



**872**  
Migrants interviewed



**21 days**  
Average length of stay in BiH



**2,953**  
Registrations by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH (SFA) in January 2024

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents

Syrian Arab Republic **48%** | Morocco **23%** | Afghanistan **11%**  
Islamic Republic of Iran **2%** | Türkiye **2%**



**75%**  
Travelled throughout the country by bus



**40%**  
Also travelled by taxis  
*\*Multiple answers possible*



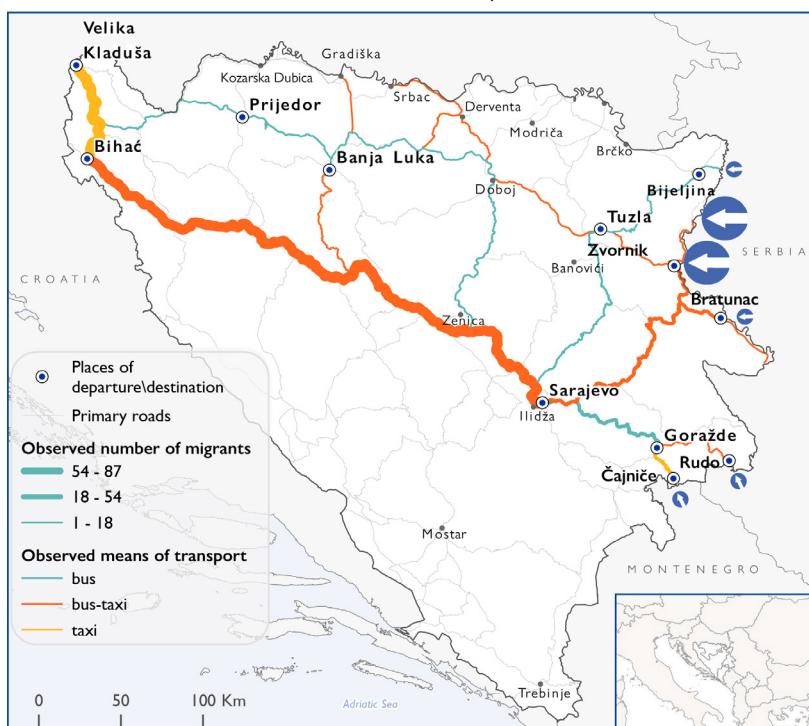
**58%**  
of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



**15%**  
Of those outside TRCs not planning to be accommodated in any TRC

**2,953**  
SFA registrations in 2024

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).<sup>1</sup> Data was collected from 3 January to 31 January 2024. 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 872 migrants in active transit locations such as bus stops or at key entry and exit locations throughout the country as well as in four transit reception centres (TRCs) in BiH (Lipa, Ušivak, 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

- In January 2024, IOM observed a significant increase in attempted border crossings among respondents with over half (58%) of the respondents indicating that they had attempted and failed a border crossing compared to 41 per cent in December 2023.
- IOM mobile teams also noted increased reports of pushbacks compared to previous rounds.
- Consistent with previous months, IOM observed fewer migrants in active transit locations in BiH, compared to warmer months.
- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through the eastern border with Serbia or the border with Montenegro further south. The vast majority of people entered the area between Zvornik and the Border Crossing Šepak. Other entry points from Serbia were around Bratunac and to a lesser extent Bijeljina.
- Although the overall use of buses in the country has remained consistent, the use of buses from the Serbian border to Sarajevo appears to have decreased. IOM mobile teams report that migrants relied more on taxis, which is confirmed by key informants. Quantitative data also shows an increase in the use of taxis from 28 per cent in December 2023 to 40 per cent in January 2024.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH from around the Metaljka official border crossing point.
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihac to attempt crossing the border into Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša.
- Some migrants also exit BiH around the area of Bosanska Gradiška.

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

From 1 January to 31 December 2023, the SFA recorded 34,409 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 26 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.



Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2022 vs 2023

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. The majority (95%) stated they walked, while 75 per cent said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 40 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi, an increase of 12 per cent compared to December 2023. Key informant interviews revealed the average taxi price per person was 50 EUR in BiH.

Fifty-eight per cent of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once, which is an increase of seventeen per cent compared to December 2023. The most frequently cited response for failing was that they were intercepted and returned by authorities. Almost all (99%) 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 and Viber.

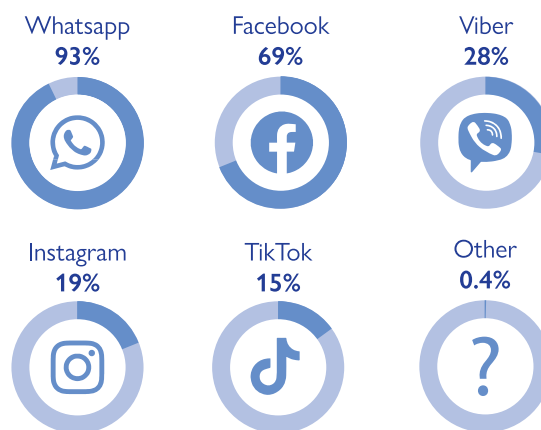


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=872)

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

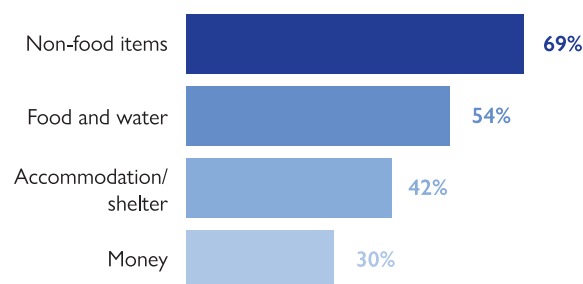


Figure 3: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=872)

## PROFILES

This sample consists of 872 individual migrants surveyed in bus stations at known entry routes into, transit locations and exit locations in BiH as well as in four TRCs (Blažuj, Ušivak, Lipa and Borići). The average age of interviewees was 28, with the youngest respondent being 18 years old and the oldest 59. Most (68%) of the respondents were ages between 18 and 29. Most respondents (82%) were single. Men represented 93 per cent of the respondents, while women made up the remaining 7 per cent.

In January 2024, as in previous months, Syrian nationals remained the largest nationality group (48%), followed by Moroccan (23%) and Afghan (11%) nationals. Syrians have been arriving in large numbers in BiH following the increased patrols and route closures in Serbia. Authorities in BiH registered 3,154 Syrian nationals in December 2023 and January 2024, compared to 571 in all of January to November 2023.

## JOURNEYS

The average length of stay in BiH was 21 days, which is similar to December 2023 and a reflection of the fact that migrants are less mobile in the colder weather. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia while the remaining two per cent entered through Montenegro.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 34 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied. This is more than three times higher compared to December 2023. This could be because, in the context of increased border patrols, migrants potentially perceived that crossing would be more successful if accompanied by a facilitator. Respondents who stated they were facilitated paid on average 100 EUR per person to enter from Serbia, which is half of what respondents stated in December 2023, and 70 EUR to enter from Montenegro. Migrants negotiate the cost of the border crossings with the smugglers and prices therefore fluctuate depending on the bargaining power of the migrants at a particular moment.

## ACCOMMODATION

Of those who were interviewed outside formal reception centres (n=418), fifteen per cent stated that they had not registered and did not plan to register in any TRCs during their stay in BiH. This is an increase of ten per cent compared to December 2023.

Many of those migrants who arrive in the country late at night opt to sleep near bus stations while they wait for transport options. Thirty-five per cent of respondents said they had slept outdoors at one point during their stay in BiH, a sixteen per cent increase compared to December 2023. Twenty-nine per cent squatted in abandoned buildings or camped in fields, a fourteen per cent increase compared to December 2023. One per cent of respondents paid for private accommodation and a further two per cent paid for hostels or hotels. On average, people paid eight EUR per person per night to stay in private accommodation.

## INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The top intended destination countries were the same as those reported in December 2023. See Figure 4 below for a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

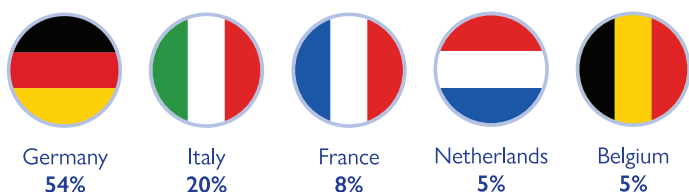


Figure 4: Top five intended destinations (n=872)

These destination countries can vary by nationality. Over half of the respondents stated that they wanted to travel to Germany (54%), while 20 per cent said Italy. Other top-countries of intended destination include France (8%), the Netherlands (5%), Belgium (5%).

See Figure 5 below for a breakdown of the main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination and Figure 6 for a graphic illustration of intended countries of destination by nationality by those nationalities in the sample who had more than five respondents.

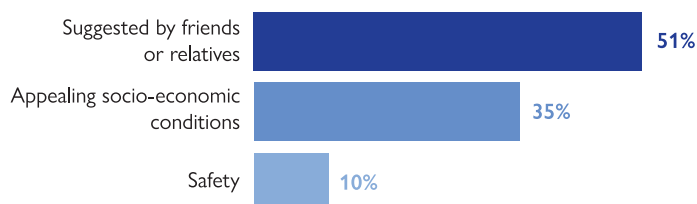


Figure 5: Top three reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=872)

\*Multiple answers possible

## SPECIAL FOCUS – WOMEN

To contextualize the journeys, experiences, and complex needs of migrants on the move, IOM carries out group interviews with specific migrant groups every month. This section is not representative but aims to give context to the quantitative data, by portraying one of the many nuanced and diverse experiences of migrants transiting through BiH. In January, IOM carried out interviews with women from Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Nepal, and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- Sex and gender shape every aspect of the migration journey from the decision to migrate, where to transit, and to eventually settle in a country of destination.<sup>2</sup> Although most migrants arriving in BiH are men, female migrants and families have been arriving consistently since 2015. In January 2024, adult women made up four per cent of the migrants in the TRCs in BiH.
- Many of the interviewees had been living in Türkiye for longer than six months and spoke of leaving Türkiye because of economic instability and a perceived increase in hostility towards migrants.
- Some married interviewees spoke of the decision-making to migrate with their spouses. They stated that the decision was mutual and that they participated in planning their journey but that the contact with facilitators and logistics were left to their husbands.
- The women interviewed spoke of specific obstacles and challenges they faced on their journeys, relating to female hygiene. They mentioned that they would need to stock up on female hygiene products for the stages in which they would be without the support of a reception facility. This was particularly challenging in contexts where the duration of the journey would be uncertain. One respondent mentioned taking a contraceptive pill to prevent menstruation during a particularly long and arduous stage without accommodation through a mountainous and forested area.
- Those women who were travelling in a family with children spoke of not being able to travel for longer than around six hours per day. They mentioned that they try to rest and meet all of their needs once they arrive at the reception facilities.
- The single women that were interviewed all arrived regularly to the Western Balkans, but then irregularized their stays to continue their journeys to Western Europe.
- The journeys of the single women interviewed were well organized and took less time as they had less need for resting in between the stages of their journeys. All of the participants interviewed spoke of a desire to work along their journey to raise funds along the migration journey.

2. IOM Global Data Institute. *Women and Girls on the Move: A Snapshot of Available Evidence*. 7 March 2023.



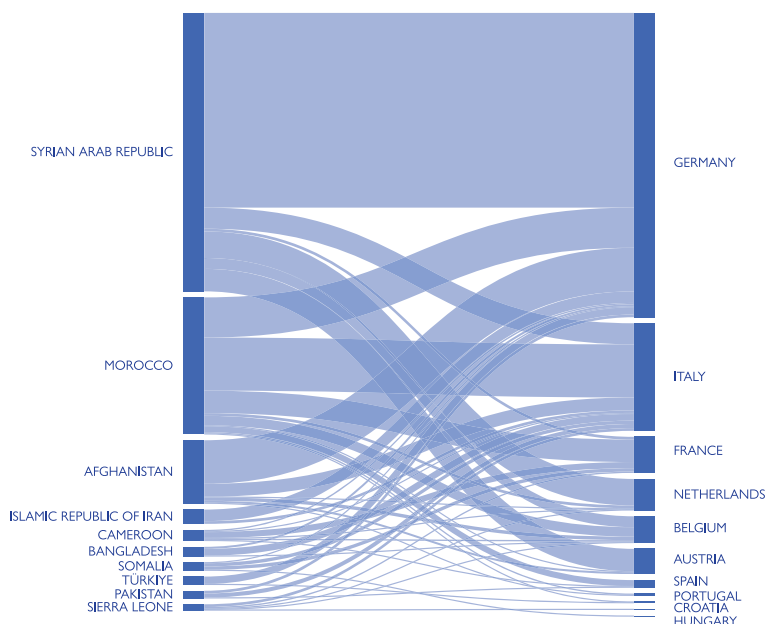


Figure 6: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=872)



IOM enumerators and partners from Red Cross BiH speaking to migrants in Tržac, 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 to answer any question and can withdraw their consent at any moment. Data was collected from 3 January to 31 January 2024 by seven teams of 13 enumerators (five women, and eight men) in Canton Sarajevo, Una Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton and Zvornik. Data was also collected in four TRCs (Lipa, Ušivak, Blažuj and Borići). In total, IOM surveyed 418 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 454 migrants inside TRCs.

### Route observation

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 took place from 29 January 2024 to 2 February 2024. IOM observed 175 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 group interviews with migrants inside TRCs. They are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

## LIMITATIONS

The data collection is 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.

SUPPORTED BY:



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs



UK Government



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation of Italy