Irregular migration is a complex, dynamic and fragmented phenomenon, and remains difficult to fully picture. Strengthening the understanding of migration routes, trends as well as migrant profiles is critical to protect migrants and support evidence-based policies[1]. 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 migratory routes[2].

This document presents the resumption of migration from the coasts of West Africa to the Canary Islands (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.

Between January and September 2023, **14,976 migrants reached the Canary Islands** irregularly after crossing by boat from the coasts of West Africa, an increase of 19 per cent compared to 2022 (12,506 migrants)[3].

Nevertheless, risks and dangers along the West African Atlantic route remain and **26 shipwrecks** were recorded along this route in 2023, resulting in the death or disappearance of **424 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, 2023.
(3) IOM DTM and the Spanish Ministry of the Interior: https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals?type=arrivals and https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/.galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2023/18_informe_quincenal_acumulado_01-01_al_30-09-2023.pdf.
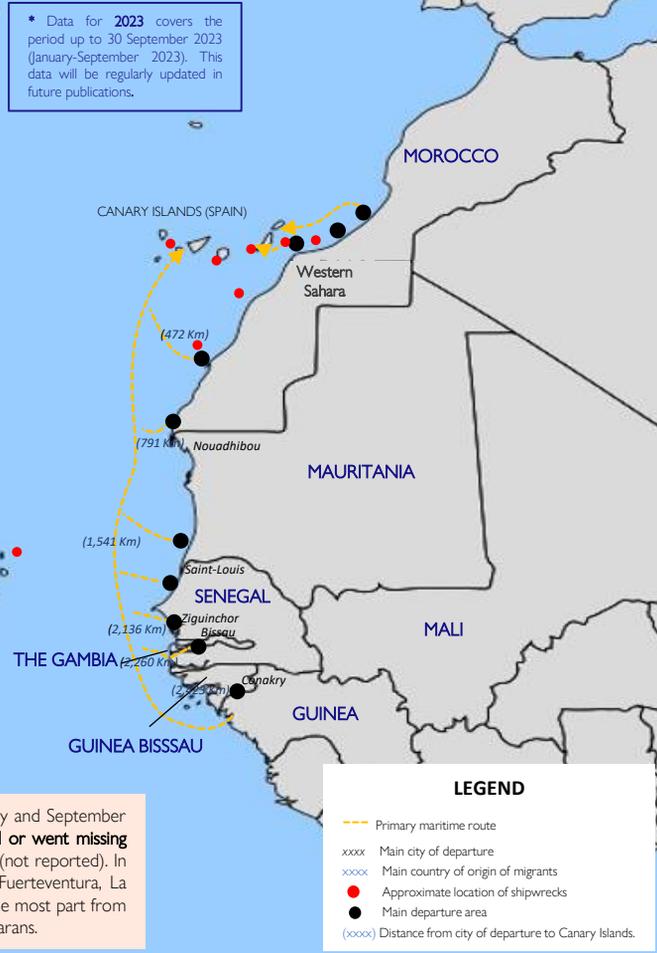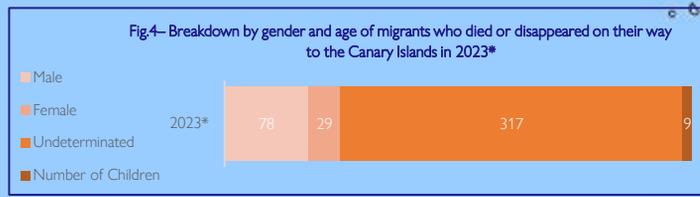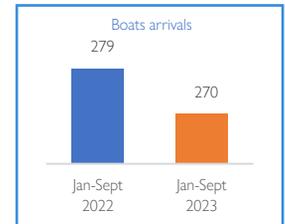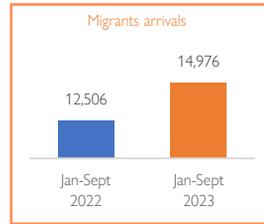
IRREGULAR MIGRATION MOVEMENTS TO THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)

14,976

MIGRANTS arrived in the Canary Islands between January and September 2023 compared to 2022 (12,506 migrants), representing an increase of 19 per cent.

270

BOATS arrived in the Canary Islands between January and September 2023 compared to 2022 (279 boats), representing a decrease of 3 per cent.

Migrants arrivals — Jan-Sept 2022: 12,506; Jan-Sept 2023: 14,976

Boats arrivals — Jan-Sept 2022: 279; Jan-Sept 2023: 270

Fig.2- Ships that reached the Canary Islands and number of ships that failed to reach the Canary Islands. (2018-2023*)
- # of ships that reached en route to the Canary Islands
- # of ships that failed to reach the Canary Islands

Year	Reached	Failed
2018	69	5
2019	129	10
2020	745	40
2021	542	84
2 022	350	45
2023*	270	26

* Data for **2023** covers the period up to 30 September 2023 (January-September 2023). This data will be regularly updated in future publications.

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. (2018-2023*)
- # of irregular migrants who reached en route to the Canary Islands

Year	Reached	Died/disappeared
2018	1,307	45
2019	2,698	210
2020	23,023	849
2021	22,316	1,173
2 022	15,682	543
2023*	14,976	424

Fig.4– Breakdown by gender and age of migrants who died or disappeared on their way to the Canary Islands in 2023*
- Male
- Female
- Undetermined
- Number of Children

2023*: 78 | 29 | 317 | 9

Map with labels: MOROCCO, CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN), Western Sahara, (472 Km), Nouadhibou, (791 Km), MAURITANIA, (1,541 Km), Saint-Louis, SENEGAL, (2,136 Km), Ziguinchor, Bissau, MALI, THE GAMBIA, (2,160 Km), Conakry, (2,???), GUINEA, GUINEA BISSSAU

LEGEND
- Primary maritime route
- xxxx Main city of departure
- xxxx Main country of origin of migrants
- ● Approximate location of shipwrecks
- ● Main departure area
- (xxxx) Distance from city of departure to Canary Islands.

Irregular crossings and incidents are increasing along the West African coasts. Between January and September 2023, **26 shipwrecks** were identified along West Africa Atlantic route and **424 migrants died or went missing** during that period. This figure is probably underestimated as many shipwrecks remain invisible (not reported). In 2023, these shipwrecks took place off Cabo Verde (Boa Vista), Canary Islands (Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, La Gomera), Morocco (Dakhla, near Cape Boujdour, Guelmim, Tan-Tan). The castaways are for the most part from Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Morocco, Mali, Liberia and other unidentified Sub-Saharans.

NOTES 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 non-governmental organisations and the medias**. In 2020, **4Mi stopped collecting data** on dead and missing migrants along migration routes.