



Benin



Background Present-day Benin is comprised of about 42 ethnic groups, including the Yoruba in the southeast, who migrated from what is now Nigeria in the 12th century; the Dendi in the north-central area, who came from Mali in the 16th century; the Bariba and the Fula in the northeast; the Ottamari in the Atakora mountains; the Fon in the area around Abomey in the south-central area; and the Mina, Xueda, and Aja, who came from Togo, on the coast. The Kingdom of Dahomey emerged on the Abomey plateau in the 17th century and was a regional power for much of the 18th and 19th centuries. The growth of Dahomey coincided with the growth of the Atlantic slave trade, and it became known as a major source of enslaved people. France began to control the coastal areas of Dahomey in the second half of the 19th century; the entire kingdom was conquered by 1894. French Dahomey achieved independence in 1960, and 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 a Marxist-Leninist government. A move to representative government began in 1989. Two years later, free elections ushered in former Prime Minister Nicéphore SOGLO as president, marking the first successful transfer of power in Africa from a dictatorship to a democracy. KEREKOU returned to power after elections in 1996 and 2001. He stepped down in 2006 and was succeeded by Thomas YAYI Boni, a political outsider and independent, who won a second term in 2011. Patrice TALON, a wealthy businessman, took office in 2016; the space for pluralism, dissent, and free expression has narrowed under his administration. TALON won a second term in 2021.

Capital name: Porto-Novo (constitutional capital); Cotonou (seat of government)

Government type presidential republic

Area
total : 112,622 sq km
land: 110,622 sq km
water: 2,000 sq km

Climate tropical; hot, humid in south; semiarid in north

Natural resources small offshore oil deposits, limestone, marble, timber

Population total: 14,697,052 (2024 est.)

Population growth rate 3.29% (2024 est.)

Ethnic groups Fon and related 38.4%, Adja and related 15.1%, Yoruba and related 12%, Bariba and related 9.6%, Fulani and related 8.6%, Ottamari and related 6.1%, Yoa-Lokpa and related 4.3%, Dendi and related 2.9%, other 0.9%, foreigner 1.9% (2013 est.)

Religions Muslim 27.7%, Roman Catholic 25.5%, Protestant 13.5% (Celestial 6.7%, Methodist 3.4%, other Protestant 3.4%), Vodoun 11.6%, other Christian 9.5%, other traditional religions 2.6%, other 2.6%, none 5.8% (2013 est.)

Languages	55 languages; French (official); Fon (a Gbe language), Yom (a Gur language) and Yoruba are the most important indigenous languages in the south; half a dozen regionally important languages in the north, including Bariba and Fulfulde
Executive branch	chief of state: President Patrice TALON (since 6 April 2016) head of government: President Patrice TALON (since 6 April 2016)
Legislative branch	legislature name: National Assembly (Assemblée nationale)
Diplomatic representation in the US	chief of mission: Ambassador Agniola AHOUANMENOU (since 24 July 2025)
Diplomatic representation from the US	chief of mission: Ambassador Brian SHUKAN (since 5 May 2022)
Economic overview	robust economic growth; slightly declining but still widespread poverty; strong trade relations with Nigeria; cotton exporter; COVID-19 has led to capital outflows and border closures; WAEMU member with currency pegged to the euro; recent fiscal deficit and debt reductions
Real GDP (purchasing power parity)	\$56.424 billion (2024 est.) \$52.51 billion (2023 est.) \$49.374 billion (2022 est.)
Real GDP per capita	\$3,900 (2024 est.) \$3,700 (2023 est.) \$3,600 (2022 est.)
Exports	\$4.511 billion (2023 est.) \$4.271 billion (2022 est.) \$4.154 billion (2021 est.)
Exports - partners	UAE 42%, Bangladesh 20%, India 11%, China 5%, Togo 3% (2023)
Exports - commodities	gold, cotton, coconuts/brazil nuts/cashews, soybeans, wood (2023)
Imports	\$6.189 billion (2023 est.) \$5.296 billion (2022 est.) \$4.925 billion (2021 est.)
Imports - partners	China 21%, India 15%, USA 6%, France 6%, Nigeria 4% (2023)
Imports - commodities	rice, refined petroleum, palm oil, poultry, cars (2023)

Population Pyramid

