World
Watch
Research

Ivory Coast: Full Country Dossier

March 2023

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Introduction

World Watch List 2023

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	94	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.7	92	91	92	92	91
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	88	87	85	86
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.2	89	88	88	87	86
5	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	9.1	88	91	92	90	87
6	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	16.7	88	87	85	80	80
7	Pakistan	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	16.7	86	87	88	88	87
8	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	10.7	86	85	86	85	85
9	Afghanistan	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	4.6	84	98	94	93	94
10	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	9.4	83	79	79	85	87
11	India	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	15.7	82	82	83	83	83
12	Syria	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	11.3	80	78	81	82	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	2.4	80	81	78	79	77
14	Myanmar	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	15.4	80	79	74	73	71
15	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	0.2	77	77	77	78	78
16	China	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	11.1	77	76	74	70	65
17	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	15.0	76	70	67	66	68
18	Iraq	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	4.6	76	78	82	76	79
19	Algeria	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	4.8	73	71	70	73	70
20	Mauritania	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	1.3	72	70	71	68	67
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	1.5	71	71	71	73	74
22	Colombia	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	15.4	71	68	67	62	58
23	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	15.6	71	68	67	66	48
24	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	68	66	68	70
25	Vietnam	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	6.9	70	71	72	72	70
26	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	0.6	70	69	70	70	69
27	Cuba	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	7.0	70	66	62	52	49
28	Niger	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.4	70	68	62	60	52
29	Morocco	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	4.8	69	69	67	66	63
30	Bangladesh	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	10.7	69	68	67	63	58
31	Laos	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	5.0	68	69	71	72	71
32	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.6	68	65	63	43	43
33	Indonesia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	12.8	68	68	63	60	65
34	Qatar	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	1.5	68	74	67	66	62
35	Egypt	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	7.0	68	71	75	76	76
36	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	6.5	67	66	67	64	63
37	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.6	67	66	64	56	55
38	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	13.9	67	65	64	60	61
39	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	10.6	66	66	65	63	65
40	Bhutan	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	1.1	66	67	64	61	64
41	Turkey	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	5.7	66	65	69	63	66
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.5	66	63	62	57	56
43	Malaysia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	3.9	66	63	63	62	60
44	Tajikistan	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	13.4	1.1	66	65	66	65	65
45	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.9	65	65	64	60	54
46	Brunei	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	0.4	65	64	64	63	63
47	Oman	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	0.6	65	66	63	62	59
48	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	1.1	65	64	64	64	63
49	Jordan	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	2.0	65	66	64	64	65
50	Nicaragua	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	9.4	65	56	51	41	41

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.3	64	63	62	61	61
52	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	64	63	62	60
53	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.6	63	61	58	55	52
54	UAE	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	1.1	62	62	62	60	58
55	Nepal	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	4.4	61	64	66	64	64
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	0.6	60	59	56	56	56
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	2.0	60	59	58	60	57
58	Azerbaijan	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	0.6	59	60	56	57	57
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	2.0	59	58	58	57	56
60	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	7.6	58	55	53	56	48
61	Russian Federation	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	2.0	57	56	57	60	60
62	Sri Lanka	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	3.9	57	63	62	65	58
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	8.9	57	50	42	42	41
64	Venezuela	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	11.7	56	51	39	42	41
65	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	11.1	55	52	48	48	43
66	Bahrain	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	0.9	55	57	56	55	55
67	Honduras	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	11.9	53	48	46	39	38
68	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	51	46	43	42
69	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	14.8	51	48	47	48	47
70	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	5.4	49	44	43	41	42
71	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	3.0	48	43	47	45	46
72	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.0	46	43	43	44	44
73	El Salvador	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	6.7	46	45	42	38	30
74	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	42	42	42	43
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	1.1	44	44	43	43	43
76	Belarus	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	3.3	43	33	30	28	35

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 2023 reporting period was 1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.
- 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 including appendices can be found on the World Watch List Documentation page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

WWL 2023 Situation in brief / Ivory Coast

Brief country details

Ivory Coast : Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
27,742,000	9,741,000	35.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

Map of country

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	44	74
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73
WWL 2020	42	70
WWL 2019	43	67

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

- ***Islamic oppression (Medium)*** and ***Clan oppression (Medium)***: It is risky for Christians with a background in Islam or traditional African religions (ATR) living with non-Christian family members to make their conversion known. The region is facing unprecedented jihadist expansion and the form of Islamic teaching that is destabilizing other West African countries is also becoming more common in Ivory Coast.
- ***Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)***: The fact that politics also has links with religion – i.e. northerners (Muslim) vs. southerners (Christian) – any political disagreement or crisis immediately bears religious connotations and hence puts Christians in a vulnerable position. At the local level, government officials are known to discriminate against Christians in the Muslim-majority northern part of the country.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Christians in the northern part of the country face discrimination at many levels. This is particularly true for converts to Christianity.
- Christians in the northern region face difficulties when seeking to obtain land for building churches.

Specific examples of positive developments

The government decided to increase investment in the northern part of the country in an attempt to quell the growth of radical Islamic views. As reported by Reuters (8 November 2021), this includes investment in schools, hospitals and employment.

External Links - Situation in brief

- Specific examples of positive developments: Reuters - https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ivory-coast-says-it-will-invest-north-counter-jihadism-2021-11-08/

WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Ivory Coast

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2021/22 country report – covering 154 countries	AI country report 2021/22 pp.137-138	https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf	14 September 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13287216	14 September 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/CIV	14 September 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cote-divoire/	14 September 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/cote-divoire	14 September 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries	EIU 2021 - p.57	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf	14 September 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2022 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2022	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	14 September 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Ivory Coast not included)	Democracy Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/cote-divoire/freedom-world/2022	14 September 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries (Ivory Coast not included)	Freedom on the Net 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 – covering 100+ countries (Ivory Coast not included)	HRW 2022 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/africa/cote-divoire	14 September 2022
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ci	14 September 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	https://rsf.org/en/cote-divoire	14 September 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2021	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/civ	14 September 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 189 countries	HDI profile	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/CIV	14 September 2022
US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom (country profile)	IRFR 2021	https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cote-divoire/	14 September 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL (Ivory Coast not included)	USCIRF 2022	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries	World Bank country overview 2022	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cotedivoire/overview	14 September 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank country profile (2020 data)	https://data.worldbank.org/country/cote-divoire?view=chart	14 September 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 Sub-Saharan Africa - pp.26-27	https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/macro-poverty-outlook	14 September 2022

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 (BBC country 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" (Peace Insight, accessed 12 October 2020). 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, soldiers 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. According to BBC News reporting on 3 November 2020, Quattara won a third term with 94% of the vote.

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 Democrat-

ic 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 24 September 2022).

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.

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 2022:

- The country is rated as "partly free".
- Despite some positive changes: "Corruption and bribery remain endemic, and particularly affect the judiciary, police, and government contracting operations. Petty bribery also hampers citizens' access to services ranging from obtaining a birth certificate to clearing goods through customs. A public anticorruption body, the High Authority for Good Governance (HABG), was established in 2013, but is considered ineffective. Perpetrators at all levels seldom face prosecution."
  "While the constitution protects the right to free assembly, the government has attempted to restrict or forcibly disperse peaceful gatherings; violence between demonstrators and police has erupted. Freedom of assembly was also restricted by June 2019 criminal code revisions, which include one– to three-year prison sentences for organizing 'undeclared or prohibited' assemblies. President Ouattara banned public demonstrations and protests throughout the 2020 election period. Despite risks and restrictions, several notable protests and demonstrations took place during 2020. The police violently dispersed protests and other acts of civil disobedience that stemmed from the opposition's election boycott. Armed militias brutally attacked unarmed protestors throughout the election period with impunity. Pro-government groups and opposition supporters frequently clashed. Over 50 people were killed because of violence at public demonstrations. In 2021, fewer political

demonstrations and protest marches took place than in the previous year; those that did occur were largely peaceful, and were not subjected to police violence or interference".

According to the World Bank country overview:

- "Legislative elections held in early March 2021 were won by the ruling RHDP party. The elections were deemed to be broadly inclusive, with the participation of the country's main political parties, including the PDCI of former president Henri Konan Bédié and the coalition supporting Laurent Gbagbo, both of which boycotted the presidential elections held in October 2020. Official reports indicate that 87 persons died in violent clashes that marred the reelection of Alassane Ouattara for a third consecutive term in 2020."
- "President Ouattara appointed Patrick Achi prime minister in March 2021 to replace Hamed Bakayoko who had passed away earlier in the month. Achi has been tasked with continuing the political dialogue for national reconciliation, particularly with the parties of former presidents Henri Konan Bédié and Laurent Gbagbo."

According to Crisis 24 country report:

- "President Alassane Ouattara finally named a constitutional successor in April 2022 when he picked political outsider Tiémoko Meyliet Koné as the new vice-president, after the post had been vacant since July 2020. The appointment of Koné, who had served as governor of the West African central bank for a decade, greatly reduces the risk of instability in the event of Ouattara's incapacity. Koné's northern background will also be crucial in gaining acceptance by the main powerbrokers in the ruling RHDP."

Religious landscape

Ivory Coast : Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	9,741,000	35.1
Muslim	11,698,000	42.2
Hindu	1,900	0.0
Buddhist	13,100	0.0
Ethno-religionist	6,144,000	22.1
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	39,100	0.1
Atheist	2,600	0.0
Agnostic	96,300	0.3
Other - *includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.*	7,000	0.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

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

Economic landscape

According to the CIA Factbook:

- "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 export 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 (2022):

- *Economic growth:* "The recovery in 2021 registered 7.0 percent growth (4.4 percent per capita), with a rebound in domestic demand. Real GDP growth is estimated at 7.0 percent in 2021 (4.4 percent in per capita terms) against 2 percent in 2020 (-0.6 percent in per capita terms), owing to stronger-than-expected domestic demand. Private consumption and investment were supported by strong credit (+13 percent) and employment (+7.5 percent) growth; while public consumption and investments remained high."
- *Inflation:* "Inflation reached a 10-year high of 4.2 percent, 1.2 percentage points above the regional target, mainly driven by foodstuffs because of a water deficit that affected production, and disruptions in the cultivation schedules of some crops because of mobility restrictions lingering since 2020 and increased security in the northern borders."
- *Imports/Exports:* "Private consumption and investment were supported by strong credit (+13 percent) and employment (+7.5 percent) growth; while public consumption and investments remained high. Net exports were negative at end-November, as exports of cocoa and cashew nuts were offset by investment-driven imports (+15.1 percent)."
- *Poverty:* "The incidence of extreme poverty measured with the US$1.9 a day per capita (2011 PPP) international poverty line declined from 8.95 percent in 2019, to 8.75 percent in 2021, slightly higher in comparison to pre-COVID (2019) poverty projections of 8.6 percent. The recent inflation spike is estimated to have increased extreme poverty rate by 0.2 ppt point over the 2020-21 period."
- *Impact of COVID-19:* "The economy rebounded strongly from the COVID-19-induced slowdown in 2020, aided by fiscal and monetary policy support and less disruptive containment measures. Real GDP growth is estimated at 7.0 percent in 2021 (4.4 percent in per capita terms) against 2 percent in 2020 (-0.6 percent in per capita terms), owing to stronger-than-expected domestic demand."

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 CIA Factbook and UN Human Development Indicators (HDI profile):

- ***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 14 September 2022):

- ***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. Liberia currently hosts 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 disp"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 victimsof 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."

Technological landscape

According to the Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 44.6% of the population – survey date: December 2021
  (Most recent survey available at time of writing)
- **Facebook usage:** 24.3% penetration rate – survey date: January 2022

According to the World Bank country profile:

- *Mobile phone subscriptions:* 145.3 per hundred people

According to BuddeComm (Publication date: March 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."

According to the CIA Factbook:

- The "strongest sector in the overall market is the mobile sector; fixed internet and broadband sectors have remained underdeveloped; country 90% digitalized; Côte d'Ivoire continues to benefit from strong economic growth; progress has been made in building out the national backbone network and connecting in 2019 to the MainOne submarine cable; this development puts the country in a better position to develop its broadband market and work on its digital economy; government further tightens SIM card registration rules (2020)".
- Due to the international COVID-19 crisis, consumer spending on telecom devices and services slowed and progress in mobile, fixed-line, broadband, submarine cable and satellite improvements moderated".

Security situation

Ever since Islamic militants killed 18 people in March 2016 in an attack at the beach resort of Grand Bassam, there has been a growing fear that Islamic militant groups operating in the region could carry out further attacks in the country - including the targeting of Christians, as they have done in other nearby countries. In June 2020, a jihadist group conducted an attack directly on the border with Burkina Faso. This ever-expanding threat (together with the history of conflict between the north and the south) means that Christians will be highly affected by any deterioration of security in the country.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

- "In recent years, al-Qaida affiliate Jamat'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) based in the Sahel region has expanded into the northern part of the country from the Sahel, and JNIM sub-group Katiba Macina, also known as the Macina Liberation Front (MLF), launched several attacks on the country's security forces during the year, some fatal. Government and civil society sources expressed concern that these groups and others would continue to increase their presence in the country and recruit from vulnerable populations, such as unemployed youth. To counter this threat, religious leaders partnered with local law enforcement and subnational government leadership on security matters to prevent violent extremism and protect their communities from what they stated was the growing terrorist threat."

According to [FDD's Long War Journal](#) (16 June 2021):

- "Since late March [2021], northern Ivory Coast has been subject to a substantial increase in jihadist attacks. This includes the country's first known instances of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This trend proves a worrying development as jihadist violence in the Sahel, especially in Mali and Burkina Faso, continues to spread southward threatening the littoral West African states. Since Mar. 29, Ivory Coast has witnessed at least 9 jihadist strikes within its territory. This number represents a stark increase in attacks as 2020 saw just one assault in June of that year and a presumed jihadist attack in late December. ... The recent spate of attacks inside Ivory Coast have been predominantly located in two northern districts of the country: Savanes and Zanzan. Both districts border southwestern Burkina Faso, where units within al Qaeda's Group for Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) have been increasingly active. It is largely from JNIM's bases in southwestern Burkina Faso where the incursions into Ivorian territory have taken place."

According to the Crisis 24 country profile:

- "The main security threat has transitioned from political instability to attacks staged in northern border regions by Islamist militants based largely in Mali and Burkina Faso. President Ouattara announced in November 2021 the recruitment of a further 3,000 soldiers in 2022 and 10,000 in total by 2024. Despite these new recruits, and bilateral operations conducted in Burkina Faso to prevent Islamist groups implanting themselves close to its northern border, Côte d'Ivoire is still likely to be the target for sporadic at-

tacks on military outposts and personnel, with a high risk of kidnap attempts focusing on expatriate gold mining personnel."

- "The Islamist threat is unlikely to have any noticeable negative effect on robust economic growth, which has recovered rapidly from COVID-19-induced recession in 2020, based again on favourable production and relatively buoyant prices for key export cocoa."

One positive development is that an [International Counterterrorism Academy](#) has been inaugurated in Jacqueville with the aim of helping the West African sub-region fight rising violent Islamic militancy (Reuters, 10 June 2021).

Trends analysis

1) Political division in the country runs deep

The presidential election was held in October 2020. It fueled rivalries and intensified competition among the various factions. The post-election violence did not last for long, but if the underlying issues are not solved thoroughly, they could have a detrimental effect on the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the country. Past conflict in Ivory Coast has always had a political and religious element caused by the fact that the majority of citizens in the north are Muslim and the majority in the south are Christian. When the incumbent president took office and the former president was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), many supporters called it "a political vendetta." Gbagbo was acquitted and released pending a possible appeal by the prosecutor. Some argue that this will heal the country, but others argue that this strengthens the already existing belief that it was a political vendetta and hence can make the situation worse. If the dichotomy between the north and south continues, it will have a huge impact on Christians. Even though the WWL 2023 reporting period did not see any major political clashes or turmoil, the north-south/Muslim-Christian issue will continue to dominate the country's political discourse.

2) Violent Islamic groups are likely to attempt to destabilize the country

The continued presence and activity of militant Islamic groups in the West African region is also a major cause for concern. There is a fear that such groups could attempt to bring further instability to Ivory Coast and target Christians as they have done in other countries in the region. The substantial increase in jihadist attacks in 2021 (see above: *Security situation*) is a grave threat to peace and stability in the country and has the potential of reversing the recent gains made in bringing about stability and a measure of economic success. The coups and failing states in the region compound this fear.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: trade routes - https://sovereignnations.com/2018/04/30/history-arab-slave-trade-africa/
- Recent history: political stability - http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/ivory-coast/conflict-profile
- 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: 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: Patrick Achi - https://www.fratmat.info/article/211965/politique/cote-divoire-biographie-du-nouveau-1er-ministre-patrick-jerome-achi
- Economic landscape: Macro Poverty Outlook (2022) - https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf
- 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/
- 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: FDD's Long War Journal - https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/06/analysis-ivory-coast-witnesses-surge-in-jihadist-activity.php
- Security situation: International Counterterrorism Academy - https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ivory-coast-opens-counter-terrorism-academy-partnership-with-france-2021-06-10/

WWL 2023: 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 missionary 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	24,400	0.3
Catholic	5,032,000	51.7
Protestant	3,286,000	33.7
Independent	1,331,000	13.7

Unaffiliated	272,000	2.8
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-205,000	-2.1
Total	**9,740,400**	**100.0**
(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)		
Evangelical movement	2,366,000	24.3
Renewalist movement	2,703,000	27.7

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

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: 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 2023: Persecution Dynamics / Ivory Coast

Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

Position on the World Watch List

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	44	74
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73
WWL 2020	42	70
WWL 2019	43	67

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

In WWL 2023, Ivory Coast's overall score rose to 44 points, after scoring 42 points in the previous three consecutive reporting periods. The average pressure on Christians was 8.2 points, an increase of 0.2 points from WWL 2022. The *Private sphere* score is the highest with 12.0 points, an increase of 2.2 points from WWL 2022 (9.8 points), followed by the *Community life* and *Church life* scores (8.7 and 8.0 points respectively. This reflects the pressure exerted on converts where attempts are made to force them to live according to family and community values and beliefs. The score for violence was 3.3 points, an increase from 2.2 points in WWL 2022. Most violent incidents have been less serious compared to those becoming the norm in several other West African countries.

Islamic oppression (Medium) and *Clan oppression (Medium)*: It is risky for Christians with a background in Islam or traditional African religions (ATR) living with non-Christian family members to make their conversion known. The region is facing unprecedented jihadist expansion and the form of Islamic teaching that is destabilizing other West African countries is also becoming more common in Ivory Coast. *Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)*: The fact that politics also has links with religion – i.e. northerners (Muslim) vs. southerners (Christian) – any political disagreement or crisis immediately bears religious connotations and hence puts Christians in a vulnerable position. At the local level, government officials are known to discriminate against Christians in the Muslim-majority northern part of the country.

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)

West Africa, in general, is under threat from violent Islamic militants. The influence of Muslims in political and economic areas has also been increasing rapidly especially in the northern part of the country. Many important investment projects in the country are under the control of the Moroccan king and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Christians fear marginalization and feel insecure.

Clan oppression (Medium)

Hostility often arises in families against converts. Also, although most people in the country are either Muslims or Christians, a considerable number of the country's population follow African traditional religions. The population also often mixes Christian/Muslim faith with ATR beliefs. Where this is resisted by Christian groups, they face opposition from ethnic group leaders, especially in remote parts of the country.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

At the local level, government officials are known to discriminate against Christians in the Muslim-majority northern part of the country. Muslim citizens have been favored by officials in a variety of ways in the north.

Drivers of persecution

Ivory Coast : Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	MEDIUM			MEDIUM				MEDIUM	
Government officials	Medium							Medium	
Ethnic group leaders				Medium					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium								
Violent religious groups	Medium								
Ideological pressure groups	-								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium								
One's own (extended) family	Medium			Medium					

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)***: Public authorities, especially at the local level in some parts of the country, are known to discriminate against Christians. For example, Christian communities such as the Assemblies of God, the Christian Missionary Alliance Church and the Evangelical Protestant Works and Missions Church have been targeted by officials for selective enforcement of noise control regulations. Churches have also been discriminated against and treated unfairly in relation to land disputes.
- ***Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium):*** In the northern part of the country some radical imams and sheiks are known to preach hateful and inflammatory messages.
- ***Ordinary Citizens (Medium):*** Ordinary citizens, as well as ethnic leaders or village chiefs in predominantly Muslim inhabited areas, are known to persecute Christians with a Muslim background.
- ***Family (Medium):*** Converts often face serious discrimination and expulsion from their own family. This has put young converts at risk of being abandoned without shelter and food.
- ***Violent religious groups (Medium):*** Militant Islamic groups that are active in the region have also been targeting Christians in the country.
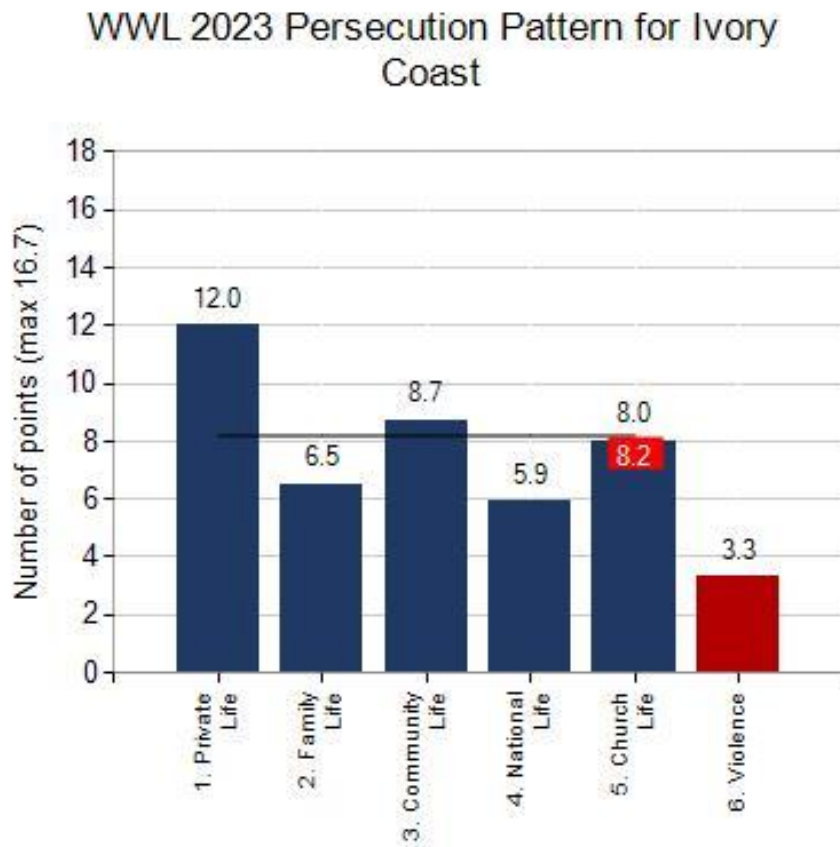
Drivers of Clan oppression

- ***Ethnic group leaders (Medium):*** 22.1% of the country's population are adherents of African traditional religions (according to WCD 2022 estimates). Ethnic group leaders will oppose Christians belonging to church groups who actively oppose African witchcraft etc.

- *Family (Medium):* Converts often face serious discrimination and expulsion from their own family.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- *Government officials (Medium)*: Government officials are known to discriminate against Christians in the northern part of the country where there is a Muslim majority.

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Ivory Coast

The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for Ivory Coast shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Ivory Coast is 8.2 points, rising from 8.0 points in WWL 2022.
- The *Private sphere* score is the highest with 12.0 points, an increase of 2.2 points from WWL 2022 (9.8 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, rising from 2.2 points in WWL 2022. Most violent incidents have been less serious compared to those becoming the norm in several other West African countries.

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 2023 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)

In the context of the northern part of the country, Christians who convert from a Muslim or Animist background cannot speak about their Christian faith with their immediate family members as they are seen as bringing shame and dishonor upon the family. Those who want to show their Christian faith, are humiliated, beaten or insulted by relatives.

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

In many countries where engines like *Islamic oppression*, *Clan oppression* or *Christian denominational protectionism* are in operation, conversion is likely to face hostility. This is also the case in Ivory Coast: i) in areas where indigenous religious beliefs (ATR) dominate; and ii) in the northern part of the country where Islam is a majority and communities often oppose the presence of Christian faith. Conversion to Christianity is considered a curse and great shame by Animist or Muslim family members.

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)

This is particularly an issue for those who have left ATR or Islam. New converts from Islam particularly face a real risk if they try to go to church. Some have had their Bibles taken away; others have had their Bibles badly damaged. They can be expelled from the family home as well.

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)

In the south, the risk is minimal. However, in the northern part of the country Muslims dominate society and any expression of Christian faith can attract danger. Christians from a Muslim background put themselves in danger if they talk about their journey to faith on social media networks.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

Harassment of children is often done to put pressure on the parents. They are targeted in an attempt to get their parents to stop holding church services, preaching and organizing church events. In some schools, Christian pupils are discriminated against because of the attitudes and moral standards passed on by their parents. Teachers (also at universities) are known to insult, discriminate and mock Christians for being old-fashioned and backward.

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

Geography plays a key role in this form of pressure which needs to be seen in the context of the emerging Islamic schools, Islamic NGOs and highly organized Muslim businessmen. All these entities have created a system where Muslims get a preferential treatment where the Muslim population is a majority. For Christians, if there are no alternatives, their children have to not only attend such schools but also join in Islamic practice.

Block 2.10: Christian spouses and/or children of Christians have been subject to separation for prolonged periods of time by circumstances relating to persecution. (2.00 points)

The threat of splitting up families is a tactic to make sure that no one would leave Islam or the indigenous belief system. Thus, most new converts in Muslim or Animist families are forced into periods of separation in an attempt to make them return to their former religion. For instance, children of a Christian partner are usually taken to live with relatives far away. Animist or Muslim parents will remarry their daughter to another man. In Islamic families, a Muslim girl may be given as a new spouse for the son.

Block 2.12: Christian spouses of non-Christians have been excluded from the right or opportunity to claim custody of the children in divorce cases. (2.00 points)

There are many ways that Christians can be put under pressure to make them stop living visibly as a Christian or to make them recant their faith. This is particularly true for converts. Generally, any Christian woman who is divorced by her Muslim husband is automatically excluded from all rights. Denying the right of child custody is seen as a serious punitive measure to deter anyone from leaving Islam.

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)

Community monitoring of Christians is particularly the case in Animist and Muslim-dominated areas. Ivory Coast's civil war had a religious component - south (Christian) vs. north (Muslim) - and this has left deep animosity and suspicion. In the northern part of the country, the monitoring by local groups can be extensive.

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)

Similar to 3.2 above, geography plays a major role. Generally, the business sector is dominated by the Muslim population, especially in the northern part of the country. However, many Muslims have moved to the south to dominate the business sector there too. Through the election of President Quattara, Muslims are systematically given preferential treatment. It is becoming more difficult for Christians to access loans and other such services.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

Some Christians call it 'payback time'. These Christians believe that the government and Muslim community are taking every opportunity to discriminate against Christians. Thus, in the WWL 2023 reporting period (as noted in previous WWL reports), Muslims are systematically promoting their fellow believers in the various areas of social and economic life. As a result, Muslims fill most positions in offices. In the northern part of the country, discrimination against Christians is particularly visible.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (2.25 points)

Pressure on Christians to renounce their faith is particularly intense in the northern part of the country. There were several reports of ex-Muslims being forced to renounce their new Christian faith by their community leaders. Such individuals are in constant fear of losing their lives. Christians who converted from African traditional religion also face pressure to renounce their faith in the remote southern part of the country where the traditional religious chiefs are dominant.

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)

State authorities either directly refuse or make the application process for permits unduly complicated for Christians. This is particularly the case in the northern part of the country where some local officials see Christians as i) outsiders, ii) people who moved up to the north to take their land, and iii) people who have moved up north to spread Christianity. This thinking has created an environment where Christians face serious discrimination due to their faith. People link this issue to the political situation and to the uneasy relationship between Christians and Muslims, especially since the civil war that resulted in a change of the political landscape and the presidency.

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

This is evident in the subtle denial of promotion. There are no laws that dictate that someone should be of this faith or that faith, but in practice denial of promotion of Christians is occurring when they refuse to compromise their faith - especially in the context of corruption. This is mainly the case in the northern part of the country.

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

Expression of views and opinion can have severe consequences if not aligned with what the government in power wants. This is particularly true in the northern part of the country where the local administration is heavily dominated by Muslim officials. Indeed, all categories of Christians in Muslim-dominated areas - but particularly converts with a Muslim background - find it very difficult to express their views openly out of fear of reprisals from radical Muslims. Also, Christians are under the watchful eyes of the ruling party who are often ready to accuse Christians of having an antigovernment stance whenever church leaders have raised the issue of government abuses and called for justice and equality.

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (2.25 points)

There is a widespread perception in the country that the ruling party is Muslim and that the challengers are Christians. This perception has led to a situation where political parties with leaders from the south and some NGOs operating in the south are restricted unreasonably. Also, government supporters see the Church and church-run projects as a threat to the administration of the incumbent president. In some circumstances, the ruling party has accused Christians of supporting former President Gbagbo.

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)

Registration is especially difficult for small, non-traditional church groups. There is a long procedure to be followed and the steps put in place are often designed to restrict the application of new churches, especially those churches that engage in evangelization. This is particularly the case for those who are applying to operate in areas where Muslims are in a majority.

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

The regulation of churches and Christian organizations is done by an agency of the Ministry of Interior known as the Department of Faith-Based Organizations or the Direction Générale des Cultes. This agency has rejected registration applications by some organizations in the past over allegations that they had forged documents.

Some conservative Muslims with an interest in Islamic propaganda monitor churches in their neighborhoods. Some young Muslims or Animists disrupt Christian activities when instructed to do so by their religious leaders. This monitoring intimidates Christians, makes them feel unsafe, and can hinder them from meeting together in their churches.

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

Churches that are operating in areas dominated by Islamic or ATR residents often struggle to integrate converts. They are met with hostile resistance from family, community and religious leaders of the converts' former faith. This is why church leaders often keep new converts away from public view and provide teaching and fellowship in safer places.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (2.50 points)

Carrying out events and activities outside the safety of the church compound can be faced with opposition in areas where Christians are not the majority. In the WWL 2023 reporting period, Christians had to pay high fees to be allowed to organize outside activities in some towns and villages.

There are also times when Animist or Muslim leaders will seek to prevent outside church activities from being carried out. With radical Islamic ideology expanding in the region, it has become increasingly unsafe for Christians to stage outside events in the northern part of the country.

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 5 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. For further discussion *(with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at:*
https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/.

4. 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.*

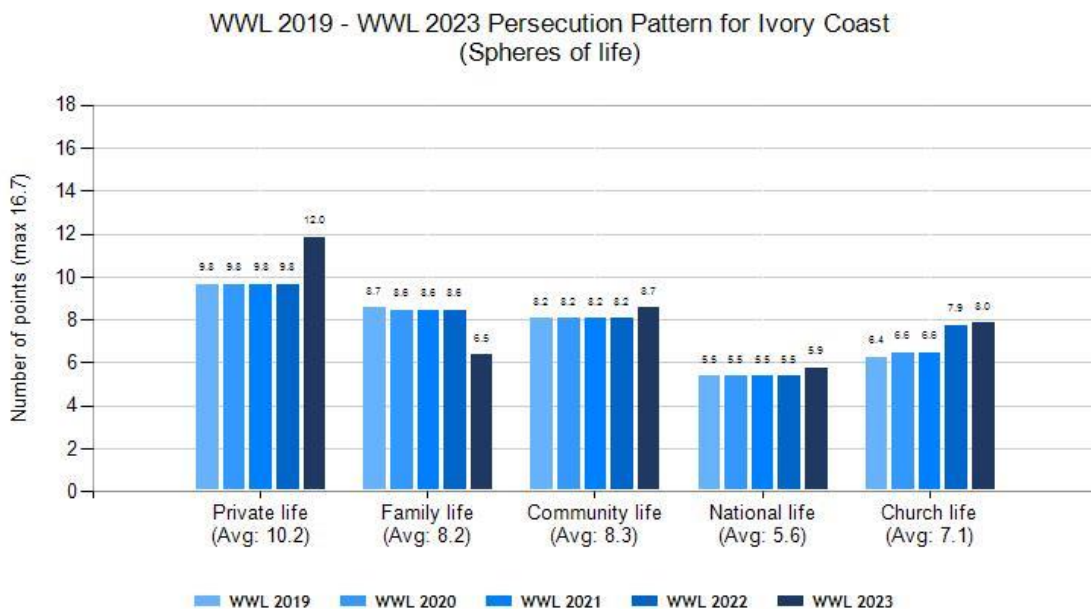| Ivory Coast : Violence Block question	WWL 2023	WWL 2022
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	1
6.2 How many churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	2	0
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)?	1	0
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?	4	10 *
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10 *	4
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?	10 *	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	20	10
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

The table below shows that the average pressure on Christians for the past five WWL reporting periods remained within the range 7.7 - 8.2 points. Although the first three reporting periods saw a stable level of pressure, pressure then started increasing in WWL 2022 and WWL 2023. This trend is in line with what has been going on in the wider region.

Ivory Coast : WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	8.2
2022	8.0
2021	7.7
2020	7.7
2019	7.7

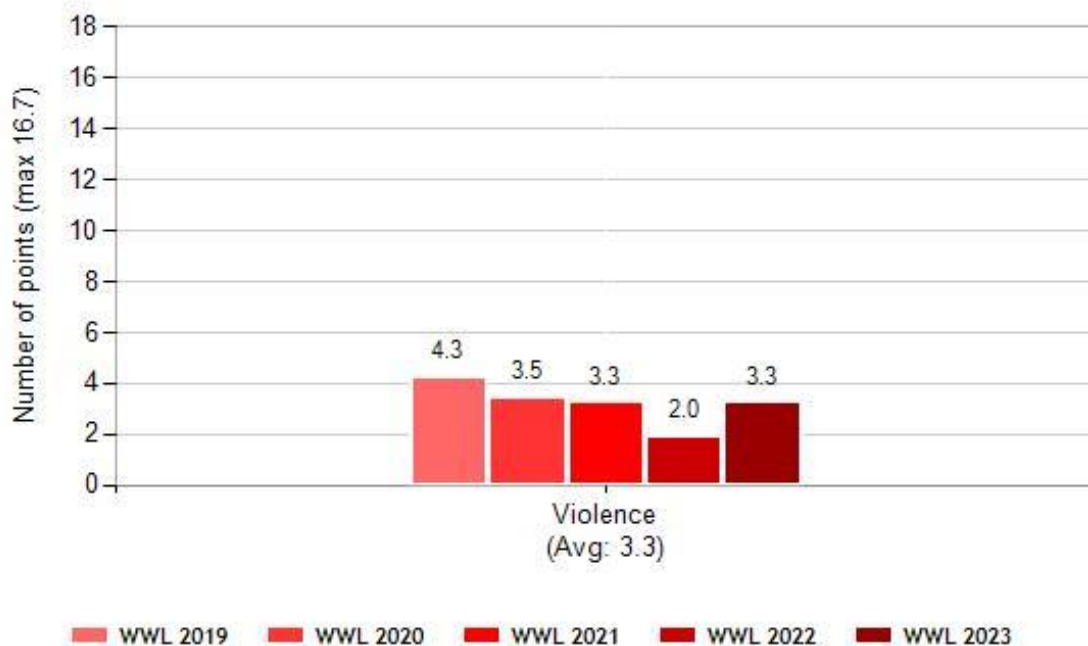## 5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

The chart above shows that the average pressure has been consistently highest in *Private life* (10.2 points on average), followed by the level of pressure in *Community life* (8.3 points on average) and *Family sphere* (8.2 points on average). This is an indication that mostly converts are the category of Christians facing the brunt of pressure. *National life* has the lowest five year average (5.6 points).

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

Violence against Christians in Ivory Coast is not as high as in some other West African countries. Indeed, the chart below shows that until WWL 2023, the trend had been a gradual reduction in violence. Nevertheless, all forms and levels of violence have serious ramifications for the victims, from personal trauma to economic or financial challenges.

WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Ivory Coast (Violence)

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

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

In general, the number of forced or early marriages, polygamy and acts of female genital mutilation (FGM) is high in Ivory Coast (CEDAW, 30 Jul 2019, "Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Côte d'Ivoire''). 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 stated. A female convert may be divorced and denied custody of her 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 (OECD, 2019, "Social Institutions and Gender Index, Côte d'Ivoire").

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 region of the country, particularly in Boundiali, Bouna, and Khorogo— the practice of levirate and sororate marriage is also reportedly prevalent in these areas. Some Christian 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	Discrimination/harassment via education; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Violence – death; 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 2023 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 future of *Islamic oppression* in the Ivory Coast depends to a large extent on the threat of rising Islamic militancy in the region and how far it impacts the country. If the jihadist threat can be contained and the country is able to carry out peaceful elections successfully, then things could improve for Christians. However, the jihadists are actually expanding their reach and have begun putting extreme pressure even on coastal countries. In the north-eastern part of the country along the Burkina Faso border, many attacks have been carried out in the past 3 WWL reporting periods. The country's army have been deployed to contain the impact of these groups. In the near future, this engine will remain a serious threat to Christians in Ivory Coast.

Clan oppression

Considering the large number of families following traditional African religion or Islam, this engine is likely to remain a threat, since such families will oppose any conversions of family members to Christianity. In West Africa, ATR is a strong factor in communities and in the short-term this is unlikely to change. However, the long-term outlook is that as communication, especially social media and other technologies, reach the peripheries, this engine will slowly disappear. This is not to say that politicians who can use this engine to gain political capital will not emerge in the future.

Dictatorial paranoia

In recent years, the country has tried to move from conflict to stability, but there have been massive limitations in respecting the fundamental rights of the citizens. When the president amended the Constitution to run for the third term in office, many analysts saw this as an attempt to derail any democratic progress and to create further friction between the north and the south. In the WWL 2023 reporting period (WWL 2023), most politicians from the South are of the opinion that the democratic process under President Ouattara has been slow and less inclusive .

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- 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
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: The lack of legislation addressing domestic violence - https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CI.pdf
- Future outlook: have been deployed - https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/reporters/20220902-living-with-the-jihadist-threat-in-ivory-coast

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the new Research & Reports page of the website od.org. As in earlier years, they are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) using the following links:

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