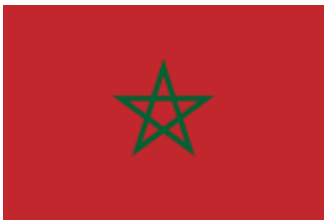


Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailedanalysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Morocco

Population: 32.99 millions (#39 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 446,550 square km. Located in northeastern Africa, Morocco borders Algeria, Western Sahara, the two small Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, the North Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea. The Strait of Gibraltar separates Morocco from Spain by a narrow 20 kilometer passageway of ocean. Coastal plains occupy northern areas, whereas mountains and plateaus occupy much of the interior. The Atlas Mountains stretch through central Morocco, reaching altitudes over 4,000 meters. Northern plains and mountain valleys tend to be fertile and heavily cultivated whereas the south is arid desert. Earthquakes and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification, soil erosion, overgrazing, sewage disposal, siltation of reservoirs, and oil pollution in the surrounding ocean. Morocco occupies and claims Western Sahara, an action not recognized by the international community. Morocco is divided into twelve administrative regions.

Peoples

Arab-Berber: 99%

Other: 1%

Traditionally, Arabs populated coastal and lowland areas and Berbers resided in highland areas in the center and south. Today many areas are mixed Arab-Berber, with the bulk of the Berber population today living in southern areas.

Population: 33,986,655 (July 2017)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.97% (2017)

Fertility Rate: 2.11 children born per woman (2017)

Life Expectancy: 74.0 male, 80.3 female (2017)

Languages: Arabic dialects (53%), Tachelhit (21%), Tamazight (14%), Tarifit (12%). Arabic is the official language whereas French is generally spoken in government and business. Berber languages (e.g. Tachelhit, Tamazight, Tarifit) are spoken in many mountainous areas, and are sometimes written in a unique script of over fifty characters with Phoenician origins.

Languages with over one million native speakers include Arabic dialects [mainly Moroccan-spoken Arabic] (18 million), Tachelhit (7.1 million), Tamazight (4.6 million), and Tarifit (4.2 million).

Literacy: 68.5% (2015)

History

Various ancient civilizations traded and control regions of Morocco since antiquity, including the Phoenicians and Romans. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, Visigoths, Vandals, and Byzantine Greeks ruled the region. Arabs conquered the region in the late seventh century and spread Islam. Moorish dynasties ruled Morocco after 788 AD. After the Middle Ages, Portugal and other European powers competed for control of North Africa and the Strait of Gibraltar for trade. The local Moroccan monarchy resisted such efforts. Spain controlled Morocco in the latter half of the nineteenth century. France had vested interested in Morocco in the nineteenth century, and successfully obtained sovereignty of the area by the early twentieth century. In 1912, the Treaty of Fes made Morocco a French Protectorate and ceded territory south of Morocco along the coast to Spain. Following World War II, Morocco took greater interest in gaining independence, which occurred in 1956. Tangier and Ifni were reintegrated into Morocco in 1956 and 1969, respectively. The government has been a constitutional monarchy since the early 1970s. Morocco annexed Western Sahara in the late 1970s and continues to control the area, although this action is not recognized by the international community. The future status of Western Sahara continues to be debated. Since the 1990s, Morocco has taken significant steps towards greater liberalization of the economy and politics, resulting in greater economic growth and development.[1] The Justice and Development Party (PJD) became the first Islamist party to lead the Moroccan government in 2011.

Culture

Islam strongly influences daily life, cultural practices, and customs. Morocco has been a center of Islamic learning and from antiquity a region integrated into Mediterranean trade routes that accelerated learning and commerce. Major influences on local culture have come from the Berbers, Arabs, Europeans, Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Cuisine consists of many foods and dishes found throughout the Mediterranean. Tea is widely consumed. There is a rich tradition of poetry, literature, art, and music. Alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the worldwide average, whereas cigarette consumption rates are moderately low. Unlike most Arab states, polygamy is uncommon, and the government has tried to eradicate its practice.

Economy

GDP per capita: $8,600 (2017) [14.5% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.647

Corruption Index: 40 (2017)

Considerable progress in developing and stabilizing the economy has occurred in the last decade notwithstanding the global financial crisis in the late 2000s that resulted in less demand and lower prices for phosphates and fewer tourists from Europe. Morocco continues to rely on phosphates and agriculture products to drive the economy, however. Low literacy rates are a significant challenge for future economic growth. The government has worked to improve living standards in many areas and develop the country's infrastructure with a particular focus on renewable energy. Agriculture employs 39.1% of the work force and generates 14.8% of the GDP. Primary crops include barley, wheat, fruit, vegetables, and olives. Livestock and wine are also common agriculture products. Services employ 40.5% of the labor force and account for 56.0% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 29.1% of the labor force and generates 20.3% of the GDP. Industries include automotive parts, phosphate rock mining, food processing, textiles, construction, energy, and tourism. Spain and France are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread but has been highly publicized, and some progress has been achieved in recent years in addressing petty corruption. Transparency International's rating for perceived corruption in Morocco has significantly improved during the past decade. Government transparency has increased, and legislation to prevent or discourage corruption appears to be in place. Prosecuting corruption charges on high-profile individuals remains a challenge.[2] Drug trafficking is a concern, as Morocco is a major transshipment point for South American cocaine to Europe and is one of the world's largest producers of cannabis.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations – Members – Congregations

Catholic – ~30,000

Latter-day Saints – 86 – 1

Seventh Day Adventists – 53

Religion

Most the population is Sunni Muslim. Shi'a Muslims appear to number in the tens of thousands and are primarily from Lebanon and Iraq. Most Christians are foreigners. The local Christian population is estimated around 2,000-6,000. Morocco is one of the few Arab nations that has been consistently tolerant of its native Jewish population. There are estimated to be between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews who primarily reside in Casablanca.[3] Morocco is the only Arab state that has a Jewish museum.[4]

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows for the practice of religion on an individual basis but declares Islam as the state religion. The King possesses the responsibility to defend Islam. The government has taken steps to prevent the spread of radical Islamic teachings and preserve its historical Islamic identity. Non-Muslim foreigners may openly practice their beliefs, but local non-Muslims and non-Jews face threats of government surveillance, ostracism, and persecution for worshipping. Local Christian converts tend to meet in private homes to worship. There have been consistent efforts by the government to limit the spread and practice of Shi'a Islam and Christianity. The government bans proselytism and the distribution of non-Islamic literature. Attempting to convert a Muslim to another religion is illegal. Foreign Christian missionaries do operate in Morocco and either work among non-Muslims or secretly among Muslims but can be expelled if their activities are made public. Christian groups registered with the government include the Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican Churches.[5] The small Jewish minority is respected and esteemed by most as a cultural heritage of Morocco due to the long Jewish history in the region.[6]

Largest Cities

Urban: 62.5%

Casablanca, Fès, Tanger, Marrakech, Salé, Rabat, **Meknès, Oujda, Kénitra, Agadir, Tétouan, Témara, Safi, Mohammédia, Khouribga, El Jadida, Béni Mellal, Aït Melloul, Nador, Dar Bouazza, Taza, Settat, Berrechid, Khémisset, Inezgane, Ksar El Kébir, Larache, Guelmim, Khénifra, Berkane, Taourirt, Bouskoura, Fkih Ben Salah, Dcheira El Jihadia.**

Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

One of the thirty-four cities with over 100,000 inhabitants has LDS congregations. Forty-one percent (41%) of the national population resides in the thirty-four largest cities.

LDS History

Small groups of foreign Latter-day Saints have met for church in Morocco since as early as the 1950s. Morocco belonged to the Europe Mediterranean Area in the 1990s.[7] The Spain Seville Mission operated two small branches in Ceuta and Melilla in the 1990s.[8] In 1994, the BYU Young Ambassadors performed in Casablanca and Rabat. The performances were recorded by national television and sold out.[9] In 2000, Morocco was assigned to the Europe West Area.[10] In 2008, Morocco was transferred to the new Middle East/Africa North Area, and the seminary program was introduced. LDS apostle Elder Jeffrey R. Holland visited Morocco in 2011 and met with local Latter-day Saints.[11]

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 86 (2017)

Membership appears to be largely, if not entirely, composed of foreign members from Europe and North America and Sub-Saharan Africa. During the 2008–2009 school year, two people were enrolled in seminary or institute. In late 2012, there

were 24 members in the Rabat Branch.[12]

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 1 Groups: 1? (2018)

A branch once functioned in Rabat, Morocco up until the late 2000s. In 2010, small groups of expatriate members met in Rabat and Casablanca, likely under the jurisdiction of the Middle East/Africa North Area Branch. In 2011, a branch was reestablished in Rabat.[13] In 2018, it was unclear whether a member group continues to operate in Casablanca.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French, English.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and French.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings likely occur in members' homes or in reserved/rented spaces in hotels.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted a many humanitarian and development projects in Morocco in recent years, including donating an ophthalmology microscope and providing neonatal resuscitation training.[14] In 2005, French members assembled fifty hygiene and fifty education kits to distribute to needy children in Laayoune, Western Sahara.[15] LDS Charities has conducted thirty-nine projects in Morocco since 1985. These projects have included Benson Food initiatives, community projects, emergency response, maternal and newborn care, and wheelchair donations.[16]

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Morocco provides foreigner non-Muslims greater religious freedom than many other Arab states. The LDS Church remains unregistered with the government, and meetings occur privately for expatriate members in harmony with governmental regulations. Government policies and attitudes towards locals converting from Islam is a major obstacle if missionary activity occurs among the population one day. The LDS Church performs no proselytism and has observed local laws and customs regarding its religious activities.

Cultural Issues

The central role Islam plays in everyday life is a major cultural issue that will challenge and restrict missionary activity even in the event that proselytism bans are one day relaxed. The amount of tolerance and respect directed towards the Jewish minority indicates that the Muslim majority can coexist with non-Muslim groups without friction. However, this trust and respect has come as a result of centuries of coexistence and the lack of Jewish proselytism among Muslims. Latter-day Saints may struggle to gain such a positive reputation. Prospective missionary outreach would need to address drug abuse issues prevalent among many Moroccans.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by the Church with the exception of the close personal contacts of Latter-day Saints, but local laws prevent any organized mission outreach. If missionary work were permitted in Morocco, mission outreach centers would likely only be established in Casablanca and Rabat, which account for 19% of the national population. Bans on the distribution of religious literature further challenge any efforts to establish a church presence among locals.

The small indigenous Christian community is a subset of the population, which has potential for outreach, but this discriminated and marginalized group is difficult to contact due to the private nature of their worship to avoid persecution.

The Church can perform legal mission outreach to hundreds of thousands of Moroccans in Europe. There do not appear to have been any concentrated efforts to proselyte Moroccans in Europe by Latter-day Saints. Limited numbers of full-time missionaries and outreach resources may render North African populations in nations with mission outreach centers unreached for the foreseeable future. Although many do not return to their home country, establishing the Church among the expatriate Moroccan population may one day facilitate church establishment among the indigenous population.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in Morocco. Member activity rates likely resemble those of nations from which foreigner Latter-day Saints originate, namely the United States and Europe.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Due to the highly homogenous demographics of the population, few, if any, ethnic issues will manifest themselves at church if an official church presence is established one day. Non-Arab-Berber converts from other Middle Eastern nations may experience some challenges assimilating into Arab-Berber congregations, as these peoples tend to be marginalized.

Language Issues

A wide selection of LDS Church materials is available in Arabic, but no materials have been translated into the Moroccan dialect. French-language church materials may be used in mission outreach. The nearly sixteen million speakers of Berber languages may remain without church materials in their languages for several more decades due to the lack of Latter-day Saints among the speakers of these languages and lack of mission outreach opportunities in nations where most Berbers live.

Missionary Service

No missionaries appear to have served from Morocco. With the exception of Spain-controlled Ceuta and Melilla, no missionaries have been permanently assigned. Humanitarian senior couple missions have visited, but it does not appear that they were permanently assigned.

Leadership

Foreign members hold current church leadership positions. There are no foreseeable prospects for the development of indigenous church leadership.

Temple

Morocco is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Organized temple trips for expatriate members do not occur, and members appear to attend the temple on an individual basis. The Madrid Spain Temple is in close proximity compared to other nations in the Middle East/Africa North Area, and members may attend this temple more frequently.

Comparative Growth

Morocco appears to have the second largest Latter-day Saint population among countries in North Africa after Egypt. With the exception of Egypt, North African nations all appear to lack native Latter-day Saint converts.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report some of the greatest success in gaining converts in Morocco among Arab states. Many of these groups operate underground and hold house church meetings to avoid government surveillance and persecution. Nevertheless, most proselytism-focused Christian groups report a very small presence in Morocco. These groups have achieved the greatest success with Moroccan-targeted proselytism efforts in Europe. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe hold worship services in Berber languages or Moroccan Arabic for approximately six congregations, and hold worship services in Standard Arabic for hundreds of congregations.

Future Prospects

Morocco offers abundant opportunities for humanitarian and development work, such as literacy programs and employment workshops for youth, which have yet to be explored by the LDS Church. Prospects for increasing the number of service projects appear favorable in the coming years and may help create a positive relationship with the government and aid beneficiaries. However, there are no current possibilities for a church establishment beyond the expatriate population in the foreseeable future

due to bans on proselytism and literature distribution, the lack of indigenous members in Morocco and abroad, and cultural restrictions on Muslims converting to Christianity.

[1] “Background Note: Morocco,” Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 26 January 2010. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm

[2] “Snapshot of the Morocco Country Profile,” Business Anti-Corruption Portal, retrieved 16 September 2010. http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/

[3] “Morocco,” International Religious Freedom Report 2017. Accessed August 7th, 2018. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=280998#wrapper

[4] “Morocco,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127354.htm

[5] “Morocco,” International Religious Freedom Report 2017. Accessed August 7th, 2018. https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2017&dlid=280998#wrapper

[6] “Morocco,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127354.htm

[7] “Europe Mediterranean Area: New Challenges and Growth,” Tambuli, Aug 1993, 22.

[8] Cannon, Mike. “Diversity in land, people, and climate,” LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html

[9] “From around the world,” LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24522/From-around-the-world.html

[10] Lloyd, Scott. “European continent realigned into three new areas,” LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent—-realigned-into-three-new-areas.html

[11] Avant, Gerry. “Apostle Visits Tiny, Remote Branch in Morocco,” lds.org, 7 December 2012. https://www.lds.org/church/news/apostle-visits-tiny-remote-branch-in-morocco?lang=eng

[12] "Apostle visits tiny, remote branch," LDS Church News, 8 December 2012. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/63039/Apostle-visits-tiny-remote-branch.html

[13] "Apostle visits tiny, remote branch," LDS Church News, 8 December 2012. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/63039/Apostle-visits-tiny-remote-branch.html

[14] “Projects—Morocco,” Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 16 September 2010. http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607–1–2008–248,00.html

[15] “French members send aid,” LDS Church News, 28 May 2005. http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47360/French-members-send-aid.html

[16] “Where We Work,” LDS Charities. Accessed 7 August 2018. https://www.ldscharities.org/where-we-work