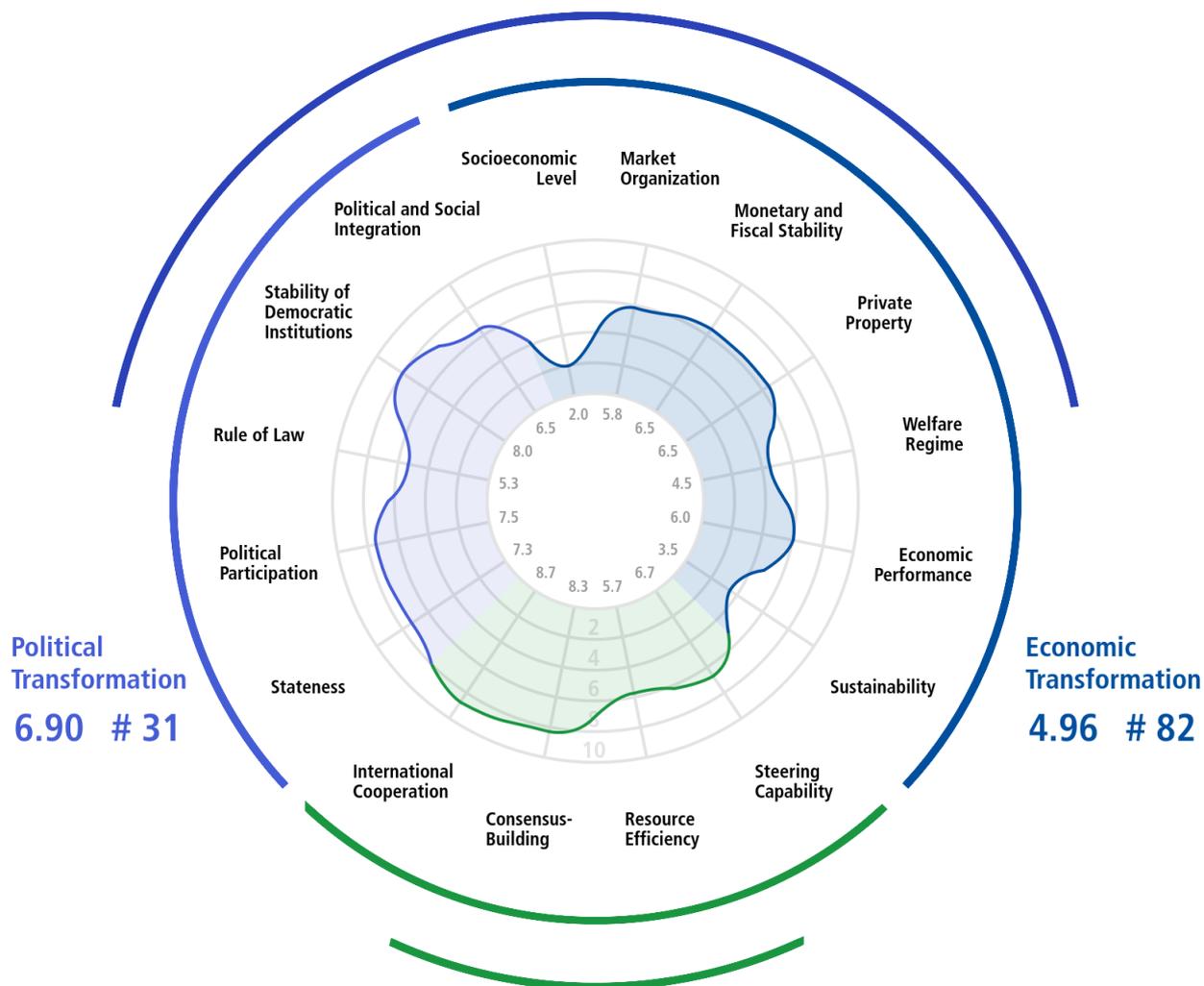


Senegal

Status Index

5.93 # 52

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
6.90 # 31

Economic Transformation
4.96 # 82

Governance Index

6.68 # 15

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report – Senegal. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2026.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung
Carl-Bertelsmann-Strasse 256
33111 Gütersloh
Germany

Sabine Donner

Phone +49 5241 81 81501
sabine.donner@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Hauke Hartmann

Phone +49 5241 81 81389
hauke.hartmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Sebastian Plate

Phone +49 5241 81 81263
sebastian.plate@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Sabine Steinkamp

Phone +49 5241 81 81507
sabine.steinkamp@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Key Indicators

Population	M	18.5	HDI	0.530	GDP p.c., PPP \$	5110
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	2.3	HDI rank of 193	169	Gini Index	36.2
Life expectancy	years	68.7	UN Education Index	0.352	Poverty ³	% 36.3
Urban population	%	50.1	Gender inequality ²	0.490	Aid per capita \$	102.9

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

The political situation in Senegal was turbulent for much of 2023 and 2024, with ongoing concerns about democratic backsliding. In early 2024, the country was on the verge of a serious constitutional crisis. However, this was ultimately defused, paving the way for a peaceful transfer of power in April 2024 from Macky Sall to Bassirou Diomaye Faye. By early 2025, the political outlook in Senegal was much less tense and appeared more promising than in the previous two years.

Toward the end of President Macky Sall's second term (in power 2012 – 2024), political tension rose substantially. This was caused mainly by the perceived politicization of the judiciary and Sall's heavy-handed approach toward his adversaries, especially his strongest opponent, Ousmane Sonko, and that candidate's party, African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (known by its French acronym, PASTEF). For several years leading up to the 2024 presidential election, local news coverage was dominated by the repeated prosecution and jailing of Sonko and his close associate, Bassirou Diomaye Faye. A large segment of the population viewed these developments as politically motivated – a strategy for sidelining political opponents. Waves of protest and crackdowns by security forces followed, generating political instability.

President Sall's ambiguity about whether he would run for a third term, which many Senegalese viewed as an illegitimate option, added to the tension. Ultimately, Sall decided not to contest the election, which was scheduled for Feb. 24, 2024, and he backed his party's candidate, Prime Minister Amadou Ba. However, the technocratic Ba did not elicit broad enthusiasm or enjoy strong support from outgoing President Sall. As the contest grew closer, doubts emerged about whether he could win despite the unlevel playing field tilting his way. Sonko, the most serious potential challenger, had been sidelined following a conviction for defamation and "corrupting the youth," relating to alleged immoral behavior with a masseuse. In July 2023, he was sentenced to two years in prison and disqualified from running by the country's Constitutional Court. PASTEF then

selected Faye as the party's candidate in the presidential election. Although Faye had also been in detention since April 2023 – for criticizing the judicial process associated with Sonko's trial – he was not barred from running since, at the time, he was awaiting trial and had not been convicted.

The major political crisis occurred when, on Feb. 3, 2024, President Sall canceled the presidential election just three weeks before the contest. Hastily pushing a new law through the National Assembly without the opposition present, Sall then attempted to postpone the election by 10 months. However, the Constitutional Court intervened and ruled those measures to be unconstitutional. The court's verdict forced Sall to hold elections on short notice before the end of his term, setting the vote for March 24, 2024, a month after the original date. While Sonko and Faye were released from detention in early March, Sonko remained ineligible to run and Faye continued as PASTEF's standard-bearer. Faye won the election in a landslide in the first round. Sall respected the election's outcome and relinquished power to Faye on April 2, 2024.

Faye's election has paved the way for a large-scale political shift. Since coming into office, Faye has nominated Sonko as prime minister. Several months into his term, he dissolved parliament, which was populated by many of Sall's allies, and called a new legislative election in November 2024. The poll brought a significant change in the parliament's makeup, with PASTEF winning 130 out of the 165 seats, giving Faye and Sonko a supermajority. Sonko's signature promise as prime minister is a rupture with the Sall era. Specifically, he has promised to establish a clean and competent government, and aims to reduce waste and reform the tax system, thereby increasing state resources. These goals are consistent with his and Faye's background as tax inspectors and their campaign's focus on fighting corruption. It remains to be seen how much of this vision they can implement, even with PASTEF's large majority.

Senegal's economy is stronger than that of most of its neighbors, and it has a positive growth outlook. Nonetheless, significant economic and social problems remain. Poverty and inequality rates are persistently high. The steady number of young Senegalese attempting to migrate illegally to Europe is a testament to the limited economic opportunities for youth in Senegal. The formal sector remains small, forcing most people to make a precarious living in the informal sector. The country's urban infrastructure is failing to cope with the rate of population growth. The periodic flooding that paralyzes Senegal's capital city underscores the pressing problem of existing infrastructure deficiencies. Faye's election raised high hopes for economic transformation, but the challenges ahead are substantial.

The handover of power from Sall to Faye also has repercussions for Senegal's foreign policy. Faye and Sonko champion African sovereignty, seeking to reduce dependence on the West. One of the first notable developments was the withdrawal of French troops from Senegal. While this move aligns with the regional shift away from France in West Africa amid a growing backlash against perceptions of neocolonialism, Faye in fact maintains a more amicable stance toward France than many of Senegal's neighbors. Despite the rhetoric of economic sovereignty, Senegal continues to cooperate with the International Monetary Fund and has not alienated private investors thus far. Senegal's position as a democratic country in a region plagued by military coups strengthens its clout in the international arena.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

Since its independence in 1960, Senegal has been a politically exemplary country in West Africa despite a period of one-party rule. The party of the country's first president, Léopold Senghor, which was renamed the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS) in the 1970s, ruled the country for more than 40 years. In 1974, the one-party state authorized a limited multiparty regime comprising three political parties. The Democratic Senegalese Party (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais, PDS), led by opposition figure Abdoulaye Wade, became the main opposition party for the next 20 years. Senghor stepped down voluntarily in 1980 in favor of his successor, Abdou Diouf, and the Senegalese party system was fully liberalized in 1981.

The first peaceful transition of power occurred in 2000 when longtime opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade (PDS) won the presidential election against Diouf – partly due to the support of former PS faction leaders. Wade adopted anti-colonial and anti-imperialist rhetoric but did not fundamentally alter the country's trajectory, which relies on a broad consensus of societal actors. He was a shrewd power politician who would remove prime ministers when they became too powerful. Macky Sall, prime minister from 2004 to 2007, was publicly humiliated, dismissed as president of the National Assembly and as the PDS's deputy secretary-general, and narrowly escaped judicial prosecution for corruption. In 2008, he founded his political party, the Alliance for the Republic (APR).

In December 2011, when Wade announced his candidacy for a third term – constitutionally controversial but validated by the country's Constitutional Council – a massive wave of popular protest followed. In the 2012 elections, Macky Sall was elected president in a run-off vote. Wade immediately conceded power, and a second peaceful transfer occurred. Sall, in power from 2012 to 2024, considered running for a third term but ultimately decided against it. Despite his attempt to postpone the 2024 election and extend his mandate by 10 months, the Constitutional Court forced the presidential election to take place before the end of Sall's mandate. In April 2024, Sall handed over power to the victor of the March 2024 election, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, thus marking the third transfer of power in Senegal through the ballot box.

Senegal's macroeconomic situation deteriorated in the early 1990s. Following a 50% devaluation of the regional currency, the CFA franc, and the implementation of a structural adjustment program in 1994, inflation rates remained low and growth improved, but living conditions showed only a slight improvement. From 2000 to 2008, annual growth rates averaged about 5% – a relatively high figure compared to many economies in the subregion, but insufficient to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly urban population. Between 2009 and 2013, economic growth slowed, averaging only 3.5%, according to World Bank data. Beginning in 2014, the services sector, investment and exports all experienced revivals, with economic growth typically exceeding 6%. This has been among the highest growth rates on the continent.

Over the past 10 years, the country has achieved lower middle-income status, according to the World Bank. The government has made major investments in national infrastructure, including a new airport, a highway to the capital, a satellite town outside Dakar to reduce congestion on the peninsula, offshore oil and gas production, and stadiums. Senegal has pursued a clearly investment-friendly path rooted in regional and global cooperation. The Sall government mobilized international support and significantly improved relations with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. It has also been a regular participant at G20 summits. Despite President Faye's distinctly different rhetoric, which emphasizes greater African and Senegalese sovereignty, Senegal continues to work with international institutions. The country still faces significant structural challenges, including low levels of formal employment, a small manufacturing sector, substantial inequality, high unemployment rates and a large informal sector. Following a campaign focused on fighting corruption and improving government services, President Faye faces high expectations with regard to social and economic transformation.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

The Senegalese state maintains a monopoly on the use of force across most of its territory, with the notable exception of the Casamance region, where it has faced a low-intensity separatist insurgency by the Mouvement de Forces Démocratiques de Casamance since 1982. Control of Casamance is further complicated by its geographic location, as it is separated from the rest of Senegal by the Anglophone country of the Gambia. Although the rebels have been weakened in recent years – partly due to the removal from power of the Gambia’s longtime dictator and the rebels’ former ally, Yahya Jammeh – the situation remains largely a stalemate, with neither government forces nor the rebels able to gain full control. Nevertheless, the rebels continue to engage in illegal economic activities, such as illicit trade. The ascension of Ousmane Sonko, a native of Casamance, to the post of prime minister could improve the situation in the region.

The Senegalese state has ceded some of its control in Touba, the seat of the powerful Mouride brotherhood. Most Senegalese practice a Sufi variant of Islam in which they pledge allegiance to a specific religious leader and belong to one of several brotherhoods. The Mouride brotherhood is considered Senegal’s most powerful, which allows its religious leaders to exert significant influence. This is particularly evident in Touba, where, with the state’s approval, the Mouride brotherhood has taken control of maintaining order. The Mouride capital is also a special economic zone and plays an important role in Senegal’s shadow economy, including the trade of counterfeit goods.

There is widespread acceptance of Senegal as a nation-state among its citizens. Even most residents of Casamance, a region affected by a separatist insurgency, view the state as legitimate and consider themselves to be Senegalese. Léopold Sedar Senghor, Senegal’s first president (in office 1960 – 1980), is often credited with promoting cooperation among different ethnic and religious groups. As a “double minority” (both ethnic and religious), Senghor had to garner support from various factions, establishing a precedent of ethnic and religious tolerance that has become a

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

7

'06 '26 10



1

State identity

9

'06 '26 10



1

significant aspect of Senegalese national identity. This culture of tolerance is further codified in Senegal's constitution, which emphasizes secularism (*laïcité*) following the French model, despite the rise of contentious debates during recent decades. The constitution also prohibits the formation of parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations. The state does not overtly exclude any specific ethnic or religious groups.

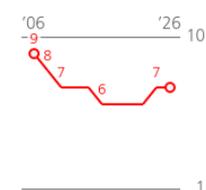
The laws governing Senegalese citizenship, amended in 2013, treat men and women equally, allowing Senegalese women to pass Senegalese citizenship to their children or foreign spouse on the same terms as men. Senegal tolerates dual citizenship for regular citizens but forbids presidential candidates and presidents from holding dual citizenship, an issue that was crucial in the 2024 election. Senegal has offered naturalization to Mauritanian refugees whose citizenship in Mauritania has been contested. The issuance of birth certificates has improved in rural areas, but a disparity between rural and urban regions remains. By regional standards, Senegalese citizenship law is fairly inclusive.

Senegal is a formally secular state, but in a highly religious society, religious authorities wield significant influence over the state. Religious leaders from various Sufi brotherhoods, especially the Mourides, have played a prominent role in Senegalese politics – often mobilizing support for political leaders in arrangements sometimes described as the “Senegalese social contract.” Although voting orders were common in the post-independence period, they have become less effective since the first political turnover in 2000. Religious leaders continue to back political candidates and rally supporters on their behalf, but they do so today in a more subtle manner. All Senegalese politicians have demonstrated reverence toward religious leaders and have sought their support. During major political crises, religious leaders helped put pressure on President Sall, potentially contributing to the peaceful nature of the transfer of power in April 2024. Senegal is religiously diverse, and even minority religious groups such as Catholics receive considerable recognition from the state and hold political leverage.

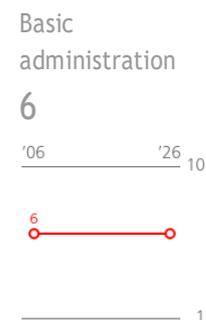
Senegalese religious leaders have contributed to the country's stability and may serve as a bulwark against radical Islam. However, they also exert a constraining influence over government policies, family law and the role of religious education. The Senegalese Family Code, which governs divorce, marital disputes and inheritance, has been a point of contention between the state and religious leaders. Due to religious resistance, the state has been unable to consistently implement it in practice. The influence of religious leaders shields Quranic schools from proper supervision even in the face of widespread allegations of child mistreatment, with many children allegedly forced to beg on the streets. Recently, the country has seen a resurgence in controversy surrounding the wearing of headscarves in schools.

No interference of religious dogmas

7

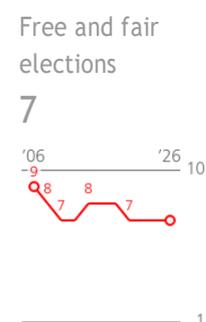


The state's administration covers the entire Senegalese territory. However, the state's administrative presence decreases further inland, away from the coastal areas. The state's presence in rural areas is notably thinner than in urban areas. Administrative capacity is hampered by a lack of resources and poor infrastructure. The process of decentralization, which began in 1996, has not brought significant improvements. The Senegalese tax system is underdeveloped, with a relatively narrow tax base. The provision of social services is limited and uneven, with rural areas having worse access to education, health care and electricity. Overall, 86.2% of the population has basic access to water and 60.2% have basic access to sanitation. However, only 14.1% have access to improved sanitation, where sanitation facilities are not shared with other households and waste is disposed of safely. In 2022, 67.9% of people had access to electricity – a marked improvement from 56.5% just 10 years earlier.



2 | Political Participation

Elections over the last several electoral cycles in Senegal have been deemed free and fair. The country has now experienced three transfers of power through the ballot box, with incumbent presidents – Abdou Diouf and Abdoulaye Wade – voted out of office in 2000 and 2012, respectively, and the 2024 presidential election determining the successor to Macky Sall, who chose not to run for a third term. He was ultimately succeeded by Bassirou Diomaye Faye. Presidential and legislative elections are conducted regularly, though the 2024 presidential election was delayed by a month following President Sall's decision to cancel the original date. Senegalese citizens enjoy universal suffrage, and the secret ballot is generally respected. Nonetheless, some vote-buying and electoral fraud occur. Parties and candidates are free to compete, with the number of registered parties reaching into the hundreds. The 2016 constitutional reform aimed to limit the high number of candidates contesting elections through a sponsorship provision that increased the number of signatures required to stand for the election.



While party formation is freely allowed, opposition candidates and parties have been hampered in some cases. The most notable opposition politician, Ousmane Sonko, was unable to contest the 2024 presidential election because of a conviction. Bassirou Diomaye Faye, the eventual winner of the 2024 presidential election, was released from detention only a few days before the election. Karim Wade (the son of former president Abdoulaye Wade) was unable to compete in the 2024 presidential election due to his dual citizenship; he was also barred from the 2019 election because of criminal charges against him. Many Senegalese view some of these charges as having been politically motivated.

The main electoral management body is the permanent electoral commission, the Commission Electorale Nationale Autonome. Members of this commission are nominated by the president. The commission is formally autonomous, but its

impartiality has repeatedly been criticized. In general, polling procedures are transparent and most voters can participate unimpeded. In the 2024 presidential election, the Constitutional Council enforced the application of the electoral agenda and rules.

Democratically elected political representatives have the power to govern, though the balance of power between the legislature and the presidency is skewed toward the latter. Much of the power in Senegal is concentrated in the presidency, with the president controlling many significant appointments. Nonetheless, the National Assembly does not simply rubber-stamp government policy and can exercise some oversight since its support is needed to approve legislation. President Faye currently has a supermajority in the National Assembly (following the November 2024 election), so he is unlikely to encounter resistance to implementing his agenda.

The Senegalese army is apolitical and does not engage in policymaking or the exercise of power. The religious establishment has limited formal power, but it can exert significant influence behind the scenes. It is unlikely that Senegalese leaders would propose major laws without consulting religious authorities. Legislation on family or social issues would need the support of religious leaders.

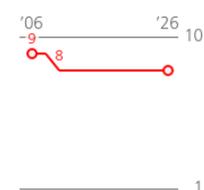
The right to assemble and organize peaceful demonstrations is constitutionally guaranteed, and protests are frequent, especially in the capital, Dakar. However, the authorities try to control the number and timing of protests, occasionally refusing permission on seemingly arbitrary grounds. Some protests in recent years have been met with force, leading to several casualties. The dissolution of Sonko's PASTEF party in July 2023 constituted a serious breach of the right to assemble and organize politically.

Senegalese civil society is vibrant and can assemble freely, except for LGBTQ+ groups, which face a hostile environment. The state mobilizes social opposition and stigma to intimidate LGBTQ+ groups. Religious organizations, student groups and trade unions can assemble freely.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and this freedom is generally respected. Senegal has a vibrant media landscape, with numerous newspapers, radio stations and digital media organizations. The neutrality of media outlets is sometimes hampered by undue influence or financial considerations, such as when journalists receive financial incentives to cover certain stories. Journalists are occasionally harassed or arrested. Politicians are also sometimes prosecuted for defamation or criticism of the government, as was the case with Bassirou Diomaye Faye. Violent repression, which led to 65 deaths during pro-Sonko protests between 2021 and 2024, raised significant concerns about former President Sall's respect for freedom of expression.

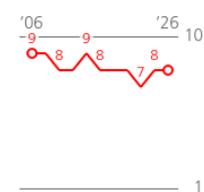
Effective power to govern

8



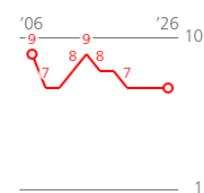
Association / assembly rights

8



Freedom of expression

7



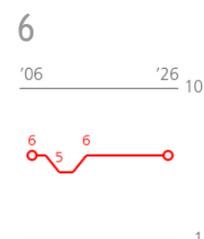
3 | Rule of Law

The Senegalese constitution establishes some checks and balances, but the presidency remains the strongest branch. The National Assembly can vote against the president's legislative priorities. The legislature's counterbalancing role depends partly on its partisan makeup. After the July 2022 legislative elections, President Sall's coalition, Benno Bok Yakar, lost its previously large majority. As a result, during his last two years in power, he was more constrained than under the previous legislature and could not rely on automatic support for his agenda. President Faye spent the first seven months of his presidency with minority support in the legislature. Following the November 2024 election, however, his PASTEF party controlled 130 out of 165 seats.

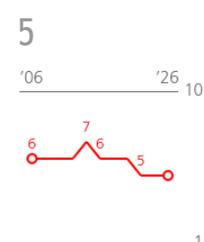
The judiciary is nominally independent, but is not immune from political influence. The Senegalese judiciary is well-trained, but career advancement is shaped by the presidency, limiting the independence of judges. The controversial prosecution of political adversaries, most notably Ousmane Sonko, cast doubt on the degree of separation between the judiciary and the presidency. However, it was the country's highest court that rebuked President Sall's attempt to extend his mandate in the controversial 2024 election. The Constitutional Court's key decision, which allowed for a timely transfer of power, was an important exercise of judicial independence at a time when many voters were losing trust in the judiciary.

Senegal has multiple court levels. Common law matters are adjudicated by district courts, regional courts, the Court of Appeal and the Assize Court. There are also courts for special jurisdictions, such as the Court for Suppression of Illicit Enrichment (CREI), which prosecuted and convicted the former president's son, Karim Wade, in 2015. The Supreme Court provides first- and last-instance judgment on the legality of decisions taken by authorities. The Court of Auditors is the supreme auditor of public finances. The seven-member Constitutional Council rules on the constitutionality of national laws, reviews candidacies for presidential and legislative elections, and declares the results of elections. Its members are selected from among the judges of the country's main courts as well as from the faculties of law of Senegalese universities. While Senegal's judges have a reputation for being well-trained, their independence is arguably constrained by the executive, particularly in cases concerning politicians. In recent years, several opposition politicians have been charged with various crimes, including former Kakar Mayor Khalifa Sall. Most notably, Ousmane Sonko was convicted of corrupting youth, a verdict that disqualified him from participating in the 2024 presidential election. President Faye was also prosecuted, through proceedings that appeared politicized, and was not released from custody until a couple of days before the 2024 election. Corruption within the judiciary remains a problem, as does underfunding and understaffing of the judiciary.

Separation of powers



Independent judiciary



Allegations of corruption in Senegalese politics have always been common. The media provide one source of oversight, and civil society groups are another source of critical review. Prosecution of alleged corruption is controversial because it tends to target the opposition or members of the former ruling party. The Cour de Répression Contre l'Enrichissement Illicite pursued a high-profile conviction of Karim Wade, the son of former President Abdoulaye Wade. It also prosecuted former Dakar Mayor Khalifa Sall. During President Sall's tenure, members of his coalition were spared from corruption investigations. Fighting corruption is one of the key objectives set by President Faye and Prime Minister Sonko. Although they have been in power for less than a year, it is expected that more anti-corruption measures will be taken in the coming years.

Civil rights are generally respected in Senegal. The constitution affirms respect for citizens' civil rights, and the Senegalese state is regarded as nondiscriminatory. In theory, violations of civil rights are subject to criminal punishment, but reported abuses by state agents are not always investigated or punished.

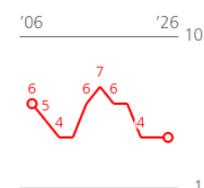
Equality before the law and equal access to justice and due process under the rule of law are enshrined in national legislation. There is generally little discrimination based on ethnicity or religion. In contrast, LGBTQ+ persons are sometimes harassed and their rights are severely limited. Homosexual acts are criminalized, and those engaged in them are frequently jailed. Such arrests are described in the media, often using individuals' full names, contributing to their public shaming. Senegalese laws describe homosexuality as an "act against nature." Abortion is banned under any circumstances. Women are frequently jailed for having abortions, even if they have been raped.

Pretrial detentions are frequently extended arbitrarily. Prisons are overcrowded and are characterized by deplorable sanitary conditions.

Senegal has ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, but child labor remains common. Boys placed in Quranic schools are often exposed to violence and are frequently forced to beg on the streets. The widespread phenomenon of child begging is a significant source of controversy in urban areas.

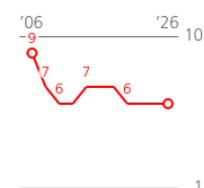
Prosecution of office abuse

4



Civil rights

6



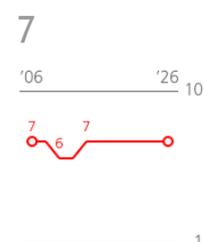
4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

Senegal has a long tradition of institutionalized governance. Key democratic institutions, including parliament, the judiciary and public administration, are present. Members of parliament are elected in regular elections held every five years. These institutions generally function well, though their configuration is frequently altered to distribute positions and spoils to ruling party loyalists. For example, the Senate was established in 1999 but abolished in 2001, then reestablished in 2007 but abolished again in 2012. New institutions such as the Conseil Economique, Social et Environmental have been created instead. The post of prime minister has been maintained inconsistently since 2019. This fluidity allows the president to shape and co-opt democratic institutions to his political advantage.

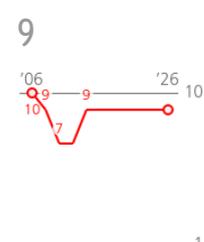
The presidency remains more powerful than the legislative and judicial branches of government. Importantly, democratic mechanisms, especially those related to transitions of power, remain strong as seen in 2000, 2012 and even in 2024 under considerable stress. In 2024 the judiciary helped protect elections and prevented President Sall from extending his mandate. Democratic institutions benefit from a vibrant civil society and active media. Attempts to create strong regional entities during decentralization have had mixed success since its introduction in 1996. The creation of local institutions, the number of which has been dramatically expanded over the last two decades, has been used by Senegalese presidents as a form of patronage.

There is broad support for Senegal's democratic institutions among both citizens and elites. The political, religious and military establishments show commitment to democratic rule. While Senegalese citizens may sometimes be cynical about politicians, they view democratic institutions and processes as necessary and legitimate. They are willing to defend democratic norms, as demonstrated by widespread protests when democracy is in danger, such as during each leadership transition (2000, 2011, 2024). This was notably the case following President Sall's attempt to extend his mandate and postpone elections by 10 months. Influential pro-democratic movements strongly engage in democratic vigilance. Despite attempts to tamper with the electoral process, President Sall respected the highest court's ruling mandating an election before the end of his term and relinquished power peacefully.

Performance of democratic institutions



Commitment to democratic institutions



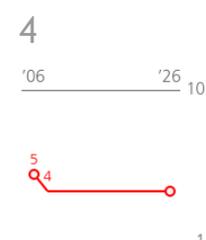
5 | Political and Social Integration

Senegal's party system has been highly volatile and unstable over the last 20 years. The Parti Socialiste (PS), which held power for 40 years after independence from 1960 until 2000, has been substantially weakened and is now a shadow of its former self. Given the strong role played by clientelism in winning popular support, parties tend to lose substantial resources and their clientelist networks once they are out of power. A common pattern in Senegalese politics is that politicians and voters flock to those already in power until their position weakens. Party switching (transhumance) is common. Once it lost power, the PS saw a significant exodus of its members of parliament to the new ruling party at the time, President Wade's PDS, which held power from 2000 to 2012. After Wade's defeat in 2012, the cycle repeated itself, and the PDS lost many of its party elites and members to President Macky Sall. In the first legislative election after President Faye came to power, his party, PASTEF, won an overwhelming majority, while former President Sall's party lost most of its seats. PASTEF had been dissolved in 2023 under Sall, but it was quickly reinstated following Bassirou Diomaye Faye's win.

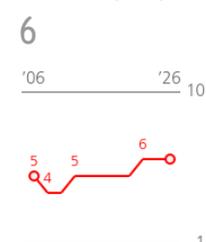
Over time, the main ruling political parties (PS, PDS, APR, PASTEF) have developed well-entrenched party structures within society. However, Senegalese parties remain personalistic and clientelistic, making them vulnerable to decline when political circumstances change. The party landscape is also highly fragmented, with hundreds of small parties that have little prospect of winning. Many of these parties serve as vehicles for the personal advancement of their leaders. Most parties are poorly institutionalized, with a weak presence across the country. Few parties have a distinct policy platform, and reliance on clientelism remains common. In contrast to many other parties, PASTEF, the current ruling party, has established a more distinctive brand centered on anti-corruption and African sovereignty.

Senegal has a vibrant civil society, ranging from trade unions and youth movements to religious organizations. Religious leaders have considerable influence over political leaders. Their privileged access to power provides a strong platform to represent their interests. Trade unions are prolific but represent only a minority of voters, given the small size of the formal economy. The informal economy is surprisingly well organized, considering its informality. Women's organizations are also well organized and have played a crucial role in increasing women's representation in the Senegalese parliament, though their ability to improve the social and economic position of women has been more limited. Youth movements and student groups have proliferated in recent years, with many involved in politics. Youth movements were among the strongest supporters of the current administration in the lead-up to its rise to power.

Party system



Interest groups



Levels of approval of democracy as a form of government is high in Senegal, even though citizens are often disillusioned with politicians and their performance. Attachment to multiparty politics and elections as a process of choosing leaders is also very strong. According to the most recent available data from the Afrobarometer survey (2022), 84.3% of the population believed democracy was preferable to any other kind of government, and 86.7% of respondents disapproved of one-party rule. However, assessments of how democracy actually works in Senegal were much more negative, with 50% of Afrobarometer respondents expressing dissatisfaction. The protests throughout the country following President Sall's attempted extension of his mandate highlight citizens' commitment to democratic processes.

The level of trust in Senegal is generally high, including across ethnic and religious groups. Trust in religious leaders and traditional authorities is strong. Afrobarometer data for 2022 indicated that 65.7% of respondents trusted religious leaders a lot, while only 32.7% trusted traditional leaders a lot. There is a noticeable urban-rural difference, with trust levels considerably higher in rural areas, particularly with respect to traditional leaders. Specifically, 19.2% in urban areas said they trusted traditional leaders a lot, compared with 43.4% in rural areas. Yet even in urban areas, the proliferation of various organizations or informal self-help schemes – such as “amicales” or “tontines” – gives individuals access to support networks and facilitates collaboration. Few people in Senegal are not part of some informal help network.

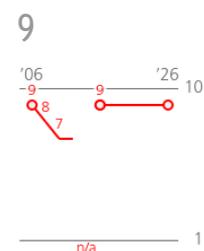
II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

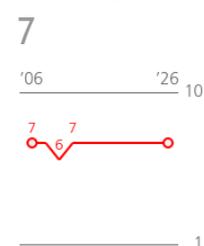
Even though Senegal has posted robust growth rates in the last decade, poverty and inequality remain widespread. The World Bank reclassified the country as a lower middle-income country in 2019. Yet the Human Development Index paints a more troubling picture, placing Senegal at rank 169 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.517 (2022). While Senegal's ranking has improved slightly from 170th to 169th place, the country has been unable to make noticeable progress despite the absence of conflict or violence – factors that serve as major obstacles in many other African countries.

The World Bank estimated the poverty rate at 36.3% in 2021 and calculated a Gini index of 36.2, down from 40.3 in 2011. Inequality remains significant despite a slight improvement over the past decade. The United Nations Human Development Report estimated the loss due to inequality at 35.4% (2022).

Approval of democracy

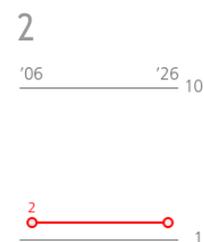


Social capital



Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers



Inequality has a strong gender dimension. On average, girls receive significantly fewer years of formal education than boys, as cultural practices such as early marriage and early pregnancy persist. Wage gaps and barriers to land access compound existing inequalities. Senegal's score on the Gender Inequality Index was 0.505 in 2022, slightly down from 0.54 a decade earlier.

Inequality also has a spatial dimension, as much of Senegal's economic activity is concentrated along the coast, especially in the capital. This inequality has two components: urban-rural and coastal-hinterland, with rural regions along Senegal's eastern edge experiencing the least development. Inhabitants of the eastern regions often refer to their area as "forgotten Senegal." The urban-rural disparity helps explain the significant influx of rural migrants into cities. However, Senegal's urban centers cannot offer sufficient opportunities to integrate those who migrate there. Most migrants make a living in the informal sector.

Wealth may not be distributed equally among different ethnic and religious groups, with the historic neglect of the Diola in the Casamance region being a significant contributing factor to the separatist conflict there. However, Senegal does not experience the same stark ethnic and religious disparities in development levels as many other African countries.

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	27520.8	27783.3	30696.3	32267.3
GDP growth	%	6.5	3.9	4.3	6.9
Inflation (CPI)	%	2.2	9.7	5.9	0.8
Unemployment	%	3.4	2.8	2.8	3.0
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	9.4	10.5	15.6	6.2
Export growth	%	22.5	3.7	-6.0	41.3
Import growth	%	16.0	14.4	-0.4	-5.1
Current account balance	\$ M	-3327.3	-5542.4	-6071.8	-
Public debt	% of GDP	98.6	105.0	118.4	128.4
External debt	\$ M	28997.5	32233.2	39950.1	-
Total debt service	\$ M	2096.4	1944.2	2684.3	-

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-6.0	-5.6	-4.9	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	17.6	18.6	19.5	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	15.2	15.1	15.8	16.4
Public education spending	% of GDP	5.6	6.0	6.2	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	1.2	0.9	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.8	1.5	1.5	-

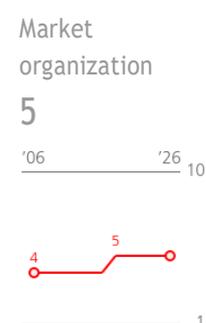
Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Economic freedom has decreased slightly in Senegal in recent years. The Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom ranks Senegal 109th out of 184 countries and 16th in sub-Saharan Africa. Senegal is ranked as “mostly unfree” after briefly being categorized as “moderately free.” The most significant obstacles are identified in the areas of financial freedom, government integrity and fiscal health. While the Senegalese government respects property rights, their implementation is inconsistent outside urban areas, where non-elected leaders influence access to land. Trade and monetary freedom remain the most problematic areas. Firms struggle with bureaucratic bottlenecks, have limited access to finance and face high credit costs. The state imposes high tariff and non-tariff costs on businesses. There are concerns that political connections affect the ability to do business or investment prospects.

Market forces primarily determine prices, with fuel as a significant exception. The Senegalese government subsidizes fuel costs and imposes price limits.

The informal sector still dominates the Senegalese economy. According to the International Labor Organization, informal employment accounts for 90.2% of total employment (2019 figure), posing significant challenges to the state’s ability to expand its tax base. In addition, most workers in the informal sector lack safety nets such as unemployment insurance, disability benefits or pensions. As a result, the situation of most Senegalese workers can be described as precarious.



Some monopolies exist in both the formal and informal sectors. Given the small size of the formal Senegalese economy, monopolies and quasi-monopolies can be easily established. Many monopolies that held considerable power during the post-independence period, such as peanut marketing, have been dissolved. However, this has not necessarily led to improvements for producers or consumers due to inadequate market regulation and oversight.

There is a quasi-monopoly in the telecommunications sector, with Orange controlling more than 50% of the market. In the energy sector, competition is limited, as the state-owned Senelec holds a monopoly on distribution. Energy prices remain high, but improvements in energy production and distribution in recent years have led to significantly fewer blackouts than a decade ago.

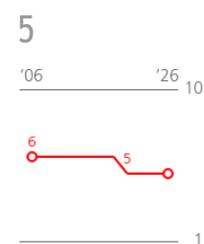
The state does not actively foster monopolies but appears to allow them to exist, including in the informal economy – especially when influential figures control those sectors. The informal transportation sector, dominated by actors from the Mouride brotherhood or those closely associated with it, faces little competition despite its poor safety record and substandard vehicles. Other countries in the region offer more and better transportation options for intercity travel, suggesting some barriers to entry in the Senegalese market.

As stated in the World Bank 2018 report “Senegal: Better Markets for All Through Competition Policy,” Senegal is subject to two partially contradictory jurisdictions: the rules of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which permit the application of national competition law, and those of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which centralizes competition enforcement. Senegal also has its own National Competition Commission, but it is relatively inactive in practice, with no reports available about any significant investigations. Regulatory authorities in some specific sectors, such as telecommunications and advertising, have the power to intervene in anti-competitive practices. Senegal is a member of the International Competition Network.

Senegal has a relatively open policy toward external trade. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the simple average most favored nation applied tariff in Senegal was 12.0% in 2023. Senegal maintains trade partnerships with various actors within and outside Africa. The country has been a member of the WTO since 1995 and was among the early West African signatories of the Economic Partnership Agreement between ECOWAS and the European Union. Senegal has also ratified the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and has signed both the Kigali Declaration and the Free Movement Protocol. Its primary trade partners include China, the European Union, India, Switzerland, Vietnam, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Senegal plays an important role in regional and transcontinental trade, and the Port of Dakar is one of the region’s most significant ports.

Competition policy



Liberalization of foreign trade



The banking sector is diversified and operates stably under the auspices of a strong regional bank, the Central Bank of West African States (Banque Central des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest). Foreign banks dominate the banking system, with the sector led by subsidiaries of French, Moroccan, Nigerian and pan-African banks.

Access to loans remains a challenge, especially for small entrepreneurs and informal sector workers. Access to credit is limited, even by African standards. The World Bank identifies this as one of the major obstacles to development.

Supervision in West Africa is divided between national and supranational levels. The Central Bank of West African States and the Banking Commission of the West African Union supervise banks and large deposit-taking institutions, while the Ministry of Finance handles other financial matters.

The Regional Council for Public Savings and Financial Markets, part of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, supervises small microfinance institutions and financial markets. The Ministry of Finance oversees the insurance industry.

Data on Senegal's banking sector is incomplete. The World Bank does not publish data on the bank capital-to-assets ratio or the share of non-performing loans.

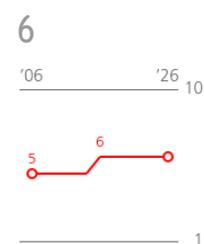
8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

Currency policy is determined by the supranational Central Bank of West African States and is characterized by prudent policies. The convertibility of the West African CFA franc (currency code XOF) is guaranteed by the French treasury and pegged to the euro. In 2019, the WAEMU and France concluded an agreement to create the eco, a new currency to replace the West African CFA franc, limiting France's influence on the currency. The eco is expected to be launched in 2027. France is in the process of withdrawing its representatives from the monetary union. It no longer requires XOF reserves to be deposited in the French treasury.

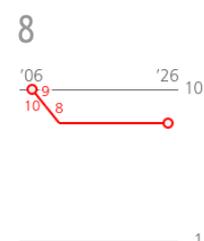
Inflation rose significantly in 2022, with a rate of 9.7% compared to 2.5% in 2020 and 1.8% in 2019. This stronger inflation reflected the lingering effects of COVID-19 and the global rise in energy and food prices in 2022. No numbers are available for the real effective exchange rate index.

Senegal faces a growing debt burden. The country's public debt reached 81.2% of GDP in 2021, up from 36.9% a decade earlier. The increase has been especially sharp over the past five years. According to the World Bank, the current account balance in 2021 (the most recent available data) showed a deficit of \$3.32 billion, a significant jump compared to previous years. In 2022, Senegal's total external debt climbed to \$32.1 billion, more than four times higher than at the start of President Sall's tenure. Debt service payments rose to \$1.9 billion in 2022, slightly lower than in 2021 but nearly double the total in 2020. Government consumption has remained relatively steady, accounting for 14.7% of GDP in 2022. There is no current data on Senegal's total reserves.

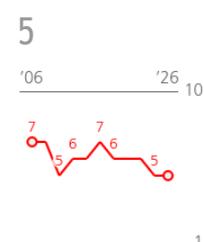
Banking system



Monetary stability



Fiscal stability



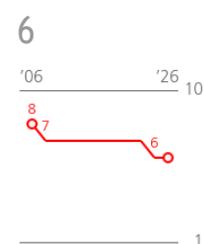
Senegal's escalating debt burden is a cause for concern. While investments in infrastructure are necessary and could potentially drive economic growth, it remains uncertain whether all debt-financed projects will yield positive returns. Both President Sall and predecessor Abdoulaye Wade faced accusations of favoring high-profile projects such as the new airport and stadium in Diamniadio, while neglecting less prominent endeavors outside the capital region. Prime Minister Sonko has announced measures to streamline public finances following the publication of the Court of Auditors' report.

9 | Private Property

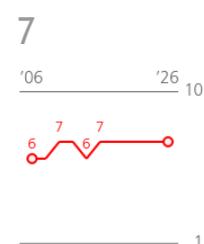
Property rights regimes in Senegal vary by location. While Senegal has clear property laws, enforcement is inconsistent. Generally, property rights are more clearly defined in urban areas, but social conventions influence use rights in rural regions. Women face systematic disadvantages under the country's inheritance laws. Investors' property rights are respected. However, the Senegalese poor, especially those in informal housing, may not have property rights to their dwellings. Occasionally, media reports highlight construction occurring without regularized property rights. Under the National Domain Law, most land in Senegal is owned by the state, with the state or local leaders responsible for allocating use rights. This state control over land allocation creates opportunities for individuals with political connections to obtain property.

Private companies are permitted and generally protected. The state welcomes foreign investment and encourages public-private partnerships. Private enterprises dominate many important sectors such as tourism, banking and telecommunications. Legal protections differ between the formal sector, where they are strong, and the large informal sector, where many enterprises might not be registered, do not pay taxes and thus lack legal protection. Private enterprise is widespread, but only part of it is formal. Senegal has undergone considerable privatization since the 1980s. The lease of state resources to foreign actors – such as Chinese access to fishing in Senegalese waters – has been controversial. The weakness of the domestic private sector often places Senegalese firms at a disadvantage to foreign competitors. President Faye has announced the creation of a commission to renegotiate contracts with private companies in the exploitation of oil resources.

Property rights



Private enterprise



10 | Welfare Regime

The welfare regime in Senegal is rudimentary and primarily serves employees in the formal sector. Coverage is limited and fragmented, leaving most Senegalese without access to health care or pension benefits. Although there are initiatives such as free medical treatment for citizens under age five and over age 60, these programs offer incomplete coverage due to financial constraints. According to the World Bank, public expenditure on health from domestic sources was equivalent to 1.1% of Senegal's GDP in 2021. In 2022, average life expectancy was 67.9 years, up from 65.5 a decade earlier.

Employers with more than 100 employees are required to provide medical coverage. Many workers in the informal sector rely instead on solidarity-based insurance schemes, known as “mutuelles.” However, many of these mutuelles are vulnerable to failure. In 2013, the government introduced universal basic health care protection (Couverture Maladie Universelle), which builds on the existing informal network of mutuelles. The program relies on voluntary participation in local mutuelles, especially in rural areas, and it injects funds to support the existing network. The Senegalese government set an ambitious goal of reaching 75% coverage by 2017, but that goal has not been reached. According to the most recent government data, the program has enrolled 4.5 million people and in 2022 it covered 25% of the population. Additionally, the government provides some free services for vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities.

Pensions for workers in the formal sector are managed by the Institution de Prévoyance Retraite du Sénégal. The Caisse de sécurité sociale provides coverage for work accidents, disability and maternity leave for formally employed individuals.

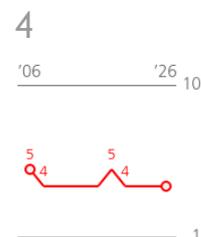
In 2014, the government established a bourse familiale that provides stipends of XOF 100,000 (\$165) per year to 250,000 poor families. Given the number of poor families, this program targets a very small share of those in need.

In the absence of social welfare programs, extended family networks and remittances serve as safety nets for most Senegalese people.

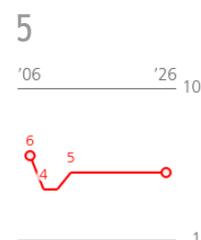
There is a significant gap in Senegal between de jure and de facto equality of opportunity. The Senegalese state does not discriminate against women, ethnic or religious minorities, or castes. Most of the discrimination in the form of reduced opportunities stems from poverty or social bias.

According to the World Bank, only 57.7% of the population can read and write (2022), though this figure is gradually rising. Gross elementary enrollment is 82.6%, indicating that not all children attend school even at the primary level. There is a significant gap in literacy rates between men (69.1%) and women (47.1%). In recent

Social safety nets



Equal opportunity



years, women have made larger gains in literacy; however, many have their schooling cut short due to early marriage. There are indications that this imbalance in literacy rates will improve in the coming years, as currently there are today more girls than boys at both the primary and secondary levels of education – a ratio of 1.2 girls for every boy. Males and females currently have equal enrollment in tertiary education. According to official statistics, women comprise 38.7% of the labor force, a figure that has remained virtually unchanged for a decade. However, women are very active in the informal economy, notably as housekeepers or market vendors.

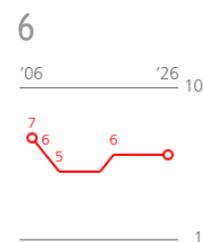
The 2010 parity law significantly increased the number of female legislators in the National Assembly. Currently, 68 of the 165 members of parliament are women (41.2%), a slight decrease since the last election. Women continue to face a power imbalance within political parties, as most party leaders are men.

Different religious and ethnic groups are generally treated equally. However, caste status still poses barriers to marriage, even though the state does not formally discriminate. Because homosexuality is criminalized, LGBTQ+ individuals have fewer protections than other citizens. Foreigners, especially those from neighboring countries, receive favorable treatment.

11 | Economic Performance

Economic indicators present a mixed picture of Senegal's economic performance. Economic growth has been slow in the post-pandemic period, with only modest growth of 1.1% recorded in 2023 and 1.2% in 2022. Positive numbers were recorded every year except 2020, when COVID-19 caused a slight contraction. While GDP is growing, the population is also increasing, making it difficult to achieve substantial gains in GDP per capita. GDP per capita, at \$4,833 (PPP) in 2023, remains low, though that represents a substantial increase from \$2,792 a decade earlier. Senegal has witnessed growth in foreign direct investment, which reached 8.5% of GDP in 2023, up from 1.6% a decade earlier but slightly down from the peak of 10.6% in 2022. Senegal's current account balance showed a deficit of \$3.3 billion in 2021. Despite positive growth in GDP and foreign direct investment, it will take years of robust economic expansion to significantly improve living standards, which have been eroded by recent high rates of inflation (9.7% in 2022). The large number of people lacking formal employment remains the most significant economic challenge. Senegal's official unemployment rate, 2.9% in 2023, is almost meaningless because it does not account for most Senegalese forced to make a living in the informal sector.

Output strength



12 | Sustainability

The Environmental Performance Index (2024) ranks Senegal 100th out of 180 countries. Both Senegal's relative and absolute rankings have improved over the last decade, but many significant and visible environmental problems remain. The effect of climate change is palpable in the form of changing weather patterns and coastal erosion. Sandstorms, which previously affected only the northern part of the country, have moved further south, affecting the already poor air quality. Air pollution in the capital has become noticeably worse in recent years. The increasing number of vehicles and their generally poor condition produce considerable volume of air pollution in Dakar.

The country has experienced cycles of irregular rainfall and flooding that are particularly severe in urban areas. Rapid urban expansion, especially in the capital region, has increased the country's vulnerability to flooding.

Overbuilding in cities has become a serious problem. Urban areas in Senegal contain very little vegetation that could help absorb excess water. The combination of climate change and rapid population growth poses severe environmental challenges. Senegal participates in the Green Wall initiative, which aims to stop desertification by planting trees across the Sahel. Although the country is making progress on the project, desertification in the northern part of Senegal remains a concern.

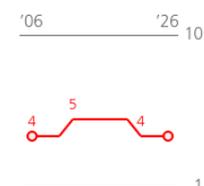
Senegal struggles to manage its trash. Trash pollution, especially large amounts of plastic, is visible throughout the country. Although the government has banned single-use plastic bags, plastic debris remains widespread. The problem is especially apparent on Senegal's beaches, where large amounts of refuse routinely wash ashore.

Overfishing and illegal wood harvesting, especially in the Casamance region, remain serious problems. The Senegalese government struggles to protect its coastal waters. Illegal fishing by large mainly Chinese trawlers is impacting fish stocks.

The Ministry of Environmental and Sustainable Development, a member of the U.N. Environment Program, is responsible for setting the state's climate policy. In addition to developing overall climate policy, the ministry lists reducing greenhouse gas emissions as one of its two main goals. It supports various projects toward that aim, including the thermal regulation of buildings. The directorate within the ministry focuses on regulation and oversight.

Environmental
policy

4



Senegal's education sector suffers from both insufficient funding and inadequate outputs. Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 6% in 2022, slightly higher than in previous years. Spending on research and development is not regularly measured. The last available figure is from 2015, when it was 0.6% of GDP, far below the approximately 2% seen in wealthy countries.

Senegal scored 0.349 in 2021 on the U.N. Education Index, a figure that has not improved much over the past decade. The country's literacy rate reached 57.7% in 2022.

The quality of schooling is also a problem, with large classes, poor infrastructure and variable quality between public and private schools. Public Franco-Arabic schools, established in the 2000s, have become more widespread. Many Senegalese children, especially in rural areas, do not receive state education but instead attend religious (Quranic) schools or daaras. With limited regulation, there are concerns about gaps in the school curriculum in many daaras. Frequent strikes also lead to the loss of school days for both schoolchildren and university students.

Education policy /
R&D

3

'06 _____ '26 10

3

_____ 1

Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

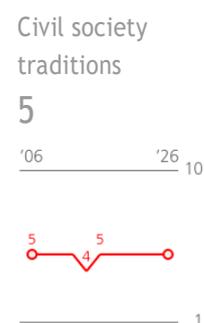
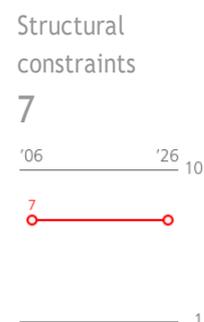
Senegal faces a number of structural challenges that constrain its governance capacity, including high poverty and illiteracy levels and poor infrastructure. Poor roads and the large number of households without electricity or running water limit productivity and hinder economic development. These conditions make it difficult for any government to satisfy the long list of unmet needs.

Senegal's geography poses challenges as well. While the country is relatively flat and compact, its southernmost region, Casamance, is separated from the rest of Senegal by the country of the Gambia. This complicates travel between the region and the capital and contributes to the marginalization of Casamance. The bulk of Senegal north of The Gambia is arid and prone to droughts. Still, severe floods can occur, as happened in November 2024. The floods in the Senegal River valley displaced more than 50,000 people and jeopardized food security in the country.

Climate change and desertification have worsened the situation, posing challenges for agriculture. Senegal has limited natural resources despite the discovery of offshore oil. However, unlike its landlocked neighbors, Senegal's coastline is a significant asset.

High population growth and rapid urbanization pose challenges in Senegal. The country has a young population, resulting in a favorable ratio of young to old people. However, because of its small formal sector, Senegal struggles to incorporate many young people into the workforce. This presents the government with a so-called demographic dividend, but also results in high unemployment levels and a large number of young men with few economic opportunities. The rapid expansion of cities, especially Dakar, has made it difficult to manage growth through urban planning. As a result, construction is often haphazard and existing infrastructure is strained.

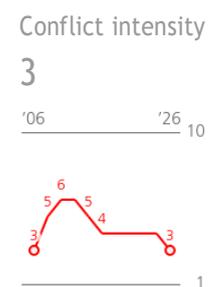
Senegal has a rich tradition of civil society engagement, but segments of civil society are vulnerable to co-optation by those in power. At times, civil society has acted as a check on those in authority – notably during the 2000 and 2012 elections and more recently following the postponement of the 2024 election. However, at other moments, parts of civil society have appeared to align with the ruling elite. Religious organizations, youth movements and women's groups all have robust networks. Women's organizations such as Cosef were instrumental in the 2010 passage of the law mandating gender parity on party lists for those contesting legislative elections.



Student groups are numerous, and students often engage in protests or go on strike. For example, students were active in demonstrations against the prosecution and arrest of Ousmane Sonko. Religious groups provide important support networks, and they can exert pressure on politicians. There are many NGOs, ranging from large international organizations to national and regional groups. Some have had a positive impact on respect for human rights (e.g., Raddho) or on women's health and education (e.g., Tostan). Social trust is high, including across religious and ethnic groups, but trust in political elites remains low. Senegalese incumbents who pursue unpopular actions, such as former President Wade's effort to seek a third presidential term in 2011, have historically faced civil society mobilization and resistance. This was also the case in the last few months of President Sall's tenure.

There is a general absence of violent conflict in Senegal, with the notable exception of the separatist rebellion in Casamance. While the rebellion is gradually subsiding, discussions of the conflict remain sensitive. In October 2024, Prime Minister Sonko advocated suppressing a new book on Casamance by a French historian. Ethnic and religious cleavages are not very pronounced. They are culturally important but do not shape politics, for instance through voting behavior. Senegalese politicians and parties seek to garner support across different groups. The 2024 presidential election confirms this pattern, with Bassirou Diomaye Faye gaining strong support across Senegal. There is considerable intermarriage between groups. Tensions between Muslims and Christians are exceedingly rare. Minor disputes between Muslim brotherhoods over issues such as the dates of religious holidays occasionally occur but are rare.

Senegalese politics can be confrontational at the level of discourse, but show low levels of violence. Clashes between rival campaigns occur regularly during elections. These confrontations are minor compared to other countries in the region, and there is no systematic targeting of ordinary citizens based on their political affiliation. Political demonstrations, especially in the capital, sometimes lead to clashes with security services, as was the case in the months leading up to the 2024 election. Senegalese generally reject sectarian discourse, and politicians seen as transgressing these norms are criticized. Prime Minister Sonko, who hails from Casamance, has made efforts to distance himself from separatist forces in the region. There is a high degree of fluidity in Senegalese politics, with few irreparable divisions. This avoids the emergence of hard cleavages, but also fuels voter cynicism about Senegalese politicians.



II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

Senegal's government has outlined its strategic goals through the Plan Senegal Emergent (PSE) since 2014. This long-term initiative focuses on economic development aimed at transforming Senegal into an emerging economy. PSE places significant emphasis on infrastructure and public-private investment in such projects. The country has made notable progress, constructing new roads, railways and an airport and proposing a new port. However, there have been considerably fewer advances with regard to improving the quality of life for ordinary people, for instance via expanding access to improved sanitation or clean water. Under Sall, the objective of reducing inequality was less visible than the emphasis on large-scale infrastructure projects. It is too early to determine how these policies will change under Faye, but the new government has placed greater rhetorical emphasis on fighting corruption and strengthening government revenue.

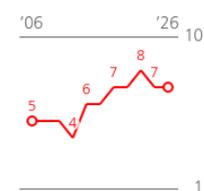
The Senegalese government can draw on both local and international expertise and has access to qualified personnel. The political leadership is committed to respecting the basic tenets of a market economy, the rule of law and democracy. At the same time, the government is not immune from political pressures. Sall's government at times prioritized the interests of powerful economic actors – whether foreign or domestic – over long-term benefits for the population. The interests of some domestic actors, such as the powerful Mouride clerics, probably influence limited progress in expanding state schooling or public transportation. Some contracts with foreign partners signed by the previous government – such as those granting fishing licenses to Chinese trawlers – seemed to privilege short-term gains. While President Faye and Prime Minister Sonko are critical of overdependence on the West, they have not turned away from Western organizations.

Senegal's government has been able to implement many, but not all, of its policies. It has been more successful in carrying out large infrastructure projects and has achieved notable results in the area of foreign policy. In recent years, it oversaw the completion of a new airport, a stadium and several office buildings in the planned city of Diamniadio, near the capital city of Dakar, as well as a commuter train linking Dakar to Diamniadio. However, the initiative to decongest Dakar by moving venues to Diamniadio has not resulted in any visible improvement in the capital. The government has also managed to execute effective foreign policy, keeping Senegal stable and safe at a time when security has declined in many neighboring countries. Other government plans, such as the provision of universal basic health care

Question
Score

Prioritization

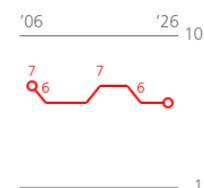
7



1

Implementation

6



1

protection through the Couverture Maladie Universelle, have made some progress but have failed to meet stated government goals. High unemployment rates and a small formal sector remain significant challenges that President Faye has inherited from the previous administration.

The Senegalese government under Sall demonstrated a combination of openness to dialogue and learning and top-down decision-making. The government was relatively receptive to consultations and generally accepted advice and critical thinking from national and international partners. It established the Commission d’Evaluation et de Suivi des Politiques & Programmes Publics (Evaluation and Monitoring Commission for Public Politics and Programs) and was open to conducting audits and reviewing failed policies. The IMF conducted several rounds of consultations, and international development partners were frequently consulted. Faye’s administration has adopted a different stance, emphasizing sovereignty and independence from international organizations and Western powers. In practice, however, the shift has been less significant than the change in rhetoric suggests. Despite decentralization reforms, power remains highly centralized, with priorities set at the top and major policies dictated by the executive’s particular vision.

15 | Resource Efficiency

Senegal does not make efficient use of administrative personnel. The politicized allocation of positions is the main inefficiency hampering public administration. Although there are many well-educated and qualified personnel available, hiring and advancement are not always based on merit. The Faye administration has stated it is focused on improving government efficiency, but few results were visible in this sphere after the initial months in power.

Senegal has strengthened its fiscal transparency and aligned its legal framework governing public finances with West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) directives, which rely on international best practices. According to the IMF, the country’s level of fiscal transparency matches that of other nations of similar size and economic development. The IMF states that fiscal legislation follows international best practices and that overall fiscal planning is sound. While some practices in monitoring risks and fiscal transparency are rated as “good,” the IMF has criticized the limited availability of certain documents to the public, such as those on tax expenditures, and the absence of a thorough analysis of fiscal risks.

The national administration maintains a basic level of competence, but has been undermined by years of patronage appointments. Senegal has pursued decentralization reforms and established local governance units. While these changes have made the government more responsive to local input, the new governance units have also served as vehicles for patronage.

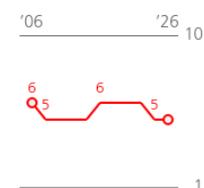
Policy learning

7



Efficient use of assets

5



The government's ability to coordinate conflicting objectives into coherent policy has been mixed. The needs of large segments of the population, such as informal sector workers or farmers, do not receive sufficient consideration. Successive governments have privileged the interests of urban areas over rural areas, and have focused on projects appealing to the urban upper classes. The priorities of different government agencies or ministries often depend on the political position of those leading them. The politicization of bureaucracies and the concentration of power affect policy priorities. Certain domains, such as environmental protection, seem to have been systematically compromised as a means of advancing economic development. The state allows the priorities of powerful actors, such as religious clerics, to influence family law and education. Because of the strength of Faye's support among young voters, there is a high expectation that his administration will do more to address the needs of Senegalese youth.

Senegal has official institutions and rules intended to address corruption, but enforcement is seen as politicized. For example, the Cour de Repression contre l'Enrichissement Illicite (CREI) is a special court created to combat corruption. However, under former President Sall, this body only targeted Sall's political opponents or those affiliated with the previous ruling party. Sall's allies were largely insulated from scrutiny, fueling public cynicism about the selective application of anti-corruption efforts. Combating corruption was at the heart of one of PASTEF's primary campaign promises. Both President Faye and Prime Minister Sonko are anti-corruption advocates, with direct experience from their years as tax inspectors.

Senegal has an anti-corruption agency, the Office National de Lutte contre la Fraude et la Corruption, created in 2012. The office is an independent authority empowered to collect complaints and investigate allegations of abuse of public office. It can also make reform recommendations and publishes an annual report. In 2021, it opened 90 inquiries into alleged malfeasance. While the creation of the body was a step in the right direction, it made little impact on the incidence of corruption under Sall. There are high expectations that Faye's administration will address corruption more aggressively.

Party financing regulations are incomplete. In principle, parties cannot receive funding from foreign nationals, but many do not provide transparent accounting of party finances. The large number of political parties renders oversight difficult. The challenge of funding parties through membership fees in a poor country adds pressure to access state resources. Asset declarations for high-level officeholders are mandatory, but questions remain about the sources of wealth for specific political figures, including government ministers. Parties often lose access to resources once their political fortunes decline.

Senegal meets basic reporting and auditing standards. It follows West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) guidelines for submitting documents to audit institutions and provides basic budget statistics to ensure transparency. The

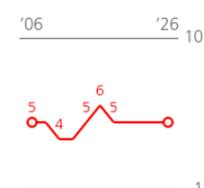
Policy coordination

7



Anti-corruption policy

5



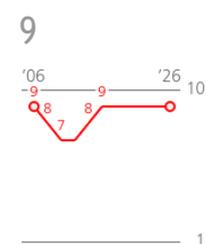
media frequently raises questions about public procurement and public tenders, and suspicion concerning the politically motivated allocation of contracts is not uncommon.

16 | Consensus-Building

Most major political actors in Senegal support democracy. Commitment to free and fair elections is strong, and political actors use existing institutions to advance their goals. The constitutional crisis narrowly averted after President Sall postponed the 2024 election highlights the strength of the population's commitment to democracy, which became evident in the scale of popular mobilization and protest. The Constitutional Court's decision to rule President Sall's actions unconstitutional demonstrates specific institutional strength. There is a high degree of pride in Senegalese democracy and in the fact that the country has avoided extraconstitutional transfers of power, such as military coups, which are not infrequent in the region. The army remains neutral and stays out of politics. The religious establishment tries to influence politics but does so within the democratic system. Market economy Most political actors accept the market economy. The now-ruling PASTEF party is more committed to reducing Senegalese foreign dependence, which distinguishes it from other parties, but in practice it tolerates the existing economic order. Political actors view a market-based economy as "the only game in town." Hence, political actors pragmatically support it, even though the leaders of PASTEF criticize it in public and many Senegalese find the market-based system insufficiently solidaristic and too tilted toward individual economic freedom.

Democracy Most major political actors in Senegal support democracy. Commitment to free and fair elections is strong, and political actors use existing institutions to advance their goals. The constitutional crisis narrowly averted after President Sall postponed the 2024 election highlights the strength of the population's commitment to democracy, which became evident in the scale of popular mobilization and protest. The Constitutional Court's decision to rule President Sall's actions unconstitutional demonstrates specific institutional strength. There is a high degree of pride in Senegalese democracy and in the fact that the country has avoided extraconstitutional transfers of power, such as military coups, which are not infrequent in the region. The army remains neutral and stays out of politics. The religious establishment tries to influence politics but does so within the democratic system. Market economy Most political actors accept the market economy. The now-ruling PASTEF party is more committed to reducing Senegalese foreign dependence, which distinguishes it from other parties, but in practice it tolerates the existing economic order. Political actors view a market-based economy as "the only game in town." Hence, political actors pragmatically support it, even though the leaders of PASTEF criticize it in public and many Senegalese find the market-based system insufficiently solidaristic and too tilted toward individual economic freedom.

Consensus on goals



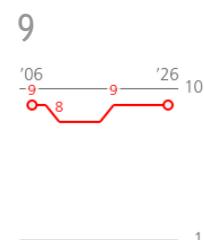
Most influential actors in Senegal are committed to democracy. The Senegalese state effectively contains radical and non-democratic elements. Senegalese presidents, including former president Macky Sall, have occasionally undertaken actions that undermine democracy to increase their electoral advantage, such as using state power against political opponents. However, Senegalese institutions have been resilient enough to limit these infractions. Courts and civil society actors served as important checks on President Sall's anti-democratic actions. Powerful religious clerics from Senegal's main Muslim brotherhoods have played a significant role in politics, but they have not undermined the democratic system. They have also played a key role in helping to stem the rise of radical Islam and contain its spread in Senegal at a time when the threat of radical Islamism has grown in the region.

Senegalese political leaders have a tradition of building diverse coalitions of support, helping to prevent the entrenchment of political divisions. Ethnic or religious cleavages have never emerged in Senegal to the extent seen in a number of other African countries. Senegalese presidents consistently cultivate relationships with religious clerics from all the main Muslim brotherhoods, creating connections across different religious communities. Senegalese politics is also highly fluid, with frequent party switching – often promoted by the incumbent president – and few lasting divisions. President Faye gained support from various social groups and regions. This fluidity ensures that no group feels permanently excluded from power.

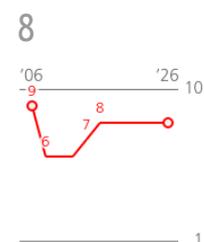
Senegalese governments have a history of consulting and engaging with important civil society actors. Most notably, religious leaders are shown significant consideration, and their opinions and support influence political leaders. The interests of trade unions, women's and youth groups are generally considered. Some influential civil society actors are brought in as advisers or given posts in the government, though these roles are sometimes no more than symbolic. Former President Sall repeatedly clashed with members of the press, and there were many protests against his government, especially in the lead-up to the 2024 elections. The interaction between Sall's government and civil society can be characterized as a mix of engagement and criticism. After less than a year in power, President Faye is still enjoying tremendous enthusiasm from civil society, and there has not been significant contestation of his agenda.

The separatist rebellion in Casamance has been the most serious conflict in Senegalese history, but it remains largely frozen. Because of Prime Minister Sonko's ties to Casamance, the current government is in a better position to engage in outreach to the region than its predecessors. However, there has not been a thorough accounting of the conduct of either the rebels or the Senegalese army. The government has a clear goal of ending the long-lasting conflict, but it is unclear whether there is widespread desire for a formal reconciliation process.

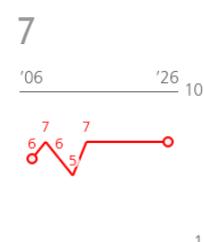
Anti-democratic actors



Cleavage / conflict management



Public consultation



Reconciliation



The leaders of the current administration faced political persecution under former President Sall. There is considerable speculation about a behind-the-scenes deal between President Sall and the leaders of PASTEF that led to their release from prison and ultimately cleared their path to power. So far, the current administration has not engaged in significant retribution against members of the former ruling party.

17 | International Cooperation

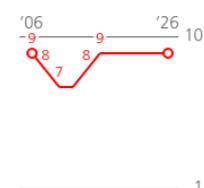
Senegal has historically maintained strong relationships with international donors and agencies. The country is highly regarded for its relative stability and democratic credentials, and it wields more diplomatic influence than its small size would suggest. Increasing instability in the region has made Senegal an increasingly valuable partner in counter-terrorism operations. Many international organizations have selected Senegal as their regional seat. President Faye aims to prioritize Senegalese sovereignty by reducing dependence on foreign actors, yet he has not as yet alienated international partners and continues to cooperate with international institutions such as the IMF. However, the administration has requested that French troops stationed in Senegal withdraw.

In October 2024, President Faye released a new national strategy, the National Transformation Agenda “Senegal 2025.” The plan’s main goal is to make Senegal a sovereign, just and prosperous nation. More specifically, this 25-year initiative aims to promote good governance, economic sovereignty through competitiveness – especially in the extractive industries and agricultural sector – and sustainable resource management. It calls for the creation of eight regional hubs to advance these policies. The plan sets ambitious goals of 6% – 7% economic growth per year and includes measures to reduce deficits and debt. As the plan is still in its early stages, it is not yet possible to assess its success.

Even though the plan stresses sovereignty, Faye invited NGOs and foreign partners to collaborate with the government. Most notably, the plan is supported by the European Union’s Global Gateway strategy as part of the EU initiative to promote green and inclusive economic growth. The EU’s support is extensive. A Team Europe Initiative called Green Economy in Senegal focuses on green agriculture and sustainability. There is also support for managing regional migration, improving transportation as part of the Praia-Dakar-Abidjan corridor, renewable energy, border security, and water and sanitation. Alongside the EU, 16 individual EU member states are involved, as well as the European Investment Bank. Ongoing projects include an effort to clean up Hann Bay.

Effective use of support

9



1

The Senegalese government is considered a reliable partner by the international community, both in the West and in Africa. The country cooperates with and complies with major international institutions. Senegal is a member of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. There are no disputes involving Senegal at the World Trade Organization.

Before the 2024 election, President Sall enjoyed a good reputation in diplomatic circles despite some unease among donors about democratic erosion under his watch. He consistently received better press abroad than at home, where concerns about democratic backsliding were more tangible. His postponement of the 2024 election significantly undermined his reputation abroad. In contrast, while there has been some concern about the current ruling party's prior pronouncements against the West, the present administration has proved pragmatic in practice and has not burned bridges with foreign donors. Senegal skillfully manages cooperative relationships with both the West and China.

Senegal also plays a significant role in mediation and peacekeeping activities. The country consistently contributes peacekeeping troops to U.N. agencies. Under President Faye, Senegal has distanced itself from France to some degree, but relations have not become conflictual. International actors view Senegal as a reliable partner, which has benefited the country, particularly by enabling it to attract greater investment.

While the government seeks to redefine relationships with the West as partnerships rather than forms of dependence, it pursues a mix of cooperation but does not yield to Western donors on issues such as LGBTQ+ rights.

Senegal is also closely engaged in continental and regional organizations. The country is well integrated in the region, chiefly as an active member of ECOWAS and WAEMU, in addition to its role in the African Union. Senegal's relations with Mali have been complicated by repeated military coups in Mali, which led to Mali being sanctioned by ECOWAS. Former President Sall also spoke out strongly against the military coup in Niger, even threatening possible intervention on behalf of ECOWAS. However, the military junta in Niger did not take that threat seriously, which can be interpreted as having undermined the credibility of ECOWAS. The withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS has further weakened the organization. Senegal is one of the most significant contributors of troops to the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA). It is also the largest provider of police for U.N. peacekeeping missions.

Senegal supports strengthening West African economic cooperation and integration through ECOWAS. Along with other ECOWAS countries, it participates in Trade Facilitation West Africa, a five-year initiative managed by the World Bank Group and the German Development Cooperation to expand trade in the region.

Credibility

8



1

Regional cooperation

9



1

Strategic Outlook

Senegal continues to enjoy a strong international reputation in Africa and beyond. The country's prospects are more promising than just a year ago. The political turbulence in early 2024 threatened to undermine Senegal's standing, but the fact that democracy ultimately prevailed restored confidence. Following a peaceful transition of power from Macky Sall to Bassirou Diomaye Faye, there are reasons for optimism. Faye's broad support and his emphasis on fighting corruption make many Senegalese hopeful about the future of their country. There is significant potential for progress under the new administration, but there is also the possibility of disappointment, given citizens' high expectations and the scale of Senegal's structural challenges.

Senegal continues to face profound structural challenges. Poverty, a large informal sector and low youth educational attainment remain persistent problems. The previous government devoted a disproportionate amount of attention and resources to high-profile projects around the capital, such as the construction of the new city of Diamniadio. The new government should instead focus more on less glamorous projects that would improve living standards for both urban and rural poor populations. Dakar suffers from an acute shortage of affordable housing. Lodging prices have risen significantly in recent years due to increased demand and speculation. The current administration is aware of the problem. It is considering expanding social housing – after many years when none was built – through the state agency responsible for housing (Sicap), while additionally using tax breaks for developers who build affordable housing. While the challenge is extensive, this dual approach has the potential to provide some relief.

Youth poverty and underemployment remain two of the most pressing challenges, especially considering that the median age in Senegal is about 19. The previous government failed to improve prospects for young people, contributing to high rates of illegal migration among young Senegalese as well as the decisive rejection of the former ruling party. Unlike in other countries in the region, where political instability has driven emigration, emigration from Senegal reflects limited economic opportunities. The government should be concerned about the number of young men with poor economic prospects, particularly given the recruitment efforts by radical Islamist groups in the region. The president and prime minister enjoy strong support among the youth, but this has also raised high expectations that will be difficult to meet.

Environmental protection has been neglected over the years, and significant environmental problems – exacerbated by climate change and rapid urban growth – need to be addressed more seriously. Environmental degradation and increased air pollution pose public health risks. Several new initiatives targeting waste collection, reforestation and solar energy investment show potential and should be expanded.

On the political front, the new administration should avoid the path taken by the previous two administrations, which promised change but largely preserved the status quo and engaged in democratic erosion, especially in their second terms. With its large parliamentary majority, the government has the flexibility to implement reforms. Although the administration is at the height

of its power following the 2024 landslide presidential and legislative elections, opposition will eventually emerge, and the administration should avoid its predecessor's strategy of persecuting political opponents. As the government focuses on strengthening Senegal's sovereignty, it should maintain productive relations with foreign actors.