

# Sierra Leone

## Geography

Location: Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Guinea and Liberia

Area:

total area: 71,740 sq km

land area: 71,620 sq km

Land boundaries: total 958 km, Guinea 652 km, Liberia 306 km

Coastline: 402 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

Climate: tropical; hot, humid; summer rainy season (May to December); winter dry season (December to April)

Terrain: coastal belt of mangrove swamps, wooded hill country, upland plateau, mountains in east

Natural resources: diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold, chromite

Land use:

arable land: 25%

permanent crops: 2%

meadows and pastures: 31%

forest and woodland: 29%

other: 13%

Irrigated land: 340 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: rapid population growth pressuring the environment; overharvesting of timber, expansion of cattle grazing, and slash-and-burn agriculture have resulted in deforestation and soil exhaustion; civil war depleting natural resources; overfishing  
natural hazards: dry, sand-laden harmattan winds blow from the Sahara (November to May); sandstorms, dust storms

# People

Population: 4,753,120 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 44% (female 1,054,826; male 1,020,943)

15-64 years: 53% (female 1,310,506; male 1,216,510)

65 years and over: 3% (female 72,982; male 77,353) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.63% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 44.65 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 18.38 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: NA migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

note: thousands of refugees, fleeing the civil strife in Sierra Leone, are taking refuge in Guinea

Infant mortality rate: 138.8 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 46.94 years  
male: 44.07 years  
female: 49.89 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 5.9 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Sierra Leonean(s)  
adjective: Sierra Leonean

Ethnic divisions: 13 native African tribes 99% (Temne 30%, Mende 30%, other 39%), Creole, European, Lebanese, and Asian 1%

Religions: Muslim 60%, indigenous beliefs 30%, Christian 10%

Languages: English (official; regular use limited to literate minority), Mende (principal vernacular in the south), Temne (principal vernacular in the north), Krio (the language of the re-settled ex-slave population of the Freetown area and is lingua franca)

Literacy:  
total population: 21%  
male: 31%

female: 11%

## Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Sierra Leone

conventional short form: Sierra Leone

Capital: Freetown

Independence: 27 April 1961 (from UK)

National holiday: Republic Day, 27 April (1961)

Constitution: 1 October 1991; suspended following 19 April 1992  
coup

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: three equal horizontal bands of light green (top), white, and light blue

## Economy

Overview: Sierra Leone has substantial mineral, agricultural, and fishery resources, but the economic and social infrastructure is not well developed.

Industries: mining (diamonds, bauxite, rutile), small-scale manufacturing (beverages, textiles, cigarettes, footwear), petroleum refinery

Agriculture: largely subsistence farming; cash crops - coffee, cocoa, palm kernels; harvests of food staple rice meets 80% of domestic needs; annual fish catch averages 53,000 metric tons

## Transportation

### Railroads:

total: 84 km mineral line is used on a limited basis because the mine at Marampa is closed

### Highways:

total: 7,400 km

Inland waterways: 800 km; 600 km navigable year round

Ports: Bonthe, Freetown, Pepel

### Airports:

total: 11

## Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, Police, Security Forces