

World
Watch
Research

Ivory Coast : Full Country Dossier

February 2022



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Contents

Introduction	3
World Watch List 2022	3
Copyright note.....	4
Sources and definitions.....	4
Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic.....	5
External Links - Introduction	5
WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Ivory Coast	5
Brief country details	5
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	5
Brief description of the persecution situation	6
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period	6
Specific examples of positive developments	6
External Links - Situation in brief	6
WWL 2022: Keys to understanding / Ivory Coast.....	7
Links for general background information.....	7
Recent history	7
Political and legal landscape	8
Religious landscape	10
Economic landscape.....	11
Social and cultural landscape	12
Technological landscape	12
Security situation	13
Trends analysis	13
External Links - Keys to understanding	14
WWL 2022: Church information / Ivory Coast	15
Christian origins.....	15
Church spectrum today.....	15
WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Ivory Coast	16
Reporting period	16
Position on the World Watch List	16
Persecution engines	17
Drivers of persecution.....	18
Areas where Christians face most difficulties	19

Christian communities and how they are affected	19
The Persecution pattern.....	19
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life	20
Violence.....	24
5 Year trends	25
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female	27
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male	28
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	29
Future outlook.....	29
External Links - Persecution Dynamics.....	29
Further useful reports.....	29

Introduction

World Watch List 2022

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
1	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	15.0	98	94	93	94	93
2	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	13.1	96	94	94	94	94
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.5	91	92	92	91	91
4	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.2	16.3	11.5	91	92	90	87	86
5	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.5	16.7	16.7	5.2	88	87	85	86	85
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.6	11.1	88	88	87	86	86
7	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.3	14.5	14.4	16.7	87	85	80	80	77
8	Pakistan	13.6	14.0	15.1	14.9	13.1	16.7	87	88	88	87	86
9	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.6	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	86	85	85	85
10	India	12.7	12.7	12.9	14.7	13.3	15.6	82	83	83	83	81
11	Saudi Arabia	15.1	15.1	15.0	15.9	16.7	3.1	81	78	79	77	79
12	Myanmar	12.4	11.5	13.8	13.4	13.1	14.8	79	74	73	71	65
13	Sudan	13.4	13.4	14.3	13.6	15.7	8.5	79	79	85	87	87
14	Iraq	14.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	6.9	78	82	76	79	86
15	Syria	12.9	13.8	13.5	14.3	13.9	9.3	78	81	82	82	76
16	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.4	77	77	78	78	78
17	China	12.6	9.8	12.2	14.4	15.5	11.1	76	74	70	65	57
18	Qatar	14.2	14.1	11.1	13.0	14.3	7.2	74	67	66	62	63
19	Vietnam	11.3	9.7	12.7	14.1	14.5	8.7	71	72	72	70	69
20	Egypt	12.7	13.2	11.5	12.7	10.8	10.0	71	75	76	76	70
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	14.1	11.8	15.6	1.7	71	71	73	74	73
22	Algeria	14.0	14.0	11.1	13.4	14.1	4.1	71	70	73	70	58
23	Mauritania	14.3	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.1	0.9	70	71	68	67	57
24	Mali	9.4	8.2	13.9	10.3	12.8	15.0	70	67	66	68	59
25	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	13.3	15.7	0.6	69	70	70	69	68
26	Laos	12.0	10.3	13.2	13.3	14.1	5.9	69	71	72	71	67
27	Morocco	13.1	13.8	10.8	12.8	14.2	3.9	69	67	66	63	51
28	Indonesia	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.0	9.6	13.5	68	63	60	65	59
29	Bangladesh	11.8	10.7	12.9	11.3	10.2	11.3	68	67	63	58	58
30	Colombia	11.5	8.8	13.1	11.0	9.9	13.3	68	67	62	58	56
31	CAR	9.0	8.6	13.6	9.6	11.4	15.6	68	66	68	70	61
32	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.0	9.6	12.1	14.8	68	67	66	48	-
33	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.9	7.2	12.8	14.8	68	62	60	52	45
34	Bhutan	13.4	12.4	11.7	13.7	13.8	1.7	67	64	61	64	62
35	Tunisia	11.9	12.7	10.6	11.3	13.4	6.5	66	67	64	63	62
36	Oman	13.8	14.0	10.3	13.2	13.4	1.5	66	63	62	59	57
37	Cuba	12.3	8.1	12.6	13.2	14.0	5.9	66	62	52	49	49
38	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.3	12.3	9.8	66	65	63	65	62
39	Jordan	12.9	14.0	11.0	12.3	12.5	3.0	66	64	64	65	66
40	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	12.0	15.6	66	64	56	55	33
41	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	11.3	7.9	12.5	15.6	65	63	43	43	-
42	Turkey	12.6	11.5	11.4	13.2	11.6	4.6	65	69	63	66	62
43	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	10.8	10.3	12.6	65	64	60	61	59
44	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.4	65	64	60	54	38
45	Tajikistan	13.8	12.3	12.0	12.6	13.2	0.7	65	66	65	65	65
46	Brunei	14.8	14.5	10.3	11.0	13.2	0.6	64	64	63	63	64
47	Kazakhstan	13.4	11.6	11.1	12.6	13.5	1.7	64	64	64	63	63
48	Nepal	12.4	9.8	9.9	13.6	12.7	5.2	64	66	64	64	64
49	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	63	62	60	61
50	Malaysia	12.5	14.3	11.5	11.6	10.2	3.3	63	63	62	60	65

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018
51	Kenya	11.7	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	11.1	63	62	61	61	62
52	Sri Lanka	12.9	9.9	11.4	11.3	9.4	7.8	63	62	65	58	57
53	Comoros	12.7	11.1	11.2	12.4	14.2	0.9	63	62	57	56	56
54	UAE	13.4	13.6	10.1	11.8	12.2	1.3	62	62	60	58	58
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	13.7	61	58	55	52	53
56	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.9	9.3	11.0	13.4	3.3	60	56	57	57	57
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.4	9.8	10.2	12.0	0.9	59	58	60	57	60
58	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	11.1	10.0	12.2	0.7	59	56	56	56	56
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.1	11.1	10.4	12.0	1.5	58	58	57	56	54
60	Bahrain	12.5	13.2	9.1	11.1	10.2	0.9	57	56	55	55	57
61	Nicaragua	9.1	5.6	11.1	11.8	11.3	7.6	56	51	41	41	-
62	Russian Federation	12.3	8.0	10.2	10.6	12.3	2.2	56	57	60	60	51
63	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.6	55	53	56	48	40
64	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.1	52	48	48	43	-
65	Venezuela	5.6	4.5	11.2	9.4	11.1	9.6	51	39	42	41	34
66	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	10.1	11.4	7.8	51	46	43	42	-
67	Rwanda	8.1	5.5	6.7	10.3	10.1	9.3	50	42	42	41	-
68	Honduras	7.2	5.1	10.5	7.7	9.2	8.7	48	46	39	38	-
69	Uganda	8.1	4.6	7.4	6.7	9.1	11.7	48	47	48	47	46
70	El Salvador	7.7	4.6	10.7	5.7	9.1	7.2	45	42	38	30	-
71	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	9.8	2.4	44	43	41	42	-
72	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.7	44	43	43	43	-
73	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	2.0	43	47	45	46	-
74	South Sudan	5.7	0.9	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.0	43	43	44	44	-
75	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	7.9	2.0	42	42	42	43	-
76	Israel	9.8	8.4	5.6	6.6	6.6	4.3	41	40	38	39	40

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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 2022 reporting period was 1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021.
- 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).

Effect on data-gathering during COVID-19 pandemic

In the WWL 2022 reporting period, travel restrictions and other measures introduced by the governments of various countries to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic did cause delays and create the need for restructuring grass-roots research in some cases. Through the agile cooperation of In-country networks, Open Doors country researchers, External experts, WWR analysts and an increased use of technological options, Open Doors is confident that – as in the previous reporting period – WWL 2022 scoring, analysis and documentation has maintained required levels of quality and reliability.

External Links - Introduction

- Sources and definitions: World Watch List Documentation - <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>

WWL 2022 Situation in brief / Ivory Coast

Brief country details

Ivory Coast : Population (UN estimate for 2021)	Christians	Chr%
26,828,000	9,177,000	34.2

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73
WWL 2020	42	70
WWL 2019	43	67
WWL 2018	-	-

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 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

It is risky for Christians with a background in traditional African religions or Islam living with non-Christian family members to keep Christian literature in their house because of the fear of being discovered. Converts living with non-Christian family members face the risk of ostracization by family members and hence often hide their conversion. Parents of a female convert from Islam would not allow their daughter to marry a Christian and would try to prevent such a marriage. Parents and/or family are known to hinder the baptism of a family member.

In the allocation of land or decisions concerning business opportunities, Christians are not represented at local government levels where there are Muslim majorities. In many villages, Christian minorities are marginalized and put under pressure as a result of this. Public officials in some government agencies discriminate against Christians. At times, new churches have been denied registration arbitrarily by officials at the Ministry of Interior. In some towns and villages, Christians must pay large sums of money as a fee to get permits to hold events. The civil war that was fought in the last decade also had religious dimensions (Muslim northerners v. Christian southerners) even though many analysts and the international community decided not to characterize the conflict that way. Christians in the northern part of the country are seen as a threat in some areas and often face discrimination at work and elsewhere.

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 2022: Keys to understanding / Ivory Coast

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International country report	AI 2021	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/cote-divoire/	24 September 2021
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13287216	24 September 2021
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2020	BTI 2020	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/CIV	24 September 2021
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cote-divoire/	24 September 2021
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2020	EIU 2020	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf	24 September 2021
FFP's Fragile States Index 2021	FSI 2021	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	24 September 2021
Freedom House's 2021 Democracy index (Not included)	Freedom House/Democracy 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2021 Global Freedom index	Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021	https://freedomhouse.org/country/cote-divoire/freedom-world/2021	24 September 2021
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report (Not included)	Freedom House/Internet Freedom 2020	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Garda World country report	Garda World	https://www.garda.com/crisis24/country-reports/cote-divoire	24 September 2021
Human Rights Watch World country report	HRW 2021	https://www.hrw.org/africa/cote-divoire	27 September 2021
Internet World Stats 2021	IWS 2021	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ci	24 September 2021
RSF's 2021 World Press Freedom Index	World Press Freedom 2021	https://rsf.org/en/cote-divoire	24 September 2021
Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index	CPI 2020	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/civ	24 September 2021
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators	HDI 2020	http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CIV	24 September 2021
US State Department's 2020 International Religious Freedom country reports	IRFR 2020	https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cote-divoire/	24 September 2021
USCIRF 2021 country reports (Not included)	USCIRF 2021	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank country report	World Bank	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cotedivoire	24 September 2021

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 (BBC country profile), 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.

On 31 October 1960, Ivory Coast became an independent republic with a new Constitution. Felix Houphouët-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 Houphouët-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 “Ivorit  ” 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 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 3000 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 has considerable implications for Christians: 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 Bédi   competing for the presidential post on 31 October 2020. According to BBC News reporting on 3 November 2020, [Ouattara 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 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 12 October 2020).

According to Freedom House/Global Freedom 2021:

- The country is rated as “partly free”.
- Despite certain 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 Govern-

ance (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".

According to Reporters without Borders (World Press Freedom 2021):

- "Police attacks on journalists, especially during demonstrations, have continued and testified to the need for more awareness training about journalists' rights. A new media law that says no grounds are admissible for detaining journalists should put a stop to the provisional detention of journalists, which is still common, with eight journalists being taken into provisional custody in 2017. Other provisions of the new media law are less progressive: insulting the president is a crime and journalists can be sued for defamation for reporting verified facts if they involve a person's privacy. Two journalists with an opposition media outlet were heavily fined in March 2020 over an allegedly defamatory article about high-level corruption. The speed with which the case was heard a few months before the presidential election and the disproportionate nature of the fines served as a reminder that press freedom in Ivory Coast depends closely on the political context. The promised opening-up of the broadcast media has yet to take place and, despite the president's undertakings, no significant progress has been seen in the investigation into the disappearance of Guy-André Kieffer, a journalist with French and Canadian dual nationality, in Abidjan 15 years ago."

According to Human Rights Watch ([World Report 2020](#)):

- "Even though the constitution clearly provides freedom of assembly and expression; the government continued to limit these rights, prohibiting opposition rallies and detaining opposition politicians and civil society activists who organized antigovernmental demonstrations. Despite the risks and new law introduced in June 2019, notable protests and demonstrations took place during 2019, with police using force to respond. For example: In October 2019, police fired on protesters demonstrating against the arrest and conviction of PDCI vice president Mangoua in the city of Bouaké killing 1 person and injuring several others."

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 politi-

cal 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 Ouattara 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 Ouattara. 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).

Religious landscape

Ivory Coast : Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	9,177,000	34.2
Muslim	11,714,000	43.7
Hindu	1,800	0.0
Buddhist	12,500	0.0
Ethno-religionist	5,787,000	21.6
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	34,600	0.1
Atheist	2,200	0.0
Agnostic	91,900	0.3
Other (includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian).	6,400	0.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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 \(2021\)](#):

- **Economic growth:** Growth was reduced to 1.8% from 7.3% in 2019, due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy. Real GDP is projected to grow by 5.7% in 2021, building on the recovery of late 2020 which was reflected in some high frequency monthly indicators picking up again.
- **Inflation:** "Inflation increased moderately to 1.2% in 2020 from 0.8 percent in 2019, mainly due to higher food costs but still well below the WAEMU regional target of 3 percent, reflecting lower energy prices and moderate food inflation."
- **Imports/Exports:** The country's reserves reached an estimated 5.5 months of imports in 2020, while the volatility in global demand and commodity prices led to lower exports. However, the external current account deficit is expected to narrow gradually, reaching 2.7% of GDP by 2023 as exports recover and grow faster than imports, strengthening the country's trade balance.
- **Poverty:** "The national poverty rate rose during the pandemic and is estimated to have peaked at 41.5% during 2020 up from 24.4% in 2019, corresponding to nearly 425,000 additional poor."
- **Impact of COVID-19:** "The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the economy in 2020 through disruptions to services, trade, lower external demand and reduced foreign financing flows, reducing real growth to 1.8%. Fiscal and external balances deteriorated, debt pressures increased, and poverty rose. The fiscal deficit widened to 5.9% of GDP in 2020 and debt rose to 45.8% of GDP (from 41.2 in 2019), driven by the government's COVID-19 emergency response package. Tax revenues narrowed, reflecting the toll on economic activity and the fiscal cost of crisis measures. To support COVID-19 related extra spending, the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) announced monetary and macro-prudential measures since March 2020, including a policy rate cut and extended refinancing operations of the 3-month COVID-19 bonds to support governments and businesses. However, downside risks to the economic outlook predominate, including a second wave of the pandemic, a decline in agricultural commodity prices, a sluggish global recovery and security vulnerabilities."

According to Heritage Foundation's [2021 Index of Economic Freedom](#):

- Ivory Coast scored 61.7 points, ranking 91st in the world. The country is ranked 7th among 47 Sub-Saharan countries.

Social and cultural landscape

According to UN Human Development Indicators (HDI 2020) and the CIA Factbook:

- **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 labour 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

Technological landscape

According to the Internet World Stats (IWS 2021):

- **Internet usage:** 45.3% of the population – survey date: June 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 22.9% penetration rate – survey date: June 2021

According to World Bank (country profile):

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 145.3 per hundred people

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)".

- The "COVID-19 outbreak is negatively impacting telecommunications production and supply chains globally; consumer spending on telecom devices and services has also slowed due to the pandemic's effect on economies worldwide; overall progress towards improvements in all facets of the telecom industry - mobile, fixed-line, broadband, submarine cable and satellite - has moderated".

Security situation

Ever since Islamic militants killed 18 people in March 2016 in an attack at the beach resort of Grand Bassam, there is 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 and the history of conflict between the north and the south, Christians will be highly affected by any deterioration of security in the country.

The October 2020 election led to the death of [dozens](#) (DW, 1 November 2020). As the election brought back the memory of the previous post-election violence, many analysts in the region see the security situation in the country as being very unstable.

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."

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) Post-election violence has become a recurring issue

The Ivorian people elected President Alassane Ouattara for a second term in October 2015. The election was deemed free and fair by the African Union (AU) and Freedom House. This indicated that the country had shifted away from the violence that followed in the wake of the elections in 2000 and 2010. However, it is important to note that many in the western and southern regions believe that transferring Laurent Gbagbo to the International Criminal Court was simply

a political vendetta (see next point below). Others also believe that the current administration is not doing enough to rectify many of the issues that undermined peace and development in the past. The pardoning of 800 prisoners in August 2018 is definitely a step in the right direction, but the 2020 election brought that old memory back into the political discourse. Violence ensued and dozens were killed. Former President Gbagbo was not allowed to run for the presidency. Opposition leader [Affi was arrested](#) following the election but was released after just under two months (Reuters, 30 December 2020). This trend will likely continue until trust building programs and negotiation in good faith take place in the country.

2) The main political coalition is breaking down because of personal conflicts and clashing interests

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.

3) Violent Islamic groups look set to try destabilizing 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.

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: World Report 2020 - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cote-divoire>

- 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-idUSKBN1KR290>
- 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>
- Economic landscape: Macro Poverty Outlook (2021) - <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/720441492455091991/mpo-ssa.pdf>
- Economic landscape: 2021 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/cotedivoire>
- Security situation: dozens - <https://www.dw.com/en/ivory-coast-election-violence-leaves-a-dozen-dead/a-55465966>
- Security situation: FDD's Long War Journal - <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/06/analysis-ivory-coast-witnesses-surge-in-jihadist-activity.php>
- Trends analysis: Affi was arrested - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ivorycoast-politics/ivory-coast-opposition-leader-affi-released-2-months-after-election-spat-arrest-idUSKBN294237>

WWL 2022: 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	24,200	0.3
Catholic	4,914,000	53.5
Protestant	3,217,000	35.1
Independent	1,291,000	14.1
Unaffiliated	276,000	3.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-545,000	-5.9
Total	9,177,200	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		

Evangelical movement	2,307,000	25.1
Renewalist movement	2,625,000	28.6

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2021)

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.

WWL 2022: Persecution Dynamics / Ivory Coast

Reporting period

1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Position on the World Watch List

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73
WWL 2020	42	70
WWL 2019	43	67
WWL 2018	-	-

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2018-2022 reporting periods

In WWL 2022, Ivory Coast scored 42 points, as in the two previous WWL reporting periods. Although there was a drop in the number of violent incidents, pressure increased in the *Church sphere sphere of life*. The highest scoring *spheres of life* for pressure remained the *Private* and *Family spheres*, reflecting the pressure exerted on converts. In general, 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. 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.

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	Very 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 parts 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	WEAK
Government officials	Medium							Medium	
Ethnic group leaders				Medium					
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. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". 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):** 21.6% of the country's population are adherents of African traditional religions (according to WCD 2021 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.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

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

Christian communities and how they are affected

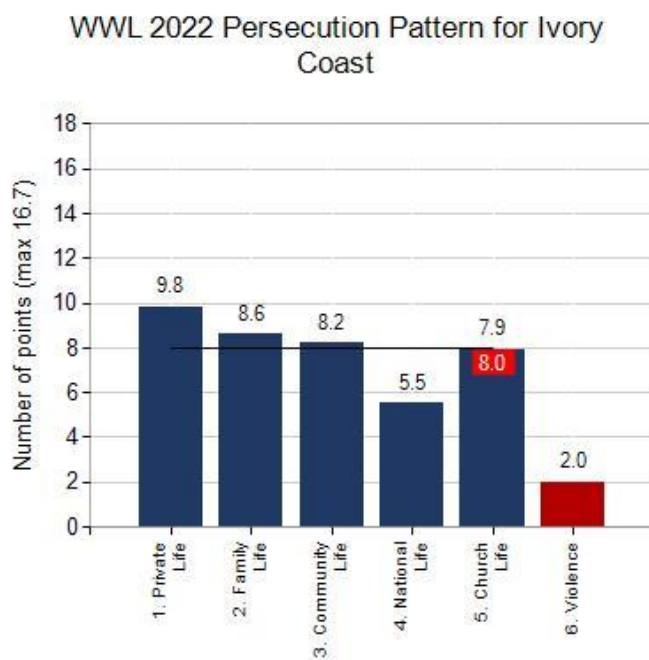
Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in Ivory Coast are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in WWL analysis and scoring.

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 more 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.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2022 Persecution pattern for Ivory Coast shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Ivory Coast is 8.0 points, an increase from 7.7 points in WWL 2021.
- The *Private sphere* score is the highest (9.8 points), followed by the *Family and Community life* scores. This reflects the pressure exerted on converts trying to force them to live according to family and community values and beliefs.
- The score for violence is 2.2 points, over one point down from WWL 2021 when it scored 3.3 points. 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 2022 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 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.00 points)

In an ATR setting, indigenous religious beliefs are upheld in some communities and adherents will often oppose Christian doctrine in certain communities. Conversion to Christianity is considered a curse and great shame by Animist or Muslim parents.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.00 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 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (2.75 points)

Converts living with non-Christian family members face the risk of ostracization by family members. 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.). (2.50 points)

The situation in the country has to be seen from two different dynamics. In the south, the problem 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 also put themselves in danger if they talk about their journey to faith on community networks.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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. (3.00 points)

There are many ways that Christians can be put under pressure to recant their faith or to stop leading their life in a Christian way. 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.

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. (2.75 points)

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, Animist or Muslim parents will remarry their daughter to another man. In Islamic families, a new Muslim girl may be given as a spouse for the son. Children of a Christian partner are usually taken to live with relatives far away.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (2.50 points)

This should 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. For Christians, if there are no alternatives they have to not only attend but practice what those schools practice.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.50 points)

In some schools, Christian pupils/students are discriminated against because of their different 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. They are targeted in an attempt to get their parents to stop holding church services, preaching and organizing church events.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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)

Generally, the business sector is dominated by the Muslim population. As a result of the election of Quattara as president, Muslims are systematically given preferential treatment. It is becoming more difficult for Christians to access loans and other such services. Many Muslims also moved

to the south to dominate the business sector there.

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.). (2.50 points)

Ivory Coast came out of a civil war that had a religious component - south (Christian) vs. north (Muslim). This has left deep animosity and in the northern part of the country there is serious monitoring by local groups.

Block 3.7: Christians have been pressured by their community to renounce their faith. (2.50 points)

In WWL 2022 and before, 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.

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

In the WWL 2022 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.

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.

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

Although this does not officially take place, in practice some Christians are barred from public office or denied promotion 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 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (2.25 points)

The government is mainly Muslim, including the head of state. There is this perception that the ruling party is Muslim and 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 as a threat to the administration of the incumbent president. Thus, they put excessive pressure on the church. In some circumstances the ruling party accuses Christians of supporting former President Gbagbo.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (2.00 points)

All 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 anti-government stance whenever church leaders have raised the issue of government abuses and called for justice and equality.

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)

There is a long procedure to be followed in the registration of churches. 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)

Generally, 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.

There are some zealous Muslims engaging in Islamic propaganda who monitor some churches in their neighborhoods. Some young Muslims or Animists disrupt Christian activities when instructed to do so by their religious leaders.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.00 points)

In areas where Muslims are dominant (particularly in the north), it is difficult to integrate new Muslim or Animist converts into the existing churches, as they are met with hostile resistance from family, community and religious leaders of their former faith. This is why church leaders often keep new converts away from public view and hide them in safer places.

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

In some towns and villages, Christians must pay high fees to be allowed to organize outside activities. Also, there are times when Animist or Muslim leaders will seek to prevent outside church activities from being carried out. As radical Islamic ideology is expanding in the region, it has become increasingly unsafe 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.*

5. The symbol "x" in the table: *This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.*

Ivory Coast : Violence Block question	WWL 2022	WWL 2021
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	1	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?	0	1
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	2
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	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?	10 *	2
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	4	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	2
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	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	10 *	10
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	0	0

5 Year trends

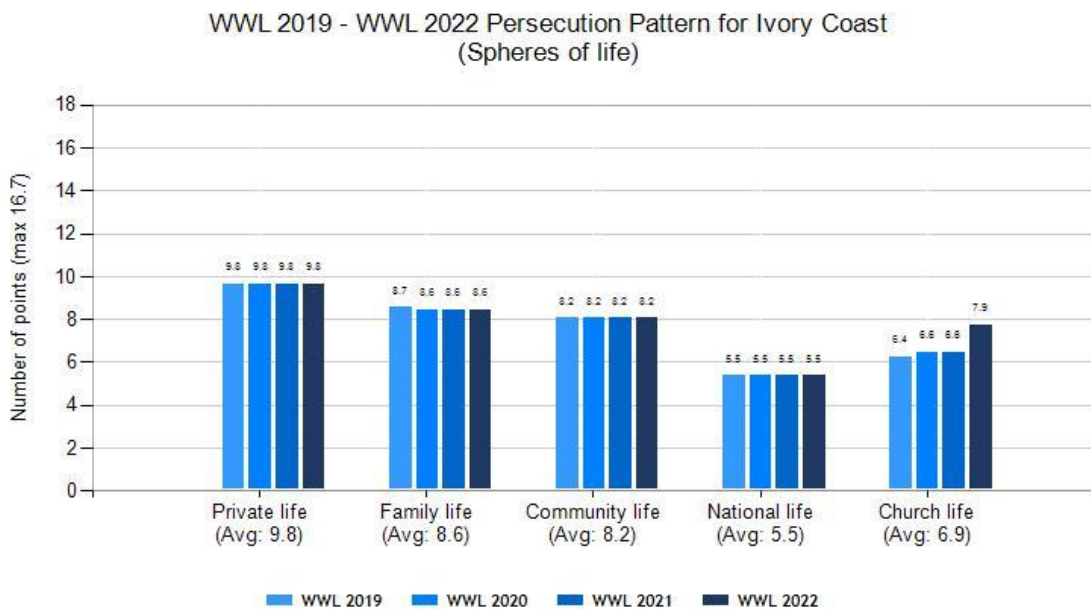
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

The table below shows that the average pressure on Christians for the past four years has been stable within the range 7.7 - 8.0 points.

Ivory Coast : WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2022	8.0
2021	7.7
2020	7.7
2019	7.7
2018	0.0

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

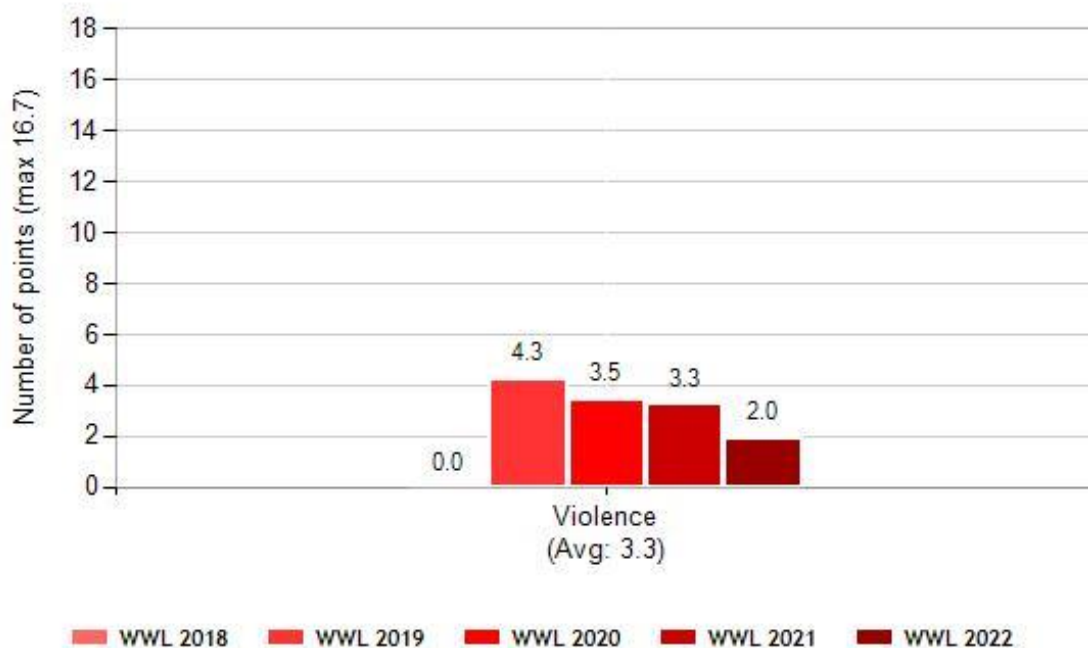


The chart above shows that the average pressure is highest in the *Private life* (9.8 points on average), followed by the level of pressure in the *Family* (8.6 points on average) and *Community spheres* (8.2 points on average) - an indication that converts are the category of Christians facing the brunt of pressure. Pressure has been stable in all *spheres of life* except in *Church life* which saw a major rise in WWL 2022.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

As can be seen in the chart below, violence against Christians in Ivory Coast has been high/fairly high, but the trend is decreasing. All forms and levels of violence have serious ramifications for the victims, from personal trauma to economic or financial challenges.

WWL 2018 - WWL 2022 Persecution Pattern for Ivory Coast (Violence)



Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	-
Political and Legal	Denied custody of children; Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Targeted Seduction; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code
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 July 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 practiced, refuse to be members 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. 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 (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. 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	Discrimination/harassment via education; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	-
Security	Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

As is often the case in the region of West Africa, male Christians can be particularly subjected to hostility stemming from secret societies (such as the Poro), especially if they live in communities where these societies are active and men are forced to become members. If they refuse, they will be excluded from male-related activities and isolated.

Converts from Muslim and Animist backgrounds face 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, such economic pressure harms their wider families and dependents.

In rare instances, converts may be killed for their faith. In the WWL 2021 reporting period, a young man was killed by his brother, who sprayed him with gasoline and set alight to him in his sleep.

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.

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.

Dictatorial paranoia

In the past eight 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.

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&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>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on World Watch Research's Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) and on the World Watch Monitor website:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Ivory Coast>
- <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/Ivory Coast>