

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

Cameroon, a country in Central Africa with a per capita income of around \$1,564, has a population of over 28.65 million. At the outset of 2022, Cameroon boasted 10.05 million internet users, representing 36.5 percent of the country's population. By the start of 2023, this figure had surged to 12.89 million, substantially increasing to 45.6 percent of the population. However, with over 37 percent of the population living below the poverty line, low incomes and affordability issues pose barriers to further digital inclusion.

Similarly, mobile phone adoption in Cameroon has grown rapidly, with penetration rates increasing from around 78.7 percent in 2022 to approximately 86 percent in 2023. This significant growth over a short period reflects the rising importance of mobile connectivity for Cameroonians across urban and rural areas. However, political instability and unrest in some regions impact infrastructure development and business operations.

ICT contributes around 5 percent to Cameroon's GDP as of 2020. Given the economy's expanding digital infrastructure, there is room for further growth. According to the Digital Preparedness Index from CSEA, which evaluates an economy's readiness for digital transformation, Cameroon scores 0.42 out of 1 and ranks 26th among African countries.

This underscores the need to develop essential infrastructure, skills, and regulations for full participation in the digital economy.

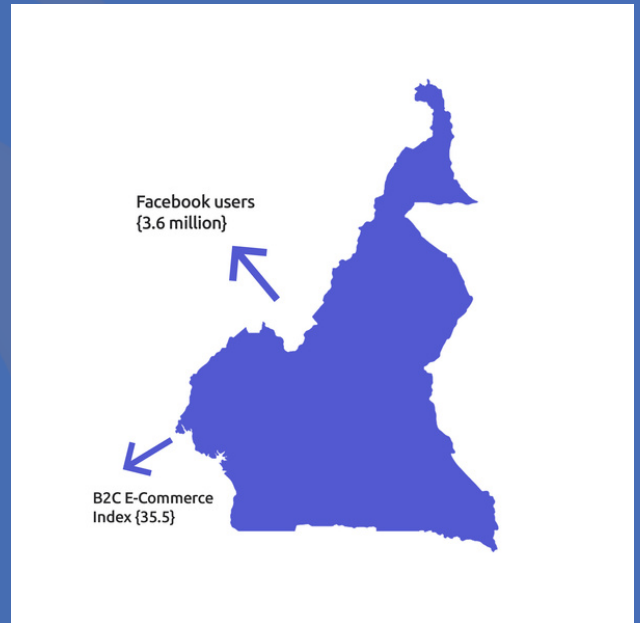
Cameroon is home to an emerging tech ecosystem centered in cities like Douala and Yaoundé. Initiatives like ActivSpaces, Tech Hub, and Timeless Technologies support the development of digital skills and new startups. With relatively advanced digital infrastructure when compared to neighboring countries, Cameroon has the potential to serve as a digital hub and drive regional expansion.

A major barrier to Cameroon's digital journey remains the high cost of internet and mobile services, which are unaffordable for many citizens due to limited competition and infrastructure. Broadband internet remains limited, especially in rural areas without fiber optic networks, resulting in uneven access that hinders leveraging digital technologies. Beyond infrastructure constraints, Cameroon suffers from inadequate digital literacy and skills among the population despite government initiatives to improve digital education. There is also limited local entrepreneurship and innovation in the digital space. Nurturing a local start-up ecosystem faces gaps in financing, mentorship, and a challenging environment for new ventures.

## DIGITAL ADOPTION

Digital adoption in Cameroon has steadily increased, gradually reshaping how government entities and businesses function while influencing how citizens engage with different services. This widespread digital adoption has ushered in numerous advantages for the residents of Cameroon. E-services, social media platforms, and the increased adoption of mobile devices have been embraced on a large scale, contributing to enhanced quality of life, increased efficiency, and greater productivity. Social media penetration is 13.9 percent, with over 3.9 million users in Cameroon. Facebook is the most popular platform used for entertainment, communication, business, education, and more. According to the DataReportal 2023 report, Facebook accounts for 3.6 million 92.3 percent of Cameroon's social media subscriptions, followed by LinkedIn at 24.62 percent, Instagram at 12 percent, and Twitter at 5.2 percent. The rapid adoption of these digital platforms has transformed Cameroonian society. Also, the Cameroonian government has taken steps to increase digital adoption across various sectors, though progress remains gradual. The World Bank's 2022 GovTech Maturity report categorized Cameroon in group C, comprising countries that have made some progress in adopting government technology, up from a lower group in prior years.

Several initiatives have been developed, including the e-National Higher Education project, to help develop basic digital skills among public servants and citizens and allow for university registration and tuition payments online.



The government of Cameroon has launched initiatives like the National Digital Payment Switch Infrastructure (NPSI) program. NPSI is a start-up incubator and a national payment switch designed to drive down mobile transaction costs and provide fairer interconnection conditions. The government has also encouraged online public services such as digital tax filing, payments, and revenue collection through platforms like e-taxation. For instance, The National Social Insurance Fund (NSIF) in Cameroon is using digitalization to improve public services, including social security services. Additionally, there have been efforts to digitize public procurement, implement digital ID systems, and computerized health and social welfare systems.

The business landscape in Cameroon is also catching up, with a growing trend of businesses embracing digital technologies. Mobile money platforms like MTN Mobile Money and Orange Money are being extensively used for financial transactions like paying bills, receiving payments for services rendered, and transferring funds. These mobile money services have expanded financial inclusion by providing financial service access to millions across the country. In addition, businesses are efficiently reaching broader audiences through digital marketing and social media. E-commerce platforms like Jumia and Kilimall facilitate online shopping, while ride-hailing apps like Yango and Gozem modernize urban mobility. Firms are employing software and apps for streamlined operations, inventory management, sales, and automation. Retailers accept card and mobile money payments via POS terminals, and digital services such as email marketing and online bookings optimize business functions. Tech-focused co-working spaces further promote digital adoption among startups and remote workers. Though there have been some positive developments, digital adoption in Cameroon still faces hurdles such as inadequate digital infrastructure, expensive internet access, shortage of skilled IT expertise, and gaps in laws governing the digital economy. Moreover, lingering concerns over the vulnerability of digital systems to cyber threats and cybercrime continue to make businesses reluctant to adopt new technologies.

## DIGITAL GOVERNANCE IN PLACE

Cameroon has recognized the need for appropriate digital governance and has instituted some key frameworks and initiatives toward this goal. In 2020, the government adopted a National Digital Economy Development Strategy to provide high-level strategic vision and goals for digitizing the public sector. This built on earlier efforts like the e-Government Master Plan, biometric national identity card in 2016, National e-commerce strategy in 2019, National Cybersecurity Strategy, and Digital Cameroon 2020 Program to expand digital infrastructure and skills. While progress has been made with e-governance systems for company registration, tax filing, customs processing, and other services, comprehensive adoption across government has been gradual.

Cameroon has several data governance institutions responsible for regulating and controlling the use of data and digital technologies in the country. There is the National Agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ANTIC), the ANTIC Cyber Incident Response and Warning Centre ('CIRT'), among others. These institutions are responsible for ensuring that data protection laws are enforced, that data is collected and used in accordance with the law, and that data is protected from unauthorized access.

Critical challenges to adequate digital governance remain. These include limited connectivity and electricity access, lack of technical skills among civil servants, absence of updated policies and regulations in some areas, and inadequate investment in digital technologies. Core government functions still rely heavily on legacy manual processes rather than automated digital systems. This limits efficiency, accountability, and transparency.

Data Governance Laws	Status	Absent	
Status of Malabo Convention		Drafted	
Cybercrime Law		Present	
Electronic Transaction Regulation			
Consumer Protection Law			
Privacy and Data Protection Laws			
Data Governance Institution			

## RECENT DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

In August 2023, Cameroon launched the Digital Transformation Acceleration Project (PATNuC) under Minister Minette Libom Li Likeng. Supported by a \$100 million World Bank investment, PATNuC aims to advance ICT sector reforms, improve internet access and digital skills, promote digital applications and services, boost digital inclusion, and use of digital services, and encourage digital employment and entrepreneurship. The program seeks to modernize Cameroon's digital infrastructure and capabilities to accelerate digital transformation and leverage technology for economic growth.

The Chinese tech giant Huawei, has committed to working alongside Cameroon in order to develop a high-level national strategy for the digital economy. The goal is to position Cameroon as an ICT hub in the French-speaking African region. The visit to Cameroon by the tech group comes one month after the launch of the PATNuC project.

## SUMMARY OF KEY INDICATORS

Digital Preparedness Indicator	Rank in Africa	Score
Digital Preparedness Index 2022	15/38	0.49
Education and Skills	13/38	0.393
Infrastructural Readiness	20/38	0.405
Macroeconomic Fundamentals	11/38	0.61
Business Dynamism and Environment	21/38	0.54
Regulatory Framework and Govt Effectiveness	10/38	0.673

Digital Development Indicators	Rank in Africa	Score
Internet Speed (KBps)	30/50	2,292
Fixed Telephone Subscriptions (per 100 person)	12/37	3.33
Digital Skills (not at all 1 - 7 to a great extent)	12/35	3.9
E-Participation Index	20/54	0.3