

# YEMEN: ANNUAL MIGRATION REPORT 2023



GLOBAL DATA INSTITUTE  
DISPLACEMENT  
TRACKING MATRIX

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#### **Cover photo:**

Waseel, IOM and its partners, including Intersos and the Danish Refugee Council, offer humanitarian assistance to migrant travelers in Lahj and other arrival points, Yemen © IOM 2022.

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## ACRONYMS

AA	Area Assessment
DFA	De-Facto Authority
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FMP	Flow Monitoring Point
FMR	Flow Monitoring Registry
FMS	Flow Monitoring Survey
AA	Area Assessment
HoA	Horn of Africa
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRG	Internationally Recognized Government
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## DEFINITIONS

**Deportation (expulsion)** – A formal act or conduct attributable to a State by which a non-national is compelled to leave the territory of that State.<sup>1</sup>

**Migrants** - An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.<sup>2</sup>

**Return** - In a general sense, the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure.<sup>3</sup>

**Area Assessment** - an assessment conducted to establish a new or update baseline on the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), IDP returnees, and migrants in Yemen.

**Displacement Tracking Matrix** - a system to gathers and analyzes data to disseminate critical multi layered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations that enables decision makers and responders to provide these populations with better context specific assistance.

**Flow Monitoring** - is a DTM component to track movement flows, profiles of movers and the overall situation at key points of origin, transit locations, and points of entry.<sup>4</sup>

**Flow Monitoring Point** - location/point where migrant arrives in Yemen, leaves from Yemen, or transits in Yemen. The FMP location have been identified through Participatory Migrant Mapping focus group discussion involving IOM team and various entities such as local authorities, local communities and humanitarian actors actively presence in the area. However, FMP exact location can be changed within the same area (especially in coastal area) as the arrival or departure points may change from time to time.<sup>5</sup>

**Flow Monitoring Registry** - a process of counting all individuals arriving (including returning) to Yemen and leaving from Yemen through pre-identified FMP.<sup>5</sup>

**Flow Monitoring Survey** - a face-to-face interview to obtain core information of migrants such as demographic and economic profile as well as further detail thematic information of migration such as mobility history, reason for migration, vulnerability, and intention.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2019). IOM Glossary (No. 34). Available here (Publication date: 18 June 2019).

<sup>2</sup> \_ibid

<sup>3</sup> \_ibid

<sup>4</sup> IOM (2023). What is DTM. [FAQ on DTM for Clusters\\_0.pdf](#) (iom.int) (accessed on 1 April 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Defined for Yemen context only and it may be different with the same terminology used for DTM Operation in other countries.

## INTRODUCTION

Every year, tens of thousands of Ethiopian and Somali migrants embark on the high-risk journey from their countries of origin towards Somalia and Djibouti, with an intention to reach the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Countries through Yemen. Yemen is located strategically in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Migrants from East Africa and the Horn of Africa (HoA), notably from Ethiopia and Somalia, have been travelling to Yemen for decades in search of refuge and employment opportunities. Despite the domestic conflict that broke out in 2015 followed by economic decline and institutional collapse, Yemen remains a frequently travelled transit country for migrants.

According to IOM's DTM Area Assessment Report in September 2023, Yemen hosts over 42,000 migrants across accessible locations in ten of the 12 assessed IRG controlled governorates.<sup>6</sup> The majority of migrants living in Yemen came from Ethiopia (88%) in addition to 12 per cent from Somalia and less than one per cent from other countries according to this stock figure. Please note that information on migrant stocks will differ from data on migration flows as migrants tend to remain in Yemen for months to years before moving on to further destinations. In the same year, a total of 96,670 migrants, 79 per cent Ethiopian and 21 per cent Somali nationals, were observed traveling towards Yemen.<sup>7</sup>

Migration in the HoA continues to be triggered by persistent insecurity and conflict, environmental degradation, harsh climatic conditions, public health emergencies, socioeconomic drivers, and traditional seasonal factors. Recognizing the importance of information about migrants in Yemen and its mixed flows, the IOM DTM team in Yemen aims to report on migration statistics and drivers throughout this report. This Yemen Annual Migration Report 2023 is presenting information on the flow of migrants to Yemen (Non-Yemeni and returnee Yemeni migrants) at transit, departure or arrival points, the profile of migrants who live in various locations in Yemen, challenges faced by migrants, and their intentions.

In light of the above objectives, the report is organized according to the following sections. Following key findings, the first section on flows presents the migrant arrivals (non-Yemeni and returnee Yemeni migrants) and trends. This section also includes the routes they took and drivers. The subsequent section on migrant profiles presents findings on migration networks, migratory drivers, migrant backgrounds, routes and challenges during migration journeys. This section also summarizes information on intentions. The last section on stocks focuses on numbers and locations of migrants living in Yemen and their immediate needs.



Waseel, a member of IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) team, records information of migrants who arrived to Yemen's shores on the coastline in Lahj, Yemen © IOM 2024.

<sup>6</sup> IOM, 2024. DTM Yemen – Yemen - Area Assessment 2023 | Round 39 Report . [DTM Yemen - Area Assessment Round 39 Report | Displacement Tracking Matrix \(iom.int\)](#).

<sup>7</sup> IOM, 2023. Migration Along the Eastern Corridor: Report no 46. Regional Data Hub for MENA [Eastern Corridor Report \(December 2023\) | IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa](#).

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection Components and Limitations

The Annual Migration Report 2023 presents a comprehensive analysis of the migration data collected using three different components implemented by IOM's DTM Team in Yemen, namely Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR), the Area Assessment's migrant component (AA) and the Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS).

#### 1. Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR)

Aims at tracking all individuals entering and exiting Yemen through Flow Monitoring Points (FMP), regardless of their nationality. The teams work in strategically chosen coast and land border stretches to collect the data between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., five days a week. Besides collecting data directly at FMPs, the team very often rely on information provided by key informants as the occurrence of migrant arrivals, departures or deportees happened after or before working time. Combining data from both methods maximizes the accuracy of available data. However, not all migration flows in Yemen are recorded due to FMR coverage limitations. These are most commonly linked to security and bureaucratic constraints.

#### 2. Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS)

The survey is conducted by 20 enumerators across 6 governorates during working days throughout the year. Data is collected by interviewing key informants (at location or administrative level) and migrant at Flow monitoring Points (when access allows). The FMS survey is not administered to children under the age of 14 years old, nor does it include migrants who have participated within the previous six months. Findings are limited to IRG controlled areas. Additional information collected include more details on demographics, socio-economic backgrounds, travel history, travel intentions and needs. The data is compiled and published in a quarterly FMS report.

#### 3. Area Assessment (AA)

Data is collected by enumerators at location level through an extensive network of Key Informants (KIs) within the operational area (IRG). DTM deploys enumerators who are in regular communication with the KI networks throughout the assessment and work continuously to maintain and expand this network to further triangulate the displacement statistics collected. DTM enumerators, along with KIs, use the Sub-Area Assessment tool to capture locations, which are matched to identified locations in the OCHA's Common Operational Dataset (P-Codes). Since the data was collected during specific time frame in 2023, figures do not necessarily represent the reality of these population figures at the end of 2023. The Area Assessment is conducted annually and also includes figures on IDP and IDP returnee populations.

### Statistical Note

Please note that some charts and graphs percentages are rounded up, and they may not add up to exactly 100 per cent. This discrepancy occurs because each percentage is rounded independently, leading to a slight deviation when all rounded percentages are summed up.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



### Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR)

In 2023, IOM Yemen DTM team recorded 97,210 migrants entering Yemen through three coastal governorates namely: Lahj, Shabwah, and Hadramawt. The majority of migrants were Ethiopian males, intended to go to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the same period, 55,402 Yemeni returnees from KSA were recorded: 94 per cent were deported after irregular entry and six per cent returned by obtaining a final exit stamp.

### Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS)

To further investigate the profiles of migrants, the DTM team interviewed a total of 10,716 migrants in six governorates. Ethiopian nationals constituted 94 per cent of the interviewed migrants and six per cent were Somali nationals. Seven out of ten of the overall interviewed migrants intended to go to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as their final destination.

### Area Assessment (AA)

Through the Area Assessment, DTM team found an estimated 42,073 migrants individual living across ten governorates with Ethiopian nationality being the dominant group (88%). Around 35 per cent migrants intended to stay in Yemen during the next three months after assessment, 55 per cent intended to move elsewhere, and nine per cent intended to return to their country of origin.

## FLOW MONITORING REGISTRY (FMR)

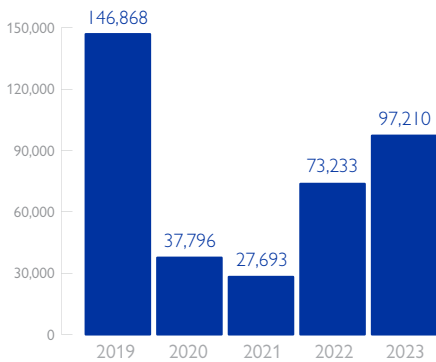
### The Arrivals of Non-Yemeni Migrants

Every year, tens of thousands of migrants, especially Ethiopian and Somali nationals, take the risky journey crossing the Gulf of Aden for an opportunity to have a better quality of life by trying to take advantage of opportunities in the Gulf countries. The southern part of Yemen, as the nearest country for migration through the embarkation points in Somalia and Djibouti, becomes a pivotal point for migrants through two main routes: the south-eastern route (which includes the Governorates of Shabwah, Hadramawt, and Al Maharah) and the north-eastern route (which includes the governorates of Lahj and Ta'iz).

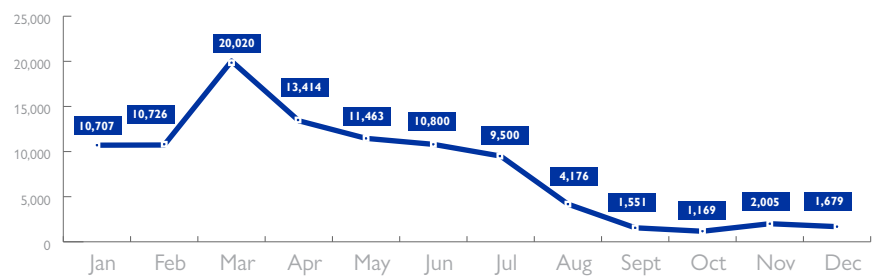
### Arrival Trends

The DTM's FMR teams identified 97,210 migrants arrived in Yemen in 2023, marking an increase of 33 per cent compared to the total arrivals in 2022 (73,233). Looking at the trend for the last five years, the number of arrivals in 2019 was the highest with 146,868 individuals, whereas the lowest was in 2021 with 28,148 individuals likely due to various travel restrictions imposed globally to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Total migrant arrivals by year



Monthly comparison of migration flow during 2023 (n= 97,210)



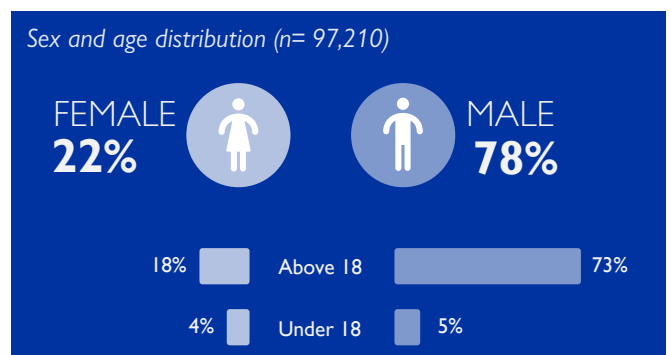
In 2023, the highest number of arrivals was recorded in March. Furthermore, the trend shows occasional fluctuation between January and July 2023, with a monthly average of migrant arrivals standing at 11,102 individuals. The number of arrivals decreased from August to December 2023, with a monthly average of 2,000 individuals. The decline over the last five months of 2023 can be attributed to 'the joint military campaign' against smuggling by Security Forces in Lahj.

### Demographic Profile

An analysis of age and sex disaggregation shows that the majority of migrants were male (78% of the total), with 73 per cent men above 18 years old and five per cent boys under the age of 18 years old. Female travelers made up 22 per cent of the total, of which 18 per cent were women above the age of 18 and four per cent were girls under the age of 18.

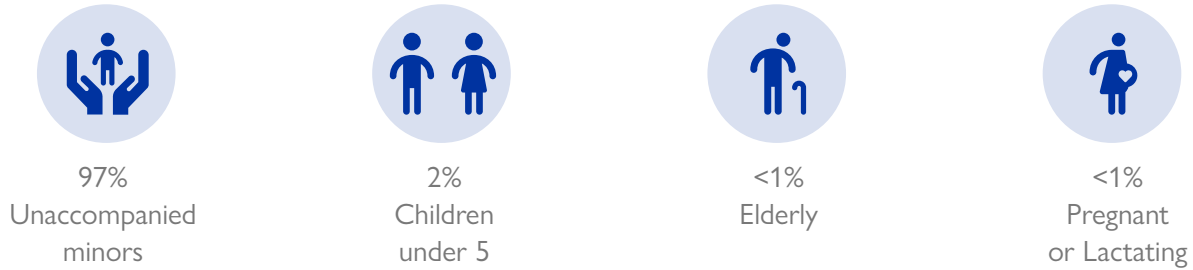
The majority of migrants (95%) were Ethiopian nationals (74% men, 17% women, 5% boys and 4% girls) while Somali nationals constituted five per cent (57% men, 32% women, 6% boys and 5% girls). Less than one per cent had other nationalities.

Among all migrants, 2,512 individuals were identified as vulnerable. The largest group of vulnerable migrants was unaccompanied minors (2,441 individuals). The other vulnerable groups consisted of 58 children under the age of five years old, elderly (7 individuals), and six pregnant or lactating women.





Migrants with vulnerabilities (n= 2,512)



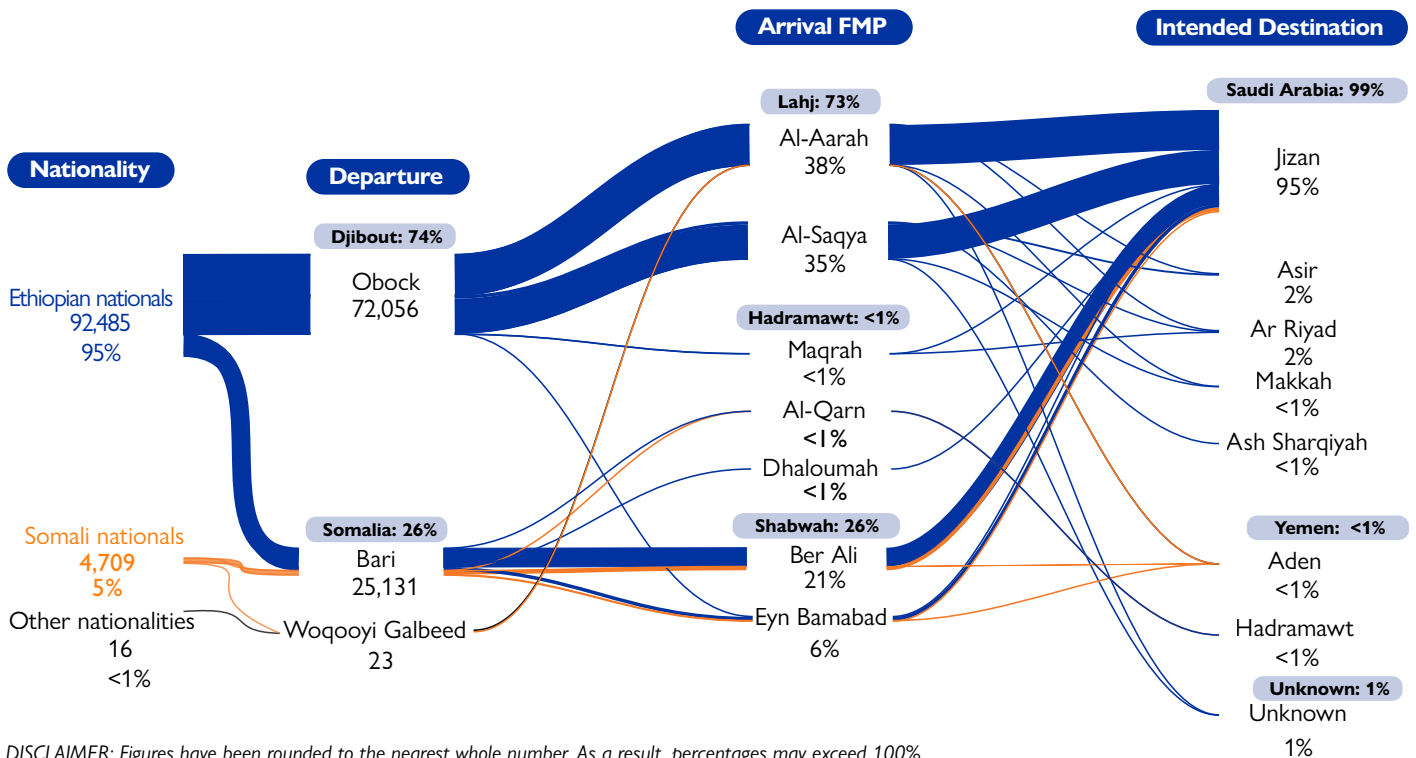
Migratory Routes and Drivers

The migration departure points are located in two countries, Djibouti (departure points are in Obock Region) and Somalia (departure points are in Bari Region and Woqooyi Galbeed point). Ethiopian migrants mostly (78%) embarked through departure points in Obock (Djibouti) with intention to reach the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as final destination, particularly to Jizan Governorate (95%) and to the governorates of Ar Riyad, Ash Sharqiyah, Asir and Makkah. The remaining (22%) of Ethiopian migrants embarked through departure points in Bari Region (Somalia) with almost all intending to reach Jizan Governorate, KSA.

Somali migrants mostly embarked through departure points in Bari (Somalia) with intention to go to Jizan Governorate, KSA (94%) and the governorates of Aden (5%) and Hadramawt in Yemen (<1%). A small proportion of Somali migrants (<1%) who embarked through Woqooyi Galbeed region (Somalia) intended to go to Aden Governorate, Yemen, as their final destination.

A small proportion of migrants holding nationalities other than Ethiopia and Somalia were also recorded, all of whom intended to go to Aden Governorate, Yemen, as their final destination.

Movement from country of departure to FMPs and intended destination by nationality (n= 97,210)



DISCLAIMER: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages may exceed 100%

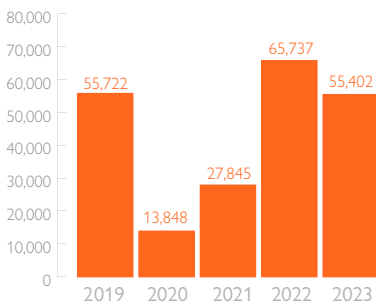
Migrants, regardless of their nationality, expressed two main reasons that drive them to make the decision to migrate. Economic reasons for improving living conditions, such as seeking jobs with higher wages/salaries, were expressed by 79 per cent of migrants. The second common reason, expressed by 21 per cent of migrants, was related to safety and security in their home countries, including fleeing from conflict, persecution, and other forms of security instability. Please note that these reasons are most commonly based on information collected from key informants. Reasons for travel collected in the Flow Monitoring Survey are more reliable as these rely on direct interviews.

## YEMENI MIGRANT RETURNEES

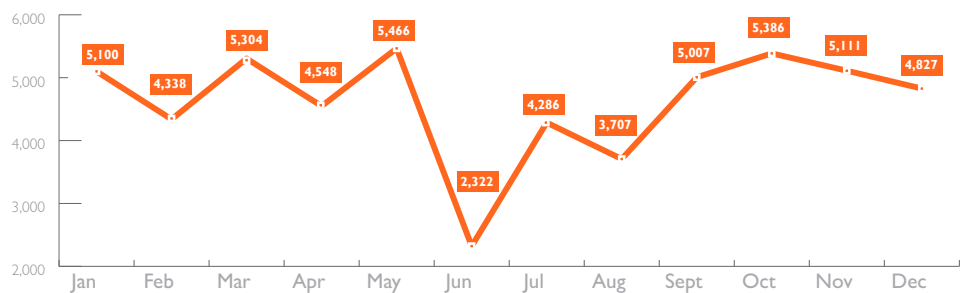
### Returnee Trends

In 2023, the Al Wadeeah<sup>8</sup> border crossing point in Hadramawt Governorate recorded a total of 55,402 Yemeni migrants returning. This equates to an average of approximately 4,600 individuals per month. The team stationed at the border crossing reported a decrease of 16 per cent compared to the number of returnees recorded in the previous year. The monthly trend over the course of the year exhibited some fluctuations. The highest monthly figure was recorded in May with a total of 5,466 individuals. However, there was a significant decrease in June with only 2,322 individuals crossing the border. Despite this decline, the numbers gradually increased again in subsequent months but generally remained below the peak reached in May.

Total Yemeni returnees by year

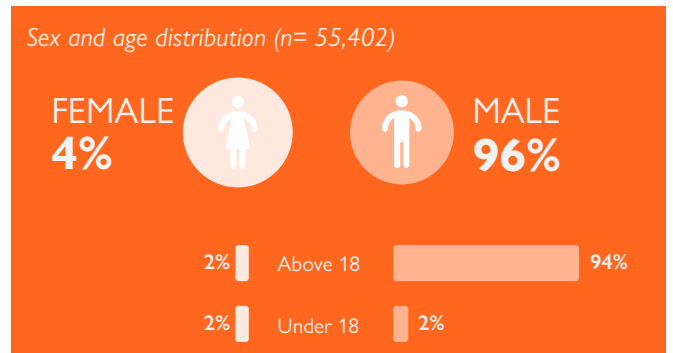


Monthly comparison of Yemeni returnees during 2023 (n= 55,402)

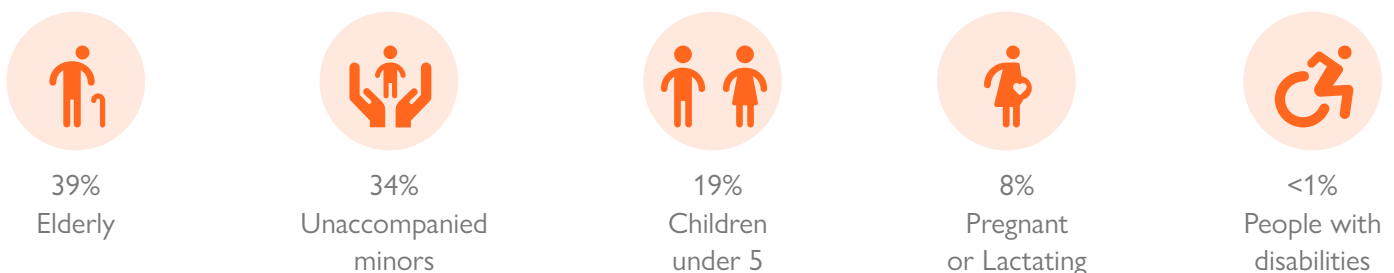


### Demographic Profile

Male Yemeni nationals constituted the majority of returnees (96%), with 94 per cent of men and two per cent of boys. The remaining four per cent consisted of women (2%) and girls (2%). Among the total, 995 individuals were identified as vulnerable persons, with the majority being elderly (39%), unaccompanied minors (34%), and children under 5 years (19%).



Returning Yemeni Migrant Vulnerabilities (n= 995)



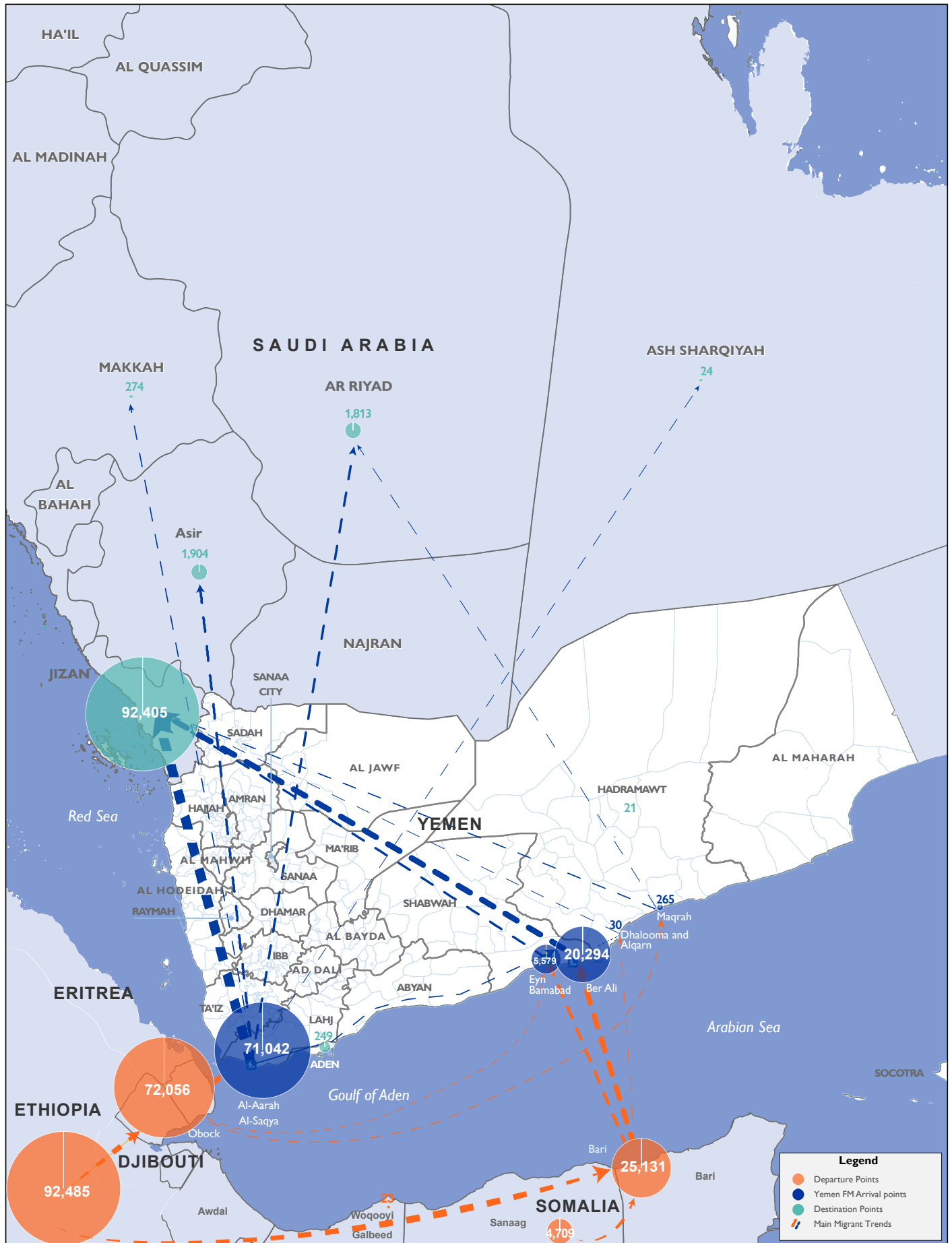
DISCLAIMER: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages may exceed 100%

### Returnee Origin and Drivers

All Yemeni returnees through the Al Wadeeah border crossing point reported the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as their country of embarkation. It is worth noting that 94 per cent of Yemeni returnees were deported by the KSA's authority after crossing the international border irregularly, and only six per cent returned after receiving an official exit stamp. Due to access limitations, the team was unable to further verify the origin and details of the migration drivers of the returnees. However, key informants stated that a total of 43 per cent of returnees embarked from Najran Governorate in KSA.

<sup>8</sup> Please refer to [Logistic cluster website](#) for detail information about Al Wadeeah border crossing point.

Map of Flow Monitoring Registry during 2023



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

## FLOW MONITORING SURVEY (FMS)

The Flow Monitoring Survey was carried out in six accessible Governorates within IRG areas, specifically in the Governorates of Lahj, Shabwah, Aden, Ma'rib, Al Maharah, and Hadramawt. Initially, in early 2023, the survey took place in four Governorates. Al Maharah Governorate and Hadramawt Governorate were subsequently included during the second quarter of 2023.

The DTM team conducted interviews with a total of 10,716 migrants. Lahj had the highest percentage of interviews (32%), while Hadramawt had the lowest (4%).

### Respondent Profile

More than 95 per cent of respondents were male, with 86 per cent above 18 years old and 11 per cent under 18. Furthermore, female respondents accounted for three per cent of the total respondents.

In terms of education, a significant proportion (66%) of respondents held primary education degrees or below. The unemployment rate among the interviewed migrants stood at 86 per cent.

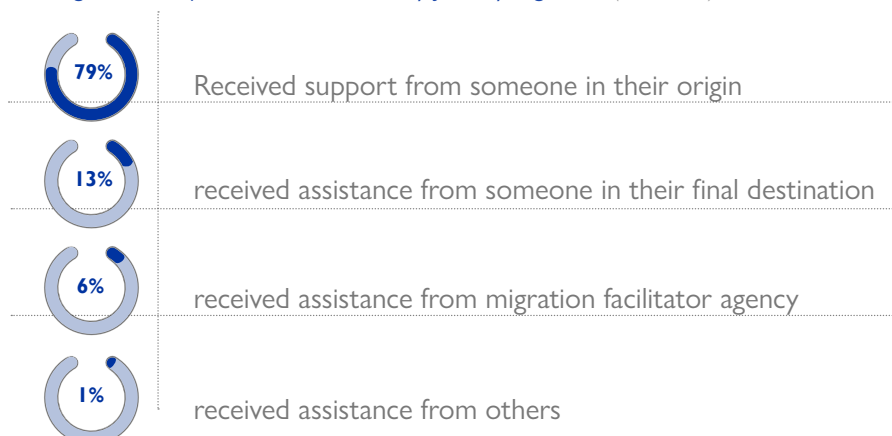
The majority of the interviewed migrant population were Ethiopian nationals (94%) followed by Somali nationals (almost 6%), while other nationalities made up less than one per cent.

More than 75 per cent of respondents lived in rural areas in their country of origin; however, interpreting their knowledge of agricultural and farming sectors (including fisheries and plantations) is challenging due to limitations in indicators relevant to their understanding of these sectors.

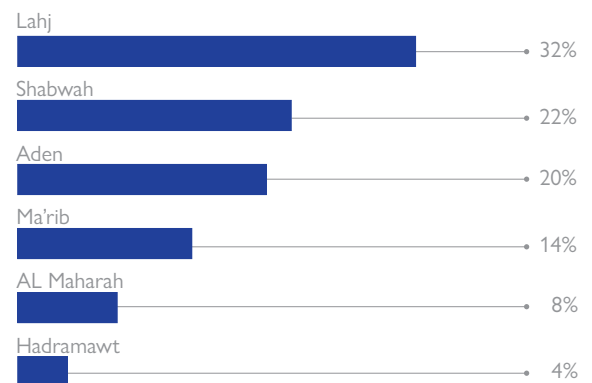
### Migration Network

The survey revealed that 53 per cent of migrants had someone help them in organizing their travels. Among those with plan, 79 per cent received support from someone in their origin, 13 per cent received assistance from someone in their final destination, six per cent received assistance from migration facilitator agency, and one per cent received assistance from other than mentioned before.

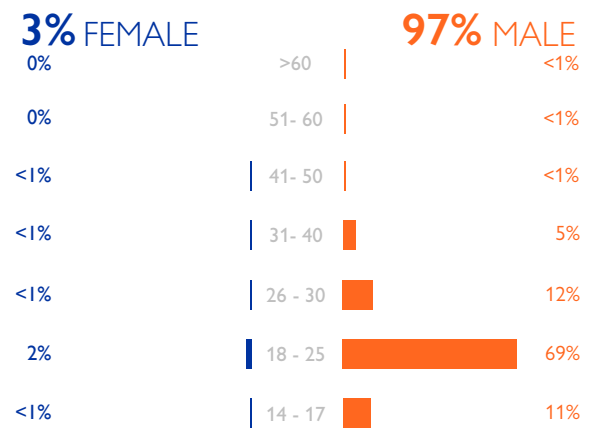
Migrants who planned their travel - by journey organizer (n= 5,669)



Total migrants interviewed by governorate of survey (n= 10,716)



Sex and age distribution (n= 10,716)

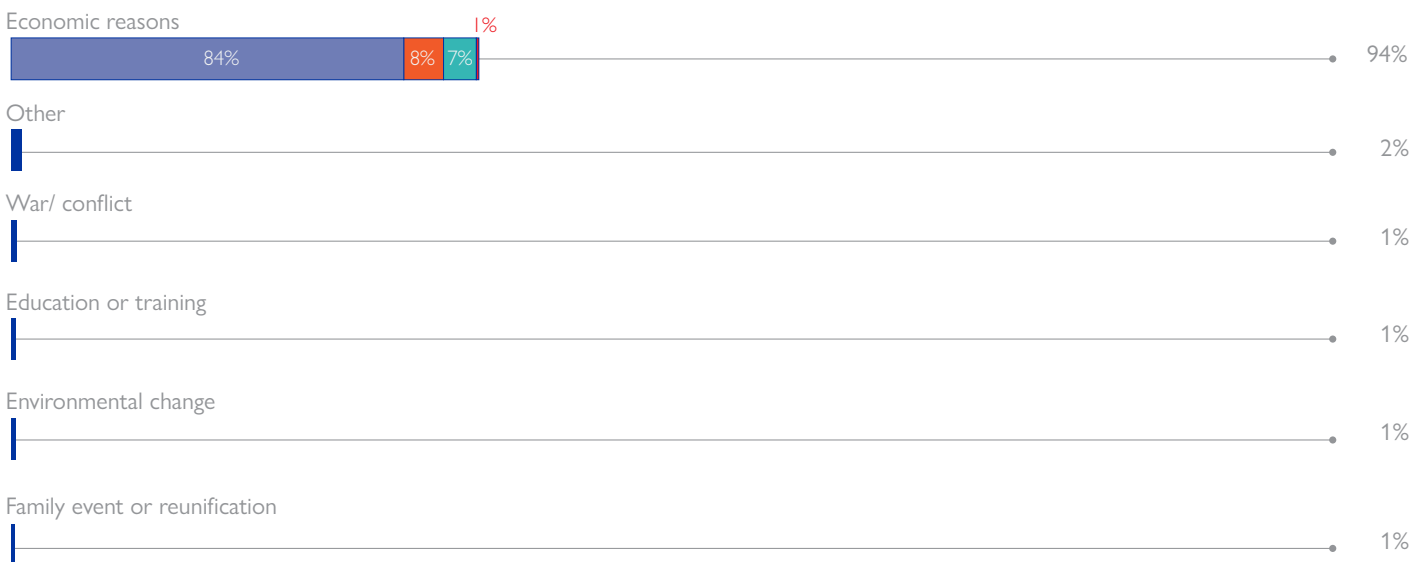


### Migration Route and Drivers

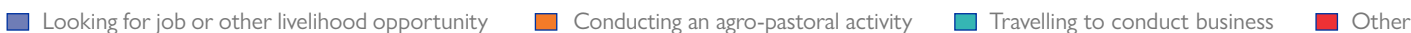
Almost all Somali nationals (99%) and a small proportion of Ethiopian nationals (22%) travelled from embarkation points in Bari Region, Somalia, to the Governorate of Shabwah in Yemen while the majority of Ethiopian nationals (77%) traveled through the south-eastern route from Obock Region, Djibouti.

The majority of migrants (94%) cited economic reasons as their primary reason for migration such as looking for better job opportunities (84%), working in agro-pastoral sector (8%), business (7%) and regular trip for work or shopping (1%). On the other hand, a small proportion (4%) stated conflict, education, family events or reunification, or slow environmental change as reasons for travel.

Reason for travel (n= 10,716)



#### Breakdown of economic reasons:

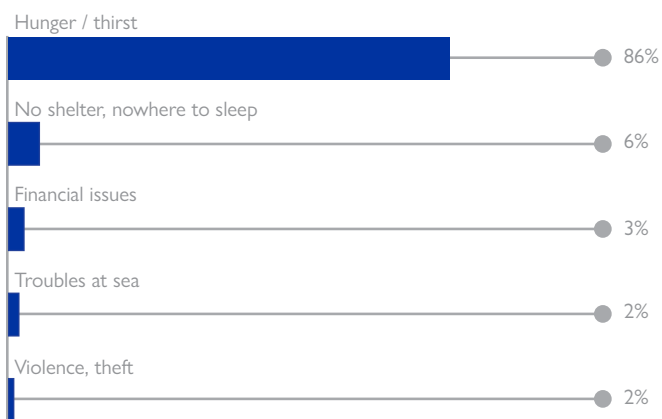


More than one third (35%) of interviewed migrants stated that they will have secured job or business opportunities at their destination. Around 89 per cent of those will work in the sector related to agriculture, forestry, and animal grazing (agro-pastoral activity). Furthermore, 55 per cent of respondents stated that they will not have jobs arranged at destinations upon arrival.

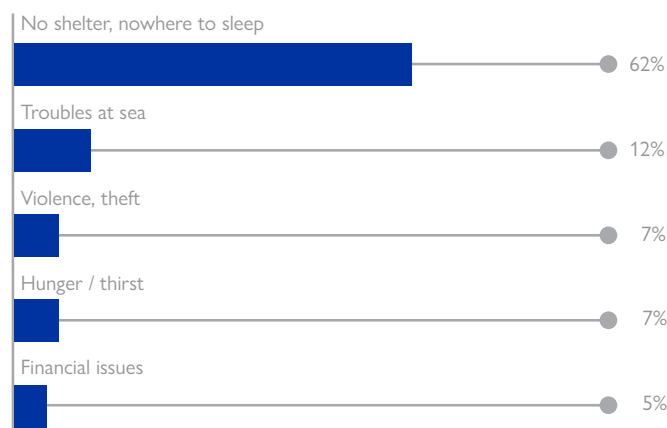
### Migratory Challenges

Respondents agreed that migrating through Djibouti was riskier and more difficult than going through Somalia. Walking long distances under the heat, lack of shelter, food, and drinking water were some common examples of challenges migrants usually faced. Additionally, the lack of dignity kits posed an additional challenge for female migrants.

Primary challenges (n= 10,429)



Secondary challenges (n= 10,429)

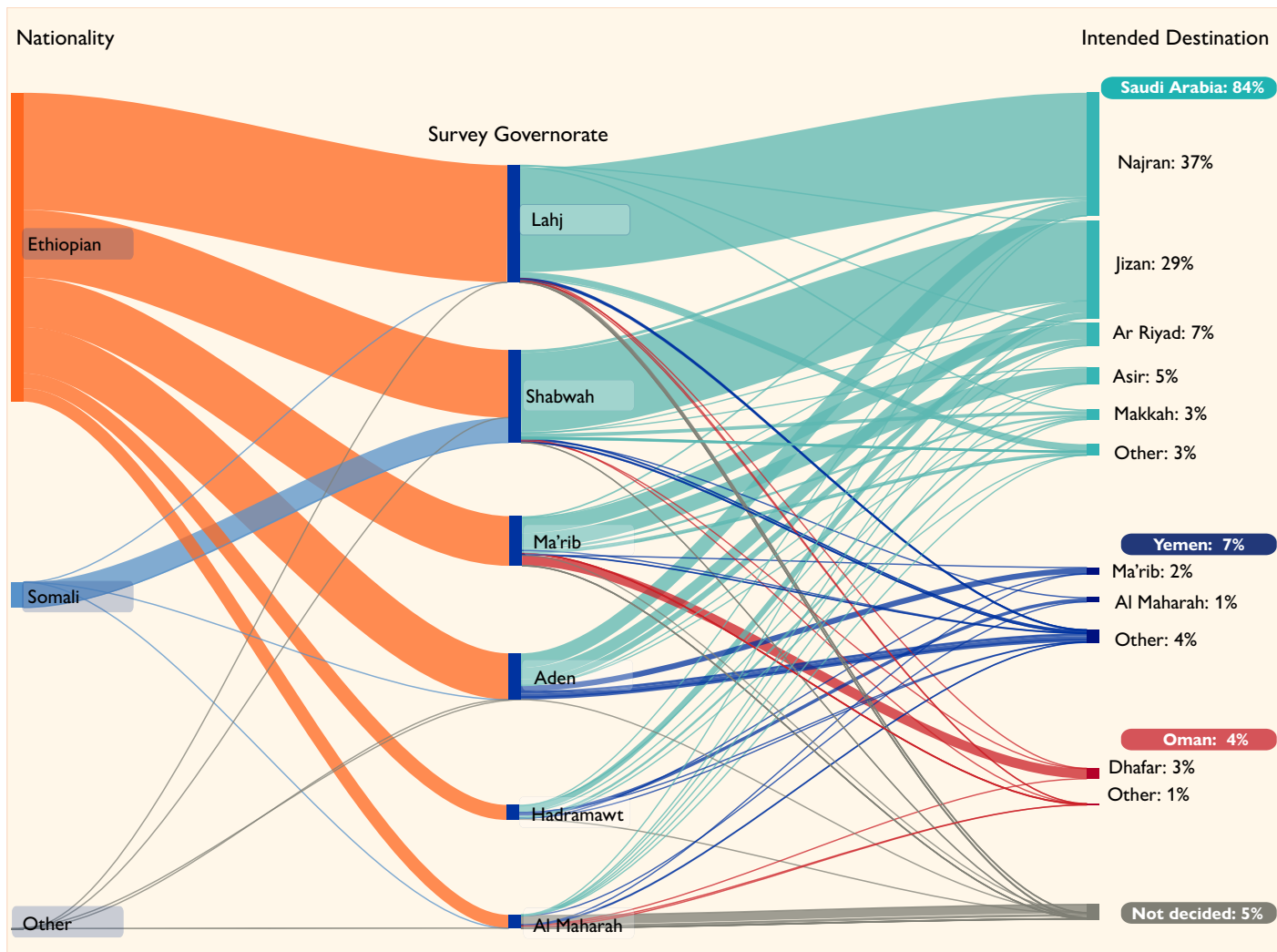


### Intended Destination

More than 8,000 migrants (80% of the total) stated that they were transiting through the location where they were interviewed in Yemen with the intention to continue to their final destination, although the destination of many migrants had changed from their original plan. Many governorates in KSA, such as Najran, Jizan, Riyadh, Asir, and Makkah, remained the main destinations for the majority of migrants (84%), especially those who were staying in Lahj, Shabwah, Ma'rib, and Aden. Another seven per cent of migrants intended to go to other governorates in Yemen, while four per cent intended to go to Oman, and around five per cent had not yet decided on their final destination.

Among respondents who decided on their final destination, half (50%) chose the destination over others based on attractive socio-economic opportunity, whereas four per cent chose the destination based on the accessibility of asylum procedures. Others chose the destination for career opportunities like farming.

Nationality and intended destination - new journey (n= 8,475)

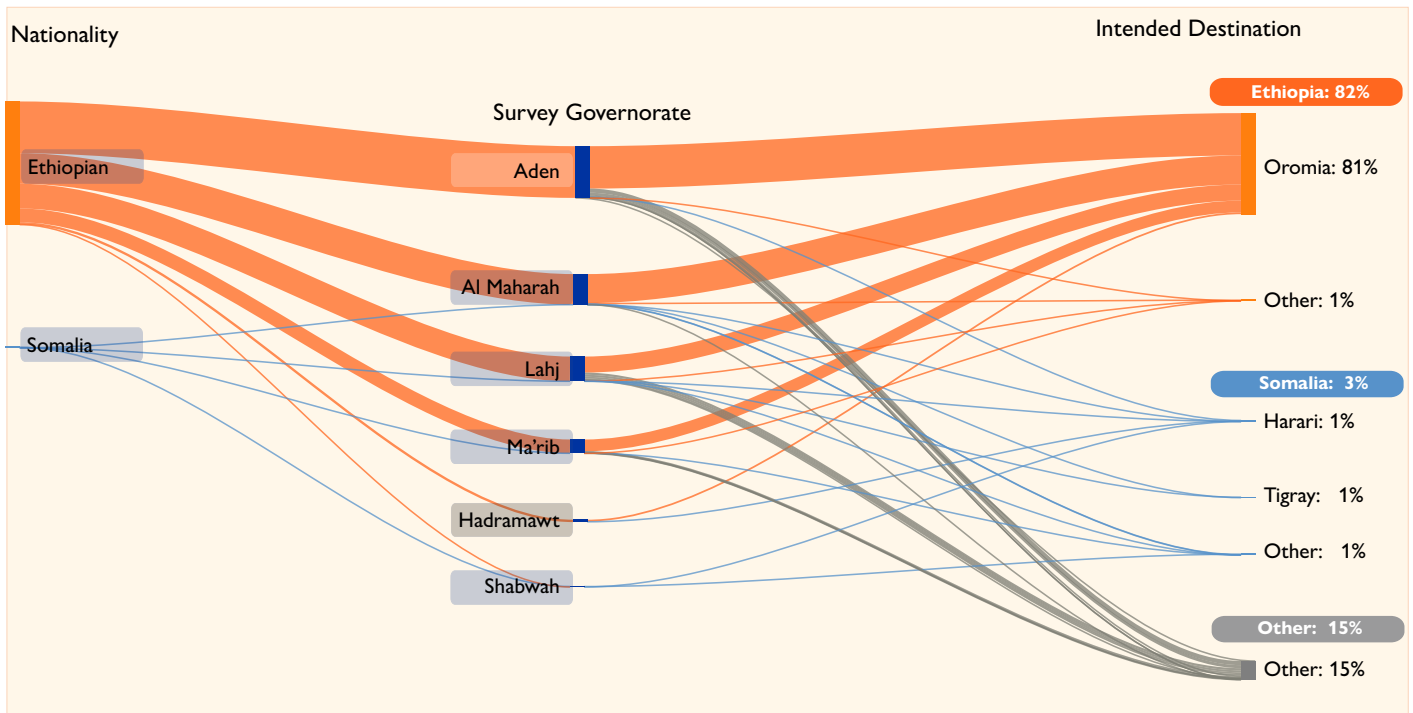


### Return Intention

A small proportion of respondents (20%) stated their intention to leave Yemen, either to return to their country of origin or to the country they departed from (particularly KSA). This intention commonly arose as migrants were unable to reach their intended final destination due to various reasons, including restrictions due to conflict or lack of valid documents to cross official borders. The intention also arose because migrants were unable to fulfill their migration purposes, while a small proportion stated that they wanted to return to their habitual place of dwelling after a visit for specific reasons such as visiting family or marriage.

Migrants who wanted to leave Yemen were mostly Ethiopian nationals (99%) living in various locations in Yemen, such as the governorates of Aden, Al Maharah, Lahj, and Ma'rib. Overall, the majority (81%) intended to return to the Oromia Region in Ethiopia, while around 14 per cent intended to go to various governorates in KSA such as Najran, Jizan, and Makkah.

Nationality and intended destination - returning journey (n= 2,241)

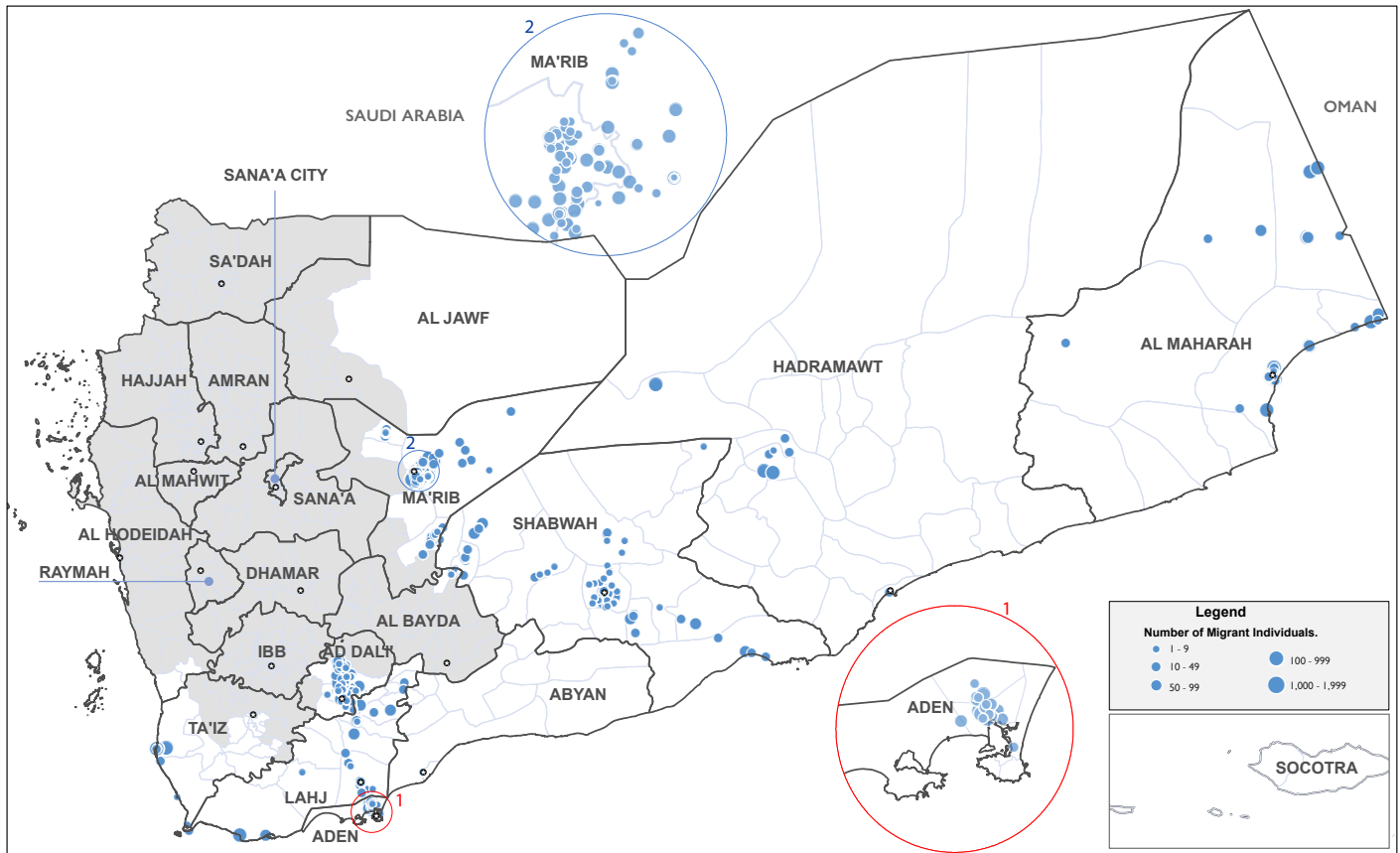


Nasser Ramah, IOM DTM team in partnership with IOM Health team, offering humanitarian assistance to migrant travelers in Shabwah and other arrival points, Yemen © IOM 2024.

## AREA ASSESSMENT (AA)

The DTM Area Assessment (Round 39) implemented between July to September 2023 in 3,688 locations across IRG. The assessment recorded 42,073 migrants living in Yemen at the time of assessment, distributed across 437 locations in 10 out of 13 assessed governorates.

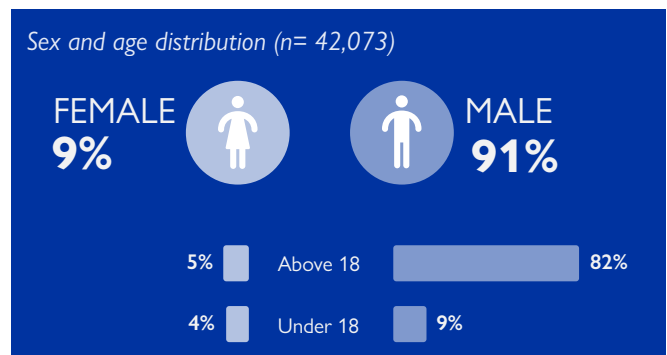
Map of Migrant Presence in Yemen



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

### Demographic Profile

The majority of the overall migrant population were Ethiopian nationals (88%), followed by Somali nationals (12%) and other nationals (<1%). The majority were males above 18 years old (82%), followed by boys under 18 years old (9%). Female migrants constituted only nine per cent of the total recorded migrants, with five per cent of women above 18 years old and four per cent girls under 18 years. The majority of migrants were recorded living in Aden (33%), Ma'rib (28%), Al Maharah (16%), and other governorates (23%).

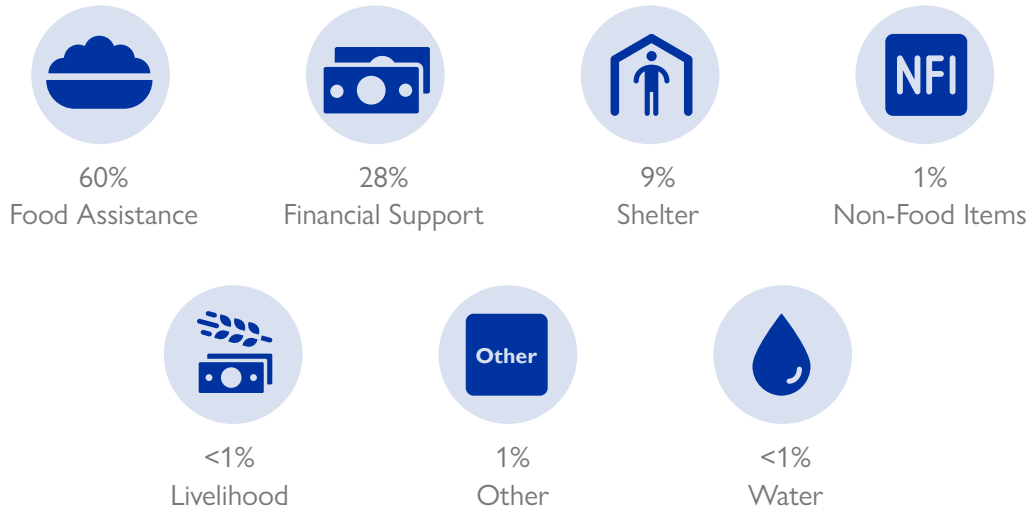




### Immediate Needs

A significant number of migrants in Yemen face challenges in fulfilling their need for food, as 60 per cent of the total stated that food assistance is their immediate need. Additionally, 28 per cent stated a need for financial support, and nine per cent of migrants are in need of shelter assistance. Furthermore, three per cent of migrants stated needs other than food assistance, financial support, and shelter as their immediate needs.

*Migrants' immediate needs according to key informants (n= 42,073)*

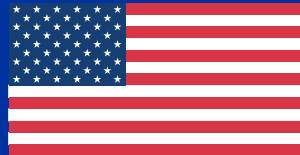


Nasser Ramah, IOM DTM team in partnership with IOM Health team, offering humanitarian assistance to migrant travelers in Shabwah and other arrival points, Yemen © IOM 2024.



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