

WWL 2018

Church History and Facts – ALGERIA

How many Christians?

Pop 2017	Christians	Chr%
41,064,000	68,500	0.2

Source: WCD, May 2017

How did Christians get there?

Christianity became rooted in Algeria by the 2nd century AD. Renowned Church Fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine of Hippo all hailed from Algeria. Many Berbers in Algeria were identified with the Donatist movement.¹ The strong Christian presence gave way to Islam after the Arab invasion in the 8th century. The Kabyle (a Berber group, originally Christian) resisted Islam stubbornly but eventually accepted it. In the late 15th century, Christianity came back to the country when Spain conquered the coastal areas; however, Spanish rule lasted only briefly, and the Ottomans conquered the country in 1525. After France gained control of Algeria (in 1830 and lasting until 1962), Catholic missionaries came with French settlers and established churches. There were also Protestants among the French settlers and Methodists from Britain.

What church networks² exist today?

Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Independent	Unaffiliated	Double-aff	Evangelical	Renewalist
1,300	6,000	8,200	52,800	130	-	28,300	21,800

Source: WCD, May 2017

¹ See <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Donatists>, last accessed on 19 April 2016.

² **Orthodox:** Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelicals:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalists:** Church members involved in the Pentecostal/Charismatic/Independent Charismatic renewal in the Holy Spirit.

The majority of Christians in Algeria are part of the Protestant Church of Algeria and are concentrated in the Berber-populated Kabyle region. Major denominations in Algeria include the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA), the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, Methodists and Adventists. There are also several Independent churches and house groups.

Religious context (selection)

Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Ethno-religionist	Jewish	Bahai	Atheist & others ³
68,500	40,428,000	-	6,200	-	620	3,800	543,200

Also to note: Chinese folk: 12,800

Source: WCD, May 2017

As in most countries in northern Africa, Algeria is a country in which Muslims are the overwhelming majority. According to WCD data, an estimated 98.5% of Algerians are Muslim. Almost all Algerian Muslims are Sunni Muslims and there is a small community of Algerians who belong to the Ibadi sect of Islam. However, the presence of Shiite Islam is negligible.

Radical Islamic influence is growing. Yet at the same time there is openness to the Gospel and Christianity is growing fast in Algeria. Christians within Muslim families face legal discrimination from the state in personal status issues, and hostility from within their own extended family.

Notes on the current situation

- The fourth consecutive term for ailing President Bouteflika (re-elected in 2014) reaffirms the regime's apathy towards any democratic shift.
- The government continues to enforce Ordinance 06-03, which regulates the exercise of religious worship other than Islam, in an effort to control the Algerian Christian minority, particularly in the Kabyle region.
- Economic poverty, rising food prices and a lack of economic development is especially apparent in the Kabyle region which is home to many of Algeria's Protestants. The government's efforts have done little to reduce high youth unemployment rates or to address housing shortages. In some regions unemployment is above 50%. On the Corruption Perceptions Index Algeria is ranked at 100 out of 175 countries. (1st rank means very clean, rank 175 means highly corrupt.)
- There is a huge youth bubble: 46% of the population is under the age of 25.
- Algeria is the largest country in Africa and the 10th largest country in the world.

Word count: 683

³ This category includes Atheists, Agnostics and New religionists.