

**Women, Business and the Law (WBL)** is a World Bank Group flagship initiative providing comparable data on laws and policies impacting women’s economic participation to drive jobs, productivity, and economic growth. Economies with higher WBL scores tend to have higher female labor force participation rates, more women business owners and managers, and narrower gender wage gaps.

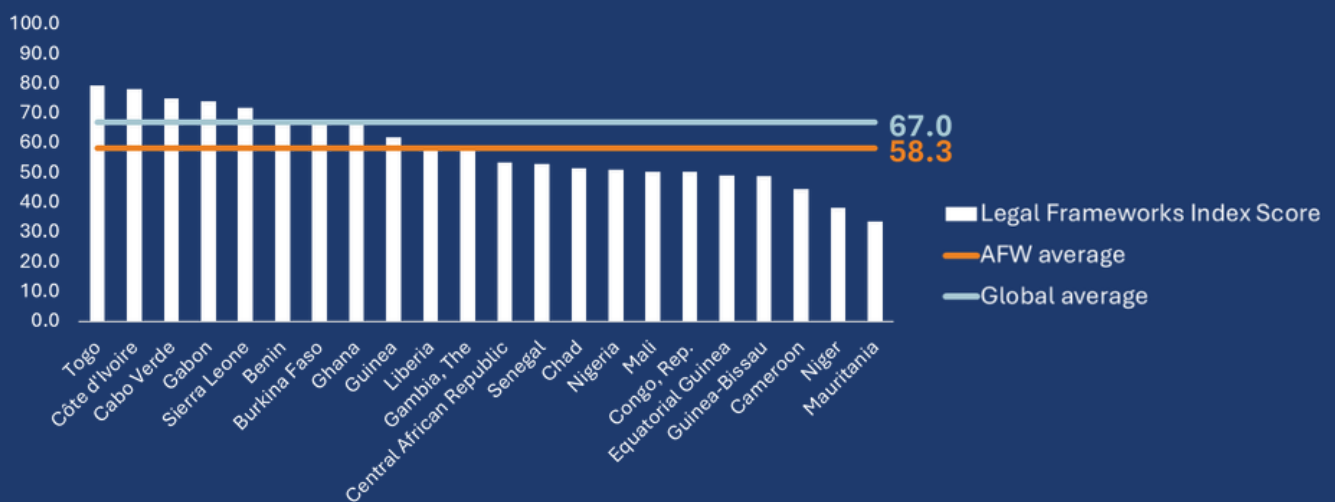
**Women in the Western and Central Africa region have less than two thirds (58.3%) of the economic rights afforded to men. Only about a third of mechanisms (32.5%) are in place to support the implementation of these laws. Experts in the region perceive that women’s economic rights are enforced at less than half (44.1%) of their full potential.**

## Reform Highlights from October 2023 to October 2025

- ⚠️ **Seven economies in the Western and Central Africa region have enacted reforms to provide women with greater access to economic opportunities.**
- ✅ In October 2024, **Mali** introduced criminal penalties for sexual harassment in employment and on cyberharassment and enacted legislation on femicide.
- ✅ In January 2024, **Senegal** enacted childcare laws addressing quality standards and provisions of childcare services by the government and private centers.

[Click here for a full list of reforms](#)

Legal Framework Index Scores for Western and Central Africa - WBL 2026 Index



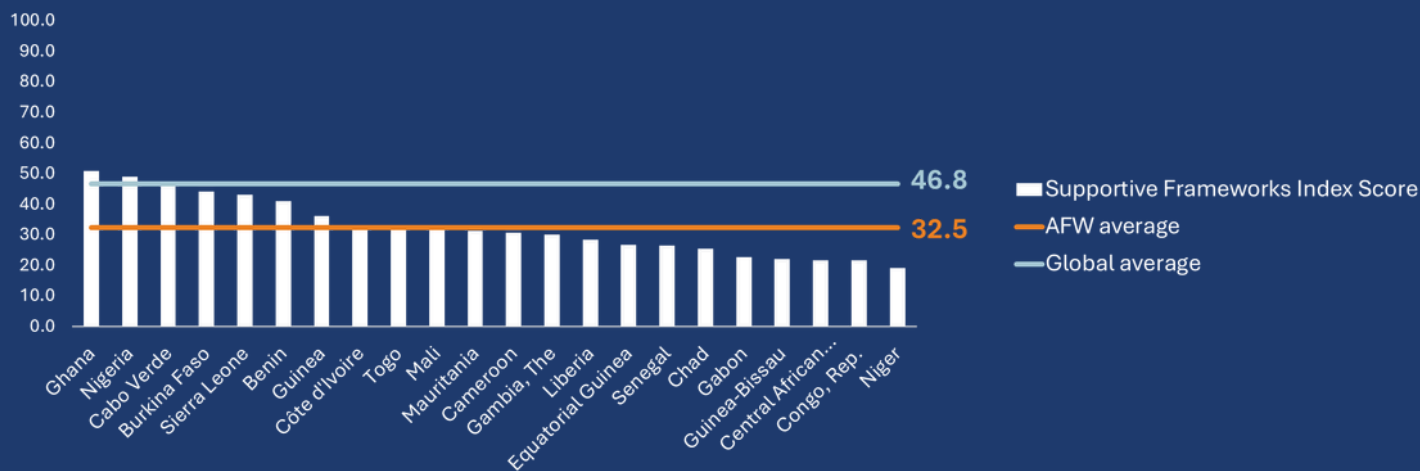
## Legal Frameworks: Measuring equal rights and explicit restrictions on women’s work and entrepreneurship

- Across the region, five economies, including **Togo** and **Cote d'Ivoire**, perform above the global average, indicating relatively strong legal frameworks promoting women’s access to economic opportunities.
- The **Mobility** and **Pension** topics perform well with average regional scores of 80.1 and 79.4, respectively.
- The **Childcare** and **Safety** topics show the most room for improvement with average regional scores of 22.0 and 30.1, respectively, indicating persistent gaps in childcare laws and laws protecting women from violence. To close such gaps, economies could establish affordable, high-quality childcare services, and introduce laws addressing femicide and sexual harassment.

## Good Practice Legal and Supportive Frameworks

- **Mali** is one of two economies in the region with legislation addressing femicide.
- **Ghana** and **Nigeria** are the only two economies in the region with a policy that considers women’s mobility needs in public transportation and includes specific objectives and targets.

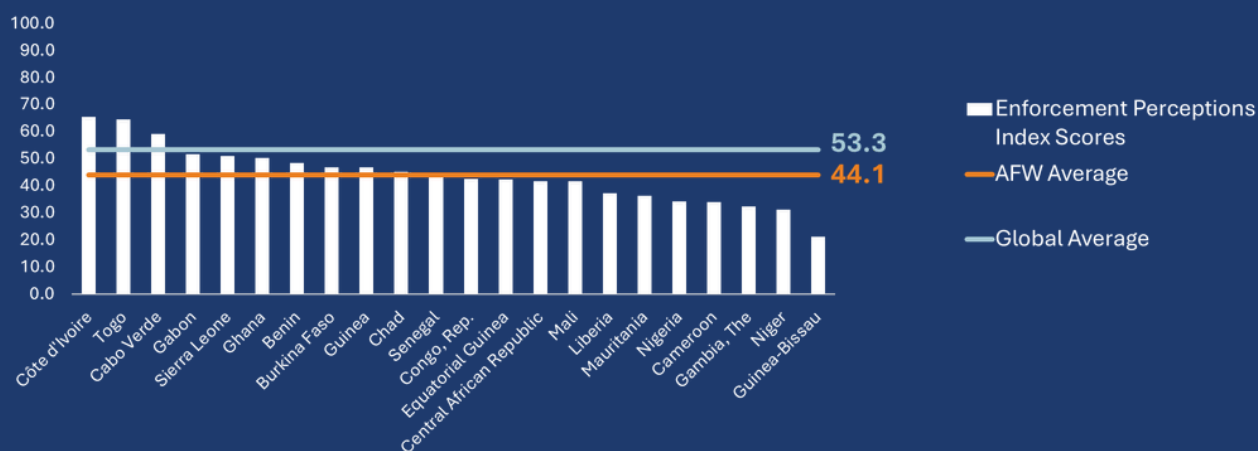
## Supportive Frameworks Index Scores for Western and Central Africa - WBL 2026 Index



### Supportive Frameworks: Examining policy instruments designed to support the implementation of laws

- Across the region, policies and institutions to implementing equal opportunity laws are strongest in **Ghana, Nigeria** and **Cabo Verde**. Most room for improvement remains in the **Republic of the Congo** and **Niger**.
- The **Mobility** and **Pension** topics perform relatively well with average regional scores of 69.3 and 46.0, respectively.
- The **Childcare** and **Work** topics show the most room for improvement with average regional scores of 1.2 and 11.4, respectively, indicating gaps in policies and institutions supporting the availability, affordability, and quality of center-based childcare, and promoting workplace equality. To close such gaps, economies could publish a registry of childcare providers and reports on the quality of childcare services, and provide guidelines on non-discrimination in recruitment and flexible work arrangements.

## Enforcement Perceptions Index Scores for Western and Central Africa - WBL 2026 Index



### Enforcement Perceptions: Evaluating expert views of how well public authorities enforce laws practice

- **Côte d'Ivoire** is the highest scoring economy (65.7%) in the region, suggesting that laws protecting women's economic rights are enforced more than half of the time. Lowest enforcement levels are perceived in **Niger** and **Guinea-Bisseau**.
- Across the region, experts assess the enforcement of women's right to **Safety** at only 12.9% of their full potential and the enforcement of **Childcare** laws at only 7.0% of their full potential.