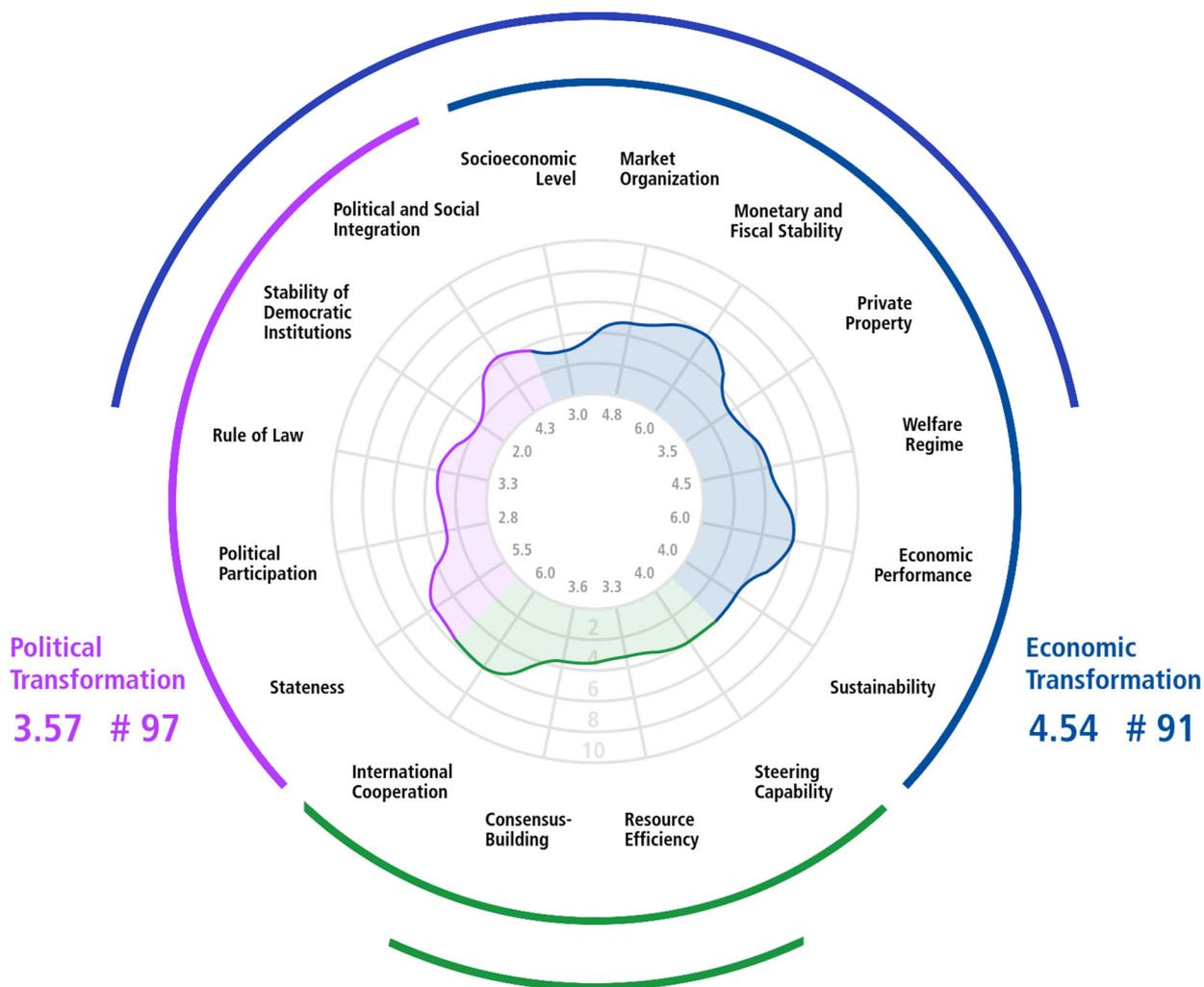


# Cameroon

## Status Index

**4.05 # 101**

on 1-10 scale out of 137



**Political Transformation**  
**3.57 # 97**

**Economic Transformation**  
**4.54 # 91**

## Governance Index

**3.95 # 97**

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report – Cameroon. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2026.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

## Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung  
Carl-Bertelsmann-Strasse 256  
33111 Gütersloh  
Germany

### **Sabine Donner**

Phone +49 5241 81 81501  
[sabine.donner@bertelsmann-stiftung.de](mailto:sabine.donner@bertelsmann-stiftung.de)

### **Hauke Hartmann**

Phone +49 5241 81 81389  
[hauke.hartmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de](mailto:hauke.hartmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de)

### **Sebastian Plate**

Phone +49 5241 81 81263  
[sebastian.plate@bertelsmann-stiftung.de](mailto:sebastian.plate@bertelsmann-stiftung.de)

### **Sabine Steinkamp**

Phone +49 5241 81 81507  
[sabine.steinkamp@bertelsmann-stiftung.de](mailto:sabine.steinkamp@bertelsmann-stiftung.de)

**Key Indicators**

Population	M	<b>29.1</b>	HDI	<b>0.588</b>	GDP p.c., PPP \$	<b>5591</b>
Pop. growth <sup>1</sup>	% p.a.	<b>2.6</b>	HDI rank of 193	<b>155</b>	Gini Index	<b>42.2</b>
Life expectancy	years	<b>63.7</b>	UN Education Index	<b>0.519</b>	Poverty <sup>3</sup>	% <b>46.7</b>
Urban population	%	<b>59.9</b>	Gender inequality <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.558</b>	Aid per capita \$	<b>33.1</b>

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

## Executive Summary

There have been few changes in political and economic conditions in Cameroon. During the review period, the entrenched rule of President Paul Biya entered its 42nd year, while an insurgency in the country's English-speaking regions continued without resolution. Cameroon weathered the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to demonstrate considerable macroeconomic stability, particularly by reducing its fuel subsidy, but failed to make substantial reforms that would curtail corruption and significantly transform the economy. Likewise, Cameroon retained its status as a credible international partner but still has no mechanisms for managing transformation. There is resistance to reforms that might undermine the regime, and Cameroon struggles to strategize its development goals or use resources more efficiently.

The autocratic nature of Cameroon continued to prevent political and economic reform. In 2024, it appeared that President Biya would once again run for president in 2025 at age 92. Biya leads a powerful presidency that is central to an elaborate system of political patronage. This system relies on the distribution of state resources and the balancing of various regional and ethnic identities, as well as high levels of political repression. Elections in Cameroon are fundamentally flawed, and many basic democratic freedoms are unprotected.

The ongoing Anglophone crisis, now in its eighth year, has further challenged the state and strained social relations. There have been near-weekly attacks by separatists on government forces and violent reprisals by the military. The Ambazonian independence movement remains highly fractured and has become more radicalized and is now increasingly targeting civilians.

Bolstered by higher oil revenues and international aid, Cameroon was able to exit the COVID-19 crisis with comparatively stable macroeconomic indicators. Cameroon also announced an ambitious new National Development Strategy meant to guide it through 2030 and secured an Extended Credit Facility from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to pursue those objectives. Nonetheless, there was no real progress on many substantial issues, and the Cameroonian economy

remained hindered by debt, weak fiscal management and a high level of state intervention. High rates of corruption and the politicized use of resources have constrained Cameroon's economic potential, limited improvements in human development and fostered an economy that excludes most citizens, who remain in large part confined to the informal sector.

Consequently, Cameroon lacks effective governance that could facilitate genuine political and economic transformation. Structural constraints are intensified by poor decision-making primarily focused on the political survival of the regime. Government priorities are inconsistent and resources are poorly utilized, most notably evidenced by the proliferation of ministries and administrative bodies that hinder coordination. The government has maintained its role as the pillar of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) region and as a key regional security partner. However, the regime is highly resistant to criticism and strategically leverages international partnerships to shield itself from scrutiny. Most notably, the government has been unwilling to address the root causes of the Anglophone crisis or participate in good-faith negotiations.

## History and Characteristics of Transformation

Cameroon's process of economic transformation began in the late 1980s, with political changes following in the early 1990s. Under Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, the agriculture, education, health care and transport sectors saw improvements. Nonetheless, Ahidjo ruled with a repressive style for 20 years in a heavily centralized state. Moreover, Ahidjo was perceived as biased toward his co-ethnics from northern Cameroon. The discovery in 1977 of modest offshore oil deposits significantly accelerated growth rates but also increased rent-seeking and corruption. The political transition from Ahidjo to Paul Biya was contentious and exacerbated by an attempted coup in 1984 and an economic crisis. While Biya promised a "New Deal" that included structural reform, he came to rely more heavily on his southern co-ethnics, who were given senior positions in the military, government, ruling party and the economy. This exacerbated public corruption and enhanced resistance to democratic and economic reform. By the late 1980s, Cameroon was again mired in a severe economic crisis.

In 1989, Cameroon entered a structural adjustment loan agreement with international lenders. The program included typical components such as banking sector reform, privatization, trade liberalization and budgetary restraints. The program did not include monetary intervention, since Cameroon is a member of the CFA franc zone. However, the reform process remained sluggish, and the World Bank identified Cameroon as one of the most disappointing adjusters of the period. The pace of reform picked up after 2000 when some state-owned enterprises were privatized and competition was allowed into the banking and telecom sectors. Cameroon was eligible for the IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, which significantly lowered Cameroon's debt burden. Cameroon made progress on stabilizing macroeconomic benchmarks and measures of well-being. Nonetheless, international lenders noted continued resistance to reform due to poor governance and rampant corruption. Cameroon began to rely heavily on non-concessional lending to finance major infrastructure projects and invested less in human development.

Cameroon's democratic transformation was also driven by the economic crisis of the 1980s. As in other African countries, civil society agitation, mass protests and international pressure compelled the regime to acquiesce to multiparty elections. Many parties were subsequently formed, most of which depended on ethnic or limited regional support. However, pressure on the regime for constitutional reform before the election failed, and the 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections were heavily manipulated to orchestrate a narrow regime victory. Since then, the regime has been able to sideline the opposition and transition into electoral authoritarianism. There have been modest improvements in political rights and civil liberties, but no allowance has been made for a transition of power. In 2006, the regime launched a large-scale anti-corruption campaign called Operation Sparrowhawk, which was used to target political opponents. In 2008, the National Assembly abolished presidential term limits, leading to large-scale protests in major cities and state violence. In 2014, a broad anti-terror law was passed that gave the regime significant discretion in defining crimes against the state and in the use of military tribunals to prosecute opponents. In 2024, it appeared that Paul Biya would once again run for president in 2025 at the age of 92.

Cameroon has also faced major armed challenges to state authority. Since 2009, the jihadist group Boko Haram has operated along the Cameroonian-Nigerian border in the Far North Region. Although the conflict has declined from its 2013 – 2014 peak, it has taken a significant toll. Since 2017, English-speaking regions have experienced acute civil conflict. These areas have long expressed a sense of linguistic and cultural discrimination dating back to colonialism. The current conflict began after peaceful civil society protests seeking redress were met with brutal state repression. The conflict has had a devastating human and economic impact, with multiple armed groups fighting for what is termed "Ambazonian" independence. There have only been symbolic efforts at conflict resolution.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

## Transformation Status

### I. Political Transformation

#### 1 | Stateness

An ongoing secessionist movement in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon – the North-West and South-West regions – significantly challenges the state’s monopoly on the use of force. In October 2017, the self-proclaimed Interim Government and the Ambazonian Governing Council both claimed the broader region’s independence from Cameroon. These groups each operate or coordinate the activities of several local militias engaged in insurgent activities against the government. Militant groups also target civilians perceived to be cooperating with the government or thought to be unwilling to support insurgent activities such as economic and political boycotts. Civilians are frequently kidnapped for ransom as a way for groups to raise funds. These patterns continued between 2023 and 2024, which by some accounts were among the most violent years of the conflict.

The state’s monopoly on the use of force is also challenged in the remote Far North region and the Lake Chad Basin. In recent years, Islamist forces including Boko Haram and the Islamic State (IS) group in West Africa have become more active, with a slight rise in violent events between 2023 and 2024. Numerous self-defense vigilante groups, comprising approximately 14,000 members, have been criticized for their involvement in criminal activity such as cattle stealing, smuggling and banditry. Similarly, the fallout from conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) affects Cameroon’s eastern border. Armed groups engage in banditry and kidnapping, which has led to frequent shutdowns of the border and constrained commerce.

In total, these conflicts have created about 1 million internally displaced people and left nearly 2 million in need of humanitarian aid. The various conflicts have killed about 9,500 people. The larger conflict between government and separatist forces has claimed about 6,500 lives since 2017, while Cameroon’s war with Boko Haram in the far north has killed more than 3,000 Cameroonians.

Question  
Score

Monopoly on the  
use of force

5



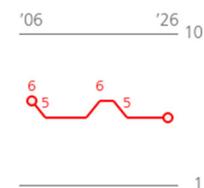
A large percentage of the population accepts that Cameroon is a legitimate nation-state, but historic tensions with English-speaking regions present a significant challenge. Anglophone identity is linked to Cameroon's unique bifurcated colonial heritage, which led to a federation between a larger French-speaking and a smaller English-speaking territory. Political centralization and the abandonment of federalism in 1972 have increased perceptions of cultural, economic and political discrimination among Anglophones. Anglophone distinctiveness has grown since November 2016, when a protest movement to address historical grievances evolved into a prolonged secessionist movement. Some segments of the English-speaking population support a return to federalism, but others support the full independence of "Ambazonia," including the territories in North-West and South-West Cameroon. Despite recognition of the North-West and South-West as regions with special status, there has been little progress in resolving these fundamental divisions.

The conflict with Boko Haram in northern Cameroon has had lingering effects on state identity. Recruitment of Cameroonian youth has often been forced or motivated by economic concerns. Boko Haram has also deliberately targeted members of the Kanuri group, who have cross-border cultural and familial ties. More broadly, the historically limited presence of the state in peripheral regions of Cameroon raises concerns about state identity. However, there is generally no structural discrimination regarding citizenship rights.

There is generally a separation of church and state, although this provision is not explicitly defined in the constitution. There is no official state religion in Cameroon, but the regime maintains close ties with members of the Catholic Church, and many northern politicians have ties to Muslim religious leaders called Fons or Lamidos. In January 2025, some Catholic bishops who urged Paul Biya not to seek re-election in the October 2025 elections were quickly rebuked and mocked by senior government officials. The Ministry of Territorial Administration has faced criticism for its lengthy registration process for new religious groups, and in July 2023 it banned the activities of the Evangelical Church for one month. Local religious leaders have at times been given significant leeway to manage local affairs. Legal codes adopted from the colonial era explicitly recognize customary and Muslim law. Local courts – called Alkali courts in Anglophone regions and Tribunaux de Premier Degré in Francophone regions – have at times overruled statutory law, especially regarding issues of inheritance, succession and personal law. It should also be noted that socially conservative values espoused by major religious organizations have likely influenced the government's attitude toward the LGBTQ+ community. Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Cameroon, with a penalty of up to five years in prison.

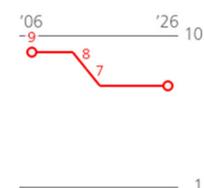
#### State identity

5



#### No interference of religious dogmas

7



Government agencies and administration are present in most parts of the country but are largely ineffective with regard to performance and in providing public services. In 2022, only half the country had access to sanitation, while just over two-thirds had access to drinking water (69.59%) and electricity (71%). School access in the North-West and South-West regions has been significantly impeded, with estimates that 50% of schools are nonfunctional.

Cameroon is divided into 10 regions, each governed by a presidentially appointed governor and an indirectly elected council. In response to demands for greater autonomy, the Anglophone regions were granted special status in 2019 that entailed the creation of regional assemblies with greater powers than the regional councils in Francophone regions. However, the regional assemblies remain very weak and under the control of appointed regional governments. The regions are subdivided into 58 divisions or departments, which are headed by presidentially appointed divisional officers. Departments are divided into subdivisions administered by 360 elected municipal councils and 14 unelected urban councils. Despite constitutional provisions, decentralization has been only partially implemented and has not translated into effective resource allocation (local councils do have the ability to levy local taxes and licensing fees). Consequently, access to public services remains limited, especially in rural areas where roughly half the population lives.

All levels of government are undermined by corruption. Instances of petty corruption are common among police, judiciary, and tax and customs officials. While several top government officials have been prosecuted for corruption, many have had charges dropped, and it is widely assumed that many elites in Cameroon are involved in large-scale corruption. Prosecutions of high-level elites, locally referred to as Operation Sparrowhawk, are seen as politically motivated and directed against Biya's rivals.

## 2 | Political Participation

Multiparty elections and near-universal suffrage have been extended since 1992; however, there are persistent concerns about electoral integrity. While the incidence of outright fraud has declined, opposition parties have rejected results and accused the election management body, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), of bias. The president appoints all members of ELECAM, and ongoing issues remain with voter registration and election management. Legislative elections have been postponed three times – in 2012, 2018 and 2024 – for political purposes, and the state-run media does not ensure equal access for all major candidates and parties. Incumbent President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982 and is expected to run again in 2025. Senatorial and regional council seats are filled through indirect election by an electoral college of municipal councilors, which gives the regime a significant advantage. Additionally, 30% of Senate seats are appointed by the president and 22% of regional council seats are filled by state-recognized traditional chiefs. In the latest senatorial election in March 2023, the ruling party won all the indirectly elected seats.

### Basic administration

5

'06 '26 10



1

### Free and fair elections

3

'06 '26 10



1

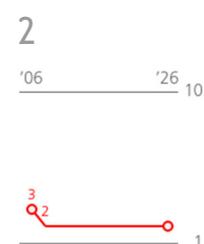
The Anglophone crisis has further eroded faith in elections. In 2020, legislative and municipal elections were held amid a tense security environment in English-speaking regions. The Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) boycotted the elections over concerns about the security situation and the impartiality of the process. Turnout rates in Anglophone regions were abysmally low, and candidates who participated in the election process were targeted by separatist groups with violence. Security and impartiality concerns also marred the 2023 senatorial elections.

While Cameroon has a nominally democratically elected legislature and regional and local councils, political power is heavily concentrated in the office of the presidency. The constitution of Cameroon grants the president extensive formal powers, including the ability to unilaterally appoint ministers and senior civil servants. Presidentially appointed governors, district officers and subdistrict officers wield significant political power that allows them to override the decisions made by elected officials. Similarly, government-recognized traditional authorities depend on the presidency and can exert influence over elected officials. The president is also the commander in chief of all military units and appoints most senior officers. Presidential power is further amplified through ambiguously defined emergency powers. The president can suspend the rule of law for renewable three-month terms. These powers were expanded in 2014 with the passage of an anti-terror bill that defined terrorism as any activity that threatened the functioning of the state and allowed certain crimes to be prosecuted in a military tribunal.

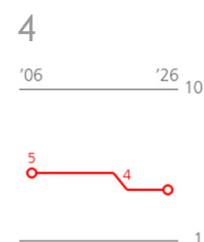
The president of Cameroon wields additional power over elected officials through his control of the ruling party and his central role in the Cameroonian political system. Because the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) dominates politics in Cameroon, it serves as the primary path for most political ambition. As chairman of the party, the president effectively controls political careers in both the party and elected bodies and can cultivate political loyalists. Paul Biya has been in power for more than 40 years, and during that time he has created extensive patronage networks throughout the state apparatus and military. These networks hold together a fragile multiethnic coalition that largely benefits Biya's southern co-ethnics. The question of succession has loomed large in Cameroon for many years, and many elites believe that any challenge to Biya's authority would lead to destabilization.

In principle, the constitution guarantees freedom of association and assembly, but in practice these rights are significantly curtailed. Citizens can create associations and political parties, although the Ministry of Territorial Administration can suspend associations that are deemed to be disruptive to public order or a threat to national security. In November 2023, there were more than 360 registered political parties and numerous civil society groups. However, in January 2017, the government used its authority under the 2014 anti-terror bill to ban two Anglophone advocacy groups: the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC).

Effective power to govern



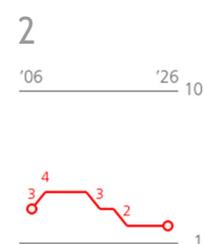
Association / assembly rights



Assembly rights are more often hindered than association rights. Throughout the Anglophone crisis, the government has resorted to severe violence to counter peaceful demonstrations and has used emergency declarations to impose curfews. In other parts of Cameroon, political opposition has been increasingly limited. In the past, the state apparatus would deny permits for assemblies for unspecified reasons. For instance, in 2019, defeated presidential contender Maurice Kamto and 350 of his supporters in the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) party were detained for nearly 10 months on charges of insurrection. The MRC was not allowed to hold a public meeting until 2023. Similarly, opposition parliamentarian Cabral Libii was banned from holding public assemblies throughout 2023.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media. However, while Cameroon has a rich media landscape with more than 500 outlets, freedom of expression is significantly constrained. State media are under strict government control, and private media outlets are often subject to intimidation. Cameroon's media regulatory body, the National Communication Council (CNC), frequently bans newspapers and sanctions journalists for reporting on censored issues and allegedly spreading false information. Cameroon's libel laws are particularly lenient, which allows the government to prosecute reporters and media outlets for defamation and insulting the presidency. The 2014 anti-terror bill has considerably expanded the range of offenses that the government can censor media over. This power was used to limit reporting on government activities during the fight against Boko Haram in northern Cameroon and during the Anglophone crisis. This environment further deteriorated with the assassination of journalist Martinez Zogo in January 2023 and Anye Nde Nsho in May 2023. Likewise, following rumors that Paul Biya had died while abroad in October 2024, reporting on the president's health was banned by the Ministry of Interior.

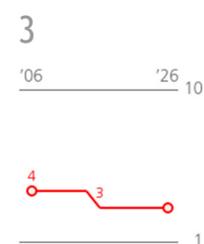
Freedom of expression



### 3 | Rule of Law

Given the formal powers granted to the presidency and the ruling party's decades-long domination of the country's institutions, neither the legislature nor judiciary can hold the executive accountable. The ruling party controls the overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly (139 out of 180) and the Senate (94 out of 100) and controls most local municipal councils (316 out of 360). Opposition figures hold some leadership positions in the legislature, but their influence is limited and demands for investigative commissions are routinely blocked. Because the president controls the CPDM nomination process, this further ensures a compliant legislature. The speaker of the National Assembly, regime loyalist Cavaye Djibril, has held the position since 1992. In the Senate, Marcel Niat Nijifendi has held the speakership since the institution's creation in 2013. The president also essentially appoints the judiciary, as he chairs the consultative Higher Judicial Council of Cameroon. The prime minister's office, established in 1992, is also appointed and its role is limited to government coordination.

Separation of powers

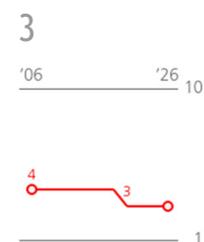


The judiciary in Cameroon is subordinate to the executive. Although the constitution provides that judicial power is independent of legislative and executive power, the president is noted as the guarantor of the judiciary's independence. The president is responsible for appointments, promotions and disciplinary sanctions, with the consultation of the Higher Judicial Council. However, the president chairs that council and appoints most of its members, and therefore wields ultimate control over the careers of justices and magistrates. While justices enjoy tenure, the president can use disciplinary standards to transfer justices, stifle promotions, temporarily dismiss justices and force early retirement. In addition, the judiciary is highly dependent on the executive for its financing, and the executive can use decrees to delay salaries and allowances. In 2018, a Constitutional Council was finally formed, as required by the 1996 constitution. This council took responsibility for constitutional law away from the Supreme Court and is responsible for adjudicating disputes during presidential elections. The president appoints the Constitutional Council's 11 members for renewable six-year terms. Clément Atangana, who was perceived as a CPDM insider, was appointed as the council's president.

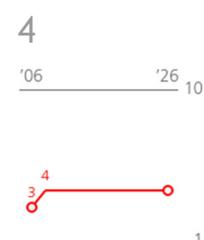
The independence of the judiciary is further undermined by the creation of special tribunals and court systems for prosecuting financial crimes and terrorism. In 2011 a Special Criminal Court was established to handle cases of public financial misappropriation. However, many view this court as a tool for the ruling regime to punish political detractors and opponents. In 2023 this court convicted former public broadcasting director Amadou Vamouké on embezzlement charges that outside groups perceived as unfounded. The 2014 anti-terror bill defines terrorism broadly to include any activity that threatens national territorial integrity and allows the government to fast-track prosecutions through a military tribunal rather than the regular judicial system. Opponents of the bill argue that these new powers have been used to suppress political dissent and freedom of expression, particularly regarding the government's activities in northern Cameroon to combat Boko Haram and in Anglophone regions.

Public corruption is pervasive, and prosecutions against offenders are selective and usually politically motivated. Cameroon has established several institutions ostensibly to fight corruption. In 2000, the National Anti-Corruption Observatory was founded, but lacked a sustained financial foundation and independence from the executive. In 2006, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) replaced this body, and in 2011 the Special Criminal Court was created to prosecute state officials involved in particularly egregious corruption scandals. Also in 2006, a coordinated anti-corruption effort known as Operation Sparrowhawk was launched and continues to operate. As a result, there have been several high-profile prosecutions of public officials including ministers, a former prime minister and several managers of state-owned corporations.

#### Independent judiciary



#### Prosecution of office abuse



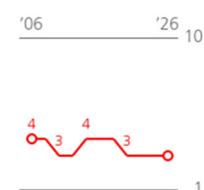
However, observers note that these anti-corruption drives are slow-moving, half-hearted and often used to silence critics. For instance, in 2012 former Minister of Health Urbain Awono was sentenced to 20 years in prison for embezzlement related to a fake contract to deliver mosquito nets to hospitals. Awono, however, was arrested in 2008 following his criticism of the abolishment of presidential term limits. In 2012, Interior Minister Marafa Hamidou Yaya was arrested and sentenced to 25 years in jail for his involvement in a scandal concerning the purchase of a new presidential jet – the “Albatross Affair.” The following year, former Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni was sentenced to 20 years in prison for embezzlement. Both Yaya and Inoni were seen as potential challengers to President Paul Biya. In 2023, a potential presidential successor, former Defense Minister Edgar Alain Mebe Ngo’o, was sentenced to 30 years in prison for embezzlement. Despite these prosecutions, many other trials have stalled and Cameroon continues to top corruption watchdog lists. Most recently, despite an ongoing related trial in the United Kingdom, no prosecution has been brought against Cameroonian officials in the context of the “Glencore Scandal.” Likewise, the executive has not implemented a 1996 law that requires public officials to declare assets (Law 2006/001).

Civil liberties are supposed to be guaranteed by constitutional procedures and the legal system. However, according to an assessment by the U.S. State Department, both mechanisms involve lengthy delays, and there are problems enforcing civil court orders due to bureaucratic inefficiency and pervasive corruption. Many civil rights are frequently violated, particularly for political opponents. As in previous years, supporters of the Anglophone secessionist movement have increasingly been targeted. The government has also declared states of emergency and imposed curfews in Anglophone areas and parts of northern Cameroon. It is common for the government to arbitrarily detain hundreds of people and hold them in prolonged administrative detention. Prison conditions are notoriously dire, with overcrowding, subpar sanitation, food shortages, and systematic torture and rape. Moreover, the increased use of military tribunals under the guise of the 2014 anti-terror law has severely restricted civil rights.

There is also evidence of significant discrimination and unequal access to justice. Since 2011, the LGBTQ+ community has faced a series of trials against homosexuals. Homosexuality is criminalized in Cameroon. Human Rights Watch has noted that Cameroon prosecutes homosexuality more aggressively than any other country in the world, and in 2021 issued a report noting a significant increase in the arrest and abuse of LGBTQ+ people. In recent years, the work of NGOs that advocate for the LGBTQ+ community has also been aggressively curtailed, as exemplified by the suspension of the Central African Human Rights Defenders Network (REHDAC) and the judicial summons of its founder, Barrister Alice Nkom. The U.S. State Department reported in 2024 that there were reports of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQ+) persons being beaten and physically abused by ordinary citizens, with little or no action by the government to protect them or pursue their attackers.

Civil rights

3



Women also face judicial and de facto discrimination concerning inheritance, employment and property rights. Domestic violence is believed to be widespread, and female genital mutilation affects about 1% of women. In northern Cameroon, the government continues to monitor Muslim places of worship and has previously banned full-face veils.

#### 4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

For decades, Cameroon has been an autocracy with a facade of democratic republican institutions that have not developed independent authority. The National Assembly and the Senate cannot be considered democratic institutions. Rather, these bodies serve as arenas in which the regime placates elite ambitions through patronage and corruption. Deficiencies in democracy and the rule of law are deeply rooted and form an inherent part of the political architecture supporting Paul Biya's rule. This bleak reality is reflected in public attitudes that are increasingly disappointed in democracy in Cameroon. According to the 2024 Afrobarometer surveys, more than 22% of Cameroonians believe that Cameroon is nondemocratic and an additional 42% believe the country is a democracy with major problems. The escalation of the crisis in Anglophone regions into a full-blown secessionist insurgency is another indicator of the failure of democratic politics in Cameroon.

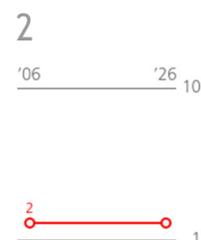
Cameroon is a highly personalized electoral autocracy with little commitment to democratic institutions. The president's centralization of power allows him to manipulate institutions to benefit supporters and punish detractors. He undermines democratic institutions by convening cabinet meetings only irregularly. The ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), does not hold regular party congresses, as its chairman, President Biya, makes even these decisions. There appears to be no institutional mechanism within the ruling party for selecting a successor, making a future succession crisis likely and potentially further destabilizing democratic institutions. In July 2024, the president obtained legislative approval to postpone legislative and municipal elections until 2026, following the scheduled presidential election.

Opposition parties and civil society organizations have historically participated in democratic politics but have also frequently boycotted elections or refused to participate in the National Assembly. The Anglophone conflict has further diminished some political actors' commitment to democratic institutions in Cameroon, as seen in the election boycott in 2020.

Performance of democratic institutions



Commitment to democratic institutions



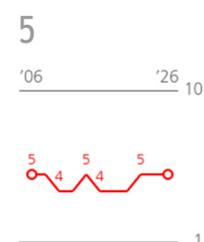
## 5 | Political and Social Integration

Cameroon's party system is characterized by a dominant or hegemonic ruling party surrounded by a fragmented array of opposition parties. Outside the ruling party, political parties are institutionally weak and have limited social roots. Five parties have consistently won some representation in the National Assembly – the Social Democratic Front (SDF), National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), the Union of Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), the Cameroonian Democratic Union (UDC) and the Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR). Of these, only the SDF has been persistently oppositional, but it currently holds only five legislative seats. Each party is rooted in specific regions or is strongly ethnic. Since 2018, new parties have emerged, such as the Front for the National Salvation of Cameroon and the Cameroonian Party for National Reconciliation, but they have won only a few seats. Other parties like the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) and Uniers have put forward somewhat popular presidential candidates but hold no legislative seats. Cameroon also has more than 300 “mushroom parties” that contend in elections with no intention of winning seats. In November 2023, for instance, the Ministry of Territorial Administration announced the authorization of 40 new political parties, adding to the already existing 329.

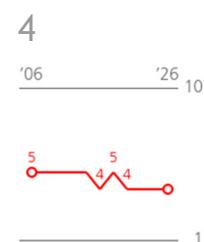
The ruling party claims to have a physical organization throughout the country that reaches down to the village level. However, in reality, the party's organization is not permanent and emerges only during elections. The ruling party has much stronger support in the Central and Southern regions among the president's co-ethnics. The ruling party appeals to political stability in its campaigns but also engages in extensive clientelism and outright vote-buying to mobilize support.

Some societal interests are represented in Cameroon, but many are under-represented and those that are organized often suffer from weak membership and government intervention in their affairs. Formal workers can form trade unions, and the Confederation of Cameroon Trade Unions (CCTU) coordinates most union activity. However, membership numbers remain low (about 200,000) and most workers in Cameroon are in the under-represented informal sector. Moreover, the CCTU is heavily monitored, and the government has also supported the rival Union of Free Trade Unions. Agricultural interests are organized into several cooperatives, but these are much stronger in the West and North-West regions. The business community is organized into an employers' association (GICAM), but its leadership has strong ties with the ruling party. Cameroon also has various elite associations based on villages and ethnic groups, which are often penetrated or co-opted by the ruling party. Women are relatively under-represented in Cameroon's interest groups. Likewise, there is no real advocacy network for civic education, governance or democracy.

### Party system



### Interest groups



Since 2016, interest groups in Anglophone areas have faced intense repression. In 2017, the government banned the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), which advocated for the self-determination of Anglophones. The government also banned the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), an umbrella organization that brought together local legal groups, teacher unions and student organizations to advocate for redress of cultural and economic grievances. According to a report by the U.S. State Department, authorities issued a ban on the activities of the Evangelical Church of Cameroon in July 2023, citing the threat of serious disturbance to public order. However, the ban was lifted in August of the same year and services were resumed.

While the political system should be described as an authoritarian regime, there is substantial support for democracy as a political system. However, Cameroon has seen a downward trend in approval of democracy. According to the 2024 Afrobarometer poll, only 50% of Cameroonians consider democracy to be preferable to other forms of government. This marks a significant decline from 67% in 2014/15. Only a quarter of Cameroonians are satisfied with the state of their democracy. These trends are especially evident among the Anglophone population.

Elections in Cameroon are generally nonviolent, and while losers might reject the results, they have not organized violence in opposition. However, the current secessionist movement in Anglophone areas reflects a rejection of the state of democracy in Cameroon and of the notion that the conflict can be resolved through democratic procedures.

Social capital in Cameroon is primarily bonding rather than bridging. Intercommunal trust is weak, as evident in the prevalence of ethnic associations and the importance of kinship in accessing the state hierarchy. These patterns often extend from rural to urban areas, where it is common to find village associations that cater to communal life. Likewise, perceptions of ethnic bias in the distribution of resources and accusations of under- or overrepresentation of certain groups in state structures and prestigious institutions permeate political discourse. Government narratives of national unity mask a strategy of ethnic balancing and divide-and-rule tactics that reinforce primary identities. These tendencies are exacerbated by persistent economic insecurity, which leads ordinary citizens to seek recourse through their primary identity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government encouraged citizens to contribute to a Health Solidarity Fund. The fund generated more than \$40 million in contributions (primarily from politicians and corporate entities), much of which was apparently embezzled. According to the 2024 Afrobarometer poll, only 44% of Cameroonians trust other citizens.

The Francophone-Anglophone division is currently the most significant barrier to social capital, and the crisis has significantly exacerbated this tendency. Levels of trust between French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonians were already likely low before the conflict, but the spread of violence has had a twofold effect.

Approval of  
democracy

n/a

'06 '26 10

n/a 1

Social capital

4

'06 '26 10

4

1

First, it has widened the chasm between the two communities and allowed the government to portray Anglophones as terrorists who threaten to destabilize the country. Second, violence has also frayed bonds within the Anglophone community – especially in widening the “Anglophone NW-SW divide” – and citizens have not been spared from separatist violence. There is frequent reporting of attacks against so-called informants and regime collaborators (referred to as “black legs”). A similar dynamic eroded social capital in northern Cameroon at the peak of the war against Boko Haram.

## II. Economic Transformation

### 6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Cameroon’s economic structure and performance do not meet the criteria for a socially responsible market democracy. Despite significant improvements in poverty alleviation and human development since the 1990s, Cameroon still ranks low and the rate of improvement has stalled. Many aspects of human development have deteriorated since the start of the Anglophone crisis.

With a GDP per capita of \$1,673, Cameroon is a lower middle-income country. Cameroon’s Human Development Index score of 0.587 places it at the very low end of the medium human development spectrum, and the country is ranked at 151st out of 189 countries by the index. Life expectancy at birth is 62 years, and 44% of the population lives in conditions of multidimensional poverty. There have been mixed improvements along specific indicators of human development, and all major aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals face significant challenges.

In addition, socioeconomic development is strongly shaped by persistent inequalities. The Gini coefficient stood at 42.2 in 2021, and more than 40% of the population lives in rural areas, where poverty is heavily concentrated in the Far North and East Region. Poverty is widespread, with a poverty rate of 46.7% in 2021. Approximately 33% of the urban population lives in slums with poor sanitation conditions. Cameroon’s HDI score falls to 0.362 when accounting for inequality, far below the average for medium-HDI countries (0.483). Gender inequality is also an issue, most evident in differences in educational attainment and labor-force participation rates. Cameroon’s Gender Inequality Index score is currently 0.55, which is slightly above the average for medium-HDI countries (0.489).

Question  
Score

Socioeconomic  
barriers

3

'06 '26 10

3

1

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	45011.9	44347.2	49279.4	<b>51326.8</b>
GDP growth	%	3.3	3.7	3.2	<b>3.7</b>
Inflation (CPI)	%	2.3	6.2	7.4	<b>4.5</b>
Unemployment	%	4.0	3.7	3.6	<b>3.5</b>
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	2.1	2.1	1.7	<b>1.8</b>
Export growth	%	3.5	2.9	-0.1	<b>-4.0</b>
Import growth	%	12.8	5.3	1.9	<b>1.9</b>
Current account balance	\$ M	-1794.5	-1505.1	-2018.9	-
Public debt	% of GDP	47.2	45.6	43.1	<b>42.8</b>
External debt	\$ M	15377.2	15109.6	15331.9	-
Total debt service	\$ M	1939.0	1805.7	1703.1	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-2.8	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	11.3	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	12.0	10.5	10.6	<b>10.5</b>
Public education spending	% of GDP	2.8	2.7	2.8	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	0.5	0.7	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.0	0.9	0.9	-

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

## 7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Market-based competition is structured by several legal frameworks aimed at streamlining the ease of doing business, but significant hindrances to a free market environment remain. Cameroon is party to the Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC) framework. Cameroon is also a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), which implements laws and regulations aimed at streamlining business regulations in 17 African countries. Cameroon's banking sector is subject to the Bank of Central African States (BEAC), and the country is a foundational member of the African

Market organization

4

'06 '26 10

4 5 4

1

Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI). This regional integration creates a degree of competitive market organization, particularly regarding access to foreign exchange, the licensing of credit bureaus and dispute resolution.

Nonetheless, the conditions for a free market are not met. Estimates indicate that nearly 90% of the population works in the informal sector, and state intervention, corruption and poorly functioning public institutions remain persistent obstacles. The state enforces price and import controls on certain goods such as staple foods and gasoline. More than 130 state-owned enterprises dominate some sectors of the economy. International financial institutions frequently criticize deficiencies in property registration, procurement and import permitting. In late January 2025, the IMF urged the government to carry out ambitious plans to improve the business climate, citing delays in reform efforts.

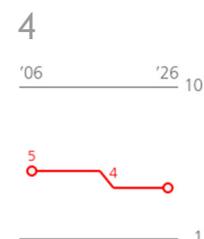
Despite the country's membership in OAPI, intellectual property rights are also weakly enforced. These restrictions have limited the ability of small- and medium-sized enterprises to enter the market and proved a hindrance to foreign investment.

The National Competition Commission (NCC) in the Ministry of Commerce is the national authority that, in theory, enforces competition rules. However, competition in many sectors is restricted, in part due to the pervasive presence of more than 130 state-owned companies and a single marketing board for agricultural exports. For example, Cameroon Telecommunications (CAMTEL) controls the national telephone and internet infrastructures, and is expanding into the retail mobile phone sector. There is also a national refinery (SONARA), a sugar company (CAMSUCO), a palm oil company (SOCAPALM), a cotton company (SODECOTON) and a brewery (Brasseries du Cameroun). In addition, the government has faced criticism for giving preferential treatment to French companies such as Total in the oil sector, Lafarge in the building materials sector and Société Générale in investment banking. Notably, the NCC has never prosecuted a competition infringement case. More recently, Cameroon has taken steps to revise Law 2013/004, which addresses foreign direct investment, and to encourage more competition in the private sector. However, these changes have not yet taken place.

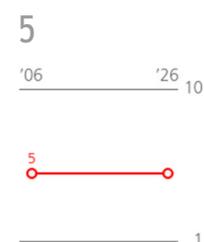
Cameroon is not a member of the International Competition Network.

Cameroon adheres to the multilateral trade system, particularly the agreements of the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization (WCO), as well as common trade rules set by CEMAC. Cameroon has signed several limited bilateral trade agreements and maintains a few foreign trade zones (FTZs) where certain trade barriers are reduced. The most-favored-nation average tariff levels stood at 18.1% as of 2023. Cameroon's membership in the Commonwealth and the franc zone is also intended to facilitate trade.

#### Competition policy



#### Liberalization of foreign trade



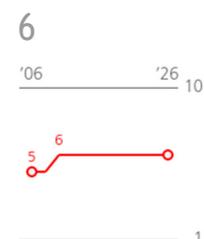
In 2016, the country's Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU took effect, providing Cameroon with duty-free exports of most goods to Europe in exchange for a reduction in tariffs on EU imports. Cameroon has ratified the 2020 African Continental Free Trade Area; however, it has not yet been implemented. In 2020, Cameroon lost its eligibility for preferential trade under the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act due to human rights violations.

Despite these structures, several formal and informal barriers to free trade remain. Complex and inefficient bureaucracies, particularly at the port of Douala, result in long delays and high costs. Cameroon applies CEMAC's common external tariff, which sets four tariff rates ranging from 10% on raw materials to 30% on certain consumer goods. This masks much higher costs due to lengthy and, at times, costly permit and registration processes. Problems also exist with customs valuation practices for certain products – including some textiles, meat, imported sugar alcohol and nicotine products – which are not always based on the transaction value but rather on a reference price set by the government. There are no export subsidies or import quotas in place, but the government requires grade certifications for the export of coffee, cocoa, gold and diamonds, and bans the export of certain types of forestry products for environmental conservation.

Cameroon has 15 commercial banks and more than 400 microfinance institutions. The Central African Banking Commission (COBAC) regulates the banking sector, and the regional Bank of Central African States (BEAC) serves as the central bank. However, banking services are not widely available outside major urban areas, and fewer than 20% of Cameroonians have access to formal banking services. Microfinance institutions and mobile money are available to most Cameroonians, but may have become more restricted after the introduction of a tax on electronic payment transfers in 2022. The domestic banking sector is also overshadowed by international commercial banks.

While Cameroon has a large banking system, it remains fragile. The four largest banks account for nearly two-thirds of total bank assets, and Yaoundé and Douala generate about 90% of all bank credits and deposits. Between 2023 and 2024 capital adequacy ratios improved to 15.3, and the share of non-performing loans decreased slightly but remained high. Since the COVID-19 crisis, Cameroonian banks have become more exposed to the public sector and state-owned enterprises of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale, CEMAC). Cameroon has one of Africa's highest sovereign-bank nexuses, which makes it vulnerable to contagion from other CEMAC members and commodity price fluctuations.

#### Banking system



## 8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

Monetary policy is managed by the regional central bank, BEAC, which holds currency reserves, seeks to limit inflation by setting policy rates and regulates foreign currency exchange. Cameroon's inclusion in the CFA zone, which pegs the CFA franc to the euro, has also given it a comparatively stable currency. In 2022, a regulation that restricted payments in foreign currency by individuals and businesses was extended to the oil sector. Following an agreement in 2018, the government has made greater efforts to increase the repatriation of foreign exchange and stabilize BEAC's reserves. Likewise, Cameroon began to share mining and oil contracts with BEAC. Cameroon's economy has also proved resilient in the face of the challenges produced by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war, which elevated food and energy prices. The consumer inflation rate remains high at approximately 4.5%, but is expected to subside further. According to the World Bank (2024), the inflation rate (based on the consumer price index) stood at 7.4% in 2023, but was substantially lower before. The real effective exchange rate index is 104 and reflects a rather healthy foreign exchange situation.

Cameroon has made gradual yet imperfect improvements to its fiscal policy, raising concerns about long-term fiscal stability. In 2021, the IMF approved a three-year \$689.5 million Extended Credit Facility that required Cameroon to accelerate reforms to improve its fiscal management and help diversify the economy. The 2023 finance law reduced fuel subsidies and increased stamp duties. However, by 2024, assessments of these reforms offered mixed conclusions. Non-oil revenue had increased, and the public debt-to-GDP ratio had continued to improve. This was largely due to more efficient collection of customs duties, budget spending cuts and a reduction in the fuel subsidy. Cameroon's current account deficit increased to 4% of GDP due to lower oil export revenue and adverse weather, but was expected to moderate.

Several ongoing issues remain of concern. Unexpected increases in international oil prices could compel the government to raise the fuel subsidy. While the overall volume of public debt is declining, Cameroon remains at high risk of debt distress. Public debt currently amounts to the equivalent of 43% of GDP, and most of this debt is external, with China as the major lender. State-owned enterprises lack transparency and currently hold an unknown amount of additional debt, estimated at about 12.5% of GDP. Debt-funded projects often proceed without the approval of the National Public Debt Commission, and loan tracking remains inadequate. Furthermore, government revenue relies predominantly on the oil sector, with very few non-oil sectors contributing.

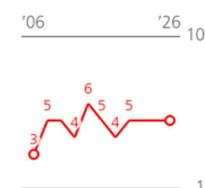
### Monetary stability

7



### Fiscal stability

5



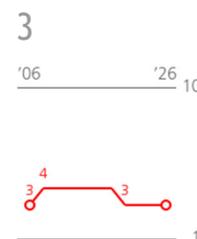
## 9 | Private Property

Property rights, including those of tribes and farmers, are recognized under Cameroonian law. In principle, liens must be recorded in contracts, and a land title registry exists. However, land registration rates in Cameroon are extremely low, with fewer than 1,000 titles issued annually. The process of registering property is often lengthy and costly, and only 2% of Cameroonian land is registered, primarily in urban areas. In rural areas, land is mostly subject to specific land tenure regimes, which has led to conflicts over informal land sales and illegal occupation. The state also has unique authority to override property rights. Emergency powers used during the Anglophone conflict have allowed the government to confiscate land indiscriminately. Additionally, the Cameroonian government can easily expropriate land for the public interest, such as for major infrastructure projects. While a compensation system exists, it is weakly enforced. Protection for intellectual property is also weak. Although Cameroon hosts the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), there are very few legal structures or enforcement mechanisms. Infringement of intellectual property in media, pharmaceuticals, software and print is common, and intellectual property rights have deteriorated due to an influx of counterfeit goods from China and India.

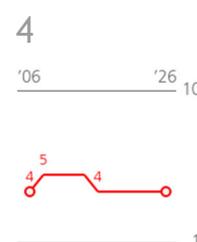
While the 2020 National Development Strategy recognizes the role of the private sector in economic growth, there are real constraints on private enterprise. Cameroon's economy is dominated by a considerable state-owned sector and centralized political control. These facts limit private entry into the marketplace. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), a parastatal, is the country's second-largest employer after the state. The government also favors public-private partnerships, particularly with large private firms that are either foreign or politically connected. The IMF continues to press the government for more rapid support of private-sector-led economic diversification. In late January 2025, an IMF mission statement expressed general satisfaction but encouraged Cameroon to catch up with delays in implementing the structural reform agenda, in particular "to attain the ambitious objectives of the national development strategy (SND30)," especially regarding the reform of state-owned enterprises, the extractive sector and the general business climate.

There is very little space within the market for small- to medium-sized firms, and nascent firms in sectors such as technology have been stifled by the Anglophone crisis. The Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun (GICAM) business association continues to press the government to simplify procedures for business registration and reform the real estate and land tenure management framework.

Property rights



Private enterprise



## 10 | Welfare Regime

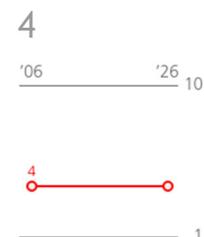
The state engages in limited measures to alleviate social risks. The public social insurance system (Caisse nationale de prévoyance social, CNPS) covers only the small formal sector and is itself overextended and poorly managed. Since 2014, people working in the informal sector have been able to contribute voluntarily. In 2016, the government raised the contribution rate from 2.8% to 4.2% while increasing the size of pensions. In 2018, the CNPS began to experiment with benefit payments using mobile banking services.

Cameroon spends less than 5% of GDP on the health system and requires payment of user fees at the point of service. Accessing health services, especially without insurance, is prohibitive for most. Most Cameroonians rely on informal mechanisms of social security such as family structures, solidarity networks and religious institutions. An informal system of community-based savings mechanisms known as “tontines” is also common. Efforts to expand formal social safety nets remain limited. The 2017 National Social Protection Policy and 2021 National Development Strategy call for the extension of universal health coverage, but it is not clear what mechanism would accomplish that. Cameroon operates a donor-funded social safety net program that provides cash transfers to about 177,000 households and publicly funded infrastructure to 100,000 households.

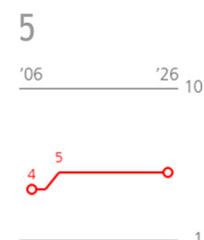
Equal opportunity is only partially achieved. Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and political preference persists. Cameroon has ratified numerous international conventions and accords aimed at eliminating discrimination against women. In practice, women continue to face barriers to economic, cultural, educational and policy participation. Women comprise 32% of the Senate and 34% of the National Assembly, largely as a result of gender quotas. Only 10% of municipal councils are led by women, and 10 of 71 ministers are women. The disadvantages faced by women are evident in lower literacy, school enrollment and labor-force participation rates. Many social practices further limit equal opportunity for women.

According to the United Nations, more than one-third of women report domestic abuse and half report having experienced physical violence over their lifetime. One-third report having participated in a child marriage, and 1% report genital mutilation. Discrimination based on ethnicity and political preference is also pronounced. Membership in the CPDM is an informal prerequisite for accessing higher education, business loans and government service. There is a widespread perception that ethnic quotas are used in making these decisions as well. Anglophones in particular report ongoing discrimination dating to the abolition of federalism in 1972 and exacerbated by the continuing Anglophone conflict.

Social safety nets



Equal opportunity



There is also discrimination against specific minority groups. The U.S. State Department reports that the Baka people – derogatorily known as Pygmies – are often discriminated against and are not represented in higher offices of government. Other forms of discrimination are also prevalent. As in other African countries, albinism and HIV-positive status create significant social stigma. LGBTQ+ rights are not protected in Cameroon, and members of this community face severe discrimination. Same-sex sexual activity is illegal, and each year members of the LGBTQ+ community are jailed, harassed or publicly outed.

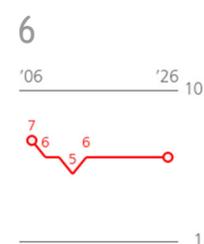
## 11 | Economic Performance

Cameroon is the CEMAC region’s largest and most diversified economy, but a number of challenges limit its growth potential. The country has recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic and maintained GDP growth of 3.3% in 2023. In 2023, GDP per capita on a purchasing-power parity basis was \$5,405.

However, this economic growth rate was lower than expected, and was constrained by decreasing oil revenues, a weak manufacturing sector, and supply disruptions in the cocoa and cotton sectors. Likewise, Cameroon’s economic output suffers from electricity shortages and climate-related challenges such as flooding. Ongoing issues relating to debt, governance and the state’s involvement in the economy limit economic output. Cameroon’s growth is sustained by debt-funded government investments in infrastructure and public works, a limited number of sectors that are primarily dependent on world prices for raw materials and a small formal sector. Some economic sectors, but primarily the palm oil industry, continue to suffer from the Anglophone crisis. Foreign direct investment was a net negative 0.2% of GDP in 2023.

Inflation spiked following the COVID-19 pandemic but moderated to a rate of 5.9% in 2023, which declined further to 4.6% in 2024. Official unemployment rates are low, around 3.9%, but these figures are of limited significance given the large informal sector. Debt remains an issue, with public debt amounting to approximately 41% of GDP in 2023.

Output strength



## 12 | Sustainability

There are insufficient environmental initiatives or regulations, and enforcement of those that do exist is lacking. Cameroon relies heavily on fossil fuels for energy production, and there have been serious issues with land, water and air pollution. Hydrocarbon exploration is associated with high volumes of gas flaring. Increased investment in palm oil, mineral extraction and road development has led to higher rates of deforestation in the past decade – approximately 1% annually, the second-highest rate in the Congo Basin. There is little regulation of pesticide use, and poor waste management systems have resulted in large amounts of refuse being discharged directly into the environment. Similarly, industrial waste and poor wastewater management – with less than 1% of sewage receiving treatment – have degraded water sources and supplies. The government has insufficient funding to measure air pollutants, but rates are likely rising rapidly in major cities due to urbanization.

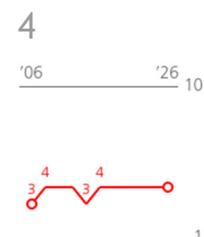
Cameroon is also highly susceptible to climate change, which has begun to cause desertification in its northern regions. Cameroon currently ranks 136th worldwide on Yale’s Environmental Performance Index.

The current legal and regulatory environment is inadequate for these challenges. Cameroon is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and participates in other regional and global environmental efforts, including the 2015 Paris Accords. Cameroon has a National Climate Change Observatory (ONACC) and in 2021 committed to unconditional emission reductions of 12% by 2030, but this has not led to any policy changes. The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPED) has piloted reforestation programs, but there is no new legislation on the horizon. Likewise, MINEPED was consulted during the development of the 2020 National Development Strategy, but no concrete policies have yet emerged.

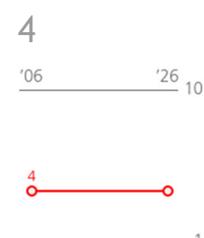
There have been positive developments, though: Cameroon’s electricity generation has significantly reduced its reliance on natural gas, while hydropower electricity generation output increased from 5 GWh in 2020 to 8 GWh in 2022 (71% of the electricity generation mix).

Cameroon has made progress in education policy, most notably with its increased literacy rate and nearly 100% enrollment rate in primary school after the abolition of primary school fees in 2000, although secondary-level enrollment rates are just 44%. Public expenditure on education has remained relatively constant over the past 10 years, averaging 3% of GDP. Cameroon’s score on the UNDP Education Index has also been around 0.5 for the past decade. Little data exists regarding national expenditures on research and development.

Environmental  
policy



Education policy /  
R&D



Despite this progress, serious issues with the educational system and research institutions remain. There are regional disparities in access, and enrollment rates are far lower in the North and Far North regions. Income level and gender also lead to unequal access to educational opportunities. Teacher absenteeism and corruption in the Ministry of Education and school system have impacted the quality of education. Tertiary education has received far less investment than primary or secondary education. Anglophones have long complained about inequality in educational access due to language requirements. Anglophone separatists have also deliberately targeted the education sector. As of 2024, 42% of nursery schools, 38% of primary schools and 50% of secondary schools are nonfunctional in conflict areas.

## Governance

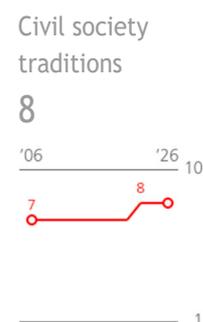
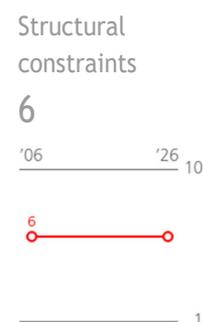
### I. Level of Difficulty

Structural constraints on governance capacity are significant and likely to increase. Several features typical of African economies are present: legacies of colonialism that have left profound social divisions and weak state capacity, strong reliance on natural resources as a source of exports and government revenue, reduction in human capital due to exposure to tropical diseases like malaria, high levels of extreme poverty and weak infrastructure. In recent years, climate change has taken a heavier toll. Northern regions have experienced desertification and more prolonged droughts. Between July and October 2024, severe flooding in Logone-et-Chari and Mayo-Danay impacted 200,000 people.

Still, Cameroon has one of the more diversified economies in West Africa and many advantageous features, including a relatively large and educated workforce, a vast endowment of natural resources, access to the sea, and a strategic location straddling Central and West Africa. Likewise, while still coping with inflation and supply chain issues, Cameroon was able to weather the COVID-19 pandemic. Without downplaying structural conditions, obstacles to political and economic transformation are mainly due to government policies rather than structural factors.

There are many civil society traditions in Cameroon, but decades of authoritarian rule have limited their development. A large proportion of early civic organizations was permeated by the ruling party and co-opted. While civil society played an important role in the transition to multipartyism in the early 1990s – particularly in the case of Anglophone organizations – it has since undergone a process of fragmentation and political demobilization. Many of the more recently created civil society groups are explicitly ethnic or are used as vehicles for securing government patronage. Social trust appears generally limited, especially when it comes to trust that cuts across identity groups.

Participation in civil society organizations is limited to towns and cities, and many such organizations lack basic offices. About 50% of the population lives in rural areas where they are integrated into local civil society traditions that foster some trust within these communities but are not part of national movements. There has been a steady decrease in electoral participation rates. The Anglophone crisis has exacerbated much of this and has created more severe issues of social trust. A considerable share of civil society groups in the Anglophone regions have been banned, and the conflict has intensified the perception among some Francophones that Anglophones want to destabilize the country.



For the past decade, Cameroon has faced serious social and religious conflict. The Anglophone crisis has taken a heavy humanitarian and economic toll. More than 6,500 people have been killed and nearly 1 million displaced. Government forces have come under heavy criticism for their indiscriminate use of violence, including the destruction of entire villages and the use of rape and torture. Insurgent groups have also increasingly targeted civilians with violence, either to extract money, punish perceived collaborators or impose economic boycotts. The Anglophone crisis has likely exacerbated the conflict with Boko Haram in the Far North. Since 2021, Boko Haram activity has escalated, in part due to the redeployment of security forces to Anglophone areas. This conflict has also caused a heavy humanitarian toll, with evidence of severe human rights violations.

The potential for other forms of violence is real. Ethnic, regional and religious identities are reinforced and often invoked in private and public discourse to evoke alleged marginalization or favoritism. The practice of scapegoating certain groups to mobilize support or secure legitimacy for would-be leaders is common. Some groups are persistently framed in adversarial terms. For example, the West Cameroonian Bamileke are widely believed to monopolize economic power and are accused of being overly ambitious. Other groups, such as the Beti (Paul Biya's co-ethnics), are perceived as being entrenched in the top levels of power and unwilling to ever cede that power. The question of presidential succession has the potential to unleash many of these tensions, as different ethnic groups compete for political power.

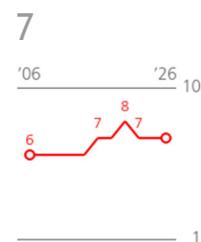
## II. Governance Performance

### 14 | Steering Capability

The government has set strategic priorities, most notably through its Cameroon Vision 2035 program, the 2020 – 2030 National Development Strategy and a commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the government's own statement, "NDS30 aims to bring about a structural transformation of the economy by making fundamental changes in economic and social structures, promoting inclusive development from within, and preserving opportunities for future needs." The government emphasizes four pillars: (1) structural transformation of the economy; (2) development of human capital and well-being; (3) promotion of employment and economic integration; and (4) governance, decentralization and strategic management of the state.

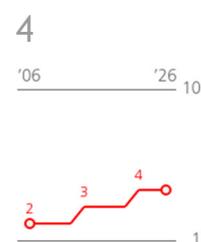
However, the prioritization decisions made by government figures are heavily dependent on external actors, and are more concerned with the political survival of Paul Biya. Many of these reforms were hard-fought with multilateral lenders after

### Conflict intensity



### Question Score

### Prioritization



decades of non-compliance or were required due to Cameroon's membership in CEMAC. Consequently, most reforms remain incomplete and fall short of their stated strategic goals.

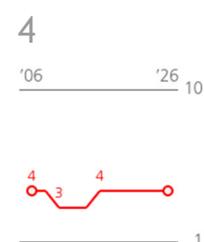
Many government institutions are poorly managed and are frequently used to place Biya supporters in positions where they can access patronage. This problem includes an oversized cabinet – the largest in Africa – an excessively large civil service and a weak national legislature. Decisions are typically driven by narrow political objectives, primarily aimed at securing the regime's survival. Implementing genuine political and economic institutional reforms would diminish the ability of regime supporters to access patronage, thereby posing a significant threat to a core feature of the regime.

Pervasive corruption, limited accountability and a fragmented bureaucracy limit the implementation of major policy initiatives. Cameroon passes IMF reviews with satisfactory marks, particularly with respect to macroeconomic programs, but faces persistent issues and delays with public finance management reform, banking reform and privatization. Long-delayed programs include improvements to the business climate; restructuring of SONARA, the national refining company; and better debt management. A strong economic policy team has helped Cameroon commit to major infrastructure projects such as the expansion of the Douala port and construction of hydropower plants. For instance, in 2024 the Nachtigal hydroelectric station came online, and new transmission lines were created for the Memve'ele hydroelectric station. At the same time, a group of Western-educated technocrats and a handful of reform-oriented bureaucrats have helped create stable macroeconomic conditions through targeted privatization, reforms to public expenditure management practices, and a liberalization of fiscal and monetary policy.

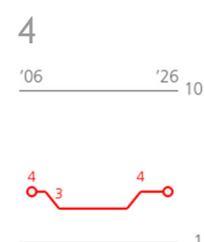
Many programs are also implemented unevenly, which perpetuates regional inequalities between the Far North and East regions and the rest of the country. Conflict in Anglophone regions has also limited the government's ability to implement reconstruction programs in the North-West and South-West regions. As with prioritization, corruption underlies a political logic meant to help keep the current regime in power.

Political decision-makers have shown limited willingness to learn from their mistakes, and conditions have remained largely unchanged compared to previous review periods. However, the government does listen to advice and adapts to some outside calls for reform. For example, the government adopted new perspectives on poverty alleviation in the 2017 National Social Protection Policy and the 2020 National Development Strategy. Still, the government is highly sensitive to criticism, particularly in the political realm. Even mild forms of critique trigger harsh reactions, as seen in the crackdown on freedoms of expression during the fight against Boko Haram and the Anglophone crisis. Officials typically use their power extensively and ignore critical voices. Genuine efforts to engage in dialogue on controversial issues

#### Implementation



#### Policy learning



are simply absent. Reform programs are rarely initiated independently. This has been evident with respect to international assistance programs such as those with the IMF, which in January 2025 criticized some delays in reform plans.

## 15 | Resource Efficiency

Despite having strategic plans such as the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2023 – 2028, which aim to improve resource management and address related challenges, the government remains highly inefficient in its use of assets, and resources are primarily deployed to satisfy political incentives. Pockets of administrative efficiency exist, primarily with regard to macroeconomic planning, but corruption is rampant in the public sector. The government loses vast resources during public procurement, and leakages occur at the local level during program implementation. The cabinet and civil service are bloated, with overlapping offices that lead to weak collaboration. For instance, in Yaoundé there is a minister of public health, a secretary of state to the Ministry of Public Health delegated from the president’s office and 10 regional representatives of the Ministry of Health. Cabinet reshuffles are common, and largely serve political ends. Processes of regional decentralization that began in 2021 have accelerated but have not yet led to a more efficient use of resources, and were designed primarily to expand the range of patronage resources that the president could distribute.

Policy coordination is limited by political fragmentation within a system dominated by the president, as well as by corruption. While the prime minister has coordination responsibilities across government ministries, he must wait on the president’s decision. Paul Biya spends at least one-third of the year abroad, and at one point, two years passed between cabinet meetings. The bloated size of Cameroon’s government further limits policy coordination. Most ministers are appointed based on a political calculus, not on their own competency. The president also appoints the secretary-generals of various ministries and sends delegates to monitor activities. This fosters a conflict-ridden environment where there is often competition and poor coordination within individual ministries. This fragmentation permeates the local level, where overlapping lines of authority impede coordination. Presidentially appointed governors, district officers and sub-district officers must cooperate with directly elected municipal councils and mayors, indirectly elected regional councils, and various local committees and ministerial delegations. Donor agencies have noted improvements in non-oil revenue collection due to better coordination between tax and customs authorities, but also highlight weak coordination as an impediment to Cameroon achieving the goals set forth in its National Development Strategy.

Efficient use of assets

3

'06 '26 10

3

1

Policy coordination

4

'06 '26 10

3

1

The government has structures in place to detect and prosecute corruption. However, these mechanisms are poorly enforced and widely perceived as highly politicized, and levels of corruption have not changed significantly over the past decades. The two main institutions that prosecute corruption are the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) within the Office of the Presidency and the Special Criminal Court. Since 2006, there has also been a coordinated anti-corruption campaign known as Operation Sparrowhawk, which has reportedly produced dozens of convictions. The Supreme Court's Audit Bench is said to have some independence from the government, but most government finances are overseen by the Supreme State Audit Office, which reports to the president and is therefore not completely independent.

According to the U.S. State Department, the Special Criminal Court (TCS) has prosecuted corruption cases. In January 2023, for example, the TCS delivered its verdict in the embezzlement case of former Minister of Defense Edgar Alain Mebe Ngo'o and four codefendants, finding Mebe Ngo'o and his wife guilty of offenses including overbilling contracts for military equipment worth almost \$40 million. The TCS sentenced Mebe Ngo'o to 30 years' imprisonment and his wife to 10 years' imprisonment.

In collaboration with multilateral lenders, the CEMAC region has moved to harmonize the management of public finances, but Cameroon is just at the beginning of that process. Ministries frequently fail to respect standard budgetary practices. The National Procurement Regulation Agency (ARMP) within the Ministry of Public Works regulates public procurement, but specific rules are circulated as presidential decrees. In 2015, the ARMP moved much of the process online to reduce petty bribery. State-owned enterprises are often informally exempt from official public procurement processes. Officeholders are not held accountable, as Article 66 of the Cameroonian constitution – which requires civil servants to declare assets – is not enforced. Likewise, Law 2006/001, which expands the range of public officials required to declare conflicts of interest, is not enforced. Finally, while public financing is available to parties, there is little regulation or transparency. It is assumed that the ruling CPDM can raise money from the business elite without disclosing contributions, and without any cap.

Anti-corruption  
policy

3

'06 \_\_\_\_\_ '26 10

3

2

1

\_\_\_\_\_ 1

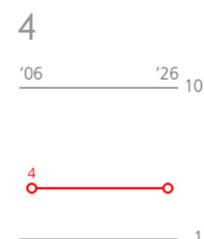
## 16 | Consensus-Building

Cameroon's government lacks both the capacity and willingness to seek consensus among major political actors. The authoritarian nature of the regime silences debate and pushes major actors in society and parts of the electorate to tolerate the status quo. The continued instrumentalization of ethnicity as a tool for political gain further limits the possibility of achieving consensus on democracy. This lack of consensus is reflected in the controversial nature of recent elections – the last presidential elections took place in 2018 and the last legislative elections in 2020. Attempts to end the Anglophone crisis have also been one-sided. Policy developments like the recognition of special status in Anglophone regions and the December 2020 regional council elections have been heavily criticized by parties outside of the government.

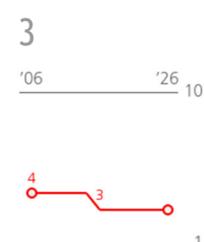
The authoritarian nature of the Cameroonian regime also limits consensus on the nature of the economy. Within the regime, a reform-minded elite exists, particularly among the younger generation, but these figures have achieved consensus only on making marginal improvements to economic management practices and broader measures supporting macroeconomic stability. Significant restrictions on capitalist activity and the substantial state intervention in the economy sustain the political coalition that has perpetuated the Biya regime. International lenders frequently point to the slow pace of reforms, especially in the absence of international pressure, and note that the default mindset is business as usual. There is also some expectation that the pace of economic reforms will slow ahead of the 2025 presidential election.

Cameroon's authoritarian regime prevents the emergence of strong, reform-minded political actors. The few reformers who do exist, both within and outside the ruling party, lack the influence to restrain nondemocratic actors, who make up most of the government and public administration personnel. The most significant anti-democratic actor is the president himself. Paul Biya is likely to run again in 2025, and as long as he remains in office, it is reasonable to assume that potential reformers will be hesitant to act for fear of repression. The creation of a Senate and the designation of the speaker of the Senate as the interim president in case of a death in office are not indications of any empowered reform movement within the regime, but rather reflect Biya's control over the ruling party and his decimation of any opposition – whether political or based in civil society.

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors

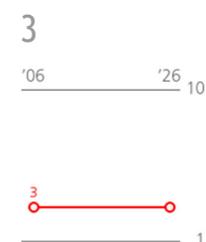


The political figures at the head of the government are largely unable to manage cleavage-based conflict, and in fact encourage societal and political fragmentation. The policy of “regional balancing” – that is, public sector appointments that respect regional quotas – has been poorly implemented and has not prevented several identity groups from claiming they are under-represented in the government and public administration. Major divisions exist between north-south, Anglophone-Francophone, urban-rural, west-east and Christian-Muslim communities. The internal debate within the CPDM party about who will succeed Paul Biya is primarily about which ethnic group will emerge on top. Many anticipate this process could result in violence, in part because the military is also divided along ethnic lines. The government benefits from this division, since it ensures a strong base of core supporters for the regime – the Beti – who feel threatened by changes to the status quo.

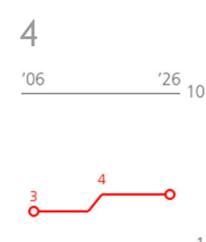
The inability to manage cleavage-based conflict is most evident in the Anglophone regions. The Francophone-Anglophone division has historically been one of the most difficult long-term cleavages to manage. The government’s delegation of an ad hoc committee to negotiate with protesters while simultaneously using state violence exacerbated tensions. President Biya used this as fodder for his 2018 campaign – with the slogan “the force of experience” – and portrayed the Anglophones as a threat to the integrity of all of Cameroon. The platforms and concessions the government has provided to respond to this conflict, such as the Major National Dialogue of 2019, the special status designation or the 2020 regional council elections, were not supported by the major Anglophone groups and have not fundamentally changed the conflict.

The political leadership fails to promote social capital and shows little interest in the role of civic engagement. Similarly, the government frequently disregards civil society, which it views as an oppositional force. In 2017, the government banned the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), thereby cutting off its own main avenue of dialogue with the Anglophone movement. The government has also escalated its crackdown on freedom of association and expression, citing the threat of terrorism and invoking the 2014 anti-terror law. This stance toward civil society participation extends to other areas. The government generally dismisses civil society groups and ignores the potential expertise some organizations can offer on specific issues such as climate change, poverty reduction or economic transformation. Local planning councils and village development committees are often co-opted by the government and do not serve as arenas for civil society participation.

Cleavage /  
conflict  
management



Public  
consultation



The government appears unable and unwilling to publicly address legacies of violence and past injustices. Cameroon has experienced several phases of widespread violence and state repression that rarely receive national attention. The most significant case is the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC) rebellion of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which was violently suppressed by the French and Cameroonian governments. To this day, this liberation movement is dismissively labeled a “rebel” movement. Other notable moments include the bloody coup attempt of 1984, the “years of burning” during the transition toward multiparty elections, and the 2008 nationwide protests against the abolition of presidential term limits.

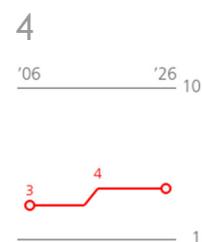
More recently, the government has had to face repeated accusations of human rights abuses in both the Far North and Anglophone regions. The government has only reluctantly, and under intense international pressure, accepted responsibility for certain events. Most notably, in 2020 the government was forced to accept responsibility for the deaths of 21 civilians in Ngarbuh only after being presented with overwhelming evidence from several human rights organizations and the United Nations.

## 17 | International Cooperation

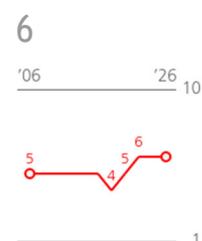
Cameroon’s leadership works with international partners primarily on issues of economic development and regional security but does so very little on questions of democracy and governance. Many major aid donors are present in Cameroon and target a range of sectors. The World Bank has ongoing projects, and Cameroon has passed the sixth review of a 2019 IMF Extended Credit Facility. The European Union and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) fund various development projects. The World Health Organization (WHO) and many other NGOs operate programs and offer technical expertise. In 2019, Cameroon lost its preferential trade status with the United States. In 2020, USAID upgraded its engagement to “Limited Presence Country” to work primarily on issues relating to HIV/AIDS. The government uses this assistance, but it does not translate into a consistent long-term strategy for development. While Cameroon has solid relations with international financial institutions, IMF statements on the progress of programs regularly encourage further reforms. Such reforms are clearly subordinate to political goals of maintaining power.

Cameroon has also increased its regional and international security cooperation. The country contributes troops to the five-state Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) opposing Boko Haram insurgents and has allowed the Nigerian and Chadian armies to enter its territory. Likewise, Cameroon has permitted the United States to operate a drone base in the Far North. Cameroon is also a member of the G5 Sahel force, which was formed as a regional military coordination mechanism. However, since 2021 the United States has implemented visa restrictions on individuals associated with perpetuating the Anglophone crisis.

### Reconciliation



### Effective use of support



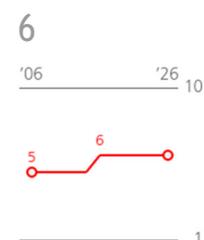
Cameroon lacks international partners acting to support efforts to improve democracy and governance. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF) are the most persistent observers, but they have also faced criticism for their unwillingness to seriously criticize the regime and the country's current state of democracy. Cameroon receives relatively low amounts of democracy aid and is not home to major institution-building efforts. Programs funded through USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) focus on promoting youth leadership and mitigating the impact of conflict in northern Cameroon. The EU funds the Civil Society Strengthening Program (PASC) but has had difficulty finding local contract partners.

Although it is seen as the pillar of the CEMAC region, Cameroon's credibility as a reliable partner has been mixed. For decades, Cameroon was a dependable partner of the French in the international arena, especially during disagreements with powerful states like the United States. Since 2003, Cameroon has increasingly entered a strategic partnership with the United States and is seen as a key ally on regional security issues. On issues of regional trade, macroeconomic reform and climate change, Cameroon has likewise appeared to make good-faith efforts. But Cameroon has also consistently avoided implementing deeper structural reforms to its political system and economy. Indeed, for decades Cameroon has been highlighted for its ability to skirt major reforms to which it has committed, while simultaneously continuing to garner leniency from international partners because of its strategic importance. This is further demonstrated in Cameroon's weak commitment to human rights. Cameroon is not a party to the International Criminal Court and has not credibly responded to calls for reform of its armed forces or the promotion of stronger democratic norms.

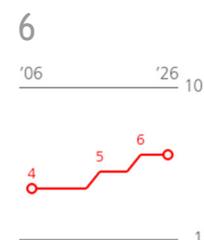
Cameroon is a member of several regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), the monetary union of the CFA franc zone, and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). Within CEMAC, Cameroon is the most important market and producing economy. In 2024, Cameroon hosted the UN's Intergovernmental Economic Committee and convened the annual CEMAC Summit.

Cameroon has fostered closer ties with Chad, Nigeria and the Central African Republic on security issues. After resolving the Bakassi Peninsula dispute, its relationship with Nigeria has improved. Nigeria and Cameroon partner on regional security to fight Boko Haram, and in early 2018 the Nigerian government extradited members of the self-proclaimed "independent Ambazonia" government. Nigeria has also allowed Cameroonian troops to cross the border in pursuit of separatist militias. In 2003 Cameroon and Chad completed the Petroleum and Pipeline Project, which connected oil fields in Doba to Kribi. In 2022, Cameroon and the Central African Republic agreed to demarcate the border between them as a means of combating cross-border violence. Since 2014, Cameroon has been a member of the G5 Sahel force, which primarily focuses on regional security cooperation. However, this

#### Credibility



#### Regional cooperation



regional cooperation has not translated into leadership on broader issues of regional integration in Central Africa, which remains poorly developed in comparison to other regions in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Strategic Outlook

While discussion of the “post-Biya” era in Cameroon has been perennial, this prospect is today rapidly approaching, and is likely to present Cameroon with significant uncertainty and challenges. Paul Biya, who turned 91 in early 2024, is the world’s oldest head of state, and is unlikely to serve a full term after the 2025 election. There is little consensus on what succession would look like, with jostling for the presidency going on within Biya’s immediate family and among key political elites in the cabinet. Cameroon is not prepared politically or institutionally for this event, and the transition is likely to be contentious and potentially violent. Cameroon’s history of bifurcating the security services, high levels of societal factionalism and weak state capacity in the periphery together raise the risk that political transition might push Cameroon into a wider civil conflict. Likewise, political elites have faced little consequence for the use of violence in the Far North or Anglophone regions.

Yet even if the political transition is relatively peaceful, the legacy of the Biya era and the style of politics developed over the past 30 years might continue. The political system is fundamentally authoritarian and heavily centralized in the office of the presidency. If elites rally behind a single post-Biya presidential figure, these basic features are not likely to change. On the other hand, if the transition leads to the breakdown of the CPDM into rival factions that contest elections rather than turn to violence, there is potential for stronger political accountability. However, this in many ways mirrors the reality of Cameroon’s initial transition to a multiparty system in 1992, after which Paul Biya was able to rebuild a robust authoritarian state that absorbed or eliminated political opposition. Cameroon’s uniquely strong presidency limits the capacity for rival elites to build long-term bases of support and incentivizes cooperation with the ruling party rather than opposition.

Biya’s legacy also increases the likelihood that the use of patronage to build political support will remain a central tool of power, which limits the potential for economic transformation. Cameroon benefits from diverse natural resources, a strategic geographic location and a relatively educated workforce. In recent years, there have been increased infrastructural investments and a more stable macroeconomic environment. Yet the returns on these developments are likely to be limited absent commensurate investments in human capital, true public sector reform and a stronger role for the private sector. The regime’s resistance to such reforms is driven by the elite’s dependency on state rents and the centrality of the president in Cameroon’s political system. Unless these political incentives are realigned, it will remain difficult for reform-minded elites to exert sufficient influence, and the benefits of economic growth will be limited to a few and eroded by corruption and inefficiencies.

Cameroon’s prolonged malaise under Biya will also have lasting social impacts. As in other parts of Africa, there is massive demand for employment and sustainable livelihoods among Cameroonians under age 25, who make up roughly 60% of the population. Addressing this demand will remain a central challenge for Cameroon in the years ahead. Cameroonians also increasingly

express deep distrust and disillusionment with most political institutions. Nowhere is the breakdown of social trust more apparent than in the Anglophone regions, which account for approximately 25% of the population. Prolonged violence has polarized society and revealed a regime willing to use extreme force to confront challenges to its authority. The conflict will likely persist, and there appears to be an insurmountable gap between the demands of Anglophone groups and the central government.

A key factor that could change the strategic outlook is the behavior of the international community. The perpetuation of the Biya regime, for example, was driven by the perception that Cameroon was an “island of stability” in a strategically important region. Cameroon’s close relationship with France and, more recently, the United States has shielded it from serious criticism and ensured a steady flow of international financial and military aid. International actors are likely to continue promoting a stable outcome in Cameroon, even if that means maintaining the current political and economic realities. However, political succession also creates opportunities for international actors to constrain hard-liner elites and elevate potential reformers.