

UNHCR SOUTH SUDAN

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

March 2025



Credit @ UNHCR/Charlotte Hallqvist



21,301 Returnees who arrived in South Sudan in March 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
List of Acronyms	1
Introduction	2
South Sudanese Arrivals in March 2025.....	2
Demographic Characteristics of the Crossing Population.....	3
Reasons for Return.....	3
Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan	4
Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia.....	5
Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda.....	7
Border Monitoring Trends: DRC	8
Border Monitoring Trends: CAR	9
Annexes	11
Border Monitoring Methodology.....	11
Analytical framework, data collection methods and analysis	11
Limitations.....	11

Lists of Tables

Table 1: Movement category of South Sudanese arrivals	2
Table 2: Movement category of arrivals from Sudan.....	4
Table 3: Movement category of arrivals from Ethiopia	5
Table 4: Movement category of arrivals from Uganda	7
Table 5: Movement category of arrivals from DRC	8
Table 6: Movement category of arrivals from CAR.....	10

Executive Summary

In March 2025, at least **26,095** South Sudanese individuals arrived in South Sudan, as recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at various border points, notably Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC, and CAR. The highest number of arrivals came from Sudan (20,556), followed by Ethiopia (4,903), Uganda (534) and 102 arrivals from DRC and CAR. Out of 26,095 arrivals, 21,301 (82%) were returnees and 4,794 (18%) were engaged in pendular movement.

An analysis of the reasons for return, as reported by South Sudanese interviewed at crossing points, indicates that food security-reduction in food ration (42%) and reunification with family members for permanent living (37%) were the primary reasons for crossing into South Sudan. Other notable reasons include lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (30%), permanent return to the country of origin from displacement (24%), lack of access to basic services (24%), and insecurity (8%). However, when examining reasons for return by country of asylum, fleeing insecurity was mostly cited by arrivals from Sudan, while food security concerns were extensively mentioned by arrivals from Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda, and Kenya.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AGD	Age and Gender Diversity
CAR	Central African Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SSD	South Sudan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

South Sudan presents a multi-layered mix of refugees, IDPs, returnees (both refugees and IDPs), stateless persons, and persons at risk of statelessness. According to UNHCR, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), and partners, more than 650,000 South Sudanese individuals have returned spontaneously from neighboring countries in the first five years since the signing of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), reaching the end of 2022. With the onset of the Sudan crisis in 2023, more than 700,000 South Sudanese residing in Sudan were forced to move back to their country of origin due to insecurity and economic factors. The number of spontaneous returnees to South Sudan in just the last two years (2023-2024) reached 970,704 individuals.

Given this context, UNHCR, RRC, and other relevant stakeholders recognized the need to recalibrate approaches to monitor the changing situation and strengthen the existing system for monitoring spontaneous refugee returnees, particularly through border monitoring. The collection and analysis of the relevant qualitative and quantitative data enables UNHCR and its partners to gain a better understanding of the scale and the trends of the ongoing spontaneous return movements.

South Sudanese Arrivals in March 2025

In March 2025, at least 26,095 South Sudanese arrived in South Sudan, as recorded by border monitoring enumerators deployed at various border points, including Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC, and CAR. The highest number of arrivals came from Sudan (20,556), followed by Ethiopia (4,903), Uganda (534) and 102 arrivals from DRC, and CAR. Out of 26,095 arrivals, 21,301 (82%) were returnees, while 4,794 (18%) were engaged in pendular movement.

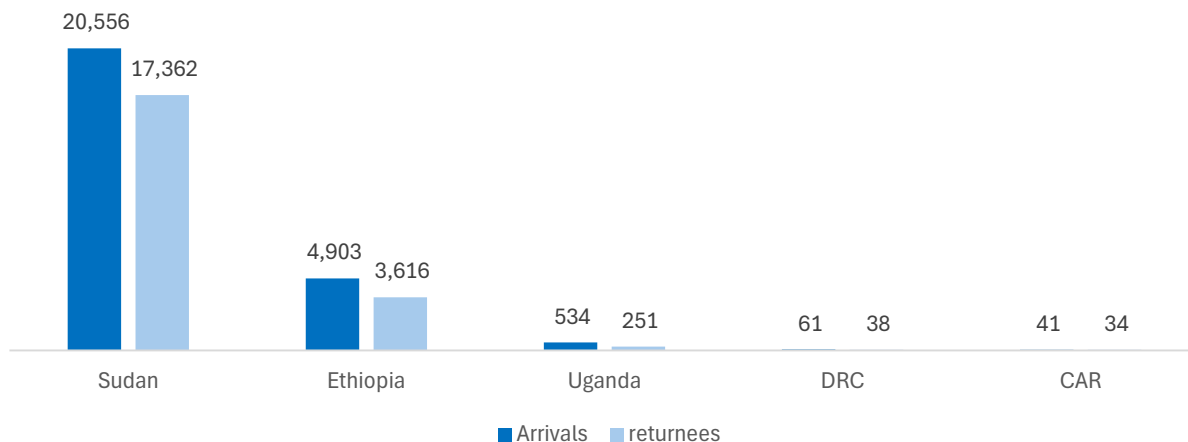
Table 1: Movement category of South Sudanese arrivals

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	21,301	82%
Pendular	4,794	18%

Note on Methodology

UNHCR South Sudan, in consultation with the RRC, introduced an updated methodology for the identification of returnees since September 2024. According to this methodology, only households with the intention to stay in South Sudan for one year or longer are counted as returnees to South Sudan. Those with the intention to stay in South Sudan for less than one year are defined as pendular movements. In addition to returnees and pendular movements, this updated methodology also highlights individuals passing through South Sudan to reach other countries ("transiting")

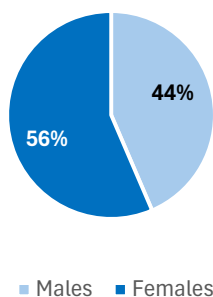
Arrivals/returnees by country of asylum



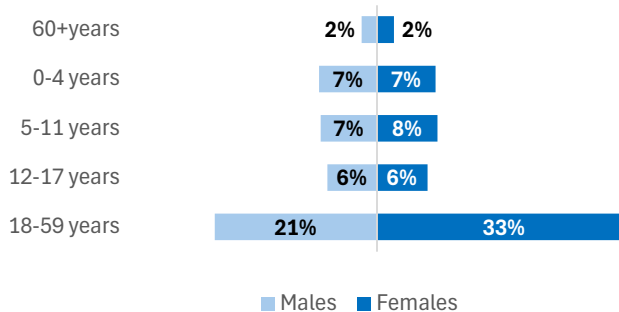
Demographic Characteristics of the Crossing Population

Females constituted the highest proportion (56%) of the arrivals, compared to males (44%). In terms of age and gender categories, adults aged 18 to 59 years made up the majority (54%), while elderly individuals aged 60 years and above represented the smallest group (4%).

Gender of arrivals

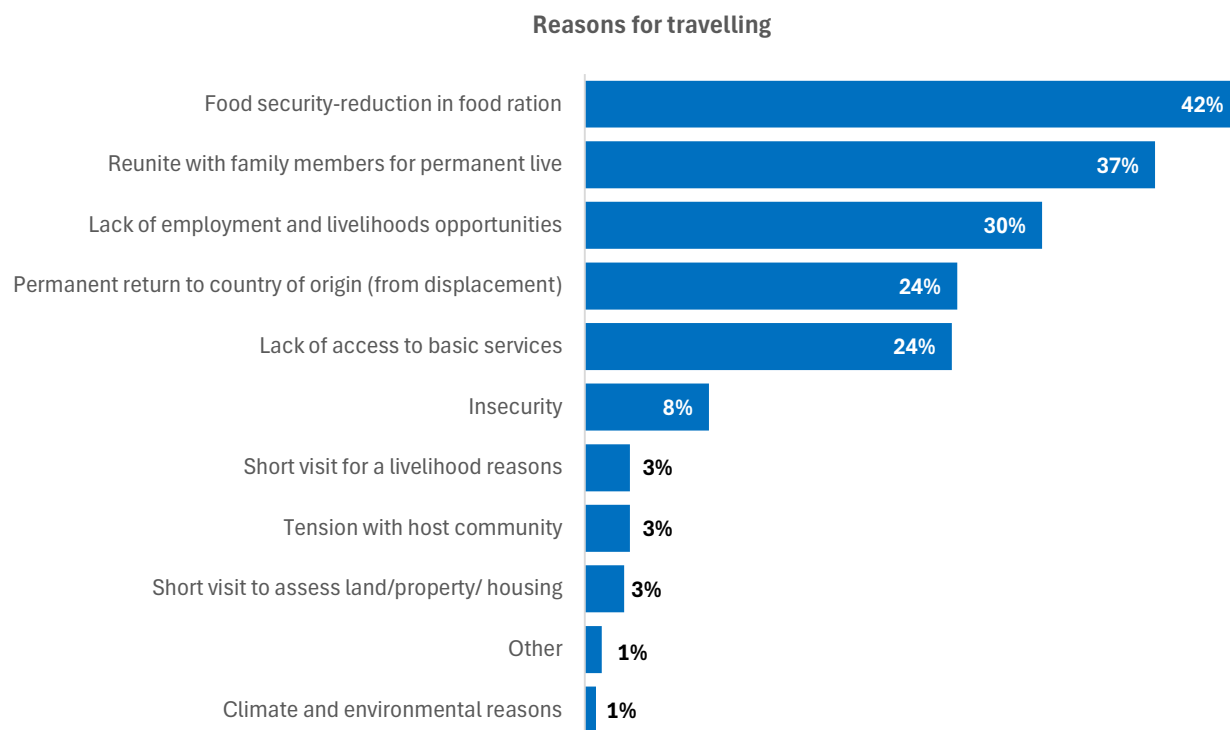


Age and gender disaggregation



Reasons for Return

Analysis of the reasons for return, as reported by South Sudanese interviewed at crossing points, shows that the primary motivations for crossing into South Sudan were food security-reduction in food ration (42%) and reunification with family members for permanent living (37%). Other notable reasons include lack of employment and livelihood opportunities (30%), permanent return to the country of origin from displacement (24%), lack of access to basic services (24%), and insecurity (8%). However, when examining reasons for return by country of asylum, fleeing insecurity was cited by most of the arrivals from Sudan, compared to food security concerns for other countries of asylum such as Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda, and Kenya. This indicates differences in socio-economic and political contexts in various countries of asylum.



Border Monitoring Trends: Sudan

In March 2025, the border monitoring system recorded 20,556 South Sudanese crossing from Sudan through multiple points of entry. Out of these arrivals, 17,362 (90%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 3,194 (16%) were engaged in pendular movement.

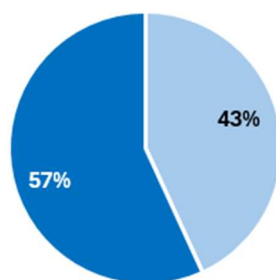
Table 2: Movement category of arrivals from Sudan

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	17,362	84%
Pendular	3,194	16%

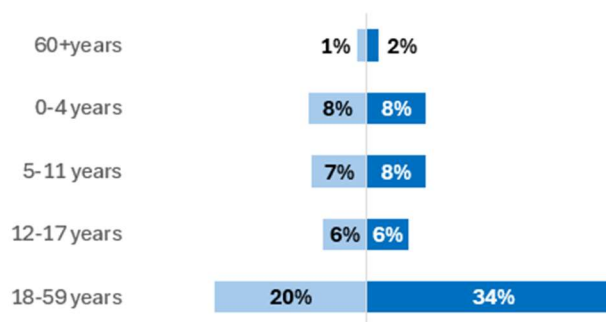
The average weekly crossings are estimated at 5,141 individuals, with the first week of the month recording about 5,519 individuals while the second, third and fourth weeks recording 5,555, 4,242 and 5,240 individuals respectively. Wunthou (13,065), Majokynthia (3,078) and Amiet (1,164) were the major crossing points, while the rest of the individuals (3,259) crossed through other points of entry.

Females constituted more than half (57%) of the arrivals, compared to males (43%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 years formed the majority (54%), followed by children under 5 years (16%), children aged 5 to 11 years (15%), children aged 12 to 17 years (12%) while elderly individuals aged 60 years and above were the least represented (3%).

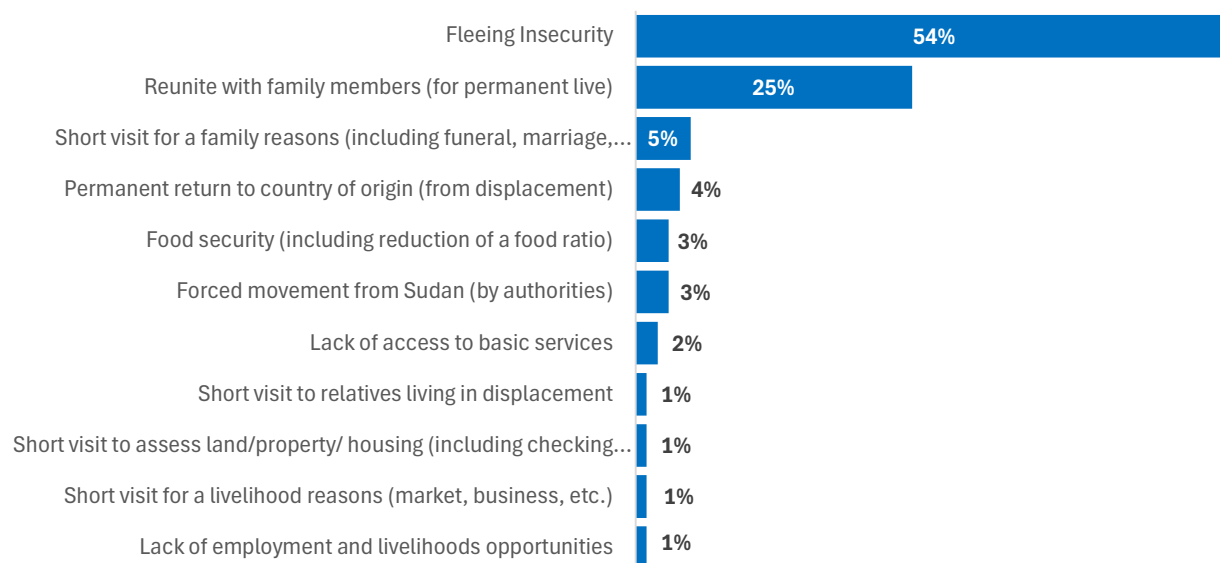
The primary reason influencing the travel of the arrivals was insecurity, cited by over half (54%). Other reasons included reunification with family members for permanent living (25%), short visit for family reasons (5%), permanent return to their country of origin from displacement (4%), and food insecurity, largely the reduction in food rations (3%).

Gender of arrivals


■ Males ■ Females

Age and Gender Disaggregation


■ Males ■ Females

Reasons for travelling


Border Monitoring Trends: Ethiopia

In March 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 4,903 South Sudanese crossing from Ethiopia into South Sudan through Akiela, Akobo, Burator, Burebiey, Jekow, Maker, Pagak, and Phil. Of these arrivals, 3,616 (74%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or more than a year, while 1,287 (26%) were engaged in pendular movement.

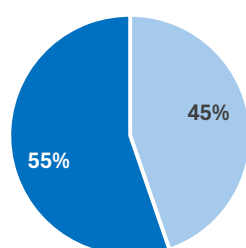
Table 3: Movement category of arrivals from Ethiopia

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	3,616	74%
Pendular	3,194	26%

The average weekly crossings were estimated at 1,226 individuals, with the first week of the month recording 2,210 individuals while the second and third weeks recorded 1,671 and 1,022 individuals respectively. Burebiey (804), Phil (326), Akobo (107) were the major crossing points, while Burator (20), Maker (20) and Akiela (15) recorded a substantial number of crossings.

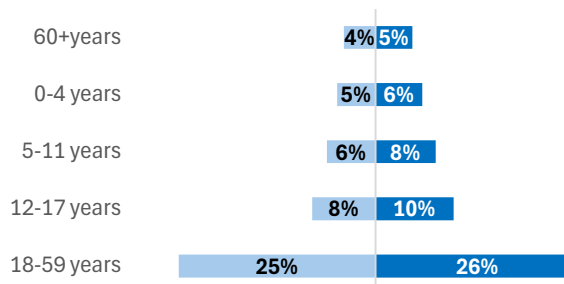
Females constituted more than half (55%) of the arrivals, compared to males (45%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 years formed the majority (51%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 years (18%), children aged 5 to 11 years (14%), children under 5 years (11%) while elderly individuals aged 60 years and above were the least represented (9%).

Gender of arrivals



■ Males ■ Females

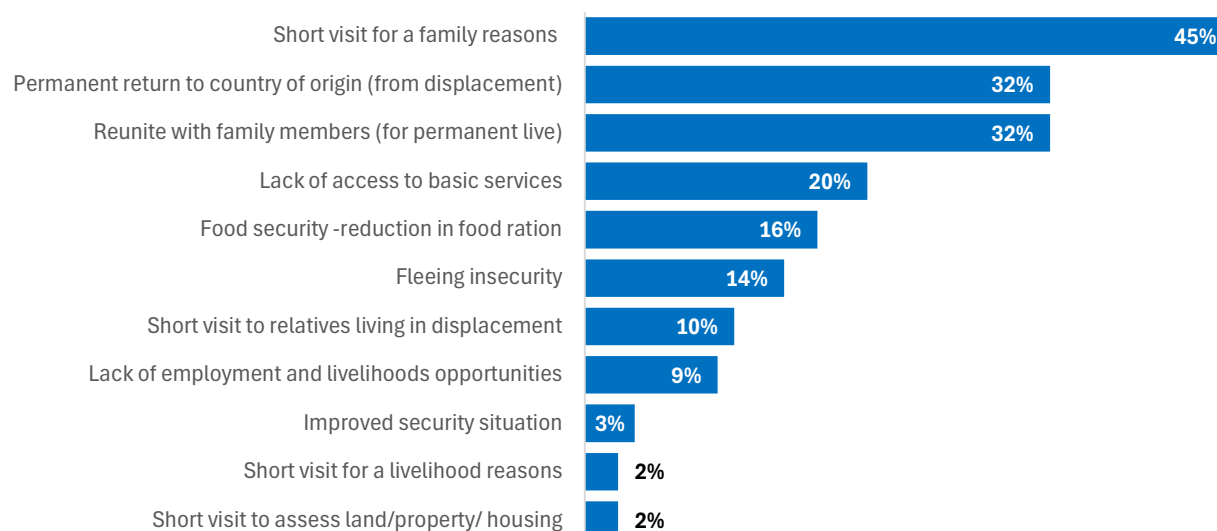
Age and gender disaggregation



■ Males ■ Females

The primary reason influencing the travel of arrivals were short visit for family reasons cited by 45% of arrivals, reunification with family members for permanent living (32%) and, permanent return to country of origin from displacement (32%). Other reasons included lack of access to basic services in country of asylum (20%), food security particularly reduction in food ration (16%), fleeing insecurity (14%), short visit to relatives living in displacement (10%), and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (9%).

Reasons for travelling



Border Monitoring Trends: Uganda

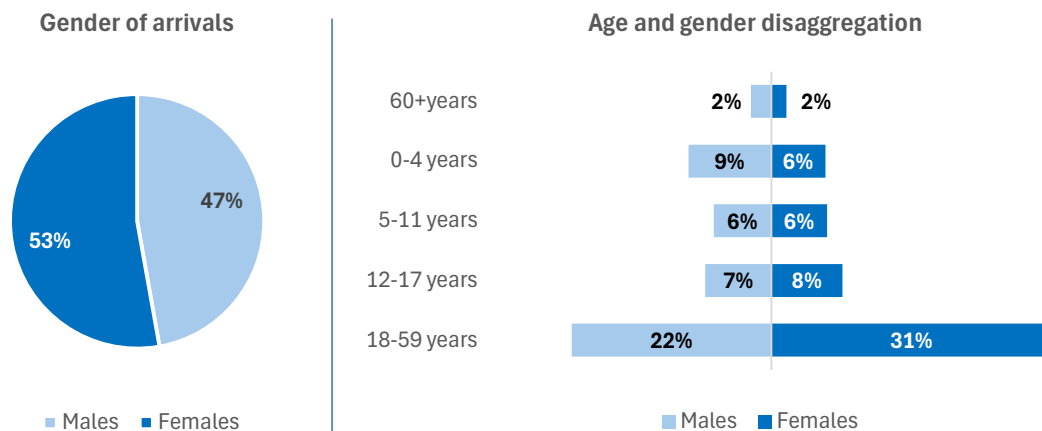
In March 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 534 South Sudanese crossing into South Sudan from Uganda through multiple points of entry. Of these arrivals, 251 (47%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or more than a year, while 283 (53%) were engaged in pendular movement.

Table 4: Movement category of arrivals from Uganda

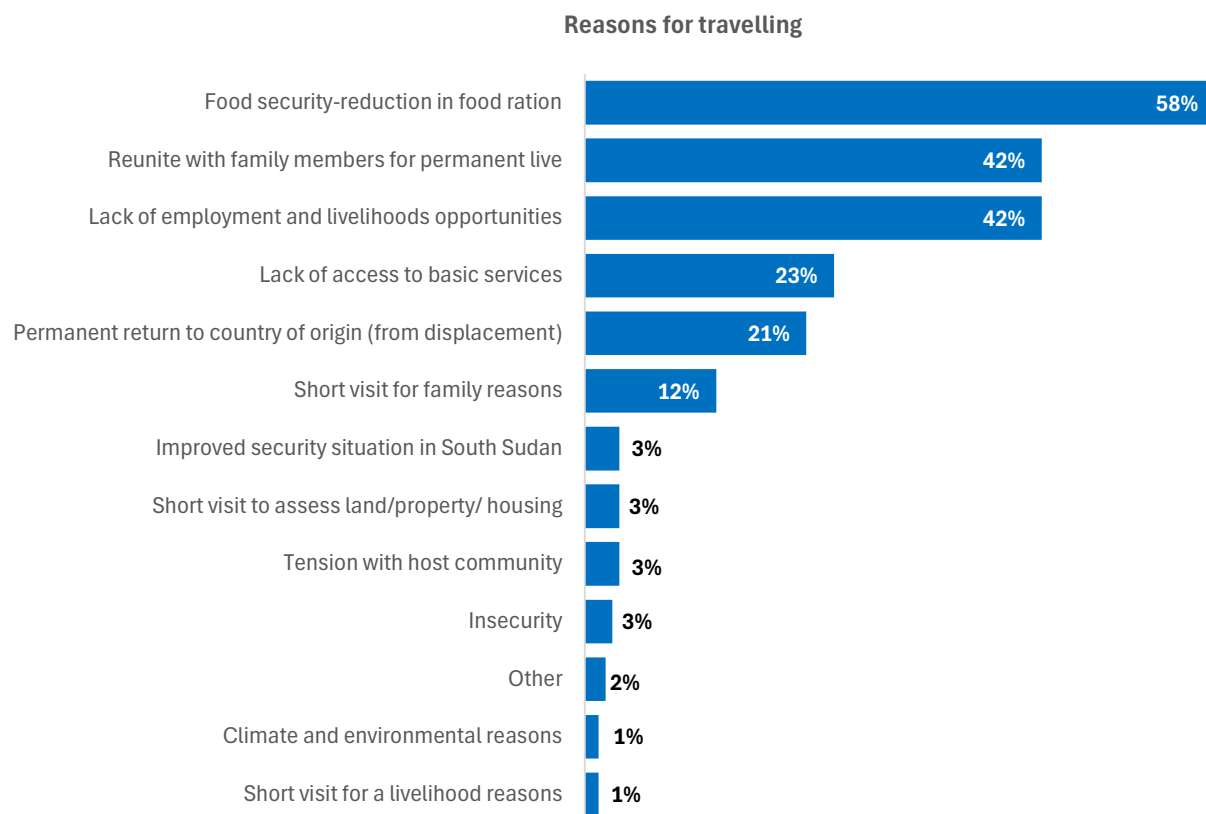
Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	251	47%
Pendular	283	53%

The average weekly number of crossings is estimated at 133 individuals, with the third week of the month recording highest number (265) of crossings. Nimule (166), Bamurye (80), Meruwa (57), and Litoba (49) were the major crossing points, with the rest (182) crossing through other points.

Females constituted more than half (53%) of the arrivals, compared to males (47%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 years formed the majority (54%), followed by children aged 12 to 17 years (15%), children under 5 years (15%) children aged 5 to 11 years (12%), while elderly individuals aged 60 years and above were the least represented (4%).



The primary reason influencing the travel of arrivals is food security in the country of asylum, cited by 58%, and lack of employment opportunities or reunification with family members for permanent living, cited by 42%. Other reasons included, lack of basic services (23%), and permanent return to country of origin from displacement (21%).



Border Monitoring Trends: DRC

In March 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 61 South Sudanese crossing into South Sudan from DRC through Isebi, Gangura, Ezo, Sakure, and Kindi crossing points. Of these arrivals, 38 (62%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 23 (38%) were engaged in pendular movement.

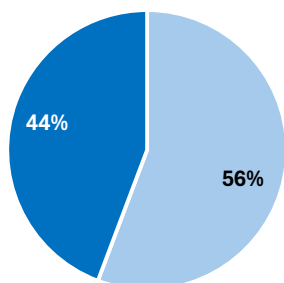
Table 5: Movement category of arrivals from DRC

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	38	62%
Pendular	23	38%

The average weekly number of crossings are estimated at 15 individuals. Isebi (17), Sakure (15), Ezo (12), Gangura (11) and Kindi (6) were the entry points used by the arrivals.

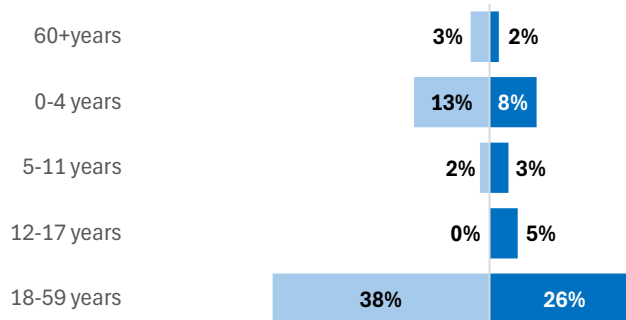
Males constituted the majority (56%) of arrivals compared to females (44%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 years were the majority (64%), followed by children under 5 years (21%), while children aged 5 to 11 years, elderly of 60 years and above and children between 12 to 17 years had similar proportion (5%).

Gender of arrivals



■ Males ■ Females

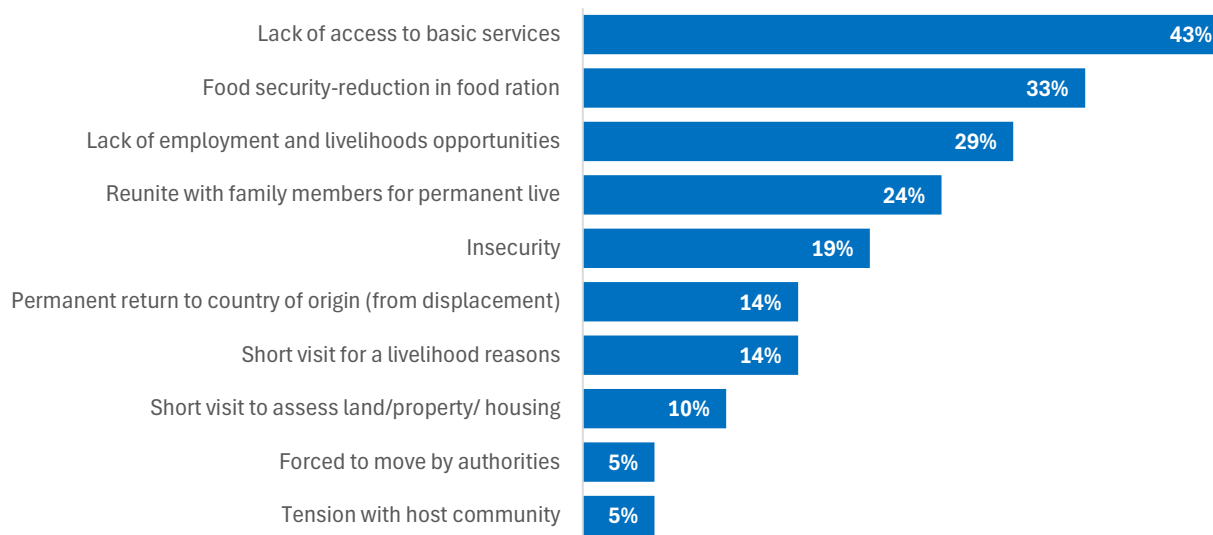
Age and gender disaggregation



■ Males ■ Females

The primary reasons influencing the travel of arrivals were lack of basic services in the country of asylum cited by (43%) and food security particularly reduction in food ration (33%). Other reasons included lack of employment and livelihood opportunities in country of asylum (29%), reunification with family members for permanent living (24%), fleeing insecurity (19%), permanent return to country of origin from displacement (14%), short visit for livelihood reasons (14%) and short visit to assess land and property (10%).

Reasons for travelling



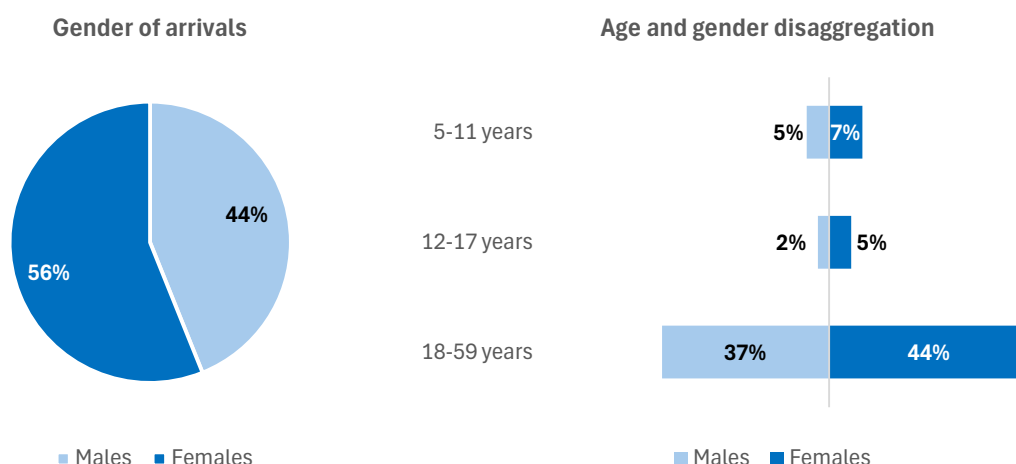
Border Monitoring Trends: CAR

In March 2025, UNHCR's partner enumerators recorded 41 South Sudanese crossing into South Sudan from CAR through Dingimo and Source Yubu. Of these arrivals, 34 (83%) were returnees intending to stay for a longer period, either permanently or for more than a year, while 7 (17%) were engaged in pendular movement.

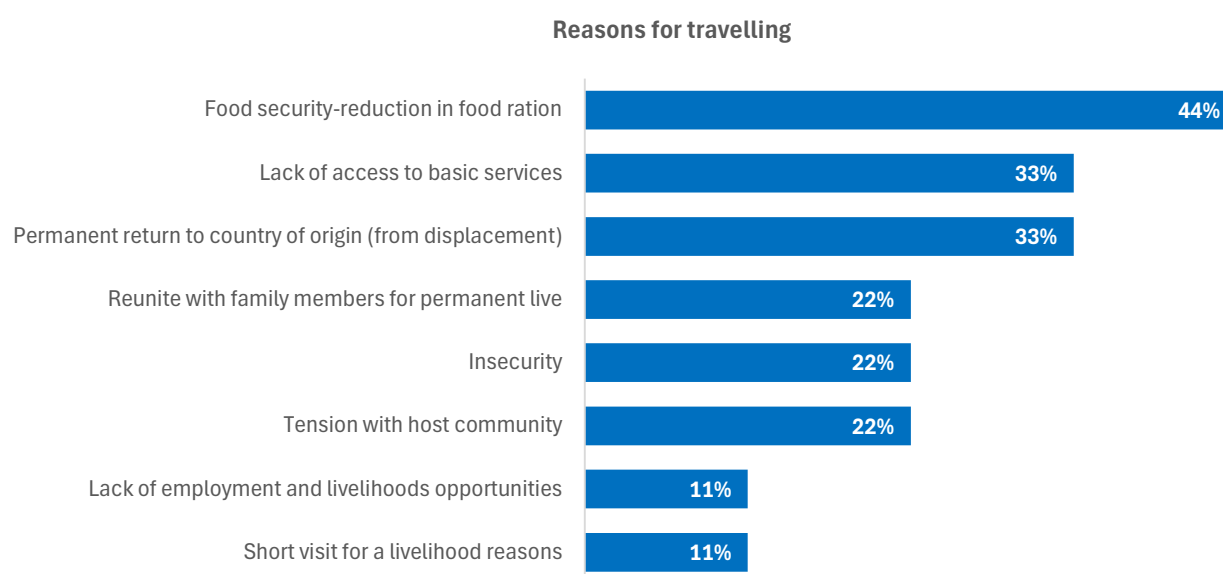
Table 6: Movement category of arrivals from CAR

Category	# of arrivals	%
Returnees	34	83%
Pendular	7	17%

Females constituted the majority (56%) of arrivals compared to males (44%). Moreover, in terms of age and gender disaggregation, adults aged 18 to 59 years were the majority (81%), followed by children aged 5 to 11 years (12%) and children between 12 and 17 years (7%).



The primary reasons influencing the travel of arrivals were food security particularly reduction in food ration in the country of asylum cited by (44%) and lack of access to basic services or permanent return to country of origin from displacement (33%). Other reasons included reunification with family members for permanent living (22%), fleeing insecurity (22%), tension with the host community (22%), and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities/short visit for livelihood reasons (11%)



Annexes

Border Monitoring Methodology

UNHCR South Sudan's border monitoring aims to improve information about the flow of South Sudanese returning to South Sudan from neighboring countries. This helps understand the current return movement trends, assess the protection needs of the returnee population, and better prepare the operational response in South Sudan at both the national and field office levels

Analytical framework, data collection methods and analysis

Border monitoring is conducted by border monitors and enumerators hired by UNHCR's partners, with the support of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). Joint UNHCR/IOM/RRC border monitoring occurs at the border crossing points with Sudan and Ethiopia. Enumerators collect data directly from incoming and outgoing individuals and households crossing the border points. For the spontaneous return monitoring, border monitors identify and interview South Sudanese nationals travelling into South Sudan (inflow movement). This excludes individuals or groups who are part of recognized daily or pendular movements. UNHCR partners exercise a presence and collect data at 42 official border points on South Sudan's borders with Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, CAR, DRC, Uganda, and Kenya. The South Sudan Government (RRC) has identified these border points as the main crossing points used by South Sudanese returnees. Border monitoring enumerators conduct household-level interviews daily, at least five days each week, eight hours per day. IOM/UNHCR maintains a 24/7 presence at the Wunthou (Joda) border point in Renk County.

Limitations

The number of arrivals serves as an indicator, reflecting the border points where UNHCR, IOM, RRC, and their partners currently operate. However, it is probable that the actual number of arrivals exceeds those captured by the border monitoring tool, as some individuals may be using unofficial (unmonitored) border crossings or travelling at night. UNHCR does not collect personal data from individuals crossing the borders, preventing them from tracking subsequent journeys or verifying any information provided.

BORDER MONITORING REPORT

2025

Spontaneous Refugee Returns Monitoring

March 2025

UNHCR Information Management Unit – Juba, South Sudan

Email: ssdjuim@unhcr.org