

Country Factsheet

Cameroon



June 2025

Country – capital	Republic of Cameroon/République du Cameroun – Yaounde. ¹
Population	Total population 30.9 million (est. 2024). Ethnic groups: Bamileke-Bamu 22.2%, Biu-Mandara 16.4%, Arab-Choa/Hausa/Kanuri 13.5%, Beti/Bassa, Mbam 13.1%, Grassfields 9.9%, Adamawa-Ubangi, 9.8%, Cotier/Ngoe/Oroko 4.6%, Bantu 4.3%, Kako/Meka 2.3%, other ethnic groups 3.8% (2022 est.) ²
Geography	Central Africa, bordering the Bight of Biafra, between Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. ³
Languages	24 major African language groups, English (official), French (official) ⁴
Writing system	Latin. ⁵
Education and literacy	77.1% is literate, females lower than males - 71.6% and 82.6% resp. (2018 est). ⁶ There are 2 separate schooling systems, depending on whether French or British colonial models apply. Primary education is free and compulsory for six years (ages 6-12), followed by 7 years of secondary education. For many young people, their parents are unable to pay secondary school fees. Tertiary institutions include both public and private universities. All but 1 of 7 universities teach in French, only Buea is Anglophone. ⁷ In Anglophone regions, boycotts and attacks by separatists on schools, students and teachers result in 41% schools closing down. ⁸ General primary school enrolment is 89% (2016) but only 66% continues till the last grade. 7.1% of primary school age children is out of school. ⁹ Secondary school enrolment is 44%. ¹⁰
Religions	Roman Catholic 33.1%, Muslim 30.6%, Protestant 27.1%, other Christian 6.1%, animist 1.3%, other 0.7%, none 1.2% (2022 est.) ¹¹
Conflict history and overview	After World War I, the German colony Kamerun was divided between France and the UK as League of Nations mandates. French Cameroun (the largest part of the country) became independent in 1960. In 1961, the southern part of British Cameroon voted to merge with the new country to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. In 1972, the federation changed into a centralised state. ¹² A 1984 coup by Paul Biya has put him in power until now. Since the 1990s, protests and calls for democracy have surged in the English-speaking part of the country. Many citizens, claiming oppression by the French-speaking majority, demanded a return to a federal system; Anglophone separatists call for independence (Ambazonia), protests are cracked down with violence. ¹³ As Biya turns 90 and is increasingly feeble, a power struggle is endangering the security situation. ¹⁴
Humanitarian situation	Life expectancy at birth: 64.2 yrs (2024). Population below poverty line: 37.5% (2014 est). Official unemployment rate 3.5%. ¹⁵ Cameroon has 3 humanitarian crises: in the north (Boko Haram), the southern Anglophone crisis and the impact of CAR refugees in the east. People are affected by violence and conflict, natural disasters and epidemic outbreaks. ¹⁶ Over 2.1 million people, incl. many children, face acute food insecurity. ¹⁷
Human rights situation	Violence has been rife in the Anglophone regions since late 2016. Separatists are targeting civilians, including aid workers, students, and teachers, while enforcing a boycott on education. Security forces are committing abuses (killing of civilians, destruction of civilian property, sexual violence, torture of suspected separatists). Boko Haram attacks are a persistent threat in the Far North. The government restricts civic space for political opposition and civil society, and harasses human rights defenders. ¹⁸
Situation of women FGM – early marriages	Maternal mortality rate: 438 deaths per 100,000 live births (2020). ¹⁹ Child marriages: 30% of girls (3% of boys) marry before the age of 18 and 11% before the age of 15. Child marriage is most common in the north. ²⁰ FGM/C is prohibited by law but prosecutions are rare. ²¹ FGM/C prevalence in women aged 15–49 was 1.4% in 2004, the highest in the Far North (5.4%). ²²
Situation of LGBTI	Consensual same-sex sexual acts punishable with 5 yrs prison and/or a fine; arrests, convictions, detentions, blackmail, violence by gangs and police are rampant. Electronic communication between persons of same sex for a sexual proposition is punished with 2 yrs prison and a fine. Penalties are doubled when communication is actually followed by sexual intercourse. Public speech/broadcasting about LGBTI issues is punished. CSO/ NGOs advocating human and LGBTI rights are suspended, attacked and interrogated. ²³
IDPs/ Asylum / migration in Malta	Cameroon hosts 332,000 refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) and 120,000 from north Nigeria. ²⁴ There are >750,000 IDPs due to the various conflicts. ²⁵ Sea arrivals in Malta: unknown. ²⁶ Asylum applications in Malta: 12 (2023), down from 68 in 2020. ²⁷

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- ¹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
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- ⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
- ⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
- ⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
- ⁷ <https://www.scholaro.com/db/countries/cameroon/education-system>
- ⁸ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/cameroon_en; <https://www.hrw.org/africa/cameroon>
- ⁹ https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.PRSC.FM.ZS?name_desc=false&locations=CM ; https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.PRSL.ZS?locations=CM&name_desc=false
- ¹⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR?co=null&locations=CM>
- ¹¹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
- ¹² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cameroon/Government-and-society> ; <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
- ¹³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cameroon/Cameroon-under-Biya#ref281022> ; <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cameroon/>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/bad-worse-cameroon>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon/>
- ¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-humanitarian-needs-overview-2025-january-2025> ; https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/cameroon_en
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- ¹⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/africa/cameroon> ; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/01/cameroon-human-rights-defender-alice-nk> ; <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cameroon/>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon>
- ²⁰ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/cameroon/>
- ²¹ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cameroon/>
- ²² <https://www.fgmcri.org/resource/fgm-in-cameroon-short-report-2019-english/>
- ²³ <https://database.ilga.org/cameroon-lgbti>; <https://76crimes.com/2025/01/28/lgbti-backer-alice-nkom-answers-terrorism-charge-based-on-peace-conference/>
- ²⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/cameroon>
- ²⁵ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/bad-worse-cameroon>
- ²⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/mt/figures-at-a-glance>
- ²⁷ https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=REF&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=ASY&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=IDP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OIP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=STA&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=HST&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OOC&data_finder%5Byear_filterType%5D=range&data_finder%5Byear_rangeFrom%5D=2019&data_finder%5Byear_rangeTo%5D=2024&data_finder%5Bcoo_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoo_country%5D%5B%5D=39&data_finder=on&data_finder%5Bcoa_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoa_country%5D%5B%5D=132&data_finder%5Byear_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoo_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoa_%5D=&data_finder%5Badvanced_%5D=&data_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=

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This factsheet was compiled for BDE by Adri van den Berg. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, now EUAA) in Malta.