

# EUAA

## Surveys with Arriving Migrants from Ukraine: Ad hoc Report on Germany

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### Key points



**While women and children are still the majority, more men have been arriving in Germany lately.** Most respondents were women of working age from the East macro-region and Kyiv city. The gender gap narrowed in 2025–2026, and a higher share were accompanied by their spouses.



**Employment remained challenging, largely due to limited proficiency in the German language.** This is despite generally high education levels with most respondents holding a university degree. Employment, education and benefits were the main reasons to choose Germany.



**Overall, accommodation conditions remain precarious, with many families continuing to rely on institutional housing support** despite a slight increase in independent renting. Respondents from Kyiv city were more likely to be employed, to speak German and rent an accommodation at their own cost.



**A significant declining trend in return intentions appeared across the years.** While only a fifth of the respondents in Germany intended to return to Ukraine, moderate differences existed among groups. Women, elderly, unemployed and those unaccompanied by their partners were more likely to return. Macro-regions and Oblasts also moderately influenced intentions, with respondents from the East and South less likely to return.

### Introduction

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine already exceeded four years, characterised by sustained missile and drone attacks on Ukraine's energy systems and civilian infrastructure, alongside intermittent diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire. Strikes on infrastructure intensified significantly in late 2025,<sup>1</sup> disabling substantial portions of electricity generation capacity and amplifying winter vulnerability. As a result, 2025 became the deadliest year for civilians in Ukraine since 2023, with more than 2,600 fatalities reported.<sup>2</sup> In January 2026, despite the first trilateral peace talks between Ukraine, Russia and the United States in Abu Dhabi,<sup>3</sup> strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities continued. These strikes disrupted electricity and heating services for wide segments of the population amid harsh winter conditions, compounding humanitarian needs and increasing displacement pressure.<sup>4</sup> By February 2026, continuous negotiations involving Ukraine, Russia and Western mediators had yet to yield an agreement, with core territorial issues still unresolved and a comprehensive peace settlement remaining out of reach.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, the EUAA has continued to engage displaced Ukrainians through its Surveys with Arriving Migrants from Ukraine (SAM—UKR). SAM—UKR is an operational tool that collects valuable data directly from displaced individuals from Ukraine for the purpose of deeper situational awareness and evidence-based policy making. The report focuses on Germany, the top hosting country of beneficiaries of temporary protection.<sup>6</sup> Data come from approximately 1,650 participants

who indicated Germany as their current country.<sup>7</sup> Responses were collected between 9 February 2023 and 20 February 2026. The analysis covers both the total number of respondents across the entire period and developments over the three years of data collection, with particular attention given to the most recent data (2025–2026).

## Respondent profile

### Originally mostly women but recently more whole families

**Most** Ukrainians displaced by the war to Germany who participated in SAM-UKR **came from Eastern Ukraine (41%)**, mainly from Kharkiv Oblast, but also from Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, **followed by respondents from Kyiv city (19%)**. A fifth of the respondents came from the South macro-region (17%), mainly Odesa and Kherson Oblasts, and 12% came from the North macro-region.<sup>8</sup> In terms of evolution over the years, fewer respondents came from the South (16% in 2025 vs 21% in 2023).

Largely, respondents were of working age and predominantly women (68%). However, the gender distribution considerably changed over time. **In 2023, women represented 82%, compared to 18% men, while in 2025–2026, women accounted for 57%, which contributed to narrowing the gender gap in the first years of displacement.** Almost half of the respondents were married and had children with them in Germany. Nearly three quarters had their spouses or partners with them. This proportion increased over time with 72% having their spouses in 2025–2026 compared to 62% in 2023. This was particularly shaped by respondents from the East and Kyiv city. Almost half of the displaced persons from Ukraine indicated plans for family members or close friends to join them in Germany.

## Germany as a host country

### Employment barriers mainly due to low proficiency in German and non-recognised qualifications

Respondents were highly educated, with approximately three quarters holding a university

degree. The majority (90%) were employed prior to the outbreak of the war. However, at the time of responding to the survey, two thirds reported being unemployed. **Only 31% had a job in Germany**, with those from Kyiv city having a marginally higher rate comparing to other macro-regions. The remaining small proportion worked remotely for employers based in Ukraine. The share of those employed in Germany rose slightly, from 29% in 2023 to over 34% in 2025–2026. When asked about the **reasons for not being employed**, more than half of respondents identified **insufficient German language proficiency** as the primary barrier. Indeed, less than half of survey participants (45%) reported being able to speak German. **Respondents from Kyiv city showed slightly higher language proficiency rates (54%)**, while those from the South presented lower rates (42%). **Another important barrier to employment was pending recognition of professional qualifications (31%)**.

Regarding income sources, **the majority (68%, based on a three-year average) reported receiving government financial support**, while less than one third (31%) relied on income from work, pensions or businesses.<sup>9</sup> **Reliance on German government support declined from nearly three quarters in 2023 to 55% in 2025–2026**, while income from work remained broadly stable. Meanwhile, **there was a rise in borrowing money** from 2% to 14% **and greater reliance on savings**, which nearly doubled from 10% to 19% over the same period.

### Germany considered preferred destination despite housing precarity

Among those in Germany, most (75%) indicated that they were at their preferred destination outside Ukraine, therefore not intending to move to another country. This proportion increased steadily over the three years of data collection, rising from 67% in 2023 to 81% in 2025–2026. **Employment chances, followed by education opportunities for children or adults, and access to benefits and support were the top factors to choose Germany.**

In terms of accommodation, while the share of those who were renting an apartment or room at their own costs increased slightly (from 21% in 2023 to 31% in 2025–2026), overall, the situation remained precarious. **A high share of families continues to rely on government or charity-**

**provided accommodation**, a proportion that decreased only marginally over the years to 53% in 2025–2026 (down from 57% in 2023). In 2025–2026, respondents from Kyiv city were more likely to rent an accommodation at their own costs (49%), compared with other macro-regions. In particular, respondents from the North macro-region were the ones with lower rates regarding renting autonomously (11%). These findings indicate a continued dependence on institutional housing support, possibly linked to affordability limitations or barriers to accessing the private rental market.

The top support services accessed by the respondents in Germany in 2025–2026 were medical services (70%), followed by accommodation and financial assistance (both 57%). Language learning and children’s education were also used by more than half of the respondents. Correspondingly, **language learning, followed by accommodation and employment, were identified as the most urgent needs.**

## Intentions to return or to stay

### Local employment discouraging returns

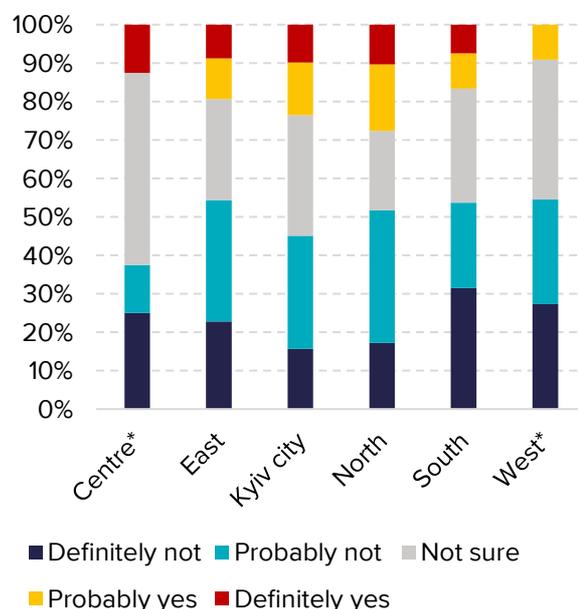
As return intentions are time-sensitive, this section focuses on the latest data (2025–2026), except where three-year comparisons are presented. In 2025–2026, **only about one fifth of the respondents in Germany were determined (9%) or leaning (11%) towards returning to Ukraine.** This represents **a significant drop compared to 2023**, when 48% intended to return, and slightly lower than in 2024 (24%). Indeed, intentions to return have been decreasing drastically over time, not only for Germany but largely in the EU+, with very few exceptions.

Moderate differences were found between groups. **Women were slightly more likely to return than men (25% vs 16%) as well as those unaccompanied by their partners (30% vs 12%). Age also impacted return intentions, with older Ukrainians being more interested to return home (40% aged 65+, 29% aged 45-64 and 17% aged 18-44). Being employed in the host country served as an incentive to stay**, with only 13% from those employed in Germany intending to return, while

those unemployed (23%) or working remotely for Ukraine (60%) showed higher willingness to return.

### Significant decline trend in return intentions across all macro-regions

Return intentions varied only moderately across macro-regions. **Respondents from the North (28%) and Kyiv city (24%) reported comparatively higher intentions to return** (Fig. 1), compared to those from East and South macro-regions who reported higher intentions not to return (54% each). **Levels of uncertainty remained high**, particularly for the South macro-region and for Kyiv city (Fig. 1).<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 1:** Return intentions by Ukraine macro-regions, for respondents in Germany (Source: EUAA SAM – UKR)

Further disaggregation at Oblast level also suggested moderate variation. In the East, respondents originating from Kharkiv (60%) and Zaporizhzhia (50%) Oblasts more often indicated that they do not intend to return. Within the North macro-region, Kyiv Oblast recorded the highest proportion of respondents expressing no intention to return (56%), while in the South this is observed among respondents from Mykolaiv Oblast (70%).<sup>11</sup>

### Reasons to return relatively stable over the years, except for indicators related with family and social ties

The main reasons for wanting to return to Ukraine included willingness to resume their previous life (57%), desire to reunite with family and friends (47%), eagerness to help rebuild the

country (43%) and belief that the security situation in Ukraine will improve (43%, Fig. 2).

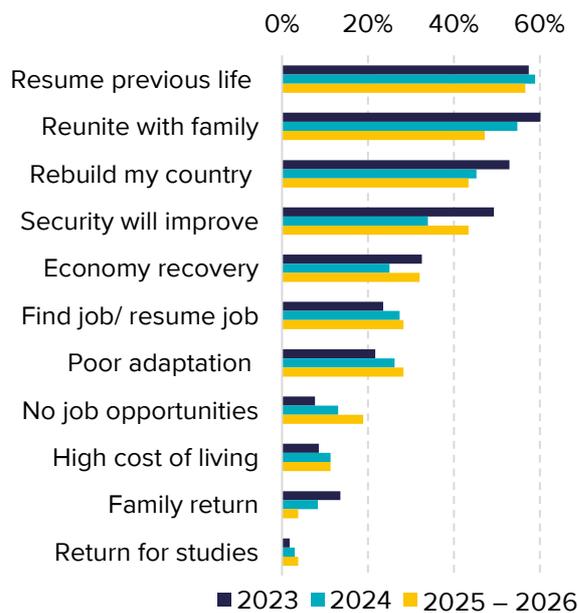


Figure 2: Evolution of the intentions to return to Ukraine for respondents in Germany (Source: EUAA SAM – UKR)

Although the main reasons remained relatively stable across the three years, a clear and significant trend is observed for indicators related with family and social ties. **The intention to reunite with family and friends in Ukraine declined markedly** from 60% in 2023 to 47% in 2025 – 2026. Similarly, fewer respondents indicated that their reason to return is due to their family as a whole aiming to go back (4%, down from 14%). **The main reasons not to return included the belief they will have a better life in Germany (65%), that it will not be safe back home (64%) and that the economy of Ukraine has deteriorated (61%).** The main change across years relates to **concerns about safety which increased** from 46% in 2023 to 64% in 2025 – 2026.

Two thirds of respondents had not visited Ukraine since leaving, while one fifth returned only once, indicating also limited back-and-forth mobility and possibly less ties to Ukraine.

## Future implications

The declining trend in return intentions may be indicative of **a shift from short-term displacement towards longer-term settlement patterns**, likely driven by the prolonged duration of the conflict, continued insecurity in Ukraine and gradual integration and life investment in Germany.

Furthermore, the reduced share of respondents citing family reunification in Ukraine as a reason to return, combined with the rise in male arrivals in Germany might suggest that **in many cases core family members may now be reunited in Germany.**

The findings on housing indicate that, even after years of displacement from Ukraine and living in Germany, at least half of the respondents continue to rely on government or charity-provided accommodation. This **sustained dependence on housing support points to vulnerabilities and persistent barriers, including affordability limitations or difficulties to accessing the private rental market.** It may also reflect challenges related to labour market integration and ensuring income stability. Both indicate a continued need, from the families, for housing support measures or rental assistance to prevent the deepening of socio-economic vulnerability.

Language proficiency and recognition of qualifications are considered by respondents as the main barriers for employment and skilled labour market integration, highlighting a **continued need for advanced language training, beyond basic level, as to enable professional proficiency and ability to work using German as main language.** In addition, **simplification of recognition processes for professional qualifications** remains necessary to facilitate appropriate job matching and better use professional skills,<sup>12</sup> which would also benefit the host country.

In this context, it should be noted that since 2022 Ukrainian refugees in Germany have exceptionally been granted access to the regular social assistance system and labour-market integration services via job centres, but **a new bill<sup>13</sup> proposes that those arriving after 1 April 2025 would fall under the Asylum Seekers’ Benefits Act – with lower benefits and stronger obligations to seek work.**<sup>14</sup> This proposal has been criticized as restricting or slowing down labour market integration, with reduced access to language courses further amplifying the effect.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, due to budgetary constraints, in February **Germany suspended all new registration for integration courses under the current financial year**, including for displaced persons from Ukraine.<sup>16</sup>

While findings from SAM—UKR provide an insight on respondents' experiences and perceptions, the broader geopolitical environment also shapes future implications. As of February 2026, ongoing negotiations between Ukraine, Russia and Western mediators had not resulted in a peace agreement. **Fundamental territorial disputes remained unresolved and a comprehensive**

**peace settlement continued to appear distant.**<sup>17</sup>

Looking ahead, Russia is likely to maintain its demand for full control over the eastern Donbas region in Ukraine, signalling limited room for compromise on core territorial issues and suggesting that substantive breakthroughs will remain difficult in the near term.

The EUAA SAM—UKR survey collects data from forcibly displaced adults from Ukraine in the EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland (EU+) following Russia's invasion in February 2022. The survey is voluntary, anonymous, available online (under [this link](#)) in English, Ukrainian and Russian and self-administered using a device with internet access.

This document is produced by the EUAA's Situational Awareness Unit (SAU) and it is based on data collected in the context of the Surveys with Arriving Migrants from Ukraine (SAM—UKR).



<sup>1</sup> Al Jazeera, [Russian strikes in Ukraine leave 20 wounded, thousands more in darkness](#), 10 October 2025.

<sup>2</sup> ACLED, [Ukraine Conflict Monitor](#), accessed 2 March 2026. These data have been accessed by filtering the dates on the 'Interactive map' on political violence events.

<sup>3</sup> Al Jazeera, [Ukraine-Russia-US hold talks in Abu Dhabi with territory as key issue](#), 23 January 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Nils Adler, ['Psychological war on society': Russia plunges Ukraine into darkness](#), Al Jazeera, 23 January 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Gozzi, ['Difficult' Russia-Ukraine peace talks end without breakthrough](#), BBC, 18 February 2026.

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat, [Beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex - monthly data](#), last updated 4 March 2026.

<sup>7</sup> The surveys were anonymous and voluntary, with data mainly collected through promotion via social media and with the support of national authorities. The annual distribution of participants was the following: 532 in 2023, 803 in 2024, and 311 in 2025 – 2026.

<sup>8</sup> West macro-region represents just 6% of the sample and Centre macro-region 5%. Analysis conclusions are mainly drawn on comparisons among the East, South, Kyiv city and North, where samples are more robust.

<sup>9</sup> Selecting multiple answers was possible.

<sup>10</sup> Findings for the Centre and West macro-regions should be interpreted cautiously due to small sample sizes. Conclusions are mainly drawn on comparisons among the East, South, Kyiv city and North, where samples are more robust.

<sup>11</sup> Similarly to the macro-regional analysis, Oblast-level analysis was only conducted when the respondent sample size was equal to or greater than 10, which limits the scope for comparative conclusions.

<sup>12</sup> For similar interpretation see Stephan Schiele, [Perspektiven von Kriegsgeflüchteten aus der Ukraine](#), Bd. 7 (2025): 40. Hohenheimer Tage zum Migrationsrecht, September 2025, p.151-168.

<sup>13</sup> German Parliament, Bundestag, [Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung Drucksache 21/3539](#), 12 January 2026.

<sup>14</sup> German Government, [Rechtskreiswechsel für ukrainische Geflüchtete](#), 19 November 2025; German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, [FAQ Rechtskreiswechsel](#), 19 December 2025.

<sup>15</sup> German Parliament, Bundestag, [Arbeit und Soziales – Anhörung – hib 124/2026: Sozialverbände gegen Rechtskreiswechsel für Ukrainer](#), 23 February 2026; Institute for Employment Research, [Arbeitsmarktintegration ukrainischer Geflüchteter verläuft deutlich schneller als bei früheren Fluchtkohorten](#), 17 February 2026.

<sup>16</sup> German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, [Trägerrundschreiben Integrationskurse 02/26: Zulassungen zum Integrationskurs nach § 44 Abs. 4 AufenthG](#), 9 February 2026; EUAA Database for International Protection, [BAMF issues circular to halt admissions to integration courses until further notice](#), 9 February 2026.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Gozzi, ['Difficult' Russia-Ukraine peace talks end without breakthrough](#), BBC, 18 February 2026.