



EDUCATION FACT SHEET-LIBERIA

In Brief	<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>Liberia Population: 4.9 million Liberia Size: 111,369 km² (43,000 mi²)</p> <p>National Curriculum: Yes</p> <p>Literacy: 54% (2014) Youth Literacy: 69% (2010) Female Youth Literacy: 47.9% (2014)</p> <p>Government Education Expenditure: 3.83% of GDP (2017)</p> <p>Years of Public School: 15 Pre-Primary: 3 Primary: 6 Junior Secondary: 3 Senior Secondary: 3</p> <p>Language of Instruction: English</p> <p>High School Leaving Exams: Yes</p>
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<p>Education Overview</p>	<p>School Structure</p> <p>Liberia has a 3-6-3-3 formal education structure. There are three years of pre-primary school, which has an official entry age of three and is referred to as early childhood education. Primary school, which is known as lower basic education, has an official entry age of six and duration of six grades.</p> <p>Secondary school is divided into two cycles: lower secondary and upper secondary. Lower secondary, which is known as upper basic education consists of grades 7- 9 and culminates in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) Certificate; upper secondary, which is known as senior secondary education, consists of grades 10-12 and starting in 2018 culminates in the West African Examination Council Senior Secondary Certificate (WASSCE). On paper, three years of pre-primary school and six years of primary and secondary schools are free and compulsory.</p> <p>Nearly 60% of schools combine pre-primary and primary levels. There are four main categories of schools in Liberia: public, community, private, and mission schools. The vast majority of schools are run by private providers and religious institutions. Non-public education providers account for 43% of primary schools, 60% of junior high schools, and 71% of senior high schools.</p> <p>Education Cost and Financing</p> <p>Education in Liberia is financed by multiple sources including the government, donors and private out-of-pocket contributions. The share of donor financing of the education sector is fairly high. However, there is no mechanism to track donors’ contributions to the sector. Most development funds are channelled outside the national budget system and go directly to implementing agencies.</p> <p>The education sector share of government expenditure over the years has ranged from 10.6% to 13.5% of total annual spending, with employee compensation accounting for a majority of the Ministry of Education (MoE) expenditure ranging from 86% to 94% from 2012/13 - 2014/15. In 2014/15 when the overall budget to MoE remained low due to the Ebola crisis, 94% of funding was used for compensating employees.</p> <p>Households shoulder a large share of the overall costs to educate Liberian children. Household expenditure on education per pupil varies greatly by household wealth. At the national level, slightly over 50% of households spend less than 6,000 Liberian dollars (US\$32) annually on public education. When wealth level is factored in, it becomes clear that nearly 80% of low income families spend less than 3,500 Liberian dollars (US\$19) annually. (MoE, 2016)</p>
<p>School System</p>	<p>National Curriculum</p> <p>The national curriculum for Liberia was approved in 2011. The MoE has produced a curriculum statement for each subject taught for Grades 1-12.</p> <p>The national curriculum is compulsory for all government and community schools and widely used by mission and private schools. Over 90% of primary schools use the national curriculum.</p>

In high schools, 87.3% of schools use the national curriculum. (EMIS, 2016)

Delivery of the curriculum is organized around the school day and the school calendar. At the basic and secondary levels, the school day is comprised of six instructional blocks of 45 minutes each for a total of 4.5 hours of instructional time per school day. The school year is comprised of over 200 instructional days (per the Education Act).

High School Leaving Exam

To complete senior secondary education, consisting of grades 10-12, Students are required to sit and pass a national high school leaving exam. The test is managed by WAEC Liberia. Until 2018, students in Liberia were required to take the Liberia Senior High School Certificate Exams (LSHCE). In 2018 the MoE transitioned to the West African Examination Council Senior Secondary Certificate, WASSCE.

While many students sit for the exams every year, pass rates have dropped, raising concerns about the quality of basic and secondary education. Lower secondary pass rates dropped from 95% to 59% between 2007 and 2014 and LSHCE pass rates dropped from 81% to 48% during the same time frame. As a further evidence of the drop in student performance, a whopping 25,000 students sitting for the University of Liberia entrance exam failed in 2015, a 100% failure rate.

Transition to WASSCE

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with WAEC piloted the administration of WASSCE in 2016 in attempts to upgrade the previously administered WAEC exams to WASSCE taken by all final year students in Anglophone West Africa. The policy is aimed at standardizing exams so that there is an international accreditation for certificates issued to individuals who successfully pass the exams. However, major questions have been raised about the preparedness of students to match up regionally without intentional changes in curriculum and investments to improve learning outcomes. Students are expected to transition to a newer and more rigorous testing regime without similar changes in instruction.

According to WAEC 2018, out of 33,124 candidates that sat the examination, 21,580 were unsuccessful while 11, 544 students were successful with a handful of successful candidates getting credits in any subject. The report also shows that the 21,580 candidates that failed the examination represent 65.51% and 11,544 that passed represents 34.85%.

Higher Education

In 2014, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) recognized and accredited 33 higher education institutions (HEI), up from 30 in 2012. Nineteen of these HEIs are located in Montserrado County, within which the majority is concentrated in Monrovia.

Liberia has two state-run universities, with the University of Liberia being the largest in student population and academic diversity. There are a number of four-year colleges run by faith-based organizations and private companies. In 2012, the overall number of students enrolled in higher education reached 43,843, within which the University of Liberia accounted for 54.4% of total enrolment.

	<p>Only nine counties have the physical presence of at least one HEI. Most of these institutions are small and only ten had more than 500 students in 2012.</p> <p>At the tertiary level, students have limited options of disciplines from which to choose, with key areas of need for Liberia’s development unavailable to many students.</p> <p>Other notable challenges with Higher Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention of quality faculty, staff • Poor infrastructure, equipment, and curricula • Lack of student foundational skills • Inequity in access
<p>Country Context</p>	<p>Africa’s Oldest Republic</p> <p>Liberia, a small English-speaking West African country, became independent on July 26, 1847, and is Africa’s oldest republic. After nearly 14 years of intermittent war that claimed an estimated 270,000 lives, Liberia, in 2003, transitioned to a state of peace and stability. Liberia has a population of approximately 4.9 million people – 60% of whom are under the age of 24 (LISGIS projections, 2014).</p> <p>Three-quarters (75%) of the working population is employed in some form of vulnerable employment. Labor force participation in Liberia is 62.8%, of which 30.8% worked in the formal sector, 36.6% in agriculture, and 28.9% in informal or household sectors. The remaining 3.7% are not employed (2010 Labor Force Survey).</p> <p>A large share of Liberian children and youth are vulnerable and large numbers face multiple forms of exclusion.</p> <p>Economic Trends</p> <p>Liberia is struggling to recover from the twin shocks of the Ebola crisis and the sharp decline in commodity prices. Before the Ebola outbreak, Liberia experienced rapid economic growth following the post-conflict boost. The annual growth averaged at 7% between 2009-13, one of the highest GDP growth rates in the world. However, affected both by the decline in the price of natural resources (mining) and Ebola, the country went into economic depression. Liberia’s economy deteriorated in 2015, with GDP growth of 0.3%, down from 0.7% in 2014. The IMF forecasted recovery of the economy with GDP growth of 2.5% (WEO, 2016).</p>
<p>Study Abroad</p>	<p>The government of Liberia through the Education Ministry runs bilateral scholarships for Liberian students. Students studying in Morocco and China account for 90.5% of the 148 scholarships currently awarded. (MoE, 2019)</p> <p>The majority of high schools in Liberia do not provide guidance counseling services, thus students are unaware of international study opportunities, and those who are aware lack the institutional support to complete their applications. Aspects of student applications, like transcript submission and writing letters of recommendation that may be considered mundane in most places, would represent a serious challenge for most students.</p>

	<p>Also important to note is that testing services are centralized to Monrovia limiting access to a vast majority of students studying outside Montserrado.</p>
<p>Issues with the Education System</p>	<p>Fundamental Factors Limiting Progress</p> <p>School Quality</p> <p>By 2003, the majority of school infrastructure in Liberia was either destroyed or experienced war-related damage. In 2007, nearly 75% of schools were in a damaged or destroyed condition (MoE 2008). Liberia has made progress increasing the number of solid and semi-solid classrooms, however high student enrolment, especially in government schools, has led to high student classroom ratios.</p> <p>The MoE has not yet finalized school quality standards, nor has it developed uniform tools for school inspection and monitoring school quality. The MoE has several policy documents and concept papers which offer guidance on defining ‘school quality’ and provide frameworks for developing school quality standards and monitoring tools. However these documents have not yet been translated into tools that could be used by district education officers (DEOs), school principals and communities to monitor and improve school quality.</p> <p>Teacher Qualification and Availability</p> <p>A large proportion of the existing basic education teaching force does not have the knowledge or skills required to be effective in the classroom. Hiring practices over the past decade have allowed teachers to be employed with insufficient qualifications or lesser credentials. Many teachers who are considered ‘qualified’ may not have sufficient knowledge and skills due to previous ‘emergency’ certification programs.</p> <p>High levels of teacher absenteeism, long-term absenteeism, and post abandonment are seen as critical challenges facing the sector. In rural areas, teachers are often absent for many days because of the need to travel to banks to collect salaries.</p> <p>Many teachers face challenging working conditions on a daily basis and often receive limited institutional support. Many teachers work in the midst of unsafe and worn infrastructure, with insufficient resources (e.g., chalk, textbooks, curriculum guides).</p> <p>Inclusion and Access</p> <p>Liberia continues to have a large number of out-of-school children. An estimated 15-20% of children between the ages of 6-14 are not enrolled in school. The main reasons for low access to basic education are (i) school fees and expenses, (ii) late enrolment, and (iii) distance to school driven by poverty and rural status. Compared to children from wealthy and urban households, children from poor and rural households are less likely to attain basic education. According to DHS 2013, fewer than 47% of youth aged 10-19 from households in the low income background survive to Grade 6, compared to 88% of the same population from households with higher income levels. Similarly, 70% of youth aged 10-19 in urban areas survive until grade 9, compared to 35% of the same population in rural areas.</p> <p>Women and girls are under-represented in nearly all levels of education, including upper basic, senior high, TVET, tertiary education, and the teaching force. Women account for 37% of</p>

	<p>students enrolled in higher education in Liberia and just over 25% of students enrolled in the University of Liberia (NCHE 2012). Women are especially underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. In 2012, for instance, just 4.8 % of women graduating from tertiary education had completed science programs.</p> <p>Pregnancy interrupts the education of a large number of Liberian girls and young women. In a nationwide study, 67% of households responding to questions about reasons for not enrolling in school reported that pregnancy was the main reason that a girl in the household had dropped out of school.</p> <p>Growing demand with limited resources</p> <p>There is a growing school-age population seeking access to ECE and basic education. For example, only 77% of children entering Grade 1 have attended ECE, and this varies across the country, falling as low as 66% of Grade 1 entrants in Margibi County. Overage enrolment is a major problem at the ECE level. Although the Education Reform Act of 2011 mandates that “the age range for attendance in early childhood programs shall be from three to five years”, the practice of enrolling overage children is prevalent. Based on the 2015 - 16 School Census, 75% of ECE students are overage for the level they are attending. Notably, 47.74% of students are six or more years old, suggesting that nearly half of the students in ECE should be attending primary school. (MoE, 2016)</p>
Academic Calendar	<p>The academic year in Liberia officially runs from September to June. The year is organized into two semesters, each with three ‘marking’ periods. The school calendar indicates that period tests are to be given at the end of each marking period and a cumulative final exam is to be administered at the end of each school year.</p>
SAT Test Centers	<p>Stella Maris Polytechnic, Monrovia. (There are no ACT Test Centers.)</p>
IELTS/ TOEFL Centers	<p>Stella Maris Polytechnic, Monrovia</p> <p>Students generally meet the English language proficiency requirement by virtue of 15 years of education in English</p>

Best Time to Visit Schools	<p>Best time to visit schools in Liberia is between October and December. This is early enough in the year for students to make use of the college information shared and is also a time before senior high school students turn focus exclusively to exit exam prep. School attendance is higher during this period.</p>
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