



# Egypt

## Arab Republic of Egypt

Africa

### Geography

**Area** 997,739 sq km. Mostly desert; only 3% is arable land – along the banks and delta of the Nile River and around the Western Desert oases.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	84,474,427	1.83%
2020	98,637,781	1.45%
2030	110,907,127	1.11%

Fertile areas average nearly 2,000/sq km.

**Capital** Cairo 11,001,378. **Other major city** Alexandria 4.4 million. **Urbanites** 42.8%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 32%. **Life expectancy** 69.9 yrs.

### Peoples

**Arab** 92.1%. Egyptian, speaking Arabic, but claimed by some to be descendants of the ancient Coptic-speaking people of biblical times. Egyptian Arab 84.3%; Sudanese 5.4%; Bedouin 1.2%.

**Berber** 2.0%. Mostly Arabic-speaking.

**Gypsy(Dom)** 1.4%. Most now Arabic-speaking. Halebi 1.2%; Ghagar 0.3%.

**Nubians** 1.1%. Arabic-speaking 1.6%; Nobiin 0.3%; Kenusi-Dongola 0.2%.

**Other** 0.8%. Westerners 0.6%; others.

**Refugees** 2.4%. Black Sudanese may number more than 2m. Also Ethiopians, Palestinians, Eritreans, Somalis, others.

**Literacy** 71.4% (functional literacy is below 50%). **Official language** Arabic. **All languages** 27. **Indigenous languages** 11. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi 1NT 3por.

### Economy

Egypt's wealth has traditionally been in agriculture, which still employs about one-third of the population. Already limited arable land continues to be lost to expanding cities. The past few years have seen significant economic growth in many

areas due to rapid privatization. But a large proportion of Egyptians live in poverty – most blame institutionalized corruption, a bloated public sector and recent economic advances that fail to trickle down to the masses. These recently resulted in some unprecedented labour unrest in state-run industries. Main sources of income: natural gas and some oil, textiles, tourism, Suez Canal dues and remittances from expatriate Egyptians.

**HDI Rank** 123<sup>rd</sup>/182. **Public debt** 86.5% of GDP. **Income/person** \$2,162 (5% of USA).

### Politics

Egypt has enjoyed years of relative stability under President Mubarak, whose rule has been secular and highly pragmatic. Islamist groups have grown greatly in strength in the last 20 years, despite harsh (and costly) suppression from the government. Transition to greater levels of democracy was undermined when, in 2006, the Muslim Brotherhood gained 20% of the elected parliament. They ran as independents, since religious parties were banned from running, but the government limited their number of seats and has since imprisoned a number of them. With such an uncertain future, many Egyptians are disillusioned with the political process.

### Religion

Islam is the state religion; until recently the large Christian minority were left in relative peace. The last 10 years, however, have seen higher levels of communal violence. The rise of Islamism caused Islamist violence and terror against Christians, combined with police collusion and the government failing to intervene. Investigations into incidents of religious violence are rarely properly conducted. Several high-profile cases relating to religious freedom have recently come to the Supreme Court; the outcome of these will shape Egypt's religious policies and attitudes profoundly.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	86.67	73,213,986	1.9%
Christian	12.83	10,838,069	1.4%
Non-religious	0.50	422,372	1.8%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	18	0.75	634,000	1.4%
Independent	16	0.10	85,000	3.8%
Anglican	1	<0.01	4,000	3.9%
Catholic	7	0.39	332,000	2.1%
Orthodox	7	11.59	9,787,000	1.3%
Marginal	6	<0.01	2,000	3.3%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates	TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Coptic Orthodox Ch*	O	1,531	4,900,000	9,410,000	<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelical Ch of E	P	350	55,833	335,000	Evangelicals	3.9	3,282,646	4.6%
Catholic Church	C	216	193,023	332,000	<b>Renewalists</b>			
Greek Orthodox Ch	O	181	23,478	270,000	Charismatics	1.9	1,611,264	7.4%
Assemblies of God	P	130	34,000	195,000	Pentecostals	0.3	235,853	3.1%
Armenian Orthodox Ch	O	34	68,182	105,000				
Free Methodist Church	P	105	21,000	44,000				
Chr Brethren (Exclusive)	P	283	17,000	27,500				
Pentecostal Ch of God	P	81	3,900	9,750				
Other denominations[40]		660	79,083	116,088				
<b>Total Christians[55]</b>		<b>3,571</b>	<b>5,395,499</b>	<b>10,844,338</b>				

\*Copts are numbered by some as low as 7 million; Copts themselves claim over 12 million.

TransBloc Movements  
% of Total Pop

Annual Growth Rates

## Answers to Prayer

- 1 **The Church has endured nearly 2,000 years of discrimination and persecution** yet retains its spiritual vitality and strength. The name “The Church of the Martyrs” has been earned. The last 20 years have seen an intensification of suffering, but there is a lot of life in all branches of the Church.
- 2 **Large-scale Bible distribution** and creative ways to maintain a public presence make The Bible Society a highly strategic ministry. Scripture is more accessible than ever, especially to young people, and Christians and the Christian message have greater exposure in the media.
- 3 **The innovative use of electronic media** through websites, chat rooms, satellite TV and mobile phone downloads has opened a way for millions of Muslims to hear the gospel clearly, in safer environments for true seekers. Signs indicate a very widespread response.
- 4 **A prayer and renewal movement** has burst onto the scene in recent years with many thousands from all the major churches participating, even to the top level of church leadership. This cultivates unity, spiritual vitality and vision for outreach in Egypt and beyond.

## Challenges for Prayer

- 1 **For over 1,000 years, Egypt was a majority-Christian country**, even after the Arab Muslim conquest in AD 640. Egypt gave to the Christian world some of its greatest theologians and the monastic movement. Egyptian Christians may be more clearly linked to the original Egyptian civilization that pre-dates the coming of Islam. Some efforts have been made to minimize Egypt’s great Christian heritage, to downplay the size of the Church and to marginalize its contribution to society. But the Church survives. Pray for recognition of its history and role within Egypt and for an even greater role in the future.
- 2 **The government is in a precarious position**, between the Muslim Brotherhood, the silent majority, minority groups, strident anti-government bloggers and international pressure on some issues. It seems to lack the willpower to root out corruption; failure to address this and the issue of police violence only strengthen the hands of the Islamists and critics. Water issues are becoming very serious and, combined with population growth, intensify both poverty and unemployment. Pray that corruption would be rooted out, justice done and fair laws passed and then carried out in the interests of the people.
- 3 **Egypt is arguably the intellectual centre of Sunni Islam**, and Islamist groups such as The Brotherhood have grown greatly as they push for a more Islamic state. Their slogan (now “illegal”), “Islam is the solution”, will never actually be tested unless they attain power. The stridency

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and harshness of some of their teachings and actions cause many to question this, yet they are also generous providers of social welfare. Pray that their leaders, their members and those disillusioned with conflict might discover the Light of the World.

**4** **The Coptic Church** is by far the largest body of Christians in the Middle East and is a strategic key for the evangelization of the region. Pray for:

- a) **Church leaders**, especially the Coptic Pope. Wisdom, grace and confidence are needed in handling the Muslim authorities, Islamist persecution and the questioning world. A close walk with God is essential to be both a bridge between communities and an example to their flock.
- b) **A spiritual awakening Church-wide** in the midst of mounting pressures and communal tensions. Many Copts are very nominal. The responses to Muslim agitation need to be humble and loving but strong, and only those walking in faith are capable of this.
- c) **The biblically based renewal movement** in the Coptic Church, which has steadily gained momentum since 1930. It strongly emphasizes Bible study and personal faith, and many are fervent witnesses for the Lord. Monasticism sees a rejuvenation as well. Pray for the growth and effectiveness of this movement of the Spirit.
- d) **Christians are numerous in business, the professions and health services**, but overall the Coptic influence within Egypt is much less than their large numbers warrant. Pray that Copts might have a positive and transforming effect in the nation, just as Joseph did millennia ago.

**5** **The Protestant churches sprang out** of the Orthodox Church, but did not significantly grow for a long while. However, since 1973, a renewal movement and a new generation of bold leaders are spurring growth. Young people are numerous and active in these churches, and several Pentecostal and evangelical denominations see notable increases. Many churches have extensive social and medical programmes to help the very poor and the disabled.

**6** **Persecution of Christians has steadily intensified** in the last 20 years. Harassment, discrimination on individual and communal levels and financial incentives for Christians to adopt Islam are all used to break the morale of Christians. Some areas, such as Upper Egypt, face more intense pressure than others. In most cases, the attacks that occur are carried out by vigilante Islamist groups – but often with the tacit acceptance of local security forces. Identity cards stating religion can be a huge challenge for believers from Muslim backgrounds, who tend to be on the receiving end of persecution more frequently than Copts. Pray for:

- a) **Christians to stand firm in their faith** and live exemplary lives before their oppressors and in the face of police mistreatment. A number have died or suffered incarceration and torture in prison, usually on false charges.
- b) **Christians who waver**. Estimates indicate that several thousand annually are coerced or enticed to become Muslim. Significant numbers of Christian girls fall in love with or are enticed by Muslim males, often leading to the girl eventually converting to Islam. In a growing minority of cases, violent abduction and forced conversion occurs. Pray for strength for all to keep the faith through every circumstance.
- c) **Government response to persecution and violence**. Government forces usually respond to attacks too late or not at all. This lack of decisive action by police emboldens Islamists, and the violence enables the state to enact draconian security measures. Pray for a government that will act with fairness to protect all of its communities from violence.

**7** **Muslim-background believers are increasing in number** and include a number of high-profile, former Muslim religious leaders. Conversion is not illegal, but some are imprisoned for “despising Islam” or under false pretexts; others have fled for their lives. It is thus far impossible for Muslim converts to change their identity cards and register as Christians. The numbers are not certain, but are indisputably on an unprecedentedly high level. Egyptian religious authorities claim that up to one million Muslims in Egypt have become believers in recent years. This is most likely exaggerated fear-mongering, but brings to light the more modest but nonetheless notable thousands who have recently come to Christ from a Muslim background.

**8** **Training for pastoral and missionary service** is a great need. Many evangelical churches have no trained pastor. As the Church grows and faces great trials, solid leadership is essential. Pray also for the growing numbers in theological training at the Coptic Evangelical Church Seminary (which had 120 students preparing for the ministry in 2007), as well as the **AoG** and the Free Methodist Bible schools.

**9 Unreached peoples.** Most Muslims have never heard a Christian personally share the gospel. Pray that Christians may take opportunities to witness by their words and Christ-like lives. Specific prayer targets:

- a) **The urban population** – many are uprooted peasants in slums. One thousand people a day migrate to Cairo; a high proportion are nominally Christian.
- b) **The Nubians of Upper Egypt.** For centuries a Christian kingdom, but eventually under pressure, Nubians became Muslim in the 17th Century. Today there are only a handful of Christians. Only a minority still speak the two main Nubian dialects, but they are culturally distinct. Many are poor, their ancestral lands flooded as a result of the Aswan dam. Pray for a rediscovery of their Christian roots, and for many to come to Christ.
- c) **The Bedouin,** proud desert nomads and descendants of the first Arabs in the region. Beset by poverty and unemployment, their traditional tribal way of life is under threat. Increasingly drawn toward radical Islam, there are very few Christians among them.
- d) **The Berbers** in ancient Siwa and other western oases. A culture apart from Arabs, their Islam is rife with folk magic.
- e) **The Beja,** a non-Arab group settled along the Nile River and Red Sea for 4,000 years. Traditionally nomadic, they are slowly being forced into sedentary existence. Folk Islam and fear of djinn characterize their faith.
- f) **Dom Gypsies,** cousins to the Romani of Europe, exist almost invisibly, taking casual labour to sustain their existence. Heavily marginalized, they are only very nominally Muslim, practicing magic and superstition. Those few who become believers are often ostracized from both Dom and general Egyptian society.

**10 The Southern Sudanese,** having fled to Egypt in their millions from the long civil war in Sudan, find themselves again under fire. Forced removal, using lethal violence, and angry protests have recently occurred. Most live in poverty, refugees on the fringes of society. Many are Christians. Pray for the spiritual health of these displaced, suffering people. There is already some Christian and social ministry to them (Episcopal Church, CMS, OM, Tearfund).

**11 The Egyptian Church's vision for outreach is growing,** but still in a very youthful stage in this modern era, though the Copts have an ancient legacy of sending out workers. Egyptian Christian workers have many advantages over non-Arabs in the Muslim world. Pray that the millions of Egyptian Christians in the West and Middle East may catch the vision to support such a thrust. Pray for:

- a) **Egyptian tentmakers in every Arab nation.** Egyptians work and are respected throughout the Arab world, an ideal opportunity for Egyptian Christians to have an impact in the region.
- b) **New initiatives** focused on effective ways of reaching the majority population.
- c) **The development and implementation of training courses** focused on ministry within Egypt and beyond.

**12 Openings for low-profile ministry** by professional, qualified expatriates are now more numerous than for many years. Pray for qualified and experienced labourers to partner with the Egyptian Church, which is taking up the challenges of compassionate ministry on the home front. Some examples of fruitful ministry:

- a) **Visiting and encouraging struggling churches** and providing training for leaders (Open Doors).
- b) **Empowerment programmes and holistic ministry** that includes micro-enterprise, ministry to women and assisting Christian schools and hospitals, especially with the disabled. MECO, Pioneers and AWM are a few of the expatriate agencies at work; there is much more being done by indigenous groups.
- c) **Drug addicts** number around 500,000. Related problems of crime and AIDS also need addressing. The Freedom Project and other local ministries focus on helping these broken, needy people.

**13 Christian media** is the most potent means of witness to the majority of Egyptians. Pray for:

- a) **Scripture distribution,** which has increased in the last 10 years. The Bible Society's effective marketing every year at the Cairo International Bookfair sees great success, with video and audio cassettes being especially popular. Special distribution for youth and children is very fruitful. The

Society regularly comes up with creative ways to get Scripture into the hands of Egyptians and continues to enjoy high visibility.

- b) **Widely distributed Christian literature.** There are over 30 Christian bookstores. The need is for more local Christian authors to write evangelistic and teaching materials. Pray also for production of evangelistic tools to be used by Christians in approaching their neighbours, which will help to break down Islamic misconceptions about the gospel.
- c) **The JESUS film** in Arabic is widely seen on DVD and satellite TV. Pray for its wider distribution and availability.
- d) **Satellite TV. SAT-7** broadcasts 24/7, beaming high-quality Arabic programmes on both its adult and children's channels. A large, loyal audience is building among Christians and non-Christians. Over the years, another seven stations have joined the effort, and many of them are very effective, such as *Al Hayat*, The Miracle Channel and two Coptic channels (*Aghapy* and Coptic TV).
- e) **Christian radio.** This is a potent tool. Pray for the various Arabic-language studios where programmes are prepared, and for Christian broadcasters and listeners. There are over 40 hours of shortwave programming weekly by FEBA, **HCJB**, **TWR** (also using medium wave), IBRA, the AWR and others, as well as Internet and digital radio.
- f) **The Internet** is an extremely effective means of impacting Egyptians. Several high-profile Coptic apologists (such as Father Zakaria) and former Muslims with websites are causing many to turn to Christ with their powerful testimonies and arguments for the gospel.