



609

Migrants interviewed



32 days

Average length of stay in BiH



1,766

Registrations by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH (SFA) in May 2024

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents

Syrian Arab Republic **22%**

Afghanistan **18%**

Morocco **14%**

Nepal **10%**

Pakistan **8%**



69%

Travelled throughout the country by bus



25%

Travelled by taxi

**Multiple answers possible*



74%

of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



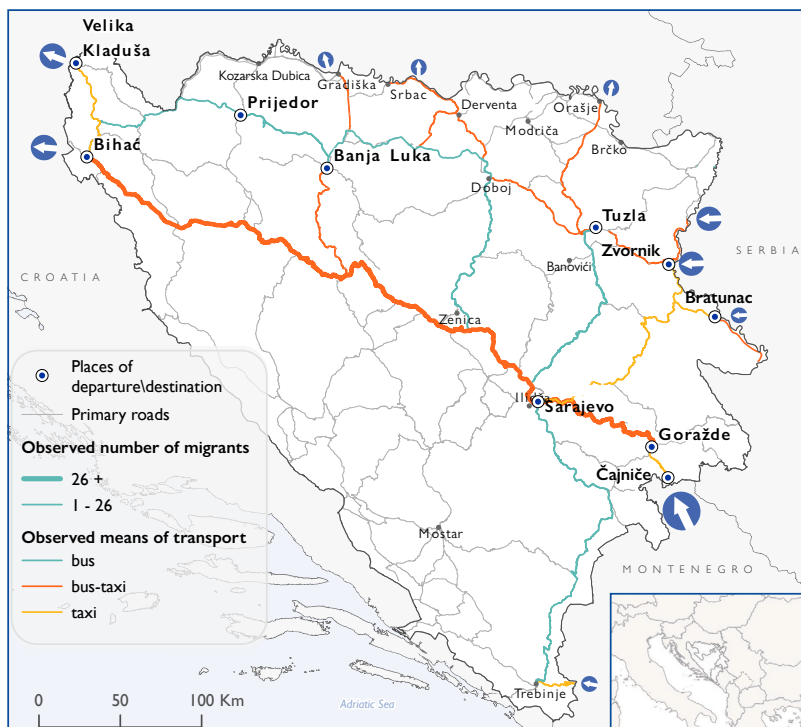
37%

Of those outside TRCs are not planning to register in any TRC

10,140

SFA registrations in 2024

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).¹ Data was collected from 1 to 30 of May 2024. IOM carried out a route observation exercise in the Republika Srpska, Sarajevo Canton, Posavina Canton, Tuzla Canton, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton and Una Sana Canton to monitor trends in entries and exits as well as transit modalities within BiH. IOM also surveyed 272 migrants in active transit locations such as bus stops or at key entry and exit locations throughout the country as well as in four transit reception centres (TRCs) in BiH (Lipa, Ušivak, Borići and Blažuj).



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 within BiH

ROUTE OBSERVATION

- Consistent with March and April 2024, failed border crossings into Croatia remain high, with 74 per cent of respondents stating that they had tried and failed to cross the border at least once in May 2024.
- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through the eastern border with Serbia or the border with Montenegro further south. Most people entered the area between Zvornik and the Border Crossing Šepak. Other entry points from Serbia were around Bratunac.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH in the area of the Metaljka border crossing point. Some migrants also entered BiH through the Klobuk crossing to Trebinje, then took a bus to Sarajevo
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihać to attempt crossing the border into Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša. Some migrants also exit BiH near Bosanska Gradiška, Srbac, and Orašje.

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

From 1 January to 30 May 2024, the SFA recorded 10,140 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 6 per cent compared to the same period in 2023.

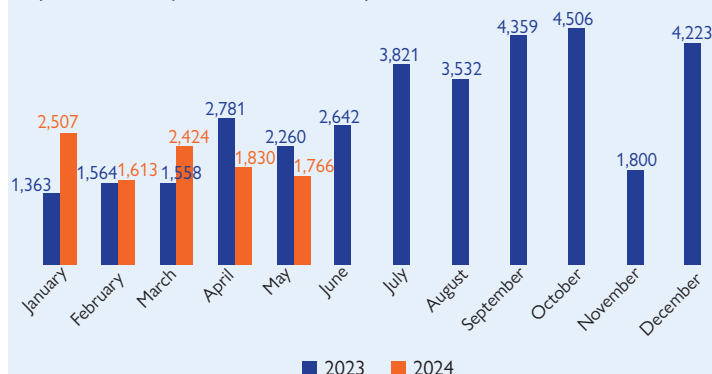


Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2023 compared to 2024

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. Most (95%) stated they walked, while 69 per cent said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 25 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi.

Seventy-two per cent of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. Three per cent of these attempts were facilitated. Seventy-one per cent of respondents stated that they failed because they were intercepted and returned by authorities. Only three respondents stated that they would not try to cross the border again.

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

PROFILES

This sample consists of 609 migrants surveyed in bus stations at known entry routes, transit locations and exit locations in BiH as well as in four TRCs (Blažuj, Ušivak, Lipa and Borići). The average age of interviewees was 28, with the youngest being 18 years old and the oldest 62. Most (66%) of the respondents were between 18 and 29 years old and 86% were single. Men represented 89% of the respondents, while women made up the remaining 11%.

In May 2024, nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic were the largest nationality group in the sample (22%), followed by Afghan (18%), Moroccan (14%), Nepali (10%), and Pakistani (8%) nationals.

JOURNEYS

The average length of stay in BiH was 32 days, four days shorter than recorded in April 2024 but two days longer than in March 2024. Seventy-nine per cent of respondents stated that they had crossed into BiH from Serbia and sixteen per cent from Montenegro. Only Turkish nationals used airports in April, with 89 per cent stating they used airports to enter BiH.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 47 per cent of respondents stated they were accompanied. This is an increase from 39 per cent recorded in April 2024 and 45 per cent recorded in March 2024. Fifty-six per cent of respondents used facilitators when crossing from Serbia to BiH, compared to eighteen per cent who used facilitators to cross from Montenegro to BiH.

Of the respondents who said they were facilitated, the average price paid crossing from Serbia was 198 EUR per person, a 23 EUR increase from April 2024. The average cost of entry from Montenegro was 132 EUR per person, consistent with April 2024. Some respondents paid in bundles from their country of origin to the Western Balkans rather than paying per border crossing within the Western Balkans. For example, respondents from the Syrian Arab Republic paid, on average, 4,438 EUR to travel from the Syrian Arab Republic to Serbia.

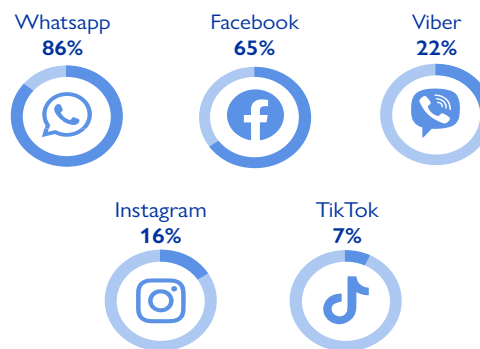


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants used to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=609)

Respondents' most frequently cited needs tend to relate to prolonged journeys throughout the region.

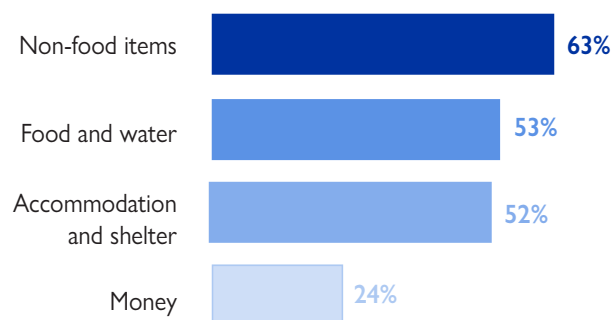


Figure 3: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=609)

ACCOMMODATION

Of those who were interviewed outside formal reception centres at exit locations (n=222), four per cent stated that they had not registered and did not intend to register in any TRC in BiH. This figure may provide some insight into the number of migrants who transit through the country without being registered by authorities.

Of those interviewed, 85 per cent of participants stated that they were accommodated in a TRC, equal to the percentage in April 2024. Forty-two per cent of participants stated that they had slept outside whilst being in BiH, an increase from April at twenty-five per cent. The number of respondents who reported squatting in abandoned buildings decreased, with 22 per cent recorded in April compared to the 14 per cent in May. The number of respondents recorded staying in hotels and hostels also decreased from four per cent to two per cent, with an average cost of stay being 20 EUR per person per night and 19 EUR for private accommodation.

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Figure 4 shows a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

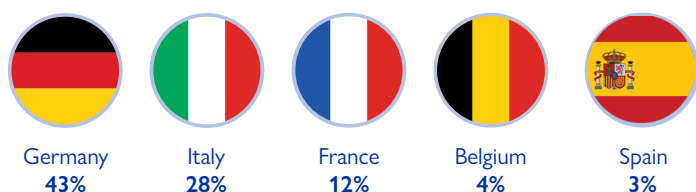


Figure 4: Top five intended destinations (n=609)

The survey found that the majority of respondents from the Syrian Arab Republic (76%) and Afghanistan (64%) identified Germany as their preferred destination. Nationals of Morocco (36%) preferred France as their intended destination. Furthermore, individuals from Nepal (59%) and Pakistan (57%) indicated Italy as their primary choice of destination.

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the three main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination. Figure 6 is a graphic illustration of intended countries of destination by nationality by the top 10 nationalities in the sample.

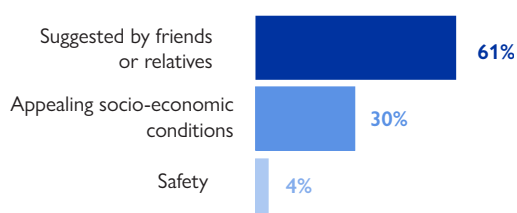


Figure 5: Top three reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=609)

SPECIAL FOCUS – NATIONALS OF ALGERIA

To contextualise 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 May, IOM carried out interviews with four people from Algeria in transit reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

- In 2024, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) has registered over 100 Algerian nationals in BiH, representing around one per cent of all registrations. According to camp registrations in BiH, 99 per cent of all of these registrations have been men with an average age of 25 years old.
- The interviewees spoke of a desire to leave Algeria due to a perceived lack of economic opportunities and because of the prospects of a better life in Europe. They specifically mentioned being drawn by how their co-nationals presented living in Europe on social media.
- Interviewees spoke of organising their journeys to Europe together with friends and consulting with friends and community members who had previously departed and were now living in Europe.
- They managed to secure visas to Türkiye and flew to Istanbul directly from Algeria. They mentioned only spending a few days in Türkiye before making their way to Edirne by train. From there, they walked across the border into Bulgaria using the maps on their smartphones.
- They stated that they did not pay for facilitation but instead relied on advice from friends who had recently made the journeys. The friends also advised them on which entry points to use, which routes to travel and how to avoid detection by official authorities.
- Algerian nationals seem to rely less on organized facilitation to cross borders compared to other nationalities. Out of all the 7,678 people surveyed in 2024, Algerian nationals have the lowest reported rate of border crossing facilitation. Eighty-five per cent stated that they were not facilitated to cross a border compared to forty-five per cent of the overall sample.
- When asked if they had faced any difficulties or problems along the route, interviewees mentioned that the biggest problem came from the prolonged periods of walking through forests without food and water. One interviewee mentioned falling ill and not having access to medicines or medical attention.
- Interviewees mentioned that travelling as a small, cohesive unit of friends without relying on smuggling networks created a sense of safety and resilience among them as they had a high degree of trust in each other.
- The group stated that they wanted to travel to Spain as it was perceived as being a more tolerant country. Interviewees also stated that having friends and family in Spain was a strong pull factor, despite not having information on how to regularise their status once they had arrived.

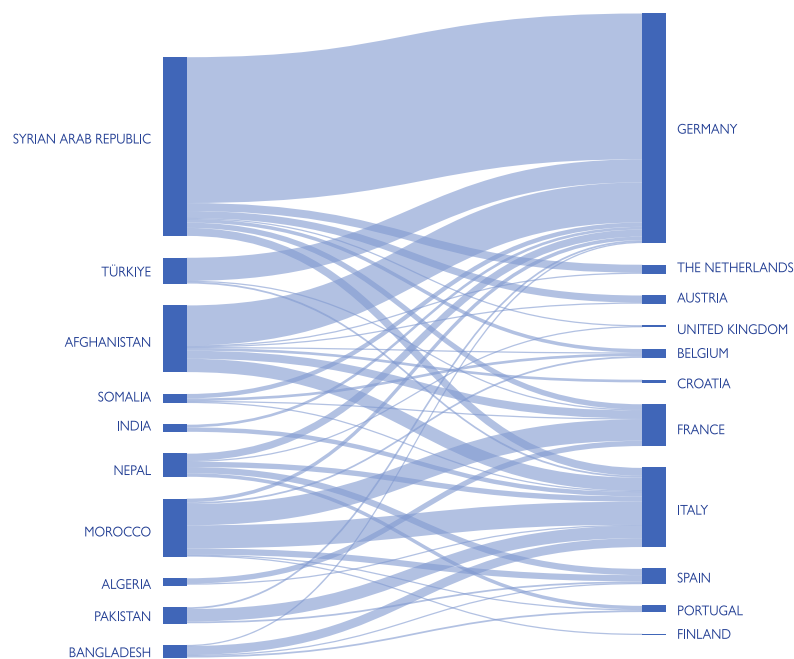


Figure 6: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=548)



Mobile Team Zvornik collecting data at the Bus Station in Gorazde while the Red Cross Gorazde provided first aid in May 2024. © IOM BiH 2024 / Ljubomir Krsmanović

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 BiH.

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 BiH, 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 answer any question and can withdraw their consent at any moment. Data was collected from 1 to 30 May 2024 by seven teams of 17 enumerators (six women, and eleven men) in Canton Sarajevo, Una Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton and Zvornik. Data was also collected in four TRCs (Lipa, Ušivak, Blažuj and Borići). In total, IOM surveyed 291 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 317 migrants inside TRCs.

Route observation

IOM field teams observed key entry, transit and exit locations in BiH to gauge the main routes migrants travel to enter the country, to move within and to exit the country. This route observation took place from 27 May 2024 to 31 May 2024. IOM observed 140 migrants and produced the map based on these observations.

Key informant interviews

Key informants can help provide information on the modus operandi of migrant mobility even when IOM field teams are not present to observe it themselves. The purpose of the key informant interviews is to contextualize the quantitative data gathered through the survey. Key informant interviews are carried out through group interviews with migrants inside TRCs. They are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

Limitations

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

1. 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, and especially late at night or early in the morning before the break of dawn.
2. 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 BiH.
3. The data collection is limited to the areas where migrants are known to enter, transit in and exit BiH. IOM continually monitors these locations, with the support of other local partners. However, due to the size of the country it is not possible to carry out this data collection in all areas where migrants may be present. IOM prioritizes the most frequently used entry, transit and exit locations, based on its field presence and contacts with key informants.

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