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**WORLD
WATCH
LIST
2024**

Komorererna

LANDSINFORMATION

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I tjänst för världens förföljda **kristna**

World
Watch
Research

Comoros: Full Country Dossier

February 2024



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Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

February 2024

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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	11	-	35
73	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	3.7	47	44	44	43	43
74	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.6	46	46	43	43	44
75	Belarus	9.6	3.8	5.8	9.7	13.3	3.3	46	43	33	30	28
76	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	44	42	42	42
77	Ukraine	5.5	4.8	8.0	11.6	11.6	2.8	44	37	37	34	33
78	Israel	9.8	8.6	5.8	6.3	6.9	6.7	44	38	41	40	38

Copyright note

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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 / Comoros

Brief country details

Comoros: Population (UN estimate for 2023)	Christians	Chr%
926,000	4,700	0.5

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

Map of country



Comoros: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	66	45
WWL 2023	66	42
WWL 2022	63	53
WWL 2021	62	50
WWL 2020	57	54

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Comoros:	
Main persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Non-Christian religious leaders, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, One's own (extended) family, Government officials
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

In the country, societal and familial pressures severely restrict religious minorities, especially Christian converts from Islam. Communities often shun those suspected of converting, fostering a hostile atmosphere for religious expression and tolerance. Women and girls converting to Christianity might face house arrest, while public discussions about Christianity are forbidden, making proselytization illegal for any faith except Islam. Converts from Islam struggle the most, forced to practice Christianity secretly due to immense pressure from family and society.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Comoros has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
2. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
3. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

Comoros is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christian parents cannot raise their children according to their religious values (CRC Art. 14);
- Christian female converts run the risk of being forcibly married to Muslim men or forcibly divorced (CEDAW Art. 16)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- Local communities ostracize individuals suspected of converting from Islam to Christianity.
- Girls and women who convert to the Christian faith may face house-arrest.
- Only expatriate Christians are permitted to meet for worship, and then only at three registered churches in Moroni, Mutsamudu and Moheli.
- Preaching in public is not allowed for Christians. The Penal code states: "Whoever discloses, spreads, and teaches Muslims a religion other than Islam will be punished with imprisonment of three months to one year and a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 Comorian francs" (\$108-1,100)."

Specific examples of positive developments

The country continued to show improvement in terms of stability.

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

WWL 2024: Keys to understanding / Comoros

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2022/22 covering 154 countries, Comoros not included	AI country report 2022/23	https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/	
BBC News Comoros profile - updated 11 April 2023	BBC Comoros profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13229685	05-Jul-23
Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022 – covering 137 countries, Comoros not included	BTI country report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/	
CIA World Factbook Comoros - updated 21 June 2023	World Factbook Comoros	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/comoros/	05-Jul-23
Crisis24 Comoros report (Garda World)	Crisis24 Comoros report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/comoros	05-Jul-23
Economist Intelligence Unit Comoros profile 2023	EIU Comoros profile 2023	https://country.eiu.com/comoros	05-Jul-23
FFP's Fragile States Index 2023 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2023 Comoros	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	05-Jul-23
Freedom House's 2023 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2023 Comoros	https://freedomhouse.org/country/comoros/freedom-world/2023	05-Jul-23
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2023 report – covering 70 countries, Comoros not included	Freedom on the Net 2023	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	
Georgetown's Women, Peace and Security Index 2021/2022 – covering 170 countries	GIWPS 2021 Comoros profile	https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/comoros/	05-Jul-23
Girls Not Brides Comoros report	Girls Not Brides Comoros	https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/comoros/	05-Jul-23
Human Rights Watch World Report 2023, Comoros not included	HRW 2023 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023	
Internet World Stats available in 2023	IWS 2023 Comoros	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#km	05-Jul-23
RSF's 2023 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2023 Comoros	https://rsf.org/en/comoros	05-Jul-23
Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2022 Comoros	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/com	05-Jul-23
UNDP: Human Development Report Comoros	UNDP HDR Comoros	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/COM	05-Jul-23
US State Department's 2022 International Religious Freedom Report Comoros	IRFR 2022 Comoros	https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/comoros/	05-Jul-23
USCIRF 2023 country reports – covering 17 CPC / 11 SWL, Comoros not included	USCIRF 2023	https://www.uscifr.gov/countries	
World Bank Comoros data – 2021	World Bank Comoros data	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfileId=b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=ncountry=COM	05-Jul-23
World Bank Comoros overview - updated 24 March 2023	World Bank Comoros overview	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/comoros/overview	05-Jul-23
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook Comoros - April 2023	Macro Poverty Outlook 2023 Comoros	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2fec5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-com.pdf	05-Jul-23

Recent history

After years of political instability following independence from France in 1974/5, the Comoros archipelago underwent a democratic transition in 2006. In that year, Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi became president of the Union of Comoros in an election that international observers described as generally free and fair. This was the first peaceful and democratic transfer of power in the country's history. In 2008, the Union Army of National Development launched a successful and bloodless military coup that led to the removal of the former president of Anjouan Island, Mohamed Bacar, who then fled the country. Moussa Toybou was then elected president in a

generally free and fair process in 2008. In November and December 2010, elections were held to decide on a new Union president on the Archipelago as well as separate governors for each of the three islands. Again, [in 2016](#), the country passed the test of holding peaceful elections which the former coup leader Azali Assoumani won, having served previously as president from 2002–2006 (Africa News, 16 May 2016). Since then, the country has remained politically stable.

In March 2019, the country held presidential elections and, as reported by [Reuters](#) on 27 March 2019: "The Comoros election body declared President Azali Assoumani re-elected on Tuesday in a single round after an election the opposition rejected as fraudulent." In the [January 2020](#) general election boycotted by the opposition, the president's party won 17 out of 24 legislative seats (Al-Jazeera, 21 January 2020). [The second round](#) of elections was held in February 2020 and the ruling party won 4 of the remaining five seats (Election guide, 23 February 2020).

In the past, some observers thought that the government might not be able to cope with the rise of Islamic militancy in the country which has been encouraged partly by the economic influence of some Middle Eastern countries. However, at present, it seems that the government is navigating this area of concern without creating unnecessary tension.

Political and legal landscape

The 2001 [Constitution of Comoros](#) (amended 2009) requires a "rotating" presidency of the Union of Comoros in which each of the three islands takes turns at holding a primary round of elections for presidential candidates every four years. Power is vested in the government by the people and switches from island to island. This may change in the future, according to World Bank (country overview): "The national congress, convened in February 2018 to assess conditions after 42 years of independence, recommended an overhaul of the system of a rotating presidency among the islands through potential constitutional reforms."

The 2001 constitution in Comoros allowed for the direct election of a president for a single five-year term, with rotational eligibility among the main islands. However, a new constitution was approved in a controversial 2018 referendum, boycotted by the opposition, which granted the president the ability to run for two consecutive five-year terms and abolished the island-rotation system. President Azali Assoumani, from the Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros (CRC) party, took advantage of the referendum's changes and won the March 2019 presidential election, also boycotted by the opposition. Despite opposition rejection and observations of irregularities by the African Union (AU) and other observers, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and the Supreme Court confirmed Azali's victory in the first round. He was sworn in for a second term in May 2021.

As reported in Global Freedom Index 2023 Comoros:

- Comoros scored a total of 42 points out of 100 in terms of political freedoms and civil liberties, making it "partly free," which is unchanged from the preceding year.
- "Comoros's volatile political history includes coups and attempted coups, though some recent presidential and legislative elections were reasonably well administered. A controversial 2018 referendum introduced major systemic changes, and opponents of the referendum were severely persecuted. Since winning the referendum and securing reelection in 2019, President Azali Assoumani has consolidated power by cracking down on

the opposition and limiting press freedom. Systemic corruption and poverty remain problems."

According to the World Bank country overview:

- On 18 February 2023, President Azali Assoumani assumed the role of the African Union's (AU) new chairperson for the year. After being absent from the political scene since 2006, he returned and won the 2016 presidential elections in his country. His government implemented various fiscal and structural reforms, including revising the Presidential Rotation System among the islands. In 2019, President Azali was re-elected for another five-year term.

The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and citizens draw principles and rules to regulate worship and social life from the Shafi school of Sunni Islam. However, as outlined by the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Comoros), the Constitution also declares the equality of rights and obligations for all individuals regardless of their religion or belief. Except for Sunni Islam, proselytizing is prohibited and is punishable with imprisonment of 3 months to 1 year and a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 Comorian francs. The law also provides for the deportation of foreigners who do so. No official registration process is required for religious groups. In this kind of legal framework, it is difficult to enjoy freedom of religion.

With regard to the legal status of foreign Christians requesting a license to build new churches, the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Comoros) reported:

- "The status of an application by expatriate Christian community members for a license to build a new nondenominational church was unclear, but most observers believed the application remained stalled. Community members previously reported they had been waiting for more than four years for a government response to their application."

Gender perspective

In 2013, Comoros was described as the "best country for Arab women" according to a Thomson Reuter poll of gender experts ([Thomson Reuters, 12 November 2013](#)). It topped the list for several reasons, which included: i) Ratifying the CEDAW treaty without making any reservations; ii) higher rates of convictions for sexual crimes; and iii) a high female representation in parliament compared to the region. Women are by no means on an equal legal footing to men, however, particularly in respect to marriage. Among other privileges, men have the right to polygamy and to divorce their wife unilaterally. Women can only enter marriage with the permission of their male guardian (*wali*) (Family Code, Art. 21). Whilst the minimum age for marriage is 18, a judge can authorize marriage at a younger age. The rate of child marriage remains high in Comoros; according to Girls Not Brides Comoros, 32% of girls and 10% of boys are married by 18 (making Comoros the country with the sixth highest prevalent rate of child marriage among boys globally).

Religious landscape

Comoros: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	4,700	0.5
Muslim	911,000	98.4
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethno-religionist	8,800	1.0
Jewish	0	0.0
Bahai	790	0.1
Atheist	120	0.0
Agnostic	1,200	0.1
Other	0	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)

Comoros is a majority Muslim country, predominantly Sunni. According to World Christian Database (WCD 2023), only around 0.5% of the population is Christian. The government itself observes the Islamic religious holidays as national holidays, such as the Birth of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Kabir and the Islamic New Year. Although classes in Islam are not compulsory in state schools, it is combined with Arabic teaching in state education at the middle school level. Due to the poor quality of state education and the fact that private schools are unaffordable for many, Islamic madrassas often fill the educational gap. Indeed, almost all children between the ages of four and seven attend Islamic schools where they learn to read and recite the Quran. Converts to Christianity face serious discrimination in society and are forced by their Muslim relatives to send their children to the Islamic madrassas.

The government favors Islam; in civil society, education and governance there is a strong presence of conservative Islam. This is reflected in Comoros' stance towards NGOs where Christian NGOs face a certain amount of discrimination. Despite Comoros' democratization of society, it appears that Islamic developments in the region - for example, the Islamic revivals in Madagascar, Mauritius and the Maldives - will become stronger, taking into consideration that Western countries are far less active on the archipelago than Muslim majority countries.

Roman Catholics, Protestants, Shia Muslims, Sufi Muslims and Ahmadi Muslims together make up the very small minority of the population.

Economic landscape

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

- **Economic growth:** Comoros' economic recovery has been affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Despite efforts, growth has remained below pre-Cyclone Kenneth (2019) levels for the fourth consecutive year. The country's low-income households have been severely impacted by rising prices, which reached record levels in 2022. The economic growth in Comoros is expected to recover modestly, reaching 2.8 percent in 2023. However, it is projected to remain subdued at 2.9 percent in 2024 and then bounce back to 3.6 percent in 2025 after the electoral cycle. The recovery will be driven by higher private and government consumption, and investment in key projects such as El Maarouf and Galawahotel, as well as port infrastructure improvements in Mohéli, will also support the recovery. With easing inflationary pressures, the fiscal deficit is projected to narrow to 3.6 percent of GDP in 2025, based on assumptions of a marginal increase in tax revenues and lower support to state-owned enterprises.
- **Inflation:** In 2022, inflation levels in Comoros reached a record high, hitting 12.5 percent for the year. By December 2022, headline inflation surged to 20.6 percent year-on-year, primarily driven by soaring food prices. The impact of this inflation is expected to be felt most by poor households, as they allocate a larger portion of their expenditure to food. In response to the rising domestic prices, the central bank adopted a tighter monetary stance by conducting liquidity-absorbing operations, amounting to US\$2.4 million from July to September 2022. These measures included increasing the obligatory reserve requirement to 15 percent in June 2022 and raising the minimum debit the credit interest rate by 2.5 percentage points since August 2022.
- **Poverty rate (measured at \$3.2 a day per capita threshold, 2011 PPP):** The poverty levels in Comoros remain high, estimated at 39.0 percent in 2022.

According to the [2023 Index of Economic Freedom](#):

- Comoros has an economic freedom score of 53.5, ranking it as the 128th freest economy in the 2023 Index. The score has increased by 3.1 points compared to the 2022 Index. In the Sub-Saharan Africa region, Comoros is ranked 40th out of 46 countries, and its overall score is below the world average.

Gender perspective

Women are on balance more economically vulnerable than men due to a gender gap in relation to education and employment access (UNDP HDR Comoros). In some regions, such as the Island of Grand Comoros, land and property are passed down the maternal line. In other regions ruled by Islamic law women typically receive half the inheritance of men.

Social and cultural landscape

According to the UNDP HDR Comoros HDI profile and World Factbook Comoros:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Antalote, Cafre, Makoa, Oimatsaha, Sakalava
- **Main languages:** Arabic (official), French (official), Shikomoro (official; a blend of Swahili and Arabic) (Comorian)
- **Urban population:** 29.9% of the total population (2022)
- **Rate of urbanization:** 2.97% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)
- **Expected years of schooling:** 11.2 years (11 years according to the CIA Factbook 2022)
- **Literacy:** 58.8% (2022)
- **Population growth rate:** 1.37% (2022 estimate)
- **Median age:** 20.9 years
- **Unemployment, total (% of the labor force):** 4.3%
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 19.5%
- **Human Development Index:** 0.554, ranking 156 out of 189 countries
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 64 years (from world bank data)
- **Gender Development Index (GDI):** 0.891

According to World Bank Comoros overview:

- Rising global food and fuel prices negatively impacted Comoros' economy, highlighting vulnerability to external shocks.
- Growth remains below potential for the fourth consecutive year.
- Expected strong recovery in 2022 was hindered by sluggish consumption.
- Inflation levels in 2022 reached a record 12.5% for the year.
- By December 2022, headline inflation surged to 20.6% year-on-year, driven by high food prices.
- Poor households, allocating a larger share of expenditure to food, are expected to bear the brunt of the shock.
- Tax measures aimed at cushioning households from rising prices and underperformance of state-owned enterprises led to a decline in government revenues and widened the fiscal deficit from 2.7% in 2021 to 3.9% in 2022.
- Current account deficit more than doubled to 6.1% of GDP in 2022 (from 2.9% in 2021) due to a higher import bill.
- External stability weakened with reserve coverage decreasing to 7.6 months of imports at end-2022 from 9 months at end-2021.

The University of Comoros is the only national university serving the Comoros Islands with a main campus located in the capital, Moroni. It opened in 2003.

Gender perspective

Comorians hold to the matriarchal family system with the women tasked with the role of initiating marriage and building the home for the family. The men still hold religious leadership but culturally, women have a strong influence within the family - which is not common in other parts of Africa, and arguably the world.

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2023):

- **Internet users:** 25.4% of the population (January 2022).
- **Facebook users:** Penetration rate of 25.1% (January 2022).

According to [Napoleon Cat \(June 2023\)](#):

- There were 258 200 Facebook users in Comoros in June 2023, which accounted for 28.2% of its entire population.
- The majority of users were men - 58.8%.
- People aged 18 to 24 were the largest user group (85,000).
- The highest difference between men and women occurs within people aged 35 to 44, where men lead by 30,500.

According to World Bank Comoros data:

- **Mobile phone subscriptions:** 853,449 people

Comoros is not a well-developed country. Its roads and other public infrastructure are basic. There are no large-scale modern industries. The country has a 4G Internet connection with 2 service providers - Comoros Telecom (Societe Nationale des Telecommunications) and Huri.

Security situation

Comoros is a country with low crime and there is no imminent threat from Islamic militancy. However, in terms of the safety for Christians, some radical Muslims known as *djaulas* are known to put pressure on converts from Islam and other Christians. These groups and their followers do not tolerate Christian activities in the country. They subtly work to dissuade Christians from practicing their faith.

Trends analysis

1) Consolidation of power

In Comoros, the political landscape bears the marks of a volatile history characterized by coups and political unrest. While recent presidential and legislative elections have shown signs of fair administration, the atmosphere remains clouded by controversy. The backdrop to this is a controversial 2018 referendum that brought about significant systemic changes, met with strong opposition that faced severe persecution. Since securing re-election in 2019 following the referendum's success, President Azali Assoumani has concentrated power by quelling opposition forces and imposing constraints on press liberties. This consolidation of power occurs amid persisting challenges of systemic corruption and widespread poverty in the nation.

2) After a turbulent political history, the country has made significant progress in terms of stability and democracy.

The president and his allies held a referendum in 2018 that abolished the presidential term limit and the rotation of the presidency among the three islands. This created a situation where an antigovernment faction emerged and lives were lost. In October 2018, the [government signed an agreement](#) with the opposition in a bid to avert further clashes (News24, 20 October 2018). However, this agreement is no guarantee that the situation is fully resolved. In January 2020, President Assoumani's party won a resounding victory in a [parliamentary election](#) boycotted by the opposition (Al-Jazeera, 21 January 2020). In February 2022, the Inter-Comorian National Inclusive Dialogue was launched with the aim of building a national consensus on the remaining political reforms. The country is rated partly free by Freedom House in its Global Freedom Index 2023.

3) The country is dependent on foreign aid

The nation's economic condition portrays a landscape of poverty, heavily reliant on foreign aid, particularly from Middle Eastern nations. However, this dependency has not arrived without its accompanying baggage. The aid from the Middle East carries the weight of radical Islamic ideology, creating a scenario where these external sources exert a form of leverage akin to "blackmail." Middle Eastern countries, in providing aid, exert pressure on Comoros to adopt policies that align with their specific ideologies, imposing demands that would not typically be asked of other nations.

4) Society and culture is conservative and the government applies this conservative value when it comes to religion

In Comoros, the conservative societal and cultural norms translate into a stringent stance on religion by the government, with strict limitations being imposed on Christians and Christian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result of grave concerns surrounding the severe violations of religious freedom, Comoros was designated for inclusion on the Special Watch List by the US Secretary of State in November 2022.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: in 2016 - <https://www.africanews.com/2016/05/16/assoumani-officially-declared-president-elect-of-comoros/>
- Recent history: Reuters - <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1R80JP-OZATP>
- Recent history: January 2020 - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/comoros-president-party-wins-poll-boycotted-opposition-200121081053507.html>
- Recent history: The second round - <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/3505/>
- Political and legal landscape: Constitution of Comoros - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Comoros_2009.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: Thomson Reuters, 12 November 2013 - <https://news.trust.org/item/20131111123247-fry3c/>
- Economic landscape: 2023 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/comoros>
- Technological landscape: Napoleon Cat (June 2023): - <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-comoros/2023/06/>
- Trends analysis: government signed an agreement - <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/comoros-opposition-sign-government-deal-after-clashes-20181019-2>

- Trends analysis: parliamentary election - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/comoros-president-party-wins-poll-boycotted-opposition-200121081053507.html>

WWL 2024: Church information / Comoros

Christian origins

The Portuguese take the credit for introducing Christianity to the island in 1517. However, this had no lasting effect and the Christian faith was reintroduced by the French when the Island of Mayotte became a French colony in 1843. Following independence in 1975, the evangelical missionary organization, Africa Inland Mission, began to expand its missionary work, but when the government started aligning itself with Muslim countries the missionaries were expelled in 1978. Similarly, the work started by other Christian groups, e.g. the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was also terminated by the government.

Church spectrum today

Comoros: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	0	0.0
Catholic	2,700	57.4
Protestant	1,400	29.8
Independent	330	7.0
Unaffiliated	220	4.7
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	4,650	98.9
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	470	10.0
Renewalist movement	370	7.9

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

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

The Christian population in Comoros is concentrated in the main cities, especially in the capital, Moroni, and in Mutsamudu, the main city on the island of Anjouan. The majority of Christians are Roman Catholic.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

All Christian communities in Comoros face persecution. The level of persecution that Christians from a Muslim background experience is far severer than the levels other groups face, no matter where they live geographically.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: The Christians in this group (for instance, the church of the Malagasy people from Madagascar) suffer many restrictions: They are not allowed to integrate converts from Islam, they are not allowed to preach in public outside their churches and if they do so, they will be deported. These communities face persecution primarily from radical Muslims and non-Christian religious leaders, and to a lesser extent from the leaders of political parties and their followers. But the fact that the current government is improving the stability of the country and its relationship with Western countries, many think the situation for expatriates could improve significantly.

Historical Christian communities: These do not exist separate from the expatriate category above.

Converts to Christianity: Christians with a Muslim background face persecution at home from family and community members, as well as from government officials, non-Christian religious leaders, leaders of political parties and their followers and from radical Islamic groups such as the *djaulas*. If their conversion becomes known, converts will be shunned and completely cut off from their families and friends.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Christians in this category are known for evangelizing, which cannot be done in public in Comoros. The Penal Code declares that “whoever discloses, spreads, and teaches Muslims a religion other than Islam will be punished with imprisonment of three months to one year and a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 Comorian francs”. Christians from Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations thus face persecution from the government and radical Muslims.

WWL 2024: Persecution Dynamics / Comoros

Reporting period

1 October 2022 - 30 September 2023

Position on the World Watch List

Comoros: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2024	66	45
WWL 2023	66	42
WWL 2022	63	53
WWL 2021	62	50
WWL 2020	57	54

Comoros scored 66 points in WWL 2024, the same as in WWL 2023, with both government and local communities exerting very high levels of pressure. The violence score remained very low at 1.1 points (a slight decrease from 1.5 points in WWL 2023). The government operates with the conviction that freedom of religion is only necessary for non-Comorians residing in the country. Any Christian found preaching will be fined and face a prison sentence.

(It should be recalled that Comoros was in the WWL Top Ten countries in the early 1990s until 1998, and in the Top 20 for several years after that.)

Persecution engines

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

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 (Strong)

Islamic oppression in Comoros is not new; however, its recent growth started with the adoption of a legal framework for introducing a state-sanctioned religion. In 2009, a referendum was held enabling the government of Comoros to change the Constitution, which now declares that Islam is the state religion. This constitutional change severely curtails the existence of other religions. Parallel to the new Constitution, it has become visible that residents are adopting a radical view of Islam, especially on the islands of Anjouan and Moheli. The rise of radical Islamic sympathies among the population at large, government officials, religious leaders and Muslim youth groups in particular, causes anxiety among Christians.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

This engine is re-emerging as an independent force in the country having been previously present but blended with *Islamic oppression*. In the period WWL 2021-WWL 2024, this engine has become increasingly visible in the way the government has chosen to consolidate its power by promoting Sunni-Islam at the expense of all other religions. The government has put serious restrictions on the activities of Christians and Christian NGOs.

Drivers of persecution

Comoros: Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG			WEAK				MEDIUM	
Government officials	Medium							Medium	
Ethnic group leaders				Weak					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong								
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong								
One's own (extended) family	Strong								
Political parties	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

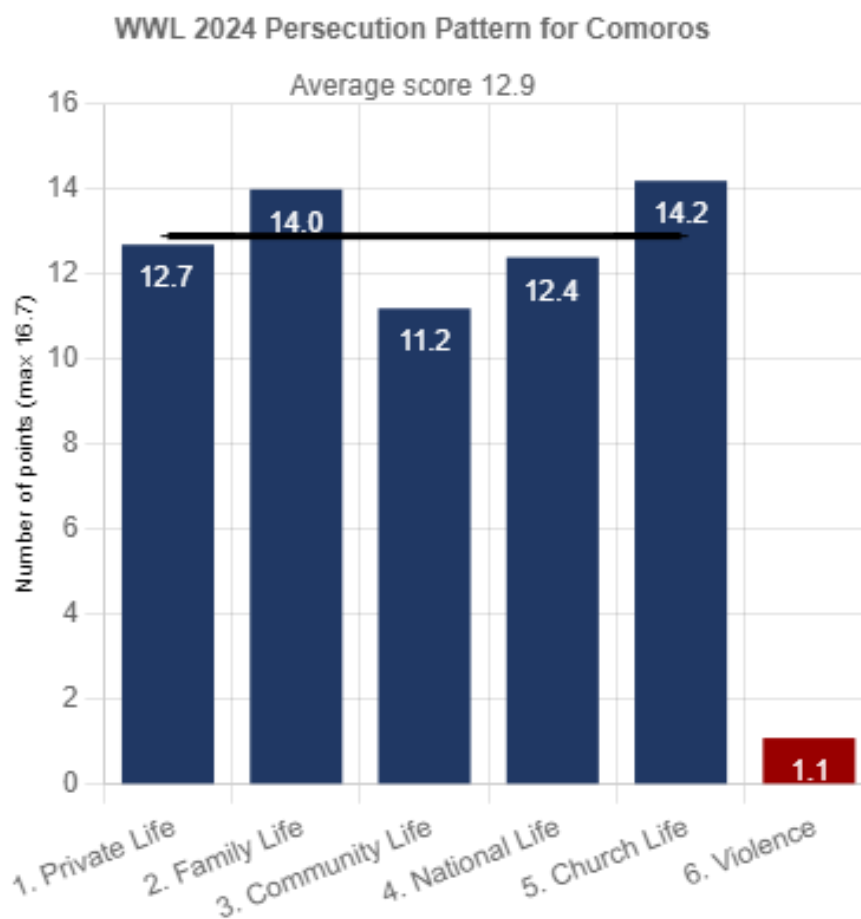
- **Non-Christian leaders (strong):** Muslim religious leaders are at the forefront of *Islamic oppression*. In mosques and madrassas, they regularly teach anti-Christian sentiments. An ultra-conservative group of radical scholars locally known as *djaulas* (many of whom are trained in Pakistan) is pushing the country to a more extreme view of Sharia law in the country and are hostile towards Christians.
- **Citizens (Strong):** Similar to other Muslim majority countries, for the majority of Comorians, to leave Islam is unthinkable. The *djaulas* in particular harass, bully and ostracize any Christians they come across. This is particularly severe in the case of converts.

- **Extended family (Strong):** Family and community members discriminate and harass suspected converts from Islam to Christianity. They also deny worshipping space for Christians in general.
- **Government officials (Medium):** The authorities put parents under the obligation to send their children to madrassas. They also prohibit Christians from engaging in religious discussions in public and from preaching in public outside churches.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** The government of Comoros has shown its intent by stating publicly that freedom of religion 'does not work' for converts and Christians. As stated above: The authorities also prohibit Christians from engaging in religious discussions in public and from preaching in public outside churches.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2024 Persecution Pattern for Comoros shows:

- The average pressure on Christians in Comoros is at a very high level of 12.9 points, similar to what was recorded in WWL 2023.
- Pressure is highest in the *Church* and *Family spheres of life*, at the extremely high level of 14.2 points and 14.0 points, respectively.
- The score for violence is very low (1.1), decreasing from a WWL 2023 score of 1.5 points.

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 1.1: Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another. (3.50 points)

Converts from Islam hide their new faith or face severe opposition from their Muslim families, local communities and Islamic leaders.

Block 1.2: It has been risky for Christians to conduct acts of Christian worship by themselves (e.g. prayer, Bible reading, etc.). (3.50 points)

Private Christian worship, prayer and Bible reading is particularly risky for converts within Muslim families.

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.). (3.50 points)

Due to the risks of being discovered, Christians with a Muslim background avoid writing about their faith on social media platforms.

Block 1.3: It has been dangerous to privately own or keep Christian materials. (3.00 points)

Converts within Muslim families risk violent repercussions if they are found possessing a Bible or other Christian materials.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.7: Parents have been hindered in raising their children according to their Christian beliefs. (3.75 points)

Converts encounter significant dilemmas regarding their children's education, as they are compelled to enroll them in Quranic schools, impeding their capacity to nurture their children in alignment with Christian faith and values.

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (3.50 points)

Christians have faced hindrances in celebrating Christian weddings for faith-related reasons, mirroring the broader challenges they confront in their family lives. This concerns converts in particular.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.50 points)

Children of Christian parents - especially of converts - cannot avoid attending Islamic classes at school.

Block 2.1: Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion. (3.25 points)

Children of converts from Islam are automatically registered as Muslim by the authorities.

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.). (3.75 points)

Christians encounter significant opposition in their local communities. Converts from Islam to Christianity bear the brunt of harassment and threats, and may face expulsion from their communities. The *djaulas* in particular harass, bully and ostracize any Christians they come across.

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.). (3.75 points)

Christians - especially suspected converts - face extensive monitoring within their local communities.

Block 3.10: Christians have been discriminated against in public or private employment for faith-related reasons. (3.75 points)

Christians find it difficult to access employment opportunities; this is particularly the case where conversion from Islam has been discovered.

Block 3.4: Christians been hindered in sharing community resources because of their faith (e.g. clean drinking water). (3.50 points)

Where their faith becomes known, converts from Islam are likely to encounter social ostracization and high levels of hostility, making access to basic resources often impossible.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (4.00 points)

The constitutional recognition of Islam as the state religion permeates various aspects of daily life, hindering Christians from fully enjoying their right to religious freedom.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (4.00 points)

Christians risk accusations of proselytism if they try to defend their faith and values in public.

Block 4.2: Officials have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identify cards (etc.). (3.50 points)

Government officials will refuse to acknowledge a Muslim's conversion to Christianity on official documents such as government administration systems, identity cards, and other vital records.

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.50 points)

In some cases, NGOs have been forbidden from operating due to their Christian basis. This situation reflects the deeply institutionalized challenges faced by Christians in a country where Islam is the state religion.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

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. (4.00 points)

Acquiring and maintaining places of worship is not only an uphill battle but also fraught with grave consequences for those daring to congregate.

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

Family and community members monitor and harass suspected converts from Islam to Christianity. They also deny worshipping space for Christians in general.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points)

Obtaining registration or legal status for churches has proven to be a formidable challenge at various levels of government.

Block 5.4: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities inside their place of worship. (3.75 points)

The government closely monitors Christian activities and maintains all legal prohibitions against any other religion other than Sunni Islam. This makes Christian preaching, training of church leaders, and publication of Christian materials extremely difficult.

Violence

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

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

Possible reasons for this may be:

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

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons

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

3. The use of symbolic numbers

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

Comoros: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire	WWL 2024	WWL 2023
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	0	0
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	2
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	0	0
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	0	0
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	14	10 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	0	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

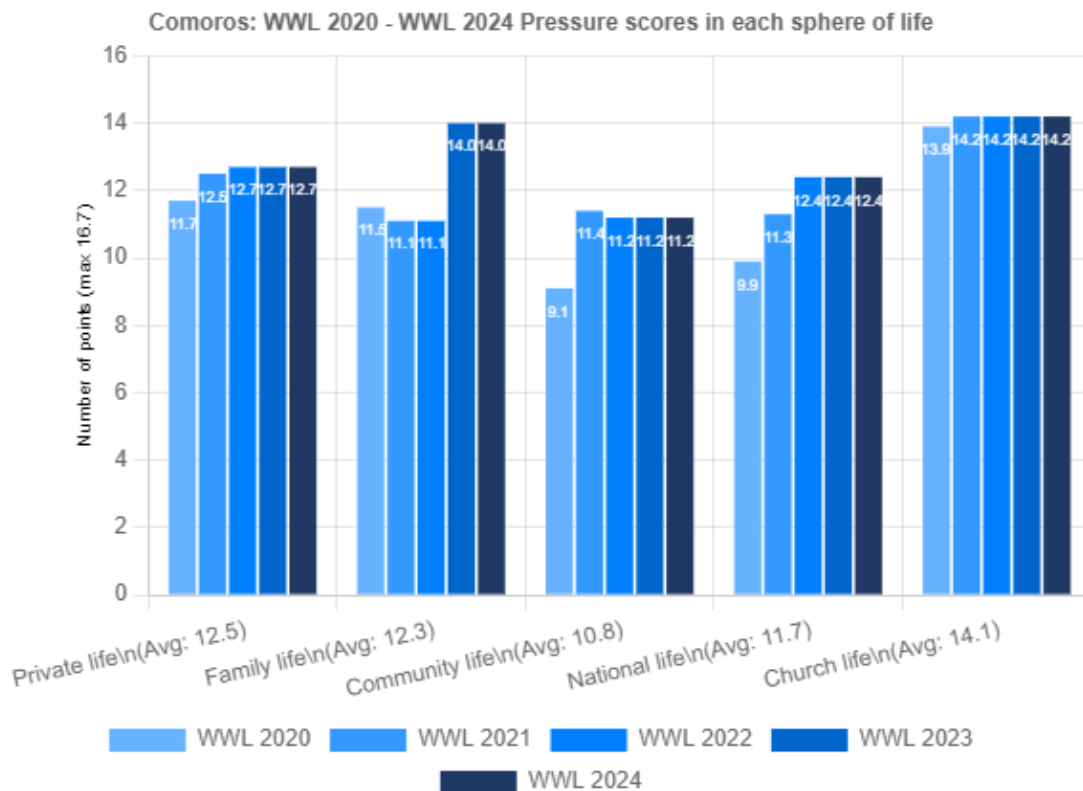
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

Comoros: WWL 2020 - WWL 2024	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2024	12.9
2023	12.9
2022	12.3
2021	12.1
2020	11.2

The table above shows that the average pressure on Christians has increased from 11.2 points in WWL 2020 to reach 12.9 points in WWL 2023 and WWL 2024. This rise has been due to the government becoming increasingly hostile to non-Sunni religious groups and encouraging society to shun them. This very high level is a warning signal: If higher levels of violence were to occur in the future, the country would have a much higher total score and WWL ranking.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life



In the chart above, it can be seen that the levels of pressure are highest on average in the *Church sphere* and *Family sphere*. Scores have plateaued in all *spheres of life* in the last two reporting periods, with the scores in some spheres showing signs of levelling off already in WWL 2021 (*Church life*) or WWL 2022 (*Private, Community and National spheres*).

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



Comoros has consistently scored low or very low when it comes to violence targeting Christians. Such levels of violence have relatively minor implications for the country's overall score and ranking.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied access to social community/networks; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Incarceration by family (house arrest); Trafficking; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Christian women and girls face grave threats, including the risk of abduction and forced marriage, particularly within their own communities. Converts to Christianity, upon revealing their faith, often encounter social ostracization and other forms of hostility. Abduction and forced marriage represent some of the most extreme forms.

Many Comorian families traditionally have matrilineal inheritance, giving women a good deal of influence in the home that can often serve as a buffer against persecution. Nevertheless, female converts from Islam experience serious difficulties due to their conversion and are kept under close family scrutiny. Women and girls who convert to Christianity before they have received their inheritance face the danger of being disinherited for their faith, due to the shame that their conversion has brought upon the family. This leaves them at a financial disadvantage, leading to poverty and distress. In addition to being shunned, there is the possibility that they will be forced into marrying a Muslim in order to pressure them to return to Islam. Women who refuse to marry face ostracism from their community. Christian women and girls are more vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and abuse, especially at the community level.

Apostasy remains a criminal offence in Comoros although not generally enforced. According to a country expert, sometimes, “the communal aspects of punishment such as isolation, denunciation and verbal or physical abuse at times could even be far worse.” A married woman who converts can be divorced for her faith, influenced by the family and community pressures, highlighting the complex dynamics of persecution faced women and girls. In some instances, for example, husbands have been largely accepting of their new-found faith, although they have then come under huge pressure from their family and local community to initiate a divorce. Should a divorce occur however, she will remain responsible for the upbringing of her children and be able to share her Christian faith with them.

Christian women and girls are also particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Comoros is renowned as a [transit hub](#) for traffickers who traffic mostly women and children to the Middle East for sex work and forced labor (USDS, Trafficking in Persons Report: Comoros, 2023).

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Denied access to social community/networks
Security	Forced out of home – expulsion; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Denied food or water; Enforced religious dress code; Violence – psychological; Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

Comoros is a matrilineal society in which the cultural norm is for a married man to move in with his in-laws. Male converts in Comoros are often dependent upon their extended families and lack independence. In this situation, the family has the means to exert a great deal of pressure upon a convert to return to Islam. They are denied equal treatment in the home, verbally abused, and in some cases, occasionally denied food. Often their wife is put under pressure to divorce them and expel them from their home. In rare instances, male converts have faced such extreme pressures and threats that they have fled to another town for safety, although no such cases were reported in the WWL 2024 reporting period.

Converts often grapple with profound dilemmas related to their faith, including the education of their children in Quranic schools, which can create religious tensions within marriages, leading to marital conflicts and ultimately divorce as spouses may struggle to reconcile their differing religious identities and practices. Furthermore, the absence of official recognition for Christian converts, combined with the state's assertion that all Comorians are Muslims, further complicates these situations.

Christian men also experience discrimination in the workplace. Employers favor Muslims and as such many Christians are out of work. In addition, because of high corruption levels in public service, most employees pay a bribe to get into positions, a practice that Christians are not willing to condone. The persecution of men and boys affects Christian families and communities greatly. Where Christian men are not able to find work because of being discriminated against, they are not able to provide for their families and become increasingly dependent on women who hold the family wealth.

The government also closely monitors Christian activities and maintains all legal prohibitions against any other religion other than Sunni Islam. This makes Christian preaching, training of church leaders, and publication of Christian materials extremely difficult. Since the majority of church leaders in Comoros are men, these violations predominantly affect male Christians. According to a country expert, pastors and priests are particularly vulnerable to arrests if what they preach is interpreted as being “against social cohesion.”

Persecution of other religious minorities

In 2022 and 2023, Shia and Ahmadi Muslims reported that they were unable to worship publicly, and government authorities occasionally attended their religious gatherings in private homes to observe their practices without interference. The conservative nature of society and the government's stance on religion have contributed to these restrictions.

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2022 Comoros):

- "There were no reports of arrests for Comorians engaging in other religious practices, but members of non-Sunni groups reported broad self-censorship and stated they practiced their beliefs only in private. Shia Muslims continued to report limited government surveillance during major religious holidays. For the third consecutive year, there were no reports of national leaders making public statements against religious minorities. Multiple religious minority group leaders said that 2022 had been 'quiet and peaceful' and again attributed the government's relative restraint to engagement from the United States and others on religious freedom issues. Private Shia commemorations of all Eid holidays, Rama-

dan and Ashura proceeded peacefully on the three islands. Shia Muslims on Anjouan said that local authorities continued to prevent them from practicing in the Shia mosque that had existed on the island for several years; they were forced to worship in a Shia community center instead."

- "Most non-Sunni Muslim citizens reportedly did not openly practice their faith for fear of societal rejection, and some Shia Muslims reported being harassed by Sunni Muslims."

Future outlook

Islamic oppression

The deeply rooted values within Comorian society significantly steer the government's stance on religion, firmly establishing Islam as the state religion in the Constitution. The public preaching of any faith apart from Sunni Islam is strictly prohibited, while the educational framework is heavily imbued with Quranic principles, further cementing Islam's prominence. Over the last twenty years, Christians have grappled with escalating threats from hardline factions advocating for an exclusive Sunni Muslim identity in Comoros, leaving scant space for religious pluralism. The 2009 Constitution, ratified through a referendum, solidified Sunni Islam's dominance, marginalizing other religious sects, including Shia Muslims. The region's escalating trend of Islamic radicalization (as witnessed in Tanzania, Mozambique, Somalia and Kenya) is intertwined with Comoros' strong ties to Middle Eastern countries known for exporting radical Islamic ideologies. This relationship may perpetuate or potentially intensify the pressure on Christians within Comoros. Despite the nation's strides toward stability and a "partly free" status according to Freedom House, Christians encounter ongoing challenges if the government persists in restricting their public expressions of faith. This restrictive environment may further embolden ultra-conservative elements within the country.

Dictatorial paranoia

The consolidation of power by President Azali Assoumani could potentially bolster stability in Comoros, yet this comes at the expense of suppressing fundamental human rights. The president's grip on governance was highlighted by a constitutional referendum in 2018, extending presidential term limits, vehemently contested by the opposition and civil society as a perceived constitutional coup d'état. His subsequent victories in the 2019 presidential and 2020 legislative elections underscore his and his party's absolute control over the nation. However, this tight control offers little promise for the flourishing of religious freedoms in the current political climate. Comoros, as rated "partly free" by Freedom House in its Global Freedom Index 2023, witnesses many Christians keeping their faith clandestine to evade harassment, with strict prohibitions on public religious ceremonies and proselytizing for non-Sunni Islam. President Azali Assoumani's elevation as Chairperson of the African Union in 2023 signifies an increased global profile, albeit temporarily. Given the nation's history marred by constitutional amendments and coups, a peaceful transition of power remains elusive. Dictatorial inclinations stemming from a fear of losing control persist, hindering democratic processes and fostering an environment of political tension and rights suppression that is likely to persist in the foreseeable future.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: transit hub - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/comoros/>

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=Comoros>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>.