

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans. IOM surveyed 1,033 migrants<sup>1</sup> from 1 April to 30 April 2024 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*.<sup>2</sup>

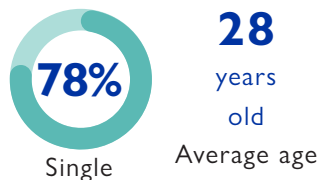
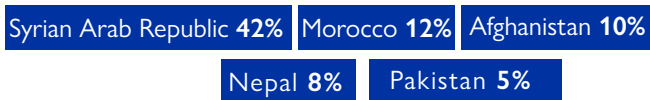


Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM  
Map 1: Most prevalent routes travelled by migrants in the Western Balkans



**1,033**  
Migrants interviewed

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents



**716 days**  
Average time since leaving country of origin



**66%**  
Travelled throughout the region by bus



**25%**  
Travelled by taxi



**3,541**  
Registrations by authorities and institutions<sup>3</sup> in April 2024 in the Western Balkans



**4**  
Average number of failed border crossing attempts per person



Were facilitated across at least one border in the Western Balkans



**27%**  
Slept outside or squatted in abandoned buildings in the Western Balkans

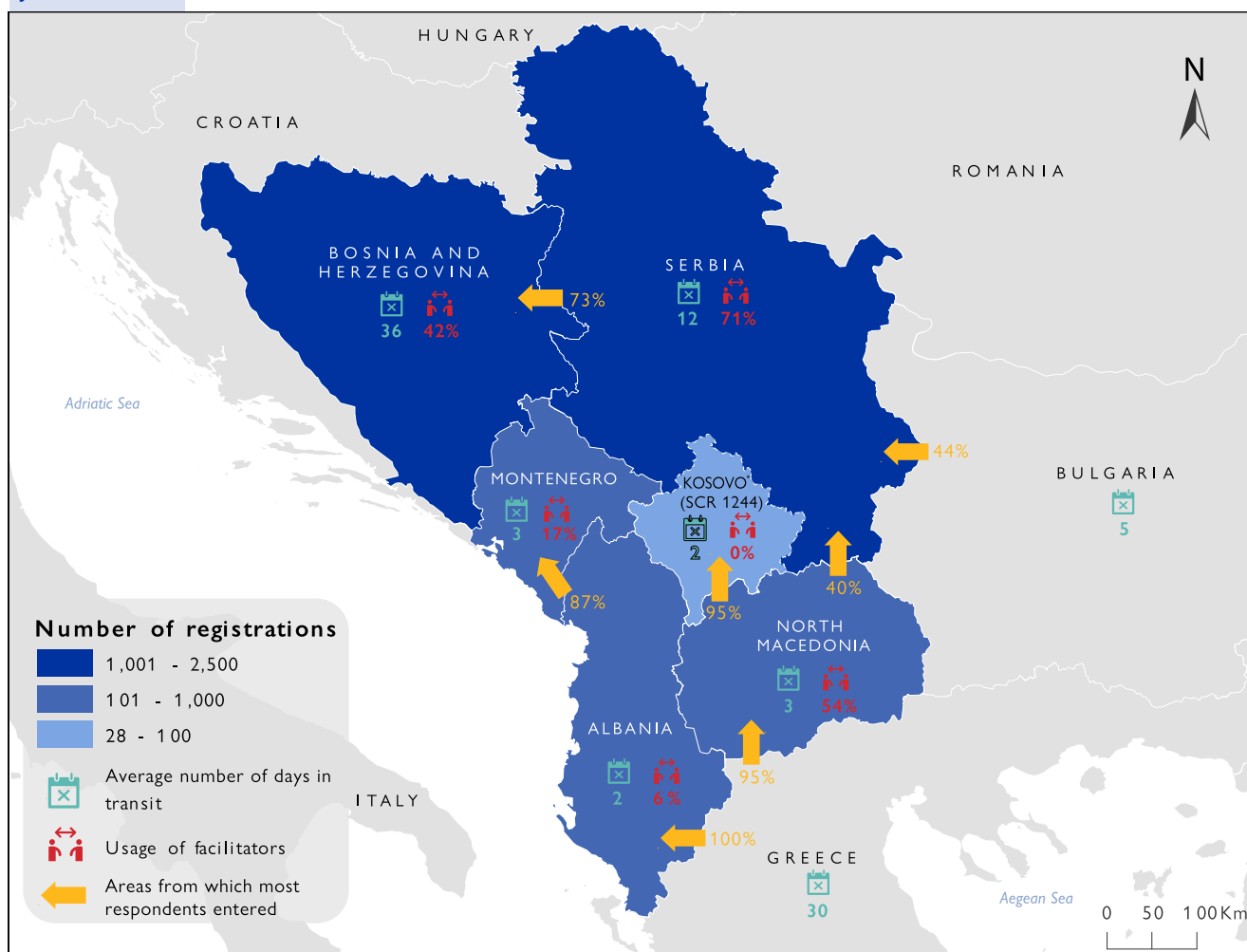
**18,787**  
Total registrations in the Western Balkans in 2024

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

2. References to Kosovo\* shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

3. Albania: the Directorate for Borders and Migration; BiH, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs; Montenegro: the Ministry of Interior; North Macedonia: Department of Border Affairs and Migration; Serbia: the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants; Kosovo\*: Directorate for Migration and Foreigners

**JOURNEYS**



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Map 2: Information on migrant movements in the Western Balkans – April 2024

Map 2 above provides a detailed look into the main borders migrants cross to enter each country or territory in the Western Balkans. The yellow arrows show the country or territory from which most of the respondents entered while red icons show the percentage of respondents who were facilitated to enter the country or territory of interview. The map also shows the average length of stay in days in each transit country or territory.

In April 2024, 73 per cent of respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered from Serbia, which was consistent with March 2024 (75%), but a decrease when compared to February 2024 when 90 per cent of respondents stated they had entered from Serbia.

On average, people transited more quickly through Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo\* compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

In April 2024, the average length of stay of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina increased to 36 days, up from 21 days in January, 26 days in February and 30 days in March. Respondents also spent fewer days in Bulgaria than in Greece.

	ALB	BIH	MNE	MKD	SRB	XKX*	WB
	100%	91%	67%	99%	79%	100%	87%
	12%	82%	94%	9%	29%	100%	66%
	0%	3%	1%	48%	25%	0%	10%
	0%	27%	27%	2%	39%	26%	25%

Figure 1: Mode of travel in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=1,033)

**Journeys: travel modality**

Most respondents (86%) reported travelling in a group. Of those who were travelling in a group, 37 per cent stated they were travelling with family members, while 63 per cent stated they were travelling in non-family groups.

**Journeys: border crossings**

In April 2024, 41 per cent of respondents stated that they were facilitated across a border to enter the survey country. On average, respondents paid 860 EUR to cross a border within the Western Balkans.

Forty-six per cent of respondents had attempted and failed a border crossing attempt at least once. The main reasons for failing were being returned by authorities (95%) and route closure (5%).

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

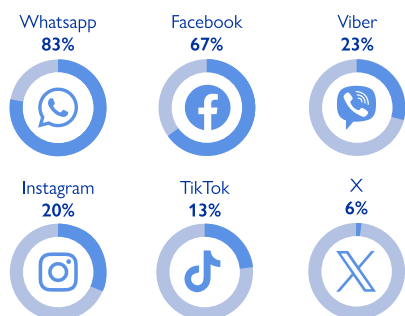


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=1,033)

**Journeys: secondary movements<sup>4</sup>**

The survey asks respondents in Serbia (n=147) if they had been living in a country other than their country of origin for a year or more, of whom 57 per cent reported that they had. Eighty-four per cent of these respondents had been living in Türkiye, followed by Greece (10%), the Islamic Republic of Iran (3%), India (2%) and the Syrian Arab Republic (2%).

When asked why they had decided to move after having lived in these countries for a year or more, the three most frequently cited responses were economic reasons (65%), war or conflict (50%) and personal or targeted violence (35%).<sup>5</sup>

**Journeys: needs**

Respondents' most frequently cited needs tend to relate to prolonged journeys from their country of origin and into the Western Balkans.

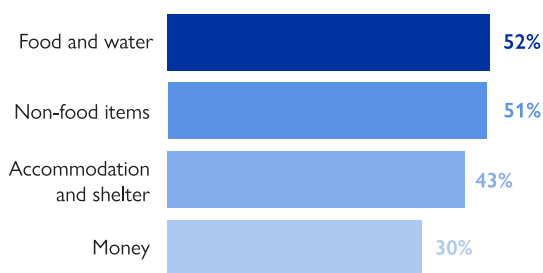


Figure 3: Most important needs outside reception facilities (multiple answers possible) (n=1,033)

**ACCOMMODATION**

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of where migrants were accommodated in the Western Balkans. Most respondents (64%) reported having been accommodated in a reception facility at least once during their journeys through the Western Balkans.

The use of private accommodation was the highest in Albania (84%), while the highest percentage of camp residencies was recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina (84%) and Kosovo\* (96%). On average, respondents paid 15 EUR per person per day for private accommodation or hotels and hostels in the Western Balkans.

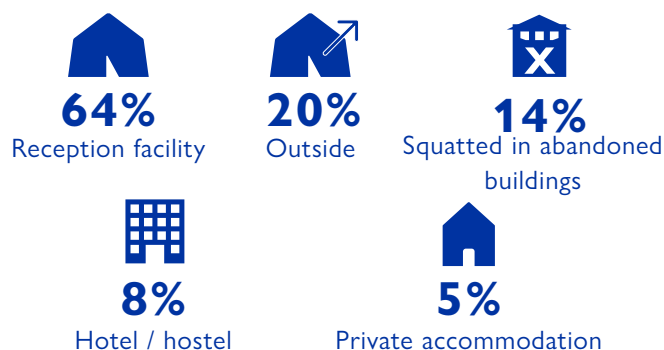


Figure 4: Accommodation in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=1,033)

**INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES**

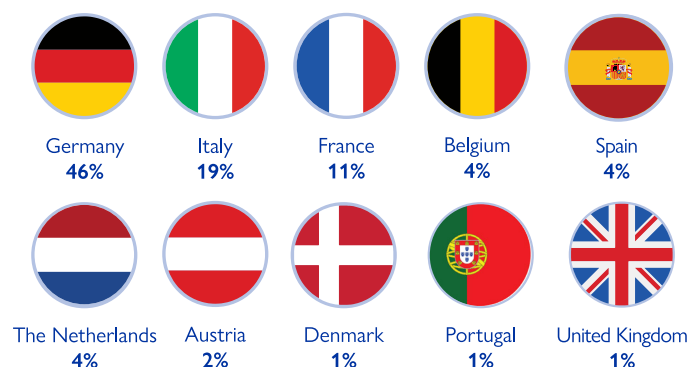


Figure 5: Top ten intended destinations (n=1,033)

Destination countries varied by the nationality of the respondents. Seventy-five per cent of respondents from the Syrian Arab Republic stated that they wanted to travel to Germany. Respondents from Morocco mentioned Italy (41%), France (31%), Spain (13%) and Germany (10%). Nationals of Afghanistan stated Germany (54%), Italy (26%) and France (10%). See Figure 6 below for a breakdown of the main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination.

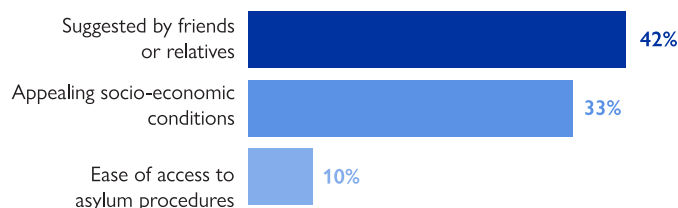
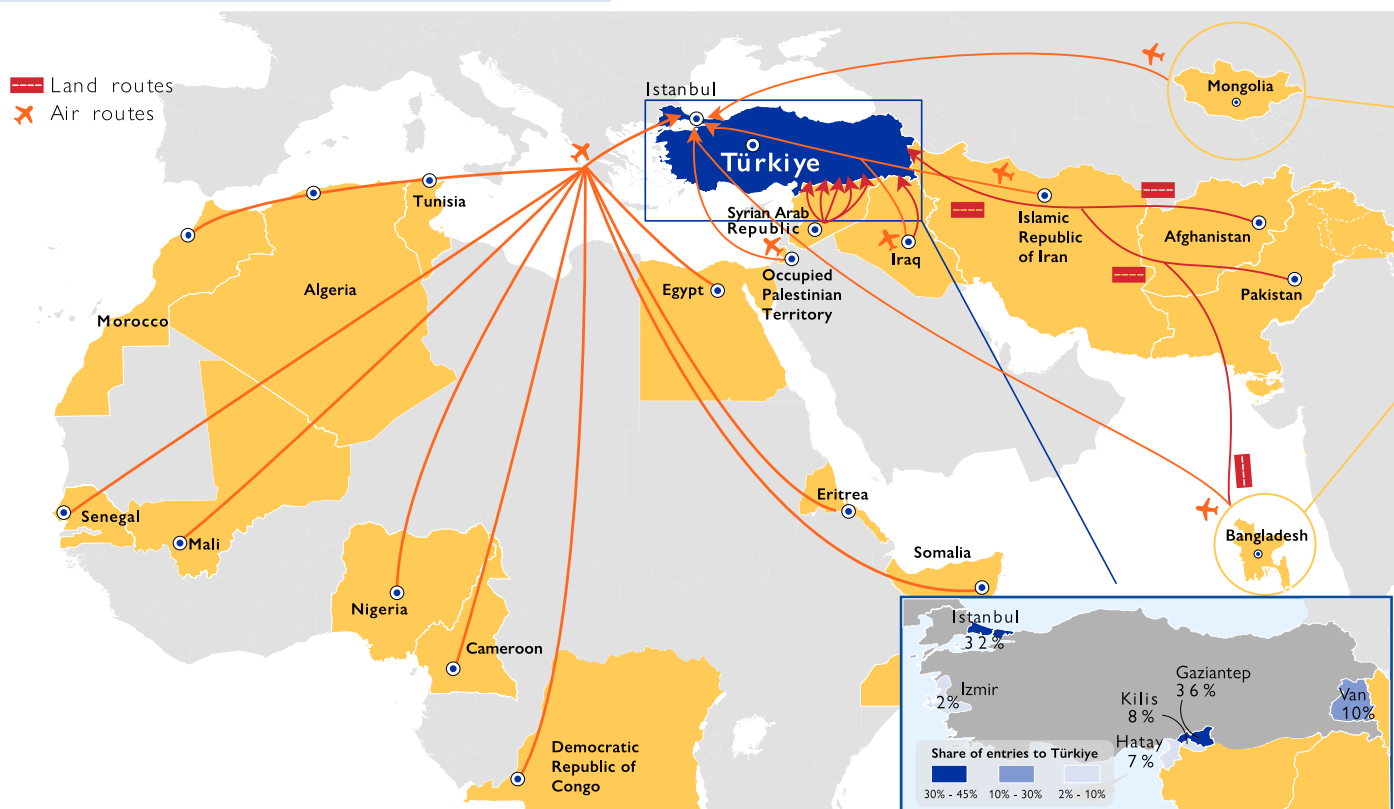


Figure 6: Main reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=1,033)

4. "Secondary movement" refers to the movement of a migrant from their first country of destination to another country, other than the country in which he or she originally resided and other than the person's country of nationality. [International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration](#). IOM, 2019.

5. This question allows respondents to choose more than one answer. The total therefore does not add up to 100 per cent.

**MIGRANTS TRANSITING THROUGH TÜRKİYE**



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. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Map 3: Countries of origin of the respondents in March 2024 and provinces of arrival in Türkiye

According to survey results, Türkiye was the main hub from which migrants departed into the Western Balkans. To better understand movements from Türkiye, this section provides insights into the journeys and experiences of those migrants. It consists of a set of questions asked to 199 migrants of the overall sample in April.

On average, respondents spent almost two years (592 days) living in Türkiye prior to leaving. Thirty-nine per cent of the respondents stated that they registered with authorities in Türkiye.



Feared being returned to their country of origin (n=199)



Average length of stay in Türkiye (n=199)

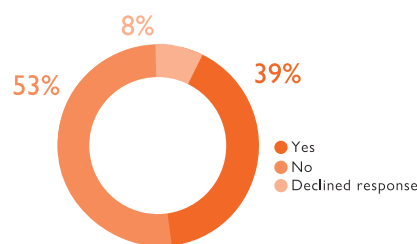


Figure 6: Registration by authorities in Türkiye (n=199)

Interviewees from Algeria, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia all stated that they flew to Istanbul, while those from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic mainly used the land route. See Map 3 above for an overview of the main provinces of entry into Türkiye.

When asked where they had departed Türkiye from, 96 per cent said it was at an unofficial border crossing. Most respondents stated that they left Türkiye due to economic reasons.

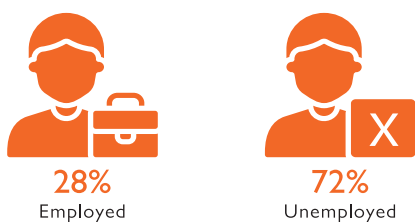


Figure 5: Employment status in Türkiye (n=199)

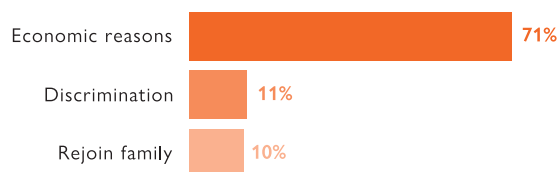


Figure 7: Reasons for leaving Türkiye (multiple answers possible) (n=199)

## SPECIAL FOCUS - NATIONALS OF SOMALIA

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 the Western Balkans. In April, IOM carried out interviews with nine people from Somalia in transit reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

- Nationals of Somalia have been arriving in small numbers in Bosnia and Herzegovina relative to other nationalities. From 2018 to 2023, Somali nationals have made up less than half a per cent of official registrations. Since January 2024, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) has reported a minor increase in arrivals of Somali nationals, registering between 20 and 30 people every month. The average age of Somali nationals who have been registered in the transit reception centres in BiH in 2023 and 2024 was 24 years old.
- All of the interviewees said they left Somalia due to general conditions of instability in the country as well as poor economic prospects.
- Most of the interviewees stated that they left Somalia for Türkiye via air travel to Istanbul. They reported having managed to secure student visas to study in Türkiye. Two respondents had completed their bachelor's degrees in Turkish universities, and had left Türkiye to move toward the Western Balkans as their resident permits were expiring. One respondent stated that they received a tourist visa to Albania and flew directly to Tirana.
- The interviewees who travelled through Türkiye spoke of having paid for each border crossing. They mentioned paying around 500 EUR to cross from Türkiye into Greece. Some of the respondents crossed the land border while others took the sea route to Greece. Interviewees mentioned that they negotiated the price they paid for border crossing locations with the facilitators.
- From Greece, all of the interviewees entered Albania, where they walked through a forested area for several hours, before being picked up by a facilitator in a car and driven to Tirana. They mentioned spending a few hours in Tirana, buying supplies before being driven in a car by a facilitator to the border with Montenegro.
- Once they had crossed the border into Montenegro, they spoke of walking for several days and sleeping outside in Montenegro and BiH before being picked up in a car and taken to Sarajevo. Interviewees mentioned paying around 200 EUR to pay for border crossing coordinates from Greece all the way to BiH.
- Interviewees spoke of receiving information about the routes from friends, family and community members who had previously made the journey from Somalia to Western Europe.
- Along the route, some interviewees mentioned that they were robbed by police in the Western Balkans as well as by organised smuggling networks consisting of other migrants.

## 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 the Western Balkans.

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 the Western Balkans, 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. The survey is designed to last no longer than 15 minutes. Data was collected from 1 April to 30 April 2024 by enumerators in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*. Interviews take place in reception facilities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*.

In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo\* enumerators also interview migrants outside formal reception facilities in transit locations, at entry or exit points and in locations where migrants are known to reside. Some questions are distributed across the different countries or territories of the Western Balkans, in order to keep the questionnaire brief. For example, the question on reasons for leaving the country of origin is only asked in Serbia. The Türkiye module is only deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina as this is where the most migrants are hosted in the Western Balkans and therefore. As most migrants transiting through the Western Balkans usually end up in either Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, these questions can still provide some interesting analysis and findings for the overall sample. IOM staff in Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out the group interviews with Somali nationals for the special focus section in BiH. Nine people were interviewed.

Key informant interviews

Key informants can help provide information on the modus operandi of migrant mobility even when IOM field teams are not present. Key informants can be migrants themselves or persons familiar with the context.

Group interviews

The purpose of the group interviews is to contextualize the quantitative data gathered through the survey. These interviews are carried out with migrants inside reception centres in BiH and are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

## LIMITATIONS

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 the Western Balkans.

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, especially late at night or in the early hours of the morning.

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