Refugee Influx Hodh Chargui - Mauritania

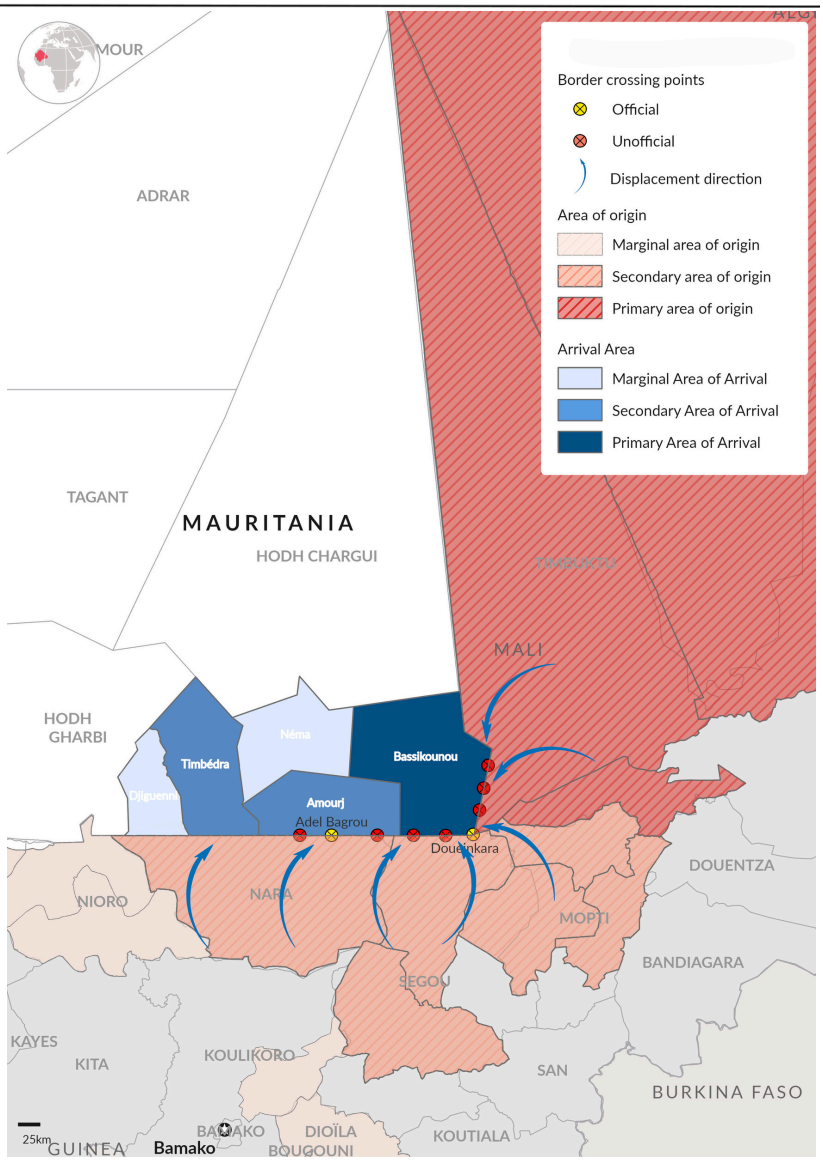
As of 21 May 2026

Overview

Insecurity in northern and central Mali continues to drive cross-border displacement into south-eastern Mauritania. Since the beginning of the current influx on 24 October 2025, approximately 14,402 refugees have been identified in Hodh Chargui region, more than double the figure recorded in December 2025.

Over the past three weeks, the number of newly arrived refugees has decreased largely due to the marked deterioration in the border areas and growing restrictions on civilian movement in Mali. The 484 newly arrived refugees identified during this period reported increasingly limited opportunity to reach Mauritania.

Recent developments suggest that displacement pressures continue to build within Mali. Many newly displaced families remain stranded in areas of internal displacement or along transit routes, while access to the Mauritanian border remains constrained by insecurity. As a result, the risk of renewed and potentially rapid refugee movements into Mauritania remains significant.

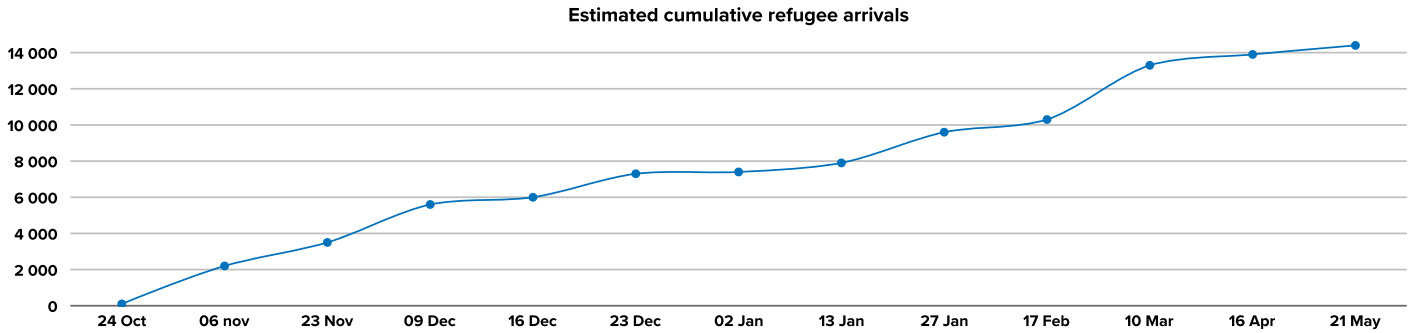


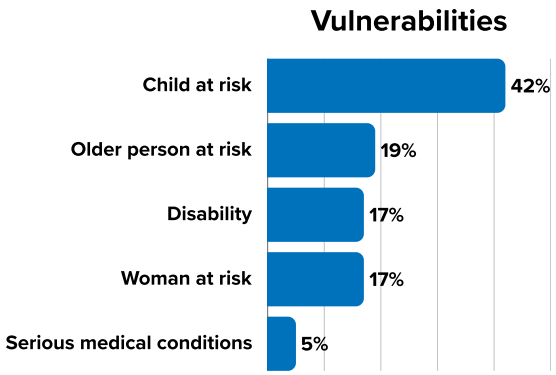
Key figures

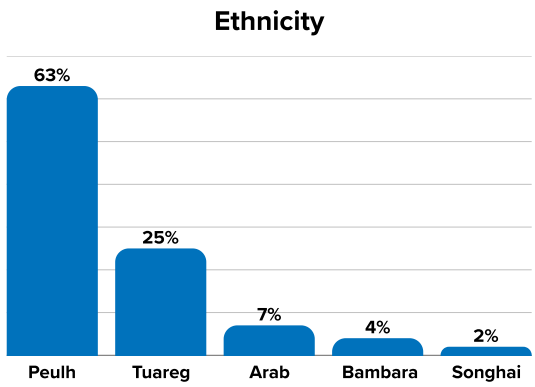
14,402
Refugees arrived since 24th October

20%
Adult women

68%
Children







(© UNHCR/OMAR DOUKALI. Mohamed Ag Mohamed never imagined that displacement would one day define his life)

Mohamed Ag Mohamed never imagined that displacement would one day define his life. He is from Gargando, in Mali. Until the last weeks of 2025, his life followed a path he knew a home, livestock, family, routines built over years. Then the violence intensified. The cruelty of the conflict left no space to stay. ***"I never thought I would be forcibly displaced,"*** *he says. Leaving meant abandoning everything. His house. His cattle. The life he had worked for. Some losses were heavier than others, Mohamed also lost close relatives to the conflict. There was no time to grieve properly. Survival came first. For the first time in his life, Mohamed fled to Mauritania. He did not come alone. He fled with his parents, his wife, and their five children. Keeping his family together was non-negotiable. A relative drove them for nearly 24 hours, across long and uncertain roads. When they arrived, nothing felt familiar. It was Mohamed's first time in Mauritania. Everything was new. Everything felt fragile.*

He arrived with empty hands. What kept him standing in those first days was solidarity. Back in Mali, a relative sold Mohamed's cows and sent him the money. A painful decision but one that allowed his family to survive. ***"I lost everything,"*** *Mohamed says quietly.* ***"But my family is safe."*** *Starting over has not been easy. Mohamed is still finding his bearings, still learning how to live in a place he never expected to be. The weight of what he left behind follows him daily. Yet his strength shows in small, steady ways in protecting his family, in adapting, in refusing to give up even after losing so much.* ***For Mohamed, resilience is not a word. It is waking up each day and continuing for his children, for his parents, for the future he still believes is possible.***

The security situation in Mali deteriorated further during the reporting period. On 25 April 2026, coordinated attacks attributed to armed groups targeted several strategic locations across the country, including Bamako, Kati, Gao, Mopti, Sévaré, Kidal and Ménaka. Reports indicate civilian casualties, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and renewed displacement in several affected areas.

In the Timbuktu region, the principal area of origin for refugees arriving in Hodh Chargui, insecurity remained acute throughout the reporting period. Armed group activity, movement restrictions and blockades continued to affect communities in and around Léré, Goundam, Gargando and Razelma, limiting access to markets, healthcare and livelihoods. Similar patterns were reported in parts of Ségou and Mopti regions, including around Nampala, Dioura and Tenenkou.

For many refugees arriving in Mauritania, displacement reflects deteriorating security, shrinking livelihood opportunities and repeated exposure to protection risks rather than a single triggering incident. As one refugee from the Léré area explained: "We used to know which roads were safe. Now, even going to the market puts your life at risk."

Over the past three weeks, the number of newly arrived refugees has decreased largely due to the marked deterioration in the border areas and growing restrictions on civilian movement in Mali. The 484 newly arrived refugees identified during this period reported increasingly limited opportunity to reach Mauritania. Some newly arrived families are settling in remote border areas where they may not be immediately identified. In addition, many people displaced by recent violence remain within Mali and could seek refuge in Mauritania if conditions worsen further. Current figures of newly arrived refugees may therefore underestimate the scale of displacement within Mali.

In the week after 25 April attacks, newly arrived refugees included families originating from Bamako, Kati, Diabali and Koutiala, locations that had not featured prominently in previous influx data, suggesting that the impact of the crisis is extending beyond traditionally affected regions. One refugee who arrived with his teenage son described leaving Bamako after violence reached his neighbourhood: "In Bamako you think you are far from the war.

“Then one morning you wake up and it is there, in your street.” Unlike many refugees arriving from the Timbuktu region, some of these newly displaced households have limited social networks in Mauritania, creating additional challenges in accessing accommodation, information and support upon arrival.

Refugees continue to settle across Kleive, Doueinkara, Kindjirle, Aghor, and Timbedra, within host communities that are affected by limited infrastructure, constrained livelihood opportunities and restricted access to basic services. Continued arrivals are putting additional pressure on already stretched local resources, highlighting the importance of maintaining support that benefits both refugees and host populations and contributes to social cohesion.

The broader protection environment in Mali remains deeply concerning. 13,718 alleged human rights violations were documented during the first quarter of 2026 in Mali, representing a seven per cent increase compared to the previous quarter. Reported GBV incidents increased by nearly 85 per cent compared to the same period in 2025, while allegations of conflict-related sexual violence continued to emerge from several affected regions, including Kidal and Gao.

Children account for approximately 68 per cent of identified refugee arrivals that has remained consistent throughout the influx. Many arrive following prolonged periods of displacement, disruption of education and separation from family members. Unaccompanied and separated children continue to be identified among new arrivals, reflecting the fragmented nature of displacement movements and the challenges families face in remaining together during flight.

Women and girls face heightened protection risks both before and during displacement. Four per cent of identified refugees have disclosed experiences of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. However, actual prevalence is likely to be significantly higher given barriers to disclosure, fear of stigma and limited access to specialised services. Long journeys through insecure areas continue to expose women and girls to additional risks of violence, exploitation and abuse.

UNHCR and partners continue to support newly arrived refugees through registration, protection monitoring and management and the provision of essential assistance. Protection teams remain active across key villages, providing protection services and supporting access to available services.

Humanitarian needs continue to outpace available response capacity. Registration remains a major challenge, with an estimated 70 per cent of newly identified refugees yet to be registered by the Mauritanian authorities, limiting access to assistance and protection services. Many families arrive with few belongings and settle in areas with limited shelter and basic infrastructure, while food insecurity remains acute, with some households reportedly going days without adequate food and resorting to negative coping mechanisms. Child protection and GBV services continue to be provided by UNHCR and partners, but coverage remains insufficient, particularly in remote refugee-hosting areas.

The conflict inside Mali, combined with restricted access to safe movement routes and a growing population of internally displaced may lead to increased arrivals of refugees. Maintaining response capacity will be critical to ensure timely registration, protection follow-up and access to assistance for newly arrived refugees, particularly in remote border areas where needs remain significant and humanitarian presence is limited.