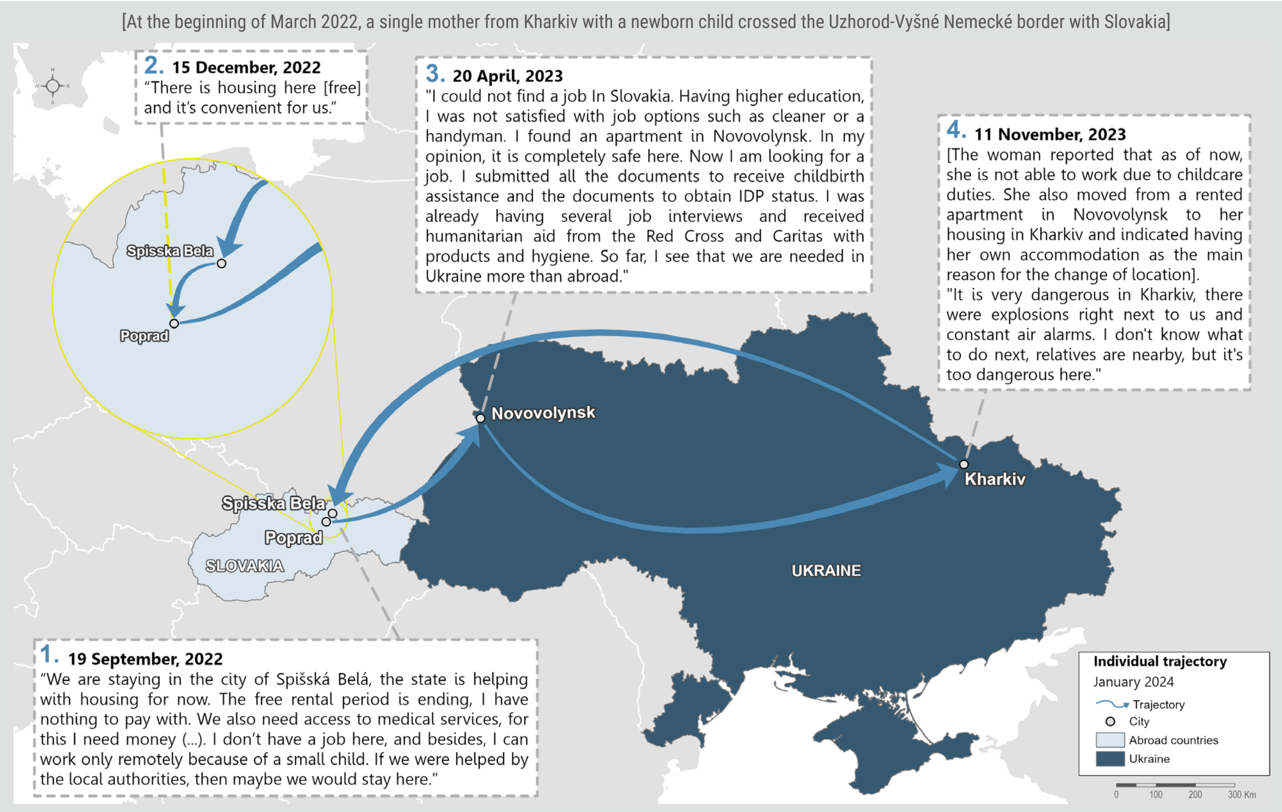
SITUATION OVERVIEW

Back, but not necessarily home: refugee experiences upon returning to Ukraine and becoming IDPs

Longitudinal Survey of Ukrainian Refugees, Round 20 — December 2023 — January 2024



Map 1: Displacement Trajectory of a Single Mother from Kharkiv

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

I. RETURNEES TO UKRAINE ARE COMING BACK TO WAR-AFFECTED REGIONS: A majority (81%) of surveyed returnees to Ukraine relocated back to their home settlements (hereafter 'home returnees(former refugees)'). Even among the rest 19% of respondents who returned from abroad to another settlement and became internally displaced people in Ukraine (hereafter 'IDPs (former refugees)') there was a moderate tendency to choose their macro-region of origin upon return (40%). Considering the predominant presence of people from the East and South of Ukraine among all who had experienced displacement, a large share of respondents chose to return to the macro-regions that continue to be heavily impacted by war.

II. IDPs (FORMER REFUGEES) WERE PUSHED TO RETURN BY LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD: Even though the most frequent self-reported reasons for returning to Ukraine were personal and emotional, specifically for IDPs push factors such as the struggle to secure stable employment (14%) and housing abroad (15%) were reported more frequently than home returnees (former refugees). Simultaneously, surveyed home returnees were more frequently driven by pull factors such as having employment opportunities at home (16%) or a change in their perception of safety in the home settlement (11%).

III. SINGLE CAREGIVERS WERE MORE PREVALENT IN SURVEYED IDPs HOUSEHOLDS: The composition of IDP (former refugee) households was marked by fewer adult men and more single caregivers than in home returnee (former refugee) households. Additionally, reunification with family was more frequently reported as an unmet need by IDP respondents, indicating possible barriers to family reunification upon return to places that are not home settlements.

IV.SOCIAL PAYMENTS AND IDP PAYMENTS WERE ESSENTIAL FOR IDPs' (FORMER REFUGEES) LIVELIHOODS: Although both groups of returnees to Ukraine reported approximately the same level of income, IDPs reported relying more heavily on social security and IDP payments than home returnees. Among surveyed IDPs, 14% reported relying on them as a primary source of income, and 43% as a secondary source, highlighting a higher level of dependency on social support upon their reintegration path.

V.IDPs (FORMER REFUGEES) FREQUENTLY REPORTED HOUSE DAMAGE AND SAFETY CONCERNS IN THEIR HOME SETTLEMENTS: surveyed IDPs reported property damage (17%) and destruction (8%) in the home settlement, coupled with 87% perceiving their original homes as completely or somewhat unsafe.

IFRC UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency Viber IMPACT Shaping practices Influencing policies Impacting lives

ABOUT | METHODOLOGY

Since the end of February 2022, IMPACT has been conducting a monthly longitudinal survey of people who fled the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine to understand their mobility patterns, integration trajectories, intentions to return, and how these change over time. Respondents were initially identified through convenience sampling among people who have crossed the border from Ukraine and were interviewed through a data collection initiative since 28 February 2022 in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova at border crossings, transit sites, and reception centres, in partnership with UNHCR. From October 2022 onwards, IMPACT began to complement the existing sample through Viber and Facebook dissemination campaigns. Given the non random sampling strategy, the results are not statistically representative and must be interpreted as indicative.

The Longitudinal Study sample includes refugees (people who live outside Ukraine following their displacement after the 2022 escalation of hostilities), and returnees to Ukraine (people who were refugees from Ukraine for a period longer than one month and have since returned either to their home settlement or elsewhere in Ukraine).[1]

Round 20 of the Longitudinal Survey collected 2,217 phone interviews with returnees to Ukraine between 20 December 2024 and 4 January 2024. Additionally to the snapshot analysis based on Round 20 sample, the output also present the annual dynamics analysis using a specific cohort of returnee respondents who engaged in four following survey rounds: Round 9 (13 Jan – 6 Feb, 2023), Round 13 (19-30, May 2023), Round 16 (17 August – 10 September, 2023) and Round 20 (20 December 2023 – 4 January 2024), accounting for 745 people. This approach allows to focus on changes over a span of one year.

Round 20 of the longitudinal survey has been funded by the International Federation of Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies.

CONTEXT | RATIONALE

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered a significant displacement crisis, with millions of Ukrainians seeking refuge abroad. As of December 2023, the UNHCR reported[2] that nearly 6 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded across Europe and 500,000 beyond Europe. Although the number of Ukrainian refugees is still large, a substantial portion of the people who have left Ukraine since the full scale invasion have then returned to Ukraine, marking a distinctive phase in their displacement journey. As of December 2023, the IOM General Population Survey estimated 4.5 million of individuals returned to their habitual place of residence after a period of displacement caused by the full-scale invasion of Russia, 26% of them returning from abroad.[3] It also estimates that 319,000 individuals returned to Ukraine from abroad but remain in displacement within the country.[4]

A substantial proportion of all surveyed refugees[5] within the Longitudinal Study have returned to Ukraine (hereafter '**returnees to Ukraine**'). Most of them (81%) relocated back to their home settlements ('**home returnees (former refugees)**') while 19% returned to another settlements and became internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ukraine ('**IDPs (former refugees)**'). This situation overview seeks to understand the demographic and socio-economic profile of returnees to Ukraine[6], and draws comparisons between the perceptions and livelihoods of the two groups.

Understanding the motivations and experiences of returnees is crucial to grasp the dynamics of forced migration and repatriation. Returnees from abroad face challenges as they reintegrate into their home country, in particular when they do not return to their original settlements and become IDPs in Ukraine. Further, IDPs (former refugees) represent a particularly understudied group within the displaced population. Their decision to settle elsewhere within Ukraine may be driven by an array of challenges in returning to their original homes or the socio-economic aftermath of displacement abroad. Such a complex displacement trajectory can be tied to socio-economic vulnerabilities, setting this group apart from those who have returned to their initial homes, and making IDP returnees an important population to focus on.

The analysis is divided into 3 sections. The first considers the demographic profile of returnees to Ukraine, their oblasts of origin, and oblasts of return. The second considers their current situation in terms of livelihoods, accommodation, needs and assistance. The third considers intentions to stay in their current location and safety perceptions. All sections highlight, when pertinent, the similarities and disparities of former refugees between home returnees and IDPs along a variety of disaggregations such as macro-region, people with vulnerabilities in the household, etc. Information presented in this situation overview should be considered indicative.

1. This situation overview does not consider 'internal' returnees who have never crossed the border, i.e., people who were internally displaced elsewhere in Ukraine and have returned to their settlement of origin.
2. "Ukraine Refugee Situation," UNHCR Operational Data Portal, assessed December 2023, https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine.
3. "Returns Report — General Population Survey Round 15 (November – December 2023)", IOM, https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-returns-report-general-population-survey-round-15-november-december-2023.
4. "Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 15 (November – December 2023)", IOM, https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-internal-displacement-report-general-population-survey-round-15-november-december.
5. Forty per cent (40%), based on the sample, which contains respondents from latest Rounds (Round 19 and Round 20). This percentage does not describe a real return rate among refugees from Ukraine, since the existing sample was deliberately complemented by returnees to Ukraine.
6. More information about overall returnees' profile and livelihoods compared with refugees together with return predictors analysis could be found in the Longitudinal Study thematic brief "What do we know about Ukrainian refugees returning home since the full scale invasion?", IMPACT initiative.

1. RETURNEES' TO UKRAINE PROFILE

1.1. DEMOGRAPHICS

Longitudinal Study Round 20 respondents, regardless of their status as IDP (former refugee) or home returnee (former refugee), have similar demographic profiles. The predominant majority of the surveyed people are women (97%), and more than half of the respondents are aged between 31 to 40 (38%) or 41 to 50 (25%). There is a slight difference in the age bracket proportions between IDP and home returnee respondents. The IDP subsample has a larger proportion of young adults in the age bracket from 18 to 30 (20%) than home returnees (14%). As for people aged between 51 to 60, the opposite is true, as they make up 18% of the home returnee sample and 15% of the IDP one. This might indicate that younger adults are more disposed to return from abroad to places that are not their home settlements in Ukraine and hence to become IDPs.

Returnee to Ukraine household composition

The average returnees' to Ukraine household size is 2.9 members. Most of the household members are women from 18 to 64 (39%) and children (35%), followed by men aged 18 to 64 (19%) and people aged 65 and above (8%). Within the IDP (former refugee) sub-sample, there is one noticeable difference in the household composition: a smaller presence of adult men below 65 years old (15%) compared to the proportion men make up in home returnee (former refugee) households (20%). Thus, surveyed IDPs might less frequently reunite with their male family members upon return from abroad. Additionally, the proportion of single caregivers is larger in the IDP sample (25%) than among home returnees (17%).[7]

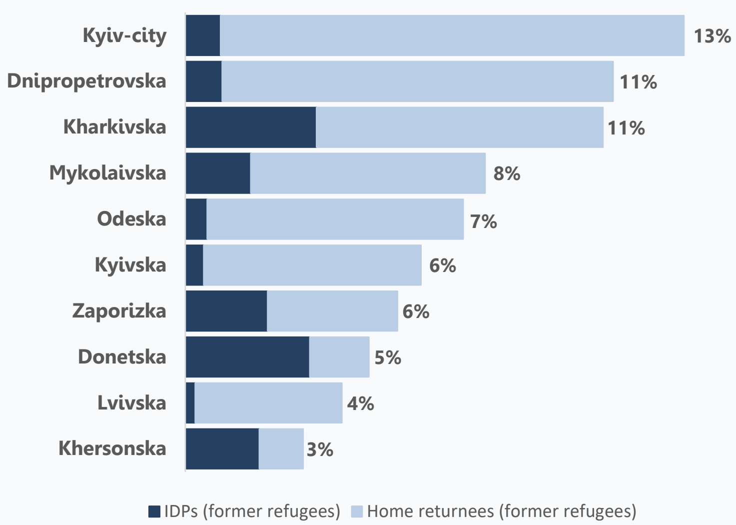
The presence of children and vulnerable members in households

IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees) have similar proportions of households with children and people with vulnerabilities. Children are present in 65% of all returnee to Ukraine households, 37% having 1 child, 23% having two children and 6% having three or more children. In 17% of the households, there is at least one person with a disability[8], 2% have at least one pregnant or breastfeeding woman and only around 1% have at least one child who is not under the adults' legal responsibility.

1.2. OBLAST OF ORIGIN[9]

Among the IDPs (former refugees), the Eastern macro-region[10] was the predominant location of residence prior to the full scale invasion (59% of the surveyed IDPs), followed by the Southern one (23%). Notably, most IDPs (former refugees) are originally from the oblasts that continue to be impacted by the conflict or are under occupation. Therefore, unlike the general sample (see Figure 1) the top five oblasts of origin for IDP respondents are Kharkivska oblast (19%) followed by Donetska oblast (18%), Zaporizka oblast (12%), Khersonska (11%) and Mykolaivska (9%).

Figure 1: Top ten oblast of origin of returnees to Ukraine



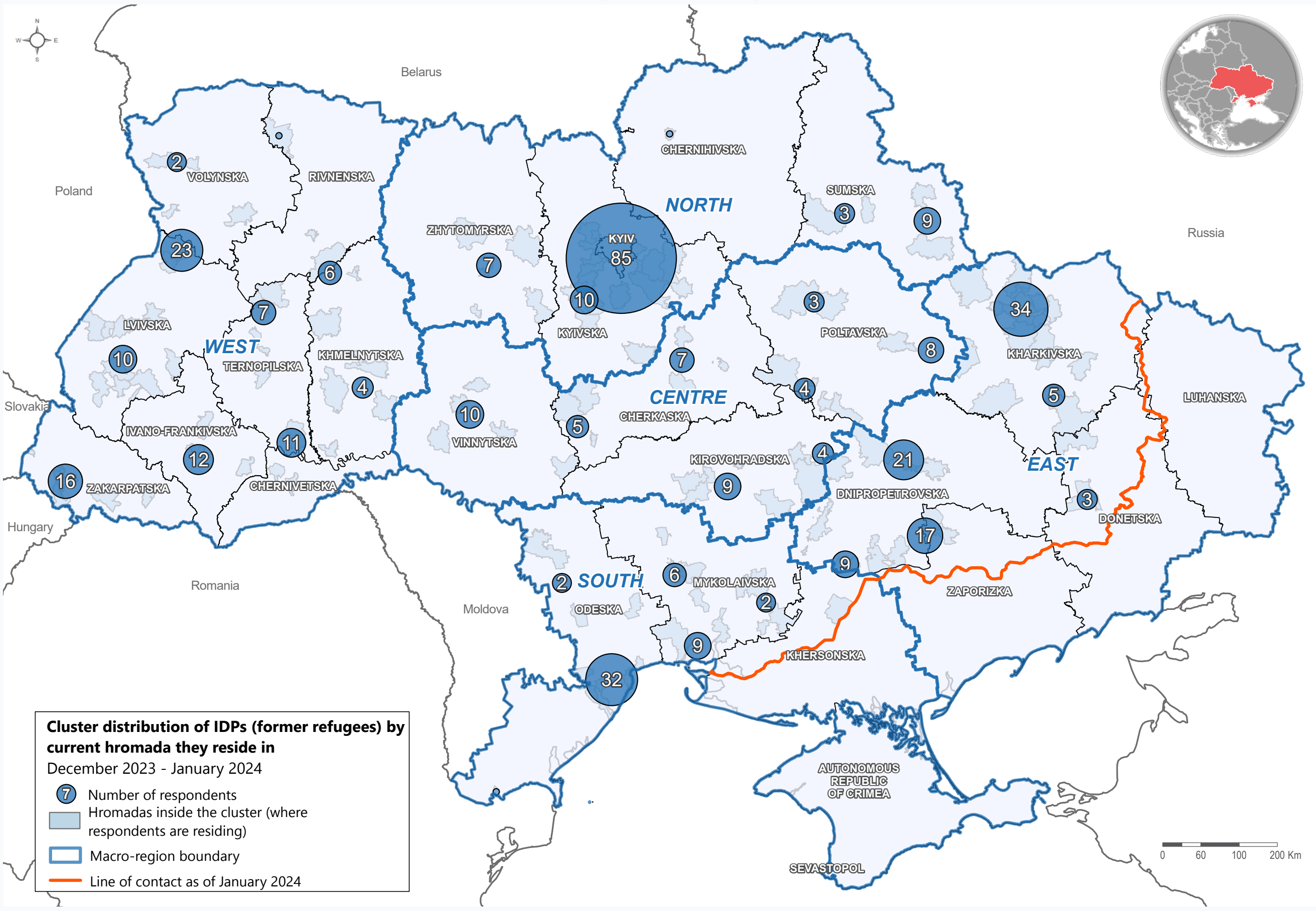
7. The share of single caregivers to children, among households with children, is even bigger among IDPs (38%) than among home returnees (26%).
8. The self-reported disability was measured using the Washington Group short set of questions. More information is available here.
9. 'Oblast of origin', in this situation overview, refers to the oblast where the respondent had resided prior to the escalation in 2022 and from where they fled, not the oblast of birth.
10. A 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 t**he Autonomous Republic of Crimea** are separate administrative units and are not included in the macro-regions mentioned above.

1.3. OBLAST OF RETURN

Most returnees to Ukraine have relocated back to their home settlements (81% of all respondents). When respondents do not return to their home settlements and hence become IDPs, they tend to return to their macro-region of origin (among all surveyed IDPs, 40% have returned to their macro-region of origin). This is also true for the macro-regions most affected by war. For instance, 46% of the IDPs who came from the South and 36% of those who came from the East became IDPs in their macro-region of origin. The next most popular macro-region for residing in after the return for both of those subgroups is the Western macro-region (21% of all surveyed IDPs from the East of Ukraine and 20% of all surveyed IDPs from the South of Ukraine), followed by Kyiv-city (16% and 13% respectively). Evidently, the top six oblasts those IDPs chose to reside in are Kyiv-city (16%), Kharkivska oblast (10%), Odeska oblast (9%), Lvivska oblast (8%) Dnipropetrovska and Kyivska oblasts (7% each).

As for home returnees (former refugees), the most frequent return locations were: Kyiv-city (15%), Dnipropetrovska oblast (13%), Kharkivska oblast (9%), Odeska oblast (8%), Mykolaivska oblast (8%) and Kyivska oblast (7%). Notably, the Eastern macro-region had the highest share (27%) of all returnees to Ukraine, followed by the Southern (17%), Western (16%), and Northern (15%) macro-regions, as well as Kyiv-city (15%). The Central macro-region (9%) had the fewest share of returnees to Ukraine. Considering the predominant presence of people from the East and South of Ukraine among all who had experienced displacement, the tendency to return to home settlement, or to some extent to the macro-region of origin, might explain why we observe such a large share of respondents choosing to return to the macro-regions most affected by war.

Map 2: Cluster distribution of surveyed IDPs (former refugees) by their current place of residence



2. RETURNEES TO UKRAINE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

2.1. LIVELIHOODS

Income

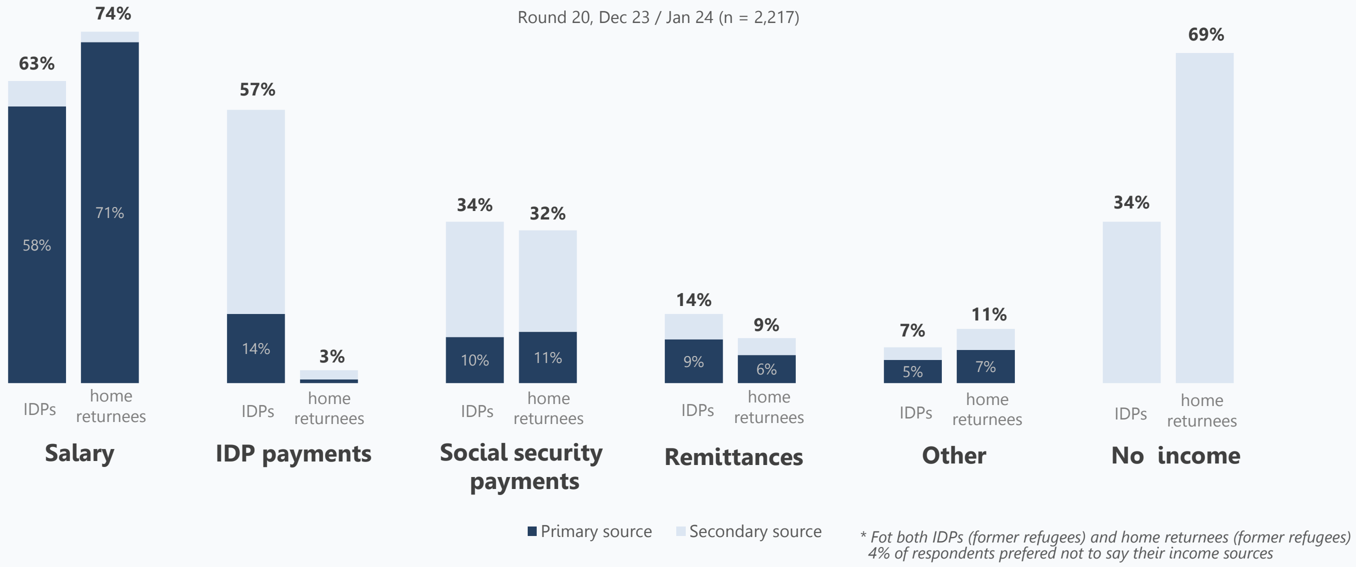
The median monthly income per household member among IDPs (former refugees) at the time of data collection was 5,292 UAH (126 EUR). This indicator did not differ much for home returnees (former refugees) and was equal to 5,502 UAH (131 EUR), and generally did not vary between oblasts, with the exception of Kyiv-city (8,862 UAH / 211 EUR).[11]

11. The median income per capita in UAH was calculated according to the data in Ministry of Finance of Ukraine exchange rate archive as of 1.01.2024 (1 EUR = 41,996 UAH).

Interestingly, the sources of income differed between the two groups of former refugees, with a higher dependency on social support for IDPs compared to home returnees. Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of IDPs (former refugees) reported being reliant on IPD payments as their primary (14%) or secondary (43%) source of income. Only 3% of home returnees (former refugees) reported likewise[12]. In addition, IDPs reported reliance on remittances in a larger proportion (5 percentage point difference) than home returnees. Salary from employment was less often a primary or secondary source of income for IDP (former refugee) households (63% for IDPs and 73% for home returnees) (see details in Figure 2).

Both groups relied on social security at almost the same proportion: 34% of IDPs (former refugees) and 32% of home returnees (former refugees). Overall, even if income levels are similar for IDP households compared to home returnee households, there is more reliance on external financial aid for the former group.

Figure 2*: Income sources of IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees)



* Fot both IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees) 4% of respondents prefered not to say their income sources

Employment situation

Overall, IDPs (former refugees) tend to have less stable employment situations than home returnees (former refugees). The most notable disparity between those two groups of respondents, as of Round 20, was observed in the proportion of employed respondents. While 57% of working-age (18-64) home returnees were employed in their place of residence, only 49% of working-age IDPs held jobs in their current location. Moreover, there was a 3-percentage point disparity in the reported proportion of former refugees not having any job between working-age IDPs (23%) and working-age home returnees (20%). Additionally, the IDP subgroup of former refugees, regardless of the age of respondents, exhibited a slightly larger proportion of caregivers (13% compared to 10% among home returnees) and retirees (10% compared to 8% among home returnees). Examining changes in employment status over time reveals a positive trend in the proportion of employed returnees to Ukraine from January to December 2023. Among the 750 individuals surveyed in 2023, approximately 15% found employment during this period. Notably, of those who were initially without occupation in January 2023, 48% secured employment by the end of the year, and of those who were caregivers for children 20% became employed as well. Conversely, 3% of respondents reported job loss over the course of 2023.

Occupation[13]

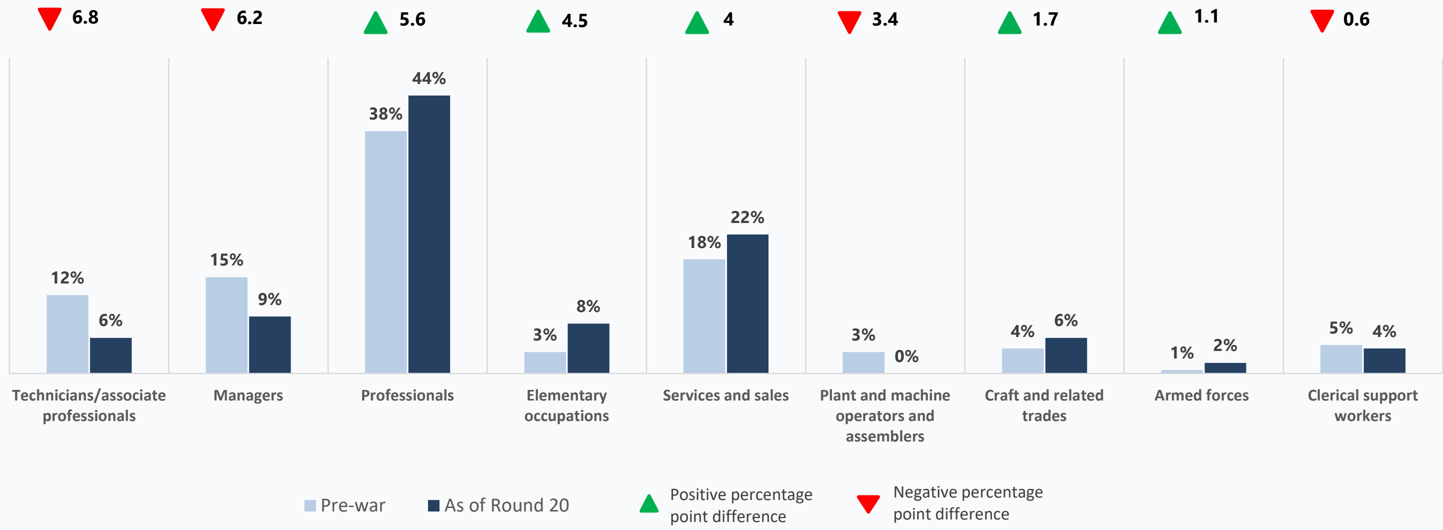
As of Round 20, the top three major groups of jobs amidst all working returnees to Ukraine were professionals (41% of working respondents), services and sales workers (20%), and managers (13%). Comparing to sub-samples of former refugees, IDPs were more frequently employed as services and sales workers (23% of IDPs, compared to 20% of home returnees) and less frequently as managers (9% compared to 14% of the home returnees). In addition, IDPs were employed as elementary workers in a slightly larger proportion (8% of working IDPs versus 6% of working home returnees). Notably, employed returnees to Ukraine who came back to home settlement experienced fewer shifts between occupation categories than those who became IDPs (see Figure 3). The biggest difference for home returnees (former refugees) is observed in the decrease in managers by 5 percentage points and the increase of sales and service workers (3 percentage points increase) together with clerical support workers (2 percentage points increase).

12. Since respondents report their sources of income for the month preceding the data collection, the 3% of people who returned home and reported receiving IDP payments may either be people who moved home before the data collection and reported their income when they were not yet home, or those who receive payments due to damage to their housing.

13. Occupations were categorised according to the International Standart Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08).

Figure 3: Pre-war and current occupation categories of employed IDPs (former refugees) at the time of data collection, ordered by the percentage point difference

Round 20, Dec 23 / Jan 24 (n= 177)



Accommodation

As of December 2023 / January 2024 , the housing situation of returnees to Ukraine differed noticeably depending on whether they have returned to their home settlement or have become IDPs.

62%

of IDPs (former refugees) were residing in rented accommodation, with 99% of them paying both rent and utility bills.

For IDPs (former refugees), the next largest accommodation modalities behind renting were the following:: staying with family or friends (15%), staying in their (or their household member's) own accommodation (14%) or in housing provided by volunteers (6%). Within those who were residing with family/friends, the vast majority were either paying a reduced cost for housing (76%) or staying there at no cost (21%). Overall, IDPs (former refugees) seem to rely on their household incomes and cash assistance for shelter in much higher proportions than home returnees (former refugees). Combined with a lower average income, and lower proportion of employed people, this may make them more financially vulnerable.

90%

of home returnees (former refugees) were residing in their own accommodation with 96% of them paying only utility bills and 2% not paying any cost for housing.

As of Round 20, most (90%) of the home returnees (former refugees) were residing in their (or their household member's) own accommodation, of which 98% are paying either a reduced cost (utility bills) or having no expenses for the accommodation. Eight per cent (8%) of home returnees were renting a flat and 99% of them fully covered the cost of living. The remainder either were staying with family or friends or in housing provided by volunteers.

17%

of IDPs (former refugees) have reported the damage of their housing or land alongside with 8% reported housing or land destruction.

5%

of home returnees (former refugees) have reported the damage of their housing or land alongside with 1% reported housing or land destruction

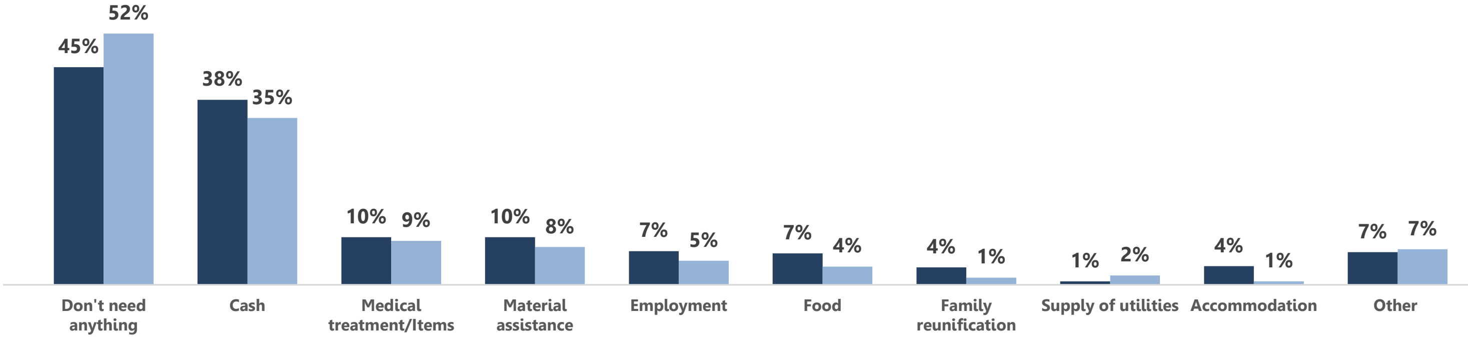
Notably, 39% of home returnees (former refugees) reported no damage, pollution, or threats in the home area, while only 13% of IDPs (former refugees) reported likewise for theirs (the home area where they were not residing at the time of data collection). Additionally, one-six (17%) of surveyed IDPs reported house damage and 8% house destruction (compared to 5% and 1% of surveyed home returnees respectively). Conditions of home damage or destruction might thus have a significant impact on the choice of the location of return, with home returnees (former refugees) able to return to their own housing while IDPs (former refugees) report issues with their housing/area of origin in higher proportions.

2.2. NEEDS AND ASSISTANCE

Unmet urgent needs

Figure 4: Unmet urgent needs* of IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees)

Round 20, Dec 23 / Jan 24 (n= 2,217)



** multiple-choice question*

Unmet urgent needs

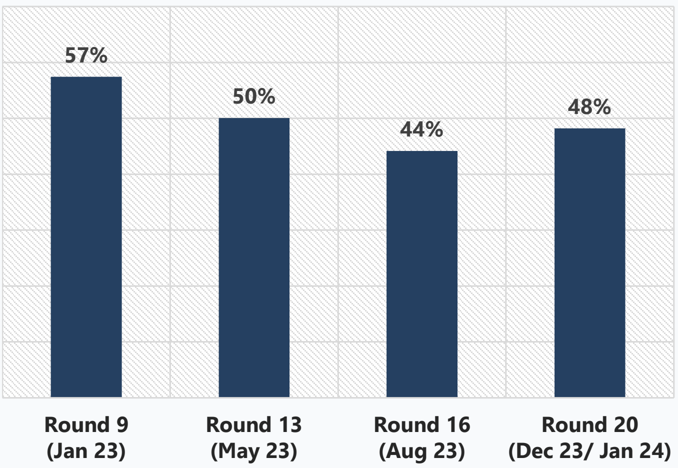
By January 2024, comparing both former refugee sub-samples, IDPs reported having at least one urgent need (55%) in higher proportions than home returnees (48%). For instance, IDPs (former refugees) reported having needs in cash (38%), material assistance (10%), employment (7%) and food (7%) in higher proportions than home returnees (former refugees), as well as the needs of family reunification (4%) and accommodation (4%).

Additionally, reported needs varied by macro-region. The macro-regions most affected by war had a higher-than-average proportion of all returnees to Ukraine reporting unmet urgent needs, with 55% in the South and 51% in the East. In contrast, Kyiv City had the smallest proportion reporting any urgent unmet needs (39%). People from the Eastern macro-region more frequently reported needing material assistance (11%), food (6%), and access to schools and childcare (3%) while in the South the need for utility supply (5%) stood out.

Finally, households with vulnerable members tend to report needs in higher proportions than average. Compared with the general sample, respondents aged 65 and above and those from households with at least one person with a disability reported needs for cash assistance (45% each) and medical treatment or items (25% and 24% respectively) more frequently. Material assistance was more frequently named as an unmet urgent need by households with three or more children (19%), by single caregivers (11%) and by respondents aged 65 and above (13%). Food was more frequently mentioned as a need by households with three or more children (8%). Additionally, single caregivers tend to express the desire to reunite with their family (4%) more frequently than the overall sample.

Figure 5: Returnees to Ukraine reporting any urgent unmet need, by round

(n = 745)



Across the cohort sample of people steadily participating in four selected rounds of the Longitudinal Study (750 respondents), a positive dynamic of decreasing number of returnees to Ukraine with unmet urgent needs is seen over the January-August 2023 period (from 57% to 44% of returnees) with a slight increase from August to December 2023 (to 48%). The largest drop was reported from January to May in the need for the supply of utilities (from 18% to 1%) and remained low throughtout the rest of the year. The high proportion of people reporting the need for utility supply during Round 9 was most likely linked to the winter rocket attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure during the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023. The next largest drop, over the whole year 2023, concerned reported employment needs, which dropped by 5 percentage points. Despite the positive dynamics, the top three main needs were reported by the same proportion of respondents over the year (cash, medical assistance/items, and material assistance).

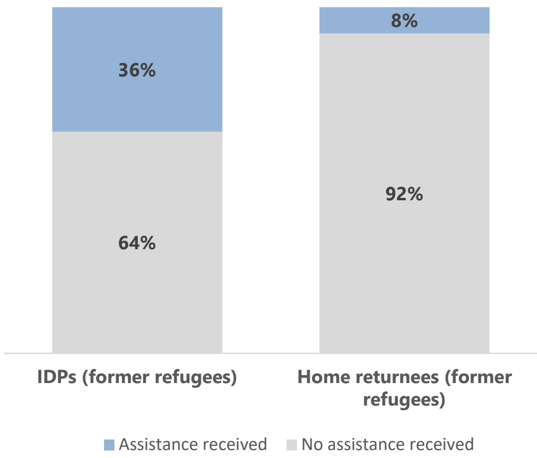
Access to assistance

As of Round 20, IDPs (former refugees) much more frequently reported receiving assistance (36%) within the last two months compared to home returnees (former refugees) (8%). The largest disparity was observed in cash assistance: 25% of IDPs reportedly received financial support against only 3% of home returnee. Such differences might be due to monthly IDP payments being accessible, at the time of data collection, to any person with the IDP status (legally recognised status involving formal registration with authorities) in Ukraine. Among the surveyed IDP returnees the majority (76%) had obtained IDP documents.

Additionally, returnee to Ukraine households with members from different vulnerability categories reported receiving assistance in a higher proportion than average (13%): single caregivers (15% received assistance), households with at least one person with a disability (19%), people aged 65 and above (23%) and people from households with three or more children (24%).

Figure 6: Reception of assistance of IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees)

Round 20, Dec 23 / Jan 24 (n= 2,217)



3. RETURNEES TO UKRAINE MOBILITY INTENTIONS AND SAFETY PERCEPTIONS

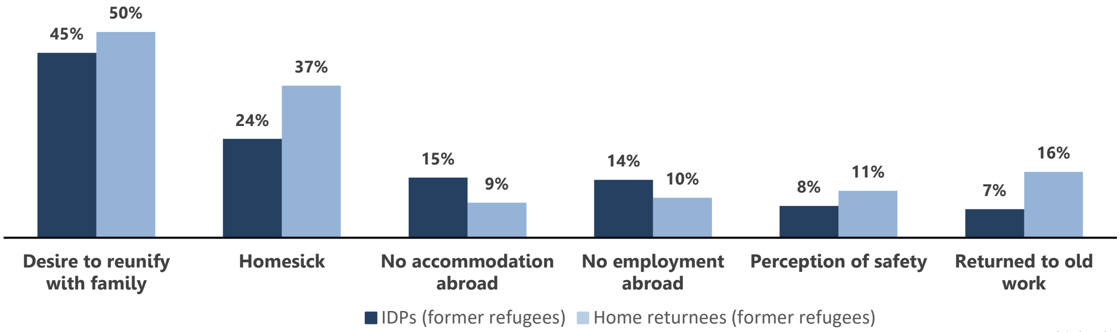
3.1. REASONS FOR RETURNING TO UKRAINE AND INTENTIONS TO STAY

Self-reported reasons to return from abroad

The desire to reunite with family and being homesick were the most frequently reported reasons for returning from abroad for both IDPs (45% and 24% respectively) and home returnees (50% and 37% respectively). IDPs reported the inability to find/ sustain permanent accommodation (15%) or employment (14%) abroad more frequently than home returnees (9% and 10% respectively). This could signal that IDPs (former refugees) were more frequently forced to return due to push factors like a lack of livelihood conditions abroad, while home returnees (former refugees) were potentially more frequently driven by pull factors such as having employment or accommodation opportunities at home.

Figure 7: Top six reasons to return* from abroad for IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees)

Round 20, Dec 23 / Jan 24 (n= 2,208)



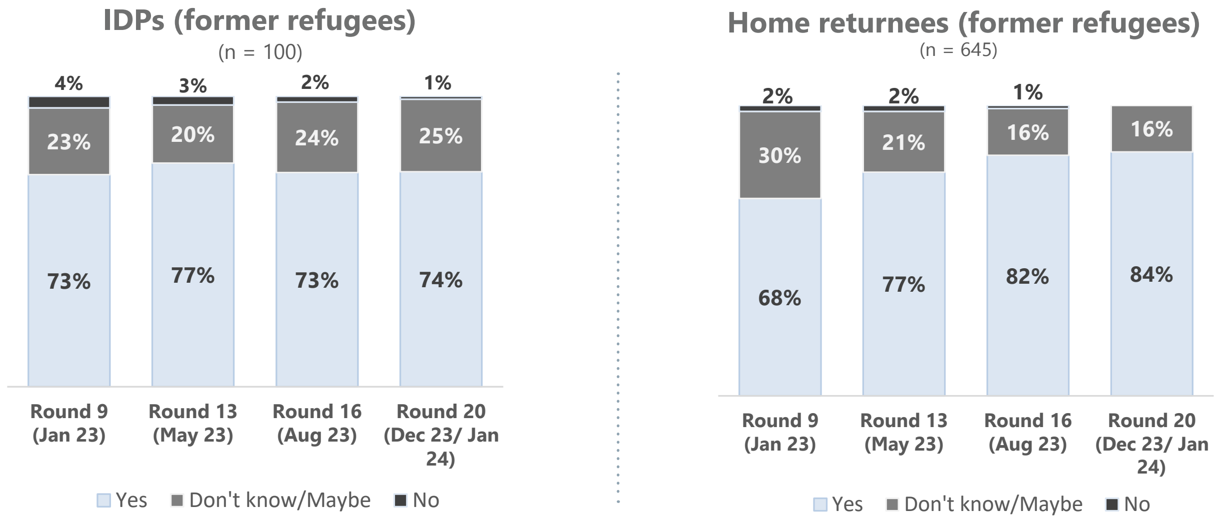
** multiple-choice question*

Intentions to stay in the current location within the next 6 months

As of Round 20, most returnees to Ukraine do not plan to move again in the short term. Eighty-two per cent (82%) of all home returnees (former refugees) and 75% of all IDPs (former refugees) were planning to stay in their current location for at least the next 6 months.

The 2023 trend for home returnees (former refugees) shows a 16 percentage point increase in certainty of staying for 3 to 6 months in the current location. In contrast, the proportion of IDPs (former refugees) expressing a desire to stay only fluctuated over the year (see Figure 8). Comparing those two groups of former refugees, it seems that home returnees may be more able to establish sustainability of some sort upon their return than IDPs.

Figure 8: Intentions to stay for next six months in current location, by round

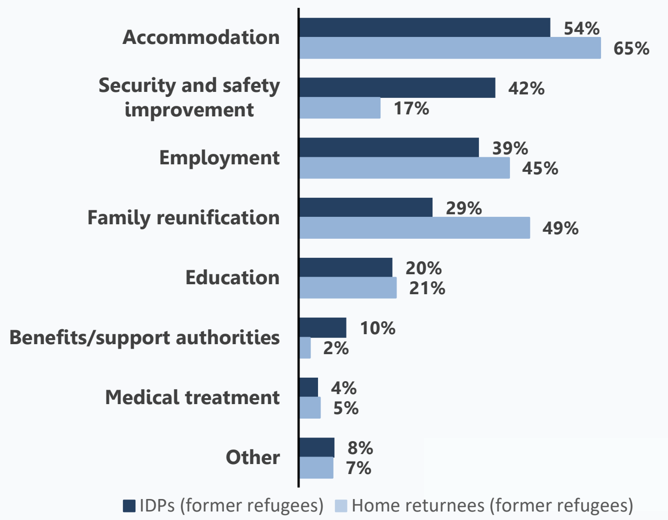


For those who indicated certainty in their intentions to stay in the current location short-term, the largest disparity in the reported reasons for staying among former refugees were security and safety (42% for IDPs compared to only 17% for home returnees) and reunification with family (29% and 49% respectively). Additionally, home returnees (former refugees) reported accommodation and employment as reasons for staying more frequently (see Figure 9) than IDPs (former refugees).

Over time, the subset of returnees to Ukraine who took part in the selected 2023 rounds increasingly reported accommodation (from 22% in January to 49% in December) and employment (from 27% to 42%) as reasons for staying.

Figure 9: Reason for staying* among IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees) who indicated intention to stay

Round 20, Dec 23 / Jan 24 (n= 1,782)



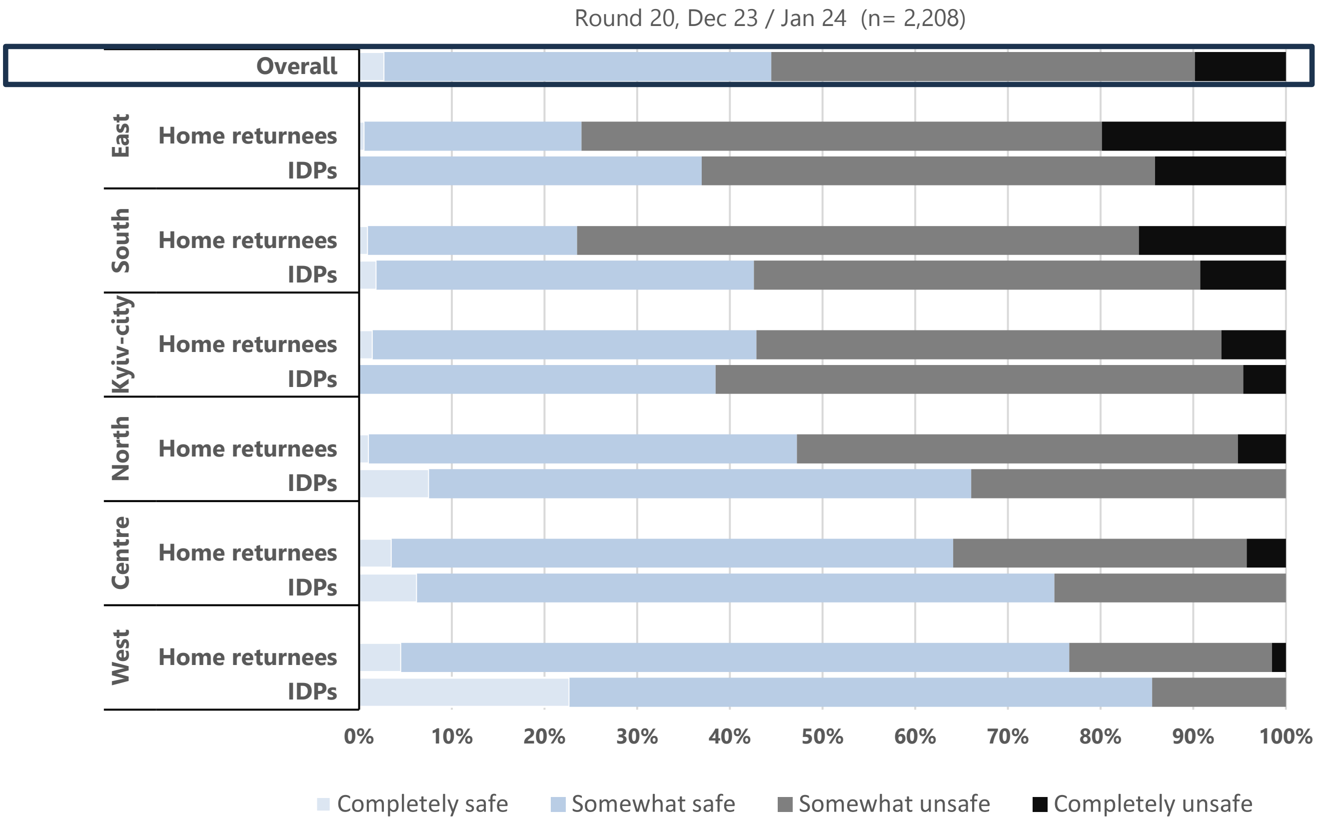
** multiple-choice question*

3.2. SAFETY PERCEPTIONS

Among former refugees, a higher proportion of home returnees perceive their current place of residence as completely or somewhat unsafe (58%) compared to IPDs (42%). This difference is observed in all macro-regions except Kyiv city, where a larger proportion (61%) of IDPs (former refugees) reported feeling completely or somewhat unsafe compared to 57% of home returnees (former refugees).

The great majority of IDPs (former refugees) have safety concerns about their home settlements. Indeed, surveyed IDPs predominantly report that their home settlements (to which they have not returned) are unsafe (87%) with 29% of them reported perceiving it as somewhat unsafe and 58% as completely unsafe, leaving only around 13% of IDPs (former refugees) perceiving their home settlement to be somewhat or completely safe. The proportion of returnees to Ukraine reporting having safety concerns remained stable in 2023, with approximately 50% of the returnees not feeling safe at any point during the year: in January (53%), May (49%), August (53%), and December 2023 (51%).

Figure 10: Perception of safety of IDPs (former refugees) and home returnees (former refugees), by current macro region



SUMMARY

The situation overview reveals the specific socio-economic vulnerabilities of IDPs (former refugees) in comparison with home returnees (former refugees).

Many surveyed IDPs have come back to Ukraine due to push factors such as a lack of housing or employment in their host country abroad. Furthermore, when returning and becoming IDPs in Ukraine, people are reportedly more reliant on external financial support (e.g., IDP payments) and less frequently employed than those who are returning from abroad to their home settlement. Less sustainable sources of income for IDPs (former refugees) are coupled with their overwhelmingly relying on renting and their paying the full cost of accommodation in Ukraine.. This is related to the fact that, for most IDPs (former refugees), going back to their settlements of origin and their own housing is not an option: at least one in six surveyed IDPs reported their housing as damaged or destroyed, while most perceive their home settlements as completely unsafe. Such security and safety considerations are frequent self-reported reasons for staying in the current settlement for IDPs (former refugees), who nevertheless report the intention to remain in their current settlement in relatively lower proportion than home returnees (former refugees).