UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR SOUTH SUDAN

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

Spontaneous Returns Monitoring

June 2025

16,381 Returnee arrivals to South Sudan in June 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1
List of Acronyms 1
Introduction 2
South Sudanese Arrivals in June 2025 2
Demographic of Arrival Population 3
Reasons for Return 3
Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan 4
Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia 5
Border Monitoring Trends: CAR 7
Border Monitoring Trends: DRC 9
Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda 10
Annexes 12
- Border Monitoring Methodology 12
- Analytical Framework, Data Collection Methods and Analysis 12
- Limitations 12

Lists of Tables

Table 1: Movement category of South Sudanese arrivals 2
Table 2: Movement category of arrivals from Sudan 4
Table 3: Movement category of arrivals from Ethiopia 6
Table 4: Movement category of arrivals from CAR 7
Table 5: Movement category of arrivals from DRC 9
Table 6: Movement category of arrivals from Uganda 10

Executive Summary

In June 2025, at least 26,443 South Sudanese nationals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at various border points. The majority from Sudan, Ethiopia, CAR, DRC and Uganda. The highest number of arrivals came from Sudan (22,261), followed by Ethiopia (3,853), CAR (126), DRC (113), and Uganda (90). Of the 26,443 arrivals, 16,381 (62%) were returnees, while 10,062 (38%) were pendular movement, meaning that they intend to stay in South Sudan for a duration of less than on year.

An analysis of the reasons for return, as reported by South Sudanese nationals interviewed at crossing points, indicates reunification with family members for permanent living (38%) and insecurity (31%) were the primary reasons for crossing into South Sudan. Other notable reasons include lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (13%), forced return (6%), permanent return to the country of origin from displacement (6%), short visit for a family reason (1%), food insecurity/reduction in food rations (1%), lack of access to basic services (1%), and short visit for a livelihood reasons (1%).

However, when examining reasons for return by country of asylum, insecurity was most frequently cited by arrivals from Sudan and the DRC, while food insecurity/reduction in food rations was a prominent reason among returnees from Ethiopia and CAR. In contrast, returns from Uganda were more often driven by lack of access to basic services and family-related visits. These variations highlight the differing socio-economic, political, and humanitarian conditions across countries of asylum.

Importantly, since May 2025, due to limited funds, UNHCR limited its presence at fourteen border crossing points in Morobo and Kajo-Keji counties of Central Equatoria State. Additionally, in Eastern Equatoria, operational presence has also significantly declined at more than ten border points, including key crossings such as Nimule, Nadapal, and Lobone.

The closure and reduced presence at these strategic border points have led to gaps in timely and accurate information on cross-border movements, protection concerns, security incidents, gender-based violence, and the identification of vulnerable individuals arriving from Uganda, Kenya, and the DRC.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AGD	Age and Gender Diversity
CAR	Central African Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SSD	South Sudan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

South Sudan presents a multi-layered mix of refugees, IDPs, returnees (both refugees and IDPs), stateless persons, and persons at risk of statelessness. According to UNHCR, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), and partners, more than 650,000 South Sudanese individuals have returned spontaneously from neighbouring countries in the first five years since the signing of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), reaching the end of 2022. With the onset of the Sudan crisis in 2023, more than 750,000 South Sudanese individuals residing in Sudan were forced to move back to their country of origin due to insecurity and economic factors. The number of spontaneous returnees to South Sudan in just the last two years (2023-2024) reached 970,704 individuals.

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

South Sudanese Arrivals in June 2025

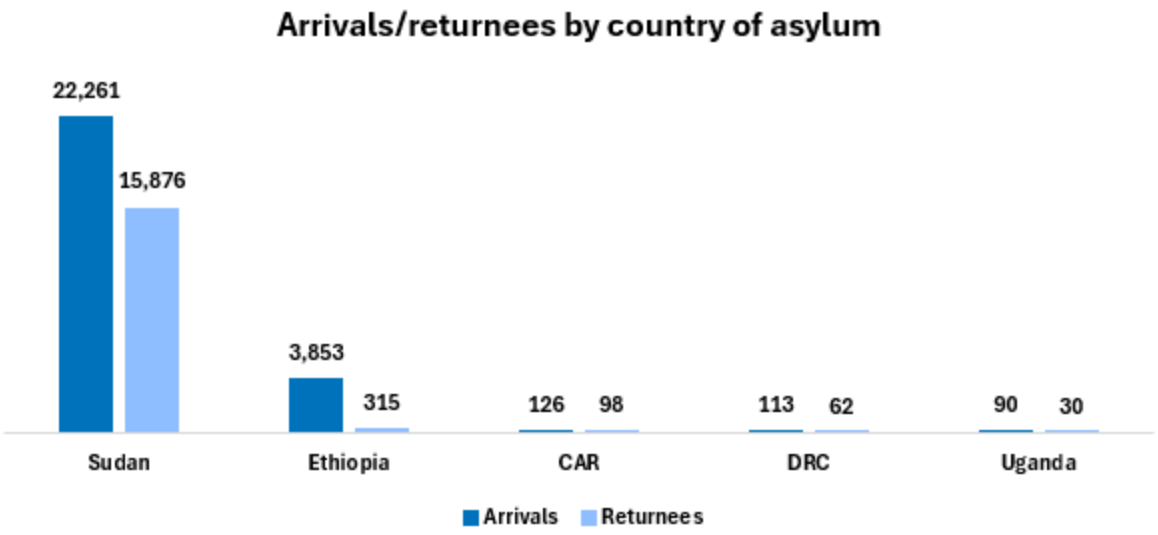
In June 2025, at least 26,443 South Sudanese nationals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at various border points, notably Sudan, Ethiopia, the CAR, the DRC and Uganda. The highest number of arrivals came from Sudan (22,261), followed by Ethiopia (3,853), CAR (126), DRC (113), and Uganda (90). Out of 26,443 arrivals, 16,381 (62%) were returnees, while 10,062 (38%) were pendular movements.

Table 1: Movement category of South Sudanese arrivals

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	16,381	62%
Pendular	10,062	38%

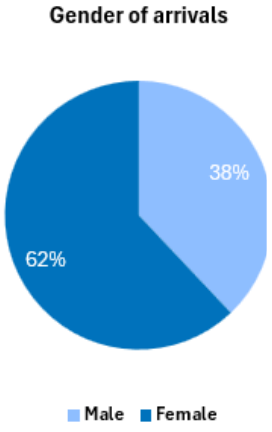
Note on Methodology

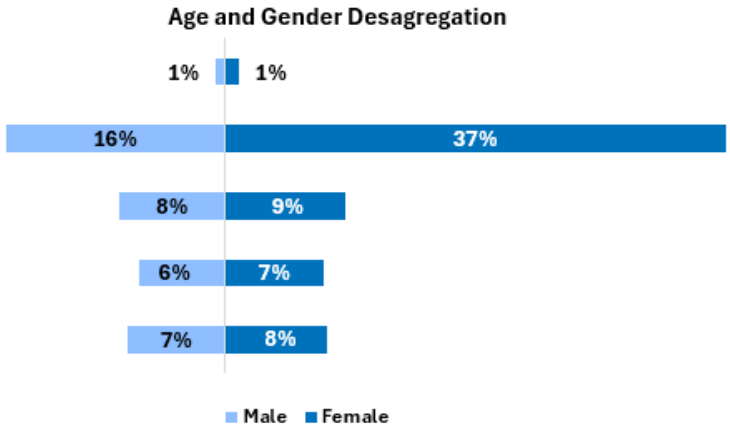
UNHCR South Sudan, in consultation with the RRC, introduced an updated methodology for the identification of returnees since September 2024. According to this methodology, only households with the intention to stay in South Sudan for one year or longer are counted as returnees to South Sudan. Those with 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 to reach other countries ("transiting").



Demographic of Arrival Population

Females constituted the highest proportion (62%) of arrivals, compared to males (38%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old made up the majority (53%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (17%), children under 5 (15%), children aged 5 to 11 (13%), while elderly individuals aged 60 and above were the least represented (2%).

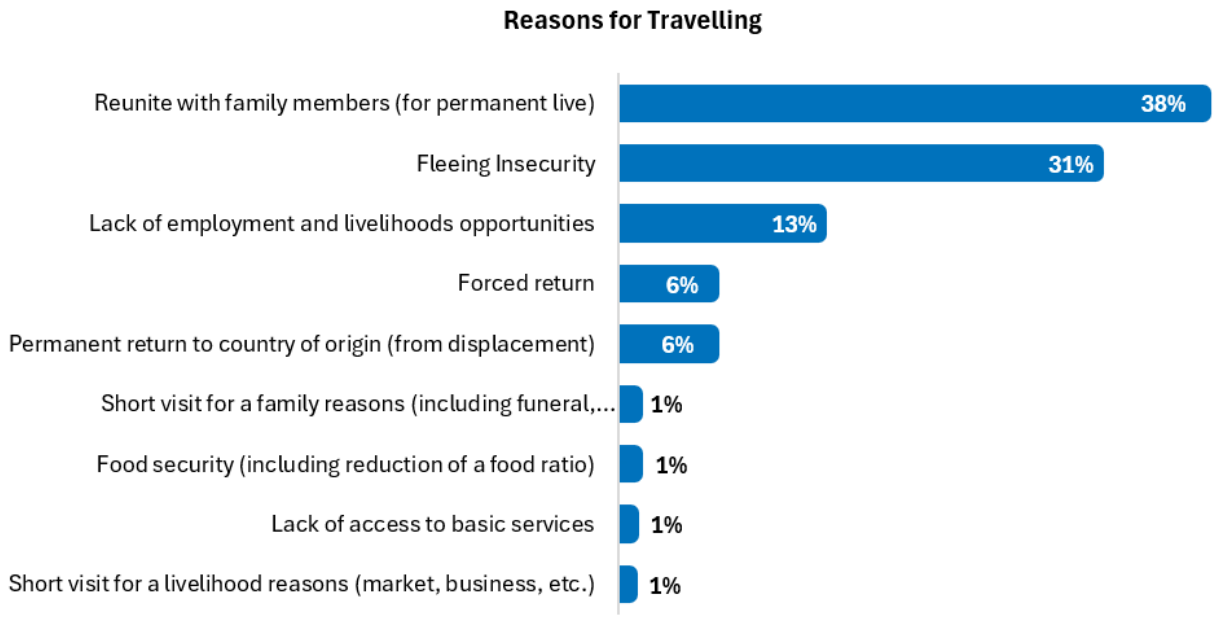




Reasons for Return

An analysis of the reasons for return, as reported by South Sudanese nationals interviewed at crossing points, indicates reunification with family members for permanent living (38%) and insecurity (31%) were the primary reasons for crossing into South Sudan. Other notable reasons include lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (13%), forced return (6%), permanent return to the country of origin from displacement (6%), short visit for a family reason (1%), food insecurity/reduction in food rations (1%), lack of access to basic services (1%), and short visit for a livelihood reasons (1%).

However, when examining reasons for return by country of asylum, insecurity was most frequently cited by arrivals from Sudan and the DRC, while food insecurity/reduction in food rations was a prominent reason among returnees from Ethiopia and CAR. In contrast, returns from Uganda were more often driven by lack of access to basic services and family-related visits. These variations highlight the differing socio-economic, political, and humanitarian conditions across countries of asylum



Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan

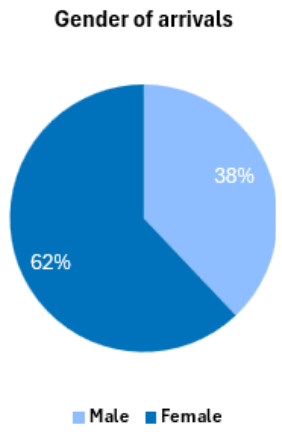
In June 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 22,261 South Sudanese nationals crossing from Sudan through multiple points of entry. Of these arrivals, 15,876 (71%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 6,383 (29%) were pendular movement.

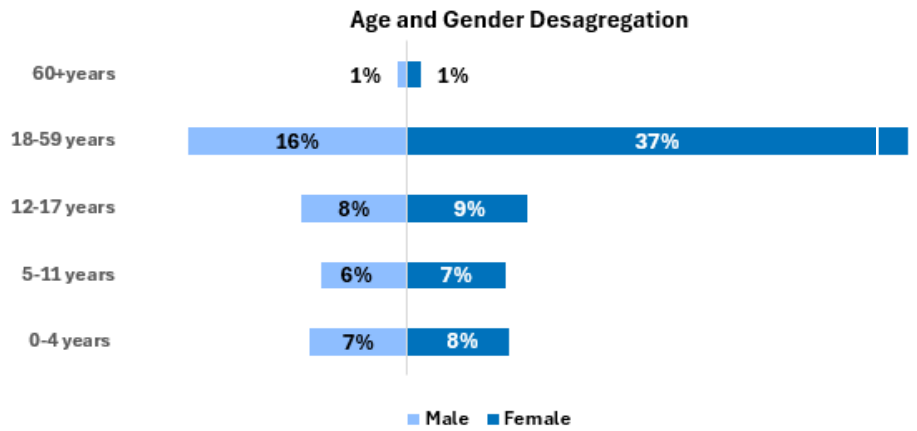
Table 2: Movement category of arrivals from Sudan

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	15,876	71%
Pendular	6,383	29%

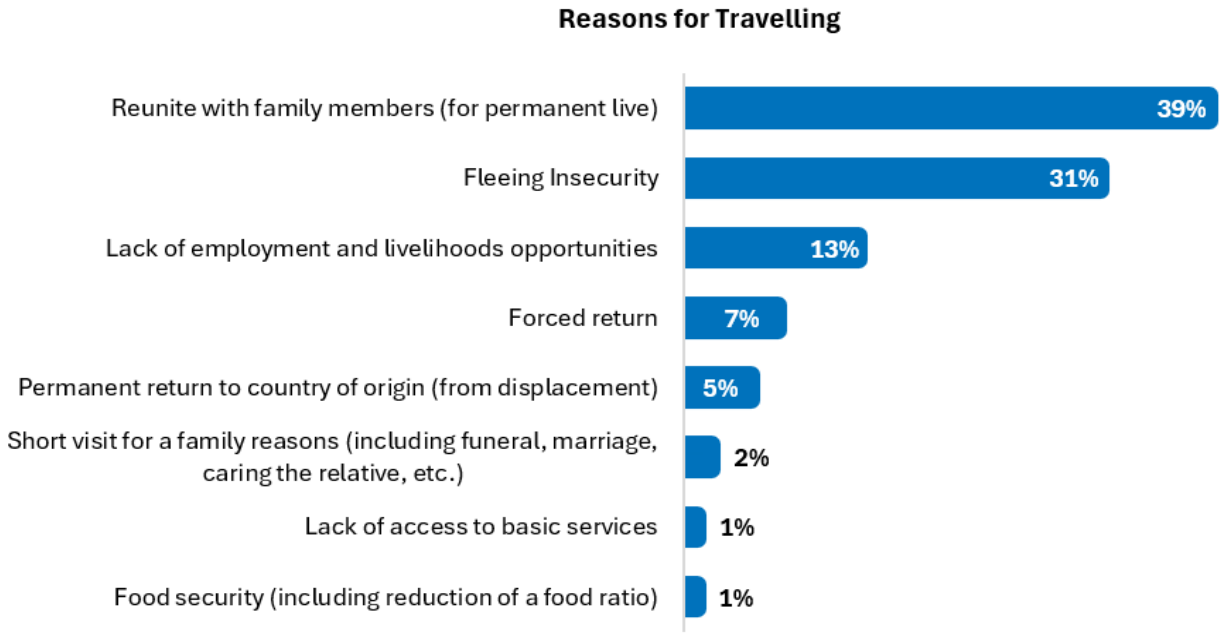
The average weekly crossings are estimated at 3,710 individuals, with the first week of the month recording highest number (4,631) of crossings. Joda/Wunthou (13,904). Majokyinthiu (2,510), Emtidad (1,122) and Amiet (1,067) were the major crossing points, while the rest (3,658) crossed through other points of entry.

Females constituted more than half (62%) of the arrivals, compared to males (38%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old made up the majority (53%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (17%), children under 5 (15%), children aged 5 to 11 (13%), while elderly individuals aged 60 and above were the least represented (2%).





The primary reasons influencing the return arrivals were reunification with family members for permanent live (39%) and insecurity (31%). Other reasons included lack of employment and livelihoods opportunities (13%), forced return (7%), permanent return to their country of origin from displacement (5%), short visit for family reasons (2%), lack of access to basic services (1%), and food insecurity/reduction in food rations (1%).



Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia

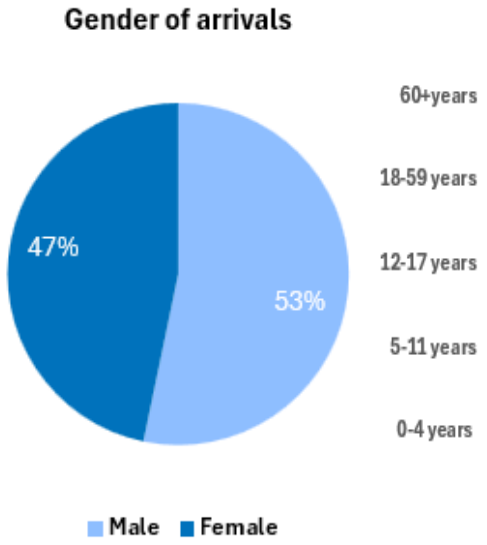
In June 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 3,853 South Sudanese crossing from Ethiopia into South Sudan through Maker, Pagak, Makak, Phil, Jekow, and Nyawech entry points. Of these arrivals, 315 (8%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or more than a year, while 3,538 (92%) were pendular movements.

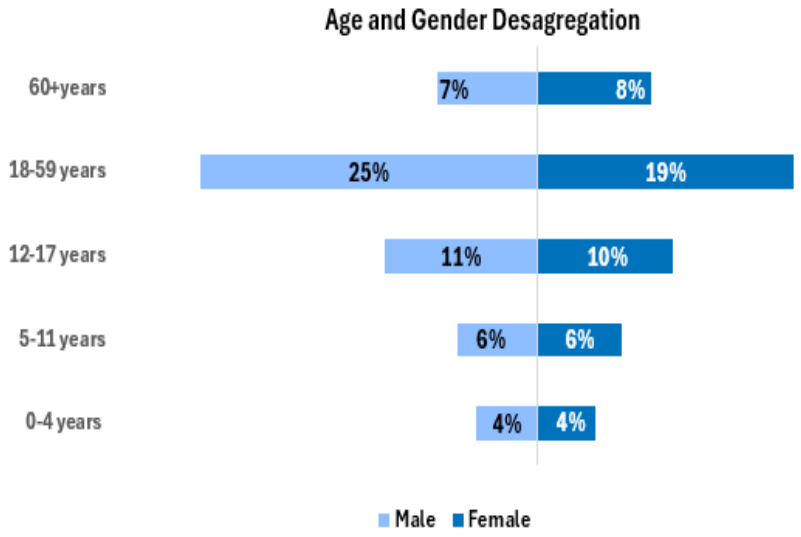
Table 3: Movement category of arrivals from Ethiopia

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	315	8%
Pendular	3,538	92%

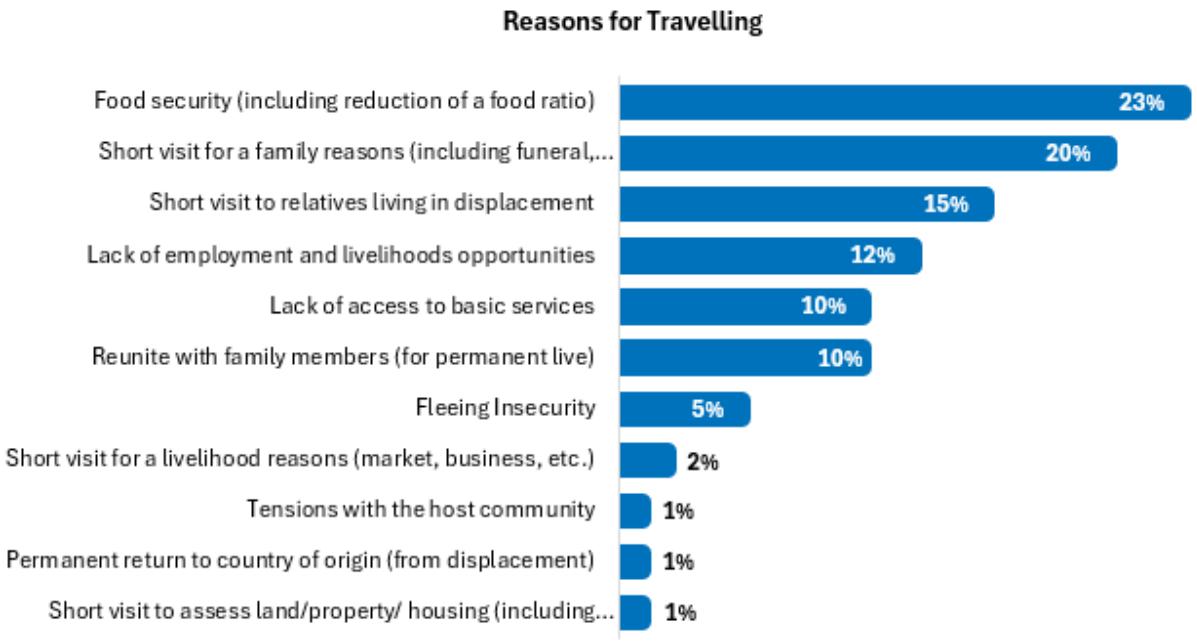
The average weekly crossings were estimated at 926 individuals, with the second week of the month recording highest number (1,220) of crossings. Maker (1,646), Pagak (759), Makak (632) were the major crossing points, while the rest of individuals (816) crossed through other points of entry.

Males constituted more than half (53%) of the arrivals, compared to females (47%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old constituted a significant proportion (44%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (21%), elderly individuals aged 60 and above (15%), children aged 5 to 11 (12%), while children under 5 years-old were the least represented (8%).





The primary reasons influencing the return arrivals were food insecurity/reduction in food rations (20%), short visit to relatives living in displacement (15%), lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (12%), lack of access to basic services in country of asylum (10%) and reunification with family members for permanent living (10%). Other reasons included insecurity (5%), short visit for a livelihood reasons (2%), tensions with the host community (1%), permanent return to country of origin from displacement (1%), and short visit to assess land, property and housing (1%).



Border Monitoring Trends: CAR

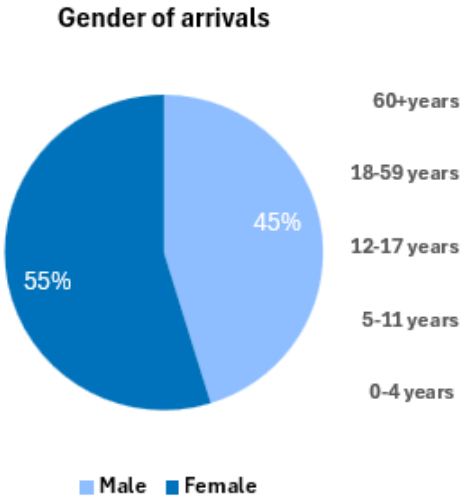
In June 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 126 South Sudanese arrivals to South Sudan from Central African Republic through Source Yubu entry point. Of these arrivals, 98 (78%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or more than a year, while 28 (22%) were pendular movements.

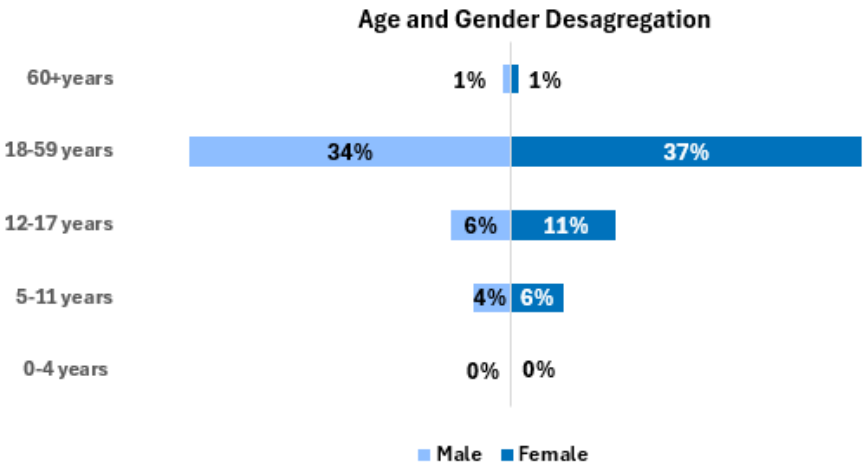
Table 4: Movement category of arrivals from CAR

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	98	78%
Pendular	28	22%

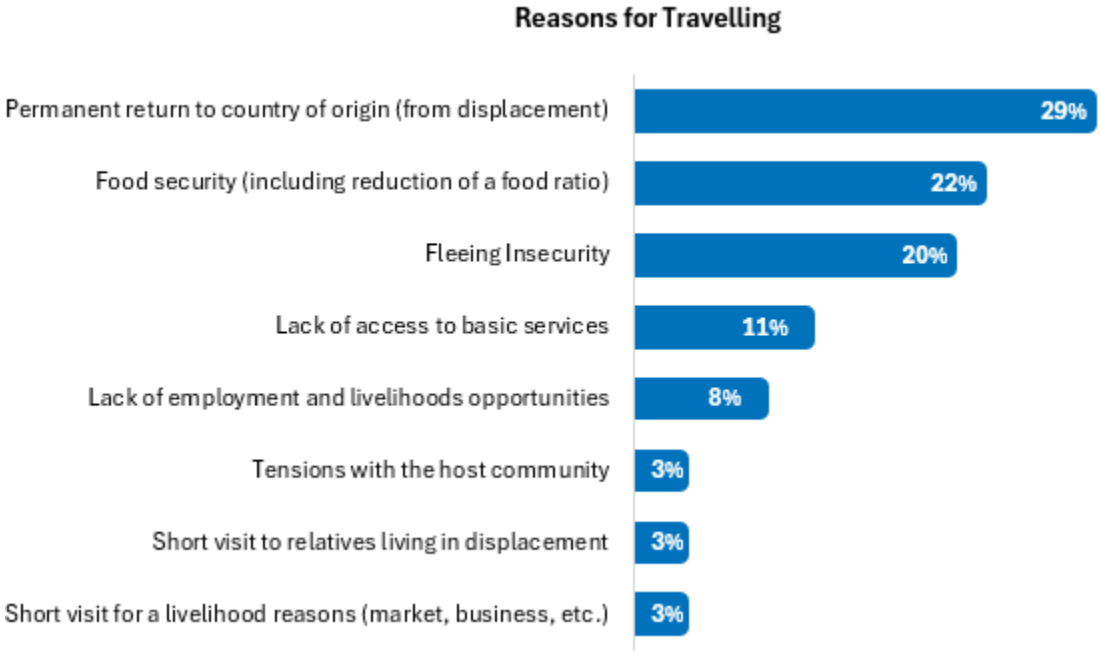
The average weekly number of crossings is estimated at 25 individuals, with the fourth week of the month recording highest number (31). All 126 individuals crossed through Source Yubu entry point.

Females constituted more than half (55%) of the arrivals, compared to males (45%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old formed the majority (71%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (17%), children aged 5 to 11 (10%), individuals aged 60 and above (2%). Notably, no children under the age of 5 were recorded among the arrivals.





The primary reasons influencing the return arrivals were permanent return to country of origin from displacement (29%), food insecurity/reduction in food rations (22%), insecurity (22%), lack of access to basic services in country of asylum (11%), and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (8%). Other reasons included tensions with the host community (3%), short visit to relatives living in displacement (3%) and short visit for a livelihood reasons (3%).



Border Monitoring Trends: DRC

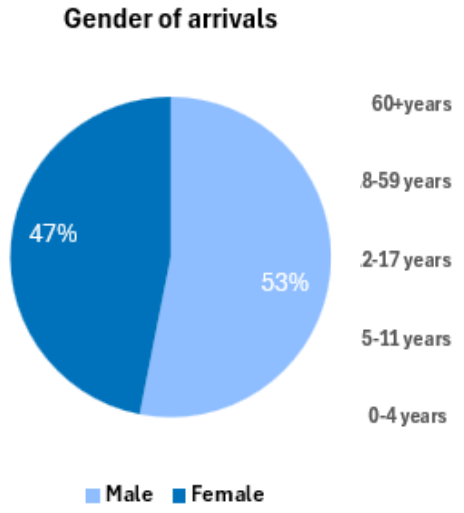
In June 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 113 South Sudanese arrivals to South Sudan from DRC through Gangura, Ezo, Sakure, and Rasul crossing points. Of these arrivals, 62 (55%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 51 (45%) were pendular movements.

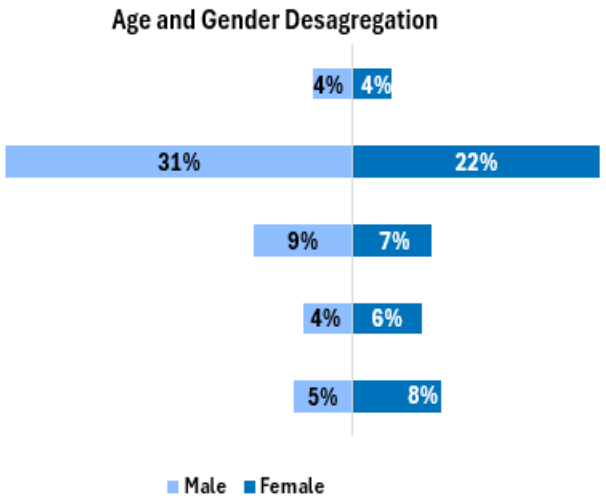
Table 5: Movement category of arrivals from DRC

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	62	55%
Pendular	51	45%

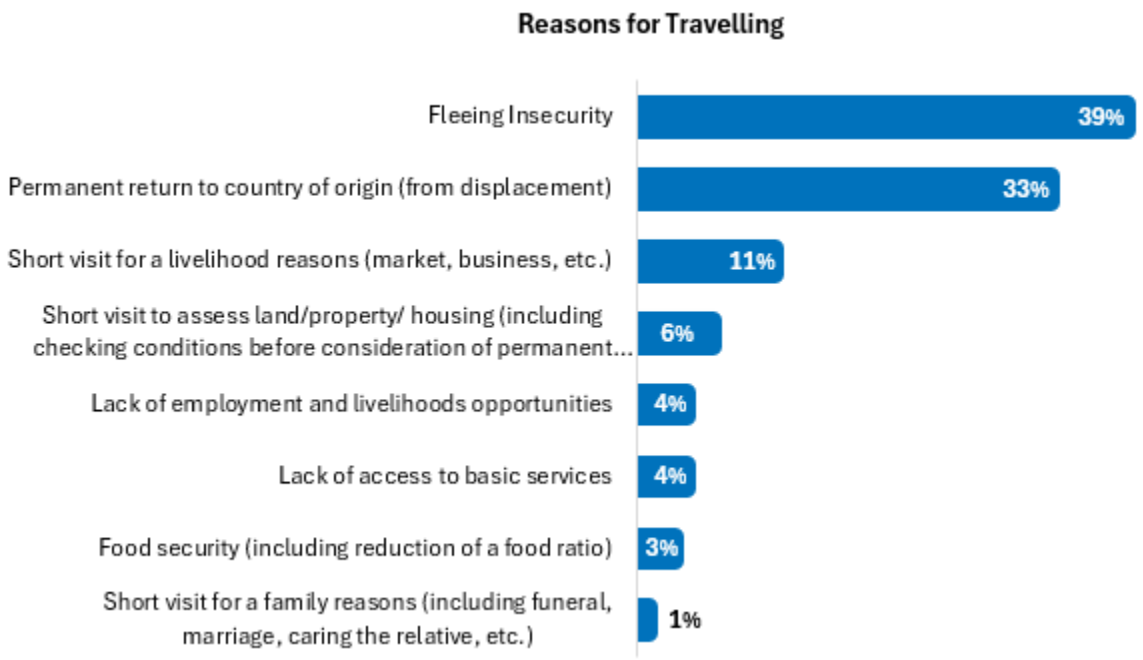
The average weekly crossings are estimated at 28 individuals. Gangura (49), Ezo (43), Sakure (17), and Rasul (4) were the entry points used by the arrivals.

Males constituted the majority of arrivals (53%), compared to females (47%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old made up the majority (53%), followed by children between 12 to 17 (16%), children under 5 (13%), and children aged 5 to 11 (10%). Elderly individuals aged 60 and above accounted for 8% of the arrivals.





The primary reasons influencing the return were insecurity (39%), permanent return to the country of origin from displacement (33%), and short visit for livelihood reasons (11%). Other reasons included short visit to assess land and property (6%), lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (4%), lack of basic services in the country of asylum (4%), food insecurity/reduction in food rations (3%), and short visit for a family reason (1%).



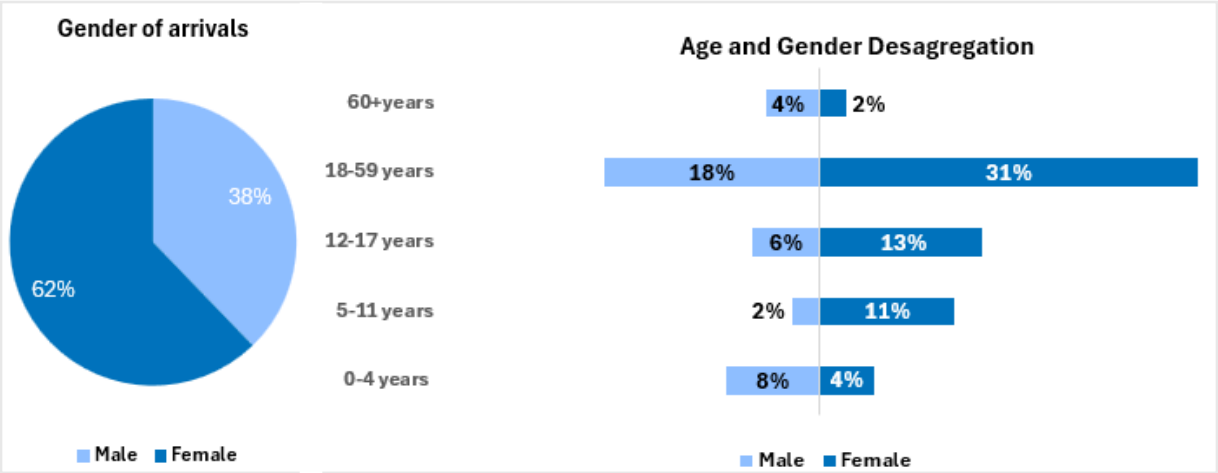
Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda

In June 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 90 South Sudanese crossing into South Sudan from Uganda through Nimule crossing point. Of these arrivals, 30 (33%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 60 (67%) were pendular movements.

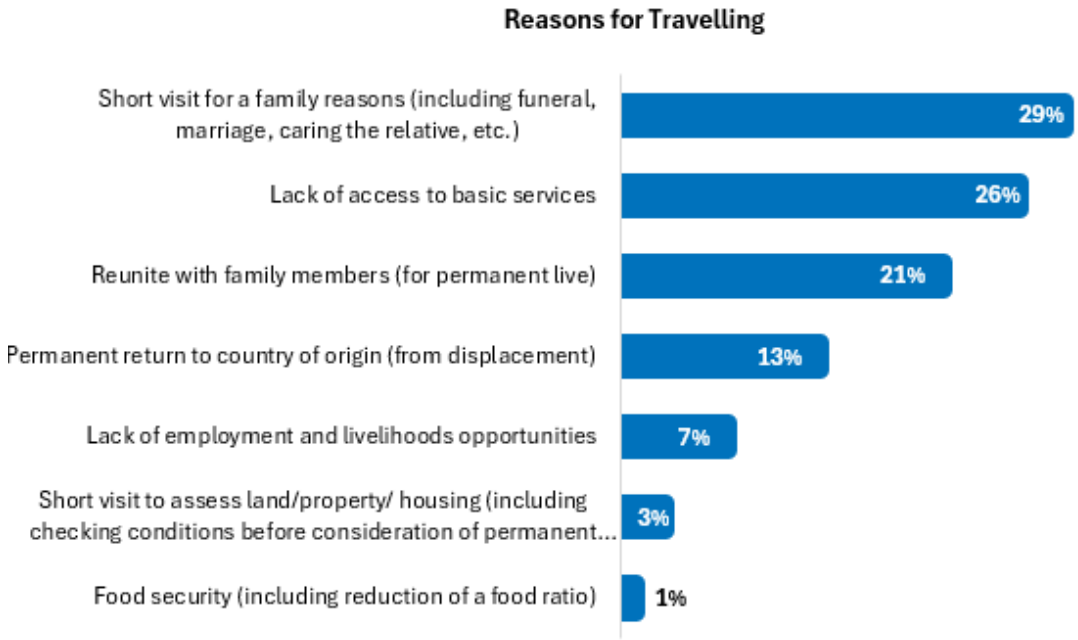
Table 6: Movement category of arrivals from Uganda

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	30	33%
Pendular	60	67%

Females constituted the majority (62%) of arrivals compared to males (38%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old constituted a significant proportion (49%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (19%), children 5 to 11 (13%), children under 5 years-old (12%), while individuals aged 60 and above accounted for 6% of the arrivals.



The primary reasons influencing return were short visit for family reasons (29%), lack of basic services in the country of asylum (26%), reunification with family members for permanent living (21%), and permanent return to country of origin from displacement (13%). Other reasons included lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (7%), short visit to assess land, property and housing (3%), and food insecurity/reduction in food rations (1%).



Annexes

Border Monitoring Methodology

UNHCR South Sudan's border monitoring aims to improve information about the flow of South Sudanese nationals returning to South Sudan from neighbouring countries. This helps understand the current return movement trends, assess protection needs of the returnee population, and better prepare the operational response in South Sudan at both national and field 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. Enumerators collect data directly from incoming and outgoing individuals and households crossing the border points. For 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 on 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 Wunthou (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 is 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 provided.

We thank our partners:

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of:

Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | Finland | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) | Luxembourg | Netherlands | Norway | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | African Development Fund | Intergovernmental Authority on Development | South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF) | United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

With the support of the following organizations and private sector partners: Australia for UNHCR | España con ACNUR | Japan for UNHCR | Mastercard Foundation | Private donors in the Republic of Korea | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

2025

Spontaneous Returns Monitoring

June 2025

UNHCR Information Management Unit – Juba, South Sudan
Email: ssdjuim@unhcr.org