

Rwanda Data Governance Snapshot



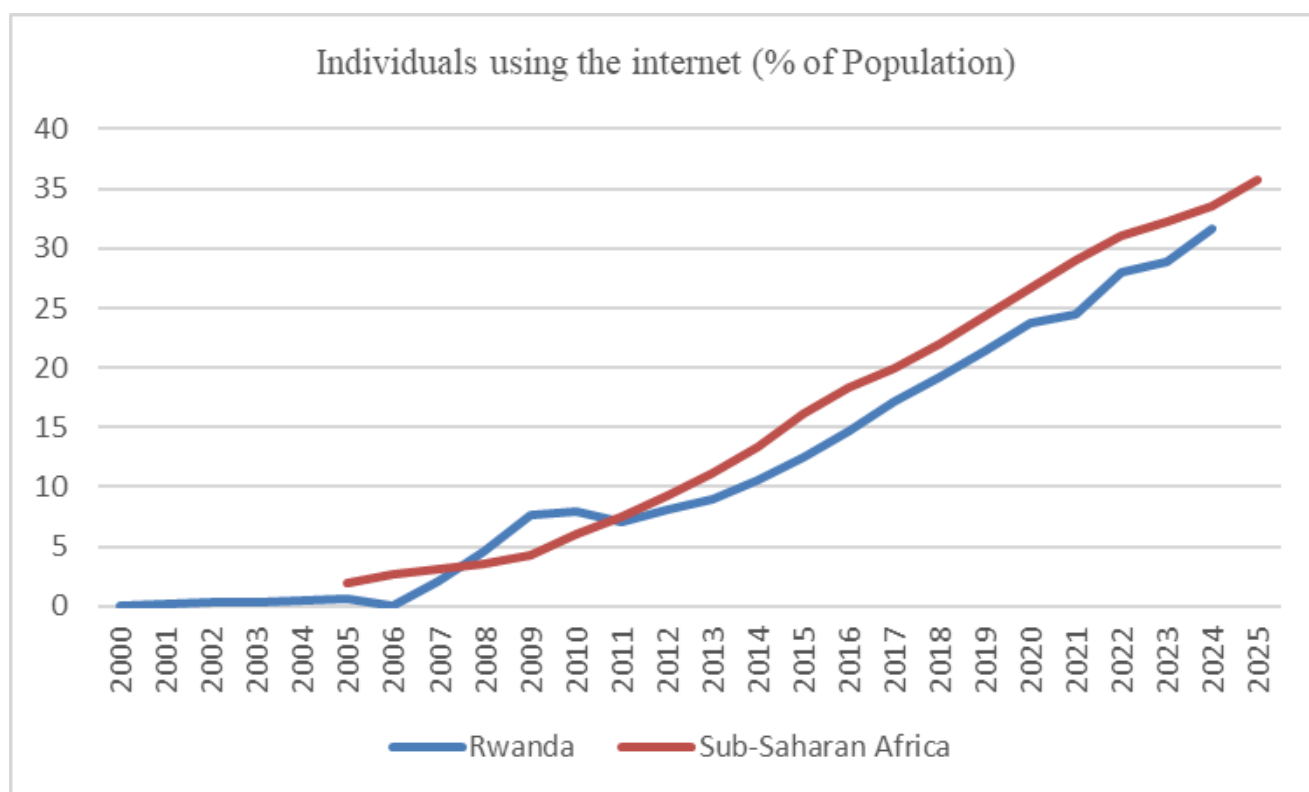
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Country Context



Rwanda has emerged as one of Africa's fastest growing economies, with an average annual growth rate of approximately [8%](#) over the past five years, driven by domestic demand, public investment, and productivity gains across key sectors. The country is also recognised as sub-Saharan Africa's longest-standing digital innovation performer. From the [Global Innovation Index 2025](#), Rwanda ranked 10th among 32 economies in Sub-Saharan Africa and 1st among low-income economies, as well as 1st among the 11 economies in the low-income group that have performed above expectations for their level of development for over a decade. Internet access in Rwanda has expanded steadily in recent years, although digital inclusion remains uneven. According to DataReportal's Rwanda [2023 report](#), the country had an estimated 4.25 million internet users at the start of 2023, representing 30.5% of the population. More recent ITU data from mid-2025 indicates that internet users had further increased to approximately [5.5 million, representing 38%](#) of the population. These reflect Rwanda's accelerated progress in digital connectivity and inclusion; the country's [Vision 2050 agenda](#) and the more recent [ICT Sector Strategic Plan \(2024–2029\)](#) envisage a future where citizens, businesses, and government systems are fully integrated into a digital economy.

Figure 1: Internet Penetration Trends: Rwanda vs Sub-Saharan Africa, 2000–2024



Source: Author's computation using data from WDI (2026)

Rwanda has made digital transformation a core part of its development strategy. For a landlocked country that depends on cross-border terrestrial fibre links rather than direct access to international submarine cables, expanding reliable broadband infrastructure is critical to overcoming connectivity constraints and supporting long-term economic competitiveness. The country's [broadband and digital policy framework](#), anchored in the National Broadband Policy and Strategy 2022, prioritises affordable, reliable, and high-speed broadband, universal access, infrastructure sharing, and expanded rural connectivity.

The policy also positions broadband as a key enabler of e-government, digital finance, education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship. These priorities align with Rwanda's broader long-term development agenda under Vision 2050 and the [National Strategy for Transformation](#).

Rwanda has also established a legal and institutional foundation for its expanding digital economy. The country enacted Law [No. 058/2021](#) relating to the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy, which came into force on 15 October 2021, [to align Rwanda](#) with international data protection standards and support trusted digital services, cross-border data flows, and digital economy growth.

Despite these gains, Rwanda's digital transformation continues to face structural constraints, particularly around digital inclusion and the pace of adoption. Key challenges include the [rural-urban digital divide](#), affordability barriers, and the need for sustained investment in broadband infrastructure and digital skills. These challenges are especially significant given that an estimated [81.8%](#) of the population lived in rural areas in early 2025. As a result, Rwanda's core challenge is less about the absence of digital strategy and more about ensuring that strong policy ambitions translate into broader access, deeper usage, and more inclusive digital productivity



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Digital Adoption



Digital adoption in Rwanda has evolved rapidly, driven by the government's strong commitment to transforming the country into a knowledge-based, service-oriented economy. According to Forbes Africa, as of 2020, about [66% of adults](#) (approximately 7.1 million people) had access to digital technologies, services, and opportunities, a significant increase from 46% in 2016, with mobile money adoption playing a major role in driving this growth. Internet penetration reached approximately [38% by mid-2025](#), representing about [5.5 million users](#), aligning with the [average internet usage across Africa](#). Mobile network coverage is available to approximately [99%](#) of the population, supported by approximately [1,760 connectivity towers covering about 96%](#) of inhabited areas. Rwanda has also begun deploying advanced digital infrastructure, with commercial 5G services launched in June 2025 by [MTN Rwanda](#), marking a significant step toward next-generation connectivity and improved digital service delivery.

A major pillar of Rwanda's digital transformation agenda is the development of its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) anchored by the [Irembo platform](#), which has transformed public service delivery by digitising [more than 25 million](#) government service applications since its launch in 2015 under a "Zero Trip, Zero Paper" approach. This initiative is being complemented by the [\\$57 million Single Digital ID \(SDID\) project](#), which entered its final implementation phase in late 2025 with over 300,000 citizens enrolled. The government plans a rollout starting in June 2026, with a final deadline to phase out existing physical ID cards by [June 2027](#). Broader initiatives, such as the [Rwanda Digital Acceleration Project \(RDAP\)](#), are also supporting broadband expansion, digital identity rollout, and device affordability through targeted subsidy programmes, alongside continued investment in fibre-optic infrastructure linking districts, public institutions, and border areas. In rural communities, programmes such as the [Fostering Digital Villages \(FDiVi\)](#) initiative further promote digital inclusion by providing farmers with digital tools, market information, and weather updates.

Despite notable progress in digital transformation, Rwanda continues to face some constraints to inclusive digital adoption. [Broadband services remain unaffordable](#) for many citizens; basic 3G subscriptions cost more than [38%](#) of the median monthly income, and smartphone penetration is also relatively low, at about [14.6%](#), while national digital service coverage is estimated at just [8.9%](#), limiting meaningful access to and the effective use of advanced digital services beyond basic mobile connectivity. This challenge is worsened by a pronounced urban–rural divide in connectivity; recent data shows that while [57%](#) of urban residents actively use the internet, usage drops sharply to just [19%](#) in rural communities.

Rwanda is prioritising device affordability and digital inclusion through a [US\\$100 million World Bank-supported Digital Acceleration Project](#) designed to subsidise smartphone acquisition for low-income households and strengthen basic digital literacy. At the same time, the country is deepening its focus on artificial intelligence and innovation, with investments in AI applications for smart cities and the development of regulatory frameworks to support emerging technologies across health, agriculture, and finance. The government is also advancing policies towards a cashless economy to improve efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and enhance transparency in financial systems. Rwanda continues to leverage public-private partnerships to bridge these gaps and foster a more inclusive digital ecosystem under its national digital transformation strategies.

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Recent Digital Development



Digital Public Infrastructure and Government Digitalisation

Rwanda has made the digitalisation of government and public service delivery a central pillar of its long-term development agenda under its [Vision 2050](#). Reflecting this ambition, the second [National Strategy for Transformation](#) (NST2, 2024–2029) targets the achievement of 100% end-to-end digital government services and universal digital identity coverage by 2030 to improve service delivery and administrative efficiency. More recently, in March 2026, Rwanda launched its [National Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\) Strategy](#) alongside the [Center for Digital Public Infrastructure](#) to strengthen secure data sharing and innovation across public and private digital systems. The initiative shows the country's ambition to position digital infrastructure at the centre of economic transformation and future AI adoption, while also supporting fintech innovation and digital service delivery. It builds on Rwanda's broader digitalisation agenda, including the ongoing [\\$200 million](#) government digitisation project aimed at moving public services online by 2026.



Digital Finance and Innovation Ecosystem Growth

Rwanda's digital economy has also experienced rapid growth in digital finance and platform-based service delivery, particularly toward a more cashless and digitally connected economy. By 2024, digital payments had reportedly reached the equivalent of [300% of GDP](#), while usage of digital services rose to [73%](#) from 30% four years ago. In [December 2025](#), [Rwanda also launched eKash](#), a [national digital payment system](#) developed by RSwitch that connects banks, mobile money operators, and fintechs on a single interoperable platform, enabling instant, cashless transactions and reinforcing the country's broader push toward a fully cashless economy. This rapid expansion of digital finance is increasingly reshaping how citizens access payments, savings, transport, and public services, particularly in urban centres. At the same time, Rwanda continues to frame digitalisation as an economic development strategy rather than solely a technology agenda. Initiatives such as the launch of [Innovate Rwanda](#), a national [innovation portal](#) designed to connect startups, investors, and support institutions, alongside new financing plans by the Development Bank of Rwanda to establish a [debt fund for startups from 2026](#), reflect efforts to strengthen the broader digital entrepreneurship ecosystem and support the scaling of local technology firms.

Expanding Rwanda's Digital Positioning

Rwanda demonstrates a growing ambition to position itself as a regional hub for digital investment, innovation, and technology-enabled services. In November 2025, the government unveiled a [Digital Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\) Roadmap](#) aimed at attracting technology investment, expanding digital jobs, and strengthening Rwanda's competitiveness within Africa's digital economy. The strategy places particular emphasis on digital infrastructure, innovation financing, skills development, and the creation of a more integrated ecosystem for technology firms operating in Rwanda. These efforts build on the country's longstanding approach of using targeted policy reforms and state-led coordination to attract international partnerships in the ICT sector. At the same time, Rwanda continues to face important governance and infrastructure challenges linked to the pace of digital expansion, including cybersecurity risks, affordability concerns, and persistent urban-rural disparities in digital access. As digital systems become increasingly embedded within financial services, public administration, and cross-border commerce, the ability to strengthen trust, resilience, and inclusive access will remain central to sustaining Rwanda's broader digital transformation ambitions.

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Digital Governance in Place



Rwanda's digital governance framework is increasingly shaped by the country's broader ambition to support rapid digital transformation while strengthening trust, security, and interoperability across digital systems. The framework is anchored by the [Law Relating to the Protection of Personal Data and Privacy](#), which establishes legal provisions governing the collection, processing, storage, and sharing of personal data, alongside broader policy instruments on cybersecurity, electronic transactions, and digital service delivery. More recently, the operationalisation of Rwanda's [National AI Policy](#) has signalled a growing attention to responsible technology adoption and secure digital governance systems. Implementation of these policies is coordinated through a centralised institutional structure led by the Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT), with the Rwanda Information Society Authority ([RISA](#)) overseeing key digital systems and e-government infrastructure, while the National Cyber Security Authority ([NCSA](#)) manages cybersecurity preparedness and the protection of critical information infrastructure. Rwanda's governance model has therefore focused less on building a complex regulatory ecosystem and more on strengthening coordinated institutions capable of supporting secure digital platforms, digital public services, and nationwide digital transformation. Nevertheless, Rwanda has progressively built a substantive legislative base for digital governance, encompassing data protection, cybercrime, electronic transactions, and consumer protection, which together provide the legal foundation upon which its coordinated institutional model operates.

Regionally, Rwanda has increasingly aligned its digital governance agenda with broader continental efforts aimed at promoting trusted digital systems, cross-border interoperability, and digital trade integration across Africa. Rwanda is a signatory to the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection ([Malabo Convention](#)), which provides a continental framework for data protection, cybersecurity, and electronic transactions. The country has also remained active within the [Smart Africa Alliance](#), a pan-African initiative headquartered in Kigali that promotes regional cooperation around digital infrastructure, digital identity, data governance, and innovation policy. More recently, Rwanda's growing focus on interoperable digital public infrastructure (DPI) and secure data-sharing systems reflects broader continental discussions around harmonising digital governance frameworks to support cross-border digital services and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Rwanda has also ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement and has been active in ongoing negotiations around digital trade protocols, reflecting its interest in shaping the regional rules governing cross-border data flows and digital commerce. In April 2025, Rwanda further strengthened its governance agenda by partnering with [UNESCO](#) and other institutions to train members of the judiciary on artificial intelligence, data protection, and the rule of law, reflecting growing recognition that advances in digital technologies must be accompanied by corresponding legal and institutional capacity. These efforts position Rwanda as one of the more active participants in ongoing regional conversations around digital transformation and governance in Africa, while also signalling a gradual shift from expanding digital infrastructure to strengthening the institutions and governance mechanisms needed to manage an increasingly data-intensive and AI-enabled economy.

Table 1: *Key Data Governance and Regulatory Indicators in Rwanda*

Data Regulation Indicator	Rwanda's Status
Privacy and Data Protection	Present
Data Breach Notification Requirement	Present
Data Protection Institution	Present
Cyber Crime Law	Present
Consumer Protection Law	Present
Electronic Transaction Regulation	Present
Status of Malabo Convention	Signatory
Cross-border Data Flow Restrictions	Present

Source: Author's computation

As digital public services, digital payments, and data-driven systems continue to expand, pressures around cybersecurity, data protection, institutional readiness, and affordability are becoming increasingly important. Persistent gaps in digital literacy and rural connectivity also risk uneven participation in the country's growing digital economy. As Rwanda positions itself at the intersection of DPI, AI adoption, and regional digital integration, the coherence and adaptability of its governance architecture will be as consequential as the pace of its technological deployment.

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Summary of key indicators



Table 2: Rwanda's Performance Across Core Digital Preparedness and Development Indicators, 2025

Panel a: Digital Preparedness Indicators

Digital Preparedness Indicator	Rank in Africa (43 countries assessed)	Score
Digital Preparedness Index	11th	0.48
Education and Skills	14th	0.43
Infrastructural Readiness	25th	0.48
Business Dynamism and Environment	16th	0.55
Regulatory Framework and Government Effectiveness	4th	0.84
Macroeconomic Fundamentals	19th	0.3

Panel b: Digital Development Indicators

Digital Development Indicator	Rank in Africa (47 countries assessed)	Score
Internet Speed, Mbps	11th	30.5 Mbp
Fixed telephone subscription per 100 people	22nd	60.1
Internet Users (% Population)	28th	34.4
Households with internet (% of population)	30th	21.9
E-Participation index	2nd	0.75
E-Government Index	14th	0.58

Source: CSEA Data Governance Index