

RETURN OF ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS FROM THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

MIDYEAR OVERVIEW 2022

IOM Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa

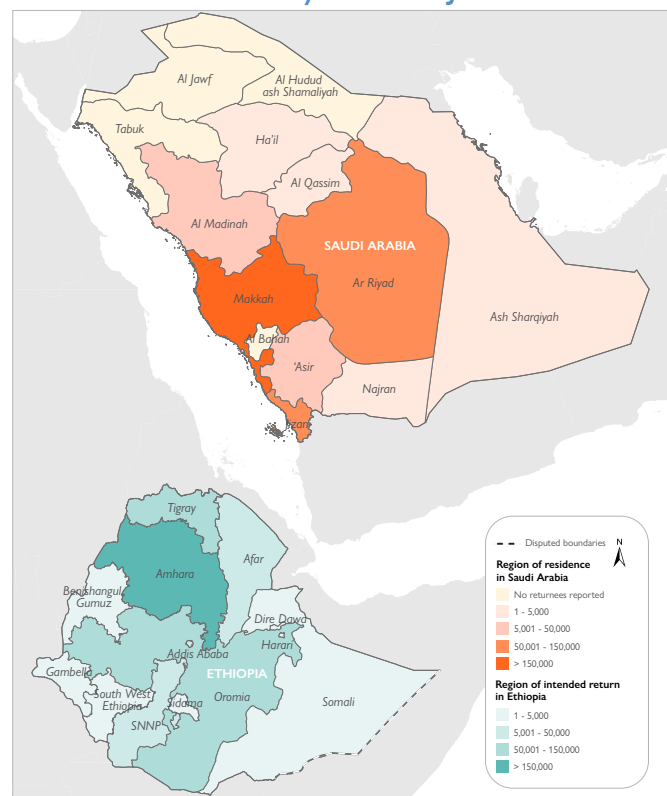
Background

In 2017, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched a large-scale airlift operation to return irregular migrants to their countries of origin in a bid to curb unemployment in Saudi Arabia. Ethiopian migrants have been returned to Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, where they are registered by IOM before continuing to their destination and the most vulnerable are extended travel assistance.¹ Since May 2017, IOM has registered over 469,000 returnees, of whom 44,074 were registered from January to June 2022. This represents a 43 per cent increase in returns compared to the same time frame in 2021 (30,899).

A two-week period in 2021, during which 40,000 people were returned to Ethiopia, marked the largest number of returns recorded by IOM since 2017. Nearly 4,000 more people are expected to be returned each week through 2022. The high rate of returns has strained reception capacity in Ethiopia, especially for the most vulnerable, including unaccompanied children and pregnant and lactating women.

Returns from Saudi Arabia were suspended from mid-November 2021 to February 2022, but operations have since resumed. In 2022, over 28,000 persons intended to return to Afar, Amhara and Tigray. Many areas in these regions are affected by conflict and some of those who were unable to return home had to stay with relatives in safe areas or in government shelters.

Returns by Region of Residence and Intended Destination from May 2017 to June 2022²

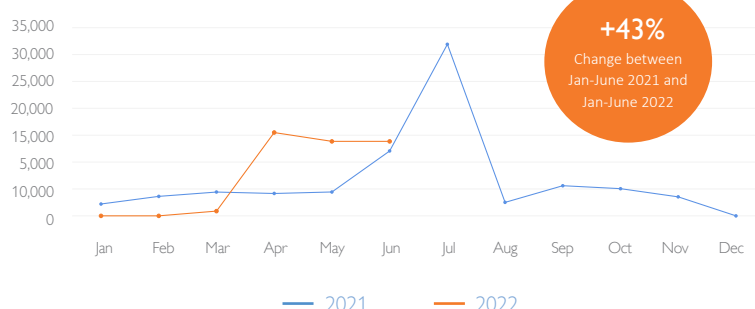


Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

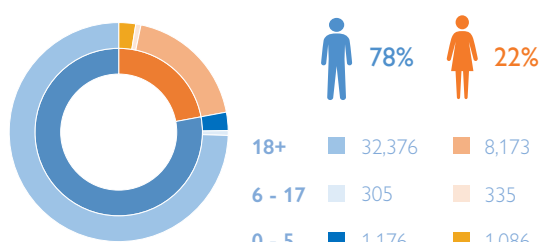
Numbers at a Glance



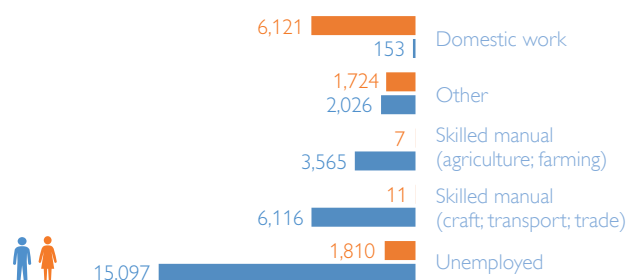
Monthly Registrations in 2021 and 2022



Migrant Sex and Age Breakdown



Occupation in Saudi Arabia



¹ IOM began collecting data on returnees from Saudi Arabia in April 2017 and switched to electronic registration in May 2017.

² In early 2022, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) region was split into the three regions of SNNP, South West Ethiopia and Sidama. Figures from before this restructuring are not captured in the new regions, resulting in low figures for these regions. Data for region of residence were not available between September 2020 and February 2021. A total of 9,058 returnees did not report their previous region of residence, while 96 did not report their intended destination.