

# Mauritania



66.6%<sup>1</sup>

## Key Findings

The prevalence of FGM in women aged 15–49 is 66.6%.  
36.1% of women in the same age group believe FGM should continue.<sup>2</sup>

### **Geography:**

The regions with the highest prevalence are in the south and south-east<sup>3</sup>

### **Age:**

FGM is practised very shortly after birth and rarely after one year<sup>4</sup>

### **Type:**

'Flesh removed' is the most common type of FGM practised<sup>5</sup>

### **Agent:**

Approximately 93% of FGM incidences are carried out by traditional practitioners<sup>6</sup>

## Development Indicators

**HDI Rank:** 159 out of 189 countries (2018)<sup>7</sup>

**SDG Gender Index Rating:** 124 out of 129 countries (2019)<sup>8</sup>

**Population:** 4,264,264 (as at 8 June 2017), with a 2.2% growth rate (2016 est.)<sup>9</sup>

**Infant Mortality Rate:** 65 deaths per 1,000 live births (2015)<sup>10</sup>

**Maternal Mortality Ratio:** 602 deaths per 100,000 live births (2015)<sup>11</sup>

**Literacy:** 52.1% of the total population aged 15 and over can read/write<sup>12</sup>

*'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

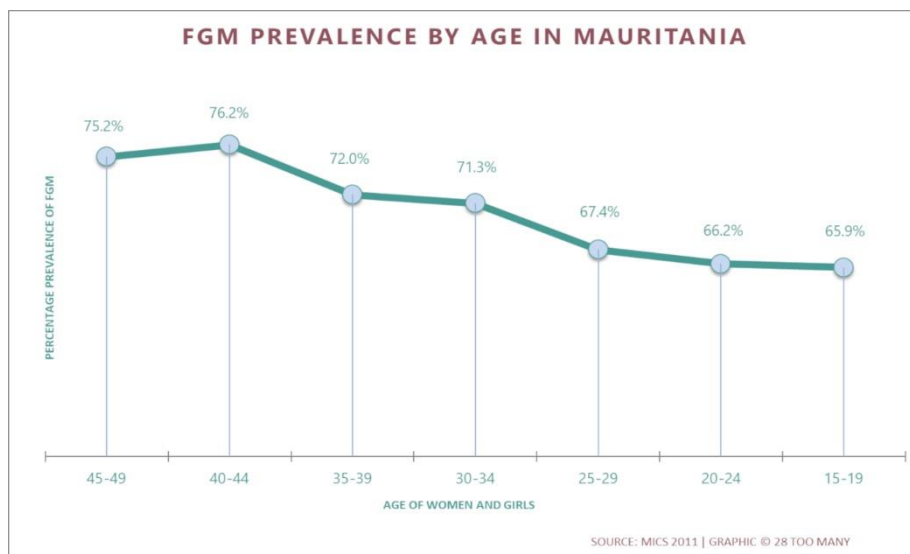
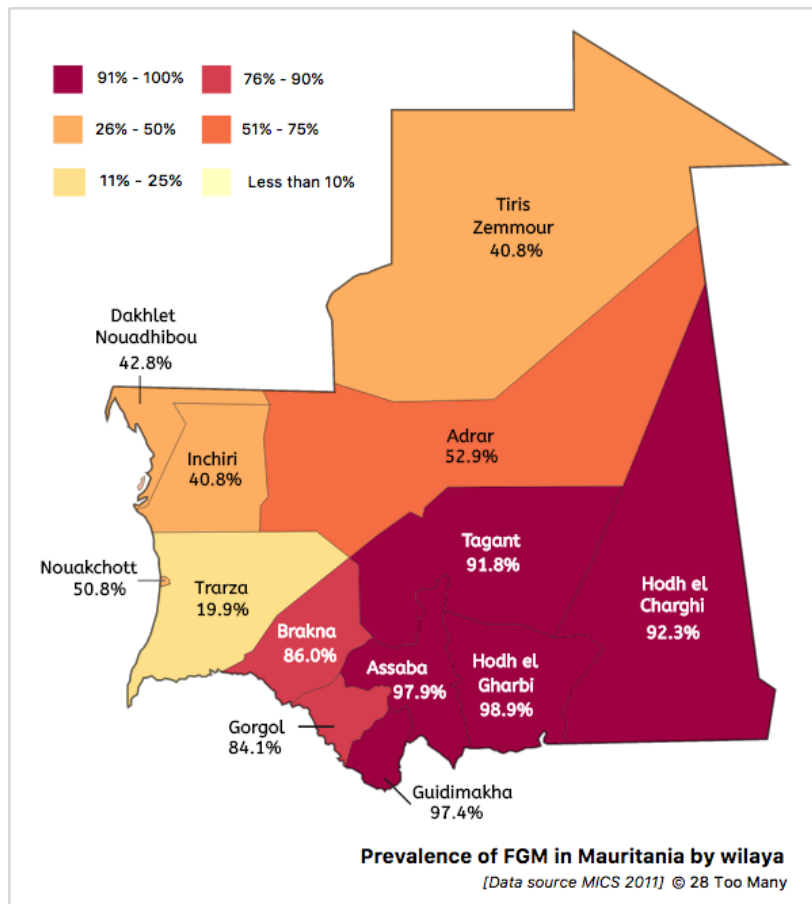
The regions in Mauritania with the highest prevalence of FGM are in the south and south-east: Hodh El Gharbi (98.9% of women aged 15–49), Assaba (97.9%) and Guidimakha (97.4%). The region with the lowest prevalence is Traraza, in the west (19.9%). FGM is more prevalent in women aged 15–49 who live in rural areas, at 80.5%, than in those who live in urban areas, at 57.2%.

Prevalence is inversely correlated with women's levels of education and wealth.

89.5% of women who live in a household where the head's primary language is Soninké have undergone FGM, 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.

*Please note the above figures are from 2011.*<sup>13</sup>

Between 2011 and 2016, the overall prevalence for women aged 15–49 fell from 69.4% to 66.6%. Due to the large age-range of 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 45–49 is 75.2%, while for the youngest age group this has fallen to 65.9%. Despite the fact that a small proportion of women may be cut after the age of 15, the data suggests a trend towards lower prevalences among younger women.<sup>14</sup>



## 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 performed on a child under 18 years of age. Law enforcement is reportedly weak, and very few cases reach court.

- 1 (**'MICS'**): L'Office National de la Statistique (2016) *Enquête par Grappes à Indicateurs Multiples, 2015, Résultats clés*, p.18. 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](https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Mauritania/2015/Key%20findings/Mauritania%202015%20MICS%20KFR_French.PDF) (accessed 8 June 2017).
- 2 MICS, p.18.
- 3 (**'MICS 2011'**): Office National De La Statistique, MICS, UNICEF, UNFPA (2014) *Suivi de la situation des femmes et des enfants: Enquête par Grappes à Indicateurs Multiples 2011 Rapport Final MICS4 – 2011*, p.170. Available at [https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS4/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Mauritania/2011/Final/Mauritania%202011%20MICS\\_French.pdf](https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS4/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Mauritania/2011/Final/Mauritania%202011%20MICS_French.pdf) (accessed 8 June 2017).
- 4 MICS 2011, p.169.
- 5 MICS 2011, p.170.
- 6 UNICEF (2013) *Mauritania: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*, p.2. Available at [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Mauritania/FGMC\\_MRT.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Mauritania/FGMC_MRT.pdf) (accessed 8 June 2017).
- 7 United Nations Development Programme (2018) *Human Development Reports*. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update> (accessed 12 June 2019).
- 8 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) (accessed 12 June 2019).
- 9 - Country Meters (2017) *Mauritania*, 8 June 2017. Available at <http://countrymeters.info/en/Mauritania> (accessed 8 June 2017).  
 - Central Intelligence Agency (2016) *World Factbook: Mauritania*, 30 May. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mr.html> (accessed 8 June 2017).
- 10 Countdown to 2030 (2015) *A Decade of Tracking Progress for Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival The 2015 Report: Mauritania*. Available at [http://countdown2030.org/documents/2015Report/Mauritania\\_2015.pdf](http://countdown2030.org/documents/2015Report/Mauritania_2015.pdf) (accessed 8 June 2017).
- 11 WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and United Nations Population Division Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group (2015) *Maternal mortality in 1990-2015: Mauritania*. Available at [http://www.who.int/gho/maternal\\_health/countries/mrt.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/mrt.pdf?ua=1) (accessed 8 June 2017).
- 12 Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*
- 13 MICS 2011, p.170.
- 14 - MICS, p.18.  
 - MICS 2011, p.170.

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

UNICEF (2013) *Mauritania: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*. Available at [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Mauritania/FGMC\\_MRT.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Mauritania/FGMC_MRT.pdf) (accessed 8 June 2017).

**Images on website:**

- 1 elrentaplats (2007) *la seva gent (III)*. Available at <https://flic.kr/p/4p2R11>. CCL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>.
- 2 Attila Jandi (2006) *NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA – JAN 5: Local women clean fish at the beach at January 5, 2006 in Nouakchott, Mauritania. Fresh fish is sold daily on the beach*. Shutterstock ID 59011123.
- 3 Attila Jandi (2006) *NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA – JAN 5: Local woman sells her staff at the market on January 5, 2006 in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The city market is an interesting place to visit.* Shutterstock ID 59011165.