Overview

Between 1 January and 31 May 2017, 60,228 persons arrived in Italy by sea. This is a 26% increase compared to sea arrivals in the same period last year (47,883).

Trends in sea arrivals should be assessed over time, as fluctuations on a monthly basis may be linked to various factors, including weather and sea conditions or the situation in the countries of departure and origin. Geopolitical developments and the capacity of smugglers to organize departures may also affect sea arrivals.

Most common nationalities of arrivals

Between 1 January and 31 May 2017, 15% of arrivals originated from Nigeria, followed by Bangladesh (12%), Guinea (10%), Côte d’Ivoire (9%), The Gambia (7%), Senegal (7%), Morocco (6%), Mali (5%), Eritrea (4%), and Sudan (4%).

Nigeria was also the most common country of origin for sea arrivals in the first five months of 2016. However, the number of Nigerians arriving by sea in January-May 2017 increased by 28% compared to the same period last year.

If the January 2016 – May 2017 period is considered, sea arrivals most commonly originated from Nigeria, Eritrea, The Gambia, Côte d’Ivoire, Somalia, Guinea, Senegal, Sudan, Mali, and Egypt.

More information: data.unhcr.org/mediterranean

\(^1\) All data is based on figures from the Italian Ministry of Interior and UNHCR estimates. All figures are provisional and subject to change.
Country of embarkation
Libya is by far the main country of departure for persons arriving in Italy by sea. Between 1 January and 31 May 2017, 58,400 persons (97% of arrivals) crossed from Libya. The majority of new arrivals are disembarked following SAR operations conducted on the high seas. However, autonomous sea arrivals also occur, with a small number of persons reaching southern Italy from Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Greece. Most vessels arriving autonomously were intercepted by the authorities just off the Italian coast and transferred to port sites, subsequently undergoing identification procedures. Since the beginning of 2017, some 1,000 persons were intercepted by the authorities who reported having departed from Turkey. Among autonomous arrivals in May, Algerian and Tunisian nationals reached Sardinian and Sicilian shores, while others (including nationals of Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Somalia, Syria, and Afghanistan) disembarked in Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia, having departed from Turkey.

Demographics of arrivals
Between 1 January and 31 May 2017, most sea arrivals were men (75%), followed by UASC (14%), and adult women (10%). Consistent with last year, the proportion of women is significantly higher among Nigerian sea arrivals. 2,800 Nigerian women arrived in the first five months of 2017, accounting for 30% of all Nigerians reaching Italian shores since the beginning of the year. Relatively higher proportions of women have also been registered among Cameroonians (23% are women), Somalis (22%), Ethiopians (19%), Eritreans (19%), Syrians (19%), Iraqis (17%), and among Ivoirians (13%).

Between 1 January and 31 May 2017, 8,312 UASC reached Italian shores. UASC arrivals have surged compared to the same period last year, when 7,654 UASC arrived. However, the proportion of UASC among sea arrivals (14%) is comparable to the first five months of 2016.