

Morocco

Ethnicity in Morocco

Group selection

A quite daunting challenge in the coding of ethnicity in Morocco is to figure out the constituent ethnic groups. The CIA World Factbook (²⁰⁹⁷), for example, reports a population estimate of 99.1% Arab-Berber. However, previous coding has identified the Berber as a powerless group. Hence they are classified as being distinct from the Arabs. Various sources then differ enormously in their population estimates for the Berber. The Joshua Project notes 10 different Berber groups that make up about 20% of the population. Wikipedia citing Encarta lists a number of 30% of Berber speaking population, which is consistent with the last census results of 28% (2004 census reported in ²⁰⁹⁸ and Ethnologue numbers from the 1990s. However, representatives of the Berber claim that at the time of independence (in the 1950s) the amount of Berber speakers in Morocco was 85% and that the official numbers are a gross underestimation of the real Berber population. Taking the 30% size of today as a vantage point and extrapolating backwards a 0.4 estimate over the whole time frame seems to be reasonable, since apparently assimilation has taken place over time (Fearon (²⁰⁹⁹) notes a proportion of 0.37).

Population shares of the Sahrawis, the people living in the Western Sahara, which Morocco occupied in 1976 are even more sparse. The CIA World Factbook (²¹⁰⁰) notes a number of 500,000 for 2011. Other sources claim lower or higher estimates. The analysis relies on the 500,000 and calculates this as a share of Morocco's total population which was backdated to 1976. While this is obviously a very crude indicator, that does not take into account the outmigration of Sahrawis into refugee camps in southern Algeria, it was the best information available.

²⁰⁹⁷ [CIA, 2011]

²⁰⁹⁸ [Guilbaud, 2010]

²⁰⁹⁹ [Fearon, 2002]

²¹⁰⁰ [CIA, 2011]

Power relations

All sources consulted did not indicate either exclusion nor discrimination on ethnic grounds. Arabs and Berbers are united in their religious belief (Sunni Islam) and the king of Morocco claims to be a descendent of the prophet. The party system of Morocco's constitutional republic is not divided along ethnic lines either. The only demands along ethnic lines came from the Berbers and sought recognition of cultural issues as well as efforts to preserve various Berber dialects. Under the current king, Mohammed VI., a center for Berber cultural affairs and a Berber TV station, both administered by the state, have been created. Moreover, efforts to promote Berber dialects in primary schools were underway. While individual members of the Berbers have been members of different administrations, the clear sovereign is the king who has been Arab since Moroccan independence. Although ethnicity plays little role in Moroccan politics, the situation can be seen as similar to Algeria. In both countries the constitution forbids political parties based on language, region etc., and both have adopted Arab as the official state language. Thus, Arabs are coded as dominant in Morocco as well.

There were no developments demanding a change of the coding in the period from 2006-2009.

Following Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara in 1976, Sahrawis's become a politically relevant ethnic group. The International Court of Justice had ruled in 1975 that the Spanish colony of Western Sahara had a right to self-determination. Morocco and Mauritania ignored the ruling and invaded Western Sahara in late 1975. Mauritania withdrew in 1979 and recognized POLISARIO as the official representative of the Western Sahara. The UN still considers Spain to be the administering country, despite the fact that 2/3 of Western Saharan territory have been under de facto control of Morocco from 1976 and almost the entire territory from 1979 onwards. The Moroccan government has even constructed a wall throughout the entire country to keep Sahrawi rebels (POLISARIO) outside the economically more advanced coastal areas. Several peace initiatives were launched since the late 1980s, most of them envisioning a referendum for independence. The Moroccan government has renounced the general need for such a referendum and has refused to hold it. Freedom House (²¹⁰¹) reports: "Sahrawis have never been able to elect their own government. The Moroccan government organizes and controls local elections in the Moroccan-held areas of the territory. Only Sahrawis whose views are consonant with the Moroccan government hold seats in the Moroccan parliament." This is a clear basis for a discrimination coding.

²¹⁰¹ [Freedom House, 2005]

Shawaris are of mixed Arab, Berber and Black African descent. Their population numbers are disputed but several sources indicate a number around 500,000 today (²¹⁰²). The population share for Morocco was calculated based on present-day population numbers for both Morocco and the Western Sahara, assuming that both populations were growing at a similar rate. Moreover, it was assumed that

²¹⁰² [CIA, 2011]

the majority of Sahwari people were living in the area claimed by Morocco (about 2/3 of the entire territory of the Western Sahara), arriving at a population share of 1.6% for Sahwaris in the period in question. Morocco occupied the Mauritanian-claimed territory in 1979 . Given the very low population density and outmigration of about 100,000 Sahwaris to Algeria, the population share of Sahwaris was kept constant. All other population figures were adjusted accordingly.

Power relations (2010-2013 update)

Population numbers: There is no evidence of major population changes during the update period 2010 – 2013.

General political context: In 2011, following the protests by the February 20 Movement for democratic political reform, the king presented a revised constitution ⁽²¹⁰³⁾, which, however, failed to effectively shift the distribution of power and to substantively curb the monarch’s political supremacy ⁽²¹⁰⁴⁾: he still rules by decree, and he still has the authority to dissolve parliament (although now only in consultation with the PM), to appoint/dismiss cabinet members, heads of administrative provinces, and judges and magistrates, and to call for new elections ^(2105; 2106; 2107). He also sets national and foreign policy, commands the armed forces and intelligence services, and presides over the judicial system ^(2108; 2109).

New is that the king is now required to elect the prime minister from the ruling party (before he had total discretion over whom to appoint) ^(2110; 2111). There are also fewer government-imposed restrictions on political parties ⁽²¹¹²⁾.

Nevertheless, executive, as well as legislative and judicial, power undoubtedly remains with the king and his closest allies from the political elite ⁽²¹¹³⁾. There are clearly no real checks and balances in the political system, and, given the concentration of power in the monarchy, elected officials do not have effective power to rule, even under the new constitution ⁽²¹¹⁴⁾.

Indeed, “the country’s fragmented political parties and even the cabinet are generally unable to assert themselves” ⁽²¹¹⁵⁾. The fact that ministers are directly appointed by the king, and usually are individuals who have close ties to the palace, “creates a political atmosphere where the power of the ministers is challenged” ⁽²¹¹⁶⁾. Also, there are many royal commissions that are more powerful than the ministries ⁽²¹¹⁷⁾. Parties, although they vary widely in their ideologies, have been unable to propose alternatives to those offered by the palace, and do not risk contesting the king’s political choices ⁽²¹¹⁸⁾. In the provinces, although political decentralization was initiated in the early 2000s, power has not been effectively transferred, as policies and budgets of municipal governments require the approval of governors who are appointed by the king ⁽²¹¹⁹⁾.

²¹⁰³ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹⁰⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹⁰⁵ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹⁰⁶ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹⁰⁷ [US State Department, 2013a]

²¹¹⁰ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹¹¹ [US State Department, 2013a]

²¹¹² [US State Department, 2013a]

²¹¹³ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹¹⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹¹⁵ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹¹⁶ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹¹⁷ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹¹⁸ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹¹⁹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

Room for opposition more generally is equally limited: freedom of expression and assembly are severely constrained, especially when the monarchy, Islam as the state religion and the status of the Western Sahara are questioned (²¹²⁰; ²¹²¹). Government critics often face severe punishment, harassment, arbitrary arrest and torture (²¹²²; ²¹²³); civil society actors and NGOs are subject to extensive administrative and financial regulation by the state, with, for example, pro-self-determination groups struggling to get legal status (²¹²⁴; ²¹²⁵).

²¹²⁰ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹²¹ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹²² [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹²³ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹²⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

Arabs: According to Fischer (2010), the dominant narrative identifies Morocco as an Arab-Islamic state, reflecting the “long history of Arabization (that) has developed the institutional, political, and social spheres of Moroccan society” (²¹²⁶). She writes that this prescriptive Arab-Islamic identity has been actively enforced by the ruling elite, which is predominantly of Arab ethnicity, and that such institutionalized Arabization has strongly perpetuated exclusion and oppression of other ethnic groups (²¹²⁷).

²¹²⁶ [Fischer, 2010]

²¹²⁷ [Fischer, 2010]

The Arabs thus clearly dominate the political system (²¹²⁸). In addition, it is also relevant to bear in mind here that the king himself is of Arab ethnicity, as mentioned in previous comments, which, given the weight and power of the monarchy, clearly further underlines the dominance of the Arabs in Moroccan politics. As such, the coding dominant can be extended through 2013.

²¹²⁸ [Fischer, 2010]

Berbers: Relevant with regards to the status of the Berbers is that the 2011 constitution raised Tamazight from national to official language status, placing it on an equal footing with Arabic (²¹²⁹; ²¹³⁰). For example, it is now taught in schools along with modern standard Arabic (²¹³¹).

²¹²⁹ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹³⁰ [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

²¹³¹ [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

According to an article in the International Business Times, this is, however, a “mixed blessing” for the Amazigh community (²¹³²): while it may be an important battle won against cultural marginalization, in political terms the recognition of Tamazight is a mere “symbolic measure” that “won’t help their disenfranchisement from what they believe is an Arab-dominated government” (²¹³³).

²¹³² [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

²¹³³ [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

Apparently no real gestures have been made to ensure Amazigh representation and participation in politics (²¹³⁴), with the International Business Times writing that “there are still those in government who have long worked against the integration of the (Berbers) politically”. Although a political party, called ‘Parti Democratique Amazigh Marocain’ (PDAM), was initiated in 2005 to represent the Berber community, this was banned in 2007 and formally dissolved by a court ruling in 2008, on the grounds that parties based on ethnicity are against Moroccan law (²¹³⁵). The party was quickly re-formed under the title ‘Parti Ecologiste Marocain’, but has not been able to legally establish itself and thus remains inactive in the Moroccan government (²¹³⁶; ²¹³⁷).

²¹³⁴ [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

²¹³⁵ [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

²¹³⁶ [IBTimes Staff Reporter, 2011]

²¹³⁷ [Wikipedia, 2013]

In addition, the above-mentioned Arabization of Moroccan culture

and identity has led to the further marginalization of the Berbers, “silencing the Imazighen constituency” (2138; also 2139). Also, restrictive press laws, for example, have undermined their right to freedom of expression, with journalists reporting on the exclusion and oppression of the Amazighs facing harassment at the hands of Moroccan authorities (2140).

²¹³⁸ [Fischer, 2010]

²¹³⁹ [US State Department, 2013a]

²¹⁴⁰ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

Given Arab dominance and the generally unfavourable climate with regards to Amazigh political participation, the powerless coding seems appropriate and can be extended through 2013.

Sahrawis: Little has also changed in the political status of the Saharawi ethnic group: “as the occupying force in Western Sahara, Morocco holds authority over local elections and works to ensure that independence-minded leaders are excluded from both local political processes and the Moroccan legislature” (2141). Therefore, while there are 31 parliamentarians in the Chamber of Counselors and 21 in the Chamber of Representatives from districts that are all or partly in the Western Sahara territory, and both the regional governor and the members of the regional council self-identified as Saharawi, they seem to be carefully selected in terms of their political orientation with regards to the Western Sahara issue (2142).

²¹⁴¹ [Freedom House, 2009-2013]

²¹⁴² [US State Department, 2013b]

In addition, and as mentioned already above, the Saharawis also continue to experience violations of their civil and political rights more generally (2143): groups or individuals who question the legitimacy of Morocco’s claimed sovereignty over Western Sahara are not only excluded from the political debate but often also severely prosecuted (2144). Government restrictions on the civil liberties and political rights of pro-independence advocates include in particular limitations on freedom of speech, press, assembly and association. As such, critical journalists face harassment and assault, dissent is repressed through the use of arbitrary and prolonged detention, protests and large gatherings of any kind are controlled through violence and excessive force, detainees are subjected to physical and verbal abuse, including torture, and Sahrawi-based associations/NGOs are often denied official recognition, preventing them from establishing office, recruiting members and collecting donations (2145; 2146; 2147; 2148). A poignant and recent example are the events around the Gdeim Izik protest camps established in 2010 close to the territory’s capital, El Ayoun, whose residents were violently dispersed by Moroccan security forces. Two years later, 24 civilians remained incarcerated with no trial scheduled (2149). In 2013, they were tried, although before a military court, and many received heavy jail sentences.

²¹⁴³ [Freedom House, 2009-2013]

²¹⁴⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

²¹⁴⁵ [Freedom House, 2010-2013]

²¹⁴⁶ [Freedom House, 2009-2013]

²¹⁴⁷ [US State Department, 2013a]

In conclusion, the Sahrawi community is clearly still actively prevented from participating in politics, and faces intentional and targeted discrimination that seeks to exclude them from both regional and national political power. It is therefore apt to extend the current discriminated coding through 2013.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Morocco

From 1956 until 1975

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Arabs	0.6	DOMINANT
Berbers	0.4	POWERLESS

From 1976 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Arabs	0.592	DOMINANT
Berbers	0.392	POWERLESS
Sahrawis	0.016	DISCRIMINATED



Figure 508: Political status of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1956-1975.



Figure 509: Political status of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1976-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Morocco

From 1956 until 1957

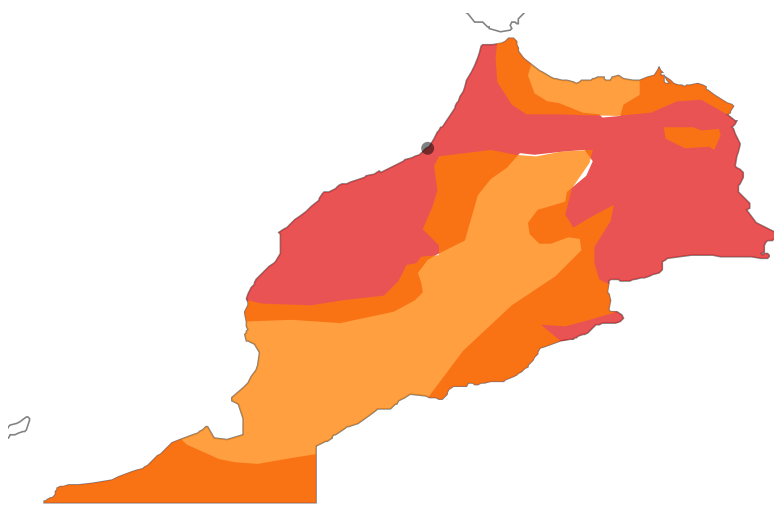


Figure 510: Map of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1976-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Arabs	263 010	Regional & urban
■ Berbers	248 584	Regionally based

Table 153: List of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1956-1957.

From 1958 until 1976

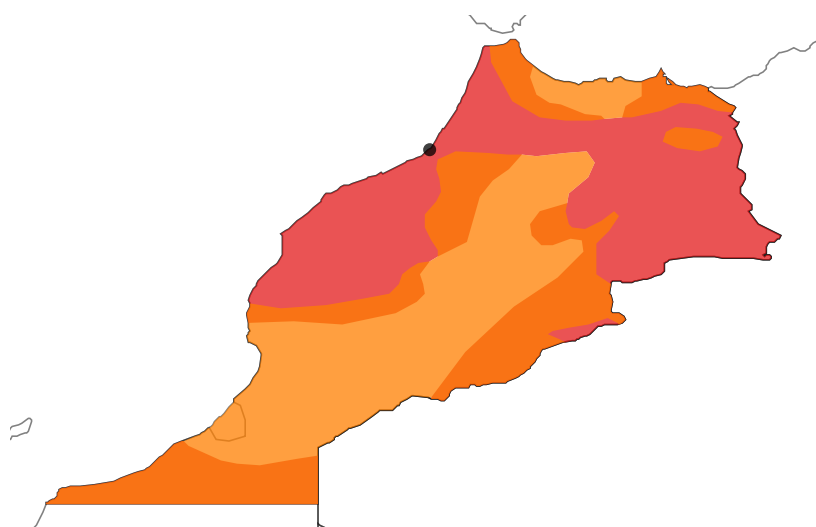


Figure 511: Map of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1976-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Arabs	263 010	Regional & urban
■ Berbers	253 296	Regionally based

Table 154: List of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1958-1976.

From 1977 until 1979

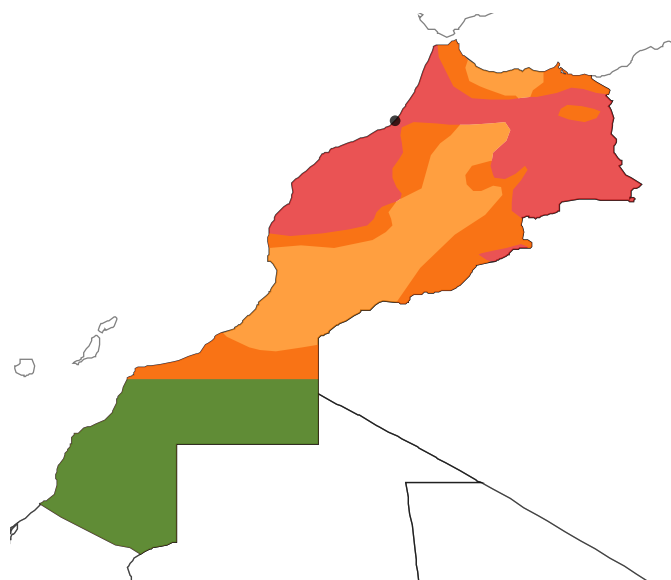


Figure 512: Map of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1976-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Arabs	434 611	Regional & urban
■ Berbers	253 296	Regionally based
■ Sahrawis	171 601	Regionally based

Table 155: List of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1977-1979.

From 1980 until 1990

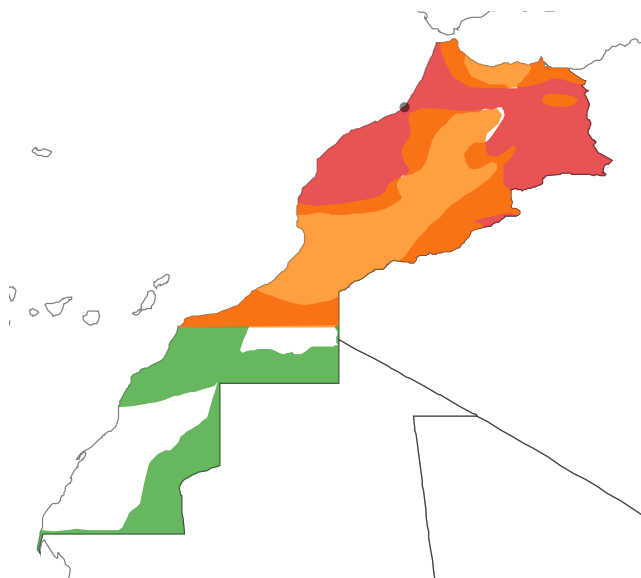


Figure 513: Map of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1976-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
Arabs	262 906	Regional & urban
Berbers	253 296	Regionally based
Sahrawis	146 086	Regionally based

Table 156: List of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1980-1990.

From 1991 until 2013

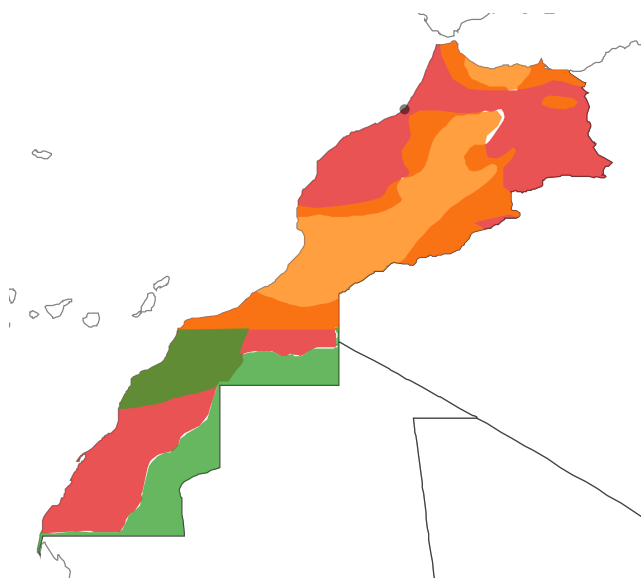


Figure 514: Map of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1976-2013.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Arabs	440 837	Regional & urban
■	Berbers	253 296	Regionally based
■	Sahrawis	146 086	Regionally based

Table 157: List of ethnic groups in Morocco during 1991-2013.

Conflicts in Morocco

Starting on 1953-11-07

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of France	Istiqlal		1953-11-07			

Starting on 1957-11-23

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Spain	NLA		1957-11-23			

Starting on 1963-10-08

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Algeria	Government of Morocco		1963-10-08			

Starting on 1971-07-10

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Morocco	Military faction (forces of Mohamed Madbouh)		1971-07-10			

Starting on 1975-09-01

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Morocco	POLISARIO	Sahrawis	1975-09-01	Explicit	Yes	No