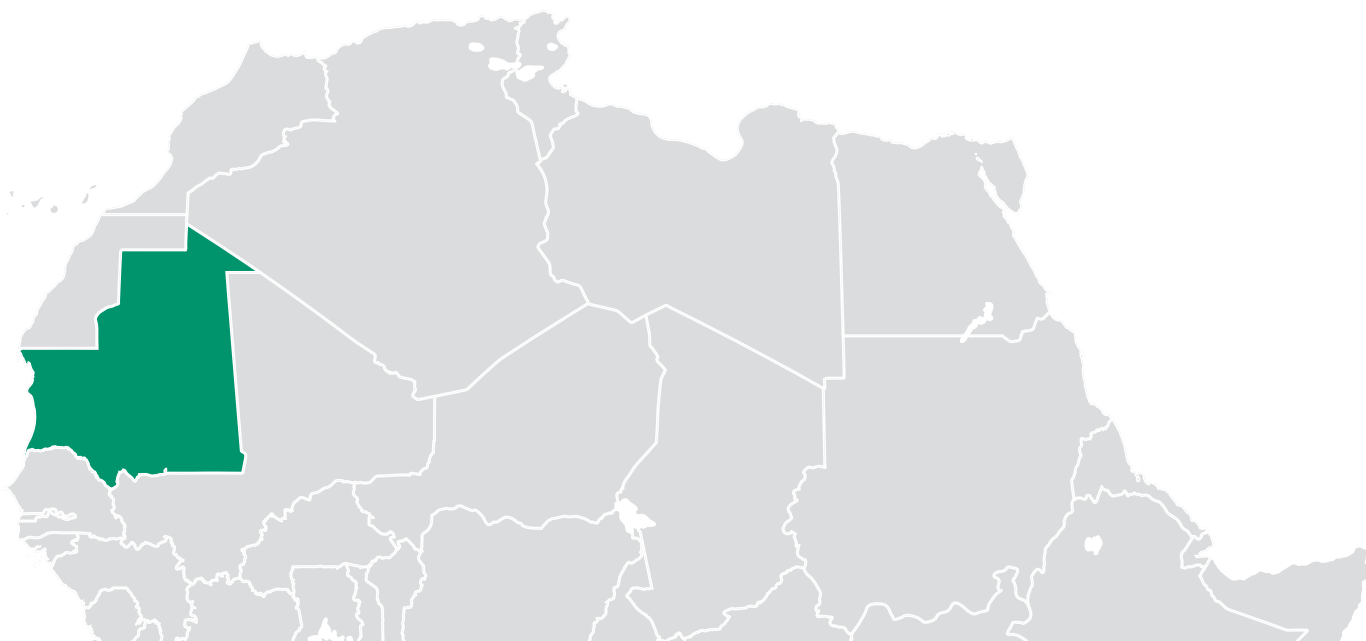




**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**  
for CRVS Systems

**LE CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE**  
sur les systèmes ESEC



# SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

# MAURITANIA



**ECA**

## Program information

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Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a global knowledge and resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems. It collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice.

The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in Mauritania.

Among other things, the report presents:

- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems.

The report will also serve as an important benchmarking tool for the improvement initiatives of other countries.

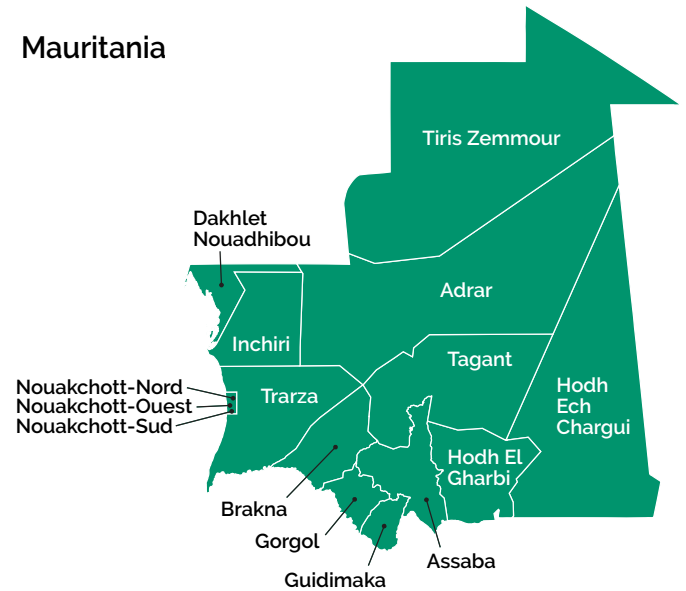
The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the National Agency for the Registry of Populations and Secure Documents in February 2020 and was supplemented by a desk review of available documents.

## Brief country profile

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is a country in Northwest Africa. It is the 11th largest sovereign state in Africa and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Western Sahara to the north and northwest, Algeria to the northeast, Mali to the east and southeast, and Senegal to the southwest.

Mauritania is divided into 15 regions. These regions are subdivided into 57 departments and these departments are subdivided into 219 communities.

### Mauritania



*Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

- Land area:<sup>1</sup> 1,030,000 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population: Estimated at 3.9 million (2016), with an annual growth rate of 2.8 percent. In 2016, 49.2 percent of the population resided in urban areas, with the remaining 50.8 percent residing in rural areas. The population is made up of 1.9 million males and 2 million females.
- Capital city: Nouakchott
- Official working languages: Arabic and French
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization
- Civil registration agency: National Agency for the Registry of Populations and Secure Documents (ANRPTS)
- National statistical office: National Statistics Office of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (NSO)

## CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration <sup>2</sup>	66% (2015) <sup>3</sup>
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	66% (2015) <sup>4</sup>
Births attended by skilled health personnel	69% (2015)
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	63% (2015)
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds <sup>5</sup>	81% (2016) <sup>6</sup>
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	34.13 (2017)
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	4.6 (2017) <sup>7</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	71.0 (2016) <sup>8</sup>
Population under age 15 years	44.2%
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	Not Available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	7.34 (2016)
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	51.54 (2018) <sup>9</sup>
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	78.2 (2017) <sup>10</sup>
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	Not Available
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	Not Available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	22% (2015) <sup>11</sup>
Divorce registration rate	Not available
Vital statistics including causes of death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Not Available
Medically certified causes of death	Not Available

## Civil registration system

In 2010, the Government of Mauritania launched a civil registration reform. According to the reform, the registration of children's births now depends on at least one parent holding a national identification number (NNI), which is assigned upon enrolment. According to the ANRPTS,<sup>12</sup> this is a biometric and electronic registration operation for every Mauritanian or foreign citizen in Mauritania.

Each person enrolled receives a NNI which serves as a starting point for the constitution of their civil status documentation. According to ANRPTS authorities, the enrolment act may entitle the person enrolled to a birth certificate free of charge for 18 months.

Under the new procedures, children will be enrolled on the basis of the NNI of one of their parents. Obtaining a NNI entitles them to a birth certificate.

In Mauritania, the ANRPTS is the institution responsible for civil registration, national identification, and passport control. The agency is overseen by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization.

## Legislative framework

The legislative and institutional framework for civil status reform includes the following:

- Law of 20 January 2010 establishing criminal sanctions in civil status matters and amending certain provisions of the Civil Status Code;
- Decree of 6 July 2010 creating the ANRPTS, replacing the National Civil Status Office;
- Law of 12 January 2011 repealing and replacing Law 96.019 on the Civil Status Code;
- Decree of 3 May 2011, defining the legal framework for enrolment in the national population register; and
- Order of 3 May 2011, establishing, organizing, and operating the departmental enrolment bodies.

According to the ANRPTS authorities, this new legal framework reflects the government's vision of civil status. The current law governing civil registration in Mauritania is the *Law 2011 – 003 of 12 January 2011*, which came into force in 2011. It covers all geographic areas and populations of Mauritania, including non-citizens and refugees, and provides for the collection of vital statistics.

## Management, organization, and operations

In 2010 the ANRPTS was created and mandated to be the custodian of the national population register, with responsibilities to register all births, deaths, marriages, and divorces occurring in Mauritania. Adoptions are handled by the Ministry of justice

There are 230 civil registration centres in the country (called citizen reception centres), which are staffed by 230 registrars. The lowest office is at the municipality level.

### *National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms*

There is currently no formal coordination committees or working group at the national level. Plans are underway to re-establish and formalize the coordination committees.

### *Accessibility of civil registration centres*

Most households are estimated to be 1 to 5 km away from a citizen reception centre. The estimated time it would take most households to cover the distance on foot is between 1 and 4 hours, and less than 1 hour by car.<sup>13</sup>

### *Registration of vital events*

To register **births**, the declarant must provide

- an extract from the birth register of the health facility;
- marriage certificate of the parents (Art. 34);
- the first name of the declared person;
- NNI of the father, mother, or others; and
- the father's first name, if available.

The declaration of birth of a child whose father is not known is made by the mother, who chooses the first name. Obtaining a marriage certificate is conditional on the presentation by the parents of their birth certificates if parents are registered on the system.

To register a **death**, the declarant must provide

- a photocopy of the deceased's identity document;
- a photocopy of the identity document of the person declaring the death;
- a photocopy of the identity documents of two witnesses if a death certificate is not available from the hospital; and
- a hospital extract if the death has occurred in the hospital.

To register a **marriage**, the declarant must provide

- photocopies of both spouses' identity documents;
- passport photos of both spouses;
- photocopies of the identity documents of two witnesses;
- a photocopy of the woman's guardian's identity document; and
- a certificate issued by the local imam.

The legal framework provisions of 2011 for the birth registration procedures are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Birth registration procedures.**

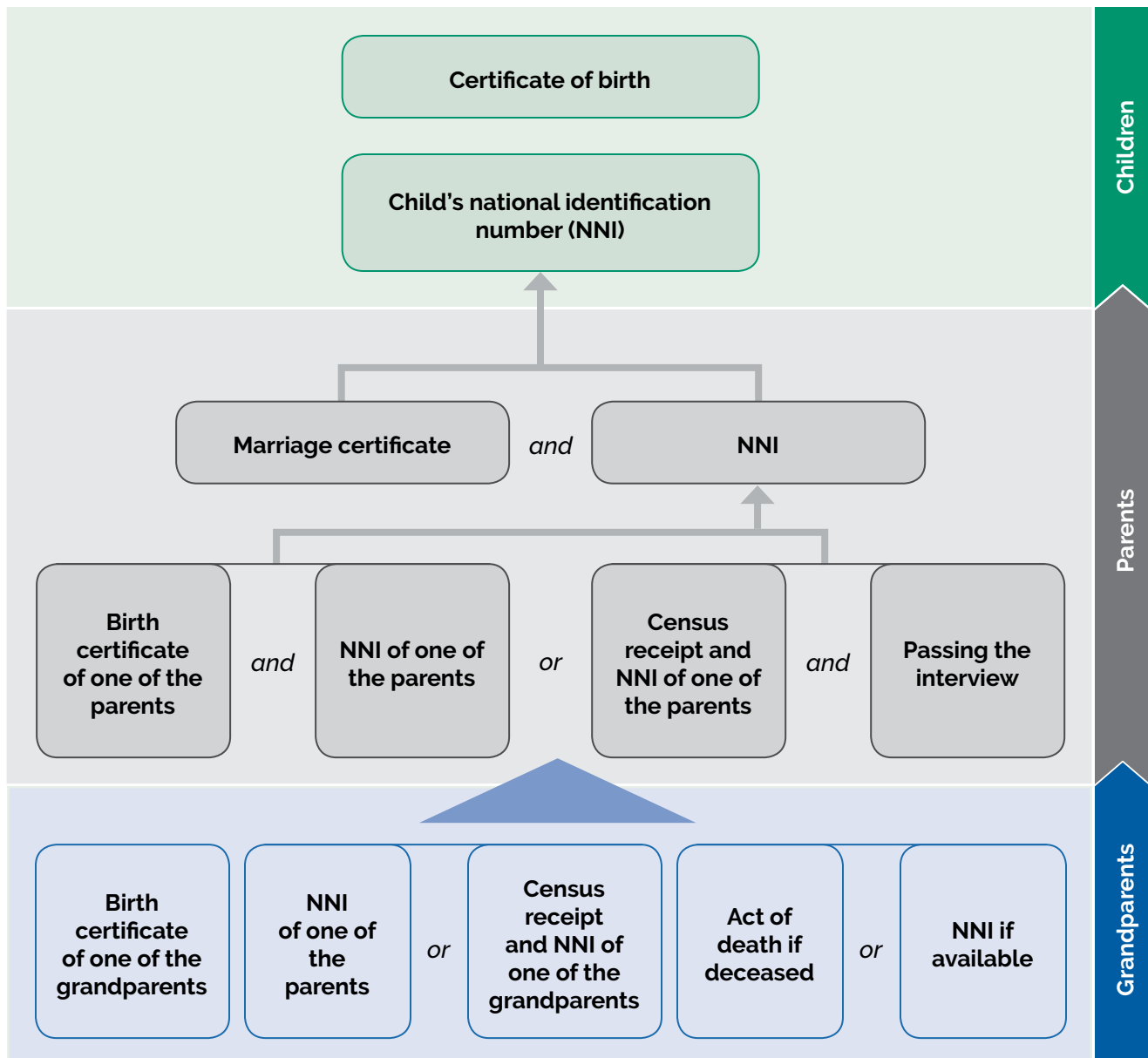
Procedures	Requirements
Authorized authorities or registrar	Persons in charge of the national population register and the citizen reception centres (Art. 13)
Target populations	Nationals and foreigners
Elements of identification of the person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NNI of the declarant</li> <li>• First name of the declared person</li> <li>• NNI of father, mother, others</li> <li>• Father's first name, if available</li> <li>• The declaration of birth of a child whose father is not known is made by the mother, who chooses the first name</li> <li>• Surname (Art. 20)</li> </ul>
Time limit for birth registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 months (Art. 34)</li> <li>• Cases of declaration outside the legal time limit, no legal proceedings have been traced</li> <li>• Declaration outside the legal time limit punishable by imprisonment from 1 to 6 months and a fine from 10,000 Mauritanian ouguiyas (US\$28) for a birth certificate to 20,000 ouguiyas (US\$56) for a marriage certificate (Art. 62)</li> </ul>
Required documents (mandatory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NNI (Art. 20)</li> <li>• Extract from the birth register of the health facility</li> <li>• Marriage certificate of the parents (Art. 34)</li> </ul> <p>Note: In order to obtain a marriage certificate, the parents must present their birth certificates.</p>

According to Article 5 of the 2011 law, a crucial step in the enrolment process is to require applicants to provide accurate data and supporting documents for their declaration. This is enforced by interviewing the applicant before the Departmental Enlistment Commission. According to NNI, applicants who declare themselves to be of

Mauritanian nationality and whose testimonies have been reported in the media, the types of questions asked at these interviews and the complexity of the procedures seemed to call into question the Mauritanian nationality of certain social groups.



Figure 1: Birth registration procedure in Mauritania.



The legal registration period and requirements for the main vital events are in Table 2.

Table 2: Legal period and requirements for each of the main vital events.

Vital events	Legal registration period	Requirements	Observations
Birth (timely registration)	Up to 60 days after birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate of live birth issued by health facility</li> <li>• National ID card of declarant(s)</li> <li>• Certificate of marriage, in case of children of married couples (physical copy not needed if marriage record is digitized in the civil registration database)</li> </ul>	The declaration of birth of a child whose father is not known is made by the mother, who chooses the first name
Birth (late registration)	After 60 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process from the judge beyond the 40 days after the birth of the child</li> <li>• Proof of birth, for which any of these documents is accepted:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• certificate of live birth issued by the health facility</li> <li>• declaration of two adult witnesses, who must present their ID cards</li> </ul> </li> <li>• National ID card of declarant(s)</li> <li>• Certificate of marriage, in case of children of married couples</li> <li>• In the event that no documents are available, a report from the Community Commission is required</li> </ul>	Adults can register their own birth, which is managed as a late registration, with witnesses
Marriage	No period is legally established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photocopy of both spouses' identity documents</li> <li>• Passport photos of both spouses</li> <li>• Photocopy of the identity documents of two witnesses</li> <li>• Photocopy of the woman's guardian's identity document</li> <li>• A certificate issued by the local imam</li> </ul> <p>For a first marriage for the woman, the documents requested are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage certificate</li> <li>• Document certifying the divorce issued by the imam of the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Photocopy of spouses' identity documents</li> <li>• Photocopy of identity documents of two witnesses</li> </ul> <p>For a second or third marriage for the woman, in addition to the documents mentioned above, she must present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage certificate(s) with her elders (other co-wives)</li> <li>• Divorce certificate(s) with her former spouse</li> </ul>	
Divorce	No period is legally established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage certificate</li> <li>• Document certifying the divorce issued by the neighbourhood imam</li> <li>• Photocopy of spouses' identity documents</li> <li>• Photocopy of identity documents of two witnesses</li> </ul>	
Death	No period is legally established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photocopy of the deceased's identity document</li> <li>• Photocopy of the identity document of the person making the declaration</li> <li>• Photocopy of the identity documents of two witnesses if a death certificate is not available at the hospital level</li> </ul>	

Demographic events are recorded for all segments of the country's population and all geographical regions.

The ANRPTS provided no information on the scope and completeness of vital events registration on the questionnaire, but completeness of birth registration is 66 percent as of March 2020, according to the World Bank.<sup>14</sup>

### *Backlog of unregistered births*

There is a big backlog of birth and death registrations. This is because of many reasons, mainly the lack of demand for the service and the lack of easy access to registration centres, especially in rural areas. It's estimated that about 30,000 children are without birth certificates.<sup>15</sup>

### *Registration fee*

Registration of vital events is free if done on time. There is no fee for registering births and deaths within the legally stipulated period of two months. A fee is charged for late registration and for issuance of birth and death certificates (Table 3).

**Table 3: Fees for late registration and issuance of vital events certificates.**

Vital event	Certificate cost (US\$)
Birth	\$1.35
Marriage	\$5.41
Divorce	None
Death	\$1.35

## Vital statistics system

Mauritania's Office national de la statistique (ONS), or National Statistics Office, has the legal mandate under Decree No 90.026/P/ CMSN of 1985 for the collection, compilation, analysis, publication, dissemination, and coordination of the national statistical system. The ONS has not been collecting statistics on causes of death, and most vital statistics have been based on projections.

### Vital statistics

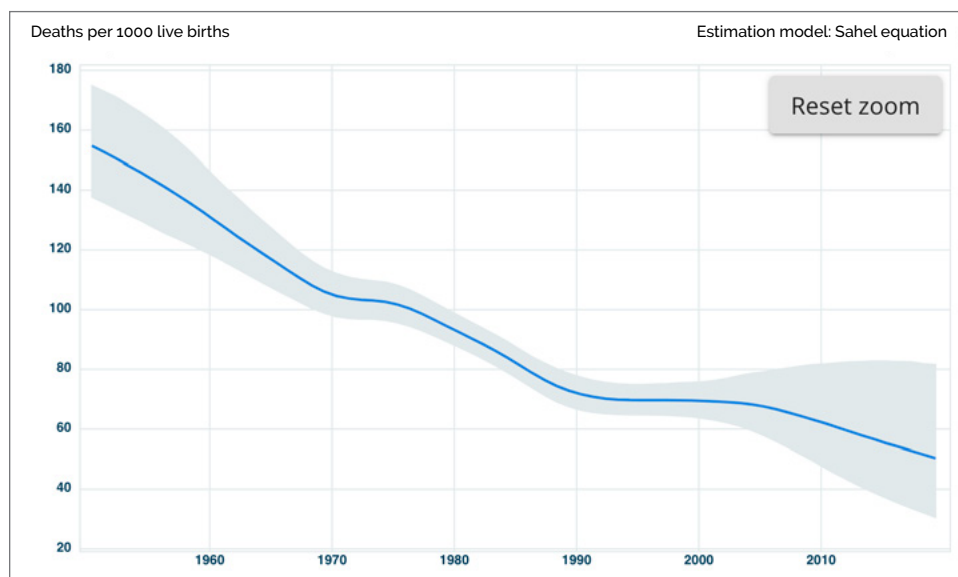
No vital statistics report has been published, but the ANRPTS and ONS have begun to define the variables for generating vital statistics in consultation with other line ministries, like the Ministry of Health.

The physical forms for registration of vital events — birth and death registration forms — do not contain information on capturing vital statistics. Therefore, civil registration and vital statistics documents are prepared separately. Vital statistics records are compiled separately.

### Causes of death

No information was provided on the causes of death from the questionnaire. No reports have been published on causes-of-death statistics based on the vital registration system. However, other sources indicate the infant mortality rate at 51.54 deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>16</sup>

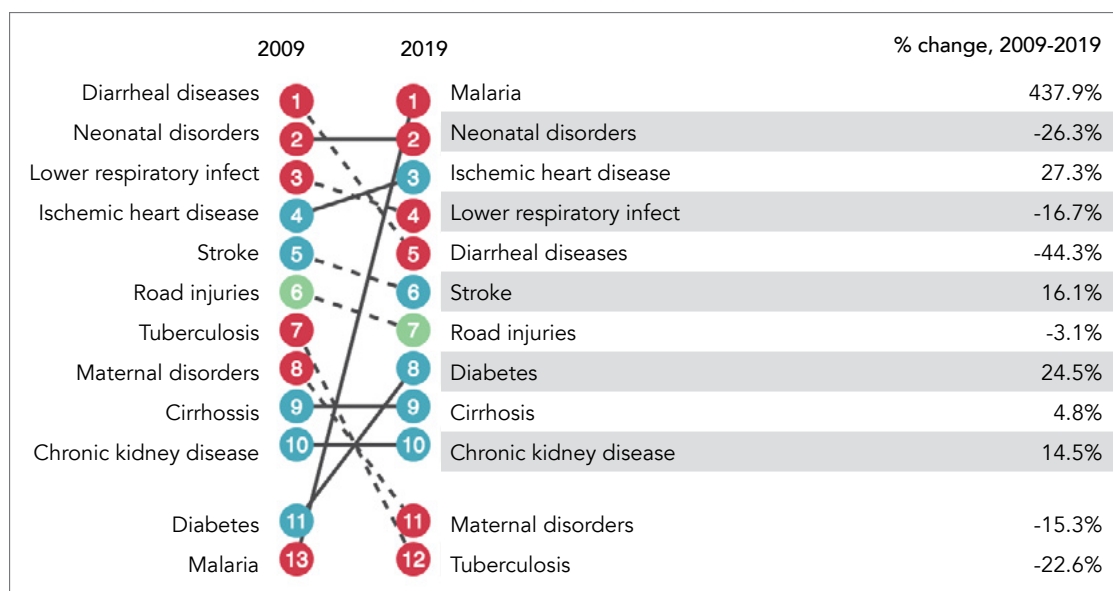
Figure 2: Infant mortality per 1,000 live births.



Source: Institute for Health Metrics (IHME).<sup>17</sup>

The Ministry of Health is currently undertaking death audits on all maternal deaths occurring in all health facilities.

Figure 3: Causes of death between 2009–2019.



## Digitization

### Computerization

According to ANRPTS, biometric and electronic registration is required for every Mauritanian or foreign citizen in Mauritania. Each person enroled receives an NNI, which serves as a starting point for their civil status documentation.

The enrolment act may entitle the person to a birth certificate free of charge for 18 months according to the ANRPTS authorities. The child is enroled using one of the parents' NNI; obtaining an NNI entitles a child to a birth certificate. Having a NNI further entitles a child to a passport, a national ID at 15 years, and other documents provided by the agency.

The ANRPTS has a modernized information system. The agency is currently supported by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization, which is the ministry responsible for civil registration and computerization. The data centre is in Nouakchott and is centrally managed. All 230 citizen reception centres are computerized and the historical records are digitized. Records are transferred on a private network and all processes are monitored centrally in Nouakchott.

There is currently no digital transfer of vital statistics data from the civil registration office to the ONS.

Computer use is outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4: Computer use in CRVS.**

Centre	Are computers used for civil registration?	Remarks
Local registrars across the country	Yes	The system is currently rolled out in all functional civil registration centres in the country except for some rural centres, which lack power and satellite connectivity.
Urban centres	Yes	The system is currently rolled out in all functional civil registration urban centres in the country.
Healthcare institutions	No	

### *Mobile technology application*

The country is currently not using any mobile technology in its processes but is considering using tablets for remote areas.

### *Unique identification number*

Mauritania has a national ID system. The ANRPTS is responsible for vital events registration and identity management. The ANRPTS is in a unique position because not only does it handle civil registration — birth, marriage, divorce, and death — but it is also the custodian of the population database. It is also responsible for other functional registers, like the vehicle registration card, National ID card, ordinary passports, diplomatic passports, and resident card.

### *Digitization of historical registration records*

All historical records are currently being digitized.

### *Link with identification system*

The biometric and electronic registration system is used to register every Mauritanian or foreign citizen in Mauritania. It's being used at Mauritanian embassies, which assign an NNI. The NNI serves as a basis to acquire all other documents. The national population register is the sole source for the identification of individuals.

## **Interface with other sectors and operations**

### *Health sector*

The health sector plays a major role in the reporting of births and deaths that occur in the health facilities. The institutional deliveries are at 69 per cent of deliveries in health facilities.<sup>18</sup> Events that happen in the communities are validated by the police and community leaders.

### *Education sector*

In 2016, the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Education adopted a joint memorandum addressed to all regional governors providing that “no student shall be enrolled in a public or private educational institution unless the registration process has been completed in the manner stipulated by law.” The memorandum also provided that “no one shall be permitted to sit for national examinations or tests unless they have completed biometric registration procedures and possess a national identity card.”

## **Improvement initiatives and external support**

### **Improvement plan and budget**

#### *Budgetary allocations and requirements*

No national strategic CRVS improvement plan is in place so far in Mauritania. There are no efforts to conduct a comprehensive CRVS systems improvement assessment to develop a strategic CRVS improvement plan.

#### *Activities identified as high priorities*

- Encourage and support the establishment of a national committee for the improvement of CRVS systems.
- Put in place mechanisms for the collection of civil status events occurring in health facilities (births, deaths, and causes of death.)

## Support from development partners

Mauritania's CRVS system improvement is well supported by various international and non-governmental organizations (Table 5).

**Table 5: Organizations that provide support to CRVS systems improvement.**

Organization	Mandate
United Nations Children's Fund	Improvements to the legal and policy framework
United Nations Population Fund	Compilation of vital statistics and capacity building, direct support to the ONS
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Birth registration for refugee children born in Mauritania

## Conclusion

Mauritania's civil registration system has some good practices, including the following:

- Standardization of processes:** The ANRPTS has standardized processes that include centralized production and distribution of standardized forms, development of a common digital platform for online registration of vital events, approval of clear criteria for the designation of civil registrars, and detailed procedure manuals for civil registration officials.
- Integration strategies:** The processes and provision of civil registration services are integrated. Once the NNI is assigned, citizens may receive civil registration documents and National ID at 15 years. The ANRPTS has fully integrated all its offices and has simultaneously adopted complementary measures so some degree of articulation is achieved in as many offices as possible.
- Bilingual electronic civil registration system:** The system developed is available simultaneously in Arabic and in French. Users can register using Arabic or French.

The ANRPTS's priorities are to expand its network connectivity, upgrade the current system infrastructure, and install solar power in rural civil registration centres. The agency is also currently revitalizing national coordination committees and working with the ONS to start generating vital statistics from the civil registration system.

## Resources

### Websites

Civil registration agency:

National Agency for the Registry of Populations and Secure Documents (ANRPTS) [anrpts.mr/](http://anrpts.mr/)

National statistical office: National Statistical Office of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania [ons.mr/](http://ons.mr/)

### Additional materials

Arrêté n° 937/MIDEC portant création, organisation et fonctionnement des instances départementales d'enrôlement.

Décret n° 2010-150/PM portant création, organisation et fonctionnement de l'Agence Nationale du Registre des Populations et des Titres Sécurisés (ANRPTS)

Décret n°2011-110/PM définissant le cadre juridique de l'enrôlement dans le Registre National des Populations

Arrêté n° 1372/MIDEC modifiant certaines dispositions de l'arrêté n° 937 du 03 mai 2011 portant création, organisation et fonctionnement des instances départementales d'enrôlement

*Loi n° 2011-003 abrogeant et remplaçant la Loi n° 96.019 du 19 juin 1996 portant Code de l'État Civil*

*Loi n° 2010-023/abrogeant et remplaçant certaines dispositions de la Loi 61.112 du 12 juin 1962 modifiée, portant Code de la Nationalité Mauritanienne*



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