

Irregular migration is a complex, dynamic, and fragmented phenomenon that is difficult to fully understand. Understanding migration routes, trends, risks, and migrant profiles is critical to protecting migrants and supporting evidence-based policies. With this purpose, the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)⁽¹⁾ and Missing Migrants Project (MMP) collect data on the departures, arrivals, deaths, and disappearances of migrants along migration routes⁽²⁾.

This document presents the panorama of irregular migration from the coasts of West and Northern Africa to the Canary Islands, Spain. This route, which used to be active until 2006, has seen an increasing number of movements since 2020. Since then, the risks, deaths, and disappearances of migrants following shipwrecks and boats going adrift have also been on the rise along the Atlantic coast.

In 2025, **17,788 migrants** reached the Canary Islands irregularly after crossing by boat from the coasts of West and Northern Africa, a decrease of **62 per cent** compared to 2024 (46,843 migrants)⁽³⁾.

Migrants face many dangers along the West African Atlantic Route, which puts their well-being at risk and too often results in their deaths and disappearances. In 2025, **54 shipwrecks** were recorded along this route, resulting in the death or disappearance of **1,214 migrants**. A disappearance in this context refers to a migrant who presumably died but whose remains were never recovered from the ocean. These figures reflect only the reported fatalities and are minimum estimates of the real magnitude of the crisis. Each number represents a person, as well as the family and community that they leave behind.

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 migrant profiles of those who arrive and on intercepted vessels. There is very little data on the number of departures and attempts from West African coasts. Official data on migrant deaths and disappearances on this route is largely lacking.

(1) IOM, DTM, [Mixed Migration Flows to Europe by Sea and Land](#), 2025.

(2) IOM, [Missing Migrants Project](#), 2025.

(3) IOM DTM and the Spanish [Ministry of the Interior](#), 2025.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION MOVEMENTS TO THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)

17,788

MIGRANTS arrived in the Canary Islands in 2025, representing a 62 per cent decrease compared to 46,843 migrants in 2024.

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BOATS arrived in the Canary Islands in 2025, representing a 62 per cent decrease compared to 692 boats recorded in 2024.

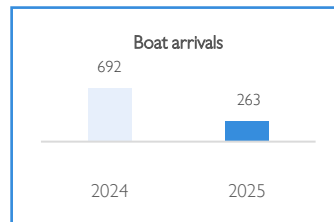
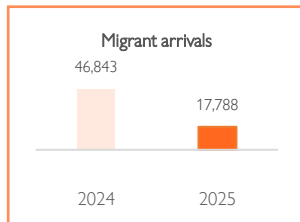


Fig.2- Ships that reached the Canary Islands and known ships that failed to reach the Canary Islands.

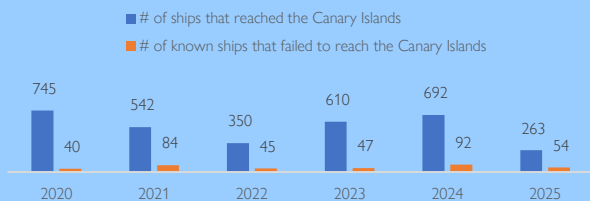


Fig.3- Migrant arrivals and migrant fatalities on the route to the Canary Islands

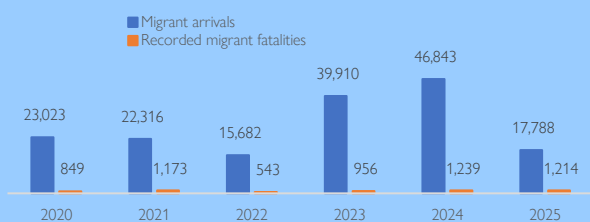
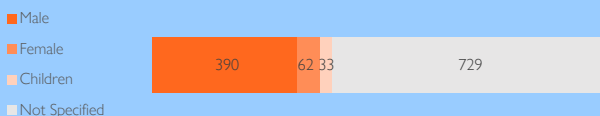
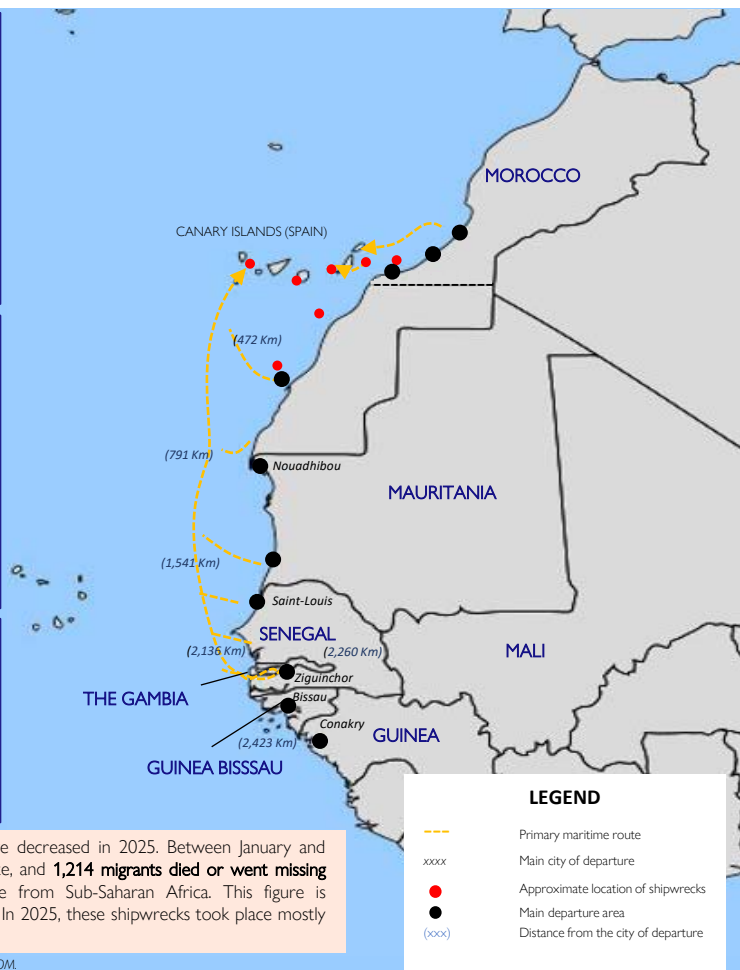


Fig.4- Breakdown by gender and age of migrants who died or disappeared on their way to the Canary Islands in 2025



Irregular crossings and migrant fatalities along the West African Atlantic Route have decreased in 2025. Between January and December 2025, **54 shipwrecks** were identified along the West Africa Atlantic route, and **1,214 migrants died or went missing** during that period. The deceased are mostly unidentified and presumed to be from Sub-Saharan Africa. This figure is underestimated, as many shipwrecks are not reported and therefore remain invisible. In 2025, these shipwrecks took place mostly off the coasts of the Canary Islands, Morocco, and Mauritania.

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



NOTES ON SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The existing data on deaths and disappearances of migrants in West and Central Africa have many limitations. Information on incidents involving the death or disappearance of migrants is scarce. Demographic details of the deceased, such as age, gender, and nationality, are most often unreported. The location of the death is inaccurate and estimated from location descriptions. IOM's Missing Migrants Project is the only public and freely accessible database of fatalities during migration across the world. MMP data on the overseas West African Atlantic Route is collected mainly from IOM field offices, NGOs, and the media. Remarkably, official data on migrant fatalities on this route from Spain and Morocco are largely missing, and there is some official data from the rest of the countries along the route.

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Identifying information: When quoting, paraphrasing or in any way using information mentioned in this report, the source should be indicated as follows: "Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), December 2025. Atlantic Route to Europe".