Ivory Coast : Full Country Dossier

March 2024

World Watch Research

Contents

Introduction

World Watch List 2024

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	12.8	96	98	96	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	10.6	93	92	91	92	92
3	Libya	15.9	16.0	15.9	16.1	16.4	10.2	91	88	91	92	90
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.8	89	89	88	88	87
5	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	89	88	87	85
6	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.5	14.9	14.4	16.7	88	88	87	85	80
7	Pakistan	13.2	13.9	15.0	15.1	13.1	16.7	87	86	87	88	88
8	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	13.3	87	83	79	79	85
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.8	16.5	10.9	86	86	85	86	85
10	Afghanistan	15.7	15.9	15.2	16.3	16.6	4.6	84	84	98	94	93
11	India	12.2	12.6	13.3	14.8	13.2	16.5	83	82	82	83	83
12	Syria	13.4	14.3	13.9	14.3	14.2	11.1	81	80	78	81	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.7	16.6	3.3	81	80	81	78	79
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	12.8	15.1	15.6	79	76	70	67	66
15	Algeria	14.4	14.1	11.5	14.0	15.6	9.8	79	73	71	70	73
16	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.0	14.8	13.9	7.8	79	76	78	82	76
17	Myanmar	12.2	10.6	13.4	13.7	13.0	16.1	79	80	79	74	73
18	Maldives	15.6	15.5	13.6	16.0	16.4	0.9	78	77	77	77	78
19	China	13.0	10.0	12.8	14.6	16.0	11.1	78	77	76	74	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	13.8	15.6	75	71	68	67	66
21	Laos	11.6	10.6	13.2	14.3	14.0	11.3	75	68	69	71	72
22	Cuba	13.2	8.7	13.8	13.3	15.1	8.7	73	70	66	62	52
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	1.3	72	72	70	71	68
24	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.7	12.8	14.4	5.4	71	69	69	67	66
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.9	12.6	15.5	1.7	71	71	71	71	73
26	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.5	10.8	10.4	14.1	71	69	68	67	63
27	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.9	70	70	68	62	60
28	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	70	68	66	68
29	Turkmenistan	14.2	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.5	0.6	70	70	69	70	70
30	Nicaragua	12.1	7.6	13.2	13.2	14.1	9.6	70	65	56	51	41
31	Oman	14.3	14.0	10.6	13.3	14.0	3.1	69	65	66	63	62
32	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	14.4	69	66	66	65	63
33	Tunisia	12.3	13.2	10.2	12.4	13.8	6.9	69	67	66	67	64
34	Colombia	11.1	8.6	12.9	11.3	10.4	14.1	68	71	68	67	62
35	Vietnam	11.3	9.4	12.4	13.8	14.2	7.2	68	70	71	72	72
36	Bhutan	13.1	12.1	12.4	14.1	14.3	2.2	68	66	67	64	61
37	Mexico	11.5	8.5	12.5	11.1	10.6	14.1	68	67	65	64	60
38	Egypt	12.5	13.7	11.4	11.9	10.9	7.8	68	68	71	75	76
39	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.0	68	68	65	63	43
40	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.6	67	68	74	67	66
41	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.9	67	67	66	64	56
42	Indonesia	10.9	12.3	11.5	10.2	9.7	11.5	66	68	68	63	60
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.0	13.1	15.9	66	65	65	64	60
44	Brunei	15.0	14.7	10.0	10.8	14.1	1.3	66	65	64	64	63
45	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.1	66	66	63	62	57
46	Tajikistan	13.8	12.6	12.3	12.9	13.4	0.6	66	66	65	66	65
47	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.8	12.1	12.8	14.3	1.1	65	65	64	64	64
48	Jordan	12.9	14.2	10.5	12.4	12.8	2.2	65	65	66	64	64
49	Malaysia	13.0	14.1	11.5	12.2	11.1	2.4	64	66	63	63	62
50	Turkey	13.0	11.5	11.6	13.2	11.4	3.1	64	66	65	69	63

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	12.4	63	64	63	62	61
52	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	14.4	62	63	61	58	55
53	Nepal	12.1	10.4	9.5	13.2	12.3	4.4	62	61	64	66	64
54	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	64	64	63	62
55	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	1.1	61	60	59	56	56
56	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	10.6	61	58	55	53	56
57	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.7	61	62	62	62	60
58	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.2	10.8	11.5	9.7	5.9	60	57	63	62	65
59	Azerbaijan	13.2	9.9	9.6	11.9	13.6	1.7	60	59	60	56	57
60	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	9.7	10.7	12.1	0.9	60	60	59	58	60
61	Kyrgyzstan	13.2	10.3	11.3	10.5	12.2	1.3	59	59	58	58	57
62	Russian Federation	12.7	7.7	10.6	12.8	12.9	1.7	58	57	56	57	60
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	9.4	58	57	50	42	42
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	12.8	57	55	52	48	48
65	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	1.1	55	55	57	56	55
66	Honduras	7.9	4.7	12.2	7.3	9.9	12.6	55	53	48	46	39
67	Venezuela	6.0	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	10.7	53	56	51	39	42
68	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	8.9	52	49	44	43	41
69	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	7.2	52	48	43	47	45
70	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	15.9	52	51	48	47	48
71	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	52	51	46	43
72	Lebanon	11.0	10.2	7.0	6.1	6.6	7.2	48	40	35	34	35
73	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	3.7	47	44	44	43	43
74	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.6	46	46	43	43	44
75	Belarus	9.6	3.8	5.8	9.7	13.3	3.3	46	43	33	30	28
76	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	44	42	42	42
77	Ukraine	5.5	4.8	8.0	11.6	11.6	2.8	44	37	37	34	33
78	Israel	9.8	8.6	5.8	6.3	6.9	6.7	44	38	41	40	38

Copyright note

Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading "External links". In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the "Keys to Understanding" chapter under the heading "Links for general background information". Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2024 reporting period was 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: "Any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians". This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/ and on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom): https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/.

WWL 2024 Situation in brief / Ivory Coast

Brief country details

Ivory Coast : Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
28,444,000	10,006,000	35.2

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. , World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

Map of country

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	44	76
WWL 2023	44	74
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73
WWL 2020	42	70

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Ivory Coast: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Government officials, Non-Christian religious leaders, Violent religious groups, Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family
Clan oppression	Government officials, One's own (extended) family
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of the persecution situation

The hostility facing Christians in Ivory Coast is multifaceted, with *Islamic oppression* and *Clan oppression* posing threats to all categories of Christian communities, with significant risks to converts with a background in Islam or traditional African religions (ATR). Converts living with non-Christian family members can experience severe opposition if their conversion becomes known. The region is also grappling with jihadist expansion, with radical forms of Islamic teaching which are destabilizing neighboring West African countries now becoming increasingly prevalent in Ivory Coast. Moreover, politics intertwining with religion exacerbates the situation, as disagreements or crises often take on religious connotations. The divide between northerners (predominantly Muslim) and southerners (mostly Christian) also fuels tensions. Local government officials in the Muslim-majority northern regions are known to discriminate against Christians.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Converts to Christianity in the north face social ostracization and expulsion from their communities.
- Converts also encounter difficulties in obtaining land to build churches, indicating a level of institutional discrimination.
- Government authorities have been known to intimidate pastors, regulating what they can and cannot preach, thereby limiting religious freedom.

- In the western part of the country, Christians are often requested by animist groups to stay home during their 'mask holidays', thus marginalizing them from public and cultural life.
- Acts of vandalism against churches have been reported in various regions, contributing to a sense of insecurity and tension within Christian communities.

Specific examples of positive developments

The government is strengthening its armed forces in an effort to prevent jihadists from infiltrating the northern part of the country.

WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Ivory Coast

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/23 Ivory Coast report	AI Ivory Coast 2022	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/cote-divoire/report-cote-divoire/	19 September 2023
BBC News Ivory Coast profile - updated 24 July 2023	BBC Ivory Coast profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13287216	19 September 2023
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022 Ivory Coast report	BTI Ivory Coast Report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/CIV	19 September 2023
Crisis24 Ivory Coast report (Garda World)	Crisis24 Ivory Coast report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/cote-divoire	19 September 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit 2023 Ivory Coast summary	EIU 2023 Ivory Coast	http://country.eiu.com/cote-divoire	19 September 2023
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 – Ivory Coast	FSI 2023 Ivory Coast	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	19 September 2023
Freedom House's 2023 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Ivory Coast not included)	Democracy Index 2023	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – Ivory Coast	Global Freedom Index 2023 Ivory Coast	https://freedomhouse.org/country/cote-divoire/freedom-world/2023	19 September 2023
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 – covering 70 countries (Ivory Coast not included)	Freedom on the Net 2023	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – Ivory Coast	GIWPS 2021 Ivory Coast	https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/cote-divoire/	19 September 2023
Girls Not Brides Ivory Coast report	Girls Not Brides Ivory Coast	https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/c%C3%B4te-divoire/	19 September 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 – Ivory Coast not included	HRW Ivory Coast page	https://www.hrw.org/africa/cote-divoire	19 September 2023
Internet World Stats 2023 Ivory Coast	IWS 2023 Ivory Coast	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ci	19 September 2023
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – Ivory Coast	World Press Freedom 2023 Ivory Coast	https://rsf.org/en/cote-divoire	19 September 2023
Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index – Ivory Coast	CPI 2023 Ivory Coast	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023/index/civ	28 March 2024
UNDP Human Development Report Ivory Coast – data updates as of 8 September 2022	UNDP HDR Ivory Coast	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/CIV	19 September 2023
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Ivory Coast	IRFR 2022 Ivory Coast	https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cote-divoire/	19 September 2023
USCIRF 2023 country reports – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL (Ivory Coast not included)	USCIRF 2023	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank Ivory Coast data – 2021	World Bank Ivory Coast data	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=CIV	19 September 2023
World Bank Ivory Coast overview – updated 17 March 2023	World Bank Ivory Coast overview	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cotedivoire/overview	19 September 2023
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Ivory Coast - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Ivory Coast	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2fefc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-civ.pdf	19 September 2023
World Factbook Ivory Coast - updated 8 September 2023	World Factbook Ivory Coast	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cote-divoire/	19 September 2023

Recent history

Due to its location, the country was at one time very important for the transatlantic slave trade. Muslim merchants established trade routes from northern Africa to Ivory Coast in the Middle Ages, seeking gold, ivory and slaves (Sovereign Nations, 8 February 2018). Today the country shares borders with Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana. After imposing a protectorate over the coastal zone in 1842, France finally made Ivory Coast an official colony in 1893, making it part of French West Africa that included Mauritania, Senegal, Mali (French Sudan), French Guinea, Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta), Benin (then Dahomey) and Niger (Source: BBC Ivory Coast profile).

On 31 October 1960, Ivory Coast became an independent republic with a new Constitution. Felix Houphouet-Boigny became president and remained in office until he died in 1993. He declared

a one-party system and ruled for more than thirty years. The country became stable and the economy grew. The president was hailed as "a leader capable of maintaining ethnic unity and political stability within a diverse and historically disunited country" (Source: Bellamy E: Ivory Coast - Conflict Under Democracy, Bertand publishers, October 2017). Yet below the surface, there were problems. The economic progress and relative stability could not mask the fact that political divisions in the country had not yet been overcome (KAS International Report, September 2015). As a result, ethnic and religious tensions increased in the 1990s and civil war broke out in 2002.

Henri Konan Bédié succeeded Felix Houphouet-Boigny as president in 1993 and was accused of corruption and bad governance, resulting in the suspension of economic aid in 1998. Bédié tried to build his power on nationalism, introducing what he called "Ivorité" or "Ivorian-ness." In December 1999, the armed forces conducted a bloodless coup. General Robert Guei assumed power and formed a government but was forced to flee the country in October 2000 after attempts at elections in which Gbagbo had declared himself the winner. The protests soon turned into a conflict that split the country in two, with Muslim rebels in the north and government control in the Christian south. Finally, in 2010 another election was held, and the Electoral Commission declared Ouattara to be the winner. However, Gbagbo refused to step down claiming election irregularities and a conflict ensued that led to the death of around 3,000 people. Eventually, Gbagbo was arrested and transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2011.

In 2015, President Ouattara won a second five-year term with nearly 84% of the vote, in an election described as credible by international observers. Early in 2020, Ouattara said he would not seek third term re-election, an attempt that would have needed constitutional amendment. In August 2020, however, he changed his mind and was formally elected by his party to run for the third term, a step which was validated by the country's top court. This change of tack by the incumbent president led to a series of protests. According to a report by International Crisis Group on 29 September 2020, the tension had already led to the death of 14 people. This renewed threat of violence had considerable implications for Christians, since this sort of crisis often bears religious undertones: Southerners (majority Christian) versus Northerners (majority Muslim). The constitutional court excluded former President Laurent Gbagbo from running in the presidential election (Al-Jazeera, 25 September 2020). As a result, it was just President Ouattara and ex-President Henri Konan Bédié competing for the presidential post on 31 October 2020. As reported by BBC News on 3 November 2020, Quattara won a third term with 94% of the vote.

As summarized by Freedom House in its Freedom in the World 2023 Ivory Coast report, over the past decade, the country has been working to recover from a devastating armed conflict that concluded in 2011. The nation has made some headway, particularly in the protection of civil liberties. However, the underlying causes of its past conflict — ethnic and regional tensions, land disputes, corruption and impunity — continue to fester. Election-related violence in 2020 marked a significant setback in this journey, yet there was a noticeable improvement in electoral conditions in 2021, permitting opposition groups and civil society to operate more openly than previously.

2022 brought a complex mix of political and socio-economic developments. Forty-nine Ivorian soldiers were arrested by authorities in Mali on charges of undermining Malian security. Most of them received prison sentences, causing diplomatic strain between the two nations. In a worrying move for civil liberties, Pulchérie Gbalet, president of the Ivorian Citizens Alternative, was placed in pre-trial detention, accused of colluding with a foreign power. She had been advocating for the release of the Ivorian soldiers detained in Mali, and her arrest raised concerns over the freedom of civil society actors. In a different vein, President Alassane Ouattara pardoned former President Laurent Gbagbo, who was facing a prison sentence for alleged theft of assets during the 2010–2011 conflict.

In summary, Ivory Coast is a country still in the throes of rebuilding and healing. While there are hopeful signs, like the improved electoral conditions and the pardon as a potential step toward political reconciliation, numerous challenges persist. These include ongoing corruption, limited civil liberties, and continued ethnic tensions, leaving the country's trajectory uncertain as it moves into 2024. Presidential elections are due to take place in 2025.

Political and legal landscape

Ivory Coast is a republic with a presidential multi-party system and a government with three branches: The executive, legislative, and judiciary. The president is elected for a five years term. The parliament is a unicameral National Assembly with 255 seats, with members elected to serve for five years. The country's legal system is based on French civil law. The country has more than one hundred registered political parties, the major ones being the Citizen's Democratic Union, Democracy and Liberty for the Republic, Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire, Ivorian Popular Front, Ivorian Worker's Party, Movement of the Future Forces, Rally of the Republicans and Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire (Britannica, accessed 20 September 2023).

In August 2018, President Ouattara pardoned 800 prisoners, including former First Lady Gbagbo who was serving a 20 year prison sentence for her role in the post-election violence that took place in 2010 (Reuters, 6 August 2018). Civil society organizations welcomed the news, but political tensions clearly heated up ahead of elections in October 2020. It was expected that the incumbent president would step down after finishing his second term. The president also said that he would not stand for re-election in October 2020, ending speculation about his political future ahead of a highly anticipated vote. However, when former prime minister and presidential candidate of the Rally of the Houphouëtist for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) Amadou Gon Coulibaly died unexpectedly in July 2020, President Ouattara reversed his previous decision and was nominated in August by the RDHP. His nomination was met with major protests from opposition parties. Subsequently, President Ouatarra was re-elected for a third term with a reported 94% of the vote in a controversial election, which the main opposition parties boycotted. The Ivorian National Human Rights Council reported on 10 November 2020 that 55 people were killed and 282 injured between 31 October and 10 November 2020 due to election protests (HRW, 2 December 2020).

The International Criminal Court's acquittal of former President Laurent Gbagbo (accused of committing crimes against humanity) in January 2019 raised tensions in the country ahead of the October 2020 elections (The Guardian, 15 January 2019). Gbagbo's supporters claim that his

ousting was politically motivated (involving France) and that his transfer to the ICC was also a political vendetta; they also believe that - due to interference by Western countries - the election was not free and fair in October 2020; after the election, the opposition called for a transitional government to be formed (BBC News, 3 November 2020). Ex-president Gbagbo returned home to Ivory Coast in June 2021 upon invitation by President Ouatarra. He was welcomed by crowds of supporters who had gathered at the airport and on the streets of Abidjan amidst cheers (BBC News, 17 June 2021).

According to Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2023 Ivory Coast:

- **Freedom of assembly and association:** Authorities have increasingly placed restrictions on public gatherings and associations, particularly those that are politically or religiously oriented.
- **Freedom of academic thought:** Academic freedom is compromised, with government regulations influencing curriculum and stifling critical discourse in educational institutions.
- **Corruption:** Widespread corruption hampers administrative efficiency, economic development, and fosters inequality. It also affects religious minorities, who often have to pay bribes to secure necessary amenities.
- **Elections:** Although recent elections have shown improvements, election-related violence and voter suppression remain concerns. Opposition parties and civil society have limited space to operate freely.
- **Media and press:** Government regulations and intimidation tactics have led to self-censorship among journalists, limiting the scope and freedom of the press.

In underscoring the country's importance as a US ally, the Library of Congress reported in August 2023:

- "Côte d'Ivoire is a leading economy in West Africa and an increasingly important US security partner amid Islamist insurgencies, military take-overs, and growing Russian activity in the region. President Alassane Ouattara, in office since 2011, has overseen an influx of foreign investment and strong economic growth. In 2020, however, Ouattara's decision to seek a third term despite term limits sparked clashes and recalled a conflict that divided the country from 2002-2011. Côte d'Ivoire also has faced a mounting threat of extremist spillover from Burkina Faso and Mali. Militants have staged nearly two dozen attacks in Côte d'Ivoire's north since 2020. The Biden Administration has named Côte d'Ivoire as a partner under the Global Fragility Act of 2019 (Title V, Div. J, P.L. 116-94), as part of the Coastal West Africa sub-region."

As reported by France 24 on 5 September 2023, Ivory Coast's ruling party, the RHDP, secured a sweeping victory in the local and regional elections held on 2 September 2023. This electoral win is viewed as an indicator of political stability and public support for the ruling party ahead of the presidential elections slated for 2025. The Independent Electoral Commission revealed that the RHDP won in 123 municipalities and 25 regions, significantly outnumbering the combined wins of the two main opposition parties, the Democratic Party (PDCI) and the African People's Party - Ivory Coast (PPA-CI), which had formed alliances in many areas to contest the RHDP. They managed to secure only 34 municipalities and four regions.

The elections were relatively peaceful, especially when compared to the tumultuous presidential elections three years ago that resulted altogether in 85 deaths. Some isolated incidents and allegations of irregularities were reported but did not significantly disrupt the electoral process. Notably, this was the first election since former President Laurent Gbagbo returned to the country, although he could not vote due to a prior conviction. Senior figures of the ruling party, including Prime Minister Patrick Achi and Defense Minister Tene Birahima Ouattara, also won comfortably in their respective regions. The president of the electoral commission urged candidates to accept the results peacefully, setting a cautiously optimistic tone for the political climate leading up to the 2025 presidential elections.

In general, despite some progress, the political landscape in Ivory Coast still reflects a nation grappling with multifaceted challenges that span governance, civil liberties, and national security. Although the situation has improved since the election-related violence in 2020, the administration under President Alassane Ouattara continues to draw criticism for its constraints on freedom of assembly and media/press. Despite such governmental control, in the background there is ongoing corruption that has permeated multiple layers of governance, affecting the judiciary and potentially undermining the rule of law in the country.

On the security front, the country faces a complex and unstable environment. The country has been ramping up its military preparedness to counter jihadist threats emanating from neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso, exacerbated by the regional instability as made evident in the coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea. Meanwhile, social divisions manifest in religious discrimination, especially in the northern regions. Converts to Christianity find it particularly challenging to obtain land for building churches and also face scrutiny from the government.

The complicated interplay of these factors makes Ivory Coast a nation in flux, striving to find a delicate balance between political stability, civil liberties and national security.

Religious landscape

Ivory Coast : Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	10,006,000	35.2
Muslim	12,131,000	42.6
Hindu	2,000	0.0
Buddhist	13,100	0.0
Ethno-religionist	6,146,000	21.6
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	38,400	0.1

Ivory Coast : Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Atheist	2,500	0.0
Agnostic	97,600	0.3
Other	7,400	0.0
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.		

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. , World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

Muslims form a 95% majority in the northern part of the country. Christians are the majority in the southern part of the country.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Ivory Coast):

- "Muslim and Christian leaders, including representatives of the Supreme Council of Imams, Mosques, and Islamic Affairs of Cote d'Ivoire (COSIM, the country's main Sunni Muslim association) and the Catholic, evangelical Christian, and Methodist Churches, reported generally good relations with each other and among their communities, although there were two reported instances of local Christian and Muslim groups disagreeing over the use of land to build additional churches. Additionally, there were two localized conflicts between animists and a Christian denomination over the right to hold Christian worship services at the same time as certain animist ceremonies. The incidents involved vandalism against churches. In one case, a Christian suffered a broken collarbone."
- "Many individuals who identify as Christian or Muslim also practice some aspects of indigenous religious beliefs."
- "During the year [2022], the Muslim community, led by the National Platform for Islamic Education, successfully advocated increased accreditation of Islamic schools. The platform coordinated evaluations of 3,416 schools during the year, 547 of which received accreditation, affecting approximately 105,000 students. In addition, the Ministry of National Education and Literacy trained 2,406 Islamic school teachers on how to implement the standard national curriculum. The platform expressed optimism that the number of accredited Islamic schools would continue to grow in coming years. Islamic schools, unlike the majority of Christian schools, historically operated without formal accreditation from the Ministry of National Education and Literacy."

Economic landscape

According to the World Factbook Ivory Coast:

- "For the last 5 years Cote d'Ivoire's growth rate has been among the highest in the world. Cote d'Ivoire is heavily dependent on agriculture and related activities, which engage roughly two-thirds of the population. Cote d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa beans and a significant producer and exporter of coffee and palm oil. Consequently, the economy is highly sensitive to fluctuations in international prices for these products and to climatic conditions. Cocoa, oil, and coffee are the country's top ex-

port revenue earners, but the country has targeted agricultural processing of cocoa, cashews, mangoes, and other commodities as a high priority. Mining gold and exporting electricity are growing industries outside agriculture."

According to World Bank's Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 for Ivory Coast:

- **Economic growth:** GDP, current US$ billion: 70.1 / GDP per capita, current US$: 2487.9. "Although growth rebounded from COVID-19 in 2021, adverse spillovers from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and global monetary tightening emphasize macroeconomic imbalances. Real growth is estimated at 6.7 percent in 2022 (4 percent per capita) with limited poverty reduction due to higher food prices. ... Growth is however expected to remain strong over the medium-term, projected to average 6.5 percent between 2024-2025, driven by domestic demand, continued high public investment increasingly complemented by private investment if pro-competitive market reforms continue and structural reforms aligned with macroeconomic stability deepen."
- **Inflation:** "Annual inflation reached 5.2 percent in 2022 – a decade high increase given price volatility and deteriorating terms of trade. ... Inflation should decelerate from 2023 and gradually converge below 2 percent, as global commodity prices ease."
- **Poverty:** "The extreme poverty incidence (less than $2.15 a day per capita in PPP) is expected to have increased to 12.3 percent in 2022, 0.6 percentage points higher than in 2021 ... Despite the deceleration in economic growth in 2023, poverty is expected to fall to 12 percent driven by the industry and services sectors, and the reduction in inflation, especially among food items (expected to fall from 8.9 percent in 2022 to 4.8 percent in 2023). Poverty reduction should continue in the medium term despite the negative headwinds, reflecting higher employment in industry and services. Extreme poverty (US$2.15 2017 PPP) is expected fall to 11.4 percent by 2024 and to 11.0 by 2025."

According to Heritage Foundation's 2022 Index of Economic Freedom:

- Ivory Coast's freedom score is 61.6, making its economy the 76th freest in the 2022 Index. It is ranked #4 among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is above the regional and world averages.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the World Factbook and UNDP Human Development Report Ivory Coast:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Akan 28.9%, Voltaique or Gur 16.1%, Northern Mande 14.5%, Kru 8.5%, Southern Mande 6.9%, unspecified 0.9%, non-Ivorian 24.2% (2014 est.)
- **Main languages:** French (official), 60 native dialects of which Dioula is the most widely spoken.
- **Population growth rate:** 2.21% (2021 est.)
- **Urban population:** 52.2% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 3.38% (2020 -2025 est.)
- **Overall median age:** 20.3 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 10.0 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (ages 15 and older):** 47.2%

- *Employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):* 55.1%
- *Unemployment, total:* 3.3% of labor force
- *Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):* 5.1%
- *Human Development Index 2020:* Ivory Coast is ranked 162nd out of 189 countries with a score of 0.538 points
- *Life expectancy at birth:* 57.8 years
- *Gender Development Index (GDI):* 0.811 points
- *Gender Inequality Index (GII):* 0.638 points

According to the [Migrants/Refugee's country profile](#) (accessed 20 September 2023):

- *International and internal migrants:* "Since 2012, Ivory Coast has enjoyed robust and stable economic growth and remains an economic hub in francophone West Africa, attracting millions of migrants from across the region. Ivory Coast constitutes one of the top ten migration corridors in Western Africa, and is the number one destination country for migrants within Western Africa. As of mid-2020, Ivory Coast was host to 2,564,857 million migrants that constitute 9.7% of the population. The migration corridor from Burkina Faso to Ivory Coast had the largest number of migrants – 1,376,3540 migrants, followed by Mali with 522,146 migrants, and Guinea with 167,516 migrants. Like other regions in Africa, migration within this region is highly influenced by economic factors, including the prospects of finding work in the host country, economic hardship and poverty in the home country, and business prospects in the host country. Other remote factors include educational opportunities and family reunification. Migration within the region is partly influenced by an aspiration for regional economic integration, contributing to free movement of people within the region and the right to residency and establishment within the framework of the regional organisation of ECOWAS."
- *Emigration and skilled migration:* "According to the global economy index, Ivory Coast experienced a decline in its flight and brain drain index from 7.30 in 2017 to 6.40 in 2021. As of mid-2020, there were 1.1 million Ivorian emigrants across the globe. The top countries of destination of Ivorians include Burkina Faso (557,732), Mali (188,250), France (99,031), Ghana (72,728), and Benin (33,996). Among Ivorian emigrants, 47.6% had received a lower level of education, while 30.7% had received higher education. These include medical doctors, nurses, and those involved in the manufacturing, distribution, and services activities. Despite the decline in personal remittances from 2011, emigrants contributed 0.528% of the GDP in 2020 in the form of personal remittance payments."
- *Refugees:* "Despite political tensions and social unrest in its past, Ivory Coast has kept its borders open to those seeking protection. Recently, there have been a greater number of refugees leaving Ivory Coast than entering. As of January 2021, there were 25,597 refugees who fled Ivory Coast to Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, and Togo, with Liberia hosting 95% (24,234) of them. As of June 30, 2021, there were 1,167 refugees and 401 asylum seekers in Ivory Coast. The majority of them come from the Central African Republic (506), the Syrian Arab Republic (142), the Democratic Republic of Congo (132), Congo (86), Liberia (72), and Rwanda (55). A total of 174 are unspecified. The Ivorian government encourages refugees to integrate locally rather than placing them in camps. However, there are some refugee camps located in certain parts of the country. For example, there is a transit refugee camp

in Tabou – designated solely for refugees in transit, and another in Peacetown in Nicla, near Guiglo."

- **IDPs**: "Internal displacement in Ivory Coast is primarily caused by conflict and violence. As of 2020, there were 308,000 people displaced by conflicts and violence, as well as 70 people displaced by natural disasters. As was the case with the aftermath of the presidential election in 2010-2011, the 2020 presidential election led the country yet into another period of post-election violence, causing massive internal displacement. This post-election violence has resulted in thousands of IDPs within Ivory Coast, mostly in the western region of the country. As of November 2020, the UN agencies and the Ivorian government had recorded 5,530 new IDPs within the country. Women in Ivory Coast have borne the brunt of internal displacement, as displacement caused by conflict and violence exposes women to human rights violation and adversely affects their sources of livelihood, since conflict results in the destruction of production capital."

- **Victims of human trafficking:** "Ivory Coast is ranked Tier 2 in the Trafficking in Person Report 2021, as the country does not meet the minimum standard for the cancellation of human trafficking activities. However, the government is making a significant effort to meet the minimum standards. Ivory Coast is a source, transit, and destination country of victims of human trafficking, specifically forced labour, sex trafficking, and to a lesser extent, drug trafficking. At the international level, Ivory Coast has established a formal agreement with other countries to combat human and child trafficking, including Burkina Faso. The government runs shelters for child victims of exploitation in Soubre and refers child trafficking victims to NGOs for long-term care. However, there is limited support for adults, making them vulnerable to re-victimisation. The majority of victims identified are children. Traffickers exploit Ivorian women and girls in forced labour in domestic service, restaurants, and sex trafficking. Traffickers exploit Ivorian and Burkinabe boys in forced labour in the agricultural and service industries, especially in cocoa production. Victims of human trafficking in Ivory Coast come from rural parts of the country, as well as Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Morocco, and China. They are mostly located in Abidjan, northern and central Ivory Coast, and western mining regions, particularly near the gold mines in Tengrela. Nigeria human trafficking victims transit Ivory Coast en route to exploitation in sex trafficking in Asia, the United Arab Emirates, and North Africa. Religious leaders also recruit women and girls for work in the Middle East and Europe."

According to [updated UNHCR data](#) (accessed 28 March 2024): As of 29 February 2024, there were 2,364 refugees in the Ivory Coast and 51,211 asylum seekers. The great majority of asylum seekers come from Burkina Faso.

Technological landscape

Different sources vary in the statistics provided.

According to the Internet World Stats (IWS 2023 Ivory Coast):

- **Internet usage:** 44.6% of Ivory Coast's population (survey date: December 2021)
- **Facebook usage:** 24.3% penetration rate (survey date: January 2022)

According to [Data Reportal Digital 2024](#) report for Ivory Coast (23 February 2024):

- **Internet usage:** 38.4% of the population (as of January 2024)
- **Social media usage:** 23.9% of the population (as of January 2024)
- **Active cellular mobile connections:** 149.1% of the population (as of January 2024).

According to [BuddeComm](#) (Last updated: 9 November 2023):

- "The fixed internet and broadband sectors remain underdeveloped. This is a legacy of poor international connectivity, which resulted in high wholesale prices, limited bandwidth, and a lack of access for alternative operators to international infrastructure. These limitations were addressed following the landing of a second cable in November 2011, and the end to the access monopoly held by Orange Côte d'Ivoire. Orange Group has also launched its 20,000km Djoliba cable system, reaching across eight countries in the region, while the 2Africa submarine cable is being developed by a consortium of companies. With a landing station providing connectivity to Côte d'Ivoire, the system is expected to be completed in late 2023."

Security situation

Ivory Coast is grappling with multifaceted security challenges, exacerbated by regional instability and the expanding footprint of jihadist organizations in the Sahel. The country has proactively bolstered its northern security apparatus and initiated socio-economic projects to combat poverty and youth unemployment. Yet, these efforts are taking place against a backdrop of worsening regional security due to political coups in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger. This volatile environment raises concerns that Western security arrangements are losing ground, potentially offering militant groups even more room for expansion.

The threat is not new. Ever since the 2016 Grand Bassam beach attack that killed 18 people, there has been growing apprehension about jihadist violence expanding into the country. More recently, this fear was substantiated with a series of attacks in the north of the country between 2020 and 2021. Such threats are not just national security issues but also deeply affect religious minorities like Christians, who are increasingly targeted in regional militant activities.

According to multiple reports, groups like al-Qaida affiliate *Jamat'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin* (JNIM) and its sub-group *Katiba Macina* have expanded their activities into northern areas of Ivory Coast. These groups have targeted both security forces and civilians, and there is growing concern that they will continue to recruit from vulnerable segments of the population, such as unemployed youth. Meanwhile, in the north of the country, the number of attacks have risen sharply, including the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The militant activities mainly emanate from bases in southwestern Burkina Faso.

In December 2022, the judiciary in Ivory Coast handed down life sentences related to a jihadist attack that occurred in 2016. Just like Benin, Ghana and Togo, Ivory Coast is also confronting the threat of jihadist spillover from neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso and Mali. This challenge reflects a broader regional security concern in West Africa, where multiple countries are grappling with the effects of expanding jihadist activities across their borders. As reported by the [International Crisis Group](#) in August 2023, "As jihadist groups in the Sahel move south-

ward, Côte d'Ivoire has beefed up its security deployment in the north and rolled out a range of social projects to alleviate poverty and youth unemployment. Militant violence has subsided since a series of attacks in the north between 2020 and 2021." Even though the International Crisis Group has pointed out that elements of jihadism cannot be resolved solely through economic progress, historical events indicate that many major global terrorist activities have been orchestrated by individuals motivated primarily by religious factors, rather than socio-economic conditions.

President Alassane Ouattara announced plans to recruit 3,000 new soldiers in 2022 and a total of 10,000 by 2024. The new recruits will augment bilateral military operations, particularly with Burkina Faso, aimed at preventing militant groups establishing bases near Ivory Coast's northern border. Despite these measures, the risk remains high for sporadic attacks and kidnapping attempts, especially targeting expatriate personnel in the gold mining sector.

Trends analysis

1) Peaceful 2023 elections mask underlying tensions in ethnicity, region and religion

Despite the peaceful September 2023 local elections, deep-rooted political divisions continue to plague Ivory Coast, intensifying competition among various factions and leading to heightened tensions. These divisions are often complicated by covert religious undertones, with a Muslim majority in the north and a Christian majority in the south. The International Criminal Court's indictment and subsequent acquittal of former President Gbagbo have polarized opinions, adding to the belief in some quarters that the charges were politically motivated. While there were no major clashes in the WWL 2024 reporting period, the persistent divisions based on ethnicity, region and religion remain critical issues that could potentially have severe repercussions for Christians and the country at large.

2) Growing jihadist influence and regional unrest amplify security concerns

The expansion of jihadist groups in West Africa continues to cast a shadow over Ivory Coast's security landscape. This concern is accentuated by the government's recruitment of additional soldiers to protect its northern borders. Coups and state failures in neighboring Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have further exacerbated regional instability, raising the stakes for Ivory Coast. The sharp increase in jihadist attacks in previous years underscores a pressing threat to the nation's stability and could undo recent gains in economic and social progress. Despite the peaceful nature of the September 2023 local elections, the looming threat of violent Islamic militancy and the complicated geopolitical context continue to put Christians and other vulnerable communities at heightened risk.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: trade routes - https://sovereignnations.com/2018/04/30/history-arab-slave-trade-africa/
- Recent history: political divisions - http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_42800-544-2-30.pdf?151012165215
- Recent history: International Crisis Group - https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/c%C3%B4te-divoire/b161-cote-divoire-reporter-pour-dialoguer
- Recent history: Al-Jazeera, 25 September 2020 - https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/15/ivory-coast-court-clears-ouattaras-third-term-bid-amid-protests

- Recent history: Quattara won a third term - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-54778200
- Political and legal landscape: political parties - http://www.britannica.com/place/Cote-dIvoire/Constitutional-framework#ref517100
- Political and legal landscape: pardoned 800 prisoners - https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ivorycoast-politics/ivory-coasts-ouattara-grants-amnesty-to-wife-of-ex-leader-gbagbo-idUSKBN1KR29O
- Political and legal landscape: 55 people were killed - https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/02/cote-divoire-post-election-violence-repression
- Political and legal landscape: acquittal - https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/15/ex-ivory-coast-president-laurent-gbagbo-acquitted-at-icc
- Political and legal landscape: called - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-54778200
- Political and legal landscape: welcomed - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-57471468
- Political and legal landscape: France 24 - https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20230904-sweeping-win-for-ruling-party-in-ivory-coast-local-and-regional-elections
- Economic landscape: 2022 Index of Economic Freedom - https://www.heritage.org/index/country/cotedivoire
- Social and cultural landscape: Migrants/Refugee's country profile - https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/ivory-coast/
- Social and cultural landscape: updated UNHCR data - https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/civ
- Technological landscape: Data Reportal Digital 2024 - https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-cote-divoire
- Technological landscape: BuddeComm - https://www.budde.com.au/Research/C%C3%B4te-d-Ivoire-Ivory-Coast-Telecoms-Mobile-and-Broadband-Statistics-and-Analyses
- Security situation: International Crisis Group - https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/cote-divoire/b192-keeping-jihadists-out-northern-cote-divoire

WWL 2024: Church information / Ivory Coast

Christian origins

French missionaries introduced Christianity in 1637, but the Church did not grow until France established its protectorate over the country, which lasted from the 1830s until 1960. In 1911, Catholic mission stations were established in the southern part of the country first and then in Korhogo in the north. In 1924, Protestant missionaries came with the arrival of British Methodists. Other organizations and churches such as the World Evangelism Crusade (WEC), the Seventh-day Adventists, the Free Will Baptists and the Assemblies of God entered the country in the 1930s.

(*Source: J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann (eds): Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices, 2nd Edition, 2010*).

Church spectrum today

Ivory Coast : Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	24,600	0.2
Catholic	5,152,000	51.5
Protestant	3,356,000	33.5
Independent	1,373,000	13.7

(Table continued below)

Ivory Coast : Church networks	Christians	%
Unaffiliated	268,000	2.7
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-168,000	-1.7
Total	**10,005,600**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	2,425,000	24.2
Renewalist movement	2,783,000	27.8

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. , World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed March 2023)

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

Christians are a majority in the south and include Roman Catholics, Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, Greek Orthodox, Copts, the Celestial Church of Christ and Assemblies of God.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The northern part of the country is a Christian-minority and Muslim-majority region. In these areas, Christians face numerous challenges from the family level right up to the regional level.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Ivory Coast are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in WWL analysis and scoring.

Historical Christian communities: These include the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church and Presbyterians. Compared to other Christian communities, this category is not so vulnerable to attack and enjoys a greater level of freedom of religion.

Converts to Christianity: There are converts with a Muslim background and converts from indigenous traditional religions in Ivory Coast. Especially Christians with a Muslim background are vulnerable to persecution in the northern parts of the country from their family and relatives as well as their local community. They are also particularly vulnerable to attacks and pressure from Islamic militants that are active in the region.

Non-traditional Christian communities: There are many registered and recognized Evangelical churches, but there also many new Independent and Pentecostal churches. Due to more active evangelism, these churches tend to face backlash both from Islamists and local authorities.

WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Ivory Coast

Reporting period

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Position on the World Watch List

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	44	76
WWL 2023	44	74
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73
WWL 2020	42	70

In WWL 2024, Ivory Coast's overall score remained at 44 points as in WWL 2023. The average pressure on Christians was 8.2 points, similar to WWL 2023. Christians in certain regions face significant challenges across different spheres of life. In the private sphere, they experience considerable pressure, often stemming from attempts by family and community to force them to conform to local values and beliefs. This pressure is also evident in community and church life, where the struggle to practice their faith openly can be difficult. Additionally, although the level of violence faced by Christians is comparatively lower than in some other West African countries, 3.3 points is still significant enough to create an environment of fear among Christians.

Persecution engines

Ivory Coast : Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Medium
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Not at all
Clan oppression	CO	Medium
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Weak

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Islamic oppression (Medium)

The Ivory Coast, much like other countries in West Africa, faces an escalating threat from Islamic militancy. In the northern regions, the growing influence of Muslims in politics and economics is palpable. Key investment projects are increasingly controlled by entities such as the Moroccan monarchy and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This has led to a climate where Christians increasingly feel marginalized and insecure, particularly as jihadist activity expands in the broader region.

Clan oppression (Medium)

Familial and societal tensions often flare up against individuals who convert to Christianity. Despite a largely Christian or Muslim populace, a significant number of people adhere to African Traditional Religions (ATR). Additionally, syncretism is common, blending Christian or Muslim faith with elements of ATR. When Christian groups oppose this mixing, they often encounter resistance from ethnic and clan leaders, especially in rural areas. Incidents like church vandalism and the forced seclusion of Christians during animist celebrations in the western regions further indicate the level of hostility.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

At a regional level, particularly in the Muslim-majority north, governmental officials have been known to discriminate against Christians. Favors such as allocation of resources, land, and opportunities are noticeably skewed towards Muslim citizens. These acts of partiality not only create an environment of unease among Christian communities but also further strain the already fragile inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations within the country.

Drivers of persecution

Ivory Coast : Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	MEDIUM			MEDIUM				MEDIUM	WEAK
Government officials	Medium			Medium				Medium	Weak
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium								
Violent religious groups	Medium								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium								
One's own (extended) family	Medium			Medium					
Organized crime cartels or networks									Very weak

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- *Government officials (Medium)*: Local authorities, particularly in certain regions, have been discriminatory against Christian communities. Churches such as the Assemblies of God, the Christian Missionary Alliance Church, and the Evangelical Protestant Works and Missions Church have found themselves selectively targeted for enforcement of regulations like noise control. Moreover, these Christian congregations are often disadvantaged in land dispute cases, adding another layer of systemic bias.

- *Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium)*: In the northern territories, some radical imams and sheiks disseminate inflammatory sermons that foster a hostile environment for Christians and other non-Muslim groups.

- *Ordinary citizens (Medium)*: In areas with a Muslim majority, everyday citizens—often backed by local ethnic leaders or village chiefs—take it upon themselves to discriminate against Christians, especially those who have converted from Islam.

- *Family (Medium)*: Those who convert to Christianity often face dire consequences within their own families, ranging from social ostracization to being left without basic necessities like food and shelter.

- *Violent religious groups (Medium)*: Extremist Islamic organizations active in West Africa also have their sights set on Ivory Coast, aiming to expand their influence through targeted attacks on Christians.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- *Ethnic group leaders (Medium)*: According to WCD 2023 estimates, approximately 21.6% of the Ivory Coast population adheres to African Traditional Religions (ATR). Leaders of these ethnic communities are often hostile to Christians who actively oppose practices like witchcraft. This hostility is amplified by incidents like church vandalism and Christians being forced to abstain from their religious celebrations in certain western regions.

- *Family (Medium)*: Familial tension is not uncommon when a member converts to Christianity. Discrimination can escalate to the point of expulsion from the family unit, leaving converts in vulnerable positions.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- *Government officials (Medium)*: Especially in the Muslim-majority northern regions, governmental figures are known to engage in overt discrimination against Christians. This manifests in various ways, such as unequal resource distribution, land allocation, and limited access to opportunities. While recent elections, such as the September 2023 local elections, have been peaceful, they have not ameliorated these deeply-rooted divisions related to ethnicity, region, and covert religious affiliations. As a result, the influence of *Dictatorial paranoia* persists.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2024 Persecution Pattern for Ivory Coast
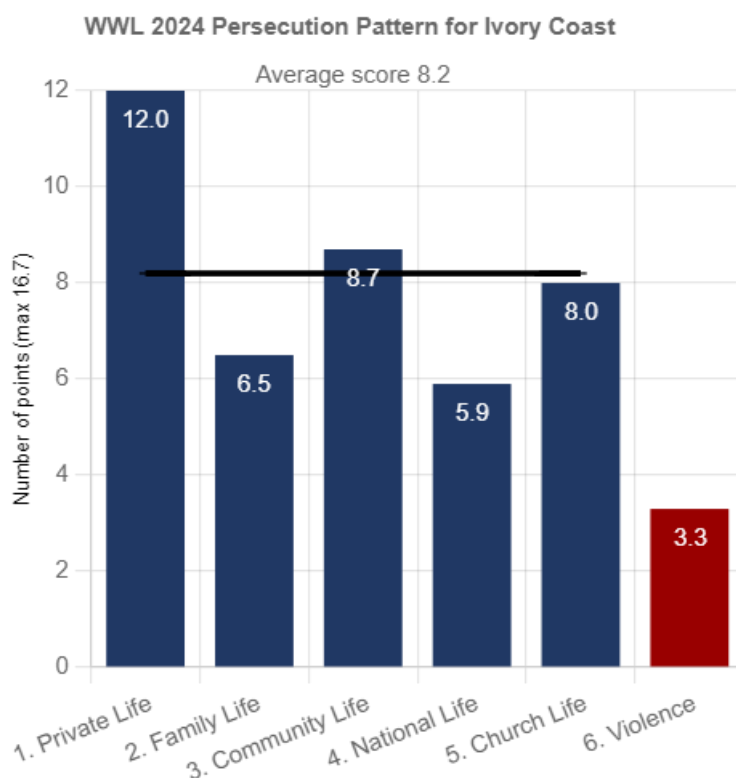
Average score 8.2

The WWL 2024 Persecution pattern for Ivory Coast shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Ivory Coast is 8.2 points, similar to WWL 2023.
- The *Private sphere* score is the highest with 12.0 points, followed by the scores for *Community life* and *Church life* (8.7 and 8.0 points respectively). This reflects the pressure exerted on converts which tries to force them to live according to family and community values and beliefs.
- The score for violence is 3.3 points, similar to WWL 2023.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2024 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.25 points)

Individuals converting from Islam or Animism to Christianity face significant risks when sharing their faith with immediate family members. The reluctance to accept such conversions is rooted in a perception of dishonor and shame within the families, exposing individuals to potential hu-

miliation, verbal insults and possible physical violence.

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)

Converts to Christianity, especially in the northern parts of the country, often face severe social and familial repercussions. These individuals can lose significant benefits, including familial support and community assistance. They are frequently ostracized or expelled from their families, resulting in isolation and a lack of access to resources and help that are available to others.

Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (3.00 points)

Practicing Christianity independently in the northern part of the country and in areas where Animism is prevalent involves significant risks, particularly for converts who face rejection from their families. Furthermore, known converts frequently face challenges such as being denied access to a Bible and other Christian materials.

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.00 points)

Expressing one's faith through written forms such as blogs and social media can be fraught with significant risk, especially for individuals who have converted from Muslim and Animist backgrounds. These converts often face stark challenges if their conversion becomes known, as their families and communities exhibit not just disapproval, but overt hostility towards their new beliefs.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.00 points)

In the northern part of the country, where Muslims are the majority, and in areas dominated by Animists, all Christian groups find it risky to engage in religious discussions. However, for converts to Christianity, the situation is even more precarious. In these regions, the dominant religious communities often view any discussion of Christian beliefs, especially by converts, with heightened suspicion or outright hostility.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

In areas where Christians are not the dominant group, celebrating Christian weddings and playing gospel songs can be risky. This need for caution is even more pronounced when the wedding involves converts to Christianity. In such cases, the ceremony often must be conducted discreetly to avoid attracting unwanted attention or hostility.

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (2.50 points)

In the Muslim-dominated northern region and areas where animism is prevalent, converts to Christianity often face the challenge of being buried in ways that do not align with Christian practices. Instead, they are compelled to adhere to non-Christian burial rites. This issue particularly affects converts.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.25 points)

In certain schools, the children of Christians face difficulties due to their parents' distinct attitudes and Christian values. Religious differences can thus lead to discriminatory treatment.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (2.00 points)

In the northern part of the country, where the Muslim community is predominant, Christian children often encounter significant pressure in their educational environments. This includes being expected to attend Islamic classes. Such educational settings can pose challenges for Christian children, as they are exposed to content that may actively oppose or undermine the principles of their faith.

Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (2.00 points)

Christian converts from a Muslim or animist background often experience rejection and denial from their families, and can lead to the loss of entitlement to inherit from familial estates.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.00 points)

Christians have been subject to monitoring by individuals within their local communities, although there is no known organized group or system dedicated to such surveillance. The monitoring includes individuals spying on Christian activities, possibly with the intention of influencing or challenging their religious beliefs, particularly in areas where religious tensions exist.

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.00 points)

In the northern part of the country, the control of essential resources, such as land and business opportunities, lies predominantly in the hands of the Muslim community leaders. As a result, Christians often find themselves excluded from these crucial community assets.

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (2.75 points)

Particularly in the northern part of the country where Muslims are in the majority, Christians regularly confront harassment and threats that impede their daily lives. These challenges stem from their divergence from the majority religion's practices and cultural expectations. Additionally, there is often a push by some to pressure Christians into leaving these areas, motivated by a desire to enforce religious homogeneity.

Block 3.11: Christians have been hindered in the operation of their businesses for faith-related reasons (e.g. access to loans, subsidies, government contracts, client boycotts). (2.75 points)

In regions where the business sector is primarily controlled by Muslims, Christian shop owners and businesses often face unique challenges. Instances have been reported where some clients choose to boycott Christian-owned shops, adversely affecting their patronage and revenue. Additionally, Christian shopkeepers sometimes receive directives dictating what they should or should not be selling, or they are told not to operate their businesses on certain days.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.5: Christians have been discriminated against when engaging with the authorities (local administration, government, army, etc.) for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)

In Ivory Coast, there is a perception that the conflicts that occurred in the last decade had a religious dimension. Christians believe that northern groups, predominantly Muslim, are seeking retribution and are discriminating against Christians. They perceive this through actions like marginalizing Christians in public discourse and appointing a disproportionate number of officials from northern regions to high government positions.

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

In the northern regions, where religious considerations subtly influence appointments to high-level public offices, Christians often encounter barriers in entering public roles or advancing their careers. Despite the official stance of the state as secular, there is a prevalent perception among Christians that Muslims are favored in these appointments. This sense of favoritism is particularly noticeable in areas with widespread corruption, where refusing to compromise one's faith can lead to exclusion from public office and hindered career progress.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.50 points)

Two major factors significantly impact Christians' ability to express their views: Firstly, Christians who criticize the government, driven by their faith convictions, often find themselves being silenced. Secondly, in the northern regions, any criticism of local or general governments, especially on issues like corruption and justice, can lead to serious persecution for Christians. This environment creates a challenging atmosphere for Christians who wish to speak out about

governance and societal issues, as they face the risk of severe repercussions for their outspokenness.

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (2.25 points)

In regions of the country, particularly in the north and areas where traditional African religions are prevalent, Christians who convert from Muslim background and ATR often find themselves navigating a complex and burdensome administrative landscape. This is especially true for those who choose to change their names as part of their conversion. The process of acquiring new identification documents and updating existing records becomes exceedingly challenging.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.25 points)

The process of church registration faces what looks like deliberate delays, especially in the northern regions, creating challenges for churches applying for official recognition from the government. This sluggishness in registering legal status underscores the need for a thorough examination of administrative procedures to ensure fairness and expeditious processing.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.00 points)

In various regions, instances have been reported where young Muslims or animists disrupt, obstruct, monitor, or impede Christian activities, often under the instructions of their religious leaders.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.00 points)

In the northern regions of the country, where Islam is the predominant religion, and in areas dominated by traditional African religions (ATR), Christians often face significant challenges in establishing new churches. Obtaining the necessary permission from local authorities is a complex process, often marked by bureaucratic delays and obstacles. Additionally, acquiring land for building these churches presents another layer of complexity.

Block 5.6: Work among youth in particular has been restricted. (2.75 points)

In the northern regions, where Muslims predominantly reside, and in areas with a strong animist presence, engaging with youth can be especially challenging for Christians due to community perceptions. Often, there is a prevailing suspicion that Christians are only interested in converting young people to Christianity.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (2.75 points)

Churches encounter obstacles in openly integrating converts, with resistance to integration primarily stemming from the Islamic or animist leaders of the converts' former religious affiliation. This opposition is particularly pronounced in the northern province.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. ***Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced.***

Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. ***Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons***

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. ***The use of symbolic numbers***

In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.

| Ivory Coast : Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2024	WWL 2023
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	4	2
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	1
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	4
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10 *	10 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	10 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	20
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

| Ivory Coast : WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	8.2
2023	8.2
2022	8.0
2021	7.7
2020	7.7

The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians for the past five WWL reporting periods remained within the range 7.7 - 8.2 points. The score would now seem to be stabilizing above the 8.0 point mark.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

Ivory Coast : WWL 2020 - WWL 2024 Pressure scores in each sphere of life
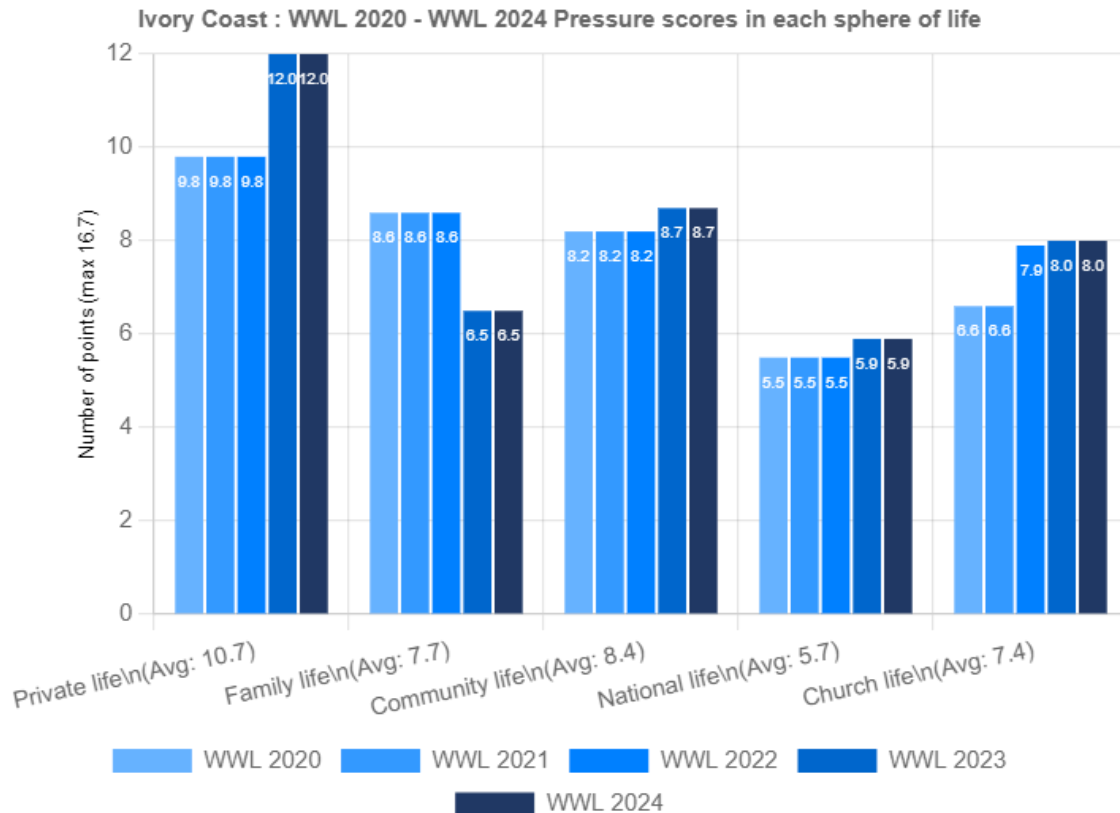
The chart above shows that the average pressure has been consistently highest in *Private life* (10.7 points on average), followed by the level of pressure in *Community life* (8.4 points on average) and *Family sphere* (7.4) points on average). This is an indication that it is mostly converts who are the category of Christians facing the brunt of pressure. National life has the lowest five year average (5.7 points).

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

Ivory Coast : WWL 2020 - WWL 2024 Violence scores
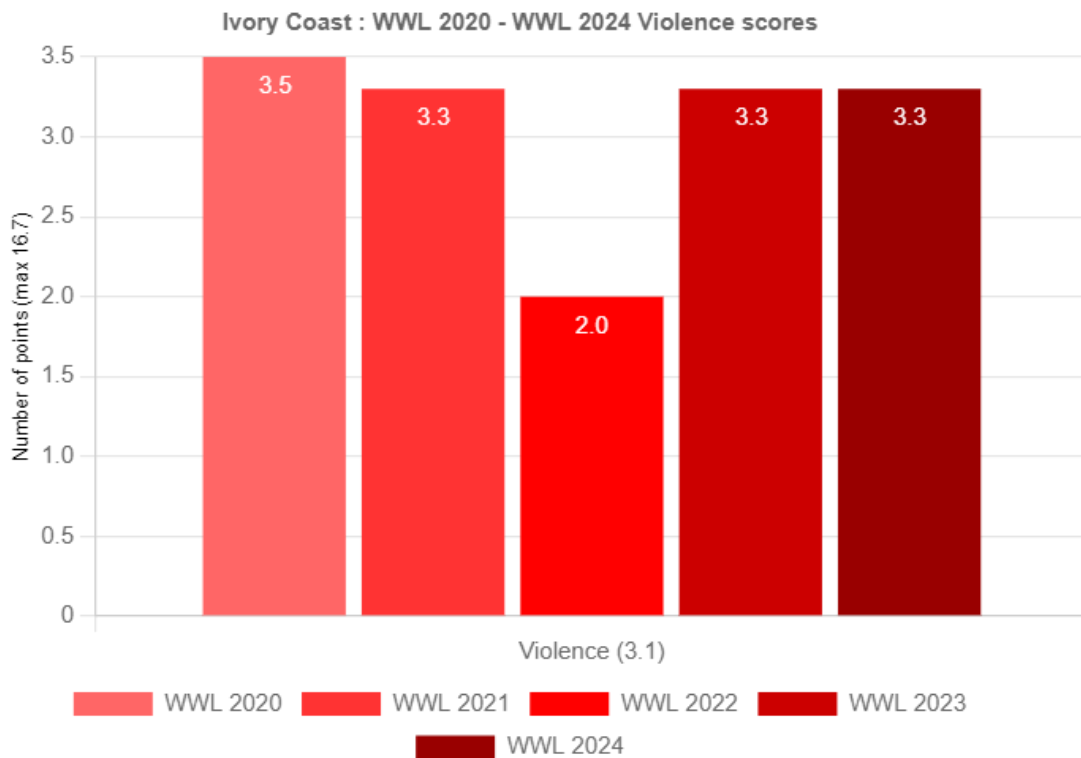
Over the past five years, the level of violence against Christians in Ivory Coast has remained consistently at 3.5 points or below. Although these levels appear relatively low, especially when compared to some other West African countries, the impact of such violence is profound. Victims often suffer from lasting trauma, emotional distress and the potential disintegration of family units.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Discrimination/harassment via education
Political and Legal	Denied access to social community/networks; Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Abduction; Forced out of home – expulsion; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Targeted Seduction; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Denied food or water; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

In general, the numbers of forced or early marriages, polygamy (France24, 19 July 2022) and acts of female genital mutilation (FGM) (UNHCR report, 1 June 2001) are high in Ivory Coast (CEDAW, 30 July 2019). In strongly Animist areas, women and girls are affected by the existence of female secret societies (such as the Sande society) and are sometimes forced to become members. If Christian women and girls, who live in communities where these societies are actively present, refuse to be members or participate in ceremonies like ritual baths due to their Christian faith, they are often isolated from female-related activities.

Converts from Muslim and Animist backgrounds face the greatest breadth of pressure. Persecution takes forms of deprivation, as well as enticement and denied educational support. "The girl who converts to Christianity is often subject to abandonment, rejection and mockery. Very often, she is forced to stop studying," a country expert remarked. A female convert may be divorced and denied custody of their children. The pressure on her spouse to divorce her often comes from Muslim relatives or friends who see her Christian faith as a source of dishonor. If a Christian convert remains a Christian while married to a Muslim, she will not be permitted to raise her children as Christians. She may also face physical and psychological abuse. The lack of legislation addressing domestic violence leaves women easily exposed in this regard.

The law in Ivory Coast forbids marriage of children under 18 years , however 27% of girls are married by 18 and 7% married by 15 (Girls not Brides Ivory Coast). Teenage pregnancy and child marriage often trigger a vicious cycle of disempowerment for girls, with many marriages characterized by violence and servitude. Such girls usually end up dropping out of school, and child mothers often have sexual and reproductive health complications.

For Christian women, unmarried converts may be forced into marriage to older, rich Muslim men. A country expert explained that this may be done "to stop them from expressing their faith." Sources indicate that the parents of convert girls sometimes threaten them with the prospect of abduction and forced marriage in order to pressure them into returning to Islam. These cases are very common in the northern regions of the country, particularly in Boundiali,

Bouna, and Khorogo — the practice of levirate and sororate marriage is also reportedly prevalent in these areas. Some women and girls (including non-converts) are targeted for marriage by more subtle means. Young Muslim men are reportedly encouraged to marry Christian girls.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

As is often the case in the region of West Africa, male Christians can be particularly subjected to hostility and forced membership into secret societies (such as the Poro), especially if they live in rural communities. If they refuse, they will be excluded from male-related activities and isolated. A country expert explained: "Most of the time, it is the heads of non-Christian families who persecute family members who have converted to Christianity. They can go so far as to threaten Christian leaders in worship on Sundays, or, they join forces with the services of the marabouts to spiritually attack, bewitch or poison those targeted by persecution. This can happen to the pastor or any member of the church, as long as it terrorizes the rest of the faithful." Pastors – the majority of whom are male – are also primary targets of persecution for their faith as well as their families. They are among the most vulnerable to attacks, especially during conflicts.

Converts from Muslim and Animist backgrounds have generally faced the most intense forms of persecution. They may be verbally, physically or emotionally mistreated by their families, who may reject them entirely, evict them and threaten them with violence. They are also discriminated against in terms of their education; Muslim youth receive more opportunities to study abroad, and parents will often stop financial support, halting the progress of their education. Upon discovery of their conversion, men may also be discriminated against in the workplace, possibly even losing their jobs. Shops have reportedly been targeted and boycotted because they belonged to Christians. As men are usually the financial providers of the family, these economic pressures harm their wider families and dependents. Married converts also face peculiar forms of persecution. According to a regional expert, wives of converts "do not hesitate, on the advice of their relatives, to consult marabouts and spiritists, to bring their husbands back to the Muslim faith, by bewitchments. Some go so far as to seduce Christian leaders to bring them down, and to deny their faith."

In rare instances, converts may be killed for their faith, but no incidents were reported in the 2024 reporting period.

Persecution of other religious minorities

In the predominantly Christian southern part of the country, Muslims are a minority and suffer discrimination and hostile treatment on occasions.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

The threat of *Islamic oppression* remains significant for Christians in Ivory Coast, particularly in the context of growing jihadist activities in the region. Although the September 2023 local elections were conducted peacefully, underlying divisions along lines of ethnicity, religion, and region continue to simmer. With the prevalence of coups in neighboring countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, the regional instability further exacerbates the situation. The Ivorian government's move to increase military presence in the north signals the gravity of these security concerns, ensuring that Islamic oppression will remain an immediate threat to Christians.

Clan oppression

The oppression from traditional clans and animist communities continues to pose a considerable challenge to Christians, particularly converts. Within families and communities that follow traditional African religions or Islam, there's a strong resistance to conversions to Christianity. In the western parts of the country, this is exacerbated by conflicts between Animists and Christians, including church vandalism and forcing Christians to stay home during Animist mask celebrations. While the reach of social media and modern communication might mitigate this to some extent in the long term, politicians who can exploit these divisions for electoral gains could keep this form of oppression alive in the foreseeable future.

Dictatorial paranoia

Despite attempts to transition from conflict to stability, the Ivory Coast has yet to establish a fully democratic environment that respects the fundamental rights of all citizens. Constitutional amendments, like the one allowing President Ouattara's third term, have been viewed as regressions in democratic progress, perpetuating regional and religious divides. Although the September 2023 elections passed without major incident, they did little to alleviate the pre-existing tensions related to ethnicity, region, and religion. Therefore, the influence of *Dictatorial paranoia* is likely to persist.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: polygamy - https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220719-ivorian-bill-that-would-legalise-polygamy-for-men-earns-the-ire-of-women-s-groups
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: female genital mutilation (FGM) - https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdos/2001/en/47933
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: high - https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/CIV/CO/4&amp;Lang=En

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/.

As in earlier years, these are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom):

- https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Ivory Coast
- https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/.