Morocco's GDP per capita since independence

How income per person has evolved from 1956 to 2022, and how it compares with economies that started from a similar level. Report prepared 19 November 2026 · Data: Maddison Project Database 2023, World Bank WDI

Executive summary

$2,313 GDP per capita in 1956 (2011 int. $, PPP)	**$8,400** GDP per capita in 2022 (2011 int. $, PPP)	**×3.6** Increase since independence	**1.97%** Average annual growth 1956–2022
5th → 10th Income rank among 12 emerging peers, 1956 → 2022	**11th / 12** Rank for growth 1956–2022	**13% → 14%** Share of the US level 1956 → 2022 (13.3% → 14.4%)	**15 yrs** Years in which income per person fell

Morocco is about 3.6 times richer per person than at independence, but most comparable economies did much better. Measured in constant purchasing-power dollars, GDP per capita rose from $2,313 in 1956 to $8,400 in 2022, an average of 1.97% a year. At that pace income doubles roughly every 35 years.

- **Slow relative to peers.** Of 12 emerging economies with similar income in the 1950s, Morocco ranks 11th for growth; only Jordan grew more slowly. The median peer grew 3.3% a year. Had Morocco matched it, GDP per capita would be about $19,300 today, 2.3 times its actual level.
- **Lost ground in the rankings.** Morocco was the 5th richest of the 12 in 1956 and the 10th in 2022, overtaken by South Korea, Thailand, Egypt, Indonesia and Tunisia, which all started below it (South Korea's income grew ×30, Thailand's ×11).
- **No catching up with rich economies.** Morocco's income stayed at 13–14% of the US level throughout. Against Spain it fell from 49% in 1956 to 18% in 2000, then recovered to 25% in 2022. Relative to the world average it has hovered around half (48% in 1960, 50% in 2022).
- **Growth came late.** Morocco ranked 11th of 12 for growth in 1956–1980 and 10th in 1980–2000, when debt crisis, structural adjustment and repeated droughts held income back. Since 2000 it has grown 2.6% a year (3.8% in the 2000s), but peers accelerated too, so it still ranks 9th for 2000–2022. 2019–2022 was flat because of COVID-19 and the 2022 drought.
- **A trend problem more than a shock problem.** Income per person fell in 15 of 66 years, mostly in drought years, yet Morocco's year-to-year volatility is middling (8th of 12). The gap with peers comes mainly from a lower average growth rate, not from more frequent crises.
- **The picture holds at market exchange rates.** In current US dollars Morocco went from $175 in 1960 to about $3,800 in 2023 (World Bank). Rankings shift somewhat with the measure (Egypt, for example, is well above Morocco at PPP but below it in dollars after its devaluations), but the conclusion of slow relative progress does not change.

What it means. The difference between 2.0% and the peer median of 3.3% a year looks small, but over two generations it compounds into a gap of more than half: at the peer-median pace, income doubles every 22 years instead of 35. The stronger performance since 2000 shows that faster growth is achievable; sustaining it, and reducing the economy's exposure to rainfall, is what would close the distance with peers.

1. Data and method

Main measure. Real GDP per capita in 2011 international dollars at purchasing-power parity (PPP), from the Maddison Project Database 2023 (University of Groningen). PPP adjusts for differences in price levels between countries and over time, so it is the standard basis for comparing living standards and long-run growth. Coverage: 1950–2022.

Second measure. GDP in current US dollars divided by population (World Bank, World Development Indicators), 1960–2023. It is not adjusted for inflation or price levels and moves with exchange rates; it is shown in section 5 as a cross-check.

Growth rates are compound annual growth rates (CAGR) between the stated years. **Ranks** are among the 12 emerging economies; Spain, Portugal and the United States are shown as references and are not ranked. **Start year** is 1956, Morocco's independence.

Comparator economies

Group	Countries	Why they are included
Maghreb	Algeria, Tunisia	Neighbours with a shared colonial history and similar independence dates (Tunisia 1956, Algeria 1962)
Middle East	Egypt, Jordan, Türkiye	Regional economies of comparable size or income
Asian comparators	South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam	Income close to Morocco's in the 1950s; most later grew through export-led industrialisation
References	Spain, Portugal, United States	Morocco's northern neighbours and main partners; the US as the frontier economy

2. Morocco's trajectory since 1956

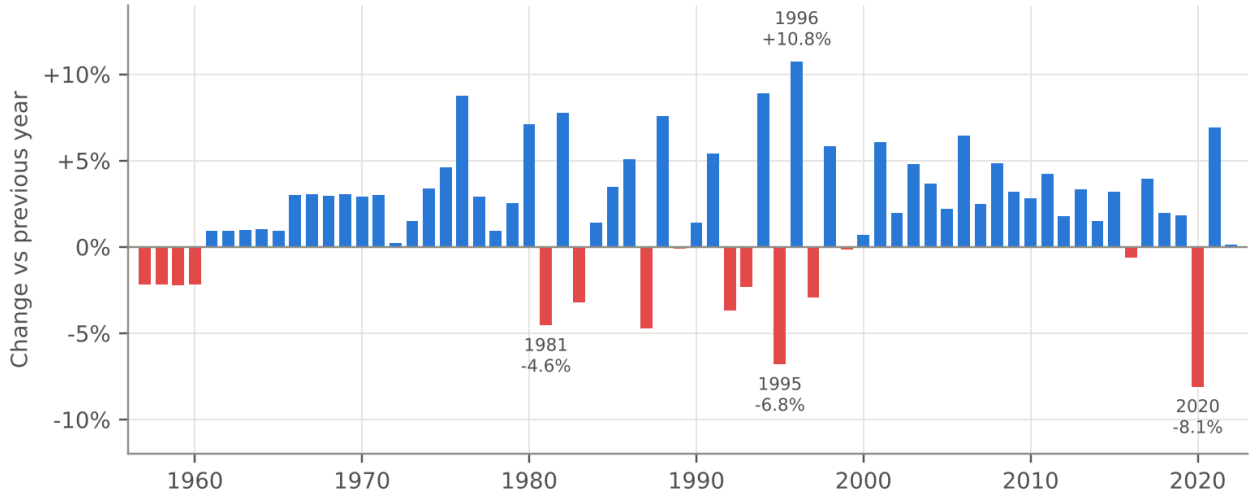
Morocco's income per person barely moved in the first decade after independence: Maddison's estimates show a decline to $2,118 in 1960 and only $2,289 by 1966. Growth picked up during the 1970s phosphate boom, slowed sharply in the 1980s and 1990s, and was strongest in the 2000s.

Table 1. Morocco: GDP per capita and growth by period (2011 int. $, PPP)

Period	Start	End	Growth / yr	Main context
1956–1960	$2,313	$2,118	−2.2%	Transition after independence; departure of much European capital and settler farming
1960–1970	$2,118	$2,576	+2.0%	Agriculture-led economy, first development plans, dam building
1970–1980	$2,576	$3,622	+3.5%	Phosphate price boom (1974), public investment surge, "Moroccanisation", rising foreign debt
1980–1990	$3,622	$4,130	+1.3%	Debt crisis; IMF/World Bank structural adjustment from 1983; recurrent droughts
1990–2000	$4,130	$4,754	+1.4%	Severe droughts, privatisations, EU association agreement (1996)
2000–2010	$4,754	$6,932	+3.8%	Strongest decade: infrastructure (Tanger Med, motorways), free-trade agreements, services boom
2010–2019	$6,932	$8,541	+2.3%	Industrial acceleration (automotive, aerospace) but slower overall growth
2019–2022	$8,541	$8,400	−0.6%	COVID-19 shock in 2020, then the 2022 drought
1956–2022	**$2,313**	**$8,400**	**+2.0%**	Whole period since independence

Source: Maddison Project Database 2023; growth rates computed for this report.

Figure 1. Morocco: annual change in GDP per capita, 1957–2022

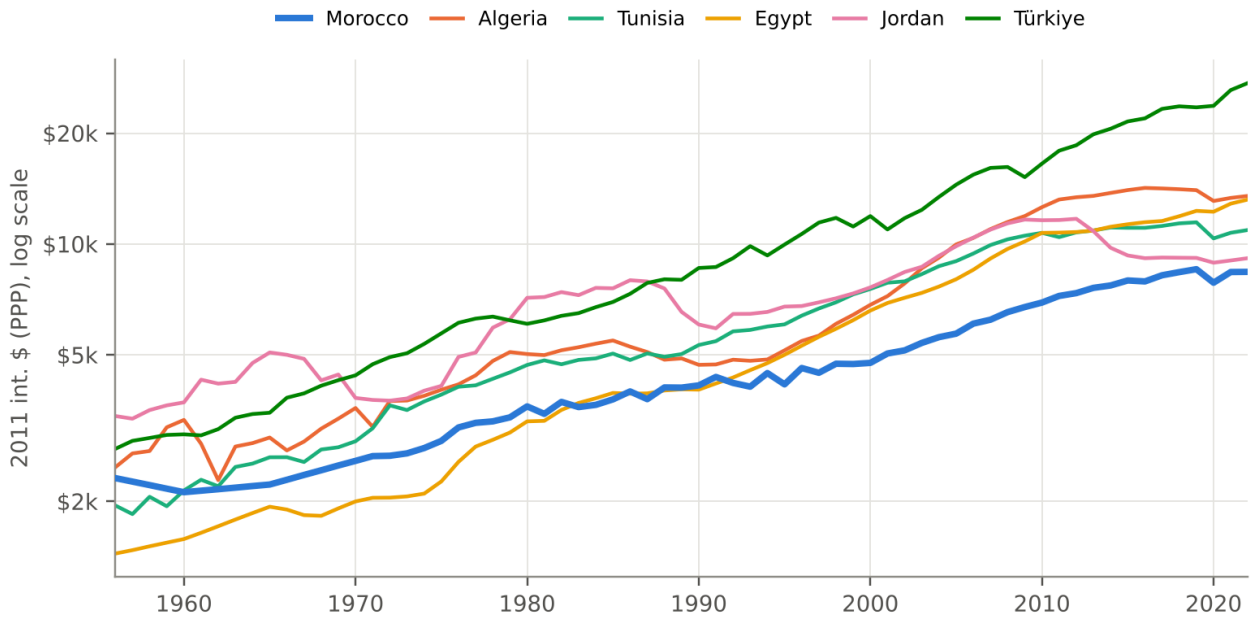


Income per person fell in 15 of 66 years. The largest falls (2020, 1995, 1987, 1981) mostly coincide with drought years or, in 2020, the pandemic; the largest gains (1996, 1994) are rebounds after droughts. The identical bars before the mid-1960s reflect Maddison's interpolation between benchmark years, not actual annual data.

3. Morocco compared with peer economies

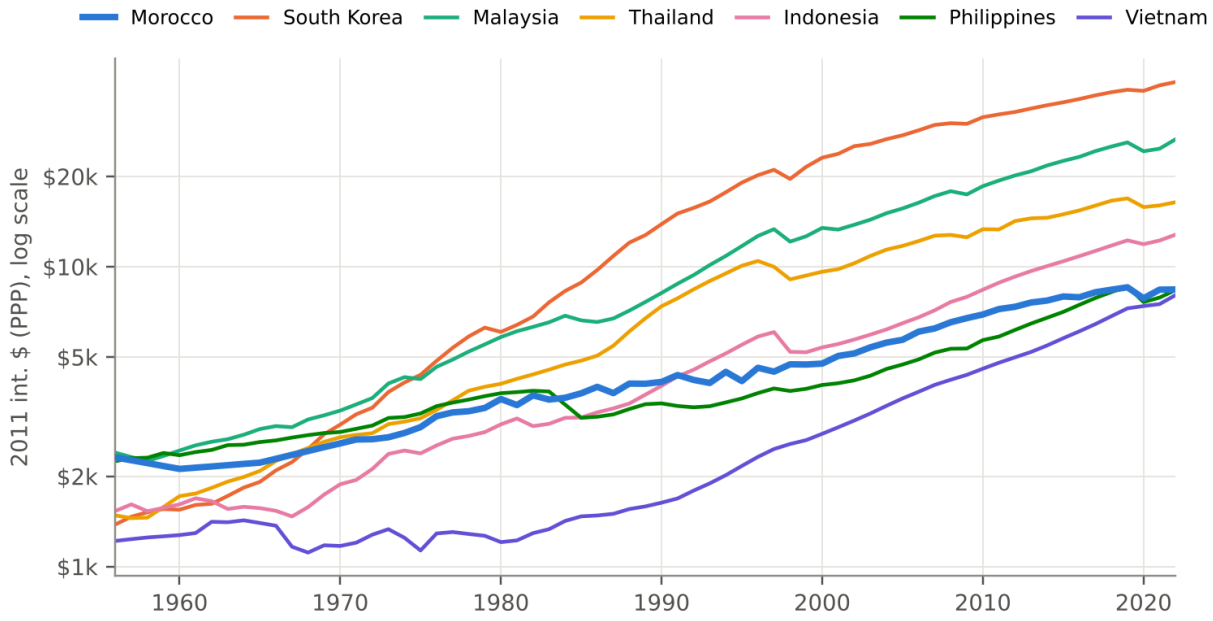
In 1956 Morocco sat in the upper half of its peer group, richer than seven of the twelve, including South Korea, Egypt, Thailand, Indonesia and Tunisia. By 2022 only the Philippines and Vietnam were poorer. The Maghreb and Middle East comparison shows Morocco on the lowest track for most of the period; the Asian comparison shows how far export-led economies pulled away after 1970.

Figure 2. GDP per capita: Morocco vs Maghreb and Middle East, 1956–2022



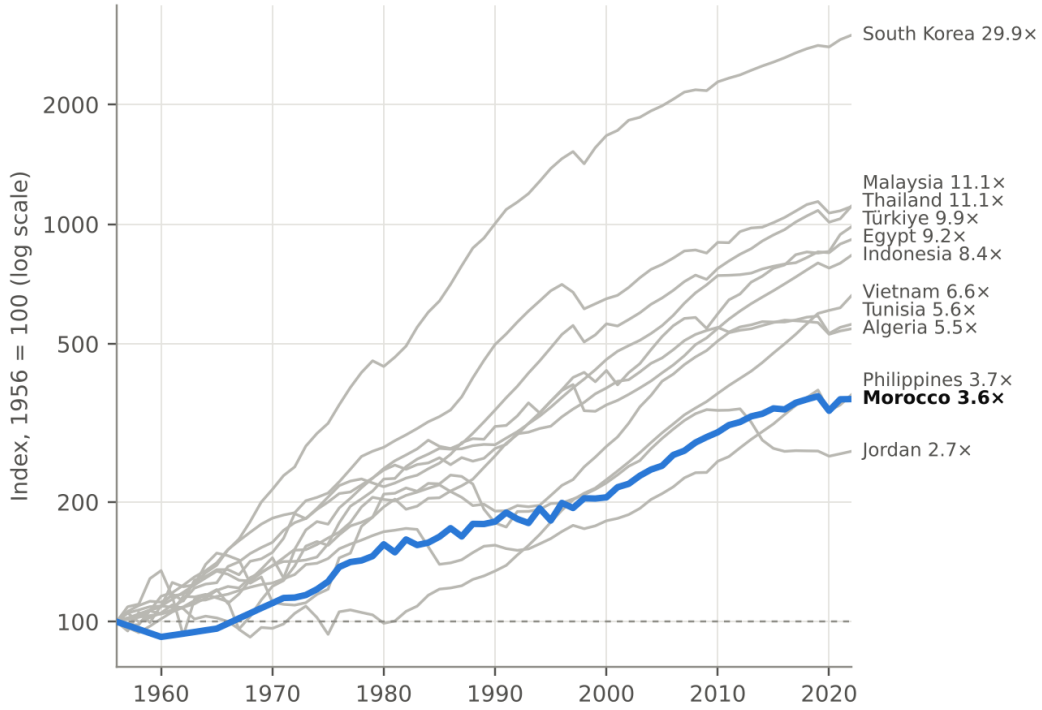
Log scale, so equal vertical distances mean equal percentage differences. Türkiye moved from about 1.2 times Morocco's income to 3.3 times; Egypt, which started well below Morocco, drew level in the 1980s and has been ahead since 1992. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023.

Figure 3. GDP per capita: Morocco vs Asian comparators, 1956–2022



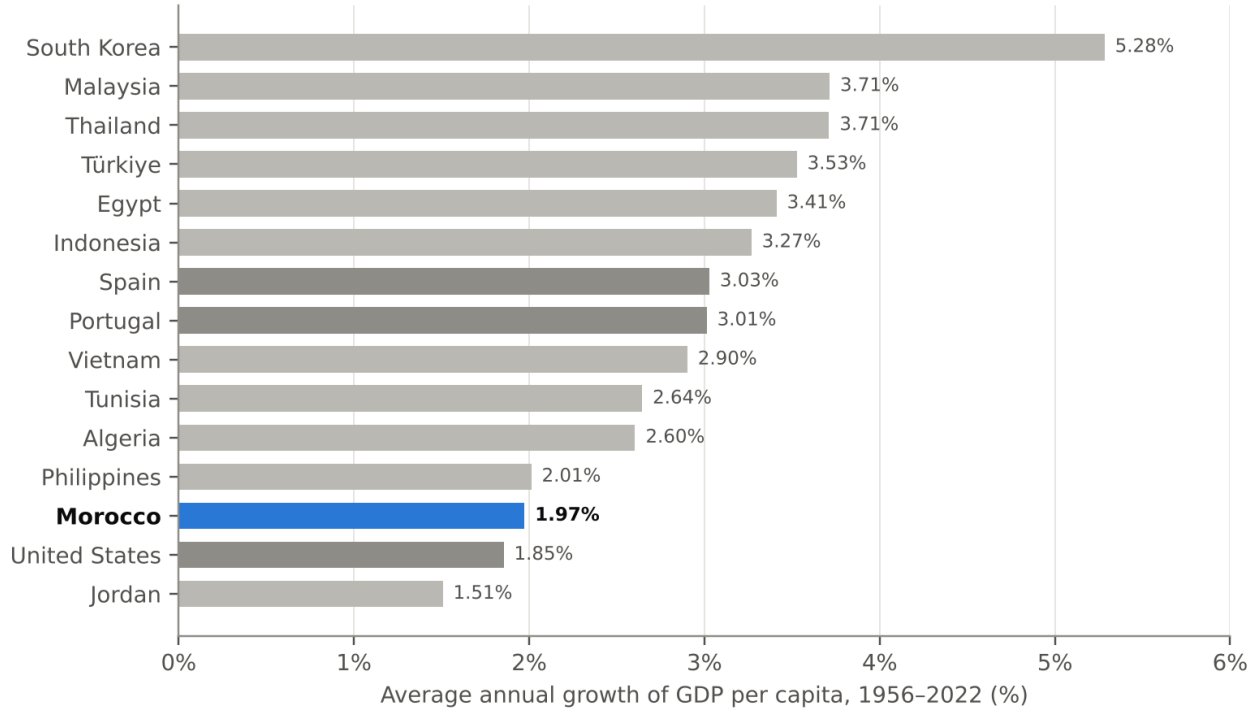
South Korea started at 60% of Morocco's level and ended at nearly 5 times it. Malaysia, with an almost identical starting point, is now 3.2 times richer. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023.

Figure 4. Growth since independence: GDP per capita indexed to 1956 = 100



Each line divides a country's GDP per capita by its own 1956 level; labels show the multiple reached in 2022. Morocco (blue) is second-lowest, level with the Philippines and above only Jordan. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023.

Figure 5. Average annual growth of GDP per capita, 1956–2022



Light grey: emerging peers; dark grey: reference economies. Morocco (1.97%) grew only slightly faster than the United States (1.85%), which is why it did not converge. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023; calculations for this report.

Table 2. Summary by country (levels in 2011 int. $, PPP; growth = compound annual rate)

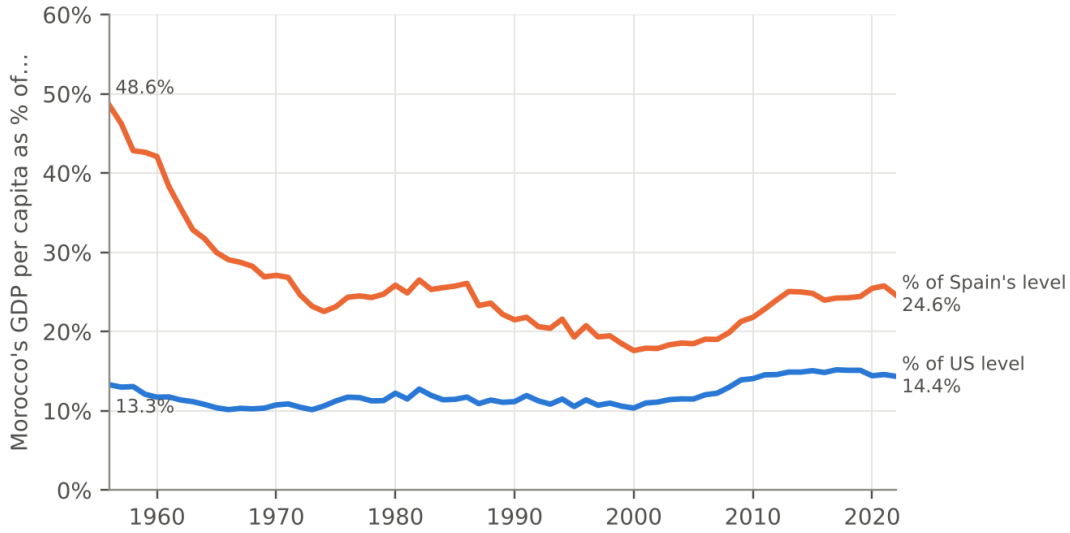
Country	1956	2022	Multiple	Growth 56–22	56–80	80–00	00–22	% of US 1956	% of US 2022	Rank 1956	Rank 2022
South Korea	$1,382	$41,321	×29.9	5.28%	6.4%	6.9%	2.7%	7.9%	70.6%	11th	1st
Türkiye	$2,777	$27,362	×9.9	3.53%	3.3%	3.4%	3.9%	16.0%	46.8%	2nd	2nd
Malaysia	$2,399	$26,629	×11.1	3.71%	3.8%	4.3%	3.1%	13.8%	45.5%	4th	3rd
Thailand	$1,482	$16,421	×11.1	3.71%	4.3%	4.4%	2.5%	8.5%	28.1%	9th	4th
Algeria	$2,475	$13,506	×5.5	2.60%	3.0%	1.6%	3.1%	14.2%	23.1%	3rd	5th
Egypt	$1,443	$13,205	×9.2	3.41%	3.5%	3.5%	3.2%	8.3%	22.6%	10th	6th
Indonesia	$1,533	$12,802	×8.4	3.27%	2.8%	3.0%	4.0%	8.8%	21.9%	8th	7th
Tunisia	$1,949	$10,914	×5.6	2.64%	3.7%	2.4%	1.7%	11.2%	18.7%	7th	8th
Jordan	$3,410	$9,151	×2.7	1.51%	3.1%	0.3%	0.8%	19.6%	15.6%	1st	9th
Morocco	**$2,313**	**$8,400**	**×3.6**	**1.97%**	**1.9%**	**1.4%**	**2.6%**	**13.3%**	**14.4%**	**5th**	**10th**
Philippines	$2,248	$8,371	×3.7	2.01%	2.2%	0.3%	3.4%	12.9%	14.3%	6th	11th
Vietnam	$1,218	$8,050	×6.6	2.90%	0.0%	4.2%	5.0%	7.0%	13.8%	12th	12th
Spain	*$4,764*	*$34,123*	*×7.2*	*3.03%*	*4.6%*	*3.3%*	*1.1%*	*27.4%*	*58.3%*	—	—
Portugal	*$4,087*	*$28,992*	*×7.1*	*3.01%*	*4.9%*	*3.0%*	*1.0%*	*23.5%*	*49.6%*	—	—
United States	*$17,397*	*$58,487*	*×3.4*	*1.85%*	*2.2%*	*2.2%*	*1.1%*	*100.0%*	*100.0%*	—	—

Sorted by 2022 level; reference economies in italics at the bottom. Ranks among the 12 emerging peers. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023.

4. Catching up with advanced economies

Convergence means growing faster than richer countries so that the gap narrows. Morocco has not converged with the United States: its income was 13.3% of the US level in 1956 and 14.4% in 2022. Against Spain, Morocco lost ground for four decades while Spain grew fast after 1960, reaching a low of 17.6% in 2000; since then it has recovered to 24.6%, the clearest sign of the faster growth of the 2000s.

Figure 6. Morocco's GDP per capita as a share of the US and Spanish levels



A flat line means Morocco grew at the same pace as the reference country. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023.

Table 3. Morocco relative to world and regional averages

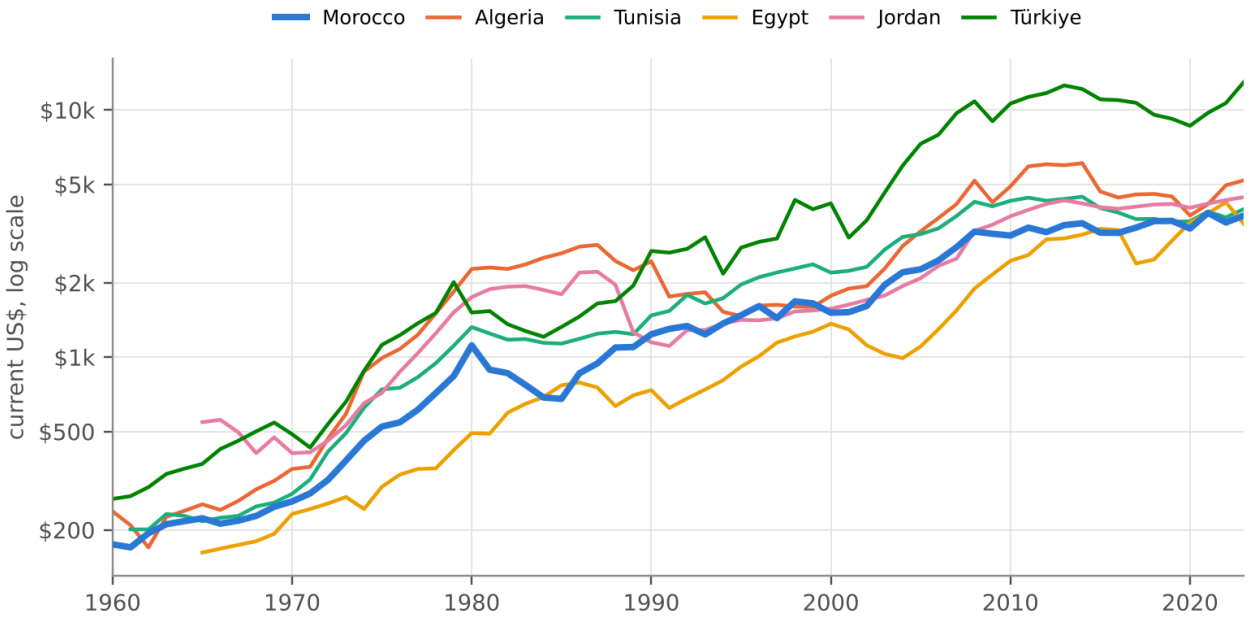
	1960	1980	2000	2022
Morocco (2011 int. $)	$2,118	$3,622	$4,754	$8,400
World average (2011 int. $)	$4,404	$7,239	$9,904	$16,677
Morocco as % of world	**48.1%**	**50.0%**	**48.0%**	**50.4%**
Middle East & N. Africa average	$3,103	$6,731	$9,659	$19,875
Morocco as % of MENA average	68.3%	53.8%	49.2%	42.3%

The regional average is population-weighted and pulled up by Gulf oil exporters after 1970, which explains Morocco's falling share of it. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023 regional aggregates.

5. A second measure: market exchange rates

At market exchange rates, which matter for purchasing power abroad, external debt and investors' perceptions, Morocco's GDP per capita rose from $175 in 1960 to about $3,700–3,800 in 2023. The World Bank's latest release puts it at about $3,814 for 2023 and $4,153 for 2024. Dollar figures swing with exchange rates and commodity prices (Algeria's fall after the 1986 oil-price collapse, Egypt's after the 2016 and 2023 devaluations), so they are less suitable for measuring growth, but the ordering of Morocco among its Maghreb and Middle East peers is broadly similar.

Figure 7. GDP per capita in current US dollars: Morocco vs Maghreb and Middle East, 1960–2023



Log scale. Not adjusted for inflation. Source: World Bank WDI (GDP and population, earlier release ending 2023).

Table 4. GDP per capita in current US dollars, selected years

Country	1960	1980	2000	2023
Morocco	**$175**	**$1,117**	**$1,513**	**$3,742**
Algeria	$238	$2,276	$1,773	$5,197
Tunisia	—	$1,324	$2,199	$3,978
Egypt	—	$493	$1,366	$3,457
Jordan	—	$1,750	$1,571	$4,442
Türkiye	$267	$1,516	$4,192	$12,986
South Korea	$158	$1,715	$12,257	$33,121
Malaysia	$241	$1,886	$4,084	$11,377
Philippines	$269	$767	$1,051	$3,805

Source: World Bank WDI, GDP (current US$) divided by population; the 2023 values are from an earlier release and may differ slightly from the latest data.

Appendix. GDP per capita by decade

Table 5. GDP per capita, selected years (2011 int. $, PPP)

Country	1956	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2022
United States	17,397	18,057	23,958	29,611	36,982	45,886	49,267	58,487
South Korea	1,382	1,548	2,975	6,064	13,874	23,108	31,538	41,321
Spain	4,764	5,032	9,503	14,006	19,215	26,995	31,786	34,123
Portugal	4,087	4,712	8,724	12,822	17,256	23,372	25,463	28,992
Türkiye	2,777	3,041	4,398	6,070	8,606	11,904	16,528	27,362
Malaysia	2,399	2,439	3,314	5,829	8,179	13,475	18,574	26,629
Thailand	1,482	1,718	2,700	4,071	7,385	9,627	13,344	16,421
Algeria	2,475	3,328	3,585	5,024	4,697	6,835	12,588	13,506
Egypt	1,443	1,580	1,999	3,298	4,022	6,594	10,719	13,205
Indonesia	1,533	1,613	1,882	2,981	4,007	5,384	8,386	12,802
Tunisia	1,949	2,141	2,912	4,693	5,316	7,548	10,722	10,914
Jordan	3,410	3,714	3,818	7,141	6,044	7,622	11,601	9,151
Morocco	**2,313**	**2,118**	**2,576**	**3,622**	**4,130**	**4,754**	**6,932**	**8,400**
Philippines	2,248	2,353	2,812	3,787	3,502	4,034	5,694	8,371
Vietnam	1,218	1,274	1,172	1,207	1,634	2,773	4,572	8,050
World average	—	*4,404*	*5,971*	*7,239*	*8,211*	*9,904*	*13,122*	*16,677*
MENA average	—	*3,103*	*4,790*	*6,731*	*6,432*	*9,659*	*16,565*	*19,875*

Sorted by 2022 level. Maddison publishes regional averages for decade years only. Source: Maddison Project Database 2023.

Caveats

- Estimates for the 1950s and early 1960s are rough for most developing countries. Maddison's Morocco series is interpolated between benchmark years before the mid-1960s and shows a decline from 1956 to 1960; measured from 1960 instead, Morocco's growth is 2.2% a year rather than 2.0%. The ranking conclusions do not change.
- 1956 is Morocco's independence year. For Algeria (1962), Malaysia (1957) and others it falls before or around their own independence.
- PPP estimates depend on international price surveys and are revised over time; differences of a few percent between countries are within the margin of error.
- The latest year available in the Maddison database is 2022. The World Bank series used here is an earlier release ending in 2023.
- The economic context given for each period summarises widely documented events; this report does not estimate their individual contribution to growth.

Sources

- Bolt, J. and van Zanden, J. L. (2024), Maddison Project Database, version 2023, Groningen Growth and Development Centre, University of Groningen.
- World Bank, World Development Indicators: GDP (current US$) and Population, total (accessed through the open-data mirrors datasets/gdp and datasets/population).
- World Bank / FRED series PCAGDPMAA646NWDB (GDP per capita for Morocco, current US$), for the 2023 and 2024 values quoted in section 5.