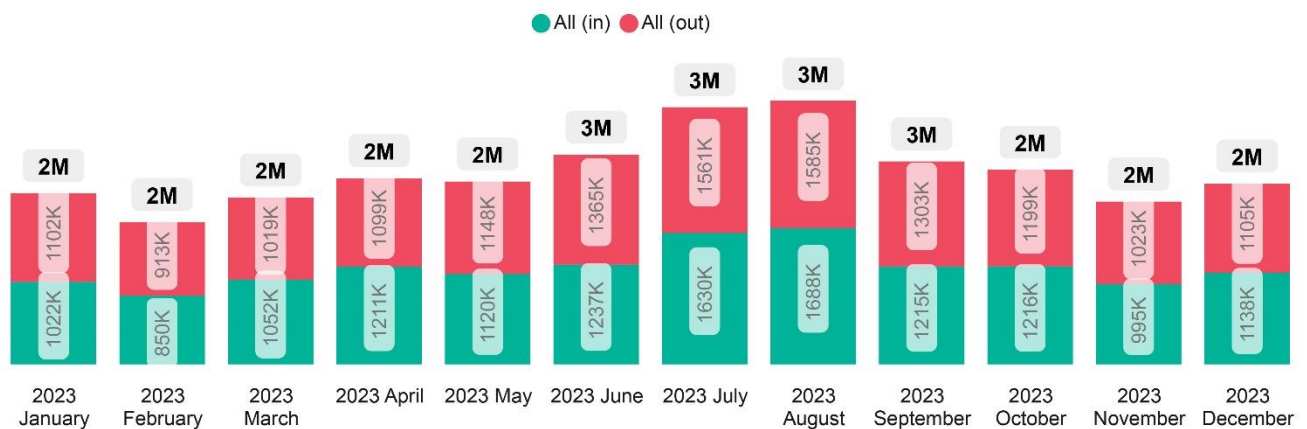




Since mid-March 2022, UNHCR and its local NGO partners Right to Protection, NEEKA, and The Tenth of April, have conducted border monitoring at 30 crossing points between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. The border monitoring teams provide information, legal assistance, protection counselling and social support to people leaving Ukraine to seek international protection or to those returning to Ukraine.

1. MOVEMENTS

Ukraine western border movement (in and out)



Source: State Border Guard Service (SBGS)

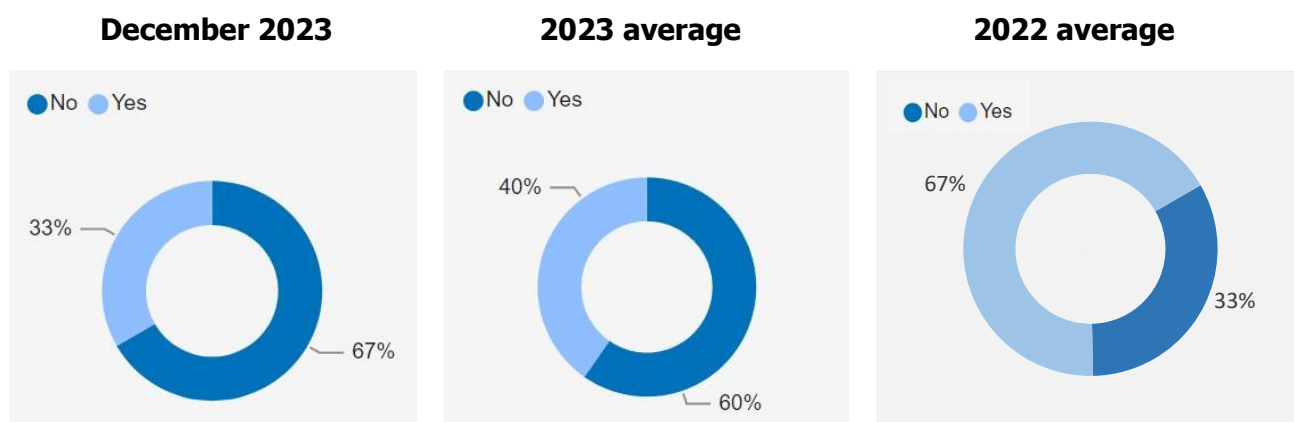
Note: This information is based on publicly available data from the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and pertains to the Ukrainian borders with four countries: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, and does not include the data for the border with Moldova.

In December 2023, more people entered Ukraine than left the country as a **net inflow of 33,000 individuals** to Ukraine was recorded. In contrast, in November 2023 there was a **net outflow of 28,000 individuals** from Ukraine. There is a slight change in comparison to 2022, when during the same time period there were more people leaving Ukraine than entering due to large-scale shelling of civilian and energy infrastructure and power cuts in large parts of the country.

2. BORDER MONITORING FINDINGS

There is a consistent downward trend in the number of those who are leaving Ukraine for the first time: from 50% in August to 33% in December 2023. The number is significantly lower than the 2022 average, where 67% of interviewees throughout the year indicated it was their first-time leaving Ukraine since the full-scale invasion. The charts below demonstrate that the numbers have reversed over 12 months.

Proportion of respondents leaving Ukraine for the first time



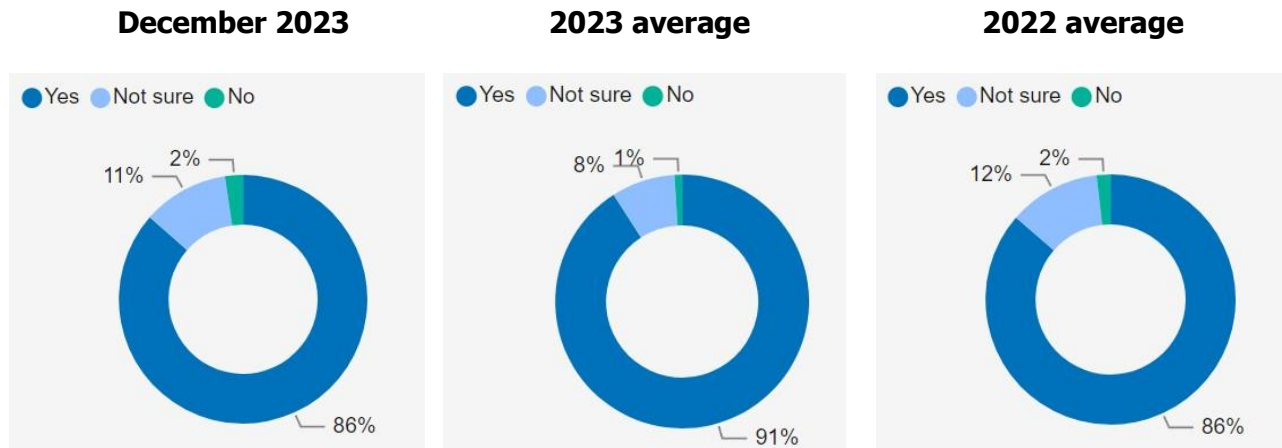
(All charts above represent responses from people who reported they were leaving or had left Ukraine to seek safety abroad)

In December 2023, respondents seeking safety abroad highlighted the following main reasons for leaving Ukraine: deterioration of the security situation (97%); ruined or damaged infrastructure (5%); no shelter solution (2%); conscription (1%).

The proportion of those citing the deterioration of the security situation as their primary reason to leave Ukraine has increased throughout the year. The proportion was highest in December (97%) compared to the 2023 average of 63%, with the lowest proportion (26%) citing the security situation as the reason for their departure observed in April 2023.

The number of respondents who state they intend to return to Ukraine if the situation improves, has dropped slightly (by five per cent) at the end of 2023, and now is similar to the numbers observed in 2022, after rising during the previous months of 2023.

Proportion of respondents intending to return to Ukraine when the situation improves

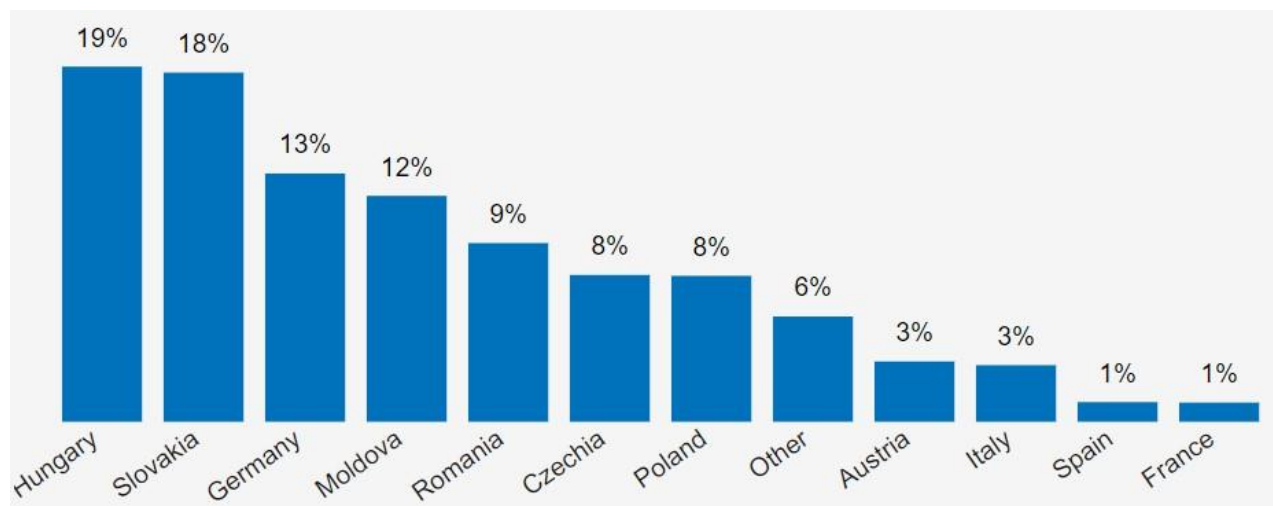


(All charts above represent responses from people who reported they were leaving or had left Ukraine to seek safety abroad)

While the proportion of respondents from across the country who cite lack of basic services as their reason to leave Ukraine has dropped, and was close to zero in December 2023 (versus the 2023 average of 14%), this level is higher for interviewees coming from the areas close to the front line (including Donetska, Mykolaivska and Odeska regions). For example, four per cent of interviewees originating from Donetska stated absence of electricity, heating and water as the primary push factor.

During 2023, Hungary, Slovakia, Germany and Moldova were the top countries chosen by Ukrainian refugees as their final destination, whereas in 2022 Poland was by far the first choice (24% of interviewees).

Intended final destinations of Ukrainians in 2023



In December 2023, the refugees returning to Ukraine were mostly heading to Odeska and Kyivska regions and Kyiv city. This trend was similar to the average for the 2023.

The main reasons for return were reuniting with family (64%), taking care of relatives left behind in Ukraine (35%), checking the safety of a personal house/apartment (25%) and lack of access to

healthcare in the countries of asylum (24%). These reasons have not changed in comparison to November 2023.

Some observations obtained during monitoring include:

- There groups of people crossing the border are primarily made up of the following categories: people visiting their relatives either in Ukraine or abroad; mothers who are taking their sons of pre-conscription age out of Ukraine due to concerns regarding mobilization; people accompanying persons with disabilities; and servicemen on leave going to visit their families in countries of asylum. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the travelers are women.
- While the movement of trucks has partially resumed at the border with Poland, the continued blockade through certain border crossing points (BCPs) has caused some truck drivers to re-route their travels to/from Ukraine through other countries, which caused longer waiting time for passengers in private vehicles at other international borders, in particular with Moldova (e.g. Krasnoilsk and Mamalyha).
- There has reportedly been an increase in the number of cases when men of conscription age try to cross the border outside of the border crossing points. According to the border guards, such attempts occur on a daily basis, including across natural barriers such as rivers. Monitors did not have an opportunity to talk to any of these persons attempting cross irregularly, but observed that in case of identification they are transferred to the National Police for further actions.
- The closure of BCPs (e.g. Mohyliv-Podilskyi and Bronnytsia) during air raid alerts negatively affects travelers (including families with children), who stay in queues in the harsh winter conditions waiting for the BCPs to re-open, without bomb shelters available for civilians at those BCPs.

3. LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 7 December 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Resolution No. 1292 amending Resolution No. 1147 of 27 July 1998 "On the Border Regime". *Inter alia*, the amendments provide for the requirement to obtain from the State Border Guard Service a permit for those who want/need to enter the five kilometer area along the state border. This requirement is not applicable in certain cases, in particular, with regard to persons entering the border area with the intention of crossing the state border through the BCPs. UNHCR's monitoring team will have to inform relevant border detachments about their work in order to continue operating within the border area.

4. UNHCR ASSISTANCE PROVIDED AT THE BORDER

In December 2023, UNHCR's partners provided different forms of assistance to 1,210 individuals who crossed the border.

During the reporting period UNHCR partners - Right to Protection, NEEKA, and The Tenth of April - conducted 301 monitoring visits to the border crossing points with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. During these visits a range of services was provided to persons crossing the border, including 1,149 instances of protection counseling and 234 instances of legal assistance, while 53 persons received social accompaniment and 1 person was provided with transportation services.

In December, 15-20 citizens of a number of African countries were denied exit from Ukraine at borders in Zakarpatska by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine following decisions ordering their forced

