



EDUCATION FACT SHEET - CAMEROON

In Brief	<p>Population:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 27.2 million (Word Bank, 2022) <p>Country Size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 475,442 sq km/183,442 sq mi <p>National Curricula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Yes, with the French and English Sub-systems of Education <p>Literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 78.2% (Knoema, 2020) <p>Youth Literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 86.24% (UNESCO, 2020) <p>Female Youth Literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 83.83% (UNESCO, 2020) <p>Years of Public School: 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Primary: 6 years, starting age 5● Secondary School (Ordinary Level): 5 years (4 years in the Technical and French Sub-System)● High School (Advanced Level): 2 (3 years in the Technical and French Sub-System) <p>Language of Instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● English, French <p>High School Leaving Exams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● The GCE Advanced Level, the Baccalaureat <p>Months of Exams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● May-June
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Education Overview

Trending toward English

Cameroon has two educational sub-systems operating simultaneously: one based on its British colonial past and the other on its French colonial history. More Cameroonians are embracing studies in English, following the globalization trend.

Free Primary and subsidized Secondary Education

In government schools, primary education became accessible for all children in Cameroon in 2000, but parents pay minimal Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) levies. The government is the largest provider of primary education. In the cities, the number of privately owned primary schools is rising —they charge high fees for higher-quality education involving ICT.

The government of Cameroon equally highly subsidizes secondary/high school education, and many households can afford it. Many private and prestigious mission secondary/high schools charge more. The Private and mission secondary, high schools are mostly a common choice for families that can afford them, or those that do not meet the qualifications to join a government sponsored school.

The percentage of students advancing to the Ordinary Level and the number of students attending universities has increased significantly due to the government's policy of creating schools in every neighborhood and at least a university in each region. Within the last ten years, more public institutions of higher learning have been created.

Cameroon's Education Expenditure

- 3.17 % of GDP (World Bank, 2020)

Pupil/Teacher Ratio:

- 44:83 (Open Data for Africa, 2018)

Percentage getting into primary school having attended preschool

- 28.71% (UNESCO, 2016)

Percentage completing primary school

- 69 % (UNESCO, 2019)

Percentage transition to secondary school

- 6.49% (UNESCO, 2020)

Percentage completion of secondary school

- 80 % (Ministry of Secondary Education, 2018)

State-owned Universities:

- 8 (two Anglo-Saxon)

Other Higher Institutions of Learning:

- 211

University enrollment rates in Cameroon have increased by 22% over the past 20 years (World Bank 2018)

School System

Cameroonian education can be described as follows:

- two years of optional pre-school from age 3 or 5
- six years in basic primary education (for children aged 5-11)
- five years of secondary education (ages 11-16)
- two years of high school education (ages 16-20)

NB: The elementary level classes are known as primary, while the secondary are known as forms.

The progression from one educational level to another is not automatic, as it depends on national examination results overseen by the government. These exams occur at the end of Class 6 in primary school, Form 5 in secondary school, and Upper Sixth Form in high school. These examinations are governed by the Cameroon GCE Board and the Cameroon BACC Board for secondary and high school.

The Government Common Entrance exam for pupils in Class 6 allows for allocating limited space in government schools. This often means that children who do not achieve a pass in List A are encouraged to seek admission to non-government secondary schools. With the increasing number of newly created government secondary schools, it is essential to consider revising these standards.

Grading Systems

The grading system in Cameroon for the GCE Ordinary and Advanced Level results is based on exam letter grades.

Letter Grades/points awarded

- GCE Advanced Level

Grade	Marks	Points	Remarks
A	80-100	5	Excellent
B	70-74.9	4	Very Good
C	60-69.9	3	Good
D	50-59.9	2	Average
E	40-49.9	1	Satisfactory
∅	35-39.9	0	Compensatory
F	0-34.9	0	Fail

The mark boundaries are not standardized and often depend on the general performance. A student must have at least two subjects to be declared successful at

the GCE Advanced Level.

- GCE Ordinary Level

Grade	Marks	Points	Remark
A	75-100	3	Excellent
B	65-74.9	2	Very Good
C	45-64.9	1	Good
D	30-44.9	0	Failed
E	15-29.9	0	Failed
U	0-15	0	Useless

The mark boundaries are not standardized and often depend on the general performance. A student must have at least four subjects to be declared successful at the GCE Ordinary Level.

Cumulative Grade Scale

Students are permitted to take a maximum of 5 subjects at the GCE Advanced Level and up to 11 subjects at the GCE Ordinary Level. Hence, a student can have 15 points and 33 points maximum at the Advanced and Ordinary Level GCE, respectively.

Secondary Schools

The Government Common Entrance Exam and the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) exam mark the end of the primary education cycle. These assessments serve as the basis for pupils to enter the secondary education cycle.

In Cameroon, secondary education is provided by various types of schools, each with its own characteristics and fee structures:

1. General and Technical Education (Government Schools):

These government-owned schools represent the largest group of educational institutions. Most are day schools, requiring students to commute to and from school. A few provide boarding facilities. Tuition fees are minimal, approximately \$60.00 per annum for day students and around \$600.00 for boarding students. Government schools play a significant role in offering secondary education in Cameroon and boast well-trained teachers.

2. Mission Schools:

Mission schools, operated by religious organizations like the Catholics, Presbyterians, and Baptists, are renowned for providing high-quality education. These schools are

predominantly boarding institutions, and the tuition fees are higher, typically around \$1,000. These schools often achieve outstanding student performances in certificate exams.

3. Lay-Private Schools:

Owned by individuals or private organizations, lay-private schools offer boarding and day options. They are generally considered lower in quality than public schools but can be more affordable, with fees ranging from \$100 to \$700 per annum, depending on the boarding option. Lay-private schools tend to attract students who may not gain admission into government or mission schools or those who are dismissed from these institutions. Some lay-private schools have been making significant improvements in discipline and academic results, although very few offer technical education.

4. International Private Schools:

These schools, offering high-quality education, follow international curricula such as the International Baccalaureate and Cambridge International. There are only a few such schools, primarily located in four cities in Cameroon. They tend to enroll both wealthy Cameroonians and expatriates.

These diverse educational options provide students and parents with choices that cater to various needs and financial capacities.

More high school graduates are now enrolling in higher education due to the increased number of higher learning institutions. This expansion has allowed students with all academic requirements to access higher education. Notably, the literacy rate among individuals aged 15-24 is 85% as of 2020 (EPDC 2020).

However, it's essential to note that achieving GPAs of 3 or above is relatively rare in Cameroonian universities, particularly in French-speaking institutions. This phenomenon is influenced by the assessment system and academic culture, which often tend to undervalue students' efforts. Many faculty members may prioritize displaying academic superiority through this grading approach.

Cameroon's higher education and training system encompasses post-high school education, granting certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Since the 2007-2008 academic year, Cameroon has adopted the LMD (Bachelors-Masters-Doctorate) system for its universities. However, pursuing higher education in Cameroon is challenging for students who do not pass the GCE Advanced Level.

The Ministry of Higher Education oversees the provision of education in universities and higher institutions in the country. The ministry's vision is to maintain a higher education system that supports national social, economic, and cultural development on a global scale. University education in Cameroon typically spans three years for liberal arts, science, and business courses, four to five years for engineering programs, and six to seven years for medical courses.

	<p>Cameroon's higher education system comprises public and private universities and vocational and technical training institutes. The government tightly controls Public higher education institutions, which regulate all aspects of their operations.</p> <p>The country has eight public universities and over 200 mission and private higher learning institutions. The proliferation of private institutions is due to the competitive entrance exams and limited spaces in public programs. Some public programs may require candidates to pass English or French and Mathematics at the GCE Ordinary Level.</p> <p>Private higher institutions often waive these requirements and focus on qualified students who can afford the tuition fees.</p>
<p>Issues with the Education System</p>	<p>Most government schools in Cameroon, especially in rural areas, are under-resourced. Government subsidies to government and private schools have significantly decreased over the last decade. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) plays a crucial role in each institution by contributing funds to provide additional resources, improve the quality of education, recruit more teachers in understaffed schools, build other classrooms, and acquire essential supplies like benches, laboratory materials, and library books. Efforts are being made to promote gender-balanced teaching to encourage more girls to stay in school and excel. However, progress in this regard has been slow, and most organizations leading these efforts are non-governmental.</p> <p>While a few model government schools embrace inclusive education from primary to university levels, logistical challenges and the availability of qualified personnel remain significant obstacles. The competency-based teaching method, aimed at developing critical thinking skills, was introduced in 2010, but many teachers are still learning and implementing it. Seminars to train teachers in this new teaching paradigm have been primarily limited to urban areas, which means traditional teaching methods are still prevalent in many regions.</p> <p>Corporal punishment is banned in schools, though some instances of low-level corporal punishment persist, mainly in non-government schools where discipline issues may be more prevalent.</p> <p>Rapid enrollment expansion has led to larger class sizes, with an average of 50 students per classroom in government secondary schools in urban areas. Government policy states that the number of students in each class should not exceed 40, but in significant towns, class sizes can surpass 100.</p> <p>Most schools face severe shortages of textbooks, desks, chairs, toilets, water supply, and hand-washing facilities. Students are expected to purchase textbooks, but acquiring them can be challenging, especially in government schools. Mission schools supply textbooks directly to students and charge them accordingly. On average, there is one latrine for every 2-6 rooms for the entire school, serving approximately 3,000</p>

	<p>students. This ratio falls far below the recommended student-to-latrine ratio, particularly affecting girls' attendance and performance.</p> <p>Cameroon has a national adolescent pregnancy prevalence of 14.2%, leading to some girls leaving school due to pregnancy. While the exact statistics on the annual dropout rates are not readily available, some teenage mothers continue their education in government, private, or evening schools after giving birth and go on to take national certificate exams.</p> <p>The Cameroon government funds teacher training programs, but many government schools still face a shortage of teachers. The government also encourages in-service training, and many teachers pursue higher qualifications. Teacher unions frequently struggle with the government to improve working and living conditions and implement educational reforms.</p> <p>Access to education in the North West and South West (English-speaking) Regions of Cameroon has deteriorated since November 2016 due to deepening political crises. The Far North region has also faced challenges due to repeated sporadic attacks by the terrorist group Boko Haram.</p> <p>The ongoing civil unrest has resulted in many internally displaced persons from affected regions seeking refuge in stable parts of the country. These individuals face new challenges in their new environments, affecting their academic performance. Those who stay behind in conflict-affected areas are exposed to daily security challenges, which can also impact their morale and academic achievements, particularly in final-year certificate examinations.</p>
<p>Academic Calendar</p>	<p>The academic year for public and private primary, secondary, and high schools extends from September to June, structured into three terms.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the academic year for universities and most higher educational institutions spans from October to July, with resit exams occurring in August. Some university programs, mainly newly introduced ones, follow a schedule from January to December.</p>
<p>SAT Test Centers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The American Language Centers in Yaounde ● The American Language Centers in Douala ● Rain Forest International School in Yaounde
<p>ACT Test Centers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Institute Supérieur Dale Kietzman in Douala ● Rain Forest International School in Yaounde

<p>IELTS/TOEFL</p>	<p>Cameroonian universities typically do not require IELTS or TOEFL tests for admission. Out of the eight public universities, only two use English as the medium of instruction, while French serves as the language of instruction in the remaining six state-owned universities.</p> <p>However, it's important to note that the University of Buea mandates a pass in English at the GCE ordinary level as a stringent admission requirement. Additionally, the University of Bamenda offers a pre-enrollment English language foundational course for students who previously studied in the French language.</p>
<p>Best Time for Admission Officers to Visit</p>	<p>Cameroonian students typically complete their Advanced Level (Upper 6th) final exams in June. Following this, they can attend preparatory classes for national competitive entrance exams, which are required for many public service positions. These preparatory classes last for a duration of two to three months, leading up to September. The results of the GCE exams, which are essential for various academic and professional pursuits, are typically released in late July or early August.</p> <p>For admissions officers from abroad who wish to visit secondary schools in Cameroon to engage with prospective students, the ideal time is in April, just before the commencement of the GCE practical exams. This timeframe allows interactions with students actively preparing for their exams and considering their educational and career prospects.</p>
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Sources:

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