

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA

Public Administration Country Profile

Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM)

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

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MAURITANIA

[Click here](#) for map of Africa



Source: [The World Factbook](#) - [Mauritania](#)

Government type

Republic

Independence

28 November 1960 (from France)

Constitution

12 July 1991; original constitution promulgated 1961

[\(in brief\)](#)

Legal system

A combination of Shari'a (Islamic law) and French civil law

Administrative divisions

12 regions and 1 capital district (Nouakchott)

Source: [The World Factbook](#) - [Mauritania](#)

The Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS), led by President Maouiyaould Sid'Ahmed Taya, has dominated Mauritanian politics since the country's first multi-party elections in April 1992 following the approval by referendum of the current constitution in July 1991. Political parties were legalized in 1991 after being banned under the civilian one party-rule (1961-1978) and the military rule (1978-1991). By April 1992, as civilian rule returned, 16 major political parties had been recognized; 12 major political parties were active in 2004.

President Taya, who won elections in 1992, 1997, and 2003, first became chief of state through a December 12, 1984 bloodless coup which made him chairman of the committee of military officers that governed Mauritania from July 1978 to April 1992.

The country's first president, Moktarould Daddah, served from independence until ousted in a bloodless coup on July 10, 1978. A group of current and former Army officers launched a bloody but unsuccessful coup attempt on June 8, 2003.

The tension between those who consider Mauritania to be an Arab country (mainly Moors) and those who seek a dominant role for the Sub-Saharan peoples remains a feature of the political dialogue.

Source: [U.S. Department of State \(Background Notes\)](#) - [Mauritania](#) & [UN OHCHR](#) - [State Party Report \(3/8/1998\)](#)

1. General Information

1.1 People	Mauritania	Burkina Faso	Mali	1
Population				a
Total estimated population (,000), 2003	2,893	13,002	13,006	
Female estimated population (,000), 2003	1,464	6,643	6,558	
Male estimated population (,000), 2003	1,429	6,359	6,448	
Sex ratio (males per 100 females), 2003	98	96	98	
Average annual rate of change of pop. (%), 2000-2005	2.98	2.95	3.00	
Youth and Elderly Population				b
Total population under age 15 (%), 2003	43	49	49	
Female population aged 60+ (%), 2003	6	5	4	
Male population aged 60+ (%), 2003	5	3	3	
Human Settlements				c
Urban population (%), 2001	59	17	31	
Rural population (%), 2001	42	83	69	
Urban average annual rate of change in pop. (%), '00-'05	5.11	5.11	5.08	
Rural average annual rate of change in pop/ (%), '00-'05	-0.42	2.56	1.89	
Education				d
Total school life expectancy, 2000/2001	6.7	2.8 ⁱ	2.1 ⁱⁱ	1
Female school life expectancy, 2000/2001	6.2	2.2 ⁱ	1.4 ⁱⁱ	1
Male school life expectancy, 2000/2001	7.2	3.5 ⁱ	2.7 ⁱⁱ	1
Female estimated adult (15+) illiteracy rate (%), 2000	69.9 ⁱⁱⁱ	85.9	84 ^{iv}	2
Male estimated adult (15+) illiteracy rate (%), 2000	49.3 ⁱⁱⁱ	66.1	64.2 ^{iv}	2
Employment				e
Unemployment rate (15+) (%), 2000	..	..	..	1
Female adult (+15) economic activity rate (%), 2000	..	79 ^v	..	2
Male adult (+15) economic activity rate (%), 2000	..	89 ^v	..	2

Notes: ⁱ 1993; ⁱⁱ 1990; ⁱⁱⁱ 1988; ^{iv} 1987; ^v xxxx

1.2 Economy	Mauritania	Burkina Faso	Mali	2
GDP				a
GDP total (millions US\$), 2002	983	2,839	3,163	
GDP per capita (US\$), 2002	348	240	279	
PPP GDP total (millions int. US\$), 2002	4,272 ⁱ	11,972 ⁱ	9,964	
PPP GDP per capita(int. US\$), 2002	1,511 ⁱ	1,012 ⁱ	878	
Sectors				b
Value added in agriculture (% of GDP), 2004	19.1	30.8	38.4 ⁱⁱ	
Value added in industry (% of GDP), 2004	30.1	19.9	26.1 ⁱⁱ	
Value added in services (% of GDP), 2004	50.8	49.4	35.5 ⁱⁱ	
Miscellaneous				c
GDP implicit price deflator (annual % growth), 2004	8.4	0.9	-0.5	
Private consumption (% of GDP), 2004	..	82.2	78.3	
Government consumption (% of GDP), 2004	..	13.0	10.1	

Notes: ⁱ Estimate is based on regression; other PPP figures are extrapolated from the latest International Comparison Programme benchmark estimates; ⁱⁱ 2003

¹ [United Nations Statistics Division](#):

^a [Statistics Division and Population Division of the UN Secretariat](#); ^b [Statistics Division and Population Division of the UN Secretariat](#); ^c [Population Division of the UN Secretariat](#); ^{d1} [UNESCO](#); ^{d2} [UNESCO](#); ^{e1} [ILO](#); ^{e2} [ILO/OECD](#)

² [World Bank - Data and Statistics](#):

^a [Quick Reference Tables](#); ^b [Data Profile Tables](#); ^c [Country at a Glance](#)

1.3 Public Spending	Mauritania	Burkina Faso	Mali	
Public expenditures				3
Education (% of GNP), 1985-1987	..	2.3	3.2	a
Education (% of GNP), 1995-1997	5.1 ⁱ	3.6 ⁱⁱ	2.2	a
Health (% of GDP), 1990	..	1	1.6	
Health (% of GDP), 1998	1.4	1.5 ⁱⁱⁱ	2.1	
Military (% of GDP), 1990	3.8	3	2.1	b
Military (% of GDP), 2000	..	1.6	2.5	b
Total debt service (% of GDP), 1990	14.3	1.2	2.8	
Total debt service (% of GDP), 2000	10.7	2.5	4.2	

Notes: ⁱ Data refer to the ministry of education only; ⁱⁱ Data refer to a year or period other than that specified; ⁱⁱⁱ 1999

1.4 Public Sector Employment and Wages						
<i>Data from the latest year available</i>		Mauritania 1991-1995	Mauritania 1996-2000	Sub-Saharan Africa average ⁴ 1996-2000	Francophone Africa average ⁴ 1996-2000	Low income group average ⁴ 1996-2000
Employment						
Civilian Central Government ⁵	(,000)	8.0	..			
	(% pop.)	0.35	..	0.30	0.14	0.46
Sub-national Government ⁵	(,000)	..	..	
	(% pop.)	..	..	0.30	0.14	0.46
Education employees	(,000)	9.0	..			
	(% pop.)	0.40	..	0.62	0.31	0.91
Health employees	(,000)	3.0	..			
	(% pop.)	0.13	..	0.29	0.39	0.62
Police	(,000)	..	..	
	(% pop.)	..	..	0.07	0.05	0.30
Armed forces	(,000)	..	..	
	(% pop.)	..	..	0.26	0.19	0.33
SOE Employees	(,000)	..	7.54			
	(% pop.)	..	0.31	..	..	13.1
Total Public Employment	(,000)	..	..	
	(% pop.)	..	..	..	..	..
Wages						
Total Central gov't wage bill	(% of GDP)	5.6	4.8	6.1	5.3	5.4
Total Central gov't wage bill	(% of exp)	..	..	28.9	31.8	24.7
Average gov't wage	(LCU)	310,918	226,511			
Real ave. gov't wage ('97 price)	(LCU)	377,789	226,511			
Average gov't wage to per capita GDP ratio		6.0	3.4	4.8	6.3	4.4

Source: World Bank - Public Sector Employment and Wages

³ UNDP - Human Development Report 2002

^a Data refer to total public expenditure on education, including current and capital expenditures.

^b As a result of a number of limitations in the data, comparisons of military expenditure data over time and across countries should be made with caution. For detailed notes on the data see SIPRI (2001).

⁴ Averages for regions and sub regions are only generated if data is available for at least 35% of the countries in that region or sub region.

⁵ Excluding education, health and police – if available (view [Country Sources](#) for further explanations).

2. Legal Structure

2.1 Legislative Branch

Bicameral legislature consists of the Senate or *Majlis al-Shuyukh* (56 seats, a part of the seats up for election every two years; members elected by municipal leaders to serve six-year terms) and the National Assembly or *Majlis al-Watani* (81 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms).⁶
women in parliament: 3 out of 56 seats: (5%). 3 out of 81 seats (4%).⁷

The legislative power belongs to the Parliament. The Parliament is composed of two representative assemblies: the Senate and National Assembly. Deputies to the National Assembly are elected for five years by direct universal suffrage, while senators are elected for six years by indirect universal suffrage. Senators represent the country's territorial districts and Mauritians residing abroad. One third of the Senate's membership is renewed every two years.

The legislative initiative belongs jointly to the Government and to the members of Parliament. Bills are debated in the Council of Ministers and brought to the desk of one of the two assemblies. Finance bills are first submitted to the National Assembly.

The President of the Senate is elected after each partial renewal of the Senate, while the President of the National Assembly is elected for the duration of the legislature.

The Parliament meets in regular session for two ordinary sessions each year (November and May). The Parliament may meet in a special session at the request of the President of the Republic or the majority of the members of the National Assembly for a specific agenda.

The National Assembly may dismiss the Government by a vote of no confidence or by the adoption of a motion of censure by majority of the deputies.

Source: [Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania](#)⁸

Fact box:

elections: Senate - last held 12 April 2002 (next to be held April 2004); National Assembly - last held 19 and 26 October 2001 (next to be held 2006)

election results: Senate - seats by party - PRDS 54, RFD 1, UNDD 1; National Assembly - percent of vote by party - PRDS 79%, RDU 3.5%, UDP 3.5%, AC 5%, UFP 3.5%, FP 1.5%; seats by party - PRDS 64, UDP 3, RDU 3, AC 4, RFD 3, UFP 3, and FP 1

2.2 Executive Branch

cabinet: Council of Ministers

elections: President elected by popular vote for a six-year term; election last held 7 November 2003 (next to be held 2009); prime minister appointed by the president

The Constitution provides for the President as Head of State and Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces. It is required that the President be a Muslim.

The President exercises the executive power. He is elected for six years by direct, universal suffrage. If the President is not elected by an absolute majority of the votes, a run-off election will subsequently be held. The President is eligible for re-election.

⁶ Source of fact boxes if nothing else stated: [The World Factbook - Mauritania](#)

⁷ [Inter-Parliamentary Union - Women in National Parliaments](#)

⁸ [Click here](#) for Decrees, Ordinances and Instructions regulating the National Assembly

In order to avoid the undue influence of particular groups, all candidates for the office of President of the Republic must be sponsored by 50 municipal counselors, it being understood that these counselors must belong to at least 10 wilayas; no wilaya may provide more than one fifth of the sponsors.¹⁰

The President of the Republic, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Presidents of the Assemblies, may pronounce the dissolution of the National Assembly.

The President appoints the Prime Minister and discharges him from his functions. Upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the President appoints the Ministers. The President presides over the Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister, under the authority of the President of the Republic, defines the policy of the government. The government oversees the implementation of the general policy of the State in accordance with the orientations and options determined by the President of the Republic.

Source: [Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania](#)

Fact box:

chief of state: President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed TAYA (since 12 December 1984). Re-elected 7 November 2003 for third term with 67% of the vote.⁹
head of government: Prime Minister Sghair Ould M'BARECK (since 6 July 2003)

2.3 Judiciary Branch

Supreme Court or *Cour Supreme*; Court of Appeals; lower courts.

The judiciary is independent from the legislative and executive branches. The President of the Republic is the guarantor of the independence of the judiciary. He is assisted therein by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, over which he presides.

The law guarantees the judges' independence in handing down sentences and protects them against all forms of pressure that might influence them in the exercise of their duties.¹¹

In Mauritania, justice is rendered by the following courts:

(1) The *Moughataa* courts which consist of one judge who presides over the proceedings and is assisted by two assessors.

(2) The *Wilaya* courts which are composed of two chambers - a mixed chamber and a civil and commercial chamber - as well as of one or more investigating units. The prosecution is represented in these courts by a Procurator of the Republic or by one of his deputies. Each of the two chambers are presided by a judge assisted by two magistrates with advisory voting rights.

(3) The Labour courts which are presided by a judge and also include assessors, as required by the Labour Code.

(4) The Appeals Court which consists of a mixed chamber which deals with appeals against decisions of *wilaya* courts and a civil chamber which deals with appeals against decisions of *moughataa* courts. The prosecution is represented by the Appeals Court Procurator or one of his deputies.

(5) The Criminal courts whose jurisdiction and functioning are determined by the Code of Criminal Procedure is established at the seat of each chamber of the Appeals Court.

⁹ [U.S. Department of State \(Background Notes\) - Mauritania](#)

¹⁰ [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(3/8/1998\)](#)

¹¹ Article 15 of Organic Act No. 94-012 of 17 February 1994 on the status of the judiciary

(6) The Supreme Court which consists of a president, four vice-presidents, each of whom presides over a chamber, and several advisers. The chambers of the Supreme Court are as follows: 1) administrative, 2) civil and commercial, 3) social, and 4) criminal.

In administrative matters, the Supreme Court has jurisdiction over appeals on grounds of abuse of power, the determination of the lawfulness of individual or statutory administrative acts, disputes relating to the situation of State officials or agents and Government entities and disputes relating to the public domain. In judicial matters, the Supreme Court rules on appeals on grounds of lack of jurisdiction or violation of the law against decisions handed down without right of appeal by the courts or the Council for the arbitration of collective labour disputes, as well as against decisions handed down with or without right of appeal by *moughataa* courts.

Besides the three traditional powers (legislative, executive and judicial), the Mauritanian democratic institutions are accompanied by the following organs:

(1) The Constitutional Council which oversees the regularity of elections, considers applications and rules on the constitutionality of laws. The Constitutional Council has six members, two of whom are appointed for three years, who for six years and two for nine years. The President of the Republic nominates one member of each of those three groups and appoints a President of the Council from among them. The President of the National Assembly nominates one member for nine years and one for three years. The President of the Senate nominates one member for six years.

(2) The High Court of Justice is composed of members elected in equal numbers by the National Assembly and the Senate from among their members after each parliamentary election. It has jurisdiction to try cases of aggravated high treason by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister or members of the Government.

(3) The Court of Audit which is the supreme institution for the audit of public finances.

(4) The Supreme Islamic Council which is composed of five members nominated by the President of the Republic. It issues opinions on matters on which it is consulted by the President of the Republic.

(5) The Economic and Social Council which is requested by the President of the Republic to give its views on draft laws, orders and decrees of an economic and social nature and on bills of the same kind submitted to him. It may also be consulted by the President of the Republic on any economic or social matter of concern to the State.

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(3/8/1998\)](#) (edited)

2.4 Local Government

Mauritania is divided into 13 *wilayas* (regions), including the Nouakchott Capital District. Each *wilaya* constitutes a decentralized administrative area. The *wilayas* are divided into *moughataa* (departments) and the *moughataa* into districts. The smallest administrative unit is the commune. There are 53 *moughataa* and 208 communes in the country.

Each *wilaya* is placed under the authority of a *wali* (governor) who represents the Executive; the *moughataa* are placed under a *hakem* (prefect) and the districts under a district chief.

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(3/8/1998\)](#)

3. The State and Civil Society

3.1 Ombudsperson

The Mediator of the Republic is an "independent authority"; he is appointed for an indefinite term of office. He receives applications from citizens relating to unsettled disputes in their relations with State administrations, territorial public authorities, public establishments and all other public service bodies.

He advises the President of the Republic on disputes between citizens and the administration.

He may also take part in improving the functioning of administrative bodies whose unsatisfactory operation he has found to be harmful to citizens by formulating proposals and suggestions designed to improve the functioning of the bodies concerned.

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(3/8/1998\)](#)

3.2 NGOs

Source: [Institution - Title](#)

3.3 Civil Society

Article 14 of the Civil Service Act (No. 93-09) guarantees freedom of expression to all civil servants. Articles 17, 18 and 19 of the Act guarantee public officials freedom of opinion and political loyalty and recognize their right to establish trade unions or to belong to trade unions already in existence.

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(26/10/2003\)](#)

4. Civil Service

4.1 Legal basis

Act no. 93-09 of 18 January 1993 (Civil Service and Contract Workers Act)¹²

Journal officiel, 1993-02-28, No 801, pp. 193-209

Title I is devoted to civil servants of the State and public establishments. The Title provides the general conditions of access to the public service as well as obligations, disciplinary sanctions, and guarantees granted to the civil servants. It recognizes the right to unionize, the right to continuous training, and the right to strike. The cases in which exercising this right is prohibited are specified. In addition, the Title contains provisions relating to the trade unions and the equal consultative bodies. It defines the structure of careers, various positions as well as career profiles (recruitment, advancement, changes and termination of functions). Moreover, the Title envisages the scale of remuneration as well as disciplinary rules and rewards; defines the modalities applicable to trainees (methods of training, discipline, social security and vacation).

Title II contains provisions applicable to contract employees of the State and public administered establishments. The Title defines their obligations and guarantees, the operating conditions (hiring, vacation, conditions of re-employment, termination), the modalities of remuneration and the disciplinary sanctions.

The Act repeals the Civil Service Act of 18 July 1967 (67-169), its modifying texts, and all former provisions.

The present Civil Service and Contract Workers Act has been amended several times

Source: [International Labour Organization \(NATLEX\)](#) - [Mauritania: Public and Civil Servants](#)

4.2 Recruitment

The *Commission nationale des concours* is an independent agency that carries out the testing of civil servants.

Source: [Institution](#) - [ILO - Comparative study of contents of civil service statutes \(2001\)](#)

4.3 Promotion

Source: [Institution](#) - [Title](#)

4.4 Remuneration

Under article 38 of the Civil Service and Contract Workers Act, civil servants are entitled to Family allowances and Maternity allowances.

Source: [UN OHCHR](#) - [State Party Report \(26/10/2003\)](#)

4.5 Training

Source: [Institution](#) - [Title](#)

¹² The Civil Service and Contract Workers Act is implemented through several decrees ([click here](#)): 94-080, 94-086, 94-087, 94-098, 94-199, 95-001, and 99-001 (non-exhaustive)

4.6 Pension

Subject to the conditions established by the Civil Servants' Pension Fund scheme, civil servants are entitled to an old-age pension and, where applicable, to a disability pension upon completing 35 years of effective service from the age of 18 years or reaching the age of 60 (Civil Service Act, Art. 72).

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(26/10/2003\)](#)

4.7 Gender

Article 1 of the Constitution stipulates that "the Republic guarantees equality before the law to all citizens without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social status".

This prohibition is also set out as a fundamental principle of the civil service in the Mauritania Civil Service and Contract Workers Act of 1993. Article 15 of the Act provides that "there shall be no discrimination between public officials based on opinion, sex or race." These provisions are extended to contract workers under article 105.

Under the international human rights conventions ratified by Mauritania, which are an integral part of Mauritanian law pursuant to article 80 of the Constitution, public institutions are required to prohibit and combat discrimination.

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(26/10/2003\)](#)

Women are entitled to three months' maternity leave on full pay and to one hour of rest a day while breastfeeding, as well as to maternity benefits.

Source: [UN OHCHR - State Party Report \(3/8/1998\)](#)

5. Ethics and Civil Service

5.1 Corruption

2003 CPI Score relates to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt).

Corruption Perceptions Index							
Rank	Country	2003 CPI Score	Surveys Used	Standard Deviation	High-Low Range	Number Inst.	90 percent confidence range
1	Highly clean	9.7	8	0.3	9.2 - 10.0	4	9.5 - 9.9
..	Mauritania	..	..	..	..	..	..
133	Highly corrupt	1.3	8	0.7	0.3 - 2.2	6	0.9 - 1.7

Source: [Transparency International - Corruption Perceptions Index 2003](#)

Surveys Used: Refers to the number of surveys that were used to assess a country's performance. 17 surveys were used and at least 3 surveys were required for a country to be included in the CPI.

Standard Deviation: Indicates differences in the values of the sources. Values below 0.5 indicate agreement, values between 0.5 and c. 0.9 indicate some agreement, while values equal or larger than 1 indicate disagreement.

High-Low Range: Provides the highest and lowest values of the sources.

Number Institutions: Refers to the number of independent institutions that assessed a country's performance. Since some institutions provided more than one survey.

90 percent confidence range: Provides a range of possible values of the CPI score. With 5 percent probability the score is above this range and with another 5 percent it is below.

Source: [Institution - Title](#)

5.2 Ethics

Source: [Institution - Title](#)

6. e-Government

e-Government Readiness Index:

The index refers to the generic capacity or aptitude of the public sector to use ICT for encapsulating in public services and deploying to the public, high quality information (explicit knowledge) and effective communication tools that support human development.

The index is comprised of three sub-indices: Web Measure Index, Telecommunications Infrastructure Index and Human Capital Index.

Web Measure Index:

A scale based on progressively sophisticated web services present. Coverage and sophistication of state-provided e-service and e-product availability correspond to a numerical classification.

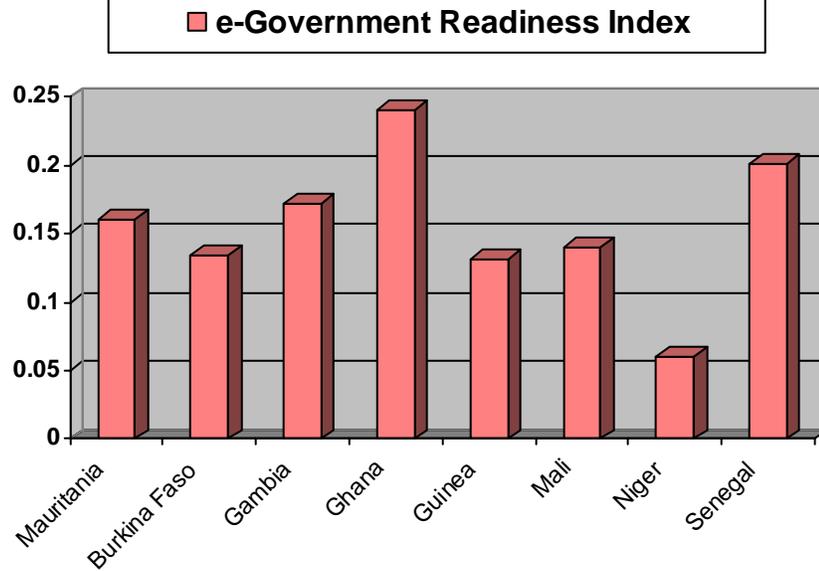
Telecommunications Infrastructure Index:

A composite, weighted average index of six primary indices, based on basic infrastructural indicators that define a country's ICT infrastructure capacity.

Primary indicators are: PC's, Internet users, online population and Mobile phones. Secondary indicators are TVs and telephone lines.

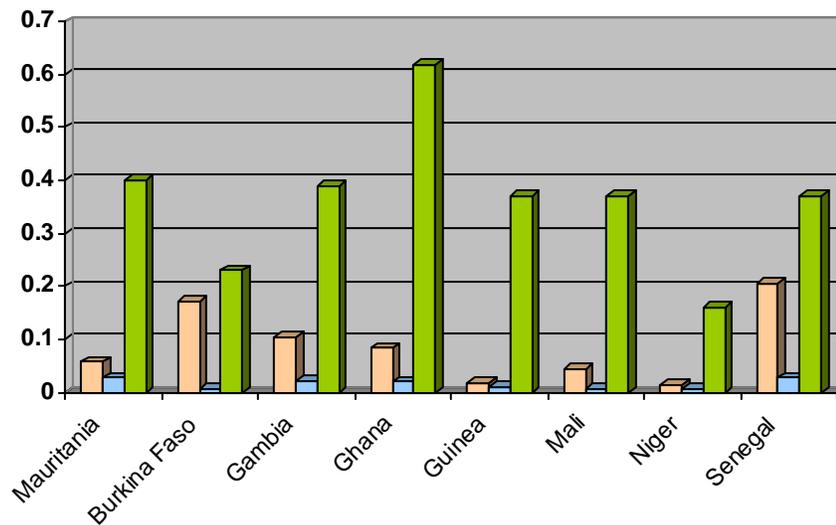
Human Capital Index:

A composite of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, with two thirds of the weight given to adult literacy and one third to the gross enrolment ratio.



Source: United Nations – World Public Sector Report 2003

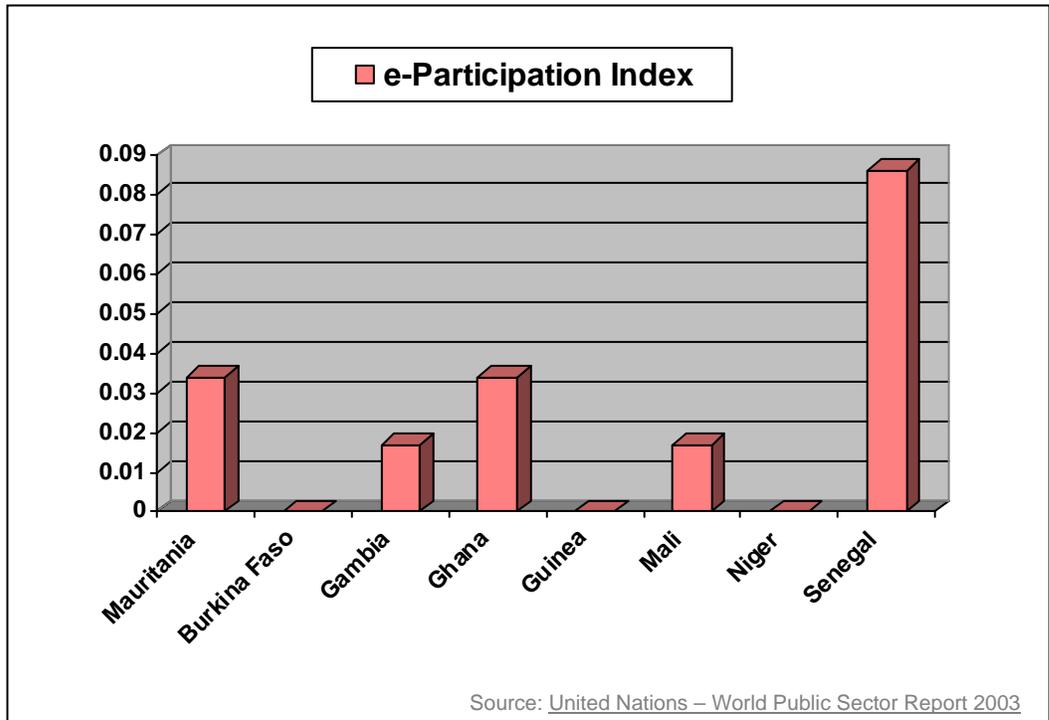
Web Measure Index, Telecom. Infrastructure Index, Human Capital Index



Source: United Nations – World Public Sector Report 2003

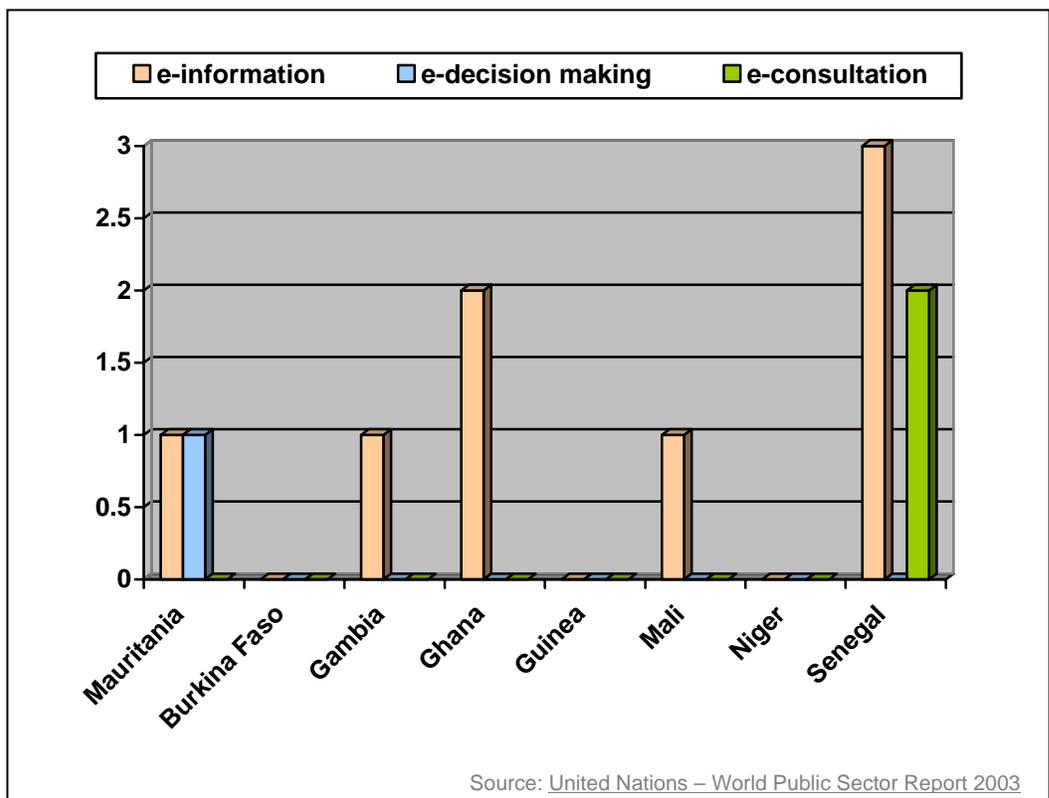
e-Participation Index:

Refers to the willingness, on the part of the government, to use ICT to provide high quality information (explicit knowledge) and effective communication tools for the specific purpose of empowering people for able participation in consultations and decision-making both in their capacity as consumers of public services and as citizens.



e-information:

The government websites offer information on policies and programs, budgets, laws and regulations, and other briefs of key public interest. Tools for disseminating of information exist for timely access and use of public information, including web forums, e-mail lists, newsgroups and chat rooms.



e-decision making:

The government indicates that it will take citizens input into account in decision making and provides actual feedback on the outcome of specific issues.

e-consultation:

The government website explains e-consultation mechanisms and tools. It offers a choice of public policy topics online for discussion with real time and archived access to audios and videos of public meetings. The government encourages citizens to participate in discussions.

7. Links

7.1 National sites	
Authority	Topic
Government	http://www.mauritania.mr/
National Assembly	http://www.mauritania.mr/assemblee/

7.2 Miscellaneous sites	
Institution	Topic
African Development Bank (ADB)	http://www.afdb.org/
African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD)	http://www.cafrad.org/
African Union (AU)	http://www.africa-union.org/
Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO)	http://www.arado.org.eg/
Arab Election Law Compendium	http://www.arabelectionlaw.net
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development	http://www.arabfund.org/
Arab Social Science Research	http://www.assr.org/countries/index.asp?CID=11
European Union (EU)	http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/country/country_en.cfm
International Labour Organization (ILO)	http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex_browse.home
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	http://www.nepad.org/
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	http://www.undp.mr/english/index.html
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)	http://www.uneca.org/
UNPAN	http://www.unpan.org/virtual_library-byregion.asp
World Bank (WB)	http://www.worldbank.org/mr