UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Regional Bureau for Europe

UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION
POPULATION MOVEMENTS | FACTSHEET #3

MAY 2026

Complementing the first and second factsheets on population movements related to the Ukraine Refugee Situation, this third 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 2025?

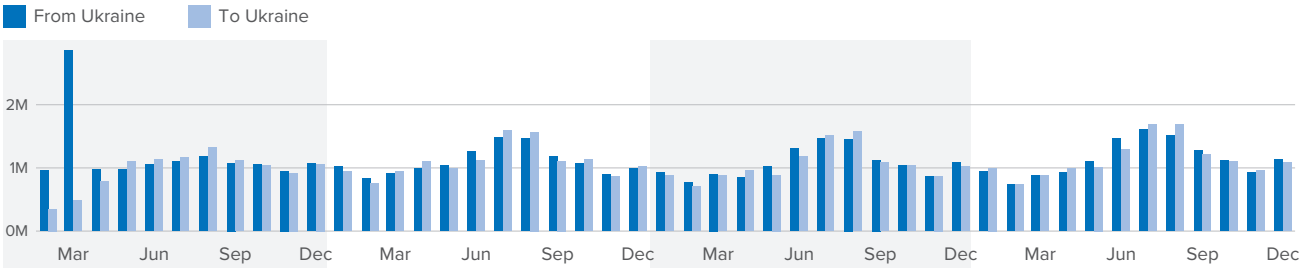
Border crossings from and to Ukraine slightly increased in 2025 compared to 2024 (**around 7 per cent more movements in both directions**) and continued to follow similar seasonal patterns linked to**pendular movements and short-term visits**, with higher traffic during summer and holiday periods.[1]

Despite intensified attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure in 2025, **there was no marked surge in outward movements during the last quarter of 2025**. Outward movements generally declined from September 2025 onwards.

However, from October 2025 onwards, people departing Ukraine interviewed by UNHCR cited more frequently energy-related reasons, including lack of electricity, heating and water.[2]

EVOLUTION OF BORDER MOVEMENTS FROM AND TO UKRAINE: 2022 - 2025

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, with a significant proportion of **voluntary returns** occurring within this period.

2023

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

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 attacks on energy infrastructure.

2025

Seasonal variations associated to **short-term visits** and **pendular movements** similar to previous years, though with a slightly higher magnitude of crossings in both directions.

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

1 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.

2 See UNHCR (2026), Border monitoring: Departures related to the energy situation. Ad hoc report – January to December 2025.

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

Latest UNHCR surveys indicate that **57 per cent of refugees from Ukraine in Europe (around 3 million people) have visited Ukraine at least once** since their displacement, and 37 per cent have done so more than once. [3]

Border monitoring data show that this pattern of repeated cross-border movements continued to grow in 2025. **Among people interviewed while leaving Ukraine, 78 per cent had already left the country at least once,** compared to 73 per cent in 2024 and 60 per cent in 2023.[4]

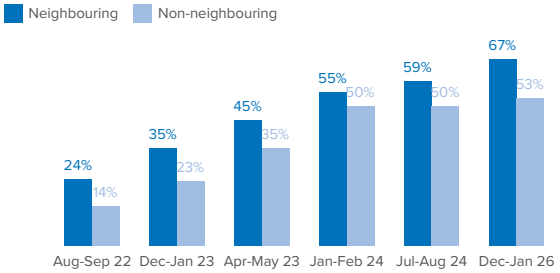
In 2025, short-term visits became more common. Among those crossing back to Ukraine, 67 per cent planned to stay for less than one month, compared to 59 per cent in 2024 - indicating a rise in brief visits rather than sustained returns.

Confirming previous findings, the most common reasons for travelling back to Ukraine remains visiting relatives and taking care of family matters, as well as the desire to be in their own home and family environment. **Access to healthcare has increased in importance and is now the third most frequently reported reason,** followed by the need to check on property left behind and to access Government services.

Short-term visits continue to be more frequent among refugees staying in neighboring countries, those originating from areas close to the borders with the EU and Moldova, and refugees who have a spouse or other close family members still living in Ukraine.

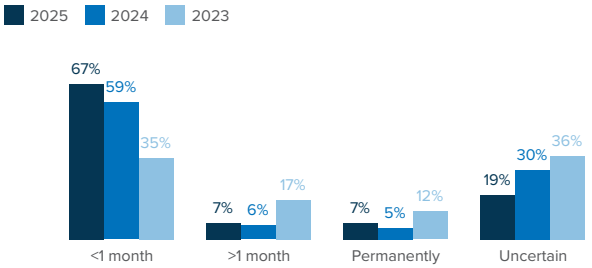
At least a quarter of refugees report that they would like to undertake short visits to Ukraine but are unable to do so. The main obstacles are security concerns and a lack of financial resources, followed by caregiving responsibilities abroad, lack of documentation and concerns about losing legal status in host countries.[5]

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 2025, 2024 and 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.

3 UNHCR (2026), Lives on Hold #7 (*forthcoming*).
4 UNHCR (2026), Border Monitoring – Annual report: 2025.
5 UNHCR (2026), Lives on Hold #7 (*forthcoming*).

How many refugees have returned to Ukraine?

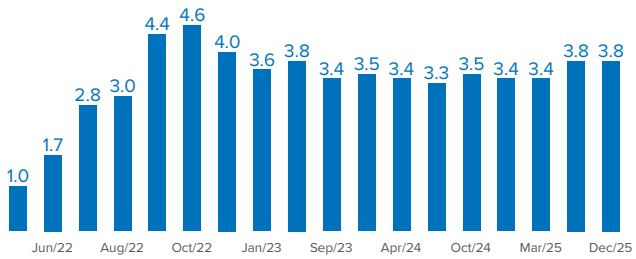
By December 2025, **an estimated 1.4 million refugees had returned to Ukraine and stayed for at least three months**, including roughly 300,000 individuals who returned to an area different from their former homes. Of the total, **approximately 139,000 are estimated to have returned in 2025**.[6]

UNHCR's latest surveys with refugee returnees show that the declining trend in returns continued in 2025. Around three quarters of surveyed returnees went back to Ukraine in 2022 or 2023, **while only 13 per cent returned in 2024 and 11 per cent in 2025**.[7]

Around 38 per cent of returns were to eastern and southern Oblasts. An estimated one quarter of all refugee returnees returned to a different place than their area of origin, largely among those who originate from places under temporary occupation. More than two-thirds of refugee returnees were previously hosted in five countries: Poland (37 per cent), Germany (12 per cent), Bulgaria (7 per cent), Romania and Czechia (6 per cent each).

The desire to return to their own cultural environment and to reunite with relatives remains the main reason behind voluntary returns. **Among returnees in 2025, however, 25 per cent mentioned difficulties in adapting or integrating in their host countries and 14 per cent cited uncertainty about their legal status abroad as additional reasons for deciding to return**.

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-R22

How many refugees arrived in host countries in 2025?

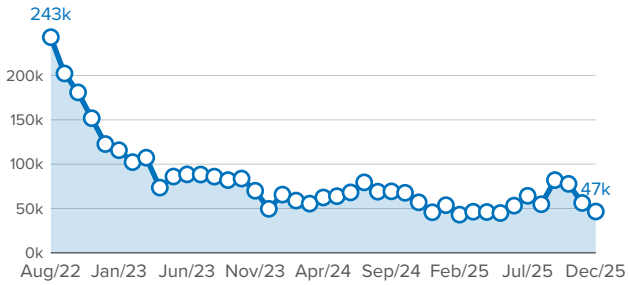
According to EUROSTAT statistics, between January - December 2025, **nearly 668,700 positive decisions for Temporary Protection (TP) were granted in EU+ countries, 12 per cent fewer than in 2024.**[8]

A marked increase in monthly TP decisions was observed in September and October 2025, following a Ukrainian Government Decree at the end of August 2025 that allowed men aged 18 to 22 to leave the country without hindrance. Among all TP decisions granted in those two months, **38 per cent corresponded to males aged 18 to 34, more than double their share among decisions issued between January and August** (15 per cent).

By November 2025, the number of TP decisions decreased, resuming the declining trend observed prior to September. However, around one third of decisions in November and December still concerned males aged 18 to 34.

It is important to note that not all new positive decisions for TP correspond to new refugees, as it can include re-applications or re-activations as well as individuals applying in multiple countries. **TP statistics should be interpreted as an indication of protection activity rather than as a precise count of new arrivals**. Latest UNHCR surveys indicate that **8 per cent of refugees currently residing in Europe were displaced in 2025** (equivalent to around 430,000 people).

MONTHLY DECISIONS GRANTING TEMPORARY PROTECTION IN EU+ COUNTRIES



Source: EUROSTAT

6 Calculations based on data included in IOM's Returns Report – General Population Survey Round 22. These estimates do not include refugees who had returned for less than three months (9%), 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.
7 UNHCR (2026), Lives on Hold #7 (*forthcoming*).
8 See EUROSTAT, Decisions granting temporary protection by citizenship, age and sex - monthly data (migr_asytpfm).

How many refugees from Ukraine are currently recorded globally?

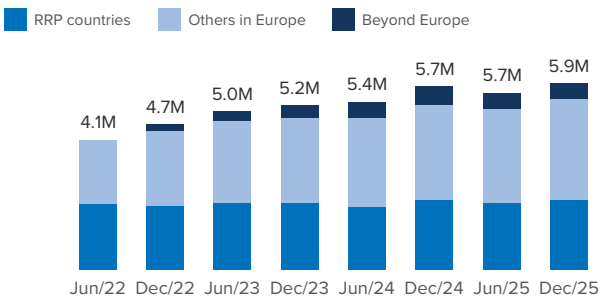
By the end of 2025, **an estimated 5.9 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded globally,** including close to 5.4 million hosted in countries across Europe.[9]

Around 4.9 million of these refugees are beneficiaries of international protection, the large majority under temporary protection or similar national schemes, while just over one million have been granted other forms of legal stay.

The number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe increased slightly in 2025, rising by about 4 per cent between December 2024 and December 2025. This growth was mainly driven by higher numbers of refugees in Germany (+83,300; +7 per cent), Spain (+31,100; +14 per cent), Romania (+22,000; +12 per cent), the Netherlands (+12,600; +10 per cent) and Denmark (+12,300; +33 per cent).

Outside Europe, the number of refugees from Ukraine decreased slightly to about 549,000 by the end of 2025, around 4 per cent lower than at the end of 2024. Most of these refugees are living in Canada and the United States of America, where specific schemes for Ukrainians were established (including Canada's CUAET programme, which expired in 2024, and the Uniting for Ukraine programme in the USA, paused for new applications since early 2025).

REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE RECORDED GLOBALLY



Source: Figures compiled by UNHCR based on data provided by authorities. Estimates from 2022 to 2024 excludes estimates of persons in refugee-like situation in the Russian Federation previously reported, as this figure has not been updated since June 2023.

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

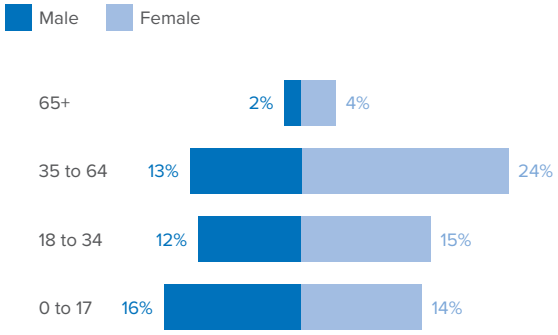
Based on official data, complemented with UNHCR survey results, **it is estimated that 74 per cent of refugees from Ukraine are women and children.**

Latest surveys indicate that **57 per cent of refugees originate from oblasts that are in part temporarily occupied or on the frontline, including 18 per cent who originate from settlements under temporary occupation.**[10]

The main demographic characteristics of refugees from Ukraine are as follows:

- **Children (0–17 years) represent around 30 per cent of the total**, a slight decrease from 31 per cent at the end of 2024.
- **Adults aged 18 to 64 represent about 64 per cent of refugees**, of whom 25 per cent are males and 39 per cent females. The share of men aged 18 to 64 has increased compared to end-2024 (22 per cent), driven mainly by the arrival of young men in the last months of 2025. The share of women aged 18 to 64 has edged down slightly (from 40 to 39 per cent).
- **Older people aged 65 and above account for around 6 per cent of refugees**.

AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE RECORDED IN EUROPE



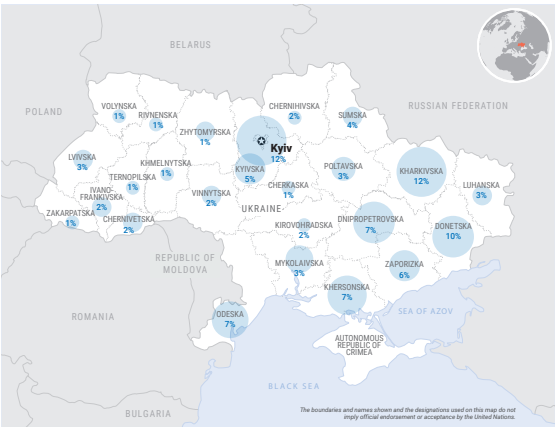
Source: UNHCR estimates based on demographic distribution data obtained from EUROSTAT and survey results for other countries.

9 See UNHCR's Operational Data Portal for latest data.
10 UNHCR (2026), Lives on Hold #7 (*forthcoming*).

Regarding places of origin, latest UNHCR surveys indicate that:

- 37 per cent of refugees originate from eastern Ukraine, with Kharkivska and Donetska as the main oblasts of origin.
- 18 per cent originate from the south, particularly Khersonska and Odeska.
- Similar shares of refugees (around 12 to 13 per cent each) come from Kyiv city, the north and the west of the country.
- While the remaining 8 per cent originate from central oblasts such as Poltavska and Vinnytska.

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



Source: UNHCR estimates based on survey results.

Data gaps and limitations

Despite the breadth of available data, there are persistent gaps and limitations that make it difficult to measure all types of population movements related to the Ukraine refugee situation with precision, including:

- Border crossing data is useful for tracking trends over time, but they are not designed to distinguish between different types of movements. **UNHCR continues to conduct border monitoring to better understand patterns, profiles and reasons**.
- There is limited precise information on new arrivals from Ukraine into host countries. Figures on TP decisions may include re-registrations or re-activations and people who applied in more than one country. **Disaggregation of registration data by date of arrival and tracking of status changes would improve the measurement of new arrivals.**
- Population estimates for refugees from Ukraine are affected by the fact that not all countries conduct verification exercises for temporary protection beneficiaries. **Linking administrative data sources and/or combining them with survey estimates should continue to be explored**.
- There is an ongoing gap in official data on refugee returnees, both because host countries do not systematically record the de-activation of protection status and because there is no official tracking of refugee returnees within Ukraine. **UNHCR relies on dedicated surveys with refugee returnees and on IOM's General Population Survey to estimate the scale and characteristics of returns**.

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 voluntary and well-informed personal decisions 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.