



1,007
Migrants interviewed during exercise



19 days
Average length of stay in BiH



1,800
SFA registrations in November 2023

Top **3** countries of origin of respondents



37%
Afghanistan



23%
Morocco



16%
Türkiye



75%
Traveled throughout the country by bus



38%
Also travelled by taxis

30,186

SFA registrations from January to November 2023



56%
of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



10%
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).¹ Data was collected from 1 November to 30 November 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 1,007 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

- Consistent with October, IOM observed fewer migrants in active transit locations in BiH, compared to warmer months.
- 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 entered in the area between Zvornik and the Border Crossing Šepak. Other entry points from Serbia were around Bratunac and to a lesser extent Bijeljina.
- From the border with Serbia, migrants take buses or taxis to reach Sarajevo, before continuing their journeys towards Una Sana Canton. Compared to October, 20 per cent fewer migrants stated that they took the bus.
- IOM observed fewer people at bus stations in these locations, indicating that people used alternative transportation means to get to Sarajevo.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH from around the Metaljka official border crossing point. Migrants pay for taxis from Čajniče to Gorazde, 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 November 2023, the SFA recorded 30,186 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 25 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

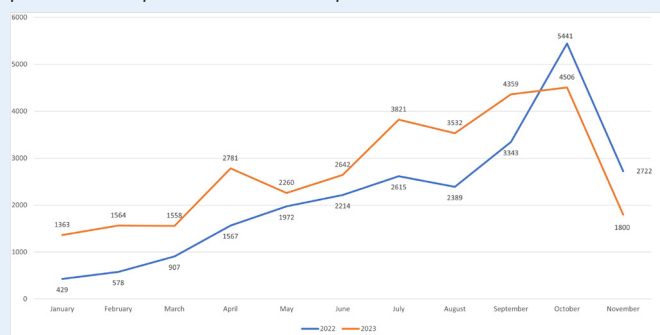


Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2022 vs 2023

PROFILES

This sample consists of 1,007 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 16 years old and the oldest 55. Most respondents (72%) were single. Women made up eight per cent of respondents and children made up one per cent.

In November, Turkish nationals constituted the third largest nationality group, overtaking Pakistani nationals. Seventy-seven per cent of them were observed outside temporary reception centres. This increase of Turkish nationals is also reflected in official registrations numbers from the SFA, who registered 203 Turkish nationals in November 2023, compared to 143 in October and 96 in September.

JOURNEYS

The average length of stay in BiH was 19 days, which is a significant increase compared to nine days last month. This increase could be explained by the colder weather and the growing difficulty in crossing the border. Ninety-four per cent of respondents had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia while the remaining six per cent entered through Montenegro.

Nine per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing. 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 who stated they were facilitated and agreed to share information on entering BiH from Serbia paid around 82 EUR per person to cross the border, while respondents entering from Montenegro paid 70 EUR.

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. Seventy-five per cent of respondents said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. This is a decrease of 22 per cent compared to October 2023. Apart from the bus, 38 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi and 1 per cent said they had travelled in a private car.

Over half (56%) of the respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. This is broadly consistent with October but an increase compared to September and August 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 95 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.

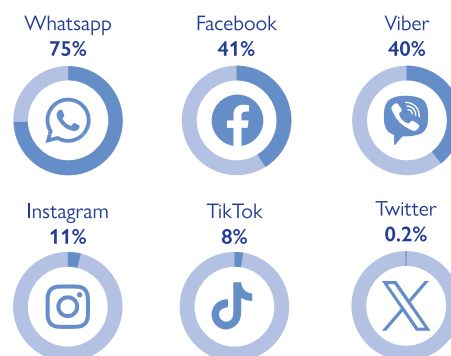


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=1,007)

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

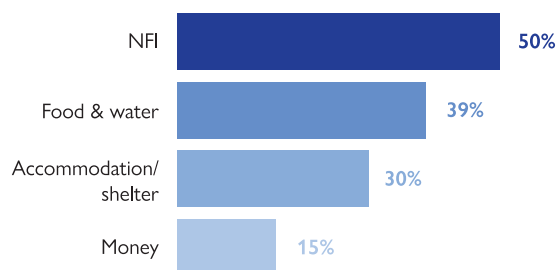


Figure 3: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=1,007)

ACCOMMODATION

Of those migrants that were interviewed outside formal reception centres at exit points (n=364), 10 per cent stated that they had not registered and did not plan to register in any TRCs during their stay in BiH. This is twice as high as the five per cent from October 2023.

Many of those migrants who arrive in the country late at night opt to sleep near bus stations while they wait for transport options. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents said they had slept outdoors at one point during their stay in BiH, a 15 per cent decrease compared to the previous month. Eleven per cent squatted in abandoned buildings or camped in fields, a 10 per cent decrease compared to the previous month. Three per cent of respondents paid for private accommodation while two per cent paid for hostels or hotels. On average, people paid 14 EUR per person per night to stay in private accommodation.

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The top intended destination countries were the same as last month. See Figure 4 below for a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

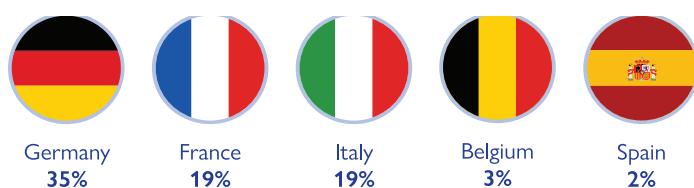


Figure 4: Top five intended destinations (n=1,007)

These destination countries vary by nationality. Over half of the respondents from Afghanistan (57%) stated that they wanted to go to Germany, while 26 per cent said Italy. Fifty-four per cent of the Moroccans interviewed stated that they intended to travel to France, while 22 per cent said Italy. See Figure 5 below for a breakdown of the main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination and Figure 6 for a graphic illustration of intended countries of destination by nationality by the those nationalities in the sample who had more than five respondents.

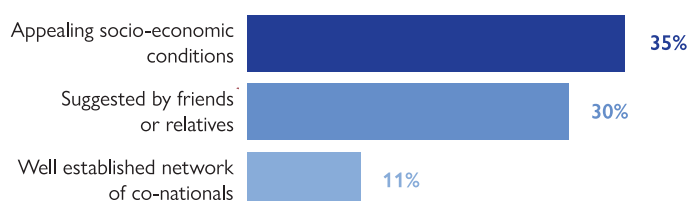


Figure 5: Reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=1,007)

SPECIAL FOCUS – SYRIAN NATIONALS

To contextualize the journeys, experiences and complex needs of people on the move, IOM carries out group interviews with specific nationalities every month. This section aims to give context to the quantitative data. It does not claim to be representative, but portrays one of many possible experiences of Syrian nationals transiting through BiH.

- There has recently been a notable increase in the number of Syrians registered by authorities in BiH, with nearly 60 per cent of all Syrian registrations in 2023 having been recorded in September, October and November. In November 2023, Syrian nationals constituted the third most registered nationality in the TRCs in BiH, behind Afghans and Moroccans. This is a stark contrast from 2022 when Syrians made up less than one per cent of total registrations in BiH and also in the TRCs. Most Syrians who had recently arrived had been living in Türkiye for one or more years, while the others had recently arrived.
- Interviewees spoke of no longer feeling safe in Türkiye, in their view, due to the increasingly hostile public discourse around migration. Interviewees felt that this was making migrants more vulnerable to labour exploitation, which, coupled with the general economic downturn in 2023, served as a strong push factor. In the perceptions of the interviewees, there was a real risk of being returned to their country.
- From Türkiye to Bulgaria, the payment arrangements for smuggling² services function through so-called “payment offices”. There are two different options available to migrants. The first option is for migrants to pay for specific GPS coordinates on a map, from where they can cross. Once they successfully cross a border, they receive a message with new instructions and coordinates for the following step in the journey. The cost of receiving each of these coordinates can vary from 100 EUR to 400 EUR. The second model of facilitation is when people pay to be accompanied along the journey by facilitators. Facilitators can be other migrants, locals, or taxi drivers. Migrants are accompanied to specific border crossings, and once they reach specific locations on the other side, are met by new people who provide them with accommodation services and information on next steps. The cost of these services can range from 9,000 EUR to 12,000 EUR from Türkiye to the intended destination country.
- The plan of the Syrian nationals who had recently arrived in BiH was initially to cross from Serbia into Hungary. Some interviewees had tried this unsuccessfully several times but were deterred due to the heavy presence of police near the border. Facilitators then rerouted them to BiH.

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](#))

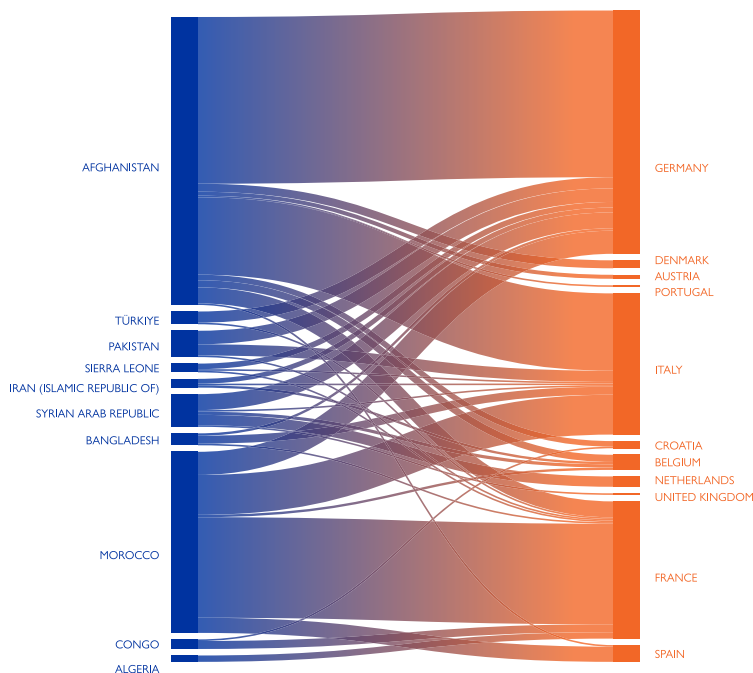


Figure 6: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=1,007)



IOM enumerator speaking to migrants in Canton Sarajevo.
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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 1 November to 30 November 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 514 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 493 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 took place from 20 to 24 November 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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