

SIERRA LEONE

Capital

Freetown

Ethnic Groups

Temne 35.4%, Mende 30.8%, Limba 8.8%, Kono 4.3%, Korankoh 4%, Fullah 3.8%, Mandingo 2.8%, Loko 2%, Sherbro 1.9%, Creole 1.2%, other 5%

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 77.1%, Christian 22.9%

Population

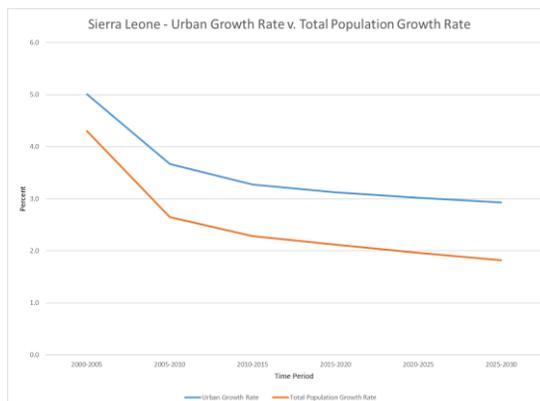
Total: 8.9 million
Median age: 19.1 years
Population growth rate: 2.41%
Urban: 44.3%
Rural 55.7%

Fertility

Birth rate: 31.49 births/1,000 population
Total fertility rate: 3.71 children born/woman
Sex ratio of population: 0.98 male(s)/female

Mortality

Death rate: 9.14 deaths/1,000 population
Life expectancy at birth: 59.07 years
Maternal mortality rate: 1,120 deaths/100,000 live births
Infant mortality rate: 72.3 deaths/1,000 live births



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Migration

Net migration rate: 1.72 migrants/1,000 population

Health

Current health expenditure: 8.8% of GDP

Physician density: 0.07 physicians/1,000 population

Adult obesity: 8.7%

Alcohol consumption per capita: 3.22 liters of pure alcohol

Education

Education expenditures: 9.1% of GDP

Literacy: 43.2%

Population Distribution

population clusters are found in the lower elevations of the south and west; the northern third of the country is less populated

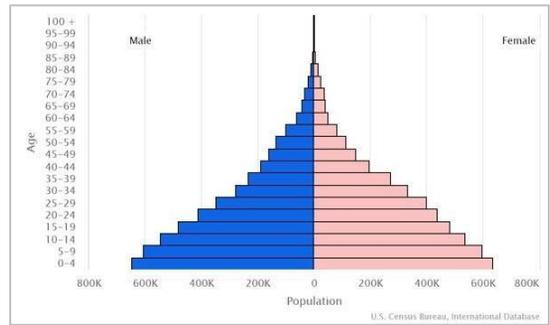
Demographic Profile

Sierra Leone's youthful and growing population is driven by its high total fertility rate (TFR) of almost 4 children per woman as of 2022, which has declined little over the last two decades. Its elevated TFR is sustained by the continued desire for large families, the low level of contraceptive use, and the early start of childbearing. Despite its high TFR, Sierra Leone's population growth is somewhat tempered by high infant, child, and maternal mortality rates that are among the world's highest and are a result of poverty, a lack of potable water and sanitation, poor nutrition, limited access to quality health care services, and the prevalence of female genital cutting.

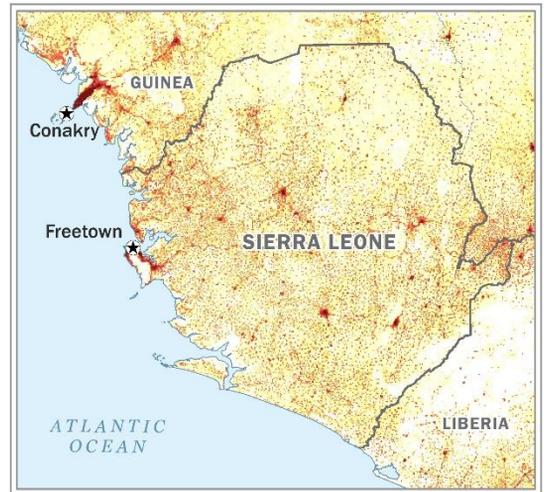
Sierra Leone's large youth cohort – about 60% of the population is under the age of 25 as of 2020 – continues to struggle with high levels of unemployment, which was one of the major causes of the country's 1991-2002 civil war and remains a threat to stability today. Its estimated 60% youth unemployment rate is attributed to high levels of illiteracy and unskilled labor, a lack of private sector jobs, and low pay.

Sierra Leone has been a source of and destination for refugees. Sierra Leone's civil war internally displaced as many as 2 million people, or almost half the population, and forced almost another half million to seek refuge in neighboring countries (370,000 Sierra Leoneans fled to Guinea and 120,000 to Liberia). The UNHCR has helped almost 180,000 Sierra Leoneans to return home, while more than 90,000 others have repatriated on their own. Of the more than 65,000 Liberians who took refuge in Sierra Leone during their country's civil war (1989-2003), about 50,000 have been voluntarily repatriated by the UNHCR and others have returned home independently.

Age Structure



Population Distribution



Population per square kilometer

