

Hon Speaker, Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu

SIERRA LEONE: TRACKING PARLIAMENTARY ATTENDANCE AND DEBATES – OCT – DEC 2021

About one fifth of Sierra Leone MPs did not attend half of the sittings in the last quarter of 2021. This maiden edition of Sierra Leone's Parliamentary scorecard presents a monitoring report on the performance of Members of Parliament in the area of attendance and participation in debates for the period October to December 2021. The purpose of tracking is to increase legislators' commitment to their representative duties and to strengthen the legislative process.

In total, 20 parliamentary sittings were held during the period as recorded in the official parliamentary attendance register, commonly known as Votes and Proceedings. By attendance, we mean MPs who were recorded as present in the parliamentary votes and proceedings but not necessarily taking part in the business of the day.

It is important not to conflate attendance with punctuality. MP's punctuality has been a source of concern for Speaker Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu and the leadership of the four parties in the house. Sitting should start at 10 a.m. and is mostly on Tuesdays and Thursdays. However, we note that Parliament rarely met on time, and we recorded an average late start of about 20 minutes as the leadership waited to meet the 25% members presence required to form a quorum. This report covers only the official parliamentary register which includes both MPs that reported on time and those that turned up late.

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Analysis of MP Attendance

Overall, MP attendance is encouraging; 75% of MPs attended at least 50% of the 20 sittings. About 20% of MPs did not attend half of the 20 sittings. A total of 92 MPs (representing 64% of Parliament) attended more than 70% of the sittings, while 27 MPs (19%) attended between 10 and 13 sittings. Another 27 members (19%) attended less than half (below nine) of the sittings.

MP turnover has been historically high in Sierra Leone. Only 24% of MPs were retained in the 2018 elections, showing increased citizen dissatisfaction with the performance of elected representatives. Commitment to duty as reflected in regular attendance and participation in sessions is critical for Parliament's scrutiny and oversight roles as well as for the overall functioning of government.

Scope

This tracking does not cover the Parliamentary leadership which include Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and party leaders in Parliament. The Parliamentary leadership determines the calendar of Parliament and the structure of debate. Their inclusion will create an undue advantage to ordinary members.

Best Performing MPs on Attendance



Hon. PC
Bai Kurr K. Sanka III
Tonkolili



010
Hon. Zainab K. Brima
SLPP Kailahun



032
Hon. Dr. Mark M. Kalokoh
APC Bombali



049
Hon. Hassan Sankoh
APC Tonkolili



060
Hon. Bai S. Kamara
NGC Kambia



054
Hon. James O. Tholley
APC Tonkolili



048
Hon. Aaron A. Koroma
APC Tonkolili



067
Hon. Alusine B. Kamara
APC Karene



081
Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin
Bo SLPP



068
Hon. Dr. Ibrahim B. Kamara
APC Port Loko



061
Hon. Abdul T.
Kamara
NGC Kambia



086
Hon. Neneh Lebbie
SLPP Bo



Hon. PC
Fasalie K. Marrah III
Falaba



Hon. PC
Sheriff A. Badara III
Bonthe



120
Hon. Tension H.
Sandy
SLPP Western Urban



102
Hon. Alex M. Rogers
SLPP Pujehun



122
Hon. Alieu I. Kamara
SLPP West



Hon. PC
Bai S.S. Gbereh III
Port Loko North-West



036
Hon. Emmanuel A.
Koroma
APC Bombali



077
Hon. Abdul Kargbo
Port Loko North-West

Three Sitzings with the Highest Absenteeism

October 21st (51 attendees), November 4th (54 attendees), and November 9th (52 attendees) produced the highest levels of absenteeism in the last quarter of 2021. The table below shows the business of parliament on the three days with lowest attendance:

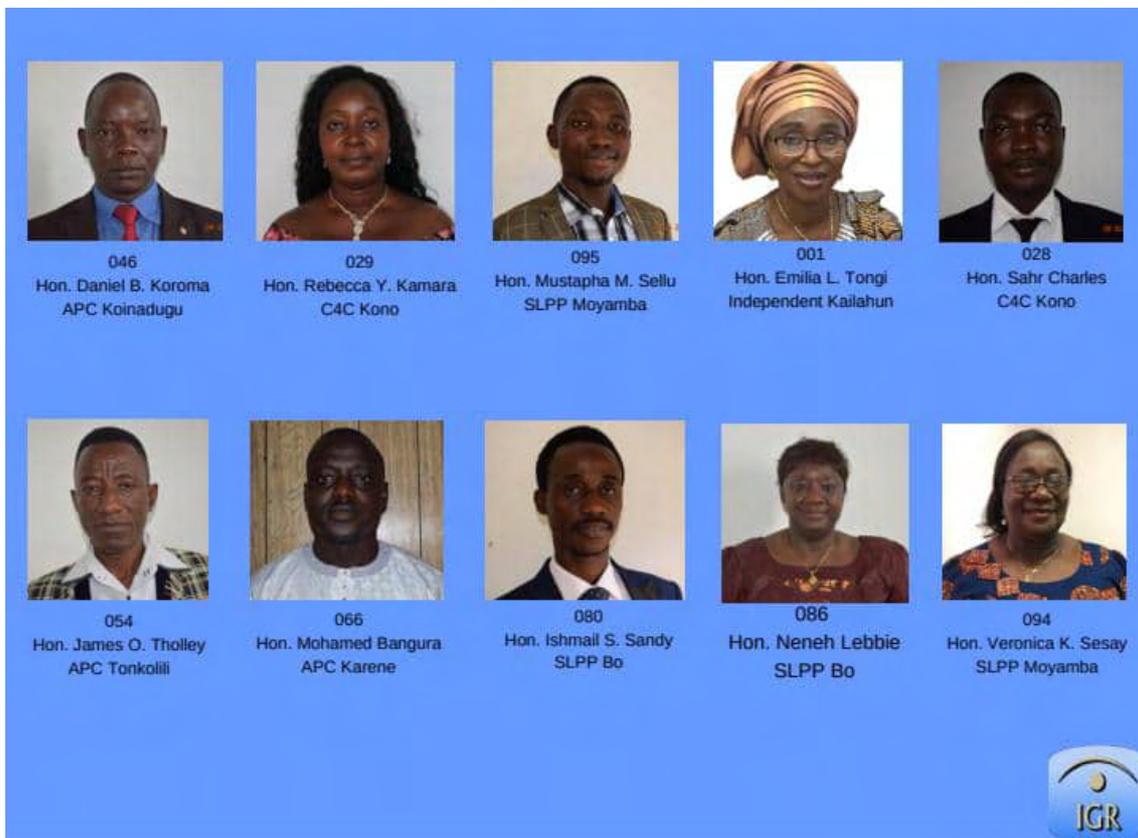
Date	Bills/reports/agreements for discussion	Attendance
Thurs 21 Oct 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Payment System Act, 2021 The Customary Land Rights Act, 2021 The National Land Commission Act, 2021 The Gender Empowerment Act, 2021 	95
Thurs 4 Nov 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on Defence Industry Cooperation with Turkey Agreement with General Beverages Company Limited (SL) Nov. 2021. The Allied Health Professions Act, 2020. 	92
Tue 9 Nov 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement between the GoSL and the Russian Federation on Visa-Free Travels for Holders of Diplomatic or Service Passport. The National Investment Board Act, 2021. 	94

Analysis of MP Debates

In terms of debate, 76 Members of Parliament debated bills, agreements, appointments, reports etc., during the period. By debate, we mean the number of MPs that spoke in the Well of parliament about the issue under review. This number represents 52% of MPs that spoke in the Well during the debate period. Just under half of attending MPs (47%) did not speak (debate) in Parliament during the last quarter (October-December) of 2021. However, they might have contributed in committee meetings, which is not tracked in this scorecard.

Regular Debaters for October to December 2021

 Hon. PC Bai Kurr K. Sanka III Tonkolili	 059 Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara APC Kambia	 081 Hon. Joseph Williams-Lamin SLPP Bo	 032 Hon. Dr. Mark M. Kalokoh APC Bombali	 018 Hon. Hafiju Maada Kanja SLPP Kenema
 042 Hon. Lahai Marah APC Falaba	 020 Hon. Francis A. Kaisamba SLPP Kenema	 077 Hon. Abdul Kargbo APC Port Loko	 007 Hon. Quintin S. Konneh Independent Kailahun	 003 Hon. Hindolo M. Gavao SLPP Kailahun



Recommendations – improving parliamentary performance

1. We note that punctuality is a perennial challenge facing parliament. Party whips and leadership should enforce existing procedures to increase punctuality. We strongly recommend that the vote and proceedings begin to record MP punctuality. Given that the Parliament of Sierra Leone is going digital, steps should be taken to automate MP attendance.
2. Although MP attendance was impressive, this commitment does not necessarily translate into greater MP retention, as citizens are unaware of the work that Parliamentarians are doing in Parliament. MPs should increase outreach to the public, sharing more with them about their parliamentary work. This will also help citizens to have a better understanding of what should be the work of Parliamentarians and what is not (such as providing personalised benefits to citizens).
3. Further steps should be taken to track MP attendance in committees and other assignments as well as their implementation of the laws passed by the house.

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