

World
Watch
Research

Togo: Full Country Dossier

March 2024



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Contents

Introduction	3
World Watch List 2024.....	3
Copyright note.....	4
Sources and definitions.....	4
WWL 2024 Situation in brief / Togo.....	5
Brief country details	5
Map of country.....	5
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	6
Brief description of the persecution situation	6
Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period	6
Specific examples of positive developments	7
WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Togo	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	13
WWL 2024: Church information / Togo	14
Christian origins.....	14
Church spectrum today.....	14
Areas where Christians face most difficulties	15
Christian communities and how they are affected	15
WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Togo.....	15
Reporting period	15
Position on the World Watch List	15
Persecution engines	16
Drivers of persecution.....	17
The Persecution pattern.....	19

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life.....	19
Violence.....	23
5 Year trends	25
Gender-specific religious persecution / Female	26
Gender-specific religious persecution / Male	28
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	28
Future outlook.....	29
External Links - Persecution Dynamics.....	29
Further useful reports.....	30

Introduction

World Watch List 2024

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

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

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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 2024 reporting period was 1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/> and on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom): <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>.

WWL 2024 Situation in brief / Togo

Brief country details

Togo: Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
8,887,000	4,267,000	48.0

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

Map of country



Togo: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	52	68
WWL 2023	49	70
WWL 2022	44	71
WWL 2021	43	71
WWL 2020	41	73

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Togo: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family
Clan oppression	Ethnic group leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Organized corruption and crime	Organized crime cartels or networks

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

Brief description of the persecution situation

In Togo, Christians face a multifaceted landscape of challenges that undermine their religious freedom. Government officials often use their power to create difficulties for Christians, particularly in obtaining land or permits for building churches. Additionally, Christians are subjected to *Clan oppression* rooted in traditional African belief systems like Voodoo, especially in certain regions where young male Christians are forced to participate in ceremonies that contradict their faith. The situation is even more perilous near the Burkina Faso border, where jihadist incursions have heightened fear and encouraged local Muslim youth to radicalize, making it particularly challenging for Evangelicals to evangelize among Muslims, and posing severe risks to those who convert from Islam. Compounding these issues, *Organized corruption and crime*, including networks that have penetrated government structures, pose significant threats to Christians who denounce these illicit activities, further eroding the rule of law and jeopardizing Christian rights in the country.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Christians in Togo are pressured to conform to community-specific dress codes, especially in areas influenced by traditional or Islamic beliefs.
- Converts to Christianity from a Voodoo background are compelled to participate in Voodoo ceremonies, a practice that contradicts their religious values.

- Converts also risk being expelled from their homes, leading to social isolation and further hardships.
- Five Christians were killed by violent Islamic militants.
- Five churches were attacked.

Specific examples of positive developments

In a situation where persecution exists, it is always positive to see members of different religious groups respecting and attending each other's ceremonies.

WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Togo

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/23 Togo report	AI Togo 2022	https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/togo/report-togo/	15 September 2023
BBC News Togo profile - updated 28 April 2023	BBC Togo profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14106781	15 September 2023
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022 Togo report	BTI Togo Report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/TGO	15 September 2023
Crisis24 Togo report (Garda World)	Crisis24 Togo report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/togo	15 September 2023
Economist Intelligence Unit 2023 Togo summary	EIU 2023 Togo	https://country.eiu.com/togo	15 September 2023
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 Togo	FSI 2023 Togo	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	15 September 2023
Freedom House's 2023 Democracy index – covering 29 countries (Togo not included)	Democracy Index 2023	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – Togo	Global Freedom Index 2023 Togo	https://freedomhouse.org/country/togo/freedom-world/2023	15 September 2023
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries (Togo not included)	Freedom on the Net 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – Togo	GIWPS 2021 Togo	https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/togo/	15 September 2023
Girls Not Brides Togo report	Girls Not Brides Togo	https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/togo/	15 September 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 (country chapter -Togo not included)	HRW 2023 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023	
Internet World Stats 2023 Togo	IWS 2023 Togo	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.html#tgo	15 September 2023
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – Togo	World Press Freedom 2023 Togo	https://rsf.org/en/togo	15 September 2023
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2022	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/tgo	24 February 2023
UNDP Human Development Report Togo - data updates as of 8 September 2022	UNDP HDR Togo	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#countries/TGO	15 September 2023
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Togo	IRFR 2022 Togo	https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/togo/	15 September 2023
USCIRF 2023 country reports – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL (Togo not included)	USCIRF 2023	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Togo - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Togo	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2fec5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-tgo.pdf	15 September 2023
World Bank Togo data – 2021	World Bank Togo data	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=TGO	15 September 2023
World Bank Togo overview – updated 31 March 2023	World Bank Togo overview	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/togo/overview	15 September 2023
World Factbook Togo - updated 12 September 2023	World Factbook Togo	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/togo/	15 September 2023

Recent history

In 1885 Togo became a German colony. Germans lost Togoland to British and French forces in 1914. In 1922, the western part of the country was officially administered by Britain and the eastern part by France.

The country gained its independence from France in 1960 with Sylvanus Olympio becoming its first President. His rule was short-lived, however, as he was assassinated in a military coup led by Sergeant Étienne Eyadéma Gnassingbé in 1963. After a brief transitional period, Eyadéma himself took power in 1967 and held it for 38 years, making him Africa's longest-serving leader at the time of his death. During his rule, Togo became a one-party state under the Rally of the Togolese People.

The 1990s saw a wave of democratic reforms and protests in the country amidst international pressure. Togo transitioned to a multi-party system, but Eyadéma managed to keep power through elections widely criticized for being flawed. After Eyadéma's sudden death in 2005, his son Faure Gnassingbé was hastily installed as president, an act that triggered international condemnation and internal unrest.

Faure Gnassingbé has been in power since 2005, winning re-election multiple times despite controversies and allegations of electoral fraud. In 2017 and 2018, the country experienced large-scale protests that demanded his resignation and the restoration of the 1992 Constitution, though these were largely ignored by the government. In the most recent elections in 2020, Faure was again re-elected, extending his family's rule over Togo for over five decades. He announced in November 2023 that the government plans to hold [legislative and regional elections](#) no later than the end of the first quarter of 2024 (Africa News, 28 November 2023).

Current security concerns in Togo include rising threats from Islamic militants at its northern border near Burkina Faso and ongoing internal issues related to traditional Voodoo practices and government oppression.

Political and legal landscape

Togo's political landscape revolves around the founders of the country. Two men, Gnassingbe Eyadema and his son Faure have dominated Togolese politics for most of Togo's existence as an independent state. Gnassingbe Eyadema became the President of Togo through a coup in 1963 and remained at the helm till he died in 2005. After seizing power, he turned Togo into a one-party state and continued without even a pretense of democracy until 1992. In 1991, he was forced to reintroduce multi-party elections, bowing to the prevailing international and regional trend of democratization. However, the democratic transition in Togo has proved to be very shallow and Gnassingbe Eyadema stayed in power by manipulating elections and severely restricting civil and political rights.

When Eyadema died after ruling Togo for almost four decades, his son Faure became president with the army's backing, in violation of the constitutional rules concerning succession to the presidency. Although Faure briefly stepped down from the presidency to placate the ire of the international community about his unconstitutional assumption of power, he was returned to the presidency in short order by holding presidential elections almost three years ahead of schedule. Faure has relaxed the iron grip of his father to some extent, but Togo still remains an autocracy. Thanks to constitutional amendments passed during his father's rule, Faure ran and won his third election in 2015. President Faure tried to soften the autocratic image of the system by forming a national unity government in 2010. However, the repressive and autocratic nature of the regime has continued, backed by the army which is dominated by Gnassingbe's Kabyé ethnic group.

Starting in August 2017, thousands of people took to the streets [demanding](#) that the president step aside in the biggest challenge to his family's power since the death of his father in 2005 (Al-Jazeera, 9 September 2017). Parliamentary elections on 20 December 2018 were [boycotted](#) by 14 opposition parties (The Economist, 5 January 2019). In February 2020, incumbent President Gnassingbe was declared victor in the country's presidential elections. The opposition candidate

(Kodjo) and supporters claimed the election was rigged and a planned [protest march](#) was suppressed by security forces, with Kodjo and retired Archbishop Fanoko Kpodzro placed under house arrest (Crux, 4 March 2020).

Under the country's current law, Gnassingbe could remain in office until 2030. The Constitution of the country is not being respected as pointed out in Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2023 Togo report (A2): "The constitution calls for a bicameral legislature, but the Senate has never been established. Members of the current 91-seat National Assembly, which exercises all legislative powers, were elected for five-year terms through proportional representation in multimember districts."

For many years, there were no local elections. These were held in June 2019 (for the first time in 32 years), and the ruling Union pour la République (UNIR) won the majority of seats, securing 878 of the 1,490 seats. The Alliance Nationale pour le Changement won the second-highest number of seats (132), followed by the opposition coalition C14 (131 seats).

As reported by the Global Freedom Index 2023 report, the political landscape in Togo is deeply entrenched in a history of autocracy, characterized by the Gnassingbé family's rule since a 1963 coup. Despite multi-party elections being a feature since 1992, the ruling party has continually manipulated the system through means like gerrymandering and a biased security apparatus, mostly favoring their ethnic group. The opposition's calls for reform are regularly met with repression, and although there are constitutional protections for press freedom and civil liberties, they are inconsistently upheld with numerous instances of surveillance, arrests, and violence against dissenters.

The National Assembly passed a bill in 2022 for subnational elections, but legal milestones like these are marred by frequent infringements on freedom of assembly and arbitrary regulations on NGOs. Academic freedom is similarly stifled, and the judiciary, though formally independent, is compromised by executive influence and corruption. Elections for the president and National Assembly are fraught with irregularities, lack of independent oversight, and voter suppression. Existing anti-corruption and transparency laws are not effectively implemented. These systemic flaws are exacerbated by an increasing threat of violent Islamic militancy, particularly near the Burkina Faso border. Overall, the prospects for meaningful political change in the scheduled 2024 elections remain limited, as the political and electoral systems favor the ruling party.

Religious landscape

Togo: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	4,267,000	48.0
Muslim	1,655,000	18.6
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethno-religionist	2,898,000	32.6
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	42,400	0.5
Atheist	2,000	0.0
Agnostic	18,500	0.2
Other	3,900	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

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

Togo is one of the few African countries where traditional religious groups are still dominant in most parts of the country. However, the number of ethno-religionists has greatly decreased in the last years and many people combine traditional rites and customs with Christianity or Islam.

Christians live mainly in the south, while Muslims are predominately in the central and northern regions.

The law does not officially recognize any specific religions, but in practice the government recognizes Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam with their religious holidays observed as national holidays and with religious leaders of these groups invited to government events. The law requires all other religious groups, including indigenous groups, to register as religious associations. Official recognition as a religious association provides these groups with the same rights as those afforded to the three religions recognized by the government, including import duty exemptions for humanitarian and development projects. Registration is not obligatory, but unregistered groups do not receive import duty exemptions or additional government benefits such as government-provided teachers for private schools.

Economic landscape

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

- **Economic growth:** Real GDP growth in Togo is estimated to have slowed to 4.9% in 2022, down from 5.3% in 2021. This slowdown is largely attributed to disruptions associated with the war in Ukraine, which led to weakened export revenues and an increased cost of living domestically. These negative impacts were only partially offset by higher public spending. Heightened regional insecurity could trigger higher security spending and increase fragility in the north.
- **Inflation:** A sharp uptick in food and energy prices propelled headline inflation to reach a 20-year high of 7.5% in 2022. Despite the ongoing economic recovery, the Ukraine conflict could further increase food/fertilizer and energy prices and is a threat to poverty reduction and could lead to increased social tensions.
- **Poverty:** The extreme poverty rate in Togo, defined as the percentage of the population living below the new international poverty line of US\$2.15 per capita per day (2017 PPP), is estimated to have increased to 30.6% in 2022, up from 29.6% in 2021. This rise is largely attributed to a sharp increase in consumer price inflation and slowing agricultural production. The situation is particularly dire in the Savanes region, Togo's poorest area, which has seen a rise in terrorist attacks since 2021 as Islamic militant groups in the Sahel expand southward. The lack of economic opportunities for youth and poor exacerbate the issue. According to a household survey realized by the National Statistics Office, over 30% of Togolese households were unable to access main staple foods when needed, with poor and rural households disproportionately affected (40% of the poor and 43% of rural households).
- **Economic and social outlook 2023-2025:** Economic growth in Togo is expected to stabilize at 4.9% in 2023 before experiencing a moderate increase to 5.3% in 2024 and 5.5% in 2025. This growth is anticipated to be driven by a resurgence in external demand as well as a moderation in domestic inflation. However, the country's growth trajectory could be constrained by fiscal consolidation measures and tighter financing conditions, which are expected to keep a lid on the overall economic recovery. Extreme poverty, which remains a pressing issue, is projected to decline slightly. The rate is expected to go from 30.7% in 2023 to 30.1% in 2024, and then further down to 29.5% in 2025. While these figures suggest a downward trend, the pace of poverty reduction is likely to be modest. Notably, rural areas are set to experience a more significant decrease in poverty levels, largely due to an optimistic outlook for the agricultural sector. In contrast, urban areas will likely see a more moderate reduction in poverty, reflecting steady but less dynamic growth in the services sector.

Various factors could potentially destabilize Togo's economic and social prospects. These include the possibility of weaker-than-expected global demand, growing insecurity in the northern regions, and disruptions in agricultural production due to climate shocks.

In a situation with high inflation and a growing economic divide, Christians, particularly as minorities in the northern parts of the country and Voodoo-dominant areas, face amplified economic challenges. They are often excluded from key economic activities, a situation exacer-

bated by tougher economic conditions. This exclusion intensifies with worsening inflation and increased wealth disparity, disproportionately impacting Christians in these regions.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the World Factbook Togo and UNDP HDR Togo:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Adja-Ewe/Mina 42.4%, Kabye/Tem 25.9%, Para-Gourma/Akan 17.1%, Akposso/Akebu 4.1%, Ana-lfe 3.2%, other Togolese 1.7%, foreigners 5.2%, no response 4% (2013-14 est.)
- **Main languages:** French (official language of commerce), Dagomba, Ewe, Kabye, Mina
- **Urban population:** 43.4% of the total population (2021)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 3.6% annual rate of change (2020-2025 est.)
- **Population growth rate:** 2.51% (2021 est.)
- **Median age:** 20 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 12.7 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (ages 15 and older):** 63.7%
- **Employment to population ratio (ages 15 and older):** 76.0%
- **Unemployment, total:** 2.0% of labor force
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 3.5%
- **Human Development Index (HDI) score and rank:** Togo is ranked 167th with a score of 0.515 points
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 61.0 years
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.822
- **Gender inequality index (GII):** 0.573

Technological landscape

Different sources provide variations in the figures presented.

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2023 Togo):

- **Internet usage:** 11.8% of the population – survey date: December 2021
- **Facebook usage:** 11.5% penetration rate – survey date: January 2022

According to [Data Reportal, Digital 2024 Togo](#) (23 February 2024):

- **Internet usage:** 37.6% Internet penetration - survey date: January 2024
- **Social media usage:** 10% of the total population - survey date: January 2024
- **Cellular mobile connections:** 75.5% of the total population.

Further details concerning access, censorship, digital economy and governance are available at [USAID Information and Communications Technology - Togo](#) (accessed 2 April 2024).

Security situation

The complex economic, social and political landscape in Togo is further compounded by an increasingly volatile security situation, particularly in the northern regions adjacent to Burkina Faso. Recognizing the severity of the threat, the government has enacted stringent travel restrictions to the Savanes region. Non-Togolese citizens are required to secure written authorization from the Ministry of Defense before venturing into the area.

In August 2023, the [US State Department Advisory](#) warning (dated 31 July 2023) underlined that violent Islamic militants have intensified their operations not just within Togo's northern border region but also in the adjoining territories of Burkina Faso and Benin.

Trends analysis

1) Political stability at risk: The resurgence of coups in the region

President Faure Gnassingbé's tenure since 2005, succeeding his father who ruled from 1967, increasingly resembles a family dynasty rather than a democratic government. While there have been attempts at economic reforms, political change has largely stagnated. The opposition faces significant struggles, often undermined by allegations of election fraud and stifled by a political environment that lacks openness. Although there were glimpses of hope for political reform, efforts have failed to gain momentum, leaving the long-standing governance issues unaddressed. Adding to the precarious nature of Togo's stability is the rising trend of coups d'état in West Africa in 2022 and 2023 which challenges the status quo and signals an uncertain future for countries with fragile political systems like Togo's.

2) Extremist groups have intensified operations

- **Border security and the Burkina Faso challenge:** The border Togo shares with Burkina Faso has become increasingly insecure due to the presence of violent Islamic groups in Burkina Faso. This vulnerability places Togo's population at heightened risk, especially the Christian community in the north. In response, Togolese troops have significantly increased their presence along the border, and Burkina Faso has officially allowed Togolese forces to enter its territory for counter-terrorism operations.
- **Rising jihadist activity within Togo:** A more alarming trend developed over 2022 and 2023, with jihadist groups penetrating Togo's northern regions. These attacks are an indication of the evolving extremist threat, prompting the Togolese government to enact restrictive measures to contain the situation.

Both political stability and radical Islamic activities present significant challenges to Togo. With coups on the rise in the surrounding region and extremist groups intensifying their operations both at the border and within the country, Togo faces a critical juncture in its path towards a stable future.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: legislative and regional elections - <https://www.africanews.com/2023/11/28/togo-sets-stage-for-elections-in-2024-amidst-opposition-challenges/>

- Political and legal landscape: demanding - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/urges-togo-respond-protesters-expectations-170909053453123.html?xif=>
- Political and legal landscape: boycotted - <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/01/05/togos-president-suffers-an-electoral-setback>
- Political and legal landscape: protest march - <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2020/03/togos-president-re-elected-according-to-official-final-results/>
- Technological landscape: Data Reportal, Digital 2024 Togo - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-togo>
- Technological landscape: USAID Information and Communications Technology - Togo - <https://idea.usaid.gov/cd/togo/information-and-communications-technology-ict>
- Security situation: US State Department Advisory - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/togo-travel-advisory.html>

WWL 2024: Church information / Togo

Christian origins

The Portuguese were present in the coastal area of Togo from the 16th century onwards, but there was no real attempt at introducing Christianity until German mission work began around 1847. In 1871, the Roman Catholic Church established its first mission station in the country. In 1886, the Society of African Missions was established. From 1884/5 until 1918, German Catholic priests were particularly active. Following the defeat of Germany in the First World War, the German presence was expelled. Churches from the USA first entered the country with the arrival of the Assemblies of God in 1937.

Church spectrum today

Togo: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	2,427,000	56.9
Protestant	1,166,000	27.3
Independent	284,000	6.7
Unaffiliated	460,000	10.8
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-70,200	-1.6
Total	4,266,800	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	629,000	14.7
Renewalist movement	1,050,000	24.6

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

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent 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.

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest church denomination. Protestant groups include Methodists, Lutherans, Assemblies of God and Seventh-day Adventist. In terms of geography, Christians are mainly to be found in the southern part of the country, while Muslims dominate the central and the northern parts of the country.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The northern part of the country and areas where Voodoo is very prominent are the main hotspots.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: The many foreign Christians in the country are not isolated and can worship side by side with other Christian communities. They are therefore not scored as a separate category in WWL analysis.

Historical Christian communities: The dominant historical Christian groups (such as the Roman Catholic churches) do not face any major problems compared to other Christian groups in the country.

Converts to Christianity: These are converts from Islam or traditional African religions (ATR). Converts from Islam face the most severe persecution in Togo and are forced to practice their Christian faith in secret.

Non-traditional Christian communities: The Christians in this category - who often belong to Pentecostal groups - tend to be active in outreach and evangelism and often face more difficulties than Christians belonging to the historical churches.

WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Togo

Reporting period

01 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Position on the World Watch List

Togo: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	52	68
WWL 2023	49	70
WWL 2022	44	71
WWL 2021	43	71
WWL 2020	41	73

The WWL 2024 score increased by 3 points, rising from 49 points in WWL 2023 to 52 in WWL 2024. This increase is primarily attributed to a significant rise in the violence score, which jumped from 5.4 to 8.9 points. The escalation of challenges faced by Christians in the country is largely due to the growing visibility of *Islamic oppression* and *Clan oppression*, which resulted in a high score in violence. Pressure is often intense in the context of converts from Islam and non-traditional church groups who evangelize among Muslims. Both have been facing increased hostility. A concerning development is the potential targeting of Togo for jihadist expansion, both ideologically and operationally. The country also grapples with *Organized corruption and crime* within both the state structure and society, with the long-ruling Eyadema family being accused of involvement in various illegal activities.

Persecution engines

Togo: 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	Medium

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)

Islamic oppression is particularly pervasive in the northern regions of Togo where the Muslim population is dominant. The climate of religious discrimination has intensified, affecting Christians in various aspects of their daily life. Converts from Islam are particularly affected and often resort to practicing their faith in secrecy, fearing hostile reactions from their families and community members. The stakes are even higher when considering the influence of radical Islamic groups active in the broader West African region.

Clan oppression (Medium)

Voodoo and ancestral worship have deep roots in Togolese society, particularly in the eastern and southern regions. While the prominence of Voodoo has declined over time, a significant percentage of the population still practices it or incorporates its elements into their Christian or Islamic faith. Traditional ethnic leaders are overtly antagonistic towards conversions to Christianity, especially if the new Christians are not willing to integrate Voodoo practices into

their newfound faith. This animosity often manifests in social ostracization and sometimes even in acts of violence against Christian converts.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

Togo has a dark history of dictatorship, with President Gnassingbe Eyadema reported to have been responsible for the deaths of over 15,000 people. His son, Faure Gnassingbe, who took power in 2005, has continued this autocratic legacy. Despite widespread accusations of corruption and authoritarianism, including election rigging, the regime remains in place. In this oppressive political atmosphere, Christians find it exceedingly difficult to exercise their rights. The authoritarian government imposes restrictions that particularly impact churches and Christian communities, making it almost impossible for them to voice any form of dissent without fearing repercussions.

Organized corruption and crime (Medium)

Corruption is rife in Togo, as evidenced by its ranking of 126 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index with a score of 31/100. The Eyadema family, which has ruled for over five decades, has been implicated in numerous illegal activities that permeate all sectors of governance. This corruption has a direct impact on freedom of religion. Whether it is in the judicial system or in other areas related to religious freedom, Christians often find themselves disadvantaged. This institutional corruption has created a daunting environment for Christians, hindering them from practicing their faith freely and exposing them to various forms of exploitation and abuse.

Drivers of persecution

Togo: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	MEDIUM			MEDIUM	WEAK			MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Government officials								Medium	
Ethnic group leaders				Medium					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Medium								
Religious leaders of other churches					Weak				
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Medium			Medium					
One's own (extended) family	Medium								
Organized crime cartels or networks									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

- **Non-Christian religious leaders (Medium to High):** With the constant threat from violent Islamic militants at the northern border, the rhetoric of Islamic teachers has become more hostile towards Christians. Imams and sheiks are not only teaching anti-Christian sentiments but also tacitly or openly supporting extremist ideologies. The consequences extend from harassment and discrimination to potentially life-threatening situations for Christians.
- **Family (Medium):** The extended family continues to be a source of persecution for converts from Islam, especially in the northern and Muslim-dominated regions. The increasing influence of radical Islamic groups has caused the pressure on converts to renounce their new faith to intensify.
- **Ordinary citizens (Medium to High):** As the tension escalates, citizens in Muslim-dominated areas are becoming more active in targeting Christians. This is not just limited to social ostracization; there are instances of mobs targeting Christian communities and businesses.

Drivers of Clan oppression

- **Ethnic group leaders (Medium to High):** Animist and clan beliefs are becoming more organized and aggressive, targeting Christians who oppose traditional practices. Voodoo priests and other ethnic group leaders are especially critical of Evangelicals, condemning their efforts to spread Christianity as an assault on traditional beliefs.
- **Ordinary citizens (Medium to High):** Encouraged by their clan and Voodoo leaders, local youth are becoming more proactive in persecuting Christians. This includes acts of violence and intimidation, especially against those engaged in evangelism.

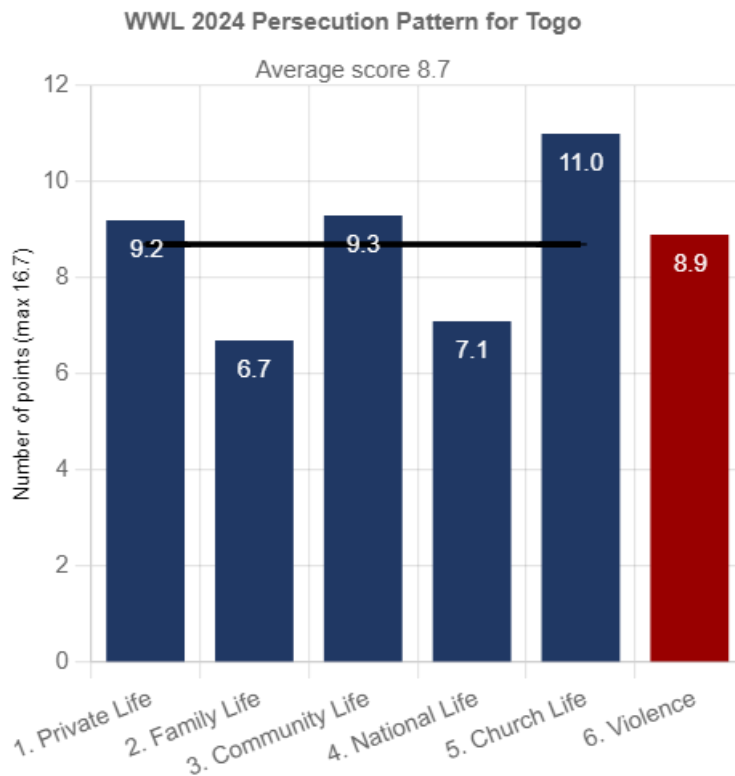
Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium to High):** The government is increasingly aiming to control all spheres of public life, including church activities. Christians who voice opposition to the government's policies face bureaucratic hurdles like the denial of land and building permits for churches. The authorities are using administrative obstacles as a form of soft persecution to keep the church under control.

Drivers of Organized corruption and crime

- **Criminal networks (Medium to High):** These networks are multifaceted, involving individuals in government who are facilitating corruption, as well as those in criminal enterprises like poaching. Christians who take a stand against these corrupt practices are targeted for reprisals, which can range from legal trouble to physical harm. Given the government's increasing control over various sectors, these criminal networks are becoming more emboldened.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution pattern for Togo shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a level of 8.7 points, similar to WWL 2023.
- Pressure is highest in the *Church sphere* (11.0 points), followed by the *Community* (9.3) and *Private spheres* (9.2).
- The score for violence is 8.9 points, an increase of 3.5 points compared to WWL 2023.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

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

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (2.75 points)

Christians, especially converts from Islam or traditional belief systems, face significant risks when expressing their faith online. Potential repercussions for revealing Christian beliefs on digital platforms include - for converts - exclusion from community or home.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.75 points)

Displaying Christian images or symbols in regions dominated by Islam or traditional belief systems poses a significant risk for Christians. This risk stems from intense monitoring by community leaders who often target Christian families and individuals who exhibit their faith openly.

Block 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (2.50 points)

Those known to have converted to Christianity can face significant opposition and restrictions in Togo. They not only encounter active resistance but also contend with formidable barriers in securing official permission for conducting evangelism and establishing places of worship.

Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (2.50 points)

Especially converts from Islam or traditional belief systems face significant risks if discovered conducting individual acts of worship; they risk, for instance, potential expulsion from their family homes.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

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

In Togo, when celebrating Christian weddings, particularly in areas dominated by Voodoo or in Muslim-majority regions, Christians often have to be cautious. This includes low-profile celebrations and not singing loudly which might otherwise provoke attacks on their homes or hostility from the community.

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.25 points)

Converts in Togo, particularly in Voodoo and Muslim-majority areas, often face intense pressure, including from their spouses, to end their marriages. This pressure can lead to divorce, community expulsion, and even threats of harm through Voodoo practices.

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (2.00 points)

In some areas of Togo, particularly where Islam is predominant, Christian parents are often compelled to send their children to Muslim schools. This situation can challenge their ability to raise their children according to Christian beliefs, as the children are exposed to and sometimes required to participate in religious practices and teachings that differ from their family's faith.

Block 2.9: Children of Christians have been harassed or discriminated against because of their parents' faith. (2.00 points)

Children of Christians, particularly those whose parents are church leaders, often face bullying and harassment because of their family's faith. This pressure is sometimes aimed at compelling their parents to reduce or stop their church activities. Such targeted discrimination against children reveals the deep-seated challenges Christian families face.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.00 points)

Christians face widespread harassment, often being bullied and marginalized within their communities, leading to a sense of unwelcome isolation. Christians, especially those who are vocal or hold leadership roles, are routinely overlooked for community engagement and participation in local activities.

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.). (2.75 points)

In areas of Togo where Voodoo practices and Muslim communities predominate, Christians are closely monitored by local community leaders, including Voodoo priests and youth groups. These community members often follow and bully Christians as a means of intimidation.

Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events. (2.75 points)

In Togo, it is a common occurrence for Christians, particularly the youth, to be compelled to participate in rituals that contradict their Christian faith, especially in areas with animist beliefs. If they refuse to partake in these non-Christian religious ceremonies, their families often face repercussions, such as exclusion from participating in community institutions and accessing communal resources.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (2.75 points)

In areas dominated by Voodoo and Islam, Christians particularly face significant challenges and are often asked to engage in practices that conflict with their Christian beliefs. If they choose not to participate in these activities, they risk being excluded from various aspects of community life.

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. (3.00 points)

Many Christians have encountered prejudice in their dealings with government officials.

Block 4.6: Christians have been barred from public office, or has promotion been hindered for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Christians in the country are not inherently barred from public office based on their faith, but challenges arise in cases of promotion. The promotion process is reportedly influenced by affiliations, particularly the acceptance of belonging to certain secret societies, raising concerns about transparency and fairness. This situation emphasizes the need for a merit-based promotion system, free from biases related to religious affiliations or adherence to specific beliefs.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.00 points)

Christians face significant obstacles in publicly expressing their faith-based views or opinions. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the government itself is repressive, with a poor record on freedom of expression.

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (2.75 points)

Perpetrators, including government officials and influential figures like Voodoo priests, who have caused harm to Christians in Togo often escape punishment. This lack of accountability is exacerbated by the fact that local authorities sometimes discourage complaints to preserve social cohesion. There are instances of negotiated settlements for thefts in churches and cases where law enforcement agencies fail to investigate or act against known perpetrators, reflecting a variability in the application of justice.

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. (4.00 points)

The process of obtaining registration or legal status for churches has proved challenging at various government levels due to the constant delays in the registration procedure.

Block 5.20: It has been risky for churches or Christian organizations to speak out against instigators of persecution. (3.50 points)

It is difficult for churches and Christian organizations to speak out against persecution, particularly when it involves powerful government officials, influential Voodoo priests, or local community leaders. The prevailing atmosphere in the country discourages open dissent against such high-profile figures, making complaints and opposition to persecution a sensitive and risky

endeavor. The fear of reprisals from these influential individuals significantly hampers the efforts of Christian entities to address issues related to persecution.

Block 5.3: Christian communities have been hindered in building or renovating church buildings or in claiming historical religious premises and places of worship which had been taken from them earlier. (3.25 points)

Christians in Togo face significant difficulties in acquiring land to build new churches. There have also been numerous instances where church properties have been attacked by mobs, making repairs challenging. The complex registration process for new churches often serves as a major hindrance, impeding both the establishment of new worship spaces and the renovation of existing ones. In areas with a predominant Muslim population or strong adherence to traditional beliefs, cultural and religious tensions further complicate efforts to construct or restore Christian sites.

Block 5.18: Churches have been hindered in establishing, managing, maintaining and conducting schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, social or cultural organizations, institutions and associations. (3.25 points)

Churches in Togo face significant challenges in operating institutions like schools, medical facilities and church-affiliated organizations, particularly due to government scrutiny aiming to control and infiltrate their activities. This control is more stringent when these institutions criticize government policies, leading to restrictions and even closer monitoring. In areas dominated by Voodoo and Islam, Christian organizations operate under heightened risk, as the influence of Muslim and Voodoo leaders imposes additional constraints.

Violence

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

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

Possible reasons for this may be:

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

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage*

is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).

- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. The use of symbolic numbers

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

Togo: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2024	WWL 2023
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	5	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	5	5
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)?	4	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	10 *	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	3	12
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	100 *	100 *
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?	10 *	10
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?	5	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	2

5 Year trends

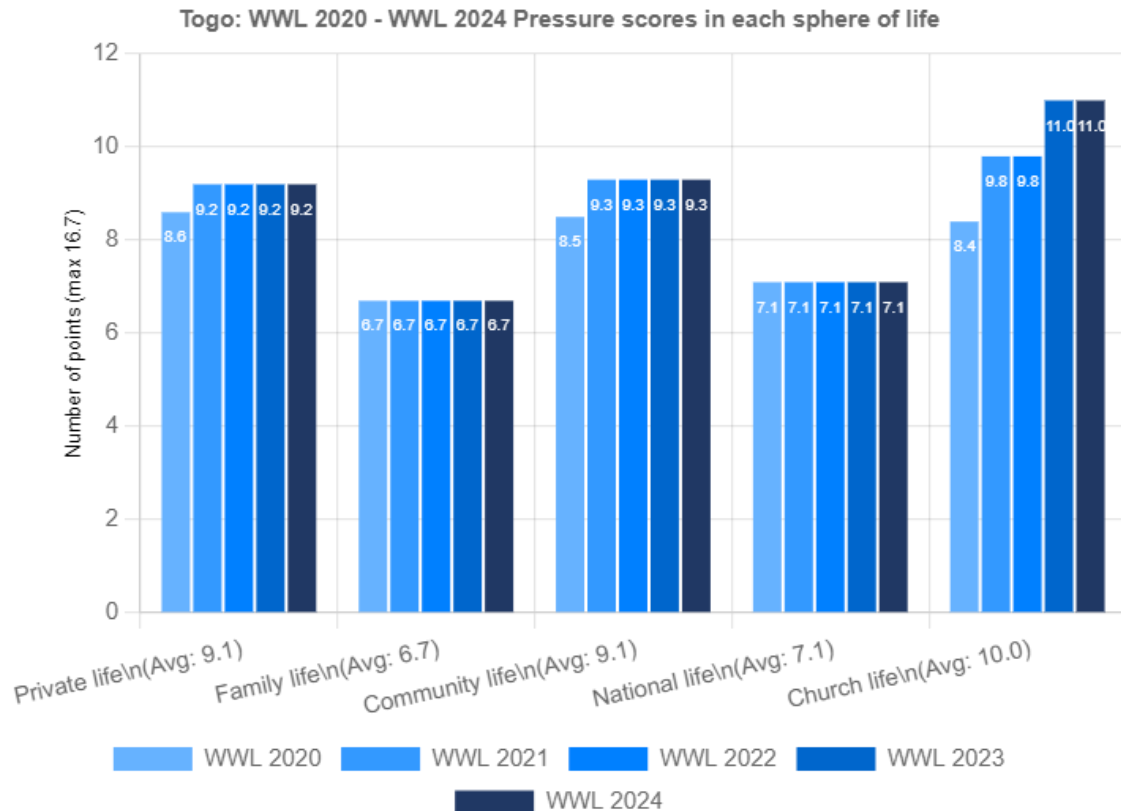
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Togo: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	8.7
2023	8.7
2022	8.4
2021	8.4
2020	7.9

The table above shows that the level of average pressure on Christians ranges from 'fairly high' (7.9 points) to 'high' (8.7 points). Average pressure has been consistently between 8.4 and 8.7 points for the last four WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



The chart above shows the levels of pressure in the different *spheres of life* over the past five WWL reporting periods. Levels remained stable in *Family* and *National life*. The rises in pressure in *Church life* have been the most dramatic.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



The score for violence fluctuated at 'low' and 'very low' levels over the first three WWL reporting periods, but shot up to 5.4 points in WWL 2023 and again increased by a further 3.5 points in WWL 2024.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

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

As is the case for men, women and girls in Togo may find themselves involved against their will in traditional rites and practices, such as Voodoo or 'generation parties', depending on the communities in which they live. A country expert explained: “The patriarchal law that subjects them to male authority makes women and girls vulnerable to persecution. The financial precariousness of women makes them vulnerable. The girl's lack of schooling easily exposes her to persecution... She has no right to personal choice.” These vulnerabilities inadvertently expose economically disadvantaged women and girls to sexual exploitation by illicit networks — many of them are sold into sexual slavery without their consent ([USDS, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report](#)).

Converts from Muslim or Traditional African Religion backgrounds face additional challenges for their faith. Forced marriage is a common method of preventing female converts from leaving their parent’s religion. Some Muslim families have deliberately forced their daughters to marry a strict Muslim husband to prevent them from living as practicing Christians. They are prevented from marrying another Christian of their choice, as the family will oppose the marriage based on religion. Animist parents have been known to act similarly.

Local sources report that there is a high intolerance to converts from Islam to Christianity especially in the central and northern regions; only widows and outcasts are allowed to become Christians. “Many women are expelled from their homes because of their conversions in the north and far north. In some cases, after several months or years they have the opportunity to see their children again but rarely to return to their homes,” a source disclosed. Female converts characteristically face physical beatings, abandonment, sexual abuse including rape, verbal abuse, disinheritance, eviction and threats. If already married, significant pressure is also applied on their spouse to divorce them and refuse the convert custody of their children. It often occurs that an unmarried convert is forced to accept a marriage arranged by her parents to a non-Christian. If she refuses, this may lead to her being abducted and forcibly taken to the home of the intended man. Despite Togolese law stipulating that both parties must consent to marriage, forced marriages such as these continue to take place in [several regions](#) across the country (HRW, 17 November 2022). In extreme cases, forms of sexual slavery have been reported. Some years ago, Human Rights Watch interviewed several child sex workers in Lomé who revealed that some girls had come to Lomé under conditions of child trafficking and had been forced into sex work after escaping or being abandoned ([HRW, 1 April 2003](#)).

Church leaders and pastors encourage new converts to keep their distance from their families in the light of these harsh responses. Christian women who leave Catholicism can also face many of the aforementioned pressures.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Discrimination/harassment via education
Political and Legal	Forced divorce
Security	Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied food or water; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Christian men and boys can be affected by cultural traditions such as Voodoo, which sometimes results in traditional practices inflicting suffering on children. This is particularly prevalent in rural areas. They can also be [forcibly recruited](#) by Islamic extremists for domestic terrorism or, by criminal gangs for drug trafficking (VOA, 13 July 2022). Togolese boys are also victim of trafficking; for the most part they have been recruited into agricultural labor in southwestern Nigeria ([HRW, 1 April 2003](#)). Christian leaders who speak out against the government risk being arbitrarily arrested and harassed by state agents. Sources report that communications of church leaders are closely monitored by the government in a bid to intimidate and repress critical voices. A country expert explains: “The increased use of electronic surveillance software to spy and intercept communications of Christians and senior church leaders is eroding all the remaining [safe] spaces that citizens had. The surveillance software used is able to access phone microphones without the knowledge of the owner. Increasing arbitrary arrests are also leading to self-censorship.”

The harshest persecution, however, is experienced by converts. Male Christians from a Muslim or Animist background can face physical abuse, verbal harassment, rejection, disinheritance, reduced food, threats and stigma because of their faith. Some men and boys are forced to flee as a result. Reports further indicate that Christians may be denied property lettings for a business, or be made redundant in favor of a Muslim employee.

Male converts come under harsh scrutiny in their local communities and can face intimidation and threats on a daily basis, including forced divorce. “Christian converts who are men report that once their families find out about their new faith, their wives and children are taken from them,” a source revealed.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Most Togolese are followers either of Christianity, ATR or Islam. According to the US State Department IRFR 2022 Togo: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Nichiren Buddhists, followers of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, Bahai and Hindus are among other religious groups in the country. There were no reports about Muslims, adherents of Animism or these other religious groups experiencing any significant

problems due to their faith.

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

West Africa has become a hotspot of radicalization and Islamic militancy. Experts believe that what is happening in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger could soon engulf the entire region; it is only a matter of time. Since Togo borders Burkina Faso, a country that has been struggling to contain the impact of violent Islamic militancy, it is possible that this impact will be increasingly felt in Togo. Furthermore, many Muslims from Nigeria are targeting Christians belonging to non-traditional church groups for attacks, especially in Lome. There is deep fear among governments in the region that the jihadist movement is expanding towards the coast.

Clan oppression

Togo has over 40 different ethnic groups and a significant portion of the country's population still adheres to traditional belief systems. In many instances, non-traditional Christian groups carrying out mission work among Animists face serious opposition. This is likely to continue in the future.

Dictatorial paranoia

This Persecution engine has been operating for decades. The ruling party has been harassing and silencing those who oppose it. Freedom House's Global Freedom Index 2023 Togo report states in its overview:

- "While regular multiparty elections have taken place since 1992, the late Gnassingbé Eyadéma and his son, current president Faure Gnassingbé, have controlled Togolese politics since a 1963 coup. Gnassingbé maintains control in part through a security apparatus dominated by his ethnic group and malapportioned election districts that benefit the ruling party. Opposition calls for reform have been harshly repressed."

There is no indication that this is likely to change in the near future. Thus, Christians who want to speak out against injustice in the country will keep facing persecution.

Organized corruption and crime

Togo has shown no significant improvement in terms of corruption. Nepotism and blatant bribery are widespread. This means that Christians who want to take their case to court will not get a fair hearing. Those speaking out against persecution or injustice in general are likely to continue facing intimidation and similar attempts at silencing them.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: USDS, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/togo/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: several regions - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/17/togo-submission-un-committee-rights-child>

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW, 1 April 2003 - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/04/01/borderline-slavery/child-trafficking-togo>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: forcibly recruited - <https://www.voanews.com/a/togo-experts-aim-to-prevent-islamist-insurgents-from-recruiting-youth-/6657400.html>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Male description: (HRW, 1 April 2003). - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/04/01/borderline-slavery/child-trafficking-togo>

Further useful reports

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

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

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

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Togo>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>.