LONGITUDINAL SURVEY
of people displaced from Ukraine and those who have returned

Life after returning:

Livelihoods, needs and intentions of returnees to Ukraine

December 2025

Shaping practices
Influencing policies
Impacting lives

I. Return Profiles:
Demography and geography of return

Demography of surveyed returnees to Ukraine[1]

Household characteristics:

2,7 - Average household size

0,8 - Average number of children

Most returnees to Ukraine came back early:
80% returned in 2022, 13% in 2023, 7% in 2024-2025.

Household types:

54% Households with children

5% Households with 3+ children

20% Households with older people

17% Households with members with disabilities

Figure 1. Gender and age distribution of household members (n=4508)

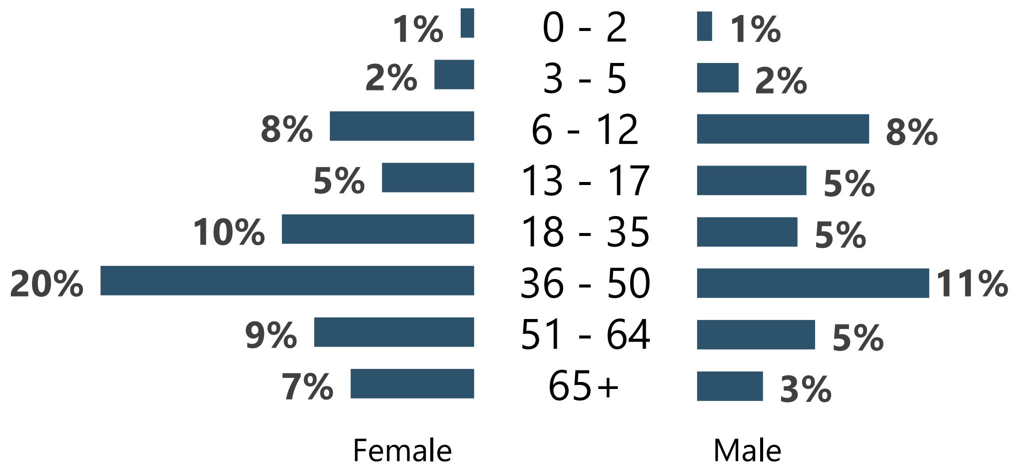
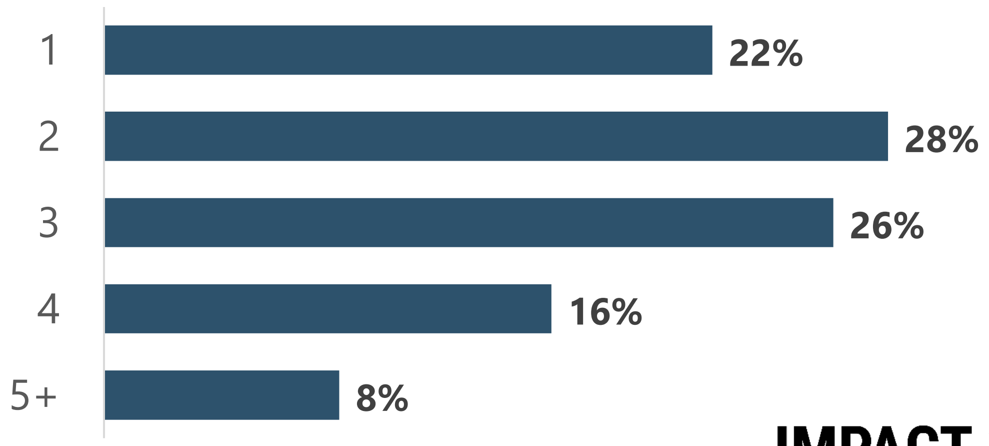


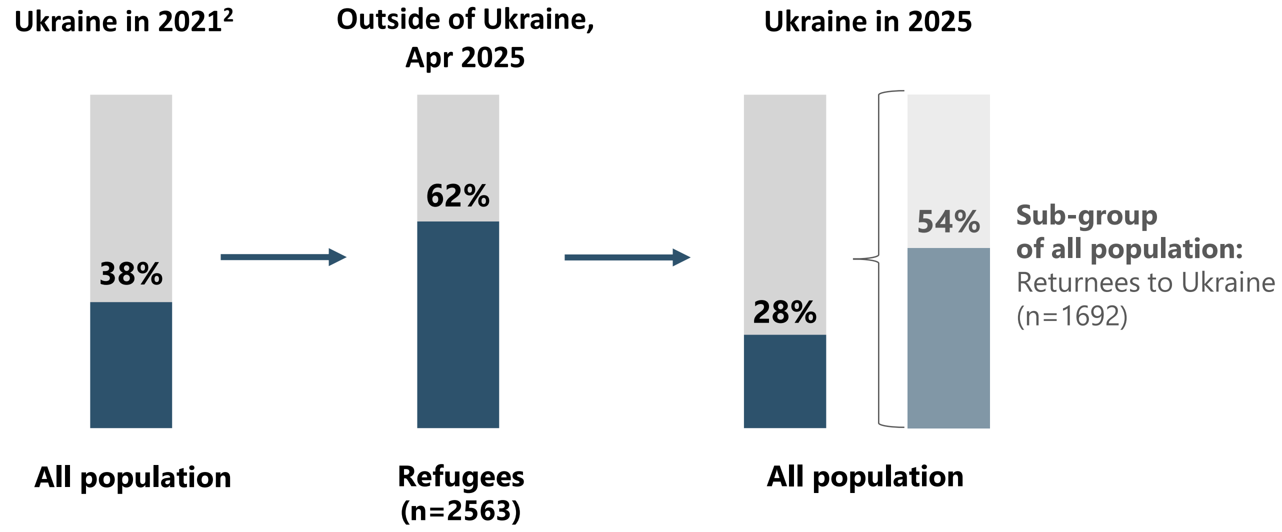
Figure 2. Household size (n=1692)



The role that cross-border displacement and return might be playing in the change of Ukraine's demography

Households with children were more likely to leave, but those returning to Ukraine brought children back, helping to slow the demographic decline:

Figure 3. The proportion of Ukrainian households with children among returnees to Ukraine and refugee respondents, and the Ukrainian population now and before displacement



1,500,000

– estimated number of Ukrainians who have returned from abroad[3]

Birth rates were already declining before 2021[4] (≈–5-8% a year, or 1.1-1.5 births per woman) and accelerated further after (≈ –11-24% per year, or <1.0 births per woman).

↓

Outflow of women with children has further reduced the share of households with children to 28% by 2025 (from 38% pre-2022), compared to 62% among Ukrainian refugees surveyed.

↓

With children present in 54% of returnee-to-Ukraine households, **return migration may have helped slow the structural drop** in the share of households with children.

Places where surveyed returnees to Ukraine are settling down after being abroad: not all are returning home or to safer areas

34%

of those returning from abroad settled in conflict-affected[5] areas
*(where **27%** have settled in currently affected hromadas and **7%** in previously affected ones, the rest (**66%**) settled in not affected hromadas)*

21%

returned to places different from their original place of residence *(and **79%** have returned to their home locations)*

Figure 4. Macro-region[6] of origin[7] vs. current macro-region of residence (n=1691)

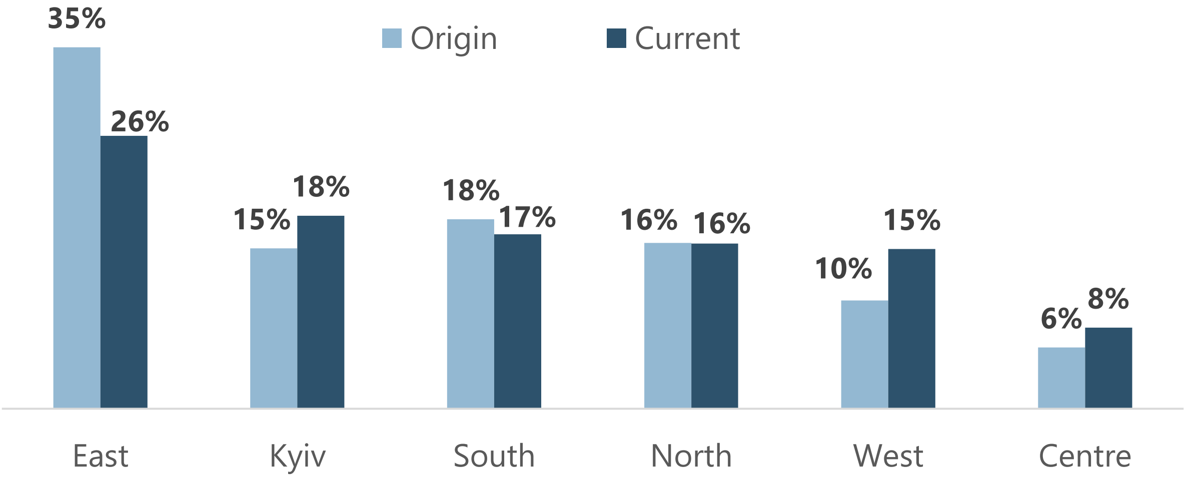


Table 1. Where internally displaced returnee to Ukraine[8] respondents moved: top 10 current oblasts by oblast of origin (n=351)

Oblast	Origin	Current
Kyiv	5%	19%
Odeska	3%	9%
Kyivska	5%	8%
Kharkivska	15%	8%
Lvivska	1%	7%
Dnipropetrovska	5%	7%
Zakarpatska	0%	5%
Cherkaska	0%	4%
Zaporizka	12%	4%
Ivano-Frankivska	1%	4%

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II. Intentions:
Drivers of return and plans to stay

Family and homesickness were the main return drivers; still, some respondents came back due to limited livelihood opportunities abroad

KEY TRENDS

2 in 3 (66%) stated family or homesickness factors as the main reasons for returning. **1 in 3 (30%) highlighted livelihood drivers:** lack of job opportunities, accommodation, or funds abroad, combined with their availability in Ukraine.

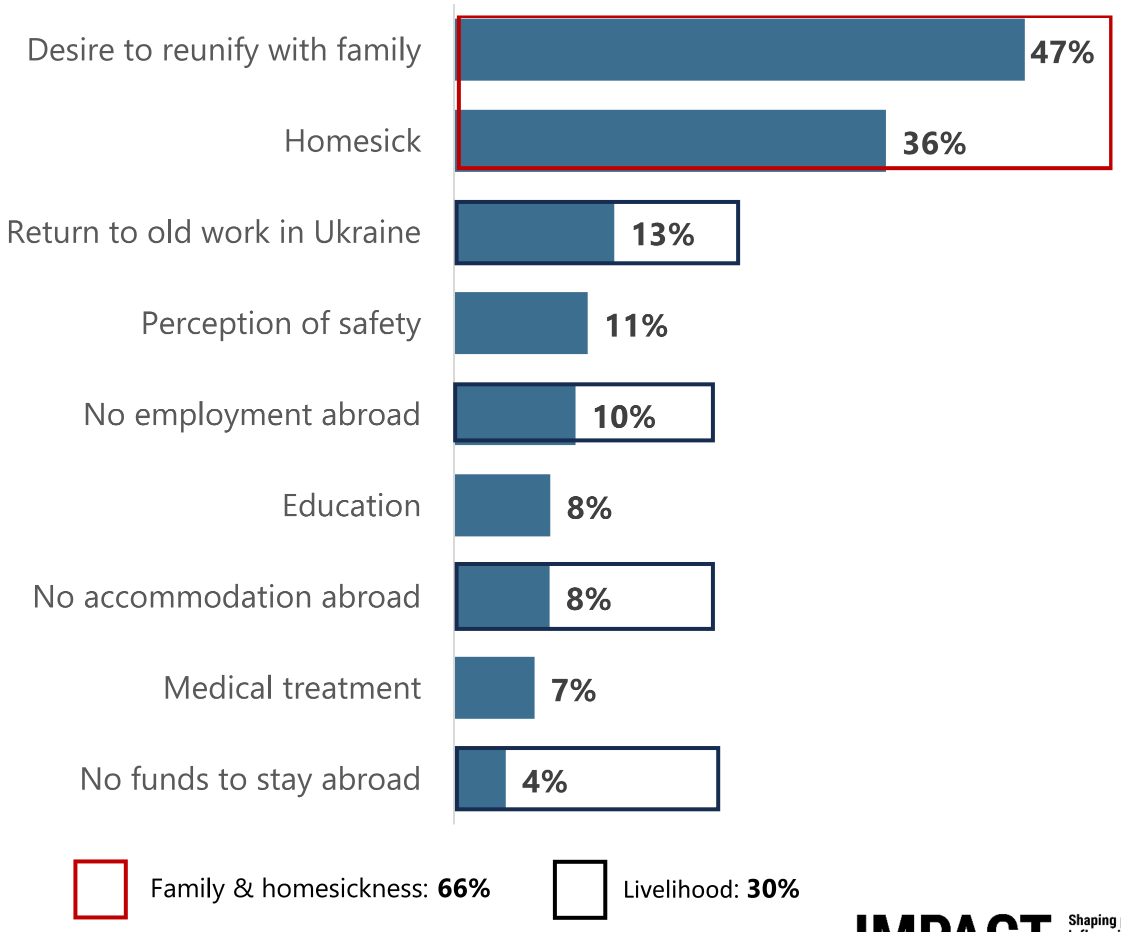
BY DESTINATION OF RETURN

Those who returned to a location other than their home more often cited barriers abroad, such as lack of housing (12% vs. 7%) and no employment (13% vs. 9%). **This points to a double vulnerability:** limited livelihood options during displacement and no access to housing or assets in their original homes in Ukraine.

BY TIME OF RETURN

Returnees who came back after 2+ years more often cited the need to return to their previous place of work: **15% vs. 5%** among those who returned within the past year, likely due to the latter having fewer opportunities to maintain working relationships.

Figure 5. Top 9 reasons for return among all returnee to Ukraine respondents (multiple choice, n=1692)



Most respondents stand by their decision to come back, and even those who express regret largely plan to remain

83%

do not regret returning to Ukraine

(13% sometimes have regrets, and 4% continue to regret their return)

Nevertheless, 69% of those who report any level of regret about returning still plan to stay in the current location for the next 6 months.

Figure 6. Surveyed returnees' to Ukraine intentions to stay for six months in the current location (n=1692)

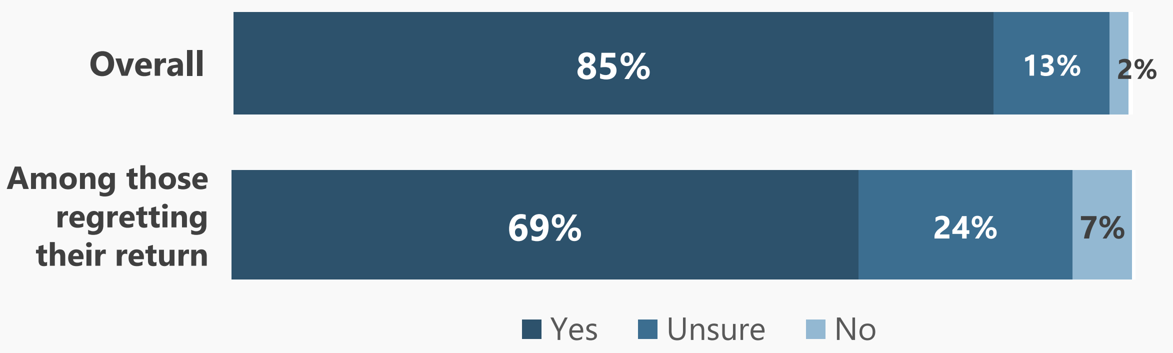
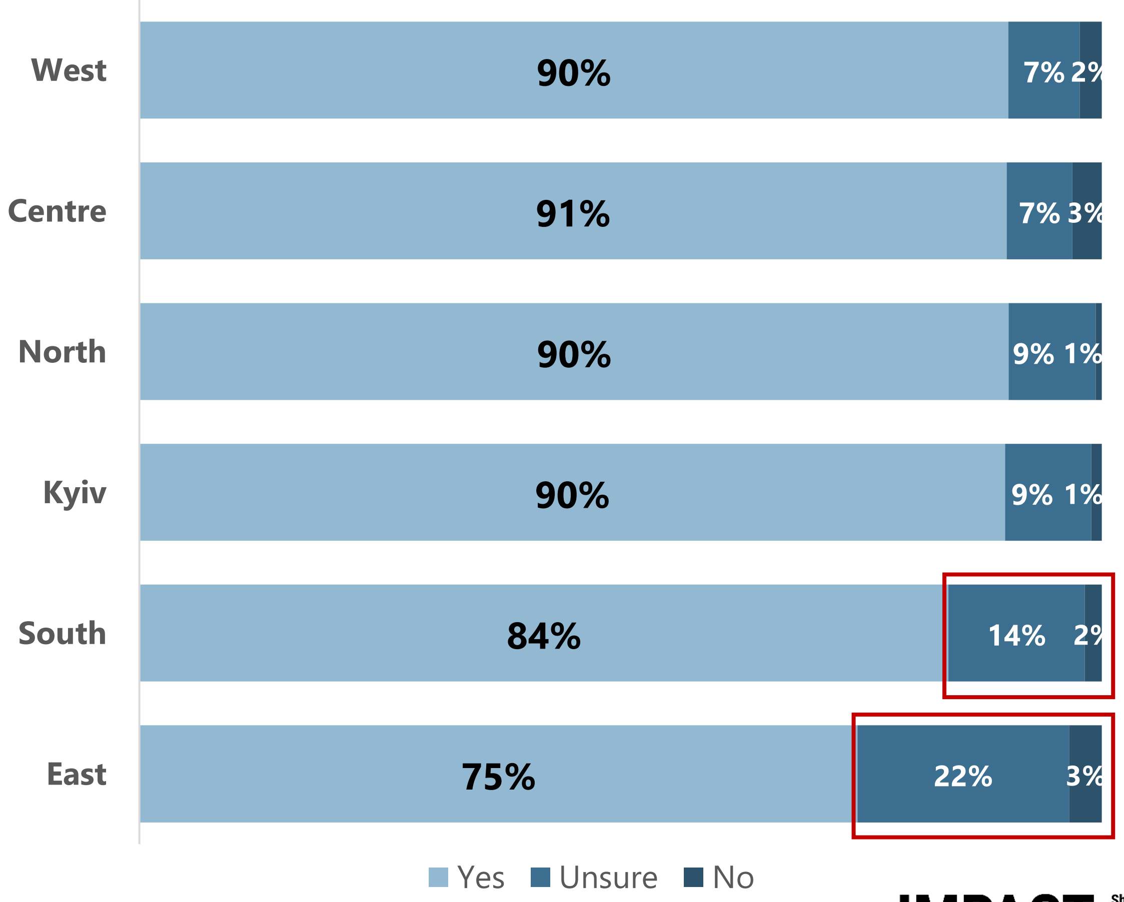
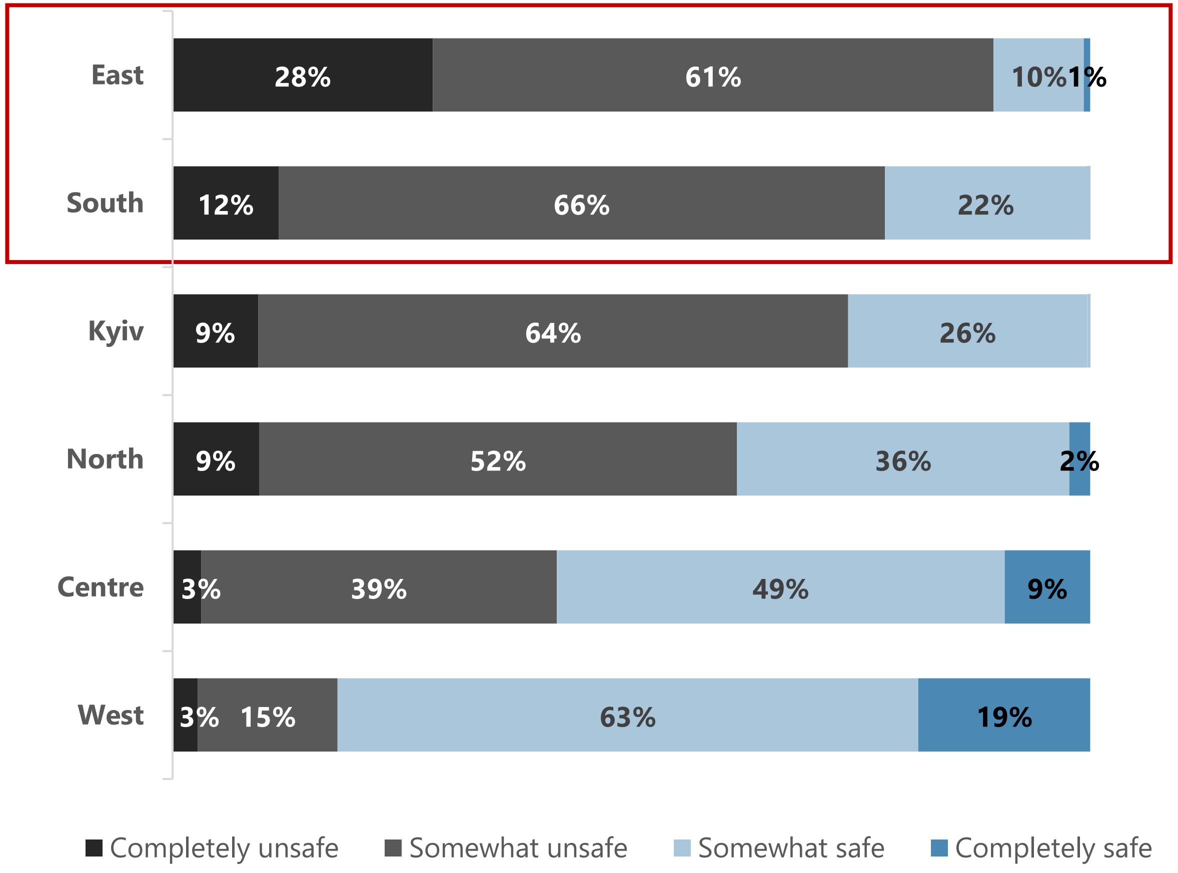


Figure 7. Surveyed returnees' to Ukraine intentions to stay for six months in the current location by current macro-region (n=1691)



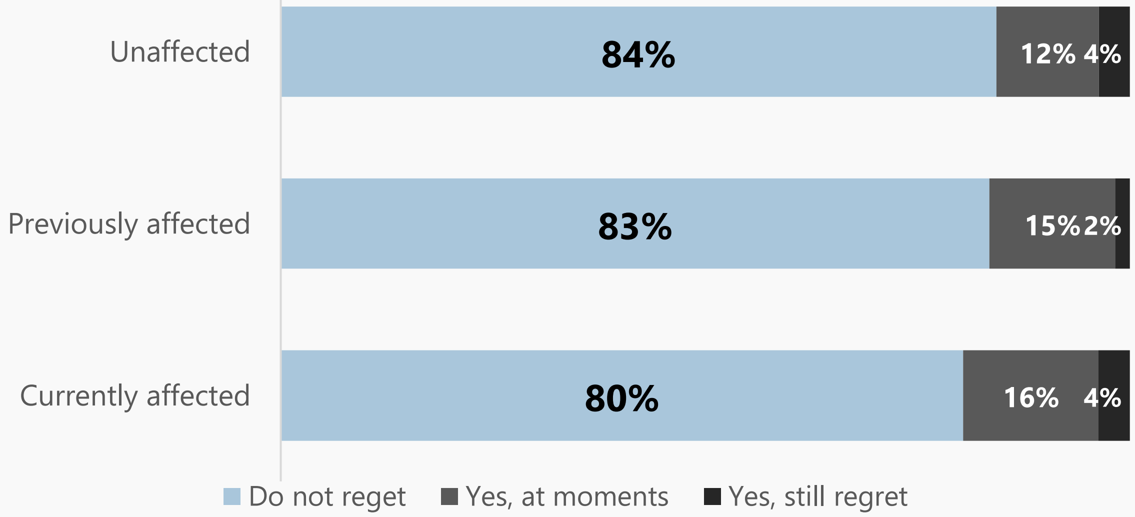
Security concerns in the current location don't translate to regret about returning to Ukraine

Figure 8. Security perception of surveyed returnees to Ukraine by current macro-region (n=1630)



The share of respondents reporting regret about returning to Ukraine remains consistently low (77-82%) across all safety contexts: even in *currently affected* hromadas, it is only about 4% higher than in *unaffected areas*.

Figure 9. Return regret among surveyed returnees to Ukraine by type of conflict-affected hromada (n=1683)



*"Prefer not to say" responses excluded (4%)

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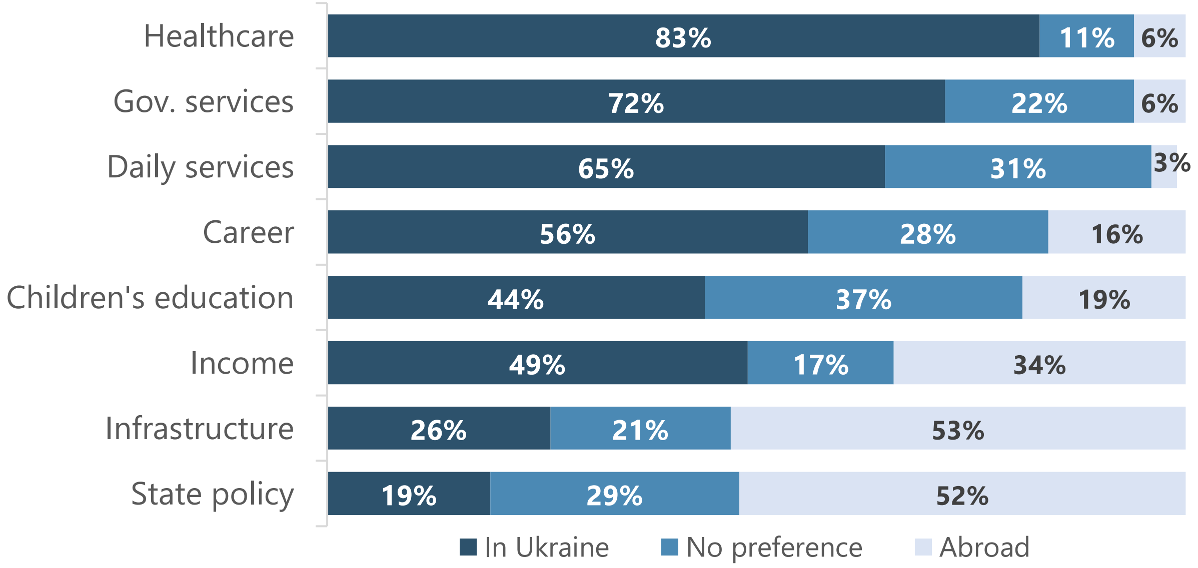
For many, life abroad reshaped long-term choices in favour of staying in Ukraine, where services and healthcare feel easier to access

88%

of respondents prefer living in Ukraine, when comparing with life abroad

Notably, 41% respondents changed their mind after living abroad as refugees and now prefer Ukraine.

Figure 10. Surveyed returnees' to Ukraine preferences: comparing their long-term perspectives in Ukraine and abroad (n=1692)



Ukraine offers better opportunities for high-skilled specialists:

28% of surveyed high-skilled workers say income is better abroad (vs. **39%** lower-skilled), and **68%** see better career prospects in Ukraine (vs. **55%** in lower-skilled positions).

Believing income is better abroad reflects weaker job prospects in Ukraine:

unemployment was **twice as high** among those respondents who rated income abroad as better: **30% vs. 16%,** among those rating it better in Ukraine.

Migration preferences are strongly correlated with perceived income gains:

75% of those respondents wishing to live abroad say income is higher abroad, vs **28%** among those wanting to stay in Ukraine.

III. Socioeconomic Situation: Employment, housing, and financial security

Surveyed internally displaced returnees to Ukraine face a disproportionate rental burden compared to those who returned home

Home returnees[9] predominantly **own their accommodation** (88%), while internally displaced returnees to Ukraine rely heavily on **rental housing** (62%). Nearly two-thirds of internally displaced respondents (64%) pay full market rent, compared to just one-quarter (24%) of those returned home.

«My husband has a salary of 21,000 UAH, 15,000 UAH for an apartment with utilities and what is left? Nothing!»

— Internally displaced woman from the Returnee to Ukraine sample

Figure 11. Type of accommodation: Home returnees vs. internally displaced returnees to Ukraine (n=1692)

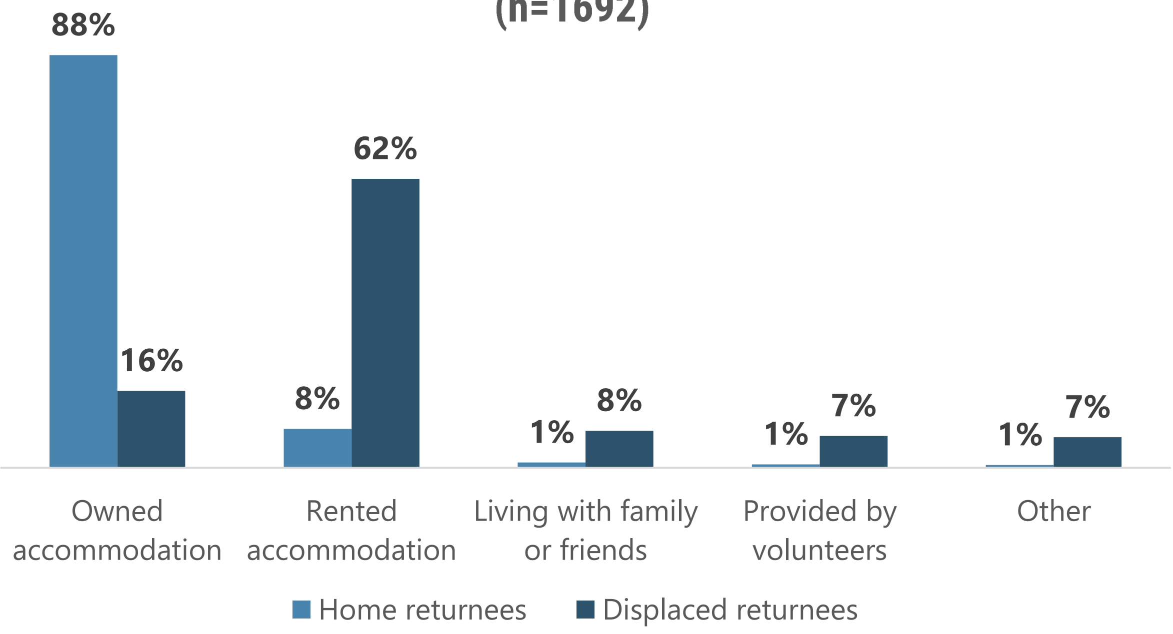
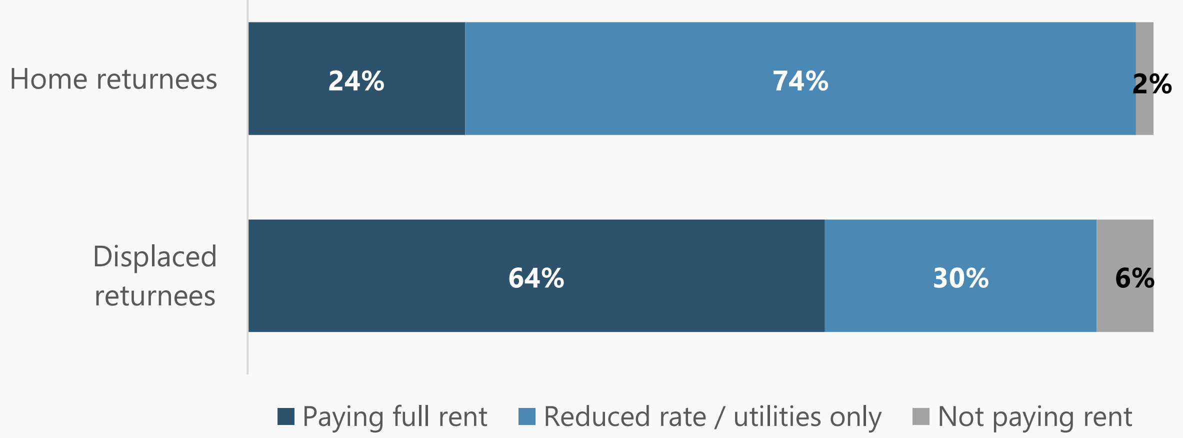


Figure 12. Rental payment status, by type of return to Ukraine (home returnees vs internally displaced) (n=1679)



Employment levels differed by return location: they were lower among respondents who remained displaced or returned to frontline areas

71%

returnees to Ukraine are employed
(and **5%** are currently looking for a job).

Figure 13. Employment status of surveyed working-age returnees to Ukraine, by location of return (n=1554)

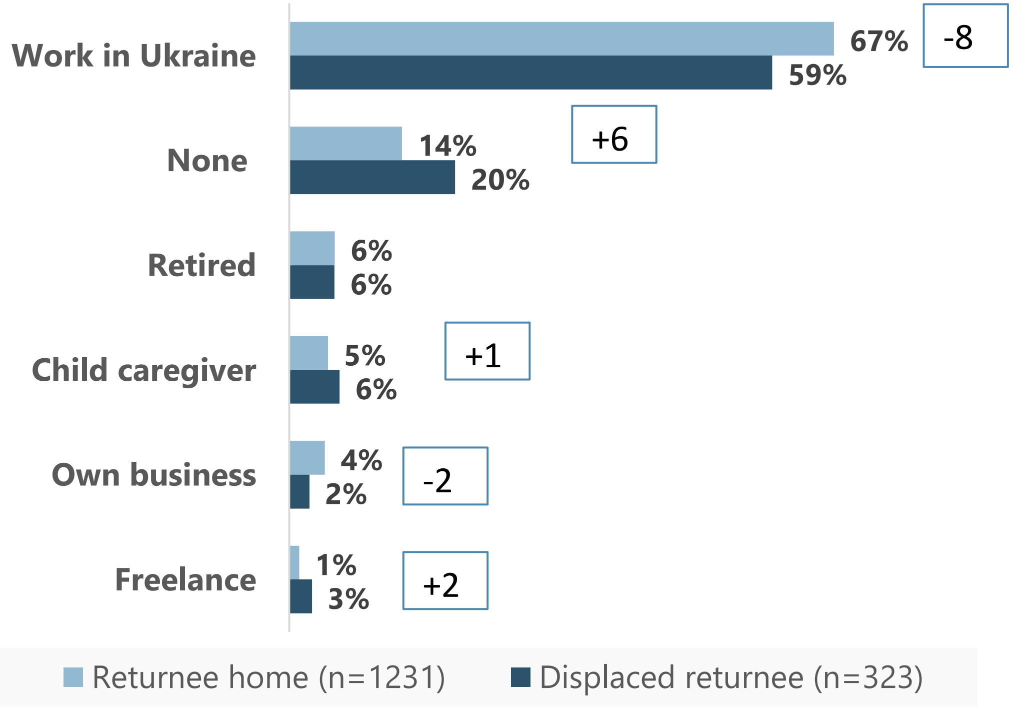


Table 2. Employment status of surveyed working-age[10] returnees to Ukraine across macro-regions (n=1553)

Occupation	Centre	East	Kyiv	North	South	West
Work in Ukraine	**60%**	**64%**	**77%**	**68%**	**62%**	**58%**
Other work modalities (freelancers/enterpreneurs)	7%	5%	4%	5%	7%	6%
No occupation	**16%**	**18%**	**8%**	**15%**	**17%**	**17%**
Caregiver for a child	7%	6%	3%	4%	5%	7%
Caregiver for an older person/ person with disabilities	4%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Retired	5%	7%	4%	4%	7%	6%
Other/Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	3%
Sample size	N=114	N=400	N=292	N=248	N=258	N=241

The longer respondents stay after returning, the higher their employment level, largely retaining pre-war skill profiles throughout

Figure 14. Employment status by time since the return to Ukraine occurred (working-age respondents) (n=1446)

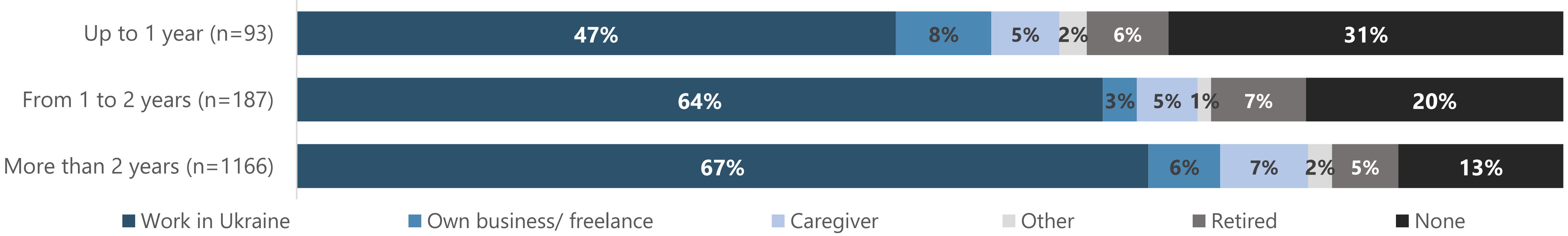
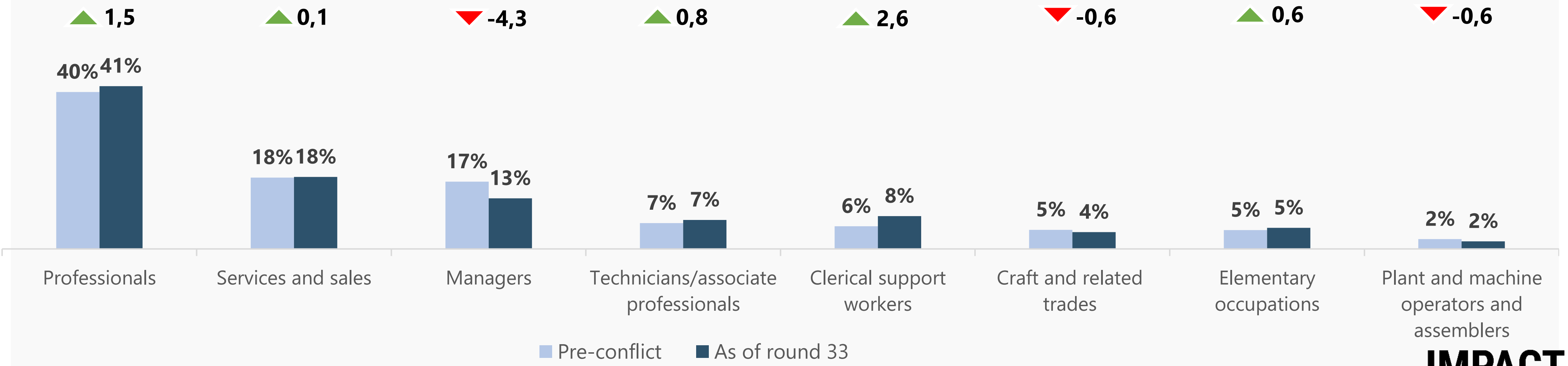


Figure 15. Pre-conflict and current occupation categories[11] of employed returnees to Ukraine (n=937)



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Except for Kyiv, respondents' income levels remain low nationwide, and rise meaningfully only in households with multiple earners

Median income per person: 177 EUR
Below 100 EUR – 21%
Up to 200 EUR – 53%
Above 500 EUR – 10%

REGIONAL DISPARITIES

West and South record the highest shares of households **living on under €100 per person (29–30%).**
Kyiv stands out with the **highest median income (€329)** per person.

Figure 16. Monthly income distribution per person (in euros) by employment composition of the household (n=696)

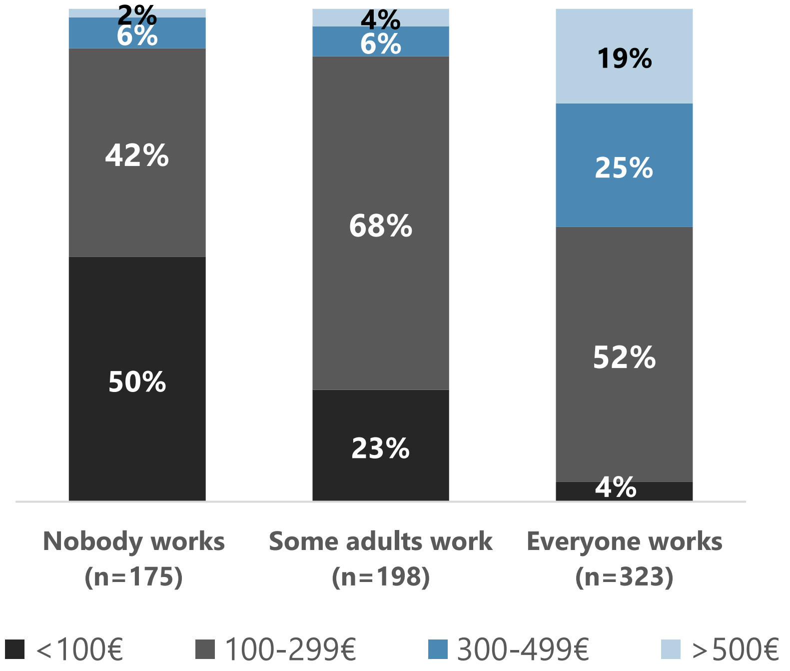
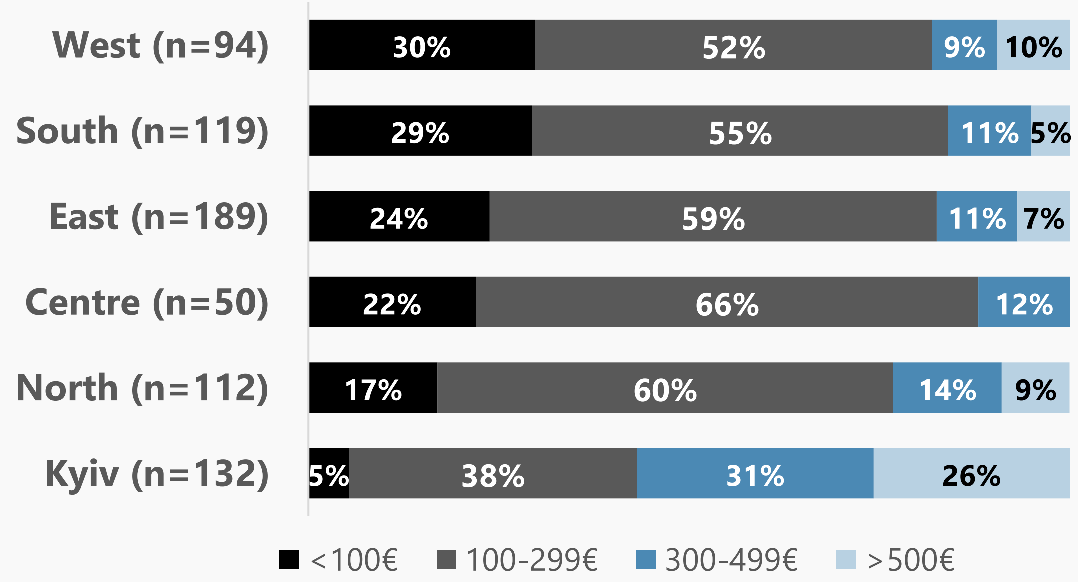


Figure 17. Monthly income distribution per person by macro-region (in euros) (n=696)

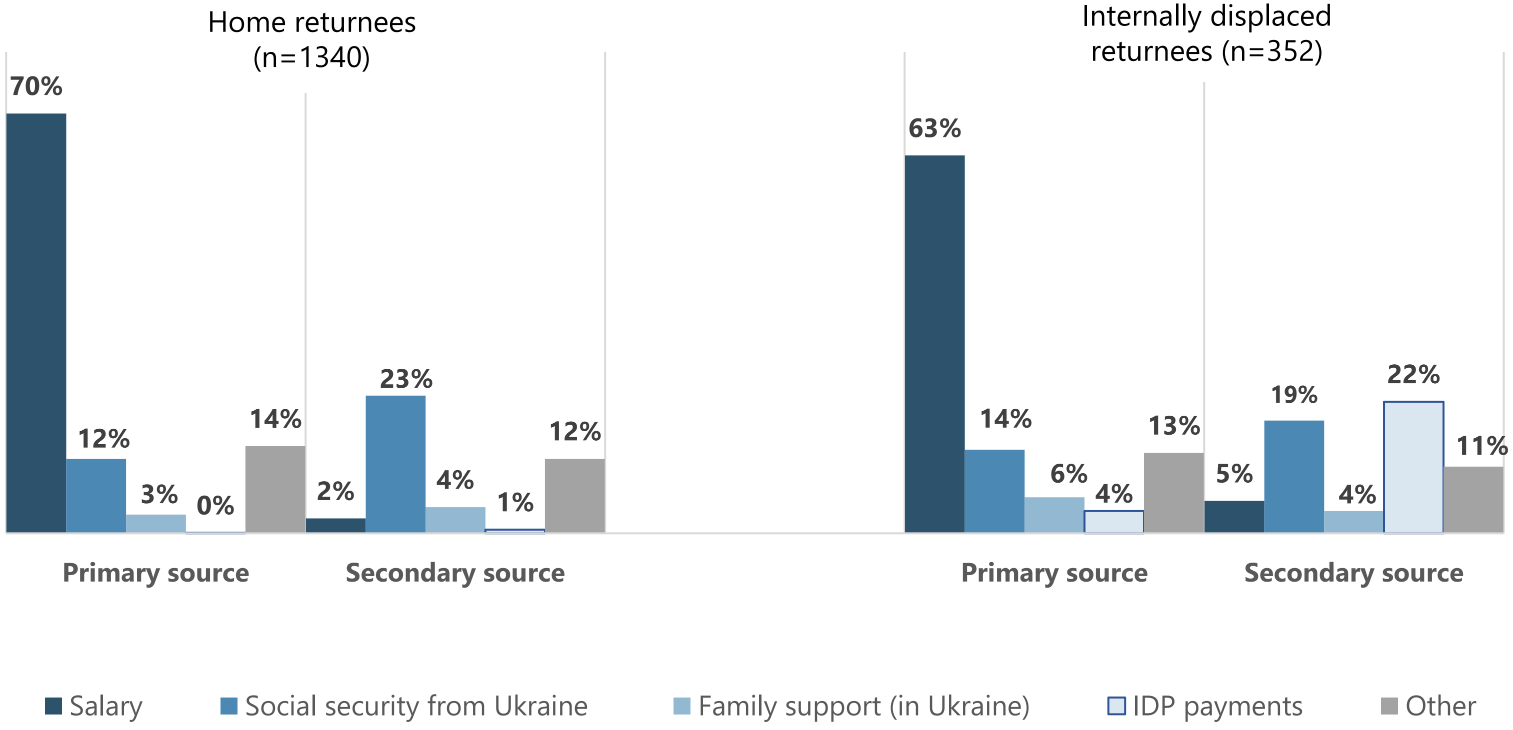


Median, euros
154
144
154
151
180
329

With low earnings, half of all surveyed households are forced to cope financially, often cutting spending on food and healthcare.

Among respondents eligible for IDP certificate[12], the proportion receiving IDP payments dropped almost twofold over 1.5 years[13]: 64% (Jan 2024)→ 34% (Sep 2025)

Figure 18. Primary and secondary income sources among returnees to Ukraine who have income (n=1692)



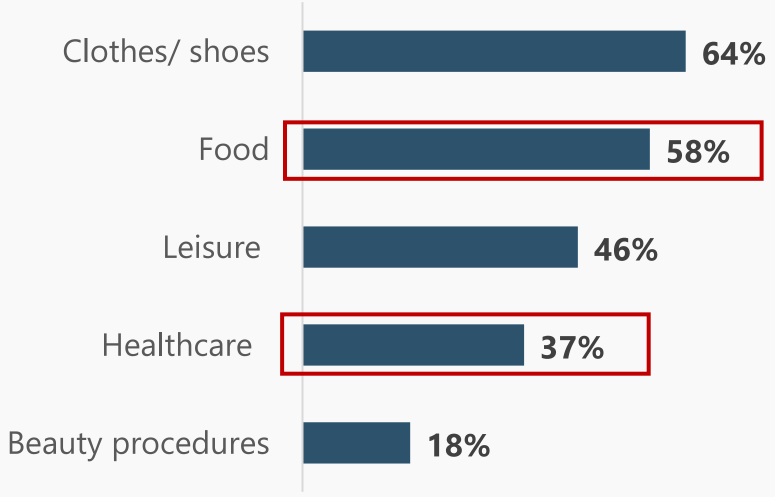
51%

had to sacrifice some of their needs due to insufficient income in the past month.

(**Below-median income households were more likely to make sacrifices (78%)** compared to above-median income households (43%))

Figure 19. Top 5 spending cuts among returnees to Ukraine with below-median income

(n=271 of 696 who disclosed income)



IV. Needs and Assistance:
upon return and now

People with disabilities, unemployed, and older people remain the most vulnerable groups

Table 3. Top-5 needs by surveyed returnees' to Ukraine socio-demographic characteristics

Needs	Affected hromada	Children in household	Older people in household	People with disabilities in household	Unemployed respondents	Single caregivers	Internally displaced returnees	Total
Cash	42% +5	38% +1	45% +8	51% +14	41% +4	41% +4	40% +3	37%
Medical treatment items	14% +2	10% -2	20% +8	27% +15	14% +2	7% -5	13% +1	12%
Material assistance	12% +3	9% 0	14% +5	17% +8	13% +4	10% +1	12% +3	9%
Employment	6% +1	5% 0	4% -1	5% 0	16% +11	6% +1	7% +2	5%
Accommodation	3% -1	5% +1	5% +1	8% +4	6% +2	4% 0	13% +9	4%
No needs	38% -4	40% -2	33% -9	26% -16	31% -11	34% -8	35% -7	42%
N	n=449	n=912	n=343	n=293	n=338	n=259	n=352	n=1691

**-x, +y - indicates lower/higher deviation from the total (overall) value*

Key changes in needs by return duration (returned <1 year ago vs. 2+ years ago):

- **While employment needs decline**: 10% → 4%
- **The need for cash assistance remains stable:** 33 → 36%
- **Overall, self-sufficiency slightly improves:** 39% → 43% report no needs

12% of returnees to Ukraine receive humanitarian assistance

Primary providers: Ukrainian authorities (65%), NGOs (29%), churches (9%), Red Cross (4%)
Most commonly received support: Cash (49%), Food (37%), Non-food items (21%)

Priority needs upon return: Safety improvements and food security

Table 4. Reported assistance needed right upon return to Ukraine by respondents, related to adaptation to new conditions

Needs upon return	East	Kyiv	North	South	Centre	West
Improving safety	22%	21%	20%	18%	10%	8%
Food & basic needs	20%	14%	13%	18%	16%	14%
Employment	13%	10%	12%	14%	11%	14%
Healthcare	14%	9%	11%	17%	11%	15%
Improving infrastructure	14%	12%	11%	14%	8%	6%
Psychological support	8%	9%	8%	6%	5%	6%
Housing support	8%	7%	7%	10%	18%	13%
Children education	9%	3%	6%	9%	8%	7%
Property repair	5%	2%	4%	10%	6%	1%
Total reporting needs	71%	65%	64%	72%	65%	59%
N	n=441	n=312	n=267	n=282	n=131	n=258

Reintegration needs by return status of respondents

- Home returnees to Ukraine **report no need for assistance** more often (38% vs. 18%)
- Internally displaced returnees to Ukraine have **higher needs across all categories**, reflecting the challenge of rebuilding life without existing assets or networks:

- Housing support: 33% vs. 3%
- Employment: 20% vs. 11%
- Food & basic needs: 22% vs. 15%

Reintegration needs upon return were high across all macro-regions (59-72%). Proximity to the frontline shows the highest needs (South 72%, East 71%), but distant regions also report substantial requirements (West 59%). Notably, **Central regions** show the highest **housing demand (18%),** driven by IDP concentration.

Thank you for your attention!

For any questions on the Longitudinal Study, please contact:

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LINKS:

Dashboard

- Refugees – Rounds 27-34 (ENG/UKR)
- Returnees– Rounds 24-33 (ENG/UKR)

Latest Outputs

- Getting by, not moving up: Labour Market Integration of Ukrainian Women Refugees in Poland (In Ukrainian)
- Story map: Stories of refugees returning to unsafe areas in Ukraine (In Ukrainian)
- Report: Unsafe returns: what makes refugees return to Ukraine and settle in the frontline areas of the country? (In Ukrainian)Predictors of return to Ukraine (In Ukrainian)
- Are refugees from Ukraine finding stability in Germany? (In Ukrainian)
- Back to Ukraine, but not home (In Ukrainian)
- Economic integration of Ukrainians in Poland by 2023 (In Ukrainian)
- Predictors of return to Ukraine (In Ukrainian)

Annex 1. Definitions and references

1. **Returnees to Ukraine** – people who were displaced abroad by the conflict from 2022 for a minimum of one month and subsequently returned to Ukraine.

2. **The total share of households with children in Ukraine in 2021** is taken from 'Social and Demographic Characteristics of Households of Ukraine', Ukrainian State Statistics. All remaining data come from IMPACT Initiatives surveys: **the share of households with children in Ukraine in 2025** was calculated based on the MSNA dataset; **Refugees** (Round 32, April 2025) and **returnees** (Round 33, September 2025) **data for households with children** come from the Longitudinal Study.

3. **The estimated number of Ukrainians returned from abroad** is the sum of those who returned from abroad to their pre-displacement place of residence (1,170,000; taken from the IOM report) and IDPs who had experience of displacement abroad (366,000; taken from the IOM report).

4. **Birth data before 2021** is sourced from Ukrainian State Statistics datasets (number of live births, by year and total fertility rate, by year). **Data after 2021** was gathered from: fertility rates – World Bank and UNFPA; 2022-2024 birth data – reports of the Ministry of Justice on the registration of civil status acts.

5. To assess **how certain areas of Ukraine were affected by conflict** at the time of data collection, a classification from the resolution of the Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine was used. This resolution divides territories into four categories according to the presence of hostilities and occupation: (1) areas with possible hostilities; (2) areas with active hostilities; (3) areas with active hostilities where state electronic systems still function; (4) temporarily occupied areas. Each territory has a recorded start and (if applicable) end date for its status. If there is no end date, the area remains in that status. To simplify the analysis, the Longitudinal Study combines the 2nd and 3rd statuses into 'active hostilities', and classifies territories at the hromada level, instead of settlement. Hromadas labelled as 'currently affected' are where 'possible hostilities', 'active hostilities' or 'occupation' are taking place at the time of data collection (September 2025). Hromadas labelled as 'previously affected' include territories where 'possible hostilities', 'active hostilities' or 'occupation' have occurred in the past but are no longer occurring at the time of data collection. All the remaining are labelled as 'not affected'. This classification reflects only the territories covered by the referenced resolution. The resolution does not account for the impact on areas far from the front line that are affected by long-distance shelling. Therefore, the actual number of territories impacted by the conflict extends beyond what is shown in this analysis.

6. **Macro-region** is understood in this survey as a territorial unit comprised of multiple oblasts. To ease the readability of the findings, oblasts were grouped by macro-regions in the following way: **North**: Kyivska, Zhytomyrska, Sumka, Chernihivska. **East**: Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska, Zaporizka, Donetska. **West**: Lvivska, Volynska, IvanoFrankivska, Rivnenska, Ternopilska, Khmelnytska, Zakarpatska, Chernivetska. **South**: Odeska, Mykolaivska, Khersonska. **Centre**: Poltavska, Vinnytska, Cherkaska, Kirovohradska. **Kyiv-city, Sevastopol-city, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea** are separate administrative units and are not included in the macro-regions mentioned above.

7. **The oblast/region of origin** is understood in this survey as the area where the respondent was residing prior to the first displacement related to the full-scale invasion.

8. **Internally displaced returnees to Ukraine** – the subgroup of *returnees to Ukraine,* who settled in a locality other than their pre-displacement settlement of residence, regardless of whether they have a legal right to an IDP certificate. For convenience, throughout the presentation, shortened to *displaced returnees.*

9. **Home returnees** – the subgroup of *returnees to Ukraine,* who came back to their pre-displacement settlement of residence.

10. **Working age** is defined as 18 to 64 years old.

11. **High-skilled workers** and **lower-skilled workers** were defined as follows: based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08), managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals (qualification levels 3–4) were combined into a single category of *high-skilled workers. Lower-skilled workers* included occupations at qualification levels 1–2, typically involving service, routine, or manual machine-based tasks. This group covers ISCO major groups such as *Elementary occupations*, *Service and sales workers*, and *Plant and machine operators and assemblers*.

12. **IDP-eligible returnees:** internally displaced returnees who meet the criteria for IDP certification (who returned to non-IDP-designated areas and are thus ineligible for IDP status)

13. This decline coincides with **cuts to IDP assistance** introduced through changes in the social benefit payment system for internally displaced persons in Ukraine, implemented in March 2024 by resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 26 January 2024, No. 94 on Certain Issues of Social Support for Internally Displaced Persons and Other Vulnerable Categories of Individuals. These changes introduced specific eligibility criteria required to qualify for IDP payments and, as a result, reduced the number of recipients of such payments significantly, [English translation] The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 'Some considerations of social support for internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups', January 2024

Annex 2. Methodology and limitations

Sample size, as of Round 33:

1,692 number of respondents

4,508 number of household members

Consent collection campaigns:

- Consent collection on border crossing in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova (Feb 2022 – Sep 2022).
- Online campaigns in Viber, Facebook, and Kyivstar (Oct 2022 - Dec 2023).
- Consent collection in train stations in Ukraine (Jan 2024 – Aug 2024).

Sampling:

- Purposive
- The surveys were collected from a pool of respondents who had returned to Ukraine and participated in previous rounds of the Longitudinal Study (Rounds 1-32; 2022-2025).
- Round 33 was conducted from September 15 to September 30 via phone interviews only.
- Interviews collected through the Kobo tool.

Limitations:

- **Non-random sampling:** findings are indicative, not statistically representative of all returnees to Ukraine.
- **Attrition risk:** some respondents were lost to follow-up due to changing phone numbers or relocation.
- **Phone-only data collection** may exclude the most vulnerable groups with unstable connectivity.
- **Contextual fluctuations** (security shifts, policy changes) may affect comparability across rounds.