



PEOPLE GROUP: FULANI

The Fulani, who call themselves the Fulɓe, are also known as the Fula, Fulani or Fulɓe. They are a diverse people group spread across about 20 countries of West and Central Africa, from Senegal to Ethiopia. Up to 47 clans and sub-clans are considered Fulani, totaling 50 million people. The largest number lives in Nigeria, followed by Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. Additionally, Fulani diaspora are living on other continents beyond Africa.

Their origins are uncertain; the Middle East or North Africa are possibilities. They mixed with local people and grew to established empires in the region. The Fulani were some of the earliest converts to Islam in sub-Saharan Africa, and spread it across the region through various means including holy wars, which also gained them more grazing lands. Powerful caliphates were founded in various parts of West Africa. To this day the vast majority of Fulani are Muslim.

The Fulani people follow a common cultural code called *Pulaaku*, but are diverse in their cultural practices and lifestyle. They are the world's largest nomadic group. Semi-nomadic

Fulani also raise livestock, but their grazing range is limited to the area where they have become farmers. Settled Fulani reside in towns.

Seasonal conflicts between Fulani herders and people groups who are agriculturalists have increased over the past 10 years, mainly in Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Violent attacks between some Fulani and farmers have devastated communities. These attacks are due to population pressure, changes in land use and access to resources, growing social inequalities, climate change, and a rise in radical Islamist ideology. The situation only grows more complicated when politics and armed conflicts overlap with small unresolved community issues. Religious differences further inflame circumstances.

Like most nomadic groups worldwide, the Fulani have not yet been effectively reached with the Good News. Missionaries and Fulani believers are reaching out to them in various countries. Negative stereotypes about them persist, due to real events as well as perpetuated misunderstandings.

AT A GLANCE

- Folk Islam is commonly practiced, with the use of amulets and witchcraft to protect and to treat illnesses.
- It is difficult for a Fulani to convert to Christianity, since to be Fulani is to be Muslim.
- It is reported that over 500,000 Fulani Christians live in Nigeria, many worshipping in secret.

PRAY FOR

- A movement of Christ leading to a decrease in violent attacks and mistrust, and the spread of peace.
- For Fulani believers to make multiplying disciples among their people.
- A breaking of spiritual strongholds through the power of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of God's people.

Music produced by Fulani believers: <https://www.youtube.com/@jamtan6415> • Video to pray for the Fulani: <https://youtu.be/z6yAe8zotPY>
Sources: Boureima Diallo, boureima@fulaniministries.org • SIM ministry working with the Fulani
<https://africacenter.org/publication/growing-complexity-farmer-herder-conflict-west-central-africa/> • Joshua Project



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