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Cameroon

Cameroon: Current Path

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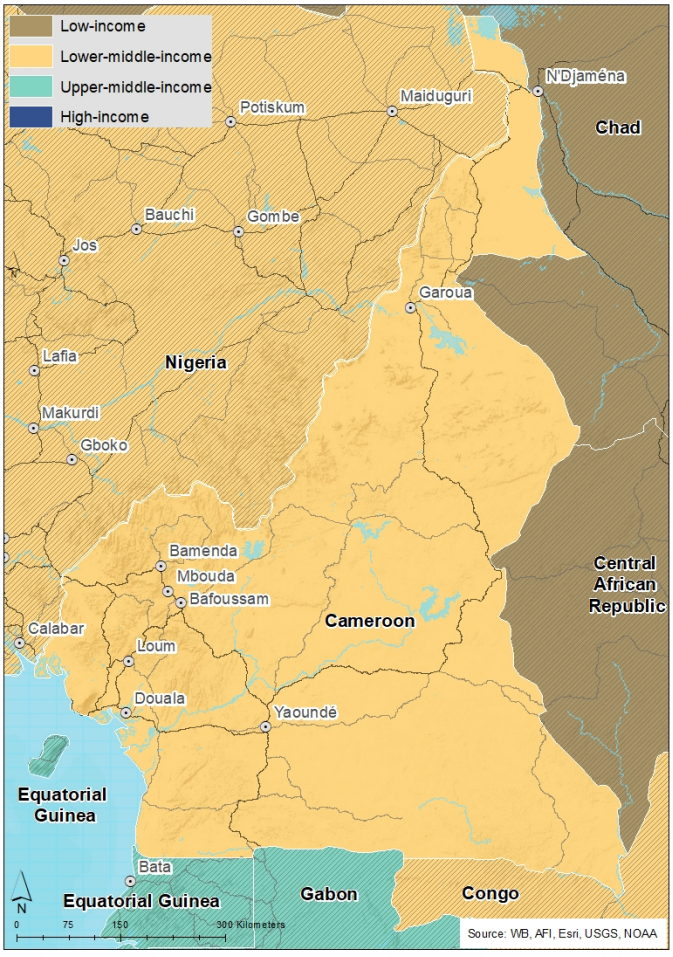
Cameroon: Current Path

Cameroon: Current Path forecast

Chart 1: Political map of Cameroon



This page provides an overview of the key characteristics of Cameroon along its likely (or Current Path) development trajectory. The Current Path forecast from the International Futures forecasting (IFs) platform is a dynamic scenario that imitates the continuation of current policies and environmental conditions. The Current Path is therefore in congruence with historical patterns and produces a series of dynamic forecasts endogenised in relationships across crucial global systems. We use 2019 as a standard reference year and the forecasts generally extend to 2043 to coincide with the end of the third ten-year implementation plan of the African Union's Agenda 2063 long-term development vision.

Cameroon is a lower middle-income country in Africa, bordered by Nigeria to the west and north, Chad to the north-east,

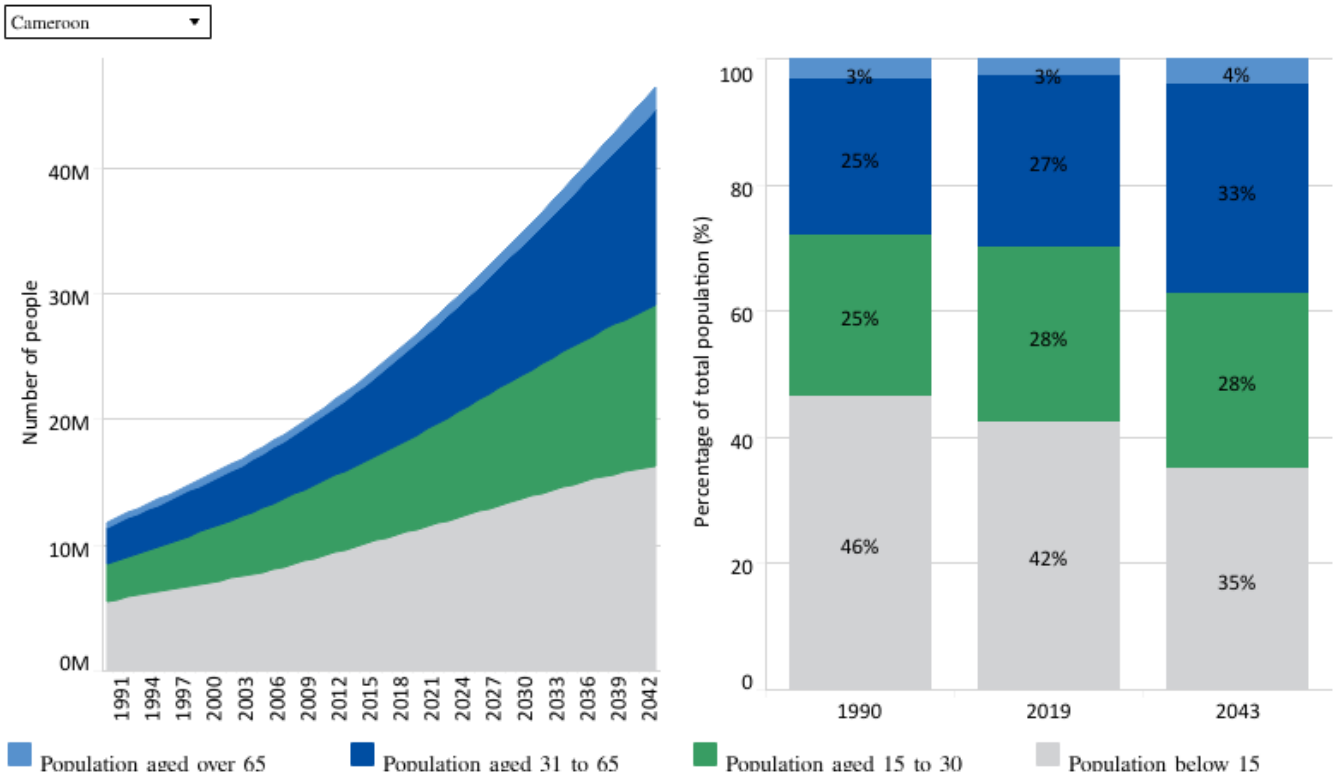
the Central African Republic to the east, and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo to the south. Because of its location between West and Central Africa, Cameroon is identified as a West–Central African country. It is therefore a member of a number of international co-operations including the African Union, the United Nations, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Commonwealth of Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. While there are about 250 native languages in Cameroon, the official languages of the nation are French and English. There has been much unrest about a separation between the French-speaking and English-speaking regions of the country. The 'Anglophone crisis' consists of some Cameroonians advocating for a split of the two regions.

Cameroon covers an area of about 475 442 km2, with a population estimated at 25.9 million in 2019. Nicknamed 'Africa in miniature', the country features great geological, linguistic and cultural diversity, and its geography includes beaches, deserts, mountains, rainforests and savannas.

Politically, Cameroon is a unitary presidential republic and has only had two presidents since its independence in 1960. Administratively, it is divided into ten semi-autonomous regions, each under the administration of an elected regional council. Each region is headed by a presidentially appointed governor. The regions are subdivided into 58 divisions (French: départements) headed by presidentially appointed divisional officers (préfets). The divisions are further split into sub-divisions (arrondissements), headed by assistant divisional officers (sous-préfets). The districts, administered by district heads (chefs de district), are the smallest administrative units. The largest cities in Cameroon include the economic capital of Douala, home of the country's main seaport, and the political capital Yaoundé. The major exports of the country include agricultural products and oil. Petroleum accounts for more than 50% of the country's total exports, and other exports include natural gas, cocoa beans, coffee, cotton, aluminium and gold.

Demographics: Current Path

Chart 2: Population structure in CP, 1990–2043
By cohort and % of population

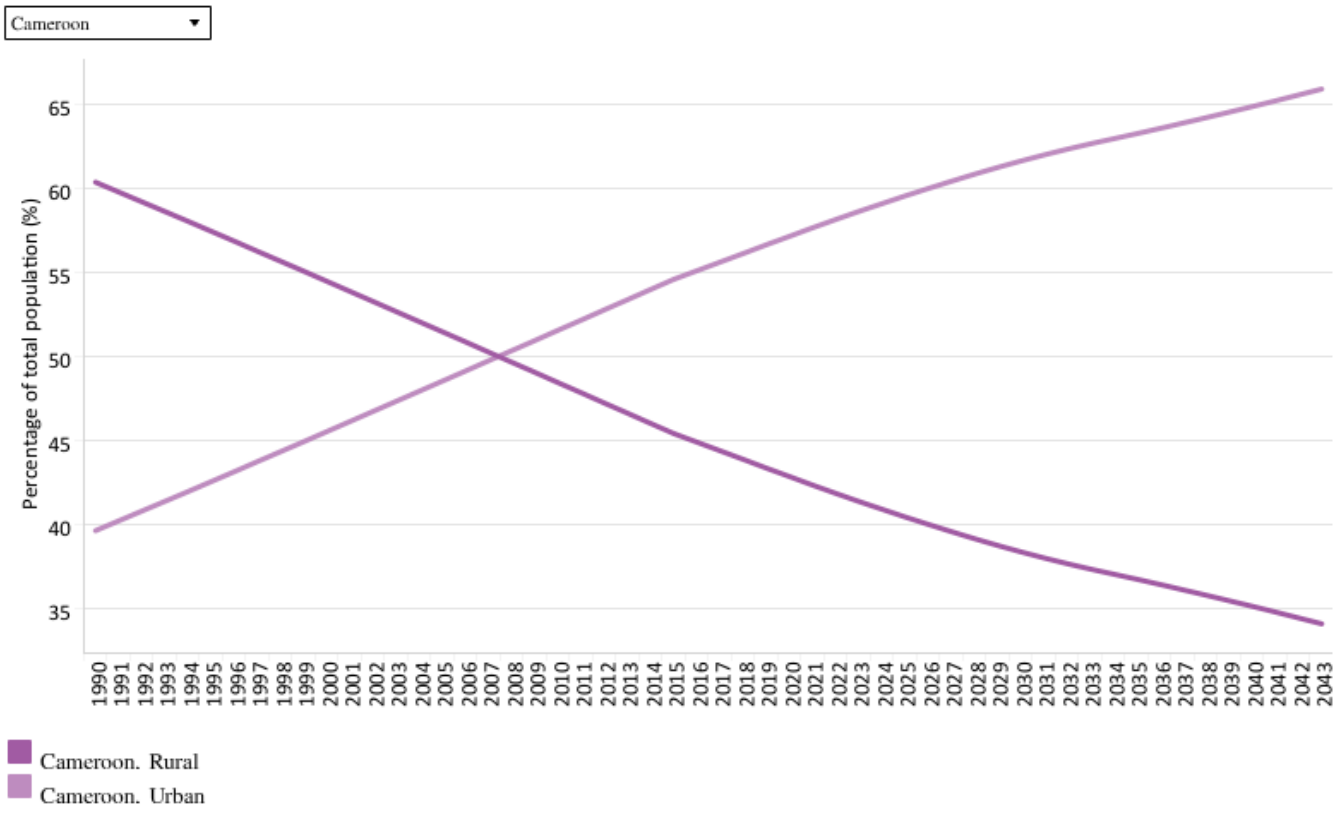


Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from UN Population Division Population Prospects estimate and World Development Indicators population data

View on Tableau Public Share

Cameroon is ranked the third most populous country in Central Africa and the 16th most populous country in Africa. In 1990, the country's population was 11.8 million people. Since then, the population has more than doubled, reaching 25.9 million people in 2019. This represents an increase of about 120% over the 29-year period. On the Current Path, the population of the country is forecast to increase to 46.4 million by 2043, representing a rise of 79.2% in the next 22 years. This means that population growth in the country over the next 22 years will be slower compared to the previous 29 years. The projected slower growth of the population can be traced to the expected decline in fertility rates as a result of the use of improved birth control methods such as contraceptives. The country has a youthful population, with a youth bulge of 48.5% and a median age of 18.5 years in 2019. Despite the projected decline in the youth bulge, it will still remain above 40% across the forecast period. The high youth population in the country is likely to lead to youth unemployment with its associated problems. The disparity between training programmes and employment, difficulties of starting businesses and discrimination in the labour market are some of the main causes of youth unemployment that were listed in the National Youth Policy of Cameroon. In addition, 42.3% of Cameroon's population is aged below 15 years and 28% is under the age of 30. The proportion of people under the age of 15 is expected to decline to 35% from 42.3% in 2019. As a result, the share of the adult population of 30 years and older is projected to increase from 29.7% in 2019 to 37.4% in 2043. This can be attributed to the projected decline in fertility rates from 4.6 births per woman in 2019 to 3.3 births per woman in 2043.

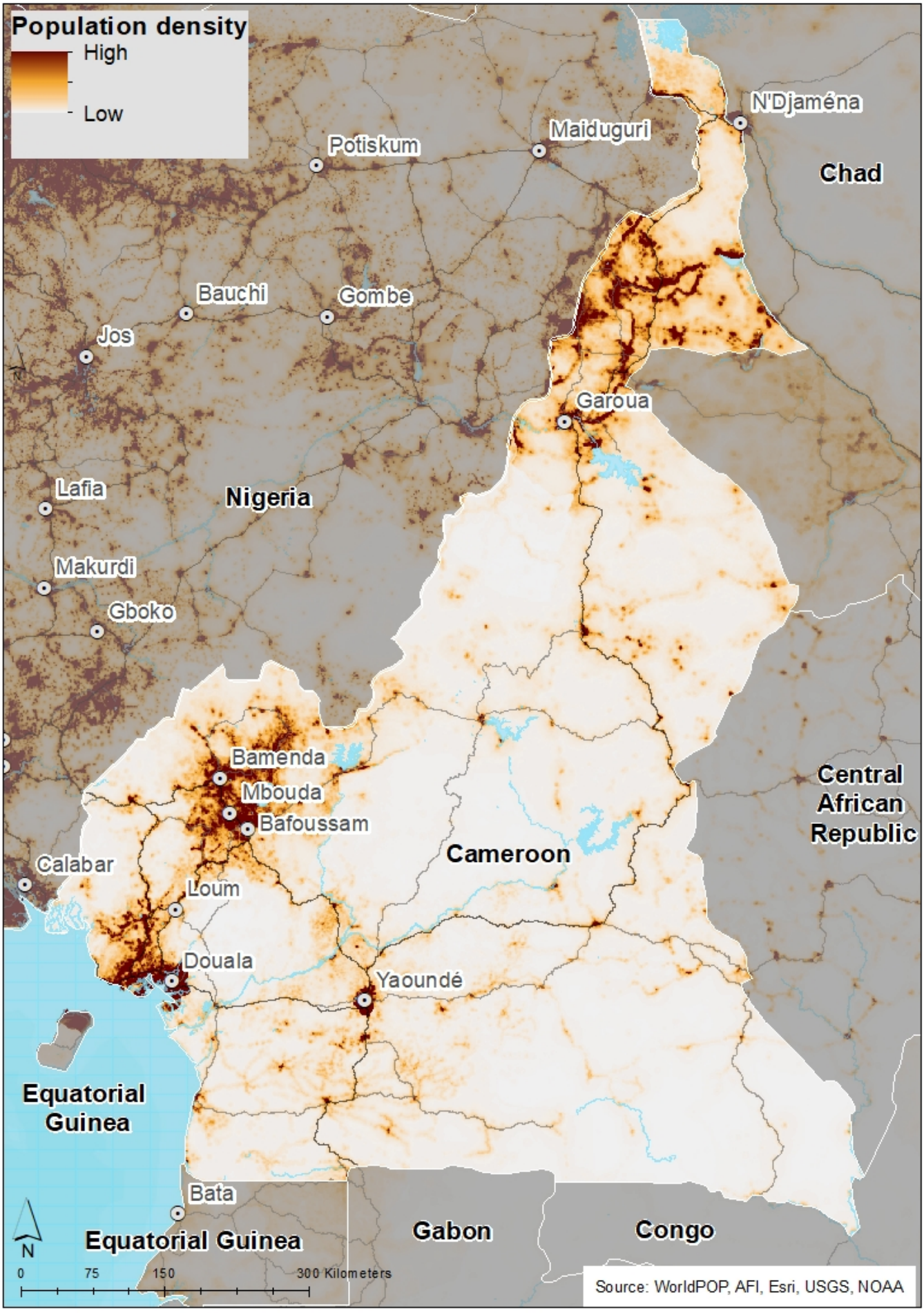
Chart 3: Urban and rural population in CP, 1990–2043
% of population



Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from UN World Urbanization Prospects estimate

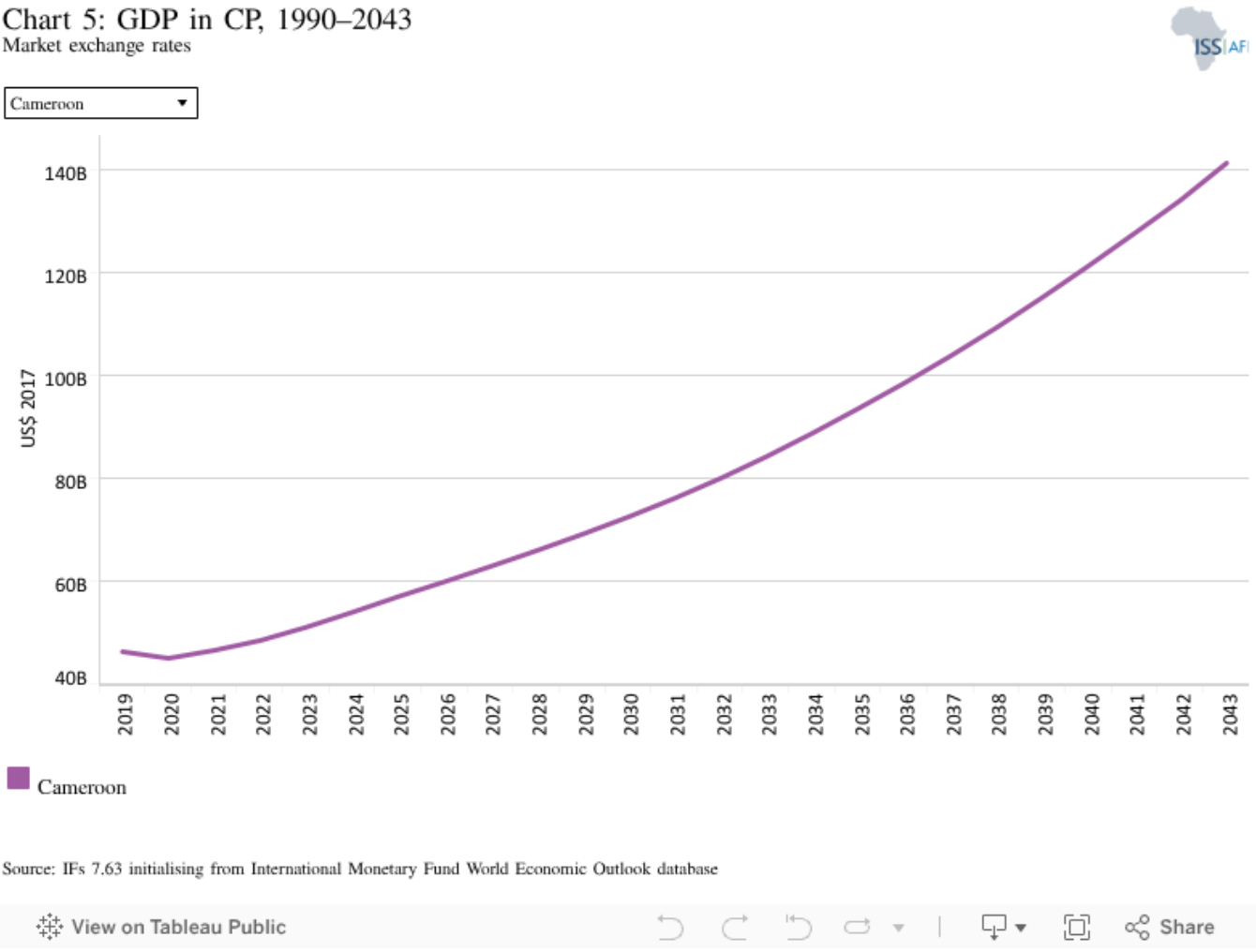
In 1990, the majority of Cameroonians (about 60.3% of the population) resided in rural areas. By 2008, the country had attained parity in urban–rural settlement, and in 2019, urban residents constituted 56.6% of the population, signalling rapid urbanisation in the country. Internal migration in Cameroon is fuelled by high inequality between the northern and southern parts of the country. Many people migrate from the northern regions to the south and from the western part of the country to cities, such as Douala and Yaoundé, mainly in search of jobs and better education. Declining returns in agriculture, violent conflicts and the lack of access to natural resources in the rural areas are also factors that continue to push rural dwellers to urban centres. By 2043, it is projected that the proportion of the population that will reside in urban areas will increase to 65.9%, meaning that the country will experience a slower rate of urbanisation compared to the previous 29 years.

Chart 4: Population density map for 2019



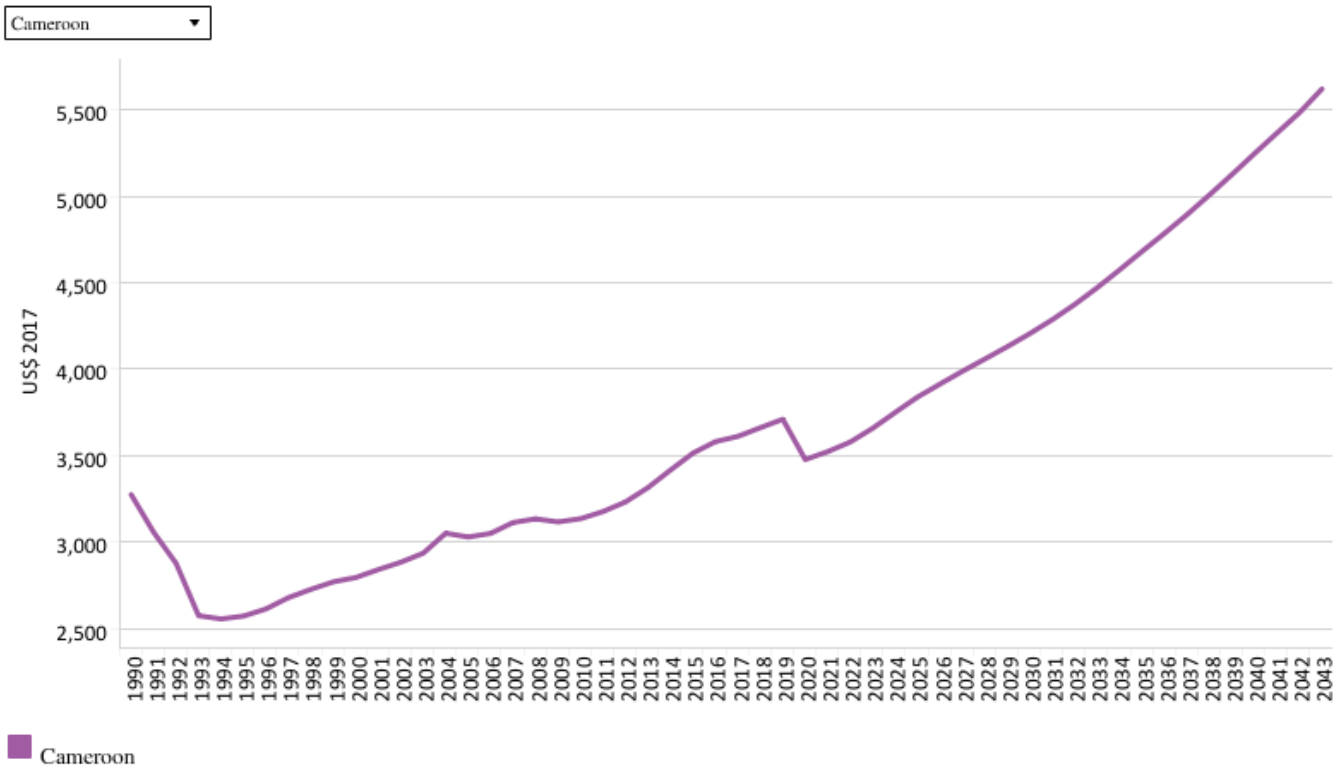
The total land area of Cameroon is approximately 475 442 km^2. In 2019, Cameroon was the second most densely populated country in Central Africa and the 28th most densely populated country in Africa. The population density of Cameroon is estimated to be about 0.55 people per hectare, which is higher than the average of 0.45 for Africa and 0.27 of Central Africa. The most densely populated area of Cameroon is the Littoral region. Other populated areas include the western, far north, north-west and south-western parts of the country. The most populated Cameroonian city is the economic capital Douala, followed by Yaoundé, the national capital. Conversely, the eastern region is the most sparsely populated area of the country.

Economics: Current Path



From 1990 to 2019, the GDP of Cameroon increased from US$18.6 billion to US$46.3 billion, representing an increase of 148.9% over the period. During the mid-1980s, economic mismanagement in the country, combined with a fall in the prices of primary commodities such as cocoa, coffee and oil, which were the main exports of the country, led to economic recession with a high budget deficit and growing national debt. During this period, real per capita GDP fell by over 60%. The country eventually resorted to IMF structural adjustment programmes in an attempt to restore the economy, followed by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) in 1997. The country also implemented the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative that led to debt forgiveness. As a result, the currency was devalued, and stringent fiscal and monetary policies were pursued to ensure macroeconomic stability. To a large extent, these internationally assisted programmes contributed to restoring economic growth in Cameroon. In recent years, the country has achieved some resilient growth, with GDP increasing above 4% from 2011 to 2019, until the COVID-19 pandemic. This was mainly a result of an aggressive public investment programme that the government embarked on. Over the next 24 years, Cameroon's GDP is estimated to reach US$141.1 billion from its 2019 level, constituting a 205% increase. The increase in GDP reflects the higher economic growth expected to occur within the next 24 years as compared to the previous 29 years.

Chart 6: GDP per capita in CP, 1990–2043
Purchasing power parity



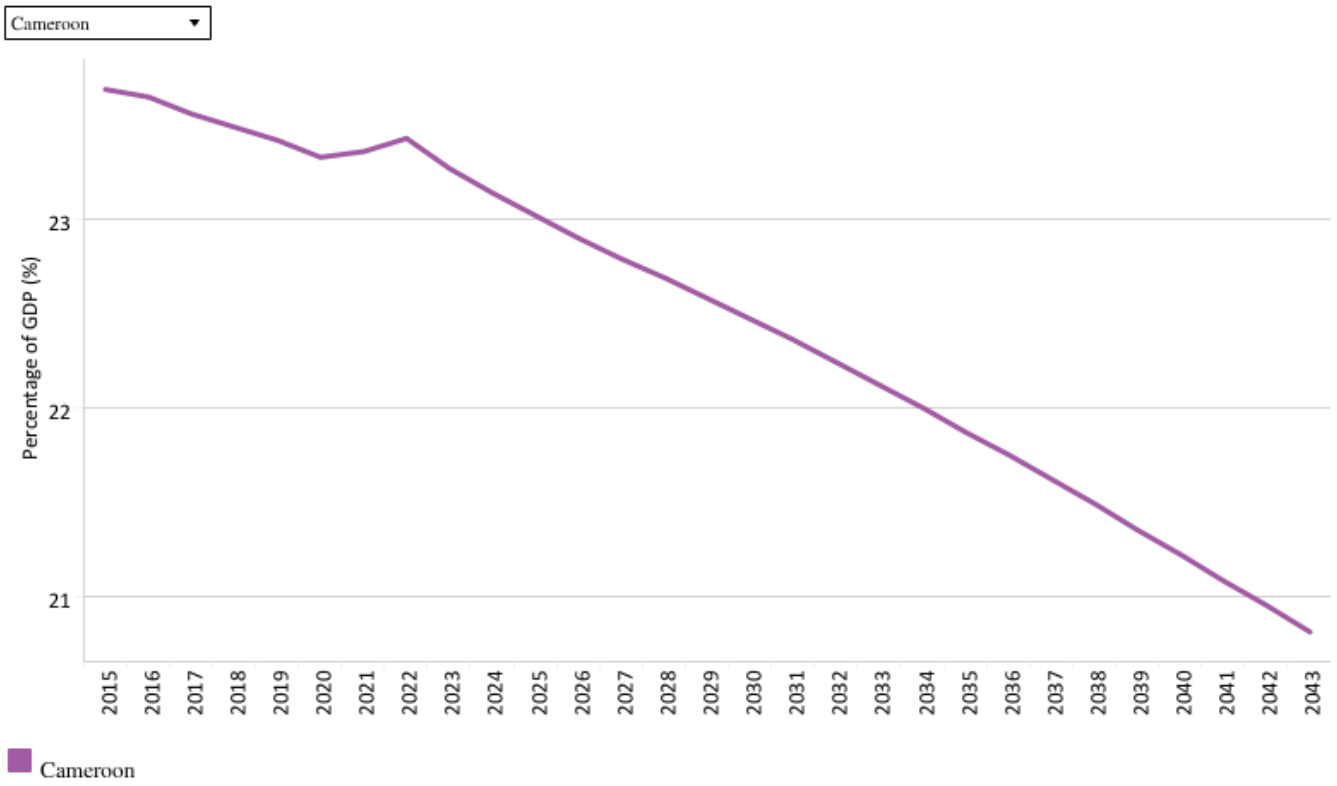
Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from UN Population Division World Population Prospects and World Development Indicators data

View on Tableau Public Share

Although many of the charts in the sectoral scenarios also include GDP per capita, this overview is an essential point of departure for interpreting the general economic outlook of Cameroon.

Cameroon's GDP per capita has seen a steady increase over time, despite the country's rapid population growth. The GDP per capita of Cameroon increased by 13.3% from US$3 274 in 1990 to US$3 710 in 2019. The increase in GDP per capita reflects the high GDP growth compared to the population over the period. With the projected increase in GDP and decline in fertility rates, it is projected that the GDP per capita will rise over the next 22 years, such that by 2043, the GDP per capita will increase to US$5 622. This represents an increase of about 51.5% over the period. Throughout the period under consideration, Cameroon's GDP per capita is far lower than the average of lower middle-income countries in Africa. Indeed, the gap between Cameroon and its income group peers on the continent in terms of GDP per capita is expected to widen from US$1 149 in 1990 to US$3 520 by 2043. This suggests that Cameroon either has a higher population growth rate or slower economic growth or even both compared to the average lower middle-income country in Africa.

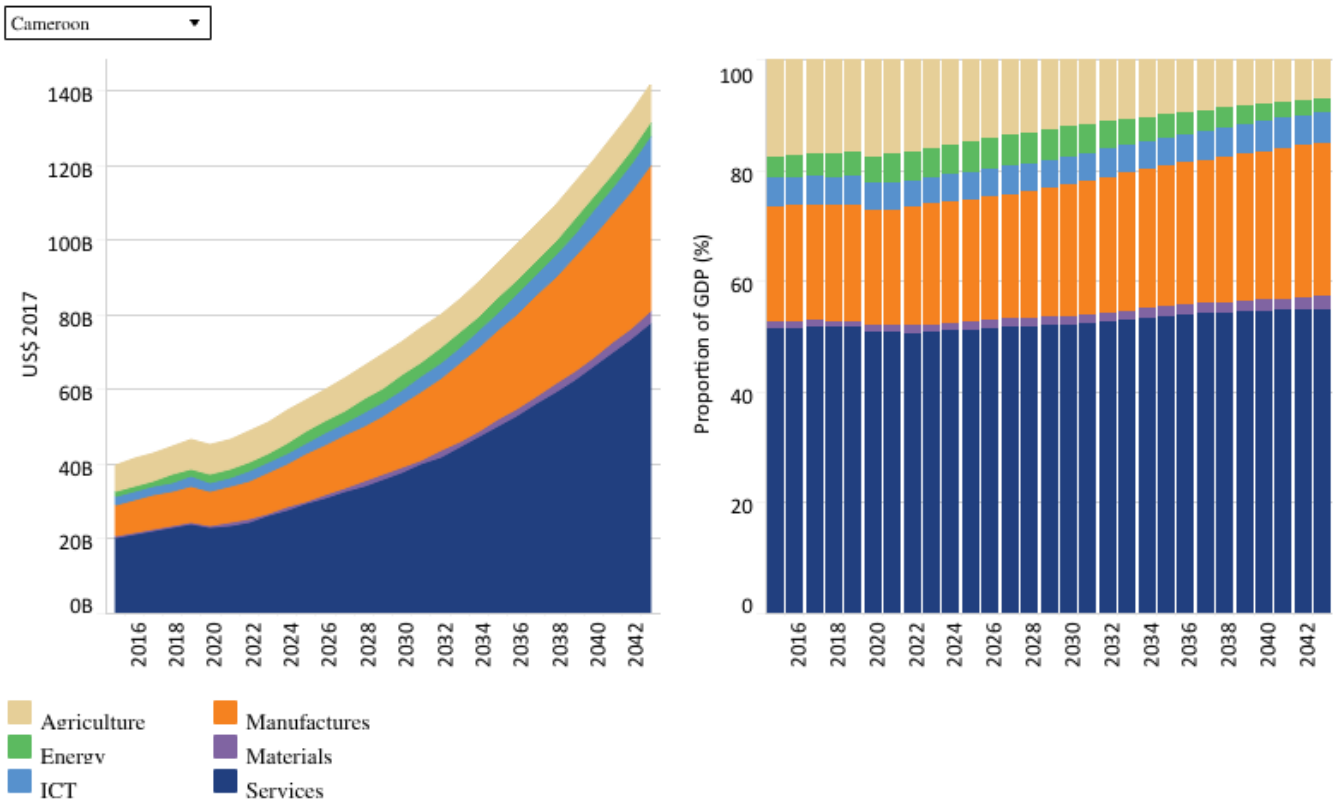
Chart 7: Informal sector value in CP, 2015–2043
% of GDP



Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from UN Economic Commission for Europe [2008]; Elgin and Oztunali [2012]; Schneider and Enste [2012]

The size of the informal sector in Cameroon was equivalent to 23.4% of GDP, representing about US$10 million in 2019, which was lower than the average of 29.2% for lower middle-income African countries. This suggests that compared to its income peer group, Cameroon has performed relatively better at formalising its economy. The size of the informal sector is expected to decline to 20.8% (US$27 billion) by 2043 — a 2.6 percentage point decline over the 24-year period. The expected decline in informality over the period will also lead to a reduction in the number of workers in the informal sector. In 2019, the total number of people employed by the informal economy constituted 41.5% of the total labour force and is projected to decline to 34.6% in 2043. The overly complex administrative procedures associated with registering a business, low productivity of most new businesses and the inefficiencies of the public sector in Cameroon have contributed to the large informal sector in the country. The government has embarked on a number of initiatives to formalise the activities of the informal sector. These include providing training and building the capacity of businesses, awareness creation, and the provision of financial support, among others. In addition, the government has set up Business Formalities Centres that are responsible for managing the administrative procedures involved in setting up a business. There has also been the deployment of Approved Management Centres to ensure tax compliance and punitive tax measures for firms operating in the informal sector. By 2043, the size of the informal sector in Cameroon is projected to be lower than the average of 26.4% for lower middle-income African countries.

Chart 8: Value added by sector in CP, 2015–2043
Billions US$ 2017 and % of GDP



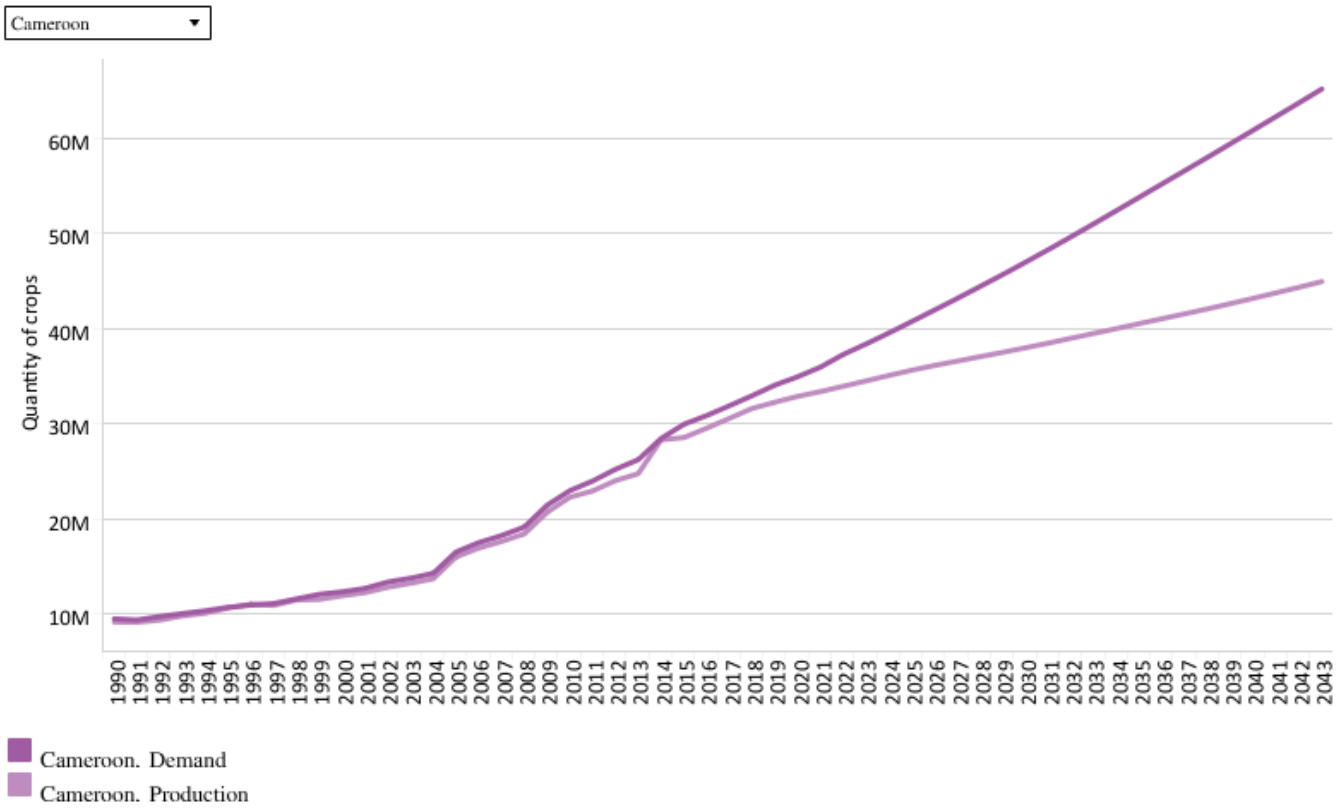
Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook database

The IFs platform uses data from the Global Trade and Analysis Project (GTAP) to classify economic activity into six sectors: agriculture, energy, materials (including mining), manufactures, services and information and communication technologies (ICT). Most other sources use a threefold distinction between only agriculture, industry and services with the result that data may differ.

The three largest contributing sectors to GDP in Cameroon are service, manufacturing and agriculture, respectively. In 2019, the service sector's contribution to GDP was about US$23.9 billion (51.6% of GDP), which is expected to increase to US$77.5 billion (54.9% of GDP) by 2043. The manufacturing sector is currently the second largest contributor to GDP with a share of 20.9% (US$9.7 billion) in 2019. This is projected to increase to 27.8% of GDP, constituting US$39.3 billion. However, the share of agriculture is projected to decline from the 2019 figure of 17.5% to 7.1% of GDP in 2043. This is despite the expected increase from its absolute value contribution of US$7.8 billion in 2019 to about US$10 billion in 2043.

Chart 9: Agriculture production/demand in CP, 1990–2043

Crops million tons

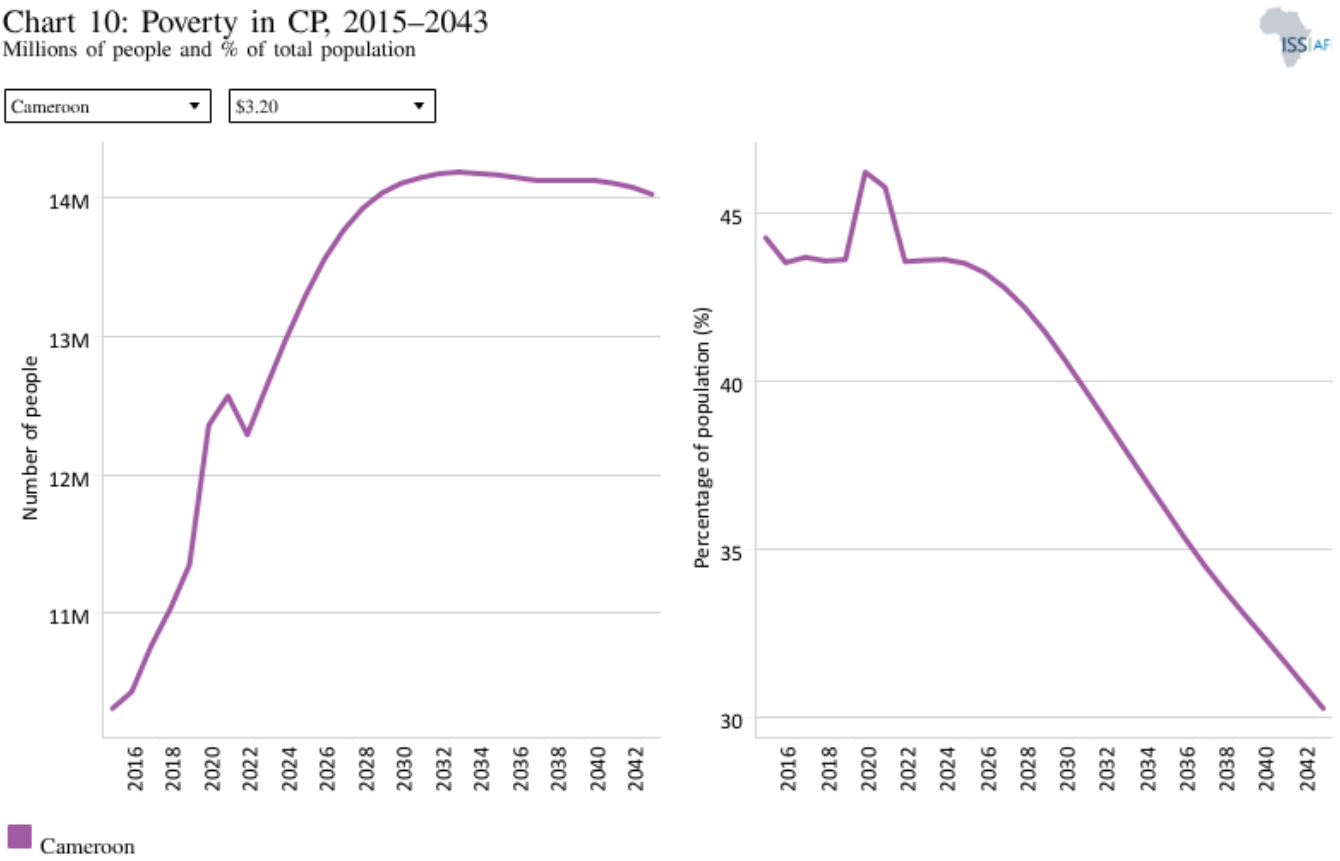


Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from Food and Agriculture Organization Food Balance Sheets

The data on agricultural production and demand in the IFs forecasting platform initialises from data provided on food balances by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). IFs contains data on numerous types of agriculture but aggregates its forecast into crops, meat and fish, presented in million metric tons. Chart 9 shows agricultural production and demand as a total of all three categories.

The total agricultural land area of Cameroon was recorded to be 97 500 km2 in 2018. The main agricultural commodities produced in Cameroon include beef, plantains, cocoa beans, taro, bananas, maize, fresh vegetables and groundnuts. In 1990, Cameroon's demand for agricultural products outstripped domestic production by 350 000 metric tons. By 2019, this gap had increased to 1.8 million metric tons. Regardless of the estimated increase in yield per hectare for crops from 4.3 metric tons in 2019 to 5.8 metric tons in 2043, agricultural production will still not be able to meet domestic demand. By 2043, agricultural demand is projected to surpass domestic production by 20.2 million metric tons, representing an increase of over 1 000% over the period. This suggests that Cameroon is at a risk of facing acute food shortages in the next 24 years if the government does not adopt policies that will boost agricultural production in the country. Some of the challenges facing agriculture production and development in Cameroon include low productivity arising from low capital intensity, environmental challenges of soil degradation, inadequate funding, and lack of access to credit facilities by farmers.

Poverty: Current Path



There are numerous methodologies for and approaches to defining poverty. We measure income poverty and use GDP per capita as a proxy. In 2015, the World Bank adopted the measure of US$1.90 per person per day (in 2011 international prices), also used to measure progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 of eradicating extreme poverty. To account for extreme poverty in richer countries occurring at slightly higher levels of income than in poor countries, the World Bank introduced three additional poverty lines in 2017:

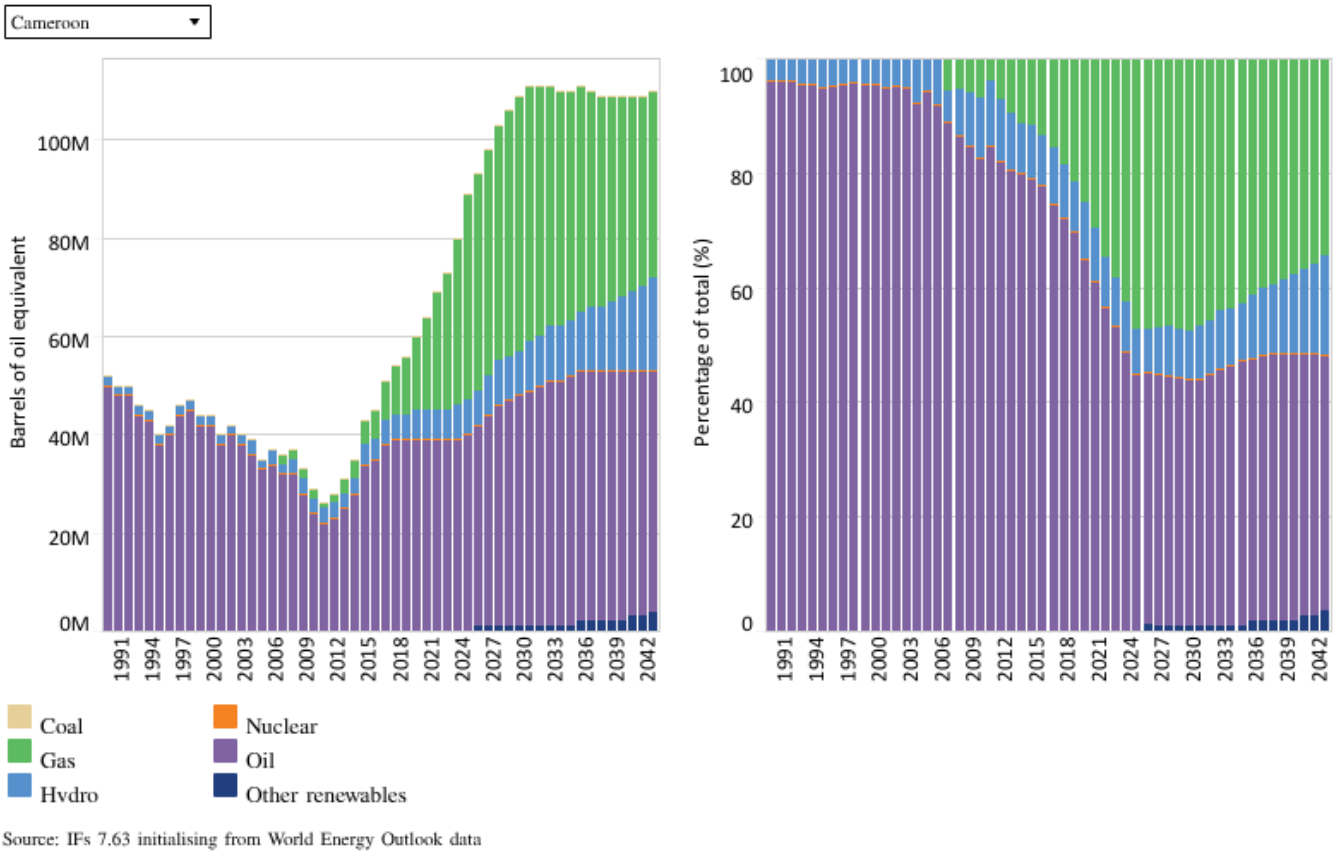
- US$3.20 for lower middle-income countries
- US$5.50 for upper middle-income countries
- US$22.70 for high-income countries.

As a lower middle-income country, Cameroon uses the US$3.20 per person per day benchmark. In 2019, 11.4 million Cameroonians (43.6% of the population) were living on US$3.20 per day. The incidence of poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban centres, with rural poverty estimated to be around 55% of the poor population. Poverty is also prevalent among women and children in rural areas. The absolute number of poor people living below the poverty line of US$3.20 is projected to increase over the period, peaking at 14.2 million in 2033. Afterwards, it declines such that by 2043, the number of people living in extreme poverty in Cameroon will be 14 million. As a result of the negative impact of COVID-19,

the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty slightly increased to 46.2%. Thereafter, the proportion of people living below US$3.20 will assume a downward trend so that by 2043, the number of people in extreme poverty will constitute 30.3% of the population. This suggests that while the proportion of the population in extreme poverty will reduce by 13.3 percentage points, the number of poor people will increase by 2.7 million people. Throughout the period under consideration, the proportion of poor people in Cameroon is lower than the average of lower middle-income countries in Africa. That is, in 2043, the extreme poverty rate in Cameroon will be 8.1 percentage points below the projected average of 38.3% for lower middle-income countries in Africa.

Carbon Emissions/Energy: Current Path

Chart 11: Energy production by type in CP, 1990–2043
Barrels of oil equivalent and % of energy production



Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from World Energy Outlook data

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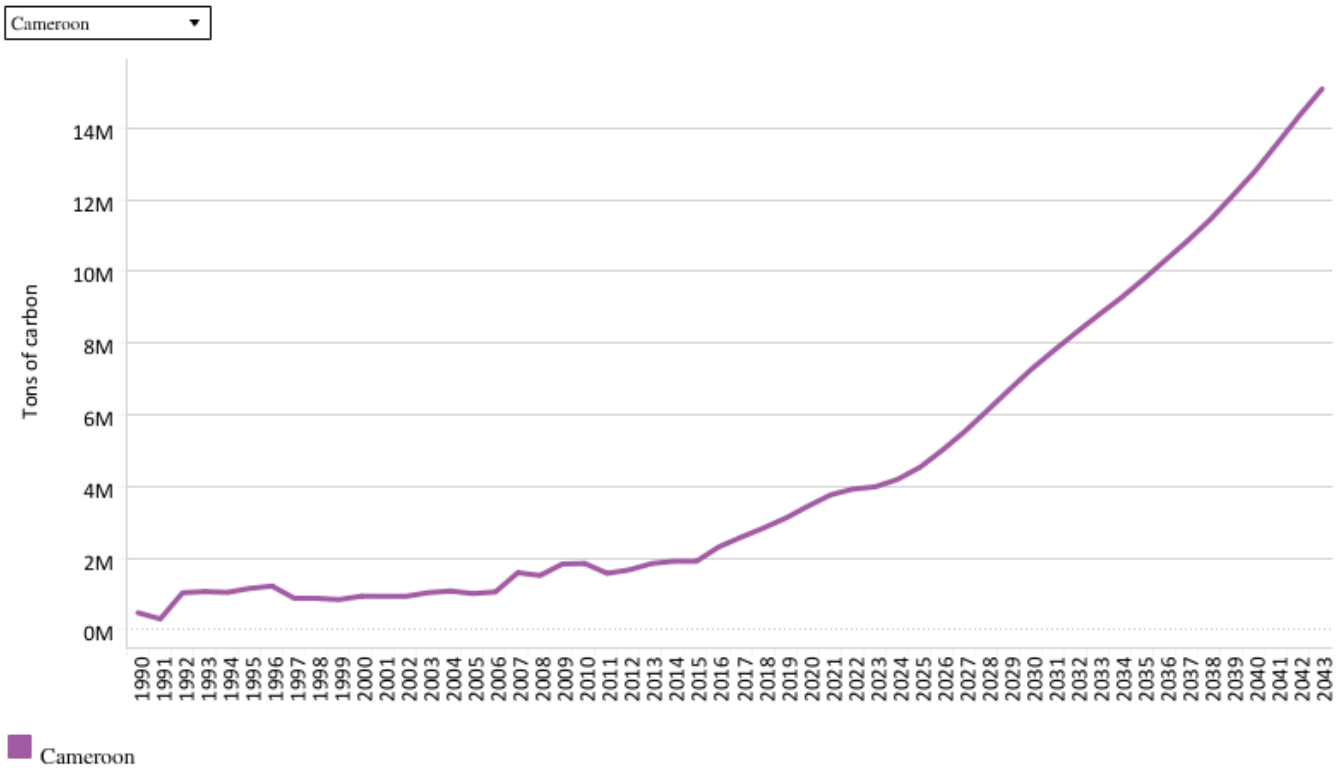
The IFs platform forecasts six types of energy, namely oil, gas, coal, hydro, nuclear and other renewables. To allow comparisons between different types of energy, the data is converted into billion barrels of oil equivalent (BBOE). The energy contained in a barrel of oil is approximately 5.8 million British thermal units (MBTUs) or 1 700 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy.

The dominant energy produced in Cameroon is oil, followed by gas and hydro. In 1990, the total amount of oil produced in Cameroon amounted to 50 million BOE, constituting about 96.2% of total energy production. This was complemented by hydro production of 2 million BOE. The amount of oil produced declined to 39 million BOE in 2019, constituting 69.6%, while the amount of hydro produced increased to 12 million BOE representing 8.3%. Gas production within the same year was 12 million BOE, constituting about 21.4% of total energy production. By 2043, oil production is estimated to be around 49 million BOE, while gas and hydro production will amount to 38 million and 19 million, respectively. These correspond to 44.6%, 34.6% and 17.3% of total energy production, respectively. It is significant to note that the country is not expected to produce any renewable energy even within the next 24 years.

Chart 12: Carbon emissions in CP, 1990–2043

Million tons of carbon (note, not CO_2 equivalent)



Source: IFs 7.63 initialising from Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center data

Carbon is released in many ways, but the three most important contributors to greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO2), carbon monoxide (CO) and methane (CH4). Since each has a different molecular weight, IFs uses carbon. Many other sites and calculations use CO2 equivalent.

Carbon emissions increased from 0.5 million tons of carbon in 1991 to about 3.1 million tons in 2019 — an increase of 520% over the past 29 years. On the Current Path, carbon emissions are projected to increase further such that by 2043 the total amount of carbon emitted by Cameroon will more than quadruple to 15.1 million tons. The main source of carbon emissions in Cameroon stems from the manufacturing of cement and the burning of fossil fuels.

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Cite this research

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Mr Enoch Randy Aikins joined the AFI in May 2021 as a Researcher. Before that, Enoch was a research and programmes officer at the Institute for Democratic Governance in Accra in charge of local governance reforms, poverty and inequality and public sector reforms. He also worked as a research assistant (economic division) with the Institute for Statistical Social and Economic Research at the University of Ghana. Enoch's interests include African politics and governance, economic development, public sector reform, poverty and inequality. Enoch is a Young African Fellow at the School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute in Florence and has an MPhil in economics from the University of Ghana, Legon.

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