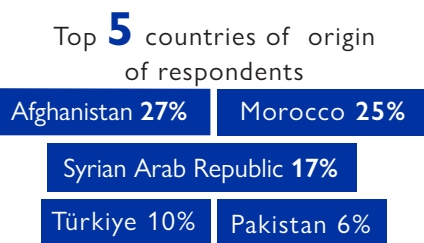




**2,783**

Registrations by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH (SFA) in August 2024



**23 days**

Average length of stay in BiH



**60%**

Travelled by bus



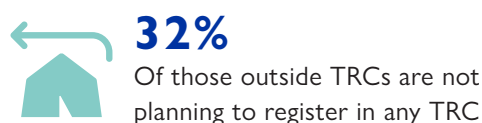
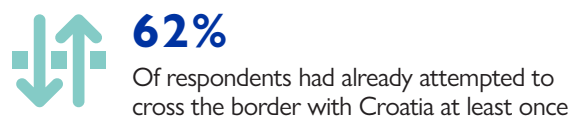
**33%**

Travelled by taxi

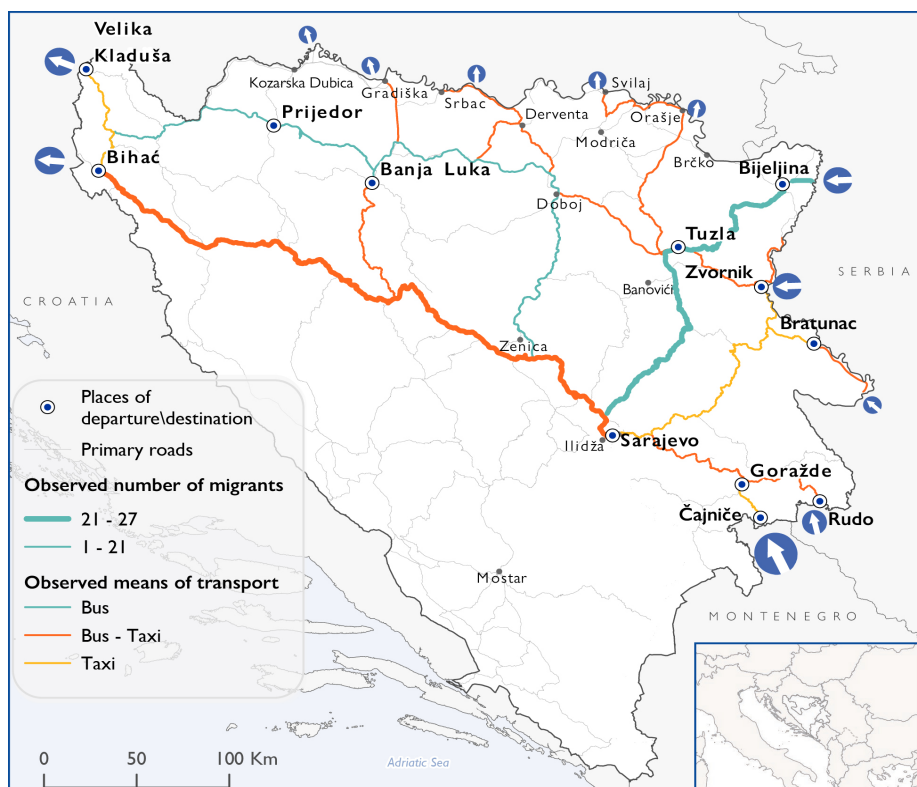
\*Multiple answers possible

**18,208**

SFA registrations from 1 January to 31 August 2024



This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).<sup>1</sup> Data was collected from 1 to 30 August 2024. 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 288 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 (TRCs) in BiH (Lipa, Ušivak, Borići and Blažuj).



## ROUTE OBSERVATION

- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through the eastern border with Serbia or the border with Montenegro further south. Most people entered through the area of Bijeljina. Other entry points from Serbia were around Zvornik and Rudo. From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH in the area of the Metaljka border crossing point, crossing to Čajniče.
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihac to attempt to cross the border with Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša.
- The August 2024 route observation has shown a 76% increase in migrant movement compared to the July 2024 route observation. This could indicate that migrants are moving more frequently in the months of August 2024.
- Service for foreign affairs and BiH border police have reported increased use in unofficial exit points with the northern border, mainly between Svilaj and Orašje.

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

From 1 January to 31 August 2024, the SFA recorded 18,208 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, a decrease of 7 per cent compared to the same period in 2023.

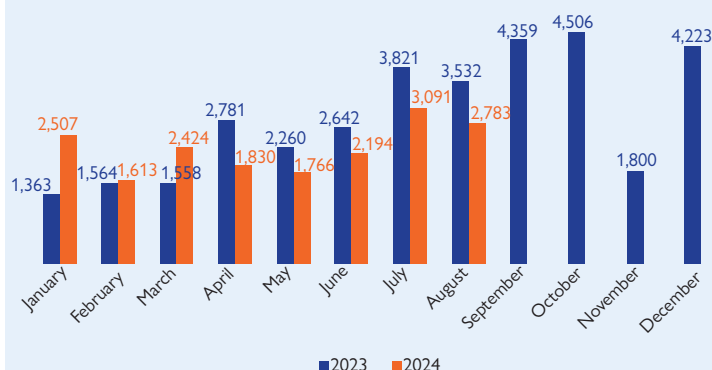


Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2023 compared to 2024

## JOURNEYS

Respondents had been travelling for 405 days on average from when they left their country of origin until they were interviewed in BiH.

On average, migrants stayed in BiH for 23 days, with the minimum number of days being 3 and the maximum number of days being 90. Seventy-four per cent of respondents stated they had crossed into BiH from Serbia, and fifteen per cent from Montenegro.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 19 per cent of respondents stated they were facilitated. Thirteen per cent of those respondents stated that they had used facilitators to cross from Montenegro to BiH, and 20 per cent stated using facilitators to cross from Serbia to BiH.

The average facilitation cost for a single entry from Serbia to BiH was 223 EUR, and for Montenegro to BiH was 217 EUR. Some respondents pay in bundles from their country of origin to the Western Balkans rather than paying per border crossing. For example, respondents from the Syrian Arab Republic paid, on average, 6,000 EUR to travel from the Syrian Arab Republic to BiH.

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. Most (87%) stated they walked, while 60 per cent stated that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Thirty-three per cent of respondents stated taking a taxi at some point during their stay in BiH.

Sixty-two per cent of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. On average, respondents made three failed border crossing attempts. Nearly all the respondents (96%) stated that they failed because they were intercepted and returned by authorities. Less than one per cent of respondents who failed to cross stated that they would not try to cross the border again.

Respondents were also asked what social media and instant messaging services they used to organise their journeys to other parts of Europe.

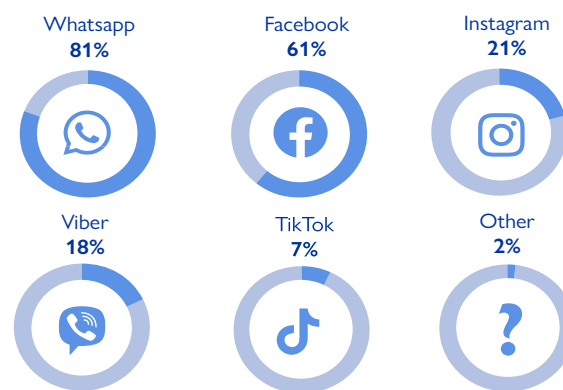


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=415)

## PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS

IOM's protection team systematically screens all migrants for vulnerabilities on first contact inside or outside transit reception centres (TRCs) in BiH. Through these emergency vulnerability screenings, IOM can effectively address immediate needs and ensure that migrants are referred to relevant services either by other IOM units, other humanitarian actors or state agencies.

In August 2024, the protection team conducted 1,885 screenings. Thirty-seven per cent (699 individuals) of respondents were identified as having protection risks and needs. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the five most identified potential risks and needs.

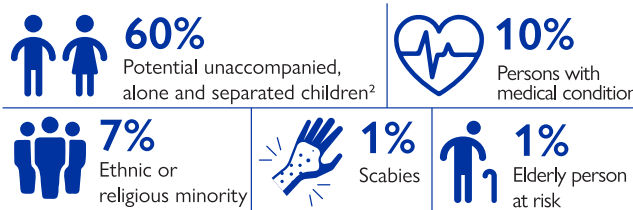


Figure 3: Five most identified potential risks and needs (n=699) (multiple answers possible)

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

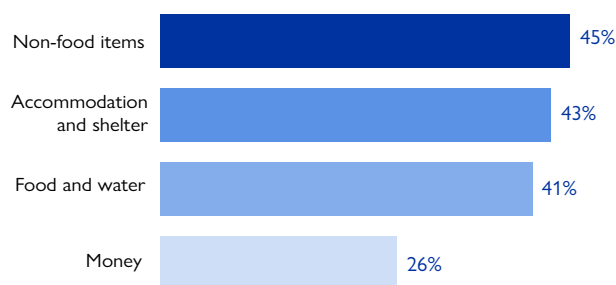


Figure 4: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=415)

<sup>2</sup> Potential unaccompanied, alone and separated children (UASC) are thought to be below 18 years of age and travelling alone

## ACCOMMODATION

Of those who were interviewed outside formal reception centres at exit locations (n=209), seven per cent stated they had not registered at the time of interview and did not plan to register in any TRC. This question may provide some insight into the number of migrants who transit through the country without being registered by authorities.

Seventy-nine per cent of respondents stated they had been accommodated in a TRC at one point during their stay in BiH. Forty-four per cent of respondents stated that they had slept outside at least once. Respondents who reported squatting in abandoned buildings was 18 per cent. The percentage of respondents who recorded staying in hostels and hotels was seven per cent, with the average cost of a stay being 20 EUR per night per person for both hotel and hostel.

## INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Figure 5 shows a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

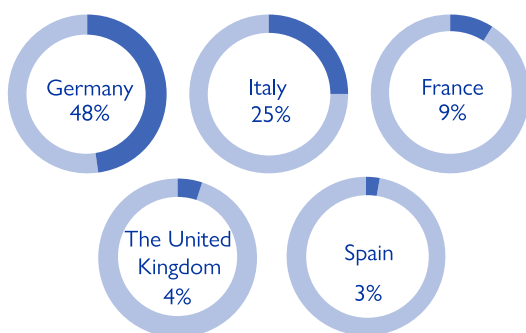


Figure 5: Top five intended destinations (n=415)

The survey found that the majority of nationals from the Syrian Arab Republic (78%), Türkiye (68%) and Afghanistan (67%) identified Germany as their preferred destination. Nationals of Pakistan (50%) and Morocco (49%) indicated Italy as their intended destination. Respondents from Algeria (33%) said they intended to travel to France.

Figure 6 shows a breakdown of the three main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination.

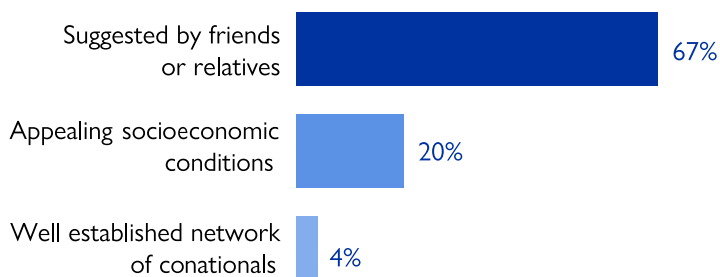


Figure 6: Top three reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=415)

## SPECIAL FOCUS – BORDER CROSSING FACILITATION

To contextualise 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 August 2024, IOM conducted interviews in reception centres in Biž and Spuž as well as near exit points in Rozaje and Pljevlja.

- Since January 1, 2024, 42 per cent of all migrants interviewed have stated they had used facilitators to cross a border at least once whilst travelling through the Western Balkans. DTM data suggest that out of those who stated yes to using facilitators, 40 per cent paid for packaged deals.
- Interviews focused on facilitation were conducted with migrants from The Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Both groups of respondents talked about their experience of paying for packages showing a unique experience of utilising facilitators to navigate across multiple borders in the Western Balkans.
- Payment for Iranian nationals was made in Türkiye, where 3,000 EUR per person was paid to travel from Türkiye to Norway and the UK. Payment for Pakistani nationals was made in Greece, and they paid between 1,800 and 2,000 EUR per person to travel from Greece to Italy. Both groups of respondents said they paid facilitators who were nationals from their own countries.
- Both groups of respondents crossed the border from Türkiye to Greece, with the Iranian respondents stating it took them multiple attempts to cross, having faced violence from both the Turkish and Greek border guards. All respondents stated that crossing from Greece to Albania and then Albania to Montenegro was a different experience from crossing the Turkish and Greek border.
- Both groups of respondents stated that transport and border GPS coordinates were included in their packages. The group from Pakistan also said that accommodation was included in their package.
- Respondents reported receiving GPS coordinates through WhatsApp or Telegram, directing them to unofficial border crossing points. After crossing, they receive another set of GPS coordinates leading them to a taxi that takes them to a nearby town.
- Once at the town, they wait for the next set of instructions from the facilitators. The facilitators also delete all messages corresponding to those completed steps.
- Both groups of migrants raised fears about crossing the border from Montenegro to BiH. They stated that they had heard stories of violent gangs that target migrants.
- Both groups of respondents stated they were waiting for further information from facilitators by WhatsApp or Telegram.



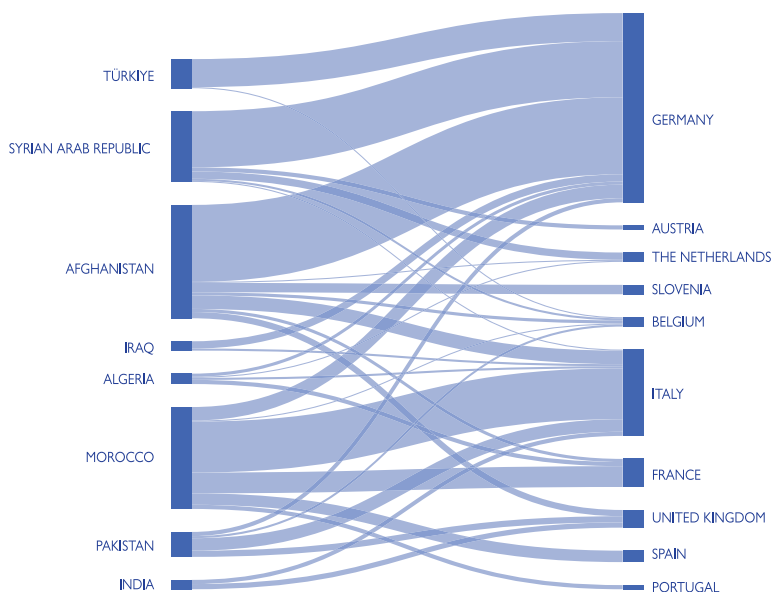


Figure 7: Intended country of destination for the top 8 nationalities in the sample (n=368)

## 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 to 30 August 2024 by 15 enumerators (5 women and 10 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 288 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 126 migrants inside TRCs. The data used to provide the protection and risk indicators was collected from the emergency vulnerability screenings conducted by the IOM protection team.

### 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 26 to 30 August 2024. IOM observed 187 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 contextualise 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.



Enumerators working together with the Red Cross to assist migrants. © IOM BiH 2024 / Melita Zulić

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