

The World Factbook



Africa :: Sierra Leone

Introduction :: Sierra Leone

Background:

Democracy is slowly being reestablished after the civil war from 1991 to 2002 that resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (about a third of the population). The military, which took over full responsibility for security following the departure of UN peacekeepers at the end of 2005, is increasingly developing as a guarantor of the country's stability. The armed forces remained on the sideline during the 2007 and 2012 national elections but still look to the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) - a civilian UN mission - to support efforts to consolidate peace. The new government's priorities include furthering development, creating jobs, and stamping out endemic corruption.

Geography :: Sierra Leone

Location:

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

Geographic coordinates:

8 30 N, 11 30 W

Map references:

Africa

Area:

total: 71,740 sq km

country comparison to the world: 119

land: 71,620 sq km

water: 120 sq km

Area - comparative:

slightly smaller than South Carolina

Land boundaries:

total: 958 km

border countries: Guinea 652 km, Liberia 306 km

Coastline:

402 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 12 nm

contiguous zone: 24 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm

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

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Atlantic Ocean 0 m

highest point: Loma Mansa (Bintimani) 1,948 m

Natural resources:

diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold, chromite

Land use:

arable land: 15.33%

permanent crops: 1.88%

other: 82.79% (2011)

Irrigated land:

293.6 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:

160 cu km (2011)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):

total: 0.21 cu km/yr (52%/26%/22%)

per capita: 38.74 cu m/yr (2005)

Natural hazards:

dry, sand-laden harmattan winds blow from the Sahara (December to February); sandstorms, dust storms

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 depleted natural resources; overfishing

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Law of the Sea, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands

signed, but not ratified: Environmental Modification

Geography - note:

rainfall along the coast can reach 495 cm (195 inches) a year, making it one of the wettest places along coastal, western Africa

People and Society :: Sierra Leone

Nationality:

noun: Sierra Leonean(s)

adjective: Sierra Leonean

Ethnic groups:

Temne 35%, Mende 31%, Limba 8%, Kono 5%, Krio 2% (descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area in the late-18th century; also known as Krio), Mandingo 2%, Loko 2%, other 15% (includes refugees from Liberia's recent civil war, and small numbers of Europeans, Lebanese, Pakistanis, and Indians) (2008 census)

Languages:

English (official, regular use limited to literate minority), Mende (principal vernacular in the south), Temne (principal vernacular in the north), Krio (English-based Creole, spoken by the descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area, a lingua franca and a first language for 10% of the population but understood by 95%)

Religions:

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

Population:

5,612,685 (July 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 111

Age structure:

0-14 years: 41.9% (male 1,169,343/female 1,181,669)

15-24 years: 19% (male 517,107/female 549,500)

25-54 years: 31.4% (male 847,115/female 914,650)

55-64 years: 4% (male 101,069/female 124,673)

65 years and over: 3.7% (male 89,643/female 117,916) (2013 est.)

Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 79.3 %
youth dependency ratio: 74.5 %
elderly dependency ratio: 4.8 %
potential support ratio: 20.9 (2013)

Median age:

total: 19 years
male: 18.5 years
female: 19.6 years (2013 est.)

Population growth rate:

2.3% (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 36

Birth rate:

37.77 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 17

Death rate:

11.26 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 34

Net migration rate:

-3.48 migrant(s)/1,000 population

country comparison to the world: 184

note: refugees currently in surrounding countries are slowly returning (2013 est.)

Urbanization:

urban population: 39.2% of total population (2011)

rate of urbanization: 3.04% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Major urban areas - population:

FREETOWN (capital) 875,000 (2009)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.03 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 0.99 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 0.94 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 0.93 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 0.8 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.78 male(s)/female

total population: 0.94 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

19 (2008 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

890 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)

country comparison to the world: 4

Infant mortality rate:

total: 74.95 deaths/1,000 live births

country comparison to the world: 11

male: 83.59 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 66.06 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 56.98 years

country comparison to the world: 199

male: 54.47 years

female: 59.56 years (2013 est.)

Total fertility rate:

4.87 children born/woman (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 22

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

11% (2010)

Health expenditures:

13.1% of GDP (2010)

country comparison to the world: 6

Physicians density:

0.02 physicians/1,000 population (2008)

Hospital bed density:

0.4 beds/1,000 population (2006)

Drinking water source:**improved:**

urban: 87% of population

rural: 35% of population

total: 55% of population

unimproved:

urban: 13% of population

rural: 65% of population

total: 45% of population (2010 est.)

Sanitation facility access:**improved:**

urban: 23% of population

rural: 6% of population

total: 13% of population

unimproved:

urban: 77% of population

rural: 94% of population

total: 87% of population (2010 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

1.6% (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 34

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

49,000 (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 58

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

2,800 (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 47

Major infectious diseases:

degree of risk: very high

food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever

vectorborne diseases: malaria, dengue fever, and yellow fever

water contact disease: schistosomiasis

animal contact disease: rabies

aerosolized dust or soil contact disease: Lassa fever (2013)

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

6.8% (2008)

country comparison to the world: 144

Children under the age of 5 years underweight:

21.3% (2008)

country comparison to the world: 28

Education expenditures:

3.6% of GDP (2011)

country comparison to the world: 125

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write English, Mende, Temne, or Arabic

total population: 43.3%

male: 54.7%

female: 32.6% (2011 est.)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 12 years

male: 13 years

female: 11 years (2007)

Child labor - children ages 5-14:

total number: 573,287

percentage: 48 % (2005 est.)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 5.2%

country comparison to the world: 132

male: 7.3%

female: 3.5% (2004)

Government :: Sierra Leone

Country name:

conventional long form: Republic of Sierra Leone

conventional short form: Sierra Leone

local long form: Republic of Sierra Leone

local short form: Sierra Leone

Government type:

constitutional democracy

Capital:

name: Freetown

geographic coordinates: 8 29 N, 13 14 W

time difference: UTC 0 (5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions:

3 provinces and 1 area*; Eastern, Northern, Southern, Western*

Independence:

27 April 1961 (from the UK)

National holiday:

Independence Day, 27 April (1961)

Constitution:

1 October 1991; amended several times

Legal system:

mixed legal system of English common law and customary law

International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; accepts ICCt jurisdiction

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: President Ernest Bai KOROMA (since 17 September 2007); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government

head of government: President Ernest Bai KOROMA (since 17 September 2007)

cabinet: Ministers of State appointed by the president with the approval of the House of Representatives; the cabinet is responsible to the president

(For more information visit the **World Leaders website**.)

elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held on 17 November 2012 (next to be held in 2017)

election results: Ernest Bai KOROMA elected to a second term; percent of vote - Ernest Bai KOROMA 58.7%, Julius Maada BIO 37.4%, other 3.9%

Legislative branch:

unicameral Parliament (124 seats; 112 members elected by popular vote, 12 filled by paramount chiefs elected in separate elections; members to serve five-year terms)

elections: last held on 17 November 2012 (next to be held in 2017)

election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - APC 69, SLPP 43

Judicial branch:

highest court(s): Superior Court of Judicature (consists of the Supreme Court - at the apex - with the chief justice and 4 other judges, the Court of Appeal with the chief justice and 7 other judges, and the High Court of Justice with the chief justice and 9 other judges; note – the Judicature has jurisdiction in all civil, criminal, and constitutional matters

judge selection and term of office: Supreme Court chief justice and other judges of the Judicature appointed by the president on the advice of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission (a 7-member independent body of judges, presidential appointees, and the Commission chairman) and subject to the approval of Parliament; all Judicature judges appointed until retirement at age 65

subordinate courts: magistrates' courts; District Appeals Court; local courts

Political parties and leaders:

All People's Congress or APC [Ernest Bai KOROMA]

Peace and Liberation Party or PLP [Darlington MORRISON]

People's Movement for Democratic Change or PMDC [Charles MARGAI]

Sierra Leone People's Party or SLPP [Julius Maada BIO]

numerous others

Political pressure groups and leaders:

other: student unions; trade unions

International organization participation:

ACP, AfDB, AU, C, ECOWAS, EITI (candidate country), FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO (pending member), ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITU, ITUC (NGOs), MIGA, NAM, OIC, OPCW, UN, UNAMID, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNISFA, UNMIT, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Bockari Kortu STEVENS

chancery: 1701 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009

telephone: [1] (202) 939-9261 through 9263

FAX: [1] (202) 483-1793

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Michael S. OWEN

embassy: Southridge-Hill Station, Freetown

mailing address: use embassy street address

telephone: [232] (76) 515 000 or (76) 515 000

FAX: [232] (76) 515 355

Flag description:

three equal horizontal bands of green (top), white, and blue; green symbolizes agriculture, mountains, and natural resources, white represents unity and justice, and blue the sea and the natural harbor in Freetown

National symbol(s):

lion

National anthem:

name: "High We Exalt Thee, Realm of the Free"

► [PLAY ANTHEM](#)

lyrics/music: Clifford Nelson FYLE/John Joseph AKA

note: adopted 1961

Economy :: **Sierra Leone**

Economy - overview:

Sierra Leone is an extremely poor nation with tremendous inequality in income distribution. While it possesses substantial mineral, agricultural, and fishery resources, its physical and social infrastructure has yet to recover from the civil war, and serious social disorders continue to hamper economic development. Nearly half of the working-age population engages in subsistence agriculture. Manufacturing consists mainly of the processing of raw materials and of light manufacturing for the domestic market. Alluvial diamond mining remains the major source of hard currency earnings, accounting for nearly half of Sierra Leone's exports. The fate of the economy depends upon the maintenance of domestic peace and the continued receipt of substantial aid from abroad, which is essential to offset the severe trade imbalance and supplement government revenues. The IMF completed a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility program that helped stabilize economic growth and reduce inflation and in 2010 approved a new program worth \$45

million over three years. Political stability has led to a revival of economic activity such as the rehabilitation of bauxite and rutile mining, which are set to benefit from planned tax incentives. A number of offshore oil discoveries were announced in 2009 and 2010. The development on these reserves, which could be significant, is still several years away, however, growth skyrocketed to more than 20% in 2012, as exploitation activities began.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$8.412 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 155

\$7.023 billion (2011 est.)

\$6.625 billion (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$3.777 billion (2012 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

19.8% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 2

6% (2011 est.)

5.3% (2010 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$1,400 (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 203

\$1,200 (2011 est.)

\$1,100 (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

Gross national saving:

19.1% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 80

-1% of GDP (2011 est.)

-1.3% of GDP (2010 est.)

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 82.4%

government consumption: 8.8%

investment in fixed capital: 38.9%

investment in inventories: 0%

exports of goods and services: 13.1%

imports of goods and services: -43.1%
(2012 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 51.5%

industry: 14.9%

services: 33.6% (2012 est.)

Agriculture - products:

rice, coffee, cocoa, palm kernels, palm oil, peanuts; poultry, cattle, sheep, pigs; fish

Industries:

diamond mining; small-scale manufacturing (beverages, textiles, cigarettes, footwear); petroleum refining, small commercial ship repair

Industrial production growth rate:

NA%

Labor force:

2.207 million (2007 est.)

country comparison to the world: 118

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: NA%

industry: NA%

services: NA%

Unemployment rate:

NA%

Population below poverty line:

70.2% (2004)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 2.6%

highest 10%: 33.6% (2003)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

62.9 (1989)

country comparison to the world: 4

Budget:

revenues: \$510.2 million

expenditures: \$728.5 million (2012 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

13.5% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 198

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

-5.8% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 174

Public debt:

34.6% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 105

41.1% of GDP (2011 est.)

Fiscal year:

calendar year

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

12.9% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 209

16.2% (2011 est.)

Central bank discount rate:

NA%

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

21% (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

21% (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of narrow money:

\$324.7 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 167

\$276.2 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of broad money:

\$1.152 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 165

\$621.3 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of domestic credit:

\$429.1 million (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 176

\$369.9 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$NA

Current account balance:

-\$969.9 million (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 111

-\$1.153 billion (2011 est.)

Exports:

\$1.104 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 153

\$381.5 million (2011 est.)

Exports - commodities:

diamonds, rutile, cocoa, coffee, fish

Exports - partners:

China 50.5%, Belgium 18%, Japan 7.6%, Turkey 4.8% (2012)

Imports:

\$1.509 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 172

\$1.631 billion (2011 est.)

Imports - commodities:

foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, fuels and lubricants, chemicals

Imports - partners:

China 16.3%, India 10.1%, South Africa 7.1%, US 6.6%, UK 6.6%, Cote d'Ivoire 4.6%, Belgium 4.5% (2012)

Debt - external:

\$1.125 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 158

\$1.049 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:

\$1.644 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 94

\$979.1 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Exchange rates:

leones (SLL) per US dollar -

4,344 (2012 est.)

4,349.2 (2011 est.)

3,978.1 (2010 est.)

Energy:: Sierra Leone

Electricity - production:

120 million kWh (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 191

Electricity - consumption:

111.6 million kWh (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 193

Electricity - exports:

0 kWh (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 128

Electricity - imports:

0 kWh (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 131

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

52,000 kW (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 182

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

92.3% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 72

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 175

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

7.7% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 118

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 185

Crude oil - production:

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 186

Crude oil - exports:

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 182

Crude oil - imports:

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 121

Crude oil - proved reserves:

0 bbl (1 January 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 185

Refined petroleum products - production:

4,381 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 109

**Refined petroleum products -
consumption:**

8,768 bbl/day (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 155

Refined petroleum products - exports:

522.9 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 116

Refined petroleum products - imports:

6,117 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 145

Natural gas - production:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 188

Natural gas - consumption:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 192

Natural gas - exports:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 178

Natural gas - imports:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 128

Natural gas - proved reserves:

0 cu m (1 January 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 190

**Carbon dioxide emissions from
consumption of energy:**

1.335 million Mt (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 159

Telephones - main lines in use:

14,000 (2010)

country comparison to the world: 197

Telephones - mobile cellular:

2.137 million (2011)

country comparison to the world: 139

Telephone system:

general assessment: marginal telephone service with poor infrastructure

domestic: the national microwave radio relay trunk system connects Freetown to Bo and Kenema; while mobile-cellular service is growing rapidly from a small base, service area coverage remains limited

international: country code - 232; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean) (2009)

Broadcast media:

1 government-owned TV station; 1 private TV station began operating in 2005; a pay-TV service began operations in late 2007; 1 government-owned national radio station; about two dozen private radio stations primarily clustered in major cities; transmissions of several international broadcasters are available (2007)

Internet country code:

.sl

Internet hosts:

282 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 191

Internet users:

14,900 (2009)

country comparison to the world: 199

Transportation:: **Sierra Leone**

Airports:

8 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 164

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 1

over 3,047 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 7

914 to 1,523 m: 7 (2013)

Heliports:

2 (2013)

Roadways:

total: 11,300 km

country comparison to the world: 132

paved: 904 km

unpaved: 10,396 km (2002)

Waterways:

800 km (600 km navigable year round) (2011)

country comparison to the world: 72

Merchant marine:

total: 215

country comparison to the world: 34

by type: bulk carrier 22, cargo 120, carrier 2, chemical tanker 19, container 6, liquefied gas 3, passenger/cargo 2, petroleum tanker 28, refrigerated cargo 7, roll on/roll off 4, specialized tanker 1, vehicle carrier 1

foreign-owned: 98 (Bangladesh 1, China 19, Cyprus 2, Egypt 3, Estonia 2, Hong Kong 7, Japan 4, Lebanon 2, North Korea 2, Romania 2, Russia 7, Singapore 9, Syria 13, Taiwan 7, Turkey 9, UAE 1, UK 1, Ukraine 5, Yemen 2) (2010)

Ports and terminals:

Freetown, Pepel, Sherbro Islands

Military branches:

Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF): Army (includes Maritime Wing and Air Wing) (2013)

Military service age and obligation:

18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service (younger with parental consent); women are eligible to serve; no conscription; candidates must be HIV negative (2012)

Manpower available for military service:

males age 16-49: 1,183,093 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 731,898

females age 16-49: 838,032 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

male: 54,212

female: 57,154 (2010 est.)

Military expenditures:

0.6% of GDP (2011)

country comparison to the world: 155

Disputes - international:

as domestic fighting among disparate ethnic groups, rebel groups, warlords, and youth gangs in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone gradually abates, the number of refugees in border areas has begun to slowly dwindle; Sierra Leone considers excessive Guinea's definition of the flood plain limits to define the left bank boundary of the Makona and Moa rivers and protests Guinea's continued occupation of these lands including the hamlet of Yenga occupied since 1998