

Irregular migration in West and Central Africa is a complex, dynamic and fragmented phenomenon. Strengthening the understanding of migration routes, trends as well as migrant profiles is critical in order to protect migrants and support evidence-based policies<sup>(1)</sup>. The International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and Missing Migrants Project (MMP) collect data on the departures, arrivals, deaths and disappearances of migrants along key migratory routes<sup>(2)</sup>.

This document presents key figures relating to maritime migration from the coasts of West Africa to Mauritania, Morocco and the Canary Islands (Spain). This route, already active in 2006, has seen exponential growth in movements since its 'reactivation' in 2019. The risks, deaths and disappearances following shipwrecks are also on the rise along the West African Atlantic Route (WAAR).

Between January and September 2022, 12,506 individuals reached the Canary Islands irregularly after crossing by boat from the coasts of West Africa, a decrease of 5 per cent i.e. 612 people per compared to 2021 (13,118)<sup>(3)</sup>. This is the first time since the increase in

crossings was first recorded in 2019 that this number has shrunk. Nevertheless, the risks and hazards along the West African Atlantic Route remain, and 32 shipwrecks were recorded along that route in 2022, leading to the death or disappearance of 350 migrants.

Data on the West Africa - Atlantic route remain scarce and incomplete. There is currently no harmonized approach to data collection except on arrival in the Canary Islands. Additional data is collected by IOM on arrivals profiles and intercepted vessels. There is very little data on the actual number of departures and attempts from West African coasts, while shipwrecks are often not reported.

- (1) IOM Senegal, "New Migration Dynamics In Senegal: Understanding The Reactivation Of The Western African Route", 2019.
- (2) IOM, Missing Migrants Project, 2022
- (3) Spanish Ministry of the Interior: [https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2022/18\\_informe\\_quincenal\\_acumulado\\_01-01\\_al\\_30-09-2022.pdf](https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2022/18_informe_quincenal_acumulado_01-01_al_30-09-2022.pdf), September 2022.

## IRREGULAR MIGRATION MOVEMENTS TO THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)

**12,506**

**MIGRANTS** arrived in the Canary Islands between January and September 2022, a decrease of 5 per cent compared to 2021 (13,118 migrants).

**279**

**BOATS** arrived in the Canary Islands between January and September 2022, a decrease of 18 per cent compared to 2021 (340 boats).

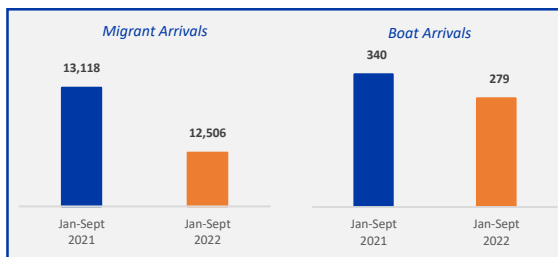


Fig.2- Number of boats that reached the Canary Islands and number of boats that failed to reach the Canary Islands

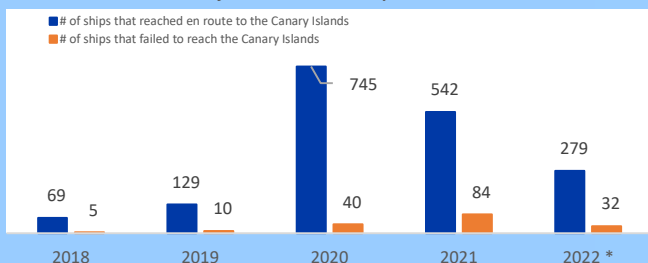
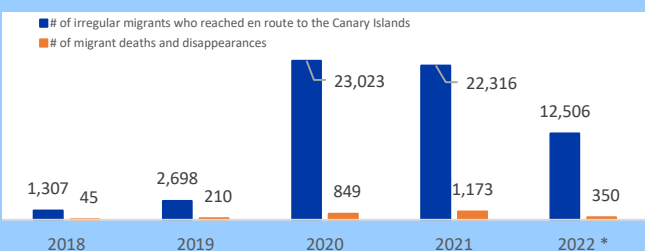
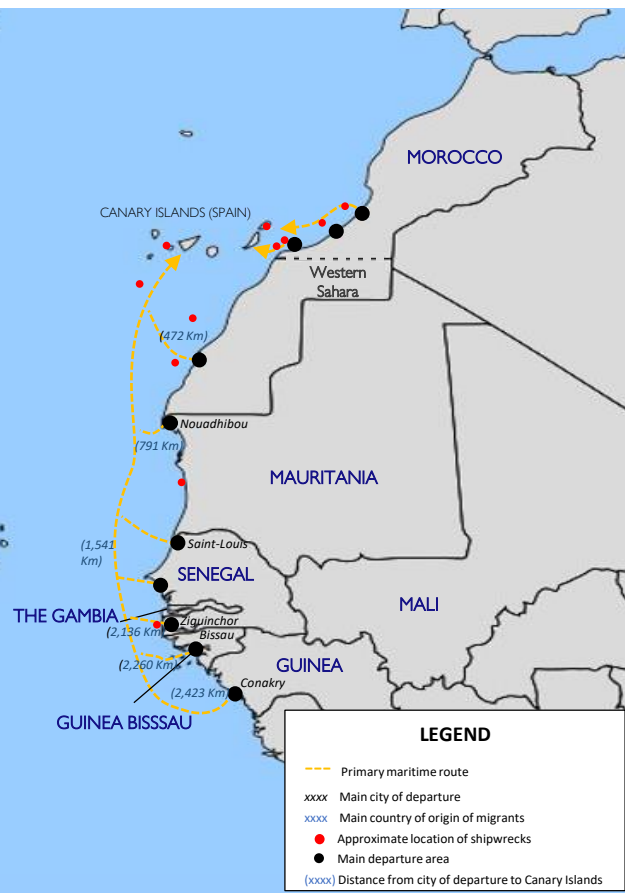


Fig.3- Number of individuals who reached the Canary Islands irregularly and number of individuals who died or disappeared on their way to the Canary Islands.



Irregular crossings and incidents are increasing along the West African coasts. Between January and September 2022, **32 shipwrecks** were identified along West Africa - Atlantic Route and **350 migrants died or went missing** during that period. This figure is probably underestimated as many shipwrecks remain invisible (not reported). In 2022, these shipwrecks took place off the Canary Islands (Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, El Hierro), Morocco (Boujdour, Tan-Tan, Tarfaya, Laâyoune, Bir Anzarane), Mauritania (Nouakchott), Senegal (Kafountine). The castaways are for the most part of Moroccan origin, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and other unidentified Sub-Saharan.



### NOTE ON SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Existing data on the deaths and disappearances of migrants in West and Central Africa is limited. Information about incidents involving the death or disappearance of migrants is sparse. Little information known about the **sex and age** of missing migrants, or about the **precise location of their death or disappearance**. In addition, there is no uniform or harmonized number of missing migrants, nor any information about the families of missing migrants with whom contact was lost during the migration journey. IOM's [Missing Migrants Project](#) is the only public and freely accessible database relating to the death or disappearance of migrants. In Africa, MMP data primarily comes from interviews with migrants conducted in the framework of the **Mixed Migration Centre's 4MI Initiative**. Other data sources include **IOM data, government data, as well as information provided by NGOs and the media**. In 2020, **4MI stopped collecting data** on dead and missing migrants along migration routes.

\* Data for 2022 covers the period up to September 30, 2022 (January – September 2022). These data will be regularly updated in future publications.