



At the end of May 2023, UNHCR deployed border monitoring teams through national NGO partners to provide information and assistance to individuals returning to Ukraine via the border with the Russian Federation in Krasnopillia hromada (Pokrovka border point) in Sumaska Oblast. UNHCR partners provide legal assistance, protection counseling, and social support to people in transit five days a week at the transit centre in Krasnopillia and at the Sumy reception center where some individuals are transported for accommodation and additional service provision.

1. MOVEMENTS

In September 2023, approximately 3,800 individuals entered Ukraine through the Pokrovka border crossing point located in Sumaska Oblast. This is equivalent to an average of 120 people returning to Ukraine on a daily basis. These figures are based on unofficial government sources.

Currently, only pedestrians may cross the border, as vehicular traffic remains restricted.

2. MONITORING FINDINGS

Individuals returning through Pokrovka are coming from the territories of Ukraine under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation, namely Donetsk, Luhanska, Zaporizka and Khersonska oblasts, and, to a lesser extent, Kharkivska oblast, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Russian Federation.

Place of departure

Territory of Ukraine under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation



98%

Russian Federation



2%

*The percentages above are based upon the total number of individuals interviewed by UNHCR Border Monitoring Teams in September 2023.

Travel to Ukraine

In general, individuals report that they reach Kolotyivka border point in the Russian Federation using minibuses with 8-18 seats. While on the move, they typically spend the night in budget roadside hostels or hotels. After crossing the border, individuals walk two kilometers to reach a free bus service provided by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGS) to the Krasnopillia transit center.

Individuals interviewed reported that the total average waiting time on both sides of the border ranged from 6 to 12 hours, and that their total travel time to the Krasnopillia transit center was approximately 48 hours.

The cost of traveling from departure points located within territories under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation to the Pokrovka border crossing remained stable from August to September 2023. Depending upon the city or settlement of departure/origin, transportation costs can range from 50 to 300 USD, and payments often made in either USD or Euros.

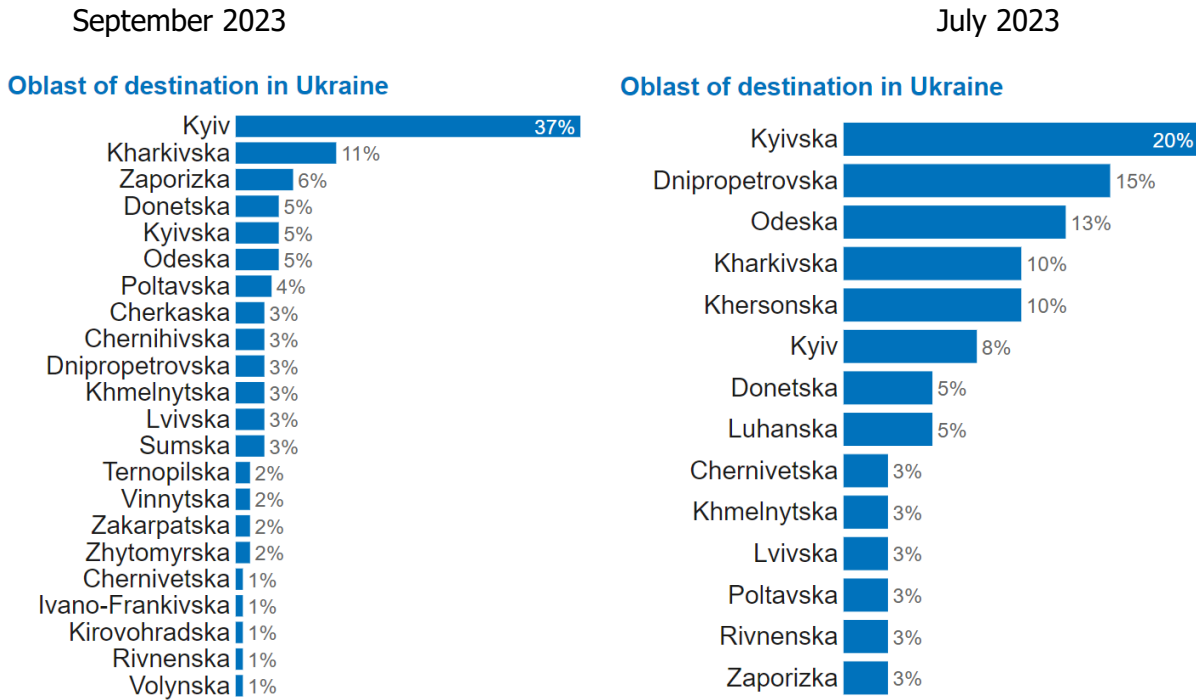
Entry into Ukraine is granted to people with various types of Ukrainian documents, including birth certificates, national passports, and passports for travel abroad, even if these documents have expired. Entry into Ukraine is also possible with copies of Ukrainian documents or without any document at all. All individuals seeking to enter Ukraine must undergo security screening by the Russian Federation on the Russian side of the border.

The most common concern about crossing the border cited by individuals was the long queues and waiting times on the Russian side of the border (66% of all respondents).

Return to Ukraine – Motivations and Intended Areas of Return

Respondents cited their primary motivations for returning to Ukraine as: reuniting with family members, accessing employment opportunities inside Ukraine, having their own homes or apartments in Ukraine, caring for relatives in Ukraine, and evacuating from areas under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation or active conflict zones.

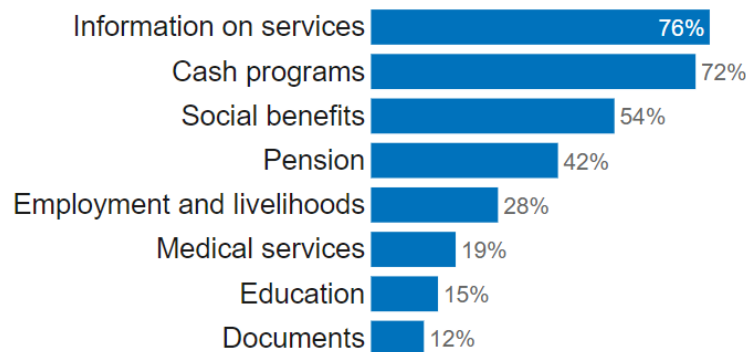
People returning to Ukraine indicated a variety of oblasts as their intended destination. In September, the predominant destinations were Kyiv city, Kharkivska, Zaporizka, Donetsk, Kyivska, and Odeska oblasts. This is a notable change from two months earlier in July 2023, when Kyivska, Dnipropetrovska, Odeska, Kharkivska, and Khersonska oblasts were the most popular destinations reported. In September 2023, Kyiv city was the most popular destination cited by respondents, reported by 37% of the total respondents.



*Percentages above are based upon the total number of individuals interviewed by UNHCR Border Monitoring Teams in July and September 2023.

Upon returning to Ukraine, the top five needs identified by respondents include: information on available services (76%), cash assistance (72%), social benefits (54%), pension (42%), and employment (28%), along with help obtaining necessary documents (12% of respondents).

Main needs upon return



*The percentages above are based upon the total number of individuals interviewed by UNHCR Border Monitoring Teams in September 2023. Respondents could provide multiple answers.

The most common information and counseling requests recorded by UNHCR Border Monitoring Teams were the following:

- Registration as an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) and access to the corresponding benefits;
- Renewal of pensions;
- Reissuing documentation for housing that has been damaged or destroyed;
- Seeking compensation for damaged or destroyed housing;
- Obtaining special status for children who suffered due to the war; and
- Information about the Prykhyostok program.

3. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROVIDED IN KRASNOPILLIA

Humanitarian services available in Krasnopillia transit center include: free transportation to Sumy and Kharkiv cities, as well as to the Sumy reception center, food assistance (World Central Kitchen), mobile teams of lawyers, psychologists, and social workers (Vostok SOS), registration for IDP benefits for those traveling to Kharkiv (DoSP of Krasnopillia), monitoring, legal counseling, and cash enrollment (Right to Protection), transportation to Kharkiv (Way of Ukraine, Helping to Leave), psychological assistance, maintenance of the Sumy reception center (Pluriton), enrollment for cash assistance for families with children (UNICEF), and social accompaniment (Proliska).

METHODOLOGY

At the end of May 2023, UNHCR deployed border monitoring teams through local NGO partners to provide information and assistance to individuals returning to Ukraine via the border with the Russian Federation in Krasnopillia hromada (Pokrovka border point) in Sumska Oblast. UNHCR partners provide legal assistance, protection counseling, and social support to people in transit five days a week at the transit center in Krasnopillia and are present at the Sumy reception center.

Protection monitoring teams conduct individual interviews with people returning to Ukraine. In September, a total of 130 people were interviewed (42% females 18-59 years, 11% males 18-59 years, 35% females 60+ years, 12% males 60+ years).

This note presents the findings from these interviews and other observations made by the border monitors in September 2023.

