

The Eastern Corridor, stretching from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti to the Arabian Peninsula, is among the most frequented migration routes in East and Horn of Africa region. In 2023, DTM teams recorded, through Flow Monitoring<sup>1</sup>, a total of 395,100 movements. The vast majority of these (96%, or 378,400) were outgoing movements towards the Arabian Peninsula, while 16,800 (4%) were return movements to East and Horn of Africa.

Over the course of 2023, 96,670 arrivals were recorded in Yemen, a one-third increase from 2022 (+32%, 73,200). In fact, by June 2023 (77,130) already had surpassed all the arrivals in 2022. These account for 35% per cent of outgoing movements from the East and Horn of Africa. Three quarters of these arrivals transited through Djibouti, while the remaining quarter crossed the Gulf of Aden from Somalia.

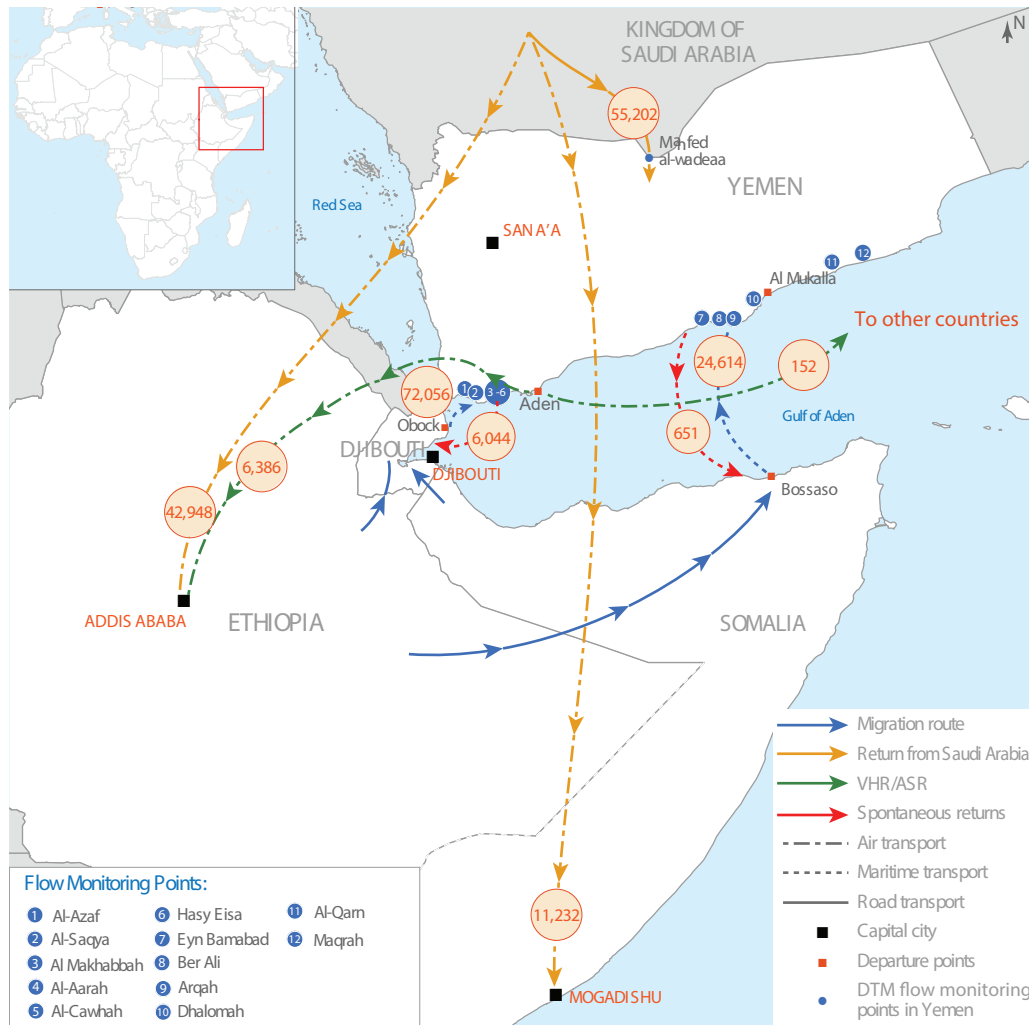
In addition, 16,800 return movements to the East and Horn of Africa were recorded by DTM; these amount to 4 per cent of total movements along the Eastern Corridor. Nearly all return movements (97%) were to Ethiopia. Smaller return movements were also noted to Djibouti (2%) and Somalia (1%). Meanwhile, there were 109,400 forced returns from Saudi Arabia to Yemen (55,200) and the Horn of Africa (54,200).

Most of the movements recorded along the Eastern Corridor in 2023 were by men (68%), with women (21%) and children (8% boys and 3% girls) representing 32 per cent. Of the 44,400 children, 75% were boys and 25% girls and more than one third were travelling alone (15,300), most of whom were boys (70%). Compared to the sex and age disaggregation of outgoing movements, DTM registered a slightly higher share of men (75%) and children (15%) among returnees.

Remarkably, movements along the Eastern Corridor through Sudan decreased by more than half (-67%) between 2022 (23,100) and 2023 (7,500) after the conflict began in mid April.

A shift in migration dynamics was observed over the course of the year. Movements in 2023 were concentrated in the first half of the year, with 80 per cent of arrivals in Yemen recorded between January and June. Until August 2023, migration through Yemen was dominated by arrivals of Ethiopians from Djibouti. However, military campaigns in Yemen's Lahj governorate in mid-2023 led to a plunge in arrival numbers from Obock. Consequently, most migrants arriving in Yemen since September crossed from Somalia. This shift in the makeup of the migrant arrivals along the Eastern Corridor also entailed a shift in the recorded drivers of migration. While migration through Djibouti remains largely economically driven, the Somalia route tends to see more conflict-induced movements. In addition, one fifth of those leaving the Somali region of Ethiopia reported escaping environmental hazards exacerbated by climate change, while more than one in ten of those departing from Tigray did so due to conflict, violence, or persecution (15%).

The IOM Missing Migrants Project documented the deaths and disappearances of 701 migrants along this corridor in 2023. The most frequent cause of death was violence (515), largely at the Yemen–Saudi Arabia border and in Somalia, followed by drowning (105) mainly in two incidents in August and September 2023 in which overcrowded and unseaworthy boats capsized in the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Other frequent causes of death were lack of adequate shelter, water, and food (26), particularly while journeying through rough and remote terrain in Djibouti and Somalia, and vehicle accident linked to hazardous transport (23). In addition, migrants are known to die or go missing in Yemen as a result of deliberate targeting by armed groups; being extorted, exploited and abused by smugglers and traffickers; or disappearing during forced transfers by authorities.

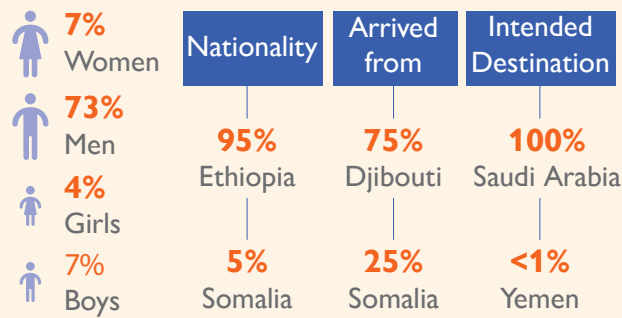


This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

<sup>1</sup> Flow monitoring is a component of the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) that tracks movement flows, profiles of movers and the overall situation at key points of origin, transit locations, and points of entry. For more information, see the [DTM Methodological Framework](#).

## YEMEN ARRIVALS FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA

**96,670** Migrants arrived in Yemen through flow monitoring

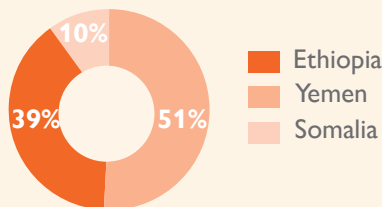


Migrant arrivals at the shores of Yemen from Djibouti and Somalia increased by 32 per cent from 2022 (73,230). Around three-quarters (70%) of arrivals were tracked in the Lahj governorate, where Ethiopian migrants crossing the Bab al-Mandab via Djibouti typically disembark, while the rest were tracked in Shabwah (26%) and Hadramaut (4%). In March 2023, the highest number of monthly arrivals were tracked (20,020) since data collection began in 2018. However, the third trimester of 2023 saw a drop in arrivals to the levels seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. This drop can be attributed to intensified operations by the Yemen and Djibouti Coast Guards to prevent and intercept journeys, as well as raids by Yemen authorities to capture the boats and other property of smugglers, resulting in surge pricing of maritime passage, a decrease in the availability of departing boats, stranded migrants in Obock, and migrant returns from Djibouti. Due to these operations, a trend was observed at the end of the year in which migrants departing from Obock took a 450 km detour in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, increasing the risk of shipwreck, and disembarked at the coast of Shabwah. After an unusually high numbers of women arrivals in 2022 (14,600), the number of women arriving in Yemen in 2023 did so at half the numbers. The number of children more than doubled (+140%), totalling almost 20,000. Although most people reported moving for economic reasons (79%, compared to 84% in 2022), one in five reported being driven by conflict, violence or persecution (21%, compared to 16% in 2022).

## FORCED RETURNS FROM THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

**109,382** Migrants returned from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia, Yemen and Somalia

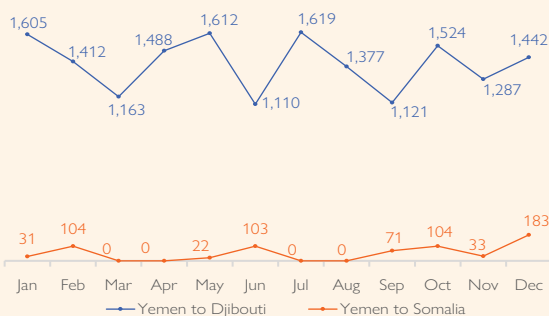
Nationals Returned



In 2023, 109,400 people were forcibly returned from Saudi Arabia to Yemen (55,200), Ethiopia (42,900) and Somalia (11,200). Migrants repatriated to Ethiopia were registered by IOM upon arrival in Addis Ababa and were composed of 81 per cent men, 12 per cent women, 4 per cent boys and 3 per cent girls. Over one in four children was under five years (29%). Of the migrants returned to Ethiopia, 95 per cent intended to return to the intermittently conflict-affected areas of Amhara (35%), Tigray (34%) and Afar (26%). Overall, forced returns to Ethiopia were about half the number returned in 2022 (93,537), partially attributed to a five-month pause in returns from May through September 2023. In Yemen, the number of returns decreased by 16 per cent from 2022 and most returnees were men (94%), followed by women (2%), boys (2%) and girls (2%). Around three-fifths of children were boys (61%) and two-fifths girls (39%). The most frequently reported destinations of returnees in Yemen were Al Mahwit (17%), Ibb (15%) and Hajjah (15%). In Somalia, returns decreased by a quarter from 2022 (15,061), although IOM has incomplete data for these returns in 2023.

## SPONTANEOUS RETURNS FROM YEMEN

**16,760** Migrant returns from Yemen to Djibouti and Somalia



Due to the harshening situation in Yemen for migrants and the challenges in moving onwards towards Saudi Arabia, many migrants opted to return to the Horn of Africa. Around 16,800 migrants were tracked through Flow Monitoring returning to the Horn of Africa, mostly through Obock (75%) and Tadjourah (12%). This represents a slight decrease from the returns tracked in 2022 (17,100). However, the last four months of 2023 observed a 18% increase in the return movements (5,400) when compared with the same period of 2022 (4,600). This is linked with the operations against irregular migration carried out by authorities in the Lahj governorate since August 2023, during which some migrants were deported by sea to Yemen.

Most of the returning migrants in 2023 transited through Djibouti (97%), and around a quarter of them (24%) were women (10%) and children (14%). Notably, more than half (59%) of children were travelling alone, most of whom were boys (72%). Additionally, key informants in Somalia reported that around 650 migrants spontaneously returned from Yemen, with women (36%) and children (28%) representing more than half of these returns.

## IOM ASSISTED RETURNS FROM YEMEN

**6,386** Migrants assisted by IOM to return home from Yemen



Through its voluntary humanitarian return programme, IOM provides safe, voluntary, and dignified return solutions to migrants stranded in Yemen. In total, 6,538 migrants stranded in Yemen were returned to their countries of origin in 2023, 968 of whom were children (67%, or 652 unaccompanied). As was the case in previous years, the majority of those assisted were Ethiopian nationals (98%). 6,150 migrants (94%) were returned through a total of 31 charter flights and 388 migrants (6%) through commercial flights. 63 per cent of migrants assisted in their return from Yemen were travelling from Aden, whereas 25 per cent set off from Mareb and 12 per cent from Sana'a. All migrants receiving Voluntary Humanitarian Return assistance were individually counselled by case managers and provided with the necessary information to make an informed decision in line with their needs.