

Arab States, Middle East and North Africa

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT FOR 2024

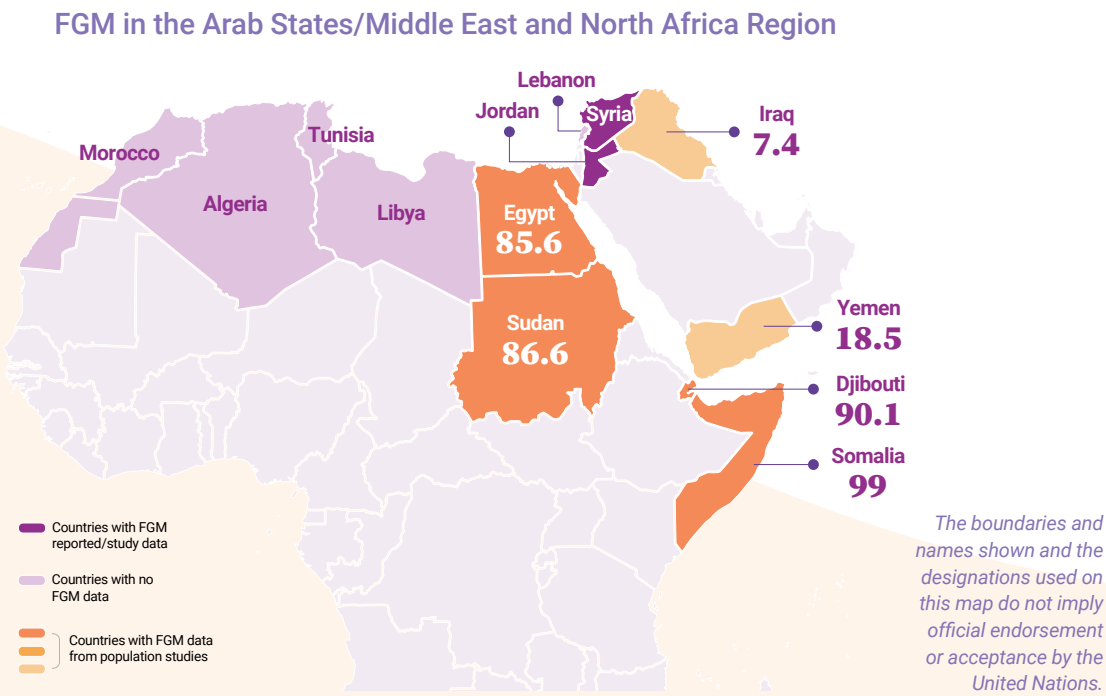
FGM context

Female genital mutilation (FGM) in the Arab States/Middle East and North Africa region affects approximately 50 million girls and women, comprising close to one quarter (21 per cent) of the global burden. The region has the highest FGM prevalence globally, with the estimated population in just six countries (Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen) matching the FGM-affected population of 18 countries in West and Central Africa. This region is also home to the highest FGM medicalization rate globally, mainly in Egypt (81.9 per cent) and Sudan (77.3 per cent), where doctors and midwives are involved.

A regional analysis showed that current trends in the decline of FGM prevalence among girls aged 15–19 years lags other regions, and progress would need to accelerate 26 times to reach the target of eliminating FGM by 2030.¹ The acceleration pace varies by country. For instance, 2 times in Iraq, 10 times in Egypt and Yemen, and 20 times in Djibouti and Sudan.² FGM elimination progress in Somalia³ has remained stagnant for the last 30 years.

All countries in the region, except Yemen, have a national multisectoral policy or strategy on FGM elimination with defined targets, allocated budgets and monitoring and evaluation components.

Three countries (Djibouti, Egypt and Sudan) and the Kurdistan region of Iraq have FGM-specific laws.



Source: Latest data from DHS, MICS, other national sources, research and reports.

FGM in the Arab States/Middle East and North Africa region affects approximately 50 million girls and accounts for nearly one quarter of the global burden

Regional partners

Number	List of partners*
2	International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, League of Arab States

Highlights of 2024 programme results



Number of **outcome documents** of global and regional intergovernmental processes that integrate FGM

Target
1
Result
1

→ Recommendations of the regional meeting on the cost of harmful practices convened by the League of Arab States

Spotlighted interventions

Movement-building through a regional religious leaders' network

→ In 2024, Islamic scholars from the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research at Al Azhar University actively addressed Islamic perspectives and rulings on FGM and GBV across the region and beyond, including in The Gambia around the FGM law repeal. The centre trained 128 students (male and female religious leaders) from Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, and established a regional religious leaders' network. The network's objective is to promote engagement and policy dialogue, and amplify and coordinate religious voices in ending harmful practices.

Expanding and intensifying the global influence of the Joint Programme

→ The regional team led impactful FGM communications pieces such as a web story, "[Breaking the Cycle for Survivors](#)", that highlighted counselling and support in Yemen. Another piece, "[Unlocking the Power Within](#)", featured videos from [Djibouti](#) and [Somalia](#) as part of a regional campaign, "[From Survival to Flourishing: Stories from the Arab Region](#)". On the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, a [regional joint statement](#) with the League of Arab States and a [regional social media package](#) were launched together with stories, data cards and quotes from Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Partnership with the League of Arab States culminated in 22 Member States participating in the 2024 Regional Meeting on the Cost of Harmful Practices. The meeting addressed the economic and health impacts of FGM and child marriage and called for Member States to increase national investment and action. Participation in cross-regional webinars or meetings to address FGM pushback expanded and built experience sharing and learning. For instance, Islamic scholars from the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research participated in a virtual workshop with Gambian religious leaders and an in-person meeting in Cairo, Egypt with Gambian National Assembly members to discuss the religious, medical and legislative aspects of FGM. Al Azhar scholars, Egyptian parliamentarians and CSOs shared experiences, insights and evidence-based responses to complexities that emerge where FGM is seen as a religious obligation as well as its political manipulation.

1 UNFPA, 2024. Level of Acceleration Needed to Achieve UNFPA Transformative Results.
2 UNICEF, 2024. [Female Genital Mutilation: A global concern](#). 2024 update.
3 Somalia is under the Arab States region for UNFPA and the East and Southern Africa region for UNICEF. Two regional summaries report on it.