



**1,076**  
Migrants interviewed during exercise



**9 days**  
Average length of stay in BiH



**4,506**  
SFA registrations in October 2023

Top **3** countries of origin of respondents



**51.6%**  
Afghanistan



**20.4%**  
Morocco



**5.7%**  
Pakistan



**96.5%**  
Traveled throughout the country by bus



**43.1%**  
Also travelled by taxis

**28,386**

SFA registrations from January to October 2023

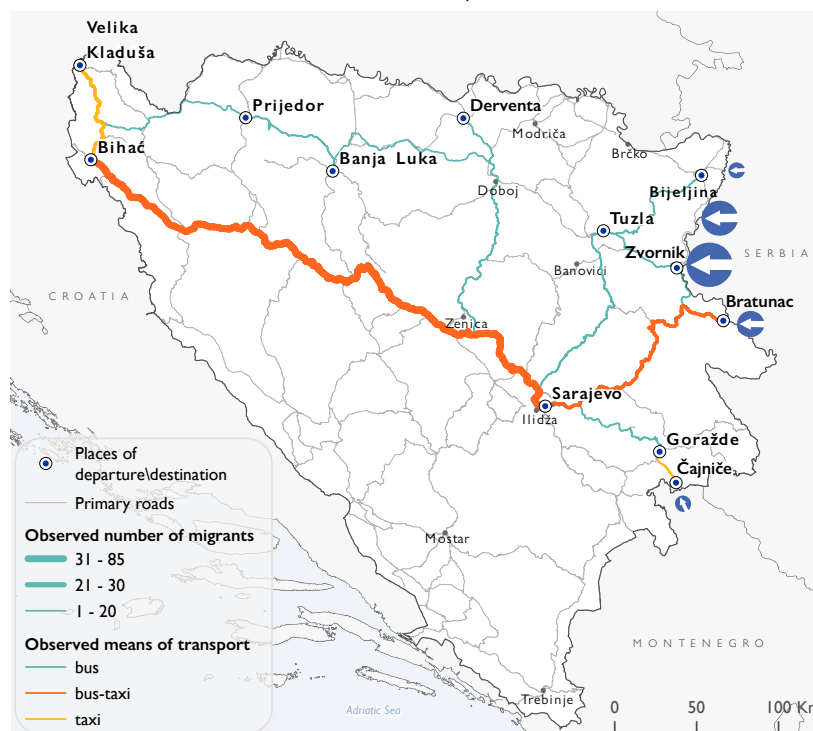


**64.3%**  
of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



**4.5%**  
Of those outside TRCs not planning to be accommodated in any TRC

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).<sup>1</sup> Data was collected from 2 October to 31 October 2023. 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 1,076 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 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

- In October, IOM observed significantly fewer people in active transit locations compared to last month (half as many).
- Sixty-four per cent of respondents had tried and failed to cross the border into Croatia from BiH, double that compared to the previous month.
- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through the eastern border with Serbia or through the border with Montenegro further south. The vast majority of people enter around Zvornik. Other entry points from Serbia are Bijeljina, Bratunac and the area around the border crossing of Šepak.
- From the border with Serbia, migrants take buses or taxis to reach Sarajevo, before continuing their journeys towards Una Sana Canton.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH from around the Metaljka official border crossing point. Migrants pay for taxis from Čajniće to Goražde, and then continue to Sarajevo by bus.
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihac to attempt crossing the border into Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša.

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

From January to October 2023, the SFA recorded 28,386 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 32.3 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

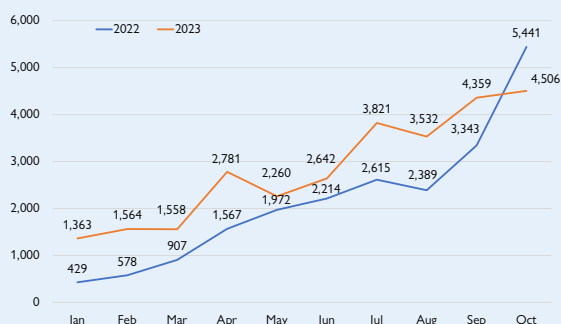


Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2022 vs 2023

## PROFILES

This sample consists of 1,076 individual migrants surveyed in bus stations at known entry routes into, transit locations and exit locations in BiH as well as in four TRCs (Blažuj, Ušivak, Lipa and Borići). The average age of interviewees was 26, with the youngest respondent being 14 years old and the oldest 60. Most respondents (83.7%) were single. Women made up 6.6 per cent of respondents and children made up 2.5 per cent.

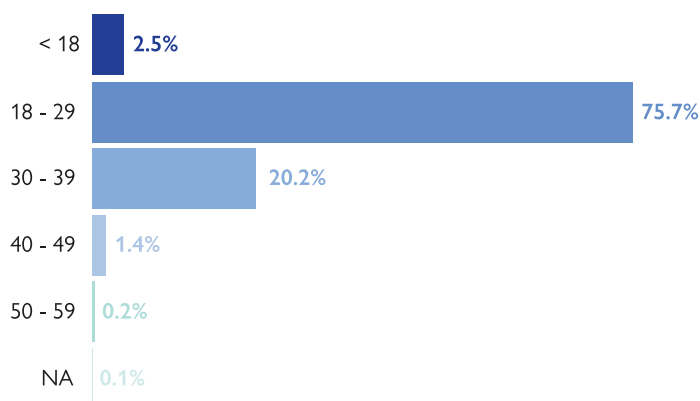


Figure 2: Age distribution of sample (n=1,076)

Key informant interviews reveal that migrants negotiate prices of the border crossings with the smugglers. Prices therefore fluctuate depending on the bargaining power of the migrants at a particular moment.

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. The majority of respondents (96.5%) said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 43.1 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi and 0.4 per cent said they had travelled in a private car.

Almost two-thirds (63.9%) of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. This is a significant increase compared to the previous two months when 30 and 32.6 per cent respectively had already unsuccessfully attempted to cross the border. The most frequently cited response for not succeeding were that they were intercepted and returned by authorities, which was mentioned by 97.4 per cent of respondents. All of those who had attempted crossing the border into Croatia, stated that they would try again.

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

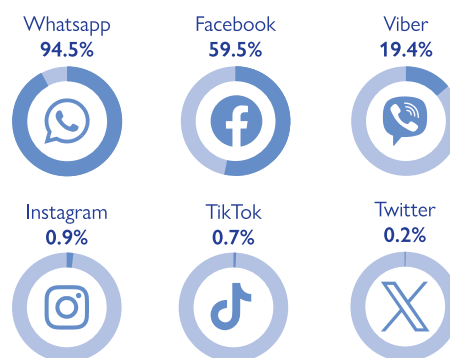


Figure 3: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=1,076)

## JOURNEYS

The average length of stay in BiH was nine days. Ninety-three per cent of respondents had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia while the remaining seven per cent entered through Montenegro.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 27.8 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied. Key informant interviews reveal that the use of border facilitation is well organized and suggests that this practice could be far more prevalent than the individual survey data indicates. On average, respondents entering BiH from Serbia paid around 102 EUR per person to cross the border, while respondents from Montenegro paid 85 EUR.

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

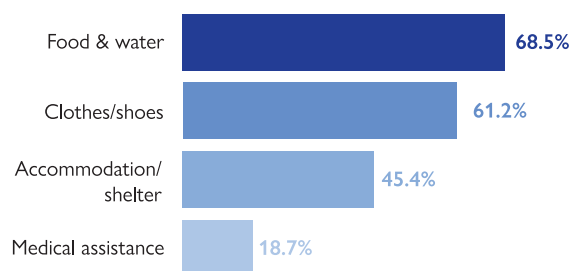


Figure 4: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=1,076)

## ACCOMMODATION

Of those migrants that were interviewed outside formal reception centres (n=535), 4.5 per cent stated that they had not registered and did not plan to register in any TRCs during their stay in BiH. This was mainly because people wanted to transit rapidly through the country to cross the border or because they had alternative accommodation arrangements.

Many of those migrants who arrive in the country late at night opt to sleep near bus stations while they wait for transport options. Forty-three per cent of respondents said they had slept outdoors at one point during their stay in BiH, an increase of 17 per cent compared to last month. Twenty-one per cent squatted in abandoned buildings or camped in fields, an increase of 13 per cent compared to last month. Less than one per cent (0.8%) paid for hostels or hotels and 0.5 per cent paid for private accommodation. On average, people paid 15 to 20 EUR per person per night to stay in private accommodation.

## INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The top intended destination countries were similar to last month with the exception that Spain replaced Austria in the top five. See Figure 5 below for a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

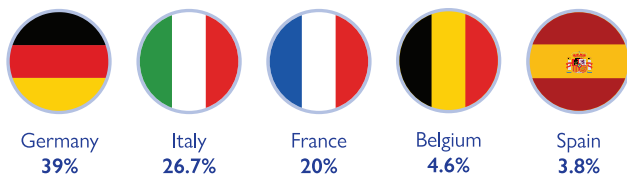


Figure 5: Top five intended destinations (n=1,076)

These destination countries can vary by nationality. Over half of the respondents from Afghanistan (50.6%) stated that they wanted to go to Germany, while 32.1 per cent said Italy. Almost half of the Moroccans (46.4%) stated that they intended to travel to France, while 23.6 per cent said Italy. Most Pakistani nationals (52.5%) said Italy, while 27.9 per cent said they intended to travel to Germany. Iranian nationals stated that they either wanted to travel to Germany (76.5%) or the UK (23.5%). Nationals of the Democratic Republic of Congo mostly said France (64.5%) or Belgium (19.4%), while respondents from Sierra Leone largely stated France (39%) and Germany (19.5%). See figure 6 below for a breakdown of the main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination.

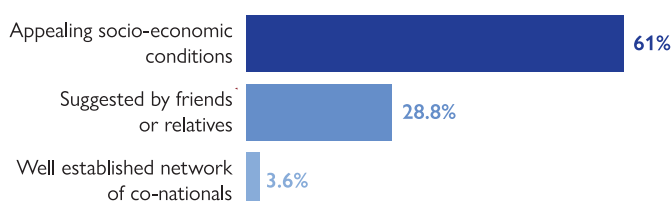


Figure 6: Reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=1,076)

## SPECIAL FOCUS – IRANIAN NATIONALS

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 aims to give context to the quantitative data and it does not claim to be representative, but it portrays one of many possible experiences of Iranian nationals transiting through BiH.

- All Iranian nationals interviewed reported significant protection concerns relating to experiences in the country of origin as well as along their journeys.
- Iranian nationals are the fifth most registered nationality in BiH with close to 1,000 Iranians having been registered by the SFA in 2023.
- Iranian nationals tend to form a more heterogeneous group of migrants compared to many other nationalities, with significant numbers of children (nearly one-tenth), women (nearly a quarter) and families (more than a quarter) transiting through BiH in 2023.
- Options and modalities to leave the Islamic Republic of Iran are varied. Some respondents mentioned that they travelled visa-free to Türkiye and arranged their travel from there. Others mentioned travelling to the western provinces of the Islamic Republic of Iran and locating facilitators there with relative ease or finding contacts through groups on Telegram. All respondents mentioned that if they had the choice to travel regularly, they would not have relied on facilitators to arrange to facilitate their journeys.
- Interviewees had experienced significant hardship and violence at the hands of official authorities and smugglers<sup>2</sup> on their journeys. In particular, there were multiple allegations of Greek and Bulgarian authorities detaining and physically assaulting migrants and robbing them.
- There were also allegations of violence by smugglers. Several people stated that once they were detained in Greece, they were driven back towards the border with Türkiye where they were handed over to smugglers consisting of other migrants who robbed them and physically assaulted them.
- Once they had managed to cross the borders into the Western Balkans, there was a sense that facilitation of border crossings became easier and less expensive with higher success rates. However, there were some allegations of continued violence and threats perpetrated by smugglers in the Western Balkans.

2. "Smuggling" is defined as "the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the irregular entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident." ([International Migration Law No. 34 - Glossary on Migration](#))



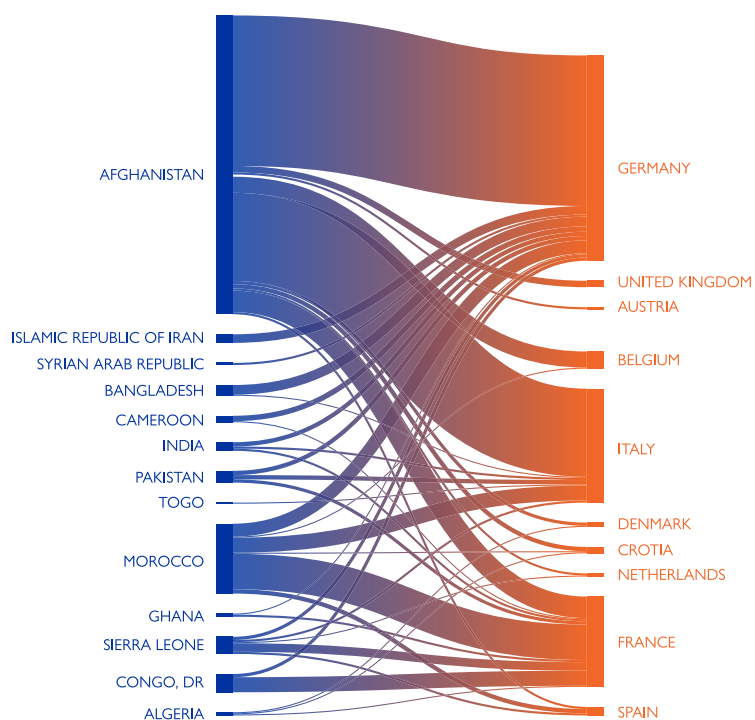


Figure 7: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=1,076)



IOM enumerator speaking to migrants in the Una Sana Canton.  
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**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 to answer any question and can withdraw their consent at any moment. Data was collected from 2 October to 31 October 2023 by seven teams of thirteen enumerators (five women, and eight 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 535 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 541 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 exercise took place from 23 October to 27 October 2023. IOM observed 246 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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