

State of the Internet and Digital Rights in Azerbaijan (2019-2025)

This document represents a comprehensive analysis of the state of the internet environment and the sphere of digital rights in the Azerbaijani Republic for the period from 2019 to 2025. The study examines a wide range of issues: from the development of physical infrastructure, including fixed and mobile broadband access, to the analysis of the legislative framework regulating the online space. Particular attention is paid to the dynamics of key indicators, such as internet speed and accessibility, the level of IPv6 penetration, the development of the national domain, and the number of autonomous systems, which allows assessing the technical maturity and sustainability of the Azerbaijani segment of the global network. Against the background of technological progress and the growth of the ICT sector, the report analyzes structural challenges, including monopolies in the telecommunications market, and risks to human rights, such as legislative initiatives allowing restrictions on access to information, and documented cases of blocking online platforms and persecution of citizens for their statements on the internet.

Disclaimer: This document was partially generated using several large language models (LLM). The information presented in it is based on the analysis and generalization of data from the specified sources, however, the process of its structuring, generalization, and presentation was performed using artificial intelligence technologies. It is recommended to use this text as a starting point for further research and to verify critically important data from primary sources.

Table of Content	1
1. General Information	2
1.1. Geographical Position	2
1.2. Population	2
1.3. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	3
1.4. Main Economic Characteristics	4
1.5. General Political Situation	5
2. Internet	5
2.1. National Domain	6
2.2. Number of Users	6
2.2.1 Fixed Internet	6

2.2.2. Mobile Internet	7
2.3. Internet Access Speed and Quality of Provided Services	7
2.4. Development of Providers and Autonomous Systems	7
2.5. IPv6 Penetration	11
2.6. Connectivity Index	12
3. Internet Legislation	15
3.1. Principles of Internet Governance	15
3.1.1. Regulation	15
3.1.2. Regulatory Bodies and Responsible Persons	15
3.2. Market Monopolization	16
3.3. Internet Shutdowns by Order of Authorities	17
3.4. Legislation on "Words on the Internet"	17
3.5. Legislation on Internet Blocking	19
3.5.1. Blocking Procedures	19
3.5.2. Registries of Blocked Internet Resources	19
3.5.3. Development of Blocking	20
4. Human Rights Violations on the Internet	22
4.1. Internet Shutdown by Order of Authorities	22
4.2. Criminalization of Statements on the Internet	23
4.3. Persecution of Media and NGOs	26
5. Civil Society in the Field of Internet Governance	27
5.1. Organizations	27
5.2. VPN and Block Bypass Tools	28
5.2.1. Status of VPN Services	28
5.2.2. Number of VPN Users	29
5.2.3. Cases of Persecution for Using VPN	30
5.2.4. Block Monitoring	30
6. Conclusion	31
Sources	32

1. General Information

1.1. Geographical Position

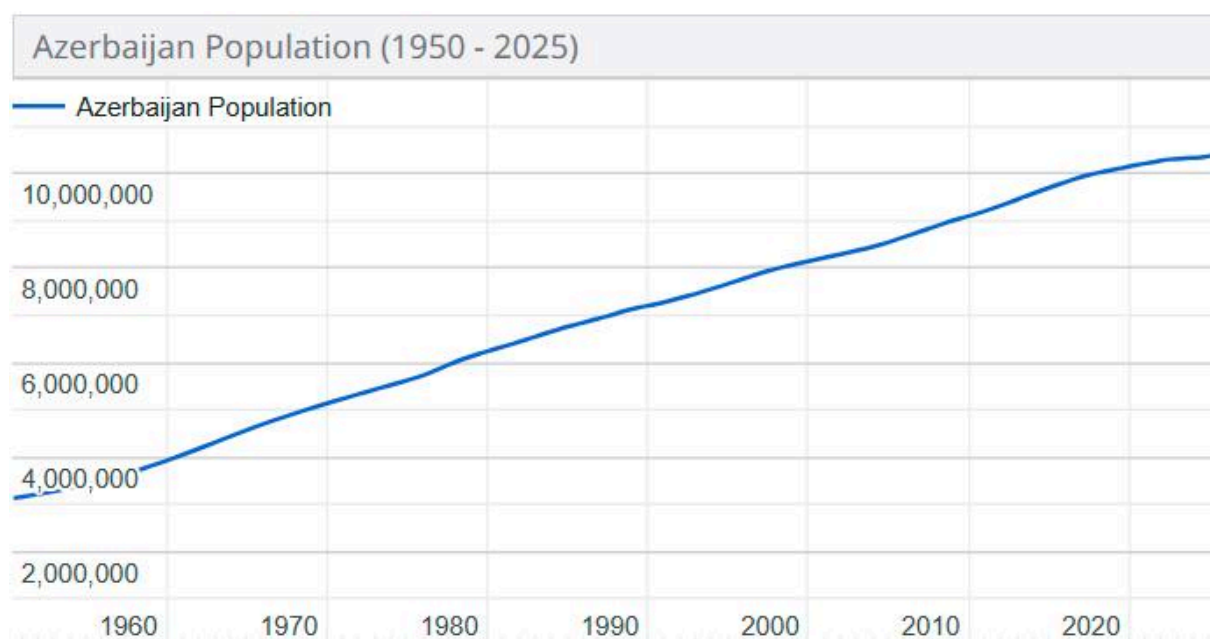
The Azerbaijani Republic, located at the junction of Eastern Europe and Western Asia in the South Caucasus region¹, represents a country with a complex socio-economic and political landscape that directly affects the state of the internet and digital rights.

1.2. Population

The population of Azerbaijan showed stable growth during the period under review. According to official data from Azerbaijan, the population increased from 9,981.5 thousand people in 2019 to the forecasted 10,224.9 thousand people at the beginning of 2025³. Data from international organizations confirm this trend, estimating the population in mid-2025 at approximately 10.4 million people⁴.

The urbanization process continues: the share of urban population grew from 52.8% in 2019 to 54.4% by 2025, while the share of rural population decreased accordingly³. Population density, according to the World Bank, was about 122.7 people per square kilometer in 2022⁷.

Graph 1: Population Dynamics of Azerbaijan (1950-2025)



Source: worldometers.info

The growth of population and urbanization create additional load on infrastructure, including telecommunications, and affect the demand for internet services.

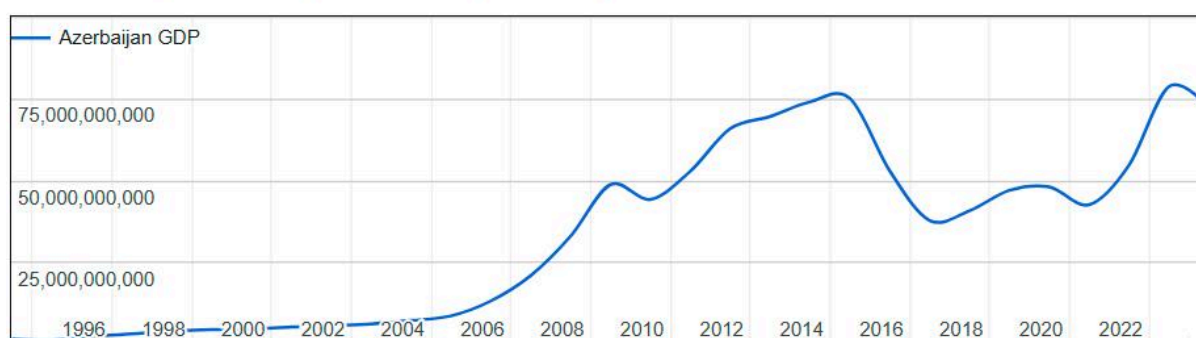
1.3. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The economy of Azerbaijan experienced significant fluctuations in the period 2019-2025. Nominal GDP, expressed in US dollars, decreased in 2020 to \$42.69 billion due to the COVID-19 pandemic and falling oil prices, but then showed significant growth in 2021-2022 (\$54.83 billion and \$78.81 billion respectively), before adjusting again to \$72.36 billion in 2023⁸. IMF forecasts for 2024 and 2025 indicated nominal GDP at \$75.6 billion and \$77 billion respectively¹⁰. In national currency, Azerbaijan's GDP in 2024 amounted to 126.3 billion manats¹¹, at the official exchange rate of about 1.70 AZN per 1 USD¹³.

Real GDP growth was also unstable: after growth of 2.5% in 2019, there was a decline of 4.3% in 2020, then recovery of 5.6% in 2021 and 4.7% in 2022. In 2023, GDP growth slowed sharply to 1.1%⁸, but accelerated to 4.1% in 2024¹². The IMF forecasts a slowdown in growth to 3.5% in 2025¹⁵. An important factor in recent years has been the growth of the non-oil sector of the economy (by 6.2% in 2024), especially in construction, communications, transport, and hospitality¹², while the oil and gas sector stagnated or showed insignificant growth¹⁰.

Graph 2: Dynamics of Nominal GDP of Azerbaijan (1993-2023)

Azerbaijan GDP (Nominal, \$USD) 1993-2023



Source: worldometers.info

Economic dynamics directly affect investments in infrastructure development, including ICT, and the accessibility of internet services for the population.

1.4. Main Economic Characteristics

The economy of Azerbaijan remains highly dependent on the extraction and export of hydrocarbons (oil and gas), which form the main part of exports (more than 90%) and a significant share of GDP, although the latter has decreased from approximately 40% to 30.6% in the period from 2018 to 2024¹². This dependence makes the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in world energy prices¹⁴.

The government and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and EBRD, declare the need for economic diversification¹⁷. Priority directions for diversification are transport (including the development of the Middle Corridor), information and communication technologies (ICT), agriculture, tourism, and transition to a "green" economy¹². In 2025, the World Bank approved a new Partnership Program Framework with Azerbaijan aimed at supporting the transition to a more competitive, "green," and inclusive economy¹⁹.

However, achieving these goals is hindered by structural problems. These include significant state presence in the economy, including in non-oil sectors, issues of corporate governance in state companies, limited access of the private sector to financing and qualified personnel, as well as the underdevelopment of financial and capital markets¹⁴. The declared goals of diversification and development of the digital economy¹⁹ may contradict the persisting high share of the state in key sectors, including telecommunications²². State control over strategic industries and infrastructure, while it may contribute to the implementation of large state projects, simultaneously limits competition and private investments necessary for genuine diversification and innovative development¹⁴.

1.5. General Political Situation

According to the constitution, Azerbaijan is a democratic, legal, secular, unitary republic with a semi-presidential system of government². However, many international observers characterize the political regime as authoritarian or as a hereditary dictatorship². Power is concentrated in the hands of President Ilham Aliyev, who has held this post since 2003², and his family (his wife Mehriban Aliyeva holds the post of vice-president²). The ruling party "Yeni Azerbaijan" (YAP) dominates the country's political life²⁹.

The period 2019–2024 was marked by the Second Karabakh War (2020) and the subsequent military operation in September 2023, as a result of which Azerbaijan

restored control over Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories². These events had a significant impact on the internal political situation and information space, often used by authorities to justify restrictions on rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and access to information³¹.

Serious restrictions on the space for activities of independent media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and political opposition are observed in the country³⁴. Fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of assembly, expression, and association, are seriously limited both legislatively and in practice³⁴. This consolidation of power and suppression of dissent create an environment in which the internet and digital technologies are used by authorities not only as a tool for development, but also as a means of control, surveillance, and restriction of citizens' rights. Subsequent sections of this report detail how this political context shapes policy in the field of the internet, leading to blockings, shutdowns, and persecutions for online activity³¹.

2. Internet

Infrastructure and access to the internet in Azerbaijan have significantly developed in the period 2019–2025, however, problems with quality, cost, and uniformity of access are observed, as well as issues related to state control over infrastructure.

2.1. National Domain

The national top-level domain (ccTLD) for Azerbaijan is .az². It was introduced on August 25, 1993⁴². The domain is administered by the organization AZNIC, which is managed by the company Intra Network Systems (IntraNS)⁴². Registration of domains is available to residents of Azerbaijan, with certain restrictions: content of pornographic nature is prohibited, and the use of names of state bodies, famous personalities, or expressions contradicting public order and morality requires special permission or is prohibited⁴². You can check the status of a domain name through the WHOIS service on the website whois.az⁴³. The number of registered domains in the .az zone grew from 40,690 at the end of 2022⁴² to 46,881 by 2025⁴⁶.

2.2. Number of Users

The level of internet penetration in Azerbaijan has reached high indicators. According to data from the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan and international organizations (ITU, World Bank, Freedom House, DataReportal), the share of internet users among the population grew from 81.1% in 2019 to 89.2% in 2023⁴⁷. As of the beginning of 2024, 9.19

million people (88.0% of the population) used the internet⁴⁸, and by the beginning of 2025 — 9.23 million (89.0% of the population)⁴⁹.

Despite the high overall level of penetration, a digital divide is preserved. In 2022-2023, internet access in urban areas was available to 91.6-94.6% of residents, while in rural areas this indicator was 81-83.8%³⁷. A small gender gap is also observed: in 2022-2023, 89.4-92.7% of men and 85.4-86.8% of women used the internet³⁷.

2.2.1 Fixed Internet

The penetration of fixed broadband access (BBA) to the internet remained relatively stable at the level of about 20-21 subscribers per 100 people in 2022-2023³⁷. In absolute terms, this amounted to about 2.15 million subscribers in 2023⁵⁵.

A key trend was the active deployment of fiber-optic networks (FTTH/GPON) as part of the state project "Online Azerbaijan", launched in 2023³⁷. The goal of the project is to provide the entire country with broadband access at a speed of at least 25-30 Mbps by the end of 2024²⁴. By the end of 2023, about 1.4 million households had access to fiber-optic networks, which accounted for approximately 49% of all fixed connections²⁴. However, in rural areas and small settlements, outdated ADSL technology through copper telephone lines is still widely used, providing low speeds (4-5 Mbps)²⁴.

2.2.2. Mobile Internet

Mobile internet is the main way to access the network for the majority of users in Azerbaijan³⁷. The level of mobile BBA penetration is significantly higher than fixed, and reached 85.4 subscribers per 100 people in 2023³⁷. The total number of active mobile connections exceeds the population (113-118% in 2024-2025), which is explained by the use of several SIM cards by one person⁴⁸.

Coverage by 2G, 3G, and 4G (LTE) networks is close to 100% of the population³⁷. The leading mobile operator Azercell reported LTE coverage of 80% of the territory of Baku and 75% of other regions³⁷. The implementation of 5G technology began with pilot projects by operators Nar and Bakcell in 2023³⁷, but as of the beginning of 2025, widespread commercial use of 5G has not yet begun, although it was planned²¹.

2.3. Internet Access Speed and Quality of Provided Services

The internet access speed in Azerbaijan showed significant growth, especially in 2024-2025, which coincided with the active phase of the implementation of the "Online

Azerbaijan" project and the expansion of fiber-optic networks³⁷. According to Ookla Speedtest Global Index, the median fixed BBA speed grew from 27.57 Mbps in February 2023 to 123.77 Mbps in March 2025. The median mobile BBA speed over the same period increased from 37.47 Mbps to 93.55 Mbps³⁷.

Despite the impressive growth of median speeds, users complain about quality, especially outside Baku. Problems include connection instability, speed drops during peak hours, and mismatch between the actual speed and the one declared in tariff plans²⁴. This discrepancy between statistical indicators and user experience may indicate problems with network overload on the "last mile", insufficient channel capacity for some providers, or uneven distribution of infrastructure improvements across the country. State providers also face technical failures²⁴. The Ministry of Digital Development and Transport and the regulator ICTA declare strengthened control over the quality of services and protection of consumer rights²⁴.

2.4. Development of Providers and Autonomous Systems

The market for internet services in Azerbaijan is characterized by the presence of many registered operators and providers⁵². However, the dominant position is occupied by state companies.

In the fixed BBA market, the key role is played by Aztelekom (operates in regions) and Baktelekom (operates in Baku), both owned by the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport²³. Together they control about 58% of the fixed BBA market (according to EBRD data for 2022)⁵⁴ and the main part of the backbone infrastructure, especially in regions²². Among other notable providers - Bakinternet (also associated with the state, share 17% according to Internet Society Pulse 2025), Uninet (12%), AG Telekom/KATV1 (9%), Azeronline (8%), CityNet and others⁴⁶.

In the mobile communications market, three main operators operate:

- Azercell Telecom: Market leader, more than 5 million subscribers and market share of 48.2% in 2022⁶⁶.
- Bakcell: Second largest operator, about 3.1 million subscribers and market share of 36%⁶⁷.
- Nar (Azerfon): About 2.2 million subscribers⁶⁸.

Table 1: Key Internet Providers in Azerbaijan (2022-2024)

Type	Name Provider/Operator	Approximate Market Share (%) / Number of Subscribers (mln)	Source
Fixed	Aztelekom/Baktelecom (state)	~58%	54 (2022)
Fixed	Bakinternet (state)	~17%	46
Fixed	Uninet	~12%	46
Fixed	AG Telekom (KATV1)	~9%	46
Fixed	Azeronline	~8%	46
Mobile	Azercell Telecom	48.2% / >5 mln	66 (2022)
Mobile	Bakcell	36% / 3.1 mln	67
Mobile	Nar (Azerfon)	n/a / 2.2 mln	68

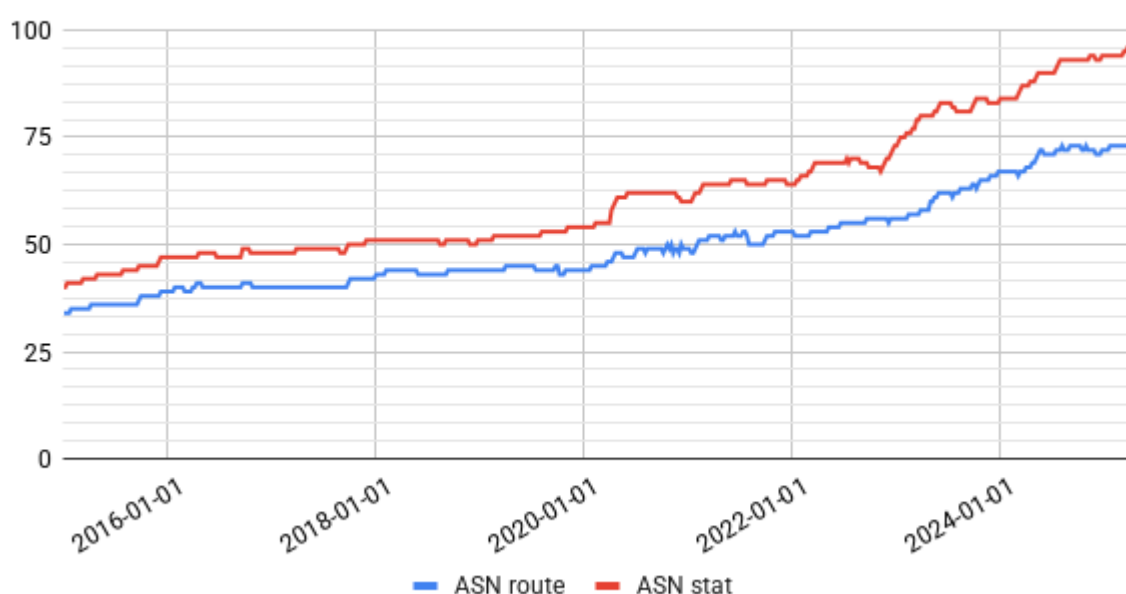
The number of Autonomous Systems (AS) registered in Azerbaijan, according to Internet Society Pulse for 2025, was 79⁴⁶. Historical data on the dynamics of the number of AS are available through the RIPEstat service⁷⁰, but were not presented in the studied materials.

Despite the formal presence of competition, the concentration of control over the backbone infrastructure and the market in the hands of state companies Aztelekom and Baktelecom creates a situation close to monopoly²². Private companies complain about dependence on the infrastructure of state companies and inflated tariffs for its use²⁴. Such a market structure, where the state is both a regulator and a dominant player through its companies, creates serious barriers to the development of healthy competition, which negatively affects prices, quality of services, and the pace of

innovation²². In addition, centralized control over the infrastructure by the state or companies affiliated with it significantly facilitates the technical implementation of censorship, blockings, and internet shutdowns for political reasons³⁷.

Graph 3: Dynamics of Autonomous Systems in Azerbaijan (2015-2025)

ASN Stat



The key conclusion from the analysis of the internet infrastructure of Azerbaijan is the critically low density of autonomous systems (AS). With only 93 AS for more than 10 million population, one system accounts for about 112 thousand people, which is several times, and sometimes an order of magnitude, inferior to the indicators of countries with developed and competitive digital markets. The positive dynamics of the number of AS observed on the graph is the expected effect of a low base and should not hide the fundamental problem - insufficient decentralization of the network. Such slow growth indicates serious barriers to the entry of new players into the market.

Table 2: Top 10 Largest Autonomous Systems in Azerbaijan

#	Number of AS	Name	Web Site	Foreign neighbour count	Local neighbour count	Total neighbour count	Foreign neighbours share
1	29049	DELTA-TELECOM -AS International Communication	http://www.delta-telecom.net	104	36	140	74%
2	196925	Azertelecom	https://www.azertelecom.az/	73	24	97	75%
3	34170	AZTELEKOM	https://aztelekom.az/en/	35	8	43	81%
4	211995	Aznet	https://a2z.az/	0	8	8	0%
5	200154	BEEONLINE	http://izone.az	0	7	7	0%
6	28787	Bakinternet ISP	https://baktelecom.az/	0	6	6	0%
7	39397	Az.StarNet	https://www.azstarnet.az	0	4	4	0%
8	200729	MCIT		1	3	4	25%
9	203622	gsp		0	4	4	0%
10	206977	azstatenet		1	3	4	25%

The table confirms that the problem of the internet market in Azerbaijan is not just in the small number of autonomous systems. There is a deep structural imbalance, in which the entire country depends on three central providers. This suppresses competition, artificially increases barriers to entry for new independent players into the market, and explains why the simple growth of the number of AS (the effect of a low base) does not lead to qualitative changes. For real development, diversification of international gateways and the appearance of a larger number of systems with independent access to the global network is necessary.

Main conclusions:

Formation of Oligopoly: The market for access to the global internet is actually divided between three key players: DELTA-TELECOM (AS29049), Azertelecom (AS196925), and AZTELEKOM (AS34170). They account for the overwhelming majority (212 out of 218 in the top-10) of all external connections. With a share of foreign peers at 74-81%, they are the main and practically alternative-less gateways through which almost all the country's

internet traffic passes. This creates a classic oligopoly in the market for international transit.

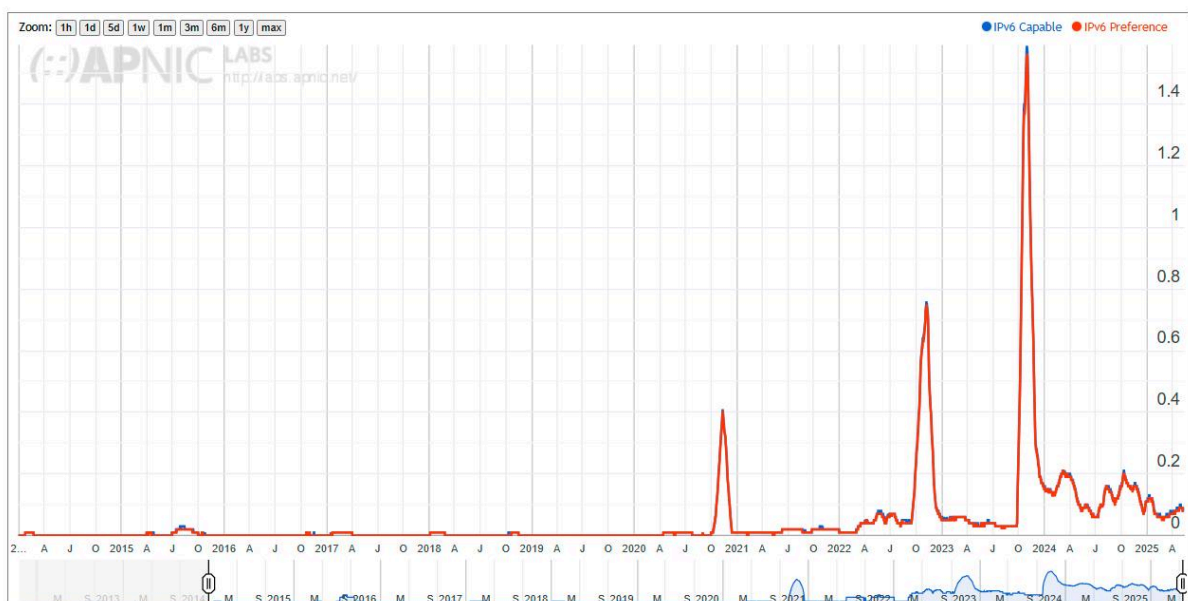
Two-level system and lack of competition: The data show the presence of a strict two-level (hierarchical) system. While the three leaders control the "external world", the majority of other providers, including those in the top-10 (Aznet, BEEONLINE, Bakinternet, etc.), have no direct foreign connection (the "Foreign neighbour count" column is zero). This means that they are forced to buy access to the global network from the same "big three", which puts them in a dependent position and deprives them of the ability to fully compete on price and quality of international traffic.

2.5. IPv6 Penetration

The implementation of the IPv6 protocol in Azerbaijan is at an extremely low level. According to APNIC Labs, the share of users capable of connecting via IPv6 remained close to zero throughout the period from 2019 to the beginning of 2025⁷³. This sharply contrasts with global averages (about 40%) and averages for Asia (about 46%)⁷³. Google's data on access to its services via IPv6 for Azerbaijan were not available in the studied materials, but the global Google indicator exceeded 47% by 2025⁷⁸. Data from ipv6-test.com also confirm minimal use of IPv6 in the country⁷⁹.

Graph 4: Dynamics of IPv6 Penetration in Azerbaijan (2015-2025)

Use of IPv6 for Azerbaijan (AZ)



Source: *stats.labs.apnic.net*

Such slow implementation of IPv6 may in the future become an obstacle to the development of the internet in the country, especially given the exhaustion of IPv4 addresses and the growth in the number of connected devices. The lack of progress in this area may indicate insufficient investments or lack of strategic priority from key providers and the regulator.

2.6. Connectivity Index

To assess the level of integration of the internet segment, two key indicators are used, based on the analysis of pairwise connections (peerings) between Autonomous Systems (ASN).

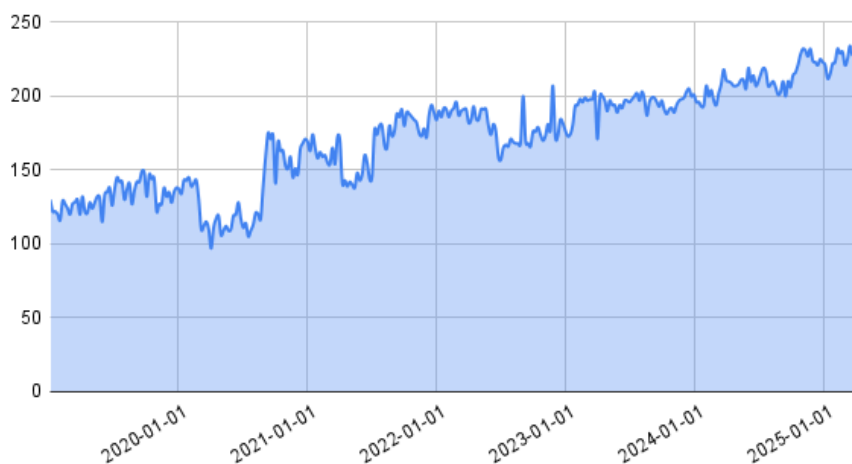
Global Connectivity Index: This index represents the total number of unique connections between each Azerbaijani ASN and each external (foreign) ASN. Essentially, it measures how widely and diversely the Azerbaijani internet segment is connected to the rest of the world. The higher this indicator, the more "windows" the country has to the global network.

Local Connectivity Index: This index is calculated as the total number of unique connections between different Azerbaijani ASNs. It reflects the intensity and complexity of the internal internet market, in particular, the activity at traffic exchange points (IXP). A high indicator speaks to a developed internal ecosystem, allowing efficient traffic exchange within the country, minimizing delays and dependence on external channels for local data.

The analysis of the ratio of these two indices allows understanding the strategic orientation of the national network: whether it is predominantly self-sufficient or deeply integrated into the global infrastructure.

Graph 5: Dynamics of Global Connectivity of Autonomous Systems in Azerbaijan (2019–2025)

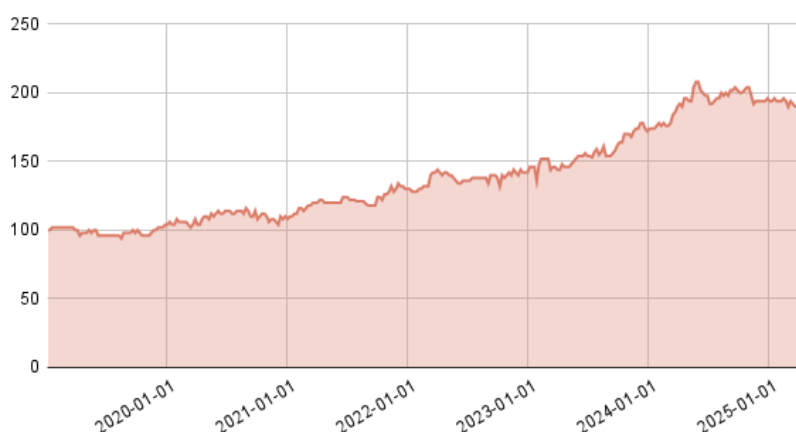
Global connectivity statistics



Global connectivity: Shows growth in the number of connections with the outside world (approximately from 125 to 225).

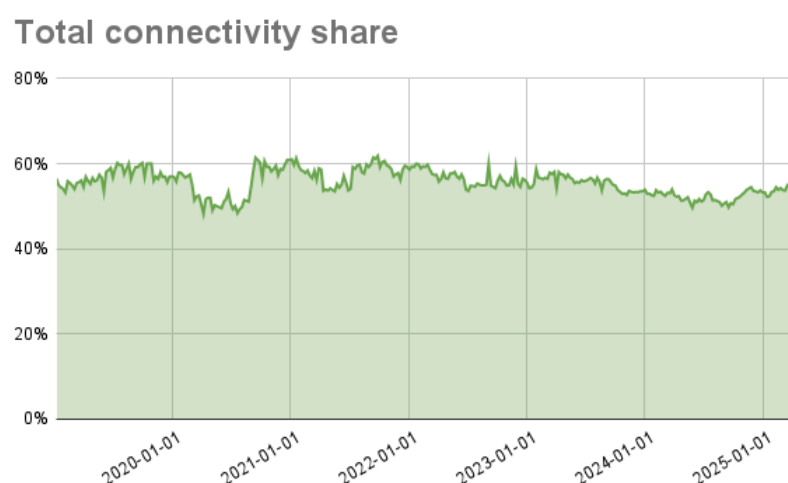
Graph 6: Dynamics of Local Connectivity of Autonomous Systems in Azerbaijan (2019-2025)

Local connectivity statistics



Local connectivity: Demonstrates steady growth in the number of connections between operators within Azerbaijan (approximately from 100 to 200 over 5 years).

Graph 7: Dynamics of the Ratio of Global and Local Connectivity of Autonomous Systems in Azerbaijan (2015-2025)



The key indicator is the stagnation of the local connectivity share (Graph of connectivity ratio). This graph is the most important of the three. It shows that, despite the growth in absolute numbers, the share of local connections in the overall connectivity structure does not grow, and since 2022 even has a tendency to decrease, fluctuating in the corridor of 50-60%.

What does this mean? In a healthy, decentralizing ecosystem, the growth of local peering should outpace the growth of global connections. This is a sign that local players are actively connecting with each other to optimize routes and costs.

What do we see in Azerbaijan? The opposite picture. The growth of global connections, which, as we know from table-2, are controlled by the "big three", occurs at least at the same pace as the growth of local ones. This prevents the internal market from becoming more self-sufficient.

The provided connectivity data convincingly prove that the existing centralized model of the internet market in Azerbaijan is not changing, but only scaling. The "big three" providers are successfully increasing their share of international channels, maintaining and strengthening their role as alternative-less gateways. The growth in the number of local connections does not occur at the expense of creating a flat, competitive environment, but within the same hierarchy - smaller operators connect to each other and to the dominant players.

Thus, the internet in Azerbaijan becomes "bigger" (the number of AS, channels, capacity grows), but its fundamental structure does not become "better" - that is, more

distributed, competitive, and fault-tolerant. The growth is quantitative, not qualitative, consolidating the dependence of the entire national network segment on several central players.

3. Internet Legislation

The legislative framework regulating the internet sphere in Azerbaijan is characterized by a contradiction between formal guarantees of freedom and broad powers of the state for control and restriction of the online space.

3.1. Principles of Internet Governance

Officially, Azerbaijan declares commitment to internet freedom. The country's constitution guarantees freedom of thought and speech (article 47), the right to freedom of information (article 50), and freedom of assembly (article 49)³². The country is also a member of the Council of Europe and OSCE, which imposes certain international obligations in the field of human rights, including digital rights³⁴.

However, in practice, internet governance is carried out in conditions of strict state control³³. International obligations are often not fulfilled, and legislation is used for restriction of rights and suppression of dissent⁸⁰.

3.1.1. Regulation

The state plays a key role in internet regulation. Azerbaijan lacks an independent telecommunications regulator.⁸³ The Ministry of Digital Development and Transport (MDDT) combines policymaking and regulatory functions.⁸¹ This creates a potential conflict of interest, as the ministry also manages the largest state-owned providers (Aztelekom and Baktelecom)²³.

Since 2020, the Azerbaijani government, in cooperation with the EBRD, has launched a reform program in the telecommunications sector, which includes the development of a new, more modern Law on Telecommunications (expected to be adopted in 2025) and the creation of a separate regulatory body – the Information and Communication Technologies Agency (ICTA)²³. The stated goal of the reforms is market liberalization and investment attraction²³.

3.1.2. Regulatory Bodies and Responsible Persons

The main state structures responsible for regulation and control of the internet:

Table 3: Key Regulatory Bodies in the Internet Sphere and Their Leadership

Body	Status/Subordination	Key Functions in the Internet Sphere	Leader (Full Name, Position)
Ministry of Digital Development and Transport (MDDT)	Central Executive Body	Development of State Policy, General Regulation of Communications and ICT, Management of State Providers	Rashad Nabiyeu (Minister)
Information and Communication Technologies Agency (ICTA)	Public Legal Entity under MDDT	Certification, Registration, Regulation and Control (incl. Quality) of ICT and Communications, Regulation of Operator Interconnection, Statistics Collection, Complaint Consideration ⁶²	Nail Mardanov (Chairman of the Board)
State Service for Special Communication and Information Security	(Probably under the President or Cabinet - to clarify)	Cybersecurity, Maintenance of "Black List" of Sites (blacklist.gov.az) ⁸⁷	n/a

3.2. Market Monopolization

Despite the presence of dozens of registered internet providers⁵², the telecommunications market in Azerbaijan is characterized by a high degree of concentration and de facto monopoly of state companies on key infrastructure²². State companies Aztelekom and Baktelecom control most of the backbone networks and access networks, especially in regions, and occupy a dominant share in the fixed BBA market (about 58% in 2022)²⁴.

There is no effectively functioning wholesale market where private providers could rent infrastructure on equal terms²³. Private companies complain about inflated tariffs from Aztelekom and Baktelecom for access to their networks and cable ducts²⁴. In July 2023, the State Service for Antimonopoly Supervision and Consumer Market Control applied

financial sanctions to natural monopolies for violation of internet service pricing norms, which confirms the presence of the problem²⁴.

Such a market structure, where the state is both a regulator and a dominant player through its companies, creates serious barriers to the development of healthy competition, which negatively affects prices, quality of services, and the pace of innovation²². In addition, centralized control over the infrastructure by the state or companies affiliated with it significantly facilitates the technical implementation of censorship, blockings, and internet shutdowns for political reasons³⁷.

3.3. Internet Shutdowns by Order of Authorities

Legislation in Azerbaijan provides authorities with powers to restrict access to the internet, but the procedures and grounds for such actions are not sufficiently clearly defined and do not meet international standards.

The Law "On Emergency Situation"⁹⁰ provides for the possibility of introducing a special legal regime in certain situations (natural disasters, epidemics, mass riots, threat to the constitutional order, etc.), which may include restriction of citizens' rights and freedoms. Although there is no direct mention of internet shutdown in the available fragments of the law⁹⁰, general provisions on control over communications in emergency conditions can be interpreted as allowing such measures. Similarly, legislation on martial law (amendments of 2016) expanded the government's capabilities for control over information⁹².

The key tool for operational intervention was the amendments to the Law "On Information, Informatization, and Protection of Information" adopted in March 2017³¹. These amendments allow the authorized body (previously MDDT, now probably ICTA) to block access to internet resources immediately without a prior court decision if they contain "information, the dissemination of which is prohibited", or information posing "a threat to the interests of the state and society protected by law"³¹. The blocking is introduced immediately, and then the authorities must apply to the court to confirm its legality⁸².

Such broad and vague formulations as "threat to the interests of the state and society" create the basis for arbitrary blockings and shutdowns. There are no clear legislative procedures, guarantees against abuses, and effective mechanisms for appeal for resource owners and users⁸⁰. This legislation creates a legal basis that allows authorities to interfere with the operation of the internet, violating international standards of freedom of information and expression.

3.4. Legislation on "Words on the Internet"

The legislation of Azerbaijan contains a number of articles that criminalize various forms of statements on the internet, creating serious risks for freedom of speech.

In 2013, amendments were made to the Criminal Code that extended the application of articles on slander (art. 147) and insult (art. 148) to statements made on the internet⁸⁴. The punishment for these crimes may include large fines, correctional work, or imprisonment for up to six months (under art. 147 and 148)⁹⁴.

In November 2016, the legislation was further tightened. Article 148-1 of the Criminal Code was introduced, providing for liability for slander or insult on the internet using fake usernames, profiles, or accounts (punishment - fine from 1000 to 1500 manats, public works, correctional work up to 2 years, or imprisonment up to 1 year)⁹⁵. At the same time, article 323.1 of the Criminal Code (insult or humiliation of the honor and dignity of the president) was expanded: the new article 323.1-1 established punishment for the same actions committed on the internet using fake names or accounts, in the form of a fine from 1000 to 1500 manats or imprisonment for up to 3 years⁹².

In addition, in March 2020, amendments were made to the Law "On Information, Informatization, and Protection of Information", which expanded the definition of "prohibited information". It included "false information creating a danger to the life and health of people; causing significant property damage; mass violation of public safety; disruption of the activities of life support facilities, financial, transport, communication, industrial, energy, and social infrastructure"⁸¹. Such a broad formulation can be used to prosecute for the dissemination of any information displeasing to the authorities. There were also reports of plans to develop a separate law on hate speech (Hate Speech)⁸¹.

Table 4: Key Legislative Norms Regulating Statements on the Internet

Law/Article of the Criminal Code	Year of Adoption/A amendment	Brief Description of the Norm	Prescribed Punishment
Criminal Code art. 147, 148	2013	Extension of criminal liability for slander and insult to the internet space.	Fine up to 1000 AZN, correctional work up to 1 year, imprisonment up to 6 months. ⁹⁴

Criminal Code art. 148-1	2016	Slander or insult on the internet using fake names/accounts.	Fine 1000-1500 AZN, public/correctional work, imprisonment up to 1 year ⁹⁵
Criminal Code art. 323.1-1	2016	Insult or humiliation of the honor and dignity of the president on the internet using fake names/accounts.	Fine 1000-1500 AZN, imprisonment up to 3 years ⁹⁵
Law "On Information..."	2020	Expansion of the concept of "prohibited information", inclusion of "false information" creating various dangers (to life, property, public safety, infrastructure).	(Specific punishment not specified in the law, but can serve as a basis for blocking or other measures) ⁸¹

Criminalization of defamation, especially in relation to the head of state, and the use of vague formulations to define "prohibited" or "false" information create powerful legal tools for suppressing criticism and dissent in the online space. This leads to self-censorship among users and is used for targeted persecution of journalists, bloggers, and activists, as will be shown in section 4.2.

3.5. Legislation on Internet Blocking

The main legislative acts regulating the blocking of internet resources are the Law "On Information, Informatization, and Protection of Information" (with amendments of 2017) and the Law "On Telecommunications"³⁷.

3.5.1. Blocking Procedures

The 2017 amendments to the Law "On Information..." granted the authorized state body (previously MDDT, now functions may be divided between ICTA and the State Service for Special Communication) the right to immediately block access to sites without a prior court decision. The basis for such blocking can be the presence on the resource of "prohibited information" (including calls for violent change of the constitutional order, terrorism, religious extremism, mass riots, as well as information containing state secrets, pornography, propaganda of violence, etc.) or information creating "a threat to the interests of the state and society protected by law".

After introducing the blocking, the body is obliged within 24 hours to notify the owner of the resource (if known) and the provider, as well as to apply to the court to confirm the legality of the blocking⁸². However, in practice, the procedures are often opaque, and the mechanisms for challenging blockings by site owners and users are ineffective⁸⁰. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the case of blocking the sites of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in Azerbaijan established that the legislation does not provide sufficient guarantees against arbitrary interference and violates Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of expression)⁸².

3.5.2. Registries of Blocked Internet Resources

There is an official registry of blocked resources – "Black List" ("Qara siyahı"), which is maintained by the State Service for Special Communication and Information Security and available on the website blacklist.gov.az⁸⁷. The purpose of the service is declared to inform users about internet resources containing "malicious content". The registry is divided into two groups: resources with general malicious content and resources targeting Azerbaijani internet users⁸⁷. The service provides the ability to check a domain, view a screenshot of malicious content, information about its type and date of detection. Functions for exporting the list for ICT specialists and API for developers are also provided⁸⁷.

However, data from independent monitoring conducted by organizations such as Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI)⁹⁷ and Azerbaijan Internet Watch⁹⁹ show that the real list of blocked resources is significantly wider than the official "black list". Blockings are applied to sites of independent media, opposition groups, human rights organizations, and tools for bypassing censorship (VPN, Tor), which often do not appear in the official registry.

3.5.3. Development of Blocking

The practice of blocking internet resources in Azerbaijan is systematic and tends to expand, especially during periods of political tension.

- **Blocking of media and critical sites:** Since 2017, after the adoption of the relevant amendments, authorities have consistently blocked access to sites of leading independent and opposition online media, such as Radio Azadlyg (RFE/RL), Meydan TV, newspaper Azadlıq, Turan TV, Azərbaycan Saati, OCCRP, Abzas.net, and others³¹. At the end of 2022, signs of blocking the site of The Guardian appeared¹⁰⁰. Blockings are often permanent and confirmed by court decisions, which the ECtHR recognized as unlawful⁸².

- **Blocking of social networks and platforms:** During periods of escalation of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (2020, 2023) and border clashes (2022), authorities resorted to temporary blocking or throttling (slowing down) of popular social networks and messengers, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, Skype, and especially often TikTok³². The official pretext is usually the need to prevent "provocations" or the dissemination of "military secrets"³². Blockings are often permanent.
- **Blocking of tools for bypassing censorship:** Authorities also block access to sites of VPN services and anonymizers, such as Tor and Psiphon, to make it difficult for users to bypass blockings⁹⁷.
- **Technical methods:** Various methods are used for blocking, including DNS manipulation, blocking by IP addresses, breaking TCP connections, and interference in TLS traffic. Observed anomalies (for example, connection timeouts) indicate the possible use of deep packet inspection (DPI) technology⁹⁷.

Table 5: Examples of Blocked Internet Resources/Platforms (2019-2024)

Resource/Platform	Type	Blocking (Approximate)	Period	Source of Information
Azadliq.org (RFE/RL)	Media	Permanent (since 2017)		31
Meydan.tv	Media	Permanent (since 2017)		31
Azadliq.info (newspaper)	Media	Permanent (since 2017)		31
Azərbaycansaati.tv	Media	Permanent (since 2017)		31
Turan.tv	Media	Permanent (since 2017)		31
OCCRP.org	Media (investigations)	Permanent (since 2017)		31
Abzas.net	Media	Permanent (since ~2020 or earlier)		97
Kanal13.tv	Media (TV)	Permanent (since ~2020 or earlier)		97
Theguardian.com	Media	Possibly since the end of 2022 (inconsistently)		100

Ria.ru	Media (Russia)	Since June 2022	100
Haqqin.az, Minval.az, etc.	Media (Azerbaijan)	Blocked in Russia since June 2022	100
TikTok	Social network	Temporarily (Sep-Nov 2022, Sep-Oct 2023)	37
Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, Skype	Social networks, messengers	Temporarily (Sep-Nov 2020)	33
Sites of VPN services (various)	Bypass tools	Permanent/Periodic	97
Torproject.org	Bypass tools (Tor site)	Permanent/Periodic	97
Psiphon.ca	Bypass tools (Psiphon site)	Permanent/Periodic	97

4. Human Rights Violations on the Internet

Against the background of the development of internet infrastructure in Azerbaijan, a consistent deterioration in the situation with observance of digital human rights is observed. Authorities actively use legislative and technical means to restrict freedom of speech, suppress criticism, and control the information space.

4.1. Internet Shutdown by Order of Authorities

Authorities in Azerbaijan have repeatedly resorted to full or partial internet shutdowns (shutdowns) or slowing it down (throttling), especially during periods of political instability, social protests, or military actions. These actions grossly violate citizens' right to access information and freedom of expression.

The most large-scale and documented cases for the period 2019–2024 include:

- **September – November 2020:** During the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and High Technologies announced restrictions

on access to the internet throughout the country to "prevent Armenian provocations"³³. In practice, this resulted in blocking or significant slowing down of most popular social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube) and messengers (WhatsApp, Telegram, Skype)³². The restrictions were lifted only after the conclusion of the ceasefire agreement³³. The authorities did not provide detailed information on the reasons and scale of blocking specific platforms³³.

- **September – November 2022:** During border clashes with Armenia, access to the TikTok platform was blocked¹⁰⁰. The blocking lasted about two months¹⁰⁰.
- **September – October 2023:** During Azerbaijan's military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, TikTok was blocked again throughout the country³². The State Security Service explained this by the need to suppress the dissemination of information "casting a shadow on the successes of the army, containing military secrets, and aimed at forming erroneous opinion in society"³². Access was restored at the end of October³⁷. Simultaneously, throttling of the internet in the city of Fizuli, located in the conflict zone, was reported³².
- **February 2024:** During the early presidential elections, journalists and observers reported connection problems in Baku and other regions, in particular difficulties with transmitting photo and video materials via WhatsApp, especially for subscribers of Nar and Bakcell³⁷. The Central Electoral Commission denied the presence of problems, and MDDT did not provide comments³⁷.

These incidents demonstrate the readiness of authorities to use internet shutdowns as a tool for information control in critical moments, limiting citizens' opportunities for communication, obtaining alternative information, and documenting events. The lack of transparency and accountability when introducing such restrictions aggravates the situation.

Table 6: Documented Cases of Shutdowns/Restrictions on the Internet (2019-2024)

Date/Period	Type of Restriction	Affected Regions/Platforms	Alleged Reason/Context	Source of Information

Sep-Nov 2020	Blocking/Throttling of social networks and messengers	Whole country / Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Twitter, Skype, YouTube, etc.	Second Karabakh War	32
Sep-Nov 2022	Blocking of TikTok	Whole country / TikTok	Border clashes with Armenia	37
Sep-Oct 2023	Blocking of TikTok, Throttling of internet in Fizuli	Whole country (TikTok), city of Fizuli (internet) / TikTok	Military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh	32
February 2024	Connection problems (transmission of media via WhatsApp)	Separate regions / WhatsApp (file transmission)	Presidential elections	37

4.2. Criminalization of Statements on the Internet

Authorities in Azerbaijan actively use criminal legislation, in particular articles on slander, insult, as well as other accusations (often fabricated, for example, in illegal drug trafficking, hooliganism, tax evasion, smuggling), to persecute journalists, bloggers, activists, and ordinary citizens for critical or other displeasing statements on the internet.

For the period 2019-2024, a transition from persecution of individual well-known activists to mass, coordinated attacks on editorial offices of independent online media is observed.

- **Persecution of activists:** The well-known activist and former parliamentary candidate **Bakhtiyar Hajiyev** has been repeatedly subjected to arrests, which human rights defenders associate with his active criticism of authorities on social networks and calls for protests¹⁰⁹. His arrest in December 2022 on charges of hooliganism and contempt of court and subsequent long-term detention caused wide international resonance¹¹¹.
- **Attacks on independent media (from the end of 2023):**

- **Abzas Media:** From November 2023, director Ulvi Hasanli, deputy chief editor Mahammad Kekalov, chief editor Sevinj Vagifgyzy, journalists Nargiz Absalamova, Elnara Gasymova, and Hafiz Babaly were arrested³⁶. Initially, they were charged with "smuggling committed by a group of persons by prior conspiracy" (art. 206.3.2 CC)¹¹². Later, in August 2024, charges of illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, and tax evasion were added¹¹². Abzas Media is known for its investigations of corruption in the highest echelons of power and coverage of social problems³⁶. The arrested journalists reported pressure and poor conditions of detention¹¹³.
- **Meydan TV:** In December 2024, at least 10 journalists and employees associated with Meydan TV (including Ramin Deco, Aynur Ganbarova, Aysel Umudova, Aytac Ahmedova, Hayala Agaeva, Natig Javadly, Shamshad Aga, Nurlana Gahramanly, Fatim Movlamly, Fatima Movlamly) were arrested¹¹⁴. They were also charged with smuggling (art. 206.3.2 CC)¹¹⁵. Journalist **Ulviyya Ali (Gulieva)**, who collaborated with Voice of America, was also arrested in May 2025 as part of this case¹¹⁴. Meydan TV denies the accusations and declares political persecution for criticism of authorities¹¹⁵.
- **Toplum TV:** In March 2024, the police conducted a search in the office of Toplum TV, dozens of employees were detained³⁶. Several journalists and activists associated with the publication and the Institute for Democratic Initiatives (IDI) were also charged with smuggling.
- **Kanal 11 / Kanal 13:** Journalists associated with these online TV channels were also subjected to arrests as part of the general wave of repressions³⁷.
- **Other cases:**
 - Religious blogger **Rashad Ramazanov**, who criticized the authorities, was sentenced in February 2024 to 5 years and 4 months imprisonment on a fabricated charge of illegal drug trafficking; reports of his torture in detention³⁷.
 - Editor of the online publication Khural **Avaz Zeynally** was sentenced in March 2024 to 9 years imprisonment, and the head of the YouTube channel Seda TV **Elnur Shukurov** - to 4 years³⁷.
 - Journalist of Radio Azadlyg **Farid Mehralizade** was detained in May 2024 on charges of smuggling and reported physical violence by the police¹¹³.

This wave of arrests from the end of 2023, directed at entire editorial offices and using stereotypical accusations not directly related to journalistic activity (smuggling, tax evasion), indicates a targeted campaign by authorities to destroy the last centers of independent online journalism in the country.

Table 7: Examples of Persecution for Online Activity (2019-2024)

Name/Organization	Status	Date of Arrest/Accusation	Presented Accusations (Main)	Connection with Online Activity	Current Status (as of mid-2025)
Bakhtiyar Hajiyeu	Activist	Dec 2022 (latest)	Hooliganism, contempt of court	Criticism of authorities on social networks, calls for protests	In custody
Ulvi Hasanli (Abzas Media)	Journalist (Director)	Nov 2023	Smuggling, illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, taxes	Leadership of independent investigative media	In custody
Sevinj Vagifgyzy (Abzas)	Journalist (Chief Editor)	Nov 2023	Smuggling, illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, taxes	Work in independent investigative media	In custody
Journalists of Abzas Media (4+)	Journalists	Nov 2023 - Jan 2024	Smuggling, illegal entrepreneurship, money laundering, taxes	Work in independent investigative media	In custody
Journalists of Meydan TV (10+)	Journalists	Dec 2024 - Feb 2025	Smuggling	Work in independent opposition media	In custody
Ulviyya Ali (VoA / Meydan TV)	Journalist	May 2025	Smuggling (as part of Meydan TV case)	Journalistic activity, connection with Meydan TV case	In custody

Employees of Toplum TV	Journalists , activists	March 2024	Smuggling	Work in independent online TV / NGO	In custody
Rashad Ramazanov	Blogger	May 2023 (arrest)	Illegal drug trafficking	Religious and critical online activity	In custody (sentence 5+ years)
Avaz Zeynally (Khural)	Journalist (Editor)	Sep 2022 (arrest)	Extortion, receiving bribes	Leadership of critical online media	In custody (sentence 9 years)
Elnur Shukurov (Seda TV)	Blogger (YouTube)	Sep 2022 (arrest)	Extortion	Leading a critical YouTube channel	In custody (sentence 4 years)
Farid Mehralizade (RFE/RL)	Journalist	May 2024	Smuggling	Work in independent media (Radio Azadlyg)	In custody

4.3. Persecution of Media and NGOs

In addition to direct arrests of journalists and activists, authorities in Azerbaijan use a wide range of measures to suppress independent media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating, including in the online space.

- Legislative restrictions:** Restrictive laws have been adopted and applied that complicate the work of independent media and NGOs. The Law "On Media" (2022) introduced mandatory registration of online media in a single registry and established strict requirements for journalists and media platforms, effectively outlawing those who did not get into the registry⁸¹. Legislation on NGOs limits their registration and possibilities of receiving foreign funding, which is critically important for independent organizations³⁶.
- Blockings and technical attacks:** As indicated in section 3.5.3, sites of independent media are systematically blocked³¹. In addition, they are subjected to DDoS attacks and hacking attempts, especially during periods of political tension or after the

publication of resonant materials⁴⁰. In 2024, large-scale DDoS attacks were subjected to resources of Global Media Group (Report.Az, Oxu.Az, etc.), with the sources of the attack linked to Russian structures¹¹⁸.

- **Pressure on NGOs:** Organizations engaged in the protection of human rights, freedom of media, and digital rights, such as the Institute for Freedom and Safety of Reporters (IRFS) and the Human Rights Club, face serious obstacles in their work and are forced to operate in extremely difficult conditions or from abroad³⁹.
- **Persecution of relatives:** Authorities exert pressure on relatives of journalists and activists who are in emigration to force them to stop critical activity online. This includes detentions, interrogations, and threats³⁶.
- **Use of spyware:** Cases of using spyware, such as Pegasus from the Israeli company NSO Group, for surveillance of journalists, activists, and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan have been identified¹⁰⁵.
- **Closure of offices and ban on broadcasting:** In the past, authorities resorted to closing offices of foreign media (for example, the Baku bureau of RFE/RL in 2014⁸²) and banning broadcasting on FM frequencies⁸².

These actions create an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship, forcing independent voices to fall silent or leave the country, and lead to further narrowing of the space for free exchange of information and public discussion in Azerbaijan³⁶.

5. Civil Society in the Field of Internet Governance

In conditions of strict state control over the information space and restrictions for independent activity, civil society in Azerbaijan, working in the field of digital rights and internet governance, faces significant difficulties.

5.1. Organizations

There are several initiatives and organizations that try to monitor the situation with digital rights and freedom of the internet in the country:

- **Azerbaijan Internet Watch (AIW):** An online platform that monitors and documents cases of internet censorship and surveillance in Azerbaijan, actively using and analyzing OONI data⁹⁹. Collaborates with OONI and publishes joint reports⁹⁹.
- **Institute for Freedom and Safety of Reporters (IRFS):** One of the oldest NGOs dealing with freedom of media and rights of journalists, including in the online sphere.

Was a co-founder of the Expression Online initiative³⁸. Was subjected to persecutions by authorities.

- **Human Rights Club:** A human rights organization that also participated in the Expression Online initiative³⁹.
- **Expression Online:** An initiative launched in 2012 by IRFS and the Human Rights Club to promote internet freedom in Azerbaijan through research and advocacy³⁹.

At the same time, there are pro-government structures dealing with issues of digitalization and innovations:

- **Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communications (CAERC):** A state structure under the President of Azerbaijan, managing the Digital Trade Hub (DTH) project¹²⁰.
- **Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) Azerbaijan:** Affiliated with the World Economic Forum, deals with the promotion of technologies of the 4th industrial revolution (AI, IoT, etc.) and the development of corresponding policy in cooperation with state and private partners¹²¹.

Sometimes events dedicated to internet governance are held with the participation of international organizations and state structures, for example, the Youth Internet Governance Forum, organized by MDDT, the Youth Fund, and UNDP¹²². However, in conditions of general suppression of civil society³⁴, such events may be more formal in nature and not provide a real platform for independent discussion of problems and development of solutions.

Thus, polarization is observed: on the one hand, independent observers operate (often from abroad or under risk), recording violations⁹⁹, on the other - pro-government centers promoting the official agenda of digital development¹²⁰. Effective dialogue between authorities and independent civil society on issues of internet governance and digital rights is practically absent.

5.2. VPN and Block Bypass Tools

The use of VPN and other block bypass tools is a common practice among internet users in Azerbaijan to access blocked resources.

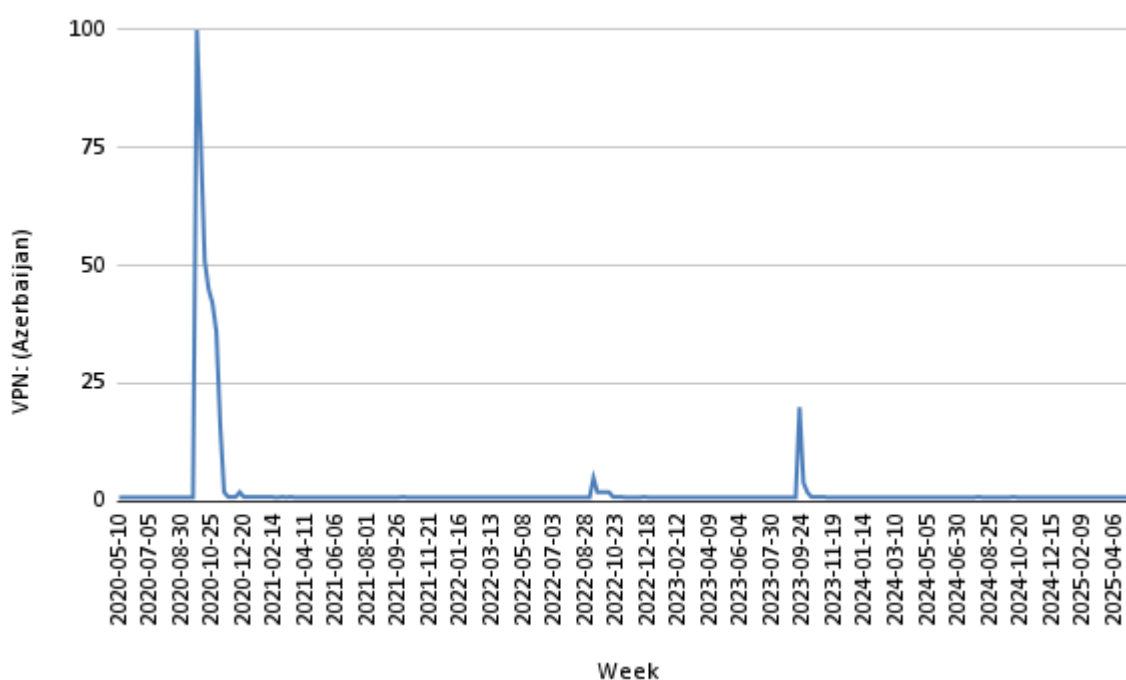
5.2.1. Status of VPN Services

Formally, the legislation of Azerbaijan does not prohibit the use of VPN services¹²⁴. VPNs are considered a legal tool for increasing privacy and security on the network¹²⁴. However, the use of VPN for committing unlawful actions is prohibited¹²⁴.

Despite the absence of a direct ban, authorities take measures to restrict access to VPN and other means of bypassing censorship. This includes blocking websites of well-known VPN providers and anonymizers⁹⁷. There have also been reports of attempts to block VPN traffic itself, in particular, the Tor protocol, although the effectiveness of such measures may be limited due to built-in bypass mechanisms in these tools¹⁰¹. This situation creates legal uncertainty: although the use of VPN is not prohibited, authorities actively hinder access to these tools.

5.2.2. Number of VPN Users

Graph 8: Dynamics of Search Queries about VPN in Azerbaijan (2020-2025)



Source: trends.google.com: Peaks on the graph coincide with the start of hostilities in Karabakh

There are no accurate statistical data on the number of VPN users in Azerbaijan for the period 2019-2025 in open sources⁴⁸. Surveys or official statistics on VPN use are absent.

However, an indirect indication of the widespread use of VPN is sharp surges in search demand for VPN services during periods of internet or popular platform blockings. For example:

- In September 2022, during the blocking of TikTok amid border clashes, the demand for VPN in Azerbaijan grew by 751% compared to the previous period¹²⁶.
- In September 2023, when TikTok was blocked again during the military operation in Karabakh, search queries for VPN grew by 324%¹⁰⁷.
- During the 44-day war of 2020, when social networks were blocked, there were also reports of difficulties with downloading and using VPN, which indicates mass attempts to apply them³³.

These data indicate that a significant part of active internet users in Azerbaijan is aware of VPN and uses them to bypass state censorship.

5.2.3. Cases of Persecution for Using VPN

The studied materials do not contain information on cases of arrest or criminal prosecution of citizens of Azerbaijan exclusively for the fact of using VPN services.

However, in one of the court cases (accusation of Tural Aliyev in hacking), it was mentioned that the accused used VPN to ensure confidentiality during communication and commission of alleged cybercrimes¹²⁷. In this context, VPN appears as a tool used in the commission of another crime, and not as an independent offense. The absence of reports of persecution precisely for the use of VPN may be related to the difficulties of detection and proof of such facts, as well as to the fact that authorities may prefer to fight VPN by blocking access to them, rather than by direct persecution of users.

5.2.4. Block Monitoring

The key role in independent monitoring of internet censorship and blockings in Azerbaijan is played by international and local initiatives using specialized tools:

- **OONI (Open Observatory of Network Interference):** A global project developing open software OONI Probe, which allows volunteers around the world to measure various forms of internet censorship (blocking of sites, applications, interference in traffic). The results of measurements are published as open data in real time⁹⁷. OONI results are the main source of independent information on blockings in Azerbaijan.

- **Azerbaijan Internet Watch (AIW):** A local platform that actively uses and analyzes OONI data to track and cover the situation with internet censorship in Azerbaijan⁹⁹.

These tools and organizations provide valuable information on the real state of internet freedom in the country, documenting blockings that are often not recognized by authorities or not reflected in official registries.

The high demand for VPN during restrictions¹⁰⁷ and simultaneous attempts by authorities to block access to these tools⁹⁷ indicate an ongoing struggle between the state's desire to control the information field and citizens' desire to gain access to blocked information. This "cat and mouse game" underscores both the resilience of society's demand for free internet and the authorities' determination to restrict it.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of the state of the internet and digital rights in Azerbaijan for the period from 2019 to 2025 reveals a number of key trends and contradictions.

On the one hand, there is significant progress in the development of internet infrastructure and expansion of access. The level of internet penetration has reached high indicators (about 89% by 2024-2025), and median speeds for both fixed and mobile broadband access have grown substantially, especially in the last two years, thanks to active state programs for the deployment of fiber-optic networks. Digital public services are being implemented, and the country demonstrates successes in international e-government ratings²¹.

On the other hand, this technological development occurs against the background of systematic and intensifying restrictions on digital rights and freedoms. Key findings include:

1. **State control and monopolization:** Internet infrastructure is largely controlled by state or state-affiliated companies, which limits competition, affects quality and cost of services, and also facilitates centralized implementation of censorship and shutdowns²².
2. **Systematic censorship:** Authorities actively and consistently block access to sites of independent media, opposition resources, human rights organizations, and tools for bypassing censorship (VPN, Tor)³¹. During periods of political tension or conflicts, temporary blockings or slowing down of popular social networks and messengers are applied³².

3. **Repressive legislation:** Legislation criminalizing defamation (especially in relation to the head of state) and containing broad definitions of "prohibited" or "false" information is used as a tool to suppress criticism and persecute dissent in the online space⁸¹.
4. **Persecution for online activity:** Journalists, bloggers, and activists are subjected to criminal prosecution, arrests, and long-term imprisonment for their activity on the internet. From the end of 2023, a transition to mass attacks on entire editorial offices of independent online media is observed³⁷.
5. **Limited space for civil society:** Independent NGOs working in the field of digital rights face serious obstacles, while pro-government structures promote the official agenda of digital development³⁶.
6. **Stagnation in technical aspects:** The implementation of the IPv6 protocol remains at an extremely low level, which may create problems for the future development of the internet in the country⁷³.

Thus, in Azerbaijan, there is a clear contradiction between investments in digital infrastructure and declared goals of digital development, on the one hand, and the real practice of strict control over the information space and suppression of digital rights - on the other. The internet, remaining an important channel for obtaining alternative information and expressing opinions, is simultaneously an object of close attention and repressive measures from the authorities. The state of digital rights in Azerbaijan for the period under review is assessed as limited and tending to deteriorate, despite the formal development of infrastructure.

Sources

1. AZƏRBAYCANIN COĞRAFİ MÖVQEYİ, SƏRHƏDLƏRİ VƏ RELİYEFİ | MİNFAKT, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://minfakt.wordpress.com/2012/06/22/az%C9%99rbaycanin-cogرافي-movqeyi-s%C9%99rh%C9%99dl%C9%99ri-v%C9%99-relyefi/>
2. Azerbaijan - Wikipedia, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azerbaijan>
3. Population » AZERBAIJAN » Official website of the president ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://president.az/ru/pages/view/azerbaijan/population>
4. www.worldometers.info, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/azerbaijan-population/#:~:text=The%20current%20population%20of%20Azerbaijan,of%20the%20total%20world%20population>.
5. www.worldometers.info, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/azerbaijan-population/#:~:text=The%20current%20population%20of%20Azerbaijan,latest%20United%20Nations%20data1>.
6. COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE AZERBAIJAN - EU NEIGHBOURS east, last accessed: May 8, 2025, https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/eu4genderhelpdesk_azerbaijangunderprofile_v3.pdf
7. World Development Indicators | DataBank, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&country=AZE>
8. Azerbaijan GDP 1990-2025 - Macrotrends, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/aze/azerbaijan/gdp-gross-domestic-product>

9. Azerbaijan GDP - Worldometer, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/azerbaijan-gdp/>
10. IMF predicts Azerbaijan's nominal GDP growth to \$77B in 2025 | Report.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://report.az/en/finance/imf-predicts-azerbaijan-s-nominal-gdp-growth-to-77b-in-2025/>
11. Azerbaijani Central Bank shares optimistic economic growth forecast until 2027, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://en.trend.az/business/4034583.html>
12. Economy of Azerbaijan - TAdviser, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.tadviser.ru/index.php/%D0%A1%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%8C%D1%8F:%D0%AD%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%90%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%B4%D0%B6%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0>
13. Azerbaijani currency to world currency rates for May 8, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://en.trend.az/business/4041288.html>
14. Analyzing GDP Growth Slowdown in 2023 in Azerbaijan: Key ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://nhsjs.com/2025/analyzing-gdp-growth-slowdown-in-2023-in-azerbaijan-key-factors-and-policy-implications/>
15. Azerbaijan: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2025 Article IV Mission, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2025/04/08/mcs040825-azerbaijan-staff-concluding-statement-of-the-2025-article-iv-mission>
16. IMF Executive Board Concludes 2025 Article IV Consultation with ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2025/04/22/pr-25118-azerbaijan-imf-concludes-2025-article-iv-consultation>
17. EBRD improves economic outlook of Azerbaijan this year - AzerNews, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.azernews.az/finance/238329.html>
18. Azerbaijan - IMF DataMapper, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/AZE>
19. World Bank Group to Support a Greener, More Competitive ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/01/28/world-bank-group-to-support-a-greener-more-competitive-economy-in-azerbaijan>
20. EBRD: GDP growth in Azerbaijan projected to moderate to 3 per cent in 2025 and 2.5 per cent in 2026, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/ebrd-gdp-growth-in-azerbaijan-projected-to-moderate-to-3-per-cent-in-2025-and-2-5-per-cent-in-2026/>

21. Azerbaijan's ICT Sector: Digital economy as new driver of sustainable development, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://report.az/en/finance/azerbaijan-s-ict-sector-digital-economy-as-new-driver-of-sustainable-development/>
22. Development of digital economy should be one of the priorities for Azerbaijan in pandemic period - Strategeast, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://www.strategeast.org/development-of-digital-economy-should-be-one-of-the-priorities-for-azerbaijan-in-pandemic-period/>
23. Law in transition 2024 - EBRD, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
https://www.ebrd.com/content/dam/ebd_dxp/assets/pdfs/legal-reform/law-in-transition-journal/2024/law-in-transition-2024-baku-to-the-future.pdf
24. Azerbaijan's internet market: investment on speed and service - Caliber.Az review, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://caliber.az/en/post/azerbaijan-s-internet-market-investment-on-speed-and-service>
25. www.google.com, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://www.google.com/search?q=political+system+of+Azerbaijan>
26. Constitution » AZERBAIJAN » Official website ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://president.az/ru/pages/view/azerbaijan/constitution>
27. Ilham Aliyev | Azerbaijan, President, Family, & Biography - Britannica, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ilham-Aliyev>
28. Official web-site of President of Azerbaijan Republic, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://president.az/en>
29. Political parties - Azerbaijan.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://azerbaijan.az/ru/information/603>
30. Most active political PARTIES on social networks - LIST - Modern.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://modern.az/olke/496812/sosial-shebekede-en-aktiv-siyasi-partiyalar-siyahi/>
31. Freedom of speech is guaranteed Aliyev says as Azerbaijan blocks news websites, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://cpj.org/2018/04/freedom-of-speech-is-guaranteed-aliyev-says-as-aze/>
32. KeepItOn: government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and internet service providers must maintain free, open, and secure internet access throughout upcoming elections, last accessed: May 8, 2025,
<https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/open-letter-azerbaijan-elections-internet-access-2024/>
33. PULLING THE PLUG: - International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR), last accessed: May 8, 2025,

https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Pulling-the-Plug_report_updated_compressed-1.pdf

34. AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASI, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/587969.pdf>
35. Extraordinary parliamentary elections 1 September 2024, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/8/587972.pdf>
36. Azerbaijan freedom of expression - Amnesty International, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/projects/azerbaijan-freedom-of-expression/>
37. Azerbaijan: Freedom on the Net 2024 Country Report, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-net/2024>
38. Media freedom in Azerbaijan - Wikipedia, last accessed: May 8, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_freedom_in_Azerbaijan
39. Don't speak, don't click: Azerbaijan's growing online restrictions | IMS, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.mediasupport.org/dont-speak-dont-click-azerbajians-growing-online-restrictions/>
40. Freedom on the Net 2017 - Azerbaijan | Refworld, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59fc67ffa.html>
41. 2024 was the worst year for internet shutdowns around the world | Context by TRF, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.context.news/digital-rights/2024-was-the-worst-year-for-internet-shutdowns-around-the-world>
42. .az - Wikipedia, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/.az>
43. .az - ICANNWiki, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://icannwiki.org/.az>
44. Rules | whois.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://whois.jis.az/en/rules/>
45. Registrar - whois.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://whois.jis.az/en/registrar/>
46. Country Report for Azerbaijan - Internet Society Pulse, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://pulse.internetsociety.org/en/reports/AZ/>
47. Indicator 17.8.1 Proportion of individuals using the Internet, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://sdg.azstat.gov.az/en/indicators/815/proportion-of-individuals-using-the-internet>
48. Digital 2024: Azerbaijan — DataReportal — Global Digital Insights, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-azerbaijan>
49. Digital 2025: Azerbaijan - Crocusoft, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://crocusoft.com/en/Blog/Details/digital-2025-azerbaijanen>
50. Azerbaijan: Freedom on the Net 2023 Country Report, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-net/2023>
51. Azerbaijan data - ITU DataHub, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://datahub.itu.int/data/?e=AZE&Connectivity=International+roaming&Markets=Com>

[petition&Trust=Applications+and+Services&Sustainability=Emergency+telecommunications&Governance=Regulatory+mandates&Affordability=Broadband+services+pricing](#)

52. Azerbaijan data - ITU DataHub, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://datahub.itu.int/data/?e=AZE&Sustainability=Emergency+telecommunications&Trust=Counterfeit&Connectivity=Use&Affordability=ICT+prices>

53. on Internet Access and Network Quality in Azerbaijan - Baku Research Institute, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Internet-hesabati_december_2024_EN-1.pdf

54. AZERBAIJAN PROJECT AZTELEKOM - EBRD, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

https://www.ebrd.com/content/dam/ebrd_dxp/documents/project/50973/aztelekom-llc-board-report.pdf

55. Azerbaijan Internet users - data, chart | TheGlobalEconomy.com, last accessed: May 8, 2025, https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Azerbaijan/Internet_users/

56. Internet market of Azerbaijan: bet on speed and service - Caliber.Az review, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://caliber.az/en/post/azerbaijan-s-internet-market-investment-on-speed-and-service>

57. More than 150 internet operators in Azerbaijan have about 1.9 million fixed broadband subscribers - Trend.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.trend.az/business/it/3871284.html>

58. Azerbaijan meets 2024 Internet Speed Targets, analysis confirms - AzerNews, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.azernews.az/business/233574.html>

59. Azerbaijan's Mobile and Broadband Internet Speeds - Speedtest ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.speedtest.net/global-index/azerbaijan>

60. Azerbaijan improves broadband and mobile internet speed rankings - AzerNews, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.azernews.az/business/237861.html>

61. Azerbaijan soars in global internet speed rankings - Azerbaijan24, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.azerbaycan24.com/en/azerbaijan-soars-in-global-internet-speed-rankings/>

62. In the first half of 2024, 539 reports on quality indicators were submitted to ICTA, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://icta.az/show-media-news/2024-cu-ilin-ilk-yarisinda-keyfiyyet-gostericileri-uzre-ikta-ya-539-hesabat-teqdim-edilib>

63. ICTA and Ookla discuss internet speed transparency in Azerbaijan - AzerNews, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.azernews.az/business/240750.html>

64. 85% of the internet market in Azerbaijan is controlled by 10 operators and providers, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://fed.az/az/diger/azerbaycanda-i%CC%87nternet-bazarinin-85-ne-10-operator-ve-provayder-nezaret-edi%CC%87r-191997>

65. Azerbaijani market of internet services is divided between 5 large secondary providers - AZERTAC, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/azerbaidzhanskii_rynok_internet_uslug_razdelen_mezhdu_5_krupnymi_vtorichnymi_provaiderami-753869

66. Azercell publishes results of 2022, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.azercell.com/ru/about-us/press-releases/news/azercell-2022ci-il-uzre-hesabatini-aciqalayir.html>

67. Join Bakcell, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.bakcell.com/en/business/join-us>

68. About us | Nar, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.nar.az/en/senin-ucun/shirket-haqqinda/>

69. ® Nar remains an affordable mobile operator - AZERTAC, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

https://azertag.az/en/xeber/_nar_remains_an_affordable_mobile_operator-2949333

70. Country ASNs | Docs - RIPEstat, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://stat.ripe.net/docs/O2.data-api/country-asns.html>

71. RIPEstat — RIPE Network Coordination Centre, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.ripe.net/analyse/internet-measurements/ripestat/>

72. Azerbaijani government and telcos must #KeepItOn during presidential elections, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/azerbaijani-government-telcos-keepiton-during-elections/>

73. IPv6 Measurement Maps - APNIC Labs, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://labs.apnic.net/ipv6-measurement/>

74. IPv6 Measurement Maps - APNIC Labs, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://labs.apnic.net/ipv6-measurement>

75. IPv6 Preferred Rate by country (%) - APNIC Labs Measurements, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://stats.labs.apnic.net/ipv6/?s=IPv6+Preferred&d=Auto&w=7&t=15>

76. Use of IPv6 for Azerbaijan (AZ) - IPv6 Capability Metrics, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://stats.labs.apnic.net/ipv6/AZ>

77. IPv6 Per-Country Deployment for AS39280: ULTELNET-AS, Azerbaijan (AZ) - APNIC Labs Measurements, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://stats.labs.apnic.net/ipv6/AS39280?c=AZ&p=1&v=1&w=60&x=1>

78. IPv6 Adoption - Google, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://www.google.com/intl/en/ipv6/>

79. Statistics for Azerbaijan - IPv6 test, last accessed: May 8, 2025,

<https://ipv6-test.com/stats/country/AZ>

80. Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on the Guide to human rights for Internet users - <https://rm.coe.int>, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://rm.coe.int/guide-to-human-rights-for-internet-users-cm-rec-2014-6-in-azerbaijani-/168074c3a4>
81. The State of Internet Freedom in Azerbaijan, a legal overview, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.az-netwatch.org/news/the-state-of-internet-freedom-in-azerbaijan-a-legal-overview/>
82. Azerbaijan held liable for blocking Radio Free Europe's websites by ECtHR, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.mediadefence.org/news/azerbaijan-held-liable-for-blocking-radio-free-europes-websites-by-ecthr/>
83. AUS9195 - World Bank Documents and Reports, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/469021468005058839/pdf/AUS91950AZERBA00Box385411B00PUBLICO.pdf>
84. Freedom on the Net 2013 - Azerbaijan | Refworld, last accessed: May 8, 2025, https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/freehou/2013/en/94497?prevDestination=search&prevPath=/search?sm_document_source_name%5B%5D=Freedom+House&sort=score&order=desc&result=result-94497-en
85. Information Communication Technologies Agency public legal entity - Mincom.Gov.Az, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://mincom.gov.az/en/ministry/structure/information-communication-technologies-agency-public-legal-entity>
86. ICTA - Information Communication Technologies Agency, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://icta.az/>
87. "Blacklist" Information Resource - The State Service for Special Communication and Information Security of the Republic of Azerbaijan, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://scis.gov.az/en/pages/view/blacklist>
88. Blacklist | Main page, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://blacklist.gov.az/>
89. Rashad Nabi oghlu Nabiyeu / Leadership / Ministry - Mincom.Gov.Az, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://mincom.gov.az/en/ministry/leadership/rashad-nabi-oghlu-nabiyev>
90. 70 - On emergency situation - E-QANUN, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://e-qanun.az/framework/7003>
91. 681-IIQ - On emergency situation and social emergency environment ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://e-qanun.az/framework/6193>
92. Freedom of the Press 2017 - Azerbaijan - Refworld, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59fc67ffa.html>

93. Freedom on the Net 2018 - Azerbaijan - Refworld, last accessed: May 8, 2025, https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/freehou/2018/en/122314?prevDestination=search&prevPath=/search?sm_document_source_name%5B%5D=Freedom+House&sort=score&order=desc&result=result-122314-en
94. Azerbaijan extends criminal defamation to Internet speech - Committee to Protect Journalists, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://cpj.org/2013/05/azerbaijan-extends-criminal-defamation-to-internet/>
95. Azerbaijani Parliament Approves Bill Restricting Online Speech – IRFS, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.irfs.org/news-feed/azerbaijani-parliament-approves-bill-restricting-online-speech/>
96. Azerbaijan Criminalizes Defamation of President Online - VOA, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.voanews.com/a/azerbaijan-criminalizes-defamation-of-president-online/3617948.html>
97. Internet Censorship in Azerbaijan - OONI Explorer, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://explorer.ooni.org/country/AZ>
98. 2024 Internet Censorship Report - iMAP - Sinar Project, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://imap.sinarproject.org/reports/2024>
99. Azerbaijan Internet Watch | OONI - Open Observatory of Network Interference, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://ooni.org/partners/azerbaijan-internet-watch/>
100. OONI measurements show ongoing internet censorship in Azerbaijan, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://ooni.org/post/2023-azerbaijan-internet-censorship/>
101. [New Report] Azerbaijan: Media censorship through the lens of network measurement - ooni-talk - lists.torproject.org, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://lists.torproject.org/mailman3/hyperkitty/list/ooni-talk@lists.torproject.org/thread/Y7XZMFYYBV6U4OTIFHKS3NCGHQY22XQH/>
102. [New Report] Azerbaijan: Media censorship through the lens of network measurement - ooni-talk - lists.torproject.org, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://lists.torproject.org/mailman3/hyperkitty/list/ooni-talk@lists.torproject.org/thread/Y7XZMFYYBV6U4OTIFHKS3NCGHQY22XQH/?sort=date>
103. OONI Report for Azerbaijan Internet Watch April 2021 Update, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.az-netwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021-04-Azerbaijan-Internet-Watch-Updates.pdf>
104. OONI Report for Azerbaijan Internet Watch September 2022 Update, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.az-netwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-09-OONI-Report-for-Azerbaijan-Internet-Watch.pdf>

105. Technical analysis - Azerbaijan Internet Watch, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.az-netwatch.org/category/technical-analysis/>
106. Internet Censorship: Access, Use, and Restriction in Azerbaijan - Baku Research Institute, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/en/internet-censorship-access-use-and-restriction-in-azerbaijan/>
107. VPN Demand Surges in Azerbaijan After Authorities Block TikTok Post Military Operations, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.vpnmentor.com/news/vpn-demand-surge-azerbaijan/>
108. Internet shutdowns in 2023 - GROWING VIOLENCE - Access Now, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.accessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-KIO-Report.pdf>
109. A Timeline on Azerbaijan's Online Activism · Global Voices Exchange, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://rising.globalvoices.org/exchange/2016/01/18/azerbaijans-online-activism-timeline/>
110. Azerbaijan: Activist detained after calling for protests: Bakhtiyar Hajiyev - Amnesty International, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/eur550022011en.pdf>
111. last accessed: January 1, 1970, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur55/7593/2024/en/>
112. URGENT ACTION - Amnesty International, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/EUR5587182024ENGLISH.pdf>
113. ATTACKS ON MEDIA WORKERS IN AZERBAIJAN IN 2024 - Justice for Journalists, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://jff.fund/attacks-on-media-workers-in-azerbaijan-in-2024/>
114. Two more Azerbaijani journalists detained as media crackdown ..., last accessed: May 8, 2025, <http://oc-media.org/two-more-azerbaijani-journalists-detained-as-media-crackdown-continues/>
115. Journalist Ulviyya Ali detained: “Over 20 journalists are currently in prison, and I am one of them” - JAM-news.net, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://jam-news.net/journalist-ulviyya-ali-detained-over-20-journalists-are-currently-in-prison-and-i-am-one-of-them/>
116. 10th independent Azerbaijani journalist arrested in Meydan TV case - OC Media, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://oc-media.org/10th-independent-azerbaijani-journalist-arrested-in-meydan-tv-case/>

117. Azerbaijan Widens Media Crackdown with Two Arrests | OCCRP, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.occrp.org/en/news/azerbaijan-widens-media-crackdown-with-two-arrests>
118. Azerbaijan state and media infrastructure faces massive DDoS attacks - FastNetMon, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://fastnetmon.com/2025/03/10/azerbaijan-state-and-media-infrastructure-faces-massive-ddos-attacks/>
119. Russia carried out its largest hybrid operation against Azerbaijan - Aze.Media, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://aze.media/russia-carried-out-its-largest-hybrid-operation-against-azerbaijan/>
120. DTH - Home, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://dth.az/>
121. C4IR Azerbaijan: Home, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.c4irazerbaijan.org/home>
122. The first Youth Internet Governance Forum was held in Azerbaijan, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://azerbaijan.un.org/az/95269-az%C9%99rbaycanda-ilk-d%C9%99f%C9%99-g%C9%99ncl%C9%99rin-i%C9%99dar%C9%99%C3%A7iliyi-forumu-ke%C3%A7irilib>
123. The first Youth Internet Governance Forum was held in Azerbaijan - Mincom.gov.az, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://mincom.gov.az/az/media/xeberler/azerbaycanda-ilk-defe-genclerin-internet-idarecilik-forumu-kecirilib633>
124. The Best VPN Azerbaijan - BeAdvice - Muffin Group, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://muffingroup.com/advice/best-vpn/in-azerbaijan/>
125. Where are VPNs legal & illegal / banned? Check by country - Comparitech, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.comparitech.com/vpn/where-are-vpns-legal-banned/>
126. VPN Demand Surges Around the World - Top10VPN, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://www.top10vpn.com/research/vpn-demand-statistics/>
127. Trial of person for hacking data of Israeli and US companies continues in Azerbaijan, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://turkic.world/en/articles/politics/358062>
128. Trial of person for hacking data of Israeli and US companies continues in Azerbaijan, last accessed: May 8, 2025, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/4032486.html>