

# RETURN OF ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS FROM THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

## ANNUAL OVERVIEW 2022

IOM Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa

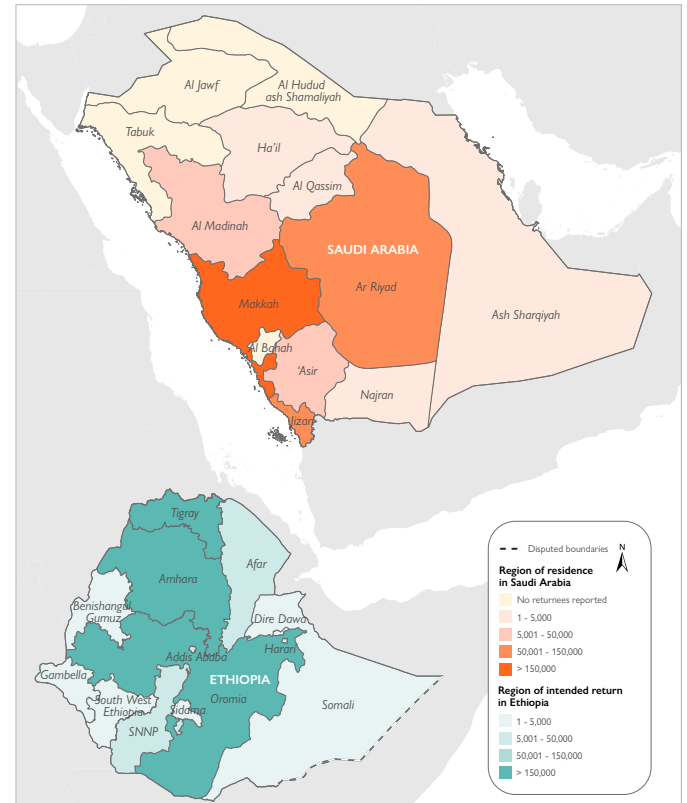
### Background

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.<sup>1</sup> Between 2017 and 2022, 519,000 migrants were returned to Ethiopia.

In 2022, IOM registered 93,500 Ethiopian returnees, an 18% increase compared to 2021 (79,500). Migrants primarily intended to return to the regions of Amhara (42%), Oromia (31%) and Tigray (20%). Migrants wishing to return to their homes in the conflict-affected regions of Amhara, Tigray and Afar (59,400) faced particular challenges; many returnees were stranded in shelters in Addis Ababa, unable to return home, reunify with family or otherwise support themselves. Compared to 2021, the number of male returnees increased by 34%, while the number of female returnees decreased by 29%. Despite an overall increase in returns from the previous year, the number of children dropped by 40%; those younger than five years constituted the majority (78%) of all children returned in 2022.

Returns from Saudi Arabia were periodically suspended, from December 2021 to February 2022 due to the escalation of armed conflict in northern Ethiopia, and from September to October 2022 due to overcrowding at reception facilities in Addis Ababa. The Government of Ethiopia has been struggling to meet resource needs at shelters, particularly for the most vulnerable arrivals.

### Returns by Region of Residence and of Intended Destination, May 2017 – December 2022<sup>2</sup>

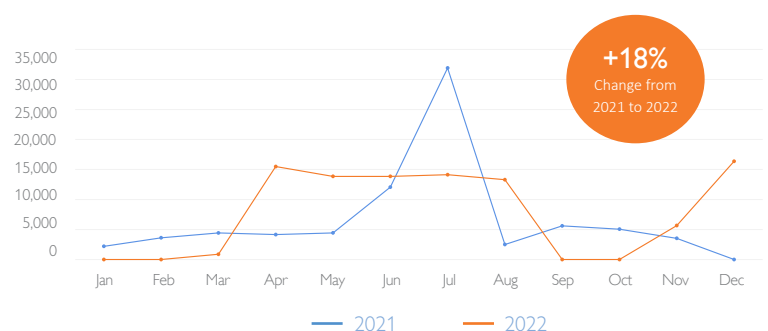


Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purposes, only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

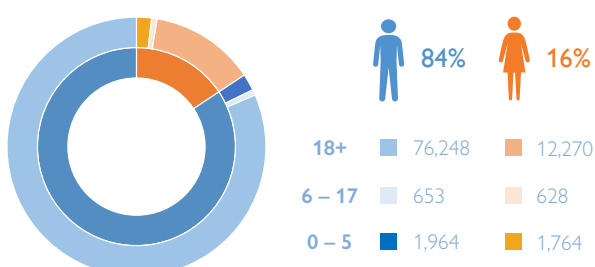
### Numbers at a Glance

- 518,766** electronically registered by IOM from May 2017 to December 2022
- 93,527** electronically registered by IOM in 2022
- 5,009** children registered by IOM at Bole airport in 2022
- 11,691** returnees arriving at Bole airport on average each month in 2022

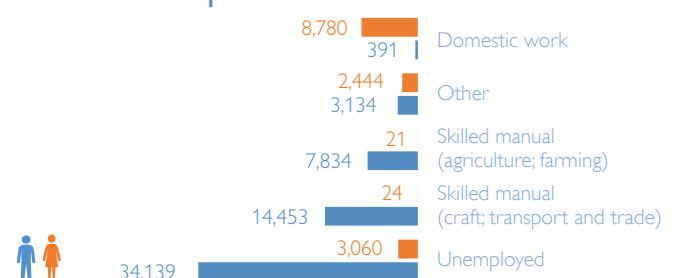
### Monthly Registrations in 2021 and 2022



### Migrant Sex and Age Breakdown



### Occupation in Saudi Arabia



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

<sup>2</sup> In early 2022, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) region was split into the three regions of SNNRP, 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 9,328 returnees did not report their previous region of residence, while 96 did not report their intended destination.