

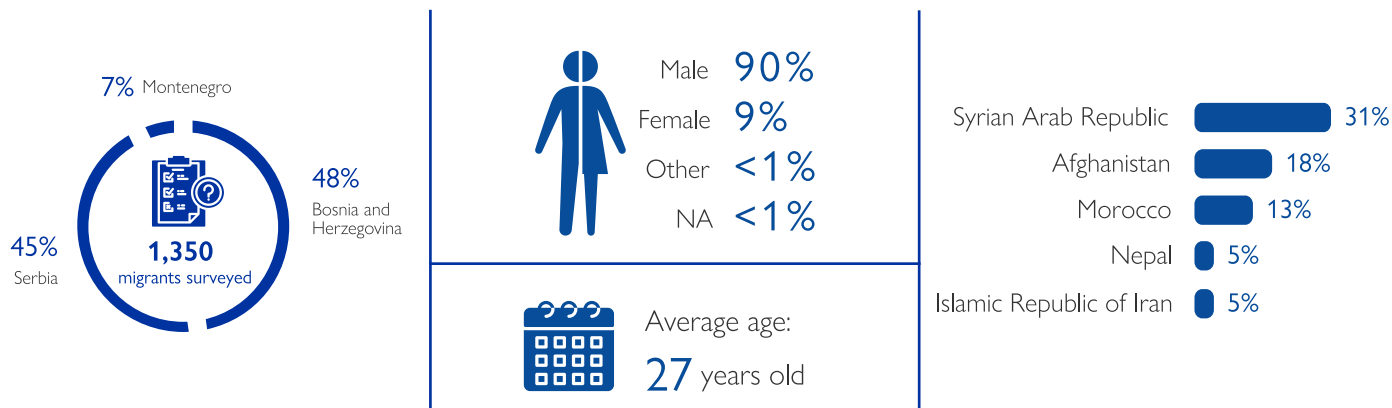
EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

FACTSHEET – BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA

APRIL – JULY 2024

This factsheet provides insight into incidents of violence, exploitation and abuse migrants may have experienced or witnessed on their journeys from their countries of origin. IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) surveyed 1,350 migrants from 3 April to 5 July 2024 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The results presented below are compared with the average results of the same data collection exercise in 2023.

Sample



Key findings

- Overall, 19 per cent of all respondents said that they had experienced of at least one of the eight indicators of violence, exploitation and/or abuse.
- Twenty per cent of the male respondents reported that they had experienced at least one of the indicators, compared to ten per cent of female respondents.
- Physical violence was the most frequently reported indicator with 13 per cent of respondents reporting having experienced physical violence. This was a two per cent decrease when compared with 2023.
- Female respondents were more likely to report having been forced to perform work or other activities against their will with two per cent reporting that this had happened compared to one per cent of male respondents.
- Of those who had experienced at least one indicator of violence, exploitation and/or abuse, the most frequently cited countries where this had happened were Türkiye (39%), Bulgaria (11%), Serbia (11%), Croatia (8%) and Greece (7%).
- Migrants who migrated due to economic reasons were 60 per cent less likely to report having experienced any of the violence, exploitation and/or abuse indicators compared to migrants who cited other reasons for leaving their countries of origin.

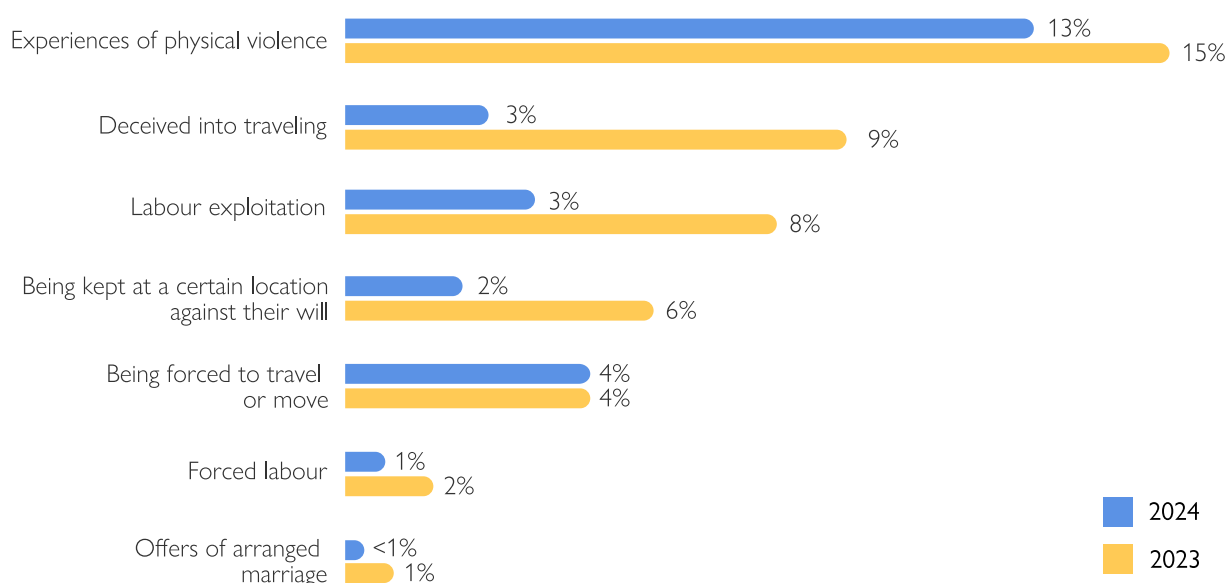


Figure 1: Indicators of violence, exploitation and/or abuse 2023 (n=1,009) compared to 2024 (n=1,350) (multiple answers possible)

Results



1% ■ Yes
8% ■ Prefer not to answer
92% ■ No

Forced labour

One per cent of survey respondents stated that they had been forced to perform work or other activities against their will, while eight per cent of respondents preferred not to answer this question. This is broadly comparable to the previous round of data collection in 2023 when two per cent of respondents said they had performed work or other activities against their will.

Female migrants were more likely to report having experienced forced labour compared to male respondents, with two per cent stating they had been forced to perform work or other activities against their will compared to one per cent of men.

Most of the experiences of forced labour occurred in Türkiye (70% or seven respondents), followed by Albania, Bulgaria, and Serbia (10% or one respondents each). The main types of activities people reported having been forced to carry out were related to working in construction, agriculture and service sectors.

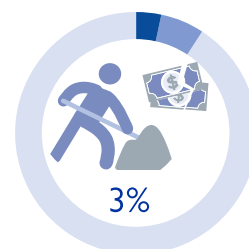
Labour exploitation

Of the total survey respondents, three per cent stated that they had worked or performed other activities without getting the expected payment, which is four per cent less than in 2023. Six per cent of respondents preferred not to answer.

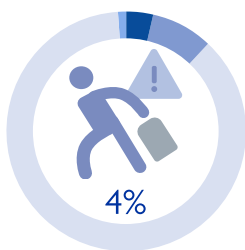
Most of the experiences of labour exploitation were reported to have occurred in Türkiye (83% or 38 incidents), followed by Serbia (11% or five incidents). There was one incident reported in each of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Bulgaria, and Greece.

The main types of activities respondents reported having carried out without receiving the expected payment were related to working in factories (furniture production, electronics, clothing), services sector (hotels, restaurants, car washes, agriculture, retail clothing, warehouses), and construction.

Respondents in the age bracket 40 to 49 had the highest reported prevalence of labour exploitation, with 11 per cent of the respondents in this age group stating that they had experienced labour exploitation. The prevalence among other age groups ranged between three and four per cent.



3% ■ Yes
6% ■ Prefer not to answer
91% ■ No



4% ■ Yes
86% ■ No
1% ■ Do not know
9% ■ Prefer not to answer

Being forced to travel or move

Overall, four per cent of respondents reported that they had been forced to travel or move, including three per cent of all female respondents and four per cent of male respondents. Ten per cent of respondents preferred not to answer.

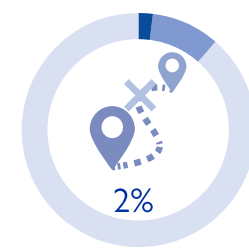
These incidents reportedly happened in the Syrian Arab Republic (43% or 23 incidents), Türkiye (21% or 11 incidents) and Albania (11% or 6 incidents).

Being kept at a certain location against their will

Of the total sample, two per cent of respondents stated that they had been kept at a certain location against their will by persons other than official authorities, while nine per cent preferred not to answer.

Most of the respondents stated that the incidents happened in Türkiye (35% or 10 respondents), followed by Serbia (17% or 5 respondents), Bulgaria (14% of 4 respondents), the Islamic Republic of Iran (10% or 3 respondents), Greece and North Macedonia (7% or 2 respondents each), Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia (3% or 2 respondents each each).

A respondent who worked in the construction sector in Serbia reported that their employers kept them against their will in collective accommodation. Another group of respondents said that they were forcibly taken to a secluded mountain location in Albania, near the border with Montenegro and were robbed.



2% ■ Yes
9% ■ Prefer not to answer
89% ■ No

Results

Experiences of physical violence

Among the indicators of violence, exploitation and/or abuse, physical violence has remained the most frequently reported with 13 per cent of respondents having experienced it, which is 3 per cent less compared with 2023.

Thirteen per cent of respondents preferred not to answer this question.

Among the female respondents, four per cent (9% less compared to last year) reported having experienced physical violence while thirteen per cent (2% less compared to last year) of male respondents also stated that they had experienced physical violence.

Most of the experiences of physical violence were reported in Türkiye (34% or 58 respondents), Bulgaria (19% or 32 respondents), Croatia (17% or 28 respondents), Serbia (12% or 21 respondents), and Greece (8% or 13 respondents). Some respondents specified that the violence took place near borders as they attempted to cross irregularly. Specific borders that were mentioned included borders in Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Croatia and North Macedonia.

Of the top five nationalities, almost one-fifth of nationals of the Islamic Republic of Iran (19%) said they had experienced some kind of violence. Among the other top nationalities, 16 per cent of Syrian nationals, 14 per cent of Afghan nationals, 9 per cent of Moroccan nationals and 9 per cent of Nepali nationals reported having experienced violence along their journeys.

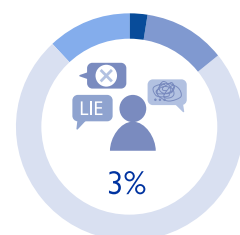


13% ■ Yes
13% ■ Prefer not to answer
74% ■ No

Deceived into traveling

When asked if they believed they were lied to, tricked, manipulated, indebted, given false promises, or otherwise deceived in order to get them to move, 3 per cent responded yes, while 11 per cent preferred not to answer.

The most frequently cited countries where this happened were Türkiye (29% or 10 respondents), Albania (23% or 8 respondents), and Greece and North Macedonia (11% or 4 respondents each).



3% ■ Yes
75% ■ No
12% ■ Do not know
10% ■ Prefer not to answer

Access to travel documents during the journey

Respondents were asked if they had travel documents with them and if they had access to them during the journeys. One third of respondents (33%) stated they had their documents with them, while 32 per cent never had any documents, 18 per cent declined to answer, and 8 per cent had lost them.

Furthermore, six per cent of respondents stated that someone held their documents at the time of the interview, while two per cent had their documents held by someone else during the journey, and less than one per cent (0.7%) stated that their documents were stolen.

Female respondents were more likely to report that they had their documents with them during the journey (54%), compared to 31 per cent of male respondents.

Eighteen per cent of respondents preferred not to answer the question.

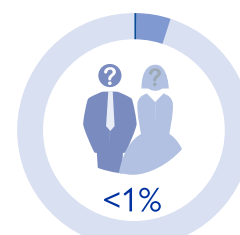


Offers of arranged marriage

A small number of respondents (0.3%) indicated that either they themselves or someone in their close family was approached and offered a marriage. Most respondents (95%) said they had not experienced this while five per cent preferred not to answer.

All of the respondents who reported having been approached with offers of arranged marriage were men. Women were more likely to prefer not to answer the question, with 10 per cent of all female respondents declining to answer compared to 4 per cent of men.

These incidents were most frequently reported in Serbia (50% or 2 respondents), Afghanistan and Kosovo¹ (25% or 1 respondent each).



<1% ■ Yes
5% ■ Prefer not to answer
95% ■ No

¹References to Kosovo* shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Methodology

The questionnaire was a part of a regular monthly data collection activities in the Western Balkans by DTM. Administered via Kobo Toolbox, the questionnaire 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.

An additional module on counter trafficking indicators was deployed from 3 April to 5 July 2024 to gather data on potential experiences of abuse, violence and exploitation that respondents may have experienced or witnessed during the journey. More specifically, the module included the following eight questions:

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 a 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?

The survey was anonymous, voluntary and respondents did not receive compensation for participation. Respondents could choose not to answer any question and could withdraw their consent at any moment during the interview. The survey was designed to last no longer than 15 minutes. IOM surveyed 1,350 adult migrants from 3 April to 5 July 2024 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia in reception centres.

The data for 2023 in Figure 1 comes from the Flow Monitoring Surveys with migrants in the Western Balkans in 2023. For this data, IOM surveyed 1,009 adult migrants in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo* from 1 June to 31 August 2023.

For further information on the routes, profiles, experiences and intentions of the migrants surveyed in 2023, please visit the following links:

- [Flow Monitoring Surveys with Migrants Travelling through Bosnia and Herzegovina \(2023\)](#)
- [Flow Monitoring Surveys with Migrants Travelling through Serbia \(2023\)](#)

For further information on the routes, profiles, experiences and intentions of the migrants surveyed in 2024, please visit the following links:

- Migrant Mobility Situation Report – Bosnia and Herzegovina ([April](#), [May](#), [June](#))
- Migrant Mobility Situation Report – Serbia ([April](#), [May](#), [June](#))
- Migrant Mobility Situation Report – The Western Balkans ([April](#), [May](#), [June](#))

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 attempts to ensure that the distribution of nationalities closely match the distribution of registrations by official authorities, however, random sampling was not possible and participation was done on the basis of the language skills of the enumerators at the time of interview. Female migrants may be under represented in this sample as there are fewer female IOM enumerators and women may feel less inclined to answer surveys due to cultural reasons.

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