



WOMEN IN LIBERIA, A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Using quantitative data from the Liberia Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index in 2023, 2021 and 2018 to provide a situational analysis of Women in Liberia focusing on education and leadership.

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Disclaimer: The ideas, opinions and comments expressed in this report belong to the author(s) and are not attributable to the United Nations Development Programme or the Liberia Peacebuilding Office or the donors.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AWLN	African Women’s Leaders Network
ARREST	Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism Agenda
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GoL	Government of Liberia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LISGIS	Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services
NACCEL	National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia
NAP WPS	National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2019-2023
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PBO	Liberia Peacebuilding Office
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SeeD	Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SI	Spotlight Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

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Background

Liberia experienced another democratic alternance at the head of the State, with Joseph Nyumah Boakai in replacement of George Opong Weah. Soon in the new term, the new administration announced its strategic priorities for the next 5 years, that will cover areas like Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism, coined the ARREST Agenda. This decision illustrates a shift in the country's public policy focus, moving away from peacebuilding, as outlined in pillar 3 of the PAPD Agenda, and towards development, in line with the goals of the ARREST Agenda. From 2016 to 2021, three waves of survey's, aligned with the SCORE methodology, were conducted to provide robust evidence for accurate monitoring of the country's progress in achieving the Peacebuilding Plan's objectives. The ambition is now to adjust the SCORE metrics to provide evidence to support the new agenda.

Indeed, the third SCORE Liberia project (2020-2021) provided an opportunity to assess progress in Liberia since the closure of UNMIL on 30 March 2018, through reports around (i) progress towards sustaining peace, (ii) livelihood resilience and (iii) women and the peace dividend. This allowed us to provide policy makers with evidence-based insights which can optimize efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving key targets in the PAPD. This assessment was made possible by the work done in the previous waves (2016 and 2018) to establish a measure of social cohesion and resilience capacities in local communities for conflict prevention (SCORE Liberia 2016) and convert SCORE findings into evidence-based publications to serve as the baseline for a) Enhancing Good Governance, b) Addressing Violent Tendencies and c) Fostering Constructive Citizenship (SCORE Liberia 2018).

The current Liberia SCORE project (2023) provides an opportunity to assess progress in Liberia since the closure of UNMIL on 30th March 2018, toward the achievement of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan's targets. It also explores the ability of SCORE metrics to provide insights that could inform the ARREST agenda. This is an important challenge to be tackled because it will establish a strategic continuity from peacebuilding to development focus, and help developing a Peace & Development Dashboard that could be useful for the Government of Liberia (GoL). The three reports in the 2023 series will explore a) livelihood resilience, b) the progress in women's situation and c) Civic Satisfaction as the bridge between peace and development. They build on the work and knowledge accrued through previous SCORE projects, and together provide policy makers with evidence-based insights to assess the achievement of PAPD's key targets and ensure the strategic continuity towards the country's new focus.

Executive Summary

The SCORE projects between 2018 and 2021 allowed to monitor several indicators aligned with SDG 5 and SDG 16, some of which were aligned with key objectives of the PAPD. For this report, the SCORE Index has monitored progress of gender equality indicators (related to SDG 5) since 2018 to analyse women situation according to their level of education and the disparities on education among men and women, the perceptions between men and women on women leadership, and others relevant indicators such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and economic advancement of Women.

Even though we can observe positive signals in terms of access to education, inequalities remain at force. Since 2018, there has been an increase in the proportion of both men and women who have completed primary education. However, around one third of Liberian women self-report that they have no numeracy or literacy skills at all. More girls than boys do not attend any formal schooling and more boys than girls attend secondary schooling. Almost half of women in rural areas have never attended school (twice more than men from those areas).

Support to traditional values and individual propension for violence contribute to slow down the delegitimization of SGBV. Even if there is a decline in the evolution of support for FGM from 2018 to 2023, almost one third of respondents in 2023 still endorses FGM in Liberia.

Support to access to elementary rights and economic resources improved but remains fragile. Indicators of support for women in the workforce, equal education for girls, and equal inheritance for women showed good progress over the period 2018-2023. However, there is a nuanced stance on women's social mobility, where there is support for their economic advancement up to a certain threshold. While access to basic economic opportunities such as inheritance, job positions, and education is encouraged, resistance often arises towards their pursuit of higher-level leadership positions in the socioeconomic hierarchy. This distinction underscores the need to differentiate between facilitating entry into economic spheres and promoting women's ascension into leadership roles.

Men in Liberia back women's leadership more than women do. Men in Liberia are more likely than women to fully support both gender equality and women's leadership. Women's trust in their own leadership abilities is notably low, which presents a critical barrier to their empowerment. While they support their economic advancement and reject violence against them, many do not see themselves as capable leaders. It is crucial to promote leadership development and foster trust in women's leadership among women themselves. Elevating women into decision-making

roles not only helps protect their interests but also strengthens their confidence, paving the way for them to assume positions of greater responsibility and influence.

Support for right to be safe from violence and to economic advancement of women might be driven by different dynamics and factors than confidence in women leaders. In other words, the reasons that lead people to support women's economic empowerment are not the same as those that encourage trust in women's leadership. These distinct motivations suggest that while many may advocate for women's empowerment in areas like safety and economic growth, deeper cultural or societal norms might limit their willingness to view women as capable leaders. Initiatives promoting equal access to basic rights should emphasize nurturing harmonious intergroup relations and fostering peaceful attitudes, whereas advocating for women in leadership hinges on bolstering positive perceptions of governance.

Introduction

The question of a woman's status and equal rights for women are relevant to every culture and society in the world. The world's confusion about the place and value of women manifests itself in various ways (Munroe, 2009). The seventeen world Sustainable Development Goals proposed "seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls"¹. The SDG 5 seeks an end to all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere (SDG 5.1); to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres (SDG 5.2); to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (SDG 5.3); and to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (SDG 5.5)².

Women play an important role in Liberia's economic and social development. They generate an estimated 38.4 percent of Liberia's annual GDP and 70 percent of (unpaid) domestic housework (Gupta & al., 2021). Women and girls suffered the worst consequences from the 14 years of the war and the subsequent economic crises (UN Women, 2021). Throughout this time, sexual violence was used against women. Violence is sometimes also one of the principal means of coercion adopted by men to impose their power and authority over spouses. For many Liberian women, acts of violence are still occurring within their communities. Also, violence is intertwined with entrenched traditional gender norms, which reinforces Female genital mutilation (FGM) as a common practice among some ethnic groups in Liberia (UN Women, Ibid). Despite grave health risks and later complications related to FGM throughout survivor's life, significant segments of Liberia's traditional population view FGM as an essential traditional practice worth preserving. It is worth noting that the government of Liberia has taken steps to fight violence against women and girls through its penal code's reforms that provide stronger penalties for SGBV crimes (Gupta & al., Ibid).

Recent democratic governments in Liberia have made considerable efforts to improve advancement for women's rights and gender equality. This commitment was reflected by the implementation of a five-year Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, which was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and including gender-specific targets. Women and girls in Liberia face disadvantages in access to health, education, labour opportunities and assets. These constraints perpetuate gender disparities and limit Liberia's economic and social development.

¹ UN General Assembly (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1.

² Ibid.

Unequal access to education has been cited as one of the long-standing challenges for gender equality in Liberia³, a cornerstone of sustainable development. Lifelong learning opportunities on an equitable and inclusive basis for men and women were a special emphasis of Liberia's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD, 2018 – 2023)⁴. Human capacity development remains as Pillar 3 of ARREST agenda, in which Gender forms an integral part of Pillar 5, and education is a standalone key investment area of the agenda⁵. Liberia has a Revised National Policy on Girls' Education (NPGE 2021-2026), which aims overall to progressively reduce gender disparities in education and training⁶. The country has ratified all major international conventions which pave the way for achieving gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, in 1984), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (in 1993), the Maputo Protocol (in 2008), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in 2012)⁷. Liberia has approved gender equality policies through involvement in commitments including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the country's institutional framework on gender is heavily influenced by the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325)⁸. Improvements in literacy for both genders were noted between 2007 and 2020, and gender parity was achieved on aggregate at early childhood education level⁹, with 50.93 percent of boys and 49.07 percent of girls accessing primary education in 2019-2020¹⁰.

Nevertheless, gender gaps remain. In 2022, the mean years of schooling¹¹ for women in Liberia was 3.6, compared to 7.2 for men. Comparable figures for all low human development countries

³ Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy 2022-2025, Version 2. UNDP Liberia. Available from: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-05/UNDP%20LIBERIA%20GENDER%20STRATEGY%20-%202022-2025.pdf>

⁴ Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD): A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive and Sustainable Development (July 2018 – June 2023). Republic of Liberia, 2018. Available from: <https://liberianconsulatatega.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/PAPD-Pro-Poor-Agenda-for-Prosperity-and-Development.pdf>

⁵ The World Bank in Liberia. The World Bank, 2024. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview>

⁶ National Policy on Girls' Education. Republic of Liberia, Ministry of Education, 2021. Available from: <https://educateherlib.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Liberia-GIRLS-EDUCATION-POLICY-2021pdf.pdf>

⁷ Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile. UN Women, 2021. Available from: <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report-UNW-liberia.pdf>

⁸ Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile. UN Women, 2021. Available from: <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report-UNW-liberia.pdf>

⁹ Education Sector Analysis Republic of Liberia. UNESCO IIEP, Global Partnership for Education, World Bank, 2022. Available from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383314/PDF/383314eng.pdf.multi>

¹⁰ National Policy on Girls' Education. Republic of Liberia, Ministry of Education, 2021. Available from: <https://educateherlib.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Liberia-GIRLS-EDUCATION-POLICY-2021pdf.pdf>

¹¹ Mean years of schooling: Average number of years of education received by people ages 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level.

are 3.9 and 5.5, respectively, and 5.2 and 6.9, respectively, for sub-Saharan Africa overall¹². Multifaceted challenges exist when it comes to ensuring gender equity and equality in education. These include early childbearing and marriage alongside discrimination due to pregnancy when accessing education, and moderate support for gender equity¹³. Additionally, government spending on education is low, the educational system suffers from a lack of female teachers, the rates of enrolment in technical and vocational education and training enrolment among women and girls are low, and women are generally more likely to be employed in lower paid positions¹⁴.

The main objective of this report is to provide an analysis on the SDG 5 which concerns gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in Liberia and over the period 2018-2023. More precisely, the emphasis will be put on the SDG 5.5 which envisions to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. This report examines the results based on data from the SCORE surveys in 2018, 2021 and 2023¹⁵. In doing so, it aims to answer a series of broad research questions:

1. Have there been any changes in the levels of Gender equality attitudes indicators in Liberia from 2018 and 2021 to 2023? (section 1)
2. Have there been any changes in the levels of self-reported educational attainment, literacy, numeracy, and other relevant skills between women and men in Liberia from 2018 and 2021 to 2023? How do differences in age affect educational attainment and skills among women and men? (section 2)
3. Do men in Liberia support the socioeconomic advancement of women? Are they willing to promote social mobility and back women in leadership roles? What are the different profiles of support? (section 3)

¹² Documentation and Downloads, Human Development Reports, Table 4: Gender Development Index. UNDP, 2022. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads>

¹³ Align the Education Sector Plan with the Girls' Education. Educate HER, 2024. Available from: <https://educateherlib.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Educate-HER-Policy-Brief-Janaury-2024-FINAL-2.22.pdf>

¹⁴ Align the Education Sector Plan with the Girls' Education. Educate HER, 2024. Available from: <https://educateherlib.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Educate-HER-Policy-Brief-Janaury-2024-FINAL-2.22.pdf>

¹⁵ Liberia. The Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), 2024. app.scoreforpeace.org/en/liberia/datasets

Section 1 - Trends in Gender Equality Attitudes: Tracking SDG5 Indicators from 2018 to 2023

Reaching gender equality is challenging, especially in a society characterised by differences in how man and women status are perceived. When examining Liberia's progress on gender equality between 2018 and 2023, SCORE analyses revealed divergent results. In some indicators progress is noted, but in other indicators mostly related to women leadership, it is unfortunately the opposite trend¹⁶.

Reference	Indicator Name	2018	2021	2023	Change 2021 to 2023
SDG 5.2	Endorsement of SGBV	2.0	1.1	1.0	-0.1
SDG 5.3	Endorsement of FGM	4.6	4.2	3.1	-1.1
SDG 5.5	Representation of women in public positions	5.2	5.2	4.7	-0.6
SDG 5.5	Trust in women leaders	6.1	5.7	5.4	-0.3
SDG 5.5	Discrimination against women in hiring	3.2	3.9	3.5	-0.4
SDG 5.5	Women's level of education	4.0	3.1	2.9	-0.2
SDG 5.5	Support for women in managerial positions	5.8	7.6	7.6	0.0
SDG 5.5	Support for women in the workforce	6.9	7.4	8.2	0.8
SDG 5.5	Support for equal pay for women	7.6	7.5	7.5	0.0
SDG 5.5	Support for equal education for girls	8.2	8.2	8.6	0.4
SDG 5.A	Support for equal inheritance for women	6.4	6.9	7.7	0.8
SDG 5.B	Women's information consumption	4.4	3.4	4.2	0.8

Table 1. Gender equality indicators according to the SDGs Framework

1. Violence against women

According to (UN Women, 2021, p17): "Gender-based violence continues to be one of the most widespread forms of abuse and inequality in Liberia. Almost half of the female population between 15 - 49 years old have experienced physical, sexual, or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner throughout some part of their lives". On a scale of 0 to 10, 0 signifies the rejection endorsement of FGM or SGBV and 10 indicates that participants fully endorse these phenomena.

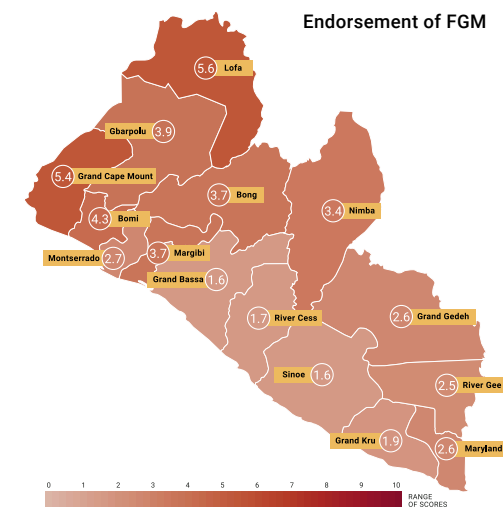


Figure1. Heatmap "Endorsement of FGM"

¹⁶ See section 3

There is a decline in the evolution of support for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) from 2018 to 2023. This decrease is likely due to the ban of FGM and the considerable efforts made by the authorities to end this practice in the country. The practice of FGM has been permanently banned in Liberia following a proclamation by the Chairperson of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia (NACCEL) during the commemoration of the International Day of Zero Tolerance against FGM in Sonkay Town, Montserrado County on the 6th of February, 2023. Several pronouncements have been previously made by NACCEL to eliminate FGM in Liberia, including the Ganta Declaration to suspend FGM for one year in 2019 and a further three-year ban from 2022 to 2025¹⁷. Since the proclamation, traditional ceremonies to effectively enforce the ban on FGM have been conducted in four out of 11 FGM practicing counties in Liberia, namely Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba and Bong counties¹⁸.

Despite this decline in support for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) from 2018 to 2023, 32 percent of the full sample in 2023 still supports FGM. It is important to note the significant territorial variations, as support for FGM exceeds 60 percent in some counties, such as Lofa (64 percent) and Grand Cape Mount (61 percent), while in Grand Bassa, “only” 12 percent of the population supports these practices. In other words, there are almost five times more people supporting FGM in Lofa compared to Grand Bassa.

Beyond the sole question of FGM, the endorsement of SGBV only decreased by 0.1 point, from 1.1 in 2021 to 1.0 in 2023. Figure 2 shows that endorsement of SGBV is more prevalent in Maryland (1.6), Grand Gedeh (1.5), Nimba (1.4) and River Gee (1.3).

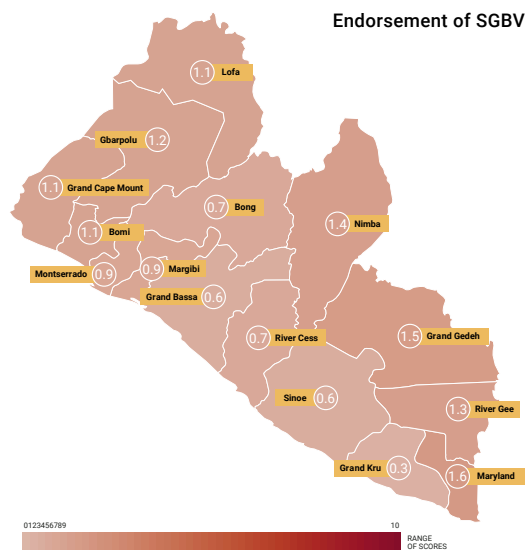
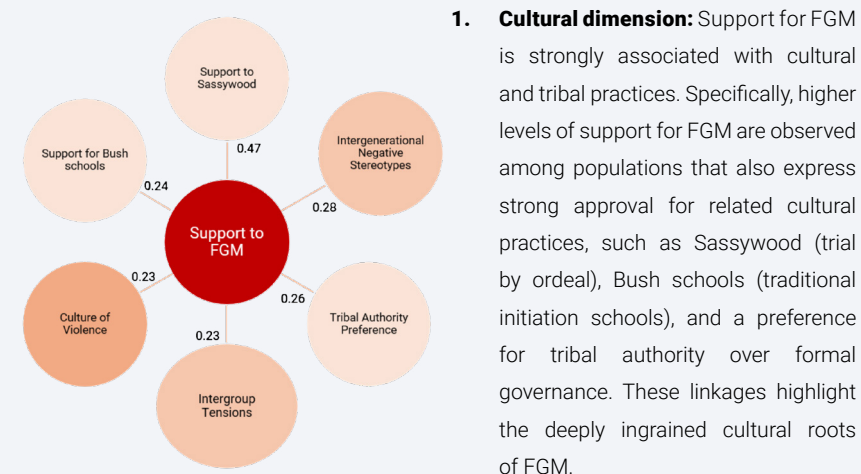


Figure 2. Heatmap “Endorsement of SGBV”

Box. 1 Support for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Key Drivers and Implications for Advocacy

Support for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Liberia is influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal interventions and robust advocacy campaigns to inform and educate citizens. Legal frameworks, when combined with targeted advocacy efforts, have the potential to significantly reduce public support for FGM. A correlation analysis reveals three primary networks of drivers underpinning support for FGM:



1. Cultural dimension: Support for FGM is strongly associated with cultural and tribal practices. Specifically, higher levels of support for FGM are observed among populations that also express strong approval for related cultural practices, such as Sassywood (trial by ordeal), Bush schools (traditional initiation schools), and a preference for tribal authority over formal governance. These linkages highlight the deeply ingrained cultural roots of FGM.

2. Social Cohesion dimension: A lack of both intragroup and intergroup social cohesion appears to correlate with greater support for FGM. Communities with weaker bonds among their members or across groups may be more resistant to change, including shifts in attitudes toward harmful practices like FGM. Many studies advocate that violence against women and societal instability are interconnected (True & Davis, 2019). These conditions often create environments where harmful traditional practices, like FGM, are maintained as part of a broader framework of systemic inequality and control over women. Furthermore, the relationship between violence toward women and broader societal violence reinforces the connection to social cohesion. Communities with limited intergroup and intragroup trust are often more susceptible to power imbalances and violence as mechanisms for resolving disputes or maintaining order.

¹⁷ <https://bit.ly/3MTSBjv>

¹⁸ <https://bit.ly/3XLdyna>

3. Individual Propensity for Violence: A general tendency to justify or resort to violence as a means of resolving conflicts or asserting control is strongly linked to higher support for FGM. Research consistently highlights that societies with normalized attitudes toward violence—whether interpersonal or communal—tend to exhibit higher levels of violence against women, including harmful practices like FGM. This correlation underscores how the lack of gender equality is both a symptom and a driver of broader societal violence.

This interplay highlights the need for advocacy efforts to not only challenge harmful cultural practices but also promote gender equality and strengthen social cohesion to address the root causes of violence and instability.

2. Economic Advancement of Women

Indicators of support for women in the workforce, equal education for girls, and equal inheritance for women showed good progress over the period 2018-2023. Also at the national level, people discriminate less against women in hiring given the score which decreased from 3.9 to 3.5 from 2021 to 2023. However, the support equal pay for women experienced no variation from 2021 to 2023. Even if none of these indicators saw a decline in 2023, efforts remain, particularly for the equal pay for women.

Many tools are used to address gender inequality, but girls' education is one of the most valuable. It puts girls and young women on a path to increased economic opportunities and fuller, richer lives. This consistently benefits the next generation, with the children of more educated women achieving greater success in life. However, despite improvements in educational equality on some metrics, in a growing number of middle-income countries, young women can often boast more completed years of schooling than young men, gender inequalities persist¹⁹.

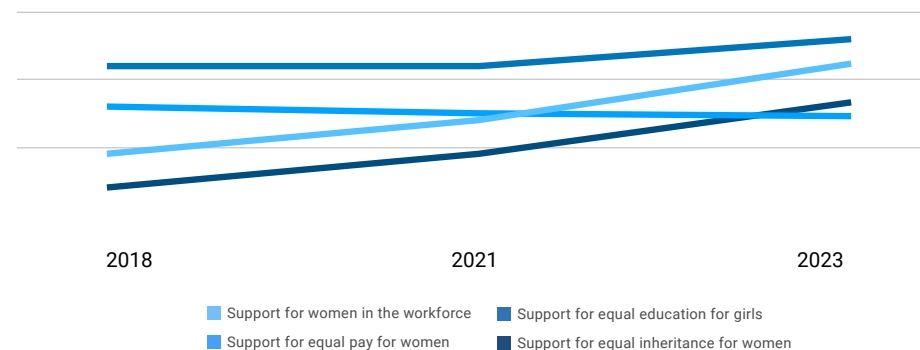


Figure 3. Economic advancement of Women

The equal participation of women in the economy is essential for the empowerment and well-being of women, their families and their communities. In Liberia, women's participation in the economy is characterized by a predominance of the informal sector and a reliance on informal financial services, which lead to precarious living conditions (UN Women, 2021). Even though the number of women entrepreneurs is increasing, significant challenges hinder the creation and management of their businesses. At the same time, for the small proportion of women who participate in the formal economy, there are challenges in their career trajectories.

¹⁹ Carvalho, Shelby, and David K. Evans, Girls' Education and Women's Equality: How to Get More out of the World's Most Promising Investment. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, 2022.

Box 2. Economic Empowerment and Youth Challenges in the Job Market

1. ECONOMIC SECURITY AND PERCEPTION OF STATE PERFORMANCE: AGE MATTERS MORE THAN GENDER

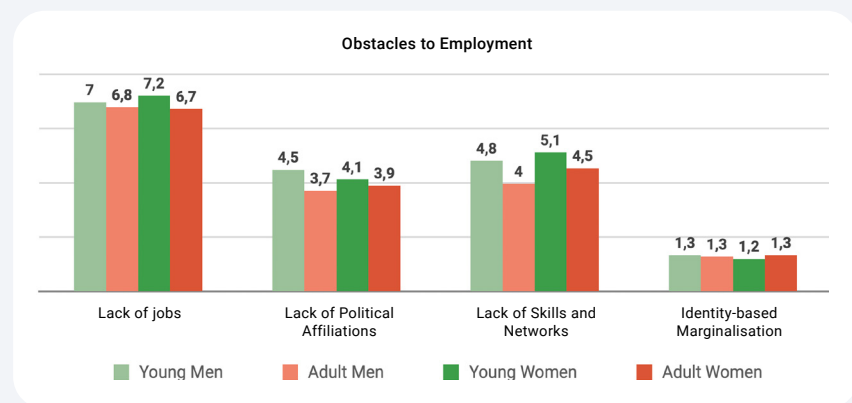
The data indicates that economic security—encompassing income, food security, health security, and livelihood security—does not significantly vary by gender but instead shows differences across age groups. Both young women and young men report slightly lower levels of economic security compared to adult men and women.

This age disparity is also evident in perceptions of the broader economic context. Young men and women provide similarly critical assessments of the investment environment and socioeconomic progress in Liberian society. They are noticeably more dissatisfied compared to older generations. In other words, the younger generation—irrespective of gender—tends to be more critical of socioeconomic progress than their parents.

Notably, perceptions of institutional actions appear to be influenced by complex dynamics beyond age or gender. For further insights, refer to the Civic Satisfaction section of the report.

2. GENDERED BARRIERS IN THE JOB MARKET AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

While economic security and perceptions of socioeconomic progress show minimal gender differences, disparities emerge regarding barriers to accessing the job market. Young women report more challenges than young men (and adults) in finding

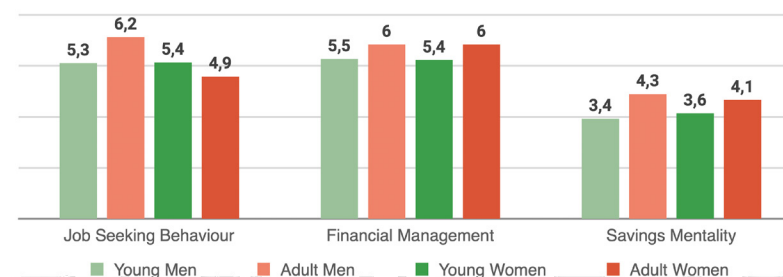


employment, citing a lack of job opportunities, skills, and professional networks. In contrast, young men highlight the absence of political affiliations as a significant barrier—an issue less emphasized by young women.

Skills Gaps and Economic Competence

When examining individual economic skills and knowledge, young women generally lag behind older women. Despite being more proactive in seeking employment, young women demonstrate lower competencies in financial management and savings compared to their older counterparts. This gap may stem from sociological factors: young women are less likely to manage household finances and are thus less experienced in daily financial responsibilities.

Addressing this skills deficit is critical. Developing financial management capabilities and fostering a savings mindset among young women could enhance their self-confidence and economic empowerment, making them more competitive in the job market.



3. Women’s information consumption

The findings showed significant differences between men and women regarding information consumption in Liberia. The level of women’s information consumption is lower than that of men (5.2) and the average at the national level (4.7), standing at 4.2 in 2023.

Occurrence	Listen to news on the radio	Read about the news in a newspaper or on the internet	Watch the news on TV
Nearly every day	36.1%	9.7%	6.5%
Once or twice a week	21.5%	9.0%	4.1%
Once or twice a month	12.6%	6.8%	5.1%
Once every 2-3 months	7.6%	9.9%	7.0%
Once or twice a year	5.9%	10.4%	12.0%
Less than once a year	5.9%	15.6%	21.7%
Never	10.4%	38.3%	43.3%
DK	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%

Table 2. Women’s information consumption

Regarding women, 36.1 percent listen to news on the radio nearly every day. On the other hand, 38.3 percent and 43.3 percent indicated respectively that they had never read news in newspapers or on the Internet, or watched news on television. Access to information enables citizens to engage more meaningfully in public life, understand policies, and use the information to ensure the exercise of other human rights. It can be a tool to provide the power to ensure that social services reach the most disadvantaged and marginalized people and promotes political and economic empowerment²⁰.

4. Women in leadership positions

Women’s representation in decision-making processes has evolved throughout the country’s history, but women’s political participation is far from reaching parity in government positions, political representation bodies and political processes.

According to UN Women (2021), in 2020’s special Senate election, women made up only 20 of the 118 eligible candidates. Our findings reveal a decrease or no variation in the level of indicators related to women leadership during the period 2021-2023 in Liberia.

²⁰The Carter Center’s (2014), Women and the Right of Access to Information in Liberia, Global Access to Information Initiative. <https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/ati/women-and-ati-10172014.pdf>

Support for Women in Managerial Positions



Figure 4. Heatmap “Support for women in managerial positions in public positions”

Representation of Women in Public Positions



Figure 5. Heatmap “Representation of women in public positions”

The support for women in managerial positions experienced no variation from 2021 to 2023. The score mean is 7.6, and River Gee (5.9), Maryland (6.3) and Margibi (6.9) are counties where the level of support in managerial positions is very low. Diverse explanations have been proposed to explain the discrimination against women’s leadership. Gender stereotypes are cultural beliefs that dictate expectations about how women and men are and how they should behave. This poses a challenge to female candidates who do not fit the masculine concept of leadership. Because the traditional perception of what leadership looks like is based on male oriented concepts, female obviously cannot correspond to these concepts²¹.

Most of the people (53 percent) consider that women are not represented in public positions in 2023. The score of representation of women in public positions is very low, below the national average (4.7), in some counties such as Grand Bassa (3.1), Grand Cape Mount (3.9), Sinoe (3.9) and Gbarpolu (4.0). Overall, the level of representation of women in public positions in Liberia decreased of 0.6 point from 2021 (5.2) to 2023 (4.7).

This downward trend is worse for the confidence in women leaders, as it has been consistently observed since 2018. The national average score of confidence in women leaders is of 5.4 in 2023, decreasing from 5.7 in 2021 and 6.1 in 2018.

²¹Gipson, A. N., Pfaff, D. L., Mendelsohn, D. B., Catenacci, L. T., & Burke, W. W. (2017). Women and leadership: Selection, development, leadership style, and performance. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 53(1), 32–65.

Confidence in Women Leaders

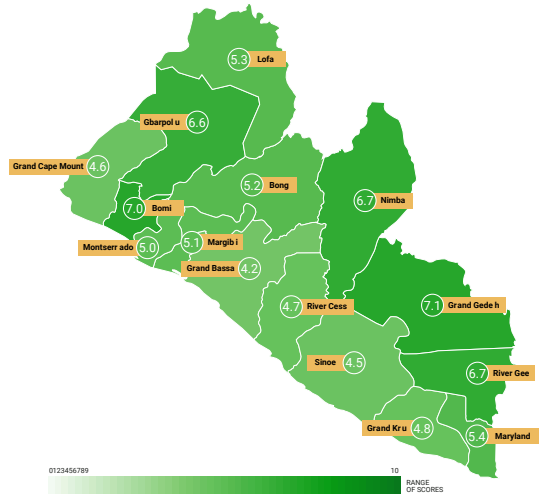


Figure 6. Heatmap “Confidence in women leaders”

involve assumptions about appropriate norms and practices. They consist of gender stereotypes, dominant views about gender roles, and cultural ideas on gender equality. Institutional factors also structure the political environment, establishing the formal and informal rules and political systems. In political systems are included the electoral system, the political party system, the broader political and legal context. Finally, individual factors concern the considerations that shape women’s decisions and abilities to participate in politics, including levels of political ambition, resources and support for their political engagement²².

Most affected counties where the level of confidence in women leaders is very low in 2023 are Grand Bassa (4.2), Sinoe (4.5), Grand Cape Mount (4.6), River Cess (4.7) and Grand Kru (4.8).

Despite the importance and benefits of Women’s Political Participation and Leadership (WPPL), women do not have full and equal access to political life around the world, nor does their mere access guarantee that they will be able to exercise political action and influence. Three sets of factors shape women’s opportunities to participate substantively in every aspect of political life. Socio-cultural factors

Section 2: Progress in Girls’ Education Amid Persistent Gender Inequalities

1. Interaction between age and gender on educational attainment in 2023

Despite the significant disparities in educational attainment, literacy and numeracy observed between men and women in 2023 (see below), findings demonstrate that the gap between genders is closing for younger generations.

While men respondents born before 1958 report 2-fold higher levels of education than women (3.7 and 1.7 out of 10, respectively), this difference decreases markedly for those born between 1999 and 2005 (aged 18 to 24 years old), with mean scores of 3.9 for men, and 3.6 for women. In this light, the levels of education reported by the youngest women are more than double those of women born before 1958, at 3.6 and 1.7 out of 10.

The decreasing difference in education level between younger men and women holds true when disaggregating by urbanity. That is, women aged 18 to 24 have similar levels of self-reported education compared to men of the same age group, a positive trend compared to their older counterparts.

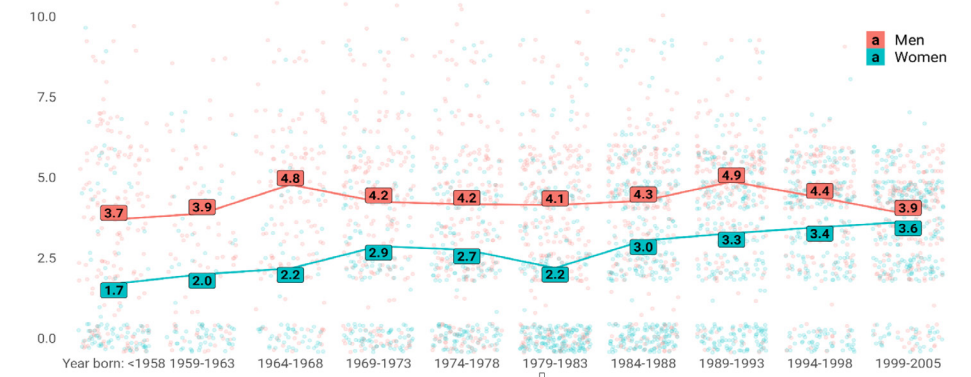


Figure 7. Mean scores of Education level for men and women based on approximate year of birth, SCORE Liberia 2023

²² USAID (2023a), Women’s political participation and leadership assessment framework, DRG learning, evaluation, and research activity, Phase 3 Revised Version. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZSBV.pdf

The biggest differences between women and men arise when it comes to the proportion over the age of 55 who lack any formal schooling, who are unable to read or write, and who have no numeracy skills at all (Table 3). Of women aged 55 and above, 57 percent have obtained no formal schooling, 60 percent cannot read or write at all, and 49 percent have no numeracy skills (Table 3). This compares to 19 percent, 20 percent and 18 percent of men in the same age group, respectively.

		2023											
		18 - 24 years old			25 to 34 years old			35 to 54 years old			55 and above		
		Men	Women	difference m-w	Men	Women	difference m-w	Men	Women	difference m-w	Men	Women	difference m-w
Education	No formal school	7%	9%	-2%	6%	26%	-20%	17%	37%	-20%	19%	57%	-38%
	Primary school	35%	39%	-4%	19%	24%	-5%	26%	29%	-3%	25%	16%	9%
	Secondary school	58%	51%	8%	64%	41%	23%	37%	26%	11%	37%	21%	16%
	University	0%	2%	-2%	11%	8%	3%	20%	9%	11%	20%	7%	13%
Reading	Very well	15%	15%	0%	30%	17%	13%	24%	11%	13%	23%	6%	18%
	Well	46%	29%	16%	36%	26%	10%	30%	17%	12%	29%	10%	19%
	Not well	31%	43%	-12%	26%	29%	-3%	28%	29%	-1%	27%	24%	3%
	Not at all	8%	13%	-5%	8%	28%	-20%	18%	42%	-24%	21%	60%	-39%
Writing	Very well	16%	13%	3%	29%	18%	12%	25%	11%	13%	24%	6%	18%
	Well	45%	34%	11%	37%	28%	9%	30%	18%	12%	30%	11%	19%
	Not well	31%	40%	-9%	26%	28%	-2%	28%	30%	-2%	28%	24%	4%
	Not at all	7%	13%	-5%	7%	27%	-19%	18%	41%	-23%	19%	60%	-41%
Numeracy	Excellent	6%	5%	1%	9%	5%	4%	12%	3%	9%	10%	4%	6%
	Good	21%	21%	-1%	32%	17%	15%	26%	16%	10%	29%	14%	14%
	Basic	56%	52%	4%	45%	47%	-1%	42%	48%	-6%	43%	32%	11%
	Not at all	17%	22%	-4%	13%	31%	-18%	20%	33%	-13%	18%	49%	-31%

Table 3. Proportion of responses for educational attainment, self-rated reading, writing and numeracy skills, by gender and age, 2023

2. Differences in educational attainment between women and men over time

In 2023, women report lower education levels, literacy and numeracy skills than men. As shown in the Table 4, this difference has not decreased in magnitude since 2021.

	Men in 2021	Women in 2021	Difference in 2021	Men in 2023	Women in 2023	Difference in 2023
Education Level	4.3	3.1	1.2	4.2	2.9	1.3
Numeracy Skills	3.5	2.4	1.1	4.4	3.1	1.3
Literacy Skills	5.3	3.7	1.6	5.6	3.7	1.9

Table 4. Mean scores of Education indicators for men and women

Compared to 2018, in 2023 there is an increase in the proportion of young men and young women respondents who have completed primary school. In 2018, 10 percent of men aged 18 to 24 had completed primary school, as had 16 percent of women (Figure 8). In 2023, these increased to 35 percent and 39 percent, respectively. According to 2023 data, the biggest proportion of women above the age of 25 have received no formal schooling (36 percent). Promisingly, for women aged 18 to 24, the biggest proportion (51 percent) have attended at least some secondary school, followed by 39 percent who attended at least some primary school.

Numeracy skills are higher among men²³, and this is consistent over time. While 18 percent of men in 2023 say that they have no numeracy skills at all, this increases to 33 percent of women. It is promising that for both women and men, numeracy skills have reportedly increased since 2021. The disparity between women and men is also observed in self-rated literacy skills, in

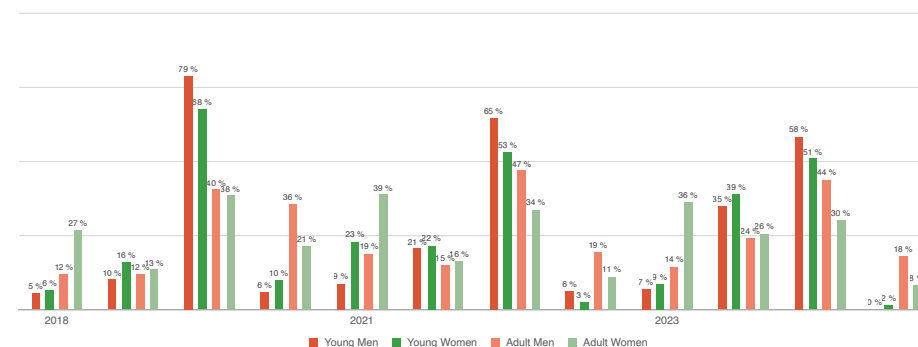


Figure 8. Proportion of responses for highest education level achieved, by gender and age, Liberia SCORE 2018, 2021, 2023

		2021			2023		
		Men	Women	difference m - w	Men	Women	difference m - w
Reading	Very well	17%	11%	6%	24%	13%	12%
	Well	42%	27%	15%	33%	21%	12%
	Not well	23%	23%	1%	28%	30%	-3%
	Not at all	18%	39%	-21%	15%	36%	-21%
Writing	Very well	17%	11%	6%	25%	13%	12%
	Well	42%	27%	14%	33%	22%	11%
	Not well	24%	23%	1%	28%	30%	-2%
	Not at all	18%	39%	-21%	15%	35%	-21%
Numeracy	Excellent	5%	2%	3%	11%	4%	7%
	Good	25%	15%	10%	27%	17%	11%
	Basic	40%	36%	4%	44%	46%	-2%
	Not at all	30%	47%	-17%	18%	33%	-15%

Table 5. Proportion of responses for self-rated reading, writing and numeracy skills, by gender and year

which men also report a slight increase from 2021. In 2023, 15 percent of men said they cannot read or write at all, compared to 35-36 percent of women.

The biggest differences between men and women are observed when considering the proportion who lack any formal schooling, and the proportion who attend any secondary school – particularly for those living in small towns or rural settlements. The proportion of respondents who do not receive formal schooling is higher in rural areas, where a staggering 47 percent of women and 23 percent of men report having obtained no formal schooling. **Over half of women in rural areas reported being unable to read at all (53 percent), compared to 21 percent of urban women. In contrast, “only” 27 percent of rural men and 6 percent of urban men reported the same.**

Overall, literacy and numeracy skills are higher in Montserrado than other counties.

These agree with findings from elsewhere, which note marked disparities in education between rural and urban populations, with the former having a higher proportion of primary-aged out of school children, lower literacy rates, and lower gross and net enrolment ratios²⁴. According to the 2019 LDHS, 21 percent of urban women in Liberia had no education, compared to 47 percent of rural women, with figures corresponding to 7 percent and 22 percent for men²⁵. Additionally, 37 percent of urban women could not read at all, compared to 66 percent of rural women, alongside 15 percent and 39 percent of men, respectively.

²⁴ Education Sector Analysis Republic of Liberia. UNESCO IIEP, Global Partnership for Education, World Bank, 2022. Available from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383314/PDF/383314eng.pdf.multi>

²⁵ Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20, Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, Liberia Ministry of Health, The DHS Program ICF, 2021. Available from: https://www.lisgis.gov.lr/admin_area/surveys/pdf/202205091307244dh12019real.pdf

3. Overall differences between women and men on educational attainment and skills in 2023

The following table shows the significant differences observed between men and women in 2023. Notably, **despite an increase in school attendance among the younger generation of women, the most significant disparities between men and women are still related to education.** Indeed, significant gender differences are seen for literacy skills, numeracy skills and education level, all of which are significantly lower in women than men. Information consumption, job seeking behaviour, language skills, IT skills, and executive skills are also all significantly lower in women than men.

	Full sample mean score	Women mean score	Men mean score
Literacy Skills	4.6	3.7	5.6
Education Level	3.6	2.9	4.2
Numeracy Skills	3.7	3.1	4.4
Information Consumption	4.7	4.2	5.3
Job Seeking Behaviour	5.6	5	6.1
Language Skills	2.5	2.2	2.8
General IT and Computer Skills	1	0.6	1.3
Executive Skills	7.3	7.1	7.5
Critical Thinking	6.7	6.6	6.9
Social Skills	7.9	7.7	8
Future Orientation	7.3	7.2	7.4
Savings Mentality	4.1	4	4.2
Support for Equal Education for Girls	8.6	8.6	8.5
Provision of Education Services	5.3	5.3	5.3
Financial Management	5.9	5.9	5.9

Table 6. Significant education-related differences between women and men

Section 3: Conditional Support for Women's Economic Advancement: Limits on Social Mobility

1. Profiling the variety of gender equality attitudes

Gender equality is not a monolithic concept; it involves various domains such as economic participation, educational attainment, political empowerment, and health and survival (Ridgeway, 2011). It can imply endorsing protection against violence as well as supporting access to inheritance, equal education opportunities, and leadership roles for women (Sen, 1999; Kabear, 2005). These varied dimensions of gender equality are critical in understanding societal progress and the complexities involved in achieving true gender parity.

To enhance the understanding of gender equality practices in Liberia, a cluster analysis was performed based on the male sample. A cluster analysis is a technique used in quantitative research to group observations based on similar characteristics. It is: "a multivariate method which aims to classify a sample of subjects (or objects) on the basis of a set of measured variables into a number of different groups such that similar subjects are placed in the same group" (Cornish, 2007, p1)²⁶.

This analysis was conceived to distinguish two primary layers of gender equality: the degree to which men support equal rights (right to be safe from violence and right to enjoy equal economic opportunities) and the degree to which they support access to leadership positions for women.

The cluster analysis was implemented along three distinct groupings:



²⁶ Rosie Cornish, "Cluster Analysis", Mathematics. Learning Support Center, 2007. <https://www.statstutor.ac.uk/resources/uploaded/clusteranalysis.pdf>

The analysis of gender equality perceptions among Liberian men identifies two primary dimensions: access to rights and access to leadership positions. Access to rights includes protection from violence (a) and equal opportunities in education, inheritance, and the workforce, emphasizing the fundamental entitlements necessary for achieving gender parity (b). Support to leadership positions (c), on the other hand, involves the acceptance and support of women in high-ranking roles and their ability to influence decision-making processes. This approach allows us to distinguish between men who believe women should have access to basic rights ((a) and (b)) and those who believe women should also hold leadership positions (c). As a result, four potential categories emerge, as visualized in the following diagram.

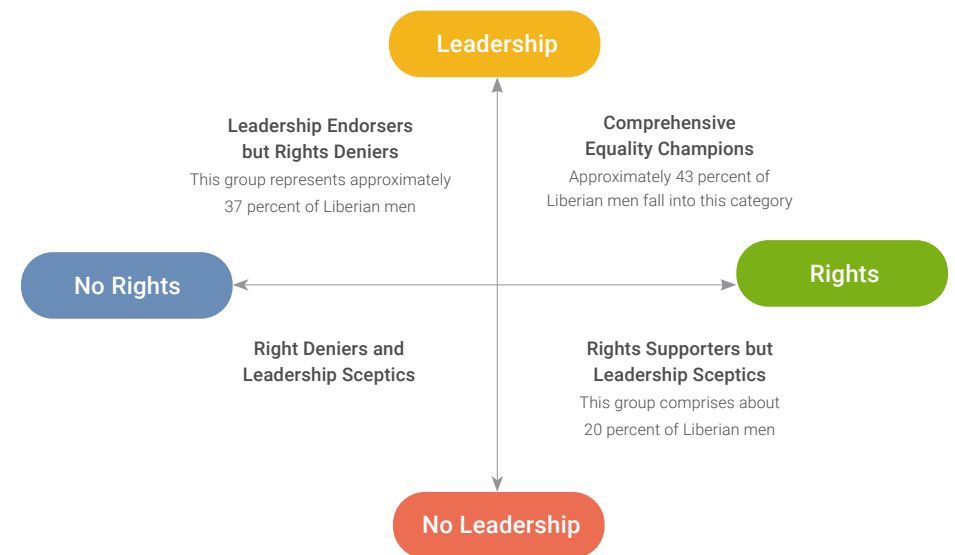


Figure 9. Profiles emerging from Cluster analysis

The distinction between supporting access to basic rights and supporting access to leadership positions is crucial as it provides a nuanced understanding of the complexities in attitudes toward gender equality. It highlights that some men may advocate for women's rights in terms of economic opportunities and protection from violence, yet simultaneously resist the idea of women in leadership roles. Conversely, others may support women's leadership but still hold regressive views on their rights to security and equal treatment.

2. Emergence of divergent profiles on gender equality

First, the cluster analysis did not find a profile of men who entirely oppose gender equality (Right Deniers and Leadership Sceptics). However, it identified three distinct profiles of Liberian men:

COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY CHAMPIONS: This group comprises men who fully support gender equality, reject violence against women, strongly support women's economic advancement, and trust women in leadership positions. These men are pivotal in promoting gender equality and women's rights in Liberia. They strongly oppose violence towards women, with a high rejection score of SGBV.

RIGHTS SUPPORTERS, LEADERSHIP SCEPTICS: These men strongly reject violence against women and support their economic advancement, yet they distrust women's leadership. This distrust might be rooted in gender-stereotypic roles that perpetuate unequal distribution of, access to, and progression to leadership and power positions between men and women²⁷. Men from this cluster ardently oppose women taking leadership roles, scoring 1.5 in Confidence in Women Leaders compared to 6.0 and 7.0 for the other two groups. They support women's rights to education, equal pay, inheritance, and workforce participation more than the Comprehensive Equality Champions, yet they resist women striving for higher-level positions in the socioeconomic landscape. In that sense, they exhibit a paradoxical stance towards women's social mobility. This group appears to support women's economic advancement only up to a certain point. They impose a threshold on women's social mobility, allowing access to various economic opportunities and resources but resisting their pursuit of higher-level positions in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

LEADERSHIP ENDORSERS, RIGHTS DENIERS: This group supports leadership positions for women but also accepts violence against them. This trend appears paradoxical, as it is surprising to support women's access to leadership while denying them basic rights. To clarify, these men deny women's rights to equal economic opportunities more than the other groups. However, the primary difference is their lack of rejection of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). For instance, their score for rejecting female genital mutilation (FGM) is 3.6, compared to 7.1 and 9.5 for the other groups. Essentially, this group primarily denies women the right to security and safety from violence but support the idea that women could have access to leadership positions. This situation suggests the following hypothesis: supporting access to equal rights, especially

²⁷ Nnenna, Ugwu & Mulegi, Tom & Asiati, Mbabazi & Esther, Eze. (2023). Barriers to Women Leadership. IDOSR Journal of Arts and Humanities, 9(1): 6-10, 2023 9. 6-10.

the right to be safe from SGBV, and supporting access to leadership stem from different streams and influences. The norms and beliefs that shape support for basic rights differ from those that influence support for leadership positions. The next section will delve deeper into these value systems.

The distinction between support for women's rights and support for access to leadership positions is crucial in the literature on gender equality. This bifurcation reflects the broader understanding that gender equality encompasses both the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities and the dismantling of systemic barriers to leadership (Kabeer, 2005). Moreover, the World Bank (2012) emphasizes that promoting gender equality requires addressing both practical and strategic needs. Practical needs include immediate improvements in conditions such as income and health, while strategic needs involve long-term changes in power relations and institutional structures. The cluster analysis in Liberia aligns with this perspective by identifying varying degrees of support for practical rights and strategic leadership roles. These variations can be visualized as follows:

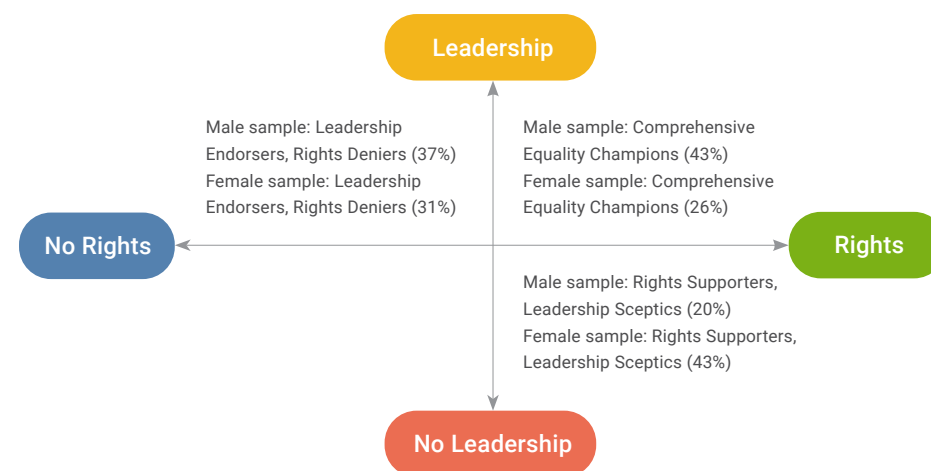


Figure 10. Clusters of postures towards Gender Equality

By distinguishing between support for women's rights and leadership positions, the analysis offers a nuanced understanding of social dynamics and the multifaceted nature of societal progress in Liberia. This approach not only aids in targeted policymaking and advocacy but also contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality by highlighting the importance of addressing both practical and strategic aspects of gender parity.

Box 3. To want extent women in Liberia support Gender Equality?

We also implemented a cluster analysis based on the female sample to observe women's attitudes toward their access to basic rights and leadership positions. The key insights can be summarized as follows:

- The same three groups emerged (see Figure 10).
- The primary difference in the distribution of women across these clusters lies between the "Comprehensive Equality Champions" and the "Rights Supporters, Leadership Sceptics" groups. **The proportion of men who support both gender equality and women's leadership ("Comprehensive Equality Champions") is higher than that of women with the same profile.**
- The least populated cluster is "Comprehensive Equality Champions," indicating that many women do not believe in their own leadership abilities. Despite advocating for and supporting economic advancement for women, **the level of confidence that women place in their fellow female leaders (5.3) is even lower than that of men (5.5) on average.**
- Almost one in three Liberian women falls into the "Leadership Endorsers, Rights Deniers" group (31 percent). They register, on average, low scores for the economic advancement of women and tolerate violence against them. This could suggest that this category of women prioritizes the well-being of their children and family over their own personal safety. Women in this group do not show a significantly stronger tendency than men to reject violence against them.

3. Why do some men deny basic women rights whereas others deny leadership positions for women?

As previously discussed, the cluster analysis results indicate that support for essential rights (such as the right to be safe from violence, the right to inheritance, and the right to education) might be driven by different dynamics and factors than support for women's access to high-ranking positions. The existence of three distinct groups, each with unique positions on these two principles (supporting basic rights and/or supporting leadership positions), necessitates more focused attention.

Two types of statistical results can help to profile these groups. First, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) allows us to identify the significant differences between these groups, considering factors such as demographics, values, behaviors, etc. It helps to answer questions such as: "do the "Comprehensive Equality Champions" have the same level of violent tendencies than the "Leadership Endorsers, Rights Deniers"?". Second, the correlation analysis can identify the factors associated with "confidence in women leaders," "representation of women in public positions," "support for SGBV," or "support for the economic advancement of women." This analysis provides information on the phenomena and dynamics linked to the principles that guide the beliefs of the three different groups. It helps to answer the question: "are the factors associate with support to Women leaders the same than the ones associated with rejection to SGBV?"

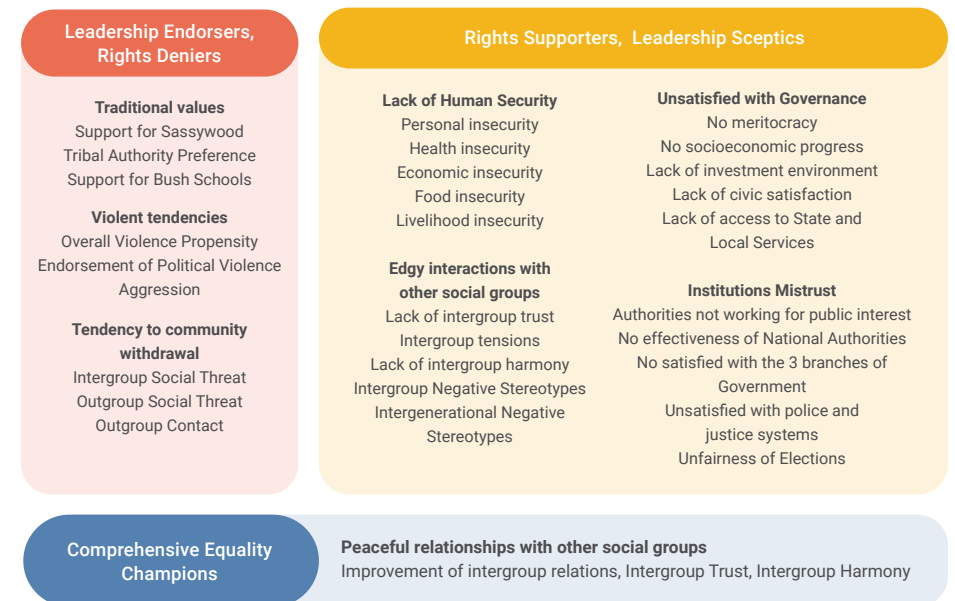


Figure 11. ANOVA of Clusters' profiles

As mentioned above, the ANOVA identified the specific characteristics of each group. By highlighting the significant differences between each group, the ANOVA allows us to draw detailed profiles. The following figure visualizes these profiles.

THE PROFILE OF “LEADERSHIP ENDORSERS, RIGHTS DENIERS”

This group represents a significant and complex segment of Liberian men. This group supports women’s access to leadership positions while simultaneously accepting violence against them. This group is **characterized by endorsement of traditional values and violent tendencies**.

These men adhere strongly to traditional values, being deeply rooted in tribal identities and customs, which shape their social and political views. They favor tribal leaders over modern state institutions and support traditional practices like Sassywood and bush schools, which may influence their views on women’s roles and perpetuate gender-specific roles. They also exhibit violent tendencies, normalizing violence as a means of conflict resolution and social control. This group has a high propensity for engaging in violence, both domestically and politically, reflecting a broader culture of aggression. Additionally, they tend to withdraw from broader community engagement, perceiving significant threats from other social groups. Their limited contact with outgroup members reinforces insular and often prejudiced views.

THE PROFILE OF “RIGHTS SUPPORTERS, LEADERSHIP SCEPTICS”

The “Rights Supporters, Leadership Sceptics” group is **characterized by a complex array of insecurities and dissatisfaction with governance**, which shapes their skeptical stance on women’s leadership despite supporting basic rights.

This group experiences significant insecurity across various domains. They face personal, health, economic, food, and livelihood insecurities, which contribute to their overall sense of vulnerability and instability. Members of this group are notably dissatisfied with governance. They perceive a lack of meritocracy and socioeconomic progress, feel there is no conducive investment environment, and have little civic satisfaction. They also experience a lack of access to state and local services, exacerbating their discontent. Their interactions with other social groups are marked by tension and mistrust. They suffer from a lack of intergroup trust and harmony, hold negative stereotypes about other groups, and experience intergenerational negative stereotypes. These factors contribute to their defensive and insular social outlook. This group has a deep mistrust of institutions. They believe authorities do not work for the public interest and see national authorities as ineffective. They have no trust in the President, are dissatisfied with all three branches of government, and are unhappy with the police and justice systems. They also perceive elections as unfair.

THE PROFILE OF “ COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY CHAMPIONS”

The “Comprehensive Equality Champions” group represents men who fully support gender equality, reject violence against women, strongly advocate for women’s economic advancement, and trust women in leadership positions. **They exhibit characteristics that foster peaceful and harmonious relationships within their communities.**

This group is characterized by their commitment to coexistence and civic trust. They prioritize social cohesion and reconciliation, working actively to improve intergroup relations. Their approach is marked by a high level of intergroup trust and harmony, which contributes to a stable and inclusive social environment. Their dedication to gender equality and peaceful community interactions positions them as key allies in the promotion of comprehensive gender equality in Liberia. Their support for women’s rights and leadership, coupled with their efforts to enhance intergroup relations, makes them influential advocates for societal progress.

4. Why is it necessary to distinguish support to equal access to basic rights and support to leadership positions?

Additionally, to the specific characteristics of each group, the correlations between some indicators can help to nuance and precise the complex dynamics at stake behind gender equality.

SUPPORTING BASIC RIGHTS ACCESS FOR WOMEN

Supporting the right to be safe from violence is generally positively associated with factors such as peaceful behaviors, intergroup harmony, community cooperation, and support for other rights like access to the workforce, inheritance, and education. People who live peacefully with other social groups tend to reject violence against women and accept gender equality in various sectors. Conversely, indicators related to cultural norms, such as support for sassywood, bush schools, and a propensity for political violence, are positively correlated with violence against women. This result confirms that women often face discrimination and violence in their daily lives, rooted in the misuse of tribal traditions, social customs, and cultural norms²⁸.

Similarly, indicators correlated with support for access to basic socioeconomic resources, such as inheritance, education, and workforce development, are positively associated with individual skills (e.g., social skills, critical thinking) and values such as the rejection of SGBV, peaceful citizenship, and a culture of peace. In contrast, negative associated factors are primarily related to cultural norms, such as support for sassywood, bush schools, and tribal authority preference.

²⁸ Tahir, M. & Rafiq, A. & Yousufi, M. & Sheikh, M. (2021). Eradicating Gender-Based Violence against Female-Intimate Partner in Pakistan: A Theoretical Framework from Islamic Philosophy. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*. 10. 340. 10.36941/ajis-2021-0029.

In summary, **support for basic rights for women tends to increase with the growth of peaceful behaviors and harmonious intergroup relations and tends to decrease with the rise of violent tendencies and support for traditional norms.** This observation aligns with the profiles described above, where the 2 groups who support equal basic rights for women (“Comprehensive Equality Champions” and “Rights Supporters, Leadership Sceptics”) share a common trait of adopting peaceful behavior.

SUPPORTING ACCESS FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS FOR WOMEN²⁹



Figure 12. Indicators correlated with Confidence in Women's Leaders

Confidence in women leaders is positively and primarily linked to indicators related to the perception and evaluation of institutional functions (e.g., public civic satisfaction, interest in authorities' efficiency, etc.) and their perceptions of peace, security, and socioeconomic development. Civic satisfaction and appreciation of governance actors' performance are strongly linked to supporting women in accessing high-ranking responsibilities. This trend aligns with the observations regarding the group of Leadership Sceptics, who report lower levels of trust in institutions, limited access to certain services, and dissatisfaction with governance.

Based on these results, the following hypothesis can be considered: while support for basic rights for women (right to security and access to basic opportunities) is mainly related to social cohesion, peaceful behaviors, and cultural norms, support for access to leadership positions is linked to perceptions of how governance and institution's function. In other words, support for equal rights and support for increased involvement in higher socioeconomic positions do not rely on the same levers. Promoting equal access to basic rights should focus on harmonious intergroup relationships and reinforcing peaceful attitudes, whereas advocating for women in leadership positions depends on positive perceptions of governance.

²⁹ The numbers on the Figure 12 represent the levels of correlations.

Key Findings & Policy Recommendations

1. Even though we can observe positive signals in terms of access to education, inequalities remain at force.

- Since 2018, there has been an increase in the proportion of both men and women who have completed primary education.
- Despite the gender disparities in educational attainment, literacy and numeracy skills, findings point to a closing gender gap for younger generations. This positive trend extends across urban and rural areas.
- More girls than boys do not attend any formal schooling and more boys than girls attend secondary schooling. Almost half of women in rural areas have never attended school (twice more than men from those areas).
- Women report lower education levels, literacy and numeracy skills than men. This difference has not decreased in magnitude since 2018. Around one third of women self-report that they have no numeracy or literacy skills at all.

2. Support to traditional values and individual propension for violence contribute to slow down the delegitimization of SGBV. Even if there is a decline in the evolution of support for FGM from 2018 to 2023, one respondent out of three still supports FGM.

3. Support to access to elementary rights and economic resources improved but remains fragile. Indicators of support for women in the workforce, equal education for girls, and equal inheritance for women showed good progress over the period 2018-2023. However, even though women advocate for their economic advancement and tend to delegitimize SGBV practises, they still do not strongly trust in their own leadership abilities.

4. Men in Liberia back women's leadership more than women do. Men in Liberia are more likely than women to fully support both gender equality and women's leadership. Many women, while advocating economic progress for other women, still express less confidence in female leaders compared to men. These results highlight the need to empower women by rebuilding their confidence in their own leadership abilities. While women support economic progress and reject violence, many struggle to see themselves as capable leaders. To drive real empowerment, it's essential to promote leadership development and build trust in women's leadership, not only for their advancement but to strengthen their role in decision-making, ultimately fostering greater responsibility and influence.

5. The support to women leadership did not improve during the period 2021-2023 in Liberia. The confidence in women leaders is consistently decreasing since 2018. The trust in Women's Leaders is mainly linked to civic satisfaction, trust in governance and authorities, peace development and human security. In other words, socio-economic development and satisfaction towards governance actions is one of the key leverages to encourage men to support women in high-ranking positions.

6. Balancing Access and Aspiration: Understanding Women's Social Mobility Challenges. There is a nuanced stance on women's social mobility, where there is support for their economic advancement up to a certain threshold. While access to basic economic opportunities such as inheritance, job positions, and education is encouraged, resistance often arises towards their pursuit of higher-level leadership positions in the socioeconomic hierarchy. This distinction underscores the need to differentiate between facilitating entry into economic spheres and promoting women's ascension into leadership roles.

7. Support for basic rights for women and support for access to leadership positions stem from different roots. Support for basic rights for women (such as security and access to basic opportunities) is primarily associated with social cohesion, peaceful behaviors, and cultural norms. Conversely, support for women's access to leadership positions is linked to perceptions of governance and institutional effectiveness. Therefore, promoting equal access to basic rights should focus on fostering harmonious intergroup relationships and peaceful attitudes, while advocating for women in leadership roles depends on enhancing positive perceptions of governance.

RECOMMENDATION 1. Establish Robust Monitoring Instruments and Evaluation Frameworks.

Implementation of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems to effectively track progress in closing the gender gap in education. Through regular data collection, consistently analysis of gender-disaggregated data, focusing on both educational attainment and citizens' perceptions. Ensure that monitoring and evaluation indicators are harmonized with national policies, creating a cohesive approach to addressing gender disparities in education. This will facilitate better alignment and synergy across various initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality. Use the insights gained from data analysis to make informed policy adjustments to ensure that educational programs are responsive to the needs of all genders, leading to more effective and equitable educational outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 2. Promoting Leadership Opportunities among the younger generation, particularly young girls.

Actively encourage and support leadership opportunities for young women through targeted programs and initiatives. Establishment of Mentorship Programs that pair young women with accomplished female leaders in various sectors, including government and private industry. These mentors should ideally have completed higher education and can provide valuable guidance, support, and inspiration to the next generation of female leaders. Eliminating obstacles that hinder women's employment and career advancement is also a crucial step to increase leadership opportunities for women. This includes addressing issues such as pay inequality, workplace discrimination, and lack of access to professional development resources.

RECOMMENDATION 3. Continue implementing comprehensive awareness and advocacy campaigns to educate communities about the devastating effects of Female Genital Mutilation, actively involving young men and women in these efforts and integrating these campaigns into broader violence prevention goals.

These campaigns should highlight both the immediate and long-term physical and psychological consequences of FGM, particularly targeting areas with strong attachments to cultural traditional norms. They should also be integrated into broader modules addressing violent behaviors in general, thereby situating the issue of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence within a wider context of violence prevention. By developing policies aimed at reducing all forms of violent behavior, the issue of SGBV can be addressed more effectively. Empowering the younger generation to advocate for the abandonment of FGM will foster a cultural shift and build stronger community-based support for ending this harmful practice.

RECOMMENDATION 4. Empowering women through education: comprehensive strategies for all generations.

Continue to implement educational initiatives and nationwide awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of education for women and girls, with a specific focus on reaching women in small towns and rural areas. Initiatives targeting young women could include collaborating with local leaders and organizations to shift perceptions and encourage girls' education, as well as introducing scholarships and financial incentives for young women aged 18-24 to complete secondary education. For actions targeting older generations, prioritize adult education and lifelong learning programs for women aged 35 and above, where the gender gap is most pronounced. Additionally, develop flexible schooling options such as evening classes, part-time schedules, and distance learning programs, or integrate childcare facilities within schools to accommodate women and girls who are household care providers.

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Annex I: Methodology

Data for the Liberia SCORE 2023 was collected between December 2023 and March 2024 across the country, with a total sample size of 3,844. Data for 2021 was collected between January and March 2021 across the country, with a total sample size of 3,874. Data for 2018 was collected between February and March 2018 across the country, with a total sample size of 6,206 respondents. Data is representative of age, gender and county, and was collected using quantitative face-to-face interviews.

Sample distribution in 2023

		(n)	(%)
Age Groups	18 - 24	466	12.1%
	25 - 34	903	23.5%
	35 - 54	1845	48.0%
	55 & more	630	16.4%
Gender	Male	1930	50.2%
	Female	1914	49.8%
Urbanity	Rural	1855	48.3%
	Semi-rural	1297	33.7%
	Urban	692	18.0%
County	Bomi	271	7.0%
	Bong	260	6.8%
	Gbarpolu	256	6.7%
	Grand Bassa	260	6.8%
	Grand Cape Mount	262	6.8%
	Grand Gedeh	260	6.8%
	Grand Kru	180	4.7%
	Lofa	258	6.7%
	Margibi	261	6.8%
	Maryland	184	4.8%
	Montserrado	419	10.9%
	Nimba	280	7.3%
	River Cess	235	6.1%
	River Gee	195	5.1%
Sinoe	263	6.8%	

