Ivory Coast :

Persecution Dynamics

February 2025

Contents

World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	98	96	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.7	11.1	94	93	92	91	92
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	89	89	88	87
4	Libya	16.0	16.2	15.9	16.2	16.4	10.6	91	91	88	91	92
5	Sudan	14.1	14.2	15.5	14.9	15.3	16.1	90	87	83	79	79
6	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.9	12.2	89	89	89	88	88
7	Nigeria	13.5	13.9	14.6	14.9	14.5	16.7	88	88	88	87	85
8	Pakistan	13.6	13.9	15.0	15.0	12.9	16.7	87	87	86	87	88
9	Iran	15.0	14.6	13.5	15.9	16.5	10.9	86	86	86	85	86
10	Afghanistan	15.6	15.9	15.9	16.4	16.7	5.0	85	84	84	98	94
11	India	12.2	12.9	13.3	14.9	13.9	16.5	84	83	82	82	83
12	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.8	15.8	16.6	3.3	81	81	80	81	78
13	Myanmar	12.6	11.1	13.5	14.1	12.9	16.5	81	79	80	79	74
14	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	13.0	15.2	15.6	80	79	76	70	67
15	China	13.2	10.1	12.8	14.6	16.1	11.1	78	78	77	76	74
16	Maldives	15.6	15.3	13.7	15.8	16.5	0.7	78	78	77	77	77
17	Iraq	14.2	14.4	14.3	14.8	13.9	6.1	78	79	76	78	82
18	Syria	13.5	14.4	13.9	14.4	14.3	7.0	78	81	80	78	81
19	Algeria	14.7	14.3	11.5	14.7	16.0	6.3	77	79	73	71	70
20	Burkina Faso	11.7	9.7	13.2	11.5	14.0	15.6	76	75	71	68	67
21	Morocco	13.2	13.8	11.6	12.9	14.3	8.3	74	71	69	69	67
22	Laos	11.8	10.7	13.5	14.1	13.9	9.8	74	75	68	69	71
23	Mauritania	14.6	14.2	13.8	14.2	14.2	2.8	74	72	72	70	71
24	Bangladesh	12.4	10.6	12.7	11.3	10.4	16.1	74	71	69	68	67
25	Uzbekistan	14.6	12.7	13.5	12.4	15.5	4.4	73	71	71	71	71
26	Cuba	13.2	8.5	13.9	13.3	15.1	9.1	73	73	70	66	62
27	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	14.0	15.6	72	70	70	68	66
28	Niger	9.4	9.6	14.5	7.7	14.6	15.7	72	70	70	68	62

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
29	Turkmenistan	14.3	12.3	13.6	13.9	15.3	1.5	71	70	70	69	70
30	Nicaragua	12.4	7.6	13.7	13.3	14.1	9.6	71	70	65	56	51
31	Mexico	11.7	9.0	12.5	11.8	11.0	14.6	71	68	67	65	64
32	Oman	14.5	14.1	10.9	13.8	14.1	3.0	70	69	65	66	63
33	Ethiopia	9.9	9.7	12.6	10.4	12.1	15.6	70	69	66	66	65
34	Tunisia	12.4	13.2	10.1	12.6	13.8	8.1	70	69	67	66	67
35	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	10.8	14.5	16.1	70	67	67	66	64
36	Bhutan	13.2	13.2	12.3	14.1	14.2	2.2	69	68	66	67	64
37	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.9	68	68	68	65	63
38	Kazakhstan	13.3	11.6	12.2	12.8	14.2	4.3	68	65	65	64	64
39	Tajikistan	14.1	12.7	12.7	13.2	13.7	1.9	68	66	66	65	66
40	Egypt	12.7	13.7	12.1	12.4	10.9	6.3	68	68	68	71	75
41	Qatar	14.2	14.2	10.5	13.2	14.4	0.7	67	67	68	74	67
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	2.6	67	66	66	63	62
43	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	8.4	13.1	16.1	67	66	65	65	64
44	Vietnam	10.8	9.5	12.2	14.1	14.1	5.9	67	68	70	71	72
45	Turkey	13.0	11.7	11.7	13.2	11.5	5.4	67	64	66	65	69
46	Colombia	11.0	7.9	12.7	11.5	10.5	12.6	66	68	71	68	67
47	Kyrgyzstan	13.5	10.3	11.7	11.4	12.4	6.9	66	59	59	58	58
48	Brunei	14.8	14.8	10.8	10.8	14.0	0.6	66	66	65	64	64
49	Chad	11.0	8.2	10.2	9.9	10.3	15.9	65	61	58	55	53
50	Jordan	12.9	14.3	10.4	12.2	12.8	2.4	65	65	65	66	64

World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
51	Malaysia	12.8	13.7	11.7	12.4	11.2	3.0	65	64	66	63	63
52	Azerbaijan	13.3	10.2	9.6	12.2	13.7	5.6	65	60	59	60	56
53	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.9	64	63	64	63	62
54	Nepal	12.2	10.6	9.5	12.6	12.3	5.9	63	62	61	64	66
55	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.4	63	62	63	61	58
56	Russian Federation	12.7	7.9	10.7	13.1	14.1	4.4	63	58	57	56	57
57	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.1	1.7	61	61	60	59	56
58	Kuwait	13.1	13.6	9.4	12.0	12.2	0.9	61	61	64	64	63
59	Indonesia	10.9	11.9	10.9	11.6	10.2	5.7	61	66	68	68	63
60	UAE	13.3	13.4	9.5	11.3	12.8	0.6	61	61	62	62	62
61	Sri Lanka	12.7	8.7	11.5	11.5	8.5	7.6	60	60	57	63	62
62	Palestinian Territories	13.1	13.3	10.3	10.7	12.1	0.2	60	60	60	59	58
63	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	14.6	59	57	55	52	48
64	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	12.1	9.4	58	58	57	50	42
65	Honduras	7.9	4.7	11.7	7.3	9.9	13.1	55	55	53	48	46
66	Togo	9.2	6.7	10.4	7.1	11.5	9.3	54	52	49	44	43
67	Bahrain	12.0	13.2	8.6	11.3	8.5	0.6	54	55	55	57	56
68	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	8.9	54	52	48	43	47
69	Ukraine	6.8	5.0	7.8	12.5	13.5	7.2	53	44	37	37	34
70	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	8.3	53	52	52	51	46
71	Venezuela	6.3	4.4	11.1	10.0	10.8	9.6	52	53	56	51	39
72	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	8.8	16.1	52	52	51	48	47
73	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	9.6	51	44	44	42	42
74	Lebanon	11.5	10.1	7.0	6.2	6.7	7.2	49	48	40	35	34
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	4.4	48	47	44	44	43
76	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	8.1	15.6	47	46	46	43	43

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2025	Total Score WWL 2024	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021
77	Belarus	9.9	3.7	5.0	10.8	14.1	3.1	47	46	43	33	30
78	Philippines	9.2	6.6	6.6	6.1	5.7	8.5	43	40	32	34	26

Copyright, sources and definitions

World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- Background country information (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January/February).

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and 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 end of each document under the heading "External links". These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

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/.

Reporting period

The WWL 2025 reporting period was 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024.

Brief country details

Ivory Coast : Population (UN estimate for 2024)
29,603,000

Ivory Coast : Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	11,229,000	37.9
Muslim	10,630,000	35.9
Hindu	2,100	0.0
Buddhist	15,000	0.1
Ethnic religionist	7,619,000	25.7
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	41,400	0.1
Atheist	3,100	0.0
Agnostic	54,600	0.2
Other	9,900	0.0
OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.		

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Map of country

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

The hostility facing Christians in Ivory Coast is deeply entrenched in the country's complex socio-political and religious dynamics. *Islamic oppression* and clan-based discrimination pose significant threats to Christian communities, especially to those who have converted from Islam or traditional African religions (ATR). These converts often face severe opposition from non-Christian family members, leading to social ostracism and, in some cases, physical harm. The growing influence of jihadist groups and radical Islamic teaching, which have destabilized neighboring West African countries, is now increasingly prevalent in Ivory Coast, further intensifying religious tensions. This rise in extremism is particularly concerning in the northern regions, where radical ideologies are gaining traction, fostering an environment of fear and hostility towards Christians.

The situation is compounded by the intertwining of politics and religion, which exacerbates the divide between the predominantly Muslim northerners and the mostly Christian southerners. In Muslim-majority northern regions, local government officials are known to discriminate against Christians, restricting their access to resources and political representation. This preferential treatment of Muslim communities, especially in matters such as land allocation for religious buildings, deepens the sense of inequality and marginalization among Christians. The Ivorian government's uneven treatment of religious groups, coupled with the growing influence of radical Islam and persistent ethnic tensions, threatens the country's stability and further endangers the Christian population, particularly converts, whose safety and religious freedoms are increasingly at risk.

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Converts to Christianity in the northern regions of Ivory Coast face severe social ostracization and are often expelled from their communities, reflecting deep-seated religious intolerance.
- These converts encounter significant difficulties in obtaining land to build churches, suggesting a level of institutional discrimination that restricts their religious practice.
- Government authorities have been known to intimidate pastors, regulating their sermons and limiting religious freedom, particularly in areas with strong Muslim influence.
- In the western part of the country, Christians are marginalized by animist groups, who request that they stay home during 'mask holidays', thereby excluding them from public and cultural life.
- Acts of vandalism against churches have been reported in various regions, contributing to a pervasive sense of insecurity and tension within Christian communities.
- The growing influence of jihadist groups and radical Islamic teaching in the northern regions further exacerbates the threat to Christians.
- The Ivorian government's preferential treatment of Muslim communities, especially in land allocation for religious buildings, deepens the sense of inequality and marginalization among Christians, worsening the already fragile religious tolerance in the country.

Specific examples of positive developments

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

Christian communities and how they are affected

- *Communities of expatriate Christians:* Expatriate Christians in Ivory Coast are not forced into isolation. This category is therefore not included in WWL analysis and scoring.
- *Historical Christian communities:* These include the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church and Presbyterians. Compared to other Christian communities, this category is not so vulnerable to attack and enjoys a greater level of freedom of religion.
- *Converts to Christianity:* There are converts with a Muslim background and converts from indigenous traditional religions in Ivory Coast. Especially Christians with a Muslim background are vulnerable to persecution in the northern parts of the country from their family and relatives as well as their local community. They are also particularly vulnerable to attacks and pressure from Islamic militants that are active in the region.
- *Non-traditional Christian communities:* There are many registered and recognized Evangelical churches, and there also many new Independent and Pentecostal churches in this category. Due to more active evangelism, these churches tend to face backlash both from Islamists and local authorities.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

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

Position on the World Watch List

Ivory Coast : World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2025	51	73
WWL 2024	44	76
WWL 2023	44	74
WWL 2022	42	75
WWL 2021	42	73

The overall score for Ivory Coast increased by 7 points in WWL 2025, rising from 44 points in WWL 2024 to 51 points in WWL 2025. This increase is primarily attributed to a significant rise in the violence score, which surged from 3.3 points in WWL 2024 to 9.6 points. This uptick in violence reflects a concerning rise in violent acts targeting Christians, particularly in the northern regions. Attacks on churches, Christian schools, and Christians have been increasingly reported, with radical youths or mobs, including those influenced by African Traditional Religion (ATR) and radical Muslim ideologies, being the main perpetrators. Additionally, while the pressure on Christians remained relatively consistent, with the highest pressure in the *Private sphere* at 12.0 points, the broader societal climate continues to create challenges for converts to live out their faith.

Persecution engines

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

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

Islamic oppression (Medium)

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

Clan oppression (Medium)

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

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

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

Drivers of persecution

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

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

Drivers of Islamic oppression

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

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

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

especially those who have converted from Islam.

- *Family (Medium)*: Those who convert to Christianity often face dire consequences within their own families, ranging from social ostracization to being left without basic necessities like food and shelter.
- *Violent religious groups (Medium)*: Extremist Islamic organizations active in West Africa also have their sights set on Ivory Coast, aiming to expand their influence through targeted attacks on Christians.
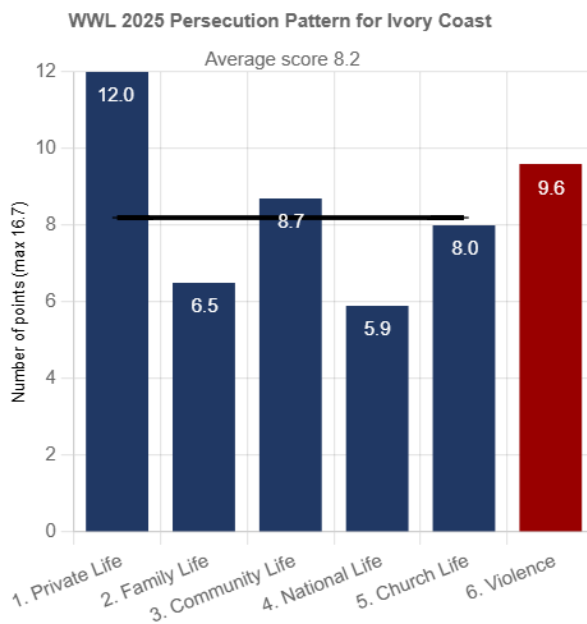
Drivers of Clan oppression

- *Ethnic group leaders (Medium)*: According to WCD 2024 estimates, approximately 25.7% of the Ivory Coast population adheres to African Traditional Religions (ATR). Leaders of these ethnic communities are often hostile to Christians who actively oppose practices like witchcraft. This hostility is amplified by incidents like church vandalism and Christians being forced to abstain from their religious celebrations in certain western regions.
- *Family (Medium)*: Familial tension is not uncommon when a member converts to Christianity. Discrimination can escalate to the point of expulsion from the family unit, leaving converts in a vulnerable situation.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

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

The Persecution pattern

WWL 2025 Persecution Pattern for Ivory Coast

Average score 8.2

The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Ivory Coast shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Ivory Coast was 8.2 points, similar to WWL 2024.
- The highest pressure was in the *Private sphere*, scoring 12.0 points, followed by the *Community life* and *Church life spheres* scoring 8.7 and 8.0 points respectively. This reflects pressure on converts to align with family and community values and beliefs.
- The violence score has significantly increased to 9.6 points, up from 3.3 points in WWL 2024, indicating a rise in violent acts targeting Christians.

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 2025 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://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/.

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

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

Individuals who convert from Islam or Animism to Christianity face considerable risks when attempting to share their faith with immediate family members. Such conversions are often perceived as bringing dishonor and shame to the family. Converts who express their Christian beliefs to relatives, particularly those from Muslim or Animist backgrounds, frequently endure verbal insults, humiliation, and even physical violence.

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

In certain regions where Muslims and Animists dominate, openly expressing one's faith through written platforms such as blogs or social media poses significant risks, particularly for recent converts to Christianity. These individuals often face severe societal repercussions, including threats to their safety and lives. The fear of exposure and the dangers associated with it frequently discourage converts from sharing their beliefs in writing.

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

In regions where Christianity is a minority, speaking about one's faith with those outside the immediate family is a significant challenge for all Christians. This difficulty is even more pronounced for converts from African Traditional Religions (ATR) and Islam, as they often face heightened scrutiny and hostility. The fear of rejection, discrimination and possible retaliation discourages open discussion about their beliefs. For converts, the societal and cultural pressure associated with leaving their former faith makes it particularly risky to share their Christian identity beyond their closest circles.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (3.00 points)

In regions dominated by Islam and Animist beliefs, meeting with other Christians is particularly challenging, especially for recent converts. These individuals often face significant risks, as their change in religious affiliation can provoke strong opposition from both their families and communities. The act of gathering with fellow believers may be perceived as a public declaration of their faith, exposing them to harassment, persecution and social ostracism. This creates a climate of fear, making it difficult for converts to practice their faith openly or to seek fellowship with others.

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)

Christians, particularly converts from Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR), face significant challenges in celebrating Christian weddings. Converts often encounter resistance from their families, who may strongly oppose interfaith marriages or reject the convert's new faith altogether. This familial opposition can lead to emotional strain and logistical difficulties in organizing a wedding. Additionally, denominational differences within the Christian community can further complicate matters, as some church leaders may object to marriages between individuals from different Christian denominations.

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

In regions where Islam or Animism dominate, Christians face significant challenges in conducting burials. In predominantly Islamic areas, access to burial grounds is often controlled by local authorities who may deny Christians the right to use these spaces, forcing families to transport their deceased over long distances to find appropriate sites. In areas where Animism prevails, Christian families often encounter resistance from local communities, who may isolate them and prevent them from receiving support from their church. Additionally, Christians in these regions may face coercion to perform traditional rituals that conflict with their faith. The broader issue of land ownership and control exacerbates these challenges, as Christians are frequently marginalized in their efforts to secure land for burial purposes, making the process both emotionally and financially burdensome.

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

Children of Christians often face discrimination and harassment because of their parents' faith, particularly in regions dominated by Islam or Animism. These children may be ostracized by peers, denied equal treatment in schools, or subjected to bullying from both classmates and teachers. In some cases, they are placed under pressure to participate in religious activities or rituals that contradict their family's beliefs. The stigma attached to their parents' Christian faith can lead to exclusion from community events or social activities, further isolating them from their peers. Such discrimination not only affects their emotional and psychological well-being but also creates barriers to their educational and social development.

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

Inheritance poses significant challenges for Christians who are converts, particularly in regions where Islam or Animism dominate. Converts often face disinheritance or exclusion from family assets due to their decision to leave their former faith. Families may view conversion as a betrayal of cultural or religious traditions, leading to deliberate efforts to deny the convert their rightful share of inheritance. In many cases, traditional or religious laws governing inheritance are applied in ways that favor adherents of the dominant faith, further marginalizing converts.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

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

In areas dominated by Islam and animism, local youth and elderly individuals often take on the role of monitoring Christian activities. This informal surveillance involves observing Christian gatherings, worship practices and interactions, particularly focusing on converts. Youth may act as informants, reporting activities to community leaders or religious authorities, while elders often exert influence by questioning or challenging Christian practices to maintain traditional norms. This type of monitoring, though not organized or formally structured, creates a climate of tension and intimidation, discouraging Christians from openly practicing their faith or engaging in communal worship. The involvement of both youth and elders underscores the pervasive societal resistance faced by Christians in these regions.

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

Christians often face significant obstacles in accessing shared community resources, including grazing lands, communal farmland, and drinking wells, particularly in regions dominated by Islam and animism. Access to these essential resources is frequently controlled by local community leaders or religious authorities, who may prioritize members of the dominant faith. In some cases, Christians are totally excluded or face discriminatory practices during the allocation process, especially when transparency is lacking. Converts to Christianity face even greater challenges, as their decision to leave their former faith often leads to intentional exclusion from communal resources.

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)

Christian-owned businesses face numerous challenges in regions dominated by Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR). These obstacles often stem from societal biases and discriminatory practices targeting their faith. Business operations, including the types of goods sold and the hours of operation, may be restricted by community norms or informal regulations imposed by local leaders. For example, Christians may be discouraged from selling items deemed incompatible with dominant religious practices or cultural expectations, limiting their ability to cater to broader markets. Additionally, community members may boycott Christian-owned businesses or put pressure on others to avoid engaging with them, further hindering their economic sustainability. Converts to Christianity

face even greater difficulties, as their decision to leave their previous faith often leads to deliberate efforts to marginalize their businesses, denying them equal opportunities to thrive in the local economy.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

Christians, particularly evangelicals and converts, often face significant hindrances in participating in communal institutions in regions dominated by Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR). While religion is not officially a prerequisite for involvement in communal activities, biases and sectarian hostility frequently emerge. Local leaders or officials, influenced by dominant religious or cultural norms, may marginalize Christians by excluding them from decision-making processes, denying them leadership roles, or creating bureaucratic obstacles to their participation. These challenges are particularly pronounced for converts, who are often viewed as outsiders or traitors to their previous faith.

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)

Christians face discrimination when engaging with authorities, particularly in regions dominated by Islam. This discrimination is evident across various levels of government, where officials exhibit bias against Christian individuals or institutions. In the northern regions, churches encounter significant obstacles in obtaining necessary permits or authorizations, especially from entities like the Ministry of the Interior. The approval process is often delayed or obstructed, preventing Christians from operating freely or accessing equal treatment under the law. Converts to Christianity experience even greater challenges, as their transition in faith leads to heightened scrutiny and resistance from officials aligned with the dominant religious or cultural norms. This systemic discrimination severely restricts the ability of Christians to fully participate in public and institutional frameworks.

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

Christians face significant challenges in public office and career advancement due to their faith, particularly in regions dominated by Islam or where animist traditions are strong. These challenges often include being overlooked for promotion, denied opportunities for leadership positions, or, in some cases, facing demotion. While not officially documented, systemic biases within institutions frequently marginalize Christians who refuse to compromise their faith or participate in unethical practices, especially in environments where corruption is widespread. These issues are especially pronounced in the northern regions, where religious and cultural dominance influences decision-making processes, further limiting equal opportunities for Christians in public service and career growth.

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

Christians face significant challenges in expressing their views or opinions in public, particularly in regions dominated by Islam or shaped by authoritarian systems. Speaking out against societal

injustices or cultural norms can lead to backlash from both authorities and local communities. In some areas, such expressions are perceived as a direct challenge to the dominant religious or political structures, exposing Christians to intimidation, harassment or even legal repercussions. These barriers not only limit Christians' ability to advocate for their faith and values but also hinder broader discussions about justice and inclusivity.

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)

Christian civil society organizations often face restrictions imposed by local communities rather than formal legal barriers. These organizations, particularly those working with youth, vulnerable groups or broader community outreach initiatives, encounter resistance from community members who view their activities as a challenge to dominant religious or cultural norms. In regions dominated by Islam or animist traditions, community pressures can take the form of boycotts, refusal to grant access to shared spaces, or social ostracism of those engaging with Christian initiatives. These informal but impactful restrictions limit the ability of Christian organizations to carry out their programs effectively.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.25 points)

In various regions of the country, churches face significant challenges from informal monitoring, often carried out by individuals within the community. This practice is particularly prevalent in areas dominated by Islam and Animism. Young Muslims and animists, sometimes acting under the influence or guidance of religious leaders, frequently observe, disrupt or obstruct Christian activities. Additionally, in some instances, government agents have been reported to monitor church gatherings, further complicating the ability of Christians to worship freely.

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.25 points)

In regions dominated by Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR), organizing Christian activities outside church compounds is particularly challenging. The influence of local Muslim and ATR leaders often creates significant resistance to Christian initiatives in public spaces. Traditional rituals and ceremonies are deeply embedded in these communities, and any activities perceived as conflicting with these practices are met with hostility. In many towns and villages, Christians are required to pay substantial fees to secure permission for such activities, placing a heavy financial burden on churches with limited resources.

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

In the northern provinces, Christian communities face significant challenges in constructing or renovating church buildings, particularly in areas dominated by Islam and ATR. Many churches were destroyed during the civil war, leaving communities struggling to rebuild their places of worship. In some regions, local authorities or community leaders completely deny permission for the establishment of new churches, citing cultural or religious opposition.

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

Working with Christian youth presents significant challenges, particularly in regions dominated by Islam and ATR. While Christian youth generally face fewer obstacles when conducting activities within church premises, resistance becomes pronounced when they attempt to engage in community outreach or organize events beyond these confines. Christian organizations often encounter hostility from local communities, who may view such activities as a threat to cultural or religious norms. This resistance underscores deep-seated religious tensions and creates a difficult environment for youth programs.

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.*

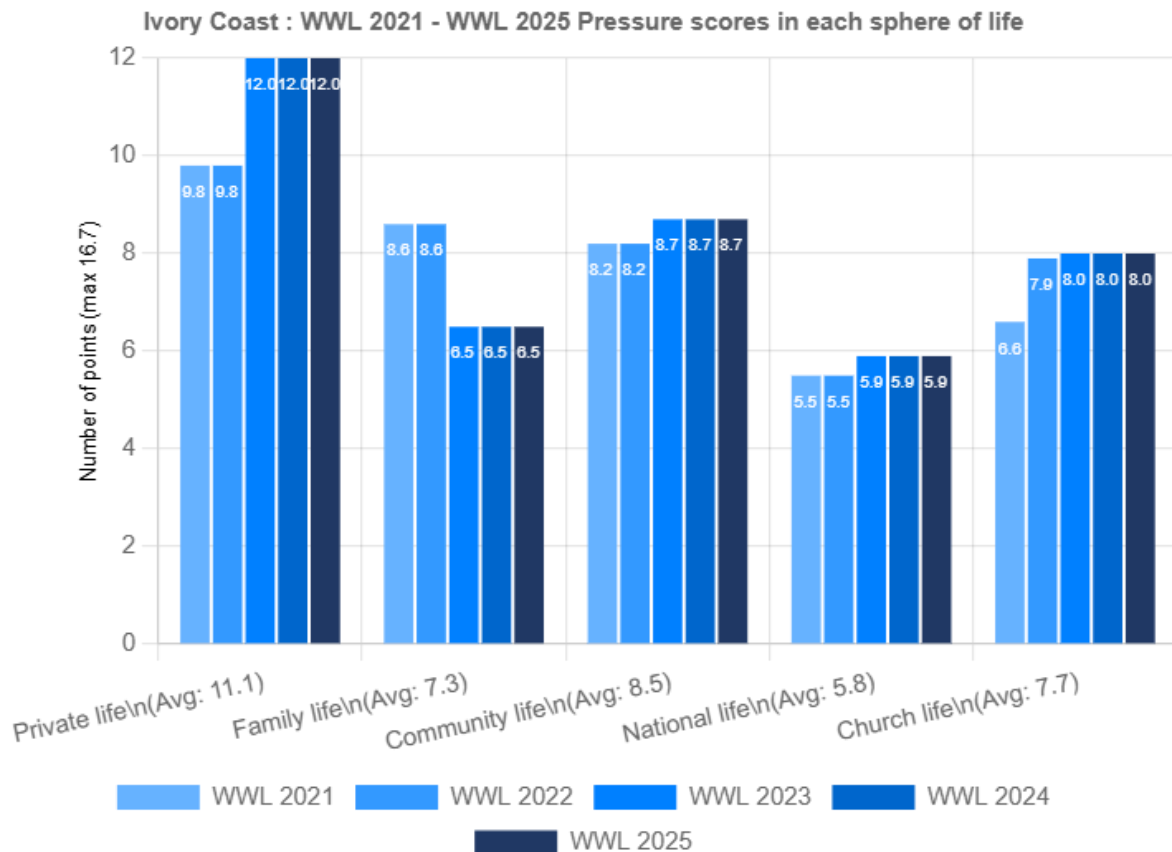| Ivory Coast : Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2025	WWL 2024
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10 *	4
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	2	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)?	2	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?	10 *	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	10 *	10 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10 *	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	10	0
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	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

Ivory Coast : WWL 2021 - WWL 2025	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2025	8.2
2024	8.2
2023	8.2
2022	8.0
2021	7.7

The score for average pressure on Christians over the past five WWL reporting periods has remained within the range of 7.7 to 8.2 points. The table indicates that the score now appears to be stabilizing above the 8.0 point mark.
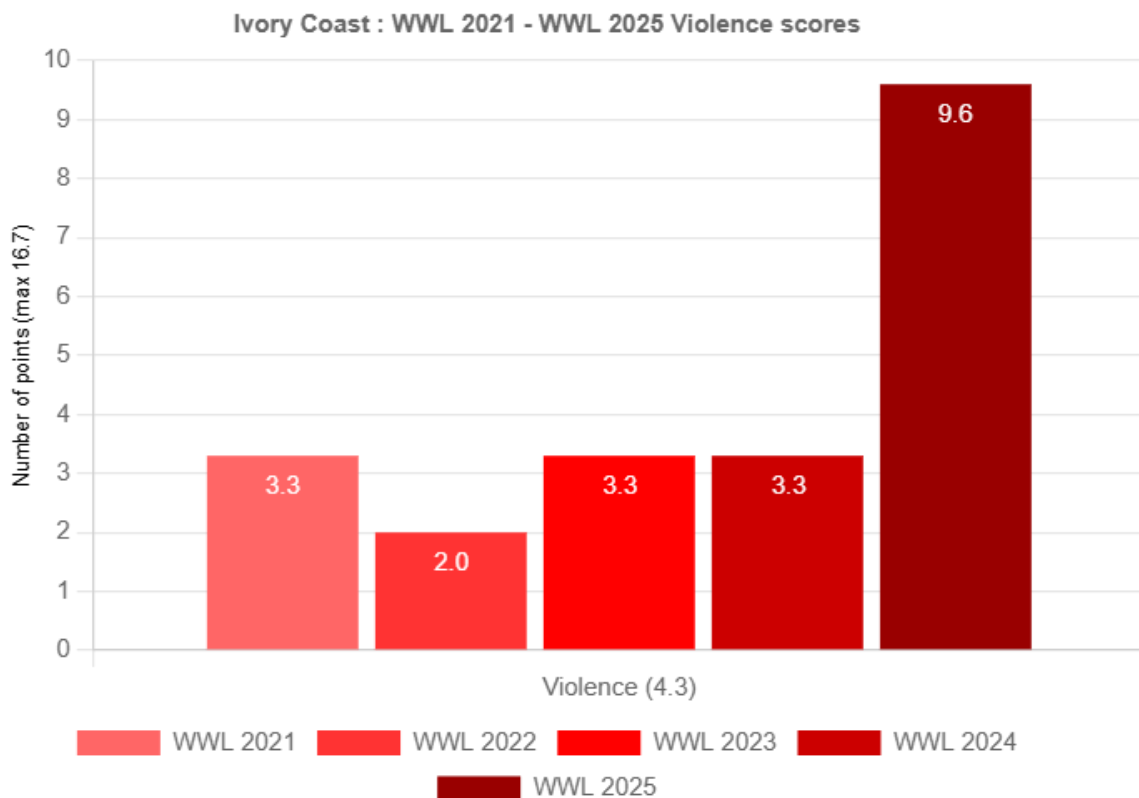
5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

The average scores for the five spheres of life over the past five WWL reporting periods reveal the following patterns:

- The *Private sphere* has the highest average score of 11.1 points.
- The next highest average score for pressure can be seen in the *Community sphere* with a score of 8.5 points.
- The *National sphere* scores the lowest, with an average of 5.8 points; this is partly due to the country's relatively better performance in upholding certain legal standards despite existing tensions.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

Ivory Coast : WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 Violence scores

The pattern, initially more or less stable at the 3.3 point level (despite a dip in WWL 2022), now shows a sharp rise to 9.6 points in WWL 2025. Ivory Coast is located in a region with a serious potential threat from jihadist activities, coupled with an increasingly radical Islamic influence becoming evident in the northern part of the country. Additionally, it is important to note that the past conflict in the country has exacerbated tensions between Christians and Muslims, further complicating interreligious relationships.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

In general, the numbers of forced or early marriages, polygamy (France24, 19 July 2022) and acts of female genital mutilation (FGM) (UNHCR report, 1 June 2001) are high in Ivory Coast (CEDAW, 30 July 2019). In strongly animist areas, women and girls are affected by the existence of female secret societies (such as the Sande society) and are sometimes forced to become members. If Christian women and girls, who live in communities where these societies are actively present, refuse to become

members or to participate in ceremonies like ritual baths due to their Christian faith, they are often isolated from female-related activities.

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

The law in Ivory Coast forbids marriage of children under 18 years , however 27% of girls are married by 18 and 7% married by 15 (Girls not Brides Ivory Coast, last accessed 19 February 2025). Teenage pregnancy and child marriage often trigger a vicious cycle of disempowerment for girls, with many marriages characterized by violence and servitude. Such girls usually end up dropping out of school, and child mothers often have sexual and reproductive health complications.

For Christian women, unmarried converts may be forced into marriage to older, rich Muslim men. A country expert explained that this may be done "to stop them from expressing their faith". Sources indicate that the parents of convert girls sometimes threaten them with the prospect of abduction and forced marriage in order to pressure them into returning to Islam. These cases are very common in the northern regions of the country, particularly in Boundiali, Bouna and Khorogo — the practice of levirate and sororate marriage is also reportedly prevalent in these areas. Some women and girls (including non-convert Christians) are targeted for marriage by more subtle means. Young Muslim men are reportedly encouraged to marry Christian girls.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

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

Converts from Muslim and animist backgrounds have generally faced the most intense forms of persecution. They may be verbally, physically or emotionally mistreated by their families, who may reject them entirely, evict them and threaten them with violence. They are also discriminated against in terms of their education; Muslim youth receive more opportunities to study abroad, and parents will often stop financial support, halting the progress of their education. Upon discovery of their conversion, men may also be discriminated against in the workplace, possibly even losing their jobs.

Shops have reportedly been targeted and boycotted because they belonged to Christians. As men are usually the financial providers of the family, these economic pressures harm their wider families and dependents. Married converts also face peculiar forms of persecution. According to a regional expert, wives of converts "do not hesitate, on the advice of their relatives, to consult marabouts and spiritists, to bring their husbands back to the Muslim faith, by bewitchments. Some go so far as to seduce Christian leaders to bring them down, and to deny their faith." In rare instances, converts may be killed for their faith.

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.

Trends Summary

1) Peaceful 2023 elections mask underlying ethnic and regional tensions

Despite the peaceful conduct of the September 2023 local elections, Ivory Coast remains a nation divided along deep-rooted ethnic and regional lines. The north-south divide, characterized by a Muslim majority in the north and a Christian majority in the south, continues to shape the country's political dynamics. Although no terrorist attacks occurred during the WWL 2025 reporting period, the persistent threat from jihadist groups lingers, particularly in the northern regions. These divisions and the potential for religious and ethnic conflict present a significant challenge, as some Christians in the north report feeling marginalized, facing difficulties in obtaining land to build churches, and other forms of mistreatment. The country remains stable, and the economy is performing relatively well, but underlying tensions could have severe repercussions for Christians and the broader population if not addressed.

2) Growing jihadist influence amid regional instability raises security concerns

The expanding influence of jihadist groups in West Africa continues to be a major concern for Ivory Coast's security landscape, especially in the context of the political instability in neighboring countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The government's recruitment of additional soldiers to protect its northern borders reflects the seriousness of the threat, even though there have been no reported terrorist attacks of late. The peaceful nature of the 2023 local elections does not fully alleviate the looming security concerns, as the threat of violent Islamic militancy remains a critical issue. This ongoing threat, coupled with the complex geopolitical context, heightens the risks for Christians and other vulnerable communities, making it clear that the country's stability and economic progress are not without significant challenges.

Further useful reports

Further background information per country and 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/wwl-background/
- https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/.

External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/
- Copyright, sources and definitions: Persecution dynamics - https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/country-dossiers/
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: polygamy - https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220719-ivorian-bill-that-would-legalise-polygamy-for-men-earns-the-ire-of-women-s-groups
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: female genital mutilation (FGM) - https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdos/2001/en/47933
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: high - https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/CIV/CO/4&amp;Lang=En
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Girls not Brides Ivory Coast - https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/c%C3%B4te-divoire/