



Morocco

Kingdom of Morocco

Africa

Geography

Area 458,730 sq km. Northwest corner of Africa. Fertile coastal areas in the north, Atlas mountains inland and Sahara Desert to the south and southeast. A further 252,000 sq km of former Spanish Sahara claimed and occupied by Morocco since 1975.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	32,777,808	1.25%
2020	36,784,700	1.10%
2030	39,934,409	0.73%

Capital Rabat. **Other major cities** Rabat/Salé 1.8 million; Casablanca 3.3mill; Fèz 1.1m; Marrakech 928,000. **Urbanites** 56.7%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 28%. **Life expectancy** 71 yrs.

Peoples

The indigenous Berbers were gradually conquered and subdued by the Muslim Arabs after AD 684.

Arabic 57.7%. Moroccan Arab 47.8%; Jebala 4.4%; Black Maure 2.1%.

Berber 41.4%. Many dialects: Arabized Berber 12.9%; Tashilhayt (known also as Ishilhayn, S. Shilha, Souss) 9.4%; Imazighen (Tamazight) 7.9%; Rif (Tarifit) 5.1%.

Other 0.9%. French 0.3%.

Literacy Officially 53.5%, lower in practice.

Official language Arabic. Berber is used in many homes. French widely used; English increasing.

All languages 10. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi 1NT 4por.

Economy

Tourism, agriculture, textiles and phosphate mining are important foreign exchange earners. Morocco and Western Sahara have 70% of the world's phosphate reserves. Great gap between wealthy few and large numbers of poor, but a

growing middle class. Unemployment is officially around 11% but in reality is much higher, especially for young people. To keep pace with population growth, 400,000 jobs must be created annually. Millions of Moroccans seek work elsewhere – especially in Europe – and send remittances home. This foreign income contributes more to the Moroccan economy than any internal industry apart from tourism.

HDI Rank 130th/182. **Public debt** 55.6% of GDP. **Income/person** \$2,827 (6% of USA).

Politics

Independent in 1956 from French and Spanish rule. A limited democracy with an executive monarchy under King Hassan until his death in 1999. His successor, King Mohammed VI, instituted liberalizing changes, but shifted to a much more repressive stance in 2010. A growing Islamist presence opposes these changes, and terrorist bombings in 2003 showed the threat radical Islam poses to Morocco's stability. Since then it has vied with a sophisticated materialistic Islam for prevalence in the political sphere. Since the "Green March" of 1975, Morocco has occupied Western Sahara, but the subsequent warfare with the Polisario and the postponed UN referendum have left this issue unresolved.

Religion

Sunni Islam is the state religion; the existence of Christians and Jews is tolerated, but the existence of an indigenous Moroccan Church is not accepted by the government. The opposing influences of prosperous, hi-tech Middle Eastern Islam and hard-line radical Islam both exert considerable pressure. It is legal both to talk about Christ and to invite friends home for discussion, but authorities carefully monitor all known Christian activity. In 2010, a large number of expatriate Christians were deported and institutions with a Christian ethos closed. Local Christians are harassed and intimidated by police informers; some Christians have been imprisoned, accused of proselytizing. The media stir up public prejudice against the gospel.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	99.88	32,738,475	1.3%
Christian	0.09	29,000	1.3%
Jewish	0.02	6,556	-6.6%
Non-religious	0.01	3,278	1.3%

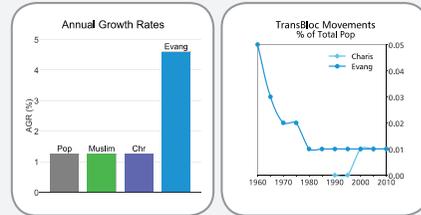
Around 90% of the Christians are not Moroccan in origin.

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	14	0.01	4,000	4.7%
Independent	3	0.01	2,000	3.3%
Anglican	1	<0.01	<200	-4.4%
Catholic	1	0.07	23,000	0.0%
Orthodox	4	<0.01	1,000	-1.2%
Marginal	1	<0.01	<200	1.5%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	32	12,849	23,000
Indigenous believers	I	30	500	2,000
Evang Reformed Ch	P	6	140	1,600
Other denominations[19]		66	1,626	3,324
Total Christians[24]		134	15,115	29,924

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	<0.01	4,774	4.6%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	<0.01	3,378	5.1%
Pentecostals	<0.01	40	4.6%

Missionaries from Morocco P,I,A estimated 10, most in Morocco.



Answers to Prayer

1 A Moroccan Church is emerging and accelerating in growth and maturity. While figures differ significantly, national Christian leaders estimate that there are about 2,000 Moroccan Christians in 20 to 30 small fellowships.

Challenges for Prayer

1 Islam was introduced by invading Arab armies in the 7th Century. The once strong North African, and largely Berber, Church was erased. Pride in Morocco's glorious past as a centre of Islamic civilization and learning, and deeply rooted prejudice against Christianity, remain barriers to the acceptance of the gospel. Only a small percentage of the population has been clearly presented with the gospel. Pray that this nation may become open for the good news.

2 Stability and relative openness make Morocco one of the West's most favoured Arab nations. Yet a troubled past and uncertain future make for challenges. Economic growth is essential to care for and give hope to the burgeoning young population, and the deeply sensitive and controversial issue of Western Sahara continues to stand between Morocco and better foreign relations. Pray for wisdom for the government, that policies and planning might establish justice, fairness and openness.

3 Moroccan Islam faces serious division as the country increasingly polarizes between Islamists and moderates. The suppression of Christian activity is meant to forestall sectarian conflict desired by extremists in other African Muslim countries. The intensifying difficulties reflect the deepening fault line; most citizens are troubled by the implications and do not wish for religious violence. Islamism finds a fertile recruiting ground especially but not exclusively among the poor and frustrated young population. Pray for peace throughout the nation, and pray that those seeking to commit violence be stymied. Pray for the country's leaders; may they navigate these troubled waters with wisdom and good decision-making.

4 The indigenous Church emerged into the nation's awareness, thanks to a media that reports obviously inflated numbers of converts to Christianity. The mostly negative press nonetheless serves to make Moroccans aware that some of their countrymen left Islam to follow Christ. There are many prayer needs for this national Church:

a) *Fellowship and unity* are essential in a Church that meets almost entirely in homes, and where many believers have little to no fellowship. There is a strong and growing informal network of indigenous Christians throughout the country; pray this network extends as believers travel to visit family groups and individuals, often isolated. Pray that no divisions upset this.

b) *Strength and perseverance* for those under pressure from family, police or religious authorities. Intensified persecution and media attention have created opportunities for witness for those bold enough to take a stand. Pray that the community of believers might grow amid such persecution

as it did in the years of the early Church, through faith, witness, mutual support and encouragement.

- c) **Discipleship of believers** is always difficult in a context of persecution, isolation and fear. This is intensified here by lack of Scripture and teaching materials, low levels of literacy and a shortage of established mature leaders. Pray that believers might increasingly engage with Scripture, focus on Christ, understand their faith and welcome newcomers.
- d) **Leadership development and training** are needed. Pray for programmes that will reliably reproduce solid leaders. Pray that there may be God-given, Spirit-gifted leadership for every group of believers.
- e) **Christians' practical needs.** Believers often have difficulty finding jobs, education and spouses. Christian families are integral to building solid house churches.
- f) **Official recognition by the government** of the legitimate existence of Moroccan believers and their identity as genuine Moroccans.

5 Specific unreached minority peoples. Pray for:

- a) **The Berber peoples.** Many were nominally Christian until Arabic Islam came; Islam among Berbers is laced with folk magic (especially in rural areas) but devout nevertheless. Currently, there is a revival of traditional language and culture. There are some believers in each of the three major Berber peoples, but nothing like the significant response among Berbers in neighbouring Algeria. Rapid and loving Christian response to a 2004 earthquake in the north generated greater openness and responsiveness to the gospel. Pray that there may soon be groups meeting together using the indigenous languages in each of the three regions.
- b) **The Maghreb Jews** once numbered more than 250,000 and enjoyed a rich cultural identity. Most emigrated to Israel in 1948. Today only a few thousand remain in Morocco. There is no known outreach to them at this time.
- c) **The nomadic desert tribes** of the south and east, who have little contact with the gospel.
- d) **Rural Moroccan Arabs**, while part of the majority people group, are particularly unreached and isolated from the gospel. Few ministries even attempt to reach them.

6 **Missionary work**, as such, is not openly permitted, but Christian workers are able to take up various types of employment, share their faith and encourage believers. Many live in the country in order to share and live out the love of Jesus. Pray especially for the following issues:

- a) **A recent crackdown on expatriate Christian workers** has seen over 100 expelled on very short notice, and their ministries all but disintegrated. In some cases, these ministries were clearly meeting social needs. The crackdown appears to be orchestrated at a very high national level and seriously endangers the continuation of foreign Christian work. Pray that the door would remain open for as long as God desires and for as long as the national Church needs in order to be raised up to finish the task in Morocco.
- b) **Relationships with nationals.** The government is attempting to drive a wedge between expatriate and indigenous believers. Expatriate Christians can endanger nationals as much as serve them if wisdom is not exercised. Pray for a good balance in how and how much foreign believers interact with indigenous Christians.
- c) **Serving the needy.** There remain some holistic ministries open to foreign Christian involvement – working with the stigmatized and disabled, assisting the destitute, building the economy through business and development links. Much discretion and patience is required until a greater freedom for the gospel is achieved.
- d) **Sub-Saharan Africans and Asians** by the thousands seek entry to Europe. They are often subject to exploitation by traffickers and harsh treatment by the Moroccan government. Some reside there as students. Many are already Christian and have formed vibrant fellowships; many others are coming to faith through the ministry of other Christians in Morocco. Pray for their positive witness to Muslims.

7 Bible and Christian literature ministries. For prayer:

- a) **Arabic Bibles** can be imported only in small quantities and Berber Scriptures not at all. Distribution is discreet. Pray for believers to acquire the discipline of reading the Word every day. Recordings

are effective for the illiterate; pray that they would listen daily. Arabic and Berber Scriptures are available on the Internet.

- b) **Bible translation** continues in the three main Berber languages in both Arabic and Berber scripts as well as in Moroccan Arabic. Pray for the translators and their work. Work is underway to record and distribute Scripture and other Christian materials in the Berber languages. The NT in Tashilhayt is available in MP3 format, loadable onto mobile phones.
- c) **BCCs in combination with Christian broadcasting** have been influential in the past, but with the coming of satellite TV fewer people now listen to foreign radio stations. Nevertheless, BCC materials still have much to offer at all academic and spiritual levels. Pray especially that leaders may benefit from Arabic-language Bible College courses available on the Internet.
- d) **Various media agencies.** Most are based in Europe. They are working to write, print and distribute Arabic and Berber materials for North Africa.
- e) **Operation Transit** distributes annually tens of thousands of packages containing evangelistic materials to North Africans crossing from Europe to Africa and back for summer vacation. Pray for these materials to be read and considered, and pray for fruit from this sowing.

8 **Christian electronic media ministries** are making a potent impact.

- a) **Satellite TV** has spread rapidly and is very popular in both urban and rural areas. *Al-Hayat*, **SAT-7**, and **Miracle** are all having an impact on millions. Pray for the production of programmes that are culturally sensitive and biblically sound. Pray for good reception of programmes and for impact on the lives and worldview of Moroccans.
- b) **Christian radio** has a role in outreach and in linking scattered believers. Seminars in radio and music ministry enable national believers to develop high-quality programmes. There are broadcasts 33 hours/week in Arabic and a total of 18 hours per week in the three Berber languages.
- c) **The JESUS film, God's Story, and other DVDs** are distributed in Arabic and the three major Berber languages. There is a need, however, for wider distribution.
- d) **Audio recordings.** Great effort is being made to record the Scriptures and other Christian resources, such as indigenous worship music and discipleship materials, into audio formats. Pray for recordings to be increased in number and variety, and for further development of indigenous Christian music, songs, poetry and theology. Where people are not habitual readers, the role of audio resources is vital.
- e) **The Internet** is an increasingly effective medium for the gospel. Many young people access sites that host serious theological discussions between Muslims and Christians. Some are coming to faith. Pray that they may be integrated into local fellowships. The Internet also connects people worldwide who are praying for Morocco.

9 **Moroccans migrate in large numbers** to search for employment, many illegally and dangerously. There are significant numbers of Moroccans in Europe: in France (approx. 1.1 million); Spain, including Ceuta and Melilla (397,000 and probably an equal number illegally); the Netherlands (315,000); Belgium (215,000); Germany (99,000); and Britain (50,000). Others reside in the Spanish North African enclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Pray for the various agencies seeking to reach them in these lands – some include **Avant**, **AWM**, **Frontiers**, **YWAM**, **OM**, **PMI** and **WEC**.

Western Sahara

Geography

Area 252,000 sq km. Almost entirely desert, but has huge phosphate deposits, one of the world's richest sea fishing areas and possibly large oil reserves beneath its territorial waters.

Population An estimated 400,000.

Capital El Aaiun 221,000. **Urbanites** 81.8%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 29%.

Peoples

Arab-Berber Moroccan "settlers" 200,000; Saharawi indigenous 75,000; a further 270,000 refugees in four main camps near Tindouf, Algeria. There are also up to 130,000 Moroccan military personnel.

Economy

Great potential for development due to natural resources; lack of water hinders this. The Moroccan occupation is costly and limits outside investment. At the same time, it has contributed to massive development of the region in the last 30 years.

Politics

Ruled by Spain until 1975 and then occupied by Morocco. Sixteen years of Polisario-Moroccan warfare ensued. A UN-brokered cease-fire of 1991 has not yielded the promised referendum on the future status of the area. Morocco is fully intent on holding on to it despite some international pressure to release it. The occupied territory (70% of total) is protected by a Moroccan-built earthen wall; the other 30% is under Polisario control (who are themselves backed by Algeria). The Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic is recognized by more than 75 governments.

Religion

Almost 100% Muslim.

Challenges for Prayer

1 Pray for a peaceful and fair resolution to decades of costly conflict.

a) *Morocco's determination to remain* is strengthened by their value as an Arab ally to France and the USA, and will only be entrenched by the likelihood of oil reserves offshore. The cause of the Polisario is remarkably enduring and strong. Pray for justice, for an equitable solution, and for the Saharawi people to be able to return to their homeland.

b) *Where there are believers*, God is breaking down enmity between those in opposition politically. Pray for the Church to model the reconciliation available in Christ, turning hearts away from attachment to futile political ambitions and toward a zeal for Jesus.

2 There are only a handful of Christians among this entire people, but we see a new day of growth and witness among the Saharawi through low-key mission work and national believers. There are openings for ministry to refugees through relief and development, and difficult political and living conditions lead to considerable openness. The JESUS film is available and the Hassaniya NT is in preparation. Pray for those who are, and could be, serving among them.