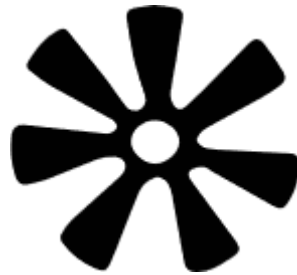


Knowledge Institutions in Africa and their development 1960-2020

Liberia

Introduction

This report about the development of the knowledge institutions in Liberia was made as part of the preparations for the AfricaKnows! Conference (2 December 2020 – 28 February 2021) in Leiden and elsewhere, see www.africaknows.eu.



Reports like these can never be complete, and there might also be mistakes. Additions and corrections are welcome! Please send those to dietzaj@asc.leidenuniv.nl

Highlights

- 1 Liberia's population increased from 1.1 million in 1960, via 2.1 million in 1990, to 5.1 million in 2020.
- 2 Liberia's literacy rate is low: 48% (15 years and older, 2017).
- 3 The so-called education index (used as part of the human development index) improved between 1999 (earlier data not available) and 2018: from .354 to .422 (it can vary between 0 and 1).
- 4 Regional inequality in education is pretty high throughout the period. Montserrado (the county where the capital is located) always had the best position and also the fastest development. Bong performed worst throughout the period. Grand Cape Mount had the slowest development.
- 5 The Mean Years of Schooling for adults increased between 1999 and 2018, from 3.39 years to 4.67 years. There was and is very high regional inequality..
- 6 The Expected Years of Schooling for children improved: from 8.69 to 9.58 years. There is middle high regional inequality.
- 7 Tertiary education in Liberia started in the 1920s. Currently there are two public tertiary knowledge institutions in Liberia and 24 private ones. There are 47,000 students in Liberia's higher education institutions.
- 8 According to the 4ICU website Liberia does not have any institutes in the continent's top 200.
- 9 Liberia's think tanks: we found information on nine think tanks in Liberia.
- 10 Museums: Liberia has one official museum.

Part 1: The Story

Liberia's demographic and education development

Liberia is a country on the west coast of Africa, bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinée and Côte d'Ivoire. Liberia began as a settlement for freed and free-born African-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans in the first quarter of the 19th century. Independence was proclaimed in 1847, making Liberia Africa's first and oldest modern republic.

Liberia's population increased from 1.1 million in 1960 to 5.1 million in mid-2020. In 1960, only 18.7% of the population lived in cities (only 208,000 people), while the urban population has increased to 52.6% or 2.7 million. Liberia's largest city is the capital Monrovia.

Liberia's life expectancy increased from 33 years for males and 38 years for females in 1960 to 64 years for males and 67 years for females currently. The median age first decreased from 19.3 years in 1960 to 17.3 years in 1985. Since then, it started to increase and is presently 19.4 years. In 1960 an average woman gave birth to 6.3 live-born children, which increased to 7 in 1985. Since then, the fertility rate has been decreasing and currently an average woman gives birth to 4.4 live-born children¹.



Source: Nations Online Project: <https://www.nationsonline.org/one-world/map/liberia-map.htm>

1 <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/liberia-population/>

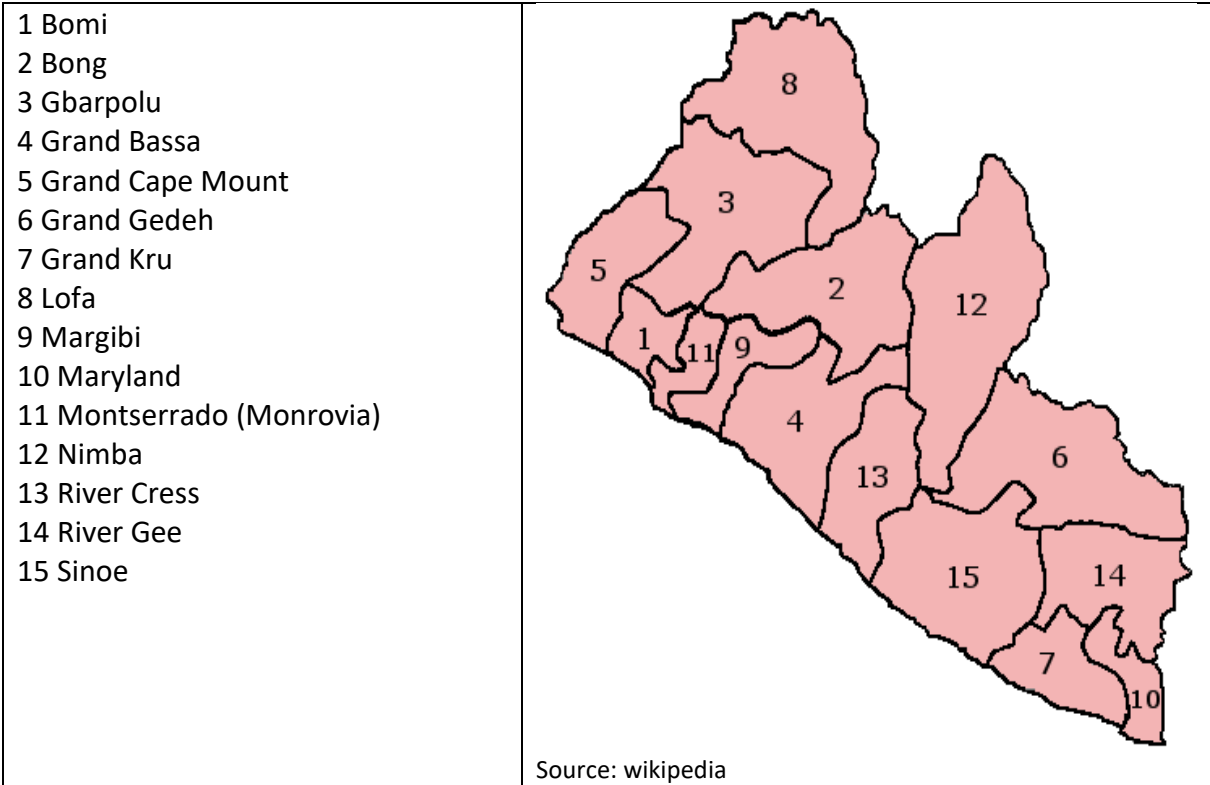
Literacy and enrolment

According to UNESCO the adult literacy rate of Liberia was 48% in 2017 (63% for men and 34% for women). Of the youth (15-24 years old) 162,000 males and 247,000 females were regarded as illiterate in 2017. For the adult population as a whole these figures are 510,000 for males and 913,000 for females.

Liberia’s population of primary school age children (6-11 years) is about 772,000 children². Education is compulsory from age 6 to age 11 (6 years). 44% of the primary school age group attend primary school (2017). Children with the age to attend secondary school (12-17) are 675,000. 16% are attending secondary school according to the latest figures (2015): males 17% and females lagging behind at 15%. Finally, 388,000 people are in the age category to attend tertiary education (people between 19 and 22). Gross enrolment rates for tertiary education increased from 10% in 2010 to 12% in 2012 with females at 9%, and males at 15%. This means that 47,000 students are studying at higher education institutions in Liberia. According to Campusfrance there were 44,000 in 2012, and 900 abroad in 2017 (many of them in the USA, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Morocco, in that order³).

Regional differentiation of education results, 1999-2018

The information provided by the Globaldatalab about the subregional human development index, its components and its indicators (<https://globaldatalab.org/shdi>) provides data for the period between 1999 and 2018, for 15 counties in Liberia (see map and list below).



² <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/lr>

³ https://ressources.campusfrance.org/publications/mobilite_pays/en/liberia_en.pdf

The Globaldatalab provides data about the education index (one of the three indexes that together form the Human Development Index), and about two relevant indicators: mean years of schooling, showing the average education level of the adult population per region, and expected years of education, showing the expected number of years current children will attend schools. This excludes the Islamic religious schools and only deals with the official, state-based, school system.

We present the data for the years 1999 (earliest year available), 2010, and 2018 (the latest year available at the moment). See tables 1-4 in part 2 ('the data').

Education index

The education index has improved in all of Liberia's counties between 1999 and 2010 (see table 1 in part 2). Performing best throughout is Montserrado (the region where the capital is located). Montserrado also has the fastest development. Bong performs worst throughout the period. Slowest development was in county Grand Cape Mount, though the differences between the counties are small in this respect.

Regional inequality is fairly high and consistent throughout the period.

There does not appear to be any correlation between population growth and development. We compare 1999 with 2018. See table 2 in part 2.

Mean years of education

According to UNESCO, 'Mean Years of Schooling' is an indicator about the "average number of completed years of education of a country's population aged 25 years and older, excluding years spent repeating individual grades".⁴

The educational standard of the adult population of Liberia has improved in all of the counties between 1999 and 2018 (see table 3 in part 2). Regional inequality has been very high throughout the period though. Performing best throughout is Montserrado. No fewer than 13 counties have an equal overall score. Bomi has the slowest development, though the differences between the counties are small.

Expected years of education

UNDP defines the 'expected years of schooling' as the: "Number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life".⁵

For Liberian children educational prospects have improved in all of the counties between 1999 and 2018 (see table 4 in part 2). Regional inequality has been middle high throughout the period. Performing best throughout is Montserrado. Performing marginally better when comparing 2018 to 1999 are Maryland and Montserrado.

⁴ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/mean-years-schooling>

⁵ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/expected-years-schooling-children-years>

Liberia’s tertiary knowledge development

Liberia currently has about 26 universities or other tertiary institutions, though it is unclear if all of the private institutes mentioned in the table below are still operational. There are two public ones and 24 private ones, many of them with a religious background. Tertiary education started in the late 1800s. There have nearly always been more private than public institutes. Most tertiary institutions in Liberia are located in or near the capital city Monrovia. There are also some think tanks and museums in Liberia.

Historically the development of the number of universities is as given in the following table.

Liberia’s universities and other tertiary institutions 1960 – 2020

Type	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Public	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Private	1	1	3	3	4	8	9	14	17	24 ⁶
Total	2	2	4	4	5	9	10	16	19	26

Sources: see tables 5 and 6 in part 2.

Public and private universities in Liberia

See tables 5 and 6 in part 2.



University of Liberia, Fendel Campus⁷



Cuttington University⁸



African Methodist Episcopal University⁹

⁶ Including the institutes with an unknown year of establishment

⁷ Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:University_of_Liberia_-_Fendel_Campus.jpg

⁸ Source: <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-cuttington-university-to-graduate-678-friday/>

⁹ Source: <https://easyliberia.com/homeplace>

Regional distribution of Liberia's Universities

18 out of the 26 institutes for tertiary education are located in or around the capital Monrovia. The other institutes are located in six different counties.

Think tanks and other knowledge institutions in Liberia

According to the 2018 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, there are four think tanks or research institutes in Liberia, outside the university system. See table 8 in part 2.

Museums in Liberia



The National Museum of Liberia¹⁰

Besides the National Museum of Liberia we did not find any other functioning Museum in Liberia. See table 9 in part 2.

¹⁰ <https://afrotourism.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LiberianNationalMuseum1.jpg>

Part 2: The Data

Table 1: Liberia: Education index 1999-2018¹¹

County	1999	2010	2018	2018/1999
Bomi	0.335	0.376	0.391	1.17
Bong	0.240	0.270	0.282	1.18
Gbarpolu	0.293	0.328	0.343	1.17
Grand Bassa	0.263	0.295	0.309	1.17
Grand Cape Mount	0.258	0.288	0.300	1.16
Grand Gedeh	0.339	0.382	0.401	1.18
Grand Kru	0.342	0.385	0.404	1.18
Lofa	0.290	0.325	0.338	1.17
Margibi	0.346	0.391	0.411	1.19
Maryland	0.370	0.418	0.440	1.19
Montserrado	0.444	0.505	0.537	1.21
Nimba	0.341	0.384	0.403	1.18
River Cress	0.277	0.310	0.324	1.17
River Gee	0.299	0.338	0.356	1.19
Sinoe	0.327	0.368	0.385	1.18
Total	0.354	0.400	0.422	1.19
Inequality	1.9	1.9	1.9	

Table 2: Liberia: changes in regional population between 1999 and 2018; population numbers in millions

County	1999	2010	2018	2018/1999
Bomi	0.08	0.11	0.14	1.75
Bong	0.29	0.42	0.52	1.79
Gbarpolu	0.06	0.08	0.11	1.83
Grand Bassa	0.14	0.21	0.26	1.86
Grand Cape Mount	0.13	0.18	0.23	1.77
Grand Gedeh	0.06	0.08	0.10	1.67
Grand Kru	0.07	0.11	0.13	1.86
Lofa	0.15	0.21	0.26	1.73
Margibi	0.21	0.30	0.38	1.81
Maryland	0.08	0.12	0.15	1.88
Montserrado	0.92	1.33	1.65	1.80
Nimba	0.36	0.52	0.64	1.78
River Cress	0.05	0.07	0.08	1.60
River Gee	0.04	0.05	0.06	1.50
Sinoe	0.07	0.10	0.12	1.71
Total	2.70	3.89	4.82	

¹¹ The HDI data, and its components go from 0 (worst level) to 1 (best level). We present the figures x 1000. The inequality figure is the highest value divided by the lowest value in a particular year.

Table 3: Liberia: Regional data for ‘mean years of schooling

County	1999	2010	2018	2018/1999
Bomi	2.40	2.90	3.31	1.34
Bong	1.87	2.26	2.58	1.38
Gbarpolu	2.17	2.62	2.99	1.38
Grand Bassa	2.06	2.49	2.84	1.38
Grand Cape Mount	1.74	2.10	2.40	1.38
Grand Gedeh	2.93	3.54	4.04	1.38
Grand Kru	2.93	3.53	4.03	1.38
Lofa	1.92	2.32	2.64	1.38
Margibi	3.20	3.87	4.41	1.38
Maryland	3.51	4.23	4.83	1.38
Montserrado	5.18	6.26	7.14	1.38
Nimba	3.04	3.67	4.19	1.38
River Cress	2.03	2.45	2.80	1.38
River Gee	2.93	3.54	4.04	1.38
Sinoe	2.75	3.32	3.78	1.37
Total	3.39	4.09	4.67	1.38
Inequality	3.0	3.0	3.0	

Table 4: Liberia: Regional data for ‘expected years of schooling

County	1999	2010	2018	2018/1999
1.5Bomi	9.18	10.0	10.1	1.10
Bong	6.39	6.99	7.05	1.10
Gbarpolu	7.93	8.68	8.75	1.10
Grand Bassa	6.98	7.64	7.70	1.10
Grand Cape Mount	7.19	7.86	7.93	1.10
Grand Gedeh	8.69	9.51	9.59	1.10
Grand Kru	8.80	9.62	9.70	1.10
Lofa	8.15	8.92	8.99	1.10
Margibi	8.62	9.42	9.50	1.10
Maryland	9.12	9.98	10.1	1.11
Montserrado	9.76	10.7	10.8	1.11
Nimba	8.61	9.42	9.49	1.10
River Cress	7.52	8.22	8.29	1.10
River Gee	7.24	7.91	7.98	1.10
Sinoe	8.46	9.25	9.33	1.10
Total	8.69	9.50	9.58	1.10
Inequality	1.5	1.5	1.5	

Table 5: Public universities in Liberia

University	Year of establishment	Location
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University of Liberia (UL) (https://ul.edu.lr/) (4icu rank: 2 in Liberia, and 11707 worldwide)	1951 (1862)	Monrovia
(William V.S.) Tubman University (http://www.tubmanu.edu.lr/)	2009 (1978)	Harper

Sources: 4icu, Wikipedia, WHED.

Table 6: Private universities in Liberia

University	Year of establishment	Location	Religious affiliation
Booker Washington Institute (BWI) (http://bwitech.edu.lr/give-to-bwi-2/welcome/)	1929	Monrovia	no
African Bible College University (http://africanbiblecolleges.com/abcliberia)	1976	Yekepa	yes
Liberia Assemblies of God Bible College (LAGBC) (https://lagbiblecollege.org/)	1980	Monrovia	yes
African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU) (http://www.ame.edu.lr/) (4icu rank: 3 in Liberia, and 12265 worldwide)	1995	Monrovia	yes
African Methodist Episcopal Zion University (AMEZU) (http://amezion.edu.lr/)	1996 (1983)	Monrovia	yes
Cuttington University (CU) (http://www.cu.edu.lr/) (4icu rank: 1 in Liberia, and 10361 worldwide)	1998 (1889)	Monrovia	yes
United Methodist University (UMU) (http://umu.edu.lr/) (4icu rank: 4 in Liberia, and 12508 worldwide)	1998	Monrovia	yes
Smythe Institute of Management and Technology (https://smytheinstitutedotorg.wordpress.com/)	1999	Monrovia	no
Stella Maris Polytechnic (SMPU) (http://smp.edu.lr/index.html)	2005 (1988)	Monrovia	yes
Starz University (https://starzit.com/)	2009	Monrovia	no
Liberia International Christian College (LICC) (https://www.hopeintheharvest.org/liberia-international-christian-college-licc/)	2009	Ganta	yes
Adventist University of West Africa (AUWA) (http://auwa.edu.lr/)	2010	Monrovia	yes
Nimba University College (http://www.nuc.edu.lr/)	2010	Sanniquellie City	no
St. Clements University (http://www.stclements.edu/liberia/)	2010	Monrovia	yes
BlueCrest University College Liberia (https://liberia.bluecrestcollege.com/)	2014	Monrovia	no
Barshell University	2014	Monrovia	no
Censil University (http://censiluniversity.com/)	2015	Monrovia	no
Christian Theological Seminar (CTS)	?	Monrovia	yes

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Grand Bassa Community College	?	Grand Bassa County	no
Grand Gedeh Community College	?	Grand Gedeh County	no
Sinoe Community College	?	Sinoe County	no
Trinity Bible Community College	?	Margibi County	yes
Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary	?	Monrovia	yes
Brewerville Institute of Technology	?	Brewerville	no

Sources: 4icu, Wikipedia, WHED.

Table 7: Regional distribution of universities in Liberia

County	Public	Private	Total	Number per million inhabitants
Bomi	0	0	0	0
Bong	0	0	0	0
Gbarpolu	0	0	0	0
Grand Bassa	0	1	1	3.8
Grand Cape Mount	0	0	0	0
Grand Gedeh	0	1	1	10
Grand Kru	0	0	0	0
Lofa	0	0	0	0
Margibi	0	1	1	2.6
Maryland	1	0	1	6.7
Montserrado	1	17	18	10.9
Nimba	0	3	3	4.7
River Cress	0	0	0	0
River Gee	0	0	0	0
Sinoe	0	1	1	8.3
Total	2	24	26	5.4

For the last column we used the population numbers as given in table 2.

Table 8: Think tanks and other knowledge institutions in Liberia

Think tanks	Year of establishment	Location
The Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP)	2003	Monrovia
Carter Center International	2003	
Search for Common Ground		
Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD)		Monrovia
African Development Associates (ADEAS)		Liberia
Sustainable Development Insitute (SDI)		Monrovia
Liberia Media Center (LMC)		Monrovia
The Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL)		Monrovia
Liberian Institute for Policy Studies and Research		Monrovia

(Sources; https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=think_tanks (for: 2018 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report); <http://africathinktanks.org/think-tanks>

Table 9: Museums in Liberia

Museums	websites	Location
National Museum of Liberia	https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/liberian-national-museum (not the official museum website)	Monrovia

(source: Wikipedia: Museums, and other sources, like <https://www.arts-store.com/mus%C3%A9es-museums-world-1/>).
Not included: cultural centres

This report was made by Jade Szegedi (Minor African Dynamics 2019/2020 and student in cultural anthropology and development sociology at Leiden University; the minor programme was supervised by Marleen Dekker and Madi Ditmars, responsible for this Minor programme of Leiden, Delft and Rotterdam Universities) and revised and extended by Maaïke Westra, and Ton Dietz (African Studies Centre Leiden).