

NAMIBIA 2026

STRONG RIGHTS.

WEAK IMPLEMENTATION.

Namibia remains one of Africa's strongest media freedom environments. Yet the 2026 African Media Barometer finds a widening gap between constitutional guarantees and practical implementation. The country's greatest challenge is no longer adopting rights-based laws. It is **making those laws work**.



**“ Namibia has the law.
What it has not done
is make the law work.**

The 2026 AMB finds that Namibia continues to benefit from constitutional protection of freedom of expression, an open environment for media establishment, broad public access to information sources, and the absence of systematic state violence against journalists. However, many reforms remain incomplete and key institutions are not functioning as intended.

WHAT NAMIBIA IS DOING WELL



Constitutional protection

Freedom of expression remains constitutionally protected and enforceable.



Open media environment

Media outlets operate without systematic state interference.



No internet shutdowns

Namibia remains one of the few African countries with an uninterrupted open internet.



Judicial protection

Courts continue to play an important role in protecting rights and freedoms.



Active civil society

Media and civil society organisations continue to advocate for reform and accountability.

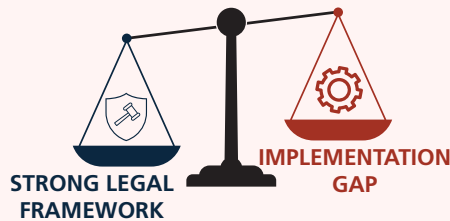


Media plurality

Citizens have access to a wide range of print, broadcast and digital media sources.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

MEDIA FREEDOM IN NAMIBIA



The decline does not reflect a collapse in media freedom. It reflects unresolved structural challenges, weak implementation of reforms, and growing pressure on media sustainability.

OVERALL SCORE

2.7 / 5.0

2022: 3.1

2026: 2.7



**Decline of
0.4 points**

STRUCTURAL PRESSURES



Access to Information Act still not operationalised

More than three years after adoption, the Act remains inactive.



Information Commissioner not appointed

The institution required to implement the law does not yet exist.



Criminal defamation remains on the books

The continued existence of criminal defamation contributes to a chilling effect.



Weak source protection

Journalists still lack statutory protection for confidential sources



Ownership concentration

Questions remain regarding ownership transparency and plurality.



Economic pressure

Self-censorship is increasingly linked to financial insecurity rather than direct state interference.



Declining media sustainability

A shrinking advertising market is placing pressure on independent journalism



Investigative journalist under-resourced

Limited capacity, training and financial resources constrain quality and impact.

THE STATE OF MEDIA FREEDOM IN NAMIBIA

The most significant finding of the 2026 assessment is the growing gap between rights on paper and rights in practice.

Access to Information Act  2022 Adopted	Information Commissioner  NO Appointment
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Act Operational  NO	Data Protection Law  NOT ENACTED	Criminal Defamation  STILL EXISTS
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“ It is citizens, not journalists, who increasingly exercise freedom of expression with greater confidence.

SECTOR PERFORMANCE

SECTOR 1 Legal and Regulatory Environment 2.7	SECTOR 2 Media Diversity and Sustainability 2.7	SECTOR 3 Broadcasting and Digital Landscape 2.7	SECTOR 4 Professional Standards and Safety 2.8	OVERALL SCORE 2.7
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The African Media Barometer (AMB) is a perception index. The findings, interpretations and conclusions reported are those of panellists drawn from civil society and media organisations for the purposes of conducting the AMB, and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the NMT Media Foundation, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and DW Akademie.

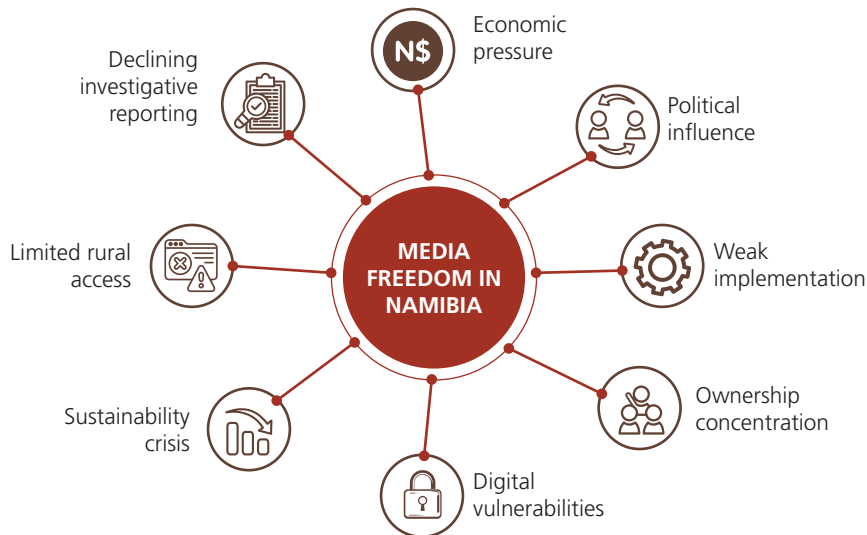
Source: African Media Barometer Namibia 2026 | Convened by: NMT Media Foundation

KEY FINDINGS AND THE WAY FORWARD

MEDIA LANDSCAPE SNAPSHOT

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION - Constitutional protections remain robust - Citizens express opinions openly - Journalists experience growing economic pressure CHALLENGES - Self-censorship - Economic vulnerability - Ownership influence	ACCESS TO INFORMATION - ATI legislation adopted - Regulations developed CHALLENGES - Act not operationalised - Information Commissioner absent - Public access remains inconsistent - Delays and administrative barriers persist	DIGITAL RIGHTS & BROADCASTING - Open Internet environment - Independent communications regulator CHALLENGES - No operational data protection framework - Surveillance concerns remain - NBC governance independence concerns persist - NBC falls outside CRAN oversight	JOURNALISM & SAFETY - Limited physical attacks on journalists - Active self-regulation structures CHALLENGES - Weak investigative capacity - Poor remuneration and working conditions - Skills shortages - Ethical challenges in changing digital environment	BROADCASTING GOVERNANCE - NBC dependent on annual state allocations - Lack of editorial independence protections CHALLENGES - Political influence concerns - Limited financial independence - Outside CRAN jurisdiction
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MEDIA FREEDOM PRESSURE POINTS



These factors interact and reinforce one another across the media ecosystem, creating a persistent pressure on media freedom, quality and independence.

THE WAY FORWARD

1 MAKE THE ATI ACT WORK - Appoint the Information Commissioner - Operationalise the Access to Information Act - Allocate implementation resources	2 REFORM RESTRICTIVE LAWS - Repeal criminal defamation - Strengthen source protection - Review surveillance and interception provisions	3 STRENGTHEN PUBLIC INTEREST MEDIA - Improve transparency in state advertising allocation - Protect editorial independence of the NBC - Support community and indigenous-language media	4 BUILD SUSTAINABLE JOURNALISM - Improve newsroom labour conditions - Invest in investigative reporting - Strengthen ethical journalism training	5 PROTECT DIGITAL RIGHTS - Enact data protection legislation - Establish independent data protection oversight - Strengthen digital security safeguards - Protect online freedom of expression	6 STRENGTHEN ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY - Update national Code of Ethics - Increase visibility of the Media Ombudsman - Develop AI and journalism guidelines - Expand ethics training	7 STRENGTHEN FREEDOM ADVOCACY - Build coordinated civil society engagement - Improve monitoring and rapid response systems - Expand public awareness on media freedom rights
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Namibia continues to rank among Africa's strongest media freedom environments. The challenge ahead is no longer constitutional recognition of rights. The challenge is implementation, institutional independence, media sustainability, digital rights protection and ensuring that legal reforms deliver tangible outcomes for journalists and citizens alike.

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NAMIBIA 2026 REPORT

