MAURITANIA

INTRODUCTION
Berbers moved south into the area of today’s Mauritania beginning in the 3rd century. Beginning in the 8th century, Mauritania experienced a slow but constant infiltration of Arabs and Arab influence from the north. The French colonized Mauritania in the late 19th century. The country gained independence from France in 1960.

GOVERNMENT
Chief of State
President Mohamed Ould Cheikh GHAZOUANI
Head of Government
Prime Minister Mohamed Ould BILAL
Government Type
presidential republic
Capital
Nouakchott
Legislature
unicameral Parliament or Barlamane consists of the National Assembly or Al Jamiya Al Wataniya (157 seats; 5-year terms)

GEOGRAPHY
Area
Total: 1,030,700 sq km
Land: 1,030,700 sq km
Water: 0 sq km
Climate
desert; constantly hot, dry, dusty
Natural Resources
iron ore, gypsum, copper, phosphate, diamonds, gold, oil, fish

ECONOMY
Economic Overview
lower middle-income West African economy; primarily agrarian; rising urbanization; poor property rights; systemic corruption; endemic social and workforce tensions; wide-scale terrorism; foreign over-fishing; environmentally fragile
GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) $23.17 billion (2020 est.)
GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity) $5,000 (2020 est.)
Industries - fish processing, oil production, mining (iron ore, gold, copper)
Agricultural products - rice, milk, goat milk, sheep milk, sorghum, mutton, beef, camel milk, camel meat, dates
Exports $321 million (2019 est.)
iron ore, fish products, gold, mollusks, processed crustaceans (2019)
partners: China 32%, Switzerland 13%, Spain 9%, Japan 9%, Italy 5% (2019)
Imports $318 million (2019 est.)
ships, aircraft, wheat, raw sugar, refined petroleum (2019)
partners: China 26%, France 6%, Spain 6%, Morocco 6%, UAE 5% (2019)

PEOPLE & SOCIETY
Population
4.1 million (July 2021 est.)
Population Growth
2.02% (2021 est.)
Ethnicity
Black Moors
(Haratines - Arab-speaking descendants of African origin who are or were enslaved by white Moors) 40%, White Moors (of Arab-Berber 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%
Language
Arabic (official and national), Pular, Soninke, Wolof (all national languages), French
Religion
Muslim (official) 100%

as of December 2021