



UNHCR UKRAINE BORDER MONITORING
AT INTERNATIONAL BORDER CROSSING POINTS
 (Borders between Ukraine, the EU and Moldova)
APRIL 2024

Figure 1. Reni BCP with Moldova. Counselling by border monitor. Photo credit: The Tenth of April

Since mid-March 2022, UNHCR and its local NGO partners Right to Protection (R2P), NEEKA, and The Tenth of April (TTA), 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 as well as to those returning to Ukraine.

1. Overview: Cross-Border Movements (in and out)

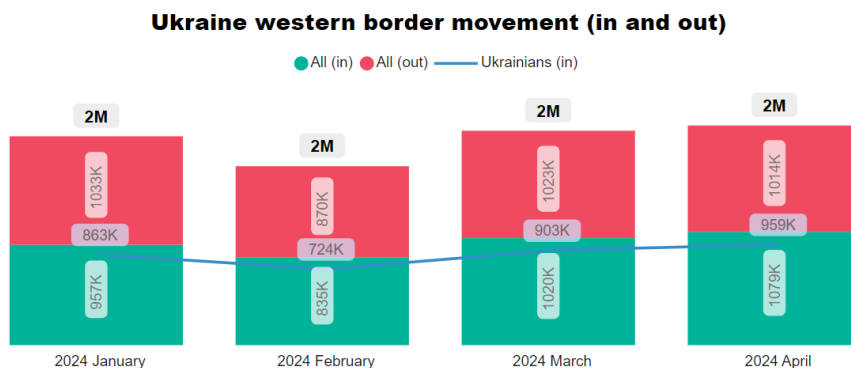


Figure 2. Number of people crossing the international border with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The figure does not include data on border crossings with Moldova. Source: State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine.

After an initial drop in overall cross-border movements from January to February 2024, from February to April 2024, a steady yet slow increase in overall cross-border movements was recorded. While in the first quarter of the year the number of people departing Ukraine surpassed those returning, in April 2024 this trend reversed with a net inflow to Ukraine of 65,000 individuals. This likely related to the Easter holiday, indicated by a relatively high percentage of short-stay intentions monitored. Some 79% of people interviewed in April said they entered

the country for less than a month, and 51% even only for less than two weeks. As such, it is anticipated that in May 2024, net outflows will increase, and departures will outweigh return movements again.

Legal amendments related to cross-border movements in April 2024

On 2 April 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a resolution amending the rules for crossing the state border by Ukrainian citizens. The amendments state that *male* students will be able to cross the border while martial law is in force if they meet the following cumulative criteria:

- He is 18 – 22 years;
- He studies full-time at a communal or state-owned university in Ukraine (excluding private universities) and is enrolled in a Bachelor's program in any discipline or Master's program in medical, pharmaceutical or veterinary subject;
- He is a participant in a global academic mobility program and he departs to study at a foreign educational institution for one semester.

2. Key findings

General observations

- Return intentions: The analysis of the interviews conducted by UNHCR partner border monitors from January to April 2024 suggests a continued downward trend in return intentions of surveyed individuals. While overall return intentions for 2023 stood at 91% of respondents expressing an intention to return should the situation in Ukraine stabilize, a downward trend set in in August 2023, when the percentage of respondents with return intentions dropped below 90% for the remainder of the year. A continuation of this downward trend in the first four months of 2024 was observed with return intentions reducing to an average of 81%. Related, the percentage of those unsure about their long-term return grew to 17% in 2024.

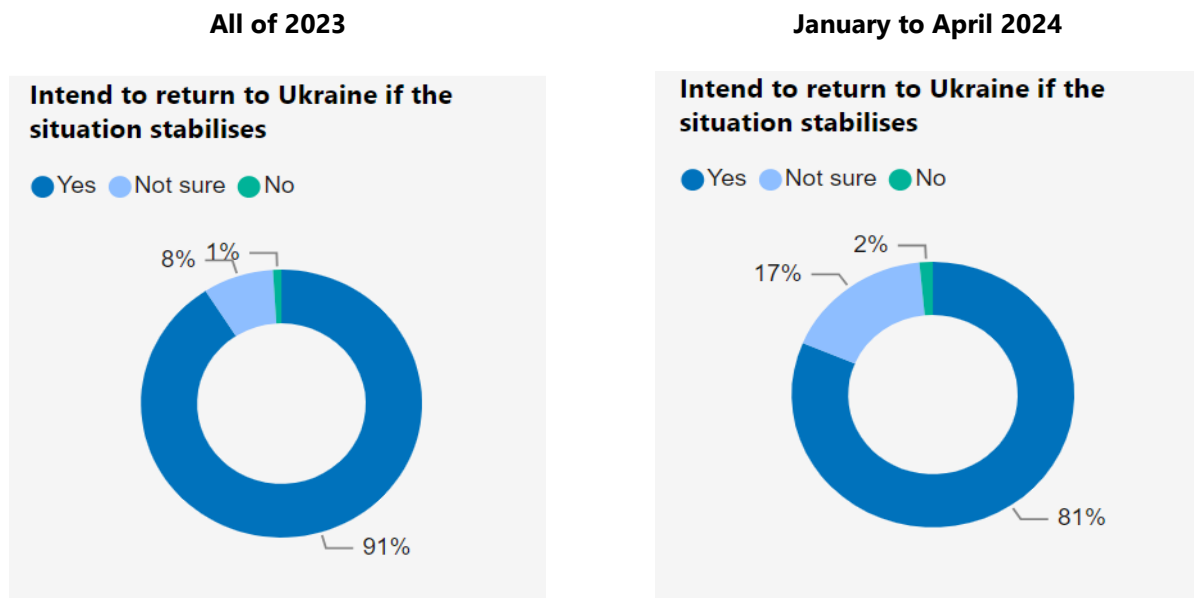


Figure 3. Data based on UNHCR border monitoring for 2023 and 2024 respectively.

- Return trends by oblast of origin: Expectedly, returns of people forcibly displaced from Luhanska and Donetska oblasts are the lowest in number. This observation corresponds with reports from partners, who noted that refugees from Donetska and Luhanska oblasts, who were already internally displaced before the full-scale invasion that started in February 2022, do not plan to return to Ukraine at all.

- Reasons for returning to Ukraine: Reuniting with family and care taking of family members who stayed behind have remained the two dominant reasons for returns to Ukraine in all of 2023 as well as in the first four months of 2024. While stabilization of the security conditions in the home area was the third main reasons of respondents returning to Ukraine in all of 2023 at 22%, in the first four months of 2024, this reason no longer featured as strongly at only 5% of responses. Other main reasons for return stated in interviews include the desire the check on housing and the lack of access to health care in host countries with no significant variations between 2023 and 2024 to date.
- Needs of people returning to Ukraine: The graph below demonstrates main needs of returnees irrespective of the duration of intended stay disaggregated by oblast of return. The top three needs among returnees are cash, health services, and documents (legal assistance) irrespective of the oblast of return.

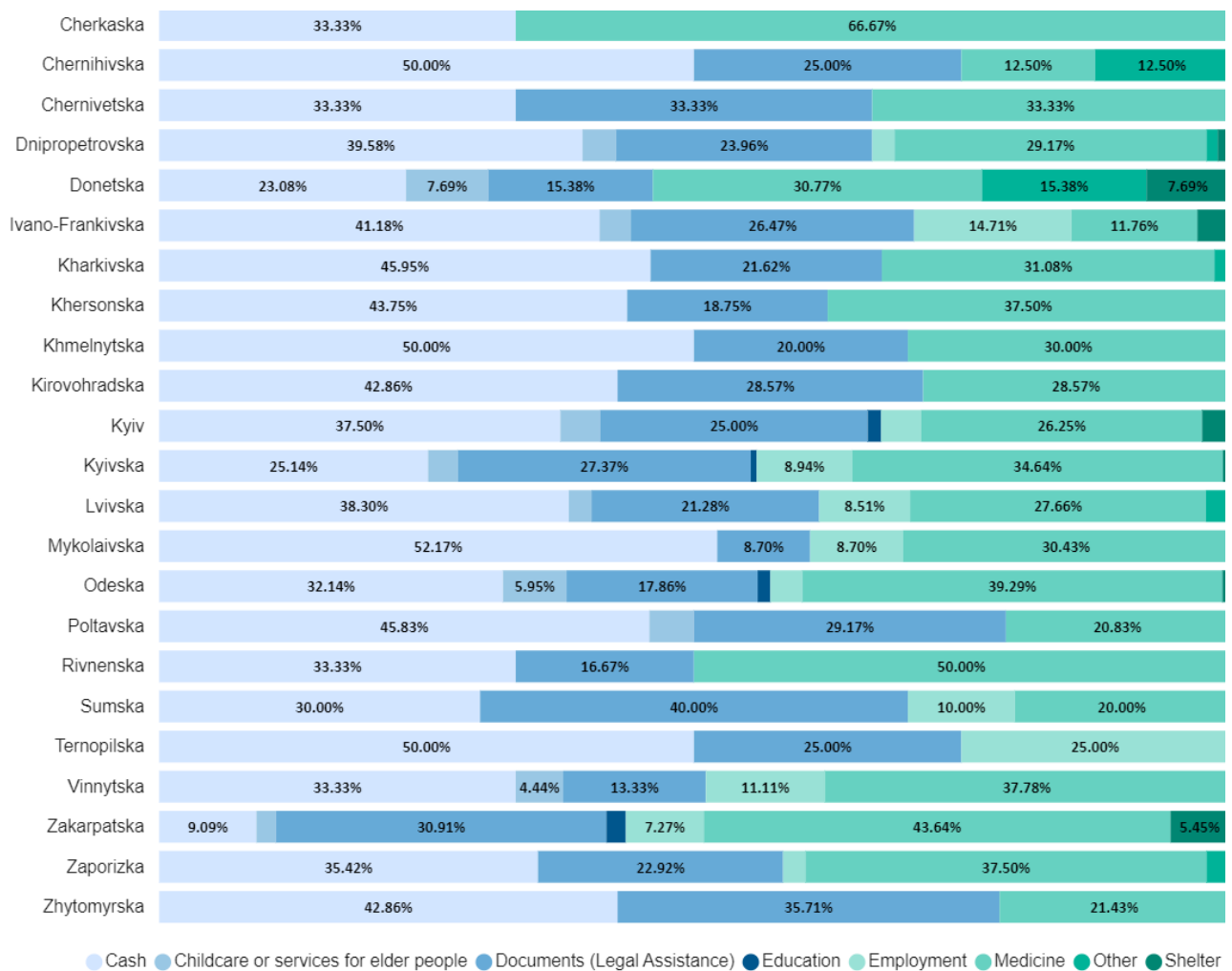


Figure 4. Data based on UNHCR border monitoring 2024.

Public information by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGS) on cross-border movements

- On its web page, the SBGS reported three cases of prevented or identified human trafficking. An [illustrative instance](#) involved the coercion of Ukrainian women to obtain temporary protection status in Romania. The suspected perpetrator, using deception, targeted women in a vulnerable socio-economic situation promising them work abroad. Upon arrival to Romania, the women were subjected to labor exploitation, their movement was restricted, and documents taken away. The abuser coerced the women to cooperate

- on applying for social benefits from Romanian authorities. All money were taken from them. The case underlines exacerbated vulnerabilities caused by the war and increased risks of human trafficking.
- The SGBS on its website continues to report on attempts of men of conscription age trying to cross the border. Instances of forged documents and lack of grounds for crossing the borders have been situations faced at the international border crossing points. Attempts of crossing the green border continue to be reported.
 - The SGBS identified [a group facilitating the illegal entry](#) of foreigners into Ukraine. This group systematically produced false employment documents for foreigners, enabling them to obtain long-term visas and subsequently legalize their stay in Ukraine by obtaining residence permits. The documented cases involved foreign citizens predominantly from East Asia and South America.

Observations through by UNHCR partners (on site) in April

- Partners report denials to men 18-59 to cross the border. In most cases the border guards referred to incomplete documentation needed to allow the border crossing. Partners noted that such denials are not issued in writing.
- Partners reported isolated cases of older individuals leaving Ukraine with an intention to return to temporarily occupied territories due to financial constraints to sustain their lives or to reunite with relatives residing there.
- Regarding the impact of changes in the legislation related to the IDP allowance, partners note that it is difficult to identify such cases in conversations during the border crossing. However, at least one such instance was identified, where an IDP residing in Chernivtsi left Ukraine for France due to the cancellation of IDP allowances.
- There was no increase of movement associated with the intensification of shelling of Odesa in March-April. However, there was increase in the number of pendular movements with people informing that they are going to visit their relatives in Moldova “to have some rest and sleep”.
- There were cases identified of people from Kharkiv and Kharkiv oblast, Sumy oblast and Donetsk oblast leaving the country for the first time after 24 February 2022 due to the deterioration of the security situation. This movement was however not of a large scale.

3. Support provided at the border crossings in April 2024

In **April 2024**, UNHCR partners, R2P, NEEKA and TTA, conducted 319 monitoring visits to the BCPs with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. During these visits, UNHCR's partners provided different forms of support to **1,351 individuals** who crossed the border. This support included a range of services, including 1,241 instances of protection counseling and 255 instances of legal assistance, while 69 persons received social accompaniment and 1 person was provided with transportation services.

In total in 2024, from **January to April 2024**, UNHCR partners supported **5,466 individuals** crossing the borders.

Note on Methodology

From January to April 2024, a total of 13,058 people were surveyed by UNHCR partners at the borders. In April 2024, UNHCR partners surveyed 3,547 people (comprising 73,4% females 18-59 years of age, 6,8% males 18-59 years of age, 9,4% females 60+ years of age, 9,2% males 60+ years of age, 1% females 0-17 years, 0,2% males 0-17 years and 3% persons with disabilities).

Since mid-March 2022, UNHCR has deployed border monitoring teams through local NGO partners to provide information and assistance to people crossing the border with EU countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania) and Moldova. These teams provide information, legal assistance, protection counselling and social support to people leaving Ukraine to seek international protection, as well as to those returning to the country.

Border monitoring teams conduct individual interviews with people who are exiting and entering Ukraine. The purpose of these interviews is to gather information about the individual circumstances, reasons for moving and their protection needs. The border monitoring methodology is focused on assessing and responding to the protection and humanitarian needs of people crossing the border between Ukraine and the EU countries and Moldova. By conducting interviews, gathering data, and providing necessary support, the goal is to enhance protection measures and ensure the well-being of those who are on the move.

The monitoring findings are based on individual interviews conducted with people crossing the border, both those entering and exiting Ukraine and other observations made by the border monitors.

