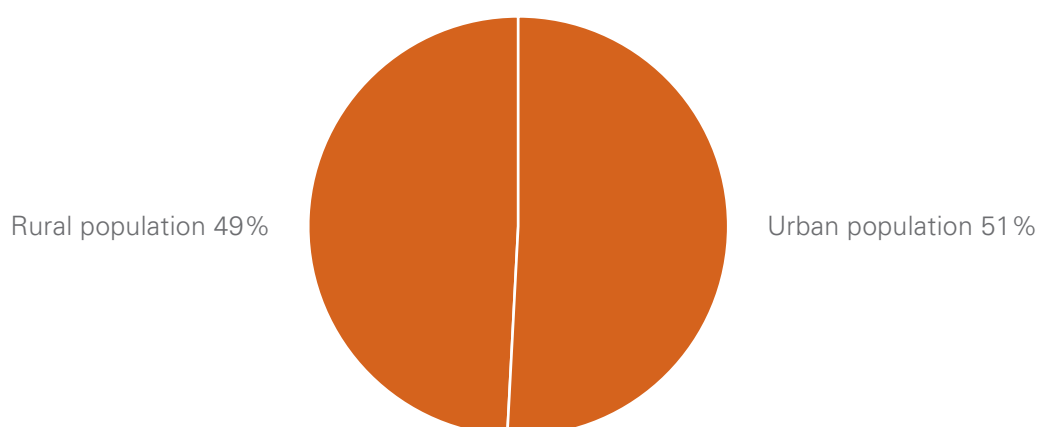




2. Country Overview

In the year 2005, the population of Cameroon was estimated at 16 million (World Bank, 2006), with 41% of the population aged 14 years and under (UNSTATS, 2006). The general population increased by 9% between 2000 and 2005. The rural population stood at about 8.2 million in 2003, in comparison to a 7.8 million urban population. This gives a percentage of 51% for the rural population and 49% for the urban population (UNDP, 2006).

Figure 1: Urban vs Rural Population

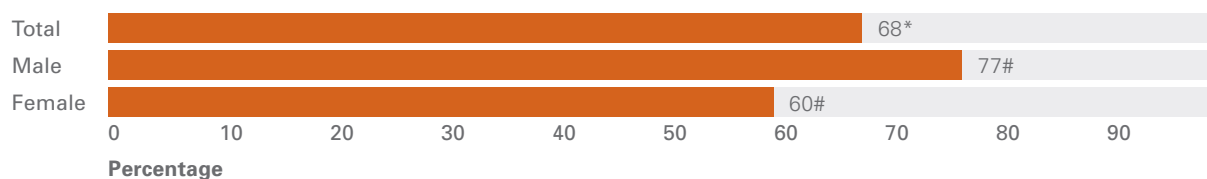


Source: 2003 statistics from UNDP, 2006

A 2004 report found that 83% of males and 81% of females attended school in Yaoundé and Douala, while 70% of males and 57% of females attended school in other towns. Around 70% of the school-age population in urban areas was attending school in 2004; in rural areas the percentage was around 20% (Republic of Cameroon, 2004). Adult literacy rates (see Figure 2) are estimated to be 68% on average, with percentages of 77% for men and 60% for women (World Bank, 2006).

In 2005, it was estimated that 48% of the population lived below the poverty line, with a GDP per person per capita of US\$2,400 (CIA, 2006).

Figure 2: Literacy Levels Age 15+



*Source: 2004 figure from World Bank, 2006

#Source: 2003 figure from World Bank, 2006

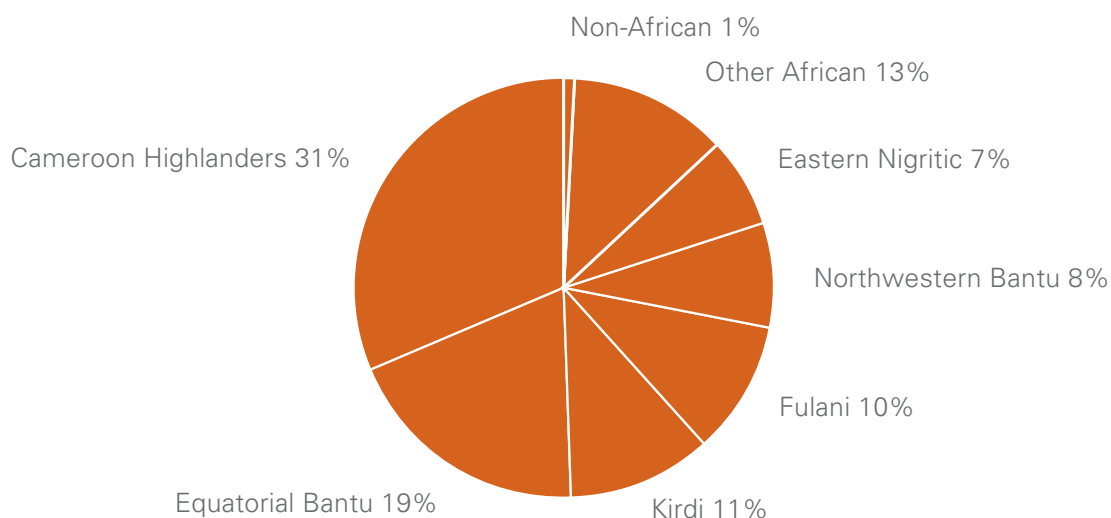
The official languages of the country are French (75%) and English (25%), and there are a further 286 indigenous languages and dialects. Of these, 279 are 'living' languages, three are second languages without mother-tongue speakers, and four have died out. No indigenous language dominates as a mother-tongue in Cameroon, and none is spoken as a mother-tongue by more than 4% of the population (Gordon, 2005). The country also has a *lingua franca* (Pidgin), which is used by many Cameroonians not as a mother-tongue but as a language of wider communication.

It was estimated in 2005 that 40% of the population is Christian, 20% Muslim and 40% hold exclusively traditional beliefs (CIA, 2006). Some Christians and Muslims also share some of these traditional beliefs.

In terms of ethnic groups, the categorisations drawn from the CIA (2006), and provided in Figure 3, are based on very large re-groupings. For example, the Highlanders category (31%) covers both the French-speaking Western Province and the English-speaking North-West Province. Both provinces are located around the highland areas of the country, and are home to many ethnic groups. Similarly, the Equatorial Bantu category (19%) consists of the South-West Province (English-speaking) and the Littoral Province (French-speaking), both of which are home to multiple ethnic groups. The *Ethnologue* website⁴, meanwhile, suggests that the ten most populous ethnic groups comprise less than one quarter (25%) of Cameroon's population. The other 75% of the population is made up of 265 different ethnic groups. *Ethnologue* lists the ten most populous ethnic groups in Cameroon as follows: Beti 12.26% (made up of Fang, Ewondo, Bulu, Mengisa); Fulfulde 4.10%; Medumba 1.28%; Tupuri 0.77%; Bassa 1.41%; Akoose 0.61%; Bamun 1.31%; Fe'fe' 0.76%; Duala 0.54%; and, Ghomala 1.60%.

⁴ See Gordon, 2005.

Figure 3: Main Ethnic Groups



Source: 2005 statistics from CIA, 2006

Cameroon consists of ten provinces, eight of which are predominantly French-speaking and two of which are majority English-speaking.

Table 1: Population of Provinces

Regions/Provinces/States	Total Population
Adamawa Province	723,626
Far North Province	2,721,463
Centre Province	2,501,229
East Province	755,088
Littoral Province	2,202,340
North Province	1,227,018
North-West Province	1,840,527
South Province	534,854
South-West Province	1,242,749
West Province	1,982,106

Source: INS, 2004

The law introducing multi-party democracy was promulgated in 1990, and in that year the first opposition party was launched⁵. The current revised Constitution was promulgated in 1996.

⁵ The Social Democratic Front (SDF) was launched on 26 May 1990 in Bamenda.

Key findings

- Cameroon has a young population, with 77% of the population aged 35 years or younger and 41% aged 14 and under.
- The two official languages are French (about 75%) and English (about 25%).
- The country is divided into ten administrative provinces.
- There are 279 indigenous mother-tongue languages, with none being a dominant language.
- The political sphere was liberalised in 1990 and the first opposition party launched in that same year.