



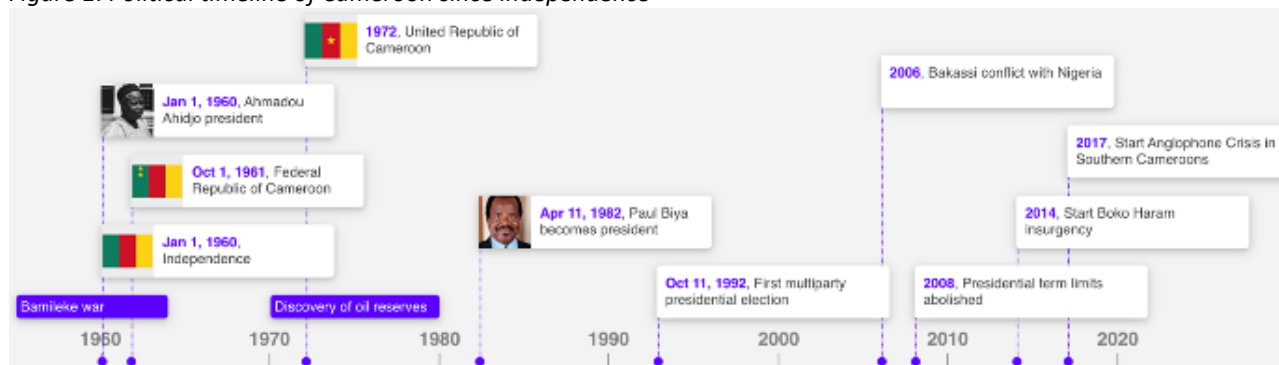
## Cameroon at 60

### Political history

1960 was the 'Year of Africa': many former colonies in Africa became politically independent. Of the seventeen colonies gaining independence in that year, Cameroon was the first one: on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Cameroon had been a German colony (Kamerun) from 1884 until the First World War. In 1919, it was divided into French and British Cameroons on behalf of first the

League of Nations and later the United Nations – a situation that lasted until the creation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1961 (see Fig 1), which united Cameroon with the formerly British Southern Cameroons. The Northern Cameroons elected to join Nigeria.

Figure 1: Political timeline of Cameroon since independence



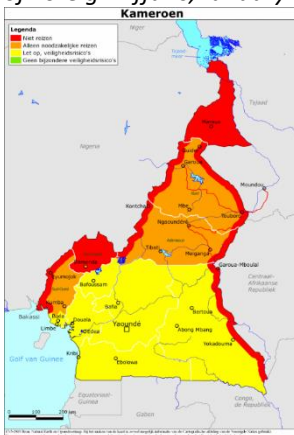
In 2020, Cameroon is formally democratic, but dominated by the political party of its long-time president Paul Biya (the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, or CPDM). The country has only had two presidents since independence: Ahmadou Ahidjo from 1960-1982, and Paul Biya since then. Ahidjo led the country through the first decades of independence and into an era of increasing income from oil production. He transformed the early federal state into a unitary one in 1972. Since 1982, Paul Biya has overseen the country's economic crisis of the 1980s and its transition to multiparty democracy in the early 1990s. Yet while elections have been nominally democratic, Biya's victories have been overwhelming: he won all but the first presidential poll in 1992 with majorities between 70% and 93%. Moreover, the abolition of presidential term limits in 2008 has made it possible for Biya to continue contesting in future elections.

Bamileke War between the French colonisers and the Bamileke nationalist movement in the country's southwest and the Bakassi conflict with Nigeria. Currently, the Boko Haram insurgency in the north and the Anglophone Crisis in the Southern Cameroons are ongoing, rendering northern Cameroon as well as the border areas with Nigeria high-risk areas (see Fig. 2). The Boko Haram insurgency spilled over from Nigeria around 2014, as Boko Haram fighters sought refuge in neighbouring states around Lake Chad. Cameroon has allied with Nigeria, Chad, and Niger in their efforts to repress the movement, with considerable success (but without being able to eradicate the movement). The Anglophone Crisis in the former Southern Cameroons is a struggle between the English-speaking Ambazonian nationalists and the Government of Cameroon. It began in 2017 and has killed thousands. Attempts at resolution have so far not been successful.

### Conflict, state fragility, and travel risks

In the 60 years of independence, Cameroon has been involved in several large-scale conflicts, including the

Figure 2: Travel advice from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 2020



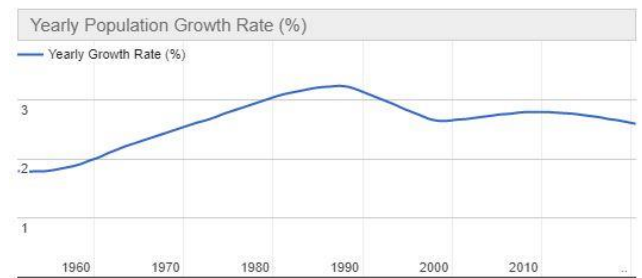
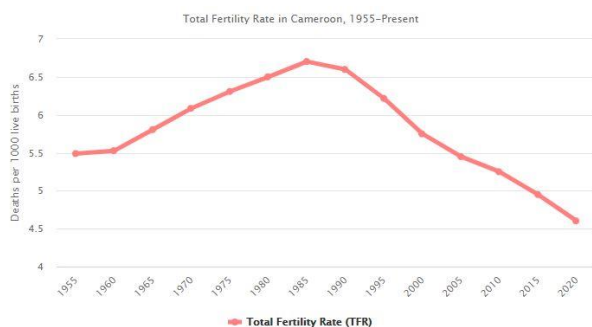
Source:

<https://www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/landen/kameroen/reizen/reisadvies>

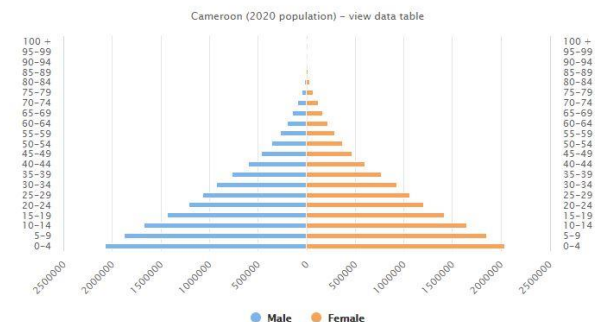
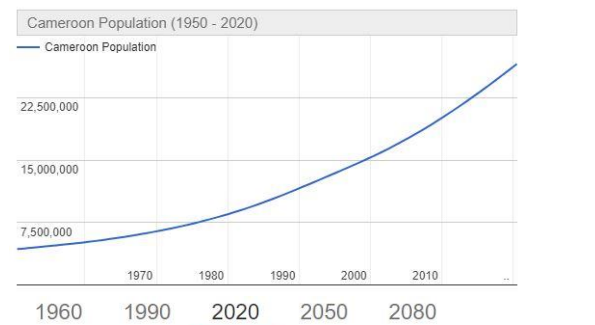
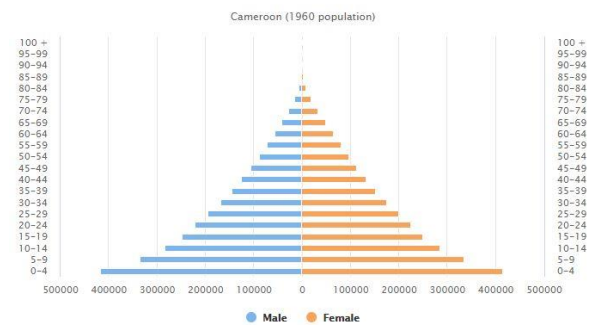
Partly due to these conflicts, in January 2020 the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs assessed the travel risks in the extreme northern and most of the western areas of Cameroon, as well as along most of the country's western and eastern boundaries as 'severe', and in the centre-northern areas as risky. The southern areas (including the metropolitan areas of Douala and Yaoundé) were assessed to be relatively safe. The State Fragility Index of the Fund for Peace puts Cameroon in the 'alert' cases (with a worrying total score of 97), and the last few years with a negative trend. Particularly the country's 'factionalised elites', and the lack of state legitimacy were seen as major risks, as well as major group grievances, and an untrustworthy security apparatus

(<https://fundforpeace.org/2019/04/10/fragile-states-index-2019/>).

## Demography



1960 1990 2020 2050 2080



Source:

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/cameroon-population/>

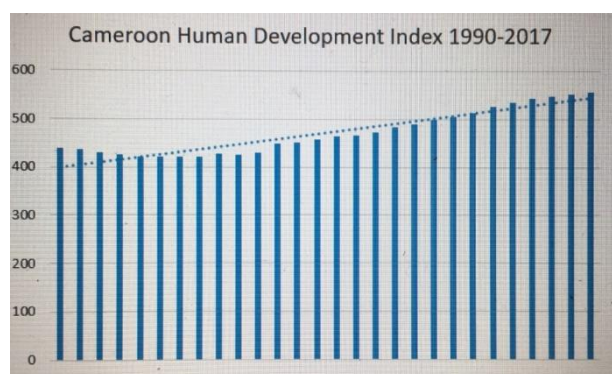
Demographic statistics, Cameroon as a whole, 1960 and 2020

	1960	2020
Population	5.2 million	26.2 million
Fertility rate	5.5 children per woman	4.6 children per woman
Life expectancy (males)	41.8 years	59.0 years
Idem (females)	44.2 years	61.7 years
Median age	20.3 years	18.7 years
Infant mortality (< 1 yr)	141/1000	54/1000
Under-5 mortality	245/1000	78/1000
Urbanization rate	14%	56%
Urban population	0.7 million	14.9 million
Rural population	4.5 million	11.6 million

Source: Worldometers

### Human Development Index, Cameroon as a whole, 1990 and 2017

Human Development Index data exist since 1990, with annual UNDP updates. Cameroon's Human Development Index started at a level of .440, then dropped to a level of .421 in 1996 (during the difficult 1990s), and afterwards steadily increased to a level of .557 in 2017. The HDI consists of a health index, an income index and an education index, while UNDP also provides data about life expectancy. Between 1990 and 2017 total HDI increased with 27 percent. Improvements have been particularly visible in the education situation, followed by the health situation, but less so in the life expectancy figures, and least so in the average income situation of Cameroonians. Between 1990 and 2017 Cameroon's population increased from 12.1 million people to 24.1 million people.



Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi/>; HDI x 1000.

Cameroon: HDI composition, and data for 1990 and 2017

	1990	2017	2017/1990
Health Index	.495	.594	X 1.20
Income Index	.509	.529	X 1.04
Education Index	.339	.549	X 1.62
Life Expectancy	52 years	59 years	X 1.13
Total HDI index	.440	.557	X 1.27

### Trade statistics, Cameroon exports and imports, 2017

In 2017 Cameroon exported products for a total value of \$4.27 billion, but imported for a total value of \$5.88 billion (mostly from China; 1.1b\$, France; 0.5b\$, the Republic of Congo; 0.4b\$, Thailand (rice!); 0.3b\$, and Nigeria; 0.3b\$).

The most important export products and most important export destination in 2017 were:

Main export products (value in \$ million)	Main export destinations (value in \$ million)
Crude petroleum products	1,340
Sawn wood	616
Cocoa beans	492
Bananas	306
Rough wood	219
France	559
China	488
Italy	392
Belgium&Luxemburg	359
The Netherlands	356

Source: <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/cmr/>

### Protected areas and Forests

In 2017 2,8 million hectares were protected areas (5.9% of Cameroon's total area; Wikipedia). Other areas are mainly unprotected forests, and areas for livestock, hunting and gathering. Forest cover was approximately 23 million hectares in 1961, and less than 18.8 million hectares in 2017 (derived from [http://data.wri.org/forest\\_atlas/cmr/report/cmr\\_an\\_overview\\_logging\\_cameroon\\_eng.pdf](http://data.wri.org/forest_atlas/cmr/report/cmr_an_overview_logging_cameroon_eng.pdf)).

### Agricultural Cameroon

Crop Area (in 1000 hectares), and total production (in million tonnes), 1961 and 2017

tonnes), 1961 and 2017						
	1961		2017		2017/1961	
	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.	Area	Prod.
Maize	460	0.4	1243	2.2	X 2.7	X 6.2
Sorghum	257	0.3	852	1.4	X 3.3	X 5.3
Cassava	109	0.6	398	5.8	X 3.7	X 10.0
Plantains	95	0.5	359	4.5	X 3.8	X 8.6
Taro (cocoyams)	96	0.5	227	1.8	X 2.4	X 4.1
Sugar Cane	10	0.0	136	1.3	X 13.6	X 25.8
Tomatoes	7	0.0	106	1.3	X 15.1	X 51.2
Oil palm fruits	30	0.4	170	3.1	X 5.7	X 7.5
Cocoa beans	380	0.1	729	0.3	X 1.9	X 3.9
Groundnuts	101	0.1	430	0.5	X 4.3	X 5.8
Seed Cotton	63	0.0	226	0.2	X 3.6	X 9.7
Rubber	11	0.0	61	0.1	X 5.5	X 6.1
Other crops (area)	529		2324		X 4.4	
Total crop area	2148		7261		X 3.4	

2017/1961: red = 2017 is below 1961; green: 2017 is more than 1961 figures (that is: more than population increase in Cameroon between 1961 and 2017); blue: in-between. Source: Faostat data.

Cameroon's land area is 47.5 million hectares, and its crop area increased from 4.5% to 15.3% of its land area between 1961 and 2017. Most crop areas expanded (the only major exceptions were coffee and millet), and expansion was very rapid for some export crops (rubber and oil palm), but particularly for rice, tomatoes, sugar cane, fruits, and vegetables, crops for which the expanded urban areas, and an expanding middle class, created a major growth in demand. Crop yields increased for all major crops, and particularly for rice and cassava. As a result, the total production of almost all major food crops expanded more rapidly than Cameroon's population, and the same is true for most export crops (with the exception of cocoa and particularly coffee). The numbers of live animals also expanded rapidly, but mostly below population growth numbers, with the exception of chicken, pigs, and goats.

#### Livestock numbers (x million)

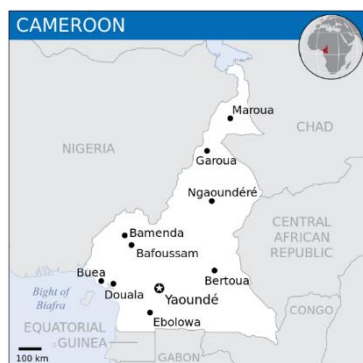
	1961	2017	2017/1961
Cattle	1.8	5.8	X 3.2
Chicken	2.9	51.1	X 17.6
Goats	1.0	5.4	X 5.4
Pigs	0.3	1.9	X 6.3
Sheep	1.6	3.5	X 2.2
Livestock units	1.6	5.7	X 3.6

Source: Faostat data; 1 livestock unit = based on 0.7 cattle; 0.1 goats/sheep/pigs; 0.01 chicken.

#### International migration

In 2015 328,000 people who were born in Cameroon lived outside the country (1.4% of Cameroon's population), of which 121,000 elsewhere in Africa (mainly neighbouring Chad, Gabon and Nigeria), and 207,000 outside Africa (0.9% of Cameroon's population: mainly in France and the USA, but also in Germany, Belgium, the UK, and Italy). In 2015 Cameroon had around 500,000 immigrants, mainly refugees from crisis areas in neighbouring Central African Republic, Nigeria and Chad (UN Migration Report 2017).

#### Urban Cameroon



Source: Wikipedia

Cities (in Regions)	Population in thousands of inhabitants	
	1960	2020
Yaoundé (in Central)	75	3992
Douala (in Littoral)	153	3663
Bamenda (in Northwest)	15	533
Bafoussam (in West)	24	424
Garoua (in North)	14	346

Source: Macrotrends.net, based on UN Population Prospects.

#### Regional Inequality

Cameroon has ten Regions, with Northwest and Southwest mainly English-speaking, and the other eight regions mainly French-speaking (and together more than 200 local languages). Most Cameroonians regard themselves as Christians. Muslims are 20%, mainly in North, Adamaoua, and West Regions. Regional population changes show big differences, as a result of differences in fertility, child mortality, and life expectancy on the one hand and in external and internal migration movements on the other. The highest population growth figures happened in North, Littoral, Far North, and West; the lowest ones in East. Regional inequality was and is high, particularly in education. Central and Littoral had high HDI and education levels, and life expectancy, and the Far North and North the lowest. However, between 1990 and 2017 regional inequality diminished. The slowest improvements can be seen in the Southwest and West Regions.

Region / Région	Population x 1000		'17/'90
	1990	2017	
1 = Adamaoua	562	1141	X2.0
2 = Central / Centre (incl. Yaoundé)	2227	4031	X1.8
3 = East / Est	913	1034	X1.1
4 = Far North / Extrême Nord	2030	4610	X2.3
5 = Coast / Littoral (incl. Douala)	1288	3124	X2.4
6 = North / Nord	1119	2827	X2.5
7 = Northwest / Nord-Ouest	1338	2153	X1.6
8 = South / Sud	477	684	X1.4
9 = Southwest / Sud-Ouest	920	1705	X1.9
10 = West / Ouest	1226	2791	X2.3
Total	12100	24100	X2.0

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi>, map: Wikipedia

Region	Subregional HDI			Life expectancy			Education index		
	1990	2017	17/90	1990	2017	17/90	1990	2017	17/90
1	.380	.503	X 1.32	50	59	X 1.18	.234	.421	X 1.80
2	.496	.651	X 1.31	54	62	X 1.15	.439	.717	X 1.63
3	.414	.545	X 1.32	52	63	X 1.21	.326	.527	X 1.62
4	.289	.406	X 1.40	49	55	X 1.12	.123	.279	X 2.27
5	.540	.664	X 1.23	56	63	x. 1.13	.488	.707	X 1.45
6	.333	.437	X 1.31	48	54	X 1.13	.181	.359	X 1.98
7	.479	.592	X 1.24	58	65	X 1.12	.368	.589	X 1.60
8	.466	.603	X 1.29	54	61	X 1.13	.409	.661	X 1.62
9	.495	.596	X 1.20	55	59	X 1.07	.421	.659	X 1.57
10	.500	.598	X 1.20	59	62	X 1.05	.397	.629	X 1.58
Cam	.440	.557	X 1.27	52	59	X 1.13	.339	.549	X 1.62
Ineq	1.87	1.64		1.23	1.20		3.97	2.00	

Source: <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi>. Cam = Cameroon as a whole. Ineq = Inequality: high/low

The subregional data about population growth show big differences between North, Coast/Douala, Far-North, and West on the one hand (with high growth figures; in North and Far North also due to refugee movements from neighbouring countries), and East, South and Northwest on the other hand (with low growth figures). The best conditions can be noticed in Central/Yaoundé and Coast/Douala, and the worst conditions in the Far North and North, both in 1990 and in 2017. However, the highest improvements between 1990 and 2017 can be seen in the Far North, and relatively low improvements in the (Anglophone) Southwest and West.

#### Further Reading

Country Portal: <http://countryportal.ascleiden.nl/cameroon>

Selected publications:

<https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/africa-2020-further-reading#Cameroon>



Reflecting on  
60 years  
of independence



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[www.ascleiden.nl/africa2020](http://www.ascleiden.nl/africa2020)

Country Information: Ton Dietz, David Ehrhardt and Fenneken Veldkamp.

Country Portal: Harro Westra

Selected publications: Germa Seuren