As a developing country in the heart of Central Africa, Cameroon has faced challenges with public and private access to the Internet. We'll discuss interesting facts about how Cameroon first started developing the critical data connections needed to access the Internet, the plan underway to make it more available, and how people there currently use the world's information superhighway.

## 1- Early Internet in Cameroon

There were rumblings of Internet technology becoming available in Cameroon in the late 1990s. In 1996, Cameroon's government began talks to establish a state telecommunications agency that would help bring the Internet to citizens and develop regulations. A year later, AT&T would be the first private enterprise to provide data access to Cameroon. Soon after, the first private Internet cafe opened in Douala, followed by the first report of a private operator, Jean Nseke, getting help from Canadian engineers to build an antenna capable of receiving data signals.

## 2 - Right in the Middle for Internet Adoption

As a continent, Africa has 54 officially recognised countries. Cameroon is roughly in the middle percentage-wise with web access, with about 44% of its citizens getting online. Cameroon

remains way ahead of Burundi, South Sudan, and neighbouring Central African Republic, which have rates in the low teens and remain the most underserved countries on the planet.

For perspective, the United States and the United Kingdom have penetration rates of over 90%.

## 3 - Internet Growth Is Significant in Cameroon

Like much of Africa, Cameroon has experienced significant gains in Internet usage among citizens in the last couple of years. The country has about 28 million residents, and 330,000 gained access in 2023 alone. Cameroon still has a long way to go, though, as over 15 million people still don't have easy access to data.

## 4 - Fuelled by Smartphones

Mobile broadband is becoming more available in Cameroon. Much of the growth previously mentioned in Cameroon's Internet access comes from smartphones, as the penetration of mobile phone data use rose from 18% to 39% between 2019 and 2023. Relatively inexpensive smartphones are responsible for this positive trend, as they can rely on a combination of cell towers and wireless routers within businesses or homes to get on the net. More widespread mobile data has helped more Cameroonians access vital communications, education, and entertainment.

## 5 - Cameroon's Internet Is Slow and Expensive

The African Policy Research Institute has a few things to say about the state of the Internet in Cameroon. They note that the country has a high cost per gigabyte of data at $1.63, although the five recently installed fibre optic cables should help lower the price. The institute believes that the average speed of 10 megabits per second is relatively slow compared to many other countries, especially for the price. For reference, the northwestern coast of Africa does much better, delivering a gigabyte of data for about half of what Cameroon pays.

While 10 megabits per second isn't terribly slow, we hope that public and private interventions will cause Cameroon's Internet providers to increase overall speeds at a price that households can afford. Allowing efficient data access to multiple devices in one home would also be beneficial. This combination would enable more people in Cameroon to subscribe to services without having the monthly fee and equipment eat away at their budget just to communicate and search on Google.

## 6 - The Government Is Stepping In

The government of Cameroon has continually pushed private Internet providers to provide more reliable service. Infrastructure failures have required repeated investigations, and a significant outage in 2023 prompted the government to issue a directive to providers to reimburse customers within two weeks. Officials desire a reorganisation of the telecommunications market to make their providers compete against one another to drive down prices, speed up data

transfer, and help with fragile infrastructure.

# 7 - Satellite Internet Is Coming

Cameroon's state Internet provider, Camtel, recognises that the country has a weak infrastructure for high-speed communications. The issues are especially prevalent in rural areas where technical installations are expensive. However, major cities also face challenges with undersea cables and old equipment, which contribute to outages. Camtel's CEO, Judith Yah Sunday Achidi, recently said the future of the country's Internet growth would likely be through satellite, stating that remote areas would benefit the most. She also cautioned that the provider would prefer to avoid partnering with Elon Musk's Starlink, as using a private company's equipment would jeopardise their ability to help themselves.

# 8 - Social Media and Search Engines are the Most Visited

Cameroon follows a worldwide trend of social media websites and the ever-useful Google search engine receiving the most visits, with WhatsApp rounding out the mix. The unique part of Cameroon's traffic is that no shopping websites break into the top ten, while Amazon is frequently ranked high in other countries.

The average Internet user in Cameroon focuses more on communication apps and video websites like YouTube. They are also fans of anime, manga, video games, and, for whatever reason, the most [popular Hacksaw slot games](#).

# Conclusion

Cameroon has an excellent opportunity to improve Internet access for citizens with the help of the state and their private providers. Thankfully, more accessible smartphones and wireless data access have given more people in Cameroon the chance to get online, and future applications of satellite technology will provide the same access for people in rural areas.