UNHCR SOUTH SUDAN

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

April 2025

19,667 Returnee arrivals to South Sudan in April 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1
List of Acronyms 1
Introduction 2
South Sudanese Arrivals in April 2025 2
Demographic of Arrival Population 3
Reasons for Return 3
Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan 4
Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia 5
Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda 7
Border Monitoring Trends: DRC 9
Border Monitoring Trends: CAR 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 Uganda 7
Table 5: movement category of arrivals from DRC 9
Table 6: movement category of arrivals from CAR 10

Executive Summary

In April 2025, at least **28,114** South Sudanese nationals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at various border points. The majority arrived from Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC, and CAR. The highest number of arrivals came from Sudan (15,536), followed by Ethiopia (11,588), Uganda (743), and 277 arrivals from DRC and CAR. Of the 28,144 arrivals, 19,667 (70%) were returnees, while 8,477 (30%) were pendular movements, 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 that fleeing insecurity (30%) and reunification with family members for permanent living (19%) were the primary reasons for crossing into South Sudan. Other notable reasons include lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (15%), food security/reduction in food rations (10%), lack of access to basic services (10%), and short visit for a family reason, including funerals, marriage or caring for a relative (8%).

However, when examining reasons for return by country of asylum, arrivals from Sudan mostly cited fleeing insecurity, while arrivals from Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda, and Kenya extensively mentioned food security concerns.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AGD	Age and Gender Diversity
CAR	Central African Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
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
IDPs	Internally Displaced Person

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 neighboring 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 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 understand better the scale and trend of the ongoing spontaneous return movements.

South Sudanese Arrivals in April 2025

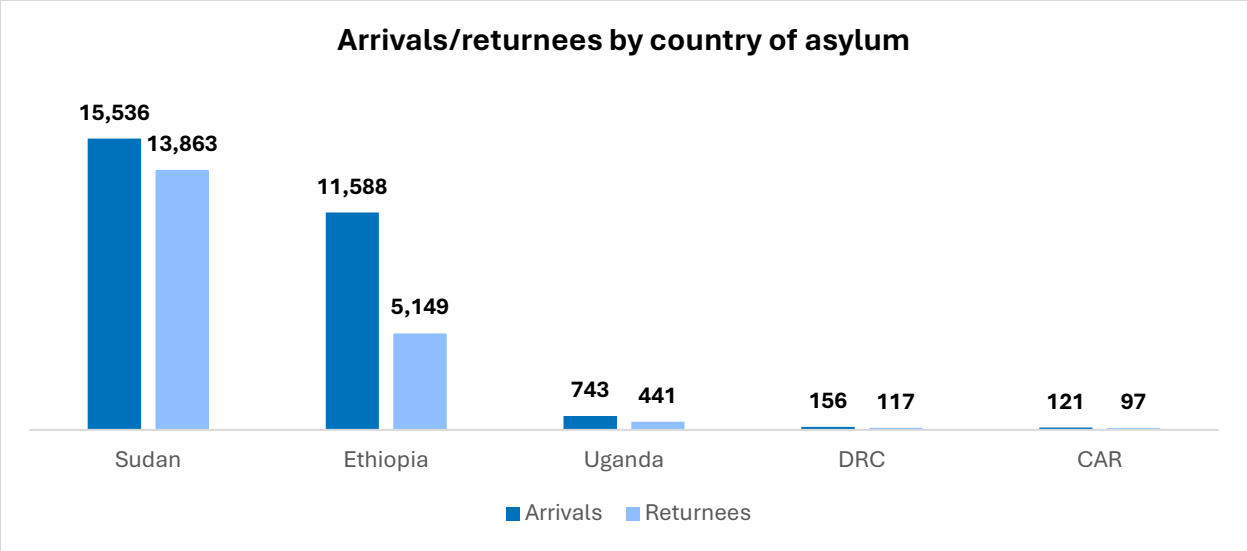
In April 2025, at least **28,114** South Sudanese nationals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at various border points, notably Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, the DRC, and the CAR. The highest number of arrivals came from Sudan (15,536), followed by Ethiopia (11,588), Uganda (743), and 277 arrivals from DRC and CAR. Of the 28,114 arrivals, 19,667 (70%) were returnees, while 8,477 (30%) were pendular movements.

Table 1: Movement category of South Sudanese arrivals

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	19,667	70%
Pendular	8,477	30%

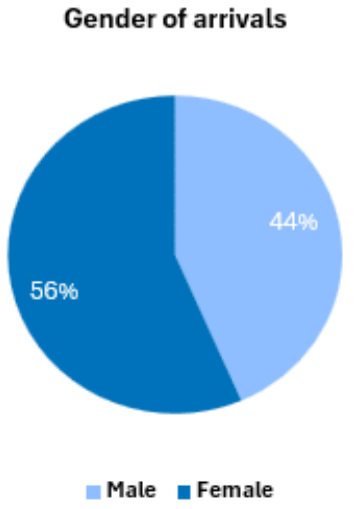
Note on Methodology

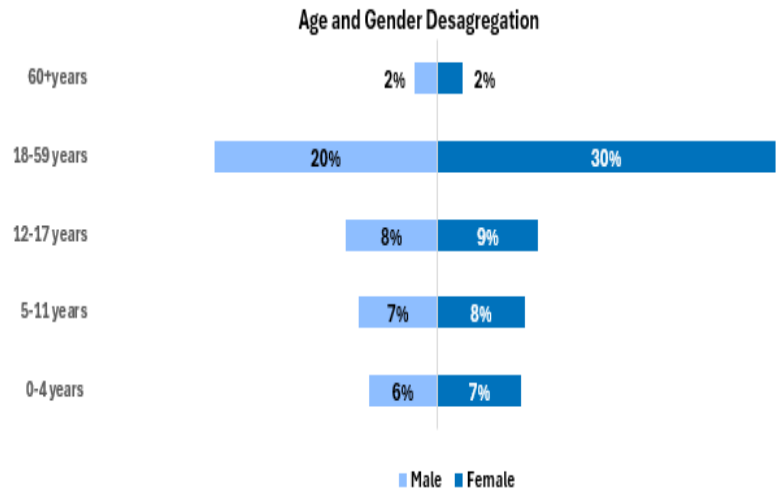
UNHCR South Sudan, in consultation with the RRC, introduced an updated methodology for identifying returnees since September 2024. According to this methodology, only households that stay in South Sudan for one year or longer are counted as returnees to South Sudan. Those who remain in South Sudan for less than one year are 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 (56%) of arrivals, compared to males (44%). In terms of age and gender, adults aged 18 to 59 years-old made up the majority (50%), while elderly individuals aged 60 years and above represented the smallest group (4%).

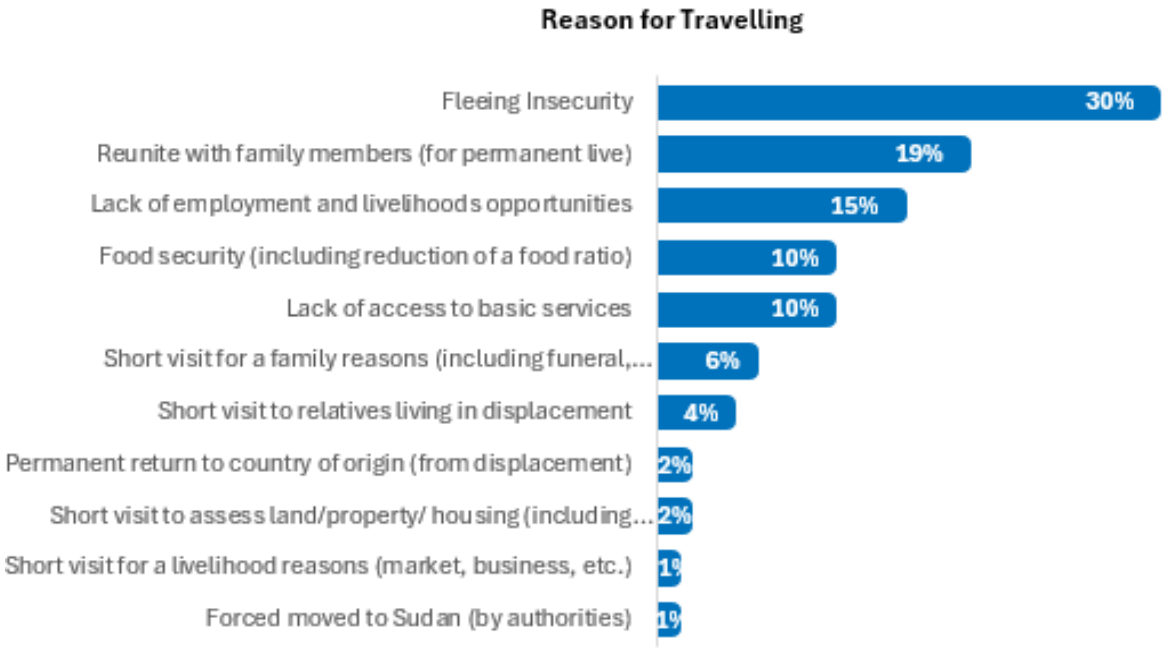




Reasons for Return

An analysis of the reasons for return, as reported by South Sudanese nationals interviewed at crossing points, indicates that fleeing insecurity (30%) and reunification with family members for permanent living (19%) were the primary reasons for crossing into South Sudan. Other notable reasons include lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (15%), food security/reduction in food rations (10%), lack of access to basic services (10%), and short visit for a family reason, including funerals, marriage or caring for a relative (8%). However, when examining reasons for return by country of asylum, arrivals from Sudan mostly cited fleeing

insecurity, while arrivals from Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda, and Kenya extensively mentioned food security concerns.



Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan

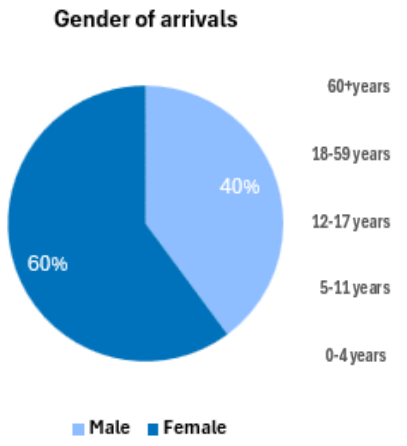
In April 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 15,536 South Sudanese crossing from Sudan through multiple points of entry. Of these arrivals, 13,863 (89%) were returnees intending to stay for an extended period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 1,673 (11%) were pendular movements.

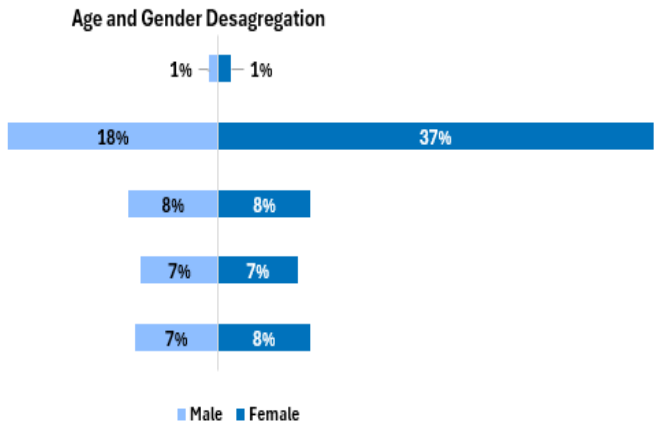
Table 2: Movement category of arrivals from Sudan

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	13,863	89%
Pendular	1,673	11%

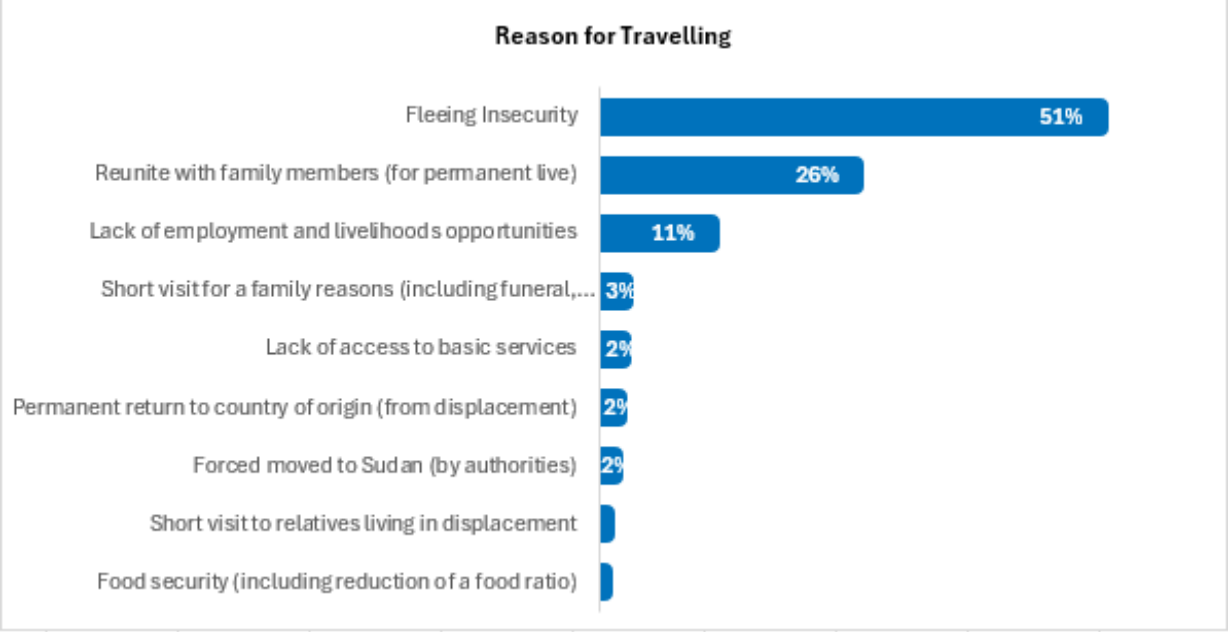
The average weekly crossings are estimated at 3,107 individuals, with the second week of the month recording the highest number (4,578) of crossings. Joda/Wunthou (8,262), Majokyinthiu (2,360), and Amiet (1,018) were the major crossing points, while the rest (3,896) crossed through other points of entry.

Females constituted more than half (60%) of the arrivals, compared to males (40%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 formed the majority (55%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (15%), children under 5 (15%), and children aged 5 to 11 (13%). In comparison, elderly individuals aged 60 and above were the least represented (2%).





Over half (51%) of the arrivals cited general insecurity as the primary reason influencing their return. Other reasons included reunification with family members for permanent living (26%), short visits for family reasons (5%), permanent return to their country of origin from displacement (4%), and food insecurity—essentially the reduction in food rations (3%).



Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia

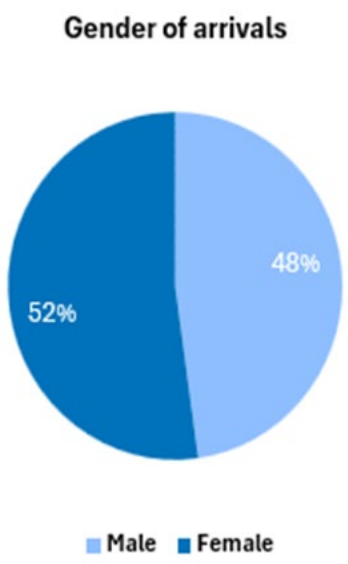
In April 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 11,588 South Sudanese arrivals from Ethiopia into South Sudan through Akiela, Akobo, Burator, Burebiey, Jekow, Maker, Pagak, and Phil entry points. Of these arrivals, 5,149 (44%) were returnees intending to stay for an extended period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 6,439 (56%) were pendular movements.

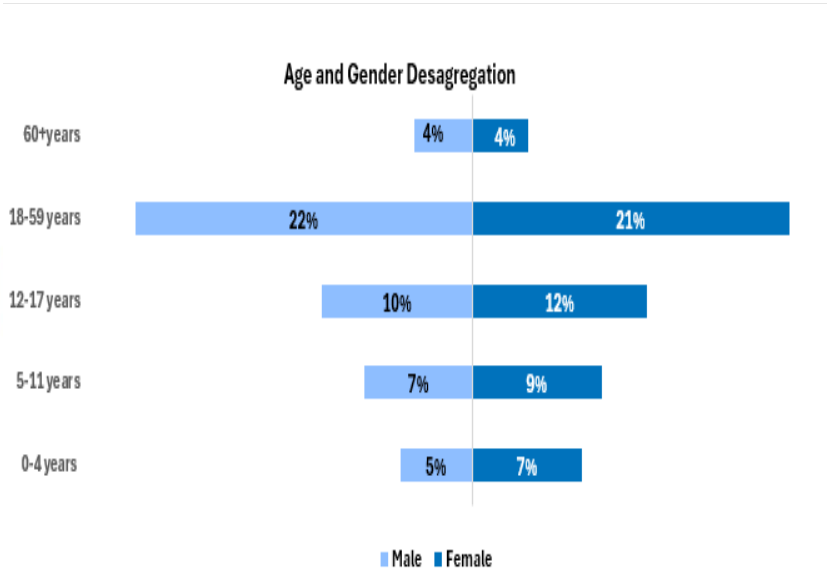
Table 3: Movement category of arrivals from Ethiopia

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	5,149	44%
Pendular	6,439	56%

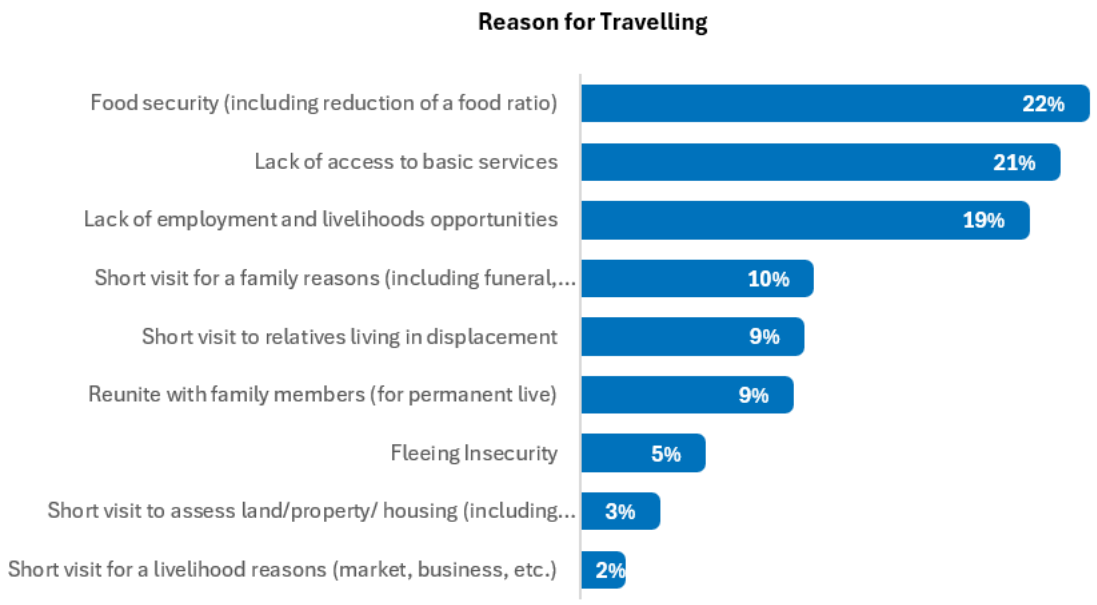
The average weekly crossings were estimated at 2,318 individuals, with the fourth week of the month recording the highest number (2,790) of crossings. Pagak (3,425), Matar/Burebiey (3,271), Jekow (1,452), Maker (1,435), and Phil (1,266) were the major crossing points, while the rest (739) crossed through other points of entry.

Females constituted more than half (52%) of the arrivals, compared to males (48%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 constituted a significant proportion (43%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 (22%), children aged 5 to 11 (16%), and children under 5 years-old (12%). In comparison, elderly individuals aged 60 and above were the least represented (4%).





The primary reasons influencing the travel of arrivals were food insecurity, particularly a reduction in food rations (22%), lack of access to basic services in the country of asylum (21%), and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in the country of asylum (19%). Other reasons included short visit for family reasons cited by 10% of arrivals, reunification with family members for permanent living (9%), fleeing insecurity (5%), Short visit to assess land, property and housing (3%), and short visit for a livelihood reasons (2%).



Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda

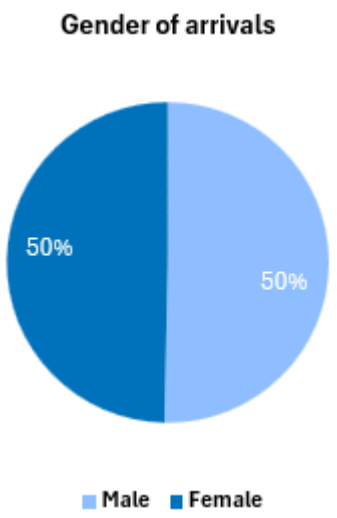
In April 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 743 South Sudanese arrivals into South Sudan from Uganda through multiple points of entry. Of these arrivals, 441 (59%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 302 (41%) were pendular movements.

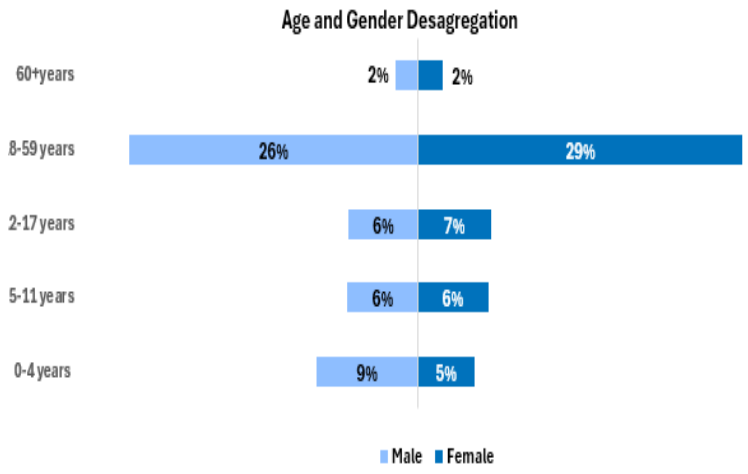
Table 4: Movement category of arrivals from Uganda

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	251	59%
Pendular	283	41%

The average number of crossings is estimated at 149 individuals, with the second week of the month recording the highest number (192). Bamurye (146), Meruwa (115), Nimule (98), Kagiri(75), and Litoba (75) were the major crossing points, with the rest (230) crossing through other points.

Females and males each constituted half (50%) of overall arrivals. Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 years formed the majority (56%), followed by children under 5 years-old (14%), children aged 12 to 17 years and children aged 5 to 11 years each made up (13%), while elderly individuals aged 60 years and above were the least represented (4%).





The primary reason influencing the return of arrivals is food insecurity in the country of asylum, cited by 32%, reunification with family members for permanent living (18%), lack of basic services (12%), lack of employment opportunities or permanent return to country of origin from displacement, (11%). Other reasons include tensions with the host community (5%), short visits to assess land, property, and housing (3%), and short visits for family reasons (3%).

Border Monitoring Trends: DRC

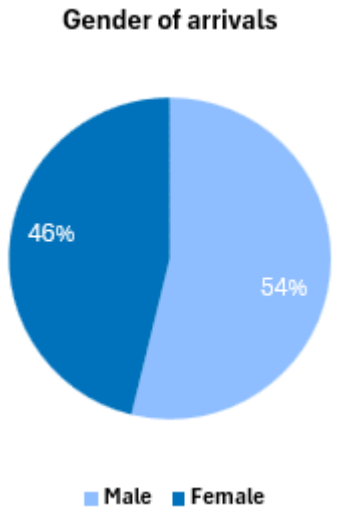
In April 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 156 South Sudanese arrivals to South Sudan from DRC through the Isebi, Ezo, Rasul, Gangura, and Sakure crossing points. Of these arrivals, 117 (62%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 39 (25%) were pendular movements.

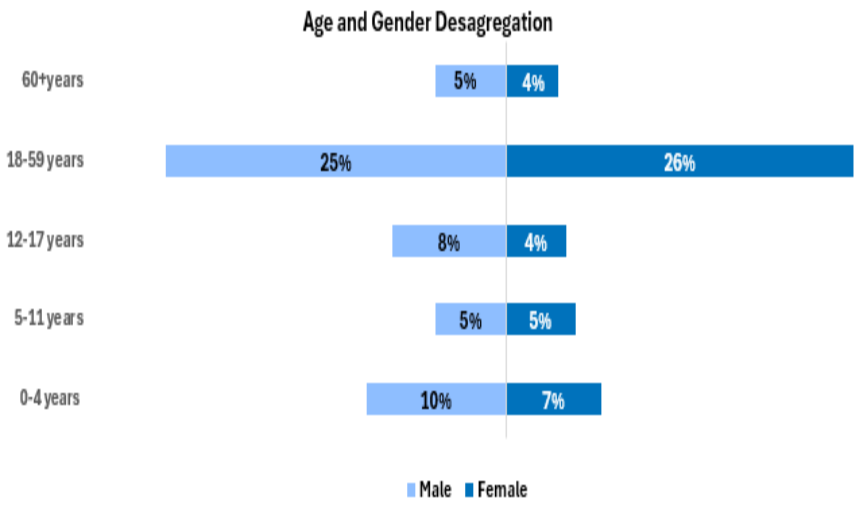
Table 5: Movement category of arrivals from DRC

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	117	62%
Pendular	39	38%

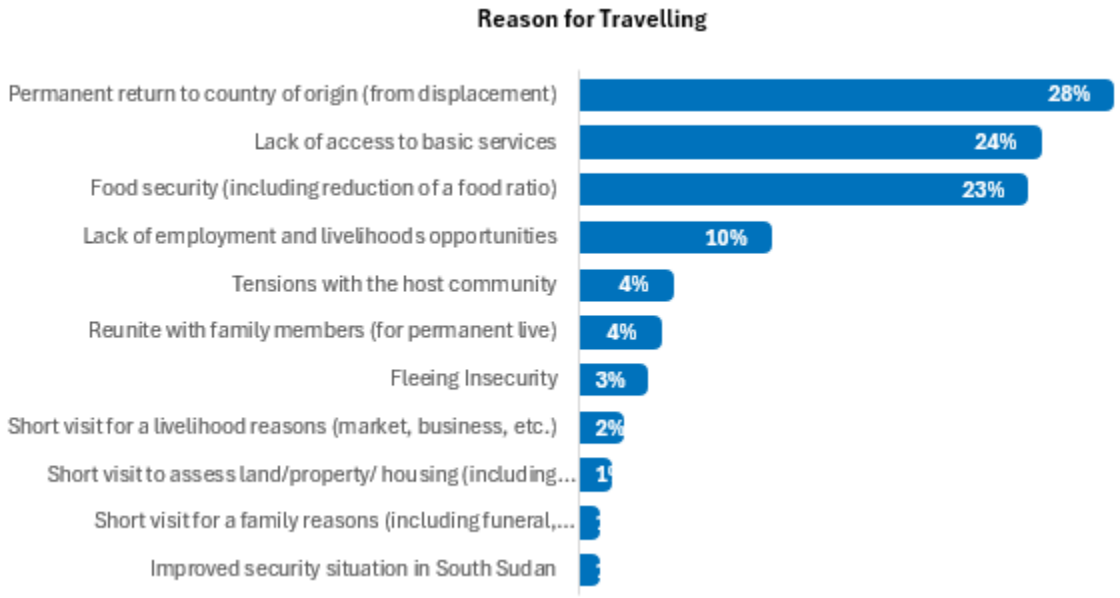
The average weekly crossings is estimated at 31 individuals. The arrivals used Isebi (51), Ezo (12), Rasul (23), Gangura (22), and Sakure(14) as entry points.

Males constituted the majority of arrivals (54%), compared to females (46%). In terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 were the majority (51%), followed by children under 5 years-old (17%), children between 12 and 17 years (13%), and children aged 5 to 11 years-old (10%). Elderly individuals aged 60 and above accounted for 9% of arrivals.





The primary reasons influencing the return arrivals were permanent return to country of origin from displacement, cited by (28%), lack of basic services in the country of asylum, cited by (24%), and food insecurity, particularly reduction in food rations, (23%). Other reasons included lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (10%), tensions with the host community in the country of asylum (4%), reunification with family members for permanent living (4%), fleeing insecurity (3%), short visit for livelihood reasons (2%) and short visit to assess land and property (1%).



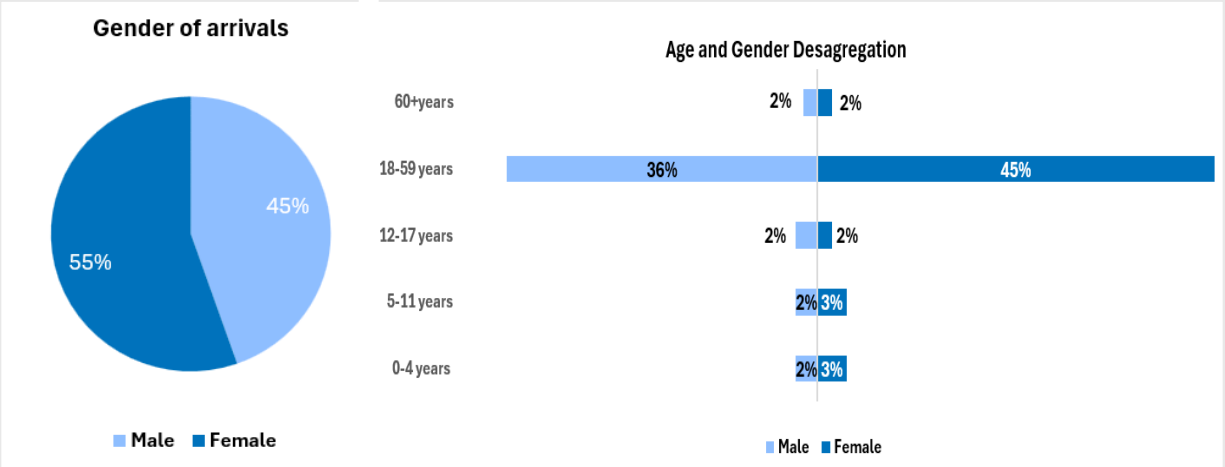
Border Monitoring Trends: CAR

In March 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 121 South Sudanese crossing from CAR through Dingimo and Source Yubu into South Sudan. Of these arrivals, 97 (80%) were returnees intending to stay for an extended period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 24 (20%) were engaged in pendular movement.

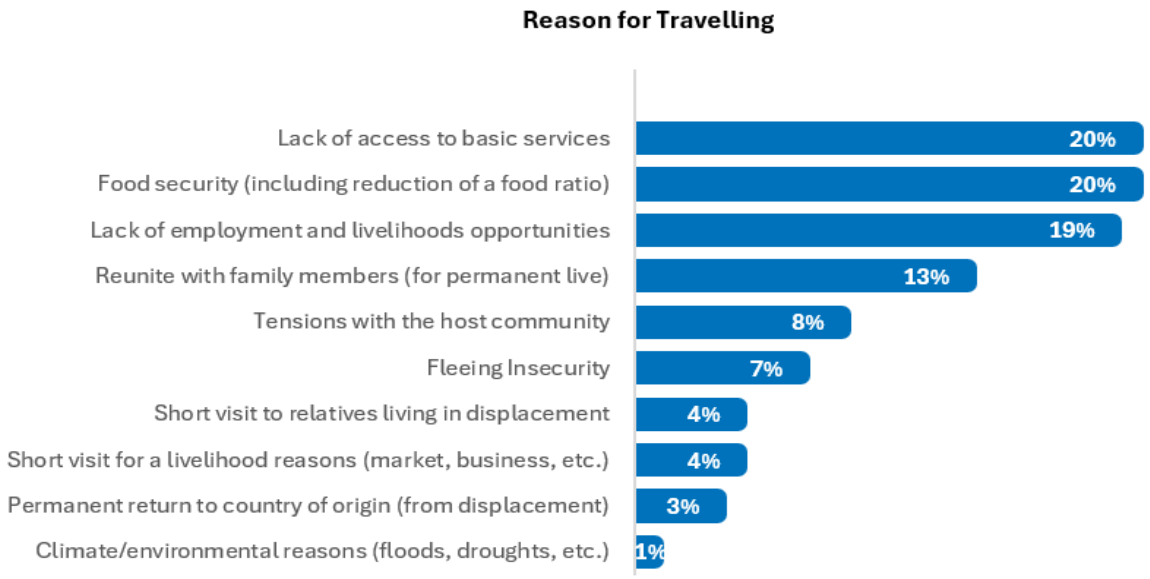
Table 6: Movement category of arrivals from CAR

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	97	80%
Pendular	24	20%

Females constituted the majority (55%) of arrivals compared to males (45%). Moreover, regarding age and gender disaggregation, most arrivals were adults aged 18 to 59, representing 81% of the population. Children aged 0 to 4 and those aged 5 to 11 each accounted for 5%, while adolescents aged 12 to 17 and elderly individuals aged 60 and above each comprised 4% of arrivals.



The primary reasons influencing return were lack of access to basic services or food insecurity, particularly a reduction in food rations in the country of asylum, cited by (20%), and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (19%). Other reasons included reunification with family members for permanent living (13%), tension with the host community (8%), fleeing insecurity (7%), short visit to relatives living in displacement/Short visit for a livelihood of origin (4%), permanent return to country of origin(3%) and climate/environmental reasons(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 neighboring 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 and Ethiopia. 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 participating in 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 South Sudanese returnees use. Border monitoring enumerators conduct household-level interviews at least five days a week, eight hours daily. 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, the number of arrivals probably 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.

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

2025

Spontaneous Refugee Returns Monitoring

April 2025

UNHCR Information Management Unit – Juba, South Sudan

Email: ssdjuim@unhcr.org