



Forced Displacement Abroad

Analytical report
Kyiv 2025

FORCED DISPLACEMENT ABROAD

Analytical report

The analytical report examines the situation of people who were forcibly displaced abroad from Ukraine; it likewise identifies the conditions that would facilitate their return to the country.

The report combines results of online surveys and focus group discussions carried out by the analytical centre Cedos with results of monitoring visits of the Ombudsman Office to the EU countries.

Results of the study and the monitoring visits are comprehended and formalised in the form of recommendations of the Ombudsman Office to state authorities and local self-government bodies in Ukraine.

Contributors

Ombudsman Office: OLGA ALTUNINA, IRYNA KALUPAKHA, YEVHEN KOLTYRIN, NATALIA STREBLYANSKA.

Cedos analytical centre: YULIA KABANETS, ALINA KHELASHVILI, OLESYA BUDZ, VALERIY MILOSERDOV, OLGA VOITENKO, OLGA POLISHCHUK.

Coordinated by SVITLANA BUTENKO, Council of Europe Project "Facilitating access to human rights and essential services for internally displaced persons and returnees at the community level".

The analytical report was issued at the request of the Ombudsman Office with the support of the Council of Europe Project "Facilitating access to human rights and essential services for internally displaced persons and returnees at the community level", implemented within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction 2023-2026".

The opinions expressed in this document are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

Table of Contents

Foreword by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights	4
Introduction	6
Study and monitoring visits methodology	7
Section 1. Displacement, and Getting a Residence Permit	12
1.1. Deciding to Move, and Choosing the Destination	12
1.2. Residence Permit.....	13
Section 2. Experience of Living Abroad	18
2.1. Integration into the Society in the Country of Residence.....	18
2.2. Language Skills.....	21
2.3. Employment and Financial Position.....	24
2.4. Housing.....	34
2.5. Education.....	44
2.6. Healthcare	50
2.7. Demand for Support from Ukraine	53
Section 3. Returning to Ukraine	57
3.1. Thoughts about Returning	58
3.2. Visits to Ukraine, and Connection with Ukraine	71
3.3. Comparing the Experience of Living in Ukraine and in the Country of Residence	76
3.4. Challenges Associated with Returning.....	79
Section 4. Problems identified during monitoring visits.....	87
Conclusions.....	92
Recommendations of the Ombudsman Office.....	97
Annexes.....	100
Annex 1. Social and Demographic Characteristics of Participants of the Survey.....	100
Annex 2. Ways to Distribute the Questionnaire	107

Foreword by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights



The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has caused one of the largest migration crises in modern European history. According to UNHCR, due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, more than 6.8 million Ukrainians were forced to leave the country in search of temporary international protection.

As of the end of 2024, in the period from February 24, 2022, more than 6.3 million Ukrainian citizens have been registered in European countries as persons in need of temporary international protection. There are still almost 560,000 Ukrainian citizens outside Europe.

Ukrainians are forced to leave their homes and go abroad in search of safety, support, and the opportunity to continue their lives in conditions of armed aggression. In many cases, these were women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities who faced difficult challenges of adaptation in new countries. Such a gap in the demographic structure affects not only current social stability, but also future demographic prospects, as the birth rate has also significantly decreased under conditions of aggression.

The forced displacement of millions of people has not only caused personal tragedies, but has also become a serious test for state policies in the field of human rights protection. Ukraine has two key tasks at once: on the one hand, to guarantee the protection of the rights of Ukrainians in the countries of temporary residence, and on the other, to create conditions for their return and a decent life in their Motherland.

The comprehensive analytical report "Forced Displacement Abroad" is designed to answer important questions:

- What challenges do Ukrainians face abroad?
- Do they have access to education, healthcare, social protection and employment?
- What factors influence their decision to return or remain outside Ukraine?
- What measures are needed for the successful reintegration of those who are ready to return?

According to the results of the study, a significant part of Ukrainian refugees, namely 25%, plan to return home, 16% plan to live in two countries (abroad and in Ukraine). At the same time, 38% have adapted in their host countries, found work, education for their children, and are temporarily not considering returning. Another 21% remain in a state of uncertainty due to the unstable situation both in Ukraine and in the countries where they are currently located.

Ukrainians highly appreciate the level of support they receive from the European Union and other partner states. About 87% of respondents indicated that they have temporary protection in EU countries and its analogues outside Europe and use the opportunities

provided by the host country in accordance with their status, another 6% indicated that they have refugee status, and 4% - a temporary residence permit.

Nevertheless, difficulties with the language barrier, integration into new societies, as well as the legal uncertainty of their status over time in certain countries remain pressing issues.

At the same time, protecting the rights of our citizens is a priority for both the Ukrainian state and international partners. That is why it is important to develop comprehensive mechanisms to support Ukrainians abroad and create favorable conditions for those who wish to return. These measures include housing programs, economic incentives, employment assistance, educational initiatives, and psychological support.

This report is an important tool in shaping policies that will take into account the real needs of our citizens. Its results will help government agencies, international organisations, and public initiatives better understand the situation and contribute to the development of effective solutions.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who participated in the study, as well as to every Ukrainian who, despite all the difficulties, maintains a connection with the Motherland. Ukraine is waiting for you and working to ensure your return is safe and dignified.

***Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights
Dmytro Lubinets***

Introduction

As a result of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, more than 6.5 million Ukrainians had the experience of moving abroad during 2022-2024.¹ In response to the mass arrival of people from Ukraine, on March 4, 2022, the European Union activated the Temporary Protection Directive². Thanks to this directive, Ukrainians who moved due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine gained access to legal residence in the countries that host them, the opportunity to work, rent housing, receive education, gain access to social security and medical services, etc. Many European countries that are not members of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU) have introduced similar statuses with access to a similar set of rights. In addition, countries have begun to implement social support programs and involve people forcibly displaced from Ukraine in integration programs. Nevertheless, despite support measures, people face various problems in different areas of life. In order to effectively direct resources to solve them, it is important to investigate the causes of these problems.

Along with adapting to living abroad, the issue of return after forced displacement is increasingly being raised. During the third year of full-scale armed aggression, the return of people from abroad is widely discussed both at the level of state authorities, as well as among public and international organisations, and at the level of society as a whole.

This analytical report comprehensively examines the situation of forcibly displaced people from Ukraine abroad and identifies conditions that would facilitate their return.

The first three sections of the document describe the results of data collection through online surveys and focus group discussions, in particular regarding:

- a) how people make decisions about moving abroad, as well as what residence permit they have and whether they have plans to change it;
- b) what is the situation of people in the host country: employment, housing, access to education and healthcare;
- c) what are people's thoughts on returning to Ukraine, and the conditions that should be created for this.

The fourth section of the report summarises the problems faced by Ukrainians abroad, identified by representatives of the Ombudsman Office during monitoring visits to European Union countries.

The results of the study, as well as information obtained during monitoring visits, are interpreted by the Ombudsman Office in the form of recommendations to state authorities and self-government bodies of Ukraine to improve the situation of forcibly displaced people abroad, as well as create conditions for their return to Ukraine.

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. n.d. "Ukraine Refugee Situation," accessed August 13, 2024. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

² European Commission. n.d. "Temporary Protection." Migration and Home Affairs. Accessed August 13, 2024. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en.

Study and monitoring visits methodology

This comprehensive analytical report was prepared at the request of the Ombudsman Office within the framework of the Council of Europe project "Facilitating access to human rights and essential services for internally displaced persons and returnees at the community level".

The uniqueness of the document lies in the combination of the results of the study (desk phase, survey and focus group discussions), which was carried out by the Cedos analytical centre at the request of the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine, and monitoring visits by the Ombudsman Office.

The purpose of the study

The study aimed to describe people's experiences abroad and their thoughts on returning to Ukraine.

The purpose of monitoring visits

The monitoring visits aimed to identify human rights protection problems faced by Ukrainians forcibly displaced abroad and to propose ways to address them.

The analysis of the study and the results of monitoring visits became the basis for recommendations to state authorities and self-government bodies on improving the situation of people from Ukraine abroad and creating conditions for their return to their Motherland. **Recommendations developed by the Ombudsman Office.**

Main tasks of the study

1. To find out what challenges and problems people who have been forced to move abroad from Ukraine face in the following areas: adaptation to living in a new country, employment and financial situation, housing, education, and healthcare.
2. To investigate what opinions people have about returning to Ukraine, and what aspects they take into account when considering this issue.
3. To consider what factors encourage people to return to Ukraine, and what factors contribute to people staying abroad.
4. To investigate what urgent problems people may face upon returning to Ukraine and what support they may need.

Tasks of monitoring visits

1. To initiate an open dialogue with Ukrainians abroad, representatives of local authorities, and organisations that provide support to those forcibly displaced abroad.
2. To collect information on existing mechanisms for the protection of Ukrainian refugees, government initiatives of host countries, as well as tools that can facilitate the return of Ukrainian citizens to their Motherland
3. To develop recommendations for government bodies and self-government bodies to improve the situation of Ukrainian citizens.

Study structure

The study included a desk phase, a **quantitative component** (survey) and a **qualitative one** - conducting focus group discussions.

The methodology of the quantitative component of the study is based on the analysis of available information about the challenges and problems faced by people abroad, as well as their plans for return, collected during the desk phase.

The qualitative component was used to interpret and supplement the quantitative data. Using data from focus group discussions, it was found out how people describe and perceive challenges and problems, and how they explain their causes.

The study does not represent the experiences of all people who were forced to move abroad from Ukraine. This group of people is not homogeneous. Among the people forcibly displaced abroad, middle-aged women predominate, however, in addition to them, various people moved abroad, in particular, of different genders, with different marital status, number (or absence) of children, different ages, etc. This study presents a wide range of experiences. Nevertheless, due to limited access to respondents, not all groups of people are represented equally.

Study is focused on such aspects of life as integration into the society of the host country, employment, housing, education, healthcare, thoughts about return and needs in case of return to Ukraine. At the same time, people may also have encountered problems and challenges in other areas of life, and these issues require additional attention.

The study examined the situation people were in at the time of the study, but did not aim to examine migration trajectories and experiences of changing countries, housing, work, etc. Focus group participants mentioned the experience of such changes, but the impact of the experience of living through these changes on the situation people were in at the time of the study was not recorded.

The field study phase took place in October-December 2024.

The survey was conducted from October 30 to December 10. Data collection was carried out online using a self-administered questionnaire in Google Forms, created in cooperation with the Ombudsman Office. 4,141 people from 43 countries participated in it.

Questionnaire distribution took place through different facilities:

- The Ombudsman Office distributed the questionnaire through partner organisations, diplomatic institutions in 10 countries (Kingdom of Belgium, Republic of Ireland, Kingdom of Spain, Italian Republic, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic), Telegram channels of Ukrainian unions in the host countries, and organisations' Facebook pages. A detailed list of organisations and distribution channels is provided in Annex 2.
- Representatives of the Ombudsman Office offered to fill out the questionnaire during monitoring visits to the Republic of Poland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Spain and the Slovak Republic.
- The Council of Europe Office disseminated information about the

questionnaire through the communication channels of the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine, as well as in European networks of organisations working with refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, etc.

- The Cedos analytical centre distributed the questionnaire to groups of people from Ukraine abroad on Facebook and other social networks.

Focus group discussions were held in December 2024. They took place online using Zoom. Participants were recruited for focus group discussions using a survey. At the end of the questionnaire, there was an option to share contacts to participate in the focus group discussion.

A total of **10 focus group discussions were conducted as part of the study**. 6-8 people were invited to participate in each discussion.

When forming the sample for the qualitative and quantitative components of the study, the representation of informants with different characteristics was ensured:

1. **Gender:** Both women and men were involved in the survey and focus group discussions.

2. **Region where they lived before leaving Ukraine:** The study presents people who, before moving abroad, lived in the central, western, eastern, southern, and northern regions of Ukraine.

3. **Country of residence:** The survey and focus group discussions present the experiences of people who have lived in different countries. The countries that were the focus of this study include the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Poland, the Kingdom of Spain, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the Slovak Republic, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Italian Republic and the French Republic.

4. **Age:** People aged 18 to 88 participated in the study.

5. **Period of departure from Ukraine:** The study included people who went abroad in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

A detailed breakdown of the socio-demographic characteristics of the survey respondents and informants is provided in Annex 1. "Social and Demographic Characteristics of Participants of the Survey "

During the invitation to the discussion, potential participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study, the use of its results in the future, the topics around which the conversation would take place, and the protection of their data. At the beginning of each focus group discussion, participants were debriefed. In addition, participants are informed that they have the option not to answer any of the questions asked and the option to refuse to participate in the study at any stage without giving a reason.

To ensure the confidentiality of the study participants, the data obtained were only available to the research team. The quotes used in the report have been anonymized and do not contain any personally identifiable information. In some cases, data on the country of residence and the region of Ukraine from which people left were not recorded . This

particularly applied to veterans, partners of military personnel, and people who could be identified by other characteristics.

The survey also included information about the purpose of the study and the topic addressed in the questionnaire. During the processing of the results, private information that people mentioned in the response fields was removed.

The study has a number of limitations :

- **The study is not representative of all people who have been forced to move abroad.** Its goal was to collect as many diverse experiences as possible, identify the main difficulties faced by respondents and study participants, and their needs. Nevertheless, the ability to draw conclusions about the prevalence of problems among all displaced people is limited.
- **Underrepresentation of men and older people in the sample.** The study involved a larger number of men and people over 60 years of age, nevertheless, the representation of these groups is not large. This is due in particular to the fact that among people who have been forcibly displaced abroad, the majority are women. Also, the rate of refusal to participate in the study was slightly higher among men than among women. In the case of people over 60, the main barrier to participation in the study may have been the online method of conducting the survey.
- **Underrepresentation of the experiences of people in difficult life circumstances.** The study includes the assumption that people in difficult life circumstances may not have had the opportunity to participate in the study, so their experiences may not have been sufficiently reflected in the study.
- **Uneven representation of people from different countries in the qualitative component.** During the recruitment of participants for focus group discussions, an even representation of people from the 10 countries that were the focus of the study was ensured. Nevertheless, fewer participants were recruited from several of these countries than from others. This creates limitations in comparing the experience of living in different countries.
- **Lack of representation of the experiences of people who did not want to talk about them.** The study involved people who agreed to share their experiences and thoughts. At the same time, the experiences of people who, for various reasons, may not have wanted to share their stories are not included in this study.
- The data obtained on returns to Ukraine demonstrate the main trends at the time of the study, nevertheless, these data may change depending on the development of events in Ukraine, domestic political factors, and the situation in the world. Therefore, in the event of significant changes both in Ukraine and in the world, data on returns may lose relevance.

Structure of monitoring visits

Monitoring visits by representatives of the Ombudsman Office were carried out in November-December 2024. Six European Union countries with the largest number of Ukrainians were selected for the visits: the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Spain, the Slovak Republic, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Belgium, and the Republic of Poland.

More than 150 Ukrainians shared their experiences of living abroad with representatives of the Ombudsman Office during meetings organised with the involvement of public organisations that protect the rights of Ukrainians abroad.

As part of the working visits, representatives of the Ombudsman Office also held a number of meetings with representatives of the Embassies of Ukraine in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Spain, and the Slovak Republic.

The problematic issues shared by Ukrainians during the meetings were discussed with representatives of public organisations, charitable foundations, other citizens' associations, and with representatives of the authorities of the countries hosting Ukrainians. In particular, meetings were held with representatives of the municipality of Amstelveen (Kingdom of the Netherlands) and the Berlin Refugee Service (Federal Republic of Germany).

As a result of the monitoring visits, information was obtained and analysed regarding the existing mechanisms for the protection of Ukrainian refugees, government initiatives of host countries, as well as instruments that can facilitate the return of Ukrainian citizens to their Motherland.

Section 1. Displacement, and Getting a Residence Permit

1.1. Deciding to Move, and Choosing the Destination

At the focus group discussions, we asked the participants to share how exactly they had chosen the country to move to from Ukraine. In their answers, the people remembered choosing a country for the following reasons:

- **Their relatives, friends and acquaintances lived in the country** and could help.

“My sister lives here with her husband and children. [...] Actually, she insisted that we get out of Kyiv while we could. So we practically considered no other options except for the Netherlands.”³

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands⁴

- **The country offered vast social support programmes for Ukrainians.** The respondents found the information on the country and its conditions for Ukrainians on their own, and made their choice out of several options. The people who had such experience left Ukraine consciously, with loss of safety not being the only reason for moving.
- **Their children studied in that country.**
- **We had lived in that country before.**

“Yet, in general, we moved to Poland because I had already worked in Poland. I could speak the language a little, and we were said it would be a bit easier there as I knew the language a little, and we could support each other.”

A woman aged 28, → Republic of Poland

- **They chose the country the language of which they could speak quite fluently.**
- **They got into the country of residence accidentally** due to the circumstances they had when leaving Ukraine.

“We did not actually plan where to go, and the choice was simple: we get any train and go there, to be honest.”

A woman aged 31, → Czech Republic

³ Hereinafter, this report provides direct speech from informants, using minimal editing and maintaining the original style of statements. The only edits made to the quotes relate to ethical communication about people with disabilities and their needs. In square brackets in some quotes, concise comments are added to improve the understanding of the meaning of the quote in cases where important parts of the sentence have been omitted in colloquial speech.

⁴ The text after the quotes hereinafter describes the path of the person's displacement: the country of residence as of the survey date.

- **Assistance was offered by volunteers, public, charitable organisations, or local authorities** in the European Union Member States.

We also asked the informants at the focus group discussions about the reasons for making the decision to move abroad. The people often said that their first intention was to go as far away as possible **from the hostilities**.

“Well, as we were at the front line, I mean our village was, it was the front life, the very middle of it, it was very difficult to survive with the children. So my husband and I decided that I had to take the kids away.”

A woman aged 48, → Federal Republic of Germany

The other reasons mentioned by the study participants was their desire **to offer their children better education**. One of the informants said that he had left to get **better medical services** for her child.

“Why did we leave? Because our son had started attending the kindergarten, and he was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. [...] So we decided to keep going [abroad]. I mean, their social support is great, and we hoped for better medical services, medical examinations.”

A woman aged 39, → The Kingdom of the Netherlands

The people also said that they had gone to Europe to earn money to repair their housing damaged by the hostilities. They noted that the money offered by the state to restore their house was not enough.

“In September, our house was a bit damaged. [...] So we decided to move to Germany and possibly earn some money to repair the roof.”

A woman aged 50, → Federal Republic of Germany

1.2. Residence Permit

Legal residence in the country chosen for displacement is necessary for subsequent adaptation, access to education, medicine and employment. People from Ukraine have been given an opportunity to get temporary protection in the European Union countries since 2022. Its effect has been extended until 2026⁵. However, some of the countries have started to encourage the displaced Ukrainians to get alternative residence permits, in particular, through employment. In fact, employment opportunities have structural limitations for some groups of people, such as people with disabilities, the elderly as well as single parents. Given the above, such ways to get a residence permit may be more complicated for them. Moreover,

⁵ European Council. 26 June 2024. “Ukrainian refugees: Council extends temporary protection until March 2026”. European Council.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/06/25/ukrainian-refugees-council-extends-temporary-protection-until-march-2026/>

alternative residence permits provide for other rights and opportunities, so people need to be informed of peculiarities of such permits in the countries of residence⁶.

We asked the respondents what type of the residence permit they had as of the survey dates. Most of the surveyed (87%) answered that they **had temporary protection in the countries of their residence** (or an equivalent thereof in the countries that were not EU Member States⁷).

Much fewer respondents had other residence permits. Thus, 6% of the surveyed responded that they had the refugee status, 4% had received the employment or education temporary residence permit, and 1% had a permanent residence permit. Only 0.1% of the surveyed had citizenship of the country of residence. Other 0.4% of the people had no residence permit (it could be connected with the opportunity of the Ukrainians to stay in the EU countries without a visa for up to 90 days within 180 days)⁸.

Type of residence permit

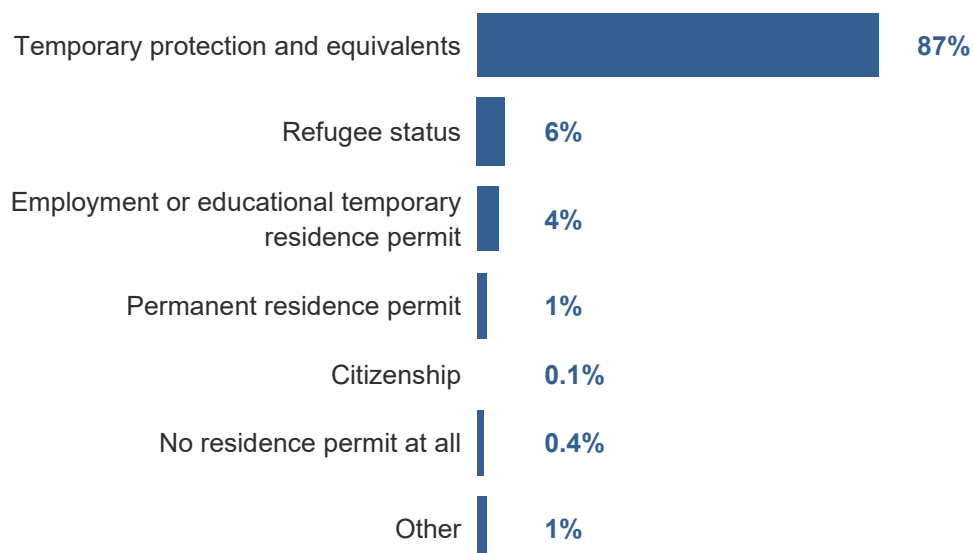


Chart 1.1. Question: "What type of residence permit do you have in your country of residence?"
One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, and UN Women. April 19, 2024a. "Helping Hands - the Role of Housing Support and Employment Facilitation in Economic Vulnerability of Refugees From Ukraine." UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108068>

⁷ Some countries introduced the programmes similar to temporary protection in the EU countries. For instance, in 2022, the United Kingdom introduced the programme for displaced Ukrainians called Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme>

⁸ Fleeing Ukraine: Travel inside the EU:

https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-solidarity-ukraine/eu-assistance-ukraine/information-people-fleeing-war-ukraine/fleeing-ukraine-travel-inside-eu_uk

The participants of the focus group discussions told that they had also mostly lived in the EU countries under temporary protection. They said that they had faced a number of problems **due to peculiarities of the process to extend their protection**. In particular, the problems included **access to administrative services and housing rent**. It was caused by the fact that the paper document expired while the automatic extension of protection was not shown in the services the people used. In particular, that problem was mentioned by the informants in Federal Republic of Germany and Kingdom of the Netherlands.

“Well, the bad thing for sure is that these documents are not updated in Germany. I mean, we got them once, and they are now sort of expired. Then they send us a letter once a year saying that we do not have to update our documents, they have been extended automatically. But we have now faced the problem [...] the programme automatically writes that the document has expired and needs to be replaced. [...] You must prove all the time that your residence here is official, something like that.”

A woman aged 35, → Federal Republic of Germany

The study participants also mentioned that **formats of residence permits** differed in all the countries. As a result, they had difficulty crossing borders and passing passport control.

“Poland also has no refugee document. All we have is an application in a smartphone. As far as I get it, only Poles know about it. When I tried to show that application in Germany, [...] the entire plane was delayed because they could not understand who I was, where and how I had got there.”

A woman aged 26, → Republic of Poland

At the focus group discussions, some of the informants admitted that they **felt uncertain about their future** because the temporary protection or its equivalent was extended for a certain period of time (most often for a year). Most people we talked to had no clear understanding of the decision of countries of their residence if the war was over, and/or their temporary protection was terminated. Some of the study participants felt uncertain and unable to plan their future for that reason.

“All the people who are abroad now have no permanent status, and we are living two lives in two countries. [...] We keep living in two homes because you cannot plan your future here as it is practically impossible to get the PRP⁹ here in the Netherlands. [...] If the war is over tomorrow, we will be told, ‘Thank you and goodbye.’”

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

We asked the participants of the focus group discussions whether they had considered replacing the residence permit and changing the temporary protection for another type of permit. Most of the people we talked to had considered that, but no decision had been made as of the time of the conversation. They emphasised that their **decisions** on changing the residence permit **would depend on development of the war, their personal plans and policies of the country of residence**. In general, the people who planned to stay abroad

⁹ The informant means the permanent residence permit.

considered changing the residence permit more often while those who were going to return to Ukraine did not intend to replace their temporary protection with other types of permits.

In the context of change of the type of a residence permit, the employment visa was mentioned. Some of the study participants planned to apply for an **employment visa** in case the temporary protection was terminated. Some other people already had specific plans to apply for an employment visa or a permanent residence permit as of the time of the discussion. In most of those cases, their partner had the citizenship or the right to apply for an employment visa.

Some of the informants at the focus group discussions told that they had considered replacing their temporary protection with other types of residence permit as they **wanted to stay abroad**. Also, they tried to give themselves and their children an opportunity not to return to Ukraine. They emphasised the desire to be able to stay abroad in case the temporary protection was cancelled despite the ongoing war.

“If they say that they are removing [temporary protection], but Ukraine will still be attacked by missiles and bombs, I will get an employment visa, that’s it. Because my priority is my child’s safety.”

A woman aged 38, → Federal Republic of Germany

One of the informants with a **disability** said that she and her caregiver were going to **get the refugee status** instead of temporary protection. She explained the intention with the fact that she had better opportunities abroad than in Ukraine, in the first place, due to the higher level of inclusion and the barrier-free environment.

“We have the temporary protection, me and my caregiver. But we have already decided that we will probably get international protection, the refugee status. [...] Well, I don’t know, I have already said that a lot is necessary to get back to Ukraine. [...] I have many more opportunities here.”

A woman aged 49, → Ireland

Some of the men of the conscription age also considered changing their temporary protection for the refugee status. They said at the focus group discussions that they could not have their passport re-issued abroad as they had no relevant military records. However, they did not want to go to Ukraine so they were looking for alternative ways to get a residence permit.

Some of the participants of the focus group discussions mentioned that **changing the residence permit could be a difficult process**. Thus, several informants shared during the discussions that they could not change the type of their residence permit in the country of residence. They told that some of the countries limited the ability of the Ukrainian citizens to apply for other types of residence permits while the temporary protection was in effect. Moreover, at the focus group discussions, the people mentioned the difficulty of getting the employment visa due to high qualification requirements.

At the same time, it was assumed by some of the study participants that after the temporary protection was over, some of the countries would allow staying there. During the

conversations, they mentioned the value of the Ukrainian employees at the European labour market.

“For instance, it seems to be that there still will be no abrupt cancellation [of temporary protection], it will be gradual, with some offers. If a country cancels, I guess, some other countries will remain interested in our people, and it will host them from another country.”

A woman aged 33, → Federal Republic of Germany

Some of the study participants from Czech Republic mentioned that the country had already announced¹⁰ possible transition of the Ukrainians from temporary protection to the long-term residence permit. One of the participants considered that option as she could not return to Ukraine in the nearest future because her home was located in the temporarily occupied territory.

“We have been proposed to replace our protection¹¹ with the PRP¹² starting from January, right[...]. We still are considering it, to be honest. Our home is in the occupied territory, and we have no idea of what has happened to our home, there is no way to find out.”

A woman aged 31, → Czech Republic

Some of the informants noted at the focus group discussions that they **did not intend to replace their temporary protection with other residence permits**. They mostly explained their opinion by their **intention to return to Ukraine** and no plans to stay in the country of residence or abroad in general. Some of them explained lack of such plans by the fact that they did not feel integrated into the society of the country of residence.

“I also have temporary protection, well, ... practically everyone who came after 2022 has it here. It cannot be changed formally. Well, the Ukrainians are not allowed to do it. But I am not going to change it, I am okay with it. Because I am also going to return.”

A woman aged 31, → Kingdom of Spain

¹⁰ Refugees in Czechia Able to Get Long-Term Residence Permit after 2025: Conditions: <https://77proukrainu.blesk.cz/bizhentsi-u-chekhii-zmozhut-pereyty-na-dovhotryvalyy-ty-p-proz-hyvannia-pislia-2025-roku-yaki-umovy/>

¹¹ Temporary protection

¹² The informant means the permanent residence permit.

Section 2. Experience of Living Abroad

2.1. Integration into the Society in the Country of Residence

The participants of the focus group discussions described the level of their adaptation in the country of residence differently. Some of the people said that they **did not feel like a part of the society**, but generally experienced no discomfort for that reason. Some said they **felt isolated**, and that all the important things remained in Ukraine. The other informants stated that **they felt comfortable, but still would like to return to Ukraine**. The informants felt integrated into the society in rare cases.

The integration level depended on lots of interconnected factors. In particular, following their arrival, the important factors of integration were the **desire and intention of the people to adapt to the new society** as well as their plans on their future stay in the country. Some of the study participants said that they had not planned to study the official language or integrate into the society from the very beginning as they expected to return home soon. At the focus group discussions, the informants also mentioned **support by the country of residence**, for instance, as integration programmes. Their experience demonstrated that the option was not available in all the countries.

Some of the informants wanted or tried to be integrated, but failed to for different reasons.

Social and Cultural Factors

Attitude by the local people and possibility of support influence success of the integration. Openness, desire to help and friendly attitude by the local people facilitated adaptation, created the sense of comfort and warm welcome. Some of the informants told at the focus group discussions that **they had faced no discrimination or biased attitude** and had positive experience of interaction with the local residents, which facilitated their integration.

"I understand that I am a refugee. [...]. So the welcome is incredible, given this fact. I get money for accommodation, and the people I meet are great support. I find Ukrainian flags in absolutely unexpected locations here. I am very happy that my children are incredibly supported."

A woman aged 46, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

On the other hand, **negative and biased attitude did not facilitate integration**. The discomfort was caused by lack of trust of the locals to the Ukrainians, for instance, monitoring their movement, controlling thoroughly how they had spent the funds granted as social assistance.

"There have been negative moments with the Czechs, for instance, when you are in a store buying something. Well, for instance, I work and can buy more than a Czech in a line next to me. [...] However, the Czech next to me realizes that I am Ukrainian. So they start offending us, 'You, Ukrainians, have come here and buy stuff', blah blah blah, so and so."

A woman aged 31, → Czech Republic

Some of the female informants told at the focus group discussions that they **had faced discrimination and biased attitude by both by the foreigners and the Ukrainians** from the other regions of Ukraine who had different experience of moving to the country of residence.

As for the locals, the study participants had the feeling of being discriminated or treated in a biased manner in the following areas:

- while looking for accommodation: refusal to rent out due to absence of citizenship of the country of residence, the temporary protection status, or pets;
- in the educational area: bullying children at school on national grounds;
- in the medical area: inadequate attention due to the temporary protection status.

In most cases, the stories about biased attitude by the other Ukrainians were associated with the interaction with the people who had moved before the full-scale invasion. The informants also remembered the situations of tense communication between the people who had lived in different regions of Ukraine before the displacement abroad at the focus group discussions.

Some of the informants told at the focus group discussions about the **difference in the conduct and habits of the locals and people from Ukraine**. Some people said that they **liked the approach and the mindset of the locals**, or that it was similar to the Ukrainian one. Some of the study participants said that the difference in the values and culture made them feel they had **difficulty understanding the locals**. They did not want to stay in the country of residence for that reason. Moreover, the people said that they had faced **misunderstanding and mistrust** in their condition and impact of the war upon their life.

"I believe we are very lucky because the mentality and the language are very similar. The Slovaks are very compassionate people in general, and they help a lot."

A woman aged 35, → Slovak Republic

"Although the social security is quite good here, and everything works very well, we must learn and implement such practices. But it is not our country, you know. It is difficult mentally. Our children also find it difficult. Although the children are becoming a part of the society, but any way. It is not our country mentally. We cannot get used to many things, they seem strange, and we cannot adapt to them."

A woman aged 53, → Kingdom of Belgium

The better knowledge of the language of the country of residence **helped the informants feel more comfortable**, and they could get integrated into the society more actively. However, the people who could not speak the language of the country at the adequate level could not communicate with the locals freely, take full part in the community life, and resolve the difficulties they faced. More detailed information on studying the language in the country of residence and the language barrier is provided in the next sub-section.

"I can say that I feel like a part of the society because I am involved into many processes, that's the main reason. Language, it is a matter of language because lots of those who are not studying the language are not involved into city processes, do not know the locals in Ireland and cannot socialise. So I believe that the language is the main barrier for the Ukrainians abroad."

A man aged 23

The language barrier and the difference in habits influenced the **informants' social circle**. Few participants of the focus group discussions told about regular communication with the locals. Some of them only contacted the people in Ukraine, but it also made them feel comfortable during their stay in the country. Some people mentioned having no friends or close people in the country of residence, which creased the sense of isolation.

"Of course, I have not made any friends here. Either Ukrainians or Spaniards. Despite speaking the language. [...]. As for the sense. It is a feeling of isolation, sure. Because my life remained in Ukraine. Although many of my friends are not in Ukraine, it is the general feeling of what it was like before the war. My friends, parents and all the others are there... It is as if everything remained in Ukraine. My job, by apartment, all the other things."

A woman aged 31, → Kingdom of Spain

Household and economic factors

Some of the informants told at the focus group discussions about difficulty **getting used to processes in the country of residence**, in particular, the ones associated with documents. However, some of the informants **assessed governance and processes in the country positively**.

"Anyway, I know it can be done in Ukraine... Some matters can be resolved in a day. Here you must wait for months to resolve these matters. Endless letters. You do not know how to sort them. So it is definitely difficult. Everything is very long and slow."

A woman aged 50, → Federal Republic of Germany

When it came to integration into the society of the country of residence, the study participants mentioned **difficulty getting a job and sources of income for themselves and their family**. Lack of adequate funds, difficulty looking for a job due to the low language skills or qualifications created the conditions in which some study participants could not be fully integrated into the society. More detailed information on employment can be found in sub-section 2.3 "Employment and Financial Position".

"I got consultations, we were given consultations as Ukrainian refugees, by the Brits. They told me I was a smart adult and had to understand that I should send CVs for the positions with lower qualifications. I would not get a more qualified job as I had no local education. And I would not be higher to a less qualified job as I was overqualified. So I realized quickly that I had to find a job in Ukraine."

A woman aged 46, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Some people told at the focus group discussions that they had faced **difficulty looking for accommodation and inadequate social support** by the country of residence, which also failed to facilitate their social integration.

Moreover, **the children and their parents could find it easier to be integrated into the country of residence**. According to the informants who took part in the focus group discussions, it was connected with the fact that the people with the children of school age could get better financial support from the country. Also, the school system in some countries was aimed at children's adaptation and integration into the society. In its turn, in some cases, it facilitated integration and involvement of their parents.

"In other words, at least, [name of the country] has the cool model of adaptation of migrants' children into the society, to the language. I mean, my child has been studying at school for three years, and she has already spoken to the others, has read in their language, they have discussed something. She teaches us at home, she actually knows the languages better than us."

A man aged 47

2.2. Language Skills

At the focus group discussions, we asked the people about their experience of studying the language of the country to which they had been displaced from Ukraine. Most of the informants studied the language of the country where they lived as of the time of the survey in different ways, such as:

- **at courses:** at integration or other free courses, including the ones offered by local university;
- **online with a tutor or in a language school:** those services were often provided by the Ukrainians;
- **online via language applications;**
- they were **helped** to study the language **by their friends or acquaintances;**
- **they studied on their own**, in particular, by talking to the locals.

The informants from some countries told at the focus group discussions that they could get **social benefits only provided that they attended integration courses and studied the language** (such practices were mentioned by the informants from Kingdom of Belgium and Federal Republic of Germany). In some countries, **learning the language** was optional, mandatory courses were not offered (such practices were described by the people who lived in Republic of Poland and Kingdom of the Netherlands), so the informants had to learn on their own.

Some of the discussion participants spoke **English** fluently enough to communicate on basic topics. However, English could be used to interact with the local and get a job only in some of

the countries¹³. In their daily life, some of the informants faced the refusal to provide services in English by the locals and negative comments on not knowing the language of the country of residence.

As of the time of the study, the informants had **different fluency** in the language of the country where they lived. Some of the people told at the focus group discussions that they had adequate fluency to resolve their household issues. The people sometimes said that they had high language skills that enabled them to socialise and work freely. The language skills of some other study participants were low.

"It is very difficult with the language. You must find ways to study on your own. I have already been at A1 three times, that's what volunteers offer. I get diplomas, and still cannot remember it."

A woman aged 45, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The following factors influenced the language skills in the country of residence:

- **Motivation to stay in the country of residence.** Some of the informants who were not satisfied with their living conditions in the country or did not plan to stay there for a long time noted at the focus group discussions that they had low language skills and felt no need to desire to keep studying the language. However, the people who were going to stay in the country for a long period were more motivated to study the language.
- **Age.** The informants who had children of different age mentioned at the focus group discussions that it was much easier for their children to study the language. Moreover, some parents made the conscious choice of focusing their resources on helping their children develop high language skills for faster integration. The youth also found it easier to study the language at the advanced level.
- **Accessibility of courses and other ways to study the language in the country of residence.** According to the informants at the focus group discussions, some of the countries and settlements did not offer free courses. Such courses were accessible only in large cities in some countries. If there was no organised learning, some people had difficulty finding learning opportunities. In particular, it was mentioned by those living in Kingdom of the Netherlands. Some of the study participants told that the price of paid courses was too high.

"I mean, studying the language, for instance, at the good level, when you study in a language school, take a test, then get... We cannot afford it. Yes, some municipalities offer that. For instance, if you want, go pay 1,500 euros per month for the language school."

A woman aged 48, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

¹³ It is about the countries where English is not an official language.

- **Quality of the courses offered in the country of residence.** The study participants told that even if they were given an opportunity to study for free, the quality of such courses was often low. It meant both the teaching level and organisation of the courses.

“Yes, the integration courses and teachers are mostly, well, unqualified. I would say that they are a mere formality for the job centre¹⁴. So if I had not studied the language in the applications, I would have learnt nothing.

A woman aged 50, → Federal Republic of Germany

- **Time resources and energy to study the language.** Some of the informants shared at the focus group discussions that they had difficulty learning the language as they lacked time and emotional resources. At times, they could not find the courses during non-work hours.

“To be honest, I am too tired to study. When I arrived, I started working at once, and I have no time and moral or physical resources to study the language.”

A woman aged 44, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

- **Opportunity to practice the language.** The informants told at the focus group discussions that they did not always have an opportunity to communicate with the locals and, therefore, practice the language they studied. Some of them worked with the Ukrainians or people from other countries. It also influenced their sense of the need to study the language of the country where they stayed. Some of the people with the low language skills had the barrier to communication with the native speakers because they were afraid to make a mistake.
- **Similarity of the language to the Ukrainian.** According to the informants, it was easier to study the languages more similar to the Ukrainian (for instance, Polish, Czech) than those that were less related (for instance, Dutch, French, German).

The study participants told about the **impact of the language barrier upon their living standards and social integration**. The people with the low language skills often failed to feel like a part of the society. They could not socialise with the locals freely and mostly communicated with the Ukrainians or the people who spoke other languages, such as Russian or English.

“I worked for the international design agency, and the client was international, so we spoke English at work, which was generally good for me. But when we had lunch breaks with my colleagues, they spoke their language, and there was nothing you could say about it as it was their language and their country. It was like a glass wall between us all the time.”

A woman aged 27, → Kingdom of Spain

¹⁴ The informant means the employment centre.

Moreover, the language barrier was one of the reason for difficulties for the informants' children to get secondary education. Difficulties due to the low language skills were also faced in medical services. These aspects are described in detail in the sub-sections 2.5 "Education" and 2.6 "Healthcare".

Some of the participants of the focus group discussions mentioned the **need to improve their language skills**, in particular, to work in the specific area in the country of residence. To their mind, better language skills **would give them better changes of employment**. Some of the study participants said that the oprincipal barrier to getting a qualified job (in some cases, in the same area in which they used to work before moving) was inadequate skills in the language of their country of residence.

"Well, I will definitely learn the language because my incentive part and wages in the German company depend. Career prospects as well. These are merely individual peculiarities. I can develop as a professional."

A man aged 40, → Federal Republic of Germany

The motivation of some of the female informants in the focus group studies to improve their language skills was **to get a higher salary at their work**, or an opportunity **to get a residence permit for a longer period**.

"I am attending the offline school in Venice in get another certificate that will help me get the PRP¹⁵ for a long period of time in the future."

A woman aged 32, → Italian Republic

2.3. Employment and Financial Position

Financial position and sources of income

We asked the respondents to specify their financial position. **The respondents most often stated that their financial position was at the medium or low level**. Thus, a bit more than one third (36%) of the respondents assessed their financial position as the one at the low level: 5% of the people did not have enough money for food, and 31% could not always buy themselves clothes. Other 58% of the surveyed responded that their financial position was at the medium level: 35% could not always afford household appliances while 22% had enough money for household appliances, but could not buy a car or an apartment. Remaining 7% had the high level of the financial position: they could buy a car and other items of similar value.

¹⁵ The informant means the permanent residence permit.

Financial position of the surveyed

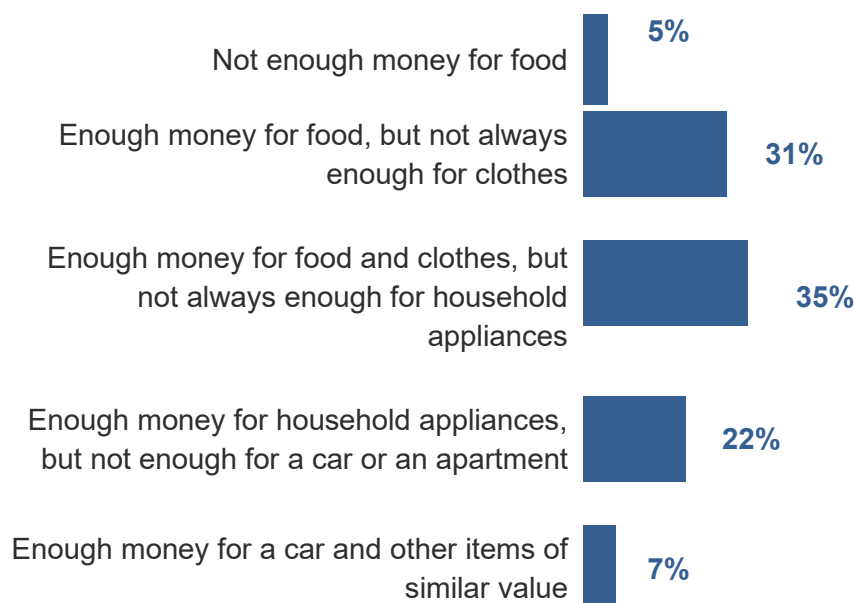


Chart 2.1. Question: "How would you describe your financial position?" One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

The people with a disability, mental diseases or disorders and their caregivers mentioned the bad financial position more often.

Thus, 15% of the people suffering from incurable diseases or diseases that required long-term therapy and 12% of the caregivers of such people mentioned that they did not have enough money for food. Also, 14% of the people with a disability and 8% of the people taking care of the person with a disability stated that they could not satisfy basic needs (food and/or clothes). As for the **people over 65** and **aged 55-64**, more respondents (13% and 11% accordingly) noted that they did not have enough money for food in comparison with the other age groups.

Half of the surveyed noted that **their principal source of income was a permanent or temporary job in the country of residence (50%)**. As for the people with the financial position at the medium and high level, most were employed. However, around one third of the respondents mentioned **financial assistance from the country of residence as the main source of income (29%)**.

The respondents with the financial position at the low and medium level relied on financial assistance of the country of their residence more often.

Main source of income

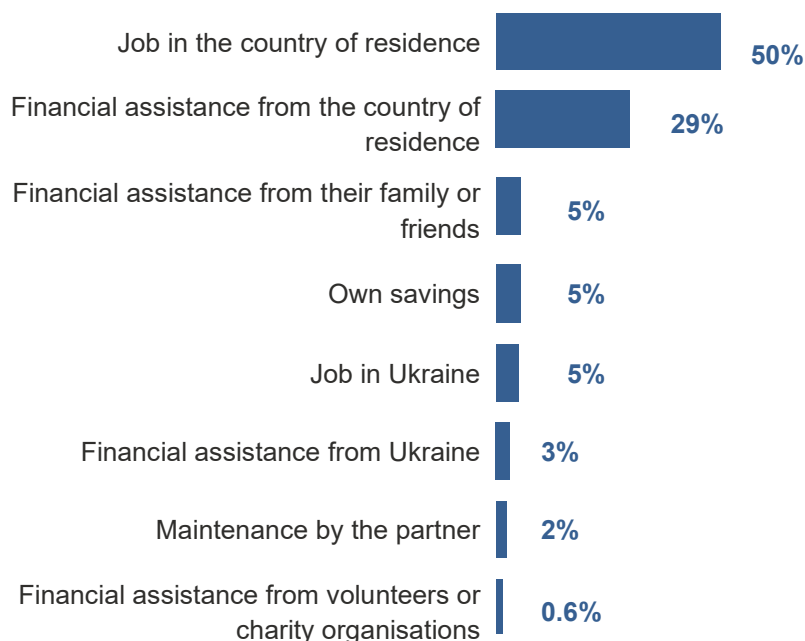


Chart 2.2. Question: “Which is your principal source of income now?” One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,139.

More than half of the respondents from Federal Republic of Germany (65%) and Kingdom of Belgium (62%) specified financial assistance from the country of residence as their principal source of income. It can be explained by the social protection policies of these countries and the state policies for the people displaced from Ukraine.

Several participants of the focus group discussions mentioned that they had found out about support programmes in different countries before moving, and it was ultimately a material factor in their choice of the country to move to.

“In general, Germany has done a lot for Ukrainians, in terms of support for almost three years, so I cannot say there is anything to complain about. [...] From courses to benefits, to apartments, to monthly allowance if you do not have a job. If you are family, you get 480 euros and 390 euros for a child. So I believe that it is quite a significant aspect for many people to choose Germany. They also pay for integration courses, public transport and so on.”

A man aged 40, → Federal Republic of Germany

At the same time, some of the study respondents told that the social benefits in the country of residence was insufficient to cover their basic needs so they looked for a job. However, the informants claimed at the focus group discussions that the level of salaries in many cases also failed to ensure decent living standards.

"The salary is 2,000 euros, 2,500 euros per month. [...] This money is not enough to survive on your own. [...] The average rent of an apartment is a room is EUR 2,000 per month."

A woman aged 48, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Looking for a job and employment

According to the Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereinafter the UNHCR)¹⁶, in the countries where it was carried out, the unemployment level among the people displaced from Ukraine was noticeably higher than the average unemployment level in those countries (14% and 3% accordingly). In our study, we are mostly focused on the job search difficulties and challenges faced by the people while working abroad.

Around half (56%) of the surveyed worked in the country of residence. 44% of them had a permanent job while remaining 12% got temporary, seasonal or project work. 21% of the respondents looked for a job. Around one third of the respondents were not employed in the country of residence due to studying (16%), health, age or pregnancy (9%), or for other reasons (6%).

¹⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, and UN Women. April 19, 2024a. "Helping Hands - the Role of Housing Support and Employment Facilitation in Economic Vulnerability of Refugees From Ukraine." UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108068>

Having a job in the country of residence

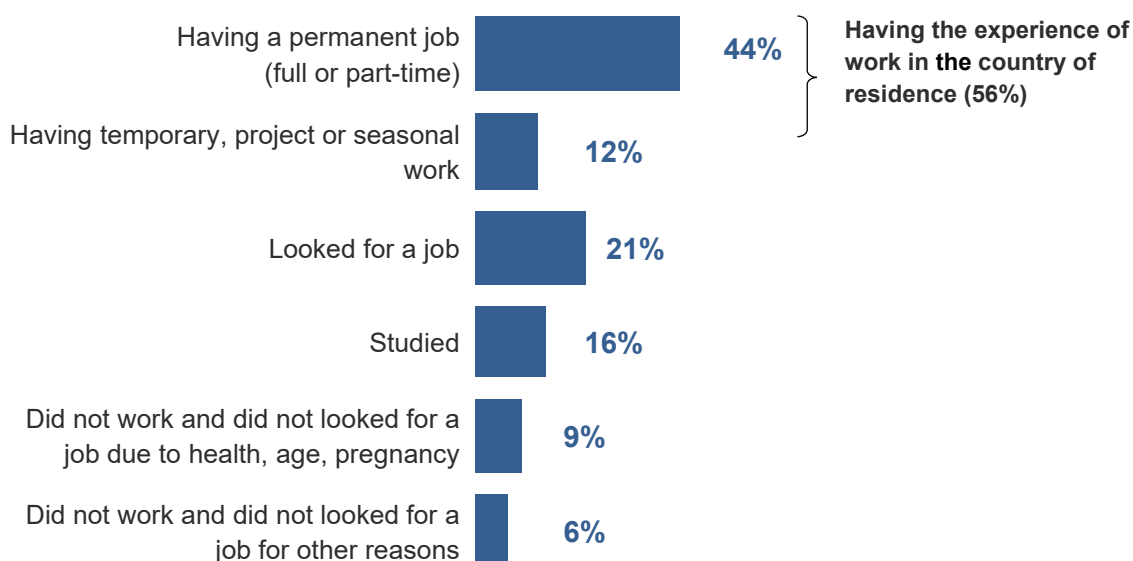


Chart 2.3. Question: “Do you have a job in Ukraine?” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,136.

There is some **dependence between a permanent job and the year of departure from Ukraine**. Thus, the share of the people employed in the country of residence among those who had left in 2022 was 47%, in 2023 — 36%, and in 2024 — 33%. In the first place, the reason was a longer period of stay in the country during which the people could learn the language and get adapted. However, several informants at the focus group discussions also mentioned that some of the countries suspended or reduced their language, integration, employment and other programmes after 2022.

“Those who arrived earlier, at the beginning of the war, almost all of them, got a job and were integrated. Those who came later have difficulty.”

A woman aged 50, → Federal Republic of Germany

More than half of the surveyed (68%) faced problems while looking for a job in the country of residence. Another 13% did not look for a job while 19% had no difficulty at all.

The most common job search difficulties were as follows: 1) the people were only offered low-qualified jobs that did not conform to their degree and work experience (36%), and 2) they had difficulty looking for a job that would be suitable for their qualifications (33%).

Problems looking for a job in the country of residence

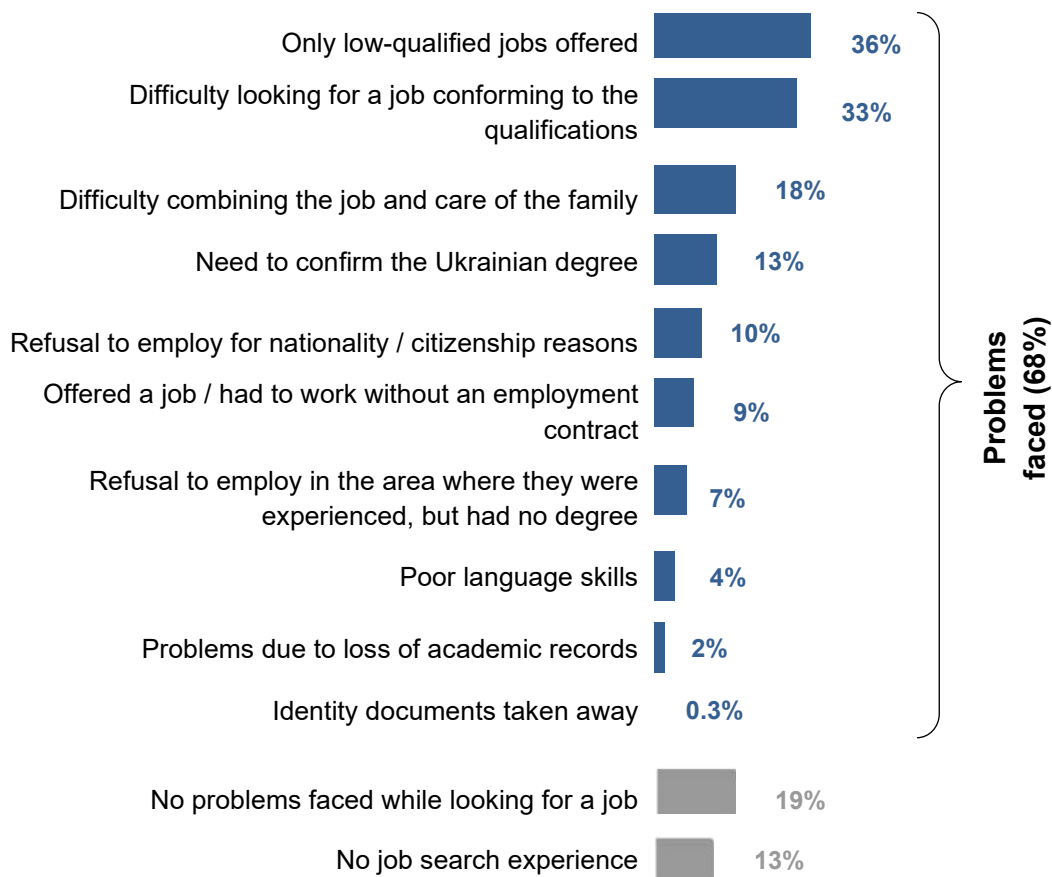


Chart 2.4. Question: “Did you face any of these problems while looking for a job in the country of residence?”. Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,135.

The theme of difficulty looking for a job was also covered by the focus group discussions. The people often mentioned that they **were only offered low-qualified jobs**. Hard physical labour harmed health of several female informants. The people also told at the discussions that they had to do low-qualified work although they could hold senior executive positions or have their own business in Ukraine. Looking for a job with the corresponding level of qualifications and competence took a long time.

“We had a large boarding house where 47 Ukrainians lived. [...] She [the social housing manager] made an arrangement with the factory, and several of us were hired, so I got to that factory. However, as I had never done physical labour before, I had never worked at night, for 12 hours, I had never carried boxes of 20 kilos, it was

really... It was a like a forced-labour camp. I did not work there long. I had a shoulder issue and had to treat it for a long time."

A woman aged 47, → Czech Republic

The participants of the focus group discussions shared their opinions on the main reasons for the difficulties the people had faced while looking for a job consistent with their qualifications in the country of residence. **The main obstacles mentioned were as follows:**

- **not knowing the language of the country of residence;**

"We don't know the language, and they do not want to hire the Ukrainians who cannot speak the language. [...] The best job you can find here is a hotel maid. Nobody cares about your academic degree. Diplomas are translated only after you get B2. However, courses do not offer B2 now, B1 at most, and there is no guarantee you will learn it."

A woman aged 50, → Federal Republic of Germany

- **need to complete additional local training** to be certified as a professional;

"I am a healthcare professional, and lots of professions in Ireland require a licence. Legalisation is very difficult. In particular, our doctors have come. It is only easier for dentists. [...] even a plumber, an electrician needs to have local ... needs to attend local courses. They can last several years, not a month, for the person to get a local paper and the right to work."

A woman aged 49, → Ireland

- **no work experience in the specific country.**

The participants of the focus group discussions told about different ways to look for a job. Several people mentioned that the local employment centres could not find them a job, which made them look for a job on their own. Some other informants had successful experience of applying to employment centres. However, the people mostly **looked for a job by viewing online ads or asking the people from Ukraine** who had already lived in the country for some time. The people were also helped at the work place by the Ukrainians who had moved before (for instance, they were explained processes etc.).

"I sometimes monitored our Ukrainian chats and what the people wrote. So I found one of such messages from the dental hospital where our people also worked. Ukrainians worked there. [...] I mean I just monitored the Ukrainian chats, responded to one of the messages, and it went on."

A woman aged 34, → Federal Republic of Germany

Refusal to look for a job was also an option for some of the informants who took part in the focus group discussions. Thus, some of the women admitted that **they had not looked for a job as they took care of minor children on their own**. Several female informants faced the situations when the employers had not hired people with small children. Moreover, the participants of the focus group discussions **mentioned the legislative rules that forbade**

leaving small children at home alone. That prevented them from getting a job. However, any way, due to lack of other sources of income, some people had to violate that rule and were concerned about effects.

“I was physically unable to work as I had come to the camp with two children, and I was told that children could not be left alone. One was fifteen, and the other one was six. I could not work. In a year, I got pregnant against. Naturally, I could not work.”

A woman aged 38, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Alternatives to looking for a job in the country of residence for some of the informants was **starting their own business**, which the people told about at the focus group discussions. They said that their own business enabled them to have decent working conditions and/or more flexible working hours to combine their job with child care.

“Well, I have completed the Slovak cosmetology course, and I am looking for a place now. Of course, there are place to rent. Because I understand that working shifts, well... the way all the salons work here. [...] It will be unreal, that's it. So I am looking for a place to rent so that I can work while the kids are at school.”

A woman aged 35, → Slovak Republic

We also asked the respondents what problems they had faced while working in the country of residence. 30% had no work experience in the country of residence, and other 28% of the people noted that they had faced no problems. However, **42% of the surveyed noted that they had faced difficulties while working abroad.**

The most common problems mentioned by the people about their work abroad was having to combine the job with care of relatives (16% of the surveyed faced the problem), the need to confirm the Ukrainian degree (10%), excessive work load (9%, refusal to promote due to poor language skills (8%), and working overtime with no payment (8%).

Problems faced while working in the country of residence

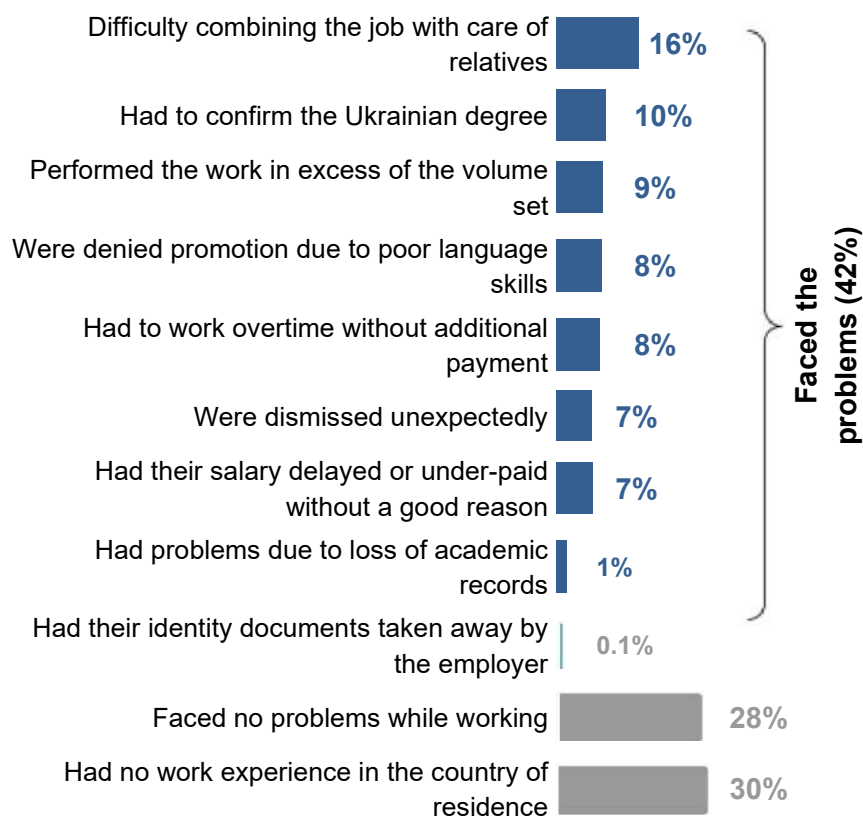


Chart 2.5. Question: “Did you face any of these problems while working in the country of residence?”. Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,132.

This matter was also discussed during the focus group discussions. **Some of the study participants told that they were less protected from dismissal due to specific aspects of documentation of employment relations in the countries of residence.** Moreover, some of the informants worked without official employment.

“I had been working for the Dutch company for three months. I had a so called zero contract that provided for nothing. You get paid for the hours you work. We were told one day that we should not come to work the next day. Without any explanation why. [...] There was no reason, no compensation. Nothing. We were only paid for the hours we had worked. That was it. There are several types of contracts. Ukrainians are given hard labour and zero contracts more often. Or the minimum wage.”

A woman aged 36, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

In the survey, we asked the respondents to state whether they had a job in Ukraine as of the dates of the survey. **The people were mostly not employed in Ukraine (67%).** 9% of the

surveyed noted that they had a permanent job, 4% had temporary, project or seasonal work, and 8% were looking for a job in Ukraine.

We observed that the longer the people had stayed abroad, the lower the probability of retaining the job in Ukraine was. Thus, the share of the respondents without a job in Ukraine among those who had left in 2022 was 69%, while that indicator for those who had left in 2023 was 63%, and in 2024 — 54%.

Having a job in Ukraine

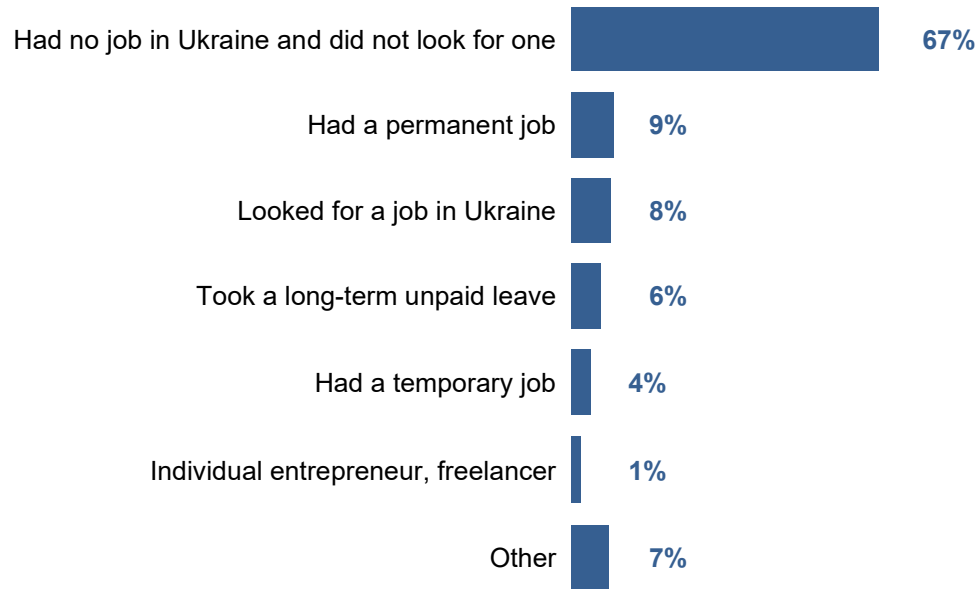


Chart 2.6. Question: “Do you have a job in Ukraine?” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,136.

The participants of the focus group discussions told that they retained their employment in Ukraine for different reasons. Thus, some of them worked for the Ukrainian organisations remotely to have additional income while others wished to keep their connection to Ukraine. For some of the informants, the job in Ukraine gave them higher income than job offers in the country of residence.

“I have an IT job with the company that works in Ukraine for the US. The IT industry in Spain is not as developed as in Ukraine so salaries are lower here. So I haven’t even tried looking for a job.”

A woman aged 31, → Kingdom of Spain

“I am a journalist, and I work as an editor in the Ukrainian media company. I have been allowed to work remotely. So I am trying to keep connected to Ukraine this way,”

A woman aged 36, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

2.4. Housing

The problem of shortage of housing and affordable accommodation in particular has persisted in the European countries for a long time and tends to get worse. Thus, from 1960 until 2015, as the population was increased by a quarter, the residential development was reduced twice (Giles 2023)¹⁷. As a result, the housing crisis caused growth of prices for real estate and more difficult access to accommodation, including the people displaced from Ukraine.

In general, the Ukrainians displaced abroad spent the material portion of their budget for accommodation. According to the Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment by the UNHCR, 40% of the total family budget of those who paid for their accommodation on their own was accommodation rental costs¹⁸ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees et al. 2024a). Our study was focused on the questions about the type of accommodation the people lived in and their living conditions as well as the housing challenges they faced.

Conditions and type of accommodation

We asked the respondents to say what accommodation they lived in as of the dates of the survey. More than **half of the surveyed** responded that **they lived in the rented accommodation under commercial conditions** (56%). The other common types of accommodation were the one rented on a beneficial basis, social housing (17% of the surveyed) and temporary refugee centres (12%). The other types of accommodation were less common. Thus, 7% of the respondents answered that they lived in host families, and 4% stayed with their relatives and friends. Only 2% of the surveyed lived in the service housing while 2% had their own accommodation.

The respondents with the bad financial position¹⁹ lived in temporary refugee centres more often than the ones (26% against 12% in the general sample).

¹⁷ Merritt, Giles. May 16, 2023. "Ukraine's Refugees Highlight the Shameful EU Housing Crisis - Friends of Europe." Friends of Europe.

<https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/ukraines-refugees-highlight-the-shameful-eu-housing-crisis/>

¹⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, and UN Women. April 19, 2024a. "Helping Hands - the Role of Housing Support and Employment Facilitation in Economic Vulnerability of Refugees From Ukraine." UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP).

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108068>

¹⁹ The surveyed asked "How would you describe your financial position?" who answered "Not enough money for food".

Type of the accommodation where the surveyed lived

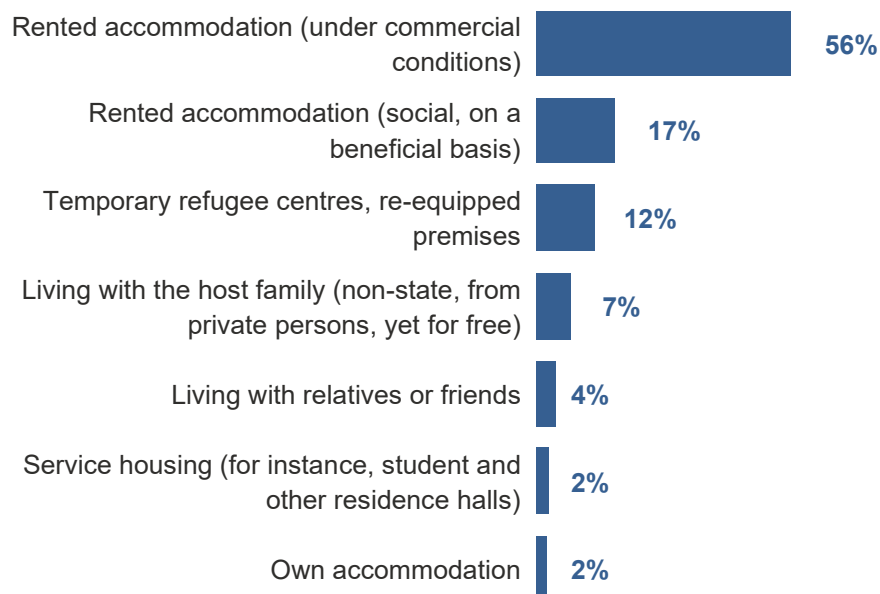


Chart 2.7. Question: "Select the answer that best describes the accommodation you are living in."
One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

We asked the respondents to specify how they paid for the accommodation they lived in. The most common situation was the one in which the people **paid for their accommodation themselves**, either in full or in part. Thus, half of the people surveyed noted that they paid for accommodation and utility services on their own (52%). 21% of the people paid for the accommodation and/or utility services in part. Another common situation was when another organisation fully paid for the accommodation and utility services (20%).

Way to pay for the accommodation where the surveyed lived

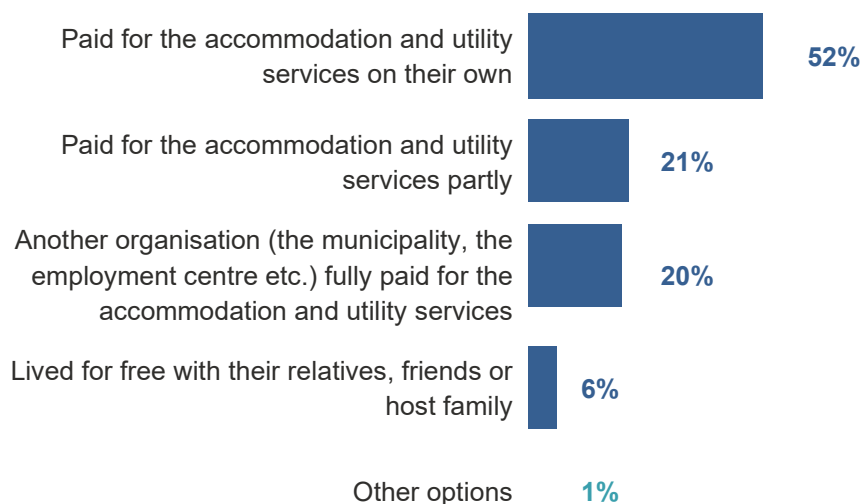


Chart 2.8. Question: “How do you pay for the accommodation you are living in?” One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

We also asked the respondents to share what accommodation problems were most concerning as of the dates of the survey. **Most of the surveyed (83%)** noted that **they had faced housing problems** while 17% had none. The most common problems were **high rent and related costs** (faced by 46% of the surveyed), **temporary accommodation** (39%) and **insufficient area** of accommodation for comfortable life (26%). Moreover, the respondents faced such problems as lack of privacy and personal space (13%), location of the accommodation far from necessary infrastructure (11%) as well as fear for their life and life of family members because of the people living around (5%).

Accommodation problems most concerning for the surveyed

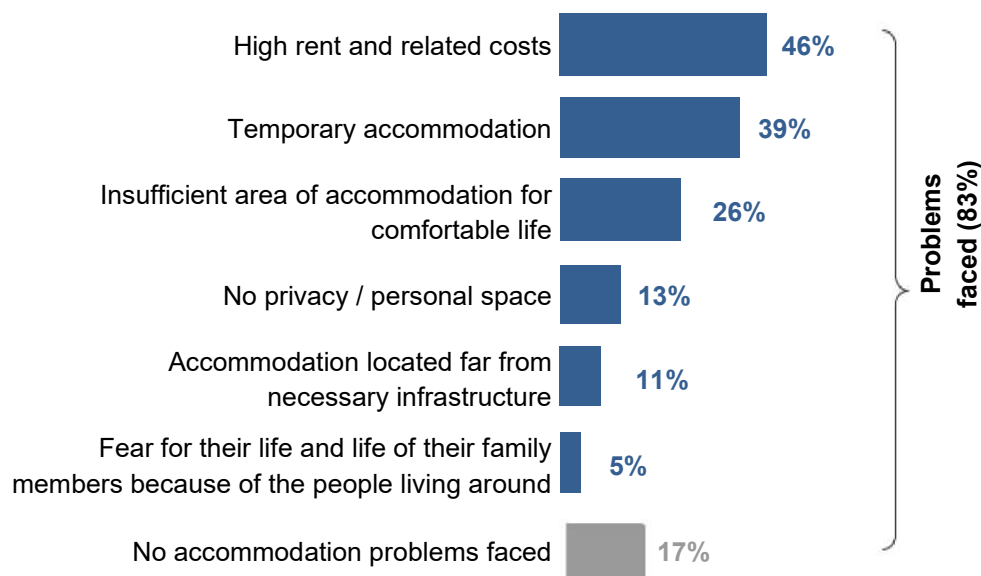


Chart 2.9. Question “What accommodation problems are your biggest concern now?” Up to three answers could be selected to answer the question. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

Temporary refugee centres, re-equipped premises

75% of the survey respondents living in the temporary centres stated that their biggest concern was the temporary permit for residence in that accommodation. At the focus group discussions, the informants told that they **felt uncertain about their future** in that type of accommodation. They did not feel that they controlled the situation as they could be made to move, or their living conditions could change any moment. In some cases, changes could be for the better: moving to a better temporary centre or a separate room, getting a social apartment. At the same time, the people were concerned that they could move to a temporary centre with worse conditions or a room with worse conditions in the same temporary centre, new people could be placed into the room etc.

The respondents living in the temporary refugee centres stated most often that **another organisation fully paid** for their accommodation and utility services (64%), or that they paid for the accommodation and utility services partly (28%). At the focus group discussions, some informants shared that they lived in temporary centres due to the **high cost of private accommodation to rent** in the countries of residence.

"We were going to rent, just rent accommodation. However, it is very difficult to find and rent accommodation at the place we live at, and in the Netherlands in general. [...] So that every child will have a room. It is impossible, and accommodation prices are sky high. I mean I understand that I am not ready to pay more than two thousand because my salary does not cover it."

A woman aged 36, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Some informants said at the focus group discussions that residence in temporary centres had been free of charge at the beginning, but the living conditions changed in the course of time. In particular, **they had to pay for utility services**. Some centres where the study participants lived arranged meals and charged the people for them. Several people from the focus group discussions mentioned that they could not refuse from meals at the temporary centre, so they paid monthly fees regardless of their intention to get the service.

Living conditions in the temporary centres differed and depended on the specific centres where the people resided. Some of the people told at the focus group discussions that they were satisfied with their living conditions, but most had problems.

Half of the survey participants (51%) who lived in the temporary refugee centres mentioned the **insufficient area of accommodation for comfortable life** as one of the most concerning accommodation problems. The participants of the focus group discussions told about the situations where lots of people could be placed into one room, and the area was inadequate for comfortable co-residence.

"Three adults and two dogs lived in a room of seven square meters, just imagine. [...] So when we woke up to go to work in the morning, we asked it in turns, 'Who is getting up?' 'I am.' So you get up and walk out carefully, then the other person does because there was a bunk bed, and the second bed would not fit."

A woman aged 44, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Half of the respondents surveyed (50%) who lived in the temporary centres recollected that they were concerned about **no privacy / personal space**. At the focus group discussions, some of the informants recollected that they **had lived in the same room with strangers**. Another inconvenience was having to share common areas, such as a kitchen, a water closet, a shower room etc. The participants of the focus group discussions also mentioned no sound insulation and conflicts arising with the other co-residents for that reason. Another aspect mentioned by the informants was no space where the people could stay on their own. In the end, some of them felt exhausted by continuous interaction with other people.

"There is a family living a floor above. I don't know, I have already told them that I will call the police. Their children do not go to bed until 2 or 3 a.m. [...] I just have no... even to talk on the phone, no. All the families are on the same floor, it gets impossible when everyone is at home."

A woman aged 48, → Federal Republic of Germany

Some of the participants of the focus group discussions were concerned about their household conditions, namely the condition of and access to kitchens, shower rooms water closets etc. Their quantity was inadequate for all the people living in the specific temporary centre. Moreover, household conditions in some cases failed to meet hygiene standards.

“Floor floors of the residence hall, a shared shower room, a water closet, a shared kitchen. [...] That’s a nightmare, you should have seen it. You get in there, and your hair stands on end.”

A woman aged 50, → Federal Republic of Germany

At the same time, some informants from the temporary centres told at the focus group discussions that their household conditions were satisfactory. Moreover, several residents of the temporary centres who were satisfied with their living conditions noted that the **conditions were much worse than those they had in Ukraine**. Some informants noted that they had to change conditions in their rooms in the temporary centres on their own to make them more comfortable.

“We have our own toilet now. It is an achievement. A shower room. [...] At least everything has been newly redecorated, with new kitchens. There is even a dishwasher. There is everything to live.”

A woman aged 36, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

According to some participants of the focus group discussions, the living conditions in the temporary centres or the social accommodation for the people coming in 2024 were worse than the ones offered to the people in 2022. The informants told at the discussions that it was connected with the fact that more comfortable accommodation had been arranged for people during the previous years while the newer temporary centres had worse conditions and were located in inconvenient places. On the other hand, some people said that there were newly-built temporary centres with better conditions in the countries of their residents.

The informants told at the focus group discussions that **living conditions in the temporary centres depended on their managers**. Managers of some temporary centres helped the residents improve their living conditions. On the other hand, some people told about the situations when the managers failed to respond to complaints against living conditions, mocked at complaints and threatened the residents that they would have to move or live with new people. Moreover, the managers of the centres could violate privacy and get into rooms without a permission and need.

“Of course, the managers have keys, and come whenever they want. When you are at work, they come and check something. I came back once to see that they had made my bed. Why, who has asked you to do that?”

A woman aged 44, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Some of the informants told at the focus group discussions that right after their evacuation from Ukraine they lived in the temporary centres for a short period of time, and then they were **placed to other accommodation** (including other temporary accommodation

centres). The people also noted that they had changed temporary centres for other types of accommodation with better conditions when they had an opportunity. For instance, they moved to social accommodation of higher quality or to host families, started to rent private accommodation.

Social accommodation and accommodation rented on a beneficial basis

The participants of the focus group discussions noted that they **tried to find an opportunity to move to social accommodation from the temporary centre**, but they sometimes failed. According to them, there was not enough accommodation of the type, and the local authorities did not provide information thereon.

“We contacted the local council to get accommodation. We accidentally found out that there were detached houses. [...] They were finishing some works, some replanning, and we got a call in two weeks to hear, ‘Yes, the house is your, you can move in.’ Well, it is practically a mission impossible in the Netherlands, especially for refugees, because they have huge housing issues.”

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The respondents living in the accommodation rented on a beneficial basis stated most often than they paid for their accommodation and/or utility services partly (44%), or that another organisation fully paid for the accommodation and utility services (39%). The informants mentioned **accommodation of different formats** at the focus group discussions: living in state or municipal accommodation, partial or full coverage of the cost of living in the accommodation rented from private individuals. The people noted that they were helped to find social accommodation by the central or local authorities of the country of their residence and charity organisation.

“Germany supports at the first stage: there are refugee camps, they people are forwarded to other regions where they can get the accommodation to be paid for by the government. So I live in a separate apartment. The government helps pay for utility services, everything except for electricity. You can choose accommodation.”

A woman aged 30, → Federal Republic of Germany

The participants of the focus group discussions told that **the living conditions in social accommodation were much better than in the temporary centres**. At the same time, some of them faced such problems as lack of personal space, poor conditions in houses, and mould in their accommodation. Some of the female informants noted that their accommodation had no furniture and household appliances from the very beginning, so they had to buy those items gradually.

The informants often mentioned at the focus group discussions that **the social housing programmes or programmes for compensation for private accommodation rent were considerably reduced in the course of time**. According to their observations, social conditions for accommodation rent were only offered to the most vulnerable groups of

people. The people who could not claim beneficial conditions for accommodation rent ceased to receive compensation for the full or partial value of the rent.

Living in host families

Some of the informants stated at the discussions that they had lived in host families. Their experiences differed and depended on the specific family they lived in.

Some of the informants told at the focus group discussions that the host families **had officially registered their residence**, so they got the financial compensation. In that context, one of the study participants complained that the host families were reluctant to offer accommodation to families composed of several people as the compensation from the government was the same as for one person hosted. Some study participants had another experience of registered residence with the host family. One participant mentioned that she received social benefits paid to her and shared them with the host family at her own discretion. Another informant insisted on the agreement with the host family herself to protect herself from eviction.

"I made it myself, I got the template of the agreement and made it to protect myself from eviction. We agreed on one year and made the agreement. It is stipulated there what I pay for, that I cannot rent out this accommodation, some other conditions, but it was my idea."

A woman aged 45, → Ireland

The respondents living in the host families stated most often that they **paid for their accommodation and/or utility services partly** (40%), or that **their accommodation was free of charge** (34%). The participants of the focus group discussions told about good relations with their host families. The host families helped them adapt to the new country. The other benefits of living with host families mentioned by the informants were that they were allowed to live with their pets, which was of help.

"Then we moved to another family, lived there for a year and a half. We developed friendly relations, and are still in contact. They support us, and we are interested in each other's life."

A woman aged 48, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The accommodation **problem** that was most concerning for the respondents surveyed who lived in the host families was a **temporary nature of their accommodation** (64%). The participants of the focus group discussions shared different reasons for which they **had to leave their host families**. Some informants told that they had bad relations with their host families, or that their host families grew tired of strangers in their home.

"However, our host family refused from us. [After that] we had to live in a hostel for the homeless for some time."

A woman aged 45, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Moreover, in some cases, the state programmes for financial support of host families were terminated, so they asked the study participants to find themselves other accommodation. The informants told at the focus group discussions that they had moved away from the host families when they had an opportunity to rent their own accommodation.

Accommodation rented under commercial conditions

The participants of the focus groups associated rent of accommodation with certain stability of living conditions, adequate space and privacy, the ability to work remotely, and decent living conditions in general. However, some people could not get and pay for rented accommodation.

Many of the people who rented accommodation told at the focus group discussions that they had **made an agreement with the landlord**. They noted that the agreement made their position more secure as they could not be evicted or rental charges could not be raised without prior notice owing to the contract.

“Apartments are rented out officially here, the owner registers them with the Ministry of Finance and pays the tax. It is good, you are protected and will not find yourself in the street.”

A woman aged 53, → Kingdom of Belgium

The study participants complained that the **landlords preferred long-term contracts**, for instance, for the period of at least three years. Most people in Ukraine could not conclude such contracts as their residence permits were shorter.

“It makes no economic sense for owners, they like to rent out for three, six or nine years, something like that. They look at our documents, and we have a permit for a year only. So they do not want to conclude a rent agreement with us.”

A woman aged 53, → Kingdom of Belgium

Several informants from the tourist cities in Spain complained against the opposite problem at the focus group discussions: the landlords wanted to conclude short-term agreements and tried to get rid of tenants in summer to rent out accommodation at much higher prices during the tourist season. The study participants also told about the practice of renting out for up to eleven months because contracts for twelve or more months allow extending them automatically and are less profitable for landlords.

Several informants noted at the focus group discussions that they had signed **an accommodation rent agreement via real estate agencies** rather than with landlords directly. They believed that the services of real estate agents made it easier to find accommodation. One of the informants said that, according to the agreement, the real estate agency undertook to repair minor break-downs in the apartment. However, the cost of services of real estate agencies was high for many people.

The study participants told that when they had moved in private accommodation, their landlords could demand security deposits in the amount of rental charges for two months or more. For instance, one informant had to sell his car to pay the security deposit.

At the focus group discussions, the informants mentioned various sources used to find accommodation to rent. They used local notice boards on the Internet and social media communities. The people they knew, both citizens of the country of residence and people from Ukraine, also helped them find accommodation to rent. In particular, they told about possible accommodation rent options they were aware of, and also have the landlords contact details of the people looking for accommodation.

Many of the informants noted at the focus group discussions that before the agreement was signed, landlords could demand **confirmation of stable income like a work contract**. Some of the participants of the study said that they had been asked to confirm having the employment contract with the income of the specific minimum level to rent accommodation.

“There are lots of difficulties when you rent accommodation. Everyone wants an official contract and asks for how many years the contract is, what kind of contract it is. However, such contracts are mostly made for a month.”

A woman aged 44, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

According to some study participants, the landlords **could be reluctant to rent out to the people coming from other countries**. The people also faced the situations where the landlords did not want to rent out accommodation because they had children or pets.

Among the people surveyed who lived in the rented accommodation, 66% stated that **the price of rent and related costs** were one of the most concerning accommodation problems. The participants of the focus group discussions shared that **search for affordable accessibility could be a long process**. In the opinion of some informants, the countries of their residence have the housing crisis, which affects both price of rent and duration of search for accommodation.

“The Netherlands generally have a huge housing problem for the locals as well. I mean, if they say in Ukraine they have difficulty finding an apartment, multiply it by 100, and that’s how hard it is to find an apartment in the Netherlands in general, for money, to buy or to rent.”

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

According to many participants of the focus group discussions, **rent of accommodation under market conditions remained non-affordable**.

One of the informants stated at the discussion that after she had moved to rented accommodation with better conditions, her charges were increased twice. Some people told that it was much more difficult to rent affordable accommodation in 2024 than in 2022. The study participants also noted that the accommodation was more affordable in the settlements without necessary opportunities, such as places to work and schools.

It was often mentioned by the participants of the focus groups that **accommodation was rented out with no furniture** in the countries of their residence. It was a problem for some of them as arrangement of their accommodation took additional time and resources. Some informants complained against the quality of the furniture in the rented accommodation as well as too many unnecessary things there.

"The living conditions are adequate, but you have to find everything yourself. I mean there was no furniture at all, only a bath. No light bulbs, nothing. It is a standard situation for Germany."

A woman aged 28, → Federal Republic of Germany

The inconveniences mentioned at the focus group discussions also included high prices of electricity and heating, which made the people **limit electricity consumption**. As a result, the temperature in their accommodation was much lower than the one they were used to in Ukraine.

2.5. Education

Education for children

Around 1.4 million of the people displaced from Ukraine are children of school age. As for formal education of such children, there are three common practices: 1) going to school only in the country of residence; 2) concurrently going to school in the country of residence and the Ukrainian school online, and 3) studying only in the Ukrainian school online. According to the study by the UNHCR on education of the children from Ukraine abroad, as of the middle of 2023, 15% of the Ukrainian children aged 5 to 11 abroad obtained no formal education, and such share of the children aged 12 to 17 made 9%. Younger children studied in Ukrainian online schools more rarely than the older ones, and mostly studied only in schools in the countries of their residence due to the limited educational opportunities offered by the Ukrainian online education to primary school²⁰. Moreover, in some countries, parents must send their children to school in the country of residence in accordance with the law of such country.

No physical attendance of school can affect social and academic development of pupils²¹, and also prevent their integration into the society in the country of residence²². This study is

²⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, and UN Women. June 26, 2024c. "EDUCATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM UKRAINE. An analysis of major challenges and trends based on Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) and other data." UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109522>

²¹ World Vision. September 2023. "Back to School 2023-2024: Report on Education for Children Displaced by the Conflict in Ukraine at the Start of the Second School Year, September 2023". Save the Children's Resource Centre. World Vision. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/back-to-school-2023-2024-report-on-education-for-children-displaced-by-the-conflict-in-ukraine-at-the-start-of-the-second-school-year-september-2023/>

²² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, and UN Women. June 26, 2024c. "EDUCATION OF REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM UKRAINE. An analysis of major challenges and trends based on Multi-Sector

focused on finding out the difficulties faced in the field of children's education and the causes of these difficulties.

We asked the respondents whether they had faced the problems associated with secondary education of their children in the country of residence. 8% of the surveyed who were abroad with the children under the age of 18 (their own children or the children they took care of) did not face the area of children's education. 25% had no problems in the field of secondary education of their children while **other 67% mentioned some problems.**

The people who stated that they raised a child on their own, took care of a person with a disability, suffered from incurable diseases or diseases that required long-term therapy faced problems in the field of secondary education **more often than the other surveyed in general.** There was also some connection between the **financial position** of the surveyed and having difficulties associated with their children's education. Thus, the respondents with the good financial position stated more often that they had no problems: 50% against 13% among the people with the bad financial position.

Needs Assessment (MSNA) and other data." UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109522>

Problems in the field of secondary education for children in the country of residence

**data estimated for the people abroad with the children under the age of 18*

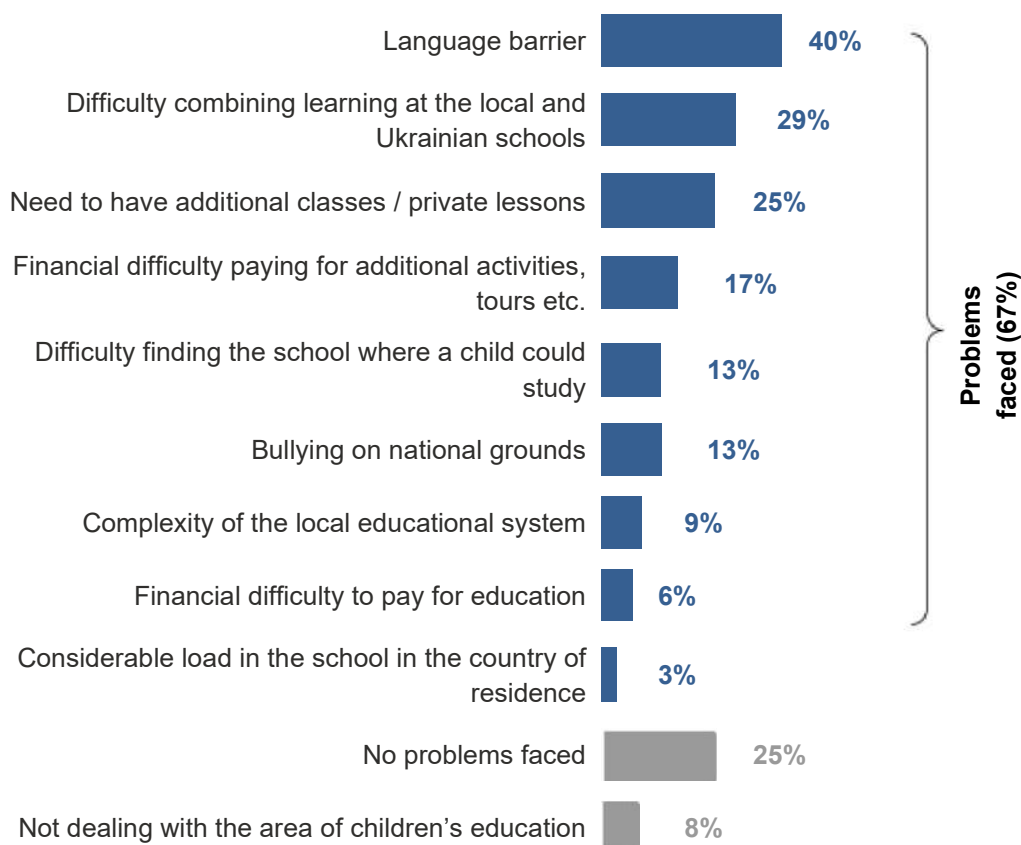


Chart 2.10. Question: "Have you faced the problems associated with secondary education of your children in the country of residence? Specify the problems you have faced below." Several answers to the question could be given. The data are estimated for the people abroad with the children under the age of 18. Number of the respondents — 2,329.

The surveyed who were abroad with the children under the age of 18 most often referred to the following difficulties in the field of children's education:

- **Language barrier (40% of the surveyed who were abroad with the children under the age of 18 faced the problem)**
 - That problem was most common among the people surveyed in most countries. It was a bit more rare in the English-speaking countries, namely United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ireland.
 - That problem was most common in Kingdom of Spain (58%) and Federal Republic of Germany (51%).

- Those who had lived in the country of residence: since 2024 generally faced the problem of the language barrier in the field of children's education more often than those who had lived in the countries since 2022 and 2023 (48% against 39% and 39% accordingly).
- **Difficulty combining learning at the local and Ukrainian schools (29%).**
 - The data obtained at the focus group discussions demonstrate that the decision to go to school in two countries was made by the parents for different reasons. Some participants of the focus groups said that their children had to study in two countries at the same time as they were not confident about their future, in particular, the ability to stay in the country of residence or to return to Ukraine. The informants shared that it created a huge burden for their children, and said that they needed the simplified Ukrainian educational programmes for the children abroad.

"However, we keep going to the Ukrainian school as we do not know when we are asked to leave. It is the biggest problem."

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

- Moreover, the decision to go to the Ukrainian school could be connected with the desire of the study participants to at least partially leave their children in the Ukrainian context and study the Ukrainian language and history. According to them, in some countries it was done owing to the Sunday schools organised by the effort of the local Ukrainian communities. However, such education was not available everywhere.
- **Need for additional classes and private lessons (25%).**
 - The data of the focus group discussions demonstrate that the need for additional classes was caused by the language barrier. However, it was difficult to find a private tutor in some countries as commonness of additional private lessons differs depending on the educational system in the country.
- **Financial difficulty paying for additional activities, tours etc. (17%).**
 - These difficulties were associated with the people's financial position. The people with worse financial position had difficulty paying for additional activities for their children more often (35% on average).
 - In some countries, free of charge additional classes were available to the local residents only.

Less common problems also differed depending on the respondents' experience.

- The share of those who faced **difficulties finding a school for their child to study made 13%**. Among the surveyed who left Ukraine in 2024, the problem was more common than among those who left in 2022 or 2023 (23% against 12% and 14% accordingly).
- **Bullying of children on national grounds was faced by 13% of the surveyed**. That problem was most common among the respondents who lived in Republic of Poland (24%) and Czech Republic (24%). The commonness of that problem was also associated with the financial position of the surveyed. The people with the bad financial position faced that problem more often.
- **The problem of complexity of the local educational system was faced by 9% of the surveyed**. That problem was common for the surveyed from Federal Republic of Germany (14%), Kingdom of the Netherlands (14%) and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (13%). It was most rare for the surveyed from Republic of Poland (5%), Czech Republic (5%), Italian Republic (3%), and Ireland (2%).
- **Financial difficulty to pay for education** was faced by 6% of the surveyed. The people who left in 2024 referred to them more often than the others (13%).

Vocational, higher and adult education

We asked the respondents whether they had faced the problems associated with vocational, higher or adult education. Among all the people surveyed, 42% did not face that area, 15% had no problems, and other **43% said they had faced the problems in this area**.

It was stated by the people most often that they had faced the problem of the **language barrier: 32%** of the surveyed had that problem in their vocational, higher or adult education.

Problems in the field of vocational, higher or adult education

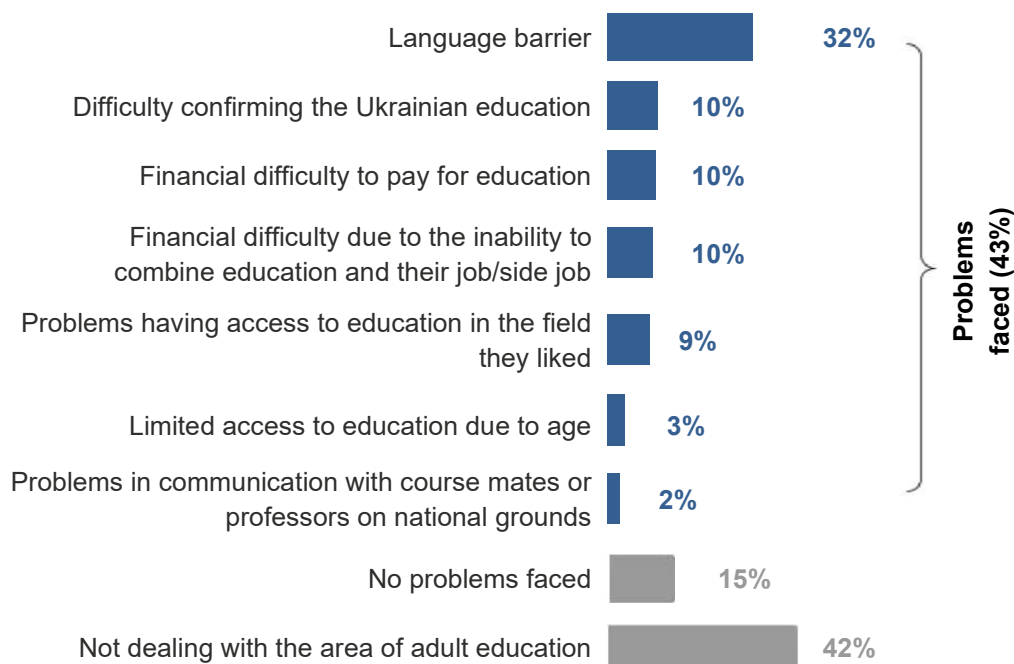


Chart 2.11. Question: “Have you faced any problems in the field of vocational, higher or other adult education? Specify the problems you have faced below.” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,129.

The data received at the focus group discussions also demonstrate that the **low language skills could be an obstacle** that prevented them from studying. Moreover, the informants who had the experience of studying shared that the low language skills **made it difficult to obtain education**.

- **Difficulty confirming the Ukrainian education** (recognition of the Ukrainian education, diploma or disciplines studied) (10%).
 - Difficulty confirming the Ukrainian education was most common among the people aged 18 to 24: 16% mentioned that they had faced the problem.
 - The difficulties associated with recognition of medical education obtained by the people in Ukraine were mentioned at the focus group discussions. For that reason, one of the study participants could not continue her internship training as the requirements in the countries differed.
- **Financial difficulty paying for education**(10%). In comparison with the other age groups, such difficulties were most often faced by the people aged 18 to 24 — 16%.

Financial difficulty paying for education were also most often faced by the people who claimed to have a low-income family: 21%.

- **Financial difficulty due to the inability to combine education and their job or side job** (10%). The problem was also most common among the surveyed aged 18 to 24 and was relevant for 17%. The people who claimed to have a low-income family also referred to that problem more often than the surveyed in general (20%).
- **Problems having access to education in the field they liked** (9%). The people with the bad financial position stated more often that they had faced the problem than the ones who assessed their financial position as good one: 15% on average in comparison with 4%.

The other problems were less common. Limited access to education due to age was faced by 3% of the respondents on average. That problem was most often mentioned by the people aged 55-64 (12%) and older than 65 (6%).

Among all the surveyed, 2% referred to the problem of negative attitude or problems in communication with course mates or professors on national grounds.

The respondents' answers about the problems they had faced did not depend on the year of departure from Ukraine or the year of starting to live in the country of residence. However, despite differences in duration of the adaptation period, people faced the above problems in adult education to the same extent.

The most common problems in the field of vocational, higher or adult education were faced by the people who suffered from incurable diseases or needed long-term therapy, the people with mental disorders as well as caregivers of such people.

2.6. Healthcare

Another question was whether the respondents had faced medical assistance problems in the country of residence.

Only **6%** of the surveyed answered **that they had not asked for medical assistance**. 18% of the respondents stated that they had faced no problems in healthcare, and other **76%** mentioned **problems**.

The most common problem associated with medical services was the **long period of waiting for the doctor's consultation** (58% faced the situation).

The share of the people facing the problem differed subject to the country of residence, but it still was the most common problem for the surveyed from all the countries.

Healthcare problems

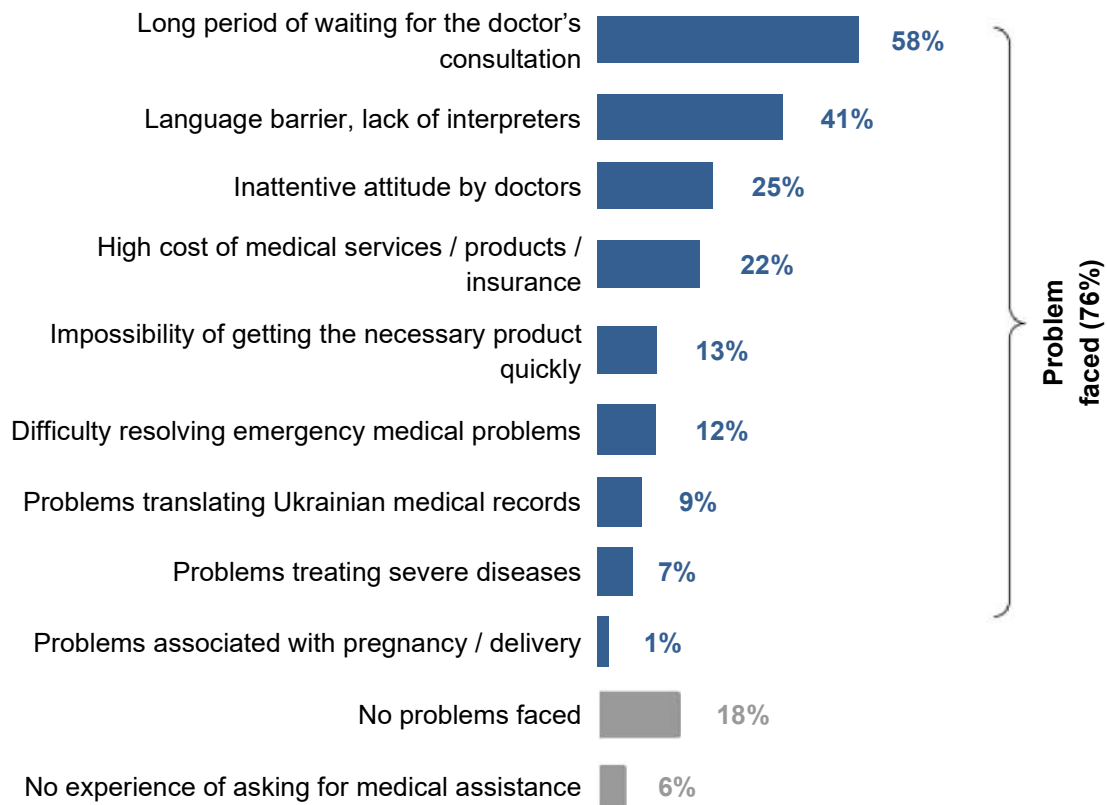


Chart 2.12. Question: Have you faced such problems in connection with medical assistance? Specify the problems you have faced below." Several answers to the question could be given.
Number of the respondents — 4,141.

The experience of the focus group discussions shows that the problem of the long period of waiting for the doctor's consultation may be associated both with the primary tier and higher ones. Even when the people wanted to get private services and to pay for them, they still had to wait for a long time. However, according to the participants of the focus group discussions in different countries, emergency assistance was more accessible.

"They need to improve access to medicine. Even for money! Because they have none. In Ukraine, if you want to take a test, you are worried about something, you need an ultrasound investigation, you just come, pay and get the service on the same day. Here you must wait for two weeks even if you have the money. If your condition is really bad, and you get to hospital, you will be taken care of and get all the services. But to get to hospital, even if you do need to get there, you will spend waiting, even if an ambulance brings you, you will spend at least seven hours."

A woman aged 45, → Ireland

The other common problems were as follows:

- **Language barrier in communication with doctors, healthcare professionals, lack of interpreters (41% of the surveyed faced the problem).**
 - That problem was less common among the people aged 18 to 35 (35%) than those aged 36 to 59 (43%) and 60% (48%). The people with the bad financial position faced the problem of the language barrier or lack of interpreters in the medical area more often than those with the good financial position.
 - **Doctors' attitude (lack of attention to the patient, shortage of time for full examination, lack of interest) (25%)**
 - That problem was most often mentioned by the people aged 18 to 35 (30%).
 - The answers of the participants of the focus group discussions were also associated with that problem. Some of the informants faced the inattentive attitude and refusal to provide efficient aid, which resulted in worse health conditions in some cases. The people also had to contact their doctors in Ukraine for that reason.
 - However, in some cases, dissatisfaction with attitude was caused by the differences in the medical system in Ukraine and the country of residence. Some of the participants of the focus group discussions did not like the approaches applied in their countries of residence.
- "Let me tell you what I don't like — medicine. All over Europe, it's just Paracetamol. You break a leg — take Paracetamol."*
- A woman aged 36, → Kingdom of the Netherlands*
- However, the informants expressed the opinions at the focus group discussions that when they got to hospital in critical situations, the attitude to patients differed, and the level of aid was high.
- **High cost of medical services / products / insurance(22%).**
 - The answers differed subject to the financial position of the surveyed: the higher the respondents assessed their financial position, the more rarely they claimed that they had problems due to the high cost of medical services.
 - At the focus group discussions, some of the informants stated that medical insurance was expensive and did not always cover all the services, for instance, a dentist, and that the services were not always accessible. However, some people had a positive opinion on such way to finance medical services.

The other problems were less common. 13% of the surveyed noted that they had **difficulty getting the product they needed quickly**. That problem was mostly faced by the people who assessed their financial position at the very low level, namely mentioned that they did not have enough money for food (22%). The findings of the focus group discussions demonstrate that the problem of getting necessary products was also connected with having to wait for a consultation for a long time. Some informants told at the focus group discussions that they needed the products they used to be prescribed in Ukraine, but they had to go to a local doctor to get them in the country of residence.

“Medicine is another disadvantage. I had to wait for half a year to get to the neurologist with my mother’s leg and back. What should we do for half a year, where to get medicines? The only thing I can buy is Paracetamol. So I have to find someone from Ukraine who will come and bring me the medicines I need.”

A woman aged 31, → Czech Republic

Most problems associated with medical assistance **were faced by the people who suffered from incurable diseases or needed long-term therapy and the people with mental disorders** as well as their caregivers more often.

In general, the answers given by the respondents **differed subject to the country of residence**, which can be associated with how the medical systems functioned in those countries as well as the support granted to the people from Ukraine there.

2.7. Demand for Support from Ukraine

When they described their stay in the other countries, the people at the focus group discussions mostly spoke about support and their demand for support from the country of residence. However, they also emphasised that they would like to feel connected to Ukraine, to keep their contacts with the Ukrainian society, and not feel isolated. Some answers were about better access to consular services and the feeling of being able to ask the Ukrainian government for help.

Applying for documents

The participants of the focus group discussions mentioned that they would like to be able to **apply for documents online and receive them in electronic format**. In particular, they noted that it would be of use to extend the list of the certificates that could be received via Diia application. The need was caused by having to go to Ukraine to apply for documents. At the same time, such trips were not affordable for all the people displaced abroad due to their cost and logistic complexity. The people with a disability do not always have an opportunity to come to Ukraine due to their health condition.

“A man told me there once that it was not his problem, and I had to resolve it myself. I had to go to Pokrovsk. I tried to understand what to do. I called Uzhhorod, called him

back and said, 'They told me in Uzhhorod that I could resolve the matter there. I am going to Uzhhorod.' [...] Well, it's not that easy."

A woman aged 35, → Slovak Republic

The informants at the focus group discussions told about **difficulty getting consular services**. Those problems were mostly associated with **logistic matters and operational peculiarities of** consular missions. For instance, the people said that it was difficult to get to the consular mission because of the high travel expenses. Moreover, several visitors to the consular mission were necessary to get certain services. In the end, the people had to either spent lots of money to get there or decide not to apply for such services, thus having expired documents for that reason. The study participants also said that the staff of the consular missions had too much work so it was quite difficult to arrange a visit.

"Yes, the situation with embassies and general consular missions of Ukraine is disastrous here. I hear all over Germany that no matter where girls go, the situation is terrible. You cannot arrange a visit. You cannot find the slot. The good thing that SE 'Document' has been opened in Munich. I went there a month ago to file documents for a new passport as mine has expired. My kid got a passport in Warsaw. Just imagine, we had to go to Warsaw to get it because there was SE 'Document' then. We went to Warsaw to get the kid a passport. 100 euros per person to Warsaw, and 100 euros back. Well, the good thing is that there are our people here who take you there and back in a day."

A woman aged 38, → Federal Republic of Germany

Some of the informants also mentioned at the focus group discussions in the context of consular services that the men without an updated electronic military record were limited in getting a re-issued passport for travel abroad.

Police services

Possibility of **remote services** was on demand for applications to the **Ukrainian police**. The female informant told at the focus group discussion that she had faced the Internet fraud as a result of which some money was debited from her bank account. She contacted the Ukrainian police to resolve the situation, but was denied the services as she was unable to personally file a paper version of the statement of fraud. The informant did not know what to do in that situation, and where to apply for help. The people also provided negative feedback on interaction with the police in the countries of their residence. Therefore, they wanted to realise that they could **rely upon help and interference by the Ukrainian representatives** where necessary.

Sensitivity to the experience of displacement

The informants told at the focus group discussions that they would like to experience **more sensitive attitude to the reasons why they had come abroad**. They wanted the society to understand that some of the people had left because their settlement had been occupied, they had lost their housing, job or source of income. Some of the people also said that they had to

live in the occupied territory for some time so they were concerned about watchful attitude by the Security Service of Ukraine and other institutions.

“For instance, I would like to be understood. The point is that some people fail to understand while someone leaves while others stay.”

A woman aged 34, → Federal Republic of Germany

Feeling connected to Ukraine

At the focus group discussions, the informants told about the need to feel the **symbolic connection with Ukraine**. They told that they maintained contacts with their friends and close people but they would also like to feel the connection between the state, the society and the displaced people. At the same time, some participants of the focus group discussions emphasised that they did not expect the connection to be maintained while the full-scale war was ongoing. They explained that the country had no resources to be used to maintain contacts with the people displaced abroad. However, they would like to have more active symbolic connection after the war. It could encourage them to return.

“We are not asking for money, food or something else. But we want to feel that we are citizens of our country. We do miss that feeling.”

A woman aged 47, → Czech Republic

“We would like to get some support from Ukraine. But I do understand they have their own problems now. Ukraine is on the edge of survival now, right? I need to win this war or at least hold on and not surrender. But I think that time will come when this matter gains relevance because not so many people have stayed in Ukraine. I don't even know what could be relevant and would not take up many resources. Of course, we want attention to understand that we belong to Ukraine [...].”

A woman aged 34, → Federal Republic of Germany

In the context of symbolic connection with Ukraine, at the focus group discussions, the people mentioned **Sunday schools and other cultural events** organised by the Ukrainians in the countries of residence. To their mind, such activities helped support the Ukrainian culture and also create the community of the Ukrainians abroad. However, the informants noted at the discussions that such **events were not accessible by everyone**. The reason was that they were mostly held in large cities. So the people who lived in smaller towns or villages could not attend them due to high travel expenses or inconvenient transport schedule. The format of such events that would cover more people should be found. The participants of the focus group discussions also emphasised that such events were often held **owing to the individual volunteers**, so it would be of use to be supported by the country of residence or Ukraine.

“There are so called Saturday Ukrainian schools. There is a minor part of the Ukrainian refugees who want to keep something Ukrainian in their children. So they organise their own activities. [The local residents] are more or less tolerant about it, offer some opportunities. Well, in our place, there is a sort of regional club, and they gave us

Saturday, 'just use the entire regional club, and clean up after yourselves'. So there are several Ukrainian classes, some signing, grammar, language and reading. Also, there are some arts and crafts for small kids. There were also concerts on St Nicolas day there, and so on."

A man aged 47

"I noted in many surveys like that something is done in large cities, there is something Ukrainian, a concert, some courses, some reading. Offline in Prague and Brno. We are mothers, there are lots of mothers with kids here, and we say — are we worse than the others? Has the government forgotten about us? There is no communication between our government and communities in small towns."

A woman aged 47, → Czech Republic

Special attention was paid by the participants of these focus group discussions to **the children's connections with the Ukrainian society**. They told about the importance of such connections, but had no idea of how it could be arranged. They assumed that the identity could be maintained by going to Ukrainian school online, but emphasised, on the other hand, that going to Ukrainian school and school in the country of residence at the same time was a huge burden.

Section 3. Returning to Ukraine

The studies demonstrate that the longer the people live abroad, the lower the percentage of those who plan to return to Ukraine might be. According to the study by the Centre for Economic Strategy, the changes reached 15% during the second half of 2023: from 41% in spring 2023 down to 26% in winter 2023-2024. The longer they live abroad, the bigger the share of those who like living abroad more than in Ukraine is, and it can also influence the intentions of the Ukrainians to return. Thus, during the second half of 2023, the percentage of those who believed the life was better abroad went up by 10% (from 12% up to 22%), and the percentage of those who believed the life was better in Ukraine went down by 15% (from 42% down to 27% accordingly)²³.

The duration of the war can also influence the attitudes and intentions to return. Thus, the number of the Ukrainian boys aged 16 and 17 grew in Kingdom of Norway in 2024. Vilde Hernes, the sociologist from the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) at Oslo Met, assumed that the teenagers left while they could officially cross the border. Around half (47%) of all the Ukrainian refugees in that country were not going to return even if the war was over while the people who had recently arrived in the country stated their intentions to stay from the very beginning more often²⁴.

According to the study about the people who have already returned to Ukraine, the most common reasons for that decision was the desire to be reunited with the family, missing home and getting back to work in Ukraine they had before 2022, the inability to get a job abroad, and no accommodation at the place of residence²⁵.

In the study, we considered in the first place what thoughts the people had when they considered returning to Ukraine, and what factors were in favour of or against returning.

²³ D. Mykhailyshyna, M. Samoiluk, M. Tomilina, O. Myronenko, Ye. Levchenko (2024). Ukrainian Refugees. Future Abroad, and Plans to Return. (Third Wave of Research). Centre or Economic Strategy.

<https://ces.org.ua/ukrainian-refugees-third-wave-research/>

²⁴ Ntb. (2024, December 28). Ukrainske flyktninger ønsker å bli værende i Norge. VG.

<https://www.vg.no/nyheter/i/wg01Bd/ukrainske-flyktninger-oensker-aa-bli-vaerende-i-norge>

²⁵ Government of Canada, IMPACT Initiatives, Save the Children, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Ukrainian Red Cross Society, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees. March 26, 2024. "What do we know about Ukrainian refugees returning home since the full scale invasion? Longitudinal Survey of Ukrainian Refugees, Round 18 — Late October/Early November 2023" ReliefWeb.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/what-do-we-know-about-ukrainian-refugees-returning-home-full-scal-e-invasion-longitudinal-survey-ukrainian-refugees-round-18-late-octoberearly-november-2023-enuk>

3.1. Thoughts about Returning

We asked the respondents whether they wanted to return to Ukraine. The data demonstrate that **the people choose different return strategies**, and neither strategy prevailed considerably. 20% of the surveyed did not have the definite opinion on that matter as of the dates of the survey. A quarter (25%) of the respondents said that they would like to return to Ukraine for permanent residence. 16% would like to live in two countries, equally abroad and in Ukraine (for instance, if they had a job with business trips or otherwise). Around one third (38%) of the surveyed would like to stay abroad. 26% out of them stated that they would like to go to Ukraine from time to time, namely visit their relatives who had stayed in Ukraine. Other 12% would like to take their relatives to the country of residence from Ukraine. It can be observed that the people over 60 were more likely to plan to return to Ukraine for permanent residence (48% against 25% in general). Moreover, more men than women planned to stay abroad and take their relatives there (20% of men and 10% of women).

The data demonstrate that, in addition to choosing between two options, to ultimately return to Ukraine or to decide to stay abroad, **many people were interested in interim options**. More than 40% of the people as of the dates of the surveyed expressed the intention **to spend some time abroad and some time in Ukraine**, or at least visit Ukraine on a regular basis.

Where you would like to live in the future

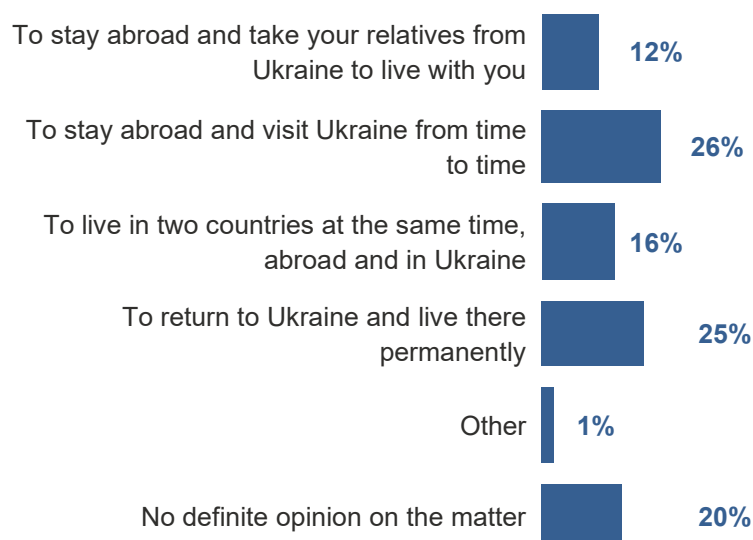


Chart 3.1. Question: "When it comes to the future, some people say that they would not like to return to Ukraine even after the war is over while others consider an option of 'living in two countries', and someone wants to return. As for you personally, which answer describes your intentions about the return to Ukraine best of all?" One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

We asked the participants of the focus group discussions whether they had considered returning to Ukraine, and what they took into account in their considerations. The informants mostly had no definite opinion on returning. The people we talked to decided not to return to Ukraine only in specific cases. As for the others, the **decision to return depended on a number of factors**, including the security situation, living conditions, employment, connections with relatives and family, educational and other opportunities for children, social protection and medical services etc.

The survey contained the questions about the factors that were vital for the people when they considered returning to Ukraine. The vast majority (**74%**) of the respondents mentioned **the final termination of hostilities all over Ukraine** as one of the most important factors. The second most common factor was **employment opportunities in Ukraine** (45% of the surveyed). Around one third of the respondents also considered safety of returning to the settlement they had lived in (36%), the desire to return to their motherland (31%), Ukraine's accession to the EU (30%), the desire to get back to their family in Ukraine (29%), Ukraine's accession to NATO (28%), and accessibility of medical services (28%). Let's consider all these factors in more detail.

Final termination of hostilities all over Ukraine	74%
Employment opportunities in Ukraine	45%
Safety of returning to the settlement they had lived in (no hostilities in the settlement)	36%
Desire to return to their motherland	31%
Ukraine's accession to the EU	30%
Desire to return to their family in Ukraine	29%
Ukraine's accession to NATO	28%
Accessibility of medical assistance, services	28%
Permission to have double citizenship in Ukraine	15%
Termination of temporary protection and support of Ukrainians by the country of residence	14%
Provision of affordable accommodation rent by the state	14%
Accessibility of social services for persons with disabilities, the elderly, single parents etc.	12%
Deoccupation of the settlement they had lived in (if occupied)	12%
Provision of temporary accommodation by the state	8%
Desire of family members to return to or leave Ukraine	7%
Cost of the ticket to return to Ukraine	5%
Return to Ukraine not considered	12%

Chart 3.2. Question: "Which factors do you find to be vital when you consider returning to Ukraine?" Up to five answers could be selected to answer the question. Number of the respondents — 4,140.

Safety

As it has been stated above, 74% of the surveyed selected safety as one of the most important factors to return. The similar trend was observed at the focus group discussions: the most common factor mentioned by the informants in their conversation about returning was **the security situation in Ukraine**. Some emphasised that they considered returning to Ukraine only if the war was over while adequate conditions for the others was no shelling or relative safety in the region (for instance, the western region of Ukraine).

The **priority of children's safety** was most often mentioned in the context of the security situation. Some of the informants said that they would have returned if they had not had minor children. They also told us during our conversations that they had left their children abroad for the time of their visits to Ukraine because they were concerned about their safety.

"Well, I understand that we might return. But I worry about my children's safety. I guess I would live there on my own, I would probably live there. When there were battle planes flying over us, I thought a missile was coming, the children ran to the bathroom, and my son ran out when it was over and said, 'Mum, my heart hurts.' [...] So I said we were packing our things. [...] I found the bus, the evacuation one, we packed our things and left."

A woman aged 36, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Some informants told at the focus group discussions that the Russian missile attacks and air raid alerts caused the **acute stress response**. For that reason, they did not consider returning to Ukraine while the war was ongoing.

"I am definitely not coming back until the war is over. Because every time we go there, there are air raid alerts all the time, and something explodes. I get panic attacks, I can't stay there. I physically can't."

A woman aged 47, → Czech Republic

In addition to the final termination of hostilities all over Ukraine, **36%** of the respondents in the survey mentioned **safety of returning to the settlement they had lived in** as one of the most important factors. That factor was most often mentioned by the people from the frontline regions and regions at the border with the Russian Federation (43% against 24% of the people from the other regions of Ukraine). Other **12%** considered **deoccupation of the settlement they had lived in** before the displacement.

These factors were often mentioned at the focus group discussions as well. The people from the frontline or border communities of Ukraine talked about safety of returning to their settlement most often. They also shared their concerns that they would be unable to feel safe in those regions for a long time due to proximity to the Russian Federation.

"Excuse me, but where can I settle down again? [...] I used to dream, well, we used to dream of buying housing in Chernihiv or Kharkiv. Now we don't. [...] For instance, we are unlikely to return to Kharkiv because Russia is not going to disappear. I do not want my children to live so close to it."

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The participants of the focus group discussions from the temporarily occupied territory or the territories with hostilities often said they **had nowhere to return**. Some of them considered returning to the territory controlled by Ukraine, but they were worried about possible challenges associated with looking for accommodation and a job. Some people considered living in the settlements where their relatives or acquaintances lived.

"We know nobody in the west. We have considered this option, I searched, tried to find some connections, but they say the right thing about prices. You need a good salary to rent accommodation in western Ukraine or even in the centre, to survive with children there."

A woman aged 48, → Federal Republic of Germany

One of the informants from the territory occupied since 2014 admitted that she would not consider returning to her home settlement even if it had been deoccupied as she was concerned about political views of the locals. The return to their home settlements could be traumatic for some people who had survived the occupation, because of the memories. Thus, they could live in constant fear and see the people they knew die. For that reason, their home settlements were closely associated with the emotions they had experienced, so they did not consider returning there. At the same time, it was emphasised by some of the informants at the focus group discussions that they only wanted to return to the settlement they had lived in.

"[I will return] only in case the city is deoccupied. I mean the problem is not whether our accommodation is intact or not. The problem is that ... I don't know whether you have been to [name of the city], it is a wonderful city. It is the most wonderful city in the world [...]. So the most important things for us are safety and no Russians in our territory. Something like that. As for the state support, it is probably not so important for our family. We will help ourselves."

A man aged 39, → Federal Republic of Germany

At the focus group discussions, we also asked the informants from the temporarily occupied territories and front-line territories whether they were aware of support programmes for internally displaced persons in Ukraine. The people we talked to mostly **heard about benefits paid to IDPs mostly** from their relatives or acquaintances in Ukraine. They noted that the **level of that support was inadequate** and could not satisfy even their basic needs. The informants could not recollect any other support programmes during the conversations.

"Well, yes, I know because our entire town has been displaced. Well, not everyone has gone abroad, and as for Ukraine, I have heard of these support programmes. But if you compare, they are probably even at the lower level than in Slovakia. [...] So... this support does not really help. It is minimum. You cannot survive with that. Especially when... I know when you leave in your pyjamas, only with your passport, it's difficult."

A woman aged 35, → Slovak Republic

“Everything I have heard about the IDPs who got it, my cousin, they are in [name of the city] with their mother, they got registered as IDPs. They were paid around two thousand hryvnias for some time. And then the payments stopped. Now my cousin only gets a social scholarship [...] as an IDP. [...] But it’s also less than two thousand hryvnias if I’m not mistaken. It is little money, especially after you have lived here. So I cannot go to Ukraine relying on such ‘powerful’ support.”

A woman aged 26, → Republic of Poland

Employment

As it has been stated above, almost half of the surveyed (45%) referred to employment opportunities in Ukraine as one of the most important factors for the return. That factor was mentioned as an important one by women more often (48% against 28% among the men). In particular, it can be associated with gender-based discrimination at the labour market. **Job opportunities and decent salaries** were also often mentioned at the focus group discussions in the context of return. The study participants were concerned whether they would be able to earn enough to live in Ukraine due to inflation. The people who were doctors and teachers mentioned their low salaries in Ukraine. It prevented them from thinking about returning.

“I did believe that when I graduated, I would be referred to internship training, and as I had very good score, I could go to Kyiv, and wanted to practice surgery. [...] I thought I might want to return, but it will be too much financially because the only people I have in Ukraine are my mother, grandmother and grandfather. They could not help me. I mean I will have to ask them to help because my salary is 6,300.”

A man aged 23

Another problem mentioned by the informants at the focus group discussions was **employment difficulties for the middle-aged and elderly people**. They were concerned that they would not be able to find a job as they had faced age-based discrimination in employment. One of the female informants doubted whether her partner from another country would be able to find a job in Ukraine.

“I had a job there, but I am not returning to it. You know, at my age, nobody will hire me to a more or less well-paid job.”

A woman aged 47, → Czech Republic

Some people could not find a job in the country of residence or were dissatisfied with their job because they did not work in their specialisation or in the position consistent with their experience and qualifications. In such cases, employment opportunities in Ukraine encouraged the people to return.

Housing

14% of the respondents of the survey referred to **provision of affordable accommodation rent by the state** as one of the most important factors they took into consideration in the

matter of returning. Another 8% selected **provision of temporary accommodation** by the state.

The informants often mentioned accommodation as an important factor at the focus group discussions. Some of the informants said that they would like to stay in the country of residence if they had access to the accommodation in which they lived as of the moment of the conversation. Those who had **their own accommodation in Ukraine** mentioned it as the factor **that might make them consider returning**. We described living conditions of the people abroad in the sub-section 2.4 “Housing”. Some study participants were dissatisfied with the living conditions and high accommodation rent prices. Moreover, several informants mentioned **impossibility of buying accommodation abroad**. It also encouraged them to consider returning.

“And I don’t know, I mean if I could buy accommodation here, I guess I would not consider returning. But it is practically impossible here, so I am considering the return.”

A woman aged 35, Donetsk Region → Slovak Republic

The informants from the **temporarily occupied territories** expressed their concerns about housing following their return to Ukraine more often than the others at the focus group discussions. They were worried that they would have **difficulty looking for accommodation to rent as well as paying for rent**. The matter of affordable rent worries not only the people from the temporarily occupied territories, but also those who had no own accommodation.

“I want to return home, but there is nowhere to return. Accommodation is the first problem. There is just nowhere to return.”

A woman aged 31, → Czech Republic

“I am divorced, and I don’t have my own accommodation in Kyiv. [...] I have a job to return to, but the money they will offer is not enough to rent accommodation, provide for my daughter and myself even if my son stays here.”

A woman aged 45, → Ireland

Moreover, the people at the focus group discussions mentioned the need to have **temporary free accommodation** for the initial period to adapt to living in a new settlement.

“Well, I guess that if I returned, I would to the controlled territory. It could be temporary free accommodation, possible, to adapt for some time. Because I am not coming back into the occupation. My city has been occupied since 2014. [...] Well, I believe, we need accommodation for the initial period. Well, it is not such a problem for young people, to find a job and so on. I mean, we need conditions for the initial period. I mean, to adapt.”

A man aged 26, → Republic of Poland

Community, Country, and Close People

During the survey, 31% of the respondents noted that the important factor was the **desire to return to their motherland**. Some of the informants also said at the focus group discussions that they wanted to be in Ukraine. The reasons they mentioned was the ability to speak their native language, to be in the environment with clear administrative procedures etc. Moreover, some participants of the focus group discussions spoke about the sense of responsibility for their country and the wish to help.

“Lots of young people have left, and many are at war now. So it turns out that several generations, like, Z and Y, right, and some more, are at war, several generations just drop out. It will be very difficult for the state. There will only be the elderly and very young people, children, who still are children. So it will be sort of very difficult unless we return.”

A woman aged 27, → Kingdom of Spain

At the same time, the people at the focus group discussions often expressed **their concerns about possible negative attitude by the people who had not left Ukraine**. Some told that they had already been condemned for being abroad, and worried the condemnation would grow stronger after the return. Some of the people did not understand what attitude to expect in case of their return, and were concerned that it could be negative. One of the informants with such concerns was a combatant. The informants told at the focus group discussions that they considered it as the factor that prevented them from returning to Ukraine.

“I know that I would be hated strongly for being here at home. I am hated all the time. Although we left officially with the daughter with a disability, we still are hated strongly.”

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

“Also, to be honest, I fear the reaction. [...] How will I be treated when I return, who will I be in their eyes?”

A man aged 23

29% of the surveyed noted the **desire to return to the close people in Ukraine** as an important factor in the context of returning to Ukraine.

The survey contained the separate question about having relatives and close people in Ukraine. It was noted by 17% of the respondents that they had a partner in Ukraine. The major share of the surveyed had relatives of different degree of kinship in Ukraine: a parent (58%), a sibling (43%), a grandparent (19%), a child (11%), a grandchild (2%). 46% of the respondents noted that they had other relatives in Ukraine. More than half of the surveyed answered that they had friends or acquaintances in Ukraine (58%).

Close people staying in Ukraine

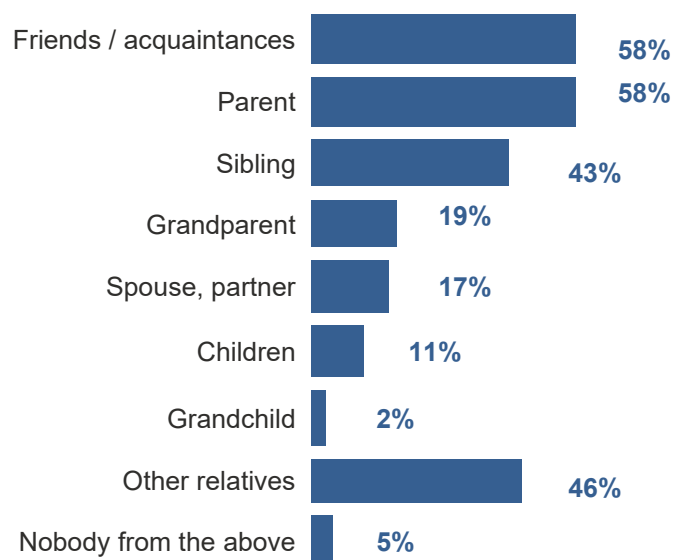


Chart 3.3. Question: “What relatives / close persons of yours have stayed in Ukraine?” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,137.

The people also often mentioned close people in Ukraine at the focus group discussions. It was a factor that encouraged them to return. At the same time, some informants considered helping their close people move to the country of their residence from Ukraine.

“I do want to return because, anyway, my parents, brother and sister live there. They all are there. I am alone here, like a bird out of the nest. Me, my husband and my kid. Just three of us. It is our little family, but the larger part of the family is there. Our friends, our circle, godparents of our kid, everyone is there. I guess everyone understands what I mean.”

A woman aged 28, → Republic of Poland

The desire of close people to return to or leave Ukraine was mentioned as one of the most important factors in the matter of returning by 7% of the surveyed.

Some informants also said at the focus group discussions that the relatives who were with them abroad wanted to return to Ukraine.

“My daughter has a hard time living outside Ukraine. She is fully concentrated on Ukraine. All her friends are in Ukraine, and she is always in touch with them. She has been taking anxiety medication for a year, it was prescribed by the psychologist as she was very deeply depressed. [...] Depression is gone as soon as she comes to Ukraine even for a week.”

A woman aged 45, → Ireland

Children

The **well-being of children** was one of the factors mentioned most often in the context of returning to Ukraine at the focus group discussions. The informants who stayed abroad with their children considered their comfort and opportunities in the first place, in addition to the security factor. They often **compared the opportunities for their children in Ukraine and abroad**. Some of the parents noted that the countries of residence had a better pre-school and school education system, more educational opportunities, and better social support for children and families with children.

The study participants were ready to stay in the country of residence for the sake of their children although they wanted to return to Ukraine. Several informants admitted that their adolescent children wanted to return to Ukraine but they tried to persuade the children to stay abroad as they believed the children would have better opportunities in the future.

“To my mind, a lot depends on children. When you feel that your child is better off there, you start thinking if you actually need Ukraine, unfortunately. [...] I mean, you understand that you must live, actually compete with the others in our country. You must make your way with your elbows, as they say, and so on. You must compete all the time. There it is different, they are more social. [...] I have just seen where, actually, the children are, and the present-day market conditions in which we must live here [in Ukraine].”

A man aged 47

“Education in [name of the settlement] is partly online, partly offline, with bomb shelters. So we study remotely at our school. They keep studying in Ukrainian school and taking tests there. But I see that well ... we will lose a lot in our children's education. So to say, we have got addicted to this normal education here. I don't want to lose it.

A woman aged 46, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Moreover, the participants of the focus group discussions talked about **integration and adaptation of children to the educational system** in the countries of residence. They were concerned that return to Ukraine would increase their children's stress level as they would have to adapt to new conditions again. Such considerations were especially relevant for the children who had started their school education abroad and had no experience in the Ukrainian educational system.

“My middle child was in the kindergarten, and he went to school for the first time here. He is getting used to this system and this world in which he is now. As far as I get, if we return to Ukraine, the question is how to combine the knowledge they have gained here with the Ukrainian system. How to integrate them into this educational system and so on. To be honest, I don't know.”

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Healthcare and social protection

28% of the respondents of the survey referred to **accessibility of medical assistance and services** as one of the most important factors in the context of return.

12% of the surveyed considered **accessibility of social services for persons with disabilities, the elderly, single parents etc.** to be important.

The matter of medical assistance was concerning for the people with a disability or with children with a disability or autism spectrum disorders among the participants of the focus group discussions in the first place. Several informants with a disability told about the cases of **inadequate or non-ethical treatment by healthcare professionals in Ukraine**. One of the informants told that **she did not have enough money for medicines in Ukraine** while the country of residence provided them free of charge or at a discount under the state programmes.

"When I was at home, I received my pension, and could not buy necessary medicines. Here I can, both me and my husband suffering from chronic diseases receive medicines from the state. So we have no problems with that. I cannot imagine how to return home. I will be locked up at home again, so I have no idea. As for the medicines I get, one of the items is a painkilling patch, and it is not available in Ukraine, there is no form of painkilling."

A woman aged 49, → Ireland

"I came to hospital, and asked to arrange a visit with my GP. I needed some manipulations, to cut it short, lots of things. She told me something, but I don't have a membrane in my left ear, so I don't hear well. I asked to repeat. Something like 'I didn't hear what you said. Could you repeat please?' And she responded, 'Are you deaf? Why are you here? I'm telling you, go upstairs!' Why shout, for God's sake?"

A man aged 50

Several **people with a disability** who took part in the focus group discussions **wished to stay abroad**. The reasons they mentioned was inaccessibility of residential buildings, transport, public spaces as well as the complicated procedure for obtaining technical rehabilitation products (TRP) or the cases in which they had received non-conforming TRP. The thought of having to return to Ukraine made one of the informants worry so she wanted to stay abroad.

"I had no chances, nothing at home. I just lay and even though I had a wheelchair, in the apartment [...] it could not get into the bathroom, the kitchen, the toilet, nowhere. I was given out an electrically-driven wheelchair in Ireland. My disease is progressing, [...] so I could not use my mechanical wheelchair. [...] There is transport, there are roads, there is everything here in Ireland [...]. I am terrified to think how I will return."

A woman aged 49, → Ireland

Some of the informants also spoke about **pension coverage and its inadequate level in Ukraine** at the focus group discussions. The study were concerned about their parents of pension age in Ukraine and though about their own position at the pension age.

“I also don't know what my parents should expect. They don't have many pensionable years. And I understand that they will not get a high pension. If I return to Ukraine to a civil service position, I don't understand how I and my children will survive at old age. Not that good.”

A woman aged 28, → Federal Republic of Germany

Political factors

Around one third of the respondents of the survey mentioned **Ukraine's accession to the EU (30%) and NATO (28%)** as one of the most important factors considered in the context of return. The participants of the focus group discussions also mentioned those factors in the context of potential improvements in the security and economic areas. Some informants said that they wished Ukraine had the higher level of economic development and living standards, and it would encourage them to return. During the conversations, the informants also reflected upon security guarantees for Ukraine. They considered them more broadly than accession to NATO. Some people could not say what they would perceive as sufficient security guarantees to return.

“I don't want my child to go to war as a volunteer the way his father did in 12 years, when it all happens again [...]. So I need clear guarantees to return. Very clear so that I will understand what's next. [...] I need guarantees that my child will not have to fight the war against Russia. What are the guarantees? I don't know.”

A woman aged 40.

The important factor in the context of “living in two countries” for **15%** of the surveyed was **permission to have double citizenship in Ukraine**. One of the participants of the focus group discussions shared that she had met the partner abroad, and if they married, she would like to have double citizenship and go to Ukraine without additional formal procedures for any period of stay. A job or business in Ukraine was another reason for which the people wanted to keep their citizenship so that they could continue their economic activity.

The factor of **termination of temporary protection and support of the people from Ukraine** by the country of residence was important for 14% of the respondents. As it was stated in sub-section 1.2 “Residence Permit”, some of the participants of the focus group discussions planned to get other types of residence permits in case temporary protection was over. However, some informants were not going to stay in the country of residence in that case. They were more likely to return to Ukraine in case of that situation.

“I will come back home, I have things to do there. I will come back home and live. I will live at home. Well, what can I do? Well, there will be no temporary protection — okay, we have been for three years, it's a lot. It's super a lot. Moreover, well, I will return as a mentally health person, contrary to the people living in Ukraine, who suffer from

mental disorders now, and the situation is tense there. And I will return full of energy and take on the world."

A woman aged 46, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

"I would consider how to return [in case the temporary protection is cancelled]. Well, to another part of the country that is not that dangerous. Because. The Netherlands are very expensive. You must earn a lot. I'm alone with the child, it's very difficult. I see no use staying."

A woman aged 46, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Duration of Living Abroad

The number of the people who would like to return to Ukraine tends to go down depending on the duration of their stay abroad. Thus, 31% of those who moved in 2024 would like to return to Ukraine and always live there, while the number of those who had lived abroad since 2023 was 29%. The share was lower in the group of people who left abroad in 2022 (24%).

The participants of the focus group discussions also paid attention to that factor. Some informants stated that **the longer they lived abroad, the lower the probability of their return to Ukraine was**. In addition to integration into the society of the country of residence, they also mentioned such practical aspects as carrying the things they had acquired since their departure from Ukraine, housing, employment plans and other affairs. The participants of the study also admitted that they would have difficulty deciding to move because of those difficulties.

"I understand that the matter of returning to Ukraine will be very painful, and will take up lots of effort and energy. The longer you stay, the lower the chances of returning are. Although I am going to. I just cannot imagine how it will be done."

A woman aged 26, → Republic of Poland

"There is another aspect: to put it in crude terms, we were torn away from the place where we lived and planned our future by force. I mean, we were torn away from the city, from the social circle, from relatives, from all our life. And here you are sort of accustomed to living, you have started something new, you have stable new life.

[...] You have created this island of stability. Now you have to abandon it and get back. Where? To what? I don't know, it's very... You need courage for this."

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Belonging to the community

In addition to the factors mentioned above, the degree of the people's integration into societies of the countries of residence also matters. The people who did not feel integrated into the society of the countries of residence are more likely to decide to return.

"I am planning to return. I have not been integrated into the society, I have no friends or job here. I am not going to get a job here. I am going to return to Ukraine. Not tomorrow as tomorrow still is dangerous, but... Well, I do my best to stay in Ukraine mentally. [...] So I, well... i try to be involved into life in Ukraine as much as possible, I go there a lot."

A woman aged 46, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Maintaining permanent connections with close people, acquaintances and the community created the **sense of belonging to the community in Ukraine**. The informants told at the focus group discussions about permanent communication with the people in Ukraine and their visits to Ukraine, expressed their concerns about possible negative response to their stay abroad more rarely. Communication and visits enabled the study participants to get a better understanding of the context of the situation in Ukraine.

"We also lived in Poland for a year and a half, for almost two years. I came back home. My acquaintances, by relatives, nobody judged me for leaving or something like that. Nobody hinted, contrary to what they had done there. [...] I can't say that I just set and did nothing abroad. I kept reposting, collecting donations, all the time. [...] I faced no condemnation."

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Ability to provide for themselves

In this context, **support by and connection with the community** are important. As it has been stated above, the informants shared their observations about the assistance granted to the internally displaced persons in Ukraine during the discussions. They did not find it adequate so they did not expect the government to support them when necessary. Therefore, the study participants often said they must understand that they would be able to organise their own life in Ukraine.

In the first place, it was a matter of **accommodation at affordable prices, with decent conditions and secure rent**. They also mentioned work or own business during the focus group discussions. It was important to people, both in terms of professional self-fulfilment and to **maintain their decent living standards on their own**. The informants told us during our conversations that they would like to get a job with the salary that cover their basic needs: accommodation, food, clothing, medicines, education, and necessary appliances. As for their own business, the people mentioned the importance of **transparency of the procedure and no corruption**. The people also referred to access to **quality medical and social services** so that they could be sure that they could rely on assistance in case of a disease or a complicated situation.

In that context, they mentioned affordable **tickets to return** to Ukraine, which was important for 5% of the respondents. It can also mean that the people in the bad financial position can be prevented from returning without limitation by the high cost of the trip to Ukraine.

3.2. Visits to Ukraine, and Connection with Ukraine

We asked the respondents of the survey how often they had visited Ukraine for the last year. The surveyed mostly **had not visited Ukraine or had visited Ukraine quite rarely** for the last year. Thus, more than half (56%) of the surveyed answered that they had not been to Ukraine for the last year. Around one third (30%) of the respondents had been to Ukraine once for the last year. Much fewer people had been to Ukraine more often: 10% of the surveyed answered that they had been to Ukraine once every six months, and 4% had once every two or three months. Only 0.3% of the respondents had been to Ukraine once a month or more often. Most people from the frontline and border regions of Ukraine had not been to Ukraine (60% against 48% of the people from the other regions of Ukraine).

Visits to Ukraine for the last year

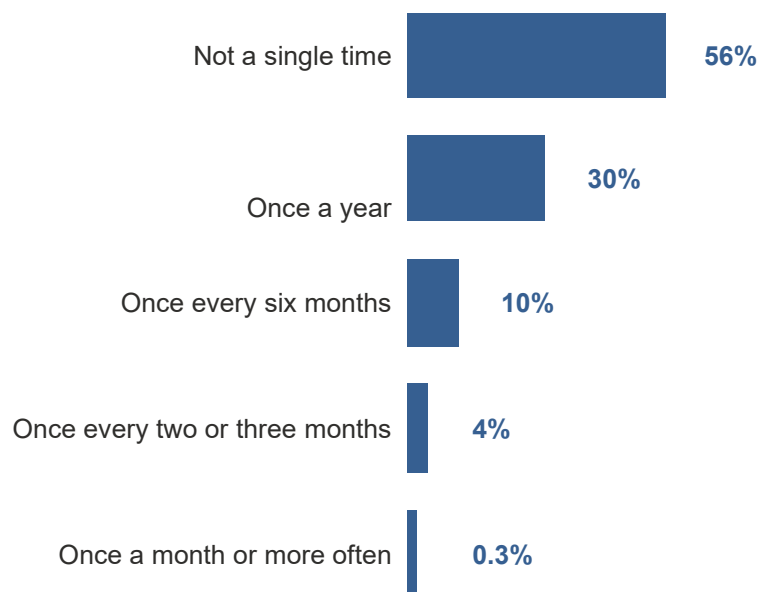


Chart 3.4. Question: "How often have you visited Ukraine for the last year?" One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

At the focus group discussions, the informants shared the factors that prevented them from visiting Ukraine. One of the main factors was safety: some study participants **were worried about possible missile attacks and air raid alerts**. One of the informants noticed the difference between her own attitude to air raid alerts and the attitude of her acquaintances. She noted that the people in Ukraine were used to them while she was stressed by the air raid alerts. The informants with the children told at the focus group discussions that they were

afraid to take children to Ukraine as they were concerned about their safety. They would like to go to Ukraine on their own, but they had nobody to take care of their children abroad.

During the conversations, the informants mentioned the considerable **duration of the trip** to Ukraine: as there were no flights to Ukraine, the trip could take several days. The trips were exhausting for some study participants. Another was the **need to get a permit to travel** to Ukraine from the employment centre or other institutions in the countries of residence, and the small number of days for which the permit to travel to Ukraine was granted. Moreover, some informants told at the focus group discussions that trips to Ukraine were **a financial burden**.

“However, there is a new aspect associated with staying abroad with our status: you do not have the right [to go to Ukraine] for more than two weeks a year or something like that. And, to put it in crude terms, the trip takes a very long time. I travel two or three days to visit my parents. It is very exhausting, takes up lots of time that I could spend more efficiently. However, I still travelled like that. And I was very happy about it.”

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Some of the people we talked to at the focus group discussions told that they **had nowhere to go to in Ukraine** as their settlements were occupied or were located in the combat zone. Several informants also admitted that they had lost connection with their friends and acquaintances in Ukraine, so they felt there was no reason to go.

“I haven’t been there. Well... All my relatives are in Donetsk Region. Absolutely all of them, both close and remote. [...] I haven’t been there because it is always dangerous there, and there is a risk of leaving children here. Even if I do miss my parents, I don’t want to risk. And now our town does not exist anymore. So as if... I do want to go, but there is no place to go.”

A woman aged 35, → Slovak Republic

Another reason preventing the people from going abroad was the **conditions for crossing the border**. The man who had the conscription deferral or were removed from military records as a result of the injury during the military service noted at the focus group discussions that they still were concerned about not being allowed to leave Ukraine on their way back.

“Look, I can go as the veteran who has been released. However, I also believe that there are lots of problems as Ukraine keeps deteriorating the conditions for crossing the border. I can travel for now, but I’m not sure I will be able to next year. [...] For instance, I have brought humanitarian assistance not only to Kyiv, to [name of the town at the frontline] to my fellow soldiers.”

A man aged 47

During the survey, we also asked the respondents **why they had travelled to Ukraine**. The most common factors that made them go to Ukraine were to visit their family or friends

(32%), to get medical services (26%), to receive documents (24%), to be at home (22%), and to pick up or buy necessary items (13%).

Purpose of visiting Ukraine



Chart 3.5. Question: "If you have been to Ukraine, please specify the purpose of your visit²⁶." Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,134.

One third (32%) of the surveyed said that they had travelled to **see family and friends**. That factor was also mentioned at the focus group discussions most often. The people we talked to wanted to see their relatives. Also, the trips to Ukraine satisfied their communication needs as the people had friends and acquaintances they could meet there.

"In general, we go to Ukraine with my child to see my husband quite, well, I don't know if it is often or not, once every three or four months. He has also managed to come to us, he has been allowed to come for two weeks, but I don't know how to explain it, two weeks are nothing."

A woman aged 40.

26% of the surveyed answered that they had been to Ukraine **to get medical services**. Those answers were also given by the participants of the focus group discussions. They said that they had travelled to Ukraine to see the doctor, especially the dentist.

"We, all my three trips were to the dentist. When I left Ukraine, I had braces installed. I have also had the implantation. I mean, in my case, it is dental tourism to Ukraine."

A woman aged 26, → Republic of Poland

²⁶ The question was not only about trips last year, but generally during their entire stay abroad following the displacement. Therefore, the share of the people who have not been to Ukraine at all differs from the data in the chart "Visits to Ukraine for the last year".

24% of the respondents noted that they had travelled to Ukraine to **pick up or receive necessary documents** while **13% needed to pick up or buy necessary items**. Some participants of the focus group discussions also went to Ukraine for those reasons. In particular, they travelled to resolve their real estate, business or other matters.

"I can say that I have been to Ukraine three times for this period. In 2022 for the first time to pick up our belongings from the rented apartment after we had moved abroad. Then I went there twice to get documents and to see my relatives."

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The purpose of visit of **22%** was to **be in Ukraine and to feel that they were at home**. The participants of the focus group discussions confessed that those visits had improved their emotional background.

Few respondents mentioned other reasons to visit Ukraine: to help carry relatives or friends abroad (2%), to pick up pets and take them abroad (2%), to sell real estate in Ukraine (2%), and to attend temporarily occupied territories (1%).

News about Ukraine

During the survey, we asked the people how often they looked up information and news on the situation in Ukraine. The vast **majority (80%)** of the surveyed answered that they **had read news about Ukraine daily or several times a day**. 12% of the respondents looked up information on Ukraine several times a week. Around 5% of the surveyed found news on Ukraine more rarely: several times a month (3%) and once a month or more rarely (2%). Only 3% of the respondents noted that they were not interested in the news about Ukraine at all.

Frequency of learning news about Ukraine

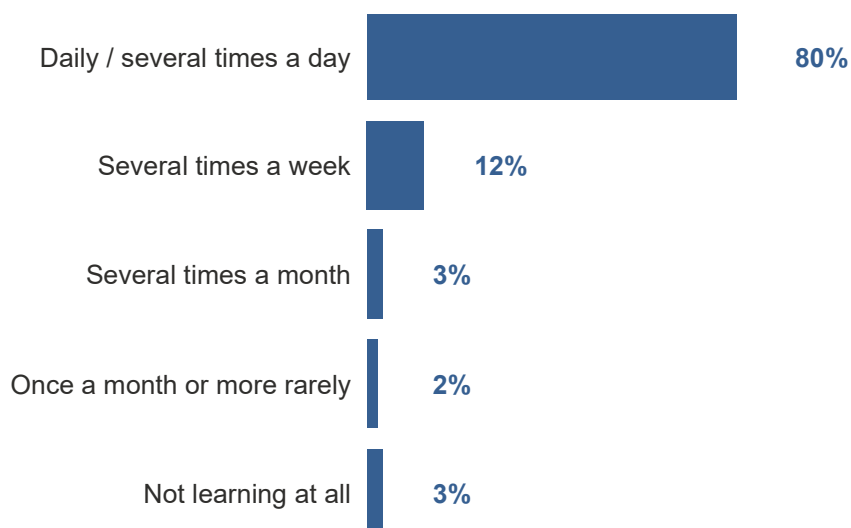


Chart 3.6. Question: “How often do you learn news about events in Ukraine?” One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

We also asked which sources were most often used by the respondents to find out about the current situation in Ukraine. **The most common sources** used by the surveyed **were messengers and social media to obtain information on the situation in Ukraine**. Most (82%) of the surveyed said that they received news via messengers (Telegram, Viber, WhatsApp etc.). Almost half (45%) of the respondents mentioned social media (for instance, Facebook) as one of the principal sources of information. 36% referred to YouTube in their answers.

Sources of news on the situation in Ukraine

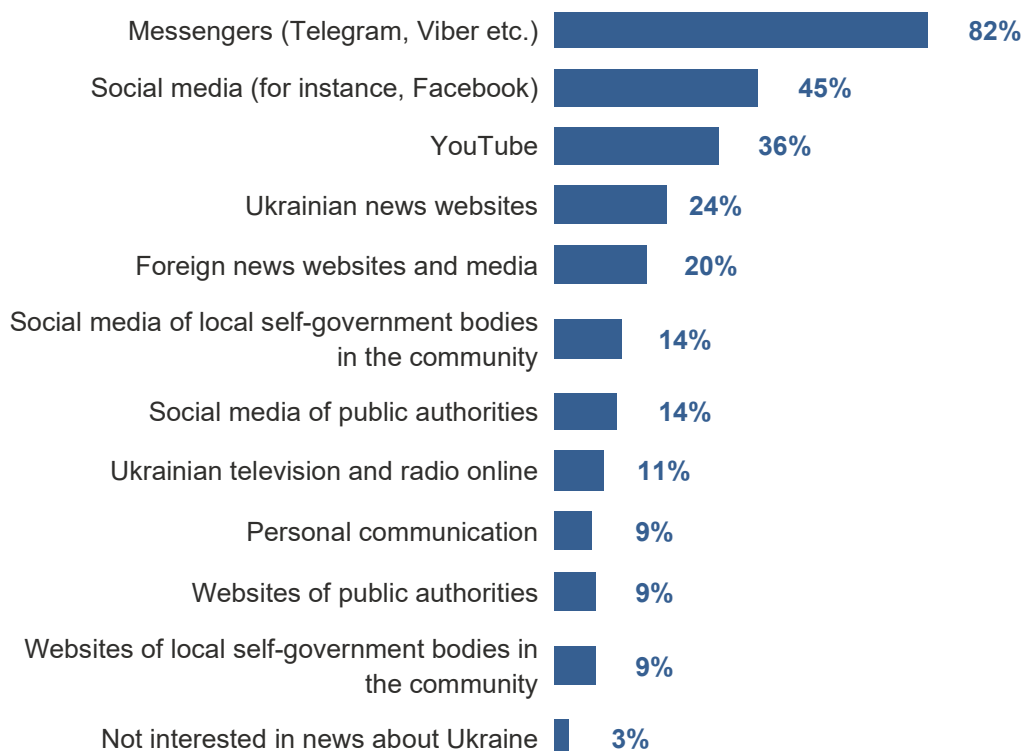


Chart 3.7. Question: “What sources do you mostly use to find out about the current situation in Ukraine and news?” Up to three answers could be selected to answer the question. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

The Ukrainian news websites and foreign news websites were selected by 24% and 20% of the surveyed accordingly. Another 14% of the respondents chose social media of local self-government bodies of the communities where they had lived, or pages of their representatives, and social media of the public authorities or their representatives.

The more rare main source of news from Ukraine for the surveyed was Ukrainian television and radio online (11%), websites of the public authorities (9%), websites of the local authorities (9%), and personal communication (9%).

3.3. Comparing the Experience of Living in Ukraine and in the Country of Residence

We asked the participants of the focus group discussions that they **liked and did not like about the country of residence**. We tried to understand what the informants had paid attention to in the first place. The aspects they told us about were often mentioned in comparison with Ukraine.

Education

- *What they liked abroad:* The people with children referred to the systems of school and pre-school education in the country of residence at the focus group discussions. They liked the quality of education as well as approaches thereto, in particular, the fact that the children were treated with respect and were under no pressure as to their grades. Moreover, they mentioned free education and value of people with higher education in the country of residence.
- *What they liked in Ukraine:* In that context, they mentioned free education as well as informal education opportunities that encouraged professional growth.

Accessibility and inclusion

- *What they liked abroad:* The participants of the focus group discussions often mentioned accessibility of public spaces and transport for people with reduced mobility. Several informants with small children told about convenient spaces for people with prams. Some of the informants shared their observations that the countries were friendly to children and parents with children.
- *What they did not like in Ukraine:* The informants noted at the focus group discussions that public spaces and transport in Ukraine were inaccessible to people with reduced mobility.

Relations between people

- *What they liked abroad:* At the focus group discussions, the people noted the high level of tolerance in the societies of the countries of residence. They also told about the volunteering culture.
- *What they did not like abroad:* In certain cases, we were told that they had experienced negative attitude of the locals to the people from Ukraine. Moreover, several participants of the study said that it was difficult to integrate into the society of the countries of their residence.
- *What they liked in Ukraine:* The people often noted in the conversations that they liked their surroundings as well as resilience of the people in Ukraine.
- *What they did not like in Ukraine:* It seemed to some of the informants that the tension between specific groups of people existed in the Ukrainian society. In particular, in that context, they mentioned the negative attitude to the people who had stayed abroad.

Social protection system

- *What they liked abroad:* At the focus group discussions, the informants gave positive feedback on the social support system in the country of residence and noted that the support was adequate for a person to have decent living conditions. In that context, they also mentioned good working conditions for social workers, namely attention to their load and mental state.
- *What they did not like in Ukraine:* The participants of the focus group discussions shared their observations about the low level of support of the internally displaced persons and no support in search for accommodation.

Healthcare

- *What they liked abroad:* Despite the complaints against the medical system, the informants mentioned attention to people and sensitive approaches in the medical system at the focus group discussions. Also, some of the informants told that they could get free treatment in their countries.
- *What they did not like abroad:* The study participants mentioned inaccessibility of the medical system most often in the context of what they did not like. In particular, they said that they had difficulty arranging visits to a doctor, that they had only been treated with painkillers and antipyretic agent, and they had to wait to see a doctor, especially a dentist, for a long time.
- *What they liked in Ukraine:* The participants of the focus group discussions noted the qualifications of the Ukrainian doctors and told that they went to Ukraine to get necessary medical services. They also mentioned that it was much easier and faster to get to a doctor in Ukraine.
- *What they did not like in Ukraine:* Although some informants described medicine as the area they liked in Ukraine, the other people spoke about the problems at the focus group discussions. In particular, several people shared that they had difficulty paying for medical services or surgery because of the high prices and no compensation programmes. Moreover, they told about the insensitive attitude to people in hospitals.

Applying for documents

- *What they did not like abroad:* The informants told at the focus group discussions that they were tired of red-tape systems of the countries of their residence. They mentioned the considerable duration of execution of documents and only hard copies of documents issued.
- *What they liked in Ukraine:* In comparison with the country of residence, the study participants mentioned Diia services, electronic records management and online services.

Housing

- *What they did not like abroad:* Some of the informants mentioned the housing crisis in the countries of their residence and difficulty finding accommodation to rent at the focus group discussions in that context.
- *What they did not like in Ukraine:* Some of the informants noted lack of regulation of the accommodation rental market, including the inefficient system of real estate services.

Public transport and infrastructure

- *What they liked abroad:* At the focus group discussions, the informants highly appreciated the well-developed public transport system, the clear transport schedule, the fare system based on duration of a trip as well as available bicycle infrastructure. They also referred to the developed infrastructure in small settlements.

Leisure

- *What they liked abroad:* At the focus group discussions, the informants gave positive feedback on leisure opportunities and a wide choice of options to spend free time: museums, libraries, sports etc.

3.4. Challenges Associated with Returning

According to the study by the Government of Ukraine, 47% of the people who returned to Ukraine had unsatisfied basic needs. The prevailing majority noted that they were short of money (35% of the surveyed). The other common unsatisfied basic needs included financial assistance, medical services/products, employment, and food products²⁷. So we tried to find out in the study which basic support the people would need if they returned to Ukraine.

Some of the questions in our questionnaire and focus group discussions were about the challenges and needs the people expected to face after they returned to Ukraine. At the focus group discussions, the informants mentioned **the housing and employment challenges** or adequate funds to satisfy their basic needs in the first place. They also mentioned access to healthcare services, access to pre-school and quality school education, and affordable public transport.

"The child's needs, accommodation, and food. Preferably a job. Because I don't want to depend on the state. I will work. But it must be something adequate, something with

²⁷ Government of Canada, IMPACT Initiatives, Save the Children, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Ukrainian Red Cross Society, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees. March 26, 2024. "Ukraine Longitudinal Survey | Round 16 (August 2023)". ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/ukraine-longitudinal-survey-round-16-august-2023-enuk>

the salary that will provide me with everything. Rather than pennies they get in Ukraine.”

A woman aged 34, → Federal Republic of Germany

Some of the participants of the focus group discussions realised that in case they returned to Ukraine, they would be registered as internally displaced persons. However, they **were mostly not aware of IDP support**, so they did not know what support they could expect if they returned.

Some informants expressed the expectations that **the experience of returning would be similar to the experience of displacement abroad** during the conversations. They found those experiences similar because they would have no income and accommodation to live in right after they returned. It was mostly mentioned by the people who used to live in the settlements that had been occupied. At the focus group discussions, those people suggested that centres to support displaced people should be established in Ukraine. They would like to have an opportunity to apply to such centres for support after they return, and to be assisted with their reintegration into the Ukrainian society.

“Establishing a sort of centre that would coordinate these people and provide temporary accommodation, a job, offers for children, some action algorithms for the situation, consult on the documents to be received in the beginning. We will be unable to bring all the items we have now. Well, something will be sent by via delivery services. However, we will need beds, wardrobes; we will only have one suitcase of clothes. To put it simple, we will lack basic items.”

A woman aged 39, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The informants emphasised at the focus group discussions the importance of non-financial support. Thus, the importance aspects were **friendly attitude and desire to help** from the workers of the institutions they will contact. They also said that they would like people to be **sensitive to their experience** and not express non-ethical views on their decision to go abroad.

We asked within the survey which challenges the respondents expected to face in such areas as housing, employment and healthcare if they returned to Ukraine. Our question about housing was about specific problems and whether the people had the accommodation they could return to and live on a long-term basis. **Around one third of the respondents (31%) had no accommodation** where they could live following the return. This situation is most common among the people with the bad financial position. Thus, 47% of the people who do not have enough money for food will not have accommodation to live in if they return.

The other people surveyed (69%) said that they potentially had the accommodation they could return to and live on a long-term basis: 48% of the people could return to their own accommodation, 15% could live with their relatives, and 6% could rent accessibility.

Where you would live if you returned



Chart 3.8. Question: “If you needed to return to Ukraine now, where could you live on a long-term basis (for half a year and longer)?” One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

The participants of the focus group discussions also mentioned the importance of their housing matter in the context of return. Thus, some of them said that they would like to be **supported in their search of accommodation, be proposed temporary accommodation** where they could live for the first time after their return. They also mentioned the matter of **providing accommodation to the people whose housing had been destroyed** as a result of hostilities or shelling or **located in the occupied territory**. The participants of the discussions emphasised that it had to be taken into consideration in the decision on providing accommodation whether a person could live in their own accommodation. In other words, it had to be considered whether the accommodation was located in the occupied territory, or how damaged it was if it was located in the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government. However, to their opinion, focus on the region in which it was located or on experience of displacement of the people (internally or abroad) in planning of the housing assistance would be unfair.

“The main thing is to provide accommodation to the people who have no accommodation at all. I mean the occupied ones or the ones damaged a lot, to make some cooperative societies that would help them restore.”

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The second question about housing was associated with the potential challenges the people expected to face in case they returned to Ukraine. The biggest challenges in the field of accommodation were associated with the **security situation and non-affordability of**

accommodation due to high rental charges and expensive utility services. Thus, the respondents (28%) answered most often that their housing was located in the frontline and border regions that were often shelled. Therefore, although the people had their own housing, they could not live there. The answers about affordability of accommodation prices were also common: 25% of the respondents said that the rental charges were too high, and other 22% mentioned expensive utility services. The older people and people with low income gave more frequent answers about the high cost of utility services.

The other challenges were less common and mostly associated with the fact that the people could not live in their own accommodation as it was located in the occupied territory or combat zone, had been destroyed or damaged, or was not equipped for the needs of persons with disabilities or reduced mobility.

Challenges associated with housing

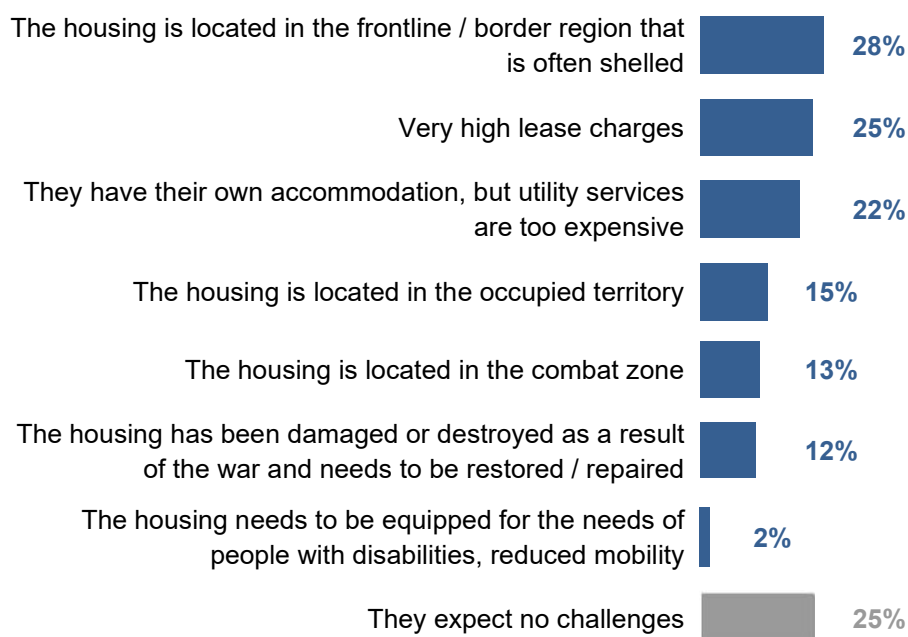


Chart 3.9. Question: “What challenges associated with housing can you face if you return to Ukraine?” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4,061.

At the focus group discussions, the people paid a lot of attention to rent of accommodation. They explained that they could not live in their own accommodation for different reasons, so they would have to rent it from other people. Therefore, they were concerned about **high prices, insecure rent, uncommon practice of conclusion of agreements** with landlords.

“In general, it could be accommodation in the place where you are, or some rent, like in other countries. It does not have to be like it’s usually done in Ukraine, paying for rent to a card; the rent can be official.”

A man aged 38, → United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The people whose housing has been destroyed or damaged spoke about its **restoration** and associated **funds and temporary accommodation necessary** at the discussions. The informants whose housing had not been damaged by the hostilities also noted that they would like to make a redecoration. To their mind, some parts of the housing would have to be restored, in particular, in detached houses, due to long-term absence of their residents. The people also admitted that they expected to spend all their savings for such redecoration, so they needed **to get a job as soon as possible**.

As for the employment area, the respondents noted that after they returned to Ukraine, they would need **help looking for a job** in the first place (39% of the surveyed mentioned the need). At the focus group discussions, the people explained that they would need help **making a CV** for a job, and choosing **what to focus on in presentation of their experience**. The informants also shared their experience of applying to job centres in the other countries at the discussions. They said that they had received adequate help and job offers there. They were not always satisfied with the vacancies offered, but the feedback on attitude by the staff of the employment centres and their operations was mostly positive. At the same time, their experience of applying to employment centres in Ukraine was rather negative. Therefore, the people referred to the need to change operations of the employment centres in Ukraine and to align their approaches with the EU standards.

“When it is sincere, when you are not simply ignored. When you have problems, you don’t want to go to different people in circles. You keep going around, but the problem persists. It is not cool. It would be good if they really helped to resolve all the job matters in the beginning, say where to go and how to make a CV for Ukraine. If they explained and told everything you needed. If the process was simple and fast.”

A woman aged 28, → Federal Republic of Germany

They also mentioned that **unemployment benefits** would also be necessary. The informants noted at the discussions that they would like to get such benefits until they found a permanent job.

“I can come and live there, but I will be unable to pay utility bills. When we lived in Ukraine, the job I had did not cover our costs. I mean, the salary I had then was not enough to live on, to provide for the kids. And I realise that if we return, we will live in poverty again. Just poverty. So it would be good to have financial support, at least for some time, until I find a job.”

A woman aged 48, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

Demand for support in overcoming employment challenges



Chart 3.10. Question: “What challenges associated with employment can you face if you return to Ukraine?” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4139.

The answers associated with support in **starting and running your own business** were somewhat less common. Thus, the need for money or initial capital was mentioned by 19% while 10% of the surveyed spoke about consultations by professionals. The participants of the focus groups also mentioned the demand for training programmes/courses for entrepreneurship.

The respondents also told about the desire to take advance training courses (14% of the people mentioned the need) or retraining courses (11%). Such answers were also given by some participants of the focus group discussions. In particular, they explained their demand for the courses with their inability to keep their awareness of the updates and changes in Ukraine as they were abroad. They assumed that the industry they worked in could also be changing, with new practices introduced etc. Therefore, they will need courses to update their knowledge and skills.

“I worked as a lawyer with my Bachelor's degree for half a year. I do not have quality legal experience. I need practical experience to get a job. Which I am not getting while I am here. The legislation is changing, the reality is changing. I understand that I am losing my relevance as a professional. I need additional training.”

A woman aged 26, → Republic of Poland

Around half of the respondents expected to have healthcare challenges. The challenges were associated with **the worse mental condition and the cost of medicines** in the first place. Thus, 30% said that psychological support would be necessary after they returned to Ukraine. 27% of the people surveyed noted that they would need medicines or money to buy them. A less common request was the one for other medical goods and support in complex therapy.

Demand for support in overcoming healthcare challenges

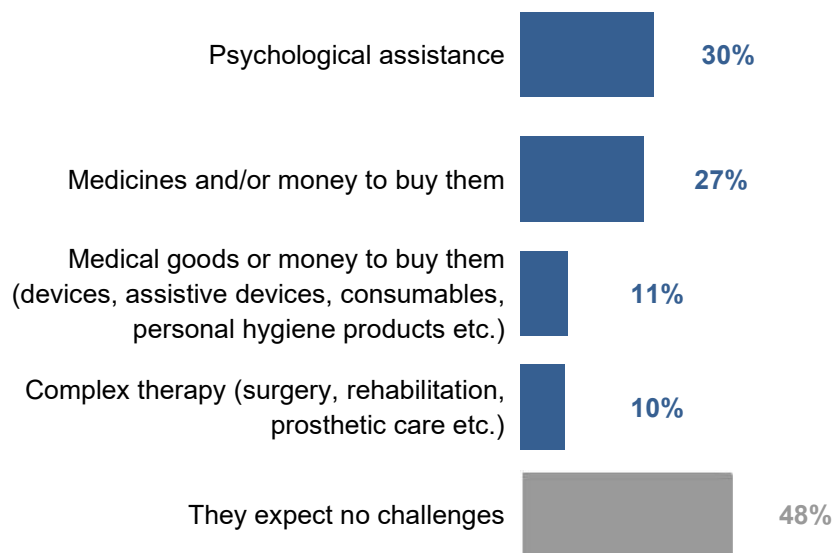


Chart 3.11. Question: “What challenges associated with healthcare can you face if you return to Ukraine?” Several answers to the question could be given. Number of the respondents — 4138.

The participants of the focus group discussions also mentioned healthcare when they spoke about their needs in case of return to Ukraine. The most important need was **access to quality medical services in their settlement** as well as availability of departments of different specialisation in their settlement or in the nearest settlements (in particular, they mentioned psychoneurological departments).

“This infrastructure is important to me. Accommodation must be affordable, with the developed infrastructure for children with special needs. There must also be quite a qualified medical centre. It must be a hospital with neurologists, with the psychoneurological department, it is important to me.”

A woman aged 38, → Federal Republic of Germany

The informants also mentioned **accessibility of the offline school education and pre-school education. During the discussions** In particular, they mentioned the kindergartens as it would enable the child’s parents to get a job rather than take care of the child. They also

proposed the idea of introducing the child reintegration programme so that it would be easier for them to adapt to the Ukrainian society.

“Well, in the beginning... To encourage me to return, be good, do me a favour so that I will place the child into all the necessary facilities and can get a job.”

A woman aged 38, → Federal Republic of Germany

Some of the people told at the focus group discussions that they **expected no help** in case they returned. In some cases, it was connected with intact housing in Ukraine, the job retained, or confidence in getting a job easily.

“As for me, for me and my family, no assistance or motivation is necessary to return. We are lucky to have our apartment. Well, for sure, it is intact today, but it might not be tomorrow, I am talking about now. I am sure that even if I do not take up my former job, I will find a new one, and the children will go to school and kindergarten.”

A woman aged 40, → Kingdom of the Netherlands

The other people said at the focus group discussions that they did not rely on any support as they believed that **funds had to be spent to support those who lived in Ukraine** in time of war in the first place, to help them live a decent life. The people also noted that most of the people in Ukraine needed support. They also did not want support to be only given to the people who had been displaced abroad.

“So the main thing is social guarantees that would support the entire state. Not only those who will return. It is the main thing. It is a big plus to the state. Not only for us, as they say, persons displaced to Europe, right? For everyone. Because pensioners have difficult time as well.”

A woman aged 33, → Federal Republic of Germany

Section 4. Problems identified during monitoring visits

Monitoring visits are a standard tool of the Ombudsman Office.

The visits helped to investigate the status of respect for the rights of Ukrainians who moved abroad in connection with the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into the territory of Ukraine, to identify the needs of such persons in the event of their return to Ukraine and/or their plans for return, as well as to find ways to improve mechanisms for protecting the rights of Ukrainians abroad and to promote effective communication between Ukrainian state bodies, non-governmental organisations and Ukrainian citizens abroad. And, ultimately, creating a basis for developing recommendations for state authorities to create incentives for the return to Ukraine of citizens who have been forcibly displaced abroad.

In order to obtain information from various sources, representatives of the Ombudsman Office held a number of meetings: with Ukrainians abroad; with representatives of Ukrainian state authorities abroad; representatives of government institutions in the countries of residence of Ukrainians abroad, who are responsible for issues of social protection of Ukrainians; with the public sector, which provides comprehensive support to citizens of Ukraine.

Representatives of the Ombudsman Office met with Ukrainians residing in the Republic of Poland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Spain, and the Slovak Republic. There were 157 participants, including 36 men and 121 women.

The communication took place in the format of an open dialogue, and everyone who wanted to speak out, ask questions, and highlight the problems that the participants of the meetings personally face.

During the meetings in each of the above-mentioned countries, a general trend towards typical problematic issues that concern Ukrainians was observed. These are housing, social, economic, medical, humanitarian issues, as well as issues related to their psycho-emotional state.

Also, the participants of the meetings emphasized the need to ensure accessibility of public services, including through the "Diia" application, by increasing the list of documents that can be obtained online by citizens of Ukraine who have been forced to move abroad.

In particular, the following problematic issues were highlighted that concerned participants in meetings abroad:

1. Uncertainty about the situation of Ukrainians in the event of return and the lack of a systematic approach to reintegration.

Most Ukrainians who are considering returning specify the problem of uncertainty regarding the conditions of return and reintegration. First of all, they are interested in creating appropriate conditions for return, including access to housing, work, medicine, and education. The lack of a nationwide strategy for the state to create appropriate conditions obviously complicates understanding the stages and processes of their safe and dignified adaptation in the Motherland.

2. The lack of clear coordination between national and local authorities on the return of Ukrainian citizens from abroad is a serious obstacle to an effective reintegration process.

Different regions of Ukraine take different approaches to supporting returnees, leading to uneven distribution of resources and insufficient interaction between state structures. Furthermore, Ukrainian returnees are often not involved in the planning and decision-making processes that directly affect their reintegration. This can lead to a gap between the real needs of returnees and the measures implemented at the state and local levels. Most Ukrainians abroad who have an active civic position, during communication, note that they prefer to be involved in the processes of managing and planning their return.

3. Assimilation and loss of connection with Ukrainian culture.

Prolonged stay in a foreign-language environment, assimilation processes, and lack of access to Ukrainian culture weaken the connection between Ukrainians forcibly displaced abroad and their Motherland. A particularly rapid loss of such connection is observed among children and young people. At the same time, Ukrainians abroad have great potential for forming active communities that will promote interaction with the local population, support Ukrainian traditions, and disseminate information about Ukraine in host countries. Ukrainians abroad consider both their solidarity in the host country and systemic support from their home country to be an incentive for implementing such activities.

4. Difficulties in accessing information about vacancies, employment programs, or assistance from the state of Ukraine.

Most Ukrainians abroad note a balanced attitude towards making a decision to return to their Motherland. In particular, one of the primary conditions is the prospect of employment. Nevertheless, while undergoing remote monitoring, potential applicants face a lack of relevant information, as well as a lack of vacancies or programs for starting their own business. This is largely due to the insufficient modernization of employment centers in Ukraine, which are unable to provide the proper level of services for citizens returning or wishing to find work from abroad, as well as the actual lack of jobs and grant programs.

At the same time, Ukrainians returning from abroad have extensive experience, in particular, gained while searching for areas of self-realisation abroad. Nevertheless, this does not exclude their fears about the impossibility of applying such experience in the Ukrainian labor market, in particular, due to a lack of jobs or a mismatch of qualifications.

Thus, the lack of employment guarantees upon return to the Motherland is the main deterrent to return.

5. Information vacuum regarding the possibilities of returning to the Motherland.

Hesitation about returning to Ukraine is also exacerbated by ignorance of successful examples of such return, further employment, and professional development. The main circle of Ukrainians who left abroad due to armed aggression against Ukraine consists of either the same category of citizens or Ukrainian migrants who began their lives in the host country long before the armed aggression. Therefore, such citizens are actually deprived of sources of information regarding positive examples of returning to their Motherland. This leads to a

gradual minimization of thoughts about such a return and increases the fear of making the appropriate decision.

6. Lack of social housing in Ukraine as a factor deterring return.

Along with the need to have a source of income as a resource for survival, the need for housing is no less important, especially for those Ukrainians abroad whose housing is damaged to the point of being uninhabitable, destroyed, or access to which has been lost due to being in temporarily occupied territories.

Almost all Ukrainians who have encountered such problems express their intention to apply for social housing from the state of Ukraine upon their return to their Motherland. In their opinion, providing such housing will allow them to experience some measure of restored justice and security.

7. Lack of integration procedures and recognition of certificates obtained abroad.

Lack of integration procedures and recognition of certificates obtained abroad in Ukrainian schools, which leads to parents postponing the decision to return to their Motherland. After all, upon returning to Ukraine, children face the challenges of reintegration into the Ukrainian education system. For the most part, their knowledge does not fully meet the requirements of the curricula. In particular, parents of Ukrainian children studying abroad express concern about psychological adaptation to a new (or already forgotten) environment upon returning to Ukraine.

In addition, during communication, parents of Ukrainian children have questions about the recognition of certificates obtained abroad, the possibility of entering Ukrainian educational institutions, and the need to undergo additional procedures or exams. Currently, there is no systematic information on this, which complicates the decision-making process for graduates and their families about returning.

8. Obligations of Ukrainian schoolchildren to attend foreign educational institutions.

Families with children have mentioned concerns that due to decisions by the governments of host countries, Ukrainian children must attend educational institutions in their host country, which, in turn, will lead to children who are abroad and continue to study online in Ukrainian schools being forced to discontinue such studies. Studying in both schools simultaneously will be an excessive burden and will negatively affect the results of such studies. At the same time, parents realize that such a situation may lead to the loss of their children's ties with the Ukrainian cultural and educational space.

9. The complex and time-consuming procedure for recognising Ukrainian educational documents.

A complex and time-consuming procedure for recognising Ukrainian educational documents, which limits access to education, work, and professional development. Current procedures in many countries involve significant financial costs, complex checks, and long waits, which is especially problematic for Ukrainian citizens who have found themselves in a difficult situation due to the war.

Most of them talk about negative experiences of trying to find employment in their specialty and the lack of professional fulfillment.

10. Lack of reliable and up-to-date information on employment, housing rental, access to education and social services in host countries.

Although host countries provide support, information about available opportunities is not always clear or accessible in Ukrainian. In addition, citizens' needs change depending on the duration of their stay abroad and their plans for the future. The lack of relevant information materials for Ukrainians abroad hinders their social adaptation.

At the same time, Ukrainians abroad also note a lack of understanding of where they can turn for help and obtain relevant information in Ukraine. The lack of a single body or support center leads to disorientation for such citizens.

11. Insufficient number of information programs, support for business initiatives, and educational opportunities for Ukrainians abroad.

Most Ukrainians, during communication, note that the introduction of return programs, investment mechanisms, and educational initiatives through cooperation with the diaspora can stimulate their return and investment in Ukraine, strengthening the sense of national unity. In particular, it has been repeatedly noted that interaction should be based on predictable and long-term state decisions.

Considering that Ukrainians abroad, along with thoughts about a possible return to their Motherland, face numerous difficulties in their host countries and in order to comprehensively study the relevant state of affairs, within the framework of monitoring visits by representatives of the Ombudsman Office, a number of meetings were held with representatives of the Embassies of Ukraine in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Spain, and the Slovak Republic.

In particular, representatives of Ukrainian consular institutions abroad noted that Ukrainian citizens face a number of problems in the process of receiving consular services. The sharp increase in the number of Ukrainians who left abroad led to an increased burden on consular institutions, which, in turn, created the prerequisites for long waits for services. The laws of some countries do not always correspond to Ukrainian legislation, which complicates the execution of documents and the resolution of legal issues. Not all Ukrainians who have gone abroad have complete information about their rights and opportunities for consular support, which complicates the process of resolving their issues.

Also, representatives of the Ombudsman Office discussed the problematic issues of Ukrainians abroad with representatives of public organisations, charitable foundations, other associations of citizens, and with representatives of the authorities of countries hosting Ukrainian refugees. In particular, meetings were held with representatives of the municipality of Amstelveen (the Kingdom of the Netherlands) and the Berlin Refugee Service (Federal Republic of Germany).

Thus, representatives of the authorities of the host countries expressed their position on the situations faced by Ukrainian citizens and shared their vision of ways to solve existing problems. Possible mechanisms for increasing access to administrative services, communication between state bodies and citizens, as well as measures to support the social integration of Ukrainians in the new conditions, were discussed.

Based on the information received and analysed, the Ombudsman Office has developed recommendations, the implementation of which will contribute to increasing the level of access to the realisation of their rights by Ukrainians who were forced to leave abroad due to armed aggression against Ukraine, as well as creating conditions for their return to their Motherland.

Conclusions

In this study, we have considered the experiences of the people who have moved abroad from Ukraine due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. We have been focused on several principles areas of life and analysed the key challenges and problems in these areas. Moreover, the study has considered the matter of returning to Ukraine. We have examined the factors the people take into consideration while thinking whether to return, and the basic needs the people might have in case they return.

It is demonstrated by the study that the **position in which the people abroad are depends on different factors**, such as the country of residence, the year of going abroad, the duration of stay in the country, the financial position, the family structure, health, openness of the community in the country of residence to integration of displaced persons etc.

Some people **did not feel like a part of the society in those countries**. The study participants said that they felt the differences in attitude to different matters and customs between themselves and the society in the country of residence. The sense of integration was negatively affected by partly biased attitude of the locals and the Ukrainian expatriate community.

The better skills in the language of the country of residence facilitated integration into the society of the country of residence. However, the language opportunities differed in the countries of residence: some of the countries did not offer integration or language courses to the people from Ukraine. Moreover, the quality of the language courses was not always satisfactory. **The low level of skills in the language of the country of residence had a negative impact upon adaptation** to the society. It also prevented access to services and opportunities in different life areas: it limited employment and educational opportunities and created obstacles to administrative, medical or social services.

More than one third of the study respondents assessed their financial position as bad one. Around one third of the people relied upon social benefits in the country of residence. In particular, the situation can be connected with employment difficulties. **More than half of the surveyed faced problems while looking for a job in the country of residence**. They mostly mentioned the following challenges: only offers of low-qualified jobs that did not conform to their degree and work experience, and difficulty looking for a job that would be suitable for their qualifications. Moreover, a major obstacle to employment of people with children was the need for child care assistance, so they could only accept the vacancies that enabled them to combine working and taking care of the children.

More than one third of the surveyed faced difficulties while working abroad. The most common problems were as follows: combining the work and the need to take care of relatives, the need to confirm the Ukrainian degree, excessive work load, denial of promotion due to low language skills, and working overtime without payment.

More than half of the surveyed responded that they lived in the rented accommodation under commercial conditions. The common types of accommodation among the respondents were

also the one rented on a beneficial basis, social housing, and temporary refugee centres. **Most of the surveyed faced housing problems.** The most common problems were high rent and related costs, temporary accommodation and insufficient area of accommodation for comfortable life.

Two third of the people who were abroad with the children under the age of 18 (their own children or the children they took care of) stated that they had faced problems with children's education. The people who raised a child on their own, took care of a person with a disability, suffered from incurable diseases or diseases that required long-term therapy faced the problems more often. The main problems in the field of children's education was the language barrier and difficulty combining local and Ukrainian school education. **The fact that some of the children studied in two educational systems created a large burden for the children.**

The most common difficulties in the field of vocational, higher or adult education were as follows: language barrier, difficulty confirming the Ukrainian education as well as financial difficulty paying for education, and difficulty combining learning and a job or side job.

The most common problem in healthcare was the long period of waiting for the doctor's consultation. Moreover, the surveyed faced such problems as the language barrier and high cost of insurance or medical services.

In the context of the difficulties faced by the people abroad, the study participants also referred to the need to **increased accessibility of consular services** and the ability to ask the Ukrainian government for help, where necessary. Another need mentioned was **an ability to apply for documents online** and to get the in the electronic format.

The study participants wanted to feel the **symbolic connection with Ukraine** and to maintain contacts with the Ukrainian society and the state. At the same time, the people realised that Ukraine had no resources in time of war to be used to maintain contacts with the people displaced abroad. However, in their opinion, the symbolic connection would encourage them to return after the war was over.

In that context, the informants admitted at the focus group discussions that they took notice of the public speeches on staying abroad. Some wanted to see more sensitive attitude to the reasons for which they had to go abroad: occupation of their settlement, loss of accommodation, a job or sources of income. To their mind, such sensitive would support the sense of connection with the Ukrainian society.

In the context of returning to Ukraine, the study demonstrates that **the people choose different return strategies**, and neither strategy prevailed considerably. The data also show that **the people do not perceive returning as choosing out of two options** — either to return to Ukraine or stay abroad. There are interim options, in particular, living both in Ukraine and abroad. Some of the surveyed mentioned that option as the strategy they preferred.

The opinions on and plans for returning can also change quickly depending on the situation in Ukraine and globally. The most common factor considered by the people in their conversations about the return was termination of hostilities all over Ukraine. However, the **views on returning depended not only on the security situation, but also a large number of factors**, including the living conditions, employment, connections with relatives and family, educational and other opportunities for children, social protection and medical services etc.

One of the most common factors mentioned by the study participants was **employment opportunities and decent salary**. The low level of salaries in some professions prevented the people from considering the return. Moreover, the middle-aged and elderly people of an employable age were concerned that they would find it more difficult to get a job because of their age.

Accommodation was also important for the study participants in the context of returning: in particular, **affordable accommodation rental charges, secure rent, and possibility of using temporary housing provided by the state** right after the return. The people also considered accessibility of medical assistance and social services for persons with disabilities, the elderly, single parents etc. to be important.

Another important factor was **having close people in Ukraine**, which encouraged them to return. At the same time, the **priority of children's well-being** was often mentioned at the focus group discussions. The people who were abroad with their children thought about their comfort and prospects in the first place, in addition to the security factor, when they compared the opportunities for their children in Ukraine and abroad.

The views on returning to Ukraine were also influenced by the duration of living abroad: some informants stated that **the longer they lived abroad, the lower the probability of their return to Ukraine was**. It was explained by the integration to the societies of the countries of residence as well as household factors — the need to carry belongings, plans related to accommodation and work in the country of residence etc.

Although most of the people from Ukraine were covered by the temporary protection in the country of residence, some of the participants of the focus group discussions were going to change the residence permit as of the dates of the study. The temporary protection and extension thereof for a specific period of time caused the sense of uncertainty and inability to plan the future. Moreover, some people were going to change their residence permit as they wanted to stay abroad even after the war in Ukraine was over, or in case the temporary protection was cancelled.

The study participants mostly did not visit Ukraine or visited it quite rarely for the last year. The factors that prevented the people from going to Ukraine were safety, considerably duration of the trip to Ukraine due to no flights because of the war, the need to get a permit to go to Ukraine in the employment centre or other institutions in the country of residence, the high cost of the trip, health etc. However, most of the people were involved into the

information space of Ukraine. Most of the surveyed monitored the news about Ukraine all the time and read news daily or several times a day.

The study identified **the basic needs the people expected to have in case they returned to Ukraine**. In their turn, the study participants spoke about **affordable accommodation with secure rent conditions**. The people would like to be supported in their search of accommodation, be proposed temporary accommodation where they could live for the first time after their return. That matter was especially relevant for those from the temporarily occupied territories and the people whose housing had been destroyed or damaged by the shelling. The study participants who would become internally displaced persons in case they returned to Ukraine were mostly unaware of IDP support, so they did not know what assistance they could expect following the return.

As for employment, the study participants noted that after they returned to Ukraine, they would **need help looking for a job** in the first place. The employment need arouse both in terms of professional self-fulfilment and to maintain their decent living standards on their own. At the focus group discussions, the informants shared their positive experience of applying to the employment centres in the country of residence and referred to the **need to change operations of the employment centres in Ukraine** and to align their approaches with the EU standards. They also mentioned the need for unemployment benefits to be paid until the people got a job. Some study participants needed help starting their own business. They also spoke about simple business processes and no corruption.

In the context of returning to Ukraine, the people also referred to access to **quality medical and social services** so that they could be sure that they could rely on assistance in case of a disease or a complicated situation. Around half of the respondents expected to have healthcare challenges. In particular, they mentioned worse mental state and high cost of medicines. Moreover, the needs mentioned were access to pre-school and quality school education and affordable public transport.

Analysis of the factors that influenced the return to Ukraine as well as the needs in case of the return demonstrates the **importance of comprehensive social and economic development of the country and enhanced capacity of the communities**. The data received at the focus group discussions show that **the people often compare living conditions abroad and in Ukraine**. In the first place, they consider the general living standards of the population and development conditions in the country rather than targeted assistance. In this context, the study participants shared their observations on the assistance granted to the internally displaced persons in Ukraine: they did not find it adequate, and they did not expect the government to have sufficient resources to support them if they returned. The people we talked to **wanted to be sure that they could arrange their life in Ukraine on their own**.

Some participants emphasised during the conversations that they **expected no assistance if they returned**. The reason for some of them was confidence in having accommodation and employment opportunities. The other people said that they did not expect support as, to their mind, the funds had to be spent to help those living in Ukraine in time of war in the first place.

They also **did not want the support programmes to give priority to the people who had been displaced abroad** over the other groups of people.

Introduction of targeted support programmes can strengthen the sense of injustice in the society. The participants of the focus group discussions often shared their concerns about possible negative attitude of the people who had not been displaced abroad. The informants often considered it as the factor that prevented them from returning to Ukraine at the discussions. Creation of the programmes designated only at support of the people displaced abroad could aggravate the sense, which would not encourage the people to return to Ukraine.

In the context of returning, **support by and connection by the community where the people had lived in Ukraine** could be important. Keeping in touch with close people, acquaintances and the community created the sense of belonging to the community in Ukraine. The people who often communicated with their relatives and acquaintances in Ukraine and visited the country were worried about possible negative response to their stay abroad more rarely.

Monitoring visits by the Ombudsman Office expanded and diversified the findings of the study.

Thanks to an in-depth analysis of individual situations and the practical work of the Ombudsman Office in upholding and restoring the rights of Ukrainians abroad, we managed to enrich the information base and understand the trends identified in the study through the prism of specific individuals and families.

The visits also provided an opportunity to formulate practical recommendations that will allow state authorities and self-government bodies to focus their attention on issues of protecting Ukrainian citizens abroad, to continue to explore the experiences of these people, and to create conditions for their return to Ukraine.

Recommendations of the Ombudsman Office

Based on the results of the study, taking into account the experience of the Ombudsman Office, recommendations were formulated to improve the situation of Ukrainians abroad, maintain their connection with Ukraine, and create ways to return to Ukraine:

1. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine:

To approve a nationwide strategy to protect the rights and freedoms of persons forcibly displaced abroad from Ukraine, as well as to create the necessary conditions for their return to Ukraine.

2. The Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine:

2.1. To develop and submit to the Government for consideration a nationwide strategy to protect the rights and freedoms of persons forcibly displaced abroad from Ukraine, as well as to create the necessary conditions for their return to Ukraine.

2.2. To establish a coordination and communication mechanism between national and local authorities to ensure coordinated action on returns. To ensure the involvement of returnees in return planning and management processes.

2.3. To introduce unified algorithms for counseling individuals planning to return to support informed decision-making. The consultation should include information about their rights, relevant legislation, support programs, and return procedures. To ensure access to information for all categories of returnees.

2.4. To develop and distribute relevant information materials for Ukrainian citizens abroad regarding ensuring their basic needs (employment, housing rental, education, etc.) in the host country.

2.5. To ensure the formation of a network of support centers for displaced persons in Ukraine, in order to collect the needs of Ukrainian citizens who have been forced to leave the territory of Ukraine and are returning, and to provide them with the necessary consultations on the implementation of their rights.

2.6. To introduce work with the diaspora, ensuring the connection of Ukrainians abroad with Ukraine through investment, education, and return to work in Ukraine.

3. The Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine:

To introduce information campaigns to attract forcibly displaced persons abroad to the Ukrainian cultural field, by creating Ukrainian cultural centers, conversation clubs, organising cultural and educational events, providing assistance in the development of Ukrainian organisations and initiatives abroad, and involving the Ukrainian diaspora in the adaptation and integration of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine.

4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine:

To initiate negotiations at the level of foreign diplomatic institutions with the relevant ministries of education of the countries of residence of Ukrainian citizens and discuss possibilities for simplifying and accelerating the procedure for recognising educational documents; reducing financial costs associated with this procedure, or establishing

preferential conditions for citizens of Ukraine who have suffered from armed aggression; introducing temporary or simplified mechanisms for promptly obtaining equivalents of diplomas or certificates for Ukrainian citizens.

5. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine:

5.1. To develop integration and adaptation courses in Ukrainian schools, with the aim of (re)integration of students into the Ukrainian education system after studying abroad.

5.2. To implement information campaigns for returning Ukrainian citizens regarding the use of a certificate obtained in another country for admission to educational institutions in Ukraine.

5.3. To ensure compliance with the right of parents to freely choose the form of education in accordance with Article 55 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" by eliminating the discriminatory norms of paragraph 4 of the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1112 dated August 7, 2024, which provide for different requirements for the curriculum for students in Ukraine and abroad.

5.4. To review the requirements for the number of pupils on remote classes, taking into account the norms of the Law of Ukraine "On Complete General Secondary Education".

5.5. To amend the educational subvention distribution formula, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated December 27, 2017 No. 1088, by providing for the inclusion of students who study in an individual form (external, family (home), pedagogical patronage).

6. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, together with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, the Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine, the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine:

To ensure the implementation of information campaigns to maintain ties between children from Ukraine abroad and the Ukrainian cultural and educational environment, by organising online leisure clubs and groups, and distributing Ukrainian-language children's books abroad.

7. The Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine:

To expand the functionality of the application and the "Diya" Portal by increasing the list of documents that can be obtained online by citizens of Ukraine who have been forced to move abroad.

8. The Ministry of Economy of Ukraine:

8.1. To strengthen the capacity of public employment centers regarding the accessibility and quality of their services, through the use of digital tools.

8.2. To expand grant programs by including Ukrainians who have returned from abroad in the list of persons eligible to receive microgrants on preferential terms.

8.3. To introduce information campaigns for Ukrainians abroad to highlight the positive experience of returning citizens and their employment in Ukraine.

8.4. To expand internship programs in areas with staff shortages by ensuring partnerships with European employers for practical training and further employment of returning Ukrainian citizens.

8.5. To introduce programs to support entrepreneurs and young professionals who are ready to work in Ukraine, creating favorable conditions for business, education, and investment.

9. The Ministry of Community and Territorial Development of Ukraine:

9.1. To expand the construction of social housing in Ukraine with the aim of renting it to persons whose housing was damaged/destroyed as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine or is located in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

9.2. To develop an electronic platform to publish information about territorial communities that are ready to accept Ukrainians returning from abroad (residence conditions, availability of employment and other social guarantees). To coordinate its content at both the national and local levels.

10. The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine:

10.1. To implement programs aimed at providing psychological support to citizens of Ukraine who are coming back from abroad.

10.2. To develop information campaigns regarding available social services for persons returning from abroad.

Annexes

Annex 1. Social and Demographic Characteristics of Participants of the Survey

Most people surveyed within the study **(84%) were women**. Men were 16% of the sample. 0.2% of the people selected the option “Other” for their gender.

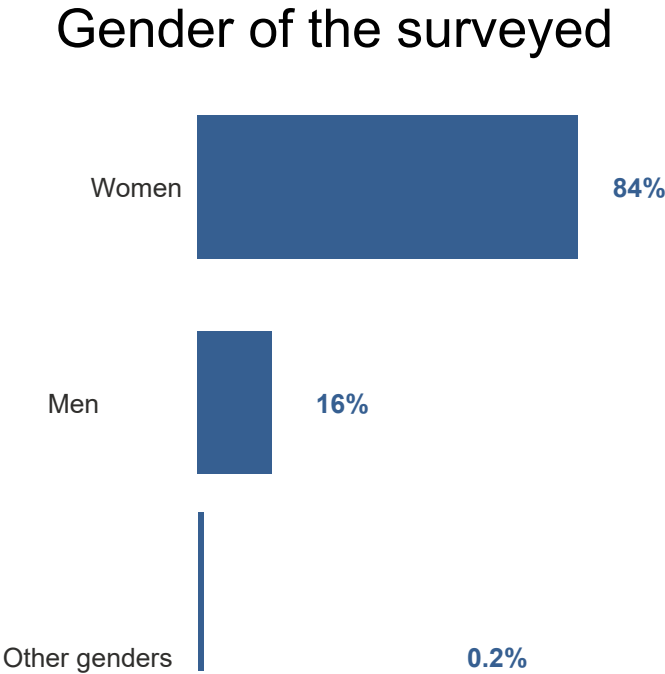


Chart 4.1. The respondents had to give their own answer. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

All the study participants were of full age. The average age of the respondents was about 40. 7% of the surveyed were of the early employable age (18 to 24). **Most respondents were of the main employable age (25 to 54) — 84%.** The surveyed of the mature employable age (55 to 64) made 6%, and the elderly people (of more than 65) made 3%.

Age of the surveyed

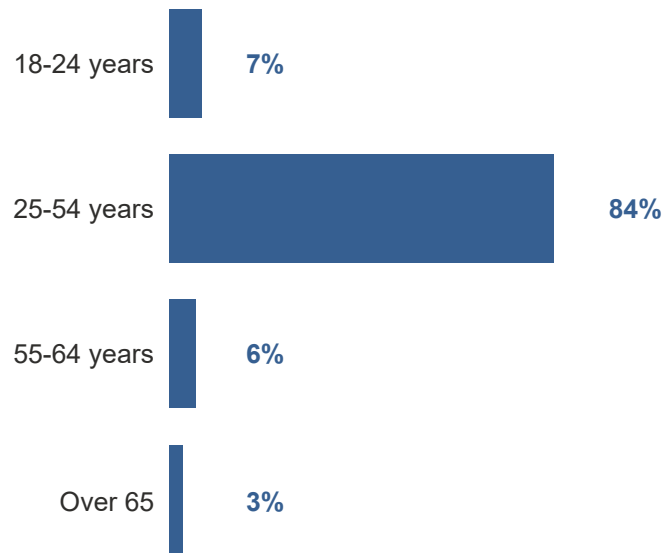


Chart 4.2. Question: “How old are you?” The respondents had to give their own answer. Number of the respondents — 4,137.

The study covered the respondents who had lived in different regions of Ukraine before going abroad. The sample presents experiences of displacement of the people from the northern, eastern, southern, western and central regions. Most of the people surveyed have lived in Kyiv before moving (20%). Other 13% of the participants of the survey had lived in Kharkiv Region, and 8% had resided in each of Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk Regions

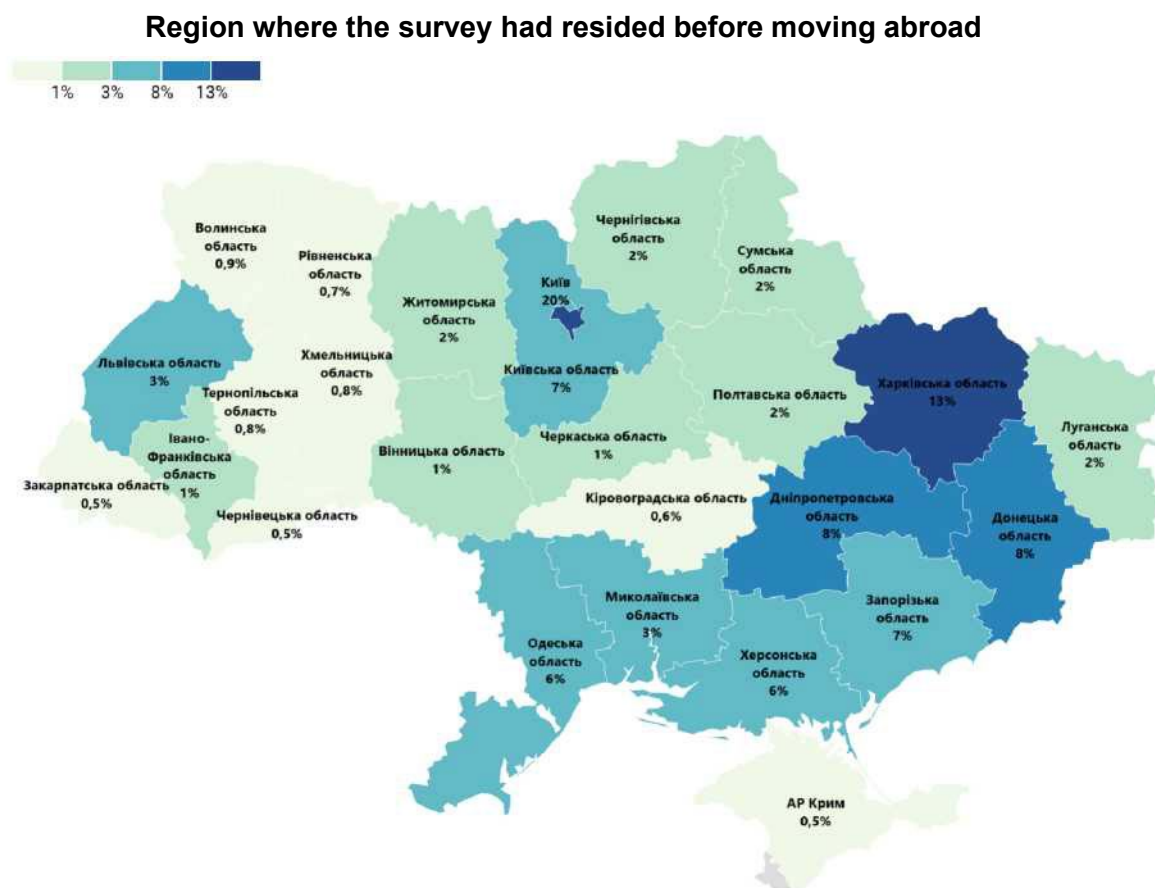


Chart 4.3. Question: “Please specify the region or the settlement where you had lived before moving abroad.” One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,134.

Most (82%) of the people who took part in the study **left Ukraine in 2022**. Other 11% of the respondents were displaced from Ukraine in 2023, and 7% — in 2024. The people who had been displaced from Ukraine because of the war before 2022 did not participate in the survey.

Year of leaving Ukraine

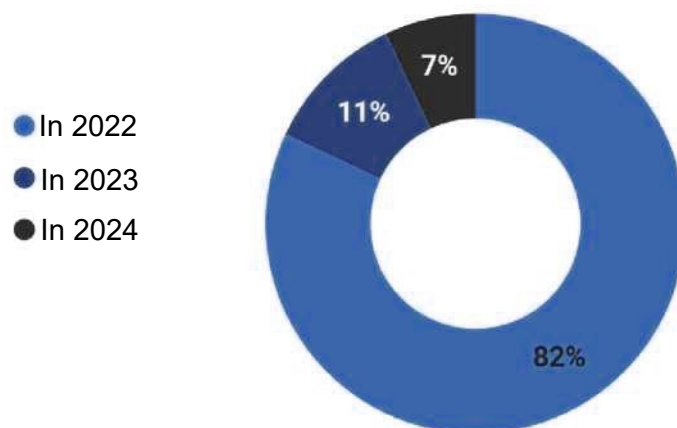


Chart 4.4. Question: “When did you leave Ukraine to flee war?” The respondents had to give their own answer. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

Most of the study participants went abroad together with the other people (children, relatives, partners etc.). **More than half of the surveyed (57%) left together with the children under the age of 18.** 34% of the respondents stated that they were abroad with their spouse or partner, 21% — with other relatives (parents, grandparents etc.), and 14% — with the children over 18. Other 16% of the study participants were abroad on their own, without close people.

People the surveyed were abroad with

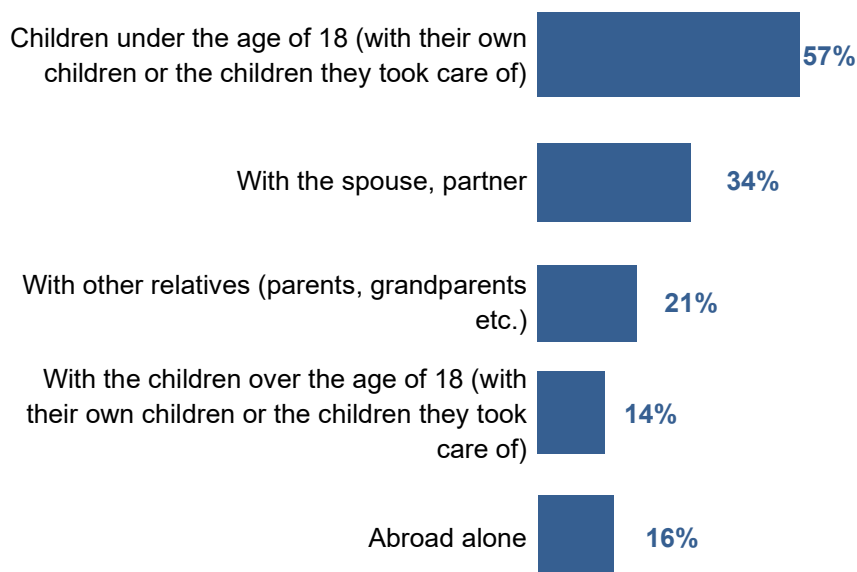


Chart 4.5. Question: "Who are you abroad with?" Several answers to the question could be given.
Number of the respondents — 4,139.

Most (92%) people surveyed lived in the European countries; in particular, Federal Republic of Germany and Republic of Poland hosted 16% each. There were 10% of the respondents from Kingdom of Spain, and 9% from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Also, Czech Republic and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland hosted 8% of the surveyed each, 7% lived in Ireland, and Slovak Republic and Kingdom of Belgium hosted 6%. In General the displaced Ukrainians from 43 countries of the world were surveyed.

Countries of residence of the surveyed

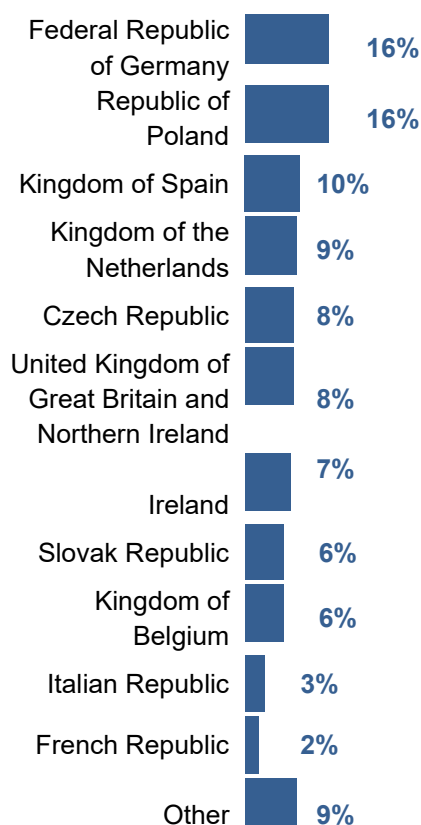


Chart 4.6. Question: "What is your current country of residence?" One answer to the question had to be selected. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

Most (80%) respondents said that they had been living in the country of residence since 2022 while 12% — since 2023, and 8% — since 2024. As of the dates of the survey, the people mostly **resided in the same country to which they had moved from Ukraine in the very beginning**. Thus, 97% of those who left Ukraine in 2022 lived in the same countries to which they arrived on the year of departure. The same situation applies to 92% of those who left in 2023, and 89% of those who left in 2024.

Year since which they have been living in the country of residence

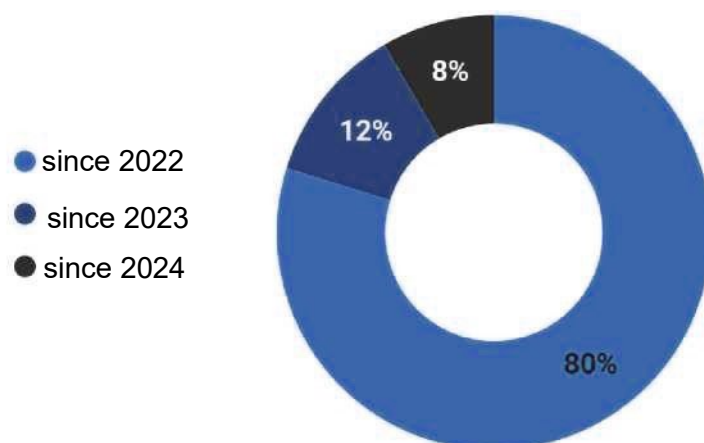


Chart 4.7. Question: “Since when have you been living in this country? Specify the month and the year.” The respondents had to give their own answer. Number of the respondents — 4,141.

The survey covered the people with **different experience and life situations**. It was registered that 23% of the respondents were single parents while 8% of the respondents had three or more minor children. 12% of the people noted that their family had low income. 7% of the respondents took care of the person with a disability, 5% took care of the person with the incurable disease, and 3% took care of the person with mental or behavioural disorders. 6% of the people noted that they had a disability. 3% of the people had mental or behavioural disorders. 3% of the respondents were survivors of domestic violence. 2% of the surveyed were affected by the Chernobyl Disaster. 0.5% of the respondents were victims of trafficking in human beings.

The following people took part in the **focus group discussions**:

- people aged 23 to 60;
- 15% of men and 85% of women out of all the participants;
- 67% of people with minor children;
- 29% of the people unemployed in the country of residence and in Ukraine, and 61% of the employed people;
- 11% of the people with the experience of living in the occupied territories;
- 30% of the people living in shelters and temporary places of residence;
- 59% of the people living in the frontline territories;
- 11% of the people with three or more children.

Annex 2. Ways to Distribute the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed via a number of partnering organisations of the Ombudsman Office, representative of the Ukrainian and foreign state institutions, social media, and during monitoring visits by the Ombudsman Office.

We would like to express our gratitude for distributing information on the study to the following organisations:

- Kingdom of Belgium: Caritas Belgium, Association of Ukrainians in Belgium, Ghent Migration Department (Amal), Ukrainian Voices Refugee Committee and RLO, Promote Ukraine Civil Society Organisation.
- Ireland: Ukrainian Action in Ireland, Caritas Ireland.
- Kingdom of Spain: Caritas Spain, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration in Spain.
- Italian Republic: Caritas Italy, National Congress of Ukrainian Associations of Italy, Cultural European Association Italy-Ukraine Maidan, INTRECCI, ARCI Pistoia, Associazione Amici di San Martino, Pane e Rose, CIDAS, Strade Blu, Caritas Fano, Caritas Fermo, Di tutti i colori, Coop Foco Bari, Associazione Lombarda Verso Nuovi Orizzonti, ARCI Nazionale, Esculapio, Dimora di Abramo, CSV MLS, Liberi tutti, Umana Solidarieta', INTERSOS.
- Kingdom of the Netherlands: Caritas Netherlands, Ukrainians in the Netherlands Foundation, Ukrainian Community in the Netherlands Foundation, VNG International, Opora Foundation.
- Federal Republic of Germany: Moabit Hilft, Alliance of Ukrainian Organisations Working in Germany, German Civil Society Organisation "Frauentreff Hellma", Zentrum Liberale Moderne, Center for International Peace Operations, Libmod, Berghof Foundation Operations gGmbH, Bertelsmann-Stiftung, Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Osteuropakunde, Berlin.hilft Network, Caritas Germany, Central Union of Ukrainians in Germany "Association of Ukrainian Organisations in Germany", ProjectTogether.
- Republic of Poland: Caritas Poland, Nomada, Diakonia Poland, Szkoua (Warsaw Ukrainian School), Your School (school for children from Ukraine), GenForward Warsaw, Poland, Centrum Wsparcia Imigrantow i Imigrantek (CWII), Polish Migration Fund (PMF).
- Slovak Republic: Caritas Slovakia, Slovak and Ukrainian Society, Human Rights League, Slovak Humanitarian Council, SME SPOLU, Ukrajinsky Institut.

- Czech Republic: Caritas Czechia, Civil Society Organisation “Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic, Association of Ukrainians and Supporters of Ukraine, Ukrainian Initiative of South Moravia, Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre, Cultural Club - Dobrovolnicke Centrum, Kalyna, NEEKA.
- International organisations: UNHCR, Caritas, La Strada International, Ukrainian World Congress.

The Ombudsman Office involved representatives of the state institutions located abroad into the distribution of the questionnaire:

- 10 embassies of Ukraine in the European countries and their consular departments;
- 13 standalone units of the SE “Document” abroad (in Italian Republic, Kingdom of Spain, Poland Republic, Slovak Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, and Czech Republic).

Moreover, the representatives of the Ombudsman Office asked to distribute the questionnaire among the Ukrainian citizens in Kingdom of the Netherlands at the meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Asylum and Migration of Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The questionnaire was also distributed via social media: in foreign Telegram channels and Facebook communities.

Around 150 people took part in the monitoring visits by the Ombudsman Office. They were asked to distribute the questionnaire among their acquaintances.