

SIX WEEKS AFTER LEAVING UKRAINE

Challenges, intentions and movement trajectories of Ukrainians in displacement

Background and Context

Almost three months after the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine, as of 30 May 2022, more than 6.6 million people have been forcibly displaced out of Ukraine (UNHCR). First fleeing to neighbouring countries to reach safety, many Ukrainians have family and friends further afield who they want to join: Ukrainians are one of the largest diaspora populations in the world, UNDESA estimates that the Ukrainian diaspora counts globally 6.1 million members. More than five million of them are in Europe.

At IMPACT we track Ukrainians' experiences in displacement, first when they cross the border into neighbouring countries, to their eventual destination and potential return. We are in touch with refugees from the moment they cross the border: we have teams situated at Ukraine's borders with neighbouring countries, where we support the humanitarian response by gathering data about those who cross and their immediate needs. As part of this, we ask respondents whether they agree to stay in touch with our

teams every two weeks, to share their stories of displacement, hopes and challenges, as they settle into a new life. We also ask about intentions to return, based on the situation in Ukraine.

Part of a larger longitudinal study, we have so far collected more than 11,000 interviews with individuals crossing the border. This is the third brief based on a total of 709 respondents interviewed two times during their journey: first at border crossing points in Poland, Moldova, Slovakia and Romania from 28 February to 16 May, and then two weeks later remotely over the phone. One hundred of them we have already interviewed a third time, six weeks after having left Ukraine. The focus of this brief is key challenges in displacement over time and movement intentions. The brief closes with three case studies showcasing respondents' decision-making process over moving, settling and returning to Ukraine over the six weeks we spoke to them.

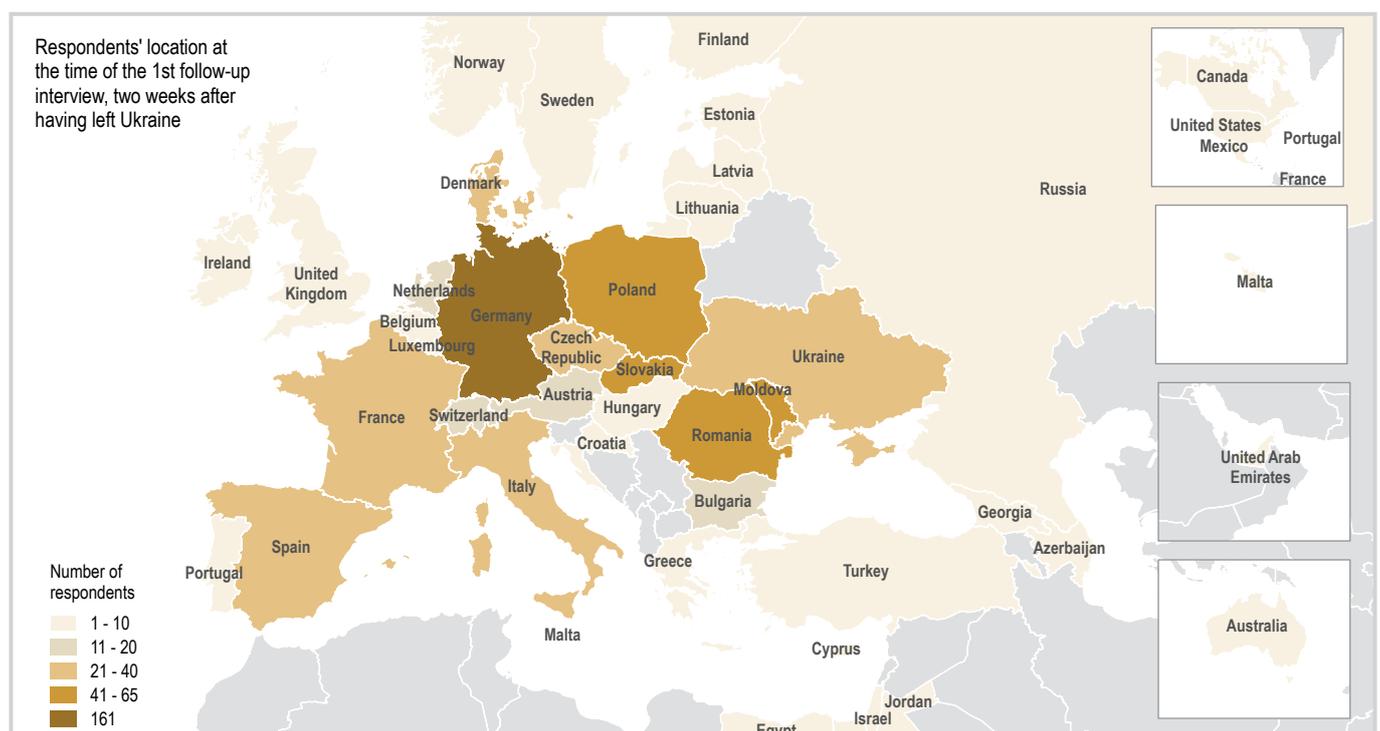
ABOUT OUR RESPONDENTS

When interviewed two weeks after having left Ukraine, our 709 respondents were in 43 different countries. While the largest group was in Germany (161), the overall majority were staying in Ukraine's neighbouring countries: Poland (65), Slovakia (60), Moldova (55), Romania (53) and Hungary (6).

The vast majority of respondents were female (647) with the majority aged between 22 and 45 years old.

Most were Ukrainian nationals (679). More than three out of four respondents travelled with an individual belonging to a vulnerable group, be that a pregnant woman, children, individuals with a disability or elderly people.

Map 1: Respondents' location at the time of the first follow-up interview, two weeks after having left Ukraine



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Key challenges in displacement

TWO WEEKS AFTER LEAVING UKRAINE

When we called respondents two weeks after having left Ukraine, their key concerns were access to housing, access to documents, and finding appropriate care for vulnerable family members.



Access to housing

Two weeks after having left, the majority of our 709 respondents either stayed in government-run shelters (241) or with family and friends (222). One in six reportedly stayed in a hotel/hostel (130), with the remaining living in a hotel/hostel (104). A comparatively low one in seven respondents (109) paid for accommodation, and most felt their housing was temporary only and were concerned that they would need to find more longer term housing quickly.



Applying for documentation

Two weeks after having left Ukraine most respondents were in the Schengen area, where Ukrainians are entitled to free movement with no need to regularize their stay for up to 90 days (ETIAS). Most respondents had not yet formally requested temporary protection (TP) or accessed other types of protection, such as asylum, as respondents reportedly largely wanted to wait and see if they could return to Ukraine.



Accessing care for vulnerable family members, including children

Out of 709 respondents, 539 travelled with a person with a particular vulnerable profile, including children of all age groups, pregnant women, elderly persons, persons with a disability, or unaccompanied and separated children. Close to half of respondents travelled with more than one individual belonging to one of these vulnerable groups. While respondents very positively welcomed the support they received in their locations, many were worried about being able to access more long-term support, such as appropriate healthcare, important to settle if they decided to stay longer term in their current location.

This was also reported in relation to work: as most respondents were not yet sure how long they would stay in their present location, the vast majority of them had not yet actively searched for work opportunities in their current location. At the same time, most felt finding work was a priority for them in the coming weeks.

SIX WEEKS ON

Out of 709 respondents interviewed two weeks after they left Ukraine, we called 100 of them again one month later, asking whether and how their situation had changed. This is what they told us.



Access to housing

Six weeks after having left Ukraine, the proportion of respondents renting housing had markedly increased to one third of respondents (29 respondents), compared to 9 respondents out of 100 interviewed one month prior. The proportion of respondents staying with family and friends had slightly decreased, as had those staying in government-run centre (33 and 7, compared to 45 and 19). This suggests that respondents' housing situation in countries of displacement is becoming more stable and permanent.

At the same time, six weeks later most respondents reportedly still did not pay for accommodation, suggesting that rented accommodation is government-subsidised or that respondents are allowed by flat owners to live in the rented accommodation for free or for highly reduced rates (reported by 87 out of 100 respondents).



Applying for documentation

Six weeks after having left Ukraine, our 100 respondents had largely applied for documents to stay legally in their current location: when interviewed two weeks after having left Ukraine, only one out of ten respondents had applied for documentation, such as temporary protection or asylum (out of 100 respondents). One month later, seven out of ten had submitted their application, the majority of them (55 out of 72) for temporary protection (TP). Of those who had not applied yet for documentation (32 respondents), half reported wanting to wait and see if they could return to Ukraine. The fact that most respondents had still applied for TP or asylum suggests that respondents intend to settle at least for the mid-term in their present location.



Language barriers to finding work & childcare

The most reported barrier for both respondents finding work and their children integrating at school and childcare was language. Only two out of 100 respondents had reportedly already found work in their destination. Most felt they would be able to find work - based on their professions in Ukraine or in an adjacent field - but lacked the necessary language skills to do so. Similarly, while most respondents' children were able to go to school/ kindergarten, respondents felt children had a difficult time to settle in due to language barriers.

Movements & intentions

SIX WEEKS AFTER LEAVING UKRAINE

During each interview round (at the border, two weeks after and four weeks after that) we asked respondents whether they intended to stay or move on from their current location. **While during the first two interview rounds respondents were very unsure about what to do, six weeks after having left Ukraine, respondents were more certain about whether to move, to stay or to return.**

Secondary movements limited

While most respondents were in a different location two weeks after having been interviewed at a border crossing point, one month after, 78 out of 100 were still in the location where they were first interviewed two weeks after crossing the border. Our respondents were first interviewed at border crossing points in Moldova (43), Poland (29), Romania (22), less in Slovakia (6) and Hungary (3). Two weeks later, respondents were in: Germany (29), Moldova (19), Poland (14), Romania (10), Italy and Spain (each 5), Austria (4). One month later, most had not moved on from that location.

Limited secondary movements, as well as respondents' reporting on accessing more permanent types of housing and applying for documentation are indicative of Ukrainians wanting to settle more longer term in their current location.

Intentions to move on

Six weeks after having left Ukraine, out of 100 respondents, 90 reportedly wanted to remain in their current location for the time being. This is markedly different to when respondents were interviewed one month earlier, when most respondents reported not yet knowing whether to stay in their current location, return to Ukraine or move on.

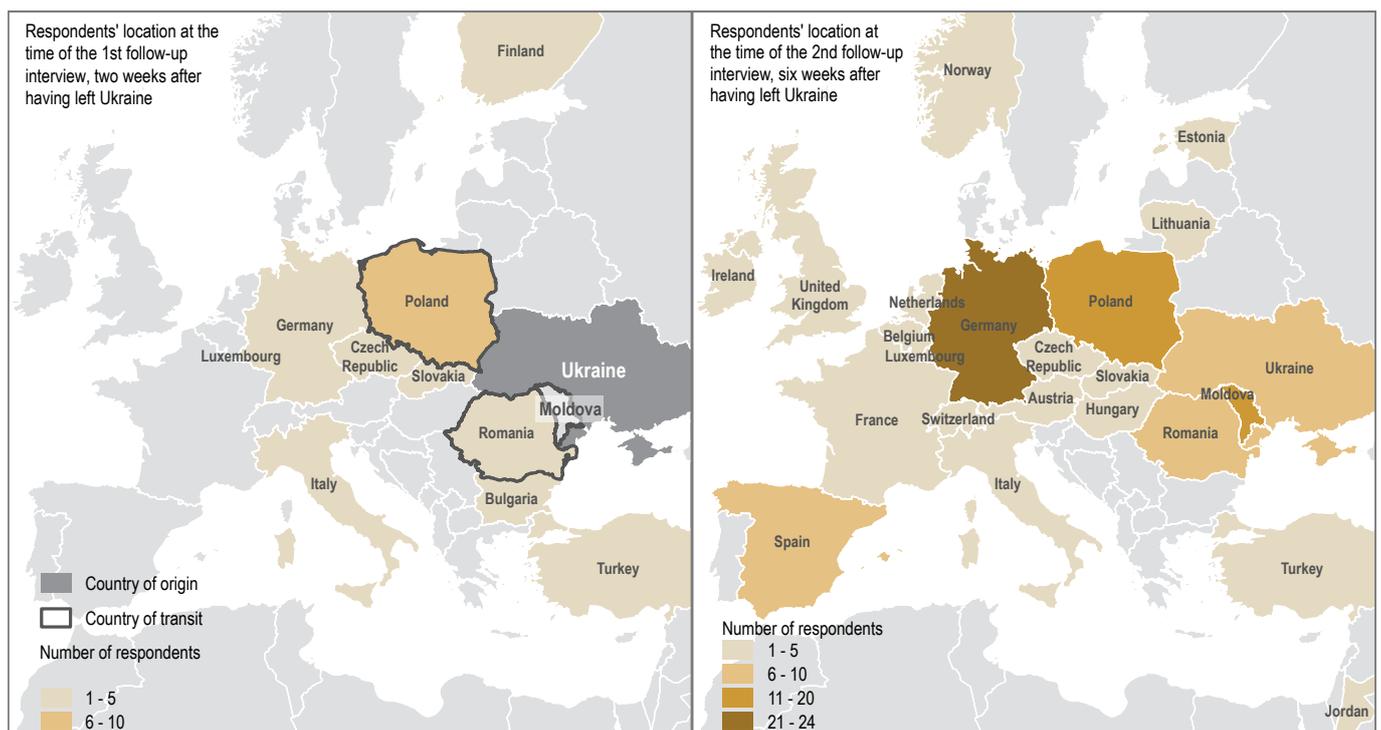
Those who said they were considering to move on, did so because the situation they were facing in their current location was reportedly poor, either in terms of accessing basic services, especially healthcare and education, or finding work. Given Ukrainians' right to move freely within Schengen for up to three months, some further movements are still to be expected.

Intentions to return to Ukraine

Six weeks after having left the country, six respondents had reportedly already returned to Ukraine when called for the second time: the majority of them had returned to Odessa (4), followed by Stryi and Vinnitsa. They intended to remain in Ukraine.

As of 24 May, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine has recorded [more than 2.1 million people](#) returning to the country. However, this figure includes pendular movements and people who return on a temporary basis only and may as such not be appropriate to estimate the scope of people returning to Ukraine with the intention to remain in the long term.

Map 2: Respondents' location two weeks after having left Ukraine, vs six weeks after having left Ukraine



UKRAINIANS' MOVEMENT TRAJECTORIES SIX WEEKS AFTER HAVING LEFT UKRAINE

Map 3: The journey of a 37-year-old IT worker from Kharkiv, traveling with his family of four



Map 4: The journey of a 47-year-old woman from Odessa, traveling with her 13-year-old son



Map 5: The journey of a 38-year-old female business owner, travelling with her family of seven



Methodology

This brief presents findings from an ongoing longitudinal study on the experiences of refugees fleeing Ukraine to neighbouring countries and further afield over time. Through its humanitarian data initiative REACH, IMPACT, in partnership with UNHCR, continuously monitors refugees crossing borders from Ukraine. As refugees cross, they are first interviewed on their most urgent needs at the border to inform the immediate humanitarian response. Thereafter, many give their consent to stay in touch with our field teams for follow-up interviews every two weeks over the phone.

The data collection tool administered during each round includes some indicators which remain the same, to ensure longitudinal analysis, and a core section which changes each time, to reflect the changing situation and key concerns of respondents. Follow-up interviews are conducted by trained enumerators, who conduct the interviews in respondents' mother tongues. Data collection at the border, as well as follow up interviews, is done continuously, to ensure comparability of refugees' profiles as they cross at different times, originate from different places, and end up in different locations.

The present product is based on interviews with 709 respondents, interviewed first at the border, and then two weeks later. One hundred of them were also called up four weeks after that. The brief presents an overview of changing movement patterns, lived challenges and intentions over time. Future products are likely to change in both scope and breadth, depending on information needs of humanitarian, government and other response actors.

About IMPACT

IMPACT Initiatives is a Geneva based think-and-do-tank, created in 2010. IMPACT's teams implement assessment, monitoring & evaluation and organisational capacity-building programmes in direct partnership with aid actors or through its inter-agency initiatives, REACH and Agora. Headquartered in Geneva, IMPACT has an established field presence in over 25 countries. IMPACT's team is composed of over 400 staff, including 180 full-time international experts, as well as a roster of consultants, who are currently implementing over 90 programmes across Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Central and South-East Asia, Eastern and Central Europe.