CHAPTER 3: HOUSING CONDITIONS

Household Headship by Female in 2008

In 2008, one in every four households in Liberia was headed by a female. Nationwide; every county had a small percentage of households headed by female.

Lofa, Bomi, Montserrado, Nimba and Bong counties have significant representation of female household headship. This could be one of the factors attributed amidst many factors, to the impact of the Civil War especially in these counties where combat was more prevalent.
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Households Main Source of Drinking Water in 2008

Piped-borne, indoor and outdoor accounted for the major source of drinking water, followed by river, lake or spring.

Montserrado and Nimba had the highest usage of pipe-borne or outdoor pump estimated at about 45 percent respectively. The relatively high usage of piped water in these two counties was associated with the Government’s effort to rehabilitate the water distribution systems destroyed by the civil war as well as the presence of many NGOs. Most of the other counties relied heavily on river, lake or spring as main source of drinking water.
In 2008, about one in every ten households in Liberia had access to flush toilet while six percent of households shared flush toilet facility. As reflected on the map, Montserrado County which contains the capital city, Monrovia, had the highest proportion of flush toilets (18%) and shared flush toilets (12%).

The use of bush was widespread throughout all the counties. About 50% of all households relied on bush for human waste disposal. Only 21% of households used covered pit latrine.
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Distribution of Households by Time taken to the nearest Health facility in 2008

Time taken to the nearest health facility is an indicator of accessibility to health services. Fig: 3-36 shows that 30% of the households took less than 20 minutes to access the nearest health facility while 18% used between 20-39 minutes. A significant proportion (31%) took a much longer time, over 80 or more minutes, to reach the nearest health facility.

As shown on the map, the latter trend is permeated throughout all the counties with the exception of Montserrado County. In almost all the counties, most people took a very long time accessing health facility.
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Nationwide in 2008, access to primary school could be considered as fairly good, as majority of the households (56%) took less than 20 minutes to get to the nearest primary school. This trend is uniformed throughout the fifteen counties. The proportion is even higher for Montserrado County. Overall, only 11% of households took more than an hour to get to the nearest primary school.

The improved access to primary school can be explained by the Government’s efforts to meet the MDG targets as well as the support from international partners.
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Distribution of Households by Main Source of Fuel for Cooking in 2008

Fifty-seven percent of all households used wood as the main source of cooking fuel. The use of charcoal which is also a derivative of wood comes next at 37%. Other main sources of fuel included kerosene (2%); gas and electricity were used by about one percent of the households respectively.

The map also shows the dominant use of wood in all the counties except for Montserrado County where majority of the households used charcoal. The heavy dependence on wood and charcoal poses health and environmental threat with serious implication for the well being of the nation.
In 2008, more than half (52%) of the households in Liberia were living in self-constructed housing units. Inherited housing units also constituted a sizable proportion (15%). Provision of public housing was limited, Government housing units accounted for only 0.8 percent while the National Housing Authority (NHA) accounted for 0.4 percent.

A high proportion of households in all the counties lived in self-constructed housing units except for Montserrado County which exhibited the lowest (34%). As shown on the map, many of the houses in Montserrado, Bomi and Margibi counties were provided by private owners. Provision of public housing across the counties was very low.
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Distribution of Households by Type of Materials used for the Outer Walls of Housing in 2008

In Liberia, in 2008, 47% of all households resided in housing units whose outer walls were made of mud and sticks while only 22% lived in units made of cement blocks.

All the counties, except Montserrado, had substantial proportion of housing units constructed of mud and sticks for outer walls. Montserrado County had relatively better outer wall materials because it’s the capital city of Liberia and has better economic opportunities for the residents.
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The most common floor type in Liberia was mud (54%), followed by cement (39%). The use of tiles and wood stood at 3.4% and 0.6% respectively.

Mud floors accounted for over 50 percent in all the counties except Montserrado County where it accounted for only 18 percent. Most of the households in Montserrado resided in units made of cement floors (70%).
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Ownership of essential household amenities was considered as proxy for income. The 2008 Census collected data on household ownership of the three essential amenities which were: mattress, furniture and a radio.

Most households owned mattress (58%) followed by radio (40%) and then furniture (25%). This pattern is depicted throughout the counties except for counties such as Grand Cape Mt, Lofa, Bomi and Grand Kru where the proportions were much smaller.
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Distribution of Households by Ownership of Non-Essential Amenities in 2008

During the Census operations, non-essential amenities were composed of television, cell phone, motor cycle, vehicle and refrigerator. These items were considered important for news and communication as well as transportation. These household amenities were vital for the comfort of the members of the households; however, they were quite expensive for an average household.

Overall, about 30% of households owned cell phone and less than 10% owned television. The rest of the amenities were far above the reach of the average household.

The map also shows that ownership of cell phone was widespread in all the counties in 2008.
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Three broad types of dwelling units were identified during the 2008 census; permanent, semi-permanent and temporary units. Permanent dwelling units were those dwellings constructed with durable materials such as concrete walls, cement floor, concrete roof and tile floor, zinc roof, among others with a life span of at least fifteen years. Temporary structures were those built of inferior construction materials such as outer walls made of zinc or sticks and mud; roof with bamboo leaves; they often last for at most three years. Semi-permanent structures were those units that were built with a mixture of permanent and temporary materials.

Forty-percent of all households resided in semi-permanent houses, 33% lived in temporary structures while only 27% resided in permanent structures. The map shows that throughout the fifteen counties, very small proportion of household members resided in permanent structures with the exception of Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa counties. Most households lived in temporary and semi-permanent structures.