

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.) ²⁹⁶	2,887,017
Share of people living in urban areas, 2019 (%)	42.5
Total MSW generated, 2016 (tons/year) ²⁹⁷	610,222

Socioeconomic Profile

Sierra Leone is a low-income country in West Africa bordered by Guinea and Liberia.²⁹⁸ Its economy is driven by mining activities, with its principal exports being iron ore, diamonds, and rutile.²⁹⁹ The country is divided into four provinces and one administrative area³⁰⁰ and runs a unitary presidential republic system.

In 2019, Sierra Leone's overall GDP (purchasing power parity) was approximately \$13.4 billion, with a GDP (purchasing power parity) per capita of \$1,718.^{301, 302} 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).³⁰³ According to statistics for 2019, 57.5 percent of Sierra Leone's population resides in rural areas.³⁰⁴ Likewise, just under 3 million Sierra Leoneans were found to reside in coastal areas in 2014,³⁰⁵ such as its capital city, Freetown.

Plastic Industry and Ecosystem

²⁹⁶ Jambeck et al., "Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean."

²⁹⁷ Kaza, Silpa, Lisa Yao, Perinaz Bhada-Tata, and Frank Van Woerden. 2018. What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050. Urban Development Series. Washington, DC: World Bank

²⁹⁸ World Bank Group, "Sierra Leone," 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/SL>.

²⁹⁹ CIA, *The World Factbook: Sierra Leone: Economy* (Langley, VA: CIA, 2021), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sierra-leone/#economy>.

³⁰⁰ CIA, *The World Factbook: Sierra Leone: Government* (Langley, VA: CIA, 2021), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sierra-leone/#government>.

³⁰¹ GDP, PPP (constant 2017 international dollars) and GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2017 international dollars).

³⁰² World Bank Group, "World Development Indicators," 2020.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Jambeck et al., "Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean."

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.³⁰⁶ It relies heavily on Ghana for its plastic imports—92 percent of Sierra Leone’s plastic imports were sourced from Ghana in 2019.³⁰⁷ Only 23,200 kg of plastics were exported from Sierra Leone that same year, 95.4 percent of which consisted of PE.³⁰⁸

Sierra Leone has a small plastic manufacturing sector, generating 8,750 metric tons of plastic products.³⁰⁹ Fifty percent of locally manufactured plastic products are classed as PE products.³¹⁰ As a formal plastics recycling sector is nonexistent in Sierra Leone, the informal sector is primarily responsible for the recovery of plastic waste.³¹¹

Solid Waste Management

Sierra Leone generates 0.31 kg of MSW per capita per day and this amounts to an overall daily MSW generation of 1.7 million kg.³¹² It should be noted, however, that about 83.8 percent of MSW generated in Sierra Leone is inadequately managed.³¹³ Plastic waste accounts for just below 9 percent of MSW arisings³¹⁴, with a daily generation rate of about 186,000 kg.

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.³¹⁵ 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.³¹⁶

³⁰⁶ UN Comtrade, “UN Comtrade Database,” 2019.

³⁰⁷ 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/>.

³⁰⁸ UN Comtrade, “UN Comtrade Database,” 2019.

³⁰⁹ Anteja, “Sierra Leone Circular Economy in Plastics.”

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Kaza, Silpa, Lisa Yao, Perinaz Bhada-Tata, and Frank Van Woerden. 2018. *What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050*. Urban Development Series. Washington, DC: World Bank

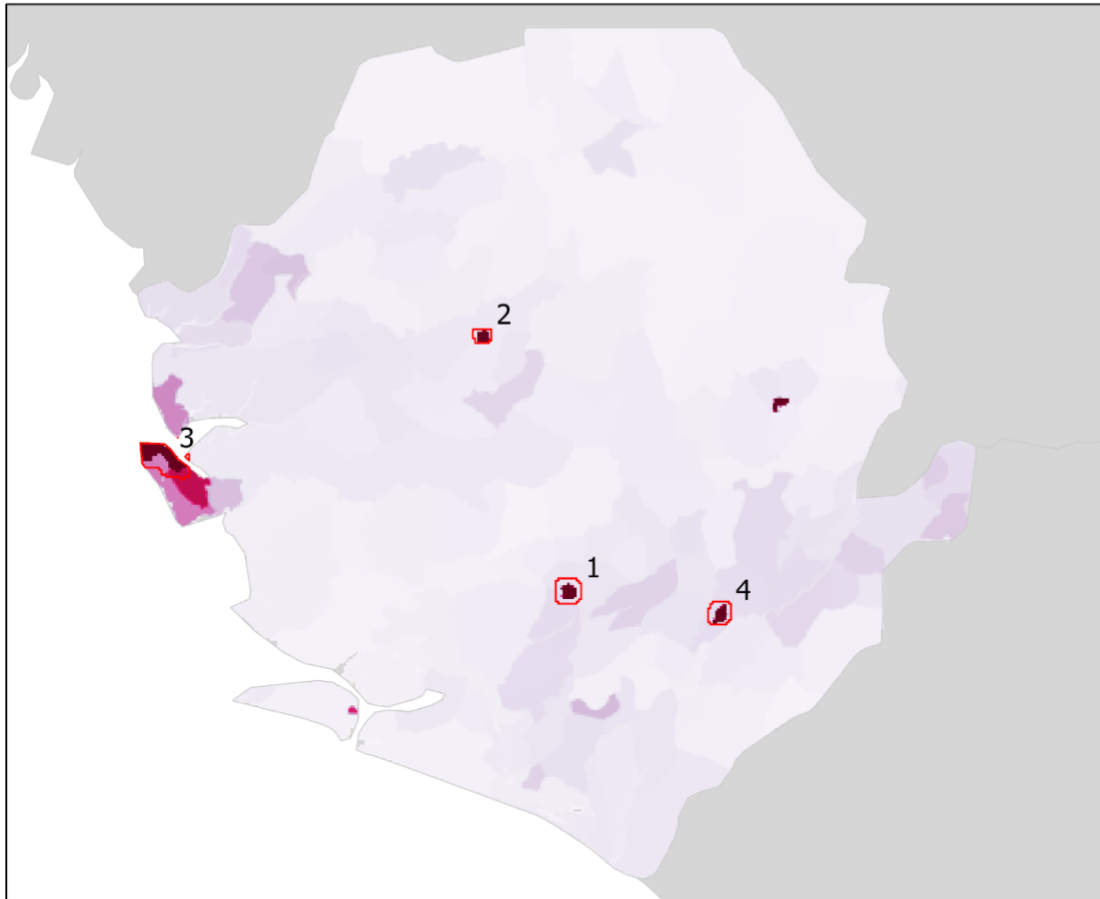
³¹³ Jambeck et al., “Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean.”

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ 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>.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Plastic Waste in Sierra Leone

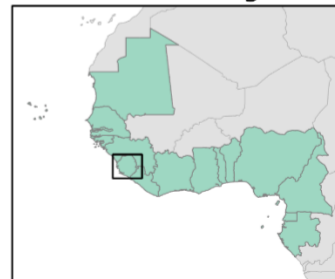


Plastic Generation Hotspots

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

