



**Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE)  
Government of Sierra Leone**

**Sierra Leone Learning Outcomes and School Ownership Analysis for Basic  
Education Examinations (NPSE and BECE) 2021**

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In Sierra Leone, national transition examinations are taken at the end of primary school, the end of junior secondary school and the end of senior secondary school. This report will focus on the learning outcomes of the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) taken at the end of primary school and the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) taken at the end of junior secondary school for the 2020/2021 academic year.

For the NPSE, the government pass mark is an aggregate score of 230. Any student who has achieved 230 or above is considered to have passed the NPSE. For the BECE, the pass we consider in this analysis is those who have achieved 5 credits including Mathematics or English. This is the criteria to be accepted onto the WASSCE programme.

With regards to school ownership, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education categorises school ownership into 5 groups – community, government, mission/religious group, private and “other”. For this analysis, we removed the “other” category due to the small number of schools. The definitions for each type of ownership are as follows:

- **Government:** schools exclusively (completely) owned by the central government or a local council in which the school is found.
- **Mission/Religious Group:** schools owned or founded by faith-based organisations or religious bodies.
- **Community:** schools established by the community and are founded as public schools with the aim of being supported by the government.
- **Private:** schools that are not public schools and cannot receive financial support from the government. They are set up as business organisations.
- **Other:** public schools that are established by individuals, NGOs and other organisations that are neither government nor faith-based and the community cannot claim ownership.

It is important to note that all government-owned schools received financial support from the government and are considered public schools. However, not all mission-owned, community-owned, and “other” schools are public, meaning they do not receive financial support from the government.

## National Primary School Examination (NPSE)

When looking at the NPSE data for 2021, there were a total of 4,296 schools with valid results. Out of these, 3,571 schools (83%) were found in the Annual School Census from the previous year and were analysed by school ownership. Four schools found in the “other” category were also removed from the analysis leaving a total of 3,567 schools. *Table 1* below shows the national pass rates for each school ownership category as well as the number of students who sat and passed the exam and the standard deviation of the pass rates.

Ownership	Sat (% sat)	Passed	Pass Rate (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Community	7,146 (5%)	5,192	72.66	18.92
Government	28,311 (20%)	21,043	74.33	10.24
Mission/Religious Group	95,969 (69%)	73,558	76.65	11.83
Private	8,433 (6%)	7,817	92.70	6.53

*Table 1: NPSE national pass rates for each school ownership category.*

We can see from the table that private schools have the highest pass rates overall. However, when comparing to government and mission schools, the number of students who sat the NPSE is significantly lower in private schools (6%). Community schools have the lowest pass rate as well as the lowest number of students that sat and passed the examination.

*Table 2* below shows the pass rates for each district by school ownership.

District	Pass Rate (%)				
	Community	Government	Mission/religious group	Private	Overall
Bo	66.24	79.52	74.56	88.51	75.71
Bombali	91.87	85.25	86.21	95.16	86.59
Bonthe	94.74	78.50	82.39	93.22	82.58
Falaba	-	94.95	92.68	-	93.19
Kailahun	91.57	80.83	84.42	-	83.82
Kambia	59.93	69.16	59.33	93.04	62.70
Karene	83.20	70.36	72.21	-	71.82
Kenema	74.92	88.79	88.83	97.56	88.72
Koinadugu	46.53	85.35	88.84	100.00	87.03
Kono	46.66	60.69	51.08	77.00	52.30
Moyamba	78.13	58.58	60.08	100.00	60.39
Port Loko	82.74	64.33	75.29	95.70	72.85
Pujehun	36.36	80.33	84.84	-	83.59
Tonkolili	96.84	78.56	77.61	-	78.12
West-Rural	74.12	69.99	73.24	89.27	74.39
West-Urban	82.71	71.46	82.13	94.44	82.47

*Table 2: NPSE pass rates per district for each school ownership category.*

As can be seen from Table 2 above, not every district had primary schools in the analysed dataset that sat the NPSE. This means there are some gaps for certain districts and ownership categories. For community schools, no schools were captured in Falaba. For private schools, no schools were captured in Falaba, Kailahun, Karene, Pujehun and Tonkolili. For government and mission/religious schools, schools were captured in all districts. Government and mission/religious entities are the largest providers of public education in Sierra Leone.

Figure 1 below shows the district pass rates for each school ownership type from the highest to the lowest pass rate.



Figure 1: NPSE district pass rates for each school ownership type, ordered from highest to lowest pass rate.

When looking at the ownership pass rates by district in Figure 1, we find that for community schools, Tonkolili had the highest pass rate of 96.84% and Pujehun had the lowest with a pass rate of 36.36%. For government schools, Falaba had the highest pass rate of 94.95% and Moyamba had the lowest with a pass rate of 58.58%. For mission/religious schools, Falaba also had the highest pass rate, with a pass rate of 92.68% and Kono had the lowest with a pass rate of 51.08%. For private schools, Koinadugu and Moyamba had the highest pass rates of 100% and Kono had the lowest with a pass rate of 77%.

Figure 2 below shows the NPSE district pass rates for each ownership category on one graph. This can be used to compare community, government, mission/religious and private schools to see if one ownership category is consistently above the others across the districts.

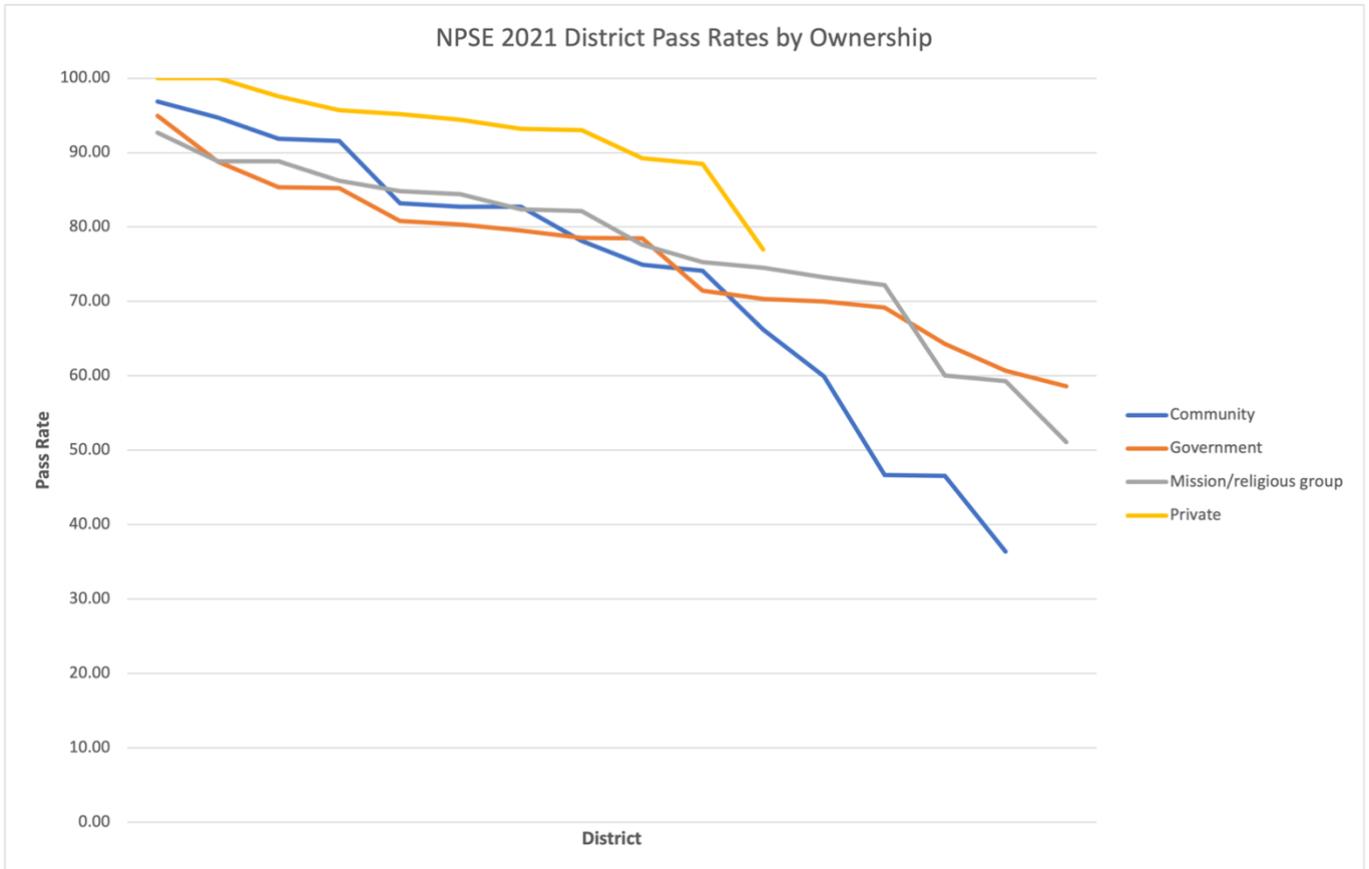


Figure 2: NPSE district pass rates by school ownership.

From the figure above we can see that private schools scored higher across the districts in comparison to community, government, and mission/ religious schools. We can also see that the lowest NPSE district pass rate was from community schools. However, it is important to note that not only were fewer private schools captured in the analysis, but there is not a large gap between the private school line and the other ownership category lines. This shows that although private schools are slightly ahead in terms of pass rates, the other ownership categories are not far behind with regards to provision of quality education. This is consistent with the data from Global Benchmarks such as the 2021 GEM Report on Non-state Actors in Education ([https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/non-state\\_actors](https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/non-state_actors)).

## Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)

When looking at the BECE, there were a total of 1,355 schools in the results dataset. Out of these schools, 1,047 schools (77%) were found in the previous Annual School Census and were analysed by school ownership. Eight schools were in the “other” category and were also removed from the analysis leaving us with 1,039 schools. *Table 3* below shows the national pass rates for each school ownership category.

Ownership	Sat (% sat)	Passed	Pass Rate (%)	Standard Deviation
Community	15,950 (14%)	12,108	75.91	9.83
Government	19,274 (17%)	15,052	78.09	17.83
Mission/Religious Group	71,337 (64%)	57,381	80.44	9.53
Private	5,680 (5%)	4,796	84.44	14.86

*Table 3: BECE national pass rates for each school ownership category.*

We can see from the table that private schools had the highest pass rate overall, followed by mission schools. However, when comparing to government, mission and community schools, the number of students who sat the BECE under a private school is significantly lower (5%). Community schools had the lowest BECE pass rate nationally.

*Table 4* below shows the pass rates for each district by school ownership.

District	Pass Rate (%)				
	Community	Government	Mission/religious group	Private	Overall
Bo	67.38	82.83	77.07	94.04	77.29
Bombali	87.75	90.49	87.94	94.79	89.07
Bonthe	70.00	33.77	87.87	-	84.61
Falaba	88.95	74.05	72.01	-	77.01
Kailahun	78.35	92.14	86.36	-	86.08
Kambia	63.79	-	80.16	93.22	74.62
Karene	86.06	94.49	88.30	-	89.20
Kenema	84.63	89.75	90.14	93.18	89.88
Koinadugu	89.23	100.00	69.84	100.00	71.42
Kono	68.25	79.67	55.22	61.02	62.20
Moyamba	68.88	50.99	69.13	96.30	67.26
Port Loko	77.43	72.07	75.67	93.20	77.42
Pujehun	93.31	94.17	73.14	-	80.55
Tonkolili	88.09	92.39	87.22	55.00	87.52
West-Rural	68.86	81.26	80.06	81.58	77.44
West-Urban	73.17	73.13	83.93	84.24	82.40

*Table 4: BECE pass rates per district for each school ownership category.*

As can be seen from the table above, not every district had junior secondary schools in the final analysed dataset that sat the BECE. For community and mission/religious schools, schools were captured in all districts. For government schools, no schools were captured in Kambia. For private schools, no schools were captured in Bonthe, Falaba, Kailahun, Kenema and Pujehun.

Figure 3 below shows the district pass rates for each school ownership type from the highest to the lowest pass rate.



Figure 3: BECE district pass rates for each school ownership type, ordered from highest to lowest pass rate.

When looking at the ownership pass rates by districts in Figure 3, we find that for community schools, Pujehun had the highest pass rate of 93.31% and Kambia had the lowest with a pass rate of 63.79%. For government schools, Koinadugu had the highest pass rate of 100% and Bonthe had the lowest with a pass rate of 33.77%. For mission/religious schools, Kenema had the highest pass rate of 90.14% and Kono had the lowest with a pass rate of 55.22%. For private schools, Koinadugu had the highest pass rate of 100% and Tonkolili had the lowest with a pass rate of 55%.

Figure 4 below shows the BECE district pass rates for each ownership category on one graph. This can be used to compare community, government, mission/religious and private schools to see if one ownership category is consistently above the others across the districts.

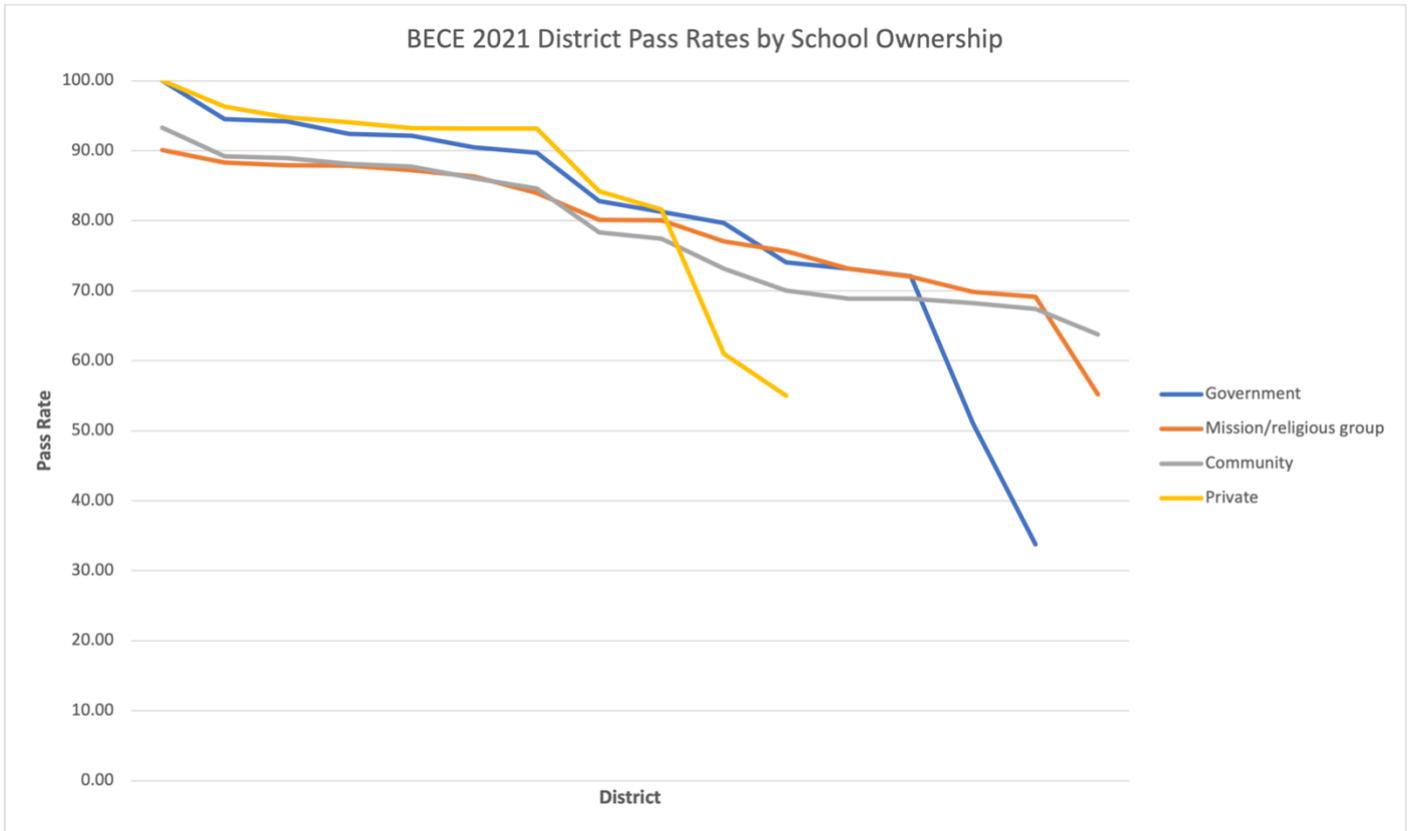


Figure 4: BECE district pass rates by school ownership.

From the figure above, we can see that private and government schools scored highest across the districts in comparison to community and mission/ religious schools. As discussed previously, it is important to note that there were fewer private schools in the final dataset used for the analysis and only 5% of candidates that sat the BECE 2021 were from private schools. The graph shows that there is not a large gap between the private school line and the other ownership category lines however the lowest pass rate for government schools is lower than that of the other ownership categories which have a similar lowest pass rate. For the most part, *Figure 4* shows that for many of the districts, the differences in pass rates between the different ownership categories are minimal, particularly at the higher pass rates. The gap between the ownership categories becomes more apparent at the lower pass rates.