

Mauritania

63.9%¹

Key Findings

The prevalence of FGM/C in women aged 15–49 is 63.9%.
38.4% of women and 49.4% of men in the same age group believe FGM/C should continue.²

Geography:

The regions with the highest prevalence are in the south and south-east³

Age:

58.4% of women aged 15–49 who have been cut were cut before the age of five; 40.7% do not know when they were cut⁴

Type:

'Cut, flesh removed' is the most common type of FGM/C practised⁵

Agent:

78.8% of FGM/C incidences are carried out by traditional practitioners⁶

Development Indicators

HDI Rank: 158 out of 189 countries (2022)⁷

SDG Gender Index Rating: 135 out of 144 countries (2022)⁸

Population: 4,903,483 (as at 15 September 2022), with a 1.99% growth rate (2022 est.)⁹

Infant Mortality Rate: 51 deaths per 1,000 live births (2022)

Maternal Mortality Ratio: 766 deaths per 100,000 live births (2017)

Literacy: 53.5% of the total population aged 15 and over can read/write¹⁰

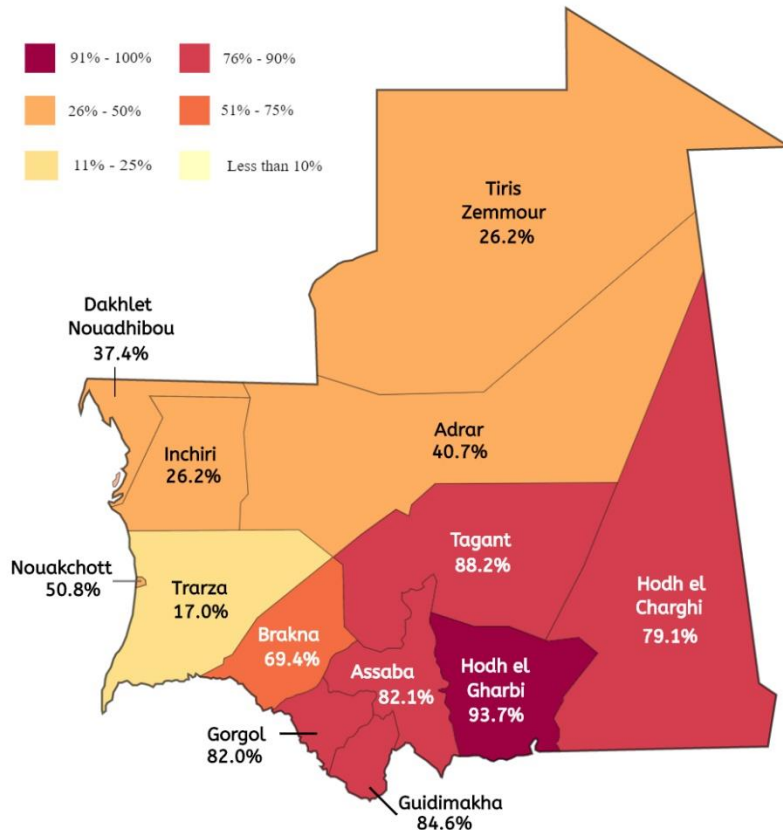
'It's a flagrant violation of the rights of girls, because international human rights law stipulates that every person has the right to the integrity of her body.'

~ Meslem, midwife with the Mauritanian Association for the Health and Development of Women

Prevalence

The regions in Mauritania with the highest prevalence of FGM/C are in the south and south-east: Hodh El Gharbi (93.7% of women aged 15–49), Tagant (88.2%) and Guidimakha (84.6%). The region with the lowest prevalence is Traraza, in the west (17%). FGM/C is more prevalent in women aged 15–49 who live in rural areas, at 77.1%, than in those who live in urban areas, at 51.3%. FGM/C prevalence is inversely correlated with women’s levels of education and wealth.¹¹

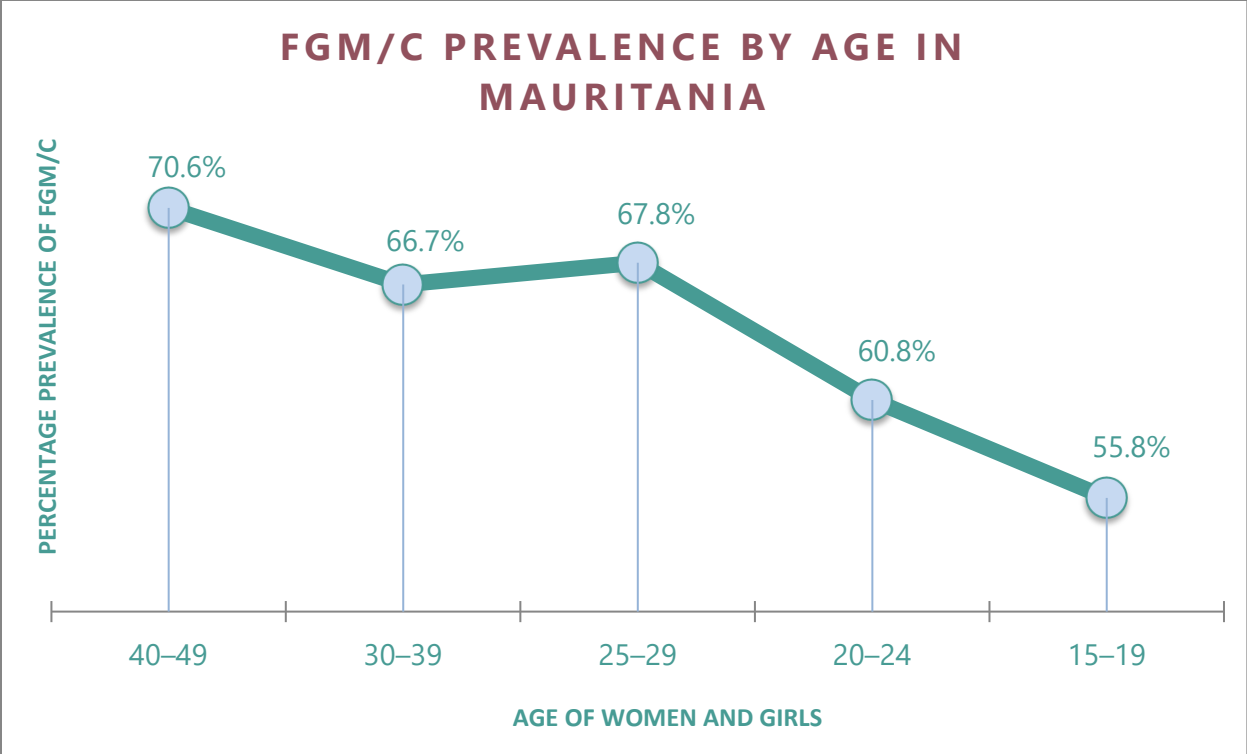
The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2011 found that 89.5% of women who live in a household where the head’s primary language is Soninké have undergone FGM/C, compared to 79% of women whose household head speaks Poular, 68.3% of women whose household head speaks Arabic and 15.7% of women whose household head speaks Wollof.¹²



Prevalence of FGM/C in Mauritania by wilaya
 [Data source: DHS 2019–21] © 28 Too Many [Part of Orchid Project]

Between 2016 and 2019/20, the overall prevalence among women aged 15–49 fell from 66.6% to 63.9%.¹³ Due to the large age-range of the women included, however, 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 for women aged 40–49 is 70.6%, while for the youngest age group this has fallen to 55.8%.¹⁴ Despite the fact that a small proportion of women may be cut after the age of 15, the data suggests a trend towards a lower prevalence among younger women.



Mauritanian Law

Currently, Article 12 of Law No. 2005-015 on the Criminal Protection of the Child (2005) criminalises and sets out the punishment for FGM/C performed on a child under 18 years of age. Law enforcement is reportedly weak, and very few cases reach court.

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- 1 **(‘DHS’)**: Office Nationale de la Statistique (ONS), ministère de la Santé (MS), et ICF (2021) *Enquête Démographique et de Santé en Mauritanie 2019–2021*. Nouakchott, Mauritanie et Rockville, Maryland, USA : ONS, MS, et ICF. Available at <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR373/FR373.pdf> (accessed 15 September 2022).
 - 2 DHS, pp.334 & 340.
 - 3 DHS, p.334.
 - 4 DHS, p.335.
 - 5 DHS, p.334.
 - 6 DHS, p.339.
 - 7 United Nations Development Programme (2021) *Human Development Reports*. Available at <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/MRT> (accessed 15 September 2022).
 - 8 Equal Measures 2030 (2022) *Back to Normal is Not Enough: 2022 SDG Gender Index Report*. Available at https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SDG-index_report_FINAL_EN.pdf (accessed 15 September 2022).
 - 9 - Country Meters (2022) *Mauritania*, 15 September. Available at <http://countrymeters.info/en/Mauritania>.
- Central Intelligence Agency (2022) *World Factbook: Mauritania*. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic> (accessed 15 September 2022).
 - 10 Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*
 - 11 DHS, p.334.
 - 12 **(‘MICS’)**: L’Office National de la Statistique (2016) *Enquête par Grappes à Indicateurs Multiples, 2015, Résultats clés*, p.170. Nouakchott, Mauritanie. Available at https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Mauritania/2015/Key%20findings/Mauritania%202015%20MICS%20KFR_French.PDF.
 - 13 - MICS, p.118.
- DHS, p.334.
 - 14 DHS, p.334.