

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 increase number of movements in 2020. However, the risks, deaths and disappearances following shipwrecks are also on the rise along the Atlantic coasts.

Between January and December 2020, 23,023 individuals reached the Canary Islands irregularly after boat crossing from the coasts of West Africa. This is a 756 per cent

increase in arrivals compared to the same period in 2019⁽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⁽⁴⁾. 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, 2020
(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>, December 2020.
(4) IOM Spain — Flow Monitoring Surveys in Spain in 2020, February 2021.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION MOVEMENTS TO THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)

23,023

MIGRANTS arrived in the Canary Islands in 2020 compared to 2019 (2,698 migrants), an increase of 756%.

745

BOATS arrived in the Canary Islands in 2020 compared to 2019 (129 arrived), an increase of 477%.

MAIN NATIONALITIES

- MALI
- GUINEA
- CÔTE D'IVOIRE
- SENEGAL

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

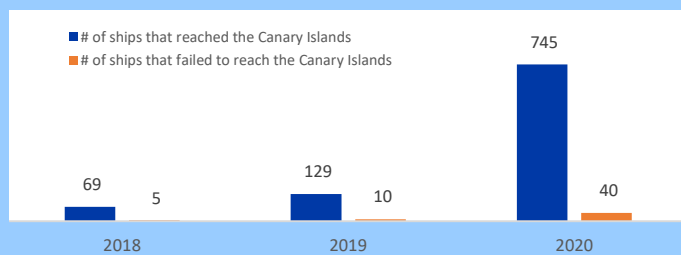
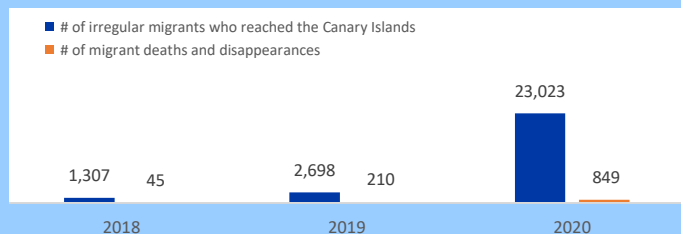
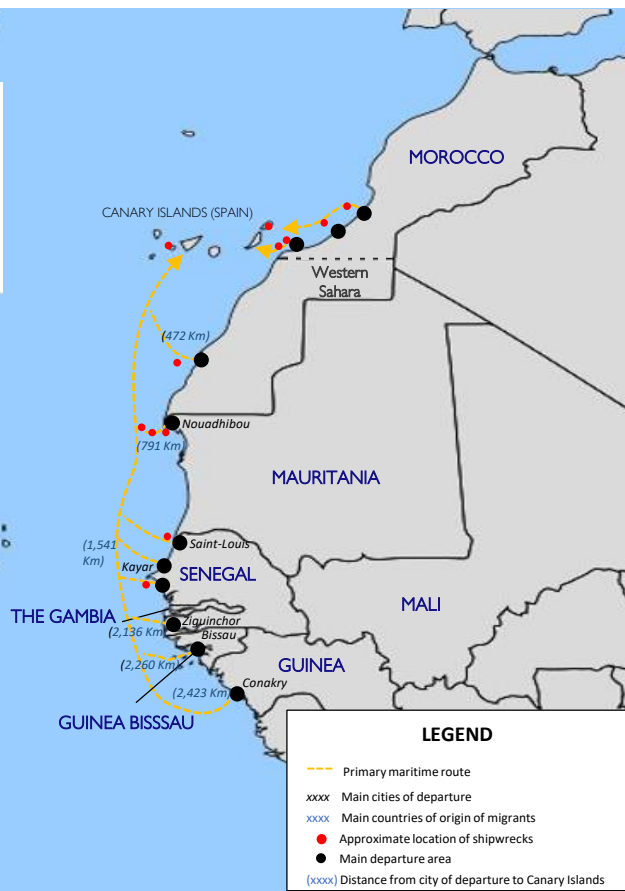


Fig.3- Number of individuals who reached the Canary Islands irregularly and number of individuals who died or disappeared on their way to the Canary Islands.



Irregular crossings and incidents are increasing along the West African coasts. Between January and December 2020, 40 shipwrecks were identified along West Africa - Atlantic Route and 849 migrants died. This figure is probably underestimated as many shipwrecks remain invisible (not reported). In 2020, these shipwrecks took place off the coast of Senegal (Mbour, St-Louis) Mauritania (Nouadhibou, Nouakchott), Morocco (Tan-Tan, Tarfaya, Plage Blanche de Guelmim), Western Sahara (Dakhla, Laâyoune). Other shipwrecks and wrecks have been observed off the Canary Islands (Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Tenerife, El Hierro).



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 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.