

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



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Acknowledgements

Data used in this report was collected and analysed through a partnership between UNHCR and Ipsos SA. UNHCR is grateful to the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, as well as to its civil society partners and refugee communities, for support with the development and implementation of the intentions survey.

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Natalia Hryshchenko and Iryna Pronenko, the co-founders of the first refugee-led organization in Croatia, the Svoja Association, in front of Zagreb's central train station. ©UNHCR/ I. Maričić

Executive summary

As part of UNHCR's intentions survey series with refugees from Ukraine across Europe, this report presents the main findings from a country-specific data collection exercise with refugees from Ukraine in **Croatia**, including an analysis of refugees' profiles, intentions, reasons behind their decisions, as well as key insights into their socio-economic situation, with the goal of informing advocacy, programming and decision-making of all stakeholders. The analysis is based on an online survey, conducted in partnership with Ipsos SA, with **506 completed questionnaires during May 2023**. Data was collected at the household level, with the

survey thus providing information on over **1,400 refugees** living within those households. The report addresses the following main questions:

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

Key findings

The majority of refugees surveyed are nationals of Ukraine, most with tertiary education, coming from the eastern and southern part of the country or from Kyiv city, and more than half arrived between February and April 2022. The most common type of refugee household is composed of two or more adults with dependents, the vast majority living with at least one child. The second most common type of refugee household is composed of 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 living in Croatia with her child(ren). The third most common type of household is composed of one or more adults without dependents – with around half of them composed of a couple and less than half corresponding to one person living on their own.

79%

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

9%

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

42%

of households are composed of **two or more adults (18-59 years) with dependents** (children and/or older persons), **26%** are composed of **only one adult with dependents** and **26%** are composed of **two or more adults without dependents**.

12%

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

78%

of respondents have at least **university-level education** and **40%** have a master's level degree or above.

1 IMPORTANT INSIGHTS INTO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN CROATIA

Most refugees report that their children aged 6-15 years (compulsory school age) were attending school in Croatia, though around a third were also attending an online school following the Ukraine curriculum and around a quarter were only attending a Ukrainian online school. Half of the respondents were working (most working in person in Croatia and likely to be employed in sales/ services, elementary occupations or working as managers or professionals, with half working at a lower level than their previous employment in Ukraine). Less than a quarter were unemployed and looking for a job and the rest were not economically active. Lack of knowledge of the local language is

by far the main challenge in accessing employment. Salary and earnings from employment was the most frequent income source reported by refugees, followed by savings and pensions from Ukraine. Only a third reported that their household income was enough to cover most or all of their basic needs. The most common accommodation arrangement was renting an apartment on their own, followed by those living in collective hotel accommodation provided by the Government. Other arrangements reported were living in apartments with rent subsidized by the Government and being hosted by local families or with relatives/ friends.

47%

of compulsory school-age children (6 to 15 years) were reported as attending exclusively a school in Croatia, while **27%** were reported as **both** attending a **school in Croatia** and following **remotely the Ukrainian curriculum**, and a further **22%** were **only attending Ukrainian school remotely**.

53%

of respondents reported **lack of knowledge of the local language** as the most important challenge for accessing employment in Croatia, followed by the **lack of employment opportunities suited to their skills (33%)** and the **lack of decent employment opportunities (32%)**.

39%

reported **not being able to cover their household's basic needs** during the past 3 months, including almost a fifth who reported that their household's income had not covered their basic needs **at all (18%)**

50%

of respondents were **working**, while less than a fourth declared themselves as **unemployed and looking for a job (22%)**.

55%

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

2 MORE THAN HALF OF THE REFUGEES SURVEYED HOPE TO RETURN TO UKRAINE ONE DAY, BUT MORE THAN A THIRD WERE UNDECIDED ABOUT RETURNING TO UKRAINE AND LESS THAN A TENTH REPORTED NO HOPE OF RETURNING.

Those who had no hope of returning are more likely to be men, more recently displaced, economically active in Croatia, without a spouse or children still living in Ukraine, and without information on the status of their dwelling in Ukraine. Conversely, older adults are more likely to be hoping to return one day to Ukraine. This is also the case of those who left Ukraine earlier, and those who have visited the

country at least once since they were displaced. The main impediments to return reported by refugees are security concerns and occupation of the territory where they were living, but also lack of access to electricity and water, lack of work and livelihood opportunities and lack of access to functioning health services.

2%

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

56%

hope to return one day to Ukraine.

35%

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

8%

reported **no hope of returning**.

Introduction

As a result of the war in Ukraine, nearly one third of the population of Ukraine remains forcibly displaced from their homes, making it one of the largest displacement crises in the world today. By September 2023, over 5 million people remain internally displaced within Ukraine according to IOM,¹ 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 recorded in European states alone.² The majority of European Union (EU) Member States, including Croatia, implemented the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), activated for the first time in March 2022, and a number of other countries applied similar legal frameworks.

According to statistics of the Ministry of Interior, by mid-October 2023, **Croatia was hosting more than 24,500 refugees from Ukraine**, of which 50 per cent are woman and 33 per cent children. Since February 2022, Croatia ensured unhindered access to its territory for refugees from Ukraine and organized country-wide reception centres. Support for refugees from Ukraine among Croatian society remains strong. The Temporary Protection Directive was implemented —with additional healthcare and welfare rights provided for by the Government — and has been extended through to March 2024. Nonetheless, refugees granted temporary protection do not have a right to free Croatian language classes, tertiary education and legal aid, as beneficiaries of international protection do. According to official statistics, some 81 per cent of refugees from Ukraine are living in private accommodation, with a further 12 per cent in government-subsidised private housing, and the remainder live in collective accommodation run by the Civil Protection Directorate.

UNHCR works closely with the Government to ensure identification and referral of individuals with specific needs to appropriate response mechanisms and has trained frontline responders on gender-

based violence, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as trafficking prevention and referral. The Ukraine refugee response has catalysed collaboration with local and regional authorities in regions that had not experienced refugee arrivals previously. New partnerships have led to responsive, locally driven solutions building on existing capacities, such as volunteer networks to promote inclusion of refugees.

To ensure the centrality of refugees' voices in discussions about their future, as well as to inform evidence-based inter-agency responses in support of host Governments, UNHCR is leading the regular implementation of intentions surveys with refugees from Ukraine, collecting primary data on their profiles, their current situation and intentions, and the factors influencing their decision-making, covering refugees hosted in countries neighbouring Ukraine as well as in the rest of Europe. 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](#)).

As part of the intentions survey series, UNHCR and Ipsos SA jointly conducted a country-specific survey with refugees from Ukraine in Croatia, in consultation with the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, to better understand their intentions and reasons behind their decisions, as well as key insights into their socio-economic situation. The report aims to answer the following main questions:

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

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

2. For the most up-to-date information, visit the [UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Ukraine](#).

Methodology

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

506

surveys completed

88%

of respondents are female

1,382

household members

40

average age of respondents

62%

of respondents live with a child in their household

72%

of respondents left Ukraine between February and April 2022

A total of **506 surveys** were completed in Croatia through an **online questionnaire**. Refugees displaced by the ongoing war in Ukraine and currently living in Croatia were invited to participate in the survey through social media and instant messaging apps (Facebook and Telegram). The survey link was published by civil society moderators of existing groups used by the Ukrainian refugee community in Croatia and shared widely by UNHCR partners during the course of their outreach and activities with refugees from Ukraine. Data was collected between the **1st and 31st of May 2023**. Data was collected at the household level, with the survey thus providing information on close to **1,400 refugees** living within those households.

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

Most of the survey respondents were **female (88 per cent)**, with **over a quarter between 18 and 34 years of age**, **over two thirds between 35 and 59 years of age**, and **only 5 per cent 60 years of age or older**.

Prior to analysing the data, age and gender weighting was applied to ensure that the sample population accurately resembles the characteristics of the actual population of Ukrainians in Croatia. Weights were developed using the most recent population figures at the time of the survey as published by EUROSTAT.³

The results presented in this report should be interpreted according to the limitations of the methodology and given the context of ongoing movements. In particular, online surveys are not based on a probabilistic sample and are not necessarily representative of all refugees displaced from Ukraine living in Croatia. Moreover, online samples tend to over-represent individuals with higher levels of education while under-representing those who are elderly, with ill health, or living with a disability. Finally, it is also worth noting that results presented in this report reflect refugees' situations and intentions at the time of data collection, which meanwhile may have changed depending on multiple factors and contextual changes.

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

3. See [EUROSTAT Temporary Protection Statistics Database](#).

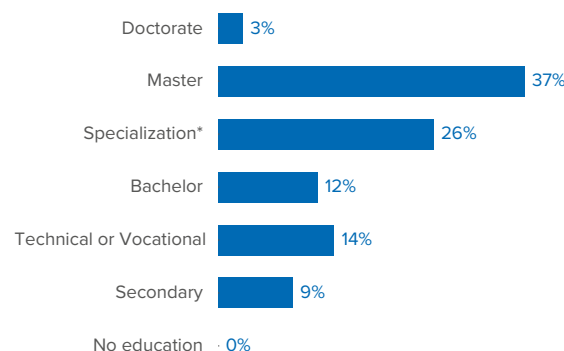
Refugees' profiles

- The majority of refugees surveyed are nationals of Ukraine, most with tertiary education, coming from the eastern and southern parts of the country or from Kyiv city, and more than half arrived between February and April 2022.
- The most common type of refugee household is composed of two or more adults with dependents, the vast majority living with at least one child.
- The second most common type of refugee 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 living in Croatia with her child(ren).
- The third most common type of household is composed of one or more adults without dependents – with around half of them composed of a couple and less than half corresponding to one person living on their own.

Refugees' profiles

Almost all respondents have **Ukrainian nationality (98 per cent)**, while only 2 per cent have another nationality (mostly Russian). No individuals declared as stateless or of undetermined nationality. The vast majority of respondents have **university-level education (78 per cent)**, including two in five with a **master's level or above (40 per cent)**.

RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION LEVEL



* Specialization refers to a postgraduate degree similar to a master's degree.

Household composition

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

79%

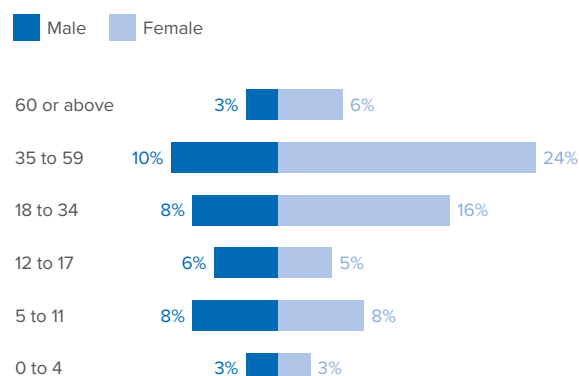
of household members are women and children

9%

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

2.8

average household size



The **median household size** of respondents is **three individuals**. The vast majority of household members are either **women or children (79 per cent)**. A third (**33 per cent**) of household members are **children**, and **9 per cent** are **older persons** (aged 60 years or more). The results from the survey are broadly aligned with the distribution reflected in official statistics on arrivals from Ukraine recorded at border crossings by August 2023, of which 50 per cent are women and 33 per cent were children.

One in seven households (**14 per cent**) are composed of a **single person**, while the vast majority (**83 per cent**) have **between 2 and 5 members**. Only a minority (4 per cent) live in bigger households of more than five members. About one in eight households (**12 per cent**) have at least one member with **care needs** due to a disability or medical condition. Nearly one in four respondents indicate that their **spouse and/or children still live in Ukraine (24 per cent)**.

More specifically, the following household profiles are observed within the refugee population:

- **41 per cent** are composed of **two or more adults (18-60 years) with dependents (children and/or older persons)**. Households in this category have 3.9 members on average, and the vast majority have at least one child in the household.
- **26 per cent** are composed of only **one adult (18-60 years) with dependents (children and/or older persons)**. The vast majority are composed

of a woman with one or more children, two in five of whose spouses or partners live in Ukraine. Over half are living alone with one dependent in Croatia, however over two in five take care of multiple dependents.

- **26 per cent** of refugee households from Ukraine in Croatia are composed of **one or more adults (18-60 years) without dependents**. About half of these households are composed of two adults living together, while two in five correspond to a single adult living alone.
- **7 per cent** are composed of **one or more older persons (60 years or more)**. Around half of them are composed of only one older person living alone and the rest by two or more older persons.⁴

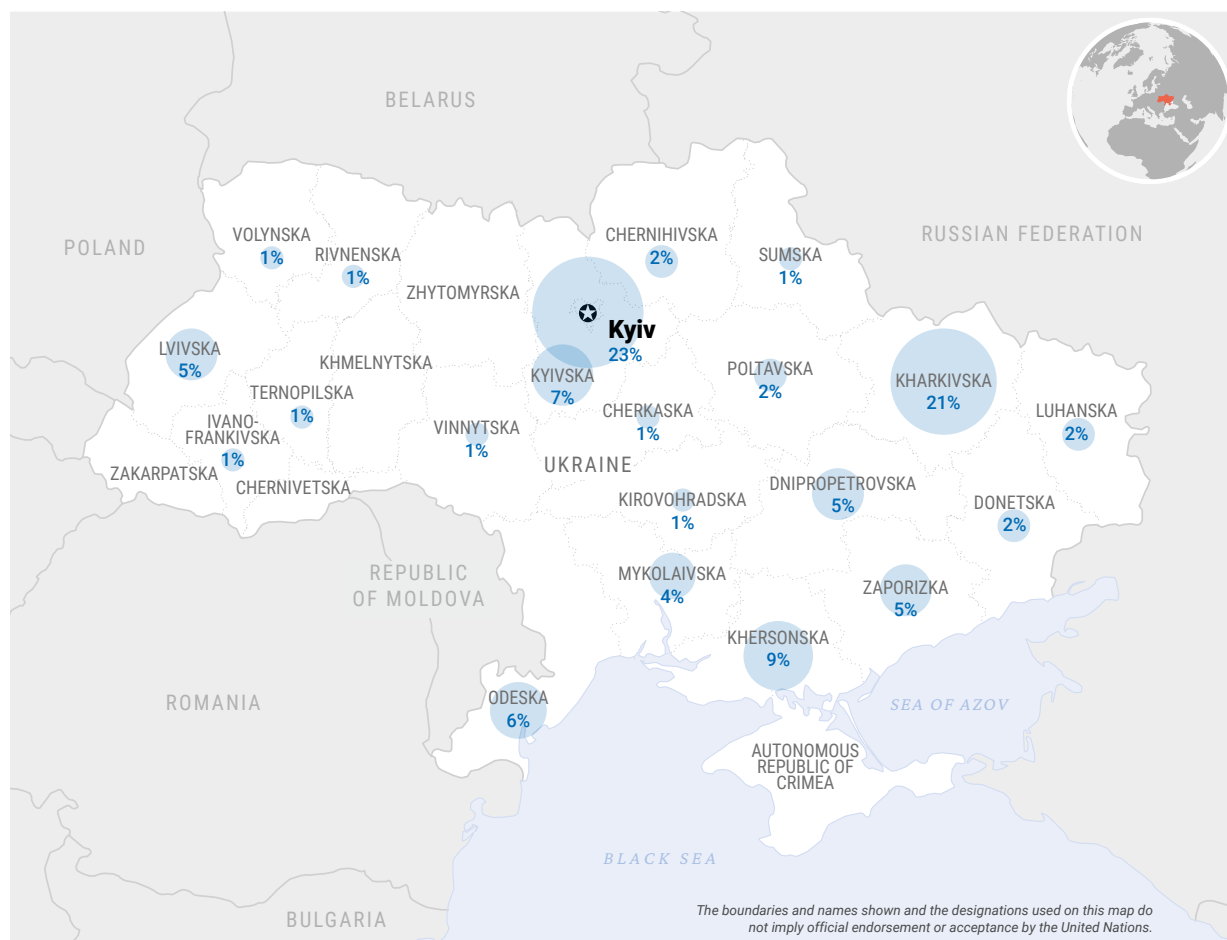
Compared to findings from the latest regional intentions survey with refugees hosted across European countries which are not neighboring Ukraine,⁵ the refugee population based in Croatia is **more highly educated** (40 per cent have at least a master's degree in Croatia vs. 30 per cent regionally). In addition, refugees in Croatia are less likely to be living in households composed of adults without any dependents (26 per cent in Croatia vs. 39 per cent regionally); instead, refugees in Croatia are **more likely to be living in bigger households, composed of two adults or more with dependents** (41 per cent in Croatia vs. 33 per cent regionally). Similarly, **fewer refugees in Croatia have spouses or children still living in Ukraine** (24 per cent vs. 39 per cent regionally).

4. Low sample size of this category does not allow for a more detailed analysis.

5. See regional intentions report published in July 2023, [Lives on Hold #4](#).

Places of origin

PLACES OF ORIGIN



Over a third of respondents were living in the **east** of Ukraine on 23 February 2022 (**35 per cent**), mostly in **Kharkiv oblast (21 per cent)**. A significant share of refugees was originally from **Kyiv city (23 per cent)**, and one in six were living in the **south** of Ukraine (**18 per cent**). A minority originated from the north, the west, or the centre of Ukraine (10, 9 and 5 per cent, respectively).

The majority of refugees surveyed **left Ukraine between February and April 2022 (70 per cent)**. Over half of the respondents **arrived in Croatia during that period (57 per cent)**, and **by August 2022**, the majority had already arrived in Croatia (**83 per cent**). Still, close to one in five respondents

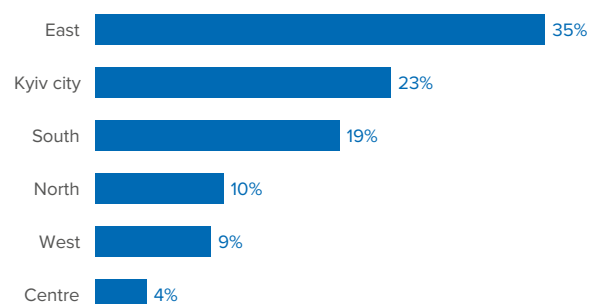
arrived in Croatia in September 2022 or later (**17 per cent**). **Having family and/or friends in Croatia**, the **availability of temporary protection or asylum** and **accommodation opportunities** are the top reasons that motivated respondents to come to Croatia (24 to 27 per cent of respondents), followed by the **language spoken** and **work opportunities** (19 to 20 per cent).

Nearly nine in ten respondents stated they had been living in Ukraine in a **dwelling that they or someone in their household owned (87 per cent)**. Of those who are homeowners in Ukraine, the majority reported that their house or apartment was **intact (64 per cent)**, while **11 per cent** reported

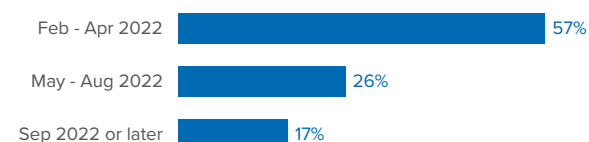
partial damage / destruction of their dwelling, and **11 per cent** reported **full damage** or **uninhabitable conditions**; finally, **14 per cent** reported **not having any information on the status of their dwelling**.

Self-reported dwelling status varies greatly depending on the region of origin: those from Kyiv city, the west and the centre were much more likely to say their dwelling was intact (87 to 93 per cent), while damaged dwellings were more often reported by those from the east, south and north (30 to 41 per cent).

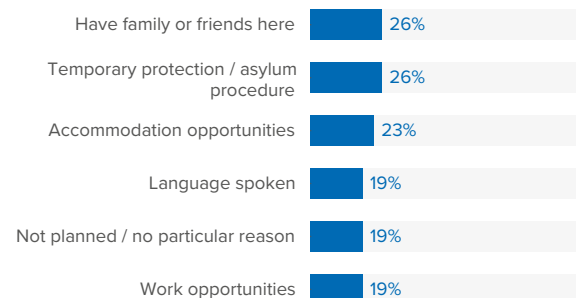
REGION OF ORIGIN



DATE OF ARRIVAL IN CROATIA

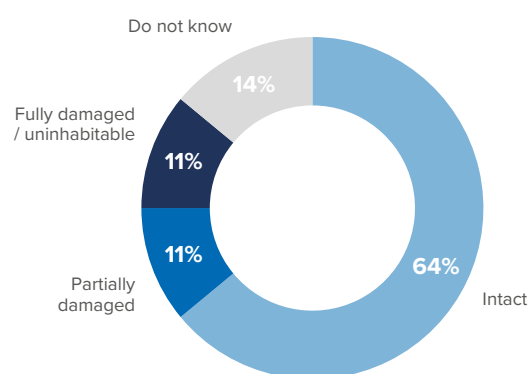


TOP REASONS TO COME TO CROATIA*

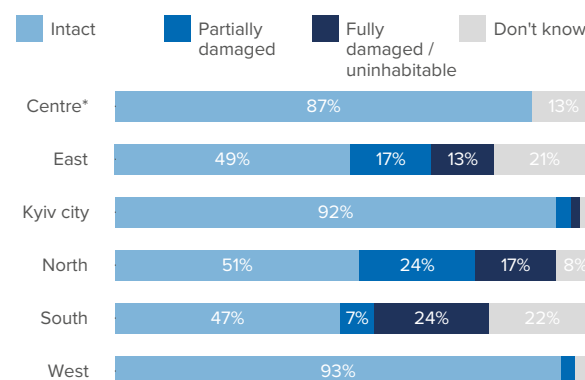


*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can exceed 100%.

DWELLING STATUS



DWELLING STATUS BY REGION OF ORIGIN



* Small base (<30 respondents)

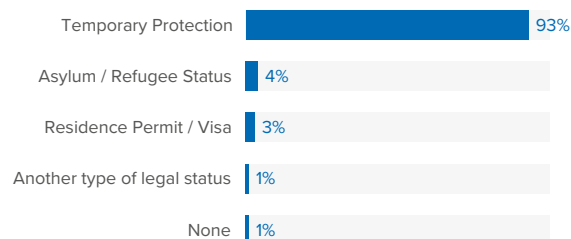
Socio-economic conditions

- Most refugees report that their compulsory school-aged children (6-15 years) were attending school in Croatia, though over a quarter were also attending online school following the Ukraine curriculum and close to a quarter were only attending Ukrainian online school.
- Half of the respondents were working, mostly in person in Croatia, and likely to be employed in sales/services, elementary occupations or working as managers or professionals, with half working at a lower level than in their previous employment in Ukraine. Less than a quarter were unemployed and looking for a job and the rest were not economically active. Lack of knowledge of the local language is by far the main challenge cited in accessing employment.
- Salary and earnings from employment was the most frequent income source reported by refugees, followed by savings and pensions from Ukraine. Only a third reported that their household income was enough to cover most or all of their basic needs.
- The most common accommodation arrangement was renting an apartment, followed by living in collective hotel accommodation provided by the Government. Other arrangements reported were living in apartments with rent subsidized by the Government and being hosted by local families or with relatives/friends.

Legal status

Almost all refugees surveyed report having applied for **temporary protection** in Croatia (**93 per cent**), however a small minority state that they have applied for **asylum** (**4 per cent**) or for a **residence permit or visa** (**3 per cent**) in the country. Only 1 per cent report not having registered for any of these statuses.

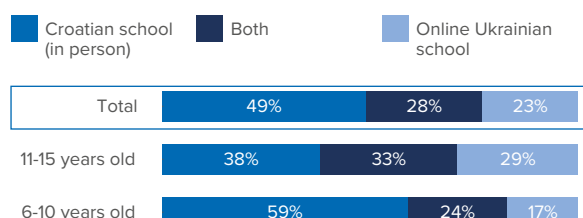
APPLICATIONS FOR LEGAL STATUS*



*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can exceed 100%.

Access to education

TYPE OF SCHOOLING BY AGE GROUP



The vast majority of compulsory school-age children (6 to 15 years) living in the households surveyed were reported as **attending school** at the time of the survey (**97 per cent**). About half were reported as only attending **in-person school in Croatia (49 per cent)**, while over a quarter were reported as attending **both** Croatian school and following the Ukrainian curriculum remotely (**28 per cent**). Nearly one in four were reported as **only attending Ukrainian online school (23 per cent)**. A minority of children aged 6 to 15 years were reported as **not currently attending school** at all (**3 per cent**).

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BY AGE GROUP



School attendance among those in later adolescence was lower (**76 per cent among those aged 16 to 18 years**), although this is beyond the compulsory school age of 15 in Croatia. The choice of schooling system varies by age: children aged 11-15 years old are more likely to be attending Ukrainian online school than those aged 6-10 (29 per cent vs. 17 per cent), and more likely to be following both Croatian school and Ukrainian online school (33 per cent vs. 24 per cent). Around four in ten (38 per cent) of those aged 11-15 years only attend in-person school compared with nearly six in ten (59 per cent) of those aged 6-10 years old.

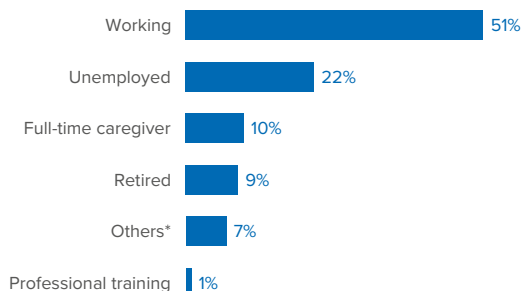
Employment

At the time of the survey, half of the respondents were **working (50 per cent)**, while a little more than one fifth declared they were **unemployed and looking for a job (22 per cent)**. **Ten per cent** were **full-time caregivers**, and **nine per cent** were **retired**. One in twelve were students, apprentices, interns, volunteers, following professional training, or are inactive due to illness or disability (8 per cent).

Men are more likely to be in work than women (**59 vs. 48 per cent**) – largely due to a higher proportion of men being self-employed compared to women

– **and are also more likely than women to be unemployed and looking for work (32 vs. 20 per cent)**. Conversely **women are far more likely to indicate not being economically active (28 vs. 7 per cent)**, including a higher proportion who are full-time caregivers compared to men (12 vs. 2 per cent) as well as a higher proportion who are retired (10 vs. 5 per cent). Respondents' primary activity remains largely consistent across age groups and education levels.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY



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

OCCUPATION *



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

Among employed respondents, just over seven in ten were **working in person in Croatia (71 per cent)**, and just under three in ten were **remote workers (29 per cent)**, most often working for Ukrainian businesses (17 per cent). Among those employed (either in person or remotely), three in ten were working in **sales or services (30 per cent)**; almost one fifth were employed in **elementary occupations⁶ (19 per cent)**; one in seven were **managers**, and the same share were **professionals⁷ (14 per cent each)**. More often than not, employed respondents stated that their current work was at a **lower level than their previous job in Ukraine (55 per cent)**, however over a third said their occupation was at the **same level (35 per cent)**, and a small minority reported that their position was of a **higher level** than the one they held in Ukraine (**2 per cent**).

Lack of knowledge of the local language is cited as the biggest challenge to getting a job in Croatia (by **53 per cent**), followed by the **lack of employment opportunities suited to their skills (33 per cent)**, and **lack of decent employment opportunities (32 per cent)**. Lack of information on how to access the labour market is stressed by 9 per cent of respondents, as is lack of education and skills recognition.

Compared with refugees hosted in other European countries that are not neighbouring Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees in Croatia were **more likely to be working** (50 per cent in Croatia vs. 40 per cent regionally)⁸, and those who were working were more likely to be working in services and sales (30 per cent in Croatia vs. 16 per cent regionally) and less likely to be working in elementary occupations (19 vs. 29 per cent regionally).

6. In the questionnaire, this was phrased as: 'Elementary occupation (e.g. cleaners, mining/construction labourers, street vendors, refuse workers).'

7. In the questionnaire, this was phrased as 'Professional (e.g. lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, accountants).'

8. See regional intentions report published in July 2023, [Lives on Hold #4](#).

Income

Nearly two thirds of refugee households in Croatia reported **salary or earnings from employment** as one of their sources of income (**64 per cent**), while nearly three in ten reported **savings (28 per cent)** as one of their sources of income. Almost one fifth reported receiving **pensions (19 per cent)**. The share of refugees that were benefiting from **social protection** or from **cash assistance** from humanitarian organizations was a minority (**7 and 3 per cent, respectively**). A small proportion reported not having any sources of income (**3 per cent**).

Salary or earnings from employment was cited as a source of income for most **working respondents (86 per cent)**, whilst about a fifth of this group reported also using their **savings (21 per cent)**. That 14 per cent of working individuals did not cite salary or earnings from employment as a source of income may reflect responses from individuals who have recently commenced employment: further research could provide greater insights into employment conditions. About twice as many **unemployed people or full-time caregivers (43 and 39 per cent)** as working respondents were fully or partially living off their **savings**. **Men** reported income from **employment** more often than women (**77 vs. 60 per cent**).

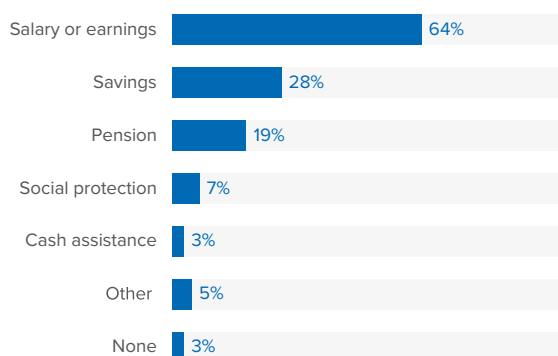
When asked if their household had been able to meet its **basic needs** in the last quarter, almost two in five respondents replied **negatively (39 per cent)**:

about one sixth said their household's income had **not covered their basic needs at all (18 per cent)**, and just over one in five declared that their household was only able to cover its basic needs 'a little' (**21 per cent**). Close to three in ten respondents indicate their household was '**moderately**' able to meet its basic needs (**28 per cent**). A third consider they were **mostly (18 per cent)** or **completely able (14 per cent)** to meet these.

The capacity to meet basic needs varies significantly according to the household profile. Adults without dependents (**26 per cent**) are more likely than average to be **completely** able to meet their basic needs, as are respondents who have a **master's level degree or higher** and those who cited **income from employment** among their main sources of funds during the last month (**22 per cent** each). Conversely, the share of those **meeting their basic needs only a little or not at all** increases significantly among **single adults with dependents** and among **older persons (46 and 53 per cent respectively)**.

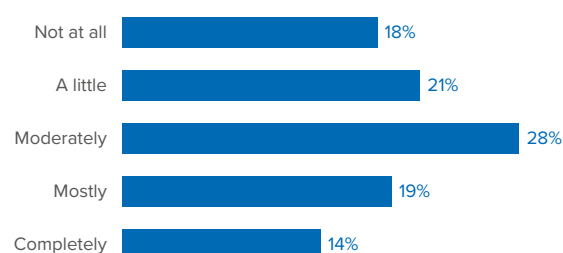
Compared with refugees hosted in other European countries that are not adjacent to Ukraine, **refugees in Croatia were more likely to indicate they have not been able to cover their basic needs** in the last three months (**39 per cent** in Croatia vs. 33 per cent regionally).

SOURCES OF INCOME*



*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can exceed 100%.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS IN LAST 3 MONTHS



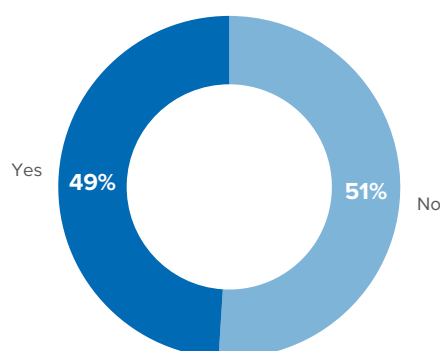
Accommodation

According to recent official statistics, some 81 per cent of refugees from Ukraine are living in private accommodation, with a further 12 per cent in government-subsidised private housing, and the remaining 7 per cent living in collective accommodation run by the Civil Protection Directorate. Around a quarter of survey respondents reported living in **collective accommodation provided by the Croatian Government (24 per cent)**, exceeding the national ratio as the survey was promoted by UNHCR and partners more routinely in touch with this group than with refugees in privately rented accommodation. The most common arrangement reported by refugees is still **renting accommodation on their own (40 per cent of all respondents)**, while **12 per cent reported living in a private apartment or house subsidized by the Government** (in line with the national ratio) and **11 per cent were in a hosted living arrangement** (with **7 per cent hosted by a local family** and **4 per cent by relatives or close friends**). Only a small minority was sharing accommodation with other refugees (**3 per cent**). Likewise, very few were living in a hotel or hostel rented on their own (**2 per cent**). The remaining nine per cent indicated having another form of accommodation arrangement. It is worth noting that the share of

those **renting on their own** is significantly higher among respondents receiving salaries or earnings from employment (**48 per cent**, compared with 28 per cent among those who do not report salary or earnings from employment as a source of income).

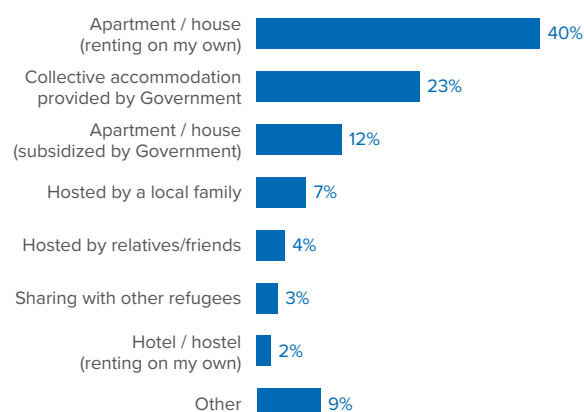
In terms of stability of current arrangements, close to half of the respondents indicated **not having a specific time limit on their current arrangement or being able to stay until they secure long-term accommodation (48 per cent)**. Close to one in ten were planning to stay in their current accommodation **more than three months (9 per cent)**, while a similar share was able to stay for **up to three months** from the moment of the survey (**8 per cent**, half of which reported they were required to leave within one month). Just over one in three (**34 per cent**) **did not know how long** they were planning to remain in their current home. The main reasons for having to leave over the coming quarter included rental or grace period running out (indicated by 30 per cent of those intending to leave within three months), having been asked to leave (28 per cent), and **not being able to pay the rent (25 per cent of those intending to move within three months)**.

ONE OR MORE ACCOMMODATION CHANGES SINCE ARRIVING IN CROATIA



*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can exceed 100%.

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION



Almost half of the respondents had already **changed accommodation** since they first arrived in Croatia (**49 per cent**, rising to **64 per cent** of those who were currently **renting on their own**). On average, those who have changed accommodation have done so **twice**, and the main reason given is the **high cost** of rent (**32 per cent**), followed by **better accommodation** offered (**26 per cent**); improved **employment opportunities** (**19 per cent**); shorter **distance from school** (**16 per cent**), and poor **accommodation conditions** (**15 per cent**).

Compared with refugees across other countries in Europe non-neighbouring Ukraine, **refugees in Croatia are more likely to be renting on their own** (43 per cent vs. 31 per cent regionally) and are **less likely to be in hosted accommodation arrangements** by local families or relatives/friends (11 per cent vs. 20 per cent regionally).

UNHCR visiting the Jaskov Centre accommodating refugees from Ukraine with specific needs. ©UNHCR/J. Kapic



Refugees' intentions

- While more than half of the refugees surveyed reported hoping to return to Ukraine one day, more than a third were undecided about returning to Ukraine and around a tenth reported no hope of returning.
- Those who had no hope of returning are more likely to be men, more recently displaced, economically active in Croatia, without a spouse or children still living in Ukraine, and without information on the status of their dwelling in Ukraine.
- Conversely, older adults are more likely to be hoping to return one day to Ukraine. This is also the case of those who left Ukraine earlier, and those who have visited the country at least once since they were displaced.
- The main impediments to return reported by refugees appear to be security concerns and occupation of the territory where they were living, but also lack of access to electricity and water, lack of work and livelihood opportunities and lack of access to functioning health services.

Overall intentions

The survey collected information about refugees' plans in the short-term (the next three months) as well as their intentions and hopes regarding return to Ukraine in the future. Although the majority of refugees **hope to return** to Ukraine one day (**56 per cent**), only 2 per cent said they were planning to return to Ukraine in the next three months. Over a third expressed **indecision about returning** to Ukraine one day (**35 per cent**), and one in twelve stated that they had **no hope of returning** to their country (**8 per cent**).

Among those who are not planning to return to Ukraine in the three months following the survey, more than four in five are planning to **stay in Croatia (82 per cent)**. Only a small minority are planning to **move to a third country (3 per cent)**,

while one in seven are **undecided** about whether they will stay in Croatia or move somewhere else (**15 per cent**).

When comparing intentions of refugees in Croatia, these differ from average findings among refugees hosted in countries in Europe that do not neighbour Ukraine.⁹ Indeed, among refugees hosted in Croatia, **a lower proportion reported planning to return over the coming quarter** (2 per cent in Croatia vs. 12 per cent regionally). A similar share indicated hoping to return to Ukraine one day (56 per cent in Croatia vs. 57 per cent regionally) and a higher share of refugees in Croatia were undecided about returning to Ukraine one day compared with the regional average (35 per cent vs. 24 per cent).

Specific demographics characterise each of these four profiles:

9. See regional intentions report published in July 2023, [Lives on Hold #4](#).

- **Those planning to return in the next three months** are more likely to have a **partially damaged dwelling** in their place of origin (indicating that refugees may be planning to return to take care of their property) and are more likely to be living in **subsidized accommodation or in a hosted arrangement** by local families or relatives/friends.
- **Those who were hoping to return permanently to Ukraine one day** are more likely to be **older persons**, which is likely due to the higher vulnerability older people face during displacement, and their dependency on pensions as their main source of income. This group is also more likely **to have left Ukraine earlier**; to have **originated from Kyiv city and from the south of Ukraine**, and to have **visited Ukraine** at least once since they were displaced, which likely means they had more information about the situation in the place of origin.
- **Those who were undecided about returning to Ukraine** are more likely to be **economically active**; to have **not visited Ukraine** since they

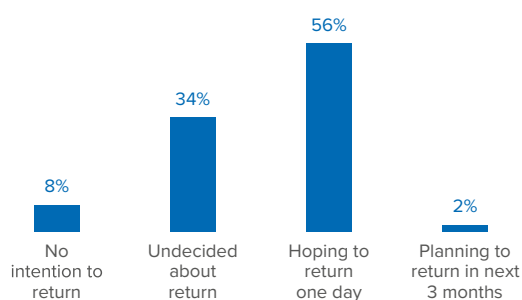
were displaced, and to be **unaware of the status of their dwelling** back in Ukraine.

Indecision about return is likely linked to having less information about the situation in the place of origin.

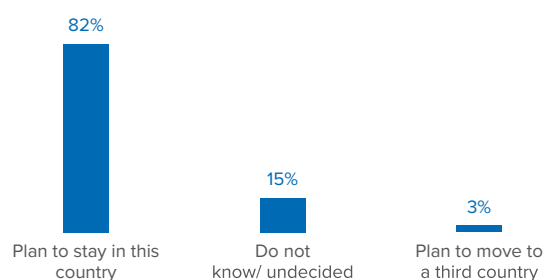
- **Those who did not have any hope of returning permanently to Ukraine** are more likely to **have been displaced more recently**; to be **men**; to be **economically active**; to have a **spouse or children still living in Ukraine**, and to have **no information regarding the status of their dwelling** back in Ukraine.

Those displaced from the north of Ukraine were more likely than those displaced from elsewhere in the country to be planning to return to Ukraine in the next three months (4 per cent), while those from the south and from Kyiv city were more likely than those displaced from elsewhere to have hope of returning permanently to Ukraine one day. Conversely, those from the west were most likely to be undecided about returning permanently to Ukraine (45 per cent) and were also the most likely

REFUGEES' RETURN INTENTIONS

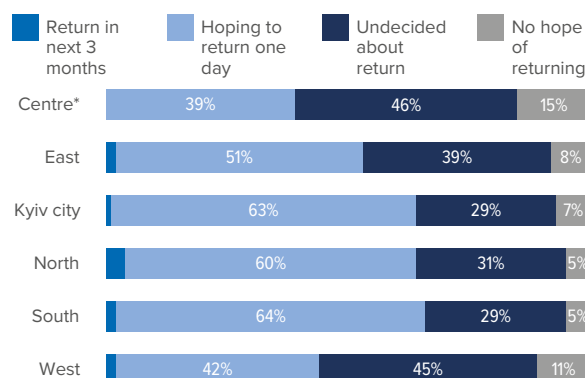


PLANS FOR NEXT 3 MONTHS*



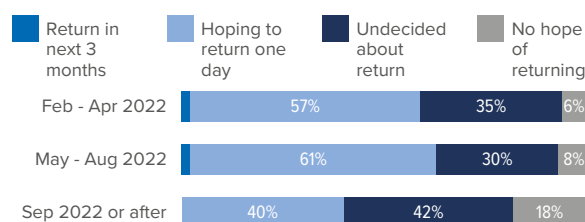
*among those not planning to return to Ukraine in next 3 months

REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY REGION OF ORIGIN



*Small base (<30 respondents)

REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY MONTH OF DISPLACEMENT



*Small base (<50 respondents)

not to have hope of returning permanently (11 per cent). Intentions also vary according to duration of displacement. Those who were **displaced more recently**, since September 2022 or later, were more likely to report having **no hope of returning** than those displaced earlier (**17 vs. 7 per cent** of those displaced prior to September 2022).

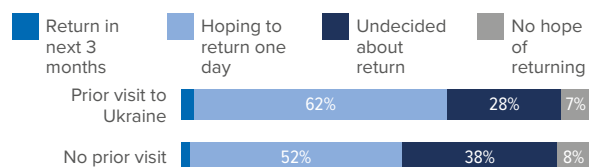
Return intentions also appear to depend on the status of refugees' dwellings back in Ukraine. Those who have a **partially damaged dwelling** in Ukraine were more likely to be **planning to return in the next three months (7 vs. 2 per cent)**. In turn, those who have a **fully damaged or uninhabitable dwelling** in Ukraine did not have return plans in the short-term but were the **most likely to have hope of returning in the future (70 vs. 58 per cent on average)**. Those who have a dwelling in Ukraine, but did not have information about its current state,

were the most likely to be undecided about returning (43 per cent) or to have no hope of returning permanently (12 per cent).

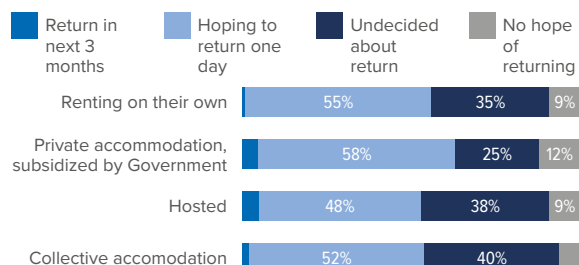
Intentions also vary depending on refugees' situation in Croatia. In terms of housing arrangements, although they remain a minority, those living in **subsidized accommodation** or who are in **hosted arrangements** by local families or relatives/friends were five times **more likely** to have **plans to return in the short term** than those who are renting accommodation on their own (**5 vs. 1 per cent**). Regarding economic activity, those who were **active in the labour market**¹⁰ were **less likely to be planning return or to have hope of returning** compared to those who were not active in the labour market (full-time caregivers or retirees) (**52 vs. 76 per cent**). By gender, **men** – who are more likely to be economically active – were **less likely than women** to report having **plans to return or hopes of returning** to Ukraine (**50 vs. 60 per cent**).

10. This refers to those who are working (or in professional training) and those who are unemployed but looking for work, as per [ILO](#) definitions.

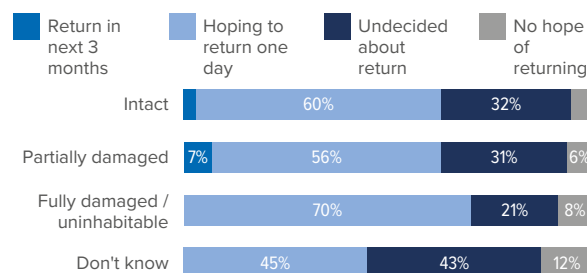
REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY PRIOR VISIT TO UKRAINE SINCE THE START OF THE WAR



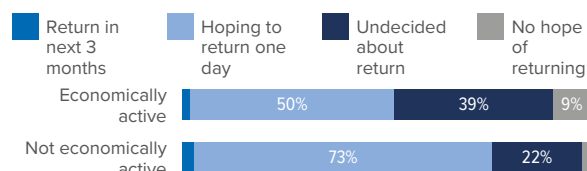
REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY HOUSING ARRANGEMENT IN CROATIA



REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY DWELLING STATUS IN UKRAINE



REFUGEES' INTENTIONS BY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



Drivers and enablers of return

Respondents who indicated hoping to return someday or being undecided about returning to Ukraine were asked to evaluate a series of factors which would influence their decision to return. The percentages presented below correspond to those who reported certain factors as influencing their decision to return either ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot.’

Predictably, the key factors that would enable refugees to return to Ukraine are linked to the improvement of the security situation in the country. The two factors which would most influence refugees to return to Ukraine are an **absence of security concerns** and an **end to the occupation of the territory** in the place where they were living (each cited by **78 per cent** of respondents). These factors are followed closely by an **end or political solution to the war**; **access to electricity and water services** (each considered influential by **75 per cent** of respondents), and **work and livelihood opportunities (73 per cent)**. **Access to functioning health services** would influence **70 per cent** of respondents either ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ in their decision to return, while **67 per cent** would be greatly or quite influenced by **freedom of movement** within Ukraine.

Occupation of the territory is particularly influential among respondents who had made a **prior visit** to Ukraine since the start of the war (85 per cent vs. 78 per cent on average), while it is seen as less influential among those who left the country after August 2022 (62 per cent vs. 78 on average). Respondents coming from **Kyiv city** are more likely than those displaced from other regions to be

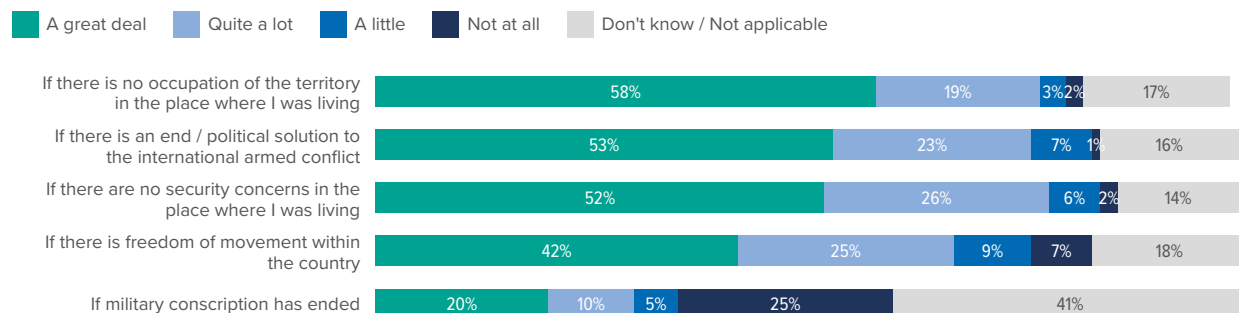
influenced to return by a **political solution** to the war (85 per cent vs. 75 per cent on average). In turn, this factor would have less influence on respondents who do not know the status of their dwelling in Ukraine (59 per cent vs. 75 per cent on average).

Access to electricity and water services would have a greater influence on the decision to return among respondents coming from **Kyiv city** compared to those displaced from eastern Ukraine (85 per cent vs. 65 per cent). **Work and livelihood opportunities** would be particularly important among households composed of **two or more adults with dependents** (82 per cent vs. 73 per cent on average) and **unemployed** respondents (87 per cent vs. 73 per cent on average). **Access to functioning health services** would be particularly influential for respondents who are **economically inactive** (87 per cent vs. 70 per cent on average) and would be comparatively less influential for those living in a household composed of **one or more adults without dependents** (54 per cent) and those able to meet their basic needs (60 per cent). Respondents with a **master’s level degree or PhD** and those who are **economically active** are more likely to say their decision on whether to return permanently to Ukraine would be greatly or quite influenced by **freedom of movement within the country** (75 per cent and 70 per cent respectively), whereas respondents who left Ukraine recently (since September 2022) find this less important in their decision-making (52 per cent), much like those struggling to cover their basic needs (57 per cent).

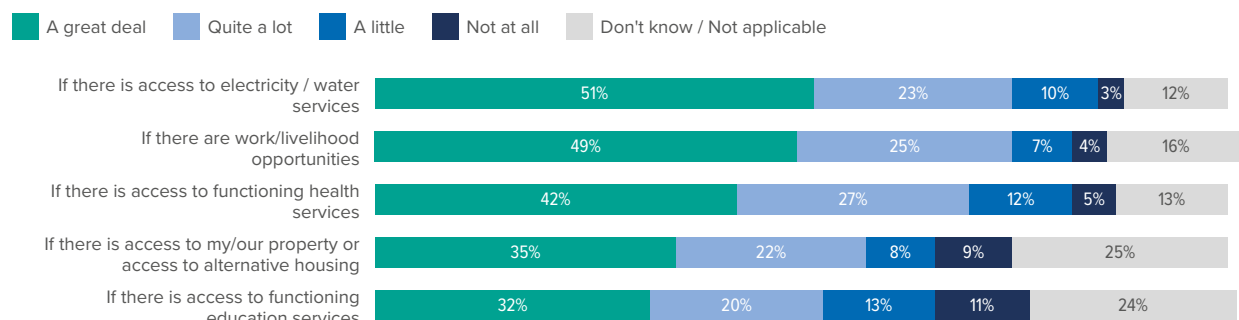
LEVEL OF INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT FACTORS ON DECISIONS REGARDING RETURN*

*Respondents were presented with a list of factors and asked: 'How much would your decision on whether to return permanently or not to Ukraine depend on the following:'

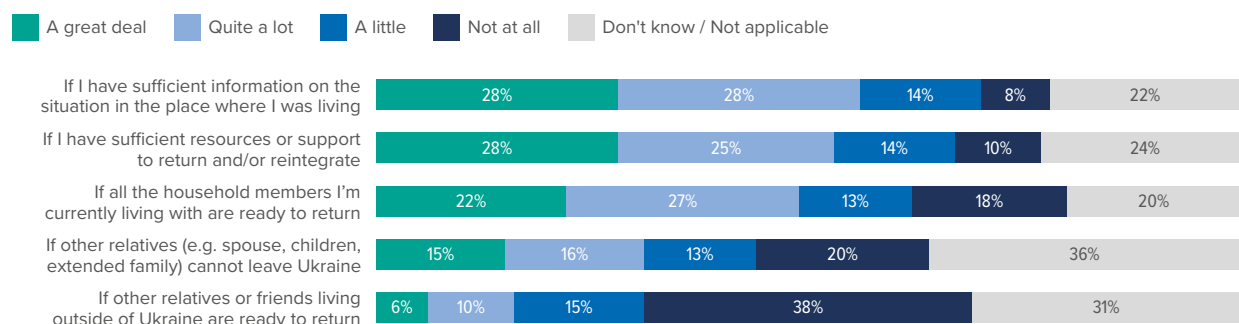
Security



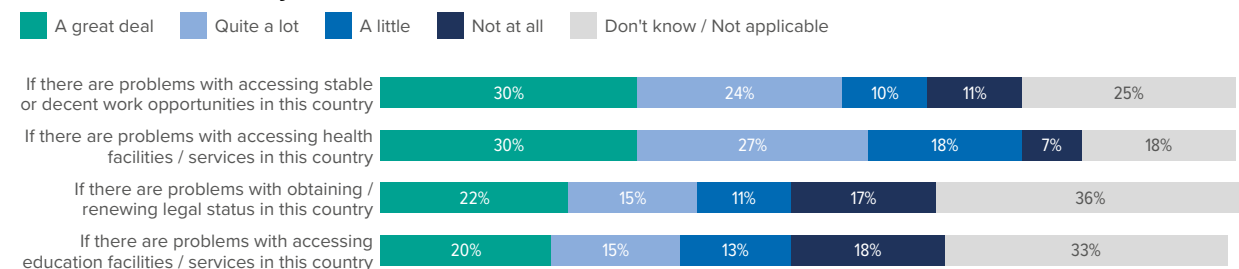
Basic services, housing and livelihoods



Information and personal circumstances



Situation in host country

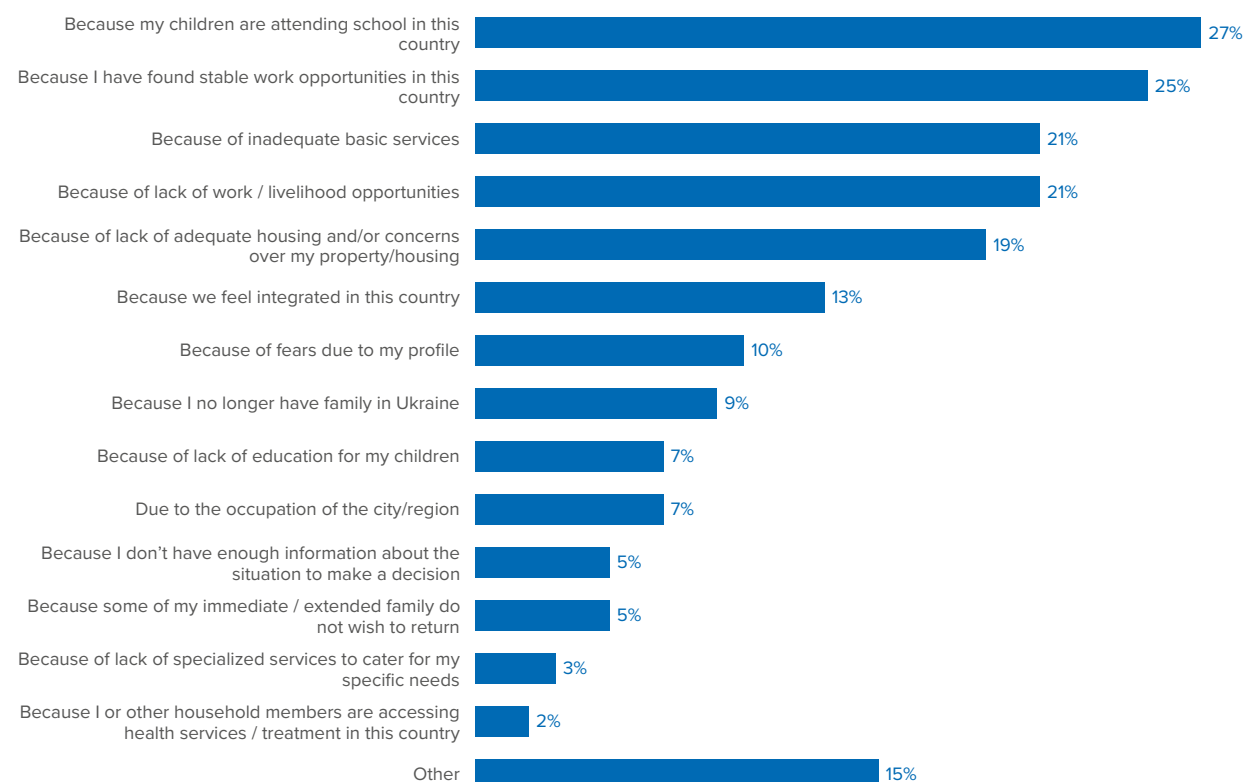


Self-reported reasons for a lack of hope of returning

Respondents who said they had no hope of returning to Ukraine one day were asked to provide their top three reasons for this. Similar to the findings regarding main enablers for return, the most frequent reason cited was **safety and security concerns**, mentioned by over two thirds of respondents (**68 per cent**). Other reasons include having **children who are attending school** in

Croatia (**27 per cent**) and having found **stable work opportunities** in Croatia (**25 per cent**). About one fifth explained that they did not have hope of returning permanently to Ukraine on account of **inadequate basic services** and **lack of work or livelihood opportunities in Ukraine** (each cited by **21 per cent**), or because of **inadequate housing** there (**19 per cent**).

REASONS FOR A LACK OF HOPE OF RETURNING TO UKRAINE SOME DAY*



*Respondents who indicated having no hope of returning permanently to Ukraine in the future were asked: 'What are the three main reasons why you are not hoping to return permanently to Ukraine?'

INTENTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN CROATIA

December 2023



UNHCR Croatia

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