

RETURN AND REINTEGRATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS

2020



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Publisher: International Organization for Migration
17 route des Morillons
P.O. Box 17
1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 717 9111
Fax: +41 22 798 6150
Email: hq@iom.int
Website: www.iom.int

Cover: Dudu and his family taking some selfie pictures before departing to Georgia.
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RETURN AND REINTEGRATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS

2020



FOREWORD

2020 was a year like no other. The global pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus resulted in large-scale border closures as well as unprecedented mobility restrictions imposed by governments worldwide to curb the spread of the virus. In a September 2020 [report on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants](#), IOM detailed the plight of nearly 3 million migrants stranded worldwide by mid-July. Many more migrants are believed to have been stranded in the subsequent months. IOM quickly adapted to the changing and fast-evolving circumstances in the first months of the pandemic to ensure the continuation of its return and reintegration activities. This included, among other things, the establishment at IOM Headquarters of the COVID-19 Return Task Force to respond to the complex challenge of organizing returns during the pandemic and to support country offices in addressing these challenges effectively. That way, IOM has been able to continue providing much needed support and assistance to tens of thousands of migrants wishing to return home. Despite a significant decrease caused by the mobility restrictions in place, in 2020 IOM assisted a total of 42,181 migrants in their safe and dignified return home.

Just like in 2019, the Niger remained the top host country of migrants willing to return, followed by Germany and Libya.¹ This presents a continuation of the trend of decreasing returns taking place from the European Economic Area and an increase from other regions, particularly West and Central Africa. The main countries of origin were Guinea, Mali and Tajikistan, to which a large number of nationals returned from Kazakhstan.

The number of reintegration services provided by IOM to returnees remained at a high level, with a total of 106,230 activities carried out by 121 country offices in 2020. IOM reintegration assistance encompassed counselling and social, psychosocial, and economic support at the pre-departure and post-arrival stages.

In addition to providing direct support to migrants during the pandemic, IOM continued expanding the activities, functionality and reach of its [Return and Reintegration Platform](#), which contributes to the dissemination of knowledge and good practices in the field of return and reintegration. The Platform operates under the umbrella of the EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub, established by IOM in 2017 and funded by the European Union under its Pilot Action for Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration. Moreover, in collaboration with UNICEF, IOM developed a module that complements its *Reintegration Handbook* and focuses on the reintegration of children and their families. The module is conceived as a hands-on tool to promote reintegration practices for children returning to their countries of origin. It emphasizes the importance of strengthening child protection and social welfare systems, as well as case management and referrals to appropriate services.

This year's report is accompanied by an [executive summary](#) in an interactive layout. It is structured along five sections: the first section presents an overview of global trends of returns supported by IOM, which are further elaborated by region in the second chapter. The third and fourth sections present reintegration assistance provided to returnees at the global and regional levels. The final section features some of the most significant initiatives and practices in the field of return and reintegration that IOM offices worldwide took in response to the pandemic, as well as the key results in 2020 of two global projects, ORION, funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, and the EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub.

We wish you a pleasant reading!



Monica Goracci
Director, Department of Migration Management, IOM



Yitna Getachew
Head, Migrant Protection and Assistance, IOM

¹ In the humanitarian settings of Yemen and Libya IOM operates Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programmes. VHR often represents a life-saving measure for migrants who are stranded or in detention.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdowns and mobility restrictions, such as border closures and the suspensions of flights, had severe impacts on migrants in 2020. In a report published in September 2020, IOM detailed the plight of nearly 3 million migrants stranded worldwide by mid-July. Many more migrants are believed to have been stranded in the subsequent months. This situation posed unprecedented challenges to IOM return and reintegration activities and resulted in a number of adaptations, allowing it to continue providing return and reintegration support to migrants in need despite health and travel restrictions. The specific changes and innovative practices adopted by IOM offices worldwide in the field of return and reintegration are further discussed in the last chapter of this report.



A group of 81 returnees and community members renovate a school in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire. This has allowed hundreds of children to return to their school in better conditions. © IOM 2020/Mohamed DIABATÉ

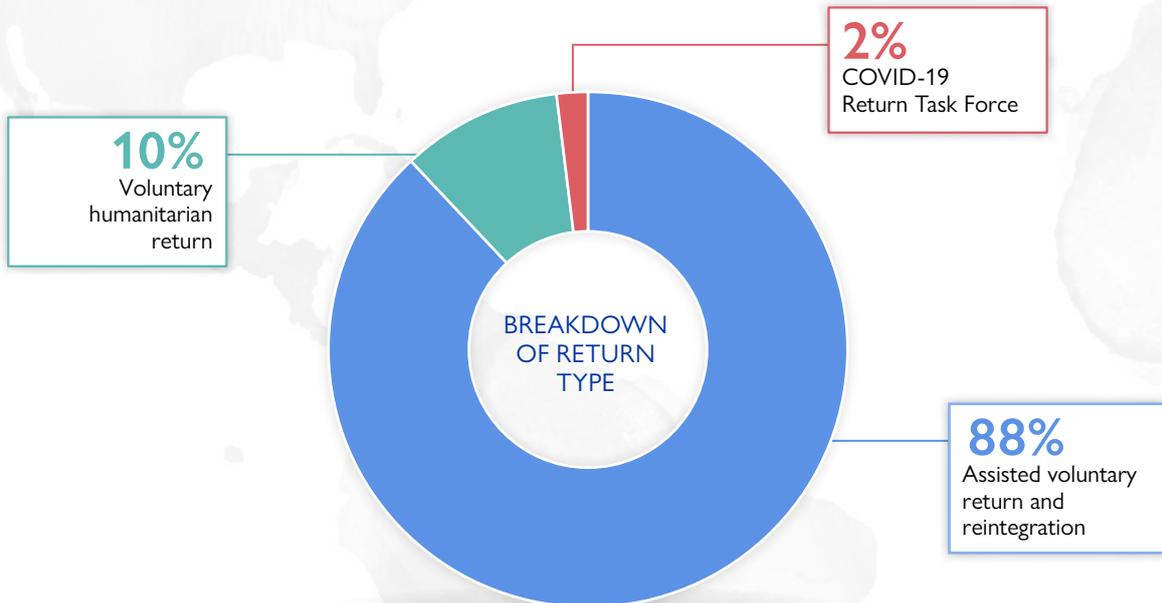
2020 AT A GLANCE

Return Overview

TOTAL MIGRANTS ASSISTED

42,181

Types of returns

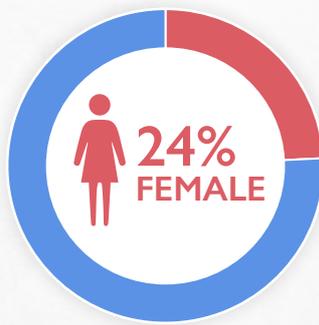
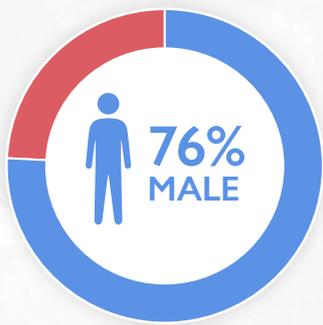


Unless specified otherwise, the data presented in the following graphs includes all three types of assisted returns: assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR), voluntary humanitarian return (VHR) and return organized with the support of the COVID-19 Return Task Force.

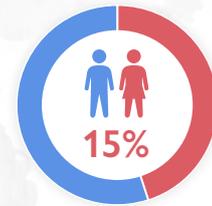
2020 AT A GLANCE

Return Overview

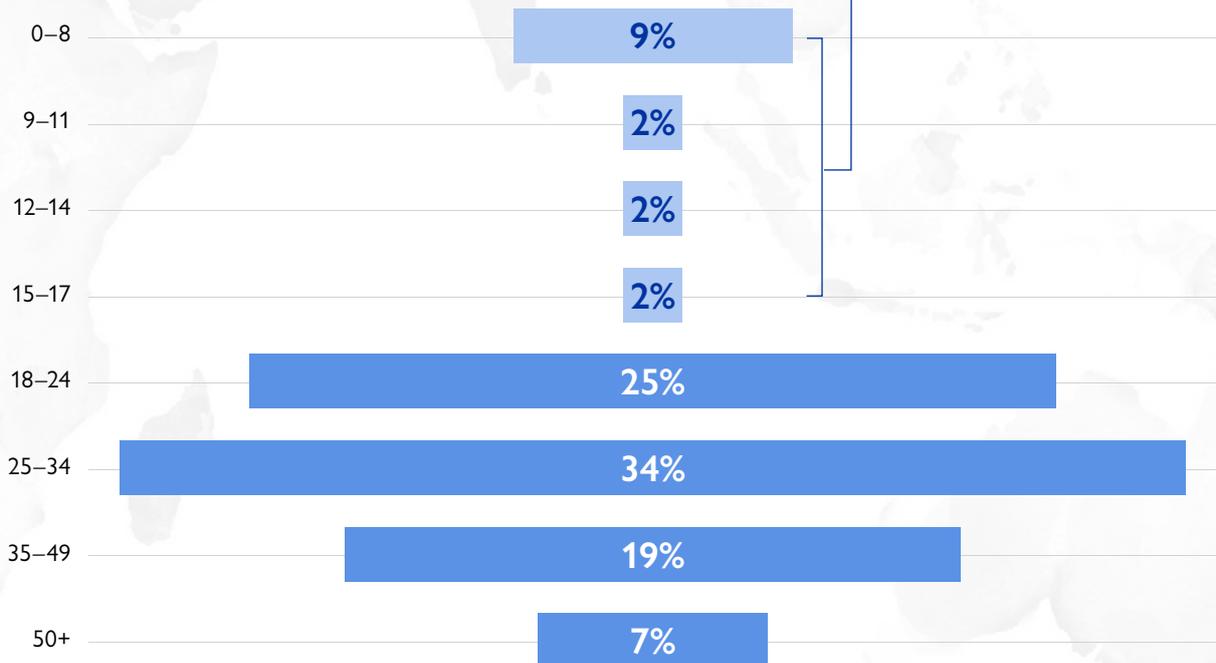
Sex breakdown



Percentage of children



55% boys 45% girls



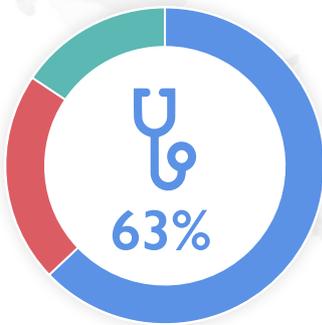
2020 AT A GLANCE

Return Overview

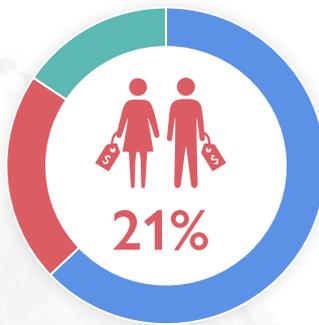
MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

2,386

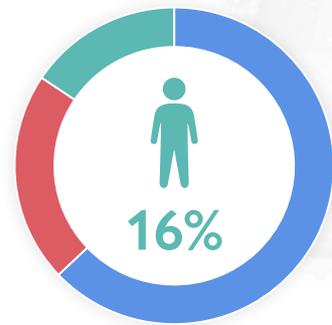
Types of vulnerabilities



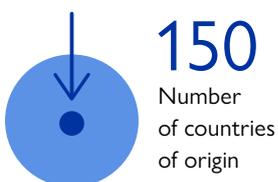
63% Migrants with health-related needs



21% Identified victims of trafficking



16% Unaccompanied or separated children



2020 AT A GLANCE

Reintegration Overview

TOTAL
NUMBER OF REINTEGRATION SERVICES PROVIDED

106,230

Number of IOM offices involved in reintegration activities

121

Provision of the reintegration assistance

The categories of reintegration support presented in the following graphs reflect the total number of services provided, which are not mutually exclusive. The beneficiaries of IOM reintegration assistances can receive multiple types of support at different levels and return stages (e.g. pre-departure counselling in the host country and economic assistance in the country of origin).

Pre-departure or post-arrival assistance provided



Pre-departure



Post-arrival

Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



IOM direct assistance

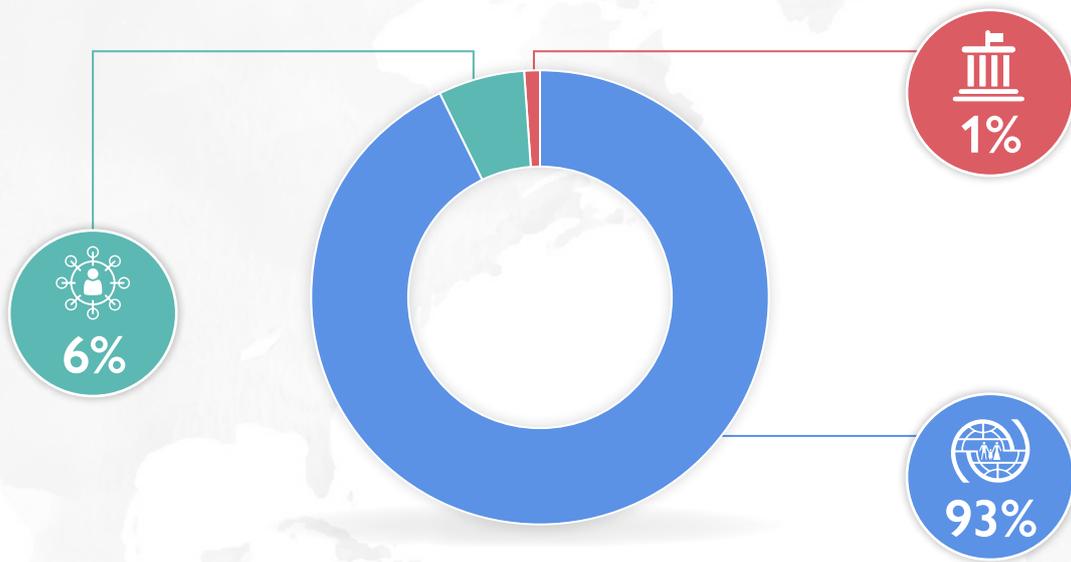


Referral

2020 AT A GLANCE

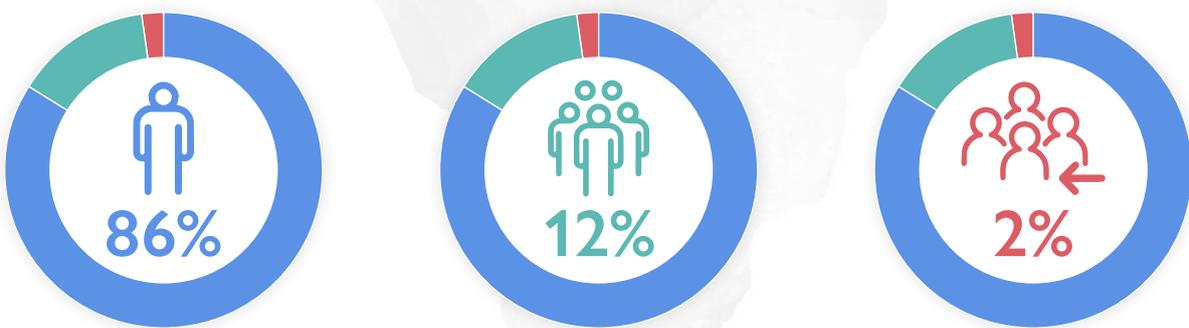
Reintegration Overview

Types of beneficiaries



IOM returnees | Forced returnees
Returns assisted through programmes considered voluntary by other actors

Levels of assistance

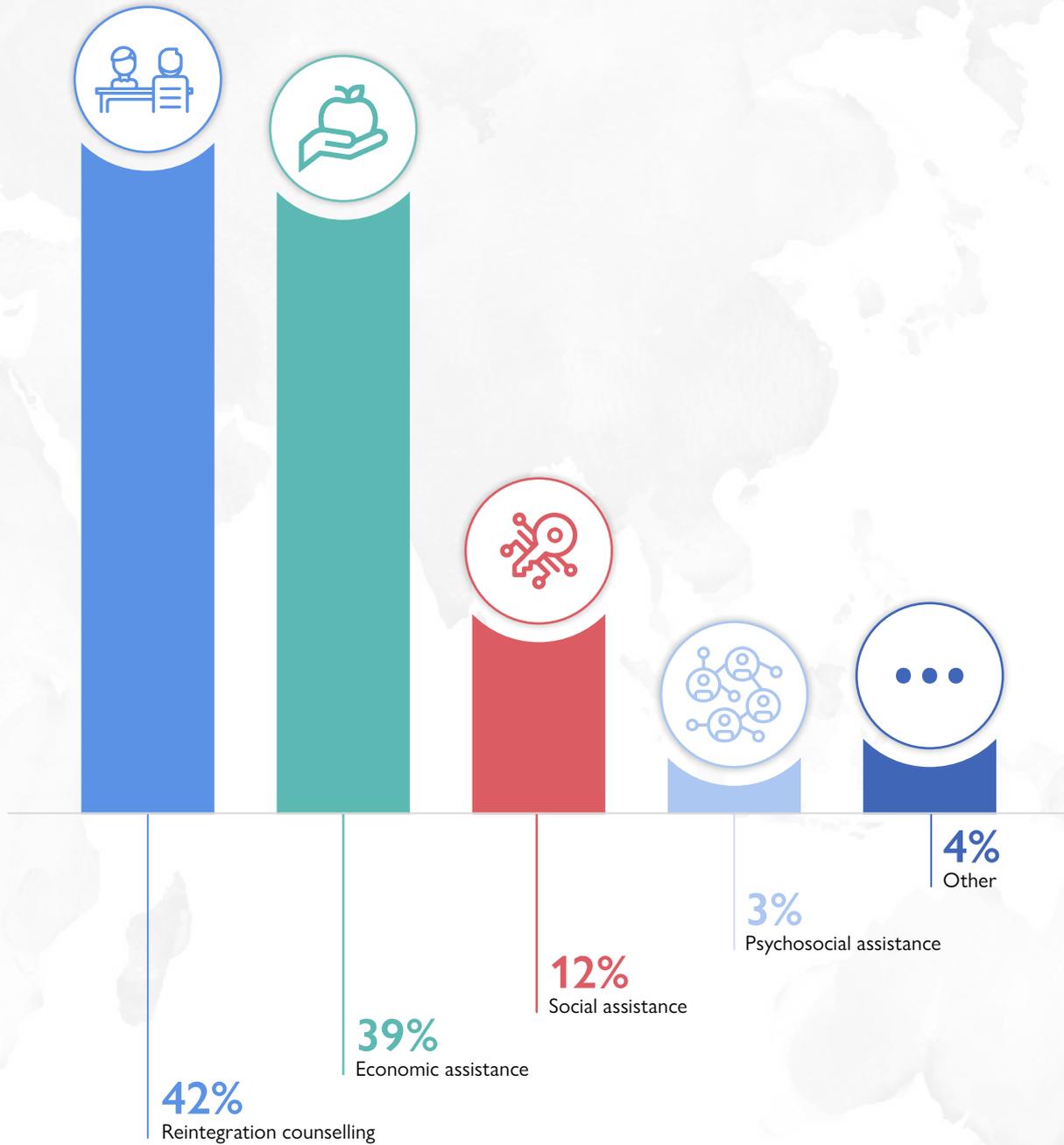


Individual | Collective | Community

2020 AT A GLANCE

Reintegration Overview

Types of services provided



CHAPTER 1

RETURN OVERVIEW



Return and reintegration

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration

IOM AVRR programmes provide a human rights-based, migrant-friendly and cost-effective option to migrants whose journey had often taken a different route than what was initially expected and who desire or need to return home but lack the means to do so. For this reason, AVRR is an integral part of a comprehensive approach to migration management. AVRR assistance can also be provided to migrants in vulnerable situations (such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, and/or migrants with health-related needs), for whom strict safeguards are applied throughout the whole return and reintegration process. It should be noted that the acronym AVRR is used throughout although the level of reintegration assistance varies from programme to programme.

Voluntary humanitarian return

VHR is based on the AVRR approach but applied in humanitarian settings. VHR often represents a life-saving measure for migrants who are stranded or in detention. Similar to AVRR principles and objectives, the IOM approach to VHR is based on the respect of migrants' rights, including the right to return, and the provision of timely, unbiased and reliable information on the return and reintegration process to ensure migrants can make an informed decision on whether to return or not. It is also accompanied by vulnerability and medical screenings to ensure appropriate safeguards are put in place throughout the whole return and reintegration process.

Return supported through the COVID-19 Return Task Force

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions, border closures and lockdown measures have left migrants stranded all over the world. Different entities as well as migrants themselves have approached IOM, seeking support for organizing the return of stranded migrants to their countries of origin as well as for providing assistance with migrants' basic needs. In response, IOM established the COVID-19 Return Task Force to ensure a coherent approach within the Organization and to leverage the expertise of the relevant IOM thematic divisions and units to adequately address challenges in return support.

Main trends 2020

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the number of beneficiaries of AVRR in 2020 decreased by 43 per cent** (from 64,958 in 2019 to 37,043 in 2020). In addition, **the number of beneficiaries of VHR decreased by 73 per cent** (from 15,248 in 2019 to 4,038 in 2020). A total of 1,100 migrants were assisted to return to their countries of origin by the COVID-19 Return Task Force.

The Niger remained the main host country of migrants assisted to return with a total of 9,069 migrants, confirming the trend of increasing numbers of beneficiaries returning from transit countries. **Germany was the second largest host country** with a total of 5,723 migrants who were assisted to return to their countries of origin.

For the first time, Kazakhstan figured among the top 5 host countries. This was the case because 3,006 Tajik migrant workers who had been stranded in Kazakhstan due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions were assisted to return to their country of origin.

The European Economic Area remained the main host region with a share of 39.4 per cent of the total number of migrants assisted to return in 2020 (compared to 43.5% in 2019).

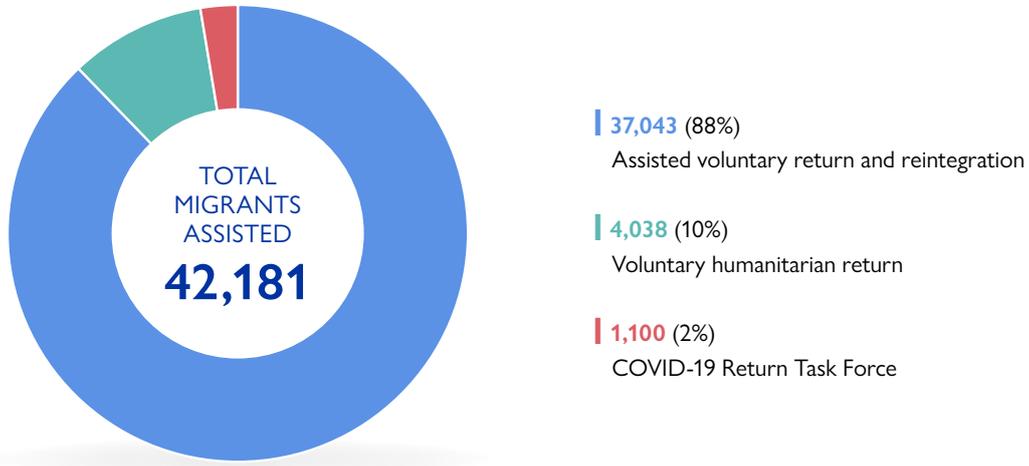
Mali was the main country of origin with a total of 3,249 nationals assisted to return. It replaced last year's top country of origin Ethiopia, which saw a decrease of 75 per cent in nationals returning and consequently dropped to the fifth place in 2020.

West and Central Africa remained the main region of origin with a share of 35.9 per cent of the total number of migrants assisted to return in 2020 (which reflects a 0.3% increase from 2019).

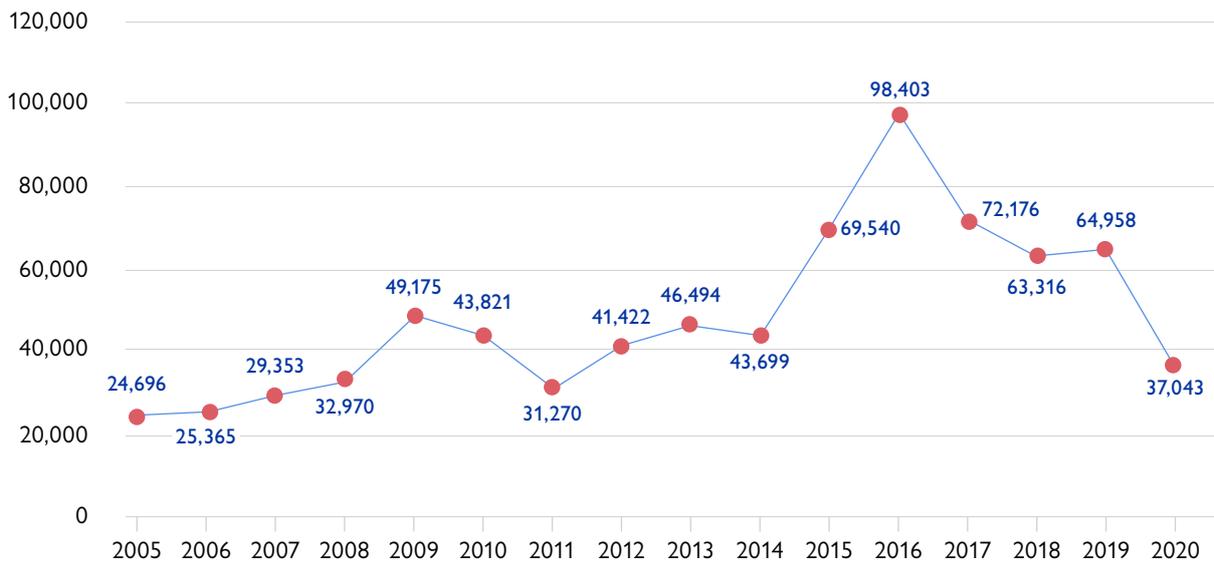
Migrants assisted to return within the same region made up 40 per cent of the total. The majority of those movements took place within West and Central Africa (65%).

Unless specified otherwise, the data presented in the following graphs includes all three types of assisted returns: AVRR, VHR and return organized with the support of the COVID-19 Return Task Force.

Breakdown of return type



Number of assisted voluntary return and reintegration beneficiaries, 2005–2020²

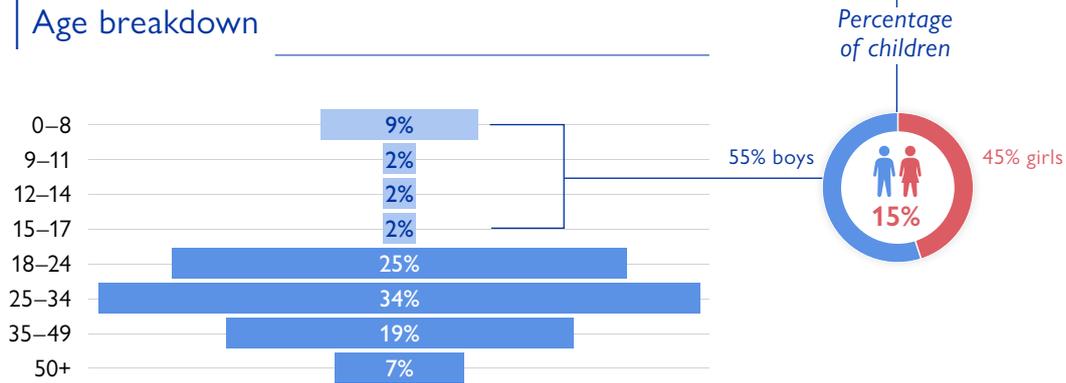


² These figures only refer to beneficiaries of AVRR and do not include migrants who were assisted to return under VHR or the COVID-19 Task Force.

Sex breakdown



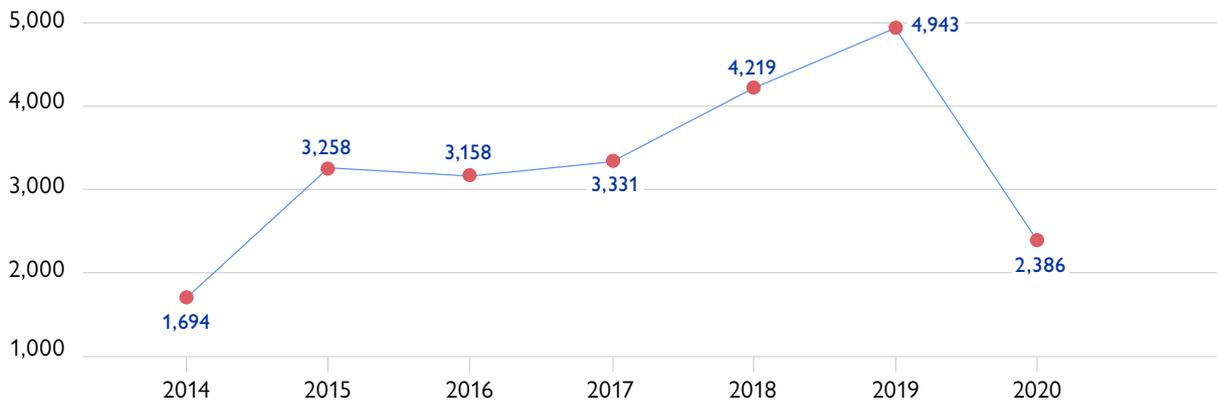
Age breakdown



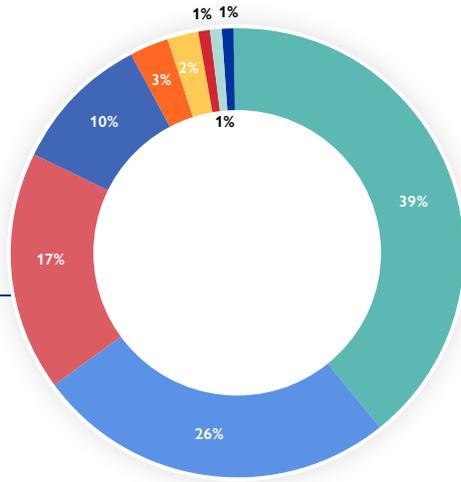
Vulnerabilities



Migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to return, 2014-2020

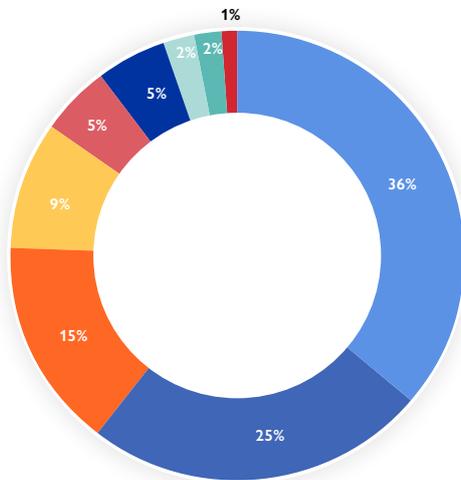


Host regions



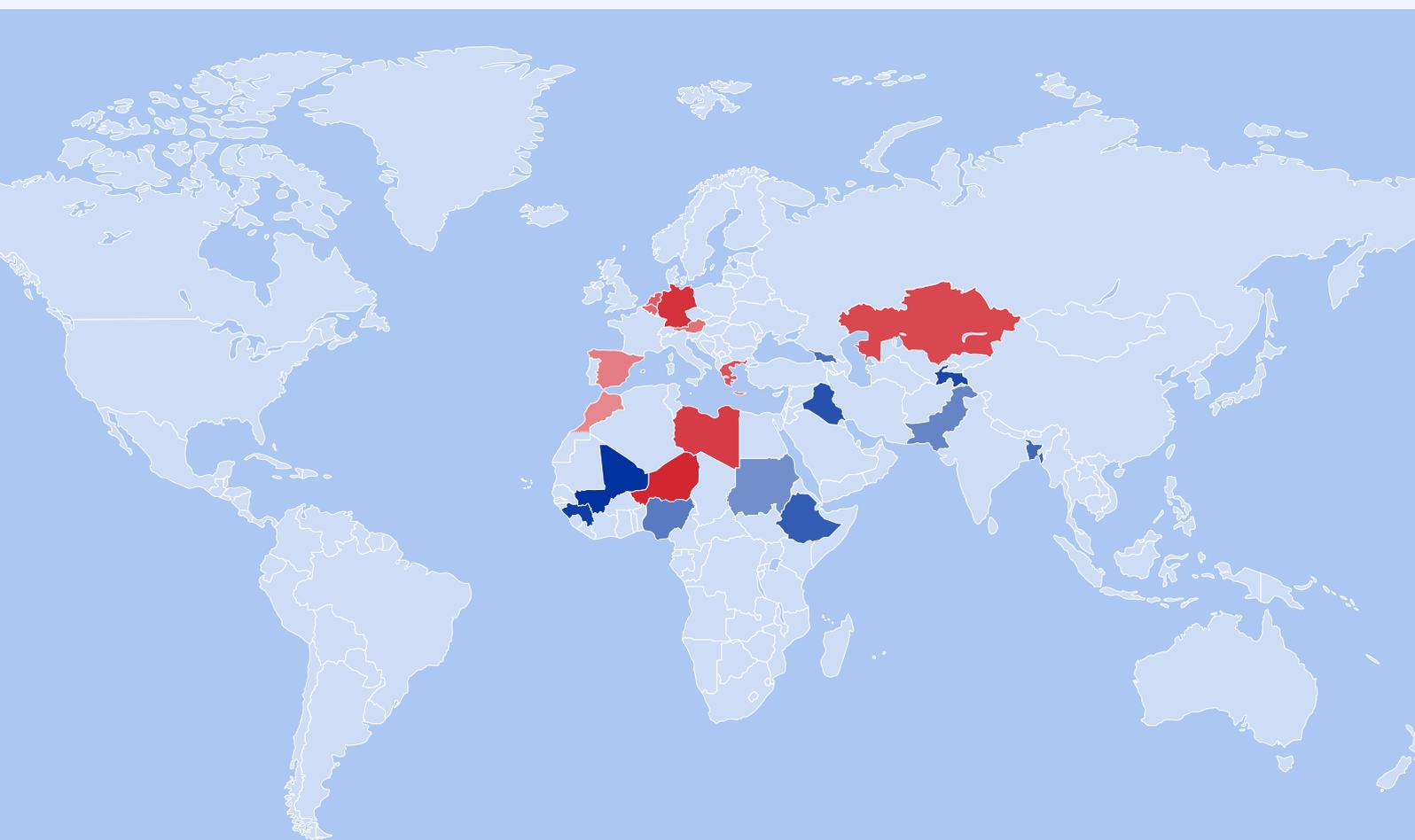
HOST REGIONS	Percentage	Region	Percentage	REGIONS OF ORIGIN
	39%	European Economic Area	2%	
	26%	West and Central Africa	36%	
	17%	Middle East and North Africa	5%	
	10%	South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia	25%	
	3%	Asia and the Pacific	15%	
	2%	East and Horn of Africa	9%	
	1%	Southern Africa	1%	
	1%	Central and North America and the Caribbean	2%	
	1%	South America	5%	

Regions of origin



	Main country of origin	Number of returns
1	Mali	3 249
2	Guinea	3 145
3	Tajikistan	3 106
4	Iraq	1 602
5	Ethiopia	1 479
6	Bangladesh	1 473
7	Georgia	1 465
8	Nigeria	1 449
9	Pakistan	1 402
10	Sudan	1 303

	Main host/ transit country	Number of returns
1	Niger	9 069
2	Germany	5 723
3	Libya	3 391
4	Kazakhstan	3 037
5	Greece	2 565
6	Netherlands	1 815
7	Belgium	1 728
8	Austria	1 321
9	Spain	876
10	Morocco	796



Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

CHAPTER 2

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



Returnees arriving in El Salvador. © IOM 2020/Elena MONTOYA

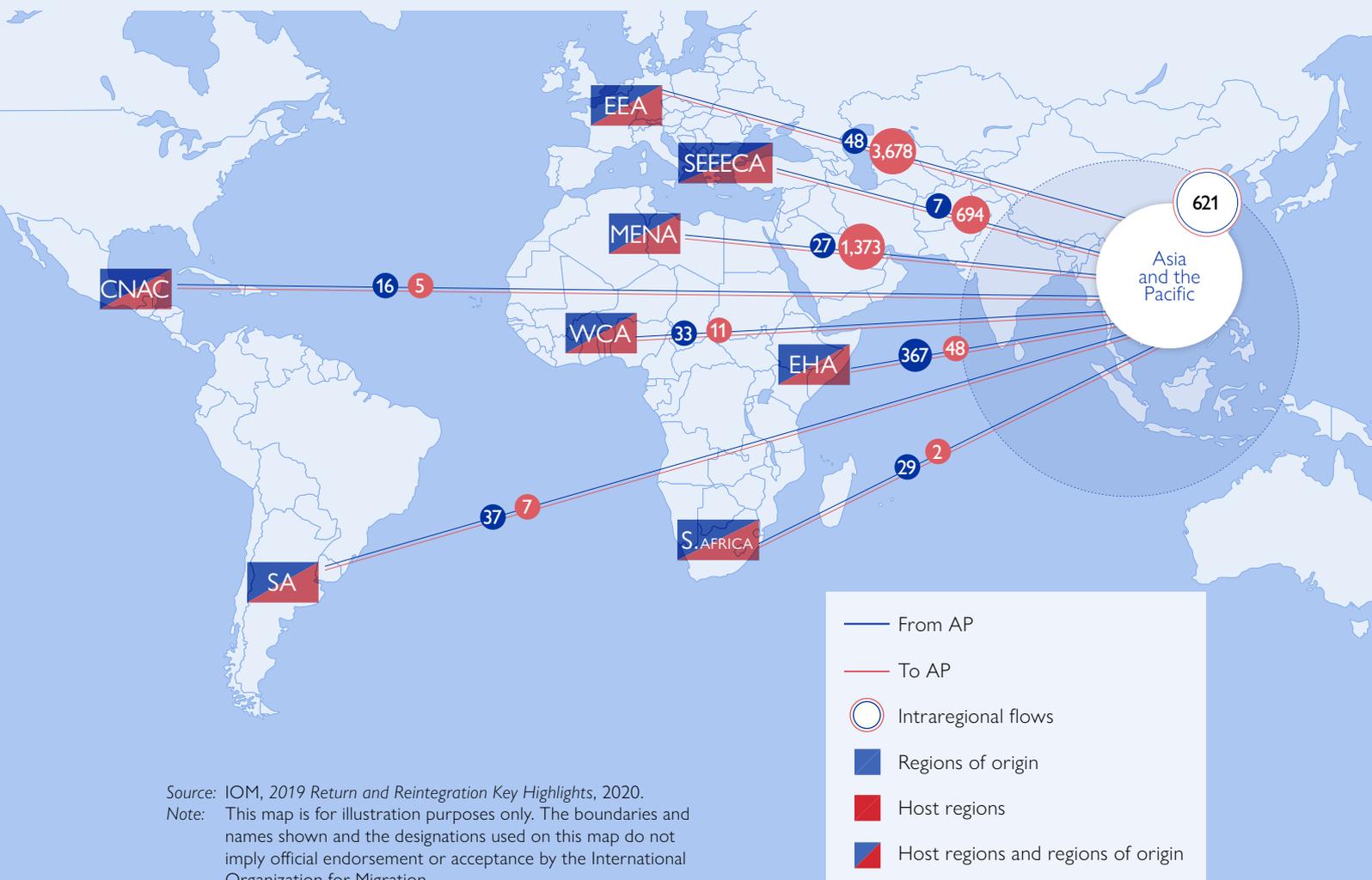
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

RETURNS FROM ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Region of origin	Number of returns
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	621
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	367
European Economic Area (EEA)	48
South America (SA)	37
West and Central Africa (WCA)	33
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	29
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	27
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	16
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	7
Total	1 185

RETURNS TO ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Host region	Number of returns
European Economic Area (EEA)	3 678
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	1 373
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	694
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	621
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	48
West and Central Africa (WCA)	11
South America (SA)	7
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	5
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	2
Total	6 439



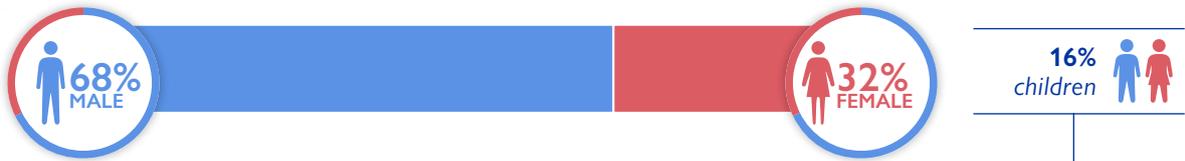
RETURNS FROM ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Migrants assisted **from** Asia and the Pacific

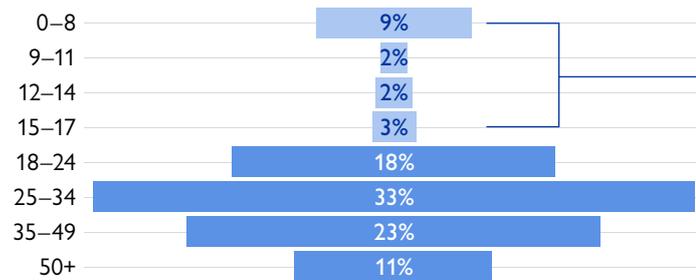
1,185

99.1% of the total caseload

| Sex breakdown



| Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted **from** Asia and the Pacific

60

| Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Australia	467	Migrants assisted
India	325	
Indonesia	147	
Thailand	47	
Japan	40	

RETURNS TO ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Migrants assisted to Asia and the Pacific

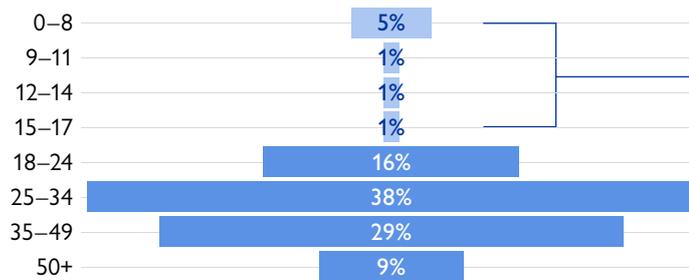
6,439

99% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to Asia and the Pacific

282

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Bangladesh	1 473
Pakistan	1 402
Afghanistan	887
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	650
Mongolia	528

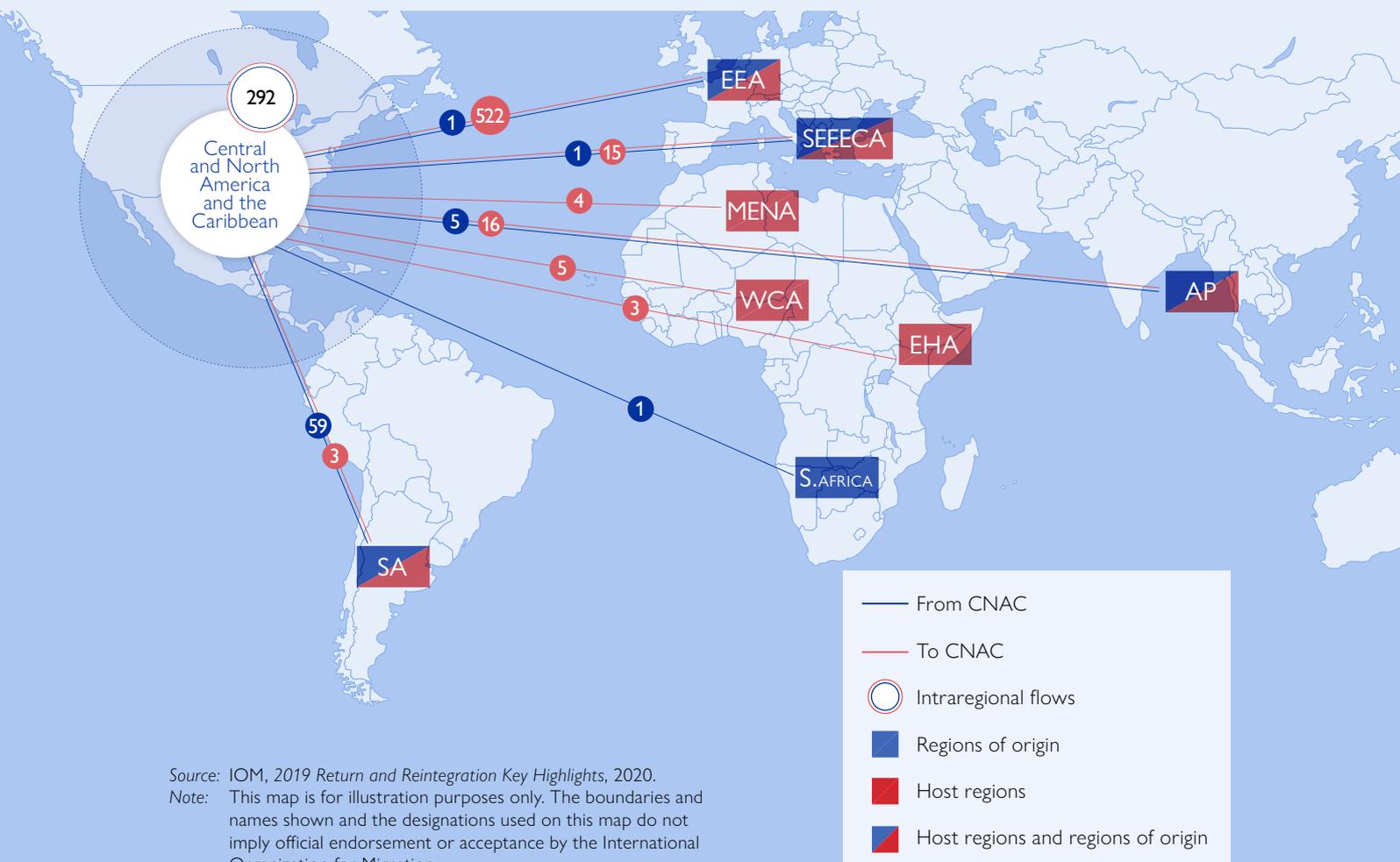
CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

RETURNS FROM CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Region of origin	Number of returns
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	292
South America (SA)	59
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	5
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECA)	1
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	1
European Economic Area (EEA)	1
Total	359

RETURNS TO CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Host region	Number of returns
European Economic Area (EEA)	522
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	292
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	16
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECA)	15
West and Central Africa (WCA)	5
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	4
South America (SA)	3
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	3
Total	860



RETURNS FROM CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Migrants assisted **from** Central and North America and the Caribbean

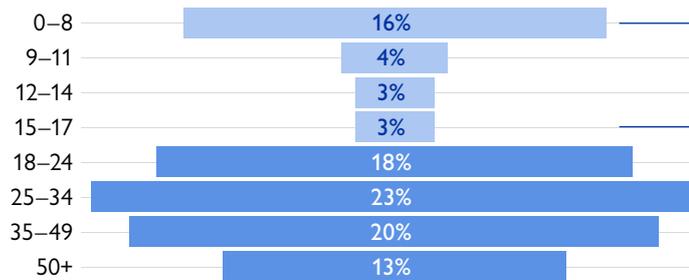
359

1% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



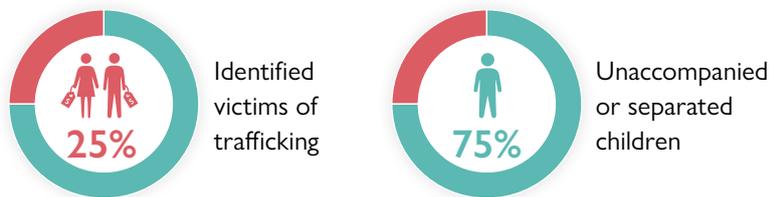
Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted **from** Central and North America and the Caribbean

8

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Mexico	186
Belize	42
Guatemala	33
El Salvador	28
Honduras	23

RETURNS TO CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Migrants assisted to Central and North America and the Caribbean

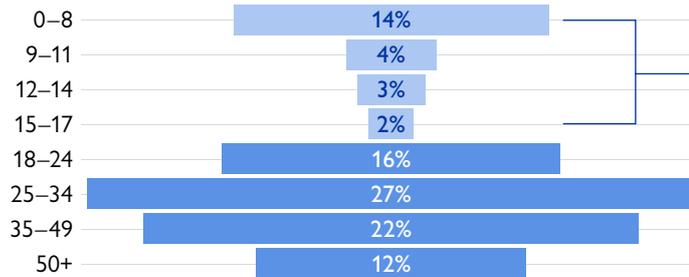
860

2% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to Central and North America and the Caribbean

32

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
El Salvador	293
Honduras	217
Nicaragua	66
Costa Rica	38
Belize	38

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

RETURNS FROM EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

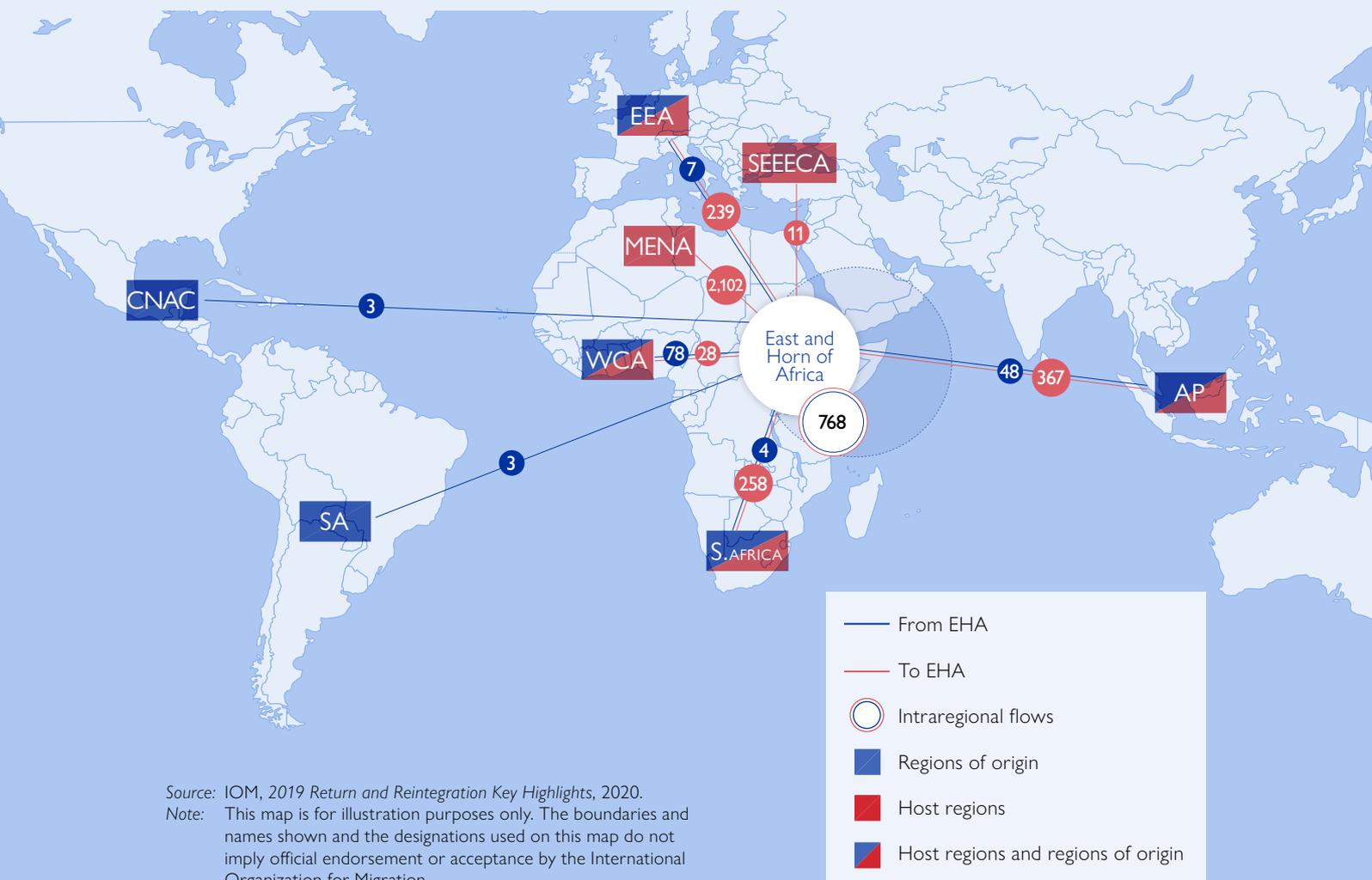
Region of origin	Number of returns
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	768
West and Central Africa (WCA)	78
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	48
European Economic Area (EEA)	7
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	4
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	3
South America (SA)	3

Total 911

RETURNS TO EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

Host region	Number of returns
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	2 102
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	768
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	367
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	258
European Economic Area (EEA)	239
West and Central Africa (WCA)	28
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	11

Total 3 773



Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.
 Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

RETURNS FROM EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

Migrants assisted from East and Horn of Africa

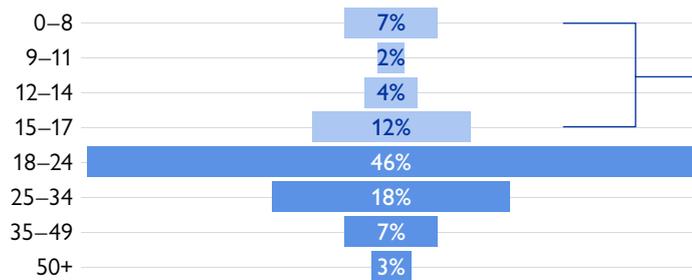
911

2% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted from East and Horn of Africa

201

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Djibouti	534
Somalia	161
Sudan	135
United Republic of Tanzania	34
Kenya	20

RETURNS TO EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

Migrants assisted to East and Horn of Africa

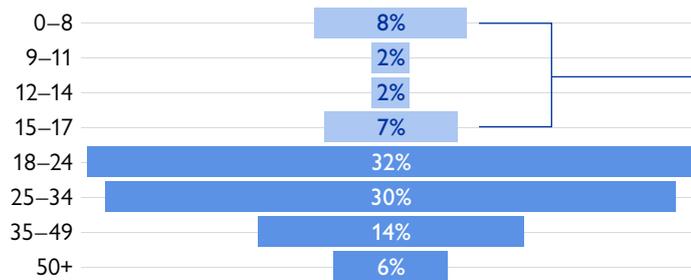
3,773

9% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to East and Horn of Africa

465

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Ethiopia	1 479
Sudan	1 303
Somalia	511
Uganda	270
United Republic of Tanzania	119

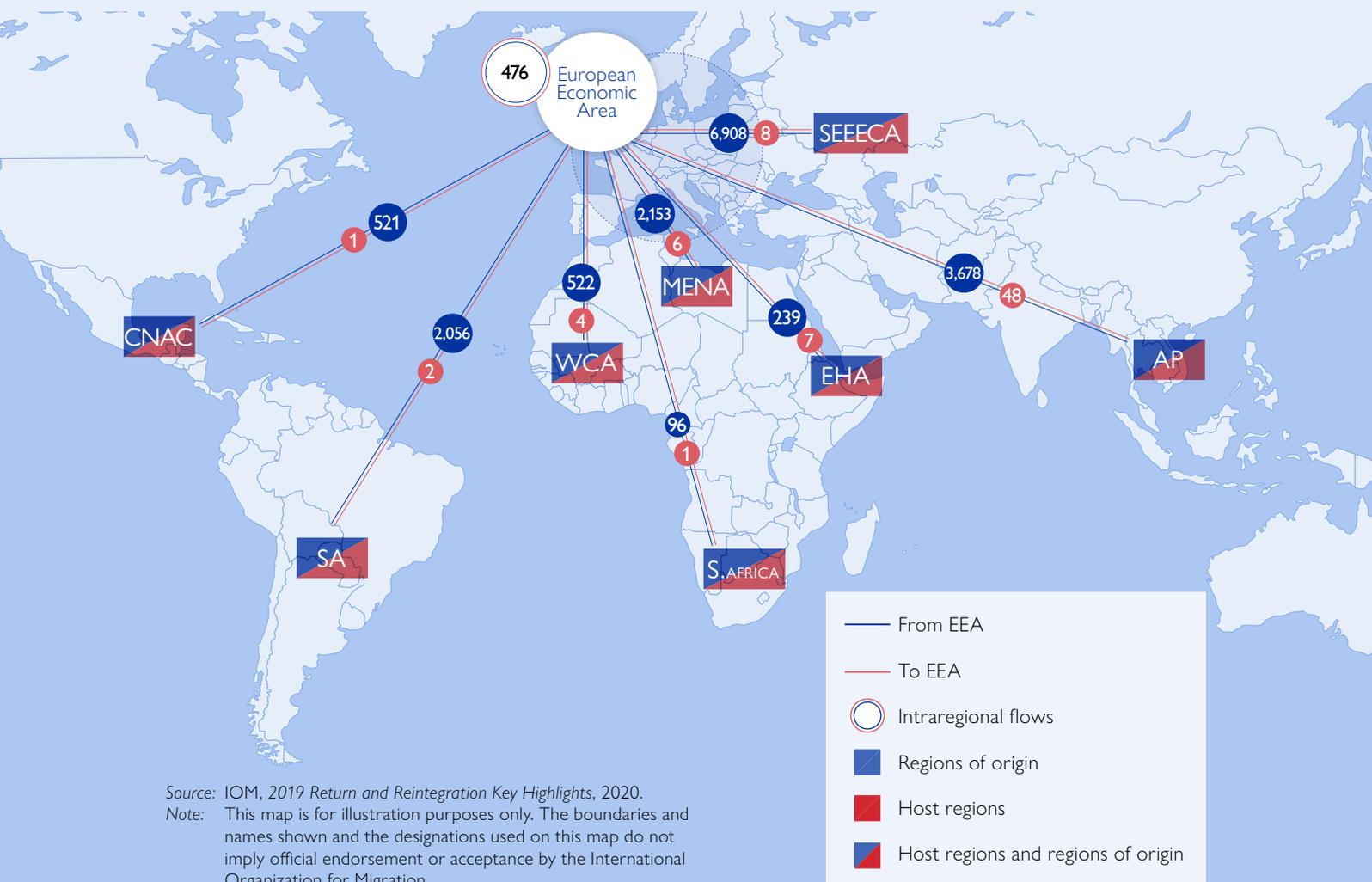
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

RETURNS FROM EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Region of origin	Number of returns
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	6 908
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	3 678
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	2 153
South America (SA)	2 056
West and Central Africa (WCA)	522
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	521
European Economic Area (EEA)	476
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	239
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	96
Total	16 649

RETURNS TO EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Host region	Number of returns
European Economic Area (EEA)	476
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	48
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	6
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	8
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	7
West and Central Africa (WCA)	4
South America (SA)	2
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	1
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	1
Total	556



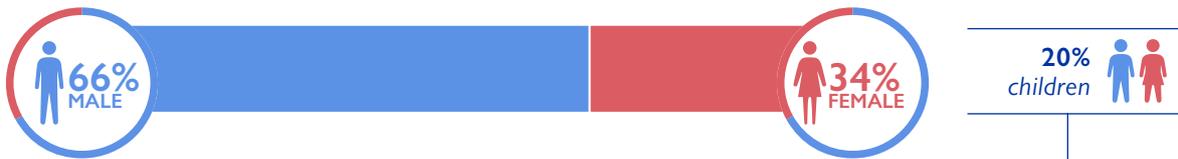
RETURNS FROM EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Migrants assisted **from** European Economic Area

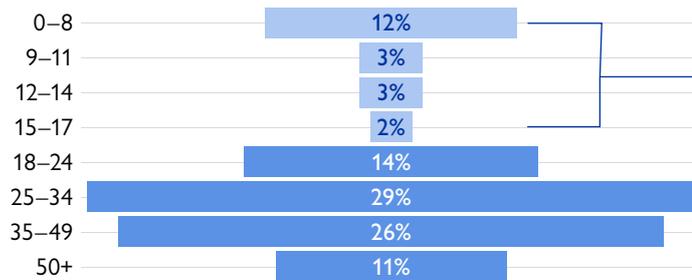
16,649

39% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



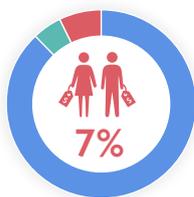
Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted **from** European Economic Area

1,100

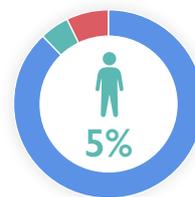
Vulnerability breakdown



Migrants with health-related needs



Identified victims of trafficking



Unaccompanied or separated children

Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Germany	5 723
Greece	2 565
Netherlands	1 815
Belgium	1 728
Austria	1 321

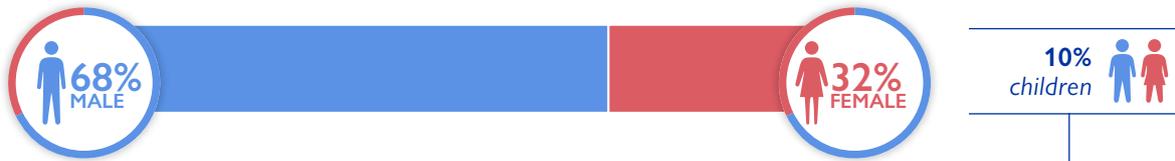
RETURNS TO EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Migrants assisted to European Economic Area

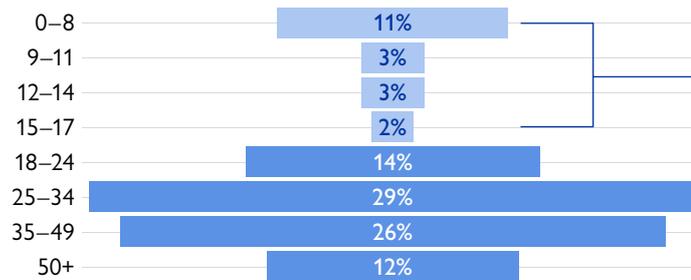
556

2% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



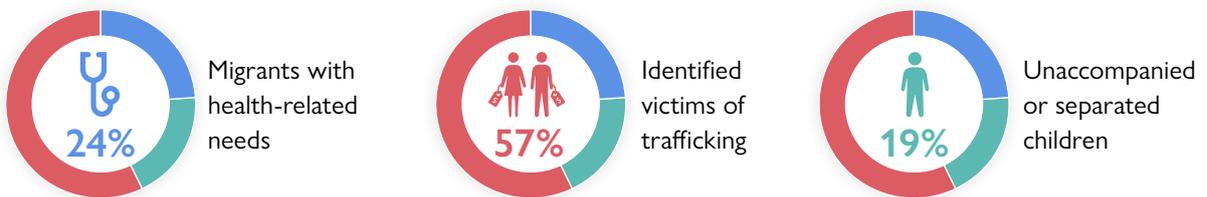
Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to European Economic Area

77

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Romania	223
Bulgaria	64
Poland	39
Spain	28
Greece	27

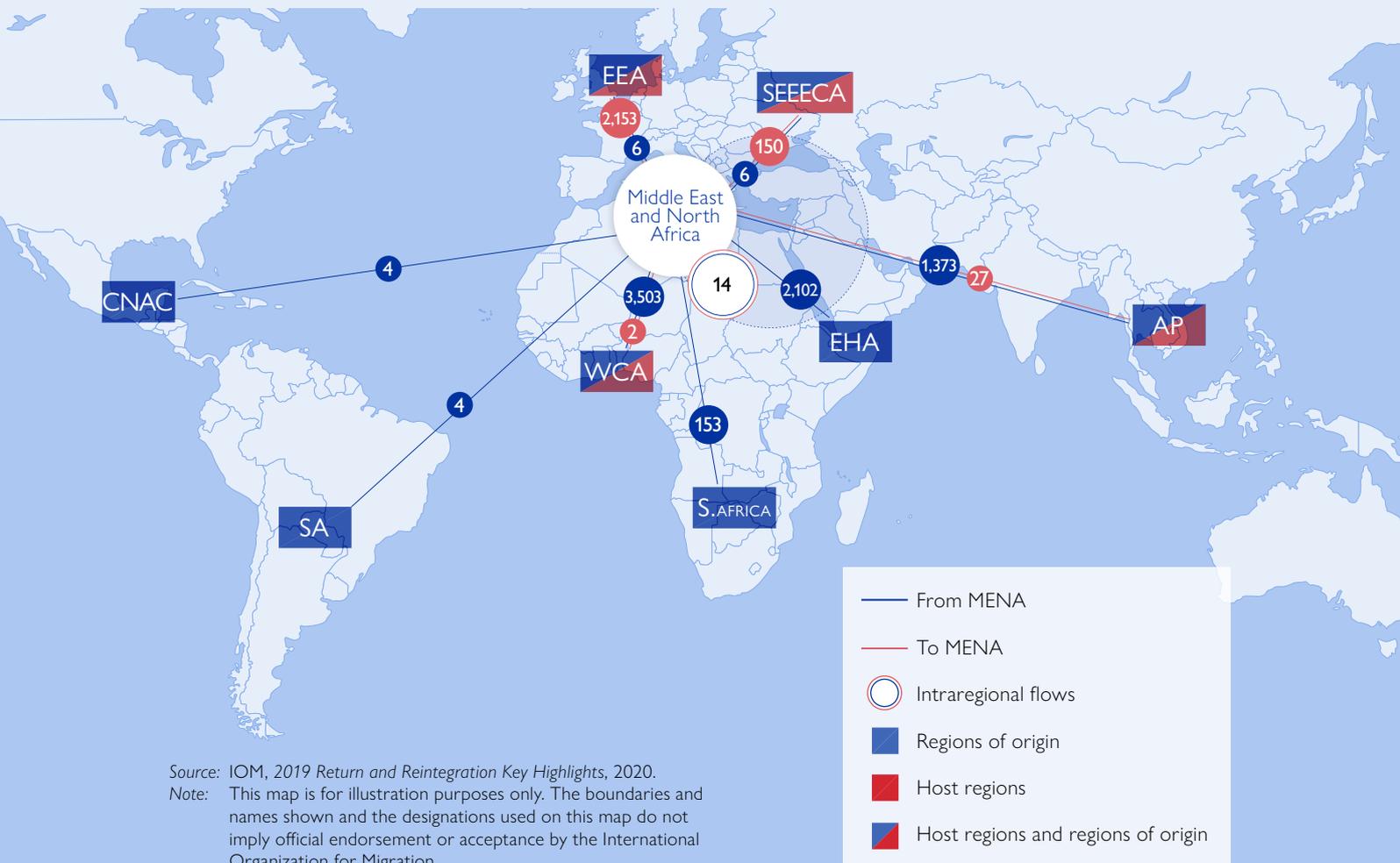
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

RETURNS FROM MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Region of origin	Number of returns
West and Central Africa (WCA)	3 503
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	2 102
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	1 373
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	153
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	14
European Economic Area (EEA)	6
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECA)	6
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	4
South America (SA)	4
Total	7 168

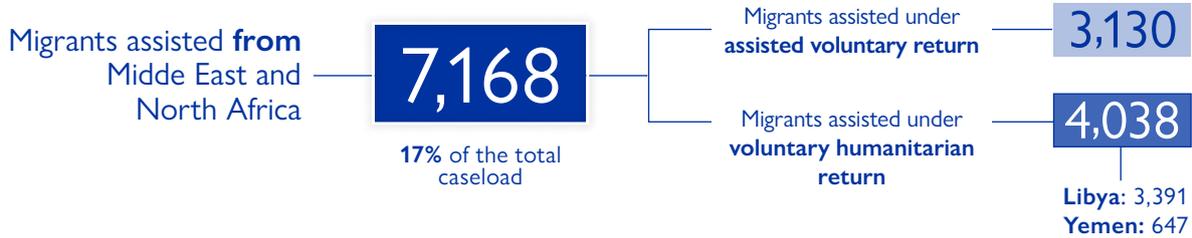
RETURNS TO MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Host region	Number of returns
European Economic Area (EEA)	2 153
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECA)	150
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	27
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	14
West and Central Africa (WCA)	2
Total	2 346

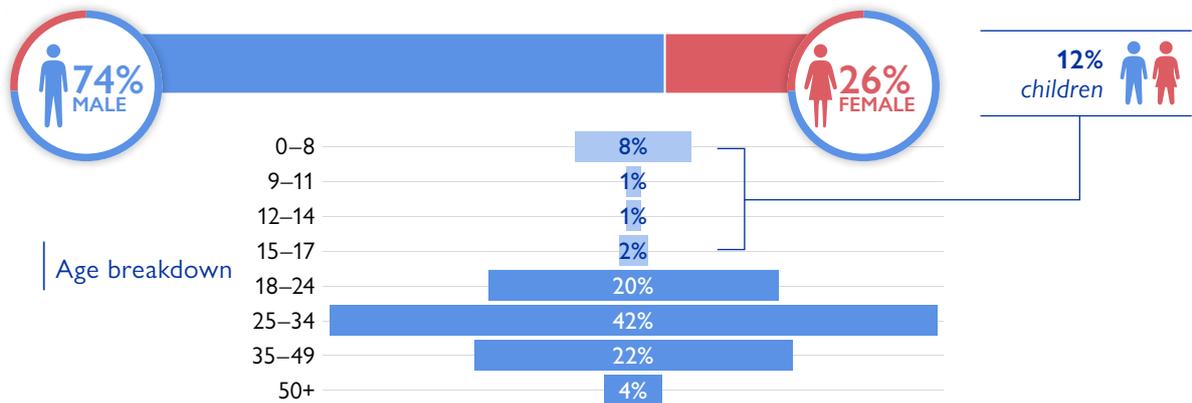


Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.
 Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

RETURNS FROM MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



Sex breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted from Middle East and North Africa

606

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Libya	3 391
Morocco	796
Algeria	763
Yemen	647
Egypt	497

RETURNS TO MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Migrants assisted to Middle East and North Africa

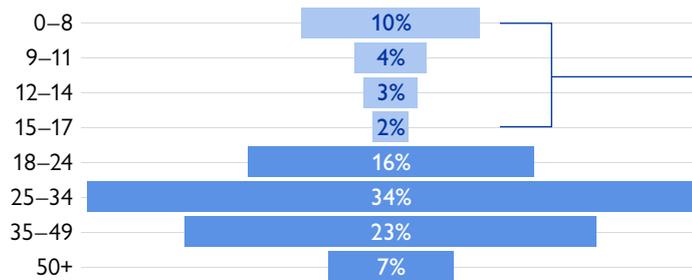
2,346

6% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to Middle East and North Africa

133

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Iraq	1 602
Egypt	189
Morocco	184
Tunisia	123
Algeria	115

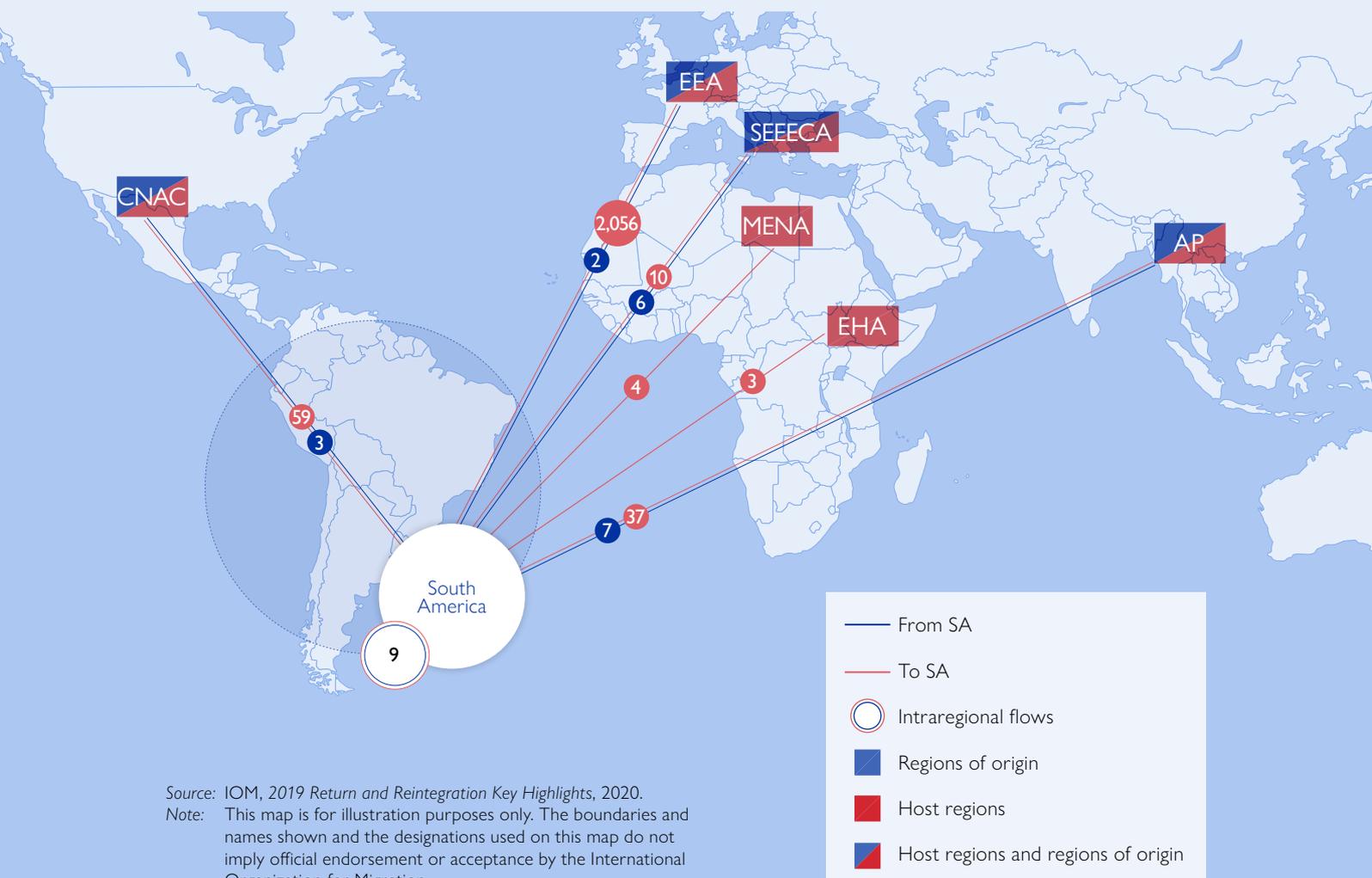
SOUTH AMERICA

RETURNS FROM SOUTH AMERICA

Region of origin	Number of returns
South America (SA)	9
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	7
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	6
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	3
European Economic Area (EEA)	2
Total	27

RETURNS TO SOUTH AMERICA

Host region	Number of returns
European Economic Area (EEA)	2 056
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	59
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	37
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	10
South America (SA)	9
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	4
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	3
Total	2 178



RETURNS FROM SOUTH AMERICA

Migrants assisted **from** South America

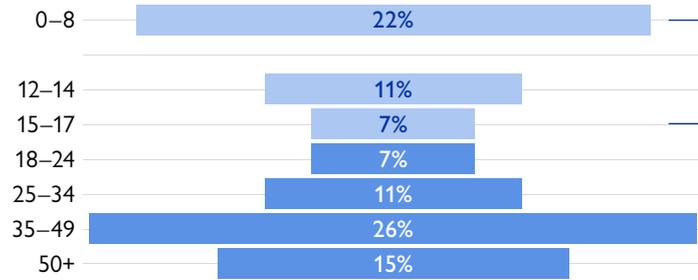
27

1% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Brazil	10
Uruguay	5
Peru	5
Argentina	4
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	1

RETURNS TO SOUTH AMERICA

Migrants assisted to South America

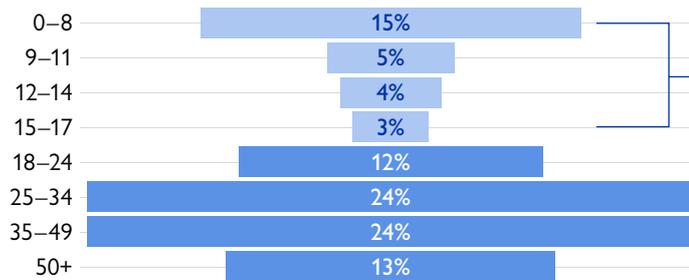
2,178

5% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to South America

69

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Brazil	1 249
Colombia	480
Peru	124
Paraguay	76
Argentina	73

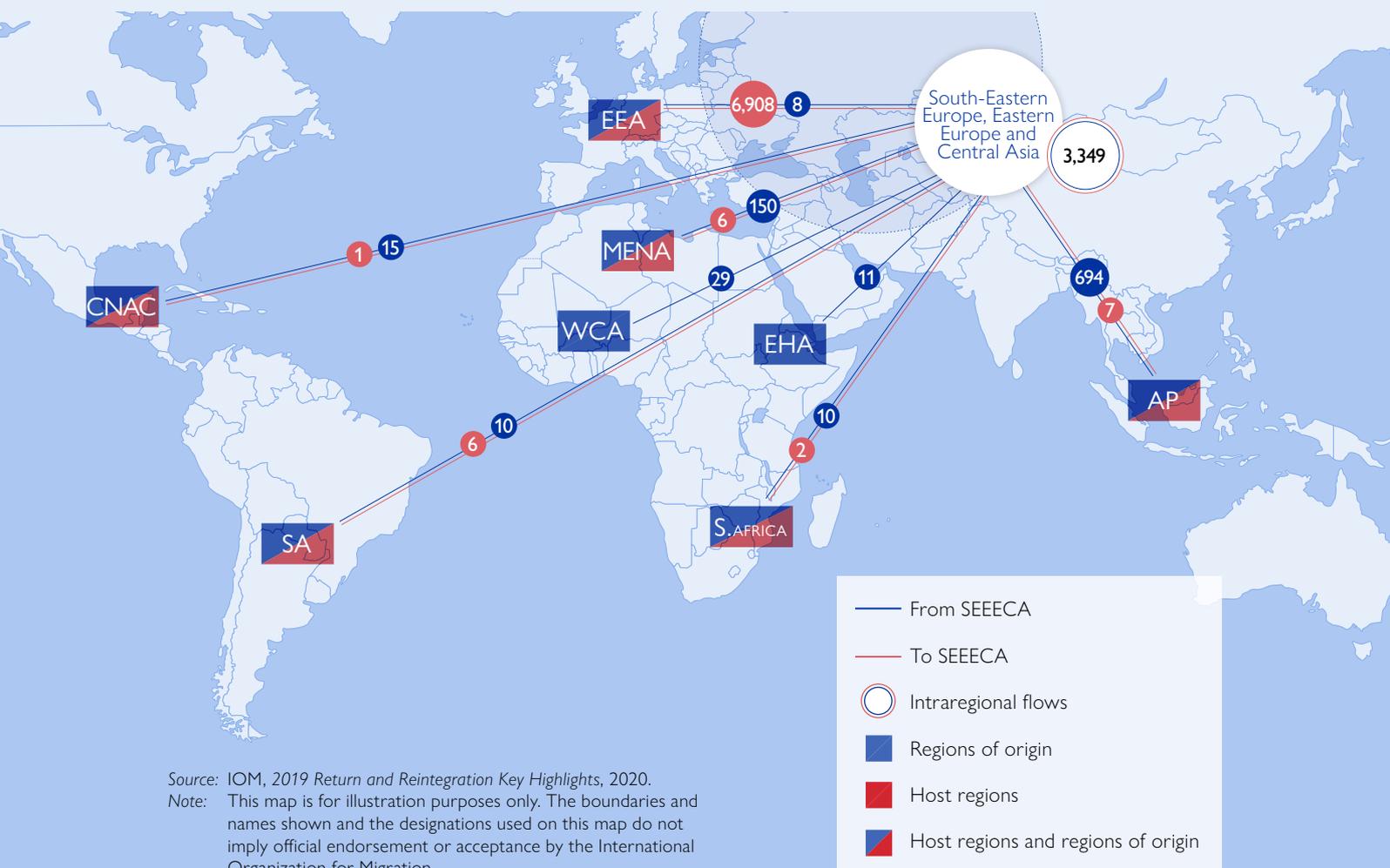
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

RETURNS FROM SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Region of origin	Number of returns
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	3 349
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	694
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	150
West and Central Africa (WCA)	29
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	15
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	11
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	10
South America (SA)	10
European Economic Area (EEA)	8
Total	4 276

RETURNS TO SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Host region	Number of returns
European Economic Area (EEA)	6 908
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	3 349
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	7
South America (SA)	6
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	6
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	2
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	1
Total	10 279



RETURNS FROM SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Migrants assisted from South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia

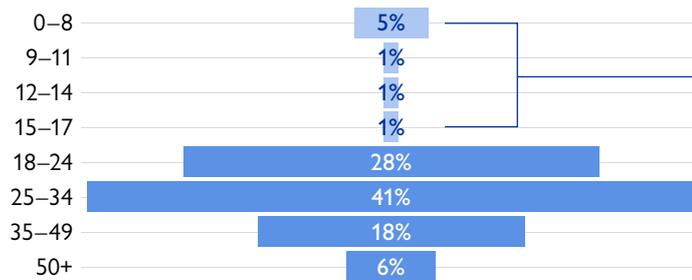
4,276

10% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted from South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia

31

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Kazakhstan	3 037
Turkey	494
Bosnia and Herzegovina	232
Georgia	144
Russian Federation	124

RETURNS TO SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Migrants assisted to South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia

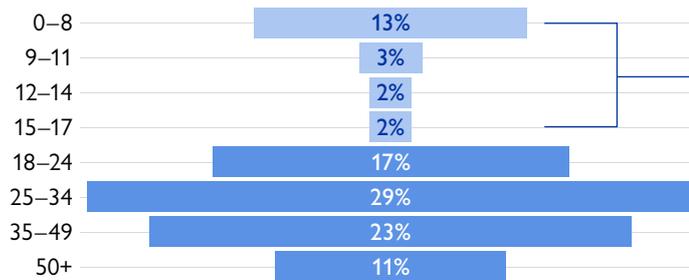
10,279

25% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia

563

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Tajikistan	3 106
Georgia	1 465
Albania	834
Republic of Moldova	807
Ukraine	778

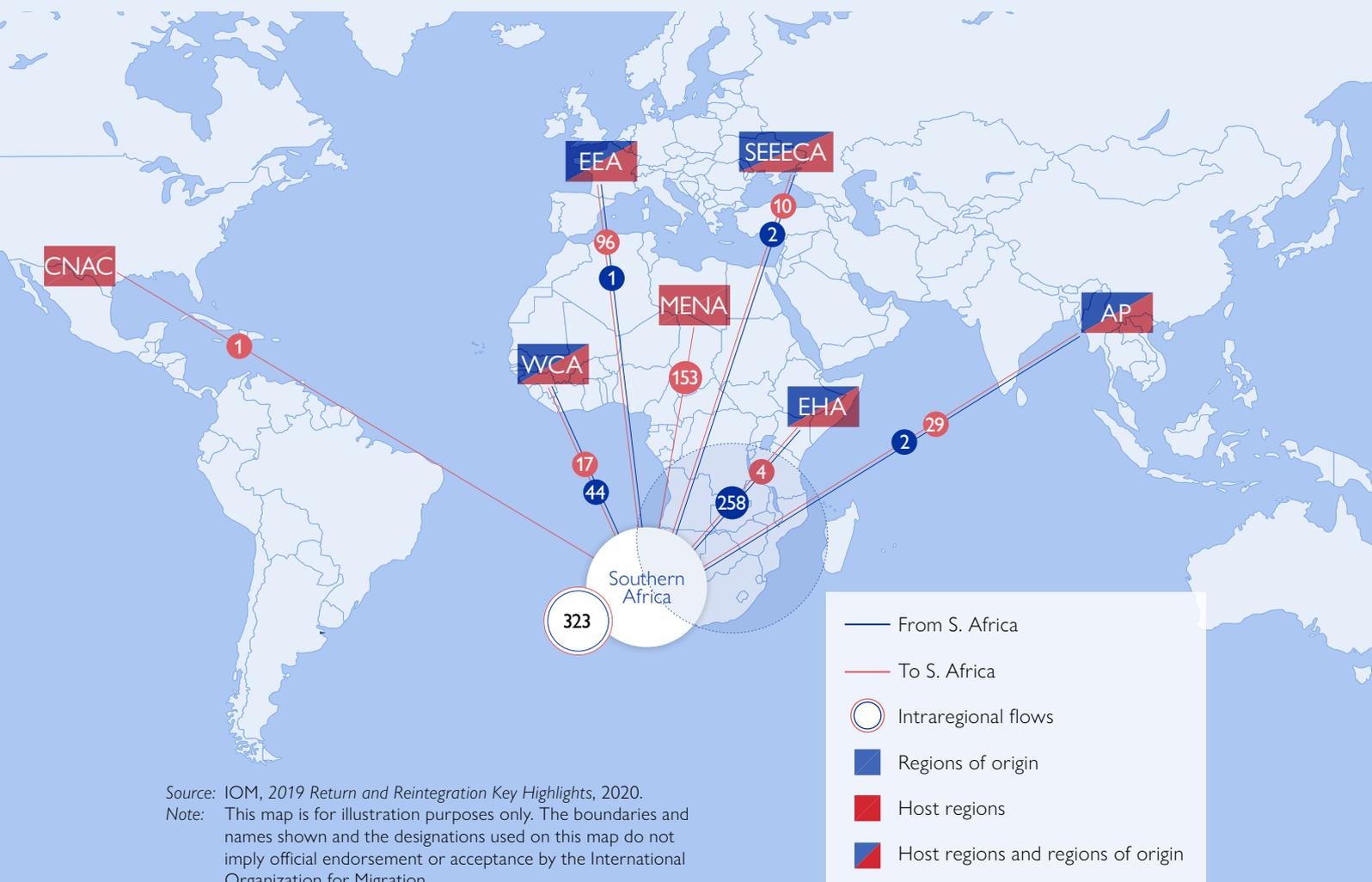
SOUTHERN AFRICA

RETURNS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

Region of origin	Number of returns
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	323
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	258
West and Central Africa (WCA)	44
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	2
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	2
European Economic Area (EEA)	1
Total	630

RETURNS TO SOUTHERN AFRICA

Host region	Number of returns
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	323
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	153
European Economic Area (EEA)	96
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	29
West and Central Africa (WCA)	17
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	10
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	4
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	1
Total	633



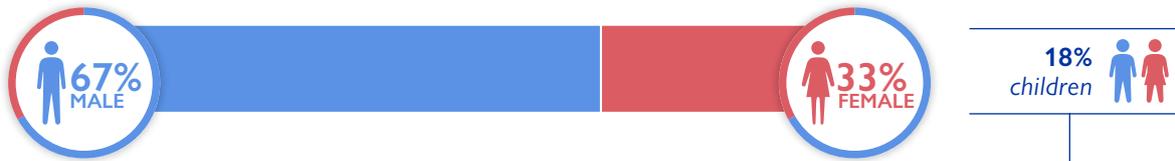
RETURNS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

Migrants assisted from Southern Africa

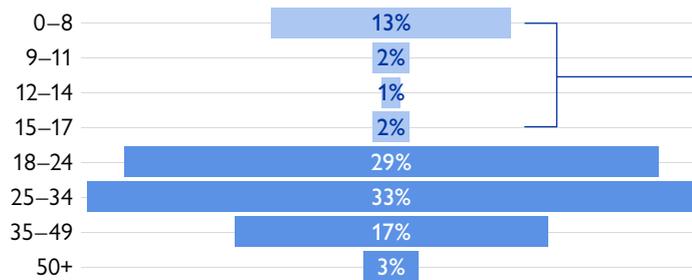
630

1% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



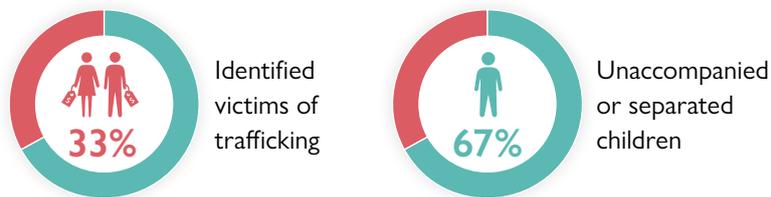
Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted from Southern Africa

9

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
South Africa	419
Zambia	86
Zimbabwe	71
Mozambique	29
Namibia	9

RETURNS TO SOUTHERN AFRICA

Migrants assisted to Southern Africa

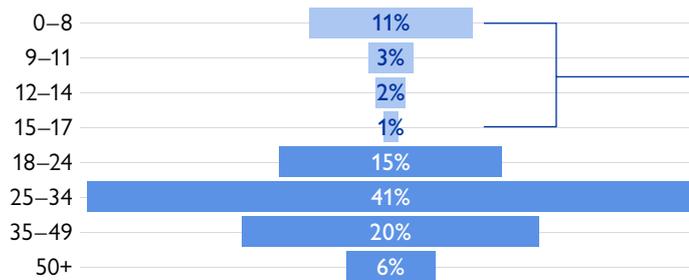
633

1% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to Southern Africa

12

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Malawi	175
Zimbabwe	164
Democratic Republic of the Congo	106
Madagascar	79
South Africa	37

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

RETURNS FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

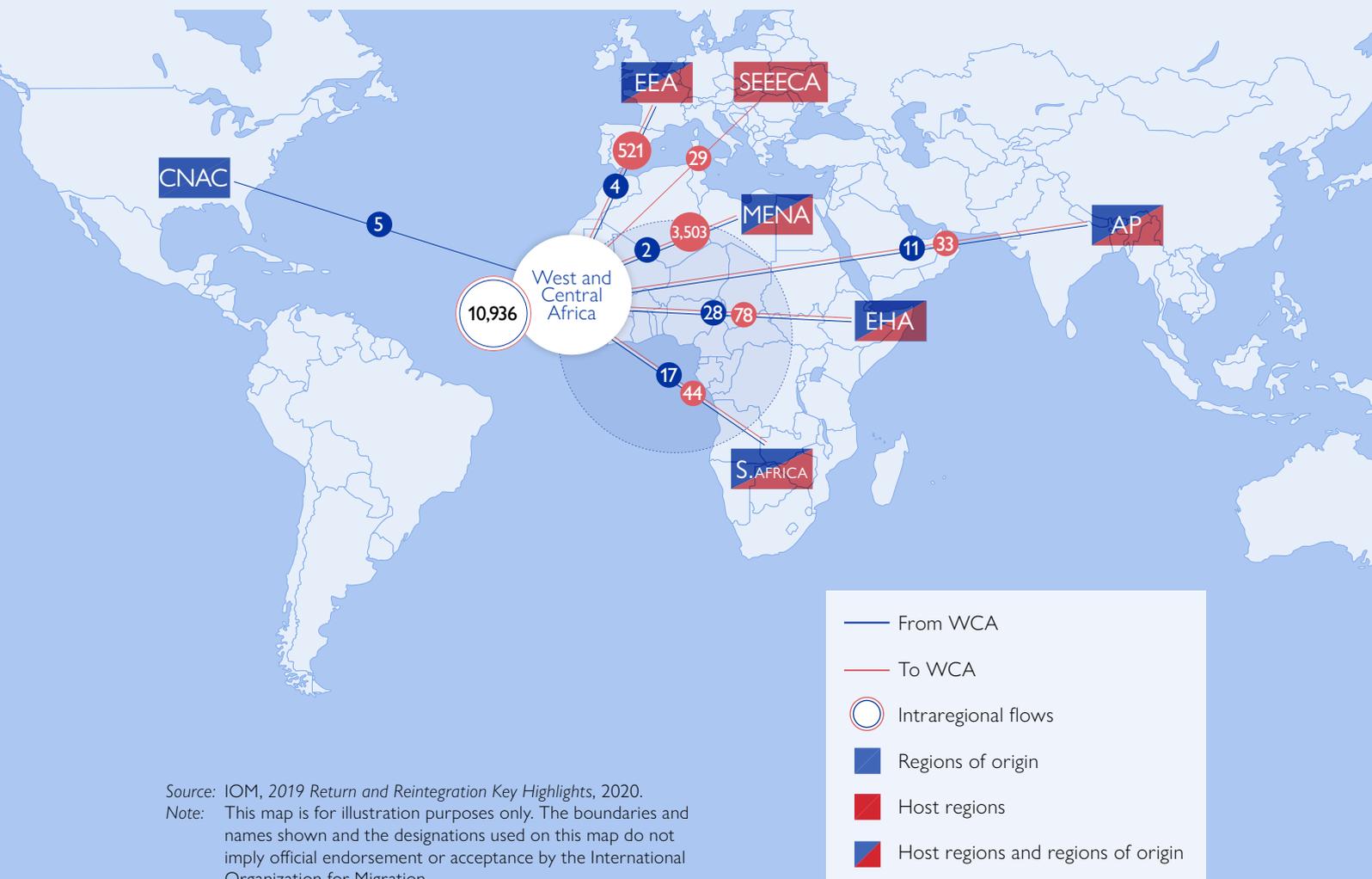
Region of origin	Number of returns
West and Central Africa (WCA)	10 936
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	28
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	17
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	11
Central and North America and the Caribbean (CNAC)	5
European Economic Area (EEA)	4
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	2

Total 11 003

RETURNS TO WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Host region	Number of returns
West and Central Africa (WCA)	10 936
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	3 503
European Economic Area (EEA)	521
East and Horn of Africa (EHA)	78
Southern Africa (S. Africa)	44
Asia and the Pacific (AP)	33
South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEEECA)	29

Total 15 144



RETURNS FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Migrants assisted from West and Central Africa

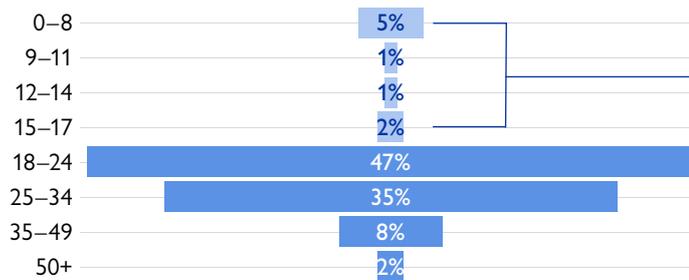
11,003

26% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted from West and Central Africa

374

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 host countries

Country	Migrants assisted
Niger	9 069
Chad	423
Mali	412
Mauritania	373
Côte d'Ivoire	326

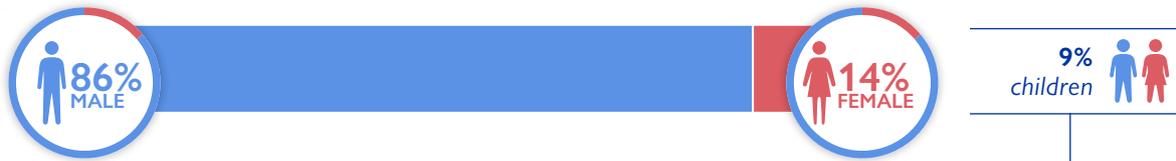
RETURNS TO WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Migrants assisted to West and Central Africa

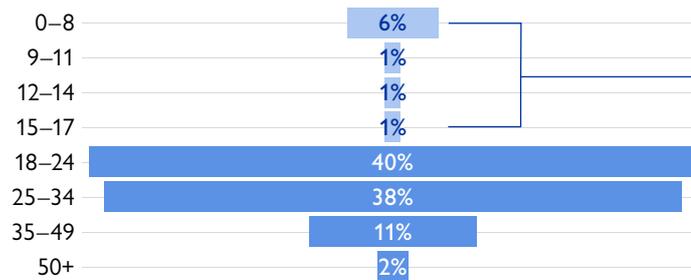
15,144

36% of the total caseload

Sex breakdown



Age breakdown



Total number of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted to West and Central Africa

753

Vulnerability breakdown



Top 5 countries of origin

Country	Migrants assisted
Mali	3 249
Guinea	3 145
Nigeria	1 449
Sierra Leone	1 259
Côte d'Ivoire	981

CHAPTER 3

REINTEGRATION OVERVIEW



Jewel Khondokar, a returned migrant, struggled to reintegrate into society. The Prottasha project supported him with financial and social reintegration assistance. © IOM 2019/Sariful ISLAM



Source: IOM, *2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights*, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Reintegration

Reintegration is generally understood as a multidimensional process enabling individuals to reestablish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood, and dignity and achieve inclusion in civic life.

Sustainable reintegration

As part of its integrated approach to reintegration (2017), IOM defines sustainable reintegration as follows:

Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than a necessity.

IOM's integrated approach to reintegration is further operationalized in the [Reintegration Handbook](#).

Provision of reintegration assistance

The categories of reintegration support presented in the following graphs reflect the total number of services provided, which are not mutually exclusive. The beneficiaries of IOM reintegration assistance can receive multiple types of support at different levels and return stages (e.g. pre-departure counselling in the host country and economic assistance in the country of origin).

Main trends 2020

121 IOM country offices provided reintegration assistance to returnees either prior to departure or after arrival.

The total number of reintegration services decreased by 16 per cent (from 126,442 in 2019 to 106,230 in 2020) but remained on a high level.

The majority of pre-departure services (88%) were provided by country offices in the European Economic Area, the main host region.

The majority of post-arrival reintegration services (66%) were provided by country offices in West and Central Africa, the main region of origin.

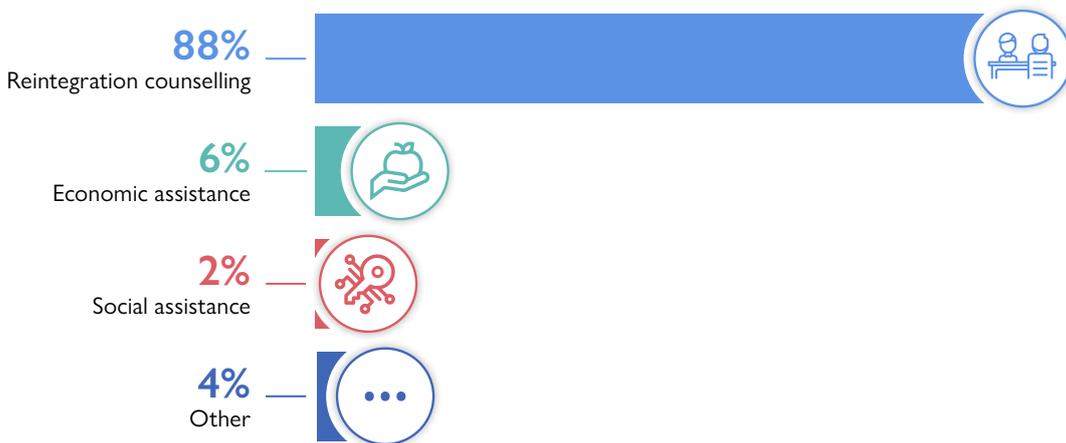
The top 3 countries for the provision of reintegration assistance are Guinea (13%), Senegal (12%) and Ethiopia (9.5%). The support consisted mainly of reintegration counselling and economic assistance.

REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE IN HOST COUNTRIES

Number of IOM country offices in host countries



Types of reintegration assistance provided in host countries



Reintegration assistance provided directly by IOM or through referral



Top 5 host countries for pre-departure reintegration assistance

Country	Number of services provided
Switzerland	3 285
Greece	2 100
Germany	1 531
Belgium	675
Netherlands	621

REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Number of IOM country offices in countries of origin

104

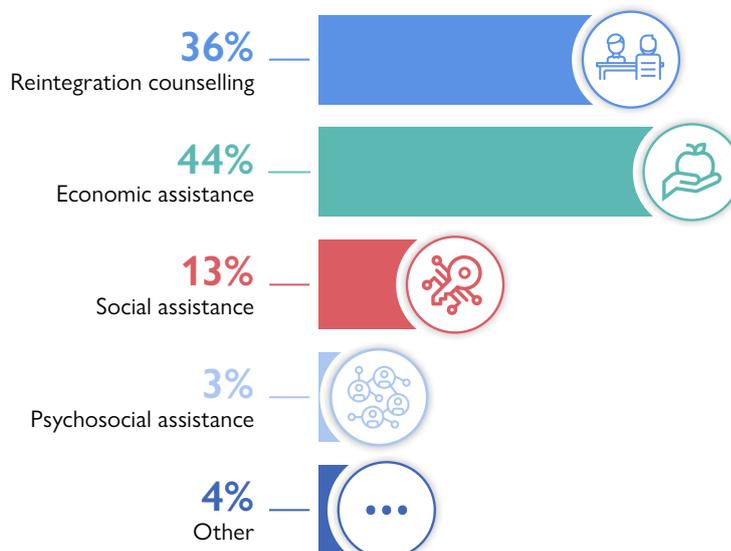
95,156

services provided

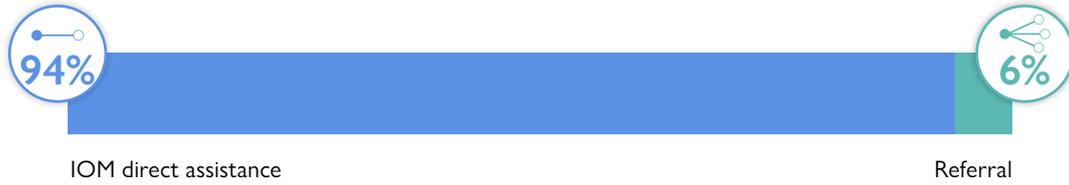
Types of beneficiaries



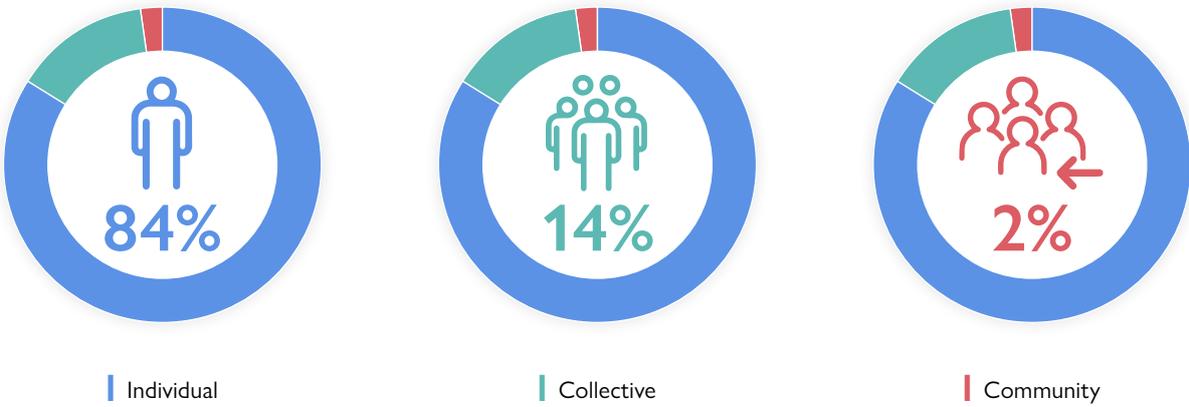
Types of reintegration assistance provided in countries of origin



Reintegration assistance provided directly by IOM or through referral



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries of origin for post-arrival reintegration assistance

Country	Number of services provided
Guinea	14 004
Senegal	12 725
Ethiopia	10 161
Nigeria	9 057
Mali	7 696

CHAPTER 4

REGIONAL REINTEGRATION HIGHLIGHTS



Through IOM Afghanistan's Reintegration and Development Assistance (RADA) and Connecting Return with Development (CRD) programmes, Afghan returnees are supported to attend a tailoring school in Herat run by a young female entrepreneur. The programme helps these women to reintegrate, enhance their professional skills and eventually gain new livelihood opportunities. © IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Reintegration assistance services provided to returnees

4,801

4.3%

of the total caseload of services



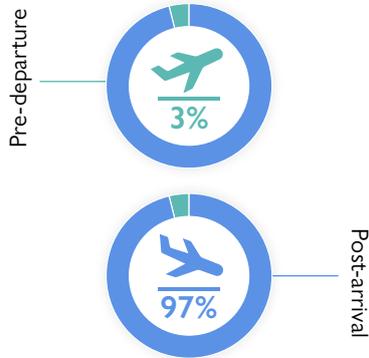
Countries involved in reintegration assistance

Afghanistan	Indonesia	Mongolia	Philippines
Bangladesh	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Myanmar	Sri Lanka
China	Japan	Nepal	Thailand
India	Malaysia	Pakistan	Viet Nam

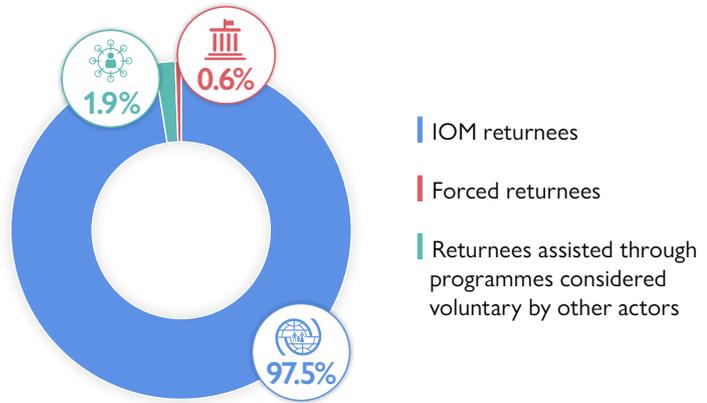
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



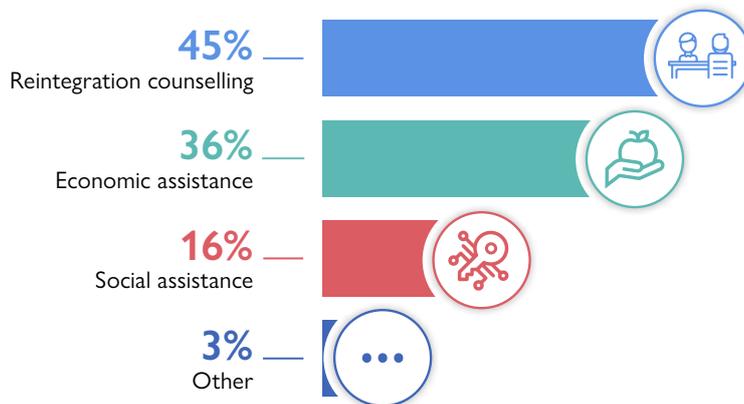
Types of beneficiaries



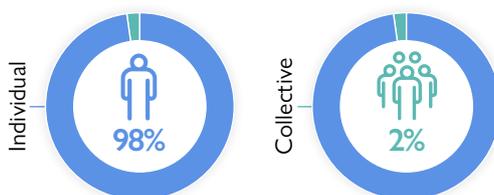
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Bangladesh
- Pakistan
- Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- Afghanistan
- Sri Lanka

CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Reintegration assistance services provided to returnees

783

0.7%

of the total caseload of services

Countries involved in reintegration assistance

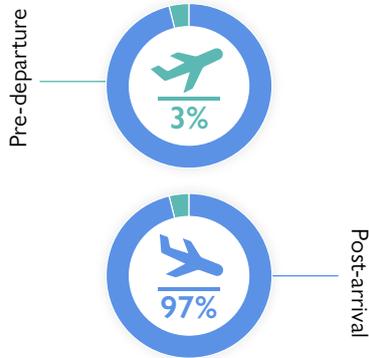
Belize
Dominican Republic
El Salvador
Guatemala

Honduras
Mexico
Panama

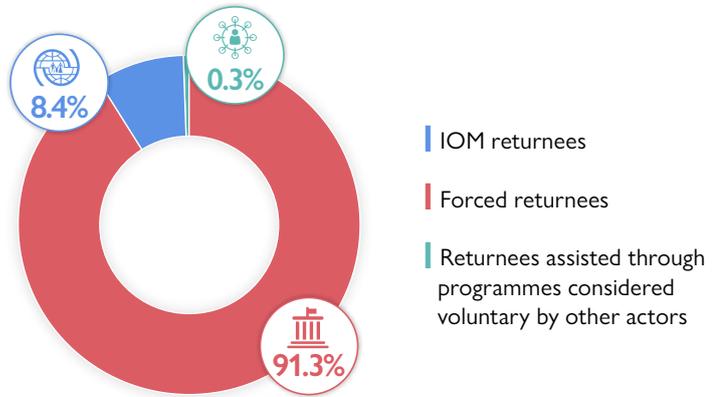
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



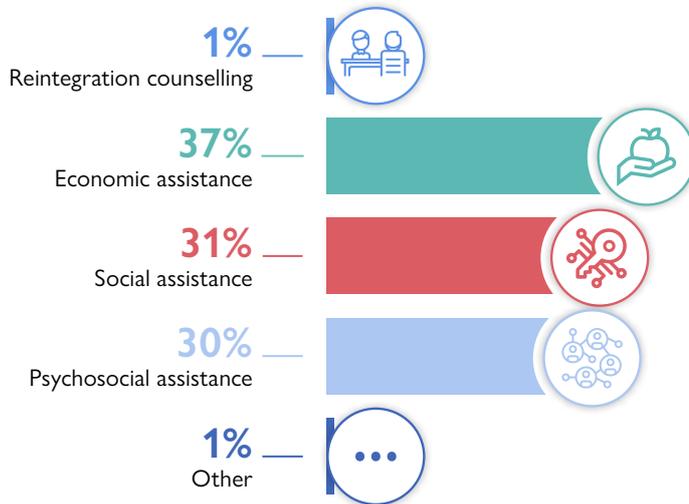
Types of beneficiaries



Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- El Salvador
- Panama
- Honduras
- Belize
- Guatemala

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

Reintegration assistance services provided to returnees

11,320

10.6%

of the total caseload of services

Countries involved in reintegration assistance

Burundi
Djibouti

Eritrea
Ethiopia

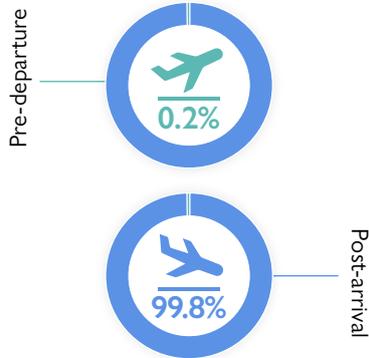
Somalia
South Sudan

Uganda

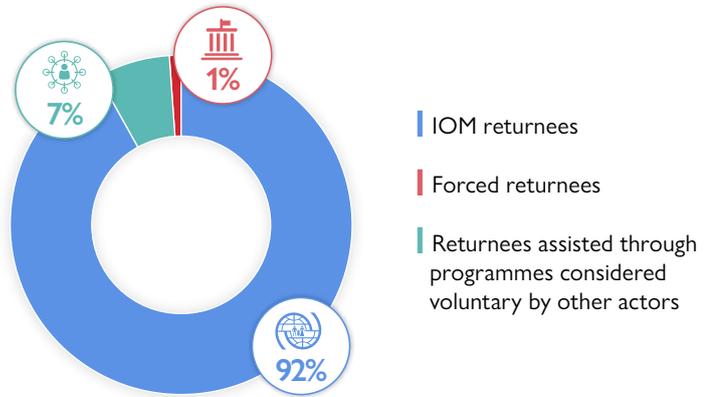
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



Types of beneficiaries



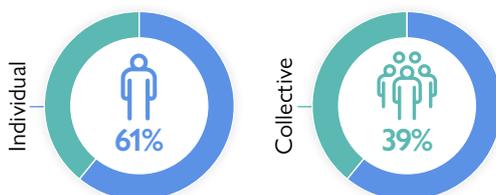
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance

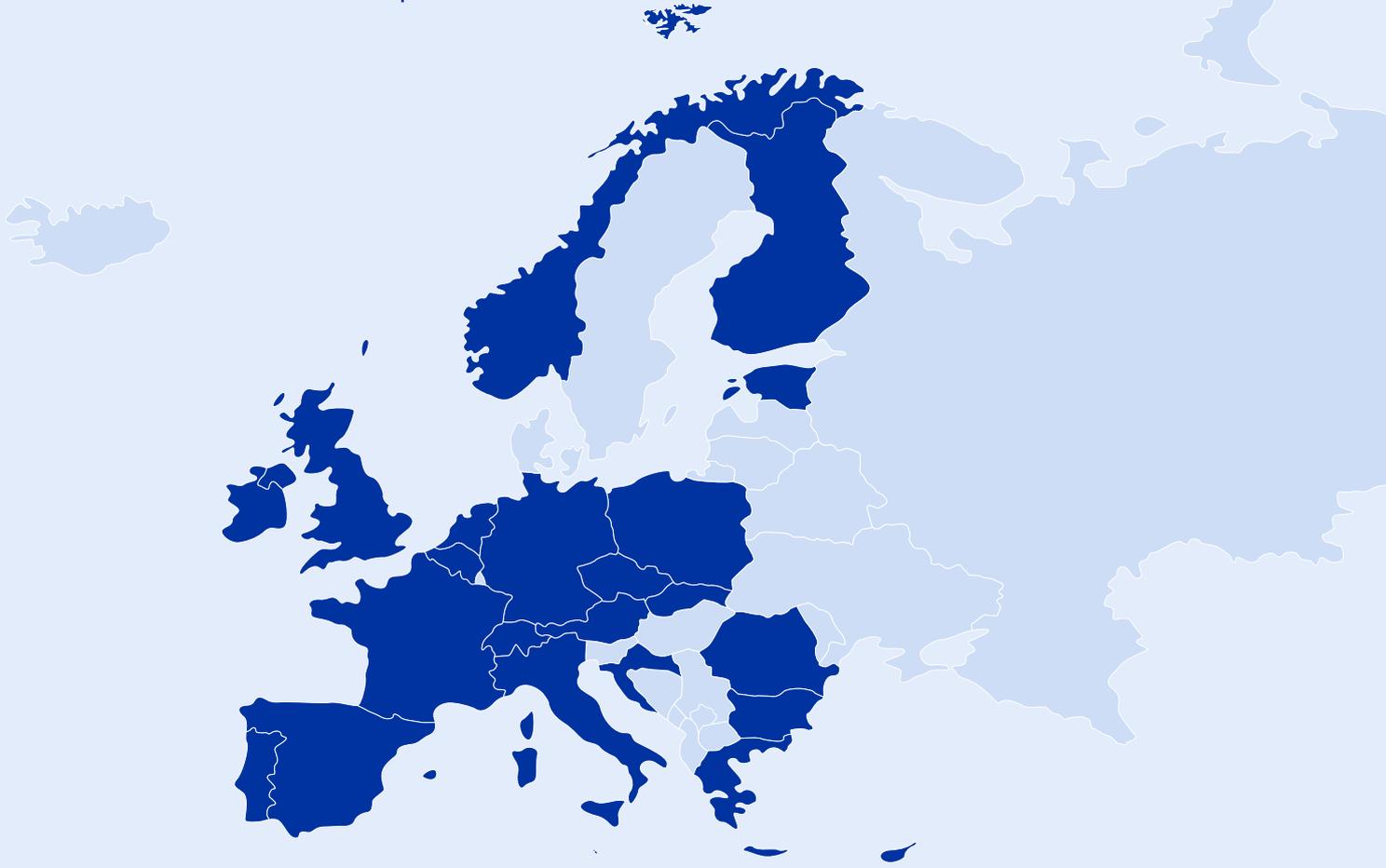


Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Ethiopia
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Uganda
- Djibouti

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Reintegration assistance services provided to returnees **9,811** **9.2%** of the total caseload of services



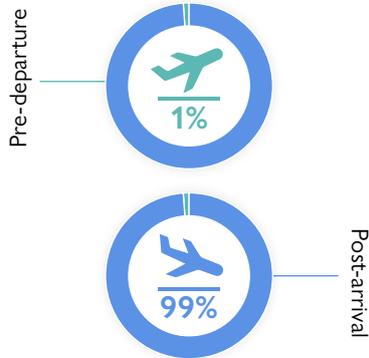
Countries involved in reintegration assistance

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|-------------|----------------|
| Austria | Estonia | Italy | Romania |
| Belgium | Finland | Malta | Slovakia |
| Bulgaria | France | Netherlands | Spain |
| Croatia | Germany | Norway | Switzerland |
| Cyprus | Greece | Poland | United Kingdom |
| Czechia | Ireland | Portugal | |

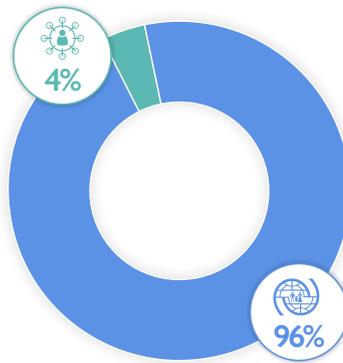
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



Types of beneficiaries



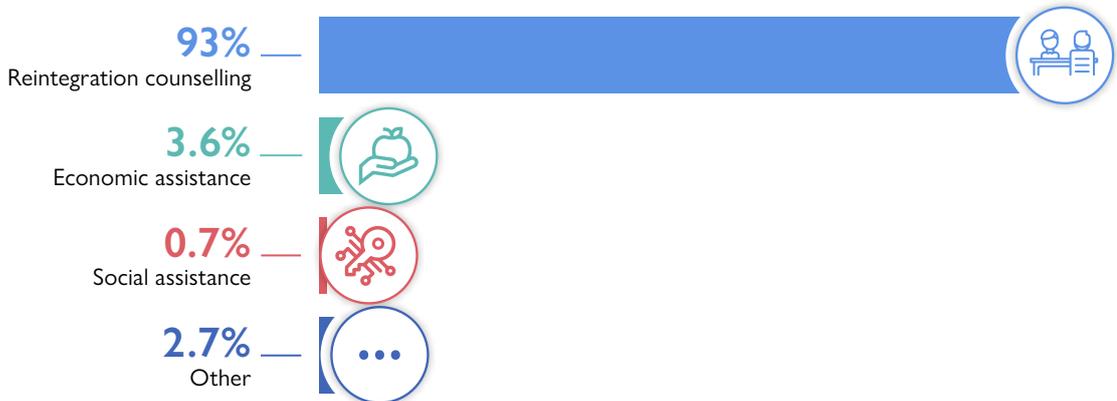
IOM returnees

Returnees assisted through programmes considered voluntary by other actors

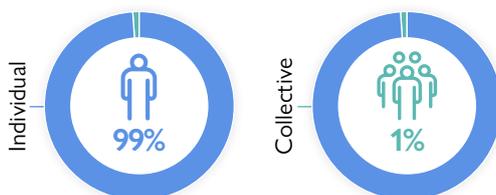
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Switzerland
- Greece
- Germany
- Belgium
- Netherlands

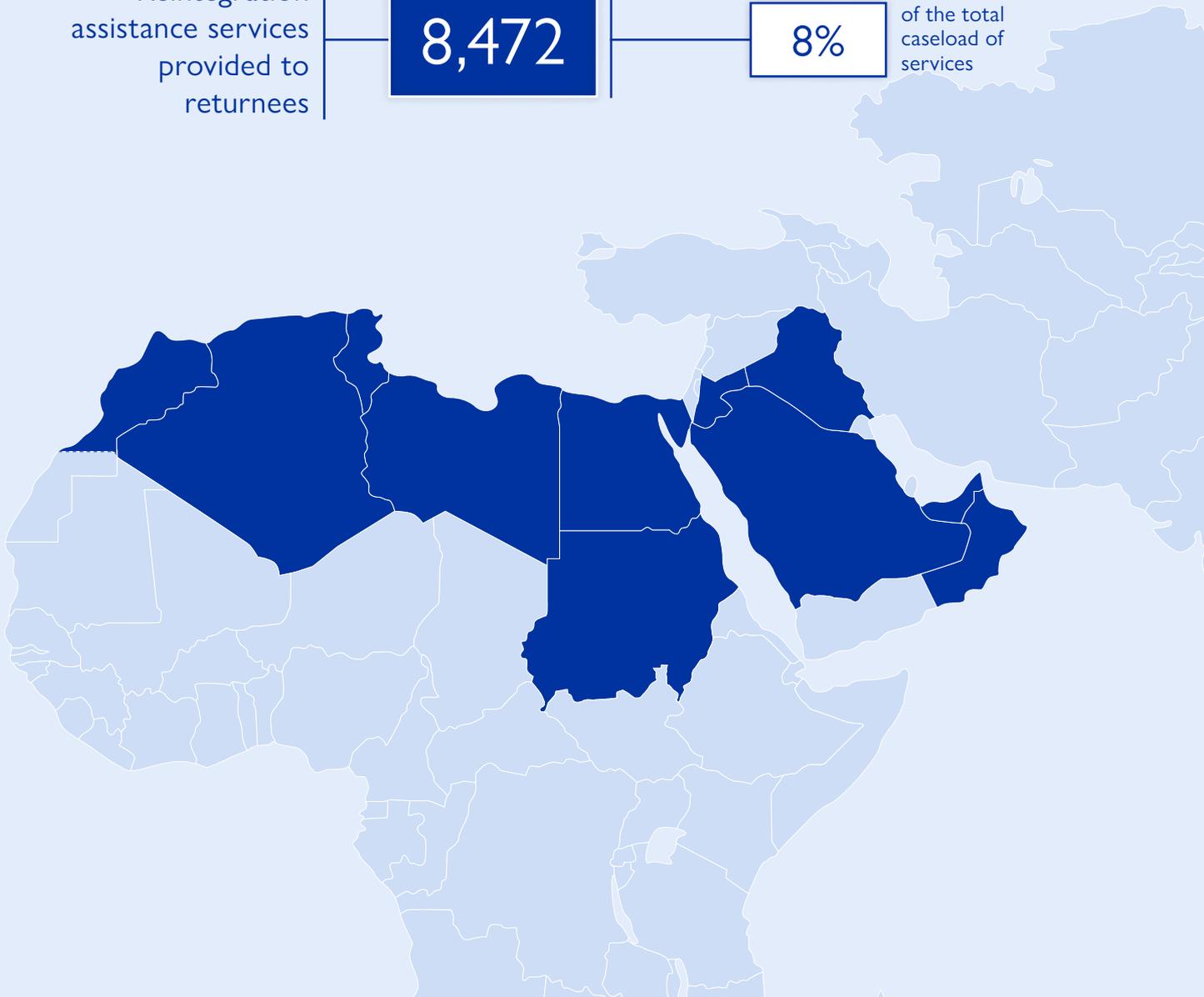
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Reintegration assistance services provided to returnees

8,472

8%

of the total caseload of services



Countries involved in reintegration assistance

Algeria
Egypt
Iraq

Jordan
Libya
Morocco

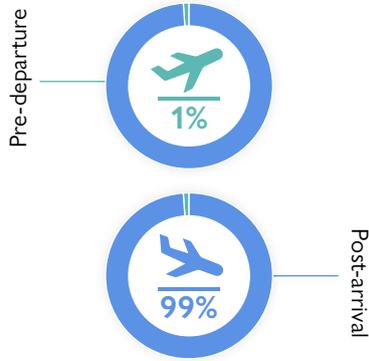
Oman
Saudi Arabia
Sudan

Tunisia
United Arab Emirates

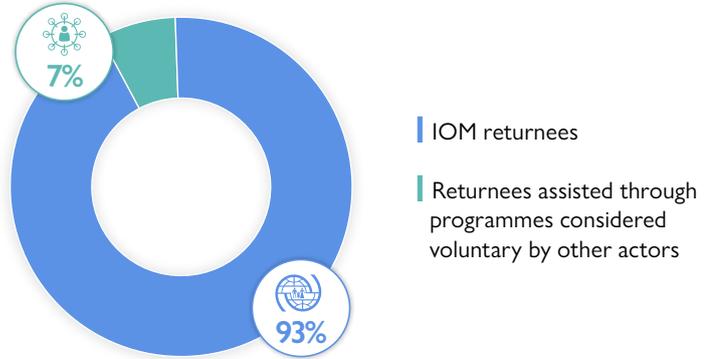
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



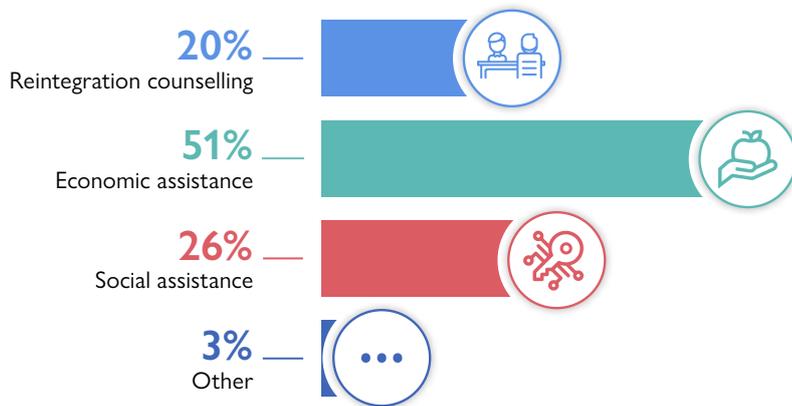
Types of beneficiaries



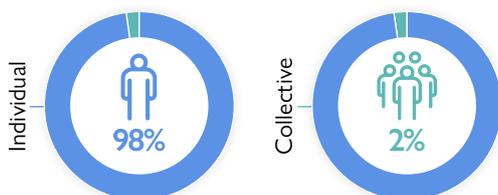
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Sudan
- Iraq
- Egypt
- Morocco
- Algeria

SOUTH AMERICA

Reintegration assistance services provided to returnees

471

0.4%

of the total caseload of services



Countries involved in reintegration assistance

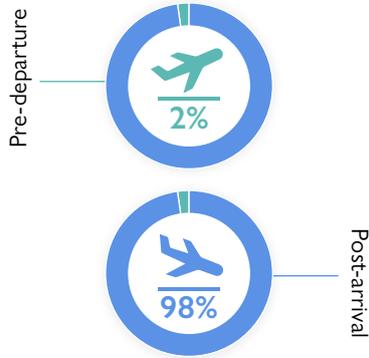
Argentina
Brazil
Chile

Colombia
Peru
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

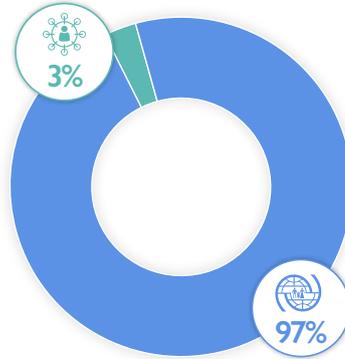
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

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Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



Types of beneficiaries

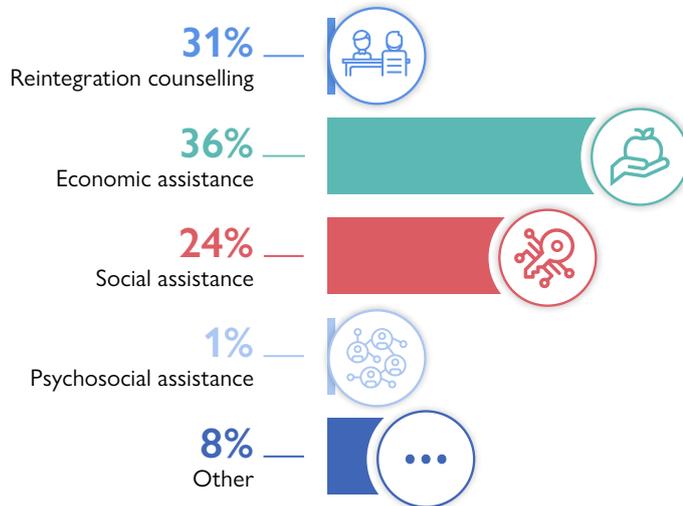


- IOM returnees
- Returnees assisted through programmes considered voluntary by other actors

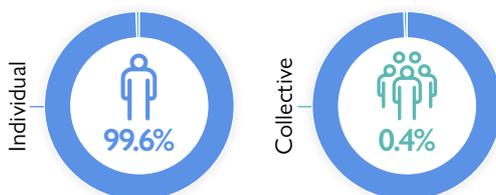
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Brazil
- Colombia
- Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
- Peru
- Chile

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



Countries and territories involved in reintegration assistance

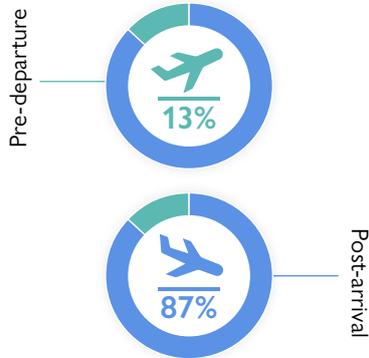
Albania	Georgia	North Macedonia	Turkey
Armenia	Israel	Republic of Moldova	Ukraine
Azerbaijan	Kazakhstan	Russian Federation	Uzbekistan
Belarus	Kyrgyzstan	Serbia	Kosovo*
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Tajikistan	

Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

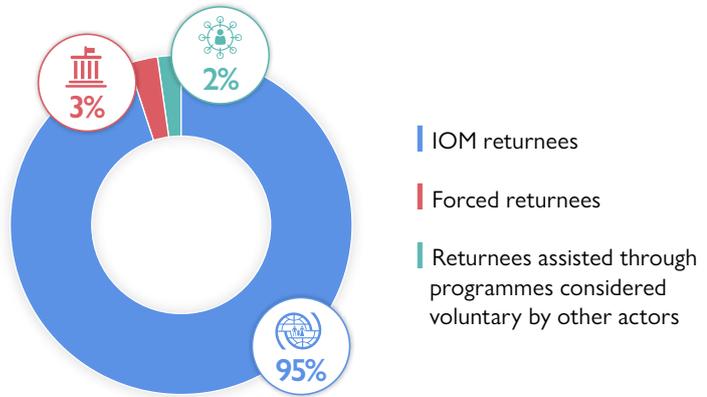
Notes: *References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



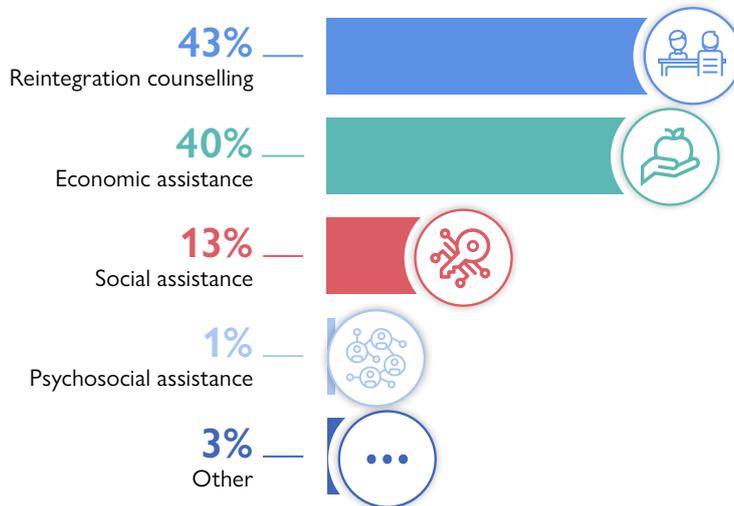
Types of beneficiaries



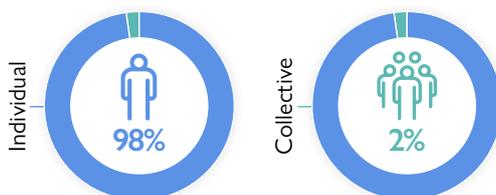
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



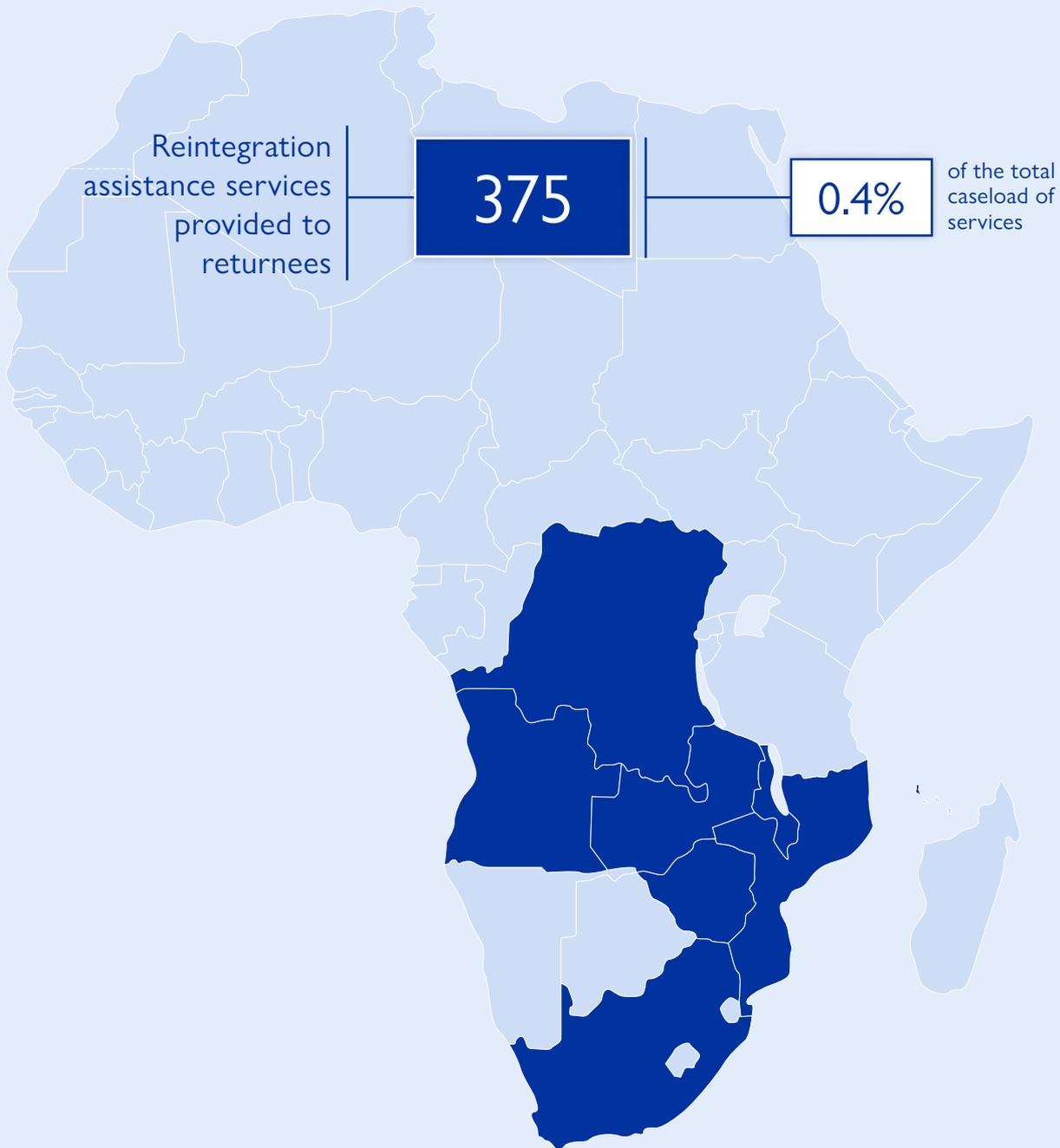
Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Russian Federation
- Georgia
- Azerbaijan
- Turkey
- Bosnia and Herzegovina

SOUTHERN AFRICA



Countries involved in reintegration assistance

Angola
Comoros
Democratic Republic
of the Congo

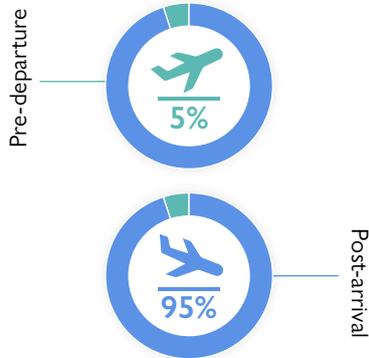
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique

South Africa
Zambia
Zimbabwe

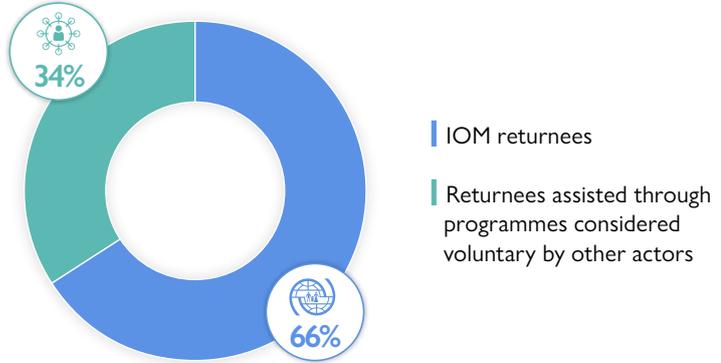
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



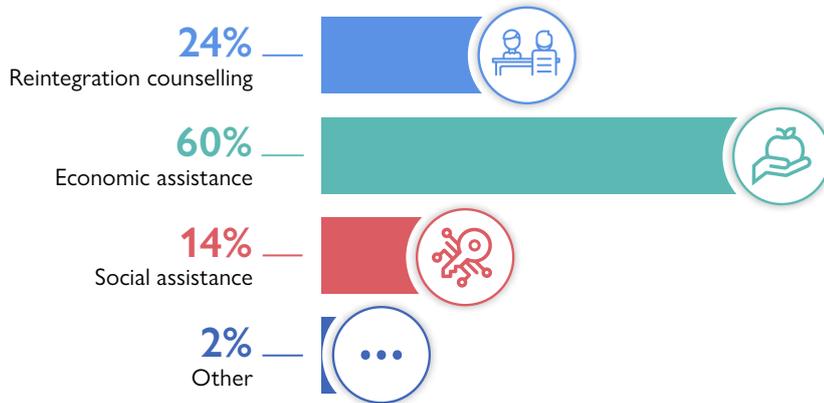
Types of beneficiaries



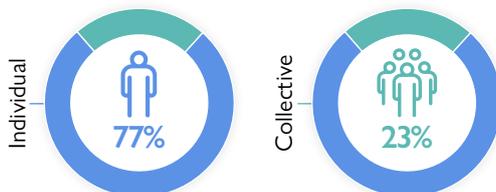
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



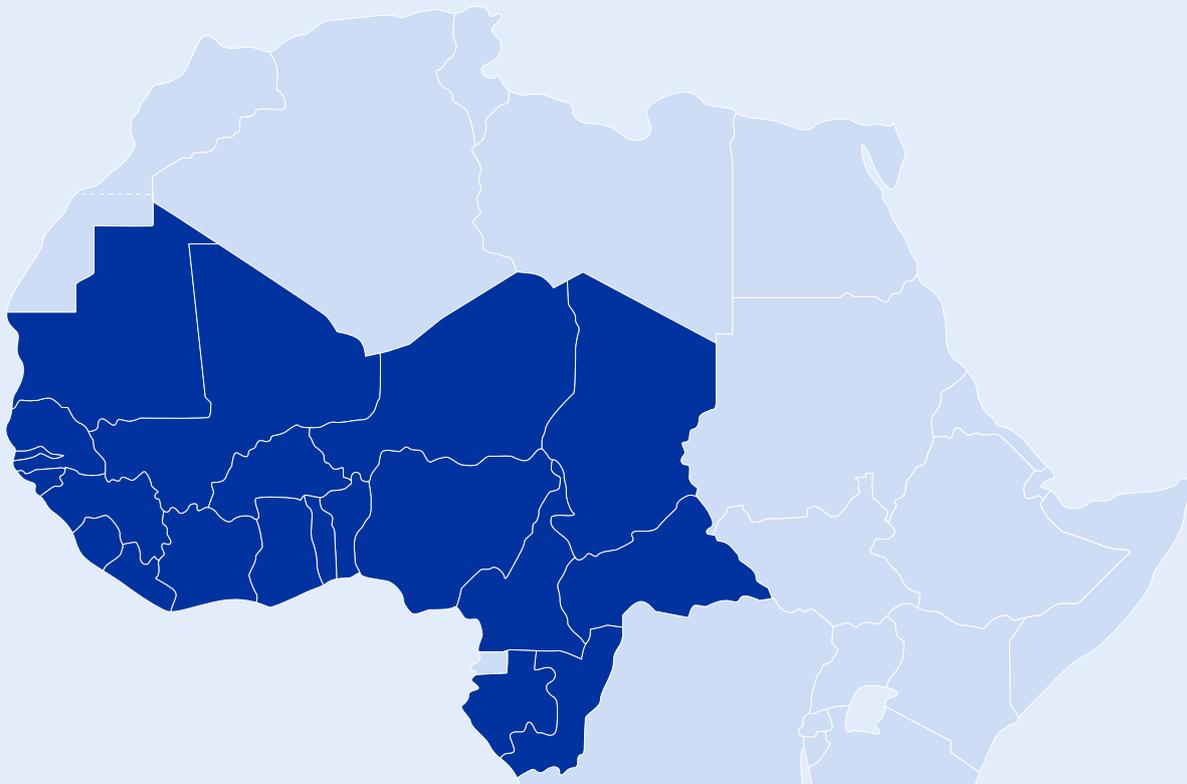
Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Mozambique
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Zimbabwe
- Angola
- South Africa

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



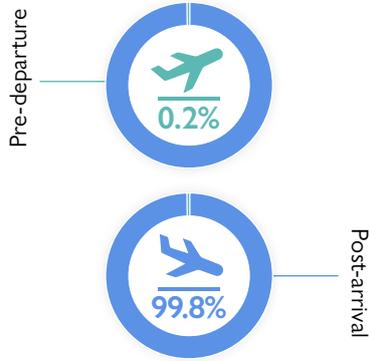
Countries involved in reintegration assistance

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Benin | Congo | Guinea-Bissau | Senegal |
| Burkina Faso | Côte d'Ivoire | Liberia | Sierra Leone |
| Cabo Verde | Gabon | Mali | Togo |
| Cameroon | Gambia | Mauritania | |
| Central African Republic | Ghana | Niger | |
| Chad | Guinea | Nigeria | |

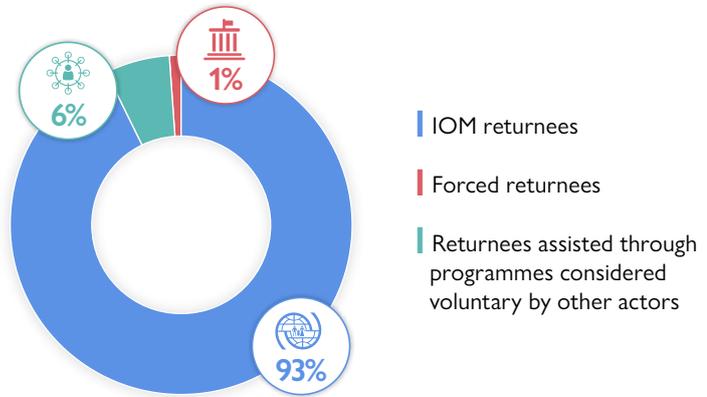
Source: IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, 2020.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance



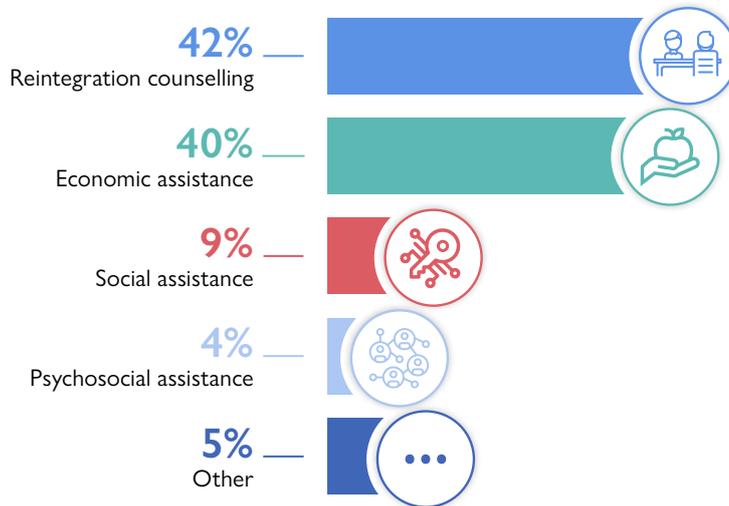
Types of beneficiaries



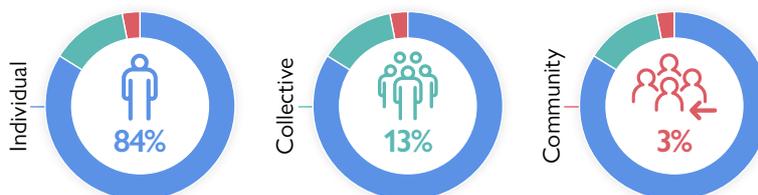
Reintegration assistance directly provided by IOM or through referral



Types of reintegration assistance



Levels of assistance



Top 5 countries providing reintegration assistance

- Guinea
- Senegal
- Nigeria
- Mali
- Côte d'Ivoire

CHAPTER 5

GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES



Hamza is a Somali returnee who runs a taxi service in Bossaso. He travelled to Libya in 2017 where he was taken hostage for ransom. After returning to Somalia through the help of the EU–IOM Joint Initiative, he re-enrolled in university and began a taxi service using a small business grant from IOM. As he continues his studies, he has a local driver to carry out his taxi service, generating income for them both.
© IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

INTRODUCTION

Nurtured by the long-lasting experience of IOM in the field of return and reintegration, initiatives presented in this chapter illustrate the commitment of the Organization towards assisting migrants in need to return voluntarily, safely and in dignity as well as supporting returnees, whether assisted to return by IOM or not, in achieving sustainable reintegration.

The first section of this chapter highlights some of the key emerging practices that have been employed by IOM offices and key measures adopted in the return and reintegration process, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focused on two global projects, the second section presents the key results of the ORION study on reintegration outcomes through a comparative analysis³ and the EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH) key highlights in 2020.

RETURN AND REINTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Introduction

Global mobility restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have posed significant challenges for IOM operations. Migrants availing of IOM return and reintegration services have faced a myriad of challenges which have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the consequent containment measures, such as lockdowns and travel restrictions. While return and reintegration services have not been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, counselling, information provision, and direct return and reintegration support have been impacted. Delivering direct assistance became particularly challenging, as caseworkers were unable to meet beneficiaries in person. For the same reason, reintegration activities for returnees also slowed down.

In response to the complex challenge of organizing voluntary returns during the pandemic, and to support country offices in addressing these challenges effectively, the COVID-19 Return Task Force was established at IOM Headquarters to ensure a coherent approach and leverage expertise available under the various IOM thematic units.



Adil is one of IOM's 50 community mobilizers in the Niger who are raising awareness about COVID-19 and its prevention measures. © IOM 2020/Daniel Kisito KOUAWO

³ This project was financed by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as part the Safety, Support and Solutions in the Central Mediterranean Route Programme.

Amid the travel restrictions, lockdowns and various other containment measures, IOM quickly adapted, both in work modalities and in delivering services and assistance to migrants. Voluntary return and reintegration programmes were reorganized to further integrate public health interventions and measures. While the principles of AVRR have remained unchanged during the COVID-19 outbreak, new procedures were introduced in the processes to make returns possible and ensure protection of and assistance to migrants. These measures not only allowed IOM and its partners to continue to work and respond to the pandemic but have also led to the development and implementation of

various ways of delivering assistance and tools that can be further improved to enhance protection and assistance activities even in a post-pandemic phase. These include virtual counselling, establishing hotlines, developing/using mobile applications, providing cash-based initiatives, fundraising to support the return of stranded migrants and providing emergency assistance to those in vulnerable situations.

The next section highlights some of the key promising practices that have been employed by IOM offices and key measures adopted in the return and reintegration process in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In May 2020, the **United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM)** called on States to suspend forced returns during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to protect the health of migrants and communities, and uphold the human rights of all migrants, regardless of status. The UNNM also advocated the release of migrants from detention, including detention for the purposes of deportation, into appropriate non-custodial facilities and other alternatives to detention or at a minimum decongestion of detention facilities, prioritizing vulnerable groups including children, families and the disabled and their respective needs.

Emerging practices and innovative solutions

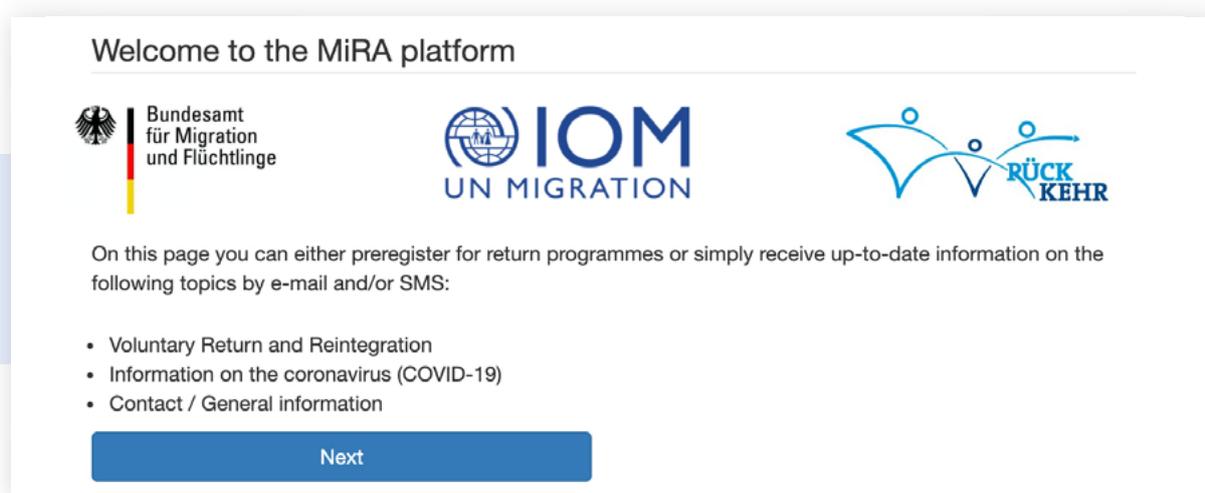
Technological innovation for migrants' enrolment in IOM return and reintegration programmes

Civil society, host governments and countries of origin (through their embassies and consulates) received requests to return during COVID-19 from migrants who found themselves stranded. In order to process these requests remotely, IOM offices developed new or adapted already existing mobile or web applications to pre-register migrants, providing information and virtual counselling. These tools had a double advantage: firstly, they allowed migrants to

express their interest to return to their countries of origin once travel restrictions ease; and secondly, they made it possible to timely identify vulnerabilities of stranded migrants and address their most immediate needs, in some cases providing life-saving support.

Emerging practices

IOM in Germany and the Western Balkans developed the **Migrant Registration Application (MiRA)** through which migrants are able to anonymously request information on return and reintegration programmes for a specific country or can additionally leave their contact information to be referred to a local return counselling centre and be registered for voluntary return. In many countries, most counselling sessions, including psychosocial support, were carried out in a remote setting via phones and/or mobile applications. Furthermore, information materials on COVID-19, hygiene measures and main countries of return are collected and shared via different social media platforms and IOM websites.



Source: IOM MiRA platform, 2020.

The IOM Migrant Assistance Portal (IMAP), an online remote case management platform, which was first implemented under EU–IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration programme and funded by the European Union Trust Fund for Africa, was piloted in **Algeria and Lebanon**. The IMAP allows for self-registration of migrants as well as referral from IOM to partners (national authorities and civil society organizations), and also referral from partners to IOM.

Virtual counselling

Migrant return and reintegration counselling, including psychosocial counselling, which is typically done in person, has also evolved to a virtual modality during the pandemic. Some offices and their partner organizations provided **virtual counselling** over the phone, and some offices developed or adapted hotlines to be able to cater to these needs. In some countries, psychosocial support to returnees and medical screenings were also organized through videocalls (telemedicine).

In several cases, virtual counselling facilitated a direct contact between prospective returnees and IOM staff in their countries of origin. This allowed migrants to receive direct information from counsellors in their

own languages, thus establishing a stronger relation and a more solid climate of trust between (potential) returnees and IOM reintegration staff in countries of origin. One good practice consisted of working closely with consular officials in touch with potential returnees, in order to facilitate more fluid communication between migrants and return counsellors and ensure prompt referral for return support. The main advantages of virtual counselling have been its flexibility, the low access threshold, and the possibility to conduct counselling in remote areas and anonymously.

Emerging practices

IOM in Greece set up 30 **phone helplines** that operate in 14 different languages so that migrants who were interested or already registered for AVRR could receive accurate and updated information about the return and reintegration procedures while enhancing their understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures. In addition to the helplines, migrants can reach out through applications that allow for phone calls and messaging for free.

IOM Bangladesh set up a hotline to provide support and counselling to migrants. The hotline is promoted and accessed through the [Probashihelpline website](http://www.probashihelpline.com). It was launched in March 2020 as a direct response to the challenges faced by migrants due to the pandemic in host countries.



Source: www.probashihelpline.com. 2020.

In **Germany**, the IOM virtual counselling project allowed migrants living in the country to contact IOM return counsellors in 16 countries of origin using different virtual communication platforms and receive culturally sensitive AVRR counselling. Already introduced in 2019 before the emergence of COVID-19, the application proved to counteract three COVID-19 specific difficulties: firstly, migrants were able to learn about movement restrictions, quarantine measures and health-related issues from a trusted source in their native languages; secondly, while the majority of German AVRR referral agencies limited their in-person counselling, virtual counselling remained fully operational; thirdly, in providing migrants with the opportunity to speak to a counsellor in their countries of origin, virtual counselling offered a safe space, increasing psychosocial resilience. IOM Germany engaged with other country offices to pass on their experience, such as in the Gambia, Greece and the Western Balkans.



Source: IOM flyer on virtual counselling, 2020.



Source: IOM, *Virtual Counselling: This Is How It Works*, 2020.

Remote consent

Providing counselling and assistance to migrants virtually led to the inability to obtain signed consent as per the traditional method from beneficiaries. To be able to continue providing assistance, audio recording

of **consent on the phone and/or scanned signature** of beneficiary on documents sent to IOM by email were identified as alternative options.

Information on measures related to COVID-19

IOM offices worldwide have been reaching out to migrant communities through social media and websites and providing up-to-date information on government-imposed measures related to COVID-19, such as movement restrictions, prevention of transmission and hygiene measures.

IOM offices in host countries communicated on a regular basis with offices in countries of origin on

COVID-19 prevention and/or quarantine measures imposed by governments in order to inform migrants and seek their consent prior to return. In addition, some IOM offices developed a **form on the health protocols** to be followed during the return, which is directly related to the COVID-19 outbreak and includes information on the health protocols people will be subject to upon return, including quarantine.

Emerging practices

Across the **West and Central Africa** region, ongoing awareness-raising activities were revised to include information sessions and sensitization on COVID-19 prevention measures.



click to watch
the video 



Information sessions on COVID-19 prevention measures are held. Among the migrants stranded in the Niger, there are many vulnerable cases. © IOM 2020/Daniel Kisito KOUAWO

In **Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand**, IOM reached migrants in relevant languages through targeted websites with up-to-date information about COVID-19, including information regarding access to health services and the impacts of the pandemic on migration and migrant status.



Community awareness-raising in local languages about COVID-19 in Rakhine State, Myanmar.
© IOM 2020

In **Algeria**, IOM organized the Facebook campaign “COVID-19: What do I need to know?”, aimed to raise awareness among migrants of COVID-19 prevention measures and containment measures adopted in Algeria. Messages on COVID-19 prevention measures were also included in the pre-departure training provided to migrants hosted at the transit centres.

Fostering dialogue between host countries and countries of origin

In the context of the pandemic, IOM offices worldwide facilitated **dialogue between host countries and countries of origin** for the establishment of and/or

adherence to public health requirements and protocols for the safe and dignified return as well as sustainable reintegration of migrants.

Emerging practices

IOM successfully negotiated with the Government of the Niger and the governments of origin countries of migrants the opening of **humanitarian corridors** to allow for the voluntary return of close to 2,500 migrants to **Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Mali and Nigeria**. Humanitarian corridors were a much needed alternative for thousands of stranded migrants who would have otherwise remained in their countries of transit or destination with limited access to basic services.

IOM Nicaragua, in coordination with the Embassy of the Government of Guatemala, through the AVR programme, assisted the return of Guatemalan migrants stranded in Nicaragua due to the COVID-19 pandemic. IOM provided ground transportation, in addition to humanitarian assistance kits that included food, information and necessary supplies to comply with security protocols, prevention measures, and protection against COVID-19.

Country offices in **Central Asia** assisted thousands of migrants who were stranded to return to their countries of origin. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, IOM and its many partners have supported more than 3,000 people – mainly Tajik nationals – to return to their countries of origin. Migrants, among them women, children, migrant workers and students, were stranded at the Zhibek Zholy border point at the Kazakhstan border with Uzbekistan in the hope of continuing their journey home to **Tajikistan**. The movements were coordinated by the Government of Tajikistan with the cooperation of the Government of Kazakhstan and the Government of Uzbekistan and facilitated by the IOM offices in the three countries.



Guatemalan migrants stranded in Nicaragua prepare for their return home. © IOM 2020



IOM provides support to a group of stranded Tajik migrants at the Zhibek-Zholy border crossing between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. © IOM 2020

Health screening and basic assistance

In addition to already existing health assessments, IOM offices, in cooperation with partner organisations, included pre-departure medical screenings to detect possible symptoms associated with COVID-19, including covering the costs of PCR testing in case of

need. IOM offices also provided basic humanitarian assistance with the provision of, among others, food, accommodation, health and hygiene kits, including personal protective equipment (PPE).

Emerging practices

IOM in the Niger developed standard operating procedure for both return movements to the Niger and AVRR from the Niger in coordination with the National COVID-19 Committee and the Ministry of Health. IOM in the Niger adapts its operations according to the procedures and COVID-19 prevention measures of countries of origin and works in constant coordination with IOM offices in countries of origin.

Among others, **IOM offices in Belize, El Salvador and Mexico**, in cooperation with partner organizations, provided pre-departure medical screenings to confirm people were fit to travel and provided them with information on quarantine requirements upon arrival.

IOM Egypt provided immediate assistance to eligible vulnerable migrants in the form of socioeconomic assistance, housing and medical assistance while waiting to be assisted to return to their countries of origin.

Escorts

Due to mobility restrictions during the pandemic, the protocols have changed in some countries. Prior to return, migrants were provided with PPE, food and any required medication. If migrants were escorted

by IOM staff, it was ensured that the escort could return after movement and he/she has signed a COVID-19 consent form.



A migrant waits for the flight to return home at the Belgrade airport. © IOM 2020

Use of charter flights

Since the pandemic, IOM has increased the use of charter flights for its return operations. This has allowed IOM to assist more people and has facilitated negotiations with governments to open the borders

on an exceptional basis when commercial flights are not possible. These charter flights are closely coordinated with the governments of both host countries and countries of origin.



IOM staff at the airport facilitate the return of Iraqi migrants. © IOM 2020



Seventy-five Malagasy women arrive in Madagascar from Saudi Arabia via a flight chartered by IOM. © IOM 2020/Daniel SILVA

Reintegration assistance

The COVID-19 outbreak caused additional uncertainty and anxiety among returnees, potentially exacerbating their existing psychosocial vulnerabilities. Similar to pre-departure return counselling, reintegration counselling in most countries of origin was increasingly

provided virtually to migrants. IOM also provided individualized virtual follow-ups on business plans and training as well as cultural orientation and peer networking, while the existing communication platforms were used as platforms for online job training.

Emerging practices

The Joint Complementary Mechanism for Sustainable Reintegration in **Brazil** (SURE) aims to contribute to a more informed and sustainable reintegration process in Brazil by strengthening the connection between pre-departure and post-arrival counselling and establishing the referral and coordination mechanism. The mechanism is based on returning migrants' needs identified in host countries (**Belgium, Ireland and Portugal**) during the pre-departure counselling phase, as well as the referrals made to local actors with relevant support programmes in Brazil. As part of the SURE project, IOM also assisted returnees who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and returned to Brazil. Hear their stories: *Returning to Brazil: The Stories of Vitor, Diego and Gercivaldo*.



click to watch
the video

In **West and Central Africa**, the EU–IOM Joint Initiative put in place **remote psychosocial support** and regular follow-ups for vulnerable returnees and other migrants stranded in transit centres to facilitate their reintegration in the pandemic context. In the **Horn of Africa**, the seven migration response centres (MRCs) in **Djibouti; Ethiopia; and Somaliland and Puntland, Somalia** continued to fill a critical gap by providing direct life-saving assistance, including **medical assistance and psychosocial support**, to vulnerable migrants. In **Bosasso, Puntland, Somalia**, the MRC staff expanded outreach activities to informal settlements populated by migrants. A hotline enabled migrants to request information and to make appointments for medical assistance or AVRR.

In the **Sudan**, IOM provided psychosocial support via **tele-counselling to returnees** and migrants whose situation had been worsened by the pandemic.

In **Morocco**, migrants were provided virtual and in-person individual or collective orientation and counselling sessions on reintegration challenges and opportunities in their countries of origin and available opportunities in Morocco. Additionally, IOM Morocco, along with its implementing partner ASTICUDE and its consortium, delivered 13 pre-departure orientation training sessions in life and soft skills as well as entrepreneurship and commercialization.

IOM Guatemala developed a mobile app for the referral of returnees to reintegration services (OportuGuate). The app provides educational, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for returnees.



OportuGuate is a system and application for the referral of returnees to reintegration services. © IOM 2020

IOM Nigeria launched several projects that provided complimentary reintegration support to returnees affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of these projects, the most vulnerable returnees were included in the National Social Register, and thus were eligible for government COVID-19-related relief schemes and support packages (including food assistance, cash transfers, loans, etc.), which the Federal Government of Nigeria, together with the Central Bank of Nigeria, established during the pandemic.

To enhance the availability of basic medical supplies in the **Gambia**, COVID-19-related activities were mainstreamed into the existing reintegration programmes. As part of their reintegration assistance, 20 migrant returnees produced more than 2,000 protective suits and shoe coverings, approved by The Gambia Standards Bureau. These were donated to the Ministry of Health for the use of front-line immigration and border officials. Beyond contributing to the Gambia's COVID-19 response, this cash-for-work initiative further facilitated their reintegration, as the pandemic's widespread impact on the economy risked undermining gains returnees have made in settling in.

IOM Zimbabwe engaged with the Food and Agriculture Organization to develop an intervention addressing livelihood assistance for returning migrants and vulnerable receiving communities. This initiative aimed to avoid further socioeconomic pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to create an immediate food source as well as medium- to long-term income-generating activities in order to reintegrate returnees into their communities.

Cash-based initiatives

Although **cash-based initiatives (CBI)** were not completely new to the context of return and reintegration, many offices have increased their use during the pandemic as an alternative to in-kind reintegration assistance. CBI proved to be a safe option to provide rapid relief as they contributed to reducing transmission risks (no overcrowded distribution sites) and allowed for remote delivery. Additional

guidance was developed by IOM to reinforce CBI activities in the pandemic context as well as delivery mechanism, including multipurpose cash assistance to meet basic needs; top-up; and emergency cash (i.e. emergency cash grants or topping up existing cash or voucher transfers by increasing transfer values to accommodate growing needs; social protection systems and safety net cash assistance).

Emerging practices

IOM Algeria launched a pilot one-time cash grant for vulnerable migrants along with its partners and the Government of Algeria, whereby beneficiaries can cash the amount in any post office using an SMS code.

In the **Sahel and Lake Chad region**, as part of the EU–IOM Joint Initiative, IOM piloted the provision of cash as part of reintegration assistance. Among the different types of CBI envisaged, some returnees were provided with monthly stipends, others with their reintegration assistance entirely in cash to buy their own equipment, while in some countries, top-ups were provided to returnees in vulnerable situations. Additional cash assistance was also provided to returnees with tailoring skills through cash-for-work initiatives, by involving them in the production of PPE for government frontliners or for migrants hosted in IOM transit centres.

Monitoring

While in the past monitoring of the reintegration process consisted of home visits, since the COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring has been carried out mainly

by phone, through apps or different social networks, ensuring confidentiality and data protection.

Emerging practices

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, **IOM Colombia** carried out monitoring of reintegration activities by phone. This practice provided a safe mechanism to check the progress of the reintegration activities and get the feedback from returnees, being at the same time a cost-effective practice.

Capacity-building

IOM offices provided **virtual capacity-building support** for their partners to strengthen their knowledge and skills to assist migrants in the context of COVID-19. While interaction with the participants

was more direct when meeting face to face, conducting virtual training allowed to reach more participants while also being more cost effective.

Emerging practices

In **Ethiopia**, IOM provided training in preparedness and basic response measures to its partner organizations offering shelter for migrant returnees. Over 550 staff were trained, including those on the front line of receiving and assisting thousands of migrants returning to Ethiopia as a result of the pandemic. IOM trained the centre staff on the spread of COVID-19, specific measures of protection, incubation period of the virus, signs and symptoms, running quarantine centres, the use of protective equipment, waste disposal and disinfecting quarantine centres.

Awareness-raising activities

Many country offices incorporated measures to **combat xenophobia** (linked to the origin and

spreading of COVID-19) and discrimination against returnees due to COVID-19.

Emerging practices

IOM in Georgia used online platforms, photos and storytelling to show the impact of COVID-19 on Georgian returnees and foreigners residing in Georgia. IOM started the “COVID-19 and Faces of Migration” initiative to counter xenophobia towards foreign nationals in Georgia and Georgian nationals, who returned home during the pandemic from various countries where the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases was high.

In **Guinea**, a group of returnees teamed up to raise awareness in their community about coronavirus pandemic, aimed at countering the stigma attached to COVID-19 patients and survivors.

In order to raise awareness of the mental health issues surrounding COVID-19, **IOM Sri Lanka** produced an animation video on mental health problems faced by migrant returnees. The video was posted on social media in local languages



click to watch
the video

Conclusion

While the COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges, it has also provided an opportunity for IOM to introduce new and innovative solutions into its return and reintegration programming. It has led to the development and implementation of different ways of delivering assistance and tools that will have a lasting impact on return and reintegration programmes in the post-pandemic world.

This includes the set-up of hotlines for the provision of information, the development or adaptation of mobile applications, virtual counselling and psychosocial support (as complementary tools to in-person support), increased use of CBIs, as well as the implementation of remote monitoring and the use of social media for communication and community outreach. The pandemic has brought to the forefront the importance of coordination between host countries and countries of origin, as well as the need to strengthen health-related measures in return and reintegration programming.



Mentoring returnees in Senegal. © IOM 2019

ORION: KEY RESULTS OF A STUDY ON REINTEGRATION OUTCOMES THROUGH A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Through the ORION project, financed by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as part of the Safety, Support and Solutions in the Central Mediterranean Route Programme, IOM piloted a mentoring approach between January 2019 and November 2020, in Guinea, Morocco and Senegal.

Twelve mentors in different communities in the three countries provided intensified follow-up and assistance to a total of 222 returnees. These mentors were members of the community who followed about 20 returnees each and helped them to implement their reintegration plans, taking into account the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration.

To identify the beneficiaries to be part of the mentoring approach, IOM administered the Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS) as a baseline. Using 30 indicators, the RSS provides a standardized monitoring framework to measure the situation of migrants upon return. It was developed in 2017 as part of a study conducted by IOM and Samuel Hall. The results of the surveys generated a score from 0 to 1 for each of the three reintegration dimensions (economic, social and psychosocial) and a composite score. Those who had the lowest scores were asked if they wanted to be part of the pilot. The surveys were then readministered at regular intervals to monitor progress.

A comparative analysis was conducted in collaboration with Samuel Hall and the University of Sussex, in order to strengthen evidence-based programming by analysing reintegration outcomes across different contexts and conditions using standardized indicators and qualitative data collected in the countries where the mentoring approach was being piloted (Guinea, Morocco and Senegal), combined with data from the RSS collected in 14 additional countries.

The comparative analysis aimed to answer these questions:

1. Reintegration outcomes: To what extent have returnees assisted by IOM achieved a sustainable reintegration? Where are the gaps and needs?

2. Outcomes of the mentoring approach: Does mentoring make a difference for reintegration?

3. Effective reintegration activities: What are existing good practices and effective reintegration activities that can be learned from each of the three fieldwork countries?

The key results from the study are as follows:

1. Reintegration outcomes

The migration cycle affects what happens post return. Often, difficult experiences occur during the migration journey (including, in some cases, situations of detention or being stranded). In these cases, psychosocial support cannot be considered an “optional extra”. It is therefore a crucial component to a healthy and sustainable reintegration process.

All three reintegration dimensions are essential.

The foundational reintegration dimension is economic, while social and psychosocial support is needed to consolidate and sustain reintegration gains. Analysis of trend lines show the mean rate of improvement for each of the countries observed and highlight where additional support is needed.

Certain variables have more impact on reintegration. Regression analysis shows that the most impactful variables are (a) country of residence, (b) training, (c) microbusiness and (d) financial services.

Networks are the missing link between social and economic programming. The role of networks varies country by country: they are not rated as providing strong support to returnees in Guinea, while they play a stronger role in Ethiopia, partly due to well-established national and local mechanisms.

2. Outcomes of the mentoring approach

An “ORION effect”: the mentoring approach has positive outcomes. A regression analysis highlights the relatively small but statistically significant impact of ORION’s mentoring approach on reintegration, with ORION beneficiaries being better off in all dimensions, while non-ORION beneficiaries stayed at the same level.

The mentor is a positive and supportive influence... but at risk. Mentors have created a strong and trustful relationship with returnees and have successfully increased their confidence over time. However, four challenges threaten this relationship: (a) keeping track of returnees, (b) engaging with returnees’ families, (c) project duration and (d) mentor’s inability to provide material support.

Mentoring’s positive impact on reintegration can be enhanced. The ORION country contexts are among the toughest across the RSS dataset for reintegration indicators, and ORION shows a positive impact. To turn this impact into a major one, the study recommends integrating ORION’s mentoring approach in all reintegration programming.

3. Effective reintegration activities

Including local, social and political structures is important. Government involvement in reintegration programmes varies the most at the local level. Overall, effective reintegration initiatives connect the returnees with their ecosystem – other returnees, their families and local actors.

The focus should be on reintegration outcomes. IOM’s definition of sustainable reintegration requires returnees to achieve economic self-sufficiency, social stability and psychosocial well-being, and to make any migration decision a choice rather than a necessity. To meet this goal, the mentoring

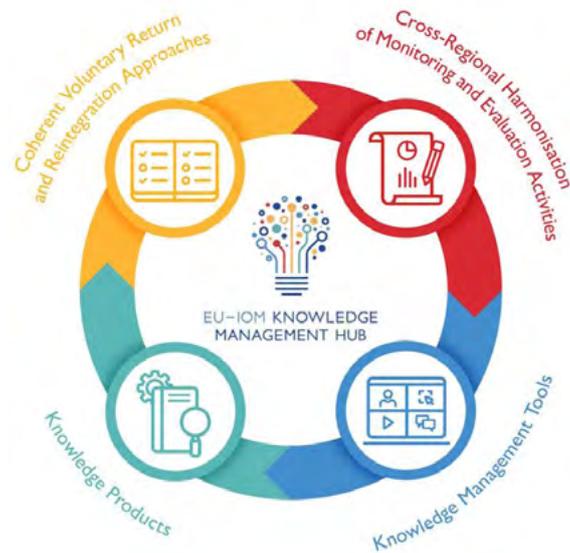
approach should be strengthened through linkages with other programming, and by giving more means to mentors to enable them to support returnees across all dimensions.

These results provide insights on how future reintegration interventions can be designed and implemented so they can be more impactful for migrants, communities of origin and countries of origin. Some of the practical applications are as follows:

- **The mentoring approach can be used systematically,** especially as a way to address the psychosocial dimension of reintegration, and the role of the mentors can be expanded into a more holistic case management approach.
- Programmes should seek to be **more adaptive and flexible** according to the context of return and the returnees’ specific situation, laddering support instead of linear, sequential programming.
- Further **synergies at local and national levels** can be found with greater engagement of local actors to connect the three reintegration dimensions.
- Investing in research and pilot initiatives for a **stronger use of technology** in support of reintegration programming and information-sharing can help build more systematic approaches to information and communication.
- It is crucial to continue **advocating better conditions for migrants,** and specifically the provision of protection for those on fragmented and dangerous journeys. A possible extension of the mentoring approach can be to **include mentors in host and transit countries,** in recognition of the fact that reintegration does not start upon return but can be planned ahead of time and prior to departure.

The full report provides further details. It is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT HUB KEY HIGHLIGHTS



The KMH activities revolve around four mutually reinforcing components as presented in this infographic.
Source: EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub, 2020.

The EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH) was established in September 2017 in the framework of the Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration funded by the European Union to strengthen learning across return and reintegration programmes, and support the harmonization of approaches, processes and tools under the EU–IOM Actions³ and beyond.

While the KMH has initially focused on setting the scene to ensure that proper systems and tools are in place, particularly in the field of monitoring and evaluation, it has also achieved substantial results in developing knowledge management tools and generating knowledge products.

In December 2020, one of the key features of the KMH – the Return and Reintegration Platform – celebrated its first anniversary. Developed as a global tool for sharing knowledge, research and good practices, the Platform is available in [English](#) and [French](#). It promotes exchanges among practitioners, policymakers and

other stakeholders in host, transit and origin countries. Since its launch in December 2019, the Platform has continued to grow and engage with practitioners globally. It has received more than 80,000 page views from over 180 countries. Its membership has expanded to more than 500 members across regions and close to 500 [public resources](#) on return and reintegration are made available. Furthermore, in 2020 the Platform hosted eight [public webinars](#) on a variety of reintegration-related topics, reaching in total close to 700 participants.

Building on a harmonized set of monitoring indicators and tools established by the KMH,⁴ a more robust, cross-regional comparative analysis, particularly in the field of reintegration sustainability, has been made possible. This has allowed the KMH to launch, in October 2020, the [Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites Series](#) that presents findings pertaining to sustainable reintegration outcomes emerging from analyses-based monitoring data collected in the framework of the EU–IOM Actions.

³ In line with the European Union external policy and migration priorities, IOM and the European Union have jointly developed the following programmes focusing on migrant protection, dignified voluntary return and sustainable reintegration: EU–IOM Joint Initiative in Sahel and Lake Chad, North Africa and Horn of Africa; Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration; Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan (RADA); and Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance (Prottasha).

⁴ See Nassim Majidi and Nazanine Nozarian, Measuring sustainable reintegration, *Migration Policy Practice*, 9(1):30 (January–March 2019). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-policy-practice-vol-ix-number-1-january-2019-march-2019>.

In 2020, the KMH also published nine Good, Promising and Innovative Practices fact sheets on a diverse range of reintegration topics implemented in **Burkina Faso, Guinea, Iraq, Mali, Morocco, the Netherlands** and **Somalia**. These fact sheets focus on initiatives with a high replicability potential and, although analytically rigorous, they are presented in an easy-to-digest way to serve as a quick reference for other countries and regions.

With an aim to further reinforce data analysis and research on return and reintegration, the KMH launched in September and October 2020 three comprehensive research studies to look into reintegration outcomes through the prism of children, gender and forced return.⁵ Findings emerging from research and from comparative data analysis can provide useful evidence and contributions to inform the development of future programming and policies on reintegration.

Other KMH achievements in 2020 included the development of harmonized indicators and data collection tools for tracking community-based reintegration initiatives and capacity-building activities. These new elements will be embedded into the IOM institutional monitoring and evaluation framework for voluntary return and reintegration programmes, for global roll-out.

The KMH, furthermore, initiated the development of an monitoring and evaluation training course for voluntary return and reintegration. The training will be rolled out in the first half of 2021 and initially benefit IOM staff and key stakeholders in countries and regions covered by the EU–IOM Actions.

Finally, in 2020 the KMH supported **capacity-building on reintegration** and in that context started a reintegration training programme. As part of this, training for the roster of facilitators was organized between September and October 2020. Twenty IOM facilitators, mainly representing the EU–IOM Actions,⁶ were trained and have started cascading the training among different external and internal stakeholders working in the field of reintegration in their respective regions and countries. Additionally, the digitalization process of the *Reintegration Handbook* is ongoing, and the web and mobile apps are foreseen to be operational in 2021.

All in all, the KMH has already proven to be a valuable tool for experts, policymakers and practitioners working in the field of migrant protection, return and sustainable reintegration, therefore benefitting returning migrants and their communities. It has reinforced standards and processes, including through capacity-building efforts, harmonized monitoring and evaluation activities, and strengthened data analysis and research. It has served as a catalyst fostering exchanges between return and reintegration practitioners; facilitating the sharing of knowledge, expertise, good practices and lessons learned; and enhancing the understanding of different aspects of sustainable reintegration.

While these attempts to increase the evidence base in the field of return and reintegration and, in turn, strengthen the assistance to returning migrants and their communities are important first steps, more efforts are needed to ensure that programming and policymaking are based on sound research and learning. Based on the results achieved and experienced gained so far, it is clear that, if supported in a sustainable manner, the KMH can play a leading role in that regard.

⁶ The KMH is coordinating on three studies: (a) sustainable reintegration of child returnees, in collaboration with Samuel Hall, and with Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Iraq and Nigeria as target countries for field testing; (b) comparative reintegration outcomes in forced and voluntary returns; and (c) gender-sensitive sustainable reintegration, in cooperation with Maastricht University, and with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, El Salvador, the Gambia, Nigeria and Somalia as target countries for additional data collection.

⁷ The distribution of facilitators is as follows: 5 from the Sahel and Lake Chad, 4 from the Horn of Africa, 4 from Northern Africa, 3 from Afghanistan and 2 from Bangladesh, with 2 additional facilitators from South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia to expand the scope beyond the EU–IOM Actions.



International Organization for Migration
17 route des Morillons, P.O. Box 17, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 717 9111 Fax: +41 22 798 6150
Email: hq@iom.int Website: www.iom.int