




**INTENTIONS AND  
PERSPECTIVES OF  
REFUGEES FROM  
UKRAINE IN  
SWITZERLAND**

**UNHCR SWITZERLAND**

DECEMBER 2023



 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP  
State Secretariat for Migration SEM

## Acknowledgements

Data used in this report was collected and analysed through a partnership between UNHCR, Ipsos SA Switzerland and the State Secretariat for Migration of Switzerland (SEM). We would like to acknowledge the resilience and strength of refugees from Ukraine, who share with us their perspectives, the challenges they face and their hopes and directly contribute to promoting and supporting data collection activities.

### **In collaboration with:**

Ipsos SA in Switzerland  
Chemin du Chateau-Bloch 11  
1219 Le Lignon – Genève  
Email: [contact\\_switzerland@ipsos.com](mailto:contact_switzerland@ipsos.com)

### **Contact us:**

UNHCR Office for Switzerland and Liechtenstein  
Website: [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)  
Email: [swibe@unhcr.org](mailto:swibe@unhcr.org)

### **SEM**

Website: [www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch)  
Email: [info@sem.admin.ch](mailto:info@sem.admin.ch)

### **Cover photograph:**

*Olena sitting on a bench in Morges with her daughter Sara (left). Seeking safety, Olena and her daughter arrived in Switzerland in July 2022. ©UNHCR / Anna-Tia Buss*

# Contents

Acknowledgements	2
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>
Key findings	4
<b>Résumé</b>	<b>6</b>
Principales conclusions	6
<b>Zusammenfassung</b>	<b>9</b>
Wichtigste Ergebnisse	9
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Refugee profiles</b>	<b>15</b>
Refugees profile	15
Household composition	16
Places of origin	17
<b>Socio-economic conditions</b>	<b>19</b>
Access to education	19
Health and quality of life	20
Employment	21
Income	23
Accommodation	24
Assistance	25
Refugees' intentions	26
Overall intentions	26
Drivers and enablers for return	28
Self-reported reasons for not hoping to return	30
<b>Results of the survey in Switzerland within a regional landscape</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Voices of refugees</b>	<b>34</b>
Access to job market	34
Access to information and support	35
Access to education	35
Perspectives	35
<b>Annex 1. Sampling and weighting</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Annex 2. Glossary</b>	<b>38</b>

# Executive summary

UNHCR, Ipsos SA Switzerland and the State Secretariat for Migration of Switzerland (SEM) jointly conducted a survey with refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland to better understand their situation.<sup>1</sup> The analysis is based on **1,125 surveys** completed via an **online questionnaire** between **30 March and 1 May 2023**. The sample was based on a random selection of 10,000 refugees from Ukraine aged 18+ with protection status S in Switzerland recorded in SEM's database and is representative of the population recorded as of March 2023, with an estimated maximum margin of error of about **+/-3.3%**. Data were collected at the household level. The survey thus provides information on over **2,800**

**refugees from Ukraine** living within those households. The report aims to answer the following main questions:

- What are the **household profiles and socio-economic conditions** of refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland? How can they influence their intentions and inclusion perspectives?
- What are the **intentions or plans of refugees** from Ukraine in Switzerland in both the short and the long term? What are the main **reasons, drivers and enablers** influencing their decisions and planning?

## Key findings

### 1 THE MAJORITY OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN. MOST CAME FROM KYIV OR EASTERN UKRAINE AND ARRIVED IN SWITZERLAND BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND APRIL 2022. ADULTS HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF EDUCATION.

The most frequent type of refugee household is composed of one or more adults without dependents – a typical individual from this household profile is a young adult (aged 18-34) with a bachelor's degree. The second most common type of household contains two or more adults with dependents – typical members of this profile are

couples living with their child(ren). The third most common type of household is composed of only one adult with dependents – a typical member of this household profile is a woman aged 35-49 years with high educational attainment who was displaced from Kyiv city and is currently residing in Switzerland with her child(ren).

**79%**

of household members are **women and children**.

**14%**

of household members are **older persons** (60 years or more).

**25%**

of households are composed of **two or more adults (18-59 years) with dependents** (children and/or older persons), **27%** are composed of **only one adult with dependents**.

**13%**

of households have a member with a **long-term illness or disability**.

**69%**

of respondents have at least **university-level education** and **32%** have a master's level degree or above.

1. UNHCR uses the term "refugees from Ukraine" generically, referring to all persons having left Ukraine since 24 February 2022 due to the war. In the case of Switzerland, this refers to all individuals granted temporary protection status S.

## 2 THE SURVEY PROVIDES SOME IMPORTANT INSIGHTS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN SWITZERLAND.

Most refugees report that their children aged 4-18 years are attending formal school in Switzerland, though around one quarter are also attending online school lessons following the Ukraine curriculum. Most consider themselves to be in fair or good health, to have a good quality of life, and to be able to rely on at least one or two people in Switzerland in case of urgent need. Four out of ten respondents are either in employment (working in person in Switzerland and likely to be employed in sales/services or working as professionals, possibly at a lower level than their previous employment in Ukraine) or taking professional training courses,

while around a third are unemployed and looking for a job. Lack of knowledge of the local language is by far the main challenge in accessing employment. Financial support from the government is the most frequent income source reported by refugees, and the majority of respondents indicate their household income meets their basic needs at least moderately. The most common form of accommodation is sharing an apartment or house with other refugees, followed by those hosted either by local families or by relatives/friends, those renting their own accommodation and those in hotels or hostels provided by the Swiss Government.

69%

of school-age children (4-16 years of age) are reported as attending exclusively a formal school in Switzerland, and 25% are reported as **both attending the formal school in Switzerland and following remotely the Ukrainian curriculum.**

21%

of respondents are **currently working**, while about one fourth declared themselves as **unemployed and looking for a job (29%)**, and a fifth are following professional trainings or courses (21%).

50%

of those employed report that their current occupation is at a **lower level than their previous employment in Ukraine.**

77%

of the respondents report the **lack of knowledge of the local language** as the primary challenge for accessing employment in Switzerland, followed by the **lack of employment opportunities suited to their skills (19%)** and the **lack of education or skills recognition (13%)**.

27%

report **not being able to cover their household's basic needs** during the past three months, including more than a tenth who reports that their household's income has **not covered their basic needs at all (14%)**.

## 3 AROUND A THIRD OF THE REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE SURVEYED HOPE TO RETURN TO THE COUNTRY ONE DAY, THE MAJORITY ARE UNDECIDED ABOUT RETURNING, AND AROUND ONE THIRD REPORTED NO HOPE TO RETURN.

Those having no hope to return are more likely to be men, under 50 years old, living in French- or Italian-speaking cantons, working in Switzerland, who have no relatives back in Ukraine. Older adults are more likely to be planning to return, either in the short-term or in the more distant future. This is also the case of those with a spouse or children in

Ukraine and those who are being hosted either by local families or by relatives/friends. The main impediments to return appear to be security concerns and the occupation of the territory where the refugees were living, lack of access to functioning health services, but also lack of work and livelihood opportunities.

2%

were **planning to return in the next three months.**

30%

**hoped to return one day to Ukraine.**

40%

were still **undecided about returning in the future.**

27%

reported **no hope of returning.**

# Résumé

Le HCR, l'Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés, Ipsos SA Suisse et le Secrétariat d'État aux migrations (SEM) ont mené conjointement une enquête auprès de personnes réfugiées venant d'Ukraine en Suisse pour mieux comprendre leur situation.<sup>2</sup> L'analyse est basée sur **1 125 questionnaires**. Elle est complétée par une **enquête en ligne, menée entre le 30 mars et le 1er mai 2023**. L'échantillon était basé sur une sélection aléatoire de 10 000 réfugié-e-s d'Ukraine, âgé-e-s de plus de 18 ans et avec un statut de protection S en Suisse enregistrés dans le système d'information central sur la migration du SEM. Cet échantillon est représentatif de la population enregistrée en mars 2023, avec une marge d'erreur maximale estimée à environ +/- **3,3%**. Les données ont été collectées au

niveau des ménages. L'enquête fournit donc des informations sur plus de **2 800 réfugié-e-s d'Ukraine** vivant dans ces ménages. Le rapport vise à répondre aux principales questions suivantes :

- Quels sont les **profils des ménages et les conditions socio-économiques** des réfugié-e-s ukrainien-ne-s en Suisse ? Comment peuvent-ils ou elles influencer leurs intentions et leurs perspectives d'intégration ?
- Quelles sont les **intentions ou les projets des réfugié-e-s** ukrainien-ne-s en Suisse à court et à long terme ? Quels sont les principaux **motifs, moteurs et catalyseurs** qui influencent leurs décisions et leur planification ?

## Principales conclusions

**1 LA MAJORITÉ DES RÉFUGIÉ-E-S D'UKRAINE SONT DES FEMMES ET DES ENFANTS, LA PLUPART SONT ORIGINAIRES DE KIEV OU DE L'EST DE L'UKRAINE ET SONT ARRIVÉ-E-S EN SUISSE ENTRE FÉVRIER ET AVRIL 2022, AVEC UN NIVEAU D'ÉDUCATION ÉLEVÉ CHEZ LES ADULTES.**

Le principal type de ménage de personnes réfugiées est composé d'un ou plusieurs adultes sans personne à charge - un individu typique de ce profil de ménage est un jeune adulte (âgé de 18 à 34 ans) titulaire d'un baccalauréat. Le deuxième type de ménage le plus courant est composé de deux adultes ou plus avec des personnes à charge - les membres typiques de ce profil sont un couple

vivant avec leur(s) enfant(s). Le troisième type de ménage le plus courant est composé d'un seul adulte avec des personnes à charge - un membre typique de ce profil de ménage est une femme âgée de 35 à 49 ans avec un niveau d'éducation élevé qui a été déplacée de la ville de Kiev et qui vit actuellement en Suisse avec son/ses enfant(s).

2. Le HCR utilise le terme «réfugiés d'Ukraine» de manière générique, se référant à toutes les personnes ayant quitté l'Ukraine à partir du 24 février 2022 en raison de la guerre. Dans le cas de la Suisse, il s'agit de toutes les personnes bénéficiant du statut de protection temporaire S.

**79%**des membres des ménages sont des **femmes et des enfants..****14%**des membres des ménages sont des **personnes âgées** (60 ans ou plus).**25%**des ménages sont composés d'**un seul adulte (18-59 ans) avec des personnes à charge** (enfants et/ou personnes âgées), et **27%** sont composés de **deux adultes ou plus avec des personnes à charge**.**13%**des ménages ont un membre souffrant d'une **maladie ou d'un handicap de longue durée**.**69%**des personnes interrogées ont une **formation universitaire** et **32%** ont un **niveau master ou supérieur**.

## 2 L'ENQUÊTE FOURNIT DES INFORMATIONS IMPORTANTES SUR LA SITUATION SOCIO-ÉCONOMIQUE DES RÉFUGIÉ-E-S D'UKRAINE EN SUISSE.

La plupart des personnes réfugiées indiquent que leurs enfants âgés de 4 à 18 ans sont scolarisés en Suisse. Toutefois, environ un quart d'entre eux suivent également des cours ukrainiens en ligne issus du programme scolaire de leur pays d'origine. La plupart des personnes interrogées estiment être en bonne ou moyenne santé, avoir une bonne qualité de vie et pouvoir compter sur au moins une ou deux personnes en Suisse en cas de problème grave. Quatre personnes interrogées sur dix ont un emploi (elles travaillent personnellement en Suisse et sont susceptibles d'être employées dans la vente/les services ou de travailler en tant que spécialistes, probablement à un niveau inférieur à celui de leur emploi précédent en Ukraine) ou suivent des cours de formation professionnelle,

tandis qu'environ un tiers est au chômage et à la recherche d'un emploi. La méconnaissance de la langue locale est de loin le principal obstacle à l'accès à l'emploi. L'aide financière des autorités est la source de revenus la plus fréquente déclarée par les réfugié-e-s, et la majorité d'entre eux et elles estiment que les revenus de leur ménage leur permettent de satisfaire au moins modérément leurs besoins fondamentaux. Le mode d'hébergement le plus courant est le partage d'un appartement ou d'une maison avec d'autres réfugié-e-s, suivi par les personnes hébergées par des familles locales ou des parents/amis, celles qui louent leur propre logement, et celles qui sont logées dans des hôtels ou des auberges mis à disposition par les autorités publiques.

**69%**des enfants en âge scolaire (4 à 16 ans) fréquentent exclusivement une école formelle en Suisse et **25%** fréquentent **à la fois l'école formelle en Suisse** et suivent **à distance le programme scolaire ukrainien**.**21%**des personnes interrogées **travaillent actuellement**, tandis qu'environ un quart d'entre elles se déclarent **au chômage et à la recherche d'un emploi (29%)** et qu'un cinquième suivent des formations ou des cours professionnels (**21%**).**50%**des personnes employées déclarent que leur emploi actuel est d'un **niveau inférieur à celui de leur emploi précédent en Ukraine**.**77%**des personnes interrogées indiquent que la **méconnaissance de la langue locale** est le principal obstacle à l'accès à l'emploi en Suisse, suivi par le **manque d'opportunités d'emploi adaptées à leurs compétences (19%)** et le **manque de formation ou de reconnaissance des compétences (13%)**.**27%**déclarent **ne pas avoir été en mesure de couvrir les besoins fondamentaux de leur ménage** au cours des trois derniers mois, dont plus d'un dixième déclarent que le revenu de leur ménage n'a pas **du tout** couvert leurs besoins fondamentaux (**14%**).

### **3 ENVIRON UN TIERS DES RÉFUGIÉ-E-S D'UKRAINE INTERROGÉ-E-S ESPÈRENT RETOURNER UN JOUR DANS LEUR PAYS, LA MAJORITÉ D'ENTRE EUX ET ELLES SONT INDÉCIS-ES QUANT À LEUR RETOUR ET ENVIRON UN TIERS D'ENTRE EUX ET ELLES N'ONT AUCUN ESPOIR DE RETOURNER DANS LEUR PAYS.**

Les personnes qui n'ont aucun espoir de retour sont plus souvent des hommes, âgés de moins de 50 ans, vivant dans des cantons francophones ou italophones, travaillant en Suisse et n'ayant pas de proches en Ukraine. Les personnes adultes plus âgées sont plus susceptibles d'envisager un retour, que ce soit à court terme ou dans un avenir plus lointain. C'est également le cas de celles et ceux

qui ont un conjoint ou des enfants en Ukraine et de celles et ceux qui sont accueilli-e-s par des familles locales ou par des parents/amis. Les principaux obstacles au retour semblent être les problèmes de sécurité et l'occupation du territoire où vivaient les réfugié-e-s, le manque d'accès à des services de santé fonctionnels, mais aussi le manque de travail et de possibilités de gagner sa vie.

**2%**

prévoient de revenir dans les trois prochains mois.

**30%**

espèrent retourner un jour en Ukraine.

**40%**

sont encore **indécis-es quant à leur retour dans le futur.**

**27%**

n'ont aucun espoir de retourner en Ukraine.



# Zusammenfassung

UNHCR, die UNO-Flüchtlingsorganisation, Ipsos SA Schweiz und das Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM) der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft haben gemeinsam eine Umfrage unter Flüchtlingen aus der Ukraine in der Schweiz durchgeführt, um ihre Situation besser zu verstehen.<sup>3</sup> Die Analyse basiert auf **1'125 vollständig ausgefüllten Fragebögen**, die zwischen dem **30. März und dem 1. Mai 2023** mittels einer **Online-Umfrage** erhoben wurden. Die Stichprobe basiert auf einer Zufallsauswahl von 10'000 Flüchtlingen aus der Ukraine im Alter von 18 Jahren und älter mit Schutzstatus S in der Schweiz, die im Zentralen Migrationsinformationssystem des SEM erfasst sind. Die Stichprobe ist repräsentativ für die im März 2023 erfasste Bevölkerung mit einer geschätzten maximalen Fehlermarge von etwa +/- **3,3%**. Die

Daten wurden auf Haushaltsebene gesammelt. Die Umfrage liefert somit Informationen über mehr als **2'800 Flüchtlinge aus der Ukraine**, die in diesen Haushalten leben. Anhand des Berichts sollen die folgenden Hauptfragen beantwortet werden:

- Welche sind die **Haushaltstypen und sozioökonomischen Bedingungen** von Flüchtlingen aus der Ukraine in der Schweiz? Wie beeinflussen diese ihre Absichten und Integrationsperspektiven?
- Welche kurz- und längerfristigen **Absichten und Pläne haben die Flüchtlinge** aus der Ukraine in der Schweiz? Welche sind die wichtigsten **Gründe, Einflussfaktoren und Voraussetzungen**, die ihre Entscheidungen und ihre Pläne beeinflussen?

## Wichtigste Ergebnisse

### 1 DIE MEHRHEIT DER FLÜCHTLINGE AUS DER UKRAINE SIND FRAUEN UND KINDER. DIE MEISTEN STAMMEN AUS KIEW ODER DER OSTUKRAINE UND SIND ZWISCHEN FEBRUAR UND APRIL 2022 IN DER SCHWEIZ ANGEKOMMEN. DIE ERWACHSENEN VERFÜGEN ÜBER EINEN HÖHEREN BILDUNGSGRAD.

Der häufigste Haushaltstyp der Flüchtlinge besteht aus einem oder mehreren erwachsenen Personen ohne Angehörige - eine typische Person dieses Haushaltsprofils ist eine junge Erwachsene oder ein junger Erwachsener (im Alter zwischen 18 und 34 Jahren) mit einem Bachelor-Abschluss. Der zweithäufigste Haushaltstyp besteht aus zwei oder mehreren erwachsenen Personen mit abhängigen Familienangehörigen - typische Mitglieder dieses

Profils sind Paare, die mit ihren Kindern zusammenleben. Der dritthäufigste Haushaltstyp besteht nur aus einer erwachsenen Person mit abhängigen Familienangehörigen - ein typisches Mitglied dieses Haushaltstyps ist eine Frau im Alter von 35 bis 49 Jahren mit hohem Bildungsniveau, die aus der Stadt Kiew vertrieben wurde und derzeit mit ihrem Kind / ihren Kindern in der Schweiz lebt.

3. Das UNHCR verwendet den Begriff «Flüchtlinge aus der Ukraine» allgemein und bezieht sich auf alle Personen, die die Ukraine ab dem 24. Februar 2022 aufgrund des Krieges verlassen haben. Im Falle der Schweiz sind damit alle Personen gemeint, die den vorübergehenden Schutzstatus S erhalten haben.

**79%**

der Haushaltsmitglieder sind **Frauen und Kinder**.

**14%**

der Haushaltsmitglieder sind **ältere Personen** (60 Jahre oder älter).

**25%**

der Haushalte bestehen aus **nur einer erwachsenen Person (18-59 Jahre) mit abhängigen Familienangehörigen** (Kinder und/oder ältere Personen), und **27%** aus **zwei oder mehreren erwachsenen Personen mit abhängigen Familienangehörigen**.

**13%**

der Haushalte haben ein Mitglied mit einer **Langzeiterkrankung oder Behinderung**.

**69%**

der Befragten verfügen über einen **Hochschulabschluss** und **32%** über einen **Masterabschluss oder höher**.

## 2 DIE UMFRAGE LIEFERT EINIGE WICHTIGE ERKENNTNISSE ÜBER DIE SOZIOÖKONOMISCHE SITUATION VON FLÜCHTLINGEN AUS DER UKRAINE IN DER SCHWEIZ.

Die meisten Flüchtlinge gaben an, dass ihre Kinder im Alter von 4 bis 18 Jahren in der Schweiz zur Schule gehen, wobei etwa ein Viertel auch online Schulunterricht nach dem ukrainischen Lehrplan besucht. Die meisten gaben an, bei guter oder sehr guter Gesundheit zu sein, eine gute Lebensqualität zu haben und sich im Falle eines ernsthaften Problems auf mindestens eine oder zwei Personen in der Schweiz verlassen zu können. Vier von zehn Befragten sind entweder erwerbstätig (sie arbeiten vor Ort in der Schweiz und sind wahrscheinlich im Verkauf/Dienstleistungsbereich oder als Fachkräfte tätig, möglicherweise auf einem niedrigeren Niveau als ihre frühere Beschäftigung in der Ukraine) oder absolvieren eine Berufsausbildung, während etwa ein Drittel arbeitslos ist und eine Stelle sucht.

Mangelnde Kenntnisse der Landessprache sind bei weitem die grösste Herausforderung beim Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt. Finanzielle Unterstützung durch die Behörden war die am häufigsten genannte Einkommensquelle und die Mehrheit gab an, dass ihr Haushaltseinkommen ihre Grundbedürfnisse zumindest einigermaßen abdeckt. Die häufigste Unterbringungsform war die gemeinsame Unterbringung in einer Wohnung oder einem Haus mit anderen Flüchtlingen. Danach folgten jene, die von einheimischen Familien oder bei Verwandten / Freunden aufgenommen wurden, gefolgt von denen, die ihre eigene Unterkunft mieteten, und von jenen, die in von den schweizerischen Behörden bereitgestellten Hotels und Wohnheimen untergebracht wurden.

**69%**

der Kinder im schulpflichtigen Alter (4 bis 16 Jahre) besuchen den Angaben zufolge ausschliesslich die reguläre Schule in der Schweiz, während **25% sowohl die reguläre Schule in der Schweiz besuchen als auch dem ukrainischen Lehrplan online folgen**.

**21%**

der Befragten sind **derzeit erwerbstätig**, während etwa ein Viertel angab, **arbeitslos zu sein und nach einer Stelle zu suchen (29%)** und ein Fünftel absolviert eine Berufsausbildung oder eine Weiterbildung (**21%**).

**50%**

der Erwerbstätigen gaben an, dass ihre derzeitige Tätigkeit auf einem **niedrigeren Niveau angesiedelt ist als ihre vorherige Beschäftigung in der Ukraine**.

**77%**

der Befragten gaben **fehlende Kenntnisse der Landessprache** als wichtigstes Hindernis für den Zugang zu einer Erwerbstätigkeit in der Schweiz an, gefolgt von **mangelnden beruflichen Möglichkeiten, die ihren Fähigkeiten entsprechen (19%)**, und **fehlender Anerkennung von Bildung oder Qualifikationen (13%)**.

**27%**

gaben an, in den letzten drei Monaten **nicht in der Lage gewesen zu sein, die Grundbedürfnisse ihres Haushalts zu decken**, darunter mehr als ein Zehntel, die angaben, dass das Einkommen ihres Haushalts die Grundbedürfnisse **überhaupt nicht gedeckt habe (14%)**.

### 3 ETWA EIN DRITTEL DER BEFRAGTEN FLÜCHTLINGE AUS DER UKRAINE HOFFT, EINES TAGES IN IHR LAND ZURÜCKZUKEHREN, DIE MEHRHEIT IST UNENTSCHLOSSEN UND ETWA EIN DRITTEL GIBT AN, NICHT ZURÜCKKEHREN ZU WOLLEN.

Diejenigen, die keine Hoffnung auf eine Rückkehr haben, sind eher männlich, unter 50 Jahre alt, leben in französisch- oder italienischsprachigen Kantonen, arbeiten in der Schweiz und haben keine Verwandten in der Ukraine. Ältere Erwachsene planen eher eine Rückkehr, entweder kurzfristig oder in fernerer Zukunft. Dies gilt auch für diejenigen, die einen Ehepartner oder Kinder in der Ukraine haben, sowie für diejenigen, die entweder

bei lokalen Familien oder bei Verwandten / Freunden untergebracht sind. Die Haupthindernisse für eine Rückkehr scheinen Sicherheitsbedenken und die Besetzung des Gebiets, in dem die Flüchtlinge lebten, der fehlende Zugang zu einer funktionierenden Gesundheitsversorgung, aber auch der Mangel an Arbeits- und Lebensunterhaltungsmöglichkeiten zu sein.

## 2%

planen eine Rückkehr in den nächsten drei Monaten.

## 30%

hoffen, eines Tages in die Ukraine zurückkehren zu können.

## 40%

sind noch unentschlossen, ob sie in Zukunft zurückkehren werden.

## 27%

gaben an, dass sie keine Hoffnung auf eine Rückkehr haben.

# Introduction

As a result of the war in Ukraine, nearly one third of the population of Ukraine were forcibly displaced from their homes, making it one of the largest displacement crises globally. As of end-September 2023, over 5 million people remain internally displaced within Ukraine according to IOM<sup>4</sup>, while UNHCR estimates that close to 6.2 million refugees from Ukraine arrived in Europe and other destination countries, of which around 5.8 million are registered in European countries alone.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of European Union (EU) Member States implemented the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) — activated for the first time in March 2022 — while a number of other countries applied similar legal frameworks. To rapidly provide protection to such a large number of people, Switzerland for example activated protection status S in March 2022. This is a national form of temporary protection<sup>6</sup>, whereby beneficiaries are provided with temporary admission; granted access to the labour market and education; and have access to housing, medical care and social aid (albeit at reduced rate). Family reunification as well as travel abroad are possible.<sup>7</sup> Protection status S is valid until the Swiss Federal Council formally withdraws it, and is dependent on the security situation in Ukraine.

According to statistics published by the SEM, by end-September 2023, Switzerland had received over 91,000 applications for temporary protection since the start of the war, and was hosting close to **65,700 active beneficiaries** of temporary protection

(status S).<sup>8</sup> The vast majority of temporary protection beneficiaries are Ukrainian nationals (98 per cent). A smaller proportion are third-country nationals (2 per cent). Similar to the profile observed in other European countries, the majority of refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland are women and children (81 per cent). Temporary protection beneficiaries are allocated to the different cantons proportional to their population. A majority reside in the German-speaking cantons (70 per cent) — including Zurich and Bern, which host almost one third of all refugees from Ukraine — followed by those hosted in French-speaking cantons (26 per cent) — mostly in Vaud, Geneva and Fribourg — and the rest in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino (4 per cent).

SEM data shows that the employment rate among working-age refugees from Ukraine (18-64 years) was close to 20 per cent by end-September 2023.<sup>9</sup> A previous survey commissioned by SEM to the Bern University of Applied Sciences provided an overview of labour market indicators of refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland, which showed that refugees with protection status S have a relatively high labour market potential.<sup>10</sup> Most working-age adults surveyed have completed tertiary education (70 per cent), and almost two fifths rated their knowledge of English as good to very good (40 per cent). One in every ten reported that they could understand most of one of the national languages, and could communicate effectively. Refugees reported training and professional experience in sectors with a shortage of skilled workers in the country, such as construction and engineering,

4. See [IOM Internal Displacement Report \(Ukraine\) — General Population Survey Round 13 \(11 - 23 May 2023\)](#).

5. For most up-to date information visit the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Ukraine](#). UNHCR uses the term “refugees from Ukraine” generically, referring to all persons having left Ukraine from 24 February 2022 due to the war. In the case of Switzerland, this refers to all individuals granted temporary protection status S.

6. Protection status S was activated for the first time in its history by the [Federal Council on 11 March 2022](#) on the basis of [Article 66 \(1\) of the Asylum Act](#).

7. See [SEM - Programme fédéral “Mesures de soutien pour les personnes avec statut de protection S” \(September 2023\)](#), for a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of integration programs for beneficiaries of protection status S in Switzerland.

8. The weekly statistics on applications are available [here](#) and the monthly statistics on active beneficiaries are available [here](#).

9. The weekly statistics are available [here](#).

10. Fritschi Tobias et al. «[Arbeitsmarktrelevante Merkmale von Personen mit Schutzstatus S](#)», Bern University of Applied Sciences, January 2023.

health and social services, education and IT. Participants in the survey reported that support was needed in finding a job (63 per cent), learning the national language (57 per cent) and having professional qualifications and diplomas recognized (40 per cent).

To complement available statistics and previous studies, UNHCR, Ipsos SA Switzerland and the SEM jointly conducted a country-specific survey with refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland, to better understand:

- What are the **household profiles and current socio-economic conditions** of refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland? How can they influence their intentions and inclusion perspectives?
- What are the **intentions or plans of refugees** from Ukraine in Switzerland in both the short and the long term? What are the main **reasons, drivers and enablers** influencing their decisions and planning?

The study is part of a series of intentions surveys of refugees from Ukraine that UNHCR has been leading with the goal of ensuring the centrality of refugees' voices in discussions about their future, and to inform evidence-based inter-agency responses in support of host Governments. Four regional intentions reports have been published in July 2022 ([Lives on Hold #1](#)), September 2022 ([Lives on Hold #2](#)), February 2023 ([Lives on Hold #3](#)) and July 2023 ([Lives on Hold #4](#)).

# Methodology

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

1,125

surveys completed

41

years old average age of respondents

2,800

household members

74%

of respondents are women

A random sample of 10,000 unique group IDs (registration file numbers) was drawn from the SEM's database of refugees from Ukraine aged 18+ with protection status S in Switzerland. The sample was stratified by, and then weighted for, the following parameters: type of household, time of arrival and linguistic region. All received a postal invitation encouraging them or someone in their household to participate through an **online questionnaire**. A total of **1,125 surveys** were completed between **30 March - 1 May 2023**. Survey participation was voluntary and anonymous. On average, the survey took 18 minutes to complete. Data were collected at the household level. This means that the survey provided information on over **2,800 refugees from Ukraine** living within those households. The sample is representative of the population registered as of March 2023, and has a maximum margin of error of approximately +/- **3.3%**, accounting for post-stratification weights and the respective design effect.

The questionnaire collected data on refugees' demographic profiles, including their place of origin, their situation in Switzerland and their intentions for the future. The questionnaire used for this study was similar to the one administered at the regional level across different European countries, so that data can be compared with those collected from refugees living in other host countries.

Almost three-quarters of surveyed respondents were **women (74 per cent)**, of which over one third were between 18 and 34 of age (36 per cent), nearly two in five between 35 and 49 years (38 per cent), and one in six between 50 and 64 years (17 per cent). Nearly one in ten were aged 65+ (9 per cent). Just over seven in ten respondents left Ukraine between **February - April 2022 (71 per cent)**, and slightly more than three in five **arrived in Switzerland during that period (62 per cent)**.

For the analysis, weights have been applied on household composition, time of arrival and linguistic region based on the population statistics available. A more detailed description of the sampling and weighting approach is included in **Annex 1**.

The results presented in this report reflect refugees' situations and intentions at the time of the data collection, which may have subsequently changed depending on a wide range of factors and contextual changes. Other limitations relate to the fact that the invitation letters and surveys were available in Ukrainian and Russian languages, which could have limited responses from refugees of other nationalities.

With the goal of facilitating the further use and analysis of the survey data, the full survey questionnaire and anonymized version of the microdata will be available to external audiences in [UNHCR's Microdata Library](#).

# Refugee profiles

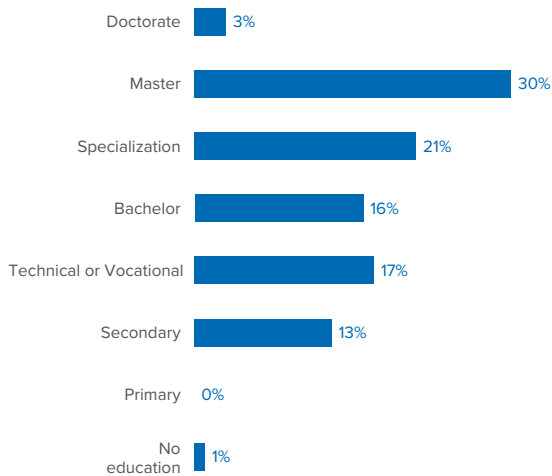
- The majority of refugees surveyed are nationals of Ukraine, with university degrees, coming from the Eastern part of the country or from Kyiv city, and arrived in Switzerland between February and April 2022.
- The most frequent type of refugee household is composed of one or more adults without dependents – a typical individual from this household profile is a young adult (aged 18-34) with a bachelor’s degree.
- The second type of household contains two or more adults with dependents – typical members of this profile are couples living with their child(ren).
- The third most common type of household is composed of only one adult with dependents – a typical member of this household profile is a woman aged 35-49 years with high educational attainment who is currently residing in Switzerland with her child(ren).

## Refugees profile

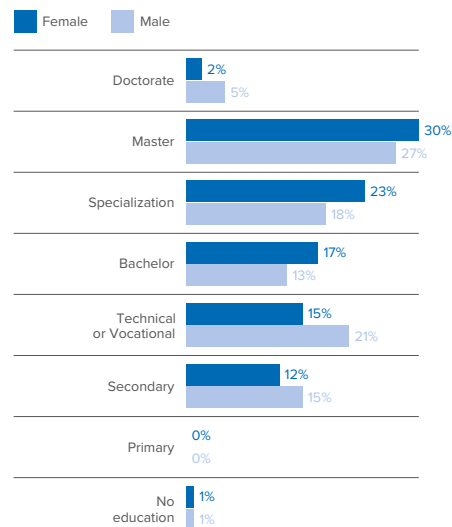
Almost all respondents have **Ukrainian nationality (97 per cent)**, while only 3 per cent have another nationality (rising to 8 per cent among those who have no relatives still living in Ukraine). Most respondents have **university-level education or**

**above (69 per cent)** and almost one third have a **master level or above (32 per cent)**. These results are in line with those obtained in the previous survey commissioned by SEM.<sup>11</sup>

### RESPONDENTS EDUCATION LEVEL



### EDUCATION LEVEL BY GENDER



11. Fritschi Tobias et al. op. cit.

# Household composition

## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

**79%**

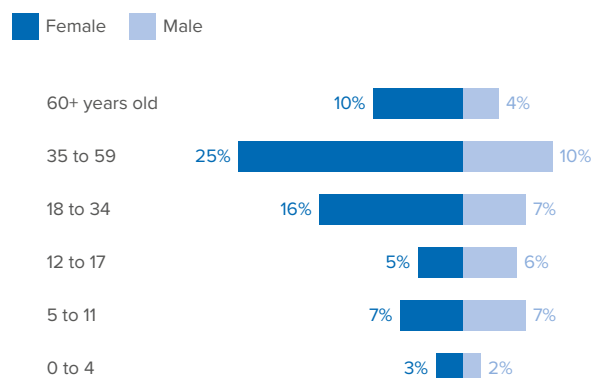
of household members are women and children

**14%**

of household members are older persons (60 years or more)

**2.6**

average household size



The **average household size** of respondents is of **2.6 individuals**. The vast majority of household members are either **women or children (79 per cent)**, which is almost the same as the proportion observed in SEM statistics for the overall population (80 per cent). Almost one third of household members covered by this survey are **children (29 per cent)**, and one in seven are older people (**60 years or more: 14 per cent**). Of the respondents surveyed, almost three in ten said their **partner and/or child(ren)** were still living in **Ukraine (29 per cent)**.

Just over three in ten households consist of a **single member (31 per cent)**, while almost six out of ten of them have **between 2 and 5 members (65 per cent)**. Only a minority live in bigger households of **more than 5 members (5 per cent)**. More specifically, the following household profiles are observed:

- **38%** of households are composed of **one or more adults (18-59 years) without dependents (children and/or older people)**. Respondents from these households are most likely than other household structures to be young (18-34 years: 57 per cent), to be female (77 per cent) and to hold a bachelor's degree (22 per cent). In

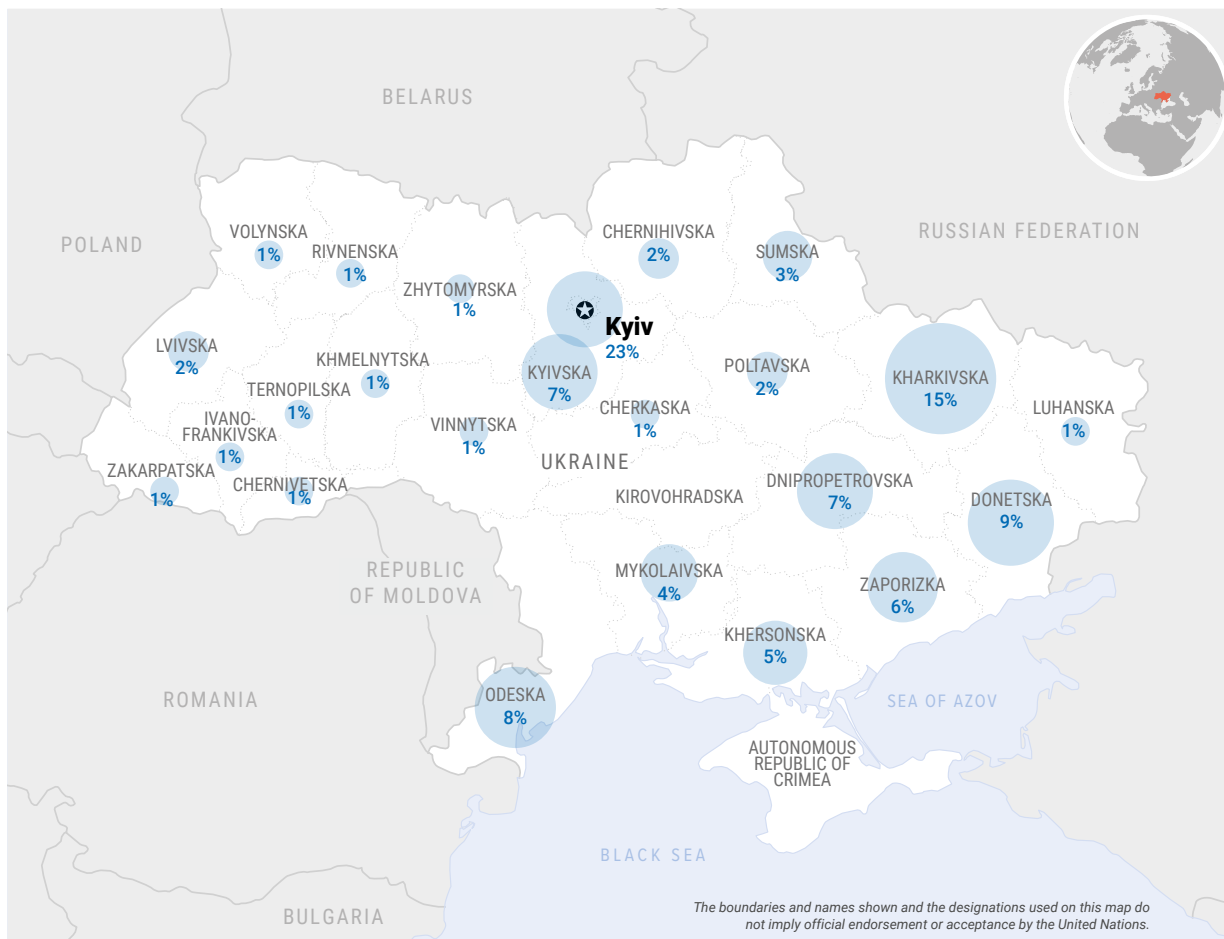
contrast, they are less likely than average to have a spouse/partner or children still living in Ukraine.

- **27%** of households are composed of **two or more adults with dependents**. Respondents from these households are more likely than average to be male (34 per cent), to be between 35 and 49 years old (50 per cent), and to originate from the eastern region of Ukraine (40 per cent).
- **25%** of households are composed of only **one adult with dependents**. Respondents from these households are more likely to be female (88 per cent), to be aged 35-49 (61 per cent), and to have a specialist or master's degree, or higher (65 per cent).
- **9%** of households are composed of **one or more older people (60 years or more)**. These households are composed of 61 per cent women and 39 per cent men. They are more likely than average to be living with their spouse (75 per cent). They are more likely than average to have arrived in Switzerland between February and April 2022 (74 per cent). They are also more likely than average to report that they or someone in their household has specific needs due to a disability or medical condition (21 per cent).



# Places of origin

## PLACES OF ORIGIN



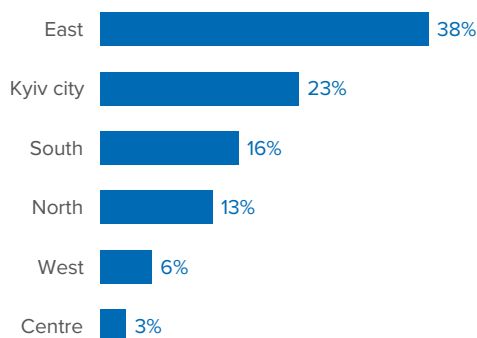
Close to four in ten respondents were living in the **eastern region** of Ukraine when the full-scale invasion began on 24 February 2022 (**38 per cent**), and more specifically, **15 per cent** were living in **Kharkiv** oblast. Almost one-quarter of respondents were living in **Kyiv** (**24 per cent**), and one in six were living in the **southern** region of Ukraine (**16 per cent**). Regarding the demographic characteristics of those displaced, more men than women were displaced from Kharkiv (19 vs 13 per cent) and Kherson (8 vs 4 per cent) oblasts. Additionally, more older respondents (aged 65+) than average were displaced from Kharkiv (23 vs 15 per cent).

Slightly more than six in ten respondents arrived in Switzerland **between February and April 2022 (62 per cent)**, while the vast majority had arrived **by August 2022 (82 per cent)** and had therefore been living in Switzerland for at least six months at the time of the survey.

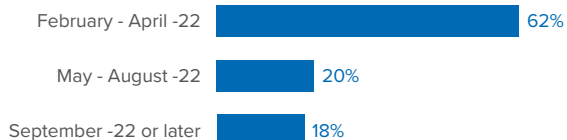
Slightly more than four in five had been living in Ukraine in a **dwelling** that they or someone in their household **owned (82 per cent)**. Of those with a dwelling in Ukraine, a narrow majority reported that their house or apartment was **intact (54 per cent)**, with disparities between regions (from 37 per cent among those from the eastern region of Ukraine to around 75 per cent among those from Kyiv or the

western region of Ukraine). **14 per cent** reported **partial damage / destruction** of their dwelling (20 per cent in the southern region of Ukraine), and **14 per cent** reported **full damage** or uninhabitable conditions (25 per cent in the eastern region of Ukraine).

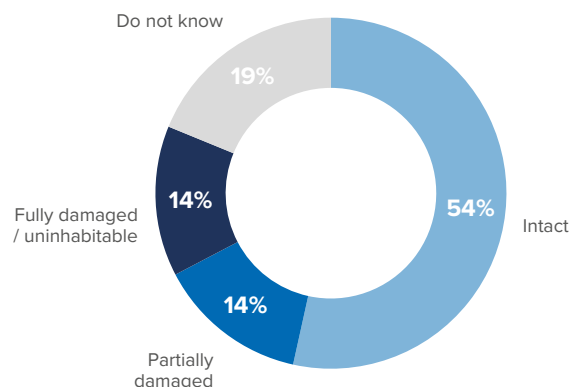
**REGION OF ORIGIN**



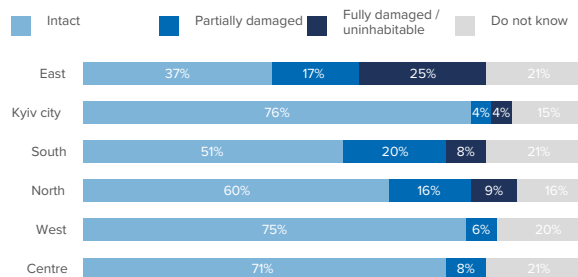
**TIME OF ARRIVAL IN SWITZERLAND**



**DWELLING STATUS**



**DWELLING STATUS BY REGION OF ORIGIN**



\* Small base (<30 respondents)

# Socio-economic conditions

- Most refugees report that their children aged 4-18 are attending formal school in Switzerland, though around a quarter are also attending online school following the Ukraine curriculum.
- The majority consider themselves to be in fair or good health, to have a good quality of life, and to be able to rely on at least one or two people in Switzerland in case of urgent need.
- Four out of ten respondents are either in employment (working in person in Switzerland and likely to be employed in sales/services or working as professionals – possibly at a lower level than their previous employment in Ukraine) or taking professional training courses – while around one-third are unemployed and looking for a job. Lack of knowledge of the local language is by far the main challenge in accessing employment.
- Financial support from the Government is the most frequent income source reported by refugees, and the majority perceives their household income to meet their basic needs at least moderately.
- The most common form of accommodation is sharing an apartment or a house with other refugees followed by those hosted either by local families or by relatives/friends, those renting their own accommodation and those in hotels or hostels provided by the Government.

## Access to education

In Switzerland, school is compulsory from the age of four and lasts eleven years (though with some differences across cantons). Children begin with eight years of primary level schooling (including two years of kindergarten or a first learning cycle) followed by three years of lower secondary level education. They complete compulsory education at the age of 15 or 16 and can then go on to upper secondary education in the form of general education programmes or vocational education and training programmes.

Most school-aged children (4-16 years old) living in the surveyed households were self-reported as **attending school (97 per cent)**. The predominant modality for child education reported by respondents was **attending only regular school** in

the host country (**69 per cent**), while one in four children (**25 per cent**) were attending **both** the regular school in Switzerland as well as following the Ukrainian curriculum remotely. Only a minority were reported as **attending solely online school following the Ukrainian curriculum (3 per cent)**. A small proportion of school-age children were reported as **not currently attending school** at all (**3 per cent**).

Attendance of school or preschool varies depending on the age group. Virtually **all children aged 6-10 and 11-16 are currently attending school**, while attendance is lower among those in kindergarten (**84 per cent** among those **aged 4 - 5**). Likewise, the choice of school curriculum also changes by age, with more children aged 11 - 16

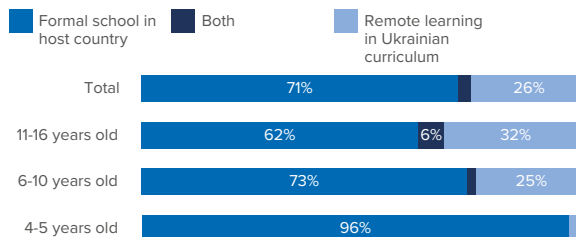
following only the Ukrainian curriculum remotely (6 per cent, compared to 2 per cent for children aged 6-10) and a higher proportion of them following both

the regular school in Switzerland as well as the Ukrainian curriculum remotely (32 per cent compared to 25 per cent for children aged 6-10).

**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BY AGE OF GROUP**



**TYPE OF SCHOOLING BY AGE GROUP**



## Health and quality of life

One in eight respondents reported at least one member of their household with **care needs due to a disability or medical condition (13 per cent)**. Close to one in two perceive their personal health as **good to excellent (46 per cent)**, while the same proportion describe it as **fair (44 per cent)**, and one in twelve reported **poor** personal health (**8 per cent**). Almost half of respondents (**46 per cent**) indicated that a health problem **impaired their ordinary daily life** in the six months prior to the survey, with **6 per cent** stating that the health problem **strongly** impaired their ordinary daily life.

Respondents who arrived in Switzerland from the southern region of Ukraine are more likely than average to indicate that at least one of their household members needed care due to a long-term physical or mental illness or disability (**16 per cent**). This is also the case of those who arrived in Switzerland recently (**18 per cent** among those who have arrived since September 2022). In line with this, those who left the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine are more likely than average to self-report their health as poor (respectively **9 per cent** and **12 per cent** compared with **8 per cent** on average). Furthermore, those with a vocational or a technical degree are more likely than those with

higher educational attainment to indicate that in the six months prior to the survey they had a health problem which impacted their daily life (**9 per cent** compared with **6 per cent on average**).

In terms of support networks, over half of respondents consider themselves to have **1 or 2 people** in Switzerland they can rely on if they have a **serious personal problem (52 per cent)**, while one in four indicated being able to count on more than two people (**25 per cent**). Conversely, almost two in ten claimed to have **nobody** to rely on in case of urgent need (**19 per cent**). Despite any difficulties they may be encountering in Switzerland, over seven in ten respondents consider their **quality of life** to be **good or very good (72 per cent)**. A small minority (**5 per cent**) reported having a **bad quality of life** in Switzerland.

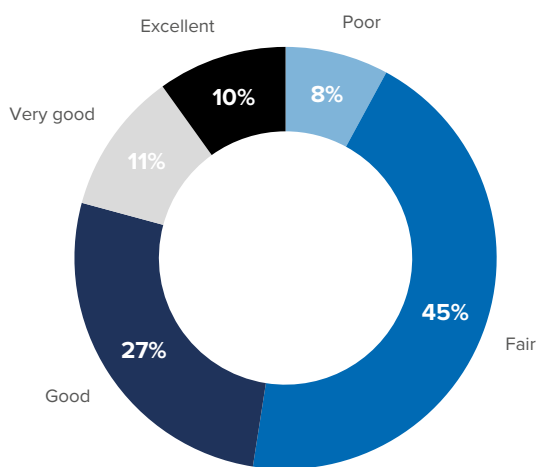
Middle-aged adults (aged 35-64) are more likely than younger or older adults to indicate not having anyone in Switzerland in whom they can rely in case of a serious personal problem (**22 per cent** compared with **19 per cent on average**). This is also the case among those who were displaced from the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine; those who

arrived recently to Switzerland, those who are not a working, and those living in a hotel or hostel (either on their own or provided by the Government).

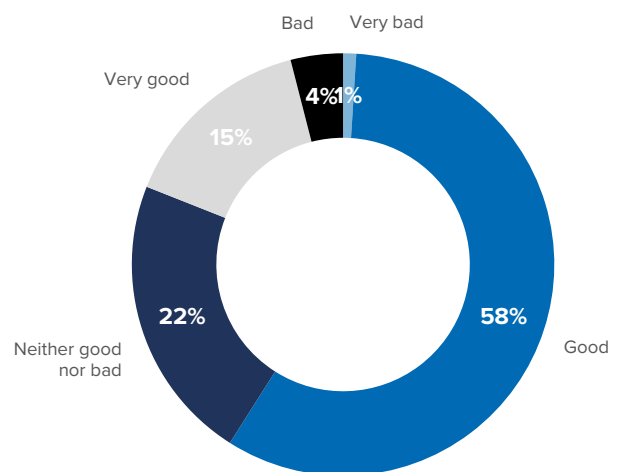
Women are more likely than men to consider themselves to have a good quality of life in Switzerland (**73 per cent vs 67 per cent**). This is also true of younger adults compared with older

generations (**76 per cent** among those aged 18-34). Those who arrived at the beginning of the war are more likely than those who arrived more recently to consider their quality of life to be good (**74 per cent** among those who arrived between February and April 2022). This is likely to show that their level of integration in Switzerland increases over time.

**SELF REPORTED HEALTH**



**SELF REPORTED QUALITY OF LIFE**



## Employment

Just over two in ten respondents are **currently working (21 per cent)**, while just under three in ten indicated that they are **unemployed and looking for a job (29 per cent)**. Just over two in ten are following **professional training courses (21 per cent)**, and one in fourteen are full-time caregivers (**7 per cent**). One tenth are retired, and the same share are students, apprentices, interns, or volunteers, or are inactive due to illness or disability (10 per cent).

Men are more likely than women to be unemployed and looking for work (34 vs 27 per cent), while women are more likely than men to be completing professional training courses (23 vs 16 per cent).

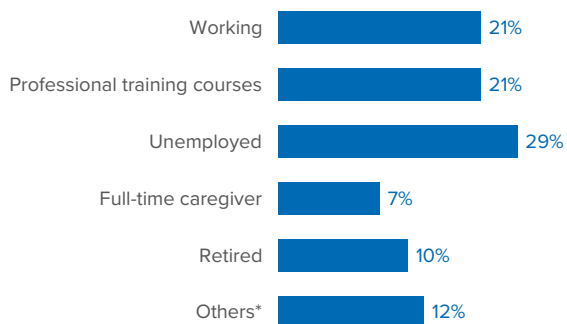
Men are also more often inactive due to illness or disability than women (5 vs 2 per cent), while women are more often full-time caregivers (8 vs 4 per cent). Respondents with vocational or technical degrees are less likely than their counterparts with higher educational attainment to be working (11 vs 21 per cent).

Among employed respondents, most are **working in person in Switzerland (91 per cent)**. The minority of remote workers are split between working for Ukrainian (6 per cent) and Swiss (4 per cent) businesses. Slightly more than half of those working are employed in **sales/services (27 per cent)** or

working as **professionals<sup>12</sup> (25 per cent)**. One tenth are employed in **elementary occupations<sup>13</sup> (10 per cent)**. Half of those employed reported that their current occupation is at a **lower level than their previous employment in Ukraine (50 per cent)**. The percentage is even higher for women than for men (56 vs 36 per cent). Almost one third said their occupation is at the **same level (32 per cent)**, while only slightly more than one in ten declared their current occupation is of a **higher level** than the one, which they had in Ukraine (**12 per cent**).

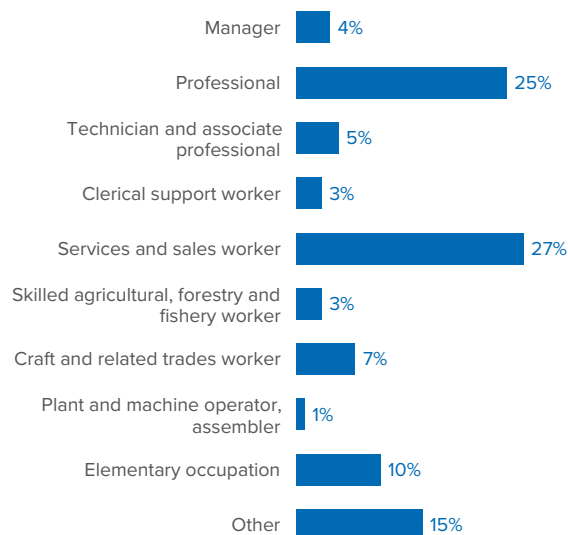
**Lack of knowledge of the local language** is mentioned as the most important challenge for accessing employment in Switzerland (**77 per cent**), followed by a wide margin by the **lack of employment opportunities suited to one’s skills (19 per cent)**. **Lack of education or skills recognition** also appears to be a significant difficulty faced by respondents (**13 per cent**), while **lack of information on how to access the labour market** is stressed by **9 per cent** of the respondents. Men refer to the lack of employment opportunities for someone of their age (9 vs 4 per cent) and discrimination (7 vs 3 per cent) more often than women.

**MAIN ACTIVITY**



\*Includes apprentice, intern, volunteer, student, and no activity due to illness/disability.

**OCCUPATION**



12. In the questionnaire, this response item was phrased as “Professional (e.g. lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, accountants).”

13. In the questionnaire, this response item was phrased as “Elementary occupation (e.g. cleaners, mining/construction labourers, street vendors, refuse workers).”

# Income

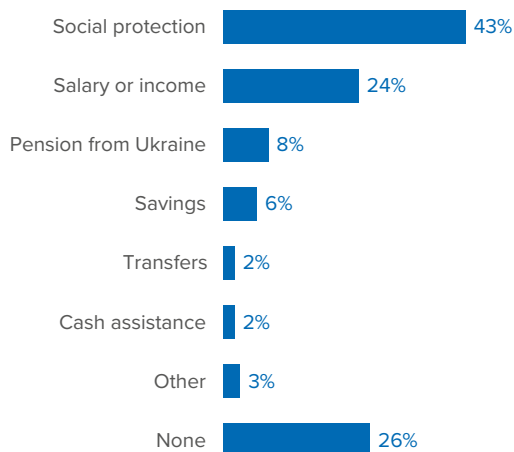
The most cited source of income for respondents is **social protection** programs or benefits from the Swiss Government (cited by **43 per cent** as a source of income in the month prior to the survey), while just under one-quarter cite **income from employment (24 per cent)**. Almost one in ten respondents receive **pensions from Ukraine (9 per cent)**, and a minority are using their **savings (6 per cent)**. Just over a quarter of respondents indicated not having **any source of income (26 per cent)**.

Men, respondents with high level of education and those out of work (49 per cent each) are more likely than their counterparts to indicate receiving income from governmental social protection programs or benefits. Those following professional training courses (57 per cent) as well as persons aged 65+ (56 per cent) are also more likely than average to cite this as one of their sources of income. Respondents renting accommodation on their own (64 per cent) and those who arrived in Switzerland between February and April 2022 (29 per cent) are most likely to cite employment as one of their sources of income. Persons coming from the western region of Ukraine (37 per cent) and Kyiv city (28 per cent) along with younger adults (29 per cent among those aged 18-34) are also more likely than average to receive income from employment. Respondents who arrived in Switzerland since September 2022 (40 per cent), those with only a

vocational or a technical degree or who are unemployed (37 per cent each), but also those who are living in a hotel or hostel provided by the Government (34 per cent), are more likely than average to report not having received any income in the month prior to the survey.

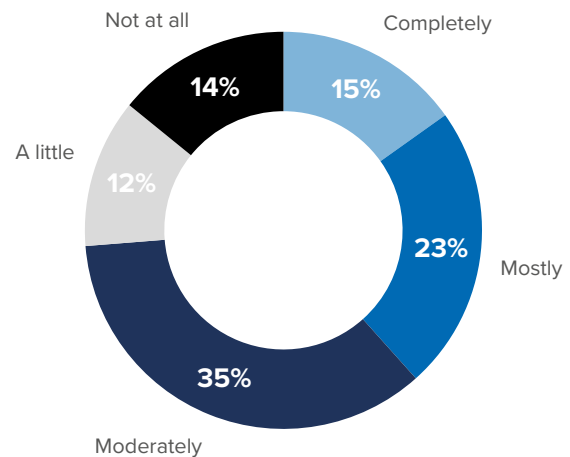
When asked if their income had allowed them to meet their household’s **basic needs** in the past three months, around one in four respondents replied **negatively (26 per cent)**: one in seven reported that their household’s income had not covered their basic needs **at all (14 per cent)**, and about one in eight indicated that their income only covered their basic needs **a little (12 per cent)**. Slightly more than a third of the respondents reported to be **moderately** able to meet their basic needs (**35 per cent**), while more than a third consider they were **mostly (23 per cent)** or **completely able (16 per cent)** to do so. Unsurprisingly, those renting accommodation on their own (35 per cent) and those in employment (32 per cent) are more likely than average to be in a household completely able to meet their basic needs. Conversely, those who arrived in Switzerland since September 2022 (23 per cent) and unemployed people (20 per cent) are more likely than average to be in a household that is not at all able to meet their basic needs.

## INCOME SOURCES\*



\*Multiple responses were possible, so sum of percentages may exceed 100%.

## MEETING BASIC NEEDS IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS



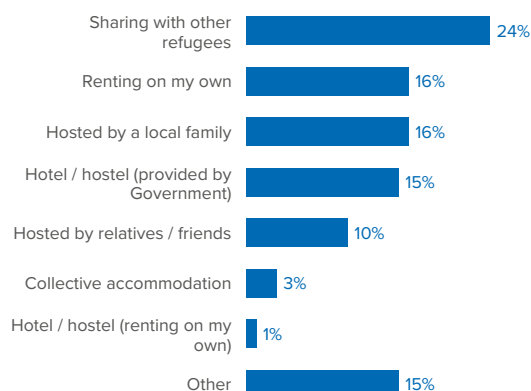
## Accommodation

Just under one in four respondents is **sharing an apartment** or a house with other refugees (**24 per cent**), while **16 per cent** are **renting accommodation on their own** and the same share is being **hosted by a local family**. **15 per cent** are living in **hotels or hostels provided by the Swiss Government**, while one tenth are **hosted by relatives or close friends (10 per cent)**.

Those who have arrived in Switzerland since September 2022 (23 per cent), unemployed people (22 per cent) and men (21 per cent) are more likely than average to be living in hotels or hostels provided by the Government. People from Kyiv city (22 per cent), those who arrived in Switzerland between February and April 2022 (19 per cent), and particularly those in employment (45 per cent) are more likely than average to be renting accommodation on their own.

In terms of stability of current arrangements, two in three respondents indicated **not having a specific time limit** on their current arrangement (**43 per cent**) or being able to stay **until they secure long-term accommodation (19 per cent)**. A minority (**6 per cent**) is only able to stay for **up to three months** from the time of the survey (with 3 per cent being required to leave within one month). Finally, just over one in four (**27 per cent**) **do not know how long** they can remain in their current accommodation. The most important reasons cited by respondents who are planning to leave their accommodation within the next three months include **not planning to stay** in Switzerland (**26 per cent**) and **looking for long-term accommodation (21 per cent)**.

### TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION





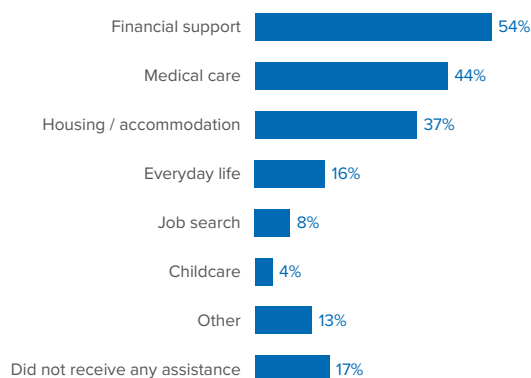
## Assistance

Over four in five adults received some form of assistance in the month prior to the survey (**83 per cent**). More specifically, over half of the respondents state that they received **financial support (54 per cent)** in the month prior to the survey. Over two in five reported having received **medical care (44 per cent)**, while nearly two in five say they have received **housing assistance (37 per cent)**. About one in six mentioned **everyday life assistance (16 per cent)**. Conversely, a similar share indicated not having received **any assistance (17 per cent)** in the month prior to the survey.

Women are more likely than men to say they did not receive any assistance in the month prior to the survey (19 per cent compared with 12 per cent). Younger adults (aged 18-34) are less likely than their older counterparts to have received some form of assistance (76 per cent received assistance, compared with 83 per cent on average). This is also true of those who arrived from the western region of Ukraine compared with other regions (69 per cent received assistance compared with 83 per cent on average).

Men, respondents over 65 years of age and those out of work (unemployed, retired or undergoing professional training) were most likely to receive financial support in the month prior to the survey. This also applies to respondents who arrived in Switzerland since September 2022 and those sharing an apartment with other refugees. In terms of medical care, the older generation, those not working, and adults sharing an apartment with other refugees were more likely to access it in the month prior to the survey. Men, persons who arrived in Switzerland since September 2022 and those out of work (unemployed or undergoing professional training) were more likely than average to have received housing assistance. This is also true of those living in a hotel or hostel provided by the Government, sharing an apartment with other refugees, or being hosted by a local family. In terms of everyday life assistance, respondents aged 50-64 and those who arrived in Switzerland between May and August 2022 were more likely than average to receive such support.

### SUPPORT RECEIVED IN THE PAST MONTH\*



\*Multiple responses were possible, so sum of percentages may exceed 100%.

# Refugees' intentions

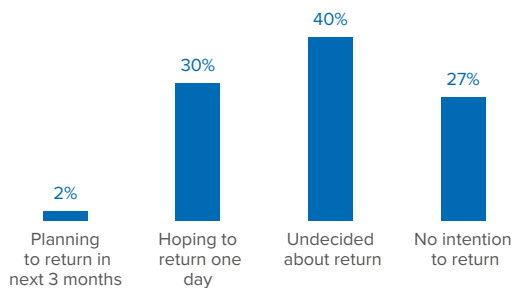
- While around one-third of the refugees surveyed reported hoping to return to Ukraine one day, two fifths are undecided about returning to Ukraine, and fewer than a third reported no hope to return.
- Those who have no hope to return are more likely to be men, under 50 years old, living in French- or Italian-speaking cantons, working in Switzerland, and with no relatives back in Ukraine.
- This is also the case of those with a spouse or child(ren) in Ukraine and those who are hosted in Switzerland by relatives, friends or local families.
- The main impediments to return reported by refugees appear to be security concerns and occupation of the territory where they were living, lack of access to functioning health services, but also lack of work and livelihood opportunities.

## Overall intentions

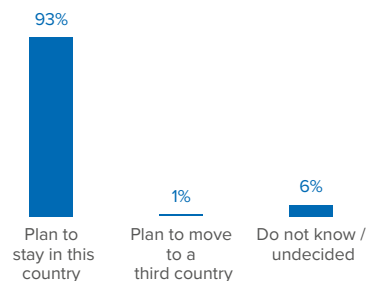
The survey collected information about refugees plans in the short term (next three months) as well as their intentions or hope to return to Ukraine in the future. Only a small minority have **plans to return in the next three months (2 per cent)**. Three in ten refugees reported **hoping to return to Ukraine one day (30 per cent)**, while just over four in ten indicated being **undecided about returning one day (40 per cent)**. Moreover, nearly three in ten have **no hope to return to Ukraine (27 per cent)**.

Of those who are not planning to return to Ukraine in the **three months following the survey**, the vast majority are planning to **stay in Switzerland** within that same time period (**93 per cent**). Only **1 per cent** are planning to move to a **third country** while the remainder of the respondents (**6 per cent**) are **undecided** about whether or not they will stay in Switzerland or go somewhere else.

REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS



PLANS FOR NEXT 3 MONTHS

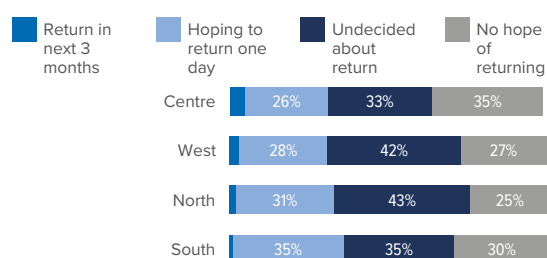


Specific demographics characterise each of these four profiles:

- **Those planning to return in the next three months** are more likely to be aged 65+ (7 per cent), retired (8 per cent) and hosted in Switzerland by relatives or friends (6 per cent).
- **Those hoping to return to Ukraine one day** are likely to be aged 50+, retired or full-time caregivers (49 per cent for both), hosted in Switzerland by relatives, friends (46 per cent) or a local family (41 per cent), and to have their spouse and/or child(ren) living in Ukraine (39 per cent).

- **Those who are undecided about returning to Ukraine** are more likely than average to be living in a hotel or hostel (48 per cent). Those with relatives in Ukraine are more likely than those who do not to be undecided about returning (44 per cent compared with 32 per cent).
- **Those who have no hope to return to Ukraine** are likely to be men (33 per cent), aged 18-49 (32 per cent), living in French- or Italian-speaking cantons (33 per cent), working (42 per cent), renting accommodation on their own (34 per cent), with no relatives in Ukraine (45 per cent).

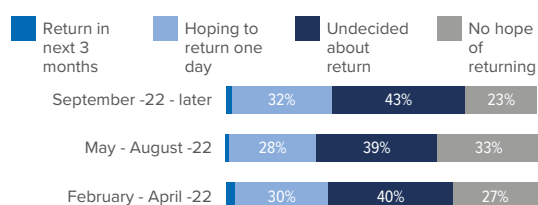
#### REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY REGION OF ORIGIN



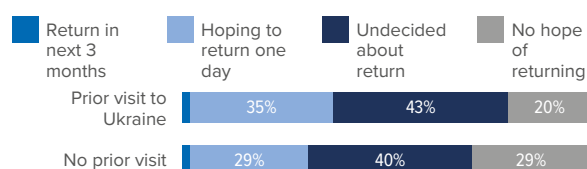
#### REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY RELATIVES IN UKRAINE



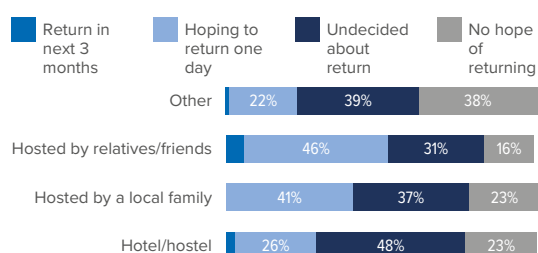
#### REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY TIME OF ARRIVAL



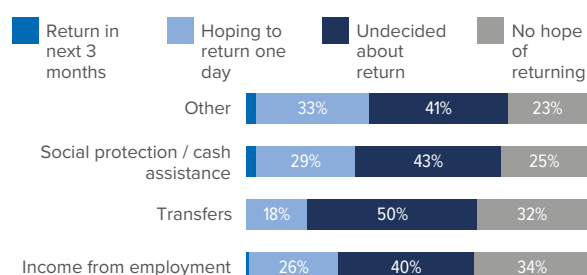
#### REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY PRIOR VISIT TO UKRAINE



#### REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE



#### REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY INCOME SOURCE



# Drivers and enablers for return

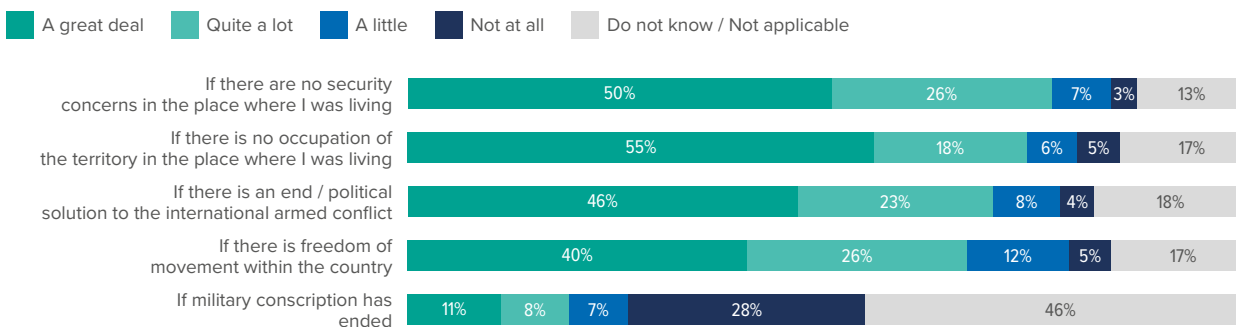
Respondents who indicated hoping to return someday or who indicated being undecided about returning to Ukraine were asked to evaluate a series of factors which would influence their decision to return.

## Improvement of the security situation

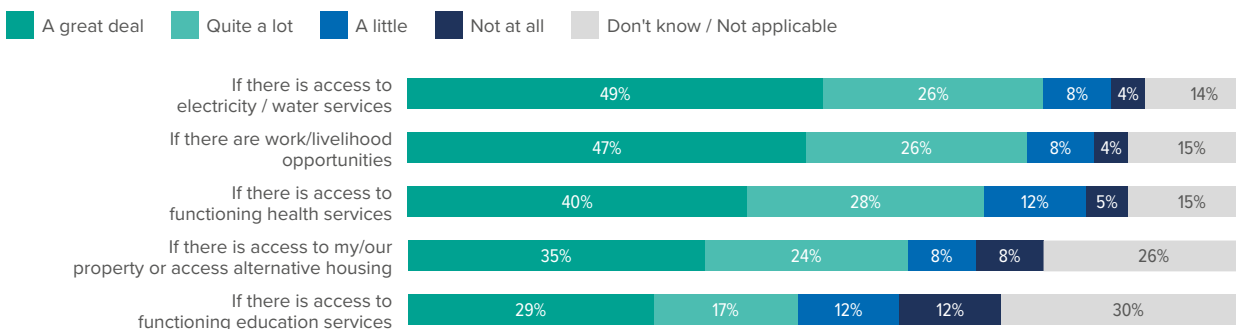
The most determinant factor that would enable refugees to return to Ukraine is related to the improvement of the security situation in the country. Indeed, more than three quarters of respondents (**77 per cent**) indicated that *“If there are **no security concerns** in the place where I was living”* this would influence their decision “a great deal” or “quite a lot”. A little more than seven in ten mentioned *“If there is **no occupation of the territory** in the place where I was living”* (**72 per cent**), while just under seven in ten cited *“If there is an **end / political solution** to the war”* (**69 per cent**), and two thirds indicated that freedom of movement within Ukraine would influence their decision to return (**66 per cent**).

Respondents aged 65+ (87 per cent), retired (88 per cent) or with a high education level (82 per cent) are more likely than average to consider the end of security concerns in Ukraine as an important determinant in their decision to return. No occupation in the place where they were living is also seen as very influential by those with a higher educational attainment (78 per cent). End of hostilities / political solution to the war is ranked highest by those having their partner and/or child(ren) living in Ukraine (77 per cent).

### IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS RELATED TO SECURITY WHEN DECIDING TO RETURN TO UKRAINE\*



### IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS RELATED TO BASIC SERVICES, HOUSING AND LIVELIHOODS WHEN DECIDING TO RETURN TO UKRAINE\*



\*Due to rounding, sum of percentages may not add up to 100%.

## Access to basic services and livelihoods in place of origin

The second and third factors that would enable refugees to return to Ukraine are related to access to basic services and livelihoods in their places of origin: “If there is **access to electricity / water services**” (75 per cent) and “If there are **work / livelihood opportunities**” (73 per cent). Access to **functioning health** services is considered an important enabler to return by almost seven in ten respondents (69 per cent). Less determinant but still considered important by nearly three in five is **access to their property** or to alternative housing

(58 per cent). Less than half ranked having access to **functioning education** services as having a big influence in their return decisions (46 per cent).

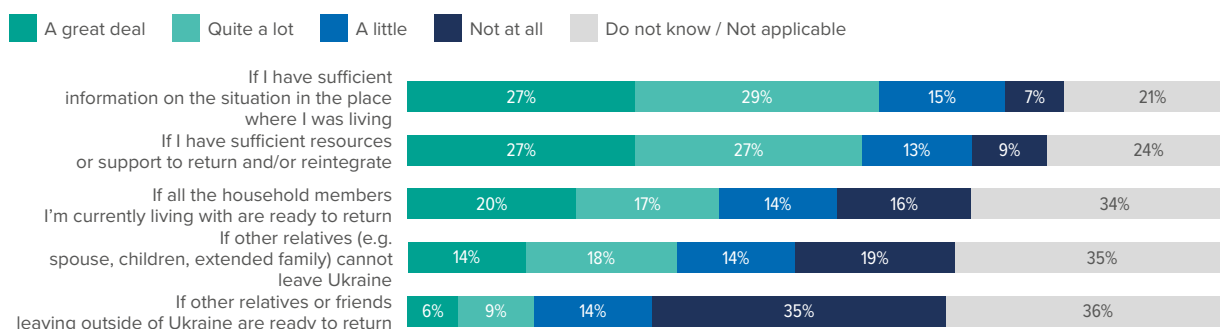
Access to functioning health services is particularly important for women compared to men (71 vs 61 per cent). Respondents aged 35-49, as well as those with their partner and/or child(ren) living in Ukraine, are more likely than average to consider access to functioning education services as a major factor when deciding to return (63 and 54 per cent, respectively).

## Personal circumstances and access to information on place of origin

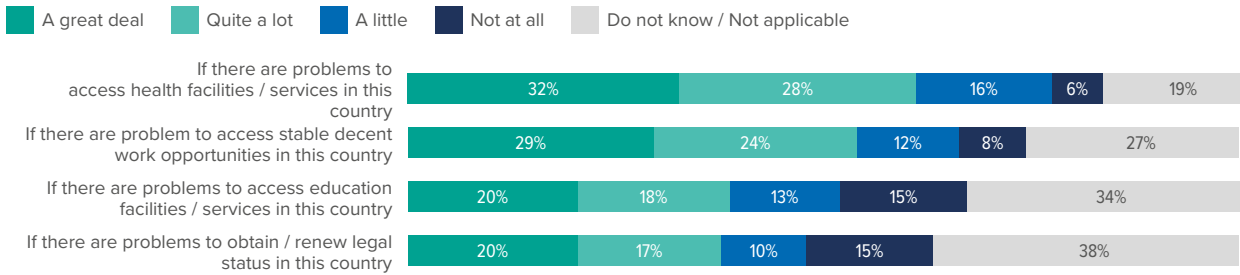
Having sufficient information on the **situation in the place where they were living** is considered as an important determinant on their decision to return by nearly three in five respondents (56 per cent). Having sufficient **resources or support** to return and re-integrate would be determinant for over half of respondents (54 per cent). Conversely, the decision of household members and relatives and friends to return to Ukraine would play a less determinant role (with respectively 37 per cent and 15 per cent saying this would influence their decision “a great deal” or “quite a lot”).

Having sufficient information on the situation in the place where they were living is particularly important for persons aged 65+, those having their partner and/or child(ren) living in Ukraine and women (68, 64 and 58 per cent, respectively). The preference of household members to return is more influential to full-time caregivers and those aged 35-49 (50 and 46 per cent, respectively). Unsurprisingly, among respondents with a partner and/or child(ren) living in Ukraine, the inability for relatives to be able to leave Ukraine would play an important role in their decision to return (52 per cent). Moreover, women consider this factor as more influential than men (34 vs 25 per cent).

### IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS RELATED TO INFORMATION AND PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN DECIDING TO RETURN



**IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS RELATED TO SITUATION IN HOST COUNTRY WHEN DECIDING TO RETURN**



**Conditions in Switzerland**

Difficulties to access services or to obtain rights in the host country appear to be as determinant for returning as factors related to the situation in Ukraine. The most important push factor for respondents is having problems **accessing health facilities** in Switzerland, which would have “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of importance on their decision to return for almost three in five respondents (**59 per cent**). Failing to **access stable decent work** opportunities in Switzerland would also push to return over half of respondents (**54 per cent**). Problems to **access education** or to **obtain/renew their legal status** in the host country are considered as determinant by less than two in five respondents (**38** and **37 per cent**, respectively).

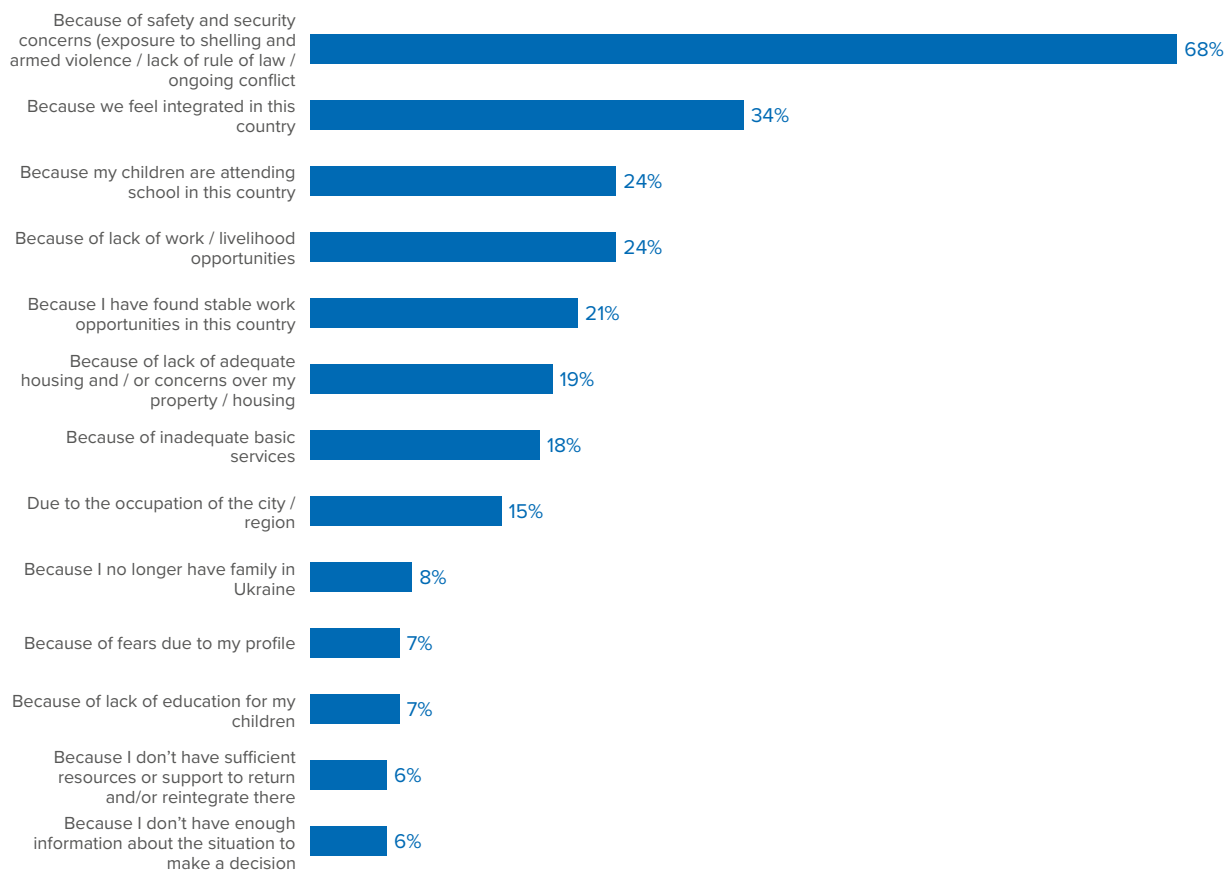
Respondents aged 65+ and those having their partner and/or child(ren) living in Ukraine would be more prone than average to return in case of problems accessing health services in the host country (71 and 67 per cent, respectively). Lack of stable decent work opportunities in Switzerland would be particularly influential to women (56 per cent), younger adults (62 per cent among those aged 18-49) and those who are unemployed (64 per cent) or in professional training (63 per cent). Those aged 35-49 are most likely to say that problems accessing education services in Switzerland (53 per cent) would be a major factor in deciding to return.

**Self-reported reasons for not hoping to return**

Refugees who indicated having no hope to return one day to Ukraine were asked to indicate up to three main reasons for not hoping or planning to return. In line with findings from the previous section, the most important reason cited is **safety and security concerns**, mentioned by just over two thirds of respondents (**68 per cent**). Just over one third explained that they **feel integrated** in Switzerland (**34 per cent**), while around one in four

explained that their **children are attending school** in this country or that there is a **lack of work / livelihood opportunities in Ukraine (24 per cent** each). Other reasons were **stable work opportunities in Switzerland (21 per cent)**, followed by the **lack of adequate housing and/or concerns over their property/housing (19 per cent)**, **inadequate basic services (18 per cent)** and the **occupation of the city/region of origin (15 per cent)**.

## REASONS FOR NOT HOPING TO RETURN



*\*Multiple responses were possible, so sum of percentages may exceed 100%.*

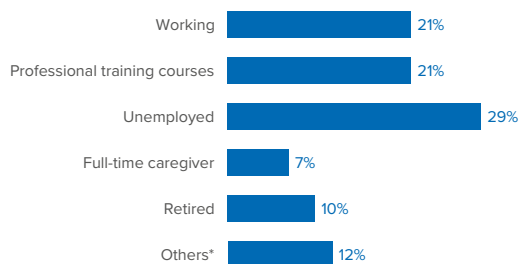
# Results of the survey in Switzerland within a regional landscape

This section presents a comparative analysis of the results of the survey with refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland with the average results of the latest regional intentions survey with refugees from Ukraine hosted across European countries which are not neighbouring Ukraine (see [Lives on Hold #4](#)). In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the average household size and the age of respondents are quite similar. However, respondents in Switzerland are less likely to be female (74 vs 86 per cent across European countries not sharing a border with Ukraine). Moreover, they have higher educational attainment, with 54 per cent of respondents in Switzerland indicating that they

have a specialist or master’s degree compared with 30 per cent regionally. In terms of household composition, there are three times more households in Switzerland composed of one or more older people (60+ years) compared to households in non-neighbouring countries of Ukraine (9 v 3 per cent).<sup>14</sup>

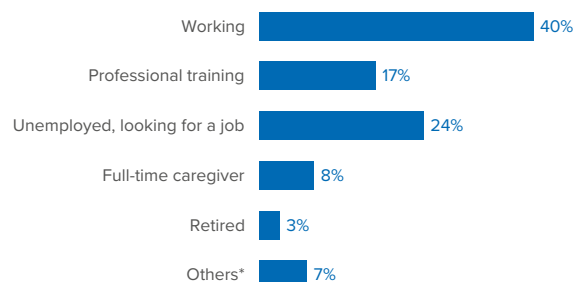
In terms of accommodation, refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland are more likely to be living in shared accommodation with other refugees than the regional average (24 vs 6 per cent). Conversely, they are less likely to be renting accommodation on their own (16 vs 26 per cent).

## MAIN ACTIVITY - SWITZERLAND\*



\*Includes apprentice, intern, volunteer, student, and no activity due to illness / disability.

## MAIN ACTIVITY - REGIONAL\*



\*Due to rounding, sum of percentages may not add up to 100%

14. See regional intentions report published in July 2023 “[Lives on Hold #4](#)”.



Refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland are also less likely to be working than the regional average (21 vs 40 per cent) though they are slightly more likely to be taking professional training courses (21 vs 17 per cent). Conversely, they are more likely to be retired (10 vs 3 per cent). Those who are working in Switzerland are more likely to be working in person in the country compared with working refugees regionally who are more likely to be working remotely (91 vs 80 per cent regionally). Those working are equally likely as their regional counterparts to be working at a similar level as their previous job in Ukraine. Refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland are equally likely to have faced challenges in finding employment compared to their counterparts regionally, with 10 per cent indicating they have not faced any challenges in this domain compared with 9 per cent regionally. However, they are less than half as likely to say there is a lack of decent employment opportunities (7 vs 18 per cent regionally) and less than half as likely to say they have struggled due to the lack of a work permit (3 vs 8 per cent regionally).

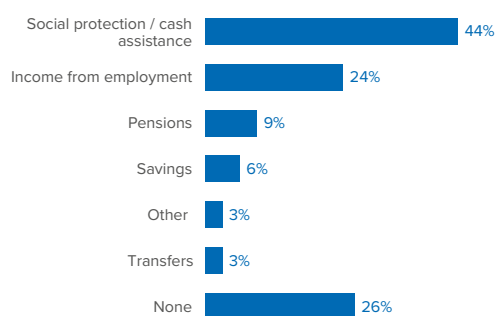
Refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland are over three times more likely than their counterparts regionally to say that in the month prior to the survey their household did not receive any income (26 vs 8 per cent regionally). In particular, they are less likely to have received income from social protection or cash assistance (44 vs 64 per cent) and income from employment (24 vs 42 per cent). Similarly, they are far less likely to have used savings or received transfers or pension funds. However, as mentioned above, refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland are more likely to be living in

shared or in hosted accommodation or in hotels provided by the Government, which likely means lower expenses on rent.

In terms of intentions for the future, these differ widely between households in Switzerland and those across non-neighbouring countries of Ukraine as a whole. In Switzerland, households are almost four times more likely to have indicated not hoping to return permanently to Ukraine (27 vs 7 per cent regionally). Conversely, only 2 per cent of refugee households in Switzerland were planning to return permanently to Ukraine in the three months after the survey, compared with 13 per cent regionally. Thirty per cent of households in Switzerland are hoping to return one day while 40 per cent are undecided, while regionally, 57 are hoping to return one day and 24 per cent are undecided.

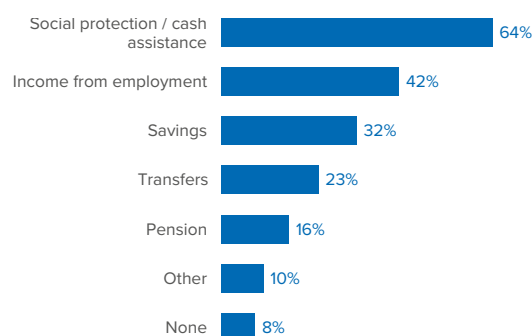
Of those who are not hoping to return permanently to Ukraine, the reasons for this intention also differ between refugee households in Switzerland and those across non-neighbouring countries of Ukraine more broadly. Refugee households in Switzerland are more likely to cite safety and security reasons (68 vs 47 per cent), but they are also more likely to indicate that they plan to stay in Switzerland because they feel integrated (34 vs 11 per cent regionally) and because their children are attending school in Switzerland (24 vs 11 per cent). Conversely, reasons for planning to return to Ukraine are similar between refugee households in Switzerland and regionally. However, those in Switzerland are more likely to indicate that they want to return to Ukraine to take care of their property or housing (26 vs 9 per cent).

**INCOME SOURCES - SWITZERLAND**



\*Multiple responses were possible, so sum of percentages may exceed 100%.

**INCOME SOURCES - REGIONAL**



# Voices of refugees

Between May and July 2023, UNHCR held a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a total of forty-four refugees from Ukraine of different age groups and genders who currently reside in the cantons of Bern and Vaud.<sup>15</sup> Topics discussed included reception conditions upon arrival and the process of obtaining protection status S, inclusion (accommodation, education, work, access to services etc.) as well as intentions and perspectives regarding return. The key objective of FGDs is to place refugees at the centre of discussions, to engage them meaningfully and to consult them on protection, assistance, and solutions which directly affect them. The explorative qualitative results of the FGDs complement the representative quantitative findings of the survey.

Refugees from Ukraine appreciated the warm welcome in Switzerland. Their arrival and the process to obtain protection status S did not pose significant obstacles. Accommodation was readily available. Most of the participants first stayed with family members, acquaintances or were hosted by locals through the host family program. In most cases, this was a positive experience, and the host families supported the refugees to manage administrative challenges. However, some participants experienced difficulties to find subsequent accommodation. The housing market in Switzerland — particularly in large cities — is exceedingly competitive, with landlords and real estate agencies often hesitant to rent to persons with a return-oriented residence status, or who are dependent on social aid.

## Access to job market

Most refugees from Ukraine continue to be dependent on government support. However, most participants expressed a desire to enter the workforce. Lack of knowledge of the local language was outlined as the most common obstacle to finding employment. Additionally, the procedure for the recognition of work qualifications and diplomas appears to be complex and time-consuming for many. As a consequence, refugees resort to finding

work in other fields, often in lower skilled jobs below their professional and educational background. The uncertain duration of protection status S was also mentioned as a deterrent for potential employers. Women with children mentioned a need for childcare. Participants expressed that more support in entering the job market would be appreciated, including information on self-employment.



***There is the stereotype that refugees don't want to work and profit unfairly from the social aid system. We are against that. We are motivated to find a job. It's just not as easy as it seems."***

– Adult woman, FGD participant, Bern.

15. See [Participatory Assessments – Ein Dialog auf Augenhöhe – UNHCR Schweiz und Liechtenstein](#).

## Access to information and support

Participants reported that information on most topics was available, albeit scattered. Therefore, the refugee community relies on sharing information through messaging apps and social media.

Refugees suggested that a one-stop-shop where information and support is available together, particularly concerning health insurance and social aid, could be made more readily available.

## Access to education

Children and adolescents are integrated in school either directly or after an introductory class, depending on the canton. Many parents and children who participated in the discussion recognize that priority should be given to Swiss schooling. Some children however still attend online Ukrainian school in addition to their in-person attendance in Swiss schools, resulting in extra pressure. An overall desire to keep a link with their country of origin was voiced. Adolescents need to adapt to the Swiss dual-track education system, which is different from the one in Ukraine. Access to the Swiss baccalaureate is difficult due to language requirements, and vocational training is perceived as less prestigious. Some adolescents intend to complete higher education and pointed out the importance of preparatory courses to access universities.

## Perspectives

For most refugees from Ukraine, pondering their future remains daunting. Participants expressed a desire to return if conditions in the country or region of origin would permit, as many still have family members and property in Ukraine. Others would like to build a future in Switzerland but are hesitant due to the return-oriented nature of protection status S and unclarity if another permit can be obtained thereafter, as well as uncertain professional prospects. Participants with children are less inclined to consider returning, as they wish to ensure greater stability and better opportunity for their children.



*I think I will be able to find a good job in Switzerland, but I really miss my friends that have remained in Ukraine. I think a lot about that, and I feel sad. I struggle to participate in free time activities with new friends here in Switzerland because I have no time. I am always busy studying.”*

– A Teenager, FGD participant, Bern

*“I am from a region where everything has been destroyed. It’s not enough for the war to end, the infrastructure has to be rebuilt too.”*

– Adult woman, FGD participant, Vaud.

*“It would be good to have more clarity on the kind of residence permit that we’ll be able to get if we find a job. This way we could better plan our future.”*

– Adult woman, FGD participant, Vaud.

# Annex 1. Sampling and weighting

**Sampling size:** The target number of respondents was 1,000 individuals, representing one registration group (RG) per interview, which was used as proxy for household. The study was designed so that only one adult member (aged 18+) of each household was interviewed. Indeed, only one adult member from each unique RG ID was invited to complete the survey and provided with a unique link to do so. To compensate for nonresponse, an oversampling factor of 10 was applied, i.e., 10,000 invitation letters were sent out.

**Sampling frame:** A random sample of 10,000 unique group IDs was drawn from the State Secretariat for Migration of Switzerland (SEM) database of persons from Ukraine aged 18+ with protection status S in Switzerland. From the full sample frame, the following invalid sampling points were removed:

- Persons having previously participated in the Bern University of Applied Sciences study;<sup>16</sup>
- Unique group IDs with more than six persons;
- Persons with invalid addresses;
- Unique group IDs which, after the exclusions aforementioned, only contained children.

**Sampling stratification:** The sample was implicitly stratified based on three variables: registration group structure, time of arrival to Switzerland, and linguistic region. The group structure dimension considered the following two categories: adult person(s) without a child in their group and adult(s)

with children of 17 or below in their group. Time of arrival segments included: 2022 Q1; 2022 Q2; 2022 Q3, and 2022 Q4 + 2023 Q1. Lastly, the three linguistic region segments included German-, French-, and Italian-speaking regions.

After assigning each member of the sampling frame to the sample strata, a random selection of registration groups (RGs; as household proxy) was made using fixed interval selection on a randomised list, sorted by implicit strata. Adults within the sampled RGs were selected in a preferential manner, to first select a random adult of those aged 25-55, to approximate heads of RGs / households. In RGs where no individuals in this age bracket were available, a random adult was sampled. Selection was not performed in registration groups with a single adult.

**Data collection:** A postal invitation with a unique survey link was sent to one adult from each of the 10,000 group IDs randomly selected from the sample. Respondents completed the survey online between 30 March and 1 May 2023.

**Weighting:** Weights were calculated and applied to control for any biases in the realization rates across the strata. Intercellular weighting was performed at each intersection of the three variables of segmentation.

16. Fritschi Tobias et al. op. cit.

RG type	Time of arrival	Linguistic region	N of RGs	% of RGs
adults with children	2022-Q1	French speaking	401	4.01%
adults with children	2022-Q1	German speaking	1320	13.20%
adults with children	2022-Q1	Italian speaking	122	1.22%
adults with children	2022-Q2	French speaking	268	2.68%
adults with children	2022-Q2	German speaking	598	5.98%
adults with children	2022-Q2	Italian speaking	30	0.30%
adults with children	2022-Q3	French speaking	104	1.04%
adults with children	2022-Q3	German speaking	196	1.96%
adults with children	2022-Q3	Italian speaking	7	0.07%
adults with children	2022-Q4 / 2023-Q1	French speaking	115	1.15%
adults with children	2022-Q4 / 2023-Q1	German speaking	253	2.53%
adults with children	2022-Q4 / 2023-Q1	Italian speaking	5	0.05%
only adults	2022-Q1	French speaking	615	6.15%
only adults	2022-Q1	German speaking	2009	20.09%
only adults	2022-Q1	Italian speaking	153	1.53%
only adults	2022-Q2	French speaking	586	5.86%
only adults	2022-Q2	German speaking	1337	13.37%
only adults	2022-Q2	Italian speaking	62	0.62%
only adults	2022-Q3	French speaking	258	2.58%
only adults	2022-Q3	German speaking	543	5.43%
only adults	2022-Q3	Italian speaking	14	0.14%
only adults	2022-Q4 / 2023-Q1	French speaking	288	2.88%
only adults	2022-Q4 / 2023-Q1	German speaking	690	6.90%
only adults	2022-Q4 / 2023-Q1	Italian speaking	26	0.26%

# Annex 2. Glossary

**Dependent(s):** Individuals who need to rely on other individual(s) for financial support; for the purpose of this report, dependent(s) includes children aged 0-17 and older people aged 60+.

**Displacement:** The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence (whether within their own country or across an international border), in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

**Fixed interval selection:** Sampling method through which the first unit is selected at random from the population sampling frame, and then subsequent units are selected at equally spaced intervals.

**Focus group discussion:** A method to collect qualitative data/information from a group of persons pre-selected according to specific criteria. A small, homogeneous group formed to discuss open-ended questions about a certain topic. Focus group respondents are encouraged to talk among themselves so that a discussion unfolds among them rather than between the evaluator/researchers and the respondents.

**Household:** Concept based on the arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living; for the purpose of this report, household has been defined as one or more persons who left Ukraine after 24 February of 2022 and are currently living together and sharing expenses.

**Registration group:** One or more individuals who are registered together; in the context of this study, it refers to beneficiaries of protection status S registered under the same file number (ID group) and address.

**Livelihoods:** Activities that allow people to secure the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, shelter and clothing. Engaging in livelihoods activities means acquiring the knowledge, skills, social network, raw materials, and other resources to meet individual or collective needs on a sustainable basis with dignity.

**Oversampling:** Sampling method that involves selecting a higher number of participants than would be required to obtain the precision level desired for the research; for the purpose of this study, oversampling was applied by selecting and inviting to complete the survey a higher number of refugees from Ukraine than required, considering response rates for online surveys are lower than for other modes of data collection.

**Persons with specific needs:** Any person who experiences particular protection risks or barriers due to the intersection of their personal characteristics with the environments, which requires specific targeted actions in order to enjoy the full range of their human rights. Children (especially unaccompanied and separated children), victims of trafficking, women and girls at risk, older people, and persons with disabilities are among the groups that often have specific protection needs. These persons have the same basic needs as other refugees but often face barriers to having these needs met.

**Realization rate:** Measure of a survey's ability to identify and interview the target population; realization rates allow researchers to see how much adjustment is needed to make the probability of selection weights equal to the population characteristics.

**Reintegration:** A process which enables returnees to regain the physical, social, legal and material security needed to maintain life, livelihood and

dignity and which eventually leads to the disappearance of any distinction or discrimination vis-à-vis their compatriots.

**Sampling frame:** A list of all members of a population used as a basis for sampling.

**Sampling size:** The number of sampling units which are to be included in the sample.

**Sampling stratification:** Method that consists of dividing the population into subsets (called strata) within each of which an independent sample is selected.

**Sample weights:** The number of individuals in the population each respondent in the sample is representing.

# INTENTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN **SWITZERLAND**

December 2023



**UNHCR Office for Switzerland and Liechtenstein**

Weltpoststrasse 4  
CH-3015 Bern  
Email: [swibe@unhcr.org](mailto:swibe@unhcr.org)

[www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)