



Liberia

Republic of Liberia

Africa

Geography

Area 99,067 sq km. Heavily forested coastal state adjoining Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	4,101,767	4.23%
2020	5,252,580	4.23%
2030	6,470,182	2.01%

In the 1990s, 250,000 were killed and over 1 million became refugees abroad. The majority have returned.

Capital Monrovia 827,465. **Urbanites** 61.5%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 43%. **Life expectancy** 57.9 yrs.

Peoples

Sub-Saharan African 93.8%. 16 major indigenous ethnic groups divided into three language families.

Mande/Malinke 48.7%. Nine groups, largest: Kpelle 19.2%; Mano 7.1%; Dan 7.0%; Loma 5.5%; Vai 3.5%; Gbandi 2.6%; Mandingo 1.8%; Maninke 1.2%.

Kru 35.1%. 19 groups, largest: Bassa 13.7%; Kru (Klao) 7.2%; Grebo(7) 7.0%; Krahn(3) 5.1%.

Atlantic/Guinean 10.0%. Kissi 4.6%; Gola 3.5%; Akan(2) 1.7%.

Other 6.2%. Americo-Liberian (returned American blacks) 2.5%; Kongo (returned Caribbean freed slaves) 2.5%; Caucasian, Lebanese, and others.

Literacy 51.9%. **Official language** English. **All languages** 31. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi 13NT 15por 12w.i.p.

Economy

Well watered; abundant natural resources of rubber, iron, diamonds, timber and others. Maritime registry of ships is the second largest revenue source. Made destitute by decades of institutionalized corruption by an elite (up to 1980) and ensuing civil wars and chaos (1989–2003). Much of the capital, the road system and most of the buildings have been destroyed, and much farmland has reverted to forest. Foreign investment and aid are helping to rebuild the shattered economy; but large debt and the devastated infrastructure will slow recovery, even with an upright government. Poverty is rife; joblessness is as high as 75%, and the majority survive on less than \$1US/day. **HDI Rank** 169th/182. **Public debt** 239% of GDP. **Income/person** \$216 (<0.5% of USA).

Politics

In 1847 Liberia became Black Africa's first independent state, created as a colony for freed American slaves. Liberian-American dominance ended in the coup of 1980. The military government grew increasingly unstable. Massive corruption and repression of the Mano and Gio peoples provoked the 1989 rebellion led by Charles Taylor. The war engulfed the country in an orgy of intertribal killings and three armies contending for power. The West African States' (ECOWAS) military intervention proved a disaster, prolonging the civil war until 1996 and resulting in Taylor gaining power. Taylor's excesses led to a second civil war in 1999. Further ECOWAS and US presence and pressure eventually led to Taylor's resignation and exile from Liberia. Peaceful elections in 2005 saw the appointment of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female leader. With Taylor on trial for war crimes, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been set up to address past atrocities and crimes.

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Religion

Liberia was founded as a Christian state, but with no state church. Freedom of religion continues in theory, but in practice, occult secret societies exercise significant influence. Religious and denominational figures are mostly estimates due to the massive population upheaval from the wars.

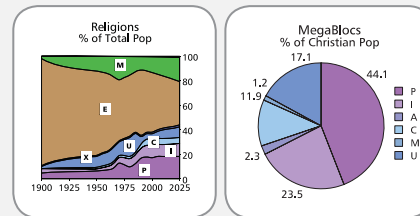
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Ethnoreligionist	42.50	1,743,251	2.9%
Christian	41.43	1,699,362	4.9%
Muslim	15.50	635,774	6.4%
Other	0.30	12,305	6.5%
Baha'i	0.27	11,075	2.8%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	44	18.28	750,000	4.1%
Independent	126	9.73	399,000	4.5%
Anglican	1	0.95	39,000	4.7%
Catholic	1	4.92	202,000	4.1%
Marginal	2	0.48	20,000	7.3%
Unaffiliated		7.1	290,000	4.2%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	125	125,466	202,000
United Methodist Ch	P	436	130,769	170,000
Baptist Convention	P	270	72,000	138,000
Lutheran Churches	P	278	44,500	89,000

Assemblies of God	P	485	29,075	66,000
Ch of the Lord (Aladura)	I	173	20,800	52,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	42	22,500	45,000
Afr Chr Fell Int (ACFI)	I	230	21,000	42,000
Episcopal Church	A	107	25,325	39,000
Pente Assem of the World	P	125	15,600	39,000
United Pentecostal Ch	P	138	19,461	32,500
United Lib Inland Ch	P	67	10,000	28,000
African Meth Epis Ch	I	155	11,588	27,000
Bethel World Outreach	I	125	12,500	25,000
Other denominations[157]		2,669	208,691	415,031
Total Christians[174]		5,425	769,275	1,409,531

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	14.6	600,533	4.6%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	12.5	511,331	5.2%
Pentecostals	7.7	317,573	5.0%



Answers to Prayer

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- 1** **Peace and stability** seem to have arrived for the longer term. The resignation of Taylor, his exile and trial, and the appointment of Africa's first elected female leader – combined with the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees and acceleration of Liberia's reconstruction – generate a forward-looking atmosphere of hope, despite urgent and obvious challenges.
- 2** **Christian ministry is once again thriving**, having been almost completely disrupted for years. Most denominations and missions are not content to merely plant churches, but are active in holistic ministry to the deep physical and spiritual scars of this recovering land.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1** **Rebuilding after two civil wars** is Liberia's greatest challenge. The country was devastated and the people traumatized. War was a blight that also poisoned Sierra Leone and Guinea. Its roots fed on deep ethnic hatreds, greed and corruption, lust for power and Christians' failure to have a redemptive effect on society, all giving Satan opportunity. Pray specifically for:
 - a) The president and government.** Elections have given legitimacy to the current regime, but wisdom and forward thinking are essential. A culture of graft, patronage and corruption must be overturned. The task force against corruption must achieve – and be seen to achieve – results. Pray for uprightness and justice to characterize Liberia's leaders.
 - b) Economic recovery.** Almost the entire nation needed rebuilding as of 2005. Already deeply in debt, Liberia must manage its considerable natural resources shrewdly, responsibly, and in its own best interests, not those of foreign speculators. Poverty still affects the majority of the population; unemployment grips the nation.

c) **Reconciliation among the ethnic groups** involved in fighting, atrocities and massacres – especially the Mandingo and Krahn on one side and the Mano and Gio on the other. Several agencies are doing reconciliation and peacebuilding work.

d) **Healing of the terrible physical, psychological and spiritual wounds of war** – 65% of the population were uprooted. Almost the entire population are either victims or perpetrators of harsh crimes, some unspeakably cruel.

2 **The testimony and impact of the Church**, compromised in the past, must be regained in power and purity. African traditional beliefs, tribal secret societies, fetishism and Freemasonry pervasively influenced every confession of Christianity in Liberia. These resulted in a lack of holiness and spiritual power and the enemy's insidious influence in the Church. Lack of compassion and care for the most vulnerable was another problem. However, the situation is thankfully changing and the Church is becoming an instrument of healing and restoration. Ministries (both African and foreign) are free to operate once again. Biblical teaching and modelling is happening, which will help excise what is rotten and build up that which is good. Pray for the Holy Spirit to purify, renew and build up the body of Christ.

3 **Obstacles facing the Church include the following:**

a) **Repair of church buildings** and reactivation of closed institutions – including schools, Bible colleges, hospitals and other facilities. Looting and destruction spared a few; many people are working to restore those that were lost.

b) **Lack of biblical teaching.** The church is often characterized by scriptural ignorance and materialism. As chaos seized the nation, established churches dissolved. A number of syncretistic African independent churches have increased in recent years. The majority of congregations and pastors are open to sensitive teaching and instruction. CenterPoint International Foundation, Development Associates International and Christian Education Foundation of Liberia are a few of the agencies at work in this capacity.

c) **Leadership development** is a great need; trained spiritual leaders are few. Many leaders had to flee or were killed; most Bible training was brought to a halt. Some refugees who studied theology in the West or elsewhere in Africa are returning with wider vision. Bible schools and seminaries are opening and rebuilding – the Baptist Seminary, Africa Bible College University, the ACFI Christian College, Liberia International Christian College (ULIC), and a Lutheran training centre among them. Trauma counselling must be an integral part of training for Christian leaders and pastors. Pray for the raising up of a new generation of leaders who preach the whole gospel without compromise, competitiveness or jealousies.

4 **The physical needs** in Liberia are many – poverty, illiteracy and under-education, HIV/AIDS, public health and sanitation, agricultural reclamation, vocational training. Pray for wisdom and effectiveness for WVI, World Relief, Tearfund and many others seeking to enable Liberians to rebuild their society.

5 **Islam's expansion** was previously tied to specific regimes or tribes, but today it attempts to operate in broader and more sophisticated realms. The Muslim Mandingo first profited and then suffered badly from their ties to the Doe regime and their part in precipitating the war; ethno-religious violence between Mandingos and other groups still flares up. Up to 1,000 mosques were destroyed or damaged from 1989–2003. Today, foreign-given Islamic money is used to restore these mosques and to propagate Muslim beliefs; Liberia remains a major target for African Islam. Significant numbers of Muslims in Monrovia are non-Liberian. Pray for the winning of many Muslims to Christ.

6 **Ministry to young people and children** is possibly the most strategic issue in Liberia. Nearly half of the nation is under 15 years old. This whole generation has been deeply traumatized and robbed of its family life, its chance for normality, its very innocence. Over 50,000 children were killed in the fighting. Pray for churches and agencies seeking to minister in this difficult context. The restoration of normative family life is a crucial challenge for prayer. Cry out to God for:

a) **Former child soldiers.** The 15,000 who survived have little chance of a normal life. Memories of the atrocities they witnessed, endured and committed haunt them. Over 30% have already attempted suicide at least once. As terrible as their past experiences were, the prejudice and stigma they face in post-war Liberia is nearly as bad.



- b) **Thousands of fatherless children** of West African peacekeeping forces. Thousands more children were fathered by rebels or soldiers; they will grow up never knowing their fathers. Most of these are children of rape. They face a stigma that will be hard to overcome, while usually living in abject poverty.
- c) **Victims of sexual abuse.** During the war, thousands of girls were taken by military troops or rebels to serve as maids, porters and, ultimately, as sexual slaves. Even in the post-war era, girls are being sexually used by peacekeepers, aid workers, teachers and others in positions of power. Pray that the initiatives taken by the government and NGOs to stop and to prevent such abuses would be effective.
- d) **Students.** Not a single Liberian child was spared from the disruption and destruction war visited upon the education system. Following years of civil unrest, a strong ministry has been reintroduced among university students, who are living out the gospel among their friends. The Liberia Fellowship of Evangelical Students (LIFES) has 4 groups with 250 students. Pray for the ministry of SU, YFC, YWAM and the churches to children and young people.

7 Less-reached peoples – despite considerable exposure to the gospel, many of Liberia’s indigenous peoples remain followers of African traditional religions and Islam. Progress is being made, but there is still much work to be done. Pray for:

- a) **Muslim groups.** The Vai (CRWM) in the west, Gola in the north and the Many/Mandingo (SIM) and Maninka of the northern borders are largely Muslim with few active Christians. Recent ministry by Muslim-background believers is seeing dramatic and increasing fruit, as are the holistic Community Health Evangelism programmes. Liberia is one of the few places where Muslims can be openly reached with the gospel and are responsive when they see it demonstrated.
- b) **Peoples of animistic faith** who live in the forests of the interior. Victorious gospel encounters must occur among the Mande peoples of the north (Kpelle, Mano, Dan, Loma, Gbandi), some south-central peoples from the Kru cluster (Western Krahn, Sapo, Southern Kissi) and the Southern Kissi in the far north. All have a small or even sizeable Christian minority, but the power of fetishism among these peoples is great. To see a harvest, spiritual warfare and breakthrough must occur, and they must continue if the church is to remain free from the spiritually polluting clutches of the enemy.



8 The task of evangelization and mission must fall to Liberians and other Africans. Foreign missionaries had a long, hard, uphill struggle to plant churches in the interior; but disease, language diversity, entrenched fetishism and the disruption of war all hampered the work and eventually drove out all expat workers. Few have returned. Pray for those with a burden to return; pray for wisdom to know how they can best serve in rebuilding the nation, and best help the Liberian church complete the evangelization of every people. National mission leadership is making progress in missions advocacy among churches and in researching the nation’s current status in terms of evangelization.

9 Christian help ministries are essential in this land of great spiritual hunger, great spiritual needs, but few material resources:

- a) **Bible translation** and distribution ministries were gravely disrupted. The Bible Society and Lutheran Bible Translators projects have recommenced; 12 projects are active but another four languages have definite Bible translation needs. The completion in 2005 of the Bassa Bible (Liberia’s second largest indigenous language) was a major achievement.
- b) **Christian literature.** Many pastors and Christians have lost all they owned, and there is a great lack of Bibles, New Testaments and Christian literature, and few available bookstores. EHC continues nationwide literature distribution; recent focus was on the Mandingo people. Literacy is also a huge challenge in this country where almost a whole generation never had a proper chance to learn to read.
- c) **The JESUS film** has been viewed by the majority of the population and continues to have a converting impact on Muslims. It is available in 13 languages; six more are in production.
- d) **GRN audio recordings** are being used in 67 languages and dialects. These are essential for low-literacy contexts and oral learners. GRN has a Liberian base from which it has conducted nationwide outreaches and distribution. This base is well positioned to produce many more Christian recordings for evangelism, discipleship and training.

e) *Christian radio.* **SIM's** Radio ELWA might still be Africa's best known station, despite being evacuated four times and destroyed twice during the wars. ELWA has been resurrected, with eight hours daily in English and with broadcasts in nine Liberian languages, and plans for three more. Other local stations include Worship FM and a station by the Christian Education Foundation of Liberia as well as a station planned by the **AoG** and United Methodist Church. Praise God for the message that goes out. Pray for the provision of funds for these ministries and for the production of excellent content that will both reach and bless the entire nation.