



The Islamic Republic of Mauritania

MAL FACT SHEET

SUMMARY

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is located in Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Senegal and Western Sahara. It is rich in cultural and religious diversity due to its location at the crossroads of three continents.

The country initially began as a single-party, authoritarian regime and experienced 49 years of dictatorships, flawed elections, failed attempts at democracy, and military coups. Mohamed Ould Cheikh GHAZOUANI was elected president in 2019, and his inauguration marked the first peaceful transition of power from one democratically elected president to another, solidifying Mauritania's status as an emerging democracy.

Chief of State: The position of the president is currently held by President Mohamed Ould Cheikh el Ghazouani.

Capital: Nouakchott

Other notable cities: Nouadhibou

Gov Type: Presidential republic

Population: 5,500,000 (2026 est.)

History: France colony (1904 - 1960) – began in the form of punitive expeditions against the Maures, Mauritania independent (November 28, 1960 - now)

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Mauritania is about 1,030,700 square kilometers in total area and has 0 square kilometers of water but has 5,002 kilometers of land boundaries.

The climate is desert; constantly hot, dry, dusty.

The terrain is mostly barren, flat plains of the Sahara; some central hills.

Natural resources include iron ore, gypsum, copper, phosphate, diamonds, gold, oil, fish.

Economy and Politics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Mauritanian(s)

Adjective: Mauritanian

Ethnic Groups: Black Moors (Haratines - Arabic-speaking descendants of African origin who are or were enslaved by White Moors) 40%, White Moors (of Arab-Amazigh descent, known as Beydane) 30%, Sub-Saharan Mauritians (non-Arabic speaking, largely resident in or originating from the Senegal River Valley, including Halpulaar, Fulani, Soninke, Wolof, and Bambara ethnic groups) 30%

Languages: Arabic (official and national), Pular, Soninke, Wolof (all national languages), French; note - the spoken Arabic in Mauritania differs considerably from the Modern Standard Arabic used for official written purposes or in the media; the Mauritanian dialect, which incorporates many Tamazight words, is referred to as Hassaniya

Religion: Muslim (official) 100%

Literacy: 91% (Male 96.7%, 85.6% Female)

Population growth is at 2.9 %%% (2026 est.)

ECONOMY AND GDP

Mauritania's economy is described as a lower middle-income West African economy; primarily agrarian; rising urbanization; insufficient property rights; systemic corruption; endemic social and workforce tensions; wide-scale terrorism; foreign over-fishing; environmentally fragile; high levels of poverty

Real GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$43.91 billion (2026)

Real GDP Growth Rate: 4.4% (2026)

Real GDP Per Capita (PPP): \$9,280 (2026)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$14.35 billion (2026)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): 4.2% (2026)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin: agriculture: 27.8% (2017 est.), industry: 29.3% (2017 est.), services: 42.9% (2017 est.)

Unemployment Rate: 10.4% (2026 est.)

Youth Unemployment: 23% (2026)

Population below poverty line: 31.8% (2019 est.)

MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

Mauritania initially began as a single-party, authoritarian regime and saw 49 years of dictatorships, flawed elections, failed attempts at democracy, and military coups.

Ould Abdel AZIZ led the last coup in 2008, and was elected president in 2009 and reelected in 2014.

Mohamed Ould Cheikh GHAZOUANI was elected president in 2019, and his inauguration marked the first peaceful transition of power from one democratically elected president to another. However, with the current rise of media suppression and efforts to reduce the influence of opposition parties, there is an increasing fear of democratic backsliding in the country. Moreover, due to current tensions in northern Mali, the Mauritanian-Mali border has been declared a no-go zone.

Mauritania: A Timeline

