

The Channel

Situation in 2022

This migratory route from continental Europe to the United Kingdom has become increasingly active just before the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union on 31 January 2020 and exponentially increased in 2021 after the Brexit transition period.

In 2022, over 71 000 irregular border crossings were detected on exit, including both attempts and successful crossings. Over 50 different nationalities were recorded in the Channel, most of them from the Middle East, Albania and the Horn of Africa.

Situation in 2021

In 2021, over 52 000 illegal border-crossings (IBC) using small boats were detected on both sides of the Channel, an increase of 241% compared to the previous year. Roughly 22 000 sea crossing attempts were detected by France and Belgium, while over 30 000 successful crossings were detected by UK border authorities.

In response to the increased migratory pressure, Frontex deployed a plane to the Channel in December 2021 to support Member States with aerial surveillance.

Situation in 2020

In 2020, over 15 000 illegal border crossings were recorded in the Channel using small boats (45% attempted to depart while 55% succeed in reaching the UK).

While previously the most common method was hiding in the backs of lorries, migrants' attempts to cross the Channel using small boats continued to rise in 2020. Simultaneous departures took place at high speed to increase the likelihood of avoiding interception.

Situation in 2019

In 2019, the most common method for migrants on this route remained hiding in the backs of lorries bound for the United Kingdom. However, as a result of reinforced security measures and more stringent border checks, the trend of trying to cross the Channel using small boats instead of hiding in lorries began to increase.