

# Overview of Girls in Liberia: Finding and Planning for “Your Girls”

Presented by:

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**ADOLESCENT GIRLS PROGRAMMING WORKSHOP**

**Monrovia, Liberia**

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# Why is investing in adolescent girls so important?

- What little policy attention and investment there are in adolescents does not reach the most vulnerable girls
- Investing in the most vulnerable adolescent girls is a key development and social justice strategy; investments in girls are particularly urgent if national **Millennium Development Goals** are to be met with respect to:
  - **Building a strong economic base, reversing inter-generational poverty** (Increased female control of income has far stronger returns to human capital and other investments than comparable income under male control)
  - **Achieving universal primary education** (the most deprived sector is rural girls)
  - **Promoting gender equality** (gender based violence and harmful traditional practices drive high and unwanted fertility, maternal mortality, and HIV)
  - **Reducing maternal mortality and related infant mortality** (selective of youngest and first time mothers)
  - **Reversing the rising tide of HIV in young people** (girls and young women, including child mothers, are likely to bear an increasing and disproportionate share of HIV infections)
  - **Reducing rapid population growth** (eliminating child marriage could have a synergistic impact on all three elements of future population growth)

# Policy Context and Legal Framework

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) signatory
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) signatory
- Children and Youth Policy within Poverty Reduction Strategy's four pillars:
  - Security; Economic Revitalization; Governance and Rule of Law; Infrastructure and Basic Services<sup>1</sup>
- Government commitment to youth
  - National Youth Policy
- Government commitment to gender equality
  - National Plan of Action against GBV
  - Women and Children Protection Unit

# Who are the most vulnerable girls?

- Girls (10-14) who are not in school and not living with either parent
- Girls (10-14) living with neither parent or living only with one parent (usually their mother)
- Girls who are not in school, not at grade-for-age, or otherwise at risk for leaving school
- Married girls (10-19)
- Girls living in districts where a significant proportion of girls are married as children (e.g. 10% under 15; 40% under 18)
- Girls living in districts where a high proportion of first sex is forced or tricked (e.g. over 10%)
- Girls living in districts with high rates of HIV or other serious illness—putting them at risk of disease; having to cope with social and economic stressors of disease
- Girls in domestic service or other potentially exploitative work
- Girls who have experienced or been displaced by conflict

# The main risk factors contributing to girls' and young women's vulnerability

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Early sexual initiation, risky sexual behavior, and transactional sex
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Physical violence—from boyfriends, at home, in bars and discos and at school
- Sexual violence—from family members, teachers, and employers, at home, on the street and at school
- Isolation due to family breakdown and weak social capital
- Emotional distress and poor psychological wellbeing
- Low access to education
- Work and income generation activities to provide for their families
- Domestic work and family responsibilities

# Where are the girls living and with whom do they live?

- In Liberia, most 10-19 year olds live in rural areas
  - Girls 10-14
    - 53% live in rural areas
  - Boys 10-14
    - 58% live in rural areas
  - Girls 15-19
    - 48% live in rural areas
  - Boys 15-19
    - 58% live in rural areas
- 31% of girls and 30% of boys 10-14 live apart from both their parents
- 29% of both girls and boys 10-14 years old live with only one parent (usually their mother)

# Communities in Focus: Greater Monrovia



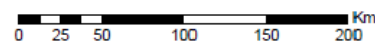
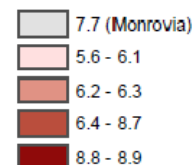
- Montserrado County
  - Bassa Community
  - Battery Factory
  - Bentol
  - Doe Community
  - New Kru Town
  - Old Road
  - Red Light
  - West Point
- Margibi County
  - Kakata

# Social isolation among young girls greatly increases their vulnerability to exploitation

- In Liberia:
  - 8% of all girls 10-14 are not in school and not living with either parent
  - In some districts up to 18% are not in school and not living with either parent
- In general:
  - Girls who are not in school and not living with their parents are at exceptionally high risk of poor health and social outcomes and have less access to social and youth services<sup>2</sup>

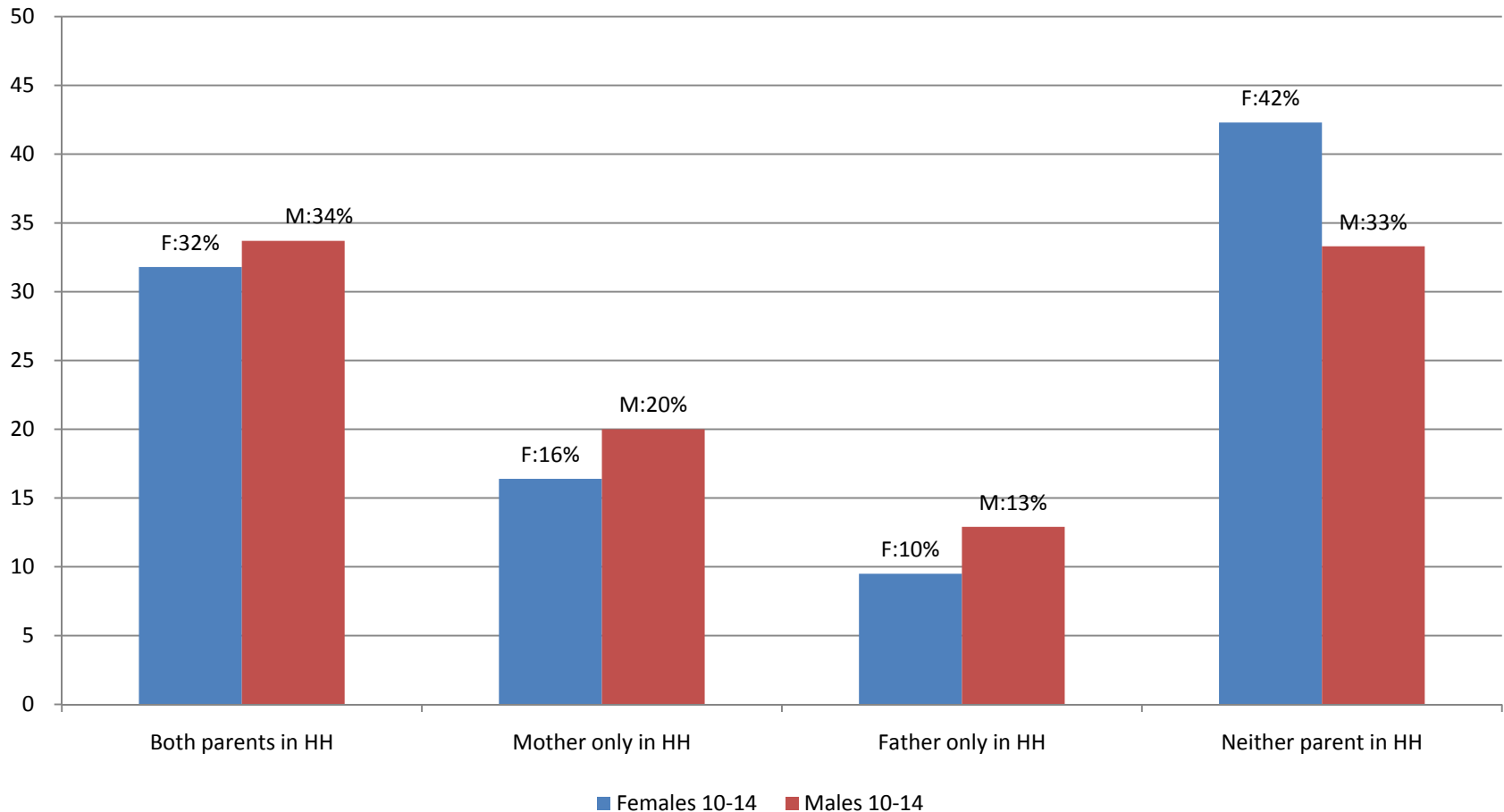


Percent of females (10-14)  
not in school and not living  
with either parent



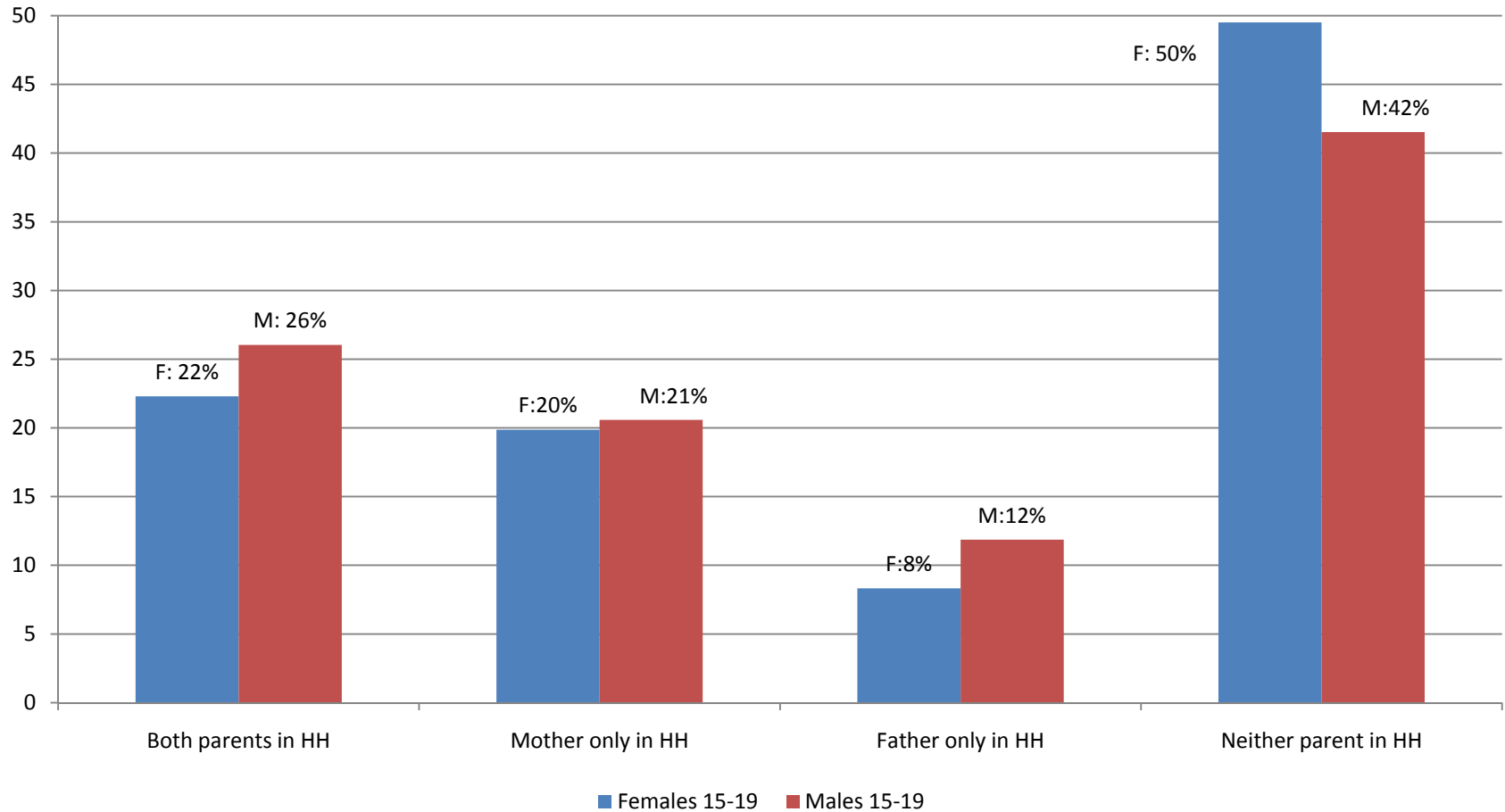
<sup>2</sup> Bruce, Judith and Kelly Hallman. 2008. "Reaching the girls left behind," *Gender and Development* 16(2): 227–245

# Household Composition: Monrovia 10-14 Year Olds



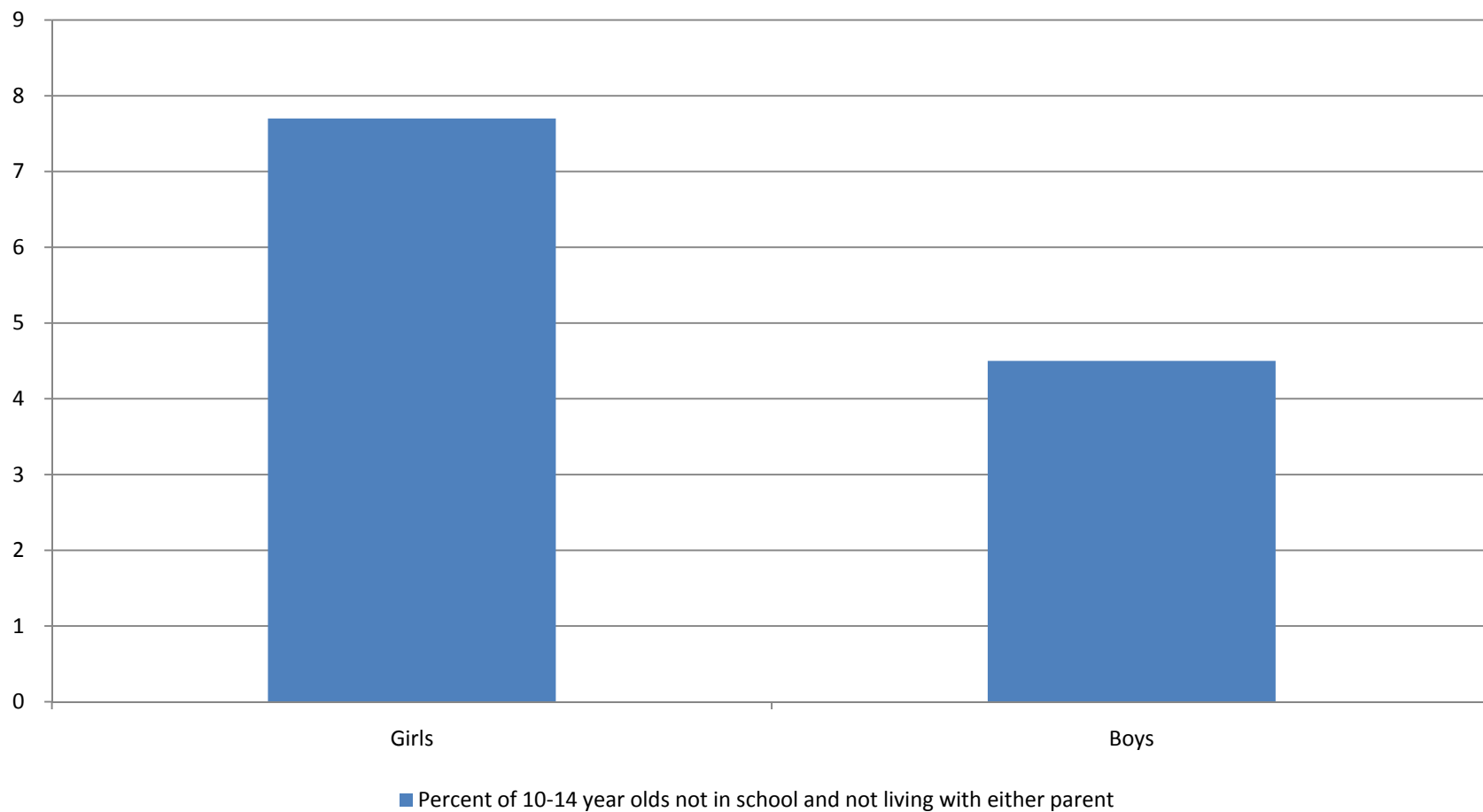
- In Monrovia, 32% of girls (10-14) live with both parents while 42% of girls live apart from both their parents

# Household Composition: Monrovia 15-19 Year Olds



- In Monrovia, 22% of girls (15-19) live with both parents while 50% of girls live apart from both their parents

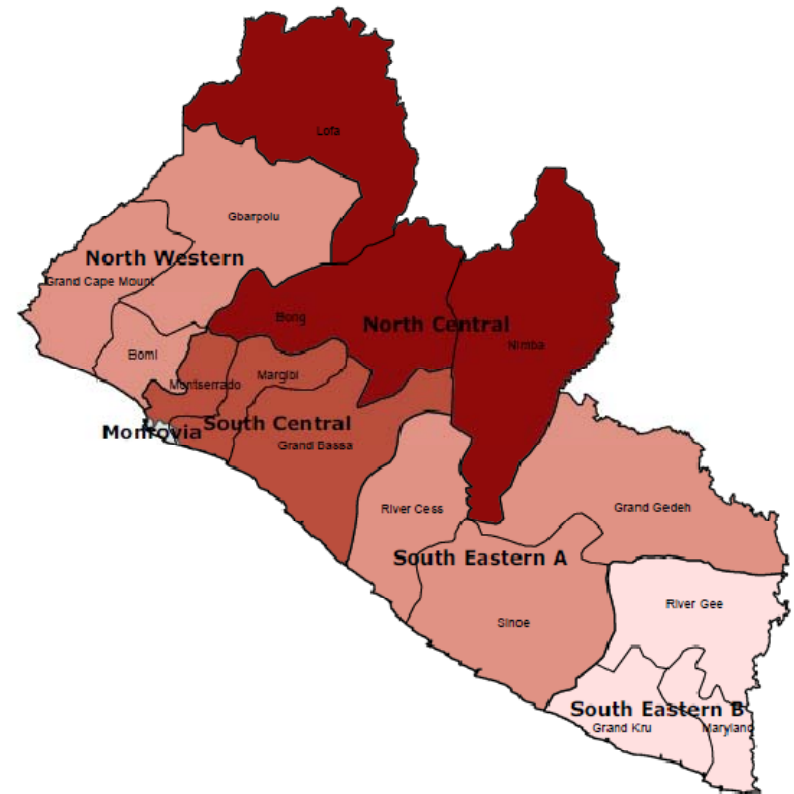
# Social Isolation among Young Girls: Monrovia



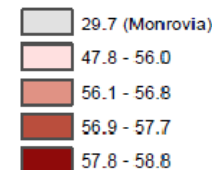
- In Monrovia, almost 8% of girls 10-14 are not in school and not living with either parent

# In addition to the educational experience, out-of-school girls lose out on critical social opportunities and friendships with same sex peers

- In Liberia:
  - The majority of young people in Liberia have spent more time engaged in war than in school
  - Almost 35% of the population never attended school, including almost 44% of females<sup>3</sup>
  - In some regions 60% of school- age girls are not in school

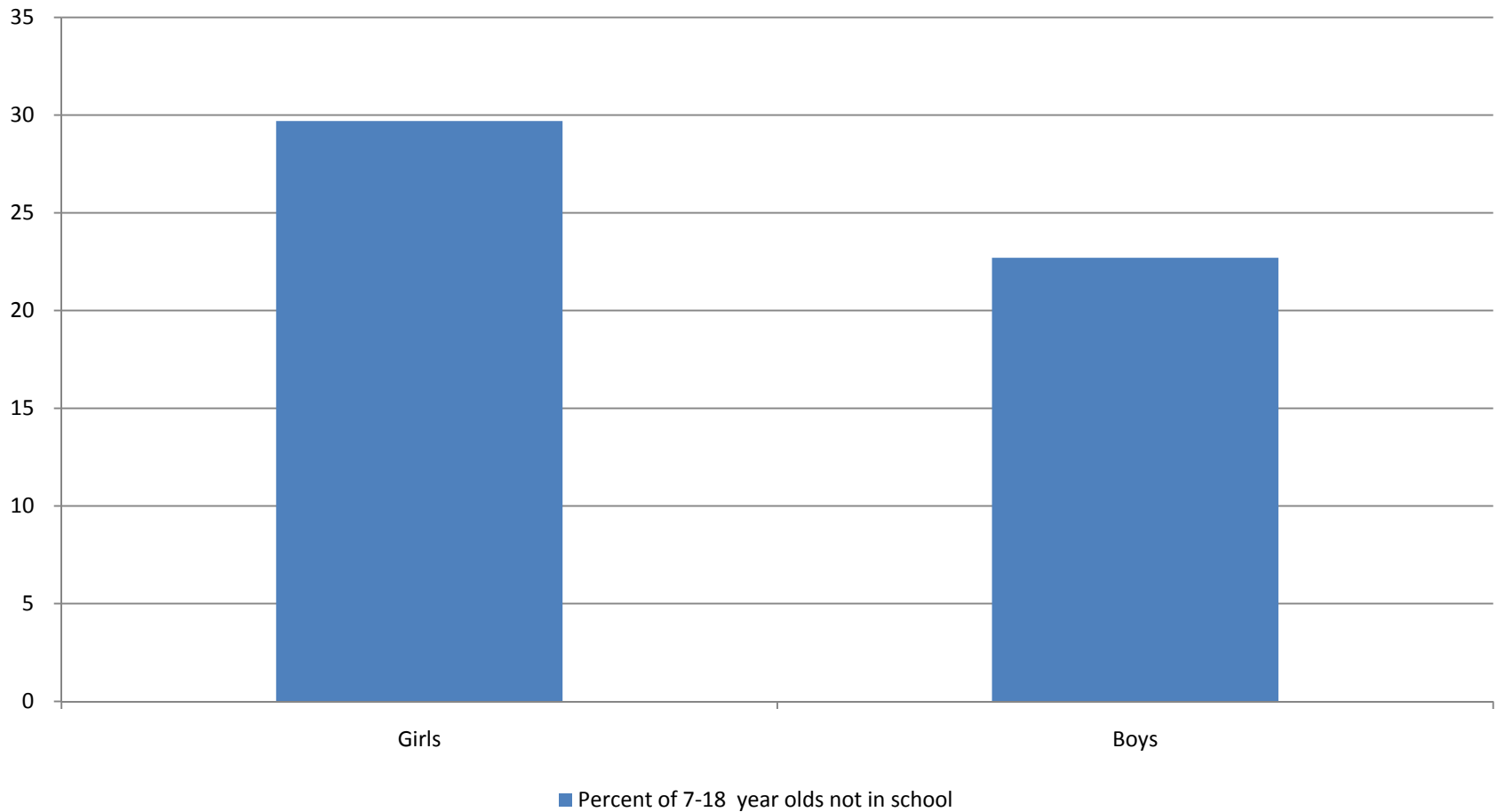


Percent of females (7-18) not in school



<sup>3</sup>“Poverty Reduction Strategy” (2007) Republic of Liberia, World Bank

# School-Age Girls not in School: Monrovia



- In Monrovia, 30% of 7-18 year old girls are not in school

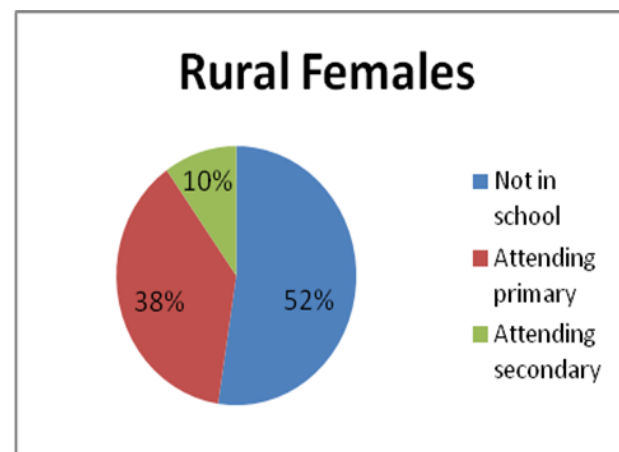
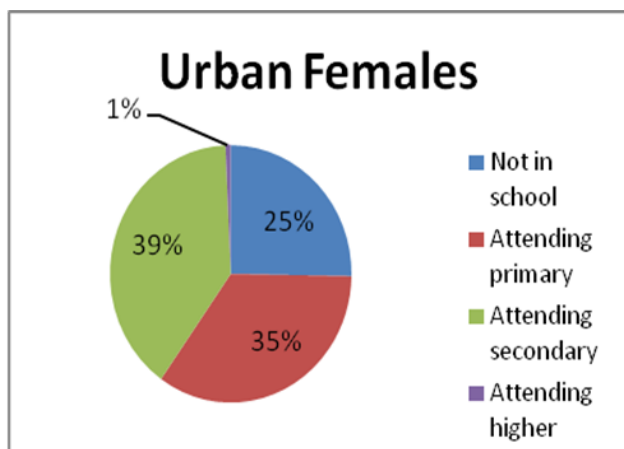
# School enrollment differs – often drastically – by gender, age, and area of residence

(Percent Enrolled in School)



- Rural girls have the lowest levels of school enrollment overall which declines sharply after age 15
- Conflict and post-conflict situations result in differential school enrollment patterns by gender, residence and age

# School Enrollment among 15-19 Year Olds

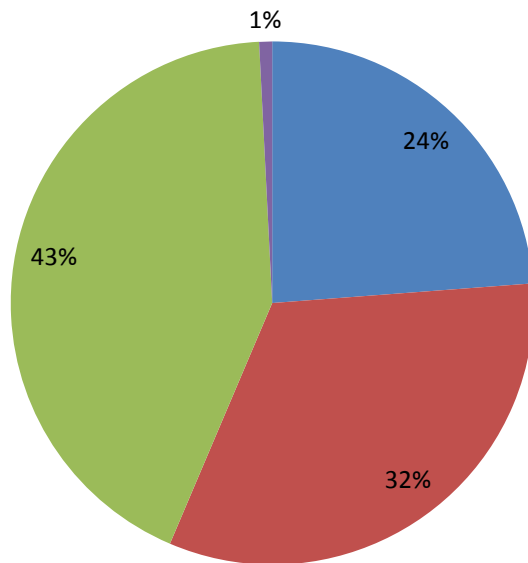


- In Liberia, only 10% of rural and 39% of urban 15-19 year old girls are attending secondary school
- Over half of all rural girls 15-19 are not in school
- In general, girls who are out of school or significantly behind are more likely to be married and have children, engage in sexual activity and less likely to access basic health and other services<sup>4</sup>

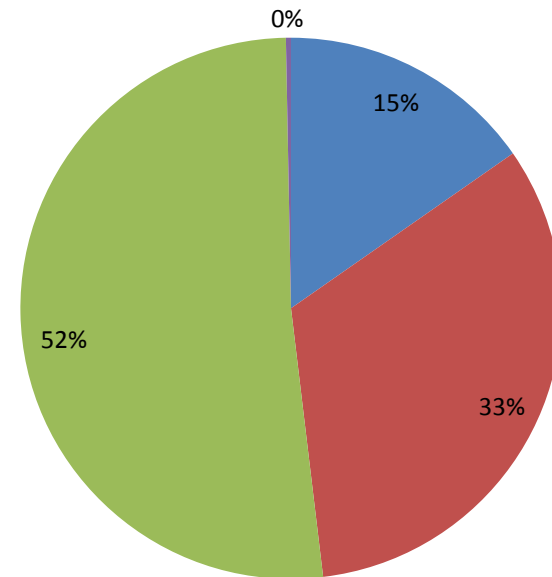
<sup>4</sup> Lloyd, Cynthia B. 2004. "Schooling and Adolescent Reproductive Behavior in Developing Countries," paper commissioned for the United Nations Millennium Project. New York: Population Council. <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/CBLloyd-final.pdf>

# School Enrollment among 15-19 Year Olds: Monrovia

**Females 15-19**

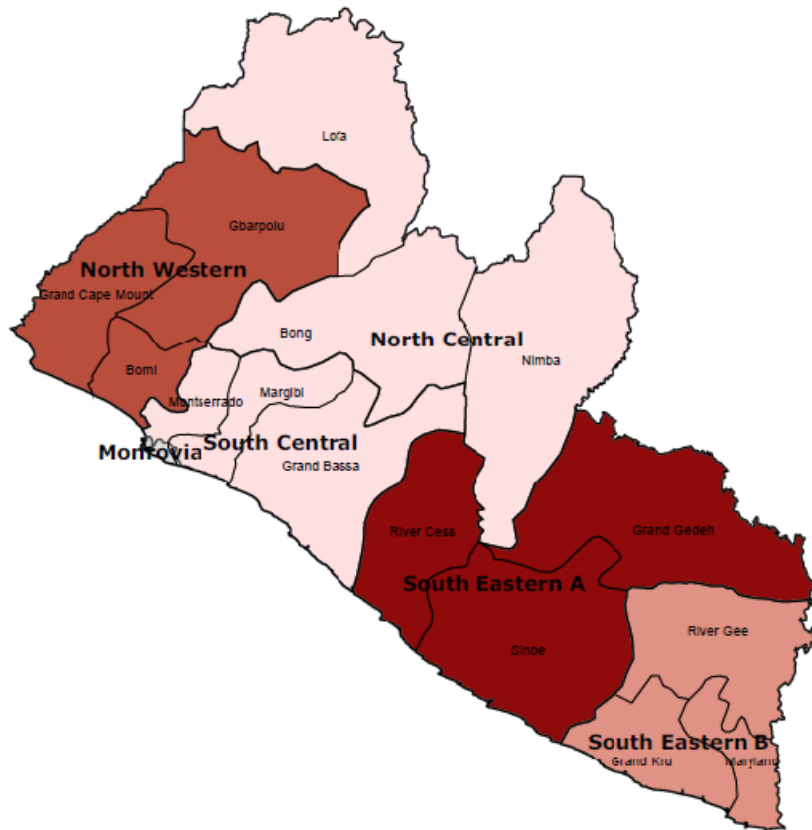


**Males 15-19**

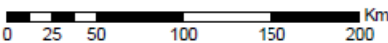
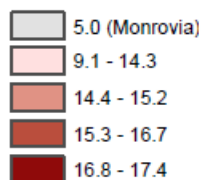


- In Monrovia, 24% of 15-19 year old girls are not in school; only 44% are attending secondary school or higher

# Child Marriage among 20-24 Year Old Females



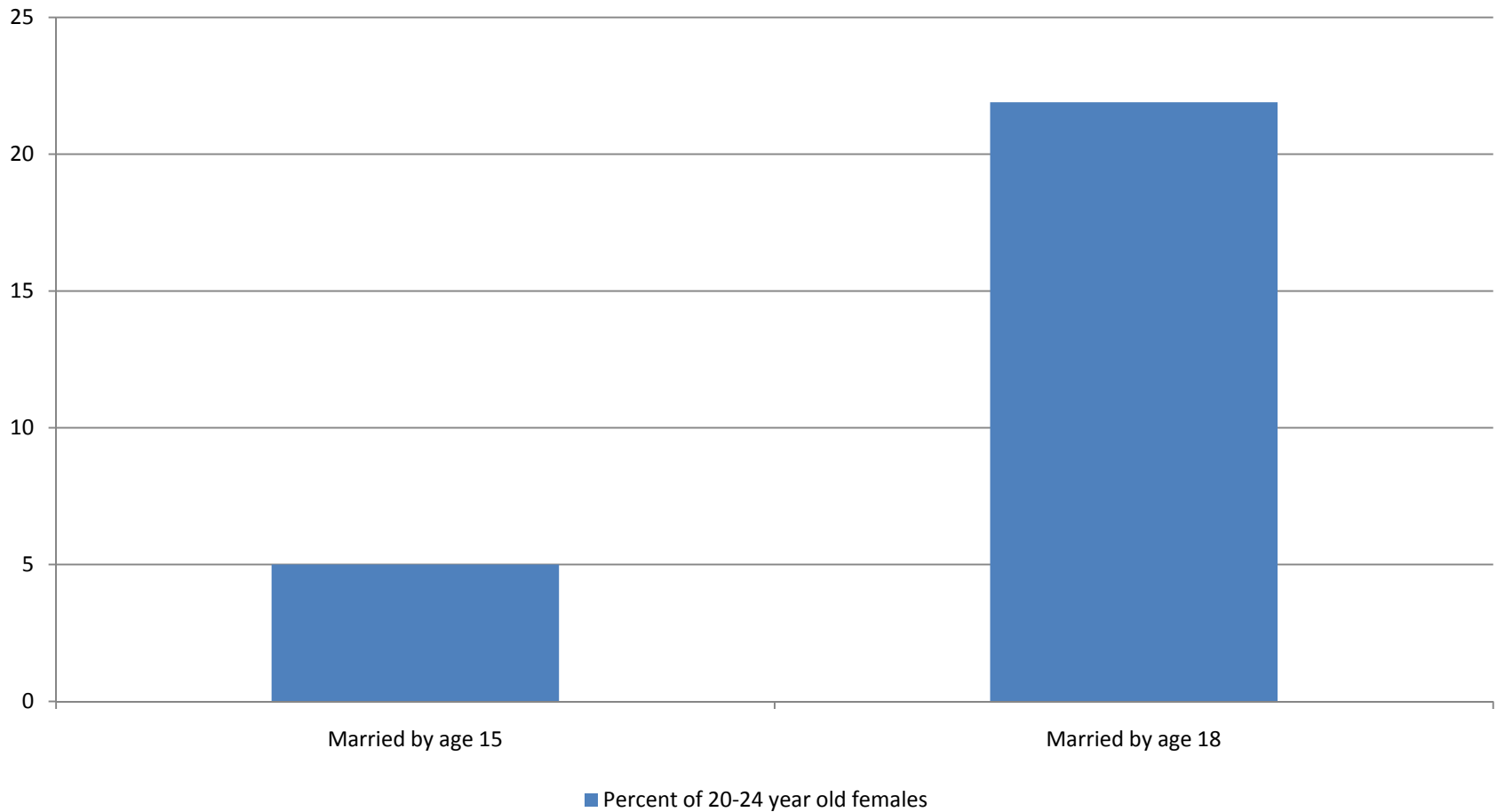
Percent of females (20-24) who were married by 15



- Marriage under age 18 is considered illegal child marriage according to CRC and CEDAW—Liberia is signatory to both
- In Liberia:
  - 11% of girls are married by 15
  - 38% of rural and 25% of urban girls are married by 18
- In general:
  - Child marriage is often justified by gender norms and economic conditions
  - The limited targeted investments in girls often stop once they are married
  - Married girls are rarely in school and the youngest first-time mothers and their children are at particularly high risk of poor health and economic outcomes<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Haberland, Nicole. 2007. "Supporting Married Girls, Calling Attention to a Neglected Group" Transitions to Adulthood, Brief 3. Population Council

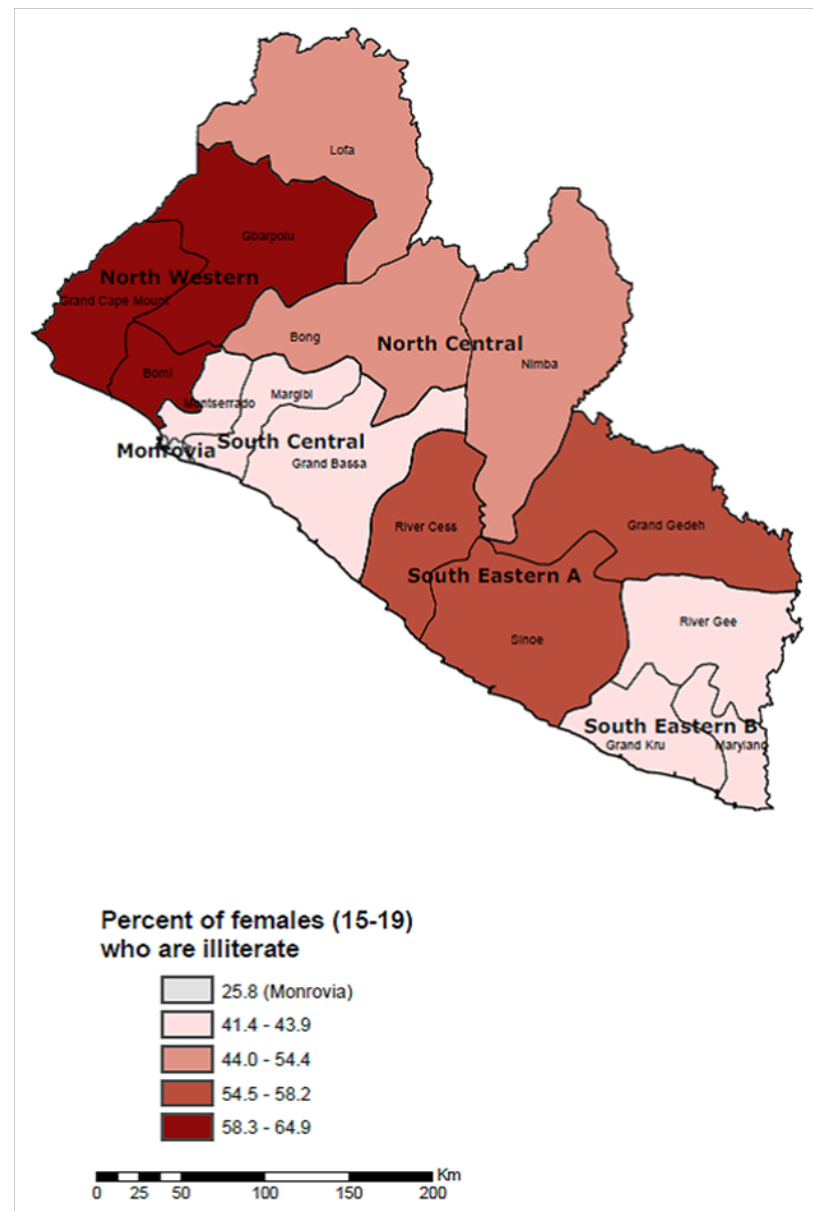
# Child Marriage among 20-24 Year Old Females: Monrovia



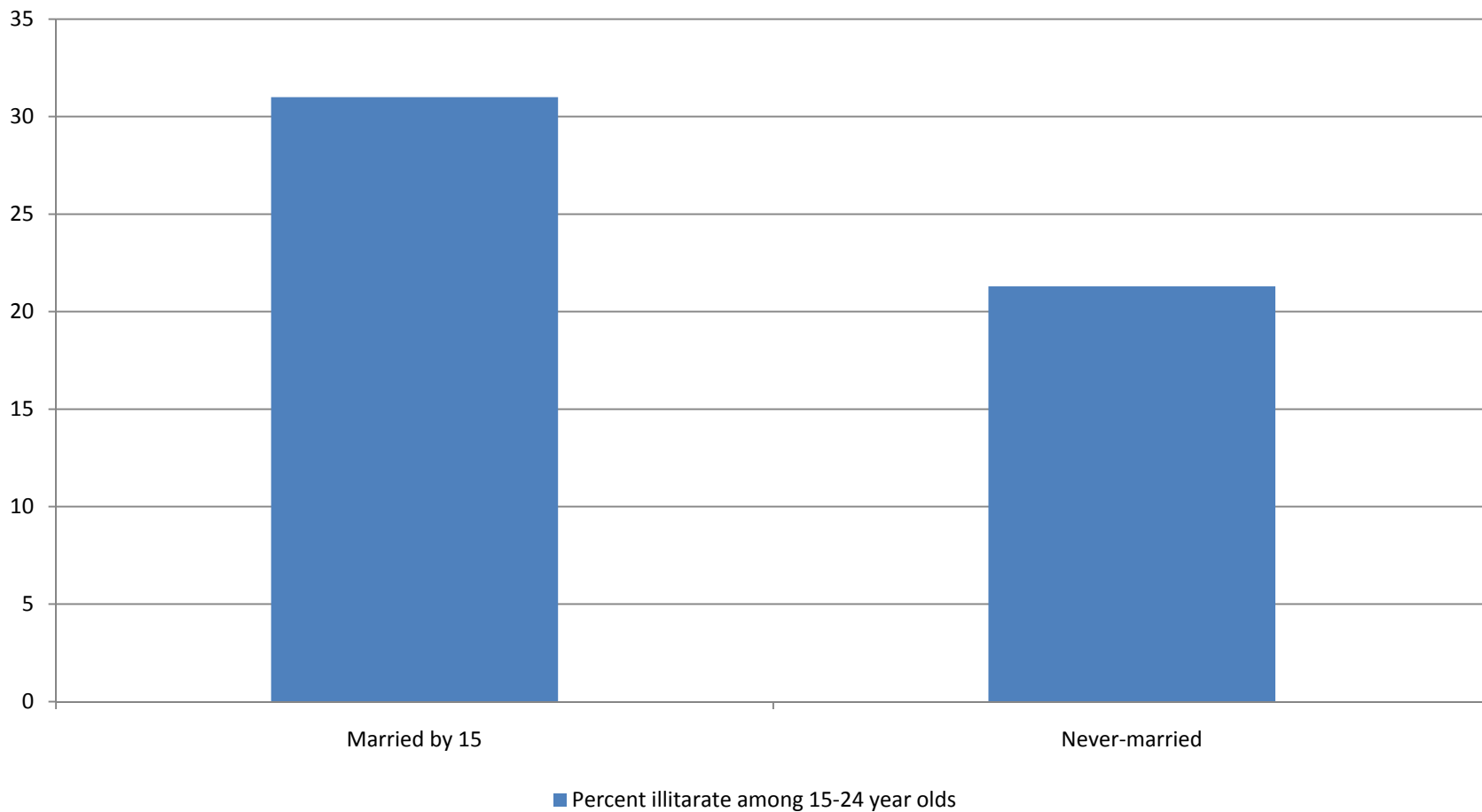
- In Monrovia, 5% of 20-24 year old females were married by age 15; 22% were married by age 18

# Illiteracy among Girls 15-19 Years Old

- In Liberia:
  - 41% of all 15-19 year olds are illiterate
  - In some regions the illiteracy rate among 15-19 year olds is 65%
- In general:
  - Illiteracy rates are even higher for girls married by 15 than for their unmarried peers

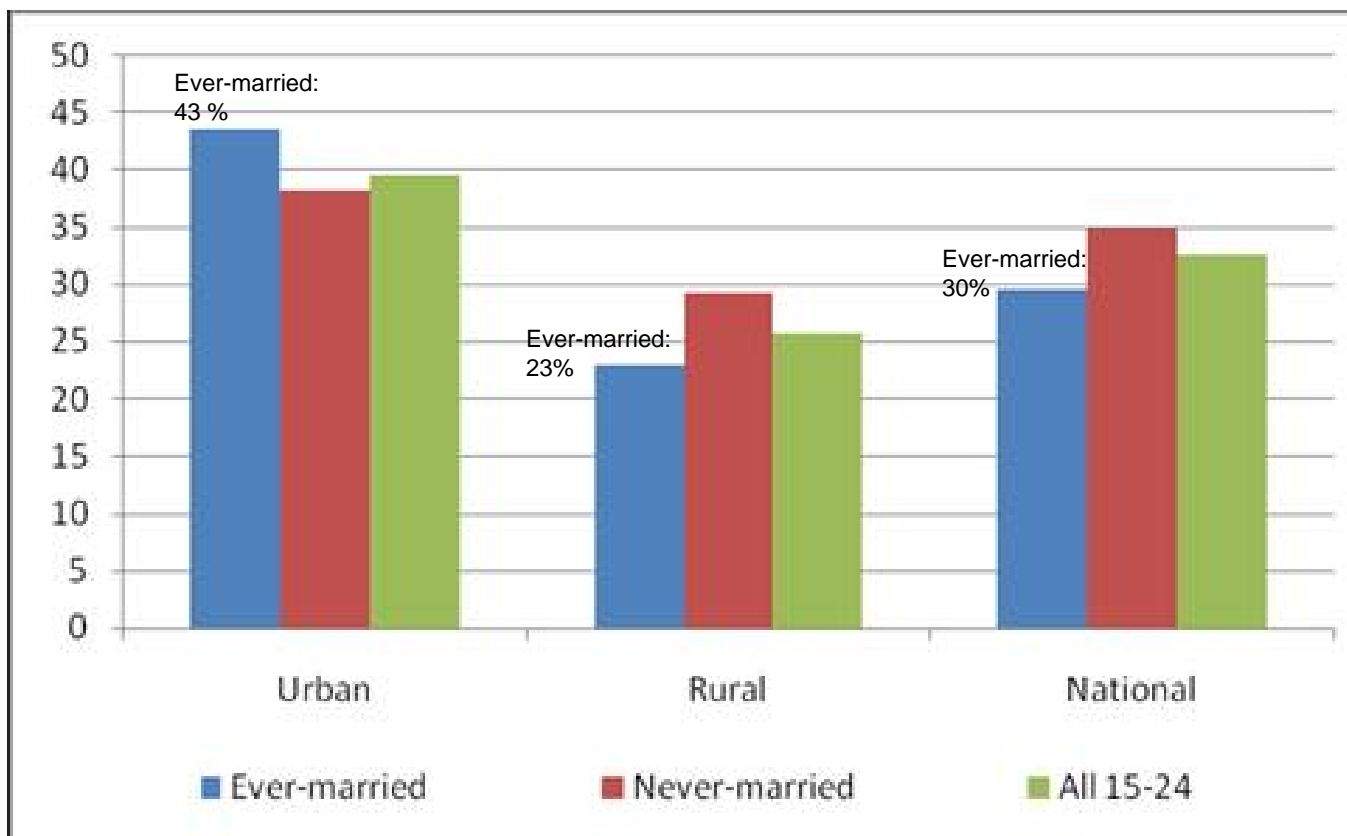


# Illiteracy among 15-24 Year Old Females: Monrovia



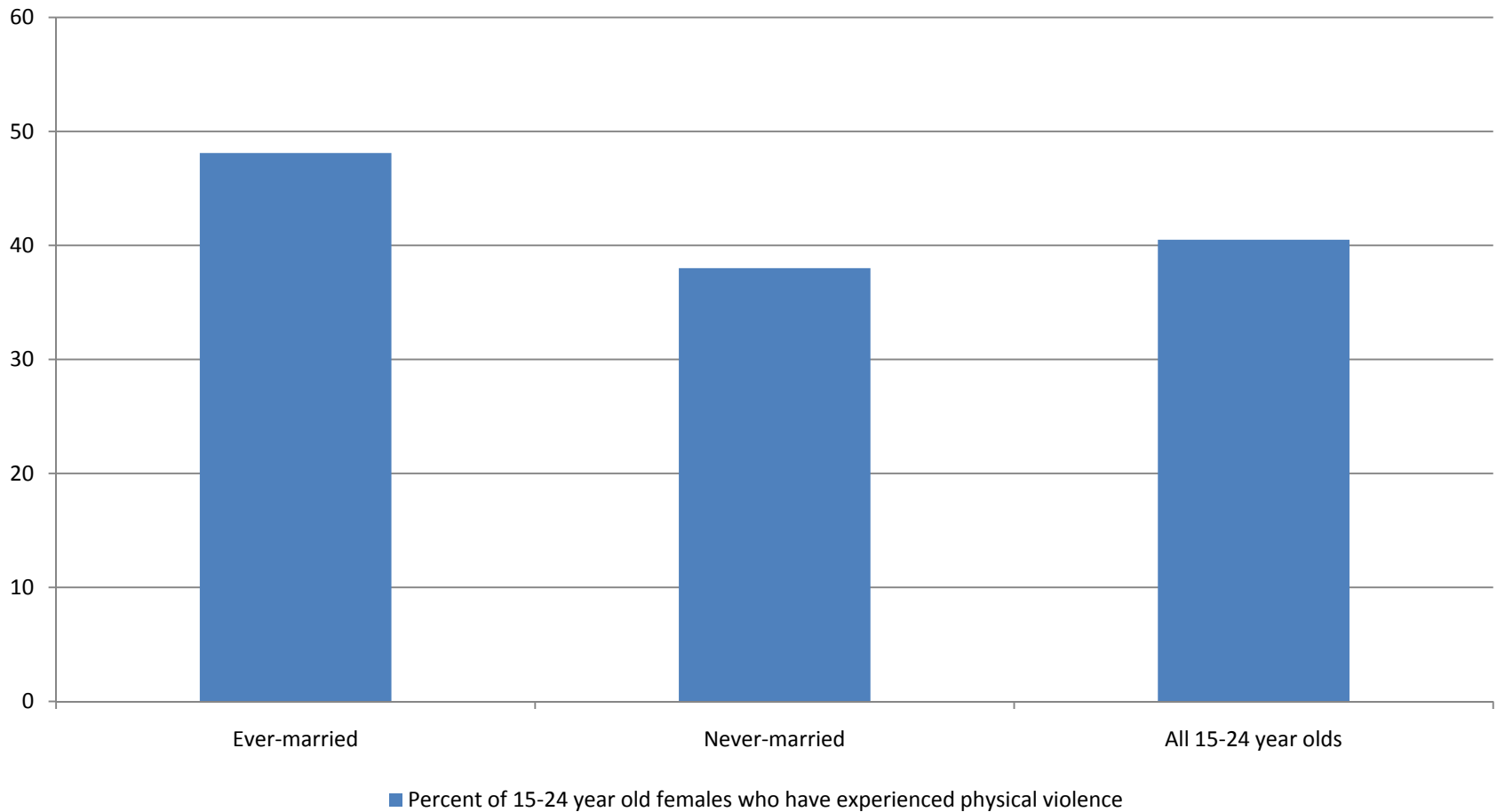
- In Monrovia, 32% of 15-24 year old females married by age 15 are illiterate

# Females 15-24 Who Have Experienced Physical Violence



- In Liberia, over 30% of 15-24 year old females have experienced physical violence; among ever-married urban girls almost 45% have experienced violence
- In general, gender-based violence is justified by cultural norms and often embedded in war-time behavior
- Most violence happens at the hands of partners

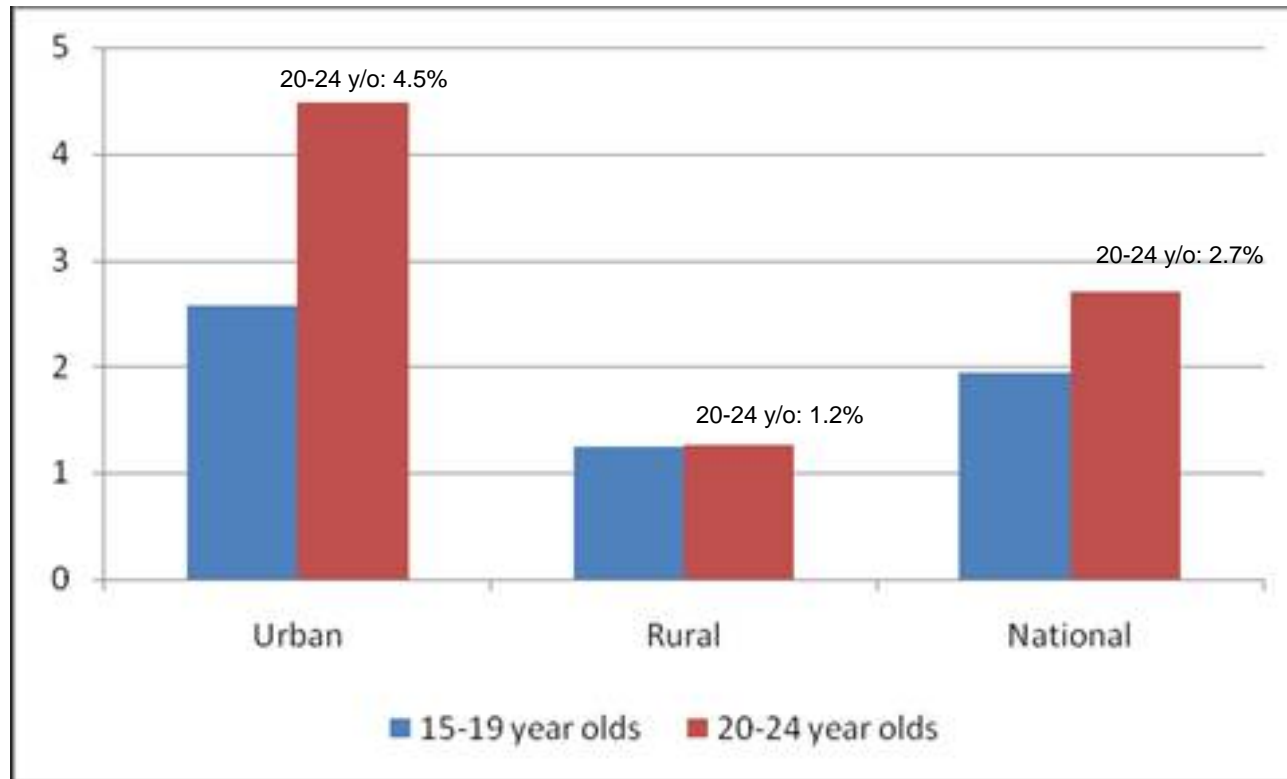
# Percent of 15-24 Year Old Females who have Experienced Physical Violence: Monrovia



- In Monrovia, almost 50% of all ever-married 15-24 year olds have experienced physical violence

# HIV Prevalence and Testing among Females 15-24 Years Old

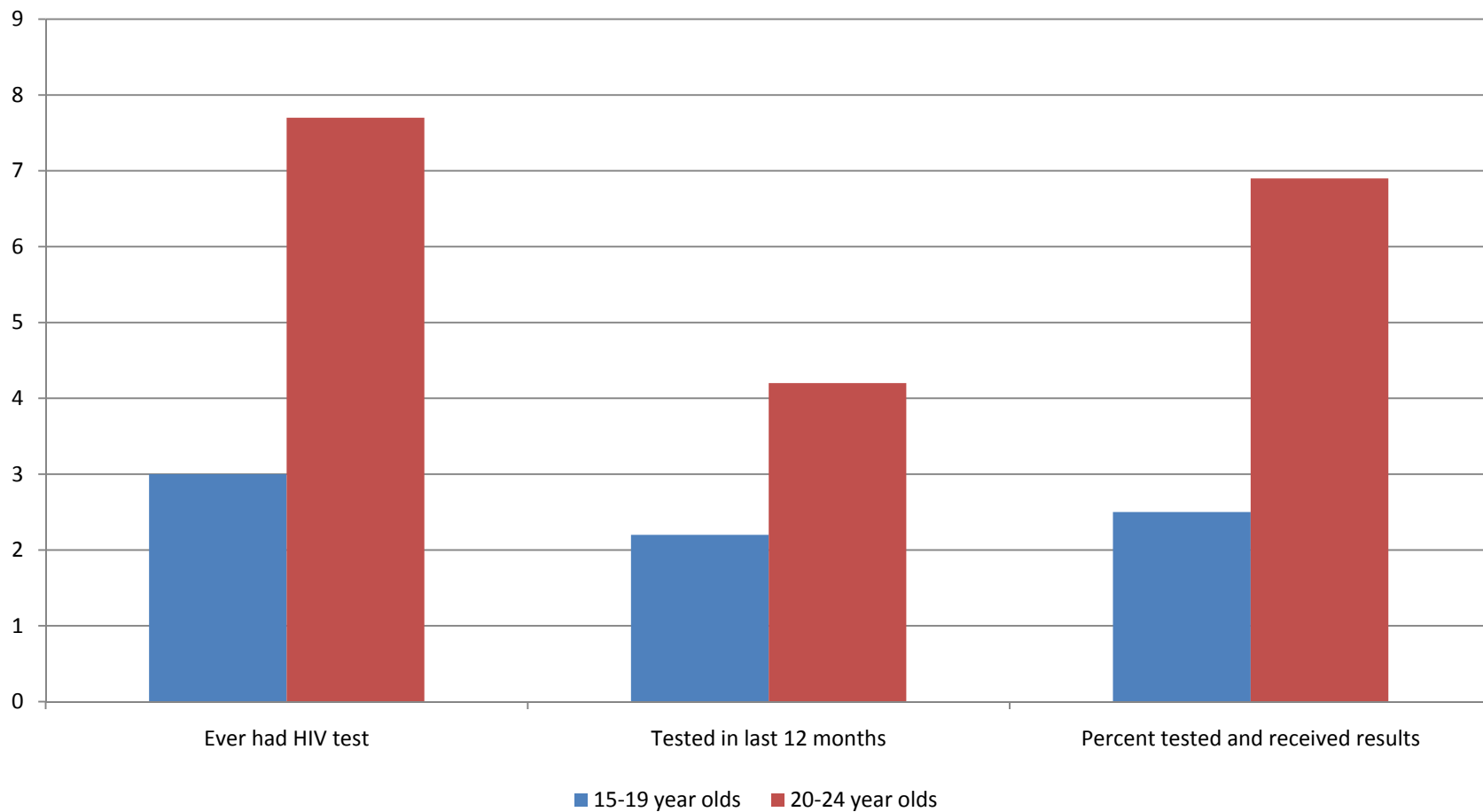
(Percent of 15-24 year old females who have had an HIV test in past year)



- In Liberia, HIV prevalence among adults 15-49 is 1.5%; prevalence among 15-24 year old females is 1.3%, while for males it is 0.4% (a ratio of 3:1)<sup>6</sup>
- Only 1% of rural girls have had an HIV test in the past year
- In general, in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) the HIV epidemic is increasingly affecting younger, poorer females
- In some areas of SSA, the female to male ratio has reached as high as 8:1

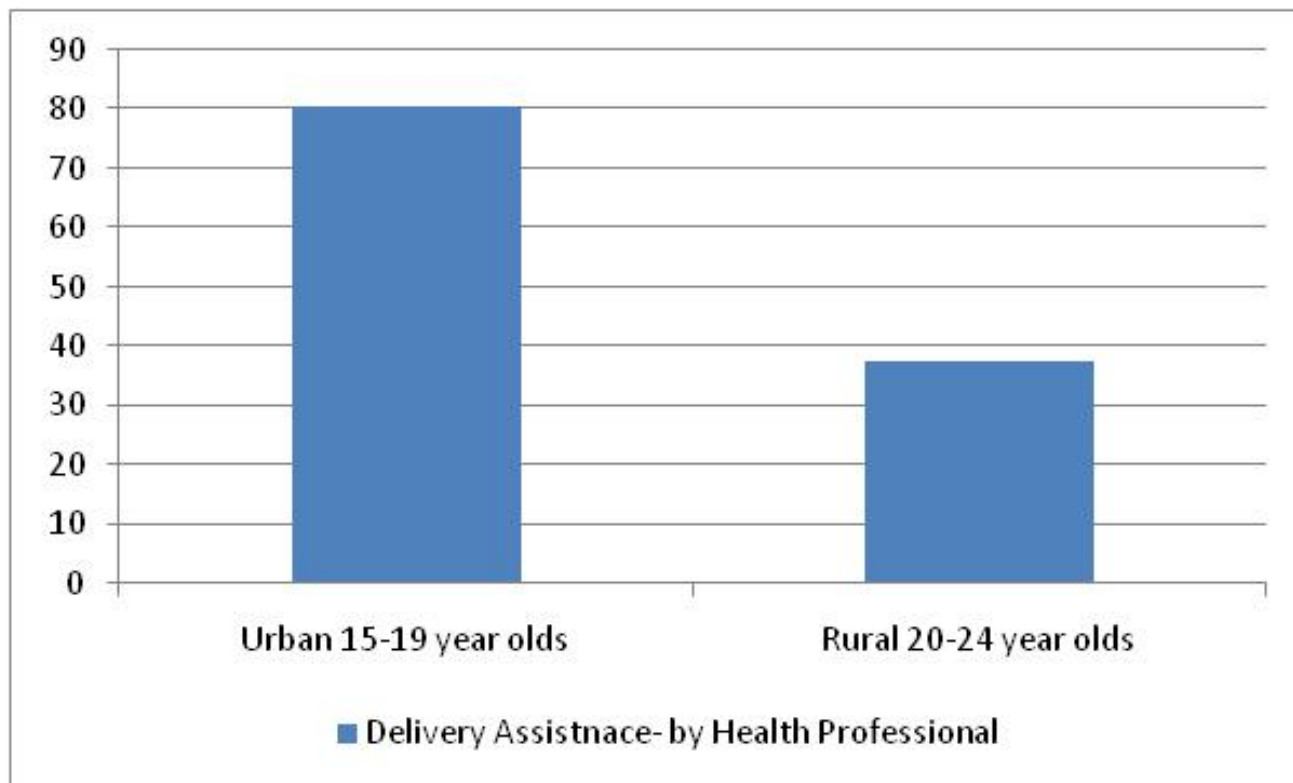
<sup>6</sup> Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV and AIDS Liberia 2004: [http://data.unaids.org/Publications/Fact-Sheets01/liberia\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/Publications/Fact-Sheets01/liberia_en.pdf)

# HIV Testing among 15-24 Year Olds: Monrovia



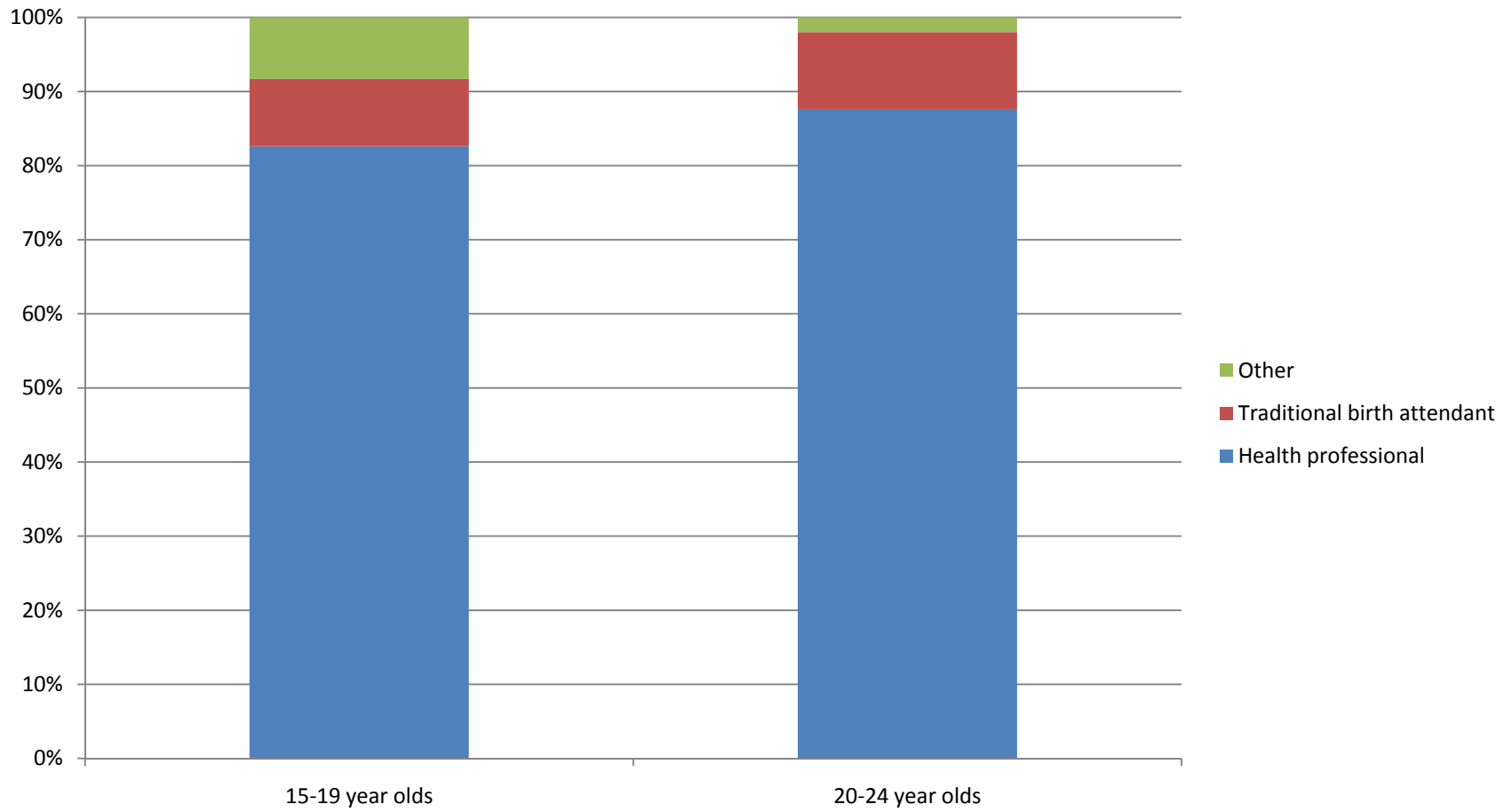
- In Monrovia, only 3% of 15-19 year old females ever had an HIV test

# Delivery Assistance Varies by Age, and the Mother's Residence



- In Liberia, half of all births are attended by a health professional; among rural 20-24 year olds only 37% received assistance from a health professional during their last birth

# Delivery Assistance among 15-24 Year Olds: Monrovia



# Our Mission. Using These Data and Common Sense to Design Girl Sensitive and Centered Programs: Key Questions

1. Who are the girls we are most interested in and why?
2. What are the conditions and status that most concern us?
3. What are the specific conditions the program addresses at the level of the girl?
4. How will we build health, social, and economic assets
  - How many girls?
  - What % of eligible girls in catchment areas?
  - How much input per week
  - How long is long enough to make a difference?
5. What are the expected results at the level of the girls?
6. What Resources Are Needed?

## II. Vulnerability Scan: Emphasizing Factors That Must be Taken into Consideration for Girls' Health, Social, and Economic Asset Building

# Linking Qualitative Observations to Quantitative Data: Monrovia

GIRLS' RISKS	DATA FINDINGS	DATA SOURCES
Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing	<p>53.6% (20-24 year old females have given birth by age 20—Monrovia)</p> <p>58.1% (20-24 year old females have given birth by age 20—Urban Liberia)</p>	DHS 2007
<p>Early sexual initiation,</p> <p>Risky sexual behaviour,</p> <p>Transactional sex</p>	<p>11.1% (20-24 year old females had sex by age 15)</p> <p>14.7% (15-24 year olds females used condom at last sex)</p> <p>37.9% (15-24 year olds females: first sexual partner 10+ years older)</p>	DHS 2007
Alcohol and substance abuse	No data available	
Physical violence	<p>40.5% (15-24 year old females experienced physical violence)</p> <p>48.1% (ever-married 15-24 year old females experienced physical violence)</p>	DHS 2007
Sexual violence	10.8% (15-24 year olds females: first sex forced)	DHS 2007

# Linking Qualitative Observations to Quantitative Data: Monrovia

GIRLS' RISKS	DATA FINDINGS	DATA SOURCES
Isolation	7.7% (10-14 year old girls: not in school and not living with either parent)	DHS 2007
Emotional distress; poor psychological wellbeing	No data available	
Low access to education	29.7 % (7-18 year old girls not in school) 17.9% (10-14 year old girls not in school)	DHS 2007
Work and income generation activities to provide for families	9.5% (of girls and young women are main provider for the household—Liberia) 54% (15-19 year olds females) & 63% (20-24 year old females) report labor force participation—Greater Monrovia	Girls Vulnerability Survey ILO/CWIQ 2007
Domestic work and family responsibilities	18% (of households headed by women—Greater Monrovia) 41% (of young girls report inactivity due to family responsibility—Liberia)	CFSNS 2007 ILO/CWIQ 2007

# III. Case Study of a Typical Neighborhood in Monrovia

- *Old Paynestown Road Community:*
  - *Population = 35,000 of which approximately 20% are females aged 10-24*

## *Liberia Adolescent Girl Demographic Stats*

Females	% Pop (Urban)	% Pop (Rural)	% In primary (urban)	% In secondary (urban)	% Out-of-school (urban)	% with child (urban)	% without child (urban)
10-12	4.6	3.4	72.5	2.7	23.3	n/a	n/a
13-14	3.3	2.0	67.1	16.7	15.8	n/a	n/a
15-17	3.6	1.9	44.6	36.1	18.3	10.5	89.5
18-19	2.2	1.4	16.1	43.0	35.6	32.1	67.9
20-24	5.4	4.0	5.9	31.3	52.4	69.0	31.0

# Case Study: Old Paynestown Road Community

(Population = 35,000 of which approx. 20% are females aged 10-24)

Females	No. of girls (% of pop)	No. of girls in primary	No. of girls in secondary	No. of girls out of school	No. of girls with child	No. of girls without child
10-12	1610 (4.6)	1167	43	375	n/a	n/a
13-14	1155 (3.3)	775	193	183	n/a	n/a
15-17	1260 (3.6)	562	455	231	132	1128
18-19	770 (2.2)	124	331	274	247	523
20-24	1890 (5.4)	112	592	990	1304	586

## *Potentially vulnerable groups of girls in Old Paynestown Road Community*

- 10-12 year old out-of-school girls
- 15-17 year old girls still in primary school
- 15-17 year old out-of-school girls
- 18-19 year old girls with children
- 20-24 year old girls with children