



1,028
Migrants interviewed during exercise



75%
Had been in BiH for one week or less



4,359
SFA registrations in September 2023

23,880
SFA registrations from January to September 2023

Top **3** countries of origin of respondents



66.6%
Afghanistan



14.2%
Morocco



7.5%
Pakistan



95.1%
Traveled throughout the country by bus



44.7%
Also travelled by taxis

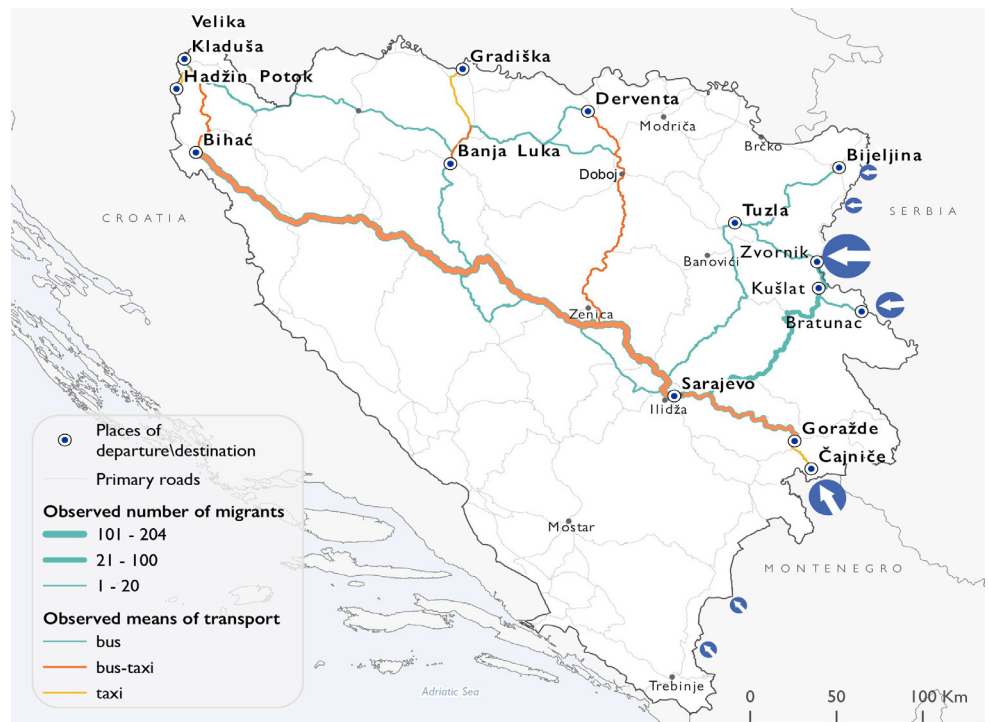


32.6%
of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



6.3%
Of those outside TRCs not planning to be accommodated in any TRC

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).¹ Data was collected from 4 September to 29 September 2023. IOM carried out a route observation exercise in the Republika Srpska, Sarajevo Canton, Posavina Canton, Tuzla Canton, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton and Una Sana Canton to monitor trends in entries and exits as well as transit modalities within BiH. IOM also surveyed 1,028 migrants in active transit locations such as bus stops or at key entry and exit locations throughout the country as well as in three transit reception centres in BiH (Lipa, Borići and Blažuj).



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Map 1: Most prevalent routes travelled by migrants within BiH

ROUTE OBSERVATION

- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through one of four areas in the eastern border with Serbia or through the Čajniče area in the border with Montenegro further south.
- Entry points from Serbia are Bijeljina, Zvornik, Kušlat, and Bratunac.
- From the border with Serbia, migrants take buses or taxis to reach Sarajevo, where they typically rest for a day or two before continuing their journeys towards Una Sana Canton. The price of the taxis is subject to negotiations between migrants and taxi drivers.
- Some migrants opt to travel from Tuzla to Dobojo and Banja Luka, bypassing Sarajevo, in order to attempt border crossings around the Gradiška area in the north. Compared to the previous month, IOM observed fewer movements on this route.
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihać to attempt crossing the border into Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH from around the Metaljka border crossing. Migrants pay for taxis from Čajniče to Gorazde, and then continue to Sarajevo by bus.

1. Interviewees include migrants in an irregular situation, refugees and asylum-seekers as the reference population consists of mixed migration flows.

From January to September 2023, the SFA recorded 23,880 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 49.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

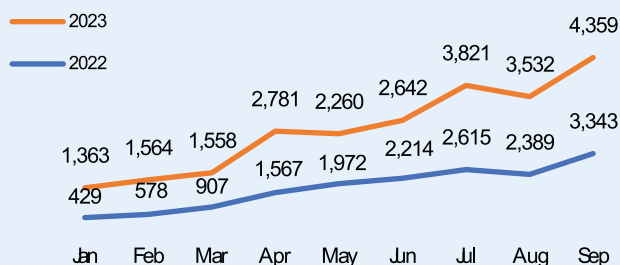


Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2022 vs 2023

PROFILES

This sample consists of 1,028 individual migrants surveyed in bus stations at known entry routes into, transit locations and exit locations in BiH as well as in three TRCs (Blažuj, Lipa and Borići). The average age of interviewees was 25, with the youngest respondent being 14 years of age and the oldest 53. Eighty-one per cent said that they were single, 13.4 per cent were married and 6.1 per cent did not answer. Women made up 7.4 per cent of the sample. Children made up 4.2 per cent of the sample.

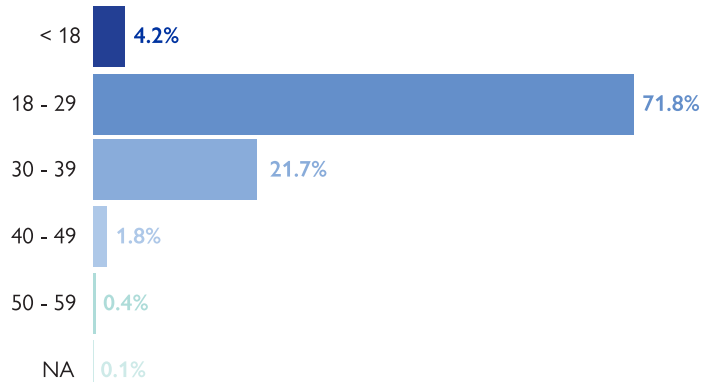


Figure 2: Age distribution of sample (n=1,028)

JOURNEYS

The majority of respondents (75%) had been in BiH one week or less at the time of the interview. Most respondents (91.4%) had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia while the remaining 8.6 per cent entered through Montenegro.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 24.2 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied- an increase of 12 per cent compared to last month. However, many migrants are reluctant to talk about facilitation to enter the country. Key informant interviews reveal that the use of border facilitation is well organized and suggests that this practice could be far more prevalent than the data indicates. On average, respondents from Serbia paid around 121 EUR per person to cross the border, while respondents from Montenegro paid 300 EUR.

Key informant interviews reveal that migrants negotiate prices of the border crossings with the smugglers. Prices therefore fluctuate depending on the bargaining power of the migrants at a particular moment.

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. The majority of respondents (96.9%) said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 45.8 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi. This overlap shows that people use diverse transportation means to travel throughout the country.

Over one-third (33.6%) of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. The most frequently cited response for not succeeding were that they were intercepted and returned by authorities, which was mentioned by 97.1 per cent of respondents. All of those who had attempted crossing the border into Croatia, stated that they would try again.

Survey respondents use social media and instant messaging to organize their journeys to Western Europe. The most frequently used platforms were WhatsApp, Facebook, Viber, TikTok and Instagram.

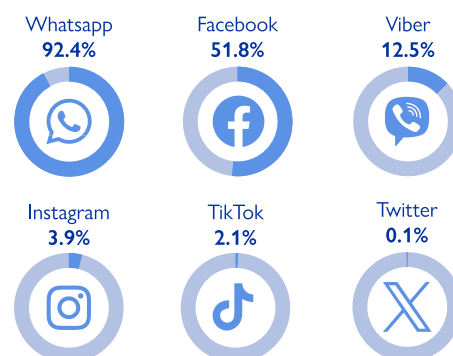


Figure 3: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (n=1,028)

Respondents' most frequently cited needs tend to relate to prolonged journeys throughout the region.

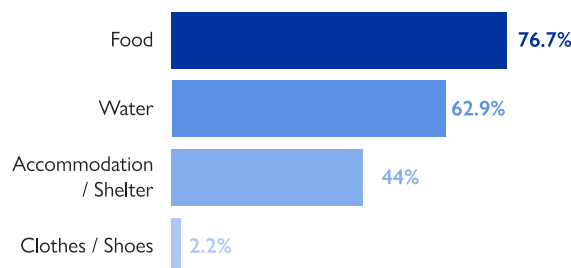


Figure 4: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=1,028)

ACCOMMODATION

Of those migrants that were interviewed outside formal reception centres (n=763), 6.3 per cent stated that they had not registered and did not plan to register in any TRCs during their stay in BiH. This was mainly because people wanted to transit rapidly through the country to cross the border or because they had alternative accommodation arrangements.

Many of those migrants who arrive in the country late at night opt to sleep near bus stations while they wait for transport options. Over a quarter of respondents (26%) said they had slept outdoors at one point during their stay in BiH, 8 per cent squatted in abandoned buildings or camped in fields, 2.6 per cent paid for private accommodation and 0.4 per cent resided in hotels or hostels.

Hotels and hostels tend to be a little bit more expensive than private accommodation. On average, people paid 15 EUR per person per night for hotels and 13 EUR per person per night in private accommodation.

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The top intended destination countries were the same as the previous month (Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, and Austria). See Figure 5 below for a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

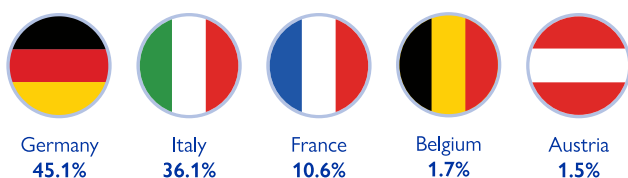


Figure 5: Top five intended destinations (n=1,028)

These destination countries can vary by nationality. Over half of the respondents from Afghanistan (50.2%) stated that they wanted to go to Germany, while 39 per cent stated that they wanted to travel to Italy. Over half the Moroccans (51.4%) stated that they intended to travel to France, while 29.5 per cent said Italy. Most Pakistani nationals said Italy (59.7%) while 32.5 per cent said they intended to travel to Germany. Iranian nationals stated that they either wanted to travel to Germany (46.2%) or Sweden (23.1%). All Cuban nationals wanted to travel to Spain. See Figure 6 below for the reasons why people choose their destination countries and Figure 7 for a visualization of intended destination countries by nationality.

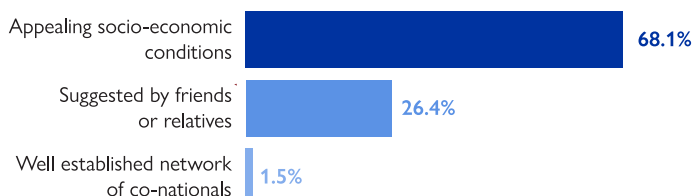


Figure 6: Reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=1,028)

SPECIAL FOCUS – MOROCCAN NATIONALS

To contextualize the journeys, experiences and complex needs of migrants on the move, IOM carries out focus group interviews with migrants inside TRCs every month. This month, IOM conducted three separate focus groups with Moroccans. The findings may reflect the average profile of Moroccan nationals transiting through BiH.

- The Moroccan nationals interviewed all had relatives or strong social links to their intended destination countries, acting as a pull factor in Europe. They also mentioned corruption, poor job prospects and salaries as push factors in their decisions to leave.
- In Morocco, they research online, on social media and through conversations with networks in Europe to determine the best way to travel. They have the option of taking the sea route to Spain or through the Western Balkan route via Türkiye where they can travel visa free. Interviewees mentioned that the sea route to Spain was dangerous, expensive with a high risk of failure and being scammed. One interviewee mentioned that he had tried to apply for a visa to an EU member state from Morocco.
- Prior to travelling to Istanbul, interviewees obtained the contact information of a facilitator in Türkiye. People have the option of trying to cross borders alone, or paying for organized facilitation services. Many of those who do not pay try join larger groups of migrants who have paid smugglers, which they call riding as a 'joker'.
- Those who pay for facilitation, pay around 150 EUR to be driven near the border with Bulgaria. Some had tried previously but were repeatedly pushed back by Greek and Bulgarian authorities. These push backs were violent and included allegations of torture, ill-treatment and theft. Once intercepted, they were driven back across the border into Türkiye where more than one person mentioned being kidnapped and forced to pay a ransom by smugglers and criminal networks.
- In Bulgaria, migrants paid smugglers between 2,000 EUR and 3,000 EUR for the journey from Istanbul to the Serbian border.
- Inside Serbia, they make their way to Pirot where they go to the TRCs. Here, they rest and collect information from other migrants on where and how to cross into BiH.
- Migrants attempt the border crossings unaccompanied in Serbia and cross into BiH around Bratunac. From here, taxis can take them to the TRCs in Sarajevo (costing around 50 EUR) where they typically rest for a few days. They have the option to be driven by taxi straight to the border with Croatia (for around 70 EUR) or to take a bus to Bihac and walk across the border.

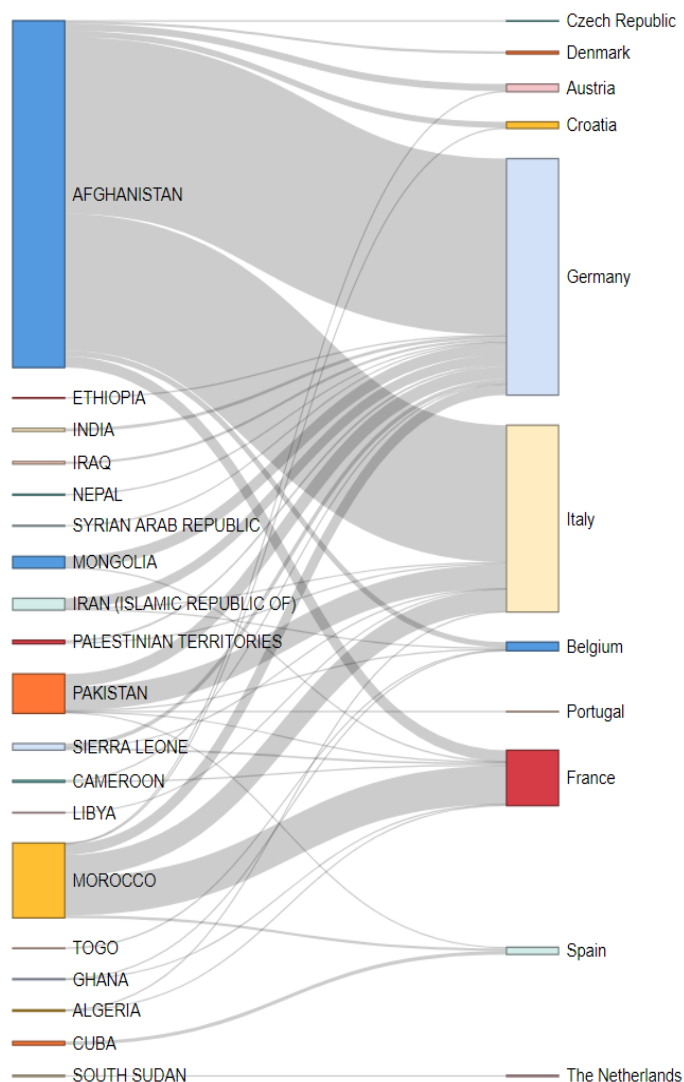


Figure 7: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=1,028)



IOM enumerator speaking to migrants in the Una Sana Canton. © IOM BiH 2023

METHODOLOGY

This report uses a multi-source and multi-method approach with the aim of providing insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, movement patterns and intentions of migrants transiting through BiH.

Survey interviews with migrants

The questionnaire is administered via Kobo Toolbox and collects information on the age, sex and nationalities of respondents, information about their journeys to BiH, registration information and movement modalities within the country as well as their primary needs at the moment of the interview. The survey is anonymized, voluntary and respondents do not receive compensation for participation. Respondents can choose not answer any question and can withdraw their consent at any moment. Data was collected from 4 September to 29 September 2023 by seven teams of thirteen enumerators (five women, and eight men) in Canton Sarajevo, Una Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Goražde and Zvornik. Data was also collected in three TRCs (Lipa, Blažuj and Borici). In total, IOM surveyed 763 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 265 migrants inside TRCs.

Route observation exercise

IOM field teams observed key entry, transit and exit locations in BiH to gauge the main routes migrants travel to enter the country, to move within and to exit the country. This route observation exercise took place from 25 September to 29 September 2023. IOM observed 763 migrants and produced the map based on these observations.

Key informant interviews

Key informants can help provide information on the modus operandi of migrant mobility even when IOM field teams are not present to observe it themselves. The purpose of the key informant interviews is to contextualize the quantitative data gathered through the survey. Key informant interviews are carried out through focus groups with migrants inside TRCs. They are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

LIMITATIONS

The data collection exercises are conducted in the context of the following limitations:

1. IOM field teams collect data in shifts within IOM working hours (07:30 – 18:30). However, many migrants enter and travel throughout the country outside of these hours, and especially late at night or early in the morning before the break of dawn.
2. This data is based on a convenience sample of migrants in the survey locations during the timeframe indicated and can therefore not be generalized to the broader population of migrants in BiH.
3. The data collection is limited to the areas where migrants are known to enter, transit in and exit BiH. IOM continually monitors these locations, with the support of other local partners. However, due to the size of the country it is not possible to carry out this data collection in all areas where migrants may be present. IOM prioritizes the most frequently used entry, transit and exit locations, based on its field presence and contacts with key informants.

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