

# Western African Route

## Situation in 2022

The Western African Route connects Western African countries and regions with the Canary Islands in Spain. In 2022, there were 15 460 arrivals, 31% less than in 2021. More than two-thirds of the detected migrants coming from Morocco and various sub-Saharan countries.

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## Situation in 2021

The overall number of detections of irregular border crossings was 22 504, staying on the same level with the numbers from 2020.

Similarly to previous years, the pressure peaked in September. The main nationality detected continued to be Moroccan, followed by various Western African nations.

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## Situation in 2020

Migratory pressure increased significantly in 2020 as 23 029 irregular migrants were detected on this route, over eight times the number in 2019.

The increased pressure can be attributed to the pandemic restrictions, which diverted migrants who were already present in Morocco from the Western Mediterranean route to this longer and more dangerous path to Europe. The increased prevention activities of Moroccan authorities were also a significant factor.

As human smugglers adapted to the demand and set up appropriate logistics for the smuggling to the Canary Islands, the arrivals particularly increased exponentially in the last third of the year.

Of all detections, roughly half were Moroccan and the other half sub-Saharan migrants. Morocco and the Western Sahara region were the top areas of departure, accounting for around three quarters of all departures.

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## Situation in 2019

In 2019 the number of irregular migrants on this route continued to increase as 2718 illegal border crossings were recorded, roughly twice the number of detections compared with 2018.

Sub-Saharan migrants accounted for more than half of all detections, while the number of Moroccans increased only slightly.

Departures from Morocco more than doubled from the previous year.

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## Situation in 2018

The number of irregular migrants on the Western African route started to increase in 2018 after having experienced a decreasing trend during the previous year. The total number of detections, 1323, represents almost a three-fold increase from the previous year.

The number of departures from Morocco particularly contributed to the heightened pressure: out of all detections, around half of all the persons detected departed from Morocco, while the rest mainly departed from Senegal.

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## Situation in 2017 and before

In 2017, 421 irregular migrants were detected on the Western African route, continuing the decreasing trend from the previous year. Most migrants detected came from Senegal and Morocco.

671 detections were reported in 2016. This low number can be attributed to the Memorandum of Understanding between Spain, Senegal and Mauritania, which included joint surveillance activities and effective return of those detected crossing the border illegally. As in the previous year, most departures were reported from Morocco.

In 2015, the total number of illegal border crossings stood at 874, more than three times as many as in 2014. Departures from Morocco particularly increased.

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## More information

For more information on this route, see Frontex's [annual risk analysis reports](#).

Illegal border crossings on the West African route in numbers.

