

Country Disease Outlook

Liberia

August 2023



World Health
Organization

African Region

Background

The Republic of Liberia is a country in west Africa, bounded by Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Atlantic Ocean. It is a low-income country with a GDP per capita of US\$ 755 (2022) and a population of 5.3 million (2022).

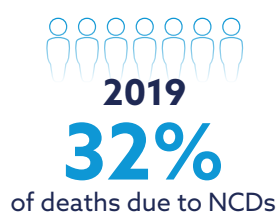
Key points

- ◆ Liberia has a high burden of communicable and non-communicable disease (NCDs), with the latter making up 32% of deaths in 2019.
- ◆ Liberia improved its child survival rates between 2015 and 2021, however it is not yet meeting the SDG targets for neonatal or under-five mortality rates.
- ◆ Liberia had 21,067 people receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2021 and has not met any of the three 95-95-95 goals, with additional efforts particularly needed to increase the testing rates among people living with HIV.
- ◆ Liberia is endemic for four of the five NTDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy through mass drug administration (MDA). In 2020, 85% of the 2.7 million people targeted were treated with MDA.
- ◆ Liberia's coverage rates of vaccination in children have historically been good. In 2021 the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine reached 66%, while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 58%. It is important for Liberia to continue to strengthen its routine immunization system, while also implementing catch-up vaccination strategies in the country to ensure that no children are left unprotected from vaccine-preventable diseases into the future.

UHC/CN

Universal Health Coverage/Communicable
and Non-communicable Diseases
WHO Regional Office for Africa





Broad disease outlook

The country has a high burden of both communicable (such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS) and non-communicable disease (NCDs). The latter was estimated to have caused 32% of deaths in 2019.

Communicable diseases

Malaria

Malaria remains a public health problem in Liberia with an estimated 1.9 million cases in 2021 (giving an incidence rate of 358.5 cases) and resulting in 3,548 deaths. According to the Malaria Indicator Survey 2022, Malaria prevalence in children under 5 is 10%, ITN ownership at 72%, ITN use at 50%, meaning Liberia is on course to achieving the GTS target for Malaria elimination.

Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS

In 2021, incidence of tuberculosis for Liberia was 308 cases per 100,000 people. The mortality rate of TB cases (all forms, excluding HIV coinfection) has remained fairly constant between 2015-2021 at 7.5 per 100,000 population. In contrast, the TB mortality rate among HIV-positive people is lower and has decreased from 3.1 to 1.4 in the same period.

Liberia has not met any of the 95-95-95 goals:

- ▲ 77% of people living with HIV know their status
- ▲ 94% of the people living with HIV that know their status are on treatment
- ▲ 84% of people living with HIV and on treatment are virally suppressed.

Approximately 21,067 people were receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2021.

Neglected tropical diseases

Liberia was endemic for four of the five NTDs amenable to preventive chemotherapy through mass drug administration (MDA), namely lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis. In 2020, 2.3 million of the 2.7 million targeted (85%) were treated with MDA.

Other notable NTDs that remain endemic are Buruli ulcer, leprosy.

Non-communicable diseases

NCDs are a significant health problem in Liberia. The age-standardised mortality rate across four major NCDs (Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Respiratory Disease, Cancer and Diabetes) was 533 per 100,000 in males and 545 in females in 2021.

NCD was integrated in the MOH HMIS and DHIS2 in 2021. The Tobacco Regulations prohibiting smoking in public places and sale of tobacco products to minors was promulgated in 2011. In 2016, taxes on tobacco cigarettes was increased from 35% to 80%.

Childhood Immunization

Liberia's coverage rates of vaccination in children have dipped in recent years. In 2021 the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine coverage reached 66%, while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 58% (WUENIC). This resulted in 29,523 zero-dose and 52,831 under-immunized children. However, in 2022 the third dose of DTP-containing vaccine coverage reached 78% while the coverage rate for the first dose of measles vaccine was 79% (WUENIC) resulting in 39,066 zero-dose children and 40,926 under-immunized children. Liberia is strengthening its routine immunization system, while also implementing catch-up vaccination strategies in the country to reach zero-dose and under-immunized children in line with Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030) in the country, to ensure no children are left unprotected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

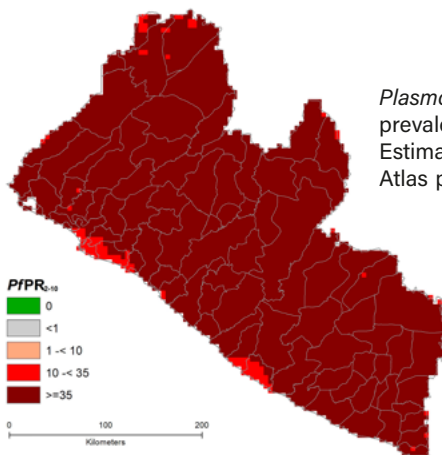
Child survival

Based on the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) estimates, the under-5 mortality rate has fallen from 88 to 76 per 1,000 live births between 2015 and 2021, still above the SDG target of 25 per 1,000 live births. Similarly, the neonatal mortality rate decreased from 32 to 30 per 1,000 live births in the same period, remaining above the SDG target of 12.

MALARIA

POPULATION AT RISK IN 2022	TOTAL MALARIA CASES IN 2021	TOTAL MALARIA DEATHS IN 2021
5.1 million	1.9 million	3,578

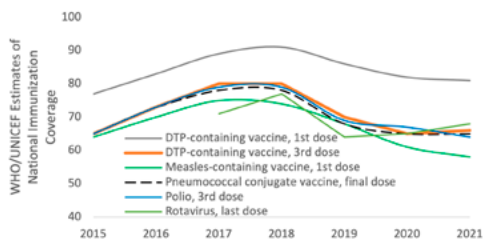
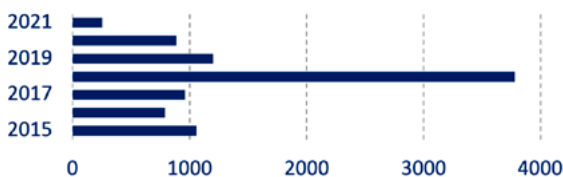
ITN use in children under five years 44.2% and 30.5% use of ACTs among those with fever for whom care was sought and received a finger or heel prick



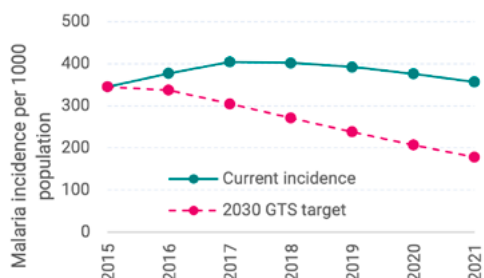
Plasmodium falciparum prevalence in children in 2020. Estimates from the Malaria Atlas project

EXPANDED PROGRAMME ON IMMUNIZATION IN CHILDREN

■ Measles



Malaria incidence in Liberia since 2015 compared to GTS targets shows that the country is off track on GTS targets



Zero dose children 29,523 Under-immunized 52,831

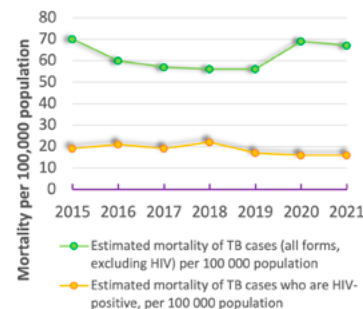
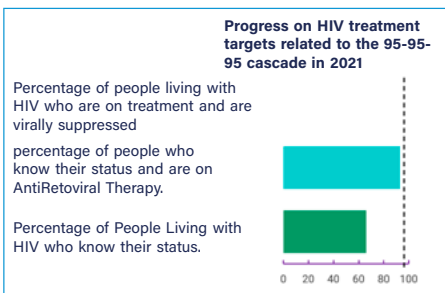
WUENIC estimates show that, for most basic antigens, coverage declined in 2019 and highlights the need for a catch-up to restore 2018 levels.

Measles continues to be a major public health problem in Liberia with >500 cases reported on annually.

HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS

- 21,067** people receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2021
- 76%** Treatment success rate for HIV-positive TB cases
- 7.2%** of children (aged < 5 years) household contacts of bacteriologically-confirmed TB cases on preventive treatment

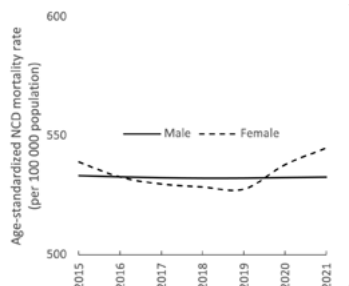
<5.0% Domestic funding for TB
Unknown Domestic funding for HIV



- Indicator 1 - Targets
- Indicator 2 - CRV Mortality
- Indicator 3 - Surveys
- Indicator 4 - NCD policy and Plan
- Indicator 5A - Tobacco taxes
- Indicator 5B - Tobacco smoke free/polution
- Indicator 5C - Tobacco health warning
- Indicator 5D - Tobacco advertising ban
- Indicator 5E - Tobacco media campaign
- Indicator 6A - Alcohol availability
- Indicator 6B - Alcohol advertising restrictions
- Indicator 6C - Alcohol taxes
- Indicator 7A - Salt policies
- Indicator 7B - Trans fats policies
- Indicator 7C - Marketing to children
- Indicator 8 - Physical activity awareness
- Indicator 9 - NCD guidelines

NCD PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Achieved
- Partially achieved
- Not achieved/Unknown



NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

Endemic NTDS requiring Preventive Chemotherapy (PC)

- Lymphatic filariasis
- Soil-transmitted helminthiasis
- Schistosomiasis
- Onchocerciasis (non-endemic)

PC-NTDs treatment in 2021
2.7 million targeted for MDA
2.3 million treated with MDA

OTHER MAJOR NTDS

- Buruli ulcer
- Taeniasis and cysticercosis
- Leprosy
- Rabies