

Ukrainians and Third-Country Nationals Crossing into Ukraine from Abroad



Regional Analysis

01 January - 31 March 2023

Data collected in Hungary, Latvia, Poland,
Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

This publication was made possible through the support provided by Council of Europe Development Bank, U.S Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), the German Federal Foreign Office, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Publisher

International Organization for Migration
Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Dampfschiffstrasse 4/10-11, 1030 Vienna, Austria
+43 1 581 22 22
Website: <https://rovienna.iom.int/>
Contact: ROViennaDataResearch-Newsletter@iom.int

This report was issued without formal editing by IOM.

Cover photo: Refugees from Ukraine at a border point between Russian Federation and Latvia, © IOM 2023

Citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM), June 2023. DTM Europe “Ukrainians and Third-Country Nationals Crossing into Ukraine from Abroad - Regional Analysis ” Vienna: IOM.

For more information on terms and conditions of DTM reports and information products, please refer to: <https://dtm.iom.int/terms-and-conditions>

Release date: 04 July 2023

© IOM 2023



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDeriv 3.0 IGO License (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO).*

For further specifications please see the Copyright and Terms of Use.

This publication should not be used, published or redistributed for purposes primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation, with the exception of educational purposes, e.g. to be included in textbooks. Permissions: Requests for commercial use or further rights and licensing should be submitted to publications@iom.int.

* <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>

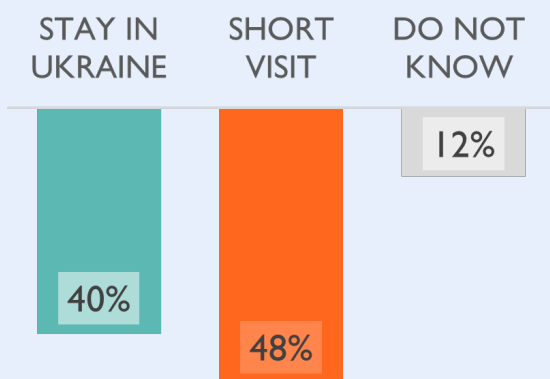
TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY FINDINGS	4
1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	6
3. TIME OUTSIDE UKRAINE & GROUP COMPOSITION	8
Main country of stay while abroad	8
Group composition & travel mode	8
Entries & exits	9
4. INTENTIONS AND REASONS TO CROSS INTO UKRAINE	9
Short visit or stay in Ukraine	9
Reasons to stay	9
Reasons for a short visit	9
5. OBLAST (REGION) OF ORIGIN & DESTINATION	10
6. NEEDS & ASSISTANCE	11
Top needs	11
Received assistance	12
7. DISCRIMINATION	12
8. RETURNEES TO UKRAINE FROM ABROAD	12
9. TCNs CROSSING INTO UKRAINE	13
10. UKRAINIANS CROSSING INTO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION	14
11. METHODOLOGY	14
Country-level implementation and limitations	14
References	15

Data collection period: January-March 2023

KEY FINDINGS

- The profiles and needs expressed by Ukrainians crossing back from neighbouring countries and surveyed between January and March 2023 mostly match with those of the actual returnees from abroad surveyed in Ukraine in January 2023 (IOM Ukraine, 2023b).
- 61% of Ukrainians interviewed stayed in one of the neighbouring countries, for an average period of 6 months before crossing back. The rest stayed mainly in Germany, Czechia, and the UK.
- Half of the respondents have travelled in and out of Ukraine more than once since February 2022. About 28 per cent of Ukrainians surveyed were already abroad in February 2022.
- Main reason to move is the desire to reunite with family members, both in case of returns and of short visits. One fourth of those doing a short visit wanted to obtain or renew identity documents (biometric passport, diplomas, licenses), one fifth of them were going to the doctor in Ukraine (visits with paediatricians, dentists and gynaecologists were mentioned).
- Around 15 per cent of the total and 58 per cent of those travelling in a group, were with at least one child (<18 years old) when crossing back. This is far less than what reported by respondents crossing back and surveyed in the same locations during 2022 (IOM Europe, 2023).
- Top 3 needs: financial support (21%), health support (17%), medicines (12%). Almost half (49%) of respondents reported no needs.
- The survey captured movements of Ukrainians from Latvia to the Russian Federation to reach areas that are not under Ukraine's government control.
- Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) were crossing back to resume studies/work in regions non-affected by the war.



- 48% of the surveyed went to Ukraine for short visit only, 40% intended to remain, 12% were not sure of their intentions. Men more frequently reported the intention to stay (55%) than women (38%).

1. INTRODUCTION

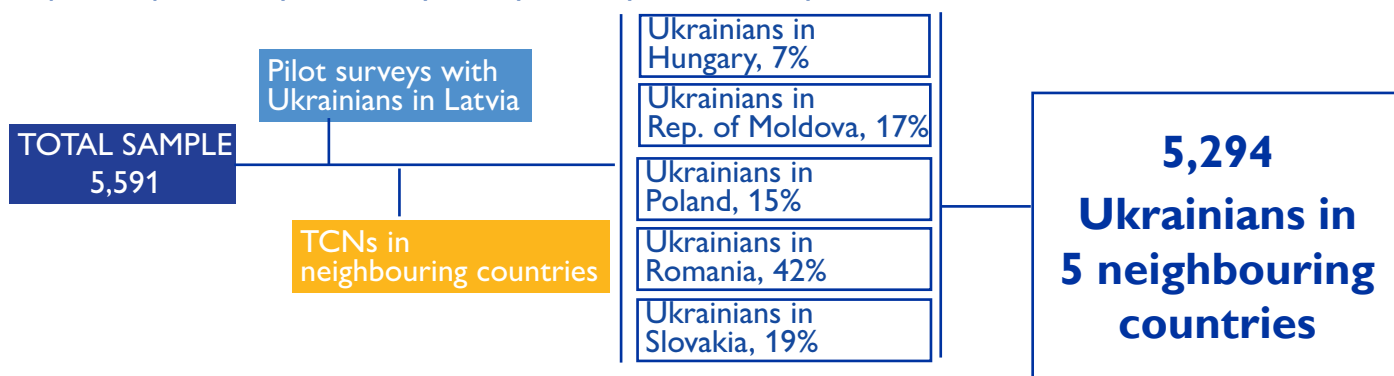
As of 23 January 2023, 5.4 million persons were internally displaced in Ukraine ([IOM Ukraine, 2023a](#)). Moreover, 5.9 million refugees were recorded across Europe as of early June 2023 and almost 22 million of border crossings from Ukraine into neighbouring countries were reported since February 2022 ([UNHCR](#)). At the same time, around 5.5 million persons were estimated to be returnees from other locations within Ukraine and from abroad ([IOM Ukraine, 2023b](#)) and 2.8 million of border crossings from neighbouring countries to Ukraine were registered in the first quarter of 2023 by Ukraine’s border authorities.

This report is based on 5,591 valid surveys collected by DTM between January and March 2023 with adult individuals crossing into Ukraine. About 95 per cent of them were Ukrainians, and 5 per cent Third-Country Nationals (TCNs).

Since April 2022, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) regularly collects individual surveys in countries neighbouring to Ukraine with persons who cross back with the aim to improve the understanding of their profiles, displacement patterns, intentions and needs.

Sections 2 to 7 focuses on the 5,264 surveys with Ukrainian nationals met at the border areas of neighbouring countries to Ukraine: Hungary (380), Poland (792), Romania (2,217), Republic of Moldova (894), and Slovakia (981). Results are weighted for the number of border crossings into Ukraine from each country between January and March 2023. Evidence on persons interviewed while crossing back is complemented with data from surveys with returnees from abroad collected by DTM in Ukraine in **Section 8**.¹ The report also presents summary evidence from surveys collected with Ukrainian nationals met in Latvia (**Section 9**) while crossing to the Russian Federation with the aim to reach non-controlled-government areas of Ukraine. Additionally, it contains a section dedicated to TCNs crossing back to Ukraine based on 297 interviews (**Section 10**).²

Sample composition by nationality and by country of the survey



1 For a more comprehensive discussion on returns from abroad and from within the country, please check the DTM Ukraine Return Report ([January 2023](#)) and the Factsheet Conditions of Return Assessment ([February 2023](#)) corresponding to the data collection period for the present report (Jan-Mar 2023).

2 Movements back to Ukraine can be pendular, and do not necessarily indicate sustainable intentions to return as the situation across the country remains highly volatile and unpredictable. Hence, individuals surveyed while crossing into Ukraine from neighbouring countries are not necessarily returnees. The [IOM glossary](#) defines return as “the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure”, which can take place within a country’s territorial borders, or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin.

2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

91% women **9%** men

55% travel alone

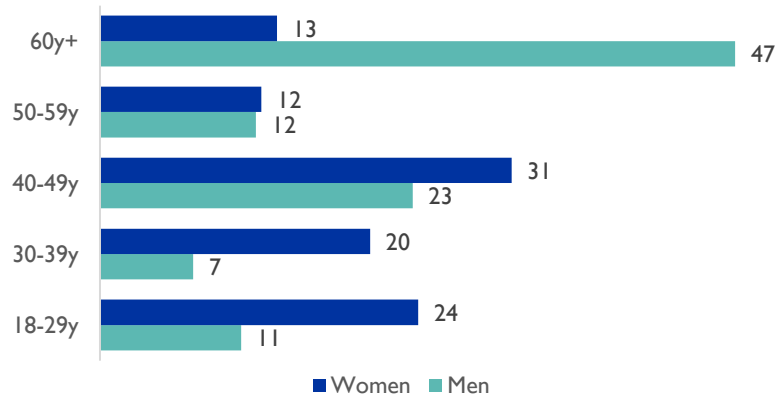
45% travel in group

88% of those in groups are with family members

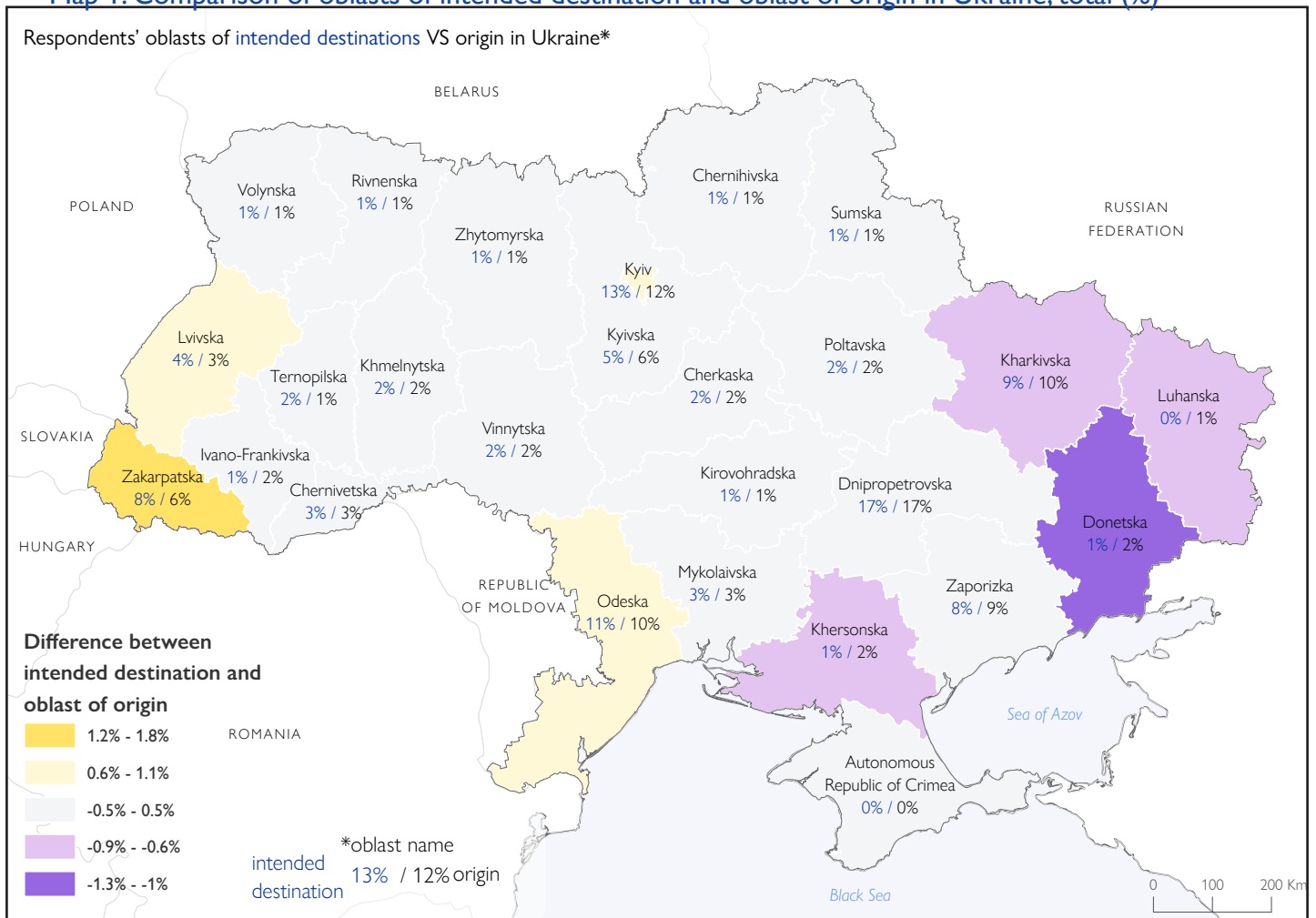
56% travel with at least one child

61% spent most time since displacement in the country of survey

AGE DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER (%)

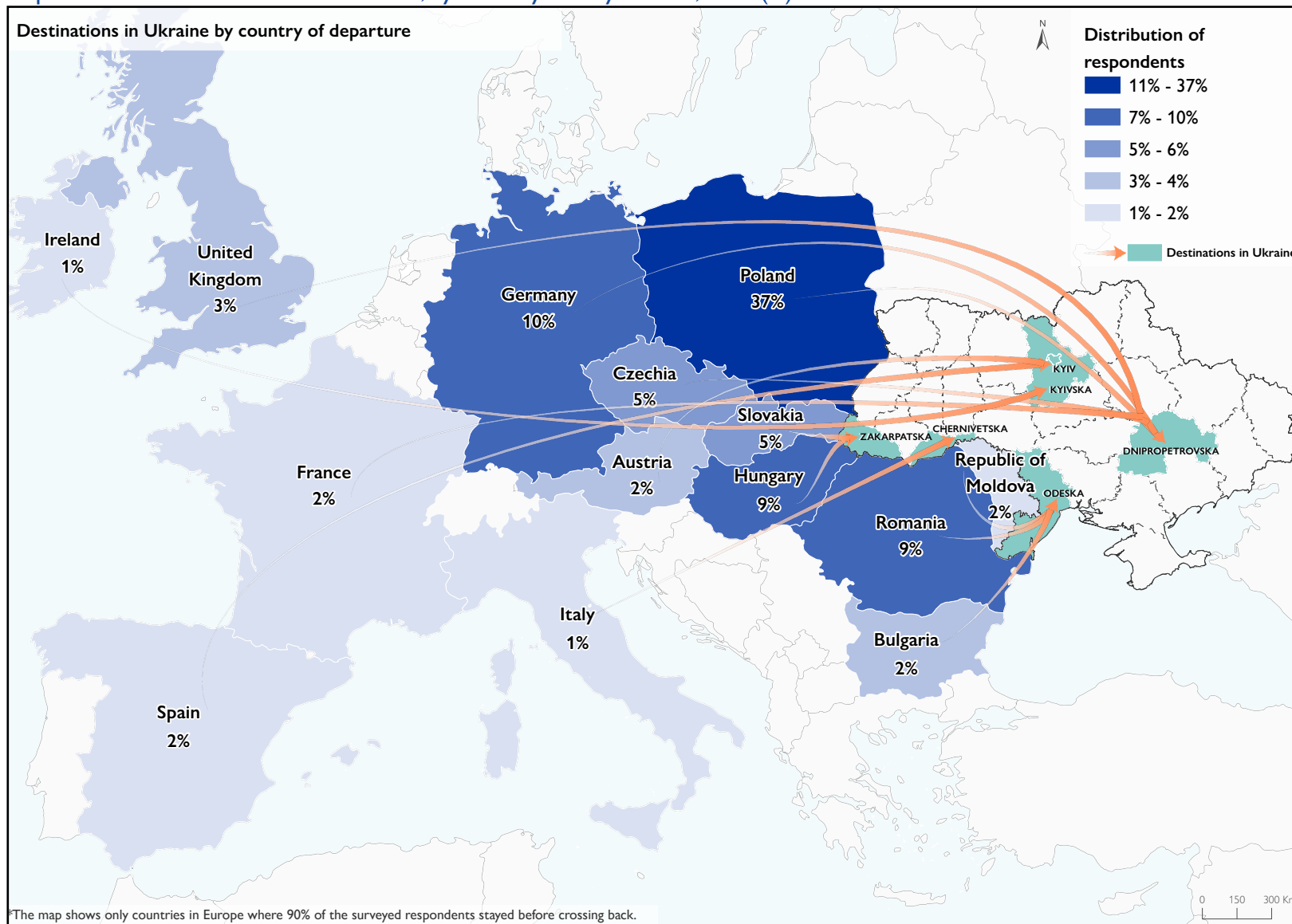


Map 1: Comparison of oblasts of intended destination and oblast of origin in Ukraine, total (%)



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Map 2: Oblasts of destination in Ukraine, by country of stay abroad, total (%).



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

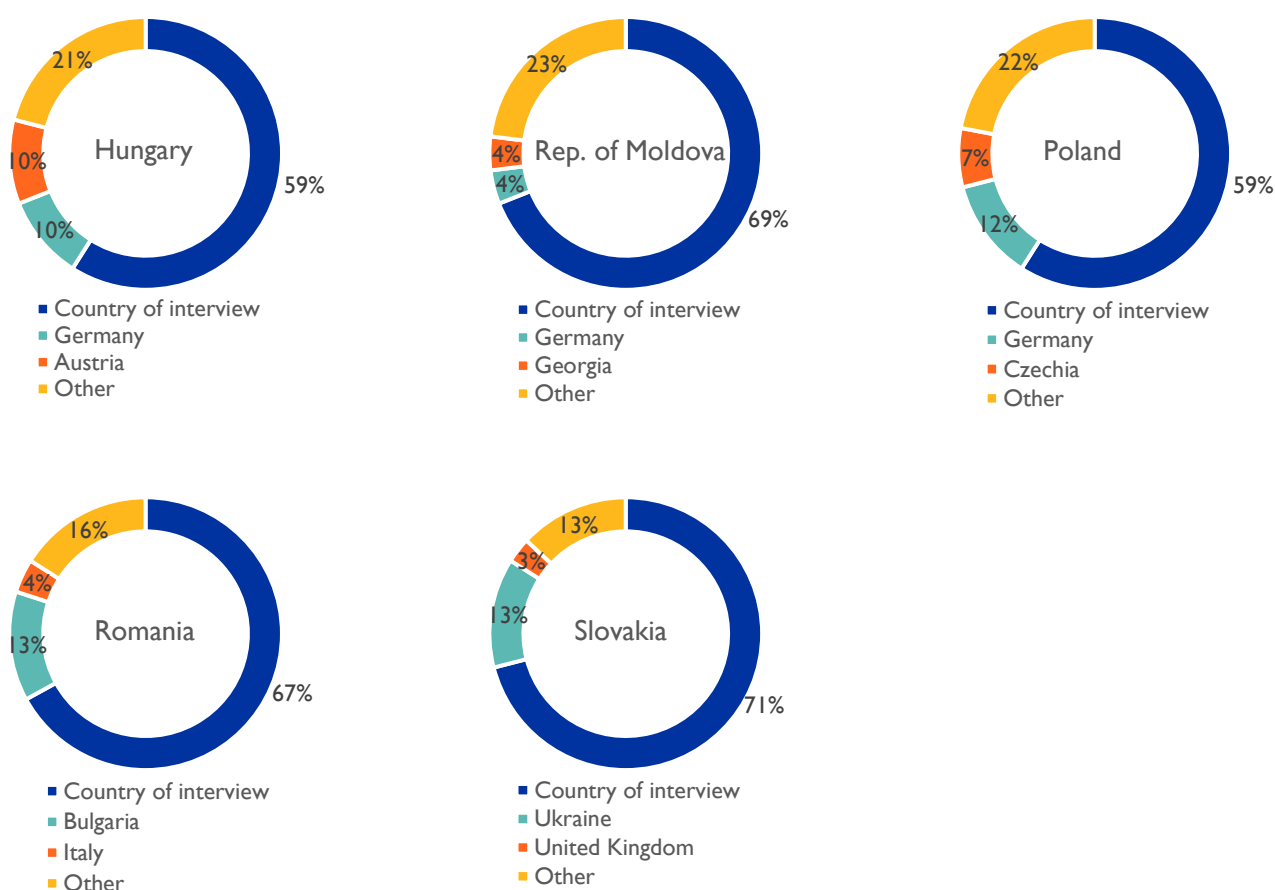
3. TIME OUTSIDE UKRAINE AND GROUP COMPOSITION

Main countries of stay while abroad

The average time of displacement abroad among Ukrainian respondents is of 237 days on average (about 8 months), while 61 per cent spent approximately 6 months in one of the five neighbouring country where they were surveyed.

The rest mainly travelled to Germany (10%), Czechia (5%), and the United Kingdom (3%). More than the half of the sample (53%) left Ukraine in the first half of 2022 – in the initial months that followed the military invasion.

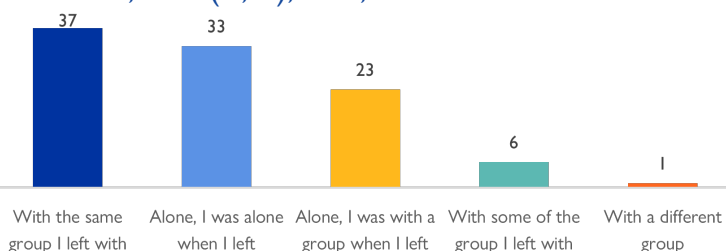
Figure 1: Main country of stay while outside Ukraine, by country of survey (%), N=5,294



Group composition & travel mode

About 55 per cent of the respondents said they were travelling alone, while 45 per cent were moving with a group. Men were slightly more likely to be travelling by themselves (56% vs 54%). The share of those travelling alone was higher in Slovakia (63%), Hungary (59%), and much lower in Romania (33%).

Fig. 2: Group composition when crossing into Ukraine, total (%), N=5,294



Overall, almost all Ukrainian respondents travelling in a group were with family members (93%) and other relatives (5%). Groups travelling together were also including friends and neighbours (6%) and colleagues (2%).

Entries & exits

Less than one quarter (23%) of Ukrainian respondents had crossed into Ukraine only once since the beginning of the war. Half had crossed already twice (23%) or

Around 15 per cent of the total and 58 per cent of those travelling in a group, were with at least one child (<18 years old) when crossing back. This is far less than what reported by respondents crossing back and surveyed in the same locations during 2022 ([IOM Europe, 2023](#)).

more (26%) since February 2022. About 28 per cent of those surveyed while entering Ukraine were already abroad in February 2022 when the war started.

4. INTENTIONS AND REASONS TO CROSS INTO UKRAINE

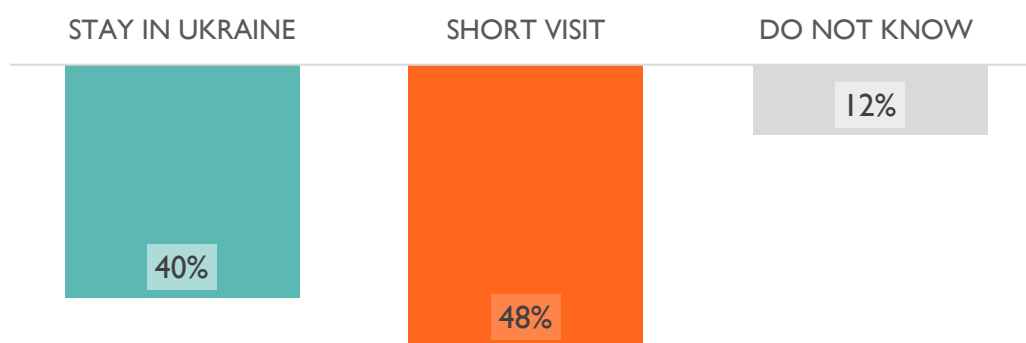
Short visit or stay in Ukraine

Overall, 40 per cent of Ukrainian respondents intended to stay in Ukraine, while 48 per cent said they would only do a short visit. Another 12 per cent were unsure on the length of their visit.

Women were more likely to report intention to pay a short visit (49%) than to remain in Ukraine (38%), while men intended to stay in Ukraine more than to do a short visit (55% versus 38%).

Most respondents planned to stay at their own houses in Ukraine (84% overall), while others reported to be going at their relatives' place (7%), or that they would find another solution (6%). The share of those planning to be hosted by relatives is higher among those who go for a short visit (12%) than among those who plan to remain in Ukraine (4%).

Figure 3: Intention to stay or do a short visit, total (% w), N= 5,294



Reasons to stay

Out of all Ukrainian respondents intending to return for the foreseeable future, more than half (51%) said they would stay in Ukraine as they missed their own place of origin and more than a third (34%) that they wanted to reunite with family members.

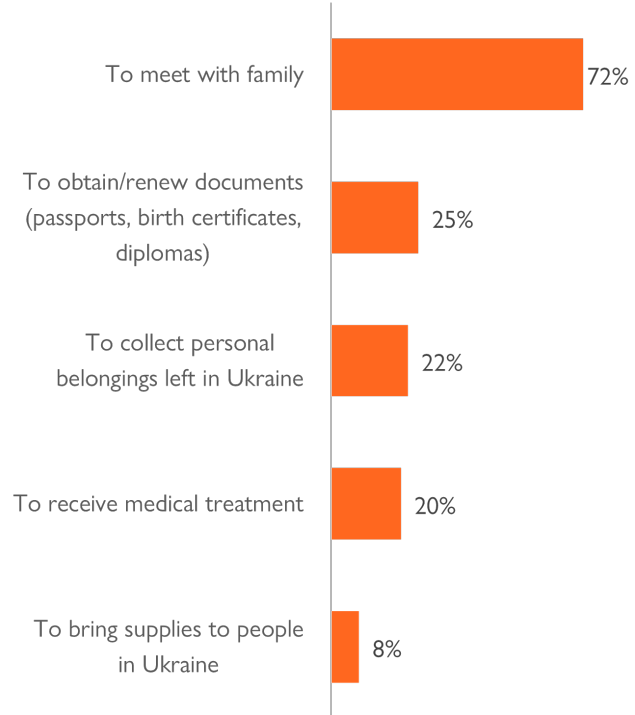
Reasons for a short visit

Amongst Ukrainian respondents crossing for a short visit, the top reason given was to meet family members (72%). Other important reasons to pay a short visit in Ukraine were the need to obtain or renew identity documents (biometric passports, diplomas, licenses), to collect personal belongings, to go to the doctor for a medical examination (paediatricians, dentists and gynaecologists among them), to bring supplies in Ukraine.

Figure 4: Top 5 reasons to stay in Ukraine, total (w, %) (more than one answer possible), N=1,889



Figure 5: Top 5 reasons to do a short visit, total (w, %) (more than one answer possible), N=2,857



5. OBLAST (REGION) OF ORIGIN & DESTINATION

The share of respondents from each region of origin in Ukraine varied widely across the countries where surveys were conducted (see Map 2 at p. 8), but overall more than half (57%) of respondents lived in only 5 regions before being displaced outside Ukraine: Dnipropetrovska (17%), the city of Kyiv (12%), Odeska (10%), Kharkivska (10%), Zaporizka (9%).

Hence, they were more frequently originating from oblasts in the central and western part of Ukraine, which are the least affected by the war. Ukrainians from eastern oblasts, who are a larger number amongst the refugees from Ukraine in Europe (IOM Europe, 2023, IOM Ukraine, 2023b), seem to be less willing or able to return to their place of origin, and hence less represented in the sample of persons crossing into Ukraine.

Eighty-nine per cent intended to reach their oblast of origin, while the remaining 11 per cent stated they were traveling to a different oblast. The share of the latter was higher than the average in Slovakia (22%) and lower in the Republic of Moldova (7%), and Romania (8%).

Among those who were not aiming at their oblast of origin, Zakarpatska (26%), the city of Kyiv (16%) and Lvivska (14%) are the top 3 destinations. 42 per cent stated that their origin oblast was unsafe. Twenty-five per cent were going somewhere else due to their family being displaced there. This was followed by 11 per cent who stated that their home was damaged or destroyed, and another two per cent whose oblast of origin was not under Ukrainian government control.

6. NEEDS AND ASSISTANCE

Top needs

The level of needs reported at crossing back is lower than that reported by those interviewed when leaving Ukraine.

The most frequently mentioned needs were: financial support (21%), health support (17%), medicines (12%), and food supply (9%). Nevertheless, important variations in the type and the frequency of reported needs among Ukrainian respondents were found, when looking at each of the five countries' sub-samples separately. While financial support is the top priority for those in Poland, Republic of Moldova and Slovakia, food supply is most mentioned in Romania and transportation emerges as top priority in Hungary.

49% of respondents did not have any specific need at crossing back

Figure 8: Top 5 reported needs in Rep. of Moldova (%) N= 894 (more than one answer possible)

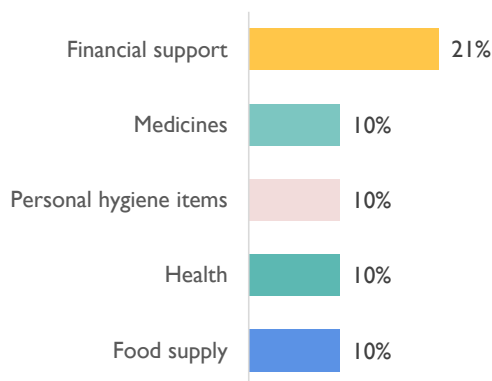


Figure 6: Top 5 reported needs in Hungary (%) N=380 (more than one answer possible)

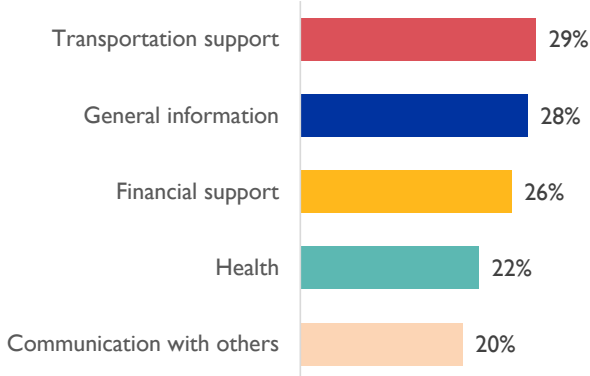


Figure 9: Top 5 reported needs in Romania (%) N=2,217 (more than one answer possible)

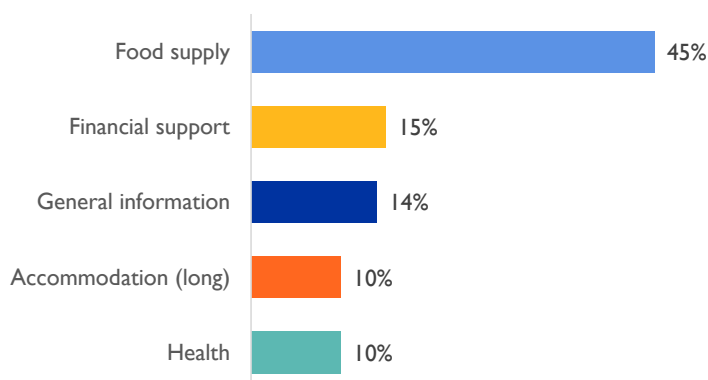


Figure 7: Top 5 reported needs in Poland (%) N=795 (more than one answer possible)

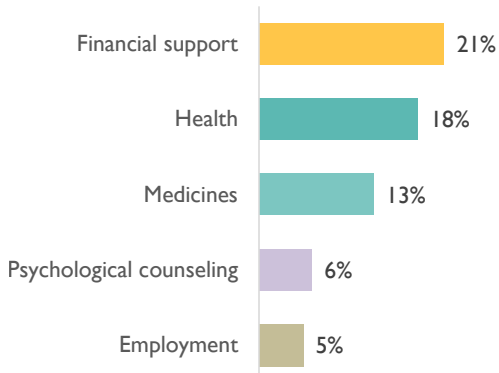
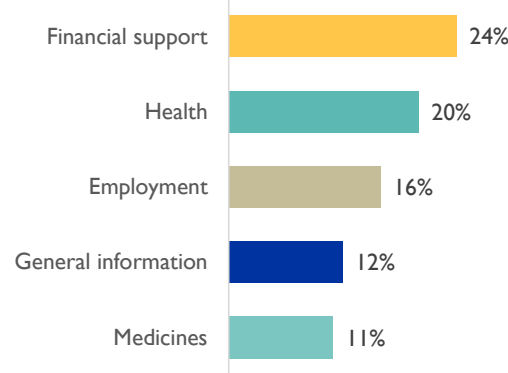


Figure 10: Top 5 reported needs in Slovakia (%) N=981 (more than one answer possible)



Assistance received

About 61 per cent of the Ukrainian respondents said they had received humanitarian assistance while being abroad. The share is higher than the average among those in Hungary (77%) and Romania (69%), close to the average in Poland (61%), and lower than the average in Republic of Moldova (55%) and Slovakia (41%). Also, the women received aid more frequently than the men during the journey (63% versus 46%).

Only a minority have had difficulties in receiving support when they asked for it. This was mentioned by 6 per cent of Ukrainian respondents, while 91 per cent did not report difficulties, and 3 per cent did not know / preferred not to answer. Among the most frequent issues were delays in receiving financial support or social benefits foreseen in the country of displacement, together with queues and congestion of basic health services.

7. DISCRIMINATION

Around 6 per cent of the Ukrainians crossing back to Ukraine said they and/or their family members experienced unfair or unequal treatment based on nationality, ethnicity, or gender since they left their usual place of residence in Ukraine.¹ About one per cent did not know or preferred not to answer, while the majority did not report any such experience (93%).

Experiences of discrimination were virtually not reported by respondents in the Republic of Moldova and Romania (less than 1% each), while were reported by 11 per cent of respondents in Slovakia and almost 7 per cent of respondents in Hungary and Poland.

¹ These involved episodes of harassment and discrimination due to citizenship or language used in public places (i.e., public transport, on the street, in restaurants and shops), or in accessing services provided by national and local authorities (welfare services, education institutions such as schools and universities). Others reported discrimination due their belonging to a specific ethnic group.

8. RETURNEES TO UKRAINE FROM ABROAD

The main profiles and needs expressed by actual returnees from abroad, surveyed within the Round 12 of IOM's General Population Survey (GPS) in Ukraine,¹ match quite substantially with those expressed by Ukrainian respondents crossing from neighbouring countries into Ukraine presented in Section from 2 to 7 of this report.

Among Ukrainian returnees from abroad surveyed while in Ukraine, women represented 89 per cent and men 11 per cent. On average, they spent around 119 days (appr. 4 months) abroad around 119 days since February 2022, and about 132 have passed since they have returned to Ukraine. Eighty-four per cent of returnees reported to be currently living in their own

original apartment/house, while the rest was living in a rented dwelling (13%) or at family member's home (3%), because someone else was there, because it was not safe or to stay together with other family members.

Similarly, to what reported by Ukrainians surveyed while crossing into Ukraine, most actual returnees stayed in EU countries before going back to Ukraine, and almost half of them (46%) in countries neighbouring Ukraine. The main countries of displacement were Poland (38%) and Germany (10%), followed by lower shares of persons who stayed in Italy, Czech Republic, Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Türkiye, Finland, France, the Republic of Moldova (between 9% and 2% each).

¹ In January 2023, as part of GPS Round 2, IOM estimated about 5.7 million returnees in Ukraine: 80 per cent were returnees after internal displacement while the remaining 20 per cent was returning from abroad.

Most reported to be willing to remain (79%), while some were considering the possibility to move again from their area of residence (13%), and others were not sure (7%). All those considering moving again were intending to go abroad.

More than half (52%) of returnees from abroad originated from and returned to the capital city of Kyiv and the regions of Kyivska, Dnipropetrovska, Odeska and Kharkivska.

Main needs reported by returnees in Ukraine are the same as those mentioned by Ukrainian respondents while crossing back: financial support is the top priority mentioned by more than half of them (59%), followed by medicines and health services (21%), and food supply (18%). For more granular data on conditions of return for some selected *hromadas* in Ukraine (please see [IOM Ukraine, 2023c](#)).

9. TCNs CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

Alongside Ukrainian nationals, also TCNs are observed while crossing into Ukraine. Ninety-seven per cent of the total of 297 interviewed have left Ukraine because of the war. Many (42%) spent more than 5 years in Ukraine prior to displacement, with others residing in Ukraine for a period between 2 and 5 years (38%), or 1-2 years (6%).

Most surveys with TCNs were collected in Hungary (83%), but others were also met in Romania (8%), in the Republic of Moldova (6%) and, less so, in Poland and Slovakia (1% each).¹

The top 5 nationalities were: India (63%), Nigeria (9%), United States (4%) Russian Federation (3%) and Georgia (3%). Out of the total – 66 per cent were men while 34 per cent were women. Most TCNs were between 18 and 29 years of age (80%), with a similar age profile for both men and women. Most (88%) intended to reach the same place of habitual residence they had before displacement abroad.

Almost two thirds of TCNs interviewed were going to the oblasts of Odeska (23%), Vinnytska (17%), Ternopil'ska (15%) and Kyiv (10%). Two thirds (66%) intended to remain in Ukraine while only 30 per cent wanted to do a short visit and the remaining 4 per cent was uncertain.

Among the main motivations to cross into Ukraine, there were the improved conditions in the location of habitual residence (42%), the need to resume the study path in Ukraine (19%), the lack of economic resources to remain abroad (14%) and the wish to reunite with family members (5%) who were left behind. Collect belongings (43%), solving issues with documents (30%) and meet family members (17%) were the main reasons for those who intended to do a short visit

¹ This is due, among other things, to the language skills of DTM enumerators deployed in different countries. While most enumerators speak Ukrainian and Russian beside the local language, others use English, Arabic, and other languages that would be needed to interview TCNs.

10. UKRAINIANS CROSSING INTO RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In March 2023, DTM enumerators deployed in Latvia to survey refugees from Ukraine entering from the Russian Federation also observed persons who were moving to the opposite direction – exiting Latvia to enter the Russian Federation.

Hence, some 30 surveys were piloted with Ukrainian nationals moving towards Russian Federation with the intent to reach Ukraine’s areas which are currently not under the government control, to understand main reasons and intentions of this specific group of persons. Out of the total, 60 per cent (18) were women while 40 per cent (12) were men. Most respondents were between 30 and 49 years of age (60%) and only 3 individuals were 60 years old or more. Three quarters

(73%) were travelling alone. They spent most of their time outside Ukraine in Poland, Latvia, Norway, and the Russian Federation and more than half of them (53%, 16 individuals) mentioned the intention to remain in Ukraine, while 30 per cent intended to do a short visit and the rest was uncertain.

About one third (9 persons) said they were not going to their place of initial origin as it was too difficult or unsafe. Nevertheless, the main intended oblasts of destination also include areas which are not under Ukraine’s government control: Zaporizka (8), Luhanska (6), Doneska (4) and Kyiv (3). The main reasons to move back to Ukraine was to reunite with family members left behind.

11. METHODOLOGY

This report is primarily based on a survey of displacement patterns, needs and intentions conducted by IOM’s DTM in 5 countries neighbouring Ukraine – Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia – and in Latvia in the first quarter of 2023 through a network of more than 70 enumerators.

Face-to-face surveys were conducted by enumerators with adult refugees from Ukraine and TCNs (18 years of age and above) while crossing back into Ukraine. Respondents were approached at selected exit points and transit locations close to the border points with Ukraine.

Prior to the start of the survey, all enumerators were trained by IOM on the DTM methodological framework, the use of Kobo application, IOM approach to migrants’ protection, ethics of data collection and provision of information. The survey was anonymous and voluntary. Surveys were administered only if consent from the respondent was given. The respondent could stop the survey at any time. Only fully completed surveys were taken in account for this report.

The questionnaire was available in Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian and English, and the preferred language was determined by the interviewee.

The total sample is composed of 5,591 individual valid surveys collected in Hungary (628), Poland (795), Republic of Moldova (912), Romania (2,242), Slovakia (984) and in Latvia (30).

Country-level implementation and limitation

The sampling framework was not based on verified figures of refugees from Ukraine and TCNs exiting to Ukraine through the various land border points of the country where surveys were conducted. This is due to the limited availability of baseline information of all border crossings to Ukraine from each neighbouring country. The geographic spread of enumerators deployed, and locations targeted captures a wide range of locations and modes of travel. Whilst results cannot be deemed representative, the internal consistency within the data within each country and at the regional level suggests that the findings of the current sampling framework have practical value.

Whilst every attempt was made to capture all types of movements at the Border Crossing Points (BCPs), the operational reality of fieldwork was confronted with different levels of accessibility of BCPs and other transit locations and the different availability of possible target potential respondents to comfortably spend 10-20 minutes responding to the questionnaire. For example, it is easier to interview persons travelling by bus and other types of group transportation than those in private vehicles who tend to be faster in transiting through BCPs and travel onwards.

Besides neighbouring countries, the crossing back survey was deployed in Latvia too since March 2023 to collect information from refugees from Ukraine who were met at border areas and moving through the Russian Federation to reach occupied western areas of Ukraine.

References

- IOM Europe. 2023. 'DTM Ukraine Crisis Response page: <https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response>
- IOM Europe. 2023. 'DTM Ukraine Crisis Response — [Regional Annual Overview — Ukrainian Refugees and TCNs crossing to Ukraine in 2022](#). April. Vienna: IOM.
- IOM Ukraine. 2023a. 'DTM Ukraine — [Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 12 \(16 - 23 January 2023\)](#)'. February. Kyiv: IOM.
- IOM Ukraine. 2023b. 'DTM Ukraine — [Ukraine Returns Report - \(16 - 23 January 2023\)](#)'. February. Kyiv: IOM.
- IOM Ukraine. 2023c. 'DTM Ukraine — [Conditions of Return Assessment Factsheet — Round 1 \(January - February 2023\)](#)'. March. Kyiv: IOM.
- UNHCR. 2023. '[Ukraine Refugee Situation portal](#)'

DTM

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

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

For more information, please consult: <https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response>

DTM is part of IOM's Global Data Institute.

