
World Watch Research

Morocco: Persecution Dynamics

December 2024



Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

December 2024

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World Watch List 2025 – Top 50

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2025 | Total Score WWL 2024 | Total Score WWL 2023 | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | North Korea | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 14.4 | 98 | 96 | 98 | 96 | 94 |
| 2 | Somalia | 16.5 | 16.7 | 16.6 | 16.6 | 16.7 | 11.1 | 94 | 93 | 92 | 91 | 92 |
| 3 | Yemen | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 10.6 | 94 | 89 | 89 | 88 | 87 |
| 4 | Libya | 16.0 | 16.2 | 15.9 | 16.2 | 16.4 | 10.6 | 91 | 91 | 88 | 91 | 92 |
| 5 | Sudan | 14.1 | 14.2 | 15.5 | 14.9 | 15.3 | 16.1 | 90 | 87 | 83 | 79 | 79 |
| 6 | Eritrea | 14.6 | 14.9 | 15.5 | 15.9 | 15.9 | 12.2 | 89 | 89 | 89 | 88 | 88 |
| 7 | Nigeria | 13.5 | 13.9 | 14.6 | 14.9 | 14.5 | 16.7 | 88 | 88 | 88 | 87 | 85 |
| 8 | Pakistan | 13.6 | 13.9 | 15.0 | 15.0 | 12.9 | 16.7 | 87 | 87 | 86 | 87 | 88 |
| 9 | Iran | 15.0 | 14.6 | 13.5 | 15.9 | 16.5 | 10.9 | 86 | 86 | 86 | 85 | 86 |
| 10 | Afghanistan | 15.6 | 15.9 | 15.9 | 16.4 | 16.7 | 5.0 | 85 | 84 | 84 | 98 | 94 |
| 11 | India | 12.2 | 12.9 | 13.3 | 14.9 | 13.9 | 16.5 | 84 | 83 | 82 | 82 | 83 |
| 12 | Saudi Arabia | 15.2 | 15.3 | 14.8 | 15.8 | 16.6 | 3.3 | 81 | 81 | 80 | 81 | 78 |
| 13 | Myanmar | 12.6 | 11.1 | 13.5 | 14.1 | 12.9 | 16.5 | 81 | 79 | 80 | 79 | 74 |
| 14 | Mali | 11.1 | 10.1 | 14.7 | 13.0 | 15.2 | 15.6 | 80 | 79 | 76 | 70 | 67 |
| 15 | China | 13.2 | 10.1 | 12.8 | 14.6 | 16.1 | 11.1 | 78 | 78 | 77 | 76 | 74 |
| 16 | Maldives | 15.6 | 15.3 | 13.7 | 15.8 | 16.5 | 0.7 | 78 | 78 | 77 | 77 | 77 |
| 17 | Iraq | 14.2 | 14.4 | 14.3 | 14.8 | 13.9 | 6.1 | 78 | 79 | 76 | 78 | 82 |
| 18 | Syria | 13.5 | 14.4 | 13.9 | 14.4 | 14.3 | 7.0 | 78 | 81 | 80 | 78 | 81 |
| 19 | Algeria | 14.7 | 14.3 | 11.5 | 14.7 | 16.0 | 6.3 | 77 | 79 | 73 | 71 | 70 |
| 20 | Burkina Faso | 11.7 | 9.7 | 13.2 | 11.5 | 14.0 | 15.6 | 76 | 75 | 71 | 68 | 67 |
| 21 | Morocco | 13.2 | 13.8 | 11.6 | 12.9 | 14.3 | 8.3 | 74 | 71 | 69 | 69 | 67 |
| 22 | Laos | 11.8 | 10.7 | 13.5 | 14.1 | 13.9 | 9.8 | 74 | 75 | 68 | 69 | 71 |
| 23 | Mauritania | 14.6 | 14.2 | 13.8 | 14.2 | 14.2 | 2.8 | 74 | 72 | 72 | 70 | 71 |
| 24 | Bangladesh | 12.4 | 10.6 | 12.7 | 11.3 | 10.4 | 16.1 | 74 | 71 | 69 | 68 | 67 |
| 25 | Uzbekistan | 14.6 | 12.7 | 13.5 | 12.4 | 15.5 | 4.4 | 73 | 71 | 71 | 71 | 71 |
| 26 | Cuba | 13.2 | 8.5 | 13.9 | 13.3 | 15.1 | 9.1 | 73 | 73 | 70 | 66 | 62 |
| 27 | CAR | 10.3 | 8.6 | 13.9 | 9.6 | 14.0 | 15.6 | 72 | 70 | 70 | 68 | 66 |
| 28 | Niger | 9.4 | 9.6 | 14.5 | 7.7 | 14.6 | 15.7 | 72 | 70 | 70 | 68 | 62 |

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2025 | Total Score WWL 2024 | Total Score WWL 2023 | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 29 | Turkmenistan | 14.3 | 12.3 | 13.6 | 13.9 | 15.3 | 1.5 | 71 | 70 | 70 | 69 | 70 |
| 30 | Nicaragua | 12.4 | 7.6 | 13.7 | 13.3 | 14.1 | 9.6 | 71 | 70 | 65 | 56 | 51 |
| 31 | Mexico | 11.7 | 9.0 | 12.5 | 11.8 | 11.0 | 14.6 | 71 | 68 | 67 | 65 | 64 |
| 32 | Oman | 14.5 | 14.1 | 10.9 | 13.8 | 14.1 | 3.0 | 70 | 69 | 65 | 66 | 63 |
| 33 | Ethiopia | 9.9 | 9.7 | 12.6 | 10.4 | 12.1 | 15.6 | 70 | 69 | 66 | 66 | 65 |
| 34 | Tunisia | 12.4 | 13.2 | 10.1 | 12.6 | 13.8 | 8.1 | 70 | 69 | 67 | 66 | 67 |
| 35 | DRC | 8.0 | 7.9 | 12.6 | 10.8 | 14.5 | 16.1 | 70 | 67 | 67 | 66 | 64 |
| 36 | Bhutan | 13.2 | 13.2 | 12.3 | 14.1 | 14.2 | 2.2 | 69 | 68 | 66 | 67 | 64 |
| 37 | Mozambique | 9.3 | 8.5 | 13.9 | 8.4 | 12.5 | 15.9 | 68 | 68 | 68 | 65 | 63 |
| 38 | Kazakhstan | 13.3 | 11.6 | 12.2 | 12.8 | 14.2 | 4.3 | 68 | 65 | 65 | 64 | 64 |
| 39 | Tajikistan | 14.1 | 12.7 | 12.7 | 13.2 | 13.7 | 1.9 | 68 | 66 | 66 | 65 | 66 |
| 40 | Egypt | 12.7 | 13.7 | 12.1 | 12.4 | 10.9 | 6.3 | 68 | 68 | 68 | 71 | 75 |
| 41 | Qatar | 14.2 | 14.2 | 10.5 | 13.2 | 14.4 | 0.7 | 67 | 67 | 68 | 74 | 67 |
| 42 | Comoros | 12.7 | 14.0 | 11.2 | 12.4 | 14.2 | 2.6 | 67 | 66 | 66 | 63 | 62 |
| 43 | Cameroon | 8.8 | 7.6 | 12.6 | 8.4 | 13.1 | 16.1 | 67 | 66 | 65 | 65 | 64 |
| 44 | Vietnam | 10.8 | 9.5 | 12.2 | 14.1 | 14.1 | 5.9 | 67 | 68 | 70 | 71 | 72 |
| 45 | Turkey | 13.0 | 11.7 | 11.7 | 13.2 | 11.5 | 5.4 | 67 | 64 | 66 | 65 | 69 |
| 46 | Colombia | 11.0 | 7.9 | 12.7 | 11.5 | 10.5 | 12.6 | 66 | 68 | 71 | 68 | 67 |
| 47 | Kyrgyzstan | 13.5 | 10.3 | 11.7 | 11.4 | 12.4 | 6.9 | 66 | 59 | 59 | 58 | 58 |
| 48 | Brunei | 14.8 | 14.8 | 10.8 | 10.8 | 14.0 | 0.6 | 66 | 66 | 65 | 64 | 64 |
| 49 | Chad | 11.0 | 8.2 | 10.2 | 9.9 | 10.3 | 15.9 | 65 | 61 | 58 | 55 | 53 |
| 50 | Jordan | 12.9 | 14.3 | 10.4 | 12.2 | 12.8 | 2.4 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 66 | 64 |

World Watch List 2025 – Ranks 51-78

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2025 | Total Score WWL 2024 | Total Score WWL 2023 | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 |
|------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 51 | Malaysia | 12.8 | 13.7 | 11.7 | 12.4 | 11.2 | 3.0 | 65 | 64 | 66 | 63 | 63 |
| 52 | Azerbaijan | 13.3 | 10.2 | 9.6 | 12.2 | 13.7 | 5.6 | 65 | 60 | 59 | 60 | 56 |
| 53 | Kenya | 10.3 | 9.2 | 11.4 | 8.0 | 11.5 | 13.9 | 64 | 63 | 64 | 63 | 62 |
| 54 | Nepal | 12.2 | 10.6 | 9.5 | 12.6 | 12.3 | 5.9 | 63 | 62 | 61 | 64 | 66 |
| 55 | Tanzania | 9.3 | 10.8 | 10.3 | 8.6 | 8.7 | 15.4 | 63 | 62 | 63 | 61 | 58 |
| 56 | Russian Federation | 12.7 | 7.9 | 10.7 | 13.1 | 14.1 | 4.4 | 63 | 58 | 57 | 56 | 57 |
| 57 | Djibouti | 12.3 | 12.6 | 12.7 | 10.1 | 12.1 | 1.7 | 61 | 61 | 60 | 59 | 56 |
| 58 | Kuwait | 13.1 | 13.6 | 9.4 | 12.0 | 12.2 | 0.9 | 61 | 61 | 64 | 64 | 63 |
| 59 | Indonesia | 10.9 | 11.9 | 10.9 | 11.6 | 10.2 | 5.7 | 61 | 66 | 68 | 68 | 63 |
| 60 | UAE | 13.3 | 13.4 | 9.5 | 11.3 | 12.8 | 0.6 | 61 | 61 | 62 | 62 | 62 |
| 61 | Sri Lanka | 12.7 | 8.7 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 8.5 | 7.6 | 60 | 60 | 57 | 63 | 62 |
| 62 | Palestinian Territories | 13.1 | 13.3 | 10.3 | 10.7 | 12.1 | 0.2 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 59 | 58 |
| 63 | Burundi | 7.6 | 7.8 | 9.4 | 9.8 | 9.7 | 14.6 | 59 | 57 | 55 | 52 | 48 |
| 64 | Rwanda | 9.4 | 7.7 | 9.0 | 10.4 | 12.1 | 9.4 | 58 | 58 | 57 | 50 | 42 |
| 65 | Honduras | 7.9 | 4.7 | 11.7 | 7.3 | 9.9 | 13.1 | 55 | 55 | 53 | 48 | 46 |
| 66 | Togo | 9.2 | 6.7 | 10.4 | 7.1 | 11.5 | 9.3 | 54 | 52 | 49 | 44 | 43 |
| 67 | Bahrain | 12.0 | 13.2 | 8.6 | 11.3 | 8.5 | 0.6 | 54 | 55 | 55 | 57 | 56 |
| 68 | Guinea | 10.3 | 7.5 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 10.5 | 8.9 | 54 | 52 | 48 | 43 | 47 |
| 69 | Ukraine | 6.8 | 5.0 | 7.8 | 12.5 | 13.5 | 7.2 | 53 | 44 | 37 | 37 | 34 |
| 70 | Angola | 6.8 | 6.7 | 8.1 | 11.5 | 11.4 | 8.3 | 53 | 52 | 52 | 51 | 46 |
| 71 | Venezuela | 6.3 | 4.4 | 11.1 | 10.0 | 10.8 | 9.6 | 52 | 53 | 56 | 51 | 39 |
| 72 | Uganda | 8.1 | 5.0 | 7.4 | 6.7 | 8.8 | 16.1 | 52 | 52 | 51 | 48 | 47 |
| 73 | Ivory Coast | 12.0 | 6.5 | 8.7 | 5.9 | 8.0 | 9.6 | 51 | 44 | 44 | 42 | 42 |
| 74 | Lebanon | 11.5 | 10.1 | 7.0 | 6.2 | 6.7 | 7.2 | 49 | 48 | 40 | 35 | 34 |
| 75 | Gambia | 8.3 | 8.2 | 8.9 | 8.8 | 8.9 | 4.4 | 48 | 47 | 44 | 44 | 43 |
| 76 | South Sudan | 5.7 | 4.4 | 7.0 | 6.3 | 8.1 | 15.6 | 47 | 46 | 46 | 43 | 43 |

| Rank | Country | Private life | Family life | Community life | National life | Church life | Violence | Total Score WWL 2025 | Total Score WWL 2024 | Total Score WWL 2023 | Total Score WWL 2022 | Total Score WWL 2021 |
|------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 77 | Belarus | 9.9 | 3.7 | 5.0 | 10.8 | 14.1 | 3.1 | 47 | 46 | 43 | 33 | 30 |
| 78 | Philippines | 9.2 | 6.6 | 6.6 | 6.1 | 5.7 | 8.5 | 43 | 40 | 32 | 34 | 26 |

Copyright, sources and definitions

World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- [Background country information](#) (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January).

These documents are the property of World Watch Research (WWR), the research department of Open Doors International. They include data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD). Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the end of each document under the heading “External links”. These documents may be used and distributed free of charge, but please always acknowledge the source as: © Open Doors International.

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 can be found on the research pages of the Open Doors website: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

Reporting period

The WWL 2025 reporting period was 1 October 2023 - 30 September 2024.

Brief country details

| Morocco: Population (UN estimate for 2024) | Christians | Chr% |
|--|------------|------|
| 38,211,000 | 33,000 | 0.1 |

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

| Morocco: Religious context | Number of adherents | % |
|---|---------------------|------|
| Christians | 33,000 | 0.1 |
| Muslim | 38,084,000 | 99.7 |
| Hindu | 0 | 0.0 |
| Buddhist | 0 | 0.0 |
| Ethnic religionist | 0 | 0.0 |
| Jewish | 2,200 | 0.0 |
| Bahai | 40,900 | 0.1 |
| Atheist | 290 | 0.0 |
| Agnostic | 51,700 | 0.1 |
| Other | 0 | 0.0 |
| <i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i> | | |

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., World Christian Database, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Map of country



Dominant persecution engines and drivers

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

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

Brief description of the 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, both Moroccan and foreign, who talk to others about their faith at risk of criminal prosecution and arrest. Advocates for the rights of Christians are being monitored by the government for their activities. While the law only punishes proselytization, Moroccan converts to Christianity can be punished in other ways, for instance by losing inheritance rights and custody of children. While some judges might on occasions even side with the convert, family pressure regularly forces Moroccan converts to be separated from their families.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

Morocco has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#)
3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CAT\)](#)
4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#)

Morocco is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christian converts are ostracized and faced with opposition by their families, and threatened with divorce and loss of child custody (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Women converts are forcibly married and forced to recant their beliefs. (ICCPR Art. 23.3 and CEDAW Art. 16)
- Christians face harassment and violence if they talk about their faith or engage in proselytization (ICCPR Arts. 18 and 19)
- Some Christians face restrictions in employment in the public sector and experience discrimination in the private sector (ICCPR Arts. 25 and 26, and ICESCR Art. 6)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- The monitoring and questioning of Moroccan Christians by the Moroccan police continued throughout the WWL 2025 reporting period. Several Moroccan Christians were arrested and subsequently questioned about their activities by the police. Although no Christian has been prosecuted, these public arrests have a chilling effect, stigmatizing Moroccan Christians both in front of their families and communities. The pervasive monitoring forces many Moroccan Christians into self-censorship. Nonetheless, some Moroccan Christians also consider the strict monitoring by the police as a protection against attacks by Islamic extremists.
- In cases of violence against Moroccan Christians, the police usually side with the perpetrators.
- Several house churches of Moroccan Christians were forced to stop meeting by the police.
- At least four cases of forced marriages were reported. In addition, several converts from Islam to Christianity, mainly young women, were relocated against their will.
- Many Moroccan Christians had to relocate inside the country due to (family) pressure.
- Numerous other Moroccan Christians have been mentally or physically abused, with several being expelled from their communities and forced to relocate, mostly by family members.
- Several non-Moroccan Christians have been banned from the country or were not allowed to enter, because they allegedly were involved in proselytizing.

Specific examples of positive developments

Morocco is keen to emphasize its track record on interfaith dialogue and co-existence. However, this discourse mainly focuses on the relationship between Moroccan Muslims and the tiny Moroccan Jewish community. During the visit of the Roman Catholic Pope in 2019, no mention was made of the growing community of Moroccan Christians. In a speech held at the esplanade of Hassan Mosque in Rabat on the first day of the Pope's visit in 2019, it was noticeable that the Moroccan king only referred to expatriate Christians and not to all Christians living in Morocco:

- "As Commander of the Faithful, I cannot speak of the Land of Islam, as if only Muslims lived there. I am keen to ensure freedom to practice the religions of the Book and I am the guarantor of that freedom. I protect Moroccan Jews as well as Christians from other countries, who are living in Morocco." ([The North Africa Post, 30 July 2022](#)).

The king repeated that same stance during a Parliamentary Conference on interfaith dialogue in 2023. While stating "We guarantee the free exercise of worship", it was accompanied once again with the precondition that it applies to "Moroccan Jews and Christians who come from elsewhere to reside in Morocco". While explicitly mentioning "Moroccan Jews", the king deliberately omitted saying "Moroccan Christians" ([MAP, 13 June 2023](#)). Nonetheless, many Moroccan Christians hold the king in high esteem - not only because of his protection against Islamic extremists, but also in the hope that he will increase their religious freedom in the future.

The majority of Christians in Morocco are expatriate Roman Catholics. Recognized churches for expatriates exist only in major cities. Denominations that existed prior to independence in 1956 include the Roman Catholic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church and the French Protestant Church. Indigenous Moroccan Christians are not allowed to join these congregations.

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 Moroccan converts to Christianity - expatriate Christians from the West enjoy relative freedom of religion. Recognized churches for expatriates (i.e., those already in existence at Independence in 1956) are only found in major cities. Most 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. They usually gather in self-established house-churches.

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 as such (i.e., as a non-traditional Christian community). Converts to Christianity still face pressure from society at large and family to renounce their faith. They also tend to be under surveillance and risk further forms of persecution, especially if they engage in evangelism.

Non-traditional Christian communities

This category does not exist in Morocco.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

The Islamic population in rural areas is known to be conservative. The majority of incidents of persecution take place in the mostly Berber populated northeast of the country, the Atlas mountains in the east of the country and the south-eastern desert area. Most converts reside in the urban areas, where it is easier to escape family and community pressure.

Position on the World Watch List

| Morocco: World Watch List | Points | WWL Rank |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|
| WWL 2025 | 74 | 21 |
| WWL 2024 | 71 | 24 |
| WWL 2023 | 69 | 29 |
| WWL 2022 | 69 | 27 |
| WWL 2021 | 67 | 27 |

The rise in score for Morocco to 74 points was mainly due to a significant increase in the score for reported violence, which rose from 5.4 points in WWL 2024 to 8.3 points in WWL 2025. This rise was mainly caused by a higher number of reported incidents involving house churches. The growing number of Moroccan Christians is increasingly leading to more incidents in the young church community, which translates into a very high level of average pressure in the five *Spheres of life*, as well as a very high violence score.

Persecution engines

| Morocco: Persecution engines | Abbreviation | Level of influence |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| Islamic oppression | IO | Strong |
| Religious nationalism | RN | Not at all |
| Ethno-religious hostility | ERH | Not at all |
| Clan oppression | CO | Very weak |
| Christian denominational protectionism | CDP | Not at all |
| 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)

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 insuperable challenges in securing recognized places of worship for

Christians with a Muslim background. In addition, known converts from Islam face pressure from family and friends and from the local community, if their statements about faith are felt to be an attempt at proselytization.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

The Moroccan government looks at the Church with suspicion, especially activities involving converts. Moroccans are expected to be loyal to Islam, king and country; Christianity would seem to 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 government 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 questioned about their motives and contacts.

Drivers of persecution

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

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

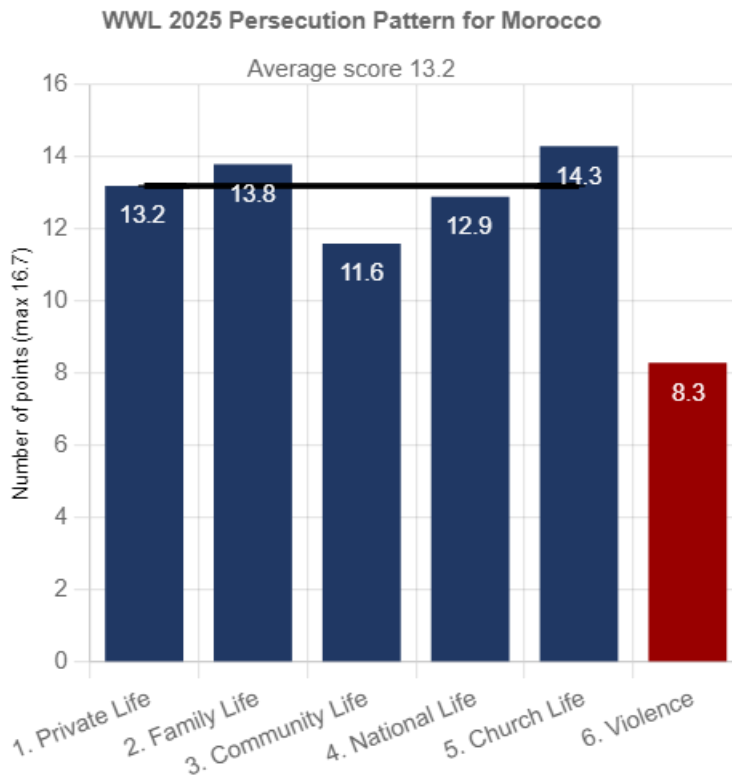
- **Government officials (Strong):** Among the main drivers of *Islamic oppression* in Morocco are government officials. The government does not fully recognize the right to freedom of belief and worship for Christians and state officials are also unwilling to register and allow Christian converts with 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):** Traditional Islamic thought is practiced and preached inside mosques in Morocco. There is usually no tolerance for converts and conversion, which add to the pressure on Moroccan Christians.

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 fear that the security services are actively infiltrating the convert movement.

The Persecution pattern



The WWL 2025 Persecution pattern for Morocco shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is at a very high level (13.2 points), remaining at the same level as in WWL 2024.
- The pressure is highest and at an extreme level in *Church life* (14.3 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 (also at an extreme level) is to be found in *Family life* (13.8 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 as a Christian is difficult and converts will face pressure from family, society and even the government, especially in rural areas.
- The score for violence went up from 5.4 points in WWL 2024 to 8.3 points in WWL 2025. This increase was mainly caused by a higher number of house churches being forced to cease their activities.

Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2025 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. 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 of 0-4 points, please see the "WWL Scoring example" in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/>.

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (3.50 points)

Both family and community members can react harshly or even violently when seeing a convert displaying a cross or Christian symbol. Some converts share their new faith on social media, usually using false names to hide their real identity.

Block 1.8: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with those other than immediate family (extended family, others). (3.50 points)

Both local and expatriate Christians can be charged with "shaking the faith of a Muslim" under Moroccan law. Hence, speaking about the Christian faith requires great sensibility.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (3.25 points)

Many converts are afraid to talk about their new faith with their families. The first reaction can be intense and there are many cases known of converts who have been ostracized or abused because they have done this. Therefore, converts often only discuss matters of faith with their family over time, with only some families engaging in dialogue to give them the chance of recanting their new faith.

Block 1.10: Christians have been isolated from other family members or other like-minded Christians (e.g. house arrest). (3.25 points)

This especially affects (young) female converts from Islam to Christianity. In the past years, numerous incidents have been reported in which young women have been forced to stay at home or even (against their will) relocated (often to family members) in the countryside. In addition to the clear infringement of their religious rights, their further development and education is also hindered or even stopped. In some cases, they are forced or given no other option than to marry a partner selected by their families.

Block 1 - Additional information

Especially young and recent converts from Islam to Christianity experience high levels of pressure, mostly from their families - with (young) women generally facing higher risks than men. It is often

difficult for them to pray and worship privately at home, while many prefer to read their Bibles online rather than owning a physical copy. At the same time, due to social stigma, it is often difficult for them to connect and share their faith with other Christians. Risks and levels of pressure generally become less over time as converts find ways to rebuild relationships and receive support from other Christians, although for some, relief only arrives after they have been ostracized by their families. A significant number of converts keep their faith a secret.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.6: Christian couples have been hindered in adopting children or serving as foster parents because of their faith. (4.00 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.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (3.75 points)

Islamic religious education is a compulsory subject in state schools and officially takes a moderate approach. School books have been adapted in recent years in order to fight Islamic extremism. Many texts deemed offensive towards Christians and Jews have been removed, although there is still no room for (religious) pluralism and it remains questionable whether these top-down reforms are supported at the grass-roots level. Although some private schools allow children from Moroccan Christian homes to skip the Islamic classes, this is not the norm and private schooling is often too expensive for Moroccan Christians to begin with.

In addition, even expatriate Christian parents, especially those from a Sub-Saharan African background, struggle with sending their children to state schools, as their children are not exempted from Islamic religious education.

Block 2.2: Registering the birth, wedding, death, etc. of Christians has been hindered or made impossible. (3.50 points)

This is especially problematic for female converts, as they are only allowed to marry a Christian man if their intended husband first converts to Islam. In practice, this means that they cannot marry a foreign Christian spouse in Morocco or that their marriage abroad will not be recognized by the state. Marrying another (Moroccan) convert is legally possible, but only via an Islamic marriage. Children born to Moroccan convert Christians cannot be registered with Christian names.

Block 2.5: Burials of Christians have been hindered or coercively performed with non-Christian rites. (3.50 points)

Moroccan Christians can only be buried with Islamic rites in an Islamic cemetery, as the government, and often (extended) family members as well, do not recognize the conversion of Moroccan Christians.

Block 2 - Additional information

Conversion to Christianity can trigger a hostile reaction from a convert's immediate and extended family. Children of known Moroccan Christians often face harassment and bullying, forcing many to

lead a double life. 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. It is not uncommon for Moroccan Christians, especially women, to be divorced or to lose custody of their children because of their conversion. Many accept certain levels of pressure or even domestic violence in order to avoid such problems and the shame it brings.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.2: 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.). (3.75 points)

Both local and foreign Christians are monitored by the Moroccan security services. Local community members regularly inform the police when they are aware of proselytizing activities. This kind of monitoring became clearly present again following the earthquake that hit Morocco in September 2023: Several Moroccan Christians were questioned about their activities surrounding the organization of humanitarian relief and were duly hindered.

Converts, especially those active in ministry, are monitored and regularly called in by the police for questioning.

Block 3.5: Christians have been put under pressure to take part in non-Christian religious ceremonies or community events. (3.25 points)

Christians, especially converts, feel a great deal of societal pressure to take part in Islamic religious activities and rituals. This is especially the case during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, but also during family events such as circumcision ceremonies.

Block 3.6: Christians have been hindered in participating in communal institutions, forums, etc., for faith-related reasons. (3.25 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.

Block 3.13: Christians have been interrogated or compelled to report to the local vigilante/police for faith-related reasons. (3.00 points)

Converts, especially those active in ministry, are monitored and regularly called in by the police for questioning.

Block 3 - Additional information

Christian converts face being ostracized by their family and community, particularly in rural areas. Societal pressure also makes it difficult for converts to raise their children as Christians. Such pressure could, for instance, 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.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.1: The Constitution (or comparable national or state law) limits freedom of religion as formulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (3.75 points)

The Constitution declares Islam to be the state religion (Article 3) but the same article also guarantees all citizens the "free exercise of beliefs". In addition, Article 41 designates the king as the "Guarantor of the free exercise of beliefs" but the same article also defines him as the "Commander of the Faithful", who "sees to the respect for Islam". In practice, this means that a Moroccan citizen is expected to only practice Islam.

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.75 points)

Civil society organizations with clear Christian convictions, or who aim to defend the rights of Moroccan converts, are actively opposed by the government. The Law on Associations prohibits any organization that the government considers to be carrying out activities "for an unlawful purpose contrary to the laws or public morals, or which could harm the Islamic religion, territorial integrity or the monarchy ...". They are prevented from organizing activities such as conferences on religious freedom in Morocco or from advocating for religious freedom in general.

Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.75 points)

Churches in Morocco are largely invisible in the public sphere. Only (foreign) historical churches in urban areas display Christian symbols publicly. However, both Moroccan Christians and expatriate Sub-Saharan African Christians gather in house-churches or general buildings not recognizable as churches from the outside, so as not to draw unwanted attention and pressure.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.50 points)

Christian evangelism is banned. Giving Christian literature to Muslims and proselytization is illegal. Christians involved in missionary activity could be accused of "shaking the faith of Islam" and this will entail criminal liability.

Block 4 - Additional information

There are 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 ([Christian Today](#), 6 February 2017). However, state officials conduct surveillance on Christians and monitor their activities to enforce the ban on evangelism.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (4.00 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 for other Christians.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.75 points)

Only the Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Anglican and French Protestant Church have a special recognized status. Other churches have to register as associations. All churches are legally prohibited from pursuing any activities that could undermine Islam. Moroccan Christians cannot officially establish their own churches or belong to foreign churches.

Block 5.7: Churches have been hindered from openly integrating converts. (3.75 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 expatriate Christian communities and Moroccan church groups affects both communities negatively.

Block 5.14: Openly selling or distributing Bibles (or other Christian materials) has been hindered. (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. However, the authorities confiscate Bibles they believe are intended for use in proselytizing, and the Bible and Christian literature are not generally available for purchase.

Block 5 - Additional information

Expatriate churches are not hindered in establishing and managing schools, or charitable, humanitarian, medical, 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

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced.

Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. The use of symbolic numbers:

- *In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. 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 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

| Morocco: Violence scores per Block 6 question in questionnaire | WWL 2025 | WWL 2024 |
|---|----------|----------|
| 6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 7 | 3 |
| 6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons? | 17 | 13 |
| 6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons? | 0 | 0 |
| 6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)? | 12 | 8 |
| 6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons? | 16 | 12 |
| 6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians? | 4 | 3 |
| 6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)? | 75 | 54 |
| 6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 5 | 7 |
| 6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons? | 2 | 0 |
| 6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons? | 24 | 13 |
| 6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons? | 12 | 7 |

In the WWL 2025 reporting period:

- Christians attacked:** The table above shows that many Christians have faced physical and mental abuse, with female converts especially being vulnerable to sexual harassment and rape. This abuse took place mostly in the family sphere, although there have also been reports of police abuse. 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.
- **Christian-owned houses attacked:** Several Christian properties have been attacked and vandalized, both by family members and members of the wider community.
- **Violence against female Christians:** Several incidents of forced marriage, sexual abuse and forced relocation of female converts from Islam to Christianity were reported. Those incidents all took place in the family sphere.
- **Christians forced to leave:** Several Moroccan Christians had to find refuge elsewhere in the country to escape from family pressure.
- **Christians refused entry:** Several non-Moroccan Christians were refused entry to the country due to allegations of proselytizing.

5 Year trends

The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

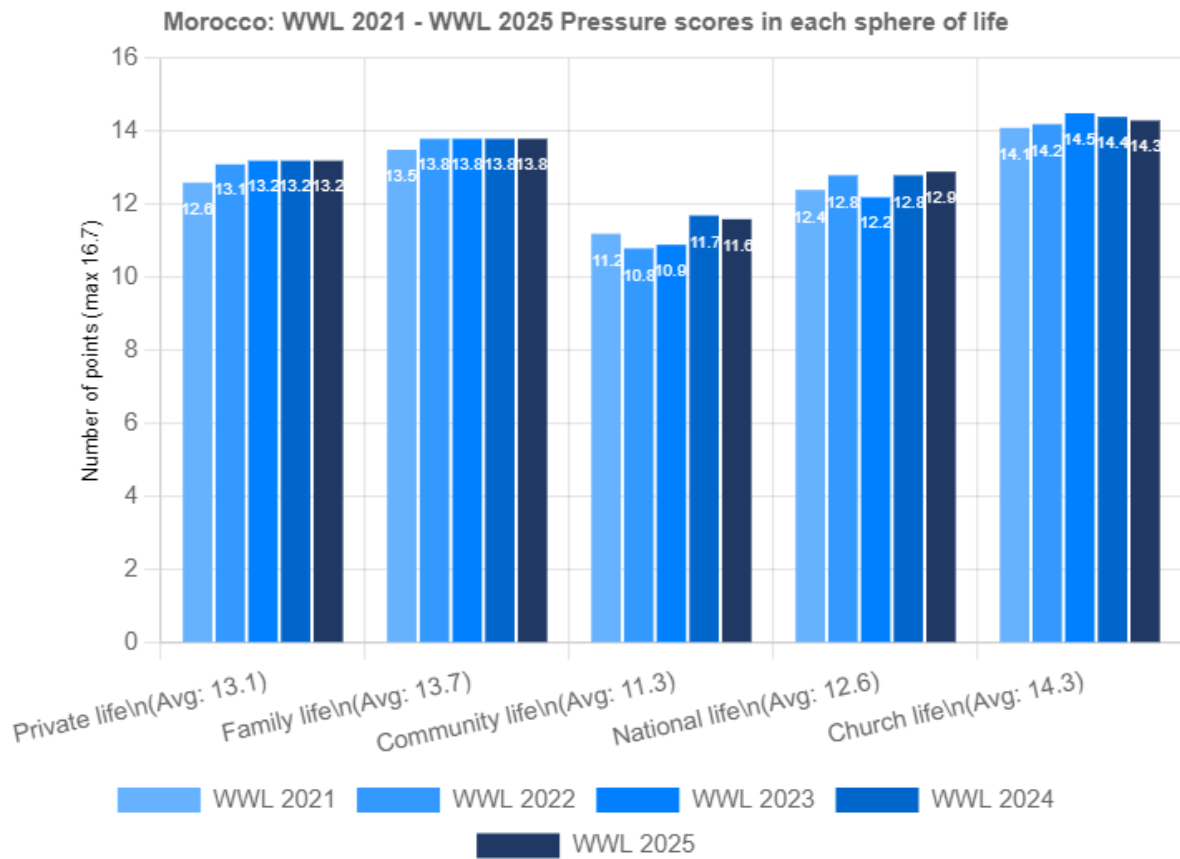
5 Year trends: Average pressure

| Morocco: WWL 2021 - WWL 2025 | Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life |
|------------------------------|---|
| 2025 | 13.2 |
| 2024 | 13.2 |
| 2023 | 12.9 |
| 2022 | 12.9 |
| 2021 | 12.8 |

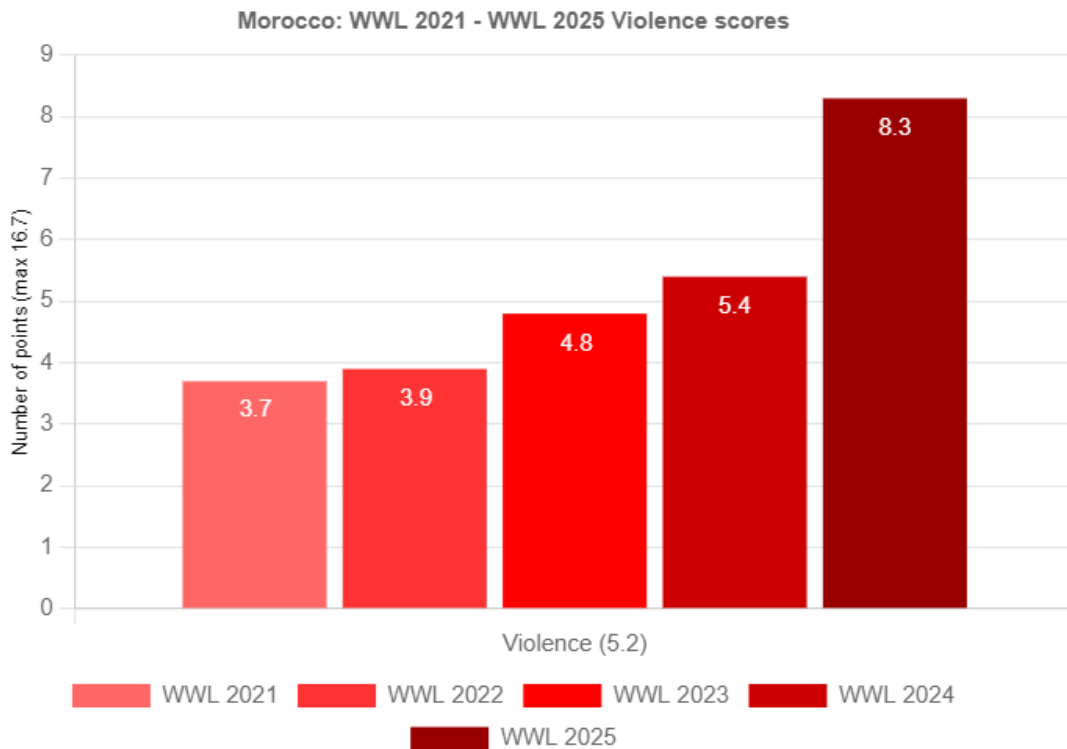
The table above shows that in WWL 2021 - 2023 reporting periods the average pressure on Christians stabilized at the very high level of 12.8/12.9 points. However, the level has since stabilized at the higher level of 13.2 points.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

The chart below shows that pressure in the *Private* and *Family spheres of life* has been stable at a very high/extreme level since the WWL 2022 reporting period. In comparison, in the *Church sphere* pressure has fluctuated slightly at an even higher level. The lowest pressure is to be found in the *Community* and *National spheres*, where the levels have also tended to fluctuate somewhat over the reporting periods.



5 Year trends: Violence against Christians



From WWL 2021 to WWL 2024, the violence score rose steadily from 3.7 points to 5.4 points. In WWL 2025, there was a major jump in score to 8.3 points.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Morocco Female Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024

Denied access to social community/networks
Denied custody of children
Denied inheritance or possessions
Denied legal ability to marry Christian spouse
Enforced religious dress code
Forced divorce
Forced marriage
Incarceration by family (house arrest)
Violence – physical
Violence – sexual
Violence – Verbal

According to reports, most people in Morocco who openly declare their Christian faith are men, because their ability to be more independent in society means that they are less vulnerable to pressure than women. Although women's rights in Morocco have developed over the last sixteen years, which has given women more legal equality, women in Morocco remain in a generally less advantageous position than men ([HRW 2023 country chapter Morocco](#)). For example, they have few economic opportunities, making them dependent on men (see scoring on financial inclusion, p.84, Georgetown's [Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/24](#)). Cultural expectations bind women to the home and domestic duties, especially in rural areas.

While all Christians from an Islamic background can, in practice, be denied their rights to inheritance or family affiliation, this is a particular risk for women. They are also more vulnerable to arbitrary divorce and the denial of access to their children. Personal status law follows the country's Maliki-Ashari Sunni interpretation of Sharia which enables such persecution.

Female Christian converts are also at risk of domestic confinement, forced marriage to a non-Christian and/or being expelled from the home. In some instances, 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. As these pressures demonstrate, religious persecution against women characteristically takes place within the private sphere, in the family home. Family members fear the scandal of their daughter's conversion, particularly if she is bold enough to demonstrate it in public. A country expert explains: "The family exerts all types of violence and pressure so that the Christian desists and returns to the religion of the family. Both men and women are affected by this type of persecution but women are much more vulnerable and less independent in Moroccan society."

Considering these pressures, it is extremely difficult for converts to grow in their faith. Gaining access to Christian religious materials is difficult. Christian women using the Internet as a way to counter 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 harassment if they change these customs, especially during Ramadan.

Additionally, rape, or the threat of rape, is a taboo subject that is socially associated with a woman’s personal honor, which is linked to her family’s honor. The high level of stigma attached makes it a powerful tool for religious coercion. This is the case both for Moroccan women and for the numerous female Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, of whom it is thought a majority are Christian; their rape is not just motivated by exploitation but also by religious intolerance.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

| Morocco | Male Pressure Points Most frequently recorded PPs: WWL 2019 - WWL 2024 |
|---------|--|
| | Discrimination/harassment via education Economic harassment via business/job/work access Forced out of home – expulsion Violence – physical Violence – psychological |

In general, male converts to Christianity are among the most vulnerable in Moroccan society: By leaving Islam, they are perceived to bring shame upon their families and will face a wide variety of pressure and violence in both family and public life.

Within the domestic sphere, they are likely to be ostracized by their families. If young and unmarried, a male convert will likely be denied financial support. If already married, he risks abandonment by his wife, whose family will also place pressure on the couple in order to ensure she is freed from his influence. Additionally, a convert can, in practice, be deprived of his inheritance. If single, he will also face pressure to marry a Muslim, although this pressure affects women more. If he reaches the age of 40 however and is still single, the pressure will mount.

in the public sphere, Christian men, particularly converts, also face difficulties. They are more likely than women to be targeted for government interrogation, beatings or imprisonment, especially if they are a church leader. However, the severity of the backlash after conversion depends on their social position and political standing within the local community.

Employment is also a key area of pressure for men, as they are usually the main providers in their families. A country expert explains: “[Men] usually need to take care of the family. By hitting them in their ability to provide for their family, the whole family is being hit.” They may lose their jobs or be harassed at their workplace, throwing them into economic uncertainty. It will be harder for them to

secure new employment if their faith is known. Christians are sometimes accused of having converted for financial gain, since Christianity is associated with opulent Western society. Discrimination and harassment have also been reported in educational settings.

Every year, there are reports of a handful of arrests of Christian men. These arrests can occur for nothing more than having a Bible in their possession, or for discussing Christian faith with a Muslim. Fines can accompany the harassment. The pressure from families and society can be so sustained that male converts leave their homes, particularly those who are threatened with death. This makes Christian fellowships harder to form or sustain.

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, only Sunni (Maliki) Islam is de facto socially acceptable. Shia Muslims, Ahmadiyya Muslims and adherents of Bahai 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 US State Department ([IRFR 2023 Morocco](#)):

- **Shia Muslims:** "[T]he government's refusal to allow Shia Muslim groups to register as associations continued to prevent these groups from gathering legally for public religious observations. There were no known Shia mosques or *housseiniyas* (Shia prayer halls) in the country. According to Shia community members, they were able to pray in Sunni mosques, but they risked criticism from other worshippers for their religious practices. ... Shia reported they observed Ashura in private to avoid societal harassment. Shia Muslims said that many avoided disclosing their religious affiliation in areas where their numbers were smaller" (pp. 10, 14).
- **Bahai:** "Leaders of the Baha'i Faith community estimate there are 350 to 400 members throughout the country" (p.3). "Members of the Baha'i Faith said they were open about their faith with family, friends, and neighbors" (p.15). However, a local human rights activist reported that several adherents of Bahai had been questioned by the police in the past, but that their leadership did not speak up for them and offer support.
- **Judaism:** "According to Jewish community leaders, there are an estimated 1,500 Jews in the country, although others place the estimate higher, approximately 1,000 of whom reside in Casablanca." "Jewish citizens continued to state they lived and could attend services in synagogues in safety but were increasingly concerned about antisemitism after the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. They said they were able to visit religious sites regularly and to hold annual commemorations" (pp. 3, 15). Prior 7 October, the King in 2022 announced the establishment of several organizations to promote, manage and safeguard "the cultural and religious heritage and influence of Judaism in Morocco." Furthermore, "in November, the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Rabat opened the first university synagogue in the Arab world next to the university's new mosque. According to a media report, the synagogue was expected to provide religious services for the Jewish community on campus and teach Muslim students about Judaism" (IRFR 2022, pp. 12, 13).

Atheists and atheism

Atheism is suppressed by both society and the government. Several known atheists and other citizens have received death threats and were harassed by the government in the recent past. In May 2020, a Moroccan actor was arrested and fined on charges of blasphemy after mocking Islam in a social media post ([Morocco World News, 26 May 2020](#)). The Freedom of Thought Report states that a Moroccan court upheld a 6 months prison sentence in July 2020 for Mohammad Awatif Kachchach for 'insulting Islam' after he had shared a satirical cartoon ([Humanists International, 22 October 2020](#)). In June 2021, a 23-year old Moroccan-Italian woman was sentenced to a three and a half years prison sentence for 'insulting Islam'. In 2019, she had re-written verses from the Quran on Facebook in praise of alcohol ([Morocco World News, 30 June 2021](#)). Two months later, in August 2021, she received a suspended sentence in appeal and was subsequently freed ([Arab News, 23 August 2021](#)).

Trends Summary

1) The country's image is progressive except where religious minorities are concerned

Morocco has been quite stable in both political and economical terms 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, with Moroccan Christians being severely limited in their religious freedom.

2) The monarchy remains strong

Currently, well over a decade since the start of the so-called Arab Spring which saw dictators being toppled in neighboring countries, the monarchy sits still on top, with the Islamist PJD defeated in the September 2021 elections by the royalist RNI. However, there could be an opening for the Islamists to return to power, depending upon whether the economic marginalization and political discontent of certain groups persists. The country's growing general economic pressure, in combination with an often absent king, could add to that. Nevertheless, if its current overall trajectory continues, Morocco is likely to remain stable.

3) Moroccan Christians still have no official recognition

Even the Roman Catholic Pope did not raise his voice to call for more acceptance of Moroccan's Christians during his visit in 2019, as this issue remains highly sensitive in Morocco ([New York Times, 29 March 2019](#)). The Pope's visit underlined the keenness of the Moroccan state to maintain its image of being a tolerant and progressive modern state; the state is thus unlikely to openly increase restrictions on religious freedom. However, 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 are happy with that. As long as "God" is interpreted as the God of Islam, Christians will remain outsiders, even if they are of Moroccan descent.

Further useful reports

Further background information per country and a selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

External Links

- Copyright, sources and definitions: Background country information - <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-background/>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of positive developments: The North Africa Post, 30 July 2022 - <https://northafricapost.com/59406-morocco-model-of-inter-faith-coexistence-under-king-mohammed-vi.html>
- Specific examples of positive developments: MAP, 13 June 2023 - <https://www.mapexpress.ma/actualite/activites-royales/sm-roi-adresse-message-aux-participants-conference-parlementaire-dialogue-interconfessionnel-collaborer-notre-avenir-commun-texte-integral/>
- Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere: Christian Today, 6 February 2017 - <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/morocco-religious-authorities-rule-leaving-islam-is-no-longer-punishable-by-death/104476.htm>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: HRW 2023 country chapter Morocco - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/morocco-and-western-sahara>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/24 - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WPS-Index-full-report.pdf>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: IRFR 2023 Morocco - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Morocco World News, 26 May 2020 - <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2020/05/303884/police-arrest-moroccan-actor-rafik-boubker-for-blasphemy-against-islam/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Humanists International, 22 October 2020) - <https://fot.humanists.international/countries/africa-northern-africa/morocco/>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Morocco World News, 30 June 2021 - <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/06/343170/moroccan-court-convicts-woman-for-publicly-insulting-islam>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Arab News, 23 August 2021 - <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1916026/middle-east>
- Trends Summary: New York Times, 29 March 2019 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/29/world/africa/pope-francis-morocco-christians.html>