

F(in)AR

FREEDOM IN AFRICA REPORT

2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. About F(in)AR	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Executive Summary	5
4. Freedom in Africa	6
• Overall Africa Freedom Rank	
• Africa Compared to Global Averages	
5. Political Freedom	8
6. Economic Freedom	13
7. Prosperity	19
8. Regional Overview	25
9. Special Themes (2025 Edition)	27
• Visa-Free Africa & Mobility	
• Digital Freedom	
• Civic Movements & Youth Participation	
10. Policy Recommendations	31

Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR)

About F(in)AR

The Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR) is an initiative of the Liberalist Centre, a policy and research think tank dedicated to advancing liberty and prosperity across the African continent.

F(in)AR was created to fill a crucial gap: while many global indices measure freedom and governance at the international level, few examine these issues through an African lens. The report provides a continental perspective, analysing how rights, opportunities, and outcomes intersect across Africa's diverse political and economic systems.

The first edition, F(in)AR 2025, establishes a long-term framework for tracking progress toward freedom and human flourishing in Africa. Designed to be updated annually, it combines quantitative data with qualitative insight to help governments, researchers, journalists, and citizens understand how freedom is evolving in their countries and regions.

Unlike traditional global indices, F(in)AR does not aim to rank countries in competition with one another. Instead, it seeks to highlight lessons, patterns, and opportunities for reform. It recognises that progress is uneven, that context matters, and that liberty in Africa often advances through local innovation, civic courage, and institutional reform as much as through national policy.

F(in)AR collects, harmonises, and interprets publicly available data from reputable international sources, applying regional insight to make sense of complex trends. Each edition of the report aims to do three things:

- Track Africa's freedom and prosperity using consistent, transparent measures.
- Translate global data into African realities by showing what freedom looks like in daily life.
- Translate global data into African realities by showing what freedom looks like in daily life.
- Transform evidence into dialogue, helping policymakers and citizens work toward solutions that make freedom real, not rhetorical.

F(in)AR's mission is simple: to show that freedom and prosperity are not abstract ideals, they are measurable, achievable, and essential to Africa's future.

How Policymakers and Citizens Can Use F(in)AR

For policymakers, F(in)AR provides a diagnostic tool to identify where reforms are working and where bottlenecks remain. A low Economic Freedom score might indicate excessive regulation or low investor confidence. A dip in Political Freedom could signal shrinking civic space or weakened judicial independence. In this sense, the index acts as an early-warning system for policy failure and a progress tracker for reform.

For citizens, journalists, and researchers, F(in)AR serves as a mirror of national reality. It helps people hold leaders accountable and push for change based on evidence rather than emotion. It equips civil society with data they can use to demand transparency, fairness, and inclusion.

F(in)AR is not meant to be a verdict or a competition, but a conversation starter, a reference point for governments, civil societies, and the private sector to ask a fundamental question: What kind of freedom are we building, and for whom?

Acknowledgements

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While the support of partners made this report possible, the analyses and conclusions presented in F(in)AR 2025 are entirely those of the Liberalist Centre. The Centre retains full editorial independence and responsibility for the content of this publication.

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Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR)

Methodology

The Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR 2025) framework assesses the state of freedom and prosperity across the African continent, through three connected dimensions: Political Freedom, Economic Freedom, and Prosperity. Together, these dimensions reflect the balance between rights, opportunities, and outcomes that shape liberty and human flourishing in African societies.

F(in)AR does not collect primary or raw data. Instead, it draws on trusted, globally recognised datasets that provide standardised, internationally comparable indicators.

Each dataset was chosen for its methodological transparency, regional coverage, and relevance to the F(in)AR framework. Where possible, the most recent data available for each country (2024 or 2025) was used. For indicators with gaps, missing values were interpolated using Excel's FORECAST.LINEAR function to maintain consistency and comparability across all 54 African countries.

Indicators were selected according to three criteria:

- **Conceptual Relevance:** Alignment with F(in)AR's definition of liberty as the coexistence of rights, opportunity, and dignity.
- **Data Reliability and Coverage:** Indicators must be widely recognised and consistently reported for most African countries.
- **Comparability and Transparency:** Methodologies must be publicly documented and replicable.

Raw data from diverse sources were standardised onto a common 0–100 scale, where 0 represents the lowest performance or complete absence of freedom, and 100 represents the highest performance or full realisation of freedom. For internal consistency, F(in)AR further normalised the data to a 0–10 subscale for indicator-level scoring.

Each country's dimension score was calculated as the average of its indicators within that dimension. The three dimension scores were then combined into a single F(in)AR overall score, expressed on a 0–100 scale for clarity and comparability.

Sources

- *Mo Ibrahim Index*
- *Freedom House*
- *Atlantic Council*
- *Heritage Foundation*
- *World Population Review*
- *International Labour Organization (ILO)*
- *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED)*
- *Accessnow Security Index*
- *Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI)*

To capture the balance between political rights, economic opportunity, and social outcomes, F(in)AR assigns nearly equal weight to each dimension:

- Political Freedom — 33%
- Economic Freedom — 33%
- Prosperity — 34%

Political Freedom consists of six indicators, Economic Freedom includes seven indicators, Prosperity also contains seven indicators. This weighting ensures that no single dimension dominates the assessment.

Each country's final F(in)AR score is computed as the weighted average of its three dimension scores, following the formula below:

$$\text{Overall Score (0-100)} = ((\text{Political} * 0.33) + (\text{Economic} * 0.33) + (\text{Prosperity} * 0.34)) * 10$$

Scores are calculated with full precision before rounding, and all published scores are displayed to one decimal place for clarity.

Interpretation and Limitations

F(in)AR is designed as a comparative and interpretive index, not a direct measurement of every aspect of freedom. The report's value lies in revealing trends and relationships between governance, economic policy, and social outcomes, rather than offering definitive rankings.

Because it draws on secondary sources, F(in)AR's accuracy depends on the reliability of the underlying datasets. While every effort was made to harmonise definitions and timeframes, small variations in source-year data or methodology may occur. The team mitigated these risks by cross-referencing multiple sources, maintaining a consistent normalisation process, and documenting every adjustment for transparency.

Finally, the index should be read as a living framework. As African countries evolve and new data become available, future editions of F(in)AR will continue to refine its indicators and weights to better capture the changing realities of freedom and prosperity across the continent.

Executive Summary

The Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR 2025) examines African countries' performance in three key areas that together define freedom and progress: Political Freedom, Economic Freedom, and Prosperity. It measures how open and fair governments are, how easy it is for people to do business or find work, and how healthy citizens live in terms of education, health, and opportunity.

Each country is rated on a scale from 0 to 100, where 100 represents the highest level of freedom and well-being.

In 2025, Africa's overall score is 52.8 out of 100. This means progress is being made, but unevenly. Some regions are reforming and thriving, while others remain trapped by conflict, corruption, or weak institutions. Southern Africa performs the best, Central Africa struggles the most, and the other three regions fall somewhere in between.

Northern Africa (Score: 51.2) *Socially advanced, politically closed*

Northern Africa tells a story of promise held back by politics. The region has significantly improved education, healthcare, and infrastructure; people live longer, literacy is higher, and cities are expanding fast. Yet, citizens still live under tight political control. Governments across the region restrict protests, regulate the media, and limit free speech.

The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), created in 1989 to boost trade and cooperation among Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania, is still mostly inactive. Political rivalry between Morocco and Algeria, especially over Western Sahara, has frozen most regional plans. As a result, trade among these countries makes up less than 5% of their total trade, one of the lowest levels of regional integration anywhere on the continent.

Tunisia, once a symbol of hope after the Arab Spring, has reversed many of its democratic gains since 2021. Egypt, Algeria, and Libya remain under firm government control, where dissent is often punished or silenced.

Still, Northern Africa is not without strengths. Its education systems are among the best on the continent, and it leads in access to electricity and digital connectivity. However, youth unemployment remains high, around 30%, and most economies depend heavily on oil and gas exports. Currency instability and high living costs add to public frustration.

For Northern Africa to progress, countries need to open political space, revive regional trade, and create jobs beyond the energy sector. When citizens can speak freely, journalists can work without fear, and businesses can trade across borders, the region's social and economic potential will finally match its human capacity.

West Africa (Score: 57.8) *Mobile, vocal, and politically restless*

West Africa remains one of the continent's most connected and mobile regions, thanks to the ECOWAS Free-Movement Protocol, which allows visa-free travel across 15 countries. Traders, students, and workers regularly cross borders to do business or visit family, showing how regional cooperation can work.

But this openness coexists with political instability. Since 2020, six military coups have taken place in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Guinea. These coups also led to the creation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in 2024, signalling a breakaway from ECOWAS and weakening its influence.

At the same time, West Africa has a young, outspoken population that refuses to stay silent. From the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria to democracy marches in Senegal, young people are demanding jobs, transparency, and better governance. They are frustrated by corruption, poor infrastructure, and inflation that eats away at their earnings.

Despite these challenges, West Africa's economies are vibrant. Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire anchor the region's GDP, while Ghana and Cabo Verde continue to perform well in terms of governance and human development.

FinAR 2025 shows that countries with more open economies and less corruption attract more investment and deliver better living standards.

To move forward, West Africa must turn its civic energy into results.

That means strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring fair elections, reducing visa fees and border delays, and liberalising regulations to support small businesses that employ young people. If managed well, the region's mix of mobility, diversity, and activism could become its biggest competitive advantage.

Southern Africa (Score: 61.8) *The most advanced region, but deeply unequal*

Southern Africa is Africa's best-performing region in FinAR 2025, leading in governance, rule of law, and public service delivery. Countries like Botswana, Mauritius, and Namibia show what consistent policy and transparency can achieve.

Education and healthcare systems are generally strong, and access to clean water, electricity, and digital services is higher than in most other regions. But beneath these successes is a stubborn challenge: inequality. South Africa, Namibia, and Eswatini are among the most unequal societies in the world, where small elites enjoy wealth while millions remain in poverty.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), which promotes regional trade and free movement, has made some progress, but the results vary. Visa policies differ widely, and road and rail networks are still weak in many areas.

Major cities like Johannesburg, Gaborone, Lusaka, and Maputo are becoming digital and innovation hubs, hosting tech startups and fintech services. Yet, rural communities lag, especially in reliable energy, transport, and internet.

FinAR 2025 recommends that Southern Africa focus on closing the urban-rural gap, expanding energy access, and investing in transport infrastructure. Governments should also protect digital freedoms, end internet shutdowns, and support youth innovation hubs to help young people turn ideas into jobs.

Southern Africa's story is one of progress, but it also reminds us that prosperity means little if it stays in the hands of a few. It has to reach everyone.

Eastern Africa (Score: 49.2) *Dynamic and digital, but fragile beneath the surface*

Eastern Africa is home to some of the continent's most creative economies. Countries like Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia are leading the continent's digital transformation, building fintech systems, e-commerce platforms, and AI startups that are creating new jobs and opportunities. Nairobi and Kigali, in particular, have become known as Africa's "Silicon Savannahs."

Yet this innovation exists alongside fragile institutions. Some governments tolerate limited political opposition, but others still restrict dissent, control the press, or shut down the internet during elections. While Kenya maintains a degree of openness, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Eritrea remain tightly controlled.

Economic growth in the region has averaged around 5% per year, but this has not kept pace with the fast-growing youth population. Many young people remain underemployed, and rural communities face poor roads, weak trade logistics, and the growing impact of climate change from droughts to floods.

To unlock its full potential, Eastern Africa must invest in better infrastructure, cross-border trade routes, and education systems that match the needs of its digital economy. The East African Community (EAC) has an opportunity to harmonise customs and trade rules, making it easier for goods, services, and people to move freely.

With stronger institutions and fairer governance, Eastern Africa could become one of Africa's most dynamic and innovative regions.

Democracy and rule of law are very important and we really need to pay a lot of attention to them. But this is not the whole story. People cannot eat democracy. If we have democracy, but there's famine, where is the dividend of democracy?

Central Africa (Score: 44.3) *Rich in resources, poor in stability*

Central Africa remains the most fragile part of the continent. Despite its natural wealth, including oil in Chad and minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo, millions still live in poverty. Weak governance, corruption, and ongoing conflicts continue to block development.

The CEMAC bloc (Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Congo) shows how fragile institutions can undermine progress. Basic infrastructure, such as roads, power grids, and internet connections, is poor, making trade difficult and expensive. Education and healthcare systems also lag behind the rest of Africa.

FinAR 2025 points out that peacebuilding and accountability must come first before anything for the Central Africa region.

African's Path Forward

One message from FinAR 2025 stands out across the continent: freedom and prosperity are connected.

- Southern Africa shows that consistent governance and economic openness can deliver results.
- West Africa demonstrates that civic energy and mobility can drive reform if democratic institutions are protected.
- North Africa reminds us that social progress cannot thrive without political freedom.
- Eastern Africa proves that innovation can grow even in fragile systems, but needs stronger foundations.
- Central Africa highlights that without peace and accountability, prosperity cannot take root.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers an opportunity to connect these strengths. If countries can reduce visa barriers, protect digital rights, and build fair economies, Africa's next decade could be defined by freedom and prosperity.

Freedom in Africa

Africa's journey toward freedom feels much like a long climb up a steep mountain.

With an average freedom score of 52.8 out of 100, one would think this is a good overall performance, but the spread of results tells a deeper story. Of the five continents evaluated by the Atlantic Council's Freedom and Prosperity Report, Africa only outperformed South and Central Asia, which scored 50, but below East Asia (66.4), Europe (77.8), and North America (85.3), and below the global average of 63.3.

In recent years, many countries across Africa have made real progress, but in many other places, that climb has stalled, and in some, it has remained totally stagnated.

Nearly half of Africans today live in countries where governance is worse than it was a decade ago. This is due to persistent government challenges, security and political instability, military takeover, conflict, lack of economic diversity and openness, economic fragility, restricted civic space, unrest, and the absence of a functioning rule of law.

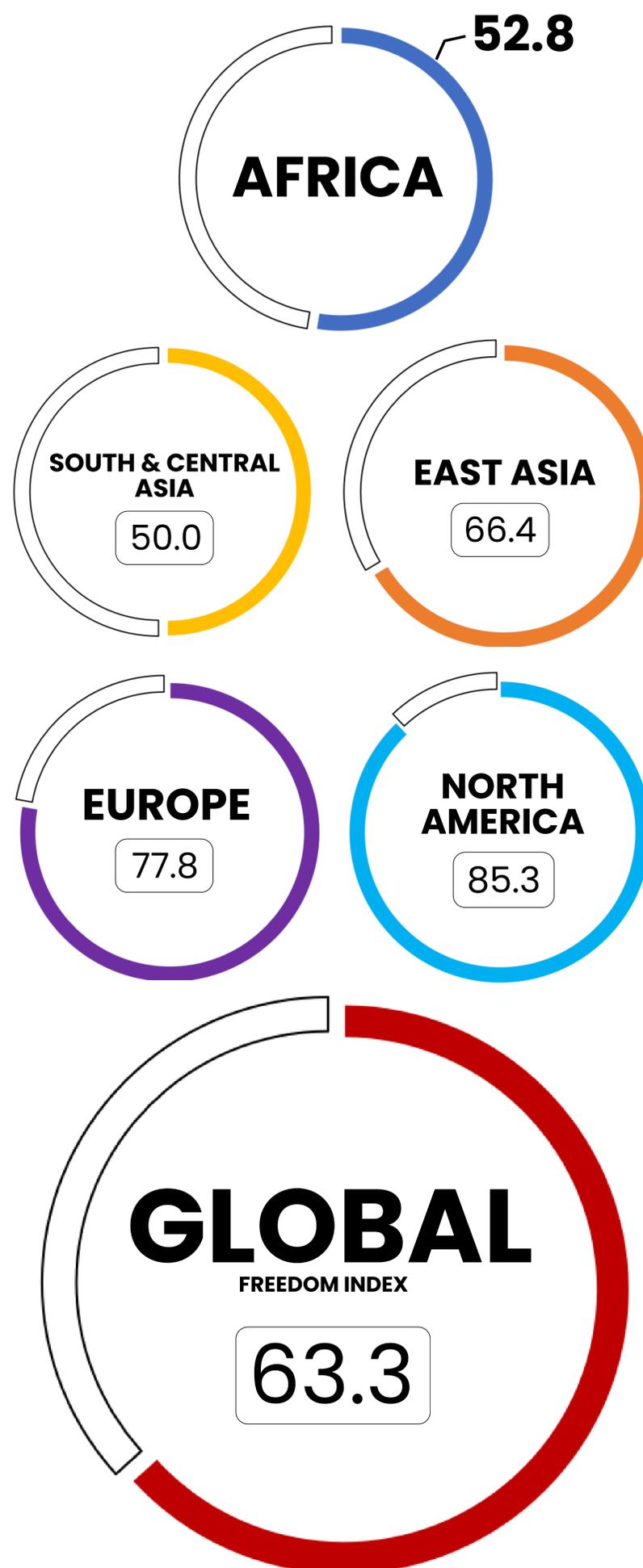
Coups, conflict, and restricted media have all severely limited the space for both freedom and prosperity.

These issues matter deeply because when people consistently lack access to jobs, healthcare, human rights, and basic infrastructure, the promise of "freedom" begins to feel hollow. What is left is a shell of a continent once tipped for greatness.

The lesson is that economic reforms and progress cannot succeed without first protecting Africans' civic and political rights. Similarly, nations cannot thrive without the economic infrastructure that provides stability and opportunity for their growing populations.

Democratic institutions must be strengthened, authorities must invest in the young and their bright ideas, and regional cooperation must be fostered to unlock trade, technology, and shared security.

Democracy and rule of law are very important and we really need to pay a lot of attention to them. But this is not the whole story. People cannot eat democracy. If we have democracy, but there's famine, where is the dividend of democracy?



Global Freedom at a Glance: Europe – 77.8, North America – 85.3, East Asia – 66.4, Southern & Central Asia – 50.0, Africa – 52.6 (Atlantic Council, 2024)

Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR)

Political Freedom in Africa

Indexes

- Electoral integrity: Free, fair, competitive elections
- Freedom of speech & expression
- Press/media freedom
- Freedom of assembly & association
- Judicial independence
- Protection against arbitrary detention, torture, and extra-judicial killings

Electoral Integrity

Electoral integrity is a cornerstone of political freedom, but it remains a major challenge across Africa, scoring just 4.2/10 on average.

Over the past decade, Africa has seen both democratic gains and setbacks. In several countries, elections are generally free and fair, with transparent processes, strong institutions, and protections that allow citizens to participate meaningfully.

In many others, elections are marred by administrative flaws, low voter confidence, weak systems, irregularities, and disruptions that undermine public trust.

Even in areas where the ballot process takes place, challenges such as disputes over results, weak oversight, and limited accountability often prevent full integrity and this creates a system that remains fragile and prone to collapse.

At the lower end of the spectrum, many countries operate in environments where the number of meaningful election is minimal or the electoral processes are totally suspended, leaving citizens with limited influence over political outcomes.

The data shows there is need for stronger institutions, transparency, and public trust to strengthen political freedom in Africa.

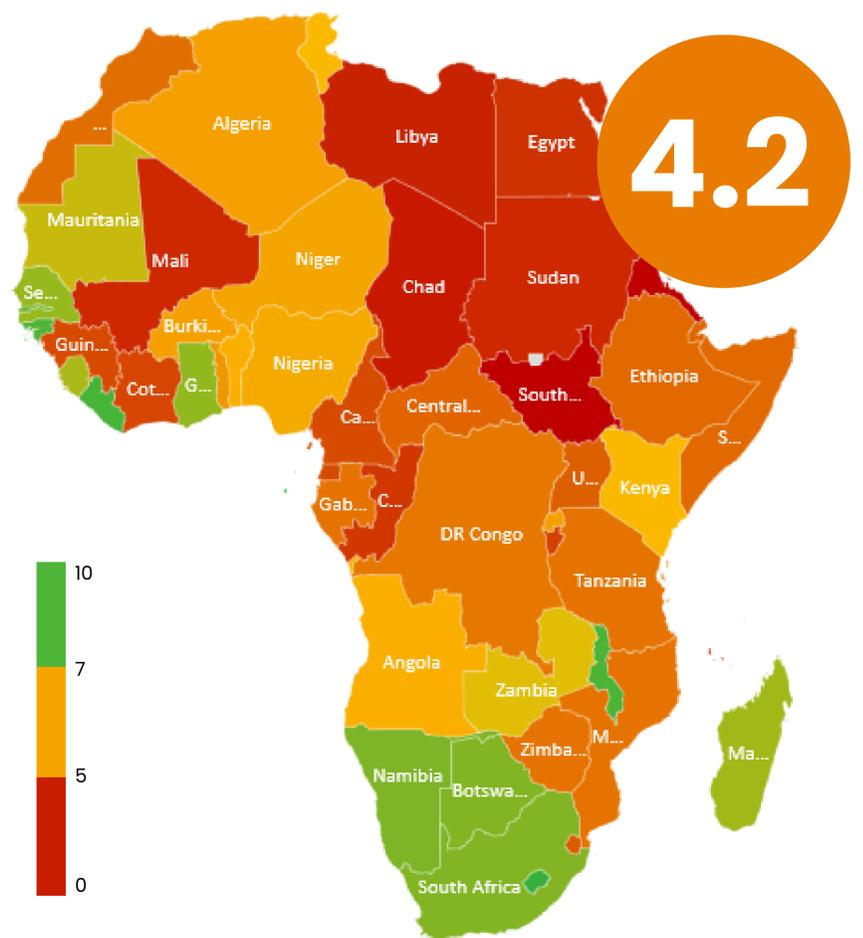


Fig 2.0; Map of Africa highlighting Levels of Electoral Integrity across Countries

Free Expression

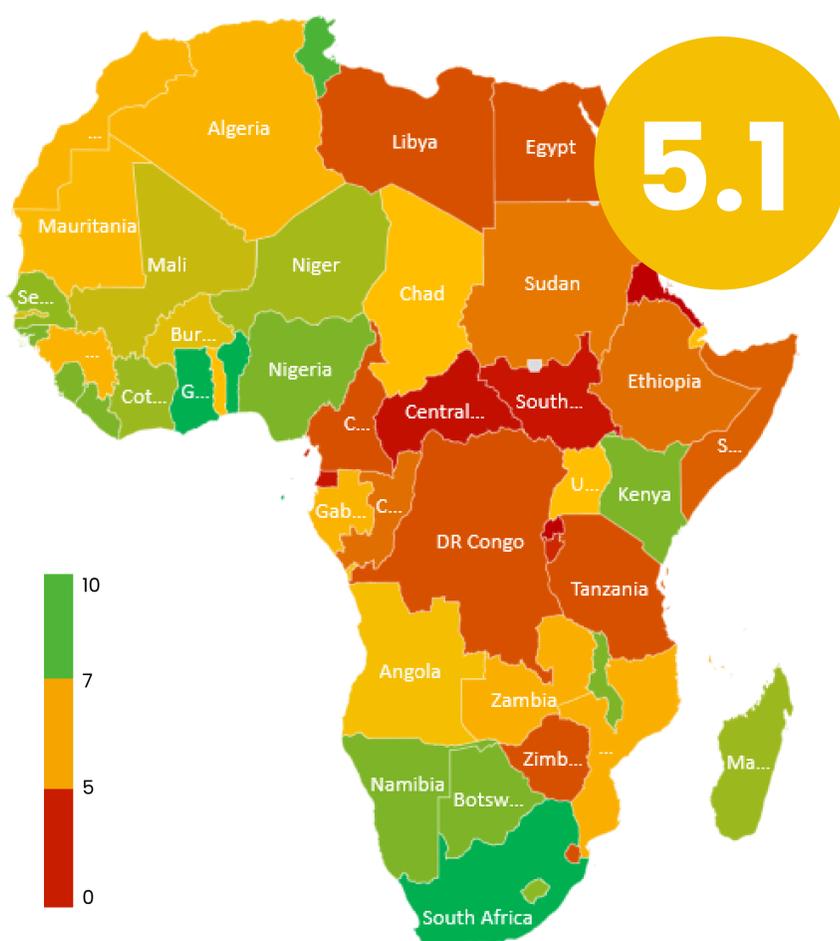


Fig 3.0; Map of Africa highlighting Freedom of Speech Levels of across Countries

One of the most obvious indicators of the health of democracy is freedom of speech, but statistics in Africa suggest that this right is frequently guaranteed in constitutions but actually restricted in practice.

While some states maintain vibrant media landscapes and open public discourse, others continue to impose restrictions on civic space and live in silence.

In many nations, freedom of expression is limited by government controls, and legal restrictions, and while official laws may exist to protect speech, enforcement is inconsistent, and journalists, activists and civilians all often face pressure that discourages dissent.

Freedom of expression and public discourse are generally stronger in stable environments where institutions support some level of transparency and accountability; however it is still not without challenges.

The case is different in areas experiencing conflict, as weak governance, and political instability see freedom of expression significantly curtailed, with media outlets censored and citizens cautious about sharing opinions publicly.

Media Freedom

If freedom of speech reflects the right of citizens to express themselves, then freedom of the media shows whether those voices can be amplified, and heard.

A free press is essential because it acts as a bridge between citizens and leaders, helping to spread ideas, expose corruption, and hold those in power accountable.

Across Africa, the statistics provide insight that media freedom is virtually nonexistent in some countries, with information being tightly controlled by governments that see journalism as a threat rather than as a tool for public awareness.

This condition is amplified in war-torn countries like Libya and South Sudan, where the chaos of conflict looms, and reporters, media personnel, and journalists alike remain largely unprotected.

Even in areas where media outlets operate actively, freedom is far from guaranteed as investigative reporting is often restricted, especially during election cycles, when governments seek to control the flow of information. As a result, journalists sometimes work in an environment of caution, where stories are filtered or softened out of fear of backlash.

But even though occasional harassment still exists, these nations show that genuine media freedom is possible in the continent.

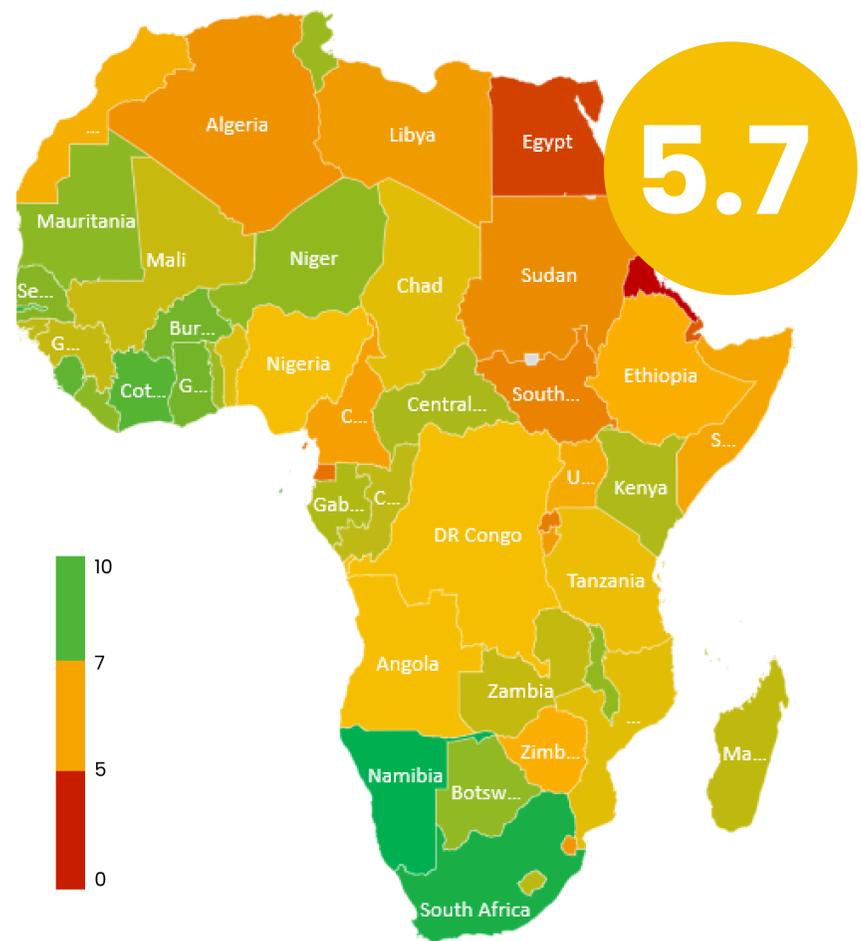


Fig 4.0; Map of Africa highlighting Media Freedom across Countries

Freedom of Assembly & Association

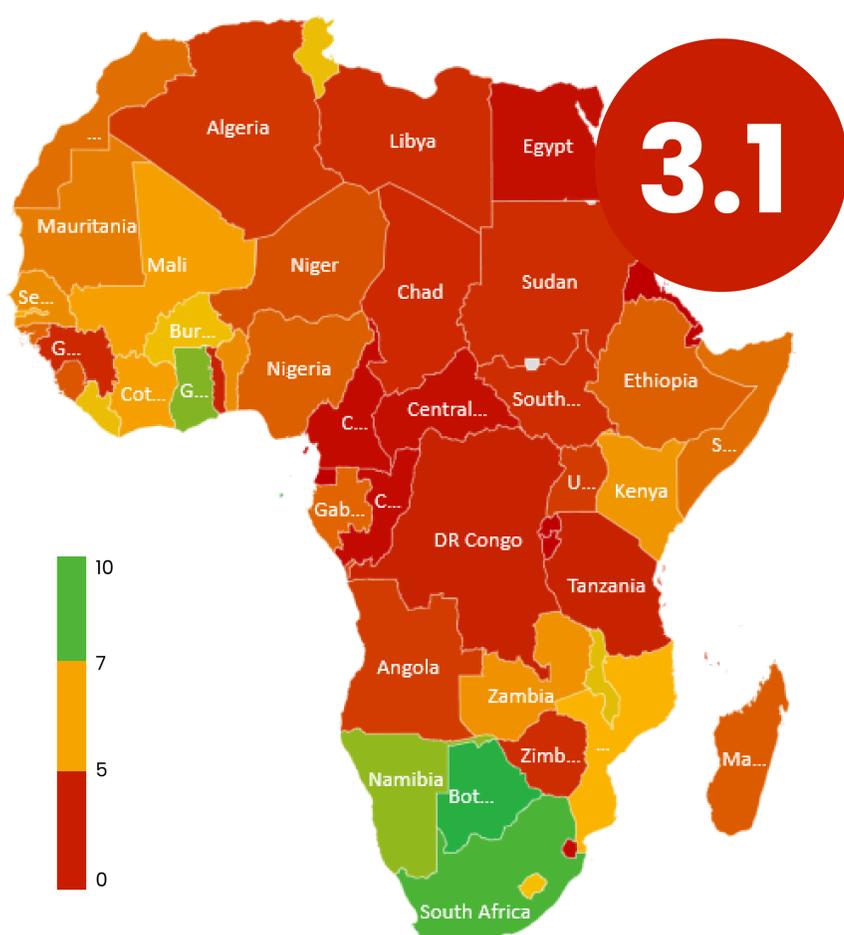


Fig 5.0; Map of Africa highlighting Freedom of Association across Countries

The freedom to gather, and form groups and associations is one of the clearest signals of how open a political system truly is.

In much of Africa, however, this space is often tightly controlled, with governments wary of the power that unions, civic groups, and opposition movements can hold.

Across the continent, restrictions take many forms, and range from strict registration requirements and bureaucratic hurdles to selective enforcement of laws that pressure groups to stay within government-approved boundaries, and the result is a society in which citizens are stripped of a collective voice.

In some countries the presence of active unions is undeniable, and there are still areas where social groups, trade unions, NGOs, and political parties can function with a level of safety and consistency, but they are few and authorities frequently use measures to keep said groups under control. This creates a form of conditional freedom where organisations exist, but only so long as they do not cross "lines".

Taken together, in the continent today the full freedom to join forces is not a guaranteed right.

Judicial Independence

A strong democracy depends on a judiciary that can operate without interference.

This is a judicial system that acts without fear or corruption, and that serves as a vital check on political excesses, ensuring that citizens' rights are respected.

In countries like Eritrea and many other states, justice is selective, and courts still face significant pressure from political leaders.

Decisions can be influenced by the prevailing political climate rather than the law, and judges who resist such pressure may face intimidation, harassment, or removal from office.

Judicial independence is still a work in progress in Africa and over the past decade, the continent has seen courts in some countries strengthen their role as genuine arbiters of justice, upholding the law and constitutional norms.

But it needs more improvements, to ensure that courts and judges are able to operate and ensure that the law is applied equally to all the citizens and most importantly maintain checks on government authority.

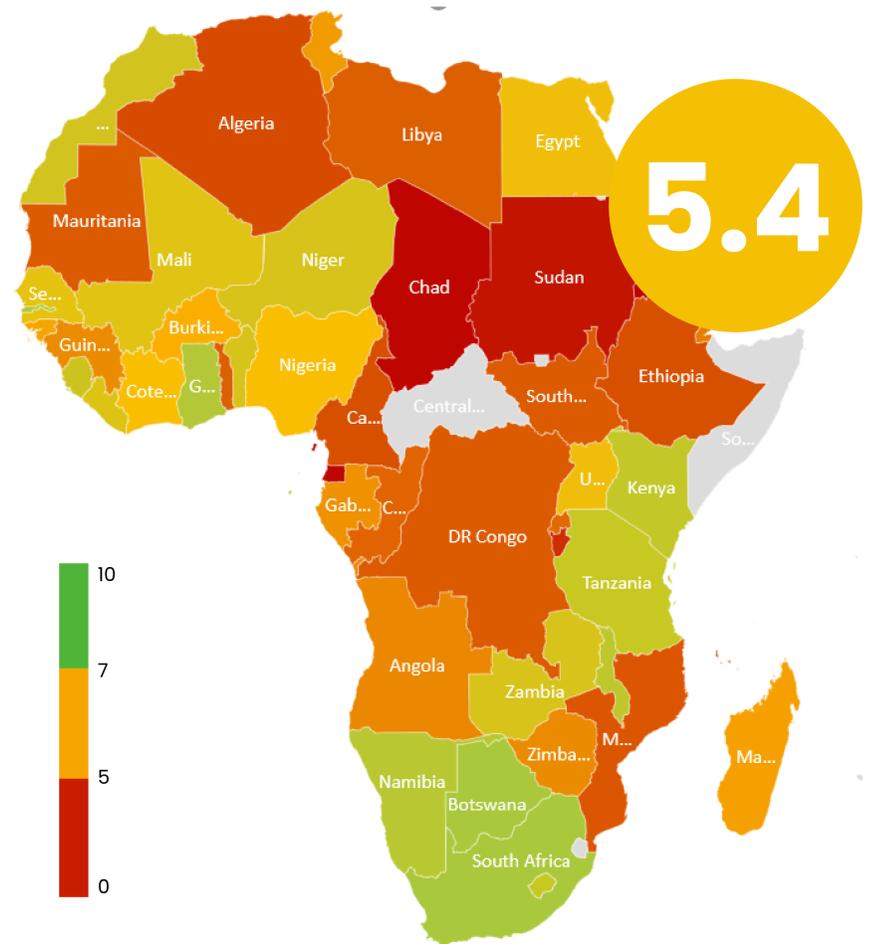


Fig 6.0; Map of Africa highlighting Judicial Independence across Countries

Protection Against Torture, Detention, and Extra-Judicial Killings

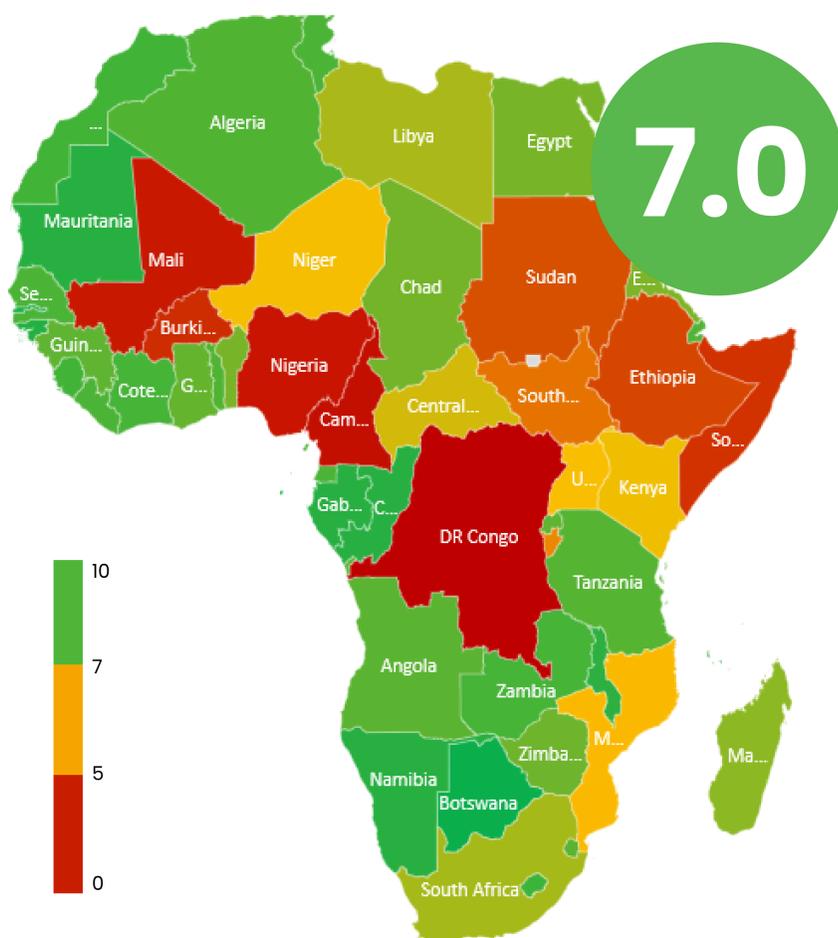


Fig 7.0; Map of Africa highlighting levels of Protection against arbitrary detention, torture, and extra-judicial killings across Countries

At the heart of human dignity and the rule of law is safety from unlawful detention and state violence acts on citizens.

In parts of the continent, this protection has grown stronger. Several states consistently record some of the highest levels of security for their citizens. Their citizens can live without fear of being detained without trial or being tortured in custody.

Elsewhere, in some other countries measures remain quite robust, however it is not without its occasional lapses, especially in periods of political tension.

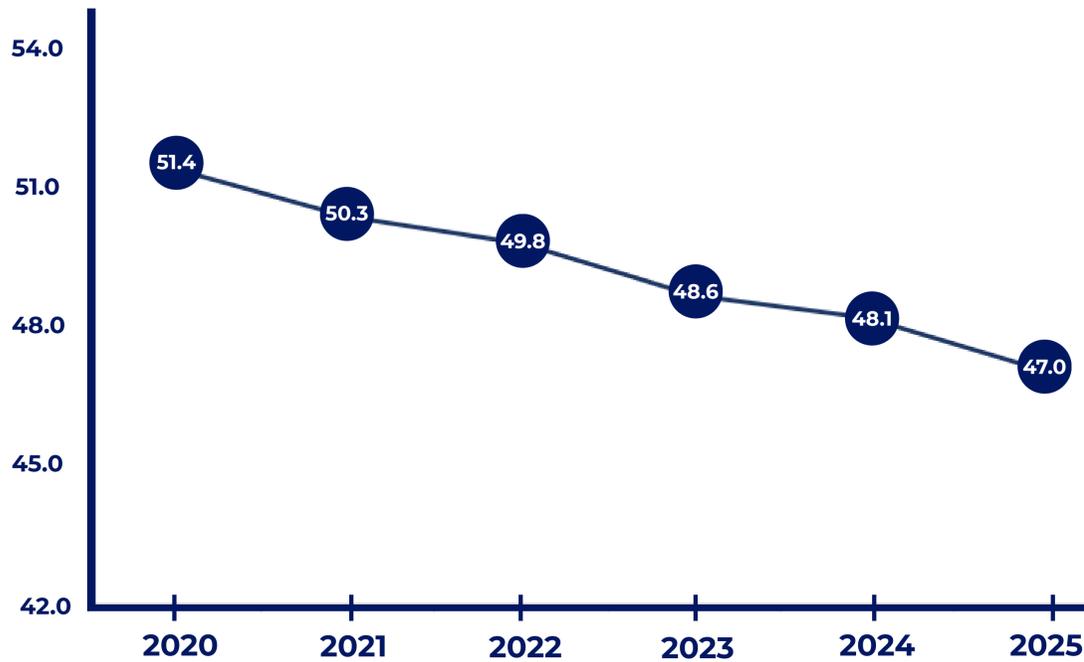
Others, like Nigeria, DR Congo, Burkina Faso, and Mali, have struggled under political repression, and weak institutions that leave individuals vulnerable to abuses at the hands of the state.

Nigeria's record over the past decade, has steadily declined, showing more political repression and unlawful arrests and detention.

The violent crackdown caused by the EndSARS protests of 2020 not only pulled it down further, but deepened public mistrust and highlighted the state's reluctance to change practices that enable systemic abuse.

Other nations that have steadily deteriorated are conflict ridden zones, where torture have become recurring features of the state's relationship with its citizens

Time Trend of Political Freedom in Africa (2020 - 2025)



*Africa's average score fell from 51.4 in 2020 to 47.0 in 2025, marking a steady decline of more than 4 points in six years. The drop reflects shrinking space for free expression, fair elections, and civic participation (Mo Ibrahim Index, 2025).

Top 10 Performing Countries

Location	Rank/10
Cabo Verde	9.1
Seychelles	9.1
Sao Tome and Principe	8.4
South Africa	8.3
Namibia	8.1
Mauritius	8.0
Botswana	8.0
Ghana	7.7
Malawi	7.4
Gambia	7.1

Worst 10 Performing Countries

Location	Rank/10
Eritrea	1.6
South Sudan	1.7
Cameroon	1.8
Burundi	2.1
Sudan	2.2
DR Congo	2.3
Somalia	2.5
Equatorial Guinea	2.6
Egypt	2.8
Ethiopia	3.0

Political Freedom in Africa at a Glance

Over the past six years, political freedom across Africa has shown a steady decline.

In 2020, the average score stood at about 51.4 out of 100, but by 2025 it had dropped to just over 47.0. This downward trend reflects growing concerns about the health of democratic institutions and the shrinking space for civic and political rights.

Elections, while more frequent, are increasingly criticized for lacking fairness and transparency. According to the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, many countries struggle with weak electoral integrity, restricted media freedom, and limited judicial independence. These challenges make it harder for citizens to hold leaders accountable.

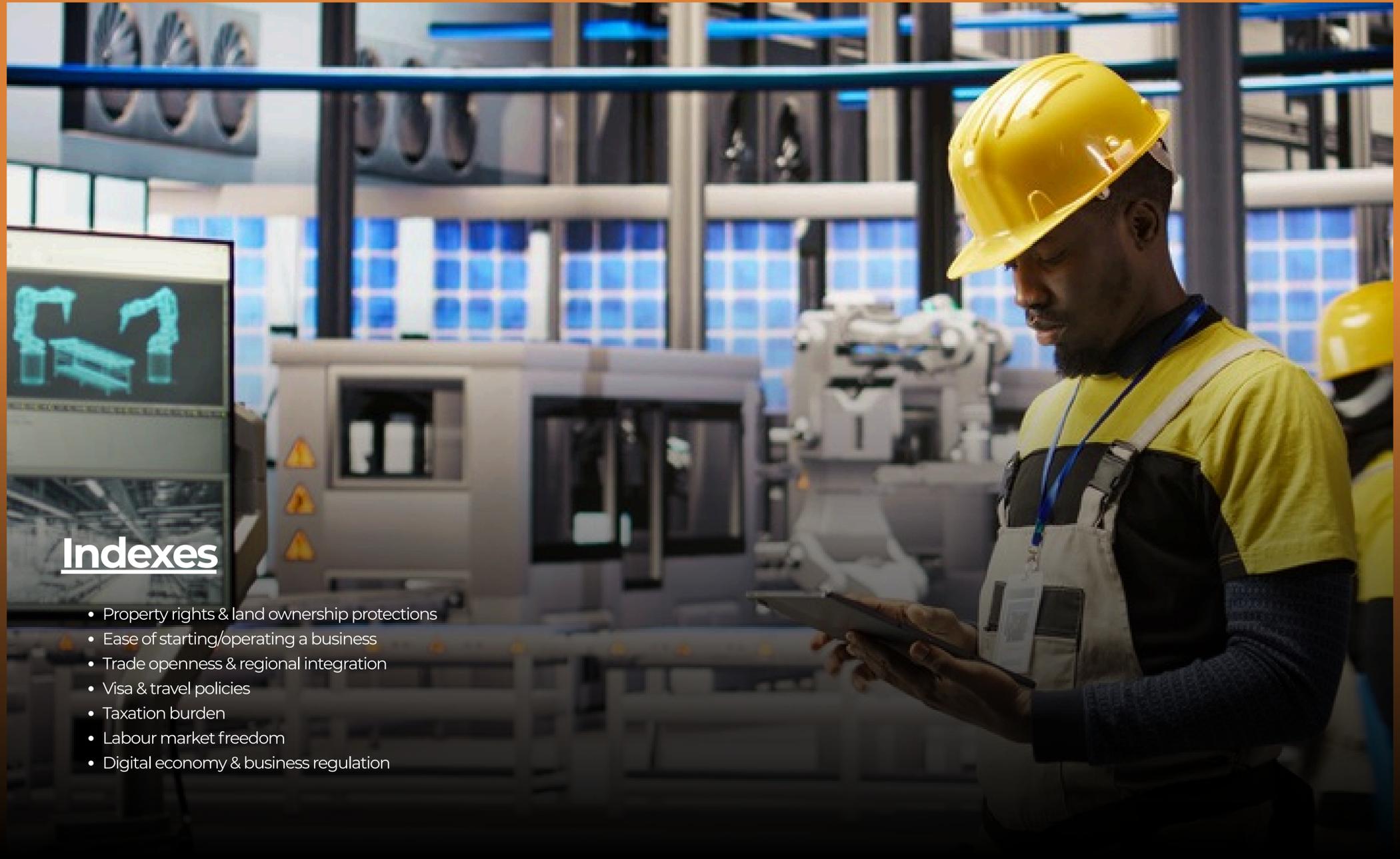
Freedom of expression and assembly have also come under pressure. Rising cases of censorship, restrictions on protests, and heavy-handed crackdowns on civil society. This has eroded public trust in political processes and created frustration, particularly among younger generations who make up the majority of Africa's population.

The decline in political freedom is not just a governance issue, it affects stability and development. When people feel excluded from decision-making or unable to express themselves freely, the likelihood of civic unrest and political tension rises. Unless reforms are made to protect basic freedoms, the downward trajectory is likely to continue, with far-reaching implications for Africa's democratic future.



Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR)

Economic Freedom in Africa



Indexes

- Property rights & land ownership protections
- Ease of starting/operating a business
- Trade openness & regional integration
- Visa & travel policies
- Taxation burden
- Labour market freedom
- Digital economy & business regulation

F(in)AR (2025)

Property Rights

The ability to own, transfer, and secure land or property rights shape how people build wealth, invest in their future, and pass opportunities to the next generation.

When these rights are strong, families and businesses feel secure, leading to growth. Some nations have steadily built reliable systems, where courts, registries, and enforcement agencies give investors and households confidence that property rights will be respected.

But While progress is visible in strengthening property rights frameworks across Africa, the average continental score of 4.2/10 shows that millions of Africans still live without full assurance that what they own today will remain theirs tomorrow.

Fragile and conflict-affected countries face the greatest risks as instability can cause lands to be seized without due process, leaving citizens vulnerable and discouraging both local and foreign investment.

Until stronger protection laws and policy are passed by governments across the continent, the certainty of property ownership will continue to depend less and less on the law itself and more on the political climate of the day and property rights will remain a barrier to opportunities for most regions

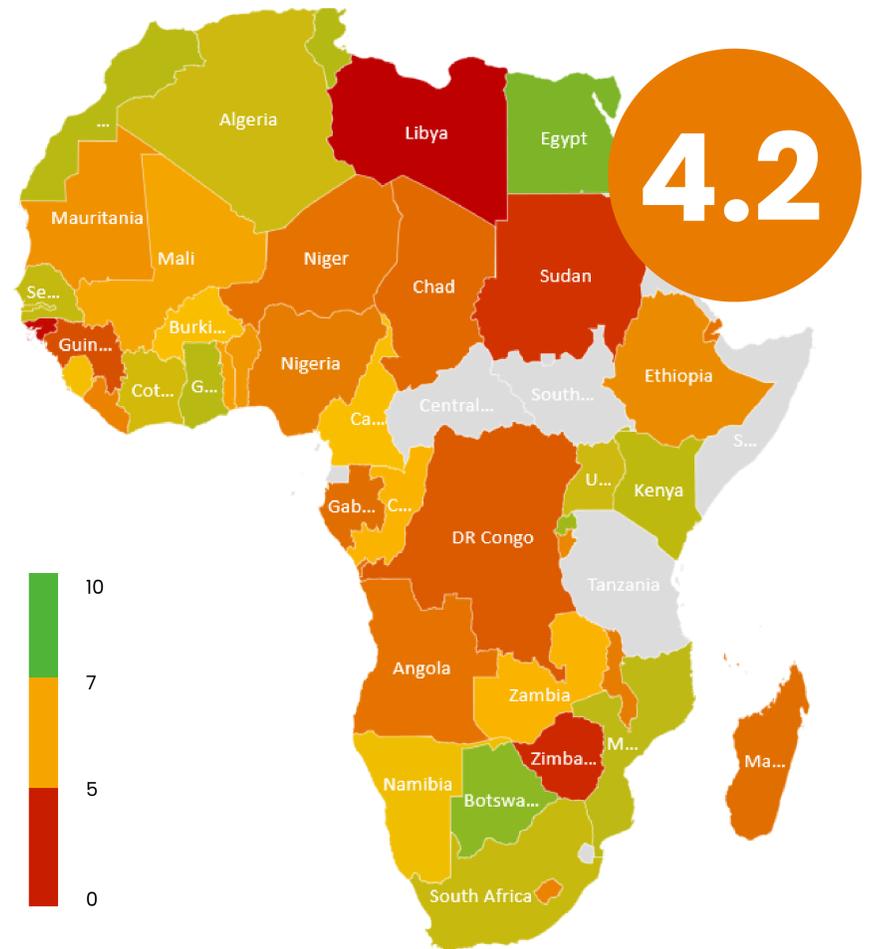


Fig 8.0; Map of Africa highlighting Property Rights levels across Countries

Ease of Starting a Business

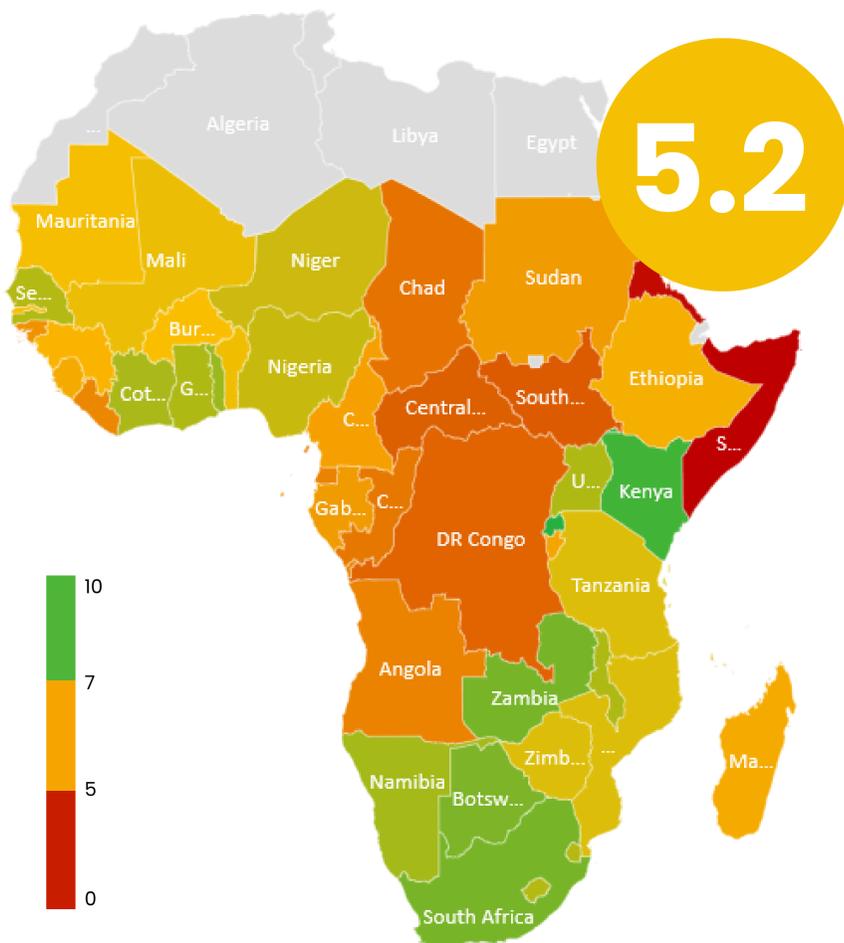


Fig 9.0; Map of Africa highlighting the ease of starting a business, across Countries

Whether it's a business in a small kiosk or a multi-million dollar big co-operation, entrepreneurship remains a vital engine for Africa's economic growth.

But the ease at which a business can be started still makes or breaks this potential as it determines whether innovation thrives or stalls.

In many cases, aspiring entrepreneurs face hurdles and delays caused by bureaucracy and corruption, discouraging them even before their businesses take off. In such countries, procedures for registration, licensing, and incorporation are often very lengthy, and costly.

However, there are exceptions, as some countries have built streamlined systems where entrepreneurs can register businesses quickly, all with minimal cost. Mauritius, being a prime example of such.

Between these extremes, are countries where moderate reforms have been made to improve registration procedures.

However, as is always the case most times, entrepreneurs still encounter delays, mostly due to administrative corruption.

Trade Openness

Trade is the backbone of Africa's economies, and how open countries are to regional and global markets plays a big role in growth.

Trade openness measures how easy it is for goods, services, and investments to move across borders.

In places with strong systems, customs processes are faster, tariffs are lower, and the rules are clearer.

This makes it easy for goods and services to cross borders, making it easier for businesses to attract investors, and link up with global supply chains.

On the other end, especially in conflict-torn states like Libya, Somalia, and South Sudan, Trade Openness barely register at all, policy inconsistency, and high tariffs add extra costs and add burdens on businesses.

These restrictions not only slow down economic growth but also reduce competitiveness on the global stage.

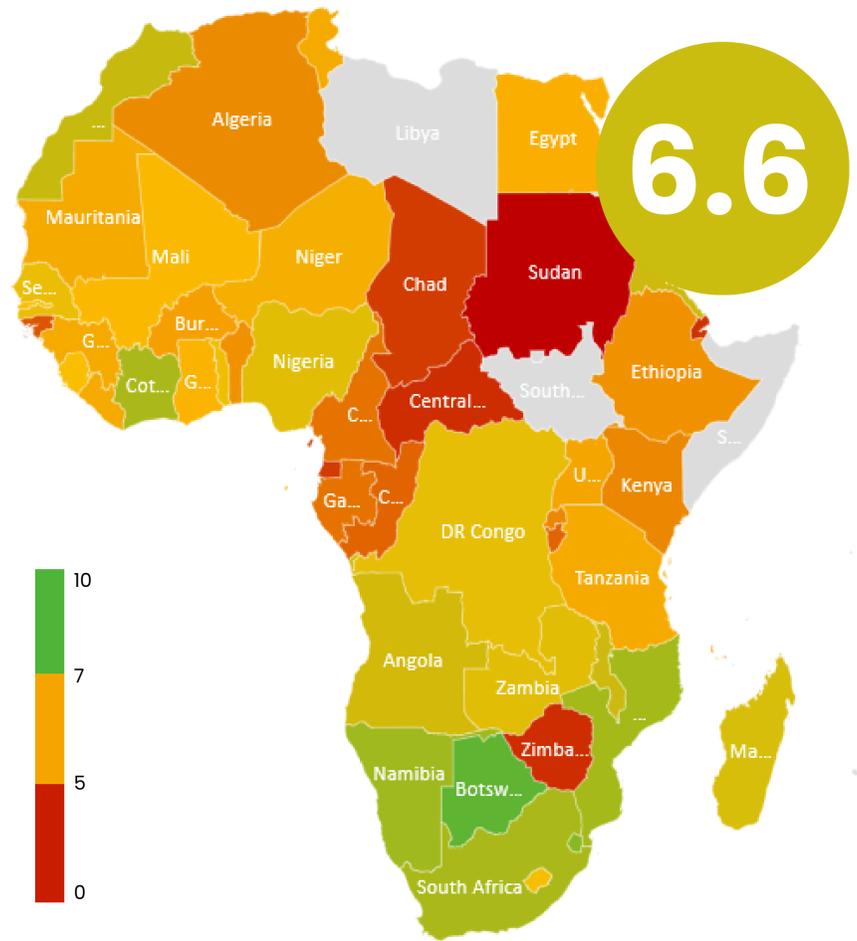


Fig 10.0; Map of Africa highlighting Trade Openness across Countries

Free Movement

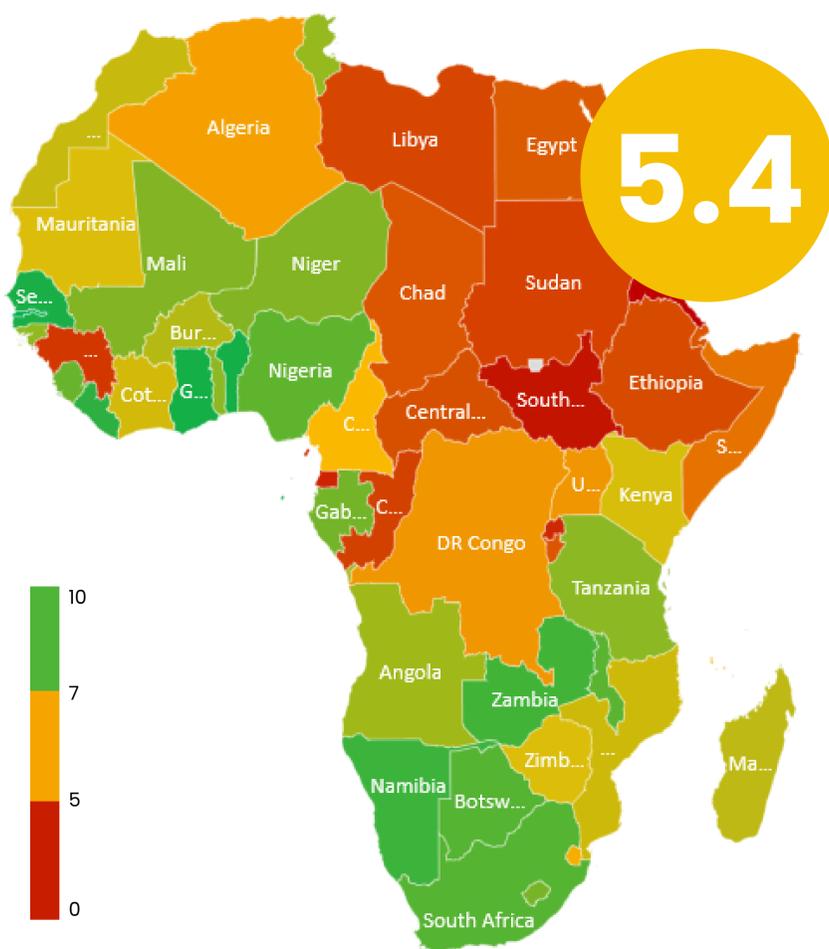


Fig 11.0; Map of Africa highlighting the Freedom of Movement across Countries

Freedom of movement is one of the most basic rights, allowing people to travel, relocate, or associate without unnecessary barriers.

But across Africa, Even in relatively stable countries, where mobility is largely encouraged and people can travel and relocate, with little restrictions; challenges still remain.

Poor infrastructure, weak transport networks, and widespread insecurity often make mobility difficult in practice. Roadblocks, and high travel costs, add further barriers, restricting both economic opportunities and personal freedoms

Despite these challenges, freedom of movement is still more open than closed across the continent as regional agreements like visa-free policies and trade zones are beginning to improve mobility.

However, with an average score of just 5.4/10, it is clear that while progress is being made, and mobility is possible, it is not always smooth.

Tax Burden

Taxation plays a central role in shaping freedom and opportunity. On one hand, taxes are essential; they fund schools, hospitals, roads, and public services that societies depend on.

On the other hand, the way taxes are structured often determines how much space individuals and businesses have to thrive.

A high tax burden can act as a double-edged sword. Governments rely on these revenues to sustain their budgets, but when rates are too steep, citizens and businesses feel squeezed.

Households struggle to meet basic needs while entrepreneurs face reduced margins, making it harder to expand or create jobs. In such cases, taxation becomes less of a contribution to the common good and more of an obstacle to prosperity.

With an average score of 8.0/10, Africa performs relatively well on the tax burden indicator compared to other measures of economic freedom.

Still, the balance remains delicate: taxation must be heavy enough to sustain development, but not so overwhelming that it stifles opportunity.

Achieving this balance is one the continent's ongoing economic challenges.

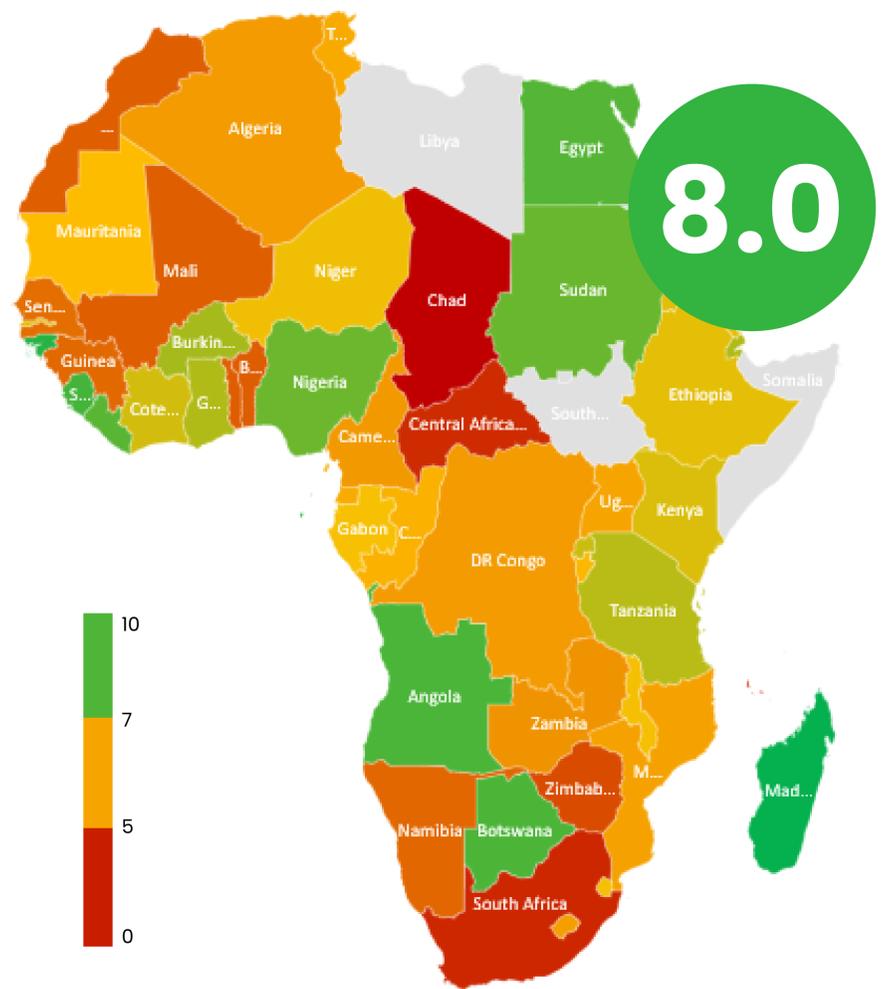


Fig 12.0; Map of Africa highlighting the Tax Burdens across Countries

Freedom of Labor

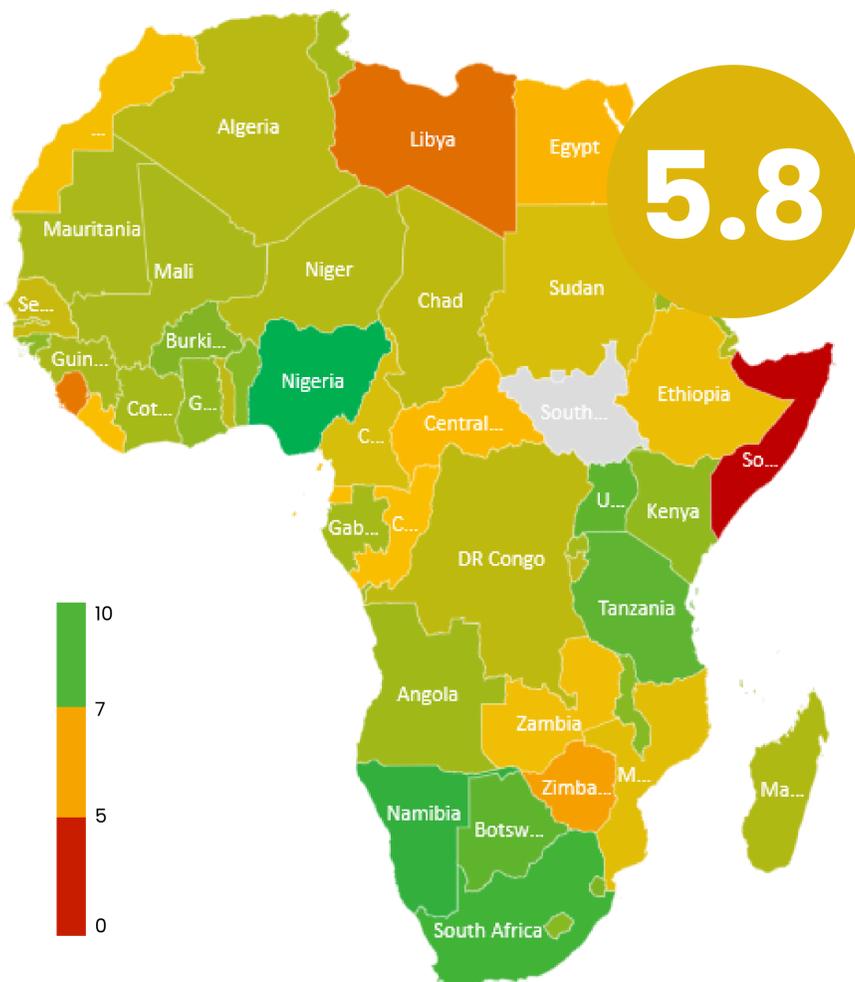


Fig 13.0; Map of Africa highlighting Labor Freedom across Countries

Africa is not lacking in human potential, but in the systems that allow it to thrive.

Workers rise before dawn, weaving through traffic to reach offices, markets, or construction sites, and behind all this activity lies a critical factor: the Freedom of Labor, i.e the degree at which laws, regulations, and state policies allow people to work, hire, or be hired with ease.

The majority of African nations rank between 6.7 and 5.0, indicating that workers face both opportunities and constraints. There are flexible labor laws put in place to give workers and employers room to freely work, hire and be hired. And these systems and laws allow for formal and informal work to coexist under an enabling environment.

However, labor freedom still remains burdened by bureaucratic regulations, and weak enforcement of contracts, which discourages formal employment, pushes many workers into the informal economy, and limits businesses from expanding or hiring with confidence.

Elsewhere, collapsed institutions, like Libya and South Sudan record some of the lowest levels of labor freedom, and have essentially dropped out of the index, due to rigid labor laws, or the near-total absence of functioning job markets.

Digital Economy

Africa is filled with a population that's full of bright ideas; but what determines if these ideas succeed or fall short is not just talent and hardwork, but the rules and policies.

Business laws, fintech regulations, and internet freedom all shape whether entrepreneurs can grow or remain stagnant in the digital age.

Most African countries have clear rules and open systems to make it easier for startups to raise money, and expand.

But in other regions, the policies are too restrictive, with heavy licensing, poor laws, and unstable governments holding businesses back and shutting down opportunities.

In the continent today, places like South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda and Mauritius, have become leaders in Africa's digital economy; while Nigeria shows moderate digital freedom, strong enough to support its rising fintech sector, but still held back by regulatory uncertainty.

For Africa's digital future, the challenge is no longer just building apps or startups; it is now in rewriting the rules of business to favor innovation and innovators

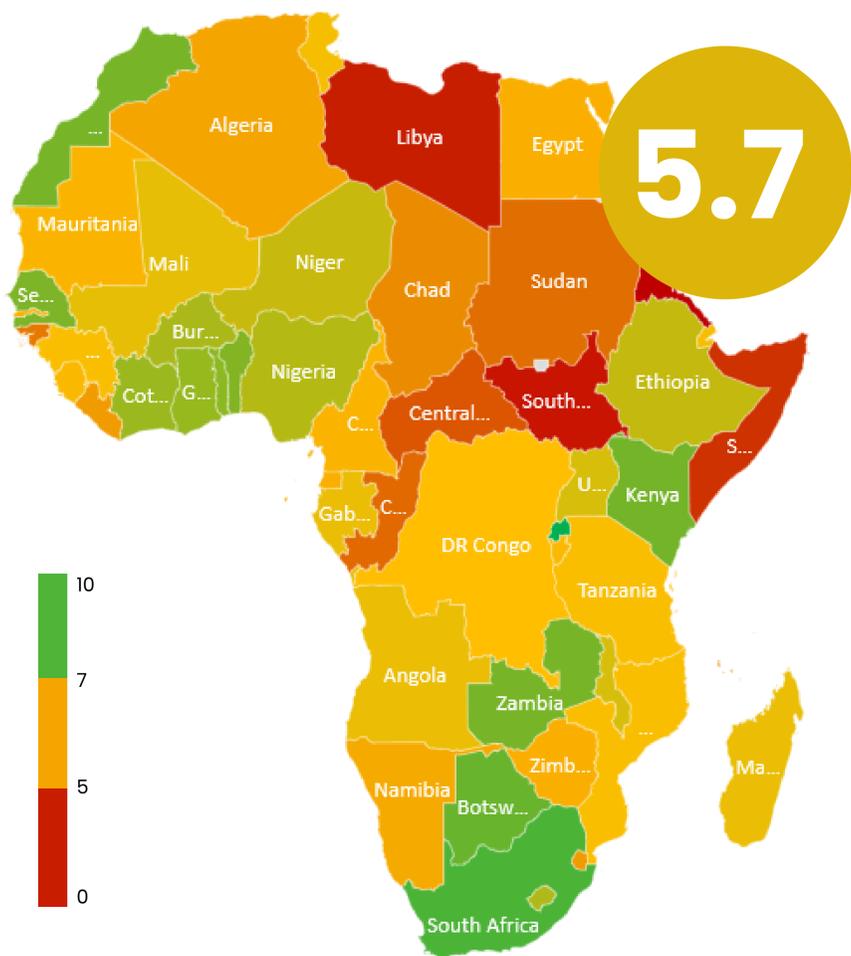


Fig 14.0; Map of Africa highlighting the levels of Digital business economy, across Countries

Economic Freedom in Africa at a Glance

Economic freedom in Africa has experienced a sharp reversal in recent years. Between 2020 and 2022, there was steady improvement, with scores rising from 53.9 to 56.4, suggesting gradual progress in areas like business regulations, property rights, and trade openness.

However, this momentum did not last. By 2023, the score began to dip slightly, and by 2024 it collapsed to 43.2, remaining at 42.8 in 2025. This steep fall reflects growing barriers to entrepreneurship, tighter fiscal pressures, and rising state intervention in key sectors of the economy.

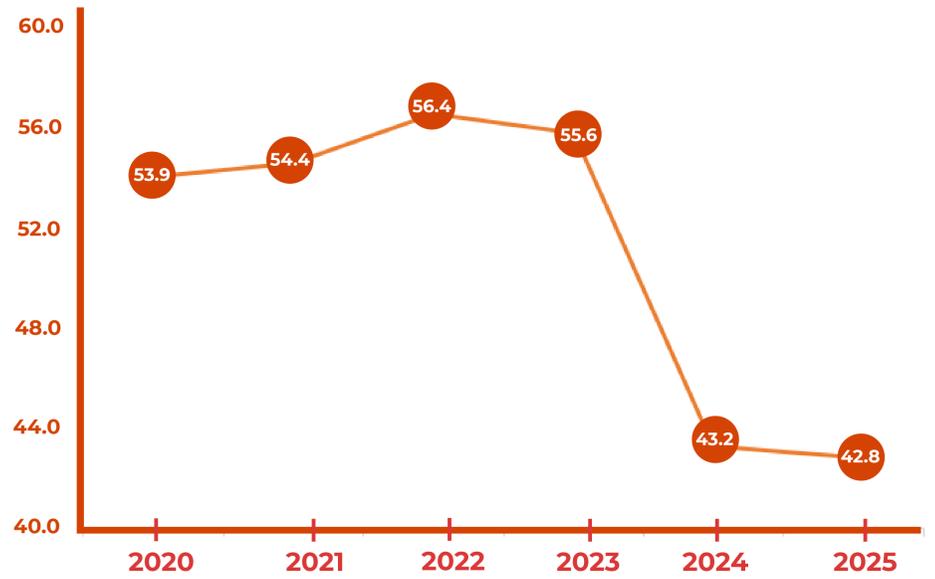
Independent assessments, including the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index (2024) and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2025), point to similar concerns. Across the continent, businesses face higher taxation burdens, regulatory uncertainty, and weaker protections for property and investment.

At the same time, many economies continue to struggle with youth unemployment and limited access to finance, which undermines growth.

The data reveals a troubling reality: while Africa's economies hold immense potential, economic freedom is shrinking instead of expanding. Unless governments create more open and predictable environments for trade, innovation, and enterprise, opportunities for prosperity will remain out of reach for much of the population.

“The concept of economic freedom is as simple as it is powerful. It is the cornerstone of every successful, wealthy and happy society on earth. At its core, economic freedom is about the freedom of individuals to make economic decisions. This includes the right to choose a profession, start a business, and decide what to charge for your labour”

Time Trend of Economic Freedom in Africa (2020 - 2025)

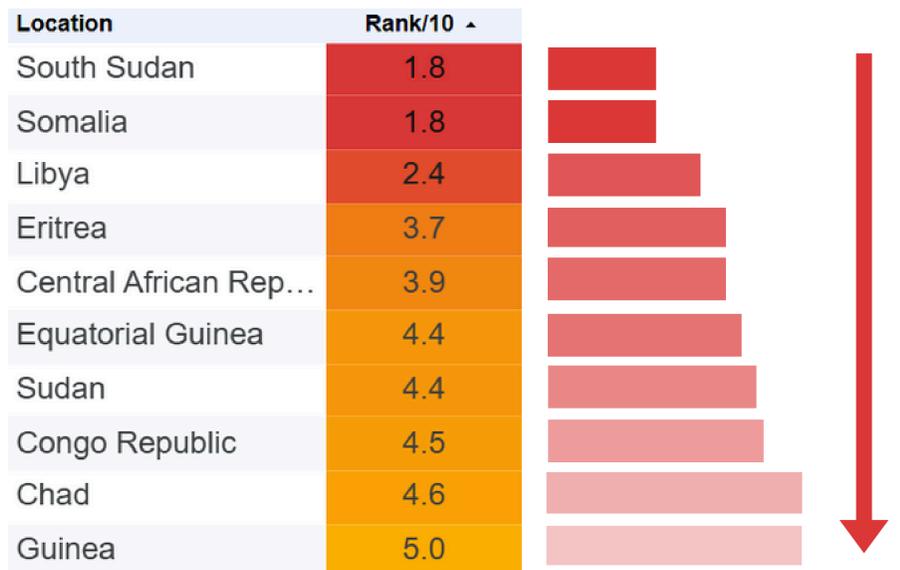


**Economic Freedom at a Glance: Africa's score rose from 53.9 in 2020 to a peak of 56.4 in 2022, but then fell sharply to 42.8 in 2025, reflecting rising taxation, regulatory barriers, and currency instability.*

Top 10 Performing Countries

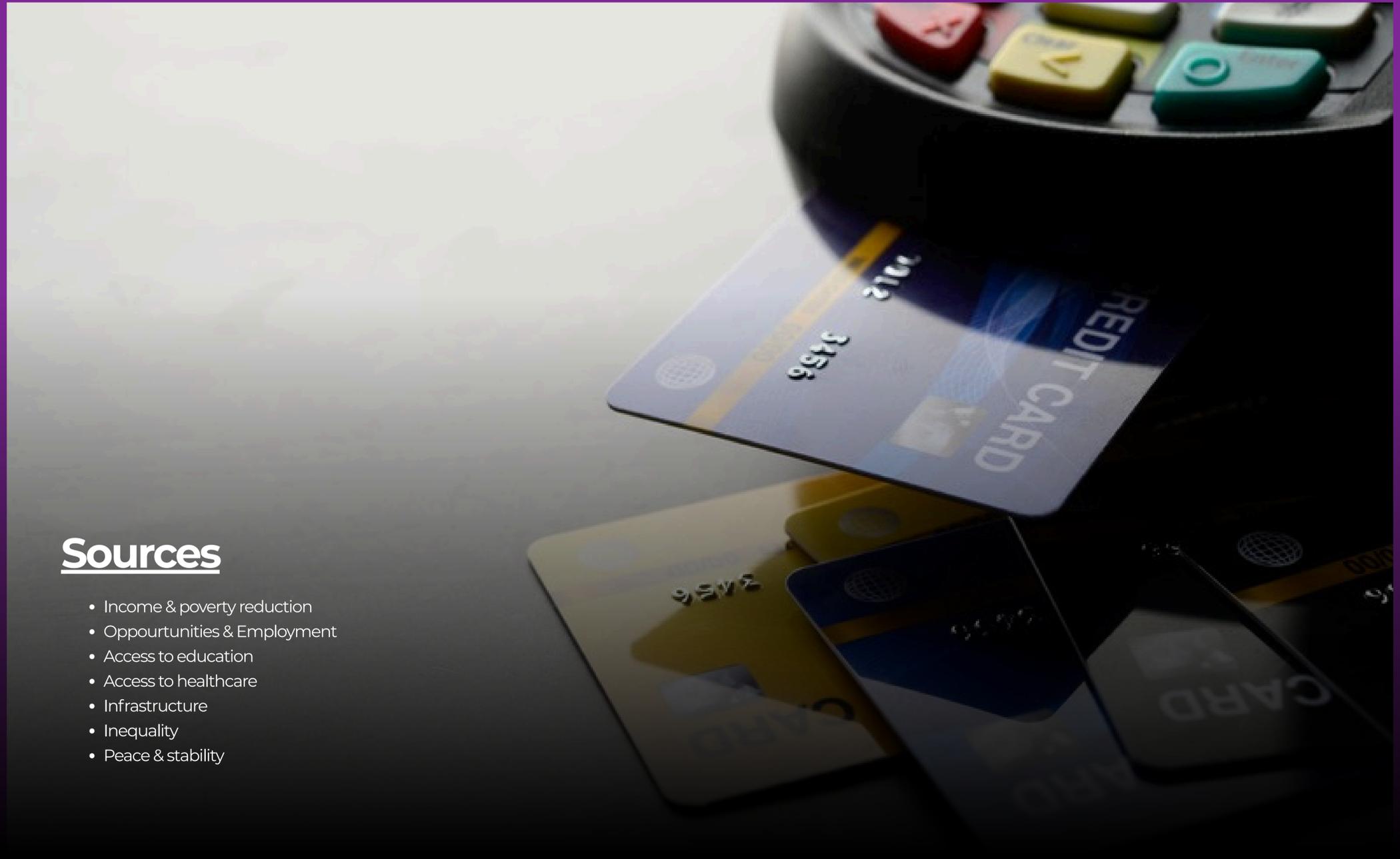


Worst 10 Performing Countries



Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR)

Prosperity in Africa



Sources

- Income & poverty reduction
- Opportunities & Employment
- Access to education
- Access to healthcare
- Infrastructure
- Inequality
- Peace & stability

Income & Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction remains one of the toughest challenges across Africa. With an average score of 5.1/10, income levels across the continent show big gaps between countries.

On average, rich countries like Seychelles, Mauritius, and Cabo Verde, lead the continent, showing strong progress in steps taken to reduce poverty among citizens.

In some other areas, progress has been fragile. Factors such as inflation, dependence on commodity exports, weak job creation and inequality within countries present a major barrier. This causes wealth to be concentrated in only a small segment of the population while many others struggle to meet basic needs.

Despite these challenges, there are signs of resilience. Investments in education, entrepreneurship, and social protection programs have made some communities better.

But for the conflict ridden countries, the reality is far worse. Instability in these regions causes prolonged crises and poverty, with communities losing their means of livelihoods and access to essential services like healthcare, food, and shelter.

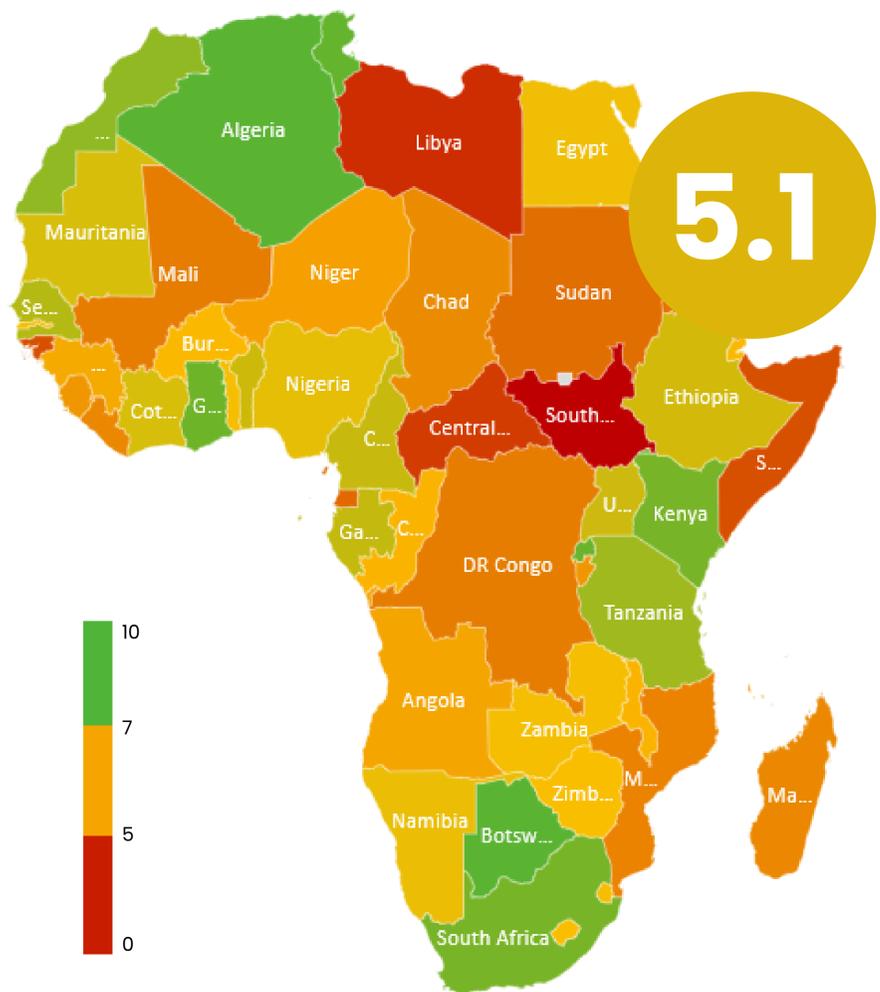


Fig 15.0; Map of Africa highlighting Levels of Poverty reduction across Countries

Opportunities & Employment

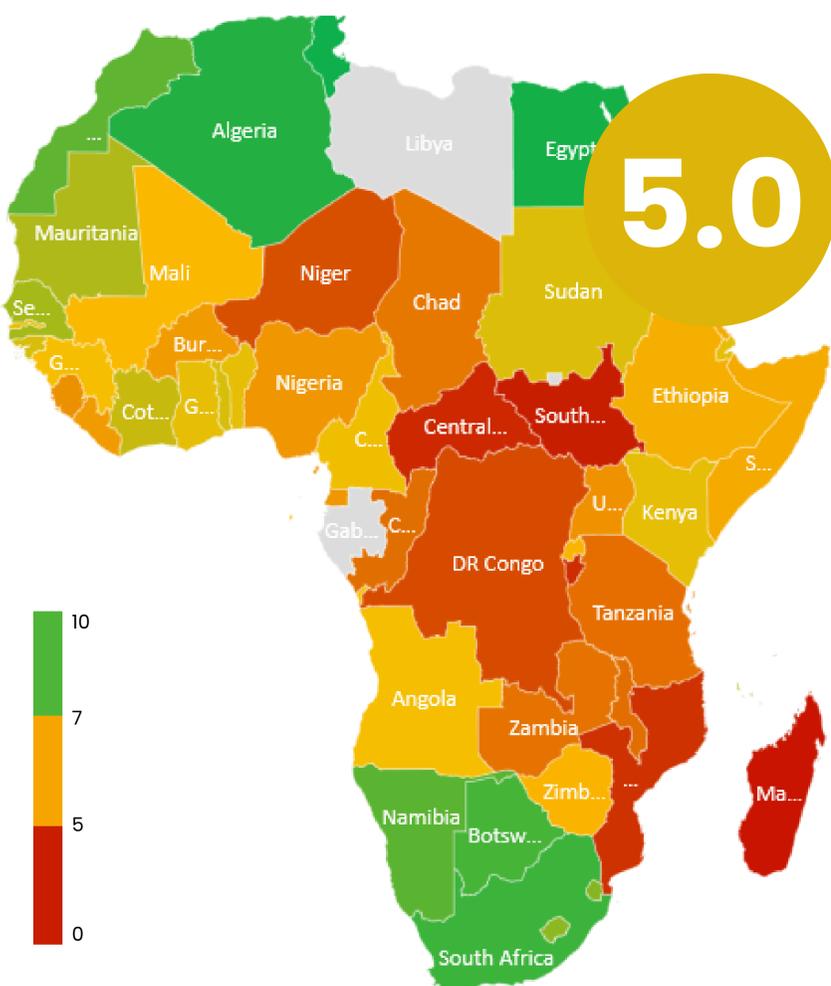


Fig 16.0; Map of Africa highlighting Levels of Employment across Countries

In a few countries, where jobs are secure and small businesses are supported, people have the chance to turn their skills into lasting livelihoods and contribute meaningfully to society. Jobs are more secure and small businesses have a real chance to grow.

But across much of the continent, the picture is less hopeful as access to employment remains a pressing challenge.

Millions of young people face high unemployment rates, forcing many into the informal sector or pushing them to seek opportunities abroad.

The reality is that too many remain locked out of steady work, leaving talent underutilized and frustrations to grow.

Even in some peaceful countries, barriers still exist; weak infrastructure, and closed markets block new businesses or opportunities before they can take root.

Africa's future prosperity, economic success and whether the continent turns its large youth population into an engine of growth will depend on how this gap is closed and how quickly jobs and enterprises can catch up with demand.

Access to Education

Access to education in Africa shows a mixed but gradually improving picture.

The continental average stands at 5.4/10, and of the countries assessed, nearly half remain below the mid-point, pointing to persistent barriers in literacy, and education access.

North and Southern Africa hold some of the continent's strongest performers with Mauritius, Seychelles, and Tunisia, boasting strong primary and tertiary institutions.

By contrast, Central Africa registers some of the weakest results, with South Sudan, Somalia, and the Central African Republic, showing chronic underinvestment in the education system and a near total collapse of it.

West and East Africa reflect both resilience and struggle in the continent. Ghana, Benin, Rwanda, Nigeria, and Kenya, have all made gradual progress, while others like Niger, Uganda and Guinea-Bissau fall behind.

This data reveals a defining reality, that Africa's prosperity and freedom hinges not only on economic growth, or political improvements, but on the continent's ability to bridge the education divide that still leaves millions of young people uneducated.

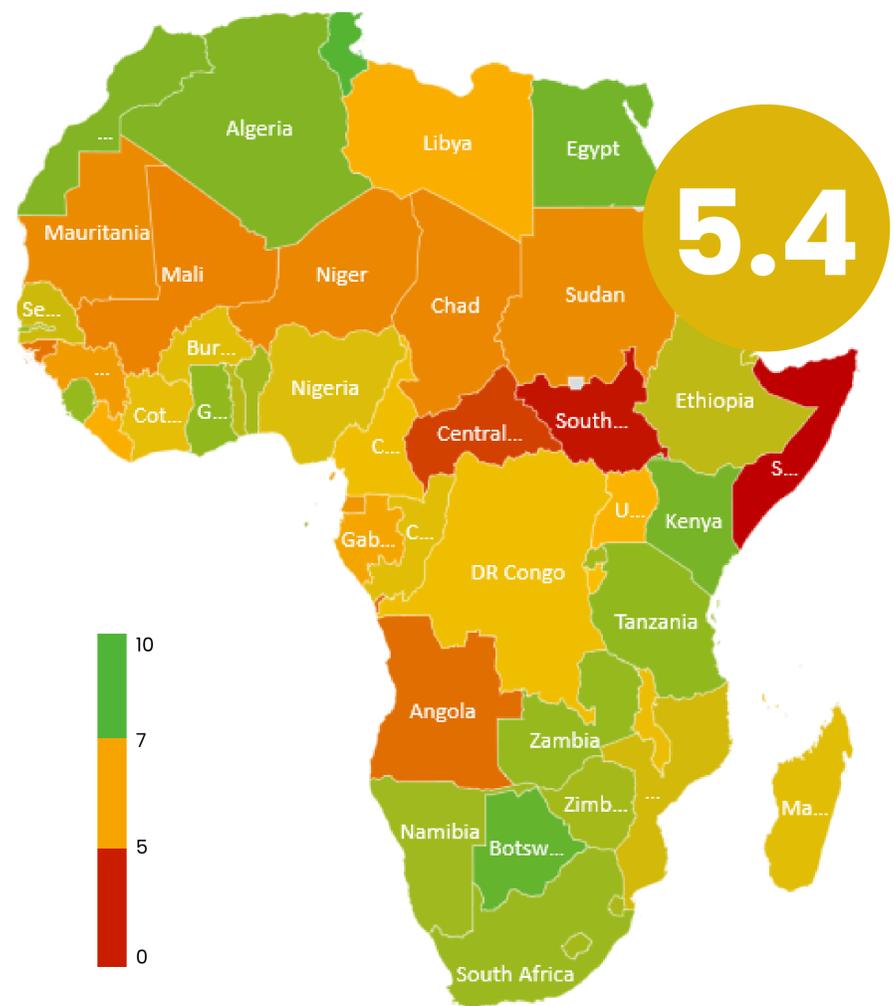


Fig 17.0; Map of Africa highlighting Education Levels across Countries

Access to Healthcare

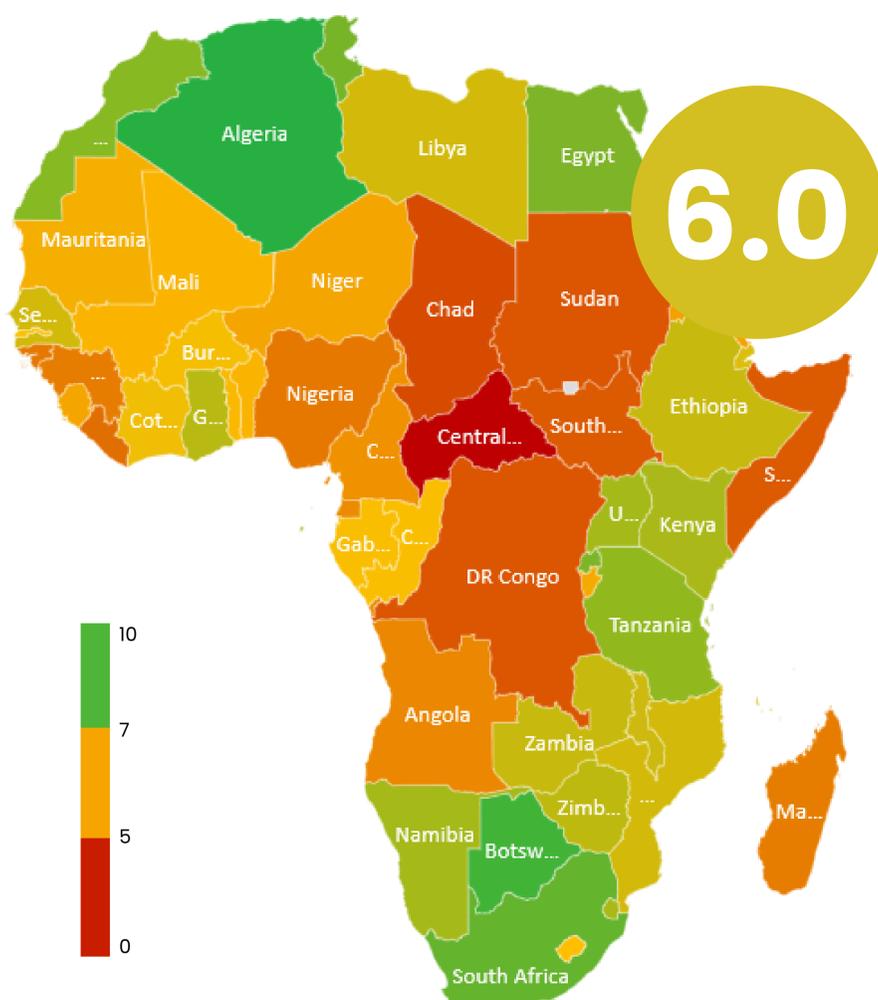


Fig 18.0; Map of Africa highlighting Levels of Healthcare Access across Countries

On average, Africa scores 6.0 out of 10, suggesting an uneven spread across the continent; in that while some people are gaining reliable access to doctors, clinics, and medicines, millions of others remain locked out of even the most basic health needs.

In countries where healthcare systems are underfunded, overstretched, or weakened by instability, conflict, poor governance, and inadequate resources, many citizens lack access to treatment. In such environments, preventable deaths are still very common, and families are left to rely on traditional medicine or sort out for treatment outside their countries.

Addressing this issue will determine whether Africa can build the human capital it needs for long-term prosperity.

With the continent's ever growing population, the challenge for Africa now is in ensuring that healthcare is enjoyed by all Africans, and not just the lucky few.

Authorities round the continent must endeavour to build better-performing systems to public health programs, that will allow more families to experience proper healthcare.

Infrastructure

Across Africa, infrastructure access is extremely limited.

In many places, citizens still lack reliable electricity, and stable internet connections, which are critical to connecting citizens to opportunities, services, and markets. Poor roads and transport systems further isolate communities, making it harder to access hospitals, clinics, jobs, or trade centers.

Only a few countries occupy the top percentile of nations with proper infrastructural capacity.

However, even in these areas access is often very uneven. Urban centers enjoy the bulk of stable infrastructure, while rural areas are left lagging behind.

For some nations, instability of government systems, poor planning, and conflict situations make it almost impossible for citizens to have access to basic infrastructures needed for their daily lives.

The overall picture shows that infrastructure in Africa is still underdeveloped and very inconsistent, and until African governments address this, citizens will remain disconnected from many of the opportunities that drive freedom, economic growth, and quality of life forward.

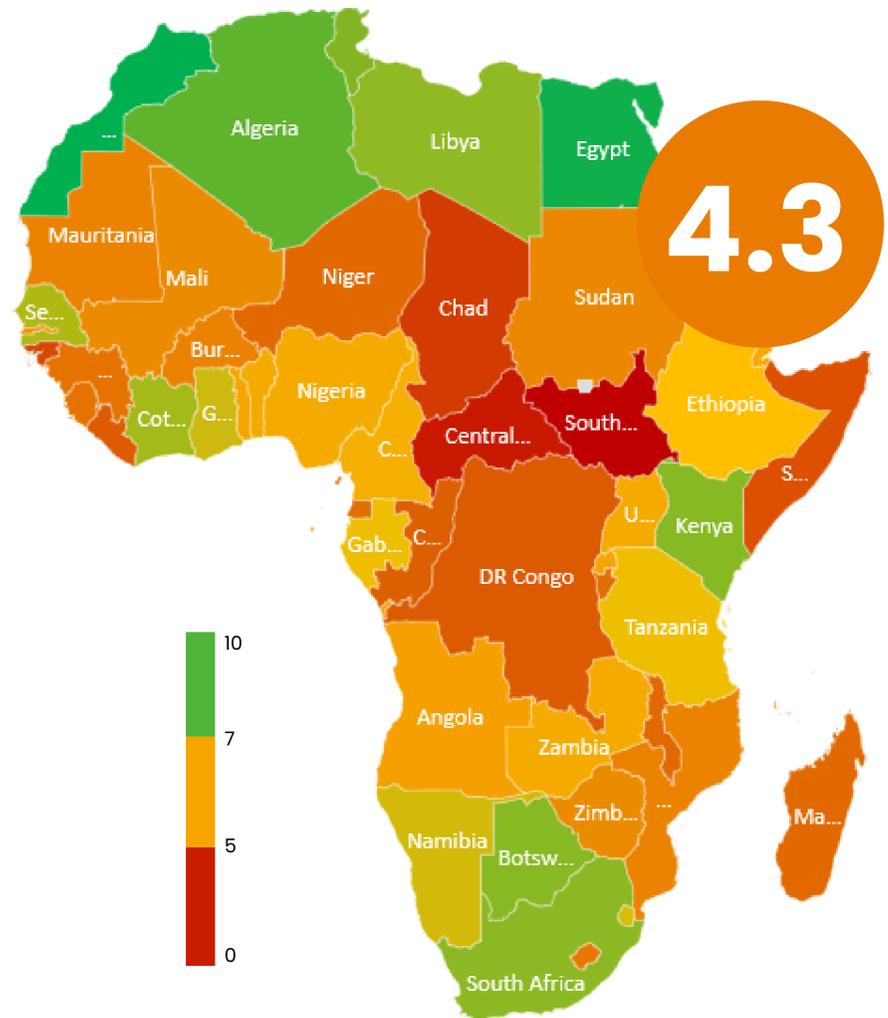


Fig 19.0; Map of Africa highlighting Infrastructural levels across Countries

Inequality

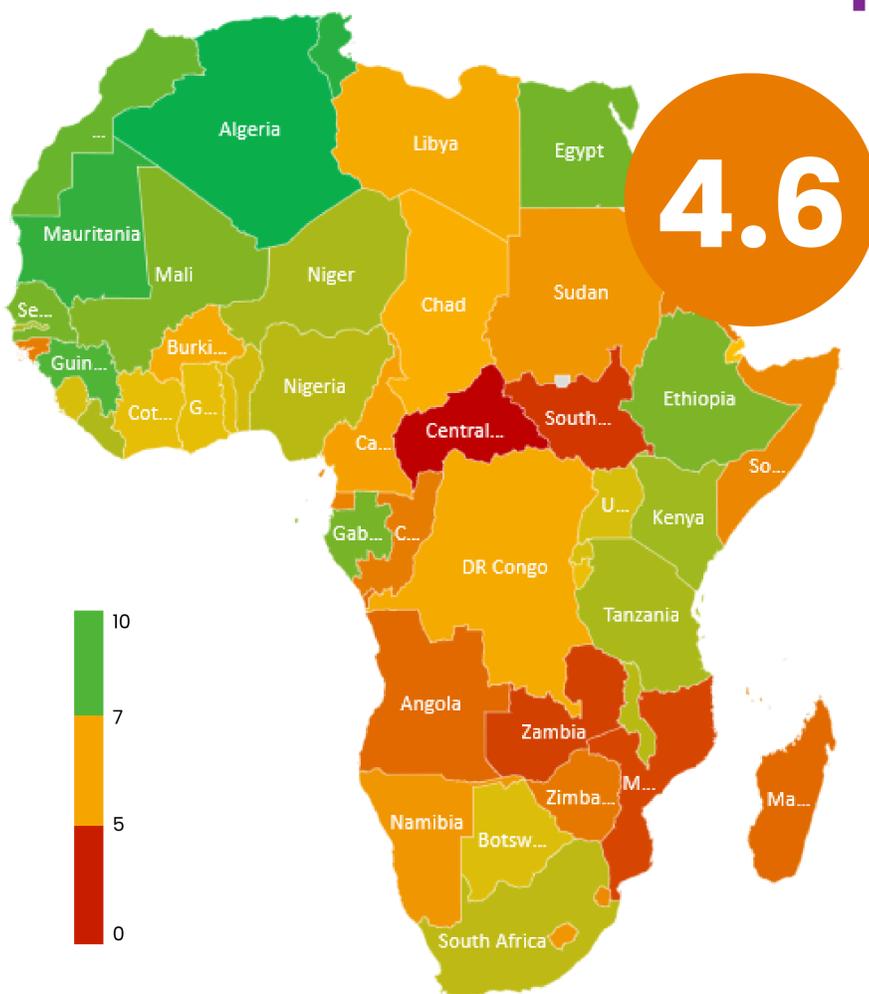


Fig 20.0; Map of Africa highlighting inequality levels across Countries

Social mobility reflects the chance for people to move up in life. It explains whether a child born in poverty can grow into the middle class, or whether they remain trapped in hardship.

The inequality gap continues to shape who gets access to good schools, jobs, and opportunities far more than talent, intelligence or hard work ever could.

Across Africa, inequality remains a major barrier to progress. Many young people face limited opportunities because they lack status, and status, not potential, determines their future as Africans.

As such, opportunities remain unevenly spread, and sometimes, a whole community remain locked out of the economic system, creating cycles of poverty that are hard to escape.

The weakest continental performers are once again found in fragile states where conflict and weak institutions make social progress nearly impossible.

These nations are some of the hardest places for citizens to break free from poverty and inequality has become deep rooted and reinforced by violence, and lack of public services.

At a disappointing rank of 4.6 out of 10, Africa's score shows that breaking the cycle of inequality remains one of the greatest challenges to long-term prosperity.

Peace & Stability

Peace and Stability, is the foundation on which prosperity in a nation is built, and the lack of which greatly hinders societies from thriving.

Across the continent, the statistics show that peace is never guaranteed, and even in most countries where residents may go about normal daily life without experiencing insecurity, conflict levels are low and communities are largely insulated from chaos, some levels of sporadic violence can still be found.

Nigeria exemplifies a nation with such mix. Insurgent activities particularly in the northeast, and intermittent clashes in the northwest, co-exist with relatively stable urban centers like Lagos and Abuja. While the millions of Nigerians navigate daily life without direct exposure to violence, the country still faces significant challenges from localized insurgencies, internally displaced populations, and occasional communal clashes.

In nations such as South Sudan, DR Congo, Somalia, and Mali which face constant turmoil, violence and extrajudicial attack are near certain. In these regions, violent clashes, insurgencies, and political unrest fuel massive internal unrest among citizens. Daily life is precarious, and state authority struggles to extend basic protection to citizens.

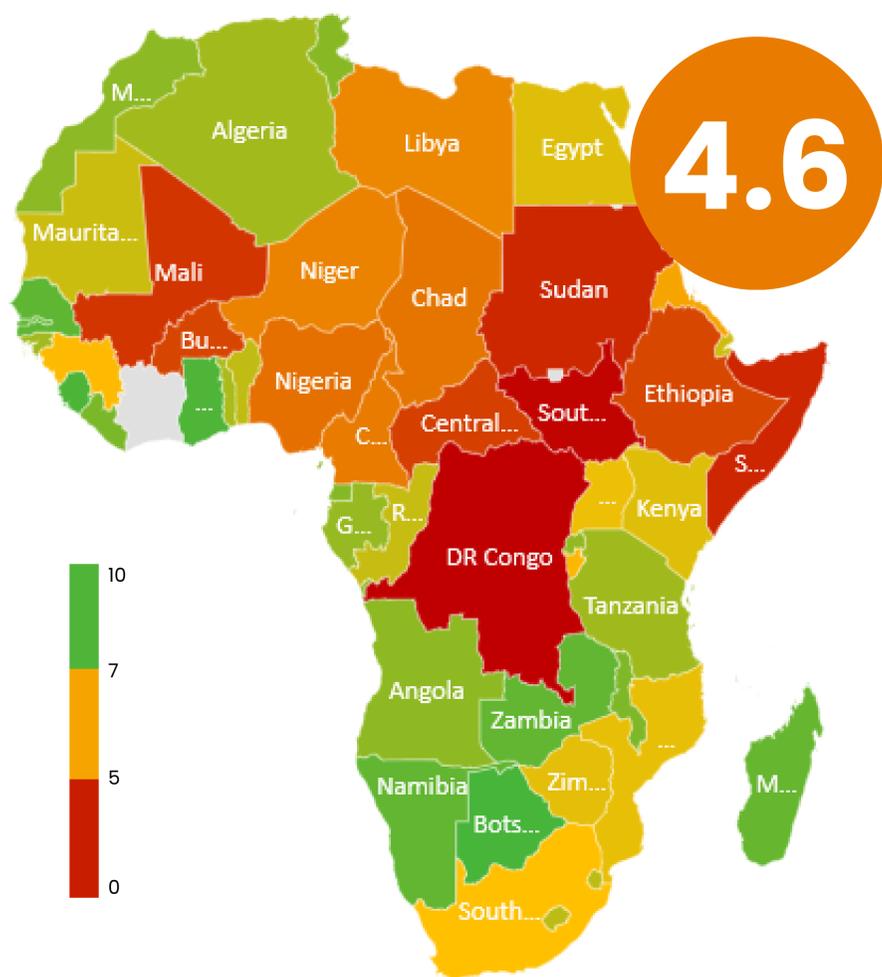


Fig 21.0; Map of Africa highlighting Peace and Stability levels across Countries

Prosperity in Africa at a Glance

Prosperity levels in Africa have shown both resilience and volatility. In 2020, the average score stood at 47.9, barely moving to 48.7 in 2022. This slow growth suggested that progress was happening, but at a very modest pace.

However, 2023 brought a sudden setback, with prosperity falling sharply to 46.8. This dip reflected the lingering effects of the pandemic, rising inflation, and instability in some regions. Economic shocks during this period hit households hard, with many struggling with food and job insecurity.

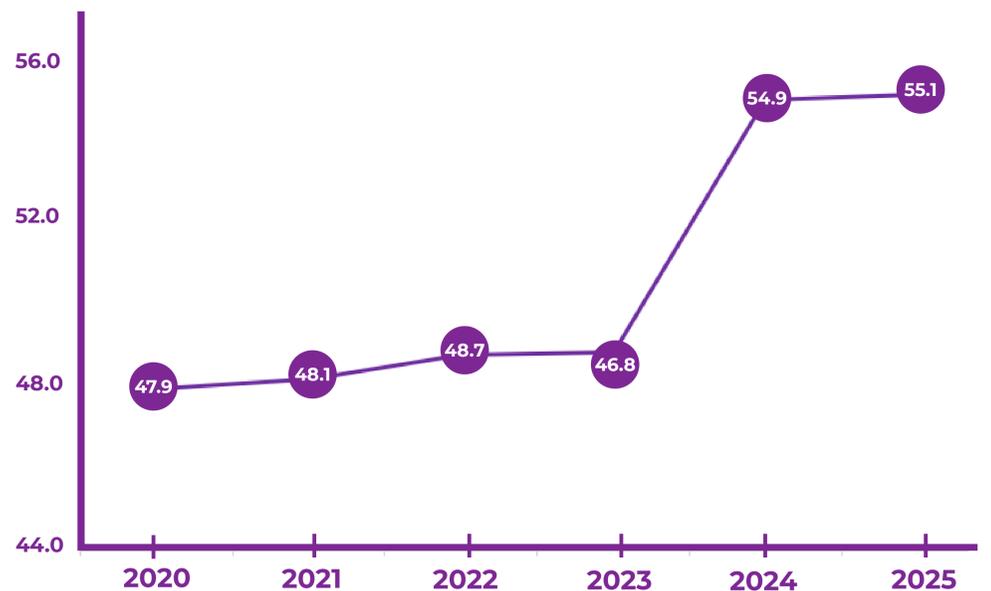
Encouragingly, the trend turned around in 2024, with prosperity making a remarkable jump to 54.9. This improvement was driven by stronger post-pandemic recovery, investment in infrastructure, and steady growth in digital services and trade integration.

By 2025, the score inched up again to 55.1, signaling stability and the potential for sustained growth.

While challenges such as inequality and unemployment remain, the upward shift shows that Africa's economies and societies are becoming more resilient. If these gains are consolidated, prosperity could continue to rise in the years ahead.



Time Trend of Prosperity in Africa (2020 - 2025)

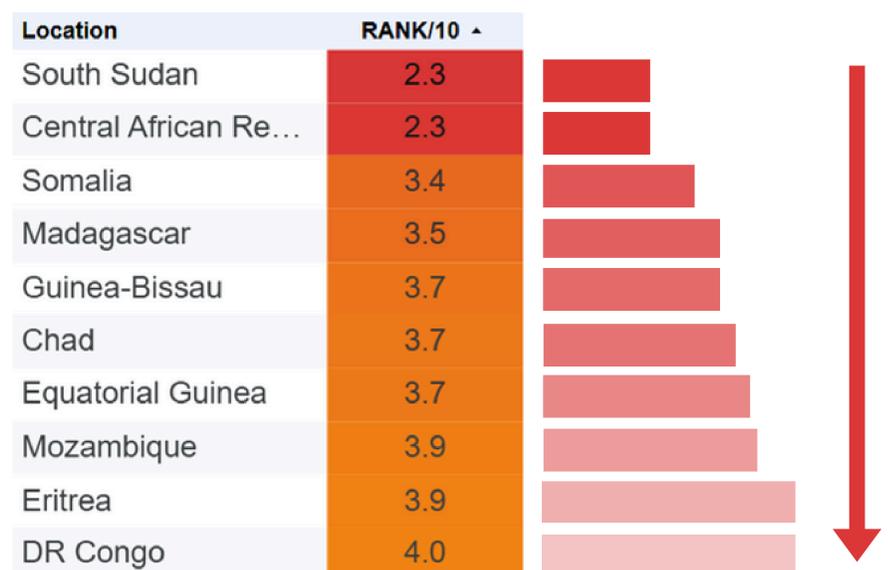


**Africa's prosperity score moved from 47.9 in 2020 to 55.1 in 2025, with a dip in 2023 (46.8) followed by a strong rebound in 2024 and 2025. The trend shows modest early progress, a mid-period setback, and then the highest prosperity levels in six years. (Mo Ibrahim Foundation & Global Peace Index, 2025)*

Top 10 Performing Countries



Worst 10 Performing Countries



Regional overview of Freedom scores across Africa

Northern Africa		Western Africa	
	Rank/100 ▾		Rank/100 ▾
Tunisia	67.7	Cabo Verde	79.8
Morocco	61.7	Ghana	68.8
Algeria	56.9	Senegal	64.4
Egypt	50.6	Gambia	62.6
Sudan	36.4	Benin	60.4
Libya	34.0	Côte d'Ivoire	59.4
		Liberia	56.6
Southern Africa		Central Africa	
	Rank/100 ▾		Rank/100 ▾
Botswana	75.3	Sao Tome and Principe	69.3
South Africa	74.3	Gabon	53.6
Namibia	69.4	Angola	49.0
Lesotho	63.0	Congo Republic	41.2
Zambia	56.6	Cameroon	40.8
Eswatini	49.0	Chad	39.7
Zimbabwe	45.1	DR Congo	37.8
		Equatorial Guinea	35.7
Eastern Africa		Central African Republic	31.2
	Rank/100 ▾		
Mauritius	80.0		
Seychelles	76.6		
Malawi	62.5		
Kenya	62.3		
Tanzania	53.6		
Madagascar	51.0		
Uganda	50.8		
Rwanda	50.7		
Mozambique	47.5		
Comoros	47.3		
Djibouti	46.7		
Ethiopia	45.9		
Burundi	37.2		
Eritrea	30.6		
Somalia	25.7		
South Sudan	19.3		

*Southern Africa lead the way, with countries in this region showing stronger governance, more open economies, and greater political stability. Eastern, Northern and Western Africa sit in the middle range, reflecting mixed progress where gains in some areas are offset by challenges in others.

Central Africa, however, remains the most fragile, marked by weak institutions, conflict, and limited civic space.

Africa's Regional Pathways to Freedom

To rebuild public trust and reduce political tension, governments in Northern Africa need to create laws that give citizens more freedom to speak, protest, and participate in public life.

When people can share their opinions freely, journalists can work without fear, and courts can act independently, the region becomes stronger and more stable.

Beyond politics, real effort is needed to revive the economy. Reviving the Arab Maghreb Union or creating new regional mobility frameworks would help countries trade more, attract investment, and share innovation.

Regional cooperation of this kind can bring lasting prosperity and make the region more competitive globally.

Finally, growth must reach everyone. Leaders should ensure that digital access, education, and social programs extend to rural and low-income communities. This will make sure that development benefits are widely shared and not limited to a few.

Youth unemployment remains one of West Africa's biggest challenges.

Expanding vocational training, supporting small businesses, and investing in fast-growing sectors like renewable energy, technology, and logistics will give young people opportunities, reduce migration pressures, and strengthen local economies.

The ECOWAS region already enjoys one of Africa's most open travel systems, but improvements are still needed.

Governments should guarantee full visa-free reciprocity, introduce digital border systems, and reduce visa fees to make movement across countries easier and safer.

Democracy must also be protected. West African leaders should commit to transparent and fair elections, while enforcing strict measures to punish corruption.

Strong democratic institutions will ensure that citizens' voices are heard and respected.

Freedom score ranks across African regions

Southern and Eastern Africa share many of the same challenges that limit their growth.

Large rural and low-income populations remain left behind, and governments must close this gap by developing affordable housing, better infrastructure, and investing in essential services such as education and healthcare. Without this, economic progress will continue to stall.

Both regions should also protect digital freedom and nurture the creativity of their young populations.

Governments must stop unnecessary internet shutdowns, create fair rules for tech startups, and promote innovation hubs that give youth the tools to turn ideas into businesses.

Supporting youth councils and social entrepreneurship will empower the next generation to drive development and stability.

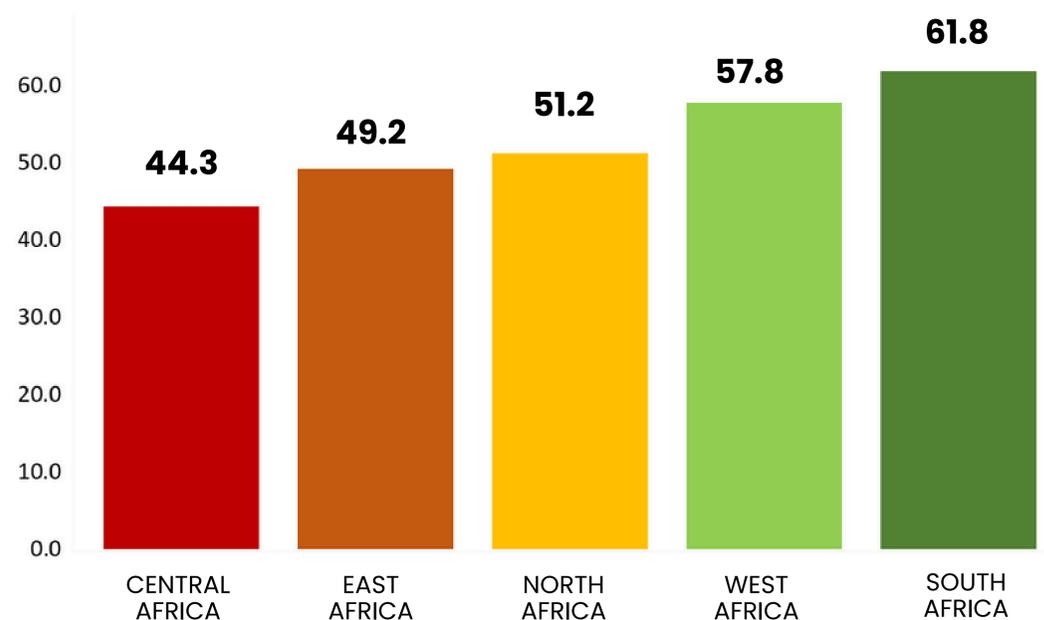
Peace and stability remain the top priorities for Central Africa.

Conflicts continue to hold back development, and the solution lies in building stronger institutions and addressing insecurity at its roots.

Governments should focus on peacebuilding, community reconstruction, and rebuilding essential infrastructure, from roads and electricity to reliable internet, to restore trust and opportunity.

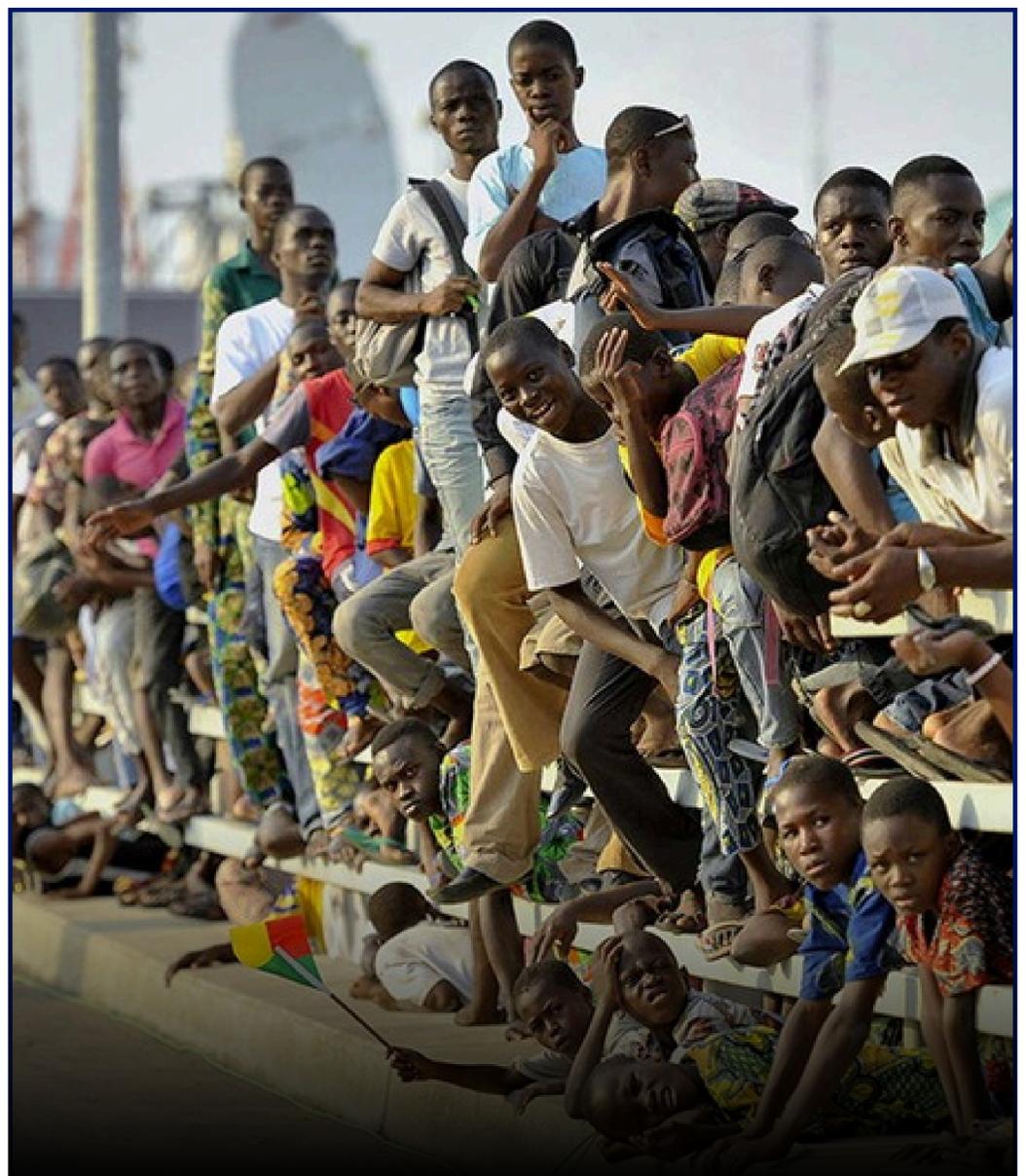
Equally important is the need for accountability. Judicial systems must be strengthened so that corruption and abuse of power are properly punished.

When citizens see fairness in governance, peace can take root and development can truly begin to flourish.



**Central Africa ranks lowest, followed by Northern Africa, Western, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa ranking the highest showing the continent's best governance and stability outcomes.*

Freedom does not grow evenly, it reflects the choices each region makes about power, inclusion, and opportunity.



Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR)

Special Themes Edition

Visa-Free Africa and Mobility, Digital Freedom and Civic Movements and Youth Participation



Indexes

- Visa-Free Africa and Mobility
- Digital Freedom
- Civic Movements & Youth Participation

Africa's Visa Mobility in Focus

Visa-free mobility across Africa is slowly improving. As of 2024, only four countries – Benin, The Gambia, Rwanda, and Seychelles – granted visa-free entry to all African nationals. But in 2025, Ghana and Kenya joined the list, positioning themselves among the most open and travel-friendly nations on the continent.

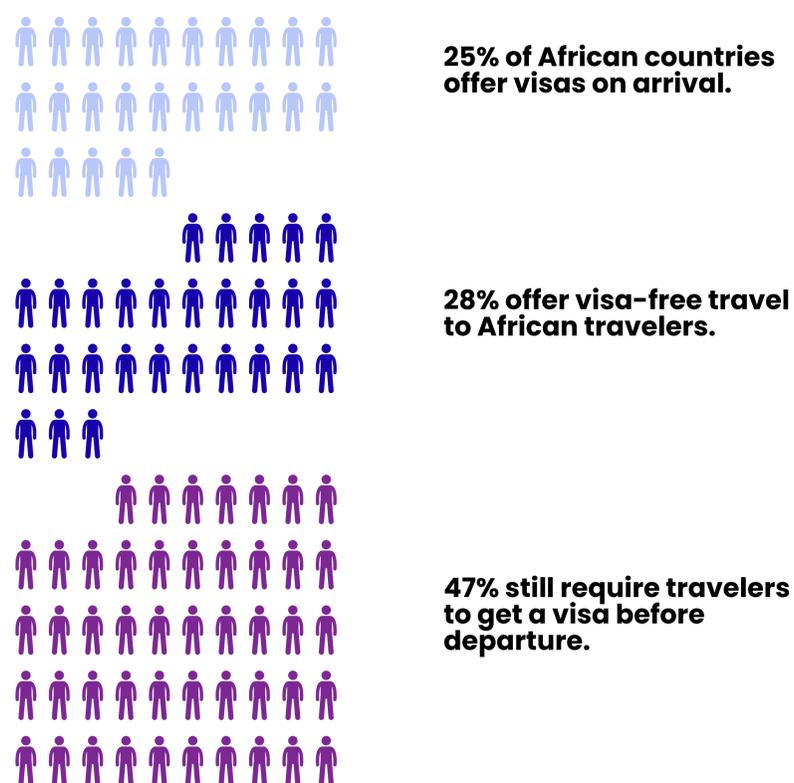
Burkina Faso, despite its exit from ECOWAS, also cancelled visa-fee for all African travellers. But despite this progress, nearly half of intra-African travel still requires pre-approved visas.

More countries are digitising their systems and simplifying procedures, but high visa fees and inconsistent policies continue to limit movement. The Africa Visa Openness Index shows that while progress is visible, real freedom of movement is still far from being a continent-wide reality.

Most of Africa's travel openness is built around regional blocs, not a single unified policy. ECOWAS leads the way with almost total visa-free movement among its members, making West Africa the most open sub-region.

East Africa's Common Market Protocol also promotes free movement, though newer members have introduced some inconsistencies.

State of Travel and Visa Policy in Africa



**Intra-African Travel at a Glance: 28% Visa-Free, 25% Visa on Arrival, 47% Visa Required (AVOL, 2024)*

In Southern Africa, a few core SADC countries have made mobility easy through bilateral agreements.

In North Africa, the Arab Maghreb Union has failed to deliver on its promise of integration, leaving countries to rely on patchy bilateral deals. Egypt maintains its own visa policies, further fragmenting mobility in the region.

We cannot talk about a united Africa if Africans themselves cannot move freely within their own continent. It is time for our governments to evaluate what has worked and what has not worked.

Digital Freedom in Africa

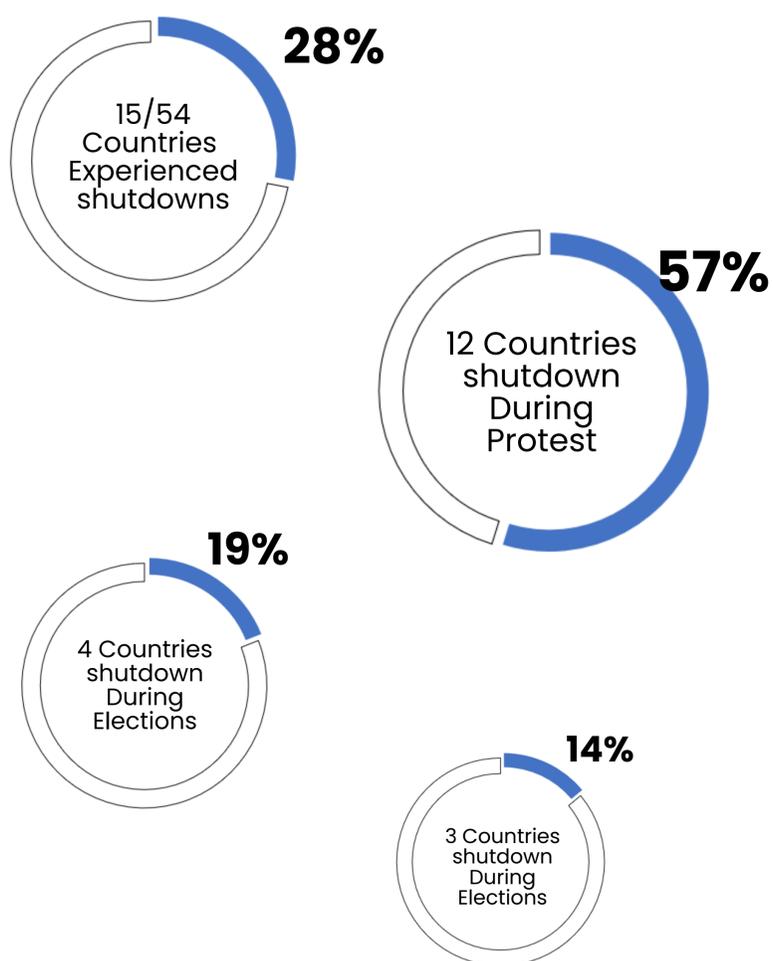
Internet shutdowns have become a growing problem across Africa. In 2024 alone, there were 21 shutdowns in 15 countries, the highest ever recorded on the continent.

For countries like Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and Mauritius, this was their first time cutting off access entirely, leaving millions without communication, banking, and essential online services. Most of these blackouts were triggered during protests or elections, as governments sought to control the flow of information and limit online mobilization.

Some cases stood out. In Kenya, Telegram was blocked during a nation-wide protest, while Uganda has continued its long-running Facebook ban, showing how digital restrictions can become deeply entrenched.

These shutdowns go far beyond inconvenience; they silence dissent, restrict free speech, and make it harder for citizens to access reliable information.

The impacts are severe. Journalists can't report or verify news in real time, activists lose their ability to mobilise, and businesses face disruptions that cost millions of dollars. Each shutdown weakens trust in institutions and damages Africa's growing digital economy.



*28% of African countries imposed shutdowns in 2024, the highest number of shutdowns ever recorded in a single year for the region (Accessnow, 2025)

Digital authoritarianism is a growing concern in Africa — governments shut down the internet, censor media, surveil citizens, and pass restrictive laws to suppress dissent.

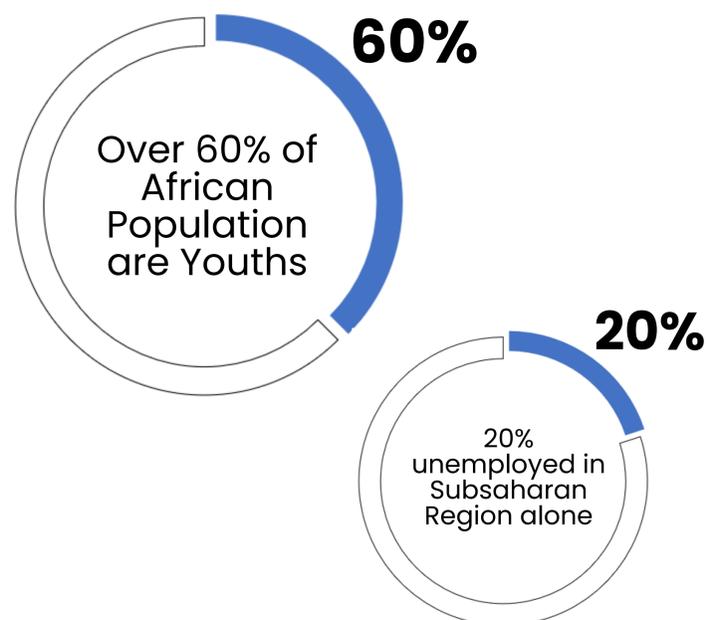
Civil Movements & Youth Participation Across Africa

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with about 60% under the age of 25. Yet, many young people feel shut out of the decisions shaping their countries. This frustration has increasingly spilled into the streets, driving powerful waves of youth-led protests across the continent.

From demands for jobs and better governance to calls for justice and accountability, these movements reflect a generation unwilling to remain silent.

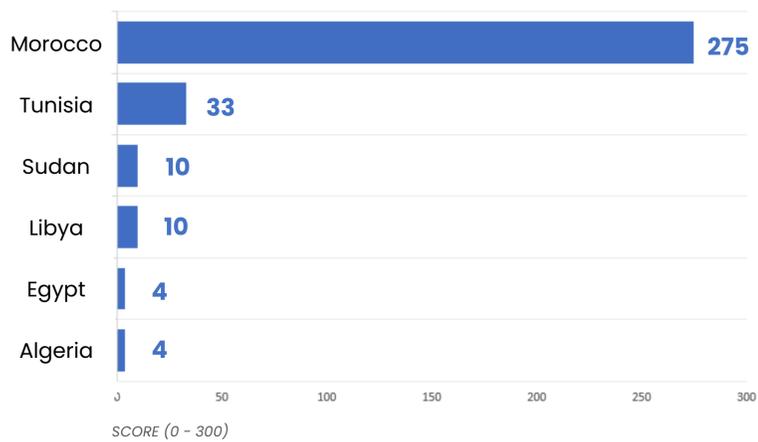
Social media has become a critical tool in this struggle, helping young Africans mobilize fast, coordinate leaderless actions, and amplify their voices globally. But governments have often responded with harsh crackdowns, using force, intimidation, and restrictive laws to silence dissent. This growing distrust in institutions has turned protest into a last resort for many.

Despite these challenges, the persistence of youth movements shows a deep hunger for change. Their courage and energy are shaping Africa's democratic landscape and signaling that the future belongs to those ready to demand it. If leaders choose to listen and act, these movements could become powerful drivers of reform rather than sources of instability.

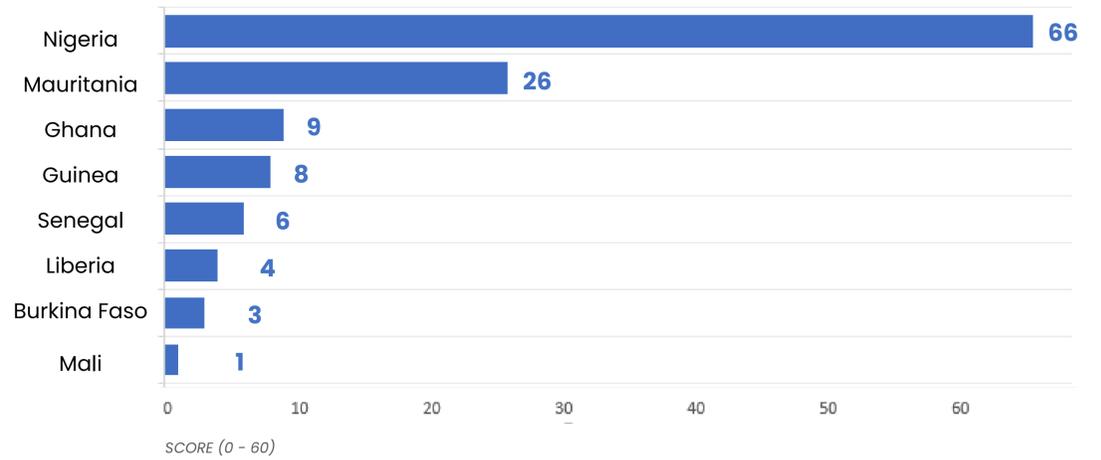


*Over 53 million youth in sub-Saharan Africa are not engaged in any form of employment, education, or training (CNBC, 2025)

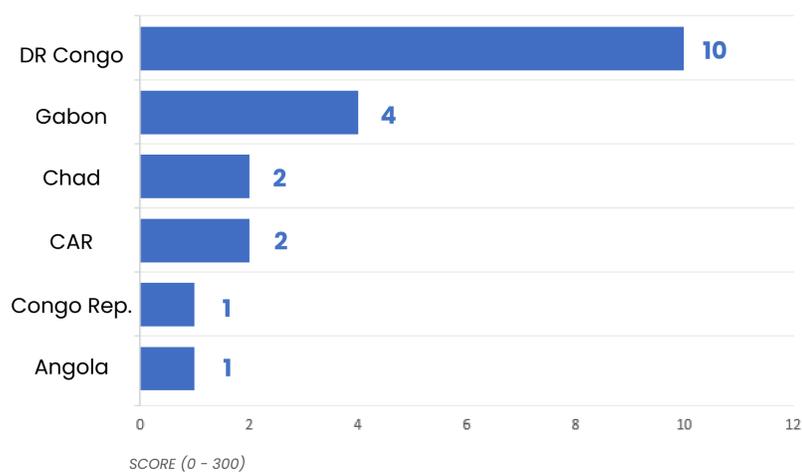
Number of Movements in Africa, by Region



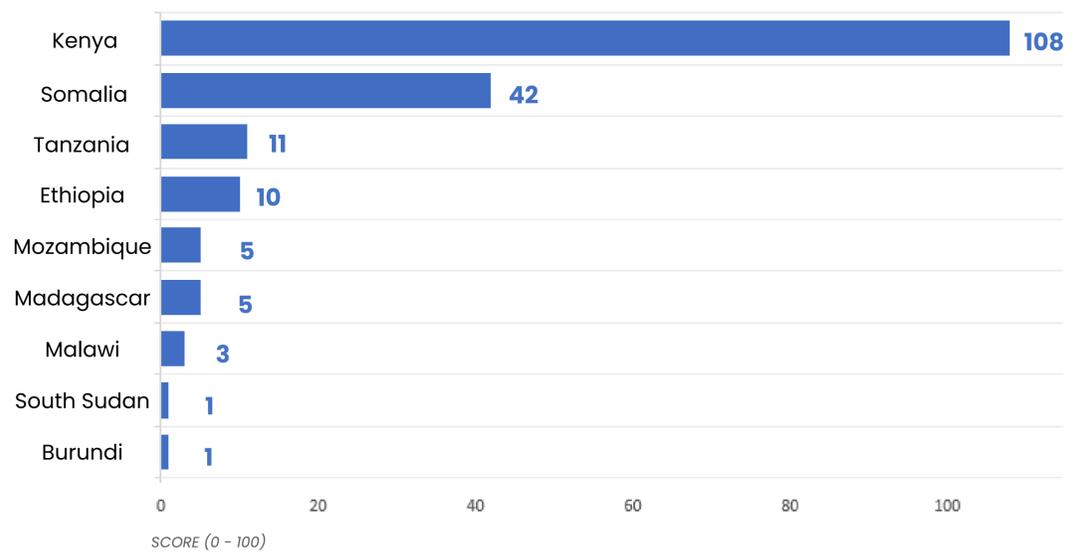
*The amount of times movements or demonstration have happened in **Africa's Northern Hemisphere** (ACLEDA, 2025)



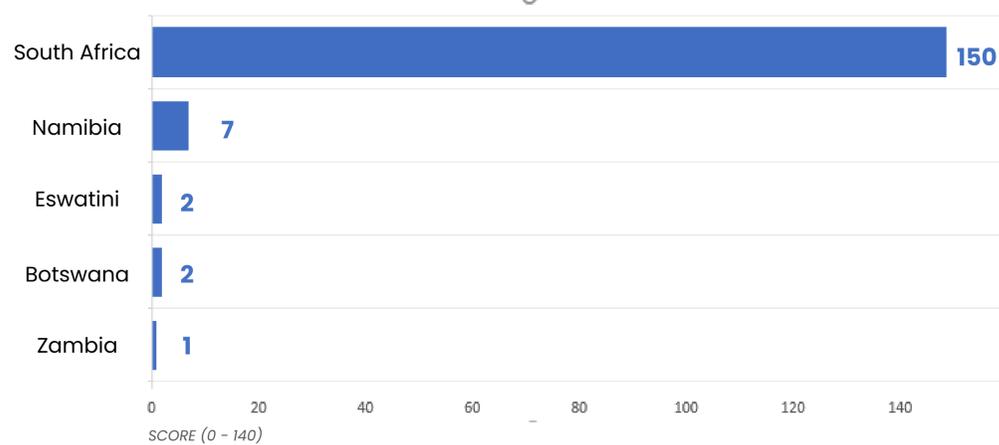
*The amount of times movements or demonstration have happened in **Africa's Western Hemisphere** (ACLEDA, 2025)



*The amount of times movements or demonstration have happened in **Africa's Central Hemisphere** (ACLEDA, 2025)



*The amount of times movements or demonstration have happened in **Africa's Eastern Hemisphere** (ACLEDA, 2025)



*The amount of times movements or demonstration have happened in **Africa's Southern Hemisphere** (ACLEDA, 2025)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from FinAR 2025 make one thing clear. freedom and prosperity in Africa rise and fall together.

Where people can speak, trade, and innovate freely, economies grow stronger, and societies become fairer. Where civic space closes, progress stalls. To move forward, African governments, regional blocs, and development partners must focus on five urgent priorities.

1. Strengthen Civic Space and Rule of Law

Freedom begins with trust between citizens and the state. Governments should make access to information a lived reality by properly funding Freedom of Information Acts and ensuring that every government institution keeps an updated public data portal. Journalists and whistleblowers must be protected through clear laws that ban arbitrary detention and guarantee prompt investigation of attacks on media workers.

Courts must regain independence through open and merit-based judicial appointments, and their decisions should be published online for public scrutiny. Vague “public-order” or “national-security” clauses that criminalise peaceful assembly need urgent review, especially in North and Central Africa. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights should publish an Annual Civic Space Index tracking how freely people can speak, organise, and protest across the continent.

2. Deepen Regional Trade and Mobility

Free movement should not exist only on paper. The Arab Maghreb Union needs revival through a small, empowered economic taskforce charged with harmonising customs rules, lowering visa barriers, and digitising border systems by 2026. ECOWAS should move beyond protocols by completing electronic “e-Gate” border systems at all major crossings before 2027, cutting waiting times for travellers and traders in half.

In Southern Africa, the next phase of integration should focus on transport corridors. Expanding the Lobito Corridor between Angola, Zambia, and the DRC, and upgrading the Maputo Corridor will boost regional logistics and manufacturing. The East African Community can lead by example by extending its Single Customs Window to every port and border post, reducing clearance times from days to hours.

By 2030, Africa should aim for a truly Visa-Free Continent, building on pioneers like Benin, Gambia, Rwanda, Ghana, and Kenya. A continent-wide African Travel Pass pilot, tied to AfCFTA mobility commitments, would turn political declarations into real connections among people, goods, and services.

3. Protect Digital Freedom and Enable Innovation

Digital transformation is reshaping Africa's economies, but freedom online is shrinking. Governments should outlaw arbitrary internet shutdowns, restricting them only to narrowly defined emergencies subject to court approval within 24 hours and parliamentary review within a week. Every country should adopt or update a Data Protection Act aligned with the Malabo Convention and guarantee that independent data-protection authorities have their own budgets and enforcement powers.

Regulation must help, not hinder, innovation. Government must create a unified digital licensing framework to spare startups from multiple overlapping permits. Expanding broadband access to rural schools and clinics should become a national target, with public-private partnerships connecting at least 80% by 2030. Finally, at least 1% of national ICT budgets should be reserved for youth-led innovation hubs so that young Africans can turn creativity into jobs rather than frustration.

4. Promote Inclusive Prosperity

Economic growth only matters when people feel it in their lives. Governments should replace blanket subsidies and cash transfers to skills development that would enable the young population catch up with the job market; national skills councils can align vocational training with opportunities in construction, logistics, renewable energy, and the care economy.

In Southern and Eastern Africa, where rural communities are often left behind, at least one-fifth of infrastructure budgets should go to rural roads, energy, and irrigation. In resource-rich countries, all mining and oil contracts should be published under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, giving citizens the ability to see where national wealth truly goes.

5. Build Stability and Accountability in Fragile States

Peace must come before policy can work. In Central and Sahel Africa, governments and their partners should negotiate Peacebuilding Compacts that link security funding to visible local development. Former fighters need pathways back into society through vocational training and transparent reintegration programs.

Justice must also reach the grassroots. Supporting traditional and hybrid courts that can settle disputes quickly will ease pressure on national systems and rebuild confidence in the rule of law. Regional anti-corruption task forces under CEMAC and ECOWAS should be empowered to trace and recover stolen public assets, working with financial intelligence units across borders.

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Cross-Regional Priorities for 2025 – 2030

To knit these efforts together, Africa needs a shared rhythm of accountability and learning. Regional blocs should align infrastructure and mobility reforms under the AfCFTA "Freedom Corridors" initiative, creating safe, well-governed trade routes that connect ports to inland economies. Annual FinAR Peer Learning Forums can allow top-performing countries like Mauritius, Botswana, and Cabo Verde to mentor others on governance and transparency reforms.

International donors must also play their part by tying financial support to measurable improvements in civic freedom, judicial independence, and open-data systems. Each member state should establish a National Freedom Observatory, a small, independent body that collects and publishes data on civic rights, economic openness, and social wellbeing to guide evidence-based decisions.

Conclusion

Freedom in Africa cannot remain a concept debated at conferences; it must be something people feel in their everyday lives. It shows up when a journalist can report without fear, when a trader can cross a border without harassment, when a young person can start a business online in minutes, and when a community can question its leaders without reprisal.

For that to happen, African leaders must commit to open institutions, honest governance, connected economies, and empowered citizens. FinAR 2025 shows the path clearly, what remains is the political courage to walk it.

Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR) - Freedom in Africa

Location	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	x	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Algeria	40.7	47.7	38.8	14.8	21.2	32.4	50.6	54.0	61.6	40.8	76.1	57.7	49.6	77.6	91.4	68.9	81.9	72.2	73.2	41.5
Angola	44.2	52.0	50.1	15.8	31.3	44.0	33.9	41.3	71.7	65.0	89.6	61.2	58.9	43.2	50.5	30.6	51.0	40.0	29.6	40.2
Benin	44.7	100.0	54.1	36.1	48.7	68.1	38.7	52.4	62.3	90.7	71.3	65.4	76.2	57.1	53.9	62.8	57.0	42.9	49.1	43.5
Botswana	70.7	75.0	67.3	88.8	79.0	83.6	57.6	66.2	82.7	78.8	89.5	71.0	81.2	77.4	85.0	73.5	79.4	65.8	47.4	35.5
Burkina Faso	40.6	55.7	72.3	50.8	60.0	51.8	45.4	51.4	64.1	61.2	84.2	66.1	69.9	48.3	40.3	53.3	59.8	33.4	40.2	57.9
Burundi	16.7	10.4	41.6	1.0	17.5	25.7	37.1	46.8	56.1	21.8	78.4	57.3	54.0	40.4	12.0	48.9	55.9	29.1	45.9	48.2
Cabo Verde	94.7	100.0	82.5	80.9	87.9	80.6	53.0	55.0	70.5	88.8	83.6	61.3	73.0	90.5	86.5	75.1	77.4	60.4	56.3	53.4
Cameroon	19.7	21.1	42.6	3.1	14.4	32.9	45.3	46.1	58.4	46.1	76.0	53.3	52.7	58.1	51.6	50.2	52.1	43.1	39.0	58.6
Central African Republic	25.1	4.2	62.4	4.2	30.5	64.1	7.0	35.6	49.1	20.9	67.5	46.8	31.4	19.3	10.8	21.0	30.6	11.3	12.6	54.0
Chad	7.2	50.0	54.0	10.9	14.6	18.0	32.1	39.0	51.1	22.3	64.0	56.6	43.7	37.3	31.2	36.2	41.6	19.0	41.0	44.2
Comoros	7.8	46.6	60.3	9.2	18.9	28.7	30.9	47.9	62.5	44.7	66.4	63.8	44.3	39.0	64.8	52.0	62.3	37.2	33.4	64.0
Congo Republic	14.0	28.6	59.8	3.6	23.2	37.0	43.4	39.5	56.6	16.5	77.8	48.1	35.9	47.0	29.1	53.2	59.1	26.4	32.8	45.4
Cote d'Ivoire	18.0	69.1	76.8	40.7	41.6	55.8	49.6	60.7	75.8	55.5	81.7	61.0	72.6	55.4	59.8	52.6	60.4	60.9	46.5	39.6
Djibouti	25.7	50.0	26.6	0.0	31.4	42.3	34.1	50.0	50.0	22.0	83.6	58.6	56.7	47.6	54.0	57.7	62.5	41.9	44.1	49.9
DR Congo	30.9	21.1	50.0	9.1	25.9	34.8	30.0	36.2	70.0	37.6	76.2	56.7	55.2	34.1	20.2	50.8	43.5	25.4	40.4	43.2
Egypt	12.6	21.1	21.1	4.2	29.9	59.9	59.5	48.0	65.9	23.4	89.1	45.6	51.9	51.7	94.2	71.4	72.7	85.3	60.3	57.9
Equatorial Guinea	19.5	6.3	32.8	0.0	10.1	18.1	27.0	41.1	51.1	9.9	77.4	47.9	52.2	29.5	38.8	39.6	51.5	29.5	33.7	40.7
Eritrea	0.0	0.0	6.7	0.0	12.3	16.6	0.0	21.6	72.1	0.2	80.7	61.8	11.9	31.6	44.5	40.2	54.5	20.2	33.1	37.2
Eswatini	23.2	21.1	40.4	3.6	35.2	44.5	55.0	59.8	78.8	43.4	79.6	66.4	47.5	50.8	72.3	62.1	67.7	52.6	35.1	36.0
Ethiopia	27.0	28.9	45.7	24.9	31.3	32.7	37.8	48.0	61.9	19.0	80.6	50.1	65.3	56.3	44.9	59.1	64.5	46.7	59.0	48.0
Gabon	28.8	46.8	61.7	25.2	37.6	45.9	33.3	45.0	58.2	73.1	79.4	60.9	58.8	58.9	55.0	43.3	59.1	48.6	59.7	41.4
Gambia	76.7	57.7	80.6	43.2	69.9	81.9	50.3	50.3	68.3	95.1	80.6	60.0	52.4	48.8	53.7	63.9	59.0	37.1	53.9	41.4
Ghana	68.4	100.0	71.9	72.4	69.7	81.0	52.7	60.0	66.3	91.2	83.6	64.0	73.2	73.6	54.1	66.1	66.0	54.6	46.4	45.4
Guinea	19.3	47.7	58.5	10.8	32.0	44.8	28.8	49.4	65.2	14.0	72.2	60.0	56.1	44.1	50.4	41.1	49.4	30.4	64.7	43.1
Guinea-Bissau	80.9	75.0	59.7	25.7	38.9	50.3	18.5	43.2	54.5	68.1	91.7	64.2	40.2	24.3	56.7	32.1	48.3	21.4	33.0	38.9
Kenya	46.7	75.0	62.2	38.3	68.3	74.5	51.9	73.2	61.0	54.8	81.2	63.9	79.4	71.7	53.9	70.0	67.8	65.6	55.1	52.4
Lesotho	85.7	71.8	60.6	49.6	64.9	73.7	35.8	59.4	68.5	72.4	76.4	65.3	68.9	48.8	71.3	63.1	58.6	32.1	36.8	37.5
Liberia	82.5	75.0	67.9	51.8	46.2	66.5	36.1	41.8	65.1	86.5	88.8	47.5	47.7	36.5	40.1	44.8	47.3	25.4	53.1	39.1
Libya	9.5	21.8	41.8	12.4	29.5	36.0	16.4	80.0	80.0	18.6	63.6	31.6	19.7	15.9	49.0	45.0	63.4	64.5	40.3	59.4
Madagascar	65.1	69.1	59.1	23.5	39.3	49.3	32.9	47.7	71.1	59.7	93.7	59.2	58.8	37.0	6.2	53.3	49.4	28.9	30.2	44.1
Malawi	81.4	75.0	66.6	53.7	78.9	76.9	35.0	60.1	72.3	78.1	79.6	65.4	61.9	47.1	29.2	51.5	63.8	28.7	51.9	30.9
Mali	10.0	60.2	57.6	41.4	48.4	64.9	41.2	52.9	67.2	70.5	71.3	60.3	59.5	34.3	47.3	35.4	57.4	36.5	58.4	40.1
Mauritania	58.1	48.1	67.8	31.9	40.5	35.3	38.0	51.5	65.1	54.2	78.7	59.6	53.7	56.0	64.4	37.0	56.1	33.5	68.3	46.0
Mauritius	55.5	72.7	72.7	97.1	91.3	73.2	73.5	81.5	91.9	68.0	94.0	77.1	84.3	87.5	98.5	90.6	72.9	82.5	74.6	37.3
Morocco	28.5	46.8	45.2	28.3	62.9	70.8	52.7	69.0	72.7	57.1	71.5	48.8	78.6	68.1	79.9	68.3	71.6	87.9	61.6	52.8
Mozambique	29.2	46.1	53.5	45.8	46.6	33.7	52.0	55.0	75.9	56.2	76.7	51.5	56.1	35.3	12.9	55.7	63.3	34.0	24.0	54.3
Namibia	71.8	75.0	91.3	68.6	85.3	78.7	46.2	61.5	76.6	83.6	72.1	78.2	51.1	52.5	80.5	64.1	68.5	53.6	37.0	43.8
Niger	41.2	67.3	66.9	21.0	46.0	68.6	34.1	56.8	65.5	70.5	79.9	58.4	64.4	42.5	21.4	36.4	54.9	28.8	53.8	40.4
Nigeria	43.3	75.0	50.4	25.0	61.0	56.2	35.3	56.9	70.3	76.6	87.6	85.9	68.0	53.2	38.6	53.9	48.4	42.9	52.0	37.0
Rwanda	40.3	0.0	35.1	0.0	38.1	38.0	55.3	76.5	60.8	10.8	82.1	60.8	99.1	74.5	47.3	63.2	72.7	41.5	48.3	35.8
Sao Tome and Principe	87.9	100.0	76.3	88.1	55.1	74.8	44.0	45.0	68.0	92.2	91.1	48.0	52.8	58.4	48.8	66.7	67.6	37.4	59.2	60.7
Senegal	67.5	71.1	68.8	36.2	60.8	63.4	51.3	59.3	69.3	90.4	72.7	55.2	77.2	61.4	66.1	56.0	63.5	59.0	59.6	47.5
Seychelles	96.0	75.0	90.9	91.7	90.2	93.1	56.0	61.7	85.4	86.8	79.9	67.4	52.4	93.1	0.0	86.8	86.7	70.6	56.5	63.7
Sierra Leone	63.4	75.0	75.5	21.7	58.2	71.0	46.0	47.5	67.4	74.8	90.0	33.5	54.1	40.4	37.1	65.7	55.3	31.0	48.3	60.6
Somalia	26.4	25.0	43.8	28.6	6.6	0.0	0.0	20.0	55.9	29.0	N/A	8.8	24.0	24.0	43.6	6.2	43.8	23.6	34.7	41.3
South Africa	71.5	100.0	87.0	82.2	88.5	83.6	50.8	67.0	75.7	78.6	67.1	76.0	85.9	71.7	86.7	64.3	75.4	64.7	51.2	42.0
South Sudan	0.0	6.3	35.4	11.3	15.0	35.0	12.0	34.6	35.3	5.6	50.0	39.2	17.3	5.3	8.1	11.1	43.8	5.5	21.5	33.2
Sudan	10.7	32.0	37.8	12.3	17.0	20.8	24.5	44.8	43.5	17.2	87.8	53.0	37.7	30.5	55.3	37.4	43.3	35.1	36.8	39.8
Tanzania	29.8	21.1	52.2	9.2	54.6	72.9	42.0	54.5	65.4	68.9	83.1	71.4	55.0	65.6	29.3	66.6	70.4	48.7	53.5	46.3
Togo	38.2	50.0	64.7	9.4	44.2	35.9	40.5	62.3	68.7	68.9	71.3	57.0	74.7	50.9	56.3	59.9	57.8	41.9	47.1	37.4
Tunisia	46.4	85.2	65.1	52.4	52.2	48.3	52.9	53.0	65.1	67.1	77.3	60.7	56.8	75.8	95.4	75.8	73.2	66.7	69.2	45.7
Uganda	24.2	49.9	44.8	15.8	58.5	59.6	50.3	60.0	64.3	38.2	77.0	70.9	61.8	57.8	37.7	46.6	68.4	41.9	48.4	25.0
Zambia	53.5	46.1	58.9	37.5	61.4	67.7	43.1	66.9	70.3	82.3	75.5	49.7	78.3	50.9	29.8	65.8	64.5	42.5	23.1	20.1
Zimbabwe	29.5	21.6	45.7	11.8	34.0	45.0	23.0	54.5	49.2	54.1	70.0	41.3	51.8	49.4	46.7	62.7	65.4	35.6	32.5	25.1

*The Freedom in Africa Report (FinAR) measures 20 key indicators: **A:** Electoral integrity, **B:** Freedom of speech and expression, **C:** Freedom of press and media, **D:** Freedom of assembly and association, **E:** Judicial independence, **F:** Protection against arbitrary detention, torture, and extra-judicial killings, **G:** Property rights and land ownership protections, **H:** Ease of starting and operating a business, **I:** Trade openness, **J:** Visa and travel policies (freedom of movement), **K:** Taxation burden, **L:** Labour market freedom, **M:** Digital economy and business regulation, **N:** Income levels and poverty reduction, **O:** Employment and entrepreneurship, **P:** Access to education, **Q:** Access to healthcare, **R:** Infrastructure access, **S:** Social mobility and inequality, and **T:** Peace and stability.

Freedom in Africa (FinAR) - Overall Scores

Location	RANK/100 ▾
Mauritius	80.0
Cabo Verde	79.8
Seychelles	76.6
Botswana	75.3
South Africa	74.3
Namibia	69.4
Sao Tome and Principe	69.3
Ghana	68.8
Tunisia	67.7
Senegal	64.4
Lesotho	63.0
Gambia	62.6
Malawi	62.5
Kenya	62.3
Morocco	61.7
Benin	60.4
Cote d'Ivoire	59.4
Algeria	56.9
Zambia	56.6
Liberia	56.6
Sierra Leone	55.8
Mauritania	55.3
Togo	54.8
Nigeria	54.4
Burkina Faso	53.6
Tanzania	53.6
Gabon	53.6

Location	RANK/100 ▾
Guinea-Bissau	52.3
Niger	51.3
Madagascar	51.0
Uganda	50.8
Rwanda	50.7
Egypt	50.6
Angola	49.0
Mali	49.0
Eswatini	49.0
Mozambique	47.5
Comoros	47.3
Djibouti	46.7
Guinea	46.1
Ethiopia	45.9
Zimbabwe	45.1
Congo Republic	41.2
Cameroon	40.8
Chad	39.7
DR Congo	37.8
Burundi	37.2
Sudan	36.4
Equatorial Guinea	35.7
Libya	34.0
Central African Republic	31.2
Eritrea	30.6
Somalia	25.7
South Sudan	19.3

*The comparison table presents Africa's leading and lagging countries in the 2025 FinAR Index. Mauritius (80.0), Cabo Verde (79.8), Seychelles (76.6), and Botswana (75.3) stand out as the continent's top performers—economically open, politically stable, and socially inclusive. On the lower end, countries such as DR Congo (37.8), Chad (39.7), and Guinea (46.1) continue to face structural weaknesses rooted in conflict, poor governance, and inequality. The table underlines the stark contrast between reform-driven island and southern states and the fragile governance of conflict-affected regions.



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