

Freedom on the Net 2025 - France



Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Internet freedom remained strong in France due to high access rates and limited restrictions on content. Laws adopted in recent years have increased online surveillance, but the rights of users remained largely protected.

- In May 2025, a Paris court ruled that five virtual private network (VPN) providers were mandated to block 203 domain names that were linked to the illegal livestreaming of sports.¹ VPN providers criticized the ruling, arguing that it could lead to restrictions on free expression and privacy.² The May 2025 ruling followed a June 2024 court ruling ordering content-delivery networks, including Cloudflare, Google, and Cisco, to block over 100 websites linked to illegal livestreams of sporting events (B1 and C4).³
- In July 2024, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said that Progressif Media, a French communications firm, had launched a smear campaign against the organization, setting up a fake website with a similar domain to RSF. Progressif Media established the website, which contained inaccurate content about RSF, and purchased Google advertisements to promote it following the French Council of State’s decision to enforce “independence and pluralism” mandates at *CNews* at the request of RSF. RSF said the fake website’s “origins were traced to a company located in the center of Paris, operating from the offices of Vivendi, a media group run by the family of French billionaire Vincent Bolloré.” Bolloré had significant media holdings in France including *CNews*, which he created (B5 and C7).⁴
- In December 2024, police detained Phillipe Miller, a journalist for the independent online outlet Warning Trading who was investigating the links between a law firm in Paris and online financial scams, and a former intern for the firm. Miller was detained for 48 hours and had his devices confiscated. The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) called his arrest “arbitrary” and condemned a judge’s decision to permit the search of Miller’s devices as “judicial intimidation” (C3).⁵
- In April 2025, under the 2024 Law to Secure and Regulate the Digital Space (SREN), the Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication (ARCOM) began requiring pornographic websites to introduce age-verification measures implementing a “double anonymity solution,” through which a third-party site conducted the age verification. The system is designed so that the site the user is trying to visit would not know the user’s identity, and the third-party site would not know the site the user is trying to visit (C4).⁶

- In April 2025, the French parliament passed the Narcotrafficking Law, which provided law enforcement with expanded authority to deploy algorithms to identify online behavior that may be associated with drug trafficking. The law also enabled law enforcement to extend its use of satellite-interception technology for “serious threats to public order” through 2028. ⁷ While civil society organizations have raised concerns about measures in the law that increase law enforcement’s surveillance powers,⁸ the final version of the law did not include a measure that would have required end-to-end encrypted messaging applications to install “backdoor” access to give authorities access to certain chats (C4 and C5).⁹
- In August 2024, Telegram founder Pavel Durov was arrested in France, in part because the company had refused to share required information with French investigators. Durov was charged with failing to comply with law enforcement, complicity in drug trafficking and the spread of child sexual abuse imagery, and violating a 2004 law that prohibited the import of encryption tools without declaration.¹⁰ Media reports described France’s 2004 cryptography law as unusual among democracies for its aim to collect certain information on cryptography tools. In September, the company announced that it would begin to share users’ internet protocol (IP) addresses and phone numbers with “relevant authorities in response to valid legal requests.” The policy applied worldwide. Previously Telegram had only offered such information to authorities in cases involving confirmed terrorism suspects. (C6).¹¹

Political Overview

The French political system features vibrant democratic processes and generally strong protections for civil liberties and political rights. However, successive governments have responded to terrorist attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and various protests and demonstrations by curtailing constitutional protections and empowering law enforcement to infringe on personal freedoms. The government has also imposed states of emergency, enabling it to curtail the rights to privacy, assembly, and movement.

*This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to **ongoing budget constraints**. Please consider making a **donation** to support future editions of this vital resource.*

*For additional background information, see last year’s **full report**.*

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?	6 / 6
---	----------

A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?	3 / 3
--	----------

A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?	6 / 6
---	----------

Score Change: The score improved from 5 to 6 because the French government did not block social media platforms, as it did in the overseas territory of New Caledonia during the previous coverage period.

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?	4 / 6
---	------------------

A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?	4 / 4
---	------------------

B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	4 / 6
---	------------------

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	2 / 4
--	------------------

B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process?	3 / 4
--	------------------

B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?	4 / 4
--	--------------

B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?	3 / 4
---	------------------

B6 0-3 pts

Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online?	3 / 3
--	------------------

B7 0-4 pts

Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability?	4 / 4
--	--------------

B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?

6 /
6

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?

5 /
6

C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?

2 /
4

C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?

4 /
6

Score Change: The score declined from 5 to 4 because of the detention of investigative online journalists. [12](#)

C4 0-4 pts

Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?

2 /
4

C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy?

2 / 6

C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy?

3 /
6

C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities?

4 /
5

C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?

2 /
3

Footnotes

- 1 Canal Plus Group, "CANAL+ OBTAINS A COURT ORDER FROM THE PARIS JUDICIAL COURT MANDATING VPN BLOCKING OF ILLEGAL SPORTS STREAMING SITES - A TURNING POINT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AUDIOVISUAL PIRACY," accessed August 2025, <https://www.canalplusgroup.com/en/press/press-154>.
- 2 AdGuard VPN, "Dangerous precedent set in France after VPNs forced to block pirate sites," June 2, 2025, <https://adguard-vpn.com/en/blog/france-vpn-streaming-court-precedent.ht...>
- 3 Andy Maxwell, "Google, Cloudflare & Cisco Will Poison DNS to Stop Piracy Block Circumvention," Torrent Freak, June 13, 2024, <https://torrentfreak.com/google-cloudflare-cisco-will-poison-dns-to-sto....>
- 4 Reporters Without Borders, "Derrière la campagne de désinformation contre RSF, Progressif Media, une boîte d'influence sulfureuse hébergée par Vivendi, le groupe contrôlé par Bolloré [Behind the disinformation campaign against RSF is Progressif Media, a controversial influence firm hosted by Vivendi, the group controlled by Bolloré]," June 4, 2024, <https://rsf.org/fr/derri%C3%A8re-la-campagne-de-d%C3%A9sinformation-con...>; European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, "France: Media freedom coalition condemns Vivendi's disinformation campaign against Reporters Without Borders," July 18, 2024, <https://www.ecpmf.eu/france-media-freedom-coalition-condemns-vivendis-d...>; "Reporters Without Borders says PR firm is posing as the group with imposter websites," Le Monde, July 5, 2024, <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/07/05/reporters-without-b...>
- 5 European Federation of Journalists, "France: EFJ calls for protection of journalist Philippe Miller's sources," December 23, 2024, <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2024/12/23/france-efj-calls-for-pr....>
- 6 Bird and Bird, "France's new age verification standard: Tightening controls on access to explicit image sites," February 26, 2025, <https://www.twobirds.com/en/insights/2025/france-s-new-age-verification....>
- 7 Elizabeth Pineau and Gabriel Stargardter, "France passes sweeping new drug law as cocaine surge drives crime wave," Reuters, April 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/france-passes-sweeping-new-drug-la...>; Library of Congress, "France: National Assembly Adopts Narcotrafficking Law," accessed August 2025, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2025-04-17/france-nationa...>
- 8 La Quadrature du Net, "All-out mobilization against the French 'war-on-drugs' law," accessed September 2025, <https://www.laquadrature.net/en/warondrugslaw/>.
- 9 Joe Mullin, "A Win for Encryption: France Rejects Backdoor Mandate," Electronic Frontier Foundation, March 21, 2025, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/03/win-encryption-france-rejects-bac...>
- 10 "France," in Funk, Brody, Vesteinsson, Baker, Grothe, Barak, Masinsin, Agarwal, Sutterlin eds. Freedom on the Net 2024, Freedom House, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2024/struggle-trust-online>.
- 11 Antoaneta Roussi, Clothilde Goujard and Océane Herrero, "France uses arcane cyber law to charge Telegram CEO," Politico, September 5, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/telegram-ceo-pavel-durov-arrest-france-...>; Daryna Antoniuk, "Telegram says it will share phone numbers and IP addresses of 'bad actors' to authorities," The Record, September 23, 2024, <https://therecord.media/telegram-shares-ip-addresses-enforcement>.
- 12 European Federation of Journalists, "France: EFJ calls for protection of journalist Philippe Miller's sources," December 23, 2024, <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2024/12/23/france-efj-calls-for-pr...>; International Federation of Journalists, "France: Blast journalist detained for 32 hours for refusing to disclose confidential source," June 20, 2024, <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/france-blast-journ...>