
To Stay or Go: Factors Shaping Ukrainian Refugees' Intentions Whether to Return to Ukraine

13 November 2024 | Webinar



Photo Credit IOM/Gema Cortes 2022



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Exploring Refugees' Intentions to Return to Ukraine

Data Insights and Policy Responses

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Forthcoming Report:

Exploring Refugees' Intentions to Return to Ukraine: Data Insights and Policy Responses

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Exploring Refugees' Intentions to Return to Ukraine

Data Insights and Policy Responses

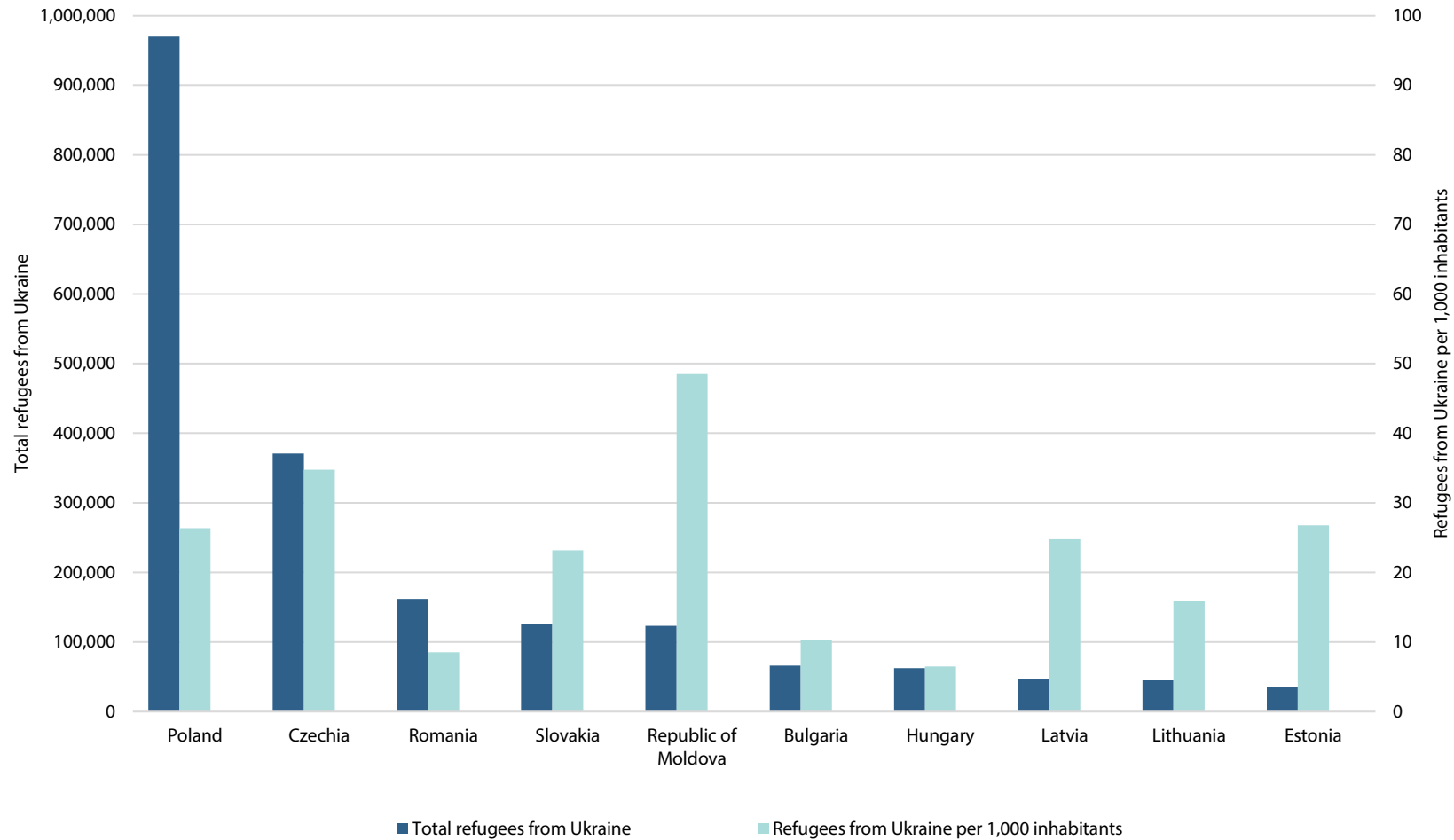
Ravenna Sohst

13 November 2024

Context: Europe's largest displacement crisis since World War II

- As of October 2024, more than **6 million** refugees from Ukraine recorded in other European countries.
- Many **refugees have settled in countries neighbouring Ukraine.**

Number of refugees from Ukraine in the 10 European countries studied, mid-2024



Context: Europe's largest displacement crisis since World War II

- As of October 2024, more than **6 million** refugees from Ukraine recorded in other European countries.
- Many **refugees settling in countries neighbouring Ukraine.**
- Historic activation the EU's **Temporary Protection Directive** and a similar status in the Republic of Moldova.
- But despite unified approach, differences in implementation and support available to refugees.
- Some signs of compassion fatigue and discussions around scaling back some of the support.

Research questions: Drivers of return intentions

With no clear end to the war in sight, uncertainty among policymakers about whether to invest more heavily in refugees' long-term integration or in measures that support their eventual return once the conditions allow.

Some refugees also starting to return from abroad. As of August 2024, IOM estimated that about **1 million had returned to Ukraine**.

- *Do return intentions vary across host countries, and if so, how?*
- *What factors influence Ukrainian refugees' intentions to return?*
- *What role does security in Ukraine play in shaping return decisions?*
- *Is more generous host-country support reducing intentions to return?*
- *What policy responses might be required to support eventual return or deeper integration into host communities?*



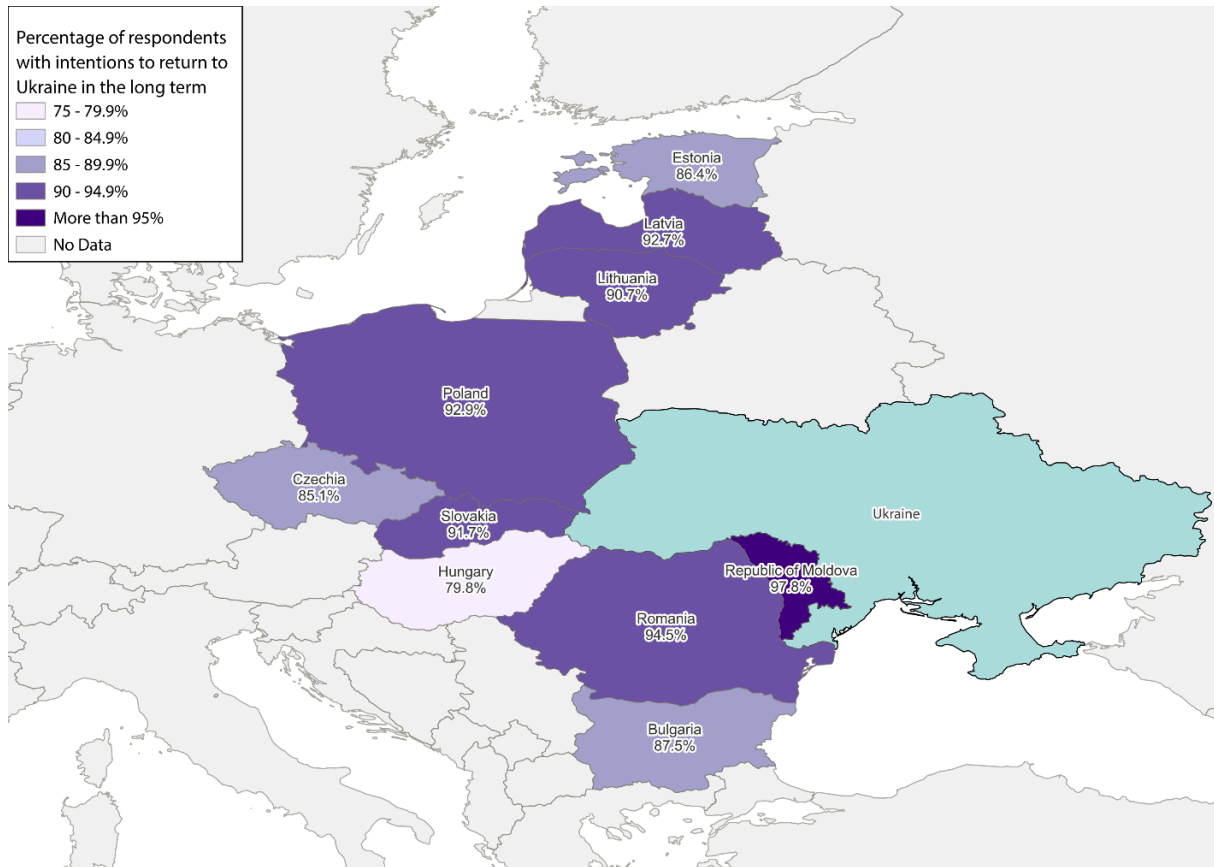
Methodology

The study provides new evidence:

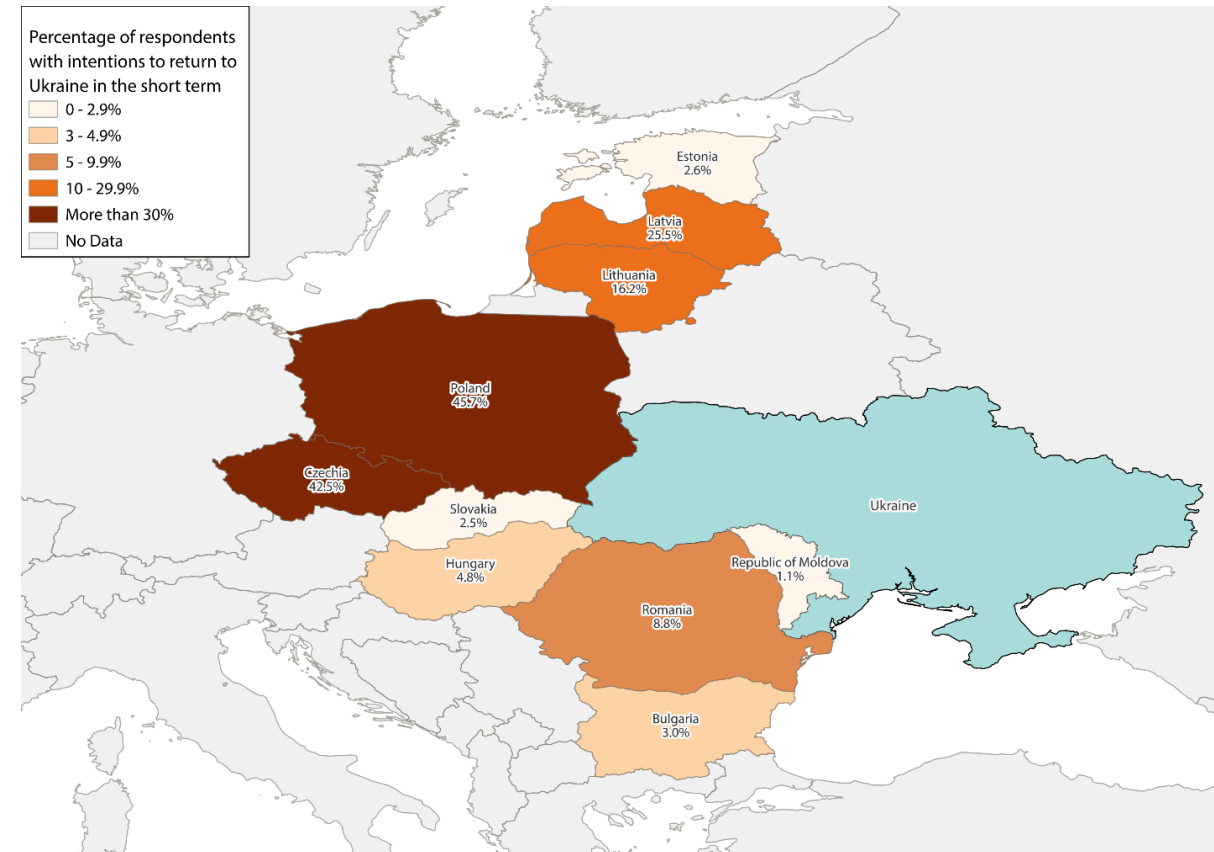
- Building on **over 60,000 surveys** collected by IOM with refugees from Ukraine between April 2022 and December 2023
 - Covering **10 countries**: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia
 - Focusing mainly on refugees of Ukrainian nationality
 - **Augmenting survey data with country-level indicators**
 - in host countries, e.g. GDP
 - in Ukraine, e.g. war intensity
 - Developing a **policy index** capturing support policies for refugees from Ukraine in host countries
- ➔ **Multilevel regression analysis** that captures how factors at the individual and country-level shape return intentions among Ukrainian refugees

Ukrainian refugees' intentions to return to Ukraine in the long and short term, 2022–2023

Ukrainian refugees' intentions to return to Ukraine in the long term

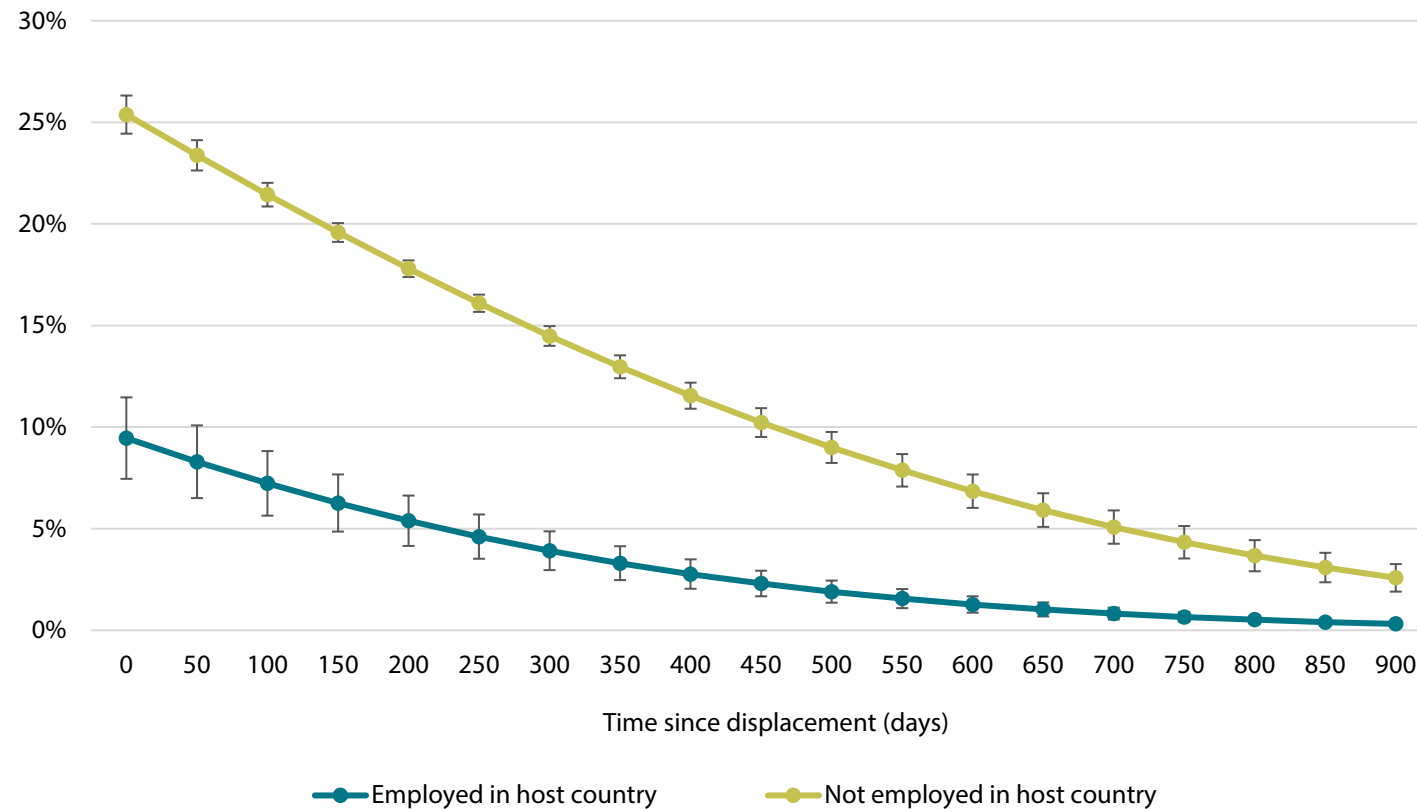


Ukrainian refugees' intentions to return to Ukraine in the short term



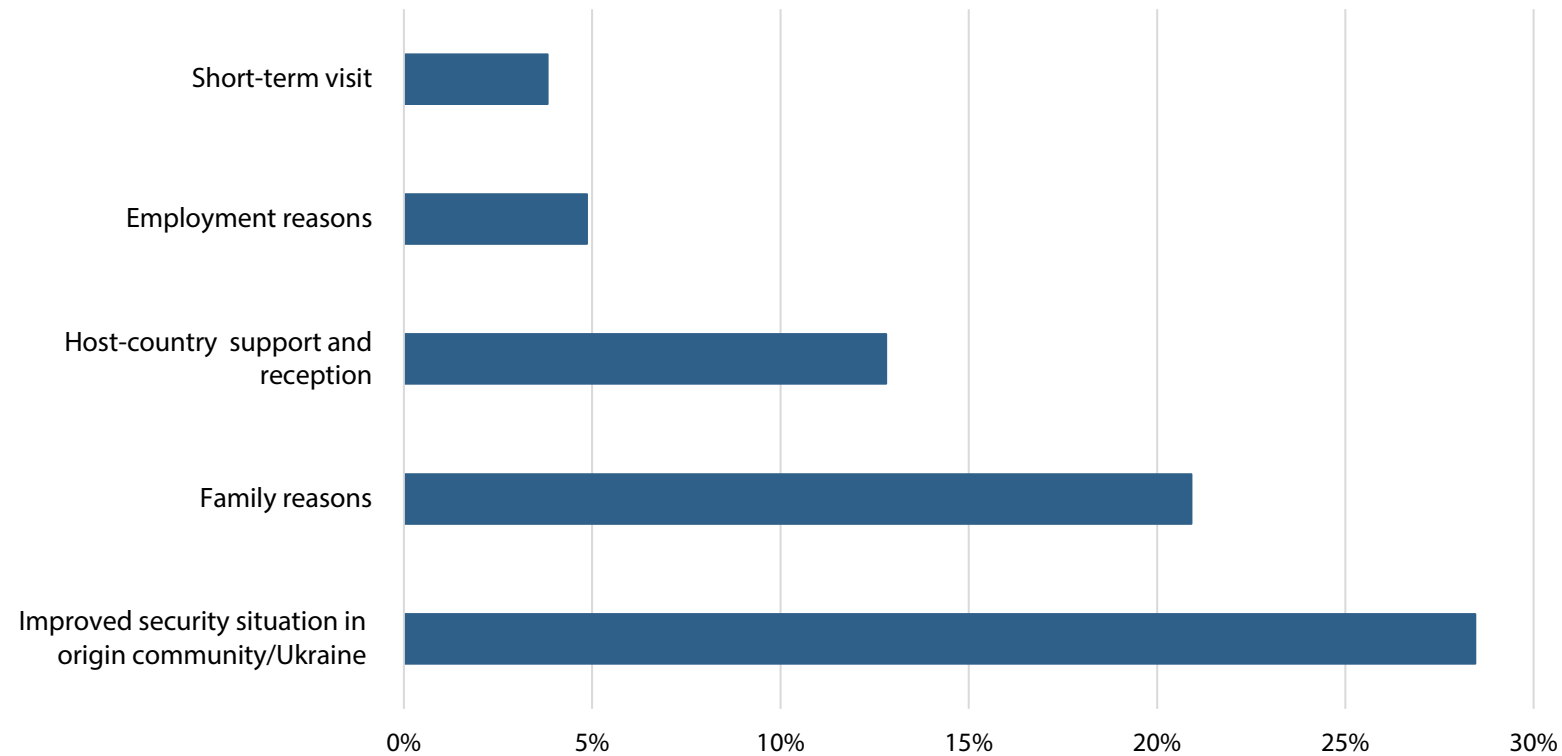
1/3 Key findings – What role for labour market integration?

Employment in the host country significantly lowers return intentions, even after long stretches of displacement.



2/3 Key findings – What role for safety conditions in Ukraine?

When asked about their reasons to return, safety stands out as the single most decisive factor:



2/3 Key findings – What role for safety conditions in Ukraine?

- **Intensity of the war**

In multivariate analysis, the intensity of war (measured by the number of battles and explosions in a region) is also a strong predictor of intentions to return in the short term.

About 20% of Ukrainian refugees would be predicted to report an intention to return in the short term if their home region had experienced no violent encounters since February 2022 versus 7% for a high-intensity region with more than 35,000 incidents.

3/3 Key findings – What role for host country conditions?

- **Economic conditions**

Ukrainian refugees who resided in host countries with a higher GDP and less poverty were slightly more likely to indicate intentions to return to Ukraine in the short term.

- **Temporary protection and other support measures**

Refugees in countries that provide more inclusive support overall were more likely to have plans to return to Ukraine in the near future, but less likely to intend to return in the long term.



Return intentions are a reflection of capacity, which can be strengthened by robust support and economic conditions in host countries

Limitations

1. **Continuing uncertainty** and evolution of factors that shape return intentions in both Ukraine and in host countries
 - Evolution of the war, war intensity, and destruction from the war (incl. mining)?
 - Evolution of host country support and policies?
2. **Lacking clarity about the nature of these planned returns** based on the survey data alone
 - Low response rate to reasons for return, unclear if short visit or more permanent form of return?
 - Based on pre-war patterns, strong precedent of circular mobility, e.g. with Poland or Czechia
3. **Translation of return *intentions* into actual return *movements***
 - Evidence from other contexts points towards a relatively close link between intentions and migration intentions

Conclusions and recommendation

What can be drawn from these findings?

1. Build refugees' capacities for both integration in host communities and to foster informed decision-making about eventual return - a potential win-win.

2. Given persisting uncertainty and prolonged displacement, factor the diversity of refugees' mobility patterns into policy and programmatic decisions.

3. Learn from the experiences of returnees, as well as the evolving needs and intentions of refugees abroad, to provide an evidence base for future reintegration and recovery initiatives.



Thank you for listening!



MPIE-IOM Webinar

Exploring Refugees' Intentions to Return to Ukraine: Data Insights and Policy Responses

Heather KOMENDA

13 November 2024



Topics



Data and information tools



Key trends and statistics



Implications for policy and programming








IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

- Part of a broader data and analytics programme
- Monitors population displacement and mobility
- Identifies needs and key conditions to inform response
- Based on field data, key informant interviews, and randomized sampling in person or via phone

The image displays a collage of IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) outputs. At the top right is a dashboard with filters for Country of survey (All), Sex of respondent (All), and Age group (All). It shows data for 'Intended length of stay' (Leather 30 days, 8 months or per, Refuse to answer) and 'Oblast of origin' (Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Hungary). A map of Ukraine highlights the Republic of Moldova region. Below the dashboard is a 'ROUND 8 FACTSHEET' titled 'CONDITIONS OF RETURN ASSESSMENT' dated 3 July 2024. The factsheet includes a 'CONTEXT' section and a 'RETURNS TO SEVERE CONDITIONS' section. In the center is a graphic titled 'UKRAINIANS CROSSING BACK TO UKRAINE' with a subtitle 'UKRAINE RESPONSE' and a date '15 October 2024'. At the bottom left is the cover of the 'UKRAINE RETURNS REPORT' titled 'GENERAL POPULATION SURVEY', dated 'ROUND 18 OCTOBER 2024'. At the bottom right is another dashboard showing 'n of respondents to their oblast of origin' with a donut chart indicating '88% of respondents will return to the same location' and '12% of respondents will not return to the same location'. A 'Bookmark and Print' button is visible at the bottom right of this dashboard.

Conditions of Return Assessment (CoRA)

- Provides granular data on where returns are occurring and the conditions of return
- Focuses on five sectors of conditions faced upon return (livelihoods, utilities and services, residential destruction, public life, and safety and security)
- And their severity (low, medium, high)

| DRIVERS | INDICATORS |
|---|---|
| Livelihoods  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery of agriculture (where relevant) • Recovery of large enterprises and industry (where relevant) • Recovery of the public sector • Recovery of small businesses, shops and markets • Availability of employment • Reduction in the quality or quantity of basic items and food used in household |
| Utilities and services  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to regular government services • Access to criminal, legal and justice institutions • Access to education • Access to healthcare services • Disruptions to electricity supply • Disruptions to household water supply |
| Residential destruction  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential damage or destruction • Rehabilitation and repair of residential damage or destruction |
| Safety and security  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) or mines • Active demining initiatives (where relevant) • Concerns regarding of military and military activities • Occurrence of missile strikes, shelling or other long-range attacks |
| Public life  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intra-communal tensions related to displacement or social assistance • Quality of daily public life |

General Population Survey (GPS)

- Nation-wide, representative population survey aimed at providing in-depth granular info on displacement figures and mobility trends
- Gathers data on the profiles, needs and intentions of IDPs to inform durable solutions to internal displacement

KEY FINDINGS



IOM estimates that 3,669,000 *de facto* IDPs and 4,396,000 returnees reside in Ukraine.



The main IDP hosting oblasts are Kharkivska (13%) and Dnipropetrovska (12%). The highest proportion of IDPs originate from Donetsk Oblast (24%). The largest flow of intra-oblast displacement was identified in Donetsk (90%), Kharkivska (85%) and Zaporizka (83%) Oblasts.



Ten per cent of the IDP households are single-parent households (only one member aged 18+ and all others are 0-17 years old) as of August 2024.



The majority (69%) of *de facto* IDPs expressed the intention to remain in their current location beyond the next three months, while 14 per cent were considering to return to their places of origin. Among those considering return, the majority (63%) reported they would do so only after the war is over.



Nine per cent of IDPs have spent at least 14 days abroad since February 2022, due to the full-scale invasion.



An estimated 82 per cent of IDPs have been in displacement for more than one year, with the median length in displacement at 750 days for all IDPs.



The most commonly cited need by IDPs were power banks and generators (20%), followed by accommodation (14%), and income earning opportunities (13%).



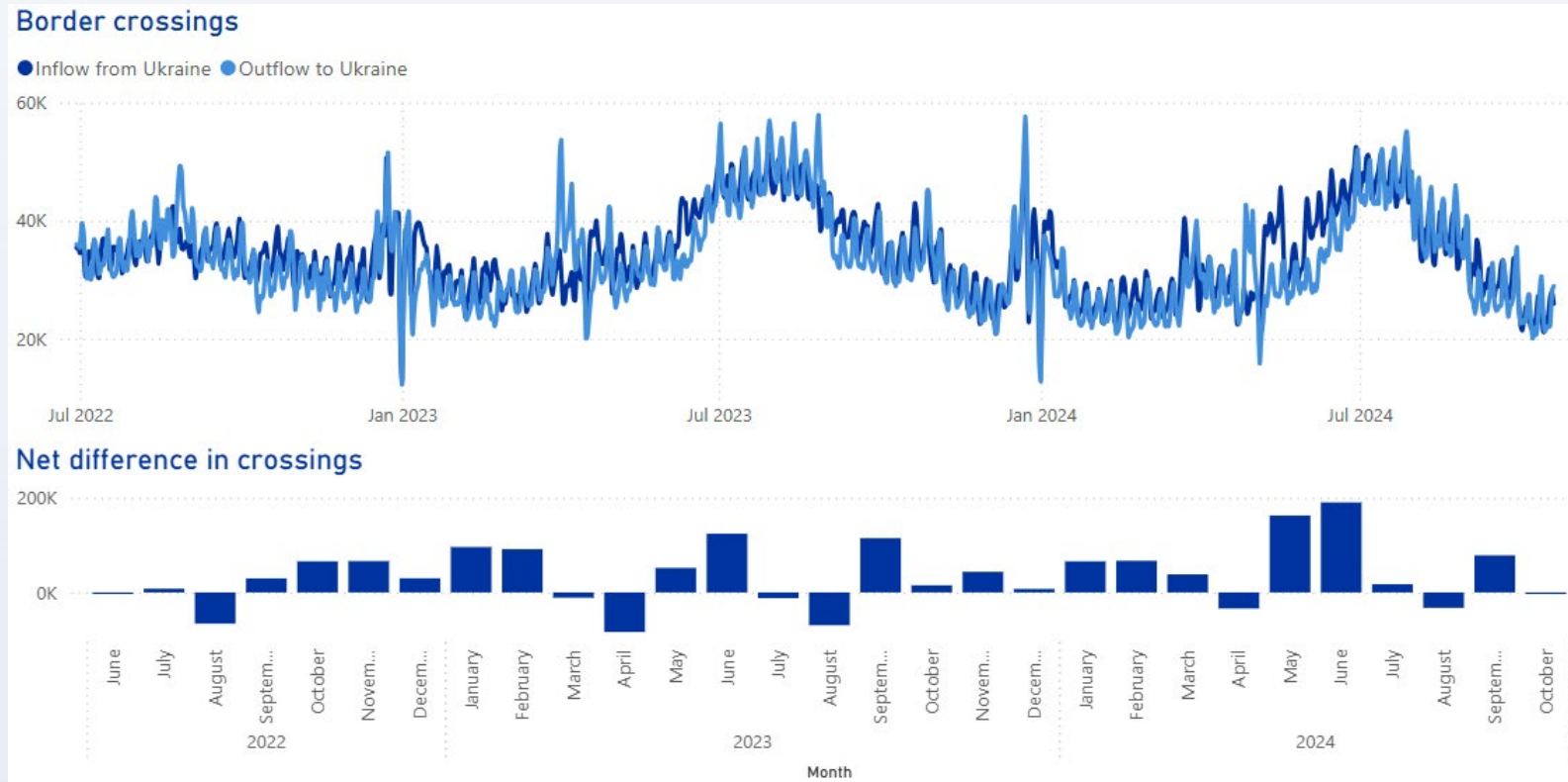
Utilisation of coping strategies dropped slightly, compared to the previous round, attributed to seasonal opportunities such as reduced utility expenses and seasonal employment. Nonetheless, households with single parents and incomes lower than 7,064 UAH per month continue to report resorting to crisis and emergency coping strategies.

Key statistics

Ukraine Regional Movements

latest observations and figures

Border crossings between Ukraine and neighboring countries (Poland, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia)



- Overall, in and outflow trends mostly align with seasonal variations identified in past years;
- **2024 has seen a greater net inflow from Ukraine to the four countries as compared to 2023.**

Return numbers

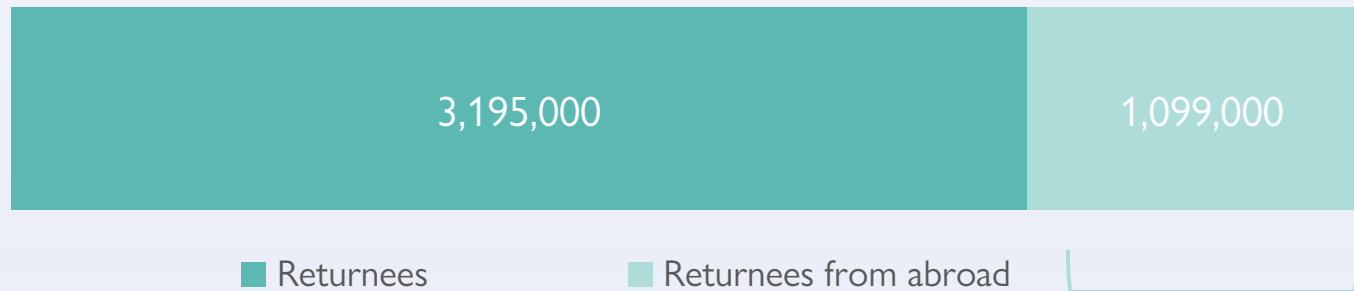
IDPs
3.55 million



345,000 Ukrainians remain in displacement in Ukraine after having returned from abroad

- 10% of all IDPs in Ukraine

Returnees
4.29 million



1.1 million Ukrainians have returned from abroad to their habitual residence

- 26% of all returnees in Ukraine

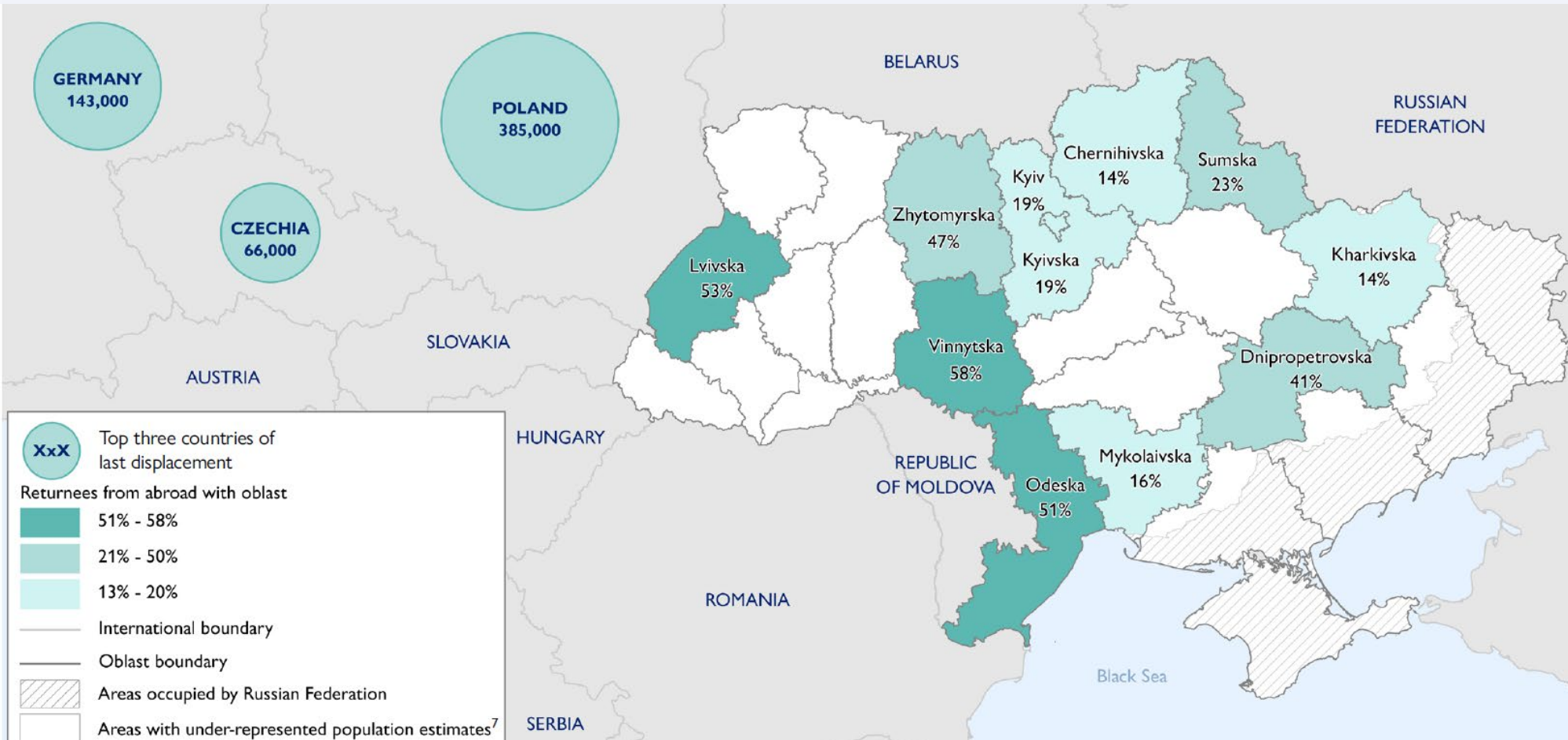
The terms "return" and "returnee" are used to refer to all people who have returned to their habitual residence after being displaced for at least two weeks since February 2022, either from abroad or from within Ukraine. This excludes those who have returned to Ukraine from abroad but have not returned to their habitual residence.

86% of which returned from Europe (approximately 945,000)

Return patterns

- 86% of the 1.1 million returned from Europe (approximately 945,000), largely from Poland, Germany, and Czechia
- Returnees from abroad reported having been displaced longer (median period of 150 days) than individuals who were displaced within Ukraine prior to return (90 days)

Estimated number of returnees who were previously displaced abroad, by oblast of return, and top three countries of previous displacement



Highest proportion of all returnees from abroad are in:

- Kyiv (17%)
- Kyivska (11%)
- Dnipropetrovska (10%)



Crossing back from abroad, 2024

In **Q1 through Q3 2024**, DTM interviewed **12,698**

Ukrainians crossing back to Ukraine from 5 countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova)

- 63% live abroad and were visiting Ukraine for a short period (“short-term visitors”)
- 5% were displaced abroad and were intending to return to Ukraine (“prospective returnees”)
- 8% were undecided as to how long they planned to stay in Ukraine
- 25% live in Ukraine and were crossing back to Ukraine after a short stay abroad



Crossing back, 2024 (Q1-3)

Short-term visitors

Reasons for crossing back

- Reunite with family
- Healthcare
- Documentation
- Check on property
- Help family

Needs upon arrival

- Financial support
- Personal safety
- Health services
- Medicine
- General info
- Employment, jobs

Prospective returnees

Reasons for crossing back

- Reunite with family
- Miss home
- Lack resources
- Lack shelter
- Job in Ukraine
- Lack job

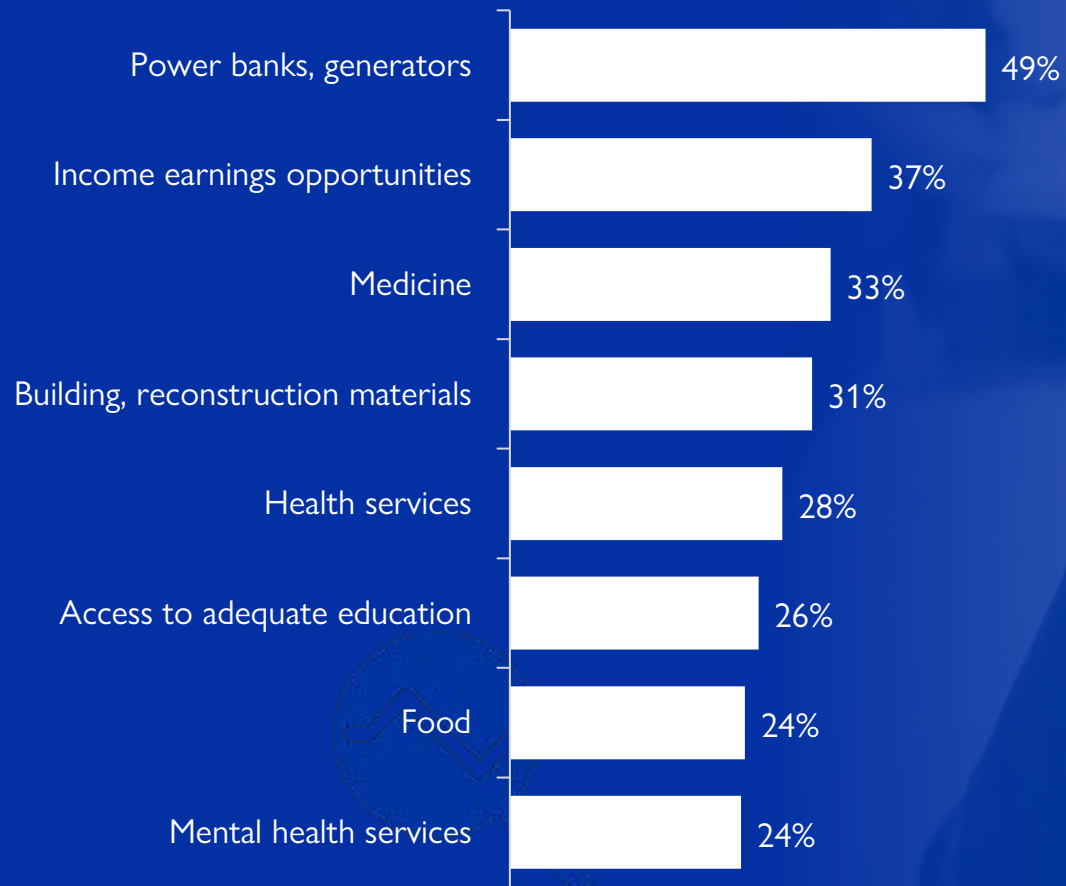
Needs upon arrival

- Financial support
- Personal safety
- Health services
- Medicine
- Employment, jobs
- General information



Needs of returnees from abroad

Top needs of returnees from abroad:



Needs- and vulnerability-based assistance provided by IOM to all regardless of status, includes those who spontaneously returned:

- Protection
- Shelter
- Livelihoods
- Health



Implications for policy and programming

Looking ahead

Key components for Ukraine to harness the full potential of its returning citizens to drive sustainable development and foster a resilient, inclusive society:

- Implementing comprehensive support systems
- Facilitating active contribution to rebuilding (social and infrastructural) efforts
- Allowing flexibility in maintaining ties with countries of displacement



Thank you!

Thank you for joining us



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Check for our forthcoming report

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Video from today's event will be
available at:
bit.ly/ukrainian-refugees-2024

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