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TRACKING MATRIX

FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS WITH MIGRANTS TRAVELLING THROUGH NORTH MACEDONIA

26 JUNE – 31 AUGUST 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of the fourth round of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) implemented in North Macedonia. The data was collected from 26 June to 31 August 2023, in three flow monitoring points. IOM interviewed a total of 183 individual respondents.¹

FMS provide a snapshot of the profiles, experiences and needs of migrants transiting through North Macedonia. The survey asks questions on demographics, education and employment backgrounds, the circumstances of the migration journey and migration factors, as well as future intentions.

- Most of the respondents (77%) were single adult men. The median age of the respondents was 25. Nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic and Morocco made up 67 per cent of the population sample. Almost half (45%) of all respondents had completed at least primary education and less than one fifth (18%) were employed prior to leaving their countries of origin.
- More than half of the respondents (55%) were travelling in a group of people, and most of these groups (64%) were made up of non-family members.
- Germany (53%), Italy (18%) and France (15%) were the most frequently cited countries of intended destination.
- The three main reported drivers of migration were economic reasons (56%), war and conflict (39%), and limited access to services (25%).
- Most migrants transit through North Macedonia after long journeys, often having witnessed or experienced significant hardship and traumatic events. During their journeys, more than one-fifth (21%) of the respondents reported at least one problem, ranging from robbery, theft of documents, health-related issues, mental health problems as well as a lack of food and shelter. Nine per cent of the respondents reported that they experienced hunger on their journey. Three of the respondents declared that they experienced physical violence.
- The most frequently cited needs during their journeys relate to food (67%), clothes and shoes (36%) and accommodation (17%).
- More than a quarter of respondents (25%) have spent more than 2,500 USD on their journeys. The journeys were largely financed with savings.
- Almost all (99%) respondents stated that they do not intend to return to their countries of origin.

¹ The term “respondents” refers to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers as the reference population is made of persons traveling along mixed migration routes. These terms are used interchangeably throughout the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

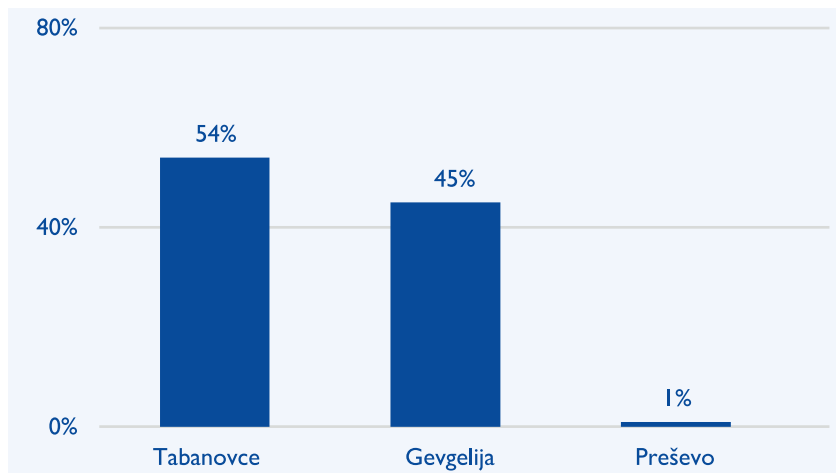
Since 2015, the Western Balkan region has emerged as a major crossroads for migrants and refugees² attempting to reach the European Union. Prior to 2017, migrants travelled mainly through North Macedonia and Serbia. Since 2017, the routes diversified with increasing flows also through Albania, Kosovo,³ Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) towards European Union (EU) countries.

Authorities in North Macedonia have registered 10,655 migrants on arrival from 1 January to 31 October 2023.

This is a significant decrease compared to 2022 when authorities registered 20,072 migrants on arrival in the same period.

To better grasp these changes and to improve assistance to migrants, IOM started conducting DTM FMS in North Macedonia in 2022. FMS were carried out in [February and March 2022](#), [April and May 2022](#) and in [July and September 2022](#).

Figure 1. Migrants recorded by authorities in North Macedonia 2017– 2023



This report contains findings from the DTM FMS conducted by IOM field staff between 26 June to 31 August 2023. Field staff surveyed a total of 183 individuals in Temporary Transit Centre (TTC) Vinojug (Gevgelija), TTC Tabanovce (Kumanovo) and at the Preševo - Miratovac Entry Transit Point. The first section presents the baseline profile of the population interviewed, followed by a section on the

migrants' travel experience up to the location where the interview took place. The report then highlights respondents' experiences of violence, exploitation and abuse during the journey. The last section looks at the impact of the journey and the respondent's views on their return intentions.

¹ The term "respondents" refers to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers as the reference population is made of persons traveling along mixed migration routes. These terms are used interchangeably throughout the report.

² 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.

³ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

2 MAIN PROFILE, REASONS AND INTENTIONS OF MIGRANTS TRAVELLING THROUGH NORTH MACEDONIA

2.1 SAMPLE SIZE AND MAIN NATIONALITIES

The two main declared nationalities of respondents were the Syrian Arab Republic (35%) and Morocco (33%), followed by Afghanistan (12%), Iraq (6%), and smaller shares of people from Algeria (5%), Pakistan (2%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2%), Cameroon (1%), India (1%), the Islamic Republic of Iran (1%), Occupied Palestinian Territory (1%), Egypt (1%), Sierra Leone (1%) and Tunisia (1%).

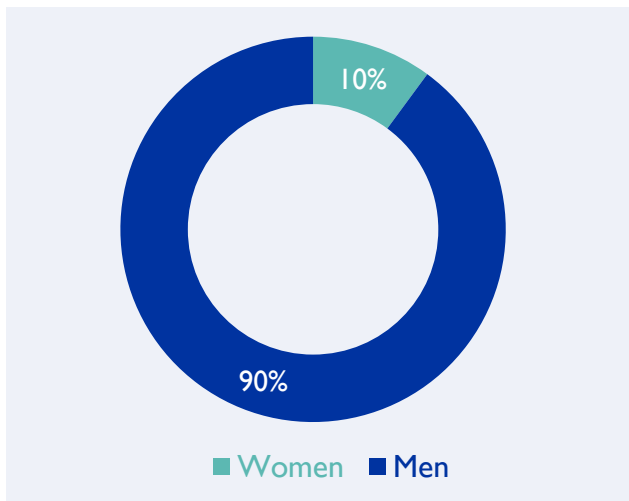
Compared to the previous round of FMS in North Macedonia, there was an increase in the number of Moroccan nationals in the sample from 19 per cent in July and September 2022 to 33 per cent in June and August 2023.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Men represent the majority (90%) of the sample, while 10 per cent are women.⁴ In the previous rounds of FMS in North Macedonia women made less than ten per cent of the sample. The median age of respondents was 25. More than a half of the respondents (65%) were 18 or 19 years old. Nine of the respondents were between 14 and 17 years of age.⁵

Similar to the previous rounds of FMS in North Macedonia, most male respondents were single. Over three-quarters of the male respondents (77%) declared they were single. In contrast, 36 percent of female respondents declared they were single, and 42 per cent married. Most of the respondents (83%) had no children. Of those who reported having children, 38 per cent said they had children travelling with them, of whom 41 per cent had children younger than four years of age.

Figure 2. Share of respondents by sex



Source: DTM MKD FMS 2023, n=183

The most spoken languages were Arabic (77%), Dari (9%), Pashto (3%) and French (2%).

⁴ The questionnaire includes one question on sex and one question on gender self-identification, both including the possibility of declining to specify for the respondent. No respondents declared “other” or “non-binary” when surveyed.

⁵ Children between 14 and 17 years are included in the sample upon informed signed consent of the parent or legal guardian and assent of the child.

2.3 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Education

More than one-fifth of respondents (23%) reported having completed lower secondary education, 45 per cent primary education, 13 per cent upper secondary school,

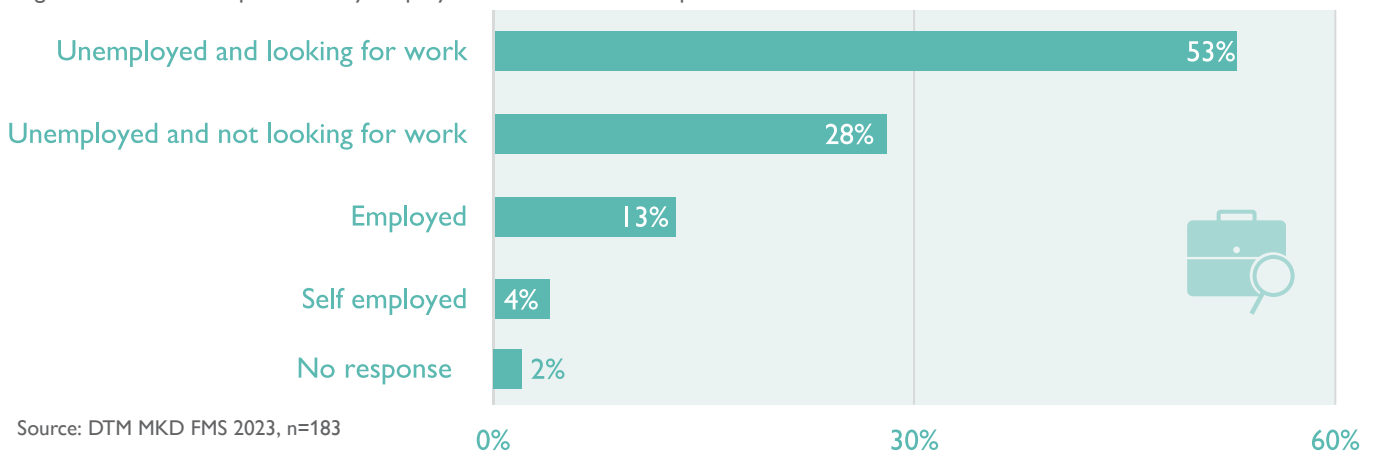
and 19 per cent of respondents declared having no formal education, compared to 4 per cent in the previous round of FMS.

Employment status before departure

More than of the respondents (53%) declared they had been unemployed and looking for a job before leaving their country of origin, 28 per cent who were unemployed and not looking for a job, followed by 13 per cent who were employed and 4 per cent who were self-employed. In the

previous FMS, 76 per cent of the respondents declared they had been unemployed and looking for a job before leaving their country of origin, followed by 13 per cent who were employed, 4 per cent who were self-employed.

Figure 3. Share of respondents by employment status before departure



Source: DTM MKD FMS 2023, n=183

Among respondents who declared they had been employed before leaving their country of origin, the most frequently reported sectors of employment were

agriculture and forestry (34%), transportation and storage (22%), construction (13%), fishing (9%) and electricity/gas (6%).

2.4 REASONS FOR LEAVING THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

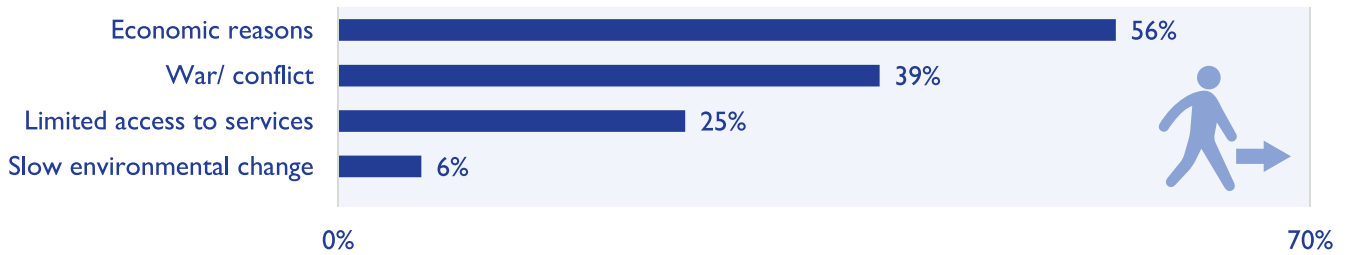
Interviewees were asked about the main reasons for leaving their countries of origin, shown in Figure 4. Respondents can choose multiple options and the total therefore does not add to 100 per cent.

In 2023, economic reasons (56%) and war and conflict (39%) were cited as the two main reasons for leaving the country of origin, followed by limited access to basic services (25%) and slow environmental change (6%). In the February-March 2022 round of FMS, 26 per cent stated war and conflict as the main reason for leaving the country of origin, while in April-May 2022 it was 36 per cent.

Among the women in the sample, 63 per cent reported war and conflict as their main grounds for leaving. This was followed by 53 per cent who reported limited access to services, while 37 per cent mentioned economic reasons and 11 per cent slow environmental change.

When looking at the main reported nationalities in North Macedonia, 88 per cent of Moroccan nationals stated that they had left due to economic reasons while 95 per cent of nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic nationals said it was due to war and conflict. Almost half (48%) of Afghan nationals stated they had left due to limited access to services.

Figure 4. Main reasons for leaving the country of origin (multiple choices possible)



Source: DTM MKD FMS 2023, n=183

2.5 MODE OF TRAVEL

Most respondents (55%) stated they were travelling with a group, while the rest was travelling alone.⁶ The majority of those in groups (64%) were travelling with non-family members, while 33 per cent travelled with relatives. Three of the respondents reported having travelled with facilitators.

Family groups among respondents mostly consisted of siblings (45%), children (18%), followed by spouses (15%) and parents (16%).

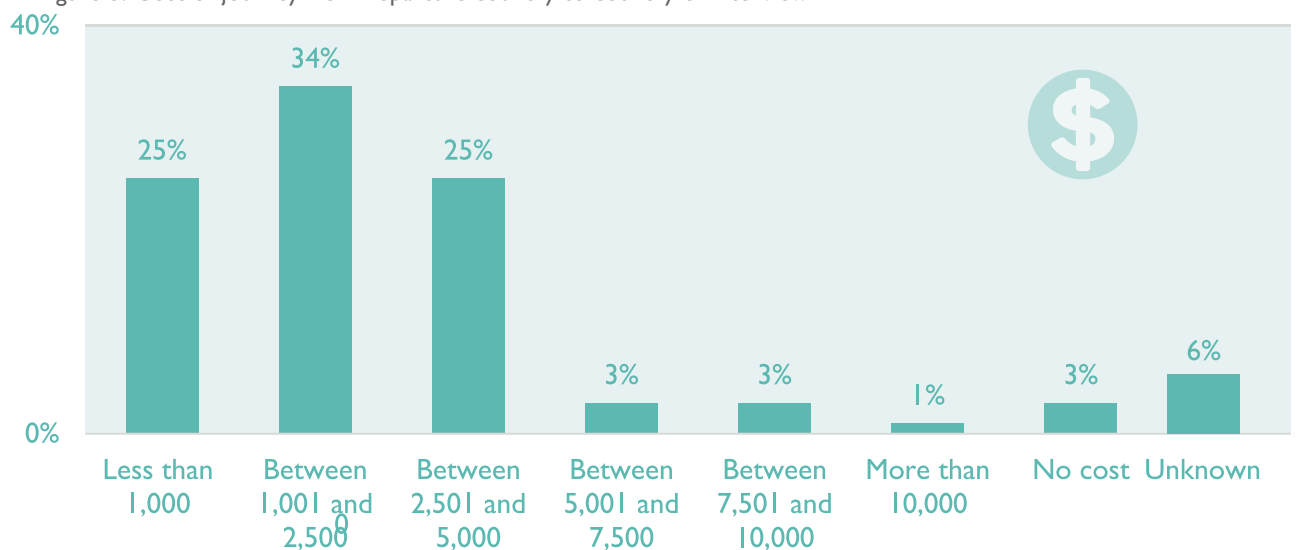
Twenty-one per cent of respondents had been living in a country other than their country of origin for more than a year prior to arriving in North Macedonia. Ninety-nine per cent of respondents entered North Macedonia through Greece while the remaining one per cent entered through Serbia.

2.6 COST OF JOURNEY

Most respondents paid between 1,000 USD and 2,500 USD to travel from their country of origin to North

Macedonia. See Figure 5 below for a complete breakdown of the cost of journey.

Figure 5. Cost of journey from departure country to country of interview



Source: DTM MKD FMS 2023, n=183

⁶ The question “Who are you travelling with (with whom did the respondent start the journey)?” presented two options namely a. Alone, b. With a group. If b (with a group), a follow-up question was asked “The group was made of, a. Non-family/non-relatives, b. Family/Relatives, c. Facilitators (agents/employer/smugglers).”

Almost three-fourths of the respondents (74%) reported having paid for the journey with their own money, followed by 32 per cent who received support from relatives in the country of origin, 10 per cent raised the money during the journey or by working in a transit country. One per cent raised money by selling property.⁷

2.7 PROBLEMS DURING THE JOURNEY

The interviewees were asked about a list of specific incidents and problems they could have faced during the journey. More than one-fifth of the respondents (21%) declared they had experienced at least one of the listed problems during the journey.

Ten per cent declared they had suffered theft of documents. Eight per cent of the respondents reported

2.8 MAIN NEEDS

Respondents were asked what their most important needs were at the moment of the interview. Most respondents (67%) reported food as their main need, followed by

2.9 COUNTRY OF INTENDED DESTINATION

The survey also asked about the respondents' countries of final destination. Germany (53%), Italy (18%) and France (15%) were the three most frequently cited countries of intended destination in this round. This is consistent with the previous round of FMS, where Germany was also the most frequently cited intended country of destination (32%).

For nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic (86%) and Afghanistan (82%) the top intended destination was Germany. For nationals of Morocco the top destinations were Italy (44%) and France (25%).

As to why migrants specifically chose the country of destination, 42 per cent stated that this was due to

just below two-thirds of the respondents (65%) reported having paid for the journey per leg, while 12 per cent reported payments via cash instalments. Nine per cent had to pay upon arrival and six per cent paid the full amount upfront.

that there was a lack of shelter at some point during the journey.⁸ Hunger was reported by nine per cent of the respondents. Three per cent reported having health problems. Three respondents declared they experienced at least one of the indicators related to violence, abuse and exploitation.⁹ One respondent declared being forced to travel or move.

clothes and shoes (36%), immediate accommodation (14%), personal hygiene and sanitary supplies (11%), medicine (10%) and health services (8%).

appealing socio-economic conditions. This was followed by 32 per cent who declared that it was because of ease of access to asylum, and 15 per cent reported to have family members in the countries of intended destination.

More than one-fifth of the respondents (22%) had immediate family members and 45 per cent had non-immediate family members in the countries of intended destination. Most of the respondents (86%) indicated they had no information about family reunification procedures.

Almost three quarters of the respondents (71%) said they had no information on asylum or how to obtain documents to stay legally in the intended country of destination.

⁷ The total does not add up to 100 as the respondents could provide multiple answers.

⁸ The population surveyed is mobile and the reasons for not having shelter or a place where to sleep are disparate, including the unwillingness to stay in a reception facility, and the desire to be as close as possible to the country's borders to reach the final intended destination as soon as possible.

⁹ For more information on indicators relating to violence, abuse and exploitation, please see Chapter 5.

3 VULNERABILITY TO VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND 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 eight questions to capture information about whether the respondents experienced any of the following issues during their journey:

1. Have you worked or performed other activities without receiving the expected payment?
2. Have you been forced to perform work or other activities against your will?
3. Have you been approached by someone offering a marriage (to you or close family member – child or sibling)?
4. Have you been kept at a certain location against your will (by persons other than the authorities of the country)?
5. Have you experienced any form of physical violence?
6. Did someone force you to travel or to move?
7. Do you think you were lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises, or otherwise deceived into moving or travelling?
8. Did you have travel documents with you or have 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, 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.

¹² Hawala is an informal money transfer system in which money is passed on through a network of brokers (who are known as hawaladars) without the actual/physical movement of cash. It is the transmission of money in ways other than the regular banking routes and hence sometimes called underground banking.

4 RETURN INTENTIONS

Almost all (99%) respondents reported they had not considered returning to their country of origin during their journey. Only one of the respondents considered returning to their country of origin.

Among those who had not considered returning, most people (81%) stated that they were not interested in returning while others mentioned security concerns (14%) and not having information about return options (1%).

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 DTM'S FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS

FMS are part of the IOM's DTM activities in the Mediterranean and Western Balkan region. These started in October 2015 and are conducted within the framework of the IOM's research on populations on the move through the Mediterranean, Western Balkan and Western African Atlantic routes to Europe. The analysis provides information on profiles, transit routes and vulnerabilities of respondents.

FMS 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 has a module on migrants' vulnerability to and potential past experience of abuse, exploitation and violence. The data collection involves direct interviews with migrants and the collation of statistical data on arrivals and migrant presence in- and outside of reception, collected by national authorities and IOM staff. Regular updates on arrivals are available on [DTM Migration Flow to Europe | Europe](#).

5.2 DTM'S FLOW MONITORING SURVEYS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

FMS in North Macedonia were conducted by IOM field staff between 26 June and 31 August 2023 in the Temporary Transit Centre (TTC) Vinojug (Gevgelija) and TTC Tabanovce (Kumanovo). A total number of three enumerators (one female, two male) were trained by IOM.

The survey is designed to profile third country nationals who are moving to Europe by land and by sea through the WB 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. 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 selected through a simple random sampling method by IOM field staff working in the TRCs. Those who consented to be interviewed were provided the questionnaire. 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 North Macedonia at the time of the data collection. Migrants could decline to respond to individual questions or to interrupt the interview if they wished to do so.

5.3 SAMPLING

The sample frame consists of the total number of migrants in reception centres in North Macedonia above the age of 14. IOM North Macedonia used a convenience sampling

procedure. The sampling frame attempted to reflect the general demographic profile of migrant present in reception centres of the country in the covered period.

5.4 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 events of exploitation, violence and abuse that may amount to human trafficking. The module was developed

together with IOM's Protection Division's experts 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.

The third module contains questions related to return intentions. As outreach activities on the existence and functioning of AVRR were run by IOM in the country, this module of the FMS asks respondents questions on their possible intention to return to their countries of origin.

5.5 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 do not represent a full picture of regional migration, but rather of mixed migratory flows in the specific locations monitored in North Macedonia during the covered period.

It should also be noted that a lower percentage of women of the total migrants in North Macedonia were interviewed, for several reasons, including the fact that there are fewer female enumerators, women tend to be less willing to talk, and that they are more difficult to approach when travelling with male family members.

