

SLOVAKIA

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE



JANUARY - MARCH 2024
COUNTRY ANALYSIS

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Cover photo: A DTM enumerator surveys individuals crossing back to Ukraine at the bus station in Bratislava, Slovakia. © IOM 2024

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KEY FINDINGS

Demographics



1,330
Ukrainian
respondents



Male
7%



Female
93%

Countries of stay

Slovakia 90%

EU countries 7%

Third countries 3%

Top 5 needs



Healthcare
23%



Information
23%



Medication
16%



Accommodation
8%

Multiple answers possible

Prospective returnees

Visiting someone abroad 75%

Meet with family members 6%

Reunite with family 6%

Other 14%

Short-term

Meet family 76%

Seek healthcare 26%

Reunite with family 21%

Multiple answers possible

Top 5 destinations



Zakarpatska



City of Kyiv



Kharkivska



Dnipropetrovska



Odeska

Traveling to

85%
Region of origin

15%
Different region

Households

75%
travelling alone

25%
in a group

Length of stay

5%
Unknown

27%
Prospective returnees
(More than 30 days)

68%
Short-time visitors
(Up to 30 days)

OVERVIEW

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) collected data on Ukrainian nationals and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) that crossed back to Ukraine from or through Slovakia, either temporarily or permanently. The survey focuses on the return intentions, duration of displacement, destinations, assistance, and experiences of discrimination of respondents. A total of 1,335 surveys were collected between January and

March 2024. Among these, 0.4 per cent (n=5) were completed by TCNs, while the vast majority, comprising over 99 per cent (n=1,330), were completed by Ukrainian nationals. The analysis presented in this report is based on the responses provided by Ukrainian nationals who are either "short-term visitors" or "prospective returnees" (n=1,330).¹

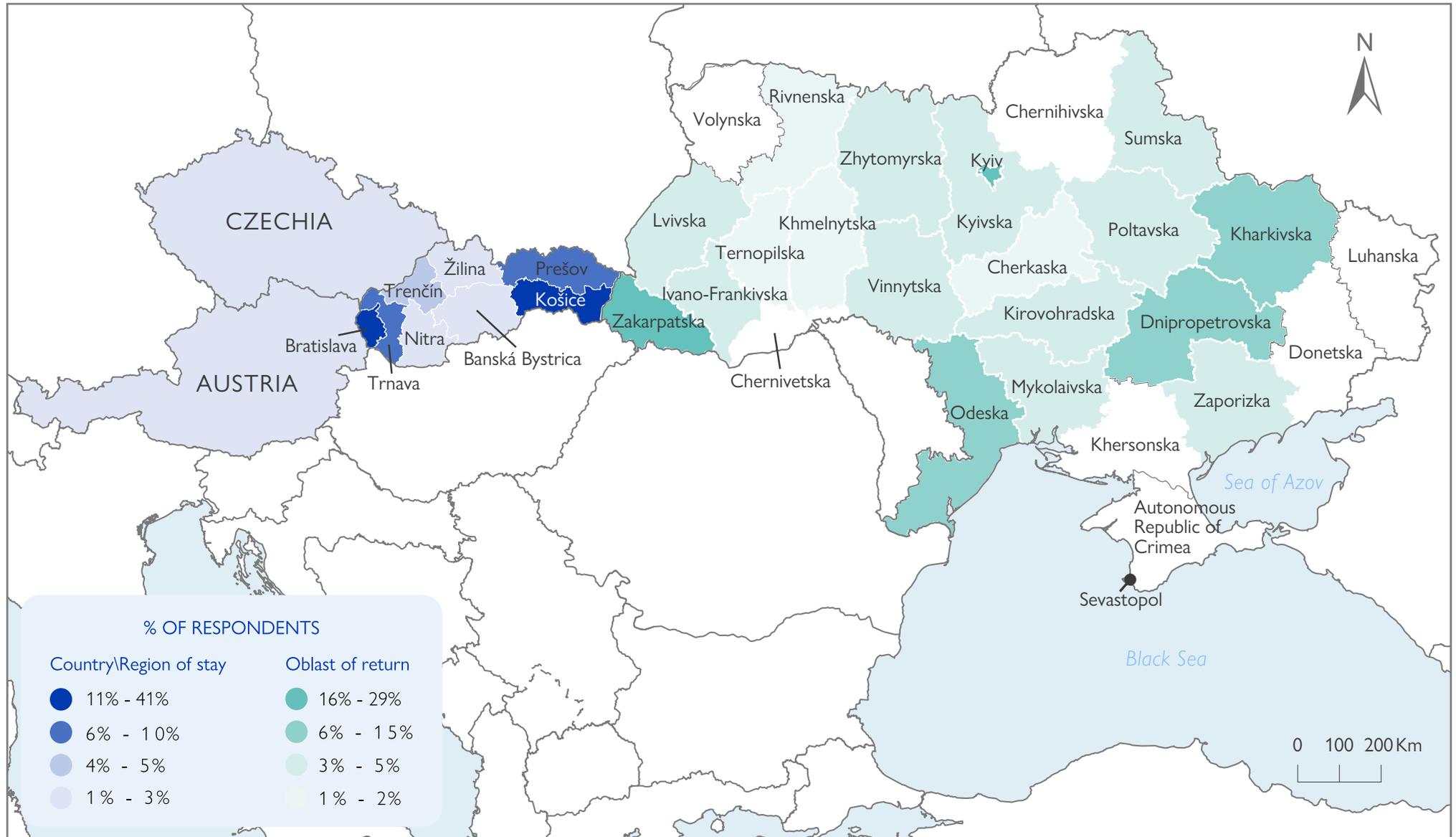


IOM provides assistance and conducts a short survey with people fleeing war in Ukraine in Bratislava, Slovakia. © IOM 2023

1. 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."

MAP 1

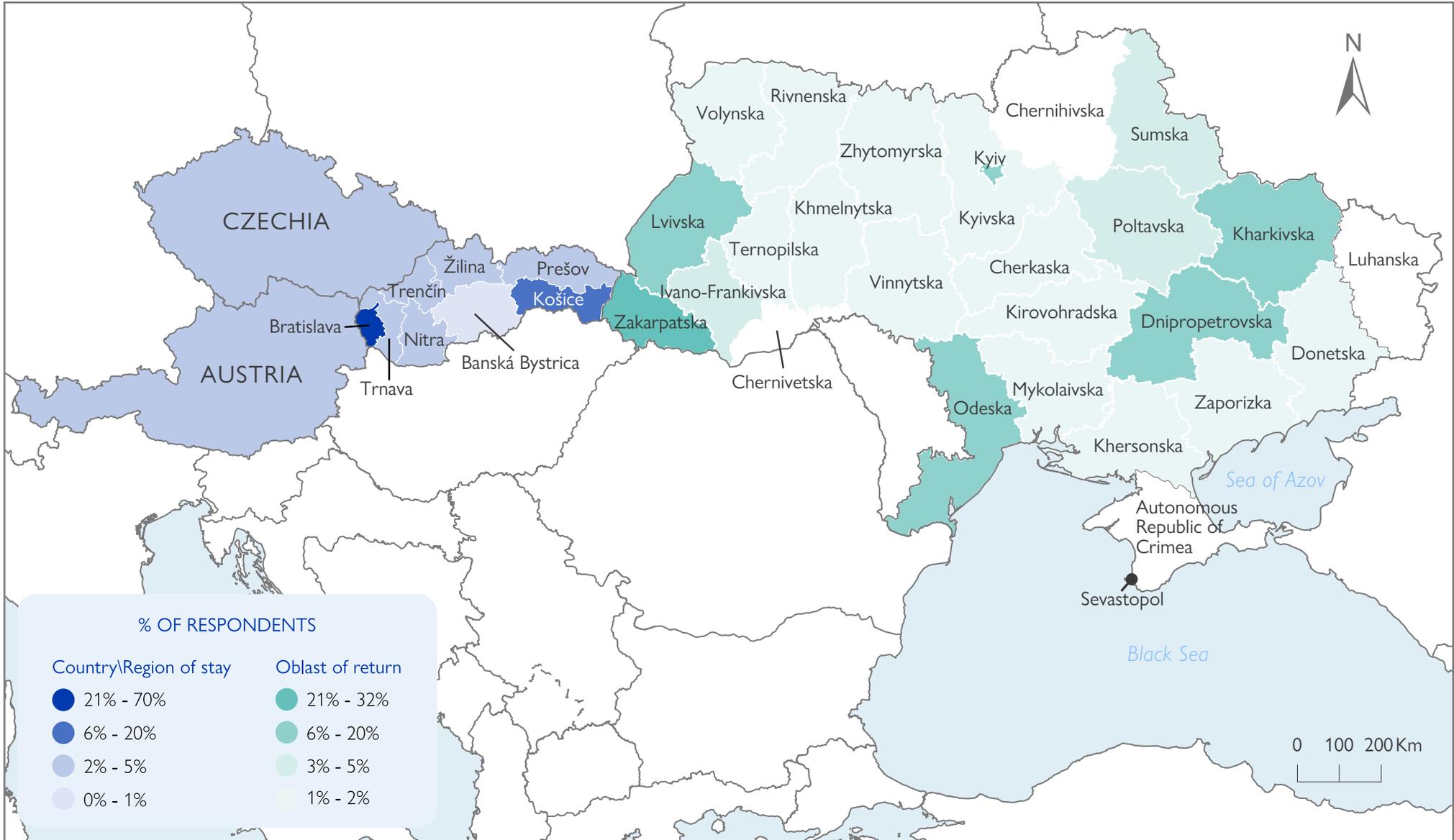
SHORT-TERM VISITORS: TOP OBLASTS OF INTENDED DESTINATION VS. OBLAST OF ORIGIN, JANUARY - MARCH 2024



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MAP 2

PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES: TOP OBLASTS OF INTENDED DESTINATION VS. OBLAST OF ORIGIN, JANUARY - MARCH 2024



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SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

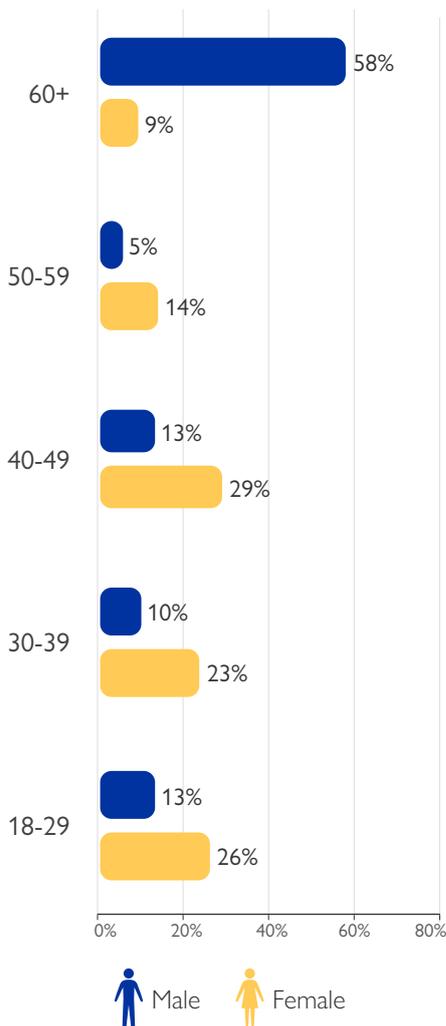
GENDER AND AGE

Among respondents, women constituted 93 per cent, while men made up only 7 per cent. The average age among all participants was found to be 41 years, with women averaging 40 years and men 54 years. Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents, accounting for 93 per cent, fell within the active age range of 18-64 years.

The highest proportions of female respondents intending to cross back were observed in the age groups of 40-49 (29%), 18-29 (26%), and 30-39 (23%). Conversely, a significant majority of men planning to return were aged over 60 years (58%). Interestingly, the 60+ age category exhibited the lowest proportion of women crossing back to Ukraine.

Among the subset of respondents intending to remain in Ukraine (n=354), the prevailing demographic consists of men aged 60+, comprising 53 per cent, in contrast to female respondents in the same age category, who represent only 16 per cent.

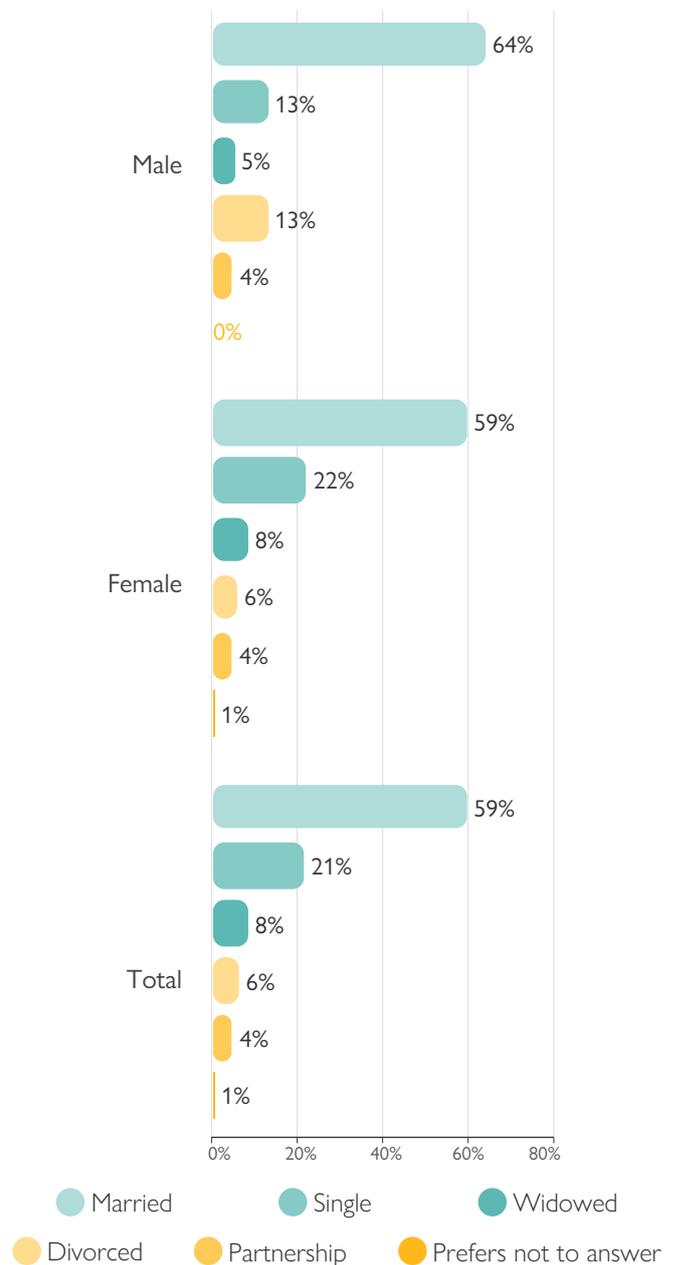
Figure 1. Respondents by age and gender (%) n=1,330



MARITAL STATUS

On average, 59 per cent of respondents were married at the time of the interview, while 21 per cent reported being single. A smaller portion identified as widowed (8%), divorced (6%), or in a partnership (4%). When considering gender, the majority of men (64%) were married, with 13 per cent being single. In comparison, slightly fewer women (59%) were married, and a higher percentage (22%) were single. Moreover, women were more likely to be widowed (8%) compared to their male counterparts (5%). The proportion of divorcees differed, with 6 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men reporting divorce.

Figure 2. Marital status by gender (%) n=1,330

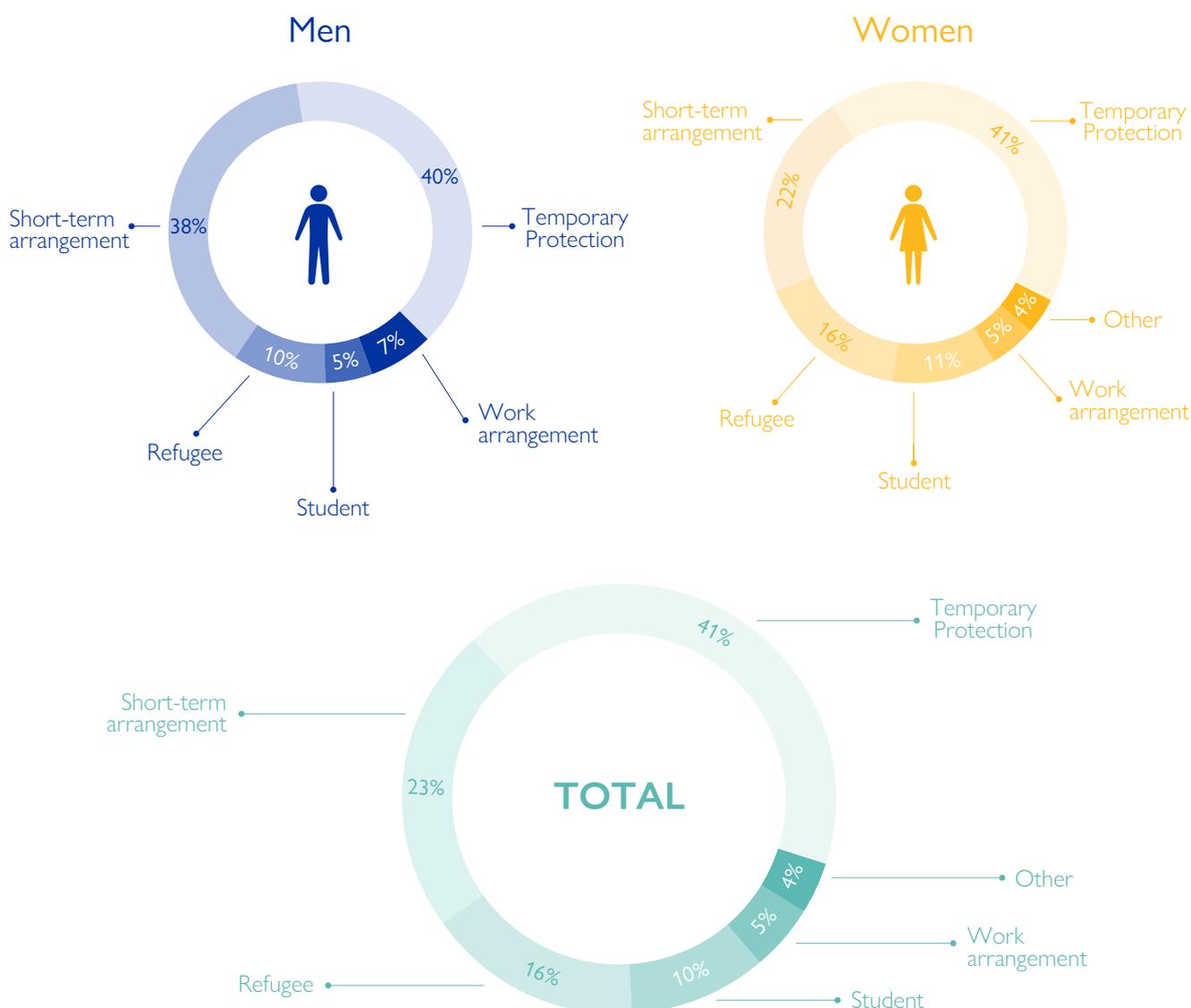


LEGAL STATUS

During the period from January to March 2024, respondents were asked about their legal status in the countries they resided in prior to returning to Ukraine. Among all participants, 41 per cent reported holding Temporary Protection (TP) status at the time of the interview. TP allows EU countries to provide immediate protection to displaced individuals from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin.² This has now also been extended until March 2025. The next most prevalent group consisted of individuals on short-term arrangements in their respective countries, comprising 23 per cent of respondents. Refugees constituted sixteen per cent of the total respondents, with ten per cent identified as students and five per cent holding work visas.

Similarly, when studying the gender composition of respondents and their legal status, the majority of women held TP status (41%) in their countries of displacement. This was followed by 22 per cent on short-term arrangements and sixteen per cent with refugee status. Furthermore, eleven per cent were pursuing education abroad on student permits, while five per cent held work visas. Comparatively, the highest proportion of men were granted TP status (40%), followed closely by 33 per cent on short-term arrangements. Refugees accounted for 10 per cent of male respondents. Among men, a greater proportion (7%) held work visas, while five per cent were students.

Figure 3. Legal status by gender (%) n=1,330



2. Council of the European Union and the European Council, 2022. "Temporary protection", accessed 23 May 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en.

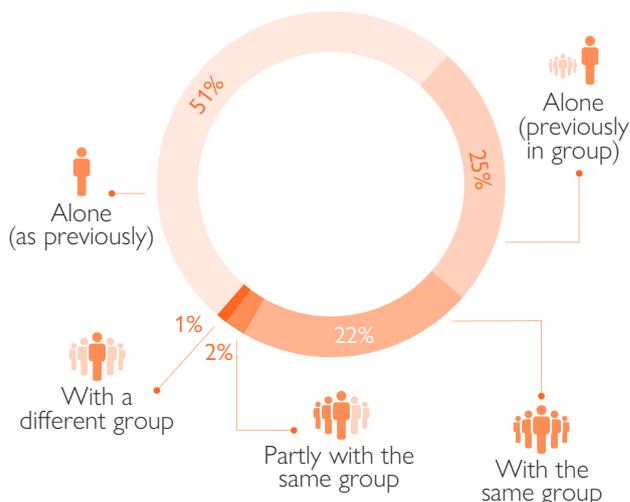
GROUP COMPOSITION

Among those crossing back to Ukraine through or from Slovakia, 75 per cent travelled alone, while 25 per cent made the journey in a group.

Among them, more than half (51%) crossed back alone, similar to their initial departure from Ukraine. Another 25 per cent chose to travel alone, despite having been part of a group previously. Additionally, 22 per cent returned with the same group they had initially left the country with. The remaining two per cent opted for an entirely different group when crossing back to Ukraine, and one per cent travelled with some members of the same group.

A significant portion, 63 per cent, were accompanied by children (0-17 years old). Among Ukrainian nationals (n=1,330), three per cent travelled with infants aged 0 to 4 years, while 13 per cent journeyed with at least one child aged between 5 and 17 years. Moreover, twelve per cent of respondents reported traveling alongside an elderly individual aged over 60 years. The average group size was 2.4 individuals.

Figure 4. Group composition (%) n=1,330



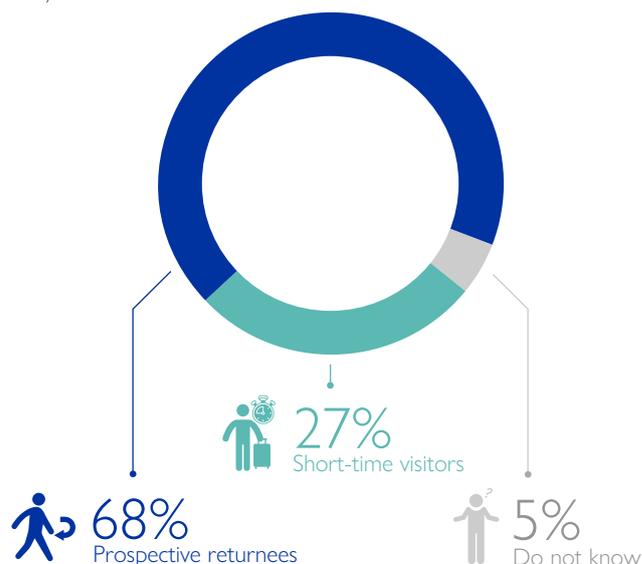
INTENTIONS AND REASONS FOR CROSSING BACK

INTENDED LENGTH OF STAY IN UKRAINE

As previously mentioned, for the purpose of this analysis, “short-term visitors” are those who reported an intention to spend from 0 to 30 days in Ukraine, while respondents intending to stay in Ukraine for more than one month are labelled as “prospective returnees”. Overall, 27 per cent of Ukrainian respondents intend to stay in Ukraine (prospective returnees), while 68 per cent plan to go for a short visit). The share of those intending to return to Ukraine is higher among men than women (49% vs 25%). Women are more likely to be crossing into Ukraine for a short visit than men (69% vs 44%).

Most of the short-term visitors plan to stay in their own home in Ukraine (78% overall), while others report to be going to their relatives’ homes (10%), finding other private solutions (7%) or staying with friends (4%). The share of those planning to stay at home is higher among prospective returnees (98%) than among short-term visitors (78%).

Figure 5: Intention to stay or to do a short visit, total n=1,330



REASONS

Among prospective returnees, three-quarters (75%) had traveled outside Ukraine to visit relatives or close friends and intended to return. Six per cent expressed a desire to meet with family members, while another six per cent aimed to reunite with their family.

For short-term visitors, in 76 per cent of cases, they traveled to visit family members. Approximately 26 per cent sought

healthcare, including visits to doctors and specialists like pediatricians, dentists, and gynecologists, while 21 per cent desired family reunification. Sixteen per cent of respondents aimed to assist their family in Ukraine, and thirteen per cent needed to obtain or renew identity documents such as biometric passports, diplomas, or licenses upon their return to Ukraine.

Figure 6: Top 5 reasons to stay in Ukraine, prospective returnees, n= 354

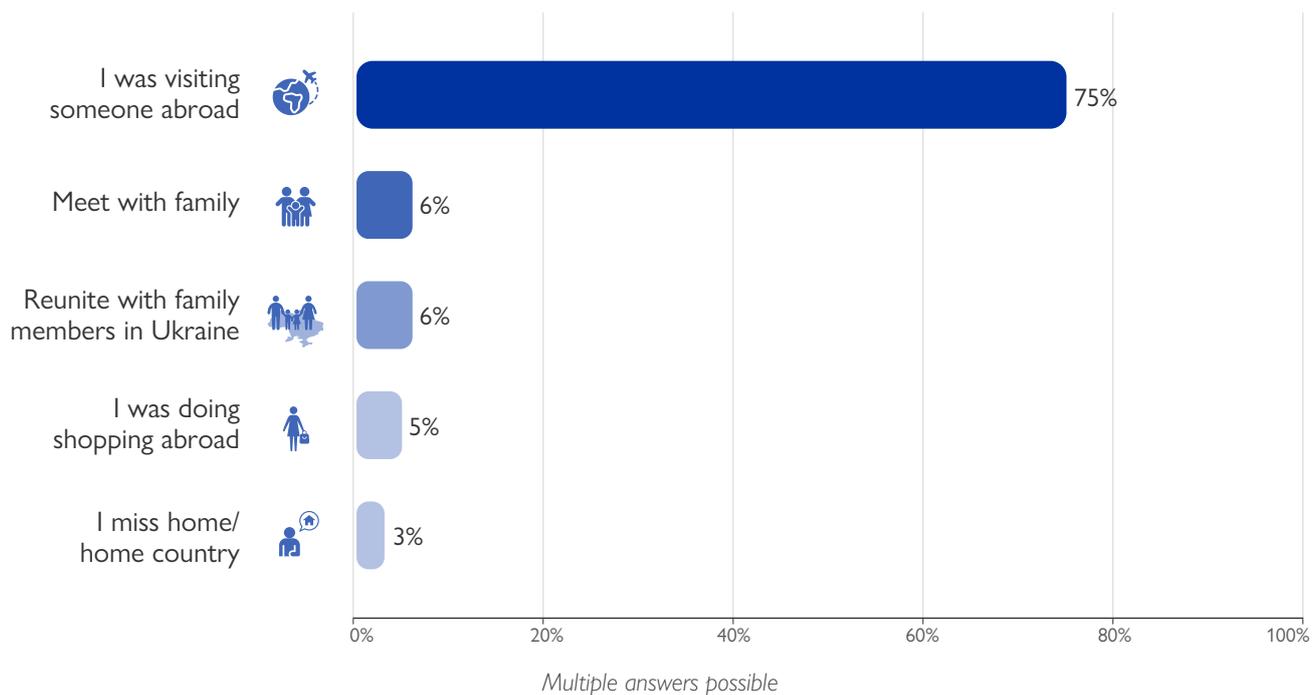
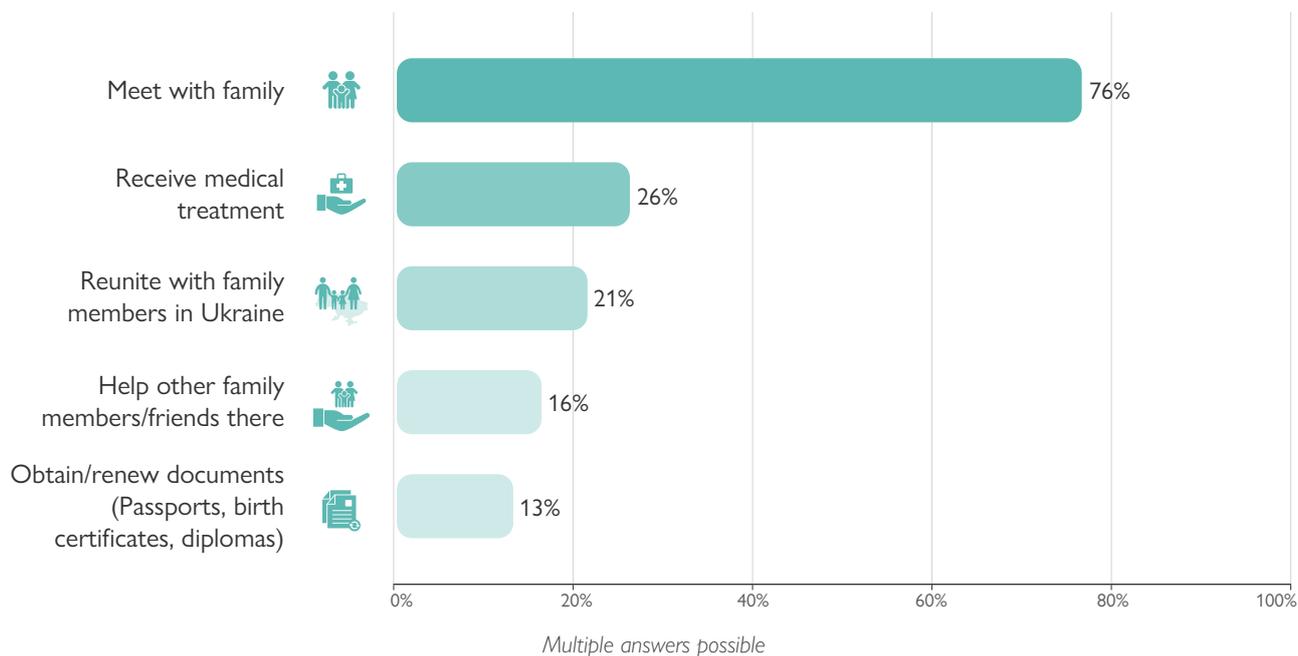


Figure 7: Top 5 reasons to visit in Ukraine, short-term visitors, n= 900



TIME SPENT OUTSIDE OF UKRAINE

DISPLACEMENT ABROAD

Altogether, 90 per cent of individuals intending to return to Ukraine during Q1 2024 had previously resided in Slovakia. Another 7 per cent had stayed in other countries around Europe, while the remaining three per cent had stayed in another 11 countries. Among those staying in Europe (n=97), in addition to those staying in Slovakia, 36 per cent returned from Czechia and 32 per cent from Austria. These were followed by Germany (14%), Poland (4%), Ireland, and Italy (3% each).

Among those who directly returned to Ukraine from Slovakia (n=1193), more than half had previously stayed in the capital Bratislava (52%), Košice (24%), and Prešov (7%). The remaining 17 per cent of respondents had stayed in other towns primarily located in the western and northwestern parts of the country.

Short-term 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 (8% each), while a larger proportion (4%) of prospective returnees reported spending a majority of their time in displacement outside of Europe compared to short-term visitors (2%).

Respondents had first displaced from Ukraine and went abroad on average almost 18 months (551 days) prior to the time of the interview.

The contrast between the two groups is also evident in their crossing patterns at the Ukraine border. Approximately, 89% of short-term visitors reported crossing the border two or more times since February 2022, whereas prospective returnees made slightly fewer entries and exits, with only 80% reporting two or more crossings during the same

Figure 8: Main country of displacement while outside of Ukraine, for prospective returnees, n=354 and short-term visitors, n=900 (%)

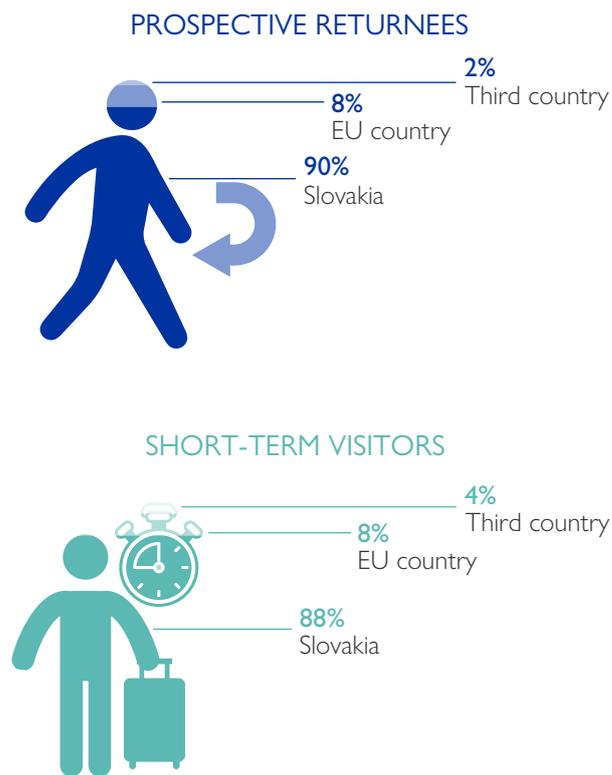
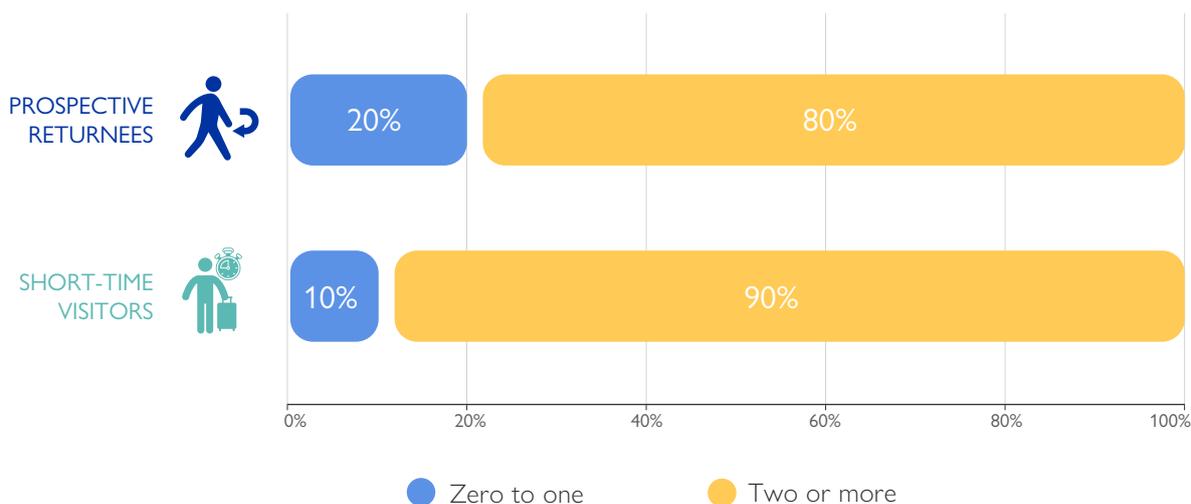


Figure 9: Frequency of entry into and exit from Ukraine since February 2022, by return intention (n=1,254)



REGION OF ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

Sixty-four per cent of the Ukrainian nationals originate from the following seven regions in Ukraine: Zakarpatska (21%), Kyiv (13%), Kharkivska (8%), Dnipropetrovska (8%), Odeska (6%), Zaporizka (3%), and Mykolaivska (3%). The remaining 36 per cent of respondents come from another 20 regions across Ukraine. Twenty-two per cent of women and twelve per cent of men originated from Zakarpatska region, and 14 per cent of women and 12 per cent of men originally came from the city of Kyiv among those surveyed. However, only 8 per cent of women originated from Kharkivska region, compared to 15 per cent of men.

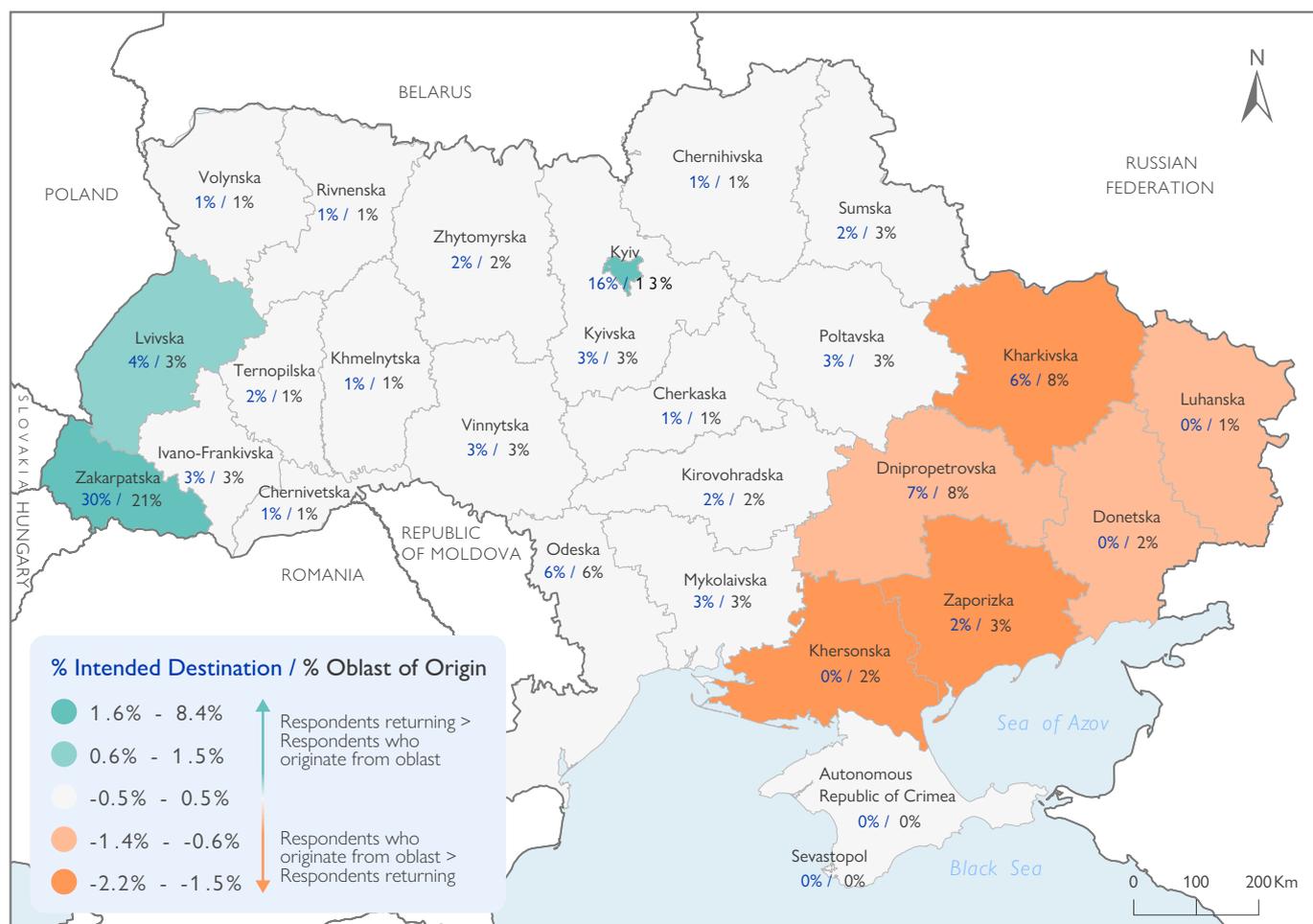
When questioned regarding respondents' intended destination, 85 per cent reported wanting to reach their oblast of origin, while the remaining 15 per cent are traveling to a different

oblast. The share of those going to a different oblast than that of origin is higher among short-term visitors (20%) than among prospective returnees (3%).

Among those who do not return to their oblast of origin (n=193), Zakarpatska (58%), the city of Kyiv (21%), and Lvivska (6%) are the top 3 destinations. Over four out of ten (41%) respondents state that their origin oblast is unsafe. Additionally, 18% intend to relocate to a different oblast where their family currently resides due to displacement, while an equal proportion cited damage to their home as a reason for their displacement. Another 23% of respondents cited various factors such as health issues, home occupation, or family reunification as their reasons for displacement.

MAP 3

INTENDED OBLAST OF DESTINATION VERSUS OBLAST OF ORIGIN IN UKRAINE, JANUARY - MARCH 2024 (%)



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NEEDS, ASSISTANCE, AND CHALLENGES

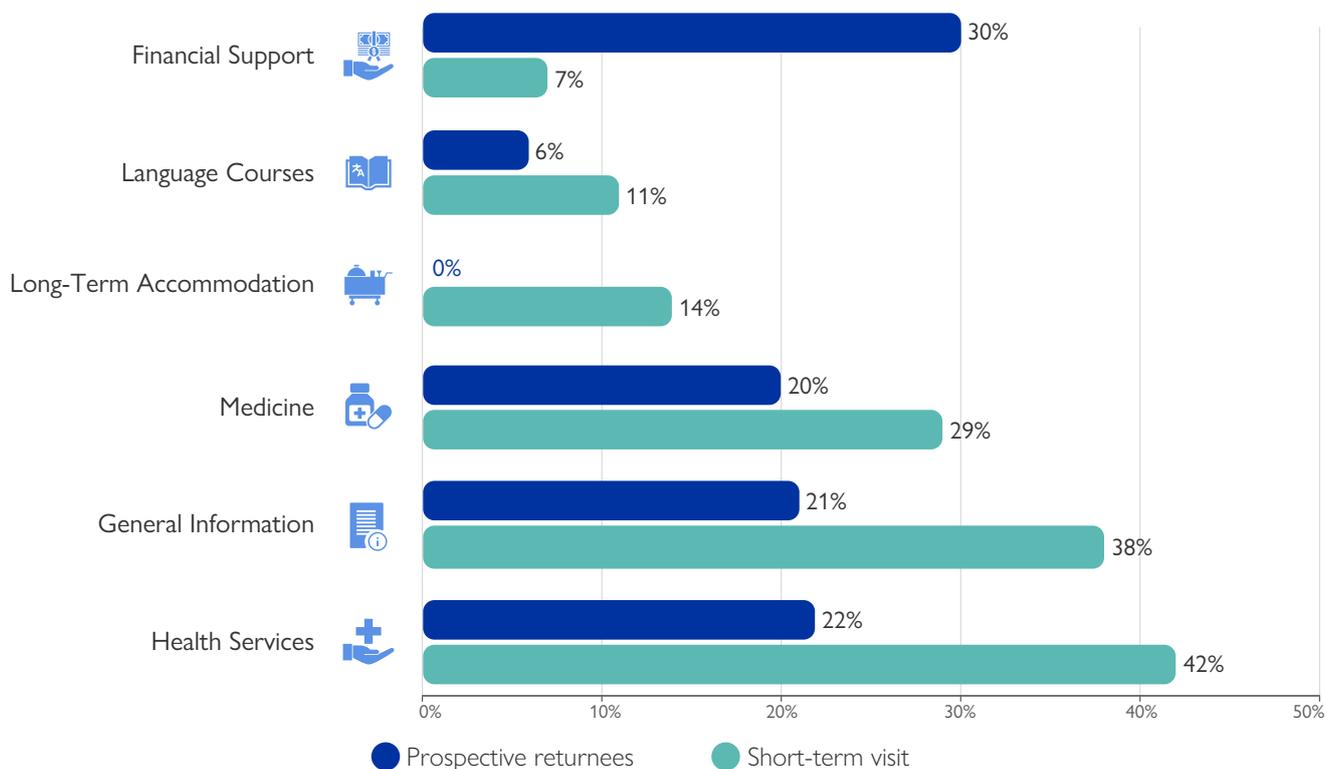
A large share of respondents (40%) stated that they had no immediate needs upon crossing back into Ukraine. Among those who reported needs (n=794), the five most pressing included general information (38%), health services (38%), the need for medication (26%), long-term accommodation (13%), language courses (10%), and employment (10%). Men reported higher frequencies for two needs compared to women: access to health services, cited by 49 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women, and the need for medicines, mentioned by 35 per cent of men and 26 per cent of women.

The analysis reveals distinct patterns in the needs expressed by short-term visitors and prospective returnees. Short-term visitors exhibited a higher prevalence of requirements for

health services (42%), general information (38%), medicines (29%), long-term accommodation (14%), and language courses (11%). Conversely, prospective returnees prioritised their needs differently, with the most common requests being financial support (30%), health services (22%), general information (21%), medicines (20%), and employment support (13%).

Almost half (46%) of prospective returnees indicated that they have no immediate needs and a slightly larger proportion (51%) of short-term visitors reported the same. This could suggest that short-term visitors may already be more oriented towards the conditions of return rather than focusing on unmet needs in the country of displacement.

Figure 10: Top needs by return intention (%), n=1,254



ASSISTANCE

In general, humanitarian assistance was received by less than half of respondents (47%) while away from Ukraine. During displacement, prospective returnees, those who aim to return and remain in Ukraine, demonstrated at much lower rates that they have received humanitarian assistance (10%) compared to short-term visitors (63%). In comparison, from January to March 2023, prospective returnees and short-term visitors responded at similar rates that they received humanitarian assistance while

abroad (35% and 39% respectively). By Q2 2023, two out of five (42%) prospective returnees mentioned they received assistance, and seven out of ten (70%) short-term visitors said the same.³ This large gap persisted and widened throughout 2023 and has continued increasing in Q1 2024.

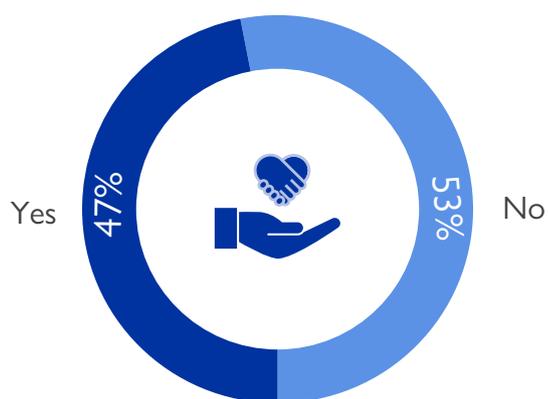
Despite the differences in aid recipients among different subgroups of respondents, only a minority of the respondents experienced difficulties receiving support overall (2%).

3. International Organization for Migration (IOM), April 2024. "Ukrainians and Third-Country Nationals Crossing Back to Ukraine - 2023 Regional Analysis," IOM, Vienna.

Thus, the discrepancy in rates of receiving aid is unlikely due to a short reach of humanitarian actors to those in need of support, but rather because of other reasons.

Among the small proportion of respondents who encountered obstacles in obtaining humanitarian aid, the difficulties were attributed to delays in receiving financial support or social benefits foreseen in the country of displacement, language barriers, congestion when accessing basic health services and lack of information.

Figure 11: Assistance received, n=1,330



Please help me find a job. I am a welder. But because of the loss of my hand, no one wants to hire me.

Twenty-two-year-old man from Khmelnitsky oblast, crossing back from Slovakia



DTM enumerator conducts surveys with Ukrainians crossing back at the train station in Kosice, Slovakia. © IOM 2024

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 Slovakia, 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

Aim

To improve the understanding of the profiles of refugees from Ukraine crossing back to Ukraine, including their displacement patterns, intentions and needs.

Target Population

Ukrainians who are crossing back to Ukraine.

Location and execution

Face-to-face surveys are conducted by 8 trained enumerators stationed at selected locations. Surveys were conducted in Ukrainian and Russian with the help of a mobile application.

Regional data collection and analysis:

The survey was deployed in 5 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 Slovakia, and the results should be considered indicative.

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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 of 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 in the country of displacement; 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 refugees from Ukraine.

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