

POLAND

UKRAINIAN NATIONALS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE

APRIL-JUNE 2024

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Cover photo: An enumerator interviews a refugee at the Przemysł train station in Poland. © IOM 2023

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KEY FINDINGS

Demographics



215
Ukrainian
respondents

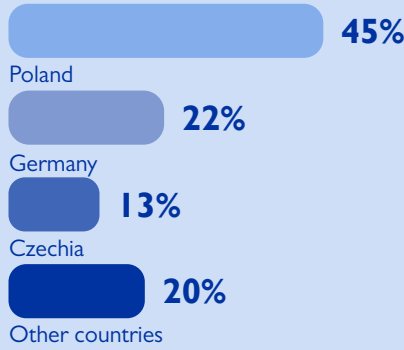
95%
Women



5%
Men



Countries of stay



Oblasts of origin

60%

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

Destination

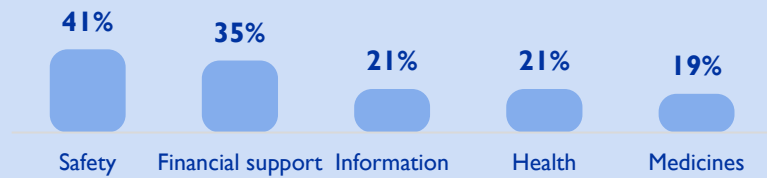
85%

to the oblast of origin

15%

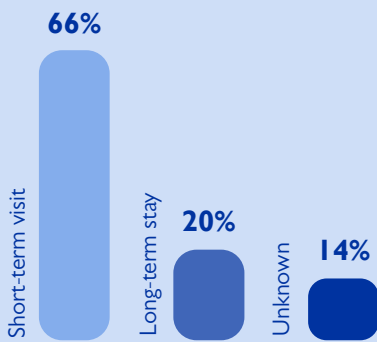
different oblast

Top 5 needs



Multiple answers possible

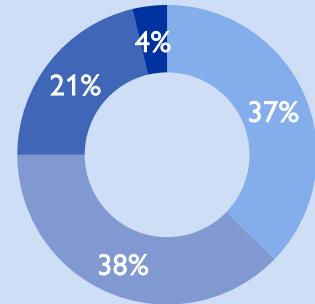
Intentions



Entries and exits

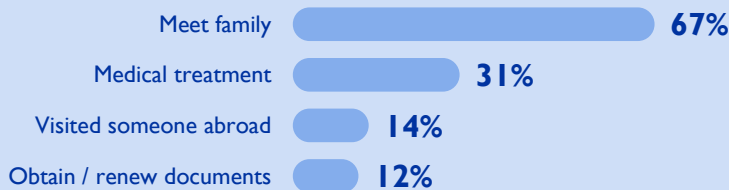
75%

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



■ None ■ Once ■ Twice ■ More

Reasons



Multiple answers possible

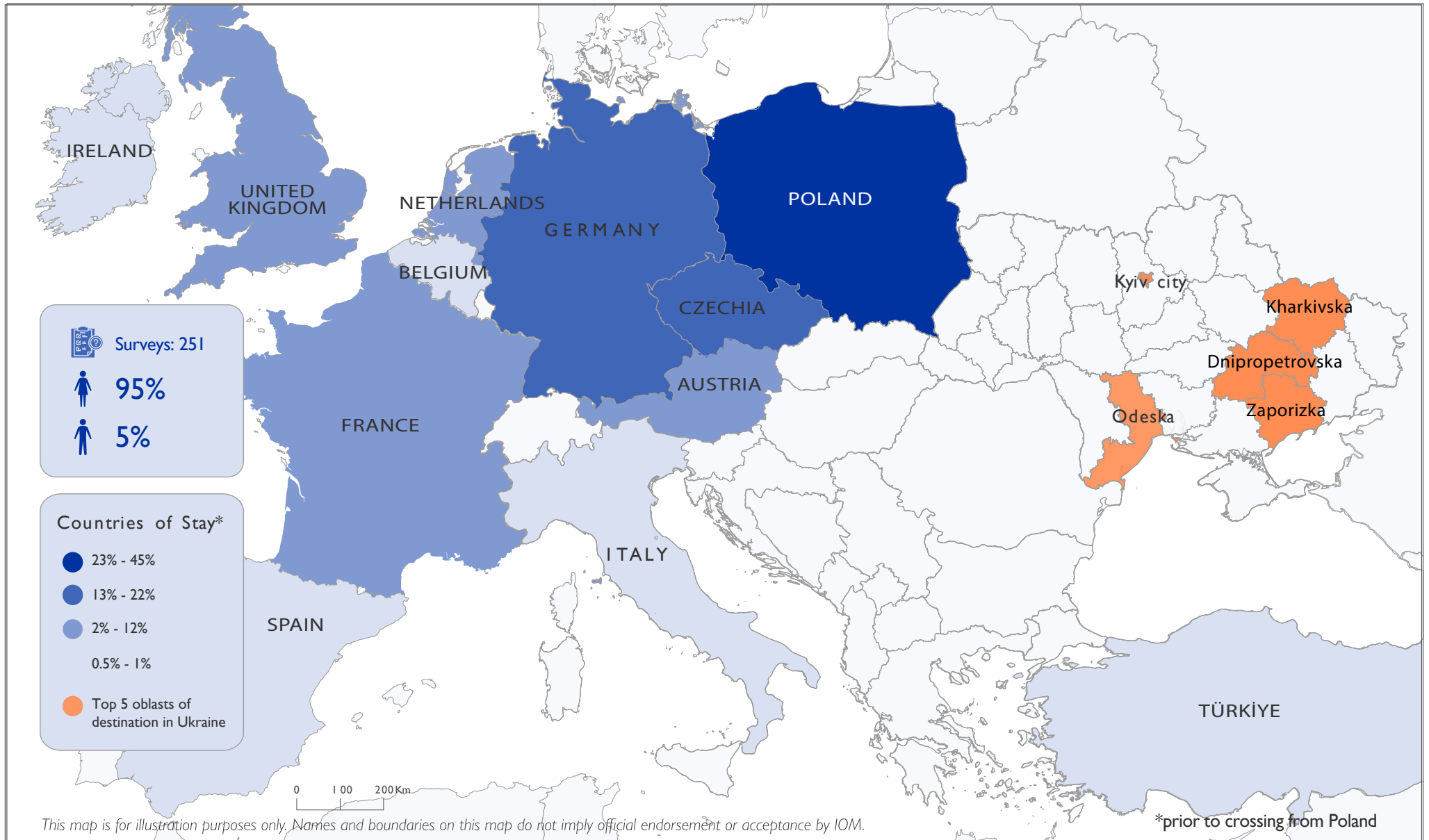
Assistance



65%

received aid
while abroad

Map 1: Main countries of stay and main oblasts of destination among respondents crossing back through Poland, April - June 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 215 surveys were collected between April and June 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. It should also be noted that results may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding or multi-select questions.

GENDER AND AGE

Among respondents, women constituted 95 per cent, while men made up only 5 per cent. The average age among all participants was found to be 42 years, with women averaging 41 years and men 55 years. Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents, accounting for 30 per cent, fell within the active age range of 40 – 49 years.

The largest proportion of female prospective returnees were in the 18–29 age group (39%), followed by those in the 30–39 age group (24%). A significant majority of men planning to return were aged 30–39 (67%). Most of the prospective returnees indicated that their reason for traveling outside of Ukraine was to visit someone abroad (66%, n=44).

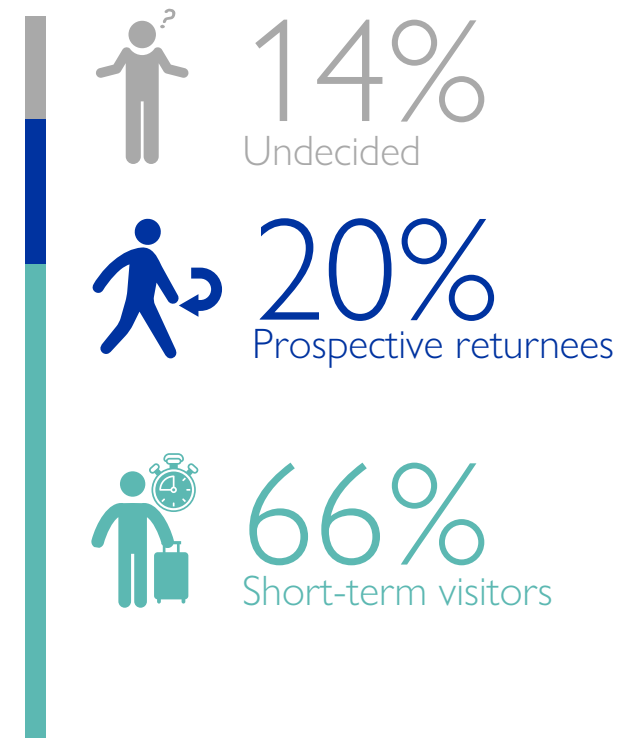
2. INTENTIONS AND REASONS TO CROSS TO UKRAINE

SHORT-TERM VISIT OR PROSPECTIVE RETURN

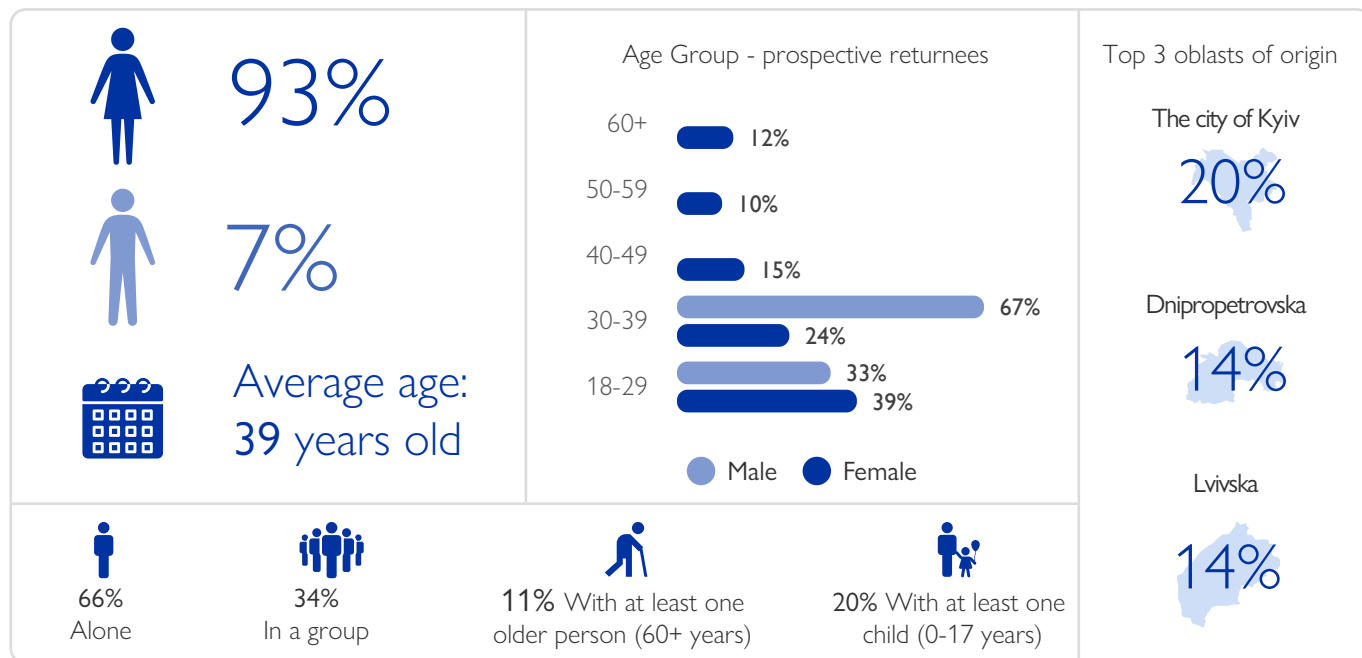
Throughout the reporting period, 20 per cent of respondents expressed their intention to remain in Ukraine (prospective returnees), while 66 per cent planned to make a short visit (short-term visitors). Almost all prospective returnees (95%) indicated they want to remain indefinitely in Ukraine. However, 14 per cent of interviewed Ukrainian nationals were uncertain about the duration of their visit.

The majority of respondents (76% overall) indicated their intention to stay in their own homes when returning. Nineteen per cent reported plans to stay with relatives, while 4 per cent stated intentions to stay with friends. Notably, a great majority of potential returnees were going back to their home (98%), which is explained by the majority of this group returning from visiting family abroad.

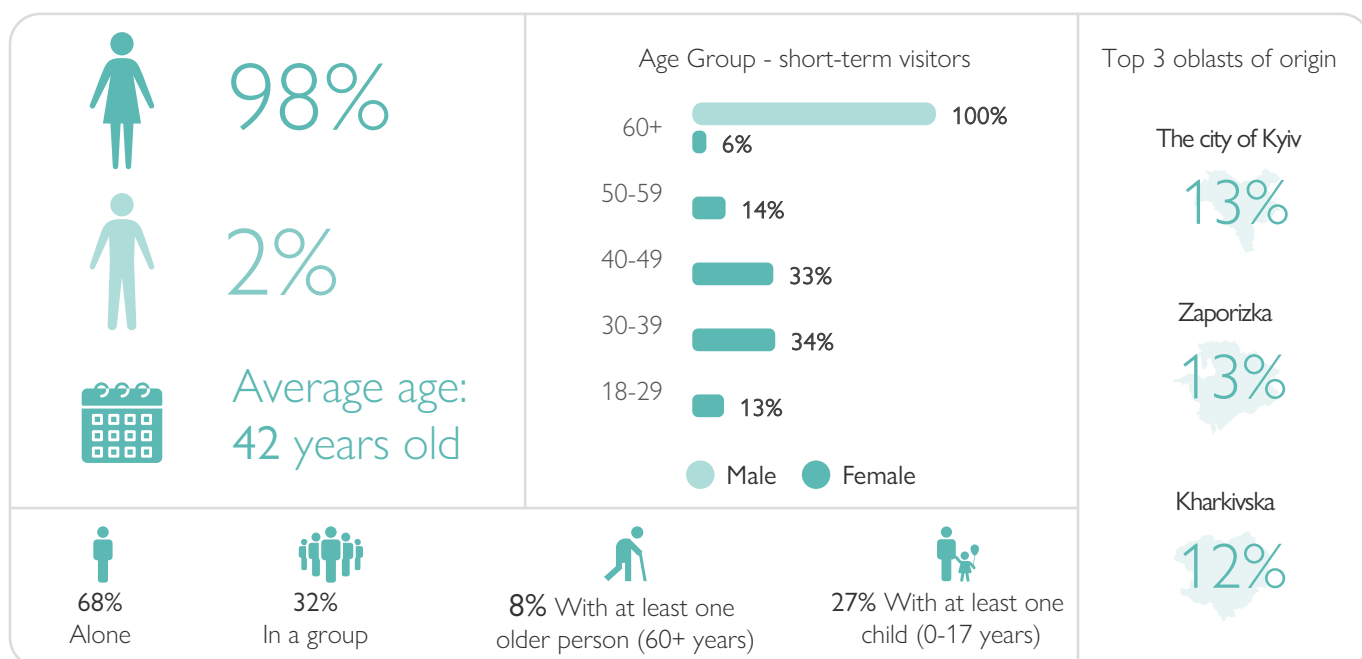
Figure 1: Intention to stay or do a short visit, total (%) n= 215



PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES (20% OF RESPONDENTS, N=44) INTEND TO STAY



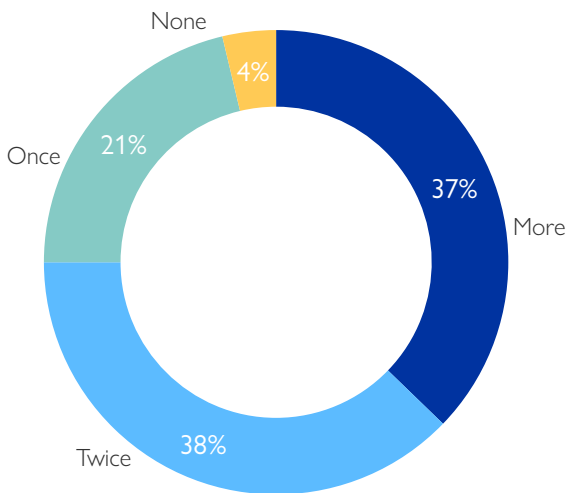
SHORT-TERM VISITORS (66% OF RESPONDENTS, N=141) INTEND TO VISIT FOR A SHORT TIME



EXITS AND ENTRIES

Many Ukrainian nationals cross back on a regular basis. Most respondents reported having crossed the Ukrainian border either twice (38%) or more than twice (37%) since their initial displacement.

Figure 2: Number of exits from and entries to Ukraine since 24 February 2022 (%), n=188



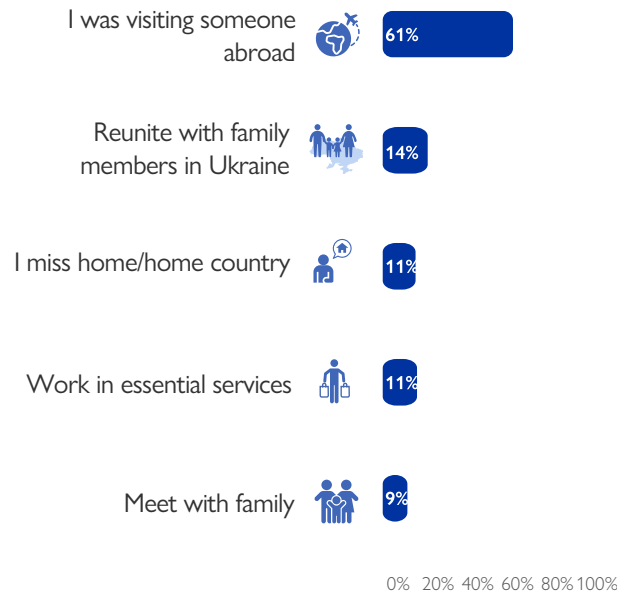
REASONS TO CROSS BACK TO UKRAINE

Among prospective returnees, over 6 in 10 respondents (61%) mentioned they were returning from visiting relatives or close friends abroad. Fourteen per cent reported their motivation was reuniting with their family members. While 11 per cent stated missing home as their reason for returning, another 11 per cent reported working in essential services as their motivation.

For short-term visitors, the main purpose of their visit to Ukraine was to meet family members (87%). Additionally, 39 per cent intended to seek medical treatment, while a smaller proportion (17%) mentioned they needed to obtain or renew identity documents.

Figure 3: Top 5 reasons to stay in Ukraine, prospective returnees (%), n=44

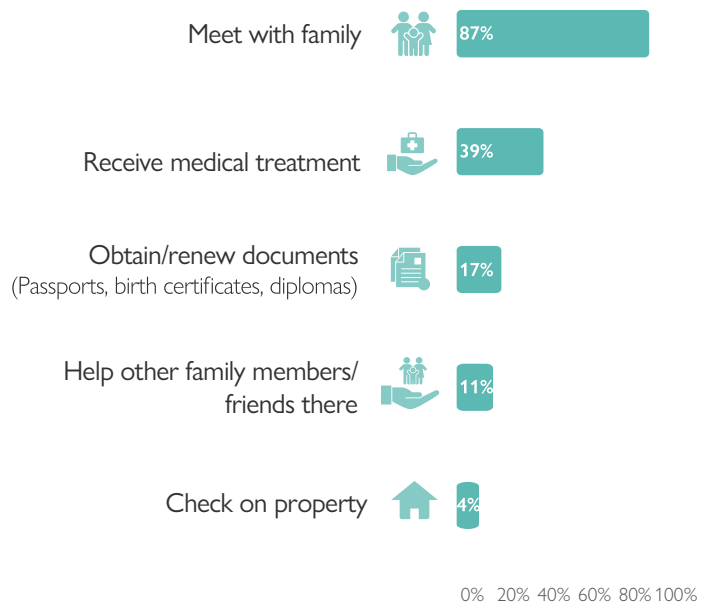
PROSPECTIVE RETURNEE



Multiple answers possible

Figure 4: Top 5 reason to make a short visit, short-term visitors (%), n=141

SHORT-TERM VISITOR



Multiple answers possible

3. TIME OUTSIDE OF UKRAINE

DISPLACEMENT ABROAD

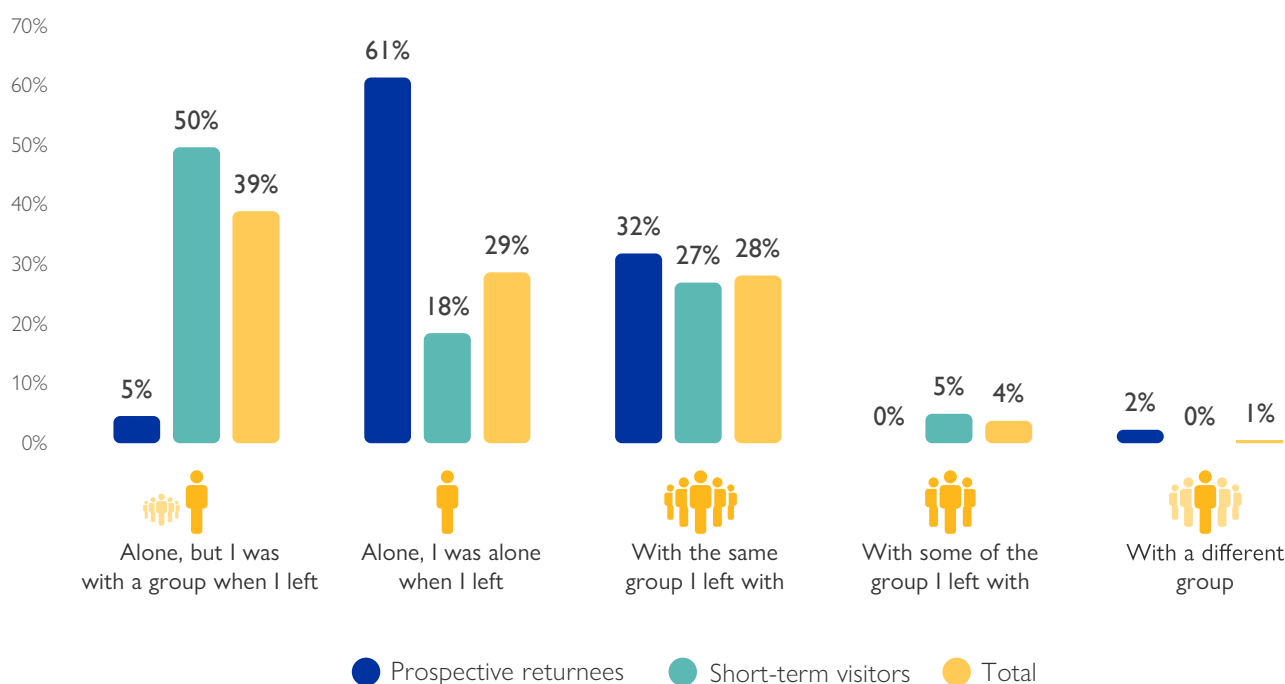
Forty-five per cent of all respondents were returning to Ukraine after being displaced in Poland. The majority of the remaining respondents stayed in other European countries (53%), particularly in Germany (22%) and Czechia (13%). Only 1 per cent spent time outside of Europe.

Among prospective returnees, the primary displacement countries were Czechia (11%), and Germany (9%). Similarly, short-term visitors returning from displacement primarily came from Germany (28%), Czechia (14%), and Austria (5%). Notably, prospective returnees were more likely to have spent their displacement period in Poland compared to short-term visitors (57% vs 43%).

At the time of the interview, respondents had been displaced outside of Ukraine for an average of 491 days (approximately 1 year and 4 months). On average, short-term visitors experienced periods of displacement that were more than twice as long (550 days) compared to those who returned for a permanent stay (222 days).

The disparity between the two groups is further highlighted by the varying frequency of border crossings. Nearly three quarters (72%) of short-term visitors crossed the border two or more times since February 2022, while only 39 per cent of prospective returnees made at least two crossings during the same period.

Figure 5: Group composition at crossing into Ukraine by return intention, prospective returnees (n=44), short-term visitors (n=141), and total (n=215) (%)



GROUP COMPOSITION

Approximately one third (33%) of respondents were part of a group, while 67 per cent travelled alone. 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=96) had previously journeyed with a group (73%), whereas the majority of prospective returnees crossing alone had also initially travelled alone (93%).

Near one in four Ukrainian respondents (24%) crossed back with at least one child under the age of 18. More short-term visitors travelled with children compared to prospective returnees (27% versus 20%). Eleven per cent of prospective returnees were either over 60 years of age or traveling with someone in that age group. Similarly, 8 per cent of short-term visitors belonged to this age category.

4. NEEDS & ASSISTANCE

NEEDS

Personal safety emerged as the overall primary need among those crossing back, reported by 41 per cent of respondents, which was then followed by the need for financial support (35%). Other frequent responses included general information (21%), health services (21%), and medicines (19%). Overall, 19 per cent of respondents reported no needs.

Although the most commonly reported categories of needs were consistent, the frequency of reported needs among Ukrainian respondents varied slightly by country. For example, in Germany, health services and medicines were reported relatively frequently (33% each, n=48). In Czechia, however, the need for general information was more common (36%, n=28), while the need for financial support was lower (21%). Variations of needs in each country – 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 and/or to factors linked to the national context in terms of rights and services granted to refugees from Ukraine under the national temporary protection schemes, to the pre-existing level of public infrastructures (in terms of public services, for example), and to the local labour market structure.

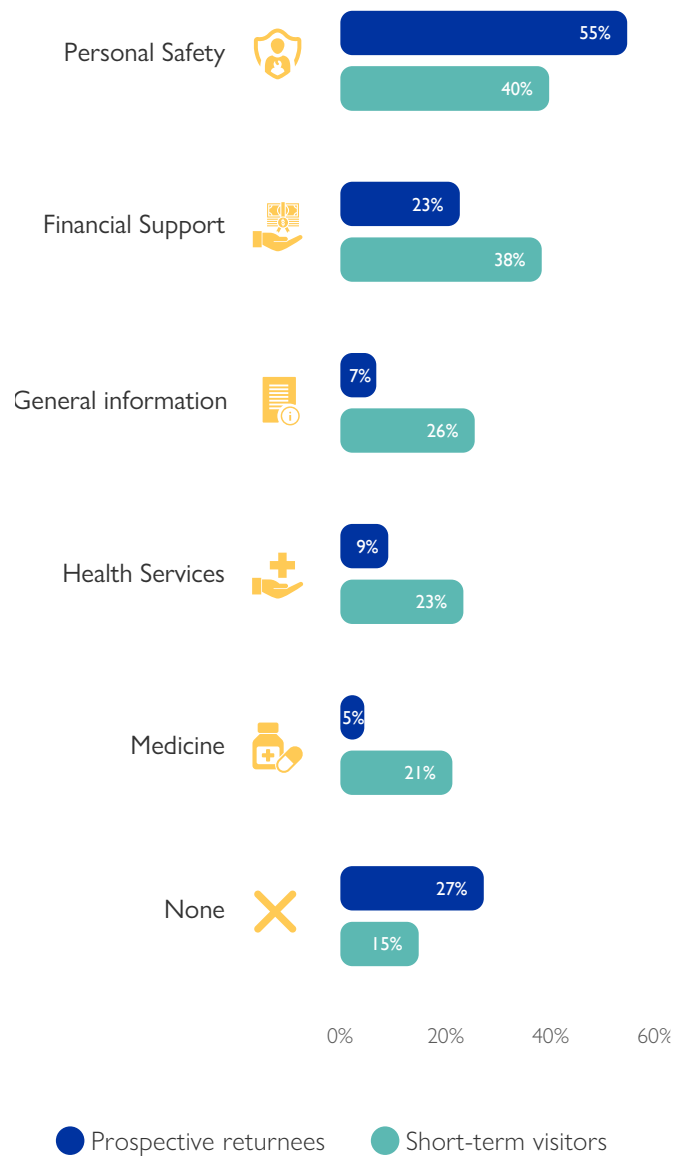
Whilst prospective returnees and short-term visitors did not differ significantly in terms of the proportion reporting no immediate needs, the average number of needs was slightly higher among those who crossed back for a short visit compared to those who returned to stay (1.9 versus 1.3). This can be 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 by those returning for a short visit. Additionally, those on short visits more often mentioned the need for general information compared to prospective returnees (26% versus 7%). Conversely, personal safety was mentioned more frequently among prospective returnees than among short-term visitors (55% versus 40%).

ASSISTANCE

Nearly two-thirds of Ukrainian respondents (65%) received humanitarian assistance while abroad. Prospective returnees reported receiving assistance at much lower rates (23%) compared to short-term visitors (80%). This discrepancy may be attributed to the longer average displacement of short-term visitors compared to prospective returnees (550 days versus 222 days).

Seven per cent of respondents experienced difficulties receiving assistance. However, 70 per cent of those reporting difficulties eventually received the assistance.

Figure 6: Top needs by return intention, prospective returnees n=44, short-term visitors (n=141)



Multiple answers possible

5. OBLASTS OF ORIGIN & DESTINATION

Overall, 60 per cent of respondents resided in only five regions before being displaced outside Ukraine: the city of Kyiv (17%), Dnipropetrovska (14%), Zaporizka (11%), Kharkivska (9%), and Odeska (9%). Over one-third (37%) of respondents came from oblasts in eastern Ukraine, while fewer originated from the northern (16%) or southern (15%) regions. Fourteen per cent of respondents were from Kyiv, nearly 10% from western Ukraine, and only 7% from central Ukraine, the region with the fewest respondents.

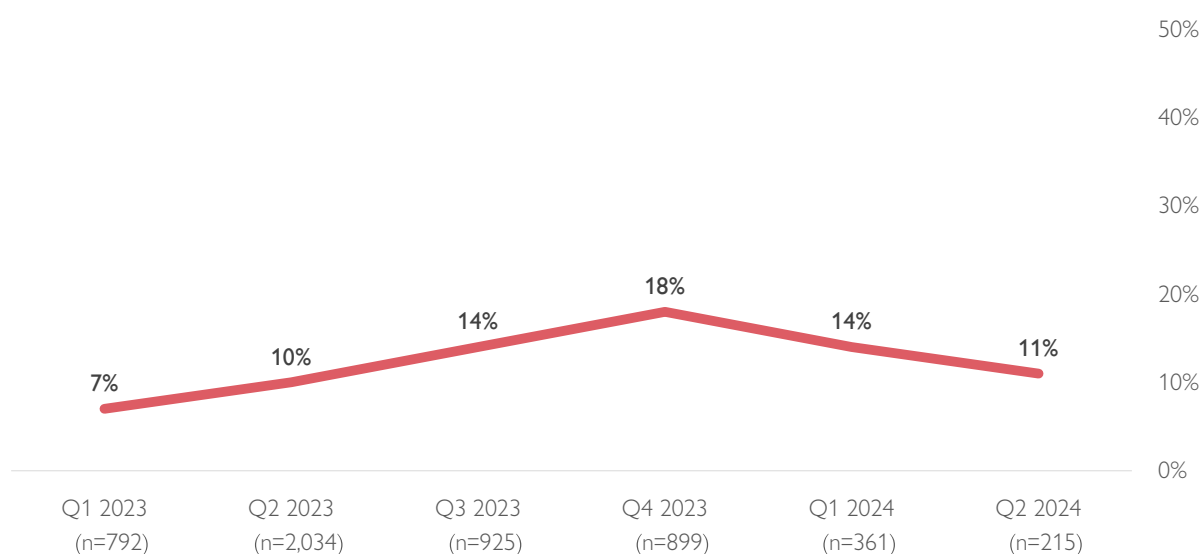
There was a large proportion of respondents who were intending to return to their oblast of origin (85%), whilst 15 per cent indicated they were travelling to a different oblast. The proportion of short-term visitors going to a different oblast than their place of origin (16%) was higher than that of prospective returnees (7%). The most frequently cited reasons for crossing back to a different region (n=32) were safety concerns (50%), displacement of family (25%), and damage to their place of origin (19%). Among respondents crossing to a different region, the top three destinations were the city of Kyiv (31%), Dnipropetrovska (25%), and Lvivska (19%).

6. UNEQUAL TREATMENT

In Q2 2024, 11 per cent of respondents or their household members reported experiencing unequal treatment based on nationality, ethnicity, or gender since leaving their place of residence in Ukraine. The majority of survey respondents (84%) did not inform such experiences, while the remaining 5 per cent preferred not to answer. The proportion of those who faced unequal treatment stabilized after a sharp increase in 2023, peaking at 18 per cent in Q4. This figure then gradually decreased to 14 per cent in Q1 of 2024.

Over a quarter of discrimination cases occurred in public spaces. Other common incidents took place while seeking employment or accommodation, or were perpetrated by officials, customs agents, or border guards.

Figure 7: Experiences of discrimination among respondents crossing back to Ukraine by quarter (2023–2024) (%)



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 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.