

POLAND

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

JANUARY-MARCH 2024



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KEY FINDINGS

Demographics



361
Ukrainian
respondents

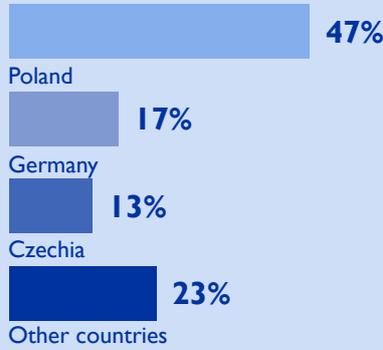
97%
Women



3%
Men



Countries of stay



Oblasts of origin

57%

from: City of Kyiv,
Dnipropetrovska, Zaporizka,
Kharkivska, Odeska

Destination

89%

to the oblast of origin

11%

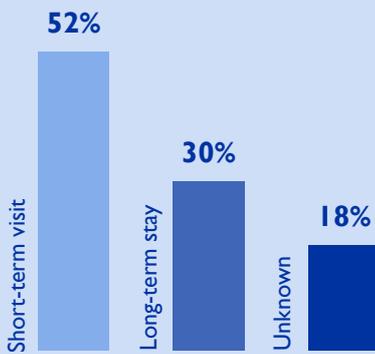
different oblast

Top 5 needs



Multiple answers possible

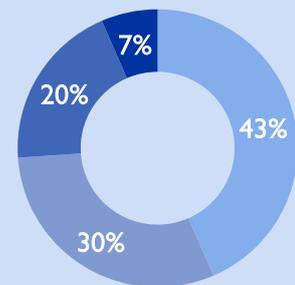
Intentions



Entries and exits

73%

have crossed back to Ukraine twice or more prior to the survey



None Once Twice More

Reasons



Multiple answers possible

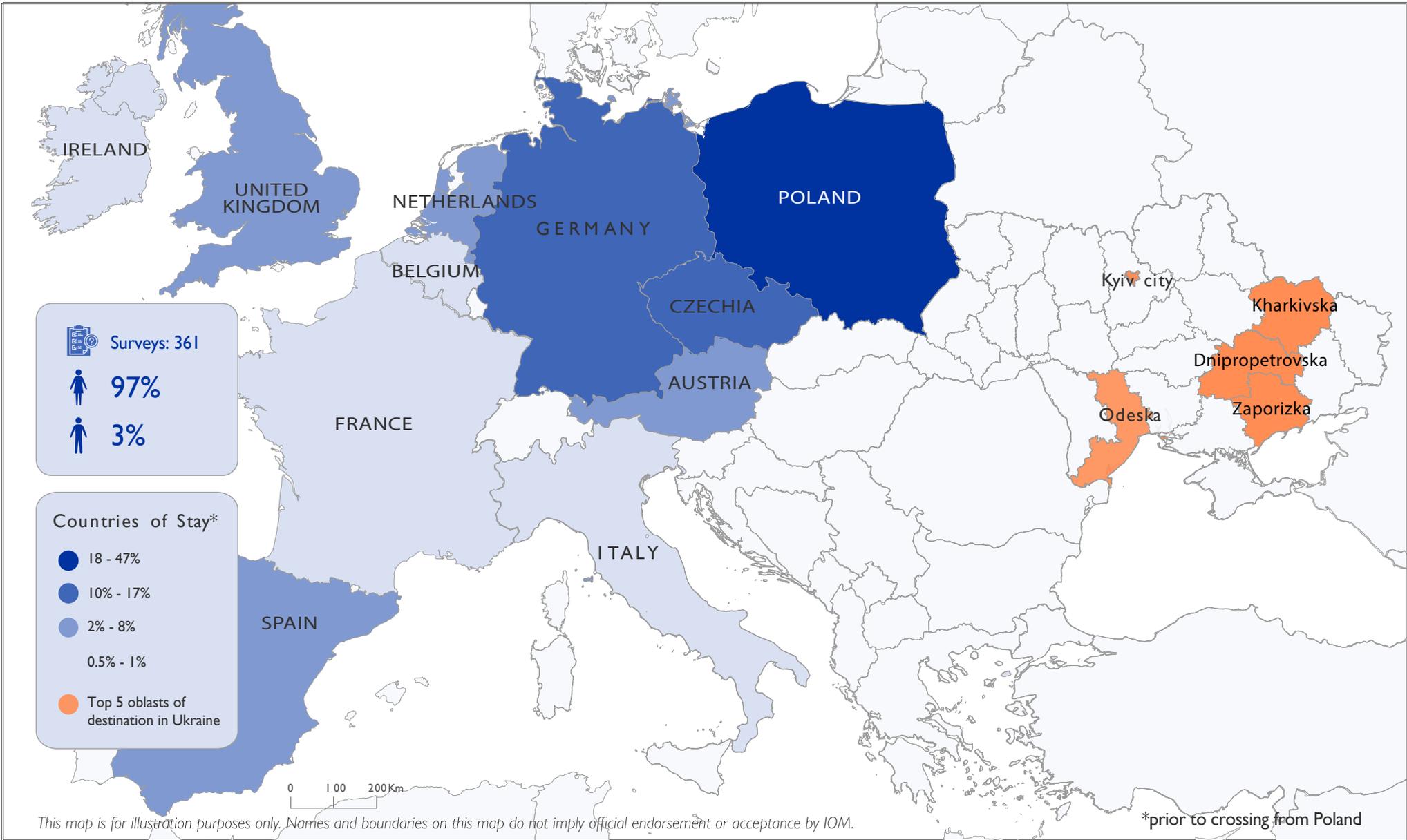
Assistance



62%

received aid
while abroad

Map 1: Main countries of stay and main oblasts of destination among respondents crossing back through Poland, January - March 2024



1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

OVERVIEW

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) collected data on Ukrainian nationals and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) who crossed back to Ukraine from Poland, either for a temporary stay or permanent return after a period of displacement abroad. The survey focuses on the return intentions, duration of displacement, destinations, assistance, and experiences of discrimination of respondents.

For analytical purposes, individuals planning to spend 0 to 30 days in Ukraine are categorized as “short-term visitors,” while those intending to stay longer than one month are identified as “prospective returnees.” A total of 361 surveys were collected between January and March 2024, all of which were completed by Ukrainian nationals. Consequently, the analysis presented in this report is solely based on the responses provided by Ukrainian nationals.

GENDER AND AGE

Among respondents, women constituted 97 per cent, while men made up only 3 per cent. The average age among all participants was found to be 43 years, with women averaging 43 years and men 57 years. Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents, accounting for 30 per cent, fell within the active age range of 40 – 49 years.

The age groups with the highest proportions of female “prospective returnees” were those aged 30 – 39 (23%), followed by the 50 – 59 age category (21%). Conversely, a significant majority of men planning to return were aged over 60 (67%). Among the subset of respondents intending to remain in Ukraine (n=106), the prevailing demographic consisted of women aged 30 – 39, comprising 22 per cent.

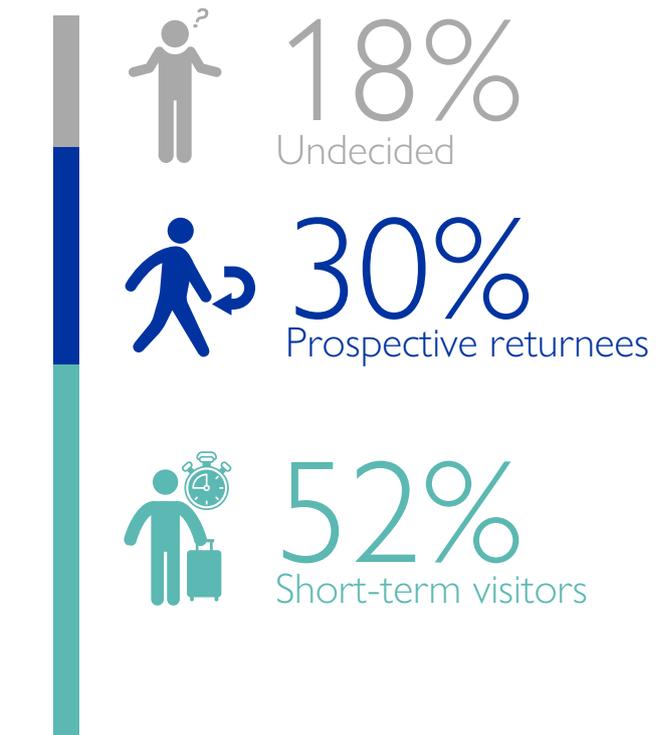
2. INTENTIONS AND REASONS TO CROSS TO UKRAINE

SHORT-TERM VISIT OR PROSPECTIVE RETURN

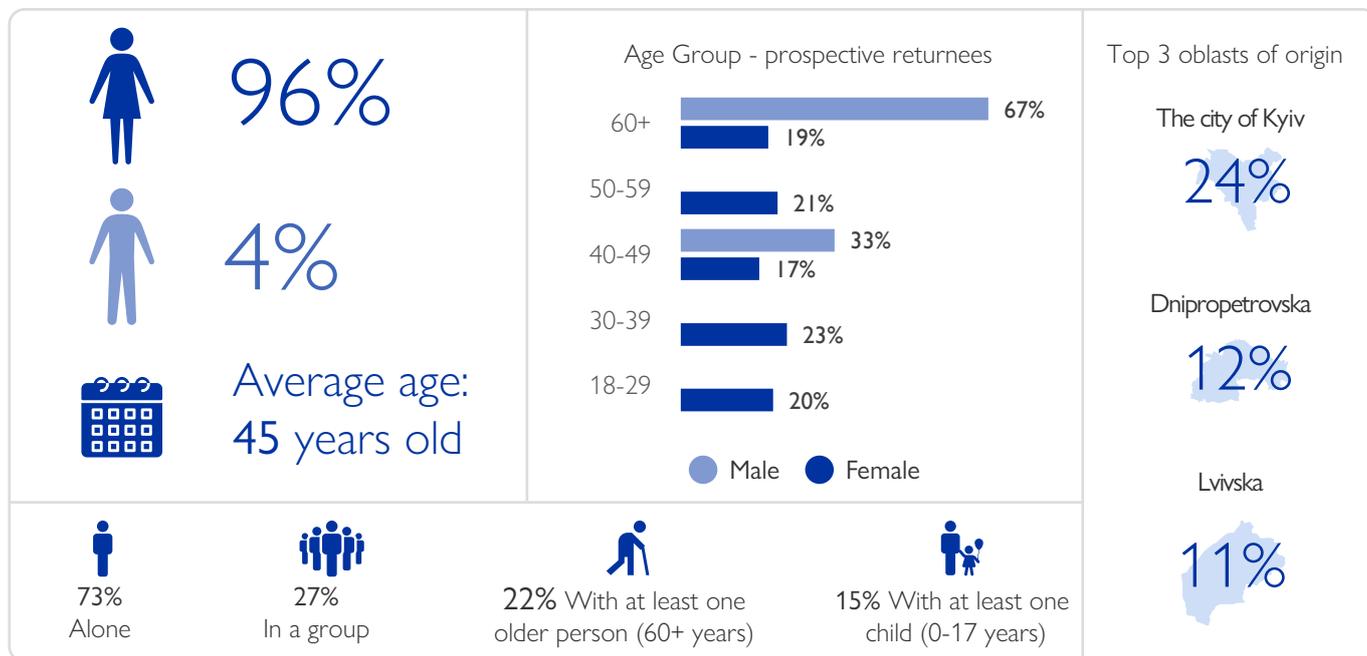
Throughout the reporting period, 29 per cent of respondents expressed their intention to remain in Ukraine (prospective returnees), while 52 per cent planned to make a short visit (short-term visitors). Almost all prospective returnees (96%) indicated they want to remain indefinitely in Ukraine. However, nearly one-fifth of interviewed Ukrainian nationals were uncertain about the duration of their visit.

The majority of respondents (81% overall) indicated their intention to stay in their own homes when returning. Fifteen per cent reported plans to stay with relatives, while 2 per cent stated intentions to stay with friends. Less than 1 per cent expressed a preference for other private accommodation. Notably, a larger proportion of short-term visitors (20%) planned to stay with relatives compared to prospective returnees (3%).

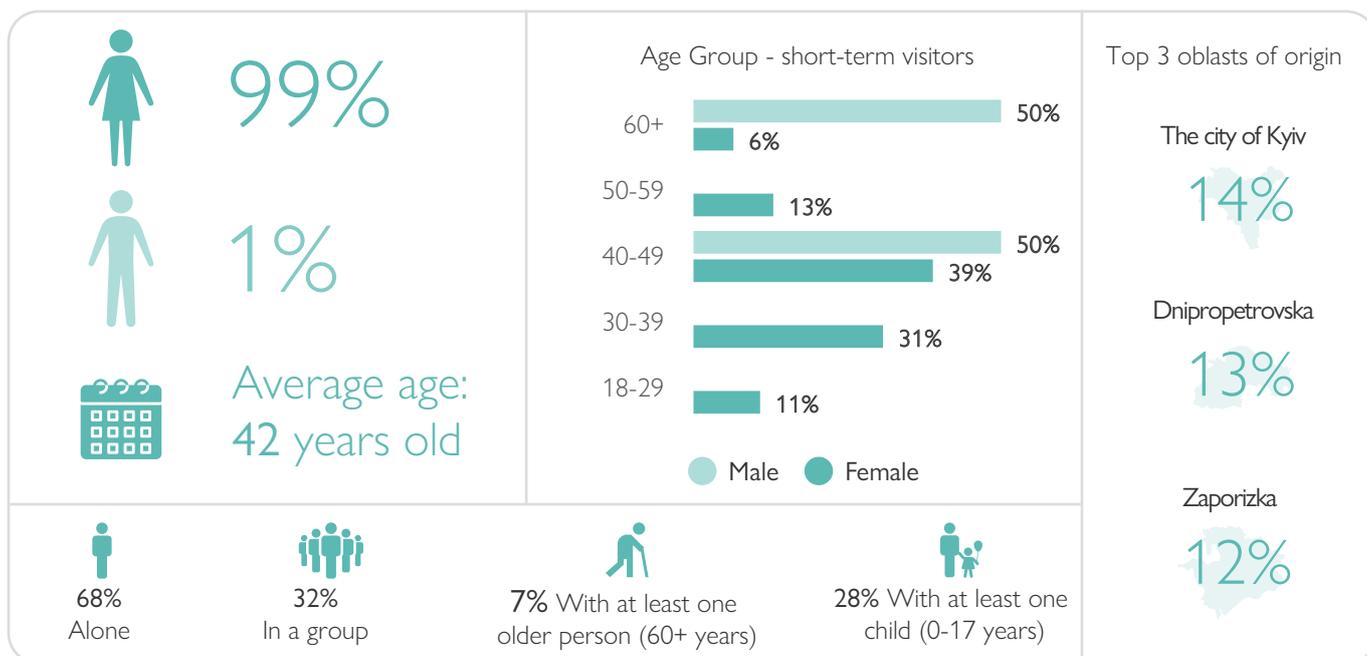
Figure 1: Intention to stay or do a short visit, total (%) n= 361



PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES (30% OF RESPONDENTS) INTEND TO STAY



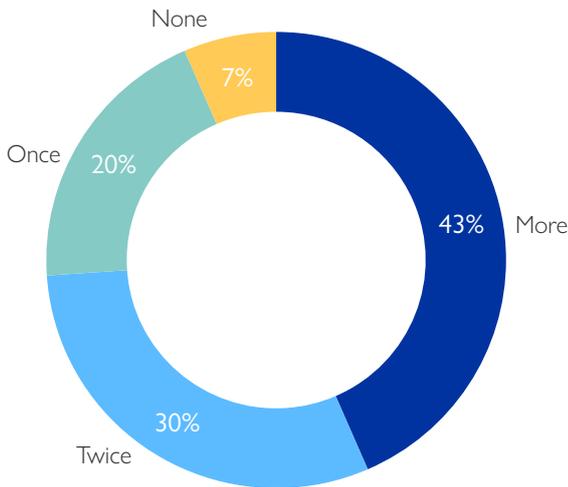
SHORT-TERM VISITORS (52% OF RESPONDENTS) INTEND TO VISIT FOR A SHORT TIME



EXITS AND ENTRIES

Many Ukrainian nationals cross back on a regular basis. Most respondents reported having crossed the Ukrainian border either twice (30%) or more than twice (43%) since their initial displacement.

Figure 2: Number of exits from and entries to Ukraine since 24 February 2022 (%), n=322



REASONS TO CROSS BACK TO UKRAINE

Among prospective returnees, over 6 in 10 respondents (63%) mentioned they were returning from visiting relatives or close friends abroad. Thirteen per cent stated missing home as their reason for returning, while 11 per cent reported their motivation was reuniting with their family members.

For short-term visitors, the main purpose of their visit to Ukraine was to meet family members (90%). Additionally, 40 per cent intended to seek medical treatment, while a smaller proportion (17%) mentioned they needed to obtain or renew identity documents.



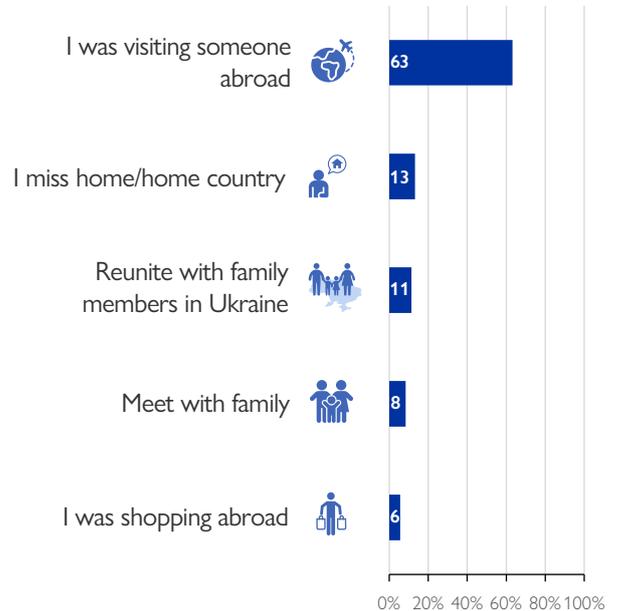
Every day I am told to get back to Ukraine, but I have nowhere to go there. Where am I supposed to go?

Thirty-six-year-old woman, originally from Donetsk oblast, crossing back from Poland



Figure 3: Top 5 reasons to stay in Ukraine, prospective returnees (%), n=106

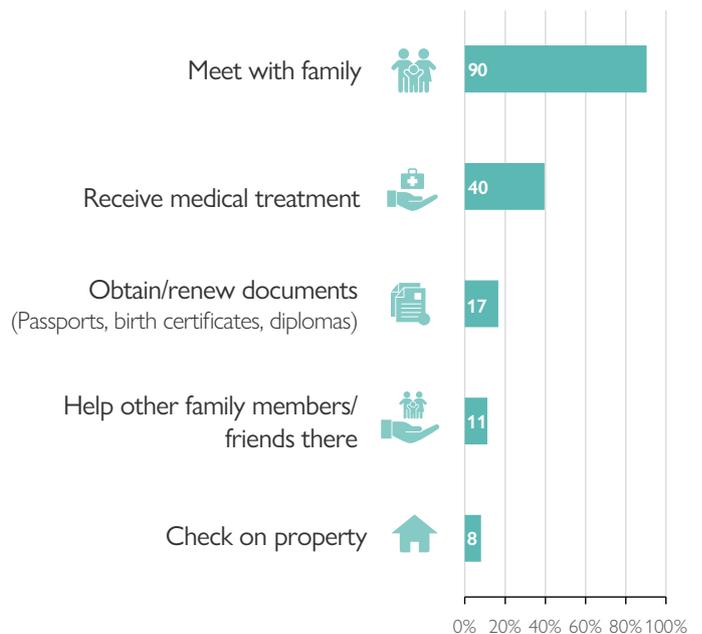
PROSPECTIVE RETURNEE



Multiple answers possible

Figure 4: Top 5 reason to make a short visit, short-term visitors (%), n=187

SHORT-TERM VISITOR



Multiple answers possible

3. TIME OUTSIDE OF UKRAINE

DISPLACEMENT ABROAD

Forty-seven per cent of all respondents were returning to Ukraine after being displaced in Poland. The majority of the remaining respondents stayed in other European countries (52%), particularly in Germany (17%) and Czechia (13%). Only 1 per cent spent time outside of Europe.

Among prospective returnees, the primary displacement countries were Czechia (12%), Austria (11%), Spain, and Germany (5% each). Similarly, short-term visitors returning from displacement primarily came from Germany (25%), Czechia (14%), Austria (7%), and the United Kingdom (5%). Notably, prospective returnees were more likely to have spent their displacement period in Poland compared to short-term visitors (53% vs 43%).

At the time of the interview, respondents had been displaced outside of Ukraine for an average of 434 days (approximately 1 year and 2 months). On average, short-term visitors experienced periods of displacement that were more than twice as long (548 days) compared to those who returned for a permanent stay (221 days).

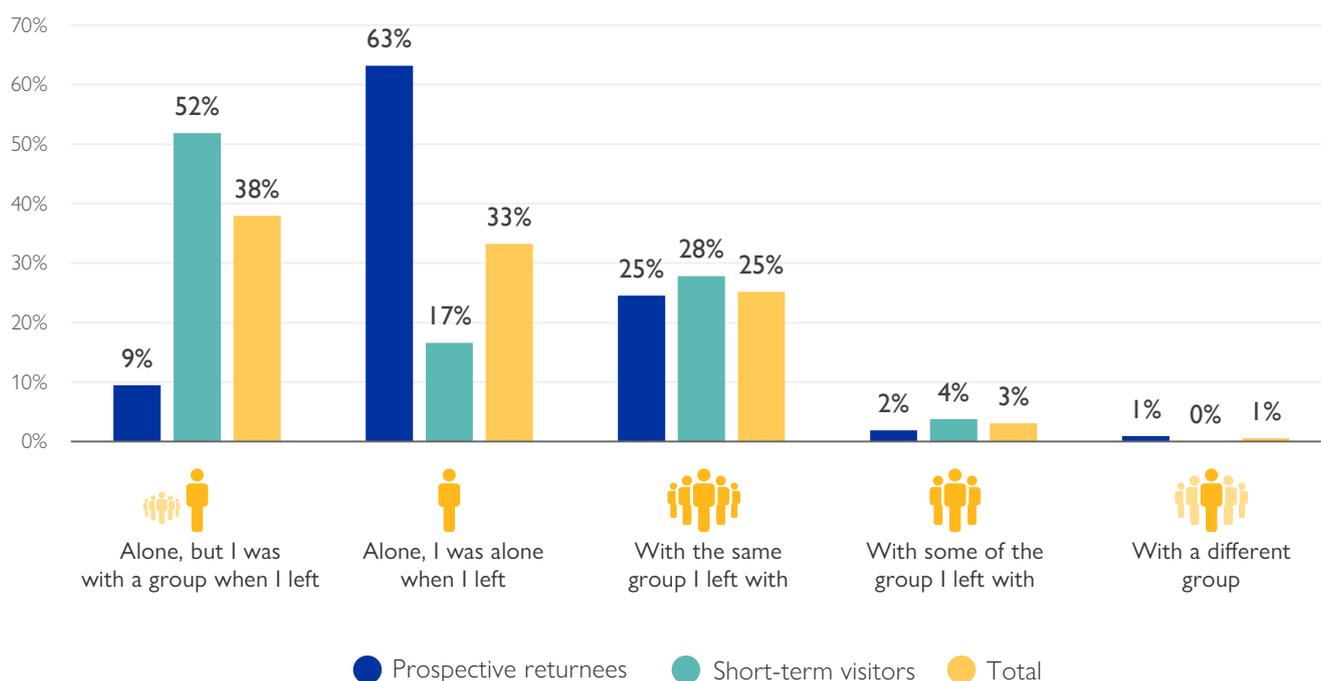
The disparity between the two groups is further highlighted by the varying frequency of border crossings as reported by the respondents. Nearly half (48%) of short-term visitors crossed the border more than two times since February 2022, while 58 per cent of prospective returnees made two or fewer crossings during the same period.

GROUP COMPOSITION

Approximately 71 per cent of respondents travelled alone, while 29 per cent were part of a group. Although prospective returnees and short-term visitors showed no difference in group modality frequency, the majority of short-term visitors who crossed back alone (n=128) had previously journeyed with a group (76%), whereas the majority of prospective returnees crossing alone (n=77) had also initially travelled alone (87%).

Twenty-two per cent of Ukrainian respondents crossed back with at least one child under the age of 18. More short-term visitors travelled with children compared to prospective returnees (28% versus 15%). Interestingly, none of the interviewed men were with children. Twenty-two per cent of prospective returnees were older than 60 years of age, or were traveling with such a person, while among short-term visitors, only 7 per cent were among this age category.

Figure 5: Group composition at crossing into Ukraine by return intention, prospective returnees n=106, short-term visitors n=187, and total n=361 (%)



4. NEEDS & ASSISTANCE

NEEDS

Personal safety emerged as the overall primary need among those crossing back, reported by 43 per cent of respondents, which was then followed by a need for financial support (37%). Other frequent responses included health services and medicines (24% each), and employment (14%). Overall, 14 per cent of respondents reported no needs.

The frequency of reported needs among Ukrainian respondents varied slightly by country. For instance, in Poland, the most frequently reported need was personal safety (45%, n=168), while in Germany, it was health services (39%, n=61). In Czechia, the most commonly reported need was financial support (55%, n=47). These variations could be due to factors pertaining to the personal characteristics of the refugee populations in each of the countries, as well as factors linked to the national context in terms of rights and services granted to refugees from Ukraine under the national temporary protection schemes, the pre-existing level of public infrastructures (such as public services), and the local labour market structure.

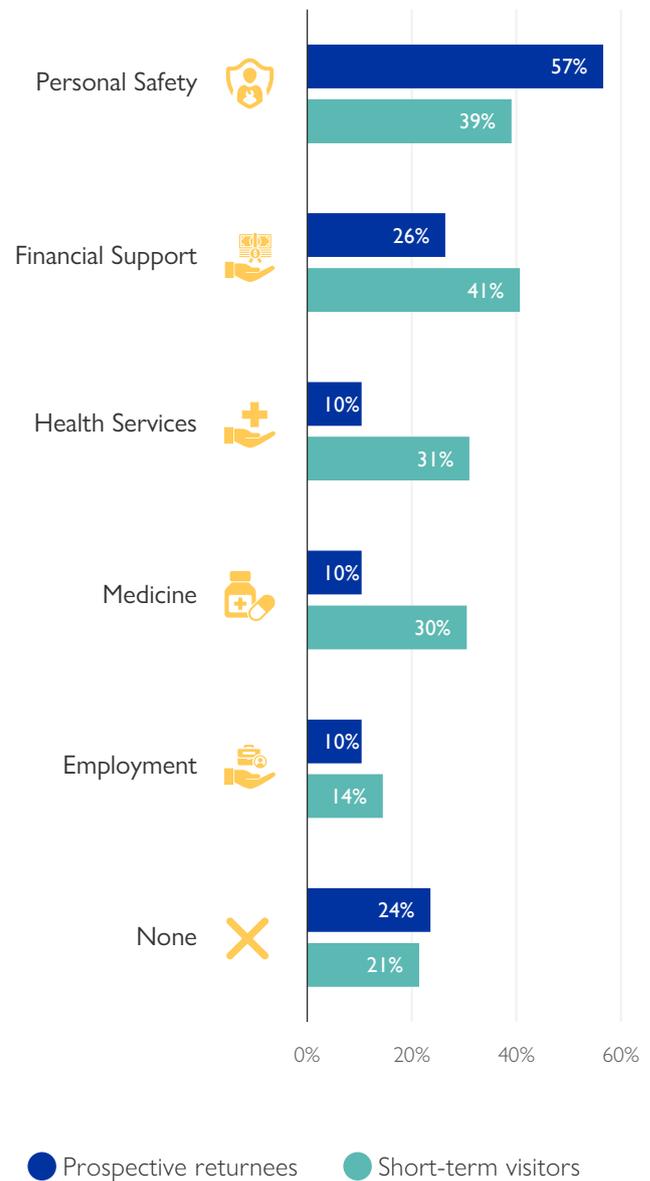
Although prospective returnees and short-term visitors did not differ significantly in terms of the proportion reporting no immediate needs, the average number of needs was slightly higher among those who crossed back for a short visit compared to those who returned to stay (1.9 versus 1.4). This can be linked to issues that short-term visitors aim to address during their visit in Ukraine. For example, financial support, health services, and medicines were reported more frequently among those who crossed back for a short visit. Conversely, personal safety was mentioned more frequently among prospective returnees than among short-term visitors (57% versus 39%).

ASSISTANCE

Sixty-two per cent of Ukrainian respondents received humanitarian assistance while abroad. Prospective returnees reported receiving assistance at much lower rates (25%) compared to short-term visitors (82%). This discrepancy may be attributed to the longer average displacement of short-term visitors compared to prospective returnees (548 days versus 221 days).

Nine per cent of respondents experienced difficulties receiving assistance, although over 80 per cent of those reporting difficulties eventually received the assistance. Half of the cases were attributed to language barriers.

Figure 6: Top needs by return intention, prospective returnees n=106, short-term visitors (%), n=187



Multiple answers possible

5. OBLASTS OF ORIGIN & DESTINATION

Overall, 57 per cent of respondents resided in only five regions before being displaced outside Ukraine: the city of Kyiv (17%), Dnipropetrovska (14%), Zaporizka (12%), Kharkivska (8%), and Odeska (7%). Over one-third (35%) of respondents originated from oblasts in the eastern part of Ukraine, while slightly fewer came from the northern part of the country (30%). The remaining regions were represented by almost equal proportions of respondents (central 12%, southern 12%, western 10%).

There was a large proportion of respondents who were intending to return to their oblast of origin (89%), whilst 9 per cent indicated they were travelling to a different oblast. The proportion of short-term visitors going to a different oblast than their place of origin (9%) was higher than that of prospective returnees (2%). The most frequently cited reasons for crossing back to a different region (n=35) were safety concerns (40%), displacement of family (26%), and damage to the place of origin (23%). Among respondents crossing to a different region, the top three destinations were the city of Kyiv (31%), Lvivska (20%), and Dniprovska (14%).

6. UNEQUAL TREATMENT

In Q1 2024, 14 per cent of respondents experienced unequal treatment based on nationality, ethnicity, or gender since leaving their place of residence in Ukraine, either themselves or someone in their household. The majority of survey respondents (83%) did not inform such experiences, while the remaining 3 per cent preferred not to answer. The proportion of those who faced unequal treatment appeared to stabilize

after a steep increase in 2023, rising from 7 per cent in Q1 to 18 per cent in Q4.

Over half of the cases of discrimination involved hostility or aggression. Other frequent incidents included being refused rental accommodation, denied employment, incidents of bullying of children in school, refusal of service, and instances of economic exploitation.



During a medical appointment, the doctor informed me that he would not treat me and told me to go back to Ukraine to solve my problems there.

Thirty-nine-year-old woman, originally from Odeska oblast, crossing back from Germany through Poland



METHODOLOGY

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.

Since March 2022, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has been regularly surveying individuals who are crossing back to Ukraine from neighbouring countries. The aim of the survey is to improve the understanding of their profiles, displacement patterns, intentions and needs. The survey is deployed in 5 countries neighbouring Ukraine – Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia.

In Poland, 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+).

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-term 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.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The aim of the study is to improve the understanding of the profiles of refugees from Ukraine crossing back into the country, including their displacement patterns, intentions, and needs. To achieve this, face-to-face surveys are conducted by eight trained enumerators stationed at selected locations. These surveys are administered in Ukrainian and Russian with the help of a mobile application. The target population consists of Ukrainians who are crossing back into Ukraine. Regional data collection and analysis are carried out in five countries neighbouring Ukraine: Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia.

LIMITATIONS

In order to maximize the number of interviews, and reach out to different profiles of individuals, various locations for data collection were identified.

While in border crossing/transit points, such as train stations, the flow of people was higher and interviewees were randomly surveyed (having the same likelihood compared to others to be selected), in other locations, such as collective accommodations and humanitarian aid centres, respondents were intentionally identified.

Among the limitations encountered during data collection were the reduced time to carry out surveys at transit points and limited number of enumerators to cover the desired locations/regions.

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 all refugees from Ukraine in Poland, and the results should be considered indicative.



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TRACKING MATRIX

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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.