

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Republic of Sierra Leone

**CAPITAL:** Freetown

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Multiparty Democracy

**AREA:** 71,740 Sq Km (27,699 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION:** 5,227,800

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** Sierra Leone is located in the southwestern part of West Africa. It is bound by Guinea to the north and northeast, Liberia to the southeast and the

Atlantic Ocean to the south and southwest. The country is divided into four topographical regions. (1.) Interior plateaux and mountains which rise in the east and northeast to form the Tingi Hills and Loma Mountains. The plateaux and mountains account for nearly 50% of the land area. (2.) The interior low plains which are rolling lowlands of swampy grasslands known as Bolilands. (3.) The coastal swamp lands which are located on a plain and consist of numerous peninsulas and estuaries. (4.) The Sierra Leone Peninsula which is a mountainous area with a strip of flat land at the foothill of the mountains. The territory also consists of a number of offshore islands, of which the largest is Sherbro. The country is drained by nine rivers, the Rokel, Gbangbar, Jong, Sewa, Waanje, Great Scarcies, Little Scarcies, Moa and Mano. Major Cities (pop. est.); Freetown 470,000, Bo 26,000, Kenema 13,000, Makeni 12,000 (1985). Land Use; forested 29%, pastures 31%, agricultural-cultivated 7%, other 33% (1993).

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**CLIMATE:** Sierra Leone has a tropical climate with a wet season from May to October and a dry season from November to April. Average annual precipitation varies from 5,080 mm (200 inches) along the coast and decreases inland towards the north to 2,160 mm (86 inches). The prevailing winds are the SW Monsoon during the wet season and the northeastern Harmattan which is a dust laden wind from the Sahara Desert during the dry season. Average temperature ranges in Freetown are from 21 degrees Celsius (73 degrees Fahrenheit) to 31 degrees Celsius (88 degrees Fahrenheit) all year.

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**PEOPLE:** The population consists of 18 ethnic groups, of which the Mende account for 35% of the population, the Temne for 32% and the Limba for 8.4%. Ethnic alien groups include the Lebanese, Indians, French, Germans and Swiss.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 59.4 persons per sq km (153.8 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 32.2% urban, 67.8% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.1% male, 50.9% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 39.4 years male, 42.6 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 41% under 15, 26% 15 to 29, 17% 30 to 44, 10% 45 to 59, 5% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1985). Birth Rate; 48.2 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 23.4 per 1,000 (1990).

Increase Rate; 24.8 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 154.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

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**RELIGIONS:** Around 52% of the population follow local native tribal beliefs while 40% are Sunni Muslims, 5% are Protestant and 2% are Roman Catholic.

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**LANGUAGES:** The official language is English, although it is only used for government, commerce and media purposes. The principal native languages are Krio which is a form of pidgin English mixed with African words as well as Mende, Temne and other local languages.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 5 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 81.3%, primary 12.1%, secondary 5.9%, higher 0.7% (1974). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 478,300 or 20.7% (1990).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** In 1951 Sierra Leone was granted internal self-government and on Apr. 27, 1961 Sierra Leone gained complete independence within the Commonwealth from Britain with Milton Margai as the country's first Prime Minister. In Apr. 1964 Prime Minister Margai died and his half brother, Albert succeeded him. After elections in Mar. 1967 the army overthrew the government and established a National Reformation Council (NRC) which was in turn overthrown in Apr. 1968 and Siaka Stevens, who won the Mar. 1967 elections, was reinstated as Prime Minister. In Mar. 1971 Brig. John Bangura unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the government and in Apr. 1971 Sierra Leone became a republic with Stevens as President. In 1977 there were widespread riots over deteriorating economic conditions and in June 1978 a referendum resulted in the establishment of a single-party system of government in an attempt to quell the ethnic factions. In Aug. 1981 the government declared a State of Emergency to prevent a general strike and in May 1982 during elections around 50 people were killed. In Aug. 1985 Pres. Stevens retired and Gen. Joseph Saidu Momoh was elected President. In Jan. 1987 more demonstrations and protests took place and in Mar. 1987 there was an unsuccessful coup attempt. Subsequently, 14 conspirators were arrested, of which 4 were sentenced to death in Oct. 1987 including the former Vice President, Francis Minah. During 1990 there were calls for a return to a multiparty political system, although these were dismissed by Pres. Momoh. In late 1990 several thousand Liberian refugees fleeing the civil war there, entered the country further straining the deteriorating economy. In 1991 border fighting erupted between government forces and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) as Taylor launched an offensive in an attempt to win control of Sierra Leone's southern diamond producing region. On March 28, 1991 Pres. Momoh announced he would support multiparty politics. By April 1991 the government had sent some 2,000 troops to the region and called on the Nigeria and Guinea who committed troops to assist in putting down the rebellion. In May 1991 fierce fighting had resulted in the death of some 5,000 civilians and

refugees. In Aug. 1991 a referendum approved the return of a multiparty political system and a transitional government was formed in Sept. 1991. On April 30, 1992 a coup by 30 mutinous soldiers led by Capt. Valentine Strasser forced Pres. Momoh into exile. Following the coup Strasser established a National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and demanded back pay and improved conditions. On May 1, 1992 Strasser was appointed chairman of the NPRC and on May 4, 1992 he dissolved the House of Representatives and appointed a Cabinet of 19 including 6 civilians. On July 14, 1992 Strasser announced that the NPRC would become the Supreme Council of State and the Cabinet would become the Council of Secretaries of State. On Dec. 30, 1992 the government executed 26 alleged coup plotters. Also in 1992 the new government announced it would honor Sierra Leone's obligations to the OAS and OCOWAS including its involvement in a peacekeeping force in Liberia. In Jan. 1993 Britain canceled a £ 4 million aid package in protest to the Dec. 1992 executions claiming the alleged coup plotters had not been given a fair trial. On July 5, 1993 Pres. Strasser dismissed Lieut. Solomon Anthony James Musa as head of government and appointed Lieut. Julius Maada Bio to succeed him. On Oct. 14, 1993 a further 4 men were arrested as alleged mercenaries plotting a coup. Also in 1993 the government announced plans to privatise the state-owned National Diamond Mining Co. and to curtail illegal diamond mining in an attempt to raise further revenues.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Leone (Le) divided into 100 Cents.

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$625,500,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$909,000,000 (1994). Imports; Le 84,030,200,000 (1995). Exports; Le 45,216,100,000 (1995). Tourism Receipts; USD \$18,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; Le -9,511,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 1,532,000 or 35.9% of total population (1991). Unemployed; 9.0% (1986).

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partners are the UK, Japan, Germany, Nigeria, China and the Netherlands.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Bauxite, Cassava, Cocoa, Coffee, Fish, Diamonds, Ground Nuts, Iron Ore, Palm Nuts, Rice, Timber.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, Mining.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Bauxite, Cocoa, Coffee, Diamonds, Iron Ore, Palm Kernels.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; None, passenger-km N/A., cargo ton-km N/A. Roads; length 7,500 km (4,660 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 29,012 (1989), trucks and buses 10,173 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 56 (1990), deadweight tonnage 14,717 (1990). Air Transport;

passenger-km 109,903,000 (68,291,000 passenger-mi) (1985), cargo ton-km 2,044,000 (1,400,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 1 with a total circulation of 10,000 (1993). Radio; receivers 1,000,000 (1994). Television; receivers 25,000 (1994). Telephones; units 14,500 (1993).

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**MILITARY:** 6,200 (1995) total active duty personnel with 96.8 army, 3.2% navy and 0.0% air force while military expenditure accounts for 2.2% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).