



792
Migrants interviewed

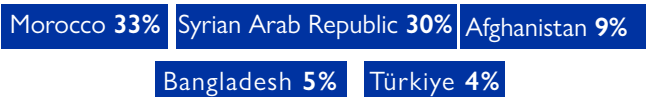


26 days
Average length of stay in BiH



1,613
Registrations by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH (SFA) in February 2024

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents



72%
Travelled throughout the country by bus



43%
Also travelled by taxis
**Multiple answers possible*



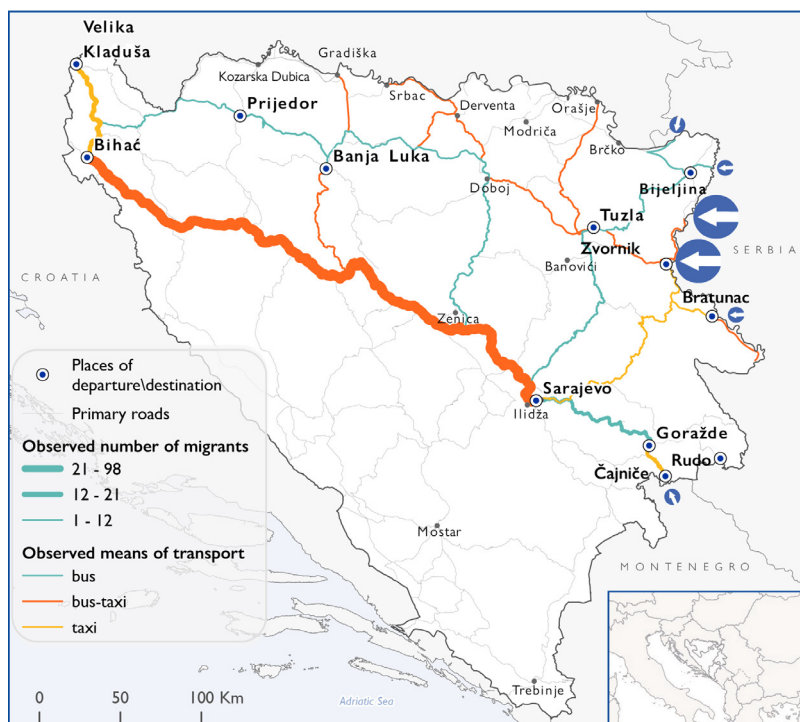
79%
of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



0%
Of those outside TRCs not planning to be accommodated in any TRC

4,120
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).¹ Data was collected from 1 February to 29 February 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 792 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 February 2024, failed attempted border crossings continued to rise with 79 per cent of all respondents stating that they had attempted and failed to cross into Croatia at least once. This is compared to 58 per cent in January and 41 per cent in December 2023.
- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through the eastern border with Serbia or the border with Montenegro further south. Most 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. Some respondents reported entering north of Bijeljina near the tri-border with Croatia and Serbia, after having failed to cross into Croatia.
- Although the overall use of buses in the country has remained stable, the use of buses specifically from the Serbian border to Sarajevo appears to have decreased. Instead, IOM mobile teams and key informants report that migrants relied more on taxis than buses. Quantitative data also shows the continued prevalence of travel by taxis from 28 per cent in December 2023 to 40 per cent in January 2024 and 43 per cent in February 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 29 February 2024, the SFA recorded 4,120 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 41 per cent compared to the same period in 2023.



Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2023 vs 2024

PROFILES

This sample consists of 792 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 being 18 years old and the oldest 57. Most (68%) of the respondents were between 18 and 29 years old. Most respondents (86%) were single. Men represented 93 per cent of the respondents, while women made up the remaining 7 per cent.

In February 2024, Moroccan nationals were the largest nationality group in the sample (33%), followed by Syrian (30%), Afghan (9%), Bangladeshi (5%) and Turkish (4%) nationals. In February 2024, Bangladeshi nationals surpassed Iranian nationals.

JOURNEYS

The average length of stay in BiH was 26 days, five days longer than January 2024. This could potentially be a direct result of increased border patrols and returns from Croatia. Ninety per cent of respondents had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia, which is a nine per cent decrease compared to January. Eight per cent entered from Montenegro, which is a six per cent increase compared to January. The remaining two per cent entered by plane.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 54 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied, which is a twenty per cent increase compared to January. This could be because, in the context of increased border patrols, migrants perceived that crossing would be more successful if accompanied by a facilitator.

Respondents who stated they were facilitated paid on average 270 EUR per person to enter from Serbia. The price also increased for crossing from Montenegro to an average of 100 EUR per person, compared to the 70 EUR in January.

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. The majority (93%) stated they walked, while 72 per cent said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 43 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi. Key informant interviews revealed the average taxi price per person within BiH was 50 EUR.

Seventy-nine per cent of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once, which is an increase of twenty-one per cent compared to January. Five per cent of the attempts were with facilitation. The most frequently cited (76%) 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, out of which seven per cent stated they intend to do it with facilitation.

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.

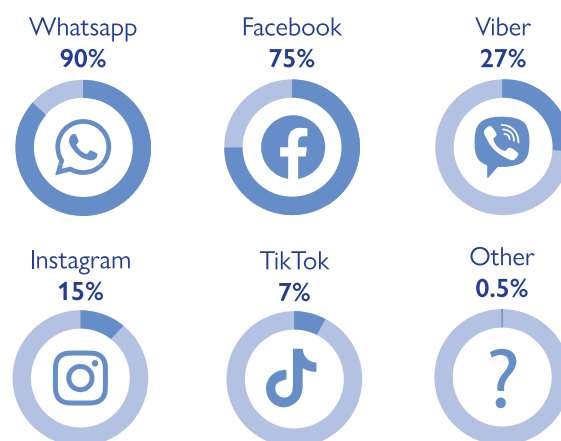


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=792)

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

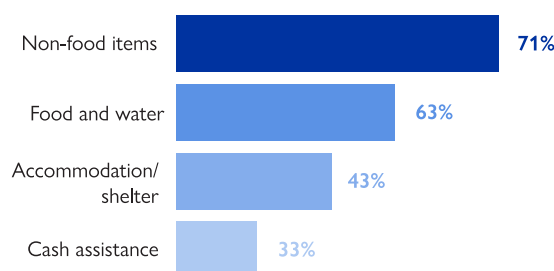


Figure 3: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=792)

ACCOMMODATION

Of those who were interviewed outside formal reception centers at exit locations (n=347), four per cent stated that they had not registered or been accommodated in a TRC. However, all those that had not registered have stated that they did intend to register in the TRCs. This is a decrease of eleven per cent compared to January and indicates that migrants may be increasingly resorting to TRCs as a result of the growing difficulty in crossing the border.

Many of those migrants who arrive in the country late at night opt to sleep near bus stations while they wait for transport options. Forty-eight per cent of respondents said they had slept outdoors at one point during their stay in BiH, a thirteen per cent increase compared to January. This could perhaps coincide with higher temperatures recorded in February. Twenty-five per cent squatted in abandoned buildings. Two per cent of respondents paid for private accommodation and a further three 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

See Figure 4 below for a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

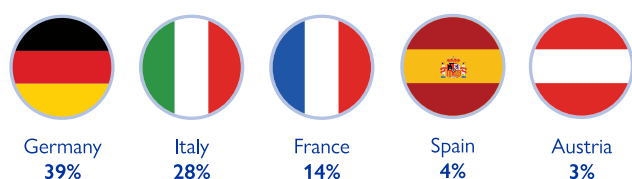


Figure 4: Top five intended destinations (n=792)

Consistent with January, Germany remained the top destination for Afghan (72%) and Syrian (63%) nationals. Forty per cent of Moroccan nationals stated Italy was their top destination, followed by France (24%) and Spain (10%). Bangladeshi nationals said Italy (95%).

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.

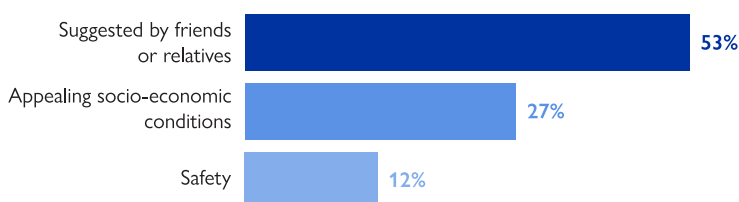


Figure 5: Reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=792)

SPECIAL FOCUS – TURKISH NATIONALS

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 February, IOM carried out interviews with 18 migrants from Türkiye inside and outside TRCs.

- Turkish nationals have been arriving in increasing numbers in BiH. In 2023, registrations of Turkish nationals increased by 79 per cent in BiH compared to 2022. This trend of arrivals has continued into 2024.
- Turkish nationals can travel visa-free to BiH and therefore arrive in the country regularly. Some interviewees had been living in BiH for a few months working in the informal economy to raise funds for their onward journeys.
- When asked why they had decided to leave Türkiye, almost all interviewees cited economic reasons, including high living costs and low wages even though they were employed in Türkiye prior to departing.
- Those who came from the earthquake-affected provinces in Türkiye spoke of how the consequences of the earthquake were compounded by low wages and the high cost of living in triggering their decision to migrate.
- Some interviewees stated that they were leaving Türkiye due to their political or religious beliefs.
- Those who were interviewed outside TRCs had arrived in BiH within a few days and were attempting to cross the Croatian border as soon as possible. Those who were interviewed inside TRCs had all tried and failed a border crossing and ended up in the TRC as a result of failing to cross the border.
- A few respondents who had tried and failed to cross the border into the European Union were despondent and had decided to return to Türkiye.
- The most common method of arranging their journeys was through contacts of smugglers or other travellers who could provide them with information on where to buy bus tickets and where to travel or where to exchange money.
- The most frequently reported intended destination country was Germany due to the perceived appealing economic conditions as well as the presence of a large Turkish diaspora. Those interviewees who had decided to leave Türkiye for political reasons cited France or Switzerland, also due to the presence of networks of Turkish communities.

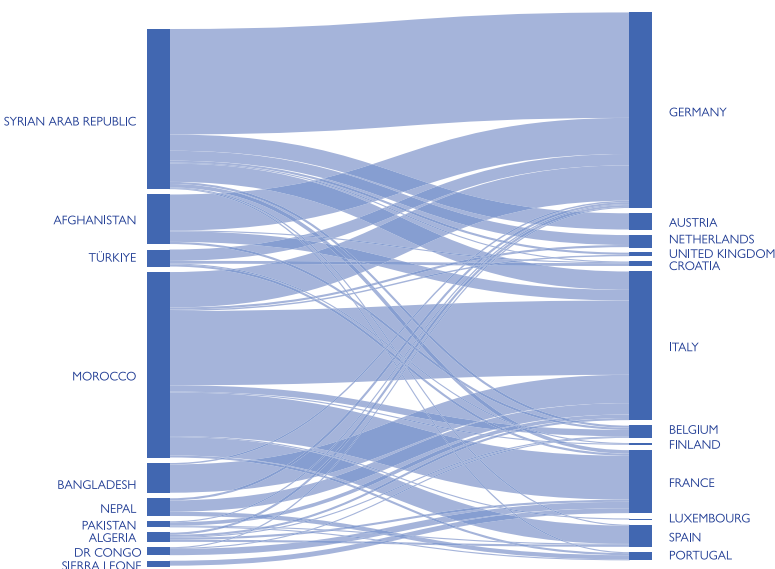


Figure 6: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=792)



IOM enumerators speaking to migrants in Trzac, Una Sana Canton.
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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 1 February to 29 February 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 453 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 339 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 19 February 2024 to 23 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.

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