

Renk Transit Centre Intention Survey

18 July 2025

Since the war in Sudan began in April 2023, Renk county has received 80% of the 1.2 million refugees and returnees arriving to South Sudan. Humanitarian partners prioritised life-saving assistance at entry points and onward transport to ease congestion. However, following the pause in onward transport assistance (OTA) on June 1, 2025, due to funding cuts, the Transit Centre population increased by almost 20% by July 11, to 12,406, up from the previous average of around 10,000.

In response, a joint intention survey was conducted from June 25 to July 3, 2025, by seven partners, reaching 5,816 households (92% returnees, 8% refugees), most of whom arrived via Joda/Wuntau and reside in the Transit Centre. This report presents the findings to inform integration planning, service delivery, and potential future relocations.

KEY FINDINGS

Intentions

- 64% of respondents are unwilling to relocate, including 77% of refugees and 63% of returnees.
- Willingness to relocate is lower among those who arrived earlier; 70% of returnees from 2023 prefer to stay compared to 54% of those who arrived in 2025. Returnees living in host communities are more likely to seek local integration than those in the Transit Centre.

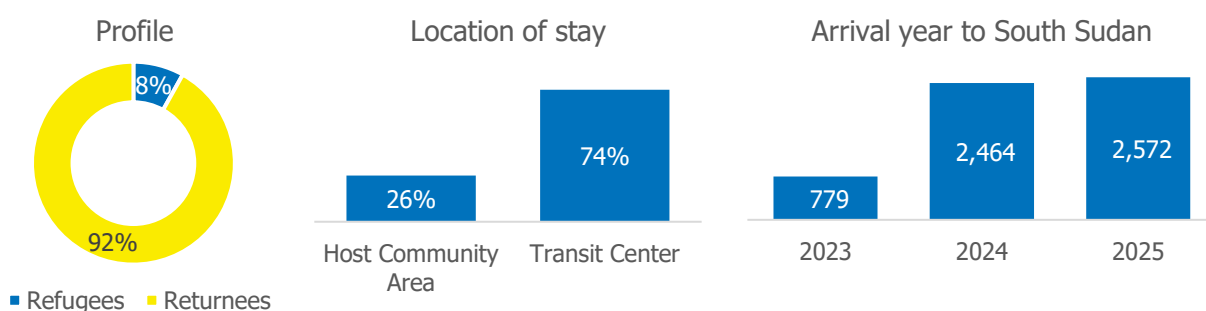
Returnees

- Among returnees willing to move (37% of returnees), 83% intend to return to their county of origin.
- Among returnees unwilling to move (63% of returnees), 84% plan to stay in the same location in the medium term, and 52% have already identified a specific site for settlement.
- The primary barriers to return for returnees include insecurity, lack of land tenure, limited livelihood options, and lack of family connections in the areas of origin.
- 85% of returnees seeking local integration would prefer a one-time cash or NFI grant to support integration.

Refugees

- Only 23% of refugees are willing to relocate; 68% of them prefer Wedweil Refugee Settlement in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, mainly due to access to services.
- 13% of refugees unwilling to move express an intention to return to Sudan.

Demographics



INTENTIONS

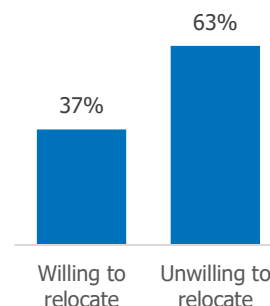
64% refugees and returnees in the Transit Centre and the surrounding hosting area are unwilling to relocate

The majority of both refugees and returnees in Renk prefer to stay in Renk rather than relocate, with 77% of refugees and 63% of returnees unwilling to move. While returnees show slightly more openness to relocation (37%) compared to refugees (23%), overall 64% of respondents across both groups indicated they intend to remain in Renk.

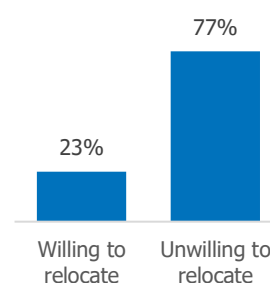
The longer individuals have stayed in Renk, the less willing they are to relocate—especially returnees. Among returnees who arrived in 2023, 70% were unwilling to move and seeking integration, compared to 54% of those who arrived in 2025, indicating stronger integration intentions over time.

Refugees and returnees residing in the host community are more likely to express a desire to stay and integrate, while those in the Transit Centre show higher willingness to relocate, likely reflecting differences in stability, access to services, and long-term prospects between the two locations.

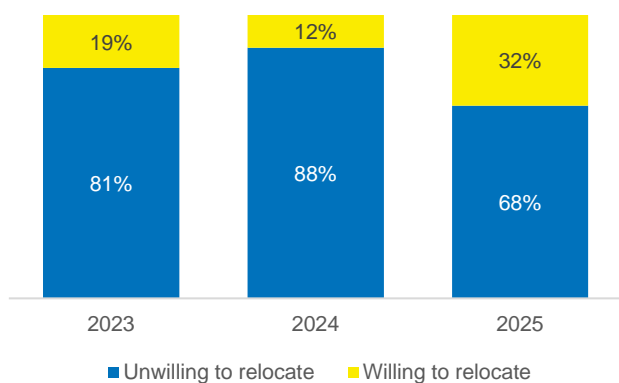
Returnee intentions



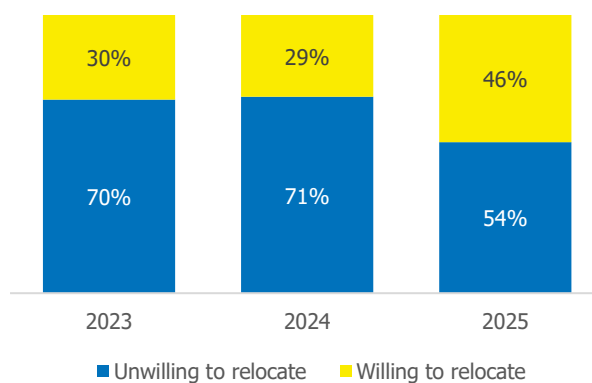
Refugee intentions



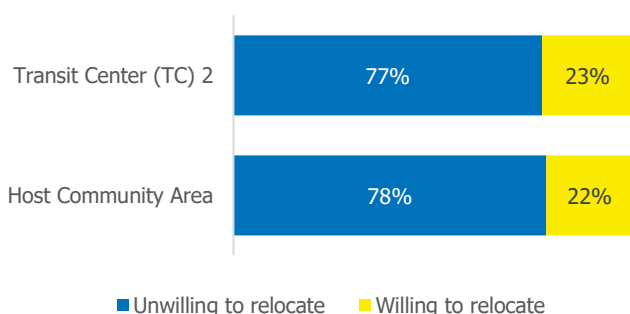
Intentions of refugees by arrival year



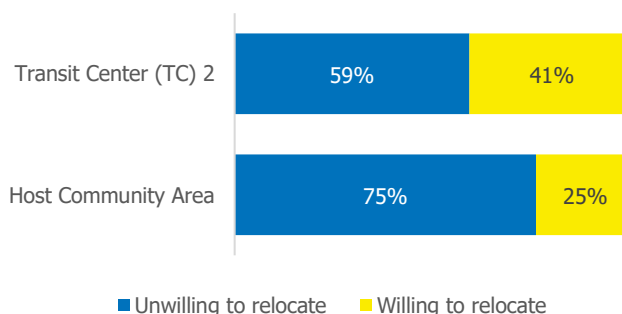
Intentions of returnees by arrival year



Intentions of refugees by place of stay



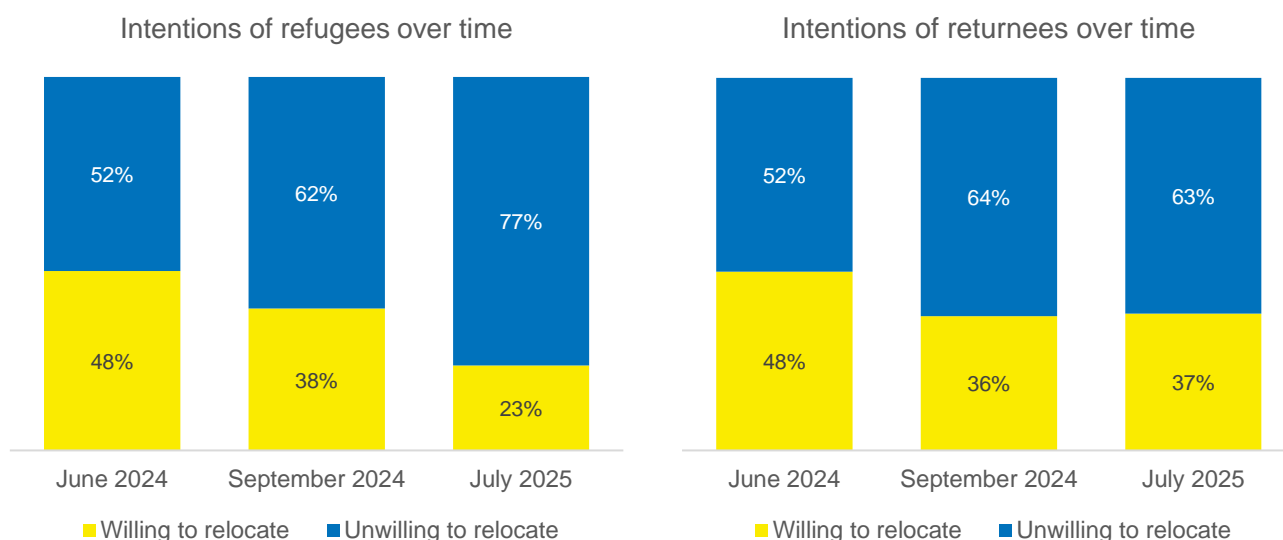
Intentions of returnees by place of stay



* The number of refugees interviewed in the host community is low (18 only) and should be treated as indicative only.

Comparison with previous intention surveys

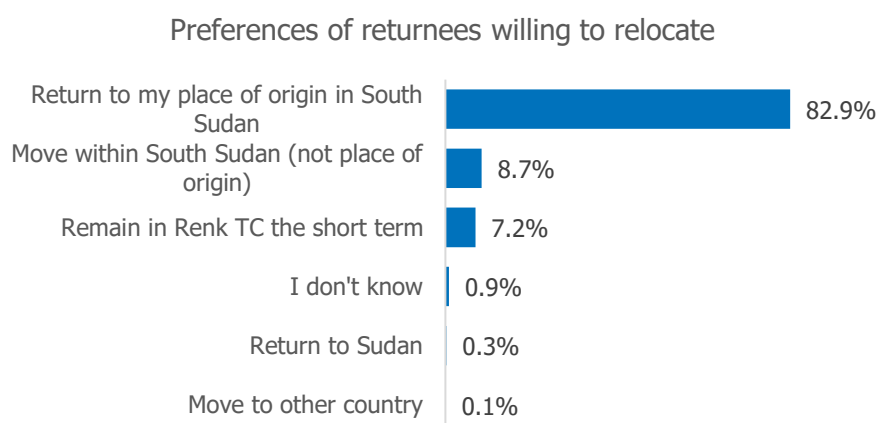
Over time, the proportion of refugees unwilling to relocate has steadily increased from 52% in June 2024 to 77% in July 2025, while returnee intentions have remained relatively stable, with 63% unwilling to move in July 2025 compared to 64% in September 2024. These earlier findings were published in the [Profiling of Refugees and Returnees in Renk \(November 2024\)](#).



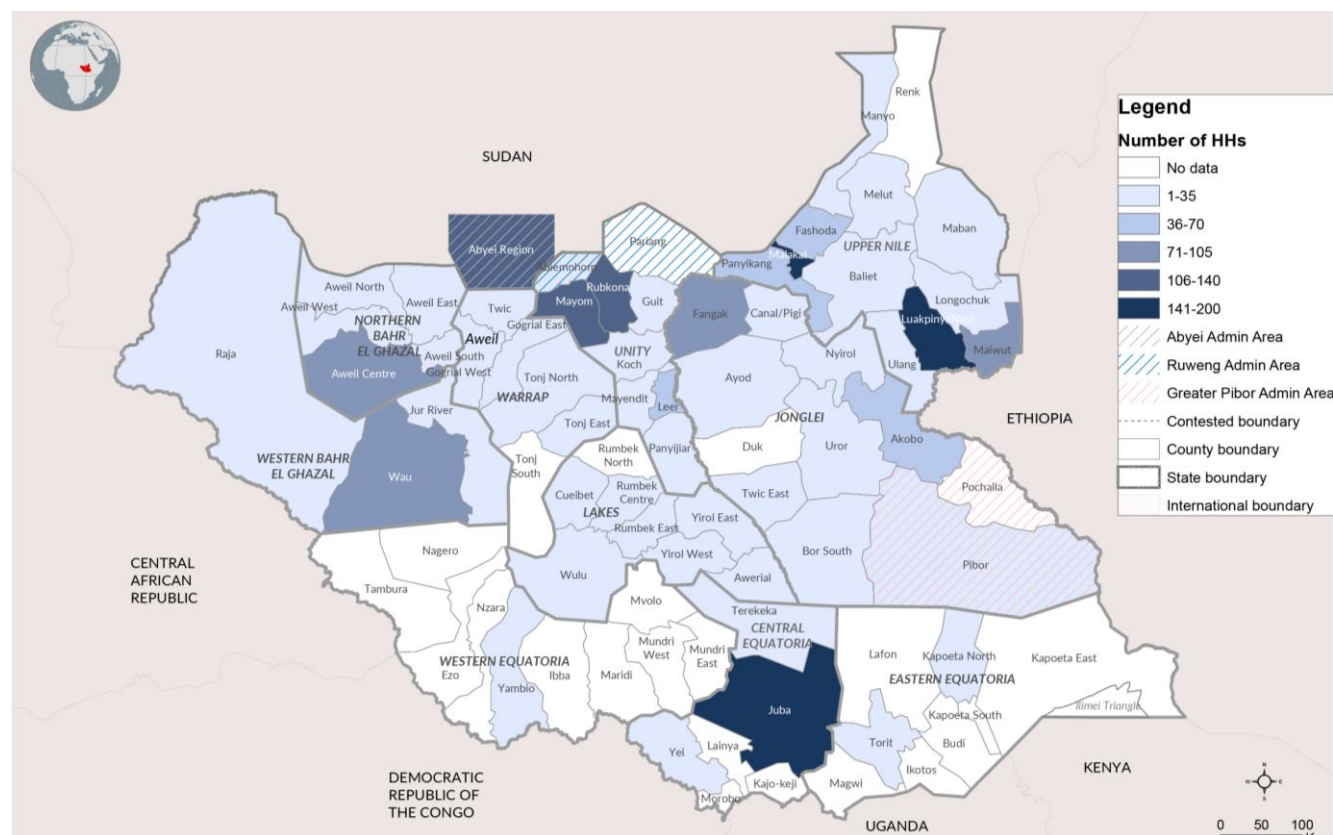
RETURNEES

37% of surveyed returnees said they are willing to relocate from their current location

Among returnees who expressed willingness to relocate, the overwhelming majority—82.9%—intend to return to their place of origin in South Sudan. A smaller portion—8.7%—plan to move elsewhere within South Sudan but not to their place of origin. 7.2% intend to remain at Renk Transit Centre temporarily, while a minimal number are unsure (0.9%), consider returning to Sudan (0.3%), or plan to move to another country (0.1%). This indicates a **strong preference among those returnees who are willing to relocate towards return and reintegration in their areas of origin, rather than moving elsewhere**. The top 5 counties where returnees are willing to relocate, as per the map below, include Malakal, Juba, Luakpiny/Nasir, Rubkona, and Abyei.



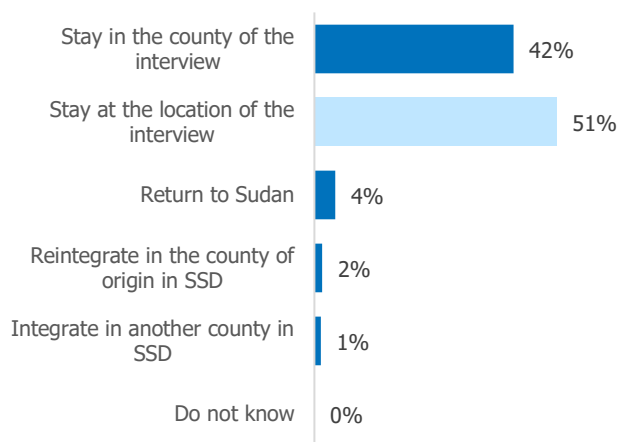
Priority counties where returnees are willing to relocate



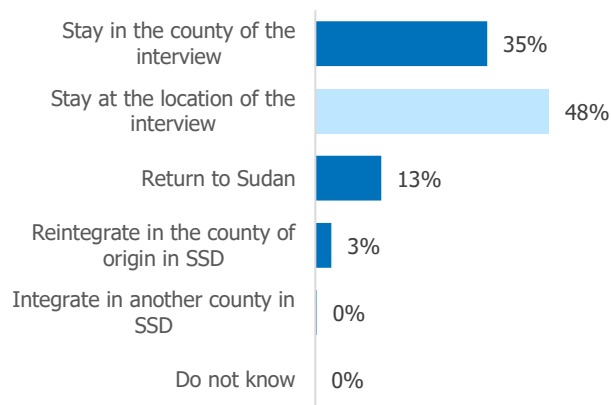
63% of surveyed returnees said they are unwilling to relocate and prefer to remain where they are

Among returnees unwilling to relocate, the overwhelming majority intend to remain where they are in both the short and medium term. In the next month, 93% plan to stay either at the interview location (51%) or elsewhere within the same county (42%). This trend remains strong over the medium term, with 84% expressing a desire to remain, 48% at the interview site and 35% elsewhere in the county. Additionally, the proportion of returnees who express intentions to go back to Sudan increases from 4% in the short term to 13% in the medium term. A minority, even though initially reported unwillingness to relocate, expressed intent to either reintegrate in the county of origin or integrate in another county. **These findings underscore strong integration intentions, alongside a modest but notable potential for future reintegration, reinforcing the importance of sustained local integration support.**

Short-term intentions (one month)



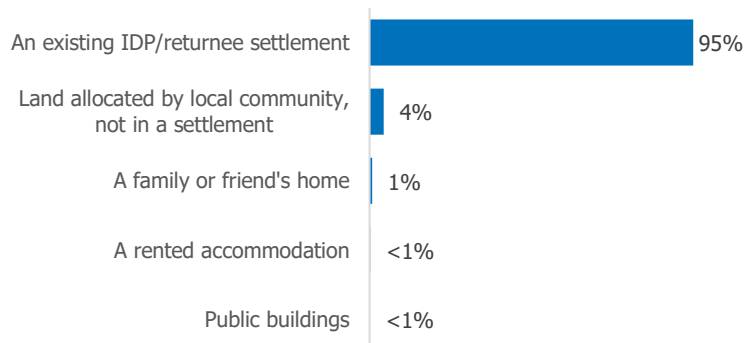
Medium-term intentions (after 1 month)



Among respondents who indicated they intend to stay at the location of the interview, 52% have already identified a specific location for their stay, while 48% have not yet done so. This suggests that while many have a clear plan for local integration, **nearly half will still require support in identifying suitable housing or land within the area.**

Among respondents who identified a specific location to stay, **95% plan to settle in an existing IDP or returnee settlement**, indicating a strong preference for established, possibly better-supported areas. A small minority identified alternative arrangements: 4% intend to settle on land allocated by the host community but outside formal settlements, 1% plan to stay with family or friends, and fewer than 1% mentioned options such as renting accommodation or staying in public buildings like schools or churches. This highlights the central role of organised settlements in current local integration pathways.

Locations identified by returnees willing to stay at the location of the interview



Among returnees unwilling to relocate and seeking integration, 85% indicated they would consider receiving a one-time cash grant or NFIs to support their integration into the local community.

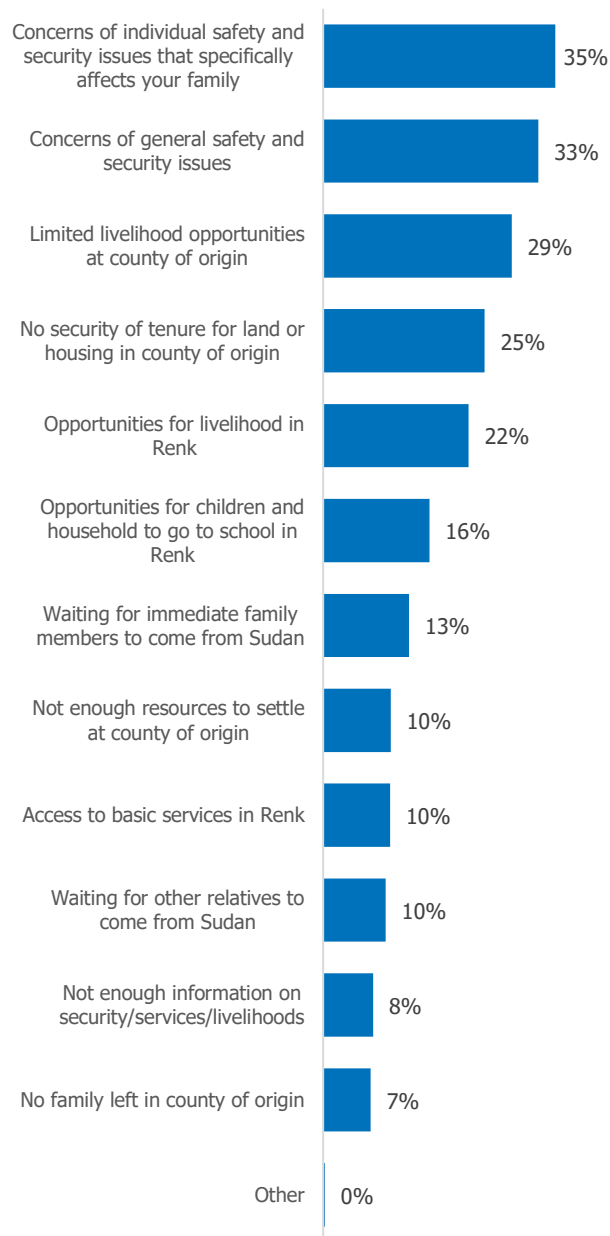
Barriers to return to the county of origin

A correlation analysis between respondents' state of origin and the reported reasons for reluctance to return to areas of origin reveals that **security, land tenure, and livelihoods** are key factors that vary significantly across states, while concerns linked to family-specific security, no family left in the county of origin and lack of information remain largely consistent across all states:

- **Security concerns** are strongly dependent on the location (state). Only about 9% of respondents from Lakes cite safety as a concern, compared to 37–39% of those from Warrap, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Unity, confirming that perceptions of insecurity as a barrier to return are closely tied to specific geographic contexts.
- **Land and housing tenure insecurity** emerges as a widespread concern, but with stark variations: over 93% of returnees from Central Equatoria report it as a barrier, compared to 57% in Eastern Equatoria—still a majority. All states report over 57%, underscoring this as a common challenge, but particularly acute for those from Central Equatoria and Upper Nile.
- When it comes to **livelihoods**, respondents from Central Equatoria (26.7%) and Warrap (25.4%) are the most likely to cite limited opportunities in their home areas, while those from Western Bahr el Ghazal (8.0%) and Lakes (12.5%) are the least likely to do so. These differences, though moderate, are statistically significant and reflect varying economic conditions in areas of origin.
- **No family left in the county of origin** is a commonly cited barrier, expressed equally across all states by those who raised it, with at least 57% of stayers in each state identifying it as a reason for not returning. This highlights the consistent influence of family connections on return decisions. While widespread, the intensity of this concern varies, reinforcing the role of social ties in shaping return decisions.
- In contrast, the **lack of information** about conditions in areas of origin is cited by few respondents, with no apparent variation by state.

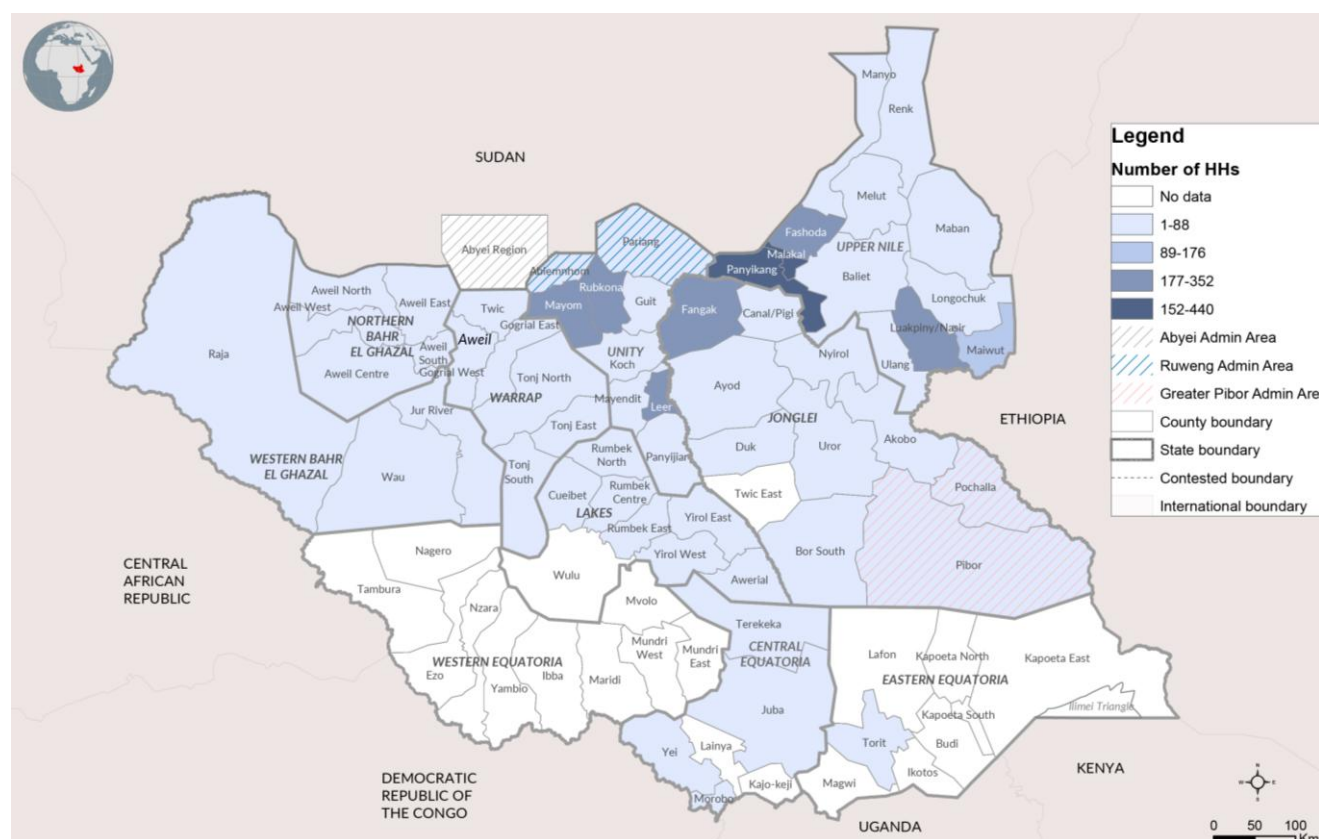
This suggests that while information gaps exist, they are not a primary driver of reluctance to return.

Challenges to reintegrate in county of origin



Overall, there are evident regional disparities in the factors influencing return intentions, reinforcing the need for tailored reintegration support that accounts for the specific challenges faced by populations from different states.

Counties of origin of returnees unwilling to relocate

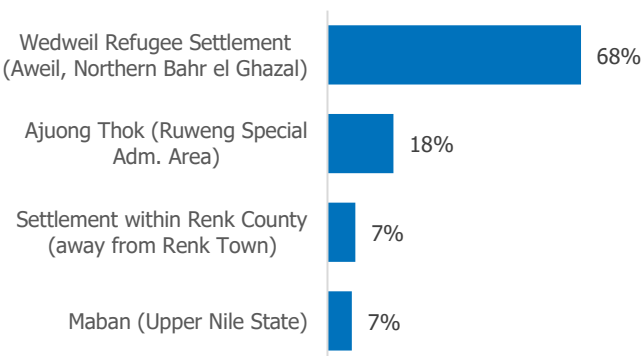


REFUGEES

23% of surveyed refugees said they are willing to relocate from their current location

Among refugees who expressed a desire to relocate, the vast majority—68%—wish to move to Wedweil Refugee Settlement in Northern Bahr El Ghazal State, making it the most preferred destination. 18% indicated a preference for Ajuong Thok (Ruweng Special Administrative Area), while 7% each would choose to move either to a settlement within Renk County or to Maban refugee camps (Upper Nile State). This distribution highlights **Wedweil Refugee Settlement as the primary relocation choice among refugees currently in Renk.**

Where refugees want to move

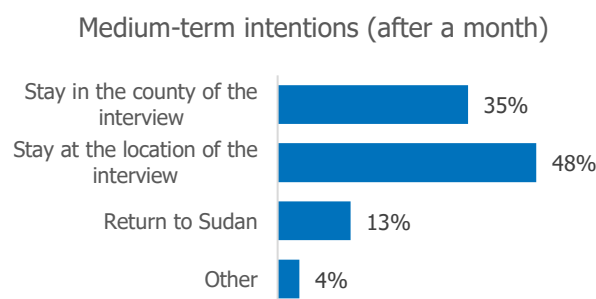
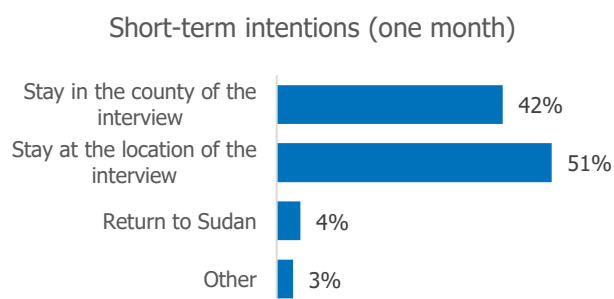


Refugees' choices of relocation sites are primarily driven by access to essential services and basic needs. Access to healthcare is the most frequently cited reason, mentioned by 68% of respondents, followed by access to education (48%) and food security (45%). General safety (31%) and family reunification (28%) also play notable roles. Livelihood opportunities, while important, are cited by only 18%, indicating that immediate well-being and service availability are stronger priorities than economic prospects when selecting a destination.

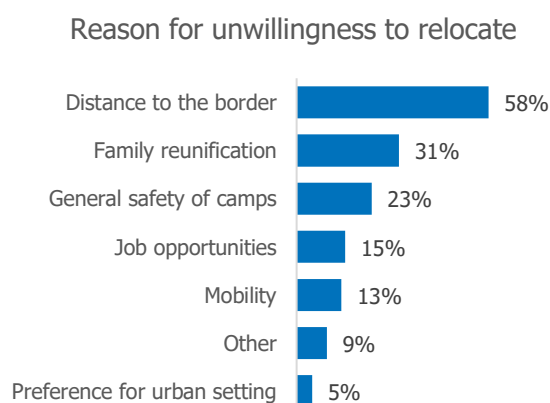


77% of surveyed refugees said they are unwilling to relocate elsewhere in South Sudan and prefer to remain where they are or to return to Sudan

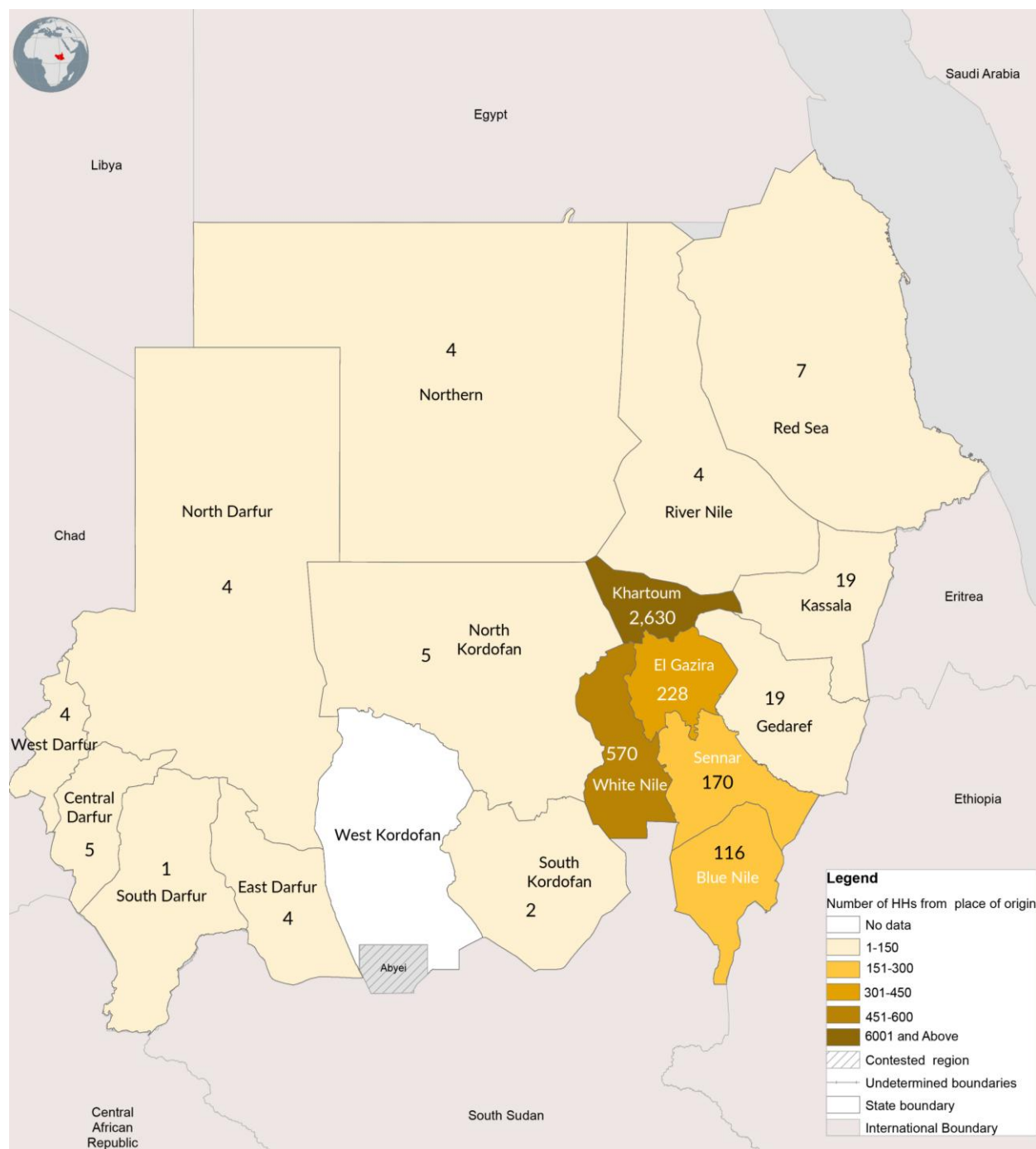
Among refugees unwilling to relocate elsewhere in South Sudan, medium-term intentions reveal a strong preference for remaining close to their current location. Specifically, 48% plan to stay at the exact location of the interview, and 35% intend to remain within the same county, resulting in 83% opting for local integration. However, unlike returnees, a notable 13% of refugees expressed a desire to return to Sudan, indicating that return to Sudan remains a relevant consideration for some. These findings highlight a predominantly local integration trend among refugees, with a small but significant group still looking toward Sudan.



The main reason refugees cite for not wanting to relocate is proximity to the border, with 58% preferring to stay closer to Sudan, likely due to uncertainty or hopes of return. Family reunification is another key factor, cited by 31%, followed by concerns about the general safety of camps at 23%. Job opportunities in Renk (15%) and mobility challenges (13%) also influence decisions. Less frequently mentioned are other personal reasons (9%) and a preference for urban settings (5%), indicating that practical and protection-related considerations outweigh lifestyle preferences.



Areas of departure of refugees and returnees from Sudan



METHODOLOGY

A total of 5,816 individuals were interviewed, comprising 92% returnees and 8% refugees. The majority had arrived via Joda/Wuntau and were residing in the Renk Transit Centre and surrounding areas at the time of data collection.

The survey was administered using KoboToolbox's KAPI interface, employing a standardised questionnaire. A total of 4,311 interviews were conducted in the Transit Centre, and 1,505 in the nearby host community area. Based on population headcounts (8,703 individuals in the Transit Centre and 3,703 in the host community), the sample is considered highly representative across both locations.

It should be noted that some bias may have been introduced, as the suspension of onward transport was announced only weeks before the survey, potentially influencing responses. Additionally, while refugees were proportionally represented in the sample, their overall numbers were too small to allow for detailed disaggregated analysis across multiple variables.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exercise was made possible through the joint data collection efforts of the following partners: AAHI, ACTED, CEN, HDC, IOM, IRC, UNHCR, and WFP. The analysis was prepared by UNHCR and was presented and validated in Renk in collaboration with all participating partners.



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