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# FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS WITH MIGRANTS TRAVELLING THROUGH THE WESTERN BALKANS

1 JUNE – 31 DECEMBER 2023



**DTM**

IOM DISPLACEMENT  
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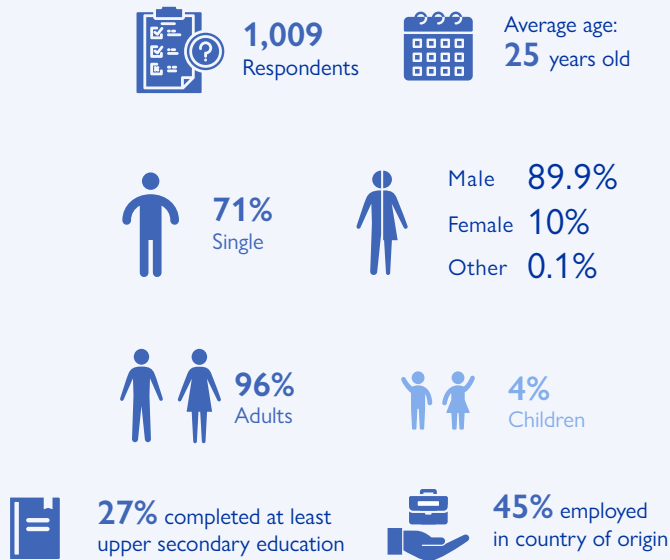
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) in the Western Balkans region. IOM interviewed a total of 1,009 migrants from 1 June to 31 August 2023 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup>.

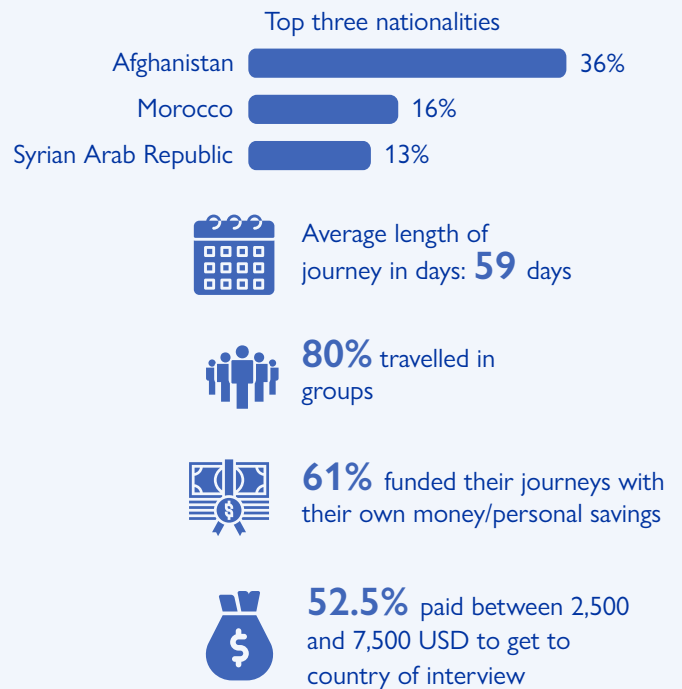
FMS provides a snapshot of the profiles, experiences and needs of migrants residing in TRCs in BiH. The survey asks questions on demographics, education and employment backgrounds, the circumstances of the migration journey and migration factors, as well as future intentions.

### Profiles of respondents

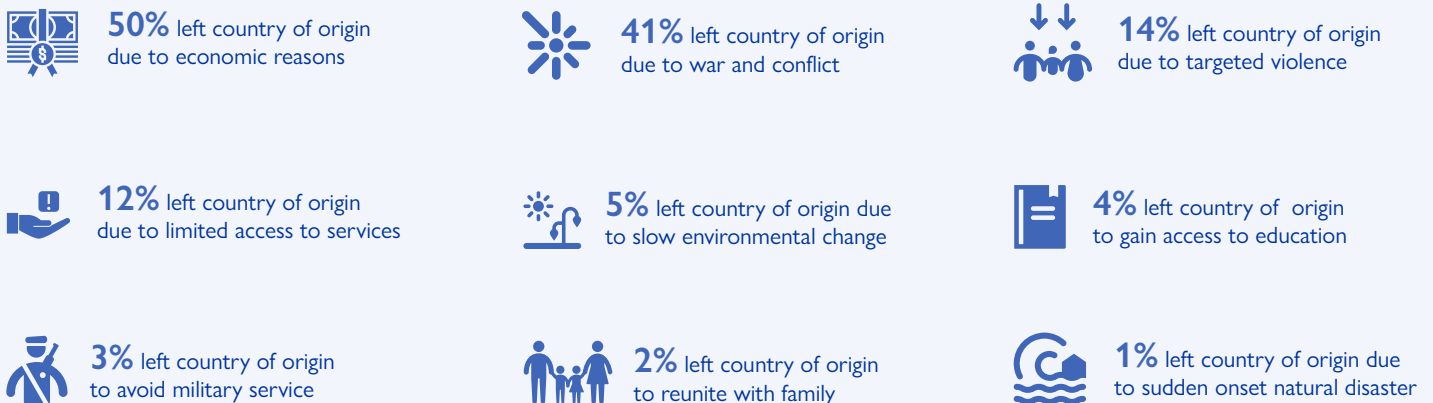
#### Demographic



#### Journeys



#### Reasons for leaving



<sup>1</sup>References to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999.)

# 1. INTRODUCTION

IOM's [Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#) is a data collection and analysis system that tracks and monitors multi-layered information on displacement and population mobility. DTM analyses the profiles, experiences, intentions, vulnerabilities, and needs of mobile populations to enable decision makers and humanitarian responders. DTM is present in the six countries or territories of the Western Balkans and Türkiye and is, therefore, in a unique position to provide route-based data analysis of mixed migration movements along the Eastern Mediterranean Route.

Since 2015, the Western Balkans region has emerged as a major crossroads for migrants and refugees<sup>2</sup> attempting to reach western Europe. A record number of migrants were registered in 2022, the highest number since 2015, with 192,182 arrivals registered.<sup>3</sup> This trend of registrations on arrival had continued in 2023 but did not surpass 2022 .

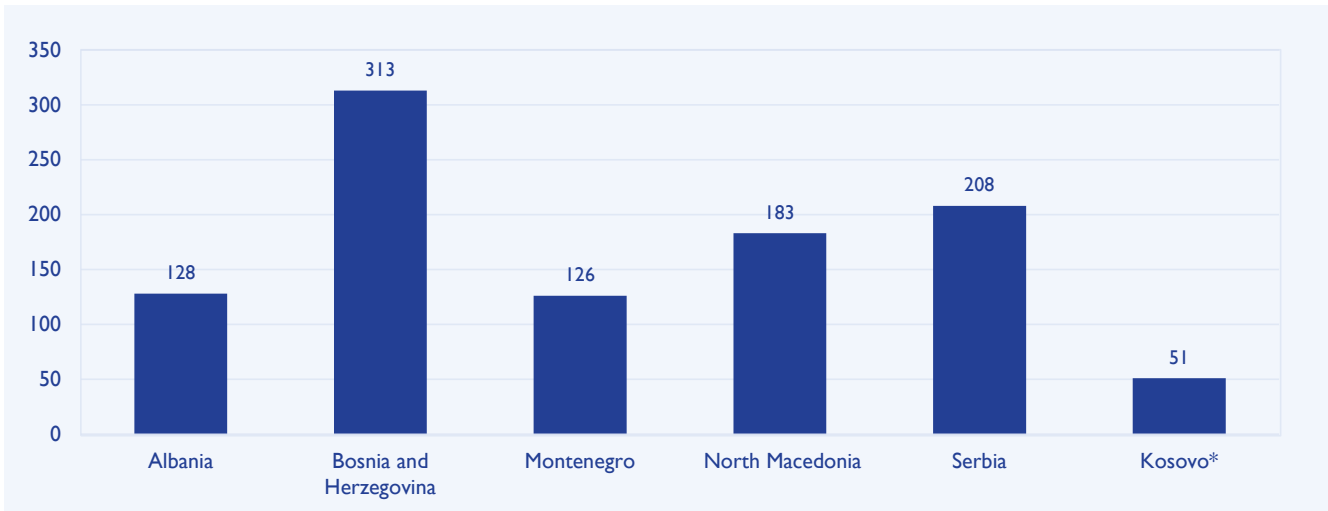
To improve assistance to migrants and to contribute to evidence-based policy making, IOM launched Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo\* in 2022.<sup>4</sup> They are part of the IOM's

DTM activities in the Mediterranean and Western Balkans within the framework of the IOM's research on populations on the move through the Mediterranean, Western Balkans and Western African Atlantic routes to Europe.

This report contains the findings of the second round of FMS carried out in the Western Balkans. Data was collected between 1 June and 31 August 2023. It gathers information about migrants' profiles, including age, sex, gender, countries and areas of origin, levels of education and employment status before migration, key transit points on their route, cost of the journey, reasons for moving and intentions. It also includes a module on migrants' vulnerability, with a focus on potential past experiences of abuse, exploitation and violence. All analyses, together with the latest information on arrivals to Europe, can be accessed via DTM's portal on mixed migration [Flows to Europe](#).

IOM interviewed 1,009 adult migrants in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*.

Figure 1: Surveys per country or territory in the Western Balkans in 2023



Source: DTM WB FMS in 2023, n=1,009

<sup>2</sup> Mixed migration movements are those in which different categories of people are travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation. [International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration](#).

<sup>3</sup> These numbers refer to registrations of migrants by authorities and institutions in the Western Balkans, meaning that double counting is possible as one migrant can be registered in multiple territories.

<sup>4</sup> IOM DTM, [Flow Monitoring Surveys in the Western Balkans 2022](#)

### Routes into the Western Balkans

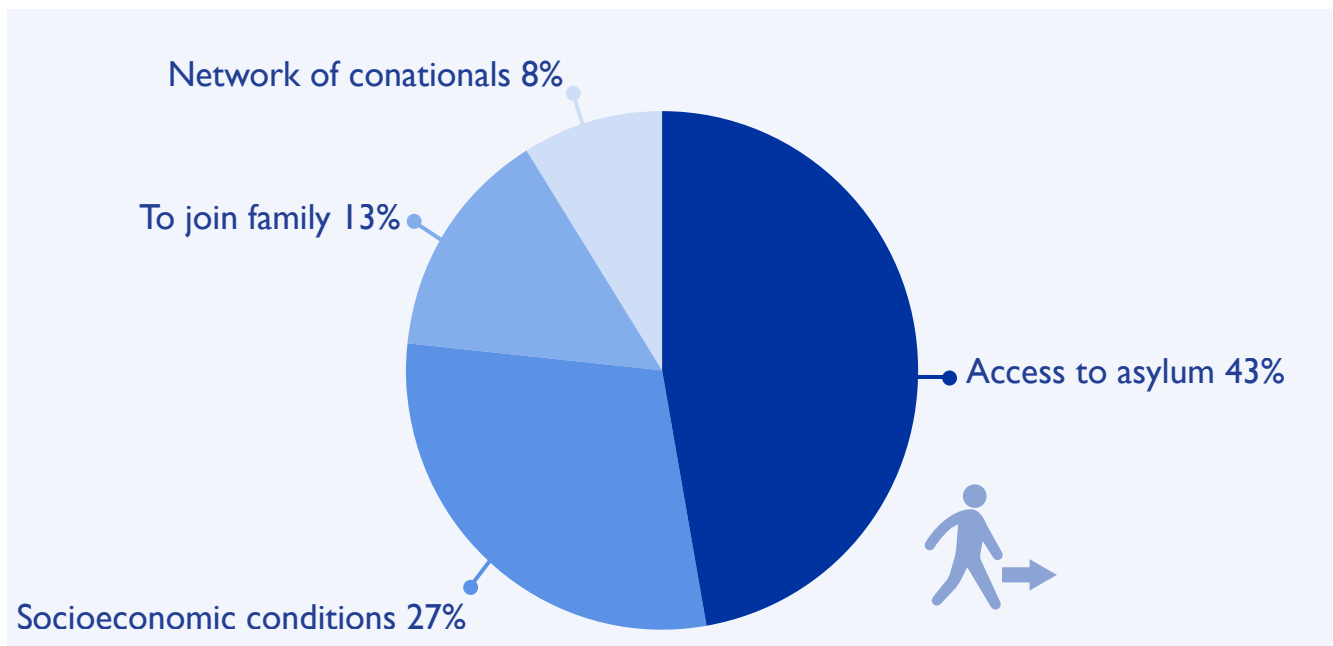
Migrants take varying routes into the Western Balkans. The routes they travel depend on their nationalities, networks and financial means. In 2023, visa restrictions have played a role in reducing the numbers of specific nationalities in the Western Balkans.

Map 1: Migration routes within the Western Balkans – 2023



Source: DTM Western Balkans flow monitoring activities.

Figure 2: Why did you specifically choose this country of destination? (n=1,009)



Source: DTM WB FMS in 2023, n=1009

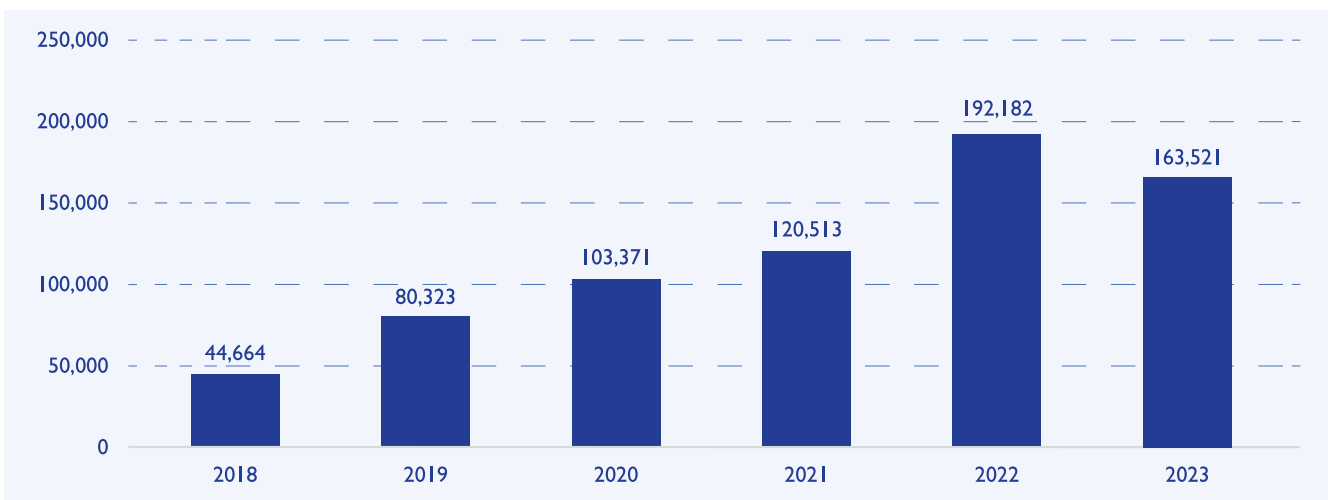
## Experiences



## Increased arrivals and high mobility

The number of migrant registrations on arrival<sup>5</sup> in the Western Balkans had consistently been increasing since 2018, reaching a height of 192,182 in 2022.<sup>6</sup> High registrations on arrival continued in 2023, with 163,521 registrations from 1 January to 31 December 2023.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 3: Annual arrivals of migrants in the countries and territories of the Western Balkans, 2018 – 2022



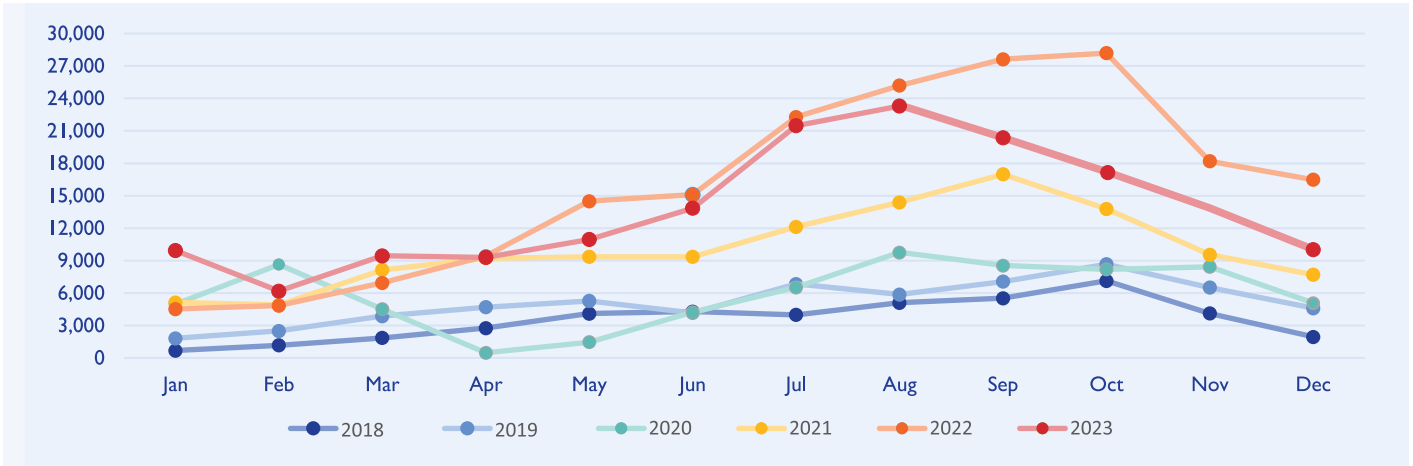
Source: DTM WB FMS in 2023, n=1009

<sup>5</sup> Registrations on arrival<sup>5</sup> refer to the registration of a migrant by official authorities. These registrations include migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as migrants enter the countries or territories of the Western Balkans in mixed migratory flows. A migrant may be registered by multiple authorities or institutions in the Western Balkans, meaning that double counting is possible as one migrant can be registered in multiple countries or territories.

<sup>6</sup> Source: IOM DTM, [Europe Arrivals](#)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

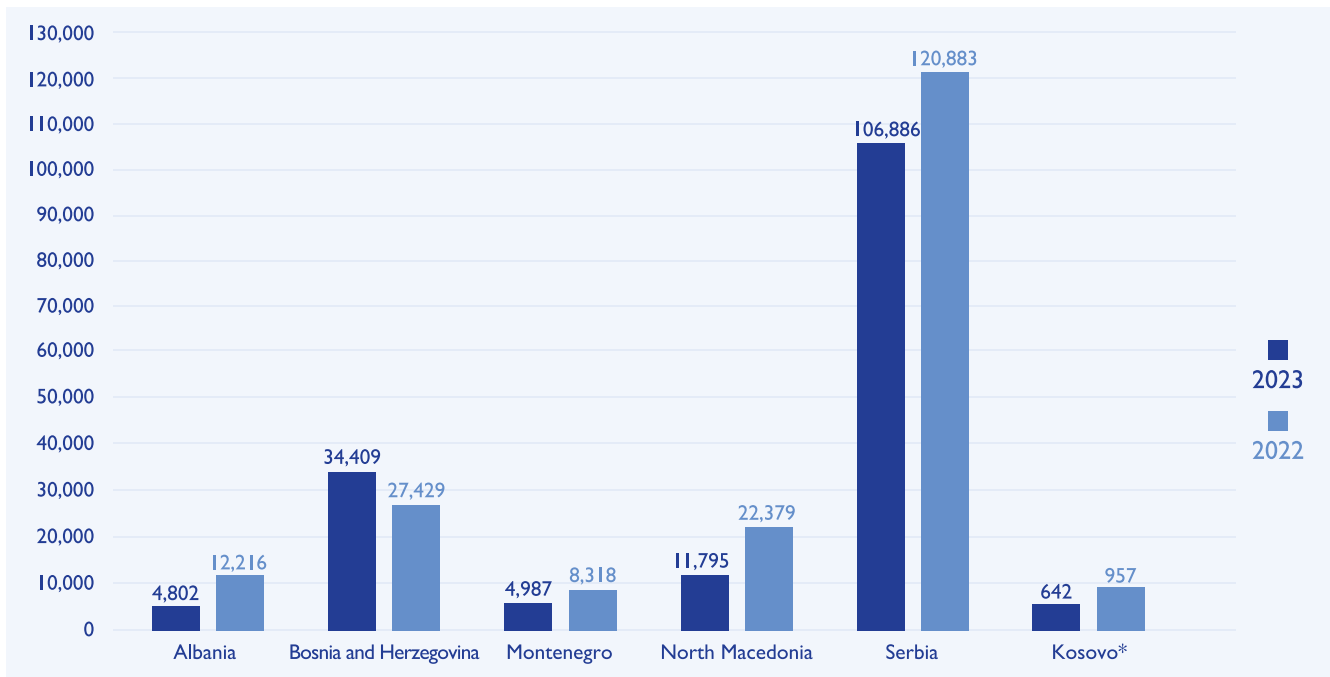
Figure 4: Monthly arrivals of migrants in the countries and territories of the Western Balkans, 2018 – 2023



Source: DTM from national authorities, <https://dtm.iom.int/content/europe-migration-arrivals-dashboard>

Once migrants are inside the Western Balkans, the majority travel through Serbia having entered either directly from Bulgaria or from North Macedonia and in rare occasions from Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> As shown in Figure 3 below, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina record the highest numbers of registrations on arrival, as these are the two exit points into Western Europe. The prevalence of the Bulgarian route has also resulted in changes to the routes within the Western Balkans.

Figure 5: Total arrivals of migrants, January to August 2022 compared 2023



Source: DTM WB FMS in 2023, n=1009

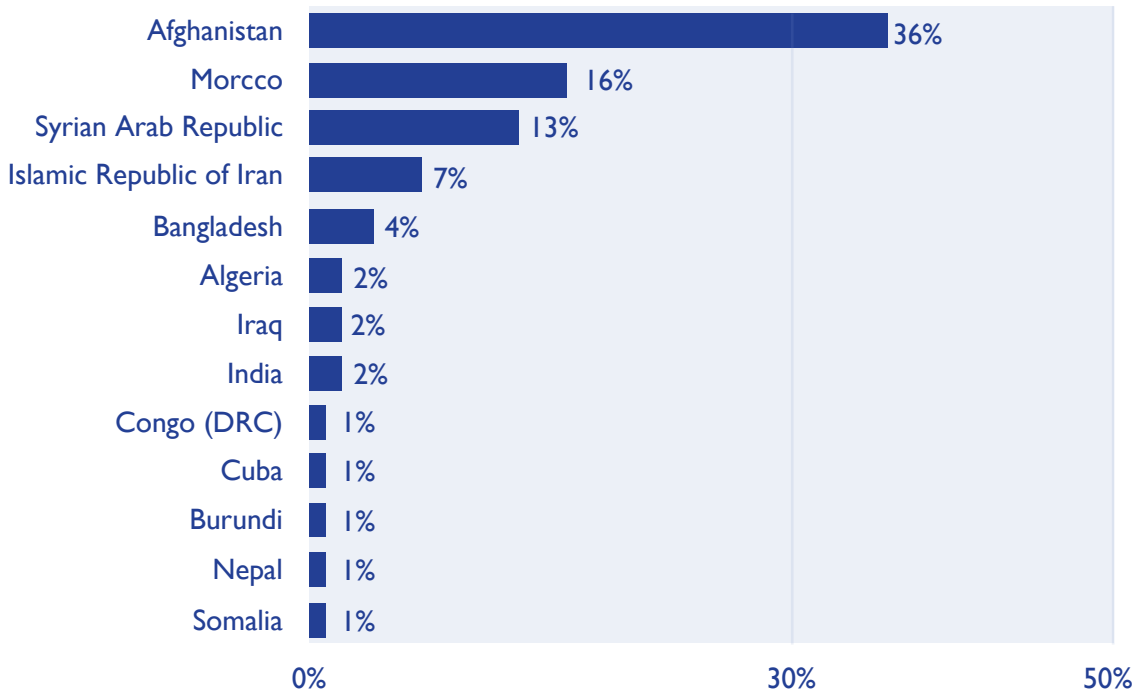


## 2. MIGRANTS TRAVELLING THROUGH THE WESTERN BALKANS: BASELINE PROFILE

### 2.1 Sample size and main nationalities

The information presented in this report is based on a sample of 1,009 respondents.

Figure 6: Main nationalities

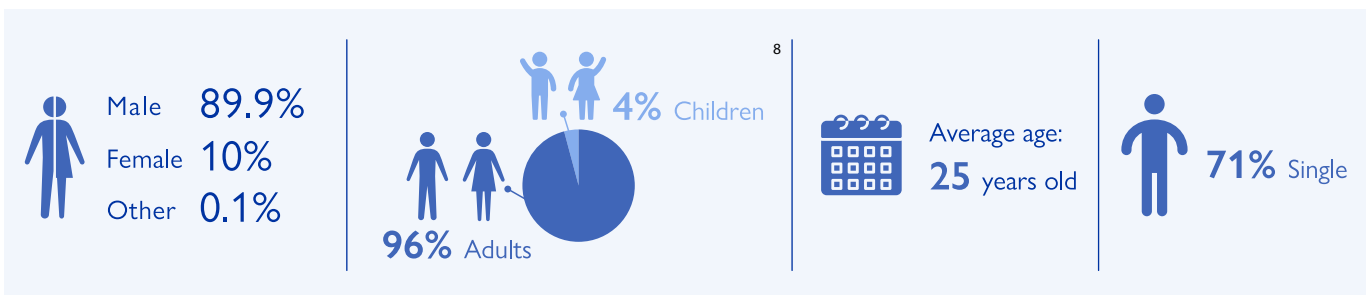


Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

The remainder of the sample consisted of nationals of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Tunisia, Egypt, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Libya, the Gambia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Djibouti, Ecuador, Mali, Mauritania, the Russian Federation, South Africa, and South Sudan, each representing less than one per cent of the total sample.<sup>8</sup>

The three main spoken languages were standard Arabic (32%), Farsi (28%) and Pashto (14%). Over half (58%) of respondents spoke a second language, while 54 per cent also spoke English.

### 2.2 Demographic profile

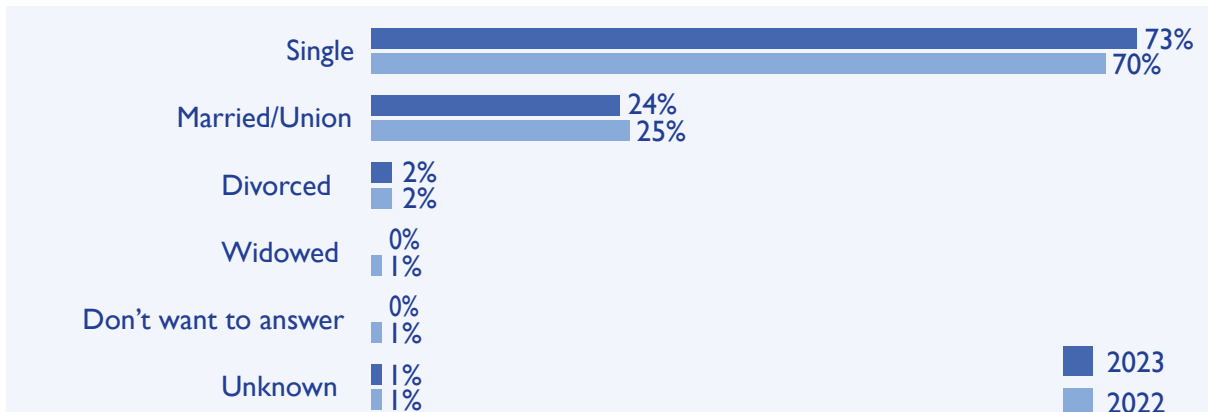


<sup>8</sup> Adolescents between 14 and 17 years require the signed informed consent of the parent or legal guardian prior to being interviewed.

Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents were single adult men. The lower number of female respondents in this sample may be due to various factors, including the availability of female enumerators and cultural reasons that may prevent women from participating in surveys. This is a slight change compared to the previous round of FMS in 2022 when only six per cent of respondents were women. Overall, 71 per cent of the sample was single,

while 24 per cent were married or in a union, 2 per cent divorced, 1 per cent widowed while 1 per cent did not wish to answer, or the information was unknown. This is consistent with the findings from the previous FMS in 2022. See Figure 7 for a breakdown of marital status by respondents for FMS 2023 and FMS 2022.

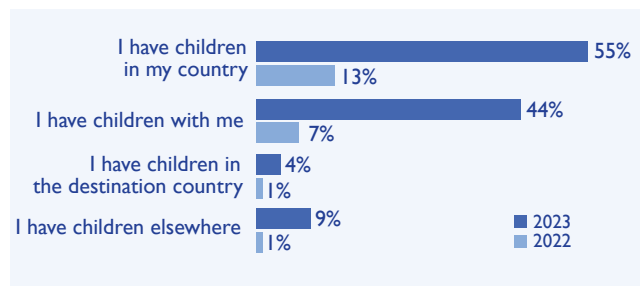
Figure 7: Marital status



Source:DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

Under one-fifth (19%) of respondents stated that they had children. Of those respondents, 55 per cent stated that they had children in the country of origin, 44 per cent stated that they had children with them in the country of interview and four per cent had children in the intended destination country.<sup>9</sup> In the 2022 FMS, 21 per cent of respondents stated that they had children. See Figure 8 for a comparison of where respondents had children in 2022 and in 2023.

Figure 8: Where do you have children?



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

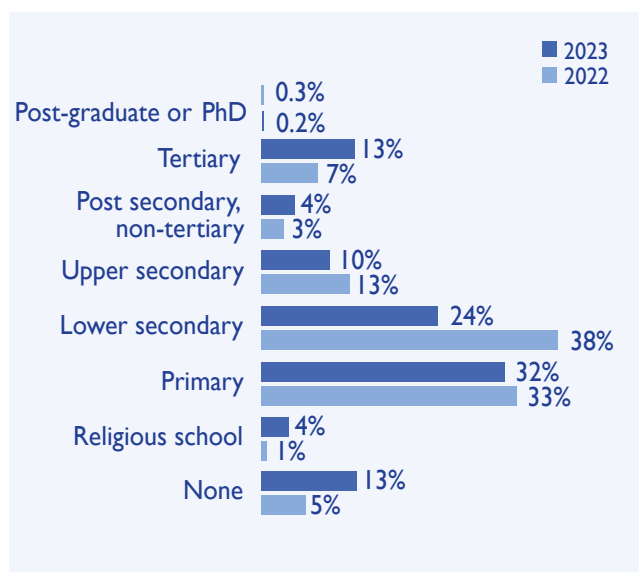
### 2.3 Education and employment

The average number of years of education a respondent completed was nine years. When asked when was the last time they had attended school, 43 per cent stated that it was more than two years ago, while 38 per cent said between one and two years, and 14 per cent said less than a year.

See Figure 9 for a breakdown of the highest level of educational attainment by respondents.

The most frequently cited subjects of study of respondents who had completed at least upper secondary school were business (14%), education (13%), information (12%), services (12%), arts/humanities (11%), engineering (10%), social sciences (10%), natural sciences (6%), health/welfare (5%), generic programmes (4%) and agriculture/forestry (3%).

Figure 9: Highest level of completed education



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

<sup>9</sup> Figures do not add up to 100 per cent as some migrants may have children in the country of origin and in the country of interview and/or in the intended destination country.

## 2.4 Employment status prior to departure

Over two-fifths (46%) were unemployed in their country of origin or habitual residence prior to departing, while 45 per cent of respondents said they had been employed, self-employed or in an apprenticeship. Seven per cent of respondents were students. The top three professions of those who were employed were agriculture/forestry (15%), construction (12%) and services (10%).

## 2.5 Reasons for leaving country of origin

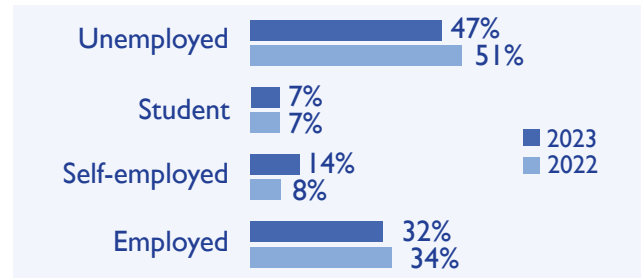
Interview respondents were asked to state the main reasons for leaving their countries of origin or countries of habitual residence. Half of respondents stated economic reasons, while 41% said war and conflict. Personal or targeted violence saw a notable increase from 3 per cent in 2022 to 14 per cent in 2023.

Drivers of migration vary among the top five nationalities (Afghans, Moroccans, Syrians, Pakistanis and Iranians) in the Western Balkans. Most Afghan nationals (69%) stated that the main driver was war and conflict, while 29 per cent stated economic reasons and 16 per cent stated personal or targeted violence.<sup>10</sup> Nationals of Morocco mostly said economic reasons (92%) followed by limited access to services (17%). Respondents from Pakistan stated economic reasons (85%), limited access to services (11%) and personal or targeted violence (10%). Syrians stated war and conflict (91%), economic reasons (18%) and limited access to services (15%). Nationals of the Islamic Republic of Iran said economic reasons (43%), personal or targeted violence (43%), and marriage or family reunification (10%).

## 2.6 Mode of travel

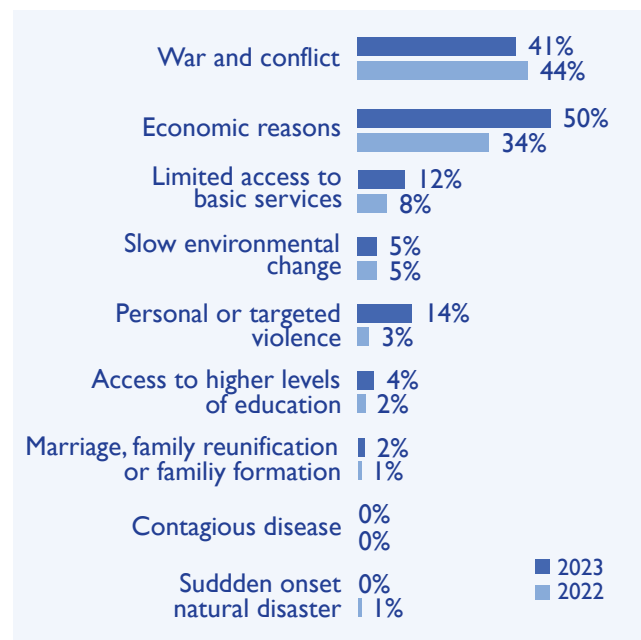
Most respondents (80%) stated that they were travelling in a group. This mostly consisted of non-family groups (66%), while 27 per cent said they were travelling with family. Of those travelling with family, seven respondents said they had been separated from their family or relatives during their journey. Nine per cent said they were travelling with facilitators, which is an increase from the five per cent who stated travelling with facilitators in the 2022 round of FMS.

Figure 10: Employment status prior to departing



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

Figure 11: Main drivers of migration



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

Figure 12: Main mode of transport to leave country of departure to first transit country



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

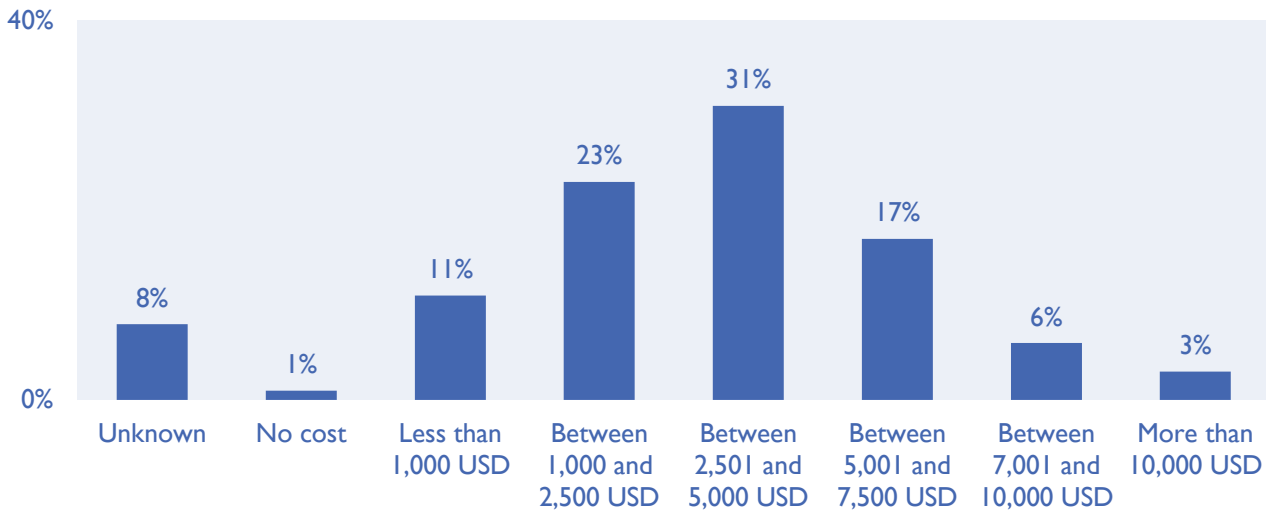
<sup>10</sup> As this was a multiple-choice question totals can add up to more than 100 per cent.

## 2.7 Cost of journey

Almost one-third (31%) of respondents paid between 2,501 USD to 5,000 USD for their journeys, compared to 2022, only 20 per cent of respondents spent the same amount. In terms of payment per leg of the journey, the maximum amount of money somebody paid to cross a border was 9,000 USD, and the minimum was no charge.

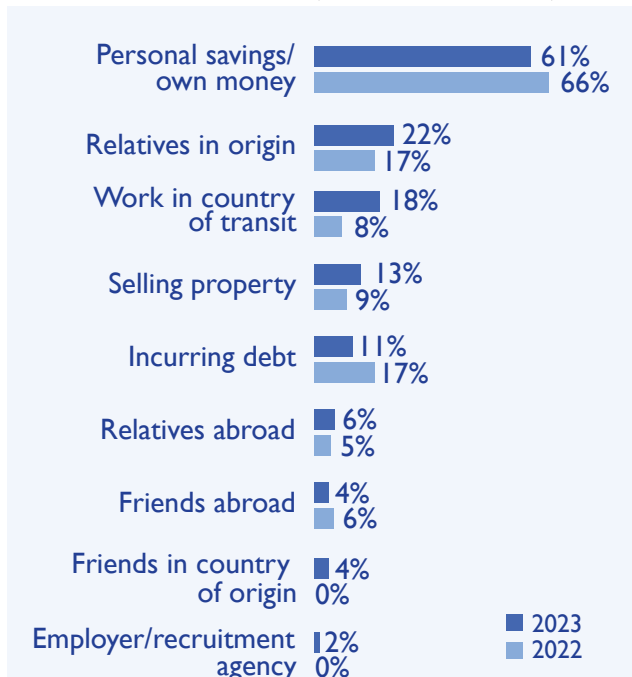
From FMS 2022, most people raised the funds for their journeys via personal savings or using their own money. The main change between 2022 and 2023 relates to the increased number of respondents who worked in a country of transit (8% in 2022 compared to 18% in 2023).

Figure 13: Cost of journey from country of origin to the time of interview



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

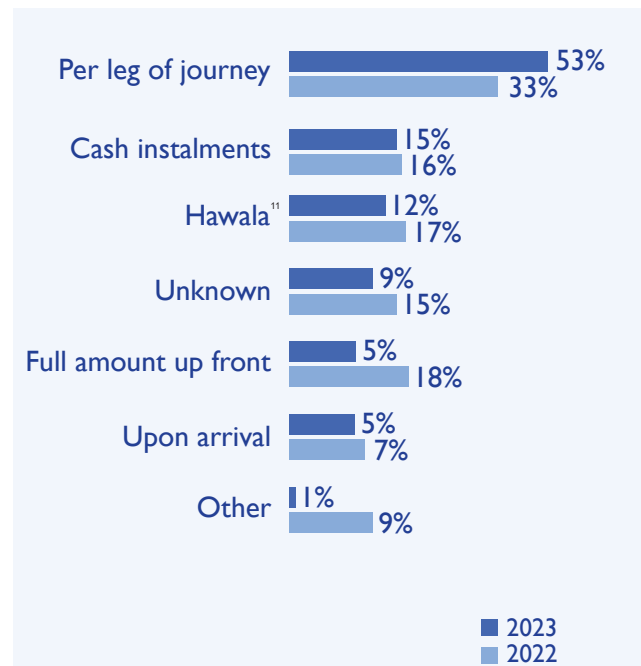
Figure 14: How was the money raised for the journey?



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

Compared to FMS in 2022, more people paid per leg of the journey (33% in 2022 compared to 57% in 2023) and

Figure 15: How did you pay for your journey?



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

more people paid the full amount up front (5% in 2023 compared to 18% in 2022).

<sup>11</sup>Hawala refers to the trust based money transferring system.

## 2.8 Problems and protection risks during the journey

Survey respondents were asked what their main problems were during their journeys. Overall, 46 per cent of all respondents reported at least one problem during their journeys, which is the same as in FMS 2022 (46%).

Figure 16: Countries where problems were reported

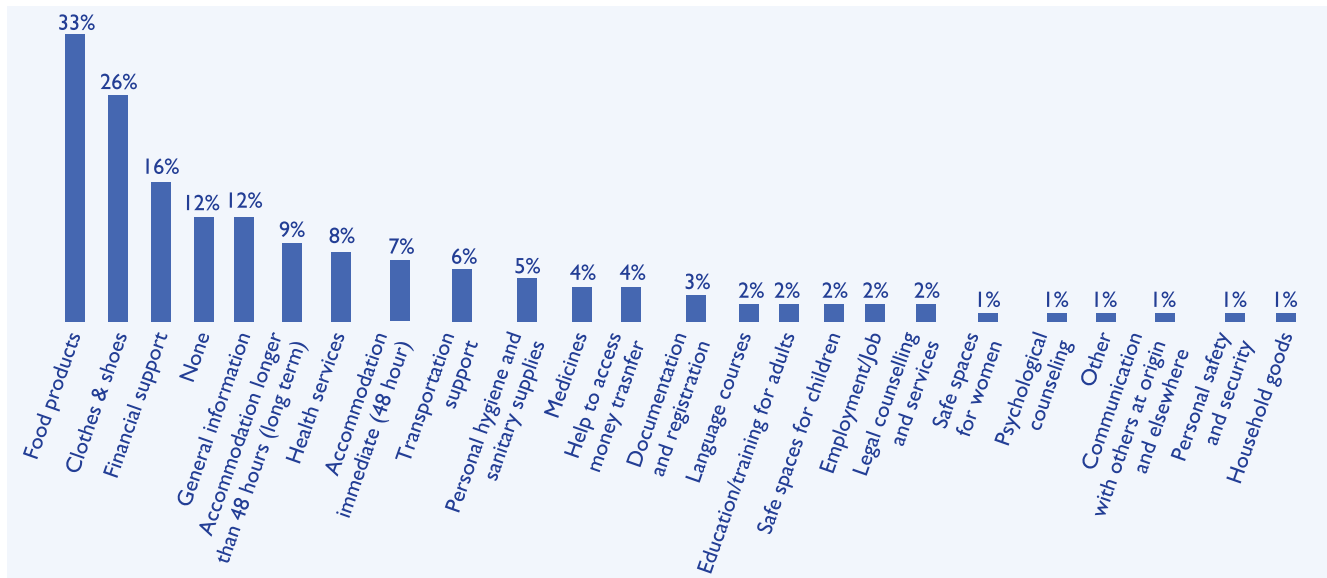


Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

## 2.9 Main needs

Respondents were asked what their main unmet needs were during their journeys. Most of the needs they reported were practical and related to basic needs such as shelter, food, medical assistance as well as bathroom.

Figure 18: Main needs during journey<sup>12</sup>

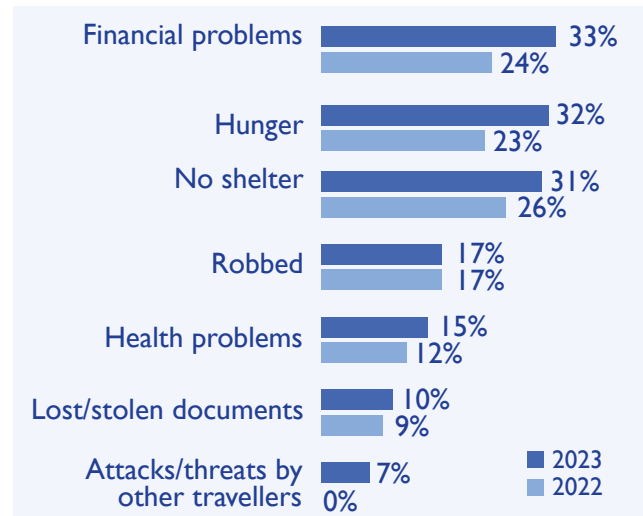


Source: DTM FMS 2023 = 1,009

<sup>12</sup> The survey asks migrants questions about whether they have been readmitted from one country to another. Migrants may or may not know the difference between formal readmission procedures and push backs and may use or understand those terms interchangeably. Findings on readmission should therefore not be understood to definitively mean pushbacks.

<sup>13</sup> Respondents can select more than one option. The total percentage therefore does not add up to 100.

Figure 17: Main problems experienced



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

Respondents were also asked if they had been readmitted to another country during their journey by the authorities of transit countries.<sup>11</sup> In this round of FMS, two per cent of respondents reported having been readmitted from one country to another. This is a significant drop compared to FMS in 2022, when this figure was 14 per cent.

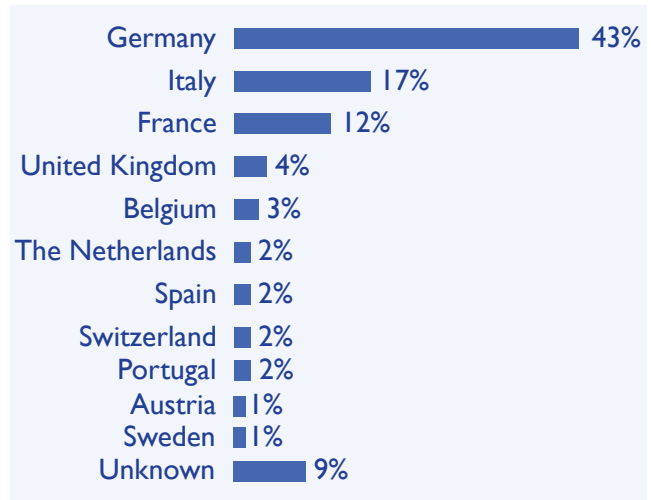
facilities, help accessing money transfers and clothing (shoes) related to the fact that people walk for prolonged periods of time.

## 2.10 Country of intended destination

The survey also asked respondents about their final intended destination. Overall, Germany (43%), Italy (17%) and France (12%) were the most frequently cited intended destination countries. These were the same top three intended countries for the 2022 FMS. However, the percentage of respondents who stated Germany increased from 31 per cent in 2022 to 43 per cent in 2023. See Figure 19 for a breakdown of the countries of intended destination.

Intended destination countries vary by nationality. Almost sixty per cent (59%) of Afghan nationals stated that they intended to travel to Germany, while for Moroccan nationals, 34 per cent said France and 31 per cent said Italy. Half of Iranian nationals said Germany while 10 per cent stated the United Kingdom (UK). Almost one-third (31%) of Pakistani nationals stated Italy, while 26 per cent stated Germany and 12 per cent said the UK. Most Syrians (78%) said they wanted to travel to Germany.

Figure 19: Countries of intended destination



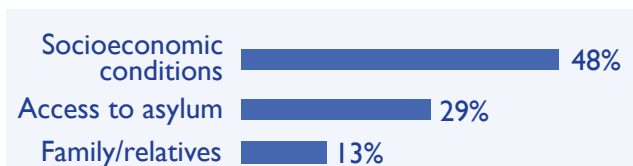
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

Figure 20: Reason for choosing intended destination country



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

Figure 21: Reason for choosing Germany as the intended destination country

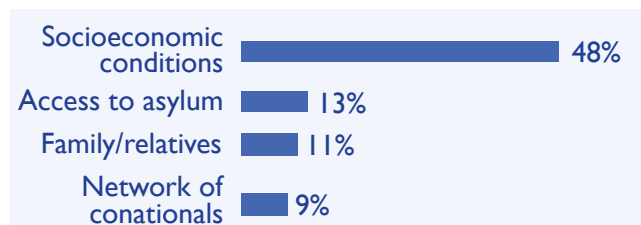


Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=448

When asked the reason why they specifically chose those countries of destination, the most frequently reported answer was because of appealing socioeconomic conditions and perceived ease of access to asylum procedures. In the previous round of FMS in 2022, 30 per cent chose the intended destination country because of appealing socioeconomic conditions and 35 per cent said it was due to ease of access to asylum procedures.

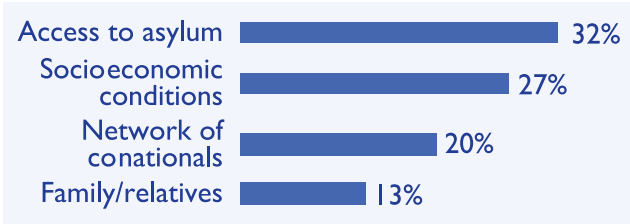
Figures 21 to 25 below provide an overview of the main reasons why people chose their intended destination countries for the top five countries of intended destination (Germany, Italy, France, the UK and Belgium, respectively).

Figure 22: Reason for choosing Italy as the intended destination country



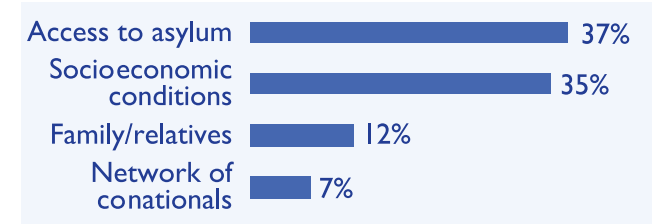
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=159

Figure 23: Reason for choosing France as the intended destination country



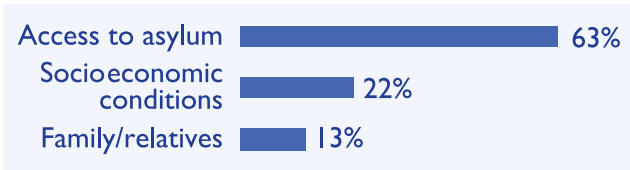
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=133

Figure 24: Reason for choosing UK as the intended destination country



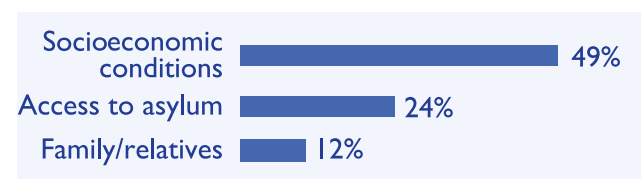
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=43

Figure 25: Reason for choosing Belgium as the intended destination country



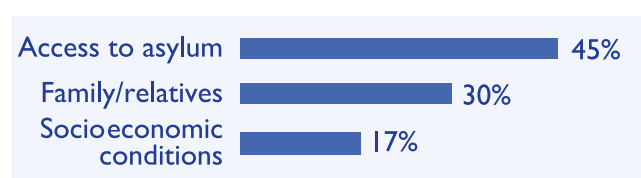
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=32

Figure 26: Reason for choosing intended destination country (Afghan nationals)



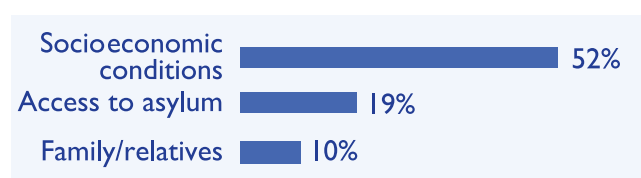
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=362

Figure 28: Reason for choosing intended destination country (Syrian nationals)



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=134

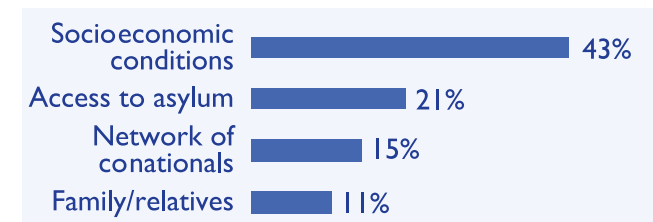
Figure 30: Reason for choosing intended destination country (Iranian nationals)



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=68

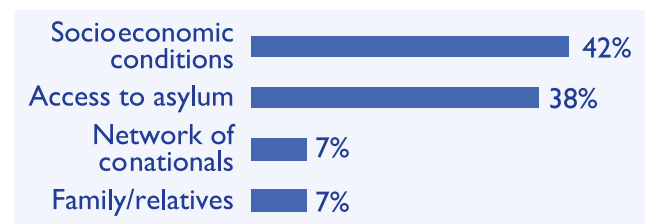
Figures 26 to 30 below provide an overview of the main reasons why people chose their intended destination countries for the top five nationalities (Afghanistan, Morocco, Syrian Arab Republic, Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, respectively).

Figure 27: Reason for choosing intended destination country (Moroccan nationals)



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=164

Figure 29: Reason for choosing intended destination country (Pakistani nationals)

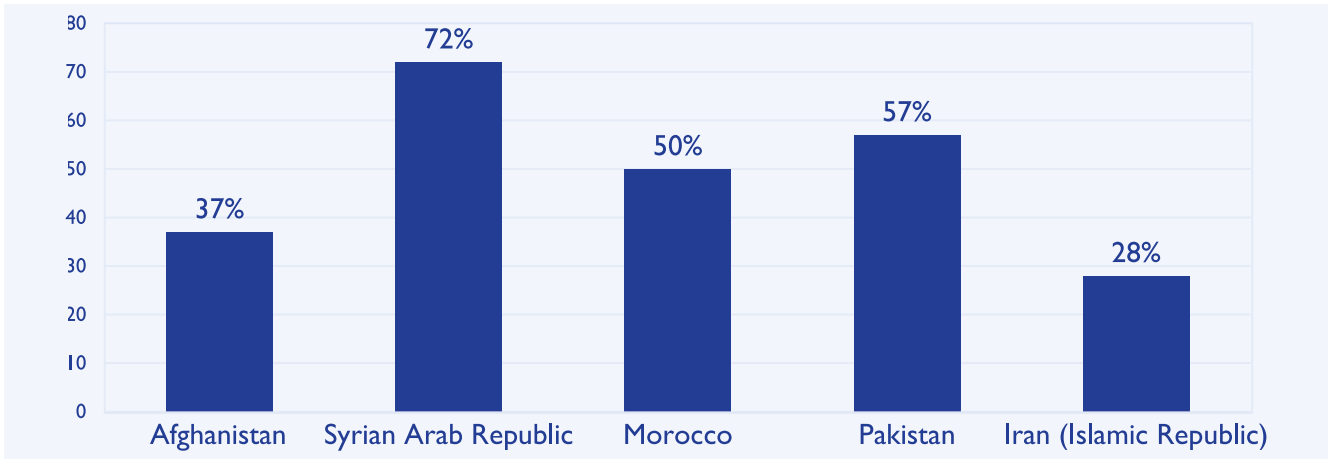


Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=81

Forty-six per cent of respondents stated that they had family in their country of intended destination (compared to 53% in FMS 2022). Most (81%) of those respondents had extended family members, while the remaining 19 per cent had immediate family members in their intended destination country. Figure 31 below provides an overview of the percentage of respondents who have

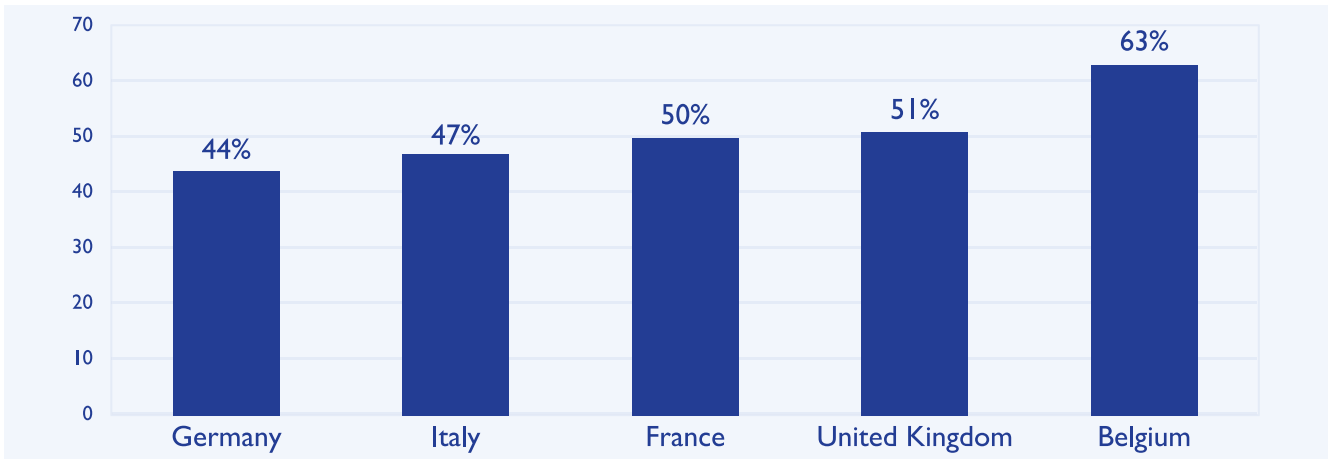
family in their intended country of destination for the top five nationalities. Figure 32 shows the percentage of respondents who have family in the intended destination country, broken down per the top five intended destination countries.

Figure 31: Percentage of respondents who have family in intended country of destination , by nationality



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

Figure 32: Percentage of respondents who have family in the intended country of destination (per Top 5 countries)



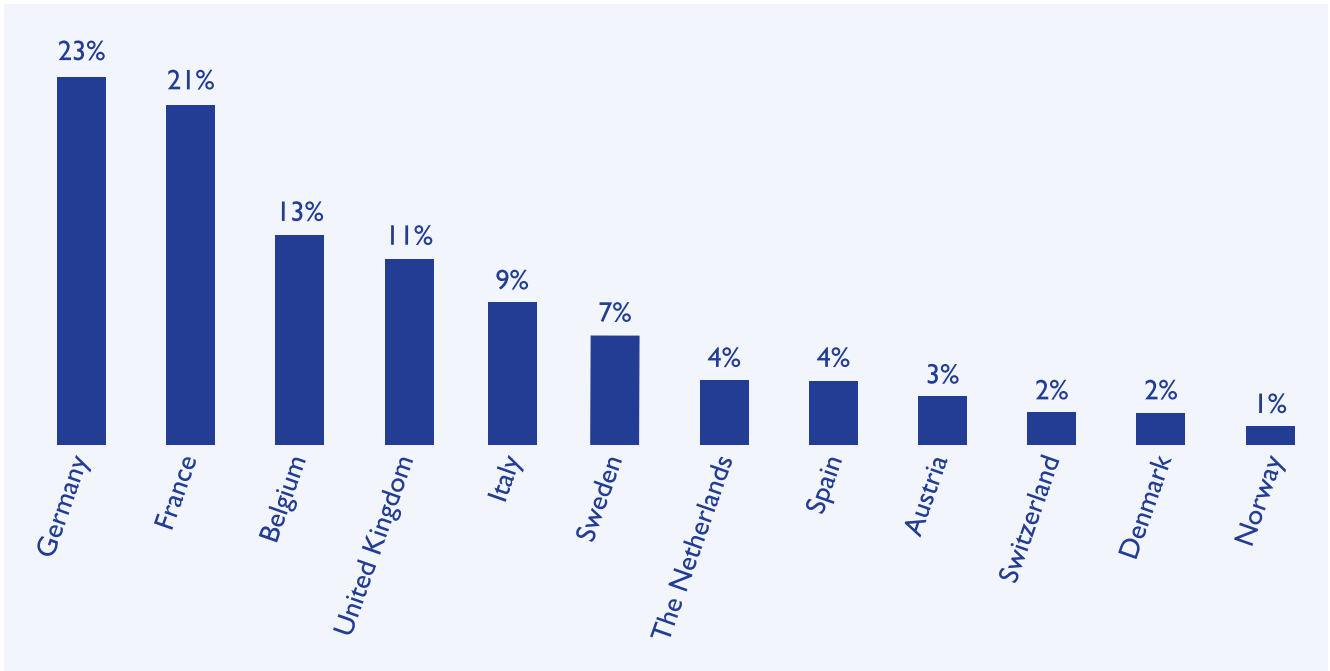
Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009



In addition, 26 per cent of respondents stated that they had family members in another European country other than their intended country of destination. Of these, 84 per cent stated that they had extended family, while the remaining 16 per cent said it was immediate family members. Figure 29 below provides a breakdown of the

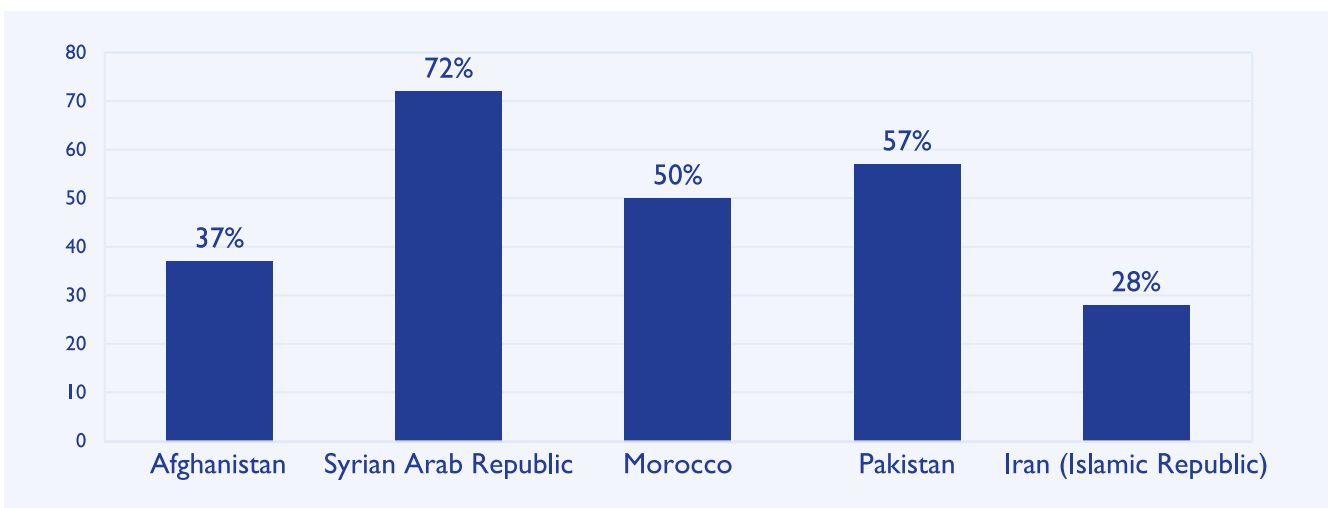
countries and the percentages of respondents who said they had family members in this other European country. Figure 34 shows the percentage of respondents who have family in another European country for the top five nationalities.

Figure 33: Percentage breakdown of European countries in which respondents had family members



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

Figure 34: Percentage of respondents who have family in another European country, by nationality



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

Only 3 per cent of respondents said that they had tried to join their family members through family reunification or other legal procedures.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (61%) said that they had no information on asylum or how to obtain documents to legally stay in the country of intended destination.

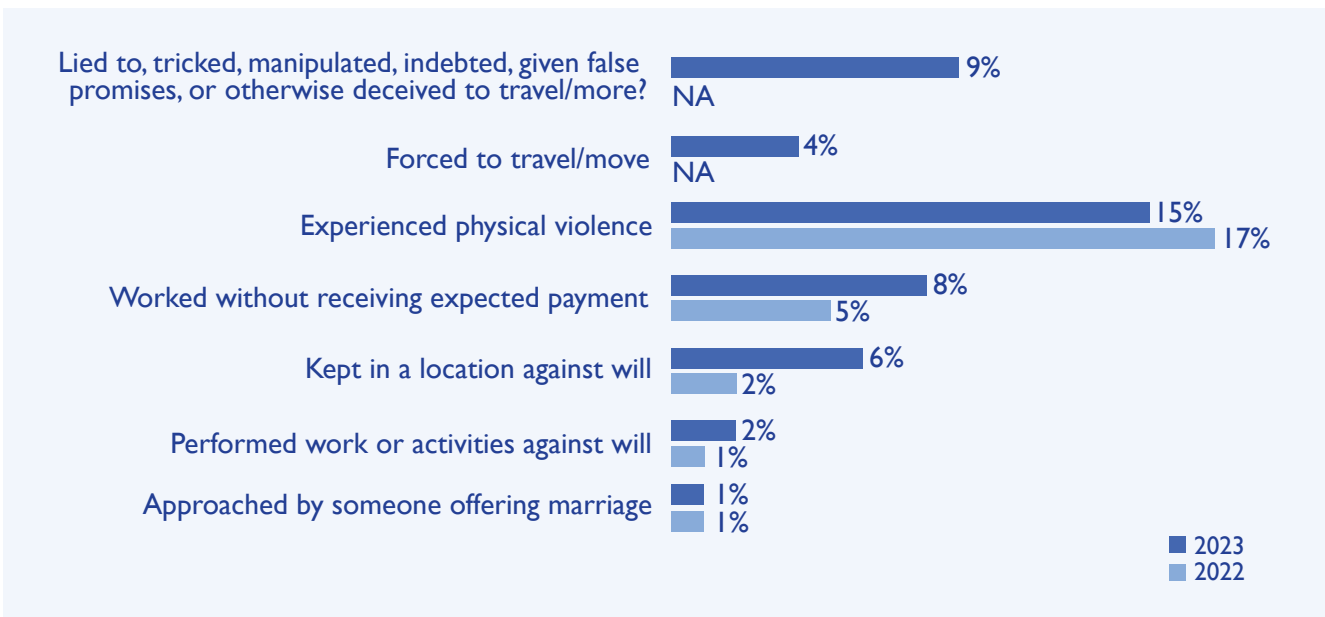
### 3. EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND/OR ABUSE

The questionnaire also included a module which gathers data on migrants' vulnerability and the forms of abuse, violence and exploitation they may have experienced or witnessed during the journey. More specifically, the survey includes questions that capture information about whether the respondents, during their journey had<sup>13</sup>:

1. Worked or performed other activities without getting the expected payment.
2. Been forced to perform work or other activities against their will.
3. Been approached by someone offering a marriage (for you or close family member – child or sibling).
4. Been kept at a certain location against their will (by persons other than the authorities of the country).
5. Experienced any form of physical violence.
6. Have been forced to travel/move.
7. Thought they were lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises, or otherwise deceived in order to get them to travel/move.
8. Travel documents with them or had access to them during the journey?

These questions relate to an event, that might indicate exposure to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse practices, physical and sexual violence, experienced by the respondent directly or by one of their family member, or witnessed by the respondent during the journey. The experiences described in these questions do not aim to identify cases of human trafficking as defined by international and national legal instruments. If interviewers came across respondents who requested further support, they referred these cases to the relevant protection actor.

Figure 35: Indicators of violence, exploitation and/or abuse<sup>13</sup>



Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009 | DTM FMS 2022, n=1,069

Overall, 28 per cent of all respondents had experience of at least one of these indicators of violence, exploitation and/or abuse.

<sup>13</sup> FMS 2022 did not include questions on whether a respondent had (1) been lied to or tricked into moving, (2) been forced to travel. (3) questions about their travel documents.



## EXPERIENCED SOME FORM OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Among the indicators of violence, exploitation and/or abuse, physical violence was the most frequently reported with under one fifth (15%) of respondents having experienced this, which compares broadly to the 17 per cent who reported this in the FMS round of 2022. Among the female respondents, 13 per cent reported having experienced physical violence while 15 per cent of male respondents also stated that they had experienced physical violence. Most of the experiences of physical violence were reported in Greece (29%), Bulgaria (23%), Türkiye (20%) Croatia (9%) and Serbia (8%).



## FORCED LABOUR

Of the total survey respondents, 2 per cent stated that they had been forced to perform work or other activities against their will, broadly comparable to the previous round of FMS in 2022 when 1 per cent of respondents said they had performed work or other activities against their will.

All the respondents who experienced this were male. Most of the experiences of forced labour occurred in Türkiye (81%), with incidents also reported in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Serbia. The main types of activities people reported having been forced to carry out were cleaning, working in the services sector and working in factories.



## LABOUR EXPLOITATION

For the 8 per cent of respondents who stated that they or someone in their family had worked without receiving the expected payments, the main sectors of the economy in which this occurred were construction, factory workers, the services sector and the textile or garment industry. Most of the experiences of labour exploitation occurred in the Republic of Türkiye (80%) and Greece (15%).



## OFFERS OF AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE

Less than one per cent (0.9%) of the total survey respondents indicated that either they themselves or someone in their family was approached and offered a marriage. All of the respondents who had experienced this were men.



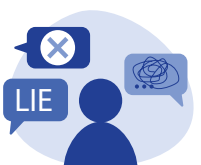
## BEING KEPT AT A CERTAIN LOCATION AGAINST THEIR WILL

The module asks survey respondents whether they have been kept against their will at a specific location by persons other than official authorities. Of the total sample, 6 per cent of respondents stated that they had been kept at a certain location against their will, which is an increase from the 2 per cent who stated this in the FMS round in 2022. This had mostly happened in Greece (39%), Türkiye (25%), Bulgaria (11%), and Albania (9%).



## FORCED TO TRAVEL OR MOVE

Survey respondents were asked if someone had forced them to travel or move. Overall, 4 per cent of respondents reported that they had been forced to move, including 7 per cent of all female respondents and 4 per cent of male respondents. Greece (34%), Türkiye (25%), Albania (11%) and Serbia (11%) were the most frequently cited countries where this occurred.



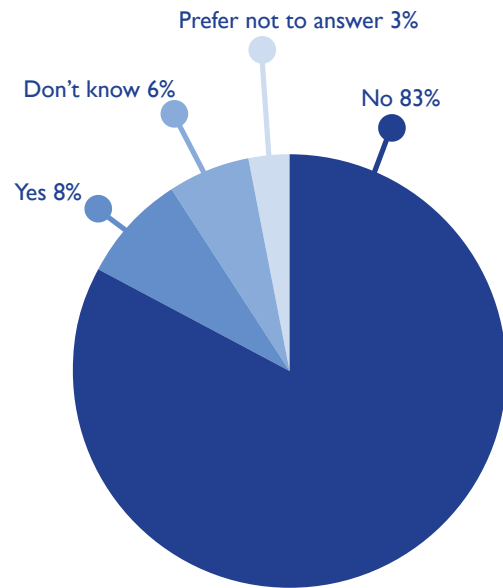
## LIED, TRICKED, MANIPULATED, INDEBTED, GIVEN FALSE PROMISES, OR OTHERWISE DECEIVED IN ORDER TO TRAVEL OR MOVE

Just under one-tenth (9%) of respondents said that they believed they were lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises, or otherwise deceived in order to get them to move. Almost a tenth of the male respondents (10%) reported this while 6 per cent of the female respondents also reported this.

## 4. RETURN INTENTIONS

Most of the survey respondents (83%) reported they had not considered returning to their country of origin during their journey so far, compared to 93 per cent who reported not having considered in the FMS round of 2022. Of those who had considered returning, the most frequently cited reason (75%) was because they were tired. Of those who had not considered returning, the main reason (76%) was that they were unwilling to return.

Figure 36: Have you considered returning back to your country of origin?



## 5. METHODOLOGY

Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) were conducted as part of DTM activities in the Mediterranean that have started in October 2015 and are being conducted within the framework of IOM’s research on populations on the move, through the Mediterranean and Western Balkans Routes to Europe. The data collection involves direct interviews with migrants and collation of statistical data on arrivals and migrant presence in reception and outside from national authorities and IOM staff presence. Regular updates on arrivals are available on [DTM Flows to Europe Geportal](#).

The surveys were administered by IOM field staff between 1 June and 31 August 2023 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*. The survey is designed to profile third country (non-European) nationals who are moving to Europe by land and by sea through the Western Balkan route. Only migrants aged 14 and above are approached and the questionnaire is proposed only to migrants and refugees who have arrived in the country of the survey no more than one year prior to the interview. The IOM requires the written consent of the parents or legal guardians of potential survey respondents under the age of 18.

The FMS questionnaire was available in e-format in Kobo (English and French) and in paper forms translated into Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Pashto and Urdu. Respondents were approached in a simple random sample by IOM field staff working in the TRCs,

Source: DTM FMS 2023, n=1,009

with those who give their consent to be interviewed proceeding with the remaining questions. The interviews were anonymous and conducted one-on-one with respondents, in safe and isolated spaces, also considering the COVID-19 regulations in force in the Western Balkans at the time of the data collection. Migrants can decline to respond to individual questions or to interrupt the interview if they wish to do so.

### 5.1 Sampling

FMS uses a convenience sampling procedure. The sample attempts to reflect as accurately as possible the population of migrants inside reception facilities in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*.

## 5.2 The questionnaire

DTM's FMS baseline module captures data on the demographic profile of the respondents, their education and employment background, the circumstances of their migration journey and migration factors, their place of origin or their last country of habitual residence, and their future intentions with regards to the country of destination.

The second FMS module contains questions that refer to experience exploitation, violence and abuse that may amount to human trafficking. The module was prepared together with IOM's Migrant Protection and Assistance Division and gathers information on events and practices, experienced directly by the respondent or by their family member(s), or that are witnessed by the respondent during the journey.

## 5.3 Limitations

The data presented in this document are representative of the individuals surveyed in the covered locations and during the indicated timeframe. The data should not be generalized and should not represent a full picture of regional migration, but rather of migratory flows in the specific locations monitored in the countries or territories of the Western Balkans during the period covered.

The third FMS module contains questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing primarily on personal knowledge and awareness of coronavirus disease symptoms among respondents and on travel restrictions related to COVID-19, and if they had already access to vaccination. The set of questions was designed to understand whether migrants are aware of COVID-19 symptoms, mitigation measures, and how potential restrictions may have impacted their migration journey and the economic situation of respondents and of their families in terms of ability to send and/or receive financial remittances.

It should also be noted that a lower percentage of women of the total migrants in the Western Balkans were interviewed, for several reasons, including that women may be less willing to talk even when female enumerators are deployed. Moreover, women tend to travel alone less often than men, and, often due to cultural reasons, is has proved to be more difficult to approach women when travelling with male family members.

