

# SOCIAL COHESION AND PUBLIC TRUST

DECEMBER 2023



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## KEY FINDINGS

- **22 per cent of IDPs reported that they or their families encountered discrimination or unfair treatment** since their displacement, because they were not local to their displacement location. Most commonly, this was reported to have happened in interactions with the local population.
- **Perceptions of social tensions due to perceived unequal access to social assistance** were reported by 16 per cent of individuals, and may further exacerbate such unfair treatment, if left unaddressed.
- **Economic and employment factors are primary drivers of perceived social tension and discrimination and can encourage return mobility.** The most commonly reported reason for social tensions was perceived **unequal access to cash assistance**. Almost half of IDPs looking for work reported that **employers discriminated** against IDPs **based on their displacement status**. Employment and economic factors were frequently reported as a motivation for return planning, pointing to challenges finding work in areas of displacement.

## BACKGROUND

As of September 2023, an estimated 3,674,000 people remain internally displaced in Ukraine (IOM GPS R14) and an estimated 6,300,000 displaced abroad (UNHCR, as of 14 November 2023). IOM estimates that 4,573,000 people have returned to their place of habitual residence in Ukraine after being displaced following the full-scale invasion in February 2022 for a period of displacement of minimum two weeks, 22 per cent of whom returned from abroad. An additional 298,000 are estimated to have returned from abroad into internal displacement across Ukraine (IOM GPS R14).

Since the full-scale invasion in February 2022, numerous communities across Ukraine witnessed the arrival of displaced persons from other parts of the country. Continued widespread displacement is likely to put an increasing strain on public services, infrastructure, housing and the labor market in hosting areas. This, as well as perceptions of unequal access to assistance among different groups, carries the potential for increasing tensions between different groups the longer displacement persists.

In this context, the following brief presents key findings related to **social cohesion, trust in public institutions, as well as decision-making on durable solutions preferences** collected as part of two successive rounds of the General Population Survey (GPS). It aims to inform IOM's social cohesion programming in Ukraine, as well as to support broader evidence-based programming, policy-making, advocacy, and further research on the subject.

## BRIEF METHODOLOGY

The data presented in this report was commissioned by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and collected by Multicultural Insights as part of rounds 13 (R13) and 14 (R14) of the GPS. Data was collected through phone-based interviews, with respondents identified through a nationally representative screening survey of 20,000 individuals. Round 13 data includes interviews with 1,611 IDPs, 1,671 returnees, and 2,015 non-displaced individuals carried out between 1 and 14 June 2023. Round 14 data includes interviews with 1,493 IDPs, 1,653 returnees, and 2,002 non-displaced individuals carried out between 3 and 25 September 2023. IDPs are defined as people who left their homes or are staying outside their habitual place of residence due to the full-scale invasion in February 2022, regardless of whether they hold registered IDP status. Returnees are defined as people who returned to their habitual residence after a significant period of displacement (minimum of two weeks since February 2022). All remaining individuals are considered non-displaced.

All interviews were conducted using a random-digit-dial (RDD) and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) approach, generating results with an overall margin of error of 1.35% [CL 95%]. The survey included all of Ukraine, excluding the Crimean Peninsula and the areas of Donetsk, Luhanska, Khersonska, and Zaporizka Oblasts under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation where phone coverage by Ukrainian operators is not available. All interviews were anonymous, and respondents were asked for consent before starting the interview. The teams consisted of male and female interviewers, and the interviews were conducted in Ukrainian and Russian, with language selection based on the preference of each respondent. For further details on the methodology and sampling design, please refer to the [Methodological Note](#).

**Limitations:** The exact proportion of the excluded populations is unknown. Those currently residing outside the territory of Ukraine were not interviewed, following active exclusion. Population estimates assume that minors (those under 18 years old) are accompanied by their adult parents or guardians. The sample frame is limited to adults that use mobile phones. It is unknown if all phone networks were fully functional across the entire territory of Ukraine for the entire period of the survey; therefore, some respondents may have had a higher probability of receiving calls than others. Residents of areas with a high level of civilian infrastructure damage may have a lower representation among the sample – one may assume the needs in the report are skewed towards under-reporting. Among the people surveyed are not those residing in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) or Areas of Donetsk, Luhanska, Khersonska, and Zaporizka Oblasts not under the control of the Government of Ukraine since 2014.

EXPERIENCE OF UNFAIR TREATMENT (R13)

**KEY FINDING 1:** Displacement status may be a driver of perceived discrimination or unfair treatment towards internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees.

A share of IDPs and returnees reported having experienced discrimination or unfair treatment as a result of not being local to their area of displacement (prior to return in the case of returnees). This was particularly true for respondents who were still displaced at the time of data collection, with 22 per cent of IDPs reporting such unfair treatment. The proportion of returnees who reported discrimination while being displaced was lower than IDPs (10%), but still higher than the share of returnees having experienced discrimination in their areas of return (6%).

Most IDPs and returnees reporting discrimination or unfair treatment identified that it occurred **when interacting with the local population**.



of IDPs reported that they or their families had encountered **discrimination or unfair treatment while displaced** due to not being local



of returnees reported that they or their families had encountered **discrimination or unfair treatment while displaced** due to not being local

Figure 1: Situations during which IDPs and returnees reported having experienced discrimination or unfair treatment during displacement, by share of respondents who reported facing discrimination or unfair treatment

	IDPs	Returnees
While interacting with the local population	65%	59%
While interacting with local authorities	15%	18%
While trying to access secure and affordable housing	10%	12%
At work	11%	7%
Receiving humanitarian assistance	10%	8%
At healthcare facilities	7%	5%
In public transportation	7%	4%
At local institutions / organizations	5%	8%
While interacting with other IDPs	1%	2%

*Differences by sex of respondent*

Female respondents who reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment were slightly more likely than male respondents to report that it occurred **when they were receiving humanitarian assistance** (13% of female respondents who reported any discrimination, compared to 3% of male respondents).

Conversely, male respondents who reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment were slightly more likely than female respondents to report this to have happened while **interacting with the local population, in particular among male IDPs** (76% of male IDPs, compared to 60% of female IDPs).



**6%** of returnees reported that they or their families experienced **discrimination or unfair treatment since their return** to their primary place of residence, because they had left following the full-scale invasion.

## TENSIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (R13)

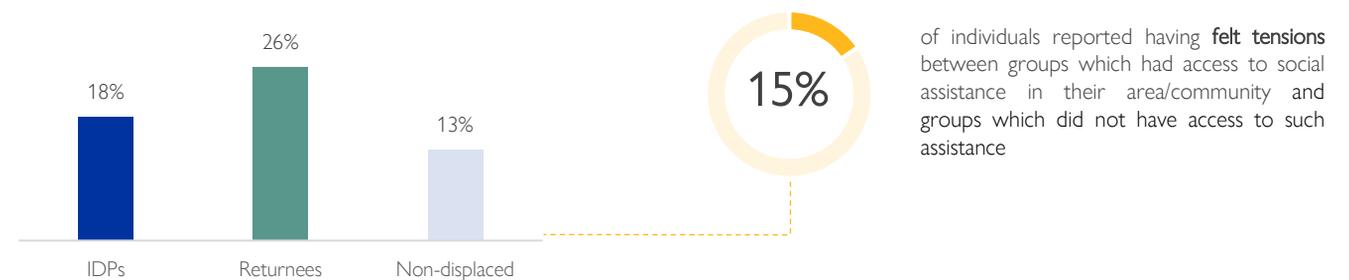
**KEY FINDING 2: Unequal access to assistance**, in particular unequal access to social assistance, is driving **social tensions**.

A quarter of returnees (26%) reported the presence of social tensions in their areas of return, between groups which received social assistance and those who did not receive such assistance. Similarly, nearly one in five IDPs (18%) reported social tensions over access to social assistance in their areas of displacement. The proportion of IDPs reporting the presence of social tensions was highest in Lvivska Oblast (34%) and lowest in Kharkivska Oblast (11%)\*.

Left unaddressed, these social tensions have the potential to lead to increased incidents of discrimination, both in areas of displacement as well as areas of return. Already, a quarter of IDPs reported tensions when interacting with local residents. Heightened levels of discrimination related to interactions with the local population (as highlighted in the graph below), suggest social fissures which could encourage some to displace again or engage in premature return, consequently exposing households to increased conflict or displacement-related shocks.

\*Data for this question was available for Dnipropetrovska, Zaporizka, Kyivska, Lvivska, Odeska, Poltavska and Kharkivska Oblasts.

Figure 2: Share of individuals reporting having **felt tensions** between groups who received social assistance from the government and those that did not in their area / community, by **displacement status**



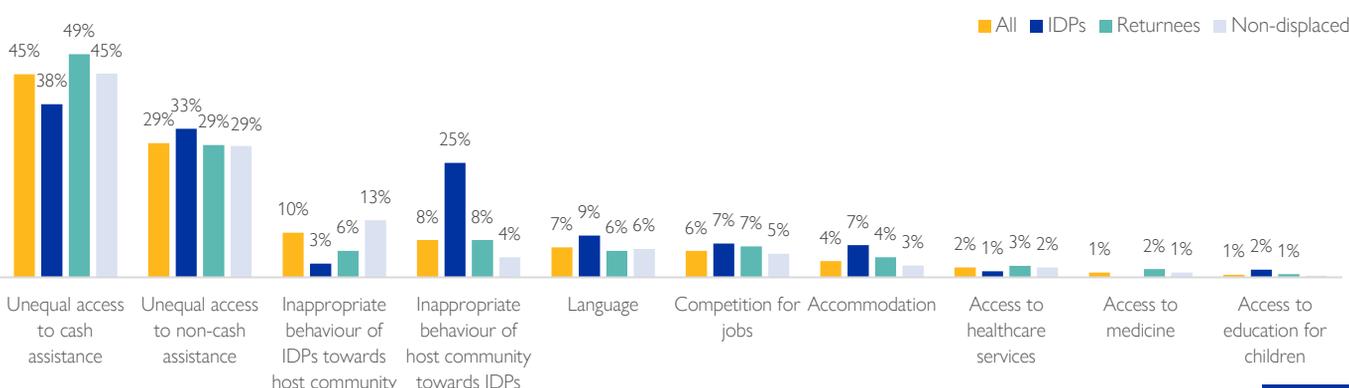
### Access to humanitarian cash and social assistance remains the most commonly reported need, while also being the most common reason for tensions

The most reported reasons for tensions were **unequal access to cash assistance** (reported as a reason for tensions by 45 per cent of those having felt any tensions) followed by **non-cash assistance** (29%).

**Unequal access to cash assistance** was a concern particularly among **returnees** and **non-displaced populations**. Around 49 per cent of returnees and 45 per cent of the non-displaced population who reported tensions in their communities, identified unequal access to cash assistance as the cause, compared to 38 per cent of IDPs. Moreover, it was a notable concern in **rural areas**, where unequal access to cash assistance was identified as the main factor behind social tensions by 54 per cent of respondents who reported tensions in the community, compared to 42 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively, in small towns and large cities. Among IDPs and returnees, perceptions of social tensions related to cash assistance were lowest in Kyiv City. Returnees in Mykolaivska (38%) and Chernihivska Oblasts (37%) were most likely to identify social tensions related to access to social assistance, a tension that is possibly exacerbated by the slower recovery of key sectors of the economy in these oblasts.

Given that **cash or financial support remains the most commonly reported need**, both among IDPs seeking to integrate in their area of displacement and among all other IDPs and returnees, it is fundamental to consider the potential tensions that could be generated when providing such assistance.

Figure 3: Share of individuals having felt tensions by reported reason



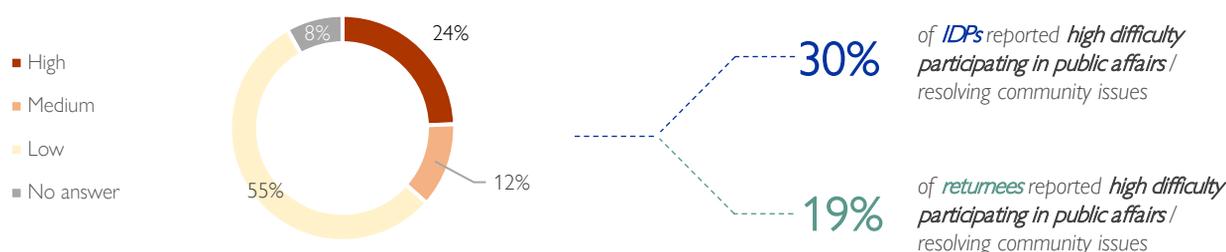
## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS (R14)

**KEY FINDING 3:** Participation in public affairs remains low among IDPs and returnees.

Roughly one fourth of IDPs and returnees reported high difficulties participating in public affairs and in resolving community issues. This proportion was notably higher among IDPs (30%) than among returnees (19%). At the same time, reported levels of **actual participation in decision-making on different topics** were very low among the entire population. Notably, the highest level of participation was reported in relation to the provision of humanitarian assistance, with 14 per cent of all respondents reportedly having been at least somewhat involved in the decision-making process related to the provision of humanitarian assistance (12% of IDPs, 21% returnees, 14% of non-displaced). Given that a quarter of IDPs and returnees self-reported a high ability to participate, **low levels of participation may not only be driven by an inability to participate, but also by a choice not to do so.**

Returnees who were considering leaving their current location (re-displacement) were far more likely to identify a high difficulty participating in public affairs (38%, compared with 17% of all returnees). This points to the importance of reintegration in all aspects of public life as an important precondition of sustainable return.

Figure 4: Share of IDPs and returnees by self-assessed level of difficulty participating in public affairs / resolving community issues



### Differences by age, sex and location

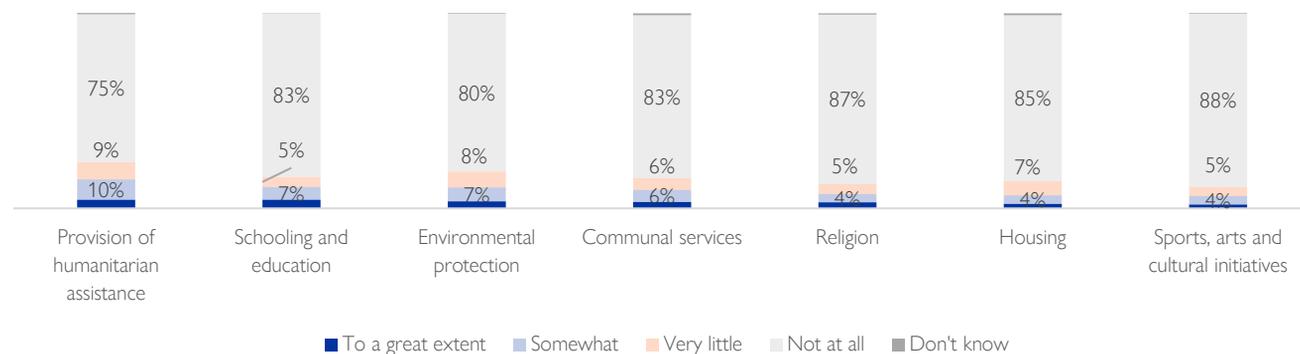
 People aged 60+ were the most likely to report high difficulty participating in public affairs, alongside reporting the lowest levels of participation in decision-making on certain topics, such as the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Male and female respondents aged 60 and above reported comparable levels of participation in decision-making. However, female respondents aged 60+ may face greater challenges than male respondents – 41 per cent of female IDPs / returnees aged 60+ reported great difficulties participating in public affairs, compared to 29 per cent of male IDPs / returnees aged 60+. These findings point to the need to pay particular attention to the requirements of older individuals for inclusive programming.

 Across the country, these findings were similar, although in Kyivska Oblast, both IDPs and returnees were slightly more likely to report being able to participate than in other parts of the country (83% in Kyivska Oblast compared to 76% overall)\*. Similarly, IDPs and returnees in large cities were more likely to report being able to participate than those in rural areas. These findings may in part be related to the different age structures present in different areas, with a higher share of older IDPs / returnees in rural areas. Nevertheless, they may indicate greater challenges to social cohesion in less urbanized areas.

\*Data for this question was available for Dnipropetrovska, Zaporizka, Kyivska, Lvivska, Odeska, Poltavska and Kharkivska Oblasts for IDPs, and for Kyivska, Mykolaiivska, Odeska, Kharkivska and Chernihivska Oblasts for returnees.

Figure 5: Share of individuals reporting the degree to which they were directly engaged in local community decision-making processes related to different topics in the areas where they lived at the time of data collection



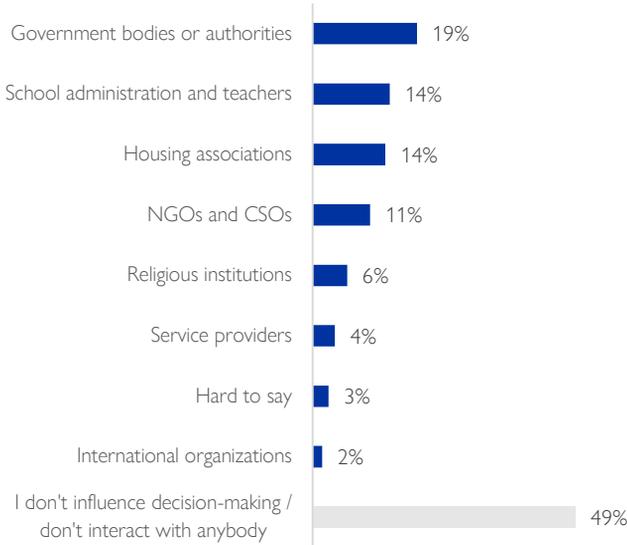
## INTERACTION WITH, AND TRUST IN, INSTITUTIONS (R14)

**KEY FINDING 4:** Most people interact with government bodies or authorities to influence their community's decision-making. However, distrust of different types of institutions and organizations is relatively widespread.

Most people reported participating in public affairs through interaction with the government. Government bodies were reported by 19 per cent of respondents as the body through which they participated in decision-making, followed by schools (14%), housing associations (14%), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) (11%).

At the same time, a reported lack of trust in local authorities was widespread. Twenty-five per cent of individuals reported not having any trust in local authorities, and a further 23 per cent reported having little trust. Among organizations and institutions, respondents were most likely to report some level of trust in specialized organizations (financial, medical, educational, and other institutions): 58 per cent of individuals reported somewhat trusting or fully trusting these organizations, followed by international organizations and NGOs (52%).

Figure 6: Primary institutions with which respondents interact to influence their community's decision-making, by share of individuals reporting with whom they interact when they influence their community's decision-making



### Differences by location

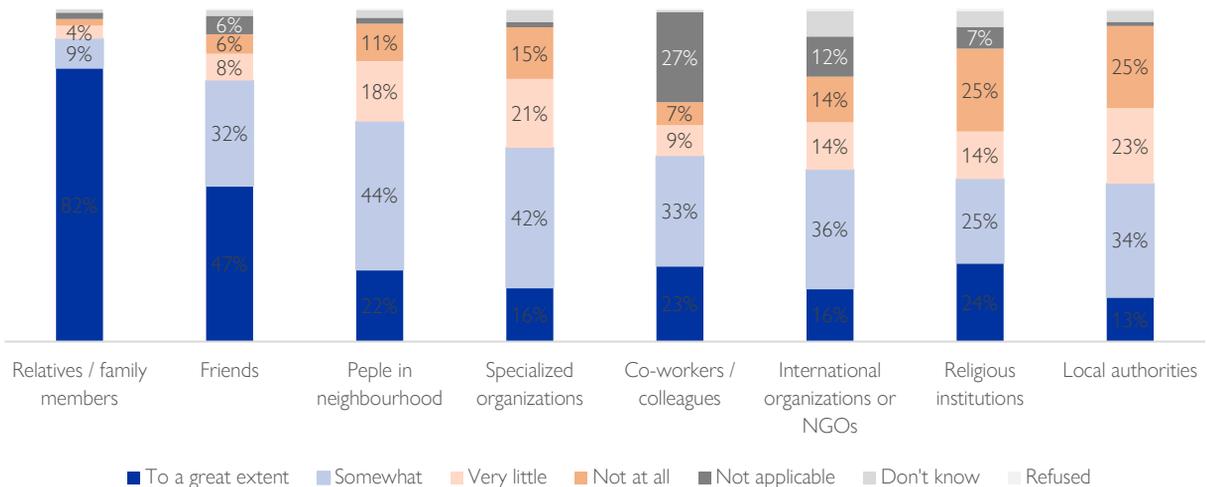


There were generally no notable differences across population groups in the institutions through which individuals reported influencing community decision-making.

However, a slightly higher proportion of individuals in rural areas (28%) than in small towns (19%), suburbs of large cities (20%) or large cities (15%) reported influencing community decision-making through government bodies or authorities.

This was particularly true for returnees and non-displaced individuals. Thirty-one per cent of returnees in rural areas reported influencing community decision-making through government bodies or authorities, compared to 22 per cent of returnees in small towns, and 17 per cent of returnees both in suburbs of large cities and in large cities.

Figure 7: Extent to which respondents report trusting organizations and institutions, by institution and by share of individuals



## PLANS FOR INTEGRATION / RETURN (R13)

**KEY FINDING 5:** While unequal access to assistance is one driver of social tensions, **unequal access to jobs** may further contribute to such tensions, and difficulty finding employment may be a key barrier to the possibility of local integration as a durable solution to displacement.

Unemployment rates among IDPs are comparatively high. Among other reasons, challenges accessing jobs for IDPs in their current location may be linked to **discrimination in the job market**. Twenty per cent of IDPs are reportedly unemployed, compared to 10 per cent and 8 per cent of returnees and non-displaced populations. This high rate of unemployment among IDPs may in part be due to the discrimination they report facing when looking for jobs – 46 per cent of unemployed IDPs actively looking for jobs reported **employers were reluctant or unwilling to hire IDPs**.

While security-related considerations remain the primary factor preventing IDPs from returning, **economic reasons also appear to be a major driver of return**. Following sentimental or family-related reasons (the most commonly reported reasons for planning to return in the short term), and considerations around access to accommodation (a driver for some to return, while a reason to remain for others), a notably higher proportion of IDPs reported economic reasons as a motivation for return (reported by 21 per cent of individuals having planned to return as a reason) than as a reason for not returning (8%). Similarly, **cash remains the most commonly reported assistance needed for integration**.

Figure 8: *Mobility intentions of IDPs who do not plan to return to their habitual residence within the two weeks following the assessment, overall and by age group*

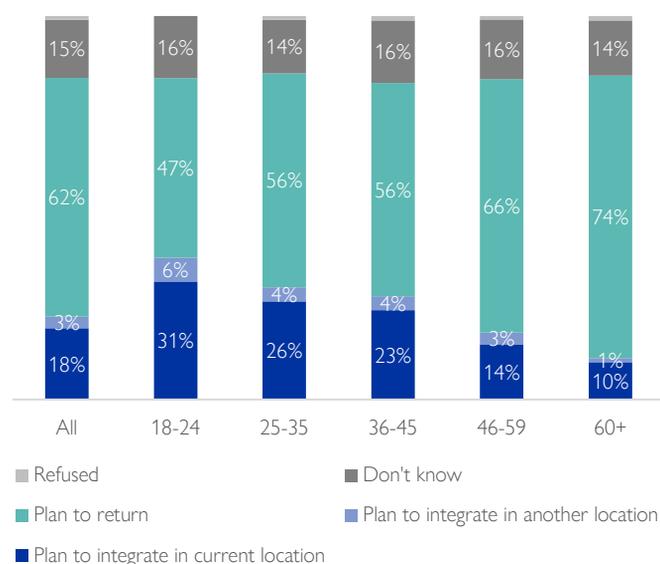


Figure 9: *Type of support needed for integration by IDPs planning to integrate, by share of IDPs who plan to integrate reporting this need*

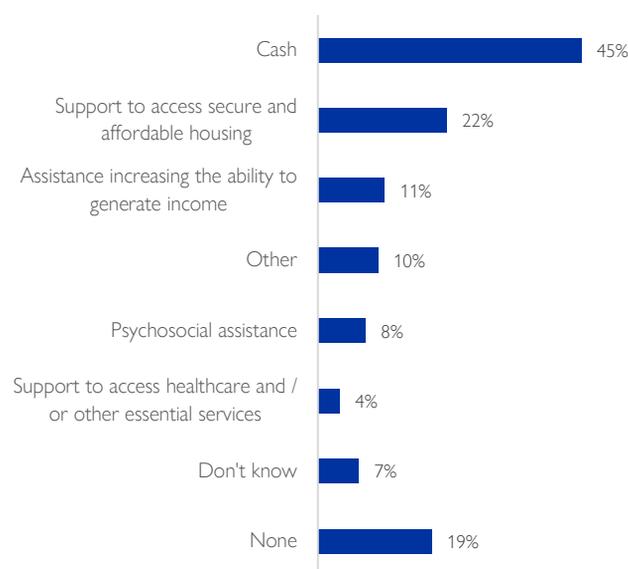


Figure 10: *Reasons for not planning to return to the place of habitual residence at the time of data collection, as reported by IDPs who do not plan to return (R13)*

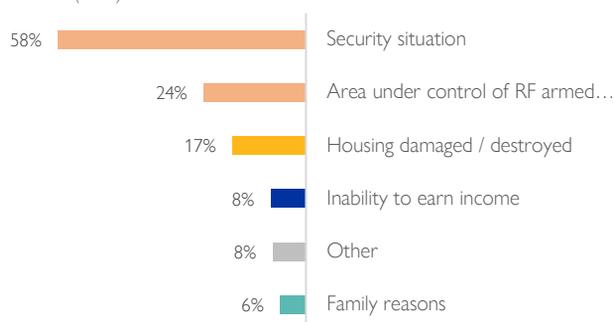
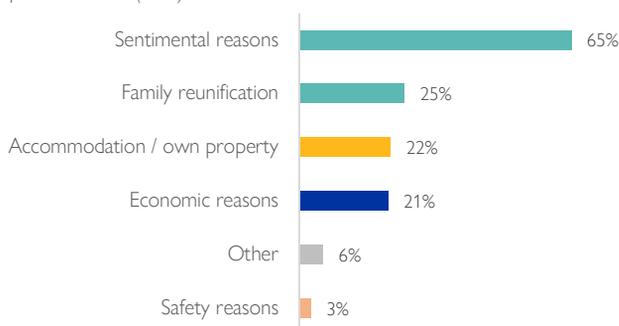


Figure 11: *Reasons for wanting to leave the current location and planned to return to the place of habitual residence, as reported by IDPs who plan to return (R13)*



14%

of IDPs reported having been **unemployed and actively seeking employment** (compared to 7% of returnees, and 7% of non-displaced) (R13)

46%

of unemployed IDPs actively looking for a job reported that **employers were discriminatory when considering hiring IDPs** (R13)