

BENIN

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 12.04.2026

Political and Security Situation
Travel advice

A decisive election at a time of political and security instability

The **12 April** presidential election will mark a **new change of government** for Benin, bringing to a close a 10-year period of governance. The decision by the outgoing president, Patrice Talon, not to stand for a third term – in accordance with the Constitution – has been widely seen as a positive sign of respect for democratic standards. The **strength of Benin's institutions** (loyalty among key bodies and the senior military hierarchy, support from partners) was further confirmed by the **failed coup attempt** led by officers in December 2025.

Although the attempted destabilisation highlighted **internal and regional vulnerabilities**, the **January 2026 legislative and local elections** went ahead as planned and were held peacefully. They confirmed **the overwhelming dominance of the presidential camp**, in line with the 2019 election results.

In terms of security, however, the situation appears to be fragile, with the **terrorist threat spreading** across several fronts and the areas at risk expanding in the north of the country. At the same time, there are ongoing political tensions amid a perceived narrowing of democratic space. The recent **controversial constitutional reforms** have notably led to presidential powers being strengthened, stricter conditions for participation in elections, and the opposition being increasingly marginalised.

What is more, the election will go ahead at **a time of geopolitical tension**, marked in particular by deteriorating relations with neighbouring Niger, as well as by a growing number of attempts at external interference aimed at undermining or discrediting the democratic governments of the states in the Gulf of Guinea.

Strategic Electoral Issues

Political Stakes

The election represents a fresh **test of the country's democratic resilience**, with electoral restrictions in place that limit the field to two candidates following the 2025 constitutional amendment. The **favourite, Romuald Wadagni** — minister of economy and finance and the designated successor of Patrice Talon (BR-UPR) — will face **Paul Houngbè** (FCBE), a former minister under President Thomas Boni Yayi and representative of a so-called “moderate” opposition. The **transparency of the election and voter turnout, which has been declining since 2019**, will be decisive for the legitimacy and representativeness of the future executive power.

The future of the main opposition party, The Democrats, which has been excluded from the election, weakened by internal crises and with no representatives in the Assembly, is a medium-term political issue, whilst its prolonged marginalisation could fuel a sense of exclusion. The party's electorate is currently sought after by both candidates in the run-up to the election, given the absence of any voting instructions or explicit calls for a boycott.

Security Stakes

The **security situation surrounding the election and the extent to which tensions have eased** will be closely monitored, given that the country has previously experienced **episodes of localised violent electoral unrest** (2019, 2021). The focus of the **new presidential security policy** on preventing the spread of jihadism and its growing impact on communities in the Far North, as well as **relations with Benin's military** and **regional partners**, will also prove to be strategic. Finally, at the regional level, democratic continuity is expected to remain a factor in regional stability amidst a deteriorating security situation and will be closely monitored, particularly in the wake of the latest elections held in Côte d'Ivoire in 2025.

Potential Risks

- Rise in disinformation campaigns
- Increased election rallies, including a potential for localised unrest
- Resurgence of jihadist attacks or possible opportunistic attempts at destabilisation
- Significant security reinforcements, particularly in large cities (traffic restrictions around sensitive buildings, increased checks, etc.)

Recommendations

- Remain vigilant, monitor developments and obtain information from official and reliable sources
- Follow the instructions of local authorities and ensure you carry valid identification when travelling
- Avoid gatherings and the vicinity of sensitive buildings in the run-up to the election, as well as when the results are announced

Cotonou - Presidential Election: key areas



Traditional rallying places



Sensitive sites



Party headquarters



French Embassy

Map: Scutum Security First (SSF) • Created with Datawrapper