

MAURITANIA



STATISTICAL PROFILE ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) 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 More than 125 million girls and women alive today have been cut in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where FGM/C is concentrated. As many as 30 million girls are at risk of being cut before their 15th birthday if current trends continue. FGM/C 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/C 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/C 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/C passed

SELECTED STATISTICS ON WOMEN’S STATUS

14% of women 20-24 years were married or in union before age 15

34% of women 20-24 years were married or in union before age 18

19% of women 20-24 years have given birth by age 18

38% of women aged 15-49 years old think that a husband/partner is justified in hitting/beatng his wife under certain circumstances

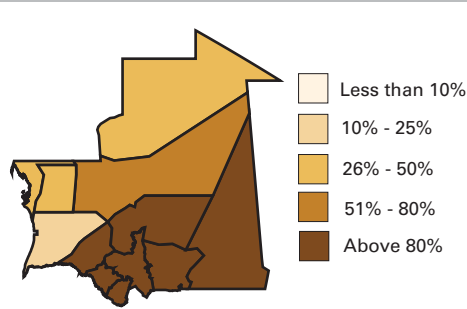
40% of women 15-49 years make use at least one type of information media at least once a week (newspaper, magazine, television, radio)

Source: DHS 2001-01, MICS 2007 and MICS 2011

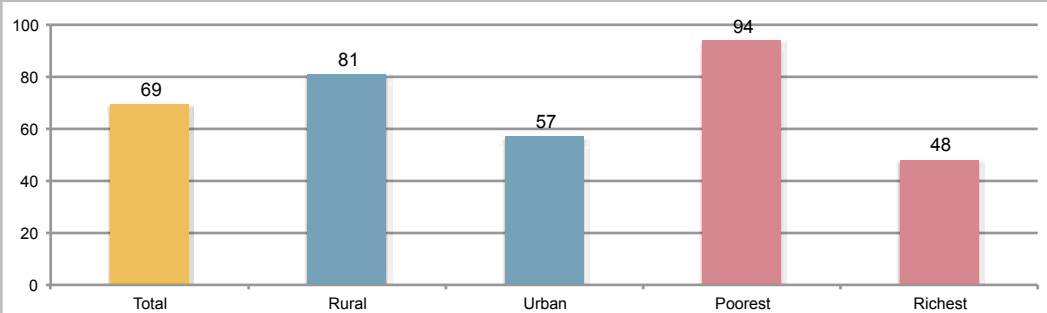
HOW WIDESPREAD IS THE PRACTICE?

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

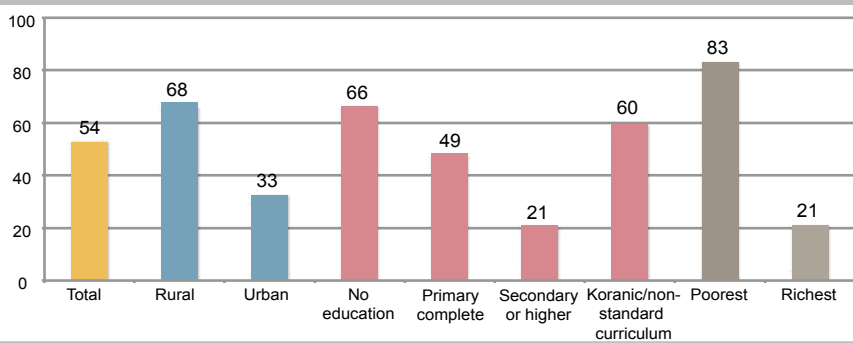
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C, by region



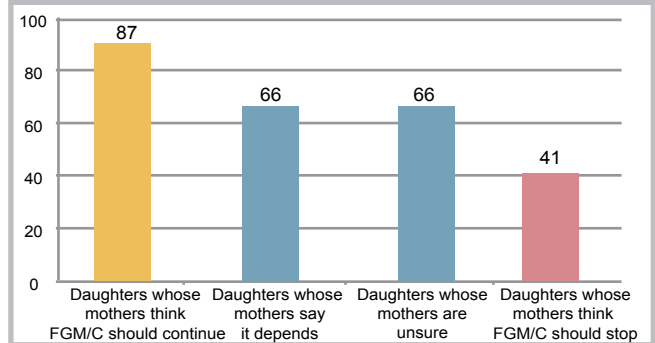
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C, by residence and household wealth quintile



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



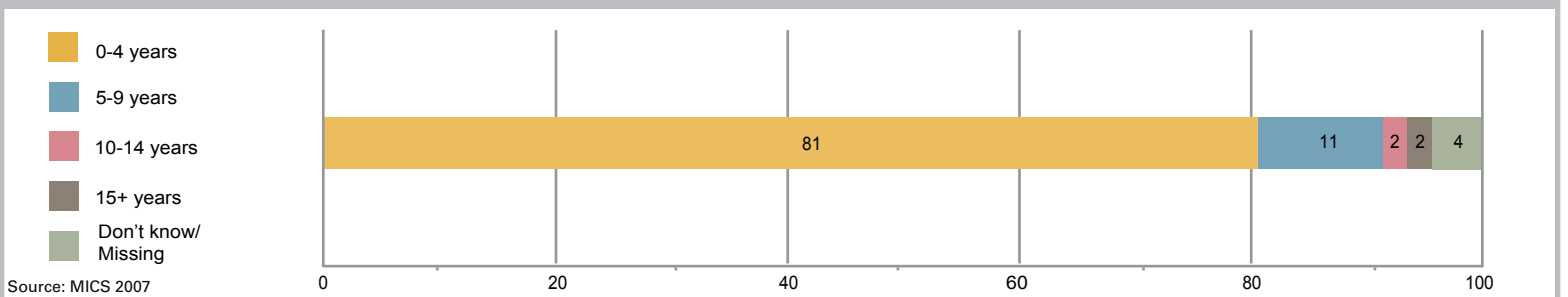
Among daughters of cut girls and women, the percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM/C (as reported by their mothers), by mothers' attitudes about whether the practice should continue



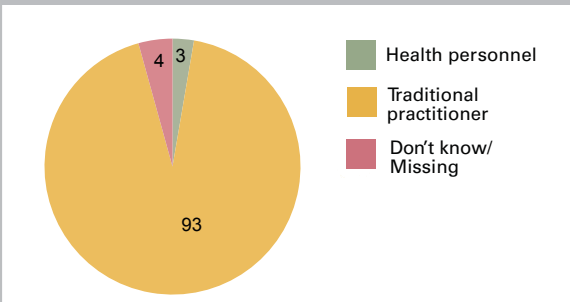
WHEN AND HOW IS FGM/C PERFORMED?

Most girls underwent the practice before the age of 5

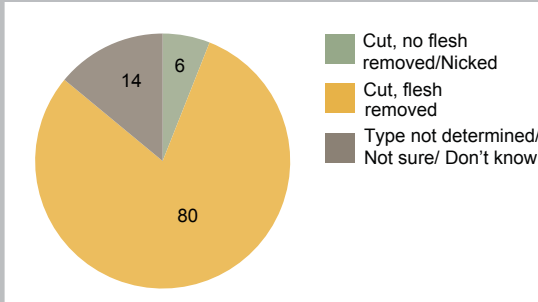
Percentage distribution of girls who have undergone FGM/C (as reported by their mothers), by age at which cutting occurred



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



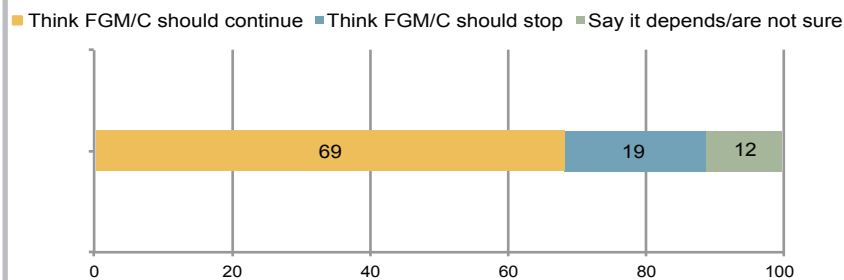
Notes: The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Only categories with 25 or more unweighted cases are presented. Due to rounding, some of the data presented may not add up to 100 per cent. There is no ethnicity or religion data for Mauritania. Prevalence data for girls aged 0 to 14 reflect their current, but not final, FGM/C 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/C prevalence data for this age group. Older data are used to report on age at cutting since data from the most recent survey includes some girls aged 0 to 14 years who have not undergone FGM/C but are still at risk of experiencing the practice once they have reached the customary age for cutting. 'Health personnel' includes doctors, nurses, midwives and other health workers; 'Traditional practitioner' includes traditional circumcisers, traditional birth attendants, traditional midwives and other types of traditional practitioners.

Source for all charts on this page: MICS 2011, unless otherwise noted

WHAT ARE THE PREVAILING ATTITUDES TOWARDS FGM/C?

One in three girls and women think FGM/C is necessary for social acceptance, and one in three think it is necessary for the preservation of virginity

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



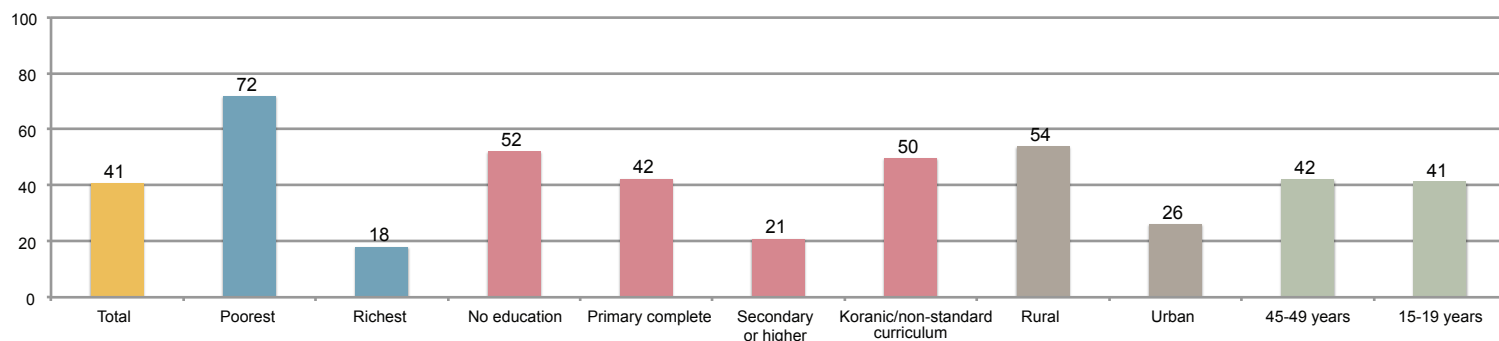
Source: DHS 2000-2001

Among girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM/C, 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 2000-2001

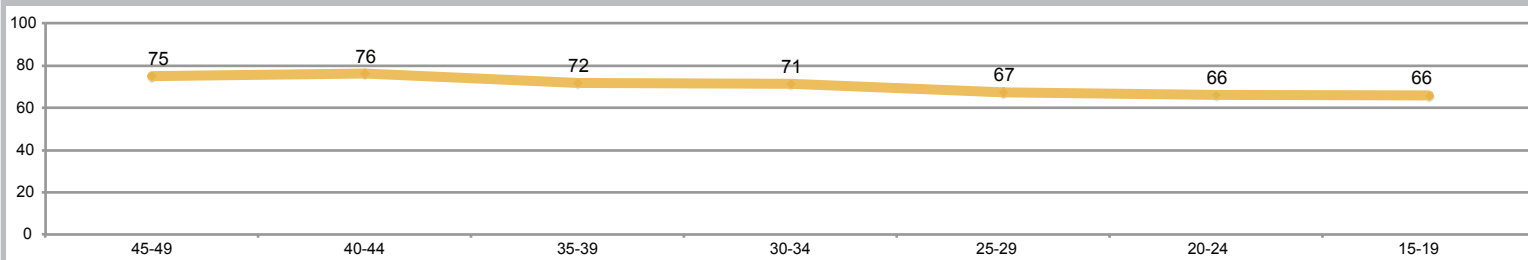
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM/C and think the practice should continue, by household wealth quintile, education, residence and age



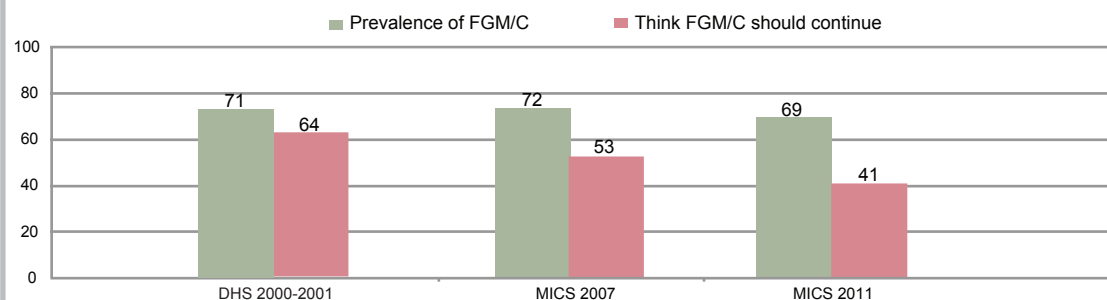
IS THE PRACTICE OF FGM/C CHANGING?

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

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



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



Source for all above charts: MICS 2011, unless otherwise noted

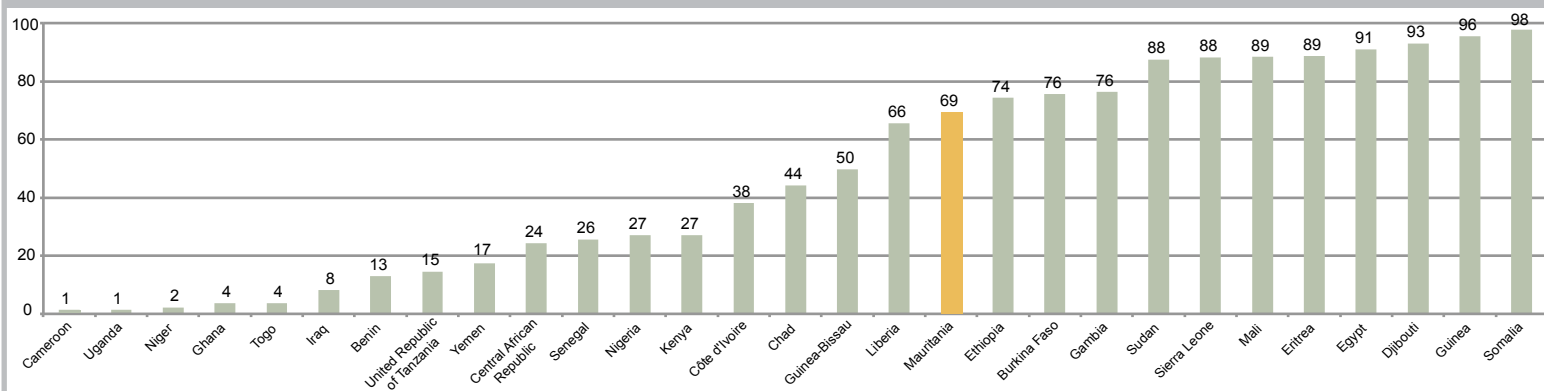
Notes: N/A = not available. There are no ethnicity data for Mauritania. Data on women's attitudes cannot be directly compared with men's attitudes since the data source for girls and women is more recent than that for boys and men.

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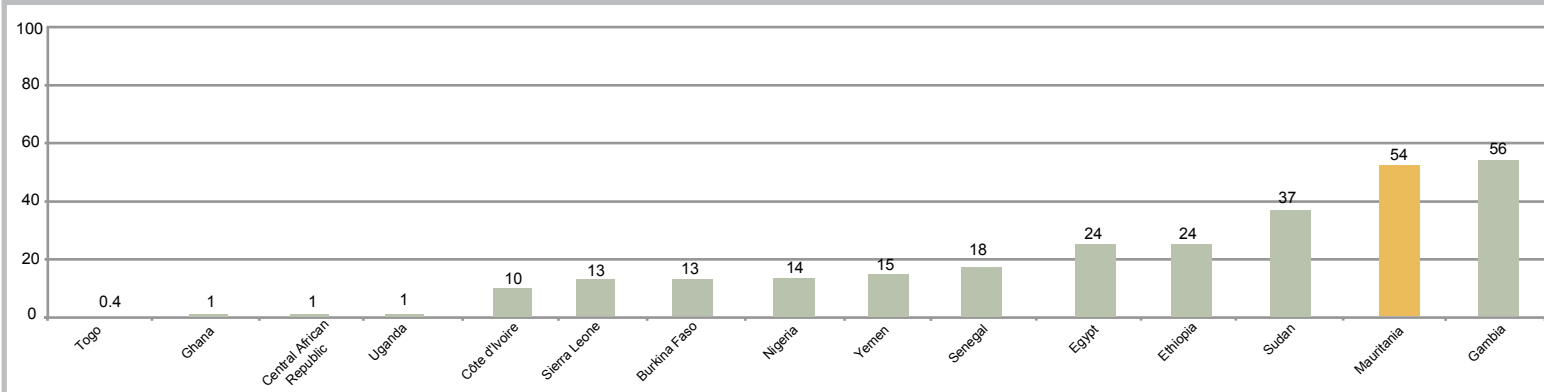


INTER-COUNTRY STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

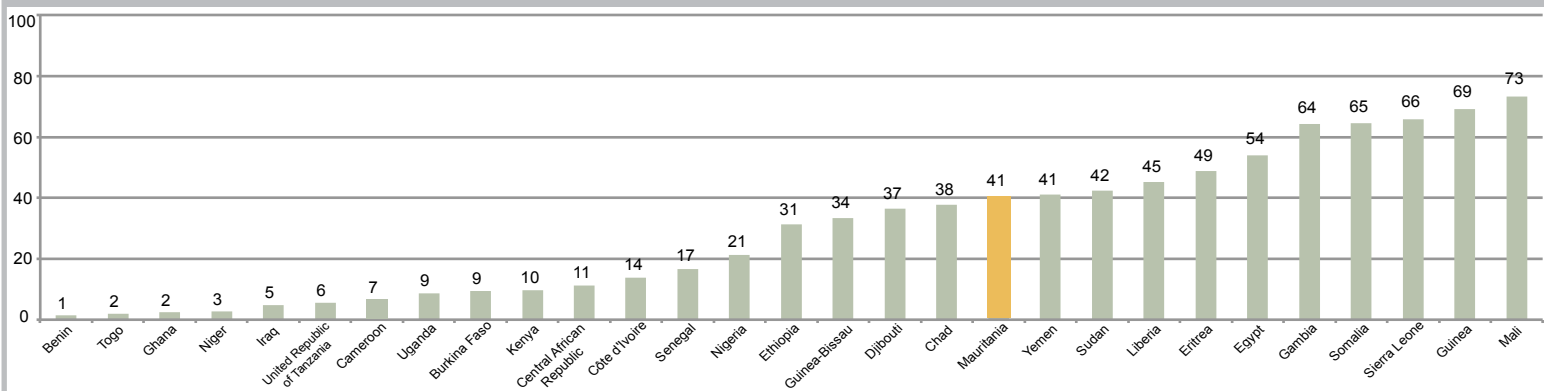
Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C



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



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



Notes: Data on attitudes for Yemen refer to ever-married girls and women. In Liberia, girls and women who have heard of the Sande society were asked whether they were members; this provides indirect information on FGM/C since it is performed during initiation into the society. Egypt data refer to girls aged 0-17 years who have undergone FGM/C. Data on attitudes for Ghana are from MICS 2006, for Nigeria from DHS 2008, and for Sierra Leone from DHS 2008 as data from the most recently available MICS surveys are not comparable. In Liberia, only cut girls and women were asked about their attitudes towards FGM/C; since girls and women from practising communities are more likely to support the practice, the level of support in this country as captured by the DHS 2007 is higher than would be anticipated had all girls and women been asked their opinion.

Sources: DHS, MICS, National Social Protection Monitoring Survey, SHHS and Welfare Monitoring Survey, 1997-2012

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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