

# The Gambia

75.7%<sup>1</sup>



## Key Findings

The prevalence of FGM in women aged 15–49 is 75.7%  
44% of women aged 15–49 believe the practice should be continued<sup>2</sup>

### **Geography:**

Basse, the most rural region of the country, has the highest prevalence (95% of women aged 15–49); Banjul, the most urbanised area, has the lowest prevalence (48.8%)<sup>3</sup>

### **Age:**

54.8% of women aged 15–49 were cut before the age of 5; 28.1% between the ages of 5 and 9<sup>4</sup>

### **Type:**

'Cut, flesh removed' is the most common type of FGM practised<sup>5</sup>

### **Agent:**

95.7% of FGM is carried out by 'traditional circumcisers'<sup>6</sup>

## Development Indicators

**HDI Rank:** 174 out of 189 countries (2018)<sup>7</sup>

**Population:** 2,332,091 (as at 17 June 2020), with a 1.87% growth rate (2020 est.)<sup>8</sup>

**Infant Mortality Rate:** 39 deaths per 1,000 live births (2019)<sup>9</sup>

**Maternal Mortality Ratio:** 597 deaths per 100,000 live births (2017)<sup>10</sup>

**Literacy:** 50.8% of the total population aged 15 and over can read/write<sup>11</sup>

*'Eradicating FGM does not take one single individual or organisation.  
It's a collective effort by government, civil society organisations  
and young people.'*

*~ Youth Anti-FGM Network, The Gambia*

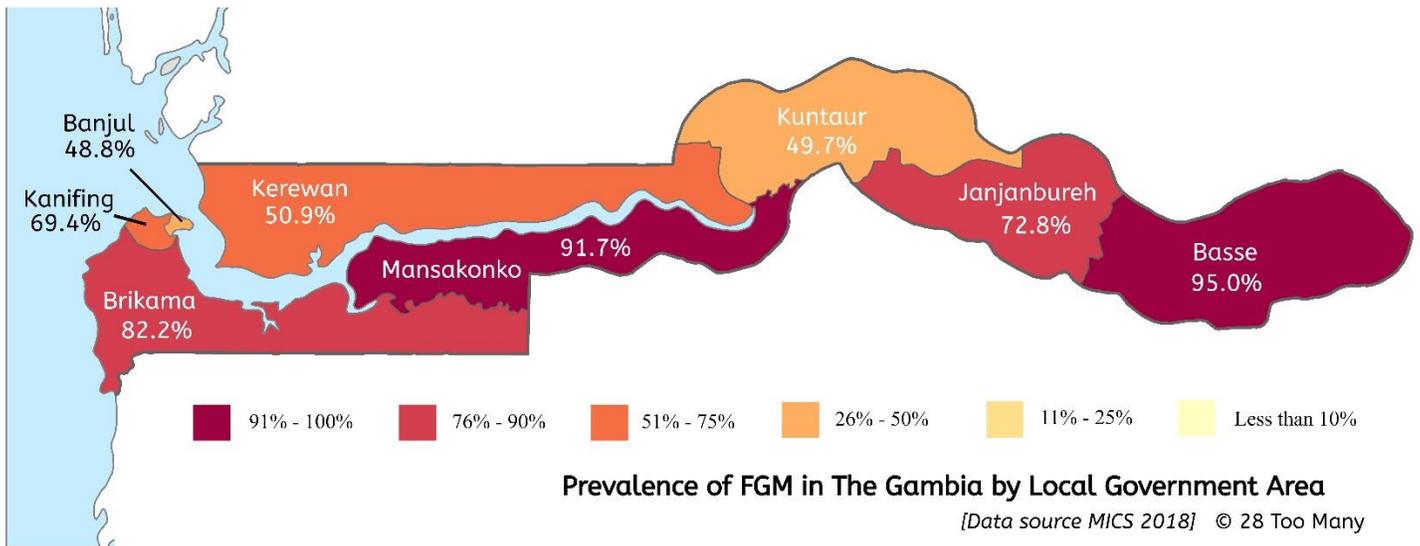
## Prevalence

FGM is practised across all eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) in The Gambia and by both Christians (20.9% of Christian women aged 15–49) and Muslims (77.3%).<sup>12</sup>

The LGA with the highest prevalence is Basse, the eastern-most and most rural region, at 95% of women aged 15–49. The LGA with the lowest prevalence is Banjul, a coastal area and the most urbanised, at 48.8%. The Basse region is predominantly inhabited by the Sarahule, Mandinka and Fula ethnic groups, whereas the coastal areas of Banjul and Kanifing are predominantly inhabited by the Wolof (among whom the prevalence of FGM has historically been the lowest among The Gambia’s different ethnic groups) and the Mandinka. Overall, the prevalence of FGM among women aged 15–49 who live in urban areas is 77.3%, and among those living in rural areas is 71.7%.<sup>13</sup>

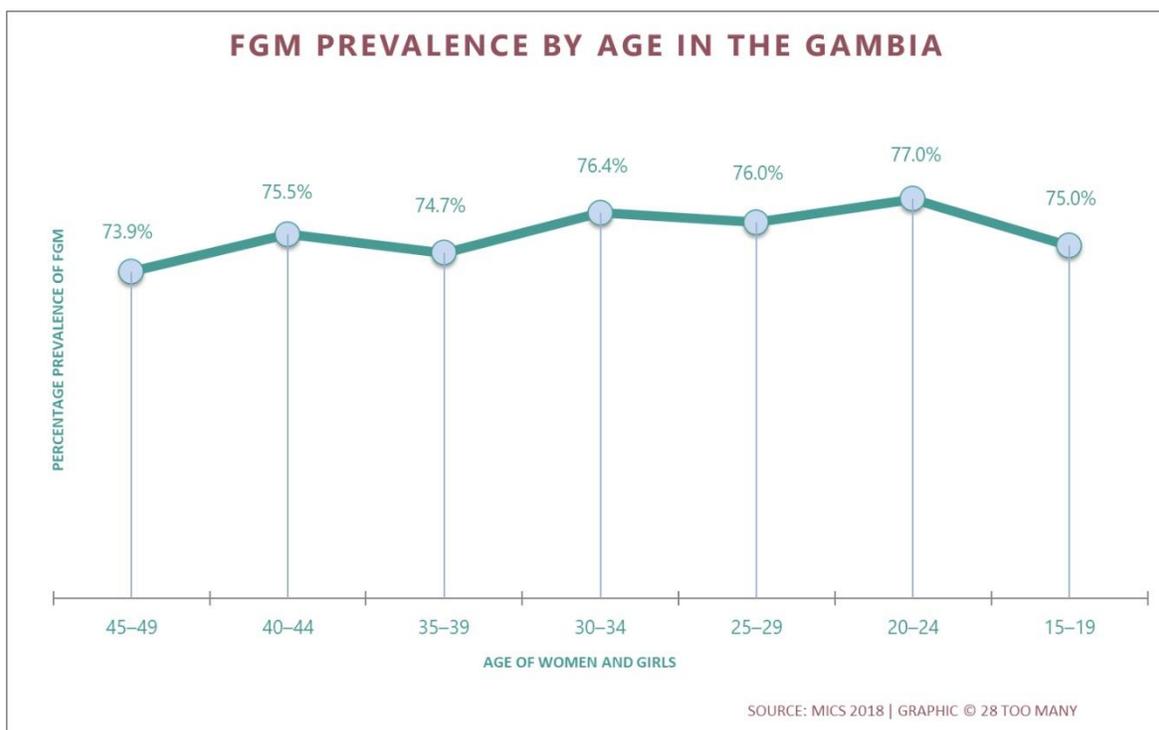
According to the MICS 2018, the overall prevalence among women aged 15–49 is 75.7%. By comparison, the MICS 2010 found that prevalence among women of the same age-range was 76.3%, suggesting that the extent of the practice has remained broadly similar in recent years.<sup>14</sup>

Of women aged 15–49 who have heard of FGM, 44% feel that the practice should continue, although among women who have not undergone FGM, that figure drops to 6%.<sup>15</sup>



Due to the large age-range (15–49 years) of women included in the MICS surveys, changes in the overall FGM prevalence of a country over time may not fully illustrate the progress that has been made. Breaking down the most recent prevalence data by age group can give additional insights into whether the practice is in decline.

In the case of The Gambia, however, the FGM prevalence is broadly the same across all age cohorts, suggesting that the extent of the practice has not changed significantly in recent years.<sup>16</sup>



## Gambian Law

The Women's (Amendment) Act 2015 addressed the issue of harmful practices for the first time in The Gambia by introducing Section 32A (Prohibition of female circumcision) and Section 32B (Accomplices to female circumcision). Very few prosecutions have reportedly taken place since the ban was introduced, and case details are limited.

- 1 **(‘MICS’)**: The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (2019) *The Gambia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018, Survey Findings Report*, p.354. Banjul, The Gambia: The Gambia Bureau of Statistics. Available at [https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Gambia/2018/Survey%20findings/The%20Gambia%202018%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report\\_English.pdf](https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Gambia/2018/Survey%20findings/The%20Gambia%202018%20MICS%20Survey%20Findings%20Report_English.pdf) (accessed 17 June 2020).
- 2 MICS, p.354 & 356.
- 3 MICS, p.354.
- 4 **(‘DHS’)**: The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) and ICF International (2014) *The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013*, p.222. Banjul, The Gambia, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: GBOS and ICF International. Available at <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR289/FR289.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2020).
- 5 DHS, p.222.
- 6 DHS, p.223.
- 7 United Nations Development Programme (2018) *Human Development Reports*. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update> (accessed 12 June 2019).
- 8 - Country Meters (2020) *The Gambia*, 17 June 2020. Available at <http://countrymeters.info/en/Gambia> (accessed 17 June 2020).
- Central Intelligence Agency (2020) *World Factbook: The Gambia*, 10 June. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ga.html> (accessed 10 June 2020).
- 9 UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (2019) *Gambia*. Available at <https://childmortality.org/data/Gambia> (accessed 10 June 2020).
- 10 World Health Organization (2017) *Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births)*. Available at [https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/maternal-mortality-ratio-\(per-100-000-live-births\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/maternal-mortality-ratio-(per-100-000-live-births)) (accessed 10 June 2020).
- 11 Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*
- 12 DHS, p.222.

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13 MICS, pp.354–355.

14 - MICS, pp.354–355.

- (**'MICS 2010'**): The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) (2011) *The Gambia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010, Final Report*, p.164. Banjul, The Gambia: The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS). Available at [https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS4/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Gambia/2010/Final/Gambia%202010%20MICS\\_English.pdf](https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS4/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Gambia/2010/Final/Gambia%202010%20MICS_English.pdf) (accessed 10 June 2020).

15 MICS, p.357.

16 MICS, p.354.

***UNICEF Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting:***

UNICEF (2016) *Gambia: Statistical Profile on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting*. Available at [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Gambia/FGMC\\_GMB.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Gambia/FGMC_GMB.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2017).

***Images on website:***

- 1 Killroy Productions (undated) African mother. Shutterstock ID 2709226.
- 2 Vladimir Zhoga (2013) WASSU/GAMBIA – NOVEMBER 18, 2013: *Very young African mother with her newborn child hanging on her back stands with the group of children on the street of Wassu, Gambia*. Shutterstock ID 409449481.
- 3 Katie Sh (2017) FARAFENNI, GAMBIA – JANUARY, 11, 2017: *Unidentified three Gambian girls with books*. Shutterstock ID 560009407.