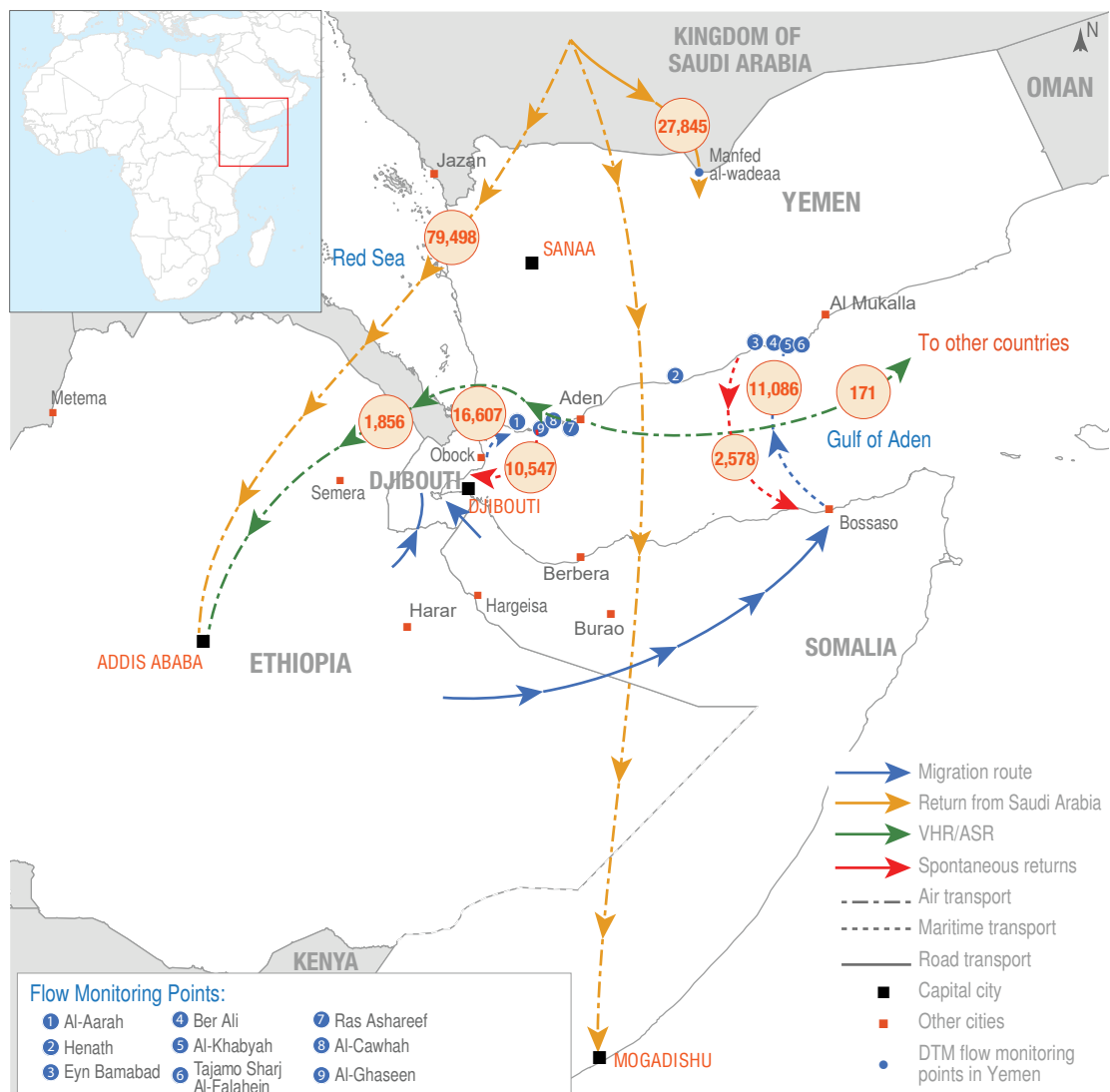


The Eastern Route, which runs from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, in particular to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has long been the busiest and most relevant migratory corridor in the East and Horn of Africa region. In 2021, movement trends along the Eastern Corridor have significantly increased by 71% compared to 2020, suggesting that migration seems to be slowly resuming to pre-pandemic levels. However, monitored crossings from the Horn to Yemen decreased by 26% compared to 2020, although these have shown a steady but slow increase in the last quarter of 2021.

The impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on mobility generated new trends along this corridor. Many migrants became stranded in both transit locations and in host communities that were themselves struggling with the economic and health burden of the pandemic. Particularly in Yemen, due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and tighten border closure enforced by Saudi Arabia, IOM estimates that nearly 35,000 migrants are stranded throughout the country in dire conditions.¹ At the same time, many of them resort to the same network of smugglers to return to the Horn. A further 6,000 migrants are estimated to be stranded across Djibouti and Somalia.

Data collected through IOM's Missing Migrant's Project suggest that the journey from Yemen to the Horn of Africa continues to be fraught with danger. In 2021, 109 migrant deaths and disappearances were recorded in the region, either in Djibouti (93%) or Somalia (7%). Many of these migrants were Ethiopian nationals and the main cause of their deaths and disappearances was attributed to drowning in two separate incidents in March and April 2021 near the coast of Djibouti. The other incidents occurred in the Djiboutian desert amongst migrants returning from Yemen and were mainly attributed to harsh environmental conditions resulting in dehydration and starvation.

Ethiopia is the main origin country of migrants travelling along the Eastern Route. These journeys are mostly undertaken by young Ethiopians who are motivated by declining livelihood opportunities and the desire for a better life. However, large return migration flows began in 2017, when the Government of Saudi Arabia committed to reducing unemployment among the Saudi population by tightening immigration policies and cracking down on undocumented migration. Irregular migrants who were intercepted at the border or did not manage to secure employment prior to interception were sent back to Ethiopia. The reintegration of returning migrants can be severely affected by such deportations as many return home empty-handed and may therefore find themselves in an even worse financial situation than prior to migration.²

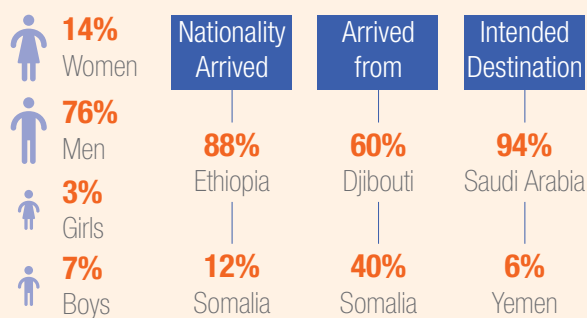


DISCLAIMER: This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

¹ It should be noted, however, that the actual number of stranded migrants in Yemen is likely much higher.
² See: <https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/resources/eastern-route-research-briefing-paper-3-return-migration-dynamics>

YEMEN ARRIVALS FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA

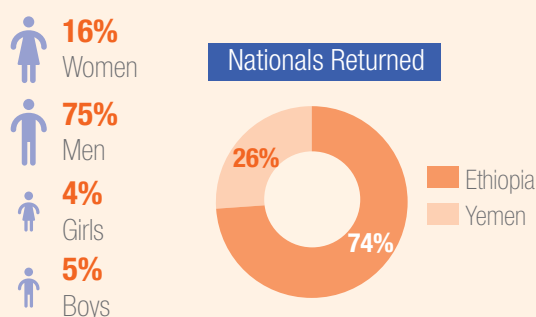
27,693 Migrants arrived in Yemen through DTM Flow Monitoring Points



In 2021, a total of 27,693 migrants' arrivals were recorded at nine Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) along the southern coast of Yemen. This represents a 26% decrease compared to 2020 and an overall 80% decrease compared to pre-pandemic arrivals. Most of the arrivals in Yemen were of Ethiopian nationals (88%), followed by Somali nationals (12%). Unlike 2020, Obock in Djibouti was the main area of departure (60%), while Bossaso in Somalia only represented 40%. Economic drivers remained the main (94%) reason for migration along this route and 94% of migrants arriving in Yemen intended to reach Saudi Arabia. This route is mostly travelled by men (76%), while children accounted for 10%. Roughly one in seven children was unaccompanied.

RETURNS FROM THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

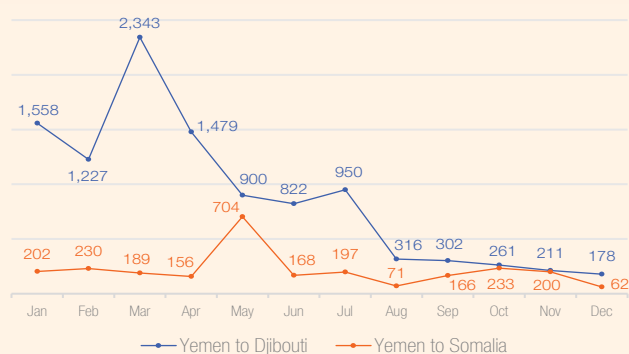
107,343 Migrants returned from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia and Yemen



In 2021, IOM registered 79,498 returnees to Ethiopia, more than twice the number of returnees registered in 2020 (36,632) when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in returns from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia being suspended for several months until they resumed in reduced numbers in the later months of 2020. In the first half of 2021, figures remained at around half of the average number of returnees registered per month in the years prior to the pandemic, while mass airlift operations took place in July 2021, when 31,911 Ethiopians were returned. This constituted the largest number of returnees registered by IOM since this data collection began in 2017. It was estimated that around 45,000 Ethiopian migrants were detained and awaiting their deportation as of October 2021. As many returnees were from conflicted-affected areas in Northern Ethiopia, the Government of Ethiopia established transit centres for migrant who were unable to return to their home communities. Additionally, 27,845 Yemeni migrants returned from Saudi Arabia to Yemen during the same time period.

SPONTANEOUS RETURNS FROM YEMEN

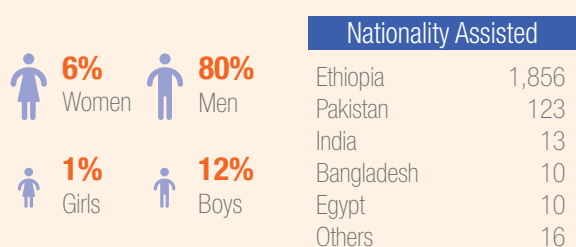
13,125 Migrants returned from Yemen to Djibouti (10,547) and Somalia (2,578)



Due to the harshening of the situation in Yemen for migrants and the challenges in moving onwards towards Saudi Arabia, many migrants have opted to return to the Horn of Africa. In 2021, IOM tracked 10,547 spontaneous returns of Ethiopian migrants to Djibouti and 2,578 spontaneous returns to Somalia. Many used the same network of smugglers that were used in the journey eastwards to try and return to their areas of origin. However, this return journey is arguably even more perilous for the migrants who are already in precarious conditions, often as a result of prolonged detention and other violations in Yemen. These migrants are also likely to be abused by their smugglers and are sometimes made to disembark in the middle of the ocean, while others report having been forced to cross the desert on foot with little or no resources left for their return journey. Nevertheless, since May 2020, 20,217 migrants have made this perilous return journey.

IOM ASSISTED RETURNS FROM YEMEN

2,028 Migrants assisted by IOM to return home from Yemen



Through its Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme, IOM provides safe, voluntary and dignified return solutions to migrants stranded in Yemen. VHRs from Yemen to Ethiopia were temporarily on hold for most of 2020 due to the restrictions brought on by the pandemic. In the first quarter of 2021, IOM, in coordination with the Government of Ethiopia, resumed this lifesaving operation. In total, 2,028 migrants stranded in Yemen participated in the VHR programme in 2021— as in previous years, the majority of those assisted were Ethiopian nationals (91%). All migrants receiving VHR assistance were individually counselled by case managers and provided with the necessary information to make an informed decision in line with their needs. IOM's Assisted Spontaneous Return (ASR) programme, implemented in coordination with UNHCR and through which Somali refugees receive return support, remained on hold in 2021.