

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 in order 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 2020. The risks, deaths and disappearances following shipwrecks are also on the rise along the Atlantic coasts.

Between January and June 2021, 6,952 individuals reached the Canary Islands

irregularly after boat crossing from the coasts of West Africa. This is a 156 per cent increase in arrivals compared to the same period in 2020⁽³⁾.

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, 2021

(3) IOM DTM and the Spanish Ministry of the Interior: <https://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals> and <http://www.interior.gob.es/prensa/balances-e-informes/2020>, June 2021.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION MOVEMENTS TO THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)

6,952

MIGRANTS arrived in the Canary Islands between January and June 2021 compared to 2020 (2,706 migrants), an increase of 156%.

185

BOATS arrived in the Canary Islands between January and June 2021 compared to 2020 (87 arrived), an increase of 112%.

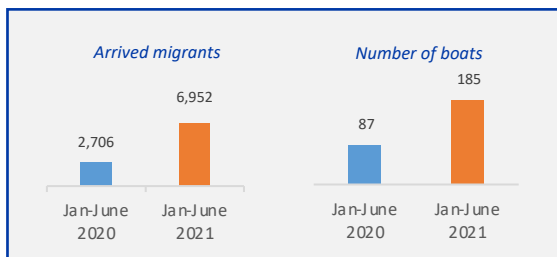


Fig.2- Ships that reached the Canary Islands and number of ships that failed to reach the Canary Islands

(source: IOM, Missing Migrants Project, & Spanish Ministry of the Interior)

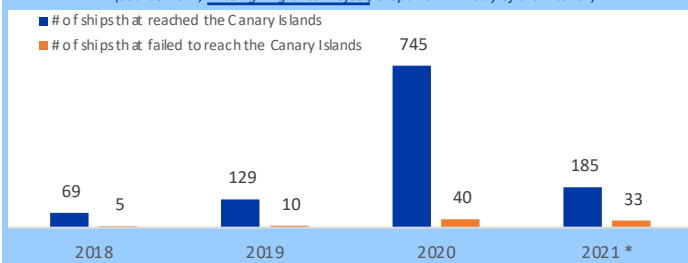
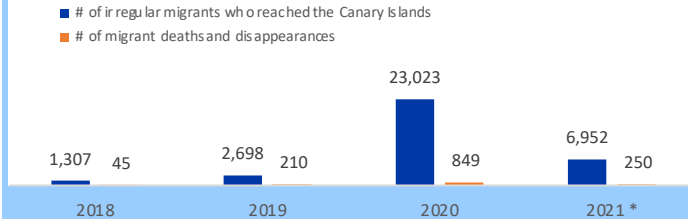


Fig.3- Number of individuals who reached the Canary Islands irregularly and number of individuals who died or disappeared on their way to the Canary Islands

(source: IOM, Missing Migrants Project, & Spanish Ministry of the Interior)



Irregular crossings and incidents are increasing along the West African coasts. Between January and June 2021, **33 shipwrecks** were identified along West Africa - Atlantic Route and **250 migrants died**. This figure is probably underestimated as many shipwrecks remain invisible (not reported). In 2021, these shipwrecks took place off the Canary Islands (Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Tenerife, Las Palma), Morocco (Tan-Tan, Tarfaya, La Sarga), Western Sahara (Dakhla, Boujdour). The castaways are for the most part of Moroccan origin, Mali, Senegal, Guinea and other unidentified Sub-Saharan.



NOTE 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 is 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 NGOs and the media**. In 2020, 4MI stopped collecting data on dead and missing migrants along migration routes.