

BORDER MONITORING REPORT



SOUTH SUDAN
OCTOBER 2024



Executive summary

In October 2024, at least 34,105 South Sudanese individuals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded through border monitoring conducted by UNHCR. According to UNHCR's new methodology, UNHCR estimates that 27,900 (82%) of these arrivals were returnees, while 6,199 (18%) were pendular movements, and 6 South Sudanese expressed intention to transit to other countries. The proportion of returnees varied significantly, from 90% of those returning from Sudan to only 22% arriving from CAR.

In October 2024, the primary reasons for South Sudanese returning included fleeing insecurity, lack of access to essential services, and limited employment opportunities. Family reunification and a desire to return to areas of origin also motivated a significant proportion, especially among long-term returnees. These push factors were directly linked to ongoing conflict and economic instability in host countries like Sudan and Ethiopia. Additionally, some returns were driven by the need to assess land and property or rebuild lives in South Sudan despite reintegration challenges.

Contents

Executive summary	2
Acronyms and Terms	4
Introduction	5
South Sudanese Arrivals in October 2024	6
Demographic characteristics of crossing population	7
Reasons for return	7
Travel Destination for Returnees	8
Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan	10
Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia	12
Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda	14
Border Monitoring Trends: Kenya	16
Border Monitoring Trends: DRC	18
Border Monitoring Trends: CAR	20
Annexes	22

Acronyms and Terms

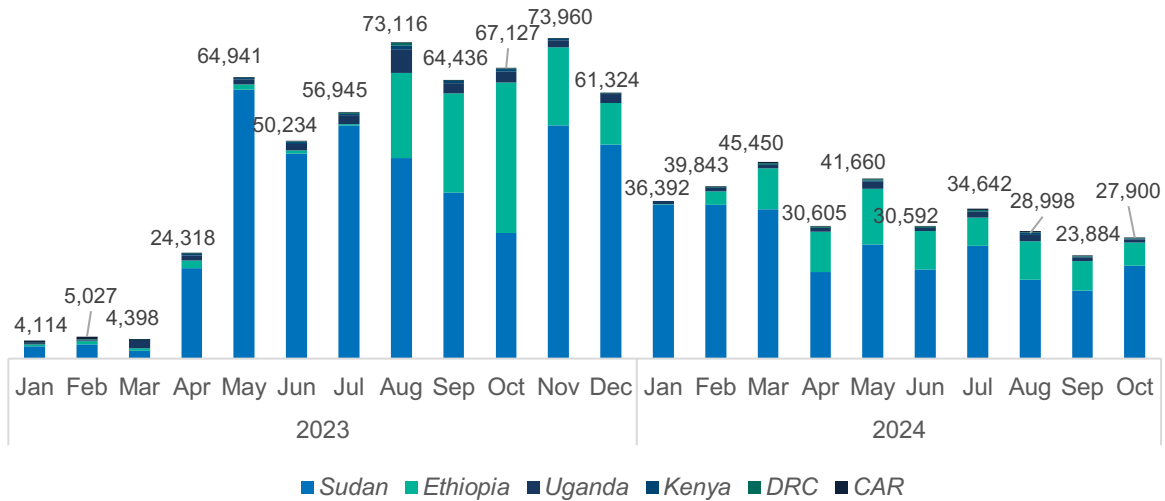
RRC	<i>Relief & Rehabilitation Commission</i>
AGD	Age, Gender, and Diversity
SSD	South Sudan / South Sudanese
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
CAR	Central African Republic
IOM	International Organization for Migration
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan

Introduction

South Sudan presents a multi-layered mix of refugees, IDPs, refugee and IDP returnees, stateless persons, and persons at risk of statelessness. According to UNHCR, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) and partners, more than 650,000 South Sudanese individuals have returned in a self-organized manner and by their own volition from neighbouring countries in the first 5 years since the signing of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) (by the end of 2022).

With the onset of the Sudan crisis in 2023, more than 500,000 South Sudanese residing in Sudan were forced to move back to their country of origin due to insecurity and economic factors increasing number of spontaneous returnees to South Sudan in the last 2 years (2023-2024) to 890,704 individuals.

Spontaneous Return to South Sudan in 2023-2024

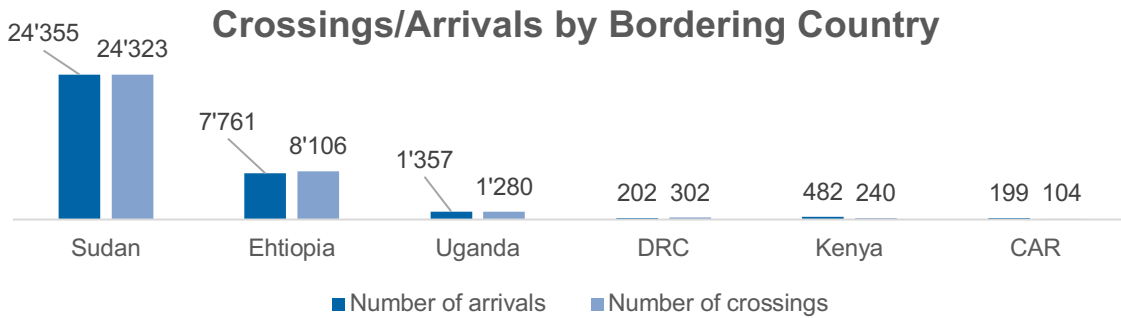


Given this context, UNHCR, RRC and other relevant stakeholders recognized the need to recalibrate approaches to monitor the changing situation and strengthen existing spontaneous refugee returnees monitoring system, particularly border monitoring, for a systematic and effective collection and analysis of the relevant qualitative and quantitative data, which enables UNHCR and its partners to gain a better understanding of the scale and the trends of the ongoing spontaneous return movements.

Following the roll-out of updated border monitoring tools by UNHCR and RRC in January-February 2024 (and in May 2024 for the border with Sudan in partnership with IOM), UNHCR adopted an updated methodology to calculate the estimated number of returnees, endorsed by RRC starting from September 1, 2024.

South Sudanese Arrivals in October 2024

In October 2024, at least 34,742 South Sudanese arrived in South Sudan, as observed and recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, DRC, and CAR border entry points. The highest number of these arrived from Sudan (24,352) and Ethiopia (7,761), followed by Uganda (1,280).



The number of arrivals by week in October 2024 was relatively stable at around 5,000 arrivals weekly, with no considerable peaks of fluctuations observed by week or country of arrival. This is lower than the previous month when weekly arrivals fluctuated at 7,000 – 8,000 persons.

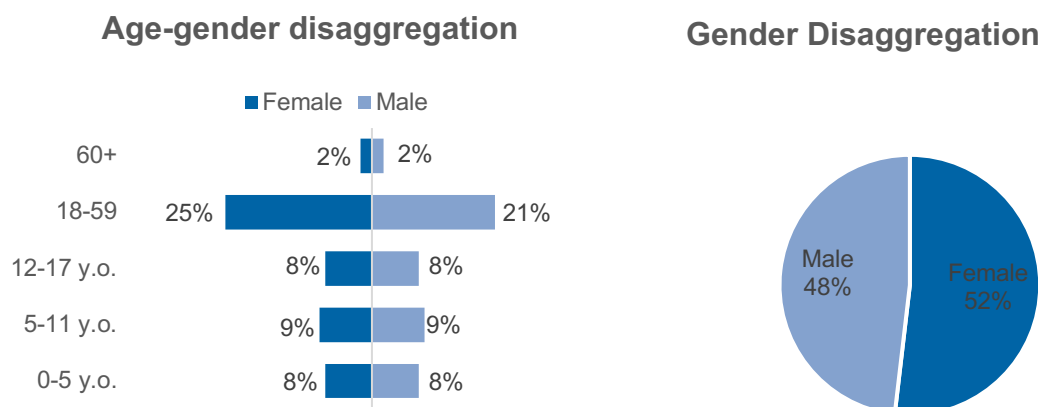
UNHCR estimates that out of the total arrivals, the number of returnees to South Sudan in October 2024 was 27,900 (82% of arrivals), while the remaining arrivals were pendular movement – 6,199 (or 18%), and 6 individuals were transiting through South Sudan to other countries (2 HH from Sudan were transiting to Uganda, and 1 HH from Ethiopia to Sudan).

Arrivals: Crossing Types	# of arrivals	% of total
<i>Returnees</i>	27,900	82%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	6,199	18%
<i>Transiting</i>	6	0%

Note on the methodology. UNHCR South Sudan, in consultation with the RRC, introduced an updated methodology for the identification of returnees since September 2024. According to this methodology, only households with the intention to stay in South Sudan for 1 year or longer are counted as returnees to South Sudan. Those with the intention to stay in South Sudan for less than one year are defined as pendular movements. In addition to returnees and pendular movements, this updated methodology also highlights individuals passing through South Sudan in order to reach other countries (“transiting”).

Demographic characteristics of crossing population

The data show that 52% of arrivals are female and 48% are male. Age and gender disaggregation reveals that women are slightly more represented in the 18-59 age group (25% female vs. 21% male), while other age groups show a relatively balanced distributions between genders.



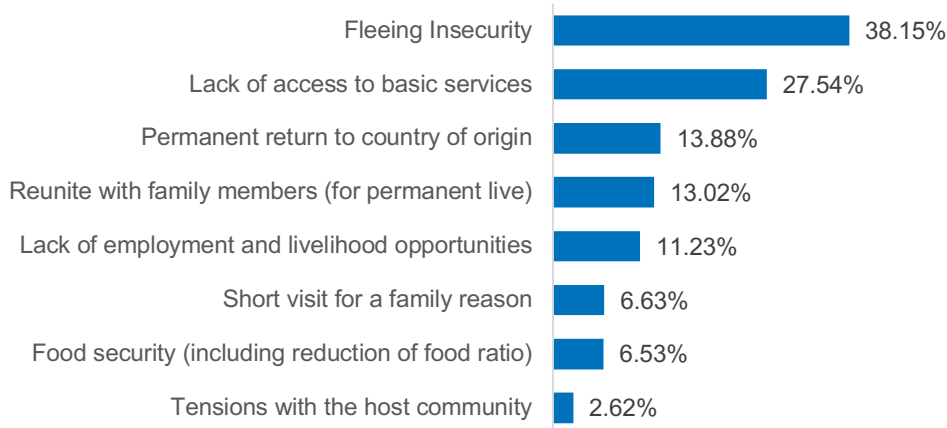
Demographic trends among South Sudanese arrivals varied significantly across countries of origin in October 2024. Women slightly outnumbered men overall, with a consistent majority observed in arrivals from Sudan and Ethiopia, whereas men formed a higher proportion of those crossing from DRC. The 18-59 age group dominated across all borders, reflecting a working-age population, while children under 11 and elderly individuals (60+) were more prominent among long-term returnees, particularly from Ethiopia. In contrast, pendular movements from Kenya and Uganda showed a disproportionately high share of women aged 18-59, often travelling alone or without school-age children due to ongoing educational commitments in host countries. These variations highlight the distinct profiles of populations returning for short-term versus long-term stays, shaped by socio-economic factors and migration patterns specific to each host country.

Reasons for return

Analysis of reasons for return mentioned by South Sudanese interviewed at the border crossing points shows that many arrivals (38% of interviewed travellers) indicated insecurity as the main push factor triggering their travel to South Sudan. Those are the travellers, mainly from Sudan, escaping ongoing insecurity in the country and degrading situations with access to services. Almost 40% of travellers indicated a lack of access to services or opportunities, and another 7% mentioned food insecurity as another push factor contributing to their decision to return to South Sudan from their country of asylum.

At the same time, more than 13% of interviewees mentioned that they decided to reunite with family members for permanent return, a strong pull factor for South Sudanese living in neighbouring countries, and almost 14% mentioned a desire to return to their country of origin as the main pull factor.

Reasons to Return to South Sudan

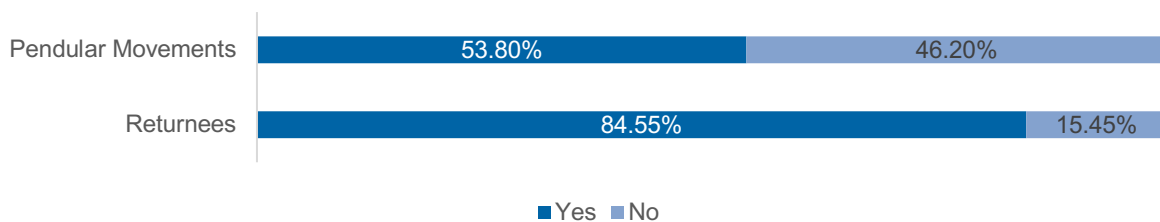


The reasons for return varied across countries, reflecting the distinct challenges faced by South Sudanese in their host countries. In Sudan, insecurity and conflict were the primary drivers, cited by over 40% of arrivals, alongside limited access to services and livelihoods. From Ethiopia, food insecurity (37%) and family reunification (43%) emerged as key motivators, while tensions with host communities also played a significant role. Returnees from Uganda highlighted food insecurity (over 60%) and lack of employment (43%) as major push factors, with many citing family reunifications as an additional reason. Movements from Kenya remain predominantly pendular, driven by short family visits (45%) or land assessments (22%), with fewer citing fleeing due to insecurity. From the DRC and CAR, lack of services and employment opportunities were significant, with fewer respondents identifying insecurity as a factor compared to those from Sudan. These variations underline the complex interplay of security, economic conditions, and familial ties influencing return decisions.

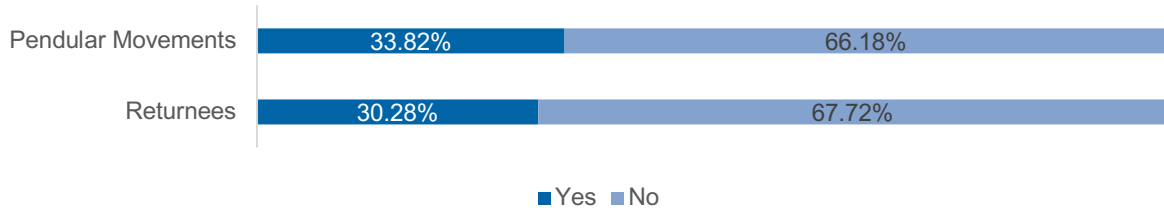
Travel Destination for Returnees

Travel destinations for those returning to South Sudan vary by country of asylum, with notable differences in destination preferences based on the length of stay and origin. From Sudan, long-term returnees mostly head to their areas of origin deeper within the country, while short-term arrivals prefer locations near the border. Similarly, over 80% of returnees from Ethiopia aim to reach their areas of origin, with pendular movements primarily staying near the border. Uganda’s arrivals mostly head to their places of origin, with children often staying behind in Uganda for schooling. In contrast, most travellers from Kenya are short-term visitors who remain close to the border. Arrivals from DRC and CAR almost entirely return to areas near the respective borders, emphasizing a pattern of regional proximity, especially for those involved in pendular movements.

Is the intended destination your area of origin?



Visit to the area to check conditions of return?



More than 80% of returnees intended to return to their area of origin. Generally, those are areas close to the borders with the respective countries of asylum. Only 30% of returnees who arrived in October visited the area earlier to check for conditions of return. Among those who did not do initial travel to check conditions for return before moving with the family are returnees from Kenya mostly and CAR. Most arrivals from Kenya mentioned that this is their first travel to South Sudan in more than half a year.

Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan

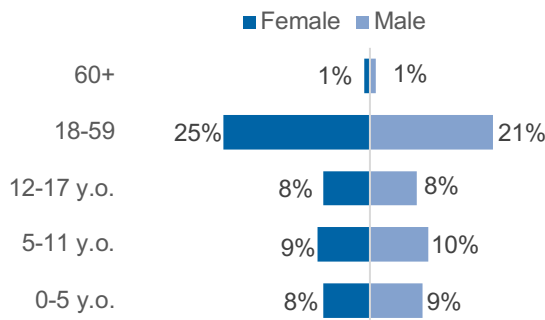
In October 2024, UNHCR partners recorded 24,352 persons of South Sudan nationality crossing the border to South Sudan from Sudan. Another 5 travellers from Sudan arrived in South Sudan, crossing the border with Ethiopia; UNHCR estimates that 21,433 returnees travel to South Sudan intending to stay for one year or longer, while 2,919 persons intend to stay short-term for less than one year.

Arrivals (Sudan): per category	# of arrivals	% of total
<i>Returnees</i>	21,433	88%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	2,919	12%
<i>Transiting</i>	3	0

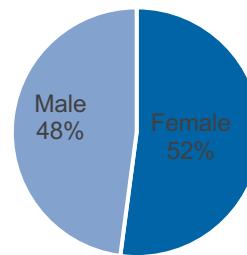
The average number of daily crossings was more than 5000 (a 20% increase from September 2024), fluctuating between 5,250 to 5,750 crossings a week. The highest number of arrivals from Sudan were registered in Wunthou (Joda) and Majokinthou border points.

Arrivals from Sudan were more likely to be female (52%) than male (48%), with the largest age group being females aged 18-59 (25%), while males in the same age group constitute 21%.

Age-gender disaggregation

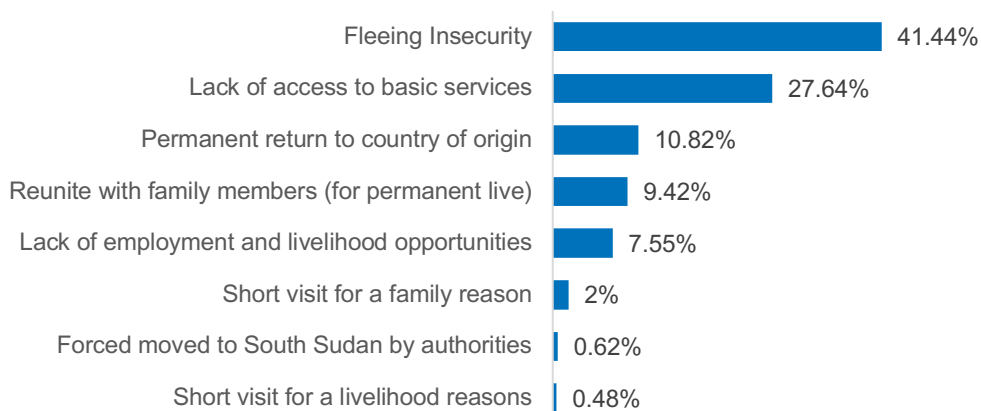


Gender Disaggregation



The primary reason for crossing, cited by more than half (41.4%) of respondents interviewed in October, remained fleeing insecurity. Other factors include lack of access to essential services (27.64%) and absence of employment and livelihood opportunities (10.8%). Additionally, up to 19% of travellers reported that their primary motivations for returning were reuniting with family members or returning to their country of origin. Up to 75% of those interviewed indicated reasons highlighting the involuntary nature of their return from Sudan, driven by factors directly or indirectly linked to the ongoing conflict.

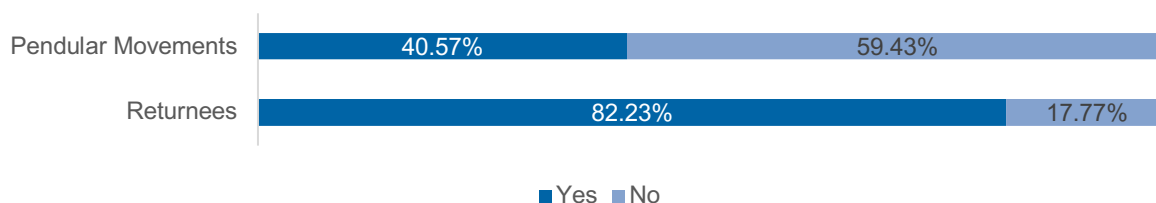
Reason* to Travel to South Sudan



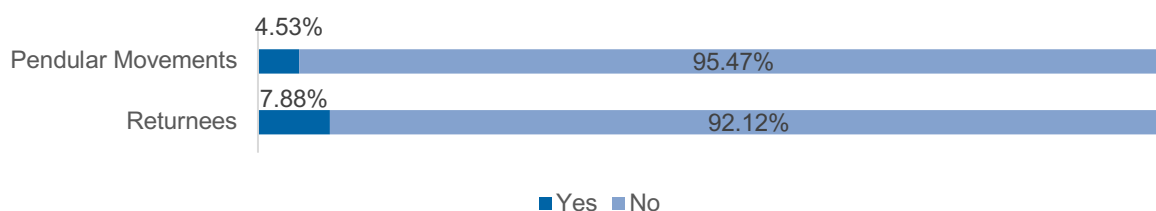
*respondents were asked to report the main reason for crossing

Among those interviewed who plan to stay in South Sudan for a year or more, 82% indicated that they were returning to their area of origin, and only 8% had previously visited the area to assess the conditions for return. At the same time, nearly 60% of those travelling to South Sudan for short-term stay reported that their destination was not their area of origin. Additionally, long-term returnees travel to locations deeper within the country; in particular, many of them travel to Juba (due to better access to services and economic opportunities in the capital), while those making short-term crossings primarily head to areas near the border.

Is the intended destination your area of origin?



Visit to the area earlier to check the conditions for return



Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia

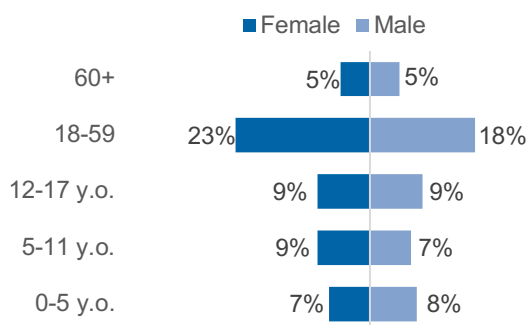
In total, 8,106 South Sudan nationals were recorded by UNHCR partner enumerators crossing the border toward South Sudan from Ethiopia in October 2024. Of these, UNHCR estimates that 5,345 were returnees (10% lower than in September), travelling to South Sudan for one year or longer, while 2,442 intend to stay short-term for less than one year, and another 3 were transiting to other countries (Sudan). At the same time 316 persons recorded crossing from Ethiopia to South Sudan were travelling from Kenya and Uganda.

Arrivals (Ethiopia): Per category	# of arrivals	Ethiopia	% of total
Returnees	5,345	5,345	68%
Pendular Movements	2,442	2,442	32%
Transiting	3	3	0

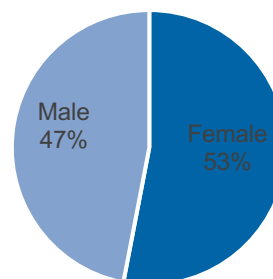
The number of crossings from Ethiopia was relatively stable throughout the month at 1,500 – 2,000 crossings per week.

Looking at the age-gender breakdown, there are slightly more women than men, with 53.03% women and 46.97% men. While the age distribution across categories is generally balanced, there is a noticeable proportion of individuals aged 60 and above. This trend is even more pronounced among those intending to stay in South Sudan for a year or longer, where 12% of women and men fall into the 60+ age group, and 31% are children below 12 y.o. This suggests that those planning to stay long-term are likely traveling with their entire family. In contrast, among those making short-term, pendular movements, there is a disproportionately high share of women aged 18-59, with fewer children and elderly individuals.

Age-gender disaggregation

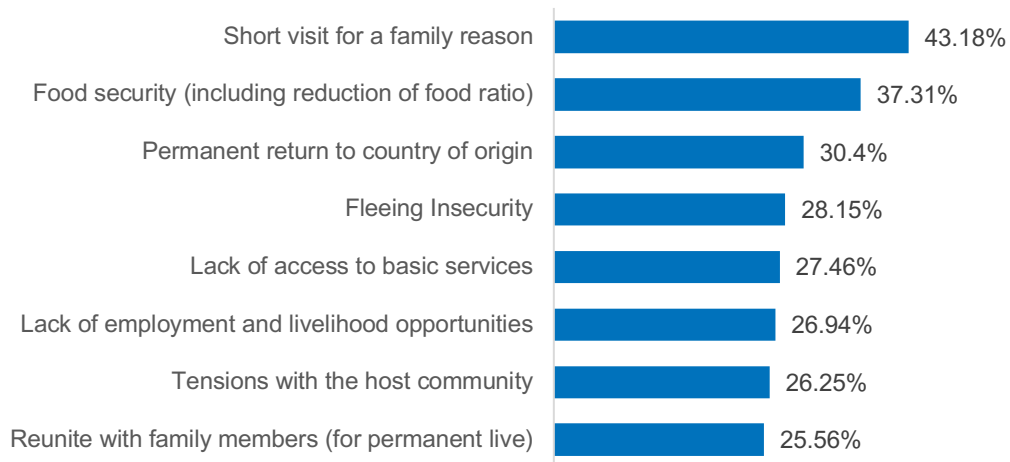


Gender Disaggregation



Short visit for family reasons is the most often mentioned by interviewees (indicated by 43,18% of interviewed households). The other key reasons for travel and return are food security (37%), lack of services (27%), and lack of opportunities (66%). 26% also cited tensions with the host community as a reason for leaving and fleeing insecurity (28%).

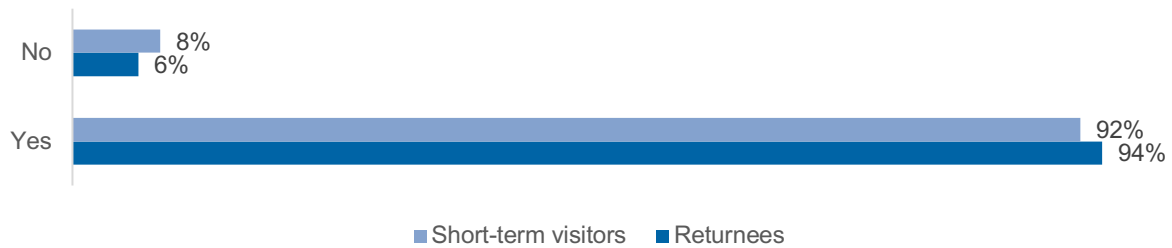
Reasons to Return to South Sudan*



*respondents could indicate more than one reason for crossing

Over 90% of travellers (in both categories: short-term and long-term returnees) aim to reach their place of origin. All travellers from Ethiopia are heading to areas near the border.

Is the intended destination your area of origin?



Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda

In October 2024, 1,357 South Sudanese arrived from Uganda, including through border points with other countries (Ethiopia, DRC). Out of these, UNHCR estimates that 766 (56%) are returnees intending to stay for a year or longer. In contrast, 591 (44%) arrived for shorter stays.

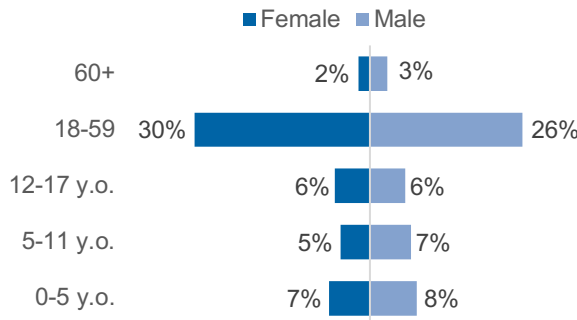
Weekly crossings fluctuated from 416 in the 2nd week of the month to 200 and remained at this level for the rest of October.

Arrivals (Uganda): per category **# of arrivals** **% of total**

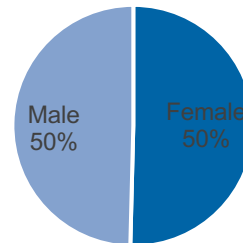
Arrivals (Uganda): per category	# of arrivals	% of total
Returnees	766	56%
Pendular Movements	591	44%
Transiting	0	0

The age-gender breakdown of arrivals from Uganda differs from the other borders showing more adults compared to school-aged children. This is due to two factors: most of returns from Uganda are pendular movement (33% of crossings) and children remain in the country of asylum for schooling.

Age-gender disaggregation

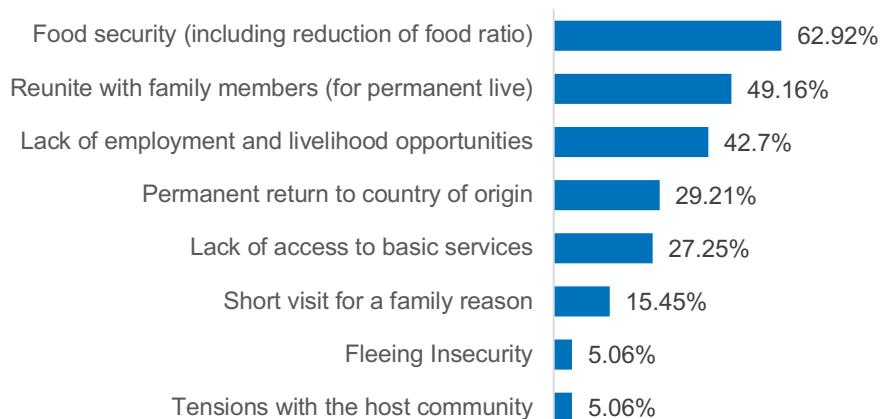


Gender Disaggregation



Analysis of South Sudanese returnees crossing from Uganda shows that more than 60% cited food insecurity, along with lack of employment (43%) and basic services (27%). Pull factors, like family reunification and returning home, motivated at least 49% of travellers. At the same time, 5% of respondents indicated fleeing insecurity or tensions with the host community as the reason for their return.

Reasons for travel to South Sudan



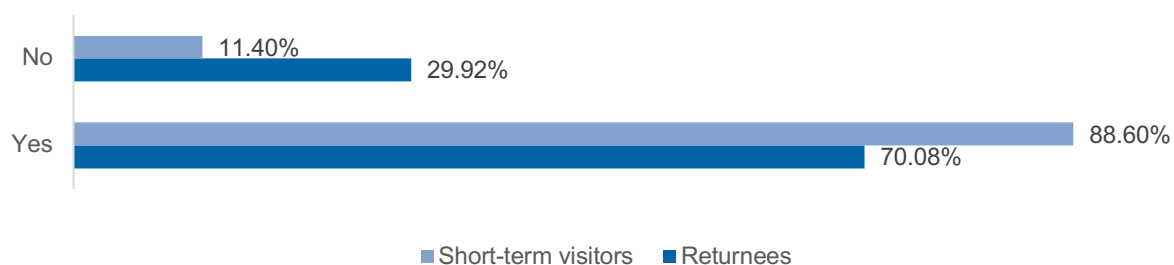
**respondents could indicate more than one reason for crossing*

Almost 97% of those crossing from Uganda aimed to reach their area of origin for long- and short-term stays. Nearly 30% of long-term returnees had yet to visit the area to assess conditions; at the same time, this ratio among short-term travellers is only 11% due to the pendular movement of their travels.

Is the intended destination your area of origin?



Visit to the area earlier to check the conditions for return



Border Monitoring Trends: Kenya

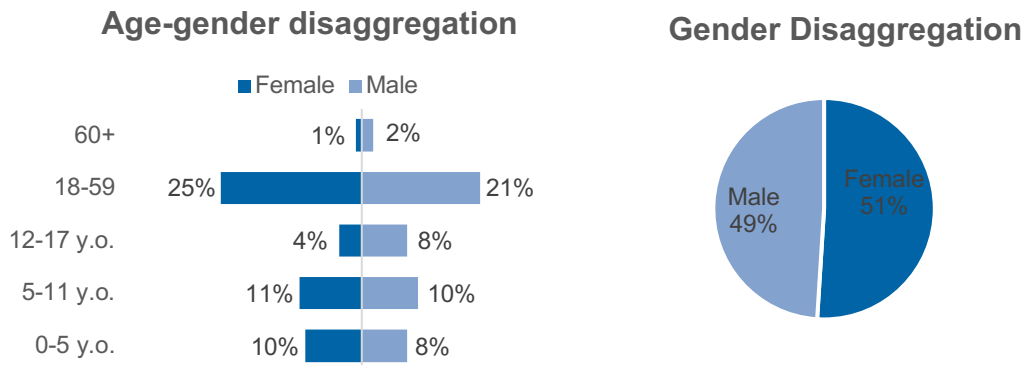
In October 2024, 240 South Sudanese were recorded crossing to South Sudan at the border crossing points with Kenya. In addition to these 240 arrivals, 242 South Sudanese arrived from Kenya crossing the border with Ethiopia.

Out of this total 482 arrivals from Kenya, 162 (34%) are classified as returnees intending to stay for a year or longer, while 320 (66%) arrived for shorter stays.

Weekly arrivals averaged around 60-80 people.

Arrivals (Kenya): per category	# of arrivals	% of total
Returnees	162	34%
Pendular Movements	320	66%
Transiting	0	0

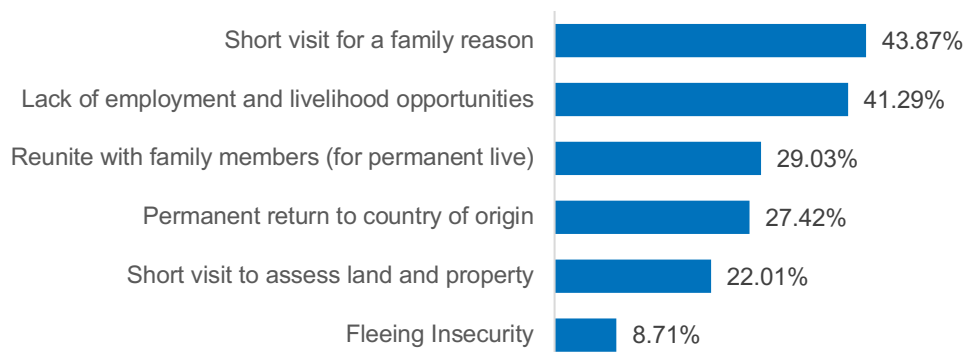
The gender breakdown shows a slight majority of women (51%) compared to men (49%). The number of individuals aged 60+ is very low, likely due to the predominantly pendular nature of movements at the Kenya border. The share of school-age children is also low, due to the ongoing school year.



The reasons for South Sudanese returnees at the Kenya border confirm the pendular nature of movements. Almost 45% cited short family visits as their reason for crossing, another 22% short visits to assess land and property, while only 29% return for family reunification. 41% mentioned lack of employment, livelihood opportunities, and food insecurity (9%) as reasons for leaving the country of asylum.

Over 95% of interviewees indicated that this was their first travel to South Sudan in the last 6 months. Also, more than half of arrivals from Kenya (133 persons) indicated Juba as their destination of travel; all of them are travelling from Kakuma camp.

Reasons to Return to South Sudan



**respondents could indicate more than one reason for crossing*

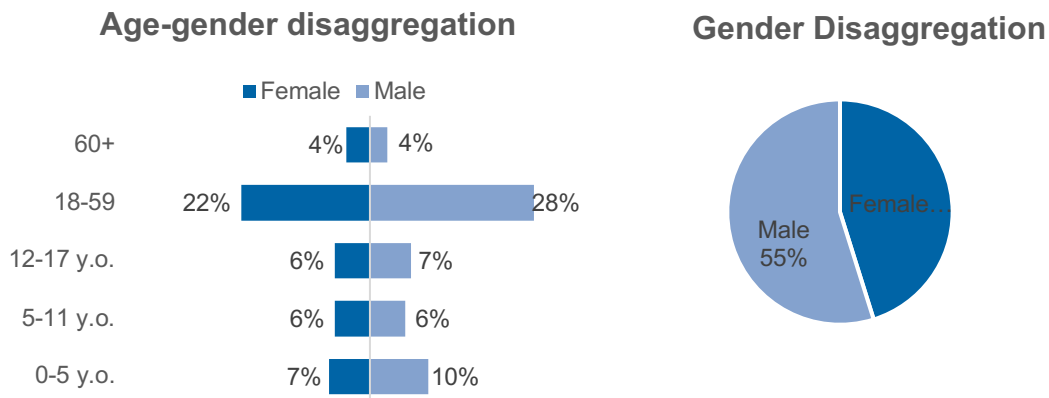
All the long-term returnees aimed to the areas in which they were originally from. Unlike those from other countries of asylum, travellers from Kenya return to areas quite distant from the border.

Border Monitoring Trends: DRC

In October 2024, 302 South Sudanese crossed the border with DRC. Of these, 130 arrived from DRC, 156 transited DRC territory from CAR, and 14 came from Uganda through the border with DRC. Weekly arrivals fluctuated, averaging around 65 to 90 people. As a result of interviews conducted covering 202 individuals in total UNHCR estimates that 74% (150 individuals) are returnees planning to stay long-term, while 26% (52 individuals) are short-term visitors.

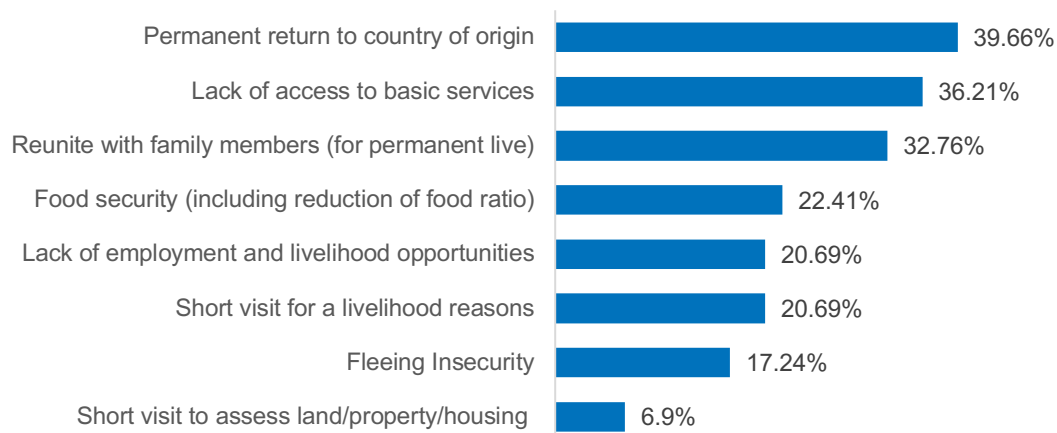
Arrivals (DRC): per category	# of arrivals	Bordering DRC	country CAR	Uganda	% of total
<i>Returnees</i>	150	84	59	7	74%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	52	46	2	4	26%
<i>Transiting</i>	0				0

The age-gender analysis of arrivals from DRC shows that in October the share of men is higher than women (55% men and 45% women driven by arrivals in the 18-59 age group (28% of men against 22% of women) and children below 5 (10% of boys and 7% of girls).



Analysis of South Sudanese arrivals from DRC shows the main reason for travel for almost 40% is a return to the country of origin, which is also triggered by lack of access to basic services (mentioned by 36% of interviewed) and employment opportunities (21%). Compared to the previous month, the share of those who mentioned fleeing insecurity decreased from 26% to 17% of those interviewed.

Reasons to Travel to South Sudan (DRC)



**respondents could indicate more than one reason for crossing*

All arrivals from DRC were headed to areas near the CAR border, which they indicated is their area of origin. More than 75% of arrivals in October indicated visiting the area previously to check the conditions of return.

Visit to the area earlier to check the conditions for return

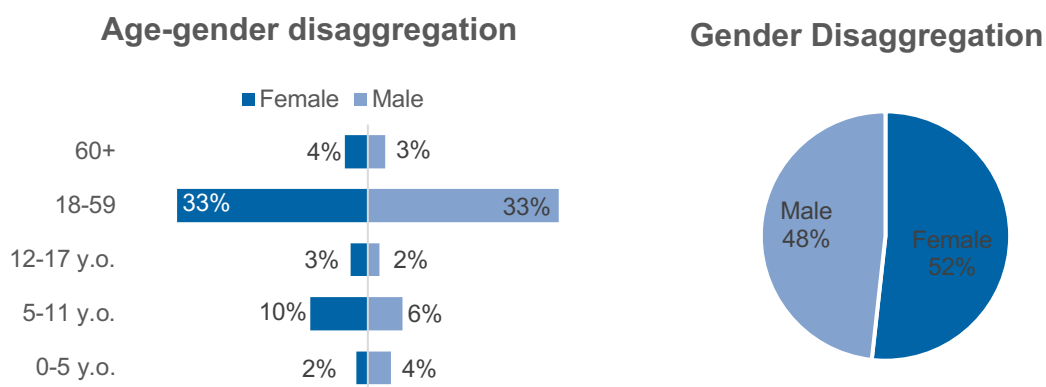


Border Monitoring Trends: CAR

In October 2024, UNHCR partner enumerators recorded 199 arrivals from CAR (almost the same number as in September). Of these, 43 crossed to South Sudan at the border points with CAR, while 156 travelled through DRC territory. 44 (22%) are returnees intending to stay for at least one year, while 155 (78%) were short-term visitors.

<i>Arrivals (CAR): per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>Bordering DRC</i>	<i>country CAR</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	44	23	21	22%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	155	133	22	78%
<i>Transiting</i>	0	0	0	0

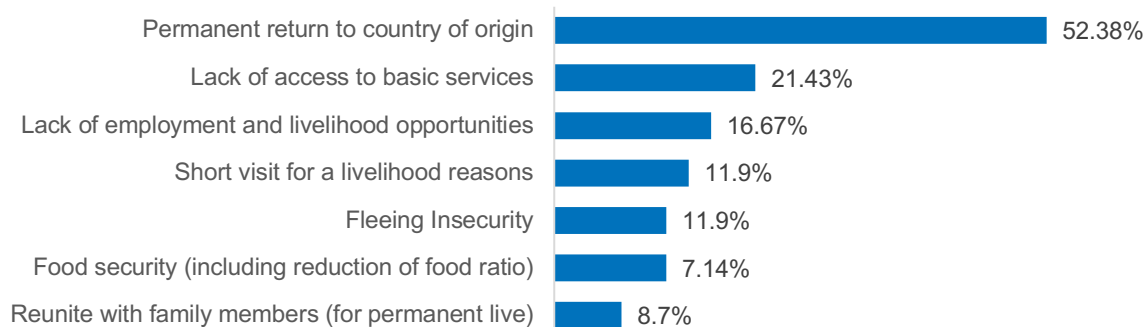
The age-gender analysis of arrivals from CAR shows a slightly higher number of women, with 52% women and 48% men. The age-gender disaggregation shows a clear prevalence of 18-59 age group for both genders.



The top reasons for return from CAR in October were intention to return permanently to the country of origin (52%), lack of access to basic services (21%), and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (16%). Only about 12% cited short visits for livelihood as their reason for travel.

12% indicated fleeing insecurity as the main reason for travel.

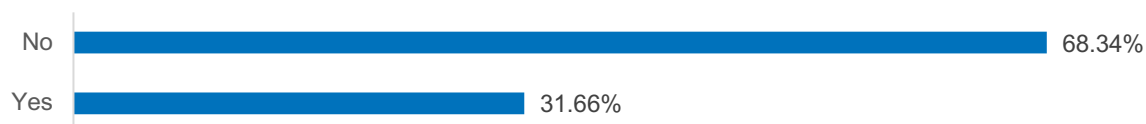
Reasons to Return to South Sudan



**respondents could indicate more than one reason for crossing*

All arrivals were headed to areas near the CAR border, where their area of origin is. At the same time only 32% of arrivals visited the area earlier to check conditions for return.

Visit to the area earlier to check conditions for return



Annexes

Border Monitoring Methodology

Objectives

UNHCR South Sudan border monitoring aims to improve information about the South Sudanese population's flow of returning to South Sudan from its neighboring countries. This helps understand the current return movement trends, assess the protection needs of the returnee population, and better prepare the operational response in South Sudan at the national and field office levels.

Analytical framework, data collection methods and analysis

Border monitoring is conducted by border monitors and enumerators hired by UNHCR's partners with the support of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). Joint UNHCR/IOM/RRC border monitoring occurs at the border crossing points with Sudan and Ethiopia.

Enumerators collect data directly from incoming and outgoing individuals and households crossing the border points.

For the spontaneous return monitoring, border monitors identify and interview South Sudanese nationals travelling into South Sudan (inflow movement). This excludes individuals or groups who are part of recognised daily or pendular movements.

UNHCR partners exercise a presence and collect data at 42 official border points at South Sudan's borders with Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, CAR, DRC, Uganda, and Kenya. The South Sudan Government (RRC) has identified these border points as the main crossing points used by South Sudanese returnees.

Border monitoring enumerators conduct household-level interviews daily, at least five days each week, eight hours per day. IOM/UNHCR maintains a 24/7 presence at the Wunthow (Joda) border point in Renk County.

Limitations

The number of arrivals serves as an indicator, reflecting the border points where UNHCR, IOM, RRC, and their partners currently operate. However, it's probable that the actual number of arrivals exceeds those captured by the border monitoring tool, as some individuals may be using unofficial (unmonitored) border crossings or travelling at night.

UNHCR does not collect personal data from individuals crossing the borders, preventing them from tracking subsequent journeys or verifying any information given.

BORDER MONITORING REPORT 2024

South Sudan
Spontaneous Return Monitoring

November 2024