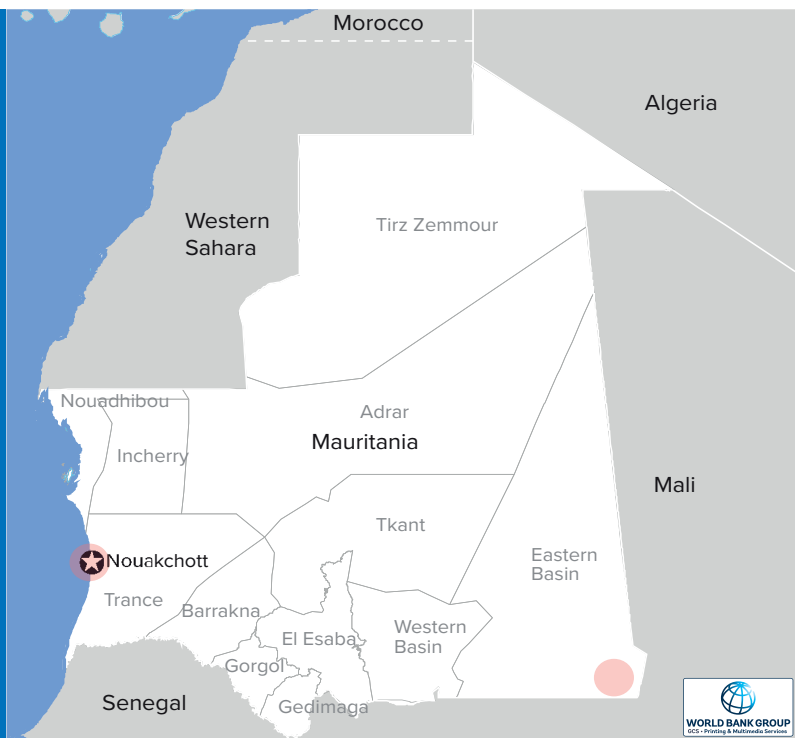


MAURITANIA

Malian refugees have been fleeing to Mauritania since 2012 as a result of the ongoing conflict in Mali. As of June 2020, there were 62,829 Malian refugees living in and around Mbera camp in the department of Bassikounou, 50 km from the border with Mali. In addition, 4,197 asylum-seekers and refugees from different nationalities are registered in the urban centres, along with 5,798 Malians waiting to be registered. By June 2020, despite closure of the borders due to COVID-19, 3,229 refugees arrived from Mali.

Mauritania's economic growth over the past decade enabled it to qualify as a lower middle-income country. However, 22.5 per cent of the population still live below the poverty line. COVID-19 has impacted the country's economy, threatening the subsistence of thousands of Mauritians and refugees.



Over 80 per cent of refugees in Mauritania are from Mali and live in the arid south-eastern region of the *moughataa* of Bassikounou. They are predominantly located in Mbera refugee camp and the surrounding villages and rural areas, alongside host communities, near the border with Mali. Other refugees in Mauritania come mainly from the Central African Republic, the Ivory Coast and the Syrian Arab Republic. Urban refugees and asylum-seekers comprise around 17 per cent of the total population of concern to UNHCR (PoC) and mainly live in rented apartments, or *baraqes*, in the cities of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

KEY POPULATION DATA

64,390

Refugees

1,382

Asylum-seekers

1.45%

of the country's population (4,525,696)
are refugees and asylum-seekers

IDA 18 RSW / IDA 19 WHR ELIGIBILITY:
SEPTEMBER 2017

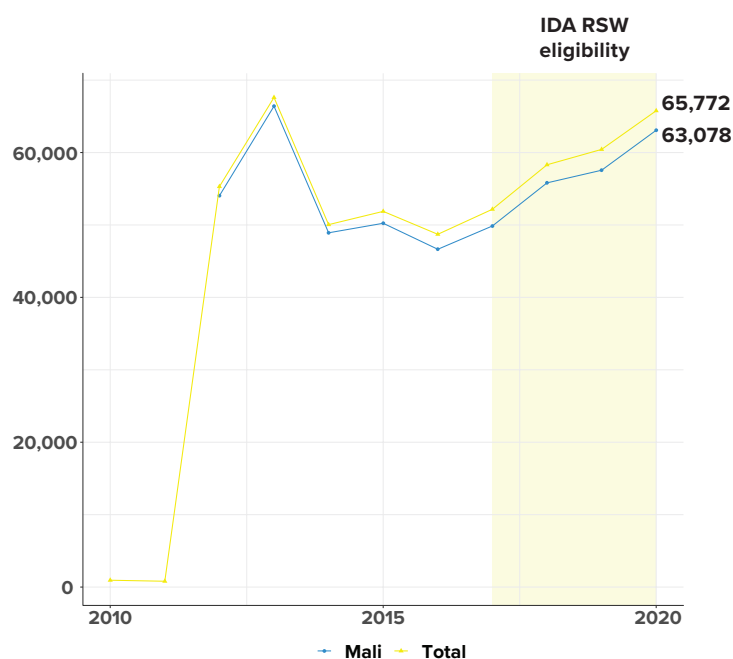


Figure 1: Number of refugees and asylum-seekers of the largest refugee population groups

OVERVIEW OF REFUGEE POLICY ENVIRONMENT (JULY 2017–JUNE 2020)

The Government of Mauritania has maintained an open-door policy for asylum-seekers and refugees in the reporting period, and refugees generally enjoy freedom of movement and protection within the country. Key elements and initiatives at the national level from July 2017 to June 2020 relate to:

- Registration by UNHCR of Malian refugees living in the vicinity of Mbera camp and the urban areas of Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Prior to this development that took place in 2019 and 2020 respectively, registration was allowed only inside the camp.
- **Draft asylum law proposed in 2016** by the Minister of the Interior and Decentralization (MIDEC) and the Ministries of Justice, Defence and Foreign Affairs. If approved by the Parliament, this law would provide a more comprehensive framework setting out the rights and obligations of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- **Commitments** on numerous occasions (since 2015, with a stated time frame for action in 2020) **to enact the draft asylum law**, which would allow Mauritania to assume full responsibility for refugee protection.
- [Decree No 0782/MIDEC \(28 October 2018\)](#), which established the **legal framework for the issuance of national identification cards** for refugees in Mbera camp that are envisaged to replace UNHCR identity cards.

Mauritania became eligible in November 2017 for the [IDA-18 Refugee Sub-Window \(RSW\)](#), through which it is accelerating humanitarian and development cooperation and increasing refugee inclusion in the areas of health care, social safety nets, water management and sanitation, local economies and urbanization projects.

Mauritania was also active regarding refugee issues at international level from 2017 to 2020. The Government of Mauritania made a number of important pledges at the [Global Refugee Forum in December 2019](#), including to adopt national asylum legislation with a stated time frame for action in 2020, to register all refugees with the national agency for civil registration and issue them with documentation, to allow refugees access to the labour market under the same conditions as nationals and to include refugees in the national health system. These complemented Mauritania's pledges to the High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019, where Mauritania pledged to provide birth certificates for all children born in Mauritania, including refugees, and to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Prevention of Statelessness within the following five years.

POLICY DIMENSIONS (AS AT 30 JUNE 2020)

1 Host Communities

1.1 Support for communities in refugee-hosting areas

There are no specific national fiscal or budget policies that provide additional financial transfers to areas most affected by the presence of refugees in Mauritania (primarily the *moughataa* of Bassikounou in the Hodh Chargui region or *wilaya*). However, two funding channels for financial transfers from the national level to regional councils, for investment and operating expenditure respectively, are set out in [Decree No 2019-089](#), which is applicable countrywide. Municipalities also receive support through a Regional Development Fund (*Fonds Régional de Développement*), as set out in [Circular No 0001/MIDEC](#) of 2016. In both cases, allocations to regions and municipalities are determined by a formula based on population size and the poverty rate. This formula does not currently take into account data on refugee population numbers and poverty levels for allocation of resources.

There are no specific provisions for extending social safety net provisions to host community members affected by an inflow of refugees. The 2012 National Social Protection Strategy (*Stratégie Nationale de Protection Sociale*, or SNPS) lays out the country's vision on social protection but does not specifically refer to social safety net programmes for refugee-hosting areas. An objective of the SNPS is the development of social assistance programmes targeting vulnerable groups and measures to address climate and disaster risks, including cash transfer top-ups during the lean season. The [2016 National Poverty Reduction Strategy \(*Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Prospérité Partagée*, or SCAPP\) for 2016–2030](#) reaffirmed the importance of social protection and social safety net programmes throughout the country and introduced the explicit objective of establishing a shock-responsive mechanism to offset food security emergencies.

However, extension of the *Tekavoul* programme — the main national social safety net comprising cash transfers conditional on beneficiaries' participation in social promotion activities — is planned in the Hodh Chargui region, where the majority of the refugee population in Mauritania lives.

The World Bank validated additional financing for the *Tekavoul* programme in March 2020, including through IDA 18 RSW funding, intended to scale up the rollout of *Tekavoul* and its shock-responsive component (*Elmaouna*) to host communities in the Hodh Chargui region. .

1.2 Social cohesion

There is generally a positive relationship in Mauritania between refugee and host communities and within the refugee communities themselves.

The regional and local authorities have engaged actively with both refugee and host communities and with UNHCR to ensure peaceful coexistence. However, there is no formal Government policy providing for local mechanisms to promote peaceful coexistence, dialogue, joint activities and citizen engagement among refugees and host communities. Over seventy local peace committees have hence been created in Mbera camp and villages in the Hodh Chargui region by UNHCR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). A study by UNHCR (October 2019) found that these committees play a role in reducing tensions and managing access to resources shared by refugees and host communities, despite limitations due to a lack of training and resources and therefore sustainability. In addition to formal dispute resolution mechanisms such as courts and tribunals especially in urban areas, there are informal traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

National policies formally protect refugees from some forms of discrimination. Prime Ministerial [Decree 022/2005](#) stipulates equal access to health services, employment, social security and education for refugees. The anti-discrimination law adopted in 2018 ([No 2018-023](#)) prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race or language and presumably applies to refugees as well as citizens. However, it should

be noted that United Nations human rights experts have expressed concern that the definition of discrimination contained in the law is unclear and not in line with international human rights instruments (see [OHCHR report, 2018](#)).

In practice, as reported directly by persons of concern to UNHCR, discrimination can occur in some situations, notably due to diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

1.3 Environmental management

While there are no national environmental policies specific to refugee-hosting areas, existing national policies also apply to refugee hosting areas and can be used to mitigate the environmental impact of hosting refugees. The National Strategy for Environment and Sustainable Development (*Stratégie Nationale de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable, or SNDD*) and the National Strategy for Sustainable Access to Water and Sanitation (*Stratégie Nationale pour un Accès Durable à l'Eau et à l'Assainissement, or SNADEA*) set objectives for halting deforestation by 2030, tree planting, preventing desertification, ensuring universal access to potable water and reducing exposure to climate shocks.

In practice, investment in these priorities has so far been limited to interventions by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors. However, the Government designed projects on sanitation and urbanization in the Hodh Chargui and Hodh Gharbi regions for refugees and host communities, which were approved for financing by the World Bank in spring 2020.

1.4 Preparedness for refugee inflows

There is no national preparedness framework to respond to increased or new refugee inflows in ways that minimize short- and medium-term socioeconomic impacts on hosting regions. The Government, UNHCR and humanitarian partners annually update a contingency plan for refugee inflows to the *moughataa* of Bassikounou, though this process has no national policy basis and is not integrated into national institutional structures.

2 Regulatory Environment and Governance

2.1 Normative framework

Mauritania acceded to the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) in 1987, as well as to its [1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) and the [1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa](#). These instruments are implemented in national law through [Decree 022/2005](#) in conjunction with the national policy framework. This decree defines the term “refugee” in accordance with the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) and the [1969 OAU Convention](#) and sets out modalities for access to asylum and some socioeconomic rights for refugees. It also sets out procedures for access to asylum and provides that refugee status should be determined by UNHCR and endorsed by the Government.

Mauritania does not yet have a national asylum law. Several issues specific to refugees are regulated through decrees and other formal instruments.

In the absence of a fully-fledged national asylum system, refugee status determination has been in practice carried out solely by UNHCR with no formal endorsement by the Government for several years. As provided for by [Decree 022/2005](#), the National Consultative Commission on Refugees (CNCR) is responsible for giving advisory opinions on asylum applications, and refugee status may be recognised or withdrawn by the Minister of Interior. UNHCR currently recognizes Malian refugees in Mbera camp and in urban areas on the basis of a prima facie approach and conducts individual refugee status determination procedures for asylum-seekers from other nationalities. While UNHCR procedures are in practice recognized and respected by the Government without formal endorsement, this arrangement has not been formalized in law or through any other arrangement.

UNHCR has advocated for the adoption of an asylum law that would allow the Government to assume full responsibility for refugee protection (while continuing to be supported by UNHCR).

Key authorities at the central level are aware of applicable international laws and policies due to regular training conducted by the Ministry of the Interior (MIDEC) and UNHCR on refugee rights and obligations and the responsibilities of the authorities. However, UNHCR has observed that there are gaps in awareness at local level, including among border officials. For instance, in 2019 and as of June 2020, UNHCR became aware of some 27 cases of expulsions of individuals with potential refugee profiles that took place before UNHCR was able to screen them to identify any international protection needs. Sectors that provide basic services such as health and education have shown more flexibility to the inclusion of refugees than other sectors, such as the banking system.

2.2 Security of legal status

[Decree 0782/2018](#) of the Ministry of the Interior provides for the issuance of identification cards with a two-year validity to refugees and states that these are considered to serve as residency permits. However, as of June 2020, these cards were only available to Malian refugees residing in Mbera camp and only a small number of those eligible have been issued with cards so far, due to the lengthy application process.

[Decree 022/2005](#) states that a refugee can only be expelled from the country for reasons of national security or public order or if they have been imprisoned for a criminal offence, in which case they have the right to appeal before the CNCR. There was no refoulement of registered refugees on the grounds of security or criminal convictions in 2019–2020 and there were no known cases of unlawful or lawful termination of refugee status, or of refugees being expelled on grounds of national security or public order. The Government is not involved in cessation and termination processes, which are conducted by UNHCR in line with international standards.

2.3 Institutional framework for refugee management and coordination

The National Consultative Refugee Commission (CNRC) was established by [Decree 022/2005](#) under the Ministry of the Interior (MIDEC) as an interministerial body for refugee management and coordination. A National Commission for Humanitarian Assistance was established in 2012 to manage humanitarian assistance in cooperation with UNHCR, other partners and civil society organizations. However, this commission has not been active in recent years. At the request of the Government of Mauritania, UNHCR currently coordinates the humanitarian response to the Malian refugee situation in close collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization and local authorities. As of 30 June 2020 there was no formal coordination mechanism for the development interventions benefiting refugees and host communities in place yet.

Initiating a transitional process towards the creation of a national asylum system will require significant technical support and resources, including trained staff, to set up a national institution to conduct asylum procedures. There has been no formalization of extant procedures —i.e. UNHCR decisions on refugee status being recognized without formal endorsement by the authorities — in the interim, to ensure that refugees are fully protected.

No formal consultation mechanisms to obtain refugee input and feedback on government decisions impacting the life of refugees have been established by national institutions. However, UNHCR facilitates informal government consultations with refugees.

2.4 Access to civil registration and documentation

Refugees in Mauritania are registered with the National Agency for the Register of Populations and Secured Titles (ANRPTS) under a formal agreement with UNHCR. Each registered refugee receives a national identification number (NNI). [Decree 0782/2018](#) of the Ministry of the Interior provides for the issuance of national identity cards bearing their NNI to refugees, which are required for such purposes as

opening a bank account or registering a business. However, until 2019, registration by national authorities was limited to Malian refugees living in Mbera camp, while only 1,092 national refugee identity cards had been issued until the end of June 2020 and only to the refugees in the camp. All registered refugees are also issued with UNHCR documentation, which is recognized by the Mauritanian authorities.

Refugees in Mauritania are entitled to register vital events that occur in Mauritania once they are enrolled with ANRPTS and have received an NNI. In practice, this happens primarily in urban areas. Birth registration after the legal deadline requires judicial involvement in urban areas even if the birth occurred in Mauritania. Judicial involvement is not required in the camp since the deadline on birth declaration is not imposed.

Refugees can also register events that occurred before coming to Mauritania, but this requires judicial involvement and in practice is only accessible to refugees in the capital, Nouakchott. Since 2018, ANRPTS delivered 1,798 birth certificates to refugees, and UNHCR is in discussions with the Government to assist with increasing ANRPTS capacity in line with the Government's 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledge to provide birth certificates to all children born in Mauritania by 2024.

2.5 Justice and Security

While no data is available on the level of security of refugees relative to that of Mauritanian nationals, the safety and security situation in the country is generally good and UNHCR has not observed any disparities in the level of security enjoyed by refugees and nationals. However, asylum-seekers and refugees are at risk of being extorted for bribes and arbitrarily detained and can face discrimination when requesting to access public services.

Refugees have access to civil, administrative and criminal justice. However, in practice this is limited to those in urban areas, since judicial institutions have a limited presence in remote areas such as Bassikounou. UNHCR's NGO partner for legal services supports refugees with legal counselling and representation in court to mitigate language barriers and lack of knowledge on rights and procedures also constitute obstacles to access to justice.

[The penal code \(1983\)](#) and the law governing family (*'Code du Statut Personnel'*/CSP adopted in 2001) contain protective measures for women and girls (such as the prohibition of rape [penal code] and early marriage [CSP]), but [also](#) include provisions that condone gender-based violence and discriminate against women regarding marriage and inheritance. The prohibition of extramarital sexual relations (*Zina* in sharia) by the penal code dissuades women and girls surviving rape from filing a complaint, thereby strongly reducing access to justice.

A national strategy on gender-based violence was developed by the Government of Mauritania in 2012 with support from UNFPA, United Nations Women and UNICEF. UNHCR provided input on concerns relating specifically to refugees. Efforts to pass a law for the prevention of violence against women and girls stalled in 2018, but the Government resumed consultations in 2019 on a [draft law](#) that was approved by the Council of Ministers in May 2020. A range of Government actors, including the Ministry for Social Affairs, Childhood and Family, are also involved in efforts to reduce Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), although this continued to affect around two out of three girls and women in the host community according to a 2019 government report. It is likely that FGM also occurs, though to a more limited extent, among refugees. Although national services to address gender-based violence are limited, refugees can access them to a similar extent as nationals where they are present ([CEDAW, 2014](#)).

3 Economic Opportunities

3.1 Freedom of movement

[Decree 022/2005](#) allows refugees to move freely within Mauritania and choose their place of residence without restrictions. Refugees in Mbera camp are generally able to move to urban areas, and around 10 per cent of registered urban refugees were formerly living in Mbera camp. However, foreigners — including non-registered individuals with refugee profiles — who are irregularly in the country are at heightened risk of arrest due to lack of documentation regularizing their stay in Mauritania, especially if suspected of intending to move irregularly to other countries (such as Morocco, Algeria, Spain), and especially in Nouadhibou (see [2019 UNHCR survey](#)).

3.2 Right to work and rights at work

While [Decree 022/2005](#) does not allow refugees to work in the public sector, it does allow refugees to seek wage-earning employment and provides for recognized refugees to be accorded the same treatment as nationals with regard to the labour market in the private sector. However, these provisions have not been integrated into national labour laws and are contradicted by [Decree 2018-025](#), which places restrictions on the employment of foreigners and makes no exception for refugees. In order to implement its Global Refugee Forum pledge to give refugees the same access to the labour market as nationals, the Government agreed to formally clarify that [Decree 2018-025](#) does not apply to refugees and to ensure protection of rights at work in both formal and informal sectors for all refugees. As of June 2020, the approach to make this clarification was under discussion.

With regard to liberal professions, [Decree 022/2005](#) states that refugees should be treated on a par with nationals of states that have the most favourable agreements for each profession. However, refugees [surveyed by UNHCR in 2019](#) reported difficulties obtaining recognition of qualifications and experience acquired in their countries of origin, particularly for employment in the health and education sectors.

No data is available on the percentage of refugees employed in the formal sector. However, it should be noted that the informal economy represents [more than 70 per cent](#) of economic activities in the country. Economic well-being in Mauritania is generally unequal between men and women, men being substantially more represented in the wealthiest part of the population (5 points difference in the top quintile – MICS [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey] 2015). This likely denotes less access to decent well-paid work for women. This tendency is likely to be the same for refugees and asylum-seekers.

No data is available on the number of refugees possessing work permits. In fact, work permits are not mentioned in [Decree 022/2005](#) as a pre-requisite for refugees to be employed, although [Decree 2018-025](#) imposes work permits as a requirement for foreigners to be formally employed.

Concerning effective access to decent employment opportunities, while refugees are in practice accessing the informal labour market, they may face barriers due to their legal status when applying for work permits. In practice, having a national identification number (NNI) issued by ANRPTS or a national identity card is useful in this regard. Opportunities to access employment are also limited by the fact that the main economic development programmes in the Hodh Chargui region have not included refugees.

Article 11 of [Decree 022/2005](#) allows refugees to open businesses and register them under the same conditions as nationals.

3.3 Land, housing and property rights

Current legislation in Mauritania ([Order 83.127 of 1983](#)) does not contain provisions relating to the purchase, lease or use of land by refugees or foreign nationals in general. While UNHCR is aware of a few cases where refugees have purchased land, precise information on legal requirements for the purchase of land by foreigners is not available to UNHCR. Mauritanian law does not prevent foreigners, including refugees, from purchasing, leasing or using of housing or immovable property.

There were no public housing programmes in Mauritania before 2020, when a pilot programme was launched involving 50 subsidized residences for nationals in Selibaby, the capital department of the Guidimakha Region.

3.4 Financial and administrative services

There are no legal barriers to refugees opening bank accounts and accessing financial services, including mobile banking. However, refugees and asylum-seekers have fewer formal employment opportunities and less access to financial services as their documentation is not recognized by all authorities. Their access to bank accounts and loans requires a national identification number (NNI). As of end June 2020, 52,322 refugees have been issued with an NNI. Access to banking and financial services by refugees is low: 89 per cent of urban refugees did not have bank accounts in 2019, while only 1 per cent of loans taken out by refugees in Mbera camp in 2017 were from micro-finance institutions. The Central Bank is developing a national financial inclusion strategy with the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) and has expressed its willingness to include refugees.

There is no specific policy governing the recognition or issuance of driving licences for refugees. In practice, some refugees issued with an NNI have been able to obtain national driving licences.

As mentioned above, refugees have occasionally reported difficulties obtaining recognition of qualifications acquired in their countries of origin, particularly for employment in the health and education sectors.

4 Access to National Public Services

4.1 Education

Mauritania has adopted a policy that allows the integration of refugee children into the national public system. [Decree 022/2005](#) allows refugees to enrol in primary, secondary, and tertiary education under the same conditions as nationals. Refugee children generally are allowed to access pre-school, primary and secondary public schools as well as literacy and technical and vocational courses where they exist.

Refugee children within Mbera camp attend schools funded by UNICEF and UNHCR programmes under the supervision of the Mauritanian Ministry of Education. They follow the national educational curriculum of Mali. Of the refugee children in the camp, 36 per cent were enrolled in primary education and 5 per cent in secondary education (2019–2020 school year), compared with national enrolment rates of 100 per cent for primary and 39 per cent for secondary, according to [UNESCO in 2019](#). The existing education system in Mbera camp, established in the context of the 2012 emergency refugee influx, is francophone since it is aligned with the Malian curriculum, with additional Arabic language courses that are meant to facilitate the integration of refugee children and youth into the national socioeconomic environment. An accelerated learning programme has also been designed to enable older children in the camp to catch up with normal educational levels, while informal programmes have been put in place to prepare out-of-school children for national examinations. Over half of Malian refugee children residing in the vicinity of Mbera camp were not enrolled in school.

Refugees in urban areas also have access to education services, including both public and private schools. In urban areas, more than 70 per cent of school-aged refugee children were enrolled either in public or private primary and secondary schools.

Concerning effective access to the education system, language remains a barrier, as does disruption to schooling due to the flight from the country of origin.

At the national level, access to primary education is generally slightly better for girls in Mauritania (parity index of 1.08 - [MICS 2015](#)), while access to secondary education is slightly higher for boys (parity index of 0.90 – [MICS 2015](#)). In Mbera camp, in 2019, gross enrolment rates were higher for boys at both primary and secondary education (39 per cent/34 per cent for primary education and 7 per cent/3 per cent for

secondary education). Men are also generally more literate than women at the national level ([MICS, 2015](#)), a tendency that is likely to be the same for refugees and asylum-seekers in Mauritania.

4.2 Healthcare

[Decree 022/2005](#) provides refugees with access to the public health system under the same conditions as Mauritanian nationals. While the [2012–2020 National Health Sector Development Plan \(PNDS\)](#) does not specifically mention refugees, it includes a commitment to the principles of justice, equity, solidarity and respect for human rights (Chapter 2 of Volume 2).

In Mbera camp, refugees are able to access a parallel health-care system free of charge that was funded by Médecins Sans Frontières until 2018 and by ECHO and UNHCR thereafter. Host communities have been able to benefit from some of these services as well. Given the limited capacities of the national health system in the Hodh Chargui region, substantial resources are needed to maintain the quality of health services for both refugees and the host community. Approval of the World Bank-funded Inaya project in spring 2020, aimed at strengthening the regional health system, and the inclusion of Mbera camp in that programme are important steps in this regard. Following the handover of these facilities to the national system planned for August 2020, costs of health care for the most vulnerable refugees in the camp will be covered by the Inaya project. In June 2020, it remained unclear how many refugees in Mbera camp will be concerned.

Refugees in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou have access to the public health-care system as well as private facilities. Data on the number of refugees accessing the national system is not available. Refugees in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou can also receive primary and secondary health care free of charge at 15 facilities under agreements with UNHCR and can be reimbursed by UNHCR for the cost of care at other facilities.

Women and girls in Mbera camp have access to sexual and reproductive health services at humanitarian facilities in the camp, including clinical care for survivors of gender-based violence. The level of access to services in the camp is significantly higher than for the host community in the Hodh Chargui region, where maternal mortality is high, and levels of assisted delivery and contraceptive use are low. Refugee women and girls in urban areas have access to sexual and reproductive health services, along with other health services available at both public and private facilities, with financial support from UNHCR.

Refugees cannot easily enroll in the national health insurance system (Caisse Nationale d'Assurance Maladie). The Government pledged to establish a universal health insurance system in its [2019 Declaration of General Policy](#).

4.3 Social protection

[Decree 022/2005](#) broadly defines the modalities for access to some socioeconomic rights, including access to social security. Although the Decree provides an entry point for the economic inclusion of refugees, its provisions have not been integrated into national labour laws and are limited in practice.

Under one of the four World Bank IDA-18 RSW Projects that will serve refugee and host populations in the Hodh Chargui region (Mbera refugee camp and the host population in the *moughataa* of Bassikounou), the [Social Safety Net System Project II](#), validated in 2020, will enrol around 14,000 refugee households in the national social registry, support cash transfers to the most vulnerable ones and open eligibility to the national shock-responsive mechanism as a top-up during food security emergencies.

UNHCR has set up a joint project with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) entitled: [Building capacities for strengthened socio-economic inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable members of host communities in Mauritania \(ProNexus\)](#). The project will be implemented from 2020 until 2023 to allow UNHCR to support the Government in coordinating humanitarian and development programmes targeting refugees and in ensuring a smooth transition to socioeconomic inclusion in Mauritania.

4.4 Protection for vulnerable groups

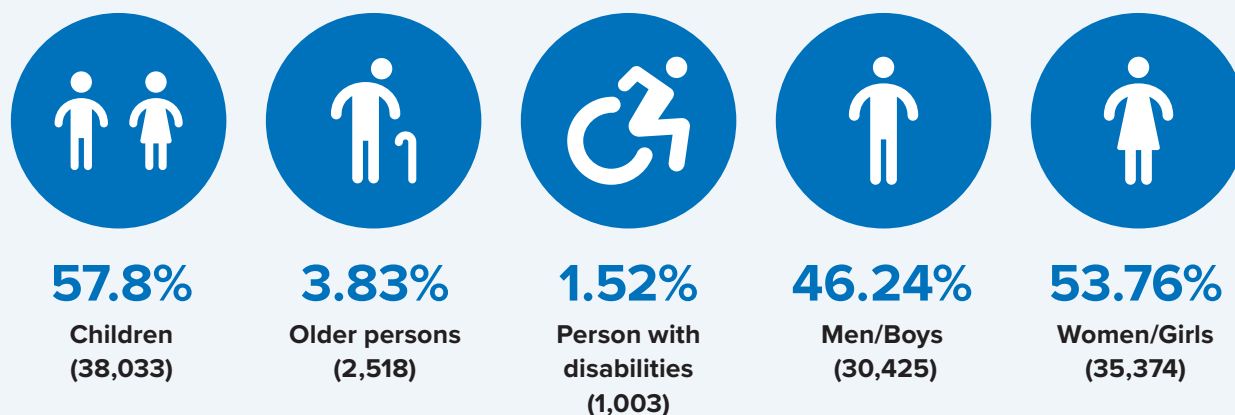
Although national care and protection systems are very limited in capacity, unaccompanied and separated refugee children, refugee victims of trafficking in persons, survivors of gender-based violence and other refugee groups with specific needs have comparable access to nationals in the same situation. The [Penal Code \(1983\)](#) and the law governing family (*'Code du Statut Personnel'*/CSP adopted in 2001) contain protective measures for women and girls (such as the prohibition of rape [Penal Code] and early marriage [CSP]) but also several unequal provisions regarding marriage and inheritance. The law ([ordonnance, 2005](#)) governing child protection and the [Law on Reproductive Health \(2017\)](#) improved protection for women and girls and their rights, for example by prohibiting female genital mutilation and ensuring access to reproductive health services for all. In order to better respond to survivors of gender-based violence, for example by strengthening access to medical services, a [draft law](#) on combating violence against women was also approved by the Council of Ministers in May 2020 but remains to be adopted by the Mauritanian legislature.

In the [2019 Declaration of General Policy](#), the Government committed to developing a national strategy for child protection, including an operational action plan, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, the legal and policy framework for child protection remains weak. The Government is working with UNHCR and Save the Children to strengthen the national child protection system, and in 2019 established standard operating procedures for panels determining the best interests of children. To support the best interest determination process for refugee children, UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM have been invited to participate in the best interest determination panel led by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

5 Cross Sectors

Characteristics of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in total refugee population*

as at 30 June 2020



5.1 Gender

Despite improvements in recent years, the normative framework does not yet fully ensure gender equity and access to basic services regardless of gender, including for refugees and asylum-seekers. Mauritania ranks 141 out of 153 countries in the [World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report](#). Economic participation and opportunities for women remain limited, with around 30 per cent of Mauritanian women participating in the labour force and a 43 per cent literacy rate. As mentioned above, the most consequential policy sub-dimensions in terms of socioeconomic development are as follows:

- i. **Justice and Security**, the challenges faced to prevent and address gender-based violence;
- ii. **Rights to Work and Rights at Work**, improving women's access to decent, well-paid work;
- iii. **Education**, improving female enrolment in primary and secondary education, particularly in Mbera camp; and
- iv. **Protection for Vulnerable Groups**, improving access to services for survivors of gender-based violence.

5.2 Social inclusion

The current implementation of policies in some policy sub-dimensions often does not enable the effective and full inclusion of refugees in national systems. While authorities have expressed a willingness to include refugees in national systems, be they the labour market (GRF pledge) or the education system, some policies and their implementation would require further amendments to operationalize these pledges. As mentioned above, the most consequential differences or restriction in terms of socioeconomic development affecting refugees with particular characteristics are as follows:

- i. **Education**, concerning adapted or accelerated learning programmes to address language barriers and disruption to schooling due to the flight from the country of origin, which impede effective access of refugee children to the education system.

* The refugee numbers reported here do not fully match the numbers on the front page because demographic characteristics are not available for all refugees (e.g., pre-registered refugees, etc.).

Annex on Key International and Regional Instruments ratified or adhered to

- [Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 \(Protocol I\)](#)
- [Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 \(Protocol II\)](#)
- [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981](#)
- [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990](#)
- [African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa \(Kampala Convention\), 2009](#)
- [African Youth Charter, 2006](#)
- [Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984¹](#)
- [Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa \(the OAU Convention\), 1969](#)
- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979²](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989³](#)
- [Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 \(Ratification date: 5 May 1987\)](#)
- [Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons of 1949](#)
- [ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 \(No 105\)](#)
- [ILO Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No 111\)](#)
- [ILO Employment Policy Convention, 1964 \(No 122\)](#)
- [ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No 100\)](#)
- [ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 \(No 29\)](#)
- [ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 \(No 87\)](#)
- [ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 \(No 81\)](#)
- [ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No 138\)](#)
- [ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No 98\)](#)
- [ILO Social Security \(Minimum Standards\) Convention \(the ILO Social Security Convention\), 1952⁴](#)
- [ILO Tripartite Consultation \(International Labour Standards\) Convention, 1976 \(No 144\), 1976](#)
- [ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No 182\)](#)
- [International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 2006](#)
- [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965](#)
- [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990](#)
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\), 1966⁵](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966](#)
- [Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Organized Crime \(2000\)](#)
- [Protocol relating to the status of refugees, 1967](#)

Reservations/declarations:

- 1 Article 20 (inquiry into allegations of systematic torture); Article 30(1) (dispute resolution among States Parties).
- 2 Not approving anything contrary to the Shari and the Constitution. Partial withdrawal of reservations for Articles 13(a) and 16.
- 3 General reservation to any articles or provisions which may be contrary to the beliefs and values of Islam.
- 4 Part I (general provisions); Part II (medical care); Part III (sickness benefits); Part IV (unemployment benefits); Part VIII (maternity benefits); Part XI (standards to be complied with by periodical payments); Part XII (equality of treatment of non-national residents); Part XIII (common provisions); Part XIV (miscellaneous provisions); Part XV (final provisions).
- 5 Reservations: Article 18 (right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion); Article 23(4) (marital equality).