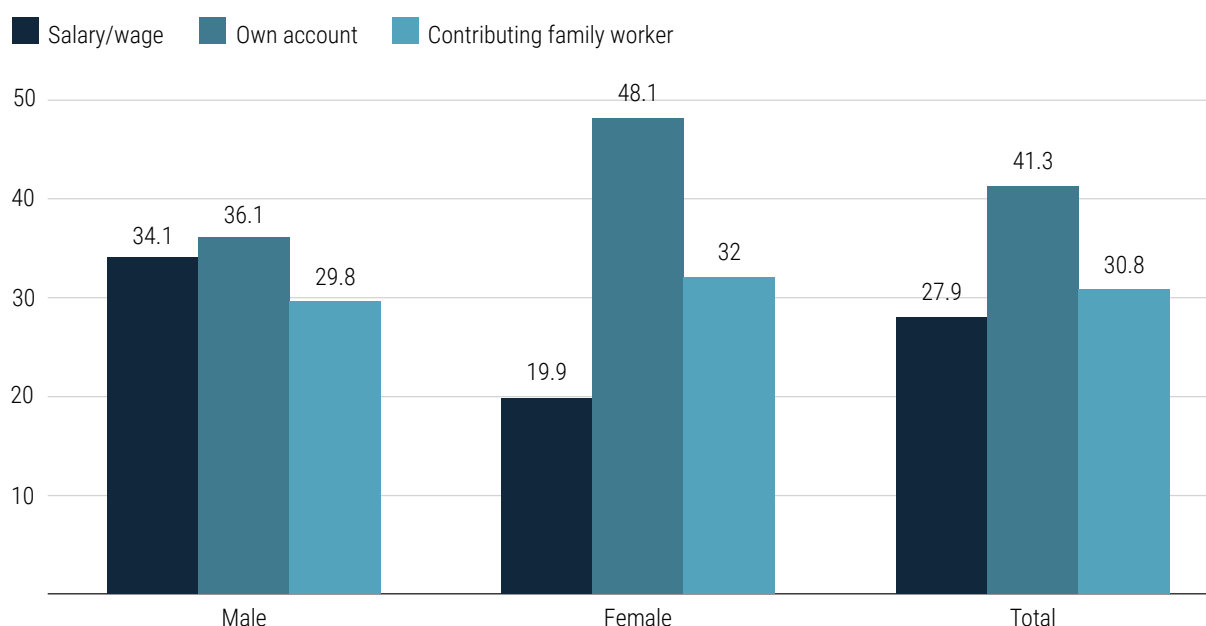
Work activity status	Urban			Rural		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Salary/wage	192,569	85,621	278,190	87,615	36,051	123,666
Own account	204,214	207,054	411,268	314,451	260,378	574,829
Contributing family worker	168,571	138,025	306,596	160,488	129,664	290,152
<b>Total that worked</b>	<b>565,354</b>	<b>430,700</b>	<b>996,054</b>	<b>562,554</b>	<b>426,093</b>	<b>988,647</b>
<b>Total population</b>	<b>1,273,639</b>	<b>1,312,438</b>	<b>2,586,077</b>	<b>1,098,656</b>	<b>1,015,502</b>	<b>2,114,158</b>
<b>Participation rate</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>46.8</b>



More males in urban areas (34.1 per cent) are engaged in salary/wage work than urban females (19.9 per cent) (Figure 6). Though own-account work is the largest employer in both urban males and females, the proportion of females is far higher than the males. Contributing family work is lowest for urban males but second largest employer in urban female.

A large number of workers in the informal economy face acute decent work deficits. This is exacerbated in the rural economy – especially in agricultural activities, which are characterized by high levels of informality.

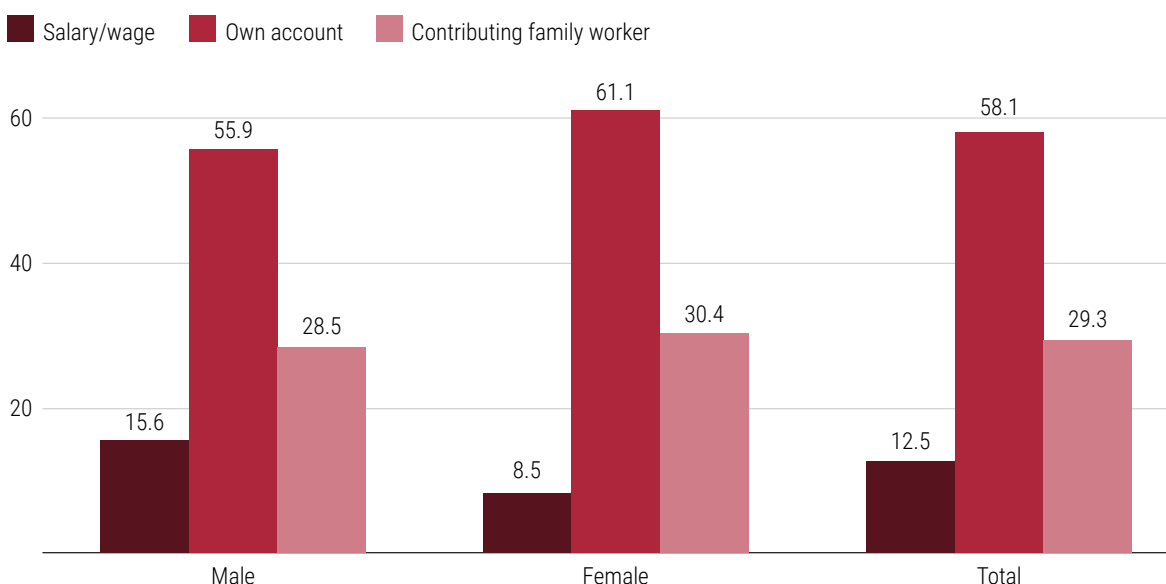
**Figure 6: Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity status of the urban population**



Like the urban counterparts, participation in salary/wage work by males (15.6 per cent) in the rural areas is higher than that of females (8.5 per cent) as shown in Figure 7. Majority of both sexes in rural areas are

engaged in own-account work, while contributing family work is the activity with second largest engagement of persons that worked.

**Figure 7: Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity status of the rural population**



Comparing the results in Figures 6 and 7, participation in salary/wage work is higher in urban areas than rural for both sexes. This is also true for contributing family work. However, majority of males and females in rural areas participated in own-account work compared to less than half in urban areas.

## 2.5 Participation in economic activity of the population 5 years and older by county

### 2.5.1 Size of the working population 5 years and older by county

The size of the population that performed some economic activity in the counties by work activity is displayed in Table 5. The activity participation rates for the counties indicate that Lofa recorded the highest rate of 61.9 per cent followed by River Cess (55.5 per cent). Maryland (33.0 per cent) recorded the lowest rate. Other counties that recorded low participation rates within the 33 to 40 per cent range are Margibi (34.6 per cent), Bomi (34.7 per cent), Nimba (37.4 per cent), Sinoe (38.7 per cent) and Gbarpolu (39.7 per cent). Montserrado, the most urbanized county, recorded a rate of 40.6 per cent.

**Table 5: Distribution of the population 5 years and older by work activity and county**

County	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work	Total that worked	Total population	Participation rate
Bomi	8,046	22,619	10,507	41,172	118,780	34.7
Bong	22,422	117,472	45,994	185,888	414,201	44.9
Gbarpolu	4,664	21,023	8,269	33,956	85,544	39.7
Grand Bassa	20,915	60,451	29,463	110,829	258,168	42.9
Grand Cape Mount	13,837	30,979	18,447	63,263	161,748	39.1
Grand Gedeh	15,799	49,559	33,116	98,474	199,106	49.5
Grand Kru	6,310	21,865	19,954	48,129	98,612	48.8
Lofa	14,435	120,281	69,795	204,511	330,431	61.9
Margibi	24,864	41,045	28,534	94,443	273,014	34.6
Maryland	9,828	24,991	16,690	51,509	156,198	33.0
Montserrado	213,978	276,422	214,575	704,975	1,737,390	40.6
Nimba	23,618	128,912	49,445	201,975	540,223	37.4
River Cess	4,622	24,336	15,096	44,054	79,360	55.5
Sinoe	12,091	22,960	17,259	52,310	135,091	38.7
River Gee	6,427	23,182	19,604	49,213	112,369	43.8
<b>National</b>	<b>401,856</b>	<b>986,097</b>	<b>596,748</b>	<b>1,984,701</b>	<b>4,700,235</b>	<b>42.2</b>

### 2.5.2 Composition of the workforce in the counties by work activity

Montserrado County, which hosts the capital city of Monrovia, had 30.4 per cent of its working population in salary/wage employment, the highest among the counties (Table 6). Monrovia as the national capital hosts a number of industries and large marketing enterprises that need services of paid employees. The city is the headquarters of public and private sector organizations, schools, hospitals etc. that give paid employment to the residents.

Margibi County has the second highest proportion (26.3 per cent) in paid employment (Table 6).

Firestone Natural Rubber Company, which is located in the county, plays a significant role in employing many Liberians. Lofa County has only 7.1 per cent of the population in paid employment.

Eight counties had majority of their workforce in own-account work, with Nimba (63.8 per cent) and Bong (63.2 per cent) with the highest proportion. Montserrado had the lowest proportion of 39.2 per cent in own-account work. Grand Kru had the largest contributing family worker population compared with the other counties. Overall, Montserrado had a fairly distributed workforce among the three work activities compared to the other counties.

**Table 6: Proportion of the population in the different work activities by county**

County	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work	Total
Bomi	19.5	54.9	25.5	100.0
Bong	12.1	63.2	24.7	100.0
Gbarpolu	13.7	61.9	24.4	100.0
Grand Bassa	18.9	54.5	26.6	100.0
Grand Cape Mount	21.9	49.0	29.2	100.0
Grand Gedeh	16.0	50.3	33.6	100.0
Grand Kru	13.1	45.4	41.5	100.0
Lofa	7.1	58.8	34.1	100.0
Margibi	26.3	43.5	30.2	100.0
Maryland	19.1	48.5	32.4	100.0
Montserrado	30.4	39.2	30.4	100.0
Nimba	11.7	63.8	24.5	100.0
River Cess	10.5	55.2	34.3	100.0
Sinoe	23.1	43.9	33.0	100.0
River Gee	13.1	47.1	39.8	100.0
<b>National</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

There have been significant changes in work activity status of the working population 5 years and older in the counties between 2008 and 2022 as evidenced in Table 7. The proportion of the working population engaged in salary/wage work increased in all counties between 2008 and 2022, with the most significant changes occurring in Grand Cape Mount (from 6.8 to 21.9 per cent) and Sinoe (from 6.9 to 23.1 per cent). The rehabilitation of the Samuel A. Ross Port in Greenville Sinoe County and the revival of mining activities of companies in Grand Cape Mount are some of the reasons for the significant increase in the proportion of salary/wage workers in these counties. In 2012, the National Ports Authority management through the Government of Liberia entered into a loan agreement with the Kuwait Fund for the rehabilitation of the Port of Greenville in Sinoe County. The Port of Greenville is a major facility for the exportation of logs, with several logging agreements including iron

ore and oil palm concessions. In addition to these developments and prospects at the Port of Greenville, Golden Veroum Liberia Limited, a multi-million Oil Palm Concession has constructed a Mini mill and Bulking Station for crude palm oil shipment through the Port.

Proportions of own-account workers increased in eight of the counties over the period, with large increases of more than 10 per cent recorded in Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa, and Nimba (Table 7). The largest declines in proportion are found in Montserrado, River Cess, River Gee and Sinoe.

All counties that recorded increases in proportions in own-account work experienced declines in the proportions in contributing family work and vice versa, with the exception of Grand Cape Mount and Maryland.

**Table 7: Changes in the proportion of work activity status of the working population 5 years and older (6 years and older for 2008) by county from 2008 and 2022**

Literacy status	Salary/wage work		Own account work		Contributing family work	
	2008	2022	2008	2022	2008	2022
Bomi	9.6	19.5	51.4	54.9	38.9	25.5
Bong	6.3	12.1	47.5	63.2	46.2	24.7
Gbarpolu	5.0	13.7	59.6	61.9	35.3	24.4
Grand Bassa	8.9	18.9	41.4	54.5	49.7	26.6
Grand Cape Mount	6.8	21.9	49.7	49.0	43.4	29.2
Grand Gedeh	8.4	16.0	42.9	50.3	48.7	33.6
Grand Kru	7.8	13.1	46.3	45.4	45.9	41.5
Lofa	3.7	7.1	33.1	58.8	63.2	34.1
Margibi	24.1	26.3	44.7	43.5	31.3	30.2
Maryland	14.8	19.1	48.7	48.5	36.5	32.4
Montserrado	27.9	30.4	50.3	39.2	21.8	30.4
Nimba	7.9	11.7	43.0	63.8	49.1	24.5
River Cess	6.9	10.5	75.9	55.2	17.2	34.3
Sinoe	9.2	13.1	62.0	47.1	28.8	39.8
River Gee	6.9	23.1	75.9	43.9	17.2	33.0
<b>National</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>30.1</b>

The contribution of males and females in the different work activities in the counties is shown in Table 8. It should be noted that, male participation rate (45.7 per

cent) is higher than that of females (36.8 per cent) (refer to Table 1). This has greatly influenced the proportions of the sexes in the work activity groups.

**Table 8: Disaggregation of work activity of population 5 years and older by county and sex**

Literacy status	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bomi	72.6	27.4	100.0	55.2	44.8	100.0	56.0	44.0	100.0
Bong	67.4	32.6	100.0	52.3	47.7	100.0	51.8	48.2	100.0
Gbarpolu	72.1	27.9	100.0	58.3	41.7	100.0	59.9	40.1	100.0
Grand Bassa	71.7	28.3	100.0	54.7	45.3	100.0	55.9	44.1	100.0
Grand Cape Mount	74.2	25.8	100.0	58.5	41.5	100.0	60.3	39.7	100.0
Grand Gedeh	69.1	30.9	100.0	59.6	40.4	100.0	59.5	40.5	100.0
Grand Kru	72.2	27.8	100.0	58.6	41.4	100.0	55.3	44.7	100.0
Lofa	64.0	36.0	100.0	50.8	49.2	100.0	50.2	49.8	100.0
Margibi	74.5	25.5	100.0	52.9	47.1	100.0	57.8	42.2	100.0
Maryland	70.5	29.5	100.0	53.8	46.2	100.0	56.3	43.7	100.0
Montserrado	68.5	31.5	100.0	48.9	51.1	100.0	55.3	44.7	100.0
Nimba	71.3	28.7	100.0	52.2	47.8	100.0	53.2	46.8	100.0
River Cess	74.8	25.2	100.0	56.4	43.6	100.0	58.3	41.7	100.0
Sinoe	73.8	26.2	100.0	57.8	42.2	100.0	60.5	39.5	100.0
River Gee	71.3	28.7	100.0	56.8	43.2	100.0	55.7	44.3	100.0

The proportion of males in salary/work is disproportionately higher than females in all the counties. Most of the counties (11 out of 15) have over 70 per cent males engaged in salary/wage work. With regards to own-account work, the gap reduces between the sexes with males dominating in all counties except in Montserrado where the proportion of females was larger. Males again dominate in contributing family work.

## 2.6 Participation of people with disabilities in economic activities

The WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines disability as an umbrella

term for impairments in bodily function or structure, activity limitations in executing common tasks or actions, and participation restrictions with respect to individuals' involvement in certain common life situations. People with disabilities can be productive and engage in successful business enterprises when there is a conducive environment. Meanwhile, they encounter various barriers in the workforce. Negative stereotypes, inaccessible workplaces (lack of elevators and appropriate restrooms) that hinder mobility, inadequate sign language interpretation, among others, pose lots of challenge for the disabled population. This subsection looks at the extent to which PWDs participated in the different types of work activities, namely, salary/wage work, own-account work and contributing to family business.



The total population of PWDs of ages 5 years and older enumerated in the census is 509,676, equivalent to 10.8 per cent of the total population 5 years and older (Table 9). The proportion is higher than the 7.8 per cent recorded in Ghana in 2021 (GSS, 2021). For the purpose of this analysis, PWDs are categorized into two by disability severity: those with some difficulty (439,901) and those with lots of difficulty or cannot do anything at all (69,775).

Despite the impairment, the activity participation rate of the disabled persons with "some difficulty" (46.6 per cent) is higher than workers without a disability (41.9 per cent), and also higher than the national average (42.2 per cent). This is contrary to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) assertion that "people with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population in all segments of the labour force, including youth and older workers (EBRD, 2020; p.7)". The EBRD report suggests that labour

force participation rates for people with disabilities rarely exceed 25 per cent and are less than half the participation rate for the rest of the population, which is not confirmed by the findings in this report on Liberia. The main reason that can be assigned to the findings in Liberia is that the people with disabilities tend to face barriers in education, which make them start working early in their lives. In one of the few studies that focused on rural areas, Erb and Harriss-White (2002) found out that when PWDs did not work at all, it was only because their disability was extremely debilitating. This study supports the high activity rate recorded for PWDs in Liberia.

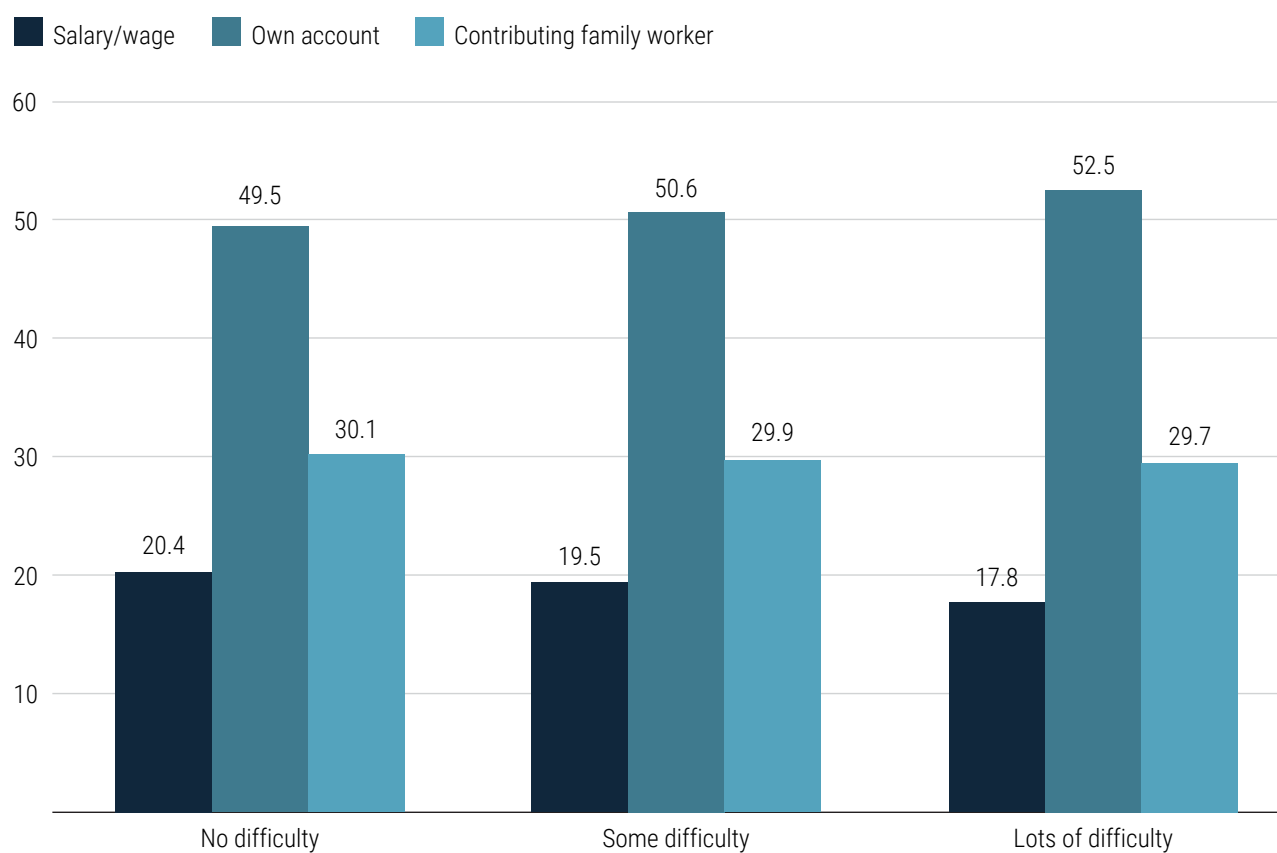
Persons with "lots of difficulty or cannot do at all" have a lower participation rate (34.9 per cent), which is below the other two categories in Table 9. This finding, however, confirms the assertion that unemployment and pay gaps tend to worsen with the severity of the disability (WHO and World Bank, 2011).

**Table 9: Work activity and disability severity of persons 5 years and older**

Work activity status	Severity of disability			Total
	No difficulty	Some difficulty	Lots of difficulty or can't do at all	
Salary/wage	357,509	40,010	4,337	401,856
Own account	869,568	103,738	12,791	986,097
Contributing family worker	528,303	61,213	7,232	596,748
<b>Total that worked</b>	<b>1,755,380</b>	<b>204,961</b>	<b>24,360</b>	<b>1,984,701</b>
<b>Total population</b>	<b>4,190,559</b>	<b>439,901</b>	<b>69,775</b>	<b>4,700,235</b>
<b>Participation rate</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>46.6</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>42.2</b>

Many studies like that of the EBRD (2020) concluded that among employed people, disabled workers are more likely to work part time, engage in informal work and generally earn less than workers without a disability. However, the presentation in Figure 8 cannot strongly support this conclusion, as the differences in proportions of the workforce in the

three different activities according to disability categories are not wide. There is a decline in the proportions engaged in paid employment with severity in disability, but the differences are small. The engagement in informal work also increases in proportion as disability worsens, but again the differences are small.

**Figure 8: Work activity status by severity of disability**

The general observations from the analysis in this chapter are that, compared to males, females tend to be overrepresented in non-wage employment, and underrepresented in paid employment. Participation rate is higher in rural than urban areas. The activity participation rate for the disabled population is higher than expected, as the rate is above that of the non-disabled population.

# Chapter 3: Economic activity of the working-age population

## 3.1 Introduction

The working-age population is the population above the legal working age, but for statistical purposes it comprises all persons above a specified minimum age threshold for which an inquiry on economic activity is made. To promote international comparability, the ILO often defines the working-age as all persons aged 15 and older, but this may vary from country to country based on national laws and practices (with some countries applying an upper age limit). For the purpose of this report, the working-age has been defined as persons aged from 15 to 64 years.

This chapter looks at the size of the working-age population, activity participation rate by sex and locality of residence, distribution by work activity status and educational characteristics.

## 3.2 Size of the working-age population by sex and locality

The working-age population enumerated in the 2022 LPHC is 3,305,412, which is equivalent to 63.0 per cent of the total population of Liberia, and 70.3 per cent of the population 5 years and older for which the general economic activity of the population in

the previous chapter was based on. Compared to the working-age population of 1,900,425 recorded in 2008, the 2022 figure is an increase of 73.9 per cent over the 2008 figure. According to the ILO<sup>6</sup>, a growing working-age population provides opportunities for economic growth while at the same time creates challenges for job creation and integration of new labour market entrants.

Out of a total of 3,305,412 persons in the working-age population, 1,829,201 of them performed economic activity during the reference period (Table 10). This translates into an activity rate of 55.3 per cent. Compared to 2008, 867,550 persons out of a total working-age population of 1,900,425 performed economic activity. This gives a work activity rate of 45.7 per cent. The work activity rate in 2008 is almost 10 percentage points lower than that of 2022.

Policies and programmes continue to be implemented by the Government and development partners to create employment for the people of Liberia, the main one being the World Bank- supported PRS programmes. Others include PROSPECTS, LADA (Liberia Business Development Activity), Grow Liberia, FIFES and the Youth Opportunities Project. These policies and programmes account for the increase in the work activity rates between 2008 and 2022.

**Table 10: Work activity status of the working-age population by sex and locality**

Work activity	Sex		Locality		Total
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	
Salary/wage	266,354	116,248	267,156	115,446	<b>382,602</b>
Own account	474,481	433,888	391,687	516,682	<b>908,369</b>
Contributing family worker	296,132	242,098	286,423	251,807	<b>538,230</b>
Total that worked	1,036,967	792,234	945,266	883,935	<b>1,829,201</b>
Total population	1,675,673	1,629,739	1,836,072	1,469,340	<b>3,305,412</b>
Participation rate	<b>61.9</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>55.3</b>

6 Culled from the ILOSTAT website <https://ilostat ilo.org/topics/population-and-labour-force/> on July 3, 2024.

As observed in Table 10, the male activity rate (61.9 per cent) is significantly higher than that of the female counterparts (48.6 per cent). This means, 61.9 per cent of males in the working-age group performed some form of economic activity while for the females the proportion is 48.6 per cent (that is, less than half). As noted by Olukemi (2008), in most countries, women contribute much less than men towards the value of recorded production both quantitatively in labour force supply and qualitatively in educational achievement and skilled manpower, and this is particularly acute in developing countries. The activity rate is higher for rural areas (60.2 per cent) than urban areas (51.5 per cent).

The proportion of the working population disaggregated by work activity and sex is shown in Figure 9. Almost half (49.7 per cent) are engaged in own-account work. This is followed by contributing family work (29.4 per cent), with salary/wage work having about one fifth of the persons that worked.

Majority (54.8 per cent) of the females are engaged in own-account work compared to 45.8 per cent of males. A quarter of males is employed in salary/wage work compared to females (14.7 per cent). The difference in proportions engaged in contributing family work between gender is not wide (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Percentage distribution of working-age population by work activity status and sex**

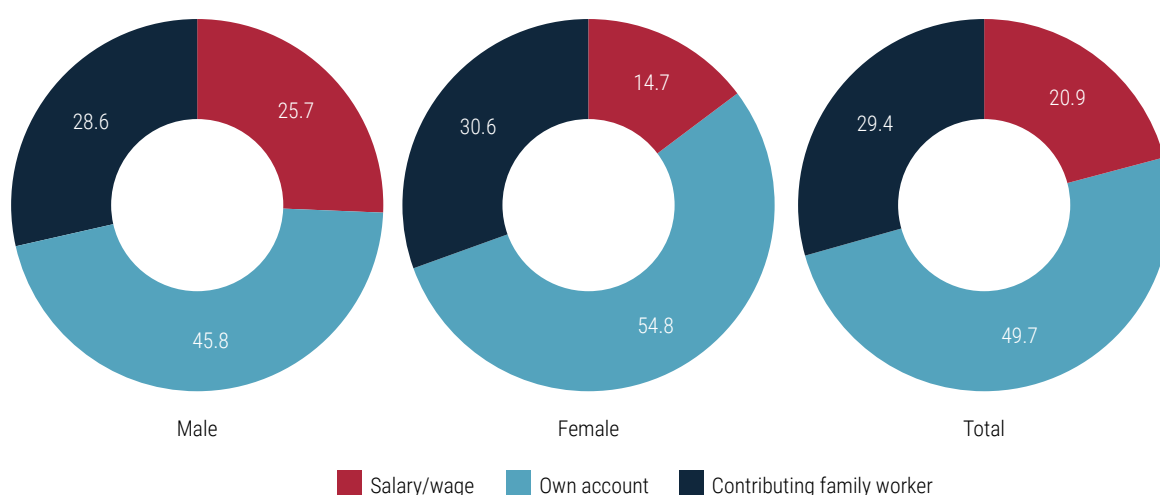
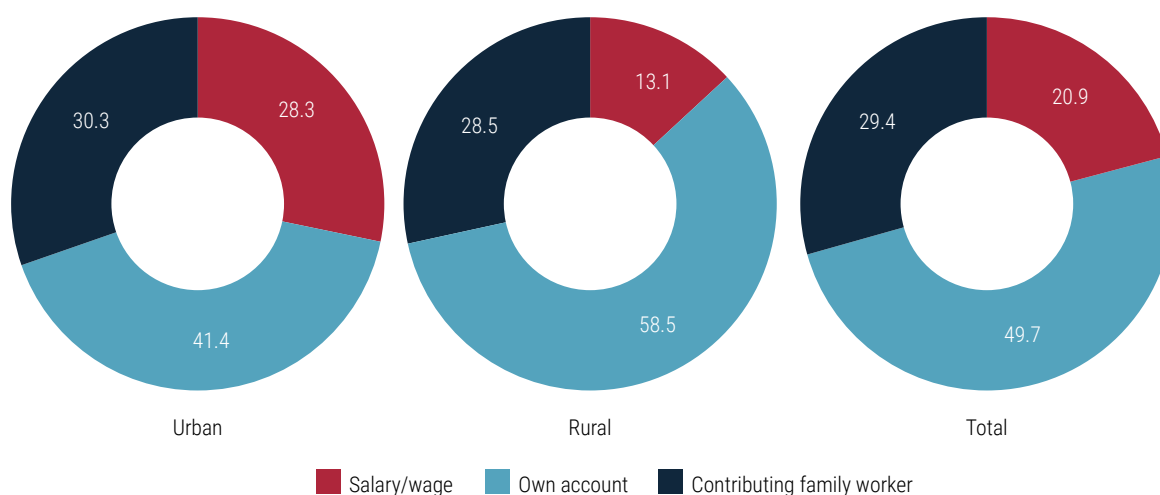


Figure 10 displays the differences in the working population in the different work activity statuses. Salary/wage work engages 28.3 per cent of the urban population compared to 13.1 per cent in rural areas. For own-account work, majority of rural

population (58.5 per cent) are engaged in this activity, compared to about two out of five of the working-age population. Small difference exists in the proportion of the contributing family workers.

**Figure 10: Percentage distribution of working-age population by work activity status and locality**

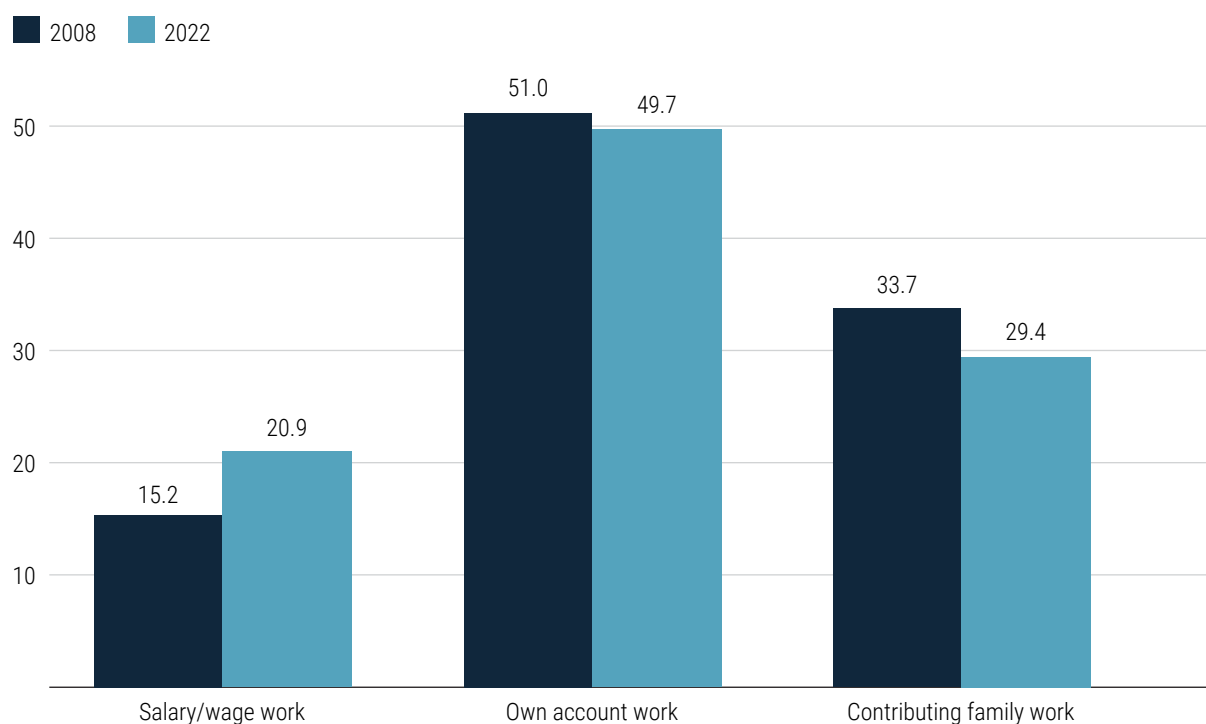


Own-account work and contributing family work are usually operated in the informal sector. The informal economy, as defined by the ILO, refers to “all economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements”. According to the ILO<sup>7</sup>, recent data collection efforts show, for a growing number of countries, that the share of the informal economy is higher in rural than in urban areas and higher in agricultural than in non-agricultural activities. This probably explains why the proportion of the rural population engaged in informal activities (own-account and contributing family work is equivalent to 87 per cent) is higher than in urban areas.

Compositional changes in the work activity status of the working-age population between 2008 and 2022 are presented in Figure 11. A larger proportion of the population is found in salary/wage work (20.9 per cent) in 2022 compared to that recorded in 2008 (15.2 per cent).

The increase in the proportion of salary/wage workers impacted changes in both own-account and contributing family work, as declines in proportions are recorded in both work activities, with a bigger decline in contributing family work.

**Figure 11: Composition of the work activity status of the working-age population in 2008 and 2022**



Source: 2008 data is from Table 2.5 of the 2008 thematic report on labour and employment

An ILO (2018) report indicates that in Africa, the average proportion of persons engaged in salary/wage work (employees) is 31 per cent, 3 per cent as employers, 44 per cent in own-account, and

21 per cent in contributing family work. Compared to the average for Africa, Liberia's working population in paid employment is low. The proportion is 27.3 per cent in Ghana.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from “Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)”



### 3.3 Educational characteristics of the working-age population

A large and varied body of literature such as that of Jung and Thorbecke (2003) and Boccanfuso et. al (2015) have identified the availability of a skilled workforce as a key element to ensure economic development and growth in the long run. The educational characteristics of the workforce determine the quality of the workforce.

#### 3.3.1 School attendance status of the working-age population

Participation, especially completion of formal education is considered the most important component of investment in human capital (World Economic Forum, 2015). The largest proportion of the working-age population has completed a level

of education (35.8 per cent), while 31.4 per cent has never attended school (Table 11). The proportion of dropouts in the workforce is above 20 per cent. As indicated by Mussida et. al (2019), school dropout hinders the accumulation of adequate levels of human capital and anticipates entry into the unskilled labour market. Those currently in school and working account for less than 10 per cent.

As shown in Table 11, the males who have completed a level of education constitute the largest proportion (42.3 per cent) of the working population, with the proportion of dropout and never attended school population being almost the same. In contrast to the males, the never attended school category forms the largest proportion (41.1 per cent) of the female working-age population with those that have completed a level of education (27.4 per cent) being second largest.

**Table 11: Distribution of working-age population by school attendance and sex**

School attendance	Male	Female	Total
Never attended	24.0	41.1	31.4
Completed	42.3	27.4	35.8
Drop-out	24.2	22.2	23.3
Currently attending	9.5	9.3	9.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>1,036,967</b>	<b>792,234</b>	<b>1,829,201</b>

As shown in Table 12, the majority (56.7 per cent) of persons who are engaged in salary/wage work have completed a level of education. The proportion of dropouts in this work activity is a little below one fifth and those currently in school constitute less than 10 per cent. The remaining 16.1 per cent has never attended school. Analysing the data from the gender perspective show that, majority of the population of both sexes who are engaged in salary/wage work have completed a level of education, with the male (59.0 per cent) proportion higher than the female (51.7 per cent). While dropouts constitute the second largest for the males, it is the never attended school category for females. The population currently attending constitutes the least proportion of salary/wage workers.

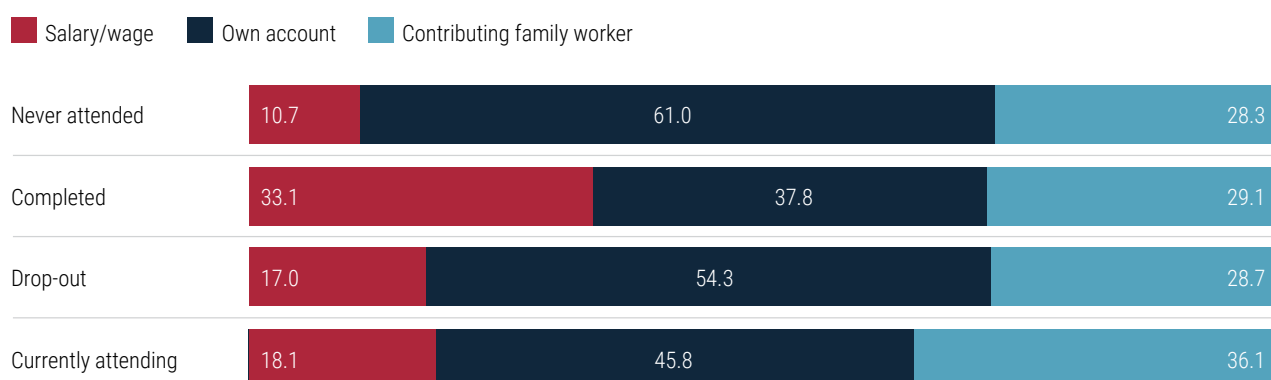
For own-account work, the never attended category is the largest (38.6 per cent), followed by those who have completed a level of education (27.3 per cent), dropouts (25.5 per cent) and currently attending school (8.7 per cent). Sex differentials are observed in the ranking of school attendance by work activity. While the largest proportion of male own-account workers (33.0 per cent) has completed a level of education, it is the never attended school (47.3 per cent) that constitutes the largest proportion of the females. Dropouts and currently attending school rank third and fourth respectively for both sexes.

**Table 12: Distribution of work activity of the working-age population by school attendance status and sex**

School attendance	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Never attended	13.6	22.1	16.1	30.5	47.3	38.6	22.8	39.2	30.2
Completed	59.0	51.7	56.7	33.0	21.0	27.3	42.2	27.3	35.5
Drop-out	19.8	17.2	19.0	27.3	23.6	25.5	23.3	22.1	22.8
Currently attending	7.7	9.0	8.1	9.2	8.2	8.7	11.6	11.4	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>266,354</b>	<b>116,248</b>	<b>382,602</b>	<b>474,481</b>	<b>433,888</b>	<b>908,369</b>	<b>296,132</b>	<b>242,098</b>	<b>538,230</b>

The extent to which school attendance influences type of work activity one is engaged in is shown in Figure 12. Own-account workers constitute the largest proportion in all the school attendance categories. However, the proportions are higher in the never attended school (61.0 per cent) and dropout (54.3 per cent) categories as majority of their population are engaged in this work activity. School dropout decreases the probability of being employed in non-elementary occupations, suggesting that unskilled

workers fail to meet the increasing demand for a skilled workforce (Mussida et. al, 2019). Though the level completed cannot be ascertained in Figure 10, persons that have completed a level of education has the largest working population in salary/wage work (33.1 per cent) compared to the other school attendance categories. Contributing family work is engaged in more by persons currently attending school than the other school attendance categories.

**Figure 12: Composition of work activity of the working-age population in each school attendance category**

Note: Proportions estimated from Appendix Table A1.

### 3.3.2 Educational attainment status of the working-age population

The formation of a skilled workforce is a key element of economic development and growth. As a measure of workforce quality, the proportion of a country's population holding a particular level of education may likely be more determinative of economic development than education spending (Clarke et. al, 2015).

The sex composition of the working-age population according to education attainment is presented in Table 13. Overall, the secondary level education attainers constitute the largest proportion (35.3 per cent), followed by those who have not attained any level of education. Those who have completed preschool constitute the lowest proportion. University graduates constitute 12.6 per cent.

As indicated in Table 13, males are more educated than females. While 42.1 per cent of females have not attained any level of education, it is 28.8 per cent for males. Two out of every five males have completed secondary level education compared

with 28.9 per cent for females. The proportion for university education attainers is also larger for males than females. That is, the quality of the working-age population is higher for males than females based on education attainment.

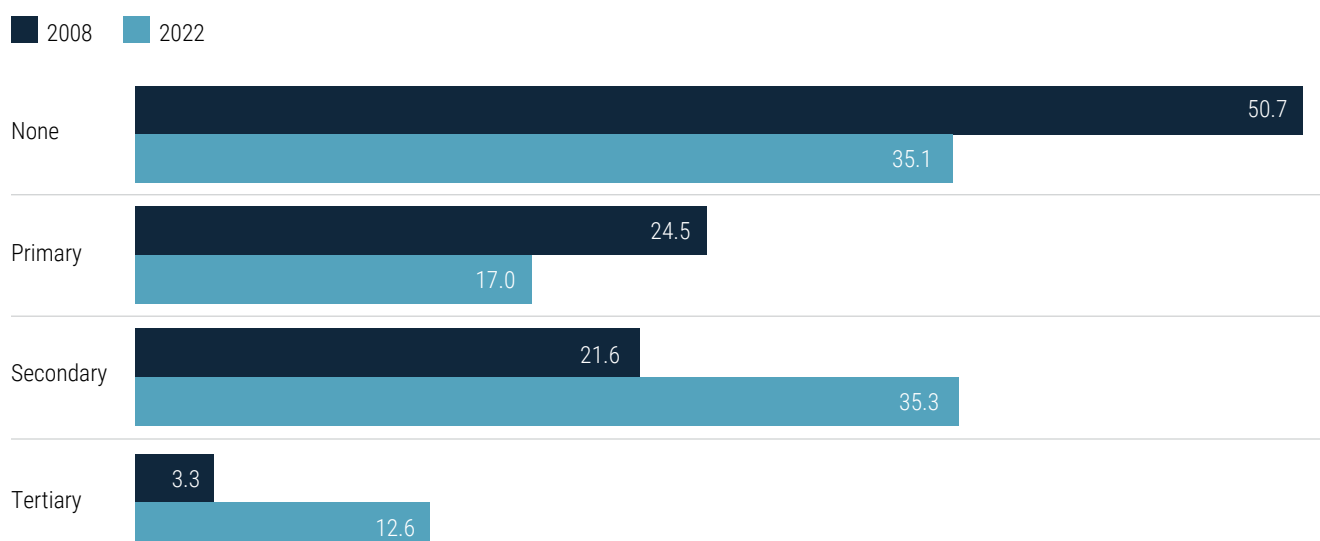
**Table 13: Educational attainment of the working-age population by sex**

Education attainment	Male	Female	Total
None	24.8	42.1	32.3
Preschool	2.6	3.1	2.8
Primary	17.0	17.0	17.0
Secondary	40.1	28.9	35.3
Tertiary	15.5	8.9	12.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>1,036,967</b>	<b>792,234</b>	<b>1,829,201</b>

A comparison of the quality of the workforce aged 15 to 64 in 2008 and 2022 as measured by educational attainment is displayed in Figure 13. In 2008, majority of the workforce (50.7 per cent) had no education compared to 35.1 per cent in 2022. The proportion that had completed primary education was 24.5 per cent and 17.0 per cent in 2008 and 2022 respectively. For the secondary education attainment category, the proportion in 2022 (35.3 per cent) is higher than that recorded in 2008 (21.6 per cent). The proportion of the workforce that had completed tertiary education in 2022 (12.6 per cent) is also higher

than that recorded in 2008 (3.3 per cent) by almost fourfold. This shows that the quality of the workforce has increased over the years as evidenced in the reduction in the proportion of the workforce that has educational attainment below secondary school level from 75.2 per cent in 2008 to 52.1 per cent in 2022. This can be attributed to the many interventions in the education sector by the Government, development partners and non-governmental organizations. The Education Act 2011, for instance, made basic education free and compulsory.

**Figure 13: Educational attainment status of the working-age population in 2008 and 2022**



Source: The 2008 data is from Table 2.9 of the 2008 thematic report on labour and employment

Table 14 presents the educational attainment composition of each work activity. For salary/wage work, the largest proportion engaged in this work activity has secondary education (43.6 per cent), followed by university graduates (25.6 per cent). The least proportion is the preschool-level attainers.

Workers with no education attainment (39.3 per cent) constitute the largest proportion of own-account

workers. This is followed by secondary school (31.6 per cent) and primary school level (18.6 per cent) attainers. The proportion of university graduates (7.3 per cent) is comparatively small.

The distribution pattern for the contributing family workers is similar to that of the own-account group, with the largest proportion having secondary level education followed by the no education attainers.

**Table 14: Educational attainment of the working-age population by work activity**

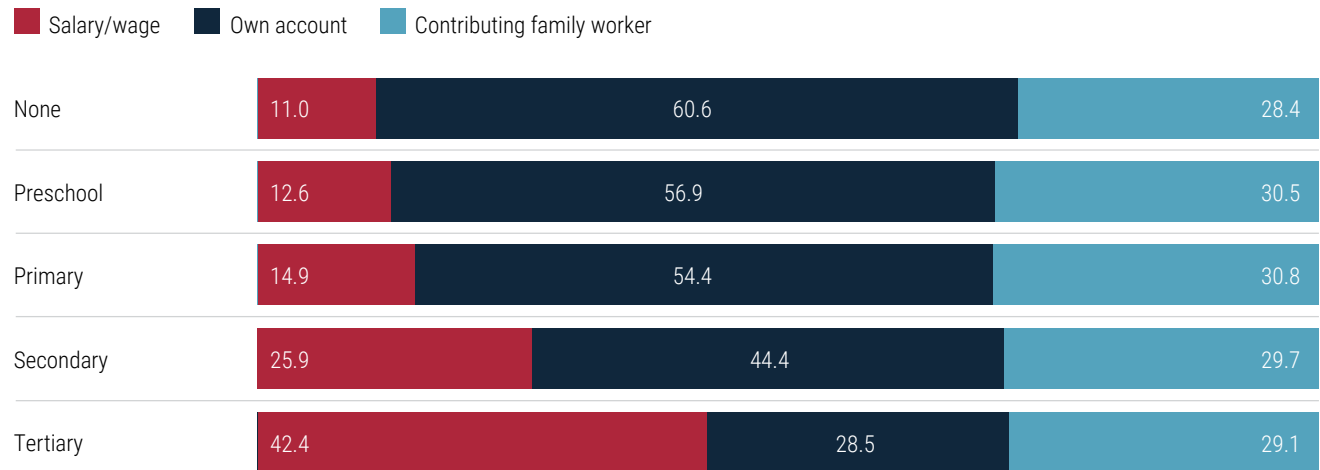
Education attainment	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work
None	17.0	39.3	31.1
Preschool	1.7	3.2	2.9
Primary	12.1	18.6	17.8
Secondary	43.6	31.6	35.7
Tertiary	25.6	7.3	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>382,602</b>	<b>908,369</b>	<b>538,230</b>

Within each education attainment status, how is the working population split among the work activity groups? This is presented in Figure 14. The general observation is that there is a direct relationship between education attainment and proportion of workers engaged in salary/wage work. Education has the strongest impact on formal sector employment. An inverse relationship is observed in the own-account work category.

For those who have no education attainment, the majority (60.6 per cent) is found in own-account work (Figure 14). Contributing family work is second with salary/work accounting for lowest proportion

of 11.0 per cent. The same picture is observed with preschool and primary school education attainers but with increases in the proportions in salary/wage work and declining shares of own-account workers. For those who have attained secondary education, the largest proportion (but not majority) are found in own accounts work with a higher proportion in salary/wage work than the proportions in the lower education attainment levels. It is only the tertiary education attainment level that has the largest proportion in salary/wage work (42.4 per cent), and the proportion of own-account workers (28.5 per cent) being lower than contributing family work (29.1 per cent).

**Figure 14: Composition of the work activity of the working-age population in each of the education attainment categories**



Note: Proportions have been estimated from Appendix Table A2



# Chapter 4: Economic activity of working children

## 4.1 Introduction

There is no universally accepted definition of child labour. According to the ILO (2012, p.1), child labour is work carried out by children under the age of 18 (i.e. 5 to 17 years) that in any way exploits them, causes them mental, physical or social harm, or places them in mortal danger. It is work that interferes or blocks their access to education and “deprives them of their childhood, their potential and their dignity”. Individual governments and different cultures may define “children” according to different ages or other criteria. Liberia defines children as persons of ages 5 to 14. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, two age groups are considered to represent children, namely, 5 to 14 years and 5 to 17 years.

It should be noted, however, that not all work performed by children is child labour. International standards define child labour as work that is hazardous to a child’s health and development, demands too many hours and/or is performed by children who are too young. Data collected by the 2022 LPHC did not give any clue as to whether children who performed economic activity were engaged in activities that were hazardous or not.

## 4.2 Size of the working children by sex

Out of a total population of 1,247,226 of children from ages 5 to 14, those who performed some form of economic activity was 86,063, translating into activity participation rate of 6.9 per cent (Table 15). This is more than two times higher than the 3.2 per cent recorded for neighbouring Ghana in 2021. The activity rate in 2008 for children 6 to 14 years is 13.8 per cent, which is two times the 2022 rate. The main reason that can be assigned to the reduction in the proportion of working children over the period (from 2008 to 2022) is the continuous increase in school enrolment and downward trend in out-of-school children population as reported in the Education Sector Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27. Reduction in poverty levels is also a factor. The activity rate for males (7.3 per cent) is higher than that of females (6.5 per cent).

For the 5 to 17-year age group, the activity rate is 8.5 per cent with the rate of the females (8.1 per cent) lower than their male (9.0 per cent) counterparts (Table 15). This confirms the results of the study by Fares and Raju (2007) that overall, boys may engage in more child labour than girls.

**Table 15: Working children by work activity and sex**

Work activity	5-14			5-17		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Salary/wage	3,531	2,749	6,280	6,404	4,684	11,088
Own account	21,846	19,763	41,609	35,525	32,583	68,108
Contributing family worker	19,824	18,350	38,174	30,957	28,865	59,822
Total that worked	45,201	40,862	86,063	72,886	66,132	139,018
Total population	622,413	624,813	1,247,226	811,601	815,365	1,626,966
Participation rate (%)	7.3	6.5	6.9	9.0	8.1	8.5

Figure 15 displays the distribution of persons aged 5 to 14 who performed economic activity by the different work activities they participated in and by sex. The largest proportion worked in own-account work in both sexes. This is followed by contributing family work, with salary/wage work engaging less than 10 per cent. There are slight differences in the proportions between males and females in all the

activity types. It is challenging to analyse gender differentials in the specific work undertaken by these children because the 2022 LPHC did not cover. However, studies conducted in different countries such as that of Allais (2009) indicate that while girls are more likely to be employed in services, boys are more likely to be employed in agriculture, and similar percentages of girls and boys are engaged in industry.

**Figure 15: Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 14 years by work activity status and sex**

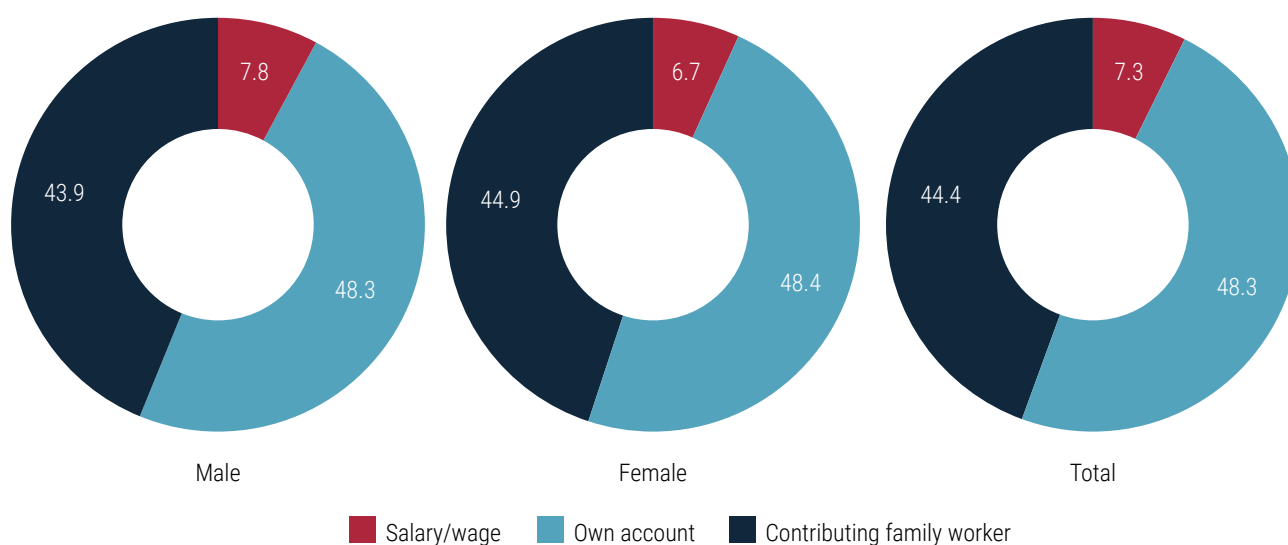
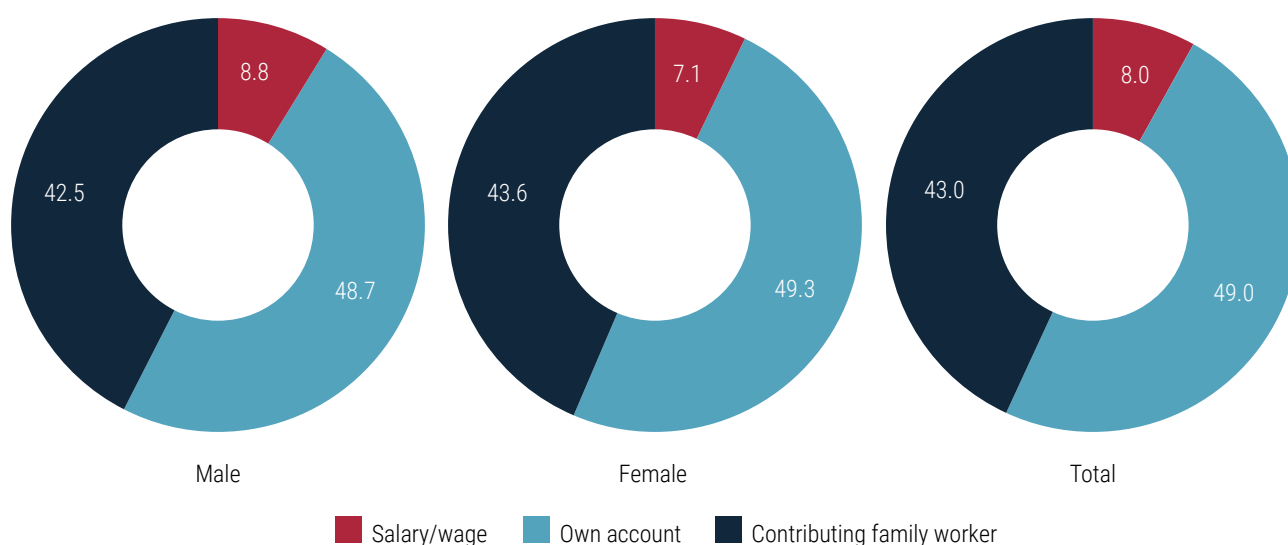


Figure 16 is the version of Figure 15 for the age group 5 to 17. The picture is the same as that of the 5 to 14 years, with those engaged in salary/wage work

slightly higher in 5 to 17 years than in the 5 to 14 years group.

**Figure 16: Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 17 years by work activity status by sex**



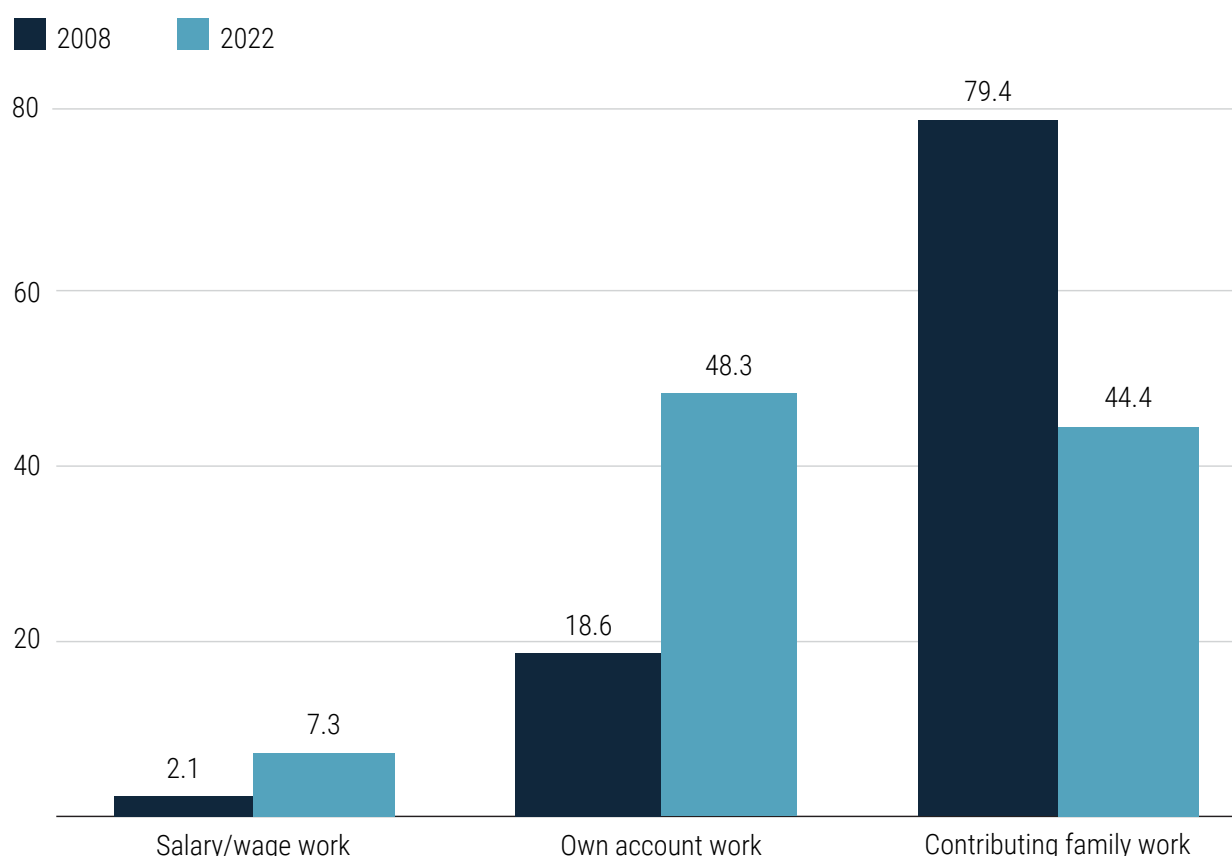
Trend in the composition of work activity status of working children 5 to 14 years from 2008 and 2022 is presented in Figure 17. The majority of the working children in 2008 were engaged in contributing family work (79.4 per cent), while less than one fifth (18.6 per cent) were engaged in own-account work and a small proportion of 2.1 per cent engaged in salary/wage work. Children's Work project based on data from ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank<sup>8</sup> indicate that the picture in Liberia in 2008 is in conformity with that of other West African countries as Burkina Faso in 2010 had 89.8 per cent of working children in contributing family work, Nigeria 84.2 per cent in 2011, Benin 80.5 per cent in 2012, and Ghana 96.9 per cent in 2012.

However, there is a drastic change in the composition of children's activity status in 2022. As discussed earlier, most working children are found in non-wage

informal work, primarily within a family context, but this is not the case for Liberia in 2022, a departure from the 2008 structure of work activity status of the working children. There is a significant reduction in the proportion of child workers in contributing family work (from 79.4 to 44.4 per cent) in favour of the other two categories, with own-account work engaging the largest proportion (from 18.6 per cent in 2008 to 48.3 per cent in 2022). The proportion engaged in salary/wage work more than tripled over the period.

It can therefore be concluded that, though the activity rate has reduced over the period, working children are now moving to jobs where they can earn their own money to support their schooling or fend for themselves instead of working in family business as unpaid family workers.

**Figure 17: Comparison of work activity status of working children between 2008 and 2022**



Source: 2008 estimates are based on Table 2.13 of the 2008 thematic report on labour and employment

### 4.3 Work activity of working children by locality of residence

The activity rate is significantly higher in rural areas than in urban areas for both children's age groups (Table 16). This means more children in rural areas are engaged in economic activity than their urban counterparts. Though significantly higher than rates recorded in Ghana for the urban-rural divide, the same scenario of higher activity rate for rural than urban areas is also observed. This confirms the findings of Webbink et.al (2012) that, children work less in

urban, less traditional and more educated areas. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of child labour globally. Another study on Ghana by Adonteng-Kissi (2018) finds that the socio-cultural contexts of child labour play a critical role in children's involvement in farming in the rural areas while poverty also contributes to children's engagement in artisanal fishing work in the slum urban communities in Ghana. These might explain the high activity rate in the rural areas of Liberia where agriculture is the predominant economic activity.

**Table 16: Working children by work activity and locality**

Work activity	5-14			5-17		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Salary/wage	3,081	3,199	6,280	5,583	5,505	11,088
Own account	8,252	33,357	41,609	15,208	52,900	68,108
Contributing family worker	11,308	26,866	38,174	19,049	40,773	59,822
Total that worked	22,641	63,422	86,063	39,840	99,178	139,018
Total population	684,011	563,215	1,247,226	905,815	721,151	1,626,966
Participation rate (%)	3.3	11.3	6.9	4.4	13.8	8.5

The proportion of working children aged 5 to 14 years in urban areas engaged in salary/wage work is higher than their rural counterparts (Figure 18). The majority of working children in rural areas (52.6 per cent) is engaged in own-account work compared to 36.4

per cent of urban working children. For contributing family work, higher proportion (almost half) of urban working children is engaged in this activity compared to 44.4 per cent in rural working children.

**Figure 18: Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 14 years by work activity status and locality**

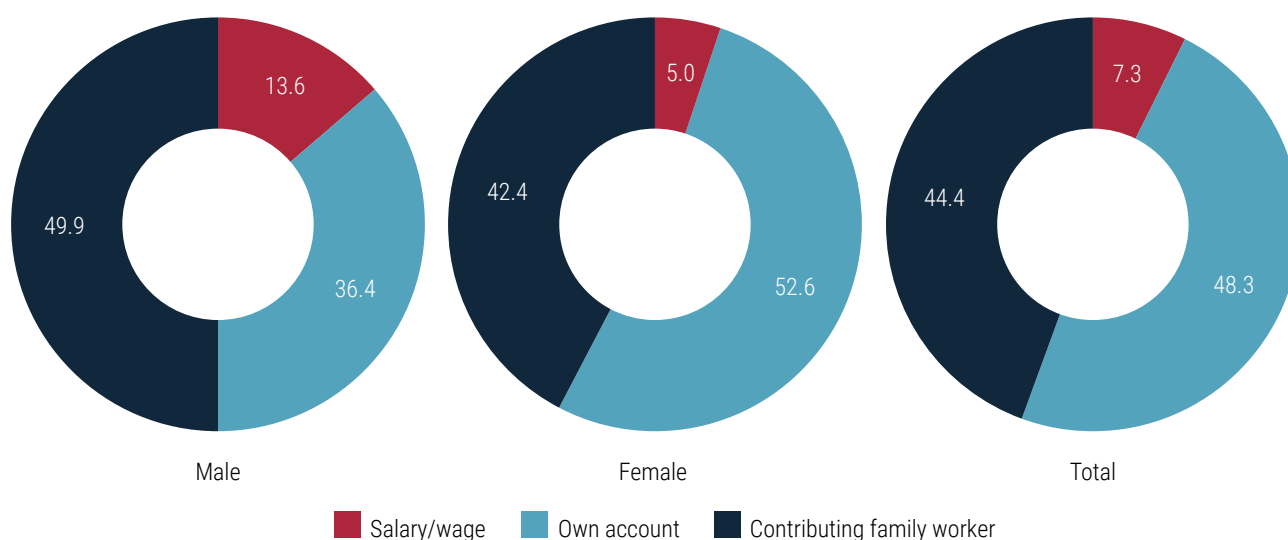
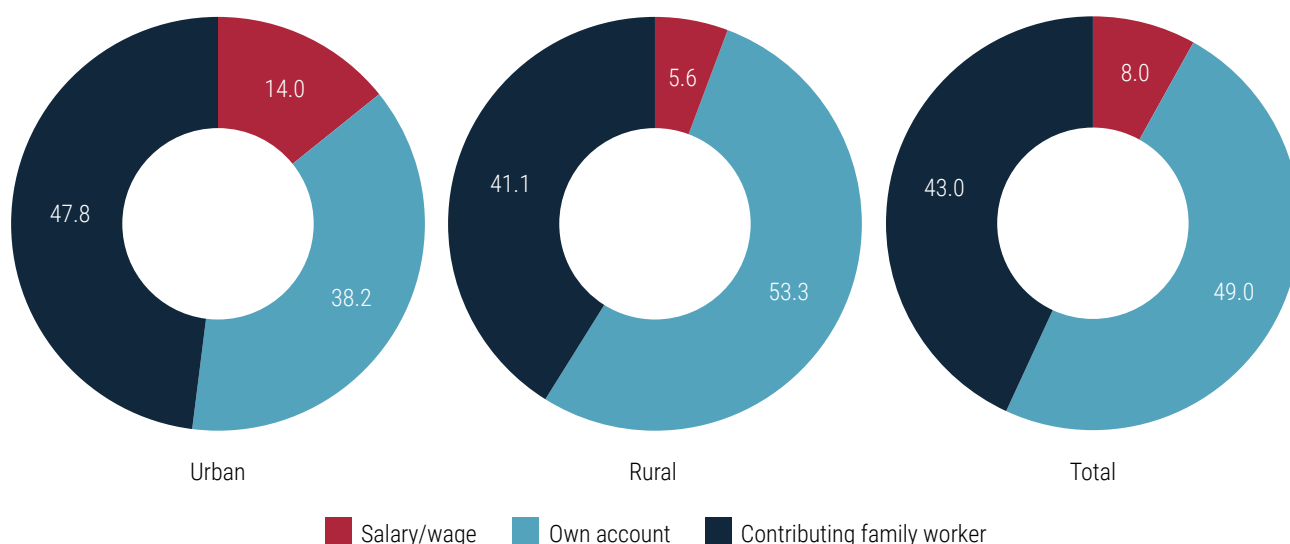


Figure 19 presents the proportions of working children aged 5 to 17 years among the work activity groups. The picture is the same as that of 5 to 14-year

age group. The proportion of persons in salary/wage work in the 5 to 17 age group is slightly higher in both localities compared to that of the 5 to 14-year group.

**Figure 19: Percentage distribution of working children 5 to 17 years by work activity status by locality**



#### 4.4 Work activity of working children by county

There are vast disparities in distribution of social infrastructure in Liberia, including educational facilities. Data on distance to the nearest primary school collected in the 2022 LPHC show that counties where families that can access a primary school long distances away from their communities have larger proportion of not-in-school children of school age. The not-in-school children are likely to engage in economic activity. The largest proportion work in the agriculture sector where children's economic contribution is often substantial. Poverty is also a contributing factor in children participation in economic activity.

The activity rates of working children in the counties are presented in Table 17. Lofa, Grand Kru and Bong have double-digit activity rates for both sexes, with the rates for Lofa being the highest in all categories. Grand Kru and Bong follow. Monterrado has the lowest activity rate in all the categorizations. This is followed by Margibi. These two counties are the most urbanized in Liberia.

The activity rate of male children is higher than female children in all the counties in all the age groups except Lofa where the rate for the female is higher. River Cess also has higher female activity rate than males in the 5 to 17 age group.

**Table 17: Work activity rate of children by county and sex**

County	5-14			5-17		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bomi	3.7	3.2	3.5	5.2	4.8	5.0
Bong	14.1	13.1	13.6	16.6	15.6	16.1
Gbarpolu	5.2	4.6	4.9	7.5	6.5	7.0
Grand Bassa	7.9	6.8	7.4	10.0	8.9	9.4
Grand Cape Mount	4.5	3.8	4.2	5.9	5.3	5.6

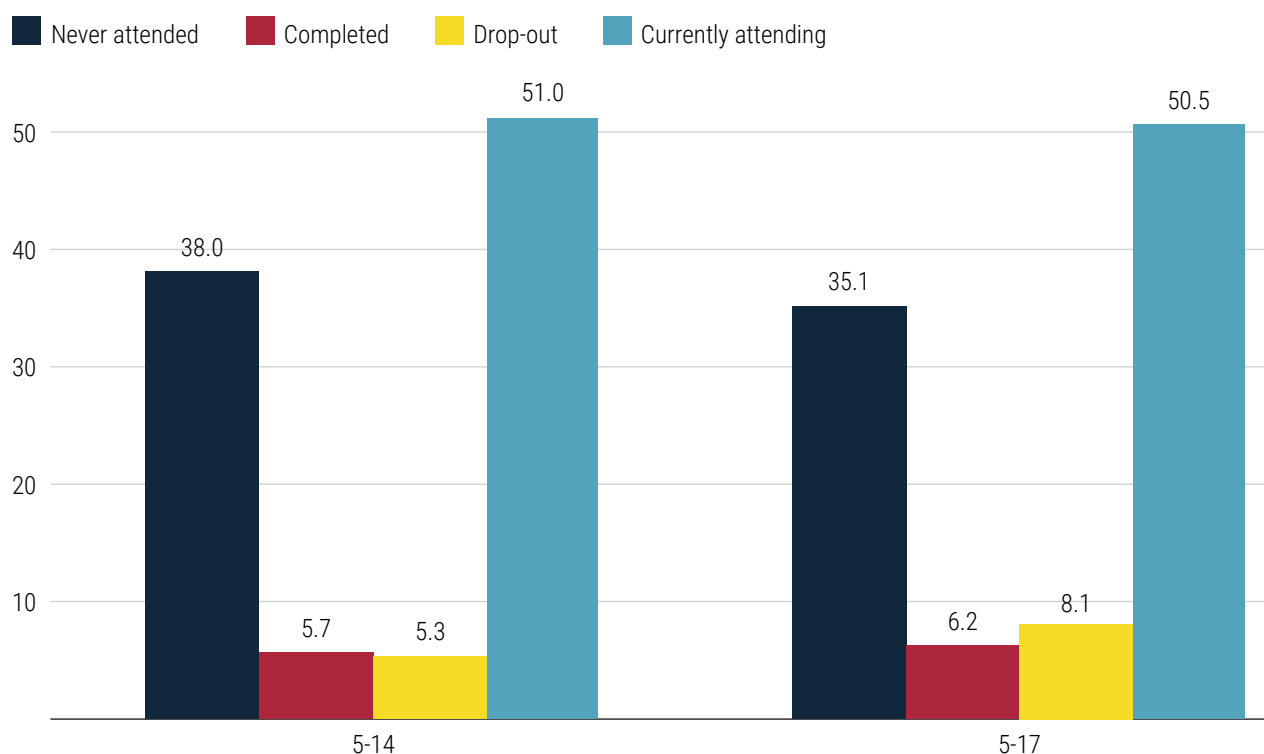
Grand Gedeh	5.7	5.5	5.6	7.7	7.1	7.4
Grand Kru	17.1	16.7	16.9	19.2	18.7	18.9
Lofa	27.8	28.8	28.3	31.9	33.2	32.5
Margibi	3.0	2.8	2.9	4.0	3.7	3.9
Maryland	4.3	3.5	3.9	5.6	4.5	5.0
Montserrado	2.4	2.1	2.3	3.5	2.9	3.2
Nimba	7.3	6.4	6.9	9.1	8.2	8.7
River Cess	4.0	3.7	3.9	6.1	6.3	6.2
River Gee	7.7	5.1	6.2	8.3	8.0	8.2
Sinoe	4.5	5.3	4.9	6.8	6.3	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>

#### 4.5 School attendance status of child workers

Educational characteristics of working children is as important as those of the total population. Only school attendance status is discussed with regards

to children in this section, because they are too young to consider education attainment of those working. The school attendance status of working children is shown in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: School attendance status of working children**



As shown in Figure 20, majority of children in both age groups are in school and also working. Children who have never attended school form the second largest working children population. Majority of working children combining schooling and work have serious implication for the child's education. One of the outcomes of schooling and working is absenteeism. The more these children miss classes, the more difficult it becomes to catch up with what is taught. Eventually, the student gives up altogether putting them on a path towards being a school dropout. Findings of a research by Xayavong and Pholphirul (2018) indicate that child labour, especially with regard to girls, has a strong impact on driving school dropout.

However, combining work and schooling can have different effects on academic performance,

depending on various factors such as the number of hours worked, the type of job and when it is done (e.g. weekends), and individual time management skills. Findings from a study carried out with children in three Ethiopian communities by Pankhurst et.al (2016) showed that, the children did not see working and learning as opposites, and one reason for them working was to be able to contribute to school costs.

The school attendance status of working children by work activity status is presented in Table 18. Never attended school category has the largest proportion of salary/wage work, while the currently attending school category have the largest proportions in the own-account and contributing family work. The proportion of the currently attending school is significantly higher than the other school attendance statuses.

**Table 18: Working children by work activity and school attendance status**

School attendance	5-14			5-17		
	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work
Never attended	41.0	43.6	31.4	37.2	40.0	29.1
Completed	17.1	4.6	4.9	17.0	5.2	5.5
Drop-out	9.0	5.9	4.1	12.2	9.0	6.4
Currently attending	32.9	45.9	59.6	33.6	45.9	59.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>6,280</b>	<b>41,609</b>	<b>38,174</b>	<b>11,088</b>	<b>68,108</b>	<b>59,822</b>



# Chapter 5: Economic activity of the youth population

## 5.1 Introduction

In response to meeting SDG 8.6 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community is committed to increase youth employment opportunities and to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in education, employment or training. This calls for detailed labour statistics on youth to provide vital information to support governments and civil society in their efforts to design, implement and monitor policies to promote better youth employment outcomes.

There is no universally agreed international definition for the youth age group. The age range for youth varies depending on the definition and purpose. The United Nations, however, defines the youth, for statistical purposes as persons from ages 15 to 24. Young people constitute a large share of all new job seekers. Between the ages of 15 and 24 is precisely when most people enter the labour market for the first time. In Liberia's National Youth Policy (2019–2023), the youth is defined as persons from ages 15 to 35. For the purpose of this report, the 15 to 35 age group is analysed together with the 15 to 24 age group to allow for international comparison.

## 5.2 Size of the youth population by sex

The size of the youth population is shown in Table 19. The 2022 LPHC enumerated 1,237,999 persons of ages 15 to 24, representing 23.6 per cent of the total population. The proportion of females (50.8 per cent) in this age bracket is slightly above the males (49.2 per cent). The population of the 15 to 35 age group was 2,189,306 which is equivalent to 41.7 per cent of the total population. The sex composition is 49.3 per cent males and 50.7 per cent females. This large proportion of the population 15 to 35 years constitutes a youth bulge. A youth bulge provides an opportunity for countries to develop their human resources. With a larger working-age population, all

things being equal, there's potential for increased productivity and economic growth. As these young adults enter the workforce, the dependency ratio (non-working-age population to working-age population) declines. Again, if these young individuals are able to find employment, average income per capita can rise, leading to a demographic dividend. However, if a large cohort of young people, as seen in Liberia's case, faces unemployment or earns insufficient income, the youth bulge becomes a demographic bomb. Frustrated youth can become a potential source of social and political instability. In summary, managing the youth bulge effectively is crucial for the country's development, as it can either propel economic growth or lead to social challenges and instability.

The work activity rate for the 15-24 age group is 25.8 per cent (Table 19). The rate recorded in 2008 is 28.2 per cent which is higher than that recorded in 2022. Two explanations can be given for this trend. First, with increase in secondary and university enrolment, people of this age may still be in school and therefore not available for work. Second, there are no jobs for them.

The rate for the 15-35 age group is higher (42.0 per cent). People aged 15 to 24 are those just entering the labour market following completion of education. It is therefore normal to see a higher participation rate for the 15 to 35 age group than the 15 to 24 age group. Thus, activity participation rates change as children get older. The rate for the 15 to 34 age group in 2008 is 38.8 per cent. The difference between the 2008 and 2022 rates can be attributed to a shorter age group for 2008 (that is, 15 to 34 years) or there is increase in activity participation in 2022.

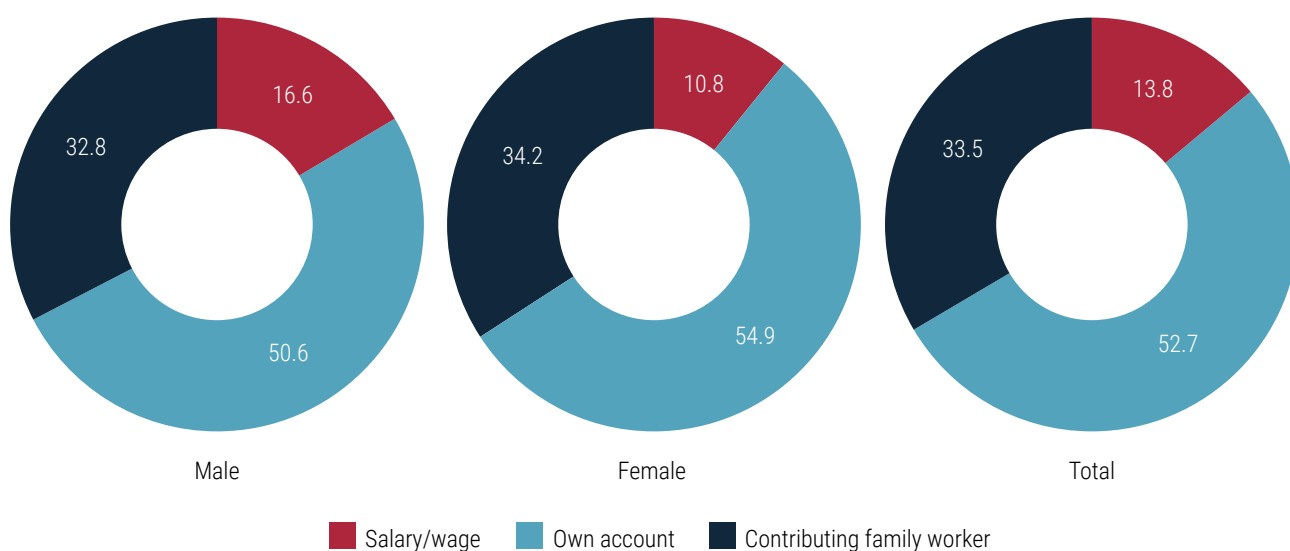
Though females constitute the larger proportion of the youth population, their activity rates for both youth categories are lower than that of their male counterparts, with the gender differential larger in the 15 to 35 age group.

**Table 19: Size of the working youth by work activity status and sex**

Work activity	5-14			5-17		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Salary/wage	27,628	16,576	44,204	109,594	59,321	168,915
Own account	84,145	84,102	168,247	235,135	234,646	469,781
Contributing family worker	54,660	52,384	107,044	144,942	134,845	279,787
Total that worked	166,433	153,062	319,495	489,671	428,812	918,483
Total population	609,515	628,484	1,237,999	1,078,630	1,110,676	2,189,306
<b>Participation rate (%)</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>42.0</b>

Majority of the youth population aged 15 to 24 years (52.7 per cent) are engaged in own-account work, and a third in contributing family work (Figure 21). Salary/wage work engaged only 13.8 per cent of the population. Majority of both sexes are also engaged

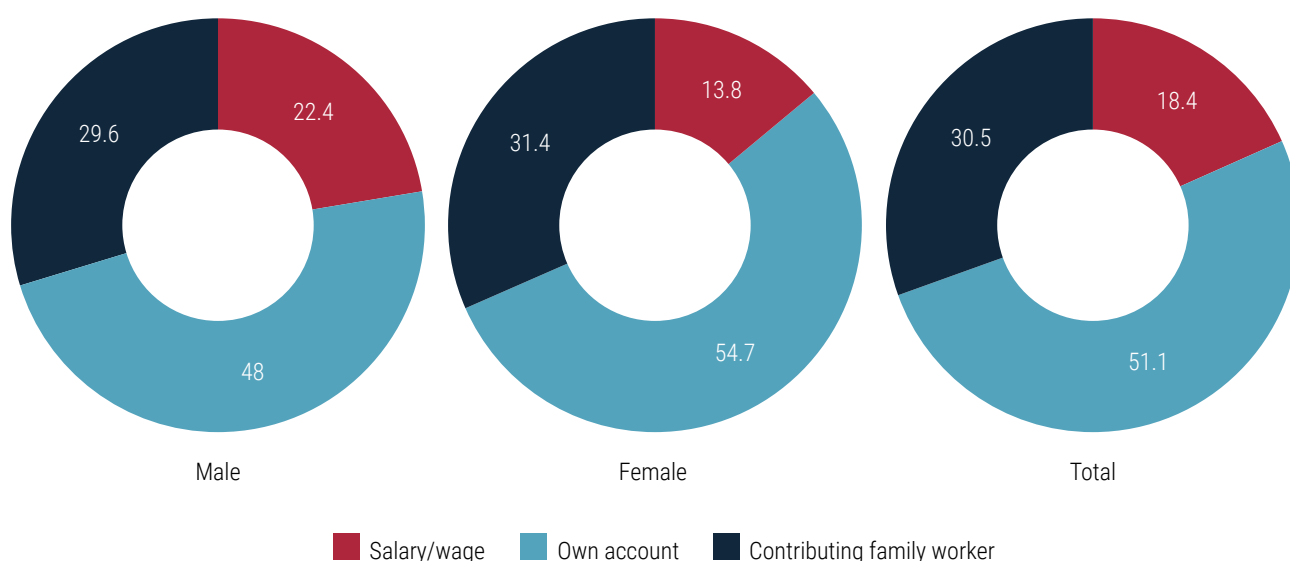
in own-account work, with the proportion of females higher than males. The proportion of males (16.6 per cent) engaged in salary/wage work is higher than the females (10.8 per cent).

**Figure 21: Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 24 years by work activity and sex**

Note: Proportions estimated from Table 19

Figure 22 presents the disaggregated youth population of 15 to 35 years. Like the 15 to 24-years category, the 15 to 35-years category have majority (51.1 per cent) of the population in own-account work, followed by contributing family work (30.5 per cent) and 18.4 per cent in salary/wage work. Majority of females (54.7 per cent) are found in own-account

work while less than half of the male counterpart (48.8 per cent) is found in this work activity. Females (31.4 per cent) are also found more in contributing family work than males (29.6 per cent). More than one fifth (22.4 per cent) of males are engaged in salary/wage work while the proportion of females is 13.8 per cent.

**Figure 22: Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 35 years by work activity and sex**

Note: Proportions estimated from Table 19

### 5.3 Work activity of the youth by locality of residence

For both youth categories, activity participation rate is higher for the rural youth than the urban (Table 20). The difference in activity rates between urban and rural youth is wider with the 15 to 24-years category.

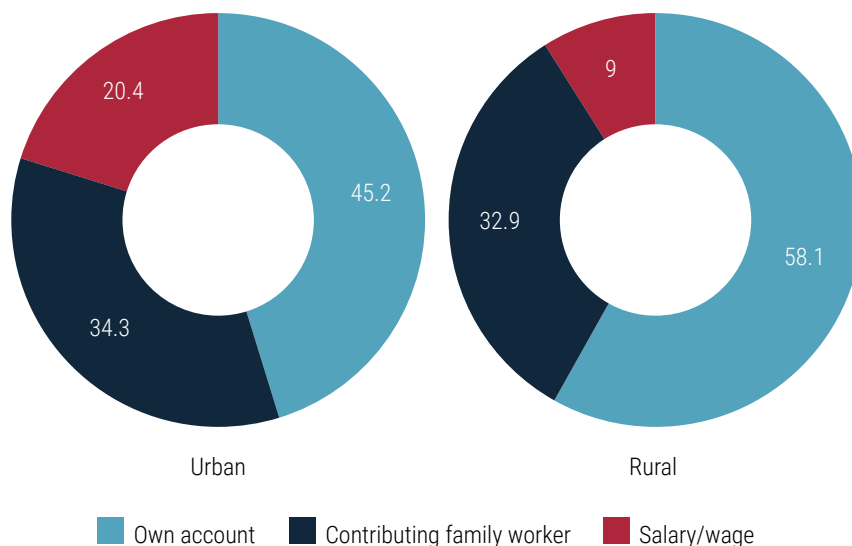
**Table 20: Size of the working youth by work activity status and locality of residence**

Work activity	15-24			15-35		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Salary/wage	27,584	16,620	44,204	117,530	51,385	168,915
Own account	61,106	107,141	168,247	203,872	265,909	469,781
Contributing family worker	46,384	60,660	107,044	143,937	135,850	279,787
Total that worked	135,074	184,421	319,495	465,339	453,144	918,483
Total population	717,590	520,409	1,237,999	1,264,015	925,291	2,189,306
Participation rate (%)	18.8	35.4	25.8	36.8	49.0	42.0

Almost three out of every five youth aged 15 to 24 years in the rural areas are engaged in own-account work (Figure 23). This compares to 45.2 per cent of the urban youth population. The difference between the proportions in contributing family work

in the urban and rural areas is not wide. However, in the case of salary/wage work, the gap in proportion between locality is wide. While about one fifth of urban youth are in salary/wage work, it is less than 10 per cent in rural areas.

**Figure 23: Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 24 years by work activity and locality of residence**

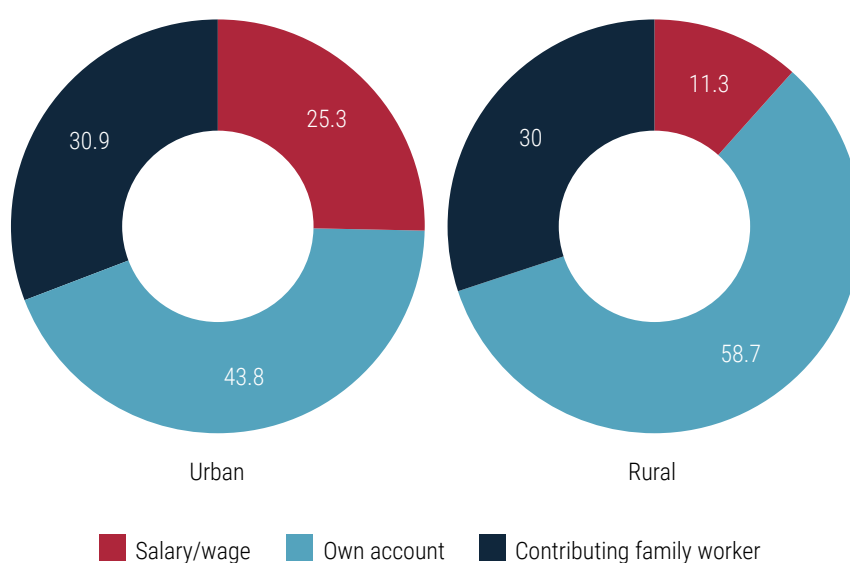


Note: Proportions estimated from Table 20

Like the 15 to 24 age category, about three out of every five youth of ages 15 to 35 years in the rural area are engaged in own-account work compared with a little over 2 out of 5 in the urban area (Figure 24). For the contributing family work, there is no

significant difference in the localities. In the case of salary/wage work, about one quarter of urban youth are engaged in this work activity. This compares with 11.3 per cent in rural areas.

**Figure 24: Distribution of the working youth population 15 to 35 years by work activity and locality of residence**



Note: Proportions estimated from Table 20

## 5.4 Educational characteristics of the working youth

### 5.4.1 School attendance status of the working youth

As indicated in Table 21, the working population of the youth of ages 15 to 24 years have almost equal proportions that have never attended school (29.4 per cent) or currently attending school (29.1 per cent). The proportion of dropouts (21.6 per cent) is larger than those who have completed a level of education (19.9 per cent). For the males, the largest proportion are found in the currently attending school category (30.3 per cent) while with the females, it is the never attended category (32.2 per cent). The proportion of the never attended is the second largest for the males, and the currently attending for the females.

The dropouts constitute a little over one fifth of the working population for both sexes. Females (18.1 per cent) have a lower proportion of persons that have completed a level of education than their male counterparts (21.5 per cent).

For the 15 to 35 years youth group, the largest proportion of 32.0 per cent have completed a level of education. This is followed by the never attended category (28.4 per cent), dropouts (23.9 per cent) and currently attending (15.7 per cent). Persons that have completed a level of education (35.9 per cent) form the largest proportion for the males and the never attended (33.9 per cent) constitute the largest proportion for the females. The male dropouts (24.2 per cent) form the second largest compared to completed for the females (27.6 per cent). Contributing family work engages the lowest proportion of both sexes.

**Table 21: School attendance status of the working youth by sex**

School attendance	15-24			15-35		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Never attended	26.8	32.2	29.4	23.6	33.9	28.4
Completed	21.5	18.1	19.9	35.9	27.6	32.0
Drop-out	21.3	21.9	21.6	24.2	23.5	23.9
Currently attending	30.3	27.7	29.1	16.3	15.1	15.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Population	166,433	153,062	319,495	489,671	428,812	918,483

The largest proportion of persons who are engaged in salary/wage work have completed a level of education (Table 22). Small differences are found in the proportions of the other school attendance categories. Persons that have completed a level of education constitute the largest for both sexes in the salary/wage activities, with the proportion of females slightly higher than the males.

For the own-account work, a third of the working youth population have never attended school and 27.3 per cent are currently attending school

(Table 22). Those who have completed a level of education constitute the lowest proportion (16.4 per cent). This category also has the lowest proportions for both male and female. The largest proportion for both sexes have never attended school with the proportion of females (36.1 per cent) higher than the males (30.3).

Persons currently attending school form the largest proportion of contributing family workers for both sexes (Table 22). The never attended school category engages the second largest proportion for both sexes.

**Table 22: School attendance status of the working youth aged 15 to 24 by work activity and sex**

School attendance	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Never attended	21.0	24.1	22.1	30.3	36.1	33.2	24.3	28.6	26.4
Completed	35.7	36.5	36.0	17.8	15.1	16.4	20.1	17.3	18.7
Drop-out	22.7	18.1	21.0	22.6	23.7	23.1	18.7	20.3	19.5
Currently attending	20.6	21.3	20.9	29.3	25.2	27.2	36.8	33.8	35.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Population</b>	<b>27,628</b>	<b>16,576</b>	<b>44,204</b>	<b>84,145</b>	<b>84,102</b>	<b>168,247</b>	<b>54,660</b>	<b>52,384</b>	<b>107,044</b>

The disaggregation of the working youth population 15 to 35 years by work activity and sex is presented in Table 23. The majority of persons engaged in salary/wage work have completed a level of education (50.7 per cent). About one fifth are dropouts, 16.8 per cent not attended school, and 12.7 per cent currently attending school. Disaggregating by sex indicates that persons who have completed a level of schooling constitute the largest proportion for both sexes, with male (51.5 per cent) proportion slightly higher than that of the female (49.3 per cent).

Persons that have never attended school form the largest proportion of females (38.6 per cent) in own-account work while persons that have completed a level of schooling constitute the largest for males (29.2 per cent). Persons that have completed a level of education form the largest proportion of males (35.0 per cent) engaged in contributing family work. For the females, the never attended school category has the largest proportion engaged in contributing family work.

**Table 23: School attendance status of the working youth aged 15 to 35 by work activity and sex**

School attendance	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Never attended	15.1	19.8	16.8	28.3	38.6	33.5	22.3	31.8	26.9
Completed	51.5	49.3	50.7	29.2	22.4	25.8	35.0	27.0	31.2
Drop-out	21.0	17.6	19.8	26.7	25.4	26.0	22.6	22.7	22.7
Currently attending	12.3	13.4	12.7	15.8	13.6	14.7	20.0	18.4	19.3
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Population</b>	<b>109,594</b>	<b>59,321</b>	<b>168,915</b>	<b>235,135</b>	<b>234,646</b>	<b>469,781</b>	<b>144,942</b>	<b>134,845</b>	<b>279,787</b>

#### 5.4.2 Educational attainment status of the working youth

The educational attainment of the working youth is shown in Table 24. Persons that have attained secondary level education constitute the largest proportion for males (38.0 per cent) in the 15 to

24 age category. For the females, persons with no educational attainment form the largest (33.4 per cent). For both sexes, a little less than three out of every 10 have completed primary school. No person with tertiary education is found as working in this age group which looks surprising.

Like the 15 to 24 years youth category, secondary school leavers constitute the largest proportion for the males (42.8 per cent) in the wider youth population age group of 15 to 35 years, while it is the no education attainment constitute the largest for

the females (34.8 per cent). Unlike the 15 to 24 years category, 7.8 per cent of the 15 to 35 years category have attained tertiary education, comprising of 8.8 per cent males and 6.5 per cent females.

**Table 24: Distribution of the working youth by educational attainment and sex**

Education attainment	15-24			15-35		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
None	28.1	33.4	30.6	24.5	34.8	29.3
Preschool	5.3	5.4	5.3	3.3	3.7	3.5
Primary	28.6	28.2	28.4	20.6	20.7	20.6
Secondary	38.0	33.0	35.6	42.8	24.2	38.8
Tertiary	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.8	6.5	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>166,433</b>	<b>153,062</b>	<b>319,495</b>	<b>489,671</b>	<b>428,812</b>	<b>918,483</b>

The education attainment of the working youth aged 15 to 24 years and the type of work activity they are engaged in is presented in Table 25. Majority of salary/wage work is undertaken by secondary school leavers for both sexes. Persons with no education qualification rank second for both sexes, and primary school leavers occupying the third position.

For own-account work, the largest proportion of males in this activity are secondary school leavers

(33.6 per cent). For the females, it is persons with no education qualification (37.1 per cent) that form the largest proportion. The proportion of primary school leavers in both sexes is significant (close to 30 per cent).

Secondary school leavers constitute the largest proportion of persons engaged in contributing family work for both sexes, followed by primary school leavers.

**Table 25: Education attainment status of the working youth aged 15 to 24 by work activity and sex**

Education attainment	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
None	22.6	25.6	23.7	31.5	37.1	34.3	25.6	29.9	27.7
Preschool	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.5	5.5	5.4	5.9	6.0	6.0
Primary	21.5	20.1	21.0	21.0	28.4	29.0	30.8	30.5	30.7
Secondary	52.4	50.9	51.8	51.8	29.0	31.3	37.6	33.6	35.6
Tertiary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>27,628</b>	<b>16,576</b>	<b>44,204</b>	<b>84,145</b>	<b>84,102</b>	<b>168,247</b>	<b>54,660</b>	<b>52,384</b>	<b>107,044</b>



Like the 15 to 24 group, youth engagement in salary/wage work is dominated by secondary school leavers of ages 15 to 35 years for both sexes (Table 26). The proportion of tertiary degree holders is the second largest for the males and it is the no education attainment category for females (20.8 per cent). Though tertiary degree holders account for the third largest proportion of the females, the proportion is higher than that of the males.

Almost two out of every five males in own-account work have completed secondary school education. The proportion of males with no education attainment

is the second largest. Tertiary level graduates account for 5.5 per cent of the male own-account workers. Females with no education attainment constitute the largest proportion of own-account workers, followed by secondary school leavers. Tertiary level female graduates account for 4.0 per cent.

Contributing family workers have the largest proportion having completed secondary level education for both sexes. The second largest proportion for both sexes is the no education attainment category, followed by primary school and tertiary.

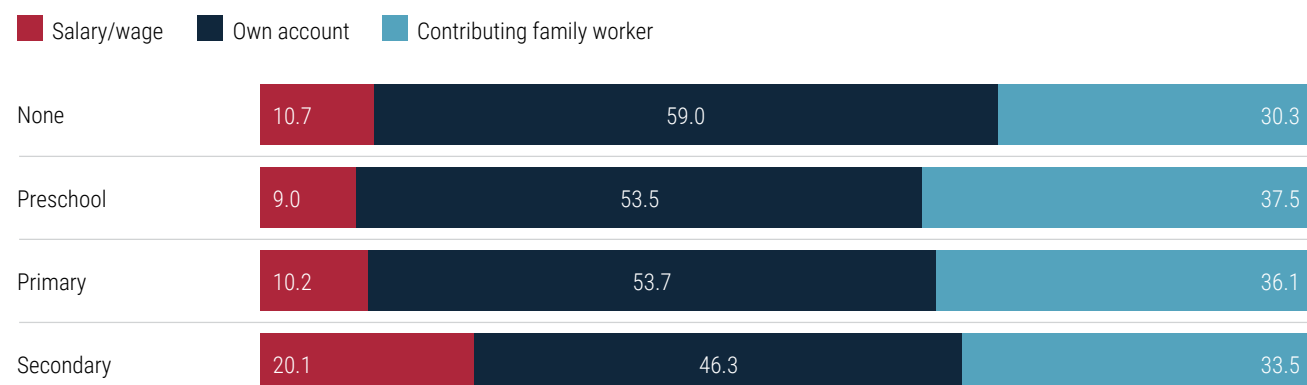
**Table 26: Education attainment status of the working youth aged 15 to 35 by work activity and sex**

Education attainment	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
None	16.1	20.8	17.8	29.1	39.5	34.3	23.3	32.8	27.9
Preschool	2.1	2.2	2.1	3.7	4.0	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.8
Primary	14.7	14.1	14.5	22.6	21.6	22.1	21.7	22.1	21.9
Secondary	50.7	45.6	48.9	39.1	31.0	35.0	42.9	34.9	39.0
Tertiary	16.4	17.3	16.7	5.5	4.0	4.7	8.5	6.2	7.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Population</b>	<b>109,594</b>	<b>59,321</b>	<b>168,915</b>	<b>235,135</b>	<b>234,646</b>	<b>469,781</b>	<b>144,942</b>	<b>134,845</b>	<b>279,787</b>

Figure 25 displays the composition of the working youth population aged 15 to 24 in each of the education attainment category. Majority of persons with education attainment below secondary school level are own-account workers. Though the largest

proportion of secondary leavers are found in own-account work (46.3 per cent), they do not form the majority. One fifth of secondary school leavers are engaged in salary/wage work, it is about one-tenth for the remaining school attendance categories.

**Figure 25: Composition of the work activity of the working youth population aged 15 to 24 in each of the education attainment categories**

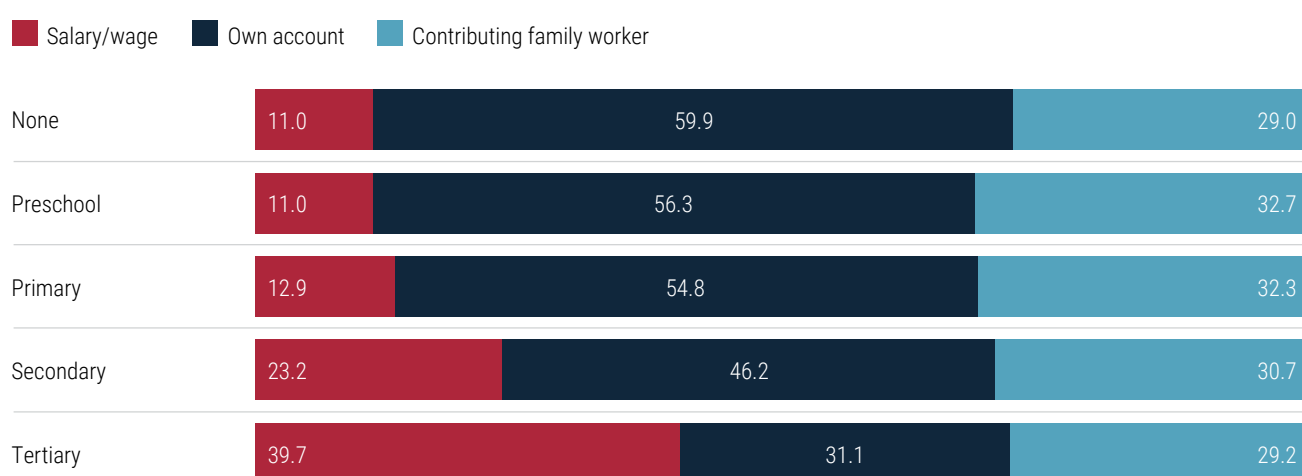


Note: Proportions have been estimated from Appendix Table A3

Figure 26 displays the composition of the working youth population aged 15 to 35 in each of the education attainment category. The proportion of workers in salary/wage work increases with the level of education attained. While only 11.0 per cent of persons who have completed preschool are engaged in salary/wage work, the proportion increases with increases in education attainment to 39.7 per cent for the tertiary graduates.

Own-account work engages the largest proportion of each of the education attainment categories except the tertiary graduates where salary/wage work engages the largest proportion. Differences in the proportions of contributing family workers among the education attainment categories are not wide.

**Figure 26: Composition of the work activity of the working youth population aged 15 to 35 in each of the education attainment categories**



Note: Proportions have been estimated from Appendix Table A3

# Chapter 6: Economic activity of the elderly population

## 6.1 Introduction

The elderly population is defined as persons 65 years and older. As has been done in the earlier chapters, this chapter presents analysis of the elderly working population by size, sex and locality of residence. Because of the age categorization, education characteristics of the elderly working population has been analysed by literacy status of the elderly worker and education attainment only. School attendance of the elderly population is not included here.

## 6.2 Size of the elderly working population

The total population of the elderly 65 years and older in 2022 is 147,497 comprising of 50.3 per cent males and 49.7 per cent females (Table 27). The number

of persons that performed some form of economic activity during the reference period is 69,437, translating into an activity participation rate of 47.0 per cent. The rate for 2008 is 41.7 per cent, meaning the proportion of the working elderly population has increased over the period.

Out of the male population of 74,209, the number of persons that performed some form of economic activity during the reference period is 45,740, translating into an activity participation rate of 61.6 per cent. The activity rate for the females is 32.3 per cent which is far below that of the males.

The rural elderly population (81,603) is significantly higher than that of the urban (65,994). The activity rate is higher for the rural elderly population (50.6 per cent) than their urban (42.7 per cent) counterparts.

**Table 27: Size of the elderly working population by work activity status, sex and locality of residence**

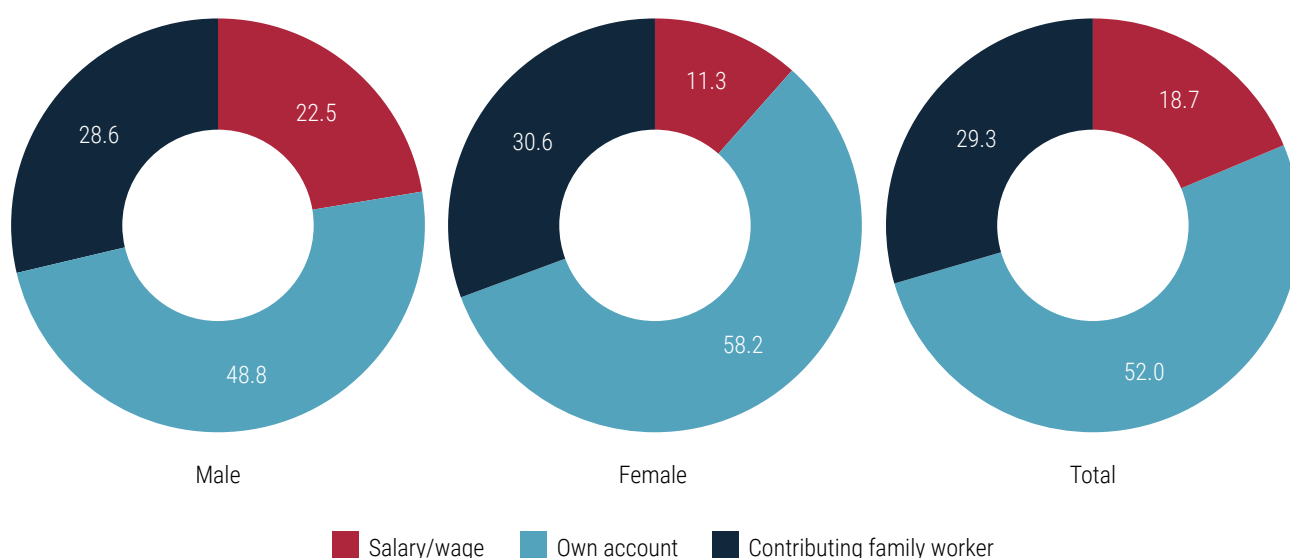
Work activity	Sex		Locality		Overall
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	
Salary/wage	10,299	2,675	7,953	5,021	12,974
Own account	22,338	13,781	11,329	24,790	36,119
Contributing family worker	13,103	7,241	8,865	11,479	20,344
Total that worked	45,740	23,697	28,147	41,290	69,437
Total population	74,209	73,388	65,994	81,603	147,597
Participation rate	61.6	32.3	42.7	50.6	47.0

The proportion of the working elderly population by type of work activity and sex is shown in Figure 27. Majority of the elderly population (52.0 per cent) are engaged in own-account work. Contributing family work engages the second largest proportion of the elderly (29.3 per cent), with salary/wage work engaging the least (18.7 per cent).

There are marked disparities in the proportions of males and females in own-account work and salary/wage work. Though own-account work engages

the largest proportion in both sexes, majority of females (58.2 per cent) are found in this work activity compared to 48.8 per cent of males. A little over one fifth of the elderly males (22.5 per cent) are engaged in salary/wage work. The proportion of females (11.3 per cent) engaged in this work activity is half that of their male counterparts.

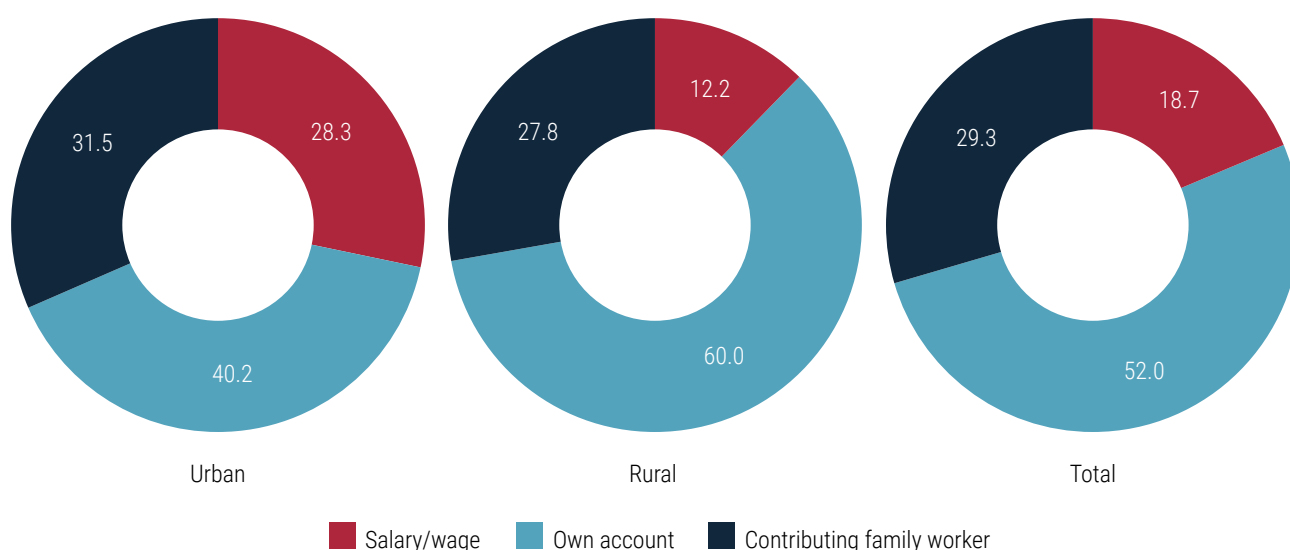
There is two percentage difference between the sexes in the proportions of workers engaged in contributing family work.

**Figure 27: Distribution of the working elderly population by work activity and sex**

Note: Proportions estimated from Table 27

The urban and rural divide with respect to elderly workers in the three work activities is shown in Figure 28. Three out of every five elderly workers in the rural areas are found in own-account work, compared to two out of five in the urban areas. A wide difference is also observed in salary/wage work as 28.3 per

cent of elderly workers in urban areas are engaged in this activity, while it is 12.2 per cent in the rural areas. Proportion of elderly workers in urban areas (31.5 per cent) engaged in contributing family work is higher than what pertains in the rural areas (27.8 per cent).

**Figure 28: Distribution of the working elderly population by work activity and sex**

Note: Proportions estimated from Table 27

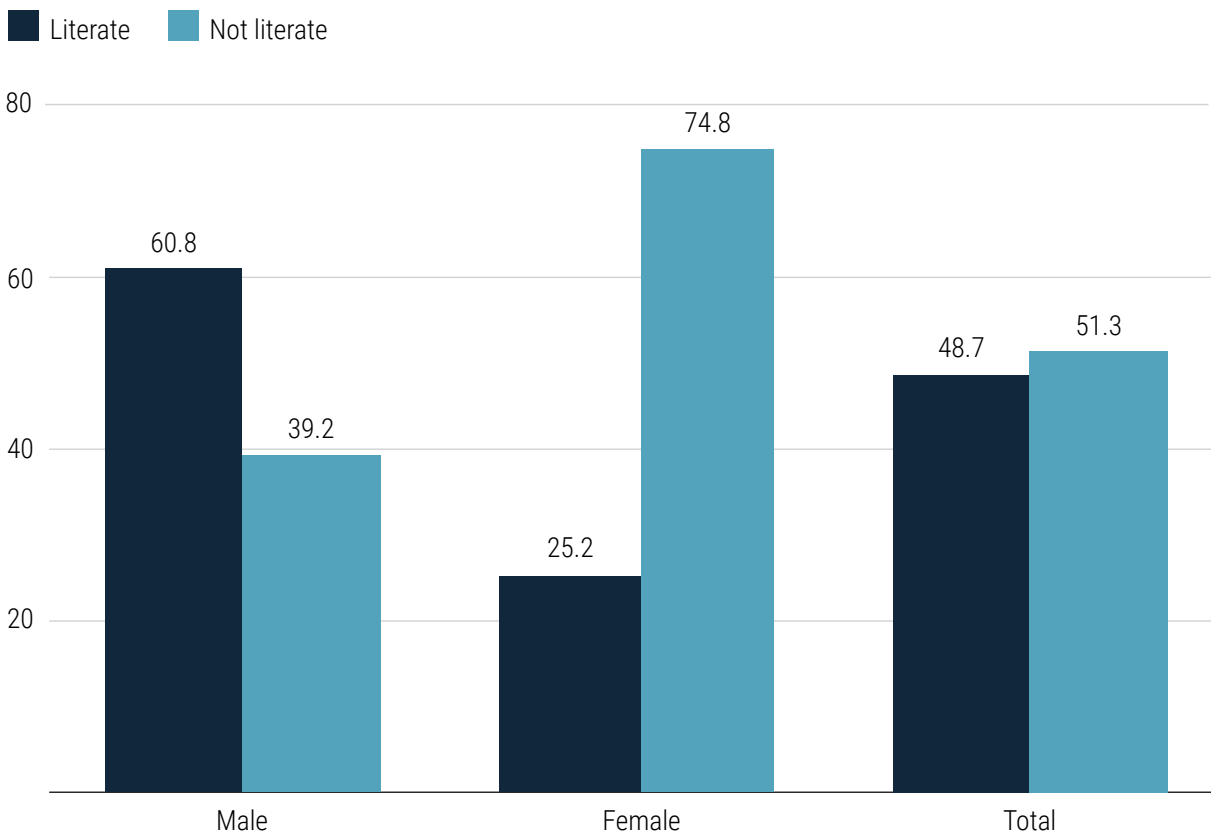
### 6.3 Educational characteristics of the elderly working population

#### 6.3.1 Literacy status of the elderly working population

How literate the elderly working population is, is shown in Figure 29. The proportion of literates

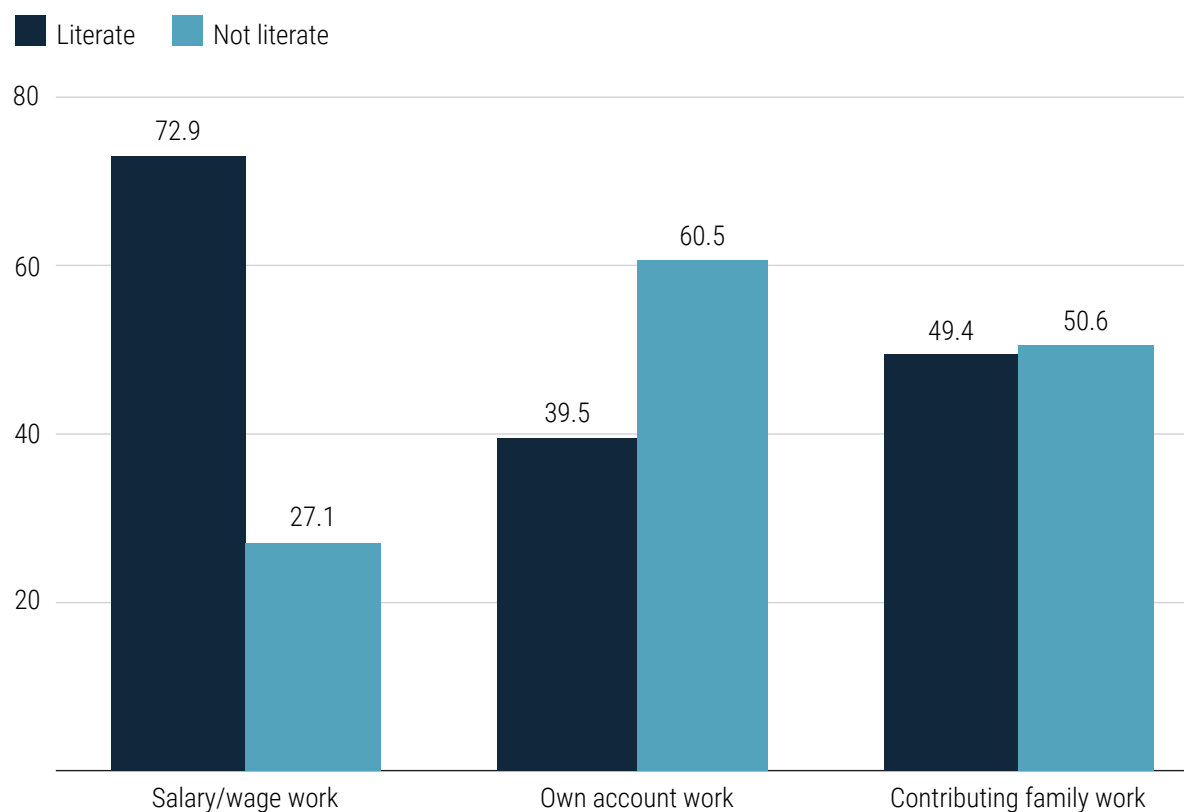
(48.7 per cent) in the elderly workforce is lower than the non-literate (51.3 per cent) proportion. Comparative analysis by gender shows that majority of the elderly male working population (60.8 per cent) are literate, compared to 25.2 per cent of the female counterparts. The proportion of the non-literate elderly female working population is very large.

**Figure 29: Literacy status of the elderly working population by sex**



Individuals with low levels of literacy are more likely to experience poorer employment opportunities and outcomes and lower income (World Literacy Foundation, 2021). As clearly displayed in Figure 30, as high as 72.9 per cent of salary/wage workers are literate. Public and civil servants, managers,

teachers, professionals and other works that need high intellectual skills are salary/wage jobs. With own-account work, 39.5 per cent are literate and the remaining (60.5 per cent) being non-literate. For the contributing family work, the proportion are almost the same.

**Figure 30: Literacy status of the elderly working population by work activity**

### 6.3.2 Education attainment of the elderly working population

As presented in Table 28, the proportion of males in all levels of education attainment is higher than that

of females. Over seven out of every 10 elderly working females have not completed any level of education. The quality of the female workforce is far lower than their male counterparts.

**Table 28: Education attainment of the elderly working population by sex**

Education attainment	Male	Female	Total
None	37.3	73.8	49.8
Preschool	2.5	1.9	2.3
Primary	12.9	7.0	10.9
Secondary	28.9	10.8	22.7
Tertiary	18.4	6.5	14.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Population	45,740	23,697	69,437

There is a direct link between education attainment and literacy. The educational outcomes in Table 28 reflect the large non-literate elderly female working population in Figure 30. It is difficult to define the direction of this relationship with a great degree of precision, however, it is observed in Table 28 that the high proportion of females that have not completed any level of education (73.8 per cent) are most likely to be non-literates (74.8 per cent in Figure 29).

Work activity status of the elderly working population is cross classified by their education attainment status and the results presented in Table 29. Secondary school leavers (38.8 per cent) constitute the largest proportion of males in salary/wage work, followed by tertiary level graduates (31.7 per cent). Male workers in salary/wage work that have not attained any education level form 20.1 per cent. The largest proportion of female workers in salary/wage work (47.9 per cent) has not completed any level

of education. The education attainment status that describes the second largest proportion of the female salary/wage workers is secondary school leavers (22.2 per cent), followed by tertiary level graduates (20.9 per cent).

Unlike the salary/wage work, the largest proportion of the elderly working population in own-account work for both sexes have not completed any level of education, with the proportion of the females significantly higher than that of the males. Secondary school leavers form the second largest for both sexes, but with much larger proportion for the males than the females.

Contributing family work is largely characterized by persons with no education level completion for both sexes: the proportion of the females is about double that of males. Secondary school leavers form the second largest proportion in both sexes.

**Table 29: Education attainment status of the elderly working population by work activity and sex**

Education attainment	Salary/wage work			Own account work			Contributing family work		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
None	20.1	47.9	25.8	45.9	79.9	58.9	36.1	71.9	48.8
Preschool	1.9	1.7	1.9	3.0	1.9	2.6	2.2	1.9	2.1
Primary	10.4	7.3	9.8	14.3	6.7	11.4	12.6	7.4	10.7
Secondary	35.8	22.2	33.0	25.6	8.0	18.9	29.2	11.8	23.0
University	31.7	20.9	29.5	11.3	3.4	8.3	20.0	7.0	15.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Population	10,299	2,675	12,974	22,338	13,781	36,119	13,103	7,241	20,344



# Chapter 7: Conclusions, policy implications and recommendations

## 7.1 Conclusions

Data on economic activity is always important for planning and policy formulation, and thus serves as a guide to shape the country's future economic development. Liberia, like many developing countries, faces challenges related to labour quality. The labour force is characterized by high self-employment rates in low-productivity activities and limited access to risk management systems (insurance coverage). Formal employment opportunities are mostly limited to the Monrovia enclaves (30.4 per cent in paid employment), plantation agriculture of rubber in Margibi County (26.3 per cent in paid employment) and yet to be fully realized mining sub-sector.

The findings of this report clearly indicate that education has a substantial impact on employment prospects. There is a positive relationship between paid employment (which is regarded as being secured employment) and education attainment, and an inverse relationship between own-account or self-employed work (considered as vulnerable employment) with education attainment level. The higher one moves on the educational ladder, the higher the probability of securing a paid employment job, while the higher one moves on the educational ladder, the lower the probability of being engaged in own-account job. The quality of the working population in terms of education attainment is generally low.

The activity participation rate of the working-age population has increased over the period; from 45.7 per cent in 2008 to 55.3 per cent in 2022. This is a reflection of the impact of policies and programmes by the Government, development partners and non-governmental organizations towards job creation. The activity rate of working children has reduced from 13.8 per cent in 2008 to 6.9 per cent in 2022 for the 5 to 14 age group. The impact of educational policies and programmes initiated by the Government and its development partners have increased enrolment and retention of children of school age. However, the proportion of working children in Lofa (28.3 per cent), Grand Kru (16.9 per cent) and Bong (13.6 per cent) are high and need attention.

The youth (15 to 35 years) constitute 41.7 per cent of the total population, and this can be described as a youth bulge. The activity participation rate of 42.0 per cent for the youth (15 to 35 years) is, however, low, and even lower than the 47.0 per cent for the elderly (65 years and older). With a youth bulge, and low activity participation rate paints a gloomy picture that needs to be critically looked at by the Government.

There are substantial disparities between men and women in activity participation rates. The activity participation rate for males is higher than that of females in several specific dimensions such as national, locality of residence, county, different age cohorts and paid employment. The education attainment status of women in the working population is also low compared to the men, making women end up in insecure (own-account and contributing family work), and constitute a minority of those in salary/wage jobs. The findings of this report are, therefore, to equip decision-makers with the data to tackle gender gaps in the most targeted and impactful way possible.

Activity rate is higher in rural than urban areas. This can be explained by the fact that more out-of-school persons are found in rural areas than urban areas. These out-of-school persons, especially children and young people, engage in economic activity very early in life. In the forest areas most of these out-of-school children and young adults are engaged in agriculture while their counterparts in the coastal areas are engaged in fishing. These activities do not need special skills through formal education to undertake.

Though the quality of the workforce is low, there has been improvement over the years. The working-age population in 2008 was characterized by 75.1 per cent not attained higher than primary school education, with only 3.3 per cent having attained tertiary education. In 2022, however, the proportion of the workforce that had not attained secondary education and higher constitutes 51.2 per cent and 12.6 per cent had attained tertiary education.

## 7.2 Policy implications

High-quality labour is a crucial element in almost every economy. Therefore, ensuring a skilled and well-trained labour force is crucial for sustainable development. Campbell and Aderinto (2022; p.30) observed that “the abilities and qualities of labour that influence productivity include higher education, on-the-job training and health. Investment in these improves the abilities of the labour force to innovate and adopt new technologies”.

Liberia’s workforce has majority of the workers having educational attainment below secondary level of education. The quality of the workforce can be considered as low. This makes immigration of high-skilled labour and outsourcing of jobs major ways of filling the skills imbalances. That is a huge cost to the Government. Reducing skills imbalances in the labour market could lower hiring costs, increase productivity and improve the ability of firms to innovate and adopt new technologies.

Liberia is faced with a youth bulge, having 41.7 per cent of the population in the 15-35 years bracket. The aspiration of every young person is that, getting a job that offers decent work is an important step in completing the transition to adulthood, a milestone towards independence and self-reliance. The entry into the workforce by young adults of working age is an additional pressure on the labour market. If the increase in labour supply is not met by a demand for labour by employers and lack of opportunities to set up own jobs, the unemployment rate is bound to rise. With the low activity participation rate of the youth (42.0 per cent), it means a large cohort of young people cannot find employment and earn satisfactory income. The youth bulge will therefore become a demographic bomb, because a large mass of frustrated youth is likely to become a potential source of social (including substance abuse) and political instability.

Despite policies and programmes by the Government, development partners and non-governmental organizations towards gender parity in the labour force participation rate, gaps remain wide overall. As noted by UN Women<sup>9</sup> “Investing in women’s economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home”.

## 7.3 Recommendations

Recommendations proffered are broadly divided under two themes: education and employment.

### 7.3.1 Education

Under education, policy dimensions towards building human capital that leads to inclusive growth is preferred to jobless economic growth that leaves large segments of the society behind. In this context, the following are proposed:

- a. Make tertiary education affordable to brilliant but needy persons.
- b. Strengthen the responsiveness of the tertiary education system to changing skills demand.
- c. Policies that promote education, skills development, and gender equality play a vital role in improving labour force quality.
- d. Improve employability by investing in education and vocational training for young people. While enrolment in secondary and tertiary education continues to expand, too many young people miss the opportunity to obtain education and training for good, productive jobs. This calls for innovative and diversified curricula for technical and vocational education (TVET) that caters for all, ensuring inclusion for everyone – males and females and for people with disability.
- e. Vocational training to be decentralized and a new certification scheme developed to absorb grade-nine graduates. A comprehensive national skills development programme needs to be in place for those with less or no educational attainment.
- f. Enact policies that can retain students in school and reduce the out-of-school population.

### 7.3.2 Employment

The following recommendations are proposed:

- a. Place employment creation at the centre of macro-economic policy. For employability, equal opportunities and entrepreneurship to be most effective, there must be an enabling environment where employment creation is placed at the centre of macro-economic and other public policies.

9 Downloaded from UN Women on June 25, 2024, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>

- b.** Promote and facilitate entrepreneurship by making it easier to start and run enterprises in order to provide more and better jobs for young women and men. Entrepreneurship should be supported so that enterprises can sustain themselves.
- c.** Policies to help the informal sector job to move gradually to the formal sector because the largest proportion of the employed population is informally employed and in most cases is without secure income, employment benefits and social protection. This explains why informality often overlaps with poverty.
- d.** Activity participation rate has been found to be higher in rural areas than urban areas, one of the reasons being large out-of-school children and young adults. It is an opportunity for Government to establish or revive national agricultural model farms in these areas for farmer training programmes to improve skills and capacity of farmers. Also, commercial farming particularly

in poultry and dairy, should be promoted to increase employment opportunities and improved livelihoods of the farmers. This will help reduce rural-urban migration.

#### Recommendations on improving the questionnaire

- Use the standard questionnaire designed by the ILO for collecting data on labour and employment in a population census as a guide in future censuses.
- Since the 2022 LPHC is not too far away from the next Labour Force Survey (LFS), few questions can be inserted in the LFS with reference to the census period to capture the missing variables in the 2022 LPHC.
- Close collaboration with the Liberia Ministry of Labour in finalizing questions on labour and employment in any censuses and surveys is important.

# References

- Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2018). Causes of child labour: Perceptions of rural and urban parents in Ghana. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 91, pp. 55-65. Elsevier.
- Allais, F.B (2009). *Assessing the gender gap: Evidence from SIMPOC surveys*. Geneva: International Labour Organization. Retrieved on June 18, 2024
- Campbell, O., & Aderinto, E. (2022). Human Capital Development and Labour Market Outcomes in Africa: Evidence from Sub-Saharan African Countries. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 13(6), 2222-2855. from <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=10952>.
- Clarke, W., Jones, A. T., Lacy, B. (2015). Education spending and workforce quality as determinants of economic growth. The *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 10(4), 24-35.
- Dorothee Boccanfuso, D., Larouche, A., & Trandafir, M. (2015). Quality of Higher Education and the Labor Market in Developing Countries: Evidence from an Education Reform in Senegal. *World Development*, 74, 412-424
- 5 Erb, S., & Harriss-White, B. (2002). *Outcast from social welfare: adult disability, incapacity, and development in rural South India*.
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2020). *Economic inclusion for people with disabilities: Challenges and responses*. Ergon Associates Ltd Unit 1, 9A Dallington St. London EC1V 0BQ
- Fares J, & Raju D. (2007). *Child labor across the developing world: Patterns and correlations*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4119. Retrieved from [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/01/25/000016406\\_20070125152956/Rendered/PDF/wps4119.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/01/25/000016406_20070125152956/Rendered/PDF/wps4119.pdf).
- IFAD (2019). Economic Activities of Persons with Disabilities in Rural Areas: New Evidence and Opportunities for IFAD Engagement. EB 2019/128/R.7. Executive Board — 128th Session Rome, 10–12 December 2019
- International Labour Organization (2012). *What is child labour*. Retrieved on June 18, 2024 from <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang-en/index.htm>.
- International Labour Organization (2018). Paid employment vs vulnerable employment. Spotlight on Work Statistics. Downloaded on June 10, 2024 from [wcms\\_631497.pdf \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/wcms_631497.pdf)
- Jung, H., Thorbecke, E. (2003). The Impact of Public Education Expenditure on Human Capital, Growth, and Poverty in Tanzania and Zambia a General Equilibrium Approach. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. DOI:10.2139/ssrn.879682
- Mussida, C., Dario Sciulli, D., & Signorelli, M. (2019). Secondary school dropout and work outcomes in ten developing countries. *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 41(4), 547 – 567
- Olukemi I. L. (2008). *Female Labour Force Participation in Nigerian: Determinants and Trends*; Oxford Business and Economic Conference Programme.
- Pankhurst, A., Crivello, G., & Agazi Tiemelissan, A. (2016). Children's Work in Family and Community Contexts: Examples from Young Lives Ethiopia. *Young Lives Working Paper 147*. ISBN 978-1-909403-62-8
- Webbink, E., Smits, J., & de Jong, E. (2012). Hidden Child Labor: Determinants of Housework and Family Business Work of Children in 16 Developing Countries. *World Development*. 40(3), 437-656.

World Literacy Foundation (2021). The Impact of Illiteracy and the Importance of Early Intervention. Downloaded on June 23, 2024, from <https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/early-intervention-reduces-illiteracy/>

WHO and World Bank (2011). *World Report on Disability*, Geneva, Switzerland [https://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report/en/](https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/).

Xayavong, T. & Pholpirul, P. (2018). Child labour and school dropout in least-developed countries: empirical evidence from Lao PDR. *International Journal Education Economics and Development*, 9(1).

# Appendix

**Table A1: Literacy status of the working population 5 years and older by sex**

Literacy status	Male	Female	Total
Literate	808,090	467,355	1,275,445
Illiterate	319,818	389,438	709,256
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,127,908</b>	<b>856,793</b>	<b>1,984,701</b>

**Table A2: Literacy status of the working population 5 years and older by work activity status**

Work activity	Sex	Literacy status		Total
		Literate	Illiterate	
Salary/wage	Male	233,137	47,047	<b>280,184</b>
	Female	91,232	30,440	<b>121,672</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>324,369</b>	<b>77,487</b>	<b>401,856</b>
Own account	Male	336,051	182,614	<b>518,665</b>
	Female	224,649	242,783	<b>467,432</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>560,700</b>	<b>425,397</b>	<b>986,097</b>
Contributing family worker	Male	238,902	90,157	<b>329,059</b>
	Female	151,474	116,215	<b>267,689</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>390,376</b>	<b>206,372</b>	<b>596,748</b>

**Table A3: School attendance status of the working children population by activity status**

School attendance	5-14			5-17		
	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work	Salary/wage	Own account	Contributing family work
Never attended	2,576	18,130	11,976	4,123	27,214	17,412
Completed	1,074	1,928	1,863	1,884	3,535	3,266
Drop-out	563	2,439	1,581	1,355	6,119	3,846
Currently attending	2,067	19,112	22,754	3,726	31,240	35,298
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,280</b>	<b>41,609</b>	<b>38,174</b>	<b>11,088</b>	<b>68,108</b>	<b>59,822</b>

