

Ad hoc Report: Situation in Ukraine and Displacement to the EU+: Trends, Drivers and Future Prospects

5 September 2025

This report draws on EUAA's EPS data on the asylum situation, Eurostat data on temporary protection, EUAA surveys of persons displaced from Ukraine, a Gradus Research Company survey with Ukrainians in Ukraine, interview with an expert, and open-source information. We try to assess what EU institutions and Member States should prepare for during the winter of 2025-2026. The report does not aim to be comprehensive or in-depth but provides a situational awareness picture.

Key findings



Despite slow but steady Russian advances in the East and heavy strikes, Ukraine sustains morale through deep own drone attacks, innovation and broad rejection of Moscow's terms. The high-level summits of US President Trump have not delivered any progress towards peace in practice.



Although, due to war fatigue, territorial concessions might seem acceptable to some Ukrainians, generally they are seen as rewarding aggression and encouraging further violence in the future as the trust in possible Western security guarantees is limited. Despite recent protests, until the active phase of the war continues, Ukrainian society will not support changing its Head of State.



Some 4.5 million Ukrainians were benefitting from temporary protection in the EU+ by the end of June 2025 but most of them had left Ukraine in 2022. Decisions granting temporary protection declined in the first half of 2025, while the number of internally displaced persons in Ukraine (3.3 million) has remained stable.



Most Ukrainian refugees in the EU+ remain in Germany and Poland. Safety and work opportunities have been the primary pull factors, the latter especially for younger people. Presence of social networks also played a major role, especially for older generations.



Return intentions decreased, in particular among men, younger people, those unaccompanied by a partner and those employed in the host country. Family reunification and the desire to return home to their previous lives appear as the main motivations both for Ukrainians in the EU+ who consider returning and those who have already returned. Beyond the security and economic situation in Ukraine, opportunities and integration in the host country also prevent Ukrainians from returning.



Despite war weariness, motivation to resist remains remarkably high in Ukraine. Most people stayed and society has adapted to the daily war realities. Energy problems due to Russian attacks persist but Ukraine seeks to secure alternative sources, such as gas imports.



Intentions to leave for residence abroad remain at a low and stable level. The part of the population that could consider emigrating abroad in case of a war escalation appears also relatively low. The Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces outlined plans for a Russian autumn offensive.¹ Only a major change in the evolution of the war, particularly large territorial gains of Russia close to or in larger cities that such an offensive might lead to, could trigger a shift in opinions and lead to a larger migration wave towards the EU+.

Current situation in Ukraine in the context of the continuing Russian invasion

Latest developments on the battlefield

Russian forces have made incremental territorial gains in eastern Ukraine over the past three months, advancing only a few hundred square miles through offensives with many casualties.² Much of the territory taken has been uninhabitable for years³ but these **limited gains** have **placed Ukrainian defenders under severe strain**, forcing understrength units to consider withdrawals from key positions such as Pokrovsk in Donetsk Oblast.⁴ Furthermore, **Russia has continued targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure**,⁵ disrupting winter preparations.⁶ A tenth of Ukraine's homes are damaged.⁷

Ukraine has responded with a series of long-range strikes deep into Russian territory, targeting military bases and critical infrastructure with drone technology.⁸ In recent weeks, Ukrainian drones have hit Russian oil refineries, a fuel depot and a drone storage and launch site, demonstrating Kyiv's ability to strike far beyond the front line.⁹ In June, a coordinated attack destroyed several Russian strategic bombers at airfields in Siberia and the Arctic ([map](#)) – an unprecedented blow to Russia's air power on its home soil.¹⁰ Independent reporting confirms **such operations have bolstered morale across Ukraine**¹¹ by showing that Russia is not immune from the unprovoked war it launched.

Geopolitical update

Since mid-July 2025, **US President Donald Trump has shifted** from threatening Russia with sweeping sanctions and ultimatums **to pursuing high-profile summitry** with Presidents Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy. After initially issuing a 50-day deadline for Russia to halt its war – later shortened to just 10 days¹² – **Trump met Putin in Alaska on 15 August**, praising the talks as “very productive” despite the absence of a ceasefire or breakthrough.¹³ Moscow reiterated demands that Ukraine cede occupied territory and abandon NATO membership aspirations.¹⁴

Days later in Washington, Zelenskyy and European leaders joined Trump in exploring a US-led “Article 5-style” security guarantee for Ukraine,¹⁵ **though the Kremlin quickly rejected the idea unless Russia itself was included**.¹⁶ Trump also publicly suggested Ukraine should not expect to regain Crimea or join NATO, a stance welcomed in Moscow but raising alarm in Kyiv.¹⁷ He threatened secondary sanctions on Russian oil buyers, with India insisting that it needs Russian oil to meet the energy needs of its fast-growing economy.¹⁸

Mixed signals have persisted since. US officials portray the summits as successful, but the Kremlin has contradicted key US claims while pushing maximalist demands.¹⁹ European leaders, meanwhile, have used meetings in Washington to re-emphasise unity behind Ukraine and caution against premature concessions.²⁰ **As the geopolitical situation evolves with little tangible progress, the Russian invasion continues unabated** on the ground and with widespread bombing and droning of Ukrainian cities and civilians.²¹ In fact, Russian missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian cities have increased sharply in 2025 ([chart](#)),²² including a strike on an American owned electronics plant,²³ underscoring that Moscow shows little genuine interest in peace.²⁴ In late August, Russian airstrikes in Kyiv damaged the EU's delegation office and the nearby British Council.²⁵

Territorial concessions

The ‘territorial taboo’ remains a defining principle: **concessions are seen as rewarding aggression, undermining international law and encouraging further violence.**²⁶ This explains why Trump’s calls for land-for-peace deals have found little traction. Ukrainian public opinion,²⁷ leadership²⁸ and most international scholarship²⁹ confirm that territorial concessions would entrench Russian gains rather than secure lasting peace.³⁰

Nonetheless, **survey data suggest a gradual rise in the proportion of Ukrainians who would accept limited territorial loss if it guaranteed peace and preserved independence** ([chart](#)).³¹ **Even so around half of the population insist that no territory should be conceded under any circumstances.**³² Critically, according to an interviewed expert, the Ukrainian military—having fought for three years to defend these lands—remains firmly opposed to concessions.³³

The situation in Russian-occupied areas illustrate why. Civilians face forced ‘passportisation’ under threat of expulsion, abductions of children for deportation to Russia and military-patriotic indoctrination, suppression of Ukrainian language and culture, and forced re-education through Russian propaganda and school curricula.³⁴ Such deliberate and widespread actions to ‘convince’ the residents of occupied areas that they are in fact not Ukrainians, but Russians who have finally been ‘liberated’ is widely described as a form of cultural genocide.³⁵ On top of that, evidence is also mounting about Russian tactics of ‘grisly’ sexual torture against Ukrainian civilians³⁶ demonstrating that Russian occupation brings not peace but deprivation and coercion. In the longer run, however, it could be expected that inhabitants that did not flee the occupied regions, would eventually accept and adapt to a new Russian order, in particular the older generation has experienced the USSR, as they ultimately need to create an economic perspective for themselves and their families.

Domestic politics

Internal governance pressures intensified in 2025.³⁷ Passage of the July NABU law weakening anti-corruption institutions triggered the largest protests against the Ukrainian government since the start of the full-scale invasion.³⁸ The demonstrations highlighted how **the demand for integrity and accountability is now almost as strong as the demand for a just peace.** They also sent a signal to international partners about the existence of an active civil society in Ukraine³⁹ since **civil society organisations, which muted criticism during the first years of the war, are increasingly vocal,** warning against concentration of power and the erosion of checks and balances. While initially the protests triggered a decline in trust in President Zelenskyy, **society will not support the idea of holding elections or changing the Head of State due to the thread of internal division** and as long as the active phase of the war continues.⁴⁰

At the same time, conceptual work is already taking place to rebuild a new Ukraine⁴¹ and prepare for integrating returns.⁴² Local governments and the business community are stepping into governance gaps, investing in housing, education, and health initiatives to support both displaced populations and returns.⁴³

Displacement

Overall displacement

Some **5.7 million Ukrainians were displaced abroad as of the end of July 2025, excluding those in Russia** (1.2 million based on estimate from mid-June 2023).⁴⁴ The EUAA Surveys with Arriving Migrants from Ukraine (SAM – UKR)⁴⁵ indicate that **most displaced persons from Ukraine left the country in 2022** (80%), particularly in March, the month immediately following the Russian invasion. Departures from Ukraine in subsequent years were significantly and consistently lower, with only 13% leaving in 2023, 6% in 2024 and 1% in 2025, which is in line with the trend in registrations for temporary protection in the EU+ (see next section). **Those who left were mainly from the regions directly affected by the war:** East (Kharkiv, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia Oblasts), South (Odesa and Kherson Oblasts) and Central (Kyiv Oblast and Kyiv city) macro-regions of Ukraine. **About a quarter had already experienced internal displacement before crossing international borders.** The profile of those who left slightly shifted over time – those with children tended to leave during earlier waves in 2022, while the proportion of men increased in later waves in comparison to women, namely in 2024.

As of July 2025, there were 3.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Ukraine, a number that has remained stable over more than the past year.⁴⁶ This represents approximately a tenth of the population currently living in the country.⁴⁷ A survey conducted in August 2025 by Gradus⁴⁸ points to a similar share of displaced persons (10%). According to the survey results, **the majority of Ukrainians (76%) have remained in their pre-war homes since the onset of the full-scale invasion** by Russia, with the highest stability in the west and central regions (Fig. 1). **Fourteen percent of the population that had relocated (internally or externally) have already returned.**

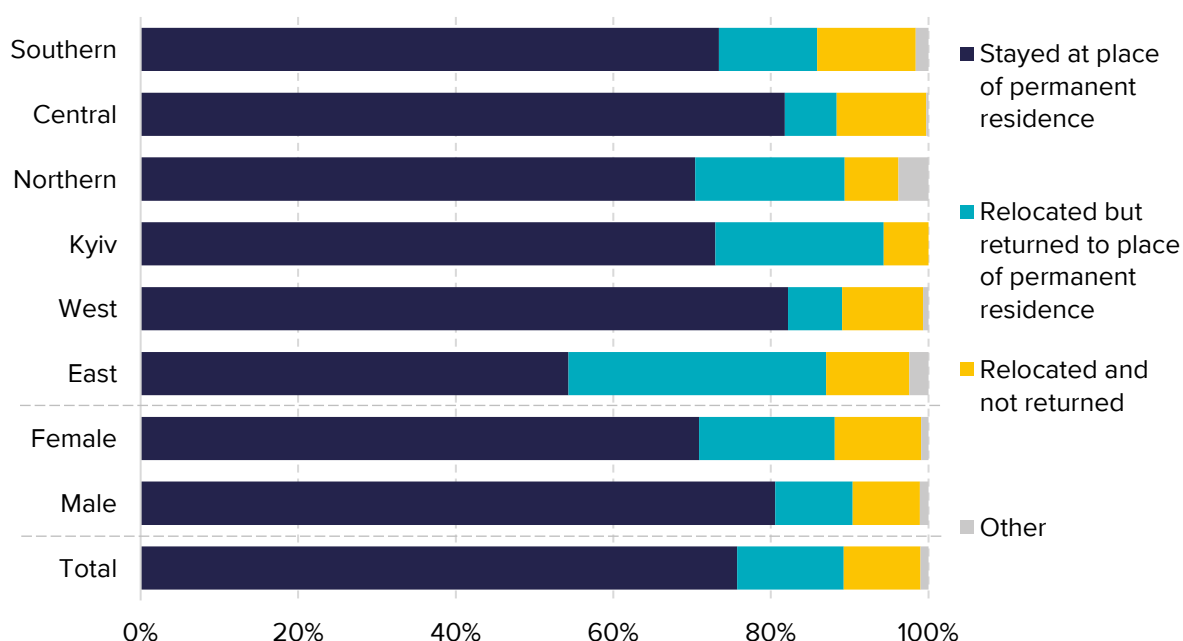


Figure 1: Internal movements of Ukrainians in Ukraine: overall, by sex and region, reported in August 2025 (Source: EUAA/Gradus)

Among those who relocated – including those who returned – most came from Kyiv and frontline and high-risk regions, such as Donetsk and Kharkiv. **The majority (69%) relocated to another oblast in Ukraine, 16% relocated within the same oblast, and 15% relocated abroad.** Women appeared significantly more likely to relocate internationally (21%) than men (6%) due to travel restrictions for the latter. Of those who left their permanent place of residence and have not returned to the same oblast, two fifths came from Kyiv and the Poltava and Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk) regions, while the remaining three fifths came from a range of other oblasts.

Ukrainian displacement to the EU+

At the end of June 2025, around 4.5 million persons in the EU+ were [beneficiaries of temporary protection](#).⁴⁹ Some 284,000 **decisions granting temporary protection** were issued in the EU+ in the first half of 2025 (Fig. 2).⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the overall number **declined in January – June 2025 (-26%) compared to both the previous six-month period (-26%) and the first half of 2024 (-23%).** They remained relatively stable throughout January – June 2025, except for an increase in June. Overall, **most decisions were still issued in Germany, Poland and Czechia but in June an increase in Poland made it the top receiving country.**

Registrations for temporary protection continued to outnumber asylum applications lodged by Ukrainians. In the first half of 2025, Ukrainians lodged almost 16,000 asylum applications in the EU+, in line with the previous six months, yet significantly above (+29%) the first half of 2024. **Eight in 10 Ukrainian applications were lodged in France and Poland.** The recognition rate for Ukrainian asylum seekers was 73% in the first six months of 2025, in line with 2024 and with some notable differences across EU+ countries.⁵¹

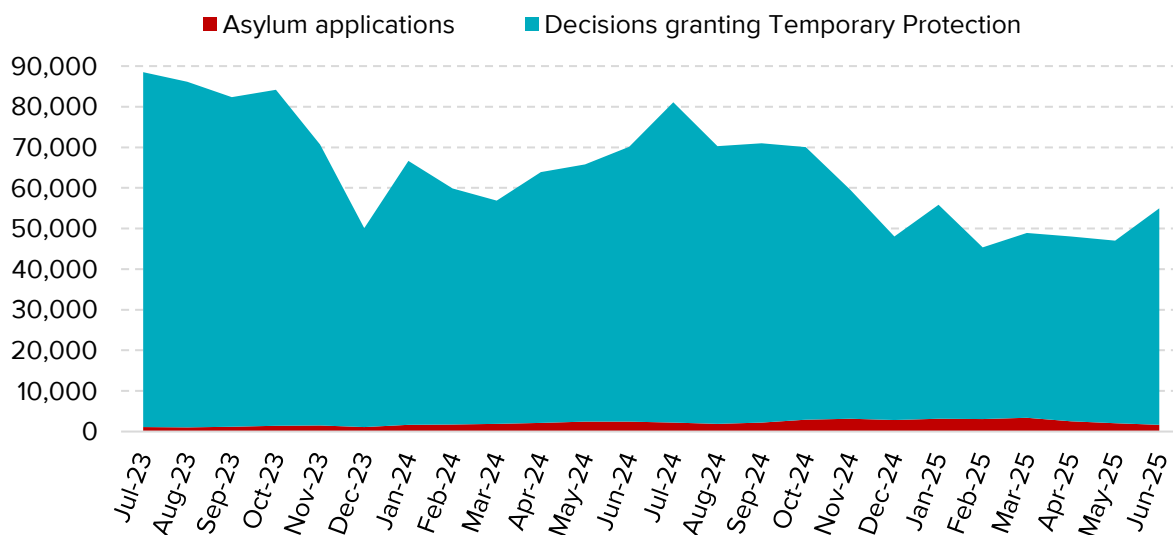


Figure 2: Ukrainian asylum applications in the EU+ and decisions granting temporary protection in the EU+, July 2023 – June 2025 (Source: EUAA EPS and Eurostat)

The main reasons for leaving Ukraine were concerns about personal and family safety and well-being, followed by direct military attacks, fear of potential attacks and issues related to physical, mental or psychological health, such as anxiety, trauma or illness.⁵²

Factors influencing the choice of host countries

In line with the pattern of registrations for temporary protection in the EU+, respondents in SAM – UKR were mainly residing in Germany (27%) and Poland (18%), with smaller numbers living in Czechia, Spain, Romania, Italy and others. However, **only two thirds indicated that they were currently residing in their preferred destination within the EU+**, while one fifth remained undecided and 13% stated their current country was not their preferred destination. **Among those not at their preferred destination, more than half did not know where they would like to go.** This is particularly relevant given that many respondents had already been in the EU+ for an extended period (on average 17 months since their displacement to the time they participated in the survey), yet there has been minimal change in the proportion of those who feel they have reached their intended destination, suggesting a precarious situation, marked by long-term uncertainty about the future and ongoing challenges to integration.

Safety and work opportunities were the primary factors influencing the choice of destination country within the EU+.⁵³ The presence of diaspora, such as family and friends already residing in the host country, was also a key consideration, along with educational and language learning opportunities for both children and adults. Other important factors included access to social benefits, the language spoken in the host country, study opportunities and proximity to Ukraine.

While safety was of high importance for all, differences were found between various groups. **Older respondents (>65 years old) placed greater value on having family and friends in the host country and access to social benefits, whereas younger respondents (<45) prioritised work and educational opportunities.** Moreover, those without their partner gave more relevance to proximity to Ukraine and access to benefits, compared with respondents whose partner was with them in the EU. **Having access to benefits decreased in importance over time, while work opportunities increased in relevance** (Fig. 3).

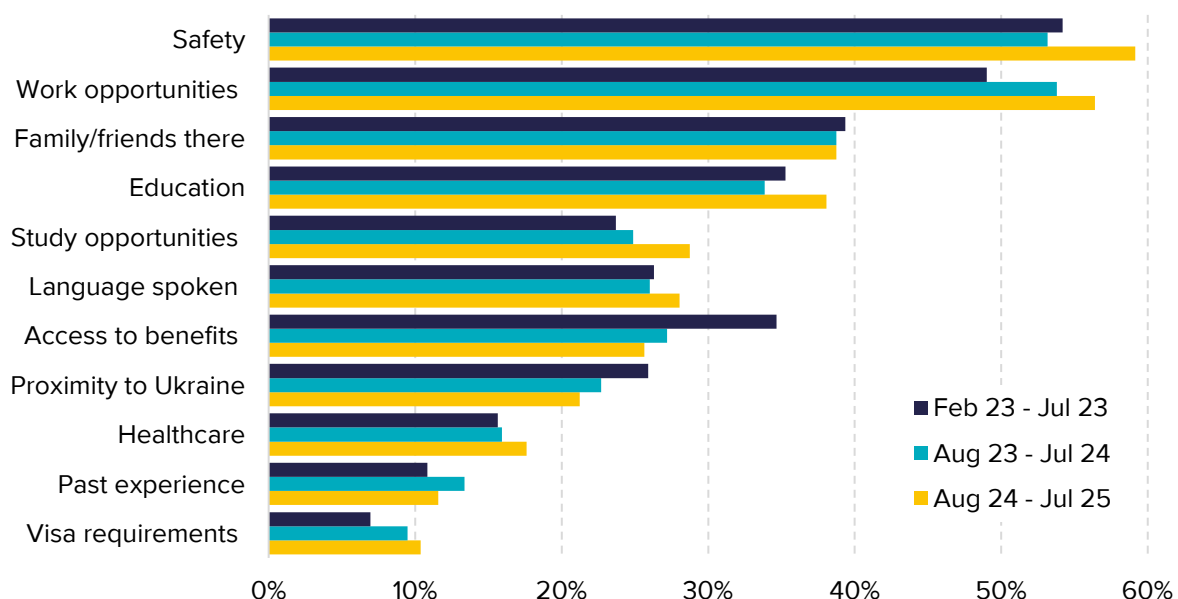


Figure 3: Drivers for selecting destination country by time of response (Source: EUAA SAM – UKR)

Beyond self-reported reasons collected via SAM – UKR, a recent study confirms the importance of job opportunities as a main driver along with having networks, while social assistance plays only a secondary role.⁵⁴ It should be noted that **many Ukrainians who currently are in Ukraine have close friends or relatives abroad**. Two thirds of respondents surveyed in August 2025⁵⁵ indicated having close ones abroad, including both close friends and family members (cousins, siblings, children, aunt/uncle, etc.) Furthermore, recent research suggests that the perception of the intended length of stay abroad (short-term vs longer-term integration) might also influence emigration choices.⁵⁶

Return to Ukraine

Visits to Ukraine

Most displaced people had not visited Ukraine since their displacement as reported by nearly two thirds of SAM – UKR respondents. Of these, almost two fifths did not intend to visit Ukraine in the near future while a quarter planned to do so. Conversely, some 37% had visited at least once, although only a tiny proportion reported frequent visits (2%).

Persons originating from the East and South macro-regions had usually never visited Ukraine, whereas those from the North and West visited more often since having been displaced. Men were more likely to have never been back to Ukraine and to not intend to go, likely due to the ongoing martial law and military registration and conscription. Women, especially those not accompanied by their partners, were more likely to have visited Ukraine.

Return intentions

The intention to visit Ukraine decreased significantly over time. Among respondents surveyed between February and July 2023, 35% expressed a desire to visit, despite never having visited Ukraine since being displaced. This proportion dropped to 23% for those surveyed between August 2023 and July 2024, and further to 16% among those surveyed between August 2024 and July 2025. These changes were reflected in an increasing proportion of respondents who do not intend to visit Ukraine (from 34% in February – July 2023 to 38% in August 2023 – July 2024 to reaching nearly half in August 2024 – July 2025). This trend may suggest that later waves were either better able to organise their departure, reducing the need for follow-up visits, or had firmly decided against returning to Ukraine. **The main reason for back-and-forth movements to Ukraine was visiting family and friends (73%),** while other less important factors included checking on property or belongings (31%), and to providing assistance to the community (13%).⁵⁷

Furthermore, **return intentions have declined over time** (Fig. 4). Among respondents surveyed more recently, one fifth was determined not to return to Ukraine, while 22% were leaning towards not returning and 31% were uncertain. In contrast, only 14% were determined to return, with further 13% leaning towards returning. The proportion of those determined not to return increased steadily over time from 5% to 12% and later to 20%. Conversely, the share of those leaning not to return increased from 12% to 15% and then to 22%. After more than three years of war, many Ukrainians now see their permanent home and life perspectives in EU host countries.

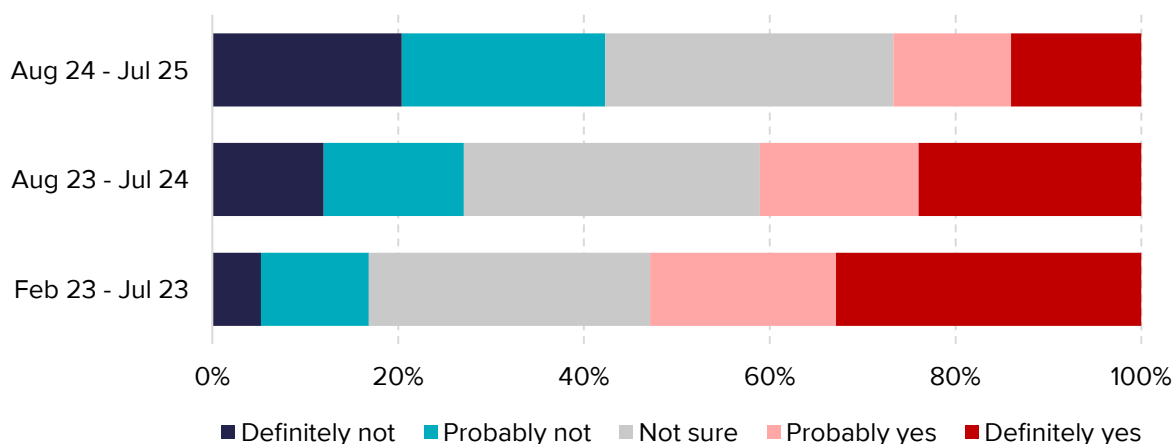


Figure 4: Desire to return to Ukraine over time by time of response (Source: EUAA SAM – UKR)

Although intentions to return declined steadily across all demographic groups, notable differences were observed. **Men, younger respondents, those unaccompanied by a partner and those employed in the host country were less likely to return.** Overall, 22% of men stated they would definitely not return, compared with only 8% of women, while 27% of women reported they would definitely return, compared with 17% of men. Age differences were also significant with 30% of younger respondents (<45) indicating they were determined or leaning towards not returning, compared with just 12% of older respondents (>65), mirroring larger rates of older respondents (70%) planning to return, compared with younger (38%). Among those accompanied by a partner, 38% planned to return, compared with 54% of those without their partner, with the corresponding differences in intentions to not return (32% with and 16% without partner). Finally, those working remotely for Ukraine (55%) or not employed (45%) were more likely to return compared with those employed in the host country (35%) or remotely for another country (30%). Indeed, those not employed were twice more willing to return than not to, with those working remotely for Ukraine almost three times more willing to return.

Reasons for return

Among displaced persons in the EU+ who intended to return to Ukraine in the future,⁵⁸ the main motivations⁵⁹ were reuniting with family and friends (57%), resuming previous lives (55%) and contributing to the country's reconstruction (48%). Hopes that safety and economic conditions in Ukraine will improve in the near future also played a certain role. Similarly, **among Ukrainian returnees from abroad,⁶⁰ the leading reasons for return were the desire to be at home** (cited by 51% of the respondents)⁶¹ **and family reunification (46%).** In addition, **challenges related to integration abroad**, such as language, cultural and bureaucratic barriers **were also among the key reasons for some (36%).** Specific individual considerations included personal challenges, such as dissatisfaction with living conditions abroad, inability to find work and medical circumstances, as well as a sense of opportunity, improved circumstances and responsibility to family or country. However, it is essential to consider that these findings are based on a limited sample size.

Among Ukrainians in the EU+, **the principal barriers to return were concerns about security (62%) and the deterioration of economic situation in Ukraine (63%),** alongside better opportunities for respondents themselves (58%) and for their families (57%) in the host

country.⁶² Such integration assessments were made mainly by respondents in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Slovenia and Spain.

Public mood and prospects

War fatigue

After three years of brutal aggression, nearly all **Ukrainians are understandably weary**.⁶³ However, awareness of Russia's superiority in size, population and industrial base has not diminished their determination.⁶⁴ Many see the war as genocidal, aimed at erasing Ukraine's statehood, and this fuels internal mobilisation rather than resignation.⁶⁵ Optimism also stems from rapid innovation in drones and robotics, which Ukrainians hope can offset Russia's material superiority.⁶⁶

Motivation to resist remains remarkably high. By late 2023, society had accepted the likelihood of a prolonged war, and that mindset has endured.⁶⁷ A recent Gallup polling suggested that **only 24% of Ukrainians still favour fighting until victory**,⁶⁸ but this does not mean surrender, quite the opposite as **76% categorically reject Moscow's terms**,⁶⁹ showing **resilience rather than defeatism**. Surveys suggest that there is a declining belief that lost territories can be regained purely by force; instead, there is growing emphasis on sustained sanctions⁷⁰ pursuing economic isolation to weaken Russia.⁷¹

Despite hardship, Ukrainian society has adapted⁷² **to daily war conditions**,⁷³ but concerns over education⁷⁴ and health care⁷⁵ remain acute alongside high living costs and limited job opportunities.⁷⁶ Still, according to an expert, many businesses are innovating – opening training centres to upskill workers and launching accommodation schemes to support displaced families and returning staff.⁷⁷ Remote work has also become more widespread, offering more safety to employees and access to relevant skills for employers.⁷⁸

Emigration intentions

Among Ukrainians in Ukraine, the intention to leave their country in the short term (within six months) **for temporary or permanent residence abroad has remained consistently low**. Just over a tenth of respondents in several waves of surveys conducted in Ukraine between August 2024 and June 2025 expressed such an intention.⁷⁹ Importantly, **the part of the population that could consider emigrating abroad in case of a war escalation is also relatively low**. In July, the share of people contemplating going abroad in an event of an escalation was just 11%, while 18% considered relocating internally; the majority were determined to remain at their place of residence.⁸⁰ Overall, Ukrainians seem to have adapted to the realities of war in all its aspects even though many acknowledge experiencing stress.⁸¹ New habits (security, food, consumer and social) have become deeply rooted in everyday life and have become almost automatic.⁸²

Prospects for life in Ukraine

About a half of surveyed Ukrainians in Ukraine in August 2025 believed they have attractive development prospects in their home country,⁸³ with younger adults (18-24 years old) and those living in Kyiv being more optimistic, at 63% and 62% respectively (Fig. 5). In contrast, older

respondents (55-60 years old) and those residing in the northern and central regions held a more pessimistic outlook.

Although the overall view was relatively optimistic, **parents of children under 18 were more cautious when evaluating their children's prospects**, where only 46% agreed (completely or somewhat) to the statement “My children have attractive development prospects in Ukraine”. This outlook improved among younger parents and in the western regions, where 67% and 58% of respondents, respectively, expressed higher confidence in their children's prospects, whereas only 35% of parents in the central regions agreed to the statement.

In terms of the expected duration of active hostilities in Ukraine, **many believed that active hostilities would last for years** (35% of respondents) **or found it hard to say** (37%). Fewer were more optimistic, with 16% expecting hostilities to end by the end of the current year and 12% by the end of the next year.⁸⁴

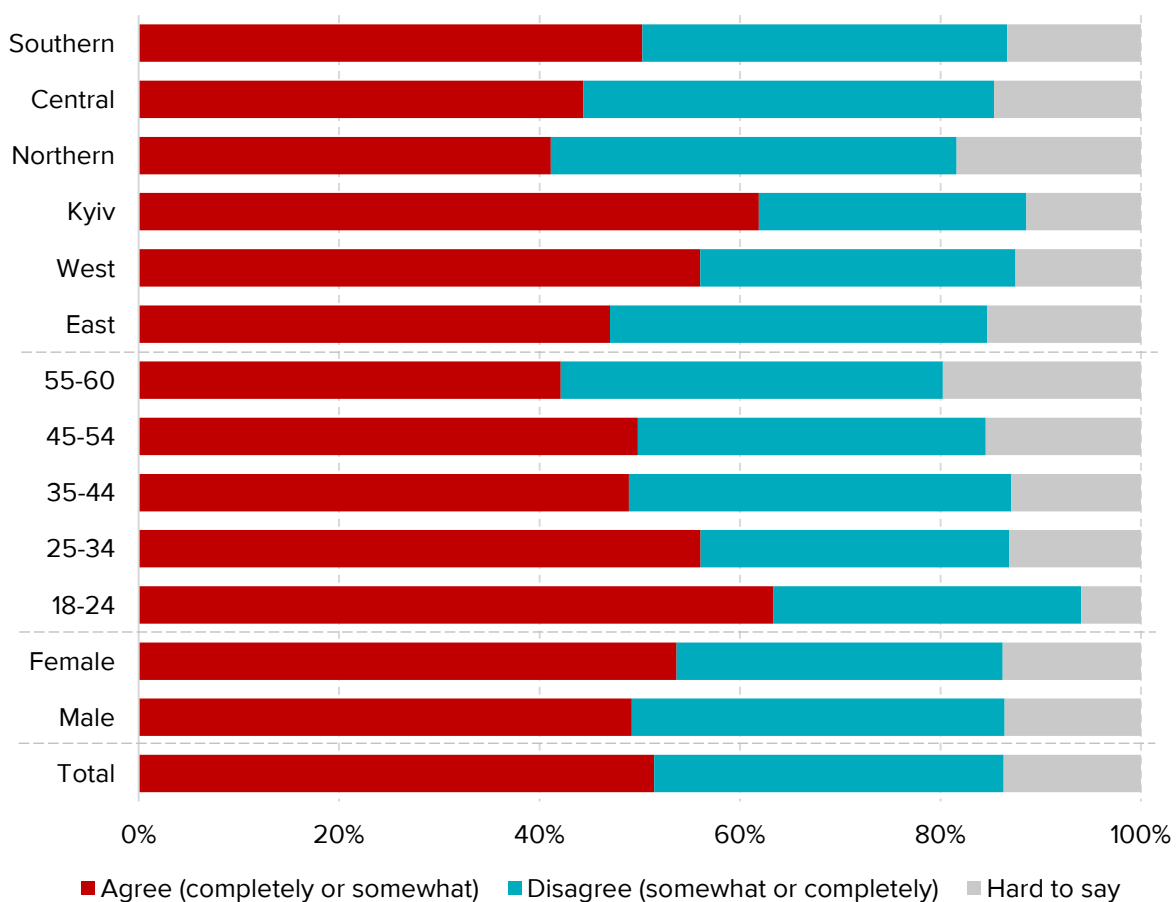


Figure 5: Evaluation of attractive development prospects in Ukraine for oneself, reported in August 2025
(Source: EUAA/Gradus)

Outlook

Although the evolution of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine remains unpredictable, and active fighting continues, on the political level negotiation attempts continue, particularly with the strong involvement of US President Donald Trump, the EU and European countries like Germany and France, and including a strong role of the United Kingdom. According to an interviewed expert, if the frontline does not move more dramatically and even if Russian air strikes on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure remain at the same intense level as at present, no major new displacement wave is to be expected. This is further supported by the fact that throughout the past year or two of the conflict the number of both internally displaced people and such seeking temporary protection in the EU+ has remained relatively stable (with some seasonal variation). Emigration intentions remained stable and low since most Ukrainians figured out how to deal with the war reality. Hence, **only a strategic change in the evolution of the war, particularly large territorial gains of Russia close to or in larger cities, could trigger a rising migration wave.** Those who wanted to leave have already done so; those who stayed, adapted to the situation.

While Ukraine is systematically preparing to ensure heating for the winter season,⁸⁵ the scale of new Russian attacks on energy infrastructure is hard to predict. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the past, **energy problems on their own are not enough to trigger a larger migration wave.** Recently gas imports (from Hungary, Slovakia and Poland) have increased,⁸⁶ while Ukrainian families are well prepared for scenarios without heating/electricity at home.⁸⁷

Even though in the short term, stable levels of new displacement to the EU+ seems the most likely scenario, **return intentions among those abroad have been declining.** The longer Ukrainians stay in EU+ countries, the higher the chances of integration there, making a potential return less desirable. Recent research suggests that while the emotional desire to come back home is present, restraining factors prevail, and **the EU's position as a place for long-term residence has been strengthened.**⁸⁸

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All numbers larger than 100 are rounded. Numbers between 101 and 1,000 are rounded to the nearest 10. Numbers between 1,001 and 10,000 are rounded to the nearest hundred. Numbers larger than 10,001 are rounded to the nearest thousand.

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