Poverty & Equity Brief

October 2025

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Oil discoveries in the 1990s lifted Equatorial Guinea into upper-middle-income status, but the 2014 commodity bust erased much of that progress, leaving poverty entrenched. Between 2014 and 2024, GDP per capita fell by more than half. By 2022, 58.1 percent of the population—around 1.04 million people—lived on less than $8.30 a day (2021 PPP). Poverty is uneven across the country. In Malabo, 36 percent of the population is poor, about half the poverty in other towns and rural areas (63–66 percent). Children, women, and those with low education are more likely to be poor, showing how oil wealth has not translated into broad-based gains. With a Gini index of 38.5, inequality threatens growth and risks trapping the country in a middle-income trap.

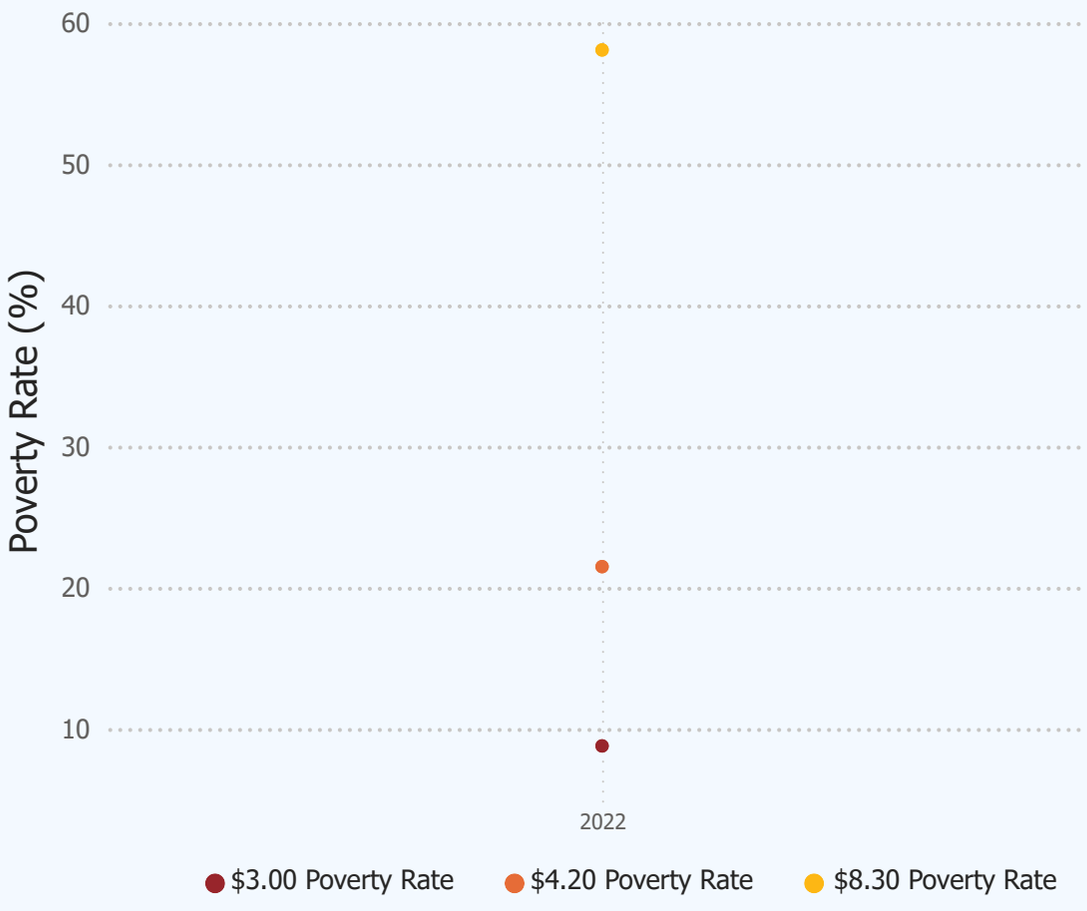
Basic services have expanded, but gaps remain wide and progress depends on private spending. About 20 percent of the population lives in multidimensional poverty, rising to 40 percent in rural areas but just 3 percent in Malabo. Despite significant investment in infrastructure in the 2000s—roads, airports, ports, water, and electricity—31 percent of Equatoguineans still lack access to safe water, 37 percent lack sanitation, and 18 percent remain off-grid. Schooling outcomes are better, as enrollment and attainment levels mean that only 3 percent and 7.7 percent of the population live in households deprived in these dimensions. Health has improved, with under-five mortality and child malnutrition rates halving since the 2000s. However, these human development outcomes rely heavily on private spending, as households devote nearly 10 percent of their consumption to schooling and health, while public spending on health and education combined — under 2 percent of GDP— remains below that of peers like Gabon and Azerbaijan.

Hydrocarbon dependence has funneled capital into enclaves that generate revenue but create few jobs, keeping unemployment above 13 percent. The private sector accounts for only a third of the scarce formal jobs—17 percent of employment. Its main obstacles are limited access to finance, cited by 43 percent of firms and reflected in low domestic credit to the private sector (5 percent of GDP); and the burden of tax rates and tax administration, identified by 21.6 percent of enterprises. This weak capacity to create jobs at scale leaves nearly half of the working poor in agriculture, forestry, and fishing—sectors dominated by self-employment and low value-added. It also results in insufficient creation of job opportunities for a growing supply of educated youth living in urban areas, preventing the country from harnessing its potential demographic dividend.

Reforms are needed to build human capital and create jobs, but fiscal constraints loom. Resources tied up in subsidies and state firms crowd out social spending. A transparent, predictable regulatory framework is key to increasing private investment, leading to private sector–led growth and more and better jobs.

$3.00 Poverty Rate	$8.30 Poverty Rate	Gini Index	Prosperity Gap
2022	2022	2022	2022
8.8%	58.1%	38.5	4.7

Poverty Rate



Inequality

Poverty at Different Lines

Poverty Line	Number of Poor (Thousands)	Rate (%)	Year
National Poverty Line	915.3	50.7	2022
International Poverty Line ($3.00/day)	158.6	8.8	2022
Lower Middle Income Class Poverty Line ($4.20/day)	387.2	21.5	2022
Upper Middle Income Class Poverty Line ($8.30/day)	1,048.3	58.1	2022
Multidimensional Poverty Measure		20.0	2022

Group and Multidimensional Poverty

Poverty by Group	Poverty Rate (%)
Urban population	54.4
Rural population	66.3
Males	57.1
Females	59.1
0 to 14 years old	68.6
15 to 64 years old	52.1
65 and older	47.7
Without education (16+)	56.0
Primary education (16+)	57.3
Secondary education (16+)	52.0
Tertiary/post-secondary education (16+)	26.7

Multidimensional Poverty Components	(% of Pop.)
Daily income less than US$3.00 per person	8.8
At least one school-aged child is not enrolled in school	3.0
No adult has completed primary education	7.7
No access to limited-standard drinking water	31.3
No access to limited-standard sanitation	37.1
No access to electricity	18.1

Note:
N/A denotes a missing/removed value, while N/A* refers to a value which was removed due to having fewer than 30 observations.
The rates in the Poverty by Group table above are shown at the $8.30 upper-middle income line.
Data for the Poverty by Group table is derived from a 2022 survey and data for the Multidimensional Poverty Components table is derived from a 2022 survey.

Poverty Data & Methodology

The second national household survey (II-ENH), carried out between 2022 and 2023, is the most recent effort to measure poverty and inequality in Equatorial Guinea. It was the product of a close collaboration between the National Statistical Office (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Guinea Ecuatorial) and the World Bank. The II-ENH was the first survey of its kind since the 2006 Equatoguinean Household Survey. Poverty estimates from the two surveys are not comparable, as the most recent round aligned both survey design and poverty measurement more closely with international standards.

The II-ENH relied on the 2015 census as the sampling frame for the country, except in Bioko, where the malaria census was used. The survey is representative of 13 domains, defined by provinces and area of residence. Unlike earlier efforts, it captured food consumption with household purchase diaries, while non-food items were recorded through recall. The welfare aggregate also incorporated consumption flows from durables and housing, and adjusted welfare for spatial and temporal cost-of-living differences.

Harmonization

The numbers presented in this brief are based on the SSAPOV database. SSAPOV is a database of harmonized nationally representative household surveys managed by Sub-Saharan Team for Statistical Development. It contains more than 100 surveys covering 45 out of the 48 countries in the SSA region. The three countries not covered in the database are Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, and Somalia. Terms of use of the data adhere to agreements with the original data producers.

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