

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans. IOM surveyed 822 migrants¹ from 1 June to 30 June 2024 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*.²



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 in the Western Balkans



822

Migrants interviewed

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents

Syrian Arab Republic **28%** Morocco **14%** Afghanistan **12%**

Pakistan **7%** Nepal **7%**



708 days

Average time since leaving country of origin



4,080

Registrations by authorities and institutions³ in June 2024 in the Western Balkans



65%

Travelled throughout the region by bus



38%

Travelled by taxi

9% **91%**

Sex

79%

Single

27

years old

Average age



35%

Slept outside or squatted in abandoned buildings in the Western Balkans

26,519

Total registrations in the Western Balkans as of 30 June 2024



3

Average number of failed border crossing attempts per person

40%

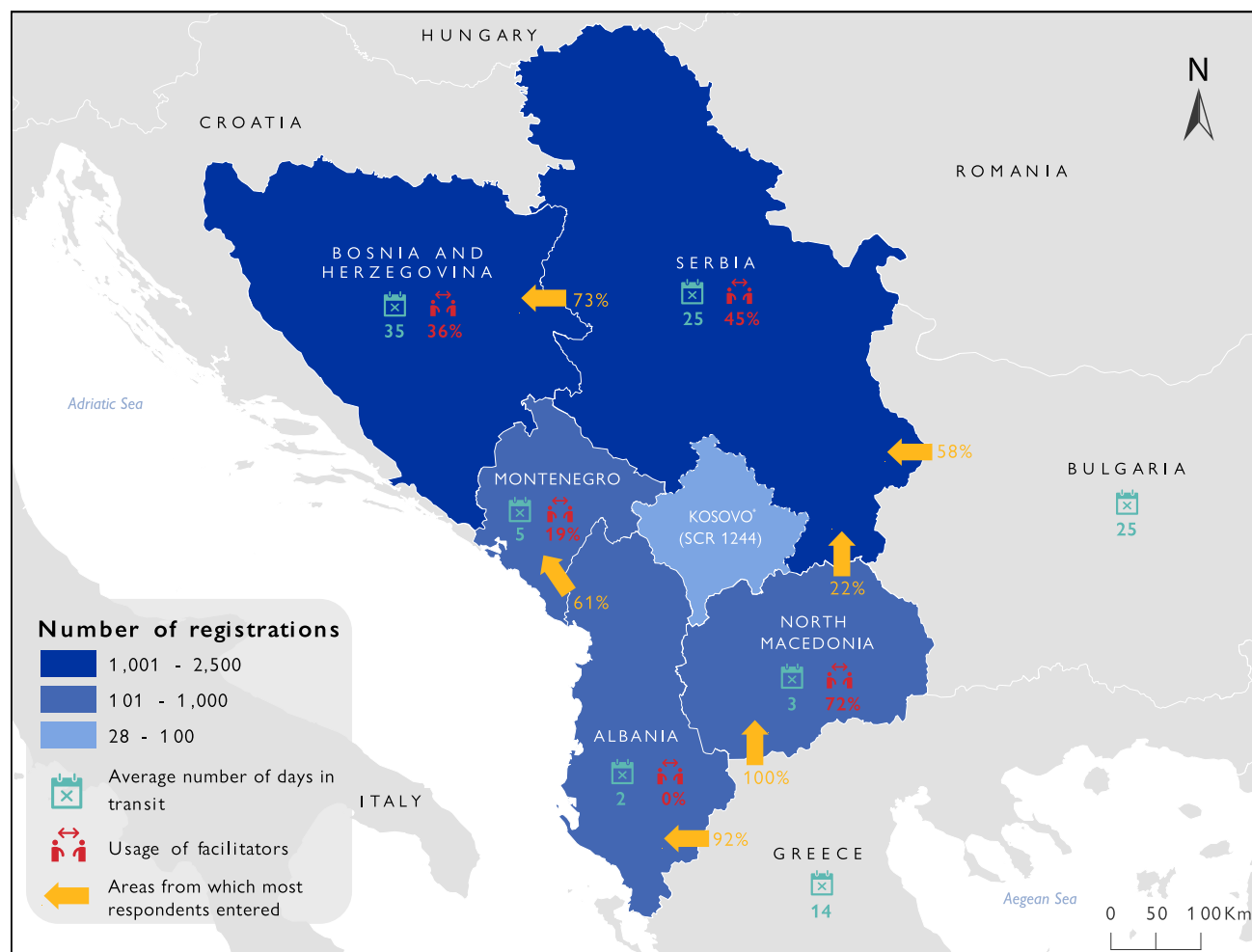
Were facilitated across at least one border in the Western Balkans

¹ Interviewees include migrants in an irregular situation, refugees and asylum-seekers as the reference population consists of mixed migration flows.

² References to Kosovo* shall be understood in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

³ Albania: the Directorate for Borders and Migration; BiH, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs; Montenegro: the Ministry of Interior; North Macedonia: Department of Border Affairs and Migration; Serbia: the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants; Kosovo*: Directorate for Migration and Foreigners

JOURNEYS



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Map 2: Information on migrant movements in the Western Balkans – June 2024

Map 2 above provides a detailed look at the main borders migrants cross to enter each country or territory in the Western Balkans. The yellow arrows show the country or territory from which most of the respondents entered while the red icons show the percentage of respondents who were facilitated to enter the country or territory of interview. The map also shows the average length of stay in days in each transit country or territory.

In June 2024, 73 per cent of respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina entered from Serbia, which was consistent with May 2024 (79%) and April 2024 (73%). The share of respondents who entered Montenegro from Albania decreased from 87 per cent in April 2024 to 66 per cent in May 2024 and 61 per cent in June 2024. In June 2024, 13 per cent of respondents entered Montenegro from Kosovo*, which is consistent with May 2024 (16%) but an increase when compared to April 2024 (0%). The share of respondents who entered Serbia from North Macedonia decreased from 42 per cent in May 2024 to 22 per cent in June 2024.

On average, people transited more quickly through Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

	ALB	BIH	MNE	MKD	SRB	XKX*	WB
	100%	93%	67%	100%	76%	–	88%
	27%	73%	100%	22%	49%	–	65%
	–	1%	–	71%	15%	–	10%
	4%	36%	34%	15%	64%	–	38%

Figure 1: Mode of travel in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=822)

Journeys: travel modality

Most respondents (75%) reported travelling in a group. Of those who were travelling in a group, 57 per cent stated they were travelling in non-family groups, while 28 per cent reported they were travelling with family members and 15 per cent said they were travelling with facilitators.

Journeys: border crossings

In June 2024, 38 per cent of respondents stated that they were facilitated across a border to enter the survey country. On average, respondents paid 304 EUR to cross a border within the Western Balkans. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had attempted and failed a border crossing at least once. Almost all respondents (98%) stated that the main reason for failing was being returned by authorities while the remaining two per cent said it was due to route closure (physical impediments or barriers that prevented them from passing).

Migrants use social media and instant messaging to organize their journeys to Western Europe. The most frequently used platforms were WhatsApp, Facebook and Viber.

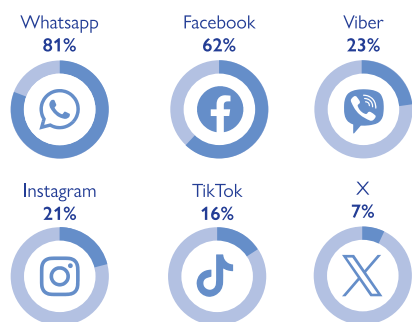


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=822)

Journeys: secondary movements⁴

Forty-seven per cent of respondents stated that they had been living in a country other than their own country of origin for a year or more.⁵ Seventy-five per cent of these respondents had been living in Türkiye, followed by the United Arab Emirates (11%), Greece (4%), Bulgaria (1%), the Islamic Republic of Iran (1%), Iraq (1%) and other countries (1%).

When asked why they had decided to move after having lived in these countries for a year or more, the three most frequently cited responses were economic reasons (78%), a fear of being returned to their country of origin (30%), and personal or targeted violence (23%).⁶

Journeys: needs

Respondents' most frequently cited needs tend to relate to prolonged journeys from their country of origin and into the Western Balkans.

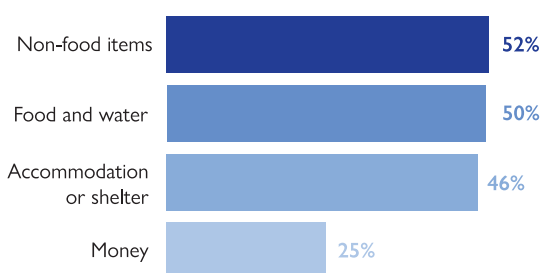


Figure 3: Most important needs outside reception facilities (multiple answers possible) (n=822)

ACCOMMODATION

Figure 4 provides a breakdown of where migrants were accommodated in the Western Balkans. Most respondents (59%) reported having been accommodated in a reception facility at least once during their journeys through the Western Balkans.

⁴ "Secondary movement" refers to the movement of a migrant from their first country of destination to another country, other than the country in which they originally resided and other than the person's country of nationality. [International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration](#), IOM, 2019.

⁵ This question is only asked in Serbia. The sub-sample is 347 respondents.

⁶ This question allows respondents to choose more than one answer. The total therefore does not add up to 100 per cent.

In June 2024, 35 per cent of respondents stated that they had either slept outside or squatted in an abandoned building at one point during their transit in the Western Balkans. The use of private accommodation was the highest in Albania (69%), while the highest percentage of camp residencies was recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina (75%). On average, respondents paid 17 EUR per person per day for private accommodation or hotels and hostels in the Western Balkans.

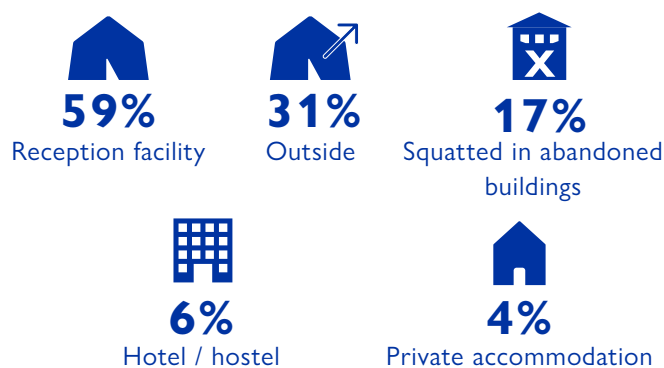


Figure 4: Accommodation in the Western Balkans (multiple answers possible) (n=822)

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

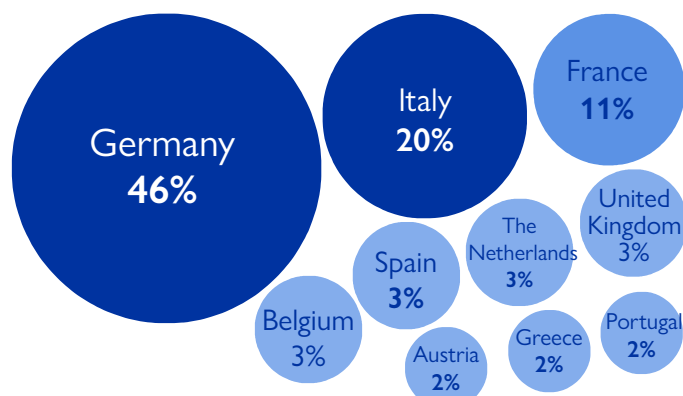


Figure 5: Top ten intended destinations (n=822)

Destination countries varied by the nationality of the respondents. Eighty-three per cent of respondents from the Syrian Arab Republic stated that they wanted to travel to Germany. Respondents from Morocco mentioned Italy (42%), France (21%) and Germany (18%). Nationals of Afghanistan stated Germany (54%), Italy (16%) and France (14%). See Figure 6 below for a breakdown of the main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination.

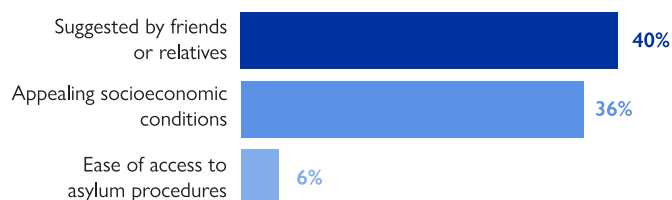
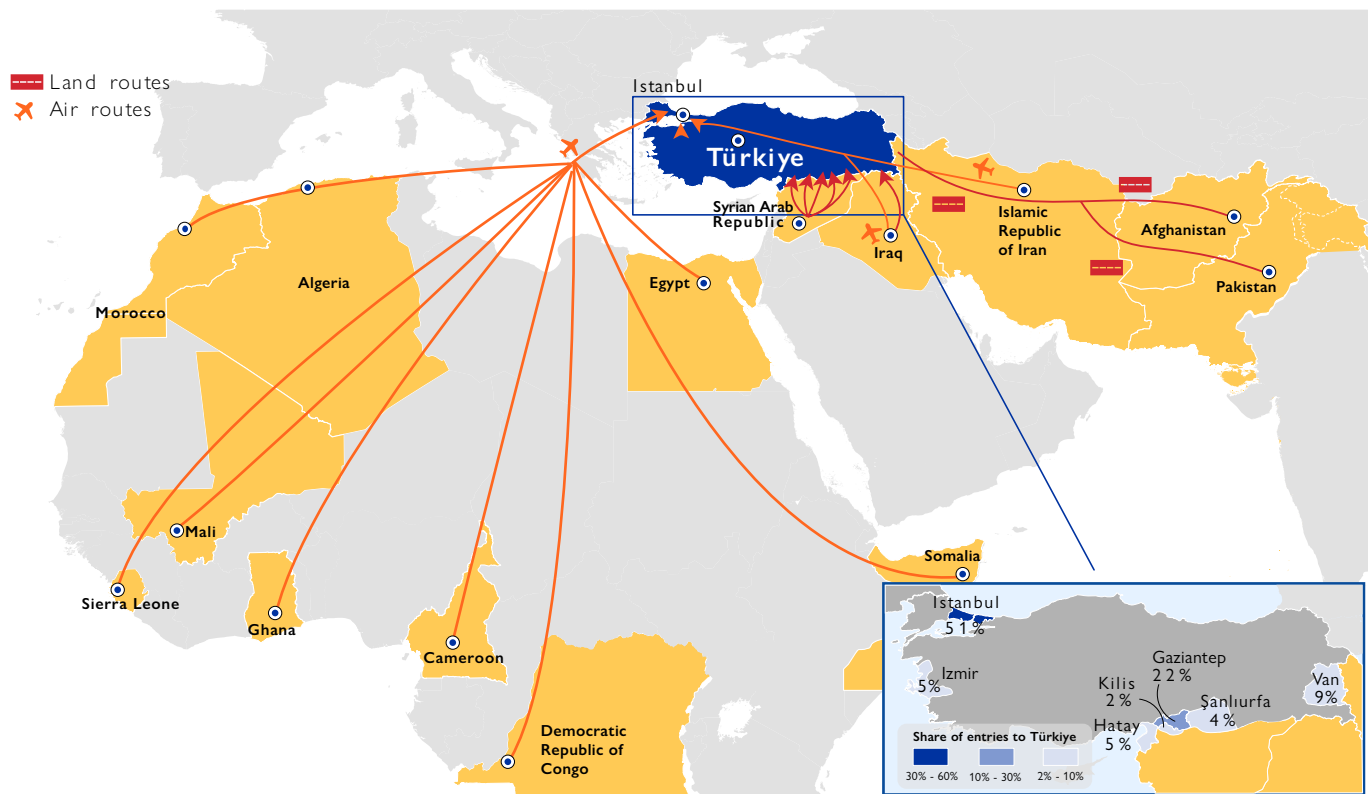


Figure 6: Main reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=822)

MIGRANTS TRANSITING THROUGH TÜRKİYE



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. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Map 3: Countries of origin of the respondents in June 2024 and provinces of arrival in Türkiye

According to survey results, Türkiye was the main hub from which migrants departed into the Western Balkans. To better understand movements from Türkiye, this section provides insights into the journeys and experiences of those migrants. It consists of a set of questions asked to 151 migrants of the overall sample in June.⁷



Figure 7: Feared being returned to country of origin (n=151)



Figure 8: Average length of stay in Türkiye (n=151)

Interviewees from North, Central, West and East Africa all stated that they flew to Istanbul, while those from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic mainly used the land route. A small number of respondents from Iraq also stated that they took the air route to Istanbul. See Map 3 above for an overview of the main provinces of entry into Türkiye.



Figure 9: Employment status in Türkiye (n=151)

On average, respondents spent 290 days living in Türkiye prior to leaving. Thirty-seven per cent of the respondents stated that they registered with authorities in Türkiye.

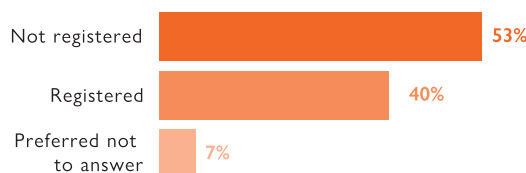


Figure 10: Registration by authorities in Türkiye (n=151)

When asked where they had departed Türkiye from, 95 per cent said it was at an unofficial border crossing. Most respondents stated that they left Türkiye due to economic reasons.

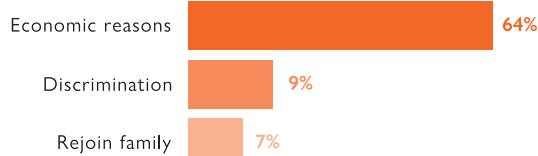


Figure 11: Reasons for leaving Türkiye (multiple answers possible) (n=151)

⁷ This question is only asked in transit reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina to keep the questionnaire brief and because most Turkish nationals in the mixed migratory flows eventually transit through Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SPECIAL FOCUS – NATIONALS OF EGYPT

To contextualize the journeys, experiences, and complex needs of migrants on the move, IOM carries out group interviews with specific migrant groups every month. This section is not representative but aims to give context to the quantitative data, by portraying one of the many nuanced and diverse experiences of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans. In June, IOM carried out interviews with seven people from Egypt in transit reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

- Nationals of Egypt started arriving in increasing numbers in 2024. In the first six months of 2024, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) have registered 476 Egyptian nationals in BiH compared to 108 in all of 2023.
- In 2024, based on reception centre registration data in BiH, 57 per cent of Egyptian nationals registered were unaccompanied and separated children, compared to 10 per cent of the overall population of migrants in reception centres. Ninety-nine per cent were male, compared to ninety-one per cent of migrants registered in reception centres in BiH.
- The Egyptian nationals interviewed spoke of leaving Egypt due to a lack of job prospects, poor pay and the increasingly high cost of living. They mentioned having raised money for their journeys through savings and borrowing from friends and family members.
- The individuals interviewed in groups did not know each other in Egypt, but met at various stages during their journeys to the Western Balkans.
- All of them had left Egypt around one year ago and all had travelled from Egypt to Libya. They crossed the border from Egypt to Libya irregularly in vehicles and on foot. From Libya, they travelled by boat to Greece. They paid between 2,000 and 3,000 EUR to take the boat.
- One interview participant mentioned residing in a closed camp in Greece for six months, while the others lived outside formal reception facilities for several months in Athens.
- From Greece, interviewees said they paid 500 EUR to cross the border into North Macedonia and then an additional 500 EUR to cross into Serbia with a vehicle. In Serbia, they resided in formal reception facilities before planning the last stage of their journey in the Western Balkans to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three participants alleged that they were attacked by authorities in Serbia while one participant said he was bitten by a dog.
- When asked about their final intended destination countries, the interview participants said they wanted to travel to Italy or Spain as they felt there were good socioeconomic opportunities there.
- None of the participants said they had friends or family in the countries of intended destination at the time they decided to start their migration journeys.

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 the Western Balkans.

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 the Western Balkans, 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. The survey is designed to last no longer than 15 minutes. Data was collected from 1 June to 30 June 2024 by enumerators in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*. Interviews took place in reception facilities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*.

In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo* enumerators also interviewed migrants outside formal reception facilities in transit locations, at entry or exit points and in locations where migrants are known to reside. Some questions are distributed across the different countries or territories of the Western Balkans, in order to keep the questionnaire brief. For example, the question on reasons for leaving the country of departure is only asked in Serbia and the Türkiye module is only deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As most migrants transiting through the Western Balkans usually exit from either Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, these questions can still provide some interesting analysis and findings for the overall sample. IOM staff in Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out the group interviews with Algerian nationals for the special focus section in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key informant interviews

Key informants can help provide information on the modus operandi of migrant mobility even when IOM field teams are not present. Key informants can be migrants themselves or persons familiar with the context.

Group interviews

The purpose of the group interviews is to contextualize the quantitative data gathered through the survey. These interviews are carried out with migrants inside reception centres in BiH and are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

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 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, especially late at night or in the early hours of the morning.

SUPPORTED BY:



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