

# Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is a country of more than 7 million people located in the west coast of Africa. The majority of the population live in rural areas, roughly 40% is urbanised. Sierra Leone is a multi ethnic society. There are about 18 different ethnic groups; two of the largest ones are the Temne and the Mende. The Temne are generally found in the centre and north west of the country while the Mende can be found in the east and the south.



English is the official language; it is used in the areas of education and commerce. Crio, a language that is a mixture between English and a variety of African languages, is also widely used.



Adult literacy rate of Sierra Leone increased from **34.8 %** in 2004 to **48.4 %** in 2015 growing at an average annual rate of **19.06 %**. Adult (15+) literacy rate (%) is the percentage of the population age 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life.

About 42% of the people are below the age of 14 years old. This young population boom is in part due to the nations' high fertility rate: a woman has an average of 5 children. But women are also dying at a high rate due to childbirth. The nation has one of the highest maternal death rates in the world.



Sierra Leoneans collect most of their drinking water from polluted sources. Pollutants and poor **sanitation** are attributed to some of the health problems in the country. Sierra Leone is one of the toughest countries to survive in. The average **life expectancy** for a Sierra Leonean is only 56 years.

About 78% of the people in Sierra Leone are Muslim; Christians, the next largest religious group accounts for almost 21% of the population. But many people also continue to practise traditional religions, collectively called African Traditional Religion, as well as their Muslim or Christian faith.





The climate is tropical and humid all year. Between November and April, it is very hot and dry, although the coastal areas are cooled by sea breezes. In December and January, the dry, dusty Harmattan

wind blows from the Sahara. Rainfall can be torrential during the rainy **season** between May and November.

Sierra Leone is an extremely poor country, with more than half of its people living below the international poverty line of \$1,25 per day. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, Sierra Leone is



ranked 179 in 2016, which makes it one of the poorest nations. Almost half of those of working age live on subsistent agriculture, but the countries mineral industry plays a major economic role as well. Diamonds and iron are major export.



Overall Sierra Leone economy sees a down fall in 2015 during the 2014/15 Ebola crisis, but in recent years there has been some growth. The future of the economy remains uncertain, giving the shrinking prices of iron around the world.

Now when it is time for a meal, most families prepare their food with wood or charcoal stove, while many in the city use gas. Cassava, okra and beans are extremely popular in the country, but the biggest staple in diet is rice. According to researchers in 2009 just over 200 pound of milled rice were consumed per person per year. Rice is typically eaten multiple times a day, usually served with stews and sauces that can include fish, chicken, pork or goat meat.





We also have to mention that Sierra Leone has suffered due to conflict, violence and disease over the last 2 decades. The impact can still be felt today. The country spiralled into civil war from 1991 to 2002. Tens of thousands civilians died as a results and hundred were subjected to brutal limb amputations as punishments and women were often subject to wide spread sexual abuse. Both sides of this conflict, rebels and government forces, used child soldiers in their fights. And up to a quarter of the population was displaced. In 1999 a cease-fire was brokered and UN troops had been diploid to help keep the peace. The war was not official declared over until 2002. Then in 2014 Sierra Leone was one of the hardest hit countries by the regional Ebola Outbreak. There were over 14000 confirmed cases of the virus and nearly 4000 people died as a direct result of the virus. But many more died due to the non-functioning of the normal health care. And in 2017 deadly mudslides killed hundreds of people and displaced hundreds more.

