

Migrant crisis: Record number tried to cross Channel to UK today, say witnesses

It is thought to be the highest daily number, surpassing the previous record of 828 migrants on 21 August.

A record number of migrants have attempted to cross the English Channel today, according to witnesses.

It's thought at least 1,000 men, women and children were spotted making the journey from France to the UK.

The Home Office has put the figure at lower than that but cannot yet say whether the record was broken.

The previous high of 828 migrants was reached 21 August.

It is understood the number may be down to the fine weather after weeks of unsettled conditions.



A group of migrants are brought ashore from the local lifeboat at Dungeness in

Kent on Monday

Lifeboat teams have been bringing groups of migrants ashore, including a baby and several young children, following a day which saw the first people escorted to safety from the Channel to Dover in more than a fortnight.

Eyewitnesses have described authorities including Border Force and the RNLi as appearing to be very busy as a steady stream of crossings was thought to be under way on calm waters and under warm, sunny skies.

French authorities were also on alert for more migrant crossings.

Local Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLi) teams based in **Kent** picked up a small boat carrying a large group of migrants at Dungeness on Monday morning.



The group were brought ashore on Monday

Photos taken at the time showed children and at least one baby being removed from the boat by RNLi volunteers.

One child was pictured smiling as she was carried ashore by one volunteer.

Their arrival in the UK comes after the first group of migrants, in more than two weeks, made the dangerous trip across the Channel.



Children were among the group rescued on Monday

On Sunday, five children were among 158 people who were rescued at the port of Dover in Kent, after crossing from France.

Four toddlers wrapped in hooded jackets and a baby being carried in an adult's arms were seen arriving, and a child's cries were heard as the group were taken off the boat and led along the quayside to the Home Office immigration centre.



Children were seen being brought off the small boat

Across the water, French authorities rescued a four-year-old child among 23 people on board an inflatable boat that had got into difficulty after suffering engine damage.

Crossings over the perilous Dover Strait have been quiet due to bad weather, but have seemingly resumed with four boats arriving on Sunday and many thought to have attempted the journey on Monday.

Sunday's arrivals brought the total number of people who have crossed the UK aboard small boats this year to more than 12,500, according to data from the PA news agency.



The group were picked up following a small boat incident in the Channel

Crossings in 2021 have already eclipsed last year's annual total of 8,417.

Home Secretary Priti Patel has previously said she will make the route "unviable" for people wanting to enter the UK illegally.

She **wants to increase prison sentences for illegal migrants**, and for those who "facilitate" crossings to get a life sentence.

Dan O'Mahoney, Clandestine Channel Threat Commander, said: "This unacceptable rise in dangerous crossings is being driven by criminal gangs and a surge in illegal migration across Europe.

"We're determined to target the criminals at every level, so far, we have secured nearly 300 arrests, 65 convictions and prevented more than 10,000 migrant attempts."

Source:

<https://news.sky.com/story/migrant-crisis-at-least-1-000-people-tried-to-cross-channel-to-uk-today-say-witnesses-12400617>

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