



Figure 1. Monitor of the Charitable Fund "Right to Protection" provides counseling to Ukrainians crossing the border. Photo credit: Oksana Ponamara, 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)

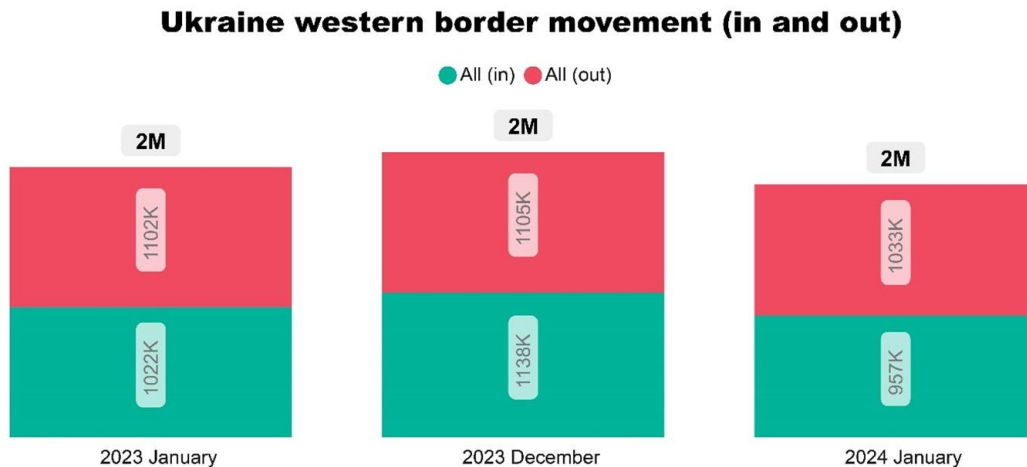


Figure 2. Number of people crossing the international border with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The figure does not include data on border crossings with Moldova. Source: State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine.

In January 2024, both inbound and outbound movement of people across the Ukrainian border was slightly lower than in January or December 2023. More people left Ukraine than entered the country as a **net outflow of 76,000 individuals** from Ukraine was recorded. In contrast, in December 2023 there was a **net inflow of 33,000 individuals** to Ukraine.

## 2. Key findings

### General observations

**Reasons to leave the country.** In January 2024, UNHCR Border Monitoring Teams reported that among all individuals interviewed when leaving Ukraine, 44% indicated that they were leaving to find safety abroad, which is a considerable drop in comparison to 71% of individuals interviewed in January 2023. Among the 56% of individuals who were leaving Ukraine for other reasons, the following were the most common factors: visiting relatives, business or work-related trips, vacation, shopping in neighboring countries, or seeking medical services abroad.

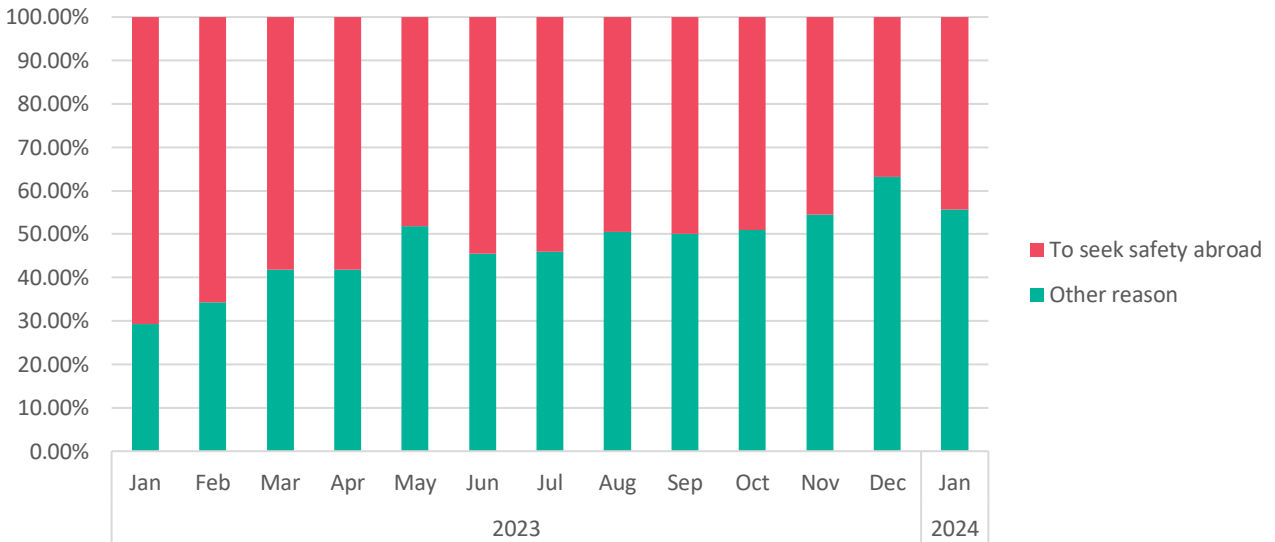


Figure 3. Data based on UNHCR border monitoring 2024.

**Concerns about staying abroad.** Among those who fled to seek safety abroad 43% of respondents stated that they did not have concerns about staying in other countries. However, 57% highlighted the following main apprehensions regarding their stay in any host country: language barrier (23%); access to employment and ability to earn living abroad (7%); availability of housing (5%); access to school/kindergarten for children (5%); access to healthcare (4%); family separation (1%).

**Respondents leaving Ukraine for the first time.** The proportion of respondents leaving Ukraine for the first time has been decreasing since 2022. In January 2024, among respondents seeking safety abroad 27% reported that they were leaving Ukraine for the first time, which is lower than respective data for December 2023 (33%), annual average in 2023 (44%), or annual average in 2022 (67%).

**Duration of stay abroad.** In the reporting period, 52% of respondents seeking safety abroad were uncertain about the duration of their stay outside of Ukraine, while 31% anticipated leaving the country for more than a month. Among returning refugees, 56% reported that they planned to return to the host country after an up to two weeks stay in Ukraine, while 5% reported that they intended to return to Ukraine permanently.

**Intended length of stay outside Ukraine**

**Intended length of stay upon return to Ukraine**

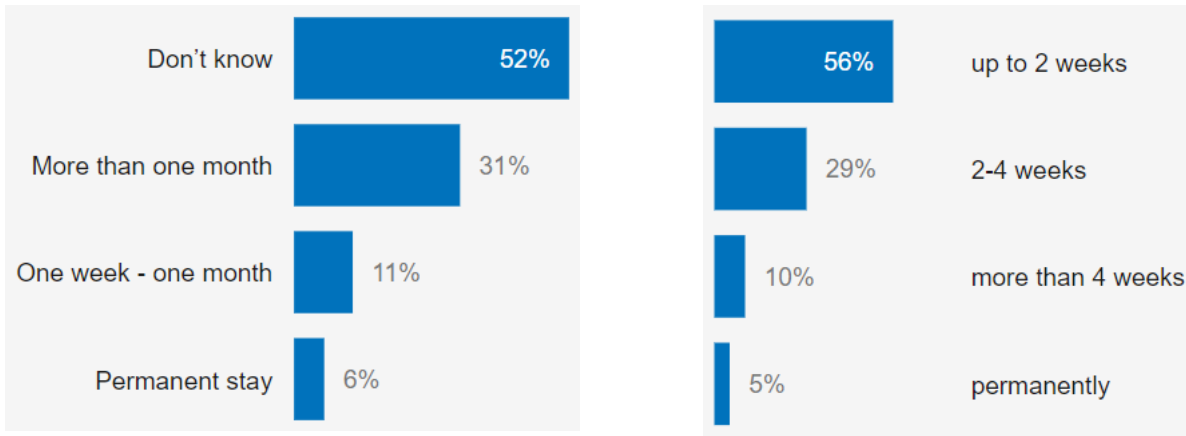


Table 1. Information reflects responses from people who reported that they had left Ukraine before to seek safety abroad.

**Reasons to return.** The main reasons for return were reuniting with families (51%), taking care of relatives left behind in Ukraine (47%), checking the safety of a personal house/apartment (25%) and lack of access to healthcare in the countries of asylum (24%). These reasons have not changed in comparison to December 2023.

#### Observations through by UNHCR partners (on site) in January

- ✓ At the border crossing points (BCPs) with Romania and Moldova, no lines were observed in January, in contrast to December, when there were long queues due to the continued truck traffic blockade at the border with Poland, causing truck drivers to re-route their travels to/from Ukraine through other countries.
- ✓ Long queues were observed at the Ustyluh-Zosin BCP (Volyn oblast, border with Poland) during the first two weeks of January, when the waiting time was up to 24 hours. Increased traffic was also noted at other BCPs with Poland over the winter holidays season.
- ✓ There is an increase in the number of border crossings by residents of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, who leave Ukraine with no intention to return due to the destruction of their housing.
- ✓ There is continued presence of personnel of local military recruitment offices (MROs, former military commissariats) at the BCPs. The MRO personnel are notified by border guards when men are denied crossing the border. Different sets of documents are required to different groups of men:
  - a) For those with disabilities, a disability certificate is up to date<sup>1</sup> renewed. The renewed document shall be provided to a respective MRO, which then puts a stamp in the military ID confirming that a man is not fit for military service due to disability;
  - b) For fathers of many children, apart from the birth certificates or a document confirming paternity to many children, a respective MRO stamps their military ID confirming temporary suspension of a military obligation. Quite often such fathers are asked to be accompanied by at least one child. There were situations where mothers residing in neighboring countries with all children arrived at BCPs with a child, crossed the BCP and then crossed back to the hosting country along with the father;
  - c) For men taking care of relatives with disabilities, there is a need to have a full package of documents including a guardianship certificate, confirmation of joint residence, as well as the MRO stamp in the military ID about temporary suspension of a military obligation.
- ✓ SBGS continued reporting multiple attempts by men of conscription age to cross through green border, including single cases of men who died trying, for example, in the mountains or in a river due to harsh winter conditions.

Crossing the border by children aged over 16 but below 18 is possible from Ukraine, but entrance to EU or Moldova without guardians is impossible. In case of border crossing denials, assistance is needed

<sup>1</sup> The current legislation provides that during martial law there is no need to prolong an expired disability certificate. This has been put in place to ensure that people continue receiving their disability benefits. However, for men of conscription age this has been reviewed: men aged 18-59 are required to renew their disability certificates which includes undergoing a medical commission.

in Ukraine, especially when the BCP is a remote one or there are no guardianship authorities in the nearest settlement.

### 3. Support provided at the border crossings in January 2024

In January 2024, UNHCR partners, R2P, NEEKA and TTA, conducted 315 monitoring visits to the BCPs with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. During these visits, UNHCR's partners provided different forms of support to **1,382 individuals** who crossed the border. This support included a range of services, including 1,289 instances of protection counseling and 282 instances of legal assistance, while 65 persons received social accompaniment and 14 persons were provided with transportation services.

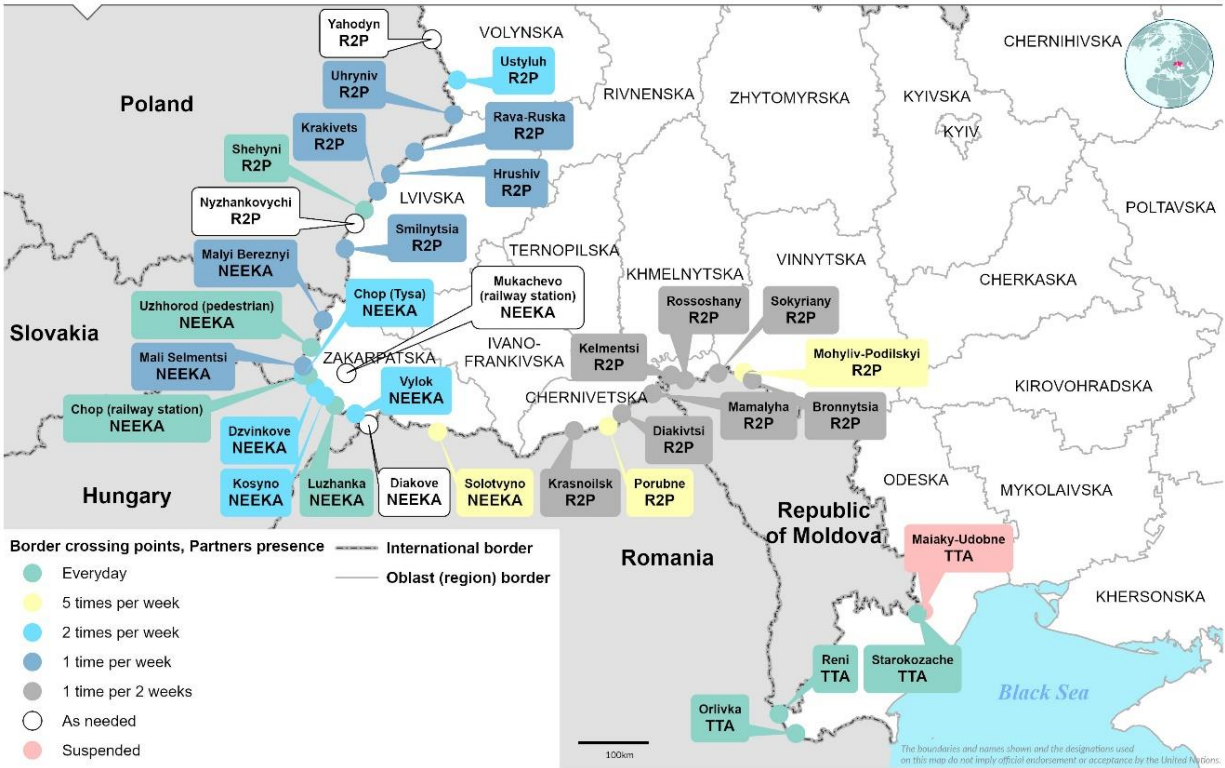
#### Note on Methodology

**Number of people interviewed in January 2024: 3,028 (comprising 66% females 18-59 years of age, 24% males 18-59 years of age, 3% females 60+ years of age, 7% 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.



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