



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	LIBERIA
Title	Treatment by society of people with HIV/AIDS
Reference period	January 2021 to 3 June 2024
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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Liberia

Treatment by society of people with HIV/AIDS

1. Societal treatment of and attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS

In a 2022 report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), it was reported that stigma and discrimination related to HIV remained ‘very high in Liberia’.¹ In May 2024, a local news source, Front Page Africa, reported that according to the newly appointed Chairperson of the National Aids Commission of Liberia (NAC), HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination ‘rate high’ in Liberia, citing a ‘study showing 51% of more people reporting discriminatory attitudes toward people living with HIV and vulnerable populations’.² An article by New Dawn, a local newspaper based in Monrovia, cited the Chairperson of NAC as indicating in August 2023 that people living with HIV ‘have been denied access to healthcare services, job opportunities, education amongst others in society’ while adding that, on occasions, ‘they experienced verbal insults, harassment, and threats, while others have suffered physical assaults and intimidation’, including on the basis of their HIV status.³ The Chairperson of NAC also stated that societal stigma and discrimination remained barriers to addressing HIV-related national strategies and policies and ‘have undermined the National HIV Response over the years’.⁴ In its report on human rights practices in Liberia, covering 2022, the US Department of State (USDOS) similarly noted that discrimination was occurring in employment and occupation on the grounds of HIV-positive status.⁵

Citing the 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS)⁶, the USDOS report covering 2023 reported that popular attitudes ‘remained broadly discriminatory toward persons with HIV and AIDS’.⁷ In connection to discrimination ‘many individuals were discouraged from testing for their HIV status, thus limiting HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment services’.⁸

A March 2021 report by the Borgen Project, a non-for-profit organization that works on issues related to poverty, indicated that although ‘the percentage of HIV/AIDS in Liberia is lower than

¹ UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme of Support on AIDS in Liberia (2022 – 2026), January 2022, [url](#), p. 13

² FPA, Liberia: New NAC Chairperson Decries Limited Budgetary Support as She Takes over the Commission, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

³ New Dawn (The), Aids Commission moves to fight stigma and discrimination, 16 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴ NAC, Liberia Concludes Conference On Stigma, Discrimination; As Delegates Present Resolution To End HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

⁵ USDOS (US Department of State), 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 26

⁶ The Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) is issued by the Ministry of Health of Liberia and the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS). See: LISGIS, Liberia: Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20, April 2021, [url](#). According to the USDOS, the 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) was ‘the most recent available’. A more recent version of the LDHS could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints.

⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 29

⁸ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 41



in surrounding countries and other regions of Africa, the country still struggles with treatment plans, education on the disease and breaking down stigma that could help prevent further spread'.⁹

2. Treatment of women living with HIV/AIDS

Information on the treatment of women living with HIV/AIDS in Liberia was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

An article by the New Republic, a local news website, published in March 2024, citing the Vice President of the Liberian Women Empowerment Network (LIWEN), a non-governmental organization of women and girls living with and affected by HIV and AIDS, noted that 'LDHS [Liberia Demographic and Health Survey] data shows that women and girls are disproportionately affected, representing nearly 60% of adults living with HIV in Liberia'.¹⁰ An article by the Inquirer Newspaper, a local news source, published in November 2022, reported that, according to the National Aids Control Program (NACP),¹¹ the HIV positivity rate amongst adolescent girls and young women was 'very high' and 'about three-fourth [...] almost double the national prevalence rate'.¹² According to the same source, the NACP's Director also reported that 'over 3,616 adolescent girls and young women are carriers of HIV/AIDS in Liberia' and are currently on treatment for HIV, while the NACP documented 'an increase of stigma and discrimination'.¹³

The 2022 report by UNAIDS noted that women were 'more vulnerable to HIV compared to men'.¹⁴ Specifically, the report indicated that "[t]he largest numbers of persons living with HIV in Liberia are women", adding that 'the gender disparity is more apparent among young women (15-24 years), where prevalence is three times higher than in males of the same age group'.¹⁵ The same report also noted that 'stigma and discrimination leads to non-disclosure of HIV status which in turn leads to high loss to follow up'.¹⁶

An article by the New Dawn, published in May 2021, reported that, according to an official of the National AIDs Control Program in Maryland county, there was an increase in HIV cases in the county, and particularly of cases of HIV/AIDS transmission from mother to child.¹⁷ The same

⁹ Borgen Project (The), A Closer Look at HIV/AIDS in Liberia, 30 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰ New Republic, Liberia News: LIWEN pushes equal right for females living with HIV & AIDS, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹ The National Aids Control Program (NACP), established in 1987, operates as a branch of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, working across Liberia's 15 counties, 'with the purpose of working to gain public health control of the AIDS epidemic in the country by 2030'. NACP, The National AIDS Control Program, n.d., [url](#)

¹² Inquirer Newspaper (The), Over 3, 000 Adolescent Females -NACP Reveals Affected With HIV In Liberia, 25 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³ Inquirer Newspaper (The), Over 3, 000 Adolescent Females -NACP Reveals Affected With HIV In Liberia, 25 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴ UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme of Support on AIDS in Liberia (2022 – 2026), January 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵ UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme of Support on AIDS in Liberia (2022 – 2026), January 2022, [url](#), pp. 12 – 13

¹⁶ UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme of Support on AIDS in Liberia (2022 – 2026), January 2022, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁷ New Dawn (The), Pregnant women not reporting for HIV test, 10 May 2021, [url](#)



official indicated that the increase was associated with the ‘low turnout of pregnant women at various health center in the County’ due to ‘failure of some pregnant women to know their status’ and their refusal to visit health centers during early pregnancy for treatment.¹⁸

A research study by Beminate Lemma Seifu et al.¹⁹ titled ‘Comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia’, published in February 2024 in BMC Public Health journal indicated that ‘the prevalence of good comprehensive HIV/AIDS knowledge was relatively low among reproductive age women in Liberia’,²⁰ with the comprehensive HIV/AIDS knowledge prevalence among Liberian women aged 15–49 reported at 33.5 %.²¹ According to the same study, factors associated with increased prevalence of comprehensive HIV/AIDS knowledge included age woman’s educational status, and distance from the health facility, whereas living in a community with high poverty levels was negatively associated ‘with lower prevalence of comprehensive HIV/AIDS knowledge’.²²

3. Legislation

The 2010 Act to Amend the Public Health Law of Liberia indicated the following:

‘Section 18.28. Prohibition of discrimination and vilification on the basis of actual or perceived HIV status

(a) Protection against discrimination: Any person living with HIV or perceived to be living with HIV shall have every protection of the law made available to them by government. Widows and orphans of people who died from this disease shall not be deprived or denied the right to own or inherit property, basic health and social services or their basic human rights provided for under the law.

(b) Discrimination in the Workplace: No person, agency, organization, or corporate body may discriminate against a person on the basis of actual or perceived HIV status, in housing, employment, the granting of credit, public accommodation, or delivery of services, nor shall an HIV test be required as a condition of employment, continued employment, promotion except where it

¹⁸ New Dawn (The), Pregnant women not reporting for HIV test, 10 May 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹ Beminate Lemma Seifu works as an academic in the Department of Public Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Samara University, Samara, Ethiopia. Concerning the other authors of the study, Gilbert Eshun works in Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, Agona-Asamang, Ghana, Getayeneh Antehunegn Tesema works in Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Institute of Public Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, and comprehensive specialized Hospital, University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia, and Frank Kyei-Arthur works in the Department of Environment and Public Health, University of Environment and Sustainable Development, Somanya, Ghana.

²⁰ Seifu, B. L. et al., Comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia, February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

²¹ Seifu, B. L. et al., Comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia, February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

²² Seifu, B. L. et al., Comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia, February 2024, [url](#), p. 6



can be shown, on the testimony of competent medical authorities, that such person is a clear and present danger of HIV transmission to others

(c) Discrimination at School and Health Facilities: No person, agency, organization, or corporate body shall deprive or tend to deprive any person or individual of an education or other educational services, health or health related services, insurance or other related services on the basis of that person or individual actual or perceived HIV status.

(d) Discrimination against Public/Private facilities and services: A person, agency, organization, or corporate body, public or private, may not discriminate against any person or individual, or deprive or tend to deprive any person or individual of access to government and private services, to elected offices, to public or private accommodations, to travel within or without the country, and other related services on the basis of the fact that person or individual is, or is regarded as being, infected with HIV.

[...]

(e) Prohibition of vilification:

[1] It is unlawful for a person, by a public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the ground of that the person is, or members of the group are, living with HIV or perceived to be living with HIV (whether or not actually living with HIV).

[...]

(f) Penalty for Discrimination: Any violation of this section shall be punishable by a fine of not less than 1000 Liberian Dollars [about EUR 5] to be imposed by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Any person aggrieved by a violation of this section shall have a right to bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction and may recover for damages for discrimination.²³

The same Act also indicated:

'Section 18.27. Wilful transmission of HIV

(a) it shall be considered a commission of a 1st degree felony for any person(s) to wilfully transmit HIV to another person or continue to have unprotected sex with his/her spouse or sexual partner knowing the positive result of his/her HIV test or status.

(b) No person shall be criminally responsible under this Act or any other applicable law where the transmission of HIV, or exposure to the risk of HIV infection arises out of or relates to:

²³ Republic of Liberia, Act to Amend the Public Health Law, Title 33, Liberian Code of Laws Revised (1976), 2010, [url](#)



- i) An act that poses no significant risk of HIV infection;
- ii) A person living with HIV who was unaware of his or her HIV infection at the time of the alleged offence;
- iii) A person living with HIV who lacks the understanding of how HIV is transmitted at the time of the alleged offence;
- iv) A person living with HIV who practices safer sex, including using a condom;
- v) A person living with HIV who discloses his or her HIV-positive status to the sexual partner or other person before any act posing a significant risk of transmission;
- vi) A situation in which the sexual partner or other person was in some other way aware of the person's HIV-positive status;
- vii) A person living with HIV who did not disclose his or her HIV status because of a well-founded fear of serious harm by the other person; or
- viii) The possibility of transmission of HIV from a woman to her child before or during the birth of the child, or through breastfeeding of an infant or child.²⁴

In Section 18.23, the Act also stipulates on confidentiality, making 'unlawful for any person to disclose to a third party the results of an individual's HIV test result without the prior written consent of that individual'.²⁵ In Section 18.26, the Act provides a sanction for violating confidentiality, and specifically it notes the following:

'(a) The violation of the provisions of confidentiality herein shall be punishable by a fine or not less than 1000 Liberian Dollars [about EUR 5] to be imposed by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and/or the suspension and revocation of the person's professional licence or operating permit for a period of no less than 12 months.'²⁶

Further information on legislation relating to HIV/AIDS discrimination and its implementation could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

4. State protection

The USDOS report covering 2023 noted that although the law prohibited discrimination based on different grounds, including on HIV/AIDS status, the government did not effectively enforce the law, whereas the penalties 'were not commensurate with those for similar violations and were seldom applied'.²⁷ According to the same source, existing mechanisms 'for receiving and acting on complaints were inadequate, and the government took no efforts to strengthen antidiscrimination regulations'.²⁸ Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

²⁴ Republic of Liberia, Act to Amend the Public Health Law, Title 33, Liberian Code of Laws Revised (1976), 2010, [url](#)

²⁵ Republic of Liberia, Act to Amend the Public Health Law, Title 33, Liberian Code of Laws Revised (1976), 2010, [url](#)

²⁶ Republic of Liberia, Act to Amend the Public Health Law, Title 33, Liberian Code of Laws Revised (1976), 2010, [url](#), p. 12

²⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 20 – 21

²⁸ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 21



In December 2023, sources reported that the National AIDS Commission of Liberia established a legal office in Monrovia to manage cases of rights violations against people living with HIV.²⁹ The mandate of the legal office included documenting and reporting cases of HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination and other rights violations,³⁰ through the establishment of a national registry.³¹ Furthermore, the legal office was mandated to legally assist ‘persons living with HIV and key populations who have been denied access to services to seek redress’.³²

The USDOS report covering 2021 noted that government ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, adopted and implemented ‘several plans to combat social stigma and discrimination based on HIV status’.³³ These plans included training to health-care facilities, discussions and outreach sessions, as provision of services ‘through drop-in centers’.³⁴ Information on implementation could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

Additional information on state protection for cases of rights violations on the ground of HIV status could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

²⁹ FPA, Liberia: NAC Establishes Legal Office to Address Stigma and Rights Violations, 12 December 2023, [url](#); New Dawn (The), NAC opens legal office in Monrovia, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁰ FPA, Liberia: NAC Establishes Legal Office to Address Stigma and Rights Violations, 12 December 2023, [url](#); New Dawn (The), NAC opens legal office in Monrovia, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

³¹ FPA, Liberia: NAC Establishes Legal Office to Address Stigma and Rights Violations, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

³² FPA, Liberia: NAC Establishes Legal Office to Address Stigma and Rights Violations, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

³³ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 41

³⁴ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 41



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