



Tonga



Key Facts

POPULATION (2011 Census)¹: 103,252

AREA²: 747 sq km

CAPITAL: Nuku'alofa

CURRENCY: pa'anga (TOP)

HEAD OF STATE: King Tupou VI

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

Prime Minister Samuela 'Akilisi Pōhiva

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: constitutional monarchy

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE: unitary

LANGUAGES: English, Tongan (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:

last: Nov 2014 **turnout:** 79% **next:** Nov 2018

LOCAL ELECTIONS:

last: May 2013 **turnout:** 64% **next:** 2016

WOMEN COUNCILLORS: 0% (2010)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013/14: na

SUMMARY

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy with two levels of government, local and national. There is no constitutional provision for local government and the main legislative texts that cover local government are the Fonos Act 1988 and the District and Town Officers Act 1988. The 23 district officers and 155 town officers are elected by popular vote every three years and report directly to the Prime Minister's Office, or the governor in the case of Ha'apai and Vava'u divisions. The town officer is empowered to call a normal fono (a community meeting to discuss matters of priority) and also a 'grand fono' where the Minister of Internal Affairs or other government official may address the people.

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy assisted by a privy council comprised of ministers and the governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai divisions. The cabinet is responsible for the overall administration of government at both national and local level. There is a unicameral parliament, the Fale Alea, which has 26 members. The elections in 2014 were the second under a new system, in which the country has been divided into 17 electoral constituencies, each of which elects one representative by universal suffrage of all adults aged over 21. Nine nobles are also elected, representing the nobles of the five island groups of Tonga. The elected members then elect the prime minister. The prime minister recommends members of the cabinet from among the elected members, and has the power under the constitution to nominate up to four from outside the elected members. This mechanism has been used to ensure that there is a woman in the cabinet if no women have been elected.

Table 1. Distribution of officers and population (2011)

Division	District Officers	Town Officers	Village (inc uninhabited)	Population (Census 2011 ¹)	% rural
Tongatapu	7	na	71 (4)	75,416	na
Vava'u	6	na	45 (2)	14,922	na
Ha'apai	6	na	28 (1)	6,616	na
'Eua	2	na	14 (0)	5,016	na
Ongo Niua	2	na	12 (0)	1,282	na
TOTAL	5	23	170 (7)	103,252	76.5

Source: Minister of Internal Affairs communication with CLGF

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

There is no constitutional^{3a} provision for local government.

2.2 Main legislative texts

These are the Fonos Act 1988^{3b} and the District and Town Officers Act 1988^{3c}.

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

A review of the District Town Officers Act is proposed to see how the system could be improved.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state

Tonga has a form of local government which features district and town officers elected every three years in a local election similar to the parliamentary elections.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

District and town officers are by law required to submit regular reports to the Minister of Internal Affairs⁴ on village and district activities, and to organise village or provincial meetings. They are also tasked to attend official and ceremonial functions of government.

3.3 Council types

In some villages, councils have been established to discuss matters of priority and to assist the town and district officers in the development of village life.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections

Local elections last took place in May 2013⁵ and the next will be held in 2016.

4.2 Voting system

Elections must take place every three years for both town and district officers by popular vote of all adults over the age of 21.

4.3 Elected representatives

There are 23 district officers and 155 town officers elected across the country.

4.4 Women's representation

At the 2010 local election, none of the elected district or town officers were women. No data was available for the 2013 local election.

Table 2. Aggregate income and expenditure for local government 2013/14

Income	TOP	Expenditure	TOP
Centre-local transfers		Administration	
restricted	na	staff	na
unrestricted	na	property	na
		other	na
Locally raised revenue		Services	
property taxes	na	water	na
licences and fees	na	road maintenance	na
other	na	other	na
TOTAL INCOME	na	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	na

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement and 5.2 Implementation

The Fonos Act 1988^{1b} makes it mandatory for any adult citizen to attend a fono, which is a meeting called within the town. The fono is classed as either normal or 'grand' depending on the level of officials addressing the people.

5.3 E-government

There is no e-government strategy for local government.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There is no system of organised local government in Tonga.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The Ministry of Internal Affairs oversees the work of the district and town officers and may require them to organise or attend local activities.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

The district and town officers are required to submit regular reports to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on district and village activities.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

Salaries and any allowances for district officers and town officers are provided by the government. There are no powers to raise taxes at the local level.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

The duties of the district officers include inspections for public health, agriculture and licence compliance and reporting back regularly to the prime minister (or the governor, for Ha'apai and Vava'u divisions), and informing the police should any breach of the law be identified. The town officer supports the district officer in public health, agriculture and licence compliance inspections, as well as by announcing any fonos. Along with their oversight duties, both district and town officers have other duties, such as the recording of births and deaths and inspecting and recording licences. As chairmen or members of most village committees, they are also able to assist in the improvement of the local water supply, garbage disposal, measures to increase cultivation and improvements to agricultural roads.

References and useful websites

- 2011 Census www.spc.int/prism/tonga/index.php?option=com_advlisting&view=download&fileId=220
- UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 3a. Constitution of Tonga www.parliament.gov.to/parliamentary-business/documents/constitution-of-tonga
- b. Fonos Act 1988 http://crownlaw.gov.to/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/1924/1924-0006/FonosAct_1.pdf
- c. Town Officers Act 1988 http://crownlaw.gov.to/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/1930/1930-0009/DistrictandTownOfficersAct_1.pdf
- Ministry of Internal Affairs www.mic.gov.to/about-mic/349-internal-affairs
- Tonga Electoral Commission www.tongaelections.com
- Government of Tonga www.pmo.gov.to
- UNDP HHDR Tonga country profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TONGA>



Annex A. Summary of service provision by different spheres of government in Tonga

Services	Delivering authority			Remarks
	Central	District officers	Town officers	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION				
Police	■			
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil status register		■	■	
Statistical office	■			
Electoral register	■			
EDUCATION				
Pre-school (kindergarten & nursery)				
Primary	■			
Secondary	■			
Vocational & technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
SOCIAL WELFARE				
Family welfare services	■			
Welfare homes	■			
Social security	■			
PUBLIC HEALTH				
Primary care	■			
Hospitals	■			
Health protection	■	■	■	
HOUSING & TOWN PLANNING				
Housing	■			
Town planning	■			
Regional planning	■			
TRANSPORT				
Roads	■	■	■	
Transport	■			
Urban roads	■			
Urban rail	■			
Ports	■			
Airports	■			
ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC SANITATION				
Water & sanitation	■			
Refuse collection & disposal	■	■	■	
Cemeteries & crematoria	■			
Slaughterhouses	■			
Environmental protection	■			
Consumer protection	■			
CULTURE, LEISURE & SPORTS				
Theatre & concerts	■			
Museums & libraries	■			
Parks & open spaces	■			
Sports & leisure	■			
Religious facilities	■			
UTILITIES				
Gas services	■			
District heating	■			
Water supply	■	■	■	
Electricity	■			
ECONOMIC				
Agriculture, forests & fisheries	■	■	■	
Local economic development/promotion	■			
Trade & industry	■			
Tourism	■			

KEY

- Sole responsibility service
- Joint responsibility service
- Discretionary service