

# Benin

9.2%<sup>1</sup>

## Key Findings

The prevalence of FGM in women aged 15–49 is 9.2%.<sup>2</sup>  
86.3% of women aged 15–49 who are aware of FGM believe the practice should not continue.<sup>3</sup>

### **Geography:**

The departments with the highest prevalence are in the north; of Benin's 12 departments, five have an FGM prevalence of less than 1%.<sup>4</sup>

### **Age:**

85.3% of women aged 15–49 who have undergone FGM were cut before the age of 15.<sup>5</sup>

### **Type:**

'Flesh taken' is the most common type of FGM practised.<sup>6</sup>

### **Agent:**

Almost all FGM is carried out by 'traditional agents' (including traditional cutters and birth attendants).<sup>7</sup>

## Development Indicators

**HDI Rank:** 158 out of 189 countries (2019)<sup>8</sup>

**SDG Gender Index Rating:** 109 out of 129 countries (2019)<sup>9</sup>

**Population:** 12,427,818 (as of 8 June 2021), with a 2.69% growth rate (2021 est.)<sup>10</sup>

**Infant Mortality Rate:** 31 deaths per 1,000 live births (2019)<sup>11</sup>

**Maternal Mortality Ratio:** 397 deaths per 100,000 live births (2017)<sup>12</sup>

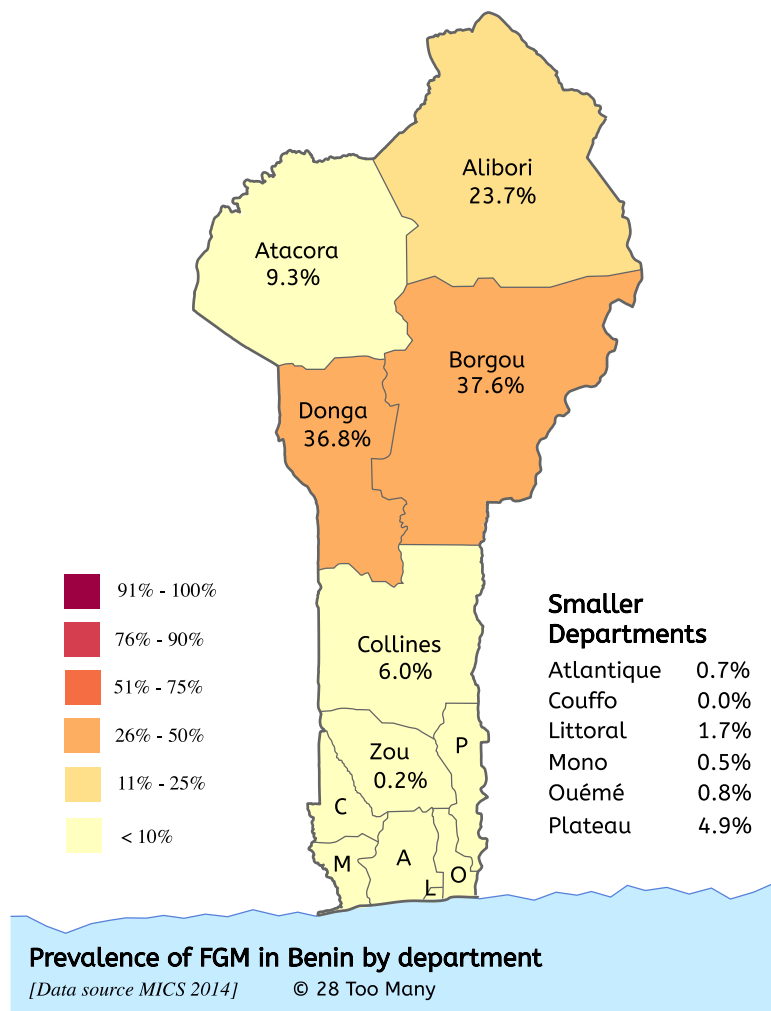
**Literacy:** 42.4% of the total population aged 15 and over can read/write<sup>13</sup>

*'I did it with a knife, without anaesthesia, and without any  
medical training.  
The number of lives I shattered is enormous.'  
~ Yon Sokogi, former cutter<sup>14</sup>*

## Prevalence

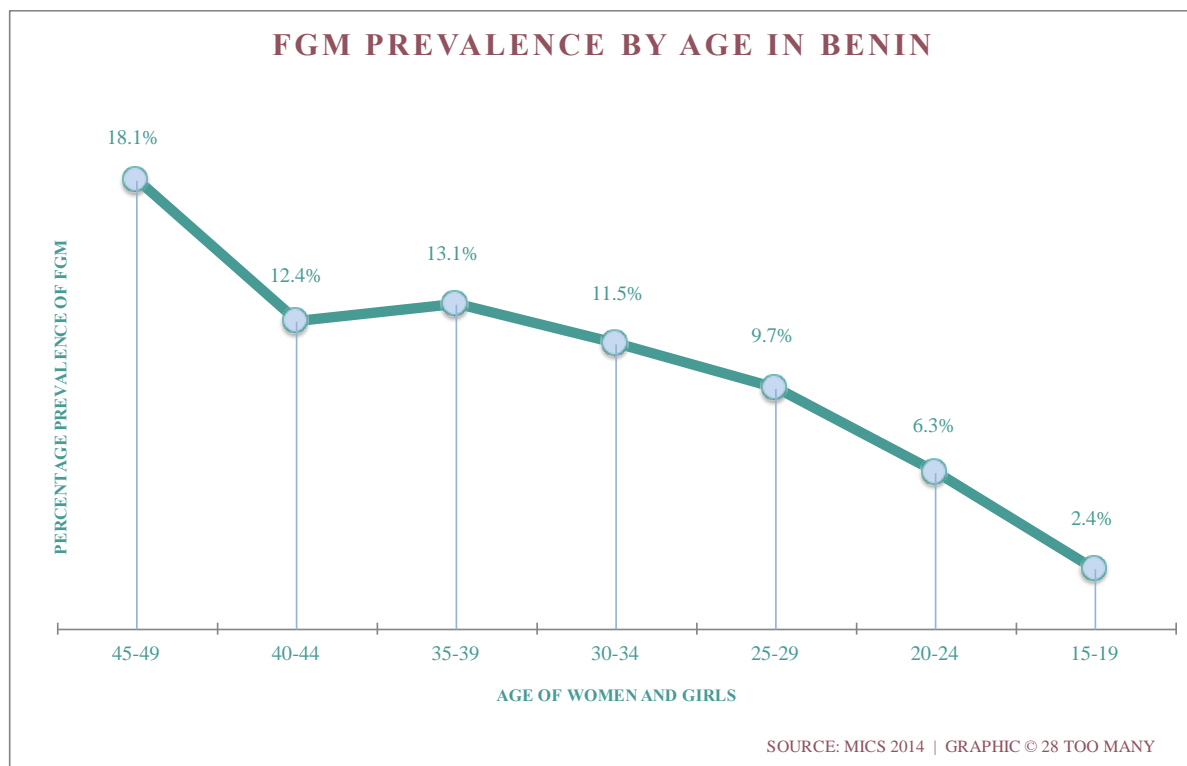
The departments in Benin with the highest FGM prevalence are in the north: Borgou (37.6%), Alibori (23.7%) and Donga (36.8%). There is a significant difference between these departments and the rest of Benin: all remaining departments have a prevalence of below 10%; five of these (Atlantique, Couffo, Mono, Oueme and Zou have a prevalence of less than 1%. The department with the lowest prevalence is Couffo, in which no instances of FGM were recorded. FGM is more common in women living in rural areas (13.1%) than in those living in urban areas (5.2%).<sup>15</sup>

FGM appears to be practised more by Muslims than by people of other religions, and there is a wide variation in levels of practice between ethnic groups: over 40% prevalence among the Bariba and Peulh, and less than 1% among the Adja and Fon.<sup>16</sup>



Between 2006 and 2001/12, the overall prevalence among women aged 15–49 fell from 12.9% to 7.3%. In 2014 the prevalence was recorded as 9.2%. Due to statistical fluctuations in the data, however, the most recent measurement of prevalence is unlikely to reflect a true increase.

Due to the large age-range of women included in the DHS and MICS surveys, the overall prevalence alone may not fully reflect the progress that has been made in recent years. Breaking down the most recent data by age group shows that the prevalence among women aged 45–49 is 18.1%, while for the youngest age group this has fallen to just 2.4%. Despite the fact that a small proportion of women may be cut after the age of 15, the data demonstrates a clear trend towards a lower prevalence among younger women.<sup>17</sup>



## Beninese Law

The main law prohibiting FGM is Law no. 2003-03 on the Suppression of Female Genital Mutilation in the Republic of Benin, which was issued in March 2003. There is a lack of evidence, however, of any FGM cases being prosecuted under this law.

- 1 (**'MICS'**): Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique (INSAE) (2015) Bénin. Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples 2014, Rapport Final, pp.289–293. Cotonou, Bénin: Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique. Available at [https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Benin/2014/Final/Benin%202014%20MICS%20FR\\_French.pdf](https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Benin/2014/Final/Benin%202014%20MICS%20FR_French.pdf) (accessed 8 June 2021).
- 2 MICS, p.290.
- 3 MICS, p. 292.
- 4 MICS, p. 290
- 5 (**'DHS'**): Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique (INSAE) et ICF International (2013) *Enquête Démographique et de Santé du Bénin 2011-2012*, p.333. Calverton, Maryland, USA: INSAE et ICF International. Available at <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR270/FR270.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2017).
- 6 MICS, p. 290.
- 7 DHS, p.337.
- 8 United Nations Development Programme (2019) *Human Development Reports*. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/BEN.pdf>.
- 9 Equal Measures 2030 (2019) *Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality: Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index*, pp.12–13. Available at [www.data.em2030.org/2019-global-report](http://www.data.em2030.org/2019-global-report).
- 10 Country Meters (2021) *Benin*, 8 June 2021. Available at <http://countrymeters.info/en/Benin> (accessed 8 June 2021).
- 11 Countdown to 2030. *Benin Country Profile data*. Accessed 8 June 2021. Available at: <https://profiles.countdown2030.org/#/ds/BEN>
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 United Nations Development Programme (2019), *op. cit.*
- 14 Anne Mireille Nzouankeu (2017) 'Cutters turn counselors to fight female genital mutilation in Benin', *Reuters*, 6 February. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-benin-fgm-idUSKBN15L0JZ> (accessed 21 May 2017).
- 15 MICS, p.290.
- 16 Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique (INSAE) [Bénin] et Macro International Inc. (2007) *Enquête Démographique et de Santé (EDSB-III) – Bénin 2006*, p.332. Calverton, Maryland, USA: Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique et Macro International Inc. Available at <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR197/FR197.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2017).
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.332.

**UNICEF Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting:**

UNICEF (2020) *Benin: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*. Available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/fgm-country-profiles/> (accessed 8 June 2021).

**Images on website:**

- 1 Anton Ivanov (2017) *Unidentified Beninese beautiful girl in colored shirt wears ear[r]ings at the local market. Benin people suffer poverty due to the bad economy*. Shutterstock ID 592414133.
- 2 Anton Ivanov (2017) *Unidentified Beninese woman in national suit smiles at the voodoo festival, which is annually celebrated on January, 10th*. Shutterstock ID 592477127.
- 3 Anton Ivanov (2012) *Unidentified Beninese woman with her little child rows a wooden boat. People of Benin suffer of poverty due to the difficult economic situation*. Shutterstock ID 429413545.