

LIVES ON HOLD:
INTENTIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES OF
REFUGEES FROM
UKRAINE

REGIONAL INTENTIONS REPORT #7

JULY 2026

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Data used in this report were collected through a partnership between UNHCR and Ipsos SA in Switzerland, who implemented surveys with refugees from Ukraine in Europe.

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Cover photograph:

Refugees Elena and Iaroslav along with their young daughter Eva were grateful to find an apartment in Ungheni, Moldova after Iaroslav originally spent time living in a tent. Though Elena dreams of stability for her family, they have recently been informed they must find a new home. "I want us to have a garden, a place where Eva can run around freely and where I can grow everything I want," Elena confesses.

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In collaboration with:

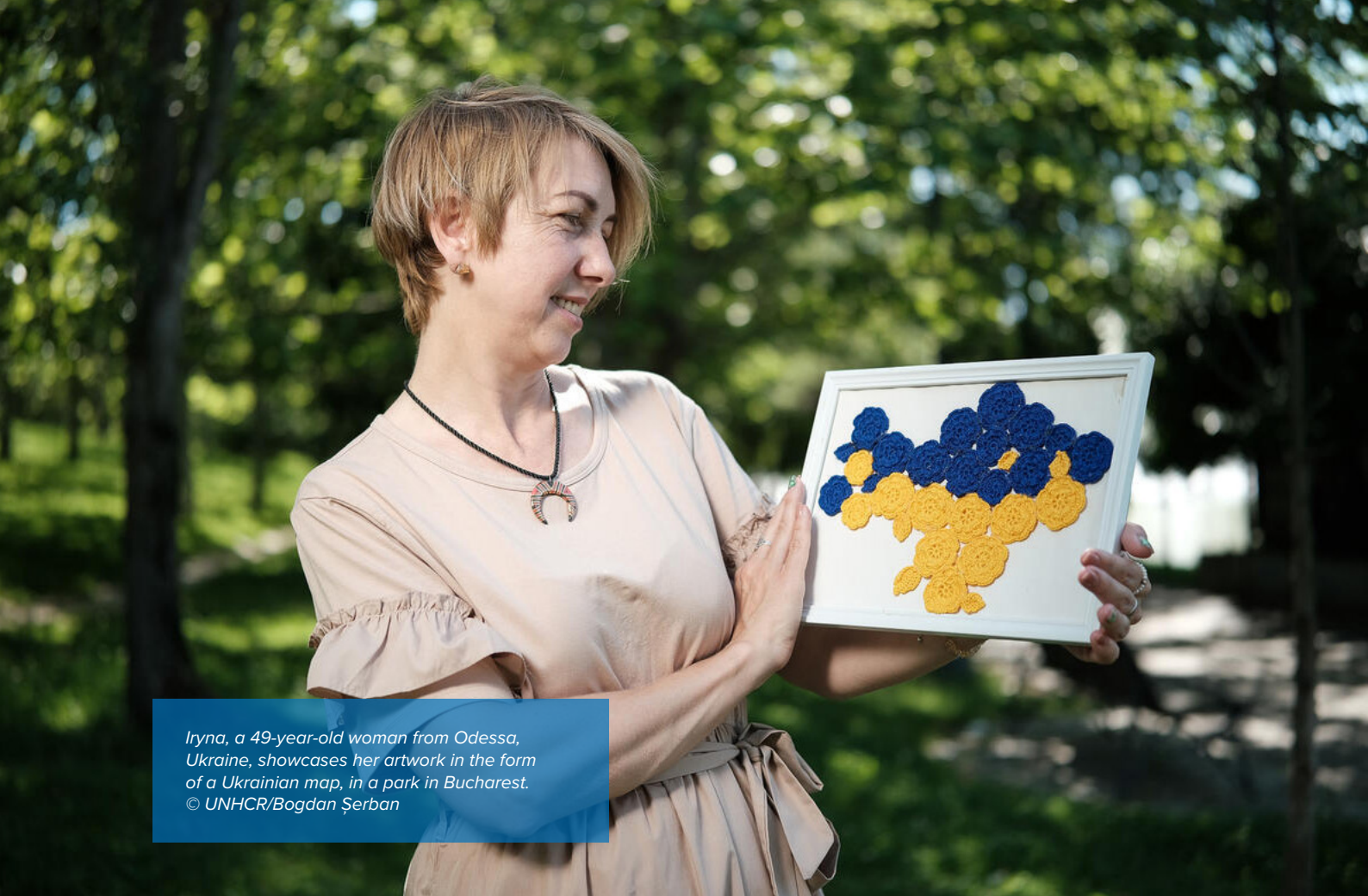


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Iryna, a 49-year-old woman from Odessa, Ukraine, showcases her artwork in the form of a Ukrainian map, in a park in Bucharest.
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Executive summary

More than four years after the beginning of the Russian Federation's full scale invasion of Ukraine, millions of people remain forcibly displaced. Over 3.8 million people are internally displaced within Ukraine and nearly 5.8 million refugees from Ukraine are recorded globally, over 5.2 million of them in European states. Against this backdrop of protracted displacement and continued uncertainty, understanding displaced people's intentions and the factors that shape their decisions is critical for guiding durable solutions and for informing policy responses in host countries and in Ukraine.

This seventh Lives on Hold report presents findings from 4,375 interviews with refugee households across Europe, conducted between December 2025 and January 2026. The surveys, implemented by Ipsos SA, used a mixed methodology (phone and web based interviews), combining longitudinal follow up of earlier respondents with new respondents recruited through online panels and a large scale SMS based approach.

Previous rounds focused on measuring return intentions by distinguishing between short-term plans to return and longer-term aspirations, recognizing that stated intentions are shaped by significant uncertainty regarding the future situation in Ukraine. This latest round introduced a new module to explore how return intentions may differ depending on how the war evolves and ultimately ends, acknowledging that different future scenarios are likely to have important implications for refugees' decisions about returning to Ukraine (see box on page 10 of the report).

Key findings



1 Return hopes have declined, yet a majority of refugees would return if the war ended and territorial integrity is restored.

- Uncertainty around the evolution of the war weighs on refugees' return aspirations, with 49 per cent of refugees still hoping or planning to return in the future, down from 61 per cent in 2024.
- However, when presented with specific hypothetical scenarios regarding the outcome of the war, 65 per cent of refugees indicate that they would be likely to return if the war ends and Ukrainian territorial integrity is restored, in contrast to 32 per cent under a scenario in which an agreement ends the war, but Ukraine does not regain control over temporarily occupied territories.



2 Intentions vary sharply according to locations of origin and of asylum.

- For refugees from temporarily occupied territories and frontline oblasts, return intentions are closely linked to territorial restoration.¹ The share of them likely to return more than doubles under a scenario in which Ukraine regains control over currently occupied territories, increasing from 21 to 70 per cent among refugees from temporarily occupied territories and from 33 to 65 per cent among those from frontline oblasts.

1. Refugees originating from frontline oblasts refers to those whose specific settlement of origin is not currently under temporary occupation but it is located in eight oblasts which border or are located in immediate proximity to active combat zones or occupied territories: Chernihivska, Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Khersonska, Luhanska, Mykolayivska, Sumska and Zaporizka.

- Refugees hosted in Central and Eastern Europe report higher likelihood of return across all scenarios than those hosted in Western and Northern Europe. These differences are associated with variations in refugees' profiles across host countries and may also reflect self-selection patterns, with refugees intending to maintain the option of return potentially choosing to remain closer to Ukraine.



3 Return intentions are associated with demographic characteristics and links with Ukraine, which are often related to differing levels of socio-economic inclusion.

- Older people, women and single-carer households are more likely to intend to return, partly reflecting more direct family and property-related links to Ukraine, including having a spouse remaining in the country, and comparatively lower levels of socio-economic inclusion in host countries.
- Younger adults without dependants and nuclear families are generally less likely to intend to return, reflecting comparatively fewer direct family and property-related links to Ukraine and stronger socio-economic inclusion in host countries.
- Refugees who remain undecided about return often reflect both comparatively fewer direct family and property-related links to Ukraine and lower levels of socio-economic inclusion in host countries. This profile is more common among middle-aged adults, who are more likely to face challenges related to labour market integration, while also lacking clear information about the status of their property in Ukraine.



4 Beyond the end of the war and durable safety and stability, housing and economic opportunities remain the key enablers of return, although their relative importance differs by refugees' profile.

- For 70 per cent of refugees, durable safety and stability conditions in areas of return ranks as their first or second most important enabler for return.
- For 44 per cent of refugees, availability of economic opportunities in areas of return ranks among the two most important enablers of return. This factor is particularly important for younger refugees and those currently working, for whom economic prospects are nearly as important as durable safety and security in shaping return intentions.
- For 40 per cent of refugees, effective access to property and adequate housing conditions in areas of return ranks among the two most important enablers of return. This factor is particularly important for older refugees and for those whose property in Ukraine is damaged or in occupied territories, for whom housing-related considerations are even more important than safety and stability in shaping return decisions.



5 Information gaps persist, particularly on security, livelihoods and housing, with needs varying across refugee profiles.

- 32 per cent of refugees report that they do not have enough information to decide whether to return or not, an increase compared to the previous round (25 per cent). Most of them seek greater clarity on the expected safety and stability conditions in areas of return, as well as on job and business opportunities (59 and 43 per cent respectively)
- Refugees originating from areas under occupation more often report information gaps about alternative housing or compensation and repair programmes.
- Refugees reporting a lower likelihood of return are more likely to identify information gaps related to employment and business opportunities in areas of return, available return and reintegration support, and the implications of return for their legal status in host countries.

Main recommendations



1 Ensure a dual track, protection based approach to solutions, supporting both voluntary return and local integration.

- Planning should remain grounded in protection principles, with returns strictly voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable, supported by ongoing monitoring of conditions and informed decision-making.
- In parallel, greater emphasis is needed on addressing protracted displacement through strengthened local integration, expanded legal stay options, and access to rights and national systems for those who may remain in host countries.² Support for local integration in host countries should also recognize that remaining outside Ukraine does not preclude refugees from maintaining close cultural, family, social and economic links with Ukraine.



2 Investing in housing, property and basic infrastructure and services as core enablers of sustainable return.

- The importance of enhanced access to housing and property, particularly for those from areas under occupation or where destruction is widespread, underscores the relevance of a needs-based and inclusive housing policy. Such a policy should involve tailored and scalable support programmes to enable access to adequate housing and compensation for returnees alongside others with high housing vulnerability, and to ensure that these are accessible, transparent and well communicated.
- Area based approaches that link housing with basic utilities and social services are critical to make returns sustainable, particularly considering that return and reintegration patterns may reshape the demographic and human geography of different areas of Ukraine, with areas likely to receive significant inflows of returning refugees requiring the ability to rapidly scale affordable housing, basic infrastructure and social services, tailored to the prevailing needs in each community.³

2. See [UNHCR \(2026a\), Transitioning from temporary protection: Projected stay, legal pathways, and policy options for refugees from Ukraine.](#)

3. See [UNHCR \(2026b\), Policy Brief No. 2: Forecasting refugee return to Ukraine amid ongoing war and uncertainty.](#)



3 Strengthen economic inclusion and access to skilled employment in both host countries and areas of return.

- Economic opportunities are a key driver of decisions both for those who may return and for those who remain in displacement. In host countries, sustained efforts to support decent work through language learning, job-matching, recognition of qualifications, bridging courses and reskilling can improve self-reliance and prepare refugees for durable solutions, including return, while reducing the risk of negative coping strategies.⁴
- In areas of return in Ukraine, investments in skills, local labour markets, business development and economic recovery will be essential not only to support sustainable reintegration of returnees, but also to help create the conditions that would enable voluntary and sustained return over time.



4 Close critical information gaps through tailored communication and counselling.

- With one third of refugees reporting insufficient information to support decision-making, there is a need to strengthen timely, targeted and accessible information provision and individual counselling, in close collaboration with Ukrainian institutions and refugee communities. Information needs relate both to potential return to Ukraine and to longer-term stay in host countries, reflecting the diversity of refugees' intentions and circumstances.
- While many refugees seek information on expected safety and stability conditions in areas of return, housing and property, economic opportunities, and available return and reintegration support (including social protection and compensation rights), others require information on legal pathways, eligibility criteria, procedures, timelines and the implications of different choices for their legal status and rights in host countries.⁵

4. See [UNHCR \(2026c\), Labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees in Europe: Employment gaps, skill mismatches and economic gains](#).

5. See [UNHCR \(2026a\), op. cit.](#)

Introduction

Background

The full-scale invasion and war against Ukraine that began in February 2022 has resulted in a protracted displacement crisis. Within Ukraine, **over 3.8 million people remain internally displaced⁶ and nearly 5.8 million refugees from Ukraine are recorded globally**, with over 5.2 million of them in European states.⁷

To ensure that the perspectives of refugees and internally displaced people are reflected in discussions about durable solutions and policy responses in host countries and in Ukraine, UNHCR has regularly implemented intentions surveys since 2022. These surveys collect data on displaced people's profiles, their return intentions, as well as the main factors influencing their decisions. Between 2022 and 2025, six rounds of surveys were conducted with refugees from Ukraine in Europe.⁸

This seventh report presents the findings from the latest survey rounds. The analysis is based on **interviews undertaken between December 2025 and January 2026 with close to 4,400 refugee households across Europe, covering 11,100 household members.**

The report aims to answer the following key research questions:

- What are refugees' current return intentions, based on their own expectations about the future?
- How would refugees' return intentions evolve under different hypothetical future scenarios related to the possible evolution and outcome of the war?
- To what extent are return intentions associated with place of origin, including origin in occupied or frontline oblasts, as well as demographic and socio-economic characteristics?
- What are enabling factors that could influence refugees' returns decisions?
- What are refugees' information needs when it comes to return decisions?

6. See [IOM \(2026\), Ukraine Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 23](#).

7. For most up-to date information visit the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Ukraine](#).

8. For all previous reports visit [UNHCR Intentions Surveys](#).

Methodology

Sampling and data collection were conducted by Ipsos SA. The research combined phone and web-based surveys and used different sampling approaches. As in previous rounds, all respondents from earlier waves who had consented to be re-contacted and were reachable were invited to participate in this round via phone or web-based surveys. **This longitudinal sub-sample comprised 898 interviews with refugees.** To supplement the longitudinal sample and reach the desired sample size, an additional sample was recruited through two main channels:

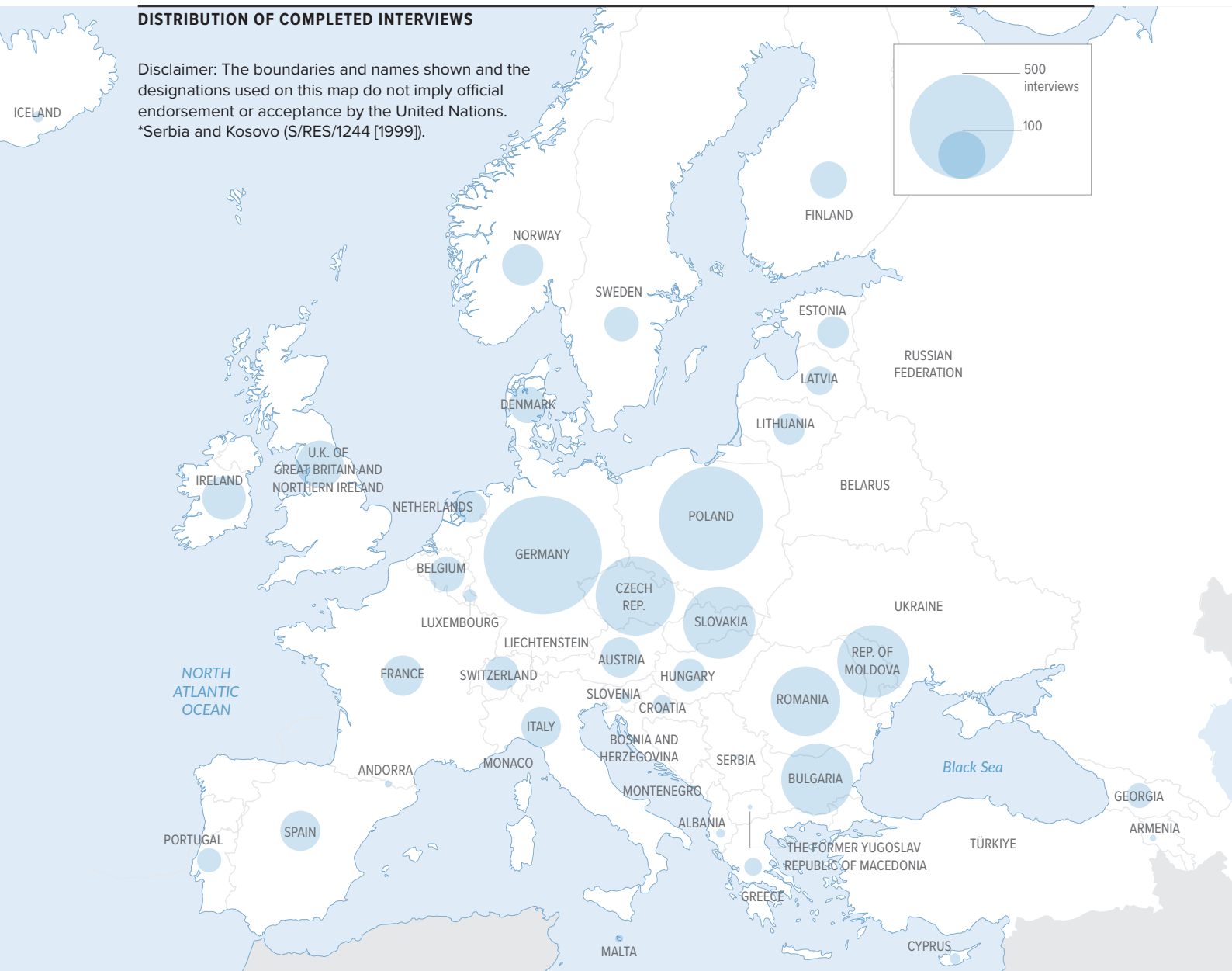
- **Online panels:** Ipsos SA's Ukrainian online panels were used to identify and invite target respondents, **resulting in 233 completed interviews with refugees.**
- **SMS recruitment:** For this round, an innovative SMS-based recruitment approach was piloted. Using the database of a large Ukrainian mobile-phone provider (Vodafone), invitations to participate were sent via SMS to a randomly selected sample of phone numbers. **This approach resulted in 3,257 completed interviews with refugees.**

Responses from all data-collection modes and sampling sources were combined by population group (4,389 interviews). Post-stratification weights were calculated to align the sample with known population distributions and to reduce potential sampling bias. While results cannot be extrapolated to all refugees from Ukraine, the demographic composition of the samples is very similar to that of the broader populations as reflected in other sources. A detailed description of the sampling and weighting approach is provided in Annex I.⁹

9. The full survey questionnaire and anonymized version of the microdata can be accessed via [UNHCR's Microdata Library](#).

DISTRIBUTION OF COMPLETED INTERVIEWS

Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
 *Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 [1999]).



The survey questionnaire remained broadly consistent with previous rounds, while introducing four main adjustments for this iteration: (i) the addition of a module exploring return intentions under different hypothetical war-end scenarios (see box below), (ii) a revision of the question on return enablers in order to better capture the relative importance of different factors influencing return

decisions (ranking instead of Likert scale), (iii) the inclusion of questions related to refugees' intentions regarding future legal status, reflecting the growing relevance of this issue in policy discussions and among refugee populations, and (iv) the streamlining of selected modules to reduce the overall length of the questionnaire and support completion through a self-administered format.



Liudmyla Dobrovolska, 68, a University Professor from Odesa, Ukraine holds an English textbook she has used to teach her students. The photo is taken inside the National Library in Bucharest, a place hosting many activities for the Ukrainian community.
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MEASURING RETURN INTENTIONS: ASPIRATIONS VS. SCENARIOS

Since the start of the intentions survey series, UNHCR has measured return intentions through a two-step approach. Respondents are first asked whether they are “*planning to return in the next twelve months*”, in order to identify those with concrete return plans. Those not planning to return in the short term are then asked whether they are “*hoping to return to Ukraine one day*”. This second question is intended to capture broader **return aspirations**, reflecting long-term preferences expressed in a context of uncertainty regarding future conditions in Ukraine.

In this latest round, a new module was introduced to explore how intentions might evolve under different hypothetical future scenarios related to the possible evolution and outcome of the war in Ukraine. Respondents were asked how likely they would be to consider returning under three distinct scenarios:

- **Partial ceasefire:** hostilities and attacks limited to the frontline, while temporary occupation of territories continues.
- **Fragile Peace with Concessions:** an agreement to end the war and hostilities, without Ukraine regaining control over temporarily occupied territories;
- **End of war under a scenario of territorial restoration:** an end to the war and large-scale hostilities, with Ukraine regaining control over all temporarily occupied territories.

These scenarios are aligned with those used in the **UNHCR-Brunel University Agent-Based Return Model**.¹⁰ They should not be interpreted as predictions, but rather as analytical frameworks designed to explore how different security and territorial outcomes could shape forcibly displaced people’s return intentions. **The analysis presented in this report draws primarily on these scenario-based measures, as they provide more nuanced and operationally relevant insights into potential return dynamics under different future conditions.**

10. See [UNHCR \(2026b\), op. cit.](#)

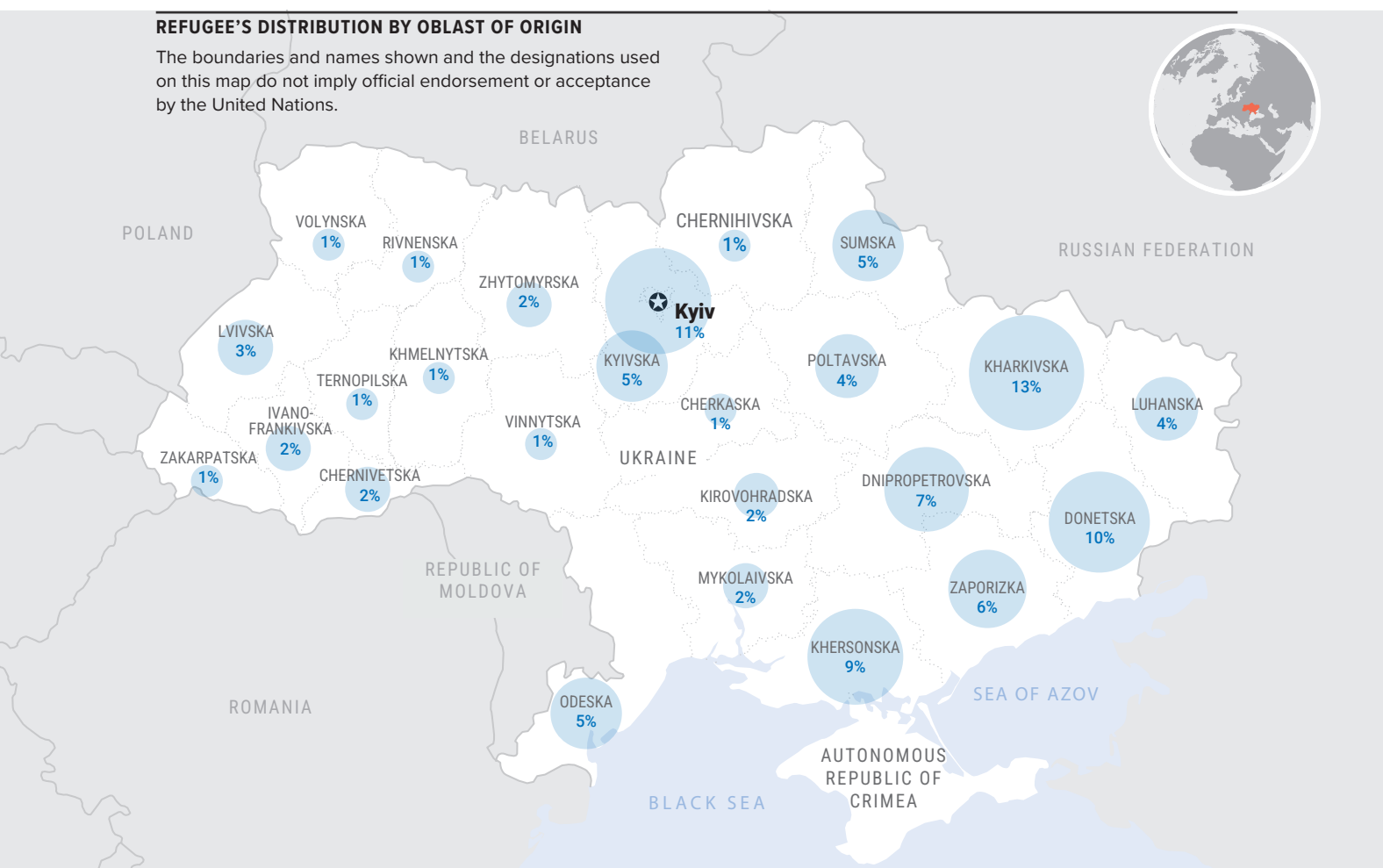
Sample characteristics

Around 58 per cent of refugees originate from frontline or temporarily occupied Oblasts, broadly reflecting the overall distribution of refugees by place of origin. Close to a fifth of refugees originate from a settlement that is temporarily occupied (18 per cent) -most of them from eastern Oblasts- and two-fifths originate from places not temporarily occupied but located in frontline Oblasts in the east,

south and north of the country (40 per cent).¹¹ The additional two-fifths originate from other Oblasts, evidence of the wide geographical impact of the war. Three quarters of refugee respondents were displaced during 2022, and the average length of displacement by the time of the survey was 3.2 years.

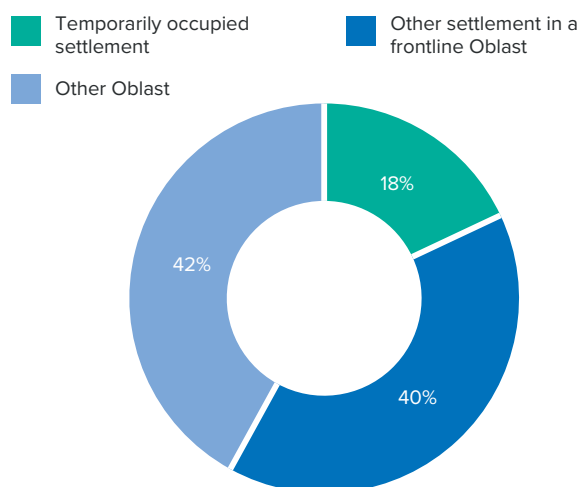
REFUGEE'S DISTRIBUTION BY OBLAST OF ORIGIN

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



11. Refers to refugees originating from non-occupied settlements located in eight Oblasts: Chernihivska, Dnipropetrovska, Donetsk, Kharkivska, Khersonska, Luhanska, Mykolayivska, Sumska and Zaporizka.

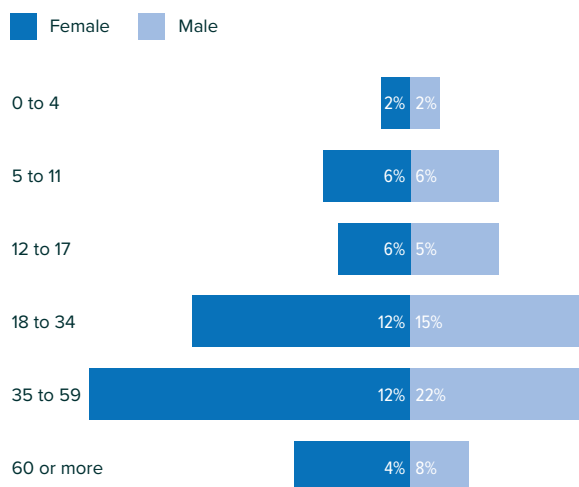
REFUGEES' BY SITUATION OF PLACE OF ORIGIN



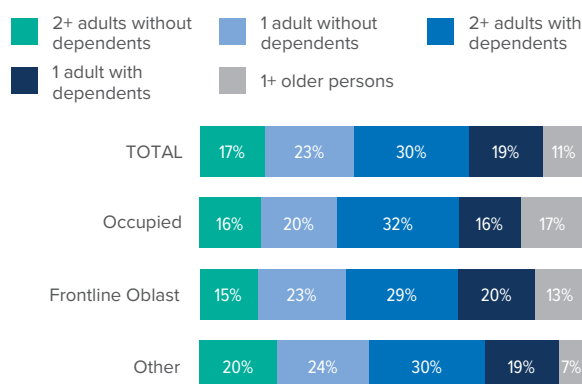
Majority of refugees are women and children, but the share of working-age males has increased.

Around three quarters of all household members are children (26 per cent) or adult females (46 per cent), while adult males represent over one-fourth (28 per cent). The share of working-age men (18–59 years) increased to 24 per cent in the latest round, compared to 11 per cent in surveys conducted in 2023 and 16 per cent in 2024 12.

REFUGEE DEMOGRAPHICS



REFUGEES' HOUSEHOLDS PROFILE BY SITUATION OF PLACE OF ORIGIN



Around 30 per cent of households are composed only of older persons (11 per cent) or of single carers (19 per cent), groups generally associated with higher vulnerability and greater barriers to self-reliance. Another 30 per cent is composed of households with two or more adults (18–59 years) with dependents, and 40 per cent are composed of only adults without dependents. **A higher share of older person' households is observed among refugees from places temporarily occupied, while a higher share of adults without dependents among those from non-occupied/non-frontline oblasts.**

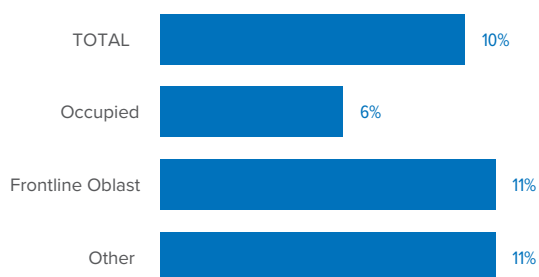
Only 10 per cent of refugees report having a spouse or partner still in Ukraine, a notable decrease compared to previous rounds (23 per cent in 2023 and 16 per cent in 2025). This trend may partly reflect family reunification dynamics (also explained by the increased share of adult males), but could also be linked to the death or loss of family members due to the war, as well as potentially higher levels of returns among refugees whose spouse or partner remained in Ukraine. Respondents with a spouse still in Ukraine are more frequently among refugees originating from non-occupied / non-frontline oblasts.

12. The share of adult male beneficiaries among newly granted Temporary Protection decisions in EU+ countries has increased steadily since 2023 and rose further in late 2025 following a Ukrainian Government decree easing travel restrictions for of young men aged 18–22. See [UNHCR \(2026d\), Ukraine Refugee Situation: Population Movements Factsheet #3](#).

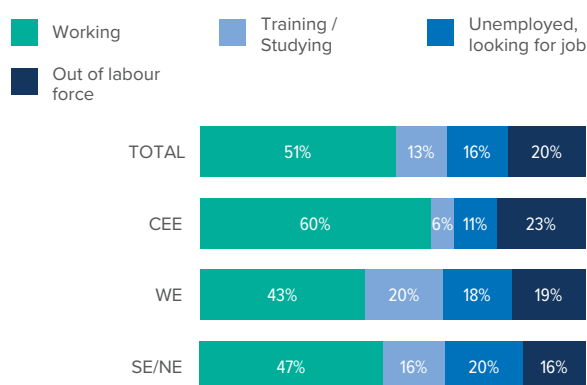
The conditions of refugees' dwellings in Ukraine differ significantly by their location of origin: only 16 per cent of refugees originating from places under temporary occupation report having an intact dwelling, compared to 45 per cent among refugees from other frontline Oblasts and 63 per cent among those from non-occupied and non-frontline Oblasts, although the latter are also more likely not to own a property (22 per cent).

Around two-fifths of refugees are residing in either Central and Eastern Europe or Western Europe, and one-fifth is residing in Southern and Northern Europe. **Over half of refugees are currently working**, with a higher share among those residing in Central and Eastern Europe (60 per cent). **However, less than half of refugees are able to cover most of their basic needs**, with a lower share in Central and Eastern Europe (41 per cent) compared to all other regions (50 to 52 per cent).¹³

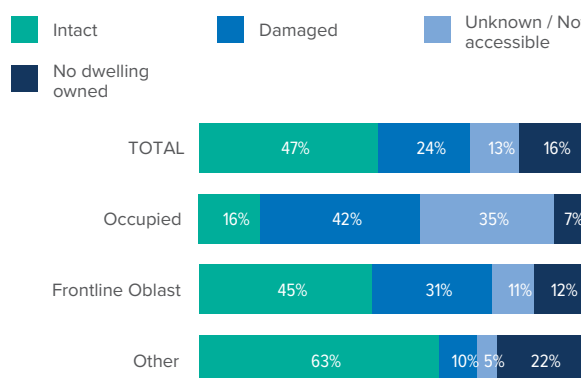
SHARE OF REFUGEES WITH SPOUSE IN UKRAINE BY SITUATION OF PLACE OF ORIGIN



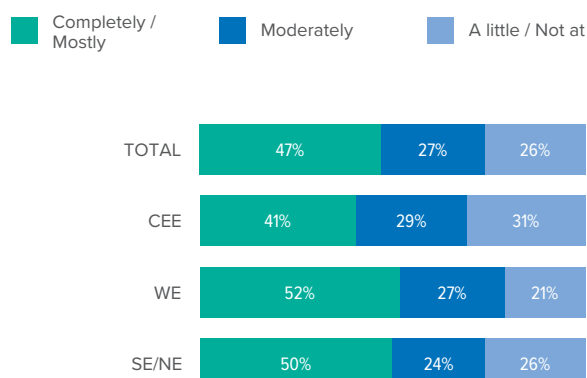
REFUGEES' CURRENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BY HOST COUNTRY REGION



STATUS OF REFUGEES' PROPERTY BY SITUATION OF PLACE OF ORIGIN



REFUGEES' ABILITY TO COVER BASIC NEEDS BY HOST COUNTRY REGION



CEE = Central and Eastern Europe
WE = Western Europe
SE = Southern Europe
NE = Northern Europe

13. A UNHCR survey conducted in 2025 found that 60% of refugees from Ukraine who were employed were working at jobs below their skill level and the overall median refugee wage was 40% less than that of hosts. See [UNHCR \(2026c\), op. cit.](#)

Return intentions among refugees

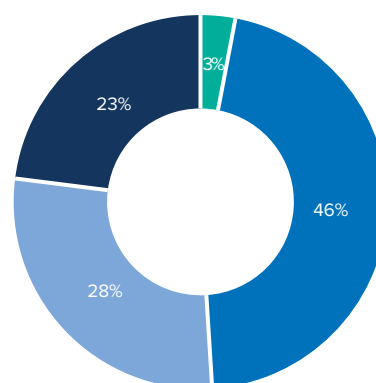
What are refugees' current return intentions?

Current return aspirations among refugees are now almost evenly divided between those planning or hoping to return to Ukraine one day and those who are either undecided or do not hope to return. Only a small minority report concrete plans to return in the short term (3 per cent within the next twelve months), while 46 per cent still hope to return one day. At the same time, 28 per cent remain undecided and 23 per cent report no hope to return.

Compared with previous rounds, aspirations to return have continued to decline as the war and displacement become increasingly protracted. In earlier rounds, a clear majority of refugees reported either planning or hoping to return in the future (61 per cent in the survey conducted in July–August 2024), compared to around half in the current round (49 per cent). Over the same period, the share reporting no intention to return has nearly doubled, from 12 to 23 per cent, while the proportion of those who are undecided has remained broadly stable (28 per cent, compared to 27 per cent in the previous round).

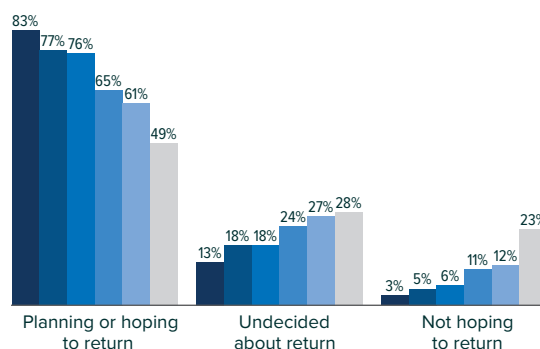
REFUGEES' CURRENT RETURNS ASPIRATIONS

■ Planning to return in 12 months
 ■ Hoping to return one day
 ■ Undecided about return
 ■ Not hoping to return



REFUGEES RETURN ASPIRATIONS OVER TIME

■ Aug-Sep/22
 ■ Dec-Jan/23
 ■ Apr-May/23
 ■ Jan-Feb/24
 ■ Jul-Aug/24
 ■ Dec/Jan26



How do refugees' return intentions vary under different hypothetical future scenarios?

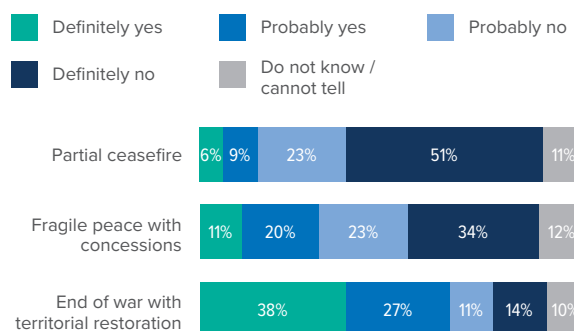
Survey results indicate that refugees' likelihood of return depends strongly on how the war ends and, in particular on Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Under a partial ceasefire scenario, only a minority report that they would be likely to return (15 per cent, combining "definitely yes" and "probably yes"). This share more than doubles under a scenario in which the war ends but temporarily occupied territories remain outside Ukraine's control (32 per cent) and rises to a majority of refugees under a scenario involving the end of the war and restoration of Ukraine's territorial control (65 per cent).¹⁴

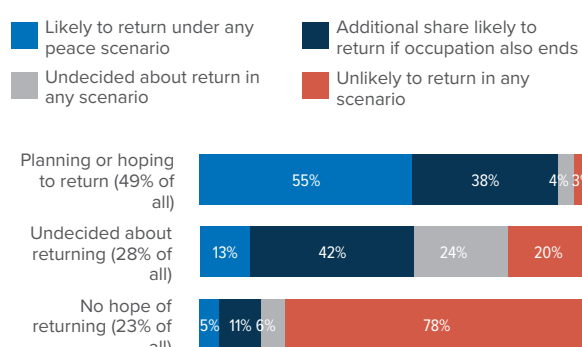
These findings are broadly consistent with the outputs from the UNHCR-Brunel University return model simulations conducted in 2025, suggesting that self-reported intentions are likely to reflect actual decision-making patterns. In both cases, the scale of return would depend heavily on prospects for future prospects for peace, security and territorial outcomes, ranging from limited returns under a partial ceasefire scenario to progressively larger return movements under scenarios involving the end of the war, particularly when associated with restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.¹⁵

Across the three scenarios, the proportion of refugees who would be undecided about return remains relatively stable, ranging between 10 and 11 per cent. Under both the partial ceasefire scenario and the scenario involving the end of the war without restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories, around one quarter of refugees report that they would "probably not" returning, suggesting some openness to return under improved conditions. This share declines to 11 per cent under the scenario involving the end of the war together with restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, where only 14 per cent indicate that they would "definitely not" return.

REFUGEES' LIKELIHOOD OF RETURN BY SCENARIO



REFUGEE'S INTENTIONS: FROM ASPIRATIONS TO SCENARIOS*



* Total likely to return if war and occupation end equals the sum of dark and light blue segments.

14. The 3% of refugees who are already planning to return in the next 12 months are included as likely to return in all the scenarios.

15. See [UNHCR Policy Brief No. 2: Forecasting refugee return to Ukraine amid ongoing war and uncertainty \(February 2026\)](#).

Scenario-based intentions help to assess how return intentions evolve when refugees move from individually perceived and often uncertain future expectations to a set of standardized hypothetical scenarios.

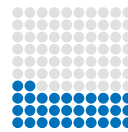
- **Among those who currently hope or plan to return, the large majority would be likely to return under at least one of the scenarios presented** (55 per cent if the war ends, and an additional 38 per cent if occupation also ends).
- **More than half of those currently undecided would also become likely to return under improved conditions** (13 per cent if the war ends and a further 42 per cent if occupation also ends), although one quarter would remain uncertain and one fifth unlikely to return.
- **Even among refugees who currently report no hope to return, 16 per cent would consider returning under at least one scenario** (5 per cent if the war ends and an additional 11 per cent if occupation also ends), while 6 per cent would remain undecided.

Taken together, these results make it possible to distinguish four broad categories of return intentions, based on how refugees' responses evolve across the different hypothetical scenarios:

OVERALL REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS ACROSS ALL SCENARIOS

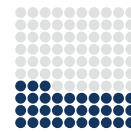
Likely to return under any peace scenario

32%



Additional share likely to return if occupation also ends

33%



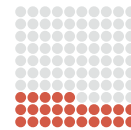
Undecided to return under any peace scenario

10%



Unlikely to return under any peace scenario

25%



Igor, 77, holds his dog Pryanik in a Bucharest park near his new home. Igor fled Odessa, Ukraine, together with his wife bringing with them nothing but a small bag and their dog, called Pryanik (meaning "gingerbread").
© UNHCR/Bogdan Șerban

How are return intentions associated with refugees' socio-demographic and socio-economic profiles, including place of origin?

Previous intention surveys reports, as well as results from UNHCR-Brunel University return simulations, have highlighted how return intentions among refugees are shaped by a combination of geographic, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics. An analysis of refugees' profiles according to their return intentions under the hypothetical scenarios presented in this latest survey round, combined with multivariate regressions analysis (see **Annex II**), indicates that the strongest predictors of return intentions are:

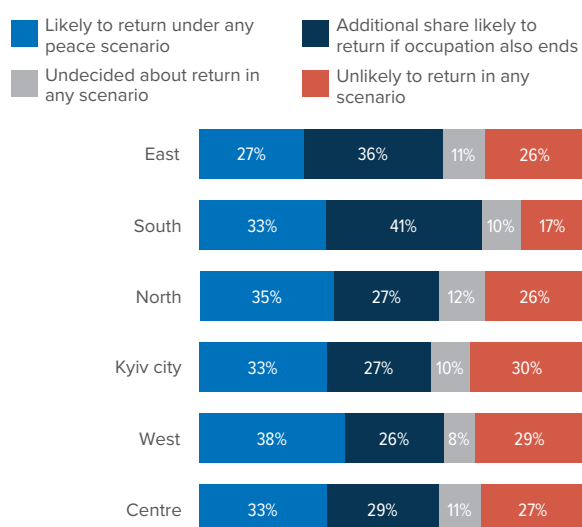
- Place of origin and the situation of the area of origin
- Family and property-related links to Ukraine
- Demographic characteristics
- Degree of socio-economic inclusion in host countries

As shown in the previous section, refugees' likelihood of return depends strongly on Ukraine's territorial integrity, **making place of origin and its situation among the strongest correlates of return intentions**. Refugees originating from places currently under occupation (18 per cent of all refugees) report the lowest likelihood of return under a scenario involving the end of the war without restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories, but the highest likelihood of return under a scenario involving restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity. By contrast, refugees originating from non-occupied and non-frontline Oblasts are comparatively more likely to report a low likelihood of return across scenarios.

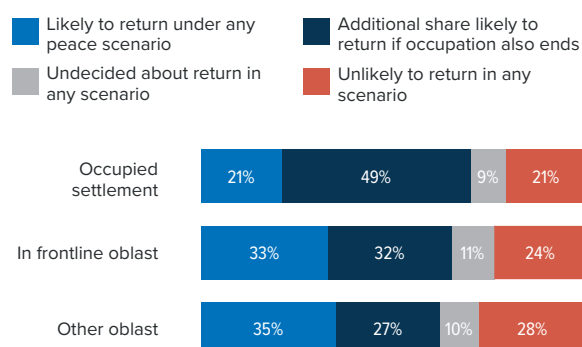
At the same time, territorial outcomes influence return intentions beyond refugees' individual places of origin. Across all refugee profiles, the restoration of territorial control is associated with significantly higher likelihoods of return, suggesting that

territorial integrity is also linked to broader perceptions regarding the durability of peace, safety and long-term stability.

REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS BY MACRO-REGION OF ORIGIN



REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS BY SITUATION OF PLACE OF ORIGIN



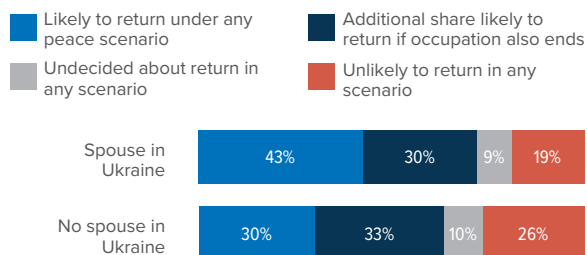
Refugees' family and property-related links to Ukraine are also closely associated with return intentions, particularly the status of their property and whether their spouse or partner is still in Ukraine. Refugees whose dwelling in Ukraine is still

intact (47 per cent of all refugees) or only partially damaged (11 per cent of all refugees) report comparatively higher likelihoods of return under a scenario involving the end of the war without restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories.

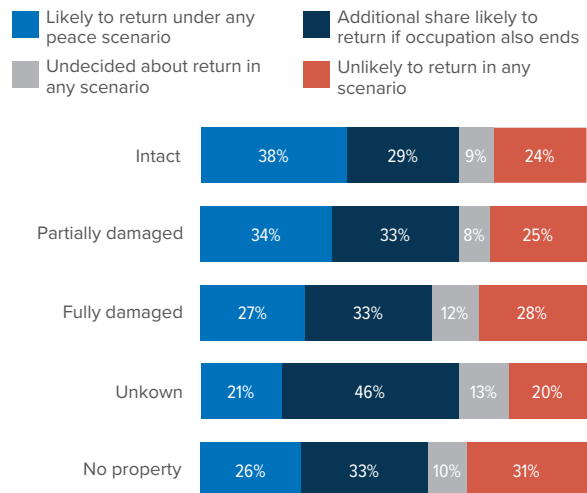
By contrast, refugees with fully damaged dwellings (6 per cent of all refugees) or without a property in Ukraine (16 per cent of all refugees) are more likely to report low likelihoods of return across all scenarios. Refugees who are unaware about the status of their property (13 per cent, more frequently among those originating from temporarily occupied places) show the lowest likelihood of return under a scenario involving continued occupation, but among the highest likelihoods under a scenario involving restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Similarly, having a spouse or partner still in Ukraine (10 per cent of all refugees) is associated with a consistently higher likelihood of return across all scenarios (around 10 percentage points more), while refugees without a spouse or partner in Ukraine are comparatively more likely to report low likelihoods of return.

REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY WHETHER SPOUSE IS STILL IN UKRAINE



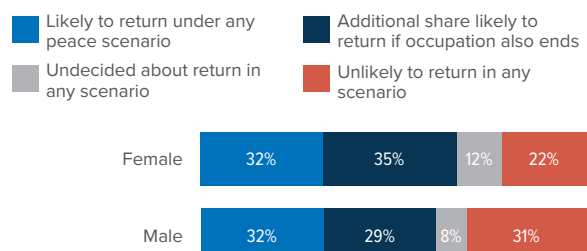
REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY STATUS OF THEIR PROPERTY IN UKRAINE



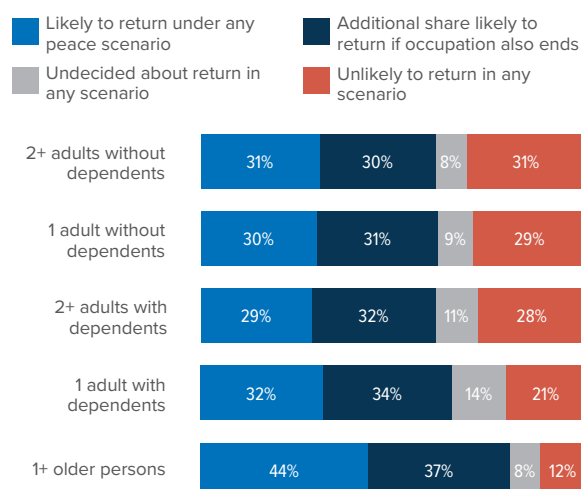
Difference in demographic characteristics also translate into distinct return intention patterns, particularly in relation to age, gender and household composition. Female respondents report similar likelihoods of return as men under a scenario involving the end of the war without restoration of control over temporarily occupied territories, but comparatively higher likelihoods under a scenario involving restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Households composed exclusively of older persons and single-carer households (together representing around 30 per cent of all refugees) also show comparatively higher likelihoods of return, particularly under the scenario involving restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity. By contrast, extended households with two or more adult, as well as households without dependents, are comparatively more likely to report low likelihoods of return across scenarios.

REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY GENDER

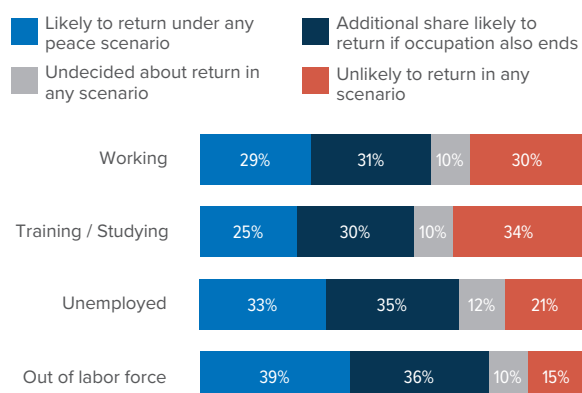


REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY HH PROFILE

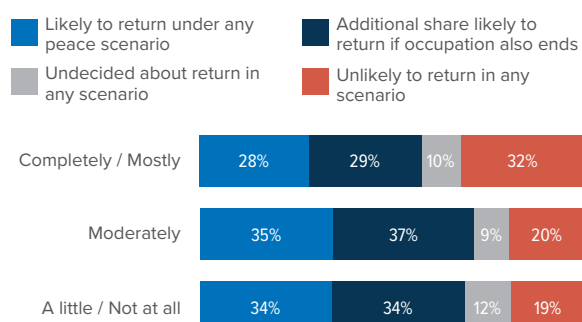


Lastly, differences in the degree of socio-economic inclusion in host countries, as reflected by proxy indicators such as local language knowledge, labour market participation and ability to meet basic needs, are also associated with different return intentions. Overall, refugees exhibiting lower levels of socio-economic inclusion are comparatively more likely to report intentions to return across scenarios.

REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY CURRENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY ABILITY TO COVER BASIC NEEDS



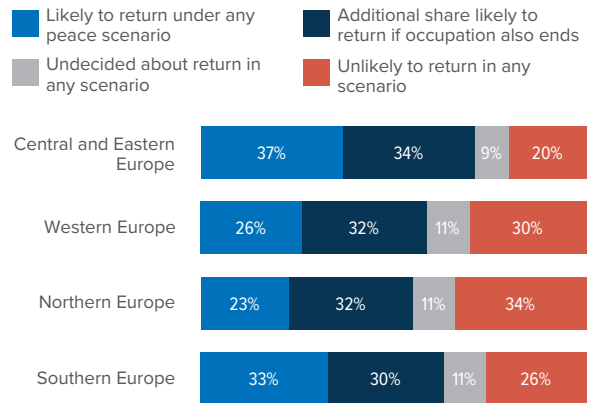
Taken together, the analysis suggests the emergence of three broad profiles associated with different return intention patterns across scenarios:

- Refugees who are **more likely to report return intentions** under any peace scenario are more frequently older persons, women and single-carer households. Refugees originating from frontline or currently occupied oblasts are also more likely to indicate intentions to return but only under a scenario in which both the war and occupation end. These profiles tend to be associated with more direct family and property-related links to Ukraine, comparatively lower levels of socio-economic inclusion in host countries, and greater sensitivity to future territorial control arrangements.
- Refugees **less likely to report return intentions** irrespective of the war outcomes are more frequently younger adults, households without dependents and refugees originating from non-frontline and non-occupied oblasts. These profiles are associated with comparatively fewer direct family and property-related links to Ukraine coupled with stronger labour market participation and socio-economic inclusion in host countries.
- Refugees who remain **undecided about return** irrespective of the war outcomes tend to display intermediate characteristics, combining uncertainty regarding future conditions in areas of return with comparatively lower levels of socio-economic inclusion in host countries. This profile is more common among middle-aged adults and refugees with unclear information regarding the status of their property in Ukraine.

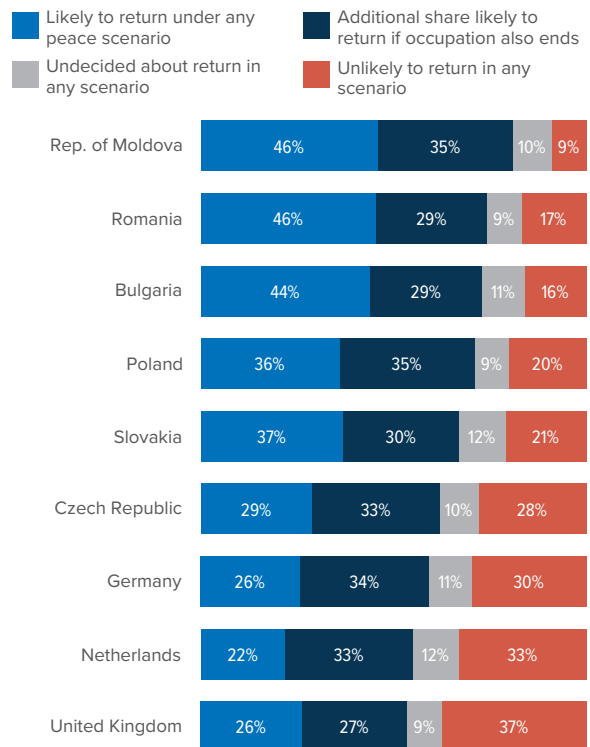
The combination of place of origin, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics that shapes intentions, also translates into different return intentions by host country. Refugees residing in Central and Eastern Europe report the highest likelihood of return across all scenarios (37 per cent if the war ends and 71 per cent if both the war and occupation end). Refugees in Moldova show particularly high return intentions (46 and 81 per cent respectively), while those in Czechia report lower-than-average intentions (29 and 62 per cent). By contrast, refugees residing in Western or Northern Europe report lower likelihoods of return under each scenario, although a majority would still be likely to return if both the war and occupation end (59 and 55 per cent respectively).

These differences are closely associated with variations in refugees' socio-demographic and socio-economic profiles across host countries. For example, refugees residing in Central and Eastern Europe are more likely to be older persons or single-carers households, more likely to have intact dwellings in Ukraine, and less likely to be able to cover their basic needs (despite comparatively higher levels of employment), factors that, as discussed above, are generally associated with higher return intentions. At the same time, these patterns may also partly reflect self-selection dynamics, whereby refugees with stronger intentions to return may be more likely to remain in countries geographically closer to Ukraine.

REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS BY HOST COUNTRY SUB-REGION



REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS IN SELECTED HOST COUNTRIES (those with 100+ surveys)

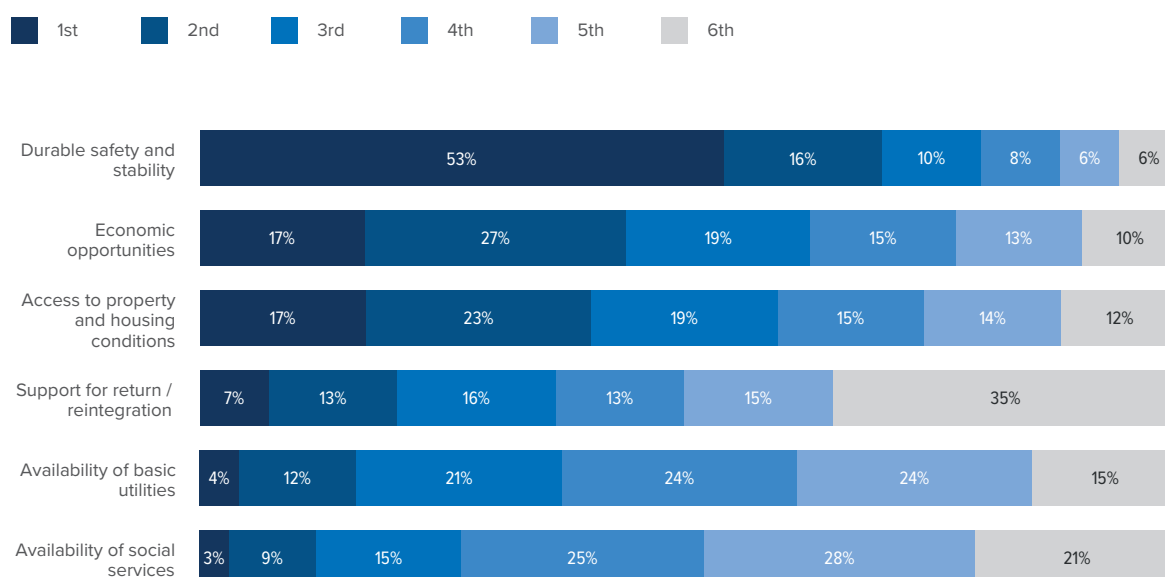


What are the enabling factors that can influence return decisions?

While the end of the war and of the occupation remain the primary determinants of refugees' return intentions, a range of additional conditions inside Ukraine are also likely to shape refugees' actual return decisions once conditions allow. To better understand these factors, respondents were asked to rank six potential enablers according to their importance for return decision-making.

As discussed in previous sections, **expectations regarding future safety and stability remain central across refugee profiles**, although the relative importance of other enablers differs significantly according to demographic characteristics, place of origin and socio-economic inclusion.

RANKING OF ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS IN UKRAINE THAT WOULD INFLUENCE DECISIONS TO RETURN AMONG REFUGEES



After durable safety and stability, **access to property and housing conditions, together with the availability of economic opportunities, are highly ranked enablers of return**: more than 40 per cent select each of these among their first or second most important factors, while around 60 per cent place them within their top three.

Access to economic opportunities is ranked particularly highly among younger refugees, those originating from non-occupied and non-frontline oblasts, and those currently employed in host countries - groups that also tend to report comparatively lower likelihoods of return under the

hypothetical scenarios. For these groups, economic opportunities are ranked above access to property and housing conditions and nearly as highly as durable safety and stability. By contrast, access to property and housing conditions is ranked significantly higher among older refugees, those originating from places currently occupied— where it is ranked even above durable safety and stability - and, unsurprisingly, among refugees whose property in Ukraine is damaged or with unknown status.

Access to support for return and reintegration, as well as to basic utilities, infrastructure and to social and community services, is generally ranked lower, with around 10–20 per cent selecting each as their first or second most important factor and 25–40 per cent placing them in their top three. Nevertheless, the importance assigned to these

factors varies across refugees' profile. In particular, older persons, refugees originating from places currently under occupation and single-carers households – groups generally associated with higher likelihood of return- place comparatively greater emphasis on support and assistance for return and reintegration than other groups.

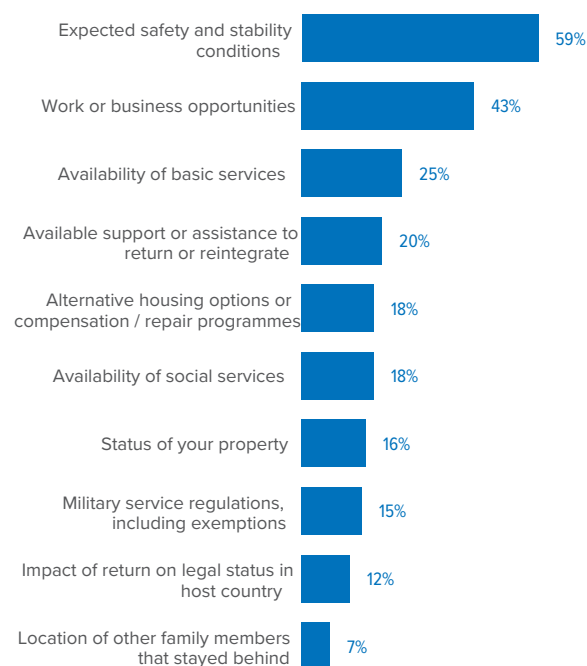
REFUGEE PROFILES MOST LIKELY TO PRIORITIZE EACH RETURN ENABLER

ENABLER	HIGHEST RANKING AMONG: (% SELECTING IT AS FIRST OR SECOND FACTOR)	SPECIFIC CONDITIONS MORE FREQUENTLY REPORTED:
Durable safety and stability	■ Place of origin is in non-occupied / non-frontline Oblast 74%	■ Internationally supported security arrangements ■ Changes to military mobilization requirements ■ Ukraine expected to join the EU within 5 years
	■ Property is intact or partially damaged 74%	
Access to property and housing conditions	■ Older persons 54%	■ Access to own property ■ Access to repair or compensation mechanism for damaged properties ■ Access to benefits or assistance to cover housing costs ■ Access to affordable housing alternatives
	■ Place of origin is occupied 64%	
	■ Property is fully damaged 55%	
	■ Property with unknown status 60%	
Economic opportunities	■ Younger adults 56%	■ Access to jobs with fair wages that cover basic living expenses ■ Access to work / business opportunities that match skills and experience
	■ Place of origin is in non-occupied / non-frontline Oblast 52%	
	■ Currently working or in training 50%	
	■ Undecided about return 52%	
	■ Unlikely to return 59%	
Support and assistance	■ Place of origin is occupied 30%	■ Access to reintegration programs (e.g. employment, housing, etc.) ■ Access to material assistance upon return
	■ Older persons 26%	
	■ Single carers 23%	

What are refugees' information needs when it comes to return decisions?

Around one third of refugees report not having sufficient information to decide whether to return to Ukraine, an increase compared to the previous round (32 compared to 25 per cent). Among those reporting information gaps, needs broadly mirror the importance assigned to return enablers: information on expected safety and stability conditions in areas of return is the most frequently reported need, closely followed by information on work and business opportunities (59 and 43 per cent respectively). At least one quarter of refugees with information needs also report requiring more information on the availability of basic services, support and assistance for return and reintegration, the status of property and housing options, and access to social services.

INFORMATION NEEDS AMONG REFUGEES INDICATING NOT HAVING ENOUGH INFORMATION TO DECIDE WHETHER TO RETURN OR NOT TO UKRAINE



Information needs also vary across refugee profiles:

- **Information on expected safety and stability conditions** is more frequently reported by women, refugees originating from non-occupied but frontline oblasts, and those who would be likely to return only if both the war and occupation end.
- **Information on work and business opportunities** is more commonly reported by households without dependents, refugees currently participating in the labour force, and those with comparatively lower likelihood of return.
- **Information on available support and assistance for return and reintegration** is more frequently requested by older persons, single-carers households and refugees originating from places currently occupied, as well as by refugees who are undecided or unlikely to return.
- **Information on status of property, alternative housing options and available compensation or repair programmes** is more commonly reported by older persons, refugees originating from places currently occupied - (almost as frequently as information on safety and stability conditions) and refugees whose dwellings are damaged or whose status remain unknown.



Iryna, 39, and her sons Ivan, 9, and Tymotii, 6, Ukrainian refugees from Kherson, living in Bucharest, Romania, since 2022. Together they walk in the park that symbolizes freedom to them: "To me, safety means that I can take my children to play in the park without being afraid of explosions." Iryna, a former TV journalist, now works with a Romanian NGO and the children are going to school and preschool respectively. (C) UNHCR/Mihai von Eremia

Annex I:

Sampling methodology

Longitudinal sample

Respondents who participated in previous waves and who had given consent to be re-contacted and were reachable were invited to participate in this round. The invitation was sent using the data collection mode—either phone or web-based—that was used in the last contact. In total, **898 longitudinal interviews were completed** (621 via phone-based interviews and 277 via web-based surveys).

The longitudinal sample frame was drawn exclusively from the panel of respondents from previous survey waves. This method does not constitute a random sample, as the frame is built upon prior engagement and consent rather than a probabilistic selection from the entire target population of displaced people in Ukraine. Inclusion in the CATI frame was specifically restricted to individuals who had participated in at least in one of the last two rounds (wave 5 or wave 4) and had provided explicit consent to be re-contacted via phone. This purposive sampling approach was designed to ensure continuity for longitudinal analysis, allowing for the tracking of changes over time within this specific cohort of the surveyed population.

Fresh sample

To supplement the longitudinal sub-sample and achieve the target sample sizes for each population group, a “fresh” sample of new respondents was recruited. This fresh sample was sourced through two distinct recruitment channels. The first was through Ipsos’s proprietary online panels, which include a significant number of Ukrainians who can be targeted for participation. The second method involved sending direct SMS invitations to a randomly selected sample of Ukrainian mobile subscribers. All participants recruited through these fresh sample sources completed the survey via the web-based (CAWI) mode. The following sections provide a detailed description of the methodology used for each of these recruitment streams.

Online panel sample:

- **Sample universe:** The sampling universe was composed by Ukraine online panels, focusing on panellists satisfying the criteria of having left Ukraine since 24 February 2022, not currently residing in Ukraine, and being at least 18 years of age. The online panel from Ukraine is a market research panel composed of 450,000 individuals from that country. It is not based on random sample, so it is not representative for a general population in strictly theoretical terms. However, the panel is big enough and has similar characteristics as the general population, so that it provides good estimates of population attitudes and behaviour. Panellists are generally younger and more urban than the general Ukrainian population. The online panel is subject to a number of quality assurance checks to ensure the quality of the sample.
- **Data collection:** invitations to take part in the survey were sent out to selected participants by email, or on the panel application and Viber bot if these had been installed by panellists. In the case of any difficulties with reaching targets for this wave, SMS reminders were sent or follow-up calls to direct panellists to the online survey. Panellists who were invited to participate in previous waves (waves 1,2,3) but did not take part in waves 4 or 5, could be invited to the current wave as fresh respondents. In total, **233 online panel interviews were completed.**

SMS sample:

- **Sample universe:** sampling and data collection was conducted via a collaboration with one of the largest Ukrainian mobile providers (Vodafone). The identification of potential refugees within their subscriber database was established as: (i) subscribers who are over 18 years old, (ii) who in the last 30 days, carried out events in roaming in one of the target countries for at least 14 days (including those without events, but whose phone moved between base stations), and (iii) whose last event in Ukraine with Vodafone was recorded on or after 01.02.2022.
- **Data collection:** Vodafone draw random samples of users from the sampling universe identified, with several small samples (batches) drawn in order to monitor variations in response rates. Vodafone then shared an SMS invitation to all selected users in each batch, containing the link to the online survey and requested the user's participation in the research. In total **277,600 invitations** via SMS were sent for refugees, with **3,258 completed surveys** at the end, equivalent to a response rate of 1.17%.

Combined sample and weighting

FINAL SAMPLE: SUMMARY TABLE

METHODOLOGY	COMPLETED INTERVIEWS
Longitudinal sample	898
Online panel sample	233
SMS sample	3,258
TOTAL INTERVIEWS	4,389
<i>Number of household members covered</i>	<i>11,101</i>
% of female respondents	63%

Responses from all data collection modes and sampling sources were combined into a joint dataset with **4,389 complete interviews**. To correct for any biases in the realization rates across the strata, post-stratification weighting of the collected responses was performed. The weighting targets were defined on the basis of various reference statistics, indicated for all weighting criteria below. The weighting was carried out using a raking algorithm, fitting the weighted sample distribution marginals to the data obtained from the respective reference sources.

The criteria were:

- Distribution by host country: respondents from Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, United Kingdom and countries with fewer than 100 respondents were categorized to Northern Europe, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, respectively. The source for population targets was UNHCR estimates of refugees recorded in Europe by end-2025.
- Distribution by region of origin: respondents were grouped depending on macro-region of origin (East, South, Kyiv city, Else). The source for population targets was the distribution of the Vodafone sample frame.
- Distribution by age & sex of respondents: six categories were used (18-34, 35-64 and 65+ for each of male and female respondents). The source for population targets was UNHCR estimates based on official data from EUROSTAT and other national authorities.
- Length of displacement: two categories were used (less than 2 years, 2 years or more). The source for population targets was the distribution of SMS subsample of the survey (to adjust for the distortions stemming from the longitudinal sample).

The design effect from the weighting is 1.496 and the overall effective sample size in this group is 2,934.

Annex II: Regressions methodology

Models' specification

To assess how different geographic, demographic, and socio-economic characteristics of refugees from Ukraine may impact their return intentions under the scenarios established, different multivariate regression analyses were run, including a multinomial regression and complementary binomial logistics regressions.

- Multinomial logistic regression: the dependent variable were the four broad categories of return intentions based on the combined responses regarding likelihood of return under different hypothetical scenarios: (1) likely to return under any peace scenario, (2) likely to return if occupation also ends, (3) undecided to return under any scenario, (4) unlikely to return under any scenario. The last category was used as reference.
- Binomial logistic regressions: four different logistic regressions were run with a binomial dependent variable: (1) likely to return under any peace scenario vs. all other categories; (2) Likely to return if both war and occupation end vs. likely to return under any peace scenario; (3) undecided to return vs. likely to return under any scenario; (4) unlikely to return vs. likely to return under any scenario.
- Fixed effects: considering the important difference in return intentions according to the situation of refugee's place of origin observed during the descriptive analysis, all regressions were run with fixed effects with a variable taking three possible categories: (i) place of origin is temporarily occupied, (ii) place of origin is not occupied but in frontline oblast and (iii) place of origin is non-occupied/non-frontline oblast.
- Independent variables: nine different variables were used as predictors of return intentions, including variables related to the strength of ties with Ukraine (status of property and whether spouse is still in Ukraine), demographic characteristics (gender of respondent, age group of the respondent and whether household has a vulnerable profile -only older persons or single-carers), displacement patterns (period of displacement), and those related to socio-economic situation in the host country (region of host country, knowledge of local language, current economic activity of respondent, ability to cover basic needs). All variables were analyzed as categorical variables, usually with two or maximum three categories.

Parameter estimates

All regressions produced the coefficient for each of the predictors considered in the model, as well as its standard error, z-scores, p-value, and relative risk ratios (for multinomial) or odd ratios (for binomial), as well as its 95 per cent confidence interval. The graphs below show the estimated relative risk ratios of the multinomial regression for each of the drivers or predictors considered and its 95 per cent confidence interval.

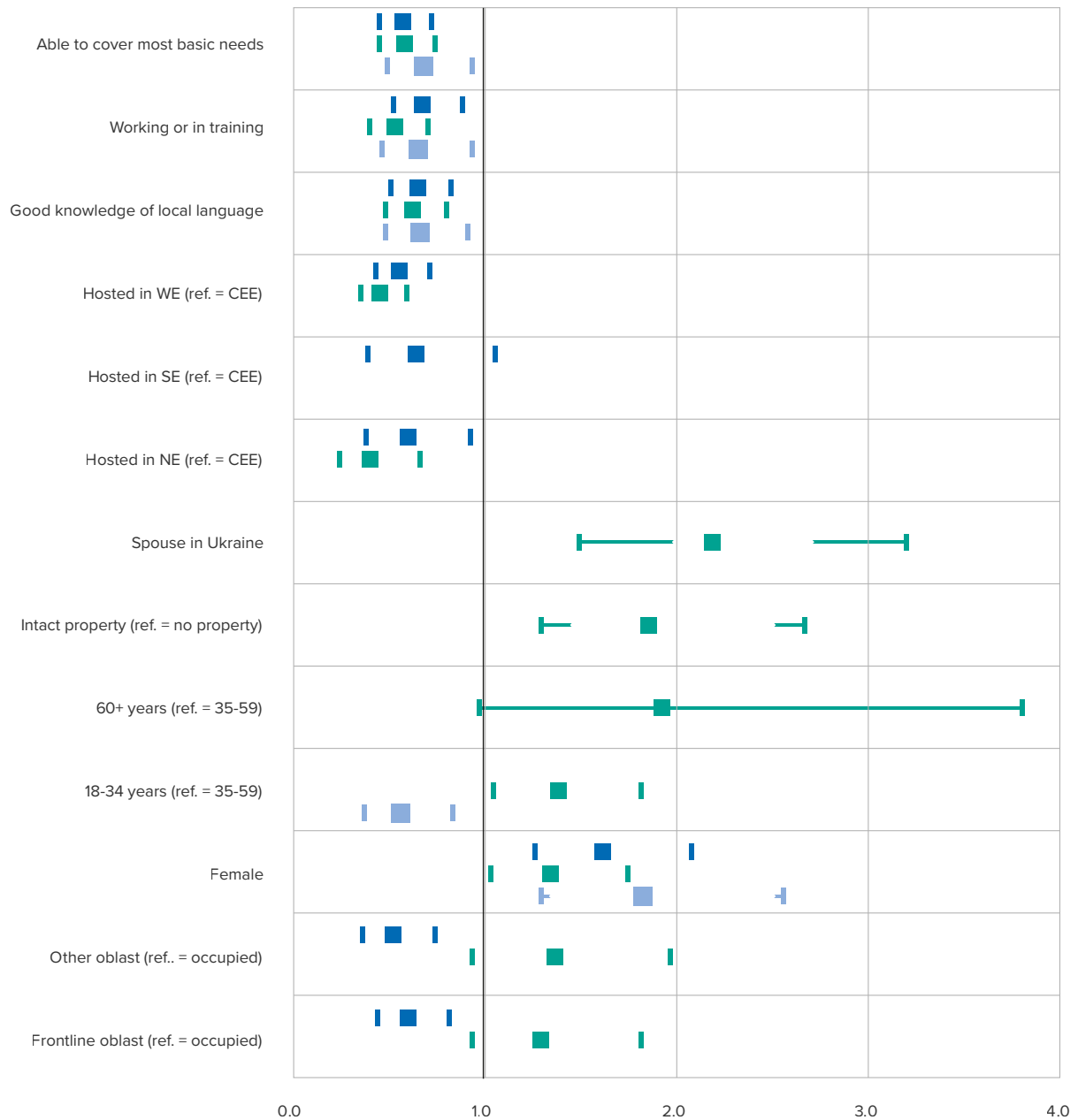
A relative risk ratio compares the likelihood of being in one return-intention category rather than the reference (unlikely to return), for each specific group of the predictor compared with its reference group, while holding the other variables in the model constant. A value of 1 means there is no difference between the specific group and its reference. A value above 1 means the group is more likely to be in that return-intention category rather than the reference category. A value below 1 means the group is less likely to be in that return-intention

category rather than the reference category. For example, if the relative risk ratio for “females” is 1.50 for the outcome “likely to return if the war ends”, this means that women are estimated to be 50 per cent more likely than men to fall into that return category rather than the reference outcome category (unlikely to return), all else equal. If the relative risk ratio is 0.70, this means the group is estimated to be 30 per cent less likely to fall into that return category rather than the reference outcome category, all else equal.

These results should be interpreted as associations, not as evidence that one characteristic directly causes a specific return intention. The estimates show how return intentions differ across groups after accounting for the other variables included in the model.

DRIVERS OF RETURN INTENTIONS: RELATIVE RISK RATIOS FROM MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS

Reference category: unlikely to return

■ Likely to return if war ends
 ■ Likely to return if both war and occupation ends
 ■ Undecided about return


Notes: Only predictors with p-value < 0.1 shown. Line lengths represent the 95% confidence interval.

LIVES ON HOLD: INTENTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

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