

# Cameroon

Republic of Cameroon  
Africa

## Geography

**Area** 475,442 sq km. On the continental “hinge” between West and Central Africa. Semi-arid in the north, grasslands in the centre, rainforest in the south.

Population		Ann Gr	Density
2010	19,958,351	2.29%	43/sq km
2020	24,348,543	1.89%	52/sq km
2030	28,601,794	1.56%	61/sq km

**Capital** Yaounde 1,800,762. **Other major city** Douala 2.1 million. **Urbanites** 58.4%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 41%. **Life expectancy** 50.9 yrs.

## Peoples

About 286 peoples, with many more sub-groups and dialects. One of Africa’s most ethnically and linguistically complex countries. Only the larger are mentioned here.

**Grassfields Bantu** 26.5%. Also called Cameroon-Bamikele Bantu. 60 peoples. Bamileke(10) 11.9%; Bamun 2.3%; Kom 1.2%; Nso 1.2; Widikum 1.0%.

**Northwest Bantu** 24.7%. Includes Central Congo Bantu. 53 peoples. Ewondo 7.7%; Bulu Fang 5.1%; Bassa 2.5%; Duala 1.0%.

Chadic 9.7%. 58 peoples. Mafa 1.5%; Masa 1.1%.

**Fulani** 9.4%. 3 peoples.

**Other Benue-Congo** 8.7%. 61 peoples. Bete 4.7%.

**Adamawa-Ubangi** 5.5%. 33 peoples. Gbaya 1.4%; Tupuri 1.1%.

**Other African** 13.3%. Cameroonian Creole 5.8%; detribalized Cameroonian 5.7%; Hausa 1.4%.

**Others** 2.2%. Arab 0.9%; Western, Asian.

**Literacy** 67.9%. **Official languages** French, English. **All languages** 279. **Languages with Scriptures** 20Bi 46NT 68por 93w.i.p.

## Economy

Largely based on agriculture and oil exports, both of which Cameroon has in abundance. Great potential for development with ample rain and minerals. Development is hampered by decline in world prices for coffee and cocoa and by an overvalued currency. The majority are employed

in agriculture. Unemployment is high, despite a top-heavy civil service employing many. High debt levels have been reduced through debt-relief servicing in exchange for suggested economic restructuring. One of Africa's highest literacy rates, and one of the world's highest corruption rates.

**HDI Rank** 153rd/182. **Public debt** 13.5% of GDP. **Income/person** \$1,224 (3% of USA).

## Politics

A German colony between 1884 and 1919, then divided between Britain and France. Independence from France in 1960, and union with English-speaking West Cameroon in 1961 as a bilingual, one-party republic. Popular pressure forced the president (who retains strong unilateral powers) to accede to multiparty elections in 1992, which, along with the 1997 elections, were boycotted by opposition groups. Having won elections in 2004, he also won a constitutional amendment allowing him to run again in 2011. International and opposition groups claim government suppression of opposition. Cameroon is a member of the British Commonwealth and *La Francophonie* and is closely allied to France, including on issues of foreign policy. Simmering tensions between Anglophone and Francophone regions could spell trouble for the future.

## Religion

Secular state that guarantees religious freedom. Islam is strong in the north, especially among the Fulbe, and interfaith tensions have increased over recent decades, especially with the increased profile of more radical Islamism.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	53.80	10,737,593	2.4%
Muslim	26.00	5,189,171	2.7%
Ethnoreligionist	18.99	3,790,091	1.4%
Non-religious	0.90	179,625	4.7%
Baha'i	0.25	49,896	3.1%
Other	0.06	11,975	6.1%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	38	19.10	3,813,000	2.7%

Independent	88	4.18	834,000	5.4%
Catholic	1	23.42	4,675,000	1.8%
Orthodox	1	0.01	1,000	0.0%
Marginal	7	0.39	78,000	2.4%
Unaffiliated		6.70	1,337,000	-0.4%

<b>Churches</b>	<b>MegaBloc</b>	<b>Congs</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Affiliates</b>
Catholic Church	C	5,599	2,799,401	4,675,000
Evang Ch of Cam	P	770	784,431	1,310,000
Presby Ch of Cam	P	3,688	398,305	705,000
Presby Ch in Cam	P	1,825	191,617	320,000
Evang Lutheran Ch	P	528	142,515	238,000
Cameroon Bapt Conv	P	1,031	103,125	165,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	850	112,000	161,000
Presby Orthodox Ch	I	1,725	86,228	144,000
Lutheran Brethren Ch	P	1,050	85,030	142,000

Full Gospel Mission	P	850	69,000	138,000
Chr Miss Fell Int	I	1,425	57,000	96,900
Baptist Pentecostal Ch	P	288	57,665	96,300
Union of Baptist Chs	P	376	48,050	96,000
Union of Ev Chs of Cam	P	310	37,200	93,000
Apostolic Church	P	760	50,000	75,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	550	35,000	67,000
Other denominations[118]		6,300	396,941	878,197
<b>Total Christians[134]</b>		<b>27,925</b>	<b>5,453,508</b>	<b>9,400,397</b>

Many of these statistics are estimates; few denominations keep records.

<b>TransBloc</b>	<b>Pop %</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Ann Gr</b>
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	9.0	1,804,104	4.3%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	6.5	1,294,403	5.8%

Pentecostals

3.9

768,440

6.6%

## Answers to Prayer

**1** **The growth of evangelicals** continued post-2000 despite the decrease in high-profile campaigns. Most of the recent growth is through localized church planting, particularly among newer Pentecostal denominations.

**2** **Many significant leaders** – professional, military, police and political – have been converted, giving hope for changing a society infamous for corruption. There is an increasing influence of the gospel in parliament, including regular prayer meetings when parliament is in session.

**3** **Media use for evangelism has increased**, building on the legalization in 2000 of Christian private radio and TV broadcasting. There has been notable impact through Bible translation and literature distribution as well as through electronic media.

## Challenges for Prayer

**1** **Cameroon faces internal forces** that could disable the nation. Cameroon is blessed with material resources, relative stability and diversity; these all have their costs and risks.

**a) *Widespread and deeply entrenched corruption***, for decades, has crippled Cameroon's economic and political progress. This blight runs deep in government administration, the police, the legal system and business. Anti-corruption initiatives (done at the behest of the international bodies that hand out loans and forgive interest on debts) have made some progress, but a deeper change of attitudes must occur. Pray that those stealing from the nation would be caught and stopped; pray also for a change in people's lax attitude toward and acceptance of corruption.

**b) *Deep divisions*** of language, politics and faith are all potential flashpoints of tension and violence. Cameroon is divided between French and English regions, between Christian, Muslim and traditional religions, between government cronies and increasingly frustrated opposition. Pray for God to raise up reconcilers and peacemakers in this divided land.

**c) *Integrity in leadership*** will make a difference if even just a few key people speak, act and live with integrity. Pray for leaders who will be examples of righteousness and transparency rather than perpetuators of the status quo.

**2** **The spiritual poverty of the churches** is the country's greatest tragedy. Nominal Christianity is a bigger problem in Cameroon than in most of Africa. The early pioneer work of Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Baptists was damaged by compromise and the arrival of liberation

theology. Tribalism, pagan practices, alcoholism and low moral standards are endemic. Most in these churches (Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon) have little concern for the unreached of the north, and they are only now starting to have a prophetic voice to address the major ills of society. Pray for deep repentance, lasting deliverance and true revival, and pray for a restoration of Bible reading, preaching and holiness among Christians.

**3** **Evangelicals, especially Pentecostals, have grown rapidly** in the last 20 years, having had a late start due to the hostility of older denominations. A number of these groups have been started by other African evangelists – in particular Nigerians – rather than by Westerners. Pray for:

- a) Greater spiritual unity and cooperation** between charismatic and non-charismatic groups. Many older denominations see these younger churches as divisive, fragmented upstarts with poor theology and an unhealthy fixation on signs, wonders and money.
- b) More effective discipling in the churches.** The growth of recent years and the focus on numbers of converts rather than on quality of disciples have caused a lack of trained leaders and spiritual growth. Pray for the formation of a genuinely evangelical association of churches in Cameroon that will assist with this challenge.
- c) Pastors and leaders** of great integrity and spirituality. Many of these churches lack accountability structures, and their leaders are often accused of being charlatans seeking wealth by manipulating the faithful. Pray that those with pure motives and hearts may see their churches grow, while the wolves in sheep's clothing may be exposed as fakes.
- d) Biblical engagement** across all spheres of society. The newer churches deliberately avoid being involved in issues of politics, justice, education etc., concentrating solely on spiritual and material blessings for their members. Pray for the maturation of these groups such that they might have a holistic vision and profound impact on the nation.

**4** **Leadership and discipleship training** in the churches are urgent needs, as Cameroon's churches struggle with shallow and biblically illiterate Christianity. Today's spiritual mess has its roots in a failure in theological training. Pray for:

- a) Godly leaders,** well trained in the Scriptures. Some church leadership is more noted for pride, power struggles, disunity, moral failure and misuse of funds than for holy living. Pray for the provision of born-again, godly staff for the nearly 20 denominational and interdenominational theological schools in Cameroon. Pray also for a spiritual revolution in these theological faculties and seminaries that will bring new life and biblical standards to churches so long deprived.
- b) Pray for lay training programmes** that will introduce the Bible to Christians. For many, the pastor's sermon is the extent of their interaction with Scripture. There are increasing numbers of modular-training programmes, aimed at poorer, bi-vocational pastors and church members. Pray also for the two Christian universities that aim to provide quality academic education within the framework of a Christian worldview.

## 5 The growing missions vision and networking are bearing fruit:

**a) Greater evangelical cooperation** to reach the unconverted. Specific initiatives:

- i Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI)* is a Cameroonian mission with remarkable ministries in prayer, missions and publishing, all having a global impact.
- ii Cameroon for Christ*, launched in 1996, involves many denominations and churches in research and evangelism of the 2,400 villages of the north.
- iii Mission BINAM* is a network targeting the idol worshippers of West Cameroon – especially the Bamiléké. It remains very active in evangelism and works with Inserv and GMI to train researchers for church and mission needs in Cameroon.

**b) The growing involvement of Cameroonians** in cross-cultural missions. Dozens of indigenous denominations and churches send missionaries to the north and to neighbouring lands. CMFI has sent and supports dozens of missionaries in 60 countries. CCCI and the Full Gospel Mission send Cameroonians abroad as missionaries, and the Baptist Seminary has a training track for Cameroonian students in Bible translation.

**6 Young people** are increasingly restive, frustrated by the unchanging political status quo, the high unemployment and the endemic cheating, bribery and favouritism in the education system. Many turn to crime and prostitution, and violent demonstrations are occurring in a country that has never before dealt with such disruptions. Pray for:

**a) Effective Christian discipling** in churches and by youth and children's agencies. Little is available. Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) develops Bible study programmes and BCCs for young people. Also, LHM and others run Christian camps and retreats for young people's discipleship.

**b) Student ministry in schools and universities.** YFC is a major ministry among young people, especially in the south. GBEEC(IFES) has a group in each university as well as high school groups in about 80 towns. CCCI sees particular fruit with the military and the military academy. AoG, SU, Academy Campus Forum and Campus Jubilee also have active student work. There are 460,000 secondary schools and 1.3 million tertiary students in the country. Christian groups in the north find themselves under increasing pressure from Muslims.

**7 Less-reached peoples.** A national survey in this complex nation is an urgent need; training and some research are underway. The Joshua Project lists 15 peoples as unreached. The major challenges:

**a) Muslims** – a majority in 59 peoples. These peoples comprise 23% of Cameroon's population and are almost all from the Chadic and Adamawa-Ubangi people clusters. The Gospel Fellowship Association works among almost all of the following groups:

*i The Fulbe* have long been the proud rulers of the area. Christians among them have grown from the 10 known in 1991, but they are still few. Several agencies have ministry among them (Pioneers, Baptist, Lutheran Brethren, Gospel Fellowship Association).

*ii The Hausa, Kanuri, Kotoko and Fali.* There are few believers among these groups.

*iii The Shuwa Arabs* are nomadic, moving between Chad and Cameroon. Only one or two believers are known, and only one agency is known to be trying to plant churches.

**b) *The many peoples of the Mandara Mountains***, 30% Muslim but mostly fetishist. Some church-planting agencies see the beginnings of breakthroughs.

**c) *The northern plains peoples*** – Giziga, Dii, Dowayayo and Mefele – among whom several missionaries and churches are at work. They are predominantly animist in their practices, but Islam has made notable inroads in recent years, polarizing these groups internally.

**d) *The Baka/Pygmies*** in the southeastern forests have long been neglected, but increasingly they are the focus of Christian ministry by Baka and cross-cultural workers (Anglican Frontier Missions, WorldTeam, SIL, CMFI). Bible translation is a significant need. Spiritual warfare among this highly animist and spiritual people is a key to seeing fruitfulness and growth.

**8** **The missionary force** – the largest groups are **YWAM**, Norwegian Lutheran Mission, **CCCI**, **CEF**, **LBT**, North American Baptist Conference and Gospel Fellowship Association. Korean agencies represent many additional workers. Pioneer missionaries are especially needed for Bible translation ministry and to reach Muslim and northern animist peoples. Evangelical missionaries could help bring new life and vigour to the more nominal churches – but this requires skill and gifting of a high order.

**9** **Bible translation** for Cameroon's 278 languages is an overwhelming task. The lack of indigenous, heart-language Scriptures is one of the contributory causes of spiritual poverty in the churches. Only 10 languages have a complete Bible, and fewer than 100 have any Scripture portion at all. Pray for:

**a) *Existing translation and literacy projects.*** Thirteen NT translations were completed from 2003 to 2009. CABTAL (Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy), SIL and several other agencies have invested much in these. Cameroon is SIL's largest African involvement. The faithful work of Bible translation is bearing fruit in church life. Literacy projects are just as vital as translation projects, since 40% of the population is still functionally illiterate. This is an area of great potential convergence of Christian agencies, government bodies and NGOs.

**b) *Surveys are needed*** to identify the translation needs of all Cameroon's languages; at least 59 are already identified as warranting a Bible translation project.

**c) *The indigenous Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy*** (CABTAL) networks with **WBT** and is committed to 28 translation projects, a number set to increase rapidly.



**d) The calling of more indigenous and expatriate workers** for translation, literacy and support work. LBT has 18 workers committed to translation. CABTAL and SIL help to mobilize the indigenous Church to get involved with the needs of Bible translation.

## **10** Support ministries for which intercession is needed:

**a) Christian literature** is a major need as well as opportunity. CMFI runs a publishing house that has already printed three million books and more than 10 million tracts. More literature workers, both expatriate and national, are needed for writing, publishing and distributing French, English and local-language materials. Ministries such as **EHC**, The Gideons and Book of Hope distribute hundreds of thousands of pieces of Christian literature each year as well as interact personally with the recipients.

**b) Christian radio programmes** and stations are an area of growth, especially in the Anglophone West. Many denominational groups are now taking advantage of this media platform. There are also many private Christian radio stations in English and French – *Radio Bonne Nouvelle* started in 2000 and has a network of five stations nationally. *Sawtu Linjilla* – a studio run by Lutherans and other churches and missions in Cameroon, Chad and CAR – produces French and Fulani radio programmes, cassettes and audio-visual materials. The aim is pre-evangelism among the northern Cameroon peoples who use Fulani as a trade language. More Christian radio and television stations and programmes are needed. **GRN** has Christian audio resources in literally hundreds of dialects.

**c) Visual media.** The JESUS film is a major evangelistic tool, resulting in thousands of converts and many churches planted. It is a praiseworthy tool in collaborative ministry among different agencies. The majority of the population have seen it at least once. It is available in over 30 languages, 20 of which are unique to Cameroon, with several more now in production. Pray for effective follow-up with the many people who indicate commitment upon seeing the film and the spiritual challenge given after. A number of Christian television stations are beginning to appear in Cameroon – pray that they might be a blessing for reaching the unreached and building up the body of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Mandryk, [\*Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation\*](#) (Westmont, IL: IVP Books, 2010).