

SLOVAKIA

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



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KEY FINDINGS IN 2023









Countries of stay

77%

had stayed in Slovakia

11%

had stayed in other EU countries

12% had stayed in third countries

Households

14% travel with at least one infant (0-4 years-old)



56%

travel with at least one child (5-17 years-old)



single-headed household



14%

travel with at least one elderly person (60+ years-old)

More than one answer possible

Length of stay



intend to cross back for a short-term visit

Short-term



46% to meet family

19%

to seek healthcare

9%

to collect documents

More than one answer possible

Long-term



returning from a 33% visit abroad

11%

did shopping abroad

10%

improved situation

More than one answer possible

Destination



Top 5 regions

71%

86%

86%



travel to:

- Zakarpatska (42%)
- Kyiv (13%)
- Dnipropetrovska (6%)
- Kharkivska (6%)
- Lvivska (4%)

Top 5 needs



Healthcare (22%)



Medication (13%)



Financial support (12%)



General information (12%)

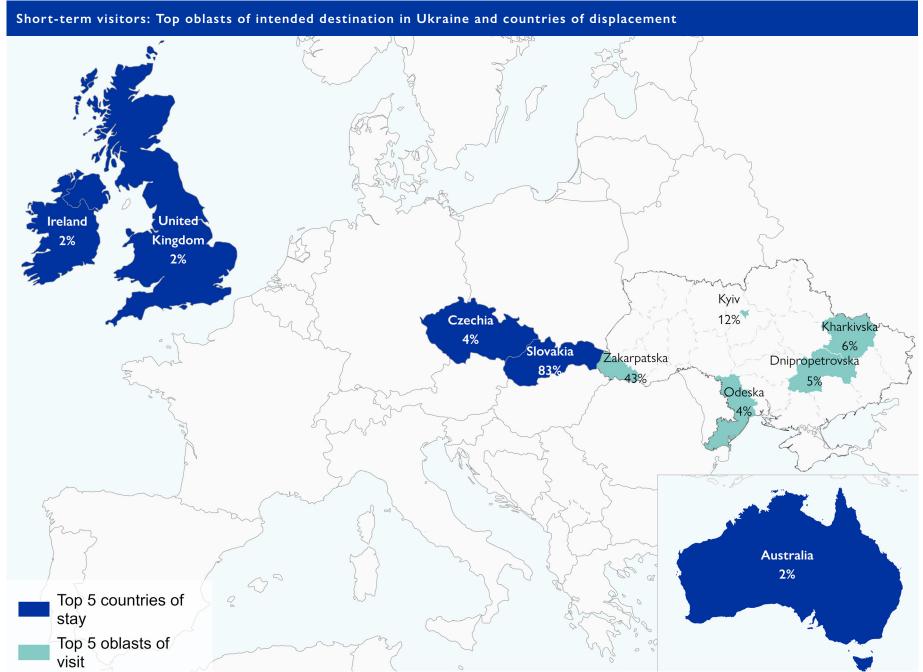


Employment

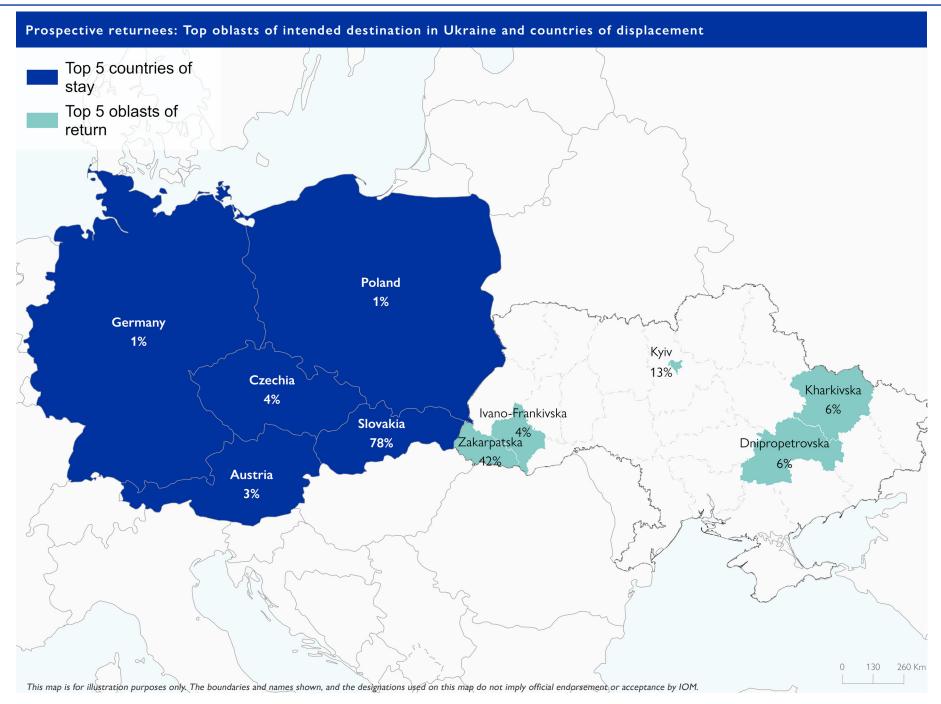
(11%)

More than one answer possible











SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

GENDER AND AGE

The Crossing Back surveys collected between January-December 2023 were carried out among Ukrainian nationals and Third-Country nationals with residence in Ukraine who crossed back to Ukraine from or through Slovakia, either for the short-term or long-term. For the purpose of the analysis, "short-term visitors" are those who reported an intention to spend from 0 to 30 days in Ukraine, while respondents intending to stay in Ukraine more than one month are labelled as "prospective returnees".

A total of 6,845 surveys were collected during 2023. Of these, 0.4 per cent (N=26) focused on Third-Country nationals, while the majority, accounting for 99.6 per cent (N=6,819), focused on Ukrainian nationals. The analysis presented in this report is based on the answers provided by Ukrainian nationals (6,819).

Women constituted 95 per cent, while men comprised five per cent of the sample. The average age among respondents was 41, with women having a mean age of 40 and men 53. Nearly 90 per cent of the respondents fell within the active age range of 18-59 years old. Among women, the most prevalent groups were the 30-39 (26%) and 40-49 (29%) age groups. In contrast, the majority of men intending to cross back were over 60 years old (52%). Interestingly, the 60+ age group was the least likely among women to cross back to Ukraine.



MARITAL STATUS

On average, 60 per cent of participants were married at the time of interview, while 22 per cent reported to be single. Other respondents were widowed (9%), divorced (5%), or were in a partnership (3%). Regarding the two genders assessed, the majority of men (73%) were married, and 14 per cent were single. Conversely, a slightly lower proportion

Figure 4. Marital status by gender in 2023 (%) n=6,818

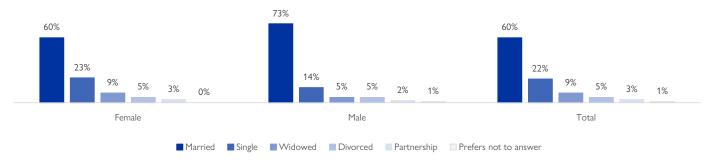


Figure 1. Respondents by age and gender (%) n=6,818

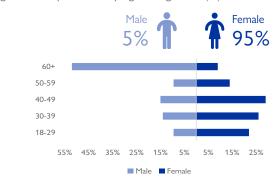


Figure 2. Female respondents crossing back over time (%) n=6,455



Figure 3. Male respondents crossing back over time (%) n=363



of women (60%) were married, while a higher percentage of them (23%) reported to be single compared to men. Additionally, women were found to be more likely to be widowed (9%), in contrast to their male counterparts (5%). The percentage of divorcees was similar (5%) for both genders in this assessment.

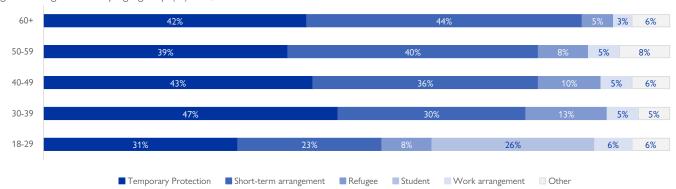


LEGAL STATUS

In 2023, participants were queried about their legal status in the countries they were residing in before crossing back to Ukraine. Of all respondents, 41 per cent held Temporary Protection¹ (TP) during the interview. The second-largest group comprised individuals on short-term arrangements in their respective countries (33%). Refugees constituted nine per cent of the respondents in 2023, while six per cent were students, and five per cent held work visas.

Figure 5. Legal status by age group (%) n=6,819

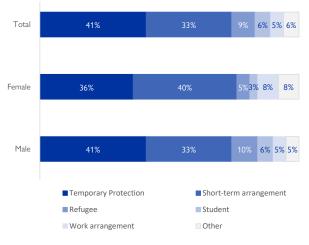
Across age groups, the highest percentage of TP holders was recorded in the 30-39 age group (47%). Short-term permits were observed primarily in the older age group 40% of the 40-49 age group and 44% of the 60+ age group). The majority of refugee status holders were recorded in the 30-39 age group (13%). Students accounted for 26 per cent of the 18-29 age group, making it the second most frequent legal status in this age group after TP holders (31%).



The highest proportion of women were on short-term arrangements (40%) in their respective countries of displacement, while 36 per cent held TP, and five per cent reported having refugee status. Additionally, eight per cent of women were granted work visas, and three per cent pursued education outside of Ukraine on student permits.

Conversely, the highest percentage of men were granted TP (41%), and 33 per cent of them were on a short-term arrangement. Refugees accounted for 10 per cent of male respondents. Among men, a greater proportion (6%) were students, while five per cent held work visas.

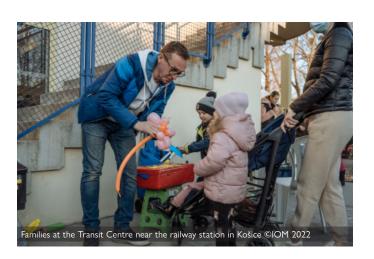
Figure 6. Legal status by gender (%) n=6,818



46%

of those crossing back directly from Slovakia hold Temporary Protection in 2023 (n=5,264)





¹ The Temporary Protection Directive was activated by the EU in March 2022 in order to provide immediate protection to displaced people from Ukraine. The scheme has been extended until 4 March 2025. According to Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022, it applies to people residing in Ukraine on or before 24 February 2022 who are 1) Ukrainian nationals and their family members, 2) non-Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons benefiting from international protection in Ukraine and their family members, 3) non-Ukrainian nationals with permanent residence permit in Ukraine who cannot return to their country of origin in safe and durable conditions. It can also apply to Ukrainians who found themselves in the EU on 24 February 2022 and other non-Ukrainian nationals previously residing in Ukraine who cannot return to their countries of origin. TP holders gain various rights, including residency rights and access to housing, access to labour market, as well as social welfare and medical assistance within the EU.



GROUP COMPOSITION

TRAVEL MODE

In 2023, among those crossing back to Ukraine through or from Slovakia, 66 per cent travelled alone, while 34 per cent made the journey in a group.

Among them, more than half (53%) crossed back alone, similar to their initial departure from Ukraine. Another 29 per cent crossed back with the same group they had initially left the country with. Additionally, 13 per cent chose to travel alone, despite having been part of a group previously. The remaining four per cent travelled with some members of the same group, and one per cent opted for an entirely different group when crossing back to Ukraine.

Throughout the year, the proportion of those travelling alone increased from 63 per cent (Q1) to 73 per cent (Q4), while the proportion of those crossing back as part of a group decreased from 37 per cent (Q1) to 27 per cent (Q4). The highest proportion of those travelling alone was recorded between October and December 2023 (Q4), whereas the majority of respondents travelled in groups between April and June (Q2).

Figure 9. Household compositions (%) n=2,337

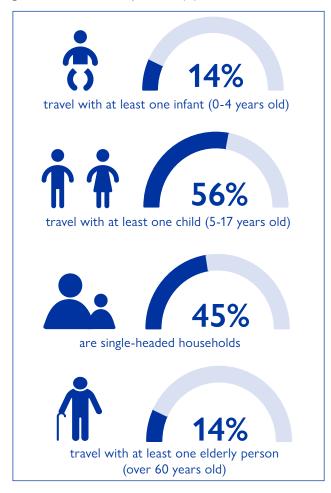


Figure 7. Travel mode in 2023 (%) n=6,819

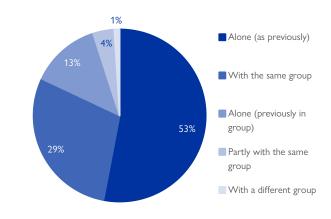


Figure 8. Travel mode in 2023 (%) n=6,819



Figure 10. Average group size (# of individuals)







TIME SPENT OUTSIDE OF UKRAINE

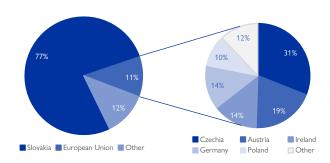
COUNTRIES OF STAY

Altogether, 77 per cent of individuals intending to cross back to Ukraine in 2023 had previously resided in Slovakia. Another 11 per cent had stayed in other countries in the European Union (EU), while the remaining twelve per cent had stayed in another 21 countries. Among those staying in the EU (N=769), in addition to those staying in Slovakia, 31 per cent travelled back from Czechia and 19 per cent from Austria. These were followed by Ireland (14%), Germany (14%), and Poland (10%).

Figure 12. Regions of stay within Slovakia (%) n=5,264



Figure 11. Countries of stay (%) n=6,819



Among those who directly crossed to Ukraine from Slovakia (N=5,264), the majority had previously stayed in the capital Bratislava (39%), Košice (30%), and Prešov (9%). The remaining 22 per cent of respondents had stayed in other towns primarily located in the western and north-western parts of the country.

AVERAGE TIME SINCE INITIAL DISPLACEMENT

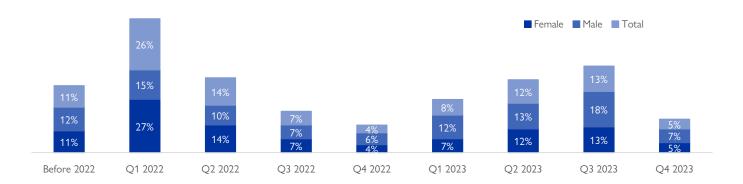
The survey revealed that the majority of respondents (26%) experienced displacement from Ukraine between January and March 2022 (Q1 2022), with 27 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men leaving Ukraine during this period, indicating that they had already spent at least one year in displacement.

In the second quarter of 2022, 14 per cent of respondents left Ukraine, with 14 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men accounting for this figure. According to the survey findings, the highest proportion of men (18%) left Ukraine between July and September (Q3) 2023.

Figure 13. Period of displacement by gender (%) n=6,818

In 2023, a total of 38 per cent of respondents left Ukraine, distributed as eight per cent in Q1, 12 per cent in Q2, 13 per cent in Q3 and five per cent in Q4. Further analysis highlighted that 37 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men experienced displacement in 2023. Throughout the year, a higher proportion of men left Ukraine compared to women.

Among those directly crossing from Slovakia (N=5,264), the majority were displaced in January-March 2022 (27%), followed by those displaced in April-June 2022 (14%) and July-September 2023 (14%).



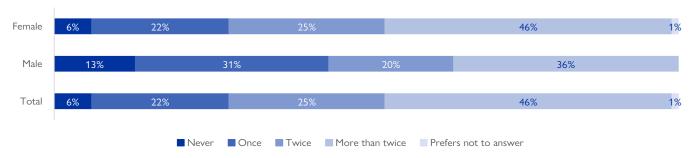


NUMBER OF EXITS/ENTRIES TO AND FROM UKRAINE

Among the Ukrainian nationals surveyed in 2023, 94 per cent had crossed back to Ukraine at least one since the beginning of their displacement. Forty-six per cent of those participating in the survey had already crossed back to Ukraine more than two times (46% of women and 36% of men), while 25 per cent had travelled back twice (25% of women and 20% of men). A total of six per cent of survey participants had never

crossed back to Ukraine, with a higher proportion reported among men (13%) than among women (6%). Among those who crossed back directly from Slovakia, 36 per cent had already crossed back more than two times, followed by those travelling back twice (20%) and once (16%). Among those crossing from Slovakia, five per cent had never crossed back to Ukraine prior to the interview.

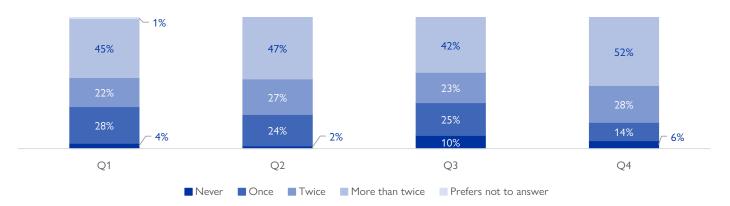
Figure 14. Number of entries/exits between 24 February 2022 and 21 December 2023 by gender (%) n=6,818



The number of the entries reported by respondents increased throughout the year. While in January-March the proportion of those who had crossed back twice was at 22 per cent, it has

reached 28 per cent by October-December 2023. Similarly, the proportion of those who had crossed back more than two times increased from 45 per cent (Q1) to 52 per cent (Q4).

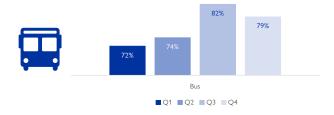
Figure 15. Number of entries/exits between 24 February 2022 and 21 December 2023 over time (%) n=6,819



TRANSPORT

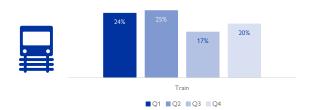
In general, buses were the most commonly mentioned mode of transportation used for crossing back to Ukraine, mentioned by 78 per cent of respondents. Seventy-eight per cent of women and 83 per cent of men reported using buses. The second most frequently utilized mode of transport was

Figure 16. Travelling by bus over time (%) n=6,814



train, mentioned by 21 per cent of respondents in 2023 (22% of women and 16% of men). Considering these two options, bus travel increased in 2023 from 72 per cent (Q1) to 79 per cent (Q4), while travel by train decreased from 24 per cent (Q1) to 20 per cent (Q4).

Figure 17. Travelling by train over time (%) n=6.814





REGION OF ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

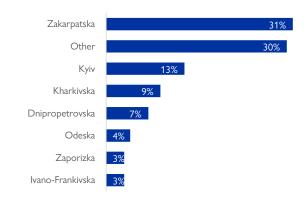
NUMBER OF EXITS/ENTRIES TO AND FROM UKRAINE

More than two-thirds of the respondents (70%) originate from the following seven regions in Ukraine: Zakarpatska (31%), Kyiv (13%), Kharkivska (9%), Dnipropetrovska (7%), Odeska (4%), Zaporizka (3%), and Ivano-Frankivska (3%). The remaining 30 per cent of respondents come from another 20 regions across Ukraine.

No significant disparities were recorded regarding the place of origin when comparing the two genders. Thirty-one per cent of women and 31 per cent of men originated from Zakarpatska region, and 13 per cent of women and 16 per cent of men originally come from the city of Kyiv among those surveyed in 2023.

Further analysis of the changing patterns over time regarding the regions of origin revealed that the proportion of those originating from Zakarpatska decreased from 34 per cent in

Figure 18. Region of origin in 2023 (%) n=6,810



Q1 to 26 per cent in Q4. In contrast, the proportion of those originating from the other six highlighted regions remained relatively constant throughout the four quarters of 2023.

Figure 19. Region of origin over time (%) n=6,811

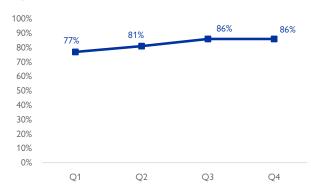


DESTINATIONS

In 2023, the majority of Ukrainian nationals surveyed expressed an intention to reach the regions where they had originated from (83%). Sixteen per cent of them planned to travel to a different region, while one per cent remained undecided about their destinations.

By the end of the year, a higher proportion of respondents aimed for their place of origin, with the proportion increasing from 77 per cent (Q1) to 86 per cent (Q4). Consequently, fewer respondents planned to cross back to the region where they had initially departed from. No disparities were observed regarding this aspect between the two genders assessed in this report.

Figure 20. Crossing back to the same region over time (%) n=6.819



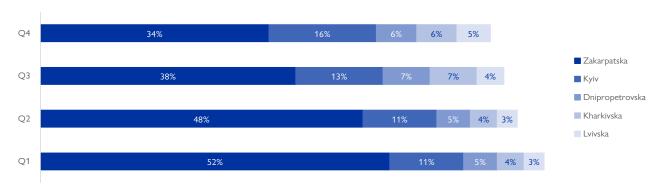


Considering all respondents, 71 per cent intended to travel to the following five regions in Ukraine: Zakarpatska (42%), Kyiv (13%), Dnipropetrovska (6%), Kharkivska (6%) and Lvivska (4%). In terms of gender, no significant differences were observed in their intended regions of destination. The most preferred destination was found to be Zakarpatska, with 42 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men expressing this choice.

Over time, there was a decline in the number of respondents mentioning the intention to cross back to Zakarpatska. The proportion of those travelling there decreased from 52 per cent (Q1) to 34 per cent (Q4). Conversely, the proportion of those planning to cross back to the city of Kyiv increased from 11 per cent (Q1) to 16 per cent (Q4).

Figure 22. Top five regions of destination over time (%) n=6,792





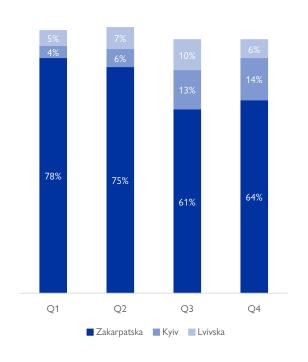
Among respondents who opted for a different oblast (N=1,117), the top three destinations included Zakarpatska (69%), Kyiv (9%) and Lvivska (8%). While Zakarpatska was the most frequently mentioned by both women (70%) and men (52%), the destinations of Kyiv (16%) and Lvivska (16%) were more frequently cited by men than by women (9% mentioned Kyiv, and 7% cited Lvivska).

Over the course of 2023, the proportion of those mentioning Zakarpatska gradually declined, from 78 per cent in Q1 to 64 per cent in Q4. In contrast, Kyiv as a destination was cited by 14 per cent of respondents in Q4, marking an increase from four per cent in Q1. The proportion of those selecting Lvivska as their alternative destination remained relatively constant throughout the year.

Figure 24. Different oblast of destination by gender (%) n=1,117



Figure 23. Different oblast of destination over time (%) n=1,118





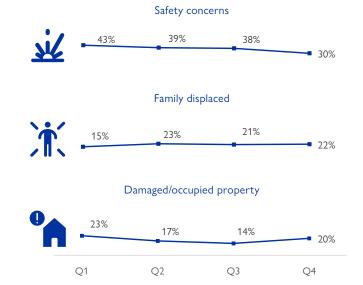
The most frequently mentioned reasons by those not choosing their region of origin included concerns about safety (38%), family displacement (21%) and damaged or occupied property (18%). These top three reasons held similar importance for both genders.

Throughout the year, the percentage of respondents mentioning concerns about safety and damaged or occupied property decreased, from 43 per cent (Q1) to 30 per cent (Q4) and from 23 per cent (Q1) to 20 per cent (Q4), respectively. Conversely, the percentage of those citing family displacement increased from 15 per cent in Q1 to 22 per cent in Q4 2023.

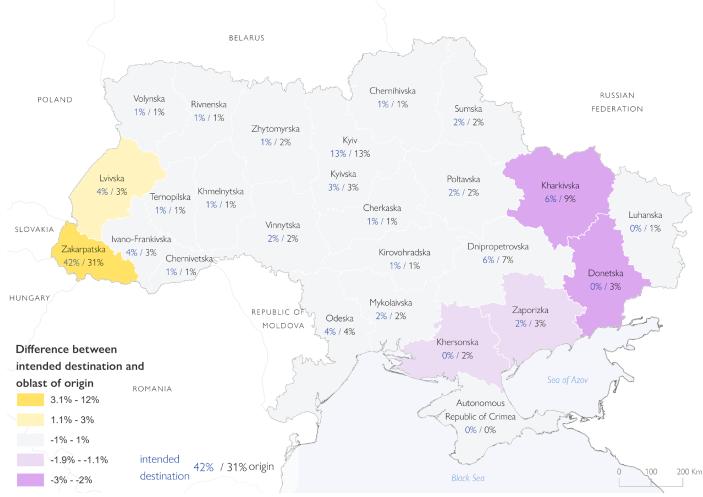
Figure 25. Top three reasons for other destination (%) n=1,120



Figure 26. Top three reasons for other destination over time (%) n=1,120



Map 1. Intended oblast of destination versus oblast of origin in Ukraine (%)



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.



REASONS FOR CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

LENGTH OF STAY

Among the surveyed population, 56 per cent expressed the intention to travel back to Ukraine for a short-term visit, while 37 per cent planned to stay in Ukraine for the long term.

Men were found to be more inclined to stay in Ukraine for the long term (45%) than their female counterparts (37%), while the opposite was observed in case of short-term visits, with 57 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men opting for a visit shorter than a month.

Further analysis revealed that the length of stay in Ukraine increased with age. Forty-four per cent of the 50-59 age group and 47 per cent of the 60+ age group planned to stay in Ukraine for the long term, compared to only 27 per cent of the 18-29 age group.

On the contrary, while 69 per cent of the 18-29 age group and 59 per cent of the 30-39 age group were travelling for a short visit, only 43 per cent of the 60+ age group reported the intention of a short-term visit to Ukraine.

When comparing responses from the beginning and the end of the year, it was observed that the proportion of individuals crossing back for a short-term visit to Ukraine increased (from 59% in Q1 to 62% in Q4), while the proportion of those returning with a long-term intention decreased (from 36% in Q1 to 31% in Q4). Respondents appeared to be less certain about the length of their stay in the second half of the year (8% in Q3 and 7% in Q4).

When assessing the length of return in terms of respondents' most frequent countries of displacement, it is found that most respondents planned a short-term visit from all six of these countries. The lowest proportion of those planning a short-term visit was recorded among those returning from Austria (51%) through Slovakia, while the highest proportion

Figure 30. Length of stay by country of displacement (%) n=715



Figure 27. Length of stay by gender (%) n= 6,818

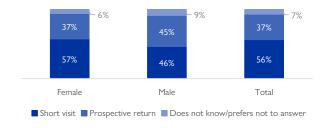


Figure 28. Length of stay by age group (%) n= 6,819

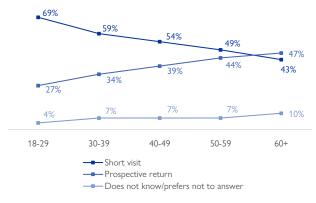
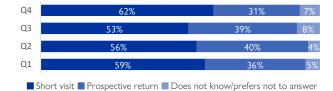


Figure 29. Length of stay over time (%) n= 6,819



of those returning for a short visit was found in the case of those travelling from the United Kingdom (73%) and Ireland (79%) through Slovakia. Conversely, the highest proportions of long-term intentions were observed among those travelling directly from Slovakia (33%), as well as from Czechia (33%) and Austria (39%) through Slovakia in 2023.



SHORT-TERM VISIT

The top three most frequently cited reasons for a short visit included meeting family (46%), seeking healthcare (19%), and collecting documents (9%), which were found to be similarly relevant for both genders. Across age groups, meeting family was reported the most frequently, with the highest proportion observed within the 18-29 age group (51%) and the lowest in the 60+ age group (38%). Seeking healthcare was most frequently cited (25%) by the elder population (60+ age group), while collecting documents was reported most often (11%) by the same 60+ age group.

Over the course of the year, the proportion of respondents mentioning meeting family decreased, from 49 per cent (Q1) to 45 per cent (Q4). In contrast, the frequency of citing health-care increased around the middle of the year, from 14 per cent (Q1) to 20 per cent (Q2) and 21 per cent (Q3). Collecting documents was most frequently reported between April-June 2023 (Q2), by 11 per cent of respondents.

LONG-TERM STAY

The primary reasons for a long-term stay in Ukraine included having visited someone abroad (33%), engaging in shopping abroad (11%) and the improved situation at the place of return (10%), with no observed discrepancies observed between genders. The proportion of those returning from visiting someone abroad was highest among the 50-59 (39%) and 60+ (43%) age groups. Shopping abroad was primarily cited by the 18-26 (14%) and 30-39 (13%) age groups. Similarly, citing the improvement of the situation at the place of return was most frequently reported by younger age groups, with 13 per cent within both the 18-29 and 30-39 age groups.

Towards the second half of the year, a higher proportion of respondents (51% in Q3 and 62% in Q4) cited having visited someone abroad prior to returning to Ukraine for the long term, compared to only seven per cent of respondents in Q1 2023. Shopping abroad was most frequently mentioned (22%) between April-June (Q2) 2023, compared to only seven per cent in Q3 and Q4. Respondents based their return intentions on the improved situation at the place of their return only in Q1 (30%) and Q2 (19%), while this reason was not mentioned in the second half of the year.

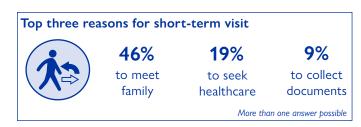


Figure 31. Top three reasons for short visit by age group (%) n=6.337

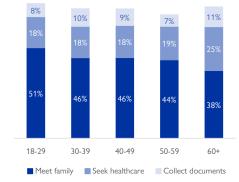
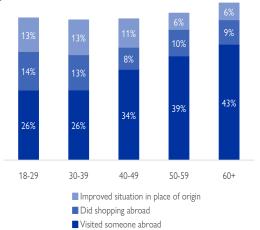




Figure 32. Top three reasons for long-term stay by age group (%) n=3.096







NEEDS, ASSISTANCE, AND CHALLENGES

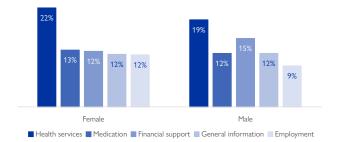
IMMEDIATE NEEDS

More than half of all respondents (53%) stated that they had no immediate needs at the time of the interview (40% of short-term visitors and 75% of prospective returnees). The most pressing needs reported by short-term visitors included healthcare services (31%), financial support (15%) and employment (15%), while the most frequent needs of prospective returnees included healthcare services (7%), financial support (7%) and general information (7%).



Seeking healthcare services remained the most sought after need in case of both genders, with 22 per cent of women and 19 per cent of men seeking health services among all respondents. The only need reported more frequently by men was financial support, with 15 per cent of men and 12 per cent of women seeking financial support.

Figure 33. Most immediate needs by gender (%) n=6,818 (more than one answer possible)



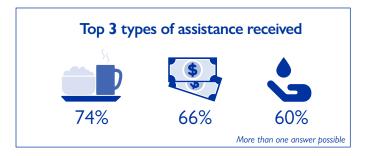
Over time, the proportion of those mentioning financial support and employment declined. Financial support decreased from 24 per cent to six per cent between January and December 2023, while the percentage of respondents citing the need for employment fell from 16 per cent to 10 per cent in the same period. Conversely, needs related to healthcare services and access to general information increased.

ASSISTANCE WHILE IN DISPLACEMENT



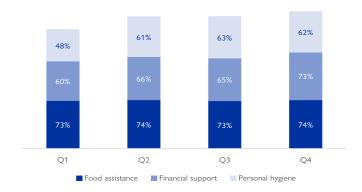
In general humanitarian assistance was received by less than half of respondents (39%) while away from Ukraine. Short-term visitors were found to receive assistance more (54%), than prospective returnees (15%). The study also suggested that women were more likely (40%) to benefit from assistance than their male counterparts (31%).

The most frequently received forms of assistance included food assistance (74%), financial support (66%), and personal hygiene items (60%).



Throughout the year, while the percentage of those receiving food assistance remained relatively constant, the proportion of those benefitting from financial support increased from 60 per cent (Q1) to 73 per cent (Q4). Similarly, the percentage of respondents receiving items related to personal hygiene increased from 48 per cent in Q1 to 62 per cent in Q4 2023.

Figure 34. Top three types of assistance received over time (%) n=2,683 (more than one answer possible)





METHODOLOGY

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. It is designed to regularly and systematically capture, process and disseminate information to provide a better understanding of the movements and evolving needs of displaced populations, whether on site or en route.

Since April 2022, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix has been regularly surveying individuals who are crossing back to Ukraine from neighbouring countries. The aim of the survey is to improve the understanding of their profiles, displacement patterns, intentions and needs. The survey is deployed in 5 countries neighbouring Ukraine – Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia. Since March 2023, the survey has also been deployed in Latvia to collect information on Ukrainian refugees who intend to move through the Russian Federation to reach occupied areas in Ukraine.

Face-to-face surveys are conducted by 14 trained enumerators in Slovakia, deployed at selected transit locations (train and bus stations) in Bratislava and Košice. The survey is anonymous and voluntary, administered only after obtaining consent from the respondent. Respondents can stop the survey at any time. In Slovakia, the questionnaire is available in Ukrainian and Russian, and the preferred language is determined by the interviewee.

Since July 2023, the survey section dedicated to intentions was adjusted to reflect more updated understanding of the dynamics of movements from and to Ukraine. A question on "length of stay in Ukraine" measured in number of days has been added. For the purpose of this report short-term visitors are those who report the intention to remain for 30 days or less, while prospective returnees are those who report the intention to remain for more than 30 days in Ukraine.

About the Survey

Aim

To improve the understanding of the profiles of Ukrainian nationals crossing back to Ukraine from or through Slovakia, including their displacement patterns, intentions and needs.

Location and execution

Face-to-face surveys were conducted by 14 trained enumerators stationed at transit locations in Bratislava and Košice in Slovakia. Surveys are conducted in Ukrainian and Russian with the help of a mobile application.

Target population

The present analysis focuses on Ukrainian nationals who are crossing back to Ukraine either for the short-term or the long-term directly from Slovakia or transiting in Slovakia.

Regional data collection and analysis

The survey is deployed in five neighboring countries: Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia. From March 2023, the survey expanded to Latvia, targeting Ukrainian refugees intending to transit through the Russian Federation to reach Ukraine.

LIMITATIONS

The sampling framework could not be based on verified figures of refugees from Ukraine exiting towards Ukraine through all land border points where the survey took place. Such verified figures are not consistently available nor are they comparable for all neighbouring countries.

The geographic spread of enumerators deployed captures a wide range of locations and modes of travel. Nevertheless, the accessibility of different transit points fluctuates and not all

individuals crossing have time (10 to 20 minutes) to respond to the survey. For example, it is easier to interview persons travelling by bus and other types of group transportation than those in private vehicles.

Whilst the overall sample cannot be deemed as representative, the consistency of data collection in each country and at the regional level suggests that the current sampling framework produces findings of practical value.

DTM

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. The survey form was designed to capture the main displacement patterns – origin country and region – for refugees of any nationality fleeing from Ukraine because of the war. It captures the demographic profiles of respondents and of the group they are travelling with, if any; it asks about intentions relative to the intended destinations and prospects of permanence abroad or return; it gathers information regarding a set of main needs that the respondents expressed as more pressing at the moment of the interview.

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, several IOM's DTM tools were deployed in countries neighbouring Ukraine and in other countries particularly impacted by the new arrivals of migrants and refugees from Ukraine.

For more information, please consult:

https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response

