

## Education For All - Home Learning Unit Resource 3

### Morocco: Fact file

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## 1. Background

Morocco is a coastal country in North Africa. The capital is **Rabat** and the two official languages spoken in Morocco are Arabic and Berber. French and to a lesser extent Spanish and English are also spoken in the country.

The west side of Morocco is a coastline on the Atlantic Ocean, while the northern coastline is on the Mediterranean Sea.

Morocco has mountainous regions and large desert regions and is bordered by Algeria, with the Western Sahara to the south. This is a section of land that Morocco claims belongs to it and calls it its Southern Provinces; ownership of this piece of land however is still under dispute.

1. The official name of Morocco is the Kingdom of Morocco.
2. Morocco is about the same size as the state of California.
3. There are over 32 million people living in Morocco (32,649,130) as of July 2013.
4. The capital city of Morocco is Rabat, although the largest city is Casablanca with nearly 4 million people.
5. Other major cities in Morocco include Marrakech, Tangier, Tetouan, Salé, Fes, Agadir, Meknes, Oujda, Kenitra, and Nador.
6. Ethnically, Moroccans are predominately of Berber (North African indigenous) and Arabic decent.
7. The Berber people have been living in North Africa for centuries, historically living in the mountainous areas but in more recent times moving to the cities for work.
8. From 1912 to 1956, Morocco was divided into French and Spanish zones. There are just two small Spanish-controlled areas still remaining today (Ceuta and Melilla).
9. Morocco is quite a mountainous country with the Atlas Mountains running from northeast to the southwest through the centre and the Rif Mountains located in the north.
10. The currency in Morocco is called the Dirham. There are approximately 12 Dirham = £1 UK.
11. Moroccan cities commonly have mosques with beautiful towers called minarets, market areas called bazaars, old medieval sections called *medina* and old fortresses called *kasbah*.
12. Green tea with mint and sweetened with sugar is a popular beverage in Morocco.
13. The most famous of Moroccan dishes is couscous, other popular dishes include *pastilla*, *tajine*, and *harira*. Chicken is the most widely eaten meat.
14. There are very large concentrations of Moroccan migrants living in France (over 1 million) and Spain (over 700 thousand).
15. The most popular sport in Morocco is football (soccer). In 1986, the Moroccan national team became the first African and Arab country to make it to the 2nd round of a World Cup.
16. The university called al-Qarawiyyin was founded in the city of Fes in AD 859 as a *madrassa* (an Arabic educational institution) and is considered by some to be the oldest university in the world.

## 2. Culture

Morocco has an interesting cultural mix of people and beliefs. Whilst many looking in would assume the main ethnic group of the people is Arabic, it is in fact Berber (or *Amazigh*, to give them their preferred name). With a history dating back 4,000 years, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many of the population are Berber, but it is thought to be approx. 40% although twice that make claim to Berber heritage in their family roots. The remaining are Arab, Moor or Jewish.

## 3. Population

Morocco is currently going through a great and exciting transition demographically. In the 1950s, the population was small at approx. 9 million inhabitants, the majority of whom were less than 45 years old. Population numbers have gradually increased, with no obvious increase in birth rates, suggesting a steady pace of natural increase. Fast forward to 2019 and the population has grown significantly to just under 37 million, with most under the age of 60.

It would be easy to assume this was purely down to an increased birth rate, but the picture is somewhat more complex than that. Women's fertility rate has been decreasing since the 1980s (from 5.90 to 2.96 in 2018) when it started becoming more socially acceptable to delay having families in order for women to gain an education, have access to contraceptives and to marry later in life than had been previously expected of them. Furthermore, there has been a widespread improvement in sanitation, access to basic medical care and increased access to more nutritious food, all of which has played a part in reducing mortality rates and increasing life expectancy in general.

Across the country there is a disparity between rural and urban areas, and where wealth is distributed. Over the past 50 years from 1970-2020, the proportion of people living in urban areas has increased from 34% to 64%. There has been a significant movement of rural-urban migration where the pull of bright-lights syndrome attracted young working males in the hope of earning a higher wage than had they stayed in their rural villages. This left behind demographically imbalanced and socially fractured communities by the large outward movement of this male generation. Rural women work hard as it is by tending to the animals, keeping the home, raising children and fetching water for the day. With the young men gone the women needed also to tend to growing crops, which was normally a job for the men. In remote rural villages, this meant that getting girls into education was virtually impossible. Meanwhile, young men often struggled to get the formal employment they had hoped in the cities, resulting in an increase in the 'informal economy and general levels of poverty.

Higher concentrations of population can be seen in popular urban areas. Casablanca is the largest city in Morocco with a population of 3.1 million (2019), equating to 16% of the total population. This makes it one of the largest cities in Africa. Rabat, the capital of Morocco, is the only other city to have over 1 million inhabitants (1.66 million). In total, 64% of the Moroccan population live in urban areas. These areas have a much faster annual growth rate of 2.16% than rural locations at a 0.1126% growth rate.

### Largest Cities in Morocco

City name	Population
Casablanca	3,144,909
Rabat	1,655,753
Fes	964,891
Sale	903,485
Marrakesh	839,296
Agadir	698,310
Tangier	688,356

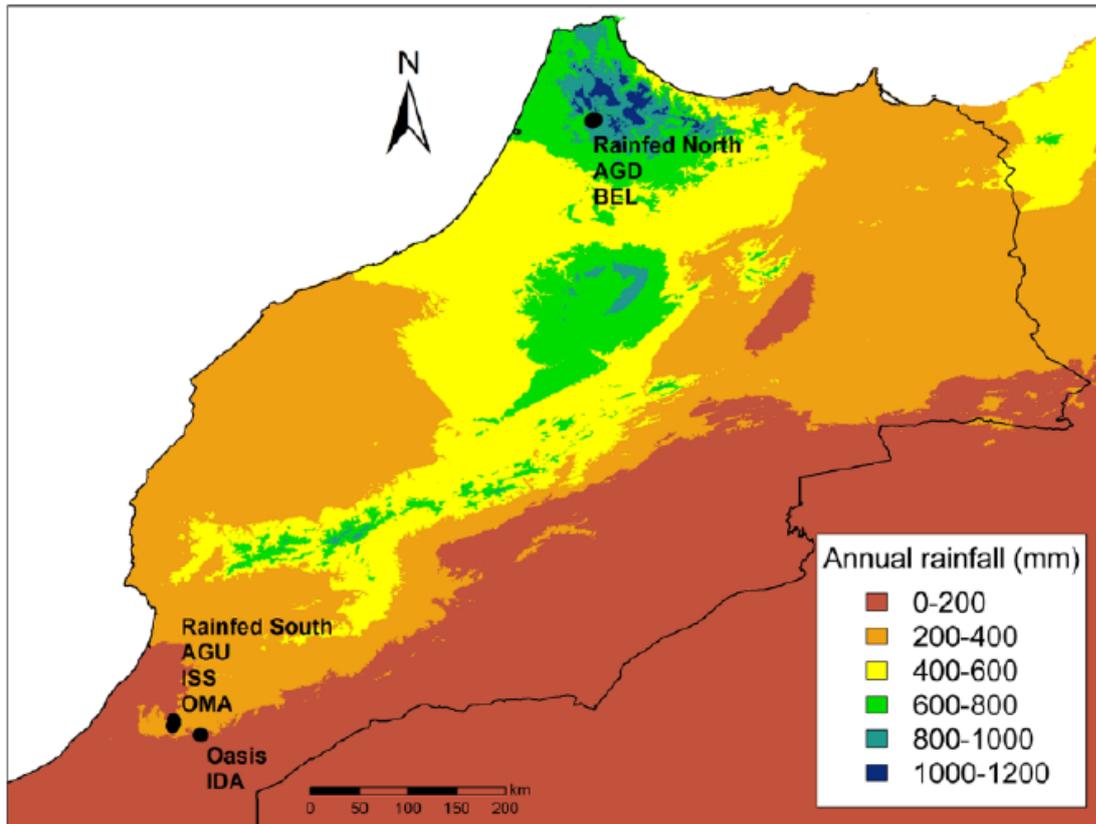
### Life Expectancy in Morocco

Both sexes	Females	Males
77.4	78.7	76.2
Infant mortality		Deaths under age 5
16.1 / 1000 live births		19.1 / 1000 live births

### Life Expectancy in UK

Both sexes	Females	Males
81.8	83.3	80.2
Infant mortality		Deaths under age 5
3.3 / live births		4.3 / 1000 live births

#### 4. Climate



Due to Morocco's physical location the climate has many influences, resulting in at least four distinct climate zones.

- 1) From the northern border of Algeria to the Strait of Gibraltar, these northern stretches of coast are influenced by a warm and dry Mediterranean climate contributing to mild wet winters and dry summers. Average temperatures range from an average 13°C in January to 23°C in the summer months. Precipitation levels can be somewhat abundant here at approx. 400mm a year, concentrated in winter months from November to April.
- 2) Following the coast south of Tangier to Agadir, the warm and moist air is influenced by the Gulf Stream travelling approx. 3,000 km over the Atlantic Ocean. Temperatures tend to be mild throughout the year, from an average of 14°C in January to 22°C in the summer months, although hot African air masses can travel north-west from the Sahara to lift average temperatures to well over 30°C, and sometimes even 40°C! On average, there are 35 days a year in Agadir with precipitation falling, mostly from late autumn to early spring, and not reaching much more than

approx. 224 mm/year. In contrast, Tangier can receive 735 mm/year.

- 3) The Atlas Mountains stretch diagonally across Morocco in a South-West to North-East line. They provide a protective barrier to the north from the harsh desert climate found to the south. Historically November and December are generally the wettest months in the mountains with approx. 40 mm precipitation each month, with the warmest month in July holding temperatures in the region of 30°C. Altitude plays the influencing role here in temperature range and precipitation levels. At 4,167 metres above sea level, Jbel Toubkal experiences very dry summer months although temperatures can still drop to below freezing above 3,500 m. During winter the mountains are covered in snow and provide a vital water source for the lower-lying villages during spring and summer with snow melt.
- 4) South and east of the Atlas Mountains is the Sahara Desert. Cloud formation is hindered due to the dry sinking air restricting evaporated water from rising, and thus cloud formation and rainfall is virtually non-existent. The lack of cloud cover and very low humidity leads to a high temperature range between day and night, typically between 13°C and 20°C. This is known as the diurnal range. Annual rain levels are anything from 0mm to 10mm. This is because this area falls in the rain shadow from any precipitation coming south from the Mediterranean Sea or west from the Atlantic. This harsh environment leads to exceptionally high potential evapotranspiration rates from 2,500 mm/year to 6,000 mm/year. On only two occasions has snow ever been recorded in the Sahara; February 1979 and December 2016, both in Ain Sefra (Algeria).

## 5. Economy

With a GNP per capita of US\$7,700 in 2018, the World Bank categorises Morocco as a middle-income country. With a formal labour force of approx. 12 million, some 40% (2014) work in the services industry. This is most likely in relation to the booming tourist industry the country has seen in recent years. Despite approx. 40% of the population being employed in the agricultural sector, this accounts for only 14.8% GDP (2017) as opposed to the 56% GDP contribution from services such as tourism.

A recovery in annual GDP growth rate from 2016-2017 was attributed to the mining of phosphates where Morocco is believed to have 75% of the worlds' reserves.

However, despite a recent boom in tourism, unemployment remains on an upward trend to a rate of 10.7% in 2017 (World Bank). It tends to be the young (26.5%) educated (17.9%) and women (14.7%) who are suffering the most, suggesting that the growth in economy is not yet capable of meeting the modern needs and skills set of those seeking formal work.

Tourism is the second largest source of income in Morocco and are continuing to rise. In 2015 over 10 million tourists visited Morocco. This compares with 3.5 million in 2002 and 9.3 million in 2010.

In 2015, most tourists arrived from:

France	845,000	Italy	508,000
USA	775,000	Turkey	362,000
Spain	682,000	Germany	350,000
China	570,000	UK	345,000

The growth of tourism, once largely concentrated in the cities, is now affecting Moroccan life in many parts of the country. The King and the Tourism Ministry are actively encouraging tourism in rural areas such as the High Atlas. Imlil is the gateway to the Toubkal National Park containing the trekking magnet of Jbel Toubkal which, at 4,167 metres, is the highest peak in North Africa. In common with much of Morocco, Imlil is a colourful, dynamic and purposeful place where people from a variety of backgrounds and different nationalities work and live together in harmony.



*Kasbah du Toubkal on the outskirts of Imlil with Jbel Toubkal and the High Atlas Mountains in the background*