

UKRAINIANS AND THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

2023 REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Special focus on Quarter 4

Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine

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Cover photo: Ukrainian refugees and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) arrive at the Nyungati train station in Budapest, Hungary. © IOM 2022

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Q4 2023 KEY FINDINGS

Demographics



6,089

RESPONDENTS

Ukrainians 99%
TCNs 1%



93%



7%

Countries of Stay

52% in one of the neighbouring countries: Hungary, Poland, Rep. of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia

45% in other European countries: mainly in Germany (13%), Czechia (10%), Austria (5%), Bulgaria (3%), United Kingdom (3%)

3% in a non-European country

Top 5 needs

(multiple answers possible)



Financial support
29%



Personal safety & security
35%



Health services
24%



Medicine
18%



Employment support
11%



None
34%

Oblasts (regions) of origin



62%

are from:

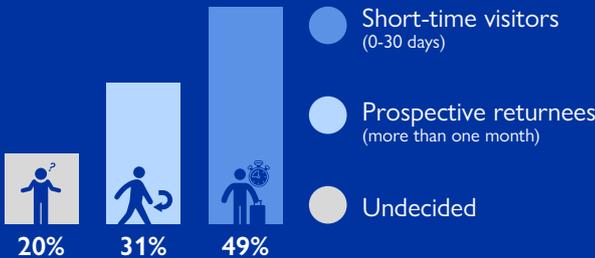
City of Kyiv (17%), Dnipropetrovska (14%), Odeska (14%), Zaporizka (11%), Kharkivska (6%)

Destination

90%

To the oblast of origin

Intentions



Assistance



66%

received aid while abroad

TCNs



86%

left Ukraine because of the war

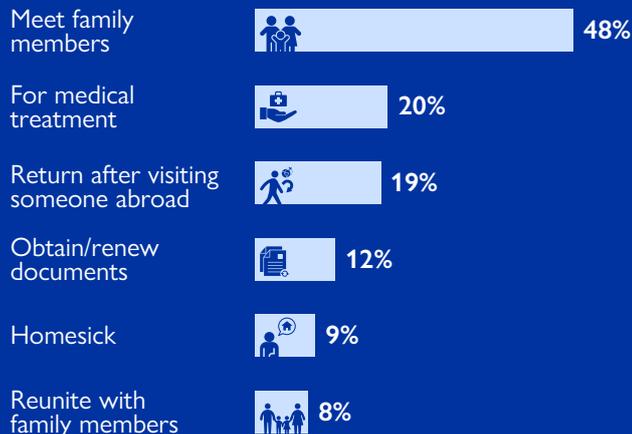


95%

resided in Ukraine 2 years or more

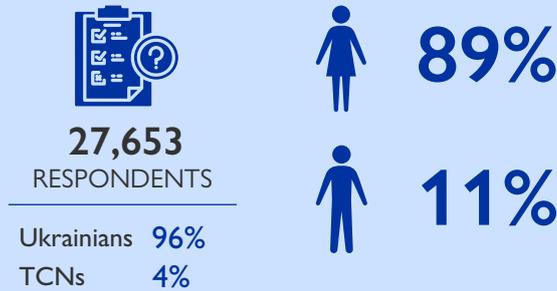
Reasons to cross back

(multiple answers possible)



2023 ANNUAL KEY FINDINGS

Demographics



Countries of Stay

54% in one of the neighbouring countries: Hungary, Poland, Rep. of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia

42% in other European countries: mainly in Germany (11%), Czechia (7%), Austria (3%), Bulgaria (3%), United Kingdom (3%)

4% in a non-European country

Top 5 needs *(multiple answers possible)*



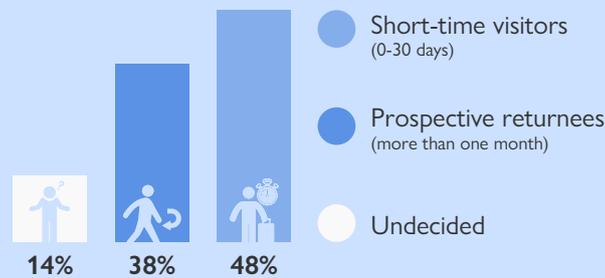
Oblasts (regions) of origin



Destination

90%
To the oblast of origin

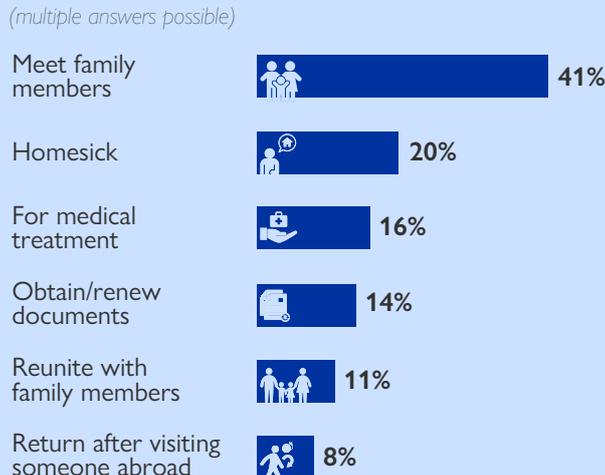
Intentions



Assistance

61%
received aid while abroad

Reasons to cross back *(multiple answers possible)*



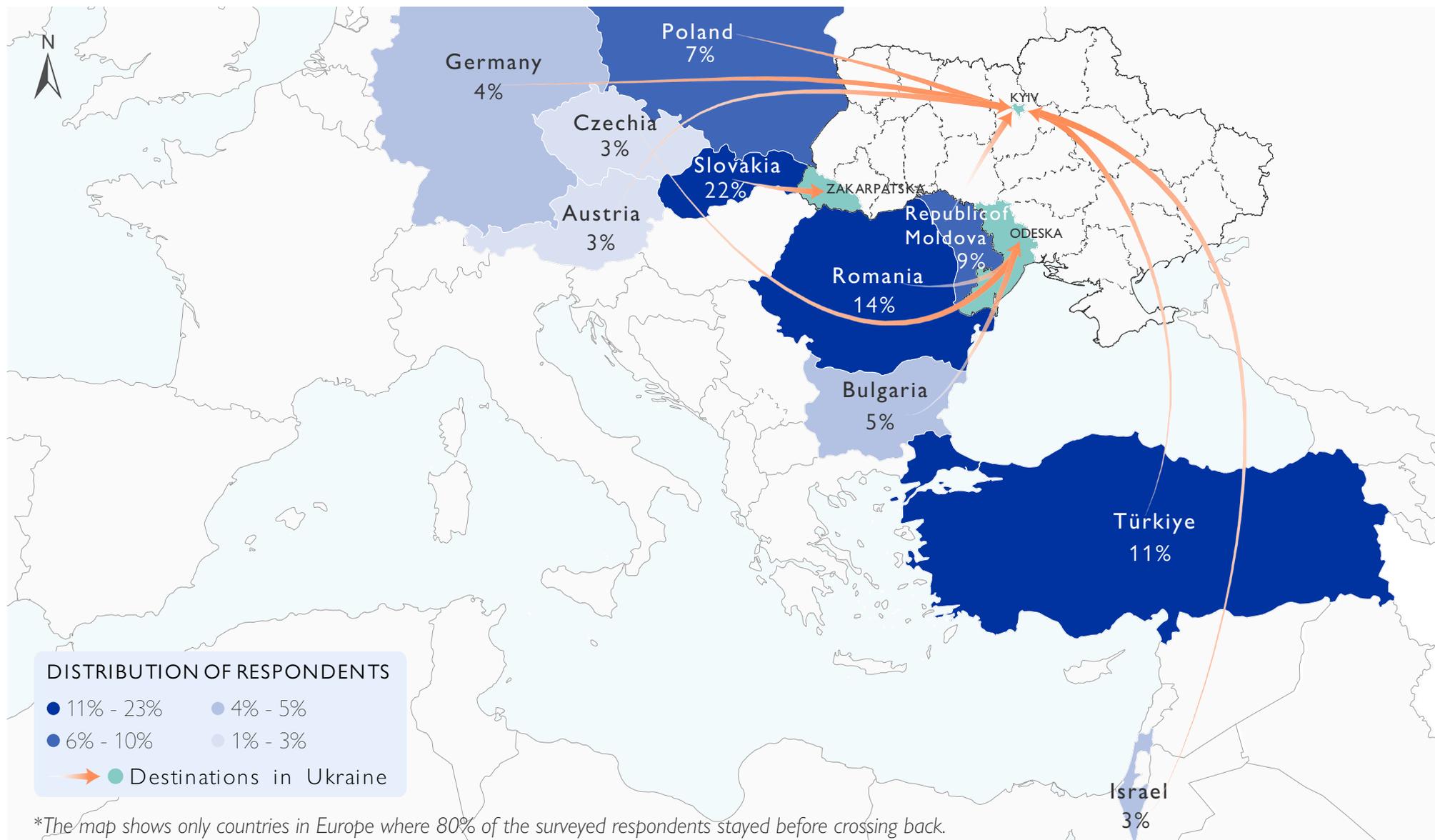
TCNs

86%
left Ukraine because of the war

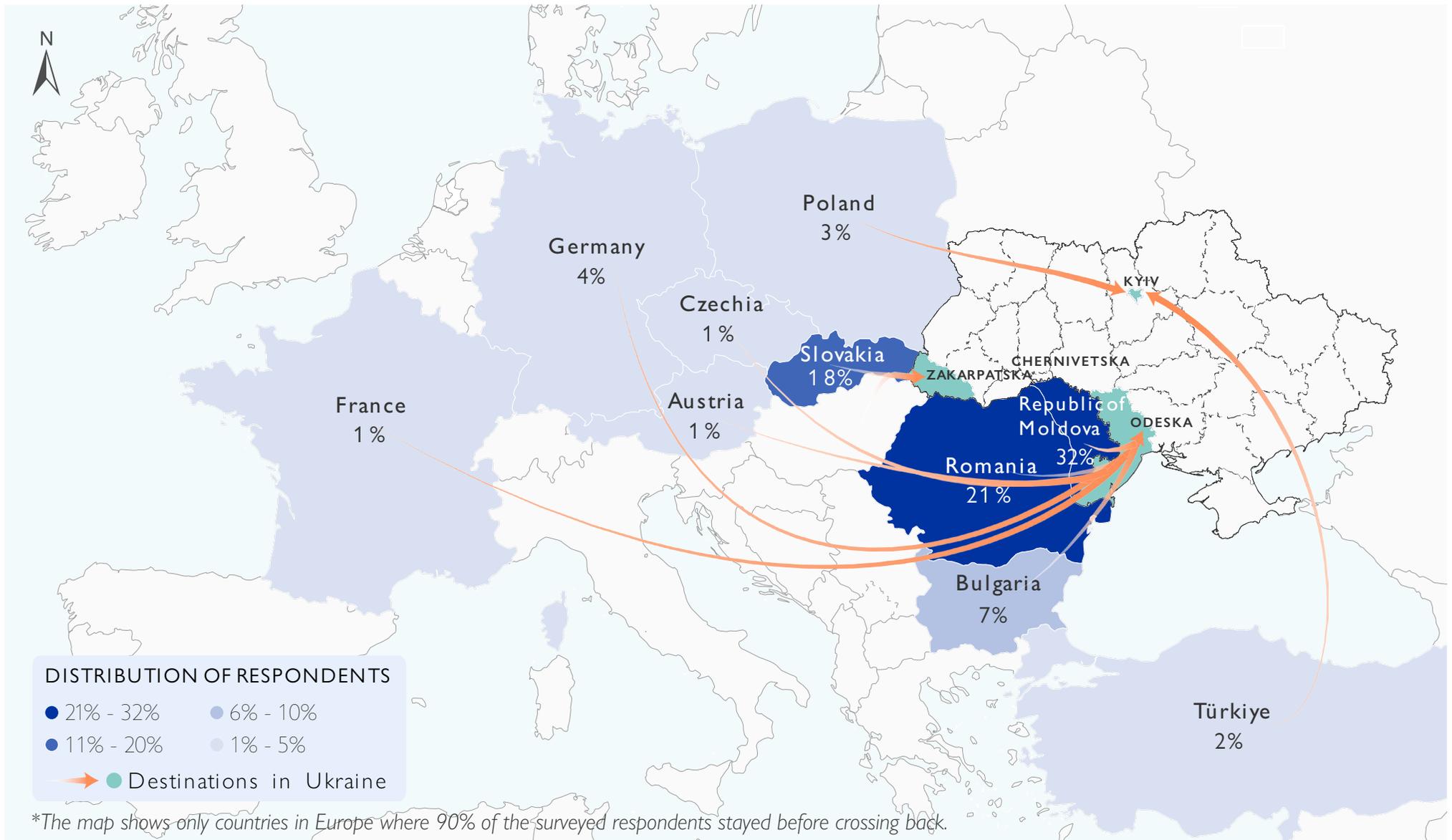
76%
resided in Ukraine 2 years or more

Map 1 and Map 2: Oblasts of destination in Ukraine, by country of stay and by return intention - Q4 2023 (w, %)

TOP OBLASTS OF INTENDED DESTINATION IN UKRAINE BY COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE - PROSPECTIVE RETURNÉES



TOP OBLASTS OF INTENDED DESTINATION IN UKRAINE BY COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE - SHORT-TIME VISITORS



SUMMARY

- In the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2023, there were more short-time visitors (49%) than prospective returnees (31%) among Ukrainians crossing back from neighbouring countries. The remaining one in five respondents (20%) were unsure of the length of their visit. The share of prospective returnees decreased by seven percentage points between the first quarter (Q1) and Q4 of 2023, while the share of those intending on visiting for a short period remained consistent throughout the year. At the same time, the share of undecided respondents grew from 11 per cent in Q1 to 20 per cent in Q4, denoting increasing uncertainty over the course of the year around respondents' plans while crossing back into Ukraine.
- Among both short-time visitors and prospective returnees, the desire to visit or reunite with family members were the most prevalent motivators for crossing back.
- More than half (51%) of Ukrainians interviewed spent the majority of their time abroad in one of the neighbouring countries where the survey took place (Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia). Slightly less than half (45%) spent most of their time outside of Ukraine in other European countries (namely Germany, Czechia, and Austria) and a minority (4%) stayed mostly outside of Europe (namely Turkey).
- Consistent with earlier quarters in 2023, financial support (28%) and health services (23%) were among the priorities of respondents at the moment of crossing back to Ukraine. The share of those who had no immediate needs while crossing back decreased from 51 per cent in the second quarter (Q2) to 34 per cent in Q4, indicating an increasing share of respondents have immediate needs.
- Those transiting into Ukraine for a short visit on average have been in displacement for twice as long (18 months) as prospective returnees (8 months).
- Over one-third (35%) of respondents crossing back into Ukraine originate from oblasts in the eastern part, while almost one in five originate from the southern region (19%), and one in six originate from the city of Kyiv (17%). Smaller proportions of respondents originate from the west (13%), center (9%), and northern regions (7%). Among respondents who were not returning to their oblast of origin, over two out of five (42%) stated that their oblast of origin is unsafe.
- In Q4, two-thirds (66%) Ukrainian respondents surveyed reported having received humanitarian assistance while abroad, which is much higher than the beginning of 2023 (37% in Q1).
- Ukrainians transiting from Latvia through the Russian Federation to reach eastern areas of Ukraine (not controlled by the government) have in general a different profile than those crossing from neighbouring countries into western Ukraine. Most originate from areas in three oblasts (Doneska, Luhanska, and Zaporizka) which are temporarily not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. Among them, there are more prospective returnees than short-time visitors, with the desire to reunite with their family members, and with a widespread need of more information about Ukraine and recent developments on the ground.
- Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) have often spent long periods in Ukraine (more than 5 years) before being displaced abroad because of the war in Ukraine. Most of those interviewed when crossing back from neighbouring countries plan to resume their studies or take exams to avoid interrupting their education cycle and career.
- The profiles and needs provided by Ukrainians crossing back from neighbouring countries and surveyed in Q4 2023 match to a large extent the needs reported by Ukrainians who had returned by December 2023 ([IOM Ukraine Return Report Round 15](#)).
- Prospective returnees, those who aim to return and remain in Ukraine, demonstrated at much lower rates that they have received humanitarian assistance (36%) compared to short-time visitors (84%).

DATA COLLECTION PERIODS – 2023

Q1
January to March

Q2
April to June

Q3
July to September

Q4
October to December

Unless noted otherwise, data cited in this report is compiled from the DTM survey with Ukrainians and TCNs Crossing Back to Ukraine, deployed from January to December 2023 in Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, and Latvia. All numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number for ease of use and weighted for the number of border crossings to Ukraine registered within the same time frame. The full spectrum of results is also presented in country-level reports released on a quarterly basis and available on the page <https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response>.

1. INTRODUCTION

As of December 2023, 3.7 million people were internally displaced in Ukraine (IOM Ukraine GPS 15) and 6.4 million refugees were recorded across Europe and beyond (UNHCR). Additionally, almost 4.5 million persons were estimated to be returnees in Ukraine after a period of previous displacement; of them, about 25 per cent (or 1.1 million) of those who returned to their place of origin were returnees from abroad (IOM Ukraine 2024, Return Report GPS Round 15).¹

Between February 2022 and December 2023, the number of total border crossings from Ukraine into neighbouring countries reached 28.5 million, and 20.7 million border crossings were registered as crossing in the opposite direction by Ukraine's border authorities. While some persons crossing back into Ukraine intend to remain, others may be engaging in short visits or pendular movements between border areas for a variety of reasons.²

This report presents evidence on persons crossing back to Ukraine from abroad distinguishing between those who aim to remain in Ukraine for longer periods (prospective returnees) and those who plan to pay a short visit (short-time visitors).

The findings are based on 27,653 surveys collected by DTM in 2023 and focuses in particular on the 6,086 surveys of adult

individuals going to Ukraine conducted between October and December 2023 (Q4). About 99 per cent of those who were surveyed were Ukrainians, and one per cent Third-Country Nationals (TCNs).

Sections 2 to 7 focus on Ukrainian nationals met at the border areas of neighbouring countries to Ukraine: Hungary (38), Poland (900), Republic of Moldova (2,585), Romania (1,102), and Slovakia (1,411). Results are weighted for the number of border crossings into Ukraine from each country during the data collection period.

In Section 8, evidence on persons interviewed while crossing back is complemented with data on returnees from abroad collected by DTM in Ukraine.³

The report also discusses the different profiles of Ukrainian nationals surveyed in Latvia (50 in Q4, 485 in all quarters of 2023) while crossing to the Russian Federation with the aim to reach areas of Ukraine which are under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation (Section 9). Additionally, Section 10 is dedicated to TCNs crossing into Ukraine from abroad (58 in Q4, 559 in all quarters of 2023). The report concludes with a short section elaborating on the [Methodology](#).

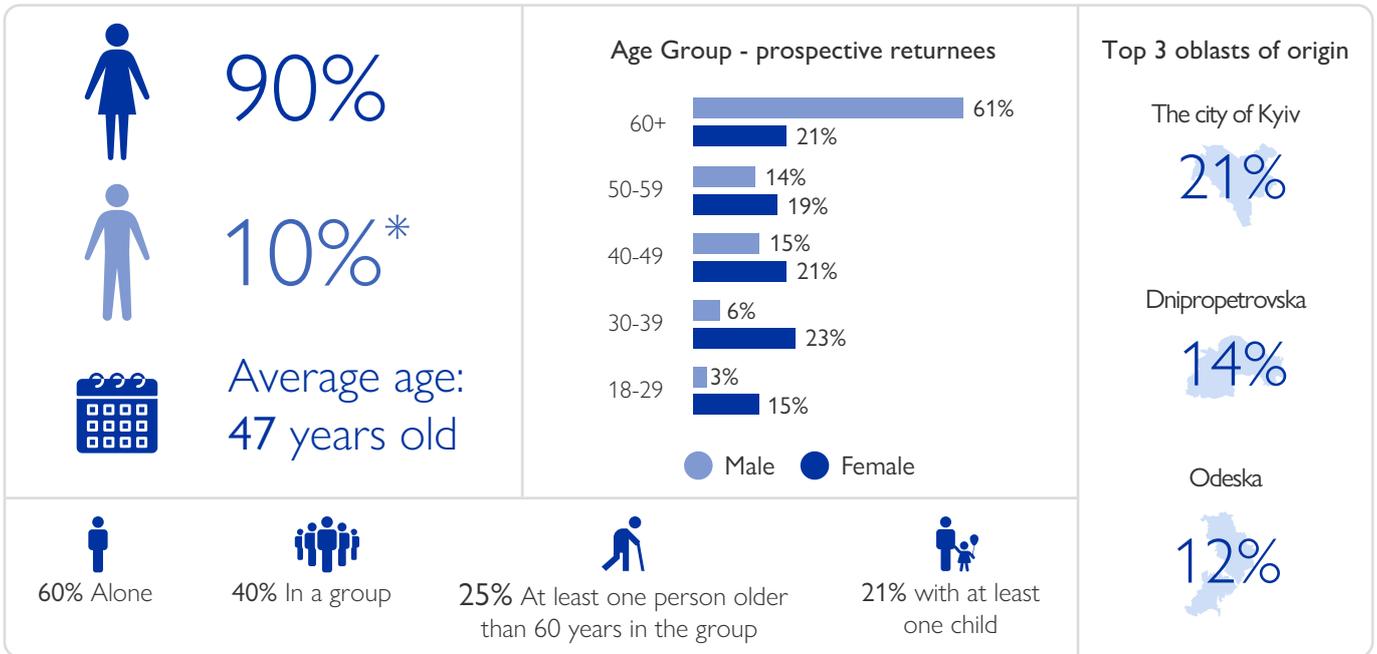
Figure 1: Number of crossing back surveys with Ukrainians and TCNs by country and quarter in 2023

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
 Hungary	637	203	375	38	1,253
 Latvia	30	181	224	50	485
 Poland	795	2,047	930	900	4,672
 Republic of Moldova	912	2,174	2,901	2,585	8,572
 Romania	2,256	867	1,601	1,102	5,826
 Slovakia	988	1,914	2,532	1,411	6,845
TOTAL	5,618	7,386	8,563	6,086	27,653

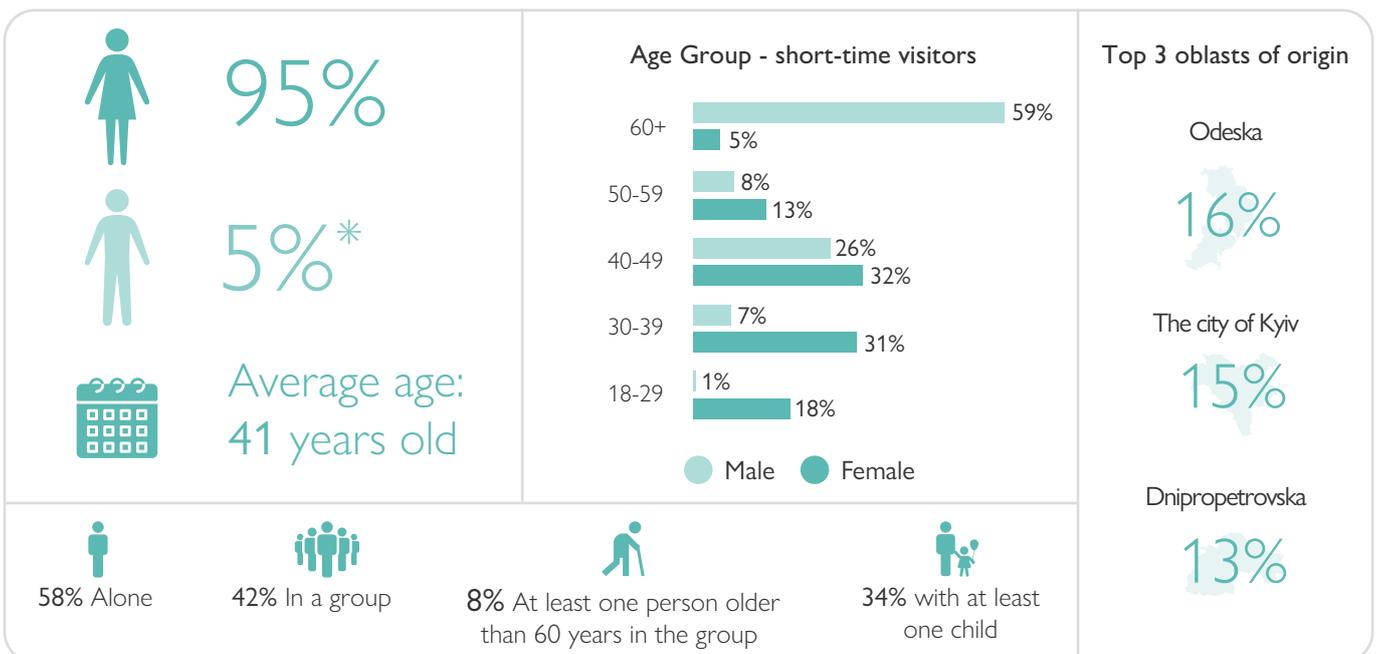
1. According to the definitions adopted by IOM's DTM Return Report, "returnee" from abroad excludes those who have come back to Ukraine from abroad but who have not returned to their places of habitual residence in the country. (IOM Ukraine 2024, Return Report GPS Round 15).
2. The IOM glossary defines 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.
3. For a more comprehensive discussion on returns from abroad and from within the country, please check the IOM Ukraine Return Report GPS Round 15.

2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES (31% OF RESPONDENTS IN Q4 2023) INTEND TO STAY



SHORT-TIME VISITORS (49% OF RESPONDENTS IN Q4 2023) INTEND TO VISIT FOR A SHORT TIME



* The small proportion of men crossing back into Ukraine compared to women is likely influenced by the legal restriction on men's ability to leave Ukraine again if desired. With the declaration of Martial Law across the entire country in February 2022, the Ukrainian government prohibits able-bodied men of conscription age from leaving the country (with some exceptions).

3. INTENTIONS AND REASONS TO CROSS TO UKRAINE

SHORT VISIT OR PROSPECTIVE RETURN

In Q4 of 2023, 31 per cent of Ukrainian respondents intended to stay in Ukraine (prospective returnees), while 49 per cent planned to go for a short visit (short-time visitors). Another 20 per cent were unsure about the length of their visit. For the purpose of the analysis, “short-time visitors” are those who reported an intention to spend between 0 to 30 days in Ukraine, while respondents intending to stay in Ukraine more than one month are labelled as “prospective returnees”. Most of those reporting periods longer than 30 days stated the intention to remain indefinitely in Ukraine.

The share of those intending to return to Ukraine was higher among men (44%) than among women (30%). On the contrary, women were more likely to be crossing into Ukraine for a short visit than men (51% compared to 30%).

The share of prospective returnees decreased by seven percentage points between Q1 and Q4 of 2023, while the share of those intending to do a short visit remained consistent throughout the year. At the same time, the share of undecided respondents grew from 11 per cent in Q1 to 20 per cent in Q4, denoting increasing uncertainty over the course of the year around respondents’ plans while crossing back into Ukraine.

Figure 2: Intention to stay or do a short visit, total (% w) n= 5,978

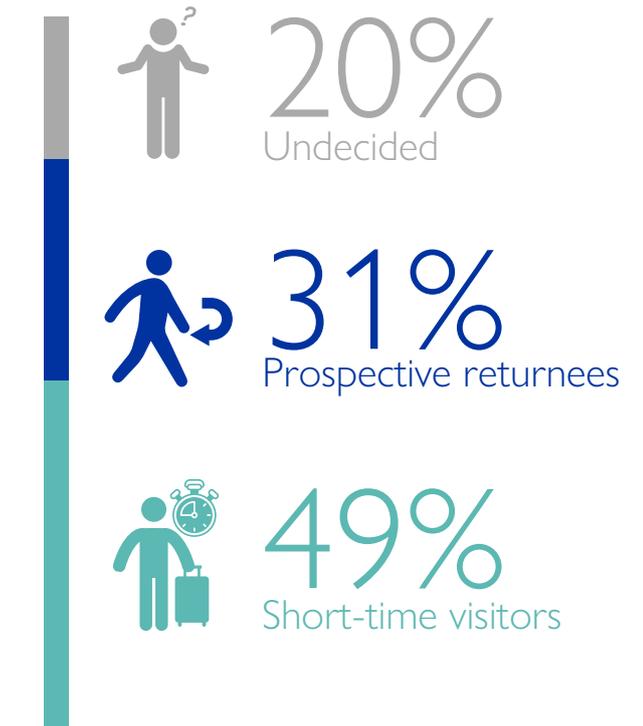
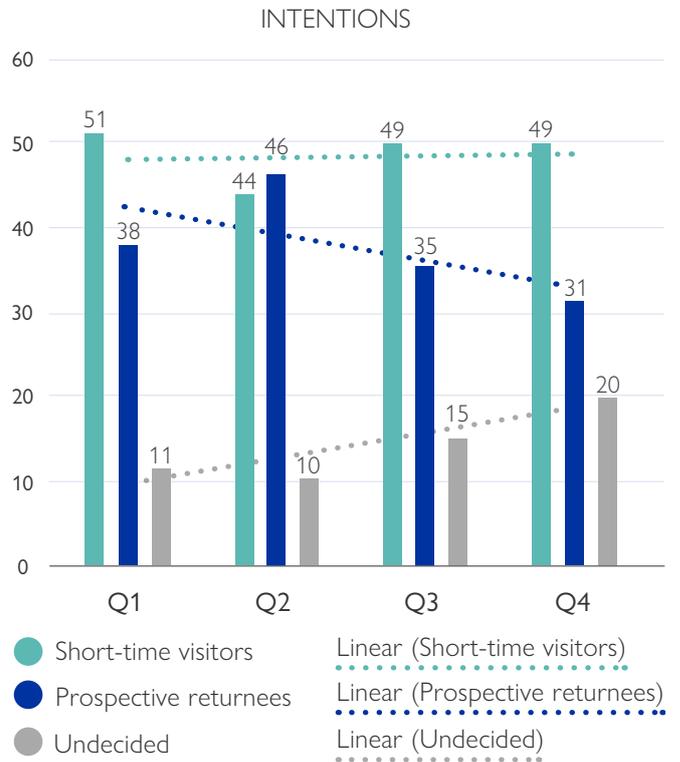


Figure 3: Evolution of intentions by quarter, total (% w) n= 26,611



Most respondents planned to stay at their own houses in Ukraine (85% overall), while others reported to be going to their relatives’ home (7%), or that they would find other private solutions or stay with friends (8%). The share of those planning to be hosted by relatives was higher among short-time visitors (9%) than among prospective returnees (3%).

REASONS TO CROSS BACK TO UKRAINE

In Q4 2023, more than half (53%) of all prospective returnees had been outside of Ukraine to visit relatives or close friends abroad (and thus had left Ukraine with the intention to return soon after), while 19 per cent were returning because they missed their place of origin and 11 per cent wanted to reunite with family members.

Short-time visitors were aiming to visit family members in almost three quarters of the cases (72%). Additionally, about 33 per cent wanted to seek medical care (including doctor visits and examinations from specialists such as pediatricians, dentists, gynecologists, and others) and another 19 per cent needed to obtain or renew identity documents (biometric passport, diplomas, licenses).

Figure 4: Top 5 reasons to stay in Ukraine, prospective returnees (w, %) (more than one answer possible), n= 1,442

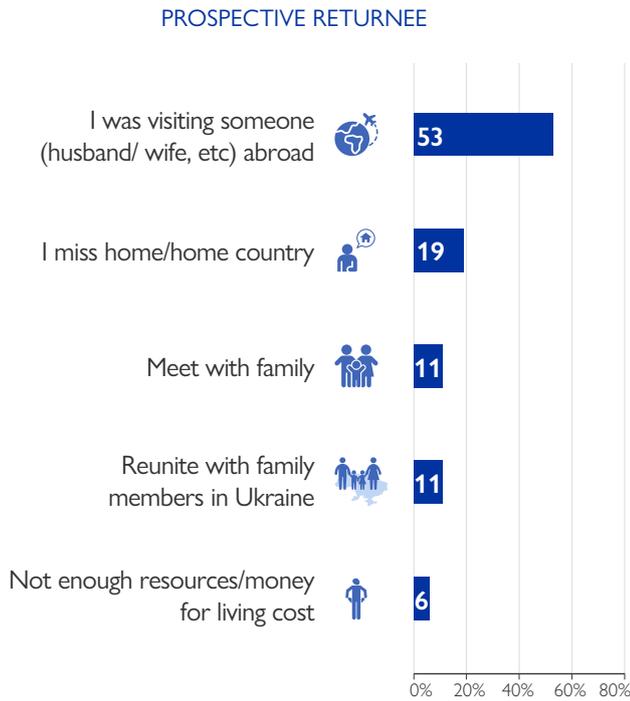


Figure 5: Top 5 reason to do a short visit, short-time visitors (w, %) (more than one answer possible), n= 3,368



Reasons for crossing back may be impacted by some seasonality of movements – with lower or higher numbers of border crossings in specific periods of the year (weather conditions, holidays) – and by changes both in Ukraine and in the country of displacement. As the EU temporary protection regimes have been extended until March 2025,⁴ reasons for short-time visitors remained mostly related to visit family members left behind during 2023. Visiting family remained the most common reasons for a short visit throughout all four quarters of 2023.

The second most common reason for a short visit was to receive medical treatment, which increased over the year, from 20% in Q1 2023 to 33% in Q4 2023 and pointed to a steady and consistent issue related to unmet healthcare needs in the country of displacement.⁵ The third most common reason mentioned by those crossing for a short visit was to obtain or renew documents. One-third of respondents (33%) reported the need to visit to obtain documents in Q2 and around one in five respondents (19%) in Q4 of 2023. Visiting to collect personal belongings decreased over the year (from 22% in Q1 to 9% in Q4 2023). The share of short-time visitors going to Ukraine to help and support family members remain consistent throughout the year.

Among prospective returnees, the intention to reunite with family members decreased from Q1 2023 (34%) to Q4 2023 (22%). The proportion of respondents reporting missing their home country as a reason to return in the long term decreased significantly from 51 per cent in Q1 to 19 per cent in Q4. Meanwhile, the share of respondents going back to Ukraine to visit someone (such as a spouse, children, or friends) increased substantially from 4 per cent in Q1 2023 to 53 per cent in Q4 2023.

“

I cannot get the necessary treatment in Slovakia, so I am going to Ukraine from time to time to seek treatment.

Thirty-nine-year-old man traveling to the city of Kyiv from Slovakia

”

4. EU Council Meeting of 28 September 2023: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2023/09/28/>
 5. See for example, IOM Slovakia (2023).

Table 1: Reasons for crossing back for prospective returnees and short-time visitors, by quarter (% w)

REASONS - PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES		Q1-2023	Q2-2023	Q3-2023	Q4-2023
	I was visiting someone (husband/ wife, etc) abroad	4	0	33	53
	I miss home/home country	51	56	22	19
	Reunite with family members in Ukraine	34	25	21	22
	Not enough resources/money for living cost	7	7	9	6
	I couldn't get a job	4	2	5	5

REASONS - SHORT-TIME VISITORS		Q1-2023	Q2-2023	Q3-2023	Q4-2023
	Meet with family	72	72	73	72
	Receive medical treatment	20	34	28	33
	Obtain/renew documents	25	33	27	19
	Collect personal belongings left in Ukraine	22	17	8	9
	Help other family members/ friends there	8	6	4	9



A DTM enumerator conducts a survey at an aid distribution point in Budapest, Hungary. © IOM 2023

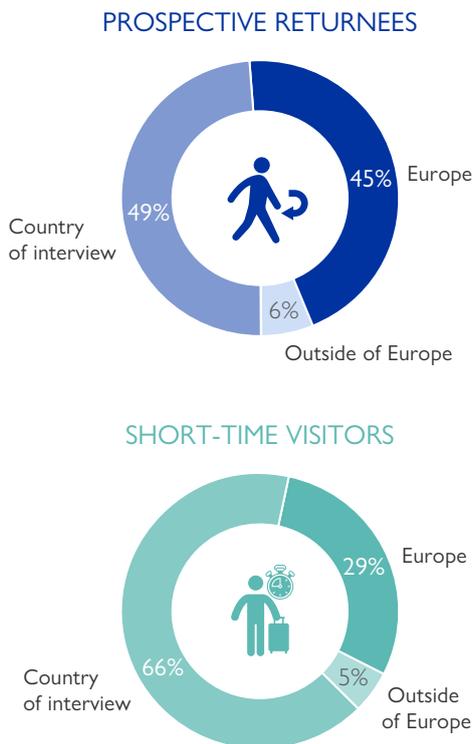
4. TIME OUTSIDE OF UKRAINE

DISPLACEMENT ABROAD

In Q4 of 2023, just over half (54%) of all respondents spent most of their time outside Ukraine in the country where they were surveyed (either Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Republic of Moldova, or Hungary). Forty-five per cent spent most of their time in another European country, including Germany (13% of all respondents), Czechia (9%), and Austria (5%). A small proportion of respondents (4%) spent most of their time in a country outside of Europe (namely Türkiye).

Short-time visitors and prospective returnees are equally likely to have spent their time in a European country other than the one in which they were surveyed (44% each), while a larger proportion (6%) of prospective returnees reported spending a majority of their time in displacement outside of Europe compared to short-time visitors (2%).

Figure 6: Main country of displacement while outside of Ukraine, for prospective returnees (n= 1,500), short-time visitors (n=3,368), and overall (n=5,978) (w, %)



Respondents surveyed in Q4 of 2023 had first displaced from Ukraine and went abroad on average 409 days (about 14 months) prior to the time of the interview. The amount of time since displacement from Ukraine is twice as high among short-time visitors (531 days or 18 months) compared to prospective returnees (231 days, or about 8 months).

Figure 7: Frequency of entry into and exit from Ukraine since February 2022, by return intention (n=4,810)



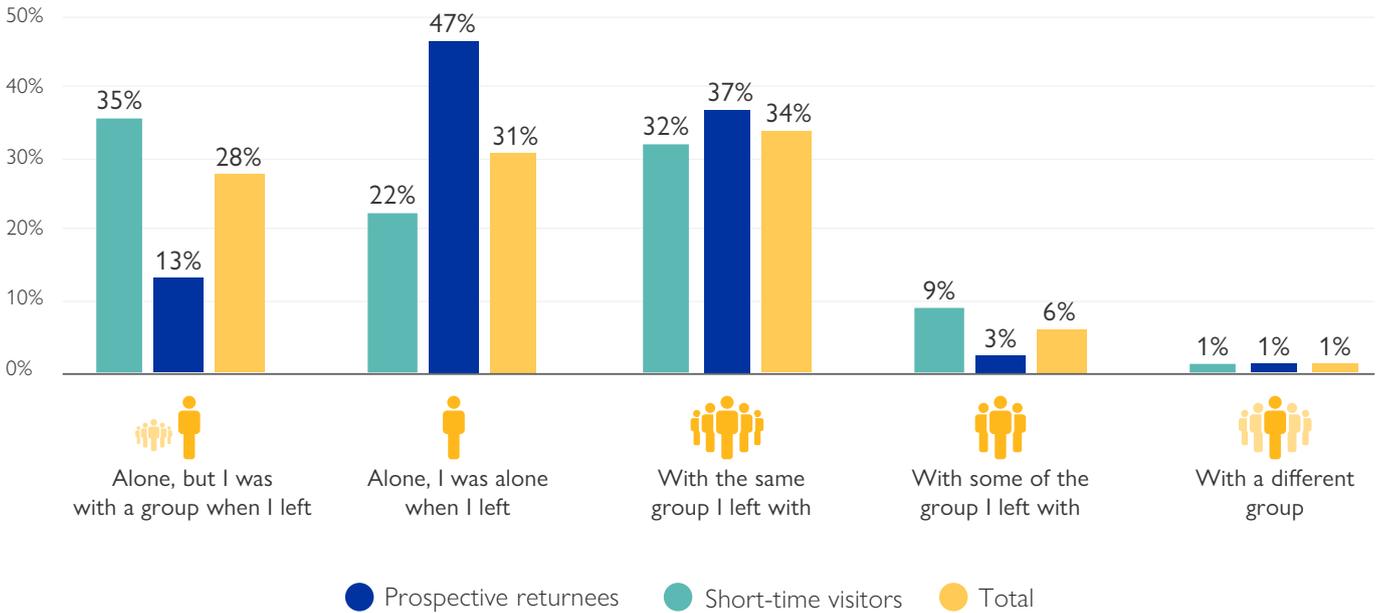
The difference between the two groups is also reflected in the frequency of crossing back and forth into and out of Ukraine among respondents: four out of five (83%) short-time visitors report to have crossed the border two or more times since February 2022, while prospective returnees have made fewer entries and exits (only 67% have made two or more crossings since February 2022).

GROUP COMPOSITION

During Q4 of 2023, almost three out of five (59%) of respondents travelled alone, while 41 per cent moved in a group. Prospective returnees were more commonly traveling alone both when leaving and when crossing back into Ukraine (47% compared to 22% of short-time visitors).

Prospective returnees who left Ukraine in a group were more likely to be accompanied by the same members of the group upon crossing back into Ukraine (37% compared to 32% of short-time visitors). Short-time visitors were more likely to have left Ukraine in a group and be crossing back alone (35% compared to 14% of prospective returnees).

Figure 8: Group composition at crossing into Ukraine by return intention and total (%), n=5,978



Among all respondents surveyed in Q4 of 2023, 28 per cent were crossing back with at least one child (<18 years old). Short-time visitors were traveling slightly more frequently with children (34%) compared to prospective returnees (21%). A larger proportion of women (30%) were traveling with a child

compared to men (12%). A much larger proportion (25%) of prospective returnees reported to be traveling with a group member over the age of 60 compared to short-time visitors (8%).

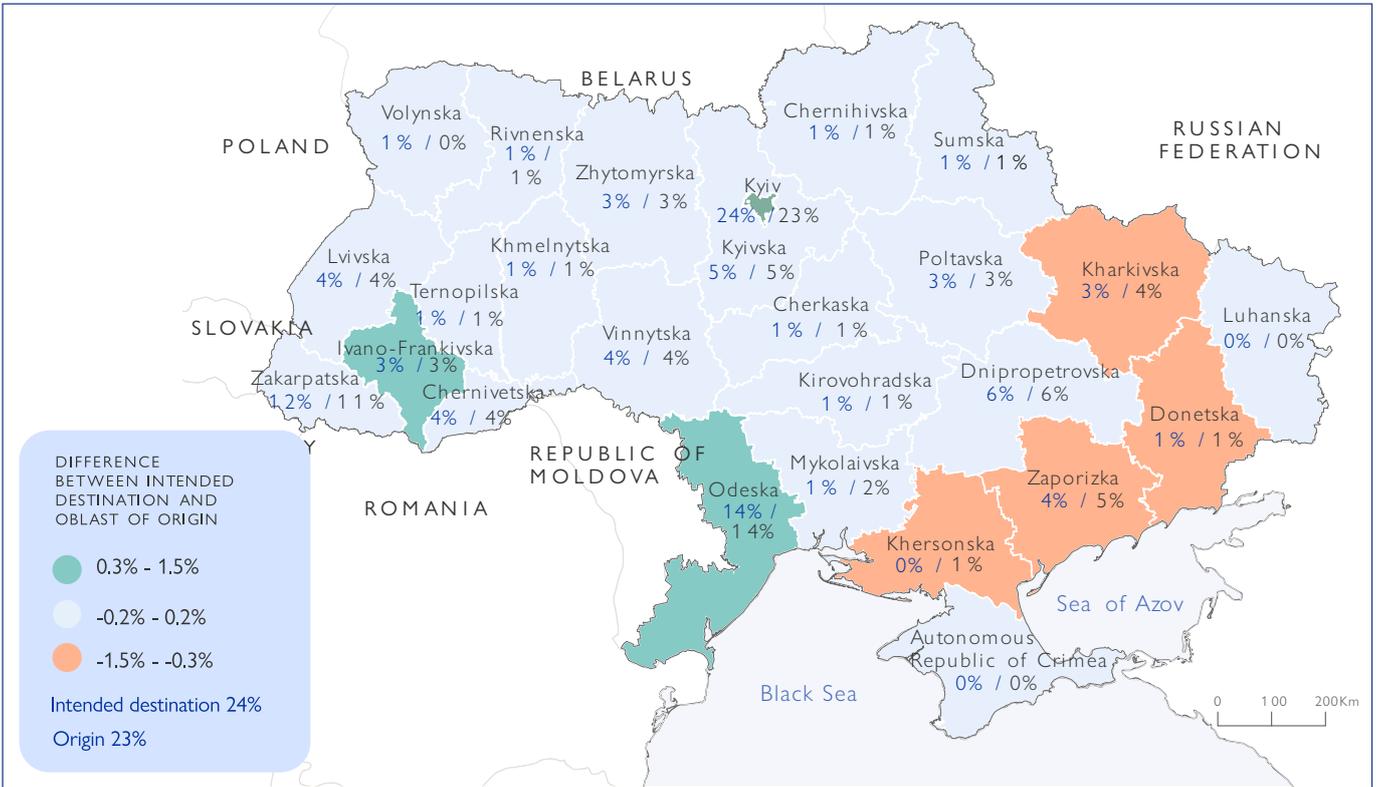


Ukrainian refugees seek safety, information, and aid at the Keleti Railway Station in Budapest, Hungary. © IOM 2022

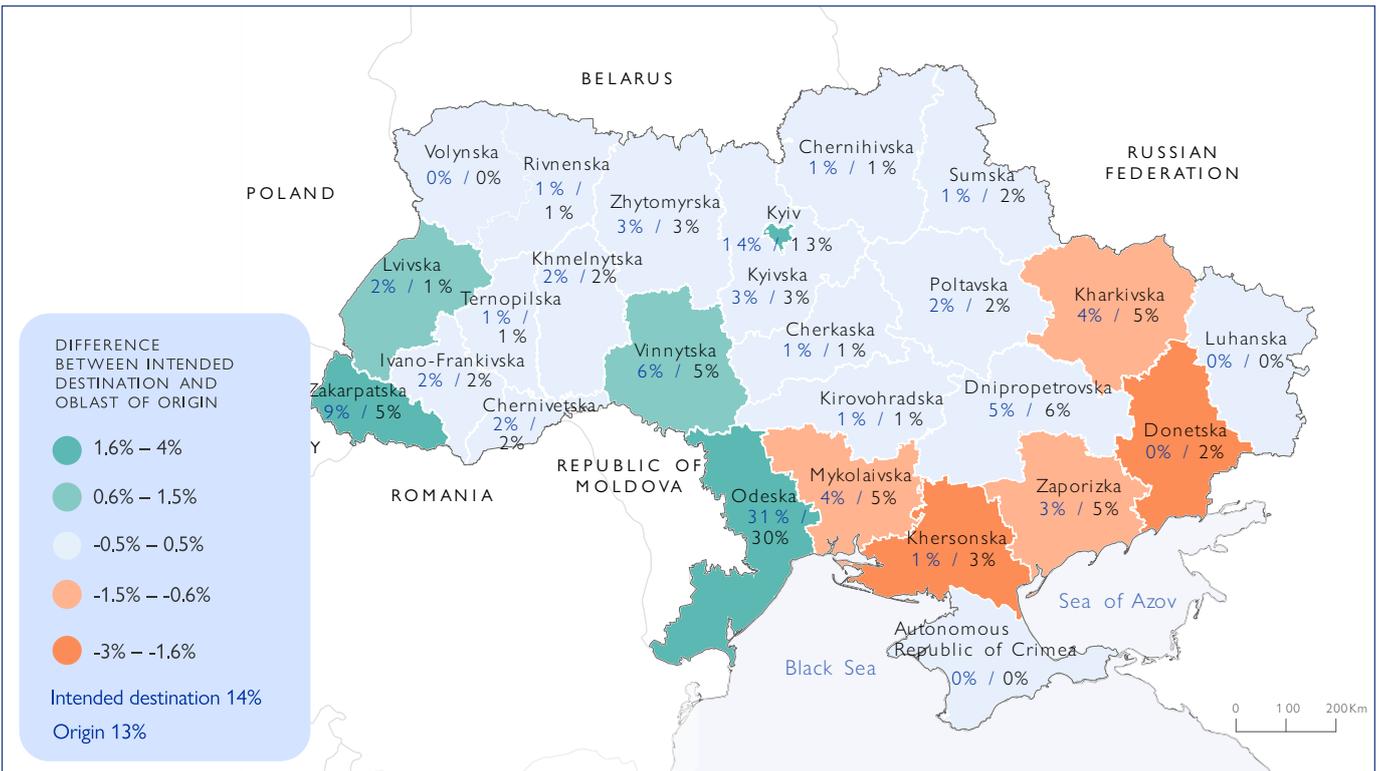
5. OBLASTS (REGIONS) OF ORIGIN & DESTINATION

Map 3: Comparison of oblasts of intended destination and oblast of origin in Ukraine, short-time visitors and prospective returnees, Q4 2023 (%)

OBLASTS OF INTENDED DESTINATION VS OBLASTS OF ORIGIN – PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES



OBLASTS OF INTENDED DESTINATION VS OBLASTS OF ORIGIN – SHORT-TIME VISITORS



The share of respondents from each oblast of origin in Ukraine varied widely across the countries of the survey, but overall, 62 per cent of respondents surveyed in Q4 of 2023 lived in only five regions before being displaced outside of Ukraine: the city of Kyiv (17%), Odeska (14%), Dnipropetrovska (14%), Zaporizka (11%), and Kharkivska (6%).

Over one-third (35%) of respondents originate from oblasts in the eastern part of Ukraine, while almost one in five originate from the southern region (19%), and one in six originate from the city of Kyiv (17%). Smaller proportions of respondents originate from the west (13%), center (9%), and northern regions (7%).

Nine out of ten respondents (90%) intended to reach their oblast of origin. Nine per cent of respondents were traveling to a different oblast, while less than one per cent did not know. The share of those going to an oblast other than their oblast of origin is higher among short-time visitors (13%) than among

prospective returnees (4%), which is consistent with earlier quarters in 2023 (8% of short-time visitors in Q1 did not intend to return to their oblast of origin compared to 4% of prospective returnees, 13% and 5% in Q2, and 14% and 5% in Q3).

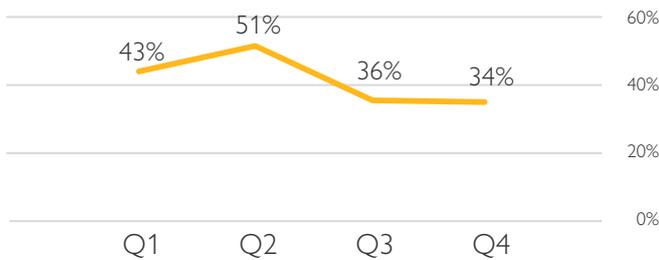
Among those in Q4 who were heading to an oblast that is not their oblast of origin, the city of Kyiv (35%), Lvivska (13%), and Dnipropetrovska (11%) were the primary three destinations.

Among respondents who were not returning to their oblast of origin, over two out of five (42%) stated that their oblast of origin was unsafe and 25 per cent planned to go to a different oblast than where their family is currently located after being displaced. Fifteen per cent were heading to a different oblast because their home in their oblast of origin was damaged, destroyed, or being occupied. There were no significant changes in the breakdown of the reasons why respondents were not returning to their oblast of origin over the course of 2023.

6. NEEDS & ASSISTANCE

The share of respondents reporting no immediate needs upon crossing back into Ukraine fell after Q2 from around half of respondents to just over one-third in Q4, indicating that the level of need among those crossing into Ukraine is increasing.

Figure 9: Share of respondents reporting no immediate needs (n=26,612)



“ I’m going to renew my passport in Ukraine and go back to Belgium because I found a job there. ”

Twenty-four-year-old woman traveling to Lvivska oblast from Romania



An IOM frontline worker offers guidance on living and working in Slovakia to a family from Ukraine in Ubla, Slovakia. © IOM 2022.

TOP NEEDS

Overall, the proportion of respondents who declared they had immediate needs while crossing back is lower than the proportion who had needs upon leaving Ukraine or during their displacement outside of the country.⁶

Personal safety was the most common need among those crossing back: more than one third (35%) of respondents indicated that personal safety is among their needs, which is 10 percentage points higher than in the previous quarter (24%). This marks a significant jump from the three per cent of respondents who cited personal safety as a top need in Q1 of 2023.

Consistent with earlier quarters in 2023, financial support (28%) and health services (23%) were among the priorities of respondents at the moment of crossing back to Ukraine. Personal safety emerged as a top need in the latter half of 2023.

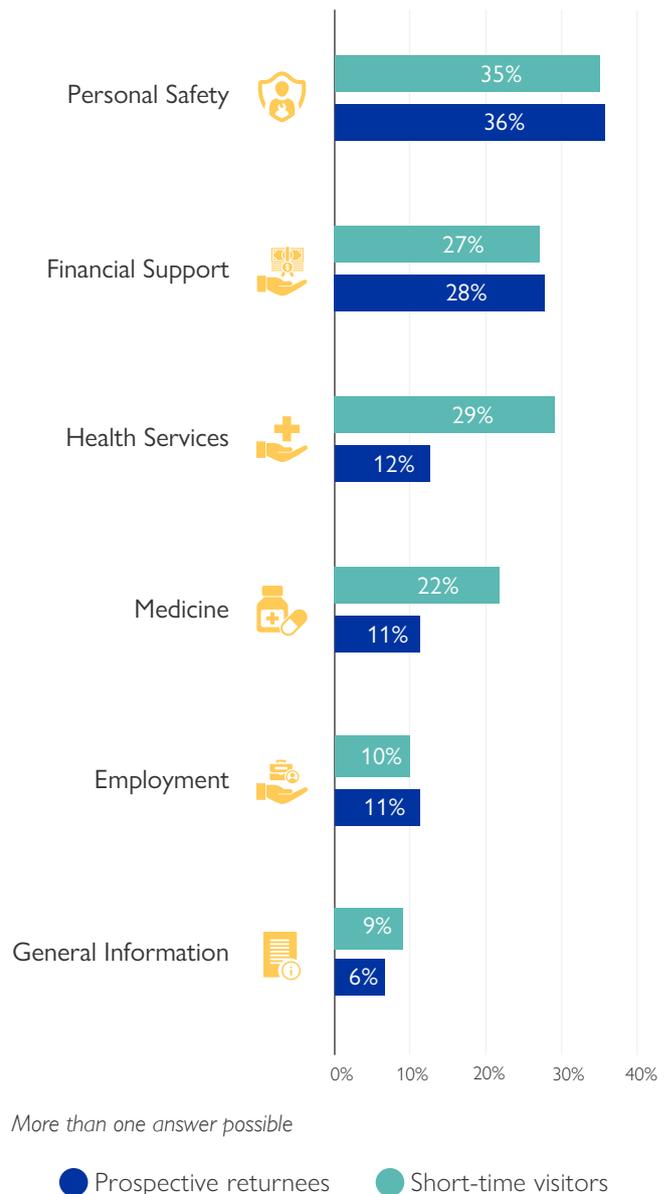
Results differ widely in the frequency of needs among Ukrainian respondents in each country. These variations – besides sampling differences due to field constraints – could be due to factors pertaining to the personal characteristics of the refugee populations in each of the neighbouring countries or to the national context in terms of rights and services granted to refugees from Ukraine under the national temporary protection schemes. The level of public services or the local labour market structure are other potential contributors to these variations.

- In *Hungary*, the main needs were financial support (68%), support with food supply (68%), and with long-term accommodation (53%).⁷
- In *Poland*, personal safety and security were mentioned by 43 per cent of respondents as priority need, followed by financial support (30%), and health services (26%).
- In the *Republic of Moldova*, the main needs were financial support (35%), personal safety (21%), and long-term accommodation (18%).
- In *Romania*, financial support was the top need mentioned by 29 per cent of respondents, followed by personal safety (27%) and general information (24%).
- In *Slovakia*, top identified needs were health services (22%), general information (13%), and medicine (11%).

Short-time visitors demonstrated higher levels of needs overall than prospective returnees. This can be linked to issues that short-time visitors aim at solving during the visit in Ukraine (such as the access to health services or the renewal of expired documents). The proportion of short-time visitors mentioning they have no immediate needs decreased by 10 percentage points over the course of 2023 from 37 per cent in Q1 of 2023 to (27%) by the end of the year.

Almost half (46%) of prospective returnees declared they have no immediate needs in Q4 of 2023, as they may be already more focused on the conditions of return rather than on what was not achieved successfully in the country of displacement. Nevertheless, among prospective returnees the proportion of those with no immediate needs has decreased from around one-half of respondents (51%) in Q2 to just above one third (34%) by the end of 2023.

Figure 10: Top needs by return intention in Q4, (w, %), n=6,028



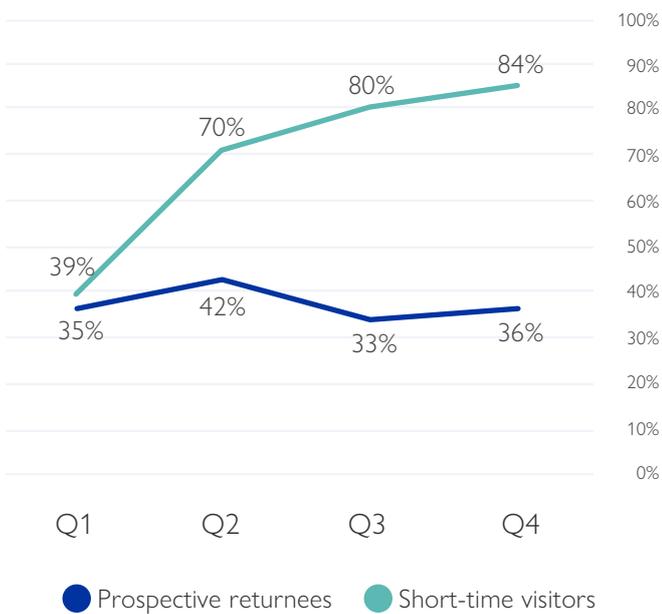
6. Check the IOM's DTM Regional [Dashboard on Needs, Intentions and Integration Challenges](#) survey result (Jan-Dec 2023).

7. Due to fieldwork constraints, the sampling size in Hungary in the Q4 of 2023 was significantly smaller than that of other countries and that of Hungary in previous quarters, totaling 38 respondents.

RECEIVED ASSISTANCE

Two-thirds (66%) of Ukrainian respondents surveyed in Q4 of 2023 received humanitarian assistance while abroad, which is much higher than in Q1 (37%). When comparing respondents in each country, the largest share of those surveyed in Q4 who had received aid were those in Hungary (87%),⁸ followed closely by Romania and Poland (68% each), and the Republic of Moldova (64%). The smallest share of respondents who received aid were those in Slovakia (44%).

Figure 11: Rates of having received humanitarian aid while abroad by return intention (n=27,095)



Prospective returnees, those who aim to return and remain in Ukraine, demonstrated at much lower rates that they have received humanitarian assistance (36%) compared to short-time visitors (84%). This gap emerged between Q1 and Q2 of 2023. In Q1, prospective returnees and short-time visitors responded at similar rates that they received humanitarian assistance while abroad (35% and 39% respectively). By Q2, two out of five (42%) prospective returnees mentioned they received assistance, seven out of ten (70%) short-time visitors said the same. This large gap persisted and widened through the end of 2023.

Two-thirds (67%) of women had received aid compared to just above half of male respondents (56%) in Q4 of 2023. In earlier quarters of 2023, this finding remained consistent (38% of women received aid in Q1 compared to 28% of men, 57% and 48% in Q2, and 63% and 52% in Q3).

Despite the differences in aid acquisition among different subgroups of respondents, only a minority of those surveyed in Q4 experienced difficulties receiving support overall (5%). Thus, the difference in rates of receiving aid is unlikely attributed to a short reach of humanitarian actors to those in need of support, but rather to other reasons. Among the possibilities is that prospective returnees may have higher income levels overall than short-time visitors, hence not requiring humanitarian assistance as frequently as short-time visitors do.

Among the small proportion of respondents (5%) who encountered obstacles in obtaining humanitarian aid, the difficulties were due to delays in receiving financial support or social benefits foreseen in the country of displacement, together with long queues, congestion when accessing basic health services, lack of information, lack of transportation and accommodation to receive the aid, and language barriers.

“ I have temporary protection in Austria. I am going to Ukraine to renew my documents. ”

Fifty-five-year-old woman traveling to the city of Kyiv from Hungary



A DTM enumerator surveys a Ukrainian woman in Lodz, Poland. © IOM 2023

8. Due to fieldwork constraints, the sampling size in Hungary in the Q4 of 2023 was significantly smaller than that of other countries and that of Hungary in previous quarters, totaling 38 respondents.

7. UNEQUAL TREATMENT

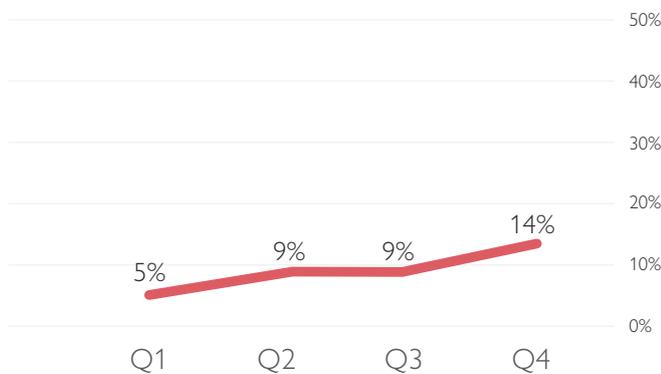
Among the Ukrainians surveyed in Q4 of 2023, 14 per cent said they and/or their family members experienced unfair or unequal treatment based on nationality, ethnicity, or gender since they left their usual place of residence. Women experienced discrimination at higher rates (14%) compared to men (8%). Ukrainians who were in the country for a short time had experienced discrimination at the highest rate (20%), followed closely by respondents with EU Temporary Protection status (18%). Seventeen per cent of those in the country on business and 16 per cent of students indicated having experienced discrimination.

Among the surveys conducted in Q4 of 2023, experiences of discrimination were found at very low rates in the Republic of Moldova (less than 1%) and Romania (2%). In contrast, 18 per cent of respondents in Poland and 9 per cent in Slovakia had such experiences.

Over the course of 2023, the proportion of respondents who experienced discrimination toward them and/or a family member almost tripled, starting at five per cent in Q1 of 2023 and reaching 14 per cent by the end of the year. Throughout all four quarters, Poland and Slovakia remained the two countries in which respondents had these experiences at the highest rates (7% and 11% respectively in Q1, 10% and 12% in Q2, 14% and 13% in Q3, and 18% and 9% in Q4).

Furthermore, women consistently mentioned at higher rates having experienced discrimination toward themselves and/or a family member throughout 2023 compared to male respondents (6% in Q1 compared to 2% of men, 9% in Q2 compared to 4% of men, 10% in Q3 compared to 3% of men, and 14% in Q4 compared to 8% of men).

Figure 12: Share of respondents indicating unfair or unequal treatment of them and/or a family member based on nationality, ethnicity, or gender since leaving Ukraine (n=26,612)



IOM staff provide assistance to Ukrainian refugees at the train station in Záhony, Hungary. © IOM 2022

8. RETURNEES TO UKRAINE FROM ABROAD

The main profiles and needs of Ukrainians surveyed while crossing back into the country align with those of Ukrainians who have already returned to Ukraine from abroad (who were surveyed in Round 15 of IOM's General Population Survey (GPS)).⁹

Among returnees from abroad surveyed upon their return, 90 per cent were women while men represented 10 per cent of returnees. On average, 342 days (11 months) had passed since they returned to Ukraine.

Similar to what Ukrainians surveyed while crossing back declared, the vast majority of returnees who had been displaced abroad stayed in European Union countries (87%) before returning, and almost half of them (46%) in countries neighbouring Ukraine. The main countries of displacement were Poland (35%), Germany (12%), Czechia (8%), Italy (5%), Bulgaria (4%), and France (3%).

Most returnees who were displaced abroad declared they intended to remain in their location of return in the near term

(91%), while a small proportion were considering the possibility for secondary displacement from their area of residence (4%). Four per cent of returnees from abroad indicated they would consider relocation, depending on the evolving situation.

The primary oblasts of return for returnees were not concentrated in specific areas and were spread out throughout the country, with the main regions of return being the capital Kyiv City (15%), and the surrounding Kyivska Oblast (12%), Dnipropetrovska Oblast (13%) in the east, Odeska Oblast (8%) in the south of the country, and Lvivska Oblast (5%) in western Ukraine.

The main needs of the returnees from abroad included: financial support, mentioned by 49 per cent of respondents, followed by power banks and generators (20%), and reconstruction material for shelters (16%).

For more granular data on conditions of return for selected oblasts in Ukraine please see the [Conditions of Returns Assessment Factsheet](#) (February 2024).



A DTM enumerator surveys a Ukrainian refugee at a food aid distribution station in Budapest, Hungary. © IOM 2023

9. In December 2023, as part of GPS Round 15, IOM estimated about 4.5 million returnees in Ukraine: 74 per cent were returnees after internal displacement while the remaining 26 per cent (1.1 million) was returning from abroad.

9. TRANSITING THROUGH THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Between October and December 2023, only 50 surveys¹⁰ were collected at border crossing points in Latvia with Ukrainians who intended to transit through the Russian Federation to non-government-controlled areas in Ukraine (IOM Latvia 2024).

As was observed in the previous quarters, the sample of Ukrainians surveyed in Q4 at two main border areas between Latvia and the Russian Federation is more balanced in terms of gender breakdown than sample of Ukrainians in neighbouring countries. Still, the share of men among those crossing into the Russian Federation decreased from 40 per cent in Q1 to 24 per cent in Q4 of 2023.

As in previous quarters, most respondents in Q4 were travelling alone (78%), while the rest were mainly going towards the Russian Federation with the same group (18%), or with part of the group with whom they left (4%).

Over the course of 2023, Latvia was a transit country rather than the country of displacement when abroad for those interviewed while crossing into the Russian Federation (94% in Q4). Main countries of displacement were Poland, the Russian Federation, Germany, and Czechia. Also, over 2023, 60 per cent of Ukrainians heading towards the Russian Federation are from only three eastern oblasts: Doneska (26%), Luhanska (18%), and Zaporizka (16%).

Among all Ukrainians surveyed in Latvia, half (50%) intended to stay in Ukraine for the foreseeable future, while 29 per cent

were travelling for a short visit and another 20 per cent were unsure. Among both prospective returnees and short-time visitors, the main motivations for crossing back were mainly to reunite with family members, the desire to go back home, and to check on property.

Contrary to what was observed among Ukrainians crossing into Ukraine from neighbouring countries, Ukrainians in Latvia expressed a very high need of general information about Ukraine and the most recent developments on the ground (83%), while only a minority listed other needs such as with food supply (11%) and short-time accommodation support (3%).



DTM enumerators conduct surveys with Ukrainians crossing back into Ukraine at the bus station in Przemysl, Poland. © IOM 2022

“

We are homeless and no longer able to earn money for housing.

Twenty-four-year-old woman traveling to Lvivska oblast from Romania

”

10. Overall, 485 surveys with persons crossing into the Russian Federation were collected in 2023. The small sample size for the quarter is due to changes in access to the border areas by DTM enumerators and the harsh weather conditions for data collection in the field during the reporting period. Please see the [Methodology section](#) for more details.

10. THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS

Alongside Ukrainian nationals, TCNs were also among those crossing into Ukraine. TCNs represented about two per cent of all surveys conducted with persons crossing back to Ukraine in 2023 and one per cent of surveys collected in Q4. Out of the 559 TCNs interviewed in 2023, most (86%) had originally left Ukraine because of the war and almost two thirds (64%) had resided in Ukraine for more than 5 years prior to displacement.

Most TCNs were surveyed at border crossing points (BCPs) with Ukraine in Hungary (55%), and in the Republic of Moldova (27%), but others were also met in Romania (9%), Slovakia (5%), and Poland (4%).¹¹

The top five countries of origin: India (40%), Russian Federation (15%), Nigeria (6%), Republic of Moldova (3%), Azerbaijan (3%), Georgia (3%), and Türkiye (3%). Most (91%) intended to reach the same place of habitual residence they had before displacement abroad. Most TCNs interviewed were going to the city of Kyiv or to the Kyivska oblast (34%), to Odeska oblast (11%), Ternopil'ska oblast (7%), Zakarpatska oblast (7%), and Kharkiv'ska oblast (6%).

Although there were some fluctuations throughout the year, TCNs crossing back to Ukraine during 2023 provided information on some specific characteristics which differentiated them from Ukrainian nationals crossing back. Unlike Ukrainian respondents, more than half of TCNs (57%) were men, while 43 per cent were women. Also, they were younger on average than Ukrainians. Asian and African nationalities in particular tended to be between 20 and 30 years of age, while TCNs from Europe and Caucasus tended to be in their 30s and 40s.

The different profile of TCNs was also reflected in their intentions regarding the length of stay in Ukraine and the reasons why they were crossing back to Ukraine at the time of the survey. More than half (52%) intended to return to Ukraine, while slightly more than a third (34%) were visiting for a short time, and the remaining 13 per cent were unsure. Among those prospecting to return, many expressed the intention to resume their studies, reunite with family members left behind, and be back in an area where the security situation has improved since 2022. Among those intending to do a short visit, collect personal belongings, renew documents, and visit family members left behind were the main reasons listed by TCNs.



We have a shop in Ukraine and we bring cheaper products from abroad. Because of the war, many factories have closed down.

Twenty-four-year-old woman traveling to Lviv'ska oblast from Romania



11. 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.

11. METHODOLOGY

Since March 2022, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has been regularly surveying individuals who were crossing back to Ukraine from neighbouring countries. The aim is to improve the understanding of their profiles, displacement patterns, intentions, and needs. The survey is deployed in five countries neighbouring Ukraine – Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia.

Face-to-face surveys are conducted by a network of more than 70 trained enumerators deployed at selected exit points and transit locations close to the border points with Ukraine. The survey is anonymous and voluntary, administered only after obtaining consent from the respondent. Respondents can stop the survey at any time. The questionnaire is available in Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, and English, and the preferred language is determined by the interviewee. Only fully completed surveys are included in the analysis.

Since March 2023, the survey has also been deployed in Latvia to collect information on Ukrainians who were met at border areas and are intending to move through the Russian Federation to reach occupied areas in western Ukraine.

Since July 2023, the survey section dedicated to intentions was adjusted to reflect more updated understanding of the dynamics of movements from and to Ukraine. A question on “length of stay in Ukraine” measured in number of days has been added (“forever” and “does not know” were also possible). For the purpose of this report short-time visitors are those who report the intention to remain in Ukraine for 30 days or less, while

prospective returnees are those who report the intention to remain for more than 30 days or “forever” in Ukraine.

LIMITATIONS

The sampling framework could not be based on verified figures of refugees from Ukraine and TCNs going towards Ukraine through all land border points where the survey took place. Such verified figures are not consistently available nor are they comparable for all neighbouring countries. The geographic spread of enumerators deployed captures a wide range of locations and modes of travel. Nevertheless, the accessibility of different transit points fluctuates and not all individuals crossing have time (10 to 20 minutes) to respond to the survey. 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.

Results for Ukrainians met in neighbouring countries are weighted for the number of border crossings by Ukrainian nationals into Ukraine from each country during the data collection period. Results for Ukrainians crossing into the Russian Federation and for TCNs crossing back to Ukraine are not weighted.

Whilst the overall sample cannot be deemed as representative, the consistency of data collection in each country and at the regional level suggests that the current sampling framework produces findings of practical value.



IOM staff provide information to Ukrainian refugees at the train station in Záhony, Hungary. © IOM 2022

RESOURCES

IOM Europe. 2023. 'DTM Ukraine Crisis Response page: <https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response>

IOM Europe. 2023. 'DTM Ukraine Crisis Response: [interactive dashboard on Needs, Intention and Integration Surveys](#)' Results (Jan-Dec 2023)

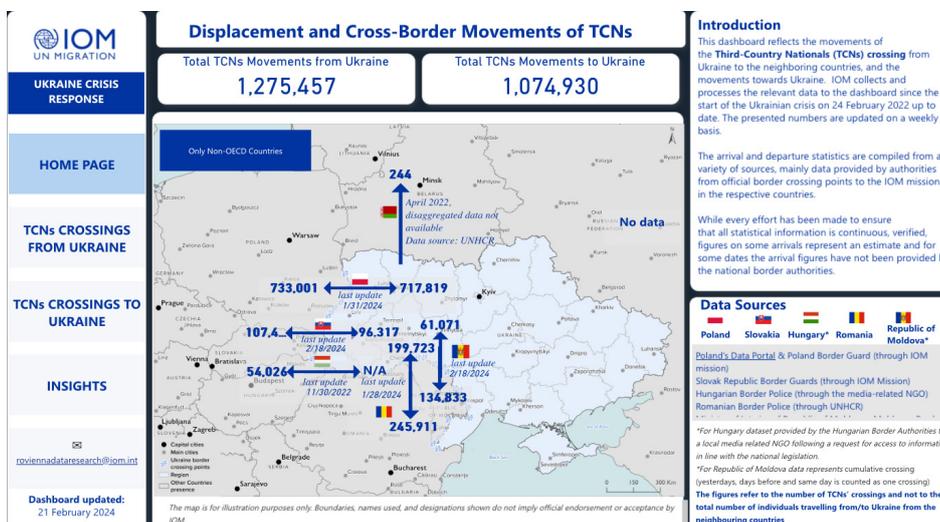
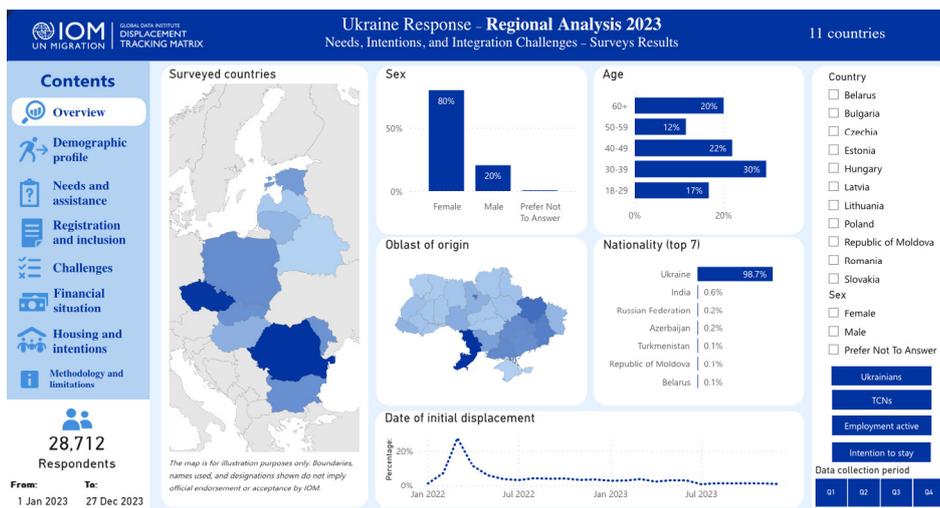
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IOM Latvia 2023. 'DTM Latvia — [On the Way Back: Survey with Ukrainian nationals](#)' (Annual 2023). December. Riga: IOM.

IOM Ukraine. 2023. 'DTM Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 15 (November-December 2023)'. February. Kyiv: IOM.

UNHCR. 2023. 'Ukraine Refugee Situation portal' <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine?s=09>



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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 destinations and prospects of permanence abroad or return; 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.