2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census

Thematic report on
Nuptiality and marriages
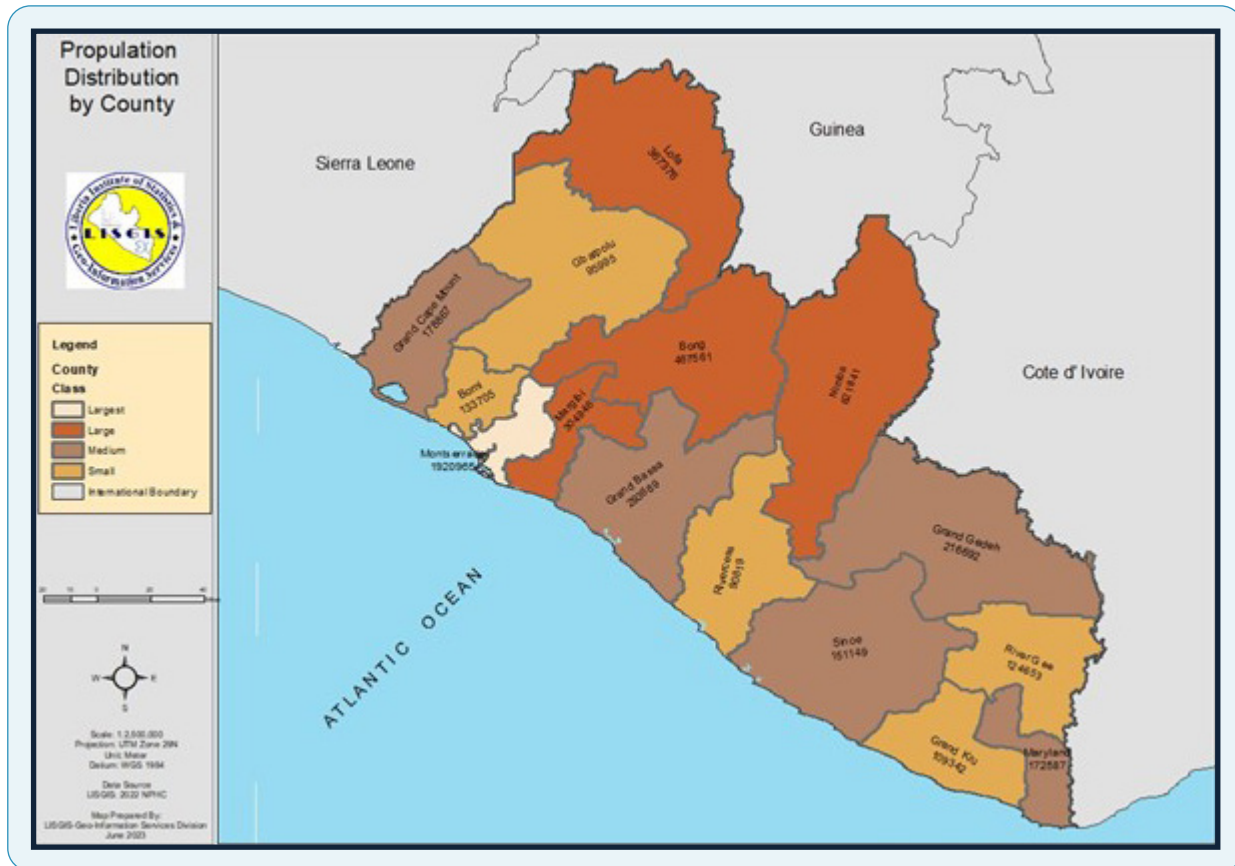
June 2024

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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Preface

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

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

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

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

Richard F. Ngafuan
Director General
LISGIS

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Acronyms

AU	African Union
CDR	Crude Divorce Rate
CMR	Crude Marriage Rate
CSO	Civil Society Organization
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
GMR	General Marriage Rate
HDR	Human Development Report
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
LDHS	Liberian Demographic and Health Survey
LPHC	Liberian Population and Housing Census
NPHC	National Population and Housing Census
PHC	Population and Housing Census
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMAM	Singulate Mean Age at Marriage

Chapter 1: Background and data evaluation

1.1 Introduction

The concept of nuptiality refers to the frequency of marriage within a population. It also focuses on the phenomenon and level of occurrence of marriages; the characteristics of persons united in marriage, and the processes of dissolving to divorce, separation, widowhood and annulment. Marriage is considered as a milestone stage in the growth processes in human evolution. Nuptiality reflects the interactions between biological, socioeconomic, cultural and religious factors. Nuptiality also looks at the relationship of the two individuals to each other in terms of any children they might have. The benefits of marriage also extend to the extended families of the two partners in some societies, including Liberia. The key features of marriages are that they are legally binding and considered as long-term contracts. Other characteristics of marriages are sexual exclusivity, shared residence, co-residence and joint production.

The levels and patterns of nuptiality have a strong influence on natural population growth and distribution, fertility levels, mortality and other demographic phenomena. In addition, marital status of any society is dynamic and varies in space and time (UNECA 1983). Studies have shown that married men and married women live, on average, two years longer than their unmarried counterparts. One reason for this longevity benefit is the influence of marital partners on healthy behaviors. Study after study shows that married people eat better and are less likely to smoke and drink excessively[1].

The connection between marriage and health involves the body's inflammatory process. It is proven that a married adult is likely to live longer than a single adult in terms of healing from chronic inflammation such as heart disease, arthritis, cancers and autoimmune diseases. There is also a strong link between loneliness and lack of close relationships and the human body's way of reacting to illness, injury or disease. Although single adults could have very meaningful close relationships too, a healthy marriage by nature provides more opportunities for closeness and socialization, supporting the link between marriage and inflammation.

The age at first marriage; the frequency of marriage, divorce, separation, etc., have implications for the structure of the population, partiality with regards to fertility and mortality. Since the 1962 population and housing census, attempts have been made to collect data on nuptiality. This chapter presents definition of marriage in Liberia in 2008 and discussion about the different types of marital status.

1.2 Objectives of nuptiality analysis

The principal objective of the nuptiality chapter is to estimate the levels and patterns of nuptiality; as well as determine its variation and impact on socioeconomic, demographic and geographical situation based on the results of the 2022 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) of Liberia.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Analyse marriage and nuptiality levels and trends;

2. Determine marriage and nuptiality differentials by background characteristics and county;

3. Examine the patterns of nuptiality and its relationships with childbearing;

4. Examine the relation between patterns of nuptiality and demographic and social-economic characteristics; and

5. Make recommendations and show policy implications of nuptiality indicators on demographic and social-economic situation of Liberia's population.

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1   https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=do+married+people+live+long+than+single+people&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8

1.3 Data and methods

The methods of analysis considered the patterns and differentials among the population, using rates, percentages, measure of central tendency and other demographic procedures. The data used in the report was collected from the 2022 NPHC. The data were collected at the household level and were based on an individual's declaration of marital status without further probing the legal, religious or customary rules and regulations affecting this status. Hence, the data analysed in this chapter are regarded as a pragmatic response to question P06 on marital status as perceived by the respondents.

The data was collected for population 12 years and older, and focused on whether respondents were single, married monogamous, married polygamous, separated, divorced, widowed and living together or in consensual union. Secondary data from the previous censuses (1962 to 2008) were applied as necessary.

1.4 Data quality

The collection, processing and interpretation of nuptiality data are influenced by problems of definition and age categorization in Liberia. The use of nuptiality and all other demographic analyses depends on the level of data accuracy and reliability. Some of the problems are coverage and content errors, which vary in nature and magnitude from one country/ region to another. Coverage errors result from omission of certain aspects of population, while content errors pertain to misreporting or misclassification of events. The errors lead to biases and distortions in estimates based on such data.

In this section, only content errors in the reports of marriageable (10-50years) women are examined. The discussion revolves around features that might bias the nuptiality estimates from the data. Nuptiality estimates in this report are obtained from data on marital status. The levels, trends and patterns of nuptiality; and the age and sex structure of the population are important in analysing nuptial data. Hence, the quality of age data is assessed mainly by examining the extent of age misreporting by women of marriageable or reproductive age. In addition, the quality of nuptiality data is influenced by individual perceptions. The nuptiality data is embedded in the cultural norms and practices that determine as to whether the population is experiencing various marital statuses and condition. As a result, the quality of nuptiality data has no impact on the analysis. Hence, the nuptiality data was used without adjustment.

1.5 Data capture methodology

The 2022 census data was captured using computer assistant instruments (CAPI), which have minimum errors. However, age and parity information always lead to some errors in a large skill data collection like the census. Despite these problems, substantial improvements were made to minimize the errors over time. Therefore, some minimum errors arising from age and parity have no impact on the nuptiality data. Despite these problems, substantial improvements were made to minimize the errors over time. Additionally, the data were edited meticulously in consonance with recent United Nations recommendations (United Nations 2001).

Age heaping Analysis

The fast-declining form of ages ending with digits 0 and 5 is a familiar feature of developing countries, including Liberia's population census data. It shows preference for or heaping on terminal digits 0 and 5 due to lack of knowledge of actual age, among other things. The Myers Index of 15.13 for male and 14.59 for female indicates high preference for or heaping on terminal digits 0 and 5, due to lack of knowledge of actual age, among other things. Digit preference is not a new phenomenon in Liberia's data.

Eligible age boundary effects

The reports of Liberia's five census from 1962 to 2022 results show that female age misreporting occurs more frequently at the boundaries of the lower and upper age cut-off for the respondents to the female questionnaire; this may lead to exclusion of some eligible women (aged 10-49 years) from responding to nuptiality questionnaire (Rutstein and Bicego 1990). Such errors can be discerned by examining the age ratios (for women) and the sex ratios for the age groups immediately above and below the eligible age boundaries.

There is a minimum transfer of eligible women to age groups at the upper and lower boundaries for 2022 census, with a relatively low age ratio at 10-19 and high ratio at 40-54. The age ratio for the age group 20-24 years seems to be high also. The sex ratios do seem to be unusually high at ages   compared ages 10-19 years but lower for age 20-24 years. The level of age misreporting may distort some of the results nuptiality indices as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Age ratios and sex ratios for upper and lower boundary age group

Age Ratios			Sex ratio
Age-group (Years)	**Males**	**Females**	
10-14	102.0	100.0	99.0
15-19	103.4	103.9	100.3
20-24	111.1	111.1	97.8
25-29	83.2	86.7	96.2
30-34	114.2	110.8	93.9
35-39	87.3	93.1	100.2
40-44	126.3	111.3	101.7
45-49	75.1	78.1	121.2
50-54	129.1	124.2	116.8

1.6 Definition of concepts

The following definitions are provided to guide readers in understanding some of the demographic concepts that are used in the report.

Marriage: This is considered as a legal union of persons of opposite sexes, with legality established by civil, religious and other means as recognized by laws of a given country (Shryock et al., 1976). Liberia subscribes to the definition as provided by Shryock et al. The meaning of marriage includes consensual union, common-law and other de facto unions which, although not registered, can make up the majority of marriages in some countries.

Early Marriage: According to the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights, child marriage, or early marriage, is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age.

Child Marriage: A child marriage is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent. Child marriage occurs to a population of 12-17 years old.

Forced Marriage: Forced marriages are marriages in which one and/or both parties have not personally expressed their full and free consent to the union.

Nuptiality: The frequency and characteristics of marriage in a population.

Frequency of marriage: This refers to how fast or slow marriages, separation, divorce and widowhood occur. Most marriages go through at least three distinct stages: 1) romantic love, 2) disillusionment and distraction, and 3) dissolution, adjustment with resignation, or adjustment with contentment (Larson, 2003). Stage 1 typically occurs prior to marriage and within the first several years after couples tie the knot[2].

Healthy marriage: Feelings of trust, caring and love, as well as physical affection, represent important dimensions of a healthy marriage. Commitment to children. For couples who have children, commitment to these children represents an important element of the healthy marriage concept[3].

Polygamy: A marriage pattern in which one man marries more than one woman at a time.

Monogamy: The practice of having only one spouse at a time. In some cases, monogamy means having only one spouse for an entire life span.

Divorce: The legal process in which a judge legally ends a marriage. The result leaves the status of the two individuals as single. A divorce does not declare a marriage null and void, as in an

2   https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Definition+for+the+freequency+of+marriages&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8
3   https://twogetherintexas.com/pdf/whatishealthymarriage.pdf

annulment, but instead states that the marriage was unsuccessful, for any of a variety of reasons, and declares the two individuals as single.

Cohabitation: Cohabiting means persons who, while not married, have lived as married persons for a period of not less than five years. Cohabitation is further defined as an arrangement where people who are not married, usually couples, live together. They are often involved in a romantic or sexually intimate relationship on a long-term or permanent basis.

Fertility: The actual birth performance of a population.

Singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM): The average length of single life expressed in years among those who marry before age 50.

1.7 Structure of the report

This report is divided into five chapters, with the initial chapter focusing on the background, the objectives, methods, sources and types of data collected. It also deals with data quality, definition of concepts and the structure of the report.

Chapter 2 looks at crude and general marital rates; currently married, separated and divorced and consensual marriage while Chapter 3 deals with the marital status of children, considering ever-married and never-married populations, emphasizing its impact on patterns of education and religious affiliation. Chapter 4 covered the computation of mean and SMAMs. Chapter 5 covered types of marriages and marital patterns, considering residence, ethnicity, religion, education, occupation and employment statuses of population. Finally, Chapter Six contains a summary, conclusion and policy implications and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Marital status of the population

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the marital status of the population, which includes but is limited to the type of marriages, crude marriage rates, general marriage and crude divorce rates. It discussed crude and general marriage rates by religion, education, ethnicity and urban and rural residence. The chapter reviewed the patterns of marriage in Liberia.

2.2 Types of marriages

The term marriage is globally considered as the legal union of persons of opposite sexes (Shryock et al., 1976). Marriage is the state of being united to a person as spouse in a legal, consensual, and contractual relationship recognized and sanctioned by and dissolved only by law[4]. The legality of marriage is established by civil, religious and other means as recognized by laws of a given country (Shryock et al., 1976). Liberia subscribes to the definition of Shryock et al., aside from the fact that there are several types of marriages in the world. However, the universally recognized ones by many countries of the world are types such as consensual union, common-law and other de facto unions. Even though some of these marriages are not registered in some countries, they constitute the majority of marriages in many countries.

Prior to the 2008 census, consensual marriage was not recorded as a form of marriage in other previous censuses such as the 1962, 1974 and 1984 censuses. Hence, Liberia only accepted four major types of marriages as follows: i) the western marriages that are conducted in religious places of worship or in civil registration offices; ii) the traditional marriages which are conducted in homes of parents of brides and groom; iii) the divorced are those whose marriages have been annulled legally in courts of law or traditionally; and iv) the separated which does not have clearance from courts or any input from traditional laws.

This means that Liberia did not consider consensual unions in its first three censuses perhaps because couples live together as husband and wife in such union without considering parental blessings, religious ceremony or civil /legal registration. Hence, Liberia's 2008 and 2022 censuses considered consensual union. Therefore, it is important to know that in spite of the large numbers of consensual marriages, they were not included in the classification of marriages in the 1974 and 1984 census reports of Liberia.

2.3 Crude marital rates

The initial estimates of nuptiality computation are crude marriage rates (CMRs); general marriage rates (GMRs) and crude divorce rates (CDRs). They give an idea of the overall marriage situation of a country or its region per 1,000 population. The results are considered crude because it is assumed that the entire population is at the risk of getting married.

Table 2.1 shows the CMRs per 1,000 population aged 12 years and older by sex and residence. The CMRs for males and females were 218 per 1,000 population and 236 per 1,000 population respectively, indicating higher female marriages than males. Similarly, the crude divorce (2.5 per 1,000) and GMRs (236 per 1,000) for females were also higher than that of males in 2022. The crude marriage, divorce and GMRs per 1,000 urban population were also lower than that of rural localities.

The CDR for Liberia is 227 per 1,000 population, indicating that 227 people were married out of every 1,000 population in Liberia. The distribution of crude rates (CMR, CDR and GMR) by sex showed that there are more female marriages, although the margin is not very wide. Similarly, the are more marriages in rural areas than in urban centers, accounting for 192 per 1,000 and 270 per 1,000 population respectively. This is an indication that marriages seem to be influenced by rural localities than more urbanized areas, and by females than males.

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4   https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=definition+of+marriage&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8

The county level analysis showed that River Cess, Grand Cape Mount and River Gee had the highest CMR, GMR and CDRs per 1,000 population. This is an indication that more marriages occurred in the three counties than the rest of Liberia. The counties with the second highest, CMR, CDR and GMR were Grand Bassa, Gbarpolu and Grand Gedeh, while lesser marriages took place in urban oriented counties such as Montserrado, Maryland and Margibi. This is an indication that more marriages occurred in less urbanized counties than in more urbanized ones.

Table 2.1 CMRs per 1,000 population aged 12 years and older by sex, residence and county

	Crude Marriage Rate (CMR)	General Marriage rate (GMR)	Crude Divorce rate (CDR)
Sex			
Male	218	365	1.7
Female	236	398	2.5
Both sexes	227	381	2.1
Residence			
Urban	192	314	1.5
Rural	270	467	2.8
County			
Bomi	258	447	3.8
Bong	235	406	2.6
Gbarpolu	266	446	3.8
Grand Bassa	278	487	4.1
Grand Cape Mount	300	476	5.3
Grand Gedeh	265	403	1.5
Grand Kru	259	430	0.7
Lofa	259	441	3.9
Margibi	205	349	1.8
Maryland	207	353	0.7
Montserrado	185	300	1.5
Nimba	241	448	1.7
River Cess	318	569	5.2
River Gee	286	473	1.3
Sinoe	256	420	0.8
Total	**227**	**381**	**2.1**

Table 2.2 shows the CMRs per 1,000 population aged 12 years and older by Ethnicity.

The CMR by ethnicity showed that Kpelle had the highest of 46.3 per 1,000, followed by Bassa and Grebo, with 31.3 and 22.4 marriages per 1,000 population in 2022. The lowest CMR of 1 per 1,000

each for non-Africans, Dey; and other Liberian ethnic groups. The rates of CDR per 1,000 population followed the trends of CMR in 2022, where Kpelle, Bassa and Grebo had the highest while non-Africans, Dey and other Liberian ethnic groups received the lowest CDR per 1,000 population. The GMR per 1,000 population was high for other Liberia Ethnic Groups (470), non-Africans (437), Mandingo (435) and Mende (427). The low of GMR per 1,000 population was experienced among other Africana Tribes (233), Dey (337), Belle (353) and Kru (336).

Table 2.2 CMRs per 1,000 population aged 12 years and older by ethnicity

	Crude Marriage Rate	General Marriage Rate	Crude Divorce Rate
Ethnicity			
Bassa	31	389	0.41
Belle	2	353	0.02
Dey	1	337	0.01
Gbandi	7	403	0.1
Gio	18	420	0.1
Gola	9	403	0.14
Grebo	22	376	0.11
Kpelle	45	376	0.46
Kissi	10	377	0.17
Krahn	11	378	0.07
Kru	11	336	0.07
Lorma	10	354	0.1
Mandingo	11	435	0.08
Mano	16	405	0.05
Mende	5	427	0.05
Sapo	2	368	0.01
Vai	9	395	0.11
Other Liberian Ethnic Groups	1	470	0.01
Other African Tribes	4	233	0.03
Non-Africans	1	437	0.00
Total	**227**	**381**	**2.12**

Table 2.3 shows the marriage rates by educational level and religion.

The distribution of crude rates by educational level revealed that the population without any level of education received the lowest rates of marriage per 1,000 population in 2022, followed by population with university and tertiary level of education. The highest marriage per 1,000 population was found among primary and secondary school levels. This is an indication that more marriages occurred among the population with a low level of education than those with higher educational achievement.

Analysing crude rates by religious affiliation showed that Christian had the highest percentage of

marriages per 1,000 population, 190 CMR per 1,000 population, 2 CDR per 1,000 population and 615 GMR per 1,000 population. This was followed by Muslims, with 33 CMR per 1,000 population; 0.3 CDR per 1,000 population and 561 CDR per 1,000 population in 2022, while people with no religious affiliation had the lowest crude rate. The census data showed that religion affiliation has an influence on crudes marriage rate. This was demonstrated by low CMRs per 1,000 population with no religious association or activities.

Table 2.3 Marriage rates by educational level and religion

	Crude Marriage Rate	General Marriage Rate	Crude Divorce Rate
Educational level			
None	2	292	0.01
Pre-school	7	293	0.06
Primary	39	295	0.29
Secondary school	68	335	0.42
University	18	547	0.20
Tertiary	1	561	0.01
Total	135	2324	0.99
Religious affiliation			
Christian	190	376	1.69
Muslim	33	460	0.36
Traditional African Religion	2	566	0.03
Other religion	0	440	0.00
No religion	2	142	0.03
Total	**227**	**381**	**2.12**

Table 2.4 shows the percentage level of national level marriages. The national level of marriages among adult population (15-54 years) is high and increases with age. The ever-married population increases with age while that of single population reduces with age. The adult marriageable single population aged 25-29 was 63.3 per cent, which later fell to 25.3 per cent by 50-54 years. The level of the ever-married population needs to decrease lower than the 2022 level, particularly for ages before 25-29 years to raise the SMAM. It is referred to as the age at which someone stays single after age 15 years.

Table 2.4 Percentage of national level marital status by age group

	Never Married	Ever married	Total	Proportion currently Married	Proportion Divorced/ Widow/widower	Number
Age group						
12 -14	98.2	1.8	100	1.5	0.1	400,867
15-19	93.5	6.5	100	6.1	0.2	638,463
20-24	79.1	20.9	100	20.0	0.4	599,536
25-29	63.3	36.7	100	35.1	0.6	440,934

	Never Married	Ever married	Total	Proportion currently Married	Proportion Divorced/ Widow/widower	Number
30-34	49.4	50.6	100	48.0	1.0	438,060
35-39	38.7	61.3	100	58.1	1.4	337,732
40-44	31.8	68.2	100	63.3	2.7	311,828
45-49	27.2	72.8	100	66.7	3.9	185,989
50-54	25.3	74.7	100	65.7	6.9	174,574
55-59	24.0	76.0	100	63.8	12.2	89,249
60-64	24.6	75.4	100	59.3	16.1	89,047
65-69	24.6	75.4	100	56.6	18.9	48,785
70-74	25.2	74.8	100	50.7	24.1	41,435
75-79	24.7	75.3	100	46.6	28.7	19,499
80+	40.6	59.4	100	34.4	25.0	37,878
Total	**61.5**	**38.5**	**100**	**34.8**	**3.6**	**3,853,876**

2.4 Marital status by residence

Table 2.5 shows the percentage of abridged marital status by urban and rural residence. The percentage of currently married population aged 12-14 years in urban centers was 1.4 per cent while that of rural areas was 1.8 per cent. This means that marriages that are below the age of 15 years and older are higher in rural than urban centers.

Similarly, the never-married population aged 12-14 years was also lower in urban areas than that of rural areas. The percentage of ever-married (currently married, widowed and divorced) was also 1.6 and 2.1 in urban and rural areas respectively. Most people in rural areas are subjected to marriages below age 15 than in urban centers. The low age at marriage could influence a long duration of 37 years in childbearing (12-49 years) instead of the normal 34 years (15-49).

Similarly, the differentials in the level of marriages aged 15-24 years in rural areas in 2022 was high - with 19.1 per cent for ever-married in rural areas and 9.8 per cent in urban centers. Also, the currently married population was 9.5 per cent in urban locality, which doubled to 18.0 per cent in rural areas for 15-24 years. Due to the high rate of early marriages in Liberia, the never-married population fell faster in rural than urban areas. The population is single in rural areas. The divorced/widowed population among adolescents was in rural than urban areas.

Table 2.5 Percentage of abridged marital status by urban and rural residence

Age group	Never Married	Ever Married	Total	Proportion Currently Married	Divorced/ Widow/ Widower	Number	Never Married	Ever Married	Total	Proportion Currently Married	Divorced/ Widow/ Widower	Number
12-14	98.4	1.6	100	1.4	0.1	229,167	97.9	2.1	100	1.8	0.1	171,700
15-19	95.8	4.2	100	4.0	0.1	371,512	90.4	9.6	100	9.0	0.2	266,951
20-24	84.6	15.4	100	14.9	0.2	346,078	71.5	28.5	100	26.9	0.6	253,458
25-29	70.9	29.1	100	28.2	0.4	260,406	52.5	47.5	100	45.0	0.8	180,528
30-34	57.1	42.9	100	41.2	0.7	246,439	39.4	60.6	100	56.7	1.4	191,621
35-39	46.3	53.7	100	51.5	1.1	184,696	29.5	70.5	100	66.2	1.8	153,036

Age group	Never Married	Ever Married	Total	Proportion Currently Married	Divorced/ Widow/ Widower	Number	Never Married	Ever Married	Total	Proportion Currently Married	Divorced/ Widow/ Widower	Number
40-44	38.8	61.2	100	57.5	2.2	159,318	24.5	75.5	100	69.5	3.1	152,510
45-49	33.8	66.2	100	60.8	3.7	94,609	20.4	79.6	100	72.7	4.1	91,380
50-54	31.3	68.7	100	60.3	6.7	85,007	19.6	80.4	100	70.7	7.0	89,567
55-59	28.9	71.1	100	59.1	12.0	45,767	18.9	81.1	100	68.7	12.4	43,482
60-64	29.2	70.8	100	55.1	15.7	42,240	20.5	79.5	100	63.0	16.5	46,807
65-69	29.0	71.0	100	52.5	18.5	23,881	20.4	79.6	100	60.4	19.2	24,904
70-74	30.7	69.3	100	45.4	23.8	18,296	20.9	79.1	100	54.8	24.3	23,139
75-79	29.9	70.1	100	42.4	27.8	8,367	20.9	79.1	100	49.8	29.4	11,132
80+	47.5	52.5	100	29.8	22.7	15,450	35.9	64.1	100	37.5	26.6	22,428
Total	**68.2**	**31.8**	**100**	**29.0**	**2.7**	**32,131,233**	**53.3**	**46.7**	**100**	**42.0**	**4.7**	**1,722,643**

2.5 Marriage patterns

Table 2.6 shows the never-married population age 10 and older by age, sex and residence, 2008-2022. The proportion of population never married aged 10 years and above increased by 39 per cent from 2008 to 2022, and by 21 per cent between 1962 and 2008 censuses. The proportion of population never married increased from 29 per cent in 1962 to 38 per cent in 1974; and from 43 per cent in 1984 to 50 per cent in 2008.

Similarly, the proportion of population never married for males was 63.0 in 2022 while that of females was 60.1. In 2008 the proportion of single males was also higher than that of females, with 54.2 per cent, compared to 45 per cent for females. Further analysis by place of residence revealed 42.9 per cent were never married in rural areas compared to 56.7 per cent in the urban areas. The figure further indicated that in the rural areas, the proportion of the population never married for males was 48.5 per cent compared to 37.1 per cent for females. The 2022 census data showed that 55.9 per cent of rural males never married while that of females was 50.4 per cent. Similarly, 68.9 per cent of urban males never married, with 67.5 for urban females. In 2008, the urban single rates were 60.4 and 53 per cent for males and females respectively.

The difference in the never-married population in rural and urban areas could be due to disparities and uneven distributions of educational facilities and social development opportunities in these areas. The distributions of access to formal and informal manpower training to improve health and ducational services and social development opportunities are skewed in favor of urban areas. This situation could have implications for the low proportion of never-married observed in rural areas. The high ever-married population in rural than urban areas could also be largely attributed to the inadequacy of educational facilities, and low social development opportunities which could induce the population in rural area into early marriages[5]. Moreover, the difference between males and females, and between urban and rural, could also be associated with the level of gender inequality infavor of males and urban areas, particularly in terms of variuous social and economic services and opportunities[6].

The differentials in sex and residence of the population indicated that the proportion of the never-married population decreased progressively by age and sex. Hence, at advanced ages, most of the population is married. However, in early ages, females marry earlier than males while rural population contributes the highest proportion of earlier marriages than urban population.

5   https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR22/02Chapter02.pdf
6   https://api.scoreforpeace.org/storage/pdfs/PUB_Liberia20_A5_Report-Livelihood_FINAL_20210806-compressed.pdf

Table 2.6 Never-married population age 10 and older by age, sex and residence, 2008-2022

Age	Both sexes		Urban		Rural		Male		Female	
	2008	2022	2008	2022	2008	2022	2008	2022	2008	2022
12-14	93	98	94	98	93	98	90	98	96	98
15-19	85	94	88	96	83	90	91	97	80	91
20-24	60	79	68	85	51	72	75	86	47	73
25-29	39	63	49	71	29	53	50	69	28	58
30-34	25	49	33	57	17	39	32	53	19	46
35-39	17	39	23	46	11	30	20	40	13	37
40-44	13	32	19	39	8	25	15	32	11	32
45-49	11	27	16	34	7	20	12	26	10	29
50-54	10	25	15	31	7	20	11	23	10	28
55-59	10	24	14	29	7	19	10	21	10	28
60-64	10	25	15	29	7	21	10	21	10	28
65-69	10	25	15	29	8	20	9	21	11	29
70 +	11	36	15	36	9	26	10	27	12	34
Total	**45**	**61**	**63**	**68**	**37**	**53**	**53**	**63**	**44**	**60**

Table 2.7 shows the percentage of county level marital status by urban and rural residence.

The county level analysis of the never-married population showed that the highest proportion of marriages was found in River Cess, Grans Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and River Gee County. The highest rates of population not married were found in Montserrado, Margibi and Maryland counties.

Table 2.7 Percentage of county level marital status by urban and rural residence

County	Single	Ever Married Population	Total	Proportion Currently Married	Proportion Divorced/ Widowed	Frequency
Bomi	53.7	46.3	100	40.8	4.2	97,247
Bong	58.4	41.6	100	37.3	3.2	339,049
Grand Bassa	51.4	48.6	100	43.4	3.3	210,921
Grand Cape Mount	51.4	48.6	100	43.5	3.1	135,524
Grand Gedeh	59.9	40.1	100	36.7	1.5	170,205
Grand Kru	58.1	41.9	100	37.9	1.9	80,658
Lofa	55.3	44.7	100	38.8	3.6	265,322
Margibi	64.8	35.2	100	32.1	2.2	223,815
Maryland	64.7	35.3	100	31.9	2.2	126,318

County	Single	Ever Married Population	Total	Proportion Currently Married	Proportion Divorced/ Widowed	Frequency
Montserrado	69.3	30.7	100	28.1	2.0	1,438,968
Nimba	56.0	44.0	100	40.1	2.6	426,121
River Cess	44.5	55.5	100	49.9	3.7	63,645
Sinoe	59.5	40.5	100	37.6	1.3	112,211
River Gee	53.9	46.1	100	42.2	2.2	93,162
Gbarpolu	55.1	44.9	100	41.1	2.8	70,710
Total	**61.5**	**38.5**	**100**	**34.8**	**2.5**	**3,853,876**

The percentage differentials of never and ever matried population shows that a little of third (32 per cent) of Liberia's population has ever gotten married. The ever-married population includes currently, divorced, widow, separated and consesual marriage. The differentials by residence showed that the population urban areas have more marriages than rural localities. Similar analysis by sex revealed that females' (40 per cent) marriages were higher than those of males (37 per cent) in 2022 (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Percentage of population never married by sex and residence, 2022
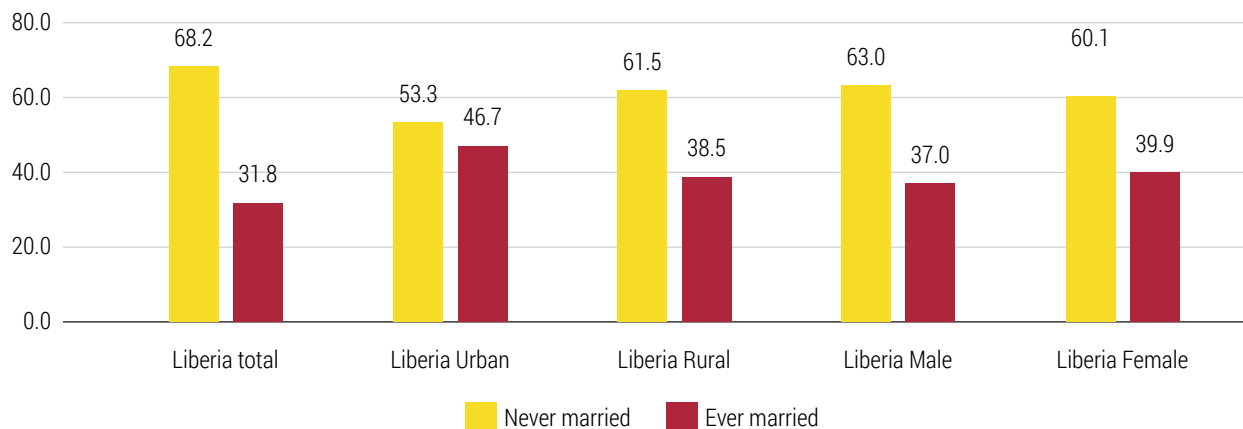
2.6 Education and never married

Table 2.8 shows that people with preschool education level had the highest never-married percentage (79.2 per cent), followed by persons with no education (75.1 per cent) and elementary (74.9 per cent. However, the proportion never married decreased from 63.8 per cent at the secondary level to 37.6 per cent for other tertiary level. The proportions with monogamous marriage contributed the highest percentage among the ever-married population, from no education level to university and other tertiary levels as shown in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8 Marital status of population aged 12 years and older by education level

	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number
None	75.1	19.2	1.8	0.6	0.2	1.1	1.9	100.0	43,806
Preschool	79.2	15.8	1.0	0.6	0.2	0.7	2.5	100.0	200,615
Primary	74.9	19.6	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.6	2.6	100.0	939,892
Secondary	63.8	29.4	1.7	1.0	0.3	0.8	3.0	100.0	1,147,594
University	40.3	50.8	2.8	1.3	0.7	1.7	2.4	100.0	204,875
Other tertiary	37.6	50.6	3.4	1.2	0.7	2.7	3.8	100.0	10,885
Total	**67.3**	**26.3**	**1.6**	**0.9**	**0.3**	**0.8**	**2.8**	**100.0**	**2,547,667**

Table 2.9 shows the percentage of never-married and ever-married people by religion. The analysis of the never-married population by religion indicates that no religious affiliation (85.4 per cent); and the Christian religion (62.1 per cent) accounted for the highest and second highest percentages respectively. Moreover, traditional African Religion and Muslims made up the highest percentage of monogamous marriage, constituting 42 per cent and 37.1 per cent respectively. The overall data revealed that religion leads to a little over two thirds of the single population (61.5 per cent) and a third of monogamous, polygamous and other forms of ever-married population in Liberia as indicated in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9 Marital status of population aged 12 years and older by religious affiliation

	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number
None	75.1	19.2	1.8	0.6	0.2	1.1	1.9	100.0	43,806
Preschool	79.2	15.8	1.0	0.6	0.2	0.7	2.5	100.0	200,615
Primary	74.9	19.6	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.6	2.6	100.0	939,892
Secondary	63.8	29.4	1.7	1.0	0.3	0.8	3.0	100.0	1,147,594
University	40.3	50.8	2.8	1.3	0.7	1.7	2.4	100.0	204,875
Other tertiary	37.6	50.6	3.4	1.2	0.7	2.7	3.8	100.0	10,885
Total	**67.3**	**26.3**	**1.6**	**0.9**	**0.3**	**0.8**	**2.8**	**100.0**	**2,547,667**

Chapter 3: Status of child marriage

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the proportion of never and ever-married populations in Liberia. It discusses the relationship of child marriage to age, urban and rural residence education and religion. The chapter also looked the mean age at child marriage in Liberia.

3.2 The never-married and ever-married statuses of children

The population between 12-17 years in 2022 made up 20.2 per cent of Liberia's population that is 12-54years, while the percentage of the country's population that was currently married at age 12-17 years was 2.5 per cent. Under Liberian and international classification, the age range of 12-17 years constitutes child marriage. The census revealed that 97.2 per cent of children 12-17 years were never married while ever-married made up 2.8 per cent of married children. The analysis by sex showed that the percentage of ever-married female children aged 12-14 years was 1.9 per cent while that of males was 1.7 per cent. The percentage of currently married male children aged 15-17 years was 1.8 per cent, which nearly doubled for females at 3.3 per cent.

Similarly, the percentage of males (98.0 per cent) never married (12-17 years) at the national level in 2022 was higher than that of females (96.4 per cent), accounting for a percentage difference of 1.8. The high child marriage percentage of females over male could be one of the factors that affect the educational level of females and seems to be reflected in the challenges that females experience in competing with males in terms of education, employment, occupation and other services.

A comparison of child marriage data using the entry age group of 12-14 showed that the never-married population grew from 93.2 per cent in 2008 to 98.2 per cent in 2022, accumulating a 5 per cent growth for the intercensal period. On the contrary, child monogamous marriages dropped by 82 per cent; polygamous marriage fell by 83 and consensual unions fell by 12 per cent from 2008 to 2022 respectively. Child monogamous means a child that has one husband or wife. The data on child monogamous marriage is shown in Figure 3.1.

The high level of child marriages has implications for pregnancy complications, low level of education and lack of scales for children and adolescents. The low ages at marriage could also mean that they have a long period (12-49 years) of childbearing for both males and females

Figure 3.1 Percentage of major selected marriages from 2008-2022
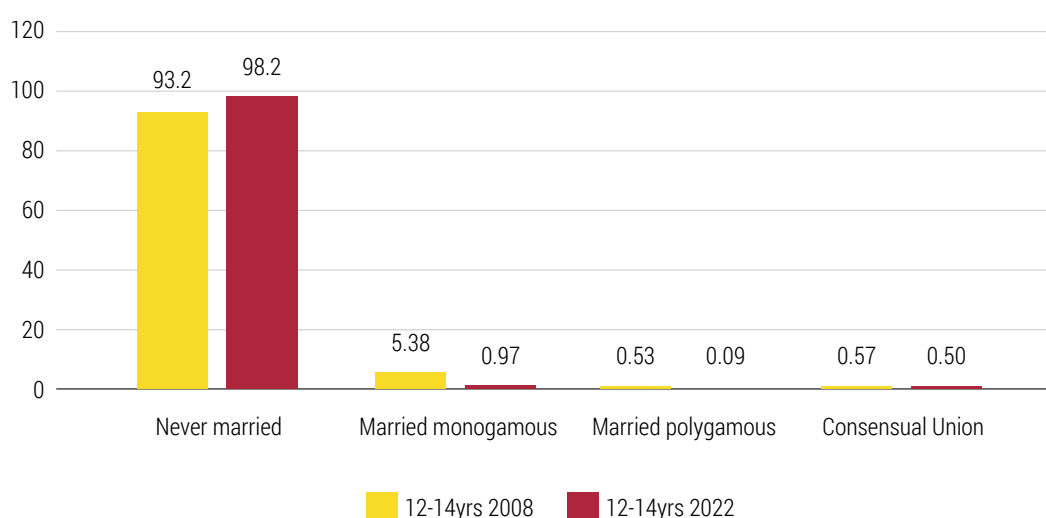
Table 3.1 shows the percentage of marital status of children by age, sex and residence. Moreover, rural percentage of child marriage was slightly higher than that of urban areas perhaps due to the early pattern of marriage in rural areas. Age distribution showed that the percentage of urban never-married

children was 98.4 for ages 12-14 years while that of rural was 97.9. The data further showed that the percentage of never-married for older children (15-17 years) was 97.4 in urban areas while that of rural was 94.3. A similar pattern was realized in the total population, where the number of ever-married children in rural areas was higher than those in urban centers, accounting for 3.8 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively. The ever-married population, including those who were currently married was higher for females than males; and for rural than urban.

Table 3.1 Percentage of marital status of children by age, sex and residence

Sex / residence	Never Married	Ever married	Currently married	Never Married	Ever married	Currently married	Never Married	Ever married	Currently married
Sex	**Male**			**Female**			**Both sexes**		
12-14 years	98.3	1.7	1.5	98.1	1.9	1.6	98.2	1.8	1.6
15-17 years	97.7	2.3	2.1	94.5	5.5	5.0	96.1	3.9	3.6
Total	98.0	2.0	1.8	96.4	3.6	3.3	97.2	2.8	2.5
Residence	**Urban**			**Rural**			**Total**		
12-14 years	98.4	1.6	1.3	97.9	2.1	1.9	98.2	1.8	1.6
15-17 years	97.4	2.6	2.4	94.3	5.7	5.3	96.1	3.9	3.6
Total years	**97.9**	**2.1**	**1.9**	**96.2**	**3.8**	**3.5**	**97.2**	**2.8**	**2.5**

Figure 3.2 Level of ever-married and currently married for children, 2022 NPHC
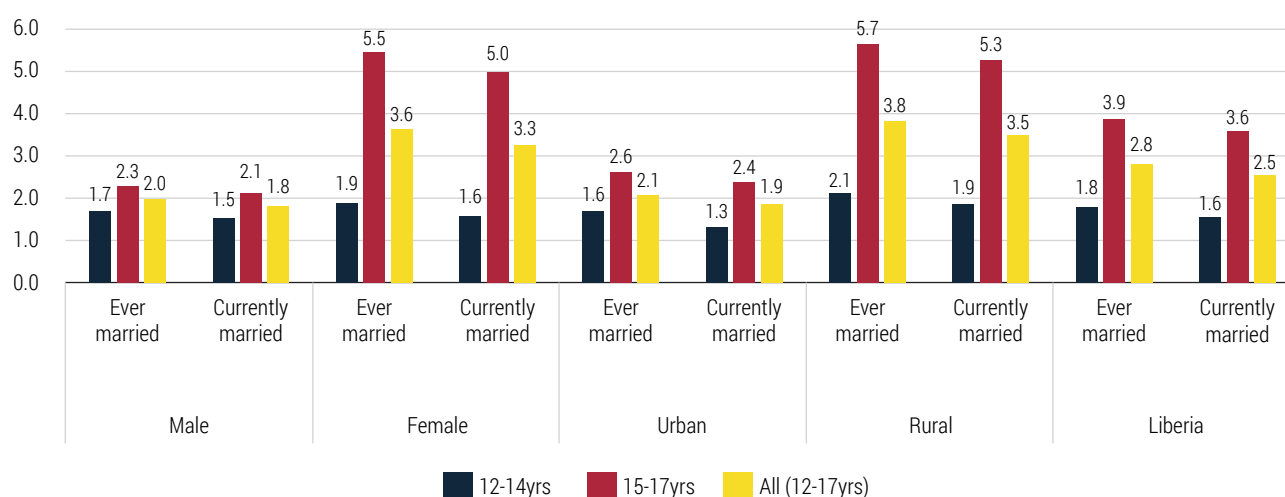
The highest educational level interviewed for child marriage was secondary school level. Hence, there were no responses for university and tertiary levels. The marital status of children by age and education level showed that older never-married children were more than the younger ones for all levels of education except for primary students. The data further indicated that children with no education level had the highest marriage rates than those with some levels of education. The distribution of children population revealed that the highest percentage of ever-married was found among children with no level of education, followed by primary and secondary levels. The highest percentage of currently married children aged 12-14 years was 2.0; and it was 6.0 for children who have not acquired any educational level. The level of child marriage could have serious implications for the educational level of children (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Percentage of marital status of children by age and education level

Age (years)	Never married	Ever married	Currently married
None (No education level completed)			
12-14	97.3	2.7	2.0
15-17	93.0	7.0	6.0
Total	95.3	4.7	3.9
Preschool level			
12-14	98.6	1.4	1.3
15-17	96.7	3.3	3.1
Total	98.0	2.0	1.9
Primary			
12-14	98.5	1.5	1.4
15-17	98.5	1.5	1.4
Total	97.0	3.0	2.9
Secondary			
12-14	97.4	2.6	2.3
15-17	97.0	3.0	2.9
Total	97.1	2.9	2.8
Total			
12-14	97.4	2.6	2.3
15-17	97.0	3.0	2.9
Total	97.1	2.9	2.8

The highest overall never-married population was found with population that has no religion, followed by Christian and Muslims, accounting 98.2 per cent, 97.3 per cent and 96.1 per cent respectively. The never-married rates for 12-14 years and 15-17 years followed same trend where population that has no religious affiliation had the highest rates, with 99.1 for no religion, 98.3 per cent for Christians, and 97.4 per cent for Muslims. Persons worshipping with traditional African religion accounted for the highest percentage of currently married population (5.5 per cent), followed by 4.3 per cent for other African religions, and 3.5 per cent for the Muslim region.

The analysis by religion also showed that children of traditional African religion experienced the highest ever-married of 7.2 per cent; other African religions; 5.2 per cent, and Muslims, 3.9 per cent.

The age analysis revealed that older children had the highest ever-married population across all religious affiliations except for Traditional African Religions and overall rates for two age groups, with 9.9 per cent and 3.6 per cent respectively. Similarly, the trend of currently married children by age revealed similar like that of ever-married, with older children receiving the highest per cent except for Tradition African and the total rates of 12-14 years and 15-17 years respectively. The overall ever-married and current married rates for children aged 12-17 years were 2.8 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively. The pattern of children marriage has been influenced by religious affiliation and age, with traditional African, Christian and Muslim religious dominating while age 15-17 years is also impacting on the situation as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Percentage of marital status of children by age and religion

Age (years)	Never married	Ever married	Currently married
Christian			
12-14	98.3	1.7	1.5
15-17	96.3	3.7	3.5
Total	97.3	2.7	2.4
Muslim			
12-14	97.4	2.6	2.3
15-17	94.8	5.2	4.7
Total	96.1	3.9	3.5
Traditional African Religion			
12-14	90.1	9.9	7.8
15-17	90.1	9.9	7.8
Total	92.8	7.2	5.5
Other African Religion			
12-14	96.5	3.5	3.5
15-17	93.3	6.7	5.0
Total	94.8	5.2	4.3
No Religion			
12-14	99.1	0.9	0.7
15-17	97.1	2.9	2.7
Total	98.2	1.8	1.6
Total (all religious affiliations)			
12-14	96.1	3.9	3.6
15-17	96.1	3.9	3.6
Total	97.2	2.8	2.5

3.3 Mean age at child marriage

The overall assessment by age showed that most of the of child marriages occurred at 15 years, especially for ever-married, divorced and the total population, with an average age of 14 years each. There was no difference between male and female children in terms of mean age at marriage. In urban Liberia, the mean at child marriage was predominantly 15 years except for divorce that was 14 years and the total population that amounted to 14 years. But in rural areas, the mean age of a child getting marred was slightly higher than in urban areas. For example, the mean age of a child been single in urban centers was 15years while that of rural was 14 years.

At the county level, it was found that Lofa had the highest mean age at child marriage of 15 years for marital statuses, followed by Bong County. The mean age of those who were single was 14 years for the 15 counties of Liberia, except Lofa. Similarly, the highest mean age at child polygamous marriage of

16 years was found in Grand Kru and Margibi while that of monogamous marriage was in River Cess County. The mean at child divorce was 16 years and found in Grand Gedeh and Grand Kru Counties, respectively. The highest mean age at marriage for those engaged in consensual union was 16 years and found in Bomi. Although the mean age of child marriage was predominantly 15 years, the impact of such early marriage could reduce potential of children to learn and contribute to national development. The analysis of child marriage demonstrated that the sex of a child, residence and county of origin impacted on the age at child marriage. Table 3.4 showed the detailed analysis of the mean age for child marriage by sex, residence and county

Table 3.4 Child mean age at marriage by marital status, sex, residence and county

Sex/residence/county	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/widower	Consensual Union	Total
Sex								
Male	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Female	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Both sexes	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Residence								
Urban	15	15	15	15	14	15	15	15
Rural	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	14
Total	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
County								
Bomi	14	15	15	16	15	15	16	14
Bong	14	14	15	15	15	14	15	15
Gbarpolu	14	15	15	15	15	14	15	14
Grand Bassa	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Grand Cape Mount	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Grand Gedeh	14	15	15	15	16	14	15	14
Grand Kru	14	15	16	15	16	14	15	14
Lofa	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Margibi	14	15	16	14	15	14	15	14
Maryland	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	14
Montserrado	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Nimba	14	15	15	14	14	15	15	14
River Cess	14	16	15	15	15	15	16	14
Sinoe	14	15	15	14	15	15	15	14
Total	**14**	**15**	**15**	**15**	**14**	**15**	**15**	**14**

The analysis of child marriage by ethnicity indicated that the overall mean age at child marriage was 14 years, although was an isolated lowest of 13 years for divorce by Liberian ethnic groups. The highest mean age for all of the marital characteristics was 16 years. The mean age of child being single, and for all marital statuses in 2022 was 14 years for all of the 16 ethnic groups except Dey. The highest mean age at child marriage for all of the characteristics was found in Dey, with 16 years each for polygamous marriage, separation, divorce and consensual marriages. The Dey are Christian dominated people.

The second highest mean age was found among the Gbandi that are predominantly Muslim. The Gola ethnic group fell in the third position of high mean age for child marriage. The tribes with the mean age of 14 years for child marriage for all marital statuses were the Kpelle, Kissi, Krahn, Lorma, Mandingo and Mende. The Kru ethnic group had the lowest mean age at marriage of 13 years for divorce. The mean age at child marriage for all of the marital statuses was 14 years, including the total population of children that were subjected to child marriage in 2022. The analysis revealed that ethnicity has strong influence on child marriage as shown by the differentials in mean age at marriage in Liberia.

Table 3.5 Child mean age at marriage by marital status and ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total
Bassa	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Belle	14	15	16	15	14	15	14	14
Dey	15	15	16	16	16	15	16	15
Gbandi	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Gio	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Gola	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	14
Grebo	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Kpelle	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Kissi	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Krahn	14	14	14	14	15	14	14	14
Kru	14	14	14	14	13	14	14	14
Lorma	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Mandingo	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Mano	14	14	14	14	14	15	14	14
Mende	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Sapo	14	14	14	15	0	14	15	14
Vai	14	14	14	15	14	14	14	14
Other Liberian Ethnic Groups	14	14	14	15	13	0	14	14
Other African Tribes	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Non-Africans	14	14	14	14	14	0	15	14
Total	**14**	**14**	**14**	**14**	**14**	**14**	**14**	**14**

The religious analysis of child marriage showed differentials in child marriage by type of religion. The highest mean age was 16 years for all marital statuses while the lowest was 14 years. The 2022 census data showed that the mean age at child marriage of 16 years for traditional Africans Religion was the highest, followed by Muslim and Christian. Similarly, monogamous, polygamous, separation,

widowhood and the highest mean age of 15 years while the lowest was of 14 years was associated with children that never got married or divorced. The overall population of religious child marriages had a mean age of 14 years. The results of the census showed that religious activities and beliefs influence child marriage in Liberia as indicated in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Child mean age at marriage by marital status and religion

	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total
Christian	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Muslim	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	14
Traditional African Religion	15	15	15	15	14	15	16	15
Other religions	15	16	16	13	0	16	15	15
No religion	14	15	16	14	13	15	15	14
Total	**14**	**15**	**15**	**15**	**14**	**15**	**15**	**14**

The overall child mean age at marriage by educational level was 14 years. The average age at marriage was also 14 years each for never-married and divorced. The highest mean age at marriage was 15 years,

covering monogamy, polygamy, divorce and marriage by consensus. The average ages at which child marriage was the same for all levels of educational attainment is indicated in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Child mean age at marriage by marital status and education

	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total
None	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Preschool	14	15	15	14	14	15	15	14
Primary	14	15	15	15	14	15	15	14
Secondary	14	15	15	14	14	15	15	14
University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other tertiary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Chapter 4: Mean and singulate mean ages at marriage

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the percentage distribution of population aged 12 years and above by marital status. It also computes the mean and SMAM for all marriageable population. The measure of central tendency and percentages help policymakers to understand how age and other social-economic characteristics influence marital status of population. The mean age at marriage determines the average age at which population enters into marriage or its dissolution. Hence, the section focuses on the percentages, mean age at marriage (MAM) and percentages for the population aged 12 years and above by sex, residence, county, ethnicity, education and religious affiliation in the 2022 census.

4.2 Marriageable population

The marriageable population 10 years and above has been increasing since the 1974 NPHC. In 2022, nearly two fifths (38 per cent) of the 3,853,876 marriageable population were ever married (currently married, widowed and divorced). This situation was different in the last three censuses (2008, 2984 and 1974) in Liberia, where the ever-married population increased consistently. Currently married population was also had grew from 49 per cent in 1974 to 50 per cent in 1984, and consistently dropped to 35 per cent in 2022 as shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Trends of never-married, ever-married and currently married, 1974, 1984, 2008 and 2022
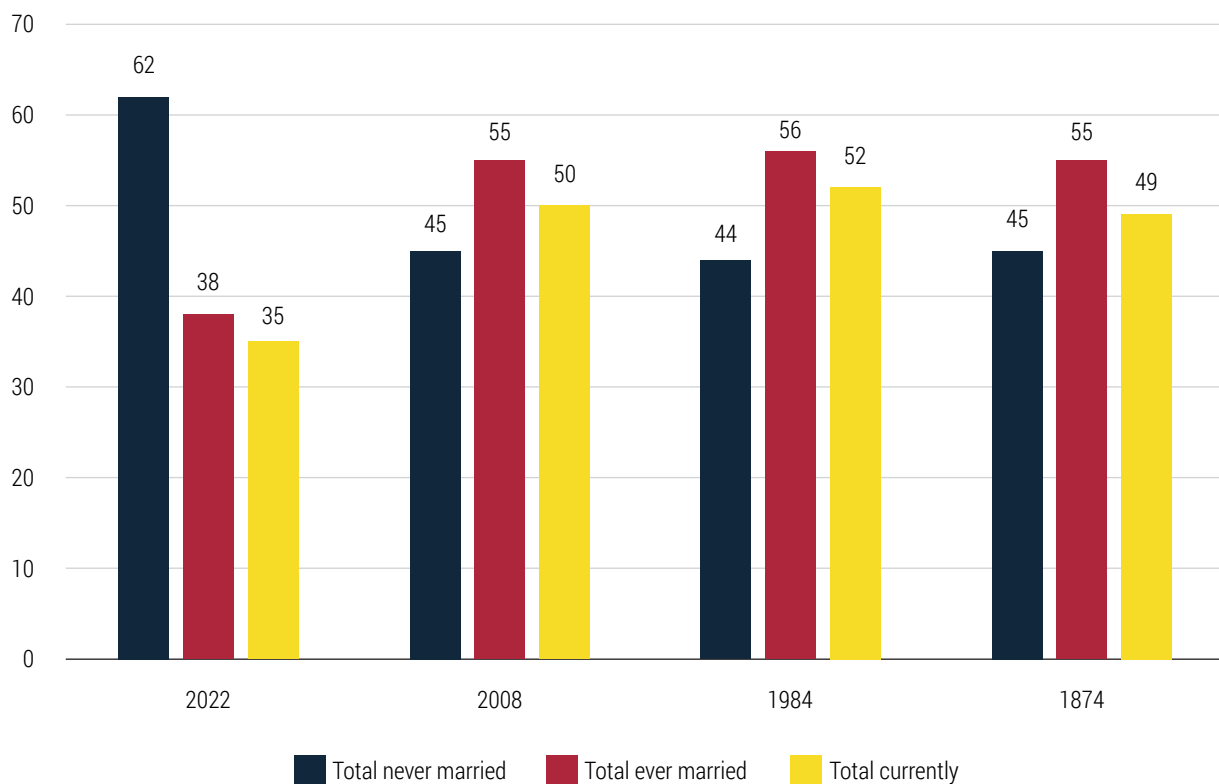
The percentage distribution of population aged 12 years and above by county showed that counties with the small urban areas contributed highest percentage of ever marriage population. This situation affected River Cess (55.5 per cent); followed by Grand Bassa and Grand Cape Mount with 48.6 per cent each; and River Gee (46.3 per cent) and Bomi (46.1percent). This is different for counties with high urban populations and consequently contributed to the lower proportions of ever-married populations. These counties include but are not limited to Montserrado, Margibi and Maryland experienced low ever marriage population of 30.7 per cent, 35.2 per cent, and 35.3 per cent respectively. Table 4.1 shows the ever-married status for population by county.

Table 4.1 Percentage of never-married and ever-married population in 2022 by county

County	Never married	Ever married	Total	Number
Bomi	53.7	46.3	100	97,247
Bong	58.4	41.6	100	339,049
Grand Bassa	51.4	48.6	100	210,921
Grand Cape Mount	51.4	48.6	100	135,524
Grand Gedeh	59.9	40.1	100	170,205
Grand Kru	58.1	41.9	100	80,658
Lofa	55.3	44.7	100	265,322
Margibi	64.8	35.2	100	223,815
Maryland	64.7	35.3	100	126,318
Montserrado	69.3	30.7	100	1,438,968
Nimba	56.0	44.0	100	426,121
River Cess	44.5	55.5	100	63,645
Sinoe	59.5	40.5	100	112,211
River Gee	53.9	46.1	100	93,162
Gbarpolu	55.1	44.9	100	70,710
Total	**61.5**	**38.5**	**100**	**3,853,876**

The 2022 census data revealed that education level influenced the marital status of the population. For example, the population aged 12 years and above that had completed preschool level received the highest proportion of never-married (79.2 per cent), followed by people with no education level (75.1 per cent). The lowest percentage of never-married was observed at other tertiary level (37.6 per cent) and population that completed university education. The data further revealed that over three-fifth (62.4) of the respondents who completed other tertiary education were ever married (currently married, widowed and divorced). This was followed by university level, with 59.7 per cent of the ever-married population. The is an indication that education influences both the never-married and ever-married populations as mentioned in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Percentage of never-married and ever-married population by education level

Education level	Never married	Ever married	Total	Number
None	75.1	24.9	100	43,806
Preschool	79.2	20.8	100	200,615
Primary	74.9	25.1	100	939,892
Secondary	63.8	36.2	100	1,147,594
University	40.3	59.7	100	204,875
Other tertiary	37.6	62.4	100	10,885
Total	**67.3**	**32.7**	**100**	**2,547,667**

The marital status of population age 12 years and above by religious affiliation showed that population with religious affiliation received the highest percentage of marital status, with Christian and Muslims accounting for the first and second highest marital statuses of 91 per cent and 6 per cent accordingly. This is an indication that population associated with western oriented religions culture had the high proportion of marital status while those that are affiliated with other forms of religion, including traditional African worshippers received the lowest never and ever-married percentages. For example, other religions and those of traditional Africans accounted for 0.2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively as mentioned in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Marital status of population by religious affiliation

Type of religion	Never married	Ever married	Total	Number
Christian	62.1	37.9	100	3,276,696
Muslim	53.7	46.3	100	458,811
Traditional African Religion	36.3	63.7	100	21,947
Other religion	53.1	46.9	100	2,963
No religion	85.4	14.6	100	93,459
Total	**61.5**	**38.5**	**100**	**3,853,876**

Further description of the marital status of population by ethnicity showed that other Liberian ethnic groups and had (46.7 per cent) Mende (42.9 per cent) and Mandingo (42.3 per cent) had the highest ever-married population. The census data also showed that other African tribes in Liberia had the highest never-married population (77.9 per cent), followed by Kru and Belle, with 65.9 per cent and 64.3 per cent respectively. The overall rate of ever-married population was 38.5 per cent of the marriageable population 12 years and older in 2022 as indicated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Percentage of never-married and ever-married population by ethnicity

County	Never married	Ever married	Total	Number
Bassa	60.5	39.5	100	523,188
Belle	64.3	35.7	100	27,971
Dey	63.8	36.2	100	12,817
Gbandi	59.1	40.9	100	113,119
Gio	58.7	41.3	100	286,028
Gola	58.3	41.7	100	149,422
Grebo	62.2	37.8	100	386,379
Kpelle	61.8	38.2	100	779,691
Kissi	60.9	39.1	100	167,833
Krahn	62.1	37.9	100	184,849
Kru	65.9	34.1	100	216,519
Lorma	63.8	36.2	100	190,677
Mandingo	57.6	42.4	100	154,912
Mano	59.8	40.2	100	265,641
Mende	57.1	42.9	100	65,264
Sapo	62.7	37.3	100	41,934
Vai	59.4	40.6	100	148,622
Other Liberian ethnic group	53.3	46.7	100	16,124
Other African tribe	77.9	22.1	100	115,518
Non African	56.9	43.1	100	7,368
Total	**61.5**	**38.5**	**100**	**3,853,876**

4.3 Mean age at marriage of population

Table 4.5 shows the MAM by sex, residence, education and religious affiliation. The overall MAM for both sexes was 40 years in 2022. The MAM for male was 41 years while of female was 39 years. The differential in MAM is due to the early marriages that are associated with females as compared with males. Although the differences in MAM for males and females are not huge, they demonstrate that females married earlier than males. The urban-rural analysis of MAM presents close ages, 40 years and 39 years for urban and rural, respectively. The results also showed that urban population married much later than rural residents. Table 4.5 shows that distribution of MAM by sex and residence.

The MAM at the county level revealed that the population in Grand Kru and Margibi and Montserrado married much older than the rest of the remaining 13 counties, 48 years and 43 years each for Margibi and Montserrado counties. The counties whose population had the second highest MAM were Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Maryland, Nimba, River Gee and Sinoe, with 40 years each; while Boing County had the lowest MAM. The high MAM in Grand Kru, Margibi and Montserrado counties may be due to out and in migration level for Grand Kru on the one hand, and Margibi and Montserrado on the other hand.

Table 4.5 MAM by sex, residence, education and religious affiliation

Variables	MAM	Variables	MAM
Sex		River Cess	38
Male	41	River Gee	40
Female	39	Sinoe	40
Residence		**Educational level**	
Urban	40	None	39
Rural	39	Pre-School	39
County		Primary	40
Bomi	39	Secondary	40
Bong	33	University	42
Gbarpolu	39	Other Tertiary	42
Grand Bassa	40	Liberia	40
Grand Cape Mount	39	**Religious affiliation**	
Grand Gedeh	40	Christian	40
Grand Kru County	48	Muslim	39
Lofa	40	Traditional African Religion	38
Margibi	43	Other Religion	39
Maryland	40	No Religion	38
Montserrado	43	**Total**	**40**
Nimba	40		

The 2022 census data showed that the nearly half of the ethnic groups: Dey, Gbandi, Gio, Gola, Grebo, Kpelle, Kissi, Kru, Krahn, Lorma and Sapo married at age 40 years while the Bassa, Mano and other African tribes married much earlier at age 38 years.

Although the MAM for each ethnic group is over 37 years, the age at marriage is an important element in determining the educational, occupational and employment status of the population. The differential in MAM by ethnicity is indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 MAM by ethnicity

Variables	MAM	Variables	MAM
Ethnicity		Kru	40
Bassa	38	Lorma	40
Belle	40	Mandingo	39
Dey	40	Mano	38
Gbandi	39	Mende	39
Gio	40	Sapo	40
Gola	40	Vai	40
Grebo	40	Other Liberian Ethnic Group	39
Kpelle	40	Other African Tribe	38
Kissi	40	Non African	39
Krahn	40	**Total**	**40**

4.4 Singulate mean age at marriage of population

Singulate men age at marriage is an important element of population census because it helps policymakers to understand the impact of population marrying in early or late age. It is considered as an indicator that monitors not only the frequency of marriage but the time that a population remains single. The time of remaining single has implications for the time spent in formal school or other capacity-building institutions. Although the recognized age for the computation of childbearing is 15 years, some women bearing children before for immediately after age 15.

Studies have shown a huge prevalence rate of marriage among girls under 18, 36 per cent marrying before their 18th birthday, and 9 per cent before the age of 15. Additionally, 5 per cent per cent of boys in Liberia are married before reaching the age of 18[7]. The level of low age at marriage is associated with child brides that put mothers at bigger risk of contracting HIV/AIDS than older women. Children marrying before age 18 also hinder progress toward gender equality; and affects Liberia's strides to improve the educational or the economic sectors[8]. The analysis of SMAM provides opportunities for policymakers to be aware of and address factors influencing early marriage and the subsequent early fertility among under Liberia's youthful population. This is important because the increase in the years that a population stays single creates more opportunities for learning.

4.5 Levels and trends of singulate mean age at marriage

The level of singulate mean age at marriage for both sexes (SMAMt) improved in 2022, with 29 years, as compared to 22 years in 1962. The analysis by sex shows that females spent 3 years in single life in 1962 after reaching the age 15 while that of male was 5 years. But in 2022 the situation has improved with females remaining single for 5 years after reaching the age of 15 years.

Further trends of SMAM also indicates that a female aged 15years in 1962 got married after 4 years as compared with 7 years for males. In 1974, the SMAMt for both sexes was 20 years, with 19 years for female and 26.5 years for male. The SMAMt for Liberia later increased to 25.7 years for both sexes in 2008. The levels and trends of marriages in Liberia show that the number of years that females remain single before getting marry (after age 15) has been increasing steadily since the 1962 census results. This could be an indication that the number of females in school has been increasing since in the past 52 years.

Although the level and trend of marriages is improving to the extent that fertility is gradually declining, and the status of women advancing, there is a need for Government to strengthen the integration of population variables into socioeconomic development processes. The overall trends of SMAM could also mean that the social-economic lives of females have been improving, particularly since 1984 (See Figure 4.1).

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7   https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=situation+of+marrying+before+age+15+in+liberia&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8
8   https://www.ohchr.org › WRGS › Liberia_NHRI

Figure 4.1 Trend of SMAM in years, 1962-2022
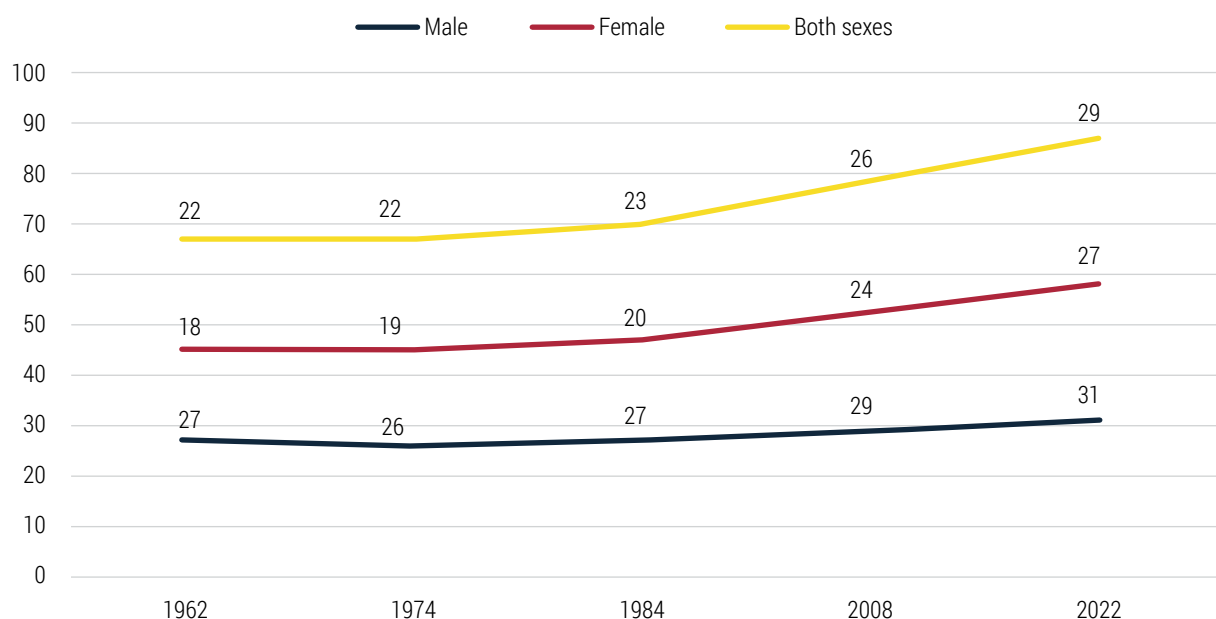
4.6 Singulate mean age at marriage by residence, county and ethnicity

The distribution level of singulate mean age by residence in 2022 shows urban areas have a longer duration of being single than rural areas. At the county level, River Cess had the lowest age at marriage of 24 years, followed by Grand Bassa Cape Mount County with 26 years. This indicates the population in River Cess stays single for 9 years while that of Grand Cape County remained single for 11 after reaching the age of 15 years. The second lowest marital age of 27 years was found in Nimba, groups in terms of marriage than those in other counties. The third highest ages at marriage after reaching the age of

15 years were found in River Gee, Nimba and Grand Cape Mount counties. The population that stays longer, after the age of 15, before getting married was found in Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, Margibi, Maryland and Montserrado as shown in Table 4.7.

The singulate mean age by ethnicity in 2022 shows that the Bassa and other African tribes got married 2 years after reaching 15 respectively, while the Mandingo did so after five years of being single in 2022. The Gbandi, Gio and Mendi married 13 years of single life. The tribes of Lorma, Krahn, Kru and Dey had the highest age of being single in 2022 as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 SMAM by resident, county and ethnicity

Residence	SMAM	Residence	SMAM
Urban	30	**Ethnicity**	
Rural	29	Bassa	17
County		Belle	29
Bomi	28	Dey	31
Bong	28	Gbandi	28
Gbarpolu	29	Gio	28
Grand Bassa	26	Gola	29
Grand Cape Mount	27	Grebo	29
Grand Gedeh	29	Kissi	29
Grand Kru	28	Kpelle	29
Lofa	26	Krahn	30
Margibi	29	Kru	30
Maryland	29	Lorma	30
Montserrado	31	Mandingo	20
Nimba	27	Mano	29
River Cess	24	Mende	28
River Gee	27	Sapo	30
Sinoe	28	Vai	29
		Other Liberian Ethnic Group	26
		Other African Tribe	17
		Non-African	In adequate data

4.7 Singulate mean age at marriage by education, employment and religion

Further analysis shows that the SMAM for university and other tertiary level population experienced the lowest age at marriage, with 5 years of single life. The second lowest marriage at marriage was found among non-schoolgoers and preschool students. However, population at the primary and secondary education married much later than couples with university and tertiary level education, which does not conform with reality.

The average age at marriage by employers was 25 years, showing that they spent 10 years being single. Moreover, own account and contributing family workers got married at 13 years respectively.

The results show that they never reached the recognized single life age of 15 years before getting married, which has implications for child marriage. The nuptiality information of employees, producer operation and unclassified work had inadequate analytical data sets.

The SMAM by employment shows that 17 years for traditional African and other religions, indicating that age of being single was as low as 2 years. Similarly, the age of being single for a Muslim or Christian in Liberia was 3 years after reaching 15 years. A comparative analysis shows that marriages are carried out at much younger ages in religious institutions than educational level as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Distribution of SMAM by education, employment and religion

Variables	SMAM
Educational	
None	28
Preschool	28
Primary	29
Secondary	31
University	20
Other Tertiary	20
Employment	
Employee	NA
Employer	25
Own Account Worker	13
Contributing Family Worker	13
Members of Producer Operative	0
Work not Classifiable by Status	0
Religion	
Christian	18
Muslim	18
Traditional African Religion	17
Other Religion	17
No Religion	NA

Chapter 5: Type of marriages

5.1 Introduction

Table 5.1 shows the marital status of populations by age group. There are three major types of marriages recorded by the 2022 NPHC. They include monogamous, polygamous and consensual unions. The results showed that monogamous marriages dominated the rest of three major marriages, constituting 67.6 per cent of all marriages of population aged 15-19 years and 80.2 per cent for ages 50-54 years. The under 15-year population engaged in monogamous marriage accounted

for 53.8 per cent while consensual marriage was 27.7 per cent. Moreover, urban and rural monogamous marriages stagnated at 79 per cent each respectively. The percentage of consensus marriages was 22.0 per cent for ages 15-19 years and 2.6 per cent for ages 50-54 years. There were more males in monogamous marriages as compared with females, accounting for 83 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. The data further revealed that consensual union was 8 per cent in urban areas compared to 6 per cent in rural areas.

Table 5.1 National level of marital status of population by age group

Age Group	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number
12-14'	98.2	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.5	100	400,867
15-19	93.5	4.4	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.1	1.4	100	638,463
20-24	79.1	15.8	0.9	0.6	0.1	0.3	3.2	100	599,536
25-29	63.3	29.0	1.7	1.0	0.2	0.4	4.3	100	440,934
30-34	49.4	41.6	2.3	1.6	0.4	0.6	4.1	100	438,060
35-39	38.7	51.4	3.0	1.7	0.5	0.9	3.7	100	337,732
40-44	31.8	57.2	3.2	2.2	0.8	1.9	2.9	100	311,828
45-49	27.2	60.4	3.8	2.2	0.9	3.0	2.5	100	185,989
50-54	25.3	59.9	3.8	2.2	1.1	5.7	2.0	100	174,574
55-59	24.0	58.2	4.0	2.3	1.3	8.7	1.6	100	89,249
60-64	24.6	54.1	3.9	2.2	1.2	12.7	1.3	100	89,047
65-69	24.6	51.6	3.8	2.1	1.3	15.4	1.2	100	48,785
70-74	25.2	45.8	3.8	2.0	1.3	20.9	1.1	100	41,435
75-79	24.7	42.3	3.5	2.0	1.2	25.5	0.8	100	19,499
80+	40.6	30.6	2.9	1.5	1.0	22.6	0.9	100	37,878
Total	**61.5**	**30.4**	**1.9**	**1.2**	**0.4**	**2.1**	**2.6**	**100**	**3,853,876**

Table 5.3 showed that the overall ever-married population by age 50-54 was 68.7 per cent for urban while that of rural was 80.4 per cent. This further demonstrates that marriages in rural areas are higher than in the urban areas. Moreover, there are more marriages in rural than urban areas, with the ever-married population of 1.6 per cent in urban centres

while those in rural areas made up 2.1 per cent. Similarly, under-15 monogamous marriages were 0.7 per cent while that of rural population was 1.3 per cent. However, consensual union was higher in urban (0.6 per cent) than in rural (0.4 per cent) as indicated in Table 5.2

Table 5.2 Marital status of population by residence and age group

	Never married	Married mono-gamous	Married poly-gamous	Sepa-rated	Di-vorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number	Never married	Married mono-gamous	Married poly-gamous	Sepa-rated	Di-vorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number
				Urban marital status										Rural marital status				
12-14'	98.4	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6	100	229,167	97.9	1.3	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.4	100	171,700
15 - 19	95.8	2.6	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	1.2	100	371,512	90.4	6.9	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2	1.7	100	266,951
20 - 24	84.6	11.3	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.2	2.8	100	346,078	71.5	22.0	1.1	1.0	0.2	0.4	3.8	100	253,458
25 - 29	70.9	22.7	1.5	0.5	0.1	0.3	3.9	100	260,406	52.5	38.1	2.0	1.7	0.3	0.5	4.9	100	180,528
30 - 34	57.1	35.1	2.1	0.9	0.2	0.5	4.0	100	246,439	39.4	49.8	2.6	2.5	0.6	0.8	4.2	100	191,621
35 - 39	46.3	45.2	2.7	1.1	0.3	0.8	3.6	100	184,696	29.5	59.0	3.2	2.5	0.7	1.2	3.9	100	153,036
40 - 44	38.8	51.6	3.0	1.5	0.6	1.7	2.8	100	159,318	24.5	63.0	3.4	2.9	0.9	2.2	3.0	100	152,510
45 - 49	33.8	55.1	3.3	1.7	0.8	2.9	2.4	100	94,609	20.4	65.9	4.2	2.7	1.0	3.1	2.7	100	91,380
50 - 54	31.3	55.2	3.3	1.7	1.0	5.7	1.8	100	85,007	19.6	64.4	4.2	2.7	1.2	5.8	2.2	100	89,567
55– 59	28.9	54.5	3.3	1.8	1.2	9.0	1.3	100	45,767	18.9	62.1	4.7	2.8	1.4	8.3	1.8	100	43,482
60 - 64	29.2	50.7	3.3	1.8	1.1	12.8	1.1	100	42,240	20.5	57.2	4.4	2.6	1.3	12.6	1.5	100	46,807
65 - 69	29.0	48.5	3.1	1.7	1.2	15.6	0.9	100	23,881	20.4	54.6	4.5	2.5	1.4	15.3	1.4	100	24,904
70 - 74	30.7	41.4	3.1	1.5	1.2	21.1	0.9	100	18,296	20.9	49.2	4.3	2.3	1.3	20.7	1.3	100	23,139
75 – 79	29.9	38.5	3.2	1.6	1.0	25.1	0.6	100	8,367	20.9	45.1	3.7	2.3	1.4	25.7	0.9	100	11,132
80+	47.5	26.4	2.4	1.1	0.9	20.8	1.1	100	15,450	35.9	33.5	3.2	1.8	1.1	23.8	0.8	100	22,428
Total	68.2	25.0	1.6	0.7	0.3	1.7	2.4	100	2,131,233	53.3	36.9	2.2	1.7	0.5	2.5	2.8	100	1,722,643

The county level analysis of marital status showed that River Cess had the highest ever-married population, with 47 per cent for monogamous marriages. The second highest population monogamous marriage were found in Cape Mount and Grand Bassa, with 40 per cent each. The lowest monogamous marriages were found in Montserrado (25 per cent) and Margibi (28 per cent). Bomi County had the highest widowhood (4 per cent), followed by Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa and River Cess, constituting 3 per cent each. Nimba County comprised the highest consensual marriages (6 per cent), followed by River Gee (5 per cent), and Bong and Grand Kru, with 4 per cent respectively, as shown in Table 5.3

Table 5.3 Marital status of population by county

County	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number
Bomi	54	37	2	1	1	4	1	100	97,247
Bong	58	32	1	1	0	3	4	100	339,049
Gbarpolu	55	39	1	1	1	2	1	100	70,710
Grand Bassa	51	40	2	2	1	3	1	100	210,921
Grand Cape Mount	51	40	3	2	1	2	1	100	135,524
Grand Gedeh	60	32	2	2	0	1	3	100	170,205

County	Never married	Married monogamous	Married polygamous	Separated	Divorced	Widow/ widower	Consensual Union	Total	Number
Grand Kru	58	32	2	2	0	2	4	100	80,658
Lofa	55	33	3	2	1	3	3	100	265,322
Margibi	65	29	1	1	0	2	1	100	223,815
Maryland	65	28	2	1	0	2	2	100	126,318
Montserrado	69	25	2	1	0	2	2	100	1,438,968
Nimba	56	32	2	1	0	2	6	100	426,121
River Cess	45	47	2	2	1	3	1	100	63,645
River Gee	54	35	3	2	0	2	5	100	93,162
Sinoe	60	34	3	2	0	1	1	100	112,211
Total	**62**	**30**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**2**	**3**	**100**	**3,853,876**

5.2 Proportion in monogamous marriages

The percentage of monogamous marriages for both sexes aged 12 and above in 2022 was found to be 79 per cent while that of 2008 was 88 per cent, indicating an intercensal decline of 9 per cent. The percentage is computed based on the total ever-married population. The proportion of male in monogamous marriages was 84 in 2008 while that of 2002 slightly fell to 83 per cent. The percentage of females that are engaged in monogamous marriage dropped from 92 per cent in 2008 to 75 per cent in 2022. The percentage of monogamous marriage in urban areas fell from 80 per cent for males in 79 while that of rural galloped from 87 per cent in 2008 to 79 per cent in 2022. The decline in monogamous marriage could be attributed to reduction in fertility and increased female education level as shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Monogamous marriage of population by sex and residence

Sex	Percent (%)		Number 2022
	2022	**2008**	
Male	83	84	596,006
Female	75	92	1,143,462
Both sexes	79	88	1,482,701
Residence			
Urban	79	80	533,342
Rural	79	87	636,369
Total	**79**	**90**	**1,482,701**

Figure 5.1 shows that the highest number of monogamous marriages was in Sinoe, accounting for 86 per cent. The second highest was Nimba (85 per cent), and Lofa and Gbarpolu with 83 per cent each respectively. The lowest percentage monogamous marriage was in Montserrado county with 72 per cent. This was followed by Grand, 74 per cent, and Grand Gedeh and Bong, with 77 per cent each.

Figure 5.1 Percentage of monogamous marriage of population by county

Figure 5.1 Percentage of monogamous marriage of population by county

Legend: ■ 2022 census   ■ 2008 census
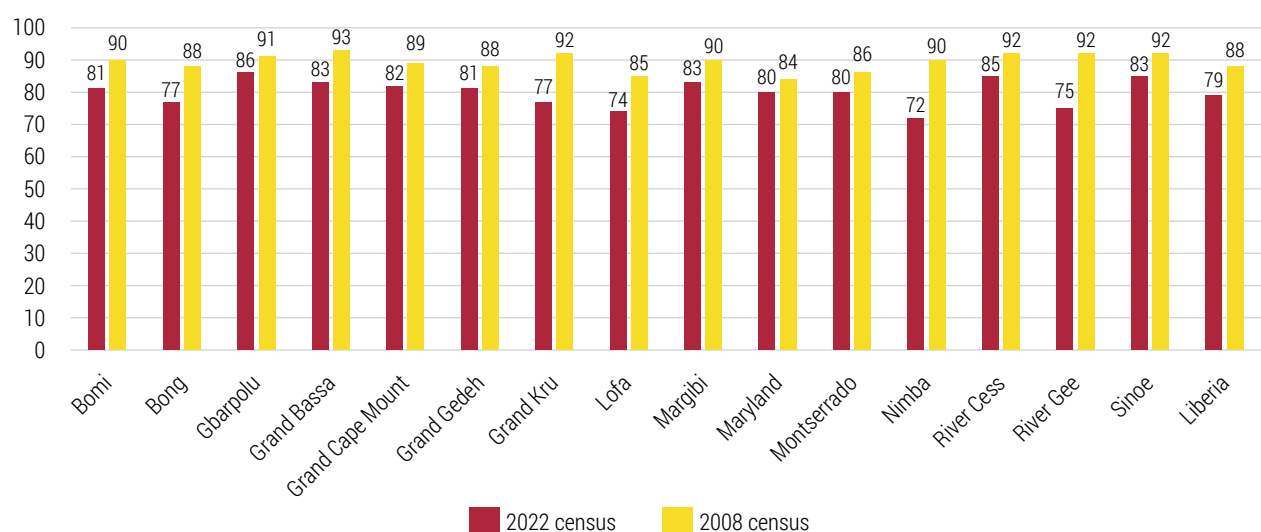
Further analysis by sex showed that proportion of males and females in under 15-year monogamous marriages was the same. However, females dominated males by 9 percentage points in entry ages for marriage, which is 15-19 years while the proportion of males during the exit ages to active marriage or 50-54 years by 13 per cent. The results of the census revealed that males dominated monogamous marriage.

The urban-rural analysis of monogamous marriage presented a rural dominated situation. The percentages of monogamous marriages under 15 years and 15-19 years were higher for rural than for urban except in 50-54 years that the proportion stagnated. The study showed that male population dominated monogamous marriage even at the end

of active marriage while differentials in rural and urban dwellers was not very significant as shown in Table 5.5.

The distribution of monogamous marriages by county revealed that Gbarpolu and River Gee had the highest rates, with 86 per cent, 85 per cent respectively. The second highest monogamous marriages were found in Sinoe, Margibi and Gbarpolu, constituting 83 per cent each. The lowest monogamous marriages were found in Nimba, Lofa and River Gee, with 72 per cent, 74 per cent and 75 per cent respectively. The county level percentage of monogamous marriages for 2022 was lower than those of 2008. The overall rates monogamous marriage was 3 per cent lower than the 2008 rate as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Monogamous marriage by age, sex, residence and county

Age group	Married Monogamous	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 Number	County	Married Monogamous	Number
								2022	2008
12-14'	54	54	54	45	62	7,196	Bomi	81	90
15-19	68	61	70	61	72	41,255	Bong	77	88
20-24	76	73	77	73	77	125,538	Gbarpolu	86	91
25-29	79	79	79	78	80	161,613	Grand Bassa	83	93
30-34	82	82	82	82	82	221,724	Grand Cape Mount	82	89
35-39	84	85	83	84	84	207,068	Grand Gedeh	81	88
40-44	84	86	82	84	83	212,589	Grand Kru	77	92

Age group	Married Monogamous	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 Number	County	Married Monogamous	Number
								2022	2008
45-49	83	86	79	83	83	135,371	Lofa	74	85
50-54	80	86	73	80	80	130,447	Margibi	83	90
55-59	77	85	66	77	77	67,807	Maryland	80	84
60-64	72	83	57	72	72	67,140	Montserrado	80	86
65-69	68	82	51	68	68	36,792	Nimba	72	90
70-74	61	78	41	60	62	30,986	River Cess	85	92
75-79	56	76	35	55	57	14,679	River Gee	75	92
80+	51	71	34	50	52	22,496	Sinoe	83	92
Liberia	**79**	**83**	**75**	**79**	**79**	**1,482,701**	**Liberia**	**79**	**88**

The overall religious classification revealed a 79 per cent of monogamous marriage in Liberia in 2022. The data on religious monogamy showed that Christians and Muslims nearly stagnated, with 79 per cent and 80 per cent of monogamous marriages accordingly. The census revealed that other religious practices other than Christianity, Islam and traditional religion was the third highest percentage of monogamous marriages. The population with no religious practice had the lowest monogamous marriage of 67 per cent as indicated in Table 5.6.

The analysis by education level obtained showed that the population with the highest level of educational level was engaged in monogamous marriage more than other lower levels. For example, the highest monogamous marriage of 85 per cent was among university level population, followed by tertiary and secondary school levels, with 81 per cent accordingly. The lowest level of monogamous practice was among the preschool-level population, with 76 per cent as mentioned in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Monogamous marriage by religious affiliation and educational level

Religion	Percent (%)	Number (n)
Christian	79	1,241,106
Muslim	80	212,573
Traditional African Religion	66	13,973
Other religion	69	1,389
No religion	67	13,660
Total	79	1,482,701
Education		
None	77	10,901
Preschool	76	41,795
Primary	78	235,513
Secondary	81	415,276
University	85	122,244
Other tertiary	81	6,796
Total	**81**	**832,525**

The census data showed that 79 per cent of the ethnic groupings engaged in monogamous marriages, followed by non-Africans and other Liberian ethnic groups with 87 per cent and 86 per cent respectively. The second highest group in terms of monogamous practice were Bassa, Gola, Kpelle, Krahn, Kru, Mandingoes, Mende and Vai, with percentages ranging from 80 to 82. The Belle, Gio, Lorma and Mano made up the lowest percentages of population that engaged in monogamous marriages in 2022.

Table 5.7 Monogamous marriage by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Percentage (%)	Number (n)
Bassa	82	169,426
Belle	76	7,602
Dey	79	3,666
Gbandi	78	36,206
Gio	75	88,805
Gola	80	49,806
Grebo	78	114,331
Kpelle	80	236,982
Kissi	78	51,033
Krahn	80	56,216
Kru	80	58,799
Lorma	76	52,490
Mandingo	81	53,188
Mano	72	77,054
Mende	81	22,642
Sapo	79	12,430
Vai	81	48,597
Other Liberian ethnic group	86	6,490
Other African tribe	83	21,203
Non African	87	2,745
Total	**79**	**1,169,711**

5.3 Proportion in polygamous marriages

The proportion of population aged 12 years and older that had separated in marriages in 2022 was 5 per cent compared to 4.5 per cent in 2008, with an insignificant intercensal increment of 0.5 per cent. The proportion of male in polygamy was 3.8 per cent in 2008 and computed to be 6 per cent in 2022, which is a significant increase of 2.2 per cent over the 2008 level. The percentage of females engaged in polygamy further decreased from 5.2 per cent in 2008 to 4 per cent in 2022. The percentage of polygamous marriage in urban areas rose from 3.4 per cent in 2008 to 5 per cent while that of rural stagnated from 5.2 per cent in 2008 to 5 per cent in 2022. The rise in polygamous marriage could have implications for the drop in monogamous marriage from 2008 to 2022 (See Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Polygamous marriage of population by sex and residence

Sex	Percent (%)		Number 2022
	2022	**2008**	
Male	6	3.8	19,970
Female	4	5.2	24,483
Both sexes	5	4.5	44,453
Residence			
Urban	5	3.4	15,339
Rural	5	5.2	29,114
Total	**5**	**4.5**	**44,453**

Polygamous analysis by age and sex revealed that proportion of under 15-year male and female in marriage was 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. However, males were more than females by 2 percentage points in entry ages for polygamous marriage, which is 15-19 years. Moreover, the proportion of males aged 50-54 was 13 per cent more than female in polygamous marriage.

The level of urban-rural polygamous marriage reflected rural dominance. The percentages of 15-19 years of polygamous marriages stagnated from 2008 to 2022 while urban population dominated 15-19 years. Similarly, the population aged 50-54 years stagnated between urban and rural. The study showed that male population dominated polygamous marriage even at the end of active marriage while differentials in rural and urban polygamous marriage was minimal.

The lowest practice of polygamy was found in Bong, Gbarpolu and River Cess counties in 2022, representing 3 per cent respectively. The intercensal comparison showed that polygamy experienced the lowest level of increase (2008 to 2022) in Bong (0.6 per cent), Gbarpolu (0.6 per cent), and Grand Bassa (0.8 per cent) per cent respectively. However, Grand Gedeh and Lofa Counties experienced the highest growth in polygamy from 2008 to 2022 as indicated in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Percentage of polygamous marriage by sex, residence and county

Age	Married Monogamous	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	County	Married Polygamous	
	Percentage						**2022**	**2008**
12-14'	5	6	4	5	5	Bomi	5	4.4
15-19	4	5	4	5	4	Bong	3	3.4
20-24	4	5	4	5	4	Gbarpolu	3	3.4
25-29	5	5	5	5	4	Grand Bassa	4	4.2
30-34	5	5	4	5	4	Grand Cape Mount	7	9.3
35-39	5	5	4	5	5	Grand Gedeh	4	3.7
40-44	5	5	4	5	5	Grand Kru	5	6.0
45-49	5	6	4	5	5	Lofa	7	12.3
50-54	5	6	4	5	5	Margibi	4	2.7

Age	Married Monogamous	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	County	Married Polygamous	
	Percentage						2022	2008
55-59	5	6	4	5	6	Maryland	6	5.4
60-64	5	7	3	5	6	Montserrado	5	2.9
65-69	5	7	3	4	6	Nimba	4	4.3
70-74	5	7	3	5	5	River Cess	3	2.1
75-79	5	7	2	5	5	River Gee	6	4.2
80+	5	7	3	5	5	Sinoe	7	3.9
Liberia	**5**	**6**	**4**	**5**	**5**	**Liberia**	**5**	**4.5**

The differential of polygamous marriage by county in 2022 showed that the highest polygamous marriages were in Grand Cape Mount, Lofa and Sinoe, accounting for 7 per cent accordingly. The second highest were found in River Gee and Maryland, with 6 per cent. In 2008, Lofa made up the highest polygamous population of 12 per cent, followed by Grand Cape Mount (9 per cent) and Grand Kru (6 per cent). The remaining counties had less than 6 per cent, with River Gee accounting for the lowest of 2 per cent population of polygamous marriage as shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Percentage of polygamous marriage of population by county
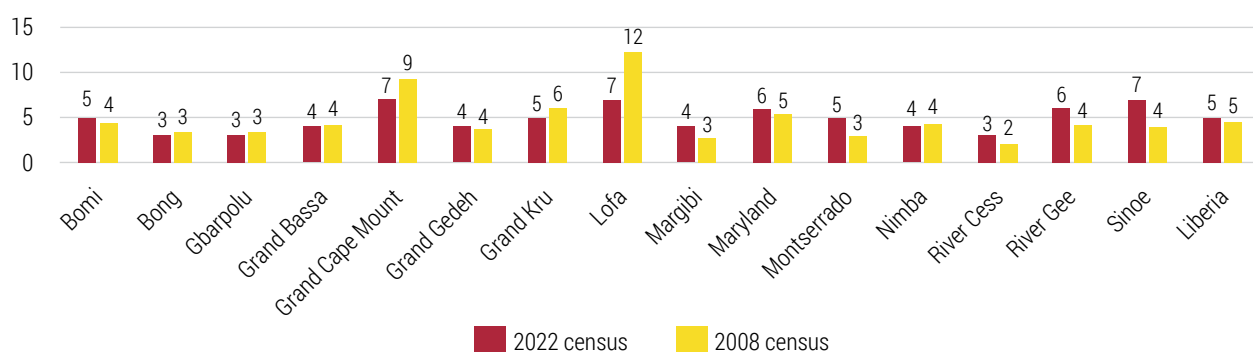
The 2022 census data revealed that the highest religious affiliation for those engaged in polygamous marriage was 5 per cent for all religions, with Muslims overriding Christians by 4 percentage points. The data further showed that Muslims received the highest percentage of polygamy of 8, followed by African religion with 7 per cent. The lowest population of polygamous religious group was associated Christian, 4 per cent and another 5 per cent for persons without any religious affiliation as detailed in Table 5.10.

The practice of polygamy by educational level obtained showed that population with the lowest level of education received the highest percentage of polygamous marriage. Moreover, those with educational level above none had the lowest polygamous marriage of per cent each for preschool, primary, secondary, university and tertiary levels. The lowest level of polygamous practice for population with some level of education showed that literacy plays a significant role in polygamous marriage as presented in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Polygamous marriage by religious affiliation and educational level

Religion	Percent	Number
Christian	4	1,241,106
Muslim	8	212,573
Traditional African Religion	7	13,973
Other religion	6	1,389
No religion	5	13,660
Total	**5**	**1,482,701**
Education		
None	7	10,901
Preschool	5	41,795
Primary	5	235,513
Secondary	5	415,276
University	5	122,244
Other tertiary	5	6,796
Total	**5**	**832,525**

The 2022 census data indicated that 5 per cent of all ethnic groups in Liberia was engaged in polygamous marriages. The highest proportion of ethnic group that practiced polygamy was Mandingoes while the second highest ethnic groups were other African tribes and Sapo, contributing 10 per cent and 7 per cent accordingly. Further, it was revealed that the Dey, Gbandi, Vai had the third highest percentage of 6 respectively while the lowest polygamous ethnic groups were Bassa, Belle, Gio, Krahn and Kpelle, constituting 4 per cent.

Table 5.11 Polygamous marriage by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Bassa	4	169,426
Belle	4	7,602
Dey	6	3,666
Gbandi	6	36,206
Gio	4	88,805
Gola	5	49,806
Grebo	5	114,331
Kpelle	4	236,982
Kissi	5	51,033
Krahn	4	56,216

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Kru	5	58,799
Lorma	5	52,490
Mandingo	10	53,188
Mano	5	77,054
Mende	5	22,642
Sapo	7	12,430
Vai	6	48,597
Other Liberian ethnic group	5	6,490
Other African tribe	8	21,203
Non African	5	2,745
Total	**5**	**1,169,711**

5.4 Proportion in separate marriages

The percentage of separated marriages aged 12 and above for both sexes, was 3 per cent in 2022 while the indicator was 0.7 per cent in 2008, indicating an intercensal increment of 2.3 per cent. The proportion of male in separation was .06 per cent in 2008 while that of 2022 rose to 3 per cent. The percentage of females that are engaged in separated marriage increased from 0.9 per cent in 2008 to 3 per cent in 2022. The percentage of the separation of married partners in urban centers increased from 0.6 per cent in 2008 to 2 per cent in 2022, while that of rural rose from 0.9 per cent in 2008 to 4 per cent in 2022. The rise in separated marriage could be attributed to high incompatibility and increased female education level as shown in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Separated marriage of Population by sex and residence

Sex	Percent (%)		Number 2022
	2022	2008	
Male	3	0.6	596,006
Female	3	0.9	1,143,462
Both sexes	3	0.7	1,482,701
Residence			
Urban	2	0.6	533,342
Rural	4	0.9	636,369
Total	**3**	**0.7**	**1,482,701**

The highest separated marriage rates at the county level were in Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru and Lofa, accounting for 5 per cent each. The second highest was Grand Bassa Cape Mount and Sinoe, with 4 per cent each. The lowest percentage of separated marriages were in Montserrado, Margibi and Gbarpolu, representing 2 per cent respectively as indicated in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Percentage of separated marriages by county
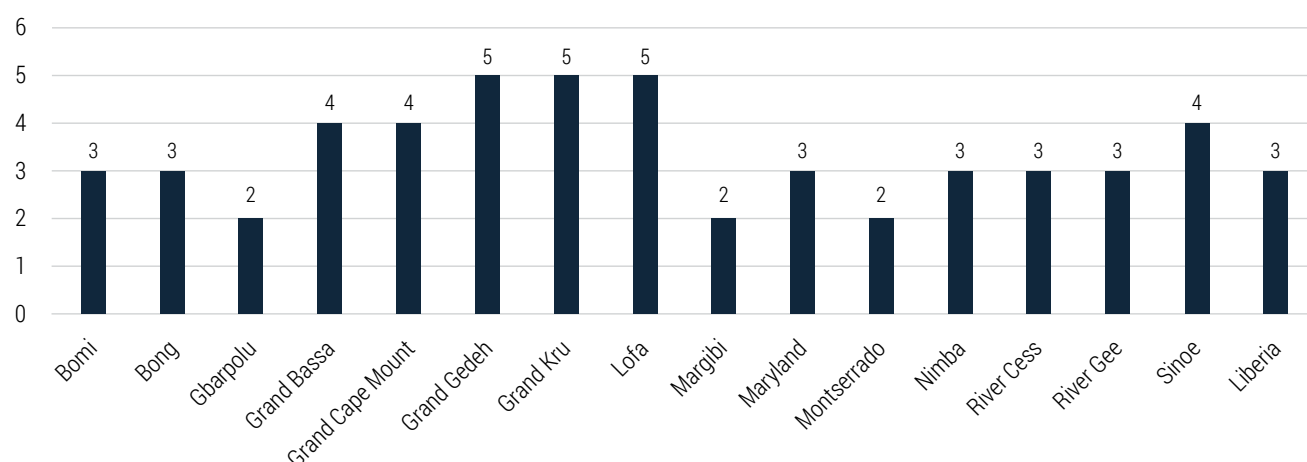
Detailed age and sex analysis showed that the proportion of male and female in under 15-year separated marriage was 8 per cent for male and 6 per cent for female. Moreover, males also dominated females by 2 percentage points in entry ages (15-19 years) for marriage. However, the proportion of females rose over males by 2 per cent during exit ages (50-54yrs) to active marriage. The results of the census revealed that males dominated separated marriage.

The overall urban-rural analysis of separated marriage showed that rural dominated urban areas by a narrow 2 percentage points. The percentages of separation for under 15 years and 15-19 years were also dominated by rural than for urban, with a percentage difference of 4 for under 15 years and 1 for ages 15-19 years as shown in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13 Separated marriage by age, sex, residence and county

Age	Separate	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 number	County	Separated
12-14'	7	8	6	5	9	7,196	Bomi	3
15-19	3	5	3	3	4	41,255	Bong	3
20-24	3	3	3	2	4	125,538	Gbarpolu	2
25-29	3	3	3	2	4	161,613	Grand Bassa	4
30-34	3	3	3	2	4	221,724	Grand Cape Mount	4
35-39	3	3	3	2	4	207,068	Grand Gedeh	5
40-44	3	3	4	2	4	212,589	Grand Kru	5
45-49	3	3	4	3	3	135,371	Lofa	5
50-54	3	2	4	2	3	130,447	Margibi	2
55-59	3	2	4	3	3	67,807	Maryland	3
60-64	3	2	4	3	3	67,140	Montserrado	2
65-69	3	2	3	2	3	36,792	Nimba	3
70-74	3	2	3	2	3	30,986	River Cess	3
75-79	3	3	3	2	3	14,679	River Gee	3
80+	3	3	2	2	3	22,496	Sinoe	4
Liberia	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**1,482,701**	**Liberia**	**3**

The overall classification of separated marriages by religious affiliation showed that 8 per cent of persons with other religious practices received the highest percentage of separation. The rate of separation attributed to religious affiliation was 3 per cent for all religions in 2022. The data further revealed that Traditional African Religions made up 4 per cent of marital separations. In addition, Christians and Muslims stagnated at 3 per cent in terms of marital separation, which constituted the lowest rate separated marriages by religious classification as indicated in Table 5.14.

The overall percentage of separated marriage by educational level of population was 3 per cent in Liberia, according to 2022 census. The analysis marital separation by educational level obtained revealed that population with the highest level of education received the highest level of separation, which was 3 per cent each for none, preschool, primary and secondary. The second highest proportion of separated marriages was 2 per cent and was associated with population with university and tertiary levels respectively as mentioned in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14 Separated marriage by religious affiliation and educational level

Religion	Percent (%)	Number
Christian	3	1,241,106
Muslim	3	212,573
Traditional African Religion	4	13,973
Other religion	8	1,389
No religion	4	13,660
Total	**3**	**1,482,701**
Education		
None	3	10,901
Preschool	3	41,795
Primary	3	235,513
Secondary	3	415,276
University	2	122,244
Other tertiary	2	6,796
Total	**3**	**832,525**

The overall marital separation rate among all ethnic groups was 3 per cent. The census results also mentioned that ethnic groupings engaged highest level of separation were Kissi, Krahn, Mende and Sapo. The highest rate of separation was found among the Bassa, Dey, Gbandi, Gio, Gola, Grebo, Kpelle, Kru and Mano. The lowest separated marriages were associated with other Liberian ethnic groups, with 1 per cent of separation in 2022 as indicated in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15 Separated marriage by Ethnicity

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Bassa	3	169,426
Belle	2	7,602
Dey	3	3,666
Gbandi	3	36,206
Gio	3	88,805
Gola	3	49,806
Grebo	3	114,331
Kpelle	3	236,982
Kissi	4	51,033
Krahn	4	56,216
Kru	3	58,799
Lorma	3	52,490
Mandingo	2	53,188
Mano	3	77,054
Mende	4	22,642
Sapo	4	12,430
Vai	2	48,597
Other Liberian ethnic group	1	6,490
Other African tribe	2	21,203
Non African	2	2,745
Total	**3**	**1,169,711**

5.5 Proportion divorced

The proportion of divorces aged 12 and above was 1 per cent in 2022 compared to 0.6 per cent in 2008. The proportion of male that divorced was 0.4 per cent in 2008 computed to 1 per cent in 2022, which is almost a stagnation (0.6 per cent) from the 2008 level. The percentage of females that divorced grew from 0.7 per cent in 2008 to 1 per cent in 2022. Moreover, the percentage of divorces in urban areas rose from 0.4 per cent in 2008 to 1 per cent while that of rural moved from 0.7 per cent in 2008 to 1 per cent in 2022. The rise in divorces could have implications for the drop in monogamous and other forms of marriage from 2008 to 2022 (see Table 5.16).

Table 5.16 Percentage of divorces by sex and residence

Variables	Percent		Number 2022
Census Year	2022	2008	
Sex			
Male	1	0.4	19,970
Female	1	0.7	24,483
Both sexes	1	0.6	44,453
Residence			
Urban	1	0.4	15,339
Rural	1	0.5	29,114
Liberia	**1**	**0.6**	**44,453**

The rate of divorce in Liberia is small, though increasing on the whole. The overall rate of divorce is 1 per cent while the highest county level divorce rate of 3 per cent was in Bomi County. This was followed by Maryland Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess and Sinoe, with 2 per cent divorce rates accordingly. The rest of the 15 counties had 1 per cent divorce rates each while Gbarpolu and Grand Bassa experienced less than 1 per cent divorce in 2022 as indicated in Figure 5.4

Figure 5.4 Percentage of divorced population by county
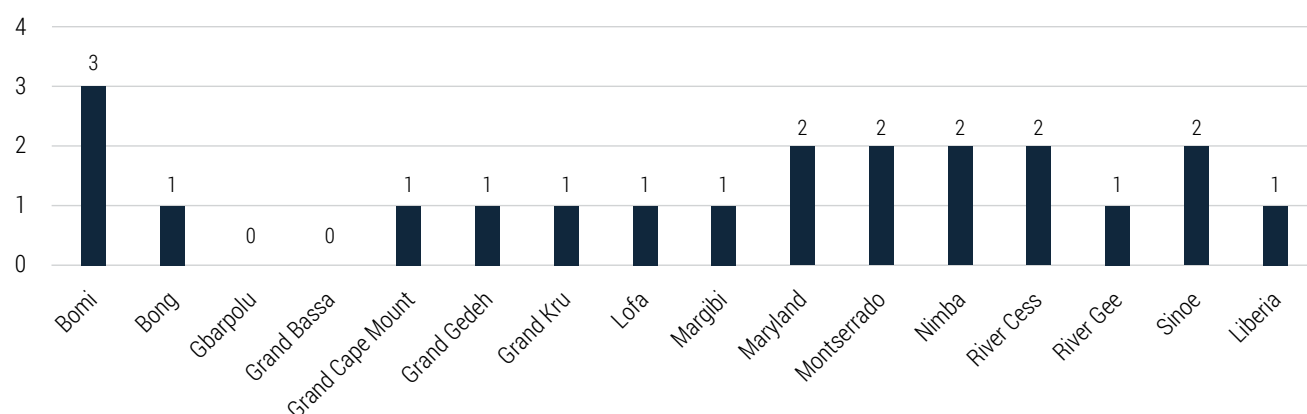
The divorce rates by sex revealed that proportion of population below 15-years was 3 per cent for males and females respectively. The divorce rates were the same for females and females by age group 15-19 years while the proportion of females aged 50-54 was 1 per cent more than males. The overall results showed stagnated divorce rates for male and females. The divorce rate for urban and rural residence was the same as that of sex with no differences in the percentage of urban and rural divorces. However, the divorces rate for rural population 50-54 years was 1 per cent higher than that of urban as indicated in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 Percentage of divorces by age, sex, residence

Age	Percentage Divorced	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 number
12-14'	3	3	3	3	2	7,196
15 - 19	1	1	1	1	1	41,255
20 - 24	1	1	1	0	1	125,538
25 - 29	1	0	1	0	1	161,613
30 - 34	1	1	1	1	1	221,724
35 - 39	1	1	1	1	1	207,068
40 - 44	1	1	1	1	1	212,589
45 - 49	1	1	2	1	1	135,371
50 - 54	1	1	2	1	2	130,447
55– 59	2	1	2	2	2	67,807
60 - 64	2	1	2	2	2	67,140
65 - 69	2	1	2	2	2	36,792
70 - 74	2	1	2	2	2	30,986
75 – 79	2	1	2	1	2	14,679
80+	2	2	2	2	2	22,496
Liberia	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1,482,701**

Bomi experienced the highest rate of divorced population (3 per cent), followed by Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess and Sinoe Counties. The lowest percentage was experienced by Gbarpolu and Grand Bassa Counties while the rest of the counties had 1 per cent divorce rate. Similarly, the national level divorce rate for population 12 years and above was 1 per cent as shown in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18 Percentage of divorces by county

County	Percent	County	Percent
Bomi	3	Margibi	1
Bong	1	Maryland	2
Gbarpolu	0	Montserrado	2
Grand Bassa	0	Nimba	2
Grand Cape Mount	1	River Cess	2
Grand Gedeh	1	River Gee	1
Grand Kru	1	Sinoe	2
Lofa	1	**Liberia**	**1**

The 2022 census data revealed that the divorce rate by religious affiliation was also very low, although it increased over the 2008 level. The data further showed that all of the divorce rates for the various religious affiliations were 1 per cent except for other religious, that experienced 2 per cent divorce rate in 2022. Similarly, the rate of divorce among the population by educational level obtained was low, with 1 per cent for all of the categories of educational levels except at the university level where divorce was 2 per cent as shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19 Percentage of divorces by religious affiliation and educational level

Variables	Percent	Number
Religion		
Christian	1	1,241,106
Muslim	1	212,573
Traditional African Religion	1	13,973
Other religion	1	1,389
No religion	2	13,660
Total	1	1,482,701
Education		
None	1	10,901
Preschool	1	41,795
Primary	1	235,513
Secondary	1	415,276
University	2	122,244
Other tertiary	1	6,796
Total	**1**	**832,525**

The 2022 census data revealed that all ethnic groups in Liberia were engaged in low level of divorce. The highest rate of divorce was experienced by the Bassa, Dey and Kissi ethnic groups while the rest had 1 per cent divorce rate, except Sapo that accumulated less than 1 per cent as indicated in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20 Divorced by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Bassa	2	169,426
Belle	1	7,602
Dey	2	3,666
Gbandi	1	36,206
Gio	1	88,805
Gola	1	49,806
Grebo	1	114,331

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Kpelle	1	236,982
Kissi	2	51,033
Krahn	1	56,216
Kru	1	58,799
Lorma	1	52,490
Mandingo	1	53,188
Mano	1	77,054
Mende	1	22,642
Sapo	0	12,430
Vai	1	48,597
Other Liberian ethnic group	1	6,490
Other African tribe	1	21,203
Non African	1	2,745
Total	**1**	**1,169,711**

5.6 Proportion widowed

The percentage of widowed aged 12 and above for both sexes was 5. The proportion of male in widowhood was 2 while that of females was 9 per cent in 2022. The percentage of the population widowed in urban centers was 5 while that of rural was the same as urban. The overall percentage of population widowed in 2022 was higher than the 2008 level. The rise in widowhood could be attributed to high the mortality that was associated with and resulting from the civil crisis. The high level of male death, as demonstrated by the percentage widowed by sex, has implications for special programmes to support single parent mothers more than and single parent fathers. Table 5.21. shows detailed percentage distribution of widowhood by sex.

Table 5.21 Percentage of widowed population by sex and residence

	Percent (%)		Number 2022
	2022	**2008**	
Sex			
Male	2	0.8	596,006
Female	9	4.5	1,143,462
Both sexes	5	2.6	1,482,701
Residence			
Urban	5	2.1	533,342
Rural	5	3.2	636,369
Total	**5**	**2.6**	**1,482,701**

Figure 5.5 Percentage of widowed population by county

The age - sex analysis of under 15-year male and female proportion widowed was 2 per cent for male and 5 per cent for female while the total was 4 per cent. Moreover, females had the highest widowhood for population aged 15-19 years. In addition, the proportion of female widows aged 50-54years was 13 percentage points more that of males. This indicates that there more female widows than males in exit period of active marriage. The results of the census points to more male deaths than females in almost all of the subsequent age groups follow exit to active marriage, which needs to be addressed.

The overall urban-rural percentage of population widowed for under 15-year population was 4 per cent for both urban and rural areas while that of 15-19 years was 2 per cent each respectively.

The percentages of widowhood for 50-54 years and later ages was dominated by urban dwellers, indicating that there are more widows in urban than rural areas. Further comparative analysis by county showed that the 2022 census report revealed more widowhood situation in the 15 counties than the 2008 as shown in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22 Percentage of widowed by age, sex, residence and county

Age	Percent widowed	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 number	County	2022	2008	Number
12-14'	4	2	5	4	4	7,196	Bomi	8	3.8	3,441
15-19	2	1	2	2	2	41,255	Bong	7	3.6	9,186
20-24	1	1	1	1	1	125,538	Gbarpolu	5	2.1	1,502
25-29	1	0	1	1	1	161,613	Grand Bassa	5	3.1	5,359
30-34	1	1	2	1	1	221,724	Grand Cape Mount	5	2.6	3,115
35-39	2	1	3	1	2	207,068	Grand Gedeh	3	2.3	2,244
40-44	3	1	5	3	3	212,589	Grand Kru	4	2.6	1,398
45-49	4	1	8	4	4	135,371	Lofa	7	4.7	7,814
50-54	8	2	15	8	7	130,447	Margibi	5	2.4	4,148
55-59	11	3	22	13	10	67,807	Maryland	6	1.9	2,634

Age	Percent widowed	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 number	County	2022	2008	Number
60-64	17	5	32	18	16	67,140	Montserrado	6	1.9	24,905
65-69	20	6	39	22	19	36,792	Nimba	5	3.1	10,054
70-74	28	9	50	30	26	30,986	River Cess	5	2.2	1,660
75-79	34	12	57	36	32	14,679	River Gee	4	2.1	1,777
80+	38	15	57	40	37	22,496	Sinoe	3	1.8	1,275
Liberia	**5**	**2**	**9**	**5**	**5**	**1,482,701**	**Liberia**	**5**	**2.6**	**80,512**

The classification of proportion widowed using religious affiliation showed that 5 per cent each for widows of the Christian and Muslim faiths. The overall rate of widowhood for all religious affiliations in the 2022 census was 5 per cent. The analysis data further revealed that Traditional African Religions had the highest proportion of widow population in 2022, accounting for 12 per cent. In addition, persons of no religion accounted for the second highest percentage of 6 while other forms of religious affiliation had the lowest widow percentage of 4 as shown in Table 5.23.

The percentage of widowhood considering all levels of educational achievements was 3 per cent. The highest proportion of widowhood, 4 per cent, was experienced among population with no educational level and persons with other tertiary educational level respectively while the lowest proportion found with population that is at the secondary level as mentioned in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23 Percentage of widowed by religious affiliation and educational level

	Percent	Number
Religion		
Christian	5	1,241,106
Muslim	5	212,573
Traditional African Religion	12	13,973
Other religion	4	1,389
No religion	6	13,660
Total	5	1,482,701
Education		
None	4	10,901
Preschool	3	41,795
Primary	3	235,513
Secondary	2	415,276
University	3	122,244
Other tertiary	4	6,796
Total	**3**	**832,525**

The 2022 census results revealed that the rate widow among all ethnic groups was 5 per cent. The ethnic groups that made up the highest percentage of widowhood were the Dey and Kissi, amounting to 7 per cent each. The second highest proportion of widow population was associated with the Vai, Lorma, Kru, Kpelle, Gbandi and Bassa, accounting for 6 per cent. The results also showed that ethnic groups the lowest proportion of widowhood were Mende and other African Ethnic Groups, with 3 per cent respectively; Other African, 2 per cent, and non-Africans, 1 per cent as indicated in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24 Percentage of widowed by ethnicity

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Bassa	6	169,426
Belle	4	7,602
Dey	7	3,666
Gbandi	6	36,206
Gio	5	88,805
Gola	7	49,806
Grebo	5	114,331
Kpelle	6	236,982
Kissi	7	51,033
Krahn	4	56,216
Kru	6	58,799
Lorma	6	52,490
Mandingo	4	53,188
Mano	5	77,054
Mende	3	22,642
Sapo	5	12,430
Vai	6	48,597
Other Liberian ethnic group	3	6,490
Other African tribe	2	21,203
Non African	1	2,745
Total	**5**	**1,169,711**

5.7 Proportion of consensual marriages

The percentage of consensual marriages aged 12 and above for both sexes was 7, which was 4 per cent more than the 2008 census. The proportion of male in consensual marriages was 6 per cent in 2022, compared with 5.2 per cent for 2008. Similarly, the percentage of females that were engaged in consensual union in 2022 was 7 while that of 2008 was 1.3 per cent, an increase of 5.7 per cent in the intercensal period. The percentage of the population in consensual union in urban centers was 8 while that of rural was 6 per cent, and an increase of 2 per cent over the 2008 level. The overall percentage of population consensual marriages in 2022 was higher than 2008 level. The rise in consensual marriages could be attributed to either the drop in monogamous marriages or the educational level of females or both. Table 5.25 shows detailed percentage distribution of widowhood by sex.

Table 5.25 Percentage of consensual marriages by sex and residence

Variables	Percent		Number 2022
Census Year	2022	2008	
Sex			
Male	6	5.2	596,006
Female	7	1.3	1,143,462
Both sexes	7	3.2	1,482,701
Residence			
Urban	8	4.1	533,342
Rural	6	2.5	636,369
Total	**7**	**3.2**	**1,482,701**

The distribution of consensual marriages by county revealed that Nimba, River Gee and Bong had the highest rates, with 15 per cent, 11 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. This was followed by 8 per cent for Grand Kru; and 6 per cent for Grand Gedeh, Lofa and Montserrado each. The lowest rates of consensual marriages were in Grand Cape Mount, 1 per cent; and Bomi, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, River Cess and Sinoe Counties, accounting for 2 per cent each. The comparative analysis showed that Bong County, which had the highest percentage of consensual marriages in 2008 became the third highest in 2022, with the later census dominating by 5 per cent. Moreover, the county level consensual marriages for 2022 increased over the 2008 rate except for River Cess, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties that dropped as indicated in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 Percentage of consensual marriages by county
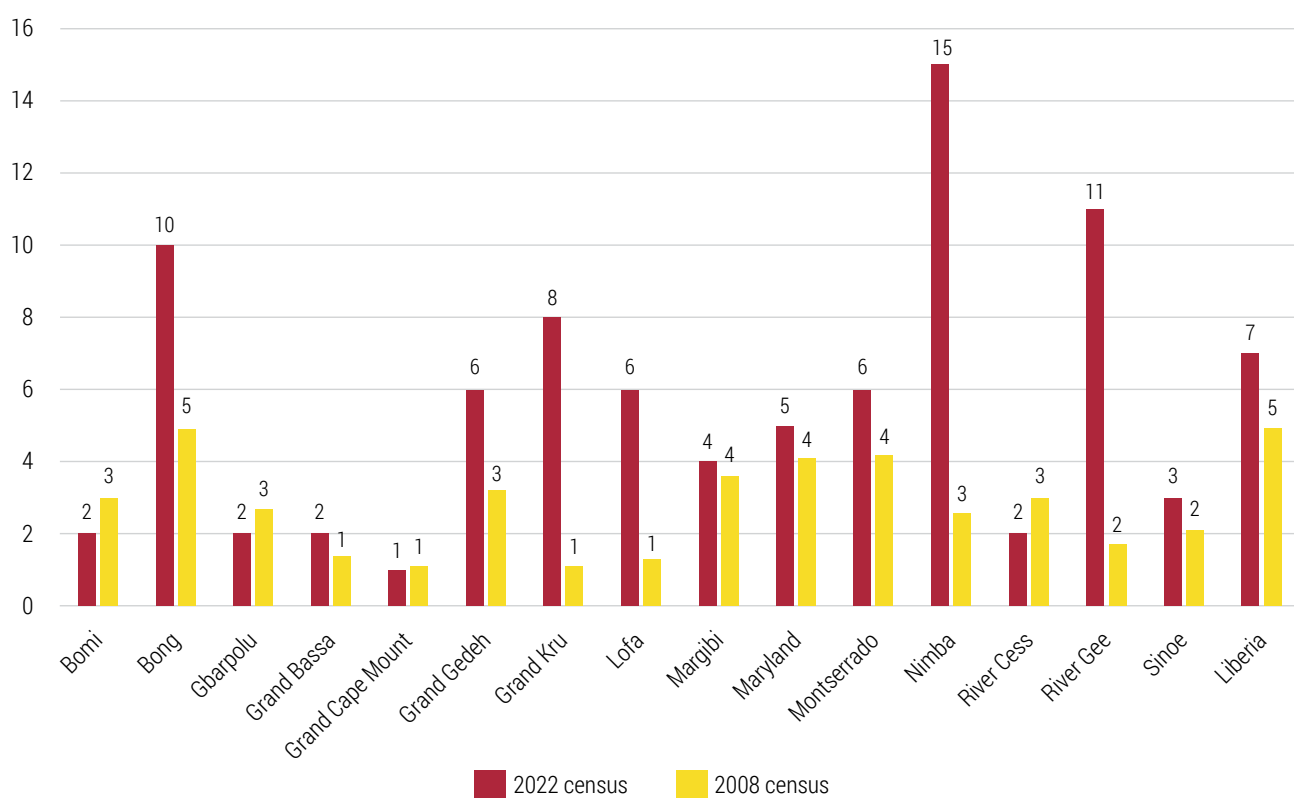
The proportion of under 15-year male and female consensual marriages was the same in the 2022 census. Moreover, males had the highest consensual marriages of 27 per cent for population aged 15-19 years, compared with 20 per cent for females. The 2022 census showed that the proportion of males and female aged 50-54 years who were in consensual union was the same in inactive stages of marriages, accounting for 3 per cent each. This indicates that the practice of two opposite sexes marrying without parental consent or religious / traditional/ legal procedures was equally carried out by both males and females. The results of the census point to more violation of the normal procedure for marriages, and gradually institutionalizing consensual marriages.

The overall rate of under 15-year consensual union by area of residence showed that urban percentage double that of rural. Similarly, the proportion of urban consensual unions aged 15-19 years was 10 percentage points more than that of rural areas. The percentage of consensual marriages for 50-54 years was the same for urban and rural areas. The data on consensual marriages indicates a high urban violation of the marriage without the normal procedure recognized by law, religion and tradition.

The rate of consensual marriage was high in Nimba County, making up 15 per cent. The second highest rates of consensual marriage were found in River Gee (11 per cent) and Bong (10 per cent) while the lowest were located in Gbarpolu and Grand Bassa. The percentage of consensual marriages in the 15 counties in 2022 was higher than those of 2008, except for Gbarpolu and Bomi. The overall consensual marriages were higher in 2022 than in 2008, constituting 7 per cent and 4.9 per cent respectively. Table 5.26 shows the distribution of consensual marriages by county for 2022 and 2008.

Table 5.26 Percentage of consensual marriages by age, sex, residence and county

Age	Percent consensual union	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	2022 number	County	Percent consensual union	
								2022	2008
12-14'	28	28	28	37	18	7,196	Bomi	2	3.0
15-19	22	27	20	28	18	41,255	Bong	10	4.9
20-24	15	17	14	18	13	125,538	Gbarpolu	2	2.7
25-29	12	12	11	14	10	161,613	Grand Bassa	2	1.4
30-34	8	8	8	9	7	221,724	Grand Cape Mount	1	1.1
35-39	6	6	6	7	6	207,068	Grand Gedeh	6	3.2
40-44	4	4	4	5	4	212,589	Grand Kru	8	1.1
45-49	3	3	4	4	3	135,371	Lofa	6	1.3
50-54	3	3	3	3	3	130,447	Margibi	4	3.6
55-59	2	2	2	2	2	67,807	Maryland	5	4.1
60-64	2	2	1	2	2	67,140	Montserrado	6	4.2
65-69	2	2	1	1	2	36,792	Nimba	15	2.6
70-74	1	2	1	1	2	30,986	River Cess	2	3.0
75-79	1	1	1	1	1	14,679	River Gee	11	1.7
80+	2	2	1	2	1	22,496	Sinoe	3	2.1
Liberia	**7**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**6**	**1,482,701**	**Liberia**	**7**	**4.9**

The distribution of consensual marriages by religious affiliation showed that the population that has no religion contributed the highest percentage of 16, perhaps because of the lack of allegiance to any religious group. The second highest rate of consensual union was found among traditional African region, 12 per cent; and other religions, 10 per cent. The Christian and Muslim faiths accounted for 7 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. The overall rate of consensual marriages for all religious affiliations in the 2022 census was 7 per cent. The 2022 census data revealed that the population that is not associated with the

Christian and Muslim religions had the highest rates of consensual marriage in Liberia as shown in Table 5.27.

The overall proportion of consensual union by educational achievements was 8 per cent while the highest was found at the preschool and primary levels of education, accounting for 12 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. The second highest level of consensual marriages was 8 per cent each for no education and secondary educational levels, while the lowest was associated with population that was at the university level as mentioned in Table 5.27.

Table 5.27 Percentage of consensual marriages by religious affiliation and educational level

Religion	Percent	Number
Christian	7	1,241,106
Muslim	3	212,573
Traditional African Religion	10	13,973
Other religion	12	1,389
No religion	16	13,660
Total	7	1,482,701
Education		
None	8	10,901
Preschool	12	41,795
Primary	10	235,513
Secondary	8	415,276
University	4	122,244
Other tertiary	6	6,796
Total	**8**	**832,525**

The 2022 census data revealed that the rate consensual union among all ethnic groups was 7 per cent. The census also showed that the ethnic group that had the highest percentage of consensual marriages were Mano, 14 per cent; and Gio and Belle, 12 per cent each. The second highest ethnic

group was Lorma, with 9 per cent; and 7 per cent for Grebo and Kpelle accordingly. The results also showed that ethnic groups with the lowest proportion of consensual marriages were Sapo and Gola, with 3 per cent respectively as indicated in Table 5.28.

Table 5.28 Percentage of consensual marriages by ethnic group

Ethnic group	Percent	Number
Bassa	4	169,426
Belle	12	7,602
Dey	4	3,666
Gbandi	4	36,206
Gio	12	88,805
Gola	3	49,806
Grebo	7	114,331
Kpelle	7	236,982
Kissi	4	51,033
Krahn	7	56,216
Kru	6	58,799
Lorma	9	52,490
Mandingo	3	53,188
Mano	14	77,054
Mende	6	22,642
Sapo	5	12,430
Vai	3	48,597
Other Liberian ethnic group	4	6,490
Other African tribe	4	21,203
Non African	4	2,745
Total	**7**	**1,169,711**

5.8 Trends of marital status

The summary of the marital status of Liberia's population showed a tremendous increase of 13 per cent in never-married persons aged 12 years and above from 2008 to 2022. Monogamous fell by 3 per cent for the intercensal period of 2008 to 2022 while polygamous married nearly stabilize. There was a 2.1 per cent increase in consensual marriages, which may have implications for the reduction in monogamous marriage and the stagnation in polygamous marriage from 2008 to 2022. The differentials in type of marriages for the intercensal period is indicated in Figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7 Trends in the type of marriages from 2028 to 2022
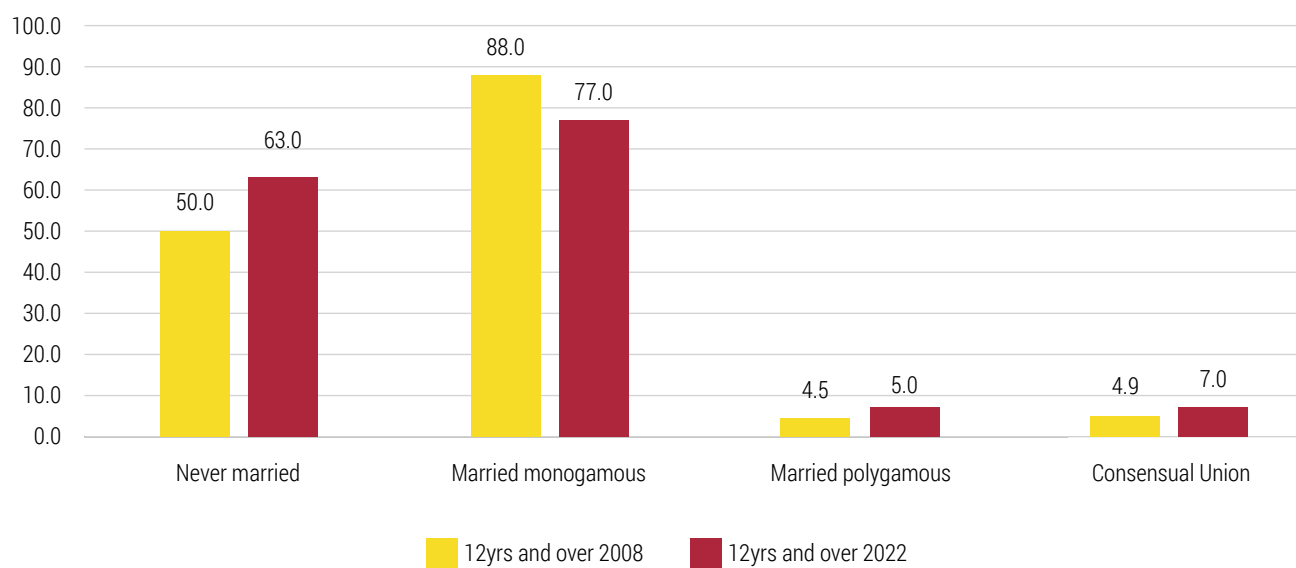
Chapter 6: Conclusions, recommendations and policy implications

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the conclusions, recommendations and explains some policy options to address the situation of marriages and their implications on the social, health and demographic situation in Liberia.

6.2 Conclusions

The nuptiality data from the 2022 census provided important data for development planning. It reveals more recent estimates on nuptiality that could be used to inform and strengthen Liberia's development programmes and policy processes with important targets for Liberia. There were some identified problems with the nuptiality data, but these shortcomings do not outweigh the values of the indicators from the analysis. The study provides some important transformation that Liberia's marriageable population is experiencing. Some of the most important changes include but are not limited to the following:

1. Increasing CMR from 261 per 1,000 population in 2008 to 277 per 1,000 population in 2022

2. Increasing never-married population from 93.2 per cent in 2008 to 98.2 per cent in 2022

3. Never-married population is experiencing declining rates, even among children 12-17 years

4. Growing SMAM from 26 years in 2008 to 29 years in 2022, where female SMA is more than that of male

5. Declining monogamous marriages; stagnated polygamous marriages

6. Increasing separations; declining divorces; stagnated widowhood

7. Rising consensual marriages from 2008 to 2022

8. Religious affiliation influenced ever-married children's population

9. Religious affiliation influenced never-married children's population: no religion (98.2 per cent); Christians (97.3 per cent) and Muslims (96.1 per cent); Christians, Muslims and people of no religion had the lowest mean age of child marriage (14 years)

10. Declining marriages in urban than rural areas; lower child marriages in urban than rural areas; more separation of marriages in rural than urban; more consensual marriages in urban than rural areas; monogamous and polygamous are the same for urban and rural areas

11. Declining marriages for secondary school level and above

6.3 Recommendations

Socio-cultural beliefs and practices such as polygamy are holding back the successful implementation of family planning programmes to reduce fertility. It is therefore critical to recommend the following:

Education beyond the primary level should be encouraged. Educational campaigns using role models in society are particularly effective. Special support programmes such as grants for deserving or deprived female students would help to keep girls in education. They would serve as an inducement to families to educate their children and help reduce pronatalist beliefs and practices. Involving women in the nation's development is essential to reducing fertility levels. Programmes designed to foster women's economic independence should be established. It is recommended that domestic and rural crafts, agro-allied and small-scale medium-sized industries and enterprises to help improve the economic status of women are set up using micro-financing assistance. This increased social and economic independence of women would help lower fertility.

The MAM is low, which is of great concern as adolescent pregnancies pose health risks to mother and child, as well as many social consequences. The Government should revise the present minimum age at first marriage from 18 to 20 years.

To end child marriage, traditional leaders and community-based women's groups should be educated via public education programmes (for example, radio shows) about the dangers of adolescent pregnancies.

To reduce fertility and improve the quality of life for families, population and development programme committees must be set up at the district and community level using local council structures. These committees must step up information and education campaigns using adult literacy programmes and the mass media. These can increase citizens' awareness of the negative effects of rapid population growth on societal development and encourage them to take some action towards fertility reduction and improved family life.

6.4 Policy implications

The 2022 census data showed a low age at early first marriage, especially among children . The existence of the Rape Law that puts age at first sexual intercourse at 18 years. The rape law also supports the legal age at marriage for girls to be 18 years. Although the SMAM grew from 24 years in 2008 to 27 years in 2022, there is still a huge percentage of population that is not only having early sexual intercourse before age 18 but is also marrying as low as age 12 years old.

Although the devolution act states that girls are allowed to be 18 years old to marry[9], which is 3 years of remaining single, the SMAM from the 2022 census suggests that girls are staying single for 12 years (after age 15) before marrying at 27 years across the country. The child marriage level shows that many marriages are occurring before the age of 15 years, which seems to suggest that the rape law and devolution act seem not to be effective. It should be noted, however, that marriage is a social and cultural practice, and that monitoring or enforcing the implementation of the laws/ policies against it could face some difficulties, including possible resistance from some gatekeepers of the socio-cultural system quarters.

Delaying marriage has social, health and demographic consequences. The social consequences of marriage could lead to the improvement in the status of women through the acquisition of higher levels of education and higher skills to address poverty and other problems. The health benefits of delayed marriages include but not limited to the ability for women to take proper care to reduce maternal and child death. This is quite relevant because younger mothers have less experience of childcare as compared with older ones.

The demographic implications of slowing down or reducing the rate of marriage in the population could lead to a reduction in fertility levels, especially in situations where non-marital births are low. The decline in Liberia's fertility has been slow with the average TFR still within the natural fertility regime, and family planning making minimum impact. In addition, slowing down marriages could increase contraceptive use, assuming that unmarried women could increase the use of contraceptives.

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