

Sierra Leone



Indicator	Data
Population, 2019 (no.)	7,813,215
Population density, 2018 (people per sq. km of land area)	105.99
Coastal population, 2014 (no.)	2,887,017
Share of people living in urban areas, 2019 (%)	42.5
Total MSW generated, 2014 (tons/year)	522,707

Socioeconomic Profile

Sierra Leone is a low-income country in West Africa bordered by Guinea and Liberia.¹ Its economy is driven by mining activities, with its principal exports being iron ore, diamonds, and rutile.² The country is divided into four provinces and one administrative area³ and runs a unitary presidential republic system.

In 2019, Sierra Leone's overall GDP (PPP) was approximately \$13.4 billion, with a GDP (PPP) per capita of \$1,718.^{4,5} With an area of 71,740 km², Sierra Leone has a population of 7,813,215 (2019) and a population density of 105.99 people per km² (2018).⁶ According to statistics for 2019, 57.5 percent of Sierra Leone's population resides in rural areas.⁷ Likewise, just under 3 million Sierra Leoneans were found to reside in coastal areas in 2014,⁸ such as its capital city, Freetown.

Plastic Industry and Ecosystem

In 2018 and 2019, Sierra Leone had no domestic resin production. Its conversion industry processed 6 kt of resin (4 kt PE, 2 kt PET) in 2018 and 2019. Sierra Leone is a net importer of plastics. In 2019, 9 million kg of plastics were imported into the country, with PE and PP accounting for about 81.9 percent of the imports.⁹ It relies heavily on Ghana for its plastic imports—92 percent of Sierra Leone's plastic imports

¹ World Bank Group, "Sierra Leone," 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/SL>.

² CIA, *The World Factbook: Sierra Leone: Economy* (Langley, VA: CIA, 2021), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sierra-leone/#economy>.

³ CIA, *The World Factbook: Sierra Leone: Government* (Langley, VA: CIA, 2021), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sierra-leone/#government>.

⁴ GDP, PPP (constant 2017 international dollars) and GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2017 international dollars).

⁵ World Bank Group, "World Development Indicators," 2020.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jambeck et al., "Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean."

⁹ UN Comtrade, "UN Comtrade Database," 2019.

were sourced from Ghana in 2019.¹⁰ Only 23,200 kg of plastics were exported from Sierra Leone that same year, 95.4 percent of which consisted of PE.¹¹

Sierra Leone has a small plastic manufacturing sector, generating 8,750 metric tons of plastic products.¹² Fifty percent of locally manufactured plastic products are classed as PE products.¹³ As a formal plastics recycling sector is nonexistent in Sierra Leone, the informal sector is primarily responsible for the recovery of plastic waste.¹⁴

Solid Waste Management

Sierra Leone generates 0.45 kg of MSW per capita per day and this amounts to an overall daily MSW generation of 1.3 million kg.¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that about 83.8 percent of MSW generated in Sierra Leone is inadequately managed.¹⁶

Plastic waste accounts for just below 9 percent of MSW arisings, with a daily generation rate of about 116,000 kg, of which 83.8 percent is inadequately managed;¹⁷ 2,325 kg/day of plastic waste leaks into the environment in Sierra Leone.¹⁸

Legislation, Policies, and Other Initiatives

The government ministry responsible for municipal waste management is Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health and Sanitation, through its Directorate of Environmental Health and Sanitation.¹⁹ Though the Sierra Leonean government is yet to introduce a law dealing specifically with MSW, it produced the National Environmental Health and Sanitation Strategy. This policy document highlights the proposed actions and activities for enhancing waste management in Sierra Leone, including specific strategies for promoting reuse and recycling.²⁰

¹⁰ Anteja, "Sierra Leone Circular Economy in Plastics for Sustainable Tourism and Economic Diversification," 2021, <https://anteja-ecg.com/portfolio-items/accelerating-sierra-leones-circular-economy-in-plastics-for-sustainable-tourism-and-economic-diversification/>.

¹¹ UN Comtrade, "UN Comtrade Database," 2019.

¹² Anteja, "Sierra Leone Circular Economy in Plastics."

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jambeck et al., "Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean."

¹⁶ Ibid.

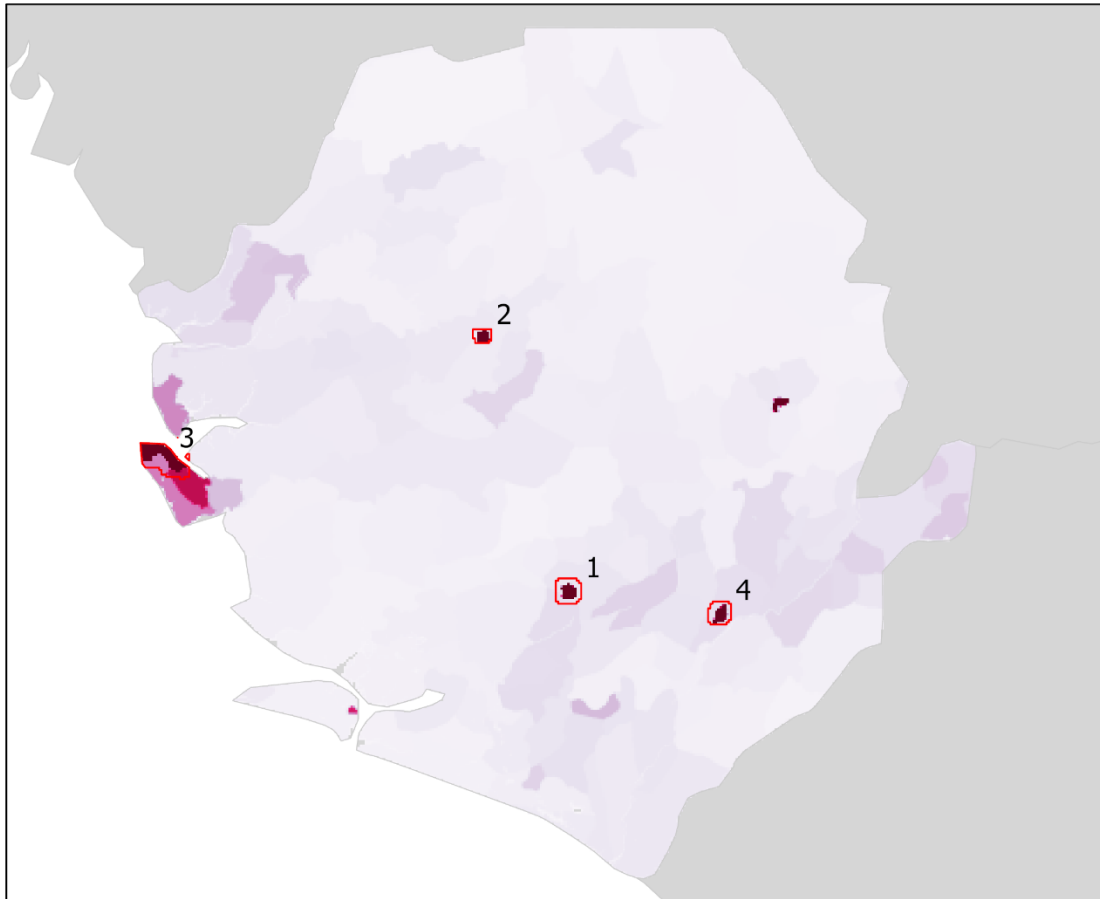
¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, *Draft—National Environmental Health and Sanitation Strategy: 2015–2020* (Freetown, Republic of Sierra Leone: Ministry of Health and Sanitation, 2017), <https://mohs2017.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/national-environmental-health-and-sanitation-strategy-2015-2020-draft.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid.

Plastic Waste in Sierra Leone

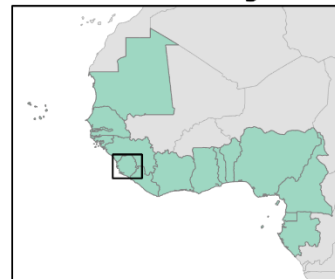


Plastic Generation Hotspots

ID	Locale	Rank	Plastic Waste (kt)	Population	Area (km ²)
1	Bo	46	2.5005	256,325	102.13
2	Makeni	56	1.0558	108,225	40.68
3	Freetown	29	11.1131	1,139,197	189.65
4	Kenema	48	1.8927	194,015	81.87

Total Annual National Plastic Waste Generation: 67.85 kt

Location in Region



Annual Plastic Waste (kg/km²)



Hotspot Extent

