

World
Watch
Research

Morocco: Country Dossier

December 2019



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2019

research@od.org

Contents

Introduction	3
World Watch List 2020	3
Copyright notice	4
Brief note on sources and definitions	4
WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Morocco	5
Brief country details	5
Dominant persecution engines and drivers	5
Brief description of persecution situation	5
Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period	5
WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Morocco	6
Link for general background information	6
Recent history	6
Political and legal landscape	6
Religious landscape	7
Economic landscape	8
Social and cultural landscape	8
Technological landscape	8
Security situation	9
Trends analysis	9
External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding	9
WWL 2020: Church information / Morocco	11
Christian origins	11
Church spectrum today	12
External Links - WWL 2020: Church information	12
WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Morocco	13
Reporting period	13
Position on World Watch List (WWL)	13
Persecution engines	13
Drivers of persecution	14
Geographical hotspots of persecution	15
Christian communities and how they are affected	15
The Persecution pattern	16
Pressure in the 5 spheres of life	16

Violence.....	20
5 Year trends	21
Gender profile of persecution.....	22
Persecution of other religious minorities.....	24
Future outlook for the church.....	24
External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics	25
Additional reports and articles.....	26
WWR in-depth reports	26
World Watch Monitor news articles	26
Recent country developments	26

Introduction

World Watch List 2020

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019	Total Score WWL 2018	Total Score WWL 2017	Total Score WWL 2016
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	11.1	94	94	94	92	92
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	94	93	89	88
3	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.5	9.4	92	91	91	91	87
4	Libya	15.3	15.5	15.8	16.0	16.4	11.3	90	87	86	78	79
5	Pakistan	14.0	13.9	15.0	14.9	13.7	16.7	88	87	86	88	87
6	Eritrea	14.5	14.9	15.9	15.9	15.4	10.9	87	86	86	82	89
7	Sudan	14.2	14.6	14.5	15.7	16.1	10.4	85	87	87	87	84
8	Yemen	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	16.7	2.6	85	86	85	85	78
9	Iran	14.1	14.3	14.1	15.8	16.5	10.4	85	85	85	85	83
10	India	12.9	13.0	13.5	15.0	13.5	14.8	83	83	81	73	68
11	Syria	13.5	14.2	13.0	13.9	14.4	12.6	82	82	76	86	87
12	Nigeria	12.2	11.9	13.5	12.8	13.0	16.7	80	80	77	78	78
13	Saudi Arabia	15.1	14.9	14.1	15.5	16.5	2.4	79	77	79	76	76
14	Maldives	15.4	15.6	14.0	15.9	16.6	0.7	78	78	78	76	76
15	Iraq	14.0	14.6	13.9	14.5	13.6	5.6	76	79	86	86	90
16	Egypt	12.1	13.1	10.7	13.2	10.5	16.1	76	76	70	65	64
17	Algeria	13.5	14.3	10.4	12.8	13.2	9.3	73	70	58	58	56
18	Uzbekistan	15.1	12.9	14.1	12.2	15.7	3.0	73	74	73	71	70
19	Myanmar	11.8	11.9	13.5	12.5	12.2	10.7	73	71	65	62	62
20	Laos	12.8	9.9	14.1	14.4	14.9	5.6	72	71	67	64	58
21	Vietnam	12.3	8.5	12.9	13.6	14.5	9.8	72	70	69	71	66
22	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.2	13.8	13.3	15.7	1.9	70	69	68	67	66
23	China	11.6	8.4	11.6	12.8	15.1	10.2	70	65	57	57	57
24	Mauritania	13.9	14.0	13.0	13.7	13.4	0.2	68	67	57	55	50
25	Central African Republic	10.1	9.1	13.1	9.8	10.2	15.6	68	70	61	58	59
26	Morocco	12.4	13.3	10.8	11.7	14.1	4.1	66	63	51	49	47
27	Qatar	13.6	13.4	10.8	12.2	14.1	2.2	66	62	63	66	65
28	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	10.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	66	48	-	-	-
29	Mali	9.2	8.2	12.8	10.0	11.7	13.7	66	68	59	59	55
30	Sri Lanka	11.5	9.0	11.0	10.9	9.6	13.1	65	58	57	55	53
31	Tajikistan	13.9	12.3	11.9	12.4	13.1	1.1	65	65	65	58	58
32	Nepal	12.4	10.8	9.9	12.1	12.2	7.0	64	64	64	53	53
33	Jordan	13.1	14.1	10.7	11.7	12.5	1.7	64	65	66	63	59
34	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.3	10.8	12.3	5.4	64	63	62	61	58
35	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.5	10.7	12.4	14.0	1.7	64	63	63	56	55
36	Turkey	12.6	11.8	10.7	13.3	11.3	3.7	63	66	62	57	55
37	Brunei	13.8	14.3	10.7	10.3	13.5	0.6	63	63	64	64	61
38	Bangladesh	11.1	9.9	12.7	11.1	8.9	9.3	63	58	58	63	57
39	Ethiopia	10.0	9.2	10.6	10.8	10.4	11.9	63	65	62	64	67
40	Malaysia	12.1	14.6	12.7	12.0	9.6	1.5	62	60	65	60	58
41	Colombia	8.9	7.8	11.9	9.8	8.9	15.0	62	58	56	53	55
42	Oman	12.7	13.1	10.0	11.5	12.7	2.0	62	59	57	53	53
43	Kuwait	13.2	13.1	9.9	11.5	13.4	0.7	62	60	61	57	56
44	Kenya	11.7	10.5	10.9	8.3	10.9	9.1	61	61	62	68	68
45	Bhutan	12.8	10.9	11.8	11.6	13.9	0.0	61	64	62	61	56
46	Russian Federation	12.2	8.3	10.7	10.4	12.1	6.9	60	60	51	46	48
47	United Arab Emirates	12.9	13.0	9.5	11.1	12.6	1.1	60	58	58	55	55
48	Cameroon	8.8	7.2	11.6	7.0	10.4	15.0	60	54	38	-	45
49	Indonesia	10.9	11.1	11.6	10.2	9.5	6.5	60	65	59	55	55
50	Niger	9.4	9.5	13.3	7.2	11.1	9.3	60	52	45	47	53
51	Palestinian Territories	12.2	13.0	9.2	10.2	11.9	3.1	60	57	60	64	62
52	Mexico	8.4	6.8	12.2	10.6	10.0	11.5	60	61	59	57	56
53	Azerbaijan	13.0	10.0	9.3	11.1	12.4	1.5	57	57	57	52	57
54	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.9	13.9	0.9	57	56	56	56	56
55	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.3	11.1	9.4	11.9	1.1	57	56	54	48	46
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.3	10.3	10.0	11.2	0.2	56	56	56	57	58
57	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5.6	6.7	10.6	7.4	10.4	15.6	56	55	33	-	53
58	Chad	11.5	8.2	10.2	9.6	10.3	5.9	56	48	40	-	51
59	Bahrain	12.1	12.3	9.1	10.1	10.5	0.9	55	55	57	54	54

60	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	7.0	55	52	53	59	57
61	Cuba	9.6	5.6	9.5	11.8	12.0	3.5	52	49	49	47	42
62	Uganda	8.1	4.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	13.0	48	47	46	53	45
63	Burundi	5.1	5.8	9.7	9.2	9.6	8.7	48	43	-	-	-
64	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	7.0	8.1	3.7	45	46	-	-	-
65	South Sudan	5.7	1.5	7.0	6.3	7.8	15.6	44	44	-	-	-
66	Mozambique	6.9	4.6	7.1	5.2	8.0	11.7	43	43	-	-	-
67	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.7	8.3	8.8	1.1	43	43	-	-	-
68	Angola	6.4	3.6	7.0	8.7	10.4	6.7	43	42	-	-	-
69	Venezuela	3.8	4.4	10.6	9.3	9.5	4.8	42	41	34	-	-
70	Ivory Coast	9.8	8.6	8.2	5.5	6.6	3.5	42	43	-	-	-
71	Rwanda	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.8	10.1	7.2	42	41	-	-	-
72	Nicaragua	5.8	4.2	8.5	9.8	9.0	4.1	41	41	-	-	-
73	Togo	8.6	6.7	8.5	7.1	8.4	1.1	41	42	-	-	-

Copyright notice

No copyright - This report is the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. It may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge WWR as the source.

Brief note on sources and definitions

This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). The highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. The WWL 2020 reporting period was 1 November 2018 - 31 October 2019.

The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”.

This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

WWL 2020: Persecution summary / Morocco

Brief country details

Pop 2019	Christians	Chr%
Morocco		
36,635,000	32,200	0.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

World Watch List Morocco	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2020	66	26
WWL 2019	63	35
WWL 2018	51	0
WWL 2017	49	0
WWL 2016	47	0

Scores and ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2016-2020 reporting periods.

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

Morocco: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	One's own (extended) family, Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs, Non-Christian religious leaders, Government officials, Political parties, Violent religious groups
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of persecution situation

A recurrent problem for Christians who are open about their faith relates to Article 220 of the Penal Code which criminalizes 'shaking the faith of a Muslim'. This puts many Christians who talk to others about their faith at risk of criminal prosecution and arrest. Advocates for the rights of Christians have also been targeted for violent attack by Islamic militants. While the law only punishes proselytization, converts to Christianity can be punished in other ways, for instance by losing inheritance rights and custody of children.

Specific examples of persecution in the reporting period

- Several converts from Islam to Christianity were detained and questioned by the security services about their possession of Bibles as well as their contact with foreign Christians.
- Converts from a Muslim background are often the victim of physical or even sexual abuse at the hands of members of their (extended) family. At least four female converts were forced to marry a Muslim man.
- During the WWL 2020 reporting period, at least two church properties were vandalized. The number of church properties in Morocco is very low.
- At least one convert from Islam to Christianity had his apartment demolished by his own family.

WWL 2020: Keys to understanding / Morocco

Link for general background information

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14121438>.

Recent history

Morocco was a French protectorate from 1912 to 1956, when it gained independence. Upon independence, Morocco was able to take control of some of the territory under Spanish protectorate, the so called "Western Sahara". However, Morocco's claim of sovereignty over other former Spanish controlled territories is resisted by the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro" (POLISARIO) which proclaimed an independent state called Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and managed to secure the recognition of some states.

After the initial Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, Morocco was also touched by the wind of liberty and desire for economic change. Large numbers of young people who found themselves unemployed even after getting university degrees expressed their frustration by taking to the streets. Responding to the demonstrations and calls for change, the government organized a referendum on constitutional reforms which was held on 1 July 2011. In the elections held since these constitutional reforms were put in place, the Islamist Justice and Development Party has won the largest number of seats in parliament enabling it to form coalition governments. Therefore, Morocco was able to avoid the political upheaval that engulfed North Africa.

However, grievances and discontent is especially strong in the Rif region (in the northern part of the country) where the mainly ethnic Berber population feel marginalized and neglected by the government. In previous years, there were occasional demonstrations in this region. In June 2018, some of the protest's leaders [were convicted](#) to lengthy prison sentences. In August 2018, during the Eid al-Adha holiday, King Mohammed VI [pardoned](#) nearly 200 imprisoned protesters. However, sentences against 43 others [were upheld in the Court of Appeals](#) in April 2019.

Political and legal landscape

Morocco is a parliamentary monarchy in which the king is granted extensive executive powers and is both political and religious leader, being officially designated "Commander of the Faithful". He presides over the Council of Ministers and appoints the prime minister following legislative elections from the winning party. On recommendations from the prime minister, he appoints the members of government. The [EIU](#) classifies Morocco as a 'hybrid' regime.

[The Freedom of Thought report](#) classifies the government as 'severely discriminating' and states: "Although Morocco signed and ratified few UN treaties and resolutions on civil rights and freedom of religion, conscience and thought, ... their primacy over national laws is compromised: ... Morocco commits itself 'To comply with the international conventions duly ratified by it' subject to their compatibility with the constitution and 'its immutable national identity'".

The report continues: "The constitution declares that 'Islam is the religion of the State' (Article 3), and that Morocco 'commits itself ... to deepen the bonds of togetherness with the Arabo-Islamic Ummah' (Preamble). It also refers to Islam, as well as monarchy, as one of the 'federative constants' of the Nation (Article 1). The King is considered as a direct descendant of the prophet of Islam, which gives the ruling Alaouite dynasty its legitimacy."

Religious landscape

Over 99% of the population is Muslim (majority Sunni), with the remaining being mostly agnostic or Christian. Islam is the official state religion. Non-Muslim foreign communities can openly practice their faiths. The majority of Christians in Morocco are Roman Catholic and, in comparison to other countries in the Arab world, Morocco could be characterized as a religiously tolerant state. Nevertheless, proselytization with the intent to convert Muslims from Islam to another religion is still considered illegal.

[MEC](#) reports: "Registered expatriate Christian communities enjoy considerable freedom in Morocco, provided that they avoid interaction with Muslims that could be construed as proselytism. In recent years (and particularly in 2010) the government has deported significant numbers of expatriate Christians on the grounds that they were contravening the Penal Code provisions relating to proselytism, or on even more vague grounds of "threat to public order." There have also been recent cases of national Christians being convicted on charges relating to proselytism or possession of Christian literature. Moroccan Christians, who mainly meet in small house churches, are especially aware of close surveillance of their activities by the authorities. In early 2017 Morocco's highest religious authority issued a declaration regarding apostasy which it defined in narrow political terms. A broad ruling by the same authority in 2002 had urged that apostates be sentenced to death. The revised ruling has been widely welcomed, including by Christians in Morocco. However, there is strong family and societal pressure against those who choose to leave Islam. Some who are considered apostates are referred to the courts (facing sanctions such as forcible divorce, loss of inheritance and removal of child custody), and in extreme cases they can face violent responses from family members."

Religious Context: Morocco	Numbers	%
Christians	32,200	0.1
Muslim	36,517,000	99.7
Hindu	0	0.0
Buddhist	0	0.0
Ethnoreligionist	0	0.0
Jewish	2,400	0.0
Bahai	35,900	0.1
Atheist	400	0.0
Agnostic	47,400	0.1
Other	0	0.0

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019). OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.

Economic landscape

Morocco's economy is rated by the [World Bank](#) as a lower income economy and has important sectors such as mining, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. Moroccan companies are becoming increasingly active and investing in other African countries, especially in West Africa and this is helping foster economic growth in the country. [FSI](#) economic indicators show no improvement in the economy, while levels of emigration and 'brain drain' remain worryingly high. The Gross National Income (GNI PPP) per capita is [7,710 USD](#). The [employment rate](#) is 41%, with the unemployment ratio being just under 10%. Compared with most other countries in the region, Morocco's economy is a relatively dynamic and robust. However, Morocco is ranked 121 on the [UNDP Human Development Index](#) despite steady progress over the past two decades.

Social and cultural landscape

Morocco is socially conservative and Muslim, although there is also a strong Arab youth culture and society is influenced by the large Moroccan population living in Europe.

Brother Rachid, a Moroccan Christian convert [dedicated an episode](#) of his weekly show "Daring Questions" on the endorsement of hate towards non-Muslims in school textbooks, giving an example of Islamic education's book for the 1st grade in primary school (generally 6-year-old children) which stipulates: "I love those who love the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and I am hostile to those who are hostile towards him", and the *Baccalaureat* school book that states that the punishment for apostasy is execution.

[FSI](#) social indicators show continued improvements but cohesion indicators show that group grievances are alarmingly high. This trend is confirmed by the [EIU](#): "Social tensions, especially in less developed areas, will remain high, but overall stability in the country will not be threatened. King Mohammed VI remains the ultimate arbiter of power; yet, the political spectrum is increasingly polarised."

The average life expectancy has been steadily growing and currently stands at [76.2 \(2017\)](#) years. The overall [adult literacy rate is 69%](#) (94% among 7 to 12 year-olds in 2014) and children can expect 12.4 years of education.

Technological landscape

According to [Freedom on the Net 2018](#), Internet usage has grown to 62%, with big differences between local and rural areas. Journalist and bloggers critical of the government (especially those involved in the Rif protests) have received prison sentences and many apply self-censorship online. Christians in Morocco, especially converts from a Muslim background, are particularly careful in their social media postings.

[RSF](#) reports a decrease in media freedom: "Aside from the trials of recent years against a number of media figures, 2018 saw a great deal of additional judicial harassment of journalists in Morocco. The authorities deliberately obstructed the national and foreign media that tried to cover the so-called Hirak protests in northern Morocco's Rif region, as well as reporting on migration, a subject that is now off limits. Prosecutions were brought against both professional and citizen-journalists." Several journalists have been on trial in 2019, while others are serving [prison sentences](#).

Security situation

In December 2018, Morocco [was shocked](#) by the murder and beheading of two Scandinavian women by men who had sworn alliance to the Islamic State group. This kind of violence has not happened before and Morocco's security apparatus is known to be strong and intelligence agencies well-informed. These capacities have also been used against Christians in Morocco, especially converts from a Muslim background.

In August 2018, the king [reinstated](#) military service for men and women aged between 19 and 25 years old. [Critics say](#) this was a way to quell protests. Many soldiers are needed to protect the border-wall in occupied Western Sahara, which Morocco sees as its 'southern provinces'.

Trends analysis

Morocco has been an oasis of stability and economic progress in a region that has been fraught with political instability and economic crises. Its incremental and evolutionary approach to political reform has proved to be quite successful so far. Morocco's international image is that of a progressive, tolerant and economically dynamic country. However, there is the risk of complacency setting in and this image does not fully reflect the country's record when it comes to the rights of religious minorities. Also, unless the unrest in the Rif region is seriously addressed, the situation could allow Islamic militants to destabilize the country.

How the future in Morocco develops depends on a number of factors. These factors include the outcome of the struggle for more influence and control between the monarchy and the Islamist political party that has been leading the government for the past few years. The degree to which the economic marginalization and political discontent of some groups persist might also be a relevant factor, as they can provide an opening for Islamists to exploit. However, if its current overall trajectory continues, Morocco is likely to remain an oasis of stability and relative freedom for Christians in an unstable region. The Moroccan state also seems to be keen on maintaining its image as a tolerant and progressive modern state and is unlikely to scale up restrictions on religious freedom. But Christianity looks set to remain a foreign religion in Morocco. Article 4 of the Constitution states that "the motto of the Kingdom is Dieu, La Patrie, Le Roi [God, the Country, the King] and many Moroccans feel that way. As long as "God" is interpreted as the God of Islam, Christians will remain outsiders, even if they are of Moroccan descent.

External Links - WWL 2020: Keys to understanding

- Link for general background information: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14121438>. - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14121438>
- Recent history: were convicted - https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/moroccan-protest-leader-3-others-get-20-year-sentences/2018/06/27/a7e4c594-79e7-11e8-ac4e-421ef7165923_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b22c1b7366f3
- Recent history: pardoned - <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/8/22/morocco-king-pardons-jailed-hirak-protesters-for-eid-al-adha>
- Recent history: were upheld in the Court of Appeals - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde29/0267/2019/en/>

- Political and legal landscape: EIU - <https://country.eiu.com/morocco>
- Political and legal landscape: The Freedom of Thought report - <https://fot.humanists.international/countries/africa-northern-africa/morocco/>
- Religious landscape: MEC - <https://meconcern.org/countries/morocco/>
- Economic landscape: World Bank - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/overview>
- Economic landscape: FSI - <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>
- Economic landscape: 7,710 USD - <https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/gni-per-capita-ppp-us-dollar-wb-data.html>
- Economic landscape: employment rate - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.EMP.TOTL.SP.ZS?locations=MA>
- Economic landscape: UNDP Human Development Index - <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MAR>
- Social and cultural landscape: dedicated an episode - <http://youtube.com/watch?v=UtxLJ5nAZ6Y>
- Social and cultural landscape: FSI - <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>
- Social and cultural landscape: EIU - <https://country.eiu.com/morocco>
- Social and cultural landscape: 76.2 (2017) - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=MA>
- Social and cultural landscape: adult literacy rate is 69% - <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/MAR/>
- Technological landscape: Freedom on the Net 2018 - <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/morocco>
- Technological landscape: RSF - <https://rsf.org/en/morocco-western-sahara>
- Technological landscape: prison sentences - <https://rsf.org/en/news/moroccan-appeal-court-increases-journalists-jail-sentence-15-years>
- Security situation: was shocked - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48132880>
- Security situation: reinstated - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-army/morocco-reinstates-compulsory-military-service-for-under-25s-idUSKCN1L52DA>
- Security situation: Critics say - <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2019/04/270255/morocco-compulsory-military-service/>

WWL 2020: Church information / Morocco

Christian origins

Christianity arrived in Morocco during the Roman Empire and became very prominent in areas like Tangiers, Rabat and Fez. The first Christian martyr in Morocco was St Marcellus (298AD) in Tangier. By the end of the 4th century, the Romanized areas of Morocco were solidly Christian and inroads had been made among the Amazigh ('Berber') tribes, who sometimes converted en masse. In that same 4th century, it was also one of the countries where Donatism and Arianism became a major theological issue. In the 5th century, German Vandals, coming via Spain, conquered Morocco and brought their Arian version of the Christian faith with them. In 533 AD, the Byzantine Empire [reconquered](#) Morocco to reinstate 'Roman' rule and to reinstall orthodox bishops and priests.

By the 7th century, Islam reached Morocco. Many Christians were forced to convert and the number of Christians decreased due to the policies of Islamization.. In 1220, priests of the Franciscan Order made a brave attempt to re-introduce Christianity and a diocese was set up at Marrakesh in 1234 which was able to function until 1566.

Missionaries from North Africa brought the Protestant faith to Morocco in 1884. The Gospel Missionary Union and Emmanuel Mission Sahara came to the country in 1894 and 1926 respectively. Other churches and movements followed, such as Anglicans, the Assemblies of God, the Christian Brethren and the Seventh-day Adventists.

Morocco's instability in the 19th century had resulted in European countries intervening to protect investments and to demand economic concessions. In 1912, Morocco became a French Protectorate, and Spain also assured itself of major parts of Morocco. Tens of thousands of French, Spanish and other colonists, entered Morocco and acquired large tracts of the rich agricultural land. During this colonial period, both Catholics and Protestants could freely worship in Morocco and the Reformed Church of France formed the Evangelical Church of Morocco. Churches, hospitals, schools and orphanages were built for the colonists and for mission work among the Muslim population. Protestant mission began in 1884.

When becoming independent in 1956, Morocco was home to 500.000 Europeans; The Roman Catholic Church was very visible in Morocco. Since then, the Europeans and their churches have largely departed. Today the expatriate Christian community (Roman Catholic and Protestant) consists of a few thousand members.

According to Jack Wald in "Christianity in North Africa and West Asia" (Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, pp. 41-44), the indigenous Moroccan church began to emerge in the late 1960s, meeting in house-churches held in the homes of missionaries. In 1984 the community suffered a major setback when king Hassan II forced many Moroccan Christians to recant their faith, after suspecting them of a coup. With the arrival of incumbent king Mohammed VI in 1999, a decade of relative freedom started which allowed house churches, this time mostly led by Moroccans, to grow. However, in March 2010, around 150 foreign Christians from all over the country were suddenly deported. [Reportedly](#), the country wanted to take a tough line against proselytism. Moroccan Christians were interrogated too and it became apparent that the police had inside informers; many house-churches disbanded as a result. With the rise of the internet and social media, new movements have been started and many can now find fellowship, even if they are alone and isolated.

Church spectrum today

Church networks: Morocco	Christians	%
Orthodox	1,100	3.4
Catholic	19,300	59.9
Protestant	4,800	14.9
Independent	5,400	16.8
Unaffiliated	1,600	5.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians	0	0.0
Total	32,200	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	4,000	12.4
Renewalist movement	4,400	13.7

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2019).

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. Roman Catholics: All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. Protestants: Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. Independents: Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). Unaffiliated Christians: Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. Doubly-affiliated Christians: Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. Evangelical movement: Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. Renewalist movement: Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

External Links - WWL 2020: Church information

- Christian origins: reconquered - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandalic_War
- Christian origins: Reportedly - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8563111.stm>

WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics / Morocco

Reporting period

1 November 2018 – 31 October 2019

Position on World Watch List (WWL)

With a score of 66 points, Morocco ranked 26 in WWL 2020.

The country scored 63 points in WWL 2019 and ranked 35. The main reason for this increase of three points is the higher number of reported violent incidents. As a result the violence score rose sharply from 1.5 to 4.1 points.

Persecution engines

Persecution engines: Morocco	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Clan and ethnic antagonism	CEA	Weak
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Very weak
Communist and post - Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Not at all

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Islamic oppression (Strong):

Morocco displays a more moderate version of *Islamic oppression* compared to other countries in the region. Restrictions imposed by the Islamic authorities include the confiscation of Christian literature in Arabic (including Bibles) if discovered, bans on cooperating with Christians from abroad - especially if evangelization is planned - and serious challenges in securing recognized places of worship for Christians with a Muslim background. Converts from Islam face pressure as a result of their new faith from family and friends and from the local community if their proclamation of faith is felt to be an attempt at proselytization.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium):

The Moroccan government looks at the church, especially the convert church, with suspicion. Moroccans are expected to be loyal to Islam, king and country; Christianity could threaten this hegemony. In past years, the Moroccan authorities have accused Christians of being disloyal to the king and have deported many foreign Christians without due process. One of the reasons for this sort of action could be the fear of radical Muslim groups: By appeasing them, the government tries to prevent any unrest. This means in practice that converts are regularly detained and questioned about their motives and contacts.

Drivers of persecution

Drivers of Persecution: Morocco	IO	RN	CEA	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	STRONG		WEAK				MEDIUM	
Government officials	Strong						Medium	
Ethnic group leaders			Weak					
Non-Christian religious leaders	Strong							
Violent religious groups	Medium							
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	Strong		Weak					
One's own (extended) family	Strong		Medium					
Political parties	Medium							

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. Please note that "-" denotes "not at all". For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Islamic oppression:

- **Government officials and Political parties (Strong):** Among the main drivers of *Islamic oppression* in Morocco are government officials and leaders of political parties. The Justice and Development Party (PJD) is arguably the most important political player in the country alongside the monarchy. Although it does not advocate banning Christianity, its leaders have exhibited intolerance towards Christianity and do not fully recognize the right to freedom of belief and worship for Christians. State officials are also unwilling to register and allow Christian converts with a Muslim background to congregate freely, gain recognition and evangelize.
- **Citizens (Strong):** Moroccan society views Christianity mostly negatively and converts from Islam to Christianity are seen as shaming family and community.
- **Extended family (Strong):** The extended family of converts from Islam - especially in rural areas - put pressure on converts to renounce their faith in Christ.
- **Non-religious leaders (Strong):** Islamic radical thought is present and preached in Morocco and adds to the pressure on Christians..
- **Violent religious groups (Medium):** The murder of two Scandinavian women in December 2018 has shown that the influence of the Islamic State group can also be a threat in Morocco. Salafi influence is reportedly growing in Morocco.

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia:

- **Government officials (Medium):** The Moroccan authorities and security services are monitoring all church life. Converts to Christianity are actively watched and sometimes interrogated. There is still fear that the security services are infiltrating the convert movement.

Geographical hotspots of persecution

The Islamic population in rural areas is known to be conservative. Most converts reside in the urban areas, where it is easier to escape social and family pressure.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians:

Expatriate Christians, many of whom are engaged in a variety of professional activities, are often under surveillance and risk deportation if they are perceived to engage in acts of evangelization. However, compared to other groups - especially to Moroccan converts to Christianity - expatriate Christians from the West enjoy relative freedom of religion. Recognized churches for expatriates exist only in major cities. Those denominations that pre-exist independence in 1956 include the Roman Catholic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church and the French Protestant Church. Most of these churches own church buildings but the government owns the land. As long as the building is being regularly used for church services, the church keeps control of the building. If it falls into disuse, the government takes over the building and uses it for other purposes. Given the difficulty for these churches to get new members and the fact that it is impossible for Moroccan Christians with a Muslim background to join these churches, historical Christian communities find it challenging to remain active and present in the country.

Expatriate Christians from Sub-Saharan African countries, who are often Pentecostal Christians, are usually marginalized and discriminated against.

Historical Christian communities:

These communities are not considered as a separate category in WWL analysis since they consist mainly of expatriate Christians and have been included in the category above.

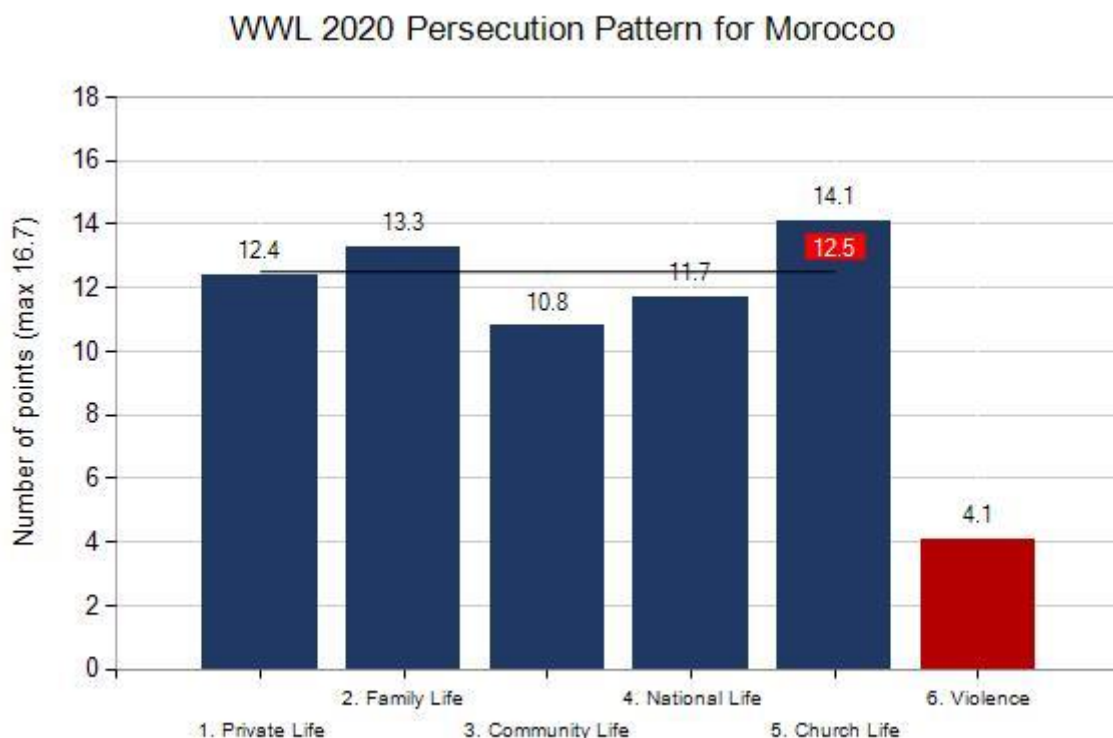
Converts to Christianity:

Moroccan Christians meet in house-churches because they cannot get permission and official recognition to congregate in public. They change location regularly and do not have the history or level of organization to develop into a "denomination" (i.e. non-traditional Christian community). While the level of tolerance from society in urban centers (as well as from the public authorities) towards Christian converts is better than in most other countries in the region, converts to Christianity still face pressure to renounce their faith from society at large and their family. They also tend to be under surveillance and risk persecution, especially if they engage in evangelism.

Non-traditional Christian communities:

This category does not exist in Morocco.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2020 Persecution pattern for Morocco shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (12.5), rising from 12.3 in WWL 2019. Pressure on Christians, especially converts, remains very high.
- The pressure is extreme in *Church life* (14.1 points). This reflects the limitations expatriate churches face if they try to share their faith with others and how the government has effectively strangled fellowship among convert communities. The next highest score is to be found in *Family life* (13.3 points), which reflects the pressure converts have to face when they want to practice their new religion in public: Getting baptized, married or even buried in a Christian way is difficult and they will face pressure from family, society and even the government, especially in rural areas.
- The score for violence went up from 1.5 in WWL 2019 to 4.1 in WWL 2019. The reason for this increase is due to reported vandalization of church properties, a higher number of Christians who have been detained as well as a higher number of Christians who have been forced to marry.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, details are shown from four of the highest scoring block questions, with those items scoring highest listed first. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale 0 – 4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Private sphere:

- ***It has been risky for Christians to discuss their faith with those other than immediate family members (extended family, others) (Block 1.8 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Both local and expatriate Christians can be charged with "shaking the faith of a Muslim" under Moroccan law.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members (Block 1.7 / Score: 3.25 points):*** Many converts are afraid to share their new faith with their families. There are many cases known of converts who have been ostracized or abused because of their sharing. Therefore, converts often only talk about their faith with their family over time. Nonetheless, the first reaction is often strong, with only some families engaging in dialogue to let them recant their new belief.
- ***It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols (Block 1.5 / Score: 3.25 points):*** Both family and community members can react harshly or even violently when seeing a convert displaying a cross or Christian symbol. Some converts do share their new faith on social media, using fake identities to hide their real names.
- ***Conversion has been opposed, forbidden, or punishable, including conversion from one type of Christianity to another (Block 1.1 / Score: 3 points):*** Although conversion from Islam to Christianity is punishable according to Moroccan law (and although Moroccan Islamic religious leaders have often disputed whether conversion is punishable by death), enforcement of this law is very weak and almost non-existent. Generally speaking, however, converts face pressure from relatives, family members and the community at large, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, it has been risky for some converts to reveal their faith. Acts of private worship and devotion that could reveal conversion to Christianity also entail the same risk.

Family sphere:

- ***Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith? (Block 2.6 / Score: 4 points):*** To adopt a child in Morocco you have to be a Muslim. Part of the adoption procedure entails a meeting with an imam, who will ask the adoptive parents about the tenets of Sunni Islam.
- ***Babies and children of Christians have automatically been registered under the state or majority religion (Block 2.1 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Except for the Jewish community, all Moroccans are considered to be Muslim upon birth.
- ***Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible (Block 2.2 / Score: 3.5 points):*** This is mainly problematic for female converts, as they are not allowed to marry Christian men.
- ***Christian baptisms have been hindered (Block 2.4 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Baptism of converts take place in secret as baptism is very clear sign of both the conversion as well as of proselytism.

Conversion to Christianity can trigger a hostile reaction from a convert's immediate and extended family. The State considers all Moroccans to be Muslims and Moroccan Christian converts can be married (without being asked if they are Muslims because it is assumed they are). However, foreign Christian men wanting to marry a Moroccan woman would have to say they are Muslims because they are asked this question. Islamic studies is a compulsory subject in schools and officially takes a very moderate approach. Some private schools allow children from Moroccan Christian homes to skip the Islamic classes, but this is not the norm.

Community sphere:

- ***Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons (Block 3.6 / Score: 3.50 points):*** Christianity is seen as a foreign religion and Christians are not considered to be part of Moroccan society. Hence, there is no room for them within communal groups etcetera.
- ***Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.) (Block 3.2 / Score: 3.25 points):*** Both local and foreign Christians are being monitored by the Moroccan security services. Local community members regularly inform the police when they are aware of proselytizing activities.
- ***Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events? (Block 3.5 / Score: 3 points):*** Christians, especially converts, feel a great deal of societal pressure to take part in Islamic religious activities and rituals.
- ***Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons (Block 3.13 / Score: 3 points):*** Converts, especially those active in ministry, are monitored and are regularly called in for questioning.

Christian converts will face ostracization, particularly in rural areas. For Christians with a Muslim background, societal pressure also makes it difficult to raise their children as Christians. Such pressure could take the form of bullying at school or Islamic instruction without parental consent. In urban areas, Christians have more freedom but expressions of Christian faith could still be perceived as an attempt at proselytization and could have negative repercussions.

National sphere:

- ***The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Block 4.1 / Score: 4 points):*** The constitution declares Islam to be state religion. Although it guarantees all the "free exercise of beliefs", in practice, this means that a Muslim can only practice Islam and cannot change his religion to Christianity.
- ***Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions (Block 4.9 / Score: 4 points):*** Civil society organizations with clear Christian convictions or aiming at defending the rights of Moroccan converts are actively opposed by the government.
- ***Officials at any level have refused to recognize an individual's conversion as recorded in government administration systems, identity cards, etc. (Block 4.2 / Score: 3.5 points):*** Christians with a Muslim background are also denied recognition by the State.

- **Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public (Block 4.8 / Score: 3.5 points):** Christian evangelism is banned and sharing Christian literature with others and proselytization is illegal. Christians who evangelize could be accused of "shaking the faith of Islam" and this will entail criminal liability.

Although it can be claimed that there is relative freedom of religion in Morocco, there are still considerable restrictions on Christians in public. For instance, eating in public during Ramadan is considered illegal. Morocco's High Religious Committee has retracted its 2012 ruling stating that apostasy is punishable by death and seems to have decided to permit Muslims to change their religion. State officials conduct surveillance on Christians and monitor their activities to enforce the ban on evangelism.

Church sphere:

- **It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government (Block 5.2 / Score: 3.75 points):** Only the Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox and Anglican Church have a special recognized status. Other churches have to register as associations and are legally prohibited from pursuing activities that undermine Islam. Hence, local Moroccan Christians cannot establish their own churches nor be part of foreign churches.
- **Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings (Block 5.5 / Score: 4 points):** Churches are hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings as these could be construed as proselytism. This will be the case both for Christians with a Muslim background and other Christians.
- **Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts (Block 5.7 / Score: 4 points):** Churches of expatriate Christian communities are always monitored to make sure that Moroccan nationals do not attend their services. The restriction on fellowship between expatriates Christian communities and other churches affects both communities.
- **Openly selling or distributing Bibles and other Christian materials has been hindered (Block 5.14 / Score: 3.75 points):** The government has continued to permit the display and sale of Bibles in French, English and Spanish. A limited number of Arabic translations of the Bible have also been available for sale in a few bookshops for use in university religion courses. The authorities confiscate Bibles they believe are intended for use in proselytizing.

Churches are not hindered in establishing and managing schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medial, social or cultural organizations, but these organizations must refrain from any activities that could be construed as proselytizing. Any perception of being evangelistic will lead to problems. Therefore, although they enjoy more freedom than churches in other countries in the region, churches in Morocco operate under substantial restrictions.

Violence

The following table is based on reported cases as much as possible. Since many incidents go unreported, the numbers below must be understood as being minimum figures. In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10, 100 or 1000) is given. (A symbolic number of 10 could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100 could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1000 could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain.) In cases where it is clear that (many) more Christians are affected, but a concrete number could be given according to the number of incidents reported, the number given has to be understood as being an absolutely minimum figure.

Morocco	Reporting period	Christians killed	Christians attacked	Christians arrested	Churches attacked	Christian-owned houses and shops attacked
WWL 2020	01 Nov 2018 - 31 Oct 2019	0	27	9	2	1
WWL 2019	01 Nov 2017 - 31 Oct 2018	0	16	2	0	0
WWL 2018	01 Nov 2016 - 31 Oct 2017	0	0	0	0	0

Christians killed refers to the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons (including state-sanctioned executions). *Christians attacked* refers to the number of Christians abducted, raped or otherwise sexually harassed, forced into marriage to non-Christians or otherwise physically or mentally abused (including beatings and death-threats) for faith-related reasons. *Christians arrested* refers to the number of Christians detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons. *Churches attacked* refers to the number of churches or Christian buildings (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons. *Christian-owned houses and shops attacked* refers to the number of houses of Christians or other property (including shops and businesses of Christians) attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons.

For the WWL 2020 reporting period:

- **Christians attacked:** Several Christians have faced abuse, with female converts especially being vulnerable to sexual harassment. In addition to the reported cases, many other incidents remain unknown as they often happen in the domestic sphere and are an issue of shame.
- **Christians arrested:** Several Christians were detained and questioned for possessing a Bible, Christian materials or engaging in evangelism.
- **Churches attacked:** At least two church properties were vandalized.
- **Christian-owned houses attacked:** The family of at least one convert demolished his property.

Converts from Islam to Christianity are known to face abuse from their own family members and are at risk of being arrested and interrogated by the government. Female converts are especially at risk of sexual abuse and in some cases forced marriage. Expatriate Christians have been deported or denied entry to the country where suspected of proselytization.

5 Year trends

The following three charts illustrate the situation for Christians in Morocco over the last five reporting periods.

Chart 1:

The table below lists the average pressure on Christians and shows that the overall level of pressure on Christians has gradually crept up since WWL 2016 and increased to a very high level.

WWL 2016 - WWL 2020 Persecution Pattern history: Morocco	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2020	12.5
2019	12.3
2018	10.1
2017	9.7
2016	9.5

Chart 2:

The chart below shows that pressure in all *spheres of life* increased over the period WWL 2016 - WWL 2019. The levels appear to have stabilized in WWL 2020, except in the *Community sphere* which showed another significant increase. Pressure has been at an extreme level in the *Church sphere* for the last two reporting periods.

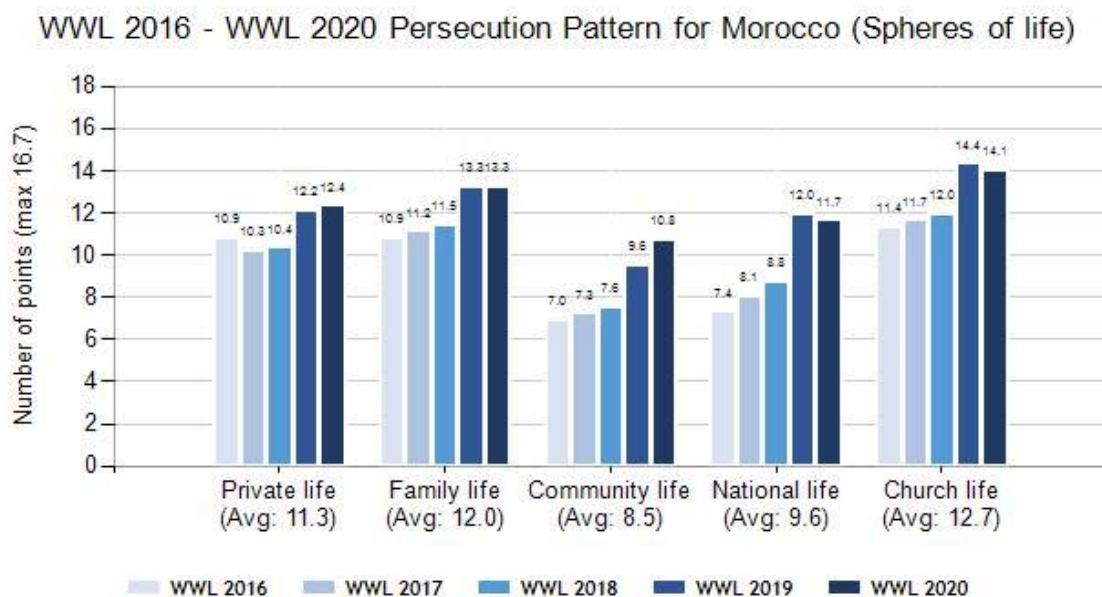
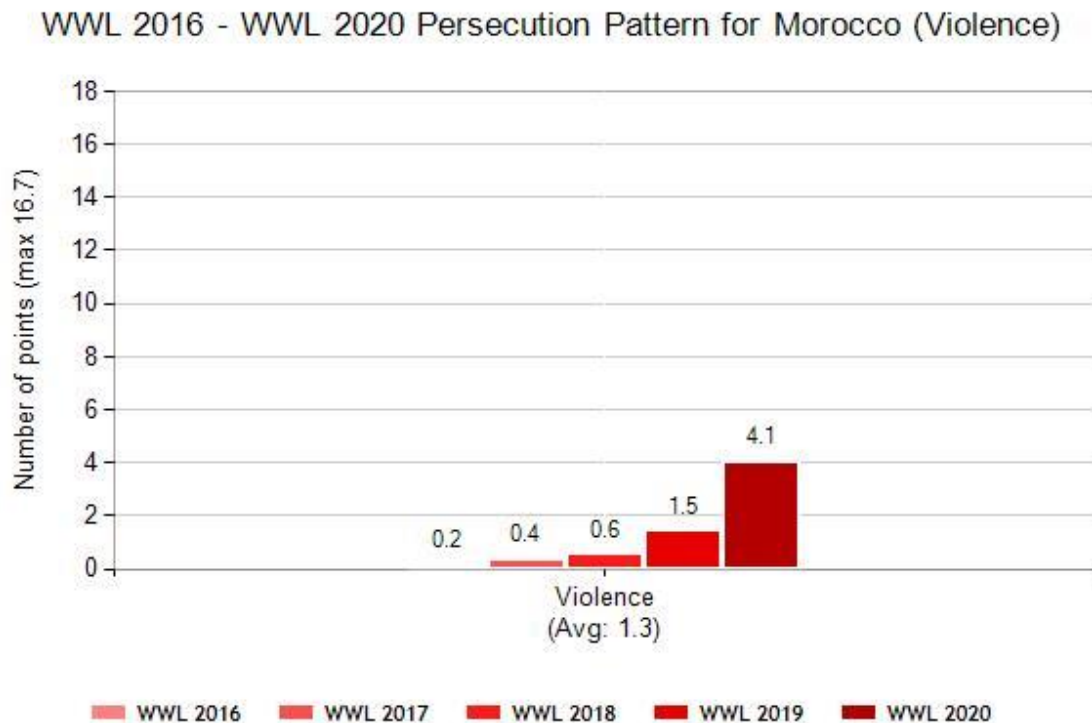


Chart 3:

The number of violent incidents recorded in the period WWL 2015 - 2018 was very low but the score has risen since with more violent incidents being reported than before.



Gender profile of persecution

Female Pressure Points:

- ***Denied access to social community/networks***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Enforced dress code***
- ***Forced divorce***
- ***Forced marriage***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Incarceration by family***
- ***Violence – death***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – verbal***

According to reports, most people in Morocco who declare their Christian faith are men, because they are less vulnerable to pressure than women. Although women's rights in Morocco have developed over the last fifteen years, which has given women more [legal equality](#), women in Morocco remain in a generally less advantageous position than men. As a result, Moroccan women have [less freedom](#) than men and are expected to be more bound to the household - especially in rural areas.

All Christians of Islamic background can, in practice, be denied their rights to inheritance or family affiliation. Female converts to Christianity from Islam are most at risk within the domestic environment. Religious persecution characteristically takes the form of abuse in the home, domestic confinement and forced marriage to a non-Christian. Persecution of female converts lies in the ability of parents and brothers to control, oppress and, ultimately, force them to leave the family, which is socially unacceptable and places shame on the girl as a rebel girl against society. Fear of scandal because a daughter has converted means that often female converts are held in their homes and later married by their families in the belief that marriage will bring her back to Islam. Sometimes the pressure is simply so intense that the girl relents and agrees to a marriage to someone who does not share her faith in order to escape the pressure of her family.

If a female convert is already married, many women are pressured and threatened with divorce by their husbands after they discover their Christian faith, and some have been forced to divorce. Personal status law follows the country's Maliki-Ashari Sunni interpretation of Sharia. One country expert writes that "as long as the personal status law is not subject to change, this kind of persecution will continue". In extreme cases, the family might inflict deadly violence; in other instances, she might be expelled from the family home.

Christian women using the Internet as a way to break isolation, risk experiencing cyber harassment for their faith and self-expression.

Although Moroccan society is relatively liberal in some respects, Christians from an Islamic background in rural areas must adhere to the religious form of clothing and way of life and may suffer bullying if they change these customs, especially during Ramadan.

Additionally, rape, or the threat of rape, is a taboo area that is socially associated with a woman's personal honor. The high stigma makes it a powerful tool for religious coercion. This is the case both for Moroccan women and the numerous female migrants journeying through Africa, of whom a percentage are Christians; their rape is not just motivated by exploitation but also by religious intolerance.

Male Pressure Points:

- ***Denied access to Christian religious materials***
- ***Denied inheritance or possessions***
- ***Discrimination/Harassment via education***
- ***Economic harassment via work/job/business***
- ***Forced out of home/expulsion***
- ***Forced to flee town/country***
- ***Incarceration by government***
- ***Violence – physical***
- ***Violence – psychological***

Converts to Christianity are the most vulnerable in Moroccan society, in general, and Christian male converts most often face expulsion from their families, educational discrimination, issues related to work and threats of death. They are also far more likely than women to be targeted for government interrogation, beatings or imprisonment. However, the severity of the backlash after conversion depends on their social position and political standing within his community.

In the domestic realm, they are perceived to bring shame upon their families by leaving Islam and are therefore regularly ostracized upon conversion. If male converts are still young and living with their parents, they might lose the financial support of their families. If the man is already married, then he risks abandonment by his wife, whose family will also place pressure on the couple and take her back. A convert can, in practice, be deprived of his inheritance.

[Employment](#) is a key area of pressure for men because they are the main the breadwinners in their families and their conversion may cause them to lose their jobs. Conversely, Christians are sometimes accused of having converted for financial gain, since Christianity is associated with opulent Western society.

Every year, there are reports of a handful of arrests of Christian men. These arrests occur for nothing more than having a Bible in their possession, or for discussing about Christian faith with a Muslim. Fines can accompany the harassment.

The pressure can be so sustained by society that it is thought that the majority of male converts would leave the country and/or their home, if they had the opportunity to do so.

Persecution of other religious minorities

Judaism is the only minority religion officially recognized in the Constitution and Jews have their own religious courts for family matters. Although Islam is the official religion of the state, de facto only Sunni (Maliki) Islam is socially acceptable. Shia Muslims, Ahmadiyya Muslims and Bahai's are religious minorities in Morocco facing government restrictions that make it nearly impossible for them to engage in public acts of [worship](#). According to the [Morocco 2018 International Religious Freedom Report](#) (p. 1): "Local Christian and Shia leaders reported the government detained and questioned some Christian and Shia citizens about their beliefs and contacts with other other Christians and Shias. Christian and Shia Muslim citizens also stated their fear of government and social harassment led to their decision to practice their faith discreetly."

Future outlook for the church

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression: Converts from Islam to Christianity are likely to keep facing pressure, mostly from the side of their families and society. Ongoing modernization in urban areas might change the attitudes towards converts in the long term. It is unlikely that the government will change its approach towards converts, especially so long as the king remains "the Commander of the Faithful, [who] sees to the respect for Islam." ([Constitution of Morocco](#), Art. 41).

Dictatorial paranoia: Morocco remained one of the more peaceful countries during the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. Morocco's strong security apparatus plays an important role in keeping the peace. It will keep monitoring all activities that can create unrest, looking especially for any acts of proselytization by Christians. In the past, it has shown it can effectively paralyze the (convert) church. It will probably keep doing so, also to appease Islamists who might otherwise cause unrest.

External Links - WWL 2020: Persecution Dynamics

- Gender profile of persecution: legal equality - https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner_article/hrwf-international/morocco-advancing-womens-rights
- Gender profile of persecution: less freedom - <http://https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/women-s-rights-in-morocco-balancing-domestic-and-international-law/>
- Gender profile of persecution: Employment - <http://http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/morocco>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: worship - <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2017/08/226353/religious-minorities-persecution-morocco-us-state-department/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Morocco 2018 International Religious Freedom Report - <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MOROCCO-2018-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>
- Future outlook for the church: Constitution of Morocco - https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011.pdf

Additional reports and articles

WWR in-depth reports

A selection of in-depth reports is available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
(password: freedom).

World Watch Monitor news articles

Articles are available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/morocco>.

Recent country developments

Up-to-date articles are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Morocco>
(password: freedom).