



Morocco

Morocco: Introduction

Jakkie Cilliers

Last updated 06 November 2023 using IFs 7.84

Morocco: Introduction

Chart 1: Political map of Morocco

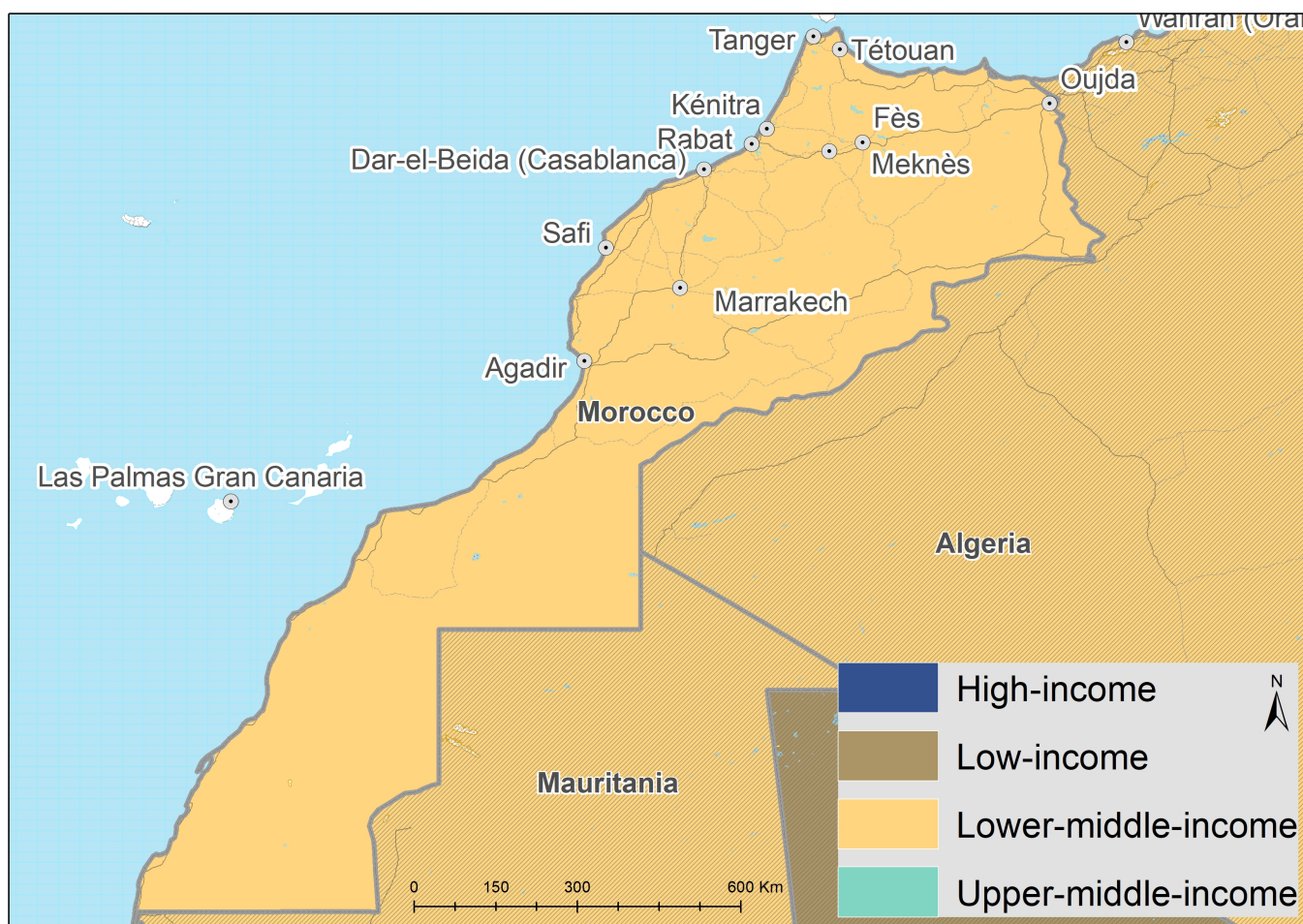


Chart 1 is a political map of Morocco.

The Kingdom of Morocco is the only African country with Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines, totalling 1 835 km. It is also the only African country with a land border with the European Union, namely with the tiny Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla both on the northern shores of Morocco's Mediterranean coast. Morocco's land area covers approximately 446 300 km². In 2019, the country had a population of about 36.5 million people. Its official and predominant religion is Islam, and the official languages are Arabic and Tamazight, spoken by the Berber people, which became an official language in 2011.[1] The Moroccan dialects of Arabic and French are also widely spoken.

Morocco claims ownership of the territory of Western Sahara, a sparsely populated area of mostly desert and a former Spanish colony that is rich in phosphates and fisheries. Western Sahara was annexed by Morocco in 1975 and has since been the subject of a long-running territorial dispute between Morocco, its indigenous Saharawi people, led by the Polisario Front and neighbouring Algeria.[2] After Spain's departure, Morocco and Mauritania partitioned the territory. In 1979, Mauritania withdrew from the territory. Over time Rabat solidified control over the area with the Polisario Front retaining control over some 20%. A UN-mediated Settlement Plan includes a ceasefire, a buffer zone and a provision for a referendum. Morocco's stance on the Western Sahara is that it is an integral part of its territory and it has proposed a plan for limited autonomy and a degree of self-government for Sahrawis, provided it remains under Moroccan sovereignty.[3]

Morocco is also in dispute with Spain over the territories of Ceuta, Penon de Velez de la Gomera and Melilla.

Morocco's largest city and port is Casablanca; however, the capital city is Rabat. Morocco is a unitary semi-constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. The King of Morocco and the prime minister lead the executive branch. Legislative power sits with the two chambers of parliament: the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. Judicial power rests with the Constitutional Court.

The king holds significant executive and legislative powers, especially over the military, foreign policy and religious affairs. He can issue decrees that are de facto laws and dissolve the parliament after consulting the prime minister and the president of the Constitutional Court. See the section on governance below (charts 27 and 28) for more detail.

The country experiences a typical Mediterranean climate with mild wet winters and hot dry summers. October to April is usually the rainy season.

Morocco is expected to be severely affected by climate change, both in terms of an increase in temperature and less rain.

Endnotes

1. *Britannica*, [Morocco – Languages](#)
2. *BBC News*, [Western Sahara profile](#), 7 September 2021
3. R Fabiane, [Paving the Way to Talks on Western Sahara](#), International Crisis Group, 20 July 2023

Donors and sponsors



Reuse our work

- All visualizations, data, and text produced by African Futures are completely open access under the [Creative Commons BY license](#). You have the permission to use, distribute, and reproduce these in any medium, provided the source and authors are credited.
- The data produced by third parties and made available by African Futures is subject to the license terms from the original third-party authors. We will always indicate the original source of the data in our documentation, so you should always check the license of any such third-party data before use and redistribution.
- All of our charts [can be embedded](#) in any site.

Cite this research

Jakkie Cilliers (2024) Morocco. Published online at futures.issafrica.org. Retrieved from <https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/countries/morocco/> [Online Resource] Updated 06 November 2023.



About the authors

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director of the ISS. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees and head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the ISS. His 2017 best-seller *Fate of the Nation* addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, *Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution* (March 2020), *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (April 2021), and *Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity* (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

About African Futures & Innovation

Scenarios and forecasting can help Africa identify and respond to opportunities and threats. The work of the African Futures & Innovation (AFI) program at the Institute for Security Studies aims to understand and address a widening gap between indices of wellbeing in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The AFI helps stakeholders understand likely future developments. Research findings and their policy implications are widely disseminated, often in collaboration with in-country partners. Forecasting tools inspire debate and provide insights into possible trajectories that inform planning, prioritisation and effective resource allocation. Africa's future depends on today's choices and actions by governments and their non-governmental and international partners. The AFI provides empirical data that informs short- and medium-term decisions with long-term implications. The AFI enhances Africa's capacity to prepare for and respond to future challenges. The program is headed by Dr Jakkie Cilliers.