

INTRODUCTION

Within the West and Central Africa (WCA) region, the **Sahel** stretches from Mauritania to Chad, separating the Sahara desert on the North, from tropical coastal countries to the South. Overall, within the African continent, it spans from the Atlantic Ocean on the West to the Red Sea on the East, separating the desert from the savanna. **Migratory routes within the WCA region inevitably cross the Sahel and - throughout their journeys - migrants are facing multiple risks along these routes.** This report compiles information from different data and research activities held within the region in the objective to **highlight the diverse dynamics, profiles and risks migrants are facing while travelling on the WCA routes through the Sahel.** This dashboard covers the period until December 2023 and is based on information from (1) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data on mobility trends and population flows; (2) Missing Migrants Project (MMP) data on arrivals to Europe and the Canary Islands, migrant deaths and disappearances; (3) Data on migrants seeking Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) to and within the WCA region; (4) Expulsions of migrants from other regions to WCA, especially from Algeria and Libya; (5) Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT) data on the mobility of transhumant populations throughout the Sahel; and (6) Solutions and Mobility Index (SMI) indicators of stability within the Sahelian region.

MIGRATORY ROUTES THROUGH SAHEL



MIGRATORY ROUTES THROUGH SAHEL TO EUROPE

THE WESTERN ATLANTIC ROUTE

Migrants travel from the region to the coasts of West Africa where they embark on boats to the Canary Islands of Spain. This route, already active in 2006, saw an increasing number of movements in 2023. The risks, deaths and disappearances following shipwrecks are also on the rise along the Atlantic coasts.

THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

The Western Mediterranean Route to Europe finds its different origins within sub-Saharan African countries, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. Migrants' extremely dangerous path through the Sahel and the Sahara desert leads them to the Algerian and Moroccan coasts where they embark on boats towards Spain's mainland.

THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN ROUTE

The Central Mediterranean Route finds its roots across different countries in the Sahel and crosses the Sahara desert to the coasts of Libya and Tunisia, towards Italy or Malta. It is mostly chosen by sub-Saharan Africans, whose identified deaths and disappearances are largely observed along this route. It is known as the deadliest route to Europe from the region.

PROFILES AND TRAVEL MODALITIES

Profiles of migrants registered at flow monitoring points within WCA in 2023 *



SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE MAJORITY OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS **



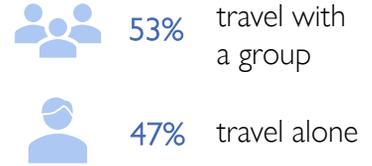
SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE MAJORITY OF SURVEYED MIGRANTS **



PRIMARY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION OF REGISTERED MIGRANTS *



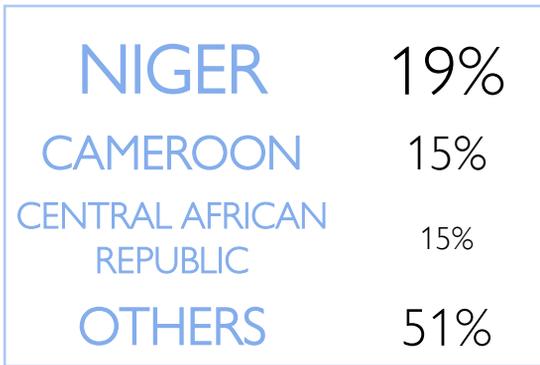
MODALITIES OF TRAVEL **



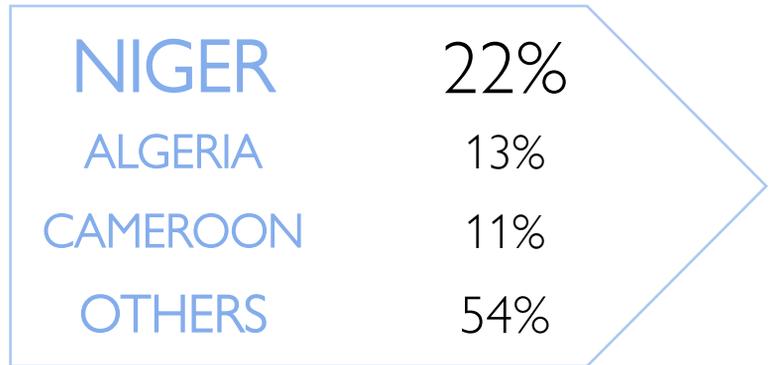
* Analysis based on data collected in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger between January and December 2023.

** Analysis based on data collected through 67 296 interviews in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger between January and December 2023.

WHERE FROM? **



WHERE TO? **



ARRIVALS TO EUROPE THROUGH SAHEL

39,910

migrants arrived at the Canary Islands between January and December 2023.

THE WESTERN ATLANTIC ROUTE

16,942

migrants arrived in Spain (mainland) between January and December 2023.

THE WESTERN MEDITERANEAN ROUTE

158,032

migrants arrived in Italy or Malta between January and December 2023.

THE CENTRAL MEDITERANEAN ROUTE

MIGRATORY ASPIRATIONS

The large majority of surveyed migrants at Flow Monitoring Points between January and December 2023 mentioned **travelling for economic reasons (74%)** and 12 per cent for marriages or family reunifications. For those travelling for economic reasons, **50 per cent were looking for a job or another livelihood opportunity**, 32 per cent were travelling to conduct business and 11 per cent were commuting for work or shopping. **Twenty-six per cent (26%) of the surveyed migrants planned to stay two weeks or less** in their intended destination, 13 per cent were planning to stay between three and six months and 12 per cent did not know how long they would stay there. **Flows observed were internal to WCA at 93 per cent.** Indeed, only 7 per cent of travelers intended to leave the region during this period.

Analysis based on data collected through 67 296 interviews in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger between January and December 2023.

ASSISTED VULNERABLE MIGRANTS *

25% of assisted unaccompanied or separated children were from Guinea.

67% of assisted victims of trafficking were from Nigeria.

32% of migrants with health-related needs were from Nigeria.

Category	Female	Male	Total
Migrants assisted in their voluntary return	6,229 (21%)	24,068 (79%)	30,297
Assisted unaccompanied/separated children	56 (27%)	155 (73%)	211
Assisted victims of trafficking	890 (82%)	195 (18%)	1,085
Migrants with health-related needs assisted	663 (39%)	1,038 (61%)	1,701

** Analysis based on data from assisted voluntary returns provided between January and December 2023.*

ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURNS *

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

GUINEA	22%
MALI	18%
NIGERIA	16%
OTHERS	44%

RETURNS FROM

NIGER	43%
LIBYA	24%
ALGERIA	8%
OTHERS	26%

EXPULSIONS OF MIGRANTS

18,043

is the number of migrants expelled from Algeria to the Niger side of the border in 2023, with peaks exceeding 3,000 expulsions in March and October only.

17,278

Nigerien returned to Niger on official convoys from Algeria between January and December 2023.

769

migrants expelled from Libya to Chad between January and December 2023, representing a 91 per cent increase since 2022.

MISSING OR DECEASED MIGRANTS

2,668

Number of **missing** migrants recorded on routes within WCA, to Northern Africa and to Europe between January and December 2023.

1,674

Number of **deceased** migrants recorded on routes within WCA, to Northern Africa and to Europe between January and December 2023.

CRISIS AND DISPLACEMENT

LAKE CHAD BASIN

- 3,129,130 IDPs (51%)
- 2,174,522 Returnees former IDPs (36%)
- 280,487 Returnees from abroad (5%)
- 483,368 Refugees (8%)

The conflict in this region impacts Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria with an estimated total of **6,067,507** individuals affected by December 2023.

LIPTAKO GOURMA, CENTRAL SAHEL AND COASTAL COUNTRIES

- 2,636,880 IDPs (88%)
- 374,412 Refugees (12%)

The region includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Togo with an estimated total of **3,011,292** individuals affected by December 2023.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

- 504,992 IDPs (13%)
- 2,125,798 Returnees former IDPs (54%)
- 513,037 Returnees from abroad (13%)
- 782,575 Refugees (20%)

The conflict in the region includes the CAR, Chad, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan with an estimated total of **3,926,402** individuals affected by December 2023.

NIGERIA NORTH-WEST NORTH-CENTRAL (NW-NC)

- The crisis in NW-NC Nigeria is affecting a reported total of **1,075,893** IDPs in Nigeria and **18,697** IDPs in Niger by December 2023.

CAMEROON NORTH-WEST SOUTH-WEST (NW-SW)

- The crisis in NW-SW Cameroon is affecting a reported total of **977,329** individuals (IDPs and returnees) by September 2023.

SUDAN CRISIS IMPACT ON CHAD AND CAR BY DECEMBER 2023

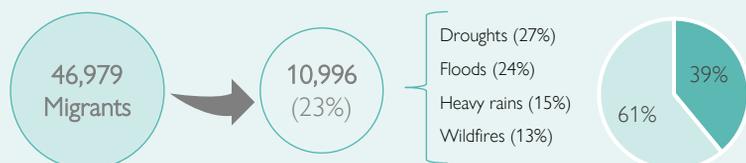
131,425	41,795
individuals returned in Chad	individuals returned or refugees in CAR *

* Impacted individuals in CAR by Sudan crisis (20,521 returnees and 21,274 refugees) already included in CAR detailed part, not double-counted in the total figure.

THE DIFFERENT CRISES IN WCA ARE AFFECTING AN ESTIMATED TOTAL OF **15,208,545** INDIVIDUALS BY DECEMBER 2023, OF WHICH **7,883,316** ARE IDPs.

ENVIRONMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

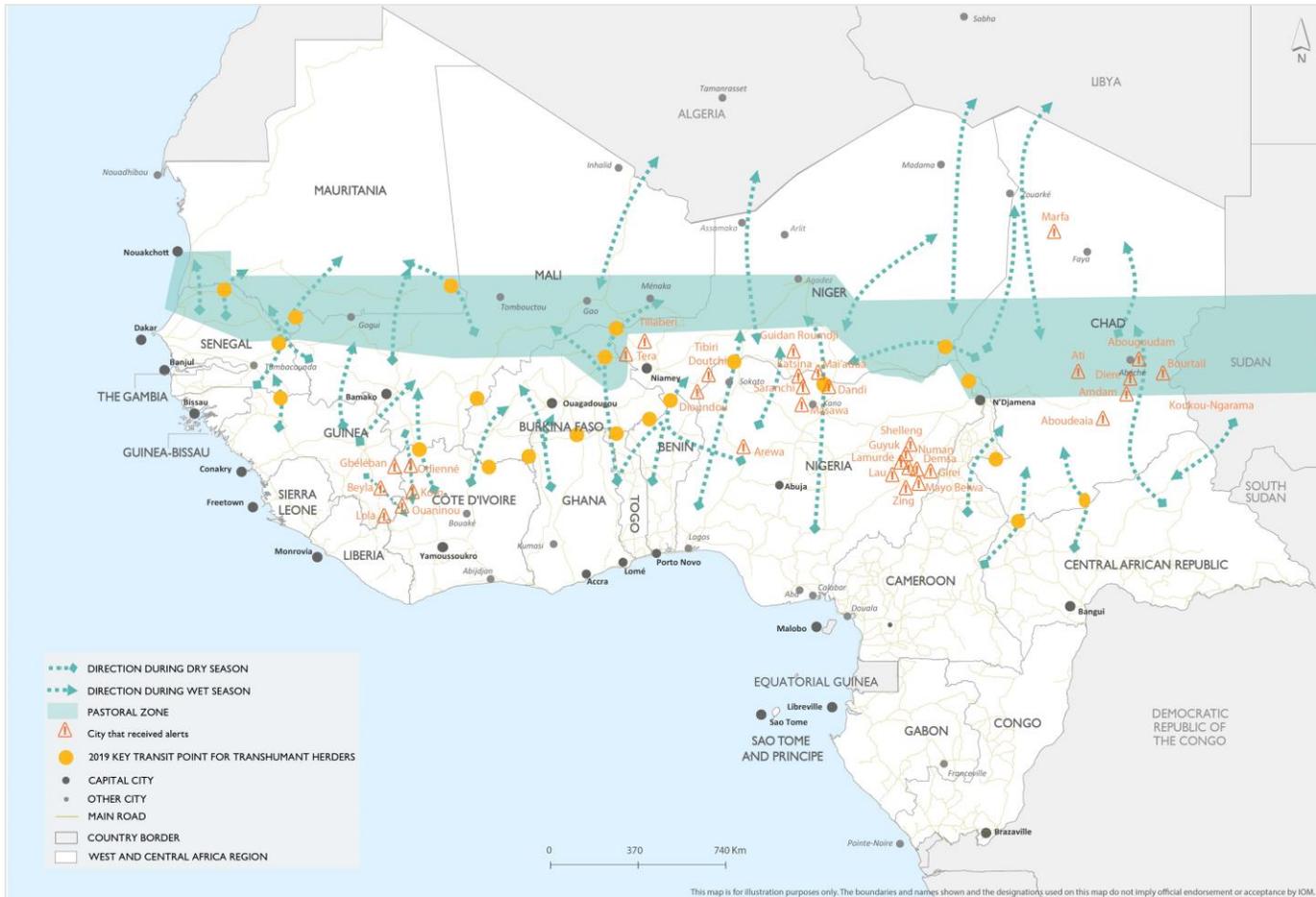
Among **46,979** individuals surveyed in Niger, Mali and Cameroon between January and December 2023, **10,996 (23%)** noticed environmental changes and/or disaster at their place of origin. The main environmental changes reported were droughts (27%), floods (24%), heavy rains (15%) and wildfires (13%). Of these 10,996 individuals, 39 per cent declared environmental changes or disasters have impacted their decision to migrate.



- Environmental changes have contributed to the decision to migrate among migrants who noticed environmental changes at the place of origin
- Environmental changes have not contributed to the decision to migrate among migrants who noticed environmental changes at the place of origin

TRANSNUMANCE IN THE SAHEL

Cross-border transhumance is a longstanding traditional pastoral practice in Africa where herders migrate seasonally with their livestock in search of grazing land. In the Sahel and coastal countries of West Africa, a region characterized by long dry seasons, livestock mobility is an important livelihood adaptation to increase resilience to climatic and economic vulnerabilities and risks. In recent years however, climate change, environmental degradation disasters, exponential population growth, urbanization, land privatization, changes in farming practices, and insecurity have affected transhumance patterns, routes and periods as well as relations with other communities. For instance, a recent IOM study in Mauritania found that 65 per cent of herders surveyed had to change their initial itinerary, and 53 per cent changed their time of transhumance due to the climate changes impacts on water and pasture resources. These changes have resulted in increasing competition over natural resources and have exacerbated tensions. Through the **Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT) Early Warning System**, IOM contributes to the mitigation of conflict over natural resources between farmer and herder communities.

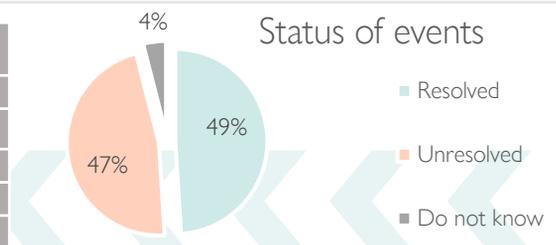


Between January and December 2023, a total of 3,104 alerts have been reported through IOM's TTT Early Warning Mechanism in Chad, Côte d'Ivoire/Guinea, Niger and Nigeria. These alerts included 2,449 events and 655 movements. Among the reported events, 49 per cent were resolved by local actors during the period of reporting.

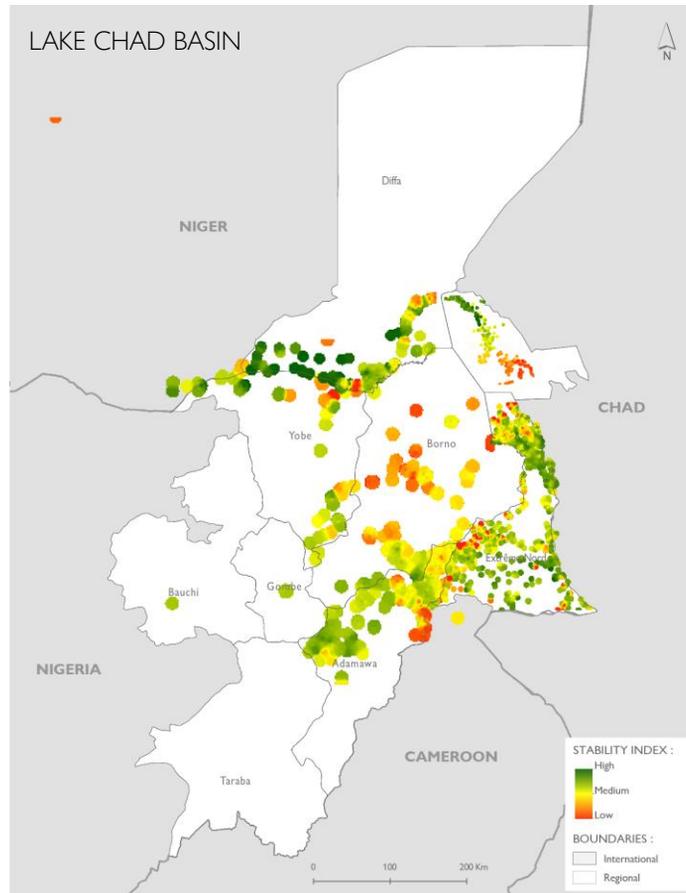
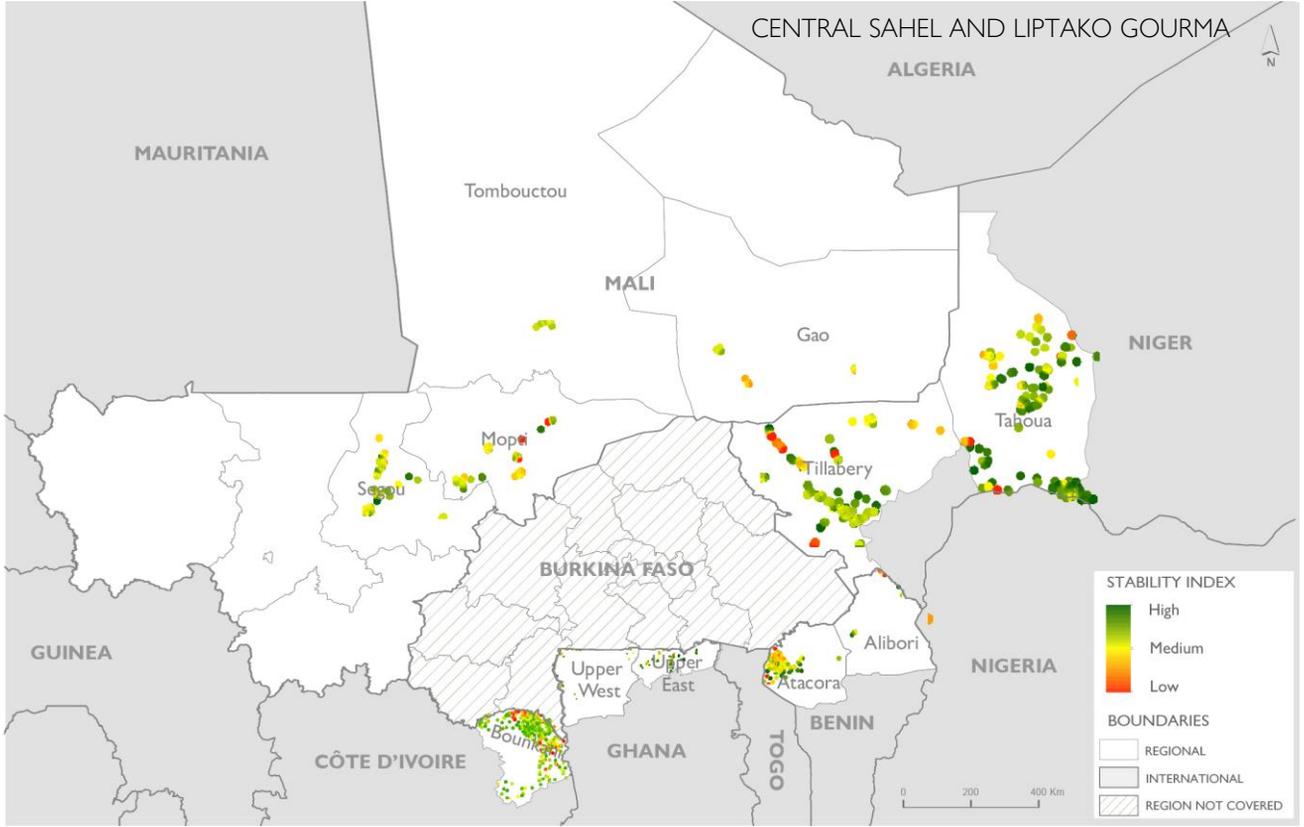
Types of alerts by country

Country	Events	Movements	Total
Nigeria	2,391	646	3,037
Côte d'Ivoire/Guinea	21	5	26
Chad	31	4	35
Niger	6	0	6
Total	2,449	655	3,104

Status of events



DURABLE SOLUTIONS AND MOBILITY IN THE SAHEL



IOM implements within Sahelian countries the Solution and Mobility Index. This assessment allows to evaluate the stability of living conditions in the Central Sahel and Liptako Gourma region and the Lake Chad Basin by calculating a **Stability Score** for each displacement-hosting location, identifying **pockets of stability** and instability and thereby prioritizing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programs.

As of December 2023, for the Central Sahel and Liptako Gourma region, Mali had an average Stability Score of **64/100**, and Niger of **65/100**.

For the locations in the Lake Chad Basin, as of September 2023, Cameroon had an average Stability Score of **77/100**, Chad of **70/100**, Niger of **73/100** and Nigeria of **90/100**.

In coastal countries affected by the Central Sahel crisis in December 2023, Côte d'Ivoire has an average stability score of **73/100**, Ghana **93/100**, and Benin **54/100**. In CAR, the average score was **74/100**.