



Save the Children
100 YEARS

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AT THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

APRIL – JUNE 2019

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub
Data and Trends Analysis

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IMPRESSUM

Every child has the right to a future. Save the Children works in North West Balkans and around the world to give children a healthy start in life, and the chance to learn and be safe. We do whatever it takes to get children the things they need – every day and in times of crisis.

Acknowledgements

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Save the Children in North West Balkans

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub
Simina 18, 11000 Belgrade
Serbia

<https://nwb.savethechildren.net>
bmdh.sci@savethechildren.org

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Bosko Djordjevic, Tatjana Ristic, Nikola Vrzic, Save the Children

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Boy in a refugee centre in Serbia,
photo by Nikola Vrzic

Tell us what you think about our work or ask for more information:

Katarina Jovanovic, Data Analyst and MEAL Officer
katarina.jovanovic@savethechildren.org



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KEY TRENDS

At least 10,600¹ migrant and refugee arrivals in the Balkans make this migration route one of two most travelled European migratory routes in the second quarter of 2019.

During April, May and June 2019 more than 10,250 people were registered as newly arrived migrants and refugees in Greece. Compared to roughly 8,600 arriving in Spain and Italy², the Balkans migration corridor is still the most travelled route on the continent. Almost all the countries in the Balkans registered an increase in refugee and migrant arrivals compared to the first three months of the year and these figures are almost identical to those for the same period last year (more than 10,000 new arrivals in the second quarter of 2018). Save the Children identified 3,685 new arrivals in Serbia, Bulgarian official institutions registered 598 new cases, the numbers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) doubled from the previous period with 7,330 new arrivals, North Macedonia registered 398 new arrivals, Albania 396, Kosovo* 235 and Romania 443. Although the filed data suggests that these numbers do not overlap completely, the number used for general estimation of new arrivals on the Balkans is the one depicting only arrivals to Greece.

More than 88,000 refugees and migrants are currently present in the Balkans

The number of people accommodated in reception centres, at external addresses and unofficial shelters in the Balkans countries is estimated to be around 88,183. Most of them are present in Greece (about 76,000), Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 7,234), Serbia (3,797) and Bulgaria (676), while several hundreds of are accommodated in Romania (372), North Macedonia (104) and Albania.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a key transit country on the Balkans route

Transit corridors from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia as well as through Albania and Montenegro most often merge in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although the number of refugees and migrants trying to cross the Hungarian border remains high. The data shows that the majority of refugees and migrants transiting through the Western Balkans region mostly enter the region through Greece and then transit through Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Children make about one-third of all refugees and migrants transiting through the Balkans with many of them travelling alone

The available data on the number of refugee and migrants transiting through the Balkans show that the proportion of children in the total migrant population fluctuated between 10% and 40%. The percentage of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in the overall number of children varies from country to country, with most of them recorded in Serbia (86%), indicating that some children remain invisible, that there are significant differences in identification procedures, and that either smugglers or the refugees and migrants themselves choose routes depending on whether they travel with families or alone. The vast majority of UASC are boys from Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is important to note that for several countries in this reporting period reliable data on refugees and migrants disaggregated by age and sex were not available.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub Data and Trends Analysis

KEY TRENDS

Among refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, who most often travel the Balkans route, there has been an increase in arrivals by Iraqis and Syrians.

In addition, there has been a noticeable increase in arrivals of refugees and migrants from Bangladesh and African countries, including those from DR Congo.

From the time we started monitoring migration trends, the number of new migrants and refugees always increases in the second quarter of the year

It is not surprising that the number of new arrivals has gone up in the second quarter having in mind that the weather conditions for travel get much better.



MIGRATION ROUTES



It has been estimated that

10,600*

new refugees and migrants have arrived to the Balkans during the second quarter of the year, putting this route on the top of European migration routes by the number of new arrivals.

* This number includes new arrivals to Greece via sea and land route, to Bulgaria from Turkey and to Serbia by plane.

CONTINUOUS ARRIVALS AND OVERCROWDED CAMPS

During the second quarter of 2019, as UNHCR data shows, there has been a marked increase of new arrivals of refugees and migrants compared to the first three months of this year³ with 10,250 new arrivals in Greece.⁴ The majority of arrivals, roughly 7,600 persons, came over sea and made 74% of all arrivals this quarter, while 2,650 persons came by land. The number of land arrivals did not change much compared to the first three months of 2019, while the sea arrivals increased.

10,250
new arrivals in
Greece during the
second quarter of
the year.

At the end of March 2019, there were 76,000 of registered refugees and migrants in Greece and this number rose to 80,600 at the end of June. Most of the refugees and migrants are accommodated on the mainland (79%).

The latest available data from the Greek National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum shows that 16,108 migrants were present on the islands in June 2019. Having in mind the total accommodation capacities on the Greek islands of 9,000 places, the situation on the islands remains difficult. The island of Samos accommodates five times more people than the capacities allow (3,448 persons compared to 648 places), while the island of Lesbos has 6,957 persons while the available capacities were designed to accommodate almost half of that number (3,100).⁶



The number of migrants and refugees on the islands at the end of June (16,108) was twice the capacity of the reception centers.

The number of UASC in Greece slightly increased at the end of June 2019 compared to the March figures.⁷

The 3,868 unaccompanied children were mostly boys (94%) and almost a third of them were accommodated in shelters for unaccompanied or separated children or in Supported Independent Living apartments. While some UASC found shelter in other relatively safe housing spaces (hotels, identification centres, etc.), as many as 1,060 of them were living in informal/insecure housing conditions such as sharing private apartments, staying in squats, being homeless or moving frequently between different types of accommodation.⁸

1,060
of UASC in Greece
are living in
informal/insecure
housing conditions

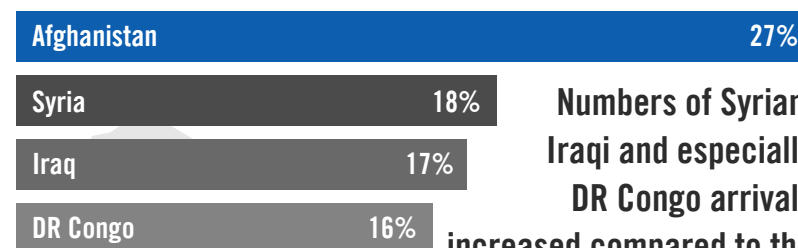
DEMOGRAPHY

With the majority of refugees and migrants arriving over the sea route it is important to analyse the available data on the arrivals on Greek islands. Similarly to the first quarter of the year, almost two thirds of 7,625 new refugees and migrants were adults (64%), including 3,048 men and 2,033 women while the children made 36% of new arrivals and 60% of children were boys. 382 UASC made 15% of all child arrivals during this period and they mostly came from Afghanistan, Syria and DR Congo. This was a change from the previous quarter when the majority of UASC came from Afghanistan, Iraq and Egypt.

The majority of arrivals on the islands continued to be from Afghanistan (27%) with much smaller percentage than in the previous period (when the Afghan arrivals constituted 47% of all arrivals), while the arrivals from Iraq (17%) and DR Congo (16%) increased (in the previous period Iraq and DR Congo were the countries of origin for 14% and 6% of arrivals respectively).

Syrian arrivals also increased with 18% of all new arrivals in Greece during the second quarter of the year (compared to 12% in the previous reporting period).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=10,250)



Numbers of Syrian, Iraqi and especially DR Congo arrivals increased compared to the first three months of 2019.

The Afghans, Syrians, and Iraqis mostly arrive in Greece in family groups. A similar trend of travelling in family groups was recorded for Syrians and Iraqis in other Balkans countries, but not for Afghans. According to the data obtained from other countries in the Balkans, refugees and migrants from Afghanistan were dominantly men and teenage boys. There is a possibility that refugees and migrants who use the land routes and the sea routes differ in some way (come from different provinces of origin, have different ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, etc.); have divergent smuggling schemes; make a decision to separate the family, with women and children staying Greece, while men continue the journey alone through the Balkans towards western and northern Europe etc. At this moment, these are only assumptions which need to be verified or refuted through a detailed research. Save the Children will continue to systematically monitor this trend and report on it.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

GREECE

MIGRATION ROUTES

During April, May and June 2019, the main entry points for the sea route were islands close to the Turkish coast including the Dodecanese islands, Lesvos and Samos. Compared to the first quarter of the year there has been an increase in the number of arrivals over the sea. From April to June, the Hellenic Police recorded 7,625 new arrivals. Land route arrivals remained roughly the same (2,650 persons compared with 2,700 persons arriving during the first quarter).

74%
of new arrivals
came over sea

A significant increase in the number of dead or missing refugees and migrants was reported during this quarter when compared to the previous reporting period with 37 have gone missing or died trying to enter Greece by sea compared to 14 reported cases during the previous period. This number is larger than the one in the same reporting period previous year (29).

Many refugees and migrants continue their journey towards western and northern European counties, mostly through North Macedonia and Serbia or travelling through Albania and Montenegro, towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some refugees and migrants use the sea route towards Italy but the numbers are not available.



REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ON THE MOVE

During April, May and June of 2019, Save the Children and its partners in Serbia recorded an increase of more than 70% in identified new migrants and refugees compared to the first quarter of the year. We have identified and supported 3,685 newly arrived refugees and migrants during this period (compared to 2,113 identified during the first quarter of the year and an increase compared to the second quarter of 2018 when 2,918 persons were identified). UNHCR data also shows an increase compared to first three months of 2019 - they have recorded 6,621 of new arrivals compared to 5,084 records in first three months of 2019.⁹ This is more than double than 3,165 observed arrivals in the second quarter of 2018.

3,685
new migrants and
refugees came to
Serbia during April,
May and March

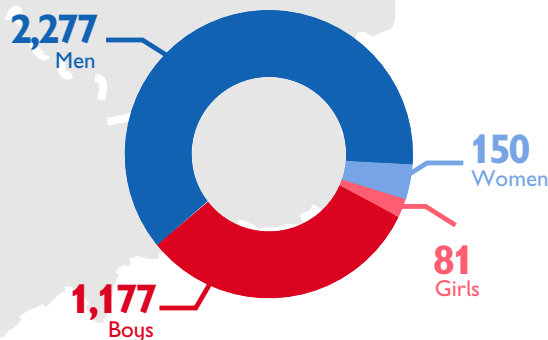
Registering intentions to seek asylum almost doubled compared to the previous period, with 3,045 requests made in these three months.¹⁰ Only 52 refugees and migrants out of all who registered an intention to seek asylum actually submitted their application during the reporting period. There were 6 positive asylum determinations during the second quarter of 2019.¹¹

UNHCR data shows that there has been a decrease in number of refugees and migrants present in the country recording 3,797 at the end of June.¹² The fact that the number of those staying in Serbia has been decreasing during the last 6 months even with an increase in new arrivals, supports the assumption that Serbia remains perceived as a transit country by refugees and migrants.

DEMOGRAPHY

Since the nature of migration makes it difficult to collect exact data on migrant and refugee population in any country, there is no precise information on the number of migrants and refugees transiting through Serbia. Most agencies and organizations collect data by registering their beneficiaries from this population or combining these numbers with the data collected by official institutions. Save the Children has been systematically and regularly collecting data on its beneficiaries for several years providing important insight into the structure and habits of this population.

During the second quarter of 2019, Save the Children and its partners identified and supported 3,685 new arrivals of which 2,427 (66%) were adults – 2,277 men and 150 women. Children made up 34% of newly arrived migrants and refugees (1,258) with boys making the majority of new arrivals (1,177 boys compared to 81 girls). Most children came from Afghanistan (72%), Iraq (10%), Pakistan (9%) and Syria (4%). Although most identified children were adolescents coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan, those younger than 13 years of age were mostly coming from Iraq and Syria.



94%
of new arrivals
are men and boys

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

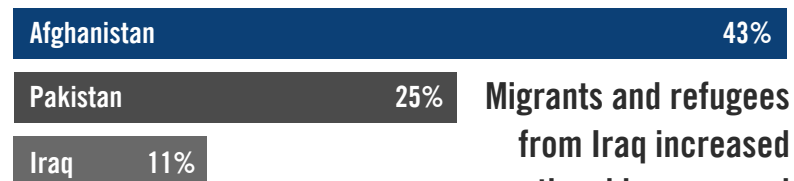
SERBIA

According to the Save the Children's data, the proportion of children traveling alone was as almost high as it was during the first three months of the year. UASC made as 86% (1,084) of migrating children identified during April, May and June. Only one unaccompanied girl was identified. UASC came mostly from Afghanistan (82%) and Pakistan (11%).

86% of identified children were registered as traveling alone

Afghan refugees and migrants remain the largest group of new arrivals during the second quarter of 2019 making 43% of all refugees and migrants, followed by Pakistani (25%) and Iraqi (11%) refugees and migrants. Compared to the previous quarter of this year, the only major change is an increase in proportion of migrants and refugees from Iraq from 4% to 11%.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=3,685)



Migrants and refugees from Iraq increased noticeably compared to the previous period

Girls and women come from different countries of origin than most boys and men. Women and girls mostly come from Iraq (36%), Iran (24%) and Syria (21%), with Syrian women and girls showing the biggest increase in arrivals comparing to the previous quarter of the year.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Exit routes from Serbia have not changed and are going mostly through Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary and Romania. Almost all borders surrounding Serbia were well protected with physical barriers and strong police presence, except the one between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, making it the most likely site for migrants and refugees to try to leave Serbia irregularly.



From Serbia, most of the refugees and migrants are heading west towards Bosnia and Herzegovina

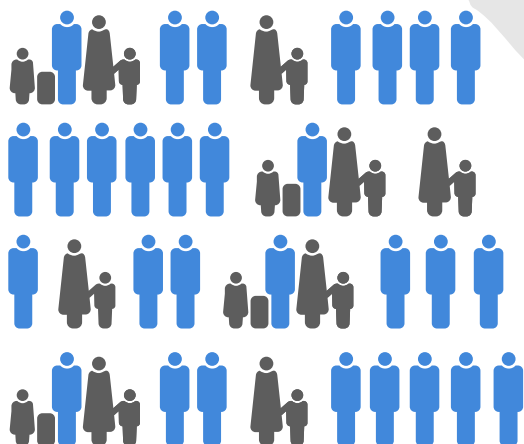
The most widely used route for entering Serbia in the first quarter of 2019 was the one through North Macedonia. Half of the refugees identified by our partner organizations used this route, which is a decrease compared to first three months of the year. Arrivals from Bulgaria somewhat increased to 35% of all new arrivals.

Plane arrivals made 5% of all refugee and migrant arrivals in Serbia during April, May and June 2019.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BUSY ROUTE THROUGH BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The data collected by UNCT¹³ confirms that Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the key Balkans countries for refugee and migrant arrivals. Between April and June 2019, the number of refugees and migrants in this country doubled compared to the beginning of the year with UNCT recording 7,330 new arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



7,330

new refugees and migrants have been registered in the second quarter of the year

The number of attestations of the intention to seek asylum also doubled compared to the first three months of 2019, rising to 6,988 cases in the second quarter of this year. This trend is visible with the asylum applications as well - compared to 74 cases in the first quarter of the year, between April and June Bosnia and Herzegovina had 126 asylum applications. Although there were more new arrivals than during the same period last year, the number of asylum applications was more than three times smaller than in the second quarter of 2018.

There is a noticeable rise in the number of refugees and migrants present in Bosnia and Herzegovina from around 5,500 at the end of March to an estimated 7,234 persons by the end June of which more than 4,000 are staying in reception centres around the country, mostly in the Una-Sana Canton in the North-West part of the country. The official reception centres are at the capacity and some 3,000 persons are estimated to be staying in private accommodation, squatting or sleeping rough.

7,234

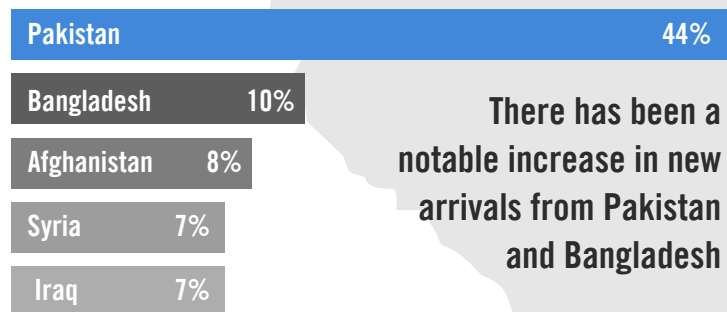
migrants and refugees are temporarily residing in the country

DEMOGRAPHY

Although several state and non-governmental institutions support migrants and refugees on their way through Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is no official public data on new arrivals desegregated by gender, age and other categories.

We do have some information on the countries of origin of refugees and migrants. In the second quarter of 2019 the largest portion of refugees and migrants came from Pakistan (44%), followed by Afghanistan (8%), Syria (7%) and Iraq (7%). The number of new Pakistani refugees and migrants is noticeably larger than in the previous reporting period when they made 26% of new arrivals. New arrivals from Bangladesh also increased during this period, with 706 refugees and migrants arriving from this country.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=7,330)



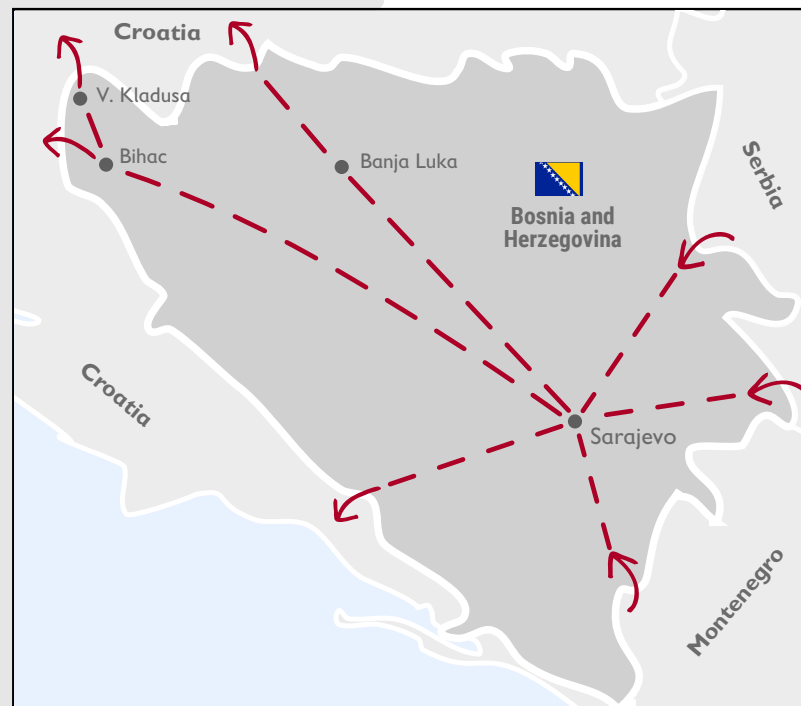
There has been a notable increase in new arrivals from Pakistan and Bangladesh

Although available data on refugees and migrants present in the country at any given time cannot be used as a representative sample of all refugees and migrants transiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, it can provide strong clues about their possible structure.

Of 7,234 refugees and migrants¹⁴ present in the country at the end of June, 79% were adults and 21% were children. Men make the majority of adult refugees and migrants (71%) and this gender imbalance is even larger when it comes to children. Out of 1,371 refugee and migrant children staying in BiH, 76% are boys. UASC children make more than a third (36%) of all refugee and migrant children in the country, but there is no data on their gender ratio.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The routes through Bosnia and Herzegovina have not changed much in the second quarter of 2019 compared to the previous period. Most refugees and migrants have entered the country through Serbia and Montenegro (south and south-east border), passed through the central part of the country (Sarajevo and Tuzla) travelling north toward the Croatian border.



According to the available field data, most refugees and migrants were trying to cross the north-west part of the border with Croatia in the area of Bihac and Velika Kladusa. The field workers estimate that there are roughly 5,500 persons in the Una-Sana Canton area. Refugees and migrants were also identified in other parts of the country, notably in the north (Tuzla and Banja Luka), as well as in the south.



TESTIMONIES

MY CHILD IS THE ONLY ONE I HAVE

“I am happy to have my child, as he is the only one I have now”, says Nasrin from Afghanistan, swaying her son Sami* in her arms, “but life gets really difficult for us sometimes”.*

Sami* was conceived and born during their migration journey. He celebrated his first birthday in an asylum centre in Serbia and Save the Children’s local partner, Group 484 organized a small birthday party in the child friendly space. In her home country, Nasrin* studied to be a teacher. Two years after she started her studies, her father demanded that she had to get married. He found her a husband. Nasrin* would have preferred to complete her studies but her family didn’t give her choice, so she started a life with her husband. The new life was not anywhere close to what she had wished for.

“After I moved to my husband’s home I realized that he was already married, living with his wife and children. That happens often in Afghanistan – after getting married, a woman comes to a new home only to find another woman and a family living there. Sometimes men claim that these women are their cousins, but they don’t hide the truth for long because a new wife can’t easily return to her parents. I was unhappy to live like this, but I didn’t have much choice” says Nasrin*.

Soon after, this 24-year-old woman left her home country with her husband and his family. “Afghanistan was not a safe place to live, military groups were everywhere, terrifying and killing people. We left the country and travelled to Turkey”, says Nasrin*. After staying there for some months, the family continued to Bulgaria, and finally ended up in Serbia. During the journey, Nasrin* got pregnant, and the family relationships deteriorated. “I felt molested both by my husband and his first wife. It was very difficult for me. I was away from home without anyone I could ask for help. I gave birth by a caesarian section, which made me vulnerable and didn’t know how to properly take care of myself or my baby,” shares Nasrin*.

She asked for support in the asylum centre. Other women helped with advice while the staff in the child friendly space provided necessities for the baby. The worsened family relationships culminated in the decision by her husband to leave Serbia and go back to Greece, hoping that it would be easier to reach western Europe from there. Nasrin* refused to go and stayed behind with Sami*.

Being alone gave this young woman the freedom she desired, but left her without any support. “My husband left soon after Sami* started to say ‘papa’. Every now and then the baby calls for him, which breaks my heart,” says Nasrin*. Nevertheless, she is determined to stay free from her former family. “My husband had promised me that he would share his time between his first family and us, but this is not the life I want for my boy and myself. Then he started threatening me. I often feel afraid that he will come back and take my son from me.”

Nasrin* frequents the child friendly space where Sami* plays with other children who carry him around and take care of him as if he was their younger brother. Whenever she can, she also comes to the workshops that Save the Children and Group 484 run for refugee parents staying in the centre, aiming to help them face challenges of parenting in difficult circumstances.

“I don’t have many people I can talk to. I stopped talking to my father after I realized he lied and made me marry an already taken man – he did know that my husband was married – and my mother is ill, so I don’t want to disturb her. I like coming to the child friendly space and to the workshops for parents, because I get to talk to people and forget, at least for a while, the adversities of my life,” says Nasrin*.

Not knowing what the future brings is one of her greatest fears. “For my son and myself I wish a quiet, normal life – the opposite of the life I had in Afghanistan. Sometimes I think that I should leave Serbia because people say refugees can’t have this kind of life here, but I don’t have any money, and I can’t travel without the money. I try to stay away from suspicious people and people who I don’t know well, because you never know where the danger comes from,” says the young mother with a concerned voice.

**Names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy and safety of individuals.*

MIGRATION FLOW

During April, May and June 2019, the Bulgarian police apprehended 598 persons for illegally entering the country which is a notable increase compared to the previous quarter when 362 persons were apprehended for the same reasons.¹⁵ 676 migrants and refugees are recorded to be staying in official centres or at “external addresses”¹⁶ which is slightly less than in the previous quarter of the year. Official data¹⁷ show that 253 persons have left Bulgaria or have been deported in this period which does not account for 380 refugees and migrants who are “missing”. We can only assume that these people irregularly continued their journey towards western and northern Europe.

598
people were
apprehended of
illegally entering
the country

DEMOGRAPHY

The number of applications for international protection increased during the second quarter by as much as 87%. The Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees reported that 577 persons applied for international protection in the second quarter of 2019.

These included mostly adults (352 or 61%) and mostly men (320 or 91% of all adults) while only 32 women applied for protection in the same period. The number of children asking for protection in the second trimester also rose with 225 children requesting asylum (211 boys and 14 girls). This increase is related to the rising number of children among the arrivals - the proportion of children in the total number of new protection seekers rose during this period to 39% compared to 24% during the first three months of the year.

39% of new protection seekers were children (N=598)



87% of all children travelled
unaccompanied

Most of children applying for asylum came from Afghanistan (75%), followed by Syria and Iraq. According to the officials, 196 of the children travelled unaccompanied which represents 87% of all new child applications. When compared to the previous reporting period, it is noticeable that proportion of UASC increased from 33% indicating a change in the structure of the refugee and migrant children in Bulgaria in the recent months.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=598)



The majority of the
asylum seekers were
from Afghanistan, Syria
and Iraq.

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub

Data and Trends Analysis

BULGARIA

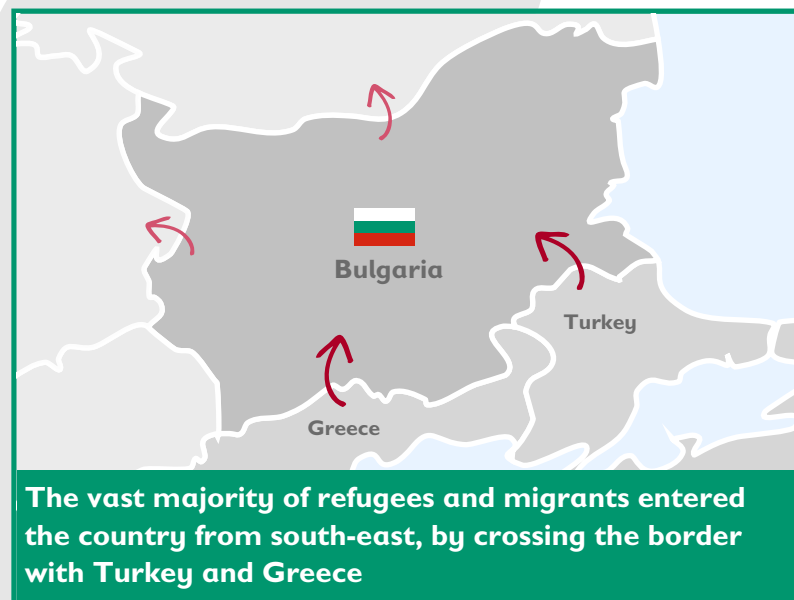
Regardless of whether they are children or adults, Afghan refugees and migrants are the most numerous amongst new protection seekers (52%), followed by those from Syria (14%) and Iraq (6%). Asylum seekers coming from Iraq and Syria, as in the previous period, include a relatively balanced number of men, women and children indicating that they travel in families.

The international protection was granted only to 76 refugees and migrants. Although the number of applications increased from the first three months of 2019, the number of granted protections are lower. Most of requests for protection were made by Afghans, but most of the approved protected statuses in this trimester were given to refugees from Syria (51 or 67%, including 17 children). Iraqi refugees and migrants make 16% of those who were granted some form of protection.

MIGRATION ROUTES

Official data on locations in which migrants and refugees have been apprehended show that most of the migrants were observed crossing the border with Turkey (53%) and Greece (43%). Although the number of reported pushbacks from the Serbian border were rising at the beginning of the year, in the second quarter of the year only 3 such cases were reported.¹⁸

Two thirds of registered cases of migrants and refugees stopped at the border trying to leave Bulgaria (66%) were located at the Serbian border, while almost all the rest were registered on the north border with Romania (25%). As in the previous period, the entry points were mostly on the south-east of the country and the exit points on the north-west.



It is important to mention that the data discussed here are based only on official records. Although it is not fully representative for all of the migrant population traveling through Bulgaria, this data proved to be useful in understanding migration flows and major trends. The location data publicized by Bulgarian officials cover migrants and refugees apprehended while entering the country, those registered in the interior as well as those trying to exit the country.

INVISIBLE IRREGULAR FLOW

The data collected by Save the Children and its partners in Serbia show that a considerable number of new migrants came to Serbia from North Macedonia. According to our beneficiary data, in the second quarter of 2019 more than 2,200 new arrivals to Serbia came through this border. On the other hand, official data from this country recorded only 398¹⁹ newly arrived refugees and migrants. These numbers, although slightly higher than in the first three months of 2019, are still far lower than the data collected in Serbia suggests, pointing to much larger migrant flow than reported by officials.

398
officially registered
new migrant and
refugee arrivals

The number of refugees and migrants accommodated in reception/ transit centres also rose compared to previous quarter of the same year with 104 migrants and refugees and migrants recorded at the end of June.

DEMOGRAPHY

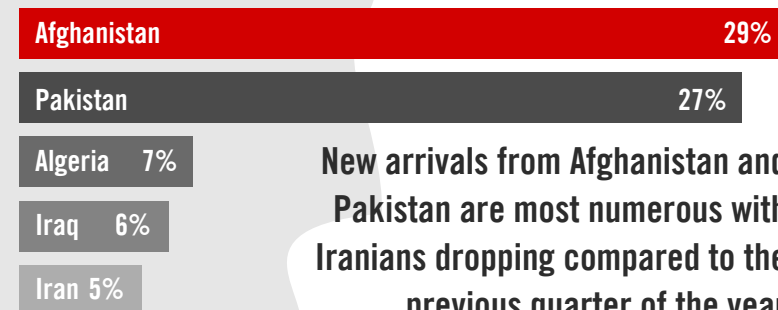
The demographic breakdown of newly arrived migrants is almost identical to the data for the previous reporting period. Out of 398 officially registered new migrants and refugees in North Macedonia, 81% were adults, mostly men (more than 87% of all newly arrived adult migrants and refugees in this period) while 19% of them were children.

19% of registered new arrivals
were children

Only 8% of the children registered in the official data were unaccompanied minors, or only 1% of all refugees and migrants entering North Macedonia from April to June.

Most of those registered between April and June came from Afghanistan (29%) and Pakistan (27%), followed by Algeria (7%), Iraq (6%) and Iran (5%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=398)



New arrivals from Afghanistan and Pakistan are most numerous with Iranians dropping compared to the previous quarter of the year

MIGRATION ROUTES

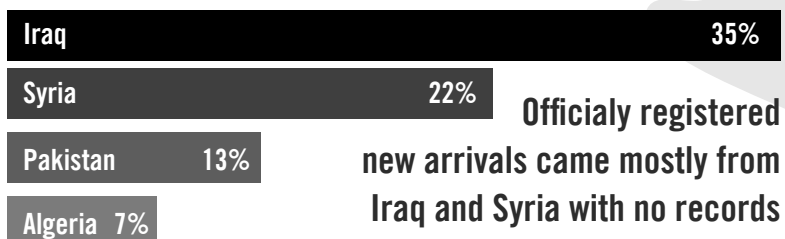
The existing data sources indicate that North Macedonia is a transit country for refugees and migrants and that they tend to pass through it relatively fast. Refugees and migrants mostly enter the country from the Greek border, while the most support activities recorded as provided by international organisations were made at the Serbian border. Some of refugees and migrants also use the route through Albania and Kosovo*.

MIGRATION CORRIDOR GAINING IMPORTANCE²¹

Although there are indications that the migration route through Albania is amongst the most travelled in the western Balkans, IOM data shows that only 396 migrants and refugees have been officially registered entering the country during the second quarter of 2019. The figures on those apprehended by authorities while entering and exiting the country are higher and include 647 persons.²²

Although no data is available on the demographical breakdown of newly arrived refugees and migrants in the second quarter of 2019, we do know that those officially registered in this period were mostly from Iraq (35%), Syria (22%), Pakistan (13%) and Algeria (7%).²³ It is interesting that there are no records of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, although they are the majority in almost all migrant and refugee populations in the Balkans countries.

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=647)



Officially registered new arrivals came mostly from Iraq and Syria with no records of Afghans for this quarter

MIGRATION ROUTES

Although the migration route through Albania is not new, it is becoming more prominent in the last year. The field data we collected suggest that most refugees and migrants perceive Albania as a transit country and usually move fast towards Montenegro crossing lake Shkoder.



IN TRANSIT

Official numbers suggest that Kosovo* transit route was not often used by migrants and refugees, although there are increasing testimonies from refugees and migrants transiting Serbia that they came from this country. During the second quarter of 2019, the Ministry of Internal Affairs registered 235 persons who applied for asylum.²⁴

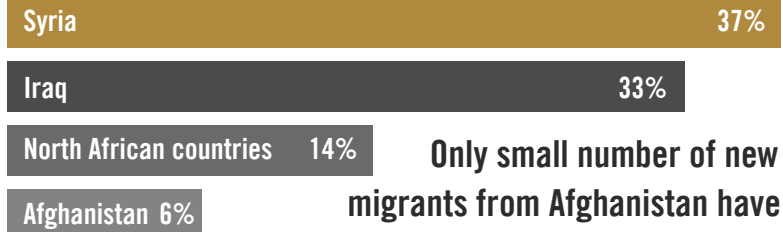
235
officially
registered
new arrivals

DEMOGRAPHY

Most applicants for asylum were men (84%), with women making 16% of all applicants. The number of women applying for asylum in Kosovo increased compared to the first three months of 2019. The similar increase can be seen with children applicants which made 18% of all applications compared to 10% in the first trimester of the year.

Similar to the beginning of the year, most of the refugee and migrants registered in Kosovo* came from Syria (37%), followed by Iraq (33%), North African countries (14%) and a small number of those from Afghanistan (6%).

Refugees and migrants by country of origin (N=235)



Only small number of new migrants from Afghanistan have been recorded with those from Iraq and Syria being most numerous

MIGRATION ROUTES

Although there are no formal data on routes refugees and migrants take transiting through Kosovo*, the information from the field suggest that they mostly enter the country from North Macedonia and proceed toward Serbia or Montenegro.



TRANSITING THROUGH ROMANIA

Romanian territory has been an important transit route for mostly Asian and African migrants and refugees heading for western and northern Europe during the last several years. This trend has continued in 2019. Compared to the first three months of this year, the number of new arrivals has slightly gone up with 443 migrants and refugees applying for international protection in that period. These figures resemble those for the same period last year (481 in 2018.).

443
migrants and
refugees applied
for international
protection

When it comes to the presence in the country, the official data²⁵ shows that there were 372 migrants and refugees temporarily residing in reception centres (Bucharest, Galati, Radauti, Somcuta Mare, Timisoara and Giurgiu) at the end of June. These numbers are higher than in the last reporting period (303) and almost identical to the ones from the same period last year (370 in 2018.).

The data collected in the field²⁶ shows that most of the owners of valid residence permits are persons traveling in families. This data also suggests that families stay longer in the country (1-3 months on average) while single adults move on faster.

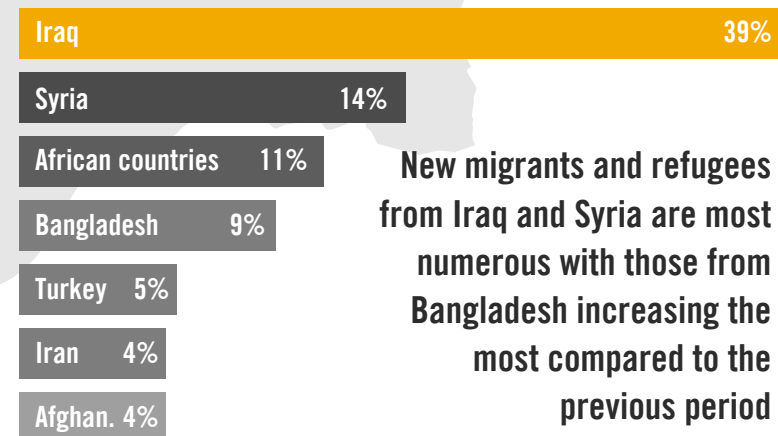
DEMOGRAPHY

According to the data collected on the field, the majority of 442 migrants and refugees who applied for asylum in the second quarter of 2019 were adults (80%), while 20% of all applicants were children.

20% of all asylum applicants
were children

The countries of origin of the most numerous applicants include Iraq (39%) and Syria (14%). Refugees and migrants from Bangladesh are on the rise with 9% of them seeking asylum in Romania followed by Iran (4%) and Afghanistan (4%). 11% of all asylum applicants came from an African country. It is interesting that 5% of all asylum seekers in the second quarter of 2019 came from Turkey, which is not usual for Romania and Save the Children will continue to monitor this situation.

Applicants for international protection by country of origin (N=443)



New migrants and refugees
from Iraq and Syria are most
numerous with those from
Bangladesh increasing the
most compared to the
previous period

Balkans Migration and Displacement Hub Data and Trends Analysis

Since no official data on children is available, Save the Children Romania collected the data from its refugee and migrant children beneficiaries which could give an indication of a structure of children entering the country. According to this data, out of 52 children receiving services from Save the Children in the relevant period, 75% were boys and 25% girls. The prevailing majority (65%) of the children came from Iraq while 15% came from Syria. The children from Bangladesh made 6% of all assisted children exceeding those from Afghanistan (4%).

Similar to the previous reporting period, out of all newly identified children, 11 (21%) travelled alone. Most of UASC were from Iraq and Bangladesh. Other countries of origin, somewhat different than those traditionally appearing in Romania, included India, Somalia, Algeria and Gambia.

MIGRATION ROUTES

The field data suggests that most refugees still come into the country from Serbia and Bulgaria. Romania is usually perceived as a transit country regardless of being an EU member state, and a small number of refugees and migrants stay longer than a few weeks, mostly families. The exit point from the country is its border with Hungary.



The official closure of borders, and the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, reduced the number of migrants, but did not stop the migrations through the Balkans. Refugees and migrants have been pushed into the hands of smugglers and traffickers facing heightened protection risks. The national protection systems in countries like Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia are struggling to provide adequate support to new arrivals. There is a lack of reliable data on migration trends and there are many rights violations against migrants and refugees transiting through, or stranded in the Balkans.

Organizations and volunteer groups operating in the Balkans track irregular arrivals, departures, cases of pushbacks, detention, and violence in their own countries, often without clearly defined standards, objectives or consistency. At the current time, there is no unified collection of information or a regional initiative to collate and organize the available information into a clear and concise overview.

International attention remains mostly focused on Greece, while the migration flows through other Balkans countries stay below the radar. The lack of comprehensive data analytics at individual country and regional level increases the vulnerability of refugees and migrants on the move, children in particular, and hinders the development of relevant, evidence-based and responsive policies and programs.

Data and Trend Analysis (DATA) is a project launched by Save the Children's Balkan Migration and Displacement Hub (BMDH). The goal of this initiative is to synthesize valuable information on migration, especially on refugee and migrant children, and

contribute to evidence-based programming and policy-making within the region.

The DATA Project focuses on the following three topics: (1) Main migratory trends: ebbs and flows in migration, changes in demographics, changes in routes, and seasonal changes; (2) Main protection violations: detention rates and conditions, pushbacks, returns, police violence, local acceptance and tensions; (3) Changes in national migration and social protection policies.

Data Sources

Besides primary data collected by Save the Children and its partners, other data used for this purpose includes publicly available data from reports, dashboards, publications, policies and articles, and information from other relevant stakeholders which are collected and analyzed. The initiative is and will remain to be open and encouraging for the exchange of information, cooperation and partnership with all relevant actors.

Data processing is done in line with national and international regulations and standards on protection of personal data.

Geographical Scope

We intend to cover the Balkans route which includes the territories of Greece, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Hungary.

Refugees and Migrants at the Western Balkans Route Regional Overview publications and other BMDH research papers and publications can be found at:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net>

keyword: BMDH

¹ This estimated figure is based on official number of arrivals to Greece

² Source: UNHCR, [Europe Monthly Report June 2019](#)

³ Source: UNHCR, Fact Sheet Greece [June 2019](#)

⁴ Source: UNHCR, Europe Monthly Report [June 2019](#)

⁵ Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Interior National Coordination Centre for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum, [National situational picture regarding the islands at eastern Aegean sea \(05/06/2019\)](#).

⁶ Ibid

⁷ It should be noted that most figures in the referred documents use percentages to present the disaggregated data thus the figures presented here represent recalculated data and could have small margin of error.

⁸ Source: Situation Update: [Unaccompanied Children \(UAC\) in Greece \(June 2019\)](#).

⁹ [Source: UNHCR Serbia Statistical Snapshot June 2019.](#)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ [Source: UNHCR Serbia Updates](#)

¹² [Source: UNHCR Serbia Statistical Snapshot June 2019.](#)

¹³ Source: UNCT Operational Update for [June 2019](#)

¹⁴ UNHCR disaggregated data cover 6,526 cases out of 7,235 recorded

¹⁵ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [June 2019](#).

¹⁶ “Asylum seekers are allowed to reside outside the reception centres at so called “external addresses”. This could be done if asylum seekers submit a formal waiver from their right to accommodation and social assistance, as warranted by law, and declare to cover rent and other related costs at their own expenses. Except those few whose financial condition allows residence outside the reception centres, the other group of people who live at external addresses are usually Dublin returnees, to whom the SAR applies the exclusion from social benefits, including accommodation as a measure of sanction within the jurisdiction for such decision as provided by the law (Law and Asylum and Refugees – article 29)”. Source: [Country Report: Bulgaria](#), p 48, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

¹⁷ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [June 2019](#).

¹⁸ Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, Monthly Information on Migration Situation in the Republic of Bulgaria for [June 2019](#).

¹⁹ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [June 2019](#)

²⁰ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [June 2019](#)

²¹ Due to the lack of official UNHCR data about the relevant period at the moment this report was prepared, the cited figures refer to IOM’s Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [June 2019](#). It should be noted that IOM’s and UNHCR’s data differ substantially and this difference should be taken into account when comparing data to previous Trend Analysis (UNHCR registered, in the first quarter of the year, almost 2,000 newly arrivals compared to IOM’s 315 for the same period).

²² It should be noted that there is no evidence that the source ruled out the possibility that persons apprehended entering the country could be, in some cases, the same individuals. Thus, following information given in this chapter are concerning newly registered individuals.

²³ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for June 2019

²⁴ Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs-Statistical report Q2 2019, DCAM/MIA

²⁵ Source: IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean: Compilation of Available Data and Information for [June 2019](#)

²⁶ Unofficial data collected in field by Save the Children Romania and UNHCR



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Data and Trends Analysis**