UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

LIVES ON HOLD: INTENTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN UKRAINE

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Cover photograph:

Vira, 77, is from Huliaipole city in Zaporizhzhia region. She has two children, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. She fled her hometown on 22 July 2022 after days of relentless shelling reduced much of it to ruins. Vira left with almost nothing, staying first in Odesa, then in Synelnykove city, Dnipropetrovsk region and eventually settling in the collective site in Maiske village, Dnipropetrovsk region. She received essential items like mattresses, bedding, and kitchen kits from UNHCR that made her life more comfortable. © UNHCR/Alina Kovalenko

Summary and recommendations

More than four years after the beginning of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, millions of people remain forcibly displaced. Over 3.8 million people are internally displaced within Ukraine and nearly 5.8 million refugees from Ukraine are recorded globally, over 5.4 million of them in European states. Against this backdrop of protracted displacement and continued uncertainty, understanding displaced people's intentions and factors that shape their decisions is critical for guiding planning for durable solutions and informing policy responses in host countries and in Ukraine.

This report presents findings from 3,892 interviews with internally displaced households in Ukraine, conducted between December 2025 and January 2026. The surveys, implemented by Ipsos SA, used a mixed methodology (phone and web-based interviews), combining longitudinal follow-up of earlier respondents with new respondents recruited through online panels and a large-scale SMS-based approach.

Previous rounds focused on measuring return intentions by distinguishing between short-term plans to return and longer-term aspirations, recognizing that stated intentions are shaped by significant uncertainty regarding the future situation in Ukraine. This latest round introduced a new module to explore how return intentions may differ depending on how the war evolves and ultimately ends, acknowledging that different future scenarios are likely to have important implications for decisions about returning to places of origin (see box on page 7 of the report).

Key findings

Return intentions have declined but remain highly dependent on how the war evolves.

- A slight majority of internally displaced people (IDPs) still plan or hope to return to their place of origin in the future, but this share has declined from 73 per cent in mid-2024 to 54 per cent in the current round. Only 2 per cent report concrete plans to return within the next 12 months, i.e. in the course of 2026, while 28 per cent report no hope to return and 18 per cent remain undecided. This points to increasingly protracted displacement and reinforces the need to support local integration for IDPs who are likely to remain in their current communities.
- Scenario-based findings show that return intentions are not fixed. Only 15 per cent of IDPs would be likely to return under a partial ceasefire scenario, and 24 per cent if the war ended without Ukraine regaining control over temporarily occupied territories. By contrast, 68 per cent would be likely to return if the war ended and Ukraine's territorial integrity was restored.

Place of origin, property status and family ties are strongly associated with return intentions.

- Return intentions vary sharply by place of origin. IDPs from temporarily occupied territories report very low likelihood of return if occupation continues, while their return intentions increase substantially under a scenario involving territorial restoration. IDPs from non-occupied but frontline Oblasts report higher likelihood of return under any peace scenario, with intentions rising from 33 per cent if the war ends without territorial restoration to 72 per cent if territorial integrity is restored.
- Property and family ties also matter. IDPs with intact or only partially damaged property in their place of origin report higher return intentions than those whose homes are fully damaged or whose property status is unknown. However, return intentions are not limited to property owners: 64 per cent of IDPs without property in their place of origin still report a desire to return under a peace scenario or if occupation ends. Having family members in the place of origin is also associated with higher likelihood of return.

Safety and housing are the main enablers of return, while employment and services matter for specific groups.

- Durable safety and stability, together with access to property and adequate housing conditions, are the main enablers of return. Overall, 62 per cent of IDPs ranked safety and stability among their first or second most important factors, while 52 per cent ranked access to property and adequate housing conditions among their top two factors.
- Economic opportunities, availability of basic and social services and support for return and reintegration are also important, but are ranked lower on average, with around 22 to 24 per cent of IDPs selecting them as their first or second most important factor.
- Economic opportunities are ranked among the top two enablers by 24 per cent of IDPs overall, but are more important for younger respondents, those currently working or looking for work and those without property in their place of origin. Access to basic and social services and return and reintegration support is also relevant, especially for older people, others with specific needs, people currently unemployed and those with fully damaged property.

Conditions in displacement affect both local integration and future return decisions.

- Many face constraints in displacement affecting their ability to adapt and integrate locally and may also influence future return decisions. Nearly three quarters are renting their accommodation, only 40 per cent are currently working and only 16 per cent report being able to cover most of their basic needs. IDPs identify the lack of stable income, limited access to employment or government assistance as main challenges to local integration, followed by access to adequate and stable housing.
- These findings suggest that some IDPs may consider return because they are struggling to meet basic needs in displacement and to sustainably integrate locally. Strengthening support for housing, employment and social protection in areas of displacement is therefore essential to ensure that decisions on return or local integration are voluntary.

Information gaps remain substantial and mirror the main conditions needed for return.

- Nearly half of IDPs, 45 per cent, report that they do not have enough information to decide whether to return, up from 30 per cent in the previous round. The most common information needs relate to safety and stability in areas of origin, access to property or alternative housing, compensation and repair programmes, availability of basic and social services and employment or business opportunities.
- Information needs vary by profile. IDPs from frontline areas more often seek information on safety and stability, while those with damaged property or unknown property status more often seek information on housing, compensation and repair. IDPs currently working, and those from non-occupied and non-frontline Oblasts, more often seek information on employment and business opportunities.

Main recommendations

1. Ensure that return planning is guided by safety considerations as top priority.

- Treat durable safety and stability as the primary return enabler in line with IDPs' own ranking. Avoid promoting or facilitating return to areas where security, access, housing and essential services do not yet support safe and sustainable reintegration.
- Provide regular, accessible and localized information on security conditions in areas of origin, using both digital and offline channels to reach older people, persons with disabilities and IDPs with limited digital access.
- Strengthen practical safety information for IDPs considering return, including explosive ordnance risk education, particularly for those from frontline or formerly occupied areas.

2. Address housing, land and property barriers as a core condition for return.

- Expand and simplify access to compensation, repair and reconstruction mechanisms for damaged or destroyed housing, including clear procedures, documentation requirements and predictable timelines.

- Strengthen support for IDPs whose homes are inaccessible, fully destroyed or whose property status is unknown, including those from temporarily occupied territories who are currently underserved by existing mechanisms. Conduct outreach and provide legal support for property documentation, damage registration, compensation claims and future reparations processes.
- Explore adequate housing options for IDPs who cannot immediately access or repair their property, including temporary housing, social housing, affordable rental options and, where appropriate, rural housing or co-living arrangements with safeguards.
- Integrate IDP and returnees' housing needs into the State Housing Strategy, the forthcoming legal social housing framework and local recovery plans, with priority for those facing the greatest housing vulnerability.

3. Link return planning to employment and livelihood opportunities.

- Integrate employment and livelihood support into recovery planning in areas of return, including labour-market assessments, job matching, re-skilling, vocational training and small-business support.
- Strengthen links with regional employment services, local businesses and training providers so that returnees can access information on jobs and livelihood opportunities before and after return.
- Prioritize employment measures for groups for whom economic opportunities are especially important to return decisions, including younger IDPs, those currently working or seeking work and those without property in their place of origin. Promote flexible and accessible work options for caregivers, persons with disabilities, older workers and others facing barriers to employment.

4. Enhance support for social protection, in particular social services, availability and accessibility in areas of return.

- Treat access to social protection as a condition for dignified and sustainable return, particularly for older people, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic illness, single caregivers and households with limited income.
- Take steps to address administrative, documentation, digital and information barriers so that returning IDPs can access pensions, benefits, social services and other essential support without interruption.
- Enhance support for social service capacity at community-level notably for social adaptation, home-based care, day care, assisted living, psychosocial support and social transport. Expand reach of services through mobile approaches where appropriate and apply financing and service-delivery models that allow support to follow people across displacement and return, including the "money follows people" approach where relevant.
- Ensure that return and reintegration support is coordinated with local authorities, social service providers, community-based organizations and IDP councils, so that people with specific needs are not left without support after return.

5. Scale up local integration support for IDPs who are unlikely to return in the near term, while preserving the right to return.

- Strengthen local integration support in communities hosting IDPs, particularly as return intentions have declined and many IDPs are likely to remain in displacement for the foreseeable future. Anchor support in the new Law on Internal Displacement, the State Strategy on Internal Displacement and its Action Plan, including through an integrated "IDP Pathway" that connects IDPs to support from displacement through to a durable solution.
- Prioritize the three areas most critical to enable a durable solution of choice:
    - **housing**, including affordable rental support, social housing, improved tenure security and solutions out of collective sites or other temporary arrangements;
    - **employment and livelihoods**, including job matching, re-skilling, flexible work arrangements and support for IDPs facing barriers to labour-market participation;
    - **social protection**, including IDP registration, benefits, pensions, social adaptation and other social services and community-based protection support.

- Ensure support is needs-based and prioritizes IDPs with heightened vulnerabilities, including older people, persons with disabilities, single caregivers, households in collective sites and those unable to meet basic needs.
- Support local authorities, community-based organizations and IDP councils to include IDPs in local planning, service delivery and community cohesion initiatives, so that local integration does not result in marginalization, exclusion or parallel systems.

Introduction

Background

The full-scale invasion and war against Ukraine that began in February 2022 has resulted in a protracted displacement crisis. Within Ukraine, **over 3.9 million people remain internally displaced**[1] and nearly **5.7 million refugees from Ukraine are recorded globally**, with 5.2 million of them in European states.[2]

To ensure that the perspectives of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) are reflected in discussions about durable solutions and policy responses in host countries and in Ukraine, UNHCR has regularly implemented return intentions surveys since 2022. These surveys collect data on displaced people's profiles, their return intentions, as well as the main factors influencing their decisions. Between 2022 and 2025, four rounds of surveys were conducted with IDPs inside Ukraine.[3]

This report presents the findings from the latest survey round. The analysis is based on **interviews undertaken between December 2025 and January 2026 with close to 3,900 IDP households in Ukraine.**

The report aims to answer the following key research questions:

- What are IDPs' current return intentions, based on their own expectations about the future?
- How would IDPs' return intentions evolve under different hypothetical future scenarios related to the possible evolution and outcome of the war?
- To what extent are return intentions associated with place of origin, including origin in occupied or frontline areas, as well as demographic and socio-economic characteristics?
- What are enabling factors that could influence IDPs' return decisions?
- What are IDPs' information needs when it comes to return decisions?

Due to the nature of the survey, the report does not examine local integration in depth as a durable solution. Instead, it focuses on IDPs' return intentions, the factors influencing return decisions and how these have shifted over time. However, given the growing share of IDPs who do not currently report return intentions, **greater consideration of local integration needs, barriers and support priorities** is required.

Methodology

Sampling and data collection were conducted by Ipsos SA. The research combined phone and web-based surveys and used different sampling approaches. As in previous rounds, all respondents from earlier waves who had consented to be re-contacted and were reachable were invited to participate in this round via phone or web-based surveys. **This longitudinal**

[1] See IOM (2026), Ukraine Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 24.

[2] For most up-to date information visit the UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Ukraine.

[3] For all previous reports visit UNHCR Intentions Surveys.

sub-sample comprised 1,183 interviews with IDPs. To supplement the longitudinal sample and reach the desired sample size, an additional sample was recruited through two main channels:

- ***Online panels***: Ipsos SA's Ukrainian online panels were used to identify and invite target respondents, **resulting in 304 completed interviews with IDPs**.
- ***SMS recruitment***: For this round, an innovative SMS-based recruitment approach was piloted. Using the database of a large Ukrainian mobile-phone provider (Vodafone), invitations to participate were sent via SMS to a randomly selected sample of phone numbers. **This approach resulted in 2,377 completed interviews with IDPs**.

Responses from all data-collection modes and sampling sources were combined into a final cleaned IDP sample of 3,864 interviews. Post-stratification weights were calculated to align the sample with known population distributions and to reduce potential sampling bias. While results cannot be extrapolated to all IDPs in Ukraine, the demographic composition of the sample is broadly similar to that of the wider IDP population reflected in other sources. A detailed description of the sampling and weighting approach is provided in **Annex I**.[4]

DISTRIBUTION OF COMPLETED INTERVIEWS

The survey questionnaire remained broadly consistent with previous rounds, while introducing three main adjustments for this iteration: (i) the addition of a module exploring return intentions under different hypothetical war-end scenarios (**see box below**), (ii) a revision of the question on return enablers in order to better capture the relative importance of different factors influencing return decisions (*ranking* instead of *Likert scale*), and (iii) the streamlining of selected modules to reduce the overall length of the questionnaire and support completion through a self-administered format.

[4] The full survey questionnaire and anonymized version of the microdata can be accessed via UNHCR's Microdata Library.

Measuring return intentions: *aspirations vs. scenarios*

Since the start of the intentions survey series, UNHCR has measured return intentions through a two-step approach. Respondents are first asked whether they are *"planning to return in the next twelve months"*, in order to identify those with concrete return plans. Those not planning to return in the short term are then asked whether they are *"hoping to return to your place of origin one day"*. This second question is intended to capture broader **return aspirations,** reflecting long-term preferences expressed in a context of uncertainty regarding future conditions in Ukraine.

In this latest round, a new module was introduced to explore how intentions might evolve under different hypothetical future scenarios related to the possible evolution and outcome of the war in Ukraine. Respondents were asked **how likely they would be to consider returning under three distinct scenarios**:

- **Partial ceasefire**: hostilities and attacks limited to the frontline, while temporary occupation of territories continues.
- **Fragile Peace with Concessions**: an agreement to end the war and hostilities, without Ukraine regaining control over temporarily occupied territories;
- **End of war under a scenario of territorial restoration**: an end to the war and large-scale hostilities, with Ukraine regaining control over all temporarily occupied territories.

These scenarios are aligned with those used in the **UNHCR-Brunel University Agent-Based Return Model**.[5] They should not be interpreted as predictions, but rather as analytical frameworks designed to explore how different security and territorial outcomes could shape forcibly displaced people's return intentions. **The analysis presented in this report draws primarily on these scenario-based measures, as they provide more nuanced and operationally relevant insights into potential return dynamics under different future conditions.**

Viktor (77) and Nadiia (74) were displaced from Kupiansk-Vuzlovyi in Kharkiv region. For a long time, they did not leave their home despite constant shelling and occupation. They decided to evacuate only after a guided aerial bomb destroyed a neighbouring house and severely damaged their own home. "We went through so much. We had nowhere to go—only the cellar." Now they stay in a collective site in Dokuchaivske in Kharkiv region together with their cat. They say the conditions there are good, and for now this place has become their safe space. They have also been told that they may be eligible for compensation for their destroyed home, but they still need support to understand the procedure and submit the documents.
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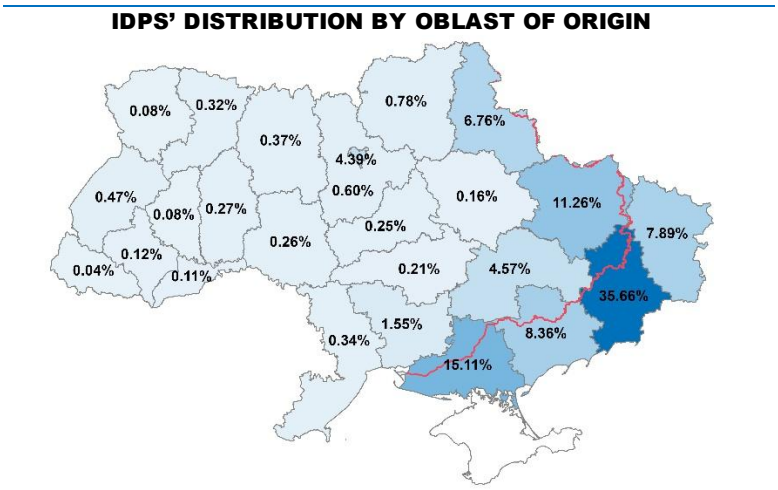
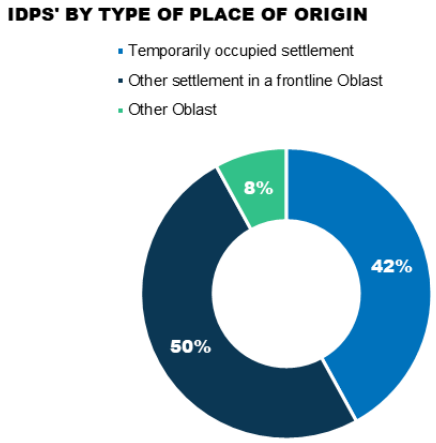
[5] See UNHCR (2026b), Policy Brief No. 2: Forecasting refugee return to Ukraine amid ongoing war and uncertainty.

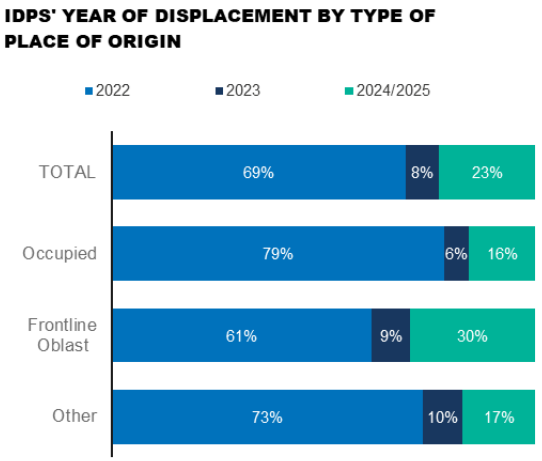
Sample characteristics

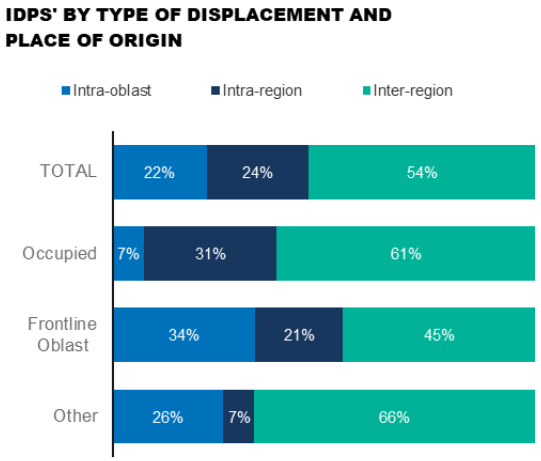
The IDP sample is heavily concentrated among people displaced from areas most directly affected by war, temporary occupation or proximity to the frontline. Around 42 per cent originate from an area that is temporarily occupied and 50 per cent originate from places that are not temporarily occupied but located in frontline oblasts in the east, south and north of the country. Only 8 per cent originate from other oblasts, half of them from Kyiv city.





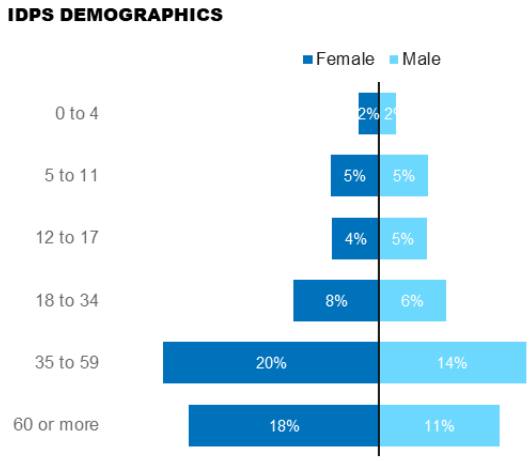
22 per cent of IDPs were displaced within their oblast of origin and 24 per cent to another oblast within the same macro-region, while over half – 54 per cent – displaced to a different macro-region. Over two-thirds of IDPs were displaced during 2022, and the average length of displacement by the time of the survey was 3.2 years.

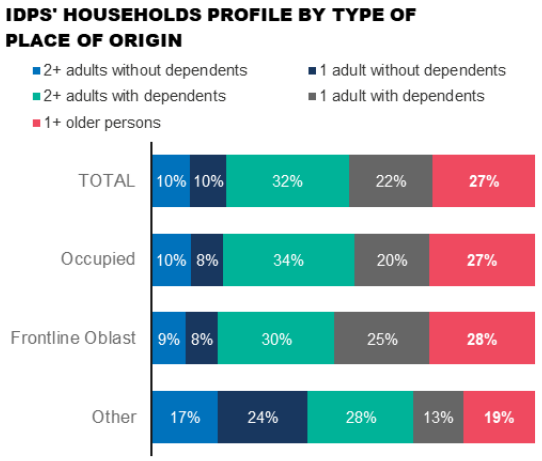




More than two-thirds of IDPs are women and children, and close to a third are older people. Compared to surveys conducted in 2023 and 2024, the share of older people among all IDPs has increased significantly (29 per cent in the last round vs. 21 per cent in 2023). In contrast, survey findings show a reduction during the same period in the proportion of children (22 vs. 27 per cent), as well as in the share of working-age females (28 vs. 35 per cent) among IDPs. Further analysis would be needed to understand whether these groups have already returned, locally integrated, or continued further abroad.

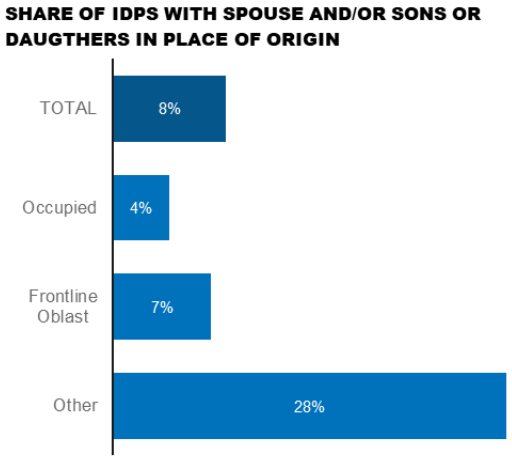
Around half of households are comprised only of older persons (27 per cent) and by single carers (22 per cent), groups generally associated with higher vulnerability and greater barriers to self-reliance. Almost a third is composed of households with two or more adults (18-59 years) with dependents, and a fifth are composed of only adults without dependents.

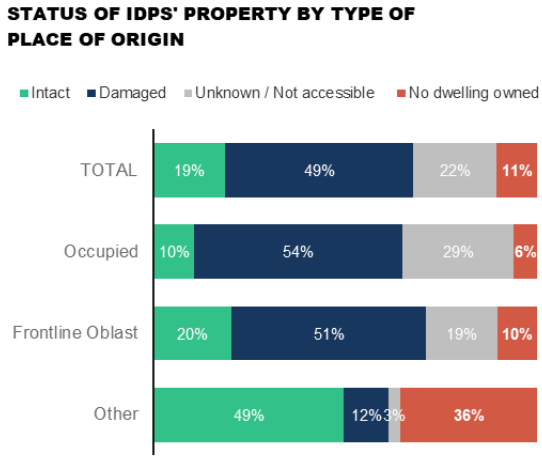




Around 8 per cent of IDPs report having a spouse and/or children remaining in the place of origin, although with differences according to the type of place of origin: only 4 per cent among IDPs originating from places under temporary occupation but 28 per cent among those from non-occupied and non-frontline Oblasts. However, two-thirds of IDPs—66 per cent—report that they have no relatives remaining in their place of origin.

Only nearly a fifth of IDPs report having an intact property in their place of origin, with almost half reporting damaged properties and more than a fifth unaware of the status of their properties. The share of IDPs with intact properties is significantly lower among those originating from places under temporary occupation (only 10 per cent), while it is much higher among those from non-occupied and non-frontline Oblasts (49 per cent). The high proportion of nearly half of IDPs reporting intact property in non-frontline areas or non-occupied territories requires further interrogation to understand causes of ongoing displacement.

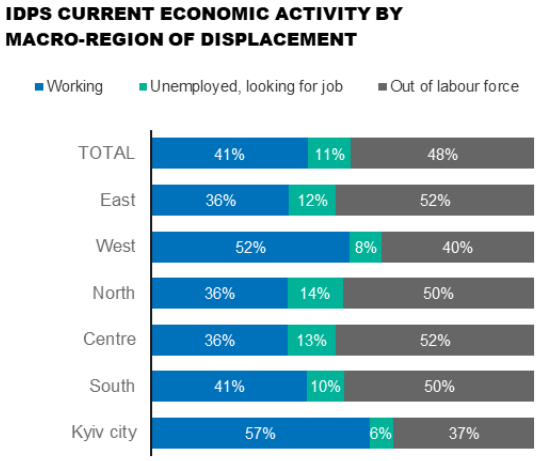


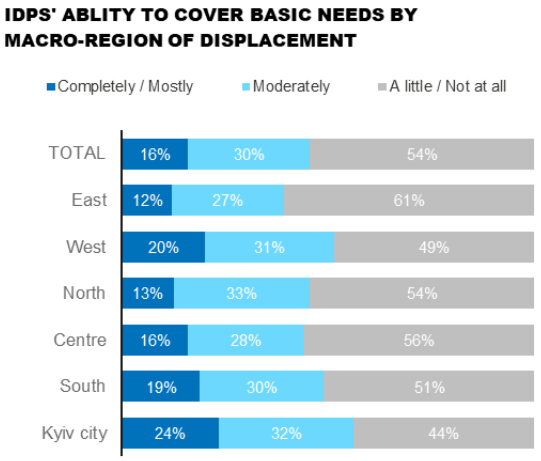


Nearly three-quarters—73 per cent—of IDPs report renting a property (53 per cent) or a room (20 per cent), while 11 per cent are hosted by relatives, close friends, or a third party. Nearly 5 per cent of IDPs reported residing in an apartment or a property that they own, indicating that for a sub-set of IDPs, they have the means and are making steps to locally integrate. However, another 5 per cent also report residing in collective sites (1.2 per cent) or hostel, hotels, or dormitories (3.5 per cent). These households likely represent the most vulnerable people for whom the sustainability of housing options will likely shape their return intentions.

Current areas of displacement show a wide geographical spread. Around a third of them are residing in eastern Oblasts, while the rest is almost evenly split across western, northern, central and southern oblasts (from 12 to 16 per cent of IDPs in each of these regions), with the lowest share residing in Kyiv city.

Only 41 per cent of IDPs are currently working and only 16 per cent report being able to cover most of their basic needs. Among IDPs outside the labour force, 24 per cent are retired, 6 per cent are caregivers and nearly 5 per cent report disability or health issues. These findings suggest that employment support may be relevant for some IDPs, while others may require social protection, care services, accessible housing or other forms of support to meet basic needs.



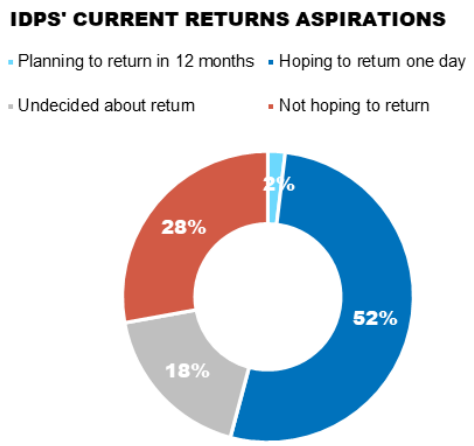


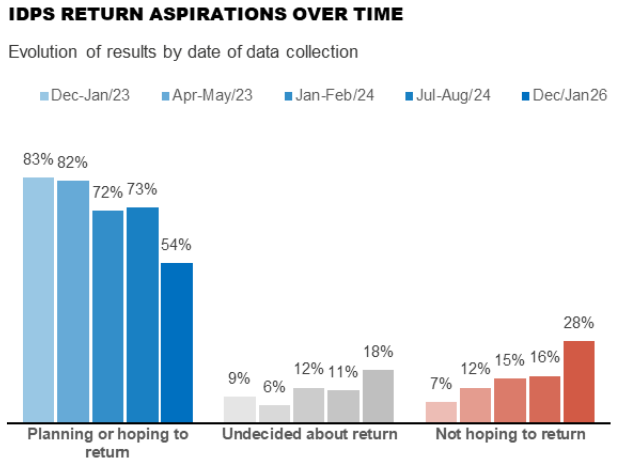
Return intentions among IDPs

What are IDPs' current return intentions?

A slight majority of IDPs are still planning or hoping to return to their place of origin one day. Only a small minority report concrete plans to return in the short term (2 per cent within the next twelve months), while 52 per cent still hope to return one day. At the same time, 18 per cent remain undecided and 28 per cent report no hope to return.

Compared with previous rounds, aspirations to return have continued to decline as the war and displacement become increasingly protracted. In earlier rounds, a clear majority of IDPs reported either planning or hoping to return in the future (73 per cent in the survey conducted in July–August 2024), compared to just over half in the current round (54 per cent). Over the same period, the share reporting no intention to return has risen from 16 to 28 per cent, while the proportion of those who are undecided has also increased (18 per cent, compared to 11 per cent in the previous round). These trends point to the need for stronger analysis and support for IDPs who may pursue local integration, while preserving their right to return when conditions allow.

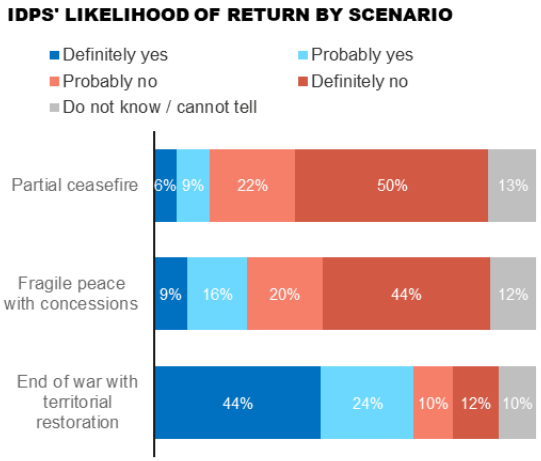


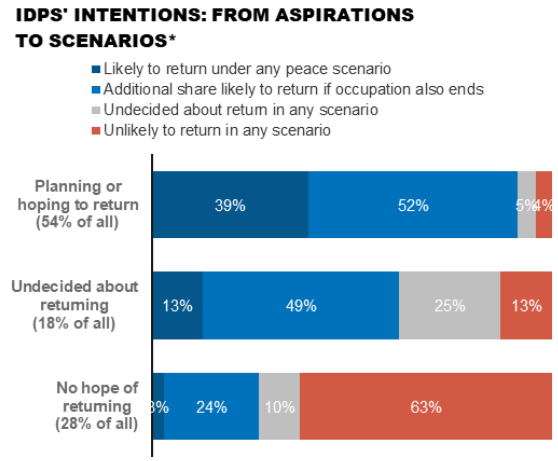


How do IDPs return intentions vary under different hypothetical future scenarios?

Survey results indicate that the nature of how the war ends, and in particular the impact on Ukraine's territorial integrity, strongly affects IDPs' likelihood of return. Under a partial ceasefire scenario, only a minority report that they would be likely to return (15 per cent, combining "definitely yes" and "probably yes"). This share increases by 10 per cent under a scenario in which the war ends but temporarily occupied territories remain outside Ukraine's control (25 per cent) but rises to a majority of IDPs under a scenario involving the end of the war and restoration of Ukraine's territorial control (68 per cent).[6]

Across the three scenarios, the proportion of IDPs undecided about return remains relatively stable, ranging between 10 and 13 per cent. Under both the partial ceasefire scenario and the scenario involving the end of the war without restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories, around one-fifth of IDPs report that they would "probably not" return, suggesting some openness to return under improved conditions. This share declines to 10 per cent under the scenario involving the end of the war together with restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, where only 12 per cent indicate that they would "definitively not" return. This indicates that territorial restoration would significantly increase the likelihood of return, although a share of 22 per cent IDPs would remain unlikely to return even under this scenario.





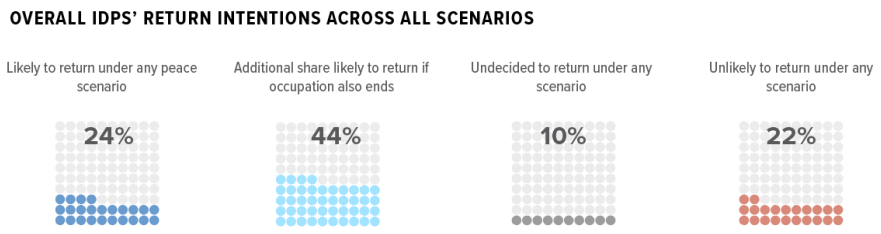
** Total likelihood of return if war and occupation end equals the sum of dark and light blue segments.*

[6] The 2% of IDPs who are already planning to return in the next 12 months are included as likely to return in all the scenarios.

Scenario-based intentions help to assess how return intentions evolve when IDPs move from individually perceived and often uncertain future expectations to a set of standardized hypothetical scenarios.

- **Among those who currently hope or plan to return, the large majority would be likely to return if there is an end to the war with full territorial integrity** (91 per cent, although only 39 per cent would be likely to return if the war ends but territorial occupation continues).
- **More than half of those currently undecided would also become likely to return if the war and the occupation end** (62 per cent, but only 13 per cent if occupation continues), although one quarter would remain uncertain and 13 per cent unlikely to return.
- **Even among IDPs who currently report no hope to return, more than a quarter would consider returning if the occupation ends** (27 per cent, but only 3 per cent if occupation continues); however, 63 per cent of them would be unlikely to return irrespective of the war outcomes.

Taken together, these results make it possible to distinguish four broad categories of return intentions, based on how IDPs' responses evolve across the different hypothetical scenarios:

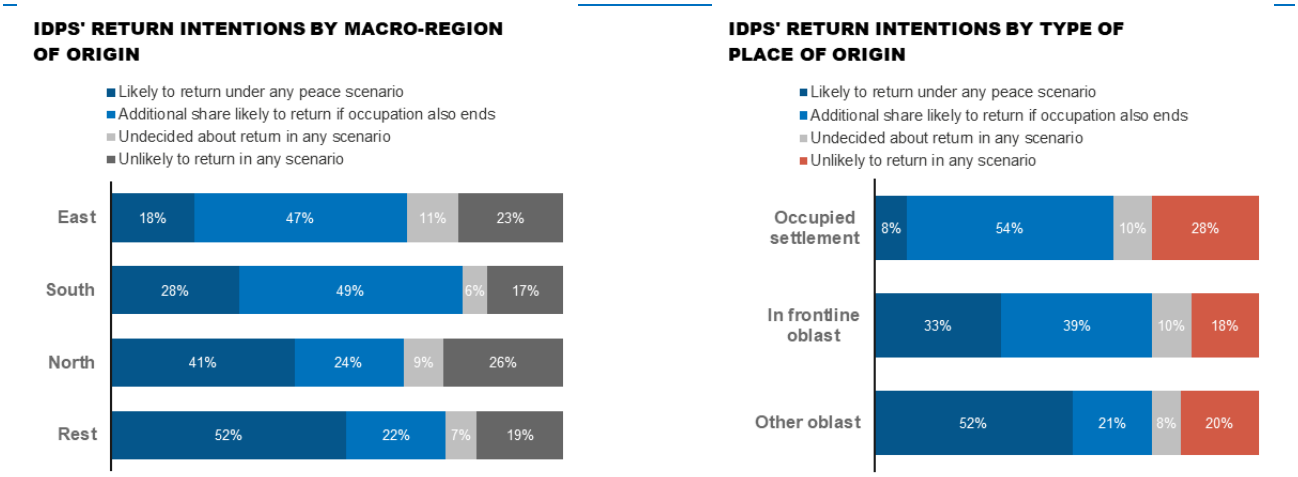


How are return intentions associated with IDPs' profiles, including place of origin?

Previous intention survey reports have highlighted how return intentions among IDPs are shaped by a combination of geographic, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics. An analysis of IDPs' profiles according to their return intentions under the hypothetical scenarios presented in this latest survey round, combined with multivariate regression analysis (see **Annex II**), indicates that the strongest predictors of return intentions are: (1) place of origin and the situation in the area of origin, and (2) the strength of family and property ties with their place of origin. Differences across (3) demographic characteristics and (4) the degree of socio-economic inclusion in areas of displacement also show some correlations with variations in return intentions among IDPs but weaker than location and property/family ties.

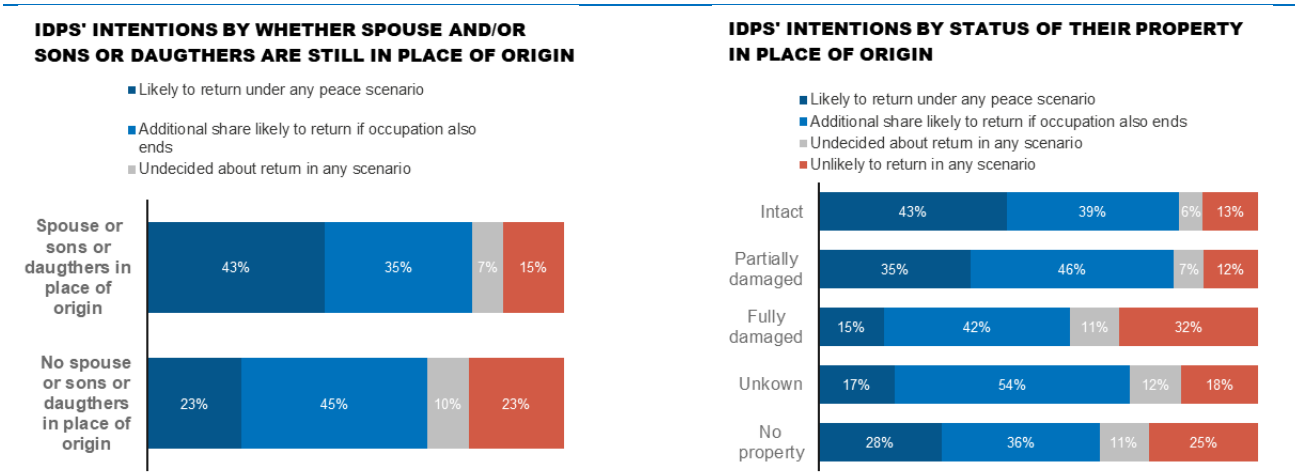
As shown in the previous section, IDPs' likelihood of return depends strongly on Ukraine's territorial integrity, **making place of origin and its situation among the strongest correlates of return intentions**. IDPs originating from areas currently under occupation (42 per cent of all IDPs) report the lowest likelihood of return under a scenario involving the end of the war without restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories (only 8 per cent), but the likelihood of return significantly increases under a scenario involving restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity (54 per cent). However, even in the scenario where both the war and the occupation end, IDPs from temporarily occupied territories show the lowest return intentions compared to others (10 percentage points lower).

Among IDPs from non-occupied but frontline oblasts (50 per cent of all IDPs), territorial outcomes also influence return intentions even though in a lower magnitude: 33 per cent of them would be likely to return if the war ends but occupation continues, a share that more than doubles in a scenario with full territorial restoration (72 per cent). IDPs originating from non-occupied and non-frontline Oblasts (only 8 per cent of all the sample) indicate higher likelihood of return across all scenarios, with over half of them being likely to return if the war ended, even if occupation continues, and around one-fifth more if the latter also ends.



The strength of IDPs' ties with their places of origin is also associated with return intentions, particularly the status of their property. IDPs whose dwelling in place of origin is still intact (19 per cent of all IDPs) or only partially damaged (11 per cent of all IDPs) report comparatively higher likelihoods of return under a scenario involving the end of the war without territorial restoration. By contrast, IDPs with fully damaged dwellings (38 per cent of all IDPs) are more likely to report low likelihoods of return across all scenarios. IDPs who are unaware about the status of their property (22 per cent, more frequently among those originating from occupied areas) also show a low likelihood of return under a scenario involving continued occupation, but among the highest likelihoods under a scenario involving restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

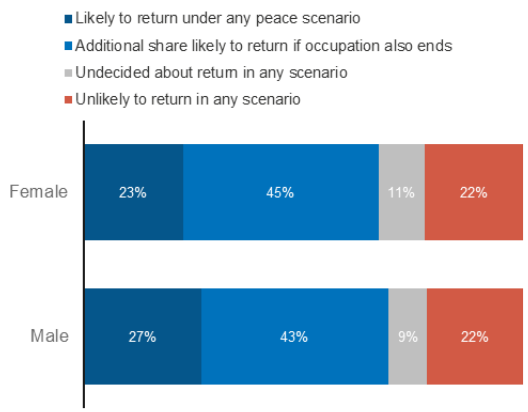
Of note is that IDPs who report not owning property still indicate a desire to return under any peace scenario (28 per cent) or with an end to occupation (an additional 36 per cent) indicating that **IDPs' ties with their areas and communities of origin are not merely linked to property ownership**. Similarly, having a spouse and/or sons/daughters still in their place of origin (8 per cent of all IDPs) is associated with a consistently higher likelihood of return across all scenarios.



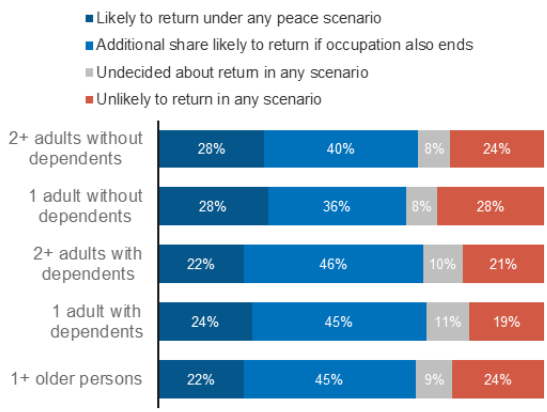
Difference in IDPs' demographic characteristics—such as age, gender and household composition— also translate into some variation in return intention patterns. Female respondents report slightly lower likelihood of return under a scenario where the war ends but occupation continues, but they are also slightly more likely to return than males if occupation also ends. Households comprised exclusively of older persons or those with dependents (together representing around 80 per cent of all IDPs) show comparatively lower likelihoods of return under a peace scenario with continued occupation (around 4 to 6 percentage points lower than households composed of working-age adults without dependents), but they show the

highest likelihood of return in a scenario involving restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories (5 to 10 percentage points more than households composed of working-age adults without dependents).

IDPS' INTENTIONS BY GENDER



IDPS' INTENTIONS BY HH PROFILE

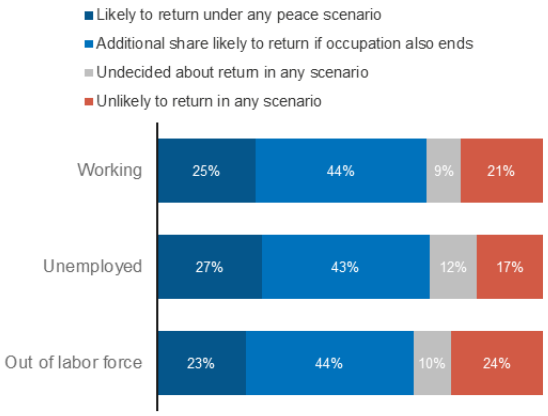


Lastly, differences in the degree of socio-economic inclusion in areas of displacement, as reflected by proxy indicators such as labour market participation and ability to meet basic needs, are also partly associated with different return intentions.

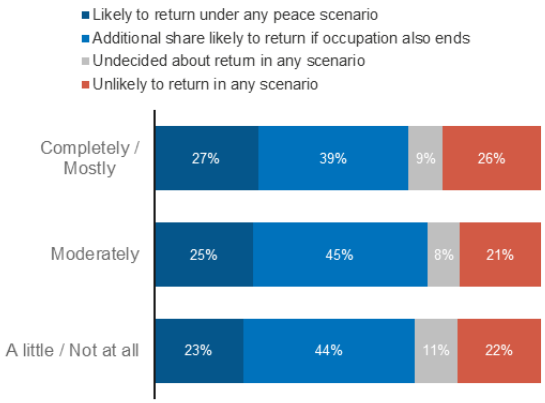
IDPs reported that their primary barrier to local integration is financial. Access to government assistance, employment, or other sources of income were reported as the main challenge by 56 per cent of IDPs. The second most reported challenge was access to improved adequate and stable housing, reported by 40 per cent of IDPs.

IDPs who cannot cover most of their basic needs are comparatively more likely to report intentions to return in a scenario where both the war and occupation end. This may indicate that some IDPs see return as a possible pathway to stability because they are struggling to meet basic needs in displacement. Addressing this gap both in areas of displacement and return are necessary to meet the needs of IDPs.

IDPS' INTENTIONS BY CURRENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



IDPS' INTENTIONS BY ABILITY TO COVER BASIC NEEDS



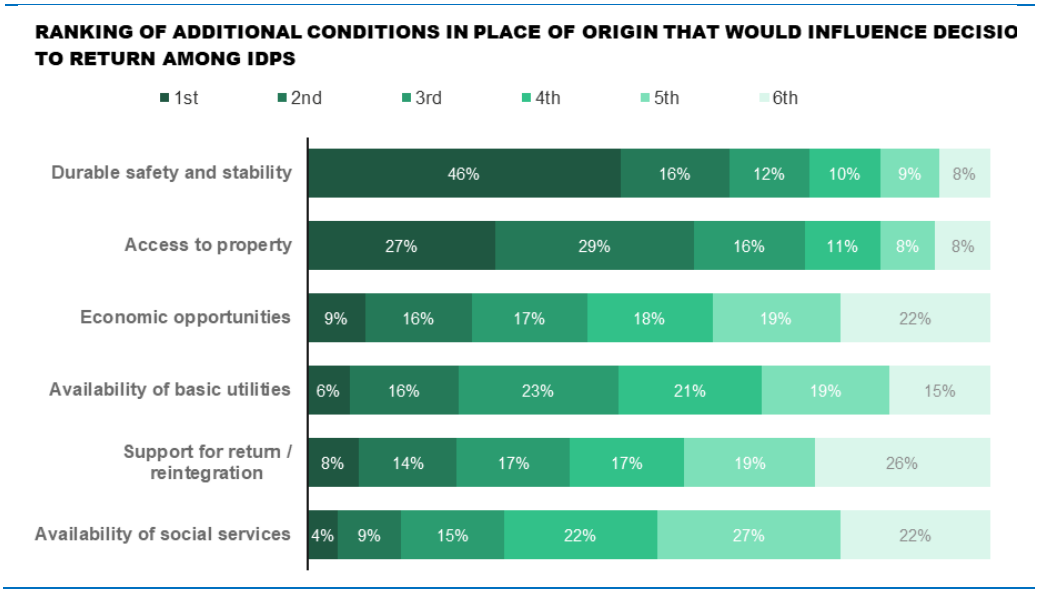
Taken together, the analysis suggests the emergence of broad profiles associated with different return intention patterns across scenarios:

- IDPs who are **more likely to report return intentions under any peace scenario** are more frequently younger males, originating from non-occupied territories, with stronger family and property ties to places of origin, and comparatively lower levels of socio-economic inclusion in areas of displacement. In a peace scenario with full territorial restoration, IDPs more likely to return share the same characteristics in addition to originating from the temporarily occupied territories. IDPs in this group are also more frequently single-carer households.
- IDPs **less likely to report return intentions irrespective of the war outcomes** are more frequently households without dependents or nuclear families, with weaker family and property ties to place of origin and stronger socio-economic inclusion in areas of displacement.
- Approximately 10 per cent of IDPs report being **undecided about return in any scenario**. Notably, these IDPs show little variation by gender, age, property ownership, or presence of relatives in areas of origin.

What are the enabling factors that can influence IDPs' return decisions?

While the end of the war and of temporary occupation remain the primary determinants of IDPs' return intentions, a range of additional conditions in places of origin are also likely to shape their actual return decisions. To better understand these factors, respondents were asked to rank six potential enablers according to their importance for return decision-making.

Expectations regarding future safety and stability and access to property and housing conditions are the main enablers for return for the majority of IDPs, with 62 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively, selecting these among their first or second most important factors. Access to economic opportunities, availability of basic and social services and access to support for return and reintegration remain also important, but with lower priority in average.



While expectations regarding future safety and stability remain central across most IDP profiles, **the relative importance of other enablers differs according to demographic characteristics, place of origin and socio-economic situation**.

Access to property and housing conditions is ranked significantly higher among IDPs whose property in place of origin is damaged or with unknown status, those originating from currently occupied areas, and older IDPs. By contrast, access to

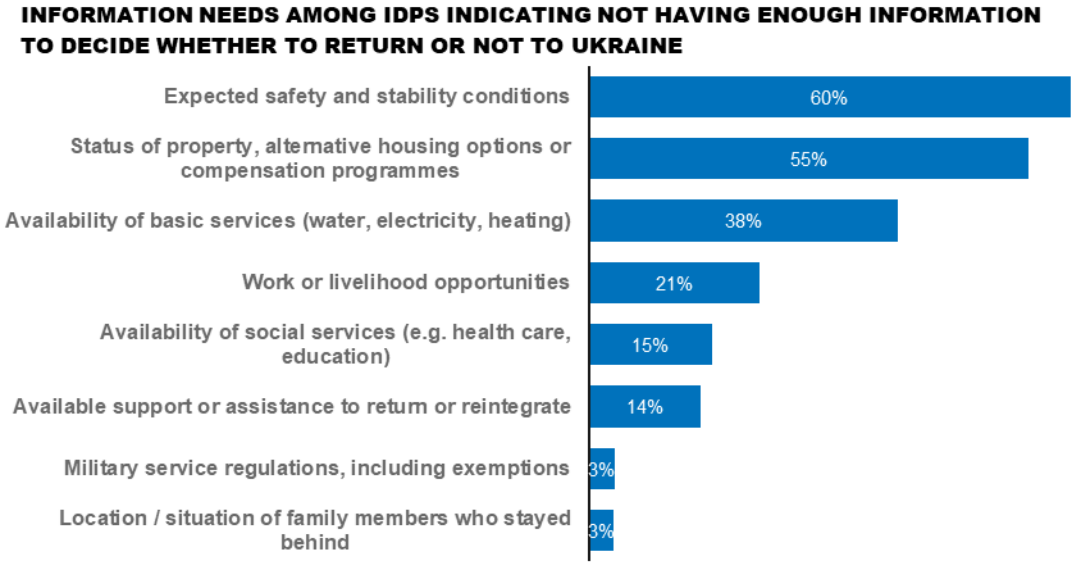
economic opportunities is ranked particularly highly among younger IDPs, those originating from non-occupied and non-frontline oblasts, those without a property in place of origin, and those currently working or looking for work in areas of displacement—groups that also tend to report comparatively lower likelihoods of return under the hypothetical scenarios, suggesting that employment and livelihood opportunities may be particularly important in making return feasible for these groups.

ADDITIONAL ENABLERS FOR RETURN: CHARACTERISTICS LINKED TO HIGHER RANKING AND SPECIFIC ISSUES MORE FREQUENTLY REPORTED AMONG IDPS

ENABLER	HIGHEST RANKING AMONG: (% selecting it as first or second factor)		SPECIFIC CONDITIONS MORE FREQUENTLY REPORTED:
Durable safety and stability	• Originating from the South or Kyiv city	**69%**	• Internationally supported security arrangements • Area is free from landmines and unexploded ordnance
	• Property is intact or partially damaged	**69%**	
Access to property	• Property with unknown status	**64%**	• Access to own property • Access to repair or compensation mechanism for damaged properties
	• Property is fully damaged	**59%**	
	• Place of origin is occupied	**63%**	
	• Older persons	**61%**	
Economic opportunities	• Place of origin is in non-occupied / non-frontline Oblast	**41%**	• Access to jobs with fair wages that cover basic living expenses • Access to work / business opportunities that match skills and experience
	• Without a property in place of origin	**38%**	
	• Younger adults	**34%**	
	• Currently working or looking for work	**30%**	
	• Undecided or unlikely to return	**30%**	
Basic utilities	• Unlikely to return	**28%**	• Access to electricity • Access to water services
	• Originating from the North	**27%**	
Support and assistance	• Property is fully damaged	**26%**	• Access to material assistance upon return • Access to reintegration programs (e.g. employment, housing, etc.) • Access to reliable information about conditions in area of return
	• Place of origin is occupied	**24%**	
	• Not working currently	**24%**	
	• Older persons	**24%**	
	• Unlikely to return	**24%**	

What are IDPs' information needs when it comes to return decisions?

Nearly half of IDPs report that they do not have sufficient information to decide whether to return to their place of origin, an increase by 15 per cent compared to the previous round. Among those reporting information gaps, needs broadly mirror the importance assigned to return enablers: information on expected safety and stability conditions in areas of origin and the status of property and housing options are the most frequently reported needs, followed by information on availability of basic services and work and business opportunities.



Information needs also vary across IDP profiles:

- **Information on expected safety and stability conditions** is more frequently reported by IDPs originating from non-occupied but frontline oblasts and those more likely to return under any peace scenario.
- As expected, i**nformation on status of property, alternative housing options and available compensation or repair programmes** is much more commonly reported by IDPs whose dwellings are damaged or whose status remains unknown.
- **Information on work and business opportunities** is more commonly reported by males, those originating from non-occupied/non-frontline oblasts and those currently working.

These findings point to the need for localized, regularly updated and accessible information on conditions in areas of origin, including through both digital and offline channels.

Annex I: Sampling methodology

Longitudinal sample

Respondents who participated in previous waves and who had given consent to be re-contacted and were reachable were invited to participate in this round. The invitation was sent using the data collection mode—either phone or web-based—that was used in the last contact. In total, **1,183 longitudinal interviews were completed** (1.048 via phone-based interviews and 135 via web-based surveys).

The longitudinal sample frame was drawn exclusively from the panel of respondents from previous survey waves. This method does not constitute a random sample, as the frame is built upon prior engagement and consent rather than a probabilistic selection from the entire target population of displaced people in Ukraine. Inclusion in the CATI frame was specifically restricted to individuals who had participated in at least in one of the last two rounds and had provided explicit consent to be re-contacted via phone. This purposive sampling approach was designed to ensure continuity for longitudinal analysis, allowing for the tracking of changes over time within this specific cohort of the surveyed population.

Fresh sample

To supplement the longitudinal sub-sample and achieve the target sample sizes for each population group, a "fresh" sample of new respondents was recruited. This fresh sample was sourced through two distinct recruitment channels. The first was through Ipsos's proprietary online panels, which include a significant number of Ukrainians who can be targeted for participation. The second method involved sending direct SMS invitations to a randomly selected sample of Ukrainian mobile subscribers. All participants recruited through these fresh sample sources completed the survey via the web-based (CAWI) mode. The following sections provide a detailed description of the methodology used for each of these recruitment streams.

Online panel sample:

- **Sample universe:** The sampling universe was composed by Ukraine online panels, focusing on panellists satisfying the criteria of being currently residing in Ukraine, and being at least 18 years of age. The online panel from Ukraine is a market research panel composed of 450,000 individuals from that country. It is not based on random sample, so it is not representative for a general population in strictly theoretical terms. However, the panel is big enough and has similar characteristics as the general population, so that it provides good estimates of population attitudes and behaviour. Panellists are generally younger and more urban than the general Ukrainian population. The online panel is subject to a number of quality assurance checks to ensure the quality of the sample.
- **Data collection:** invitations to take part in the survey were sent out to selected participants by email, or on the panel application and Viber bot if these had been installed by panellists. In the case of any difficulties with reaching targets for this wave, SMS reminders were sent or follow-up calls to direct panellists to the online survey. Panellists who were invited to participate in previous waves but did not take part could be invited to the current wave as fresh respondents. In total, **304 online panel interviews were completed**.

SMS sample:

- **Sample universe:** sampling and data collection was conducted via a collaboration with one of the largest Ukrainian mobile providers (Vodafone). The identification of potential IDPs within their subscriber database was established as: (i) subscribers who are over 18 years old, (ii) who as of 01.02.22, lived in the one of settlements of Ukraine from specified oblasts (only Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Luhanska, Zaporizka, Kyiv City, Chernihivska, Kyivska, Sumska, Zhytomyrska, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Odeska oblasts) and (iii) who as of the sampling date, changed the settlement to another (can be any settlement from any region).

- **Data collection:** Vodafone draw random samples of users from the sampling universe identified, with several small samples (batches) drawn in order to monitor variations in response rates. Vodafone then shared an SMS invitation to all selected users in each batch, containing the link to the online survey and requested the user's participation in the research. In total **232,400 invitations** via SMS were sent for IDPs, with **2,377 completed surveys** at the end, equivalent to a response rate of 1.16%.

Combined sample and weighting

FINAL SAMPLE: SUMMARY TABLE

Methodology	Completed Interviews
Longitudinal sample	1,183
Online panel sample	304
SMS sample	2,377
Total interviews	**3,864**
Number of household members covered	***10,814***
% of female respondents	*68%*

Responses from all data collection modes and sampling sources were combined into a joint dataset with **3,864 complete interviews**. To correct for any biases in the realization rates across the strata, post-stratification weighting of the collected responses was performed. The weighting targets were defined on the basis of various reference statistics, indicated for all weighting criteria below. The weighting was carried out using a raking algorithm, fitting the weighted sample distribution marginals to the data obtained from the respective reference sources. The criteria were:

- **Distribution by region of current residence:** respondents were grouped depending on macro-region of residence (Centre, North, West, East, South, Kyiv city). The source for population targets was IOM's General Population Survey Round 23.
- **Distribution by region of origin:** respondents were grouped depending on macro-region of origin (East, South, Kyiv city, Else). The source for population targets was IOM's General Population Survey Round 23.
- **Distribution by age & sex of respondents:** six categories were used (18-39, 40-59 and 65+ for each of male and female respondents). The source for population targets was IOM's General Population Survey Round 23.
- **Length of displacement:** two categories were used (less than 2 years, 2 years or more). The source for population targets was the distribution of SMS subsample of the survey (to adjust for the distortions stemming from the longitudinal sample).

The design effect from the weighting is 1.320 and the overall effective sample size in this group is 2,927.

Annex II: Regression methodology

Models' specification

To assess how different geographic, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics of IDPs in Ukraine may impact their return intentions under the scenarios established, different multivariate regression analyses were run, including a multinomial regression and complementary binomial logistics regressions.

- **Multinomial logistic regression:** the dependent variable were the four broad categories of return intentions based on the combined responses regarding likelihood of return under different hypothetical scenarios: (1) likely to return under any peace scenario, (2) likely to return if occupation also ends, (3) undecided to return under any scenario, (4) unlikely to return under any scenario. The last category was used as reference.
- **Binomial logistic regressions:** four different logistic regressions were run with a binomial dependent variable: (1) likely to return under any peace scenario vs. all other categories; (2) Likely to return if both war and occupation end vs. likely to return under any peace scenario; (3) undecided to return vs. likely to return under any scenario; (4) unlikely to return vs. likely to return under any scenario.
- **Fixed effects:** considering the important difference in return intentions according to the situation of IDPs' place of origin observed during the descriptive analysis, all regressions were run with fixed effects with a variable taking three possible categories: (i) place of origin is temporarily occupied, (ii) place of origin is not occupied but in frontline oblast and (iii) place of origin is non-occupied/non-frontline oblast.
- **Independent variables:** nine different variables were used as predictors of return intentions, including variables related to the strength of ties with place of origin (status of property and whether spouse and/or children are still there), demographic characteristics (gender of respondent, age group of the respondent and whether household has a vulnerable profile -only older persons or single-carers), displacement patterns (period of displacement and type of displacement), and those related to socio-economic situation in the area of displacement (current economic activity of respondent and ability to cover basic needs). All variables were analyzed as categorical variables, usually with two or maximum three categories.

Parameter estimates

All regressions produced the coefficient for each of the predictors considered in the model, as well as its standard error, z-scores, p-value, and relative risk ratios (for multinomial) or odd ratios (for binomial), as well as its 95 per cent confidence interval. The graphs below show the estimated relative risk ratios of the multinomial regression for each of the drivers or predictors considered and its 95 per cent confidence interval.

A relative risk ratio compares the likelihood of being in one return-intention category rather than the reference (unlikely to return), for each specific group of the predictor compared with its reference group, while holding the other variables in the model constant. A value of 1 means there is no difference between the specific group and its reference. A value above 1 means the group is more likely to be in that return-intention category rather than the reference category. A value below 1 means the group is less likely to be in that return-intention category rather than the reference category. For example, if the relative risk ratio for "females" is 1.50 for the outcome "likely to return if the war ends", this means that women are estimated to be 50 per cent more likely than men to fall into that return category rather than the reference outcome category (unlikely to return), all else equal. If the relative risk ratio is 0.70, this means the group is estimated to be 30 per cent less likely to fall into that return category rather than the reference outcome category, all else equal.

These results should be interpreted as associations, not as evidence that one characteristic directly causes a specific return intention. The estimates show how return intentions differ across groups after accounting for the other variables included in the model.

DRIVERS OF RETURN INTENTIONS: RELATIVE RISK RATIOS FROM MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS

Outcome variable	Independent variable	Relative risk Ratio	ci low	ci high	p-value
Likely to return if war ends *(reference = unlikely to return)*	Frontline oblast (ref. = occupied)	4.83	3.62	6.44	-
	Other oblast (ref.. = occupied)	5.36	2.85	10.09	0.00
	Female	0.71	0.54	0.94	0.02
	18-34 years (ref. = 35-59)	1.53	1.05	2.22	0.03
	Intact property (ref. = no property)	0.57	0.36	0.91	0.02
	Fully-damaged property (ref. = no property)	2.97	1.83	4.81	0.00
	Intra-oblast displacement (ref. = inter-region)	1.45	1.03	2.04	0.03
	Able to cover most basic needs	0.57	0.40	0.81	0.00
Likely to return if both war and occupation ends *(reference = unlikely to return)*	Other oblast (ref.. = occupied)	0.45	0.24	0.85	0.01
	Single-carer (ref. = other HH type)	1.32	1.02	1.71	0.03
	Intact property (ref. = no property)	2.04	1.34	3.11	0.00
	Unknown status o property (ref. = no property)	1.68	1.11	2.55	0.01
	Able to cover most basic needs	0.68	0.51	0.90	0.01
Undecided about return *(reference = unlikely to return)*	Frontline oblast (ref. = occupied)	1.45	1.06	1.99	0.02
	60+ years (ref. = 35-59)	0.48	0.25	0.93	0.03
	Single-carer (ref. = other HH type)	1.48	1.00	2.21	0.05
	Able to cover most basic needs	0.70	0.46	1.07	0.10

Notes: Only predictors with p-value < 0.1 shown. Line lengths represent the 95% confidence interval.

Vira and Mykola, both 75 years old, are pensioners and live in Shevchenkove village in Mykolaiv region in southern Ukraine. Their village was severely impacted by shelling and hostilities from the very beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022. Through UNHCR's local NGO partner Caritas, they were enrolled in the cash-for-repair programme, which allowed them to buy materials and pay for professionals to help with the work. The couple received additional repairs ahead of winter 2024, as Caritas helped with some insulation measures, making the house warmer and reducing the amount of firewood needed to warm it up. "It is thanks to the support we received that we are even able to now be back in our own home and stay warm. We are very happy about this, but now I just want the war to end," says Vira. © UNHCR/Elisabeth Arnsdorf Haslund