

# REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE



TOTAL POPULATION<sup>I</sup> **8,697,890**

POPULATION 24 YEARS OR YOUNGER<sup>I</sup>

**59.37%**

WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE  
(15-49 years)<sup>I</sup>

**2,172,890**

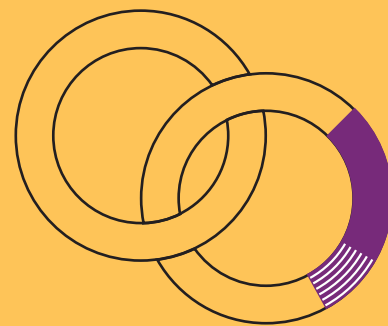
WOMEN (20-24 years) WHO WERE  
FIRST MARRIED OR IN UNION<sup>II</sup>

BEFORE  
AGE 18

**29.6%**

BEFORE  
AGE 15

**8.6%**



POPULATION 15-24 YEARS  
(male + female)<sup>I</sup>

**1,792,160**

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO

**1,120**

(per 100,000 live births)<sup>II</sup>

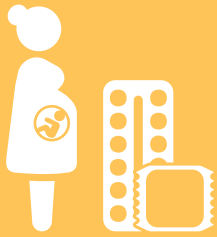
**100,000**



TOTAL FERTILITY RATE<sup>I</sup> (births per woman)  
**3.88**



ADOLESCENT (15-19 years)  
BIRTH RATE<sup>I</sup> (births per 1,000 girls)  
**99.17**



**19.8%** UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING (all women) <sup>III</sup>

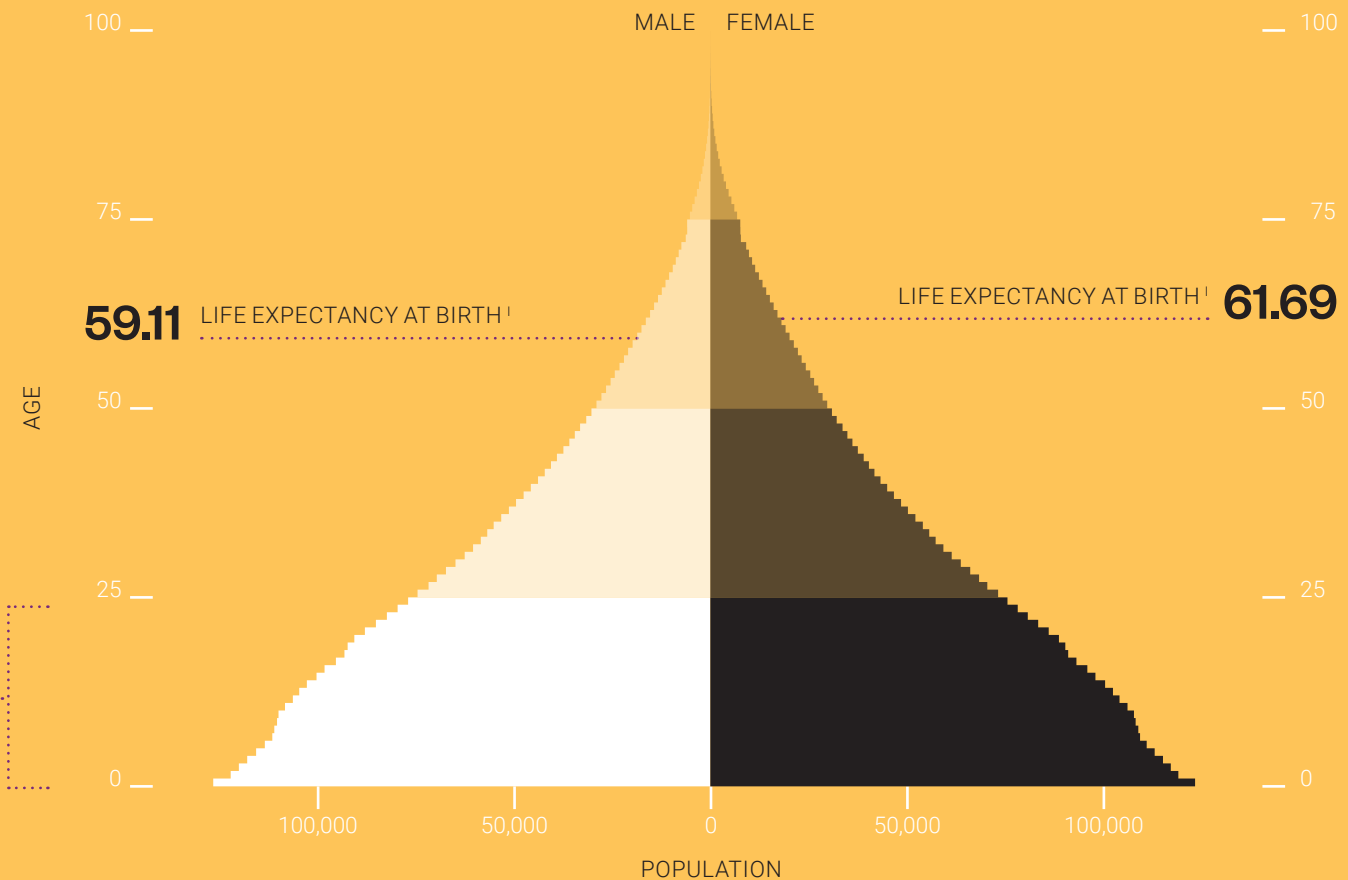


**56.8%** DEMAND FOR FAMILY PLANNING SATISFIED WITH MODERN METHODS (all women) <sup>III</sup>



**86.9%** DELIVERIES ATTENDED BY SKILLED HEALTH PERSONNEL <sup>II</sup>

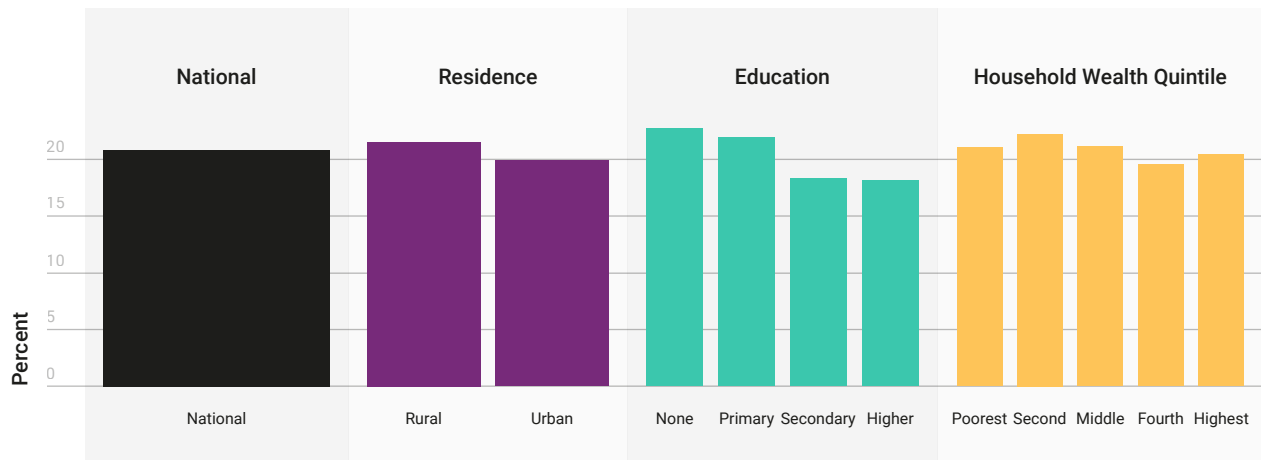
At the Nairobi Summit the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone committed to the **overall goal** of the ICPD Programme of Action, in line with the National commitments in the Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (2018 – 2023), the national population policy (2018), and the 2017 Family Planning 2020 commitments.



The Government of Sierra Leone has committed to the overall goal of zero unmet need for family planning services by 2030. As part of this commitment, Sierra Leone is working to raise the contraceptive prevalence rate from 22.5% in 2017 to 50% by 2028.

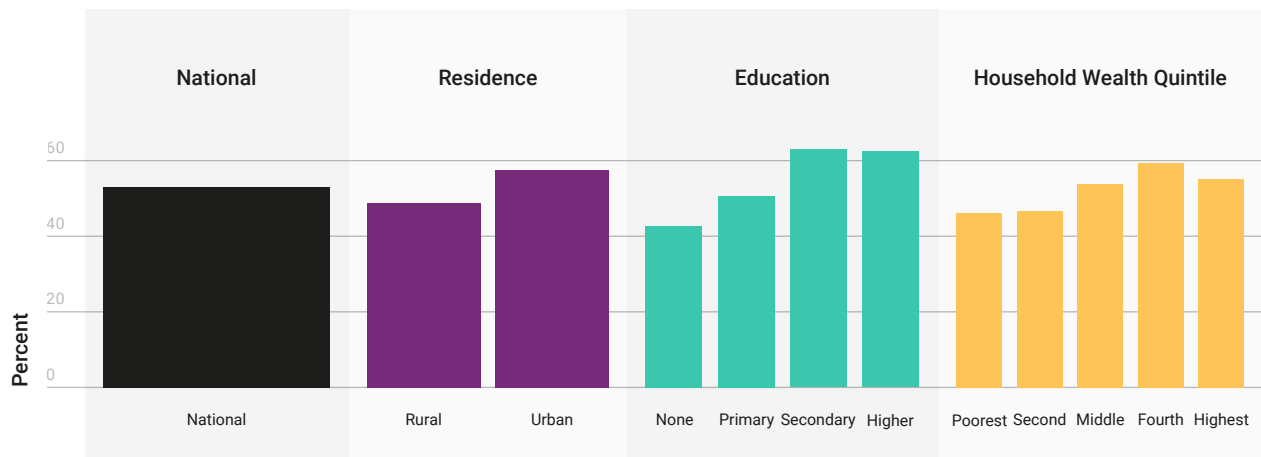
In 2022, Sierra Leone's total fertility rate (TFR) – the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years – is estimated to be 3.88. Unmet need for family planning is slightly higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and is highest among women with no education and primary education. Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods is higher among women living in urban areas, among women with secondary and higher education, and among women living in wealthier households.

Unmet Need for Family Planning, All Women



Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

Demand for Family Planning Satisfied with Modern Methods, All Women



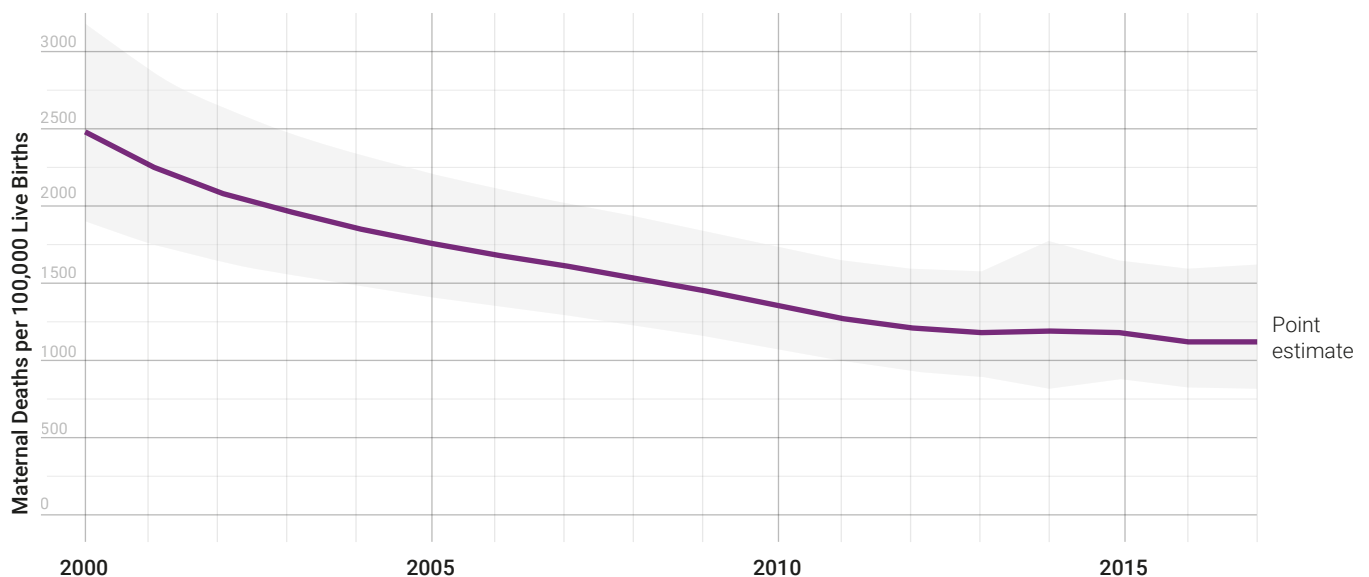
Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

**The Government of Sierra Leone has committed to the overall goal of zero preventable maternal deaths by 2030.**

Sierra Leone’s maternal mortality ratio declined from 2000 to 2017 and recent survey estimates from the Demographic and Health Survey, 2019 indicate that the rate is 717 deaths per 100,000 live births. Recognizing the impact of unsafe abortion on maternal deaths, Nairobi Summit Commitment 3 highlights the integration of “a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health interventions, including access to safe abortion to the full extent of the law, measures for preventing and avoiding unsafe abortions, and the provision of post-abortion care into national UHC strategies, policies and programmes, and the need to protect and ensure all individuals’ right to bodily integrity, autonomy and reproductive rights, and to provide access to essential services in support of these rights”. While abortion has been prohibited altogether in Sierra Leone, in 2022 Sierra Leone’s President and Cabinet backed a bill to decriminalize abortion and overturn a pre-independence, colonial-era law dating back to 1861. The bill is due to be debated and signed into law before the end of 2022. The Government of Sierra Leone has committed itself to train and employ 1,000 midwives, 180 nurse anaesthetists, 72 surgical assistants by 2025, with progress underway, as reported by Sierra Leone in its Voluntary National Review of the SDG implementation to the United Nations High Level Political Forum in 2021.

Maternal mortality ratio, 2000–2017

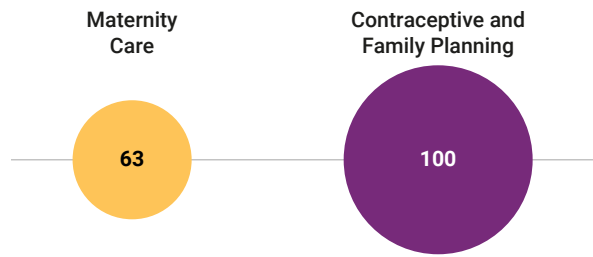
■ 80% uncertainty interval



Source: World Health Organization, 2019

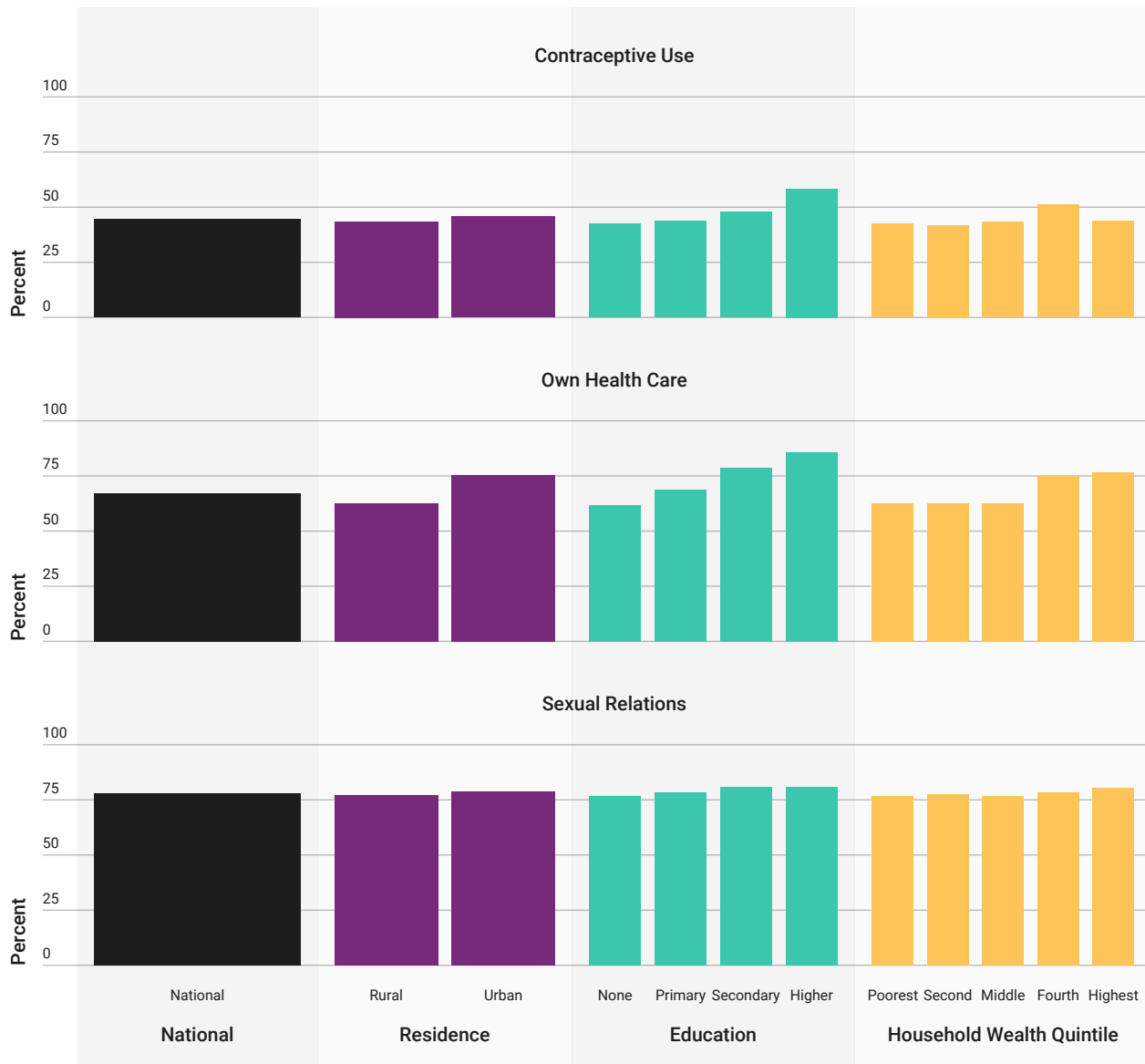
In Sierra Leone, 78% of married or in-union women aged 15 to 49 make their own decisions regarding sexual relations, 44.2% about contraceptive use, and 67.5% about their own health care. The percentages related to sexual relations are fairly consistent geographical region, education level and household wealth, while the percentages about contraceptive use and own health care increase with education level and with household wealth. SDG 5.6.2 reflects the extent to which prevailing laws enable or disable women and men's full and equal access to health and rights. Sierra Leone has achieved 63% of enabling laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men to maternity care, and 100% to contraceptive and family planning services.

Extent to which Sierra Leone has laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education



Source: United Nations Population Fund, 2022

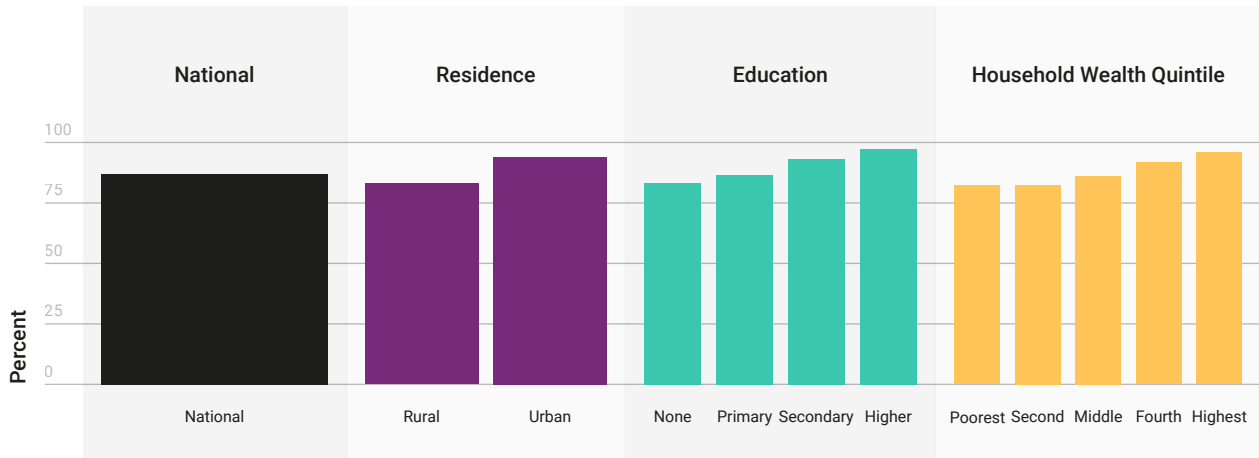
Proportion of married women who make their own informed decisions regarding reproductive health care, contraceptive use, and sexual relations



Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

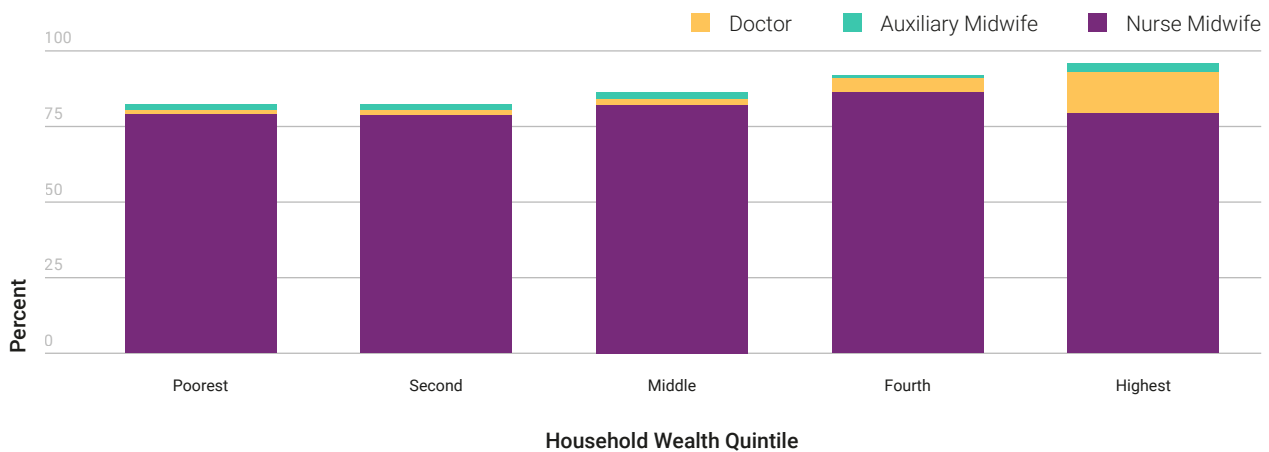
86.9% of deliveries among married women 15-49 years who had a live birth in the last two years in Sierra Leone were assisted by a skilled attendant. This percentage is one of the highest in the region. The percentage of deliveries assisted by a skilled attendant was higher among women who live in urban areas, and increased with a woman's education level and with household income. Most births in Sierra Leone are attended by nurse midwives; in the wealthiest households, approximately 14% of births are attended by doctors (compared with 80% attended by nurse midwives).

Births with Skilled Attendant



Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2017

Skilled Birth Providers by Wealth Quintile

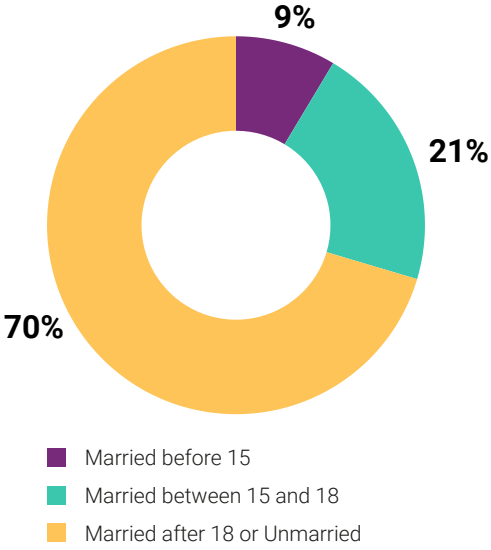


Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

The Government of Sierra Leone has committed to enact the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill in Sierra Leone which criminalizes child marriage for all types of marriages. Some initial milestones have included a wide-spread child marriage campaign in communities, the engagement with traditional and religious leaders, and review of the Child Rights Act 2007.

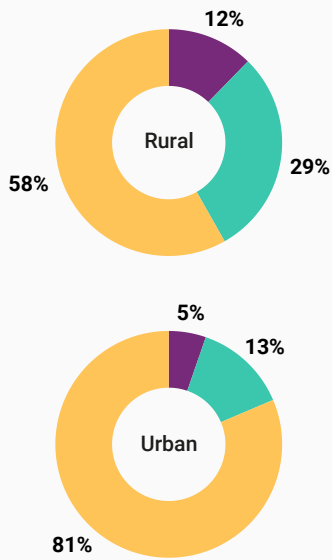
In Sierra Leone 29.6% of women aged 20-24 years were married before age 18, with almost 9% of women married before age 15. Marriage before age 18 is two times higher among women living in rural areas compared to women living in urban areas. It is higher among women with no education and only primary education, and is four times higher among those living in the poorest households compared to those living in the wealthiest households.

Age of Marriage Distribution, Women 20-24

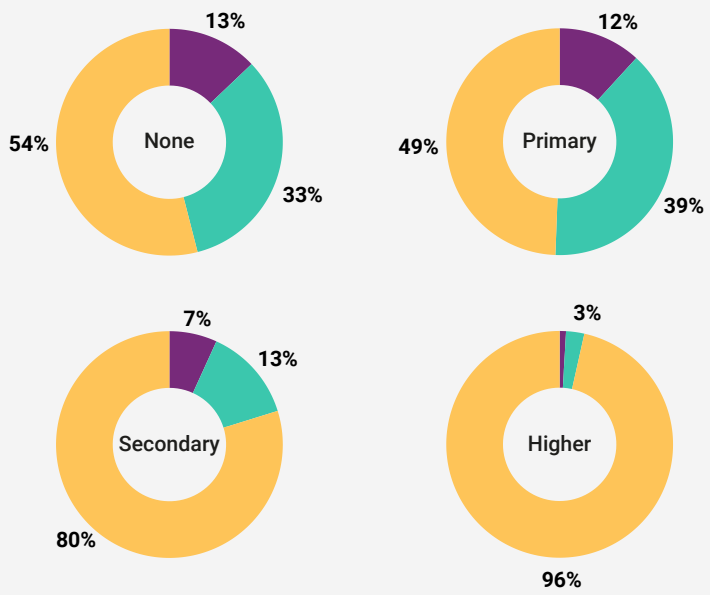


Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

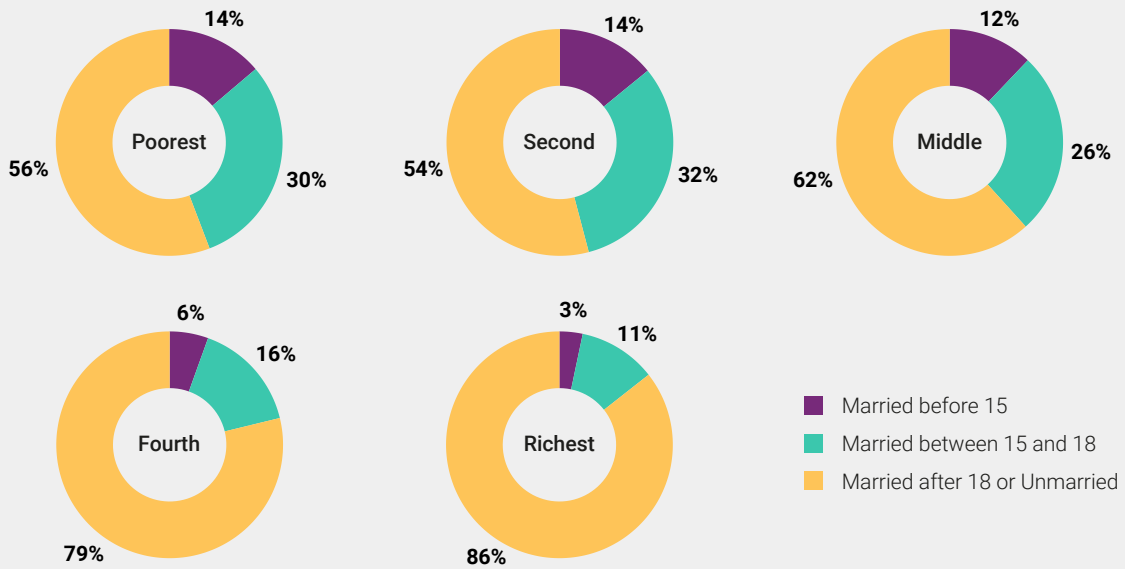
Age of Marriage Distribution by Residence, Women 20-24



Age of Marriage Distribution by Level of Education, Women 20-24



Age of Marriage Distribution by Household Wealth Quintile, Women 20-24



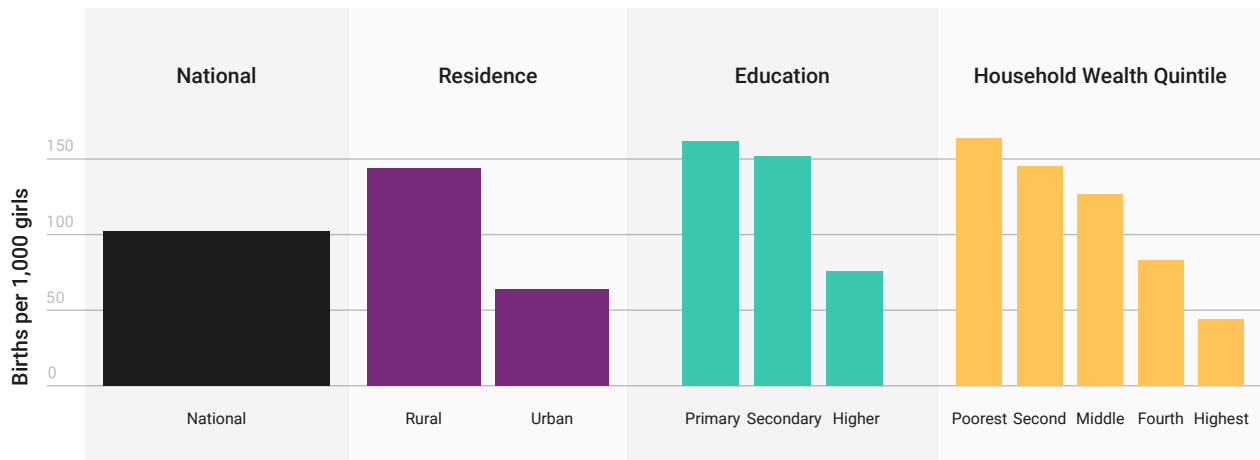
■ Married before 15  
■ Married between 15 and 18  
■ Married after 18 or Unmarried

Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019



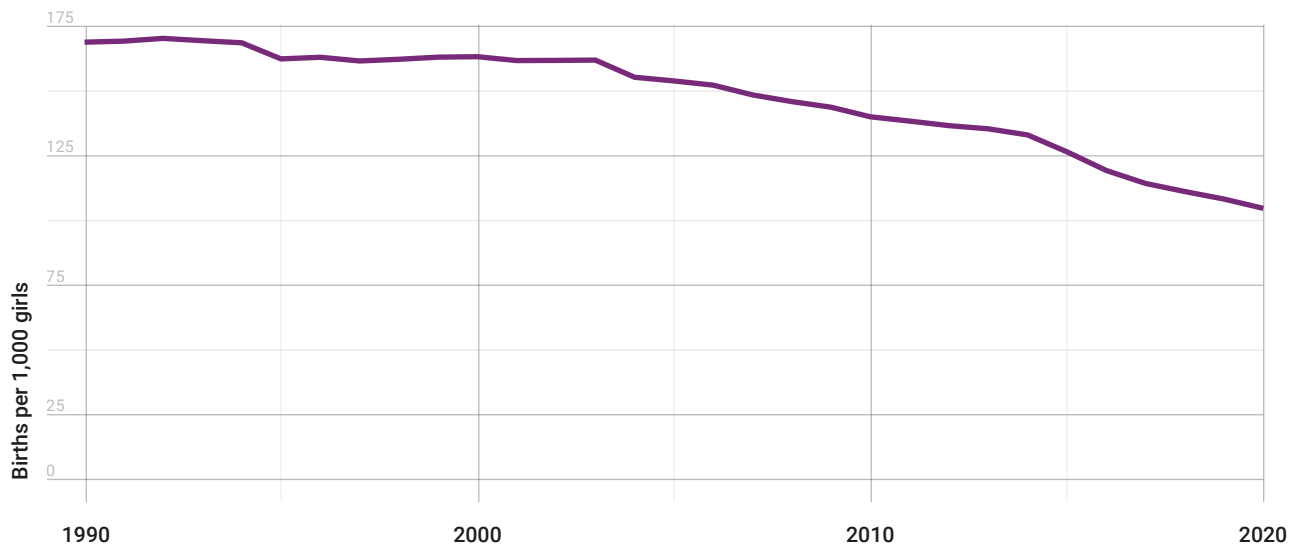
Sierra Leone's adolescent birth rate has been decreasing from 1990 to 2020 and is currently slightly over 100 births per 1,000 girls. The adolescent birth rate is two times higher among women living in rural areas of the country compared with those living in urban areas, two times higher among those with no education compared with those with secondary education, and three times higher among those living in the poorest households compared to those living in the wealthiest households.

Adolescent birth rate



Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

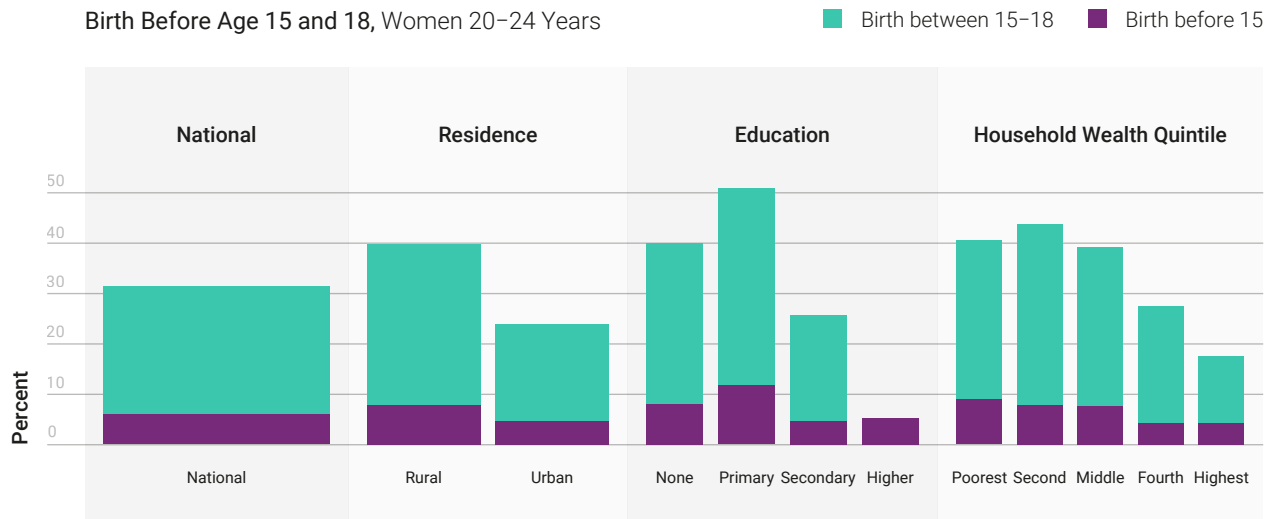
Adolescent birth rate, 1990–2020



Source: World Population Prospects, 2022

31.3% of women aged 20-24 years in Sierra Leone gave birth before age 18, including 6.1% before age 15. Most births occur among women residing in rural areas and those with primary education, as well as those living in the poorest and second poorest households. The percentage of births before age 15 and age 18 is 1.6 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and two times higher among women living in the second most poor households compared with those in the wealthiest households.

Birth Before Age 15 and 18, Women 20–24 Years

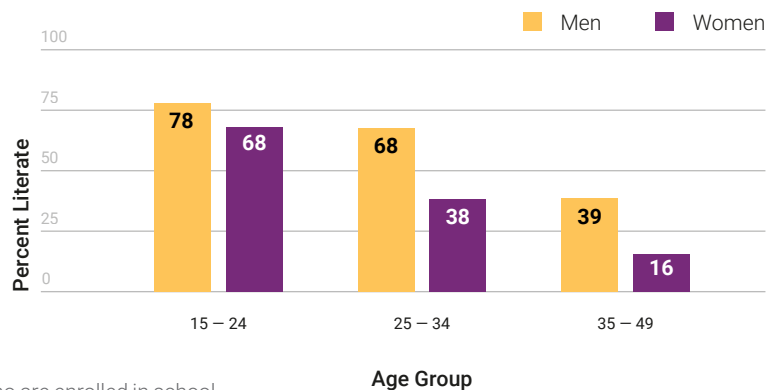


Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2017

More than 90% of women over 30 in Sierra Leone have undergone female genital cutting, compared to 61% of those ages 15-19<sup>IV</sup>. Sierra Leone is one of a few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have not banned female genital mutilation.

The literacy rate in Sierra Leone among men is higher than that for women. Both rates decrease by age group from 15-24 years old to 35-49 years old. Secondary education completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level, and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction using more specialized teachers. In 2018, Sierra Leone's secondary school net attendance ratio<sup>V</sup> is 41.8. The 2020 decision by the Government of Sierra Leone end a 10-year ban against pregnant girls and teenage mothers attending school is an important step to improve education for girls in the country, in line with their human rights and in support of advancing gender equality and the Nairobi commitments.

Literacy Rate by Age and Sex



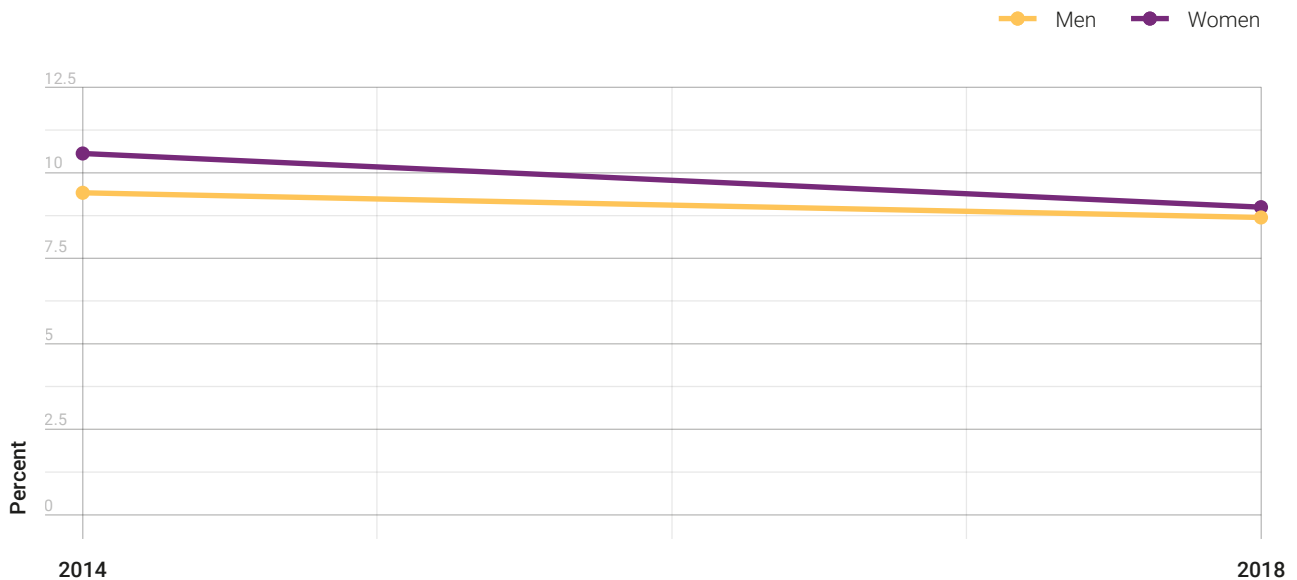
IV Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

V Ratio of children of official school age who are enrolled in school to the population of the corresponding official school age

Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

Young people who are not in education, employment or training (i.e., the NEET population) quantifies the proportion of young people who find themselves outside of the educational system and without work. In Sierra Leone, the percentage of youth not in education, employment or training has been decreasing among women and men, and in 2019 it is relatively the same for sexes.

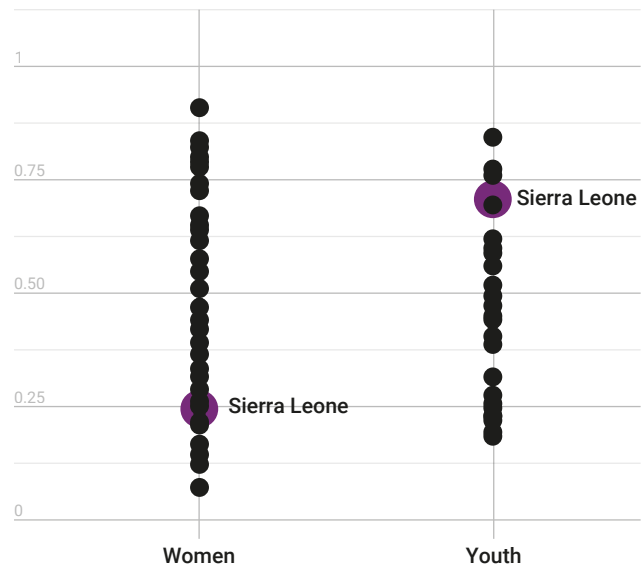
Percent of Youth (15–24) Not in Education, Employment, or Training, by Sex



Source: Labour Force Survey, 2014 and Integrated Household Survey, 2018

SDG Goal 16 seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. One component of this is ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. The ratio of the proportion of female Members of Parliament in Sierra Leone is one of the lowest compared with those in the region, while the ratio of the proportion of young Members of Parliament is among the highest in the region (SDG 16.17.1).

Ratio of proportion of population in parliament to proportion in national population, Lower Chamber or Unicameral, Sub-Saharan African Countries



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022

Since the Nairobi Summit, Sierra Leone launched its National Strategy for Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. A National Demographic Dividend Observatory tracker is also being set up.

In its 2021 Voluntary National Review, Sierra Leone explicitly reported progress made on its national ICPD25 commitments to zero unmet need of family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices.

Prior to that, Sierra Leone was reviewed at the 38th session of the Universal Periodic Review at the UN's Human Rights Council in May 2021. It received 274 recommendations, of which at least 136 (nearly half of all recommendations) were related to the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25.