



103
Syrians interviewed during study



92%
Male

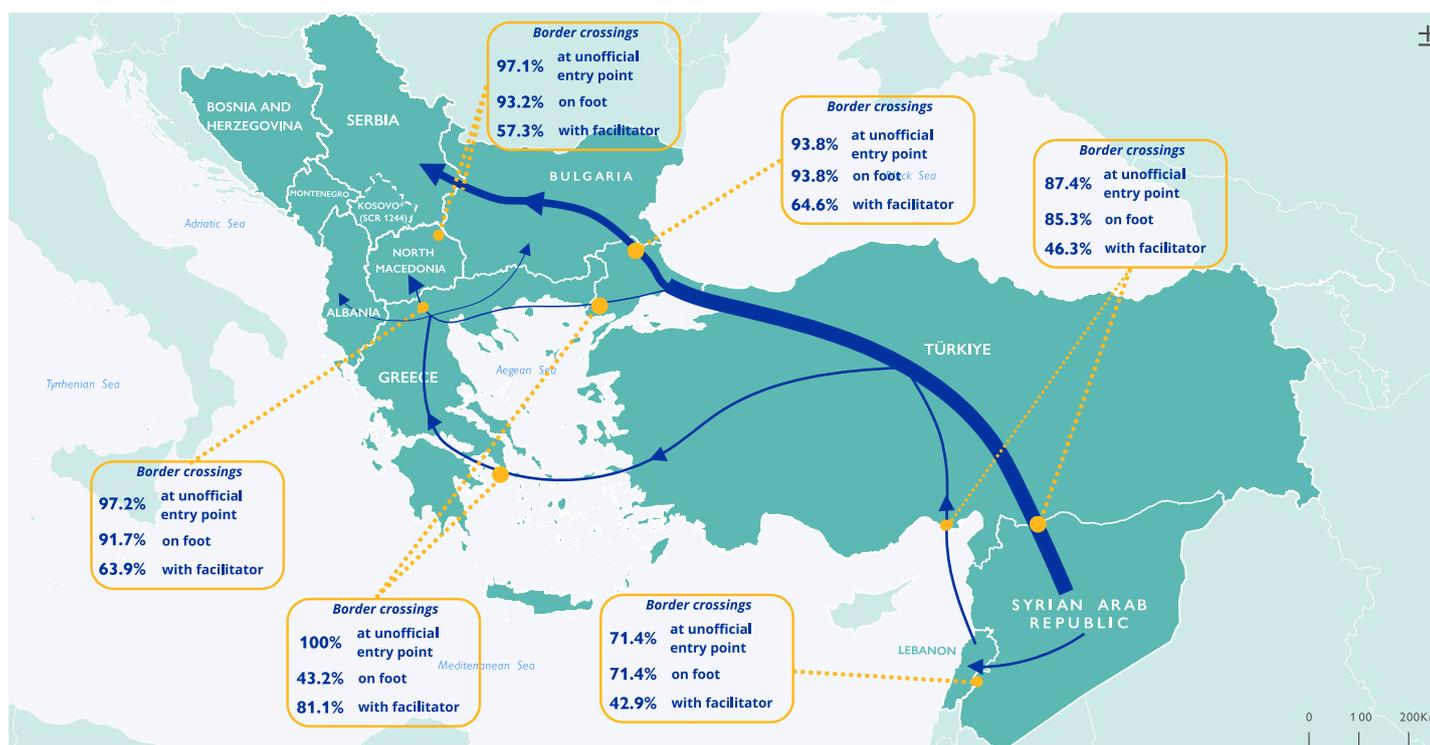
7%
Female

1%
NA



36,360
Total number of Syrians registered by KIRS in 2023

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences and journeys of Syrian nationals transiting through the Republic of Serbia. Data was collected from 4 October to 19 October 2023 together with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants of the Republic of Serbia (KIRS). IOM interviewed 103 Syrian nationals in five reception centres (TC Sombor, TC Preševo, AC Krnjača, TC Kikinda and TC Pirot) across the country.



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. References to Kosovo* shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

KEY FINDINGS

- Almost all respondents were men (92.2%).
- Most respondents were single and had never been married (59.2%).
- The average age of the respondents was 27 years old.
- Twenty-eight per cent of respondents had completed at least secondary education.
- Almost all respondents were travelling in a group (96.1%).
- The majority of those who travelled in a group, travelled in non-family groups (80.6%).
- The top three provinces of origin in the Syrian Arab Republic were Deir-ez-Zor, Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa.
- The most frequently cited reasons for leaving the Syrian Arab Republic were war/conflict (91.3%), economic reasons (37.9%), and indiscriminate violence or persecution (33%).
- Most respondents entered Bulgaria after having left Türkiye (63.1%), while the remaining 36.9 per cent entered Greece either by land or by sea.
- Almost all respondents entered Serbia through an unofficial entry point (96.1%).
- Most respondents walked across the border into Serbia (93.2%) with the remaining 6.8 per cent crossing into Serbia in a vehicle.
- Over half of the respondents said that they were accompanied by people facilitating their border crossing into Serbia (57.3%).
- On average, people had paid 6,800 USD for their journeys from the Syrian Arab Republic to Serbia.
- The top five intended destination countries were Germany (68.6%), the Netherlands (10.8%), Austria (6.9%), Norway (3.9%) and the United Kingdom (2.9%).

PROFILES

In the first ten months of 2023, authorities in Serbia have registered 31,360 Syrian nationals, constituting one of the largest nationality groups together with Afghans and Moroccans. Consistent with broader migration trends, respondents to the survey tended to be single men under the age of 30. The youngest respondent was 17 and the oldest was 60. See figures 1 and 2 below for a breakdown of age and marital status.

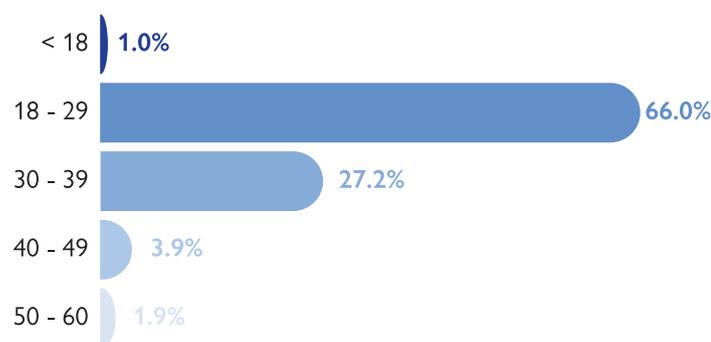


Figure 1: Breakdown of age

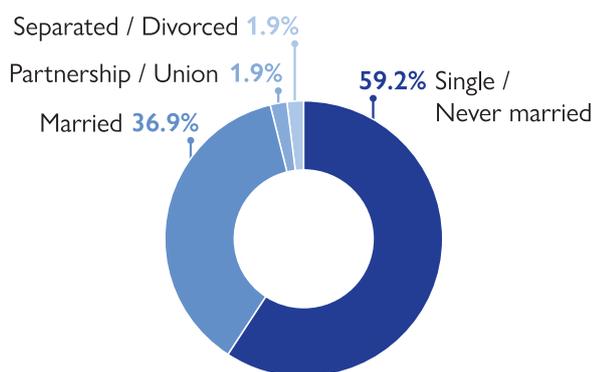


Figure 2: Breakdown of marital status

The majority of respondents (71.8%) stated that the highest level of education they had completed was primary school.

The most frequently cited provinces of origin in the Syrian Arab Republic were Deir-ez-Zor, Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa. The complete disaggregation of province of origin can be found in Table 1 below.

Province of Origin	Percentage
Deir-ez-Zor	33.0%
Aleppo	17.5%
Ar-Raqqa	14.6%
Damascus	10.7%
Al-Hasakeh	7.8%
Homs	5.8%
Idleb	3.9%
Dar'a	2.9%
Hama	1.9%
Quneitra	1.9%

Table 1: Disaggregation of province of origin

The most frequently cited reasons for leaving the Syrian Arab Republic were war/conflict (91.3%), economic reasons, including a lack of jobs and poor incomes (37.9%), and indiscriminate violence or persecution (33%). See Figure 3 below for a complete breakdown of why people left the Syrian Arab Republic.

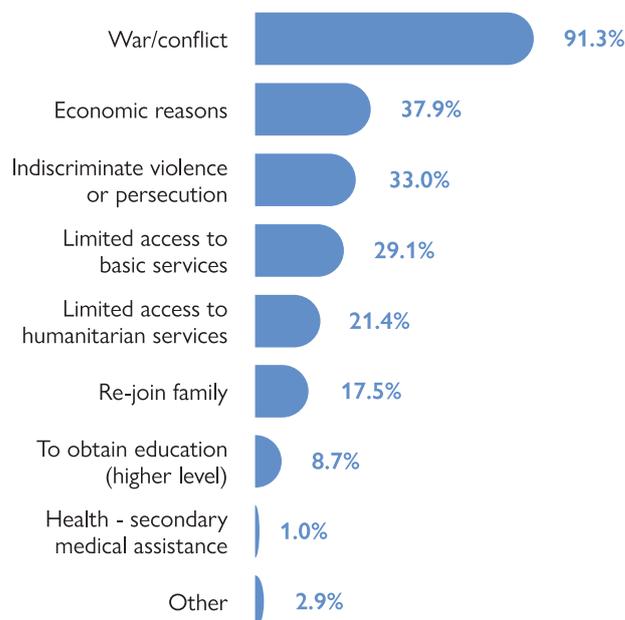


Figure 3: Why respondents left the Syrian Arab Republic (more than one response possible)

JOURNEYS

Over three-quarters of respondents (76.7%) were travelling in non-family groups. Only 2.9 per cent stated that they had travelled alone. Those who travelled in family groups, travelled with their spouses (7.8%), with children (5.8%), with their siblings (2.9%), with their parents (2.9%) or with extended family members (6.8%).

Ninety-three per cent of respondents travelled from the Syrian Arab Republic to Türkiye, while the remaining seven per cent travelled into Lebanon. Eighty-seven per cent of respondents stated that they entered Türkiye through an unofficial border crossing, and most of these crossings were on foot (85.3%), while 11.6 per cent were in a vehicle, 2.1 per cent were via air and 1.1 per cent via boat. Less than half (46.3%) of the crossings into Türkiye were done with facilitation.

The average length of stay in Türkiye was almost four years. Figure 4 shows the spread in the years respondents had spent in each transit country prior to arriving in Serbia. As is shown, the length of years is distributed widely in Türkiye, whereas for most other transit countries, except Lebanon, the average length of stay tends to be under one year.

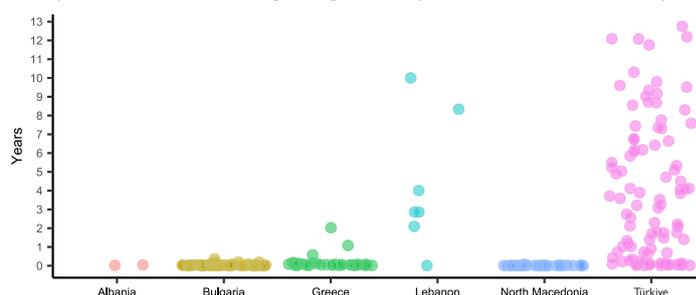


Figure 4: Length of stay in each transit country

INTENTIONS

When asked why respondents had decided to leave Türkiye at this moment despite having lived there for so long, the most frequently cited reasons were a fear of being sent back to the Syrian Arab Republic, economic reasons and indiscriminate violence.

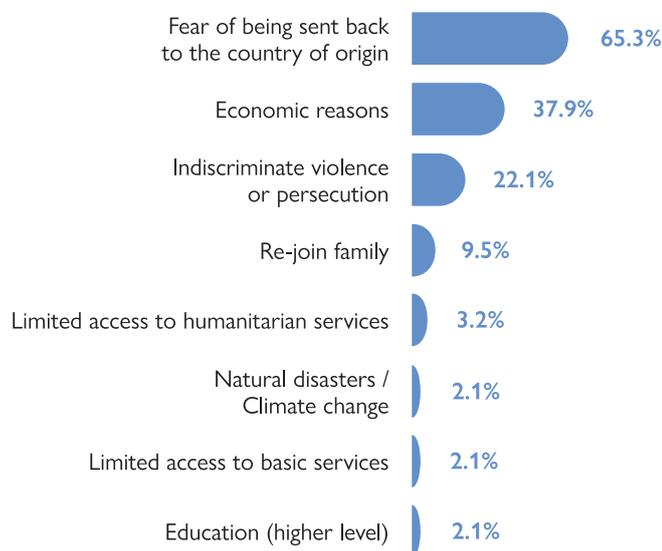


Figure 7: Breakdown of why people left Türkiye

From Türkiye, 63.1 per cent of respondents entered Bulgaria, while 26.9 per cent travelled by sea or land to Greece. Of those who entered Bulgaria, 93.8 per cent of respondents said they walked across the border with the remaining 6.2 per cent crossing the border by land either in a vehicle or a train. Most respondents (64.6%) said that they were not accompanied by a facilitator to enter Bulgaria.

Over half (54.1%) of those who took the Greece route, entered Greece by boat while 43.2 per cent walked across the border and 2.7 per cent crossed in a vehicle. All crossings were at unofficial entry points. Eighty-one per cent of crossings into Greece were accompanied by a facilitator. From Greece, respondents travelled to North Macedonia where 91.7 per cent crossed the border on foot, all at an unofficial entry point.

On average, it took less time to reach Serbia via the Bulgarian route but it was more expensive than the Greek route. Survey respondents who took the Bulgaria route spent on average 13 days from the first transit country to Serbia whereas those who took the Greek route spent on average 64 days, transiting through North Macedonia and to lesser extent Albania. Respondents paid on average 7,424 USD on the Bulgaria route for the complete journey from the Syrian Arab Republic to Serbia, while those who took the Greek route paid on average 5,838 USD.

Regardless of whether people took the Bulgaria or the Greece route, the vast majority (96.1%) crossed into Serbia at an unofficial entry point. Ninety-three per cent crossed the border on foot while the other 7 per cent were driven in a vehicle. Over half of the respondents (57.3%) said that they were accompanied by people who facilitated the border crossing.

The top five intended countries of destination were Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Norway and the United Kingdom. Smaller percentages of respondents said Belgium, France, Italy and Serbia. When asked why people had chosen those countries of destination, half of respondents who said Germany said it was due to appealing socio-economic conditions while 42.9 per cent said it was because they had family there. Of those who chose the Netherlands, 36.4 per cent said appealing socio-economic conditions and because it was suggested by friends or relatives, each. Those respondents who Austria mostly said it was due the fact that they had relatives in the country (71.4%).



Figure 8: Top five intended countries of destination

METHODOLOGY

The survey

The survey gathers information about migrants' profiles, including age, sex, gender, and areas of origin, levels of education before migration, key transit points on their route, cost of the journey, reasons for moving, intentions and needs. The survey is administered through KoBo Toolbox.

Methodology

The data presented in this report is based on a customized survey and was collected from 4 October to 19 October 2023 in five reception facilities in Serbia. The reference population consisted of Syrian nationals resident in one of these reception facilities in Serbia, who intend to travel onwards to Western and Northern Europe.

Data was collected by IOM staff together with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants in TC Sombor, TC Preševo, AC Krnjača, TC Kikinda and TC Pirot.

Limitations

The data is based on a convenience sample of Syrians interviewed in these locations during the timeframe indicated and should therefore not be generalized to the population of Syrian migrants in Serbia. Due to the high mobility of the migrants, it was not possible to obtain a representative sample of this population.

