

# UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION

## POPULATION MOVEMENTS | FACTSHEET #2

February 2025

Complementing the [first factsheet](#) on population movements related to the Ukraine Refugee Situation published in February 2024, this second factsheet presents an overview of recent trends around **border movements, pendular movements and short-term visits, voluntary returns of refugees, new displacements and latest estimates of refugees recorded in Europe and beyond.**



### How did cross-border movements from and to Ukraine evolve in 2024?

Despite a slight decrease in overall border crossings from and to Ukraine in 2024 compared to 2023, movements out of the country continued to exceed those to Ukraine in 2024. **The resulting net outflow was four times higher than in 2023** (346,000 vs. 86,000 crossings).<sup>1</sup>

Border crossings continued to exhibit seasonal fluctuations associated to **short-term visits and pendular movements**. The months of March-April (Easter period) and July-August (Summer period) were characterized by higher inflows towards Ukraine than outflows out of the country, while the opposite occurred in the months following these periods.

The higher net outflows from Ukraine observed during May - June 2024 are partly explained by seasonal movements following the Easter period, **but also due to new displacements caused by the escalation of hostilities and power cuts following attacks on energy infrastructures.**

### EVOLUTION OF BORDER MOVEMENTS FROM AND TO UKRAINE: 2022 - 2024

Number of monthly crossings along Ukraine's borders with Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia



#### 2022

The majority of **outflows** from Ukraine occurred between Feb - Apr.

Between May – Sep, movements back to Ukraine exceeded movements out of, with a significant proportion of **voluntary returns** occurring within this period.

#### 2023

Continuous months of net **outflow** from Ukraine occurred between Oct 22 – Feb 23, likely due to displacement linked to increased hostilities and winter conditions.

Seasonal variations associated to **short-term visits and pendular movements** (weeks of net inflow during Easter, Summer and Christmas periods, followed by weeks of net outflow).

#### 2024

Seasonal variations similar to 2023, though with a slightly lower magnitude of crossings.

Higher **net outflow** than in 2023, particularly during **May-June**, partly due to the escalation of hostilities and power cuts following attacks on energy infrastructure.

Source: Border authorities in Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia.

<sup>1</sup> Border movements along the western borders of Ukraine with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Republic of Moldova. Border crossings reflect the number of movements not individuals, as those engaged in pendular movements or short-term visits would be counted more than once. See UNHCR's [Operational Data Portal](#) for more up-to-date information, as well as UNHCR Ukraine's [Border Monitoring Factsheets](#).



## How many refugees are engaging in pendular movements and short-term visits?

Data from [UNHCR's intentions surveys](#) indicates that **52 per cent of refugees (around 2.6 million<sup>2</sup>) have visited Ukraine at least once**, with a higher proportion having conducted more than one visit compared to those who visited only once (30 vs. 22 per cent).

[UNHCR's border monitoring interviews](#) indicate an increase in repeated movements: **in 2024, only 27 per cent of individuals interviewed when exiting Ukraine were leaving for the first time**, compared to 67 per cent in 2022. **Among those interviewed entering Ukraine in 2024, 85 per cent intended to stay for less than a month**, compared to 54 per cent in 2023.

The share of surveyed refugees who had visited Ukraine by July-August 2024 was only slightly higher than by January-February 2024 (52 vs. 50 per cent), in contrast to the increasing trend observed in previous surveys.

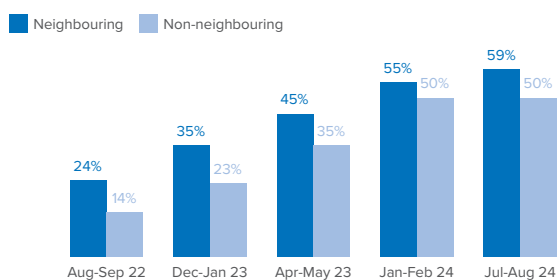
Results from UNHCR's intention surveys and border monitoring show that the most common reasons for travelling back to Ukraine, as reported by refugees, included **visiting relatives or friends, checking status of properties, accessing healthcare and temporary work opportunities** as well as **to obtain documentation**.

Short-term visits were more frequent among refugees staying in neighbouring countries, refugees originating from areas closer to the borders with the EU and Moldova, and refugees with a spouse and/or children in Ukraine.

Surveys have also shown that **38 per cent of refugees considered conducting short-term visits to Ukraine but were unable to do so**, mainly due to security concerns and a lack of funds.

### TRENDS IN REFUGEES' SHORT-TERM VISITS TO UKRAINE

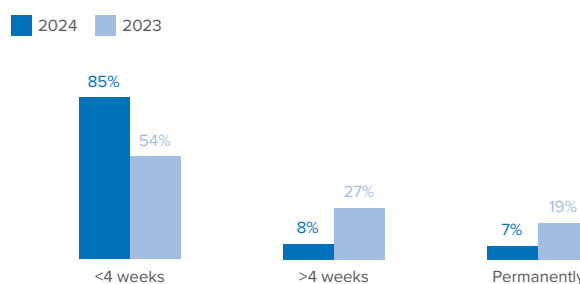
% of respondents who had visited Ukraine at least once, by date of data collection and location of host country



Source: UNHCR's Intention Surveys

### CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE: INTENDED DURATION OF STAY

Distribution of interviews in 2024 vs. 2023



Source: UNHCR's Ukraine Border Monitoring

As noted in [UNHCR's Position on Voluntary Returns to Ukraine](#), refugees' ability to travel home for short periods can help pave the way for durable voluntary returns. UNHCR has urged host States to maintain a flexible approach to short-term visits to Ukraine, as it may help facilitate fully informed decisions on longer term return. UNHCR also recommends that an individual's legal status and associated rights in a host country are not affected by a visit to Ukraine lasting less than three months. UNHCR additionally recommends that in the event of longer-term travel to Ukraine, hosting countries temporarily de-activate temporary protection and other legal status rather than withdrawing legal status or de-registering individuals, to avoid administrative burdens and facilitate renewed access to protection if required.

2 Estimated figure is based on total number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe (excl. those in the Russian Federation, which are not covered in the survey).



## How many refugees have returned to Ukraine?

Based on data from IOM’s General Population Surveys (GPS) inside Ukraine, it is estimated that by December 2024 **around 950,000 refugees from Ukraine had returned to their places of origin and remained in Ukraine for at least three months**. Additionally, approximately **316,000 refugees are estimated to have returned to an area different from their former homes**.<sup>3</sup>

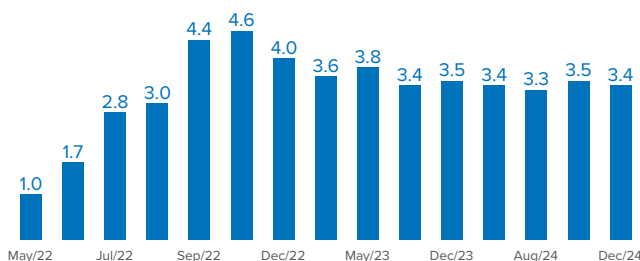
IOM’s GPS results indicate that while the proportion of refugee returnees among the total estimated population in Ukraine registered a peak of 5 per cent by October 2022, **it subsequently decreased and has stabilized at around 3 per cent since September 2023**.

The declining trend in refugee returns is also reflected in UNHCR’s most recent [survey with refugee returnees](#): while 51 per cent returned between May - December 2022, **only 9 per cent returned throughout 2024**.

The survey also indicates that **one-third returned to locations other than their former homes**, particularly those from areas under temporary occupation. Around three-quarters of returns were to northern, eastern and southern regions. More than one-third of returnees were previously hosted in Poland, followed by those who returned from Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechia, and Italy.

### ESTIMATED PROPORTION OF REFUGEE RETURNEES

Proportion of refugee returnees out of total estimated resident population in Ukraine at each round of data collection



Source: UNHCR calculations based on IOM-Ukraine General Population Survey, R4-R19



## How many refugees arrived in host countries in 2024?

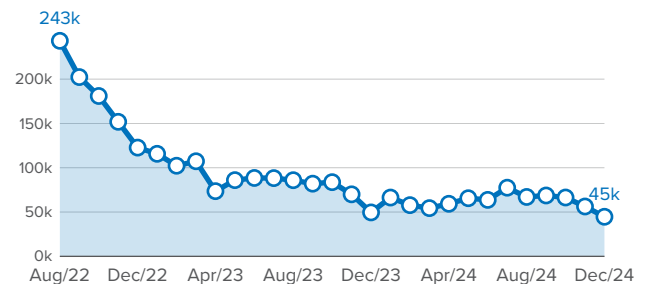
According to data published by [EUROSTAT](#), between January - December 2024, **nearly 748,000 positive decisions for Temporary Protection (TP) were granted in EU+ countries**. Additionally, the number of **refugees from Ukraine recorded outside Europe increased by 157,000 by December 2024** compared to December 2023.

While the overall number of monthly decisions granting temporary protection in 2024 was 28 per cent lower compared to 2023, **an increase was observed between May and July 2024, peaking at 77,500 positive decisions in July**. This surge coincided with a higher net outflow of border crossings during May and June 2024, driven by intensified hostilities and power outages following attacks on energy infrastructures

More than half of decisions granting TP in 2024 were registered in Germany (22 per cent), Poland (22 per cent) and Czechia (10 per cent). Similarly, **the proportion of males aged 18 - 64 years among positive decisions granted each year continued to rise**, from 14 per cent in 2022 to 27 per cent in 2023 and 30 per cent in 2024.

It is worth mentioning that not all new positive decisions for TP correspond to new refugees, as it may include re-applications, re-activations or individuals applying in multiple countries.

### MONTHLY DECISIONS GRANTING TEMPORARY PROTECTION IN EU+ COUNTRIES



Source: EUROSTAT

3 Calculations based on data included in [IOM’s Returns Report – General Population Survey Round 19](#). These estimates do not include refugees who had returned for less than three months (11%), in line with [UNHCR’s Position on Voluntary Return to Ukraine](#) recommending that a person’s legal status and rights in host countries are not affected by a visit of less than three months.



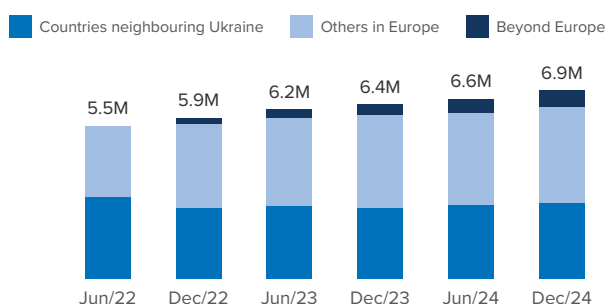
## How many refugees from Ukraine are currently recorded globally?

By December 2024, **more than 6.9 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded globally**, including 6.3 million hosted in countries across Europe.<sup>4</sup>

The number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe has slightly increased in 2024 (rising by 6 per cent from December 2023 to December 2024). This increase was primarily driven by a higher number of refugees in Germany (+10 per cent, equivalent to 117,600 refugees), Poland (+3 per cent, equivalent to 32,900 refugees) and Spain (+17 per cent, equivalent to 31,100 refugees).

Meanwhile, onward movements outside of Europe continued to increase in 2024, with **over 560,600 refugees from Ukraine recorded beyond Europe by December 2024**, 39 per cent higher compared to the figure in December 2023. Most are living in Canada and in the United States of America, which have set-up specific schemes for Ukrainians (including CUAET programme in Canada, which expired in 2024, and Uniting for Ukraine in the USA).

### REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE RECORDED GLOBALLY



Source: Figures compiled by UNHCR based on data provided by authorities.



## What are the demographics and places of origin of refugees from Ukraine?

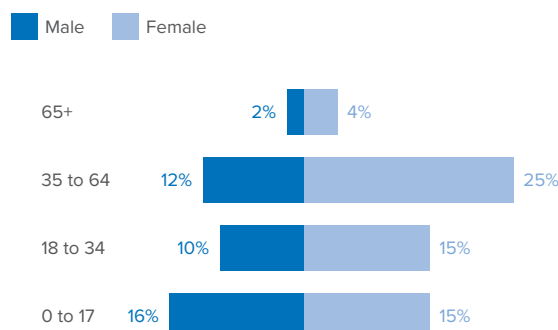
Based on available official data, complemented with results from UNHCR surveys, it is estimated that **76 per cent of refugees from Ukraine are women and children**. The main regions of origin are the **east and south of Ukraine (58 per cent of all refugees)**.

The main demographic characteristics of the overall number of refugees from Ukraine in Europe include:

- 59 per cent are female and 41 per cent male (compared to 65 per cent female / 35 per cent male by end-2022).
- 31 per cent are children (compared to 36 per cent by end-2022), with a slightly higher proportion of male than female (16 vs. 15 per cent).
- 6 per cent are older people (aged 65+), with a slightly higher proportion of female than male (4 vs. 2 per cent).

Among Ukraine's neighboring countries, the proportion of children is higher than in the rest of Europe (40 vs. 28 per cent), while the proportion of adults aged 18 - 64 years is lower (55 vs. 65 per cent).

### AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE RECORDED IN EUROPE

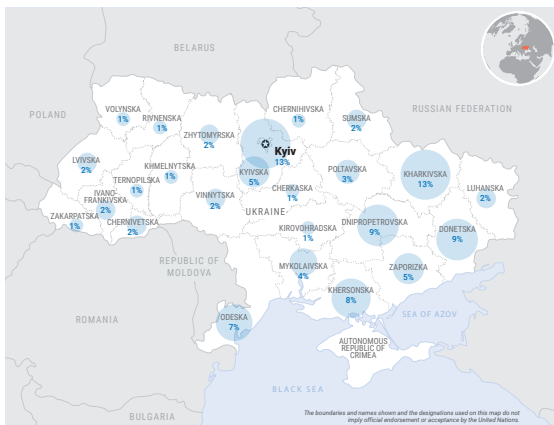


<sup>4</sup> See UNHCR's [Operational Data Portal](#) for latest data.

Regarding places of origin among refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe, results from multiple UNHCR-led surveys indicate that:

- 38 per cent originate from the east, with Kharkivska as the main oblast of origin, followed by Donetsk and Dnipropetrovska.
- 20 per cent originate from the south, with Khersonska as the main oblast of origin, followed by Odeska.
- 13 per cent originate from Kyiv city.
- 11 per cent originate from the north and an equal proportion originate from the west, with Kyivska, Lvivska and Sumska as the main oblasts of origin.
- 7 per cent originate from central Ukraine, with Poltavska and Vinnytska as the main oblasts of origin.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE RECORDED IN EUROPE BY OBLAST OF ORIGIN



Source: UNHCR estimates based on survey results, applied to estimates of refugees recorded in Europe (excluding those in the Russian Federation).



## Data gaps and limitations

There are persistent data gaps to accurately measure the different type of movements, including:

- While border crossing data can be useful to assess trends over time, it is not optimal to differentiate different types of movements. **UNHCR will continue its border monitoring** to better understand movement patterns, reasons and intentions of people exiting and entering Ukraine.
- **Data on new displacements or new arrivals is limited**, as figures of monthly TP decisions can include re-registration of individuals who lost their previous status. Disaggregation of host countries registration data by date of arrival would be useful to understand trends in new arrivals.
- Population estimates are affected by challenges in tracking refugees from Ukraine in a context of free movement across Schengen countries, and as not all countries have undertaken exercises to verify the presence of TP beneficiaries in their territory. **Linking administrative data sources and/or survey-based estimates should be explored to improve refugee estimates.**
- There is gap in official data on refugee returnees, both due to lack of data on deactivation of protection status in host countries, as well as a **lack of official tracking of returns inside Ukraine**. UNHCR will continue to conduct surveys with refugee returnees to better understand return patterns and enablers of sustainable returns.

As noted in [UNHCR's Position on Voluntary Returns to Ukraine](#), UNHCR does not consider that promotion or incentivization of return to Ukraine is appropriate at the current time, given the ongoing war and hostilities. UNHCR continues to call on States to refrain from forcibly returning nationals and former habitual residents of Ukraine. This does not preclude refugees from taking personal decisions to return, as returning to one's country is a fundamental right that needs to be respected; however, it is important that these decisions are truly voluntary, well-informed and without inducement to return. UNHCR has developed – in cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities - the [Ukraine is Home](#) information platform to support refugees' ability to take free and informed decisions regarding return, and make the necessary preparations for sustainable return.

Given the ongoing full-scale war and general volatility of the situation, UNHCR does not consider that such voluntary decisions to return undermine the overall assessment that the vast majority of people displaced from Ukraine are likely to have international protection needs.