



# Mauritania

## Islamic Republic of Mauritania

### Africa

### Geography

**Area** 1,030,700 sq km. Entirely desert apart from the north bank of the Senegal River on its southern border.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	3,365,675	2.43%
2020	4,091,379	1.86%
2030	4,791,136	1.52%

In 1970, 70% were nomadic, but drought and urbanization have reduced this to less than 20% today.

**Capital** Nouakchott 729,000. **Urbanites** 41.4%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 40%. **Life expectancy** 56.6 yrs.

### Peoples

Reliable statistics are hard to come by, since ethnicity involves caste as well as economic and political issues. Many prefer to simply divide the population into equal thirds – White Moor, Black Moor, Sub-Saharan African.

**Arab (Hassaniya-speaking)** up to 70%. Black Moors (Haratine) 40%, descended in part from slaves of the White Moors. White Moors (Bidan) of Arab and Berber origin 30%. White Moors have dominated in power since before independence.

**Sub-Saharan African** 28.8%. Fulbe/Tukulor (Pulaar); Wolof; Soninke; Bambara. Most are settled farmers in the south with important concentrations in Nouakchott and certain regional capitals.

**Other** 1.2%. West Africans, French, other ex-patriates.

**Literacy** 51.2%. **Official language** Arabic; the Hassaniya dialect is used as the vernacular for two-thirds of the population. French is the language of government and commerce. **All languages** 8. **Languages with Scriptures** 1Bi 3NT 3w.i.p.

### Economy

One of the world's poorest countries. Continuing drought in the 1970s and 1980s devastated the country and led to rapid urbanization. Subsistence farming and animal herding are the main sources of employment; the main exports are fish, iron ore and, recently, oil (offshore production since 2006). Corruption is still a significant factor in the economy at all levels. Two issues dominate political debate – the alleged persistence of slavery in the interior and the interethnic tensions between Sub-Saharan African and Moor.

**HDI Rank** 154<sup>th</sup>/182. **Public debt** 170.6% of GDP. **Income/person** \$1,042 (2% of USA).

### Politics

Independent from France in 1960, followed by a long succession of military coups that were a continuation of rivalry among Moorish tribes. The military junta transformed itself into a multiparty democracy in 1992, but was ousted by a bloodless coup in 2005. The restoration of a civilian government came after the 2007 elections. Another coup took place in 2008, and then further presidential elections were held in 2009, re-establishing civilian government.

### Religion

Officially an Islamic Republic, with a combination of several legal traditions including shari'a law. The Constitution officially states that Islam is the religion of the people and the state. Moderate Sunni Islam permeated by folk magic is practiced by the vast majority. There is tremendous social pressure against anyone converting to another faith.

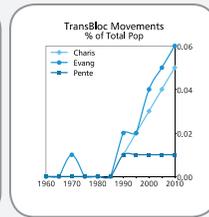
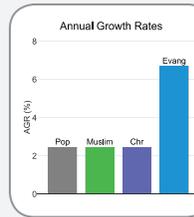
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	99.75	3,357,261	2.4%
Christian	0.25	8,414	2.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	4	0.02	1,000	3.2%
Independent	4	0.06	2,000	7.4%
Anglican	1	0.03	1,000	4.1%
Catholic	1	0.14	5,000	0.4%
Marginal	1	<0.01	<100	11.8%

Most of the Christians are expatriates.

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	5	2,570	4,600
Other Afr Chr groups	I	7	400	1,600
Anglican Church	A	1	611	1,100
Evangelical fellowships	P	7	266	380
Other denominations[4]		6	548	640
<b>Total Christians[11]</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>4,395</b>	<b>8,320</b>

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	0.1	2,081	6.7%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	0.1	1,778	7.9%
Pentecostals	<0.1	170	2.5%



## Challenges for Prayer

**1 Islam has been entrenched for 1,000 years** with little challenge. Many are the barriers to change – laws hindering proclamation of the gospel, powerful social resistance to change, an historic reluctance to engage with the outside world, geographical isolation, low literacy and minimal exposure to Christians and Christian media. Pray for greater spiritual openness and hunger for God. WorldVision, Caritas, the Lutherans and others are working in development as well as with issues such as AIDS, human rights and environmental protection.

**2 Mauritania is one of the world's neediest countries.** One-third of children face chronic malnourishment, and many families struggle to afford basic necessities. Widespread divorce also causes social difficulties. Desertification threatens the remaining arable land, which amounts to perhaps only 1% of the total land area. The discovery of oil and new mineral reserves could either bring wealth to the country or increase corruption and the divide between rich and poor. Pray for political stability and wisdom for the government to enable revenues from Mauritania's natural resources to benefit the poor.

**3 Political issues are historical and highly charged,** although the elected government is widely seen as progressing forward. Despite slavery being illegal, allegations of slavery persist, and thousands are thought to live in such circumstances. Interethnic and intertribal tensions remain from past violence over the White Moor-dominated government seizing Black African lands and livestock. Pray for justice for all who have been oppressed.

**4 Expatriate Christians in Mauritania are few.** Most are from various West African countries working at menial jobs, although some work as professionals. Others work in diplomatic services, development and commerce. Expatriate Protestants are petitioning the government for legal protection from sporadic police harassment in certain precincts. Expatriates suspected of proselytizing Mauritians are subject to harassment, interrogation, brief imprisonment, expulsion and even murder. The murder of a foreign Christian by Islamic terrorists in 2009, as well as extremist activities, have led to many expatriate believers leaving the country. Pray that the lives of Christians might clearly demonstrate the love of Jesus. Pray also that the Lord might grant them wisdom, protection and make them powerful witnesses for His name.

**5 All Mauritanian peoples remain essentially unreached,** and the vast majority have yet to hear the good news of God's grace through faith in Jesus. There are only a small number of Mauritanian believers worldwide, although the exact number is unknown. Believers in Mauritania have at times been imprisoned, beaten for their faith, or have endured ostracism by family or tribe. Pray for godly indigenous leadership to develop. Pray for increasing freedom of religion, both socially and legally. Pray for seekers to encounter Jesus, and that any who follow Him might be courageous in the faith. Also pray that God might minister to believers despite the lack of fellowship.

**6 Mauritanians in other lands are an opportunity.** Mauritanians reside in many countries in West Africa as well as in France, Spain and the USA. There is some work among them in Senegal. Pray that these scattered people may be evangelized and that Mauritanian believers, wherever they may be, might increase.

**7 Unreached minorities.** Pray for:

- a) *The Haratine or Black Moors*, who are Moors by culture and language as well as the former slave class of Moorish society.
- b) *The African peoples of the Senegal River Valley*, including the Pulaar (Tukulor and Fulakunda), Soninke, Bambara and Wolof. Some of these peoples have suffered much persecution, yet many previously exiled are now returning to their homeland. Their persecution and dispersion, as well as assistance from Christian agencies, have opened them for the gospel.
- c) *The nomads of the desert*, descended from Berber and Arab Bedouin tribes, are even less accessible for evangelization due to their nomadic ways.

**8 Sub-Saharan African refugees** are increasingly using Mauritania as an illegal transit point to Europe (Canary Islands). Each year, tens of thousands make the attempt in unsafe boats, and over a thousand of those die in the attempt. Pray that those seeking riches in the West might somehow find Christ.

**9 Other ministries.** Pray for:

- a) *Bible translation.* Outside Mauritania, efforts are underway to translate the Bible into Hassaniya Arabic. The Pulaar NT exists and work on the OT is progressing; work is being done in Soninke as well. Low literacy and a prevalent oral culture pose a challenge.
- b) *The JESUS film* exists in all the local languages. It has had the most success among minorities in urban areas.
- c) *Radio and satellite TV broadcasts* in the local dialects are still in the experimental stage; prayer is needed for the development of biblical content. There are some radio programmes in Pulaar and Bambara. While awaiting the production of local material, much good could be done by broadcasting quality programming already available in French and modern standard Arabic; but for technical and geographical reasons, those available in North Africa do not usually reach Mauritania. The main radio and TV stations have no Christian content.
- d) *The Internet* is more widely available in the main districts of Nouakchott and the regional capitals, and is one way for Mauritians to access the good news.