

For almost a few years an increasing number of people have taken the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR). This migratory route, which had been particularly active in 2006, has once again become a route frequently taken by sub-Saharan migrants. Thus in 2019, reference year for this report, 2,687 migrants arrived in the Canary Islands (Spain). Year after year, the number of migrants arriving irregularly in the Canary Islands continues to increase.

Between **January 1 to September 30, 2022**, no less than **12,506** migrants arrived on the Canary Islands compared to 2021 when for the same period there were **13,118** migrants, a decrease of **4.7 percent**.

Migrants generally leave the coasts of Morocco or Mauritania which are closer to the Canary Islands. However, departures are often prepared from the coasts of Gambia and the trip to the Canary Islands often includes several intermediate stages. Since **August 2022**, IOM The Gambia has been monitoring the main departure points for boats bound for the Canary Islands. This report presents the main data collected, the methodology used, and the other events identified by the investigators along the Gambian coast.

Source: <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/gl/prensa/balances-e-informes/index.html>

DEPARTURES FROM THE GAMBIA – PROFILE OF MIGRANTS

Nationalities

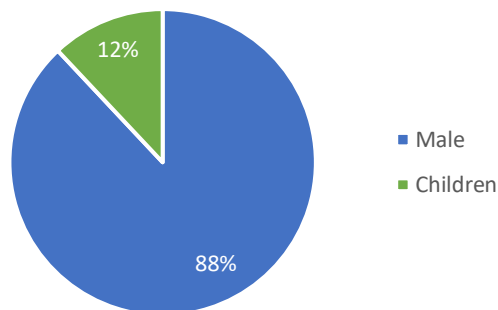
Main nationalities of migrants embarking from the coasts of The Gambia

The Gambia

Senegal

Guinea

Demographic profile



Boat construction site in Barra, The Gambia © IOM-2022

METHODOLOGY





The departure tracking tool monitors events related to migratory movements from the coasts of The Gambia to the Spanish Canary Islands (which, most often, pass through several intermediate stages), with the aim of documenting the mobility along the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR). The methodology combines three tools: tracking departure locations, mapping departure locations and counting.

This report presents the data collected by the **departure tracking tool** between **13th August and 30th September 2022** at the main departure points along the Gambian coast. Information is provided to IOM Community Focal Points (CFPs) by several Key Informants who collect information on notable events observed in departure areas used by migrants on their way to Mauritania, Morocco and the Canary Islands. When Community Focal Points obtain relevant information, they enter it into the database using the data collection form. As part of its activities to monitor departures from the Gambian coast, IOM does not collaborate in any way with migrant smuggling and facilitation networks.

DATA SOURCES AND NOTES:

There are some limitations to the data provided by the CFPs on the movements that take place on the coast as part of maritime migration in The Gambia. Available data is sparse and rarely contains information on the exact date of the trip or the list of migrants boarding the boats. In addition, there is no perfectly harmonized data with the Spanish government on arrivals to the Canary Islands (Spain) from The Gambia.

COLLECTION PHASES

-  Design and deployment of a data collection form
-  Evaluation conducted with CFP by phone
-  Total number of CFPs working on this project
-  CFPs monitoring departures from the locations of Brufut, Gunjur, Juffureh and Barra

10

Number of events identified by Community Focal Points (CFPs) regarding possible departures or preparations for departures from the coasts of The Gambia between 13th August and 30th September 2022.

EVENT DETAILS



200 migrants departed on boats from the shores of The Gambia during the reporting period.



1 boat departed the shores of The Gambia between 13th August and 30th September 2022



Most boats departing from The Gambia head directly to the Canary Islands, while some headed first to Mauritania before proceeding on their journey to the Canary Islands.



7 migrant recruitment campaigns were recorded between 13th August and 30th September 2022.



1 boat construction incident was report by CFPs during the reporting period.

Potential risks:

- Overloaded boats and increased risk of sinking and disappearance of boats at sea following the upsurge in registered candidates
- Poor quality of boats increasing the risk of sinking
- Abuse, extortion and exploitation of migrants due to the isolation of areas of departure, the vulnerability of would-be migrants and the imbalance of power



Departure areas (August – September 2022):

- Coast of Essau, North Bank Region



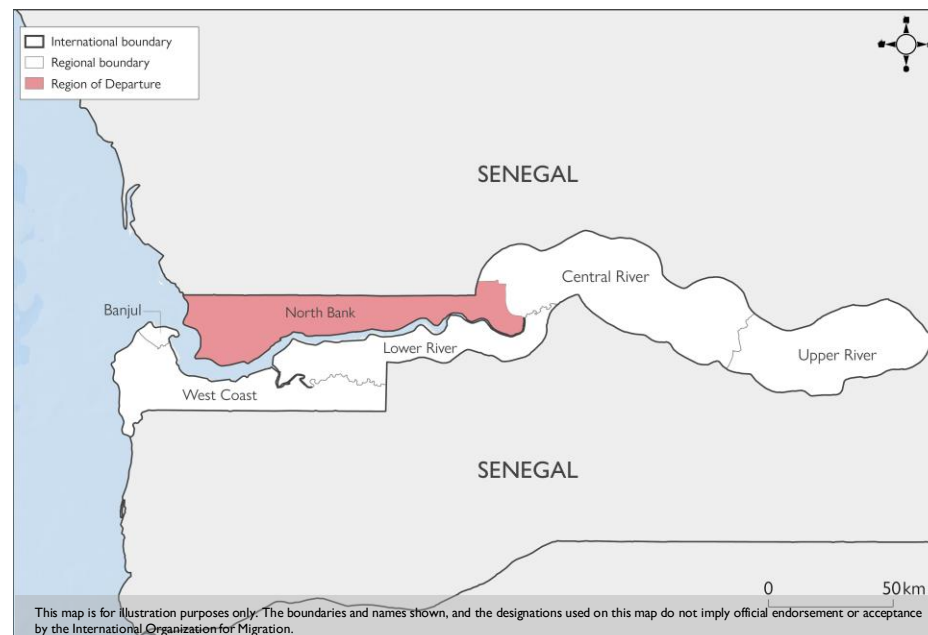
This page presents data collected between 13th August and 30th September 2022 by Community Focal Points (CFPs) along the Gambian coast. The data collected concerns all types of boat movements from The Gambia to Mauritania or the Canary Islands (Spain) identified as irregular migration.

Between **13th August and 30th September 2022**, **10 events** were reported by the CFPs: **7 events (70 percent)** represent the **recruitment of migrants** for planned departures, **1 events (10 percent)** was related to **boat departures** from the Gambian coast, **1 events (10 percent)** is linked to the **sighting of boat on the high seas** and finally **1 event (10 percent)** is linked to the **construction of boat** for the purpose of migration to the Canary Islands.

Fig.1 - Types of events identified (August - September 2022)



Map 1 – Departure regions of canoes from The Gambia (August – September 2022)





DETAILS OF INCIDENTS RECORDED BY COMMUNITY FOCAL POINTS (CFPs)

1



The construction of a boat for the purpose of migration to the Canary Island was reported by Community Focal Points (CFPs) during the reporting period.

Community Focal Points reported that the construction of a boat for the purpose of migration to Spain was in progress. The construction was in advanced stage and was expected to be completed in one month with plans to take migrant from one of the ongoing recruitment campaigns to Spain. This was reported in the locality of Barra which is a known area for boat construction.

1



One sighting of migrant boat in high sea was reporting during this period.

A boat carrying migrants was reportedly sighted off the coast of Barra during the reporting period. According to the CFPs, fishermen who returned from sea reported the sighting and contact they had with the boat that was heading to Spain. There was no information provided on the profiles of the migrants onboard but the report indicates about 40 migrants were seen on the craft as it headed to Spain.

7



Seven migrant recruitment campaigns were reported by Community Focal Points (CFPs) during this data collection period, August to September 2022.

Recruitment of migrants was reported by CFPs with a desired objective of 1,052 migrants across all the recruitment campaigns. According to the reports, most departures are scheduled around mid September with one specifically targeted for "a day or two" before the Magal in Touba, a religious event in Senegal. Many activities were observed during this wintering period combined with religious events such as the Malgal of Touba, in Senegal. At the time of reporting, most of the recruitment campaigns were less than halfway from meeting their target number of migrants. Recruitments were also noted to have been opened several months prior with the courting of would-be-migrants done at different locations simultaneously by different agents.

The significant number of campaigns to recruit would-be migrants also reflects the new migratory dynamics towards Europe from West and Central Africa and the growing importance of the Atlantic route to reach Europe. An average of one hundred and fifty migrants were reported to be the target across the seven recruitment campaigns. Recruitment was being done discretely across several towns and villages with varying fees being charged.

1



One boat departure was reported by Community Focal Points (CFPs) to have departed during the reporting period, August – September 2022.

A boat with 200 migrants on board was reported to have departed from The Gambia during the reporting period with Gambians, Senegalese and Ghanain nationals onboard. Reports indicate that 88% are adults and 12% may be minors on board this craft. The departure is reported to have been observed from the coast of Essau in the North Bank Region of the country.

The departure follows months of meticulous planning to evade in control of the Immigration authorities by stowing the boat further inland in the mangroves of the River Gambia while the journey was being planned.

The Gambia Immigration authorities have played an important role in reducing the number of boat departures. Thanks to the interventions, a journey that was in the final stages of preparation was aborted in the locality of Gunjur and the organizer and would-be-migrants that were converged at a secret location were rounded up.

A study by the Mixed Migration Center (MMC) of February 2022 reports the growing attraction for the Atlantic route; 68 percent of the migrants surveyed expressed the wish to take this route to reach Europe. According to the MMC study, the reasons behind the growth in interest in the Atlantic route are manifold, and include first of all the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, pushing many people into extreme poverty and encouraging them to migrate at all costs. In addition, border closures following the COVID-19 crisis and increased border controls have forced migrants to take the more dangerous sea route than the land route. Finally, the Atlantic route is also the 'shortest' route to Europe.