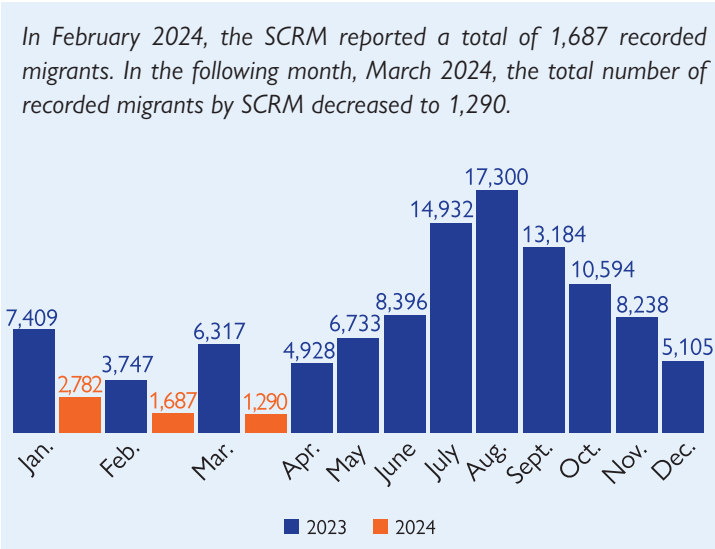


This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences and journeys of migrants transiting through the Republic of Serbia. Data was collected from 1 to 31 March 2024 together with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants of the Republic of Serbia (SCRM). The sample consists of 262 interviewed migrants in Asylum Centres (AC) Sjenica, (AC) Tutin, (AC) Krnjaca, (AC) Obrenovac, and Reception Centre (RC) Bujanovac, (RC) Pirot, (RC) Presevo, (RC) Bosilegrad across the country.



PROFILES

In March 2024, the top three nationalities were broadly consistent with February. Syrian nationals remained consistent, while Afghan nationals decreased by 11 per cent in March. Moroccan nationals made up seven per cent of the sample, consistent with February.

In March, there was a thirteen per cent increase in Female respondents; women made up 18 per cent of the sample, while men constituted 82 per cent.

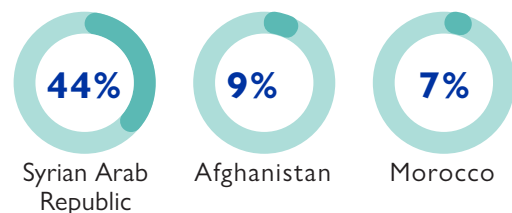


Figure 1: Top three countries of origin (n=262)

KEY FINDINGS

- The number of SCRM-recorded migrants decreased in March by 24 per cent.
- Migrants are rerouting their journeys through North Macedonia. Entries from Bulgaria continued to decrease in March (by 3%), while arrivals from North Macedonia increased by three per cent.
- The share of migrants reporting facilitation to cross the border in March was 42 per cent, a seven per cent increase compared to February.
- On average and in comparison to February, the costs of border crossing facilitation in Bulgaria have been reported to have declined by 200 EUR, while North Macedonia saw a rise of 100 EUR.
- In March 2024, women made up 18 per cent of the sample, a 13 per cent increase from February.

Most of the respondents reported completing primary (39%) or lower secondary (34%) education. Six per cent hold university level degrees, which is twice the number reported in February.

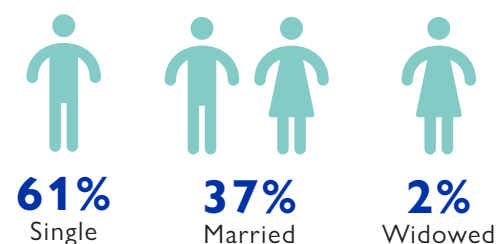


Figure 2: Marital status (n=262)

JOURNEYS

Bulgaria (33%) and North Macedonia (56%) remain the main entry points into Serbia. Three respondents, nationals of Türkiye, reported entering by plane. In February, the entries from Bulgaria dropped by nearly a half, while entries from North Macedonia nearly doubled. This trend remained as entries from Bulgaria fell another three per cent, while arrivals from North Macedonia increased by three per cent in March 2024. When asked about the next intended destination, 73 per cent stated Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nine per cent expressed the intention to enter Hungary, while four per cent wanted to directly enter Croatia; a three per cent decrease from February.

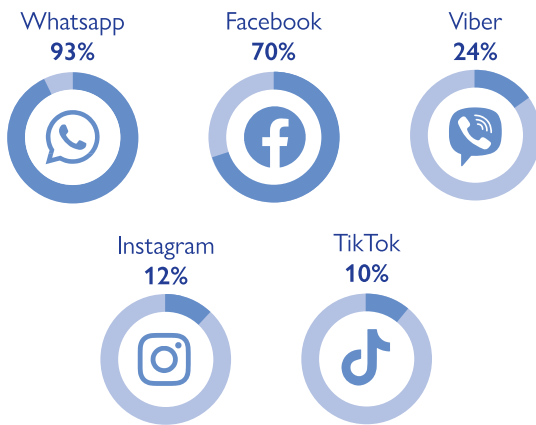


Figure 3: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=262)

BORDER CROSSING TRENDS

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 42 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied, which is a seven per cent increase from February. Key informant interviews reveal that it is becoming increasingly challenging to cross borders into Serbia and that the use of border crossing facilitation is well organized and suggests that this practice could be more prevalent than the individual survey data indicates.

In February, over half (58%) of the respondents who entered from Bulgaria stated that they were facilitated to cross the border, while 22 per cent reported the use of facilitation to enter from North Macedonia. For entries from both countries the reported facilitation increased by five per cent.

Respondents who confirmed facilitation and stated the price, paid on average 1,000 EUR. Furthermore, they paid on average 1,100 EUR to be facilitated from Bulgaria, 200 EUR less than in February, and 700 EUR from North Macedonia, 100 EUR higher than in February.

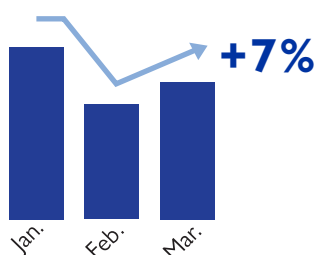
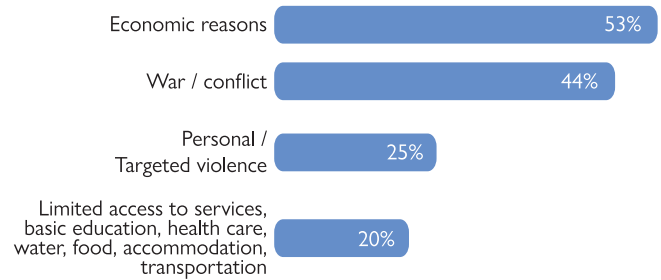


Figure 4: Reported border crossing facilitation rates (n=262)

Thirty-three per cent of respondents reported that they had attempted and failed to cross a border at least once. Of those respondents who stated that they had attempted and failed to cross a border 70 per cent were returned by the authorities, while 20 per cent reported route closure as the reason (10 per cent reported other). In March, the majority attempted to cross into Bosnia and Herzegovina where 70 per cent were returned by the authorities. This could potentially indicate Bosnia increasing border security.

REASONS FOR LEAVING



(Respondents may choose more than one answer on certain questions)

Figure 5: Reason for leaving the country of origin (n=262)

Of those surveyed, 36 per cent reported residing in a transit country for longer than a year. Türkiye remained the most frequently cited country (66%), followed by Greece (27%). However, Türkiye decreased by eight per cent in March, while there was a ten per cent increase in respondents reporting staying in Greece for longer than a year.

Türkiye is the main location from where migrants depart for the Western Balkans and is a country in which migrants tend to stay longer. Nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic (55%) consistently remain the largest nationality departing Türkiye, followed by nationals of Pakistan (21%).

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Figure 6 below provides a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination:

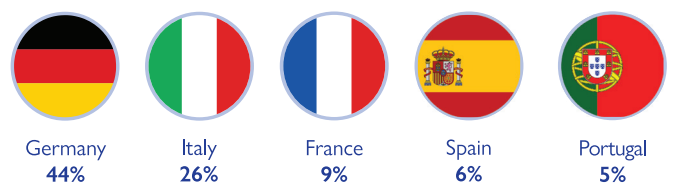


Figure 6: Top five countries of destination reported by migrants. (n=262)

Germany was most frequently stated by nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic (70%), Afghanistan (55%), and Türkiye (93%). Eighty-eight per cent of Pakistani nationals stated Italy. France was the main intended destination for over half (55%) of Burundi nationals and over one-third (36%) of nationals of India. Nearly a third (29%) of nationals from Bangladesh and over one-third (35%) of Moroccan nationals were on their journey to Spain. Nationals of Bangladesh (29%) and Nepal (20%) stated Portugal.

SPECIAL FOCUS – AWARENESS DURING THE JOURNEYS

To contextualize the journeys, experiences, and complex needs of migrants on the move, IOM together with SCRM 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 Serbia. In March, IOM and SCRM carried out interviews with nine migrants from Afghanistan and Iran accommodated in RC Presevo. The objective of this section is to gain an understanding whether migrants transiting through Serbia possess information about these services, how they acquire such knowledge, and whether they have ever utilized the rights and services offered.

- The long and exhausting journeys undertaken by migrants are often full of hardship, danger, and fear. Frequently, migrants lack awareness and information regarding the array of services provided by both the host country and various local and international organizations.
- In Serbia, the recent increases in border patrols and policing measures have rendered many previously utilized routes impassable, prompting migrants to adapt their travel plans accordingly. Interviewees revealed that they were unaware of the recent increase in border patrols and that they entered Serbia through Bulgaria with the assistance of facilitators.
- Participants indicated that they planned their journey based on advice from friends and family who had previously traversed the route and successfully reached Western Europe. They highlighted their reliance on daily communication with these networks, expressing a lack of access to further information and a reliance on hope throughout the difficult journey. The most frequent way of receiving or sharing information is simply through WhatsApp or Messenger groups with other traveling migrants. Interviewees explained they do not intend to stay long in transit countries, which is why they do not research available services and protections available in transit countries before they arrive. They further stated that they primarily research immigration laws in their selected destinations. Their main concern is being granted asylum and family reunification. Even for this information, they rely on their relatives residing abroad to keep them informed.
- Migrants explained they did not attempt to find out whether any of the transiting countries offered reception center accommodation or any other specific services for migrants. They also shared their belief that not all transit countries offer such accommodation nor any specific services aimed at easing the difficult journeys. Serbia was the first transit location where they entered a reception center and were offered assistance from official authorities and international organizations. They revealed that upon their arrival to the centre, SCRM, IOM, and UNHCR provided them with an information session regarding the accommodation and the available resources. They intended to stop and rest in Serbia before they continued their journey towards Western Europe.

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 Serbia.

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 Serbia, registration information and movement modalities within the country. 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.

Some information which serves as context or explanation for particular concepts or trends are repetitive in each report, as it is important for new readers to be able to understand the information.

Data was collected from 1 to 31 March 2024 in RCs/ACs (AC Sjenica, AC Tutin, AC Krnjaca, AC Obrenovac, RC Bujanovac, RC Pirot, RC Presevo, RC Bosilegrad).

Key informant interviews

Key informants can help provide information on the modus operandi of migrant mobility. The purpose of the key informant interviews is to contextualize the quantitative data gathered through the survey.

Special focus - group interviews

Group interviews are carried with migrants inside reception centers are conducted by IOM and SCRM staff who are trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations. SCRM is always present in the centers. The information is not representative and does not intend to draw general conclusions about migration nor all migrants in Serbia.

LIMITATIONS

The data collection is conducted in the context of the following limitations:

1. This data is based on a convenience sample of migrants in the survey locations during the time frame indicated and can therefore not be generalized to the broader population of migrants in Serbia, or anywhere else.
2. The data collection is limited to the RCs/ACs; therefore, no data collection occurs outside of centers settings. Entry points, bus stations, and railroads are known locations of migrant movements, however, in Serbia IOM and SCRM does not collect data at such locations.