

# Mauritania

## Geography

Location: Northern Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Senegal and Western Sahara

Area:

total area: 1,030,700 sq km

land area: 1,030,400 sq km

Land boundaries: total 5,074 km, Algeria 463 km, Mali 2,237 km, Senegal 813 km, Western Sahara 1,561 km

Coastline: 754 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or to the edge of the continental margin

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: desert; constantly hot, dry, dusty

Terrain: mostly barren, flat plains of the Sahara; some central hills

Natural resources: iron ore, gypsum, fish, copper, phosphate

Land use:

arable land: 1%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 38%

forest and woodland: 5%

other: 56%

Irrigated land: 120 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: overgrazing, deforestation, and soil erosion aggravated by drought are contributing to desertification; very limited natural fresh water resources away from the Senegal which is the only perennial river

natural hazards: hot, dry, dust/sand-laden sirocco wind blows primarily in March and April; periodic droughts

Note: most of the population concentrated along the Senegal River in the southern part of the country

## People

Population: 2,263,202 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 48% (female 544,674; male 551,099)

15-64 years: 49% (female 574,282; male 542,762)

65 years and over: 3% (female 28,955; male 21,430) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 3.17% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 47.32 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 15.66 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 83.5 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 48.54 years

male: 45.66 years

female: 51.54 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 6.92 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Mauritanian(s)

adjective: Mauritanian

Ethnic divisions: mixed Maur/black 40%, Maur 30%, black 30%

Religions: Muslim 100%

Languages: Hasaniya Arabic (official), Pular, Soninke, Wolof (official)

Literacy:

total population: 35%

male: 46%

female: 25%

# Government

## Names:

conventional long form: Islamic Republic of Mauritania

conventional short form: Mauritania

local long form: Al Jumhuriyah al Islamiyah al Muritaniyah

local short form: Muritaniyah

Type: republic

Capital: Nouakchott

Independence: 28 November 1960 (from France)

National holiday: Independence Day, 28 November (1960)

Constitution: 12 July 1991

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: green with a yellow five-pointed star above a yellow, horizontal crescent; the closed side of the crescent is down; the crescent, star, and color green are traditional symbols of Islam

## Economy

Overview: A majority of the population still depends on agriculture and livestock for a livelihood, even though most of the nomads and many subsistence farmers were forced into the cities by recurrent droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. Mauritania has extensive deposits of iron ore. The nation's coastal waters are among the richest fishing areas in the world, but overexploitation by foreigners threatens this key source of revenue.

Industries: fish processing, mining of iron ore and gypsum

Agriculture: accounts for 25% of GDP (including fishing); largely subsistence farming and nomadic cattle and sheep herding except in Senegal river valley; crops - dates, millet, sorghum, root crops; fish products number-one export; large food deficit in years of drought

## Transportation

### Railroads:

total: 690 km (single track)

### Highways:

total: 7,525 km

Inland waterways: mostly ferry traffic on the Senegal River

Ports: Bogue, Kaedi, Nouadhibou, Nouakchott, Rosso

### Airports:

total: 28

## Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, National Gendarmerie, National Guard, National Police, Presidential Guard