

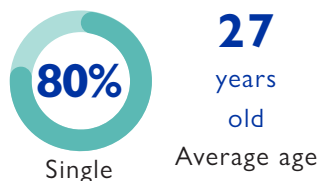
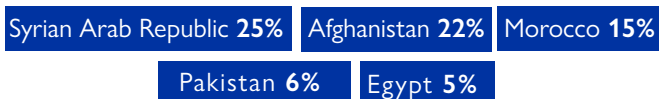
This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans. IOM surveyed 760 migrants¹ from 1 July to 31 July 2024 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*.²



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

760
Migrants interviewed

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents



600 days

Average time since leaving country of origin



48%

Travelled throughout the region by bus



23%

Travelled by taxi



5,454

Registrations by authorities and institutions³ in July 2024 in the Western Balkans



Average number of failed border crossing attempts per person



Were facilitated across at least one border in the Western Balkans



34%

Slept outside or squatted in abandoned buildings in the Western Balkans

31,973

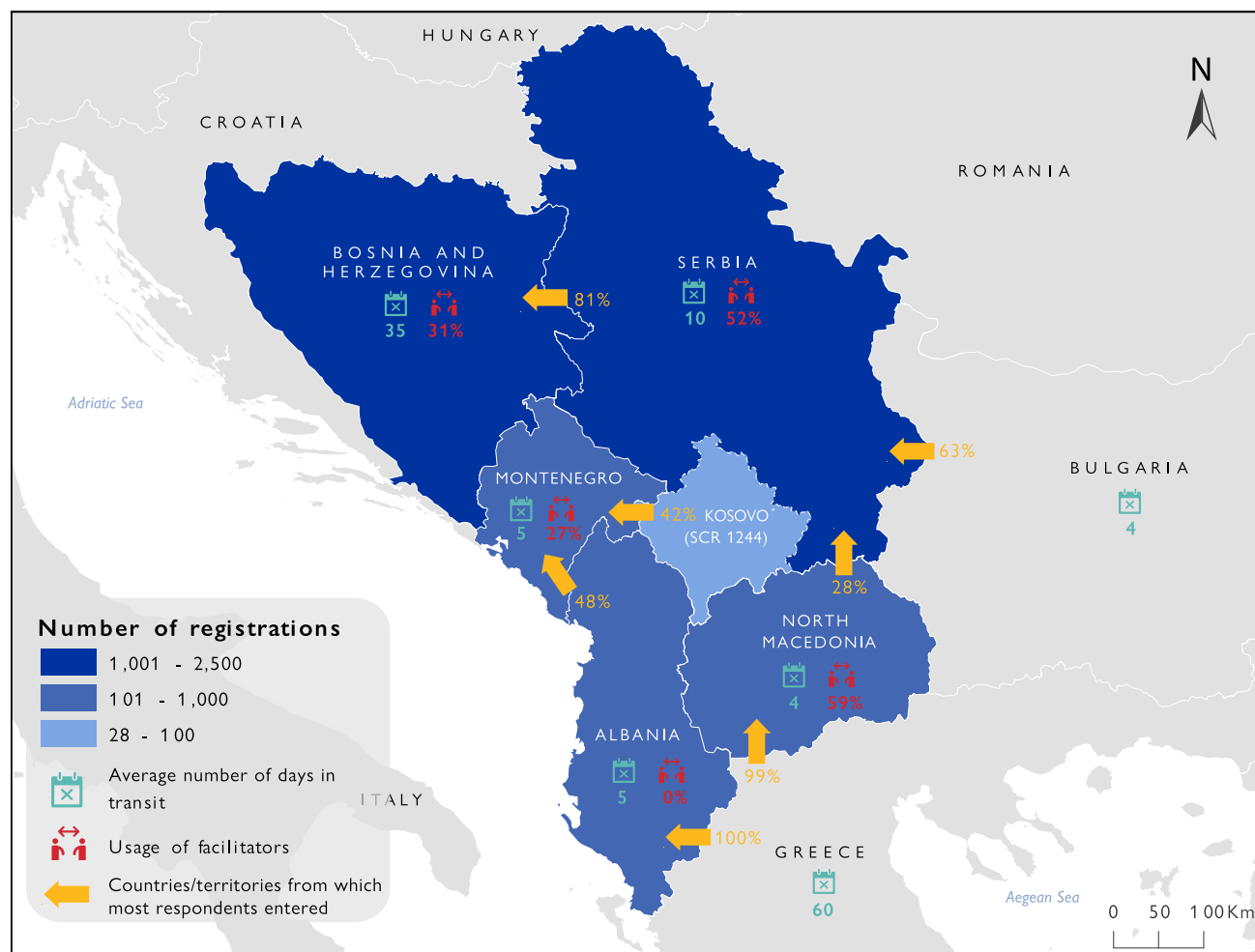
Total registrations in the Western Balkans as of 31 July 2024

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 – July 2024

Map 2 above provides a detailed look at 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 the 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 July 2024, 81 per cent of respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered from Serbia. Entries into Montenegro from Kosovo* increased by 29 per cent, while entries from Albania decreased by 13 per cent compared to June 2024. The share of respondents who entered Serbia from North Macedonia increased from 22 per cent in June 2024 to 28 per cent in July 2024. Sixty-three per cent reported entering Serbia from Bulgaria.

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

	ALB	BIH	MNE	MKD	SRB	XKX*	WB
	100%	94%	84%	99%	79%	–	91%
	3%	64%	100%	25%	39%	–	48%
	–	1%	–	57%	29%	–	18%
	–	28%	30%	5%	32%	–	23%

Figure 1: Mode of travel in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=760)

Journeys: travel modality

Most respondents (82%) reported travelling in a group. Of those who were travelling in a group, 53 per cent stated they were travelling in non-family groups, while 15 per cent reported travelling with family members. Thirty-two per cent said they were travelling with facilitators, a 17 per cent increase compared to June 2024.

Journeys: border crossings

In July 2024, 39 per cent of respondents stated that they were facilitated across a border to enter the survey country, which is consistent with June 2024 (38%). On average, respondents paid 382 EUR to cross a border within the Western Balkans. Thirty-eight per cent of respondents had attempted and failed a border crossing at least once. All of the respondents stated that the main reason for failing was being returned by authorities.

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

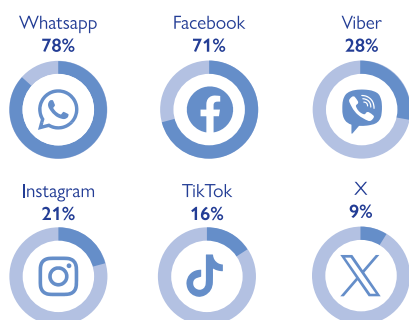


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=760)

Journeys: secondary movements⁴

Fifty-three per cent of respondents stated that they had been living in a country other than their own country of origin for a year or more.⁵ Seventy-eight per cent of these respondents had been living in Türkiye, followed by Greece (9%), Bulgaria (3%), Lebanon (3%), the United Arab Emirates (3%), and four per cent other countries.

When asked why they decided to move after living in transit countries for over a year, the primary reason cited was the fear of deportation, which was reported by 60 per cent of respondents. The two other main reasons for leaving were the deteriorating economic conditions (41%), and personal targeted violence (31%).⁶ Personal targeted violence increased by 8 per cent compared to June 2024.

Journeys: needs

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

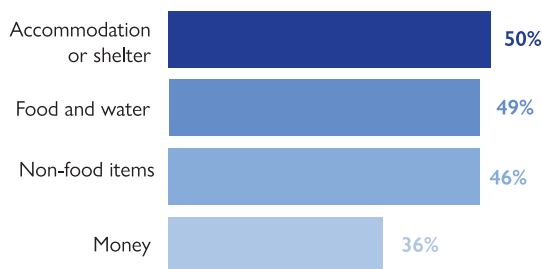


Figure 3: Most important needs outside reception facilities (multiple answers possible) (n=760)

ACCOMMODATION

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of where migrants were accommodated in the Western Balkans. Most respondents (62%) reported having been accommodated in a reception facility at least once during their journeys through the Western Balkans.

In July 2024, 34 per cent of respondents stated that they had either slept outside or squatted in an abandoned building at one point during their transit in the Western Balkans. The use of private accommodation was the highest in Albania (97%), while the highest percentage of camp residencies was recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina (91%). On average, respondents paid 16 EUR per person, per day for private accommodation or hotels and hostels in the Western Balkans.

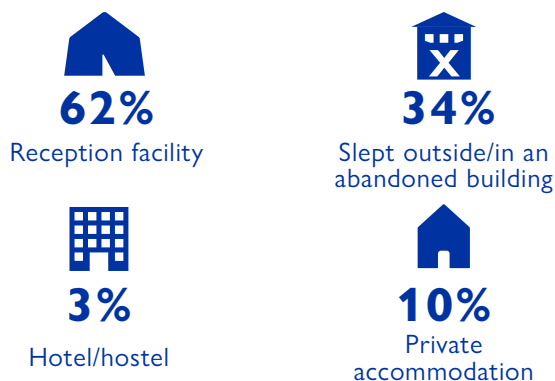


Figure 4: Accommodation in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=760)

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

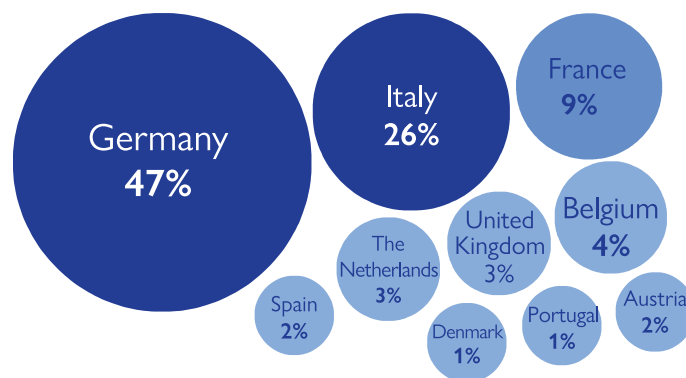


Figure 5: Top ten intended destinations (n=760)

When asked why they had chosen their destination countries, the most frequently cited responses were that it was suggested by friends and family (39%), because of appealing socio-economic conditions (33%), and due to ease of access to asylum procedures (14%).

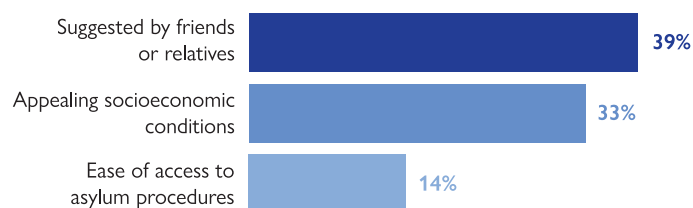


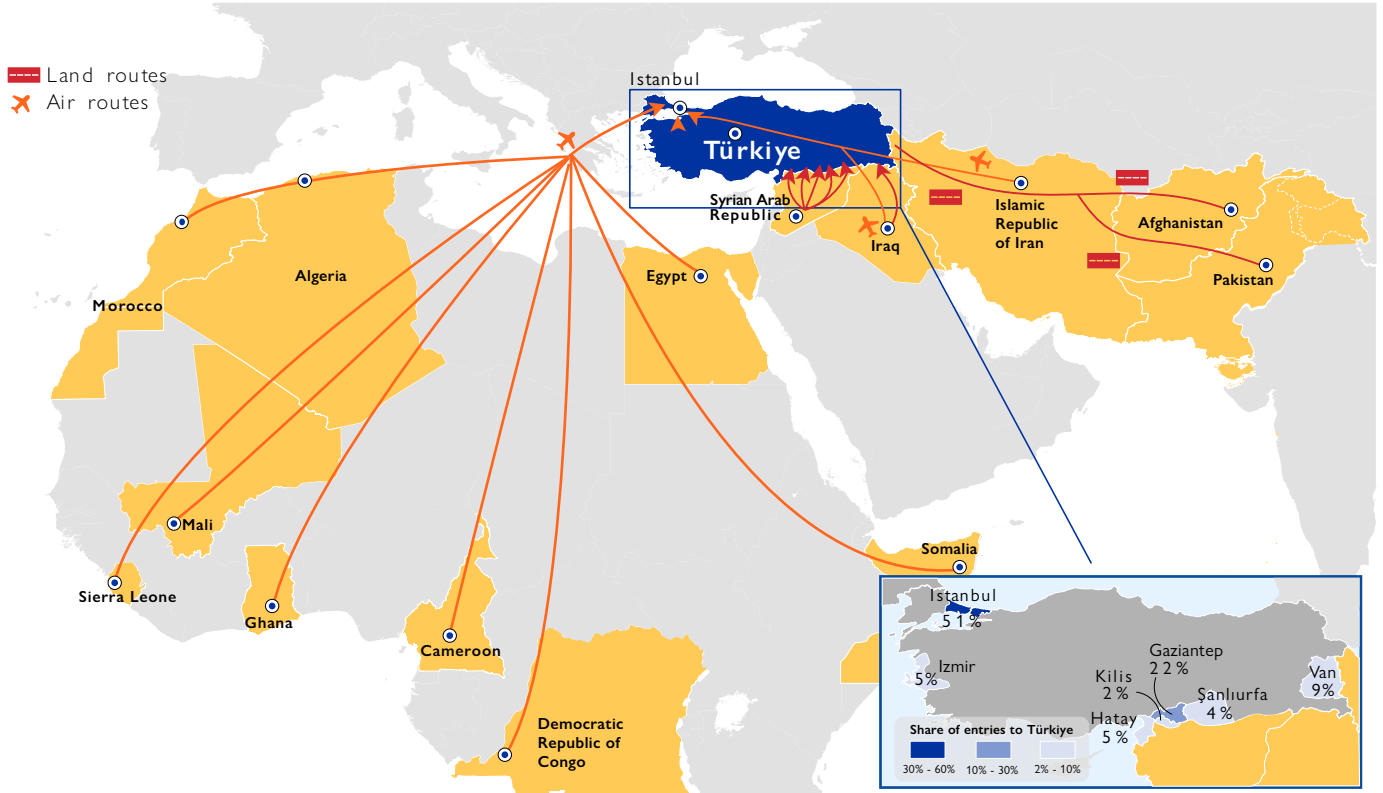
Figure 6: Main reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=760)

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 they originally resided and other than the person's country of nationality. [International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration](#), IOM, 2019.

⁵ This question is only asked in Serbia. The sub-sample is 347 respondents.

⁶ This question allows respondents to choose more than one answer. The total therefore does not add up to 100 per cent.

MIGRANTS TRANSITING THROUGH TÜRKIYE



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 July 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 113 migrants of the overall sample in July.⁷

On average, respondents spent 389 days in Türkiye prior to leaving. Thirty-seven per cent of the respondents stated that they registered with authorities in Türkiye.



Figure 7: Feared being returned to their country of origin (n=113)



Figure 8: Average length of stay in Türkiye (n=113)

Interviewees from North, Central, West and East Africa all stated that they flew to Istanbul before continuing their journeys, while those from Afghanistan, Iraq, 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.

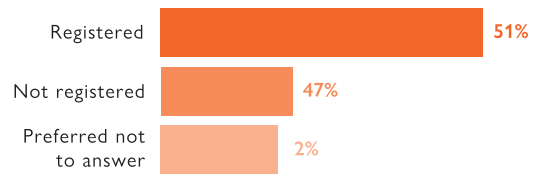


Figure 10: Registration by authorities in Türkiye (n=113)

All of the respondents had departed Türkiye from an unofficial border crossing. Nearly half of the respondents stated that they left Türkiye due to economic reasons. Most (57%) respondents exited Türkiye from Edirne province, followed by Istanbul (29%).

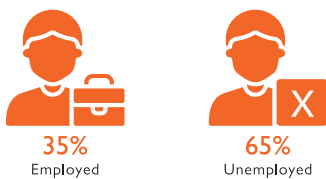


Figure 9: Employment status in Türkiye (n=113)

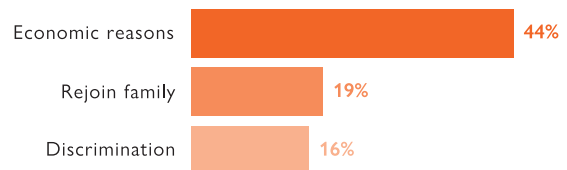


Figure 11: Reasons for leaving Türkiye (multiple answers possible) (n=113)

⁷ This question is only asked in transit reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina to keep the questionnaire brief and because most Turkish nationals in the mixed migratory flows eventually transit through Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SPECIAL FOCUS – ON THE MOVE AS A FAMILY

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 add context to the quantitative data, by portraying one of the many nuanced and diverse experiences of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans. DTM interviewed four families in TRC Borici. The families were of Syrian, Pakistani, Nepalese, and Afghani nationalities.

- Although single males make up the majority of arrivals into BiH, 4,443 families have been recorded arriving in BiH since 1 January 2024. Families can vary in size and age, producing a unique set of logistical and emotional challenges when travelling.
- Four families made up the special focus group. Three families from the Syrian Arab Republic were travelling with children, and a couple from Nepal and Pakistan were travelling without children.
- The families said that they had left their country of origin due to economic reasons, conflict, and family issues. The families from the Syrian Arab Republic stated that they had been living in Türkiye for a number of years but left due to the increased discrimination and violence they faced. One parent mentioned that their children faced discrimination when at school.
- All the families stated that they used facilitators to cross from Greece to Albania and paid, on average, 3,000 EUR per family. Families mentioned that they paid a reduced fee for their children but could not remember the exact amount.
- Participants spent varying amounts of time in BiH, with the least amount being 10 days and the maximum being 9 months. All the families stated that they had tried to cross the border with Croatia, and all the families stated that the Croatian border police had apprehended them aggressively with dogs, with parents stating that the dogs came close to their children and that it was a traumatising experience for both adults and children.
- Although all families stated they had bad experiences with the Croatian border police, they all stated that both authorities and facilitators have a bit more mercy for families travelling with children than those travelling alone.
- The families with children said they had to prepare their children psychologically before the trip, but further went on to say that they witnessed things they could not prepare or protect their children from, such as coming across a dead body. Parents also highlighted that they often ran out of food, and the additional lack of transport made the journey emotionally and physically demanding.
- The families stated that Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands were their intended destinations. They all said they would work once they arrived but wanted to prioritise learning the local language first.
- All the families remarked that the journey had a profound impact on them and that it had changed them forever, with some saying it had made them stronger.

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 July to 31 July 2024 by enumerators in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*. Interviews took 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 interviewed 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 departure is only asked in Serbia and the Türkiye module is only deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As most migrants transiting through the Western Balkans usually exit from 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 Algerian nationals for the special focus section in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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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