

Western Mediterranean

Situation in 2022

The **Western Mediterranean** route saw a decrease in migratory pressure in 2022 with around a fifth fewer detections than in the previous year. While 80 % of the irregular migrants come from Northwest African countries, selected Sub-Saharan African nationalities recorded major increases, as did Syrians.

Situation in 2021

The number of arrivals to Europe via the Western Mediterranean route increased slightly in 2021 as 18 466 cases were reported.

Algeria was the main country of departure. The majority of the migrants detected on this route were of Algerian nationality, while Moroccans continued to account for the second most detected nationality.

Situation in 2020

In 2020, 17 228 irregular migrants were detected on this route, representing a decrease of 28% from 2019.

The decline in the number of people choosing this path to Europe can be attributed to the COVID-19 countermeasures introduced throughout Northwest Africa, and particularly the restrictions in place in Morocco diverted migration flows onto the Western African route.

Most of the migratory pressure on the Western Mediterranean route was associated with Algerian nationals who accounted for two thirds of all detections. Departures from Algeria almost tripled when compared with 2019 and occurred in significant numbers much earlier in the year than in previous years.

Moroccans were the second most common nationality on this route.

Situation in 2019

In 2019, this route was the second most used path to Europe. The total number of detections was 23 969, more than half less than the record numbers of 2018.

Moroccan and Algerian migrants accounted for almost half of the people taking this route, while the nationality of the remaining half remained unspecified.

Departures from Morocco decreased significantly after January 2019 but started to somewhat pick up from the summer onwards again. Departures from Algeria remained almost unchanged.

There was an increase in cases involving jet skis and speedboats, traditionally used for drug trafficking, for people smuggling on this route.

Situation in 2018

In 2018, the Western Mediterranean became the most frequently used route into Europe. The number of detections in 2018 doubled for the second consecutive year to a record high of 56 245.

Morocco was the main departure point to Europe for irregular migrants. Most of the migratory pressure registered on this route was linked to migrants originating from sub-Saharan countries. However, towards the end of 2018, the number of Moroccan migrants began to increase.

Migrants claiming to be minors accounted for 9% of the arrivals on this route. Overall, on both land and sea routes, Moroccans were the top detected nationality, followed by Guineans, Malians and Algerians.

Situation in 2017 and before

In 2017, the number of migrants detected reaching Spain from northern Africa jumped to 23 063.

The situation in the Rif region of Morocco, the main transit country for migrants heading to Spain, created an opportunity for more departures from its western coast in the second half of the year.

Two of every five migrants were nationals of Algeria and Morocco. Most of the remaining people on this route came from Western Africa.

In 2016, detections of illegal border crossings on the Western Mediterranean route reached almost 10 000. As in the case of the Central Mediterranean route, most migrants were from Africa.

Nevertheless, the situation differed considerably at the land and sea border. At the land borders of Ceuta and Melilla, yearly detections near the fences hit a record low of about 1 000, while detections at the sea border increased to over 8 000 in 2016.

More information

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

Illegal border crossings on the Western Mediterranean route (sea and land) in numbers.

