

MAURITANIA



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STATISTICAL PROFILE ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Female genital mutilation (FGM) refers to “all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.”¹ While the exact number of girls and women worldwide who have undergone FGM remains unknown, at least 200 million girls and women have been cut in 31 countries with representative data on prevalence. FGM is a violation of girls’ and women’s human rights and is condemned by many international treaties and conventions, as well as by national legislation in many countries. Yet, where it is practised FGM is performed in line with tradition and social norms to ensure that girls are socially accepted and marriageable, and to uphold their status and honour and that of the entire family. UNICEF works with government and civil society partners towards the elimination of FGM in countries where it is still practised.

1. World Health Organization, *Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: An interagency statement*, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNECA, UNESCO, UNDP, UNAIDS, WHO, Geneva, 2008, p. 4.

2005

National decree/legislation banning FGM passed

SELECTED STATISTICS ON WOMEN'S STATUS

18%

of women 20-24 years were married or in union before age 15

37%

of women 20-24 years were married or in union before age 18

22%

of women 20-24 years have given birth by age 18

27%

of women aged 15-49 years old think that a husband/partner is justified in hitting/beating his wife under certain circumstances

59%

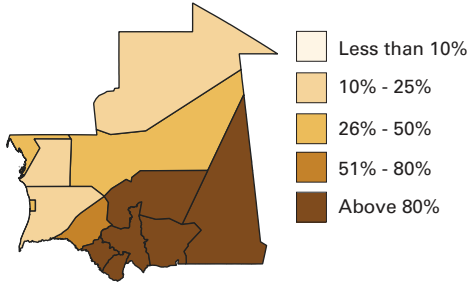
of women 15-49 years make use at least once a week (newspaper, magazine, television or radio)

Source: MICS 2015

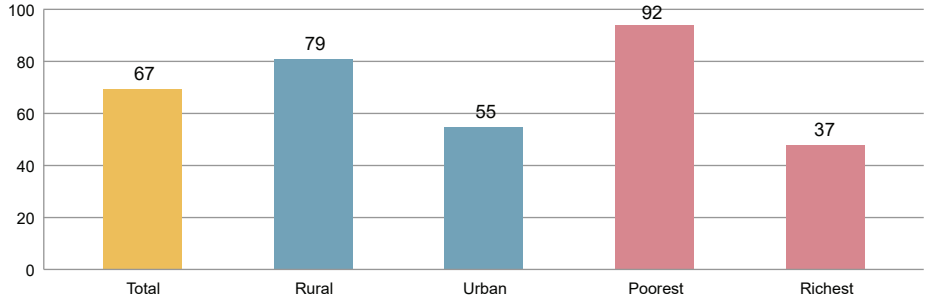
HOW WIDESPREAD IS THE PRACTICE?

Nearly 70 per cent of girls and women in Mauritania have undergone FGM
with those living in rural areas and from poorer households more likely to experience the practice

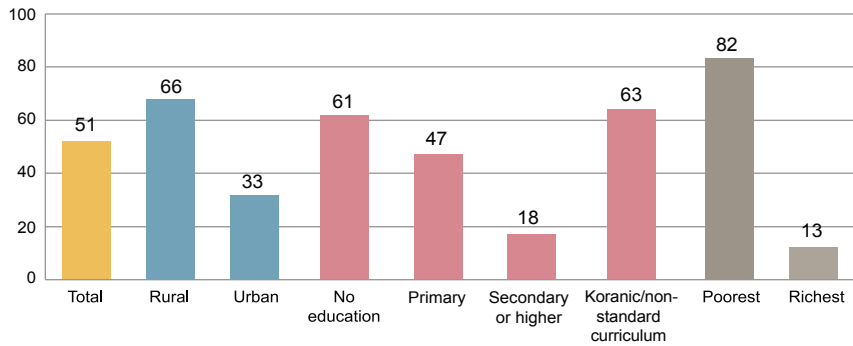
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM, by region



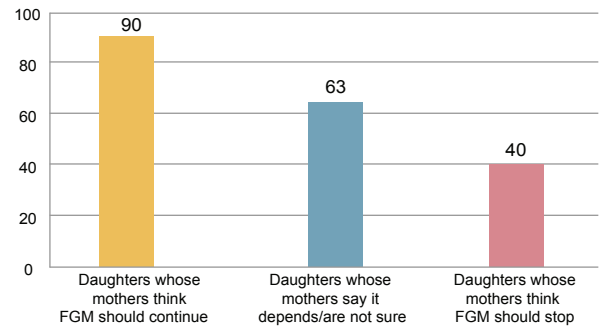
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM, by residence and household wealth quintile



Percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM (as reported by their mothers), by residence, mother's education and wealth quintile



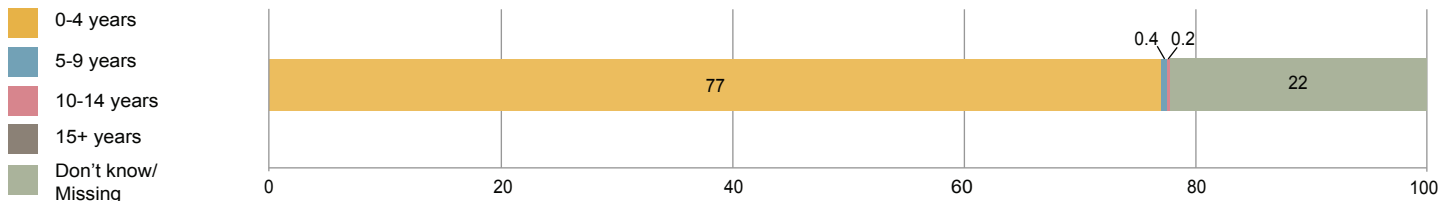
Among daughters of cut girls and women, the percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM (as reported by their mothers), by mothers' attitudes about whether the practice should continue



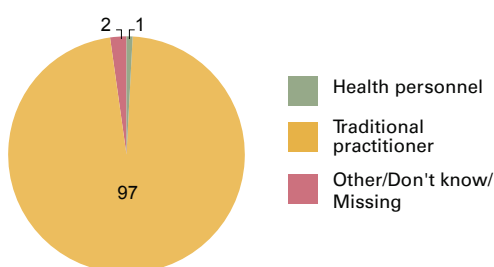
WHEN AND HOW IS FGM PERFORMED?

Almost eight out of ten adolescent girls who underwent the practice were cut before the age of 5; most of the remaining girls are unsure at what age they were cut

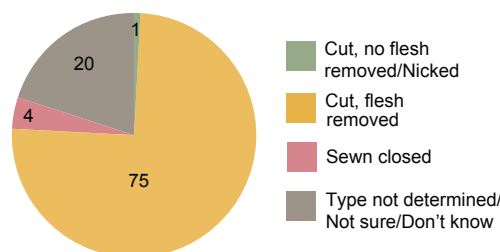
Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 19 years who have undergone FGM, by age at which cutting occurred



Percentage distribution of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM (as reported by their mothers), according to the type of person/practitioner performing the procedure



Percentage distribution of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM (as reported by their mothers), by type of FGM performed



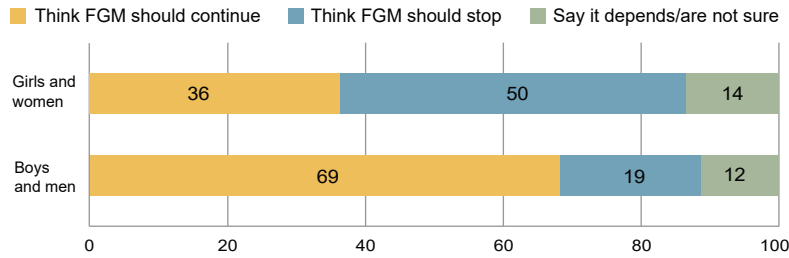
Notes: The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Only categories with 25 or more unweighted cases are presented. Due to rounding, some of the data presented may not add up to 100 per cent. There is no ethnicity or religion data for Mauritania. Prevalence data for girls aged 0 to 14 reflect their current, but not final, FGM status since some girls who have not been cut may still be at risk of experiencing the practice once they reach the customary age for cutting. Therefore, the data on prevalence for girls under age 15 is actually an underestimation of the true extent of the practice. Since age at cutting varies among settings, the amount of underestimation also varies and this should be kept in mind when interpreting all FGM prevalence data for this age group. "Health personnel" includes doctors, nurses, midwives and other health workers; "Traditional practitioner" includes traditional circumcisers, traditional birth attendants and other types of traditional practitioners.

Source for all charts on this page: MICS 2015

WHAT ARE THE PREVAILING ATTITUDES TOWARDS FGM?

More than one in three girls and women think FGM should continue in Mauritania

Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years and boys and men aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM, by their attitudes about whether the practice should continue



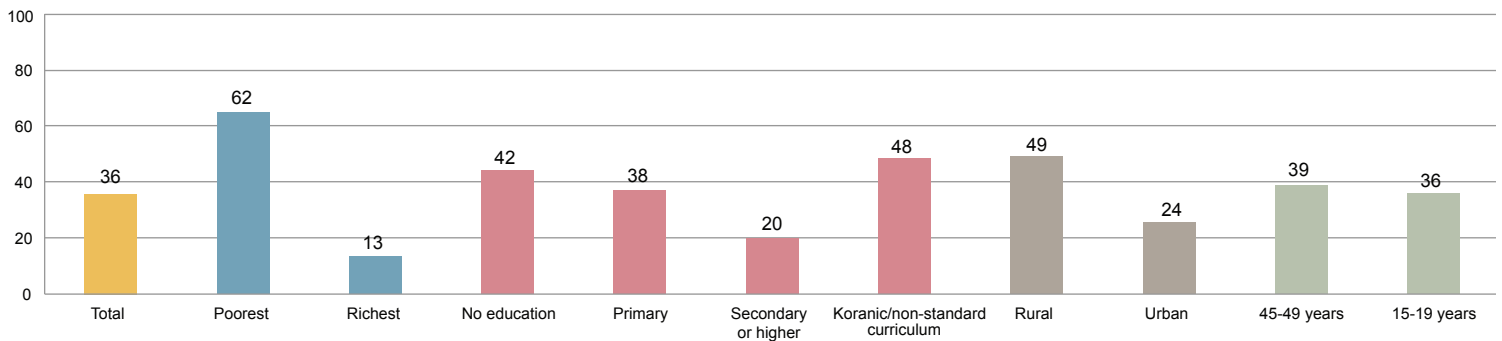
Source: MICS 2015 for girls and women and DHS 2000-01 for boys and men

Among girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM, the percentage who cite specific benefits or advantages for a girl to undergo the procedure

No benefits	21
Cleanliness/Hygiene	19
Social acceptance	35
Better marriage prospects	4
Preservation of virginity	31
More sexual pleasure for the man	2
Required by religion	29
Other	9
Don't know	N/A

Source: DHS 2000-01

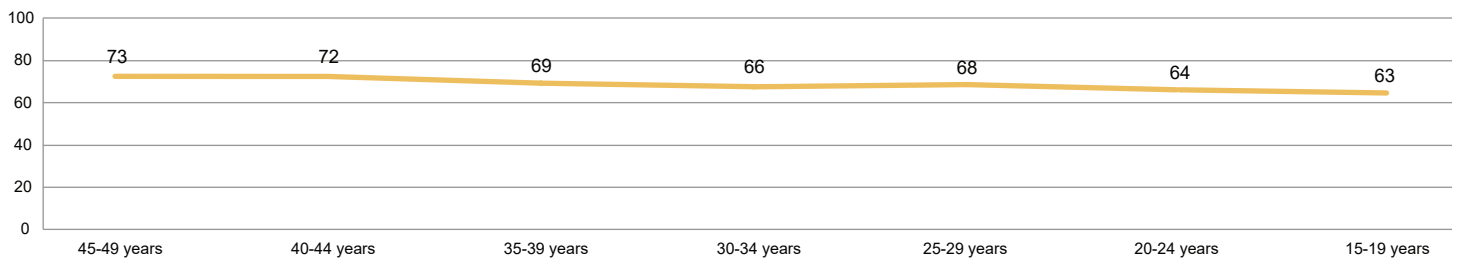
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM and think the practice should continue, by household wealth quintile, education, residence and age



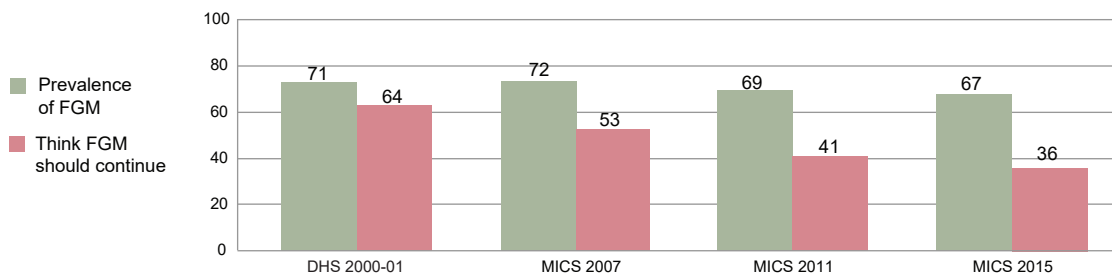
IS THE PRACTICE OF FGM CHANGING?

There are signs of a small decline in the prevalence of FGM over time

Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM, by current age



Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM, and percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM and think the practice should continue



Notes: There are no ethnicity data for Mauritania. Data on women's attitudes cannot be directly compared with men's attitudes since the data source for girls and women is more recent than that for boys and men.

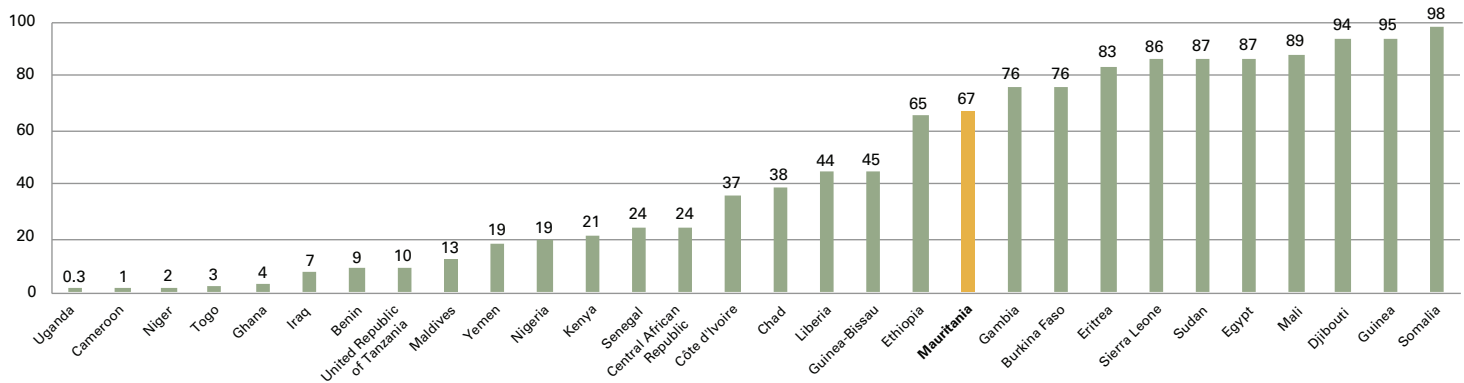
Source for all above charts: MICS 2015, unless otherwise noted.

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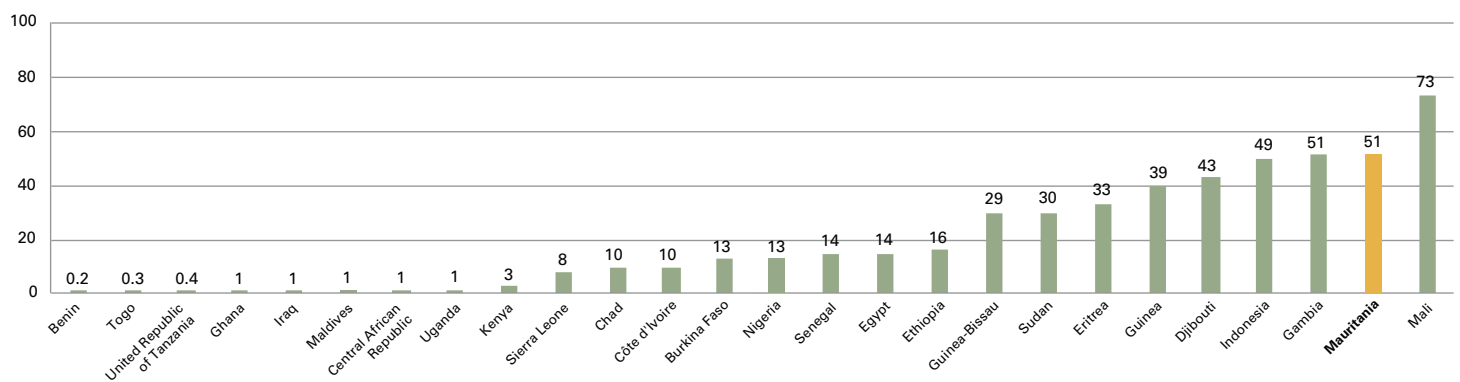


INTER-COUNTRY STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

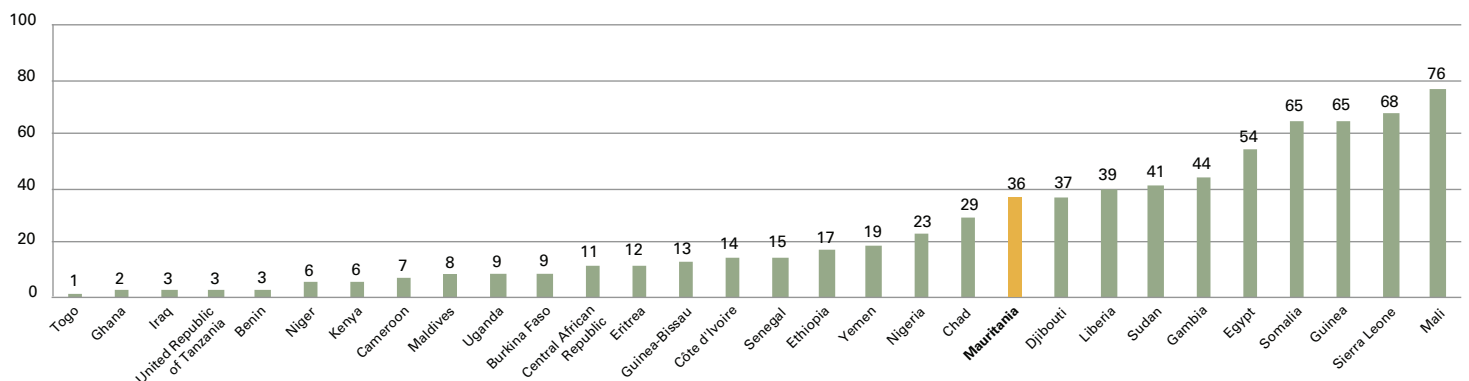
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM



Percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM (as reported by their mothers)



Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 who have heard of FGM and think the practice should continue



Notes: In Liberia, girls and women who have heard of the Sande society were asked whether they were members; this provides indirect information on FGM since it is performed during initiation into the society. Data on girls' prevalence in Egypt refer to girls aged 6 months to 14 years and in Indonesia refer to girls aged 0 to 11 years. An older source is used to report on the prevalence of FGM among girls and on the percentage of support for FGM in Uganda (DHS 2011) since the latest source did not collect these data. Data on the prevalence among girls refer to an older source in Nigeria (MICS 2016-17) due to an anomaly in the results in the most recent source. MICS data for Ghana (2011) could not be used to report on attitudes towards FGM due to the fact that information is missing for girls and women with no living daughters; data from MICS 2006 are used instead. EDSF/PAPFAM data for Djibouti (2012) could not be used for attitudes towards FGM since the question is different from the standard; data from MICS 2006 are used instead. In Liberia, only cut girls and women were asked about their attitudes towards FGM; since girls and women from practicing communities are more likely to support the practice, the level of support in this country as captured by DHS 2013 is higher than would be expected had all girls and women been asked their opinion. In Egypt and Somalia, the support for FGM was calculated among all girls and women, since respondents were not first asked whether they had heard of the practice. Prevalence data for girls and women aged 15 to 49 years and data on attitudes towards FGM are not available for Indonesia.