

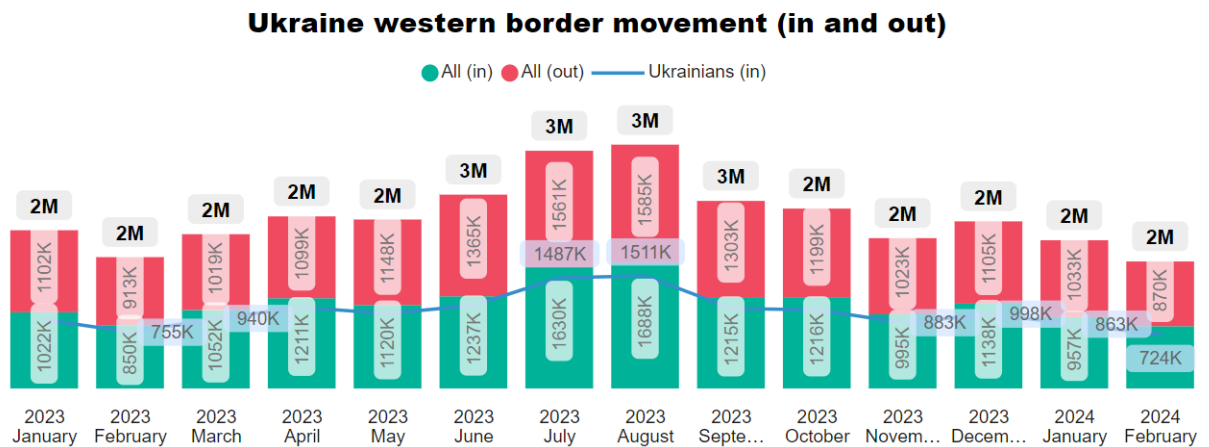


**UNHCR UKRAINE BORDER MONITORING
AT INTERNATIONAL BORDER CROSSING POINTS
(Borders between Ukraine, the EU and Moldova)
February 2024**

Figure 1. Pedestrians crossing the border through the BCP Shehyni. Photo credit: Right to Protection.

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)



During the reporting period net outflow has reached 35,000 individuals, with more people leaving the country than entering. According to available information in February 2024 cross border movement is the lowest over last fourteen months. If compared to the same period of 2023, dynamics remain the same: the outflow in winter months remains significantly higher than in other periods.

Ukraine western border movement (in and out)

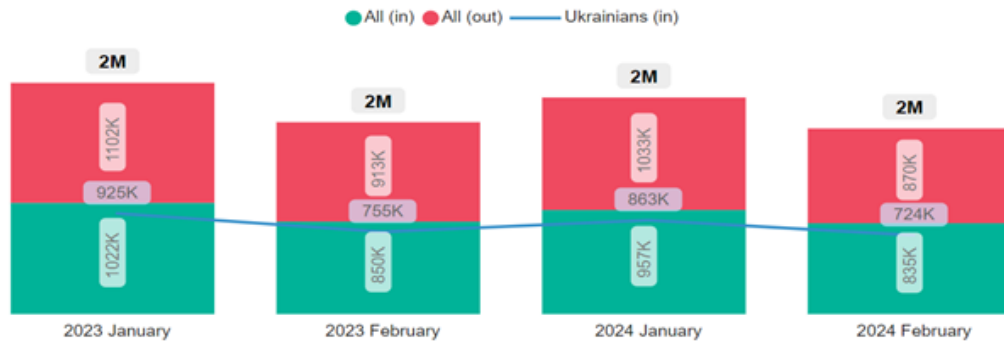


Figure 2 and Figure 3. Number of people crossing the international border with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The figure does not include data on border crossings with Moldova. Source: State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine.

2. Key findings

General observations

Basic needs as a reason to leave the country. Information collected during individual interviews with people leaving or returning to Ukraine provide findings around push and pull factors for the movement, as well as people’s intentions. In February 2024 individuals leaving Ukraine due to deficiencies in coverage of basic needs constituted less than one per cent of the countrywide population and all originated from Kharkivska oblast. This is a drastic difference from the last quarter of 2023 year and January 2024 when lack of access to basic needs was mentioned as a primary reason to leave by people from Mykolaivska, Poltavvska, Odeska, Donetska, Khersonska, Zaporizka, Kyivska, and Kharkivska oblasts.

Basic needs as a reason to leave Ukraine

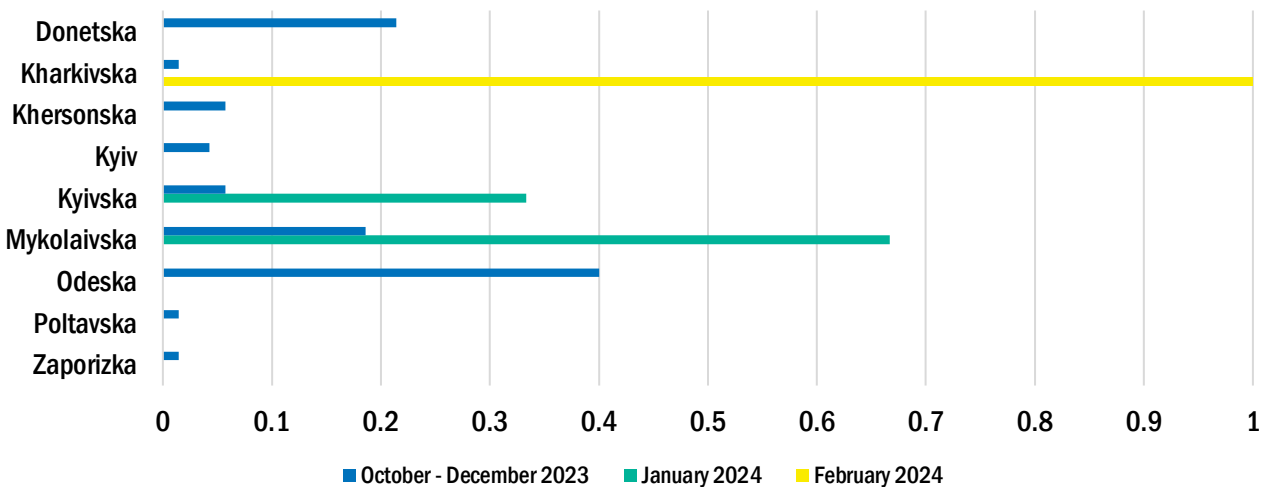
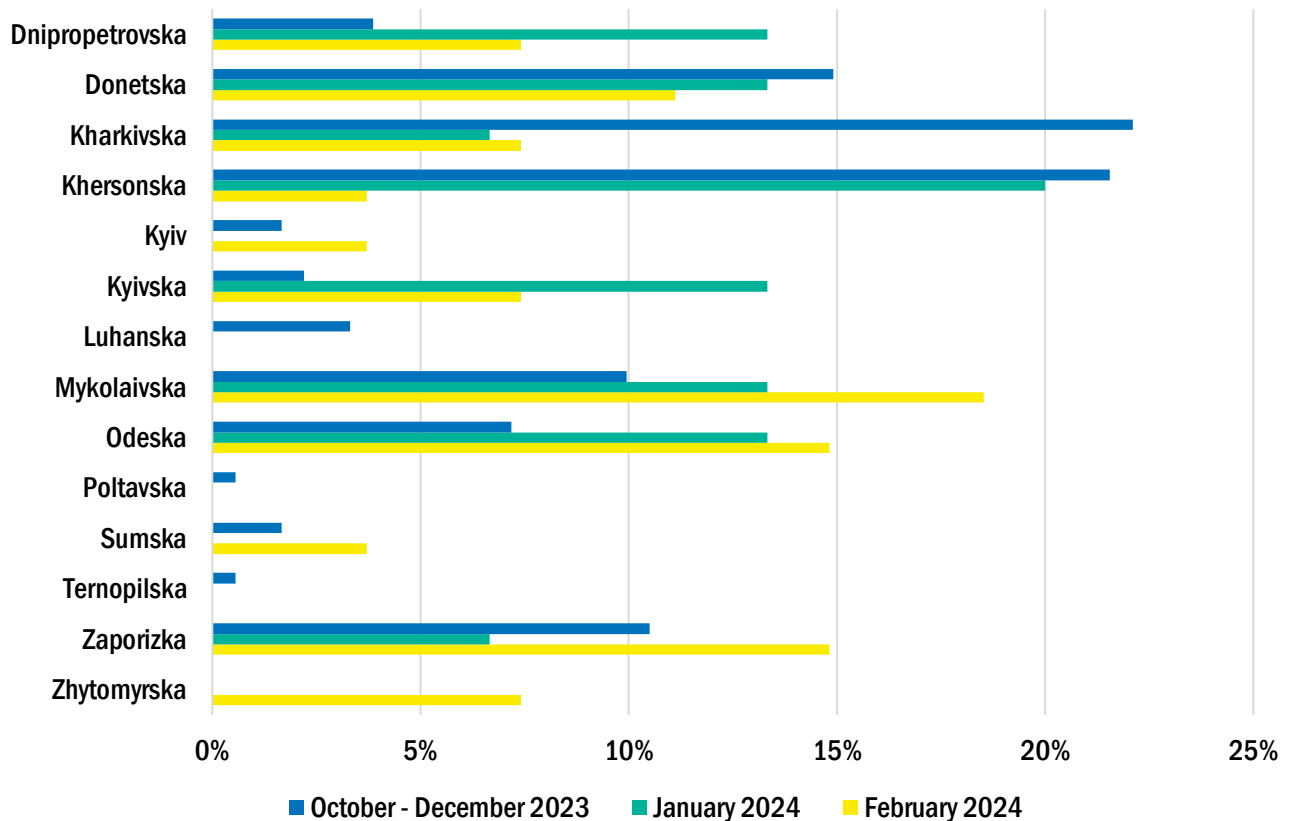


Figure 4. Data based on UNHCR border monitoring 2024.

Shelter needs as a reason to leave the country. Ruined or damaged housing as a reason to leave was reported by people fleeing Zhytomyr oblast (which is a newly identifying tendency), while ruined and damaged infrastructure by people from Donetska, Sumska, Dnipropetrovska, and Kharkivska oblasts. Respondents from southern oblasts (Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa) cited absence of housing options and evictions being push factors mostly for IDPs. More broadly, over last five months there is an increased tendency to report problems around housing and infrastructure by people departing from Kharkivska and Khersonska, Donetska and Zaporizka, Mykolaivska and Dnipropetrovska oblasts.

Shelter needs as a reason to leave Ukraine



Protection concerns as a reason to leave the country. Among protection concerns deterioration of the security situation is the leading answer constituting 97,51%. Fear of conscription as a reason to leave is rather frequent among people from Rivnenska oblast (33%), followed by Khmelnytska (14%), while in January as many as 50% respondents from Zakarpattia chose this reason. This is an important indication of the societal change, as in the last quarter of 2023 the highest share (9%) of this answer was noted in November for people coming from Cherkaska oblast. Other protection concerns, such as widespread violence or GBV, persecution, marginalization or lack of access to social services were either not selected at all or appear in less than one per cent of responses.

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

1. There is an increase in the number of instances of attempted irregular border crossing by men of conscription age (27-59) at different parts of the border. Mostly the SBGS informs on the initiation of administrative procedure against men apprehended while attempting to cross the border outside of the official crossing points, while criminal charges are put against persons suspected in such smuggling.
2. One case was reported on prevention of human trafficking in Odeska oblast. According to the SBGS, several Ukrainian women were under the risk of sexual exploitation with the trafficking route organized from Odesa through Moldova to Italy. The case was identified at the time of crossing in one of the official border crossing points.
3. During the reporting month one death of a man attempting to cross the Tysa river was reported, making the official death toll in Tysa rising to twenty since February 2022.

Observations through by UNHCR partners (on site) in February:

1. No large queues observed in border crossing points. Border monitors observe increased pendular movements including such reasons as business trips and visiting relatives. Regarding the entrance to

Ukraine, there are instances of families, who are coming back to Ukraine with the intention to stay permanently. Some of them report that primary reason to return is difficulty in integrating, obtaining access to livelihoods or ensuring psychological well-being of kids who experience bullying in schools. Still, most of surveyed individuals reported that they are coming for short visits to meet with relatives, check the accommodation and come back to the countries providing temporary protection.

2. Outflow of families (mostly women) with boys of 16-17 years old continues. Mostly people state education as the reason to leave, while in informal conversations confirm fear of the military service and further conscription. Monitors note that there is decrease in the number of situations accompanying non-parent adults lack documents to cross the border.
3. The highest number of denials to leave Ukraine concern men of conscription age. The most frequent cases include:
 - Incomplete set of documents for the system Shlyah (set up to allow volunteers and humanitarian workers to leave country for short time when on official mission to pick up humanitarian cargo or other types of assistance);
 - Incomplete set of documents when accompanying a person with a disability, for example no acts of care/guardianship or documents, confirming cohabitation.
4. In general, monitors note that overall movement situation has stabilized. Expected long waiting times either due to blockades on other sides of the border or due to legislative changes in Ukraine requiring longer verification time did not realize and stable movement continues.

3. Support provided at the border crossings in February 2024

In February 2024, UNHCR partners, R2P, NEEKA and TTA, conducted 324 monitoring visits to the BCPs with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. During these visits, UNHCR's partners provided different forms of support to **1,292 individuals** who crossed the border. This support included a range of services, including 1,136 instances of protection counseling and 340 instances of legal assistance, while 85 persons received social accompaniment and 1 person was provided with transportation services.

In total in 2024, from January to February 2024, UNHCR partners supported 2,674 individuals crossing the borders.

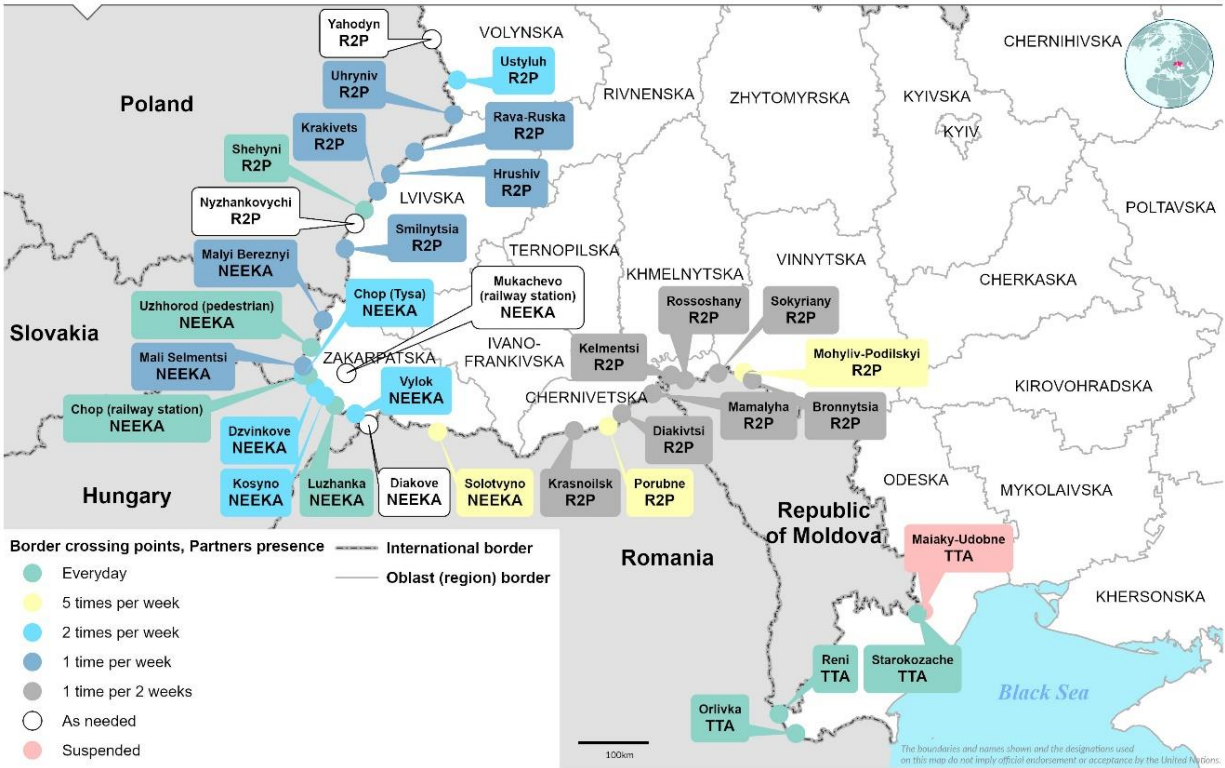
Note on Methodology

Number of people interviewed in February 2024: 3,216 (comprising 64% females 18-59 years of age, 17% males 18-59 years of age, 9% females 60+ years of age, 10% males 60+ years of age, and 2% persons with disabilities).

In mid-March 2022, UNHCR 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 legal assistance, protection counselling and social support to people leaving Ukraine to seek international protection, or who are returning to the country.

Protection 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's 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.



Date: 13 Nov 2023 Source: UNHCR Author: UNHCR - Kyiv Feedback: stovpovy@unhcr.org Filename: Border presence