



Africa :: Benin

Introduction :: Benin

Background:

Present day Benin was the site of Dahomey, a West African kingdom that rose to prominence in about 1600 and over the next two and half centuries became a regional power, largely based on its slave trade. Coastal areas of Dahomey began to be controlled by the French in the second half of the 19th century; the entire kingdom was conquered by 1894. French Dahomey achieved independence in 1960; it changed its name to the Republic of Benin in 1975. A succession of military governments ended in 1972 with the rise to power of Mathieu KEREKOU and the establishment of a government based on Marxist-Leninist principles. A move to representative government began in 1989. Two years later, free elections ushered in former Prime Minister Nicephore SOGLO as president, marking the first successful transfer of power in Africa from a dictatorship to a democracy. KEREKOU was returned to power by elections held in 1996 and 2001, though some irregularities were alleged. KEREKOU stepped down at the end of his second term in 2006 and was succeeded by Thomas YAYI Boni, a political outsider and independent. YAYI, who won a second five-year term in March 2011, has attempted to stem corruption and has strongly promoted accelerating Benin's economic growth.

Geography :: Benin

Location:

Western Africa, bordering the Bight of Benin, between Nigeria and Togo

Geographic coordinates:

9 30 N, 2 15 E

Map references:

Africa

Area:

total: 112,622 sq km
country comparison to the world: 102
land: 110,622 sq km
water: 2,000 sq km

Area - comparative:

slightly smaller than Pennsylvania

Land boundaries:

total: 1,989 km
border countries: Burkina Faso 306 km, Niger 266 km, Nigeria 773 km, Togo 644 km

Coastline:

121 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 200 nm

Climate:

tropical; hot, humid in south; semiarid in north

Terrain:
mostly flat to undulating plain; some hills and low mountains
Elevation extremes:
lowest point: Atlantic Ocean 0 m
highest point: Mont Sokbaro 658 m
Natural resources:
small offshore oil deposits, limestone, marble, timber
Land use:
arable land: 22.48%
permanent crops: 2.61%
other: 74.9% (2011)
Irrigated land:
230.4 sq km (2008)
Total renewable water resources:
26.39 cu km (2011)
Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):
total: 0.13 cu km/yr (32%/23%/45%)
per capita: 18.74 cu m/yr (2001)
Natural hazards:
hot, dry, dusty harmattan wind may affect north from December to March
Environment - current issues:
inadequate supplies of potable water; poaching threatens wildlife populations; deforestation; desertification
Environment - international agreements:
party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands, Whaling
signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements
Geography - note:
sandbanks create difficult access to a coast with no natural harbors, river mouths, or islands
People and Society :: Benin
Nationality:
noun: Beninese (singular and plural)
adjective: Beninese
Ethnic groups:
Fon and related 39.2%, Adja and related 15.2%, Yoruba and related 12.3%, Bariba and related 9.2%, Peulh and related 7%, Ottamari and related 6.1%, Yoa-Lokpa and related 4%, Dendi and related 2.5%, other 1.6% (includes Europeans), unspecified 2.9% (2002 census)
Languages:
French (official), Fon and Yoruba (most common vernaculars in south), tribal languages (at least six major ones in north)
Religions:
Catholic 27.1%, Muslim 24.4%, Vodoun 17.3%, Protestant 10.4% (Celestial 5%, Methodist 3.2%, other Protestant 2.2%), other Christian 5.3%, other 15.5% (2002 census)
Population:
9,877,292 (July 2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 90
note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected
Age structure:
0-14 years: 44.1% (male 2,223,497/female 2,134,644)
15-24 years: 19.9% (male 1,001,845/female 967,664)
25-54 years: 29.7% (male 1,476,894/female 1,456,501)
55-64 years: 3.5% (male 143,594/female 200,424)
65 years and over: 2.8% (male 109,009/female 163,220) (2013 est.)
Dependency ratios:
total dependency ratio: 84 %
youth dependency ratio: 78.7 %
elderly dependency ratio: 5.3 %
potential support ratio: 18.8 (2013)
Median age:

total: 17.6 years
male: 17.2 years
female: 18 years (2013 est.)

Population growth rate:

2.84% (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 17

Birth rate:

37.02 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 19

Death rate:

8.59 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 80

Net migration rate:

0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 79

Urbanization:

urban population: 44.9% of total population (2011)
rate of urbanization: 4.12% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Major urban areas - population:

COTONOU (seat of government) 924,000; PORTO-NOVO (capital) 314,000 (2011)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female
0-14 years: 1.04 male(s)/female
15-24 years: 1.04 male(s)/female
25-54 years: 1.01 male(s)/female
55-64 years: 0.71 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.67 male(s)/female
total population: 1.01 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

20 (2006 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

350 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)
country comparison to the world: 33

Infant mortality rate:

total: 58.54 deaths/1,000 live births
country comparison to the world: 27
male: 61.76 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 55.15 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 60.67 years
country comparison to the world: 191
male: 59.37 years
female: 62.04 years (2013 est.)

Total fertility rate:

5.13 children born/woman (2013 est.)
country comparison to the world: 17

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

12.9% (2012)

Health expenditures:

4.1% of GDP (2010)
country comparison to the world: 166

Physicians density:

0.06 physicians/1,000 population (2008)

Hospital bed density:

0.5 beds/1,000 population (2010)

Drinking water source:

improved:
urban: 84% of population
rural: 68% of population
total: 75% of population

unimproved:
urban: 16% of population
rural: 32% of population
total: 25% of population (2010 est.)

Sanitation facility access:

improved:
urban: 25% of population
rural: 5% of population
total: 13% of population

unimproved:
urban: 75% of population
rural: 95% of population
total: 87% of population (2010 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

1.2% (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 41

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

60,000 (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 55

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

2,700 (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 48

Major infectious diseases:

degree of risk: very high
food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever
vectorborne diseases: dengue fever, malaria, and yellow fever
respiratory disease: meningococcal meningitis
animal contact disease: rabies (2013)

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

6% (2008)
country comparison to the world: 151

Children under the age of 5 years underweight:

20.2% (2006)
country comparison to the world: 34

Education expenditures:

5.4% of GDP (2010)
country comparison to the world: 58

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 42.4%
male: 55.2%
female: 30.3% (2010 census)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 9 years
male: 11 years
female: 8 years (2005)

Child labor - children ages 5-14:

total number: 1,020,981
percentage: 46 % (2006 est.)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 0.8%
country comparison to the world: 143
male: 1.1%
female: 0.6% (2002)

Country name:

conventional long form: Republic of Benin

conventional short form: Benin

local long form: Republique du Benin

local short form: Benin

former: Dahomey

Government type:

republic

Capital:

name: Porto-Novo (official capital)

geographic coordinates: 6 29 N, 2 37 E

time difference: UTC+1 (6 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

note: Cotonou (seat of government)

Administrative divisions:

12 departments; Alibori, Atakora, Atlantique, Borgou, Collines, Kouffo, Donga, Littoral, Mono, Oueme, Plateau, Zou

Independence:

1 August 1960 (from France)

National holiday:

National Day, 1 August (1960)

Constitution:

adopted by referendum 2 December 1990

Legal system:

civil law system modeled largely on the French system and some customary law

International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; accepts ICCT jurisdiction

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: President Thomas BONI YAYI (since 6 April 2006); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government

head of government: President Thomas BONI YAYI (since 6 April 2006); Prime Minister Pascal KOUPAKI (since 28 May 2011)

cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president

(For more information visit the **World Leaders website** [↗](#))

elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term (eligible for a second term); last held on 13 March 2011 (next to be held in March 2016)

election results: Thomas YAYI Boni re-elected president; percent of vote - Thomas YAYI Boni 53.1%, Adrien HOUNGBEDJI 35.6%, Abdoulaye Bio TCHANE 6.1%, other 5.2%

Legislative branch:

unicameral National Assembly or Assemblée Nationale (83 seats; members are elected by direct popular vote to serve four-year terms)

elections: last held on 30 April 2011 (next to be held in 2015)

election results: percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - FCBE 41, UN 30, other 12

Judicial branch:

highest court(s): Supreme Court or Cour Supreme (consists of the court president and 3 chamber presidents organized into an administrative division, judicial chamber, and chamber of accounts) Constitutional Court or Cour Constitutionnelle (consists of 7 members including the court president); High Court of Justice (consists of the Constitutional Court members, 6 members appointed by the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court president)

note - jurisdiction of the High Court of Justice is to limited cases of high treason by the national president or members of the government

judge selection and term of office: Supreme Court president and judges appointed by the national president upon the advice of the National Assembly; judges appointed for single renewable 5-year terms; Constitutional Court members - 4 appointed by the National Assembly and 3 by the national president; members appointed for single renewable 5-year terms; High Court of Justice "other" members elected by the National Assembly; member tenure NA

subordinate courts: Court of Appeal or Cour d'Appel; district courts; village courts; Assize courts

Political parties and leaders:

African Movement for Democracy and Progress or MADEP [Sefou FAGBOHOUN]; Alliance for Dynamic Democracy or ADD; Alliance of Progress Forces or AFP; Benin Renaissance or RB [Rosine SOGLO]; Democratic Renewal Party or PRD [Adrien HOUNGBEDJI]; Force Cowrie for an Emerging Benin or FCBE; Impulse for Progress and Democracy or IPD [Theophile NATA]; Key Force or FC [Lazare SÈHOUEÏTO]; Movement for the People's Alternative or MAP [Olivier CAPO-CHICHI]; Rally for Democracy and Progress or PRD [Dominique HOUNGNINOÛ]; Social Democrat Party or PSD [Bruno AMOUSSOU]; Union for Democracy and National Solidarity or UDS [Sacca LAFIA]; Union for the Relief or UPR [Issa SALIFOU]; Union Makes the Nation or UN

note: approximately 20 additional minor parties

Political pressure groups and leaders:

other: economic groups; environmentalists; political groups; teachers' unions and other educational groups

International organization participation:

ACP, AfDB, AU, CD, ECOWAS, Entente, FAO, FZ, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, ITUC (NGOs), MIGA, MONUSCO, NAM, OAS (observer), OIC, OIF, OPCW, PCA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNISFA, UNMIL, UNMISS, UNOCI, UNWTO, UPU, WAEMU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Cyrille Segbe OGUIN
chancery: 2124 Kalorama Road NW, Washington, DC 20008
telephone: [1] (202) 232-6656
FAX: [1] (202) 265-1996

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Charge d'Affaires Susan TULLER
embassy: Rue Caporal Bernard Anani, Cotonou
mailing address: 01 B. P. 2012, Cotonou
telephone: [229] 21-30-06-50
FAX: [229] 21-30-66-82

Flag description:

two equal horizontal bands of yellow (top) and red (bottom) with a vertical green band on the hoist side; green symbolizes hope and revival, yellow wealth, and red courage

note: uses the popular Pan-African colors of Ethiopia

National symbol(s):

leopard

National anthem:

name: "L'Aube Nouvelle" (The Dawn of a New Day)

 [PLAY ANTHEM](#)

lyrics/music: Gilbert Jean DAGNON

note: adopted 1960

Economy:: Benin

Economy - overview:

The economy of Benin remains underdeveloped and dependent on subsistence agriculture, cotton production, and regional trade. Growth in real output had averaged almost 4% before the global recession and it has returned to roughly that level in 2011-12. Inflation has subsided over the past several years. In order to raise growth, Benin plans to attract more foreign investment, place more emphasis on tourism, facilitate the development of new food processing systems and agricultural products, and encourage new information and communication technology. Specific projects to improve the business climate by reforms to the land tenure system, the commercial justice system, and the financial sector were included in Benin's \$307 million Millennium Challenge Account grant signed in February 2006. The 2001 privatization policy continues in telecommunications, water, electricity, and agriculture. The Paris Club and bilateral creditors have eased the external debt situation with Benin benefiting from a G-8 debt reduction announced in July 2005, while pressing for more rapid structural reforms. An insufficient electrical supply continues to adversely affect Benin's economic growth though the government recently has taken steps to increase domestic power production. Private foreign direct investment is small, and foreign aid accounts for the majority of investment in infrastructure projects. Cotton, a key export, suffered from flooding in 2010-11, but high prices supported export earnings. The government agreed to a 25% increase in civil servant salaries in 2011, following a series of strikes, increasing pressure on the national budget. Benin has appealed for international assistance to mitigate piracy against commercial shipping in its territory.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$15.84 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 139

\$15.26 billion (2011 est.)

\$14.74 billion (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$7.429 billion (2012 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

3.8% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 91

3.5% (2011 est.)

2.6% (2010 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$1,700 (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 199

\$1,700 (2011 est.)

\$1,700 (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

Gross national saving:

13.9% of GDP (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 109
12.9% of GDP (2011 est.)
13.3% of GDP (2010 est.)

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 79.9%
government consumption: 10.5%
investment in fixed capital: 22.6%
investment in inventories: 0.6%
exports of goods and services: 19.4%
imports of goods and services: -33%
(2012 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 35.9%
industry: 6.4%
services: 57.7% (2012 est.)

Agriculture - products:

cotton, corn, cassava (manioc), yams, beans, palm oil, peanuts, cashews; livestock

Industries:

textiles, food processing, construction materials, cement

Industrial production growth rate:

3.3% (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 82

Labor force:

3.662 million (2007 est.)
country comparison to the world: 96

Unemployment rate:

NA%

Population below poverty line:

37.4% (2007 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 3.1%
highest 10%: 29% (2003)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

36.5 (2003)
country comparison to the world: 83

Budget:

revenues: \$1.407 billion
expenditures: \$1.671 billion (2012 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

18.9% of GDP (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 173

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

-3.6% of GDP (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 132

Public debt:

28.2% of GDP (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 118
29.5% of GDP (2011 est.)

Fiscal year:

calendar year

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

6.8% (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 174
2.7% (2011 est.)

Central bank discount rate:

4.25% (31 December 2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 85
4.25% (31 December 2009 est.)

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

NA%

Stock of narrow money:

\$1.903 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 126
\$1.715 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of broad money:

\$2.95 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 145
\$2.716 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of domestic credit:

\$1.63 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 141
\$1.475 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$NA

Current account balance:

-\$625.3 million (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 101
-\$699.9 million (2011 est.)

Exports:

\$1.55 billion (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 146
\$1.593 billion (2011 est.)

Exports - commodities:

cotton, cashews, shea butter, textiles, palm products, seafood

Exports - partners:

China 25.4%, India 24.6%, Lebanon 15.6%, Niger 4.8%, Nigeria 4.2% (2012)

Imports:

\$2.152 billion (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 163
\$2.188 billion (2011 est.)

Imports - commodities:

foodstuffs, capital goods, petroleum products

Imports - partners:

China 37.2%, US 8.9%, India 6.7%, France 5.6%, Malaysia 5.3% (2012)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:

\$859.4 million (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 140
\$887.4 million (31 December 2011 est.)

Debt - external:

\$1.403 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 151
\$1.327 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Exchange rates:

Communaute Financiere Africaine francs (XOF) per US dollar -
510.53 (2012 est.)
471.87 (2011 est.)
495.28 (2010 est.)
472.19 (2009)
447.81 (2008)

Energy:: Benin

Electricity - production:

120 million kWh (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 192

Electricity - consumption:

778 million kWh (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 155

Electricity - exports:

0 kWh (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 167

Electricity - imports:

866 million kWh (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 67

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

60,000 kW (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 176

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

98.3% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 60

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 53

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

1.7% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 138

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 112

Crude oil - production:

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 112

Crude oil - exports:

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 86

Crude oil - imports:

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 161

Crude oil - proved reserves:

8 million bbl (1 January 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 94

Refined petroleum products - production:

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 157

Refined petroleum products - consumption:

29,170 bbl/day (2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 117

Refined petroleum products - exports:

11,410 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 84

Refined petroleum products - imports:

35,140 bbl/day (2008 est.)

country comparison to the world: 79

Natural gas - production:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 104

Natural gas - consumption:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 120

Natural gas - exports:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 65

Natural gas - imports:

0 cu m (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 164

Natural gas - proved reserves:

1.133 billion cu m (1 January 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 98

Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:

3.65 million Mt (2010 est.)

country comparison to the world: 132

Communications:: Benin

Telephones - main lines in use:

152,700 (2011)

country comparison to the world: 133

Telephones - mobile cellular:

7.765 million (2011)

country comparison to the world: 91

Telephone system:

general assessment: inadequate system of open-wire, microwave radio relay, and cellular connections; fixed-line network characterized by aging, deteriorating equipment

domestic: fixed-line teledensity only about 2 per 100 persons; spurred by the presence of multiple mobile-cellular providers, cellular telephone subscribership has been increasing rapidly

international: country code - 229; landing point for the SAT-3/WASC fiber-optic submarine cable that provides connectivity to Europe and Asia; long distance fiber-optic links with Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria; satellite earth stations - 7 (Intelsat-Atlantic Ocean) (2008)

Broadcast media:

state-run Office de Radiodiffusion et de Television du Benin (ORTB) operates a TV station with multiple channels giving it a wide broadcast reach; several privately owned TV stations broadcast from Cotonou; satellite TV subscription service is available; state-owned radio, under ORTB control, includes a national station supplemented by a number of regional stations; substantial number of privately owned radio broadcast stations; transmissions of a few international broadcasters are available on FM in Cotonou (2007)

Internet country code:

.bj

Internet hosts:

491 (2012)

country comparison to the world: 183

Internet users:

200,100 (2009)

country comparison to the world: 139

Transportation:: Benin

Airports:

6 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 171

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 1

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 5

2,438 to 3,047 m: 2

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1

914 to 1,523 m: 2 (2013)

Railways:

total: 438 km

country comparison to the world: 113

narrow gauge: 438 km 1.000-m gauge (2008)

Roadways:

total: 16,000 km
country comparison to the world: 120
paved: 1,400 km
unpaved: 14,600 km (2006)

Waterways:
150 km (seasonal navigation on River Niger along northern border) (2011)
country comparison to the world: 102

Ports and terminals:
major seaport(s): Cotonou

Military :: **Benin**

Military branches:
Benin Armed Forces (Forces Armees Beninoises, FAB): Army (l'Arme de Terre), Benin Navy (Forces Navales Beninois, FNB), Benin Air Force (Force Aerienne du Benin, FAB) (2013)

Military service age and obligation:
18-35 years of age for selective compulsory and voluntary military service; a higher education diploma is required; both sexes are eligible for military service; conscript tour of duty - 18 months (2013)

Manpower available for military service:
males age 16-49: 2,095,373
females age 16-49: 2,038,351 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:
males age 16-49: 1,385,065
females age 16-49: 1,400,045 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:
male: 108,496
female: 104,526 (2010 est.)

Military expenditures:
1.5% of GDP (2011)
country comparison to the world: 96

Transnational Issues :: **Benin**

Disputes - international:
talks continue between Benin and Togo on funding the Adjrala hydroelectric dam on the Mona River; Benin retains a border dispute with Burkina Faso around the town of Koualou; location of Benin-Niger-Nigeria tripoint is unresolved

Illicit drugs:
transshipment point used by traffickers for cocaine destined for Western Europe; vulnerable to money laundering due to poorly enforced financial regulations (2008)