



ULANDSSEKRETARIATET – DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

LABOUR MARKET PROFILE

Benin

2025/2026

This profile brings insights and useful information of the labour market's structure, status, and challenges in the country.



PREFACE

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) is the development organisation of the Danish trade union movement. DTDA's work aligns with the International Labour Organization's global Decent Work Agenda (DWA), based on its four pillars: creating decent jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue. The overall development objective is to eradicate poverty and support the development of just and democratic societies by promoting the DWA.

The DTDA collaborates with trade union organisations in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The programmes' immediate objective is to assist the partner organisations in becoming change agents in their own national and regional labour market context, capable of achieving tangible improvements in the national DWA conditions and the labour-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Labour Market Profile (LMP) format is a comprehensive resource that offers a detailed overview of the structure, development, and challenges of the labour market. It covers key indicators such as unionism, social dialogue, bi-/tri-partite mechanisms, labour policy development, legal reforms status' compliance with international standards, just transition, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, providing a wealth of information for stakeholders.

This profile is prepared via national partner organisations that provide annual narrative

progress reports as part of programme implementation and monitoring. National statistical institutions and international databanks (e.g., ILOSTAT and NATLEX, World Bank Open Data, the U.S. Department of State, and other internationally recognised labour-related global indexes) are also used as sources of data and information.

The profile is a living document, regularly updated to reflect the latest developments. The current version spans from 2025 to 2026. Labour Market Profiles for more than 20 countries are available on DTDA's website, ensuring stakeholders have access to the most recent information:

<https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/>.

The Labour Market Profile was prepared in close collaboration with the *Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Bénin*. If you have any comments about the profile, please contact Mr. Kasper Andersen (kan@dtda.dk) from DTDA.

The front-page photo illustrates a fisherman in Benin. It was photographed by Mr. Carsten Snebjerg.

Address:
Ulandssekretariatet
Islands Brygge 32D
DK-2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark
Telefon: +45 33 73 74 40
<https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Benin has experienced robust economic growth over the past decade, with a gradual reduction in poverty and inequality. However, the looming threat of economic and job losses due to climate change, particularly in vulnerable populations and key economic sectors like agriculture, underscores the critical need for a Just Transition agenda.

Compliance with fundamental labour rights has marginally deteriorated in recent years but is positioned better than the average in Western Africa. Benin's labour-related legal framework encounters flaws with international and regional standards, and workers confront systematic rights violations. A central sub-regional trade agreement met complications in 2024, putting the application of its labour and migration clauses in limbo.

The social dialogue environment experiences positive steps ahead, involving a milestone by formalising a collaboration between major trade unions and employers' organisations in November 2023. Unionism has been struggling with weak structural employment shifts towards the formal sector and the liberalisation of the economy, and trade unions' criteria for representativeness threshold was raised to 20% of votes cast in professional elections, challenging many to take part in the activities of the consultative and collective bargaining bodies.

New quality jobs are not created for formal workers but instead emerge in informal low-income activities. This tendency is blindsided by the relatively low unemployment rate concerning the mentioned type of jobs offered. Climate migration contributes to an urbanisation rush, and the population's high age dependency ratio puts

pressure on welfare services' coverage and finances. Remittances fuelled by emigration flow have lost pace in the economy, landing below foreign direct investments. Although the legal framework for protecting Benin women workers is advanced, they still face a low proportion in senior/middle management positions.

Benin has demonstrated worrisome trends in educational attainment, linking with difficulties in the school-to-work transition, where young Beninese need decent jobs. The poor education results haunt Benin's low Global Youth Development Index ranking and stick with a relatively high child labour rate. Although the government is transforming the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, this sector has been driven by low government expenditure, and Beninese firms offering formal training have fallen. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) could disrupt Benin's labour market, putting pressure on the upskilling and retooling of the TVET system. One of the alterations ushered in is the rise of digital labour platforms, bringing an increasing number of part-time and contractual workers, which could lead to employment vulnerability.

Social protection remains an underdeveloped sector in Benin, but some progress has been made. Coverage of non-contributory social protection is relatively low but projected with an upsurge, while a problematic low-slung exposure for social insurance faces stark leakage to the wealthiest quintile. Even though health insurance has struggled with shallow coverage due to user fees policy, the relatively new insurance schemes have boosted the coverage for informal workers, benefitting from free treatment in public health facilities.

FACT SHEET

Significant improvements

- A milestone by formalising a collaboration between major trade unions and the two central employers' organisations in 2023.
- The Ministry of Labour and Public Service doubled the number of labour inspectors at the beginning of the 2020s.
- The global Cotonou Youth Action Agenda was launched in 2024 to expand opportunities for young people.
- The ARCH programme registered a significant upsurge in enrolment from the poorest quintile.

Social dialogue

- The labour market's ambience started to improve at the beginning of the 2020s, including by formalising a collaboration between major trade unions and central employers' organisations in 2023.
- Stakeholders established a national platform for workers in the informal economy.

Main challenges

- Approval of an updated Labour Code Bill is required to become in line with international and regional standards.
- The widespread informal economy is stymieing the application of the labour market's laws and regulations, including poor social and health insurance coverage.
- ECOWAS entered uncertainty after failed sanctions against military regimes, which could lead to ruptures in the regional market and migration flow.
- Beninese formal employees have experienced worrisome educational shifts

from intermediate and advanced to less-than-basic and basic education levels.

- The country is still behind on the digitisation agenda.

Unionism

- Trade union density reached about 4.0% for employment in 2024.
- The trade union membership rate from central centres fell by 10% at the beginning of the 2020s.
- Violations of trade union rights rank 4 of 5+.

The trade union movement's five central risks that are most likely to pose the biggest threat to unionism in the next two years:

- Excessive restrictions on the right to strike.
- Outdated labour legislation.
- Trade union representativeness criteria in social dialogue bodies.
- The exclusion of trade union organisations from representative bodies.
- Negative public perception of the limited influence of trade unions.

Workforce

- The working-age population is 5.5 million.
- Unemployment rate of 1.7%.
- The proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment is 94%.
- The child labour rate is 20%.
- Men and women employees share 16% and 7.6% of total employment, respectively.
- The education, employment, or training (NEET) rate of 15%.

COUNTRY MAP



Source: National Online Project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	I
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	II
FACT SHEET	III
COUNTRY MAP	IV
ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE	1
Just Transition	2
Export Processing Zones.....	3
LABOUR LEGISLATION	3
Observations on Labour Legislation.....	4
Ratified ILO Conventions.....	5
Trade Agreements.....	5
SOCIAL PARTNERS	6
Government	6
Trade Unions.....	7
Employers' Organisations	8
SOCIAL DIALOGUE	9
Central tripartite institutions	10
Labour dispute resolution system.....	11
TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	11
WORKING CONDITIONS	12
WORKFORCE	13
Unemployment	14
Migration.....	14
Informal Economy	17
Child Labour	18
Gender	18
Youth.....	19
EDUCATION	21
Vocational Training	21
Fourth Industrial Revolution.....	23

SOCIAL PROTECTION	24
APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA	27
Table 3: Benin’s key economic data, projections, 2019-2025.....	27
Table 4: The main demands of the African trade unions in the declaration statement calling for the Just Transition agenda, 2023.....	27
Table 5: Central legal reservations concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes in Benin.....	28
Table 6: Ratified ILO Conventions in Benin.....	29
Table 7: Labour market efficiency in Benin, 2019.....	30
Table 8: Ease of Doing Business in Benin, 2020.....	30
Table 9: ITUC - List of affiliated organisations' membership in Benin and growth.....	31
Table 10: Benin’s key workforce data, 2022.....	31
Table 11: Benin - Scores for Women, Business and the Law, 2024.....	31
Table 12: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems and health in Benin and Western Africa (WA), %, 2022.....	32
Figure 10: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) and mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) trend in Benin and sub-Saharan Africa, 2000-2022.....	32
REFERENCES	33

Tables

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Benin and neighbouring countries, 2022	5
Table 2: Key indicators for employed gender gaps in Benin, 2022	19
Table 3: Benin's key economic data, projections, 2019-2025	27
Table 4: The main demands of the African trade unions in the declaration statement calling for the Just Transition agenda, 2023	27
Table 5: Central legal reservations concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes in Benin	28
Table 6: Ratified ILO Conventions in Benin	29
Table 7: Labour market efficiency in Benin, 2019.....	30
Table 8: Ease of Doing Business in Benin, 2020	30
Table 9: ITUC - List of affiliated organisations' membership in Benin and growth.....	31
Table 10: Benin's key workforce data, 2022.....	31
Table 11: Benin - Scores for Women, Business and the Law, 2024	31
Table 12: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems and health in Benin and Western Africa (WA), %, 2022	32

Figures

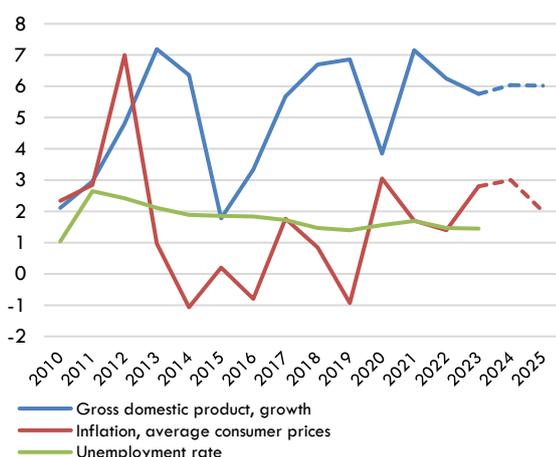
Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and unemployment growth trends in Benin, %, 2010-2025	1
Figure 2: Monthly minimum wage trend in Benin, nominal and real growth, 2010-2024	12
Figure 3: Population pyramid based on the Age-Sex structure of the population in Benin, 2023	13
Figure 4: Unemployment rate in Benin and sub-Saharan Africa average, Total and Youth (15-24 years), %, 2010-2023.....	14
Figure 5: Benin's net migration and personal remittances trends, 2010-2023.....	16
Figure 6: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in Benin and neighbouring countries, %, latest data	20
Figure 7: Employees by education share in Benin, 2011-2022.....	21
Figure 8: Youth working-age population with vocational education or training in Benin, 2012-2022	23
Figure 9: Current health expenditure per capita (current US\$) and out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure) trends in Benin and Africa Western & Central (AWC), 2010-2021	26
Figure 10: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) and mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) trend in Benin and sub-Saharan Africa, 2000-2022.....	32

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

Benin, a small Francophone country in Western Africa, joined the group of lower-middle-income countries in 2020. It is recognized as politically stable and has succeeded in democratic transitions. The country has an open economy and fertile agricultural land. It is located at the centre of two regional corridors – the Abidjan-Lagos and Cotonou-Niamey corridors – which lead to a commercial and tourism hub.

The Beninese economy has delivered a relatively high economic growth rate with resilience to recent shocks due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the closure of borders with Niger, and macroeconomic difficulties in Nigeria, triggering a rise in petrol prices and inflationary pressures. Neither did these latter factors prompt an increase in the unemployment rate (see Figure 1 and Appendix Table 3).

Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and unemployment growth trends in Benin, %, 2010-2025



Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2024; The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

The country's business regulations and labour market efficiency, detailed in Appendix Table 7 and Table 8, are relatively low. Although the business climate and reforms that are in

progress, including the modernisation of the public administration and the social protection system, a gap persists between these reforms and their impact due to the dominance of the informal economy.

Labour productivity is rising and getting closer to Western Africa's average. Over the past two decades, economic structural shifts have evolved slowly, with the share of services increasing from 45% of GDP in 2003 to 52% in 2022, at the expense of industry, whose share fell from 26% to 19%. It is worth mentioning that Benin's manufacturing employment share of total employment is significantly higher than that of West African average. The country remains dependent on agriculture and is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of cotton and palm oil. Extensive employment and income arise from subsistence farming. The share of agriculture has stagnated at 30% of GDP, despite sectoral employment has been boosted in recent years.¹

Benin has historically maintained low public spending. The country's tax system, which includes a 4% payroll tax and 15.4% social security contributions from the employer, is aimed at promoting tax collection. Despite recent reforms to modernize tax administrations, the tax-to-GDP ratio remains low at 11%, below the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) average of around 14%. The country faces several challenges in creating a sustainable tax system to finance its welfare, including a growing economically dependent population that places increasing demands on social services (education, health, and social protection) and the struggle to formalize the employment structure.

While Benin's labour income share has remained stable over the past decade, it is significantly lower than the average in Western Africa. Nevertheless, the country has seen a positive trend, with a steady decrease in economic inequality over the past decade. It's important to note that the labour income share primarily focuses on formal employees, excluding the self-employed who make up 88% of the workforce in Benin. This stance raises concerns about future inequality, the need to ensure workers' income growth keeps pace with labour productivity, and the implementation of collective bargaining agreements. On a positive note, the poverty rate has also decreased to 36% in 2022 from 39% in 2019, reflecting improvements in social protection.²

Just Transition

Despite its low contributions to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Benin is among the most vulnerable countries to climate change. The country is exposed to various natural hazards, including flooding, strong wind, coastal erosion, and forest fires. These factors pose immediate and future threats to ecosystems, natural resources, agricultural production, livelihoods, income, infrastructure, health, and socio-economic services. The high exposure to these shocks presents severe challenges for poverty reduction, with adverse spillover effects on labour productivity that could put many workers at risk, especially in food, water, ecosystem service, health, human habitat, and infrastructure.

The scope of these negative climate change impacts on the labour market is projected to cause increasing economic losses, ranging from 7–9% in the 2030s to 11–19% by 2050. This forecast entails an equivalent loss in real per capita income: between half a million to one

million additional people could remain in poverty by 2050 in the absence of adaptation action.³ These dynamics question the private sector-driven expansion of agribusiness for export future and an effect on development because 43% of employment is in this sector.

While the country has been somewhat unprepared to combat climate change effects, the government has initiated reforms to improve disaster risk management through a legal and policy framework. In 2022, Benin submitted its first National Adaptation Plan (NAP) that outlines adaptation actions to build resilience to climate change in eight key sectors. The vision is to achieve resilient and decarbonised economic development and growth by 2030, with adaptive capacity and early warning systems in place. The total cost of adaptation options for the targeted sectors is estimated at 4% of GDP over a 10-year horizon, but mobilising financing for climate investments will be a significant challenge.⁴

Since agriculture is a central part of the economy with higher poverty resistance, this sector still needs to adopt adaptive measures to respond to the consequences of climate change that threaten food security and job losses. Social safety nets are still nascent in Benin and do not account for the climate dimension. At the same time, most of the health and education infrastructure is vulnerable to climatic shocks (see more in the Social Protection section).

A Just Transition agenda—ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies—has not yet been prioritised within Benin's policy framework. In September 2023, the African trade union movement launched a declaration statement setting out ten demands for the Just Transition agenda (see details in Appendix

Table 4). In Benin, the National Committee on Climate Change is not tripartite, and it does not include any workers' representatives. The confederations are trying to find training programmes to make their leaders and activists more aware of the issue, so that they adopt environmentally friendly behaviour, and the job opportunities associated with it, and to make them more aware of the fundamental role they must play as trade unions to ensure that workers' interests are protected during this transition to a green economy.

Export Processing Zones

Benin is located with access to the sea and shares a border with Nigeria, one of the leading African economies. The Industrial Free Zone (IFZ) scheme was established by law in 1999 and later reformed. The government adopted an IFZ option to combine geographically defined free zones and free points or free enterprises. Based on the latest available data, there were 19 free points in 2016, and 11 of 19 companies which were approved under the ZFI regime were operating.⁵

In Benin, as in most African countries, export zones are a driver of economic growth and transformation. These zones, which include agriculture-related sectors covering agribusiness, agro-processing, livestock, and dairy products, have the potential to attract investment. While high-end service sectors are less common, Benin has some information and communication technology (ITC) and biotechnology-focused zones.⁶

Data of employment scope in IFZ are scarce. This lack of transparency underscores the need for more comprehensive data. It's important to note that workers in these zones are excluded from relevant legal protections from the Labour

Code. The zones often lack infrastructures such as running water, electricity, security, and well-functioning roads, which has led some companies to refuse to move their enterprises to IFZs.⁷

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Benin's employment and labour legal framework is covered by five primary laws: i) Constitution of the Republic of Benin 1990; ii) Labour Code, 1998; iii) Hiring, Workforce Placement and Termination of the Employment Contract; iv) General Collective Labour Agreement, 2005; v) Act No. 98-019 of 21 March 2003 on the Code of Social Security.⁸ In recent years, several legal reforms have been approved, including the National Social Dialogue Council, changes in employment contracts, reforming the forms of workers' trade union organisations, and restricted the maximum duration of a strike to 10 days per year for all employees.

Benin's constitution of 1990 recognises the right to work and guarantees fair compensation, not to mention social security. It also guarantees equal access to education and employment, as well as the right to freedom of association and the right to strike. The constitution was modified in 2019, providing positive discrimination to strengthen women's representation in the National Assembly. It reserved a share of parliament seats for women, despite the reluctance due to traditions and customs.⁹

The Labour Code of 1998 regulates individual and collective labour issues, such as working conditions and wages. It further recognises the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike. The law prohibits anti-union discrimination (see more in the Observations on Labour Legislation sub-section). The code governs the following

institutions: Labour Court, Labour Administration and Inspection, National Labour Council, Joint National Commission on Collective Bargaining Agreements, and Salaries and National Commission for Occupational Safety and Health. A revised draft Labour Code has been under preparation by the government for an extended period but has yet to be approved. The Supreme Court examined proposals to repeal the draft labour bill to update it, setting out the conditions and procedure for recruitment, placement, and termination of an employment contract.

The Decree 2020-458 of September 23, 2020, clarified the different forms of workers' union organisations and the criteria for their representativeness. It included, among others, to raise the representativeness threshold to 20% of votes cast in professional elections. The representative trade union confederations share out the seats in the representation fora equally after the national, departmental and municipal professional elections, depending on the number of places available. Sectoral union elections are essential for establishing which representative unions will sit on the Joint Administrative Committee. They have the right to take part in the activities of the consultative and collective bargaining bodies at national level in equal measure according to the number of seats available. Currently, the list of representative trade union organizations covers CSTB, CSA-Benin and COSI-Benin confederations for the 2021-2026 term (see more in the Trade Unions sub-section).

The Code of Social Security of 2003 establishes a general social security scheme for workers in the formal sector. It is linked with the Labour Code and a special regime for the self-employed, farmers and those working in the informal economy. The legislation does not tie social security to non-working persons. The code

sets regulations on sick leave and employment injury benefits (see more in the Social Protection section).

Observations on Labour Legislation

Concerning the labour legislation applicable at the national level, Benin's overall score on Labour Rights Index is 66 out of 100 in 2024, which is equal to the regional average observed across sub-Saharan Africa (66) (see more in Appendix Table 13).

Although unionism is recognised by law, it remains strictly regulated, including that law prohibits anti-union discrimination but does not provide adequate means of protection against it (see details Appendix Table 5).

The reform of trade unions' criteria for representativeness in 2020 brought some limits, leading to exclusive representativeness. Based on the combined scores of the trade union confederations that did not reach the 20% threshold in the professional elections in 2021, around 30% of workers lost representativeness in social dialogue and collective bargaining. On the other hand, it motivated the creation of large coalitions through alliance building to succeed in reaching the 20% threshold in the professional elections (see more in the Social Dialogue and the Trade Union sections).

Reports listed that the government generally respected the right to form and join independent unions and the right to collective bargaining.¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that it enforces applicable labour laws in the formal sector, but it is often ineffective.

A large majority of the workforce operates in the informal economy, which most often faces loopholes in labour and business regulations. This situation is often due to a lack of awareness

or incentives among workers and employers, limited labour inspection coverage, and a lack of trust in the tax system. More details can be found in the Informal Economy sub-section.

Ratified ILO Conventions

International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions enumerate international principles and rights at work. Benin has ratified 32 conventions. The latest ratified convention was the Social Security Convention (C102) in 2019. Appendix Table 6 shows that Benin ratified eight out of ten fundamental conventions, two out of four Governance Conventions, and 22 Technical Conventions, out of which 12 are Up-To-Date and actively promoted.

The independent ILO body, known as the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), recorded observations and direct requests for a series of conventions in recent years. For example, requests for the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087) in 2024 insisted upon the need to amend the Labour Code, which requires trade unions to deposit their by-laws with numerous authorities to obtain legal status. Benin's Supreme Court has issued a technical notice on the draft of the new Labour Code, stating that the latter provisions are being updated to respond to changes in the labour market. In addition, new sections concerning the act's scope in terms of the persons covered, requisitioning in the event of a strike, duration of the strike, and sympathy strikes were raised. They urged the government to take the necessary measures to amend the legal provisions on exercising the right to strike.¹¹

The Sustainable Development Goals indicator 8.8.2 measures compliance with fundamental

labour rights. Based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, Benin's scoring has marginally deteriorated in recent years but is better than the Western Africa average (see more in Table 1). This trend suggests that the country is losing pace to reach the specific SDG goal.

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Benin and neighbouring countries, 2022

Country	Value
Benin	0.9
Burkina Faso	0.7
Niger	1.3
Nigeria	3.1
Togo	0.7
Western Africa	2.1

Note: The value ranges from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB) rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Sources: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Trade Agreements

Benin is a member of the African Union and is integrated with the regional market. About 70% of its exports go to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) zone (mainly Nigeria), and the port of Cotonou remains a transit corridor for countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The country is also integrated into the regional capital markets via the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and is host to subsidiaries of regional banking groups. In addition, Benin signed as a member of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), founded in 1998 as a framework for African integration in the Sahel region.

Dynamic economies characterise the ECOWAS's 15 countries, and the treaty contains labour provisions with cooperation regarding the harmonisation of labour law, social security, and the consultation of the social

partners. A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is in progress with ECOWAS's regional criteria to increase cross-border transparency in facilitating orderly and responsible migration and mobility. ECOWAS promotes a tripartite forum on social dialogue. In 2024, the organisation faced complications due to three member countries – Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso – withdrew from the institution (see more in the Migration sub-section).

Benin's private sector organisations are consulted on an ad hoc basis to formulate trade policy. However, no permanent arrangement exists for consultations between the state and the private sector. A broader study of labour clauses in regional trade agreements and their effects on labour conditions revealed no evidence of the pro-labour-conditions effects of labour clauses in Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs).

WAEMU establishes a common currency and a customs union between several ECOWAS countries. Apart from affirming that migrant workers of the member states can enjoy equal benefits as nationals, the WAEMU treaty did not include labour matters.

African economies initiated an ambitious regional integration programme in the form of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will be the largest free trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organisation. Most African states have ratified the agreement, but Benin is one of the few others who still have not yet signed it. Generally, regional trade union organisations are pushing hard to include labour clauses in this agreement and have conducted various studies mapping labour rights violations and highlighting the benefits of allowing the free movement of labour and labour rights. In addition, the Tunis declaration from September

2022 by trade unions from 39 African countries stresses the inclusion of labour provisions in the AfCFTA agreement to ensure compliance with international labour standards and the decent work agenda.¹²

The negotiations for the West Africa-European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) were concluded in 2014. This agreement aims to facilitate the investment and trade between people and businesses from the two regions. However, the WA-EU EPA has not yet been applied in any Western African countries – it will enter into provisional application once all West African countries have signed, and two-thirds of West African countries have ratified the agreement.

Benin signed several other bilateral trade agreements to promote and protect investments with China, Germany, Greece, France, Portugal, Switzerland, and Tunisia.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social partners are central to promoting the realisation of core labour rights and social justice for workers by protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining. These organisations are usually represented as the government, trade unions, and employers' organisations.

Government

Benin's government operates with 24 ministries. The central government institutions involved in labour-related issues are summarised below.

The Ministry of Labour and Public Service (MLPS) manages labour, public service, and administration policy. The ministry designs, controls, and monitors labour legislation for job promotion. Concerning the public services,

MLPS promotes civil servants' recruitment policy and continuously adapts the public service profile to the demands of progress and modernisation. In terms of administration and institutional reform, the ministry focused on stimulating and coordinating reform projects contributing to a public development administration, collaborating with the structures concerned, not to mention the development of standards, procedures, and performance standards for public services.¹³

The General Inspection of Public Services and Employment department is under the MLSP authority. It reports on its activities to the Minister and the Presidency of the Republic. The Inspectorate is a body with transversal and sectoral competence (see more in the Working Conditions section).

Several other ministries are influencing the labour market, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Micro-finance, which deals with social affairs, including family, childhood and adolescence; women and gender; persons with disabilities and older people.¹⁴ Another ministry, the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and Employment Promotion, is committed to promoting business creation and employment.¹⁵ The Ministry of Health, with its mission to design and implement the state policy in health, is dedicated to promoting health through a variety of initiatives. Last but not least, the three education ministries (primary, secondary, and tertiary level) are central actors in promoting education and training that prepares youth for the labour market.

Trade Unions

The Labour Law protects workers' rights to form and join independent unions, excepting certain civil servants and public employees. The legal

framework has unclear rules about either denying or approving a trade union and is generally strictly regulated (revisit Appendix Table 5). Unionism is primarily an urban phenomenon in Benin.

At the beginning of the 2010s, around three out of four (75%) of Beninese government workers were affiliated with labour unions. The private sector has been dominated by informal micro and small enterprises, representing a much lower union membership rate at about 10% of employment.¹⁶ Unionism's landscape changed during the 2010s due to the liberalisation of the economy, including privatising central public companies. Legal reforms that reshuffled workers' contractual conditions by applying fixed-term employment contracts and other conditions also stymied the social dialogue ambience.

As indicated, economic deregulation has an impact on trade union membership rates. For example, the *Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Bénin* (UNSTB) experienced a membership rate growth of 10% from 2012 to 2020. The membership rate peaked in 2017 but fell by 2.9% from 2017 to 2019 in the aftermath of the more flexible contractual conditions. Affiliation rebounded in 2020, grasping the 2017 level despite the Covid-19 economic impact. It is worth mentioning that UNSTB's members from the formal sector fell by 56% from 2012 to 2020. Instead, affiliated organised workers from the informal economy increased by 145% in the same period: around three out of four (73%) members were from the informal economy in 2020, while it was down to 33% share in 2012.

The reform on trade unions' criteria for their representativeness in 2020 has motivated the creation of large coalitions through alliance building to succeed in reaching the 20%

threshold in the professional elections. For instance, in 2024, this was the case for the elections organised in the education sector, where alliances such as Aube Nouvelle (UNSTB-CGTB-CSA) were formed to face these elections successfully.¹⁷

Nine central trade union centres are registered, and five are affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). A fully updated data set for the total trade union membership rate was unavailable. Still, according to ITUC's five affiliated trade union centres, it fell by approximately 10% from 2019 to 2022, reaching around 329,000 in 2022 (see details in Appendix Table 9). With some reservations, these data show that the trade union density rate fell by 2.2 percentage points from 2019 to 2022, landing at 6.0% of total employment in 2022. Other recent trade union density estimations could be down to 4% in 2024.¹⁸

A recent study found that Benin's union membership positively affects workers' pay, enabling them to increase their pay level by an average of 33%. In addition, this pay is influenced by workers' skill levels and the length of time spent at work. On the other hand, employees in the formal sector are still the most likely to be unionised.¹⁹

The trade union movement also has evolved applicable internal policy and institutions to realise its social protection ambitions, not to mention occasionally undertakes campaigns, public marches, and sensitisation to raise awareness amongst members to understand the benefits of social protection.²⁰

In 2023, CSA-Benin and the UNSTB have set up a Committee of Experts on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), intending to work with the government.

Employers' Organisations

The Global Competitiveness Index provides a view on various aspects, including labour market efficiency, based on surveys among employers in the country. This latter efficiency has landed medium-low, ranking the country as 104 out of 141 countries (1 is the best), including the indicator on cooperation in labour-employer relations is at the medium-high level (see more in Appendix Table 7). Based on the Global Risks Report 2024, identified by the Benin Executive Opinion Survey, the five risks that are the most likely to pose the biggest threat to the country in the next two years are the use of biological, chemical or nuclear weapons; erosion of social cohesion; economic downturn; energy supply shortage; adverse outcomes of artificial intelligence.²¹

The two leading employers' organisations involved in bi- and tripartite institutions and social dialogue mechanisms are summarised below.

National Council of Employers

The National Council of Employers (CNP-Bénin) is a federation of various industry and employer organisations. Its mission is to enhance entrepreneurial activity development and promote healthy and balanced relationships with social partners. The council is dedicated to improving the business environment and monitoring economic and social policies. It is a member of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE).

Benin's National Confederation of Employers

The *Confédération Nationale des Employeurs du Bénin* (CONEB) represents companies and aims to generate employment in all fields. The organisation monitors the country's economic and social policies, participates in social dialogue with public authorities and organised

workers, strengthens entrepreneurship, and implements training programmes. The confederation also participates in tripartite agreements and in the settlement of conflicts through arbitration, mediation and conciliation administered by an Arbitration Court. CONEP is affiliated with the Federation of Employers' Organizations of West Africa and the IOE.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Benin has ratified central ILO conventions involving social dialogue, such as the Tripartite Consultation Convention (C144) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098) (revisit Appendix Table 6). Although the Labour Code encapsulates workers' rights to bargain collectively, they are strictly regulated (revisit Appendix Table 5).

During the 2010s, the government initiated the privatisation of several key sectors. These changes triggered political turmoil, leading to subsequent and multi-sectoral strike actions. The government, employers' organisations, and six trade union centres signed a National Charter of Social Dialogue to improve the social dialogue environment in August 2016. This charter aimed to promote stakeholder collective bargaining to restore the labour market's ambience. The parties initiated several measures, but social dialogue remains fragile.

The controversial Law No. 2017-05 introduced the workers' contractual conditions by applying fixed-term employment contracts, with easy dismissal to attract private investment and limited right to strike, further weakening the tripartite social dialogue ambience.

The previously mentioned 2020 reform of trade unions' criteria for their representativeness triggered an impact that

improved social dialogue, including a milestone by formalising a collaboration between major trade unions and the two central employers' organisations in November 2023.

Institutionalised social dialogue is implemented through several institutional bodies, but it faces challenging coordination measures. A part of this involves social dialogue, remaining an emergent factor shadowed by the widespread informal economy. It is worth mentioning that other social dialogue forums have been active, for example, to tackle child labour.²²

In Benin, collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) are negotiated within a joint committee, including representatives of one or several unions and/or representatives of one or several employers' organisations. The minister of labour has the authority to determine what trade unions may represent in the negotiation at the enterprise level, not to mention the power to extend the scope of coverage of a collective agreement. CBAs are not allowed to establish conditions less favourable than those of the Labour Code, signing in the private sector for a determined (up to 5 years) or undetermined period.

CBAs are listed at inter-professional collective conventions, sectoral collective bargaining agreements, and enterprise collective bargaining agreements in the formal sector. An official up-to-date list of CBAs was not available. In 2019, the government and enterprise agreements concluded collective agreements in para-public enterprises, as well as in industry, services, and commerce. Recently, the government reports having signed an enterprise agreement in the elastomers and plastics industry in 2022 and a collective agreement in the sugar industry in 2023.²³

Another study found that most of Benin's CBA wage clauses applied with sickness, disability, and health/medical assistance; three out of four with employer contributions to the pension fund; half with wages tied to skills; few with employers' contributions to disability fund; and none to employer contributions to the unemployment fund. All Benin's CBAs also have standard working hours clauses: most with paid leave and work-family arrangement, while paid maternity covered half of them, and few with childcare clauses.²⁴

The widespread informal economy and the dominance of micro and small enterprises in the private sector continue to challenge the scope of collective bargaining.

Central tripartite institutions

Numerous consultation bodies are set to promote social dialogue among social partners in Benin, including:

- The sectoral committees for social dialogue at the ministries.
- The Public Service Joint Advisory Committee.
- The National Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining.
- The National Labour Council (NLC).
- The National Occupational Safety and Health Commission (NOSHC).

Although these institutions function, they have been considered ineffective and under threat. For example, the four-yearly sessions set in the Labour Code for NLC and NOSHC do not occur regularly.²⁵

The status of the central institutions is summarised below.

National Labour Council

The National Labour Council (NLC) is comprised of an equal number of members from the most representative trade unions, employers' organisations, and experts appointed by the Minister of Labour. The council's mission is to investigate labour issues and advise on labour legislation and minimum wages.

The NLC provides input to the Minister of Labour's report, which is used to fix the Guaranteed Minimum Wage (SMIG) and is approved by the Decree of the Council of Ministers. Even though some council sessions were implemented in recent years, a renewed SMIG was stalled, and it took almost ten years to be adjusted due to the deterioration of the social dialogue (see more in the Working Conditions section). As a part of this, the committee has been haunted by the inadequacy of dialogue with the employers and the lack of a formal discussion framework. Workers have expressed regret about the fact that the convening of the social dialogue bodies is the sole prerogative of the government.²⁶

National Commission for Consultation and Collective Bargaining

The government created the National Permanent Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining (NPCCB) to facilitate collective bargaining and enhance social dialogue. This commission brings together all the players involved in social dialogue in both the public and private sector. It advises on the use and extent of collective bargaining agreements and the functioning of social partners. It can issue binding decisions on occupational classifications, minimum wages, and other forms of compensation. However, the trade union movement considered the sessions more formal than result oriented.

Labour dispute resolution system

In Benin, the labour dispute resolution system combines labour courts and arbitration panels to address conflicts between employers and employees.

Various government ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Labour, are responsible for enforcing specific regulations and conducting compliance audits and inspections within their respective domains. Businesses may also hire external auditors to conduct internal compliance audits to assess adherence to both internal policies and external regulations. This proactive approach can help organisations identify potential risks and address them before they result in regulatory action.

Labour courts are specialised courts established within the judicial system to handle individual labour disputes between employers and employees, violations of labour laws and regulations, collective labour agreements, and social security matters. The process in these courts starts with conciliation, an attempt to reach an amicable settlement between the parties. If conciliation fails, the case proceeds to a formal hearing before a labour court judge. The court then issues a judgment, which can be appealed to a higher court. Labour courts often handle wrongful dismissal, wage and hour disputes, discrimination and harassment claims, breach of contract, and workplace safety violations.

Arbitration offers an alternative dispute resolution mechanism outside the formal court system. Arbitration panels can be ad hoc (formed for a specific dispute) or institutionalised (part of a larger arbitration body). These panels consist of arbitrators chosen by the parties or appointed by an institution. The jurisdiction of arbitration panels

depends on the agreement between the parties.

In arbitration, parties agree to submit their dispute to arbitration and outline the process in an arbitration agreement. This agreement typically includes the selection of arbitrators and the rules that will govern the arbitration process. A less formal hearing is then conducted where evidence and arguments are presented. The arbitrator, who is often an expert in the subject matter of the dispute, then issues a binding decision. Arbitration panels handle similar types of disputes as labour courts, complex disputes that may benefit from specialised expertise, and disputes where parties desire privacy and a faster resolution process.

The widespread informal economy sidelines many workers from the formal labour dispute resolution system (see more in the Informal Economy sub-section).

TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Benin is ranking 4 out of 5+ (5 is worst) on the Global Rights Index in 2023, characterised by “systematic violations of rights:” the government and/or companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush the voice of workers putting fundamental rights under threat.²⁷

ITUC’s latest cases of systematic violations of rights were from 2018 concerning Benin’s Constitutional Court bans on the right to strike in the justice and health sectors and ban on student union activities.²⁸ Likewise, ILO has no active Freedom of Association cases.²⁹ Other reports noted that employers threatened individuals with dismissal for union activity.³⁰

Crises heighten the risk of all forms of modern slavery, and climate crisis has accelerated

these circumstances. About 37,000 people were living in modern slavery in Benin, which is 0.3% of the population and ranking as number 38 out of 50 African countries on the Global Slavery Index (1 is the worst score) in 2023.³¹ This index measures modern slavery, i.e., slavery-like practices (such as debt, bondage, forced marriage and sale or exploitation of children), human trafficking and forced labour.

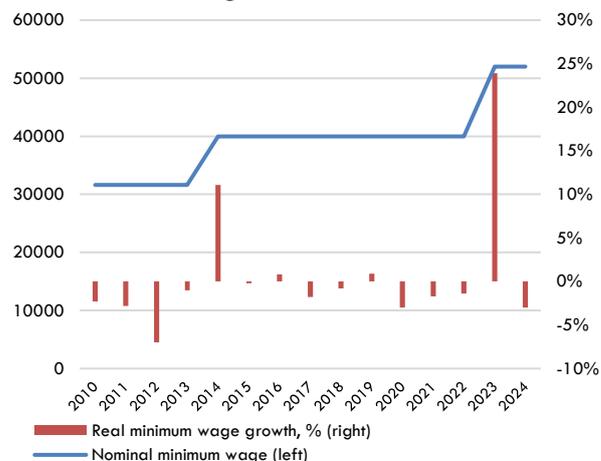
WORKING CONDITIONS

The Council of Ministers sets the minimum wage as the only one approved by law, and it is used as a reference in all categories. Social partners should be involved in the minimum wage settings and compliance procedures. According to the General Labour Collective Agreement, no salary can be less than the Guaranteed Minimum Wage (SMIG). Employers in Benin who fail to pay the minimum wage may be subject to punishment by the government. Compliance with minimum wage rates is ensured through the labour inspection system that implements laws and regulations (see more ahead).

There are disparities in how effectively the minimum wage is implemented between the formal sector and the informal economy. Often, domestic workers and other labourers in the informal economy earn less than the minimum wage. This reflects the fact that the enforcement of minimum wage standards and income tax are sidelined.

Only one increase in the minimum wage occurred in the 2010s, in 2014. In 2023, the minimum wage was finally adjusted, with a 30% hike, reaching 52,000 CFA francs (US\$86) per month. It further introduced an aggregated real hike (deducted inflation) of 6.1% from 2014 to 2023 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Monthly minimum wage trend in Benin, nominal and real growth, 2010-2024



Source: WageIndicator.org; own calculation on real minimum wage growth.

The average salary in Benin varies widely depending on the sector, level of experience, and educational background of the workforce. Even the gender wage gap is at least 40%, a stark reminder of the need for gender equality in wages.³² Equally important, many workers in the formal sector earn more than the minimum wage, with the average salary for Beninians workers in the formal sector hovering around US\$100-300 per month, somewhat lower than in other neighbouring countries

The criticised reforms of labour regulations in recent years have caused job insecurities. Employers can dismiss workers arbitrarily, a situation that requires effective enforcement of labour regulations. The Ministry of Labour and Civil Service and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microcredit were responsible for enforcing the minimum wage, workweek, and OSH standards. However, these authorities do not effectively enforce these standards in practice.

The Ministry of Labour and Public Service (MLPS) doubled the number of labour inspectors from 2021 to 2022, reaching 72. It equals about one labour inspector per 76,000 employed (one per 9,000 employees). The ILO is concerned if the relation exceeds one

inspector per 20,000 workers in transition economies and one inspector per 40,000 workers in less developed countries.³³ Benin's labour inspection system generally enforced legal limits on workweeks in the formal sector, voiding the informal economy. Additionally, this system faces limited material and financial resources, affecting the activities to be conducted entirely.

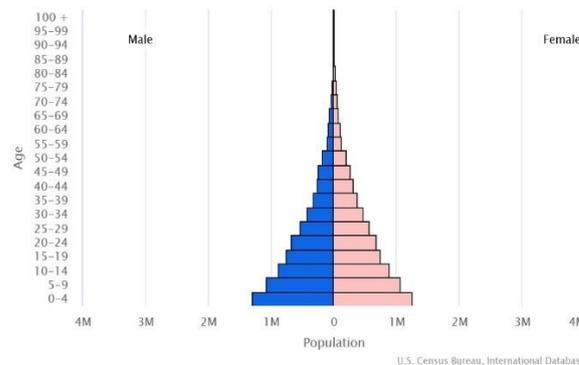
Violations of occupational safety and health (OSH) standards often occur in the informal economy, for instance, in hairdressing, dressmaking, baking, mechanics, and carpentry, where workers face biological, chemical, physical, and psychological risks.

WORKFORCE

Benin is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious country. It has a population that has more than doubled since 1990, grasping 14.5 million in 2024, with a share of 1.1% of the total sub-Saharan African population. The demographic landscape demonstrates a slowly decelerated population growth but remains slightly faster than the sub-Saharan Africa average. This situation leads the country among the youngest populations in the world. It is projected to surpass 30 million people in 2030.³⁴ This stance is linked to a slow fertility rate transition and a life expectancy on the rise.

Figure 3 below visualises Benin's demographic pyramid, visualising the increasing age dependency on the Working-Age Population ratio. By 2050, the projected changes to age structure will lead to a larger working-age population than currently exists compared to the number of dependent children and elders. Generally, this growing dependency rate pressures generating tax income via formal job creation to finance the mounting social service demands.

Figure 3: Population pyramid based on the Age-Sex structure of the population in Benin, 2023



Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, Benin, September 2024.

Benin's National Employment Policy (*Politique Nationale de l'Emploi* - PNE) is a national sectoral document for the period 2020-2025, focusing the respond to the challenges of employment as they relate to economic growth and poverty.

The main trends of Benin's workforce are summarised below, and other facts are available in in Appendix Table 10:

- The total employment rate is growing fast, even at the beginning of the 2020s despite the global Covid-19 pandemic, representing 5.5 million workers in 2022.
- Although the share of employees in total employment has been stable at about 12%, the self-employed still dominate the workforce by 88%.
- Employment in the public sector was slowly falling and landed at 2.2% of total employment in 2022.
- Although more workers are achieving basic education, almost six out of ten (59%) of total employment have less than basic education, not to mention lost pace at the intermediate level (see more in the Education section).
- A minimal shift of employment moved towards urban areas during the 2010s and even reverted to the margins at the

beginning of the 2020s due to the impact of COVID-19.

- A significant shift is in employment by marital status, reflecting an upsurge of the single, widowed, and divorced group, reaching 33% in 2022.
- Employment by economic activity increased the agricultural sector's share by two percentage points from 2019 to 2022, reaching 43% in 2022; the industry sector also grew by three percentage points, representing 18%, while the service sector experienced a downturn, landing at 39%.

There are few big formal private firms or medium-sized enterprises in Benin; the large majority operate as micro- or small-enterprises in the informal economy.³⁵ Other data of Benin's firms suggested 98% as individual entrepreneurs.³⁶ The government promotes policies and plans promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship in the private sector, including the government created an agency for the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in 2022. The country has one of the highest shares of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit in manufacturing.³⁷

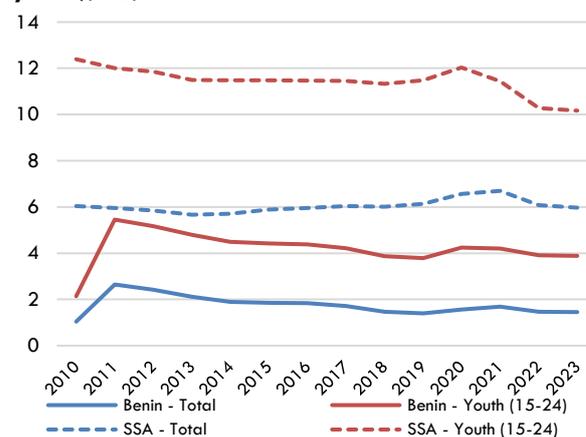
Unemployment

Benin's low unemployment rate has slowly fallen during the last decade, even though the global economy ruptured at the beginning of the 2020s. It stood significantly below the regional average (Figure 4). Unemployment is predominantly an urban phenomenon, affecting the youth and those with higher education levels.

The unemployment rate underestimates that many individuals are engaged in casual or informal activities, working a few hours per week as a survival strategy. Moreover, the intermittent nature of subsistence farming,

occupied only during planting and harvesting, contributes to what is known as 'disguised' unemployment.

Figure 4: Unemployment rate in Benin and sub-Saharan Africa average, Total and Youth (15-24 years), %, 2010-2023



Source: International Labour Organization, modelled ILO estimate.

Unemployment is statistically a part of the employed group, excluding people outside the workforce. Approximately 25% of the working-age population in Benin is estimated to be 'economically inactive', a term that further masks a potential for unemployment. It is worth addressing these mentioned aspects to get a more accurate picture of the real unemployment rate.

Data show that no workers have been covered by an insurance unemployment benefit scheme (see more in the Social Protection section).

Migration

Benin has a rich history linked with complex migratory dynamics. It is located on the Abidjan-Lagos strategic geographic corridor in the Gulf of Guinea. The country acts as both an origin, transit, and destination point with little control over migrant flow.

Benin ratified central international and regional conventions dealing with standards

and the fulfilment of migrants' rights, including one of the ILO's migrant-specific four conventions (C143). Several laws cover migration subjects at the national level, including the amended Constitution's rights of migrant workers in 2019 that grants foreign nationals the same rights and freedoms as Beninese citizens. Several agencies are involved in realising the rights of migrant workers and members of their families in Benin. Some of these are state bodies, while others are not.³⁸

Based on the latest Benin's Population and Housing Census, about 2.3% of the population are migrants.³⁹ Seeking employment opportunities is a common reason people migrate from one place to another. Internally, the migration flow is mainly rural to urban. Most enter the service sectors like commerce, restaurants, hotels, or other precarious work. Other go into manufacturing industries and a flow in the agricultural sector.⁴⁰

The adverse impacts of climate change are challenging many small-scale agricultural workers living in vulnerable areas in Benin. A glimpse of its scope is displayed by a large segment of internally displaced people (IDPs) associated with disasters – floods and wildfires – that reached 547,000 persons since 2008, mainly at the beginning of the 2010s. About 11,000 have been internally displaced due to conflicts since 2008, especially in 2023.⁴¹ The legal and policy framework has weaknesses to improve the circumstances considered in regularisation procedures of displacement within the country. Those who displayed a lack of secure land tenure, children out of school, weak access to health services, lack of livelihood opportunities, and discrimination remain obstacles to lasting solutions.

Benin's urbanisation rate is growing steadily, reaching about one out of two (50%) people living in urban areas in 2023.⁴² Projections suggest Benin's urbanisation rate grasps by 2043 that 58% of the population will reside in urban areas, driven by poverty, harsh climatic conditions, 'disguised' unemployment, and declining natural resources in rural areas, among other factors.⁴³ This urbanisation progression could bring pressures in infrastructure development to harness 'unjust' cities and generate more demand for jobs in the industry and services sectors.

The ECOWAS sub-region has the highest concentration of intra-regional migrants; some migrants are moving towards Northern Africa and Europe. This institution promotes measures for the free movement of persons and labour from the member states. However, studies found that the protocol relating to the free movement of persons, the right of residence and establishment still faces impeding adequate inter-regional mobility within the region, including weak progress in access to employment; for instance, labour emigration and jobs abroad is regulated only to a limited extent.⁴⁴ As mentioned, three counties decided to withdraw from ECOWAS bringing questions about how they will navigate regional mobility in future.

Trade union involvement in migration initiated working on migration issues in 2014, setting up a network of trade unions to defend the rights of migrant workers; for instance, the UNSTB joining the Mediterranean sub-Saharan Migration Trade Union Network (RSMMS) in 2017. In 2018, six national trade union confederations and federations set up a network of Trade Union Organizations for the Defence of Migrant Workers Rights. This latter initiative aims to defend migrant workers and promote protective legislation favouring

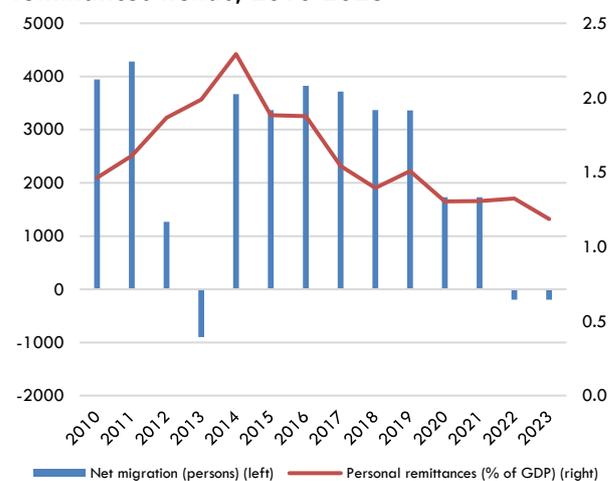
migrant workers, among others. In 2019, a Multi-actor Platform on Migration in Benin (PMB) was created, a multi-actor network made up of trade unions, non-governmental organisations, lawyers, researchers and other specialists. It serves and defends the cause of migrants, particularly migrant workers. The PMB is member of the RSMMS. Although PMB remains at an early stage, it participates in drafting Benin's migration policy and gaining trust among stakeholders. This process lost pace, though, but it was reinitiated in 2024, and the results are pending. Despite these initiatives, a wide range of issues still challenge trade unions' involvement in migration issues, such as widespread informal economy, data on migration is scarce, and a lack of awareness or incentives to comply with migration laws and regulations.⁴⁵

More people entered than left Benin, but it was dwindling, and the net migration rate turned balanced in recent years. Migrants to Benin mainly come from Togo, Nigeria, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana.⁴⁶ Destinations for Beninese diaspora have traditionally been composed of high-skilled nationals and directed towards French-speaking countries like Nigeria, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, and France. Beninese emigrant stock was estimated at about 4.7% of the population.⁴⁷ The National Development Plan 2018-2025 recognises the diaspora as a source of development financing, noting its importance to supporting daily household consumption and its potential to contribute to domestic savings. However, personal remittance inflow, which has been stagnant for the last decade, is low, significantly below the regional average and the foreign direct investment rate (see also Figure 5). Thus, although Benin has taken several steps to engage the diaspora and remittances as tools for national development,

it has so far not achieved significant improvements.

Benin has not hosted many women migrants, but it has seen an increase during the last decade. It is also worth mentioning that child labour migration is quite prevalent in the country, where children are trafficked for work in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Nigeria.⁴⁸

Figure 5: Benin's net migration and personal remittances trends, 2010-2023



Note: Net migration is the total number of immigrants minus the annual number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens.
Source: Migrant Data Portal, Migration statistics; The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

The deterioration of the situation in the central Sahel has negatively affected the northern region of Benin. As of August 2024, the north area of Benin hosted an estimated least 16,000 refugees and asylum seekers.⁴⁹ Benin recognises refugee status by law, recognising the right of movement and receiving the same treatment as native persons regarding access to education, scholarships, labour rights, and social benefits. Regarding employment, beneficiaries of refugee status are like the foreign population whose countries have a more favourable Convention of Establishment concerning employment.

Informal Economy

The informal economy, a prevalent feature in Benin, operates outside the purview of labour and business regulations. Recognising this, the government has taken steps to bring it under a legal framework, with a focus on productivity and formalising enterprises, including access to social security (see more in the Social Protection section). As a member of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Corporate Law in Africa (OHADA), Benin is part of a system that includes a policy on workers' status in the informal economy and their transition to the formal sector. This instrument has facilitated enterprises' activities. However, the implementation of business regulations in Benin remains a challenge (revisit Appendix Table 8),

In 2020, a national platform for workers in the informal economy was established and it was formalised by the *Union Nationale des Acteurs de l'Économie Informelle du Bénin* (UNAEIB) in December 2020. This platform brings together representatives from informal workers affiliated with trade union confederations and other professional associations, aiming to adopt an action plan and a policy to promote informal economy workers by improving their living and working conditions. In 2021, the UNAEIB has adopted a national Policy on the Informal Economy. However, UNAEIB is still not considered by the government, preferring to deal with associations or chambers of trade.⁵⁰

Data reveals a concerning trend in Benin's employment structure, with a very high proportion of non-agriculture informal employment at 94% in 2022. This figure has only decreased by one percentage point since 2011, and it is higher than the Western Africa average, which stands at 88. All Beninese employed in agriculture are operating in informality.⁵¹ This persistent high rate of informal labour suggests that the country is

struggling to achieve SDG 8.3.1, which deals with the formalisation of employment.

The informal economy is linked with small-scale activities that use simple technologies and employ few people. The ease of entry and exit into this segment, coupled with the use of low-level or no technology, makes it an avenue for job creation but with low labour productivity. Workers in the informal economy also face other challenges and vulnerabilities; for instance, many lack stable income, have no formal employment contract with legal coverage, sideline the business and labour regulation and social security, and have less access to productive resources such as capital. During the COVID-19 pandemic, workers in the informal economy dramatically lost daily incomes and faced existential problems due to the weak coverage of social safety nets coverage (see more in the Social Protection section). It is worth mentioning that informality can also be a voluntary choice given their preferences, skills, competing earnings prospects, and job characteristics linked to cultural aspects.

Non-standard employment emerging forms and gig work create opportunities and challenges for the labour market in Benin. For example, commercial motorbikes called "*Zemidjan*" in Benin have become the backbone of the gig economy. This evolution has created new avenues for employment, especially for urban young people who face high unemployment. With the advent of app-based platforms, individuals can register as riders and earn income by providing transportation or delivery services. This service has helped reduce the unemployment gap while promoting financial independence and entrepreneurship. Generally, the gig economy operates largely outside formal employment structures, meaning gig workers, like other informal economy

workers, lack job security, benefits, and legal protections. Their income is unpredictable, and many must work long hours under high pressure to sustain themselves (see more in the Fourth Industrial Revolution sub-section).

The dominating informal employment structure has supported the trade union movement's interests in organising workers from the informal economy. As mentioned, UNSTB has registered a large share of organised workers from the informal economy.

Child Labour

With approximately 45% of Benin's population falling within the 0-14 age group, this segment's growth is rapid (revisit Figure 3).

Benin has endorsed central international treaties and conventions on children and child labour, as well as establishing national laws and regulations related to child labour. However, gaps persist in this legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labour. This situation is linked to the widespread economic and cultural heritage factors. The lack of free public basic education guaranteed by law also leads to child labour; for instance, children in Benin are required to attend primary school, which lasts six years and typically ends at age 11. This factor places children ages 11 through 14 vulnerable to child labour as they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to work. The country still has a low completion rate for primary and, above all, for secondary level education, especially for girls. Such factors include a lack of school access, direct and opportunity costs, social norms, apprenticeship, and insufficient second chance programmes (see more in the Education section).

Despite existing gaps, the labour law enforcement agencies in Benin have taken significant actions to address child labour. The Ministry of Labor and Civil Service, although facing operational challenges, has shown commitment. Overall, Benin has made moderate advancement in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, a promising sign of progress.⁵²

The root of child labour is linked with poverty and the widespread informal economy. Around 20% of Beninese children were engaged in child labour in 2022, which was six percentage points lower than the West and Central Africa average.⁵³ This still relatively high child labour rate signals the labour-related legal framework's flawed scope and stands far behind of SDG goal by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

Children in employment in Benin are often found in the agricultural sector, particularly in the production of cotton, a sector with a high prevalence of child labour. Many others work as labourers with adults in quarries, including crushing granite. The issue extends to other sectors such as domestic work, industry, construction, trade and vending, food and beverages, transportation, and even public work, highlighting the gravity of the situation.

Gender

Benin has demonstrated political will to promote gender equality and is committed to central, regional, and international gender-related conventions and protocols. Generally, the country's laws and regulations around the life cycle of a working woman score 84 out of 100 (100 is best) in 2024, relatively higher than the regional average across sub-Saharan Africa at 74. They still encounter a lower ranking on the indicator measuring laws

affecting parenthood, mobility, pay, marriage, and assets (see more details in Appendix Table 11).⁵⁴

In Benin, gender inequality is haunted by beliefs around gender roles, norms, and female empowerment, not to mention almost one out of here (32%) of women aged 20 to 49 were already in a union before the age of 18.⁵⁵ Apart from the mentioned legal hurdles, women's unpaid childcare and domestic work limit their contribution to and benefit from productive activities, constraining their mobility and limiting access to market resources and information while participating in the economy. This situation is reflected in the global Gender Inequality Index (GII), ranking Benin 160 out of 166 countries (1 is best) in 2022 due to the high maternal mortality ratio, women's low share of seats in parliament and their low rate of at least some secondary education. Poor access to reproductive health information in rural areas, poverty, and limited formal education contributed to low usage of contraceptives and high pregnancy rates. Also, Beninese women have difficulty working in non-traditional fields, receive slower promotions, and are more likely to be dismissed.

Table 2 below shows that Beninese women have a slightly higher share of total employment than men and a lower unemployment rate. In contrast, women as employees or employers have significantly lower shares than men, linked to the 'domestic burden', making them more likely than men to work part-time or in informal employment in low-productivity sectors. Besides, Beninese women's average earnings face a gender wage gap of at least 40%.⁵⁶

Table 2: Key indicators for employed gender gaps in Benin, 2022

	Men	Women
Participation rate	77%	74%
Employment share	48%	52%
Unemployment rate	3.6%	2.7%
Employees share	1.6%	7.6%
Employers share	1.4%	0.5%
Informal employment rate (non-agriculture)	89%	97%

Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

Beninese women have limited decision-making positions in political bodies; for instance, they have a low share of seats in parliament and a low proportion of women in senior and middle management positions compared with the neighbouring countries.

Youth

Youth is the labour market's future backbone. Benin's population structure faces a significant 'youth bulge', a term used to describe the increase in the youthful population. In 2022, the youth (aged 15-24 years) accounted for a substantial portion of the working-age population, reaching 2.4 million or 32% of the total working-age population.⁵⁷

A global Cotonou Youth Action Agenda was launched in 2024, focusing on several aspects, such as transforming education and transforming lives via expanding opportunities for young people. The aspiration confronts massive challenges in Benin, including a fast-growing population that pressures the education system supply and the labour market demand.

Based on national survey data, each year, at least 106,000 young Beninese enter the job market.⁵⁸ However, few of them complete the transition: finding a stable or satisfactory job. Instead, most end up in informal low-income jobs with limited access to insurance. Like in

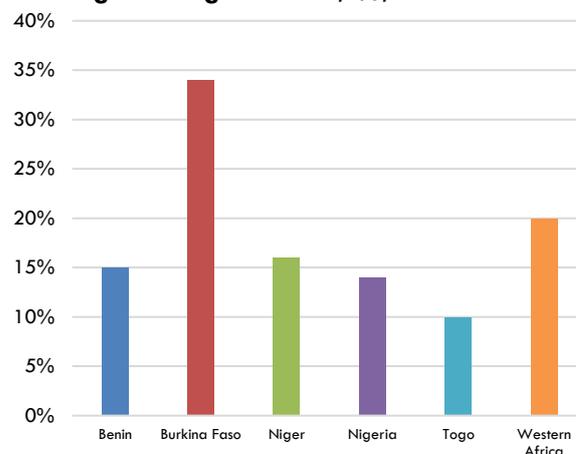
many other African countries, this situation mirrors the dual factor: many young workers still need to complete school, and others are better educated, but the labour market needs to offer sufficient decent jobs. The youth is also more vulnerable to unemployment, facing unfulfilled societal expectations that could lead to depression for many graduates who are expected to secure white-collar jobs to care for their families quickly.

Benin's relatively low youth unemployment rate of 3.2% in 2022 suggests that the economy generates jobs. However, the labour market does not generate many additional jobs in the formal sector. Instead, a large majority of Beninese young workers operate in the private sector haunted by informality; by the same token, few operate with employment contracts (written or oral) or hold a salary-based position.⁵⁹

Benin's low ranking on the Global Youth Development Index, at 163 out of 183 countries in 2023, is a stark reflection of the challenges our youth are facing. This ranking, particularly the country's worst score in education rank (174), underscores the need for action to improve the situation.⁶⁰

The not-in-education, employment, or training (NEET rate) provides a better indication of the extent of barriers facing young people in the labour market than the unemployment rate does. Benin's NEET rate was 15% in 2022, slowly falling and placing five percentage points lower than the West African average (Figure 6). Benin's NEET rate is higher for women than men, 18% vs 13%, respectively. Young people from lower-income families are usually more present in the NEET rate.

Figure 6: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in Benin and neighbouring countries, %, latest data



Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market.

Beninese youth workers face an overwhelming mismatch between job requirements and qualifications; for instance, few young workers have been well-matched in the labour market, and most are under-educated.⁶¹ It points towards that the education system does not produce adequate skills and creates a mismatch to the labour market's demand. In other words, most youngsters are stuck in vulnerable informal jobs where they often earn less than the minimum wage and have no access to social security coverage; many others become economically inactive. Additionally, it places the country in a weaker position in shaping the economic and labour market outcomes, labour productivity, and competitiveness.

Another worrisome tendency is that Benin is experiencing growing threats of conflict with waves from neighbouring countries, making it more vulnerable to criminal activities and struggle. The lack of economic opportunities and limited access to social factors like health, education, and social protection make Beninese youth more vulnerable to being pulled in by extremist groups.⁶²

EDUCATION

Benin has ratified central international conventions protecting the right to education. Several laws guarantee the implementation of this right, including the 1990 Constitution, which states that primary education is obligatory, and that the government shall progressively offer free education to its schools. An ongoing education reform is in progress that could help prepare the workforce for a transforming economy.

Benin's government expenditure in the education sector slowly fell during the last decade, landing at 2.9% of GDP in 2022, missing the international Education 2030 Framework for Action's benchmark for government financing of education within 4% to 6% of GDP.

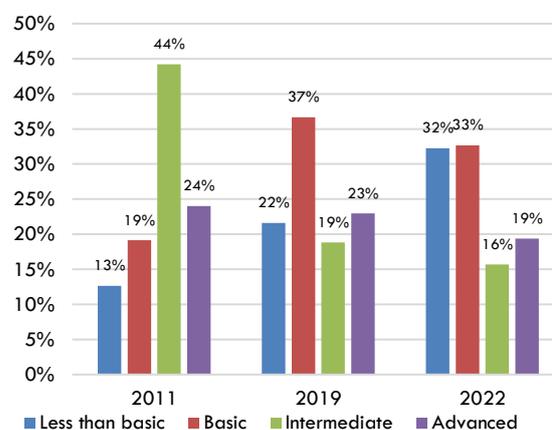
In Benin, primary education is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and eleven. Public school education is tuition-free for all primary school students and for girls through grade nine in secondary schools. Women often assume household duties, leading to less access to formal education.

The country has made strides in implementing its compulsory and free education policy, as evidenced by the increased youth literacy rate over the past two decades. However, it still lags the sub-Saharan African average. The system also grapples with a high dropout rate; for instance, a considerably low completion rate for lower secondary education, with only 35% of girls and 39% of boys completing this level.⁶³ These challenges, including overcrowded schools, inadequate infrastructure, and regional disparities, hinder delivering quality primary education.

During the last decade, Beninese formal employees have experienced worrisome

educational shifts from the intermediate and advanced levels to the less-than-basic and basic education levels (Figure 7). Self-employed in education level has mainly changed from intermediate to basic education. These trends mirrored that the education system cannot keep pace with the fast-growing workforce; by the same token, the labour market is not generating sufficient new jobs requiring higher education. In recent years, the government has prioritised secondary education in Benin.

Figure 7: Employees by education share in Benin, 2011-2022



Source: Benin Monitoring Survey of the Modular and Integrated Survey of Household Living Conditions via ILOSTAT.

Vocational Training

Benin, in its commitment to technical and vocational education, has made strides via the signing of the international Convention on Technical and Vocational Education in 2017, coupled with the National Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (2020-2030) and the Post 2015 Education Sector Plan (2018-2030), sets the stage for an expanded and relevant vocational training. The governance of the TVET sector is undergoing a positive transformation. A new agency, the National Agency for the Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, has been established to

manage the key tasks associated with TVET. In January 2022, the National Assembly adopted Act No. 2022-01, a framework law on technical and vocational education and training. Adopting this law is part of the reform of Benin's education system, which is intended to provide the country with a critical mass of skills in line with the needs of the economy and the labour market.

Benin's TVET programmes are offered at the secondary level of education, and graduates can access them at the tertiary level. However, the country does not yet have a National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Benin offers a path for its youth through apprenticeships. These three-year programmes can follow a dual system (work in an enterprise and learn in a training centre or technical school) or be organised in specialised TVET centres. These opportunities are intended for young people of at least fourteen years of age, providing them with a valuable entry point into the workforce and a chance to develop their skills and knowledge in craft occupations.⁶⁴

Non-formal TVET in Benin is a collaborative effort. Various ministries, including the Ministry for Work, Public Functions, Administrative Reform, and Social Dialogue and the Ministry for Culture, Literacy, Crafts and Tourism, are involved. Trade associations also play a crucial role in the vocational training system, working with social partners to ensure training relevance to the informal economy. Notably, trade unions like UNSTB are actively lobbying and advocating for the institutionalisation of vocational and entrepreneurship training for workers in the informal economy. Their efforts are instrumental in promoting a robust trainers' pool to ensure the activities are based on short-term courses in several trade sectors.

The national budget finances Benin's public education, including the TVET system, the private sector and external sources. The country has the lowest government expenditure on vocational education compared with the neighbouring countries.⁶⁵ The institutions themselves fund private TVET programmes, and there is no structure in place to support the private education sector. In addition, data show that Beninese firms offering formal training fell, landing at 20% of firms, a much lower proportion than in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁶

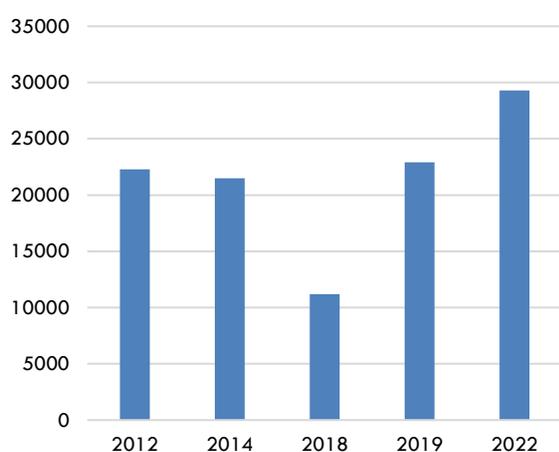
Employer wage payment (EWP) is a tax payable by the employer in place of the former payroll and apprenticeship taxes. Individuals and legal persons who pay salaries and wages are subject to the EWP at 4% (2% for educational institutions).⁶⁷ Formal firms continue to be a minimal group compared to the widespread informal micro- and small enterprises.

There is a significant disparity in the fields of study, with administrative and management courses being the preferred choice, representing at least half of the enrolment. In contrast, the agricultural sector, despite being the main provider of employment in Benin, only attracts one out of four students. This mismatch in skills leads to significant underemployment, particularly among the youth population.

In Benin, enrolment of vocational pupils at the secondary education level has demonstrated weak results. After a downturn, the rate started to rise in recent years (Figure 8). However, it still peaked back in 2004. It further caused a drop in the ratio of vocational pupils to working-age population, but it rebounded on the margin in recent years, grasping 0.8% in 2022. Other data of students in technical and vocational training institutions was 3.8 per 100

pupils at the general secondary education level. It signals that the education system has not prioritised formal vocational training. It is worth mentioning that females are underrepresented among vocational students (34%). Additionally, the employability rate of graduates was estimated at 10%, reflecting the inappropriateness of employment training.⁶⁸

Figure 8: Youth working-age population with vocational education or training in Benin, 2012-2022



Source: Benin Monitoring Survey of the Modular and Integrated Survey of Household Living Conditions via ILOSTAT.

Some hurdles that negatively affect the TVET system and its quality of training concern an obsolete curriculum, outdated and weak pedagogical methods, inadequate training and learning equipment, and trainer skills and qualifications, including few trainers with industry experience.

Since the dominance of the informal economy, informal apprenticeship has the highest coverage of about 200,000 persons in Benin, including master craftsmen, following a non-written curriculum. This group equalled approximately 20% of the enrolment in secondary education. Thus, informal apprenticeship prepares a large share of Benin's youth, supported by the dominant informal small businesses that offer training and

employment opportunities. Graduates of the informal apprenticeship often do not earn a decent living because many workshops are in low-productivity sectors. The acquired skills do not sufficiently increase the productivity of graduates. The lack of formal sanctioning mechanisms, quality standards, and certification of skills bears the risk of masters who do not adequately treat their apprentices, leading to precarious employment outcomes and delayed graduation.⁶⁹ In recent years, Benin took measures to upgrade both trainers and apprentices' skills together with standardise and recognise skills at the national level.

Fourth Industrial Revolution

Several key factors play a major role in enabling Benin, like other African countries, to enter and benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) (4IR), including an environment for healthy competition between technology companies, the existence of technological skills among workers and accountability of governments to citizens' online rights. The country has strong creative outputs and business sophistication strengths but low indicators' values in human capital.⁷⁰

The government has introduced several reforms aimed at structuring the digital sector and ambitiously aspires to become the central digital platform of Western Africa. Steps already taken include the improvement of digital infrastructure, establishing specialised institutions, and creating appropriate regulatory instruments. While the country is still somewhat behind on the digitisation agenda compared with other Western Africa countries, there is significant potential for growth. For instance, as mobile money takes off, digital financial services represent an untapped potential associated with the regulatory

framework is not adapted due to poor interoperability, weak supervision, and lack of public-private dialogue.⁷¹ Generally, 4IR could lead to disruptions in the labour market: job losses due to digitisation are becoming more urgent, just as upskilling and retooling are putting pressure on the TVET system.

Benin's ranking is at the low end on the GSMA Mobile Connectivity Index. Only about a quarter of the Beninese population now using high-speed internet via mobile broadband. The country's coverage of individuals using the internet is in line with the sub-Saharan Africa average and supersedes on mobile cellular subscriptions per people.⁷²

Benin's workforce digital skills have significant potential for growth. Currently, about 16% of Beninese older than 13 years can complete simple tasks online, and at least 42% possess or have the potential to learn necessary digital skills. However, the dominated MSMEs are likely to face more severe resource constraints than larger firms, limiting their ability to invest in strengthening their workers' skills.⁷³

Benin's education in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has been haunted by a slower tempo than other Western African countries and imbalances regarding access to technology learning among low-income and rural groups. At the education level, computer delivery practice to students is opposed by lack of adequate computers, no connection of appropriate electric power, and no internet connection, among other things.

Workers in Benin are facing significant challenges in the competitive job market of digital automation. This struggle can bring extra stress, particularly for the trade union movement. For instance, the effects of "casualisation" and "externalisation" could

emerge with an increasing number of part-time and contractual workers. These factors could lead to employment vulnerability, making unionisation more difficult.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Benin, in its commitment to social security and welfare, has ratified several regional and international conventions, including two of the fifteen up-to-date ILO Social Security conventions, which are the Social Security (C102) and the Maternity Protection Convention (C183) (see Appendix Table 6). The national legal framework is linked with constitutional provisions for social security, gearing towards schemes such as work injury, sickness, maternity, and unemployment. The Social Security Code provides for adopting a specific law determining the organisation and functioning of a scheme for self-employed workers, agricultural workers, and workers in the informal economy.

The medium-term Government Action Programme 2021-2026 (PAG) has reinstated social development as one of the three key pillars of the growth agenda. This includes scaling up social protection via the flagship Insurance Program for Strengthening Human Capital (ARCH) mechanism and improving access to health services across Benin.

Trade unions in Western Africa have advocated for improving and expanding social protection schemes; for example, UNSTB has established an internal secretariat in charge of social protection issues. Besides, Beninese trade unions are represented on the National Social Security Fund (CNSS) governing board that covers workers in formal private and semi-public sectors. This fund is financed by contributions from workers (3.6% of their earnings) and employers (6.4%).⁷⁴

Generally, public spending on social priorities that target vulnerable segments of the Beninese population has been relatively low: it increased from 2% of GDP in 2011 to a peak of 3.5% of GDP in 2018, falling to 2.3% of GDP in 2020.⁷⁵ Other more specific estimations of social protection spending has remained low at about 0.4% of GDP from 2017 to 2020, primarily focused on fee waivers, in-kind transfers and other forms of social assistance.⁷⁶ Although there is no settled international benchmark for social protection, ILO suggests that low-and middle-income countries should spend at least 3.3% of GDP on providing a universal package of social protection benefits that cover children, maternity, disability, old age, as well as administrative costs. It hints that Benin needs a hike of the current investment by an additional 2.9 percentage points of GDP.

The legal framework for social protection is linked with self-employed and wage-employed workers, but it still needs to be fully implemented due to the widespread informal economy. Benin's limited social protection coverage mirrors this situation; for instance, the population covered by at least one social protection benefit reached 8.4% of the population in 2020, five percentage points lower than in Western Africa (see more details of social protection coverage in Appendix Table 12).

The system for non-contributory social protection programmes was boosted: the coverage of social safety net programmes grasped 17% of the population in 2018, still with leakage among the richest quintiles.⁷⁷ It is worth mentioning that the Benin Productive Social Safety Net Programme (PSSNP) is explicitly aimed at expanding the national Gbessoke safety net programme and improve its ability to support poor households during shocks better. At least 150,000 individuals, representing 61% of the extremely poor

households in the social registry, will benefit from the program, which will run until the end of 2027.⁷⁸

Another trend in Benin is that the social insurance programme fell during the last two decades, based on the limitations of data availability, landing at 2.0% of the population in 2018, which was close to neighbouring countries. This indicator is haunted by a stark leakage to the richest quintile; the poorest has a weak coverage of just 0.2% (see other coverage of social security schemes in Appendix Table 12).

The active membership in pension schemes rate fell at the beginning of the 2020s due to the Covid-19 pandemic, reaching 9.1% of the population, slightly lower than the average of 11% in Western Africa.

Under Beninese labour laws, there is no provision for unemployment benefits. Nevertheless, for a limited period, the Beninese unemployed have a right to unemployment benefits set as a percentage of the minimum wage or a percentage of the earned wage.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, data suggest that none of the unemployed receive unemployment benefits.

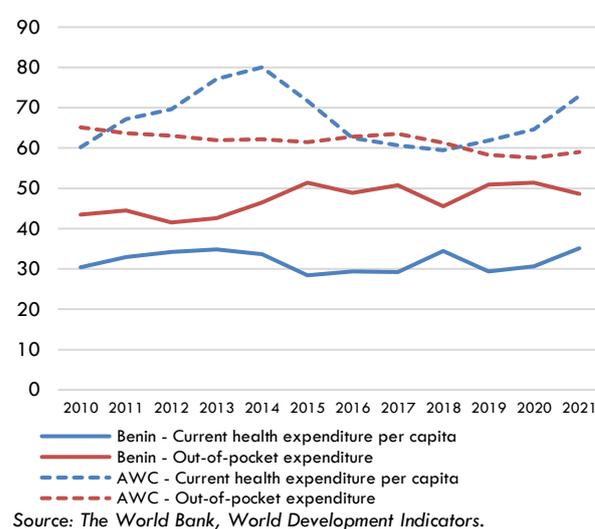
In Benin, women in formal employment are entitled to 14 weeks of paid maternity leave, including six weeks of prenatal and eight weeks of postnatal leave. However, coverage reached just 2.8% of mothers with newborns receiving maternity benefits in 2020, below the Western Africa average of 6.8%.⁸⁰ Paternity leave is not clearly provided under the Labor Code, but the Collective Labour Agreement provides for three paid leave days for birth at home, which can be taken as paternity leave by fathers; data on its coverage are scarce.

Before establishing the Insurance for Strengthening Human Capital (ARCH) in 2019, the national health insurance scheme was characterised by a user fees policy. This scheme led to low coverage; for example, 2.0% of the population in 2018 was mainly for civil servants and other salaried staff. The state inefficiently managed ARCH, and transaction costs were often excessive. Besides, there were no compulsory practices for the private sector and no large-scale operational social protection mechanisms in place for the informal economy. It adversely affected the demand for health services, making the poorest unable to access and pay for health services when they needed them most. The ARCH programme focuses on actors in the informal economy, promoting four integrated services, including training, credit, retirement insurance, and health insurance, which form the central part of the programme. As of December 2022, almost 900,000 individuals from the poorest quintiles have been identified and enrolled on ARCH and now benefit from free treatment in public health facilities. The state subsidises up to 100% of the contributions for this population.⁸¹

Generally, the country has achieved progress in healthcare during the last decade, marked

by reductions in maternal and child mortality rates and increasing life expectancy on the margin. In addition, the country's health out-of-pocket expenditure stays lower than the regional average, but health expenditure per capita remains significantly lower (Figure 9). Government health expenditure decreased during the last decade, below the World Health Organization's minimum threshold of 4% of GDP.

Figure 9: Current health expenditure per capita (current US\$) and out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure) trends in Benin and Africa Western & Central (AWC), 2010-2021



APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 3: Benin's key economic data, projections, 2019-2025

Values	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
GDP (current, US\$)	14.4bn	15.7bn	17.7bn	17.4bn	19.4bn	21.4bn	23.1bn
GDP per capita (PPP, US\$)	3,283	3,358	3,661	4,049	4,315	4,558	4,783
Total investment (% of GDP)	25.6%	25.6%	28.9%	36.5%	32.2%	33.4%	32.2%
Gross national savings (% of GDP)	21.6%	23.9%	24.7%	30.5%	26.6%	28.4%	27.6%
General government expenditure (% of GDP)	14.6%	19.1%	19.9%	19.9%	19.3%	18.9%	18.6%
Government gross debt (% of GDP)	41.2%	46.1%	50.3%	54.2%	54.2%	53.4%	52.4%

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2024.

Table 4: The main demands of the African trade unions in the declaration statement calling for the Just Transition agenda, 2023

Main demands in the declaration statement calling for the Just Transition agenda
1. Decent work and quality jobs: Trade unions insist on the creation of quality jobs as part of climate change policies. They demand that these jobs uphold labour rights and prioritise decent working conditions for all. This includes investments in skills development and training for workers to adapt to emerging green industries.
2. Social protection: Workers adversely affected by climate change must benefit from social protection measures, including income support, access to health care, education, and training to facilitate their professional reorientation. Trade unions are committed to protecting the most vulnerable workers and communities from the potential impacts of climate policies.
3 Worker Participation: Workers must be involved in the development and implementation of climate-related policies and projects, as they have valuable insights into the realities of their industries and communities.
4. Community Engagement: Local communities and stakeholders must be involved in decision-making on climate initiatives. Priority should be given to investment in sustainable infrastructure, green technologies and community resilience.
5 Gender equity: Trade unions demand that gender considerations be integrated into climate policies, recognising that women are often the most affected by the effects of climate change. They call for the empowerment of women through training, leadership and gender-sensitive policies.
6. Investment in green jobs: Trade unions call for substantial investment in green technologies, renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. They believe this investment will boost economic growth, create jobs and help preserve the environment.
7. Labour rights and just transition plans: Trade unions demand that labour rights be enforced and upheld in the context of climate policies, including the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining. Comprehensive just transition plans must be developed to outline pathways for affected workers and communities through the transition period.
8. Reskilling and Upskilling: Trade unions call for reskilling and upskilling programmes to equip workers with the skills needed for the transition to green industries by adapting to the needs of the labour market.
9. Support for impacted industries: The industries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change policies should be given targeted support and resources to help them transform their operations while safeguarding jobs.
10. Transparency and accountability: Trade unions call for transparency in the allocation of resources and the distribution of benefits resulting from climate initiatives. They also call for accountability mechanisms to be put in place to hold stakeholders accountable for meeting their just transition commitments.

Source: ITUC-Africa, Africa Climate Summit: African trade unions call for a just transition.

Table 5: Central legal reservations concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes in Benin

Right to organize
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior authorisation or approval by authorities required for the establishment of a union. • Power to refuse official registration on arbitrary, unjustified or ambiguous grounds. • Absence of recourse to an independent body in the event of administrative refusal to register a trade union. • Sanctions imposed for organising or joining an organisation not officially recognized. • Restrictions on trade unions' right to establish branches, federation and confederation or to affiliate with national and international organisations. • Single trade union system imposed by law and/or a system banning or limiting organising at a certain level (enterprise, industry and/or sector, regional and/or territorial, national). • Restrictions on the right to freely draw up their constitutions and rules. • Restrictions on the right to elect representatives and self-administer in full freedom. • Restrictions on the right to freely organise activities and formulate programmes. • The Maritime Code only affords seafarers limited trade union rights, specifically in relation to representation within the framework of collective bargaining. However, it does not grant seafarers the right to organise, the right to strike or other aspects of freedom of association. • Persons named in the permanent employment of a public administration are excluded from the scope of application of the Labour Code.
Right to collective bargaining
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous authorisation or approval by authorities required to bargain collectively. • Excessive requirements in respect to trade unions' representativity or minimum number of members required to bargain collectively. • Absence of recourse to an independent body responsible for declaring whether an organisation may negotiate or not. • Compulsory conciliation and / or binding arbitration procedure in the event of disputes during collective bargaining, other than in essential services. • Authorities' power to intervene in the preparation of collective agreements. • Authorities' or employers' power to unilaterally annul, modify or extend content and scope of collective agreements. • Persons named in the permanent employment of a public administration are excluded from the scope of application of the Labour Code.
Right to strike
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous authorisation or approval by authorities required to hold a lawful strike. • Compulsory recourse to arbitration, or too long and complex conciliation and mediation procedures prior to strike actions. • A trade union must notify the authorities of the duration of a strike. • Forcible requisitioning of workers strikers (apart from cases in public essential services). • Discretionary determination or excessively long list of "essential services" in which the right to strike is prohibited or severely restricted: health, safety, energy, water, air transports and telecommunications (with the exception of private radios and televisions). • Absence of compensatory guarantees for categories of workers deprived of the right to strike. • Discretionary determination or excessively long list of "services of public utility" in which a minimum operational service is can be imposed in the event of strikes.

Source: International Trade Union Confederation, *Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, Benin: Legal, August 2024*.

Table 6: Ratified ILO Conventions in Benin

Subject and/or right	Convention	Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948	1960
	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	1968
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	1960
	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1961
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973	2001
	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2001
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	1968
	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	1961
Occupational safety and health	C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981	Not ratified
	C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006	Not ratified
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	2001
	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	Not ratified
Employment policy	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	Not ratified
Tripartism	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	2001
Technical Conventions (Up-to-date)		
Working time	C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921	1960
Wages	C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949	1960
Social Security	C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952	2019
Industrial relations	C135 - Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971	2001
	C154 - Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981	2012
Migrant Workers	C143 - Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975	Not in force *
Seafarers	C147 - Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976	2010
	MLC – Maritime Labour Convention, 2006	2011 **
Labour Administration	C150 - Labour Administration Convention, 1978	2001
	C160 - Labour Statistics Convention, 1985	2000
Occupational Safety and Health	C161 - Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985	1998
Maternity Protection	C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000	2012

Note: Fundamental Conventions are the eight most important ILO conventions that cover four fundamental principles and rights at work. Equivalent to basic human rights at work. Governance Conventions represent four instruments that are designated as important to building national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment. In addition, there are 83 conventions, which ILO considers "up-to-date" and actively promotes.

Source: International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Country Profiles: Benin, August 2024.

Table 7: Labour market efficiency in Benin, 2019

Indicator	Rank
Total	104
Redundancy costs (weeks of salary) **	40
Hiring and firing practices *	14
Cooperation in labour-employer relations *	63
Flexibility of wage determination *	23
Active labour market policies *	124
Worker's rights *	86
Ease of hiring foreign labour *	16
Internal labour mobility *	16
Reliance on professional management *	84
Pay and productivity *	108
Ratio of wage and salaried female workers to male workers **	125
Labour tax rate **	113

* Survey data. ** Ranked by per cent.

Note: Rank from 1 to 141 (1 is highest).

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, 8th pillar: Labour market efficiency.

Table 8: Ease of Doing Business in Benin, 2020

Topics	2020
Overall	149
Starting a Business	65
Dealing with Construction Permits	82
Getting Electricity	178
Registering Property	126
Getting Credit	152
Protecting Minority Investors	120
Paying Taxes	171
Trading Across Borders	110
Enforcing Contracts	162
Resolving Insolvency	108

Note: Doing Business 2020 indicators are ranking from 1 (top) to 190 (bottom) among countries.

Source: World Bank, Ease of Doing Business 2020 in Benin.

Table 9: ITUC - List of affiliated organisations' membership in Benin and growth

ITUC - Affiliated organisations' membership	2012	2019	2022	Share, 2022	Growth, 2019-2022
Centrale des Syndicats de Secteurs Privé, Parapublic et Informel du Bénin (CSPIB)	-	10,875	11,375	3.5%	4.6%
Confédération des Organisations Syndicales Indépendantes du Bénin (COSI)	53,470	129,470	58,140	18%	-55%
Confédération des Syndicats Autonomes du Bénin (CSA)	60,000	55,459	84,361	26%	52%
Confédération Générale des Travailleurs du Bénin (CGTB)	90,751	90,751	90,751	28%	0.0%
Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Bénin (UNSTB)	36,000	78,315	84,203 *	26%	7.5%
Total	240,221	364,870	328,830	100%	-10%

* Data from 2020.

Source: International Trade Union Confederation.

Table 10: Benin's key workforce data, 2022

Indicator	Value
Working Age Population	7,308,100
Employment rate	75%
Unemployment rate	1.7%
Employed share	
<i>Urban</i>	43%
<i>Rural</i>	57%
<i>Public</i>	2.3%
<i>Private</i>	98%
Employed by aggregated sector share	
<i>Agriculture</i>	43%
<i>Industry</i>	18%
<i>Service</i>	39%

Source: Benin Labour Force Survey 2022.

Table 11: Benin - Scores for Women, Business and the Law, 2024

Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension	Index score
75	100	75	80	60	100	80	100	84

Note: Overall scores are calculated by taking the average of each indicator, with 100 representing the highest possible score.

Source: The World Bank, Benin: Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Table 12: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems and health in Benin and Western Africa (WA), %, 2022

Indicator	Benin	WA
Population covered by at least one social protection benefit	8.4%	13%
Persons above retirement age receiving a pension	9.1%	11%
Persons with severe disabilities collecting disability social protection benefits	0.1%	2.7%
Unemployed receiving unemployment benefits	0%	4.7%
Mothers with newborns receiving maternity benefits	2.8%	6.8%
Employed covered in the event of work injury	7.2%	21%
Children/households receiving child/family cash benefits	12%	12%
Poor persons covered by social protection systems	-	-
Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	5.2%	4.6%
SDG 3.8.1: Universal health coverage, % of population	38%*	-

* Year: 2021.

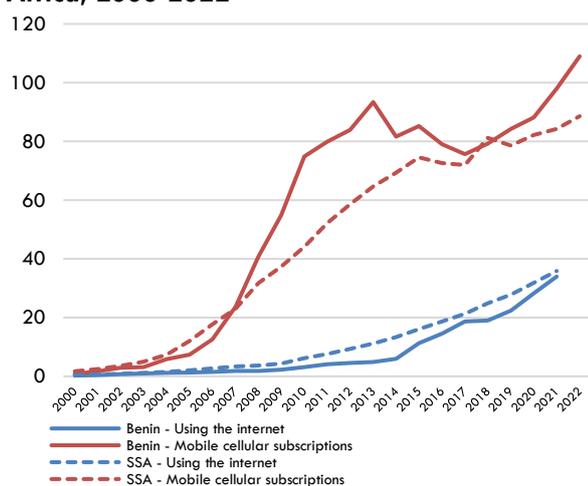
Source: International Labour Organisation, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM); World Health Organization, Coverage of essential health services (SDG 3.8.1) (%).

Table 13: Scores for Labour Rights Index's legislative performance indicators for Benin, 2024

Fair wages	Decent Working Hours	Employment Security	Family Responsibilities	Maternity at Work	Safe Work	Social Security	Fair Treatment	Child & Forced Labour	Freedom of Association	Index score
40	100	40	25	80	100	60	60	100	50	66

Note: Overall scores are calculated by taking the average of each indicator, with 100 representing the highest possible score.

Source: WageIndicator.org & Centre for Labour Research, Labour Rights Index 2024: Benin.

Figure 10: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) and mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) trend in Benin and sub-Saharan Africa, 2000-2022

Source: The World Bank, DataBank - World Development Indicators.

REFERENCES

- ¹ African Development Bank, Benin Economic Outlook, September 2024.
- ² African Development Bank, Benin Economic Outlook, African Economic Outlook, 2024.
- ³ International Monetary Fund, Benin: Third Reviews Under the Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility and Arrangement Under the Extended Credit Facility and Request for an Arrangement Under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, January 5, 2024.
- ⁴ International Monetary Fund, Benin: Third Reviews Under the Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility and Arrangement Under the Extended Credit Facility and Request for an Arrangement Under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, January 5, 2024.
- ⁵ World Trade Organisation, WT/TPR/S/362; Benin.
- ⁶ United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research, Industrial clusters The case for Special Economic Zones in Africa, WIDER Working Paper 2017/15, 2017.
- ⁷ ACET, African's Export Processing Zones – it's Time to Lift the Game, 2012.
- ⁸ Iftikhar Ahmad & Liberat Bigirimana, Decent Work Check 2021: Benin, WageIndicator.org, 2021.
- ⁹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, In dialogue with Benin, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights asks about the weakening of labour rights and harassment of trade union activists, February 25, 2020.
- ¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Benin, 2023.
- ¹¹ International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2023, published 112nd ILC session (2024), Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) - Benin, September 2024.
- ¹² IndustryAll, Tunis declaration calls for inclusion of labour provisions in the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, September 29, 2022.
- ¹³ Ministère du Travail et de la Fonction Publique, Mission et attributions du MTFP.
- ¹⁴ Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Microfinance, République de Bénin.
- ¹⁵ Ministère des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises et de la Promotion de l'Emploi, Programmes.
- ¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Benin, 2011.
- ¹⁷ Education International, Benin: Union elections give hope of real social dialogue in the education sector, April 15, 2024.
- ¹⁸ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, Review of the Labour Market Profile of Benin via the Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Bénin, November 2024.
- ¹⁹ Mahoubé Aimée-Gabrielle Soglo & Achille Barnabé Assouto, Benefits of Membership in a Labour Organization in Benin, Journal of Economics and Development Studies, June 2023.
- ²⁰ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, Mapping of the role of trade unions on Social Protection schemes, December 2023.
- ²¹ World Economic Forum, Global Risks Report 2024, Global Risks Perception Survey 2023-2024.
- ²² International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98): Benin, Direct Request (CEACR) - adopted 2019, published 109th ILC session (2021).
- ²³ International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Direct Request (CEACR) - adopted

2023, published 112nd ILC session (2024), Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) – Benin, September 2024.

²⁴ Janna Besamusca & Kea Tijdens, Comparing collective bargaining agreements for developing countries, 2015.

²⁵ International Labour Office, Social dialogue and tripartism, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 107th Session, 2018.

²⁶ International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Direct Request (CEACR) - adopted 2016, published 106th ILC session (2017), Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154) – Benin.

²⁷ International Trade Union Confederation, Global Rights Index 2023, 2023.

²⁸ International Trade Union Confederation, Survey of violations of trade union rights: Benin, August 2024.

²⁹ International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Benin, August 2024.

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Benin, 2023.

³¹ Walk Free, The Global Slavery Index 2023.

³² International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC Economic and Social Policy Brief: The Gender Wage Gap, 2018.

³³ International Labour Organization, Press Release, ILO calls for strengthening labour inspection worldwide, November 16, 2006.

³⁴ International Fund for Agricultural Development, Countries: Benin, September 2024.

³⁵ The World Bank Group, Country partnership framework for Benin for the period FY19–FY23, Report No. 123031-BJ, June 6, 2018.

³⁶ The World Bank, An Incentive Package to Encourage Small Business Registration in Benin, March 1, 2014.

³⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Micro, Small, and Medium- sized

Enterprises (MSMEs) and their role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

³⁸ United Nations, Consideration of the initial report submitted by Benin under article 73 of the Convention, due in 2019, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, August 30, 2023.

³⁹ National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis, Benin Population and Housing Census, 2013.

⁴⁰ Integral Human Development, Benin Country Profile, 2022.

⁴¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Benin, September 2024.

⁴² Statista, Urbanization in Benin, 2023.

⁴³ The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme, Benin: Country Analysis – Current Path vs Combined Agenda 2063, September 2024.

⁴⁴ International Centre for Migration Policy Development & International Organization for Migration, A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa, 2015.

⁴⁵ Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Trade Unions Experiences for Migrant Workers' Rights in Africa and Europe, PROMIG-FES (2017-2020) project series, No. 7, 2020.

⁴⁶ Integral Human Development, Country Profiles: Benin, July 2022.

⁴⁷ United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs, A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa, Country Chapters – Benin, 2015.

⁴⁸ International Labour Organization, Women migrant workers' labour market situation in West Africa, 2020.

⁴⁹ Operational Data Portal, Benin, September 2024.

⁵⁰ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, Review of the Labour Market Profile of Benin via the Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Bénin, November 2024.

⁵¹ International Labour Organization, SDG indicator 8.3.1 - Proportion of informal employment in total employment by sex and sector (%) -- Annual.

⁵² U.S. Department of Labor, Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Benin, 2022.

⁵³ The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Child labour data, September 2024.

⁵⁴ World Bank Group, Women, Business, and the Law 2024: Benin.

⁵⁵ World Bank Blog, Different sex – same opportunities? Not really: a close look at the extent of gender inequalities in Benin, October 20, 2023.

⁵⁶ International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC Economic and Social Policy Brief: The Gender Wage Gap, 2018.

⁵⁷ International Labour Organization, Working-age population by sex and age (thousands) – Annual, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), September 2024.

⁵⁸ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, own calculations of youth employment annual growth based on Monitoring Survey of the Modular and Integrated Survey of Household Living Conditions, ILO's KILM, September 2024.

⁵⁹ The World Bank, Benin Economic Update, 2014.

⁶⁰ Commonwealth Secretariat, Global Youth Development Index: Update Report, 2023.

⁶¹ International Labour Organization, Skills and jobs mismatches in low- and middle-income countries, 2019.

⁶² World Bank Blogs, Helping Youth in Benin Find Economic Opportunities, January 30, 2024.

⁶³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Benin: Education Country Brief, January 2024.

⁶⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, TVET Country Profile: Benin, September 2024.

⁶⁵ The World Bank, Databank, Government expenditure on secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education as % of GDP.

⁶⁶ The World Bank, Databank, Firms offering formal training (% of firms).

⁶⁷ Deloitte, Guide to fiscal information: Key economies in Africa, 2021.

⁶⁸ African Development Band, African Economic Outlook, Benin Country Note, 2012.

⁶⁹ Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques Université Abomey-Calavi (UAC) and KOF Swiss Economic Institute, Country Case Study on Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Benin, Working Papers, No. 9, September 2019.

⁷⁰ African Development Bank Group, Potential of the fourth industrial revolution in Africa: Study report unlocking the potential of the fourth industrial revolution in Africa, Technopolis & Research ICT Africa & Tambourine Innovation Ventures, October 2019.

⁷¹ International Finance Corporation, Creating Markets in Benin: Country Private Sector Diagnostic, Leveraging Private Investment for Inclusive Growth, March 2023.

⁷² World Bank Group, DataBank, World Development Indicators.

⁷³ International Finance Corporation, Creating Markets in Benin: Country Private Sector Diagnostic, Leveraging Private Investment for Inclusive Growth, March 2023.

⁷⁴ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, Mapping of the role of trade unions on Social Protection schemes, December 2023.

⁷⁵ International Monetary Fund, Benin: Selected Issues, July 25, 2022.

⁷⁶ United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, An Evaluation of the work of the Joint Programme on HIV and Social Protection, UNAIDS Evaluation Office, December 2023.

⁷⁷ The World Bank, DataBank, World Development Indicators.

⁷⁸ World Bank Group, World Bank Approves \$100 million for Benin to Strengthen and Expand Coverage of Poor Households in Social Safety Net, March 24, 2023.

⁷⁹ WageIndicator.org, Decent Work Check: Benin, 2023.

⁸⁰ International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT, SDG indicator 1.3.1 - Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems.

⁸¹ World Health Organization, Benin – Towards universal health coverage (UHC): Government of Benin expanding health coverage to the extreme poor, September 2024.