

# Somalia

99.2%<sup>1</sup>



## Key Findings

The prevalence of FGM in women aged 15–49 in Somalia and Somaliland is 99.2%.<sup>2</sup>  
72% of women believe that FGM is a requirement of their religion.<sup>3</sup>

### **Geography:**

Prevalence is marginally higher among nomadic populations (99.7%), but universally high in all locations<sup>4</sup>

### **Age:**

Most girls are cut between the ages of 10 and 14

### **Type:**

Most women have undergone Type III FGM (infibulation/‘sewn closed’), which is also known as Pharaonic FGM

### **Agent:**

Predominantly traditional practitioners, but medicalised FGM is on the rise

## Development Indicators

**HDI Rank:** no reliable data; the UNDP estimated in 2010 a rank of 165 out of 170 countries<sup>5</sup>

**Population:** 11–12 million (2020), with a 2.21% growth rate (2020 est.)<sup>6</sup>

**Infant Mortality Rate:** 85 deaths per 1,000 live births (2015)<sup>7</sup>

**Maternal Mortality Ratio:** 692 deaths per 100,000 live births<sup>8</sup>

**Literacy:** 40% (female – 36.2%; male – 43.8%)<sup>9</sup>

*‘The youth are our future. If we teach young people to how to help,  
and give them the tools to help themselves,  
we can eradicate FGM for the generations to come.’*

*~ Somali FGM survivor Hibo Wardere<sup>10</sup>*

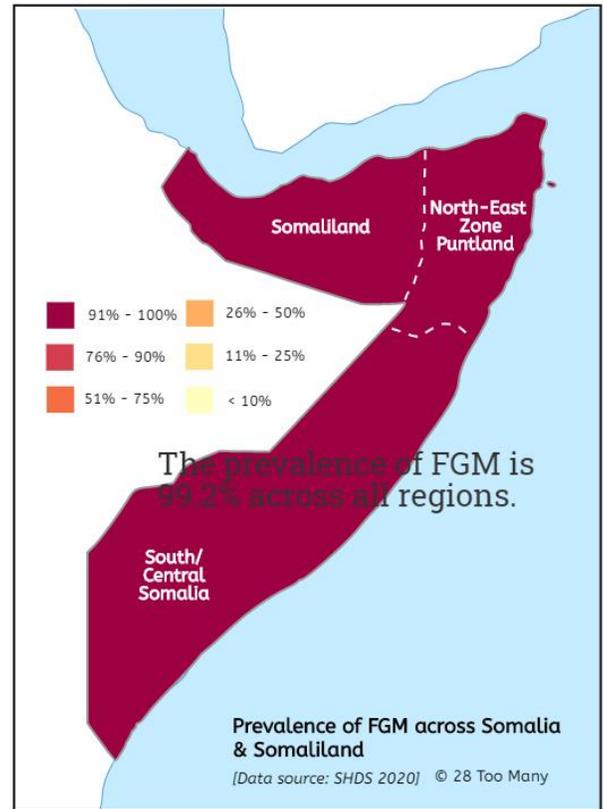
## Prevalence

In 2006, prevalence in the South/Central Zone was 99.2% and in 2011 in the North-East Zone (Puntland) it was 98% (women aged 15–49). There is no geographical breakdown available for the prevalence in 2020.

Across both Somalia and Somaliland, women who live in rural areas are only slightly more likely to undergo FGM than those who live in urban areas. The prevalence is highest among nomadic women, but is universally high (over 98%) among women living in all areas.<sup>11</sup>

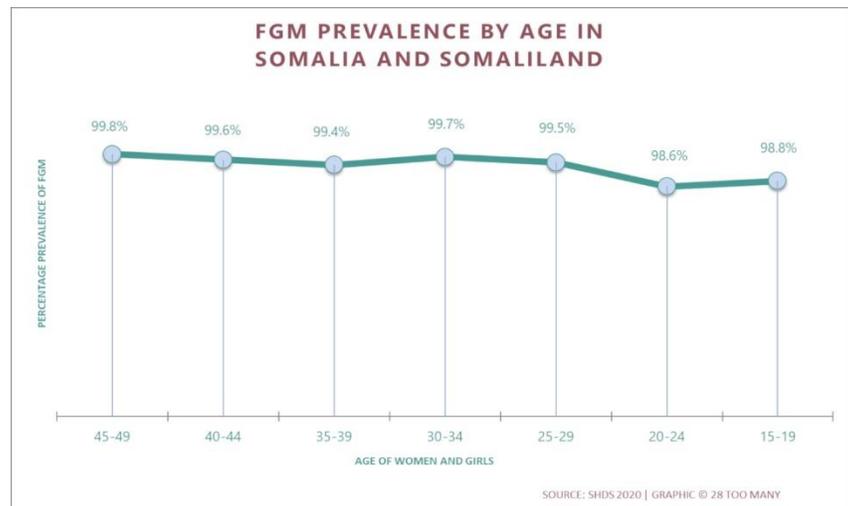
76.4% of women believe that FGM should continue and 18.9% believe that it should not.<sup>12</sup>

While support for Type III (Pharaonic) FGM has declined in recent years, other types of FGM referred to as ‘Sunni’ remain popular. More than four in five women in the oldest age group experienced Pharaonic cutting, compared to less than half of women in the youngest age group.<sup>13</sup>



FGM prevalence among women aged 15–49 has remained broadly consistent for some time.

Breaking down the 2020 data by age group shows that the prevalence for women aged 45–49 is 99.8%, while for the youngest age group it is 98.8%, but some women over the age of 15 may yet be cut.<sup>14</sup>



## Somali Law

There is currently no national law in place banning FGM in Somalia. New national legislation is being drafted and will go through a consultation phase with stakeholders during 2019.

In November 2013, 18 religious leaders in Puntland signed a fatwa against FGM, which was witnessed by various ministers.

In March 2014, the president of Puntland approved an official policy outlawing all forms of FGM; however, parliamentary legislation is not yet in place.

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- 1 **'SHDS 2020'**: Directorate of National Statistics, Federal Government of Somalia (2020) *The Somali Health and Demographic Survey 2020*, p.220. Available at [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Som%20Gvt%20UNFPA%20Press%20Release\\_SHDS%20Rpt%20Launch\\_29-04-20\\_Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Som%20Gvt%20UNFPA%20Press%20Release_SHDS%20Rpt%20Launch_29-04-20_Final.pdf) (accessed 18 January 2021).
  - 2 SHDS 2020, p.223.
  - 3 SHDS 2020, p.219.
  - 4 SHDS 2020, p.223.
  - 5 United Nations Development Programme (2015) *Human Development Index*. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/137506> (accessed 16 May 2017).
  - 6 Central Intelligence Agency (2020) *World Factbook: Somalia*. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html> (accessed 18 January 2021).
  - 7 Countdown to 2030 (2015) *A Decade of Tracking Progress for Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival The 2015 Report: Somalia*. Available at [http://countdown2030.org/documents/2015Report/Somalia\\_2015.pdf](http://countdown2030.org/documents/2015Report/Somalia_2015.pdf) (accessed 26 June 2017).
  - 8 SHDS 2020, p.xxiii.
  - 9 UNFPA (2016) *Educational Characteristics of the Somali People*, p.7. Available at [http://www.analyticalreports.org/pdf/UNFPA\\_PESS\\_Vol\\_3.pdf](http://www.analyticalreports.org/pdf/UNFPA_PESS_Vol_3.pdf).
  - 10 Charlotte Lytton (2015) 'FGM survivor: 'The pain was so bad, I prayed to God to take me then and there'', *The Telegraph*, 6 February. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11390949/FGM-survivor-The-pain-was-so-bad-I-prayed-to-God-to-take-me-then-and-there.html> (accessed 27 June 2017).
  - 11 SHDS 2020, p.223.
  - 12 SHDS 2020, p.223.
  - 13 SHDS 2020, p.220.
  - 14 SHDS 2020, p.220.

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

UNICEF (2013) *Somalia: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*. Available at [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Somalia/FGMC\\_SOM.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Somalia/FGMC_SOM.pdf) (accessed 1 May 2017).

**Images on website:**

- 1 Free Wind 2014 (2010) *HARGEISA, SOMALIA – JANUARY 11, 2010: African refugee camp on the outskirts of Hargeisa in Somaliland. With the support of UNICEF, an international organization it operates the school*. Shutterstock ID 173095733.
- 2 Sadik Gulec (2011) *DADAAB, SOMALIA – AUGUST 15: Unidentified woman & children live in the Dadaab refugee camp where thousands of Somalis wait for help because of hunger on August 15, 2011 in Dadaab, Somalia*. Shutterstock ID 83490673.
- 3 Free Wind 2014 (2010) *HARGEISA, SOMALIA – JANUARY 8, 2010: Unidentified Somalis in the streets of the city of Hargeysa. City in Somalia, capital of unrecognized state of Somaliland. Much of the population lives in poverty*. Shutterstock ID 187165037.