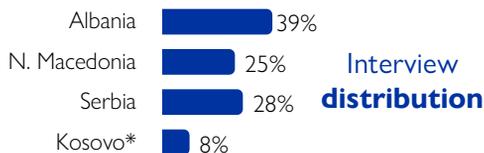




**4 countries
or areas in
the Western
Balkans**



**227 Syrians
interviewed**



This report presents the results of a customised survey of Syrian nationals transiting through the Western Balkans in 2022. IOM surveyed 227 nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo¹ between 14 October and 8 November 2022.

There has been a **significant increase in the number of Syrians travelling through the Western Balkan region in 2022**. Authorities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo* registered² more than **twice as many Syrians in 2022** than in 2021.

In this context, IOM launched a survey with Syrian nationals to better understand the increasing arrivals and to gauge their profiles, needs and intentions.



Map³:
Routes travelled
by Syrians.
Thicker arrows
indicate more
active routes.

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority (97%) of the population sample are men while almost two-thirds (65.7%) are single, adult men under the age of 29
- Women in this sample were on average older than men, tended to be married and travelled in a group with relatives
- Almost half (48.5%) have completed at least secondary education
- They mostly come from Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Idlib and Al-Hasakeh regions in the Syrian Arab Republic
- Almost all (95.2%) stated that they had left the Syrian Arab Republic due to war and conflict
- Many people (40%) had been living in Türkiye for one year or more prior to arriving in the Western Balkans
- Of those who had lived in Türkiye for over a year, the most frequently cited reason (43.5%) for triggering their secondary movement was economic reasons
- While a fear of being returned to the Syrian Arab Republic was the second most cited reason (37.5%)
- Almost equally as many people had only recently left the Syrian Arab Republic, with 39.4 per cent having departed within three months of the survey interview
- Most people (81.8%) travelled in non-family groups
- The majority (84%) crossed borders by foot
- Only 1.5 per cent of all entries took place at a regular border crossing
- Their main needs during these journeys related to the fact that they have been walking over prolonged distances (food, water, housing, the use to bathrooms, shoes, and cash assistance)
- Half of all border crossings were facilitated
- One-third of the respondents paid between 1,000 USD and 2,500 USD and one-third paid between 2,500 USD and 10,000 USD to facilitate their journeys from the Syrian Arab Republic
- Two-thirds wanted to travel to Germany, largely because of perceived ease of access to the asylum procedure
- There has not been an increase in Syrians in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, where there continue to be very few Syrians, based on official and IOM DTM data. This suggests that the routes they travel are dictated by existing networks and contacts

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

2. Data retrieved from the [IOM's Flow Monitoring Portal](#)

3. 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 the IOM

Authorities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo* registered more than **twice as many Syrian nationals in 2022 compared to 2021.**



Figure 1: Number of arrivals of Syrian nationals in the Western Balkans 2017 – 2022

Monthly arrival figures of Syrians show that this rise goes beyond seasonal migration trends and beyond the context of the travel restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, (which can possibly explain the decrease in numbers in 2020 and 2021).

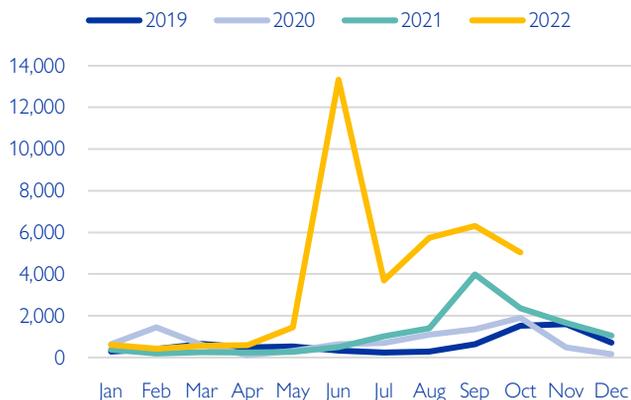


Figure 2: Monthly arrivals of Syrian nationals in the Western Balkans 2019 – 2022

In general, the population sample were young with reasonable degrees of educational attainment. Almost two-thirds (**65.2%**) of the Syrians interviewed in this survey were **single, adult men under the age of 29.** The median age of the sample was 25 years of age and 48.5 per cent of the population sample had completed at least secondary education.

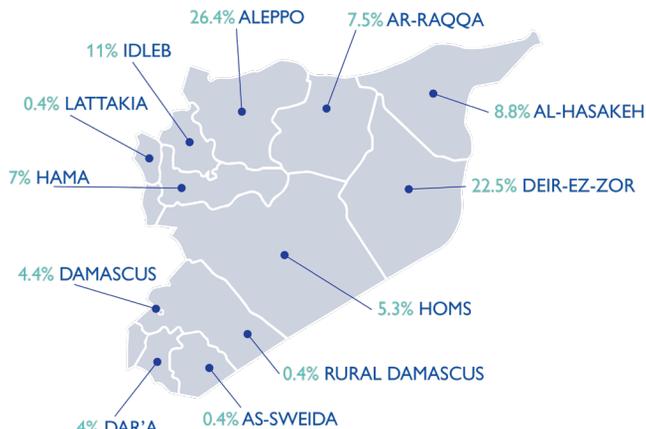


Figure 3: Main provinces of origin in the Syrian Arab Republic

Most people in this sample **come from active conflict zones** in the Syrian Arab Republic, including Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Idlib and Al-Hasakeh, which have all been subject to insurgent activity and shelling. Indeed, 95.2 per cent of respondents stated that the main reason they left the Syrian Arab Republic, was because of war and conflict.

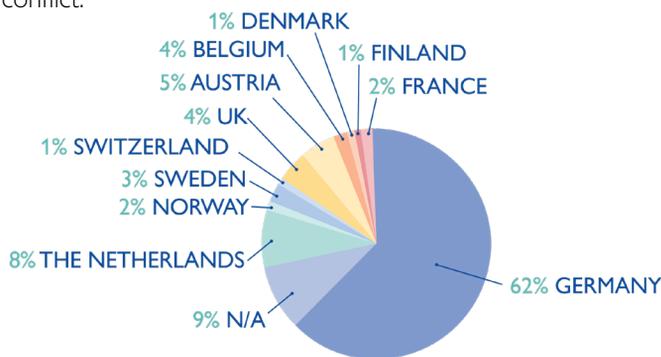


Figure 4: Intended final destinations

When asked why they wanted to go to **Germany**, half of the respondents said it was because of **ease of access to asylum**, 30.7 per cent said because of **appealing socio-economic conditions**, 7.1 per cent said that it was because they had relatives in Germany and 6.4 per cent said it was due to suggestions by friends or relatives.

Survey respondents were also asked how long they had resided in transit countries. Figure 5 below shows that 40 per cent of the Syrians currently migrating through the Western Balkans had been living in Türkiye for over a year, prior to making their journeys toward Western and Northern Europe.

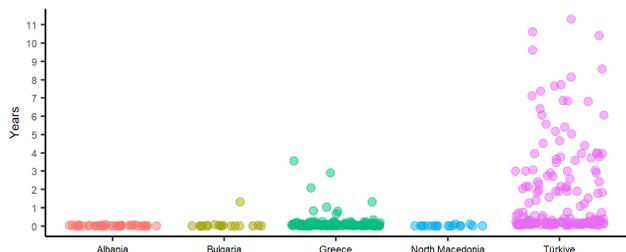


Figure 5: Length of time people had been living in transit countries

When asked what had prompted the onward movement after having lived in Türkiye for over a year, 44.3 per cent said it was for economic reasons, while 37.5 per cent it was a fear of being sent back to the Syrian Arab Republic.

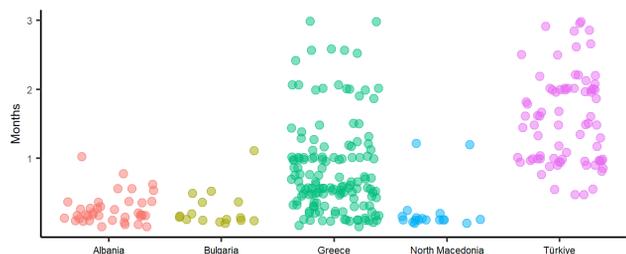


Figure 6: Length of time people had been living in transit countries. Only showing those who had arrived within the last three months.

Almost as many (39.4%) of the survey respondents were recent arrivals in the region, having arrived in the Western Balkans within three months prior to their interview. Of these, 92.9 per cent stated that they left the Syrian Arab Republic due to war and conflict.

The Syrians interviewed in this survey largely **travel in non-family groups**, suggesting that people make smaller units of groupings along their journeys or travel with friends and acquaintances from their countries of departure. Most of the people in this survey have **walked long distances** in their journeys. In fact, **84 per cent** crossed all the borders of these countries by foot.

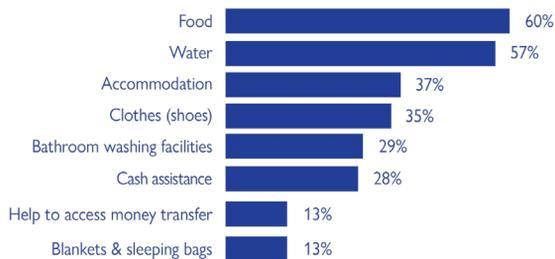


Figure 8: Main needs during journeys

Understandably, the most pressing needs for people during their journeys related to the cumulative **exhaustion and stress that stems from having walked for a very long time**, without regular access to basic needs provided by reception facilities.



Picture: IOM enumerator interviewing Syrian migrant in Preševo, Serbia

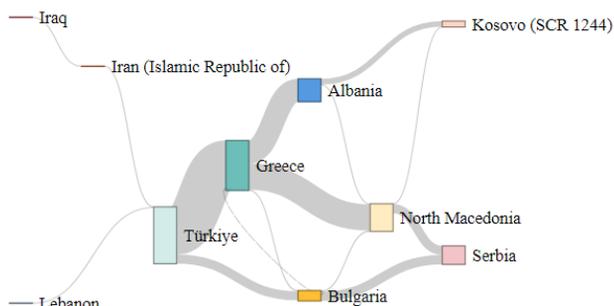


Figure 7: Routes travelled by Syrians

The most frequently used travel routes were from Türkiye, through to Greece into North Macedonia and then onwards into Serbia.

METHODOLOGY

The survey

This customized survey is a part of the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) activities in the Mediterranean region. DTM activities in the Western Balkans are conducted within the framework of the IOM's research on populations on the move through the Mediterranean and Western Balkan (WB) routes to Europe. The analysis provides information on profiles, transit routes and needs. 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.

Methodology

The data presented in this report is based on a customized survey and was collected from 14 October to 8 November 2022 in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*. The reference population consisted of nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic traveling through these countries attempting to reach the Western and Northern Europe. Data was collected entirely by IOM staff in the Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo* country offices with the support of and coordinated by staff of the sub-regional office in BiH.

Limitations

The data is based on a convenience sample of individual Syrians on the move interviewed in these locations during the timeframe indicated and should therefore not be generalized to the population of Syrian migrants in the four countries or areas. Limitations and constraints are that results cannot be generalized. Due to the high mobility of the Syrian migrants, it was not possible to obtain a representative sample of this overall population. There is a low percentage of female Syrians because there are fewer of them, but also because they may be less willing to speak to interviewers when traveling with male family members.

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