

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans. IOM surveyed 979 migrants¹ from 1 September to 30 September 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



979
Migrants interviewed

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents



525 days
Average time since leaving country of origin



5,546

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



62%
Travelled throughout the region by bus



21%
Travelled by taxi

6% **94%**
Sex

79%
Single
28
years old
Average age



31%
Slept outside or squatted in abandoned buildings in the Western Balkans

43,092
Total registrations in the Western Balkans as of 30 September 2024

3
Average number of failed border crossing attempts per person

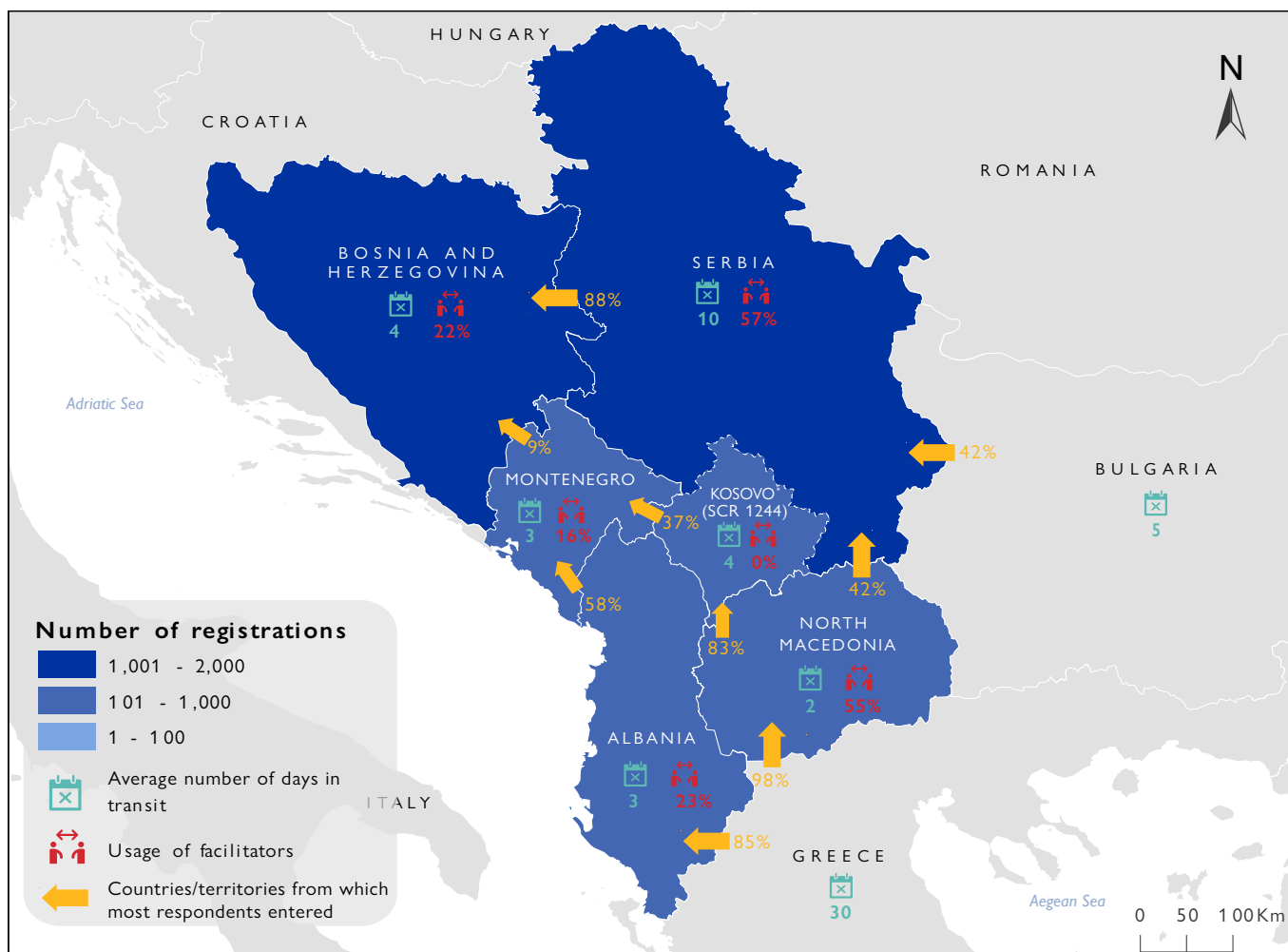
30%
Were facilitated across at least one border in the Western Balkans

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 – September 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.

Eighty-six per cent of respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina reported entering from Serbia, a 21 per cent rise from August 2024. In Montenegro, 58 per cent entered from Albania and 37 per cent from Kosovo*. In Albania, seven per cent of respondents stated that they had arrived by air in Tirana airport, which is the first time this has been reported in 2024.

	ALB	BIH	MNE	MKD	SRB	XKX*	WB
	72%	96%	69%	100%	70%	–	90%
	21%	71%	91%	38%	59%	–	62%
	–	2%	–	56%	1%	–	10%
	5%	22%	27%	2%	39%	–	21%

Figure 1: Mode of travel in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=979)

In Serbia, the primary entry points were the borders with Bulgaria (39%) and North Macedonia (34%), while 23 per cent, mainly Turkish nationals, arrived by air.

Journeys: travel modality

Most respondents (78%) reported travelling in a group. Of those who were travelling in a group, 32 per cent stated they were travelling with facilitators, which is a 23 per cent decrease compared to the August 2024 sample. Thirty-four per cent reported travelling with their families, which is a 24 per cent increase compared to the previous month.

Journeys: border crossings

Thirty per cent of the respondents in September 2024 stated that they were facilitated across a border to enter the country of survey, which is consistent with August 2024. On average, respondents paid 575 EUR to cross a border within the Western Balkans.

Thirty-seven per cent of respondents had attempted and failed a border crossing at least once. Almost all (95%) 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.

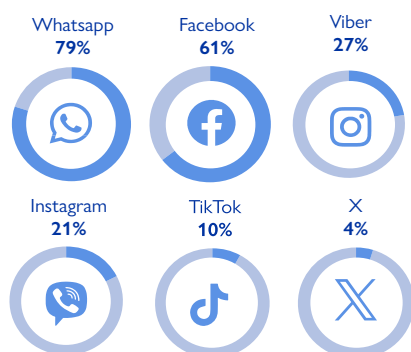


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=979)

Journeys: secondary movements⁴

Thirty-four per cent of the respondents stated that they had been living in a country other than their own country of origin for a year or more⁵. Sixty-six per cent of these respondents had been living in Türkiye. Greece was the second most cited country with 29 per cent of respondents stating they had resided here for more than a year.

When asked why they decided to move after living in transit countries for over a year, the primary reason cited was personal targeted violence (64%). The two other main reasons for leaving were the deteriorating economic conditions (61%), and the fear of deportation to the country of origin (50%).⁶

Journeys: needs

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

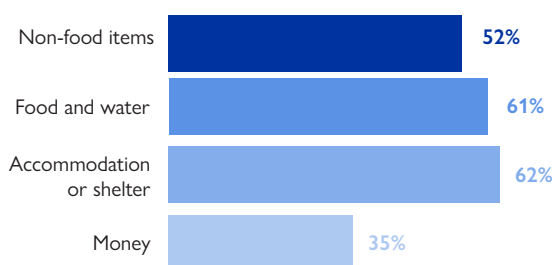


Figure 3: Most important needs outside reception facilities (multiple answers possible) (n=979)

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.

ACCOMMODATION

More than half of the respondents (52%) reported having been accommodated in a reception facility at least once during their journeys through the Western Balkans.

In September 2024, 52 per cent of respondents also stated that they had either slept outside or squatted in an abandoned building at one point during their transit in the Western Balkans. The number of migrants who reported having slept outside increased by 22 per cent compared to August 2024. The use of private accommodation was the highest in Albania (67%). On average, respondents paid 23 EUR per person, per day for private accommodation or hotels and hostels in the Western Balkans.

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of where migrants were accommodated in the Western Balkans.

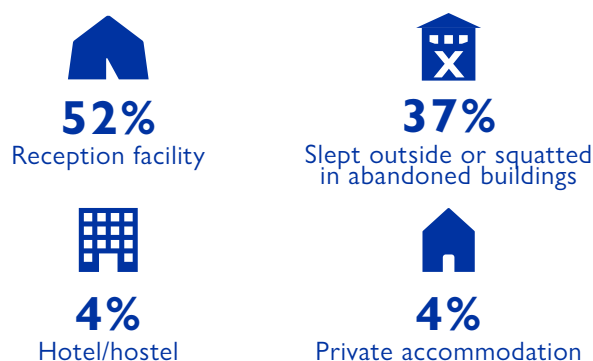


Figure 4: Accommodation in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=979)

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

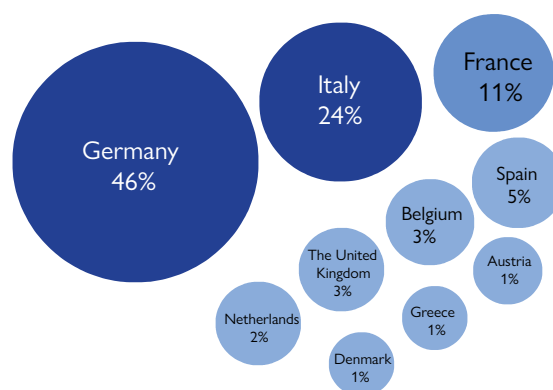


Figure 5: Top ten intended destinations (n=979)

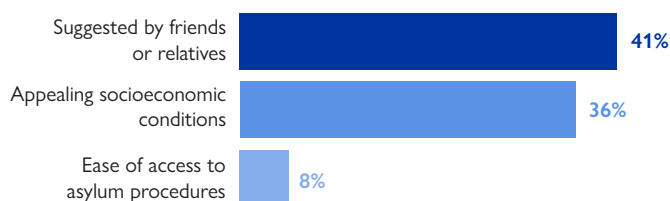
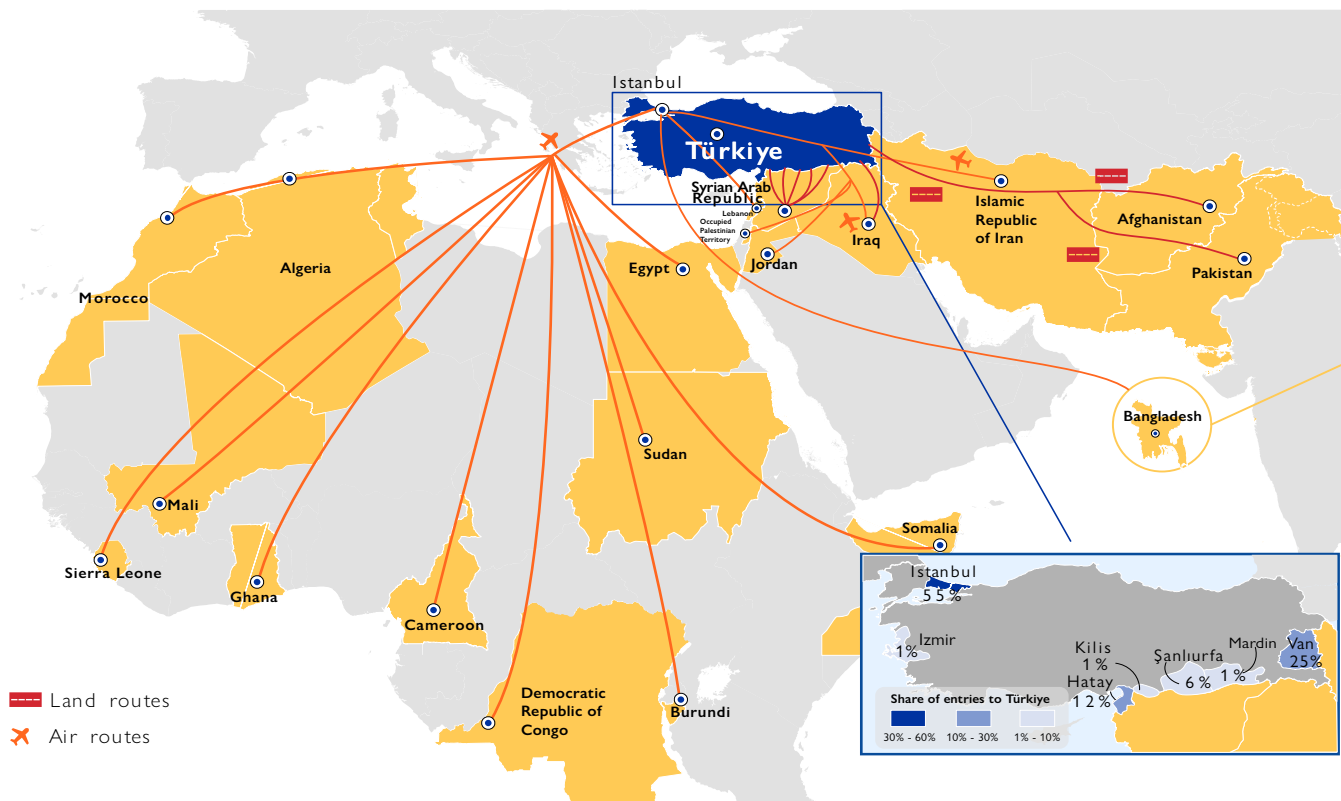


Figure 6: Main reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=979)

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 September 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 202 migrants of the overall sample in September.⁷



Figure 7: Average length of stay in Türkiye (n=202)

Interviewees from North, Central, and West Africa all stated that they flew to Istanbul before continuing their journeys, while those from Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, 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.

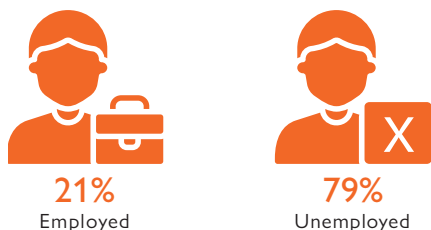


Figure 8: Employment status in Türkiye (n=202)

On average, respondents spent 337 days in Türkiye prior to leaving. Thirty-two per cent of the respondents stated that they registered with authorities in Türkiye.

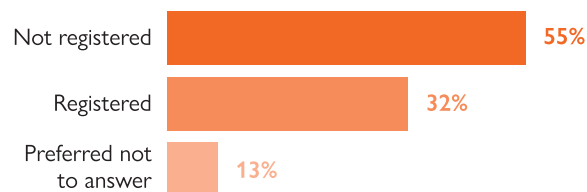


Figure 9: Registration by authorities in Türkiye (n=202)

All of the respondents had departed Türkiye from an unofficial border crossing. Twenty-two per cent stated they left Türkiye due to the deteriorating economic situation, while 19 per cent stated they left due to persecution. Most (79%) respondents exited Türkiye from Edirne province followed by Izmir (16%).

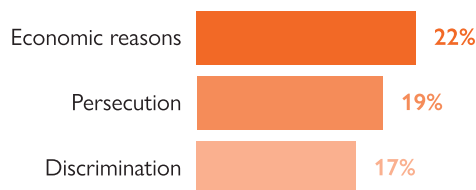


Figure 10: Reasons for leaving Türkiye (multiple answers possible) (n=202)

⁷ This module 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 – Raising and Spending

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. IOM conducted interviews with five migrants from Algeria, Cameroon, Senegal and Morocco to better understand how they receive and decide to spend money while travelling.

- The cost of travelling through the Western Balkans can vary from person to person. Food, water, accommodation, facilitation, and many other expenses can accumulate for migrants. This special focus aims to give an insight into how people can make and spend money during their journey through the Western Balkans.
- Respondents were asked how they raised money for the journey. Nearly all respondents stated savings, except one respondent, who stated he borrowed money from a friend.
- All respondents flew to Türkiye, and from there, the two Moroccan respondents walked through Bulgaria, and the other three respondents took a boat to Greece.
- Respondents from Cameroon and Senegal said they paid 200 EUR and 1,000 EUR to get a boat from Türkiye to Greece. The respondent from Angola said he didn't pay anything and boarded a boat. Once in Greece, all three respondents stated they travelled through Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, and then BiH.
- Respondents from Angola, Cameroon and Morocco stated they worked in Türkiye. The two respondents from Angola and Cameroon worked in the textile industry for four to five months and were paid 1,500 lira (40 EUR) a week and 2,500 Turkish lira (66 EUR) a week. Respondents from Morocco stated that they worked in a plastic factory and made 3,800 Lira (100 EUR) a week.
- All respondents stated they feared being robbed and their savings being taken away. The respondents from Morocco said they wrap their money in plastic just in case they need to swallow it to keep it safe.
- The respondent from Cameroon stated that all his savings were stolen when the Greek border guards caught his boat. He said they took everyone's money and phones on the boat and then pushed them back to sea. He stated it was the worst experience of the trip so far.
- When asked what they spent the most on, three respondents stated food, while two stated transport. Respondents from Morocco stated that they would often find fruit trees while walking and collect fruit to save money.
- At the end of the interview, respondents were asked roughly how much they spent travelling from Türkiye to BiH. The respondent from Angola stated 200 EUR, the respondent from Senegal stated 1,800 EUR, and the two from Morocco stated 150 EUR. The respondent from Cameroon noted that he did not know how much he had spent.

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 September to 30 September 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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