

Impact Insight:

Senegal's 2023 Internet Shutdowns on Economic Participation

The 2023 internet shutdowns profoundly disrupted Senegal's economy—an impact that, according to experts consulted, warrants further study and discussion. These interruptions significantly affected businesses, workers in both formal and informal sectors, and financial systems, revealing a critical dependence on mobile internet.

Beyond the immediate economic losses, these shutdowns raised concerns about Senegal's long-term economic stability. Many survey participants expressed fears that repeated use of shutdowns as a response to political crises could tarnish Senegal's reputation as a technological hub in West Africa, potentially deterring foreign investors and slowing the country's digital transformation. These practices also appear to contradict the Senegal Digital Strategy,

an ambitious initiative that aims to position the country as a regional leader in technology and digital innovation. Nevertheless, some respondents viewed these events as an opportunity to reassess the importance of stable internet access for economic development and called for structural reforms to prevent such disruptions in the future.

Respondents also highlighted the damaging effects on financial services, with 41.4% stating that the shutdowns compromised their ability to transfer or receive money. These interruptions not only represent an infringement on digital rights but also led to considerable financial losses, underscoring the growing reliance of individuals and businesses on digital services.

Key Findings

- **Impact on individual incomes**
 - Individual economic losses reported by respondents ranged from 60,000 XOF (approximately \$95 USD) to 7 million XOF (approximately \$11,200 USD).
 - An online entrepreneur reported a direct loss of 400,000 XOF (approximately \$640 USD), reflecting the immediate impact on daily income.
- **Disruption of business activities**
 - 54.6% of respondents reported that the shutdowns “severely compromised” their ability to work.
 - Digital platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram, essential for commerce and communication, were paralyzed, disrupting professional interactions.
- **Fragility of the financial sector**
 - 41.4% of respondents encountered difficulties transferring or receiving money.
 - Inequalities between rural and urban areas were exacerbated, with rural zones lacking access to alternatives such as Wi-Fi or VPNs.

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- **Disruption of digital value chains**
 - Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are highly dependent on online services, were severely affected. Projects were postponed, contracts canceled, and client exchanges suspended.
 - While tools like VPNs were used by a minority, they were insufficient to mitigate the losses experienced.
- **Consequences for the digital economy**
 - The shutdowns exposed the fragility of Senegal's economic ecosystem to sudden political decisions.
 - They harmed the country's image as a technological hub, calling into question its ambition to become a regional leader in digital transformation.



Personally, these events have reinforced my concerns about the country's future economic stability. Political instability and internet shutdowns are creating a climate of uncertainty that could hamper long-term growth.

Testimony shared in the survey

To learn more, read the full reports:

- [The Impact of Senegal's 2023 Internet Shutdowns on Society, the Economy, and Trust in Democracy](#)
- [The Price of Disruption: Evaluating the Economic Impact of Senegal's 2023 Internet Shutdowns](#)