LIBERIA INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS AND GEO-INFORMATION SERVICES

(LISGIS)

Thematic Report on Non-monetary Poverty

2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census

Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present this document as a highlight summary of the upcoming Thematic Report on Non-monetary Poverty from the 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census (LPHC). This summary offers a snapshot of the key findings and insights that will be detailed in the final report.

Please note that the full report is currently undergoing finalization, which includes comprehensive editing, formatting, graphic designing, and proofreading. The finalized version will replace this document once it is completed.

We appreciate your patience and look forward to sharing the complete report with you soon.

Best regards,

Johnson Q. Kei
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Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS)

Outline

⇒ Introduction: Background and Context

⇒ Methodology: Estimation procedures

⇒ Deprivation Analysis: By sex, locality and county

⇒ MPI Analysis: By characteristics of HH, locality & county

⇒ Conclusion, Policy implications and recommendations

❑ Poverty is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon and is related not only to the income or consumption, considered as monetary dimension of poverty, but also to non-monetary dimensions such as education, health, gender equality, water supply, and sanitation.

❑ Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

❑ Liberia is among the poorest countries in the world today, and this situation can be attributed to decades of mismanagement and the 14-year civil war which caused severe impairment to the country infrastructure.

❑ Stabilization and recovery of the Liberian economy began following the 2003 Peace Agreement and a democratically-elected government thereafter.

❑ The programs and policies implemented by the new government and its international partners helped stimulate the recovery. However, poverty remains widespread but on a declining trend.

❑ Measuring poverty can be a powerful instrument for focusing the attention of policy makers on the living conditions of the poor. Poverty data can inform policies intended to reduce poverty by:

a) allowing the assessment of the impact of projects, or crises, or government policies, on poverty;

b) permit the comparison of poverty over time; and

c) target the poor with the view of improving their conditions.

❑ Understanding the characteristics of poverty can help policy makers think about the impact of growth strategies and assess if poverty has increased or decreased, or whether general economic growth helped the poor.

❑ Using multidimensional approach in measuring poverty is a means to capture the complexity of poverty that considers dimensions of wellbeing beyond just monetary poverty.

❑ The 2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census (LPHC) collected enough information for examining and measuring non-monetary poverty among the population. Due to the enormous data censuses collect, they provide a more comprehensive basis to undertake this exercise unlike other household surveys, which may not be fully representative of all population groups accurately.

❑ The main advantage of using 2022 LPHC data in the estimation of non-monetary poverty is that the deprivation measure can be calculated for every household and can be disaggregated by population sub-groups.

❑ Non-monetary poverty means poverty not measured by income or consumption, but by other dimensions of wellbeing, such as education, health, access to basic services, and quality of life. Non-monetary poverty reflects the deprivation of essential assets and opportunities that every human being is entitled to. Applying a narrow definition of poverty and focusing on one dimension alone, such as income, fails to capture the true reality of people's circumstances.

❑ Thus, the use of income or expenditure as determinant of the poverty line within the context of the widely accepted view of poverty as multidimensional, is problematic.

❑ The MPI provides policy-relevant information: (i) easily disaggregated for different population sub-groups (e.g., rural/urban, regions, characteristics of household heads, etc.), (ii) gives information on the composition of poverty by indicator, (iii) can track progress in reducing poverty over time.

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Methodology

❏ The dimensions of non-monetary poverty were identified, and corresponding indicators selected. The selected indicators are more relevant to the national context to create national poverty measures.

❏ Deprivation cut-offs were established and estimated for different population characteristics: sex of household head, locality of residence, and county of residence

❏ The MPI was computed using the Alkire-Foster methodology (AF method). By aggregating various dimensions of poverty into one index, the AF method estimates incidence (H), the percentage of multi-dimensionally poor people, and intensity (A), the average percentage of dimensions in which poor people are deprived. The estimates have been done by characteristics of household head (sex, education attainment, and marital status), locality of residence and county of residence.

❏ All data used for the measurement of non-monetary poverty are derived from the 2022 LPHC. MPI estimates for Liberia in 2018 using indicators from the 2013 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey, have been used at the latter stages of the report to analyze trend in MPI.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth.

The 3 dimensions of poverty selected, therefore, are:

a) Education
b) Health
c) Living standards

Dimensions, indicators and deprivation cut-offs

Dimensions	Indicators	Cut-off (household deprived if ...)
Education	Access to primary school education	Walking distance to the nearest primary school is one hour or more
	Household school attainment	No member of the household has completed any level of education
	Child school attendance	Any of the children from 6 to 11 years not attending school
Health	Access to health facility	Walking distance to the nearest health facility is one hour or more
Living conditions	Electricity	The household has no electricity (i.e. the household is not connected to the national grid nor use own generator)
	Improved toilet facility	The household's toilet facility is not improved according to WHO guidelines
	Safe drinking water	The household does not have access to safe drinking water (according to WHO guidelines)
	Flooring	The household has an earth, mud or dung floor
	Cooking fuel	The household cooks with kerosene, wood, charcoal, and other solid fuel
	Ownership of basic household assets	Ownership of none of the following: mattress, radio, or mobile phone

❑ Studies have shown that education has a large impact on a country's poverty level (Bakhtiari & Meisami, 2010) and that investing in education is a way to reduce income inequality and poverty.

❑ Low levels of education hamper economic growth, which in turn slows down poverty reduction (UNESCO, 2017; Global Education Monitoring Report, 2019). UNESCO estimates that each year of schooling raises earnings by around 10%.

❑ A good level of education of a country is necessary to guarantee a sustainable economy, in which coexists satisfactory levels of quality of life and an equitable distribution of income.

❑ Household school attainment status: Completion of a level of education of members of the household acts as a proxy for the level of knowledge and understanding of household members.

❑ Access to primary education: Distribution of education infrastructure has impact on school attendance. Long distances to access a primary school affects school attendance and violates the country's Agenda for Transformation (AfT) which seeks to give "equal access to high-quality and free compulsory basic education".

❑ Children school attendance: Children from ages 6 to 11 should be in the primary school, as indicated in 2011 Education Reform Act that established the free and compulsory basic education.

❑ Access to healthcare is crucial for maintaining good health, preventing and managing diseases, and achieving health equity.

❑ Health poverty measures are useful to monitor deprivation in the domain of health.

❑ Ensuring equal access to care promotes health equity, therefore efforts to reduce disparities due to residential location is essential.

❑ Access to care when needed improves overall health and well-being. Patients should be able to seek care promptly when they perceive a need

❑ Access to health facility: Access to healthcare is a fundamental human right and a pillar of Liberia's sustainable development.

Living Conditions as a Poverty Dimension

❑ Living standard is one of the cardinal dimensions of poverty and it is made up of safe drinking water, clean cooking fuel, improved sanitation, improved floor of house, electricity and assets.

❑ Alkire and Santos (2014) established that in countries with high poverty incidence and MPI, the living standard dimension is the largest contributor to overall poverty.

❑ **Electricity:** Many recent research findings point out that access to electricity significantly reduces poverty and enhances economic welfare in developing countries.

❑ **Safe drinking water:** In many countries, preventable water-borne disease keeps a large portion of the population in a cycle of illness, illiteracy, and poverty. Safe water is therefore a fundamental requirement for human well-being and is closely tied to poverty alleviation efforts.

❑ **Clean cooking fuel:** According to WHO, the use of solid fuels in households is associated with increased mortality from pneumonia and other acute lower respiratory diseases among children, as well as increased mortality from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer among adults.

❑ **Improved sanitation:** SDG 6 targets calls for universal access to safely managed sanitation to reduce health consequences caused by the lack of access to adequate sanitation

❑ **Floor:** Rights to decent living provides a backstop against the burdens of environmental harm, and a decent housing is the first step to a better life. The materials used to construct the floor of a dwelling gives an indication of the socioeconomic status of the occupants

❑ **Asset:** Many studies on multidimensional poverty considered assets as one of the most important poverty indicators, alongside education and health. Asset scores are widely used as the preferred method of measuring socioeconomic wellbeing of households in developing countries

Male-headed households are deprived in more of the indicators than female-headed households (ie. except in household school attainment and household assets)

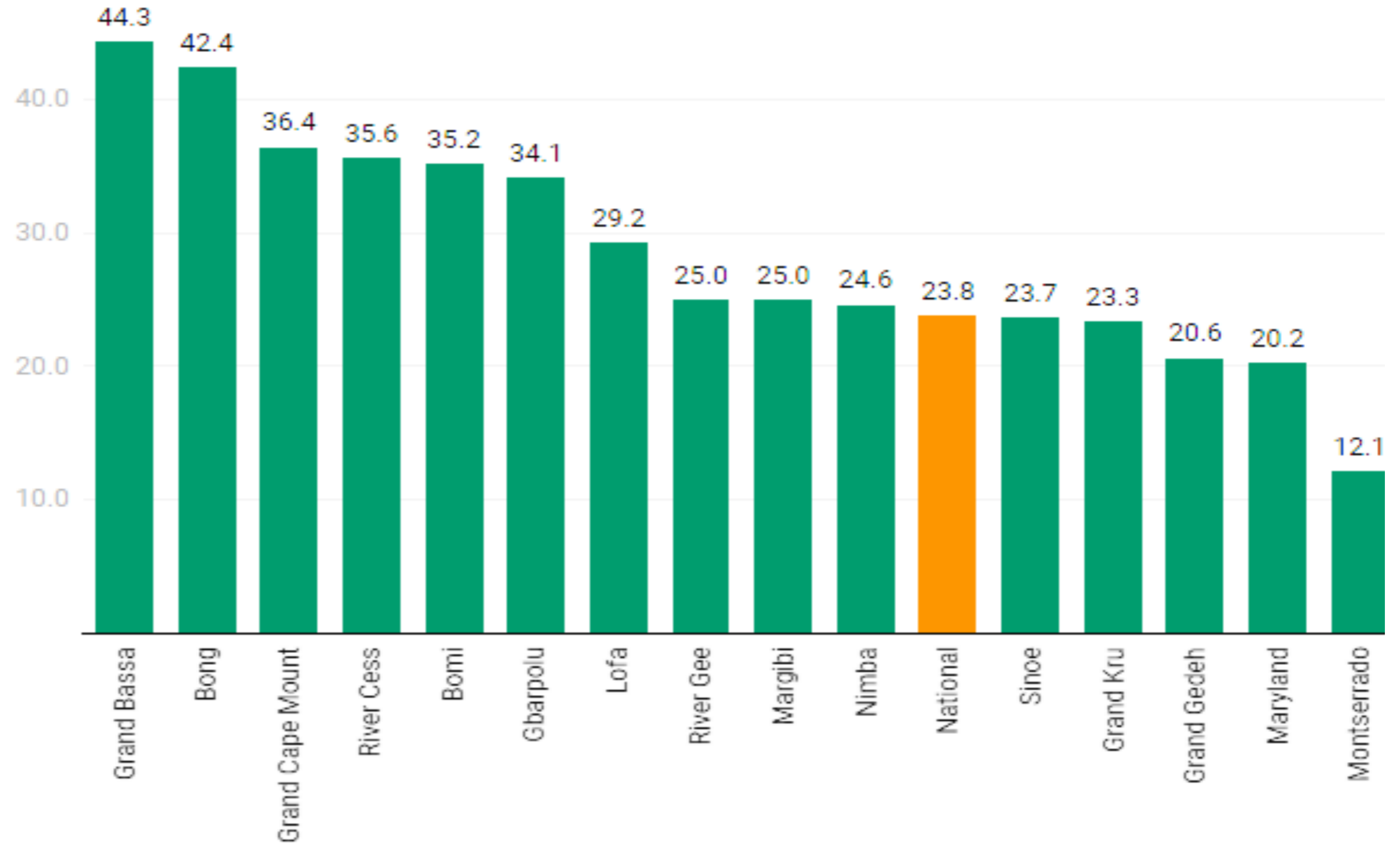| Dimension/indicator	Male	Female	National
Education			
Household school attainment	22.7	25.9	23.8
Childern school attendance	31.8	29.2	30.8
Access to primary school	12.8	9.7	11.7
Health			
Acces to health facility	31.3	26.6	29.7
Living conditions			
Electricity	61.7	61.5	61.7
Safe drinking water	32.1	28.2	30.7
Clean cooking fuel	97.5	97.8	97.6
Improved sanitation	44.9	40.7	43.4
Improved floor material	37.3	34.2	36.2
Mattress	15.7	16.9	16.2
Radio	49.0	59.7	52.8
Cellphone	36.0	37.6	36.6

The deprivation in the rural localities far outweigh that of their urban counterparts in all the indicators

Dimension/indicator	Urban	Rural	National
Education			
Household school attainment	13.1	36.9	**23.8**
Childern school attendance	18.7	45.4	**30.8**
Access to primary school	4.5	20.5	**11.7**
Health			
Acces to health facility	11.7	51.4	**29.7**
Living conditions			
Electricity	42.4	85.0	**61.7**
Safe drinking water	23.4	39.6	**30.7**
Clean cooking fuel	96.2	99.3	**97.6**
Improved sanitation	20.0	71.8	**43.4**
Improved floor material	12.3	65.2	**36.2**
Mattress	7.1	27.1	**16.2**
Radio	45.0	62.3	**52.8**
Cellphone	19.1	57.8	**36.6**

Two-thirds of the counties are deprived in household school attainment above the national average. Grand Bassa and Bong have more than 2 out of 5 households deprived
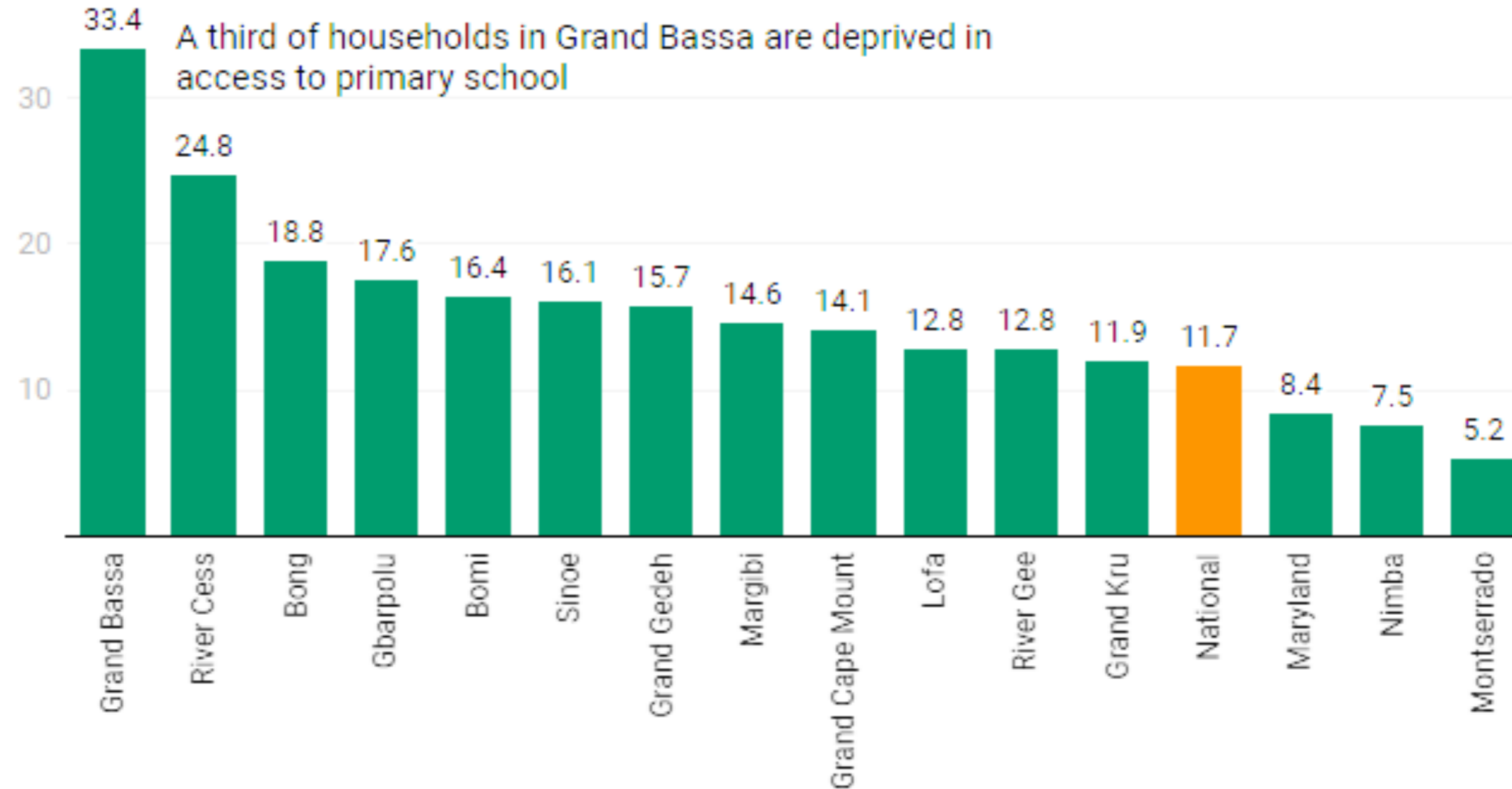

County	Value
Grand Bassa	44.3
Bong	42.4
Grand Cape Mount	36.4
River Cess	35.6
Bomi	35.2
Gbarpolu	34.1
Lofa	29.2
River Gee	25.0
Margibi	25.0
Nimba	24.6
National	23.8
Sinoe	23.7
Grand Kru	23.3
Grand Gedeh	20.6
Maryland	20.2
Montserrado	12.1

Only 3 counties – Montserrado, Nimba & Maryland - have deprivation in access to primary school below the national average
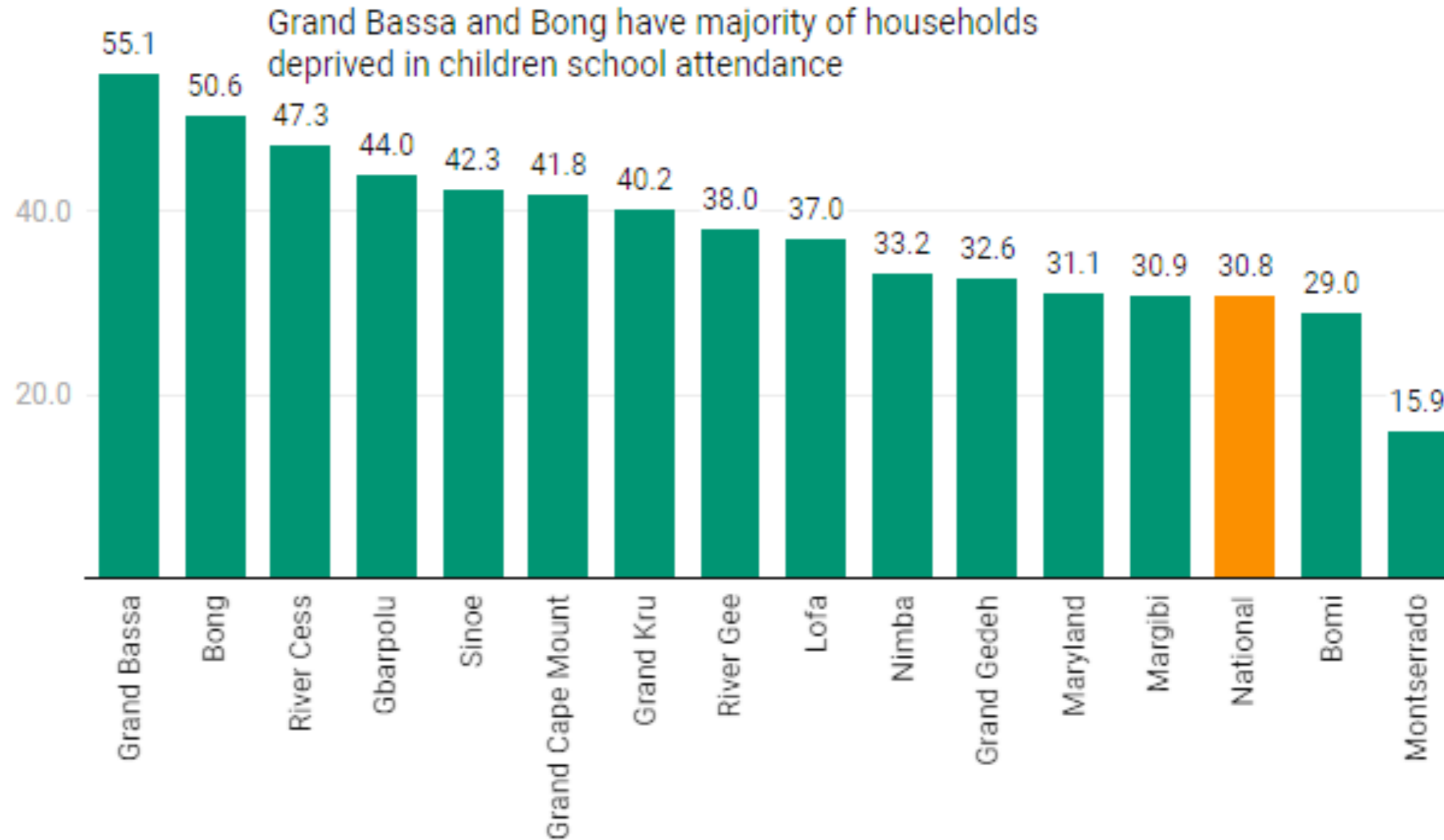
Access to primary school - county

A third of households in Grand Bassa are deprived in access to primary school

County	Value
Grand Bassa	33.4
River Cess	24.8
Bong	18.8
Gbarpolu	17.6
Bomi	16.4
Sinoe	16.1
Grand Gedeh	15.7
Margibi	14.6
Grand Cape Mount	14.1
Lofa	12.8
River Gee	12.8
Grand Kru	11.9
National	11.7
Maryland	8.4
Nimba	7.5
Montserrado	5.2

Montserrado (15.9%) and Bomi (29.0%) are the counties with deprivation below the national average (30.8%)

Children school attendance - county
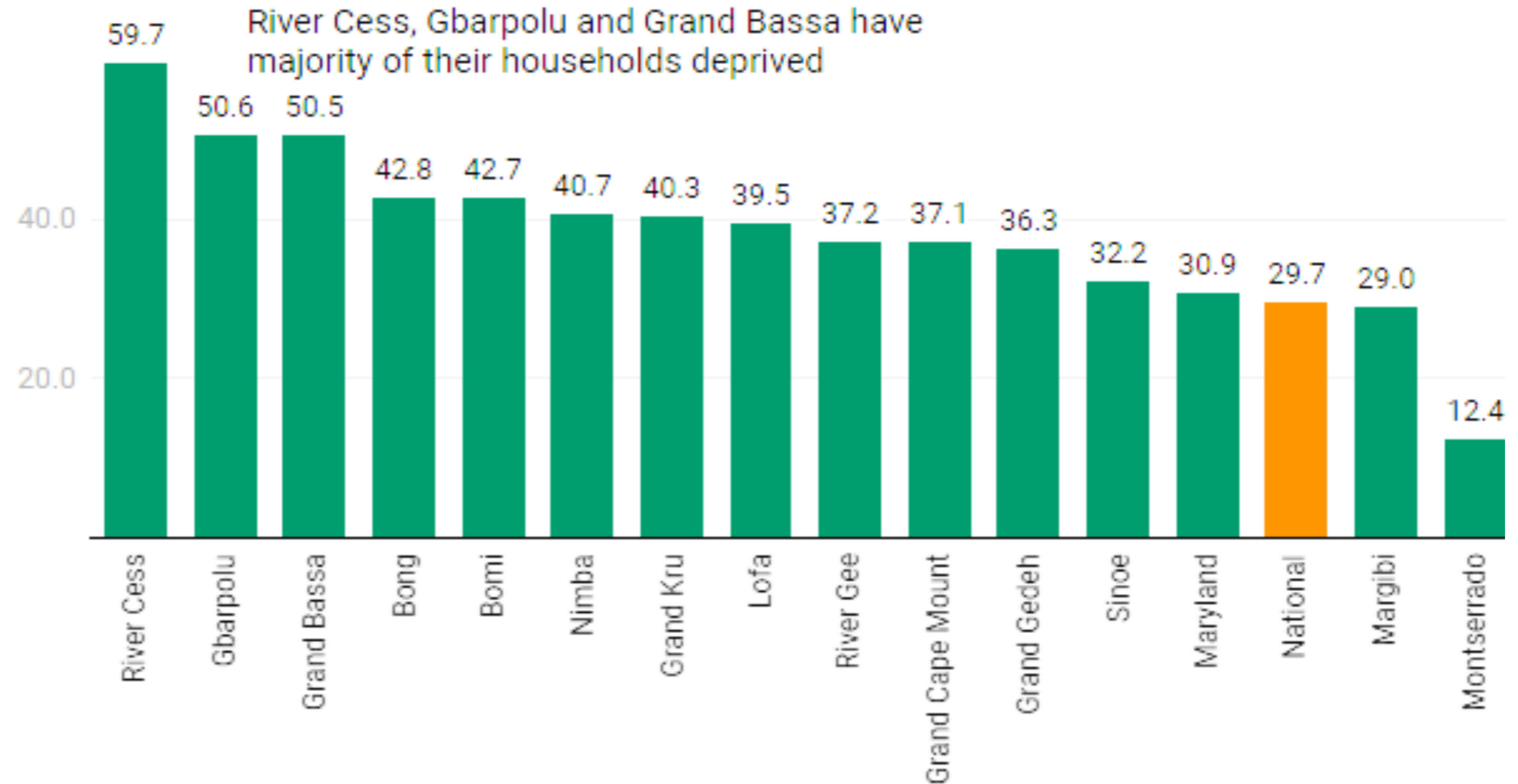
Grand Bassa and Bong have majority of households deprived in children school attendance

County	Value
Grand Bassa	55.1
Bong	50.6
River Cess	47.3
Gbarpolu	44.0
Sinoe	42.3
Grand Cape Mount	41.8
Grand Kru	40.2
River Gee	38.0
Lofa	37.0
Nimba	33.2
Grand Gedeh	32.6
Maryland	31.1
Margibi	30.9
National	30.8
Bomi	29.0
Montserrado	15.9

Montserrado (12.4%) and Margibi (29.0%) have deprivations below the national average of 29.7%

Access to health facility - county

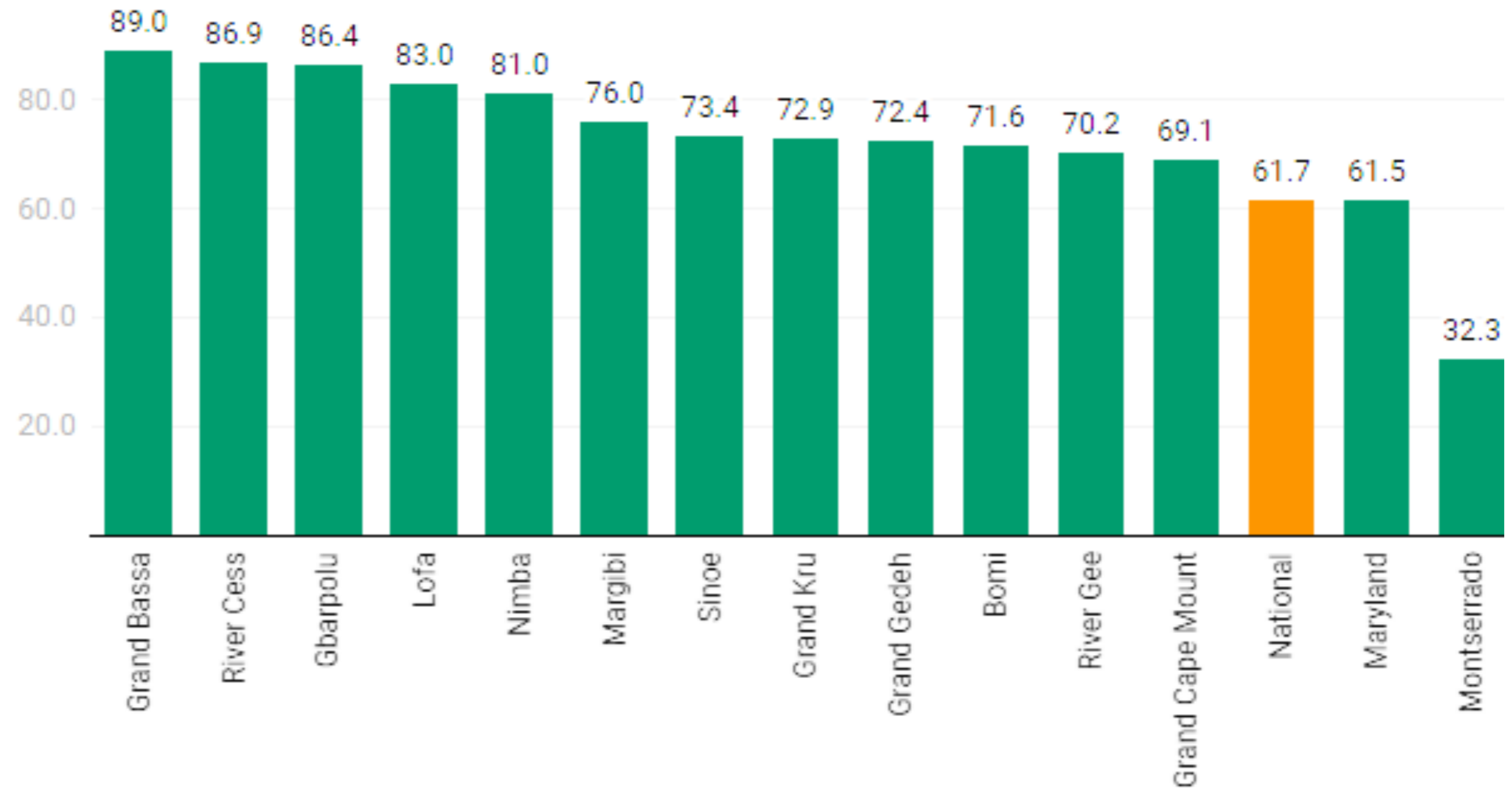River Cess, Gbarpolu and Grand Bassa have majority of their households deprived

Majority of households in all counties are deprived in access to electricity, except Montserrado
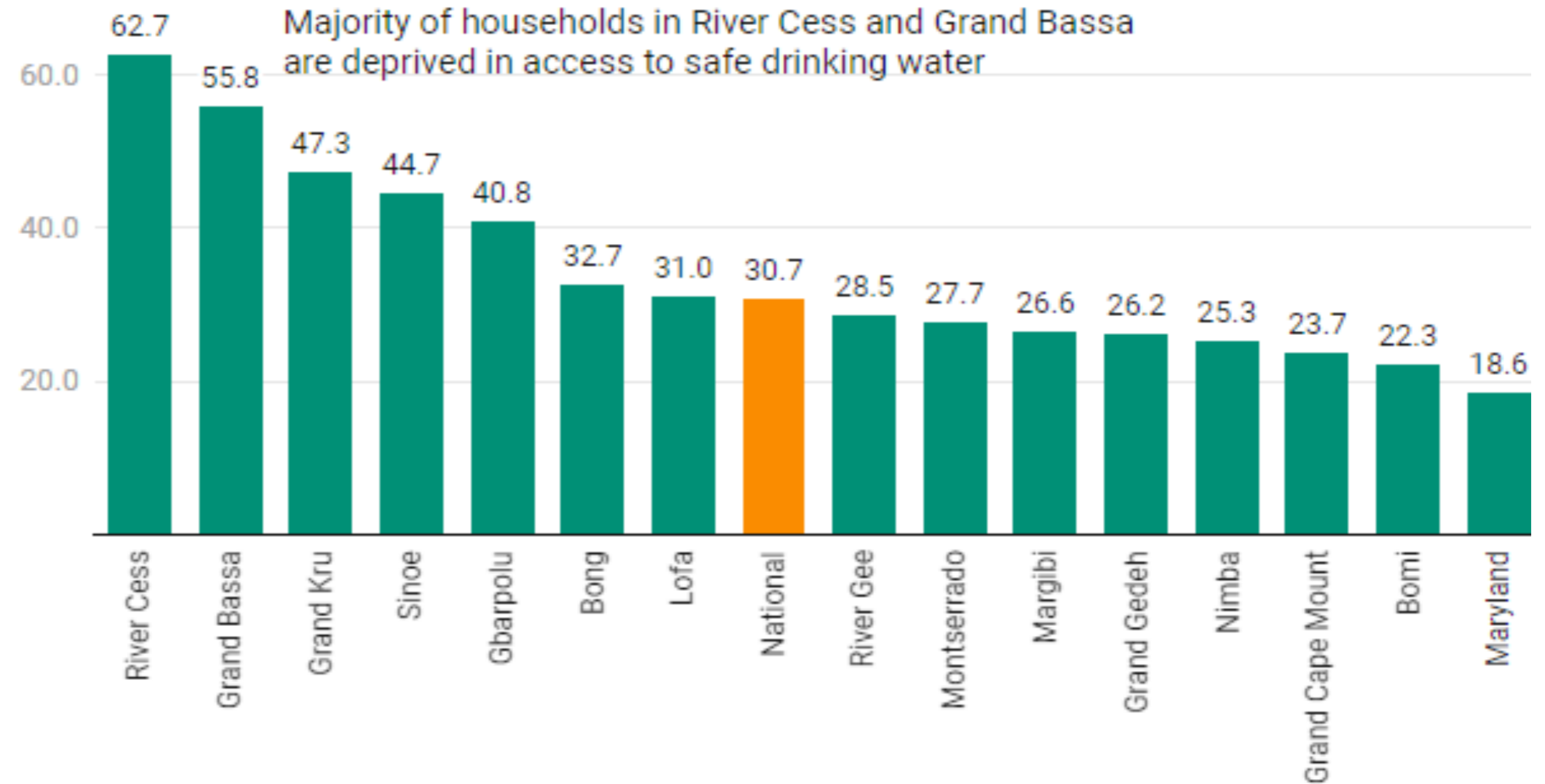

Access to electricity - county

County	Value
Grand Bassa	89.0
River Cess	86.9
Gbarpolu	86.4
Lofa	83.0
Nimba	81.0
Margibi	76.0
Sinoe	73.4
Grand Kru	72.9
Grand Gedeh	72.4
Bomi	71.6
River Gee	70.2
Grand Cape Mount	69.1
National	61.7
Maryland	61.5
Montserrado	32.3

Eight (8) counties have household deprivation proportions lower than the national average. Maryland has the lowest proportion of deprivation

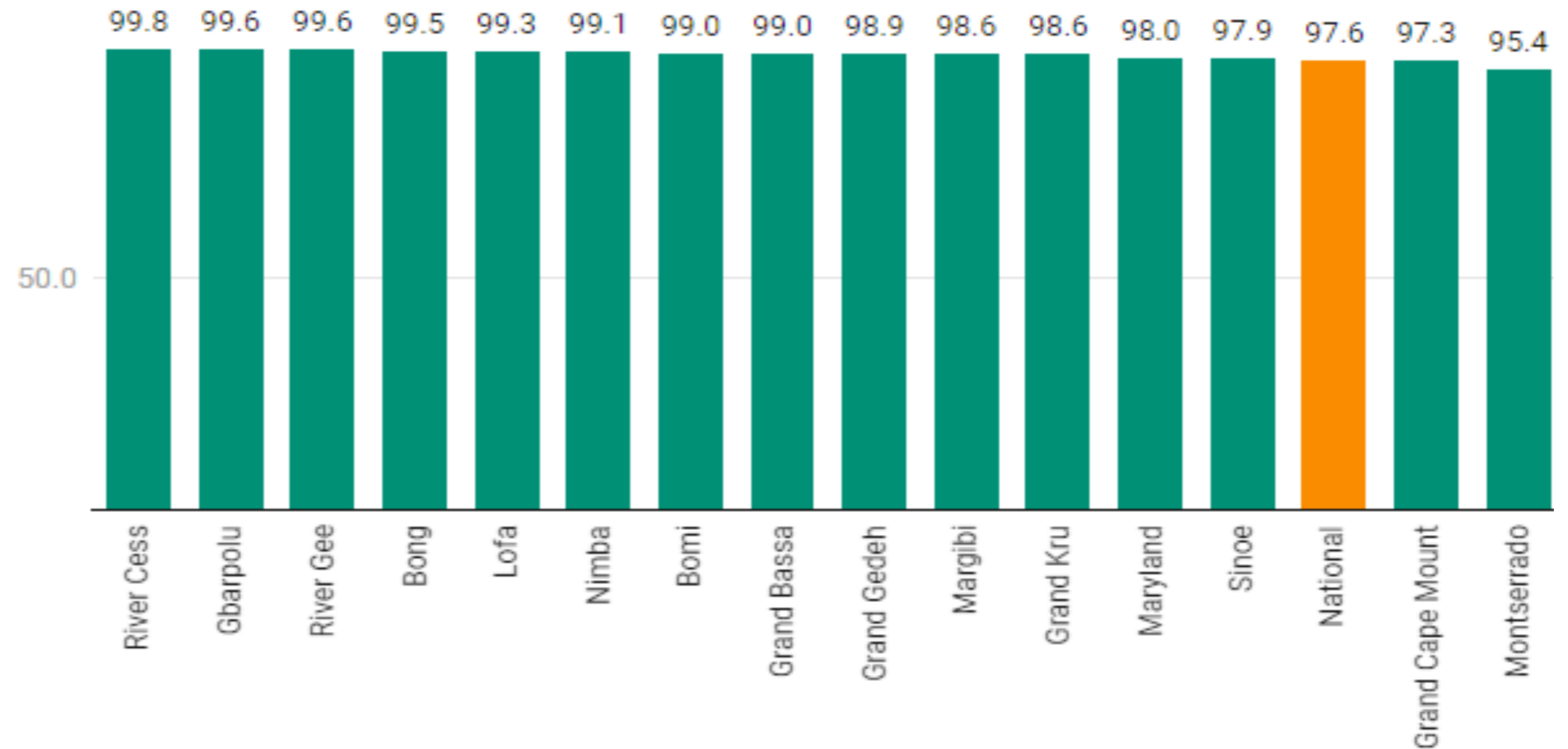## Access to safe drinking water - county

Majority of households in River Cess and Grand Bassa are deprived in access to safe drinking water

County	Value
River Cess	62.7
Grand Bassa	55.8
Grand Kru	47.3
Sinoe	44.7
Gbarpolu	40.8
Bong	32.7
Lofa	31.0
National	30.7
River Gee	28.5
Montserrado	27.7
Margibi	26.6
Grand Gedeh	26.2
Nimba	25.3
Grand Cape Mount	23.7
Bomi	22.3
Maryland	18.6

10 out of 15 counties have majority of their households deprived in access to improved sanitation.

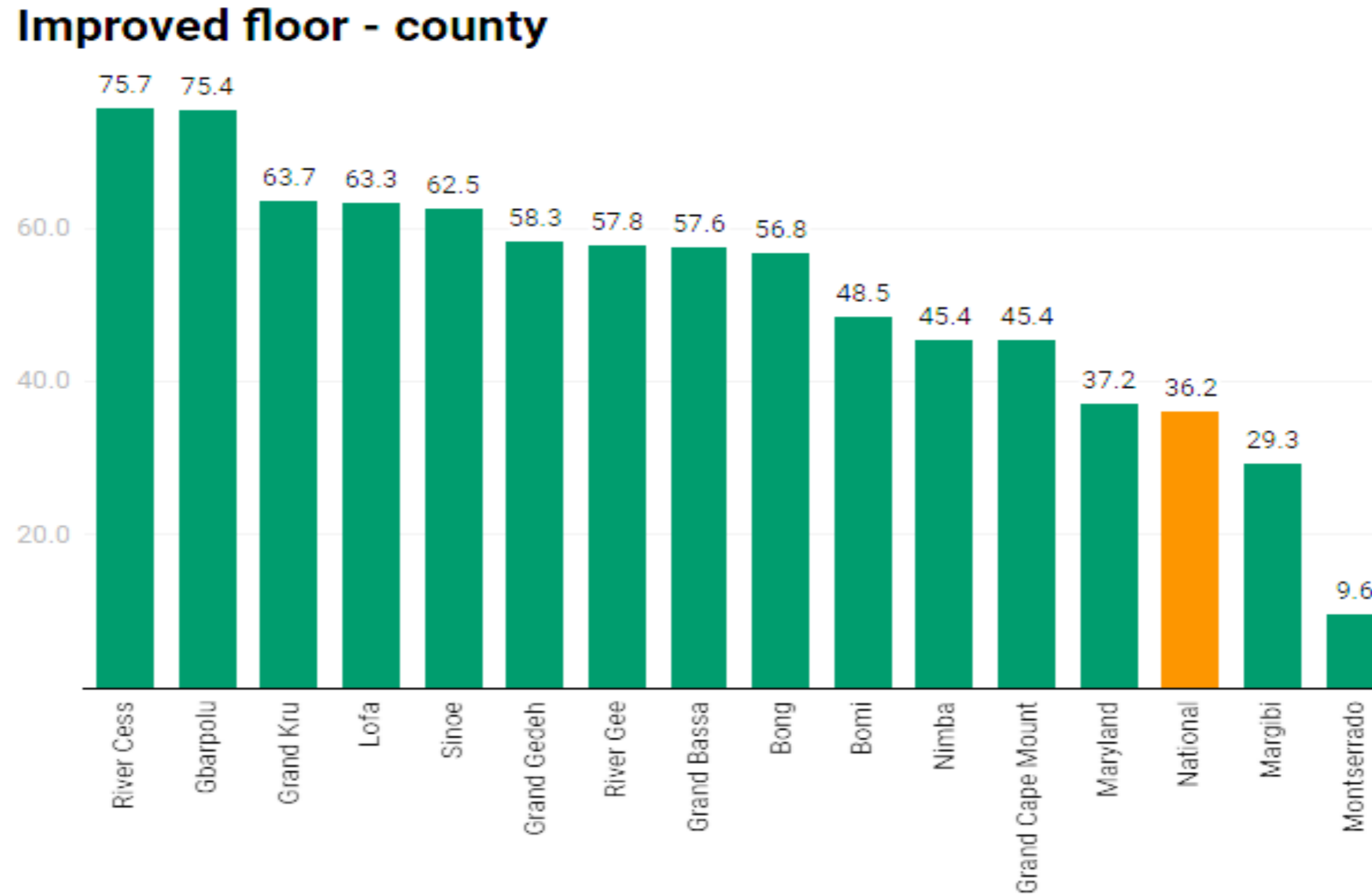The proportion of Montserrado's deprived households strikingly below that of the rest

Improved sanitation - county

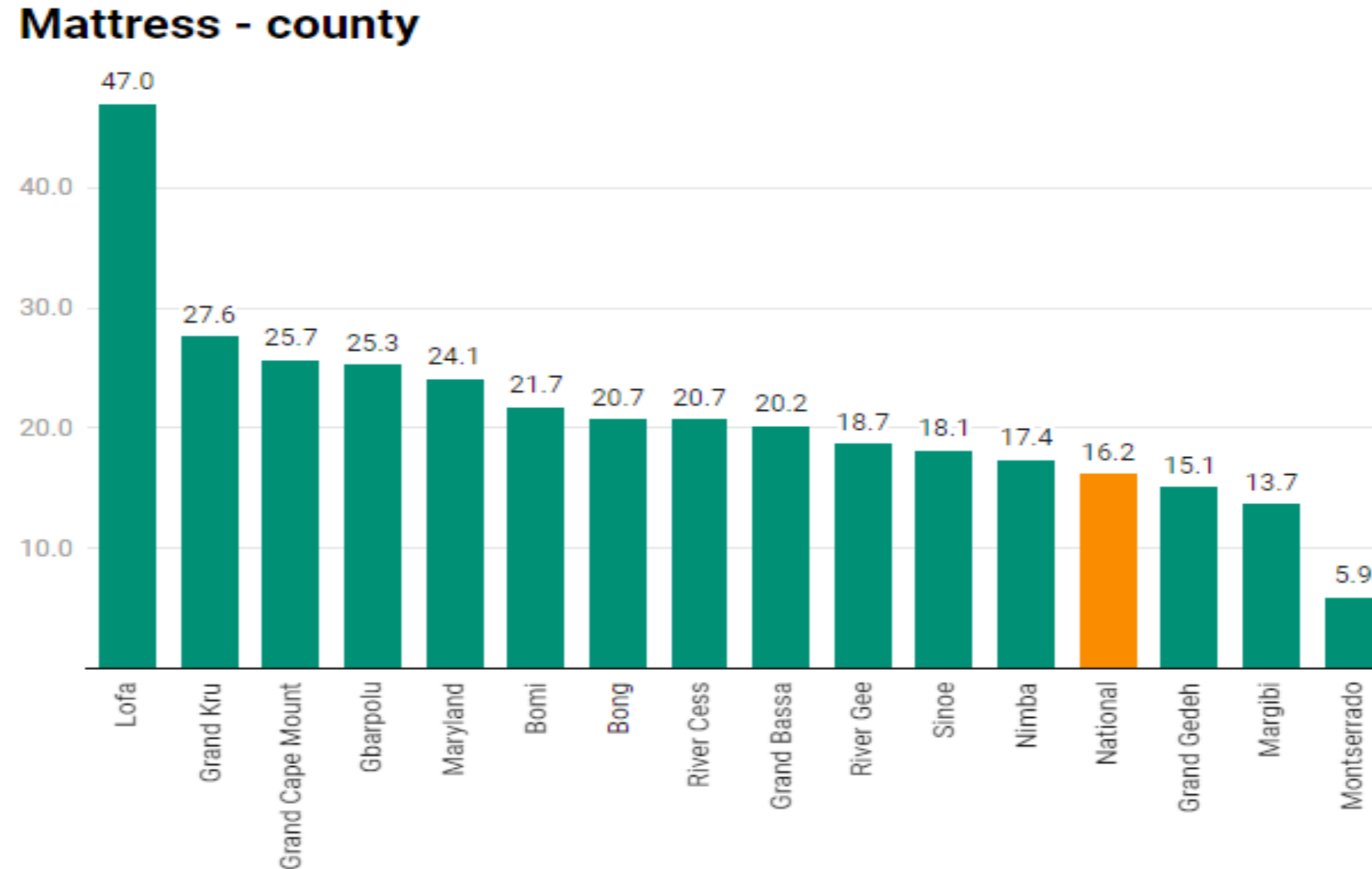| County	Value
River Cess	85.4
Sinoe	76.1
Gbarpolu	74.0
Grand Kru	73.8
Bomi	68.2
Grand Bassa	67.7
Lofa	62.2
Bong	59.5
Grand Gedeh	55.8
Grand Cape Mount	55.4
Maryland	48.2
River Gee	47.8
Nimba	47.7
National	43.4
Margibi	40.6
Montserrado	19.6
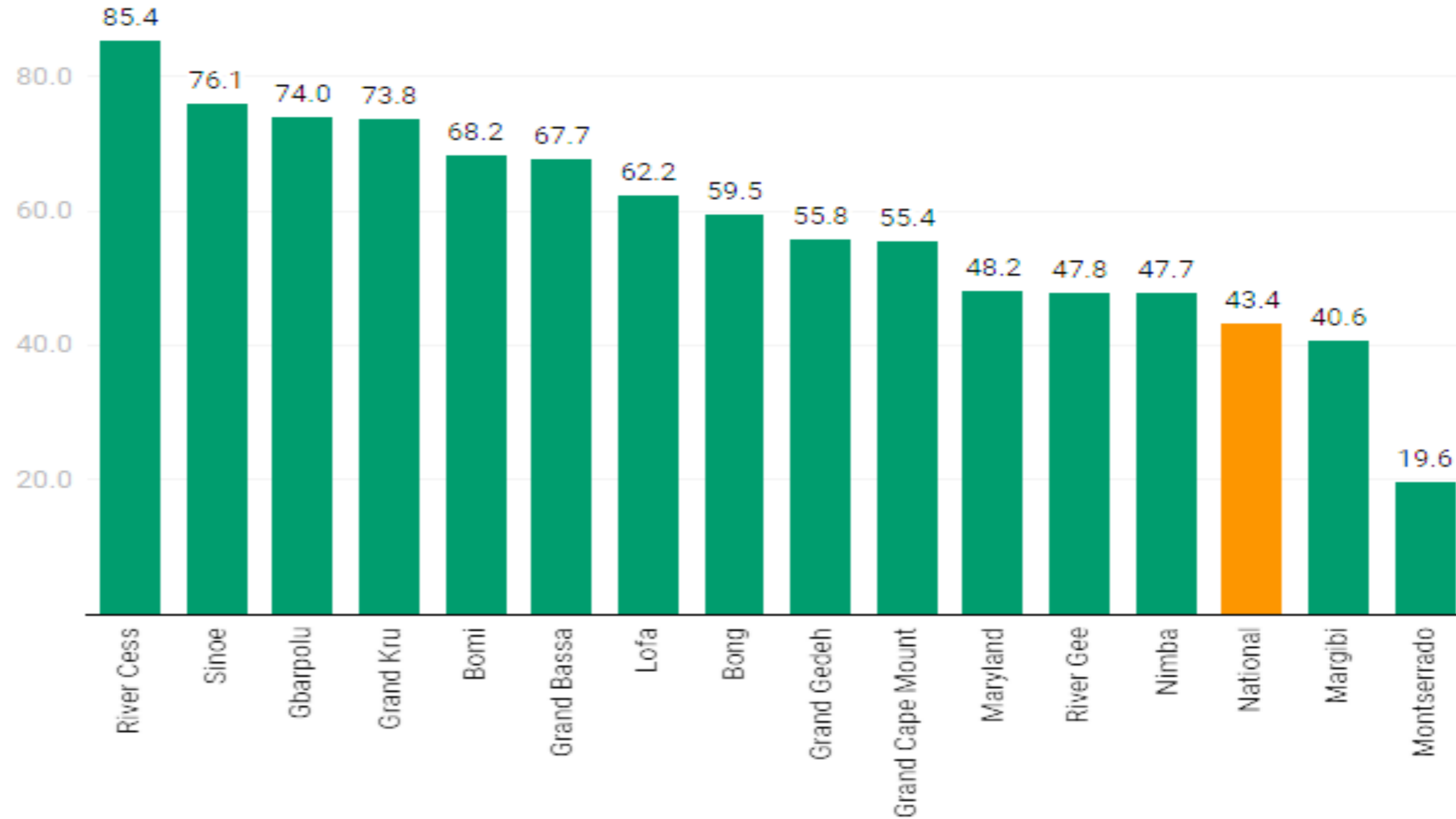
Only Montserrado and Margibi have proportions of deprived households below the national average. 9 counties have majority of their households deprived

Improved floor - county

County	Value
River Cess	75.7
Gbarpolu	75.4
Grand Kru	63.7
Lofa	63.3
Sinoe	62.5
Grand Gedeh	58.3
River Gee	57.8
Grand Bassa	57.6
Bong	56.8
Bomi	48.5
Nimba	45.4
Grand Cape Mount	45.4
Maryland	37.2
National	36.2
Margibi	29.3
Montserrado	9.6

Deprivation in access to mattress is generally low in all localities except Lofa

Mattress - county

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Deprivation in access to radio is widespread with 10 counties having majority of their households deprived
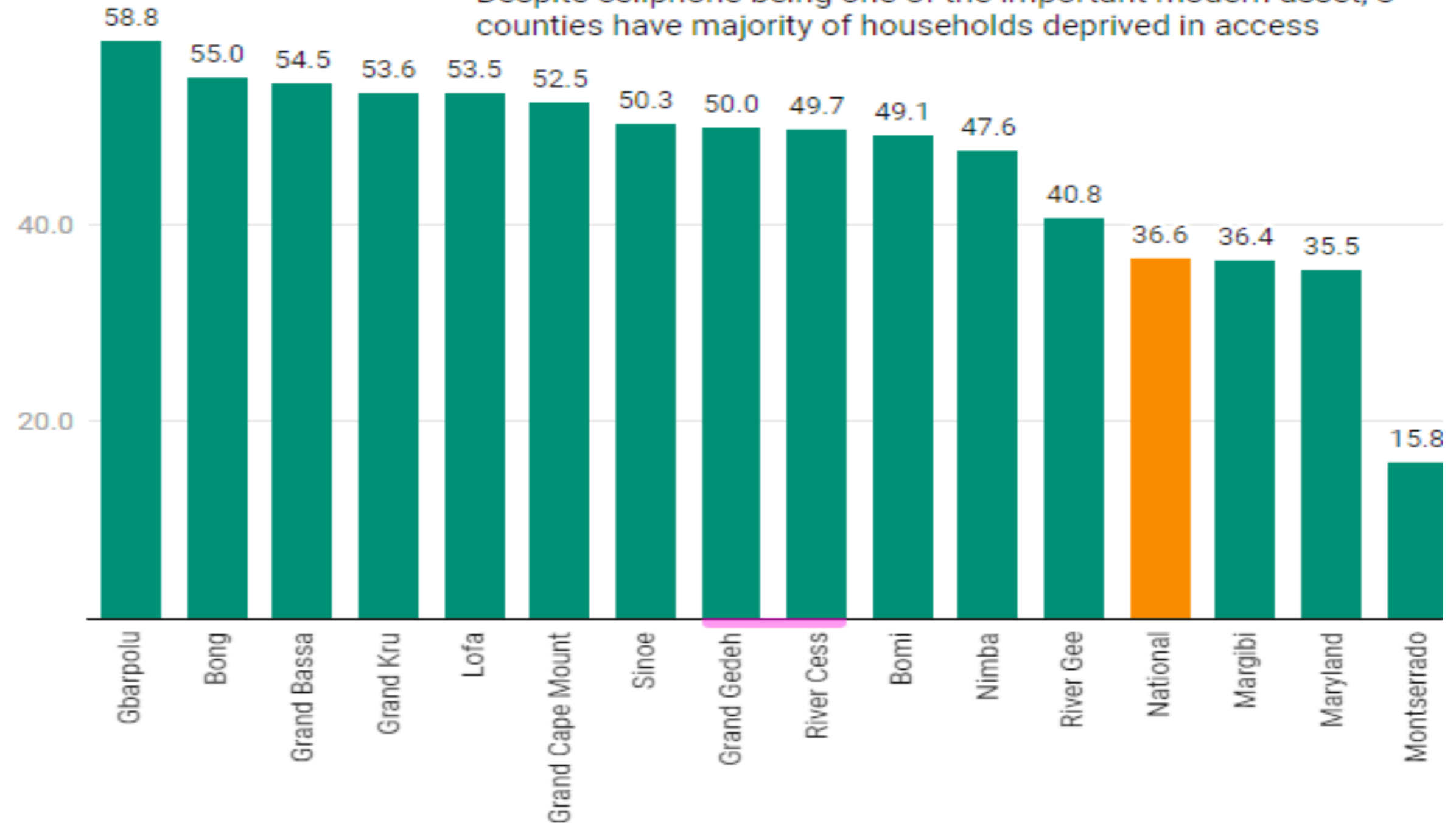

Radio - county
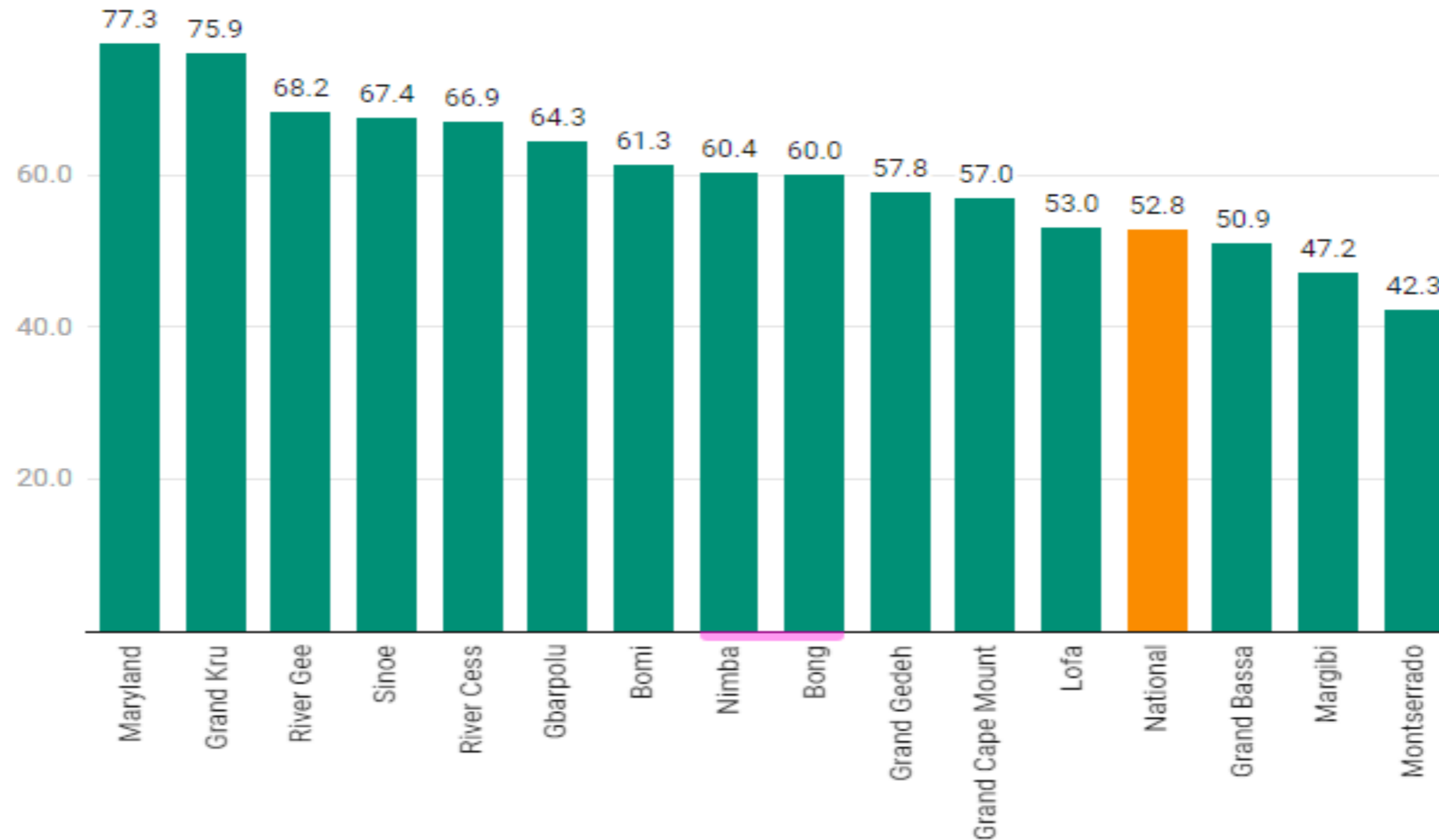
County	Value
Maryland	77.3
Grand Kru	75.9
River Gee	68.2
Sinoe	67.4
River Cess	66.9
Gbarpolu	64.3
Bomi	61.3
Nimba	60.4
Bong	60.0
Grand Gedeh	57.8
Grand Cape Mount	57.0
Lofa	53.0
National	52.8
Grand Bassa	50.9
Margibi	47.2
Montserrado	42.3

Only Montserrado, Maryland and Margibi have proportion of deprived household in cellphone access below the national average

Cell phone - county

Despite cellphone being one of the important modern asset, 8 counties have majority of households deprived in access

County	Value
Gbarpolu	58.8
Bong	55.0
Grand Bassa	54.5
Grand Kru	53.6
Lofa	53.5
Grand Cape Mount	52.5
Sinoe	50.3
Grand Gedeh	50.0
River Cess	49.7
Bomi	49.1
Nimba	47.6
River Gee	40.8
National	36.6
Margibi	36.4
Maryland	35.5
Montserrado	15.8

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Cell phone - county

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Gbarpolu	58.8
Bong	55.0
Grand Bassa	54.5
Grand Kru	53.6
Lofa	53.5
Grand Cape Mount	52.5
Sinoe	50.3
Grand Gedeh	50.0
River Cess	49.7
Bomi	49.1
Nimba	47.6
River Gee	40.8
National	36.6
Margibi	36.4
Maryland	35.5
Montserrado	15.8

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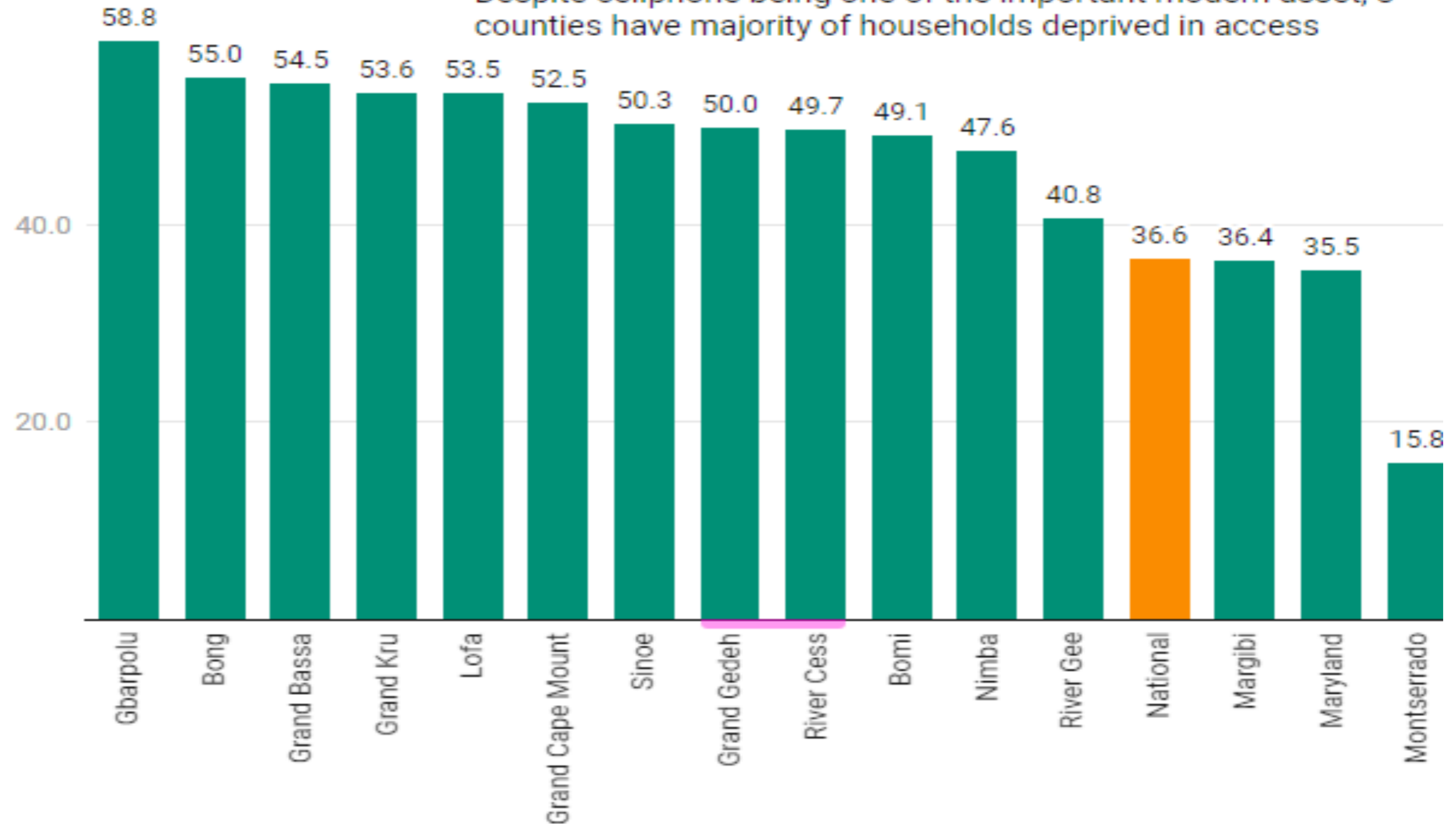
Disaggregating the Multidimensional Poverty Indices

❑ People are counted as multidimensionally poor if they are deprived in one-third or more of 10 indicators used for computing the Liberia index. This means one deprivation alone may not represent poverty.

❑ The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) value summarizes information on multiple deprivations into a single number. MPI ranges from zero to one, and a higher number signifies greater multidimensional poverty.

0.261

MPI

The MPI poor people in Liberia experience 26.1% of the weighted deprivations out of the total possible deprivations

45.0%
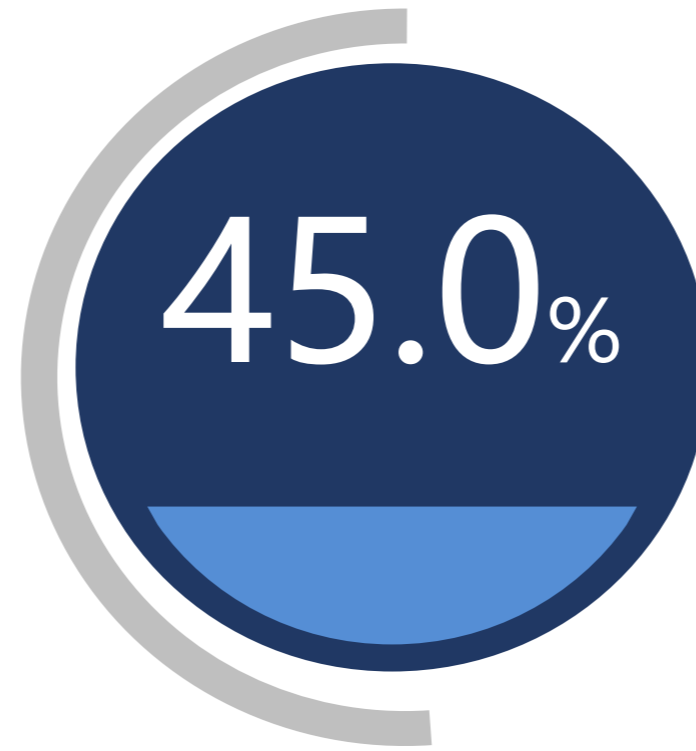
Poverty rate

45.0% of Liberia's population is MPI poor

57.9%
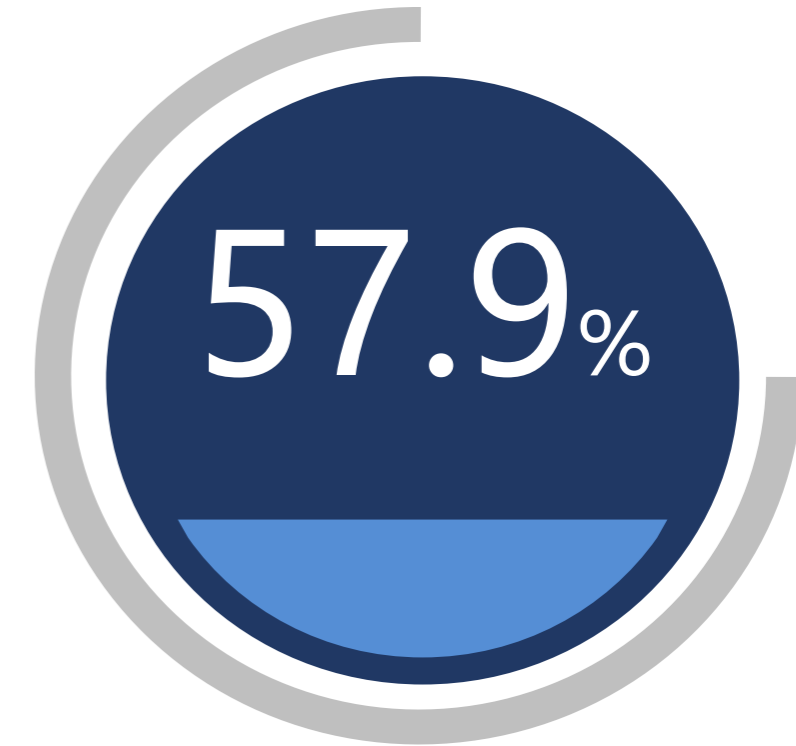
Intensity

Each poor person is, on average, deprived in about 57.9 % of the weighted indicators

The largest contributor to national multidimensional poverty is Living conditions (42.8%), followed by Health (40.1%), with Education contributing the least
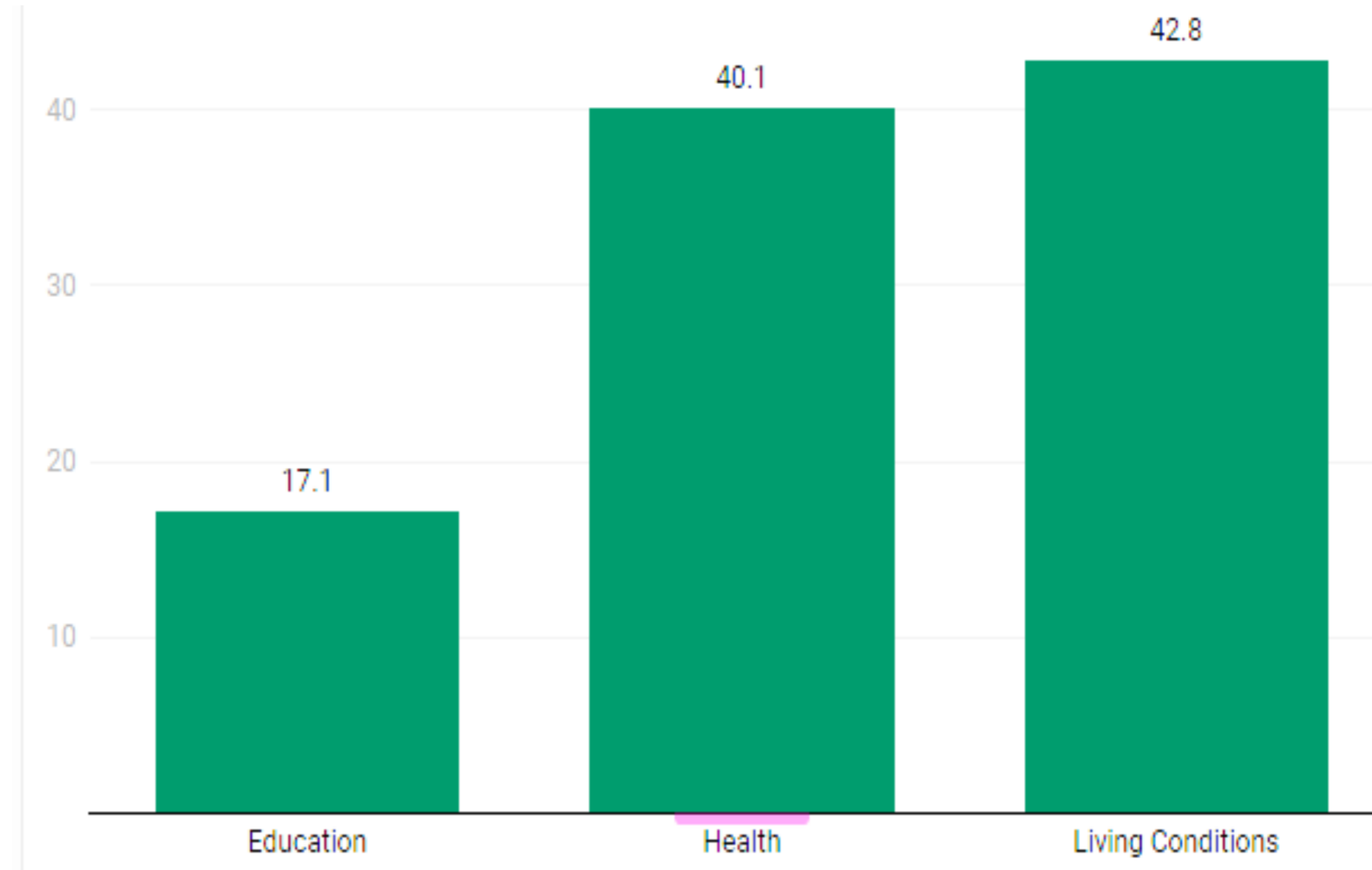
72% of rural households are MPI poor compared to 22.5% of their urban counterparts. Intensity of poverty is also higher in rural households than urban
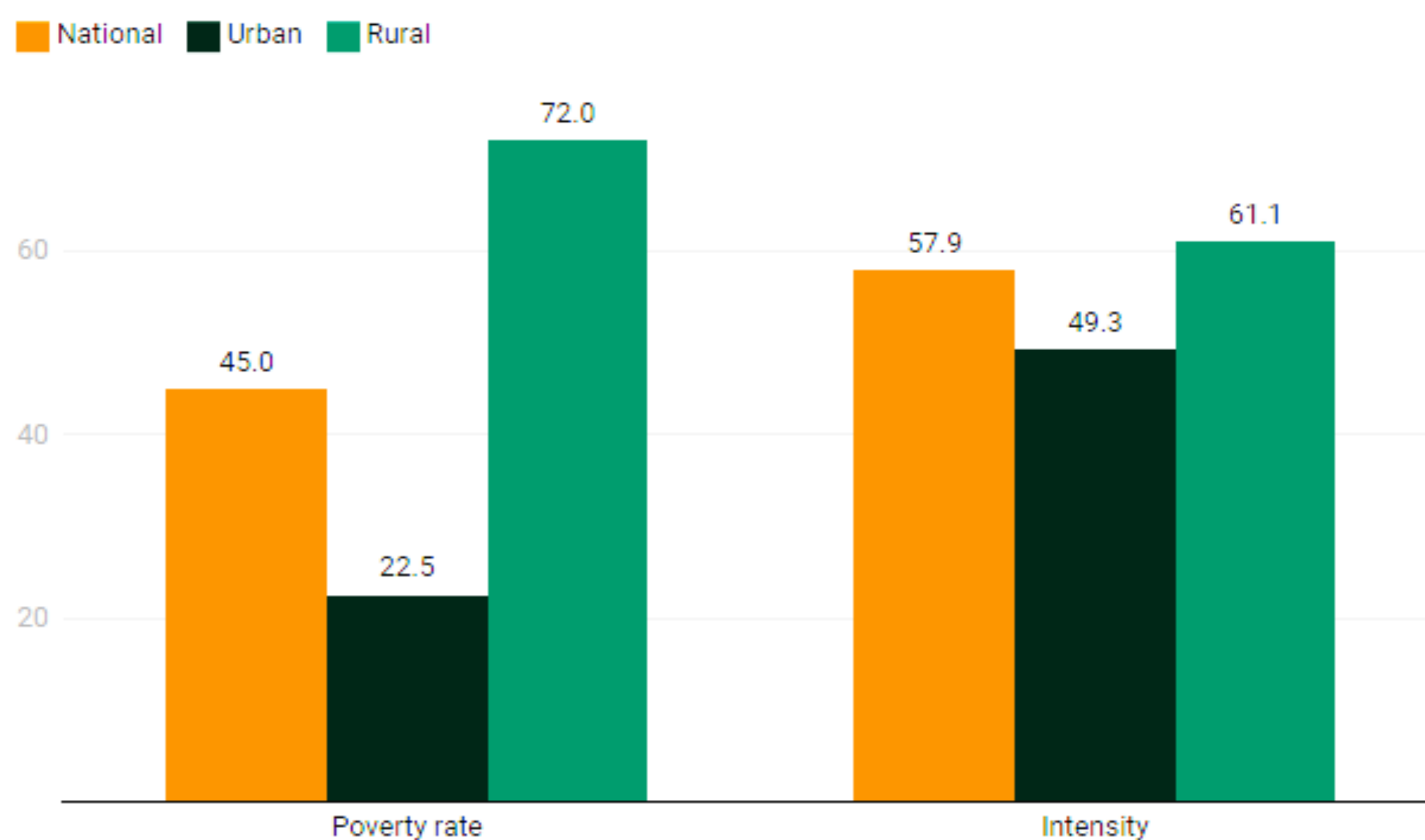
The poverty rate for male-headed households is higher than that of their female counterparts, and so is the intensity

■ Male ■ Female
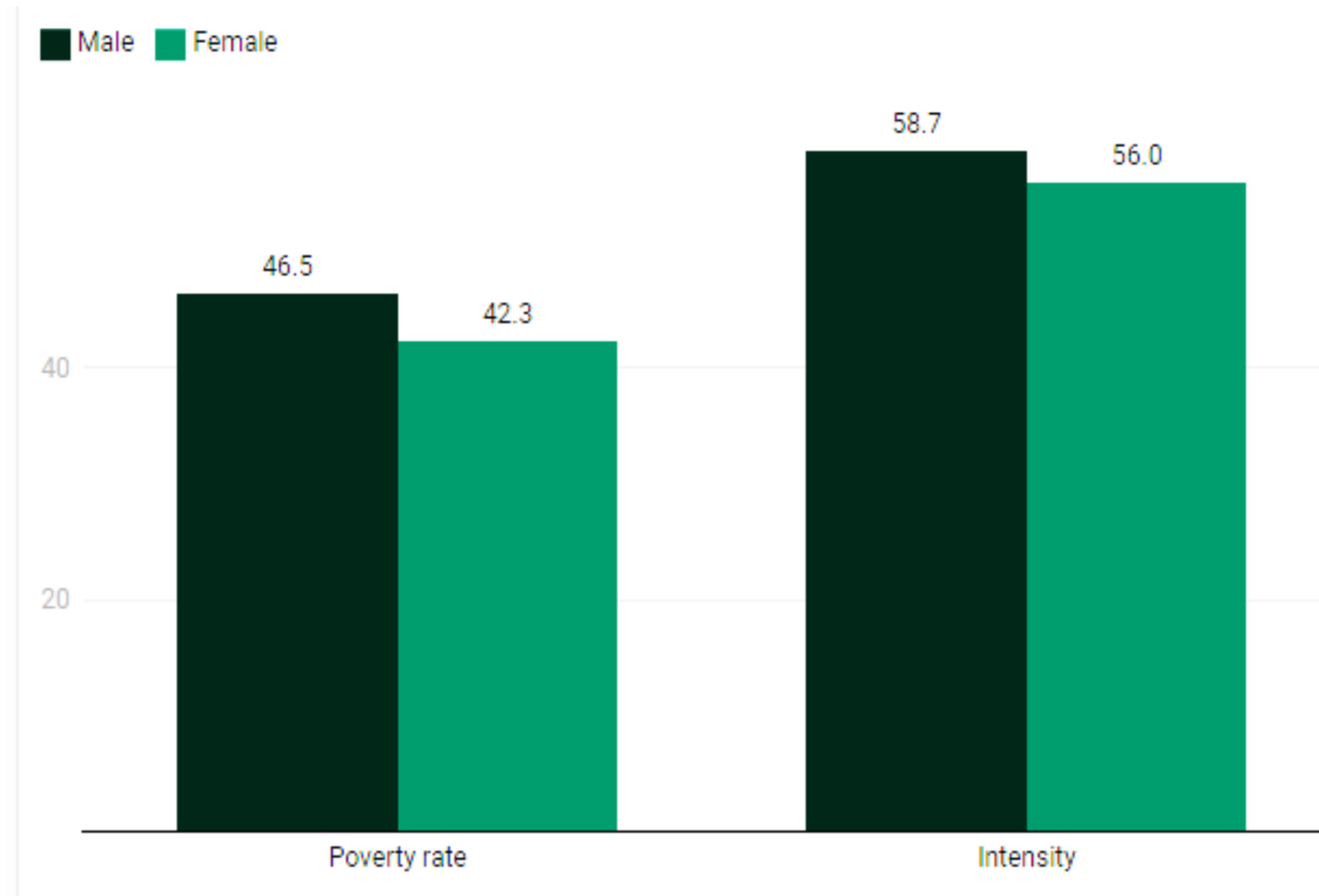
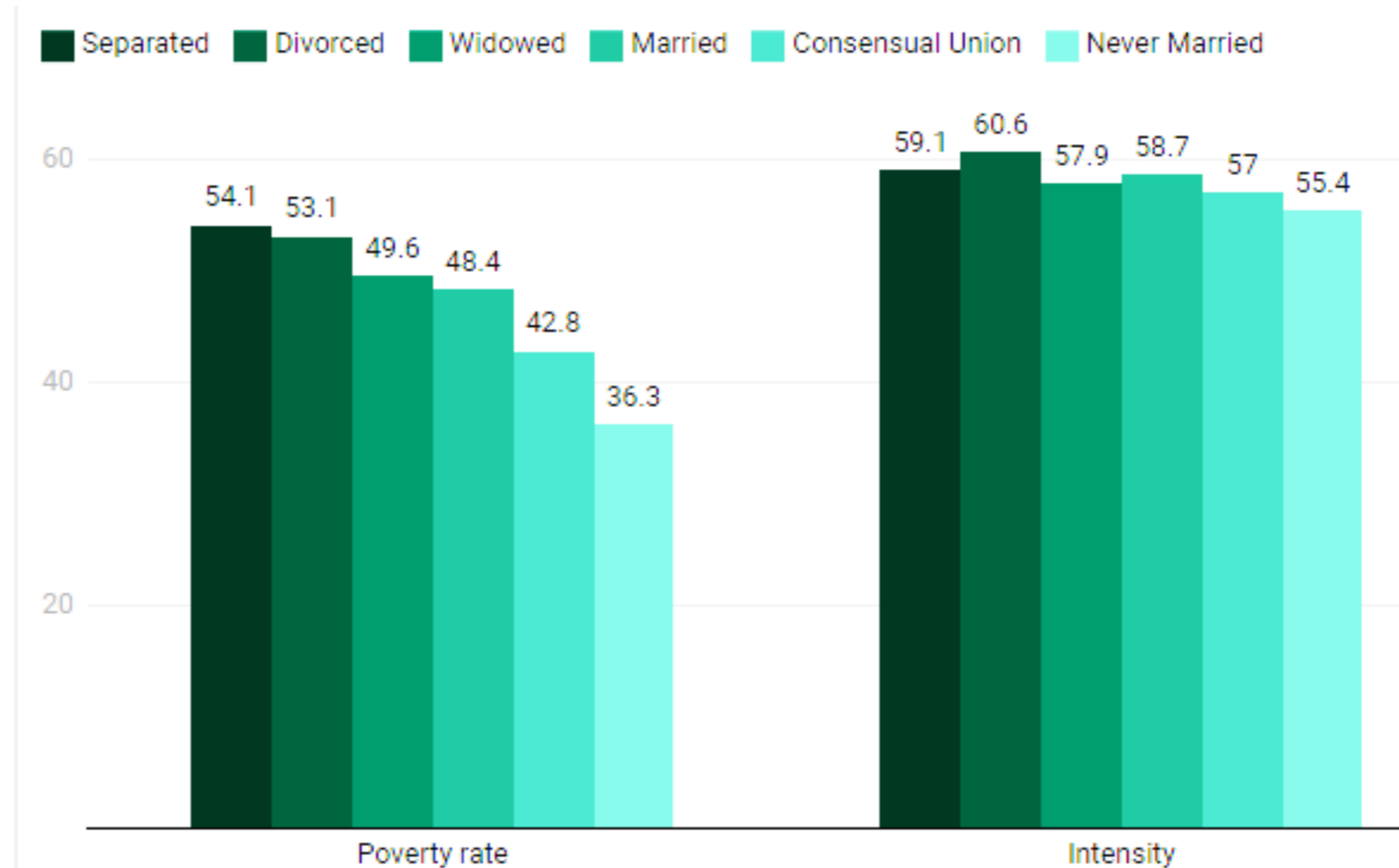|	Poverty rate	Intensity
Male	46.5	58.7
Female	42.3	56.0

There is a negative relationship between education attainment of household head and poverty rate. The same is observed with poverty intensity.

As education attainment of household head increases, poverty reduces
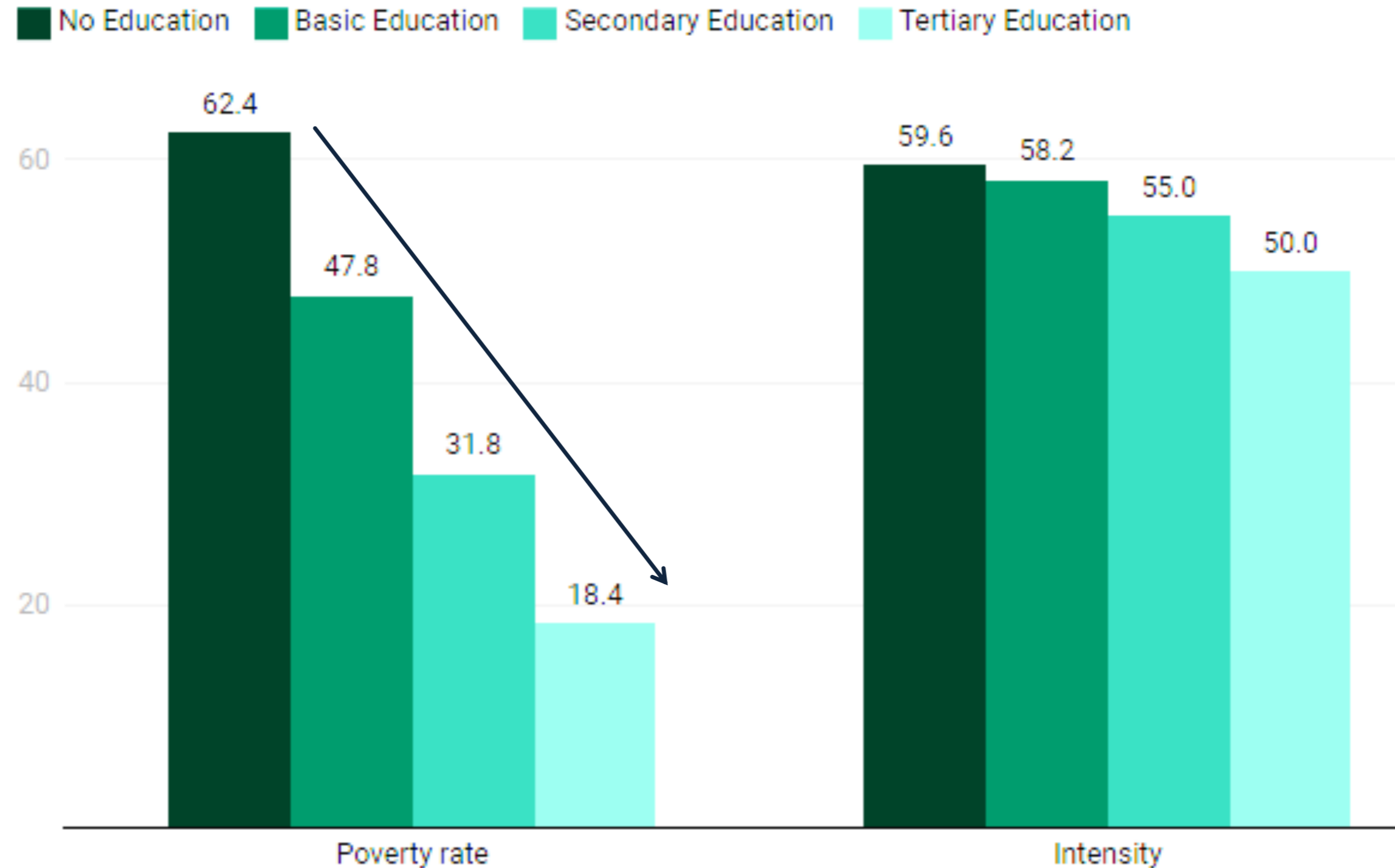
Higher rates of poverty are observed in households headed by people who had been in marriage before but currently not (separated, divorced and widowed)

Legend: Separated | Divorced | Widowed | Married | Consensual Union | Never Married

Poverty rate: 54.1, 53.1, 49.6, 48.4, 42.8, 36.3

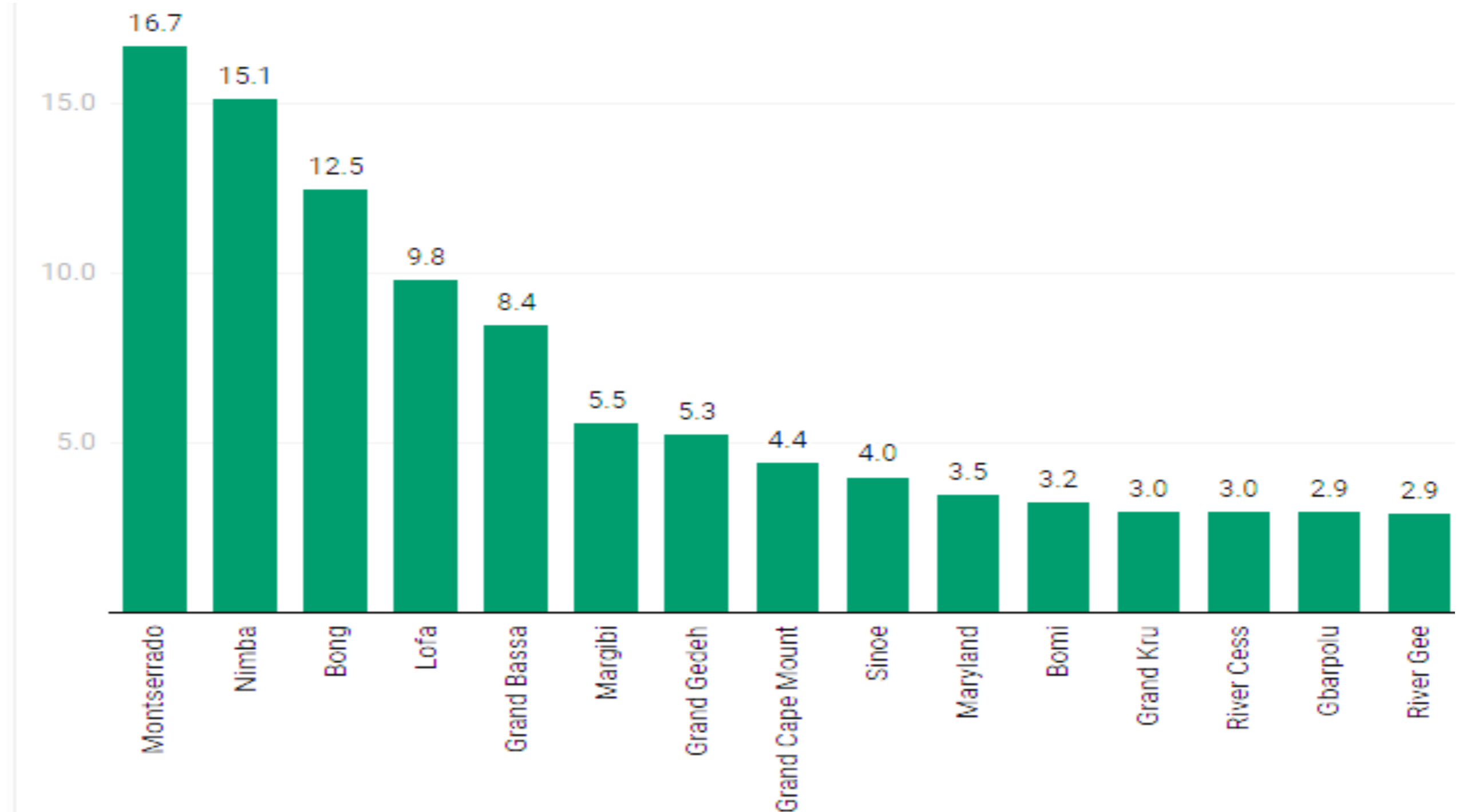**Intensity:** 59.1, 60.6, 57.9, 58.7, 57, 55.4

Majority of households in 12 counties are multidimensionally poor. Montserrado and Margibi are the only counties with rates below the national average.

The highest pockets of poverty are observed in River Cess and Gbarpolu
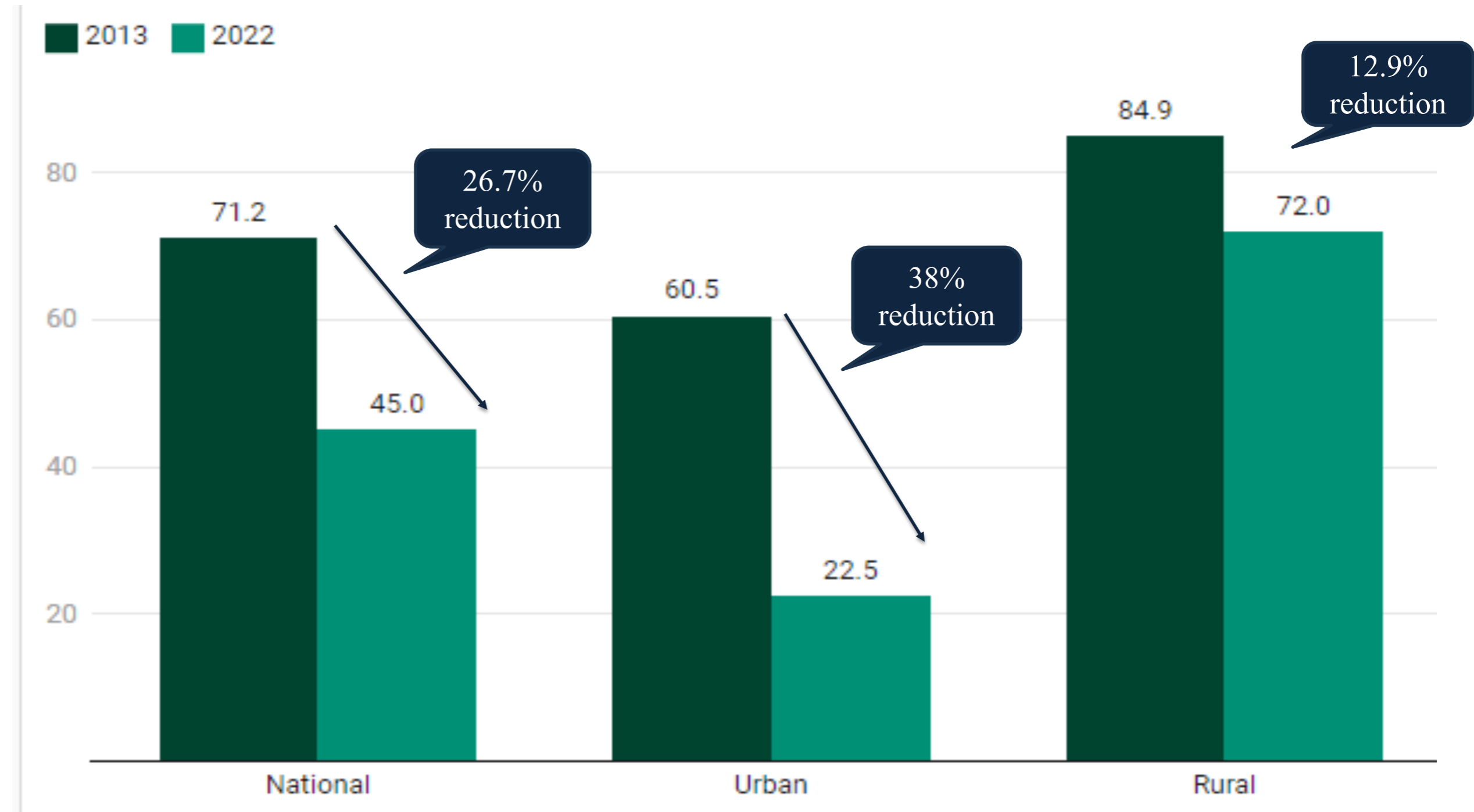

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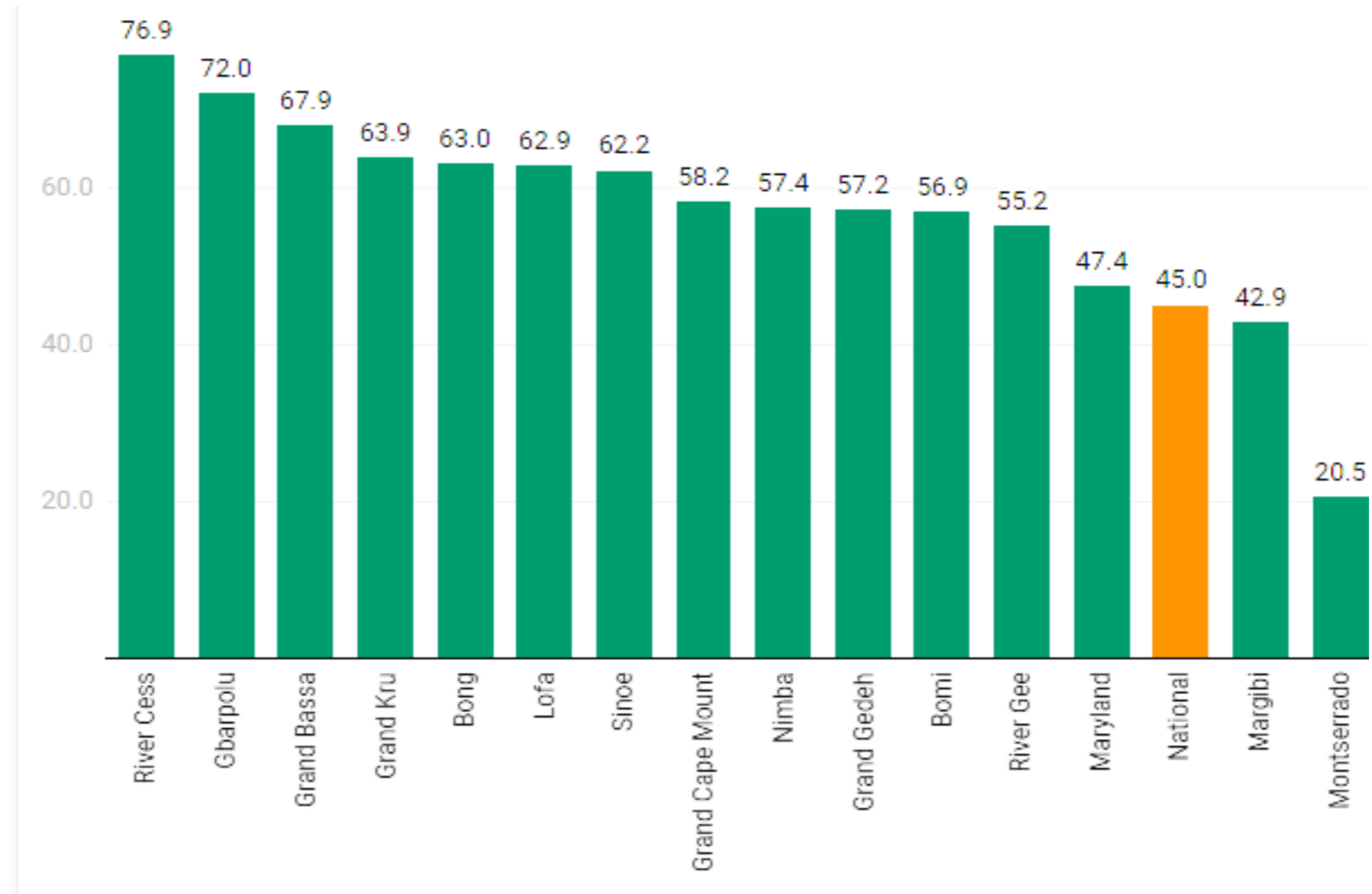
Though Montserrado has the lowest poverty rate, it hosts the largest percentage of the national multidimensional poor population

District	Value
Montserrado	16.7
Nimba	15.1
Bong	12.5
Lofa	9.8
Grand Bassa	8.4
Margibi	5.5
Grand Gedeh	5.3
Grand Cape Mount	4.4
Sinoe	4.0
Maryland	3.5
Bomi	3.2
Grand Kru	3.0
River Cess	3.0
Gbarpolu	2.9
River Gee	2.9

Multidimensional poverty declined in all counties. The largest declines recorded for Montserrado, Margibi, Maryland, Grand Cape Mount, River Gee and Grand Kru

County	2022	2013
Montserrado	20.5	54.2
Nimba	57.4	72.0
Margibi	42.9	72.7
Grand Gedeh	57.2	74.9
Maryland	47.4	77.3
Bomi	56.9	79.1
River Gee	55.2	81.4
Lofa	62.9	83.1
Bong	63.0	83.9
Sinoe	62.2	84.4
Grand Cape Mount	58.2	85.6
Gbarpolu	72.0	86.3
Grand Bassa	67.9	86.7
Grand Kru	63.9	90.6
River Cess	76.9	94.5
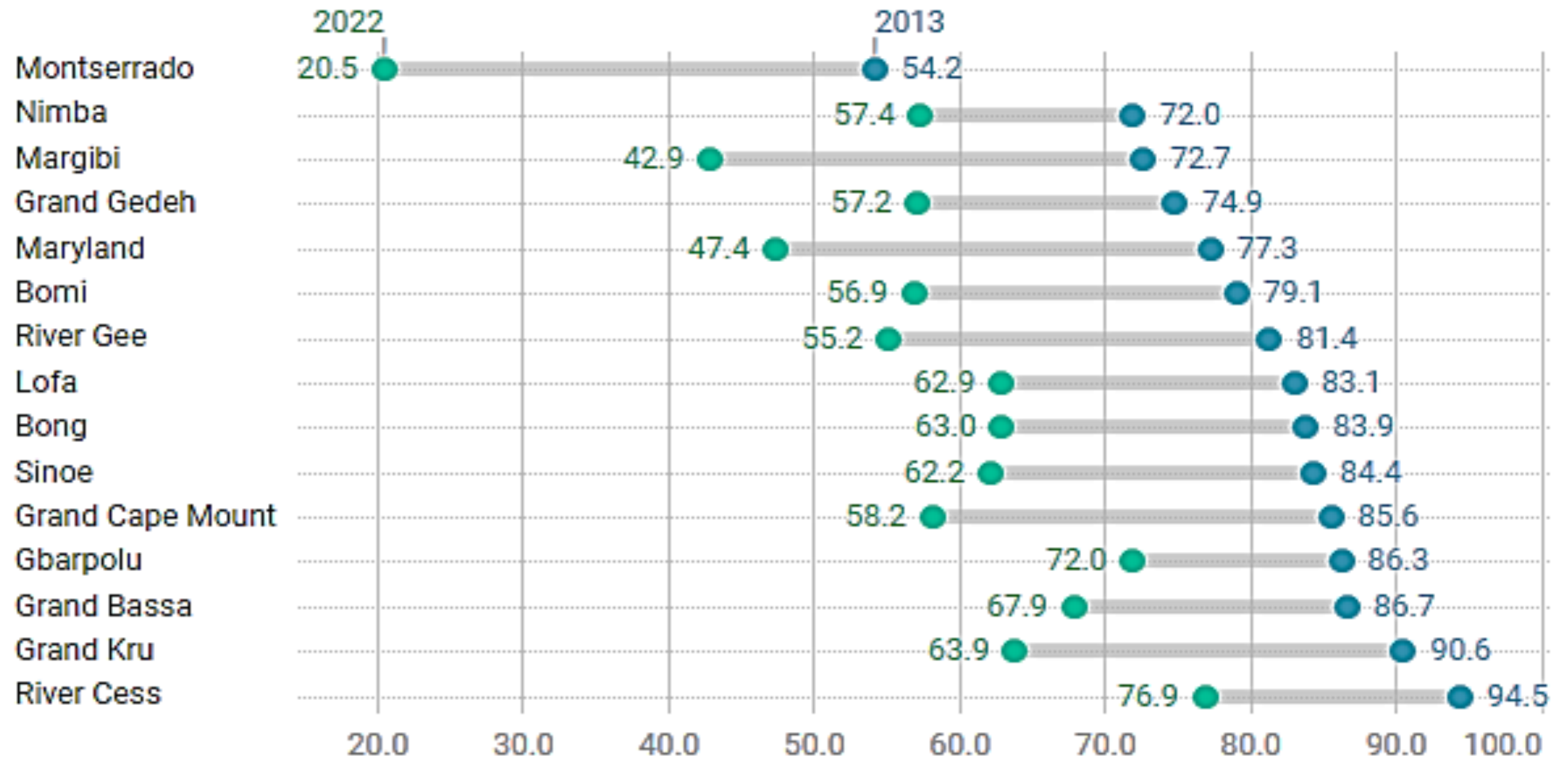
Conclusions, Policy Implications and Recommendations

❑ Liberia has made significant progress on poverty reduction over time, with deprivations of the population from the perspectives of health, education, and living conditions reducing by 26.2 percentage points from 71.2% in 2013 to 45.0% in 2022.

❑ Poverty reduced in all the counties over the period under discussion.

❑ Apart from many governmental initiatives, post-war Liberia has benefited from many support programs from DPs and bilateral donors across many sectors of the economy. All these account for the reduction in poverty over the period.

❑ The gap in poverty rate between urban and rural is very wide, and so is the disparities between Montserrado and most of the counties (13 out of the 15 counties have poverty rates above the national average)

❑ There is a very high deprivation ratio of household access to clean cooking fuel nationwide. This has implication on health, deforestation and environmental degradation.

❑ Access to electricity is also very low, a critical component for the country's development.

❑ The largest contributor to multidimensional poverty is the living condition dimension. It is, therefore, paramount to prioritize the use of resources in order to reduce the high deprivations in the indicators of living conditions, especially access to electricity and clean cooking fuel.

❑ The gap between the urban and rural localities in terms of the level of deprivation is wide and needs to be looked at. This is one of the major causes of rural-urban migration which leads to unplanned settlement (slums) and its attendant problems.

❑ Given that River Cess, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Kru, Lofa, Bong and Sinoe counties present the highest incidence of multidimensional poverty, policies and programs aiming to reduce poverty in these counties should generally be given high priority.

❑ The education dimension is the least contributor to multidimensional poverty. As efforts are being made to improve universal access, quality of education should be of high national priority.

❑ The inverse relationship between education attainment and level of poverty implies policies should be made to make it easy for people to progress on the education ladder.

❑ **Guide and influence national and sub-national budgets**. Recommendations include using information on multidimensional poverty to broadly inform budgetary decisions to directly integrate multidimensional poverty into the budget allocation formulae. That is, the dimensions which will have the biggest knock-on effect on other dimensions should be prioritized in the budget.

❑ **Engender the broad targeting of geographic areas and groups in poverty based on a multidimensional poverty measure by locality of residence (urban/rural) and county**. Deprivations in the indicators are sufficient to highlight the multiple deprivations people in poverty face in the localities and counties of residence.

❑ **Guide multisectoral investment and coordination**. Because of the multisectoral nature of multidimensional poverty, there is the need for investment across sectors and better coordination, often pointing to areas of deprivation overlap. Using the MPI estimates can provide the actors from different sectors with a common framework for coordination, prioritization and planning towards broader poverty reduction programs across the country.

❑ **Identify and address social protection needs**. Social protection is an important policy response to multidimensional poverty. National MPI estimates can be used as part of the evidence in a needs assessment study to guide discussions towards a national social protection policy.