



WORKER RIGHTS · CAMEROON

Working in Cameroon: Your Rights

What every worker should know, in plain language. No legal jargon.

Read this first — Cameroon has no single minimum wage: it has three, by sector, set in 2023 and 2024. It has no sickness or unemployment insurance at all — the CNPS runs exactly three branches. What it gives every worker is a front door: no court will hear an employment case until the Labour Inspector has tried to settle it first, and that first step is free. This guide is for workers based in Cameroon.

General information only — not legal advice.

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The Wage Floor: Three Rates, by Sector

- The SMIG (guaranteed minimum wage) is set by sector, not nationally (Labour Code, s. 62(1): fixed by decree after consulting the National Labour Advisory Board). Since Decree No. 2023/00338/PM of March 21, 2023, the monthly rates are: 60,000 FCFA for private-sector workers outside agriculture, and 45,000 FCFA for agriculture and related sectors.
- State personnel governed by the Labour Code have their own rate: 43,969 FCFA a month, since February 23, 2024 (Decree No. 2024/0168/PM). Paying below the SMIG that applies to you is an offence.

Hours and Rest

- The legal week is 40 hours in non-agricultural work. Agriculture runs on 2,400 hours a year, at most 48 hours a week (s. 80). Night work is 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. (s. 81).
- Overtime exists, but its premiums are set by decree (Decree No. 95/677 of 1995), not by the Code — ask the Labour Inspectorate what premium applies to your hours.
- Weekly rest: at least 24 consecutive hours, as a rule on Sunday — and it may NEVER be replaced by a cash allowance (s. 88(1)).

Contracts

- A fixed-term contract (CDD) may not exceed two years and, for Cameroonian workers, may be renewed only ONCE with the same company. If the work continues after that renewal, the contract becomes indefinite (CDI) by law (s. 25).
- A CDD over three months must be in writing, with a copy to the Labour Inspector (s. 27(1)). Probation must be in writing, and may never exceed six months in total — eight months for managerial staff. If you are kept on after probation without a new contract, a final contract is deemed to run from the start of the trial period (s. 28).

Leave

- Annual paid leave accrues at 1.5 working days per month of service — 18 working days a year (s. 89) — plus 2 days for every full five years of service, and, for mothers, 2 extra days per child under 6 living at home (s. 90). Young workers under 18 accrue 2.5 days a month.
- Up to 10 days a year of special paid leave covers family events, on top of annual leave.

Maternity

- Maternity leave is 14 weeks, starting 4 weeks before the expected confinement, extendable by 6 weeks for a certified illness arising from the pregnancy or the birth. The employer may not dismiss a woman during the leave, or because of the pregnancy (s. 84).
- During the leave, the CNPS pays a daily allowance EQUAL to the wages the worker was actually receiving, and benefits in kind continue. After the birth: nursing breaks of up to one hour per working day, for 15 months (s. 85).

Getting Paid

- Wages are paid in legal tender, at intervals of no more than one month. Monthly pay must arrive no later than EIGHT DAYS after the month ends (s. 68). On termination, the final settlement of all wages and allowances is due as soon as the employment ceases.
- You are entitled to an individual payslip — and your signature on one, even one marked 'in full settlement,' is NOT proof that everything due was paid (s. 69). Wage claims are barred after THREE YEARS (s. 74).
- Deductions are a CLOSED list (s. 75): outside compulsory levies and the few named cases, no deduction is permitted; any agreement allowing another deduction is void; and wrongfully withheld sums bear interest.

Ending a Job: Notice

- An indefinite contract may be ended by either side — but only with written notice STATING THE REASON, and notice cannot be set off against leave (s. 34).

The LENGTH of notice is fixed by ministerial order, by seniority and occupational category. This guide prints the rule, not a table: ask the Labour Inspectorate for the notice length for your category, and hold your employer to the answer.

- During notice, you receive one paid day off a week to look for work (s. 35(2)). Notice not given, or cut short, is paid for in full (s. 36(1)). Termination without notice is possible only for serious misconduct, whose gravity the court assesses. A CDD may end early only for gross misconduct, force majeure, or both parties' written consent (s. 38).

Severance and Wrongful Dismissal

- Except for serious misconduct, a worker dismissed after at least TWO successive years is entitled to severance pay, separate from any pay in lieu of notice (s. 37). Its scale is set by ministerial order — ask the Labour Inspectorate for the scale for your category.

- **WRONGFUL DISMISSAL (s. 39):** dismissal because of your opinions, or your union membership or non-membership, is expressly wrongful — and the EMPLOYER must prove the grounds for any dismissal were well founded. Damages are at least **THREE MONTHS'** salary, and at most **ONE MONTH'S SALARY PER YEAR OF SERVICE**, calculated on the gross average of the last twelve months. They are separate from notice pay and severance. A dismissal sound in substance but defective in formality is capped at one month's salary.
- On any termination, your employer must give you a work certificate stating only your dates of employment and the posts you held (s. 44).

Economic Dismissals

- For economic dismissals (s. 40), the employer must first consult staff representatives, with the Labour Inspector present, on alternatives — reduced hours, shift work, part-time work, lay-off, allowance reviews, even wage cuts. Negotiations may not exceed 30 days.
- Selection weighs professional proficiency first, then seniority and family responsibilities. Dismissed workers hold a priority re-hiring claim for **TWO YEARS**.

Social Security: The CNPS

- The CNPS (the national social insurance fund) runs exactly THREE branches: family benefits; old-age, invalidity and death pensions; and occupational risks. Sickness and unemployment are NOT covered — this guide says so plainly because many workers assume they are.
- Contributions: family benefits are paid by the EMPLOYER alone — 7% of the contributory wage (5.65% in agriculture; 3.70% in private education). Pensions: 8.4%, split 4.2% employer and 4.2% worker — the only branch you pay into. Occupational risks are employer-only: 1.75% for low-risk work (Group A includes hotels, restaurants, cafés and bars), 2.50% for medium risk, 5% for high risk.
- Family and pension contributions are calculated on wages up to a ceiling of 750,000 FCFA a month. Your employer is liable for paying all contributions, deducting your share from your pay. You can check your own record at www.cnps.cm. Voluntary insurance — the pension branch only — exists at 8.4% of declared income for those outside compulsory cover.
- CNPS: Place de l'Indépendance, Yaoundé — +237 222 224 601 — cnps.cameroun@cnps.cm.

Equal Treatment and Children

- Equal pay for the same work and the same level of proficiency, irrespective of origin, sex, age, status and religion (s. 61(2)). The Code carries no general discrimination chapter — that is a finding of this review; its stated protections are the ones in this guide.
- No child may be employed before age 14, even as an apprentice (s. 86). Night work in industry is prohibited for women and children, whose rest period must be at least 12 consecutive hours (s. 82). Forced labour is forbidden (s. 2(3)).

Unions

- Workers may set up and join unions freely, WITHOUT prior authorisation (s. 3), and join the union of their choice. Anti-union discrimination is prohibited, and acts in breach of it are NULL AND VOID (s. 4).
- A workers' union registers with at least 20 members. If the Registrar does not act within one month, the union is considered registered (ss. 6, 11). Dues check-off needs both an employer-union agreement and your personal signed consent — which you may withdraw at any time, effective the following month (s. 21).

Public Holidays

- Public holidays are fixed by Law No. 73/5 of 1973, not by the Code. Civil holidays — January 1; February 11, Youth Day; May 1, Labour Day; May 20, National Day — and religious holidays — Good Friday; Ascension; August 15, Assumption; December 25; the end-of-Ramadan feast and the Feast of the Sacrifice, by the lunar calendar — are non-working days.
- The stoppage is obligatory for all workers on civil holidays. On religious holidays, it is not obligatory for workers over 18. If a civil holiday falls on a Sunday, the following day is treated as the holiday. The President may declare an extra day by order.

If Something Goes Wrong

- STEP ONE IS MANDATORY: ask the competent Labour Inspector to settle the dispute out of court (s. 139). A settlement is recorded in a statement of conciliation, enforceable once endorsed by the court president. If it fails, the Inspector issues a statement of NON-CONCILIATION — and a court case is receivable ONLY with that statement attached (s. 140). Individual-dispute proceedings are FREE OF CHARGE (s. 138).
- A worker who is underpaid — including below the SMIG — may seize the Inspectorate immediately, and may denounce the employer ANONYMOUSLY, with protection. Social-security problems go to the CNPS directly (contacts in the Social Security section).