



411
Migrants interviewed during exercise



91%
Had been in BiH for less than two weeks



3,532
SFA registrations in August 2023

Top **3** countries of origin of respondents



67.9%
Afghanistan



17%
Morocco



4.6%
Pakistan



92%
Traveled throughout the country by bus



44.5%
Also travelled by taxis

19,521
SFA registrations from January to August 2023



30%
of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



11.5%
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 22 August to 1 September 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 411 migrants in active transit locations such as bus stops or at key entry and exit locations throughout the country as well as in three transit reception centres in BiH (Lipa, 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.

ROUTE OBSERVATION

Map 1: Most prevalent routes travelled by migrants within BiH

- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through one of four areas in the eastern border with Serbia or through one of three areas in the border with Montenegro further south.
- Entry points from Serbia are Bijeljina, Zvornik, Bratunac as well as the area surrounding the villages of Ročević and Donji Šepak.
- From the border with Serbia, migrants take buses or taxis to reach Sarajevo, where they typically rest for a day or two before continuing their journeys towards Una Sana Canton.
- Some migrants opt to travel from Tuzla to Doboј and Banja Luka, bypassing Sarajevo, in order to attempt border crossings around the Gradiška area in the north. Compared to the previous month, IOM observed fewer movements on this route.
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihac to attempt crossing the border into Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH from around the Metaljka border crossing. Migrants pay for taxis from Čajniće to Gorazde, and then continue to Sarajevo by bus.

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

From January to August 2023, the SFA recorded 19,521 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 54.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

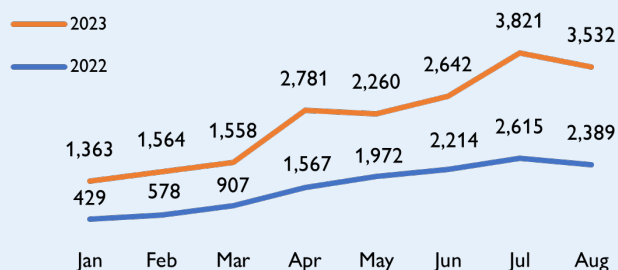


Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2022 vs 2023

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. The majority of respondents (92%) said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 44.5 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi. This overlap shows that people use diverse transportation means to travel throughout the country.

Thirty per cent of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. The most frequently cited response for not succeeding were that they were intercepted and returned by authorities, which was mentioned by 97.6 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, Viber, TikTok and Instagram.

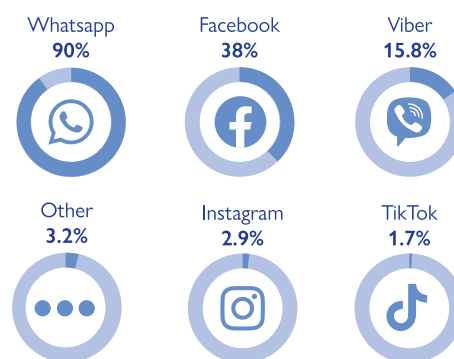


Figure 3: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (n=411)

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

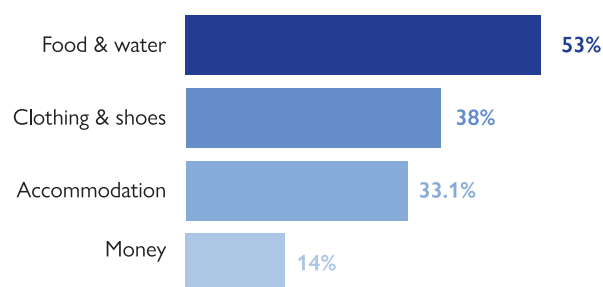


Figure 4: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=411)

PROFILES

This sample consists of 411 individual migrants surveyed in bus stations at known entry routes into, transit locations and exit locations in BiH as well as in three TRCs (Blažuj, Lipa and Borići). The average age of interviewees was 24, with the youngest respondent being 15 years of age and the oldest 50. Children made up 3.2 per cent of the sample. Eighty-one per cent said that they were single, 13.4 per cent were married and 6.1 per cent did not answer. Women made up 3.5 per cent of the sample.

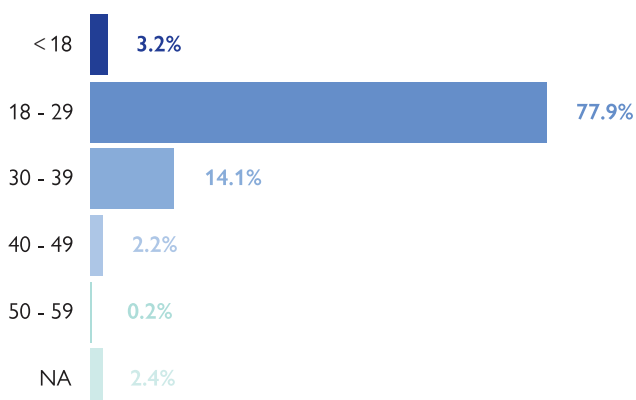


Figure 2: Age distribution of sample (n=411)

JOURNEYS

The majority of respondents (91%) had been in BiH for less than two weeks at the time of the interview. Most respondents (90.4%) had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia while the remaining 9.6 per cent entered through Montenegro.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 12.2 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied. However, many migrants are reluctant to talk about facilitation to enter the country. 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 data indicates. The cost of entry from Serbia tends to be more expensive than Montenegro. On average, respondents from Serbia paid around 200 Euros per person to cross the border, while respondents from Montenegro paid 133 Euros.

ACCOMMODATION

Of those migrants that were interviewed outside formal reception centres (n=226), 11.5 per cent stated that they had not registered and did not plan to register in any TRCs during their stay in BiH.

This was mostly because people wanted to transit rapidly through the country to cross the border or because they had alternative accommodation arrangements.

Of those migrants interviewed outside TRCs (n = 226), 5.3 per cent squatted in abandoned buildings or camped in fields while 4.9 per cent resided in hotels or hostels and four per cent in private accommodation.

Hotels and hostels tend to be a little bit more expensive than private accommodation. On average, people paid 15 Euros per person per night for hotels and 13 Euros per person per night in private accommodation.

INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES

The top intended destination countries were Germany, Italy, France, Austria, and Belgium. See Figure 5 below for a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

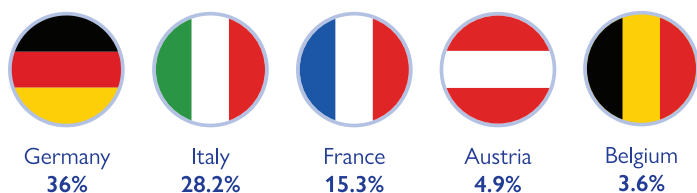


Figure 5: Top five intended destinations (n=411)

These destination countries can vary by nationality. Almost half of the respondents from Afghanistan (44.8%) stated that they wanted to go to Italy, while 34.4 per cent stated that they wanted to travel to Germany. The majority of respondents from Morocco (75.7%) stated that they intended to travel to France. Most Pakistani nationals said Italy (57.9%) while the remaining 42.1 per cent said they intended to travel to Germany. Iranian nationals stated that they either wanted to travel to Germany (46.2%) or Sweden (23.1%). Eighty per cent of Cuban nationals want to travel to Spain while the remaining 20 per cent said they wanted to travel to Sweden. See Figure 6 below for the reasons why people choose their destination countries and Figure 7 for a visualization of intended destination countries by nationality.

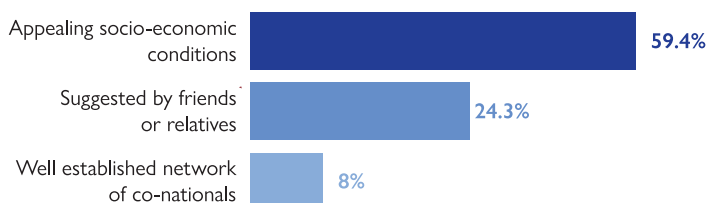


Figure 6: Reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=411)

SPECIAL FOCUS – AFGHAN NATIONALS

To better contextualize the journeys, experiences and complex needs of migrants on the move, IOM carried out focus groups interviews with migrants inside TRCs. This month, these interviews took place with in three focus groups with Afghan migrants, to provide more detailed insights into their experiences and travel modalities. The findings show general trends, which may to reflect the modus operandi of many Afghan nationals.

- The Afghan nationals interviewed spoke of paying for their journeys in instalments. The costs of these instalments depends on multiple factors, including who is travelling as well as the network of the smuggler, the complexity of the route and the mode of transport.
- The first instalment was from Afghanistan to Türkiye, with a price range of 1,500 USD to 2,000 USD for this leg. This is paid directly to a contact in Afghanistan. The second instalment is from Türkiye to Serbia, with a price range of 3,000 USD to 4,000 USD. The third instalment from Serbia to Italy costs between 500 to 1,000 EUR. The second and third instalments are paid through Hawala.²
- All those interviewed travelled from Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran via Pakistan. Tehran functions as the main hub. People often rest for a few days or weeks before making onward travel arrangements. From Tehran, people are driven in vehicles to near the Turkish border. They cross the border on foot and are picked up on the Turkish side in vehicles. From there, some people are taken to the Turkish city of Van while others continued directly to Istanbul.
- Some interviewees had been living in Türkiye for several years prior to moving again. Reasons for departing from Türkiye ranged from poor living conditions, economic difficulties, violence and ill-treatment by Turkish authorities and fear of being returned to Afghanistan.
- From Istanbul, most people travel to Edirne and then cross the border into Bulgaria. Migrants tend to spend very little time in Bulgaria, and instead move rapidly to Serbia. Belgrade functions as a hub, where people rest for a few days prior to arranging their journeys to BiH. From Belgrade, they are driven in vehicles to the border with BiH. They cross the border on foot and, depending on the time of day and funding, they either take taxis or buses to Sarajevo.
- Many Afghans interviewed had suffered harrowing accounts of violence, theft and abuse by smugglers and by official authorities in the transit countries on their way to BiH. They spoke of disillusionment at the treatment they experienced in the transit countries.

2. Hawala refers to an informal channel for transferring funds from one location to another through service providers, known as hawaladars, and is based on trust or extrajudicial forms of enforcement.

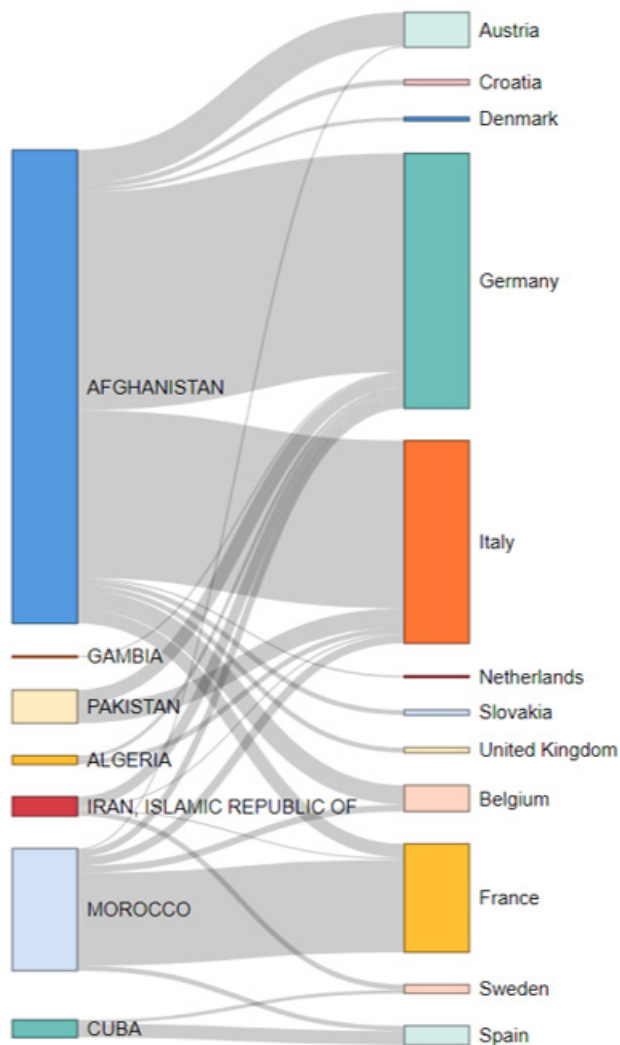


Figure 7: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=411)



IOM enumerator speaking to a group of migrants in Una Sana Canton. © IOM BiH 2023

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 22 August to 1 September 2023 by seven teams of thirteen enumerators (five women, and eight men) in Canton Sarajevo, Una Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Goražde and Zvornik. Data was also collected in three TRCs (Lipa, Blažuj and Borići). In total, IOM surveyed 226 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 185 migrants inside TRCs.

Route observation exercise

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 exercise took place from 28 August to 1 September 2023. IOM observed 436 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 focus groups with migrants inside TRCs. They are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

LIMITATIONS

The data collection exercises are 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.

SUPPORTED BY:



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