

Protection at Sea in South-East Asia – 2022 in Review

 **3,545**

Rohingya attempted the sea journey on 39 boats in 2022. This is a 360% increase from the number of individuals who attempted the journey in 2021.

 **3,040**

Individuals disembarked in 2022. **Up to 157 persons may still be at sea at the end of 2022.**



348

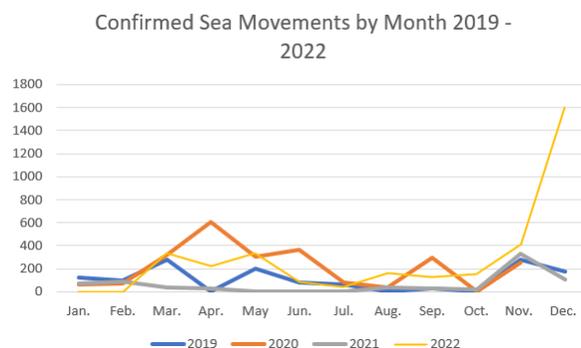
Individuals are believed to have died or gone missing at sea in 2022.



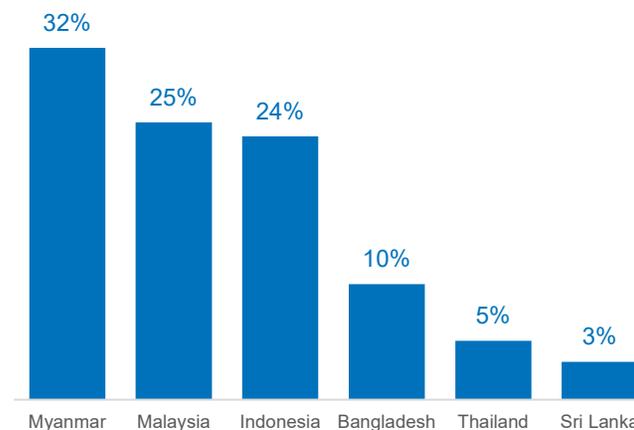
Nearly **45%** of rescued persons were women and children.

This flash update summarizes boat movements of Rohingya from their home country of Myanmar and from Bangladesh, where they are in exile, across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. They undertake dangerous sea journeys seeking protection, security, family reunification, and livelihoods in other countries. Growing desperation in Myanmar and Bangladesh appears to have driven the increasing numbers undertaking sea journeys in 2022.

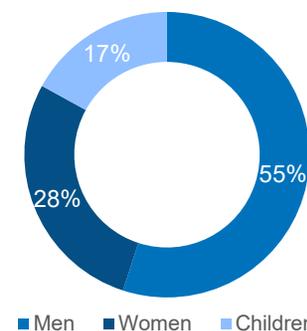
CONFIRMED SEA ARRIVALS BY MONTH (PERSONS) 2019 -2022



DISEMBARKATION LOCATIONS (2022)



SURVIVORS' GENDER AGE BREAKDOWN (2022)*



*Gender-age breakdown is available for 60% of survivors. The percentage of women and children traveling has increased by 7% between 2021 and 2022.

DEVELOPMENTS IN LATE 2022

In the last two months of 2022, four boats carrying over 450 Rohingya disembarked in Aceh. One boat of over 100 Rohingya disembarked in Sri Lanka. One boat is believed to have sunk in early December with approximately 180 individuals on board. Several boats that departed in December remained at sea as of the end of the year.

TREATMENT OF PERSONS RESCUED AT SEA

Those intercepted in Myanmar have been arrested and sentenced for violating the 1949 Registration Act or the 1947 Immigration Act, resulting in two- or five-years imprisonment respectively. Upon rescue in other locations, authorities, the local community, and humanitarian actors mobilize to address the medical and other needs of the rescued persons. In addition, UNHCR registers new arrivals and, with protection partners, identifies survivors with specific needs and provides specialized services. Vulnerable individuals include potential victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

NEED FOR RESPONSIBILITY-SHARING

Disembarked Rohingya report encounters with naval authorities while at sea. However, even when in distress, these encounters often result in pushbacks intended to prevent disembarkation. Notably, in 2022, the Sri Lankan navy engaged to ensure rescue and disembarkation of a boat and other boats carrying Rohingya disembarked in Aceh, where support was coordinated with the Indonesian authorities. This important humanitarian responsibility must be more evenly distributed among countries in the region to ensure protection responses are sustainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A comprehensive regional response to maritime movements remains essential to address threats to life at sea and to ensure more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing.

Necessary actions include:

- 1) Prompt search and rescue operations.
- 2) Timely disembarkation in a place of safety.
- 3) Support to countries of disembarkation in the humanitarian response.
- 4) Effective prosecution of smugglers and traffickers.
- 5) Enhanced protection and opportunities in and from countries of asylum, including by expanding safe legal pathways to third countries.
- 6) Support to efforts to address the root causes of displacement in Myanmar. Until these are resolved, refugees will continue to undertake dangerous journeys in search of safety.

The current crisis in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea is a crisis of solidarity. Without a regional response, States will continue adopting unilateral policies that endanger lives. ASEAN and the Bali Process have a responsibility to foster an equitable and life-saving mechanism to prevent and respond to boat movements.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations