



Montenegro

General Information



Population

623 525 (World Bank 2024)
623 327 (STAT ME 2025)



Immigration

92 237 (UN Immigration Stock
2024)
122 744 (STAT ME 2023)



Emigration

90 678 (UN Emigration Stock
2024)
44 017 (STAT ME 2023)



Working-age population

399 312 (World Bank 2024)
403 657 (STAT ME 2024)



Unemployment rate

13.1 % (World Bank 2023)
11.4 % (STAT ME 2024)



GDP

8 270 016 670.9 current prices
USD (World Bank 2024)
7 644 530 000 current prices
EUR (STAT ME 2024)



Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

Refugees

19 073 (UNHCR 2025)

Asylum Seekers

142 (UNHCR 2025)

IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2025)



Citizenship

By Birth

No (GLOBALCIT 2024)

By Descent

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT
2024)

Years of Residency

10 years of residence required
(GLOBALCIT 2024)



Territory

13 812 km² (CIA World
Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

Ministry of the Interior

Line Ministries

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Diaspora Affairs

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Economic Development

Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights

Agencies

Employment Agency of Montenegro

Statistical Office of Montenegro - MONSTAT

Key Policy Documents

Law on Foreign Nationals 2021

Labour Law 2020

Law on Border Control 2019

Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms 2018

Law on International and Temporary Protection of Foreigners 2018

Law on Montenegrin Citizenship 2008

Law on Police 2005

Relevant Publications

Western Balkans 2035: Demographic Resilience and Strategic Migration Planning under EU Integration and Isolation Scenarios

Prague Process has supported our efforts in harmonization of border and migration policy with European standards

The Western Balkan Migration Route (2015-2019)

Lessons learned from the 2015-2016 migration situation in the Western Balkan region

Diasporas' Contribution to the Socio-Economic Development in the Western Balkans, 2023

ICMPD, Germany's Western Balkans Regulation: Inspiration for facilitating refugee labour mobility?

Montenegro is one of the smallest countries in the Western Balkans, with an estimated population of [623,327](#) as of 1 January 2025. Over the past decade, the country has experienced both emigration and immigration; though emigration pressures remain notable.

According to [UN DESA](#), an estimated [90,678 persons](#) Montenegrin citizens lived abroad in 2024. Around 64% resided in Serbia, followed by North Macedonia (10%), Croatia (6%), Slovenia (4%), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (4%). Montenegro's 2023 population census enumerated [44,017](#) citizens as working, studying, or staying abroad, with the largest groups recorded in Germany (23.7%), Serbia (16.7%), the United States (14.6%), Luxembourg (8.1%), and Switzerland (4.5%). The emigrant population is relatively young, nearly two thirds aged 20-49. Economic reasons remain the [main driver of emigration](#) (48.7%), followed by family reunification (24.4%) and education (18.7%). Emigration flows have almost doubled between 2022 (3,394) and 2023 (6,930).

The number of [first-time residence permits](#) issued to Montenegrin citizens in the EU peaked in 2022 at 4,135 and declined by around 21% to 3,260 in 2024. About three quarters of these permits were issued by a small group of EU Member States, led by Germany (40%), followed by Croatia (18%), Slovenia (7%), Luxembourg (6%) and France (3%). [Employment](#) was the main reason for migration, accounting for 42% of first permits, primarily issued by Croatia and Germany. Family reunification followed closely (36%), with Germany issuing the largest share of first permits. [Labour demand in Croatia](#), driven by the outflow of Croatian workers to other EU Member States, has also created opportunities for Montenegrin workers. Meanwhile, labour migration to Germany is also incentivised by the [Western Balkan Regulation](#), which has expanded formal labour migration pathways for Western Balkan nationals. Montenegrin [workers in Germany](#) are mainly employed in lower- and medium-skilled sectors such as administrative and support services, accommodation and food, construction, transport, and health and social work.

The stock of [all valid residence permits](#) issued to Montenegrin citizens in the EU exceeded 36,000 at the end of each year between 2022 and 2024. In 2024, of the 36,375 valid permits, over 42% were issued on family grounds and 17% for employment, with Germany the leading issuing country in both categories. Beyond family and labour migration, education constitutes a smaller but stable component of Montenegrin mobility to the EU. [Slovenia](#) continues to attract Montenegrin students, driven by its comparatively high quality of education and significantly lower tuition fees than in many Western European countries. Based on the number of [valid permits](#), Italy remains another popular destination for education.

Irregular migration from Montenegro to the EU remains relatively low. Over the past decade, the annual number of Montenegrin nationals [refused entry](#) to the EU fluctuated between 350 and 500, peaking at 545 in 2018. In 2024, the figure stood at 320. The number of Montenegrins [found to be illegally present](#) in the EU followed a similar pattern, hovering between 800-1000 persons annually between 2020 and 2024. The number of [return orders](#) issued to Montenegrin nationals in the EU has declined steadily since 2015, reaching a low of 220 in 2023, before rising modestly to 310 in 2024. Germany accounted for the largest share of both return orders and [effective returns](#). The return rate reached 73% in 2024.

Since 2019, the number of [asylum seekers](#) from Montenegro has increased markedly, rising by around 75% between 2019 and 2024 and reaching 1,058 in both 2023 and 2024. Over the same period, the number of recognised refugees grew more moderately, from 659 to 763 (+16%). Germany and the United States received most [asylum applications](#) and, together with France, host the majority of [recognised Montenegrin refugees](#).

In terms of [immigration](#), the stock of immigrants in Montenegro stood at 92,237 in 2024, most of whom originated from Bosnia and Herzegovina (35%), Ukraine (24%), Croatia (17%) and Serbia (9%). Immigration flows increased sharply after 2020, with arrivals rising [3,126](#) to a peak of 10,846 in 2022, driven largely by inflows from Russia (5,911) and Ukraine (1,407). Although arrivals fell by 15% to 9,215 in 2023, they remained well above pre-2021 levels. The largest groups in 2023 originated from Russia (34%), Serbia (11.4%), and Türkiye (10.7%). [Family reasons](#) were the main driver of immigration (48.8%), followed by economic factors (16.8%), conflict-related displacement (14.6%), and education (4.4%).

Like other Western Balkan countries, Montenegro continues to experience mixed migration flows. In 2024, 3,153 migrants were apprehended for [illegal border crossing](#), a 40% decrease compared with 2023. The largest groups were nationals of Syria, Afghanistan, and Iran. Although most intercepted migrants registered an intention to seek [asylum](#) (2,970 in 2024 and 4,973 in 2023), only 132 formally applied in 2024. The majority of 2024 asylum applications were submitted by nationals of Russia, Iran, and Türkiye.

Since March 2022, Montenegro has been granting [temporary protection to Ukrainians](#), hosting one of the largest refugee communities in Europe relative to its population. As of 1 July 2024, 6,151 Ukrainians received [temporary protection](#). In March 2025, the decision to grant temporary protection was [extended](#) until March 2026. Moreover, in 2024, Ukrainians accounted for over [99% \(18,558\)](#) of all refugees (18,670) in Montenegro.

[Trafficking in human beings](#) remains a concern in Montenegro, which continues to act as a source, transit, and destination country. Children are particularly vulnerable to forced begging, while migrant workers face risks of labour exploitation – especially in construction and seasonal tourism – and women and girls remain at risk of sex trafficking. In 2024, authorities identified 28 trafficking victims, up from 15 in 2023; all were exploited in labour trafficking, including 12 cases of forced begging, and most victims were children from vulnerable Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian communities. Law enforcement activity remained stable, with eight investigations, 13 prosecutions, and one conviction. Victim support and awareness activities continued, and a new [national anti-trafficking strategy](#) for 2025-2028 and a 2025 action plan were prepared in late 2024.

In 2025, building on broader efforts to strengthen migration governance, Montenegro adopted [amendments to the Law on Foreigners](#), introducing new measures to regulate the residence of foreign nationals. The amendments establish updated requirements for obtaining temporary residence, including conditions linked to property ownership and business activity. Transitional periods have been set for existing permit holders to comply with the new rules. In parallel, authorities are intensifying interinstitutional and

international data exchange to prevent abuses of residence permits. This includes cross-checks of company activity and verification of residence data, notably in cooperation with Türkiye regarding approximately 13,500 Turkish citizens holding temporary or permanent residence permits. In April 2025, the government also adopted the [Integrated Border Management Strategy](#) for 2025-2028, accompanied by an action plan covering 2025-2026.

In 2023, the EU and Montenegro signed an upgraded [agreement on operational cooperation in border management](#) with Frontex, which [entered into force](#) in March 2025. The signature of this agreement represents a concrete deliverable under the [EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans](#), presented by the Commission in December 2022. As of September 2025, a total of 87 [Frontex-deployed officers](#) were stationed in Montenegro operating at borders with Albania, Croatia, Kosovo* and Serbia, as well as its airports in Podgorica, Tivat and Bar.

In the area of return and readmission, Montenegro has [readmission agreement](#) with the EU and implementing protocols with 15 EU Member States, which facilitate its practical application. The country also maintains a bilateral readmission agreement with Croatia and 11 agreements with non-EU states, including all five Western Balkan countries and Türkiye. However, Montenegro has neither a formal agreement nor an administrative arrangement with the main countries of origin of migrants arriving in its territory.

Montenegro is a party to the Prague Process. In September 2022, it joined the [EMN](#) as an observer. Cooperation with the [EUAA](#) was further strengthened in March 2025 through the signing of the Second Joint [Roadmap for Cooperation for the period 2025-2027](#).

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