LIBERIA INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS AND GEO-INFORMATION SERVICES

(LISGIS)

Thematic Report on Education and Literacy

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 Education and Literacy 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,

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Outline

- Background and Context
- Objective
- Methodology
- Limitations
- School Attendance
- Educational Attainment
- Literacy
- Conclusion
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- Recommendation

Background and Context

- Studies have shown that education is a fundamental driver of economic growth and poverty reduction
- Liberia has faced numerous challenges, including civil wars and economic instability, which have hindered the development of its education system. Liberia is one of the countries with the lowest literacy rates in Africa.
- The economy completely came to a halt during 14 years of debilitating civil conflict, which also halted the education system.
- The Ministry of Education (MOE) and its development partners, recognizing this pivotal moment in Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction, made every effort to fulfil the mandate of providing all Liberians with the opportunity to access and complete affordable education of a quality, relevance and appropriateness that meets their needs and that of the nation.

Background and Context *(continue…)*

Justification for using census data

- Education data collected through administrated sources and school surveys do not cover out-of-school children as well as the adult population.
- Population censuses collect information on all enumerated persons which include educational characteristics of all enumerated persons (school attendance, educational attainment and literacy status) that go beyond data collected from other sources

Policies and programs in education

- The 2011 Education Reform Act is the overarching law guiding the education sector in post-war Liberia
- The Inclusive Education Policy (2018)
- The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018–2023
- The Education Sector Plan (ESP), 2022/23-2026/27
- ARREST

Objectives

- Estimate and analyse education indicators on the population such as school attendance, school attainment and literacy rates among different population groupings and counties in Liberia, with a focus on identifying disparities.
- Examine the accessibility of educational facilities in terms of distance to schools.
- Identify gaps and propose actions for improvement.

Methodology

- The main source of data is the 2022 LPHC. Data from the 2008 LPHC is used to aid the trend analysis. Other supporting data is the Liberia Education Statistics Report of 2021-2022.

- Education indicators are estimated from the above sources. Tables, proportions and graphs are used in the analysis to show trends and differences between variables like sex, locality of residence, county etc.

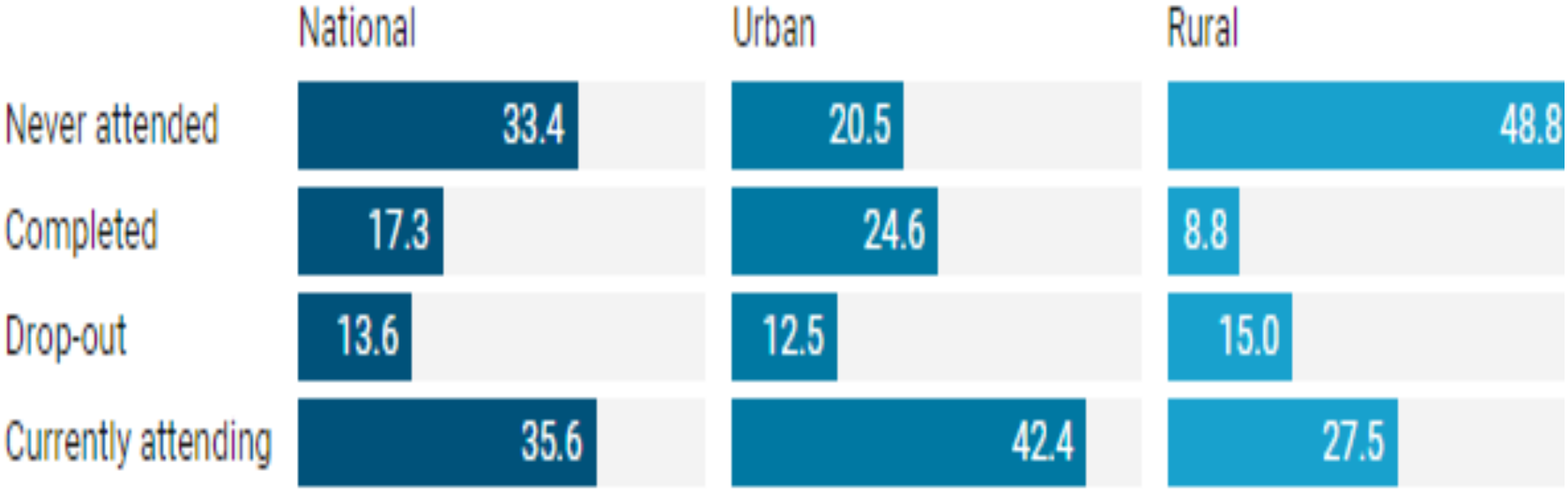
Limitations

- Changes in policies such as age thresholds for the different levels of education make comparison with previous census data difficult
- Data on literacy collected did not specify the language persons are literate in. This limits the use of the data with regards to public communication
- Reasons why children of school-going age who were out of school were not captured in the census.

Definition of school attendance

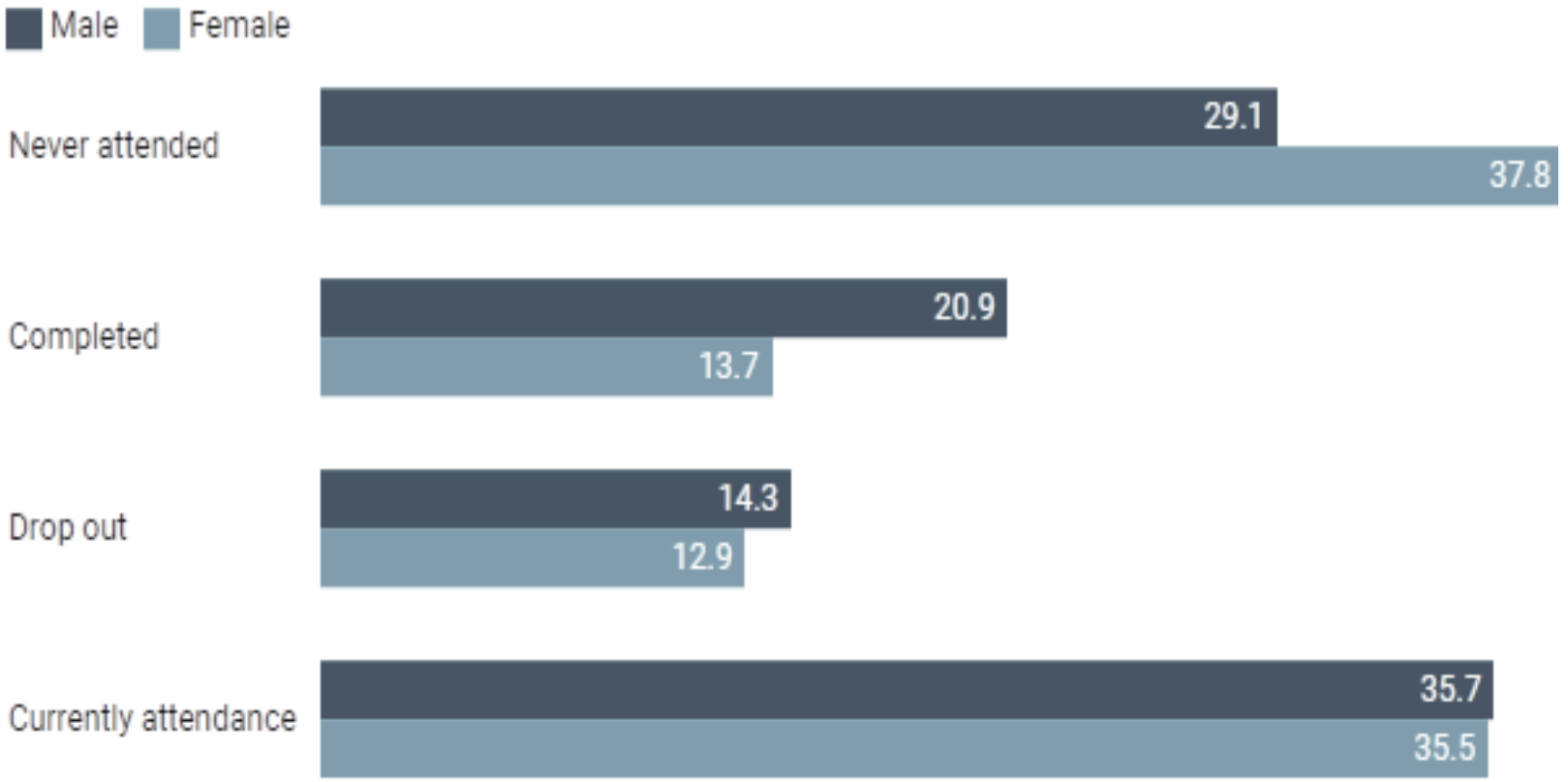
According to the UNESCO, school attendance is attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or program, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education at the time of the census or, if the census is taken during the vacation period at the end of the school year, during the last school year.

School Attendance: School attendance status of the population 3 years and older



One-third of the population has never attended school. Nearly half of rural population has never attended school: the proportion is more than two times that of the urban population.

School Attendance: School attendance by sex



About 2 out of every 5 females have never attended school compared to less than one third for males.
The proportion of the population currently attending school is almost the same for both sexes

School Attendance: School attendance by different age groups

School attendance	Age groups			
	3-5	6-12	13-15	16-18
Never attended	55.7	27.0	19.2	20.5
Completed	1.3	2.3	3.3	5.7
Drop-out	1.1	2.0	3.8	8.4
Currently attending	41.8	68.7	73.8	65.4

Majority of children who should be in pre-school are not in ECE. The proportion of currently attending school increase with advancement in age.

School Attendance: School attendance by different age groups by locality

School attendance	3-5 years		6-12 years		13-15 years		16-18 years	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Never attended	41.6	70.0	16.1	40.0	11.1	30.1	11.8	32.7
Completed	1.9	0.7	3.0	1.4	4.0	2.2	7.3	3.4
Drop-out	1.2	1.1	1.9	2.2	3.2	4.6	6.9	10.6
Currently attending	55.3	28.2	79.0	56.4	81.6	63.1	74.0	53.3

The proportion of children 3-5 years not in pre-school in the rural areas is very high (70%). School attendance population is higher in urban areas in all ages than in rural areas

School Attendance: School attendance by different age groups and sex

School attendance	3-5 years		6-12 years		13-15 years		16-18 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Never attended	56.5	54.9	28.1	25.9	20.1	18.2	20.0	20.9
Completed	1.3	1.3	2.3	2.3	3.3	3.3	5.7	5.6
Drop-out	1.2	1.1	2.1	1.9	3.9	3.6	7.4	9.5
Currently attending	40.9	42.7	67.5	69.9	72.7	74.9	66.9	64.0

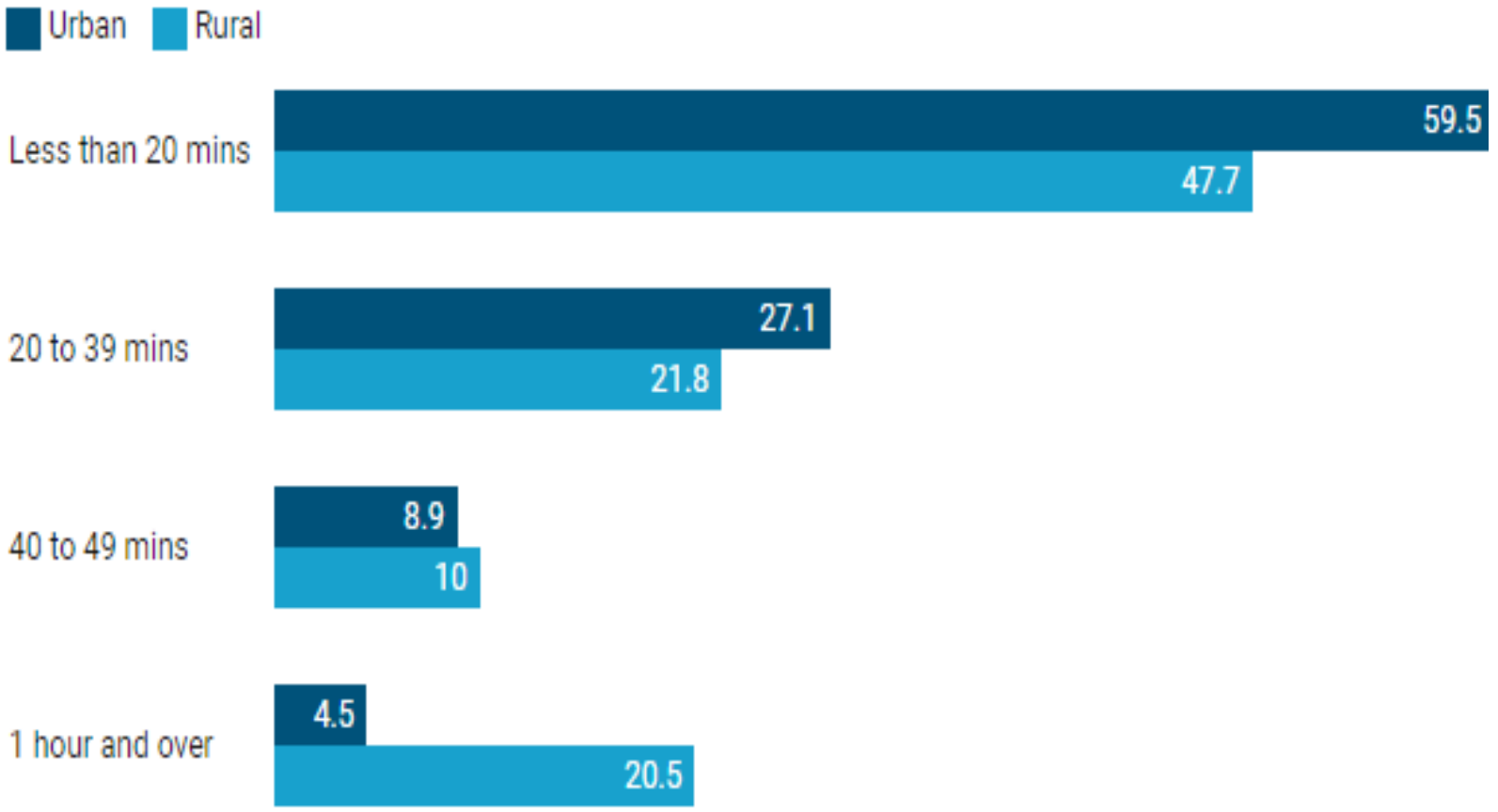
Not much difference between proportions of both sexes in each age group. However, female proportion are higher except in age 16 to 18.

School Attendance: School attendance by county

County	Never attended	Completed	Drop-out	Currently attending
Bomi	56.7	0.6	1.3	41.5
Bong	74.9	0.9	1.1	23.1
Grand Bassa	77.7	0.5	0.9	20.9
Grand Cape Mount	65.7	0.8	1.1	32.3
Grand Gedeh	57.6	1.2	1.0	40.2
Grand Kru	64.5	0.6	0.7	34.2
Lofa	59.9	0.9	1.1	38.1
Margibi	56.9	1.5	1.6	39.9
Maryland	58.2	0.7	0.9	40.3
Montserrado	37.0	2.2	1.2	59.6
Nimba	60.4	1.0	0.9	37.6
River Cess	77.2	0.2	0.9	21.7
Sinoe	68.3	0.9	1.3	29.5
River Gee	65.6	0.6	1.2	32.7
Gbarpolu	67.3	0.5	1.9	30.3

- Montserrado has the lowest proportion of the population that has never attended school and the highest proportion of the population currently attending school.
- The reverse is true for Grand Bassa.
- Gbarporlu has the highest drop-out rate

School Attendance: Walking distance to the nearest primary school



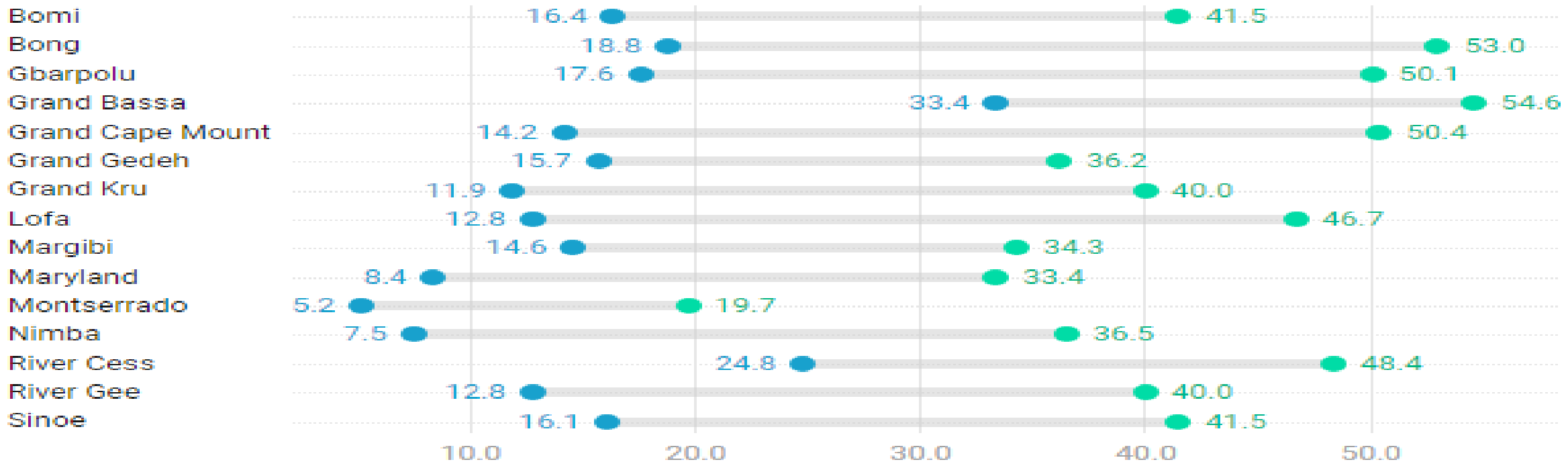
- About 3 out of 5 households in urban localities can access a primary school in less than 20 minutes walk.
- About one-fifth of rural household can access a primary school in one hour or more compared to 4.5% in urban areas

School Attendance: Walking distance to the nearest primary school

	< 20 mins	20 to 39	40 to 59	> 1 hour
Bomi	49.2	25.7	8.7	16.4
Bong	47.3	23.2	10.7	18.8
Gbarpolu	58.9	17.5	5.9	17.6
Grand Bassa	35.8	19.3	11.5	33.4
Grand Cape Mount	52.2	24.7	8.9	14.2
Grand Gedeh	47.8	26.8	9.6	15.7
Grand Kru	46.2	32.8	9.1	11.9
Lofa	52.3	24.3	10.6	12.8
Margibi	42.3	30.2	12.9	14.6
Maryland	48.2	30.2	13.2	8.4
Montserrado	62.4	24.3	8.1	5.2
Nimba	55.1	28.0	9.4	7.5
River Cess	55.8	13.7	5.7	24.8
River Gee	54.1	23.2	10.0	12.8
Sinoe	53.1	21.7	9.0	16.1

Montserrado County (5.2%) has the lowest proportion of households that have to walk long distance of one hour or more before accessing a primary school with Grand Bassa (33.4%) as the highest.

School Attendance: Walking distance to the nearest primary school by County



- Proportion that access primary school in one hour or more
- Proportion that has never attended school

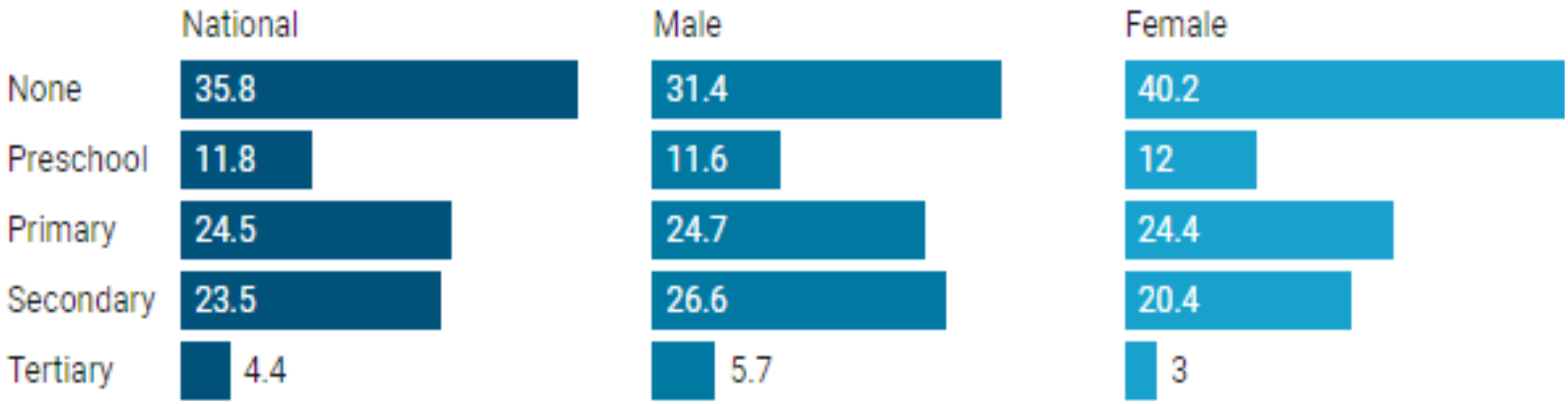
There is some link between walking distance to a primary school and school attendance. However, there are factors other than distance that affect school attendance

Definition

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual has completed. This is distinct from the level of schooling that an individual is attending.

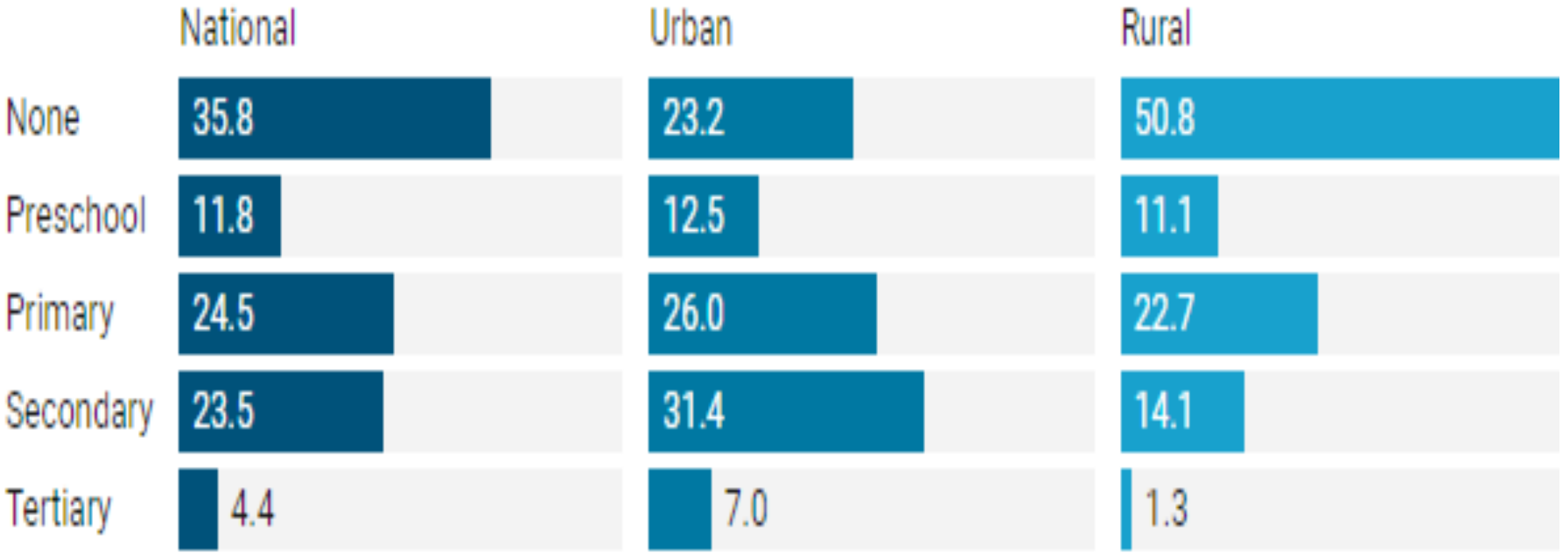
Data on educational attainment are used to provide information on the educational skills of the work force. This indicator also helps planners to decide on the best strategies to communicate with the population.

Educational Attainment: Population 5 years and older



A little over a third (35.8%) of the population have not attained any level of education. The proportion that has attained a level of education reduces from primary school upwards, with a very low (4.4%) tertiary educational attainment. Males have higher education attainment than females

Educational Attainment: Population 5 years and older by locality



About half of the rural population has not attained any level of education compared to less than a quarter of the urban population. The disparity in educational attainment at the secondary and tertiary levels is wide between the localities

Educational Attainment: Population by County

County	None	Preschool	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Bomi	44.1	11.7	23.9	17.8	2.4
Bong	55.1	11.4	18.6	13.1	1.8
Gbarpolu	52.0	8.8	23.0	14.6	1.6
Grand Bassa	56.4	8.9	18.9	13.8	1.9
Grand Cape Mount	52.3	7.8	19.9	17.6	2.4
Grand Gedeh	37.9	10.0	25.6	24.6	1.9
Grand Kru	42.7	12.0	26.4	17.8	1.1
Lofa	48.9	10.1	23.7	15.7	1.7
Margibi	37.2	10.9	25.5	22.5	3.9
Maryland	35.9	12.0	26.7	22.3	3.0
Montserrado	22.1	11.5	25.0	33.1	8.3
Nimba	39.3	16.0	25.6	17.4	1.8
River Cess	50.3	13.0	22.9	12.7	1.2
River Gee	42.3	12.8	25.3	18.5	1.1
Sinoe	43.6	9.8	27.0	18.2	1.5

Montserrado has the highest proportion of the population that had attained secondary & tertiary level education

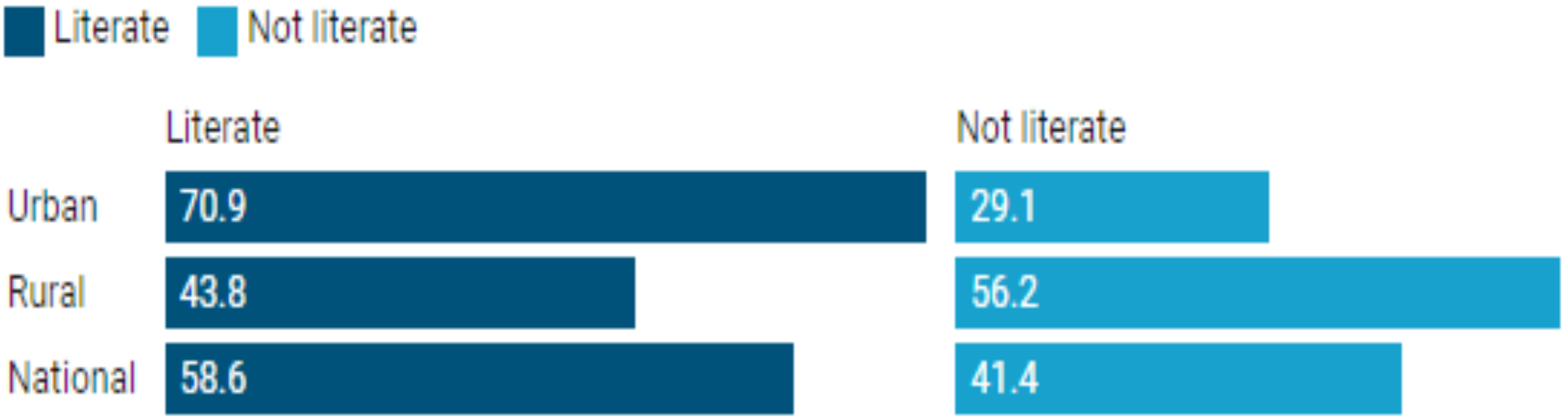
Grand Bassa, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and River Cess have more than half of the population not attained any level of education

Definition:

The UN defines “a literate person as one who can both read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life.

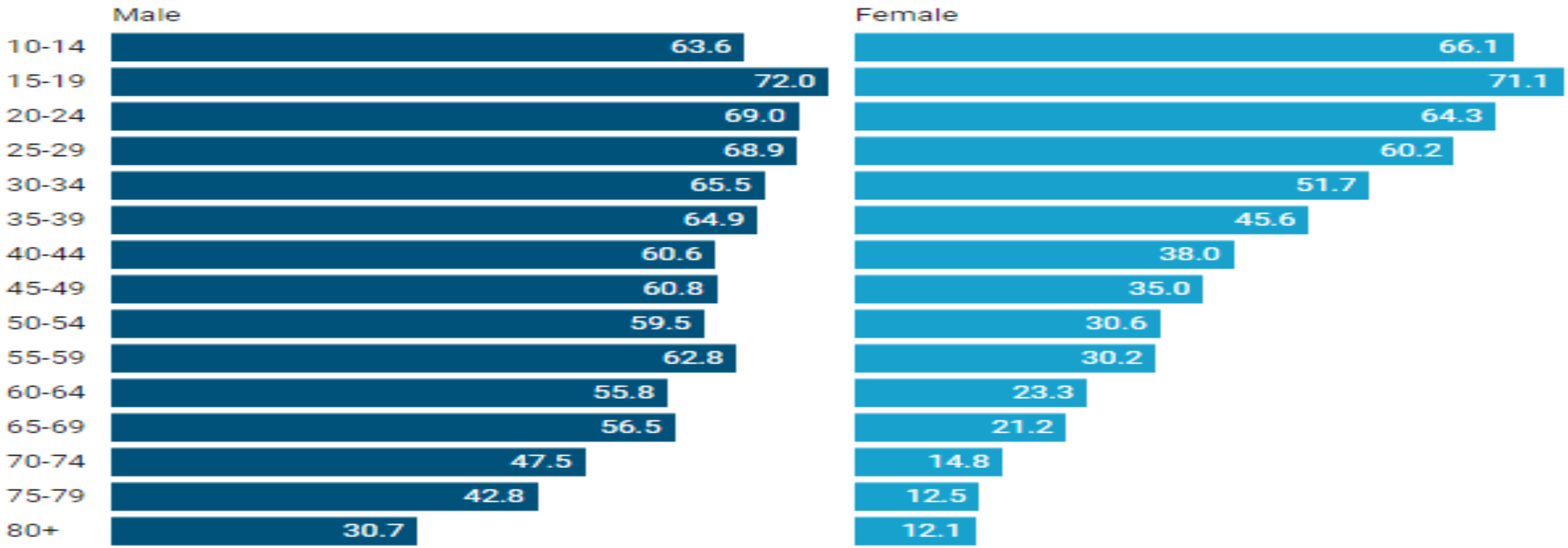
An illiterate person is one who cannot, with understanding, both read and write such a statement ”.

Literacy: Literacy rate of the population 15 years and older by locality



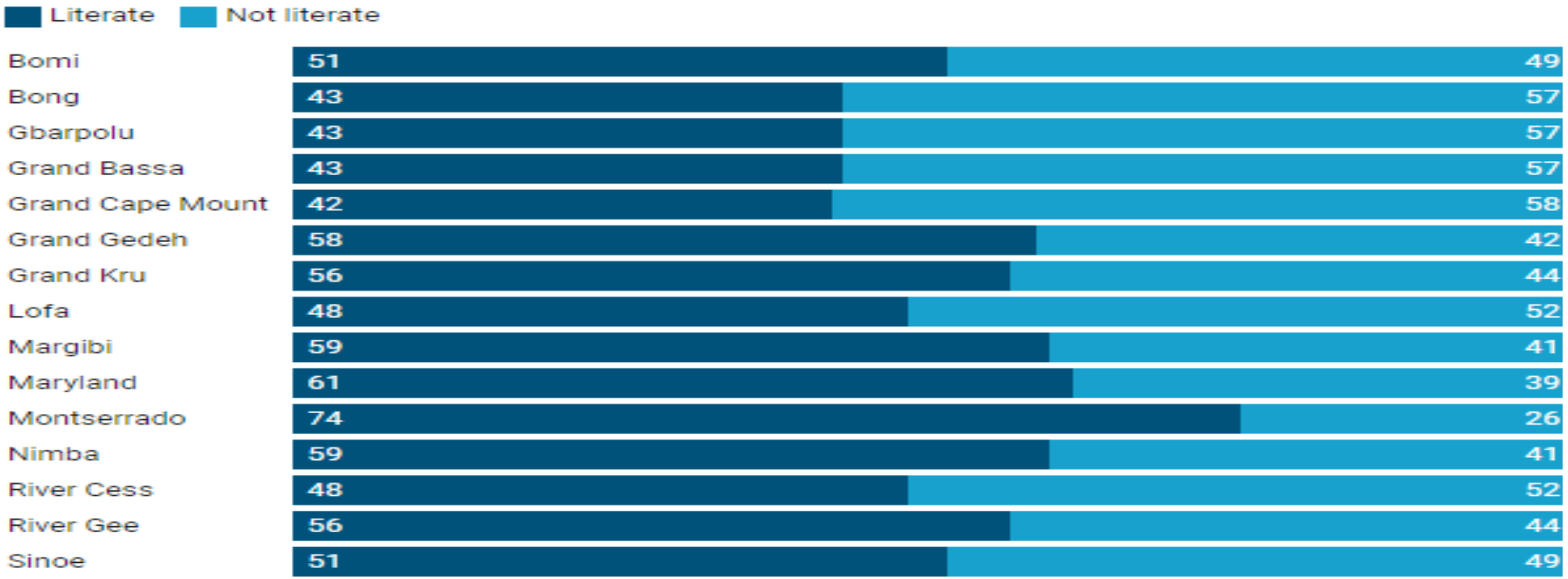
The national literacy rate is 58.6%. The rate for the urban (70.9%) population is significantly higher than that of the rural (43.8%).

Literacy: Literacy rate by sex



Generally, younger age cohorts demonstrate higher rates of literacy than older age cohorts.
Literacy among males is higher than females for all ages except the 10 to 14 age groups

Literacy: Literacy rate of the population 15 years and older by locality



Montserrado County (74%) has the highest literate population and Grand Cape Mount County has the lowest (42%).

Literacy: Literacy status of household head and school attendance of children 3-15 years

Locality	School attendance status	Literate	Not literate
National	Never attended	2.1	56.2
	Completed	3.6	1.1
	Drop-out	2.4	2.6
	Currently attending	91.9	40.1
	Total	100.0	100.0
Urban	Never attended	1.6	42.8
	Completed	4.0	1.7
	Drop-out	1.9	3.0
	Currently attending	92.5	52.5
	Total	100.0	100.0
Rural	Never attended	3.1	66.1
	Completed	2.7	0.7
	Drop-out	3.4	2.2
	Currently attending	90.8	31.0
	Total	100.0	100.0

- A literate household head, irrespective of locality of residence, is more than 90% likely to send children to school, compared to the not literate households in urban (52.5%) and rural (31.0%)
- The implication is that literacy status of a household head is one of the predictors of children school attendance

Conclusion

- Locality differences exist as far as children's school attendance and attainment are concerned. Residing in urban areas, relative to rural areas, not only reduces the chances of children not going to school, but also increases the schooling levels to be attained.

- Holding other factors constant, higher levels of parental education tend to reduce the probability of children not attending school. That is, literate household heads or parents have by far the better educational prospects.

- The school attendance outcomes are translated into the education attainment and literacy outcomes of the society. The analysis shows that localities and counties that have better school attendance outcomes have better education attainment and literacy outcomes.

- Tertiary education attainment is very low and this has serious implications on the quality of the workforce. For those who completed secondary level education, only 19 percent continue to acquire a tertiary degree.

- Monrovia's status as the national capital and situated in Montserrado County, has skewed educational resources into that county relative to the other counties. This is not surprising, because modern Liberia has been built around Monrovia, attracting more people from the other counties to either look for jobs or seek for better education.

Policy Implication

- The phenomenon of no schooling and dropping out of school has serious socioeconomic implications such as unemployment and its related social vices, and increased dependency ratio.

- An equitable education system provides all students with the resources to succeed. It is important to study perceived educational barriers as these can prevent youth from formulating or pursuing particular education aspirations.

- The low tertiary education attainment is an area that should receive equal attention because of advantages of a well-developed tertiary education system. Training people to the tertiary level is a way to increase one's skills and marketability in securing a job in the new economic landscape.

- Over-concentration of educational facilities in Monrovia and its environs also has its own problems. The area will continue to attract migrants and problems associated with high population concentration at the national capital will need to be addressed with a sense of urgency.

Recommendation

- The Education Sector Plan (ESP) - 2022/23 to 2026/27 has identified almost all the problems that this thematic analysis has revealed. The Plan has outlined programs to integrate and reintegrate out-of-school children through return-to-school strategies and programs. Also in the plan is to provide inclusive education.
- The recommendation therefore is that there is the urgent need for government to implement the plan to provide educational equality and narrow the urban-rural education in the rapid development of the economy.
- Ways of making tertiary education more accessible should be explored to increase the quality of the workforce.

This include:

  - Provision of sandwich and distance education for workers and those who cannot attend tertiary education due to distance from tertiary institutions
  - Supporting needy but brilliant students
  - Using e-learning

Recommendations on improvement of the questionnaire in future censuses

- The language of literacy should be specified. It is important to collect information on literacy in all the languages persons are literate in.
- Question on reasons children of school-going age are not in school should be included in surveys and censuses to help policy makers identify barriers to education.
- Junior high school as a category of educational level was not in the 2022 LPHC and need to be included in subsequent surveys and censuses.
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be included in the categories of education attainment.