

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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Cover photo: Conversation on legal and social assistance needed, between IOM and refugees' social media group, focal point in Anenii Noi, the Republic of Moldova. © IOM 2023

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KEY FINDINGS

Top 3 countries of stay:

- Republic of Moldova (52%)
- Romania (9%)
- Türkiye (6%)

Top 3 oblasts* of origin:

- Odeska (35%)
- Kyiv city and Kyivska (23%)
- Mykolaivska (7%)

* Regions in Ukraine

Destinations:

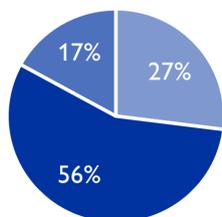
To the oblast of origin (92%)



To a different oblast (8%):
Kyiv city, Vinnytska & Odeska

Intentions:

- Long-term stay
- Short-term visit
- Does not know



In displacement:

58%

were already displaced between January and June 2022.

Needs:

Financial support (34%)

Medicines and health services (14%)

Support with personal safety and security (13%)

No immediate needs (52%)

More than one answer possible

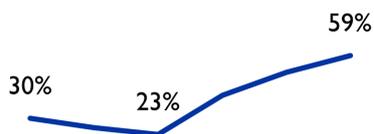
Entries & exits:

84%



had crossed back to Ukraine twice or more prior to the survey.

Legal Status:



from July to December individuals holding EU Temporary Protection status had increased.

Transport:

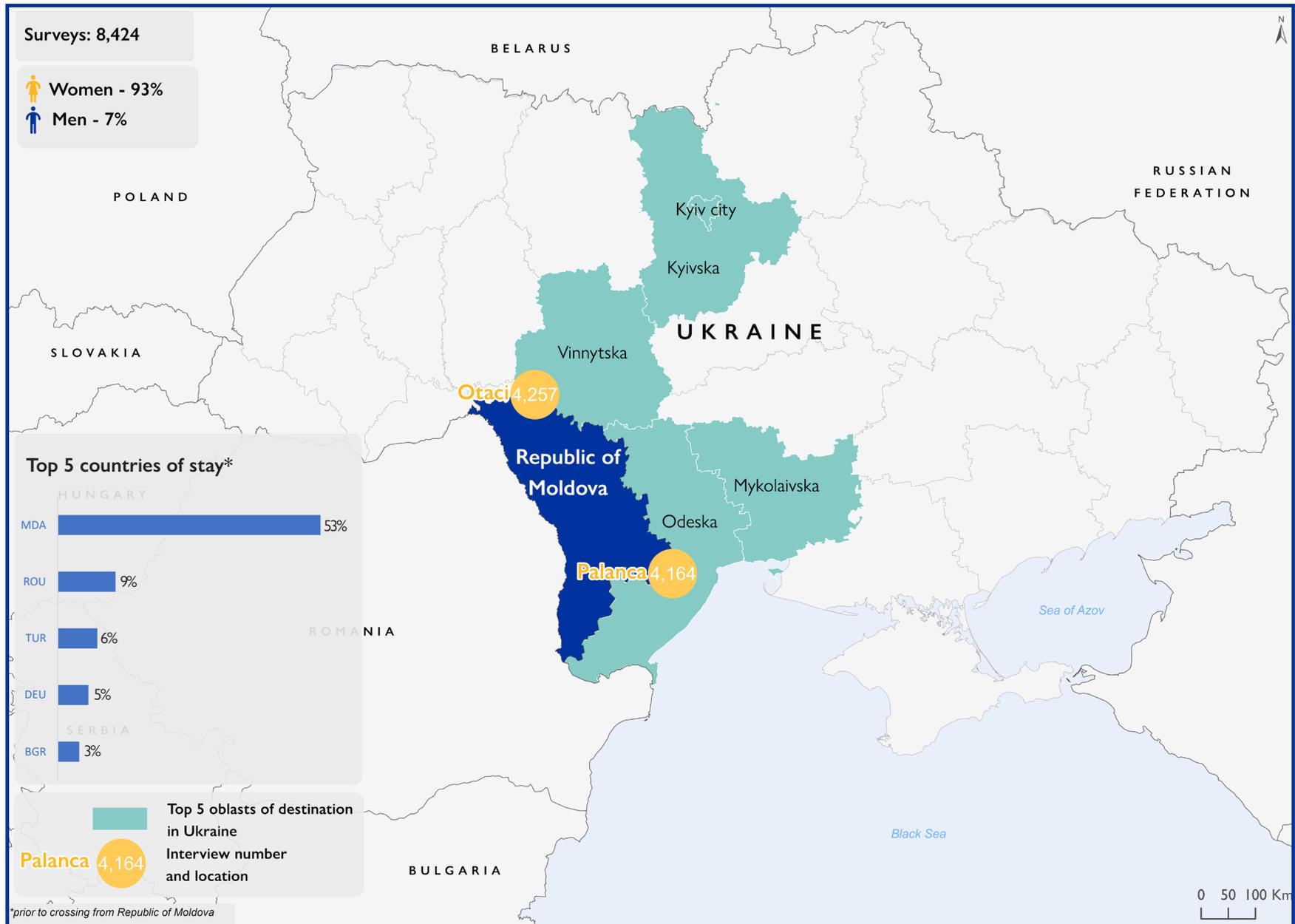
• Car (52%)

• Bus (33%)

• On foot (12%)

• Other (3%)

Map 1: Republic of Moldova, surveys deployed, countries of stay and oblasts of destination in Ukraine



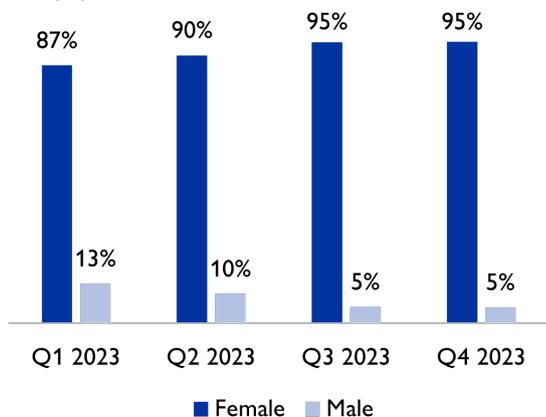
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1. Socio-Demographic Profile

Gender and age

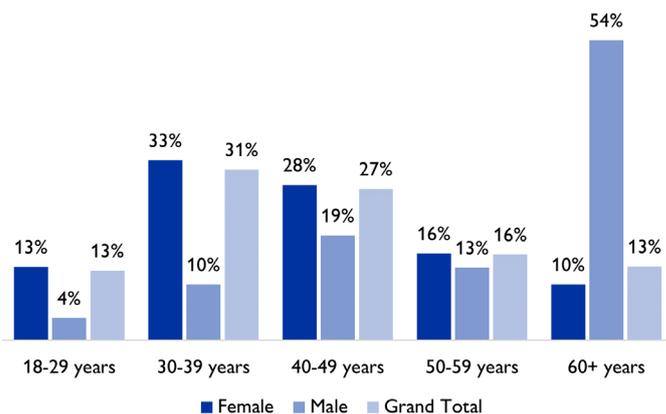
A total of 8,421 individuals were interviewed between the 16 February and the 21 December 2023 at two main border crossing points between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Almost half of the data (4,164 surveys) was collected at Palanca BCP and transit centre, while the other 51 per cent, was collected at Otaci BCP. Out of the total 8,421 survey respondents, 93 per cent were women, and seven per cent were men. The gender distribution exhibited some changes over the study period. The percentage of women increased, fluctuating between 87 per cent in the first quarter of the year and 95 per cent by the end of 2023. In contrast, the number of male respondents steadily declined from 13 to five per cent.

Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents by quarters, (%)



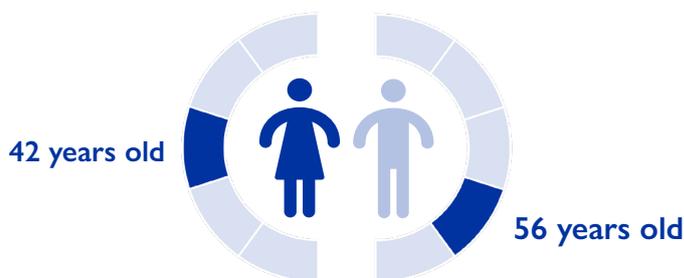
Out of the total 623 interviewed males, the majority 54 per cent were above 60 years old. The highest share of women were aged 30-39 years (33%), compared to 10 per cent of men within the same age group. The age distribution of respondents did not vary considerably over the studied period.

Figure 2: Age distribution of respondents by gender and total, (%)



The breakdown of interviewed respondents by age cohorts reveals that 30 per cent were aged between 30 and 39 years old. The average age of the total sample was 43 years old. Throughout the reporting period, male respondents were older than female respondents, with men having on average 56 years old, versus the 42 years old for women. That could be a result of Ukraine imposing a blanket ban on men of working age leaving the country through the imposition of martial law which means that men between the age of 18 to 60 can be conscripted into the army.

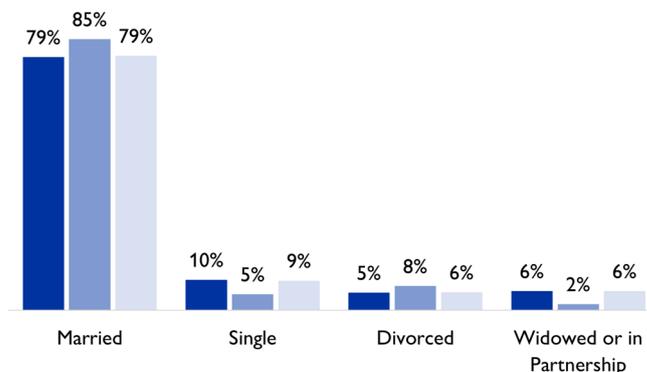
Figure 3: Average age of respondents by gender



Marital status

In terms of their marital status, 79 per cent of respondents were married, while others reported being single (9%), divorced (6%), widowed or in a partnership (6%). The proportion of married men was slightly higher than the proportion of married women (85% versus 79%). Single women constituted a higher percentage than single men (10% versus 5%), and the proportion of divorced men was higher than that of women (8% compared to 5%). Five per cent of women were widowed, compared to two per cent of men. Additionally, one per cent of women were in a partnership or union.

Figure 4: Marital status by gender and total, (%)

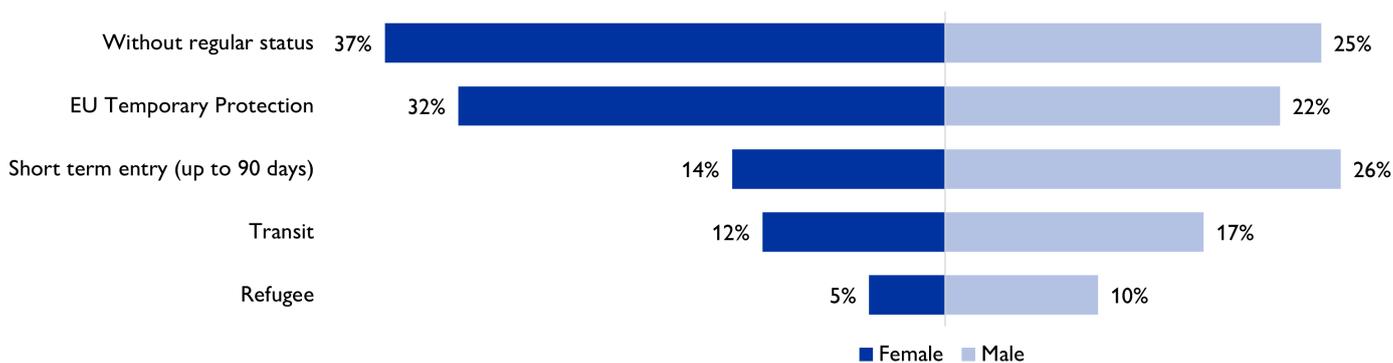


Legal status

At the end of July 2023, DTM introduced a question on the legal status of the respondents in the Republic of Moldova. Consequently, this report includes data on the legal status of 4,947 of the total 8,421 survey respondents, excluding 3,474 individuals who were interviewed in previous months. Of the respondents who answered, 36 per cent did not hold legal status in the Republic of Moldova, with a higher share among

female respondents (37%) than among male respondents (25%). Similarly, 32 per cent of respondents had obtained EU Temporary Protection status, with 32 per cent of female respondents compared to 22 per cent of male respondents. Fifteen per cent of respondents declared being in the country for a short-term of up to 90 days, with the share of male respondents being double that of females (26% versus 14%).

Figure 5: Current legal status of respondents in the Republic of Moldova by gender and total, (%) (N=4,947)

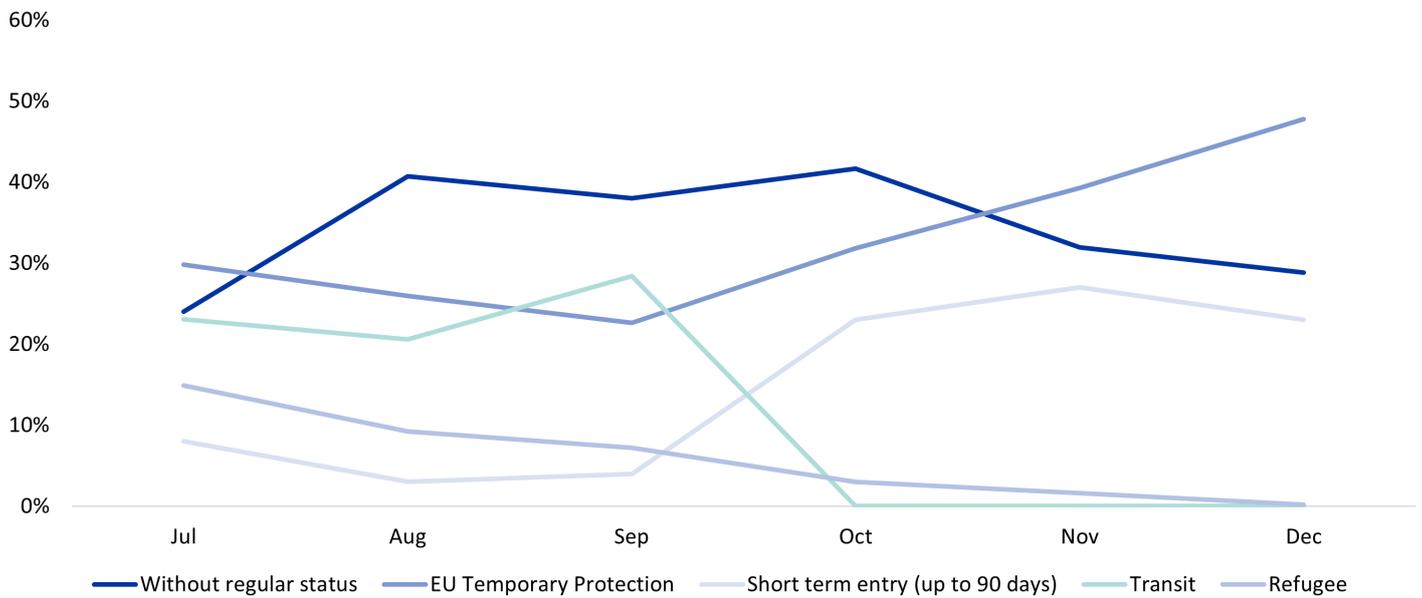


Five per cent of respondents reported having official refugee status, while 12 per cent reported being in the Republic of Moldova only for transit purposes. A higher percentage of male respondents reported being in transit (17%), compared to female respondents (12%). Additionally, the percentage of male respondents holding official refugee status is double that of females

(10% versus 5%). Overall, more than 36 per cent of respondents lack any type of legal status that regulates their stay in the Republic of Moldova. Collecting data on the legal status of respondents is critical for understanding the insecurity and possible vulnerabilities of displaced populations in the Republic of Moldova.

Legal status

Figure 6. Current legal status of respondents in the Republic of Moldova between July and December, (%) (N=4,947)



The chart above provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents' legal statuses in the Republic of Moldova throughout the data collection of 2023. Notably, individuals holding EU Temporary Protection status witnessed a consistent rise, increasing from between 20 to 30 per cent in the months of July to September and culminating in a peak of 48 per cent by December. This upward trajectory aligns with the data from the General Inspectorate for Migration, Republic of Moldova, indicating a surge in applicants and status holders over the course of the year (IGM, 2023). Conversely, the share of respondents that reported not having a regular status in the Republic of Moldova decreased from 42 to 29 per cent in the last quarter of

2023, countering the previous ascending trend observed from July to October that saw a steady rise from 24 per cent at the end of July, to 42 per cent in October. It is noticeable that all respondents at the end of the 2023 year had decided to obtain the EU temporary protection instead of transiting the country as previously (23% in September) or having a refugee status (15% in July). Finally, the number of respondents indicating being in the Republic of Moldova for a short-term entry of up to 90 days had increased in the last quarter of the year.

2. Time Outside of Ukraine

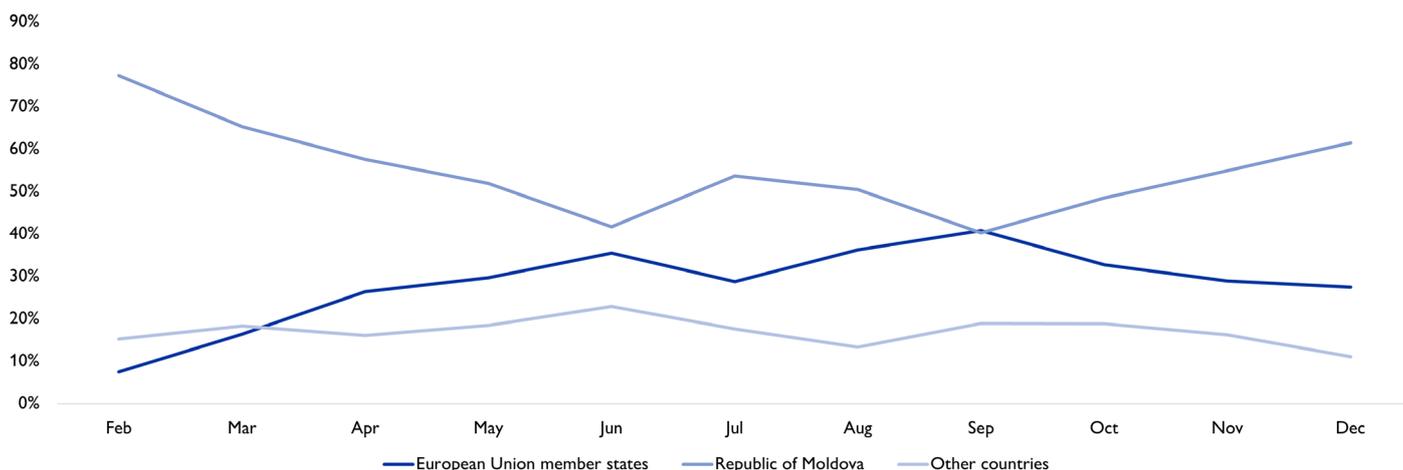
Countries of stay while abroad

Among the 8,421 respondents interviewed while crossing back to Ukraine, 52 per cent had been residing in the Republic of Moldova, 31 per cent stayed in a European Union (EU) country, and the remaining 17 per cent stayed in other countries. The distribution of respondents who reported staying in the Republic of Moldova fluctuated during the year. It experienced a decline in the first half of the year, decreasing from 77 per cent in February to 42 per cent in June. However, it stabilized over the summer, hovering between 42 and

50 per cent from June to August, and experienced a subsequent increase from September to December (from 40 to 61%).

Conversely, the number of respondents coming from EU member states showed a steady increase throughout 2023, rising from seven per cent in February to 27 per cent in December. In contrast, the percentage of respondents displaced in countries other than the EU or the Republic of Moldova, remained relatively stable over the year, fluctuating between 10 and 20 per cent.

Figure 7: Countries of stay since fleeing Ukraine by month, (%)



Out of the total respondents that participated to the survey in the year 2023, 52 per cent had been residing in the Republic of Moldova, nine per cent came from Romania, six per cent from Türkiye, and five per cent from Germany. While the remaining 27 per cent came from other countries around the world.

Figure 8: Countries of stay, (%)

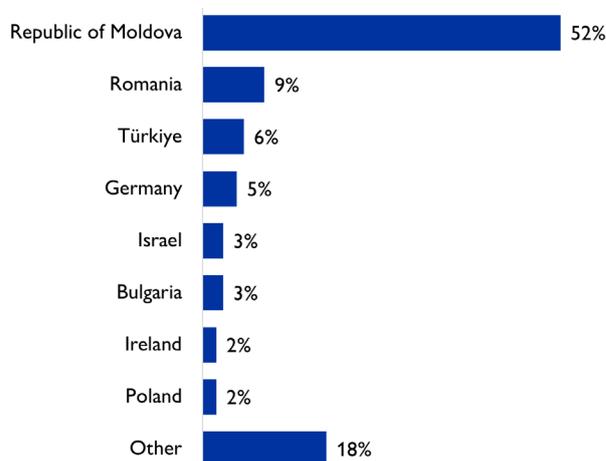
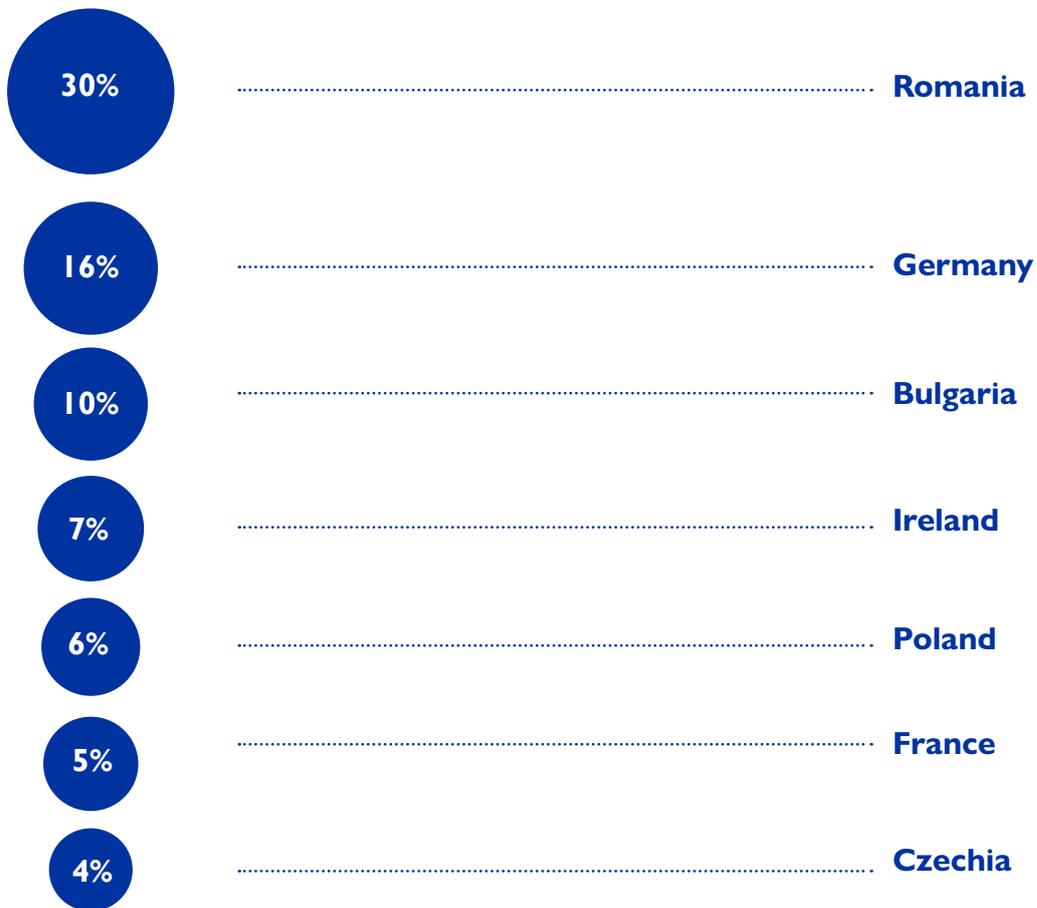


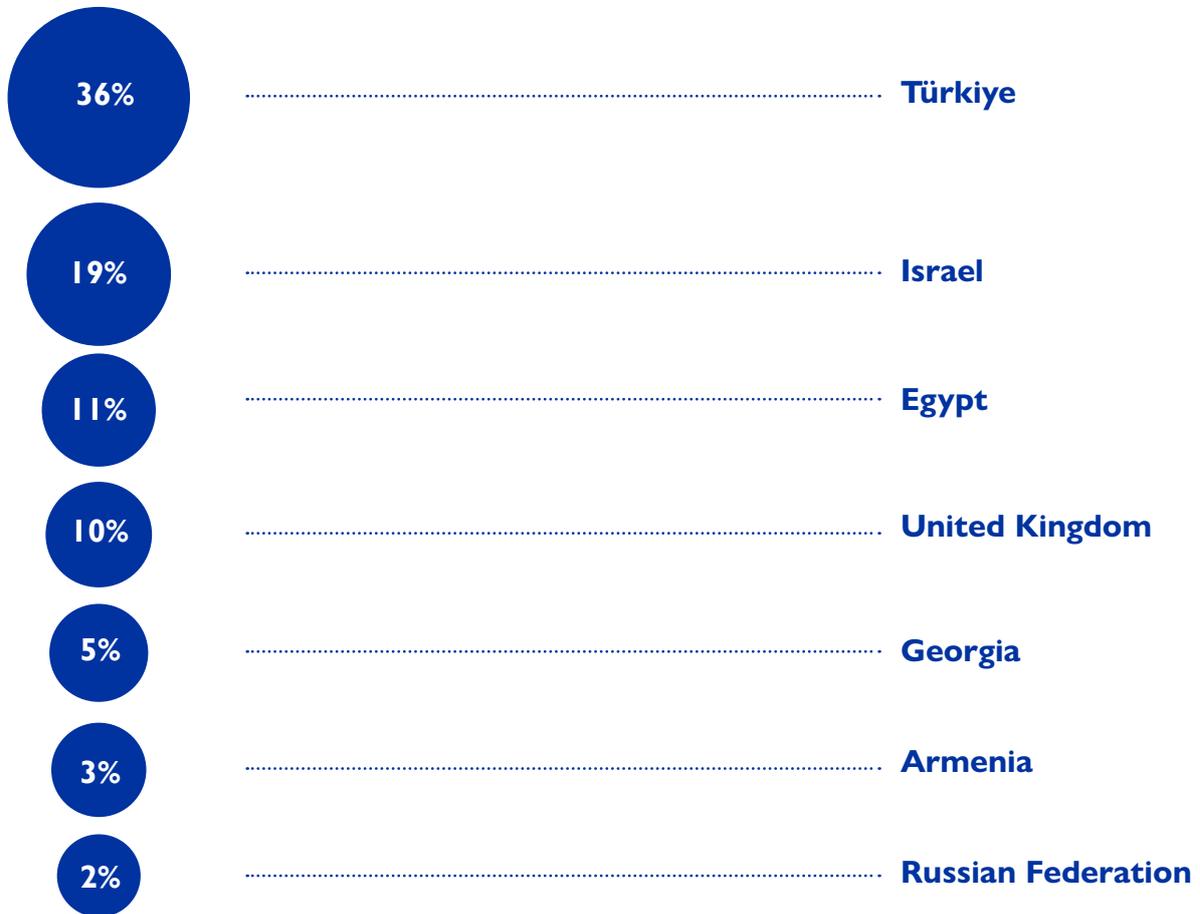
Figure 9: Top 7 countries of stay in the EU since fleeing Ukraine, (%) (N=2,562)



Among the 2,562 respondents who sought refuge in a European Union member state after fleeing Ukraine, their distribution across countries was as follows: Romania (30%), Germany (16%), Bulgaria (10%), Ireland (7%), Poland (6%), France (5%), Czechia and Belgium (4% each), and other EU countries (18%). The proportion of respondents who resided in Romania, had been fluctuating throughout the year. The spikes of the fluctuations were marked by the increase between February and May (from 17 to 40%), and a decline

from 40 to 21 per cent between May and October. It had reached to 30 per cent, and remained stable in the following two months. Conversely, the number of respondents that had stayed in Germany showed a decrease from 26 per cent in March to 16 per cent in May, followed by stabilization between 15 per cent and 20 per cent in the second half of the year. Among those who came from other countries did not show any significant fluctuations and remained relatively stable throughout the study period.

Figure 10: Top 7 countries of stay outside the EU and Republic of Moldova since fleeing Ukraine, (%) (N=1,439)

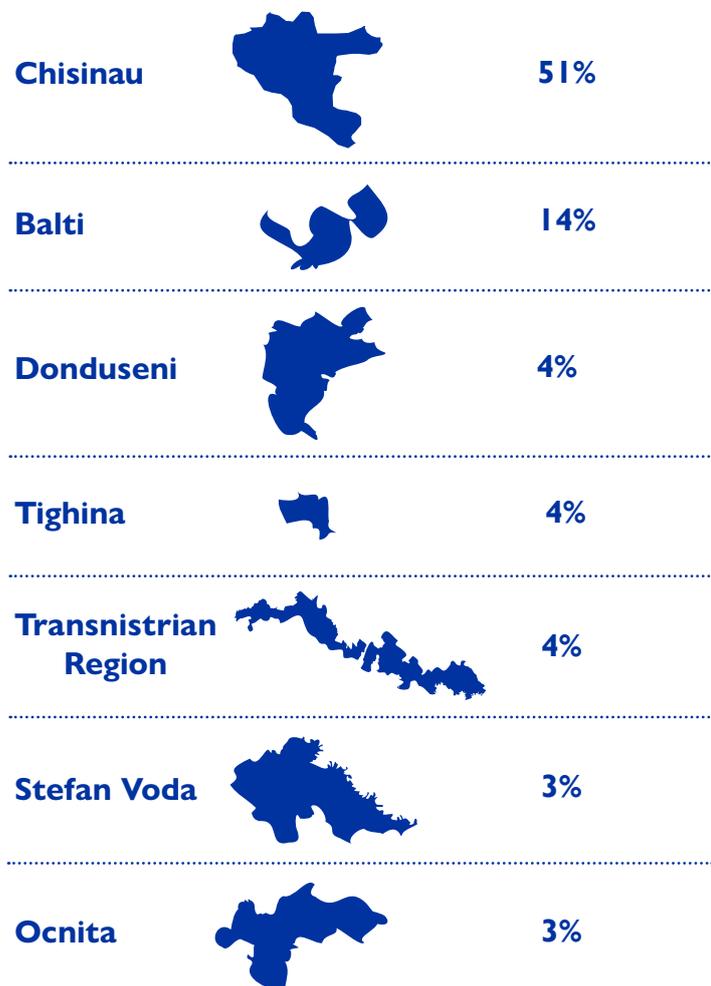


Out of the total number of respondents interviewed while crossing back to Ukraine, 1,439 individuals reported having stayed in a country outside the European Union (excluding the Republic of Moldova). Specifically, mentioned countries were Türkiye (36%), Israel (19%), Egypt (11%), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (10%), Georgia (5%), Armenia (3%), Russian Federation (2%) and the United States of America (2%), with the remaining 12 per cent in various countries globally.

Regarding the monthly breakdown of this data, the trend for those reporting to have stayed in Türkiye shows a

consistent increase throughout the reporting period, rising from an initial 13 per cent in February to 55 per cent in December. In contrast, the number of who had been residing in Egypt steadily decreased over the year, declining from 21 per cent in February to two per cent in December. Fluctuations in the number of individuals who had been staying in Israel are noteworthy, as they ranged from 17 per cent in August, to eight per cent in September, reaching in October a maximum of 31 per cent and had been declining ever since. This variance could possibly be attributed to the emergence of the conflict in the Gaza strip in October 2023.

Figure 11: Top 7 raions of stay in the Republic of Moldova since fleeing Ukraine, (%) (N=2,562)

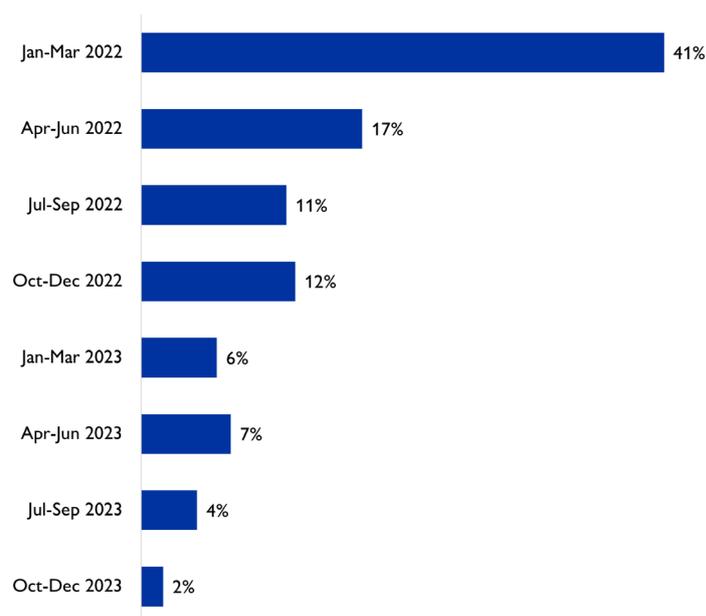


Among those who had been staying in the Republic of Moldova, half were residing in the locality of Chisinau (51%). Other respondents reported having been staying in Balti (14%), Donduseni, Tighina, and the Transnistrian region (4% each), Ștefan Vodă, Ocnîța and Calarasi (3% each). Finally, 14 per cent reported staying in other raions. With the exception of Chisinau, where the monthly percentage of respondents having place of residence ranged from 39 per cent to a maximum of 57 per cent throughout the reporting period, the share of other regions of residence did not vary considerably.

Period of initial displacement

Out of the total 8,421 respondents, 41 per cent were displaced between January and March 2022, and 17 per cent were displaced in the next quarter (April to June). Twenty-three per cent were displaced between October and December 2022, 12 per cent between January and June 2023, while six per cent between August and December 2023. A significant majority (81%) of respondents reported being displaced from Ukraine between January and December 2022, emphasizing a downward trend. Such observation underscores a considerable duration of displacement, with many respondents having endured this displacement for up to two years as the war continues into its third year.

Figure 12: Approximate date of initial displacement, (%)



Number of exits/entries

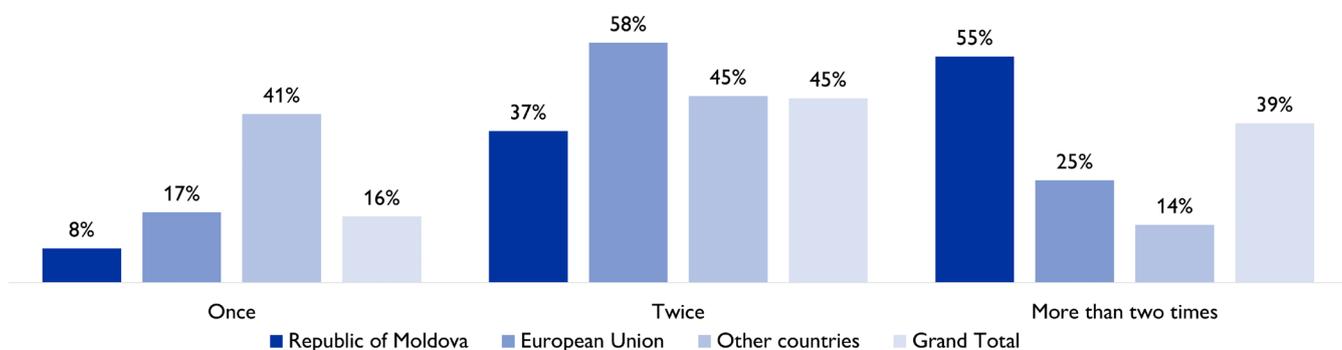
Out of the total number of respondents, 45 per cent had entered/exited Ukraine twice since 24 February 2022. Thirty-nine per cent had entered/exited more than twice, while 16 per cent had entered/exited only once. Interestingly, that all respondents had crossed at least once in Ukraine since the beginning of the war, which underscore the prevalence of cross border movements and the dynamic nature of people’s mobility across the Ukrainian borders. The data suggests not only a substantial degree of movement but also reveals the existence of swinging movements (IOM, 2023a), where individuals traverse the border multiple times.

As illustrated further in section 6 on ‘Intentions and Reasons to Cross Back to Ukraine’, these patterns of movement can be attributed to various motivations, ranging from visiting and reuniting with family members to accessing essential services such as healthcare, document renewal, and others. The multiplicity of reasons behind

these movements highlights the complex interplay of personal, familial, and practical considerations that influence individuals’ decisions to navigate across the border multiple times. This is further confirmed when disaggregating based on the place of stay outside of Ukraine, which shows a relation between the country of stay and the number of movements across the border.

The majority (55%) of the respondents residing in the Republic of Moldova have reportedly entered and exited Ukraine more than two times since their initial displacement. This is double the share of respondents from European Union member states (25%), and four times more than the share of respondents from countries outside the European Union (14%). This stark contrast can be attributed to the geographical proximity of Moldova to Ukraine, making it more accessible for individuals to traverse the border multiple times for various reasons.

Figure 13: Number of entries/exits between 24 February 2022 and 21 December 2023 by country of stay, (%)



Additionally, 37 per cent of the respondents who resided in the Republic of Moldova had entered and exited Ukraine twice, while 58 per cent were from those who stayed in a EU member state and 45 per cent were coming from a country outside the EU (excluding the Republic of Moldova). Finally, eight per cent of the respondents who resided in the Republic of Moldova had entered and exited only once, while 17 per cent of respondents were from the EU and from countries outside of the EU (41%). Generally, a total of 92 per cent of the respondents, who had been residing in the Republic of Moldova and 83 per cent

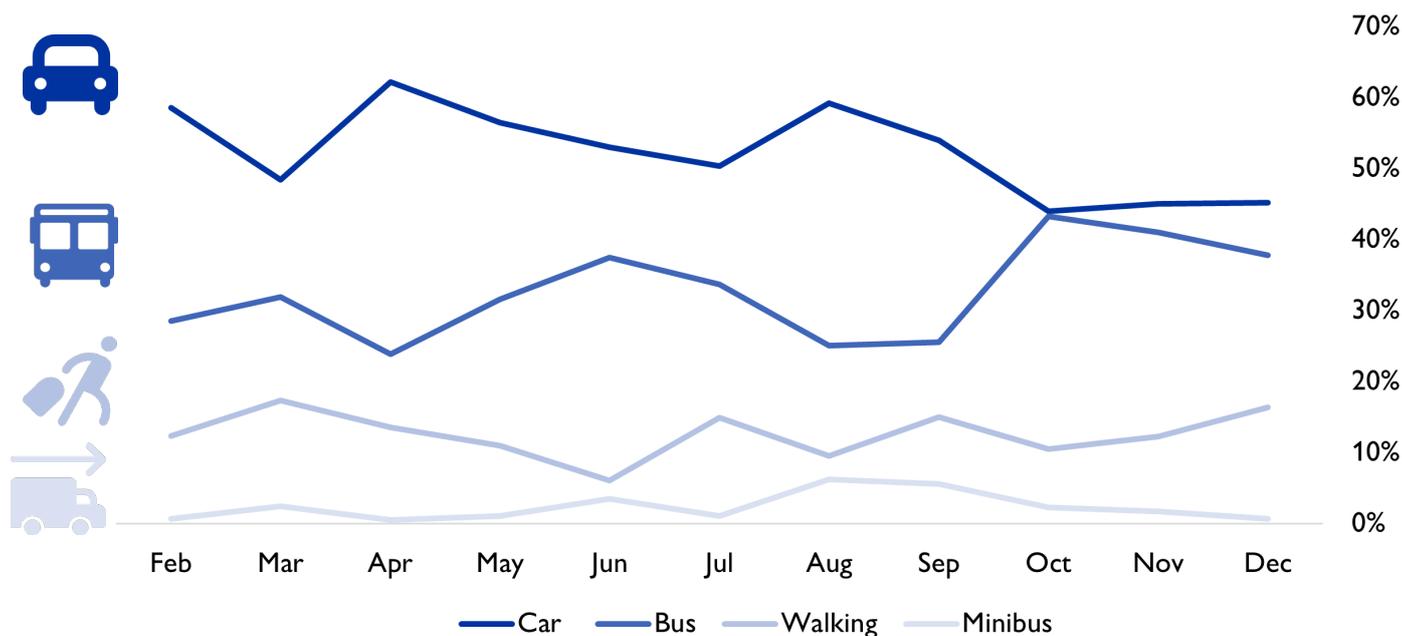
of the respondents from a EU country had entered and exited Ukraine at least twice since February 2022, suggesting that Ukrainians frequently return to their homes for various reasons despite of the ongoing war. Geographical proximity might be, consequently, one of the reasons to choose the Republic of Moldova as a place of stay. The ease of access and frequent border crossings highlight the significance of geographical factor in influencing individuals’ decisions to move across borders for diverse purposes.

3. Transport

Over half of the respondents were travelling to Ukraine by car (52%). Thirty-three per cent of respondents were travelling by bus, and 12 per cent were crossing the border on foot. The remaining three per cent were travelling by minibus. The distribution of chosen transportation means remained relatively consistent throughout the study period, with cars consistently ranking as the most frequently used method to cross the border in 2023, followed by buses, walking, and minibuses. Over the course of the year, there was a gradual decrease in the percentage of respondents using cars, declining from 59 per cent in February

to 45 per cent by the end of December. In contrast, the proportion of respondents choosing to cross the border by bus increased, rising from 28 per cent at the beginning of the year to 38 per cent in December 2023. The number of people opting to cross the border on foot fluctuated between 10 and 17 per cent, reaching a minimum of six per cent in June. Lastly, the percentage of respondents using minibuses experienced an uptake during the first half of the year, climbing from one to six per cent in August and September, before decreasing back to one per cent in the last quarter of 2023.

Figure 14: Approximate date of initial displacement, (%) (N=2,562)



4. Oblasts (regions) of Origin and Destination

Origin or habitual residence

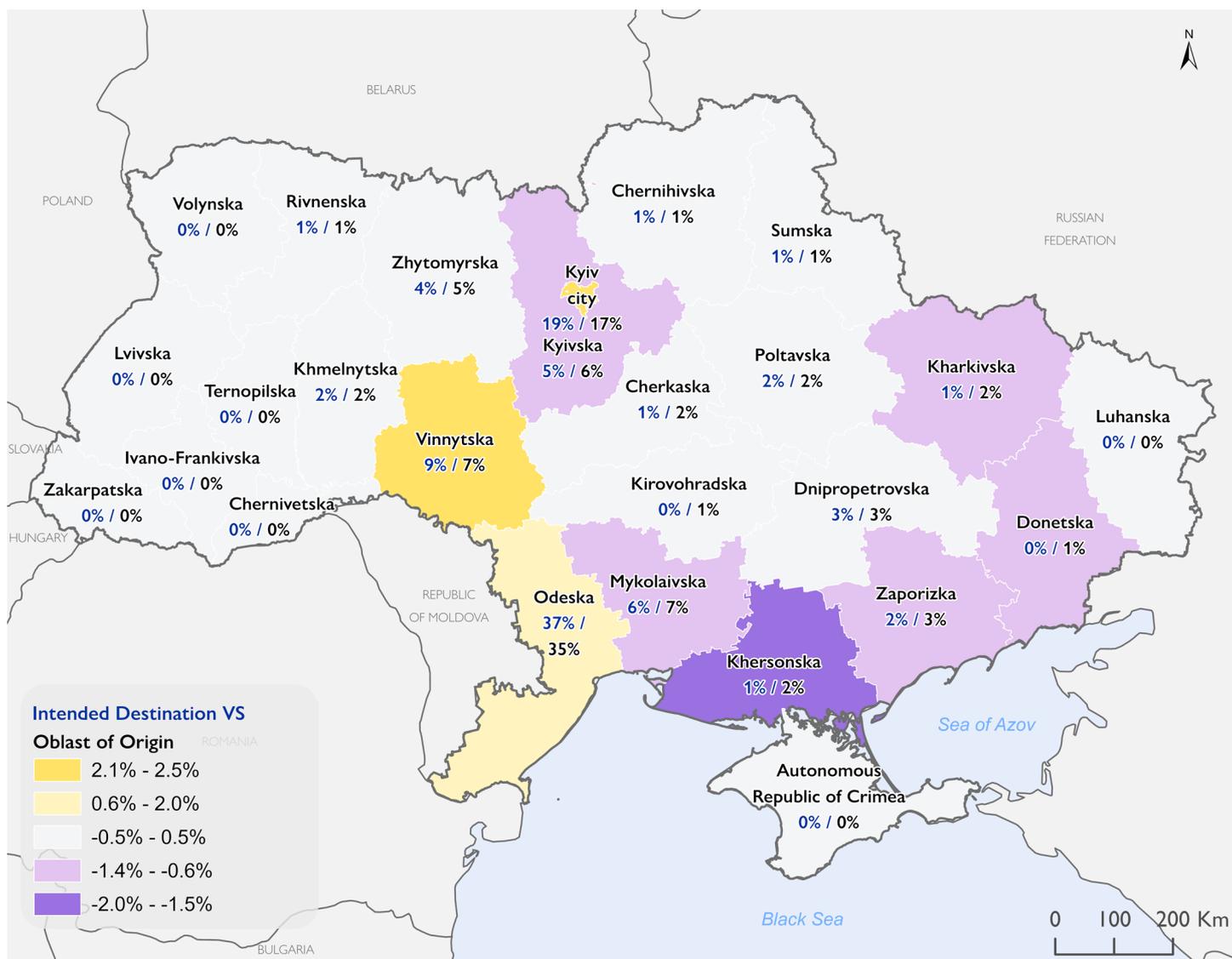
The majority of respondents came from five oblasts in Ukraine: Odeska (35%), the city of Kyiv (17%), Mykolaivska (7%), Vinnytska (7%) and Kiyvska (6%). The remaining respondents (28%) originated from various oblasts, mostly around the City of Kyiv as well as in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine (the regions most impacted by the war).

Intended destination

Ninety two per cent of all respondents were planning to return to the same oblast of origin, while seven per cent intended to go to a different oblast, and one per cent reported that they did not know what they would do once returned to Ukraine. Among those returning to a different oblast, 224 respondents intended to go to

the city of Kyiv (37%), 208 intended to go to Vinnytska (35%), and 128 intended to go to Odeska (21%). Others intended to go to Khmelnytska, Zhytomyrska, Lvivska, Dnipropetrovska, Mykolaivska, Poltavska, Cherkaska, and Sumska oblasts.

Map 2: Intended oblast of destination versus oblast of origin in Ukraine, (%)

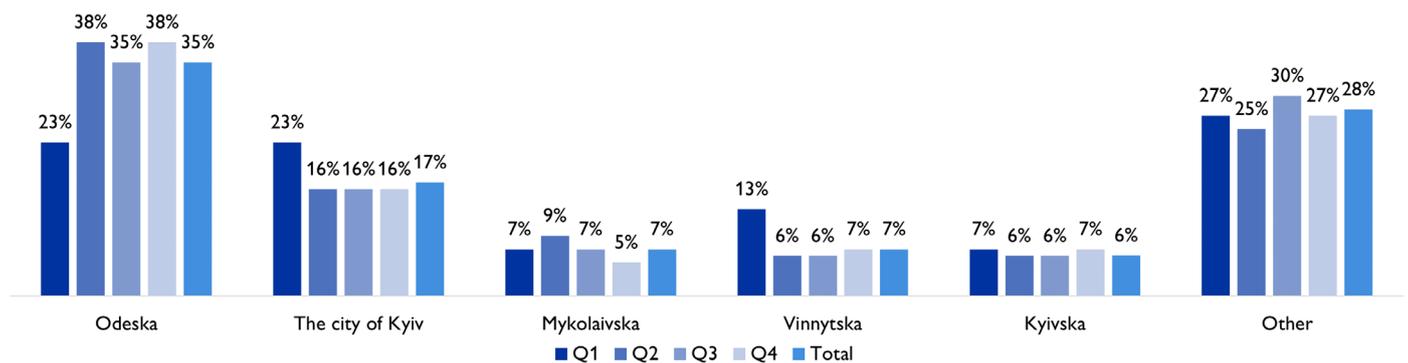


This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

On average, throughout the year 2023, the Odeska region was reported by 35 per cent of the respondents as their region of usual residence before leaving Ukraine. The share of respondents coming from this region almost doubled from around 23 per cent in Q1 (January – March), to 38 per cent in Q4 (October –

December) of 2023. On the contrary, the reported number of people coming from the city of Kyiv and Vinnytska halved over the studied period (passing from 23% to 16% and from 13% to 7%). Finally, the share of respondents that came from Mykolaivska and Kyivska, was subject to minor changes throughout the year.

Figure 15: Regions of origin/habitual residence of respondents before leaving Ukraine by region and quarter, (%)



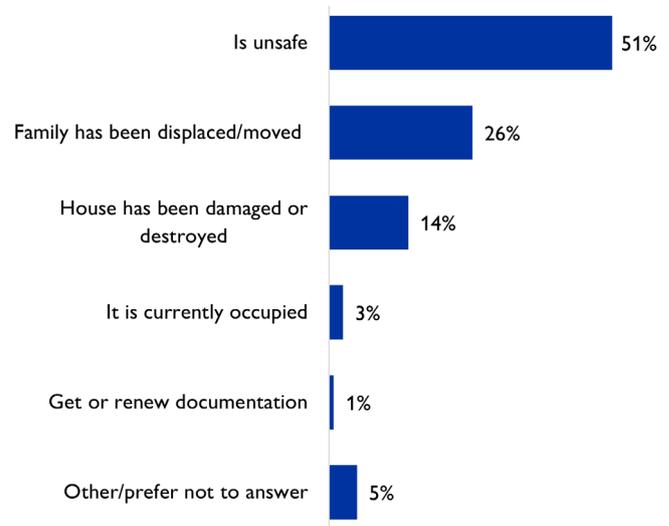
Most respondents (92%) reported that they intend to go back to the same region that they initially departed from. Among those crossing back to Ukraine that were going back to a different oblast from their place of habitual residence before being displaced, 37 per cent were going to the city of Kyiv, 35 per cent to Vinnytska, and 21 per cent to Odeska. The number of people going to the city of Kyiv increased during the study

period (from 28% in Q1 to 38% in Q4), with a peak of 42 per cent in Q2 (April – June). Similarly, the number of people going back to Odeska region saw an overall increasing trend, from 11 per cent in Q1 to 26 per cent in Q4. On the contrary, the number of people going to Vinnytska diminished during the reporting period, from 57 per cent in the beginning of 2023, to 31 per cent in the final quarter.

Reason to go to another oblast other than the usual place of residence

Among the reasons not to go back to their place of origin, the majority (51%) reported that they could not do so because of the unsafe location. Other reported reasons were due to the respondent’s family already having moved or been displaced to another part of the country (26%), damaged or destroyed housing (14%), or that their property was occupied (3%). Some respondents also reported they needed to acquire documents in another region, that they were facing discrimination, needed to undergo health treatments which were unavailable in their place of origin (1% each).

Figure 16: Reasons to go to another oblast than the usual place of residence (%) (N=598)

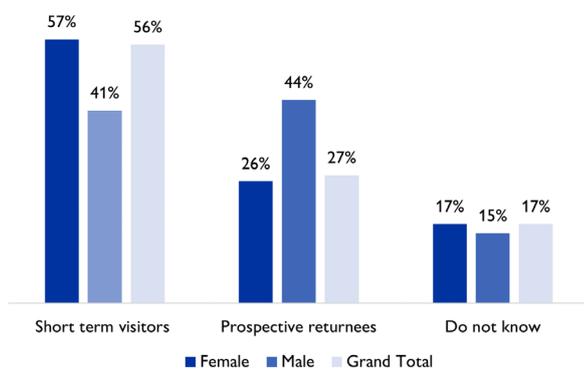


5. Intentions and Reasons to Cross Back to Ukraine

Duration of stay

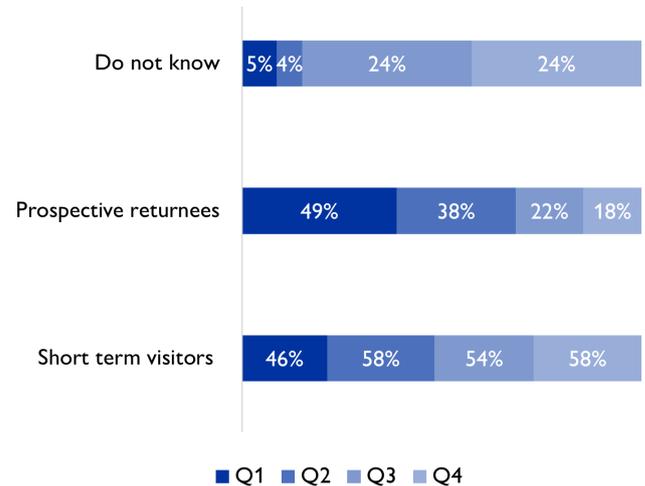
Fifty six per cent of respondents were travelling to Ukraine for a short-term visit (less than 30 days), while 27 per cent indicated that they intended to stay for a longer period in Ukraine (prospective returnees). Sixteen per cent did not know and the remaining one per cent preferred not to answer. For the purpose of this analysis, “short-term visitors” are those who reported an intention to spend up to 30 days in Ukraine, while respondents intending to stay in Ukraine more than one month are considered as “prospective returnees”. Around 99 per cent of those intending to stay for periods longer than 30 days stated the intention to “remain indefinitely” in Ukraine while the rest planned on staying for 30 to 90 days.

Figure 17: Duration of stay by gender and total, (%)



Over the study period, the number of people that declared to be going to Ukraine for a short-term period increased from 46 per cent in Q1, to 58 per cent in Q4. Contrastingly, for those declaring to be relocating to Ukraine for a long term, halved from 49 per cent to 18 per cent. This was associated with a net increase in the number of respondents that reportedly did not know the duration of their stay upon crossing back to Ukraine. In fact, the share of respondents that provided such an answer increased from five per cent in Q1 2023, up to 24 per cent at the end of the year (Q4). This change might also be attributed to some changes in the questionnaire that were implemented during the summer months.

Figure 18: Intended duration of stay by quarter, (%)



The majority (58%) of those that were coming from countries outside the EU (excluding the Republic of Moldova) declared to be returning to Ukraine for a long-term stay. This percentage was considerably lower for those who had been staying in an EU country (22%) or in the Republic of Moldova (20%). On the contrary, 66 per cent of those residing in the Republic of Moldova, and 54 per cent of those staying in an EU member state came to Ukraine for a short-term visit. Among those that resided in a EU, the share of respondents that intended to stay for a short-term followed a varying trend of increases and decreases during the period, (changing from 48% in February to 70% in December and reaching lows of 42% in July and October). In contrast, the percentage of respondents that reported to be going back for a long-term saw an overall decrease from 30 per cent to six per cent at the end of the year. The share of respondents uncertain of their duration of stay, recorded a descending pattern in the first six months of the year: from 17 to three per cent, then spiking to 26 per cent in June, and reaching a peak of 37 per cent in October and November. Similar to those residing in the Republic of Moldova, the share of prospective returnees, who previously stayed in the EU decreased during 2023.

Long-term stay

A total of 2,315 respondents (27%) intended to remain in Ukraine for a long period. Among them, 70 per cent indicated that they were returning to Ukraine to reunite with family. 33 per cent were returning because they missed home, while eight per cent were returning because they did not possess the essential resources

needed to continue living abroad. Other key reasons for returning included visiting someone (such as family members) abroad or working in essential services (7% each), the improvement of the conditions in their region of origin and to support their family back in Ukraine (5% each).

Table 1: Main reasons for returning to Ukraine for a long-term period by gender and total, (%) (N=2,315) (multiple answers possible)

Reasons for long term return	Women	Men	Total
To reunite with family	72%	60%	70%
I miss my home/country	34%	26%	33%
I lack the resources	7%	10%	8%
I visited someone (husband, wife, daughters, etc.) abroad	7%	6%	7%
I work in essential services	6%	10%	7%
The situation improved in my home country	5%	5%	5%
Help other family members/friends	6%	1%	5%
To meet with family	4%	3%	3%
Other	4%	10%	5%

Short-term visit

Those who reported their intentions to stay in Ukraine for a short period (4,680 respondents), 53 per cent cited visiting family members as their main reason for returning. Other motives for returning included returning to collect or renew their documents (27%),

to check their properties (24%), to visit a doctor and access healthcare services (22%), to collect personal belongings (16%), and to help other family members/friends (13%).

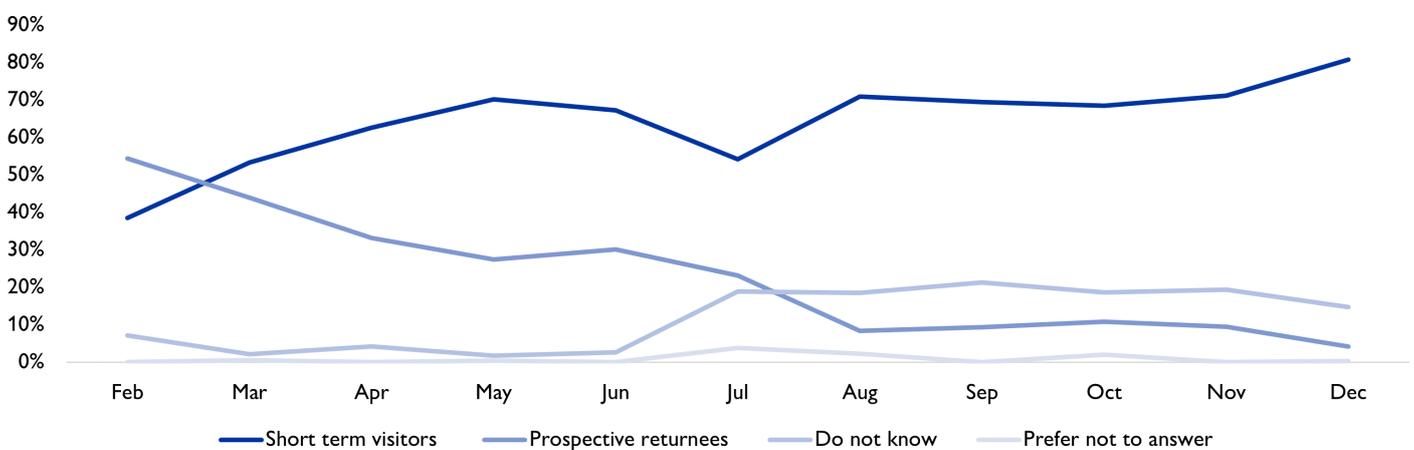
Table 2: Main reasons for returning to Ukraine for a short-term period by gender and total, (%) (N=4,680) (multiple answers possible)

Reasons for short term return	Women	Men	Total
To meet with family	53%	52%	53%
To obtain/renew documents	27%	26%	27%
To check on property	24%	32%	24%
To go to the doctor/access healthcare	21%	31%	22%
To collect personal belongings	16%	16%	16%
Help other family members/friends	13%	9%	13%
To reunite with family	5%	4%	5%
I miss my home/country	5%	1%	4%
Other	3%	3%	3%

Among those respondents who, after being displaced, had been staying in the Republic of Moldova, there was an overall increase, from 40 per cent in February to 81 per cent in December. Simultaneously, the number of respondents residing in the Republic of Moldova who were prospective returnees to Ukraine diminished throughout 2023, decreasing from 54 per cent at the beginning of the year to four per cent in December 2023. This might indicate that many refugees, who

were residing in the Republic of Moldova took into consideration the possibility of a long term or permanent settlement. As previously mentioned, it is also notable that the share of uncertain respondents doubled from eight per cent in February to 17 per cent in December 2023. This increase could be attributed either to changes in the survey or to the heightened uncertainty experienced by the respondents.

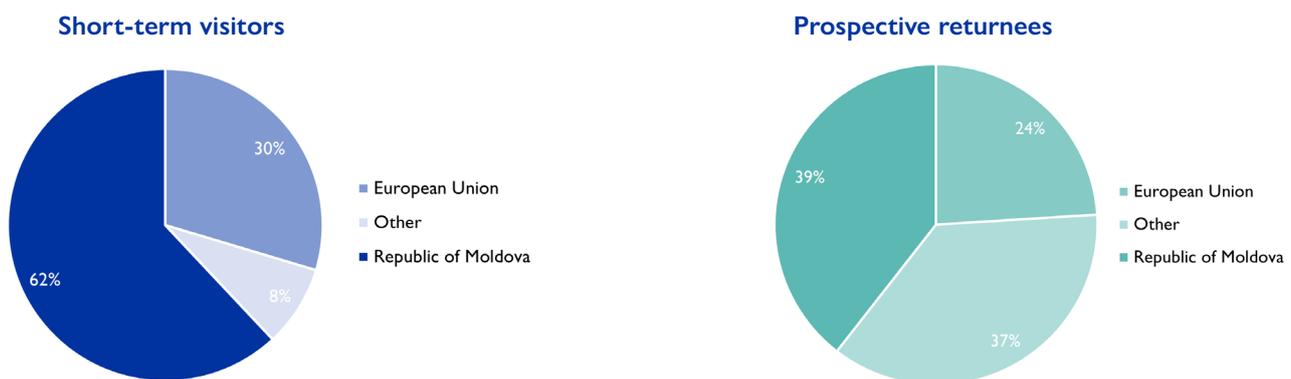
Figure 19: Intended duration of stay in Ukraine – respondents residing in the Republic of Moldova by month, (%)



Contrary to the trends observed for those residing in the EU or in the Republic of Moldova, the majority of those coming from other countries and crossing back to Ukraine were prospective returnees as they intended to stay for periods longer than 30 days. This trend remained stable from February to November, fluctuating between 55 per cent and 65 per cent, with a periodic low of 40 per cent in December that coincided with a spike in the number of short-term visitors, possibly due to

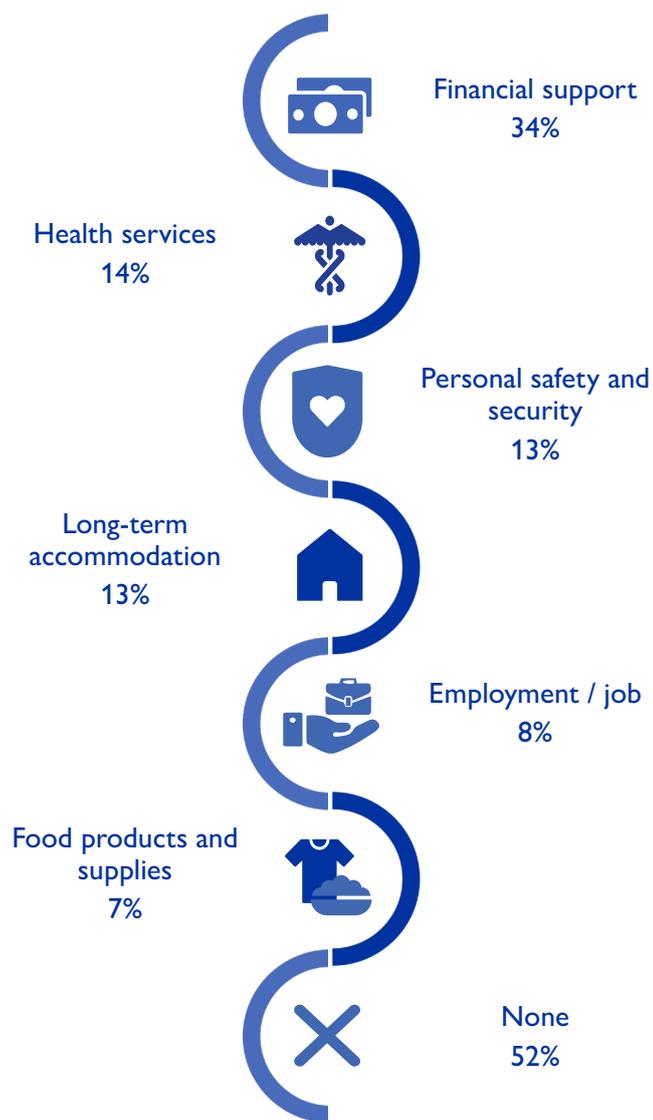
the holiday season. In contrast to the trends mentioned previously, the share of respondents reporting as short-term visitors remained stable around 30 per cent during the first half of the year, with a decrease and stabilization during the second half (oscillating between 22% and 26%) before spiking in December. In general, the percentage of short-term visitors remained around half the share of prospective returnees between February and November.

Figure 20: Region of displacement while outside of Ukraine for prospective returnees and short-term visitors, (%)



6. Needs, Assistance Received, and Challenges

Figure 21: Top 6 needs upon crossing back, (%)
(multiple answers possible)



In general, during the reporting period, the top six needs and their rankings changed slightly. The need for financial support increased throughout the year, rising from 15 per cent of in February to 25 per cent in December. Likewise, the need for health services exhibited an overall increasing trend, with six per cent in the beginning of the year to ten per cent by the end of 2023. Similarly, the need for personal safety and security

increased from not having such need in the beginning of the year (with an average of three per cent between February and June) to 12 per cent in December.

An upward trend also characterized the share of respondents reporting the need for long-term accommodation, which rose from three per cent to ten per cent during the entire period. This included a spike during the second quarter of the year (reaching 8%), followed by a slight retrenchment during the third quarter (averaging 6%). On the other hand, the need for employment or a job showed an inconsistent pattern during the first half of the year, fluctuating between two per cent in February and March and nine per cent in May. In the second half of the year, the share of respondents reporting this as a need did not experience any stark changes, oscillating between three and five per cent.

In contrast, the share of respondents reporting food products and food supplies as a need increased during the first half of the year, from six per cent in February to eight per cent in June, only to decrease during the second half to one per cent.

Finally, the percentage of respondents reporting not having any needs fluctuated throughout the year but following an overall decreasing trend from 51 per cent in February to 23 per cent in December. This trend, together with the increase reported in needs, highlights how the ongoing war in Ukraine has led to an escalating demand for assistance among those displaced outside the country (from 49 per cent in February to 77 per cent in December 2023).

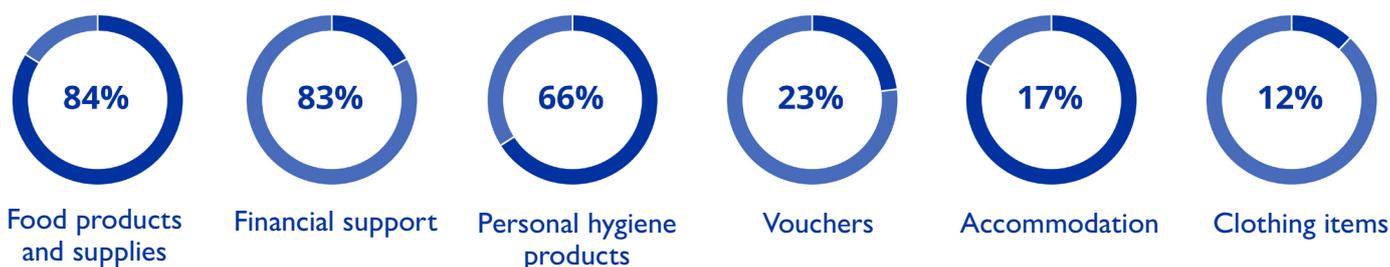
The increasing demand for humanitarian assistance and the increasing trend described above becomes more evident when comparing the current data with that gathered throughout 2022 by the IOM DTM, as reported in the ‘Surveys with Ukrainian and Third-Country Nationals crossing to Ukraine: observed trends (IOM, 2023b). In 2022, the overall percentage of respondents reporting any needs increased from 24 per cent in April to 31 per cent in November. These percentages changed significantly, doubling in 2023 reaching 61 per cent in December.

Assistance received in the Republic of Moldova

Of the total of 5,166 respondents that indicated that they had received some form of assistance, 84 per cent reported having received food items, 83 per cent received financial support, and 66 per cent received hygiene and sanitary items. Other types of assistance

received included vouchers (23%), accommodation (17%), clothes and shoes (12%), transportation support (5%), and psychological counselling and toys for children (2% each).

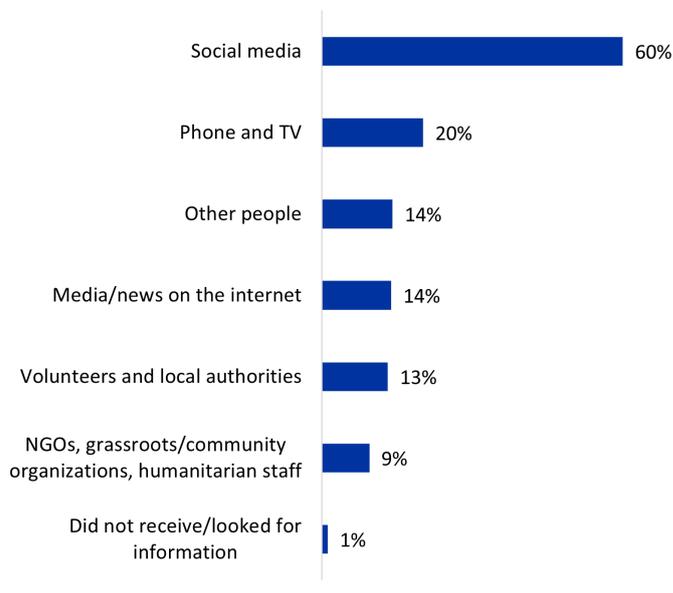
Figure 22: Top 6 areas of assistance received, (%) (5,166) (multiple answers possible)



Sources of information on aid and support services

The majority of respondents reported that social media platforms (60%) and in particular Telegram (59%) were their main source of information to learn about available support and services for people displaced from Ukraine. Other cited sources of information included messages or calls via mobile phone and through television (TV) (20%), other people and internet-based media outlets (14% each). Furthermore, 11 per cent reported relying on volunteers deployed by humanitarian organizations or public authorities, and nine per cent of respondents reported that they were relying on NGOs, grassroots or community organizations, or other humanitarian organizations (such as IOM or Red Cross, among others) despite these organizations being at the forefront of the humanitarian response. Finally, two per cent of respondents relied on local authorities and municipal officials for information.

Figure 23: Channels of information by total (%) (multiple answers possible)

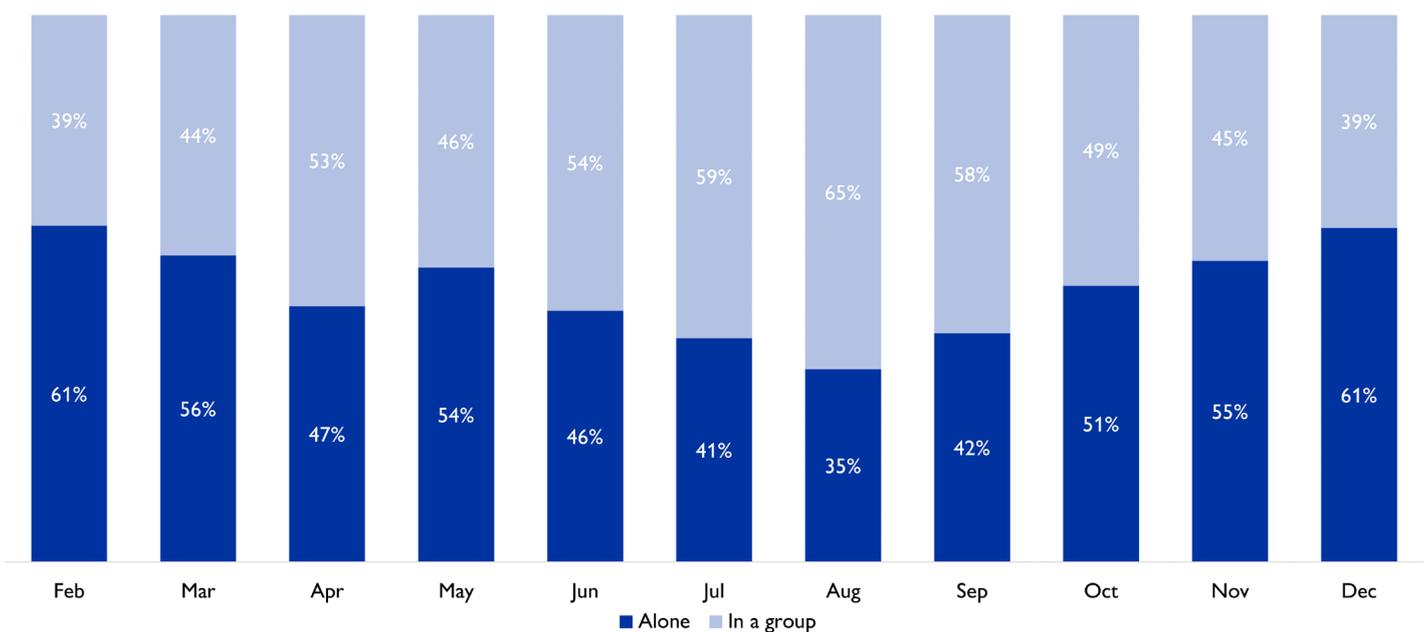


7. Group Composition

The overall percentage of respondents travelling alone and those travelling in a group were very similar, with the former accounting for 48 per cent of the total respondents and the latter, making up 52 per cent of the total. This contrasts the findings from 2022 in Moldova, where the majority of respondents (58%) were travelling alone (IOM, 2023b). When disaggregated by

month, the share of participants travelling alone shows that during the first half of the year, the percentage of respondents travelling alone decreased from 61 per cent in January to 46 per cent in June. This trend reversed during the second half of the year, with the percentage of respondents travelling alone increasing from 41 per cent in July to 61 per cent in December.

Figure 24: Distribution of respondents by travel mode and by month, (%)



A breakdown by gender reveals that the shift in travel mode is primarily attributed to changes in the travel behaviour of female respondents, who constitute the majority of survey participants. The percentage of women travelling alone exhibited a steady decrease during the first half of the year, dropping from 64 per cent in February to 35 per cent in August. Following this, there was a reversal in the trend, with a constant increase, culminating in 61 per cent by the end of the year. In contrast, the number of men travelling alone

remained relatively stable in the first half of the year, fluctuating between 47 per cent in February and 43 per cent in June. However, it declined to 32 per cent in August, reaching a low of 27 per cent in October, only to spike during the last two months of the year, peaking at 54 per cent. A breakdown by age and gender shows that the largest share of female respondents travelling alone during the reporting period were aged between 50 and 59 years old, while most male respondents travelling alone were aged between 18 and 29 years old.

Out of the total of 8,421 respondents that participated to the survey in 2023, 47 per cent were crossing back to Ukraine with the same group with which they had originally left. Thirty-two per cent were travelling alone, despite having initially left Ukraine with a group. Another 16 per cent had initially left alone and were crossing back alone as well. The remaining five per cent were crossing

back with some of their original group members. Of those travelling in a group (N=4,358), 93 per cent were travelling with family members, four per cent with other relatives, and three per cent with friends, colleagues, or neighbours. The distribution of the disaggregated data by gender did not vary considerably.

Figure 25: Travelling mode by gender and total, (%) (multiple answers possible)

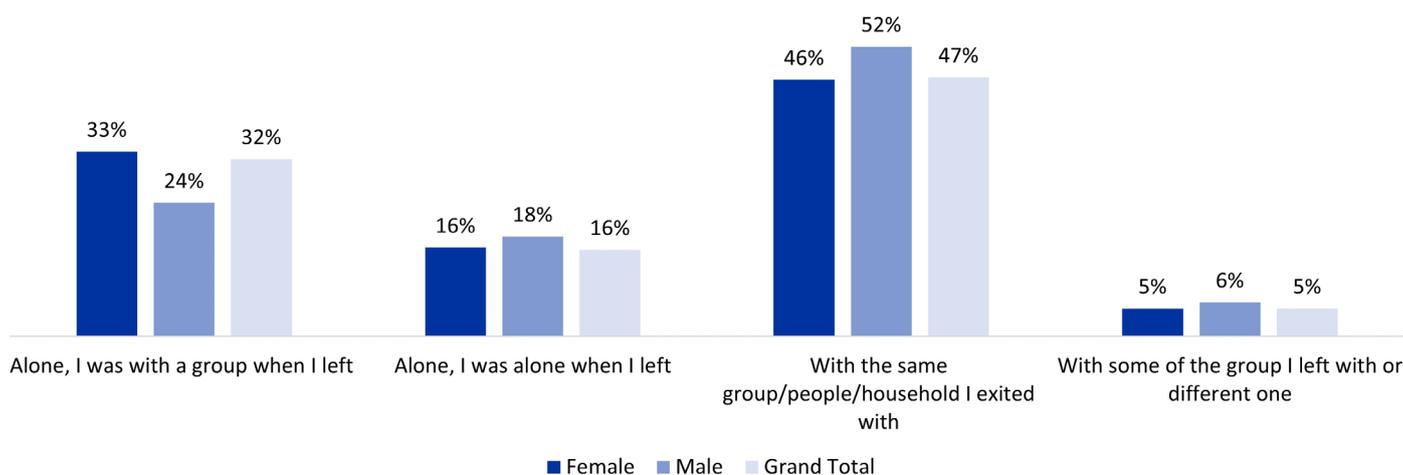
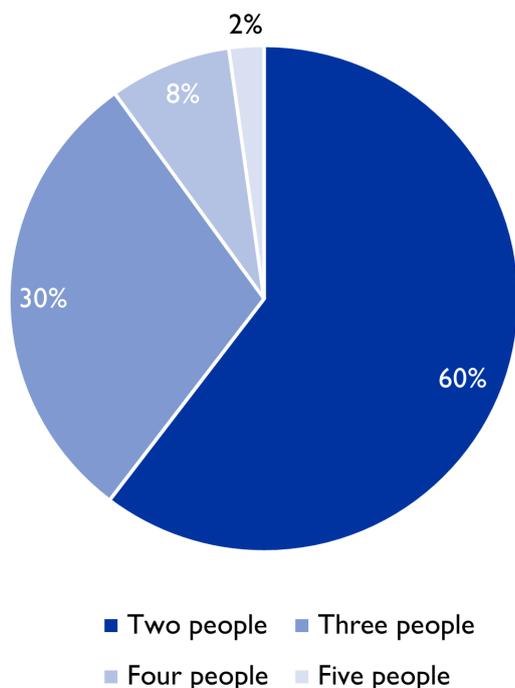


Figure 25: Group size, (%)



The majority (60%) of those that reported to be travelling in a group were accompanied by one other person, resulting in a total group size of two people, including the respondent. Additionally, 30 per cent reported travelling with a group composed of three people, while eight per cent were travelling with a four-person group, and two per cent with a five-person group. On average, the group size was 2,54 persons per group. Of the 4,358 respondents that reported to be travelling with a group, 63 per cent of them were travelling with a group that included children (0 to 17 years old) and 22 per cent were travelling with a group that had at least one elderly person (60 years old or more).



2,54 members is the average group size

8. Methodology

Background

Since 24 February 2022, refugees from Ukraine and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) have been fleeing to neighbouring countries as a result of the war. As of December 31, 2023, about six million refugees from Ukraine were recorded across Europe. At the same time, more than 28 million of border crossings of Ukrainian and Third-Country refugees and migrants were reported from Ukraine into the neighbouring countries since February 2022. IOM has deployed its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools since mid-April 2022 to collect individual surveys in neighbouring countries with persons crossing into Ukraine, with the aim to improve the understanding of main profiles, displacement patterns, intentions and needs of those moving into Ukraine. This report is based on surveys collected in the Republic of Moldova between 16 February and 21 December 2023 in two border crossing points, Otaci and Palanca. To improve the quality of the questionnaire, continuous reviews of the questionnaire and additional questions must be implemented in each iteration of the data collection in the Republic of Moldova as and when necessary.

Methodological framework

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

This survey is part of IOM's DTM activities to monitor the profiles, displacement patterns and most immediate needs of the Ukrainian refugees and TCNs crossing back to Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

In the Republic of Moldova, surveys were conducted in Ukrainian, Russian, and English by IOM's DTM trained teams of enumerators on a mobile application. The interviews are anonymous and carried out one-on-one with respondents, provided they consent to be interviewed after a brief introduction. Enumerators trained on ethics of data collection, information provision and protection principles, approached people crossing back to Ukraine, to verify their willingness to conduct the survey, which was only addressed to adults (18+).

The survey form was designed by IOM to capture the main displacement patterns for refugees crossing back to Ukraine following the outbreak of the war. It analyses the demographic profiles of respondents and of the group they are travelling with, if any. It asks about intentions relative to permanence in Ukraine; and it gathers information regarding a set of main needs at the moment of the interview. Various settings were identified to conduct surveys, maximize the number of interviews, and reach out to different profiles of individuals.

Among the limitations encountered during data collection were the reduced time to carry out surveys at border crossing points and the presence of only four enumerators at the moment of the interviews.

To address the aforesaid shortcomings, and cover different viewpoints, a mixed sampling strategy guided the data collection exercise.

Consequently, this analysis does not proportionally represent the whole population and results cannot be deemed representative of a full picture of mobility towards Ukraine from the Republic of Moldova.

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.