



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	CAMEROON
Title	Cameroon: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): legislation; prevalence; societal attitudes; possibility to refuse FGM and consequences for refusal; availability of state protection; access to support services
Reference period	January 2021 to September 2023
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">LegislationPrevalence; societal attitudesPossibility to refuse FGM and consequences for refusalAvailability of state protection; access to support services
Date of completion	5 October 2023
Query Code	Q48-2023
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A



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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Cameroon

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): legislation; prevalence; societal attitudes; possibility to refuse FGM and consequences for refusal; availability of state protection; access to support services

1. Legislation

The 2022 US Department of State (USDOS) annual report affirmed that the law prohibits genital mutilation for all women.¹ Section 277-1 on FGM of the Cameroonian Penal Code, enacted in 2016, cites that ‘whoever mutilates the genital organ of a person, by any means whatsoever, shall be punished with the penalties provided for in Section 277 [grievous harm]’; which are imprisonment ranging from ten to twenty years. Moreover, the law prescribes the penalty of life imprisonment for persons committing genital mutilation where: ‘a) the offender habitually carries out such practice or does so for commercial purposes; b) it leads to the death of the victim’. However, the article further states that the provisions shall not apply ‘where the acts were performed by a qualified person and in order to save life’.²

According to International Crisis Group, FGM amongst other harmful practices affecting women were criminalized in the 2016 law, describing it as ‘marking significant progress, at least on paper’. However, the same source indicated that ‘there is little to suggest that the law is widely enforced’.³

No further information could be found on the implementation of the 2016 law among the sources consulted by the EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

2. Prevalence; societal attitudes

The 2022 USDOS report, citing estimates from UN Women, stated that the prevalence of FGM in Cameroon among girls and women aged 15 to 49 years was 2 %.⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung in its 2022 country report on Cameroon indicated that FGM impacts approximately 1 % of women.⁵ According to an article from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) from 2023, in several regions of Cameroon such as the Far North, South West, North West and the Centre, including Yaounde, FGM is a ‘reality’. Moreover, FGM rates as reported were 1.4 % at a national level and 20 % in the regions, ‘which are most vulnerable to the practice’.⁶ Data from

¹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

² Cameroon, Penal Code, Law N.2016/007, 2016, [url](#), p. 101

³ International Crisis Group, Rebels, Victims, Peacebuilders: Women in Cameroon’s Anglophone Conflict, 23 February 2022, [url](#), p. 12

⁴ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI, Country Report for 2022 – Nigeria, 23 February 2022, [url](#), p. 14

⁶ UNFPA, International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation 2023, 6 February 2023, [url](#)



the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) stated that the prevalence of FGM in Cameroon was no more than 1%.⁷

The 2021 USDOS report described that, although statistical data collected in the past 10 years indicated that the practice was gradually declining, the Minister of Women’s Empowerment and the Family noted that ‘she believed it continued in some areas’. The same source indicated that ‘anecdotal reports suggested children were subjected to FGM in isolated areas of the Far North, East, and Southwest Regions and among the Choa and Ejagham ethnic groups’.⁸ Sources have affirmed that FGM is mainly practiced by the Ejagham tribe situated in the Southwest Region⁹ and by Muslim groups like the Fulbe, Haoussas and Arapshouas in the north.¹⁰ A French news source indicated that [informal translation] FGM was most practiced on young girls of Muslim faith, between infancy and the age of 15.¹¹

An article by Voa (Voice of America) News, quoting a woman who conducts FGM procedures, stated that ‘a girl who is circumcised does not have sexual desires and remains faithful when she gets married’. Moreover, ‘women who are circumcised are hardworking, since they are not tempted into prostitution’. The same news source illustrated that FGM has been on the rise in the Far North Region due to Covid and crises which have hindered campaigns to stop FGM, such as the country’s separatist crisis and Boko Haram terrorism.¹² The news source, The Guardian, also affirmed that since Covid, FGM has ‘resurfaced’ in countries including Cameroon, ‘where it had been largely abandoned’.¹³

According to a qualitative study, based on data collected from focus groups and interviews, published by an American university called Bridgewater State University in February 2023, ‘for a woman of the Far North Region to be considered successful and be fully accepted by society, she must undergo’ FGM. The source described that FGM is accompanied with a lot of social pressure for girls and their parents, to get married in a ‘brief timeframe’ after. Further, the same source, citing an oral source, described that ‘once a girl is cut, she automatically becomes a woman who is ripe and ready for marriage’.¹⁴ The source added that women who do not meet ‘this standard’ of having an FGM procedure, getting married, and having children, ‘are considered deviants and as such, cannot be fully accepted by the community’.¹⁵

⁷ UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), June 2023, [url](#)

⁸ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 13 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 42-43

⁹ HRLRC, Female Genital Mutilation: What you need to know, 25 February 2023, [url](#); Borgen Project (The), Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon, 17 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰ Borgen Project (The), Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon, 17 June 2021, [url](#)

¹¹ Actu Cameroun, Mutilations génitales féminines : trois millions de filles excisées dans le monde [Female genital mutilation : three million girls circumcised worldwide], 9 February 2021, [url](#)

¹² Voa News Cameroon Says Female Circumcision Resurfacing Because of COVID-19, Other Crises, 7 February 2021, [url](#)

¹³ Guardian (The), ‘On a rampage’: the African women fighting to end FGM, 9 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴ Ekun Nyok, M., “Am I More than a Housewife”, An Exploration of Education, Empowerment, and Gender Preference in Relation to Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation in the Far North Region of Cameroon, Bridgewater State University, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 11-12

¹⁵ Ekun Nyok, M., “Am I More than a Housewife”, An Exploration of Education, Empowerment, and Gender Preference in Relation to Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation in the Far North Region of Cameroon, Bridgewater State University, February 2023, [url](#), p. 11



No further information could be found on prevalence or societal attitudes among the sources consulted by the EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

3. Possibility to refuse FGM and consequences for refusal

No information could be found on the possibility to refuse FGM and consequences for refusal among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

The qualitative study published by Bridgewater State University, citing a 2019 study, described an incident where a woman was publicly disgraced by other women for not undergoing the procedure and threatened with divorce by her husband. Further, an oral source from the study, described that women who refused to undergo FGM in the region end up remaining single or marrying people from outside their community.¹⁶

4. Availability of state protection; access to support services

No information could be found on the availability of state protection or access to support services for women specifically related to FGM among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

¹⁶ Ekun Nyok, M., “Am I More than a Housewife”, An Exploration of Education, Empowerment, and Gender Preference in Relation to Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation in the Far North Region of Cameroon, Bridgewater State University, February 2023, [url](#), pp. 10-11

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ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED

Africa News; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD); Asylum Research Center (ARC); Canada - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB); ECOLnet; European Union – EUAA COI Portal; Refworld; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)