

# Sierra Leone



## COUNTRY FACTS:

**Capital:** Freetown

**Population:** 5,245,695

**Area, sq. mi.:** 27,699

**Real GDP per capita:** 900

**Adult literacy rate:** 47% (male); 24% (female)

**Ethnic make-up:** Temne 35%, Mende 31%, Limba 8%, Kono 5%, Krio 2% (descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area in the late-18th century; also known as Krio), Mandingo 2%, Loko 2%, other 15% (includes refugees from Liberia's recent civil war, and small numbers of Europeans, Lebanese, Pakistanis, and Indians)

**Religion:** Muslim 60%, Christian 10%, indigenous beliefs 30%

## School Classes

In Sierra Leone, students are evaluated on daily homework, class participation, and periodic written exams. To maintain a good grade, students must turn in daily homework, participate in class regularly and perform well on exams. In Sierra Leone, students remain in one classroom while teachers rotate. There are mixed schools and schools for just boys and just girls in Sierra Leone. In co-ed schools, boys and girls may be seated next to each other.

## School Relationships

Sierra Leonean culture does not allow younger people to call elders by their first names and students call their teachers by their last names with a formal title.

## Extracurricular Activities

In Sierra Leone, most parents do not want their kids to be involved in extra-curricular activities because they believe extra activities are distractions to students. Most students normally play football, music and other extracurricular activities without the knowledge of their parents.

## School Rules

Sierra Leone high schools have a "zero tolerance" policy regarding cell phone usage, and fighting. These activities are generally not allowed at all in school and the penalties for engaging in them are often severe. All students in Sierra Leone wear a uniform with black or brown shoes and white socks to school.

## Family Life

In Sierra Leone the typical household encompasses the extended family, with parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all living in one home. One of the parents will have responsibility for their family financially, and it could be the mother or father. In Sierra Leone, men are the dominant figures in the home and may make decisions without the knowledge of the wife. In Sierra Leone every individual eats their meals on their own time and most houses do not have dining area. It is not common in Sierra Leone to allow family members to regular, individual time by themselves, to pursue their own activities, socialize with friends or to simply relax. Time is typically spent all together as a family and there is very little time spent alone.

## Teen Life

Most children in Sierra Leone do not have access to a computer, even at school. If anyone would like to borrow anything from someone permission must be given first. Teenagers in Sierra Leone are largely dependent upon their parents. Teenagers do not get allowances from their parents nor do they do part time jobs. Sierra Leonean students interact more with their mothers and rarely sit and talk with their fathers.

## Responsibilities

It is not common in Sierra Leone to have housekeepers. Typically the mother is responsible for housekeeping. In Sierra Leone it is common for female teenagers to cook for themselves and their families but not common for male teenagers to cook. Sierra Leonean students are expected to be responsible for studying, attending school and looking after their clothes.

## Parental Involvement

Many Sierra Leonean parents are in direct contact with their children's school and are kept aware of their academic progress.

## Pets

Generally people in Sierra Leone do not have pets at home, especially cats. Some families keep dogs, but they are not allowed inside the home.

## ***Personal Interactions***

### ***Mixed Gender Socializing***

Culturally in Sierra Leone teenage boys and girls are allowed to socialize together in groups, but seldom one-on-one.

### ***Friendships***

Sierra Leonean students socialize in groups and sometimes one-on-one. They make most of their friends in school, through activities and from family or neighborhood connections. It is uncommon for Sierra Leonean teenagers to share money with each other, they may share food. In Sierra Leone, friendship means someone teens feel confident with at all times and whom they trust deeply.

### ***Eye Contact***

In Sierra Leone it is not culturally acceptable to make eye contact with elders when they are talking, as a sign of respect.

### ***Cultural Norms***

Sierra Leonean teenagers show negative emotions quite freely amongst their peers but not amongst family. Direct communication is shared only between close friends. Family time is most important and personal space or time for individual pursuits is rare.

### ***Personal Hygiene***

In Sierra Leone teens shower twice a day. It is generally thought to be unclean in Sierra Leone to wear the same clothes two days in a row or to wear them twice without washing. In Sierra Leone teenagers change their clothes immediately they get home from school or formal event. Sierra Leone teenagers are expected to keep their bathrooms clean after using them. Many Sierra Leonean teenagers have only one towel to dry their body, face and hands.

### ***Religion***

Attending religious services is often a family and community affair. Muslims go to pray as a large group in open fields, share food with friends and families and visit each other.

### ***Holidays***

Christmas, New Year, Easter, Ramadan, Eid al Fitr, Independence Day