

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 protection abroad or to those returning to Ukraine.

1. MOVEMENTS

Ukraine western border movement (in and out)



Figure 1. Source: State Border Guard Service (SBGS). Note: This data is based upon publicly available data from the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and pertains to the Ukrainian borders with four countries: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, and does not include the data for the border with Moldova.

In November 2023, more people left Ukraine than entered the country, as a **net outflow of 28,000 individuals** from Ukraine was recorded. In contrast, in October 2023 there was a **net inflow of 17,000 individuals** into Ukraine. According to border monitoring teams, a slight increase in outflow is expected during the winter holiday season when pendular movements may increase due to family visits.

2. BORDER MONITORING FINDINGS

In November 2023, UNHCR Border Monitoring Teams reported that among all individuals interviewed leaving Ukraine, 45% indicated that they were leaving to find safety abroad (compared to 65% of individuals interviewed in the first quarter of 2023). Among the 55% of individuals who were leaving Ukraine for other reasons, they cited a variety of reasons including visiting relatives, business or work-related trips, seeking medical services, shopping in neighboring countries, or pursuing education abroad.

Proportion of respondents seeking safety abroad (by month)

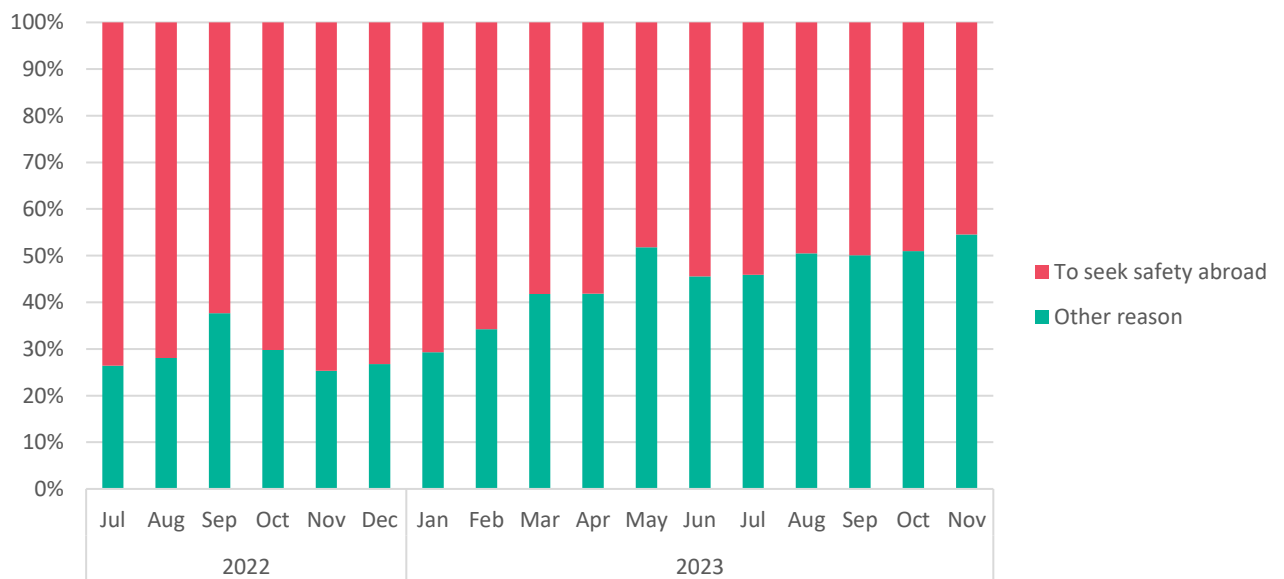


Figure 2. Data based on UNHCR border monitoring

While 42% of the respondents seeking safety abroad stated that they did not have concerns about staying abroad, 58% cited the following apprehensions regarding their stay in a host country: language barrier (22%); access to healthcare services (9%); access to employment (9%); availability of housing (7%).

In November 2023, 34% of respondents seeking safety abroad reported that they were leaving Ukraine for the first time, which is a decrease in comparison to 2023’s annual average of 41%. This proportion is much lower than 2022 data, when an average of 67% of the people interviewed throughout the year said they were leaving Ukraine for the first time.

In the reporting period, 48% of respondents seeking safety abroad were uncertain about the duration of their stay abroad, while 42% anticipated staying abroad for more than a month. Among returning refugees, 51% reported that they planned to return to their host country after a short stay in Ukraine of up to two weeks, while 15% reported that they intended to return permanently.

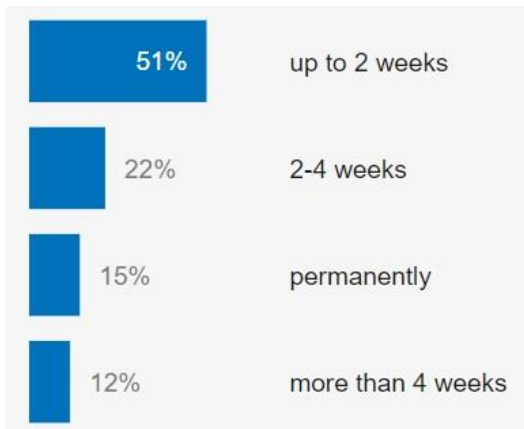
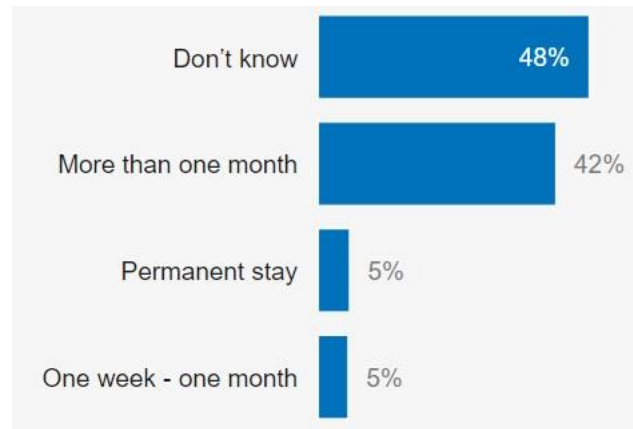
Intended length of stay upon return to Ukraine

Intended length of stay outside Ukraine


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

The three main reasons for return cited by refugees returning to Ukraine temporarily in November 2023 were: reuniting with their families, taking care of relatives who remained behind in Ukraine, and checking the safety of their houses/apartments. These reasons were similar to those indicated by respondents interviewed in October.

In November, there were less cases of third country nationals denied crossing (leaving Ukraine) identified at the border. Those that experienced difficulties included citizens of the Russian Federation, Belarus, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, as they require visas to enter Moldova and the EU and they cannot travel directly to their countries of origin due to border closures and lack of air connection. These individuals are in limbo as they cannot leave Ukraine, nor can they legally remain.

At the end of November, the southern oblasts of Ukraine were hit with a strong snowstorm. As a result, all international border crossing points with Moldova were closed for two days. People caught by the storm on their way to the border crossing area were evacuated to the nearest shelters by the State Emergency Service. Due to damaged infrastructure, including electricity lines, the State Border Guard Service used generators to resume their work. However, interruptions of internet connection continued to affect access of SBGS to information systems and resulted in longer waiting times at border points.

3. UNHCR ASSISTANCE PROVIDED AT THE BORDER

A total of 1,051 individuals who crossed the border in November 2023 received support from UNHCR partners conducting border monitoring.

During the month, UNHCR partners - Right to Protection, NEEKA, and The Tenth of April - conducted 314 monitoring visits to the border crossing points with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. During these visits, a range of services was provided to persons crossing the border, including 960 instances of protection counseling, 218 instances of legal assistance, 48 persons received social accompaniment, and 45 persons were provided with transportation services.

Some observations obtained during monitoring include:

- Crossing the border with a non-parental adult. If people do not possess documents confirming temporary guardianship over a child, they are advised to obtain such documents to be able to enter the territory of a neighboring country. In most cases, these documents can be obtained from child protection services in the nearest settlements.

- Crossing of the border by men of conscription age. Most cases of rejections in border crossing result from a lack of documents confirming an individual's right to exit Ukraine. When identified by monitors, men mostly refuse advise or consultation. Even though reported regularly, cases of men of conscription age crossing the border outside of official border crossing points are limited (5-7 cases weekly in IBCPs monitored by UNHCR partners).
- One of the trends observed in November is a slight increase in the number of women traveling with their sons aged between 16 to 17 years. They report that they are seeking education opportunities abroad to prevent conscription at age of 18 for mandatory military training, noting that mobilization into active combat is for those aged over 27 years of age.
- Border crossing for persons with disabilities due to lack of documents confirming disability is no longer reported as a concern. Issuance of plastic disability confirmation cards was resumed by Social Protection Departments, and the SBGS has gradually obtained access to disability databases.

Note on Methodology

Number of people interviewed in November 2023: 3,100 (comprising 63% females 18-59 years of age, 20% males 18-59 years of age, 7% females 60+ years of age, 9% 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.

