

BORDER MONITORING REPORT



SOUTH SUDAN
NOVEMBER 2024



Executive summary

In November 2024, at least 36,051 South Sudanese individuals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded through border monitoring conducted by UNHCR. According to UNHCR's new methodology UNHCR estimates that 28,407 (82%) of these arrivals were returnees, while 6,348 (18%) were pendular movements, and 22 South Sudanese expressed intention to transit to other countries. The proportion of returnees varied significantly, from 84% of those returning from Sudan to only 21% arriving from Kenya.

In November 2024, the primary reasons for South Sudanese returning included fleeing insecurity (specific to Sudan and CAR), 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, increased short-term return were probably driven by approaching festive season and desire of family reunification during celebration.

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Acronyms and Terms

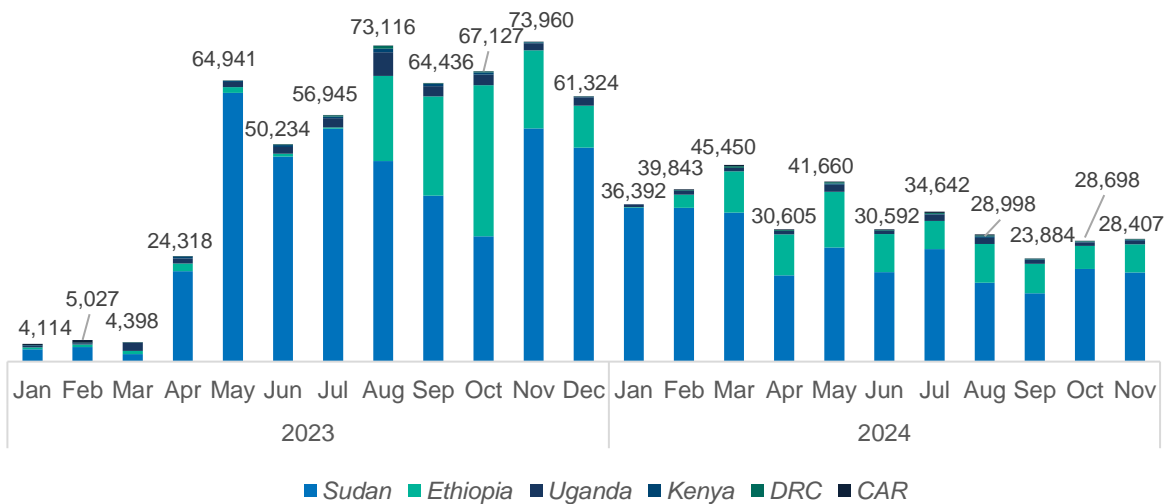
RRC	<i>Relief & Rehabilitation Commission</i>
AGD	Age, Gender, and Diversity
SSD	South Sudan / South Sudanese
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
CAR	Central African Republic
IOM	International Organization for Migration
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South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

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 919,111 individuals.

Spontaneous Return to South Sudan in 2023-2024

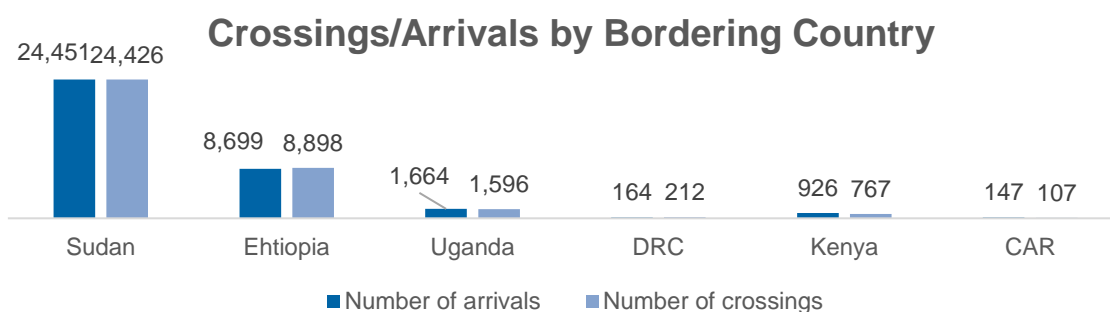


Given this context, UNHCR, RRC and other relevant stakeholders recognized the need to recalibrate approaches to monitor the changing situation and strengthen existing spontaneous refugee returnees monitoring system, particularly border monitoring, for a systematic and effective collection and analysis 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 November 2024 at least 36,051 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 (24,451) and Ethiopia (8,699), followed by Uganda (926).



The overall number of arrivals by week in November 2024 was relatively stable at around 7,500-8,000 arrivals weekly, with no considerable peaks of fluctuations observed by week, however slightly decreasing to the end of the month. This is due to peak of arrivals from Sudan in the first weeks of the month (almost 7,000) decreasing to the end of the month (up to 4,300 arrivals).

UNHCR estimates that out of the total 36,051 arrivals, the number of returnees to South Sudan in November 2024 was 28,407 (79% of arrivals), while the remaining arrivals were pendular movement – 7,622 (or 21%), and 22 individuals were transiting through South Sudan to other countries (Uganda, Egypt, Sudan).

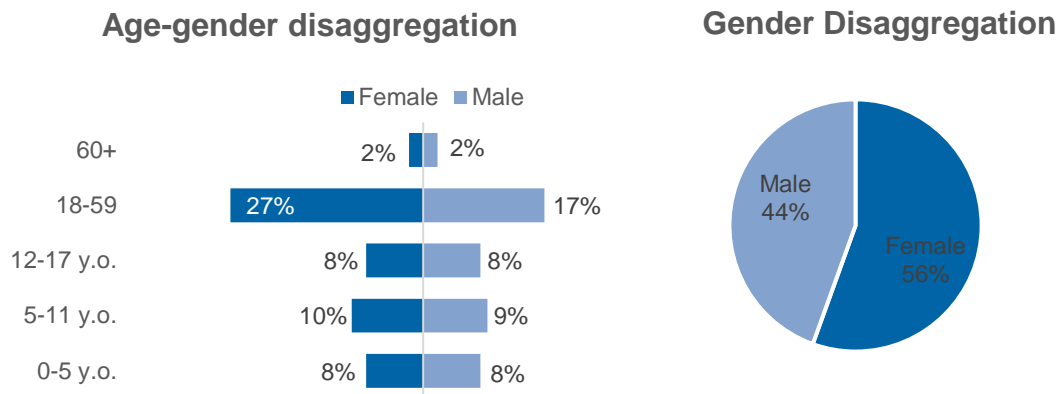
Arrivals: Crossing Types	# of arrivals	% of total
<i>Returnees</i>	28,407	79%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	7,622	21%
<i>Transiting</i>	22	0%

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 in November 2024 females constitute 56% of arrivals and 44% are male. The prevalence of woman in age gender disaggregation of travellers in November is even higher mostly due to increase of share of woman in category 18-59 (27% of women against 17% of men). Other age groups show a relatively balanced distributions between genders, also comparable to previous months data.



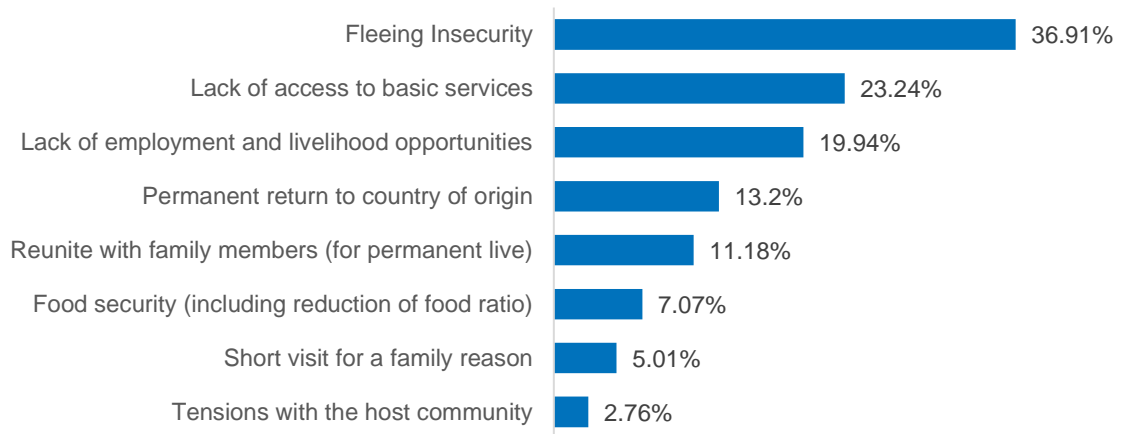
Demographic trends among South Sudanese arrivals varied significantly across countries of origin in November 2024. Although overall females prevail in the statistics of travellers, local statistics of crossings from Kenya, Uganda and DRC shows prevalence of males, especially in the pendular movements category. Women outnumbered men with a consistent majority observed in arrivals from Sudan and Ethiopia. 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 DRC, CAR and Uganda showed a disproportionately high share of men aged 18-59, and women of the same age group, often travelling alone or without school-age children due to ongoing educational commitments in host countries. In combination with increased number of short term travellers these solitary travels can probably be explained by short-term migration due to approaching festive season.

Reasons for return

Analysis of reasons for return mentioned by South Sudanese interviewed at the border crossing points shows that many arrivals (almost 37% 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 25% 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 11% 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 13% mentioned a desire to return to their country of origin as the main pull factor.

Reasons to Return to South Sudan

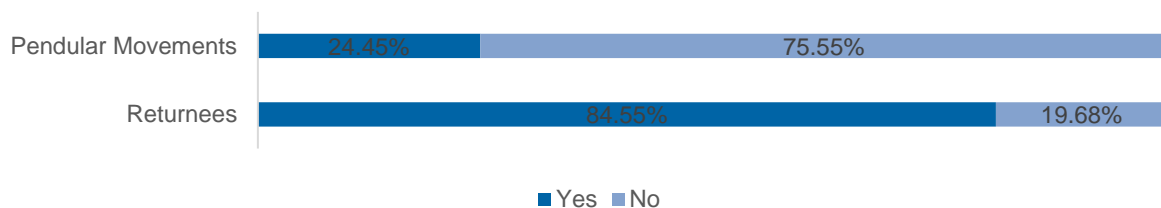


The reasons for return varied across countries, reflecting the distinct challenges faced by South Sudanese in their host countries. In Sudan, insecurity and conflict were the primary drivers, cited by almost 40% of arrivals, alongside limited access to services and livelihoods. From Ethiopia, food insecurity (43%) and family reunification (40%) emerged as key motivators, while tensions with host communities and insecurity also played a significant role in November. Returnees from Uganda highlighted food insecurity (over 60%) and lack of employment (over 40%) as major push factors, with many citing family reunifications as an additional reason. Movements from Kenya remain predominantly pendular, driven by short family visits (over 65%) or lack of opportunities (10%), with fewer citing fleeing due to tensions with host community (6%). From the DRC lack of services and employment opportunities were significant, while insecurity was the main push factor for returning from CAR in November. These variations underline the complex interplay of security, economic conditions, and familial ties influencing return decisions.

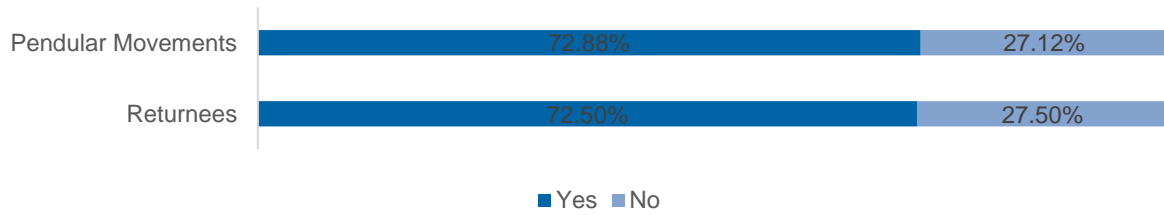
Travel Destination for Returnees

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 arrivals 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, although with short-term visits most travellers from Kenya travel longer distances from the border, with about 40% heading to Juba. 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.

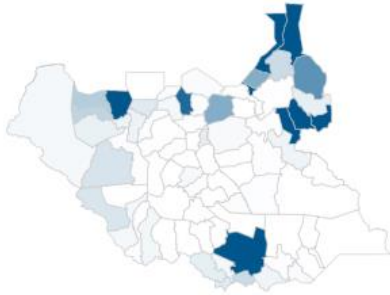
Is the intended destination your area of origin?



Visit to the area to check conditions of return?



Areas Where Returnees Go To



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 November 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 probably leaving unplanned country of asylum due to insecurity). Most arrivals from Kenya (80%) mentioned that this is their first travel to South Sudan in more than half a year.

Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan

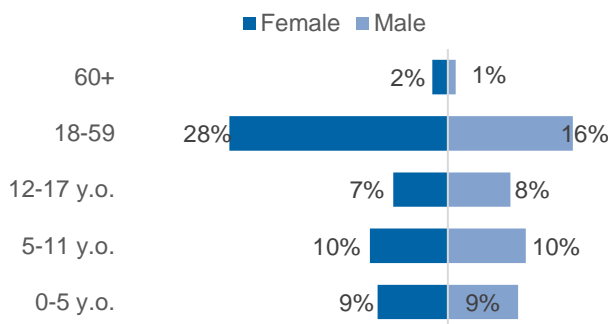
In November 2024, UNHCR partners recorded 24,463 persons of South Sudan nationality crossing the border to South Sudan from Sudan. UNHCR estimates that 20,599 returnees travel to South Sudan intending to stay for one year or longer (84%), while 3,852 (16%) persons intend to stay short-term for less than one year. The share of short-term travellers is significantly higher in November (16% against 12%), it might be linked to the upcoming festive season travels. Five families interviewed on the border with Sudan were planning to transit South Sudan with intention to travel to Uganda and Egypt.

<i>Arrivals (Sudan): per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	20,599	84%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	3,852	12%
<i>Transiting</i>	12	0

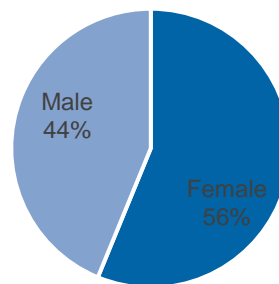
The average number of daily crossings was around 6000 weekly (approximately comparable to October 2024), decreasing weekly from 6,800 to 5,600 and even 4200 crossings a week. The highest number of arrivals from Sudan were registered in Wunthou (Joda) and Majokinthou border points.

Arrivals from Sudan were more likely to be female (56%) than male (44%), with the largest age group being females aged 18-59 (28%), while males in the same age group constitute only 19%. (which is even 5%) less than in October 2024.

Age-gender disaggregation

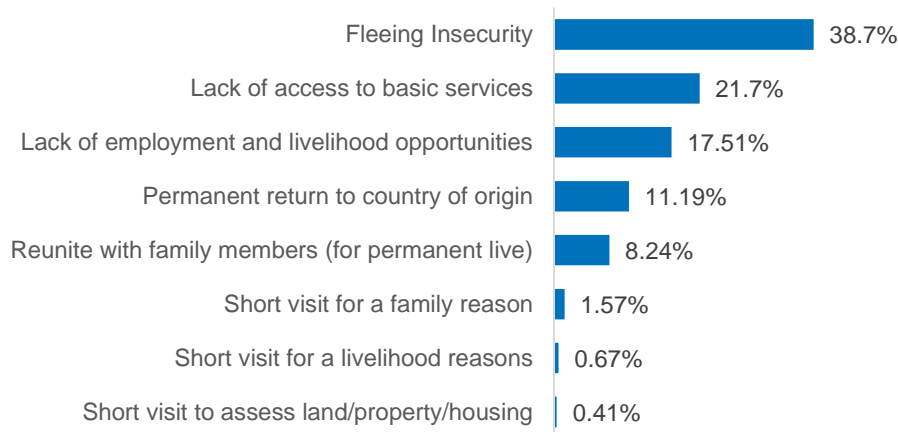


Gender Disaggregation



The primary reason for crossing, cited by almost 40% (37.7%) of respondents interviewed in October, remained fleeing insecurity. Other factors include lack of access to essential services (21.7%) and absence of employment and livelihood opportunities (17.51%). Additionally, up to 12% 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.

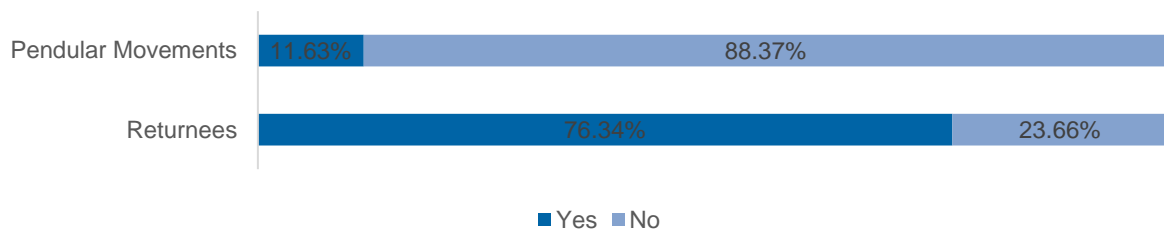
Reasons to Return to South Sudan



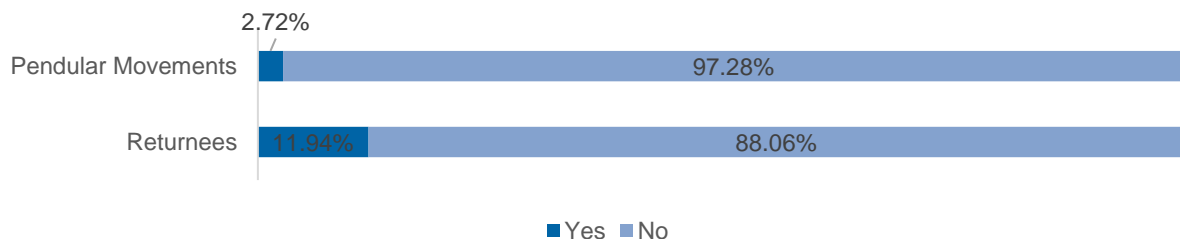
**respondents were asked to report the main reason for crossing*

Among those interviewed who plan to stay in South Sudan for a year or more, 76% indicated that they were returning to their area of origin, at the same time, only 12% had previously visited the area to assess the conditions for return. Share of those who visited area of origin before to check conditions for return among short-term travellers even lower than 3%. This can be partially explained by the fact that only 11% of those intend to travel to the area of origin. Additionally, long-term returnees tend to 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

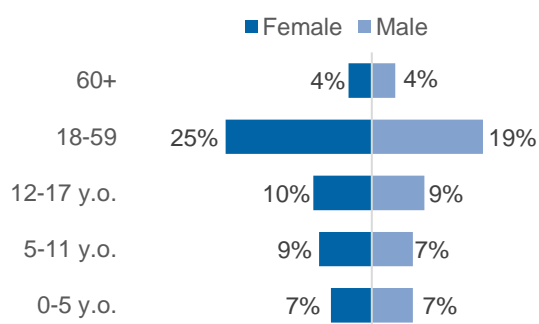
In total, 8,708 South Sudan nationals were recorded by UNHCR partner enumerators crossing the border toward South Sudan from Ethiopia in November 2024. Of these, UNHCR estimates that 6,502 (75%) were returnees (6% lower than in September), travelling to South Sudan for one year or longer, while 2,203 (25%) intend to stay short-term for less than one year, and another 3 were transiting to other countries (Kenya). At the same time 219 persons recorded crossing from Ethiopia to South Sudan were travelling from Kenya and Uganda.

<i>Arrivals (Ethiopia): Per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>Ethiopia</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	6,502	6,502	75%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	2,203	2,203	25%
<i>Transiting</i>	3	3	0

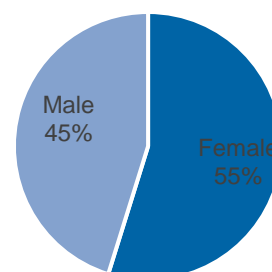
The number of crossings from Ethiopia was relatively stable throughout the month at 2,000 – 2,500 crossings per week.

Looking at the age-gender breakdown in November, the gap between share of men and women is increasing with almost 55 % women (54,81%) and 45.19% men. While the age distribution across categories is generally balanced, in the age group 18-59 share of men is noticeably lower (19% of men and 25% of women). This trend is even more pronounced among those intending to stay in South Sudan for less than a year, where women constitute 29% and men only 15% of the total. This suggests that those planning to stay long-term are likely traveling with their entire family, while women and children alone participate in pendular movements. The tendency of high share of women aged 18-59 in pendular movements category remains unchanged from previous months.

Age-gender disaggregation



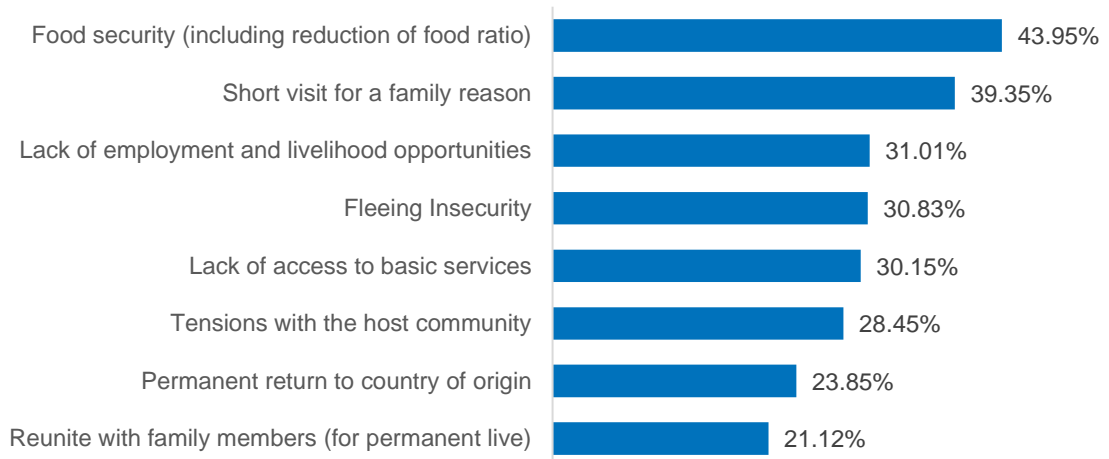
Gender Disaggregation



Food security (and reducing of food ratio) is the most often mentioned by interviewees (indicated by 43,95% of interviewed households). The other key reasons for travel and return are short visit for family reason (39%), lack of services (30%), and lack of opportunities (31%).

28% also cited tensions with the host community as a reason for leaving and fleeing insecurity (30%).

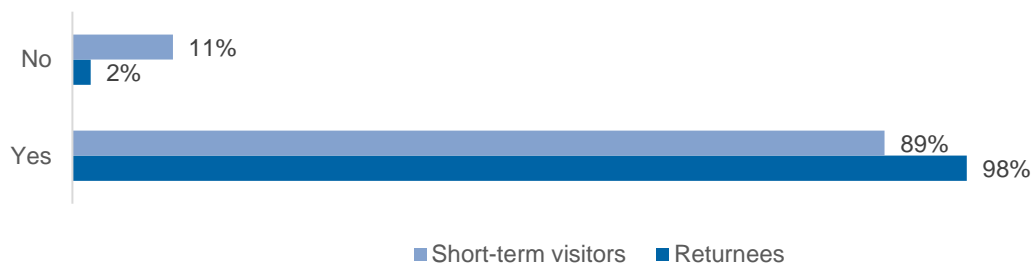
Reasons to Return to South Sudan*



*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. In the category of long-term travellers, the share of those who travel to the area of their origin reaches 98%. All travellers from Ethiopia are heading to areas near the border. It is noticeable as well that in the category of short-term travellers almost 90% of interviewed have already visited the area earlier to check conditions to return.

Is the intended destination your area of origin?



Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda

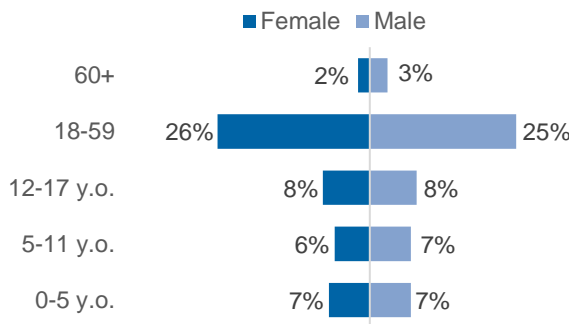
In November 2024 1,664 South Sudanese arrived from Uganda which is 22,6% higher than in October, including through border points with other countries (Ethiopia (44), DRC (9), Kenya (1)). Out of these, UNHCR estimates that 865 (52%) are returnees intending to stay for a year or longer. In contrast, 799 (48%) arrived for shorter stays.

Weekly crossings fluctuated around 300 crossings remained at the same level as in October.

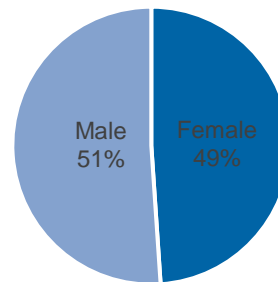
<i>Arrivals (Uganda): per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	865	52%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	799	48%
<i>Transiting</i>	0	0

The age-gender breakdown of arrivals from Uganda differs from the other borders showing in November slightly more males (51%) comparing to females, although in the most numerous age category women are prevailing (26% women and 25% men). The share of women in short time traveller category is slightly higher (29% of women and 25% of men). It is noticeable that share of pre-school age children (almost 17% of total) in pendular movement category is higher than 5-11 or 12-17 cohort, who remain in the country of asylum for schooling.

Age-gender disaggregation

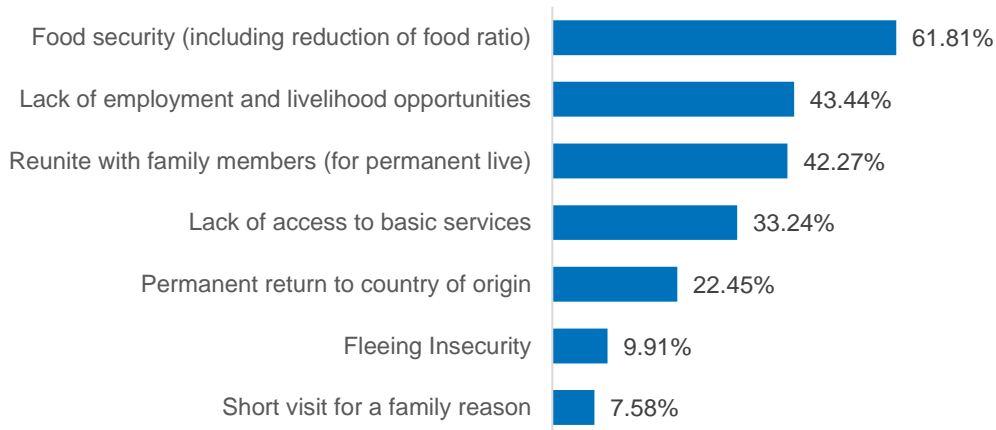


Gender Disaggregation



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 (33%). Pull factors, like family reunification and returning home, motivated at least 42% of travellers. At the same time, almost 10% of respondents interviewed in November indicated fleeing insecurity or tensions with the host community as the reason for their crossing.

Reasons to Return to South Sudan



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

Returnees from Uganda like arrivals from other neighbouring countries are travelling to the areas relatively close to the border. Almost 97% of those crossing from Uganda aimed to reach their area of origin for long- and short-term stays. Majority of interviewed in both categories short and long-term travellers interviewed in November confirmed having visited earlier the area they are heading to.

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, 751 South Sudanese were recorded crossing to South Sudan at the border crossing points with Kenya. In addition to these 751 arrivals, 175 South Sudanese arrived from Kenya crossing the border with Ethiopia.

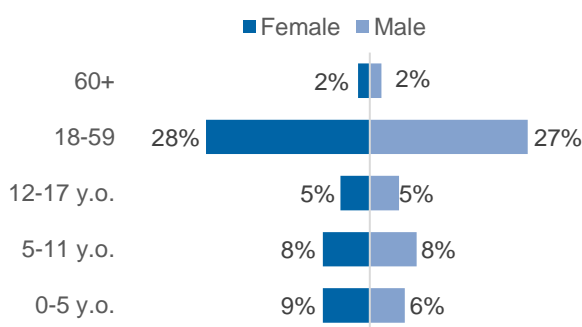
Out of this total 926 arrivals from Kenya, 203 (21%) (which is 13% lower than in October) are classified as returnees intending to stay for a year or longer, while 320 (66%) arrived for shorter stays.

Weekly arrivals averaged around 170-250 people.

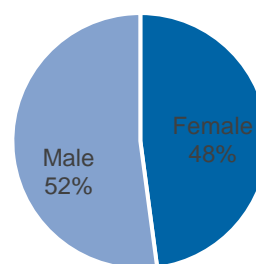
<i>Arrivals (Kenya): per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	203	21%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	723	79%
<i>Transiting</i>	0	0

The gender breakdown shows a slight majority of men (52%) compared to women (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.

Age-gender disaggregation

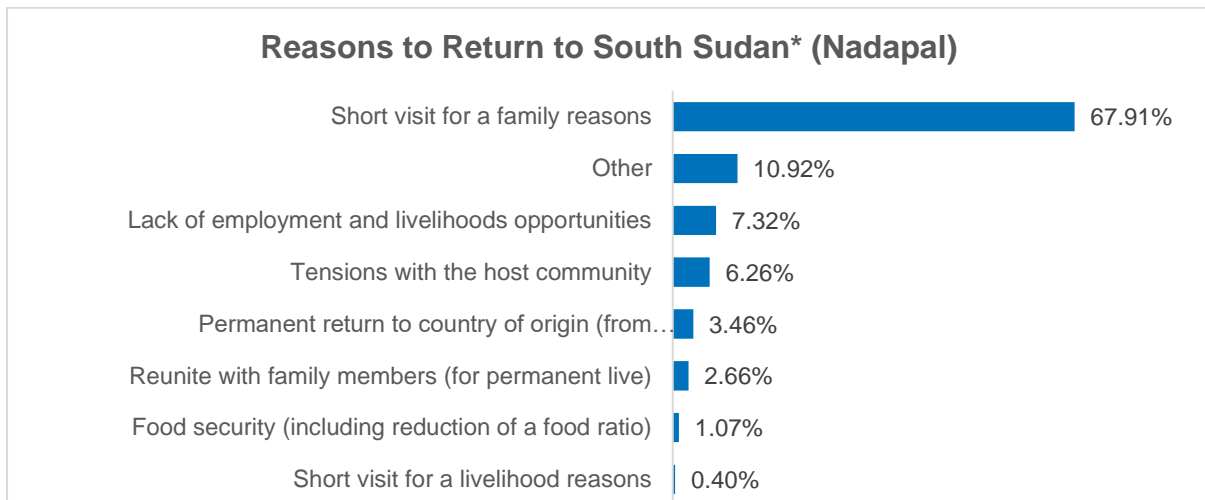


Gender Disaggregation



The reasons for South Sudanese returnees from Kenya (in particular, those crossing at Nadapal border point) confirm the pendular nature of movements. Almost 70% interviewed cited short family visits as their reason for crossing, another 7% indicated lack of employment and livelihood opportunities, and 1% food security as reason for their travel. Only 3% of interviewed indicated return for family reunification as their primary reason for crossing. At the same time almost 7% indicated tension with the host community as a push factor triggering their return.

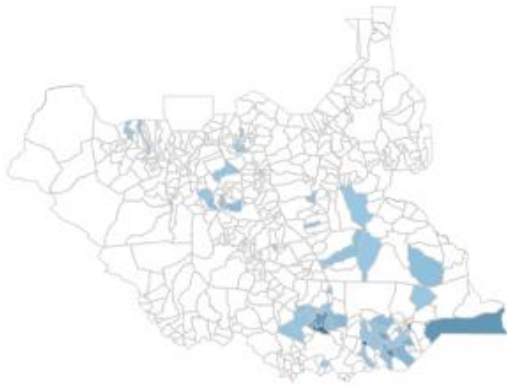
Over 80% of interviewees indicated that this was their first travel to South Sudan in the last 2 years. Also, more than 40% of arrivals from Kenya indicated Juba as their destination of travel; all of them are travelling from Kakuma camp.



**respondent could select only 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, short-term travellers from Kenya return to areas quite distant from the border.

Intended Destination



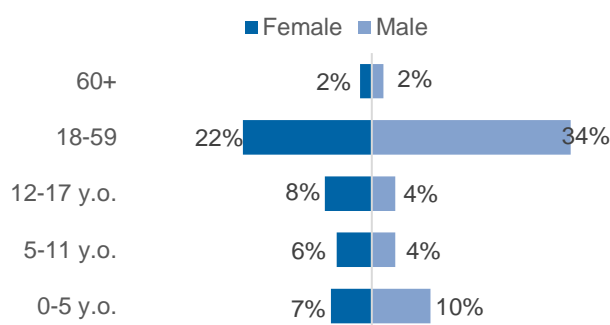
Border Monitoring Trends: DRC

In November 2024, 164 South Sudanese arrived to South Sudan from DRC. Of these, 121 arrived at DRC border, 42 transited through CAR territory, and 1 arrived through Uganda. Weekly arrivals fluctuated, from 17 to almost 60 people. As a result of interviews conducted by UNHCR enumerators UNHCR estimates that 82% (134 individuals) are returnees planning to stay long-term, while 26% (30 individuals) are short-term visitors.

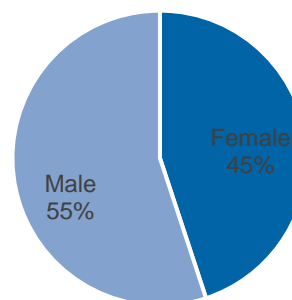
<i>Arrivals (DRC): per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>Border DRC</i>	<i>CAR</i>	<i>Uganda</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	134	91	42	1	82%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	30	30			18%
<i>Transiting</i>	0				0

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 (34% of men against 22% of women, and children below 5 (10% of boys and 7% of girls). It is noticeable that share of men of 18-59 age group in pendular movement category is even higher, reaching 71% of cohort against 17% for women.

Age-gender disaggregation

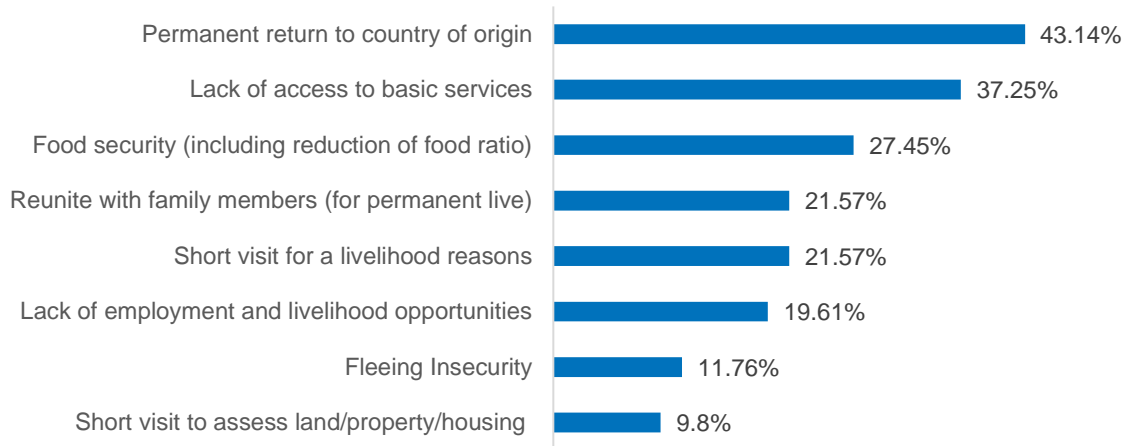


Gender Disaggregation



Analysis of South Sudanese arrivals from DRC shows the main reason for travel for over 40% is a return to the country of origin, which is also triggered by lack of access to basic services (mentioned by 37% of interviewed) and employment opportunities (20%). The share of those who mentioned fleeing insecurity decreased 3rd consecutive month from 26% to 17% and 12% of interviewed respectively. At the same time food security remain a push factor for travel as generally in the region, mentioned by 27% of 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 80%% of arrivals in November indicated visiting the area previously to check the conditions of return.

Visit to the area earlier to check the conditions for return

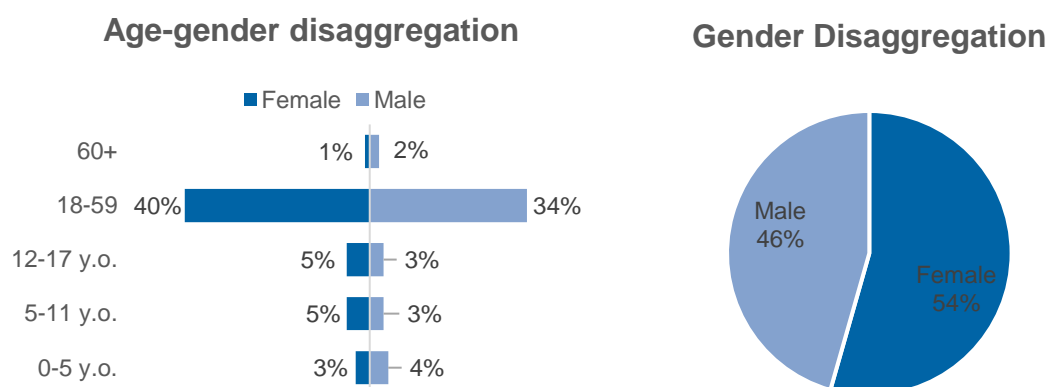


Border Monitoring Trends: CAR

In November 2024, UNHCR partner enumerators recorded 147 arrivals from CAR (which is slightly lower than in October and September). Of these, 65 crossed to South Sudan at the border points with CAR, while main part of 82 travelled through DRC territory. 104 (71%) are returnees intending to stay for at least one year, while 43 (29%) were short-term visitors.

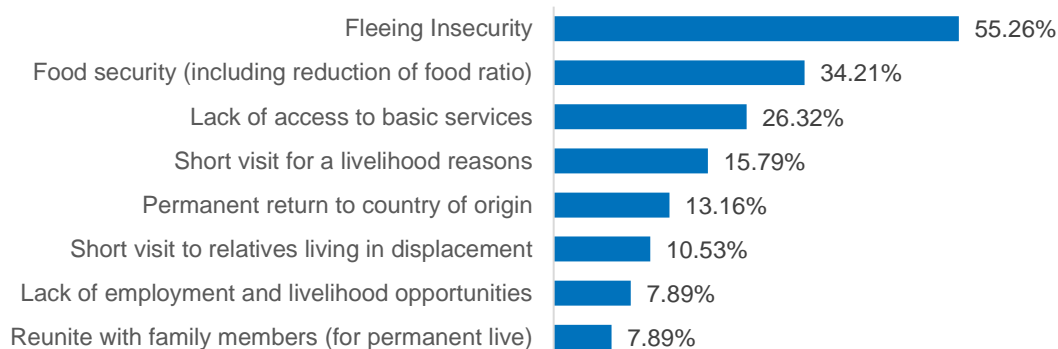
<i>Arrivals (CAR): per category</i>	<i># of arrivals</i>	<i>Bordering DRC</i>	<i>country CAR</i>	<i>% of total</i>
<i>Returnees</i>	104	67	37	71%
<i>Pendular Movements</i>	43	15	28	29%
<i>Transiting</i>	0	0	0	0

The age-gender analysis of arrivals from CAR shows a slightly higher number of women, with 54% women and 46% men. The age-gender disaggregation shows a clear prevalence of 18-59 age group for both genders over all other age groups. (40% - women, and 34% - men)



The top reason for travel from CAR in November mentioned more than 55% interviewed is fleeing insecurity and food security 34.21%. In combination with lacking access to services and livelihood opportunities, increased insecurity explains high long-term return numbers in November, comparing to previous months. At the same time only 13% of interviewed mentioned intention to return permanently on voluntary basis.

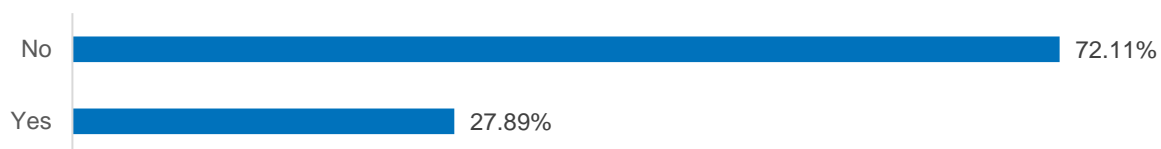
Reasons to Return to South Sudan



**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 27% 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 recognized 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