



TONGA



KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2011 Census):
103,252

AREA (UN 2006):
747 sq km

CAPITAL: Nuku'alofa

CURRENCY: pa'anga (TOP)

HEAD OF STATE:
King Tupou VI

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:
Prime Minister Samiuela 'Akilisi Pōhiva

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
constitutional monarchy

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:
unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE:
unitary

LANGUAGES:
English, Tongan (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: Nov 2017, turnout: na; next: 2020

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2017):
7.7%

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: Nov 2017, turnout: na; next: 2020

LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2016, turnout: na; next: 2019

WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2016):
1.1%

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2016/17:
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 156 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. Following the 2016 local elections, 1.1% of local government officers were women. 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. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy^{46.1a} assisted by a privy council comprised of ministers and the governors of Ha'apai and Vava'u 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 2017 were the third 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. Following the 2017 election, 7.7% (2/26) members of the Fale Alea were women.^{46.1b}

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

There is no constitutional^{46.2a} provision for local government.

2.2 Main legislative texts

These are the Fonos Act 1988^{46.2b} and the District and Town Officers Act 1988.^{46.2c}

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

No information is available on current proposed legislative changes.

2.4 National urban policy

No information is available.

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 local elections similar to the parliamentary elections.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

District and town officers are by law required to submit regular reports to the Ministry of Internal Affairs^{46.3a} (MIA) on village and district activities, and to organise village or provincial meetings. They are also tasked with attending official and ceremonial government functions.

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 2016 and the next will be held in 2019.^{46.4a} The turnout in 2016 is unavailable; however at the 2013 election turnout was 64%.

4.2 Voting system

Elections must take place every three years for both town and district officers using the first-past-the-post-system and universal suffrage of all adults over the age of 21.

4.3 Elected representatives

There are 23 district officers and 156 town officers elected across the country.

4.4 Women's representation

Following the 2016 local election, 1.1% (2/179) officers were women: one district officer ('Eua Motu'a District) and one town officer (Havelu).^{46.1b}

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement and 5.2 Implementation

The Fonos Act 1988 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.



Table 46.1a Distribution of officers and population (2011)

Division	District officers	Town officers	Village (uninhabited)	Population (2016 Census)	Population (2018 est.)	% rural (2010)
Tongatapu	7	62	71 (4)	74,679	na	na
Vava'u	6	39	45 (2)	13,740	na	na
Ha'apai	6	28	28 (1)	6,144	na	na
'Eua	2	15	14 (0)	4,950	na	na
Ongo Niua	2	12	12 (0)	1,232	na	na
TOTAL	23	156	170 (7)	100,745	99,740	76.5

Source: MIA communication with CLGF, Tonga Electoral Commission^{46.3b} and 2016 Census^{46.6c}

5.2. ICT use in citizen engagement

There is no e-government strategy for local government.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are no associations of local government in Tonga.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The MIA 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 MIA on district and village activities.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Local government expenditure

There is no information available on local government expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditure.

9.2 Locally raised revenue

There are no powers to raise taxes at the local level.

9.3 Transfers

No information is available.

9.4 Loans

No information is available.

9.5 Local authority staff

Salaries and any allowances for district officers and town officers are provided by the government.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 Overview of local government 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. 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.

10.2 ICT use in service delivery

No information is available.

10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025^{46.10a} draws on the draft SDGs and uses the same framework of balancing environmental, social and economic needs. The national government has further confirmed the value of local government in its ability to understand the context and vulnerabilities of local communities and has joined other Pacific Islands in setting up the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific. The Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP) convened a forum for local government resilience development officers from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu in recognition of local government as an important stakeholder for managing the risks that communities face arising from climate change and disasters. The purpose of the forum was to create an informal network within which these officers can share successful approaches and examples of risk-informed development.^{46.10b}

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 46.1a Government of Tonga www.gov.to
- 46.1b Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 46.2a Constitution of Tonga www.parliament.gov.to/parliamentary-business/documents/constitution-of-tonga
- 46.2b Fonos Act 1988 http://crownlaw.gov.to/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/1924/1924-0006/FonosAct_1.pdf
- 46.2c District and Town Officers Act 1988 http://crownlaw.gov.to/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/1930/1930-0009/DistrictandTownOfficersAct_1.pdf
- 46.3a Ministry of Internal Affairs www.mic.gov.to/about-mic/349-internal-affairs

Table 46.1b Women local government officers following the last three local elections

Election	2010		2013		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
All officers						
Female officers	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.1
Male officers	na	100.0	0	100.0	177	98.9
Total officers	na	100.0	178	100.0	179	100.0
District officers	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female district officers	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.3
Male district officers	na	100.0	23	100.0	22	95.7
Total district officers	na	100.0	23	100.0	23	100.0
Town officers	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female town officers	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6
Male town officers	na	100.0	155	100.0	155	99.4
Total town officers	na	100.0	155	100.0	156	100.0

Source: MIA correspondence with CLGF and Tonga Electoral Commission



- 46.3b Tonga Electoral Commission
www.tongaelections.com
- 46.3c 2016 Census
http://tonga.prism.spc.int/PublicDocuments/Census%20of%20Population%20and%20Housing_/04_2016/01_2016_Census_Preliminary_Count_Results.pdf
- 46.4a District and town officer elections 2016
www.tongaelections.com/index.php/component/content/article/208-district-and-town-officer-election-2016
- 46.4b Women make history in local government elections
www.mic.gov.to/news-today/press-releases/6130-women-make-history-in-local-government-elections-2016
- 46.5 No reference for this section
- 46.6 No reference for this section
- 46.7 No reference for this section
- 46.8 No reference for this section
- 46.9 No reference for this section
- 46.10a Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025
www.finance.gov.to/sites/default/files/TSDf%20II_English_printed%20to%20LA%20on%2019May2015_0.pdf
- 46.10b Local government resilient development network to boost risk-informed development
www.gov.to/press-release/local-government-resilient-development-network-to-boost-risk-informed-development
- 46.11a UN statistics surface area
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 46.11b UNDP HDR Tonga country profile
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TON>



Annex 46a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Tonga

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

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service