

LONDA 2025

DIGITAL RIGHTS & INCLUSION IN AFRICA REPORT

Benin

Country Report



PARADIGM
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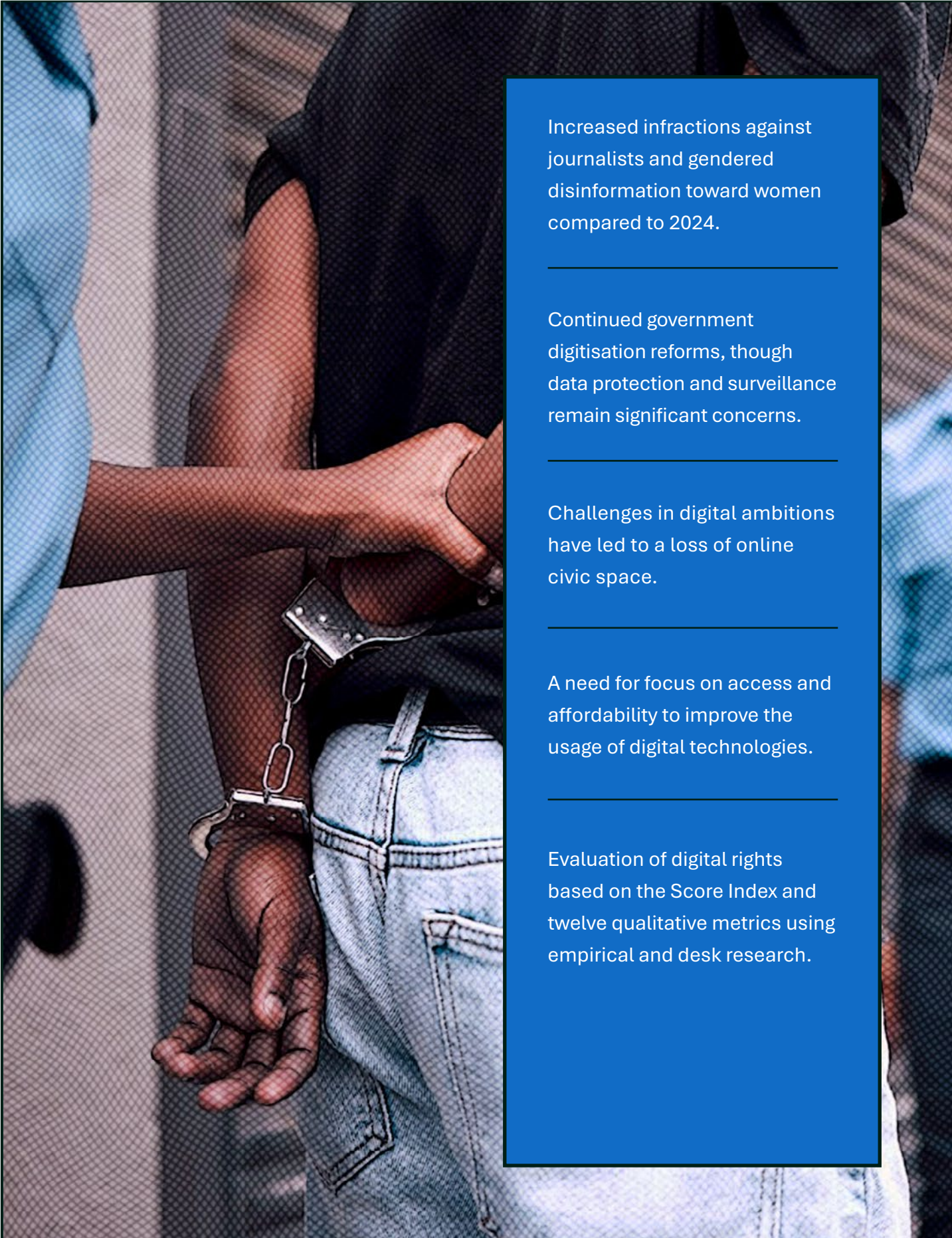
Benin

By Dr. Qemal Affagnon

Executive Summary

In comparison to the 2024 Londa report, more concerning infractions against journalists were found, and women are subjected to gendered disinformation. The government continued its strategic reforms focusing on digitisation but serious concerns remained about data protection, privacy and surveillance. If the updated national Artificial Intelligence strategy represents a cornerstone of Benin's digital ambitions, the country has faced challenges that have resulted

in a loss of online civic space. Access and affordability should be given special consideration in policy decisions and the frameworks that support them in order to improve the use of digital technologies. Alongside the Score Index by Paradigm Initiative that evaluates the nation's performance on key human rights issues, the report's methodology is based on a comprehensive approach, integrating empirical and desk-research techniques to analyse the digital landscape. Using twelve qualitative metrics, this study evaluates the factors influencing digital rights and inclusion in Benin.



Increased infractions against journalists and gendered disinformation toward women compared to 2024.

Continued government digitisation reforms, though data protection and surveillance remain significant concerns.

Challenges in digital ambitions have led to a loss of online civic space.

A need for focus on access and affordability to improve the usage of digital technologies.

Evaluation of digital rights based on the Score Index and twelve qualitative metrics using empirical and desk research.

Introduction

Since 2016, Benin has made significant strides toward digitalisation in an effort to become a hub for digital services in West Africa. With the enhancement of the digital infrastructure, various reforms were implemented, including the establishment of specialised institutions. The establishment of the Ministry of Digital economy and communications in 2016 highlights the government's dedication to the digital agenda¹. Similarly, the launch in 2020 of an extensive national public services portal is another important accomplishment². From business registration to passport issuance, this site offers residents the possibility to obtain information on over 560 governmental services. The portal was created with the intention of facilitating citizens' access to public services and improving the quality of governance. Nowadays, the portal also allows its users to make and

manage requests for 132 online services³. Despite advancements in digitalisation, the country continues to encounter major challenges like a digital divide within its population. On another level, the Internet has accelerated the rate at which misinformation has been spread in recent years, reaching more people as a result. Cybercrime is another significant concern, driven by increasing digitalisation, with a focus on cyber-enabled financial crimes like romance scams and sextortion. Also, online freedoms are being compromised by government legislation. Hate speech and malicious use of artificial intelligence continue to affect digital spaces in addition to the failure of major tech companies to prioritise rights and freedoms.

1. See Ministère de la communication : Rfiatou Monrou s'installe ! <https://mamabenin.com/2016/04/07/ministere-de-la-communication-rafiatou-monrou-sinstalle/> (accessed on 04 November 2025).
2. See Lancement du Portail national des services publics: Le gouvernement rend accessible l'administration en ligne <https://lanationbenin.bj/actualites/lancement-du-portail-national-des-services-publics-le-gouvernement-rend-accessible-ladministration-en-ligne> (accessed on 03 November 2025).
3. See Trois nouveaux e-services disponibles en ligne <https://andf.bj/liste-des-3-nouveaux-e-services-disponibles/> (accessed on 01 November 2025).

Online Freedom of

Expression and

Access to Information

The Constitution of Benin, 1990, as amended by Law no. 2019-40 of 7 November 2019, ensures that everyone has the fundamental right to obtain information⁴. In Article 8, the Constitution declares that the State guarantees to its citizens equal opportunities in health, education, culture, information, vocational training, and employment. The Constitution of Benin does not explicitly mention the acknowledgement of the right to access administrative information. However it refers to information in general, particularly information that the State must share with its citizens⁵.

After the adoption of the Constitution, the Benin administration has been quite

unclear regarding public access to information. Later, the first move towards increased transparency was made in 1996 by the Council of Ministers⁶. This initiative underlined the importance of developing user guides and procedural manuals to enhance citizens' comprehension of their right to access administrative information, and was validated by a decree in 2000.⁷ Thanks to significant pressure from civil society groups, a law related to access to information was passed in 2015.⁸

However, the establishment of rules and procedures via law on information access does not always ensure their consistent application. In recent years, alongside the issue of accessing information, journalists have begun encountering additional challenges in managing public information. Under Patrick Talon's regime, arrests and judicial harassment of journalists or digital activists have increased such that this move tends to develop as a normal behaviour. Several

4. See Trois nouveaux e-services disponibles en ligne <https://andf.bj/liste-des-3-nouveaux-e-services-disponibles/> (accessed on 01 November 2025)
5. See Problématique de l'accès de l'information administrative au Bénin https://www.memoireonline.com/12/07/739/m_problematique-acces-information-administrative-benin9.html (accessed on 09 November 2025).
6. idem
7. idem
8. See Loi N° 2015-07 DU 20 MARS 2015 portant code de l'information et Communication du Bénin <https://sgg.gouv.bj/doc/loi-2015-07/> (accessed on 07 November 2025)

online media suffered cyberattacks that defaced their website pages during the reported period⁹.

During the period between 2024 and 2025, Benin grappled with a surge in infringements on freedom of expression in an evolving landscape of online threats towards several journalists. An example is that of Cosme Hounsa, editor of the newspaper *La Boussole*¹⁰. The journalist was arrested by agents of the National Centre for Digital Investigations (CNIN) on charges of harassment by electronic means under the Digital Code. The incident followed a complaint filed by Minister Counsellor Rachidi Gbadamassi¹¹. Even though Hounsa is free for now, he is still facing legal proceedings and may be summoned at any time as part of the judicial process. Under the Digital Code, anyone who initiates coercive, intimidating, harassing

or emotionally distressing electronic communication can be charged. The same applies to anyone who initiates or relays false information against others through social networks.

Recently, the Digital Code was also applied to Olivier Allocheme, editor of the daily newspaper *L'Evenement Précis*. The arrest of Allocheme comes amid heightened tensions between independent media outlets and Benin authorities¹². Physical attacks against journalists and harassment in reprisal for journalists' work are on the rise. Known for his criticism of President Patrice Talon, Hugues Comlan Sossoukpè, was first arrested in Ivory Coast and later, extradited to Benin. His case is pending a judicial investigation on charges of inciting rebellion, inciting hatred and violence, but also for harassing through electronic communication. Since 2019,

9. See des médias en ligne victimes de perturbations numériques <https://shorturl.at/8ts7f> (accessed on 05 November 2025)

10. See Benin: Newspaper editor arrested after Minister's online harassment complaint <https://mfwa.org/country-highlights/benin-newspaper-editor-arrested-after-ministers-complaint-of-online-harrassment/> (accessed on 07 October 2025).

11. See Beninese journalist jailed over critical reporting (accessed on 04 November 2025). <https://ifex.org/beninese-journalist-jailed-over-critical-reporting/> (accessed on 03 November 2025).

12. See Bénin : Le dossier du journaliste Olivier Allochéme reporté au 15 janvier devant la Criet <https://lanouvel-letribune.info/2025/10/benin-le-dossier-du-journaliste-olivier-allocheme-reporté-au-15-janvier-devant-la-criet/> (accessed on 02 November 2025)

Sossoukpè has been living in exile in Togo, under refugee status. On July 14 2025, the Court for the Repression of Economic Offences and Terrorism upheld his detention, like Steve Amoussou, a digital activist, convicted on charges of politically motivated insult and spreading false information¹³.

Taking into account the cases referenced above, in addition to the extensive list of journalists who face prosecution or imprisonment, there is fear of the government continuing on this path. So far, the introduction of the Digital Code in Benin presents new obstacles to freedom of expression, limiting certain opposition media and encouraging the detention or imprisonment of journalists.

Internet Access and

Disruptions

According to the latest update from the Electronic Communications and Postal Regulatory Authority (ARCEP Benin), the Beninese internet market continues to expand. Among the 14 operators who are competing, Société Béninoise d'Infrastructures Numériques (SBIN SA) and Isocel SA, maintain their dominant positions with national coverage, while intermediate players such as FirstNet SA, SUD Telecom Solutions SA, Euphorbia SARL and GVA Bénin continue to operate in major urban areas. The dominance of SBIN SA and ISOCEL SA can mainly be attributed to their ability to offer Fibre to Home solutions, a technology that offers stability and speed to customers.

Nevertheless, despite the existence of all these services, Benin still experienced significant internet service outages last year. A number of underwater telecommunications

13. See Benin: Digital activist sentenced to two years imprisonment <https://mfwa.org/country-highlights/benin-activist-steve-amoussou-sentenced-fined/> (accessed on 27 October 2025).

cables, including two that connect the West African country, sustained damage, which resulted in connection failure¹⁴. With the exception of Moov Africa and Starlink, all the telecom giants operating in Benin were affected by the outage that impacted their installations¹⁵.

Starlink was able to avoid the outage because it uses low-Earth orbit satellites to provide internet access. It is important to note that the majority of Beninese consumers mostly rely on systems connected by physical cables. With the low-Earth orbit satellites, Starlink is attempting to bolster its presence in Benin, particularly by offering connectivity for more efficient border surveillance¹⁶. If it is true that digital infrastructure could enable a

more effective management of areas facing terrorism in Benin, Starlink's potential can also be harmful¹⁷. For example, this potential brings up issues with privacy, corporate control over space infrastructure, environmental effects like space debris, and criminal organisations using it¹⁸. Nevertheless, a large portion of internet service is currently provided via mobile operators in Benin. Given that the nation is still developing its digital infrastructure, mobile operators are often the primary gateway to connect people, especially in areas lacking an infrastructure of fixed lines. Between 2024 and 2025, an increase in active mobile subscriptions was noted throughout the country. With almost nine million customers and a roughly 50% market share, MTN leads the Benin mobile phone industry¹⁹.

14. See Perturbation de réseau depuis le 14 mars : Celtiis assure la continuité du service internet <https://matinlibre.com/2024/03/20/perturbation-de-reseau-depuis-le-14-mars-celtiis-assure-la-continuite-du-service-internet/> (accessed on 09 November 2025).

15. See Pourquoi Maroc Telecom a échappé à la coupure internet en Afrique <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1550309/economie-entreprises/pourquoi-maroc-telecom-a-echappe-a-la-coupure-internet-en-afrique/> (accessed on 12 November 2025)

16. See Des cadres de Starlink en mission au Bénin <https://www.afrique-sur7.fr/starlink-des-emissaires-delon-musk-en-mission-au-benin> (accessed on 15 November 2025)

17. See Elon Musk offensif au Bénin <https://mondafrique.com/decryptage/elon-musk-a-la-tete-de-starlink-mise-sur-lafrique/> (accessed on 11 November 2025).

18. See Le groupe « Starlink » d'Elon Musk, un outil de pouvoir au coeur du Sahel <https://mondafrique.com/decryptage/le-groupe-starlink-delon-musk-un-outil-de-pouvoir-au-sahel/> (accessed on 13 November 2025).

19. See Inclusion financière : MTN Bénin veut accélérer sur la Fintech <https://www.agenceecofin.com/actualites-numerique/1401-124902-inclusion-financiere-mtn-benin-veut-accelerer-sur-la-fintech> (accessed on 10 November 2025).

Table 1: Mobile subscriptions - Change in active mobile subscriptions

Designations	T2_2024	T3_2024	T4_2024	T1_2025	T2_2025
SPACETEL BENIN	8 467 023	8 951 193	8 860 782	8587 373	8 467 024
MOOV AFRICA BENIN	6 46 9731	6 103 953	5705 177	5 938 114	5 520 384
CELTIS	2 867 222	3 191 516	3 648 522	4 178 572	4 649 114
Total Mobile Subscriptions	17 803 976	18 246 662	18 214 481	18 704 059	18 636 522

Source : Electronic Communications and Postal Regulatory Authority (ARCEP Benin)

In the mobile internet market, which comprises around 64.25% of Benin's Internet customers, MTN Benin and Moov Benin benefited greatly from the transition to mobile data services²⁰. According to GSMA, around 3.8 million people, which corresponds to 28% of the population (48% of adults), routinely used their phones to access the Internet²¹.

Table 1: Mobile subscriptions - Change in active mobile subscriptions

Designations	T2_2024	T3_2024	T4_2024	T1_2025	T2_2025
SPACETEL BENIN	6 101 371	6 265 262	6 852 058	5 283 369	4 616 644
MOOV AFRICA BENIN	3 303 734	3 169 805	2 923 627	2931 394	2 639 727
CELTIS	1 661 841	2 289 253	2 585 697	2931 753	3317 431
Total active mobile internet subscription	11 066 946	11 724 320	12 361 382	11 146 516	10 573 802
Including WOMEN	27%	28%	26%	22%	22%

Source : Electronic Communications and Postal Regulatory Authority (ARCEP Benin)

Canal box (GVA Bénin) is also trying to attract new clients in this competitive environment. In this regard, Canal Box (GVA Bénin) started to offer two unlimited monthly plans, including 50 Megabits per second (Mbps) for CFA15,000, approximately US\$27, and 200 Mbps for CFA30,000, approximately US\$53²². During the period covered by the report, high-speed mobile internet (3G and 4G) expanded to nearly 90% of the country²³. Despite an increase in the number of internet subscribers between 2024 and 2025, GSMA points out that there is an increasing discrepancy between the number of individuals who have access to high-speed networks and those who actively use them²⁴. Known as the usage gap, this phenomena refers to the percentage of Benin's population which is offline even though they reside close

to high-speed mobile networks. According to GSMA, between 39% and 66% of Benin's population were offline despite the fact, they live near a high-speed mobile network²⁵.

Gendered disinformation

In Benin, a country where leadership is considered to be patriarchal, significant progress has been achieved politically in terms of gender inclusiveness in recent years. Nevertheless, tradition still retains an important influence despite evolving social perspectives. First, this situation acts as an obstacle for women wishing to engage in political affairs. In this context, gendered misinformation can be understood as the dissemination

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20. See Benin: 94% mobile Internet coverage, but actual usage can improve (GSMA) <https://extensia.tech/benin-94-mobile-internet-coverage-but-actual-usage-can-improve-gsma/> <https://www.agenceecofin.com/actualites-numerique/1401-124902-inclusion-financiere-mtn-benin-veut-accelerer-sur-la-fintech> (accessed on 05 November 2025).
21. See Benin Expands Mobile Internet, but Many Still Lack Access <https://www.ecofinagency.com/telecom/1702-46429-benin-expands-mobile-internet-but-many-still-lack-access> (accessed on 06 November 2025).
22. See Fiber optic internet in Benin: Canal Box triggers a price war <https://extensia.tech/fiber-optic-internet-in-benin-canal-box-triggers-a-price-war/> (accessed on 08 November 2025).
23. See Benin Expands Mobile Internet, but Many Still Lack Access <https://www.ecofinagency.com/telecom/1702-46429-benin-expands-mobile-internet-but-many-still-lack-access> (accessed on 08 November 2025).
24. Idem
25. See New insights on mobile internet connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa <https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/blog/new-insights-on-mobile-internet-connectivity-in-sub-saharan-africa/> (accessed on 09 November 2025).

of false or misleading information that relies on misogyny or stereotypes related to gender. For instance, Marie-Elise Gbèdo, has admitted facing challenges in navigating her aspirations in a country dominated by male politicians²⁶. Marie Elise Gbèdo, the 63-year-old attorney who attempted to persuade voters to back her political campaign, lamented that, due to her gender, no one took into account her skills or accomplishments²⁷. This type of disinformation generally depicts women as deceitful, lacking intelligence, or incites rivalries among women. Among those impacted by gendered misinformation in Benin are women activists, government officials, political leaders, and those in public roles. Mariam Chabi Talata, the first woman Vice President of Benin and one of the few women to hold higher positions,

is among those who encounter false information based on misogyny²⁸.

The election in which President Patrice Talon secured a second term was fueled by gender disinformation, particularly due to the widespread availability of the Internet and smartphones²⁹. During this election, Reckya Madougou, another woman in politics, has endured sexist, discriminatory, and degrading comments from multiple individuals, including those in office³⁰.

In addition to being detrimental, gendered misinformation can put women who are engaged in politics and governance at risk of danger. This is the case of Marie-Elise Gbèdo, a four-time presidential candidate who narrowly escaped assassination in 1998. This year, Gbèdo was attacked in front of her

26. See Benin Election: Female candidate makes fourth attempt at presidency <https://www.africanews.com/2016/03/04/benin-election-female-candidate-makes-fourth-attempt-at-presidency/> (accessed on 18 November 2025).

27. idem

28. See Benin's first female vice-president on women's bodies, Amazon warriors and being called a feminist <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/mar/15/mariam-chabi-talata-benin-first-female-vice-president-on-abortion-rights> (accessed on 12 November 2025).

29. See Enlightened West African dictatorship challenged by state capture ? Insights from Benin, Togo and Senegal https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362832783_'Enlightened'_West_African_dictatorship_challenged_by_state_capture_Insights_from_Benin_Togo_and_Senegal (accessed on 08 November 2025).

30. See des doutes face aux accusations contre Reckyath Madougou <https://www.dw.com/fr/des-doutes-face-aux-accusations-contre-reckyath-madougou/a-56789203> (accessed on 09 November 2025).

home by six armed men. She narrowly survived five severe shots with one hitting her chest³¹. Following the general elections on January 8 2023, the Ninth Benin Parliament (2023-2026) has 28 women Parliamentarians among 109 members³². This accounts for 25.69% of the overall total, compared to 7.23% of women elected in the Eighth legislature (2019-2023). The advancements noted in 2023 during the legislative elections can be linked to the reform started in 2019, via the amendment of Article 26 of the Constitution, 1990 and Article 144 of the Electoral Code³³. Despite improvements in the representation of women in decision-making bodies, gendered disinformation aimed at keeping women out of politics persists.

Data Protection and

Cybersecurity

In an increasingly digitalised environment, personal data of online users can be sold for advertising, leveraged by companies to enhance productivity, or employed by governments to forecast voter turnout³⁴. For example, in order to provide highly targeted advertisements, Meta's business strategy relies on collecting copious amounts of personal data³⁵. However, such use and exploitation of data helped to undermine privacy, whereas the security of personal data should be considered fundamental. In Benin, the Constitution assures various fundamental rights, including the right to privacy³⁶. However in reality, many Beninese users are still

31. See *Présidentielle au Bénin : Marie-Elise Gbèdo, une femme dans la mêlée* <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/296397/politique/presidentielle-benin-marie-elise-gbedo-femme-melee/> (accessed on 01 November 2025).

32. See *Une amélioration de la représentativité des femmes à la 9ème législature de l'Assemblée nationale du Bénin* <https://www.undp.org/fr/benin/actualites/une-amelioration-de-la-representativite-des-femmes-la-9eme-legislature-de-lassemblee-nationale-du-benin> (accessed on 02 November 2025).

33. See *Benin republic adopts new electoral Code* <https://www.africanews.com/2018/09/05/benin-republic-adopts-new-electoral-code-the-morning-call/> (accessed on 03 November 2025).

34. See *A closer look at modern digital political advertising* <https://illuminate.com/insights/blog/modern-digital-political-advertising/> (accessed on 04 November 2025).

35. See *Mad at Meta? Don't Let Them Collect and Monetize Your Personal Data* <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/01/mad-meta-dont-let-them-collect-and-monetize-your-personal-data> (accessed on 05 November 2025).

36. See *Privacy Law at Benin* <https://lawgratis.com/blog-detail/privacy-law-at-benin> (accessed on 06 November 2025).

unaware or do not understand their data rights, and for those, the true power of everything from geolocation data to health data is still not starkly apparent. Furthermore, many people in Benin do not understand the ways in which their data is used or the laws surrounding such. This situation raises serious human rights concerns. This is the reason why the Personal Data Protection Authority of Benin (APDP) opted to raise awareness among people in different regions of the country, regarding the importance of protecting their personal data³⁷. APDP also periodically organises open days to engage with the general public. In recent months, the Personal Data Protection Authority has held these events outside Cotonou, the country's economic capital³⁸.

APDP is able to impose financial sanctions on data controllers who do not comply with Law No. 2017-20 of the Digital Code. The body also verifies public

files and checks whether file managers comply with Law No. 2017-20 of the Digital Code. APDP also receives and investigates complaints in accordance with its mission and the law. Because APDP is expected to operate as an autonomous organisation, it must assess if the government's ongoing utilisation of personal data adheres to legal standards. Specifically, APDP is charged with the responsibility of making sure that Benin's digitisation of public services doesn't lead to or exacerbate existing data protection rules and regulations³⁹. With over 560 services already offered, the digitisation of public services is advancing, but data protection and cybersecurity should not be overlooked⁴⁰.

37. See Protection des données : L'APDP quitte Cotonou pour sensibiliser tout le Bénin <https://afriqueitnews.com/tech-media/protection-donnees-apdp-quitte-cotonou-sensibiliser-benin/> (accessed on 07 November 2025).

38. See Protection des données personnelles: L'APDP en campagne de sensibilisation à Parakou <https://matinlibre.com/2025/06/11/protection-des-donnees-personnelles-lapdp-en-campagne-de-sensibilisation-a-parakou/> (accessed on 03 November 2025).

39. See Digitalisation des services publics : un pilier important pour le développement <https://lematinal.bj/digitalisation-des-services-publics-un-pilier-important-pour-le-developpement/> (accessed on 13 November 2025).

40. See Bénin : une stratégie numérique intégrée et ambitieuse <https://www.teamfrance-export.fr/infos-sectorielles/37110/37110-benin-une-strategie-numerique-integree-et-ambitieuse> (accessed on 14 November 2025).

Privacy and

Surveillance

In Benin, digital technologies continue to transform how citizens are able to obtain information, communicate and interact with the environment surrounding them. Yet, this progress in technology has also brought about new challenges and risks to essential human rights, such as surveillance. According to the surveillance legislation in Benin, surveillance measures apply to anyone whom there are legitimate reasons to gather information for intelligence purposes, with the exception of members of Parliament, judges, public prosecutors, and barristers during their mandate or professional activity, as well as individuals who are likely to be aware of the indictment of the President of the Republic and government members due to their statute⁴¹. In general, this surveillance involves methods, technology, or frameworks that make control possible by identifying, tracking, monitoring, or analysing personal data. There are two

forms of digital surveillance: targeted surveillance and passive surveillance. Targeted surveillance concentrates on particular people, usually by using spyware. Passive surveillance, entails wide population monitoring, such as internet monitoring, mobile phone tapping, SIM card registration, location tracking, deep packet inspection, network interception, cable tapping, and telecom surveillance.

Both types of surveillance pose significant threats to human rights and civic freedoms. For example, the right to privacy can be compromised, as constant surveillance weakens individuals' capacity to communicate, associate, or organise freely without worrying about being observed. This can also result in a significant chilling effect on the freedom to express oneself. Yet, the Constitution of Benin contains several provisions promoting freedom of expression and information. Article 23 states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression and opinion while respecting public order as stipulated in laws and regulations.

Article 24 specifically recognises and protects freedom of the press and

41. See Loi n° 2017-44 portant recueil du renseignement en République du Bénin <https://lanouvelletribune.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/DSL-LOI-N%C2%B0-2017-44-PORTANT-RECUEIL-DU-RENSEIGNEMENT.pdf> (accessed on 12 November 2025).

gives this responsibility to the Higher Authority for Audio-Visual Media and Communication. Thus, it is clear that surveillance activities constitute a violation of the Benin Constitution. In the same vein, significant privacy concerns arise from the fact that both passive and targeted monitoring frequently include the collection of personal data without consent. In such a context, these actions can violate the right to privacy, which is guaranteed under Article 8 of the Benin Constitution. At the beginning of 2025, reports of the government's interest in invasive surveillance surfaced again⁴². In previous years, these actions were conducted with Pegasus spyware⁴³.

Digital Inclusion of

Persons with Disabilities

Article 26 of the Constitution of Benin, 1990, asserts that the State shall

guarantee equal treatment under the law for everyone, regardless of origin, race, gender, religion, political views, or social status. However, one reality persists, as marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities continue to encounter exclusion and marginalisation in various social processes. In Benin, the promotion and protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act encompasses a variety of social benefits for individuals with disabilities, such as enhanced access to healthcare, education, job training, transportation, and recreational activities⁴⁴. This act includes rules pertaining to the construction or alteration of buildings to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. Also, this Act states that schools are required to admit children with disabilities.

Additionally, the Act emphasises that the State is obligated to guarantee the right to education, instruction, and training for persons with disabilities. In the Act, kids and teens with disabilities have the right

42. See Veterans of Israeli spyware firm NSO bounce back in Africa <https://www.africaintelligence.com/west-africa/2025/01/10/veterans-of-israeli-spyware-firm-nso-bounce-back-in-africa,110359430-art> (accessed on 11 November 2025)

43. See Londa 2023 Digital Rights and Inclusion Reports <https://paradigmhq.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Benin-Londa-Report.pdf> (accessed on 04 November 2025).

44. See Les avancées en matière de protection des personnes handicapées au Bénin <https://journals.openedition.org/rdctss/6591> (accessed on 01 November 2025).

to access free and inclusive education in regular public schools. The protection of children in the digital space, including children and teenagers with disabilities in Benin, is mainly governed by Law No. 2017-20 of April 20, 2018, on the Digital Code, amended in 2020, which punishes cybercrime and child pornography and guarantees the protection of personal data⁴⁵. Despite all these provisions, one truth remains as the exclusion of persons with disabilities is still an issue in Beninese society, even in the digital sphere.

To address this problem, the government has established internet community centres, with three specifically dedicated to people with disabilities⁴⁶. In Benin, the community digital centres, are government-led initiatives to provide public access to computers and internet, support public service applications, and promote digital literacy⁴⁷. In addition to

the community digital centers, Benin authorities have launched a project called les cases numériques. The project is a satellite-connected version of the community digital centers in areas of the country where the internet fiber is not yet available⁴⁸.

Although these initiatives for individuals with disabilities seem encouraging, additional efforts are necessary. Benin officials should implement measures that consider the ICT requirements of individuals with disabilities and the interrelation of the inequalities they face. In general, these inequalities result in fewer opportunities compared to individuals without disabilities. Moreover, the digital divide remains a significant problem, particularly for persons with disabilities, whose ability to access digital opportunities and resources continues to be limited by insufficient digital skills.

45. See A study on children's right to privacy in the digital sphere in the African region https://www.chr.up.ac.za/images/researchunits/cru/files/publications/Childrens_rights_reports_2022_for_web.pdf (accessed on 06 November 2025).

46. See Pourquoi l'avenir numérique du Bénin repose sur la patience, les partenariats et le peuple <https://techcabal.com/fr/2025/07/04/benin-digital-future/> (accessed on 08 November 2025)

47. See Bénin /Point numérique communautaire : un pilier de la connectivité locale à Ouidah <https://lechasseurinfos.bj/benin-point-numerique-communautaire-un-pilier-de-la-connectivite-locale-a-ouidah/> (accessed on 03 November 2025).

48. See Bénin numérique : « C'est ce qu'ont fait les Coréens, les Chinois, les Japonais... » (Marc-André Loko, DG ASIN) <https://www.agenceecofin.com/actualites/0304-127222-benin-numerique-c-est-ce-qu-ont-fait-les-coreens-les-chinois-les-japonais-marc-andre-loko-dg-asin> (accessed on 08 November 2025)

Universal Service Funds

In Benin, the government has established the Universal Service Fund (USF) to financially support the development of telecommunication services, including internet access and mobile networks, in isolated and underserved areas. The USF is established by Benin law, but it encounters irregular reporting regarding fee collection. This scenario complicates the assessment of funds available⁴⁹. In Benin, the main aim of the Universal Service Funds is to expand network infrastructure to isolated areas that are not profitable for service providers. In this regard, the government of Benin intends to link more municipalities to fiber-optic networks, as part of its larger objective to increase high-speed internet access to all 77 municipalities across the country.⁵⁰ This project is expected to cost CFA207

billion (approximately US\$375000000) and represents a key component of the government's 2021–2026 Action Plan⁵¹.

If this project has the potential to greatly improve internet access and telecommunications coverage across the country, there is a lack of financial integrity and public transparency regarding the accounting of funds received and distributed within the Universal Service Funds. This situation makes it challenging to ascertain whether the payments are truly towards supporting USF⁵².

Given the extensive utilisation of telecommunications by the public in Benin, the challenge arises that politicians may use USF and potentially create regulations that deviate from their intended objectives. Another point to note is that Benin's communications sector continues to encounter multiple challenges.

49. See Loi n° 2014-14 relative aux communications électroniques et à la poste en République du Bénin <https://admin.theiguides.org/Media/Documents/DSL-LOI%20N%C2%B0%202014-14%20RELATIVE%20AUX%20COMMUNIC.pdf> (accessed on 07 November 2025).

50. See Digitalisation dans les collectivités territoriales: Le projet e-Commune lancé <https://lanation.bj/actualites/digitalisation-dans-les-collectivites-territoriales-le-projet-e-commune-lance> (accessed on 10 November 2025)

51. See Benin to Connect All Municipalities to High-Speed Internet by 2025 <https://www.wearetech.africa/en/fils-uk/news/public-management/benin-to-connect-all-municipalities-to-high-speed-internet-by-2025> (accessed on 11 November 2025)

52. See Trois ans après la réforme, la mise sous contrôle des mairies est un échec <https://www.africaintelligence.fr/afrique-ouest/2025/01/17/trois-ans-apres-la-reforme-la-mise-sous-controle-des-mairies-est-un-echec,110362211-art> (accessed on 12 November 2025)

Digital adoption is hampered by obstacles such as exorbitant sector-specific taxation. For example, the Benin government levies a variety of industry-

specific fees on mobile service providers. However, excessive taxes may deter investment in network infrastructure and mobile telecom services.

Telecoms Sector Specific Taxes in Benin

Tax	Application	Base	Current Value
Numbering fee	Specific	One-off connection charge	XOF 100
Import Duty on handsets	Ad valorem	Import value of goods	10%
Universal Service Fund	Ad valorem	Revenue	2.0%
Annual licence fee	Ad valorem	Revenue	13%
Annual spectrum fees	Various	% of revenues	7%
Import duties on equipment	Ad valorem	Import value of goods	10%

Source GSMA report : [Driving digital transformation of the economy in Benin](#) .

Developments in

ICT and Emerging

Technologies

Through several initiatives, Benin is currently trying to seize the opportunity to turn artificial intelligence (AI) into a vital

tool for growth. For instance, President Talon's administration has established a national policy for big data and artificial intelligence, valid from 2023 until 2027⁵³. The activities related to AI are being shaped by initiatives around start-ups, academic institutions, training organisations, and the private sector. Consequently, several training centres in this area have been established and are thriving, particularly

the Institute for Training and Research in Computer Science and the Institute of Mathematics and Physical Sciences. On one hand, the Institute of Mathematics and Physical Sciences is equipped with a supercomputer that offers substantial computing capabilities to aid in the advancement of AI in Benin⁵⁴. On the other hand, Benin is also investigating new ways to connect culture and technology as part of its commitment to put its artificial intelligence policy into practice. For instance, the government of Benin has officially launched a project called JaimeMaLangue⁵⁵. This initiative is led by the Information Systems and Digital Agency (ASIN). For three years, ASIN has absorbed the Agency for Universal Electronic Communications and Postal Services, previously responsible for

the Universal Service Fund in Benin⁵⁶. Inaugurated with the theme “Benin speaks to the future,” citizens are encouraged to join through the jaimemalangue.bj platform, where they can record sentences in their mother tongue.

The recorded data will then form a national training base for AI models capable of understanding and reproducing local languages. The pilot phase is starting with Fongbe, the largest indigenous language in Benin, before being extended to other languages such as Yoruba and Baatonu⁵⁷. However, such projects are not without risks. As Benin is preparing to hold three elections in 2026, several threats should be taken into account⁵⁸. This includes, for example, speech synthesis, which is the artificial generation of speech. In addition

53. See National AI and Big Data Strategy (Stratégie Nationale d’Intelligence Artificielle et des Mégadonnées 2023-2027) <https://www.aipolicy.africa/national-strategies/0e574345-6d15-4eb3-b6b2-b2f039b2db48> (accessed on 15 November 2025)

54. See L’intelligence artificielle au Bénin et les révolutions pour le développement <https://hal.science/hal-04527846/document> (accessed on 16 November 2025)

55. See Bénin : lancement du projet « JaimeMaLangue » <https://www.africatopsuccess.com/benin-lancement-du-projet-jaimemalangue/> (accessed on 18 November 2025)

56. See Bénin : l’ASIN conclut trois accords clés pour accélérer la transformation numérique <https://www.wearetech.africa/fr/fils/actualites/tech/benin-l-asin-conclut-trois-accords-cles-pour-accelerer-la-transformation-numerique> (accessed on 19 November 2025)

57. See Bénin : comment contribuer au projet d’IA en langues locales « JaimeMaLangue » <https://lanouvelletribune.info/2025/11/benin-comment-contribuer-au-projet-dia-en-langues-locales-jaimemalangue/> (accessed on 11 November 2025)

58. See Benin MPs Vote to Extend Presidential Terms Ahead of 2026 vote <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-11-15/benin-mps-vote-to-extend-presidential-terms-ahead-of-2026-vote> (accessed on 15 November 2025)

to more realistic-sounding artificial voices, speech synthesis can also include voice cloning, which artificially reproduces the characteristics of an individual's voice, known as audio deepfakes. In

such conditions, manipulated audio could blur reality and erode trust of the public in available information during the upcoming elections.

Conclusion

During the reporting period under observation, numerous violations of digital rights have been identified. This led to situations where issues with freedom of speech, discriminatory rhetoric, lack of transparency, and possible AI manipulations emerged. Legislation to counter such digital rights violations remains weak, as Benin has yet to revise the Digital Code. As discussed in Londa Report 2024, Benin received recommendations relating to freedom of expression, and the need to ensure that its national legislation complies with international standards. If no measures are implemented, this is probably going to foster greater infringement of digital rights, ahead of the upcoming elections. On the basis of all the above, Benin barely met the minimal requirements set by TheScore

Index, despite the government's continuous efforts in the digital realm during the reporting period.

Recommendations

Government should:



- Adapt constitutional norms to the digital context.
- Create flexible constitutional frameworks for technological change in the digital age.
- Adopt a balanced approach to safeguarding rights and addressing inequalities caused by digital technologies.
- Harness digitalisation to enhance democratic processes.

Civil Society Organisations should:



- Combat rights violations and inequalities caused by digital technologies.
- Provide more opportunities to refine and clarify the language of digital rights with citizens enabling them to better protect themselves online.
- Continue to build tools that advance rights, provide essential analysis, and conduct critical advocacy.

Private sector should:



- Respect the rights of individuals who use their platforms, and address any negative effects that their products may
- Effects that their products may

impose on human rights.

- Oppose governmental directives to restrict internet access or digital services.
- Minimise the collection of per-

sonal information, such as health, biometric, and

- Location data, and limit how third parties can access and use it.

Media should:

- Report on human rights concerns with a strong and professional commitment.
- Take measures to promote digital literacy as well as critical thinking,







by covering these topics and by engaging with civil society organisations and other stakeholders to raise awareness about these issues.


The Score Index



Benin, 2025

1 = Totally non-compliant; 2 = Mildly compliant; 3 = Moderately compliant; 4 = Considerably compliant; 5 = Fully compliant

Indicator	ACHPR Principle	2024 Score	2024 Score	2025 Justification
1. Internet Shutdowns	P38(2)			As a result of civil society pressure, Benin chose not to disconnect the Internet following the shutdown in 2019. Nonetheless, the country will hold its presidential elections in 2026. During election season, the possibility of shutdowns might be present.
2. Inexistent laws, policies and other measures to promote universal, equitable, affordable and meaningful access to the internet	P37			Previous calls to bring its domestic law into compliance with international human rights standards persists. Benin is yet to reform the Digital code and Benin Electoral Code. (even though articles 131, 174, 179, 180) of the Electoral code allows state organs to collect personal and biometric data for voters' registration. Data collected includes pictures and fingerprints for both hands
3. False News Criminalisation	P22(2)			Many journalists, bloggers, and political adversaries of President Patrice Talon's administration have faced prosecution due to the Digital Code. Per the Article 550-paragraph 3 of this law, individuals who create or spread false information

Indicator	ACHPR Principle	2024 Score	2024 Score	2025 Justification
				regarding another person on social media or via any electronic means risk imprisonment for one to six months, a fine ranging from CFA500,000 (US\$1803) to CFA1,000,000 (US\$1606), or both penalties.
4. Sedition Legislation	P22(2)			Article 553 of the Digital Code and Articles 454, 455, and 456 of the Penal Code have a stifling effect on civil society and the media. Through an ambiguous formulation, the provisions address provocation and sedition offenses related to media and audiovisual communications, imposing penalties of CFA200,000 (US\$360) or six months in prison up to CFA10,000,000 (US\$18000) or five years in prison.
5. Arbitrary Arrests and Harassments of the Media, HRDs and Citizens	P20(1) & (2)			While the Digital Code may benefit Benin, it has resulted in numerous arbitrary arrests and harassment of citizens, human rights defenders and journalists
6. Data Protection Legislation.	P42			By using a national interoperability platform, the Council of Ministers can allow the transfer of personal data to a third country or international entity lacking adequate protection, potentially threatening Benin's digital rights and the aims of the Digital Code. This exception is set by the provisions of the Digital Code regarding data protection and privacy.

Indicator	ACHPR Principle	2024 Score	2024 Score	2025 Justification
7. States interfere and require the removal of online content by internet intermediaries	P38 and P39 (4)			Benin has contacted Facebook's parent company, Meta ⁵⁹ as it did last year, requesting information on user accounts for emergency or legal purposes. There is a sense of regulatory uncertainty because the Presidency and the National Center for Digital Investigation (CNIN) have considerable power over the unilateral removal of internet information by intermediaries.
8. Invasion of Privacy of Communications	P41			Paid operatives are used to run covert dirty tricks in the fragile democratic systems of Benin
9. Failure by the government to proactively disclose and disseminate information digital technologies.	P29(3)			Key implementation issues that public administration still faces include poorly trained staff, lack of resources and the community's access to and understanding of information.
10. AI and Emerging Technologies national strategies	P39 (6)			Benin has formally embraced a National Strategy pertaining to Megadata and artificial intelligence. Nevertheless, the nation has postponed the consideration of any international human rights standards.
11. Adoption of specific	P37(5)			Benin has established a digital infrastructure for the management of childcare and

Indicator	ACHPR Principle	2024 Score	2024 Score	2025 Justification
child laws, policies and measures promoting children’s digital safety and privacy online				<p>protection facilities. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the nation implements a regulatory framework that governs the utilisation of minors’ data on this platform, while also considering the advancements in the realm of human rights</p>
12. Digital Inclusion	P37(3)			<p>The installation of optic fiber connections has been one of the major initiatives and investments made to expand the country’s internet coverage. However, the digital divide is still quite noticeable in both urban and rural areas. Large swathes of Benin remain dark at night, which serves as a sobering reminder of the nation’s unreliable access to energy.</p>
Total (out of 60):	2024: 33	<div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 20px; text-align: center;"> <p>2025</p> <h1>33</h1> </div>		



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