UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

TURUN YLIOPISTON MAANTIETEEN JA GEOLOGIAN LAITOKSEN JULKAISUJA
PUBLICATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

No. 21

RETURN MIGRATION OF UKRAINIANS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION TO UKRAINE, 2022–2024

Зворотна міграція українців з ЄС в Україну, 2022–2024 роки

Migracja powrotna Ukraińców z UE na Ukrainę, 2022–2024

Rückwanderung von Ukrainern aus der EU in die Ukraine, 2022–2024

Ukrainalaisten paluumuutto EU:sta Ukrainaan, 2022–2024

Возвратная миграция украинцев из ЕС в Украину, 2022–2024 годы

Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Olha Mamchur & Mart Reimann

RETURN MIGRATION OF UKRAINIANS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION TO UKRAINE, 2022–2024

Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Olha Mamchur & Mart Reimann

Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Department of Geography and Geology, University of Turku & Institute of Ecology and the Earth Sciences, University of Tartu

with

Olha Mamchur, Department of Economic and Social Geography, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

Mart Reimann, School of Humanities, University of Tallinn

Turku 2024
University of Turku
Department of Geography and Geology
Division of Geography

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

ISBN 978-951-29-9787-9 (printed)
ISBN 978-951-29-9788-6 (Internet)
ISSN 2489-2319 (printed)
ISSN 2324-0369 (Internet)
Painosalama, Turku, Finland 2024

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

The study *Return migration of Ukrainians from the European Union to Ukraine, 2022–2024* examines migration, daily lives, and future aspirations of adult Ukrainians who have undergone a specific journey. Initially they fled Ukraine after February 24, 2022 when Russia started the large-scale military invasion on Ukraine. They subsequently resettled in the European Union (EU) member states. Ultimately, they returned to Ukraine so that they lived there in the spring of 2024 (Fig. 1). In this report, these individuals are referred to as Ukrainian return migrants.

Figure 1. Ukraine with its neighboring countries.

Ukrainians repatriated from the EU belong to a broader group of Ukrainians who returned when Ukraine was still in war. There is a pressing need to understand the circumstances under which these individuals departed Ukraine, the nature of their daily lives while residing in the EU, and the realities of the lives of these Ukrainians upon returning to their country of origin. It is essential to document the migration experiences and processes of those who have left the country during the war and later returned when the war was still going on. The phenomenon of return migration is of significant relevance, both during the current war and in the aftermath of it.

1.1 Research project

This report centers on Ukrainian return migrants exploring their migration trajectories and everyday lives in Ukraine and the EU. Enabled by the EU's so-called Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), officially the Council Directive 2001/55/EC, they were allowed to reside in the EU, receiving temporary protection there and facilitating their access to housing, jobs, education for children, healthcare, and other social services in their host EU country (European Commission, 2022). We also address their engagement with the Internet and social media before leaving Ukraine, during their stay in the EU, and upon their return to Ukraine. Furthermore, we are interested on knowing what are their aspirations after they returned to Ukraine. Spanning over two years, the study encompasses the period from February 2022 to June 2024, providing a comprehensive analysis of their experiences and behaviors over this significant timeframe.

Estimates suggest that as of spring of 2024, between 7 and 9 million Ukrainians have fled their country following Russia's large-scale military offensive against Ukraine (United Nations, 2024). This war, however, commenced already in 2014 with Russia and Russian-supported forces seizing Crimea and certain areas of eastern Ukraine. The escalation from 2022 saw widespread attacks across Ukraine, inflicting significant damage and casualties in both urban and rural settings. Initially, many were forced to evacuate due to immediate danger, as their homes and localities were ravaged. The unpredictable targets of the warfare prompted a broader spectrum of Ukrainian citizens to depart. Predominantly, those who fled were women, children, and the elderly, attributable to a martial law declaration in Ukraine that restricted the mobility of men aged 18 to 60, barring them from leaving the country except in specified cases. From February 2022 to April 2024, the mobilization age for Ukrainian men started from 27 years. In April 2024, this minimum military conscription age was dropped to 25 years of age. In this case, there would be a potential of 3.7 million men eligible for mobilization (Sauer, 2024). Furthermore, it was mandated that all Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 must register with the armed forces, ensuring their availability for military duties.

As of spring 2024, the war entered its third year with no cessation. However, Ukraine has notably reclaimed territory initially seized by Russian forces, yet substantial portions of the country remain under occupation. Active combat unfolds daily along the frontline, and even cities and villages far from the conflict zones are subjected to attacks. Despite the continued hostilities, between 1 and 2 million individuals decided and returned to Ukraine by the spring of 2024 (IOM, 2024).

1.2 Research questions, material and methods

The report addresses the following principal research questions:

1. What were the migration journeys of Ukrainians who left the country after the military invasion by Russia, who then went to live in the EU, and subsequently returned to live in Ukraine?
2. What were daily lives for these Ukrainians in the EU?
3. What were daily lives of Ukrainian return migrants in Ukraine after their return?
4. What future migration aspirations do Ukrainian return migrants hold?
5. How and for what purposes these Ukrainians used the Internet and social media throughout their migration journeys?

The primary empirical data for this study stems from field research carried out in Ukraine during March–June 2024, which includes surveys and interviews conducted within the country. This new empirical evidence is augmented by data and statistics from both national and international bodies that monitor Ukrainian migration trends. Key among these is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has compiled statistics on Ukrainian border crossings and the provision of temporary protection within the EU (United Nations, 2024). Additionally, International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supplied overarching data regarding the migration of Ukrainians (IOM, 2024).

Given the ongoing war in Ukraine, accurately tracking the out-migration and return migration of Ukrainians is extremely challenging. The TPD facilitates relatively free movement for Ukrainians within the Schengen area, allowing them to temporarily return to Ukraine and re-enter the EU without the need for specific permissions or registrations (European Commission, 2022). This flexibility in movement means that obtaining precise figures on the number of Ukrainians in each EU member state, as well as those who have returned permanently to Ukraine, is practically unfeasible. Ukrainians have the liberty to move across the EU-Ukraine border, stay for an undetermined period, and potentially leave and re-enter multiple times. Consequently, statistics on border crossings do not provide a clear picture of the actual number of individual Ukrainians who have left and those who have returned.

The core of the new empirical data for this study was gathered from survey responses provided by 117 Ukrainian return migrants. The survey was executed between March 15 and June 15, 2024, across Ukraine, while the interviews took place from March 15 to March 24 2024, within the same country. Participants completed a survey in Ukrainian, which consisted of a series of questions designed to elicit detailed responses: these included 55 structured, 4 semi-open,

and 7 open questions. The structured questions, formatted with answer choices such as "yes/no," "yes/maybe/no," and "I agree/I don't know/I disagree," addressed the migrants' circumstances and activities in Ukraine prior to leaving, their experiences migrating to and living in an EU member state, and their subsequent return to Ukraine and life thereafter. The semi-open and open questions addressed finer details regarding their experiences and adaptations during their time in the EU.

To recruit participants for the survey, individuals within Ukraine who were known to have migrated out and then returned were contacted through the research team's direct networks. Respondent recruitment was further facilitated using the snowball sampling method, where current respondents could refer others they knew to participate in the survey. Initial survey questions were designed to establish eligibility, specifically verifying whether respondents had left Ukraine on or after February 24, 2022, had resided in an EU member state, and were living in Ukraine at the time of completing the survey. Only those affirming all three criteria were considered eligible to proceed with the survey.

It was initially estimated that the survey sample would be rather small, so special attention was paid on that there would be respondents from distinct parts of Ukraine, namely western, central, southern and eastern macro-regions of Ukraine. Furthermore, the aim was to collect experiences of return migrants who left and returned in different periods. They would include people who left immediately after the escalation of the war in February 2022, later in 2022 when Ukrainian military was able to push back the Russian invasion from many areas as well as from 2023 and 2024 when the war front was more stable. In addition, the task was to collect responses from Ukrainians who left from major war conflict areas, from those subjected to partial conflicts and occupation and those in which there were only limited conflicts. Such diversity was expected also those returning of whom some could return exactly to the same home they left and other would have to be internally displaced in Ukraine.

Overall, as indicated in Chapter 4, we managed successfully in gathering a very rich demographic, temporal and geographical variety of Ukrainian return migrants. That would make it possible to reflect both in depth and broadly what happened among Ukrainian return migrants along their migration journeys in 2022–2024. A total of 174 individuals initiated the survey, of which a 117 (67%) met the criteria and were deemed eligible for the research. They lived in 17 out of 24 oblast in Ukraine. Of respondents, 85% filled the survey electronically and 15% on paper.

In addition, the study was enriched with 10 thematic interviews with Ukrainian return migrants, each lasting between 20 to 40 minutes. These interviews were conducted face-to-face in both Ukrainian and Russian across various loca-

tions in Ukraine in March 2024. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently translated into English. The selection of interviewees aimed to represent a diverse range of return migrant experiences from different regions of Ukraine. Additional insights into the survey and thematic interviews were garnered from conversations with local residents and systematic field observations, with corresponding notes taken during the fieldwork in Ukraine. Given that the research team comprises also Ukrainian experts, the analysis of findings was infused with local perspectives, enriching the nuanced understandings of the return migration phenomenon.

Research ethics was rigorously adhered to throughout the planning, execution, analysis, and reporting phases of the field study. At the outset of the survey, participants were fully informed about the research's scope and ethical guidelines. Ukrainian return migrants had the option to participate in the survey anonymously, ensuring their confidentiality within the study. Consent for data analysis was implicitly given upon the completion and submission of the survey. Interviewees were referred to using pseudonyms in the research report to maintain their anonymity.

Upon collection, the research materials were carefully processed. The survey sheets filled electronically in the Webropol program formed automatically a database stored in a secure place. Research assistants, under the direct oversight of the principal investigator, categorized all survey responses. Answers provided in Ukrainian were translated into English for uniform analysis. The comprehensive dataset was then entered into the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, where its integrity was verified through systematic accuracy checks. The survey data underwent a quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation techniques. Thematic interviews were subject to a detailed content analysis, focusing on identifying patterns, similarities, and differences among the participants' responses, and integrating and reflecting these insights with the survey results.

This research represents a collaborative endeavor, benefiting from the collective efforts of various contributors, to whom we extend our deepest gratitude. Special thanks are owed to the survey respondents and interview participants, whose willingness to share their experiences has been invaluable.

Professor Jussi S. Jauhiainen from the University of Turku, Finland and the University of Tartu, Estonia, was the principal investigator. He had a crucial role in the fieldwork, data analysis, and in writing this report in English. Dr. Mart Reimann of the University of Tallinn, Estonia, took charge of coordinating the field campaign and facilitated the gathering of empirical data. Dr. Olha Mamchur from the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine supported the survey material collection. Research assistants Elsa Halmajärvi, Ville Rummukainen, Sampo Viljanen and Maximilion Koort at the University of Turku helped with

the analyzes, tables and illustrations. Prof. Jauhiainen remains the responsible author of the research.

1.3 Research highlights

- The brutal Russian military invasion, commencing on February 24, 2022, precipitated a mass exodus of millions of Ukrainians, leading to both their internal displacement within Ukraine and migration to foreign countries.
- In response to the large number of war-fleeing Ukrainians, in the EU was activated on March 4, 2022 the Directive (2001/55/EC) for temporary protection (TPD) to provide fleeing Ukrainians with residency and access to essential services such as housing, employment, education for children, healthcare, and other social services in the EU member states where they sought refuge.
- International migration patterns of Ukrainians have varied significantly: some evacuated immediately as hostilities intensified in February 2022, while others left at later stages, with continuing departures into 2024.
- As the spring of 2024, approximately 6.5 million Ukrainians, predominantly women and children, remained in flee abroad leaving Ukraine after the onset of the war, with 4.2 million finding temporary protection and/or residence in EU member states. Out-migrated Ukrainians' destinations varied, with a significant number opting for countries like Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. Increasingly, temporary protected Ukrainians have been registered as residents of EU members states. It is difficult to estimate the actual number of those who escaped because of the war and those who otherwise out-migrated or had out-migrated earlier to the EU member states.
- After their leaving Ukraine, some continued to remain in flee continuously abroad while others visited Ukraine while they remained residents abroad. Between February 24, 2022 and 15 May, 2024, more than 32 million border crossings have been made from Ukraine and almost 28 million border crossings to Ukraine (UNHCR, 2024).
- By the spring of 2024, about 1.13 million Ukrainians, a significant majority (88%) being female, have returned to live in their homeland after leaving it due to escalated war. About one million came back from the EU countries (IOM, 2024). Some came back as early as spring 2022 after brief stays abroad, while others returned at later dates, even years later.
- According to our survey, Ukrainian return migrant respondents have been overall rather well satisfied into their everyday lives despite the war context in which they have had to live. The largest change during the war was the

major decline in the share of respondents who were fully satisfied with their life. Before the war escalated, of respondents 59% were fully and 35% partly satisfied (together 94%) in their overall life in Ukraine, while 6% were not satisfied. In the EU, 39% were fully and 54% partly satisfied (together 93%), and 7% were not satisfied in their overall life there. After returning to Ukraine, 21% were fully and 73% were partly satisfied (together 94%), and 6% were not satisfied in their overall life in Ukraine.

- In the EU destination country, the majority of respondents were fully satisfied with their accommodation whereas substantially fewer thought such regarding their employment situation or health services provided. Nevertheless, survey responses from Ukrainian return migrants revealed generally high degrees of contentment regarding their satisfaction in the EU in elements included in the TPD. Of respondents, 56% were fully satisfied and 34% partly satisfied with accommodation (9% unsatisfied); 27% and 50% with employment (23% unsatisfied), 33% and 49% with education (18% unsatisfied), 22% and 53% with health care (25% unsatisfied), and 41% and 44% with other social services (15% unsatisfied).
- While satisfaction on one's physical health among Ukrainian return migrant respondents have remained rather high after return, satisfaction on one's mental health has decreased considerably among many respondents comparing the situation before out-migration with their life in the EU and in Ukraine after their return.
- Almost all (94%) Ukrainian return migrant respondents reported daily use of social media, most frequently Telegram and Instagram, and the Internet at every migration stage, primarily to maintain contact with family and other Ukrainians and to follow the developments in Ukraine.
- The return migration reasons varied among respondents. For some, it was about completing the mission such as having been able to escape the immediate threads of the war and then return when it was perceived that it would not be too dangerous to live in Ukraine. For others, the return was a setback due to reasons that made the person to return before the mission was completed. In addition, many returns related to crisis such as the need to take care of nuclear family members or relatives in Ukraine and to join them there after return.
- No one knows for sure about future migration of current Ukrainian return migrants. This will depend on situations regarding individual, context in Ukraine and that in possible destination countries. Of Ukrainian return migrant respondents, 64% believe that they will remain for the rest of their lives in Ukraine, and 54% do not aspire onward migration from Ukraine even if

the war would continue. However, 21% is unsure about their future migration plans and 17% aspire to leave Ukraine if it will not be safe there.

- It is crucial to study the needs and perspectives of Ukrainian return migrants to enhance the support systems to them in Ukraine. Individual return migrants' successful reintegration means that they will have a motivated permanent stay in the country and contribute to Ukraine's recovery and sustainable economic and social development.

2. International return migration during the war

This chapter examines the concept of international return migration, focusing specifically on returning to one's home country during times of war. It explores the complex interplay of structural and individual factors that characterize such migrations, which can be both voluntary and forced, or in-between them.

Additionally, the chapter discusses the reintegration processes faced by return migrants who come back to their country of origin while it is still embroiled in war. Various theories and concepts on international return migration and the reintegration of return migrants are discussed. These are presented to the extent that they provide useful context and insight into the specific situation of Ukrainians returning from the EU to Ukraine during the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia.

2.1 International migration and return migration

International migration during war is shaped by complex, evolving contexts that blend elements of both voluntariness and compulsion. Many are forced to flee due to actual or perceived threats. Some are able to make deliberate choices about their destinations, influenced by personal significance beyond mere escape. This decision-making process is often shaped by structural factors such as laws, agreements, and policies that either facilitate or restrict international border crossings, allowing or preventing for an element of deliberate choice in the migration journeys.

Official definitions of international migration emphasize the formal change of a migrant's residence, which involves registering as a resident in the destination country and deregistering from the country of origin. For non-citizens, this process often requires navigating various legal hurdles, such as obtaining visas or residence permits. The terms and conditions of these permits can vary widely, making initial migrations often temporary, with expiry dates that require either extension or departure. Despite their temporary nature, these migration journeys can significantly impact both the migrants' former home and their current host communities economically, socially, and politically (Bossavie & Özden, 2023).

Migration is not only about physical movement; it also encompasses the realm of imagination. Individuals often envision their departure and life in a new country, as well as a potential return home. These "imagined migrations," while involving emotional and mental preparation, do not meet the official criteria for international migration, as they do not involve a physical change of residence. Migration is about physical mobility but also about myths, ideologies and imaginaries (Bilgili, 2022).

Furthermore, international agreements and improved transportation options have facilitated an increase in international migration. Although the global trend shows a rise in international migration, it remains relatively uncommon, with only about 3–4% of the world's population being international migrants – however, being more than 300 million people. Of these, 15–25%, and by some estimates up to half, eventually return to their country of birth after spending several years abroad (Azose & Raftery, 2019; IOM, 2021).

Migration scholars have devoted more than a century to understanding why people migrate internationally and why some choose to return. Traditional models focusing on push and pull factors—where push factors drive individuals from their home countries, and pull factors attract them to new ones—have evolved into more nuanced approaches. These modern theories consider a blend of individual and contextual influences on migration decisions. Factors influencing these decisions range from macro-level political and economic conditions in both the home and host countries to the personal circumstances and outlooks of the migrants themselves (Zakirova & Buzurukov, 2021). For example, war is a key factor that compels people to migrate.

2.1.1 International return migration

International return migration, although less studied than out-migration, is a significant phenomenon. It involves individuals returning to their country of origin or a country where they previously held permanent residence after time abroad. The motivations for return migration are varied and depend on the individual's experiences in both their prior country of residence and the destination country upon return. These motivations can reflect positive personal achievements or negative circumstances forcing a return.

International return migration typically involves first leaving one's home country of which citizens they are and then to become residents in another country, followed by a subsequent return. The time spent abroad can range widely, from a few months to many years. This process necessitates physically crossing international borders at least twice—once upon departure and again upon return. Scholars differ in defining international return migration: some require a minimum one-year absence from the home country (Erdal, 2017), while others consider a few months sufficient (King & Kuschminder, 2022). Additionally, some scholars believe that the return migrant status is reached immediately upon return, whereas others contend it occurs after spending a year back in the home country.

While the concept of international return migration might seem straightforward—moving from an origin to a destination and back—the reality is often far more complex. Migrants may change residences within the host country, or even live in several countries, before eventually returning home. Additionally,

the notion of 'home' is nuanced and varies widely among individuals. For some, 'home' is a sentiment that remains with them wherever they are in the world. For others, it is specifically the place of their birth or where they spent significant parts of their life. It can also be simply the place they left from and to which they have returned, without people making notable difference between home and place of residence.

Moreover, even if migrants return from abroad to the same geographical location in their home country, they cannot return to the exact same context. Places and their inhabitants evolve, especially if one has been away for a long time. The memories of the place and people as they were at the time of departure may not align with the current reality. Migrants themselves undergo changes while abroad.

Erdal and Oeppen (2022) discuss the complexities of defining the voluntariness of return migration. This involves understanding the context in which return decisions are made, particularly distinguishing between those who were compelled to leave due to war, conflict, or economic hardship, and those for whom departure was not a necessity. The feasibility of return also hinges on the availability of acceptable alternatives that the potential returnee can choose from, indicating that the decision to return can involve both forced and voluntary elements, similar to initial out-migration.

Many international migrants maintain strong material, personal, and emotional connections to both their 'home' and 'host' countries. While abroad, they engage in activities that keep them informed about social and economic developments back home, preserving their emotional ties (Bilgili, 2022). According to King and Kuschminder (2022), some migrants make regular visits back to their homeland, which can either act as a precursor to and preparation for a final return, or serve as a substitute for returning permanently, which may be seen as problematic or unfeasible under certain circumstances. Thus, the dynamics of international return migration reflect a complex interplay of personal, spatial, and temporal factors.

Additionally, regular communication and interaction between host and origin countries enable some migrants to blend cultural behaviors and habits from both contexts. This process often leads to a hybrid identity shaped by multiple cultures, influencing their daily life patterns and sometimes resulting in a unique cultural fusion. This blending of cultures and ongoing cross-border interactions categorize some migrants as transnational (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Tedeschi et al., 2022). This includes return migrants who engage in frequent, life-altering connections across international borders. Such transnational relationships set these migrants apart from the local populations of both their host and home countries, as they navigate a complex identity that spans multiple nations.

2.1.2 Reasons for international return migration

Reasons for international return migration are diverse and often interrelated, encompassing family matters, life-stage transitions, (un)employment, business or investment opportunities, nostalgia, and sometimes expulsion (King & Kuschminder, 2022). Migrants must not only desire to return but also possess the capability to do so, which is influenced by structural factors and personal resources (Carling and Schewel, 2018). Consequently, return migration is better understood as an evolving process rather than a singular event.

The return migration of those who were initially forced to leave their home countries is a distinct phenomenon that requires careful contextualization, as the circumstances before departure and after return can vary significantly from one case to another. Koser and Kuschminder (2015) investigated the return migration of forced migrants by considering structural, individual, and policy-related factors. These elements collectively determine the motivations and processes that influence the decision to return, underscoring the complex nature of return migration.

Reasons for returning from abroad can be categorized into three main types, each influenced by different factors and circumstances. Each type of return migration presents its own set of challenges and motivations, reflecting the complex interplay between personal objectives and external circumstances.

The *crisis-related return migration* is often driven by societal, political, or environmental crises in either the country of origin or the country of residence. For some, a crisis in their home country acts as a push factor, compelling them to return to provide support to family members, relatives, and friends in the affected area (Battistella, 2018). Examples include political upheaval, environmental disasters, or the expiration of temporary protection schemes like those established for war-fleeing Ukrainians by the EU in 2022, initially for one year but subsequently extended to three years (European Commission, 2022). Other reasons of return might include the failure of an asylum application or repatriation due to criminal acts (King & Kuschminder, 2022).

The *setback-related return migration* occurs when migrants encounter challenges abroad, such as unemployment, homesickness, or health issues, which can lead to an earlier-than-planned return (Battistella, 2018). These setbacks can disrupt the initial intentions and force a reevaluation of the feasibility of continuing to live abroad, often blending voluntary and forced elements into the decision to return. For example, a migrant might need to return before completing their intended project or duration abroad (King & Kuschminder, 2022).

The *completion-related return migration* refers to situations where individuals return after accomplishing their goals in the host country (Battistella, 2018). This return can be voluntary, such as completing a work assignment or educational program that was the original purpose of the migration. Alternatively, it can be

involuntary, occurring when the completion of these tasks coincides with the expiration of a work or study-related residence permit, necessitating a return despite the migrant's desire to remain longer in the host country.

International return migration can be driven by various political-policy, economic and social reasons, each contributing to the complexity of this global phenomenon. Each of these factors interplays uniquely in the lives of migrants, shaping their experiences and decisions regarding international return migration.

Political and policy reasons often revolve around personal safety and political stability. Individuals and their families may flee to safer countries due to war or life-threatening situations in their current host country. If conditions improve, they might return to their former home country if it is deemed safe enough. In some cases, their home country demands them to return, for example, to join the military or to support the civilian production during the war. Foreigners often face more stringent legal requirements to reside in the host country permanently. Restrictions on social welfare, political rights, or employment opportunities can hinder integration and prompt decisions to return. In some countries, certain jobs may be restricted to citizens only, further limiting opportunities for immigrants and motivating return migration (Koser & Kuschminder, 2015).

Economic reasons also play a crucial role. Difficulties such as finding employment or maintaining a livelihood can make life in the host country unsustainable. For those who initially migrated for security reasons, the decision to return involves considering economic viability in their post-conflict home country. Opportunities for better employment, higher wages, or business prospects significantly influence this decision. Additionally, retirement often provides individuals with the flexibility to choose whether to stay abroad or return home. During war and conflicts, labor shortages can also create new job opportunities in the country of origin, prompting return migration.

Social reasons include challenges such as discrimination or integration difficulties in the host country. Cultural ties, along with the desire to be near family, relatives, or friends, strongly influence the decision to return. Migrants might prefer to raise their children in a cultural environment more aligned with their values. If an immigrant faces cultural integration challenges or discrimination abroad and has strong cultural, social, and emotional ties to the home country, they may return. Gender and age also impact these decisions; research indicates that elderly men are more likely to return, while young women may be less inclined. Social networks, both in the host and home countries, facilitate return migration by providing emotional and logistical support (King & Kuschminder, 2022). Returning to a place of comfort drives some returnees who were initially forced to leave (Stefanovic & Loizides, 2015; Metivier et al., 2017).

Hagan and Wassing (2020) analyze international return migration through the lenses of economic and political sociology. From the economic sociology perspective, they focus on the role of the individual and their voluntary decision to return, which often relates to labor market opportunities and economic development in their country of origin. Returnees utilize resources—both intentionally and accidentally acquired abroad—to improve their socio-economic status upon returning home, often achieving upward mobility in economic, social, and professional realms. The political sociology perspective examines the role of both host and home countries' administrations in regulating and managing migration, including the reintegration processes for returnees. This view considers how governmental policies influence the migration lifecycle, from departure to return.

2.2 Reintegration after international return migration

People who return to their home country after living abroad undergo a complex reintegration process, adapting to the everyday life of a country they once knew but which may have changed during their absence. Over time, both places and their inhabitants evolve, presenting returnees with a landscape that might at least initially feel somewhat unfamiliar.

Particularly challenging is the return migration to countries that are experiencing or have experienced war. Such conditions pose unique reintegration challenges due to the numerous risks that deeply affect the daily lives of return migrants. These individuals must navigate not only the physical dangers inherent in war zones and conflict areas but also the psychological and social complexities involved in reintegrating into society. This includes managing relationships with those who stayed behind during the conflict, who may have had different experiences of the war.

Reintegration is influenced by a variety of individual, societal, and contextual factors. As Ine Lietaert and Katie Kuschminder (2021) note, successful reintegration means adapting socially, spatially, and temporally to the societal and community norms of one's home country. This adaptation is a nuanced phenomenon, requiring return migrants to carefully navigate their resettlement in their country of origin.

Understanding both the structural and social components is crucial for developing effective reintegration strategies that address the diverse challenges faced by return migrants. This understanding helps to tailor support systems that effectively aid migrants in reintegrating, highlighting the complexity and the need for a nuanced approach to assist return migrants successfully.

The reintegration of return migrants is a multifaceted process, influenced by various components that add complexity. First, the *structural component of reintegration* is particularly significant, as it encompasses the conditions in both

the countries of origin and the countries where migrants previously resided. The state-level migration management and return regimes play a critical role in shaping the support available to returnees. Cassarino (2008) notes that the effectiveness of these structures significantly influences the reintegration process. Lietaert and Kuschminder (2021) highlight that return migration policies, regulations, and services can vary widely across different governments and organizations, profoundly affecting the experiences of individuals as they reintegrate into their former home countries. Recognizing these structural elements is essential, as it brings to light the broader institutional and policy contexts that impact reintegration, encompassing legal, economic, and political frameworks. This understanding is crucial for developing effective support systems that address the diverse challenges faced by return migrants.

Second, the *social component of reintegration* plays a critical role in how return migrants readjust to life back home. This aspect of reintegration unfolds within complex social contexts, shaped by both the individual's immediate social environments and broader community relationships. Social networks are particularly influential in return migration and adaptation, providing essential support and fostering a sense of belonging. These networks facilitate access to crucial resources such as information, housing, employment, and business opportunities, all of which significantly contribute to a returnee's mental health and overall life satisfaction (Van Meeteren et al., 2014; Lietaert and Kuschminder, 2021). Additionally, the social infrastructure includes cultural norms and societal structures that aid returnees in reintegrating into their home country's social fabric. This support helps foster community connections and eases social interactions, making the transition smoother for return migrants. Moreover, the role of digital communication remains pivotal. Social media and other digital platforms continue to play an integral part in the lives of return migrants, maintaining and expanding their transnational connections. These interactions, which often persist through ongoing communications and physical visits to the former host country, can sometimes lead to a higher likelihood of return migrants re-migrating to their previous host country or moving onward to other countries (Bilecen, 2022). This dynamic illustrates the continuing impact of global connectivity on the lives of return migrants.

Third, the *multi-dimensional component of reintegration* for return migrants includes economic, socio-cultural, physical, psychological, and political aspects, all of which returnees must simultaneously navigate and adjust to. This complexity can be categorized into two interrelated dimensions: objective and subjective. The objective dimension focuses on tangible outcomes such as economic achievements and the success of social integration upon returning. This involves assessing how well returnees re-establish themselves economically and socially in their home country. Conversely, the subjective dimension encompasses the

returnees' perceptions, emotions, and overall sense of well-being during the reintegration process. This perspective acknowledges the internal experiences of returnees, highlighting that reintegration is not solely about measurable successes but also involves the personal satisfaction and psychological adjustment of the return migrant (Lietaert and Kuschminder, 2021). This comprehensive approach underlines that reintegration is a complex, multifaceted process that extends beyond external achievements to include deep personal adjustments and transformations.

Fourth, the *temporal component of reintegration* is a multifaceted, dynamic, and enduring non-linear process characterized by periods of progress, stagnation, or decline that return migrants may experience after their return. The duration of time spent abroad is a critical factor in this process; the longer the period away, the more challenging the adaptation might be. Returnees often find themselves in a social environment that, while once familiar, may have undergone significant changes during their absence. At the same time, they themselves might have experienced considerable personal growth and acquired new skills while abroad, which can complicate their readjustment to the home country, potentially leading to challenges, disappointment, or even economic setbacks (Markowitz and Stefansson, 2004; Vathi and King, 2017; Lietaert and Kuschminder, 2021). These factors can affect decisions to re-migrate again, conducting onward-migration to abroad (Bilecen, 2022), as well as influence opportunities to remain. Furthermore, social mobility or advancement upon returning may necessitate leaving behind former friends and the social environment that was familiar before their departure. This illustrates the complex and continuously evolving dynamics that influence reintegration over time.

Fifth, the *spatial component of reintegration* addresses the processes that occur when an individual physically returns to their former home country after a period of absence. The degree of integration previously achieved in that location significantly influences the ease of reintegration. Factors such as employment and housing in the country of origin serve as pull factors that facilitate this process (Bilecen, 2022). Generally, returning to a familiar region eases the adaptation process. However, maintaining transnational ties and practices can both assist and complicate reintegration, particularly in an era where advanced digital communication tools enable continuous interaction with the former host country (Vorobeva and Jauhiainen, 2023). While these transnational connections can offer valuable resources and support, the constant back-and-forth between the home country and the previous country of residence may impede full adaptation, presenting challenges to fully immersing oneself in the home environment (Bilgili, 2022).

Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2004) and Katie Kuschminder (2017) highlight that the voluntary or forced nature of international return migration greatly influences

returnees' ability to adapt to their country of origin, closely linked to their sense of agency during the return process. Returnees who proactively plan their return by securing resources, and gathering information about housing, employment opportunities, and social networks, generally experience smoother reintegration. Such preparedness significantly boosts their ability to successfully re-establish themselves in their home country. Kuschminder (2017) and Bilecen (2022) also emphasize that regular leisure visits to the country of origin can deepen connections with the home country, often leading to permanent return and resettlement. These visits help maintain cultural and social ties, enhance understanding of ongoing changes in the country, and sometimes strengthen professional networks.

Conversely, returnees who face forced returns or are less prepared to meet again the former home country circumstances often encounter significant reintegration challenges. Difficulties in securing employment, reconnecting with social networks, or adjusting to societal changes during their absence can complicate their resettlement, potentially leading to onward migration.

Overall, successful reintegration is crucial as return migrants who reintegrate effectively are more likely to remain permanently and contribute positively to local development. Understanding the dynamics of return migration and implementing supportive mechanisms are essential for facilitating adaptation and reintegration. Effective strategies not only benefit the returnees but also enhance the socio-economic fabric of the country of origin by improving local skill sets and strengthening economic and social structures.

3. Ukrainians' migration since the Russian invasion on 24 February, 2022

This chapter examines the migration patterns of Ukrainians following the outbreak of war on February 24, 2022, and analyzes developments over the subsequent two years until summer 2024. It begins by providing an overview of the war's progression in Ukraine and the European Union's response to it, including the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).

The discussion then shifts to explore both the initial out-migration of Ukrainians to various international destinations and their eventual return migration. This analysis utilizes available data on international border crossings and the residency patterns of Ukrainians within EU member states and other countries. Through this data, the chapter offers insights into the displacement and resettlement dynamics during this period of significant upheaval.

3.1 War in Ukraine

On early morning of February 24th, 2022, Russia launched a comprehensive military assault on Ukraine, employing land, sea, and air forces to penetrate various regions across the country. It was a stark intensification of the war that had commenced in 2014 with Russia's unlawful annexation of Crimea and continued warfare and territorial encroachments in Eastern Ukraine.

By the close of March 2022, Russian forces had occupied territories in the northern, eastern, and southern parts of Ukraine, including areas within Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Mykolaiv oblasts (Fig. 3.1.1). This amounted to roughly 20% of Ukrainian territory. The extensive military onslaught prompted millions to leave their homes, leading to a vast number of internally displaced persons within Ukraine. Many sought temporary protection abroad in the EU or obtained varying types of protection and residence permits in other countries. In the first weeks, some of those remained on the Russian side of the war front needed to try to escape through Russia. In addition, some Ukrainians were also forcibly moved to the Russian territory (UNHCR, 2022). Later, they continued forward as they could; however, not all knew where to go after crossing the Russian border.

As Ukrainian resistance intensified, the Russian military's advancement slowed during the spring of 2022. Subsequently, the Russian military was forced to retreat from areas near the capital Kyiv and northern Ukraine. By early June, as the Russian military pulled back from the regions of Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy, many Ukrainians began returning to these areas from both within the country and abroad. However, some Ukrainian residents had

remained in the Ukrainian territory that had been temporarily occupied the Russian forces.

Throughout summer 2022, Russian efforts concentrated on attacking regions in Donbas that was already partially under separatist control. By early August, Russian forces had seized most of Donbas and continued to occupy extensive stretches along the Black Sea coast, sporadically launching missile strikes across Ukraine (Fig. 3.1.1).

In August and September 2022, Ukrainian forces mounted significant counteroffensives, and recaptured most of the Kharkiv oblast. At the same time, controversial referenda were held in Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts regarding joining the Russian Federation. On September 30, the Russian President addressed the annexation of these regions in a speech to the Russian parliament. The war persisted, with a more stable front line established by the final months of 2022. Ukraine continued its counterattacks, and retook parts of Kherson oblast. Russia continued to target various locations across Ukraine (Fig. 3.1.1).

In the winter months of early 2023, the war persisted with Russia making only limited territorial gains in Ukraine. During the summer, Ukraine launched counteroffensives on multiple fronts, to which Russia responded with missile strikes targeting civilian infrastructure, resulting in civilian casualties. Overall, neither side achieved significant advancements along the frontline (Fig. 3.1.1).

From January to June 2024, Russia escalated its military operations across various segments of the frontline, initially capturing Avdiivka in the Donetsk region. Despite this intensification, the gains were modest, confined to minor territorial advancements of only a few kilometers in specific areas and the occupation of several villages in northeastern Ukraine. Russia also consistently launched air strikes with missiles and drones, targeting strategic locations including the capital, Kyiv, the port city of Odesa, and Kharkiv, a major city in the northeast. By June 2024, when this report was finalized, Russia had intensified again its attacks and advanced in the Kharkiv area in the northeast (Fig. 3.1.1).

3.2 Temporary protection of Ukrainians in the EU

As military attacks in various parts of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022, soon millions of Ukrainians started to seek refuge in neighboring countries, including several EU member states such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. Moldova also emerged as a destination, although access to it through the eastern border was difficult because Transnistria had been occupied already for decades. Belarus and Russia, being hostile towards Ukrainians, were not considered viable options for escape.

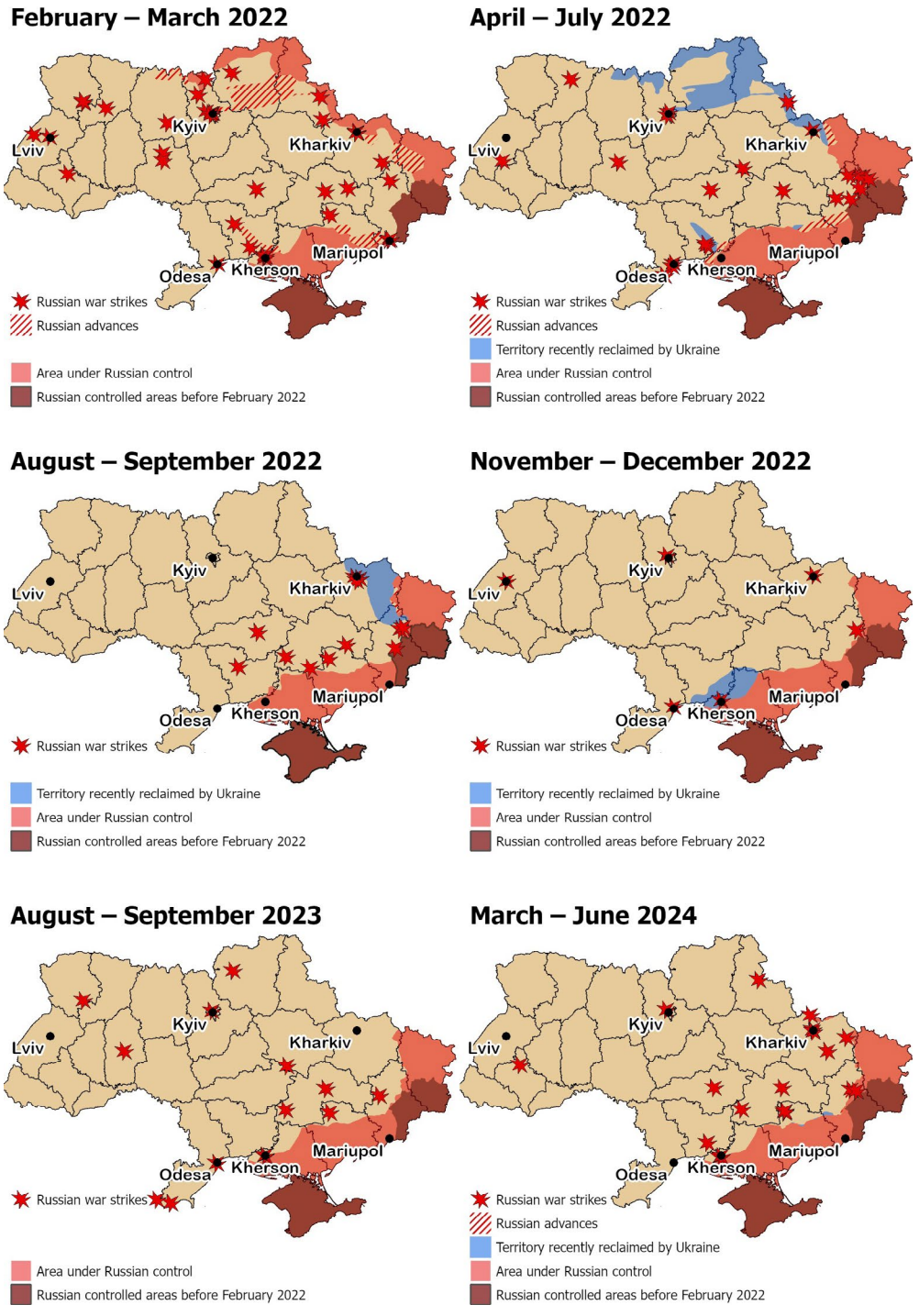

Figure 3.1.1. Military frontlines in Ukraine from the beginning of March of 2022 to June 2024. Source: Modified from Neuer Zürcher Zeitung (2022; 2024) and other sources.

The onset of the war highlighted the potential for the EU to host millions of people fleeing the war. In anticipation of such scenarios, the EU had previously established the Council Directive 2001/55/EC on July 20, 2001. This directive, known as the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), was designed to offer a complementary and subsidiary form of protection within the EU for exceptional situations, accommodating a sudden arrival of large number of displaced individuals (Arenas, 2005, 339–340).

Article 2(a) of the TPD (see European Commission, 2001) states:

> 'temporary protection' means a procedure of exceptional character to provide, in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who are unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary protection to such persons, in particular if there is also a risk that the asylum system will be unable to process this influx without adverse effects for its efficient operation, in the interests of the persons concerned and other persons requesting protection.

The TPD mandates EU member states to adhere to the principles of non-refoulement and equitable burden-sharing, providing a standardized suite of services to those fleeing due to a mass displacement event. It secures the rights to temporary protection for displaced individuals, ensuring their access to housing, employment, healthcare, education for children, and social welfare within EU member states (Table 3.2.1, European Commission, 2022). Additionally, the TPD includes provisions aimed at promoting an equitable distribution of efforts among member states in terms of receiving displaced persons and assuming responsibility for their protection, as outlined by the European Commission (2001). Notably, prior to 2022, the TPD had not been activated, remaining unused even during the 2015 crisis when the EU saw the arrival of over 1.3 million asylum seekers and continued to receive large numbers into early 2016.

Table 3.2.1. Obligations of the EU member states implementing the TPD.

• a residence permit for the entire duration of the protection (which can last from one year to three years)
• appropriate information on temporary protection
• guarantees of access to the asylum procedure
• access to employment, subject to rules applicable to the profession and to national labor market policies and general conditions of employment
• access to suitable accommodation or housing
• access to social welfare or means of subsistence if necessary
• access to medical care
• access to education (for persons under 18 years, to the state education system)
• opportunities for families to reunite in certain circumstances
• access to banking services, for instance opening a basic bank account
• freedom to move to another EU country before the issuance of a residence permit
• freedom to move freely in EU countries (other than the EU member state of residence) for 90 days within a 180-day period after the issuance of a residence permit in the host EU member state

Source: Modified from the European Commission (2022)

The Russia's initiated armed conflict with Ukraine was officially characterized as 'aggression' by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution of March 1, 2022 (A/RES/ES-11/1). Following this, on the next day on March 2, 2022, the European Commission recommended the activation of the TPD within the EU. By that time over one million Ukrainians had reached the EU territory (European Commission, 2022).

Subsequently, on the following day on March 3, the Council of the European Union unanimously agreed to invoke this directive, enabling the temporary protection outlined in the directive through the EU Council Decision (2022/382) dated March 4, 2022. This decision referred to the situation as an 'invasion,' thereby meeting the conditions for Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC. It allows for the provision of temporary protection in instances of mass displacement, signifying the large-scale movement of displaced persons from Ukraine to EU member states (European Commission 2022).

In the EU was stipulated that the TPD would apply to Ukrainian citizens and their family members who fled their country following the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, primarily assisting those escaping the war. In addition to Ukrainian nationals, certain non-Ukrainian citizens were also considered eligible for protection under the directive. This included third-country nationals or stateless individuals who, at the onset of the conflict, possessed international protection status or permanent residency in Ukraine (European Commission, 2022).

While the TPD theoretically opened the possibility of extending temporary protection to all third-country nationals who had permanent residency in Ukraine and were unable to safely return to their country of origin, this extension was ultimately not enacted. The omission was significant as it would have encompassed a considerable number of Russian nationals permanently living in Ukraine, which was not the intended focus of the directive (European Commission, 2022; Motte-Baumvol et al., 2022). Moreover, millions of Ukrainians who had been residing in the EU prior to the conflict—predominantly labor migrants with temporary or permanent residency permits—were not covered by the TPD, as they had departed Ukraine before the commencement of the Russian military action. However, the EU member states provided other support mechanism for these Ukrainians.

3.3 Out-migration of Ukrainians

After Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, many people opted for immediate internal displacement to western Ukraine. As Russia attacked to several regions in Ukraine, including sporadic attacks to different parts of the country, including in the west, many needed to leave Ukraine. The out-migration of Ukrainians started.

By March 3, 2022—merely eight days into the conflict and a day before the activation of TPD—over one million Ukrainians had entered the EU. The majority had migrated to the neighboring country Poland (UNHCR, 2022). These figures are derived from counts at official border crossings. However, some individuals may have exited Ukraine without official registration. After this initial period in early March, the estimates of Ukrainians present in various EU member states were predominantly based on approximate assessments.

The implementation of the TPD significantly eased the reception of Ukrainians in the EU member states. Within a month of the conflict's onset, the tally of border crossings from Ukraine to other countries surged to nearly 3.7 million (UNHCR, 2022c). However, not all Ukrainians were immediately, or even subsequently, registered to receive temporary protection status, although the majority did register to gain access to a variety of services.

Throughout the conflict, some Ukrainians have moved back and forth between Ukraine and other countries. This reflected the dynamic and evolving nature of their needs, circumstances and related migration patterns. Given these factors—combined with the varying stages of the war and the registration process—it remains challenging to accurately determine the exact number of Ukrainians who left the country, the destinations of all Ukrainians in the EU, or to other locations in Europe and beyond, and those who returned Ukraine.

As of the end of May 2022, estimates suggested that approximately 7 million people, comprising about 5.3 million Ukrainians and 1.7 million non-Ukrainians, had crossed the border. These individuals were dispersed across all EU member states, with the highest concentrations observed in Poland (estimated at 3.5 million), Germany (estimated at 900,000), and the Czech Republic (estimated at 400,000) (BBC, 2022b; UN News, 2022). By then, over 2.1 million border crossings into Ukraine had been recorded since the war's inception (UNHCR, 2022; Table 3.3.1). This figure includes individuals who deemed their return to Ukraine both possible and safe, as well as those compelled to return for reasons related to family, employment, or military obligations. Additionally, tens of thousands of Ukrainian and foreign nationals entered Ukraine to participate in the war or to offer support to the civilian populace. Some individuals made frequent trips across the border, providing various forms of assistance to those within Ukraine.

After the Russian military withdrew from areas near Kyiv and several northern regions of Ukraine, there was an increase in the number of people crossing back into Ukraine. By the end of July, border crossings into Ukraine had totaled four million since the escalation of the war, with nearly two million of these occurring in June and July alone (Table 3.3.1; UNHCR, 2022). Among those crossing back were Ukrainians who had secured temporary protection in EU member

states; some returned to Ukraine temporarily to attend to urgent matters before going back to their host countries. At this time, Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic were the primary host countries for war-fleeing Ukrainians, in addition to Russia (Table 3.3.1). Notably, Poland was already home to over 300,000 Ukrainians prior to the war, and their number was 300,000 in Germany and 250,000 in Italy. The estimated number of Ukrainians residing in Russia was then 3.2 million people (IOM, 2024).

Throughout autumn 2022, the exodus from Ukraine persisted, especially from its eastern regions where active combat was ongoing. By mid-September, approximately 4.1 million Ukrainians had registered for temporary protection (or a similar status under different administrative categories) in the EU, with the majority residing in Poland (1.4 million), Germany (709,000), and the Czech Republic (409,000) (UNHCR 2022c). In total, over 7.4 million fleeing Ukrainians had registered across Europe. At this point, about 55% of those fleeing the war from Ukraine and registering in Europe had received temporary protection. However, this statistic does not account for unregistered individuals, whose numbers were challenging to ascertain accurately (UNHCR, 2022c).

By mid-September 2022, there had been over 13.1 million border crossings from Ukraine, with 9.8 million directed towards neighboring EU countries. Estimating the number of returns to Ukraine is more complex, involving approximately 5.8 million re-entries from Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. It is important to note that these figures may include individuals who crossed the border multiple times, which complicates the exact count of unique migrants (UNHCR, 2022c).

According to Statista (2024), from 24 February 2022 to 24 December 2023, there were 17.3 million crossings from Ukraine into Poland and 14.7 million returns from Poland to Ukraine. The crossings from Ukraine to Romania totaled 3.7 million, with 3.2 million returns. Between Ukraine and Slovakia, there were 1.9 million exits and 1.8 million entries, and between Ukraine and Moldova, 1.0 million exits and 0.7 million entries. Data for Hungary, Russia, and Belarus were available only for exits from Ukraine, with figures of 4.0 million, 2.9 million, and 0.02 million respectively.

As of mid-April 2024, there have been 32.2 million border crossings from Ukraine and 27.6 million border crossing to Ukraine since 24 February, 2022 as well as border crossing to and from Belarus and Russia (UNHCR, 2024). The share of temporary protected war-fleeing Ukrainians was clearly largest in Germany and Poland but one could find them in all EU member states (Table 3.3.1; Fig. 3.2.1)

Table 3.3.1. Ukrainian citizens in 2020 in the EU and Ukrainian war-related migrants registered in the EU and other countries in September 2022 and in May 2024.

	Ukrainian citizens, 2020	Ukrainian war-related migrants, September 2022	% of population	% of all in EU	Ukrainian war-related migrants, May 2024	% of population	% of all in EU
Poland	500 000	1 391 000	3.7	32.9	953 900	2.3	22.6
Germany	80 000	1 003 000	1.2	23.7	1 301 800	1.6	30.9
Czech Republic	166 000	434 000	4.0	10.3	345 400	3.3	8.2
Italy	223 000	160 000	0.3	3.8	164 700	0.3	3.9
Spain	95 000	143 000	0.3	3.4	203 300	0.4	4.8
France	15 000	101 000	0.2	2.4	62 900	0.1	1.5
Bulgaria	8 000	136 000	2.0	3.2	51 000	0.8	1.2
Romania	2 000	80 000	0.4	1.9	154 900	0.8	3.7
Slovakia	40 000	94 000	1.7	2.2	119 700	2.1	2.8
Austria	10 000	82 000	0.9	1.9	73 000	0.8	1.7
Netherlands	7 500	77 000	0.4	1.8	113 000	0.6	2.7
Lithuania	31 000	65 000	2.5	1.5	77 000	2.8	1.8
Belgium	5 000	56 000	0.5	1.3	78 600	0.7	1.9
Portugal	29 000	50 000	0.5	1.2	60 700	0.6	1.4
Estonia	13 000	55 000	4.1	1.3	32 800	2.5	0.8
Sweden	6 000	47 000	0.5	1.1	38 000	0.4	0.9
Ireland	2 000	47 000	0.9	1.1	104 800	2.1	2.5
Latvia	9 000	40 000	2.2	0.9	45 000	2.5	1.1
Finland	6 000	39 000	0.7	0.9	61 600	1.1	1.5
Denmark	13 000	35 000	0.6	0.8	32 400	0.5	0.8
Hungary	58 000	30 000	0.3	0.7	55 500	0.5	1.3
Greece	19 000	19 000	0.2	0.4	28 600	0.3	0.7
Croatia	2 000	18 000	0.4	0.4	23 900	0.6	0.6
Cyprus	4 000	16 000	1.3	0.4	20 200	1.6	0.5
Slovenia	3 000	8 000	0.4	0.2	9 000	0.4	0.2
Luxembourg	1 000	7 000	1.1	0.2	4 200	0.6	0.1
Malta	1 000	1 000	0.2	0.0	2 000	0.4	0.0
EU total	1 348 500	4 234 000	0.9	100	4 217 900	0.9	100
Russia	2 000 000–3 000 000	2 692 000	1.8		1 228 000	0.9	
Turkey	20 000	145 000	0.2		40 000	0.0	
United Kingdom	32 000	126 000	0.2		240 000	0.4	
Moldova	42 000	92 000	2.3		121 000	3.5	
Switzerland	3 000	65 000	0.7		65 000	0.7	

Sources: Eurostat (2022); IOM (2021); Turkish Statistical Institute (2022); Office for National Statistics (2021); UNHCR (2022a); Worldbank (2022); Worldometer (2022)

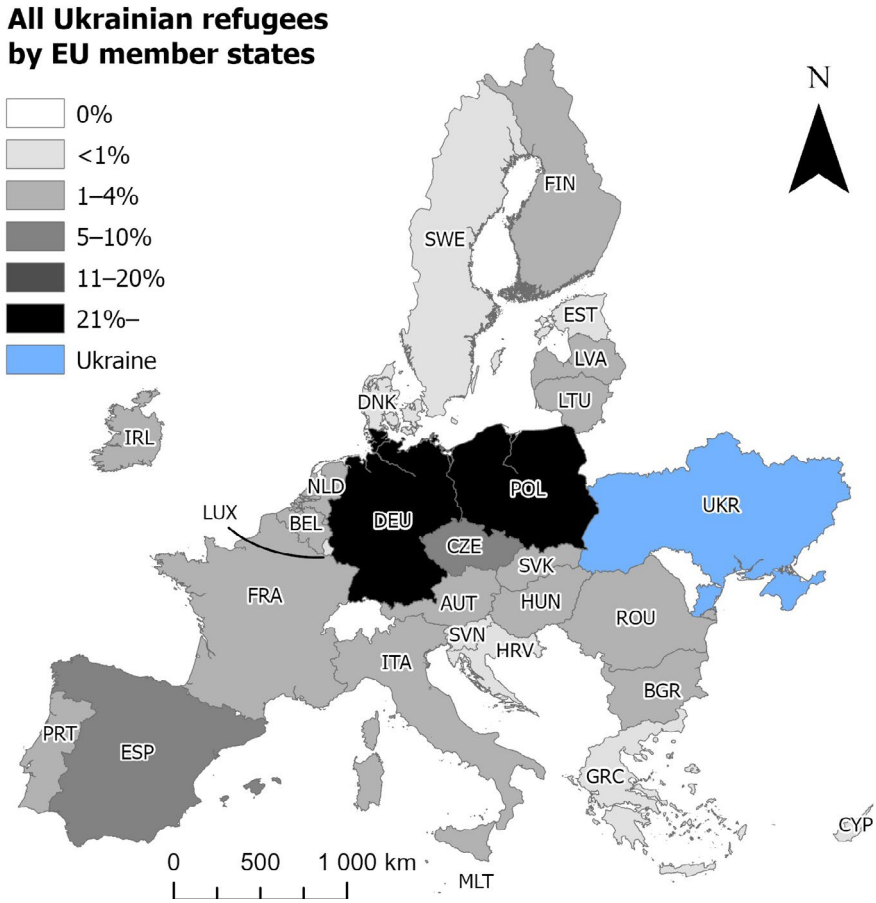

Figure 3.3.1. Share of individual war-fleeing Ukrainian registered in the EU member states as of April 2024. Source: Modified from UNHCR (2024).

3.4 Return migration of Ukrainians

Estimating the number of Ukrainians who returned to their country following the war escalation on February 2022 presents challenges due to the diversity of returnee profiles. Each return migrant category highlights the complexity of tracking return migration to Ukraine, with each type of returnee presenting unique registration and residence histories that impact how their movements are recorded and can be analyzed. The returnees can be systematically categorized as follows.

(1) Ukrainian citizens who permanently resided in Ukraine prior to 24 February, 2022, who went to the EU and returned. These are Ukrainians who were permanent residents of Ukraine before the war escalation, migrated to an EU member state where they registered as residents, and subsequently re-

turned to Ukraine to re-establish their residence in Ukraine. Most of them were registered in the EU under the temporary protection schemes.

(2) Ukrainian citizens who permanently resided in Ukraine prior to 24 February, 2022, who went to a country outside the EU and returned. These are Ukrainians who were permanent residents of Ukraine before the war, migrated to a country outside the EU where they registered as residents, and subsequently returned to Ukraine to re-establish their residence in Ukraine.

(3) Ukrainian citizens who permanently resided outside Ukraine prior to 24 February, 2022, and returned Ukraine. These individuals held residence permits in EU member states or other countries before the war. Despite their residency abroad, they chose to return to Ukraine and re-registered as residents within the country.

(4) Ukrainian citizens who were registered as residents in Ukraine but lived abroad prior to 24 February, 2022, and who then returned Ukraine. They lived outside Ukraine but never deregistered as residents of Ukraine. Consequently, their physical return to Ukraine does not reflect in population registers, as they were never marked as having left. In this group can be included also those who were temporarily outside Ukraine when the military invasion started.

(5) Other Ukrainians migrating from abroad on or after 24 February, 2022. This category includes ethnic Ukrainians who were not Ukrainian citizens but who migrated to Ukraine during the war. They might have lived in Ukraine after their birth but some had lived all their lives abroad, thus their returning is slightly different compared with other Ukrainians. In the population register, these individuals are noted as foreign citizens migrating to Ukraine.

The examination of border crossings provides insight into the flow of people entering and exiting Ukraine during the war (Fig. 3.4.1). This data offers a glimpse into the net mobility associated with departures and arrivals in the country. However, these figures do not directly reflect the exact number of individuals who have left or returned to Ukraine. This is because a single person may cross the border multiple times, a common occurrence, especially among Ukrainians living near EU borders who cross it frequently for various reasons, as explained in detail later in this report.

Despite millions of Ukrainians returning to Ukraine by the spring of 2024, the overall trend has shown that the number of people leaving Ukraine each month is typically higher than those entering. There were two notable exceptions: in August 2022 and April 2023 entries surpassed exits (IOM, 2024). These instanc-

es were influenced by successful Ukrainian counterattacks during the summer of 2022, which allowed many to return to regions liberated from Russian control, including those from Kyiv and its surrounding areas. The spike in entries in April 2023 corresponds with Easter, a time when many took the opportunity for short visits (Fig. 3.4.1).

The peak of border crossings from Ukraine occurred in March 2022, amidst the onset of a large-scale Russian offensive, creating uncertainty about Ukraine's defensive capabilities. Another significant period of crossings occurred from June to September 2023, when many Ukrainians returned temporarily to spend the holidays in Ukraine before heading back to the EU. A similar but slightly smaller wave occurred from June to September 2022, when many returned permanently as Russian forces were pushed back, while others visited for summer holidays before returning to the EU (Fig. 3.4.1).

Regarding entries into Ukraine, the highest monthly figures were recorded from June to September 2023 during the summer vacation period in Ukraine and the EU. The second highest was from May to August 2022, characterized by a mix of permanent returns and short-term summer visits. The third notable peak in entries occurred in Decembers 2022 and 2023, primarily due to visits in holiday seasons (Fig. 3.4.1). According to a survey conducted by IOM, main reasons for Ukrainians in exile to temporarily visit Ukraine were to visit relatives (56%), access to healthcare (33%), access work or business in Ukraine (23%) and to obtain documentation (19%) (IOM, 2024).

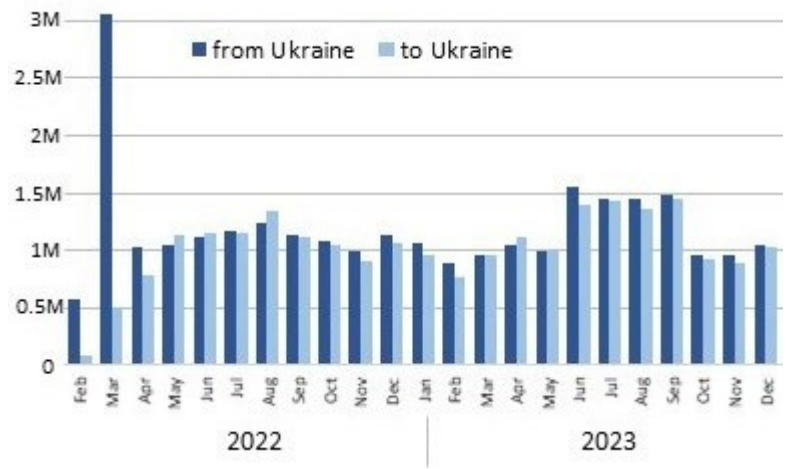

Figure 3.4.1. Border crossings from Ukraine to abroad and from abroad to Ukraine between 24 February 2022 and 31 December 2023. Source: Modified from IOM (2024).

Comprehensive research on the return migration of Ukrainians post-February 24, 2022, is limited. Although the available border crossing data provide

insights into broader mobility trends, they highlight the difficulty in precisely quantifying the scale and patterns of return migration without more detailed studies focused on individual migrants' journeys. IOM has conducted several survey on return migration intentions of Ukrainians living abroad as well as on those who have already returned to Ukraine (IOM, 2024). Their results provide general information about returned Ukrainians' accommodation, employment and economic situation as well as their internal displacement in Ukraine and onward-migration aspirations.

In addition, Yeo & Pysmenna (2024) performed a content analysis of publicly available data on Ukrainian return migrants. They identified family and community connections as key factors influencing Ukrainians to return from the EU during the Russian invasion. This was a change in return migration patterns as prior to the escalation of the war, structural and policy-related factors played a more significant role in return migration of Ukrainians.

4. Main results

The main new empirical results in this report derive from survey and interviews conducted in Ukraine in 2024. A total of 117 adult Ukrainian return migrants participated in a survey conducted from March to June 2024 within Ukraine. In addition, 10 in-depth interviews with Ukrainians were conducted during the same period. Pseudonyms are used to indicate the persons in the interviews. For survey and interview methodology, refer to Section 1.2.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the definition of international return migrants varies. One criterion for defining a return migrant could be the length of stay abroad, which should be at least months, if not one year (Erdal, 2017; King & Kuschminder, 2022). Additionally, upon returning to Ukraine, individuals must remain registered in the country for a certain period to confirm their status as returnees rather than short-term visitors. The following results derive from the survey respondents who were Ukrainian citizens who left the country earliest on 24 February, 2022, went to live in the EU member states for at least months, and then returned to Ukraine, latest by May 2024, and remained then as residents in Ukraine. Therefore, the respondents can be considered as Ukrainian return migrants.

In this report, Ukraine is divided geographically into four macroregions by oblasts: Western, Central, Southern, and Eastern. Additionally, the country is categorized based on the extent of war conflicts and occupations since the escalation of the war in February 2022. The region labeled "major occupation and/or conflict area" includes those oblasts experiencing substantial and prolonged armed fighting, war strikes, and continuous or partial occupation by the Russian military. The "partial occupation and/or conflict area" encompasses oblasts that experienced temporary occupation by the Russian military and primarily temporary direct armed conflicts, including relatively frequent war strikes. Lastly, the "limited occupation and/or conflict area" comprises oblasts where war strikes were less frequent and where active direct combat or occupation was rare or very limited (Fig. 4.1).

4.1 Respondents' background

In a survey conducted from March to June 2024, the age distribution of Ukrainian return migrant respondents was as follows: 36% were aged 18–29, 50% were aged 30–45, and 14% were aged at least 46 years old (3% were older than 60 years). The youngest respondent was 18 years old, and the oldest was 75. The median age was 36 years.

Reflecting the overall gender distribution of return migration to Ukraine, a significant majority (92%) of respondents were women, with only 8% being men, a ratio that was consistent across the age groups of 18–60 (Table 4.1.1). As such,

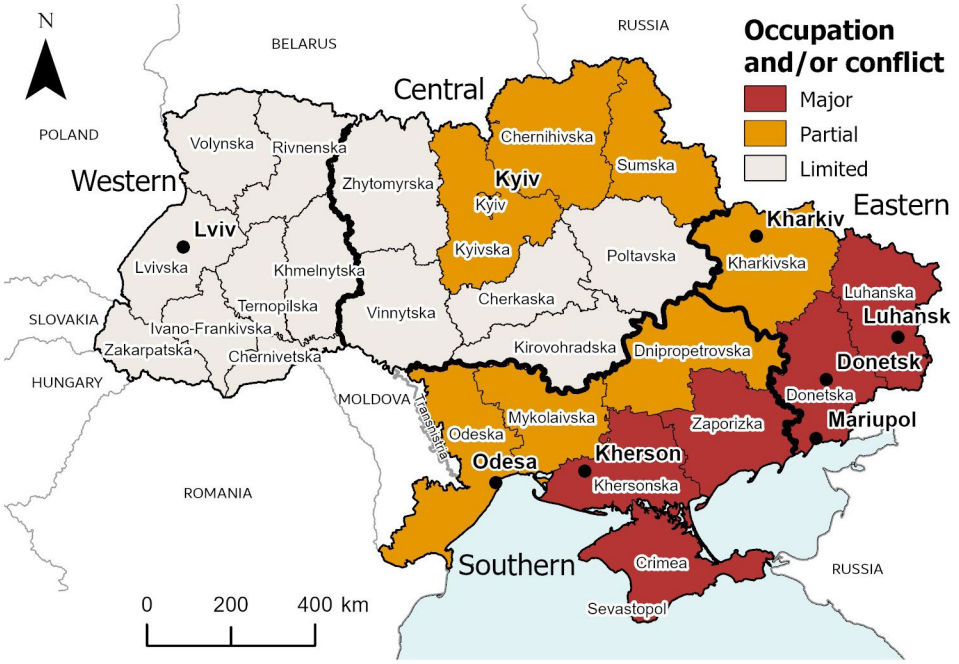

Figure 4.1. Ukraine divided into macroregions.

the majority of survey respondents were younger middle-aged women. Given the small proportion of male respondents, gender-based comparisons of respondents' opinions cannot be made in this report except in very specific cases. The high percentage of female return migrants is a reality in Ukraine. This was also noted in a 2024 survey conducted by the IOM in Ukraine: 88% of their survey respondents were female (IOM, 2024).

The low representation of men among the return migrants overall and also in this survey is directly related to the war in Ukraine. Following the Russian invasion in February 2022, martial law was enforced, restricting men aged 18–60 from leaving the country. Exceptions for this rule included father who were alone taking care of their underaged children, those having a disabled child, those having at least three underaged children, etc. Consequently, very few adult men were able to leave, and even fewer returned. Additionally, some male return migrants joined the military efforts and were unable to participate in the survey. The ongoing war has also resulted in the loss of lives among male Ukrainian return migrants.

Typically, when the war escalated, women needed to flee abroad with nuclear or extended family members. Sometimes this was possible with husband but usually husband had to remain in Ukraine leading to geographical family separations. After return, most married or cohabiting female return migrants were eventually able to reunite with their spouses in Ukraine. However, not necessar-

ily being able to live anymore constantly together as many men were involved in military activities to support Ukraine.

Among the survey respondents, 55% were married or cohabited with a partner. Almost all had their spouse living in Ukraine as only very few (3%) mentioned spouse living abroad. This is largely attributed to the predominantly female demographic of the respondents. The proportion of single respondents was 30%, while fewer (14%) were divorced or separated. On average, single respondents were younger (median age 24 years) compared to those who were divorced or separated (median age 42 years). Only a small fraction (2%) reported being widowed (Table 4.1.1). However, the actual proportion of widowed Ukrainians remaining in the EU is likely higher. These individuals often prefer to stay under temporary protection in the EU, seeking stability and security away from their homeland, and many, especially those with children, may choose not to return to Ukraine.

Table 4.1.1. Demographic backgrounds of Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	%	Single	Married or cohabitation	Divorced or separated	Widowed	N
Woman	92	28	56	15	2	108
Man	8	56	44	0	0	9
18–29 years old	36	74	24	2	0	42
30–45 years old	50	5	78	17	0	59
46– years old	14	6	50	31	13	16
Total	100	30	55	14	2	117

The war in Ukraine has led to a widespread international dispersion of Ukrainian families and relatives, as revealed by a survey of diverse family networks crossing geographical boundaries. All respondents indicated they had family members or relatives; about half (46%) had underage children, reflecting a demographic primarily composed of married women in their 30s and early 40s.

Only a small fraction (1%) of respondents reported that their underage children were living abroad, (2% of those with underage children). This indicates that young children generally remained with their mothers during the exodus and subsequent return. Among respondents, 15% had adult children, with 6% of these noting that their adult children, predominantly daughters, were living abroad. This suggests that while the nuclear family—spouse and children—largely resided in Ukraine following their return, the entire nuclear family could not always live together due to many husbands being engaged in military activities.

Additionally, 37% of respondents had extended family members both within Ukraine and internationally. Specifically, 79% had their own or their spouse's parents living in Ukraine, and 15% had at least one parent living abroad. Furthermore, 79% had siblings or other relatives in Ukraine, while a slightly smaller majority (68%) had relatives living abroad (Table 4.1.2).

Table 4.1.2. Ukrainian survey respondents having family and relatives in Ukraine / abroad (%).

	Spouse		Children 0–17 yrs		Children 18+ yrs		Parents		Siblings		Other relatives		No one		N
	UKR	Abroad	UKR	Abroad	UKR	Abroad	UKR	Abroad	UKR	Abroad	UKR	Abroad	UKR	Abroad	
Woman	46	3	47	1	13	6	81	16	56	24	63	56	0	22	108
Man	44	0	22	0	11	11	67	11	89	0	44	33	0	44	9
18–29 years old	19	2	5	0	2	2	81	19	69	24	69	60	0	19	42
30–45 years old	66	3	81	2	8	2	83	17	56	24	54	46	0	29	59
46– years old	44	0	19	0	56	31	63	0	44	13	69	69	0	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	53	1	54	1	14	5	79	15	56	26	58	50	0	26	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	45	5	41	0	5	5	73	9	64	18	59	55	0	27	22
Left in 2023	18	0	9	0	27	9	82	36	64	18	91	73	0	0	11
Left in 2024	17	17	17	0	0	17	100	0	67	0	67	67	0	33	6
Returned in 2022	49	0	54	1	9	6	84	7	57	21	58	55	0	27	67
Returned in 2023	41	5	38	0	18	5	72	26	56	26	67	49	0	21	39
Returned in 2024	45	9	18	0	18	9	82	27	82	18	64	64	0	18	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	57	4	49	2	12	2	82	16	49	24	69	49	0	27	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0	0	0	0	29	14	71	0	57	43	57	29	0	29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	42	2	47	0	12	8	78	17	68	19	56	61	0	20	59
Total	46	3	45	1	13	6	79	15	59	22	62	54	0	24	117

The adult population in Ukraine generally possesses high educational qualifications, with many having completed tertiary education (Table 4.1.3). According to our survey of adult Ukrainians who left the country during the escalated war, a significant percentage hold tertiary degrees. The educational attainment among survey respondents reflects a diverse range, with a majority showcasing high educational backgrounds.

Of respondents, 45% had higher education qualifications: 32% held a master's degree or an equivalent specialist qualification, 13% had a bachelor's degree, and 4% had pursued higher education but had not (yet) completed their degree. A smaller portion (3%) possessed vocational training, and 30% had completed only secondary education as their highest educational degree. Some (18%) had not completed secondary education.

Age and location were also connected to educational attainment. Of the youngest cohort (18–29 years old), a notable 63% had not (yet) completed a university degree. Furthermore, educational levels varied geographically: only 18% of respondents from rural areas had higher education, significantly less than those from the national capital, Kyiv (42%), and other regional capitals (59%) such as Lviv.

Table 4.1.3. Ukrainian survey respondents' education levels (%).

	Basic education	Secondary education	Vocational education	Incomplete higher education	University education (bachelor)	University education (masters)	N
Woman	15	29	4	5	14	34	108
Man	56	44	0	0	0	0	9
18–29 years old	48	5	0	10	19	19	42
30–45 years old	2	42	7	0	10	39	59
46– years old	0	50	0	6	6	38	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	23	29	4	1	10	32	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	5	36	0	5	27	27	22
Left in 2023	9	36	9	9	0	36	11
Left in 2024	17	0	0	33	17	33	6
Returned in 2022	24	28	4	1	12	30	67
Returned in 2023	13	31	3	8	15	31	39
Returned in 2024	0	36	0	9	9	45	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	16	35	4	6	12	27	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	0	14	14	29	29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	20	29	2	2	12	36	59
Total	18	30	3	4	13	32	117

All survey participants were Ukrainian citizens, yet they exhibited diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Language proficiencies varied significantly according to demographic and geographical factors (Table 4.1.4). Of respondents, 84% identified Ukrainian as their sole native language, while 21% reported Russian as their native tongue on same grounds. Among those who exclusively spoke Russian natively, all (100%) originated from Ukrainian oblasts that have been under occupation or war activities with Russia and 17% from Eastern Ukraine. Among the respondents who both left from and returned to areas of major/partial conflict, 45% were native Russian speakers, and 76% spoke Ukrainian at a native speaker level. Conversely, of those who left and returned to areas under limited war conflicts, none reported speaking Russian at a native speaker level.

Almost all (97%) respondents rated their Ukrainian language proficiency as at least good, and 84% considered their Ukrainian language skills to be at native level. The share of native-level Ukrainian speakers was lower in major war conflict areas in Ukraine. There the share of native-level Russian speakers was highest. For the command of Russian, 63% said that it was at least good. However, 18% did not know Russian at all. Of the latter, 86% were from Western Ukraine, a region where Ukrainian is predominantly spoken. As explored later in the report, the escalated war influenced language preferences; notably, 77% expressed a reluctance to speak Russian upon their return to Ukraine.

English language abilities among the respondents also varied: 32% perceived to have good command of English, and 30% moderate command of it. Almost none of more than 45 years old respondents had good command of English. At least some knowledge of English had many (85%) respondents. The latter high share is explainable as all of respondents had lived abroad and many had had to use English there in their everyday communication with authorities and local people. Those least likely to know any English, 15% of respondents, were predominantly over 60 years of age (100% of them had no English skills), lacked higher education (18% of them). Conversely, a significant proportion of respondents from Kyiv (54%) and major regional capitals in Ukraine such as Lviv (43%) had at least good English skills.

The frequency of using languages varied. Of respondents, 86% spoke Ukrainian most of days whereas such did much fewer in Russian (21%) or very few in English (4%). At weekly frequency spoke Ukrainian 9%, Russian 7% and English 21%. The share of respondents speaking less often Ukrainian was 3%, Russian 19% and English 40%, and never spoke Ukrainian 2%, Russian 54% and English 35%. Those maintaining frequent contacts abroad were using English more often than those without such frequent contacts and communication.

Table 4.1.4. Language skills of Ukrainian survey respondents in Ukrainian/Russian/English (%).

	Native	Good	Moderate	Some	Nothing	N
Woman	83 / 19 / 0	13 / 44 / 31	3 / 15 / 31	1 / 6 / 26	0 / 17 / 13	108
Man	89 / 44 / 0	11 / 11 / 44	0 / 0 / 22	0 / 11 / 0	0 / 33 / 33	9
18–29 years old	93 / 12 / 0	5 / 45 / 33	0 / 12 / 38	2 / 2 / 17	0 / 29 / 12	42
30–45 years old	81 / 20 / 0	15 / 37 / 37	3 / 17 / 25	0 / 10 / 29	0 / 15 / 8	59
46– years old	69 / 44 / 0	25 / 50 / 6	6 / 6 / 25	0 / 0 / 25	0 / 0 / 44	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	85 / 24 / 0	12 / 33 / 33	3 / 15 / 28	1 / 8 / 24	0 / 19 / 14	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	82 / 0 / 0	18 / 59 / 27	0 / 14 / 32	0 / 5 / 27	0 / 23 / 14	22
Left in 2023	82 / 18 / 0	18 / 64 / 27	0 / 9 / 27	0 / 0 / 27	0 / 9 / 18	11
Left in 2024	83 / 50 / 0	0 / 50 / 33	17 / 0 / 50	0 / 0 / 0	0 / 0 / 17	6
Returned in 2022	79 / 19 / 0	16 / 34 / 27	3 / 18 / 34	1 / 4 / 24	0 / 24 / 15	67
Returned in 2023	92 / 21 / 0	5 / 49 / 36	3 / 10 / 23	0 / 8 / 26	0 / 13 / 15	39
Returned in 2024	82 / 27 / 0	18 / 64 / 45	0 / 0 / 27	0 / 9 / 18	0 / 0 / 9	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	76 / 45 / 0	18 / 33 / 31	6 / 12 / 33	0 / 8 / 20	0 / 2 / 16	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	86 / 0 / 0	14 / 71 / 29	0 / 0 / 14	0 / 0 / 43	0 / 29 / 14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	90 / 2 / 0	8 / 46 / 32	0 / 17 / 29	2 / 5 / 25	0 / 31 / 14	59
Total	84 / 21 / 0	13 / 42 / 32	3 / 14 / 30	1 / 6 / 24	0 / 18 / 15	117

Survey participants hailed from various regions of Ukraine, covering 17 of all 24 regions, including those (partly) occupied by Russia. Geographically, of survey respondents (47%) originated from Western Ukraine, with a significant proportion having resided in the Lviv oblast (38%) prior to their migration. Another substantial group came from the Central region, encompassing both the capital city Kyiv and its surrounding oblast (26% of respondents). Of respondents, 18% were from the Southern region and 9% from the Eastern region. Very few respondents were from the Donetsk or Luhansk oblasts (2%) and none from Crimea (0%), regions that have experienced for a decade occupation by Russia and Russian-backed forces (Fig. 4.1.1).

The oblasts in Ukraine can be categorized based on the level of occupation or conflict during 2022–2024 into three types: 'No occupation or conflict area,' 'Partial occupation or conflict area,' and 'Major occupation or conflict area.' 'Major conflict and/or occupation areas' encompass five areas in Eastern and Southern Ukraine (Donetska, Khersonska, Krim, Luhanska, Zaporizka) subjected to continuous occupation and fighting. The 'Partial occupation and/or conflict areas' experienced occasional fighting and temporal occupation, including seven Central and Southern areas (Charnivska, Dnipropetrovska, Kyiv, Kyivska, Mykolavska, and Sumska), despite being heavily targeted in 2022, became significantly safer thereafter. The remaining 13 areas classified as 'Occasional conflict areas' experienced very occasional air raids and are located mostly in Western Ukraine

(Fig. 4.1.1). Of respondents, 6% lived prior migrating in major conflict and/or occupation areas, 42% in partial occupation or conflict areas and the remaining 52% occasional conflict areas. They have had different circumstances for leaving and returning Ukraine.

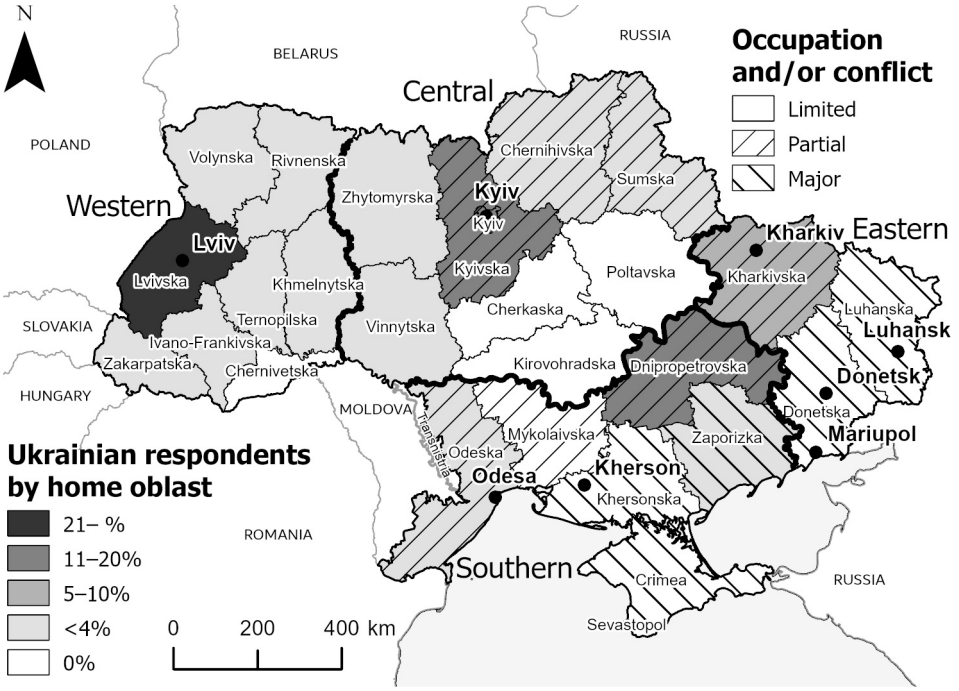

Figure 4.1.1. Geographical provenience of Ukrainian survey respondents before the escalated war.

4.2 Respondents' situation in Ukraine before out-migration

Survey respondents were Ukrainians who had different demographic, social and economic backgrounds before the escalation of the war. Before migrating out of Ukraine, the primary activities of survey respondents showcased a range of engagements (Table 4.2.1). Overall, very many (75%) were economically active: employed full-time (58%), part-time (13%), or self-employed (14%). Employment rates were particularly high among the age group from 46–60 years of whom all were employed. They were in the top of their working career.

The employment backgrounds of survey respondents in Ukraine prior to migration can be classified into three distinct groups based on their labor market activity. The group of labor market active, forming the majority at 75%, was actively engaged in Ukraine's labor market. Within this cohort, 55% possessed completed higher education, i.e. proportionally more than the overall share among respondents. Such high share of employed respondents with high educational

backgrounds signifies that their out-migration due to the escalated war was a major economic setback for the Ukrainian society. Very many (93%) of those who both left the major / partial war conflict areas and returned to these in Ukraine were employed persons. Their share in limited war conflict areas was lower because among respondents there were more students. Those being married and having children were slightly more often actively engaged in labor market compared with single and divorced respondents.

The group of temporarily or partially outside of labor market, comprised 25% of respondents. These individuals were temporarily not fully participating in the labor market but had the potential and intention to do so. This category includes students (22%, of whom some were employed) and a few job seekers (4%), and those (7%) remaining at home for taking care of family matters. The share of students was logically highest among respondents below 30 years of age.

The group of formally outside the labor market were few (3%) retired persons among respondents and those who voluntarily stayed out of the active labor force.

Table 4.2.1. Activity of Ukrainian survey respondents before out-migrating Ukraine (%).

	Employed	Student	Unemployed	Retired	Housework	N
18–29 years old	48	62	5	0	5	42
30–45 years old	93	0	5	2	8	59
46– years old	81	0	0	19	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	74	21	4	3	8	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	86	23	5	0	5	22
Left in 2023	82	18	0	9	9	11
Left in 2024	33	50	17	17	0	6
Returned in 2022	70	24	6	1	9	67
Returned in 2023	82	21	0	8	5	39
Returned in 2024	82	18	9	0	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	80	16	6	0	12	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	86	29	0	0	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	69	27	3	7	3	59
Total	75	22	4	3	7	117

Among the survey respondents, prior to out-migration, the majority (55%) resided in their owned apartment, 21% in a separate house, and the remaining 24% in other types of accommodation such as in rented apartments (9%) and in other types of accommodation (13%) such as in shared apartment, house or property owned by their parents or relatives (Table 4.2.2). Proportionally larger share of older respondents lived in an apartment owned by themselves. The share of respondents living in a separate house declined with the increase of age.

Furthermore, the later one escaped from Ukraine, the higher was their share in living in a shared house after return to Ukraine.

Specifically, 62% of respondents from Kyiv or regional capitals lived in owned apartment, and 33% in separate or shared house, in contrast to 47% and 47% of those from rural areas, respectively. Among respondents who had underage children (whether single parents or living with a spouse) in Ukraine, 72% resided in own or rented apartment in a block of flats and 25% in a separate house (Table 4.2.2).

Table 4.2.2. Accommodation type of Ukrainian survey respondents' current living place in Ukraine (%).

	Own apartment	Rented apartment	Own house	Shared house	Hotel or hostel	Other	N
18–29 years old	36	12	21	19	5	5	42
30–45 years old	59	8	25	2	0	3	59
46– years old	88	6	6	0	0	0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	62	8	21	4	1	4	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	27	18	32	14	5	0	22
Left in 2023	55	9	9	18	0	9	11
Left in 2024	67	0	17	17	0	0	6
Returned in 2022	51	7	28	7	0	4	67
Returned in 2023	64	13	10	5	5	3	39
Returned in 2024	45	9	18	18	0	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	67	10	8	8	0	6	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0	29	0	43	29	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	51	7	36	3	0	2	59
Total	55	9	21	8	2	3	117

Life in Ukraine was not necessarily easy even before the Russian military invasion in 2022, affecting both those who fled the country and later returned. Before their departure, respondents expressed varied levels of satisfaction with their overall life in Ukraine. Almost all (94%) reported at least partial satisfaction: 59% was fully satisfied, 35% were partly satisfied, and a small fraction (6%) were not satisfied with their life in Ukraine. Such a high level of full or partially satisfied before leaving Ukraine suggests that it would have been at least one motivation to return. Notably, a higher proportion of those fully satisfied resided in Western Ukraine (45%), highlighting regional disparities in life satisfaction. In areas heavily affected by the war, fewer (14%) reported full satisfaction (Table 4.2.3). Before out-migration, the share of fully satisfied in their life in Ukraine was higher among single and divorced respondents (69%) compared with those married and having children (56%).

The level of satisfaction with life in Ukraine also varied based on when individuals left the country. Among those who migrated in February–March 2022, 97% were satisfied and of them 64% had been fully satisfied and 33% partly sat-

isfied before leaving. For those departing later in the year, 86% expressed satisfaction (41% fully and 45% partly). Among those leaving in 2023, the proportion of satisfied respondents decreased to 82% (55% fully and 27% partly), and among those having left in 2024, it reached 100% (67% fully and 33% partly). These findings indicate that those who left Ukraine later tended to report higher shares of satisfaction with their lives in Ukraine compared to those who left earlier. This suggests that factors beyond military actions and threats to safety—such as general life satisfaction in Ukraine—also influenced decisions when to leave. If individuals were fully satisfied with their lives in Ukraine, they were more likely to stay there longer. There were clear push factors to leave Ukraine but pull factors giving them satisfaction made these respondents to remain in Ukraine.

Despite the above-mentioned overall satisfaction to life in Ukraine, there was a notable trend of declining health satisfaction among those who stayed longer in Ukraine following the outbreak of war. This highlights the significant impact prolonged exposure to war can have on individual well-being. Before out-migration, 44% of respondents were fully satisfied with both their physical and mental health, while a small minority (4%) were not satisfied, and the majority (52%) fell in between.

Satisfaction with physical health among respondents varied in Ukraine before out-migration. Of respondents, 50% reported being fully satisfied with their physical health, while 44% were only partly satisfied, and a small minority (5%) were not satisfied with their physical health in Ukraine before leaving the country. In terms of physical health satisfaction, younger respondents aged 18–29 reported a slightly higher frequency of full satisfaction (57%). Of single and divorced respondents, proportionally higher share (61%) were fully satisfied with their physical health compared with married respondents with children (44%). A rather high satisfaction into one's physical health suggests that many who had to flee from Ukraine were physically in rather good shape, or at least very many perceived that they did not have substantial physical health issues.

As for mental health, the majority (62%) of respondents declared full satisfaction, with 31% partly satisfied, and a few (8%) not satisfied. The proportion of those fully satisfied with their mental health decreased with the duration of their stay in Ukraine post-war onset: 71% of those who left at the earliest opportunity (February–March 2022) reported full mental health satisfaction. This decreased to 45% among those who departed later in 2022 and 45% among those leaving in 2023, and to 33% among those who left in 2024 (Table 4.2.3).

This data highlights how the war has negatively impacted the mental health of those remaining in Ukraine over time. Respondents under 30 years old displayed a specific trend where they were more often fully satisfied with their physical health than their mental health, likely attributable to their younger age. However, a smaller proportion of these respondents were fully satisfied with

their mental health before out-migration, potentially due to the stress associated with completing university studies.

Table 4.2.3. Satisfaction to life in Ukraine before Ukrainian survey respondents' out-migration (%).

	Overall satisfaction			Physical health satisfaction			Mental health satisfaction			
	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	N
18–29 years old	64	31	5	57	36	7	52	36	12	42
30–45 years old	54	39	7	47	51	2	71	24	5	59
46– years old	63	31	6	44	44	13	50	44	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	64	33	3	55	41	4	71	24	5	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	41	45	14	36	55	9	45	41	14	22
Left in 2023	55	27	18	55	36	9	45	36	18	11
Left in 2024	67	33	0	33	67	0	33	67	0	6
Returned in 2022	64	34	1	60	37	3	66	30	4	67
Returned in 2023	51	38	10	38	56	5	62	31	8	39
Returned in 2024	55	27	18	36	45	18	36	36	27	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	61	31	8	55	37	8	63	25	12	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	43	14	43	57	0	57	43	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	59	37	3	47	49	3	61	34	5	59
Total	59	35	6	50	44	5	62	31	8	117

4.3 Respondents' out-migration to the EU

4.3.1 Planning the out-migration from Ukraine

The outbreak of war on February 24, 2022, led many Ukrainians to flee the country immediately. However, not all Ukrainians could or wanted to leave the country. The ability to flee often depended on various factors, such as access to transportation to the border, adequate health to travel, connections to safe places abroad, and sufficient financial resources. Despite the severe threats posed by the war, some individuals were reluctant to leave and chose to stay in their homes. Nevertheless, the participants in this survey were among those who did leave Ukraine and subsequently returned.

All respondents mentioned a reason why they left Ukraine. Of all, 78% articulated that their primary motivation for leaving Ukraine was to escape the perils of war and insecurity and seek safety abroad. Even those who evacuated from areas experiencing limited or no military action, 75% cited the war as the predominant factor driving their decision to leave. As none of the respondents had left Ukraine before due to war, they all faced a new reality when deciding to out-migrate from Ukraine. Escaping the war was a predominant reason for leaving, cited by 91% of those who left in February–March 2022 and by 88% of those

who both left and returned to areas with major or partial conflict. However, the proportion of respondents leaving to escape the war dropped to 27% among those who left in 2023, a period when the military front had relatively stabilized.

Family- and friend-related reasons were mentioned as well: a few (9%) mentioned that as the reason to leave so that they could be with family or friends who then left Ukraine or were already abroad. Only a few (4%) mentioned motives not directly related to the war, such as seeking employment opportunities within the EU (Table 4.3.1). Very few (3%) did not know the exact reason to leave, and that share was slightly higher among 18–29 years old (8%). A few (7%) mentioned other reasons. Most factors were those pushing Ukrainians away from the country rather than pulling them to the EU.

Interviews with Ukrainian return migrants showed that for families with children, the primary motivation for leaving Ukraine was to protect their children from the war. In the early stages of the escalated conflict, it became too dangerous and frightening to remain in the country. Many families initially moved to western Ukraine and then continued on to other countries. As discussed later in this report, it was not always possible for the entire family to leave together.

> *I preferred to leave, to save my life and my child's life, rather than stay with the people who had come.* (Daria)

> *It was very difficult and not planned [to leave Ukraine]; it was sudden. We had our own plans to go to Spain in peaceful times to take care of some things calmly. But when the war started, we decided to leave.* (Maria)

Table 4.3.1. Reasons for out-migration by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Escape war	Be with family and friends	Find a job in the EU	No particular reason	N
18–29 years old	62	14	7	7	42
30–45 years old	88	3	3	0	59
46– years old	81	13	0	0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	91	3	1	3	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	55	23	9	5	22
Left in 2023	27	27	18	0	11
Left in 2024	83	0	0	0	6
Returned in 2022	81	6	4	4	67
Returned in 2023	72	10	5	0	39
Returned in 2024	82	18	0	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	88	6	0	0	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	29	29	14	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	75	8	7	5	59
Total	78	9	4	3	117

I left Ukraine with my son because of the Russian invasion and missiles attacking on Kyiv. When we crossed the Romanian border, I felt that I am in a safe place. No stability but we are safe. (Kateryna)

It was not very quick [decision to leave Ukraine], but the fear was there. It was a very difficult decision because my parents and my husband's parents stayed behind. It was very hard to leave loved ones and not know anything about them. It was also hard to leave for the unknown. As one of my friends said, taking your entire life in one suitcase is very difficult, and such decisions are not easy. (Vira)

Of respondents, 73% had visited at least one EU country prior to fleeing Ukraine (Table 4.3.2). Such a clear majority means that they had at least a vague understanding what it could be to live in a foreign country in the EU. The prevalence of previous trips to the EU was notably high among those residing in Kyiv and the capital region (71% of respondents from this area). In contrast, the smallest proportion of individuals with prior EU visits came from the easternmost parts of Ukraine, where very few respondents reported previous EU visits. A vast majority of respondents had some familiarity with the EU before deciding to migrate there. Furthermore, older respondents tended to visit EU countries for longer compared with younger adult respondents. Also among those who left from major war conflict areas and did not return there, the share of those who had not visited an EU member state before departure was high (57%).

Among the respondents, a few (8%) had previously been employed in an EU member state, indicating that for most, their earlier visits to the EU were not for labor migration purposes. Very few of respondents below 30 years of age had been earlier employed in the EU destination country.

Among the survey respondents, 48% had previously visited the EU country to which they later migrated (Table 4.3.2). This familiarity gave them an understanding of what to expect upon arrival. Within this group, 16% had been employed in these countries before, while the vast majority (84%) had visited for reasons other than work. Previous work-related visits to the EU destination were more common among respondents over 45 years old. Poland, which shares a border with Ukraine, was the most frequent destination for those with prior visits, with 13% of the individuals moving there having previously worked in the country. A notably high proportion of respondents aged 45 and older (56% of them) chose a destination country they had visited before, indicating a preference for migrating to familiar locations.

To gather information and about their future destination country prior to their migration, 60% used social media and 28% engaged for this with the Internet. This proactive approach to information gathering suggests that the majority of those who left were equipped with at least some recent digitally-mediated knowledge about the destination country before making the decision to migrate there. Earlier studies conducted in late 2010s and 2020s show how the majority

of forced migrants used social media and the Internet to enquire about potential destinations in the EU (Merisalo & Jauhiainen 2020a; 2020b; Jauhiainen 2022).

In February–March 2022, many Ukrainians had to leave the country quickly, leaving them no time to search the Internet for information about potential destination countries. Additionally, access to the Internet and social media was unavailable on several occasions during this period. Nevertheless, for 19% information and interaction in social media helped their decision to go to live in the EU, 24% were unsure about it and 57% disagreed with this. However, 38% of respondents went to their EU destination country without inquiring anything about it through digital means. Proportionally, many of them were among the oldest (more than 60 years old) of whom none enquired digitally about their destination country. Many people turned to digital tools to learn about potential destination countries, but social media interactions did not always aid in making hurried decisions. Many respondents were compelled to leave due to external forces and the war, and the information found on social media was not always reliable. As a result, social media did not consistently help respondents in making informed decisions.

Table 4.3.2. Earlier visits to the EU and the EU destination country by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Visit the EU destination country			Visit the EU			
	Work	Other reasons	No	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	N
18–29 years old	2	33	64	60	10	31	42
30–45 years old	8	46	46	81	5	14	59
46– years old	19	38	44	75	6	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	4	45	51	76	8	17	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	14	27	59	68	0	32	22
Left in 2023	27	18	55	64	9	27	11
Left in 2024	0	67	33	67	17	17	6
Returned in 2022	6	37	57	78	6	16	67
Returned in 2023	8	41	51	64	8	28	39
Returned in 2024	18	55	27	73	9	18	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	2	45	53	71	2	27	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	14	71	43	0	57	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	12	39	49	78	12	10	59
Total	8	40	52	73	7	21	117

The TPD was implemented across the EU, making the choice of country less critical. However, those leaving Ukraine typically learned the specifics of the TPD only upon arrival in their EU destination country. Moreover, the practical implementation of the TPD varied among different EU member states (Jau-

hiainen & Erbsen 2023). However, when asked the main reason for choosing their destination country, several interconnected reasons were identified (Table 4.3.3).

As mentioned, the majority (56%) of respondents indicated their choice was primarily due to having family or friends already in the destination country. There were thus war-related pushing factors to leave Ukraine but social pulling factors for selecting the EU destination country. This, however, differed along respondents' backgrounds. For those, who left Ukraine earlier in 2022, 58% thought so, of those who left later in 2022, slightly fewer (50%) expressed that family and friends there were the main reason for selecting the EU destination country, and for those leaving in 2023 or 2024, the share was substantial (64% and 50%). Having family or friends in the destination country was significant for all of those older than 60 years for selecting their destination country. Distinct preferences were observed in the reasons for choosing the destination country.

However, for 14%, of the respondents, the choice of destination appeared to be somewhat coincidental, driven primarily by the availability of quick and accessible transportation at the time of departure. Among those who emphasized the importance of rapid and easy transport, the majority (63%) left during the initial phase of the escalated conflict, specifically in February–March 2022. The urgent need to flee Ukraine meant that not everyone had the luxury of choosing their preferred destination country. Additionally, for some who traveled in their own vehicles, the choice of destination was also influenced by whether they had enough gasoline to reach a particular border crossing.

Among those who went to nearby Poland, 22% cited the availability of transportation as the primary reason for choosing it as their destination in the EU. Among the younger respondents aged 18–29 years, 17% highlighted quick and easy transport as their main reason, compared to the general respondent group. However, none of the respondents who left Ukraine in 2023 or 2024 mentioned easy transport as the primary factor in selecting their EU destination country.

A few gave also other reasons to select the EU destination country: 5% because of positive information about the country and 5% had a possibility of getting a job there. None of those who left Ukraine in 2023 or 2024 mentioned positive image of the EU destination country or a prior visit there as the main reason to travel to live there. In addition, 13% indicated other reasons. In the end, a few (7%) had no particular reason at all why they went to the country in which they ended up in the EU (Table 4.3.4).

Despite the war had escalated when the respondents left Ukraine, their choice of selecting the country to which they escaped was mostly a motivated choice. Of respondents, 83% went to live in an EU member state where they initially wanted to go. However, the destination country in the EU was not the country for 17% of respondents they initially wanted to travel to live. Of those who went

and remained in Poland, fewer (11%) than the average initially aspired to travel elsewhere: such as to Austria, Switzerland and Italy.

Interviews revealed different contexts why respondents ended up in the EU country in which they lived until they returned to Ukraine.

> *We were traveling purposefully. … We knew where we were going to. We were taken in [to Poland] by the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland.* (Alina)

> *We have friends in Poland, Poles, with whom we have been communicating for over 20 years. The immediately, as soon as the war started, proposed us to go to them [in Poland].* (Olha)

> *The manager [of the company in which the husband was employed] was in the Romanian office and he began to call him [husband] and tell us to come to Romania to see them. … He [husband] persuaded me to go to Romania for some time.* (Olesia)

> *We kept in touch with our friends and they invited us to come [to Germany] because it was also scary in Kharkiv, especially at nights. … Yes, we knew where to go and we were invited.* (Marta)

> *We made our way to any evacuation train in the queue. … We did not know its direction. The train was going through western Ukraine to Budapest and the final stop was Vienna. … The choice of the country took place absolutely accidently.* (Olexandra).

> *We were taken to France. There were several factories and I personally wanted to work there but they told that they do not hire women. So, we went to Spain.* (Maria)

> *We tried several countries such as Portugal and Italy, and finally we came back to Romania to live and receive protection.* (Kateryna)

The timing of departure to the EU destination country also influenced the reasons for choosing it as a destination. For those departing in the initial months of the conflict, February–March 2022, 13% pointed to transportation conveniences. Among those arriving later in 2022, a significant portion (50%) opted for the destination country due family and friends there. Among leavers in 2023 and 2024, none (0%) cited a positive impression of the country as their key decision-making factor (Table 4.3.4). Those who had to leave in February–March 2022, in the beginning of the escalated war, had less choices to where to escape. Of them, 23% did not end up in the country in the EU then had aspired to. Among those respondents leaving Ukraine later, this share declined to 11%.

Overall, 58% of respondents went to a country in the EU that they had visited before and that they aspired to travel to live. Of those who went to Poland, 57% were such respondents. The share of such respondents was lower (33%) among those who went to live in distant countries in the EU, i.e. to countries that were not neighbouring countries of Ukraine and not their neighbouring countries.

Respondents' location in Ukraine before departure affected the reasons for migration of individuals from major conflict zones. Of them, 52% stated the presence of family or friends in the destination country as their primary reason to go there. Some individuals (14%) from major conflict areas decided to go to their destination country for other reasons such as speaking the language of the destination country or because of accommodation possibilities there. A few respondents from these areas with major conflicts chose the country because of job opportunities (2%), a quick and easy transportation (13%), or positive view of the destination country (5%). Some (3%) had no particular reason for choosing to go to their destination country when they left the major conflict areas in Ukraine.

Table 4.3.3. Respondents' reasons for selecting the destination country in the EU (%).

	Family or friends there	Easy transport	Earlier visit	Positive image	No particular reason	Other	N
18–29 years old	52	17	5	10	5	12	42
30–45 years old	56	14	7	2	8	14	59
46– years old	69	6	0	6	6	13	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	58	13	6	6	5	12	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	50	23	5	5	9	9	22
Left in 2023	64	9	0	0	18	9	11
Left in 2024	50	0	0	0	0	50	6
Returned in 2022	58	12	3	7	7	12	67
Returned in 2023	49	18	8	3	5	18	39
Returned in 2024	73	9	9	0	9	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	57	14	4	4	6	16	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	14	0	14	14	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	58	14	7	5	7	10	59
Total	56	14	5	5	7	13	117

4.3.2 Out-migration journey to the EU

The length of the out-migration journey to the EU destination country varied among respondents. Even selecting the nearest possible EU country made a difference. Those living in Western Ukraine could find Poland accessible as it was merely 70 kilometers from Lviv. For those in the southwestern part of the country, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania were the closest EU countries to refuge. From the capital, Kyiv, the nearest EU border is 500 kilometers away, while from Kharkiv in the northeast, the distance to the EU spans 900 kilometers. Anyway,

most respondents needed to travel westwards as other directions were blocked by the Russian military and/or enemy countries of Russia and Belarus.

Respondents departed from varied locales, encountering differing levels of military conflict in their residential areas or along their escape routes. Of respondents, 6% fled from Ukrainian regions actively experiencing combat, bombardments, or significant war-related conflicts, while 42% left areas with limited conflict engagements. The rest, 52%, evacuated from regions yet to be affected substantially by war-related conflicts at the time of their departure.

Of respondents, 67% left Ukraine in the initial weeks of the military invasion in February to March 2022. Much fewer (19%) left later between April and December 2022, and 9% departed throughout 2023. A few (5%) continued leaving as late as in 2024, two years after the break of the war, and considering that they had already returned by May 2024. In the interviews, many respondents who left during the initial weeks of the escalated war in 2022 explained that they had to depart in a hurry, without having a clear and secure plan for their journey ahead.

There were varied travel arrangements, preferences and possibilities among Ukrainians as they navigated their way to the EU amidst the war. Of respondents, the vast majority (85%) had companions during their journey while rather few (15%) traveled alone to their EU destinations. Among those who were accompanied, 76% were with family members. Of all, 50% traveled with their own children. The share of them was higher among those being 30–45 years old, i.e. in age when one most likely has small children.

Only a few (6%) were able to travel with their spouse, reflecting the restrictions on men's travel abroad. Traveling with a spouse was slightly more common among older respondents and those who were able to leave later in 2022. However, none of those who left in 2023 or 2024 were able to leave with their husbands, as restrictions and controls on men's ability to leave Ukraine had become more stringent.

With parents traveled 28%, and their share was higher among respondents being under 30 years old. Furthermore, 22% departed and traveled with other relatives. Additionally, some (15%) traveled with friends from Ukraine, and that share was largest among those being less than 30 years of age. Very few (3%) went abroad with friends they met during the journey. Interestingly, a few (7%) respondents reported taking a pet, such as a dog or cat, with them during their migration (Table 4.3.4). However, with respondents were much fewer men than when they departed, as husbands had returned to Ukraine earlier. Overall, a larger proportion of respondents who left in 2023 or 2024 did so alone, whereas almost no one left alone at the beginning of the escalated war in 2022.

> *I was afraid for my children, for myself, when enemy planes were flying over your head, bombing from all sides. It was very scary. Hiding in the basement every day, every evening, every hour. … I went alone without my husband. Me and my sister with the children.* (Alina)

We left with my daughter three months after the war started because there were bombings there too, and we went abroad. (Maria)

Well, we left in March [2022] because it was very frightening. We left with our friends, and our men stayed at home. … My oldest son, who is 25, stayed behind, along with my husband. We left with our younger child. … That was the first reason, the fear. The second reason was that the child needed an education. We left the three of us [me, the younger son, and future daughter-in-law]. It was scary to leave, but it was also scary to stay, so we decided to leave. Our first acquaintances who had gone abroad told us about it. (Vira)

We left Ukraine on March 13 [2022], and we left Kyiv on March 7. We went to Lviv, but the road was very difficult. We drove for two days because we had three cars. My family, then my sister and her mother, then my mother. … I also have two dogs and two cats that were with us, and my sister had three cats and a dog. (Olha)

I left on March 6 [2022], just before they [the Russian military] arrived. We were out the day before the Russians came. So I managed to get out in time. … By March 6, this area up to the bridge was already occupied; they had already arrived. We could not cross over anymore. There were already explosions. We were in basements, and it was very scary and horrible. Yes, the aviation. It was frightening, and we began to realize how serious it all was and that it would not just pass. … But when I was in the basement, I noticed that people were slowly leaving, those who were there initially, there were many of them. Gradually, they left and left. Those who were there the day before yesterday were gone, and those who were there yesterday were gone. (Daria)

Table 4.3.4. Ukrainian survey respondents' company during the travel to the destination country in the EU (%).

	Spouse	Own children	Parents	Other relatives	Friends	Pet	Alone	N
18–29 years old	2	5	38	17	17	5	26	42
30–45 years old	7	80	27	27	17	8	5	59
46– years old	13	63	6	19	0	6	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	4	60	33	24	15	8	4	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	18	41	18	14	23	9	23	22
Left in 2023	0	18	9	18	0	0	64	11
Left in 2024	0	17	33	33	0	0	33	6
Returned in 2022	3	57	27	21	18	4	9	67
Returned in 2023	10	46	33	26	8	10	15	39
Returned in 2024	9	27	18	18	18	9	45	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	4	57	31	29	12	10	12	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	14	0	14	29	14	29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	7	49	29	17	15	3	15	59
Total	6	50	28	22	15	7	15	117

The journey of Ukrainian respondents to their EU destination country was marked by various difficulties (Table 4.3.5). Of respondents, 44% reported significant challenges and 38% encountered minor challenges and only 18% did not mention challenges. Those who reported the highest frequency of challenges were individuals who departed Ukraine at the onset of the conflict in February–March 2022, with 54% of respondents from this period noting such experiences.

As it is well known, the exodus from Ukraine in the first weeks created complex situations and queues at the Ukrainians borders, resulting sometimes in difficulties to migrate forward. In February–March 2022, the Russian military was actively advancing and war strikes were common in many areas. These created life-threatening challenges. In addition, logistics was challenging as much more people were on move than logistics, roads and public transport was able to deal with. Many respondents had to flee when there was active fighting going on along their way away from their homes. Many left first to western Ukraine and then abroad. Some interviewed mentioned how their place became surrounded by the Russian military and they had to flee first to Russia through a humanitarian corridor and only later from there to the EU. One interviewed told how they were abroad when the war escalated, so they had to first to return to Ukraine to find their children and then to travel to the EU.

> *[When I left I had] feelings of horror. Horror was the only feeling. Horror and confusion about what was happening. Kharkiv was under heavy bombardment. There were already air raids by that date. It was very frightening. Everything around was collapsing, exploding, and people were dying.* (Marta)

> *The Russians were already in Kharkov, and we could not get there. … It was already surrounded; everything was blocked. From Izyum to Kharkov, the road was completely under fire, so there was no way to go there. There was no way to travel there. … When the city was occupied, and it was clear that peace would not return soon, the Russians opened a road through Kupyansk, through Russia, to Europe, and most people left, taking their children. … As soon as the road to Kupyansk, Russia, and Europe was opened in April, everyone left.* (Daria)

> *On March 5 [2022] we left Kyiv. We went out, it was very difficult. [The road was already occupied by Russians] so we went on a detour. All the roads were blogged, there were a lot of people at the checkpoints and checkpoints. The navigator kept trying to lead us around some circular roads. Naturally, we did not know the road. There was no way to navigate, because all the signs had been removed. And we rode for a very long time, very hard. We left in a fairly large group, we had a lot of cars, but due to the fact that each one tried to navigate the navigator on its own way, and each one had one's own nuances along the road, then at a certain stage we were no longer with anyone .. we lost everyone.* (Olesia)

> *So there were a lot of us, and it was cramped, but also the curfew that started, plus a lot of these checkpoints where there were long lines. … We had to spend the night on the road. It*

was my child's birthday, we woke up sleeping in the car in the winter, plus we have elderly women, my mother and my aunt, plus animals. It was hard. (Olha)

It [the journey] was hard. We traveled from our parents' place for about ten hours to the town of Rivne. There we stayed with volunteers for about two days with the children. There were six of us in one room. Then we took a bus and went acrossthe border. To Chełm, a destination in Poland, where the volunteers were, where there was a distribution camp, where Ukrainians fleeing the war were divided. It also took us about ten hours to get there, so to speak, almost a day and a half. (Alina)

On February 17 [2022], my husband and I left the country, and our two children stayed in Irpin with their grandmother. We were supposed to return on February 25, a week later. But, of course, we woke up on the 24th tothe news on the phone. … For two days, we tried to buy any tickets to fly closer to the Czech Republic, Poland, and then return as close to the border with Ukraine as possible, so that we could still return home. … When we arrived in Kyiv, it was an absolutely dystopian atmosphere. We heard a siren for the first time, and we found ourselves in a militarized, empty Kyiv. (Oleksandra)

Conversely, respondents who traveled to Poland during 2023–2024 encountered relatively few difficulties, with 40–45% reporting no challenges at all. Given its geographical proximity to Ukraine, and the fact that millions of Ukrainians had already passed through or settled in Poland by 2023, the journey appeared smoother for many. In contrast, only 14% of those respondents who left in 2022 reported a challenge-free journey. Among respondents who left and then returned to areas in Ukraine with major or partial war conflicts, a significant proportion (55%) experienced major challenges during their travels.

Table 4.3.5. Challenges faced during travel to the EU destination country by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Major challenges	Some challenges	No challenges	N
18–29 years old	38	45	17	42
30–45 years old	51	31	19	59
46– years old	31	50	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	54	33	13	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	18	64	18	22
Left in 2023	18	36	45	11
Left in 2024	50	17	33	6
Returned in 2022	48	42	10	67
Returned in 2023	41	33	26	39
Returned in 2024	27	36	36	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	55	35	10	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	71	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	37	37	25	59
Total	44	38	18	117

The first respondents reached EU member states in the same day that the war escalated, with the latest arrivals in February 2024. By March 1, 2022, in a week from the war's start, 28% of respondents had arrived in the EU. Within a month from the war's onset, the majority (66%) of respondents had entered the EU (Table 4.3.6). Such pattern of rapid arrivals of large quantities of Ukrainians were observed in overall migration patterns of Ukrainians following the escalation of the war (UNHCR, 2022, see Section 3.3).

Respondents from oblasts bordering EU countries generally reported rapid arrivals. Of respondents from Kharkiv, 38% left within one week since the escalation of the war, and 63% within one month. Of respondents leaving from Kiev, smaller share (21%) left immediately within a week but then larger share (71%) within one month (Table 4.3.6). This trend reflects the Russian military's early attacks on Kyiv and Kharkiv, the necessity to leave soon, and the subsequent reduction of departures as in conflicts in these cities diminished.

The demography of early and late leavers shows various patterns. Of the oldest respondent group of more than 45 years old, rather many left either immediately when the war escalated in 2022 or more than one year of it. The share of less than 30 years old respondents among leavers declined as time went by.

Curiously, there were not many differences among respondents' temporal patterns of escaping Ukraine whether they left the most or the least affected areas by war. Proportionally higher share of respondents departing and returning to limited war conflict areas in Ukraine left within one week from the escalation of the war in 2022.

Table 4.3.6. Respondents' time of leaving Ukraine after the Russian invasion (%).

	Within one week	Within 1–4 weeks	Within 1–6 months	Within 7–12 months	After 12 months	N
18–29 years old	21	36	14	10	19	42
30–45 years old	34	41	14	3	8	59
46– years old	25	31	13	6	25	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	41	56	3	0	0	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	5	0	64	32	0	22
Left in 2023	0	0	0	0	100	11
Left in 2024	0	0	0	0	100	6
Returned in 2022	34	45	16	3	1	67
Returned in 2023	26	28	8	10	28	39
Returned in 2024	0	27	18	9	45	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	25	45	10	8	12	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0	29	29	29	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	34	32	15	2	17	59
Total	28	38	14	6	15	117

Poland and Germany as well as the Czech Republic were the countries that received the largest number of Ukrainians after the war escalated (UNHCR, 2024). The geographical distribution of survey respondents in the EU resembles rather much that of all Ukrainians out-migrated to the EU during the escalated war (Table 4.3.7). The clearly largest share of respondents remained the most time in Poland (46%), followed by Germany (14%), and the Czech Republic (5%). The large share of Poland is explainable as many respondents lived in Ukraine in areas close to it.

Overall, 19 of the 27 EU member states served as the primary host countries for the respondents during their time abroad. Notably, there were no survey respondents who had primarily resided in Malta, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal, Latvia, Slovenia, or Slovakia. Before the escalation of the war in 2022, over one million Ukrainians were already living within the EU, with the largest diaspora communities in Poland, Germany, and Italy. Importantly, Ukrainians were present in all EU member states both before and during the war, according to Eurostat data from 2024.

As regards Poland, a significant majority of respondents, 72%, who went there fled there at the beginning of the escalated war in February–March 2022, compared to 28% who went afterward. Similarly, many of those who moved to Germany did so immediately at the onset of the conflict. Conversely, the proportion of respondents moving to more distant EU countries increased over time. Overall, 26% of the respondents ended up in more distant EU countries.

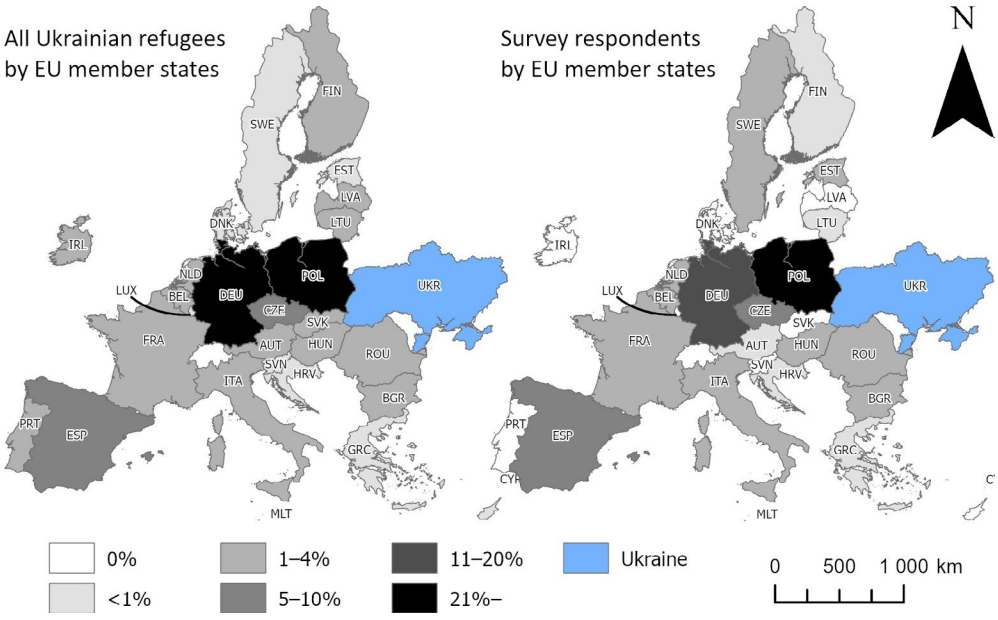

Figure 4.3.1. Geographical distribution of survey respondents and all war-fleeing Ukrainians in the EU.

Table 4.3.7. Ukrainian survey respondents' destination country in the EU (%).

	Poland	Germany	Czechia	Spain	Other	N
18–29 years old	43	17	7	2	31	42
30–45 years old	51	14	3	5	27	59
46– years old	38	6	6	6	44	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	50	19	5	4	22	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	36	5	0	5	55	22
Left in 2023	45	0	18	0	36	11
Left in 2024	33	0	0	17	50	6
Returned in 2022	48	12	4	4	31	67
Returned in 2023	46	18	5	3	28	39
Returned in 2024	36	9	9	9	36	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	35	24	0	2	39	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	57	14	14	0	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	54	5	8	7	25	59
Total	46	14	5	4	31	117

4.4 Respondents' living in the European Union

4.4.1 Settling into everyday lives in the EU

Respondents' stays in EU member states varied in duration before their return to Ukraine, spanning from those who departed on February 24, 2022, to those who came back as late as March–May 2024. They settled across different locations within the EU, each of which presented an opportunity for temporary protection eligibility, contingent upon formal registration in the host country. This process required completing specific forms and registering with the local authorities.

From the onset of the escalated war in February 2022 until the survey conducted in March–June 2024, there was a span of 25–27 months. Consequently, the maximum duration respondents could have spent abroad before returning to Ukraine was just over two years. The minimum stay abroad varied, ranging from a few weeks to several months. The distribution of time spent abroad before returning was as follows: 38% of respondents stayed outside Ukraine for less than three months, 32% for 3 to 6 months, 10% for 7 to 12 months, 21% for 1 to 2 years, and 0% for more than 2 years (Table 4.4.1). The likelihood of spending only a few months abroad increased with later departure dates from Ukraine. Among those who returned in 2024, durations varied significantly; some had stayed in the EU for just a few months, while others remained up to two years. Respondents who both left and returned to areas of Ukraine with limited conflict tended to spend shorter periods abroad, with fewer staying longer than three months.

On average, respondents spent 6 months away from Ukraine before returning. Specifically, those who relocated to Poland or Ukraine's neighboring EU countries—Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia—also reported an average stay of 6 months: 42% stayed for less than three months, 41% stayed between three to twelve months, and 17% stayed for more than a year. The duration varied, with some spending less and others more time abroad than the average. The length of stay also depended on family composition. For respondents accompanied by underage children and/or parents in the EU, the average duration of stay was slightly longer (7 months). In contrast, for those with underage children and/or parents who remained in Ukraine, the average period of stay abroad was 5 months, reflecting how family circumstances influenced the duration abroad.

Table 4.4.1. Ukrainian survey respondents' lengths of stay in the EU destination country (in months, %).

	1–3 months	4–6 months	7–12 months	13–24 months	25+	N
18–29 years old	40	38	7	14	0	42
30–45 years old	32	31	10	27	0	59
46– years old	50	19	19	13	0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	29	36	12	23	0	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	55	23	5	18	0	22
Left in 2023	55	27	9	9	0	11
Left in 2024	50	17	17	17	0	6
Returned in 2022	45	46	9	0	0	67
Returned in 2023	26	10	13	51	0	39
Returned in 2024	36	18	9	36	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	25	41	14	20	0	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	29	0	29	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	47	24	8	20	0	59
Total	38	32	10	21	0	117

Respondents resided in EU settlements varying in size and significance, enjoying the freedom to choose their municipality and residence, contingent upon the availability of suitable housing and, ideally, job opportunities there. The implementation of the TPD ensured that accommodation was provided for Ukrainians under temporary protection in EU member states, with this support extending for several months. In certain countries, individuals were required to secure their accommodation and manage associated expenses after this initial period, while other countries offered longer-term housing subsidies through public authorities.

Very many (84%) of respondents settled in urban areas in the EU. Of all, 16% settled in capital cities, 15% in regional capitals, 52% in other towns, and 16% in

rural areas. Among those who spent over a year in the EU, 25% resided in capital cities, 8% in regional capitals, 50% in other towns, and 8% in rural areas. Of those who stayed less than six months in the EU before returning to Ukraine, 16% lived in capital cities, 19% in regional capitals, 49% in other towns, and 16% in rural areas. This suggests that with increasing time spent in the EU, a larger share of respondents moved upwards in the settlement structure hierarchy in the EU destination countries.

A significantly larger proportion of the youngest respondents (18–29 years old) tended to reside in EU capital cities compared to older respondents, who predominantly lived in smaller towns. Those who left Ukraine in 2023 or from areas with major war conflicts were more likely to settle in rural areas. Ukrainians most commonly found in EU capital cities were from Lviv and typically engaged in full-time work (Table 4.4.2). In contrast, none or very few of those who originated from Kyiv or other regional capitals chose to live in rural areas, unlike those from smaller towns in Ukraine.

Table 4.4.2. Ukrainian survey respondents' place of living in the EU destination country (%).

	Capital city	Regional capitals	Other towns	Rural areas	N
18–29 years old	24	14	52	10	42
30–45 years old	12	15	53	20	59
46– years old	13	19	50	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	17	13	54	17	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	14	14	59	14	22
Left in 2023	9	36	27	27	11
Left in 2024	33	17	50	0	6
Returned in 2022	15	16	52	16	67
Returned in 2023	15	13	51	21	39
Returned in 2024	27	18	55	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	14	16	53	18	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	14	29	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	15	15	54	15	59
Total	16	15	52	16	117

Among the respondents, 46% resided in the EU in a separate unshared apartment (34%) or house (12%), 32% in shared accommodation, 19% in hostels or hotels, and a few (2%) in other types of temporary living arrangements such as temporary shelters. The accommodation arrangements varied substantially comparing respondents' situation before respondents' out-migration. The share of separate housing facilities declined substantially and temporary housing provisions became more common.

Initially, we lived in a camp for two months, which was a sports hall divided into small rooms. Oh, around 150-200 people, I think. It varied as people came and went. … We found a social apartment and started settling in there. We were in the sports hall for about 2 months, and the rest of the time in the apartment. … Not among Ukrainians, there were Syrians, but no Germans. (Daria)

In the hotels where we stayed, they only provided meals and very little assistance. So we decided to live independently and find work. (Maria)

We lived in a man's yard. He had two houses in his yard. He lived in one house, and we lived in the other. It was one yard but separate houses. (Vira)

At first, we were accommodated in hotels, in some houses, with friends. (Alina)

We went to our friends' house, and they found us this old house. No one had lived there for many years. I will also tell you about something else that struck us when we arrived. We were not used to this, we are city people. There was a stove, a boiler in the basement, which had to be heated with coal and wood. (Olha)

We arrived at our friends' house, they have a large apartment, but … it is difficult to share space and live in such an environment. … I immediately found a hotel … and we moved into the hotel a week later. I was happy with everything, the price was affordable. However, I stayed there for a month, and the price was raised four and a half times, because there was a very high demand among Ukrainians. I mean, every second person in our hotel was a Ukrainian. (Oleksandra)

Specifically, 38% of those from Kyiv lived in shared accommodations, whereas 18% of respondents from rural areas lived in these conditions. Additionally, 17% of individuals from Kyiv stayed in hostels or hotels as did those originating from Ukrainian rural areas (12%). A higher share of the youngest respondent group (18–29 years old) shared their accommodation as did also those who left and returned to major/partial war conflict areas in Ukraine. Those who left early in 2022 went often to live in a separate apartment.

Ukrainian respondents who received temporary protection were entitled to accommodation support. Of those with temporary protection, a larger proportion (45%) lived in an independent unshared house (10%) or apartment (36%) compared to those without temporary protection. Conversely, a smaller fraction of respondents with temporary protection status resided in hostels (18%) compared to those without such status (27% respectively). The data shows a trend where the proportion of respondents in temporary accommodation decreased while the proportion living independently increased the longer they stayed in the EU (Table 4.4.3).

Facilitating employment for Ukrainians fleeing the war is a crucial aspect of the TPD. However, maintaining employment while temporarily abroad presents complex challenges. There was a notable decline in employment rates among

Table 4.4.3. Accommodation type of Ukrainian survey respondents' in the EU destination country (%).

	Own apartment	Own house	Shared house	Hotel or hostel	Other	N
18–29 years old	29	5	38	26	2	42
30–45 years old	39	17	29	12	2	59
46– years old	31	13	31	25	0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	40	12	33	12	3	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	27	14	18	41	0	22
Left in 2023	18	9	36	36	0	11
Left in 2024	17	17	67	0	0	6
Returned in 2022	31	13	34	16	3	67
Returned in 2023	33	10	31	26	0	39
Returned in 2024	55	9	27	9	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	33	10	39	16	0	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	29	0	0	71	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	36	15	31	15	3	59
Total	34	12	32	19	2	117

the respondents in the EU compared to their employment status before leaving Ukraine. Previous studies on forced migrants have consistently shown that employment rates for such migrants are typically very low upon arrival in the host country (Brell et al. 2020). Despite this trend, a majority (53%) of the survey participants in the EU were employed, a high rate attributed to the TPD mechanisms designed to quickly integrate war-fleeing Ukrainians into the EU labor market (Jauhiainen & Erbsen 2023). Furthermore, Aksoy et al. (2023) have found that forced migrants are more likely to secure employment if local attitudes towards them and immigrants in general are more positive. This was the case of Germany for several respondents.

Regarding the type of employment, 13% of respondents worked full-time and 15% part-time for the EU destination country, and a few (5%) were self-employed. In addition, 30% performed distance work for Ukraine (20% full-time, 10% part-time). Those who worked for Ukraine either full-time of part-time were typically those who had been abroad for less than one year (66% of them). The highest employment rates were observed among those who returned in 2024 (82%) and who were from the age group from 30 to 45 years old (66% of them). Conversely, slightly lower employment rates were among youngest and oldest respondents (Table 4.4.5).

Of respondents in the EU, 47% were out of labor market: 22% were unemployed, 16% maintained their house, 15% were students and a few (3%) were retired. The proportion of students was notably higher among respondents under 30 years of age. The highest unemployment rates were observed among

the most recent leavers in 2024 and the oldest returnees. Many respondents faced challenges entering the labor market, often because the available jobs did not match their qualifications or they lacked proficiency in the local language, as frequently noted in interviews. Previous studies (see Brell et al., 2020) suggest that forced migrants typically earn lower wages compared to other immigrant groups and the native local population. This trend was also evident among the respondents who managed to find employment, as indicated in the interviews.

> *The jobs they offered were ones I physically could not do. Dishwasher, cleaner. I just do not have the physical strength for such jobs.* (Daria)

> *In France, they offered work in factories but only hired men or couples in Paris. That was one issue. Another was that they offered hotel work, but the salary was 800 euros. … but when we went abroad, as I mentioned, finding work was very difficult. … My daughter found occasional work. (Maria)*

> *I did not work because of the language barrier. Physically, I could have worked in a hotel, for example. But I never got to work because I was focused on language courses. (Vira)*

> *I was not looking for a job [abroad], because we arrived on March 11, but already on March 20, my clients [in Ukraine] started calling me about my work, and I was already busy online with my work [with Ukraine], so I was not looking for a job.* (Olesia)

> *They [authorities in Poland] were already looking for work for us. They asked us what you can do, what you want to do, and they already gave us options. Where I worked, I*

Table 4.4.4. Respondents' employment activities in the EU destination country (%).

	Employed	Student	Unemployed	Retired	Housework	N
18–29 years old	40	38	21	0	5	42
30–45 years old	66	2	22	0	24	59
46– years old	38	0	25	19	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	53	14	17	3	21	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	55	14	32	0	5	22
Left in 2023	64	9	27	0	18	11
Left in 2024	33	33	50	17	0	6
Returned in 2022	45	18	21	1	19	67
Returned in 2023	59	10	21	5	13	39
Returned in 2024	82	9	36	0	9	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	55	14	27	0	24	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	57	0	43	0	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	51	17	15	5	12	59
Total	53	15	22	3	16	117

worked, I was very, very lucky. We lived in a very small town, and after two jobs there, I found a job in my field, in the beauty industry, in a beauty salon. (Alina)

The economic implications of relocating from Ukraine to an EU country posed significant challenges for the respondents. Among them, 34% reported they were able to save money during their stay in the EU, while 25% were unsure, and the largest share (41%) indicated they were unable to save. Notably, full-time employed respondents had a higher propensity to save, with 42% affirming their ability to do so, compared to 28% of those without employment situations (Table 4.4.12).

When surveyed about acquiring new skills or knowledge during their stay in the EU, 52% of respondents affirmed that they indeed had gained useful insights or abilities, i.e. learning something useful. Notably, those who had spent over a year in the EU reported slightly higher incidence of learning something useful (58% of them), in particular those who returned to Ukraine in 2024 (73%), suggesting that a longer duration in the EU enhances the opportunity for learning and adaptation. Educational attainment also played a role in this learning experience; 60% of respondents with higher education reported acquiring new knowledge or skills, compared to 46% of those without higher education (Table 4.4.5). The youngest respondent cohort below 30 years of age learned slightly less than average (48%) and those middle-aged slightly more than average (58%).

Language skills were the most frequently cited area of learning, noted by 46% of respondents, underscoring the importance of foreign language proficiency for those living abroad. Interviews further highlighted that a lack of local language skills was a significant barrier to securing employment and integrating into local life. Acquiring valuable skills while abroad can be advantageous upon returning to one's home country. Among those who reported learning something useful, language skills were commonly mentioned as necessary for communication in a foreign language. Others found value in learning to relax or in gaining a deeper appreciation for Ukraine than they had before. Additionally, 21% of respondents were unable to specify precisely what they had learned, reflecting a wide range of experiences and the subjective nature of what constitutes useful learning (Table 4.4.5).

In the interviews, many Ukrainian return migrants shared their attempts to learn the local language and the difficulties they encountered. This language barrier made it challenging for them to communicate with local people and secure employment.

The biggest problem is Romanian language did not work because of the language barrier. Physically, I could have worked in a hotel, for example. But I never got to work because I was focused on language courses. (Vira)

I attended courses, started learning the [German] language, and looked into how to validate my diploma. … But after some time, I realized it was unrealistic. … I did not grasp the language. (Marta)

There are also problems with the language barrier, that is, I do not know English very well, and the Romanians on the other side do not know it very well, and therefore communication was very limited, let's say. (Olesia)

I did not know the [Polish] language, people would come to me, I did not understand anything, they didn't understand me. Then I found a connection through Google Translate, and we got along just fine. But for others, who have such professions as a doctor or a salesperson, it is hard for them to be without a language, very hard. (Alina)

Polish is somewhat similar to Ukrainian. If you know Russian, Ukrainian, and if Poles still want you to understand them, we can understand them. If they use some simple words and speak slowly, we can understand them. (Olha)

Table 4.4.5. Learning useful things in the EU by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	No	Yes	N	What
18–29 years old	52	48	42	Language, independence
30–45 years old	42	58	59	Language, new perspectives, respect for others/ nature
46– years old	56	44	16	Language, appreciation for Ukraine
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	46	54	78	Language, relaxation, independence
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	59	41	22	Language, new perspectives,
Left in 2023	45	55	11	Appreciation for Ukraine
Left in 2024	33	67	6	Language, (nature) legislation
Returned in 2022	48	52	67	Language, relaxation, independence, appreciation for Ukraine
Returned in 2023	54	46	39	Language
Returned in 2024	27	73	11	Language, Respect for others/nature
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	55	45	51	Language, culture
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	57	7	Culture, Language
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	42	58	59	Language, relaxation, independence, appreciation for Ukraine
Total	48	52	117	Language, respect, new perspective

Health, encompassing both physical and mental aspects, emerges as a significant concern for populations displaced by war. Survey data reveal varied levels of health satisfaction among Ukrainian respondents in the EU: 19% of respondents reported full satisfaction with their overall physical and mental health, 30% expressed partial satisfaction, 51% in varied combinations and 9% indicated dissatisfaction in both of them (Table 4.3.7). The lowest proportion of respondents fully satisfied with both their physical and mental health were the youngest, aged 18–29 (19%). A large degree of dissatisfaction on both of them was reported by those who had escaped from Ukrainian regions experiencing intense military conflicts, with 29% of such respondents expressing complete dissatisfaction with both their physical and mental health.

In physical health satisfaction, 38% of respondents felt fully satisfied with their physical health, 51% were partly satisfied, and 11% were not satisfied. A slightly higher satisfaction with physical health was reported by the younger middle-age age group, 30–45 years old (42%), while full or partial satisfaction was seen also among the oldest respondents, those over 60.

As regards mental health satisfaction, 26% respondents were fully satisfied with their mental health, 44% were partly satisfied, and 29% did not feel satisfied with their mental health. Those having left Ukraine in 2023, exhibited the highest satisfaction levels (55% full satisfaction) with their mental health. The lowest satisfaction levels were among those who had fled regions in Ukraine with significant war conflicts and not returned there (14% fully satisfied). The young middle-aged respondents (30–45 years old) who in general were fully satisfied with their physical health (42%) had substantially lower share of those feeling to be mentally fully satisfied (22%).

These findings highlight a clear age-related trend in health satisfaction among displaced Ukrainians, with younger individuals reporting higher levels of well-being. The impact of experiencing intense conflict zones on both physical and mental health satisfaction is notably adverse, indicating the need for targeted health support for those from heavily affected areas.

Table 4.4.6. Satisfaction to physical and mental health in the EU by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Physical health satisfaction			Mental health satisfaction			
	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	N
18–29 years old	31	48	21	31	33	36	42
30–45 years old	42	51	7	22	53	25	59
46– years old	38	63	0	31	44	25	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	37	53	10	23	45	32	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	50	36	14	32	50	18	22
Left in 2023	18	73	9	55	27	18	11
Left in 2024	33	50	17	0	50	50	6
Returned in 2022	48	43	9	30	40	30	67
Returned in 2023	23	62	15	21	49	31	39
Returned in 2024	27	64	9	27	55	18	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	35	57	8	22	49	29	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	57	29	14	57	29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	42	46	12	32	39	29	59
Total	38	51	11	26	44	29	117

4.4.2 Social environment in the EU

Respondents experienced various social environments while they remained in the EU. Before their arrival to the EU destination country, very few (7%) of

respondents had some nuclear family members in their EU destination country before they went there 3% had spouse, 3% had underaged children, and 2% had children who had already become adults. More had members of extended family in the EU destination country before arrival: 6% had their parents or spouse's parents, 9% a sister or brother and 26% other relatives. More (45%) respondents had friends: 24% Ukrainian friends, 19% local non-Ukrainian friends and 15% other friends. Of those who left from major/partial war conflict areas in Ukraine, proportionally more had other (non-Ukrainian, non-local) friends in the EU destination country compared with other groups.

Of respondents, before their arrival to the EU destination country, 60% did not have nuclear family or extended family members there and 25% did not have any family or friends there: 43% received them when they were there, so that 74% had family or friends from Ukraine in their EU destination country at some stage of their remaining there. Overall, of respondents who remained in their EU destination country, 44% were without nuclear or extended family from Ukraine, 32% without Ukrainian friends and 38% without other friends, and very few (10%) without family or friends at all.

The absence of family members or friends was notably prevalent among respondents aged 18–29, with 29% reporting not having them in their destination country. In contrast, all respondents over the age of 60 had family and friends in their destination countries (Table 4.4.7). Those who left Ukraine early in 2022 were less likely to have family or friends in their EU destination. Respondents who had spent a longer time in the EU more frequently reported receiving parents or other relatives there. However, compared to other respondents, those who left and returned to areas with major or partial war conflicts more often had friends join them in those locations.

When respondents had already settled in the EU destination country, for 92% arrived some family members, other relatives or friends. For 3% it was the spouse, 6% underaged children, 15% parents, 7% sister or brother, 6% other relatives and 14% Ukrainian friends. However, 57% did not receive anyone from Ukraine to their EU destination country.

Friendship plays a vital role in one's social environment. According to the survey, 79% of respondents reported making friends in their EU destination country. Those who had been in the EU for more than a year reported a slightly higher friendship formation rate at 88%, and the proportion was also higher among those aged 30–44 years at 85% (Table 4.4.4). Even among those who lived in the EU for less than a year, 82% succeeded in making new friends. However, respondents who spent less than three months in the EU were the least likely to make new friends, although a substantial 70% still managed to form friendships in their destination country (Table 4.4.7). Overall, spending time abroad facilitated the development of new positive social relationships.

Of those respondents who made new friendships, 65% made these with Ukrainians residing in the EU, slightly fewer (51%) with locals, and substantially fewer (15%) with people of other nationalities. Of the youngest respondents, aged 18–29, 71% formed new friendships. Of this age group, 40% of respondents made new friends predominantly with non-Ukrainians. However, those aged 45–60 stood out for establishing friendships predominantly with non-Ukrainians (62% of them), highlighting their broader social integration within the EU, often through employment or children.

Conversely, the highest percentage of respondents without friends in their destination country were among those who had spent less than three months in the EU (30% of these individuals). Of few men in the sample, lower rate (11%) reported being without friends compared to women (22%) (Table 4.4.7).

Regarding Ukrainian friends in respondents' EU destination country, 52% of respondents indicated they had created such friendships in the EU destination country. It is generally easier to befriend people of one's own nationality. The same or almost same share of friendships with Ukrainians was found among those with underage children (56%), those residing in Poland (50%), those who had been in the EU for less than a year (49%), and those aged 18–29 (48%).

Among all participants, 40% reported forming friendships with local, non-Ukrainian residents (Table 4.4.7). Those with lower educational levels were slightly less likely to make local friends, with 40% reporting such connections. Generally, the longer one's stay in the destination country, the higher the likelihood of forming friendships with locals. However, only 30% of those who stayed for a short period (less than three months) made local friends. Among those who had local friends, 30% had at least good English proficiency, while a higher percentage (41%) of those without any English skills also reported having local friends, indicating they likely communicated in languages other than English, most often Ukrainian or Russian.

A smaller portion (12%) of respondents also established friendships with people neither Ukrainian nor local, and among these, 64% had at least a good command of English. This suggests that English proficiency facilitated the formation of friendships with both locals and other non-Ukrainian individuals in the EU. Notably, a higher proportion of those who returned in 2024 reported making such diverse friendships compared to those who returned to Ukraine earlier.

In terms of social relationships, survey respondents expressed varied levels of satisfaction with their interactions both with local inhabitants and fellow Ukrainians in their EU destinations. Of respondents, 35% reported being fully satisfied with their social relationships with both locals and Ukrainians, 54%

Table 4.4.7. Respondents' family, relatives and acquaintances in the EU destination country (%).

	Spouse	Children 0–17 yrs	Children 18+ yrs	Parents	Other relatives	Ukrainian friends	Local friends	Other friends	No one	
	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	N
18–29 years old	2 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	7 / 21	38 / 14	24 / 19	10 / 31	14 / 10	29 / 14	42
30–45 years old	3 / 5	7 / 10	0 / 2	5 / 15	25 / 10	29 / 10	24 / 42	17 / 14	24 / 5	59
46– years old	6 / 6	0 / 6	13 / 19	0 / 0	19 / 6	6 / 13	25 / 56	13 / 13	19 / 0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	1 / 4	4 / 9	0 / 5	4 / 15	26 / 13	23 / 15	19 / 37	17 / 13	24 / 6	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	9 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	9 / 14	23 / 5	23 / 9	18 / 45	14 / 9	36 / 5	22
Left in 2023	9 / 9	9 / 0	18 / 0	9 / 9	55 / 9	18 / 9	9 / 55	9 / 18	18 / 18	11
Left in 2024	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 33	50 / 17	50 / 17	33 / 33	17 / 0	0 / 17	6
Returned in 2022	0 / 1	1 / 9	0 / 0	3 / 9	27 / 13	22 / 15	16 / 37	13 / 9	31 / 6	67
Returned in 2023	8 / 8	8 / 3	3 / 8	5 / 23	31 / 5	26 / 13	18 / 46	18 / 10	18 / 10	39
Returned in 2024	9 / 0	0 / 0	9 / 9	18 / 27	36 / 18	27 / 9	36 / 36	18 / 36	9 / 9	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	6 / 2	2 / 8	0 / 6	4 / 24	18 / 6	29 / 24	31 / 39	25 / 8	20 / 2	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0 / 14	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	14 / 0	29 / 0	0 / 57	14 / 14	43 / 29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	2 / 3	5 / 5	3 / 2	7 / 10	41 / 17	19 / 7	10 / 39	7 / 15	27 / 10	59
Total	3 / 3	3 / 6	2 / 3	5 / 15	29 / 11	24 / 14	19 / 40	15 / 12	25 / 8	117

were partially satisfied, and a few (11%) experienced clearly mixed feelings (Table 4.4.8).

As regards satisfaction with local non-Ukrainian inhabitants, 58% felt fully satisfied, 34% were partly satisfied, and a few (8%) were not satisfied with their interactions with local inhabitants. The highest satisfaction levels with locals were observed among those who had made friends among the local inhabitants, with 72% reporting full satisfaction. Very many older respondents were fully satisfied with local non-Ukrainian inhabitants. Conversely, of those without any friends among the local population, 12% expressed dissatisfaction with local inhabitants (Table 4.4.8). Among those who left in 2024, the share of dissatisfied respondents on local inhabitants was slightly higher. This was probably because they had not yet met them to enough extent.

As regards satisfaction with fellow Ukrainians in the places in which the respondents lived in the EU, 43% of respondents felt fully satisfied in their relationships with fellow Ukrainians in the area, 46% were partly satisfied, and few (11%) were not satisfied. Among those who had established friendships with other Ukrainians, slightly fewer (36%) reported full satisfaction. Of younger respondents, aged 18–29, 40% felt fully satisfied with Ukrainians in the region in which they lived in the EU. The least satisfied were those without Ukrainian friends in their locality, with 36% expressing full satisfaction (Table 4.4.8). Slightly higher share of dissatisfied respondents with local Ukrainians were among those who left Ukraine in April–December 2022 (18%) and among the youngest (18–29 years old) respondent group (19%). These findings highlight the significance of forming social connections in fostering satisfaction with one's social environment abroad, particularly the positive impact of integrating with both the local and expatriate communities.

Interviews indicated that respondents generally felt the local population had a positive attitude towards them and other Ukrainians fleeing the war. However, there were instances of unfriendly behavior, and some respondents felt unwelcome at times.

> *The owners of the house where I lived were wonderful people. I remember them with great gratitude. But overall, the attitudes [of local people in Germany] varied. Sometimes there was neglect and lack of understanding. Sometimes it was clear that we were a burden.* (Marta)

> *Local volunteers organized events and helped us with documents, job center communication, housing, health insurance, bank accounts, and more. They were very helpful. … The support was amazing. They were very attentive and I thanked them deeply when we left. The locals were very kind and helpful, even on the streets, explaining things as best they could.* (Daria)

Table 4.4.8. Satisfaction to friends and authorities in the EU destination country by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Non–Ukrainian local friend satisfaction	Ukrainian local friend satisfaction	National authority satisfaction	Local authority satisfaction	
	Full / Partial / No	Full / Partial / No	Full / Partial / No	Full / Partial / No	N
18–29 years old	50 / 36 / 14	40 / 40 / 19	45 / 36 / 19	50 / 33 / 17	42
30–45 years old	59 / 37 / 3	41 / 53 / 7	54 / 42 / 3	56 / 37 / 7	59
46– years old	75 / 19 / 6	56 / 38 / 6	56 / 38 / 6	63 / 31 / 6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	56 / 36 / 8	45 / 46 / 9	51 / 40 / 9	53 / 36 / 12	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	68 / 27 / 5	45 / 36 / 18	45 / 41 / 14	59 / 32 / 9	22
Left in 2023	55 / 36 / 9	27 / 64 / 9	45 / 45 / 9	45 / 45 / 9	11
Left in 2024	50 / 33 / 17	33 / 50 / 17	83 / 17 / 0	83 / 17 / 0	6
Returned in 2022	66 / 28 / 6	52 / 39 / 9	58 / 31 / 10	58 / 31 / 10	67
Returned in 2023	46 / 44 / 10	31 / 51 / 18	41 / 49 / 10	46 / 41 / 13	39
Returned in 2024	55 / 36 / 9	27 / 73 / 0	45 / 55 / 0	64 / 36 / 0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	51 / 45 / 4	47 / 41 / 12	59 / 35 / 6	59 / 33 / 8	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	71 / 14 / 14	57 / 29 / 14	29 / 57 / 14	43 / 43 / 14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	63 / 27 / 10	37 / 53 / 10	47 / 41 / 12	53 / 36 / 12	59
Total	58 / 34 / 8	43 / 46 / 11	51 / 39 / 9	55 / 35 / 10	117

It was entirely positive. The Romanians were entirely behind us, on all sides. … There was complete support from the authorities there. … I have not met a single person who was in any way negative towards us. (Olesia)

We have only encountered good attitudes [by the Polish people]. (Olha)

I have an extremely positive impression of the Austrians. … However, we were surrounded by Russian-speaking Austrians, who are Slavs, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Russians, they are somehow pro-Russian. For some reason, it just happens to be the way they are. Perhaps not even consciously. They stay in this language environment, they watch Russian TV channels. They told me a phrase that knocked me out. They said, "Calm down, there is no Ukraine anymore, look for a husband, look for a life here." … After a few days, conflicts began, of course, it is difficult to share space and live in such an environment. … When situations became unacceptable for me. Children, for example, were insulting and beating my children … we moved into the hotel a week later. (Olexandra)

Well, at first, yes, there was a lot of sympathy [toward Ukrainians] for a year, and then somehow it died down a bit. People got used to the fact that we have been at wafor a year, and some people were against it. There was a little bit of injection from the Internet that Ukrainians are already sitting on the neck of the Poles. The media was very influential in saying that we live at their expense, although this is not entirely true. Many of our people opened individual businesses there, worked without children and paid taxes. (Alina)

Authorities played a significant role in shaping the daily lives of Ukrainians in the EU. This influence manifested in various ways, including individuals' connections with local people and other Ukrainians in their destination countries. Additionally, interactions with national and local government representatives impacted their experiences. Personal aspects also played a crucial role; individual choices about how to spend free time varied widely and were determined by personal preferences. Moreover, physical and mental health, deeply personal matters, significantly affected one's quality of life in the EU destination country.

The experiences of Ukrainians fleeing the war and residing in the EU with local and national authorities encompassed a range of direct and indirect interactions. Given the limited specificity regarding these contacts, their reported satisfaction largely reflects their perceptions of these authorities. Regarding satisfaction with local authorities, 55% of respondents expressed full satisfaction, 35% indicated partial satisfaction, and 10% reported being not satisfied with local authorities. Of the oldest respondents and of those leaving Ukraine in 2024, proportionally higher share reported full satisfaction. An almost equally satisfied group comprised individuals who had spent less than three months in their EU destination country (50 % of them were fully satisfied with local authorities), possibly reflecting fewer challenges in navigating local systems or securing

immediate assistance upon arrival. Of the youngest (18–29 years old) group of respondents, slightly fewer (50%) were fully satisfied, and 17% were unsatisfied with local authority in the EU destination country (Table 4.4.8).

In terms of respondents' satisfaction with national authorities, 51% of respondents were fully satisfied, 39% were partly satisfied, and few (9%) were not satisfied with them. The satisfaction to national authorities increased along the age of respondents. Those who left and returned to major/partial war conflict areas were more satisfied with the national authorities in their EU destination country compared with those who came and returned to limited war conflict areas. This observation may be also due to the fact that those from limited conflict areas spent shorter time in the EU. Dissatisfaction among those who had resided in the EU for less than six months was proportionally higher (14% of them not satisfied) and among the youngest respondent group (19% of then were not satisfied), which may highlight growing expectations or unmet needs over time from national authorities (Table 4.4.8). While there were indications of varying satisfaction levels with national authorities across different EU countries, the available data is too limited for definitive country-level conclusions. Nonetheless, the overall satisfaction with national authorities in Poland was comparable to that in other countries combined, suggesting a relatively consistent experience among Ukrainian respondents across the EU.

Regarding the treatment received in their EU destination country, an overwhelming majority (87%) of Ukrainian respondents felt that they were treated well there, with only few (11%) being unsure and a tiny portion (2%) disagreeing with this sentiment. The youngest respondents, those aged 18–29, displayed more uncertainty (21%) but none were dissatisfied (0%) (Table 4.4.9).

In terms of adaptation to the EU country, 42% of all respondents felt they had successfully adapted to life in the EU, while 40% were undecided, and 18% did not feel adapted. Those reporting the highest levels of adaptation were curiously those who had left Ukraine very recently in 2024. Perhaps this was because they had not yet faced many challenging issues that appear over time. In addition, individuals with local friends (47%) felt more often adaptation to the EU country in which they lived. Conversely, of those who had resided in the EU for over a year, fewer felt adaptation to the EU (33%). Those who left major/partial conflict areas but did not return there 43% did not feel adapted to the EU. Of newcomers, who had been in the EU for less than three months, very few (18%) did not feel adapted to (Table 4.4.9).

Regarding satisfaction with free-time activities, the responses varied significantly among the survey participants: 56% reported full satisfaction, 36% indicated partial satisfaction, and a few (8%) expressed dissatisfaction. The youngest respondents, those aged 18–29, had proportionally about the same share of those satisfied (57%), however, a higher share of those not satisfied (12%). Slightly

Table 4.4.9. Adaptation, treatment and overall satisfaction in the EU destination country by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	I felt adapted to it			I was treated well			Overall satisfaction			Free–time in the EU			
	Agree	Don't know	Disa-gree	Agree	Don't know	Disa-gree	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	N
18–29 years old	45	33	21	79	21	0	38	50	12	57	31	12	42
30–45 years old	42	41	17	92	7	2	34	61	5	56	39	5	59
46– years old	31	56	13	94	0	6	63	38	0	56	38	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	37	42	21	87	12	1	33	58	9	47	45	8	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	55	27	18	86	9	5	50	50	0	86	9	5	22
Left in 2023	36	64	0	91	9	0	55	45	0	55	36	9	11
Left in 2024	67	17	17	83	17	0	50	33	17	67	17	17	6
Returned in 2022	43	36	21	93	6	1	43	49	7	58	34	7	67
Returned in 2023	38	44	18	74	23	3	31	64	5	54	38	8	39
Returned in 2024	45	55	0	100	0	0	45	45	9	55	36	9	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	33	39	27	86	12	2	39	55	6	53	39	8	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	14	43	86	14	0	57	29	14	86	0	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	49	44	7	88	10	2	37	56	7	56	37	7	59
Total	42	40	18	87	11	2	39	54	7	56	36	8	117

higher share of satisfaction with free-time activities was reported by those who had spent less than three months in the EU before returning to Ukraine (66% fully satisfied) (Table 4.4.9). The extent of satisfaction with leisure activities is closely linked to social connections and the duration of stay in the EU, with younger individuals and those with family ties reporting higher levels of satisfaction.

Interviews revealed that local authorities and residents had organized complimentary services and activities for Ukrainians fleeing the war, making these resources more accessible to them.

> *We arrived, everything was free for Ukrainians. Everything in the city was free. Some charity centers opened, where they distributed some kind of food and hygiene products. Then parking was free for Ukrainians, public transport was free. There are a lot of sports centers with swimming pools in [the city in Romania], all the swimming pools were free. All entrances to museums, to some parks. Absolutely everything was free.* (Olesia)

> *In Poland, in principle, we were treated even for free. Of course, not everything, but almost everything was free.* (Olha)

4.4.3 Satisfaction to main structural elements and temporary protection in the EU

Of respondents, 76% were sure that they had received formal temporary protection status, whereas 5% were not sure about it, and 20% indicated they had not obtained such status. The accuracy of the latter figure may be uncertain due to potential factors such as the absence of a formal declaration by the authorities regarding the temporary protection status or individuals not remembering or being aware of their status. This highlights the complexity and variability in the administrative experiences of Ukrainians seeking temporary protection in the EU. However, all were sure that they had not received temporary protection status in another EU member state than in which they resided. TPD would have allowed them to migrate within the Schengen countries (European Commission, 2022). Finally, in the survey the respondents expressed their satisfaction with the provisions outlined in the TPD, focusing on accommodation, employment, children's education, healthcare, and other social services (Table 4.4.10).

When asked how satisfied the respondents were with their accommodation, the majority (56%) of respondents replied that they were fully, 34% partly, and 9% not satisfied with their accommodation (Table 4.4.10). Slightly higher levels of satisfaction with accommodation were reported by the oldest (more than 45 years old) age group and those who left Ukraine from areas only with limited war conflicts. The share of those who were fully satisfied with their accommodation was slightly less among those who were in the EU for more than one year (52%) and those alone in the EU destination country (50%) (Table

4.4.10). Respondents reported on the accessibility of basic physical amenities during their stay in the EU, with almost all (92%) affirming they had adequate access to toilets and showers for their needs. However, a few (4%) felt these facilities were inadequate and a few (4%) were uncertain about the sufficiency of these amenities.

Employment satisfaction among the respondents showed variation: only 27% reported being fully satisfied, 50% were partly satisfied, and 23% were not satisfied with their employment situation in the EU. Notably, dissatisfaction was lower among those who left or returned in 2024. Those who were employed tended to express higher satisfaction, with 45% feeling fully satisfied, 48% partly satisfied, and only 6% not satisfied with their job situation. Particularly high levels of full satisfaction were reported by a small group who had left in 2024 (50%), and those who left areas of major or partial conflict but did not return to these areas (43%). Conversely, the highest share of dissatisfaction was among young respondents aged 18–29 years (31%), among whom fewer were employed in the EU (Table 4.4.10). As previously discussed, significant barriers prevented many respondents from entering the labor market, primarily due to language barriers and a mismatch between their qualifications and the available jobs. Despite having university degrees and professional experience, many found themselves in basic positions, such as dishwashing or house cleaning.

In assessing the satisfaction levels concerning educational opportunities among respondents, a significant focus was placed on the provisions available to their children within the EU. This emphasis arises from the EU's commitment to ensuring access to education for children displaced by the war in Ukraine. The survey results reveal that 33% of respondents expressed full satisfaction with the educational opportunities provided, 49% felt partly satisfied, while 18% were not satisfied (Table 4.4.10). Younger respondents tended to be slightly more satisfied with education opportunities than older respondents, however, the share of unsatisfied was also higher among younger respondents. Among those who returned in 2024, the share of dissatisfied with education opportunities in the EU destination country was low (9%). Interviews revealed how in some places, there was a possibility for children to learn in Ukrainian either in local school or through on-line. In other cases, Ukrainian child was the only foreigner in a class without possibility to learn in Ukrainian.

The survey inquired about respondents' satisfaction with healthcare services, revealing a range of experiences. Of respondents, proportionally few (22%) replied that they were fully, 53% partly, and 25% not satisfied with health care services (Table 4.4.10). Of all TPD elements provided, respondents were the least satisfied with healthcare. The share of fully satisfied with health services in the EU destination country was lowest among those who returned to Ukraine in 2024, i.e. having spent longer time in the EU. Of them many had experienced

Table 4.4.10. Respondents' satisfaction to the TPD elements in the EU destination country (%).

	Full/Partial/No	Full/Partial/No	Full/Partial/No	Full/Partial/No	Full/Partial/No	N
18–29 years old	62 / 24 / 14	26 / 43 / 31	36 / 43 / 21	21 / 52 / 26	33 / 50 / 17	42
30–45 years old	53 / 42 / 5	25 / 56 / 19	31 / 54 / 15	20 / 56 / 24	42 / 44 / 14	59
46– years old	56 / 31 / 13	38 / 44 / 19	38 / 44 / 19	31 / 44 / 25	56 / 31 / 13	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	55 / 38 / 6	27 / 45 / 28	31 / 50 / 19	23 / 51 / 26	40 / 45 / 15	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	59 / 23 / 18	27 / 59 / 14	41 / 50 / 9	27 / 45 / 27	45 / 41 / 14	22
Left in 2023	73 / 18 / 9	18 / 64 / 18	27 / 55 / 18	9 / 82 / 9	27 / 64 / 9	11
Left in 2024	33 / 50 / 17	50 / 50 / 0	50 / 17 / 33	17 / 50 / 33	67 / 17 / 17	6
Returned in 2022	63 / 30 / 7	28 / 46 / 25	36 / 46 / 18	31 / 48 / 21	42 / 45 / 13	67
Returned in 2023	49 / 38 / 13	28 / 46 / 26	28 / 51 / 21	10 / 56 / 33	41 / 38 / 21	39
Returned in 2024	45 / 45 / 9	18 / 82 / 0	36 / 55 / 9	9 / 73 / 18	36 / 64 / 0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	43 / 47 / 10	20 / 53 / 27	31 / 49 / 20	16 / 61 / 24	35 / 53 / 12	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	57 / 0 / 43	43 / 29 / 29	57 / 29 / 14	14 / 43 / 43	57 / 29 / 14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	68 / 27 / 5	32 / 49 / 19	32 / 51 / 17	29 / 47 / 24	44 / 39 / 17	59
Total	56 / 34 / 9	27 / 50 / 23	33 / 49 / 18	22 / 53 / 25	41 / 44 / 15	117

increasing mental pressure and stress when being constrained to live outside Ukraine while many of their relatives and friends were in under the perils of war in Ukraine. As discussed earlier, for many respondents the early escalation of the war in February–March 2022 was a very frightening experience that impacted their lives in the EU as well.

Regarding personal physical health satisfaction, among those who were either partially or not satisfied with their physical health, 7% reported being fully satisfied with health services, 59% were partly satisfied, and 34% were not satisfied. Regarding mental health satisfaction: 74% of respondents, who were either partly or not satisfied with their mental health, 12% expressed full satisfaction with health services, while 58% felt partly satisfied, and 30% were not satisfied. Among those who were fully satisfied with both their physical and mental health, 68% were fully satisfied with health services and those being partly or not satisfied in either their physical or mental health, 12% were fully satisfied with health care services.

Respondents also shared their levels of satisfaction regarding other social services provided under the TPD, with responses indicating that 41% were fully satisfied, 44% were partly satisfied, and 15% were not satisfied with other social services (Table 4.4.10). A lower level of fully satisfied with these services was reported by those who left Ukraine in 2023 (27%), however, the share of unsatisfied was very low (9%) among them as well.

Additionally, other groups demonstrating lower full satisfaction on social services included those having other family members in the EU (27%), possibly reflecting the support system's role in navigating and benefiting from available services. The youngest respondent group (18–29 years old) were slightly less often fully satisfied (33%). They might have had different expectations or experiences with social services (Table 4.4.10).

4.4.4 Contacts with Ukraine while in the EU

Maintaining contact with individuals in Ukraine constitutes a significant component of the social environment for war-fleeing Ukrainians residing in EU countries, transcending the boundaries of their immediate physical settings. This aspect of social connectivity often involves staying in touch with family, relatives, and friends who remain in Ukraine. These insights indicate the importance of maintaining connections with Ukraine for the displaced population in the EU, reflecting varied patterns of communication and visits influenced by familial ties, geographical proximity, and personal circumstances. King & Kuschminder (2022) has found that maintaining contacts with the country of origin can be a significant precursor to return. However, not all visits need to be physical as people can use social media and phone calls to remain in contact with the country of origin. In particular, social media played a crucial role, with

in practice all (98%) respondents utilizing it to connect with family and friends back home.

Almost all respondents (99%) reported keeping in contact with people in Ukraine during their time abroad. Specifically, 82% communicated with someone in Ukraine at least daily, 15% weekly, a few (2%) less frequently, and only 1% never maintained contact (Table 4.4.11). Notably, a high frequency of contact, at least once a day, was reported by respondents being 30–45 years old (90%). Many had children with them in the EU and at the same time relatives and friends in Ukraine, thus having a need and aspiration to be in active contact with them. Fewer respondents of those being more than 45 years old (69%) and those departed in 2024 (67%) maintained daily connections to Ukraine while they were in the EU (Table 4.4.11).

In the survey made by IOM in 2024, of temporary protected Ukrainians in the EU, 50% had visited Ukraine indicating an increase from 39% in the earlier survey: 23% had visited it more than once. Of return migrants in Ukraine, 25% had visited Ukraine at least once before returning in 2022 but this share rose to 43% for those who returned after 2022 (IOM 2024).

Table 4.4.11. Frequency of connections to Ukraine while being in the EU by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Many times a day	Daily	Many times a week	Weekly	Less often	No	N
18–29 years old	38	38	14	5	2	2	42
30–45 years old	46	44	3	5	2	0	59
46– years old	31	38	19	13	0	0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	38	45	10	5	0	1	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	41	45	5	5	5	0	22
Left in 2023	55	18	18	0	9	0	11
Left in 2024	50	17	0	33	0	0	6
Returned in 2022	37	45	10	6	0	1	67
Returned in 2023	41	38	8	8	5	0	39
Returned in 2024	64	27	9	0	0	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	47	37	6	8	2	0	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	57	43	0	0	0	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	34	44	14	5	2	2	59
Total	41	41	9	6	2	1	117

Of respondents to survey here, 33% of respondents had made at least one trip back to Ukraine while living in the EU: 14% visited Ukraine before returning once, 8% twice, and 9% three times or more often, while 67% did not visit Ukraine before returning to live there. Visits to Ukraine were of equal frequen-

cy among those residing in Poland (33% visited), female respondents with children in Ukraine (35% visited) and individuals living in Western Ukraine prior to migration (32%). Conversely, proportionally more visited Ukraine of those originally from areas heavily affected by the war (43% of them), and those without children in Ukraine (50% of them) (Table 4.4.12). Men did not visit Ukraine before returning as their leaving from Ukraine after the visit would have been complicated.

Table 4.4.12. Frequency of visits to Ukraine while being in the EU by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Yes, once	Yes, twice	Yes, more times	No	N
18–29 years old	19	5	5	71	42
30–45 years old	17	8	12	63	59
46– years old	0	19	6	75	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	13	5	9	73	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	18	5	5	73	22
Left in 2023	9	27	18	45	11
Left in 2024	50	33	0	17	6
Returned in 2022	12	1	3	84	67
Returned in 2023	21	21	15	44	39
Returned in 2024	18	9	18	55	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	16	12	4	69	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	29	0	14	57	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	14	7	12	68	59
Total	15	9	9	68	117

The move to the EU, coupled with the receipt of subsidies or earnings from employment, often resulted in higher income levels for many respondents compared to what they would typically earn in Ukraine. However, that was not always the case. Of respondents, 36% mentioned to have been able to save money while they were in the EU. Despite facing higher daily living costs in the EU, 20% of the respondents managed to send money back to Ukraine. Among those fully employed in the EU, 40% remitted funds home, as did one out of four (25%) of other employed individuals. The percentage of non-employed respondents or those in various employment statuses contributing financially to their families or causes in Ukraine stood at substantially lower levels (20%) (Table 4.4.13). Of the youngest respondent group (18–29 years old), proportionally more were able to send money to Ukraine compared to older ones.

Logically, of those 34% who were able to save money in the EU destination country, substantially more (48%) were able to send money to Ukraine compared with those 41% who were not able to save money, of whom almost none (4%) sent money to Ukraine.

Table 4.4.13. Respondents' financial situation in the destination country in the EU (%).

	Ability to save money			Ability to send money to Ukraine			
	yes	don't know	no	yes	don't know	no	N
18–29 years old	50	19	31	31	24	45	42
30–45 years old	29	25	46	15	15	69	59
46– years old	13	38	50	6	19	75	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	33	23	44	19	19	62	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	32	27	41	27	27	45	22
Left in 2023	45	36	18	18	9	73	11
Left in 2024	33	17	50	0	0	100	6
Returned in 2022	31	22	46	18	19	63	67
Returned in 2023	33	28	38	18	21	62	39
Returned in 2024	55	27	18	36	9	55	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	27	22	51	14	14	73	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	0	57	43	0	57	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	39	31	31	22	25	53	59
Total	34	25	41	20	19	62	117

4.5 Respondents' return migration from the EU to Ukraine

As discussed in Chapter 3, there has been a considerable movement across Ukrainian borders on monthly basis, often around one million people moving on both directions. The timeline of return from the EU to Ukraine varied among respondents. Of them, very few (2%) returned immediately in February–March 2022 after the war escalated, thus making a very short stay in the EU. Overall, few (7%) returned within two months after their departure. Of them, 88% had both left and returned to areas with limited war conflict in Ukraine. In addition, those who left and returned to limited war conflict areas tended to spend shorter time in the EU compared with those who left and returned to major/partial war conflict areas.

The largest share, 56%, returned in April–December 2022 when it became evident that Ukraine was able to resist against the Russian military and push them back from several areas that they had been initially able to conquer. In fact, 39% returned to Ukraine in 3–6 months after their departure. Of respondents, 38% returned after having been for more than one year abroad. In addition, 32% returned in 2023 and 9% in 2024. In a return migration survey conducted by IOM (2024), 64% of respondents in Ukraine had returned in 2022. However, this survey was conducted earlier than the one in this article.

Those who returned before autumn 2022, typically originated from Western Ukraine (56%) or had lived in Poland (48% of early returnees, 48% of those who went to Poland) or had children awaiting them in Ukraine (43% of them). Similar results were found in the survey conducted by IOM (2024). Respondents from Eastern Ukraine showed distinct return patterns: substantially fewer (10%) came back before autumn 2022, and still only 14% returned later in the year, when the war front had stabilized and Russian forces had retreated from initially occupied areas.

Table 4.5.1. Respondents' time of return to Ukraine (%).

	after 1–2 months	after 3–6 months	after 7–12 months	after 13+ months	N
18–29 years old	10	38	17	36	42
30–45 years old	7	41	12	41	59
46–60 years old	0	38	25	38	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	9	51	12	28	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	5	23	41	32	22
Left in 2023	0	0	0	100	11
Left in 2024	0	17	0	83	6
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	2	41	16	41	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0	0	57	43	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	12	42	10	36	59
Total	7	39	15	38	117

While nearly all respondents left Ukraine due to the war, directly or indirectly, their return to a still embattled country often involved more voluntary elements. The decision to return was influenced not just by the character of the ongoing war but also by the social environment in Ukraine, including connections to family, relatives, and friends, and the work opportunities. There was a complex interplay of factors motivating Ukrainians' return from the EU, with personal ties and the evolving war landscape significantly influencing their decisions. Interviews revealed that many respondents aspired to return to Ukraine for most of the time they were abroad, especially when it became apparent that Ukraine could resist the Russian military and reclaim many of the occupied territories. Like many forced migrants abroad, these respondents maintained hopes and imaginaries of returning to their homeland (see Bilgili, 2022).

A survey conducted by IOM in 2024 in Ukraine among return migrants revealed how the most commonly expressed reason for returning was a desire to be back in Ukraine and the cultural environment. It was expressed by 43% of that survey respondents. The next most common reason was the desire to reunite with one's relatives, and this was mentioned by 34% of respondents (IOM 2024).

In the survey for this report, every respondent could articulate a reason for returning to Ukraine, showcasing a variety of motivations. The decision to return involved a mix of pushing and pulling factors, often intertwined. However, besides the aspiration to return, respondents also needed the ability to return, i.e., sufficient resources to do so (see Carling & Schewel, 2018), which they had in this instance.

A significant 43% cited the desire to be with family or friends in Ukraine as their primary reason, underscoring a strong pull factor. Although the voluntariness of return can be complex (see Erdal & Oeppen, 2022), social reasons are commonly cited among returning forced migrants.

However, 21% expressed an unwillingness to continue living abroad, including many who left in 2024 and quickly returned. This suggests that push factors also played a role in their decision to return to Ukraine. Additionally, few (10%) mentioned their return was driven by the inability to remain in the EU, more frequently stated by those who left Ukraine in the latter part of 2022.

Few (8%) returned for work opportunities within Ukraine, and very few (3%) explicitly stated their intention to support Ukraine through their return. These were also pulling factors for return migration (Table 4.5.2). Furthermore, 15% of respondents indicated other reasons for their return. Almost all male respondents (78%) cited reasons unrelated to family or friends for their return.

Table 4.5.2. Reasons to return to Ukraine by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Not willing to be in the EU	Not being able to be in the EU	To be with family/ friends	To work in Ukraine	To support Ukraine	Other	N
18–29 years old	29	14	31	7	5	14	42
30–45 years old	15	8	54	3	2	17	59
46– years old	25	6	31	25	6	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	21	8	53	5	3	12	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	18	23	18	9	9	23	22
Left in 2023	9	9	36	27	0	18	11
Left in 2024	67	0	17	0	0	17	6
Returned in 2022	21	4	51	6	3	15	67
Returned in 2023	26	18	33	8	3	13	39
Returned in 2024	9	18	27	18	9	18	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	22	14	49	6	2	8	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	14	29	0	0	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	19	7	39	10	5	20	59
Total	21	10	43	8	3	15	117

Interviews revealed that very few of the interviewed return migrants had fully adapted to life in the EU, and they were awaiting an opportunity to return to Ukraine. Once it became feasible to return, they did so, having achieved

their primary objective abroad of ensuring safety for themselves and their children. This scenario aligns with a completion-related return migration, rather than a setback-related return where the initial mission remains unfulfilled (Battistella, 2018). Several factors motivated their return, such as the desire to reunite with family members in Ukraine, the opportunity to secure employment there, or simply a strong sense of belonging, feeling that Ukraine was truly their home. These elements collectively influenced their decision to return to Ukraine.

> *God, this return to home [in Ukraine] was the happiest day of my life. I will always remember this date as my birthday. There is nothing better than home.* (Olesia)

> *I have a husband here [in Ukraine]. That is the first thing. Secondly, the children missed Ukraine very much. I missed it too. But when you work hard, you do not have time to be sad. Such thoughts did not come to me. … Kyiv became more secure. We decided to leave [the EU] earlier.* (Alina)

> *The most important thing [to return] is that my family, my husband and son stayed in Ukraine. At first, they were near Lviv, in a village, but in April [2022] they returned home as soon as the Russian occupation troops withdrew from Kyiv, and from that moment I started to get ready to go home.* (Olha)

> *[We returned] because we still felt like guests [in the EU host country]. Because the children, especially my son, who was small at the time, had the hardest time adapting. … He would cry every night and miss his home, his father, and his cat.* (Oleksandra)

> *During this period, I did not have a feeling that Bucharest is my city to live all my life. I was just waiting. And I decided to try [to return] … because my family was in Kyiv, parents and son. (Kateryna)*

> *I could not live in Germany: I needed to return to Ukraine. … First of all, I missed it [Ukraine]. Everything is clear and familiar here [in Ukraine]. I knew I would have work here. … I was not disappointed and have not regretted my decision to return, not even once.* (Marta)

> *Once I was called back to work, I immediately knew I would return. I just needed time to close things in Germany … I wanted to leave properly and follow all the rules.* (Daria)

> *There was no work [for us in Spain], and it made no sense to stay there. My daughter wanted a job that matched her skills, not just random babysitting or occasional jobs. … When I came back home, the difference was clear. We returned home, and even though there are missile strikes, it is still much better to be home.* (Maria)

4.6 Respondents' daily lives in Ukraine after their return

4.6.1 Settling back into everyday lives in Ukraine

Individuals returning to Ukraine were met with diverse circumstances as they sought to rebuild their lives. Some were fortunate enough to return to homes situated far from the war-torn zones, relatively untouched by the war. However, many faced greater adversities, including the need to internally displace themselves to safer areas within Ukraine due to their homes being destroyed or located in regions that were too perilous to inhabit. This was particularly true for those from areas near the active frontline or regions that had experienced occupation and significant damage during the conflict. In fact, as of spring 2024, still about 3.5 million Ukrainians were internally displaced (IOM, 2024).

As previously mentioned (Fig. 4.1), the distribution of respondents upon their return was as follows: 50% to Western Ukraine, 29% to Central Ukraine, 15% to Southern Ukraine and 6% to Eastern Ukraine (Table 4.6.1). Of all respondents, very many (90%) were able to return and resettle to the same oblast in which they lived before their leaving Ukraine, and 32% to the same apartment or house where they lived before out-migration. This means that 68% was not able or did not will return to exactly same housing unit despite the majority had the opportunity to remain in the same oblast.

Table 4.6.1. Respondents' place of residence in Ukraine (%).

	Major conflict area	Partial conflict area	Limited conflict area	Western Ukraine	Central Ukraine	Southern Ukraine	Eastern Ukraine	N
18–29 years old	0	38	62	60	26	7	7	42
30–45 years old	2	47	51	46	29	22	3	59
46– years old	0	50	50	44	38	6	13	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	1	49	50	47	31	17	5	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	0	36	64	59	18	14	9	22
Left in 2023	0	18	82	64	27	9	0	11
Left in 2024	0	67	33	33	50	0	17	6
Returned in 2022	1	42	57	52	30	16	1	67
Returned in 2023	0	49	51	46	28	10	15	39
Returned in 2024	0	45	55	55	27	18	0	11
Total	1	44	55	50	29	15	6	117

However, not all returnees could go back to their original homes or even the oblasts where they had lived before leaving Ukraine. This situation hindered their full spatial reintegration, as they had to establish their lives in other parts of the country, leading to significant internal displacement upon their return.

The prevailing trend was migration from east to west, moving from areas of major conflict to nearby oblasts with only partial conflicts or to areas with limited conflict in western Ukraine, particularly to Lviv. Additionally, many also relocated to the national capital, Kyiv (Fig. 4.6.1). Before the war, there were notable differences between the populations in western and eastern Ukraine. This internal movement from east to west has thus shifted these historical, cultural, and demographic patterns.

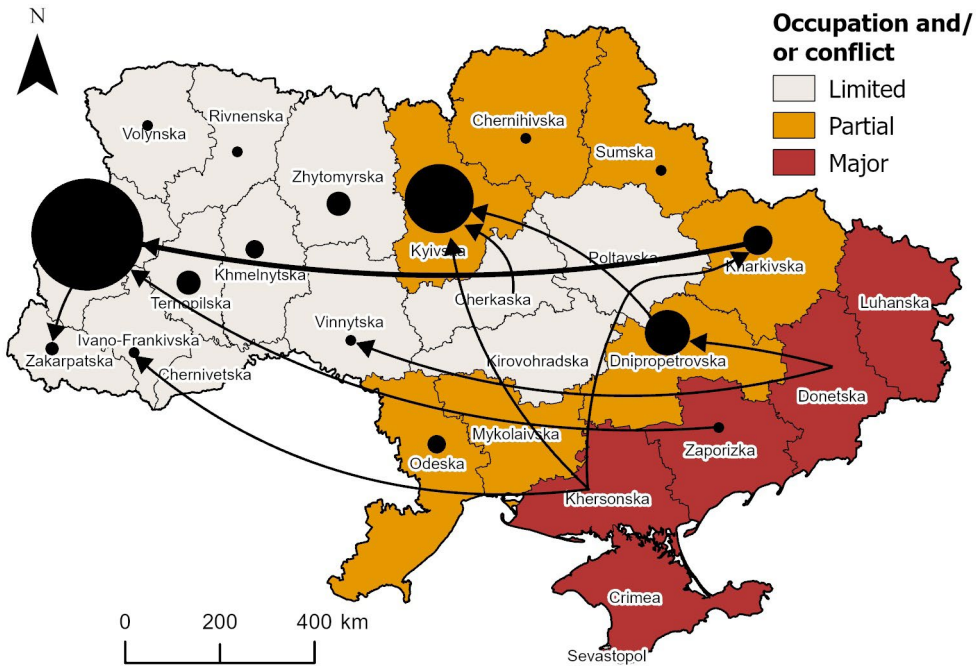

Figure 4.6.1. Internal displacement of respondents after their return to Ukraine.

Other studies also highlighted the necessity for internal displacement in Ukraine following return migration. According to a 2024 survey by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 27% of respondents in Ukraine had returned to a different location than their original place of residence, while 73% had returned to the same location. However, significant regional differences were observed: 60% of those originally from Eastern Ukraine returned to a different place, compared to 34% from Southern Ukraine and only 10% from other regions. Among those who managed to return to their original location, nearly all (92%) were able to move back into their previous accommodations. The IOM survey also identified Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kharkiv as key areas of displacement, although, curiously, Lviv was not noted among these locations. The

primary reasons respondents cited for relocating were perceived safety (42%) and proximity to relatives (31%) (IOM 2024).

Upon their return to Ukraine, 55% of respondents found their accommodation in own apartment within block of flats, signifying a preference or necessity for such living arrangements in urban settings, a decline from 60% before out-migration. Of respondents, 21% returned to separate houses to a more private living situation, again a decline from 25% before out-migration. The remaining 18% found themselves in different types of housing options: rented apartments (9%, while it was 3% before out-migration), shared house (3%, while it was 1% before out-migration), and other accommodation situations (6%) such as living in parents' house. The older were respondents, the proportionally more they lived in apartments that they owned.

As mentioned, 32% of all respondents succeeded in returning to the exact apartment or house they had inhabited prior to their migration. This continuity suggests a significant ability to reclaim their former lives and spaces despite the upheavals caused by the war and displacement. Of those, who were able to return to the same apartment, the majority (62%) argued that they need much more money to improve their living situation in Ukraine. However, that share was substantially higher (80%) among those who were not able to return to the same apartment. For them the running living costs related to accommodation were probably higher.

However, among those who experienced a change in their living situation, the distribution of housing types remained diverse: 69% moved into own block of flat apartment or a separate house (24%), signaling a shift within urban centers, possibly to areas less affected by the conflict or offering better employment opportunities. A few (13%) resettled in shared houses, which might indicate a move to different neighborhoods or towns offering greater safety or family reunification opportunities.

Lastly, only a few (13%) found themselves in rented apartments, reflecting the varied housing strategies employed by returnees as they navigated the challenges of resettlement in their home country. The share of respondents living in a rented apartment was overall low but relatively higher among youngest (18–29 years old) respondent group as well as among those who left in 2023 and those who returned in 2024. Whether returning to familiar homes or adapting to new living arrangements, these individuals faced the task of re-establishing their lives under the shadow of ongoing war, with each choice of accommodation reflecting their individual circumstances, preferences, and the realities of a nation in turmoil.

Table 4.6.2. Respondents' accommodation in Ukraine before and after out-migration (%).

	Own apartment	Rented apartment	Own house	Shared house	Hotel or hostel	Other	N
	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	B / A	
18–29 years old	45 / 36	10 / 12	26 / 21	5 / 19	0 / 5	14 / 5	42
30–45 years old	63 / 59	5 / 8	27 / 25	3 / 2	0 / 0	2 / 3	59
46– years old	88 / 88	0 / 6	13 / 6	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	65 / 62	3 / 8	23 / 21	3 / 4	0 / 1	6 / 4	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	36 / 27	14 / 18	41 / 32	9 / 14	0 / 5	0 / 0	22
Left in 2023	64 / 55	18 / 9	9 / 9	0 / 18	0 / 0	9 / 9	11
Left in 2024	67 / 67	0 / 0	17 / 17	0 / 17	0 / 0	17 / 0	6
Returned in 2022	54 / 51	1 / 7	33 / 28	4 / 7	0 / 0	7 / 4	67
Returned in 2023	74 / 64	8 / 13	13 / 10	3 / 5	0 / 5	3 / 3	39
Returned in 2024	45 / 45	27 / 9	18 / 18	0 / 18	0 / 0	9 / 0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	73 / 67	6 / 10	8 / 8	6 / 8	0 / 0	8 / 6	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	57 / 0	0 / 29	43 / 0	0 / 43	0 / 29	0 / 0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	49 / 51	7 / 7	37 / 36	2 / 3	0 / 0	5 / 2	59
Total	60 / 55	6 / 9	25 / 21	3 / 8	0 / 2	6 / 3	117

Upon their return to Ukraine, securing employment emerged as a crucial concern for many respondents, pivotal for stabilizing their financial situation amid the ongoing conflict. Efforts to find work were largely driven by individual initiative and the private sector, responding to labor shortages in various fields within Ukraine. The state played a limited role, offering minimal support for the structural reintegration of return migrants (see Lietaert & Kuschminder 2021).

As previously noted, a substantial portion (73%) of those surveyed were employed, with varying levels of engagement: 50% held full-time positions, 17% worked part-time, and 12% were self-employed (Table 4.6.3). Employment rates were especially high among those aged 45–60, with nearly all (86%) in full-time positions. Substantially fewer (36%) of the younger cohort, aged 18–29, also engaged in full-time work, indicating strong workforce participation or re-entry for these age groups. In contrast, respondents over 60 were not employed full-time upon their return, as most were already retired.

Of respondents, 27% were not employed in Ukraine after their return. These included students who were 18%, those maintaining house duties (9%), unemployed (8%) and retired (4%). Some of them were at least partially employed. Notably, those not participating in the labor force often included students. Among unemployed, the share was higher among those who both left and returned to major/partial war conflict areas and those who had just returned to Ukraine in 2024 (Table 4.6.3). This suggests as least a temporary friction for some to enter the labor market in Ukraine immediately after return.

In the survey conducted by IOM (2024), 50% of respondents were working, 15% were unemployed and 35% were otherwise economically not active such as retired or those at home dealing with caregiving. The share of employed return migrants was higher (65%) among those returnees who were living in the Kyiv city. In that study, the lower share of being employed resulted in 55% reporting that their economic situation in Ukraine is worse than they thought it would be. Therefore, 27% of those return migrant survey respondent mentioned that they were able to cover all or most of their basic needs. That share was much higher (47%) in Kyiv in which proportionally more respondents were employed.

Table 4.6.3. Respondents' economic activities in Ukraine (%).

	Employed	Student	Unemployed	Retired	Housework	N
18–29 years old	52	50	7	0	10	42
30–45 years old	86	0	10	2	8	59
46– years old	75	0	0	25	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	69	18	6	4	8	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	82	14	14	0	5	22
Left in 2023	91	9	0	9	18	11
Left in 2024	50	50	17	17	17	6
Returned in 2022	67	19	7	3	9	67
Returned in 2023	82	15	5	8	8	39
Returned in 2024	73	18	18	0	9	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	73	14	14	0	16	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	100	14	0	0	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	69	22	3	8	3	59
Total	73	18	8	4	9	117

4.6.2 Social environment in Ukraine after return

Respondents were initially compelled to leave Ukraine due to the Russian military aggression. This crisis led to an out-migration, presenting a distressing reality for many Ukrainians. However, upon migrating to an EU member state, they were afforded temporary protection there. The insights into returned respondents' satisfaction in Ukraine reveal a nuanced picture of returnees' lives. Despite the resilience and partial recovery, the shadows of war linger, especially in aspects of mental health, indicating the long-term challenges faced by individuals in post-conflict environments.

Upon their return to Ukraine, almost all respondents (94%) reported at least some level of satisfaction with their overall life, with only a small fraction (6%) expressing outright dissatisfaction (Table 4.6.6). Notably, the proportion of those fully satisfied with their life post-return stood at 21%, a significant decrease from 59% who reported full satisfaction in their life in Ukraine before the war. The

percentage of those few not satisfied also decreased to 6% post-return. Potentially many of those who would have potentially felt dissatisfied never returned to Ukraine from the EU.

Many interviewees viewed the opportunity to return very positively. They chose to come back when it was possible and felt at home upon returning. However, everyday life was sometimes challenging, particularly due to the ongoing war.

> *When we learned about the de-occupation of the Kyiv region, we decided to buy tickets home. We did not know whether our homes had survived until the last moment, there was no communication. Then they opened access to Irpin and started letting civilians into their homes. … We were very homesick, very homesick for our dad, and nothing could hold us back. … There are moments when it is hard, when there is massive shelling, when my children have to sleep in the corridor or in the parking lot.* (Oleksandra)

> *Life is harder [now in Ukraine] with new rules: curfew and endless sirens, dangerous. People are nervous and not happy like before. … I am not on vacation and life is not a rose garden here. … If you are a very sensitive person, you will be stressed here. [There is] no normal life right now, to be honest. People adapt and get used to the war regime. But why to get used to war and danger?* (Kateryna)

> *The first month [after return in September 2023] was unusually scary. Very scary. I was on the monitor every day, on the phone every night. What's going on out there? What is flying? We sat up every night when there were alarms in the corridor. Now we have gotten used to it a little bit. The children were scared too. … We still monitor the alarms, if something goes off, we go out and hide. We go out into the corridor, or if it's really scary, we go to the shelter. … Every day I sit at work and still I call my children, even though they are at home, even though I know that nothing will happen, everything is fine.* (Alina)

> *When I came back home, the difference was clear. We returned home, and even though there are missile strikes, it is still much better to be home. … We really wanted to come back home. We always intended to live abroad temporarily because I never saw my life there permanently. Life was great here before the war, although there were challenges. … For various reasons, people feel good at home, even with the ongoing war.* (Maria).

> *All my friends have returned. There are very few who stayed abroad. Basically, everyone has returned. They also returned to their husbands. Work, again. And some people started coming back a little bit earlier than me, some later, but at the moment almost everyone has returned. … People returned to their jobs. It was necessary to return, everything became more or less stable, and people returned.* (Olha)

> *But when I returned [to Ukraine in 2023], everyone was smiling, everyone was showing each other the way. People seemed softer. Now [in 2024], there are more and more non-locals. The atmosphere has changed, of course. It is different. … People's spirits have improved, but the buildings have worsened. … Honestly, I do not know how I would feel if I did not have a job. Probably not well. Work means a lot to a person. I work, I earn, I*

work. So I feel confident and good. Except for these constant attacks, of course. You go to bed knowing that an explosion might happen, and you think, "today, it's not me." In that sense, yes. And the war, or rather the emigration, showed me to move forward, forward, keep going forward. Like a second youth. Yes, yes, I definitely feel stronger. (Marta)

After retuning home [I felt] happiness. For three months, I could not believe I was home. Even though my apartment had no windows and [there] was a mess, I was very happy. My heart was singing. … Seeing the destroyed buildings, and knowing that some of my colleagues lost everything, was very sad. But I was still glad to be home. … I do not want to have to leave again. … Looking back at my journey, I did everything correctly, thoughtfully, and at the right time. I appreciate everything more now, especially knowing how good it is to be home after experiencing life abroad. (Daria)

Regarding physical health, 32% of respondents reported being fully satisfied post-return, a clear decrease from the 50% who felt this way before migrating. The majority were partly satisfied, with an increase (from 44% to 62%) compared to the pre-migration period. The share of those not satisfied (7%) slightly increased.

The satisfaction with mental health saw a more pronounced decline. Only about a fourth (26%) were fully satisfied with their mental health post-return, a stark contrast to the pre-migration period where clearly more than a half (62%) reported full satisfaction. The proportion of respondents fully dissatisfied with their mental health remained relatively low but increased after return (8% vs. 13%), highlighting that the most significant impact of the war and subsequent return was on respondents' mental well-being. Those most affected by this decline in mental health satisfaction were individuals with family members still abroad (47% of those who had family abroad had a decline, 79% of those who had a decline in mental health had family abroad) and quite many from areas subjected to severe military attacks (55% had a decline, 69% were from active conflict zones), or those not employed full-time in Ukraine (48% of them had a decline, 67% were not full time employed).

As a whole, only 10% of respondents were fully satisfied with their life, physical health and mental health. They all left and returned in Ukraine in 2022 and very many of them (75%) were under 46 years old. Larger share of fully satisfied was among those who departed from limited war conflict areas (50%) and among older (more than 45 years old) respondents (30%). 80% of those, who felt fully satisfied with their life in 2022 and 2024 felt also patriots in Ukraine.

The share of those who were not fully satisfied with their life, physical health and mental health increased from 26% in 2022 to 54% in 2024. However, still only few (10%) of them aspire to migrate to the former EU host country but 17% search information from the Internet about living and working opportunities in the EU.

The decline in satisfaction was particularly evident among those who left Ukraine in the early stages (February–March 2022) of the war (49% of them felt such decrease), those from regions heavily impacted by military actions (47% of them felt such decrease), and individuals whose family members remained in their EU host countries (45%). Conversely, a minority of respondents, who managed to relocate to Western Ukraine areas within Ukraine upon their return, experienced an increase in overall satisfaction (100% of them).

Table 4.6.4. Respondents' satisfaction to life as well as to their physical and mental health in Ukraine after returning there (%).

	Overall satisfaction			Physical health satisfaction			Mental health satisfaction			
	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	N
18–29 years old	31	62	7	33	55	12	26	57	17	42
30–45 years old	14	83	3	31	68	2	24	66	10	59
46– years old	25	63	13	31	56	13	38	50	13	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	22	74	4	38	56	5	29	58	13	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	18	68	14	18	73	9	18	73	9	22
Left in 2023	27	64	9	18	73	9	18	73	9	11
Left in 2024	17	83	0	17	67	17	33	33	33	6
Returned in 2022	27	67	6	39	54	7	36	51	13	67
Returned in 2023	15	77	8	23	72	5	13	77	10	39
Returned in 2024	9	91	0	18	73	9	18	64	18	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	24	71	6	31	61	8	18	65	18	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	71	14	29	57	14	14	57	29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	20	75	5	32	63	5	36	58	7	59
Total	21	73	6	32	62	7	26	61	13	117

Respondents provided various reflections on their lives after returning to Ukraine (Table 4.6.5). Overall, 69% felt a sense of patriotism after returning. This sentiment was more prevalent among older respondents, with 75% of those over 45 feeling patriotic. Conversely, 23% were unsure about their feelings of patriotism, and a small minority (8%) did not feel patriotic while in Ukraine. A slightly higher proportion of those who left and returned to areas with limited conflict (75%) felt patriotic compared to those from areas with major or partial conflict (63%). The highest percentage of respondents who did not feel patriotic (14%) was among the youngest age group (18–29 years old).

Such supportive feeling toward Ukraine was evident also in respondents' perception of the language uses. After returning, 77% did not like to speak Russian in Ukraine while a few (8%) were unsure about it and 15% disagreed with that statement. Of those, who spoke Russian at native level, 50% agreed that they did not like to speak Russian in Ukraine after return and 33% disagreed with this. Of those who disagreed to not like to speak Russian in Ukraine, 67% were fluent

in Russian and 28% did not speak Ukrainian at native level skills. Of those who spoke at native level Ukrainian, 77% felt patriots in Ukraine whereas that share was clearly lower but still felt by majority (50%) among those who spoke Russian as native level.

Table 4.6.5. Respondents' feelings towards being patriotic and the use of the Russian language while in Ukraine (%).

		I feel as a patriot			I do not like to speak Russian			
		Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	N
18–29 years old		67	19	14	76	10	14	42
30–45 years old		69	25	5	83	7	10	59
46– years old		75	25	0	56	6	38	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022		72	19	9	79	10	10	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022		68	27	5	77	5	18	22
Left in 2023		55	36	9	64	0	36	11
Left in 2024		67	33	0	67	0	33	6
Returned in 2022		73	18	9	76	10	13	67
Returned in 2023		62	31	8	82	3	15	39
Returned in 2024		73	27	0	64	9	27	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration		63	29	8	63	18	20	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration		71	29	0	71	0	29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration		75	17	8	90	0	10	59
Knowledge level of Russian	Native	58	29	13	50	17	33	24
	Good	61	35	4	78	10	12	49
	Moderate	88	6	6	88	0	13	16
	Some	71	14	14	100	0	0	7
	Nothing	86	5	10	90	0	10	21
Total		69	23	8	77	8	15	117

By returning, respondents had to accommodate their lives into governance by public authorities. Respondents were asked about their satisfaction to public authorities in Ukraine after their return. Very many respondents were rather critical towards public authorities for many kinds of reasons. Only very few (8%) were fully satisfied with national authorities, 68% were partly satisfied and 25% were not satisfied with them. The share of those who were not satisfied was higher among respondents who could not return to the same oblast they left (27% of them). However, this inability might not have been the fault of national government. Also among those who lived in the most war-torn oblasts, 28% expressed dissatisfaction with national authorities (Table 4.6.5).

The satisfaction to local authorities was also low among respondents. Of respondents, a few (9%) were fully satisfied with local authorities and 61% were partly satisfied, while 30% were not satisfied with them. Dissatisfaction to local

authorities was proportionally highest among those who had recently returned in 2024. Among those who lived in the most war-torn oblasts, the share of unsatisfied with local authorities (36% of them) was close to the overall share of dissatisfied among respondents. The share of those who were not satisfied was 50% among respondents who could not return to the same oblast they left. There might be a sentiment among respondents that local authorities in their new regions of residence did not do everything to facilitate respondents' return or that they were unfamiliar with them (Table 4.6.5).

Table 4.6.6. Respondents' satisfaction to national and local authorities in Ukraine after returning (%).

	National authority satisfaction			Local authority satisfaction			
	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	N
18–29 years old	14	50	36	12	50	38	42
30–45 years old	3	73	24	7	63	31	59
46– years old	6	94	0	13	81	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	8	72	21	12	64	24	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	14	45	41	9	41	50	22
Left in 2023	0	82	18	0	73	27	11
Left in 2024	0	67	33	0	67	33	6
Returned in 2022	9	70	21	10	67	22	67
Returned in 2023	3	67	31	8	56	36	39
Returned in 2024	18	55	27	9	36	55	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	4	69	27	10	55	35	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14	57	29	14	43	43	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	10	68	22	8	68	24	59
Total	8	68	25	9	61	30	117

4.6.3 Satisfaction to main structural elements in Ukraine after return

After returning to Ukraine, the respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction across various structural elements, including accommodation, employment, children's education, healthcare, and other social services. These domains mirror the structural support provided under the TPD scheme in the EU, enabling a comparative analysis of respondents' satisfaction in the EU before returning and in Ukraine after their return (see Table 4.4.6). The return to Ukraine was characterized by nuanced experiences of satisfaction across various life domains, reflecting both improvements and ongoing challenges in adapting to post-return life. After return, there is a complex interplay of factors influencing the well-being of returnees in a conflict-affected context.

A majority (56%) reported being fully satisfied with their accommodation in Ukraine, with 38% partly satisfied, and a small fraction (7%) expressing dissatisfaction (Table 4.6.7). Notably, compared with the respondents' situation in

the EU, satisfaction levels slightly increased after their return to Ukraine among those who were partially satisfied (growth of 4 percent units) while the share of those fully satisfied did no change, and a small proportional decline took place regarding those not satisfied (decline by 2 percent units). Full satisfaction levels were almost the same among respondents returning to their pre-migration accommodation (51% of them). Of those returning to the same oblast (57% of them) clearly more reported full satisfaction compared with those who returned to another accommodation (58% of them) or another oblast that that before they left (42% of them). The satisfaction levels were rather similar regardless the ownership of one's apartment: Among those who did not live in apartment of their own, 55% were fully, 34% partly and 11% were not satisfied in their accommodation.

Almost a half (44%) of respondents were fully satisfied with their employment after they had returned Ukraine, while 40% partly satisfied. Dissatisfaction with their employment stood at 15% post-return situation in Ukraine (Table 4.6.7). The highest level of dissatisfaction was noted among the youngest respondents (18–29 years old) of whom 33% were not satisfied. Many of them had not been employed in Ukraine after return. Among those who were full-time employed: 63% felt fully satisfied, 34% were partly satisfied and 3% were not satisfied with their employment. Comparing respondents' employment satisfaction in the EU, the proportion of respondents satisfied with their employment increased upon returning to Ukraine, particularly among those fully employed, indicating improved labor market positions or employment conditions relative to their experiences abroad. The share of fully satisfied with employment increased by 17 percent units and the share of not satisfied declined 8 percent units, reflecting the importance of stable full-time employment in post-return adaptation. In fact, in the EU destination country, 13% were full-time employed and in Ukraine that share was 50%. Comparing satisfaction among those who were full-time employed both after return and in the EU destination country, the share of fully satisfied increased by 29 percent units and those not satisfied decreased by 15 percent units.

Satisfaction with educational opportunities also saw an upward trend, with 50% fully satisfied and 44% partly satisfied post-return, and few (6%) were not satisfied (Table 4.6.7). Of those respondents, who had underaged children in Ukraine, the satisfaction levels were even higher, the majority (53%) were fully satisfied, 45% partly satisfied and almost none (2%) were not satisfied with education opportunities.

The largest improvement in satisfaction after return occurred regarding health care services. Of respondents, 39% were fully satisfied, the majority (57%) were partly satisfied and almost none (3%) were not satisfied with health care services in Ukraine after their return (Table 4.6.7). Comparing the respondents'

Table 4.6.7. Respondents' satisfaction to basic elements in Ukraine (%).

	Accomodation			Employment			Education			Health service			Social sevice			
	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	Full	Partial	No	N
18–29 years old	67 /	19	/ 14	36 /	31	/ 33	48 /	38	/ 14	38 /	55	/ 7	21 /	69	/ 10	42
30–45 years old	51 /	47	/ 2	51 /	46	/ 3	53 /	46	/ 2	41 /	58	/ 2	22 /	76	/ 2	59
46– years old	44 /	50	/ 6	44 /	44	/ 13	50 /	50	/ 0	38 /	63	/ 0	31 /	69	/ 0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	54 /	41	/ 5	49 /	37	/ 14	53 /	41	/ 6	41 /	55	/ 4	26 /	71	/ 4	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	55 /	32	/ 14	32 /	55	/ 14	45 /	45	/ 9	32 /	68	/ 0	23 /	68	/ 9	22
Left in 2023	55 /	36	/ 9	45 /	36	/ 18	45 /	55	/ 0	36 /	55	/ 9	0 /	100	/ 0	11
Left in 2024	83 /	17	/ 0	33 /	33	/ 33	50 /	50	/ 0	50 /	50	/ 0	33 /	67	/ 0	6
Returned in 2022	61 /	31	/ 7	46 /	37	/ 16	55 /	40	/ 4	46 /	51	/ 3	24 /	73	/ 3	67
Returned in 2023	49 /	44	/ 8	49 /	38	/ 13	44 /	46	/ 10	28 /	67	/ 5	23 /	69	/ 8	39
Returned in 2024	45 /	55	/ 0	18 /	64	/ 18	45 /	55	/ 0	36 /	64	/ 0	18 /	82	/ 0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	61 /	35	/ 4	39 /	51	/ 10	53 /	41	/ 6	41 /	55	/ 4	25 /	73	/ 2	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	14 /	29	/ 57	43 /	43	/ 14	29 /	57	/ 14	14 /	86	/ 0	14 /	57	/ 29	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	56 /	41	/ 3	49 /	31	/ 20	51 /	44	/ 5	41 /	56	/ 3	22 /	75	/ 3	59
Total	56 /	38	/ 7	44 /	40	/ 15	50 /	44	/ 6	39 /	57	/ 3	23 /	73	/ 4	117

situation in the EU, the increase in those fully satisfied was very large (increase by 17 percent units). A decrease in dissatisfaction points to a positive assessment of healthcare services in Ukraine, despite the ongoing war. Those partly satisfied remained almost the same (decline by 5 percent units), and the share of not satisfied declined substantially (decrease by 22 percent units). Satisfaction varied with respondents' health care needs, indicating that those who felt healthier were more likely to report higher satisfaction. Fully satisfied with health services in Ukraine were 70% of those who mentioned to be fully satisfied with their physical and mental health in Ukraine. 45% were not fully satisfied with their physical health, 41% were not fully satisfied with their mental health, and 29% were not satisfied with either their physical or mental health. Therefore, the satisfaction to health services was lower among respondents who perceived to need these health care services compared to those who did not necessarily need them.

Respondents also shared their levels of satisfaction regarding other social services in Ukraine after their return. This showed a distinct pattern as 23% were fully satisfied, and 73% were partly satisfied (Table 4.6.7). Despite a high rate of partial satisfaction, dissatisfaction remained very low (4%), suggesting nuanced views on the adequacy of social services in Ukraine. Among fully satisfied, there were 27% of single respondents. They might not need other social services. The share of fully satisfied was lower (19%) also among those with underaged children in Ukraine. They might have a need in Ukraine for other social services whatever these services might be. Compared to respondents' situation in their EU destination countries, there was a substantial decline among fully satisfied (decline by 18 percent units), major increase among partly satisfied (increase by 29 percent units) and a major decline among not satisfied respondents (decline by 11 percent units).

4.6.4 Contacts with the EU after returning to Ukraine

While all respondents had experienced life in the EU, their return to Ukraine necessitated leaving behind the physical and social environments they had become part of during their stay abroad. Of respondents, 72% reported continuing to maintain some level of contact with individuals or entities in their former EU host country, illustrating ongoing connections beyond their physical return (Table 4.6.8). The frequency and nature of these contacts varied: some (9%) engaged in daily communications, 26% contacted less frequently but at least weekly, and 36% had even less frequent interactions, and 28% did not maintain any contacts.

The enduring contacts between returnees and their former EU countries of residence were predominantly personal, centered around family and friends. This persistence of international connections pinpoints to the complex, multi-dimensional nature of return migration experiences and the lasting impacts of temporary protection and integration in the EU on Ukrainian returnees.

Among those maintaining at least weekly contact, almost all (88%) had formed friendships with Ukrainians, locals, or others in their EU destination country during their stay there. The likelihood of sustaining contacts differed based on the duration of the EU stay: of respondents who spent less than three months in the EU, very many (68%) were likely to keep in touch, and 36% did so on at least a weekly basis. Of those who had a stay of more than one year slightly more (75%) maintained contact, with 58% engaging at least weekly. On the other hand, 25% did not maintain any contacts post-return, particularly those who did not make friends in the EU, or were only partly or not satisfied with their life there.

Of respondents, 41% told to have maintained contacts with non-Ukrainian friends in their former EU host country and 32% with Ukrainian friends there. Of respondents, 26% held contacts with relatives and 18% with family. Of respondents having family members and/or relatives in the EU host country (41% of all respondents), 77% maintained contacts with them. On those, who claimed to have had Ukrainian or other friends there (45% of all respondents), 72% maintained contacts with them. Another small group consisted of respondents having miscellaneous contacts with respondents' former country of residence in the EU, namely those with enterprises (2%) and NGOs (2%).

Of those who left Ukraine in 2023, 63% maintained contacts with their family in the EU destination country. Of more than 45 years old respondents, 44% maintained contacts with Ukrainians friends there. Of those, who returned in 2024, 45% maintained contacts with their family in the former EU host country and 73% with non-Ukrainian friends there.

Table 4.6.8. Respondents' remaining connections to former EU destination country (%).

	Family there	Relatives there	Ukrainian friends there	Other friends there	NGOs there	Enterprises there	N
18–29 years old	24	29	21	29	0	2	42
30–45 years old	14	22	37	51	3	2	59
46– years old	19	38	44	38	0	0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	14	24	32	38	1	3	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	14	23	32	41	5	0	22
Left in 2023	64	45	27	45	0	0	11
Left in 2024	0	33	50	67	0	0	6
Returned in 2022	7	28	34	36	1	1	67
Returned in 2023	28	18	26	41	3	3	39
Returned in 2024	45	45	45	73	0	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	18	12	39	43	2	0	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0	29	43	43	0	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	20	39	25	39	2	3	59
Total	18	26	32	41	2	2	117

The proportion of respondents maintaining contacts with family, Ukrainian friends, or other friends in their EU host country decreased over time, as did the number of such acquaintances remaining there. Additionally, the duration of their stay in the EU host country significantly influenced these connections. Specifically, among those who spent six months or less in the EU host country, 54% continued to maintain contacts with friends there, whereas this figure rose to 72% among those who stayed longer than six months.

After their return to Ukraine, about a half (48%) reported having traveled abroad, and another half (52%) had not ventured outside Ukraine again. Among those who lived in areas of major or partial conflict before out-migration and returned to these areas, 41% traveled abroad after returning, mainly for security reasons. This proportion was also high (54%) among those who returned in 2022. In contrast, only 18% of those who returned in 2024, i.e. rather recently, traveled abroad after their return to Ukraine (Table 4.6.9).

For those who traveled abroad post-return, the distribution was more specific: 50% returned to their former EU destination, 60% visited another EU country, 28% went to other locations such as Turkey, for example, to spend holidays there. Of those, who left Ukraine in 2023, 55% visited their former EU host country after returning Ukraine, whereas so did only 6% of oldest (more than 45 years old) respondents. Visitors to another EU country were 36% of those who left in later part of 2022 and 33% of those who left in 2024 whereas only 9% of those who left in 2023. Other than EU countries visited 33% of those who left Ukraine in 2024 but only 5% of the youngest (18–29 years old) respondent group (Table 4.6.9).

Table 4.6.9. Visits abroad after return by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Yes, same EU country	Yes, another EU country	Yes, other country	No	N
18–29 years old	21	29	5	62	42
30–45 years old	32	32	20	44	59
46– years old	6	25	13	56	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	22	31	15	53	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	18	36	5	55	22
Left in 2023	55	9	9	45	11
Left in 2024	33	33	33	50	6
Returned in 2022	18	34	15	46	67
Returned in 2023	36	26	10	54	39
Returned in 2024	27	18	18	82	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	22	25	14	59	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	29	57	0	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	27	31	15	51	59
Total	25	30	14	52	117

The ability and decision to travel abroad after returning to Ukraine were influenced by various factors, such as the necessity of travel, the feasibility to travel abroad based on one's location in Ukraine, and personal or professional reasons. Among those who had stayed in Poland during their initial migration, 35% visited Poland again, 26% ventured to another EU country, and 13% traveled to a different country altogether while 52% did not travel abroad. Of respondents who had spent their migration period in an EU country other than Ukraine's neighboring countries, fewer (16%) reported revisiting that country, 32% traveling to a different EU country, and 16% going to another country post-return, while 50% had not traveled abroad so far.

The reasons to visit again foreign countries reveal complex reasons driving post-return international travel among Ukrainian returnees. These ranged from seeking safety or employment to leisure and family connections. This highlights the ongoing impact of the war and personal circumstances on mobility decisions. For 42%, security concerns, including the ongoing war or the desire to avoid areas at risk of air raids, were paramount. Entertainment accounted for 31% of visitors abroad, and it was notably significant among respondents aged at least 45 years (44%). Employment-related reasons prompted for 20% respondents and more common among respondents who returned to Ukraine recently in 2024 (27%) and among those aged 30–45 years (24%) of whom many had been employed in the EU. Family reasons were mentioned by 16% of respondents. It was a more frequent reason for those who returned relatively recently in 2023 (45%) and 2024 (33%). Other reasons, such as meeting friends living abroad, were mentioned by 13%. Additionally, 15% traveled abroad just without a specific other purpose, notably higher among youngest respondents, namely 24% of those less than 30 years old (Table 4.6.10).

Table 4.6.10. Reasons to visits abroad after return by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Security	Employment	Family	Entertainment	Other reason	No reason	N
18–29 years old	36	14	12	24	19	24	42
30–45 years old	49	24	19	32	7	10	59
46– years old	31	19	19	44	19	6	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	47	18	10	29	12	17	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	32	32	18	41	9	14	22
Left in 2023	18	9	45	27	27	0	11
Left in 2024	50	17	33	17	17	17	6
Returned in 2022	40	19	15	27	9	16	67
Returned in 2023	44	18	21	38	15	13	39
Returned in 2024	45	27	9	27	27	9	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	51	10	20	29	18	12	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	29	43	29	29	0	14	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	36	25	12	32	10	17	59
Total	42	20	16	31	13	15	117

4.6.5 Onward-migration aspirations after return

The war persisted but the respondents had returned to Ukraine. After spending some time back in their homeland, they were at a juncture to deliberate on whether to stay permanently or consider relocating again. This decision encapsulates their aspirations for the future, which may or may not materialize. One significant aspect of these aspirations is the desire to either stay in Ukraine or leave, coupled with their expectations of what might actually occur, regardless of their desires. The decision to return during an ongoing war indicates a strong motivation and reason for coming back.

In a survey among Ukrainians return migrants conducted by IOM in 2024, only 3% of respondents indicated concrete plans to out-migrate within the next 12 months. However, 25% were undecisive whether to move or not.

Of the survey respondents for this report, 54% were adamant about not relocating outside Ukraine again – they would not leave Ukraine after returning there (Table 4.6.11). This sentiment was clearly stronger among those who returned already in 2022 (63% of them) and older respondents (63% of respondents with more than 45 years of age), and slightly stronger among parents of underage children in Ukraine (57% of them) and. A clear majority of them were thus reluctant to leave Ukraine again. Those who found their experience in the EU destination country less or more satisfying did not determine about their aspiration to stay in Ukraine. The vast majority aspired to be in Ukraine in 2027, three years from the time of completing the survey. Their simple wish was to live and work in their home country. Overall, almost none (1%) indicated to out-migrate from Ukraine within two months. These few all were below 30 years old.

Of respondents, 21% were ambivalent about staying in Ukraine, indicating a "maybe" stance towards the possibility of out-migration. This group notably included those who left and returned Ukraine recently in 2024 (33%) and younger individuals (31% of those below 30 years of age). While most respondents aspired to remain in Ukraine, a few pondered about the idea of moving to other countries, including destinations within Europe like Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom, as well as further afield to Canada and even Tanzania. This reflects a spectrum of considerations and potential plans among Ukrainians as they navigate the uncertainties of post-war life and personal aspirations.

However, 17% admitted they would consider leaving if safety becomes a major concern for their and their children's everyday life in Ukraine. Of those who left in 2023, 36% considered to leave if it would not be safe in Ukraine whereas that share was substantially lower among those who had left Ukraine in 2022 or 2024. Despite the ongoing war, only few (8%) indicated a willingness to leave Ukraine due to the reason the war continued unabated. That share was low but proportionally higher among recent returnees in 2024 (27%) (Table 4.6.11).

Among the surveyed individuals, a significant majority (63%) felt certain they would likely spend the rest of their lives in Ukraine, while 32% were undecided about such a long-term commitment, with only 4% outright rejecting the idea of remaining in Ukraine. The satisfaction into their life in the EU destination country did not matter on their aspiration to remain in Ukraine. Namely, of those who were fully satisfied with their life there, 64% thought to remain in Ukraine for the rest of their lives as did 63% of those who were less satisfied in their lives there.

Of all respondents, 61% were opposed to the idea to aspire moving back to the EU country they had previously resided in, with 33% withholding opinion on this matter, and a tiny fraction (6%) was open to considering such a move. The interviews also revealed that many did not see the onward-migration to the EU member states and living there as a suitable option for them. That was also one reason why they came back to Ukraine.

> *Many [Ukrainian] people went with the illusion that Europe is a paradise and faced a different reality. … I did not. … But some people had never been anywhere and thought that over there, it would be… a chance. But not for me. I did not see anything there that I would not already have at home. I did not see it. I have everything here.* (Marta)

> *Immigration is not for me at all. … I never wanted to emigrate anywhere. What we now already know, since many people left, what difficulties people face there [in the EU] and how difficult it all is, I would not recommend to anyone [to emigrate].* (Olesia)

Table 4.6.11. Onward-migration aspirations by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Yes in 2 months	Yes if not safe	Yes if war continues	Maybe	No	N
18–29 years old	2	10	5	31	52	42
30–45 years old	0	22	8	17	53	59
46– years old	0	19	13	6	63	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	1	15	9	21	54	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	0	14	9	18	59	22
Left in 2023	0	36	0	18	45	11
Left in 2024	0	17	0	33	50	6
Returned in 2022	0	10	4	22	63	67
Returned in 2023	3	28	8	18	44	39
Returned in 2024	0	18	27	18	36	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	0	16	14	18	53	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	0	14	0	29	57	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	2	19	3	22	54	59
Total	1	17	8	21	54	117

4.6.6 Views on future

Respondents expressed varied outlooks regarding their future. A notable portion, but still only about a third (32%), viewed their future with optimism, indicating a sense of hope or confidence in what lies ahead. However, 50% were uncertain, indicating ambivalence or difficulty in predicting their future circumstances in the context of ongoing challenges. Despite the on-going war, only 18% held a pessimistic view, reflecting concerns or doubts about their prospects (Table 4.6.12). Overall, the share of those seeing future positively was highest among those who returned in 2022 (37%) and lower among those who returned in 2023 (23%) or 2024 (36%). Among those having children, the share of those viewing one' future optimistically was lower (30% thought so) compared with those who did not have children (34% though so).

The tendency to view the future positively was not uniform across all respondent groups but pronounced among certain demographics. Of respondent more than 45 years old, a half (50%) saw one's future positively. Such share was high also among those who had left Ukraine in latter 2022 and returned to Ukraine (59%) as well as among those who left major/partial war conflict areas but did not return there (43%). The lowest share of seeing one's future positively were among those who left and returned recently in 2024, those who returned in 2023 and those who left and returned to major/partial conflict areas.

Being employed full-time in Ukraine did not impact much optimism as almost same share was held by those being full-time employed (34%), somehow employed (38%) and not employed (31%). However, none (0%) unemployed return migrant respondents saw their future positively in Ukraine. Those who were definitive about their decision not to migrate away from Ukraine again displayed slightly higher levels of positivity about their future (46% of them). This firm stance might reflect a deep-rooted connection to their homeland or a belief in Ukraine's resilience and recovery potential. The share of feeling optimistic about one's future was clearly higher (37%) among respondents in limited war conflict areas compared with respondents who lived in major conflict areas (25%) in Ukraine.

Of respondents, 26% thought that children can have a positive future in Ukraine while the majority (58%) could not answer that and 15% disagreed with this. Of those, who thought that children's future can be good, a high share (81%) felt in general positive about one's future, felt to be patriot (90%) while in Ukraine and thought to live the rest of their life in Ukraine (94%).

Compared with others, respondents with underage children in Ukraine tended to be equally optimistic about children's future as 26% were optimistic about it. This perspective might be driven by a challenging commitment to providing a stable and hopeful future for their children due to the surrounding uncertainties during the on-going war and in the post-war contexts. The share of

feeling optimistic about the future of children was substantially higher among respondents living in limited war conflict areas (32%) compared with those in major war conflict areas in Ukraine (18%).

These findings illuminate the complex interplay between personal circumstances, such as family responsibilities, and individuals' outlooks on their future. While the overarching sentiment is one of uncertainty, a large segment of Ukrainian return migrants who possess a commitment to staying in Ukraine and to return there, and they tend to view the future more positively. This may have been an important overall reason for them to return to Ukraine. Those having a bleaker view about one's future in Ukraine might still be remaining in the EU destination countries and not aspiring to return to Ukraine at all. Stability and security are significant in shaping perceptions of the future amidst the backdrop of ongoing conflict and societal upheaval.

Table 4.6.12. Seeing one's and children's future positively by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Own future			Children's future			
	Yes	Don't know	No	Yes	Don't know	No	N
18–29 years old	31	43	26	29	52	19	42
30–45 years old	29	58	14	24	63	14	59
46– years old	50	38	13	31	56	13	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	27	54	19	24	62	14	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	59	27	14	41	41	18	22
Left in 2023	36	45	18	18	64	18	11
Left in 2024	0	83	17	17	67	17	6
Returned in 2022	37	46	16	31	57	12	67
Returned in 2023	23	54	23	21	54	26	39
Returned in 2024	36	55	9	18	82	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	25	51	24	18	63	20	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	43	57	0	43	57	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	37	47	15	32	54	14	59
Total	32	50	18	26	58	15	117

During the war, Ukraine had received substantial financial aid from abroad to military and civilian purposes. The largest donors have been the United States and Germany. Respondents' opinions about the need to increase foreign support to Ukraine varied. Of all respondents, 21% were on the opinion that foreign countries support for Ukraine is enough, 43% not make their minds about this topic and 37% saw that foreign support to Ukraine is not enough. Of those, who felt to be patriots in Ukraine, 14% opinioned that foreign support is sufficient while that share was 22% among those who did not consider themselves patriots or were not sure about it. Of those who lived in Western Ukraine, 22% opinioned that foreign support is sufficient while that

share was 18% among those in Central Ukraine and 14% in Eastern Ukraine. Of those respondents living more distant from the actual war frontline proportionally fewer felt the need for increase of foreign aid while that was not the case among those living closer to the front.

Nostalgy for Ukraine, particularly the longing for the landscape of their home region, emerged as a significant aspect of respondents' attachment to their homeland. A substantial majority of 72% acknowledged missing the landscape of their home region, indicating a deep-rooted connection to their physical surroundings in Ukraine (Table 4.6.13). This group's strong response reflects a more established sense of identity and connection to their place of origin coupled with memories tied to their formative years in Ukraine.

Respondents who had not been able to return to their original living situations more frequently reported a longing for their home region's landscape: 73% of those who could not go back to the same accommodation and 100% of those not returning to the same oblast, i.e. to their former home region. Likewise, all of those who left major/partial conflict areas and returned to limited conflict areas felt nostalgy toward one's home region landscape. The inability to return to familiar settings likely intensifies feelings of nostalgia and longing for the natural and built environments they associate with home. In addition, of those who left in 2023, all (100%) felt nostalgy towards their home region landscape as well as those who left from major/partial war conflict areas and returned to other areas. Of those, who both left and returned recently in 2024, proportionally lower share felt such nostalgy as they had been away from Ukraine only shortly.

Table 4.6.13. Nostalgy towards home region landscape by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Yes	Don't know	No	N
18–29 years old	67	17	17	42
30–45 years old	76	19	5	59
46– years old	69	13	19	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	73	14	13	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	59	32	9	22
Left in 2023	100	0	0	11
Left in 2024	50	33	17	6
Returned in 2022	75	12	13	67
Returned in 2023	69	21	10	39
Returned in 2024	64	36	0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	65	18	18	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	100	0	0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	75	19	7	59
Total	72	17	11	117

4.7 Respondents' Internet and social media uses during their journeys

Since the 2010s, the use of social media and more broadly the Internet have become common tools for communication, information searching and entertainment among people who have had to leave their country of origin due to war or other security-related reasons. The studies regarding the situation in the 2010s highlighted this as a novel phenomenon. Such forced migrants, who had not been users or avid users of these tools started to use digital tools increased during their journeys (Merisalo and Jauhiainen, 2020a, 2020b). In the 2020s, the use of social media and the Internet have become an integrated part of the everyday lives of forced migrants. This regards their situation before the leave their country of origin, during their journeys, in the refuge and also after returning to the country of origin. Such a full immersion of Ukrainians into digitally-mediated communication and information spheres is particular and clearly higher compared with forced migrants from non-European countries who came to reside in the EU (Merisalo and Jauhiainen, 2020a).

Almost all respondents were active users of social media and the Internet before they out-migrated (Table 4.7.1). In general, among respondents the frequency of social media uses was rather similar in the EU destination country as it was after respondents returned Ukraine (Table 4.7.1). Overall, almost everyone (94%) mentioned that they had a mobile phone with Internet connection when they were in the EU destination country (1% were not sure about it, 5% did not have it). In the EU, all (100%) respondents used social media, and 99% used there the Internet

Table 4.7.1. Frequency of social media use in the EU and after return to Ukraine by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Many times a day		Daily		Many times a week		Weekly		Never		
	in EU	/ after	in EU	/ after	in EU	/ after	in EU	/ after	in EU	/ after	N
18–29 years old	74	/ 71	21	/ 26	2	/ 2	2	/ 0	0	/ 0	42
30–45 years old	63	/ 54	37	/ 39	0	/ 5	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	59
46– years old	63	/ 50	19	/ 38	13	/ 6	0	/ 6	0	/ 0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	63	/ 54	32	/ 41	3	/ 3	1	/ 1	0	/ 0	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	73	/ 68	23	/ 18	5	/ 14	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	22
Left in 2023	64	/ 73	36	/ 27	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	11
Left in 2024	100	/ 83	0	/ 17	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	6
Returned in 2022	60	/ 60	34	/ 34	4	/ 4	1	/ 0	0	/ 0	67
Returned in 2023	72	/ 59	26	/ 36	0	/ 3	0	/ 3	0	/ 0	39
Returned in 2024	91	/ 64	9	/ 27	0	/ 9	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	76	/ 63	24	/ 33	0	/ 2	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	71	/ 71	14	/ 14	14	/ 14	0	/ 0	0	/ 0	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	58	/ 56	36	/ 37	3	/ 5	2	/ 2	0	/ 0	59
Total	67	/ 60	29	/ 34	3	/ 4	1	/ 1	0	/ 0	117

for other than social media purposes. After returning to Ukraine, all (100%) continued to use social media and 99% used the Internet for other than social media purposes. Daily users of social media were 96% of respondents in the EU and 94% after return in Ukraine and daily users of the Internet for other than social media purposes were 91% of respondents in the EU and even more (98%) after return to Ukraine. Slightly less used social media in the EU destination country middle-aged (46–60 years old) respondents but also 93% of them at least once a day. In the EU destination country, 67% used social media on average many times a day. Those who left in 2024 and returned in 2024 were the most frequent users.

Very many (86%) used social media in the EU host country to get information and new about Ukraine and 76% for being contact with family members (the latter was 87% in post-return Ukraine). Of respondents in the EU host country, 74% used it also to socialize, and this share was 9 percent units less in post-return Ukraine. In the EU host country, compared with the post-return Ukraine, the use of social media was more frequent for entertainment (69% vs. 55%), work or education (69% vs. 55%) and to get information about other countries (55% vs. 49%) (Table 4.7.2).

Older respondents used in the EU social media proportionally more to get information about Ukraine than younger respondents as they did also regarding getting information about other countries. On the contrary, younger respondents tended to use it more for entertainment than older respondents did. The later one left Ukraine, the less one used social media to get information about other countries than Ukraine (Table 4.7.2).

After return to Ukraine, 62% used social media on average many times a day. The most active users were those who left Ukraine in 2024, returned to Ukraine in 2024, were under 30 years old and those who lived in limited conflict areas before and after return.

After return to Ukraine, of respondents, 69% mentioned that social media helped them with their everyday lives in Ukraine (21% did not know, 10% disagreed with this). Of those, who used social media many times a day, 80% responded that its use helped them while this was for 53% of those who did not use it many times a day. Very many respondents used it for being contact with family members (87% of them) or to get information and news about Ukraine (85% of them) (Table 4.7.2).

In the EU, respondents' most common social media platforms were Telegram (83%). That was followed by Instagram (79%), Viber (73%), YouTube (65%), Facebook (62%). Fewer respondents used WhatsApp (45%), Facebook Messenger (43%) and TikTok (43%). Clearly fewer respondents used Signal (13%), X (9%), Skype (9%), LinkedIn (6%) and Snapchat (2%). No one of respondents mentioned to use VKontakte or Odnaklassiki. Facebook was more common among older respondents, and all of 46–60 years old respondents used it compared with the youngest respondents of whom 40% of 18–29 years old used it (Table 4.7.3).

Table 4.7.2. Purposes of social media use in the EU and after return to Ukraine by Ukrainian survey respondents (%).

	Stay connected with family	information about Ukraine	information about other countries	Work or education	Entertainment	To socialize	
	EU / Ukr	EU / Ukr	EU / Ukr	EU / Ukr	EU / Ukr	EU / Ukr	N
18–29 years old	71 / 81	79 / 81	45 / 45	64 / 64	83 / 76	76 / 71	42
30–45 years old	85 / 93	90 / 85	58 / 46	71 / 42	63 / 41	73 / 59	59
46– years old	69 / 81	94 / 94	69 / 69	63 / 31	56 / 50	75 / 69	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	76 / 86	87 / 87	60 / 51	68 / 49	71 / 56	72 / 67	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	82 / 91	86 / 86	50 / 45	68 / 41	64 / 36	73 / 50	22
Left in 2023	82 / 91	91 / 82	45 / 45	73 / 64	64 / 64	100 / 73	11
Left in 2024	83 / 83	67 / 50	17 / 33	50 / 50	83 / 83	67 / 83	6
Returned in 2022	75 / 87	85 / 81	60 / 49	64 / 42	67 / 49	70 / 63	67
Returned in 2023	82 / 90	90 / 92	44 / 41	72 / 54	72 / 59	77 / 67	39
Returned in 2024	82 / 82	82 / 82	64 / 73	73 / 73	73 / 73	91 / 73	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	76 / 80	86 / 92	59 / 55	71 / 51	73 / 55	76 / 61	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	86 / 100	100 / 86	57 / 43	71 / 43	71 / 29	71 / 43	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	78 / 92	85 / 78	51 / 44	64 / 47	66 / 58	73 / 71	59
Total	78 / 87	86 / 85	55 / 49	68 / 49	69 / 55	74 / 65	117

Table 4.7.3. Social media application usage by Ukrainian survey respondents after return to Ukraine and in the EU destination country (%).

	Telegram	Instagram	Viber	Facebook	Whatsapp	Youtube	Tiktok	
	Ukr / EU	Ukr / EU	Ukr / EU	Ukr / EU	Ukr / EU	Ukr / EU	Ukr / EU	N
18–29 years old	93 / 93	90 / 90	57 / 55	33 / 40	24 / 33	76 / 76	71 / 79	42
30–45 years old	93 / 81	88 / 83	81 / 83	86 / 76	69 / 59	75 / 61	41 / 29	59
46– years old	69 / 63	44 / 38	88 / 88	69 / 63	38 / 25	69 / 63	0 / 0	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	95 / 85	86 / 78	74 / 76	64 / 58	51 / 47	71 / 63	45 / 38	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	73 / 73	73 / 86	68 / 59	73 / 73	50 / 41	95 / 86	50 / 55	22
Left in 2023	91 / 91	82 / 73	91 / 91	73 / 82	45 / 36	55 / 45	55 / 45	11
Left in 2024	83 / 83	83 / 83	50 / 67	33 / 33	17 / 50	83 / 83	33 / 50	6
Returned in 2022	87 / 76	84 / 79	75 / 70	64 / 61	54 / 48	78 / 72	46 / 42	67
Returned in 2023	95 / 92	82 / 82	79 / 85	67 / 64	46 / 44	67 / 59	54 / 46	39
Returned in 2024	91 / 91	82 / 73	45 / 55	64 / 55	27 / 36	82 / 64	18 / 36	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	96 / 90	86 / 82	65 / 67	65 / 59	51 / 57	76 / 67	41 / 33	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	86 / 86	86 / 86	71 / 57	29 / 29	29 / 14	86 / 86	57 / 57	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	85 / 76	80 / 76	81 / 81	69 / 68	49 / 39	71 / 64	49 / 49	59
Total	90 / 83	83 / 79	74 / 74	65 / 62	49 / 45	74 / 67	46 / 43	117

After returning to Ukraine, in general, the most common social media platforms used by respondents were Telegram (90%, used by 7 percent units more that in the EU host country), Instagram (83%, 4 percent units more), Viber (74%, the same share), YouTube (74%, 7 percent units more), Facebook (65%, 3 percent units more). Fewer respondents used TikTok (49%, 6 percent units more), WhatsApp (49%, 4 percent units more), and Facebook Messenger (44%, 1 per cent unit more). Clearly fewer respondents used Signal (17%, 4 percent units more), LinkedIn (12%, 6 percent units more), X (11%, 2 percent units more), Skype (7%, 2 percent units less) and Snapchat (2%, the same use frequency). No one of respondents mentioned to use VKontakte or Odnaklassniki (Table 4.7.3).

There were differences in the social media application uses. Telegram was very popular among those who both left and returned to major/partial conflict areas as well as among those who left in 2023. The older respondent group were less frequent users of Telegram though also among them the majority used it. For older respondents, Viber was the most popular application whereas among youngest respondents it was used clearly less. Facebook was the most common among middle-aged (30–45 years old) respondents and TikTok among younger respondents below 30 years of age.

After returning Ukraine, 15% of respondents used the Internet to search for accommodation and work opportunities in the EU, 25% did not know how to answer this, and 60% disagreed with this. Those proportionally most frequent users of the Internet for this purpose were those who had left Ukraine in April–December 2022 (27%). Of those who left in 2023 or 2024 and returned recently in 2024, very few used the Internet to search accommodation or work opportunities in the EU (Table 4.7.4).

Table 4.7.4. Respondents' searching the internet about accommodation and work in the EU (%).

	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	N
18–29 years old	14	36	50	42
30–45 years old	15	20	64	59
46– years old	19	13	69	16
Left in Feb–Mar 2022	14	26	60	78
Left in Apr–Dec 2022	27	32	41	22
Left in 2023	9	18	73	11
Left in 2024	0	0	100	6
Returned in 2022	15	25	60	67
Returned in 2023	18	26	56	39
Returned in 2024	9	18	73	11
Major or partial conflict area before AND after out-migration	14	20	67	51
Major or partial conflict area before OR after out-migration	29	14	57	7
Limited conflict area before and after out-migration	15	31	54	59
Total	15	25	60	117

5. Conclusions

The mass exodus of Ukrainians following the Russian military invasion in February 2022 marks a significant migration event in post-Second World War Europe, driving millions from their homes. Many sought refuge abroad, yet a notable number have returned to Ukraine despite the ongoing conflict. This cycle of out-migration and subsequent return migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that deserves comprehensive analysis from academic and social viewpoints. Particularly, the experiences of Ukrainians within the EU contrast with earlier studies on forced migration, necessitating detailed examination from both scholarly angles and the migrants' own perspectives.

This report focuses on Ukrainian return migrants, specifically those who fled after the military invasion escalated in February 2022, spent several months in the EU, and then returned to Ukraine by the spring of 2024. It explores their conditions in Ukraine before departure, their reasons for leaving, the EU countries they chose as destinations, their adaptation to life in these host countries, and the process of their reintegration upon their return to Ukraine. The findings are based on responses from surveys and detailed interviews with the migrants, offering direct insights into their experiences and challenges.

Although the migration of Ukrainians to the EU and their return might appear to be a straightforward process, the reality is far more complex. The timing of their departure, the locations where they stayed in the EU, and their daily activities while in exile varied significantly. Return migration involves not only the physical return to their homeland and often to the exact locations from which they originally left, but also the sustained use of social media and the Internet throughout their journeys.

Despite leaving Ukraine, migrants maintained constant contact with their home country and the people there. Nearly all respondents reported daily use of social media to keep in touch with family and friends back home and to stay informed about the situation in Ukraine. Upon returning, many continued these communications, keeping in touch with connections in the EU or other countries. This ongoing interaction has helped maintain social ties, opened up potential job opportunities in Ukraine, and sometimes prompted thoughts of migrating back to the EU. Exposure to new cultures while abroad introduced return migrants to new practices, and continuing these practices and communications has given them a transnational identity.

To support Ukrainians in exile and manage the large-scale migration to the EU, the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) was implemented. This directive provided temporary protection and assistance in areas such as housing, employment, education, healthcare, and other social services. Satisfaction levels with these services varied: over half of the respondents were fully satisfied with their accommodation, though satisfaction with employment and healthcare was low-

er. Specifically, 56% were fully satisfied with their housing, 34% partly satisfied, and 9% dissatisfied. Employment satisfaction was lower, with 27% fully satisfied, 50% partly satisfied, and 23% unsatisfied. Education, especially for children, saw 33% fully satisfied, 49% partly satisfied, and 18% unsatisfied. Healthcare received the most critical feedback, with only 22% fully satisfied, 53% partly satisfied, and 25% unsatisfied. For other social services under the TPD, 41% were satisfied, 44% partly satisfied, and 15% unsatisfied.

War has a profound impact on societies and individuals. The massive Russian invasion in February 2022, on top of nearly a decade of conflict in Ukraine since the annexation of Crimea and the fighting in Eastern Ukraine, has been deeply felt. Despite this, return migrants have shown reasonable satisfaction with their lives, though full satisfaction dropped from 59% pre-migration to 39% in the EU and 21% after returning. Mental health satisfaction also notably declined during the war.

Despite the ongoing conflict, 64% of Ukrainian return migrant respondents intend to stay in Ukraine for life, and 54% do not consider leaving again even if the conflict persists. However, 17% indicated they might leave if Ukraine becomes unsafe, particularly for the sake of their children, underscoring the complex interplay of structural and personal factors that could influence future migration decisions.

The dynamics of out-migration and return migration offer numerous research opportunities crucial for understanding the broader impacts of migration on individuals and societies. A critical area of study is the reintegration of families separated by migration. Examining how these families rebuild their lives together in Ukraine, amid the pressures of war and separation, can yield valuable insights into the emotional and practical challenges of reestablishing familial ties and the possibilities for overcoming these obstacles.

The experiences of returned Ukrainian children warrant special focus. Children often quickly adapt to new environments, forging friendships and learning new languages. Investigating the difficulties they encounter when they return to Ukraine—such as leaving behind friends and reintegrating into their native social contexts—could illuminate key aspects of child migration. Additionally, the role of social media in sustaining international friendships and the long-term effects of these relationships are significant areas for further research. Another important aspect is the impact of digitally-mediated communication. Analyzing how communication between Ukrainians who temporarily lived in the EU and those who stayed in Ukraine during the conflict affected their everyday lives and influenced their decision to return could offer deeper understanding of the emotional and logistical challenges of maintaining long-distance relationships during tumultuous times, both in exile and upon return to their homeland.

Questions emerge about whether the friendships and contacts developed abroad could act as conduits for enhancing economic and social ties between Ukraine and EU member states, potentially aiding Ukraine's future integration into the EU. Another area of study concerns the impact of transnational practices. Many Ukrainians were exposed to new customs and behaviors while abroad, some of which they have reintroduced into their communities in Ukraine. Researching whether these adopted practices will endure and drive societal changes within Ukrainian communities, or whether they will fade, provides a crucial perspective on cultural integration and adaptation.

From a societal standpoint, understanding the needs of Ukrainian return migrants is essential for bolstering support systems within Ukraine. Though return migration is often voluntary, adapting to a society disrupted by war presents significant obstacles. Investigating these challenges is key to developing effective interventions that support the reintegration of returnees. The ability of these migrants to resettle permanently and contribute to Ukraine's recovery highlights the need for targeted support aimed at their sustainable economic and social development. A comprehensive study of return migration not only helps in shaping better policy responses but also in building a resilient and prosperous post-war Ukrainian society.

Exploring and understanding individual return migrants' experiences and requirements provide insights into the factors that facilitate their successful reintegration. A scholarly approach would involve a systematic analysis of how these factors influence migrants' decisions to remain permanently and contribute to Ukraine's recovery. This research is essential for understanding the dynamics of sustainable economic and social development in post-conflict settings. The findings could inform targeted interventions aimed at ensuring that return migrants are not only supported in their transition but are also motivated to invest in the long-term resilience and prosperity of their communities and contribute to Ukraine's recovery and sustainable economic and social development.

6. References

Aksoy, C., Poutvaara, P. and Schikora, F. (2023). First time around: Local conditions and multi-dimensional integration of refugees. *Journal of Urban Economics* 137, 103588.

Arenas, N. (2005). The concept of 'mass influx of displaced people' in the European directive establishing the temporary protection system. *European Journal of Migration and Law* 7, 435–450.

Azose, J. and Raftery, A. (2019). Estimation of emigration, return migration, and transit migration between all pairs of countries. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, 116–122. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1722334116

Battistella, G. (2018). *Return Migration: A Conceptual and Policy Framework*. Rome: Scalabrini Migration Center.

BBC News (2022). Ukraine conflict: Russian forces attack from three sides. *BBC News* 24 February 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60503037 Ukraina

BBC News (2022b). How many Ukrainian refugees are there and where have they gone? *BBC News* 4 July 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472

Bilecen, T. (2022). To stay or to return? A review on return migration literature. *Migration Letters* 19 (4), 367–385. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v19i4.2092

Bilgili, Ö. (2022). Return and transnationalism. In King, R. and Kuschminder, K. (eds) *Handbook of Return Migration*, 38–52. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839100055.00011

Bossavie, L. and Özden, Ç. (2023). Impacts of temporary migration on development in origin countries. *The World Bank Research Observer* 38, 249–294 https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkad003

Brell, C., Dustmann, C. and Preston, I. (2020). The labor market integration of refugee migrants in high-income countries. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 34 (1), 94–121.

Carling, J. and Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. In Collins, F. and Carling, J. (eds) *Aspiration, Desire and the Drivers of Migration*. London: Routledge.

Cassarino, J. (2004). Theorising return migration: The conceptual approach to return migrants revisited. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 6 (2), 253–279.

Cassarino, J. (2008). The conditions of modern return migrants—editorial introduction. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 10 (2), 95–105.

Erdal, M. (2017). Timespaces of return migration: the interplay of everyday practices and imaginaries of return in transnational social fields. In Mavroudi, E., Page, B. and Christou, A. (eds) *Timespace and International Migration*, 104–118. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Erdal, M. and Oeppen, C. (2022). Theorising voluntariness in return. In King, R. and Kuschminder, K. (eds) *Handbook of Return Migration*, 70–83. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

European Commission (2022). Temporary protection. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en

European Council (2001). The Council Directive 2001/55/EC.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L. and Szanton Blanc, C. (1995). From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration. *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1), 48–63. https://doi.org/10.2307/3317464

Hagan, J. and Wassink, L. (2020). Return migration around the world: An integrated agenda for future research. *Annual Review of Sociology* 46, 533–552. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-120319-015855

IOM = International Organization for Migration (2021). *World Migration Report 2022*. https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022

IOM = International Organization for Migration (2024). Ukraine Returns Report. General Population Survey Round 16, April 2024. https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/GPS_R16_returns_April2024.pdf

Jauhiainen, J., Eichholz, L. and Spellerberg, A. (2019). Asylum-related migrants in Germany, 2019. The case of Rhineland-Palatine and Kaiserslautern. *Publications of the Department of Geography and Geology at the University of Turku* 13.

Jauhiainen, J. and Erbsen, H. (2022). Multi-level governance in the temporal protection and integration of Ukrainians within the European Union: the case of Estonia. *Journal of European Integration* 45 (3), 415–430.

King, R. and K. Kuschminder (2022). Introduction: Definitions, typologies and theories of return migration. In King, R. and Kuschminder, K. (eds) *Handbook of Return Migration*, 1–23. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839100055.00008

Koser, K. and Kuschminder, K. (2015). *Comparative Research on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Migrants*. Geneva: IOM.

Kuschminder, K. (2017). *Reintegration Strategies: Conceptualizing How Return Migrants Reintegrate*. London: Palgrave Macmillian. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-55741-0

Lietaert, I. and Kuschminder, K. (2021). Contextualizing and conceptualizing reintegration processes in the context of return. *International Migration* 59 (2), 140–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12830

Markowitz, F. and Stefansson, A. (2004). *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return*. Oxford: Lexington Books.

Merisalo, M. and Jauhiainen, J. (2020a). Digital divides and the Internet use among asylum-related migrants: Comparing Internet use and smartphone ownership. *Tijdschift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 111 (5), 689–704.

Merisalo, M. and Jauhiainen, J. (2020b). Asylum-related migrants' social media use, mobility decisions, and resilience. *Journal of Immigrants and Refugee Studies* 19 (2), 184–198.

Metivier, S., Stefanovic, D. and Loizides, N. (2018). Struggling for and within the community: What leads Bosnian forced migrants to desire community return? *Ethnopolitics* 17 (2), 147–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2017.1349636

Motte-Baumvol, J., Mont'Alverne, T. and Braga Guimarães, G. (2022). Extending social protection for migrants under the European Union's temporary protection directive: Lessons from the war in Ukraine. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4096325

Neuer Zürcher Zeitung (2022). *Interactive map: How the Ukraine war is developing, day by day*. https://www.nzz.ch/english/interactive-map-how-the-ukraine-war-is-developing-day-by-day-ld.168808

Sauer, P. (2024). Ukraine military draft age lowered to boost fighting force. *Guardian* 3 April 2024. theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/03/ukraine-military-draft-lawStefanovic and Loizides 2015

Tedeschi, M., Vorobeva, E. and Jauhiainen, J. (2022). Transnationalism: current debates and new perspectives. *GeoJournal* 87, 603–619. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10271-8

UN News (2022). Ukrainian refugees arrive in Poland 'in a state of distress and anxiety'. *UN News* 27 May 2022.https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1119172

UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022). *Ukraine Refugee Situation*. https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94366

UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022b). *Ukraine Refugee Situation*. https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2024). *Ukraine Refugee Situation*. https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

United Nations Security Council (2022). Russian Federation announces 'special military operation' in Ukraine as Security Council meets in eleventh-hour effort to avoid full-scale conflict. *SC*/14803 8974th meeting (night) 23 February 2022

United Nations (2024). *Ukraine Refugee Situation*. https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

Van Meeteren, M., Engbersen, G., Snel, E. and Faber, M. (2014). Understanding different post-return experiences. *Comparative Migration Studies* 2 (3), 335–360. https://doi.org/10.5117/CMS2014.3.MEET

Vathi, Z., and King, R. (2017). *Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing: Discourses, Policy-making and Outcomes for Migrants and Their Families*. London: Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315619613

Vorobeva, E. and Jauhiainen, J. (2023). Transnationalism and belonging: National identity negotiations and their outcomes. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49 (13), 3389–3408. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2184293

Yeo, J. and Pysmenna, O. (2024). Lives on hold between the European Union and Ukraine:

Ukrainian migrants' return before and after the war. In Yeo, J. (eds) *Return Migration and Crises in Non-Western Countries,* 103–119. Berlin: Springer.

Zakirova, K. and Buzurukov, B. (2021). The road back home is never long: Refugee return migration. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34 (4), 4456–4478. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab026

7. Return migration of Ukrainians from the EU to Ukraine, 2022–2024

Prof. Jussi S. Jauhiainen (jusaja@utu.fi) with Dr. Olha Mamchur and Dr. Mart Reimann

Summary in English

The study titled "Return Migration of Ukrainians from the European Union to Ukraine, 2022–2024" examines the migration trends, daily lives, and future aspirations of adult Ukrainians who returned to their homeland after fleeing due to Russia's large-scale military invasion that began on February 24, 2022, and who remained in an EU member state before returning to Ukraine.

As of spring 2024, the United Nations reports that 7 to 9 million Ukrainians had fled their country, with millions resettling in EU member states under the Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC). This allowed them access to housing, jobs, education, healthcare, and other services. By spring 2024, 5.5 million Ukrainians resided in the EU, but 1 to 2 million had returned to Ukraine despite ongoing war.

This report focuses specifically on these return migrants. Primary data was collected through field research conducted in Ukraine from March to June 2024, utilizing surveys and interviews. A total of 117 return migrants responded to the survey, and 10 thematic interviews were conducted

The findings highlight varied migration patterns of the respondents: some migrants left Ukraine immediately after the hostilities commenced, while others left later, continuing into 2024. Common destinations included most of the EU member states, Poland and Germany being the most common destinations. Some migrants returned within months, particularly in autumn 2022, following Ukrainian military successes, while others spent more than two years in the EU. Migration had both voluntary and forced elements. Frequent contact with Ukraine was maintained through social media throughout their migration, and 32% visited Ukraine personally during their stay in the EU. Interviews indicated the details of challenging migration journeys and the desire to return.

Despite the ongoing war, return migrants reported reasonable satisfaction with their lives, although full satisfaction levels significantly decreased from 59% pre-migration to 39% while in the EU, and to 21% after returning to Ukraine. Mental health satisfaction also notably declined during the war. Declining satisfaction poses challenges to their successful reintegration to Ukraine.

In the EU, respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the provisions of the Temporary Protection Directive: 56% were fully satisfied and 34% partly satisfied with their accommodation, while 9% were unsatisfied; 27% were fully satisfied and 50% partly satisfied with employment, with 23% unsatisfied;

33% were fully satisfied and 49% partly satisfied with education, with 18% unsatisfied; 22% were fully satisfied and 53% partly satisfied with healthcare, with 25% unsatisfied; and 41% were fully satisfied and 44% partly satisfied with other social services, with 15% unsatisfied.

Of respondents, 64% think to stay in Ukraine permanently, 54% do not aspire onward migration from Ukraine despite the ongoing war, and 17% aspire to leave if it will not be safe anymore in Ukraine. Further research on the needs and perspectives of Ukrainian return migrants is essential for their successful reintegration and to support Ukraine's recovery and sustainable economic and social development.

8. Зворотна міграція українців з ЄС в Україну, 2022–2024 роки

Проф. Юссі С. Яухіайнен (jusaja@utu.fi) з д-ром Ольгою Мамчур та д-ром Мартом Рейманом

Резюме українською мовою

У дослідженні "Зворотна міграція українців з Європейського Союзу в Україну, 2022-2024 рр." розглядаються міграційні тенденції, повсякденне життя та майбутні прагнення повнолітніх українців, які повернулися на батьківщину після того, як вони покинули Україну через широкомасштабне військове вторгнення Росії, що розпочалося 24 лютого 2022 року, і які перебували в одній з країн-членів ЄС до повернення в Україну.

Станом на весну 2024 року, за даними Організації Об'єднаних Націй, від 7 до 9 мільйонів українців покинули свою країну, мільйони з них оселилися в країнах-членах ЄС відповідно до Директиви про тимчасовий захист (Директива Ради 2001/55/ ЕС). Це дозволило їм отримати доступ до житла, роботи, освіти, охорони здоров'я та інших послуг. Станом на весну 2024 року в ЄС проживало 5,5 мільйона українців, але 1-2 мільйони осіб повернулися в Україну, незважаючи на війну, що досі триває.

Цей звіт фокусовано саме на тих мігрантах, які повертаються. Первинні дані були зібрані під час польового дослідження, проведеного в Україні з березня по червень 2024 року, з використанням опитувань та інтерв'ю. Загалом, в опитуванні взяли участь близько 117 мігрантів, які повернулися, також проведено 10 тематичних інтерв'ю.

Отримані дані свідчать про різні моделі міграції респондентів: одні мігранти виїхали з України одразу після початку бойових дій, тоді, як інші виїхали пізніше, продовжуючи виїжджати у 2024 році. Найпоширенішими напрямками міграції були більшість країн-членів ЄС, особливо, Польща та Німеччина. Деякі мігранти повернулися за кілька місяців, зокрема восени 2022 року, після військових успіхів України, тоді як інші провели в ЄС понад два роки. Міграція мала як добровільні, так і примусові елементи.

Протягом усієї міграції вони підтримували часті контакти з Україною через соціальні мережі, а 32% особисто відвідали Україну під час перебування в ЄС. Інтерв'ю показали деталі складних міграційних подорожей і бажання повернутися.

Незважаючи на війну, що триває, мігранти, які повернулися, повідомили про достатню задоволеність своїм життям, хоча рівень повної задоволеності значно знизився з 59% перед міграцією до 39% під час перебування в ЄС і до 21% після повернення в Україну. Задоволеність психічним здоров'ям також

помітно знизилася під час війни. Зниження задоволеності створює виклики для їхньої успішної реінтеграції в Україні.

В ЄС респонденти висловили високий рівень задоволеності положеннями Директиви про тимчасовий захист: 56% були повністю задоволені і 34% частково задоволені своїм житлом, тоді як 9% були незадоволені; 27% були повністю задоволені і 50% частково задоволені працевлаштуванням, 23% незадоволені; 33% були повністю задоволені і 49% частково задоволені освітою, 18% незадоволені; 22% були повністю задоволені і 53% частково задоволені охороною здоров'я, 25% незадоволені; і 41% були повністю задоволені і 44% частково задоволені іншими соціальними послугами, 15% незадоволені.

Серед респондентів 63% планують залишитися в Україні назавжди, 54% не планують мігрувати з України, незважаючи на триваючу війну, а 17% планують виїхати, якщо в Україні більше не буде безпечно. Подальші дослідження потреб і перспектив українських мігрантів, які повертаються, є важливими для їхньої успішної реінтеграції, а також для підтримки відновлення України та її сталого економічного і соціального розвитку.

9. Migracja powrotna Ukraińców z UE na Ukrainę, 2022–2024

Prof. Jussi S. Jauhiainen (jusaja@utu.fi), dr Olha Mamchur, dr Mart Reimann

Streszczenie w języku polskim

W badaniu zatytułowanym „Migracja powrotna Ukraińców z Unii Europejskiej na Ukrainę w latach 2022–2024" zbadano trendy migracyjne, życie codzienne i przyszłe aspiracje dorosłych Ukraińców, którzy powrócili do ojczyzny z krajów UE po wcześniejszym wyjeździe spowodowanym rozpoczęciem pełnoskalowej inwazji rosyjskiej 24 lutego 2022 roku. Według ONZ na wiosnę 2024 od 7 do 9 mln Ukraińców opuściło swój kraj, a miliony osiedliły się w państwach członkowskich UE na mocy dyrektywy w sprawie tymczasowej ochrony (dyrektywa Rady 2001/55/WE). Zapewniła ona dostęp do mieszkań, pracy, edukacji, opieki zdrowotnej i innych usług. Do wiosny 2024 r. w UE przebywało 5,5 mln Ukraińców, ale pomimo trwającej wojny od 1 do 2 mln wróciło na Ukrainę.

W niniejszym raporcie skupiono się szczególnie na migrantach powracających. Dane pierwotne zebrano w ramach badań terenowych przeprowadzonych na Ukrainie w okresie od marca do czerwca 2024 r. z wykorzystaniem ankiet i wywiadów. W ankiecie wzięło udział łącznie 117 migrantów powrotnych i przeprowadzono 10 wywiadów tematycznych.

Wyniki podkreślają zróżnicowane wzorce migracji respondentów: część migrantów opuściła Ukrainę natychmiast po rozpoczęciu działań wojennych, a część później, aż do 2024 r. Wspólne kierunki migracji obejmowały większość państw członkowskich UE, przy czym najczęstszymi celami były Polska i Niemcy. Część migrantów powróciła w ciągu kilku miesięcy, szczególnie jesienią 2022 r., po sukcesach militarnych Ukrainy, inni zaś spędzili w UE ponad dwa lata. Migracja miała zarówno elementy dobrowolne, jak i wymuszone. Przez cały okres migracji utrzymywano częsty kontakt z Ukrainą za pośrednictwem mediów społecznościowych, a 32% odwiedziło Ukrainę osobiście podczas pobytu w UE. W wywiadach omówiono szczegóły trudnych podróży migracyjnych i chęci powrotu.

Pomimo trwającej wojny migranci powrotni wyrażali względne zadowolenie ze swojego życia, chociaż poziom pełnego zadowolenia znacznie spadł z 59% przed migracją, do 39% w UE i do 21% po powrocie na Ukrainę. Zadowolenie ze zdrowia psychicznego również znacznie spadło podczas wojny. Malejące zadowolenie stanowi wyzwanie dla ich pomyślnej reintegracji na Ukrainie.

Respondenci wyrażali wysoki poziom zadowolenia z przepisów dyrektywy o ochronie tymczasowej gdy mieszkali w UE: 56% było nimi w pełni usatysfakcjonowanych, a 34% częściowo zadowolonych ze swojego zakwaterowania, a 9% było niezadowolonych; 27% było w pełni zadowolonych, 50% częściowo zadowolonych z pracy, a 23% niezadowolonych. 33% było częściowo zadowolonych, a 49% w pełni zadowolony z możliwości edukacyjnych. Niezadowolonych było 18%. Jeśli chodzi o dostęp do usług

medycznych 22% było w pełni usatysfakcjonowanych, 53% częściowo zadowolonych, a 25% niezadowolonych. 41% było w pełni usatysfakcjonowanych, a 44% częściowo zadowolonych z innych usług społecznych, a 15% było niezadowolonych.

Spośród respondentów 63% uważa, że pozostanie na Ukrainie na stałe, 54% nie aspiruje do dalszej migracji z Ukrainy pomimo trwającej wojny, a 17% pragnie wyjazdu, jeśli na Ukrainie nie będzie już bezpiecznie. Dalsze badania nad potrzebami i perspektywami ukraińskich migrantów powrotnych są niezbędne dla ich pomyślnej reintegracji oraz wsparcia ożywienia gospodarczego Ukrainy i zrównoważonego rozwoju gospodarczego i społecznego.

10. Rückwanderung von Ukrainern aus der EU in die Ukraine, 2022–2024

Prof. Dr. Jussi S. Jauhiainen (jusaja@utu.fi) mit Dr. Olha Mamchur und Dr. Mart Reimann

Zusammenfassung des Berichts auf Deutsch

Die Studie mit dem Titel „Rückwanderung von Ukrainern aus der EU in die Ukraine, 2022–2024“ untersucht die Migrationstrends, den Alltag und die Zukunftswünsche erwachsener Ukrainer, die sich nach ihrer Flucht aufgrund der am 24. Februar 2022 begonnenen groß angelegten militärischen Invasion Russlands und vor ihrer Rückkehr in ihr Heimatland in einem EU-Mitgliedstaat aufgehalten haben.

Im Frühjahr 2024 waren nach Angaben der Vereinten Nationen 7 bis 9 Millionen Ukrainer aus ihrem Land geflohen, von denen Millionen im Rahmen der Richtlinie über vorübergehenden Schutz (Richtlinie 2001/55/EG des Rates) in EU-Mitgliedstaaten umgesiedelt wurden. Dies ermöglichte ihnen den Zugang zu Wohnraum, Arbeitsplätzen, Bildung, Gesundheitsversorgung und anderen Dienstleistungen. Im Frühjahr 2024 lebten 5,5 Millionen Ukrainer in der EU, aber 1 bis 2 Millionen kehrten trotz des anhaltenden Krieges in die Ukraine zurück.

Dieser Bericht konzentriert sich speziell auf diese Rückkehrer. Primärdaten wurden durch Feldforschung in der Ukraine von März bis Juni 2024 mit Hilfe von Umfragen und Interviews erhoben. Insgesamt nahmen 117 Rückkehrer an der Umfrage teil, und es wurden 10 thematische Interviews geführt.

Die Ergebnisse verdeutlichen die unterschiedlichen Migrationsmuster der Befragten: Einige Migranten verließen die Ukraine unmittelbar nach Beginn der Feindseligkeiten, während andere die Ukraine später - bis ins Jahr 2024 hinein- verließen. Zu den gemeinsamen Zielen gehörten die meisten EU-Mitgliedstaaten, wobei Polen und Deutschland die häufigsten Ziele waren. Einige Migranten kehrten innerhalb weniger Monate, insbesondere im Herbst 2022, nach den ukrainischen militärischen Erfolgen zurück, während andere mehr als zwei Jahre in der EU verbrachten. Die Migration war sowohl freiwillig als auch erzwungen. Während der gesamten Migration wurde über soziale Medien häufig Kontakt zur Ukraine gehalten, und 32% besuchten die Ukraine während ihres Aufenthalts in der EU persönlich.

Trotz des andauernden Krieges berichteten die zurückgekehrten Migranten von einer angemessenen Zufriedenheit mit ihrem Leben, auch wenn die vollständige Zufriedenheit von 59% vor der Migration auf 39% während des Aufenthalts in der EU und auf 21% nach der Rückkehr in die Ukraine deutlich zurückging. Auch die Zufriedenheit mit der psychischen Gesundheit ging während des

Krieges deutlich zurück. Die sinkende Zufriedenheit stellt eine Herausforderung für die erfolgreiche Wiedereingliederung in die Ukraine dar.

In der EU äußerten sich die Befragten sehr zufrieden mit den Bestimmungen der Richtlinie über vorübergehenden Schutz: 56% waren voll und ganz und 34% teilweise zufrieden mit ihrer Unterkunft, während 9% unzufrieden waren; 27% waren voll und ganz und 50% teilweise zufrieden mit der Beschäftigung, während 23% unzufrieden waren; 33% waren voll und ganz und 49% teilweise zufrieden mit der Bildung, während 18% unzufrieden waren; 22% waren voll und ganz und 53% teilweise zufrieden mit der Gesundheitsversorgung, während 25% unzufrieden waren; und 41% waren voll und ganz und 44% teilweise zufrieden mit anderen sozialen Dienstleistungen, während 15% unzufrieden waren.

Von den Befragten wollen 63% dauerhaft in der Ukraine bleiben, 54% streben trotz des anhaltenden Krieges keine Weiterwanderung aus der Ukraine an, und 17% wollen die Ukraine verlassen, wenn es dort nicht mehr sicher ist. Weitere Forschungen zu den Bedürfnissen und Perspektiven ukrainischer Rückkehrer sind für ihre erfolgreiche Wiedereingliederung und zur Unterstützung der Erholung der Ukraine und einer nachhaltigen wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Entwicklung unerlässlich.

11. Ukrainalaisten paluumuutto EU:sta Ukrainaan 2022–2024

Prof. Jussi S. Jauhiainen (jusaja@utu.fi) sekä Dr. Olha Mamchur ja Dr. Mart Reimann

Tiivistelmä suomeksi

Tutkimus “Ukrainalaisten paluumuutto EU:sta Ukrainaan 2022–2024” tarkastelee aikuisten ukrainalaisten muuttoliikkeitä, päivittäistä elämää ja tulevaisuuden toiveita. Tutkimukseen tarkempana kohteena ovat ukrainalaiset paluumuuttajat eli henkilöt, jotka pakenivat Ukrainasta kun Venäjä hyökkäsi sinne 24. helmikuuta 2022, jotka oleskelivat myöhemmin EU:n jäsenvaltiossa ja jotka palasivat Ukrainaan niin, että he asuivat siellä keväällä 2024.

Keväällä 2024 YK:n raporttien mukaan 7–9 miljoonaa ukrainalaista oli paennut maastaan, ja miljoonat olivat asettuneet EU jäsenvaltioihin Väliaikaisen suojelun direktiivin (neuvoston direktiivi 2001/55/EY) turvin. Tämä mahdollisti heille pääsyn asuntoihin, työpaikkoihin, koulutukseen, terveydenhuoltoon ja muihin palveluihin. Keväällä 2024 3,5 miljoonaa ukrainalaista asui EU:ssa, mutta 1–2 miljoonaa oli palannut Ukrainaan sodasta huolimatta.

Tämä raportti keskittyy näihin paluumuuttajiin. Tiedot kerättiin kenttätutkimuksen avulla kyselyillä ja haastatteluilla Ukrainassa maaliskuusta kesäkuuhun 2024. Kyselyyn vastasi yhteensä 117 paluumuuttajaa, ja 10 teemahaastattelua tehtiin paluumuuttajille.

Tulokset osoittavat vastaajien vaihtelevia muuttopolkuja: jotkut lähtivät Ukrainasta heti sodan alettua, kun taas toiset lähtivät myöhemmin, aina vuoteen 2024 asti. Vastaajia sijoittui useimpiin EU jäsenvaltioihin, joista eniten Puolaan ja Saksaan. Jotkut palasivat muutama kuukausi lähdön jälkeen, erityisesti syksyllä 2022 ukrainalaisten sotilasmenestysten jälkeen. Toiset viettivät yli kaksi vuotta EU:ssa. Muuttoliike sisälsi sekä vapaaehtoisia että pakotettuja elementtejä. Tiivis yhteydenpito Ukrainaan säilyi sosiaalisen median kautta koko muuttoprosessin ajan, ja 32% kävi henkilökohtaisesti Ukrainassa EU:ssa oleskelunsa aikana. Haastattelut osoittivat muuttomatkan haasteiden yksityiskohtia sekä haastateltujen kaipuusta Ukrainaan.

Huolimatta jatkuvasta sodasta, paluumuuttajat raportoivat kohtuullista tyytyväisyyttä elämäänsä, vaikka täysin tyytyväisten vastaajien määrä laski merkittävästi: se oli 59% ennen muuttoa, 39% EU:ssa ja 21% Ukrainaan paluun jälkeen. Tyytyväisyys mielenterveyden laski huomattavasti sodan aikana. Tyytyväisyyden lasku asettaa haasteita paluumuuttajien integroitumiselle uudelleen Ukrainaan.

Vastaajat olivat varsin tyytyväisiä Väliaikaisen suojelun direktiivin tarjoamiin etuuksiin: 56% oli täysin tyytyväisiä majoitukseensa, 34% osittain tyytyväisiä, kun taas 9% oli tyytymättömiä; 27% oli täysin tyytyväisiä työllistymiseensä, 50% osittain tyytyväisiä, ja 23% tyytymättömiä; 33% oli täysin tyytyväisiä koulutukseen,

49% osittain tyytyväisiä, ja 18% tyytymättömiä; 22% oli täysin tyytyväisiä terveydenhuoltoon, 53% osittain tyytyväisiä, ja 25% tyytymättömiä; ja 41% oli täysin tyytyväisiä muihin sosiaalipalveluihin, 44% osittain tyytyväisiä, ja 15% tyytymättömiä.

Vastaajista 63% aikoo jäädä pysyvästi Ukrainaan, 54% ei suunnittele muuttoa pois Ukrainasta sodasta huolimatta, ja 17% harkitsee lähtöä, jos Ukraina ei pysy turvallisena. Ukrainan paluumuuttajien tarpeiden ja näkökulmien tutkiminen on olennaista, jotta he heidän integroituminen Ukrainaan onnistuu uudelleen ja tukee Ukrainan toipumista ja kestävää taloudellista ja sosiaalista kehitystä.

12. Возвратная миграция украинцев из ЕС в Украину, 2022–2024 годы

Проф. Юсси С. Яухиайнен (jusaja@utu.fi) совместно с доктором Ольгой Мамчур и доктором Мартом Райманном

Краткое содержание на русском языке

В исследовании под названием "Возвратная миграция украинцев из ЕС в Украину, 2022-2024 годы" рассматриваются миграционные тенденции, повседневная жизнь и планы на будущее взрослых украинцев, которые вернулись на родину после бегства из-за полномасштабного военного вторжения России, начавшегося 24 февраля 2022 года, и которые проживали в странах ЕС, прежде чем вернуться в Украину.

По данным Организации Объединенных Наций, по состоянию на весну 2024 года, от 7 до 9 миллионов украинцев покинули свою страну, многие из которых поселились в странах ЕС в рамках Директивы о временной защите (Директива Совета 2001/55/ЕС). Это позволило им получить доступ к жилью, работе, образованию, здравоохранению и другим услугам. К весне 2024 года в ЕС проживало 5,5 миллиона украинцев, но от 1 до 2 миллионов вернулись в Украину, несмотря на продолжающуюся войну.

Настоящее исследование посвящено именно этим вернувшимся мигрантам. Первичные данные были собраны в ходе полевых исследований, проведенных в Украине с марта по июнь 2024 года с помощью опросов и интервью. В общей сложности в опросе приняли участие 117 вернувшихся мигрантов и было проведено 10 тематических интервью.

Полученные данные свидетельствуют о различных траекториях миграции респондентов: некоторые мигранты покинули Украину сразу после начала военных действий, в то время как другие уехали позже, в том числе в 2024 году. Наиболее распространенными направлениями стали страны-члены ЕС; Польша и Германия являлись самыми популярными государствами для переезда. Некоторые мигранты вернулись в течение нескольких месяцев, в особенности осенью 2022 года, после военных успехов Украины, в то время как другие провели в ЕС более двух лет. Миграция имела как добровольные, так и принудительные элементы. На протяжении всего периода проживания заграницей, мигранты поддерживали частые контакты с Украиной через социальные сети, а 32% из них посещали Украину во время своего пребывания в ЕС. Опросы раскрыли подробности сложных миграционных траекторий и желание вернуться.

Несмотря на продолжающуюся войну, вернувшиеся мигранты сообщили об умеренной удовлетворенности своей жизнью, хотя уровень полной удовлетворенности значительно снизился с 59% до миграции до 39% во время пребывания в ЕС и до 23% после возвращения в Украину. Удовлетворенность

психическим здоровьем также заметно снизилась во время войны. Снижение удовлетворенности препятствует их успешной реинтеграции в Украине.

В ЕС респонденты выразили высокую степень удовлетворенности Директивой о временной защите: 56% были полностью удовлетворены и 34% частично удовлетворены своим жильем, в то время как 9% были не удовлетворены; 27% были полностью удовлетворены и 50% частично удовлетворены работой, при этом 23% не удовлетворены; 33% были удовлетворены полностью и 49% частично удовлетворены образованием, при этом 18% не удовлетворены; 22% были полностью удовлетворены и 53% частично удовлетворены здравоохранением, при этом 25% не удовлетворены; и 41% были полностью удовлетворены и 44% частично удовлетворены другими социальными услугами, при этом 15% не удовлетворены.

Из числа опрошенных 64% думают остаться в Украине навсегда, 53% не стремятся к дальнейшей миграции из Украины, несмотря на продолжающуюся войну, а 19% попытаются уехать, если в Украине больше не будет безопасно. Дальнейшие исследования потребностей и взглядов украинских вернувшихся мигрантов необходимы для их успешной реинтеграции, поддержки восстановления Украины и устойчивого экономического и социального развития.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
MAANTIETEEN JA GEOLOGIAN LAITOS
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

TURUN YLIOPISTON MAANTIETEEN JA GEOLOGIAN LAITOKSEN JULKAISUJA
PUBLICATIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

No. 3. Jukka Käyhkö ja Tim Horstkotte (doaimm.): Boazodoallu globála rievdadusaid siste Davvi-Fennoskandia duottarguovlluin. 2017.

No. 4. Jukka Käyhkö ja Tim Horstkotte (Toim.): Globaalimuutoksen vaikutus porotalouteen Pohjois-Fennoskandian tundra-alueilla. 2017.

No. 5. Jussi S. Jauhiainen (Toim.): Turvapaikka Suomesta? Vuoden 2015 turvapaikanhakijat ja turvapaikkaprosessit Suomessa. 2017.

No. 6. Jussi S. Jauhiainen: Asylum seekers in Lesvos, Greece, 2016-2017. 2017

No. 7. Jussi S. Jauhiainen: Asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Lampedusa, Italy, 2017. 2017

No. 8. Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Katri Gadd & Justus Jokela: Paperittomat Suomessa 2017. 2018.

No. 9. Jussi S. Jauhiainen & Davood Eyvazlu: Urbanization, Refugees and Irregular Migrants in Iran, 2017. 2018.

No. 10. Jussi S. Jauhiainen & Ekaterina Vorobeva: Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Jordan, 2017. 2018.

No. 11. Jussi S. Jauhiainen: Refugees and Migrants in Turkey, 2018. 2018.

No. 12. Tua Nylén, Harri Tolvanen, Anne Erkkilä-Välimäki & Meeli Roose: Guide for cross-border spatial data analysis in Maritime Spatial Planning. 2019.

No. 13. Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Lutz Eichholz & Annette Spellerberg: Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in Germany, 2019. The Case of Rhineland-Palatinate and Kaiserslautern. 2019.

No. 14. Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Davood Eyvazlu & Bahram Salavati Sarcheshmeh: Afghans in Iran: Migration Patterns and Aspirations. 2020.

No. 15. Jussi S. Jauhiainen & Ekaterina Vorobeva: Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Lesvos, Greece, 2019–2020. 2020.

No. 16. Salla Eilola, Petra Kollanen ja Nora Fagerholm: Vehreyttä ja rentoa oleskelutilaa kaivataan Aninkaisten konserttitalon kortteliin – Raportti 3D-näkymiä pilotoivan asukaskyselyn tuloksista ja käyttökokemuksesta. 2021.

No. 17. Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Sanni Huusari & Johanna Junnila: Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in Lesvos, Greece, 2020–2022. 2022.

No. 18. Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Heidi Ann Erbsen, Olha Lysa & Kerly Espenberg. Temporary Protected Ukrainians and Other Ukrainians in Estonia, 2022. 2022.

No. 19. Liliana Solé, Katri Väänänen, Johanna Kostamo ja Nora Fagerholm: Saaristomeren maisema-arvot ja tulevaisuuden kehitystoiveet. 2023.

No. 20. Joni Mäkinen, Kari Kajuutti & Juulia Kautto: Mannerjäätikön alaisten sulamisvesireittien ja murtoo-maaperä-muodostumien luontotyyppi, hyödyntämismahdollisuudet ja suojelutarve. MurtooVarat -hankkeen loppuraportti. 2023.

No. 21. Jussi S. Jauhiainen, Olha Mamchur & Mart Reimann: Return Migration of Ukrainians from the European Union to Ukraine, 2022–2024. 2024.

ISBN 978-951-29-9787-9 (printed)
ISBN 978-951-29-9788-6 (Internet)
ISSN 2489-2319 (printed)
ISSN 2324-0369 (Internet)