

SITUATIONAL REPORT

RETURNS OF MIGRANTS AND RECEPTION ASSISTANCE IN HAITI

19 September to 19 October 2021

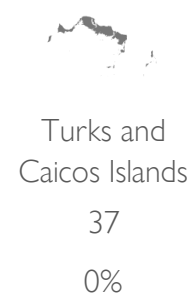
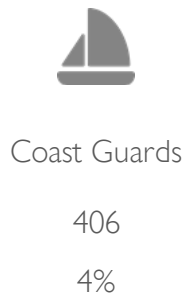
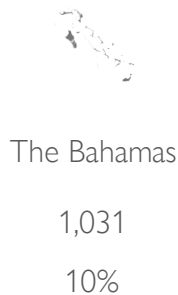
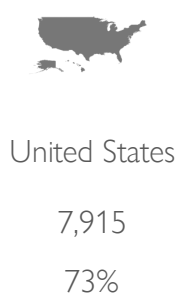
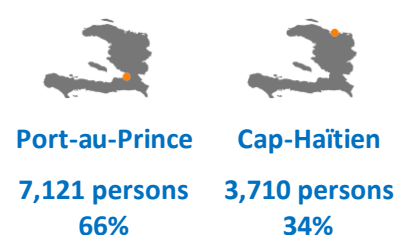
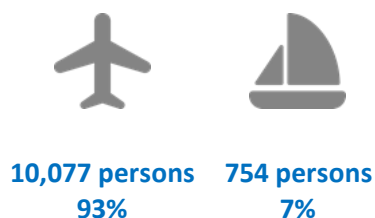
No. 1

Since 19 September 2021, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Haiti has provided **reception and post-arrival assistance to a total of 10,831 returned migrants** (6,586 men, 2,456 women, 920 boys and 869 girls). Returnees arrived from the United States, Mexico, Cuba, The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Most migrants repatriated from the United States and assisted by IOM were residing in Chile or Brazil prior to starting their journey towards the U.S., with several child returnees born in these countries. Other returnees have started their journey more recently, particularly at routes by sea, motivated by various factors such as lack of income or job opportunities, insufficient access to services for them and their family, the 14 August earthquake, insecurity, and political instability.

Summary chart

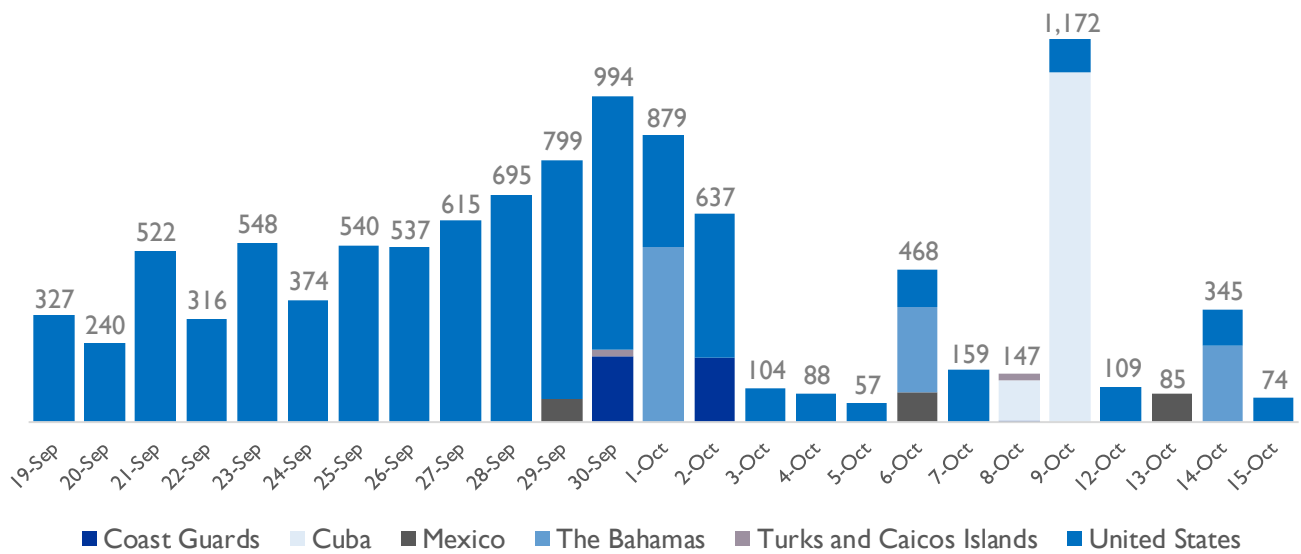
Location	Number of vessels (flights/boats)	Total	Adults		Children	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
Port-au-Prince	59	7,121	3,844	1,771	750	756
Cap-Haïtien	33	3,710	2,742	685	170	113
Grand Total	92	10,831	6,586	2,456	920	869



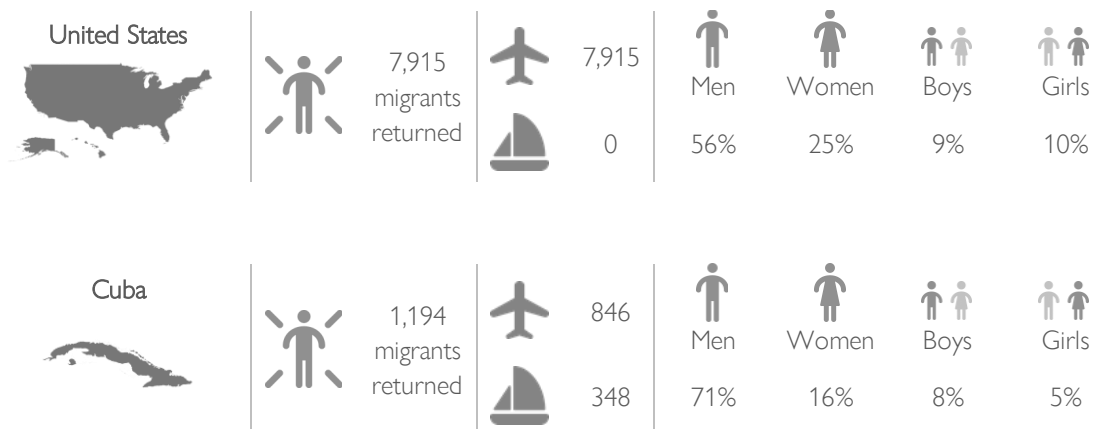
There are two main points of reception of returnees in Haiti: Toussaint Louverture Airport at Port-au-Prince and the Cap-Haïtien International Airport, where IOM in coordination with the National Office for Migration (ONM, acronym in French) and other Haitian institutions and partners are on site to assist returnees. Other points of entry of returnees have been the Coast Guards' premises in Cap-Haïtien and the commercial port at Port-au-Prince, mainly for returns made by boat.

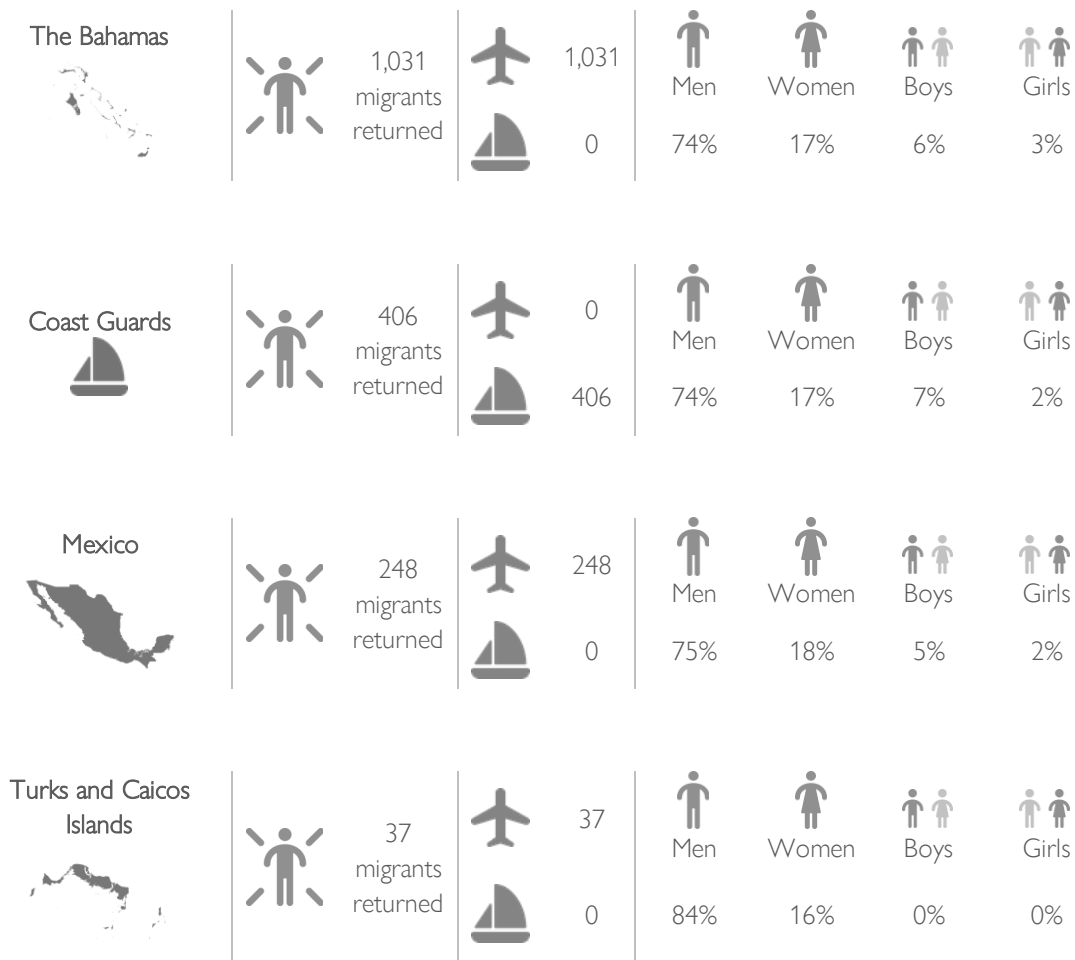
Adult men represent the majority among migrant returnees: indeed, they represent 60.8% of the total returnees to Haiti by air and sea since 19 September 2021, while women represent 22.7% and children represent 16.5%. Among migrants repatriated from the U.S., adult men also represent the majority (56.3%) - especially among those returned to Cap-Haïtien (73.9%). Children amount of 18.8% of the returnees.

Returns of migrants, by date and sending country



Detailed information by sending country





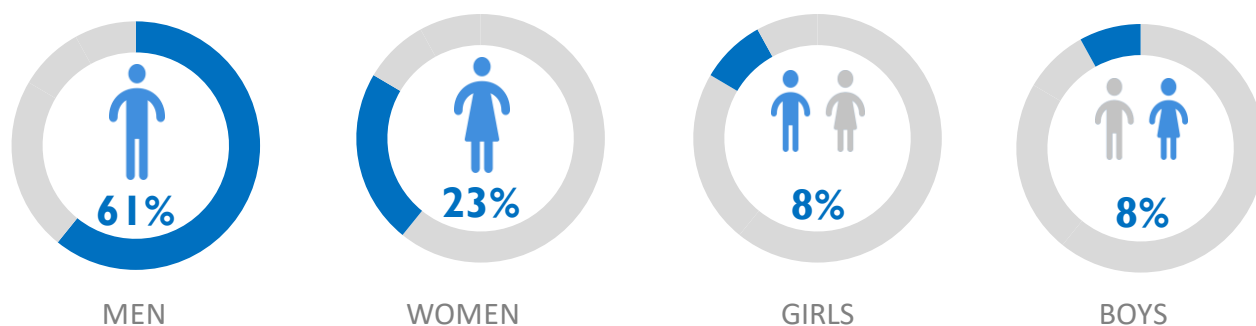
Key highlights

Most migrants who were repatriated from the U.S. since 19 September 2021 had left Haiti many years ago, some of them more than 10 years ago. Their motivation to leave the country relied on various reasons, such as the lack of income or job opportunities, insufficient access to services for them and their family, the 2010 earthquake and 2016 hurricane Matthew. Migration policies in their destination country played a role as some migrants moved several times from one country to another when residence, work permits and/or other documents expired. Indeed, several factors at destination such as impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, new visa requirements, increasing xenophobic sentiments and false information on social media about opportunities in the U.S. motivated the movement of thousands of Haitian migrants from South America trekking north towards the U.S., with approximately 15,000 left stranded at the US-Mexico border and other several thousand facing many risks and death in their transit through the Darien Gap.

In addition, groups of Haitian migrants have been repatriated by other countries from the region, including some being identified and intercepted at sea as they leave Haiti towards the U.S. and other destinations in the region. These migrants have stated insecurity, lack of opportunities, as well as the recent earthquake of 14 August as the main reasons for their migration. Indeed, IOM has observed an increase of boats leaving from Grand'Anse and Nippes departments, which figure among the areas mainly affected by the recent earthquake.

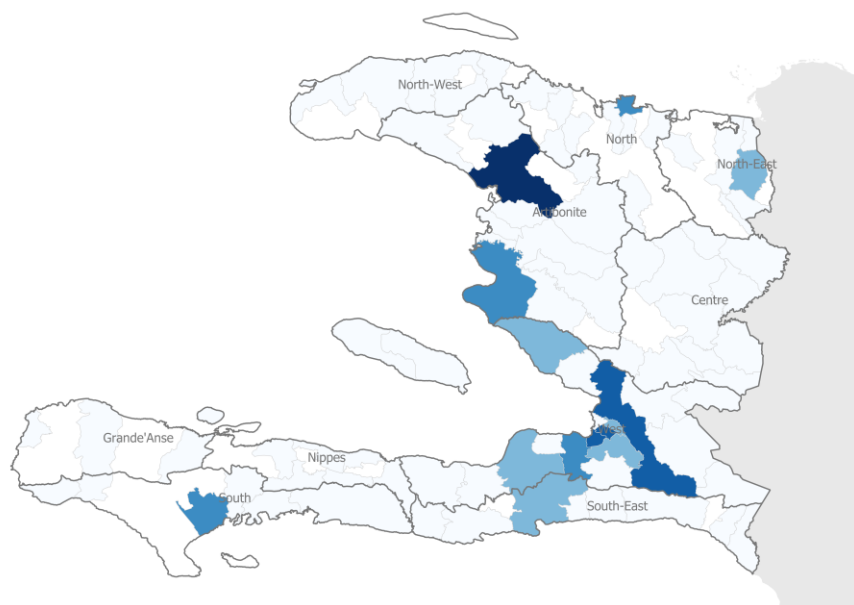
Migrants from these two main situations of return have a **different background and profile**: migration by boat is frequently improvised, based on the offer/opportunity at the moment, with lower costs than those who have crossed multiple countries by land to reach the US, in average, about 10 countries, spending several thousand US dollars.

Figure 1. Demographics – Breakdown by sex and age



Most migrants are returning to West, followed by Center, North-East and South/Artibonite departments.

Figure 2. Communities of return¹



Departments of Return	Percentage of Migrants
Ouest	44%
Artibonite	18%
Sud	8%
Nord	8%
Centre	7%
Nord-Est	5%
Sud-Est	5%
Nippes	2%
Nord-Ouest	2%
Grand'Anse	1%
Grand Total	100%

¹ Based on a sample of 1,520 migrant returnees.

The current context presents a series of protection concerns for migrant returnees, some of them having been exacerbated in their previous country of residence by the COVID-19 pandemic. The precarious conditions that Haitian migrants face while transiting across the region – especially in the Darien Gap – make them **vulnerable to various protection risks, including gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and other forms of abuse and/or violence**, including at the hands of criminal networks. Additionally, Haitian migrants have been increasingly vulnerable to xenophobia and racism. Returnees have been witnesses of deaths, and victims of extortions and theft, as well as physical abuse. Pregnant women gave birth during their trek, in the middle of the Darien jungle or in other transit countries such as Mexico, without access to medical services. Most returnees have been out of Haiti for many years, facing cultural disorientation and lack of knowledge of Haitian Creole.

In addition, **unaccompanied migrant children** have been identified and returned in the sea routes towards the U.S. and other Caribbean islands. Upon their return, indicators of human trafficking were identified, as some expressed fear of the people they were travelling with; they were also emotionally overwhelmed, lacking information on the return process and uncertain of what would follow-up, as reunification with their parents was not confirmed for all children, since some parents refused to receive their child back in their home. Also, several children were in fact **separated children**, meaning they were traveling with relatives who were not their parents. The lack of documentation did not allow IOM to confirm the age of several of the returnees and the relation to relatives.

Unaccompanied and separated children (USAC): 15 UASC (8 male 7 female) arrived at Port-au-Prince from Cuba on 8 and 9 October, and 2 UASC male were repatriated from The Bahamas on 8 October. Family reunification was not possible for some of them, who were transferred by the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (in French: *Institut du Bien-Etre Social et de la Recherche*, IBESR) to a specific shelter for children. The remaining UASCs were picked up by their parents or relatives at the airport.

Other nationalities of returned migrants

Besides, several children were born to Haitian parents in countries of residence, transit or destination, and acquired a foreign nationality, mainly from Chile and Brazil².



² This figure is not representative of all the returnees, as the information on the nationality does not always figures in the manifests.

"I feel shattered. At my age, I shouldn't be risking my life on a fragile and uncertain journey. Life for Haitians in Chile is not as easy as people think, it's like a tailored life, you are very limited in terms of access, and it's impossible to integrate easily because of the rigid principles of migration."

– Woman repatriated from the U.S.



Assistance provided by IOM



Food and beverage at the airport during the registration process



One basic hygiene kit per person or family (adapted kit). This kit include soap, toothpaste and a toothbrush, a small towel, a deodorant, a razor, and a comb. There are also dignity items for women and girls, and specific items for babies/infants.



Unconditional and multipurpose cash for each returnee to choose the most appropriate solutions to meet their priority needs upon return.



Psychosocial support and counselling services provided by IOM psychologists on site.



First aid by an IOM doctor on site and referral for medical assistance when needed.



The family reunification of UASCs is facilitated by IOM in collaboration with IBESR.



Protection screenings on site by IOM protection staff to identify vulnerable returnees and activate special assistance and referrals



Returnees have the possibility to contact their family and relatives by using the phones put at their disposal by IOM upon their arrival in Haiti.



Cellphone devices and clothes are also provided to returnees on a needs-basis.



Feedback and complaints mechanism are available, notably through IOM's free hotline (# 840).

"When I heard that the IOM had a Psychologist here [at the airport], I said that I would finally be able to express myself. When I called my family to tell them about the tragedy, I couldn't do it, so a Haitian friend picked up the phone to speak for me."

– Man repatriated from the U.S.

Coordination with partners on site

IOM supports the ONM in the coordination and provision of post-arrival assistance, including registration and referral to further assistance and specialized services. The Ministry of Health and Population (MSPP), supported by WHO, conducts rapid COVID testing upon arrival. The IBESR, national authority responsible for child protection, jointly with UNICEF, OCCEDH and Kids' Club, provides psychosocial support for children and distribution of toys/kits. The Office for the Protection of Citizens (OPC) collects complaints on human rights violations with support from OHCHR. UNICEF and *Solidarités International* provide WASH services (handwashing points and toilets). The Haitian Red Cross has an ambulance on site for medical emergencies. Other organizations such as the Jesuit Migrant Service (SJM) and the Support Group for Refugees and Returnees (GARR) collaborate with assistance to returnees.

Main challenges

- ✓ The conjunction of repatriations from the U.S. and other countries of the region, as well as by the Coast Guards, has represented a challenge to ensure the reception and post-arrival assistance.
- ✓ The lack of advanced notification of repatriation movements from certain countries has made it difficult for IOM, ONM and their partners to provide a timely response.
- ✓ The context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current volatile security situation in Haiti, as well as occasional shortages of fuel, have put additional pressure on humanitarian operations.

Recommendations

- ✓ Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should be developed to guarantee a dignified reception process at both airport reception areas. Coordination with government and partners is key to the effective implementation of these SOPs.
- ✓ Dissemination of up-to-date information on the security risks, location of transportation hubs, and services available in Haiti needs to be strengthened.
- ✓ More attention needs to be drawn on longer-term needs, including the reintegration of returned migrants, and activities aimed at addressing the root causes of irregular migration should be reinforced.



These activities are implemented jointly by IOM and the ONM, with the generous support of USAID and ECHO



Protection civile
et aide humanitaire
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