

# Sierra Leone

## *Ethnicity in Sierra Leone*

### *Group selection*

The Susu, Loko, Sherbo, Kissi and Koranko groups are not listed here because at the national level, they are not politically relevant as individual groups but rather subsumed under the larger ethnic identities like Temne or Mende (<sup>2943</sup>).

<sup>2943</sup> [Kandeh, 1992]

According to the Encyclopedia of the Nations (<sup>2944</sup>), both the Mende population and the Temne groups make up about 30% of Sierra Leone's population.

<sup>2944</sup> [Sierra Leone, 2014]

There is contradictory information concerning the size of the Creole group from the Encyclopedia of the Nations and the CIA World Factbook (10% vs 2%). Other sources (Wikipedia etc.) either reproduce these data or give an absolute number of Creole people (about 60'000). As a consequence, it appears reasonable to opt for Fearon's (<sup>2945</sup>) number that lies exactly in the middle (6%).

<sup>2945</sup> [Fearon, 2003]

The analysis also relied on Fearon's (2003) number for the size of the Kono ethnic group (rounded up to the next half percentage point).

### *Power relations*

*1961-1963: From independence to the death of Milton Margai, the country's first president.* Early dominance by the Southern Mende group. Sierra Leone's oldest political party, the SLPP, which also becomes the governing party after independence, is a Mende-based party (<sup>2946</sup>; <sup>2947</sup>; <sup>2948</sup>). However, its leadership in the first years is ethnically quite diverse (<sup>2949</sup>), and the country's first president, Milton Margai (a Mende) of the SLPP, forms a coalition government, co-opting and including Temne and other Northern leaders into the cabinet (<sup>2950</sup>). Also the Creole group, the political elite of the colonial period, is well-represented in the government (<sup>2951</sup>).

<sup>2946</sup> [Davies, 2002]

<sup>2947</sup> [Kandeh, 1992]

<sup>2948</sup> [Keen, 2003]

<sup>2949</sup> [Hayward, 1984]

<sup>2950</sup> [Kandeh, 1992]

Note that during these first two periods of Mende leadership/dominance, no separate ethno-political identities of the Limba and Temne groups developed. There was, however, a joint northern feeling of relative deprivation and underrepresentation (<sup>2952</sup>). This is why the Temne and Limba groups were combined to one politically relevant group during the first two periods.

<sup>2952</sup> [Kandeh, 1992]

Hence, the Mende are coded as "senior partner", and the combined northern group (Temne and Limba) and the Creole as "junior partners" in a power-sharing regime.

On the contrary, no Kono leader is included in the government, which leads to sentiments of marginalization among this group (2953). Already in the 1950s, the Kono Progressive Movement (KPM) was formed as a political vehicle to pursue the interests of the Kono region. The party made demands for a fair return from the diamond wealth of the region that was exploited by a foreign company with the help of the central government, but also for the economic and infrastructural development of the region, for a solution to the situation of lawlessness caused by the massive influx of foreign diamond diggers, and more generally for the recognition of the rights of the Kono people. Although the party was not restricted to a particular ethnic group, it also raised concerns about the disadvantages faced by the Kono group itself. Overall, the Kono people saw themselves insufficiently benefiting from and even harmed by the diamond mining in their district (2954, 2955). Despite winning several parliamentary seats and the fusion with a small Freetown party, the party did not have any influence in the central government and soon came into open conflict with the ruling SLPP (2956, 2957). Thus the Kono group as was coded as being "powerless" in this period.

2953 [Kandeh, 1992]

2954 [Hayward, 1972]

2955 [Minkin, 1973]

2956 [Hayward, 1972]

2957 [Minkin, 1973]

*1965-1967: Albert Margai's rule from 1964 to 1967.* Ethnic favoritism in the cabinet and civil service aggravates under Albert Margai (2958; 2959). Northern elites defect from the governing SLPP (2960), and the northern representation in the government is cut in half, accounting for only 2 out of 14 cabinet members in 1964 (2961). A tendency of "ethnic chauvinism" by the Mende president can be observed (2962), and Sierra Leone's society becomes more ethnically polarized while the northern groups become increasingly alienated from the SLPP (2963). Also the army is getting politicized with a Mende-dominated officer corps (2964; 2965; 2966). Therefore, in this second period, the Mende were coded as being "dominant", and the northern groups as "powerless".

2958 [Hayward, 1984]

2959 [Kandeh, 1992]

2960 [Kandeh, 1998]

2961 [Kandeh, 1998]

2962 [Kandeh, 1998]

The situation of the Kono group becomes even worse under Albert Margai. Foundation of a new Kono party (DPC), collaborating with the opposition APC (2967). Thus, the Kono are still coded as "powerless".

2967 [Hayward, 1972]

Under Albert Margai, also the colonial rivalry between the Creole and the SLPP resurges. The SLPP regime breaks up the Creole domination within the civil service. As a result, the Creole elite becomes disaffected and begins to support the opposition party APC (2968). Therefore, the Creole group was also coded as "powerless" during this period.

2968 [Davies, 2002]

*1968-1992: Siaka Stevens' rise to power and the APC rule* Since EPR focuses on the main ethno-political changes, the short-lived alterations in the course of the subsequent military coups after the 1967 elections are disregarded here. Thus, the new period starts in 1968.

The northern groups now dominate the government and the army (2969; 2970; 2971). At the same time, however, as political power is concentrated among these northern groups (especially during the APC one-party rule after 1978), there is a growing consciousness of intra-northern ethnic distinctions, and separate ethno-political identities begin to develop, especially among the Temne and Limba groups (2972). This is why the two groups are listed as two separate politically relevant ethnic groups in this period.

The APC, the new dominant party after its victory in the 1967 elections, is a northern party, founded as an alternative to the Mende-dominated SLPP (2973; 2974; 2975). The Temne form a clear majority in the cabinet, but the Limba hold key posts and increasingly dominate the inner circles of political power (2976). Also, both presidents of this period, Stevens and his handpicked successor Momoh, are Limba. Especially under Momoh, Ekutay - a Limba association - becomes a major political force. President Momoh, the chief of police, the commander of the armed forces, the minister of trade and industry, and the party affairs minister are all members of this association (2977; 2978; 2979; 2980). Scholars speak of a "Limbazation" of the state apparatus and the security forces, beginning in the Stevens era, culminating under Momoh, and resulting in greater access to the state and its resources for Limba elites as the most powerful positions in the cabinet are held by Limbas (2981; 2982; 2983).

Thus, the Limba group is coded as "senior partner", and the Temne as "junior partner" in a mainly northern-based power-sharing regime. Yet, also the Creole group is well-represented in the government in this period (especially compared to their tiny share of the whole population) (2984), as Creole elites collaborate politically with the APC (2985). Hence: The Creole group is also coded as "junior partner" again.

The SLPP opposition is harassed by the army and the police (2986; 2987), and the Mende people feel deprived of power (2988). The SLPP sees itself forced to withdraw from the 1973 elections, leaving the APC unopposed, and in 1978 a one-party state is established legally ruling out any (SLPP-)opposition (autociteHayward1984). Particularly the southern region, but also the eastern region, are targets of state violence and, moreover, deprived of developmental efforts and welfare provision (2989; 2990). Some scholars have argued that for these reasons, elements of the SLPP supported the RUF in the early part of its rebellion (in 1991) by mobilizing young combatants in the Mende heartland (where the war actually started). Yet, this support came to an end when the APC regime was overthrown (see e.g. 2991).

2969 [Kandeh, 1992]

2970 [Kandeh, 1998]

2971 [Keen, 2003]

2972 [Kandeh, 1992]

2973 [Hayward, 1984]

2974 [Kandeh, 1992]

2975 [Ndumbe, 2001]

2976 [Kandeh, 1992]

2977 [Kandeh, 1992]

2984 [Kandeh, 1992]

2985 [Hayward, 1984]

2986 [Hayward, 1984]

2987 [Zack-Williams, 1999]

2988 [Zack-Williams, 1999]

2989 [Davies, 2002]

2990 [Zack-Williams, 1999]

It seems that the political discrimination aimed more at the SLPP party elite (although they were mostly Mende, too) than the Mende people as a whole. There were also some Mende members in the cabinet during APC rule (2992). Therefore the whole group was not as "discriminated". However, given their clear political marginalization and the repression of "their" party, the SLPP, the Mende have to be seen as "powerless" during this period.

2992 [Kandeh, 1992]

Despite its earlier collaboration with the party in removing the ruling SLPP, also the Kono group is affected by the APC's subsequent repressive rule and illegal exploitation of diamonds (and other natural resources) in the Kono heartland (2993; Hayward 1984; 2994; 2995; 2996). Members of the Kono group become increasingly alienated from their parliamentary representatives (2997). Therefore the Kono were coded as "powerless" during this period as well.

2993 [Davies, 2002]

2994 [Kpundeh, 1994]

2995 [Ndumbe, 2001]

2996 [Zack-Williams, 1999]

2997 [Kandeh, 1992]

*1993-1996: Military coup and NPRC rule* President Momoh is ousted by young army officers in April 1992, and a military National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), headed by Capt. Valentine Strasser, takes over power. The constitution is suspended, and all political parties and activities are banned (2998). (Note that due to EPR's January-1st-rule, the new period is coded as starting in 1993.)

2998 [Kandeh, 1998]

Meanwhile, the civil war - started in 1991 by the RUF - continues, as Strasser does not achieve to defeat the rebels despite his hiring of the South-African mercenary firm Executive Outcomes.

Mende perceptions of a northern-dominated army led to the formation of the Kamajors, a Mende civil defense militia. Because of their military success against the RUF, the Kamajors' influence increased considerably over the years (2999; 3000). There is information that Strasser favored the Mende over other ethnic groups in both the government and the military. However, this seems highly doubtful to me, especially what regards the situation in the military after the Stevens and Momoh era which is commonly said to have been rather northern-dominated (see e.g. 3001). Furthermore, the RUF rebels apparently did not hail from any specific ethnic group (3002). Overall, the situation becomes extremely nebulous during this period as different armed forces (NPRC, RUF, Kamajors) autonomously control different parts of the war-torn country. Thus, this period is coded as "state collapse" here (meaning that all groups are coded as "irrelevant").

2999 [Keen, 2003]

3000 [Zack-Williams, 1999]

3001 [Keen, 2003]

3002 [Zack-Williams, 1999]

*1997-1997: Short interlude of order and democracy.* The SLPP wins the 1996 general elections, and its candidate Kabbah is elected president.

Although Kabbah is a Mandingo, as the SLPP candidate (and a protege of Albert Margai) he is considered a representative of the southern and eastern groups (mainly the Mende) <sup>(3003)</sup>. The SLPP itself is still a Mende-dominated party and also draws its support in both elections predominantly from the southern and eastern regions, while remaining very weak in the north <sup>(3004)</sup>. The Mende become the dominant group again during this short period, after winning both the presidential and the parliamentary elections. As a result, the Mende militia, the Kamajors, now becomes an extremely influential security force in the country, a sort of an ethnic praetorian guard for the president, protecting the economic and political interests of the Mende elite, and entering in competition with Sierra Leone's regular army <sup>(3005; 3006)</sup>. (The RUF uses this situation in turn as a justifying reason for its rebellion, claiming to fight Mende hegemony in politics <sup>(3007)</sup>.)

However, Kabbah forms a National Coalition Government after coming to power that includes the major parties in parliament <sup>(3008)</sup>. These parties are mainly the ones representing the north (UNPP, PDP, and APC) <sup>(3009)</sup>. Therefore the Mende were coded as "senior partner" and the northern groups as "junior partner". In times of Mende domination, the Limba and Temne groups again are more relevant as a combined identity category of northerners rather than as separate ethnic groups.

The DCP, the party representing the Kono group's interests (or at least the interests of the Kono elite), fails to win a single parliamentary seat <sup>(3010)</sup>. Hence, the Kono group remains politically marginalized and is coded as "powerless".

There was no evidence of any political relevance of the Creole during this period. They were thus marked as "irrelevant".

*1998-2002:* Kabbah's government is removed from power in a new military coup by the armed forces in May 1997. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) is established as the new government, and Major Johnny Paul Koroma invites the RUF to join his government. (Note again that due to EPR's January-1st-rule the new period is coded as starting in 1998.)

The civil war reaches its peak in 1997-1998 <sup>(3011)</sup>, which leads to the total breakdown of all institutions of the state and the functioning of the government <sup>(3012)</sup>. The government even lacks an official army after 1998, being completely dependent on foreign peacekeepers and local militias <sup>(3013)</sup>. Although Kabbah is reinstalled by ECOMOG forces in March 1998, the civil war continues, with rebels reentering the capital Freetown in January 1999. Several peace accords are ignored, and even the (small) UN mission is not able to compel their implementation. The dramatic increase of warring parties and the shifting alliances completely blur the picture of who holds po-

<sup>3003</sup> [Kandeh, 1998]

<sup>3004</sup> [Kandeh, 1998]

<sup>3005</sup> [Keen, 2003]

<sup>3006</sup> [Zack-Williams, 1999]

<sup>3007</sup> [Keen, 2003]

<sup>3008</sup> [Zack-Williams, 1999]

<sup>3009</sup> [Kandeh, 1998]

<sup>3010</sup> [Kandeh, 1998]

<sup>3011</sup> [Ducasse-Rogier, 2004]

<sup>3012</sup> [Ndumbe, 2001]

<sup>3013</sup> [Ducasse-Rogier, 2004]

litical power (<sup>3014</sup>). Due to the virtual loss of control by the central government and the totally nebulous situation regarding political power during this period of intensified civil war, this period is again coded as state collapse here (meaning that all groups are coded as "irrelevant").

A ceasefire is finally achieved in November 2000, with the disarmament process starting in May 2001, and an official end to the conflict being declared in January 2002.

*2003-2005:* The long-standing ethno-regional divisions in Sierra Leonian politics resurface in the context of the 2002 general elections held in May. The SLPP remains mainly based in the south and east while the APC draws its support from the north (<sup>3015</sup>; <sup>3016</sup>).

The SLPP wins a clear majority and Kabbah is reelected. In the cabinet, only the SLPP is represented (<sup>3017</sup>). This leads to a sense of marginalization among the northern Temne and Limba groups (<sup>3018</sup>, 12).

Therefore, the Mende group was coded as "dominant", and the northern groups and the Kono as "powerless" during this period.

No evidence of political relevance of Creole; therefore coded as "irrelevant".

*2006-2007:* Second part of Kabbah's and the SLPP's rule (until the August/September 2007 elections).

In 2006 (but not before), the U.S. State Department Human Rights Report notes that the country's ethnic groups are well represented in the SLPP government (with Temne cabinet ministers even outnumbering Mende ministers in 2006) (<sup>3019</sup>). Thus, the last two calendar years of SLPP rule are coded as a power-sharing arrangement. Although Kabbah is a Mandingo, and not a Mende, the Mende can be considered as "senior partner" since the SLPP is still clearly rooted in the Mende south and east (<sup>3020</sup>). Accordingly, the northern groups - again combined to one politically relevant group during "southern rule" - are coded as "junior partner", as well as the Kono group (although this coding is a little more doubtful).

There was no evidence of any renewed political relevance of the Creole minority, so they remain coded as "irrelevant".

*2008-2009:* Ernest Bai Koroma is elected president in Sierra Leone's 2007 elections and inaugurated in mid-September 2007, becoming the country's first president of Temne origin. His rival in the run-off election was Solomon Berewa, a Mende and Kabbah's hand-picked SLPP candidate.

Under "northern rule" - analogous to the codings in previous periods - the Temne and Limba groups are coded as separate politically relevant ethnic groups again.

Koroma's vice-president is Samuel Sam-Sumana from the Kono group. And according to the U.S. State Department Human Rights Report of 2007 (<sup>3021</sup>), Koroma's new government also included mem-

<sup>3014</sup> [Ducasse-Rogier, 2004]

<sup>3015</sup> [Davies, 2002]

<sup>3016</sup> [Keen, 2003]

<sup>3017</sup> [United States Government State Department, 2002]

<sup>3018</sup> [Davies, 2002]

<sup>3019</sup> [United States Government State Department, 2006]

<sup>3020</sup> [Kandeh, 2008]

<sup>3021</sup> [United States Government State Department, 2007]

bers of the Mende and Limba groups, although the Temne were clearly overrepresented with 12 out of 20 ministers (apart from president and vice-president). Successive governments seem to have remained ethnically inclusive (autociteUSStateDepartment). Note that Koroma's APC party also went into an alliance with the new PMDC in order to win the run-off presidential election of 2007. The PMDC - whose leader Charles Margai is former president Albert Margai's son - is a southern-based party composed of disaffected former SLPP members and supporters (and thus clearly Mende based) (<sup>3022</sup>). After the election, the PMDC was rewarded for its support by Koroma with 4 ministerial appointments (<sup>3023</sup>). This also points to a power-sharing arrangement between north and south.

Therefore, the Temne were coded as "senior partner", and the Mende, Limba and Kono groups as "junior partners" in this period. Again, no evidence of renewed political relevance of the Creole group.

2010-2012

Ernest Bai Koroma stayed in power together with his junior partner PMDC. Thus, the overall assessment with regard to the power constellations does not change from the previous period.

2013

In 2012, E- B- Koroma was reelected, in elections considered to be free and fair (<sup>3024</sup>). PMDC lost many votes in the parliamentary elections in 2012 and did not enter the Parliament subsequently. As the parliament was only made up of the APC (Limba and Temne-based) and the SLPP (Mende-based) which are competing along ethnic lines (<sup>3025</sup>) and Koroma is member of the APC, the Temne were coded as "senior partner" and the Limba as "junior partner", whereas the Mende are coded as being "excluded" from government. This coding decision is supported by data on individual ministers - of the 13 members of the cabinet ethnic information is available on Wikipedia (<sup>3026</sup>), only one is reported to belong to the Mende group. Samuel Sam-Sumana, the Vice-President is a Kono; therefore the Kono were coded as being a "junior partner".

There is still no evidence of the Creole people being politically relevant in Sierra Leone.

<sup>3022</sup> [Kandeh, 2008]

<sup>3023</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2008, 4]

<sup>3024</sup> [United States Government State Department, 2012]

<sup>3025</sup> [Bertelsmann, 2014]

<sup>3026</sup> [Sierra Leone Cabinets, 2014]



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## Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone

*From 1961 until 1964*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0.38	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mende	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Creole	0.06	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kono	0.04	POWERLESS

*From 1965 until 1967*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0.38	POWERLESS
Mende	0.3	DOMINANT
Creole	0.06	POWERLESS
Kono	0.04	POWERLESS

*From 1968 until 1992*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Temne	0.3	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mende	0.3	POWERLESS
Limba	0.08	SENIOR PARTNER
Creole	0.06	JUNIOR PARTNER
Kono	0.04	POWERLESS



Figure 654: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1961-1964.

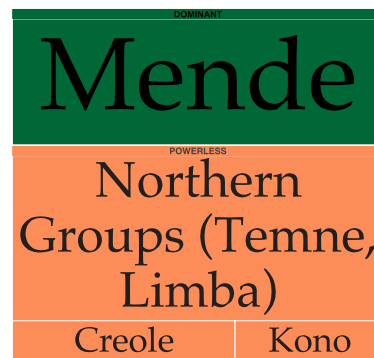


Figure 655: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1965-1967.

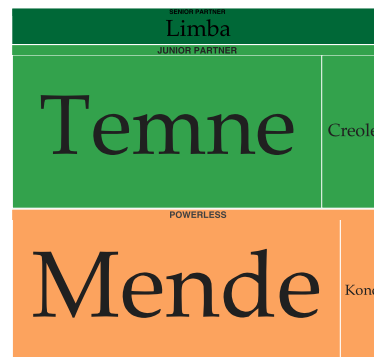


Figure 656: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1968-1992.

*From 1993 until 1996*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Mende	0.3	STATE COLLAPSE
Temne	0.3	STATE COLLAPSE
Limba	0.08	STATE COLLAPSE
Creole	0.06	STATE COLLAPSE
Kono	0.04	STATE COLLAPSE

*From 1997 until 1997*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0.38	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mende	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Creole	0.06	IRRELEVANT
Kono	0.04	POWERLESS

*From 1998 until 2001*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0.38	STATE COLLAPSE
Mende	0.3	STATE COLLAPSE
Creole	0.06	STATE COLLAPSE
Kono	0.04	STATE COLLAPSE

*From 2002 until 2005*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0.38	POWERLESS
Mende	0.3	DOMINANT
Creole	0.06	IRRELEVANT
Kono	0.04	POWERLESS

*From 2006 until 2007*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0.38	JUNIOR PARTNER
Mende	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Creole	0.06	IRRELEVANT
Kono	0.04	JUNIOR PARTNER

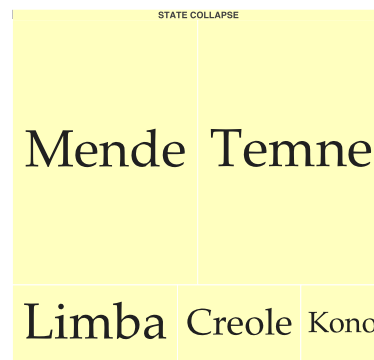


Figure 657: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1993-1996.

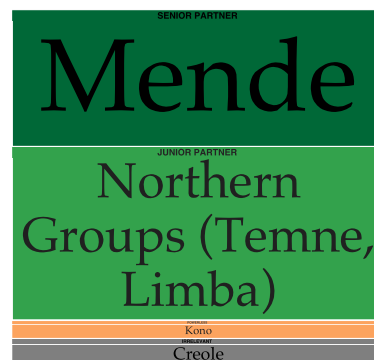


Figure 658: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1997-1997.

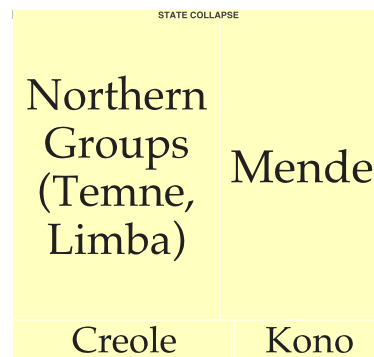


Figure 659: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1998-2001.

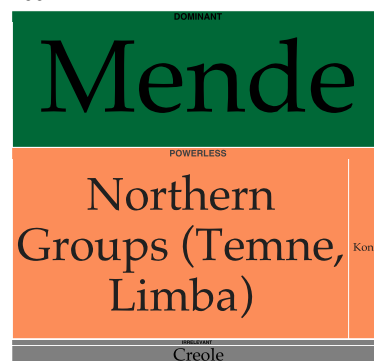


Figure 660: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2002-2005.



*From 2008 until 2012*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Temne	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Mende	0.3	JUNIOR PARTNER
Limba	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Creole	0.06	IRRELEVANT
Kono	0.04	JUNIOR PARTNER

*From 2013 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Temne	0.3	SENIOR PARTNER
Mende	0.3	POWERLESS
Limba	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Creole	0.06	IRRELEVANT
Kono	0.04	JUNIOR PARTNER

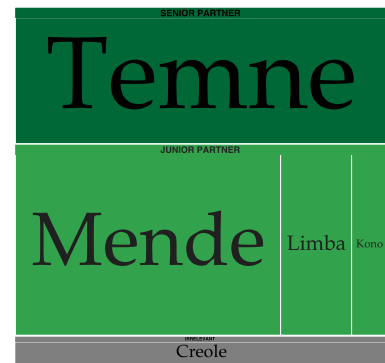


Figure 662: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2008-2012.

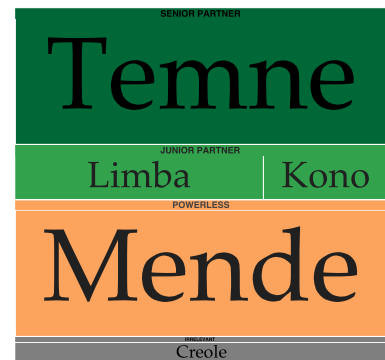


Figure 663: Political status of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2013-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone*

*From 1961 until 1967*

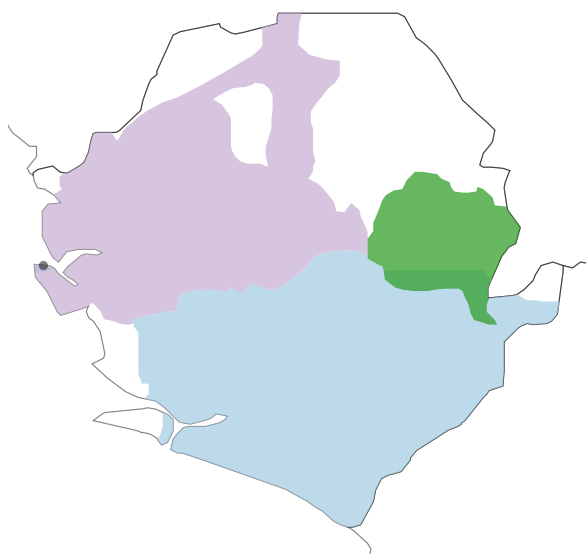


Figure 664: Map of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2013-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> Mende	28 533	Regional & urban
<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	22 492	Regional & urban
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Kono	5778	Regionally based
Creole		Urban

Table 191: List of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1961-1967.

*From 1968 until 1995*

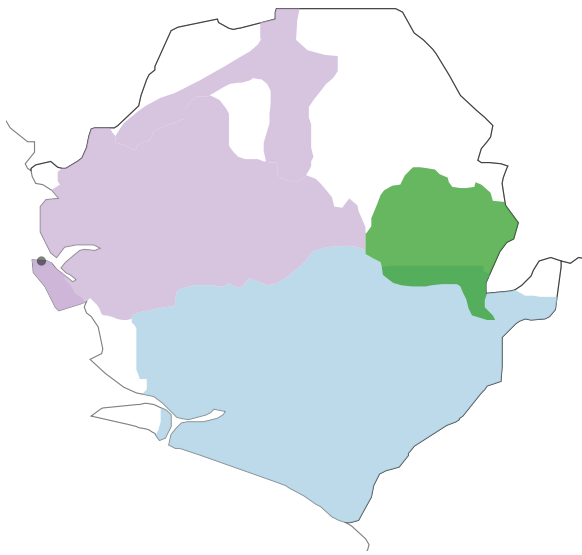


Figure 665: Map of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2013-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
Mende	28 533	Regional & urban
Temne	17 677	Regional & urban
Kono	5 778	Regionally based
Limba	5 328	Regional & urban
Creole		Urban

Table 192: List of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1968-1995.

*From 1996 until 2007*

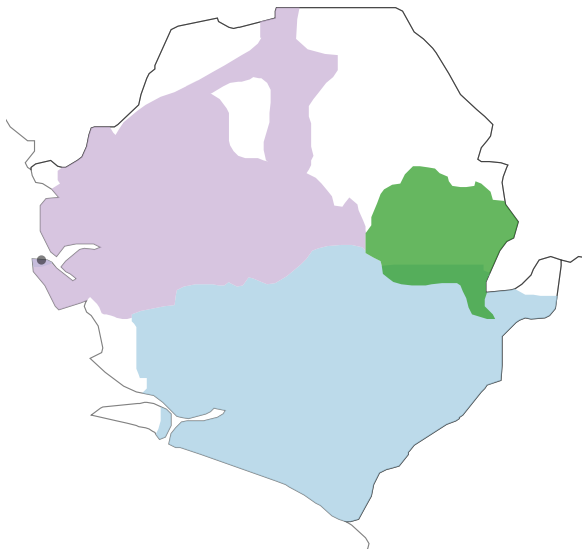


Figure 666: Map of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2013-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Mende	28 533	Regional & urban
<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	22 492	Regional & urban
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Kono	5 778	Regionally based
Creole		Urban

Table 193: List of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 1996-2007.

*From 2008 until 2013*

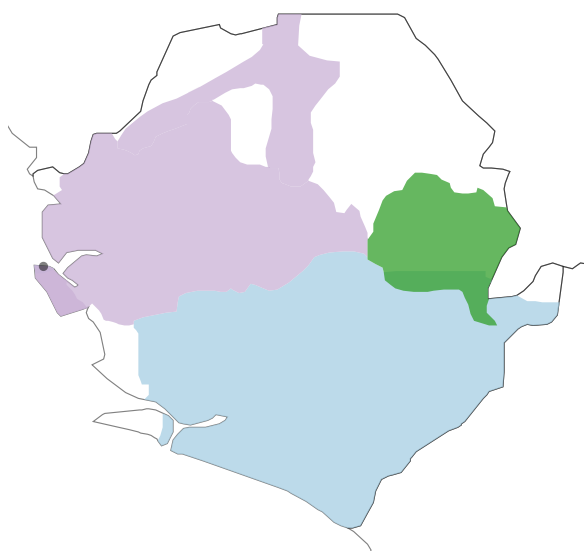


Figure 667: Map of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2013-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Mende	28 533	Regional & urban
<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Temne	17 677	Regional & urban
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Kono	5 778	Regionally based
<span style="color: pink;">■</span> Limba	5 328	Regional & urban
Creole		Urban

Table 194: List of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone during 2008-2013.



## *Conflicts in Sierra Leone*

*Starting on 1991-03-23*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Sierra Leone	RUF	Temne	1991-03-23	No	No	No
Government of Sierra Leone	AFRC	Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	1997-05-25	No	No	No
Government of Sierra Leone	Kamajors	Mende	1997-05-27	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Sierra Leone	WSB		2000-09-10			