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Article

Refugee Flow from Ukraine: Origins, Effects, Scales and Consequences

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Refugee Flow from Ukraine: Origins, Effects, Scales and Consequences*



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The Russian Federation’s military offensive in Ukraine has triggered one of the fastest-growing refugee crises since World War II. During the first three months of the war, over 14 million Ukrainians (IOM 2022b) or one-third of Ukraine’s population¹ fled their homes, 7.2 millions of whom crossed the Ukrainian Border (UNHCR 2022b). Despite the many civilian casualties and the enormous scale of the damage, not everyone is fleeing the war and there are those who are returning. Before explaining why some flee, others stay or return, why refugees go to certain countries and how they adapt in host countries, as well as assess the overall scale and consequences of current relocations of refugees from Ukraine, it is appropriate to look at the history of migration movement from Ukraine.

rectly involved in the war. So, the first – the pre-war wave began in the last quarter of the 19th century and lasted until the beginning of the First World War, the second – the interwar wave dates from the period between the First and Second World Wars, the third – the post-war wave began during the Second World War, covered the post-war period, and lasted until 1980s (Encyklopediya suchasnoyi Ukrayiny 2009; Klyuchkovska and Gumnyczka 2010). Among the representatives of the second and third waves are certainly those who moved to Russia or other former Soviet states during the Soviet era, but we are interested in those who traveled outside the USSR. Only the fourth wave (since the collapse of the USSR) was associated mainly with labor migration, which takes various forms (temporary, seasonal, permanent). Also, temporary migration often turns into permanent emigration.² As a result of all four waves of migration from Ukraine, from 12 to 20 million people of Ukrainian origin live outside Ukraine (declared by the World Congress of Ukrainians in 2020) (Aristova et al. 2022). At the same time, according to the UN, as of 2020, 6.1 million people born in Ukraine lived outside Ukraine, and their number has been growing rapidly over the last decade (see Figure 1).

ORIGINS OF REFUGEE MOVEMENT

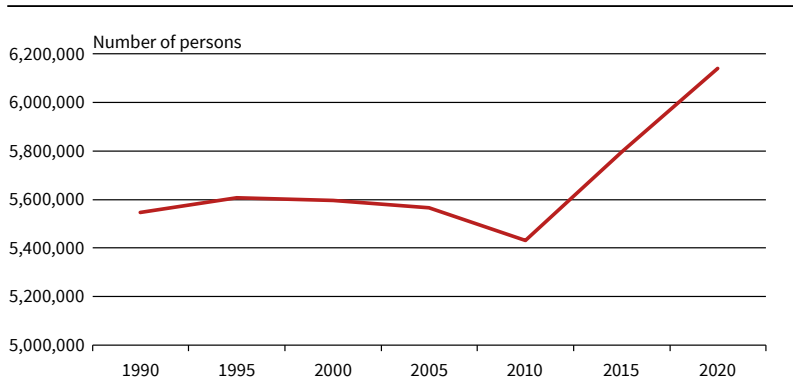
Emigration from Ukraine has more than a century of history, linked to the history of world wars. Three of the four waves of Ukrainian emigration have the word “war” in the title, although only one of them was di-

* We thank Panu Poutvaara for helpful comments and revisions.
¹ In May 2021, the population of Ukraine was 41.4 million, excluding the annexed territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (IOM 2021)

In each wave of emigration, there were people fleeing persecution by the ruling regime or war, and the last fourth wave is no exception (see Figure 2). Although the number of refugees from Ukraine has been small in recent decades, since the beginning of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the UN Refugee Agency has recorded a 37-fold increase in the number of refugees compared to the previous year. In 2015, the number of refugees and asylum seekers from Ukraine increased by another 36 percent to a peak of 343,749 citizens. After that, the number of refugees and asylum seekers from Ukraine decreased by 20–30 percent annually (Figure 2). On the eve of the war in 2021, there were 53,474 registered Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers worldwide including 17,720 in EU countries (UNHCR 2021). The insignificant interest in Ukrainian asylum seekers can be explained by the fact that the number of Ukrainian refugees recognized by EU-courtiers, who are granted protection in accordance with international agreements, is small. In particular, the acceptance rate in EU countries in 2020 ranged from 0 to 7.5 percent, except for Belgium, where it was 25 percent (Laenderdaten.info 2020). These data indicate that the number of refugees from

² For more information about the waves of migration from Ukraine, see Albrecht and Panchenko (2022).

Figure 1
Ukrainian Diaspora



Source: UN (2020).

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Ukraine in the EU countries until 2022 was insignificant. The war in Ukraine dramatically changed the situation.

CHRONICLE OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND ESCAPE ROUTES

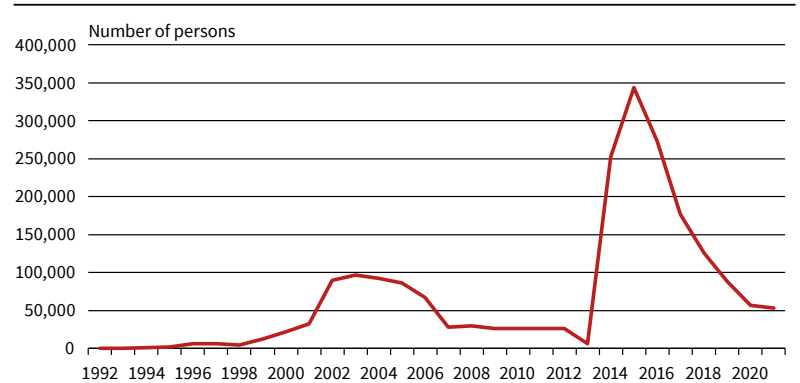
In the early morning of February 24, Russia launched missile attacks on Ukrainian cities and then began a large-scale invasion. In the following days, Ukrainian cities in the east and south of the country, as well as Kyiv, were subjected to rocket attacks. At the same time, Russian troops tried to break through the defenses in many directions. While in the first days of the war, rocket attacks mainly hit strategic infrastructures, in the following weeks civilian targets – hospitals, schools, kindergartens, universities, cultural institutions, and architectural monuments – were increasingly attacked. Cities such as Mariupol, Kharkiv, Izum, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kramatorsk, Donetsk, Lugansk, Volnovakha, Berdyansk, Melitopol, Nova Kachovka Akhtyrka, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, as well as small towns near Kyiv, including Bucha, Hostomel, Irpin, Makariv were or still remain in a dire humanitarian situation. After two weeks of war, residents no longer felt safe in any part of the country, and the constant threat of nuclear disaster due to military action near nuclear power plants also alarmed residents across Europe. By the end of March, when the whole world learned about the Russian military atrocities near Kiev and appreciated the courage of the Ukrainian army and the resistance of the civilian population, it was clear that the war would not end quickly. Fighting has escalated in eastern Ukraine since late April as Russia seeks full control of Donbas and the south of the country. Also, air attacks continue throughout Ukraine and the nuclear threat remains.

More and more of those affected are therefore fleeing within Ukraine or abroad. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as of 3 May 2022, there were 8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, which is 18.2 percent of the country's population. This is 24 percent more than on March 16, when the first round of the IOM Survey took place (IOM 2022b).

The IDPs in Ukraine are often families with men aged 18 to 60 who are not allowed to leave Ukraine. They often travel in their own car because the chance for men to get a seat on an evacuation train or bus is quite small. The IDPs seek refuge mainly in the western regions of the country (2.9 million), although they are in the center (1.7 million), east (1.5 million) and north (1.2 million), where there is no fighting, too. According to the IOM (2022b), they are fewest in the south of the country (0.5 million). According to the IOM Survey among IDPs,³ 63 percent are women,

³ The general population survey was conducted by dialing random telephone numbers, which anonymously surveyed 2,000 unique re-

Figure 2
Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Ukraine



Source: UNHCR (2021).

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and 37 percent are men, representing different age groups. 84 percent of the IDPs surveyed said that at least one of their current family members is a child. Of interest is the fact that 47 percent of respondents consider moving further from their current location, with the share of IDPs considering relocating more than doubling since March 16. Obviously, the increase in the number of IDPs ready for relocation is due to the growing trend of their return to permanent residence. In particular, among all respondents who are currently in their usual place of residence, 8.9 percent said they had returned after at least two weeks in another region as IDPs. This is an estimated 2,715,000 returnees (IOM 2022b).

It should be noted that moving around Ukraine, especially by one's own car, is not safe due to constant shelling and possible looting, and not everyone is ready to take such a risk. That is why many men who serve neither in the army nor in the Territorial Defense of Ukraine (an organization of the Ukrainian Armed Forces consisting of reservists and volunteers) often stay with their families in war zones. Civilians remain in the war zones for other reasons: unwillingness to leave their homes or their families, poor health, etc. It is estimated by IOM in April 2022, that about 30 percent of the population in Ukraine have left their homes. Most of them are from Kyiv (53 percent), in the second place are residents of the east and north of the country (34 and 32 percent), in the third place are residents of the south (24 percent). Only 13 and 16 percent of respondents left the central and western regions (IOM 2022a). It is also worth noting that according to the IOM survey in May, the remainder are a relatively large proportion of men (44 percent) and dominated by the elderly population (including 44 percent over 50 and older and 22 percent in the 40–50 age group). Those who remained are mostly not willing to move in the future. Only 4 percent of them said they were considering leaving, and 7 percent said "it depends" (IOM 2022b).

spondents aged 18 and over using the automated telephone survey method between 29 April 2022 and 3 May 2022.

Another point to note is the perception of the security of IDPs and those who remain. 3 percent of respondents feel that IDPs are “in complete danger” and another 19 percent are “in partial danger.” Of those who have remained, 7 percent said they were “in complete danger” and 26 percent “in partial danger.” But the share of those who feel completely safe is the same among IDPs and those who remain – 16 percent (IOM 2022b). Obviously, it is the subjective perception of security and danger that is the most important factor in the displacement of populations in conditions of war. Many of those who decided to leave the country were probably guided by them.

Refugees seeking support abroad are mostly women with children, including those whose husbands either serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine/Ukrainian Territorial Defense or work as volunteers and critical infrastructure workers. Many of them used evacuation vehicles to leave the war zone. Although people are fleeing to all neighboring countries, the majority choose to flee to or through Poland (Figure 3). Far fewer Ukrainians fleeing to the EU cross the Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, or Moldovan borders. The fewest people choose Belarus as a destination. As for border crossings with Russia, the situation here is not unambiguous. The recent increase in the number of its crossings is often due to the fact that many of those who move in this direction do it against their will or have no other choice to get out.

Figure 3 clearly shows that the main flow of refugees is to EU countries. After all, the EU states agreed to accept war refugees from Ukraine quickly and without bureaucracy and to treat them equally in accordance with the law, granting them the right to temporary protection without an asylum procedure. At the same time, data on recorded and registered refugees from Ukraine show that Hungary and Romania are considered by Ukrainians as transit countries. Ukrainians mainly enter the Schengen area through these countries and go to other EU states. In Poland, about a third of those who arrived remain and register for temporary protection. In Slovakia about a sixth of those who arrived do the same.

REFUGEE ARRIVALS FROM UKRAINE SINCE FEBRUARY 24, 2022

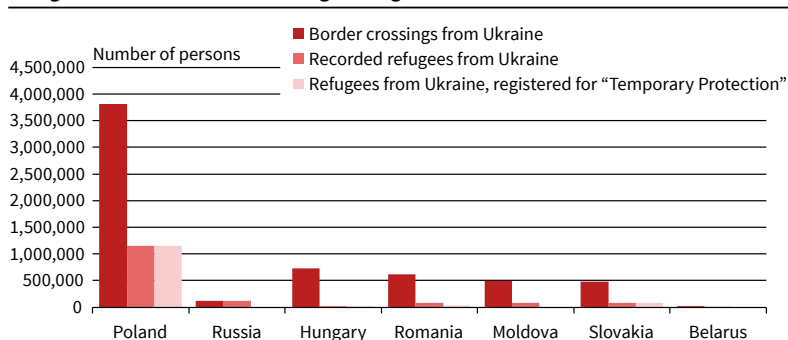
As mentioned above, from the outbreak of war to the beginning of June 2022, over 7.2 million people have fled Ukraine (UNHCR 2022b). In addition, there are 8 million IDPs and another 1.2 million who are estimated by the IOM (2022b) to be actively considering leaving their usual place of residence as a result of the war. The data on external refugees is provided daily by the UNHCR. Figure 4 shows the cumulative and daily number of people that have left Ukraine and fled into a neighboring country since 24 February 2022. We clearly see a significant increase in border crossings from Ukraine in the second and third weeks since hostilities began and a moderate decrease in border crossings from the fourth week onwards. The largest outflow of people occurred on March 7, when over 200,000 people fled Ukraine in only one day. After this date, the size of these flows of refugees from Ukraine gradually decreased until March 20, when the number of refugees who left the country per day was about 60,000. After that, during the month one can observe constant fluctuations in the daily number of refugees in the range from 30 to 70 thousand per day. Only on certain days – April 24 and May 25, a smaller number of refugees from Ukraine were recorded.

On the eve of those dates on which we record a daily increase in the number of refugees from Ukraine, sad well-known events took place in Bucha and Borodyanka, and the situation in Mariupol and other cities of Ukraine escalated. The dissemination of information about the victims among the civilian population obviously contributed, if not to an increase of migration flows, then at least to stop the decline.

Nevertheless, these observations point to a trend towards a further decrease of the number of border crossings and, accordingly, a slower increase of the number of external refugees. However, the extent to which the number of people fleeing Ukraine will actually increase depends largely on the further development of the war, its duration, and specific events.

In addition, one should consider the trend of increasing border crossings in the opposite direction from the EU to Ukraine. Figure 4B shows that on some days, the number of those returning to Ukraine exceeded the number of those leaving the country. Although, according to UNHCR data, as of 7 June 2022, more than 2.3 million Ukrainians have already returned to their homeland (UNHCR 2022a), the UNHCR insists that due to the unstable and constantly changing situation in Ukraine, it is premature to subtract the number of those who returned to Ukraine from the total number of refugees (UNHCR 2022b). However, according to the results of UNHCR survey at the borders of Ukraine,⁴ 83 percent of respondents

Figure 3
Refugee Influx from Ukraine in Neighboring Countries^a

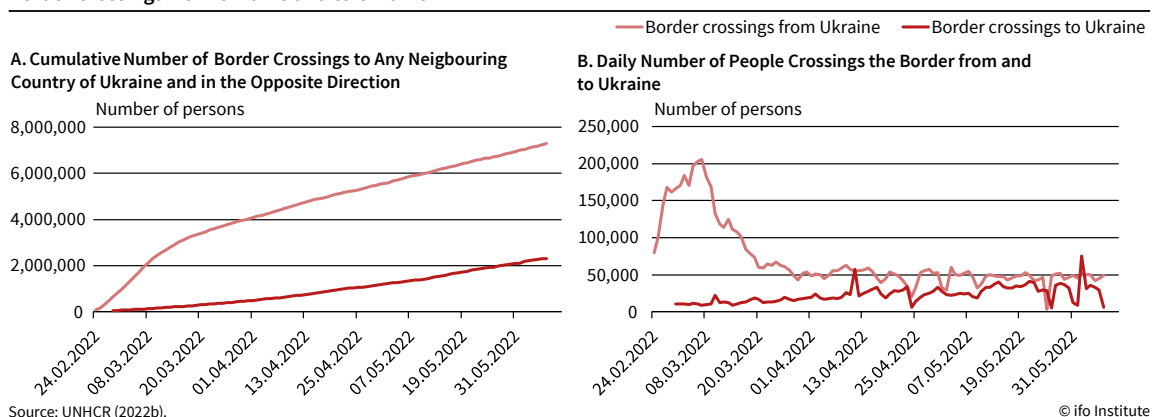


^a From Februar 24 to June 7, 2022. Source: UNHCR (2022b).

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⁴ 846 interviews were conducted with people crossing to Ukraine neighboring countries at checkpoints, reception centers, and railway stations near the Ukrainian border from 3 April to 27 April. The sam-

Figure 4
Border Crossings from Ukraine and to Ukraine



reported intention to return to their area of origin in Ukraine, mainly to Lviv, Kyiv regions, and the city of Kyiv. Two-thirds of those surveyed reported either the reunion with family or perception of safety in the area of return as their reasons for returning and only 15 percent of respondents called their visit temporary to get supplies or to see family (UNHCR 2022a).

Unfortunately, the intentions and expectations of Ukrainians are not always justified: some of those who have returned will leave their homes again. In our opinion, it is still too early to talk about a steady trend in the return of Ukrainians to their homeland, but the potential number of those ready to return if the situation stabilizes is obviously large. This is evidenced by a significant difference in the new data of UNHCR on those who crossed the border with Ukraine, who was recorded in Europe, and who was registered for temporary protection. According to the UNHCR, as of June 7, the number of border crossings from Ukraine was 7,270,939, the number of individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe was 4,816,923, and the number of registered refugees for temporary protection was 3,204,047 (UNHCR 2022b). These data also confirm that the actual number of Ukrainian refugees (especially those who registered for temporary protection) is lower than the number of those who left the country. Data on cross-border movements cannot be a reliable source of information on the number of refugees and those who have returned.

Data on the number of refugees in individual host countries have become available relatively recently. Prior to this, migration researchers assumed that the main host countries would be countries with a large Ukrainian diaspora,⁵ which, through their existing networks, would be able to support flight and migration from Ukraine and facilitate the integration of refugees. According to UN data on the number of people born in Ukraine and living in other countries in 2020, most Ukrainians abroad before the war lived in Poland, It-

ple is not statistically representative, and results should therefore only be considered as indicative (UNHCR 2022a).

⁵ In 2020, there were 1,714,656 Ukrainians living in Europe (excluding Ukraine and Russia), which is equivalent to more than three Ukrainians per 1,000 inhabitants (CREAM 2022).

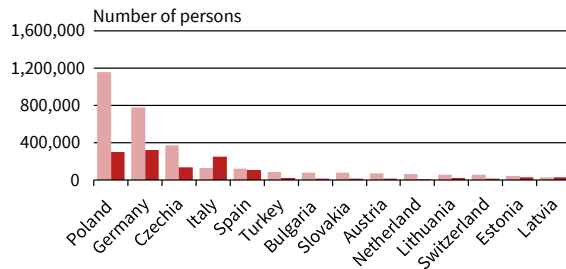
aly, and Germany (from 250,000 to 300,000 in each country). More than 100,000 Ukrainians also lived in Czechia and in Spain (UN 2020). The national statistics of these countries and other sources often operate with higher figures. The most significant discrepancy between UN data, official statistics, and other sources is characteristic of Poland, where, according to many experts, there were about 2 million Ukrainians before the Corona crisis (Kellermann 2018; Vinikuriv 2019). Geographical proximity to Ukraine and similarities in language and culture make Poland the most attractive for both Ukrainian labor migrants and refugees from the war in Ukraine. It is Poland, where as of 7 June 2022, a number of 1,152,364 Ukrainians were recorded and registered (3,051 Ukrainians per 100,000 population), which has become the undisputed leader among the host countries. If in the case of Poland the hypothesis regarding the role of the diaspora was fully confirmed, then in the case of other countries the situation is not unambiguous. Figure 5 shows data on the number of registered refugees from Ukraine in individual countries, which, as of June 7, 2022, accepted more than 50 thousand Ukrainians or more than a thousand Ukrainians per 100,000 population of the country compared with the number of representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora, as well as their number per 100 thousand inhabitants of the country.

The graphs in Figure 5 clearly show that the number of registered refugees in most countries has already exceeded the number of representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora. If Poland is the undoubted leader in the number of accepted refugees, then among European countries that do not have borders with Ukraine, most of the refugees from Ukraine were accepted by Germany, where according to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, between February 24 and May 28, 2022, a number of 802,500 entries of war refugees from Ukraine were documented (Mediendienst Integration 2022),⁶ which has already more than doubled the number of pre-war emigrants from Ukraine. Germany is

⁶ According to the UNHCR data, which is presented in Figure 5, in Germany, as of 2 June, 780,000 refugees were recorded and only 565,821 refugees were registered for temporary protection.

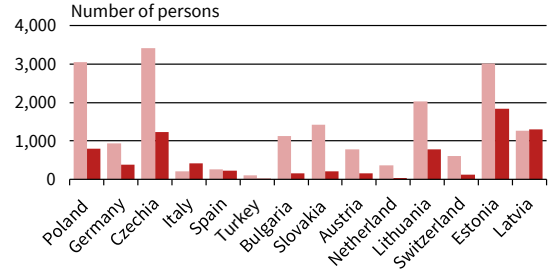
Figure 5
Ukrainians in Selected European Countries: Refugees after February 24, 2022 and the Ukrainian Diaspora

A. The Number of Registered Refugees from Ukraine Compared with the Number of Representatives of the Ukrainian Diaspora



Source: UN (2020); Eurostat (2021); UNHCR (2022b).

B. The Number of Registered Refugees from Ukraine per 100,000 Inhabitants Compared with the Number of Representatives of Ukrainian Diaspora per 100,000 Inhabitants



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followed by Czechia, where the number of registered refugees exceeds the number of emigrants who lived before the war by almost three times. Italy, which is in the third place in terms of the number of registered refugees among countries that do not share borders with Ukraine, has registered 125,907 refugees as of May 31. This is less than half the number of Ukrainians living in Italy as emigrants. This is followed by Spain, where the number of refugees (as of 5 June, 118,199) has already surpassed the number of representatives of the diaspora. In other countries, which received more than 50,000 refugees, the number of representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora does not exceed 20,000. Moreover, in countries such as Turkey and the Netherlands, which received 85,000 and 60,000 Ukrainians, the share of Ukrainian emigrants is insignificant (23 and 41 per 100,000 population of these countries).

Figure 5B demonstrates that Czechia experiences the greatest burden of accepting refugees, where there are 3,415 refugees from Ukraine per 100,000 inhabitants, which exceeds the corresponding indicator of Poland, the leader in the number of refugees. In addition, Estonia has almost reached the indicator of Poland, where the number of refugees per 100,000 inhabitants exceeds 3,000. In addition, it is worth noting that there is a significant burden for Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia, and Bulgaria, where there are from 1,000 to 2,000 refugees per 100,000 inhabitants. Attention should also be paid to the fact that in countries such as Austria and Switzerland, where there was a small Ukrainian diaspora, the number of refugees per 100,000 population is higher than in Italy and Spain. It should also be noted that in Latvia and Italy the number of refugees still did not exceed the number of the Ukrainian diaspora.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE TO GERMANY AND FEATURES OF THEIR ADAPTATION

Based on the results of a representative survey among refugees from Ukraine, which was conducted on be-

half of the Federal Ministry of Interior and Home Affairs at the end of March,⁷ the following is a socio-demographic profile of refugees from Ukraine. Of those surveyed, 84 percent were women and 16 percent men, which is quite natural in conditions where men from 18 to 60 years old are forbidden to leave the territory of Ukraine. Only fathers of three or more minor children, children with disabilities, single fathers as well as persons exempted from military service for health reasons may leave Ukraine. The above categories and men over 60 years of age correspond to a small proportion of men-refugees from Ukraine (the quota of men in the population of Ukraine is 46 percent (Eurostat 2021).

The results of the study show that the age composition of refugees who arrived from Ukraine also does not correspond to the population of Ukraine as a whole. Most of the refugees are parents with children, which is consistent with the fact that 55 percent of respondents came to Germany with their children. Among women, the quota for women with children is slightly higher – 58 percent– but the highest quota for people with children is among the working-age population; in particular among 30–49 year old it is over 70 percent. It should be noted that the average age of the refugees interviewed is 38.2 years and only a small fraction of those surveyed are under working age or over 60. These data confirm our hypothesis that the majority of those who came to Germany are of working age. Moreover, the quota of refugee of working age exceeds the quota of people between 15 and 64 years in the population of Ukraine, which according to data of Eurostat from 2021 was 67 percent (Eurostat 2021).

It is also of interest that the share of employed people among respondents who came from Ukraine after 24 February 2022, exceeds the Ukrainian average share of employed people. According to the data of State Statistics Service of Ukraine the quota of those employed between the ages of 15 and 64 in 2018 (be-

⁷ From March 24 to March 29, 2022, 1,936 interviews were conducted (including 511 face-to-face interviews at relevant registration points in Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich and 1,425 web interviews on the websites of BMI, BAMF, and Germany4Ukraine.de) (INFO 2022).

fore Covid-19 crisis) was 61.6 percent, with 57.5 percent of women and 66 percent of men (State Statistics Service of Ukraine 2019). Women’s employment opportunities are generally limited due the lack of part-time jobs, limited availability of preschool facilities for children, and the widespread practice of unpaid parental leave. Restrictions related to Covid-19 caused further pressure on women to combine their professional duties with their household duties and care work. To illustrate, in 2020, women’s employment rates were lower than men: 51 percent versus 62 percent. The socioeconomic impact of the crisis since 2014 has affected women and men’s access to paid work, increasing unemployment by 30 percent (UN Women 2022).

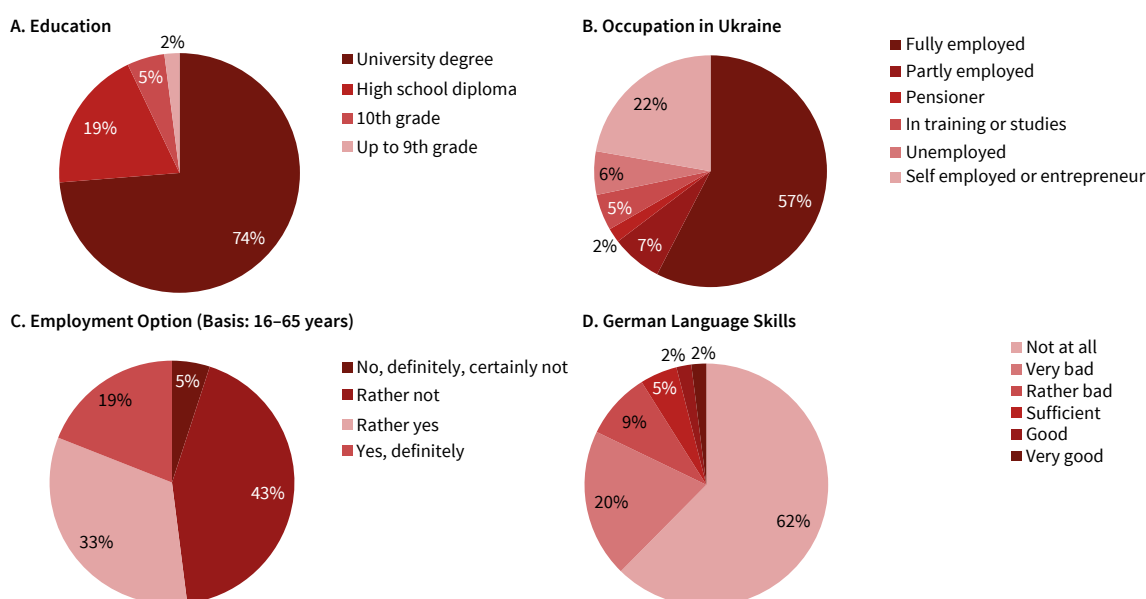
Despite the fact that the refugees who came from Ukraine are predominantly women with children, these studies demonstrate high rates of their employment in Ukraine: 57 percent of those surveyed worked full-time as employees, 7 percent were part-time, and another 22 percent were self-employed. It is likely that almost everyone was engaged in skilled labor, as 73 percent of those surveyed had a university degree and 19 percent had a high school diploma (Figure 6a). Although the level of education of refugees who came from Ukraine is quite high, the above data suggest that the quote of refugees from Ukraine with university degree corresponds to the share of persons with university degree in Ukraine or lower. According to the data of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 75.4 percent of those employed in 2018 had a complete higher education (72 percent of women and 79.9 percent of men). Experience with other refugees, which shows that they have a significantly higher level of schooling and vocational training than the populations of the countries of origin (Guichard 2020; Aksoy

und Poutvaara 2021), cannot be directly transferred to refugees from Ukraine.

Returning to the survey data (INFO 2022), the fact that 52 percent of respondents are considering the possibility of working in Germany deserves special attention. However, only 19 percent said they were sure they wanted to and could work. The latter can probably be explained by the fact that only 4 percent of those surveyed rated their knowledge of German as good or very good, and 63 percent said they did not know German at all (Figure 6C).

In addition to the direct socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed refugees, which can only partially be transferred to the entire general population, the respondents’ answers to questions regarding the choice of the host country and their accommodation deserve attention. It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of those surveyed (82 percent) specifically chose Germany as a target country and only a few considered other countries such as Poland, Switzerland, Italy, Czechia, and the Netherlands. Not all of them were seeking a specific location in Germany: almost a quarter of those surveyed made their decision on the way, and one-fifth reached their destination completely by chance. 42 percent of respondents are currently staying in large cities with 500,000 or more inhabitants. For the majority of respondents, the choice of a particular destination was due to friends or relatives living there (61 percent), which indicates the decisive role of the diaspora at choosing a host country. Moreover, it was friends and relatives who provided housing for 43 percent of those surveyed. Obviously, their role in finding another place to live is also great. It should be noted that most refugees found accommodation in private housing. Only 7 percent were living in refugee camps at the time of

Figure 6
Selected Social Characteristics of the Respondents of the Systematic Survey among Refugees from Ukraine



Source: INFO GmbH (2022).

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the survey, even fewer were living in hotels, social housing, and only 1 percent of those surveyed had no accommodation (INFO 2022). It is highly likely that most refugees living with relatives, friends, or in other private accommodation will soon face the problem of finding long-term accommodation. The difficulties associated with this can significantly affect the future of refugees from Ukraine.

Despite considerable help from friends and relatives, 95 percent of those surveyed consider financial assistance and social assistance to be important or very important. It was this item that turned out to be the most important of all the proposals for support in Germany that were proposed for the assessment of the respondents. Also important for the interviewed refugees were medical care (93 percent), assistance with visits to authorities (90 percent), free local transport (85 percent), provision of own apartment (80 percent), and procurement of temporary accommodation (76 percent). Non-financial assistance was important for a slightly smaller number of respondents. In particular, support services such as Ukrainian-speaking contact persons and psychological assistance were found to be important for 71 percent and 52 percent of respondents (INFO 2022).

PROSPECTS OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES: RETURNEES, ONWARD TRAVELERS, LABOR MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The duration of the war is not only a decisive factor for the number of refugees from Ukraine but also for their further life planning. The sooner the war ends, the more people will return to Ukraine as soon as

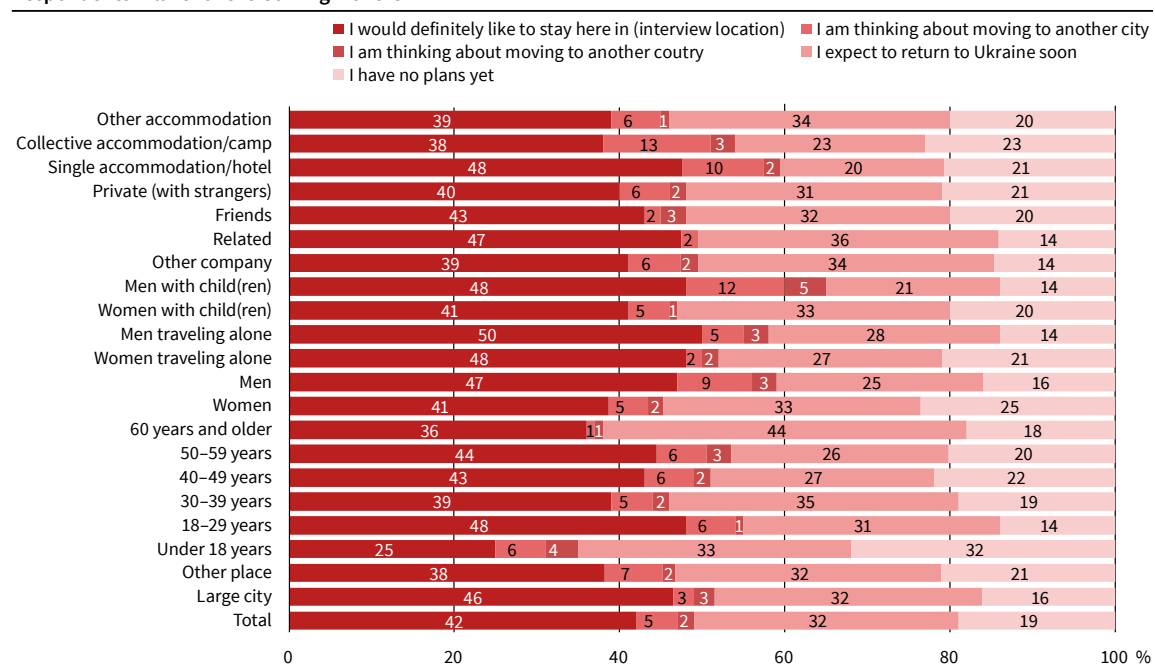
possible. Still, some will not be in a hurry to return home. Many of them will not want to return to the destroyed cities, and some will simply have nowhere to go, having become homeless. Among them will be those who will seek asylum in host countries. Those who take up work will have the opportunity to change their status and join the ranks of migrant workers.

The longer the war lasts, the fewer people will want to return home and the more they will seek ways to settle and integrate permanently in host countries. By far the most favorable path to integration is through employment. Many will need to learn the language, have their educational qualifications recognized, or retrain. Children will attend local schools, make friends in the area, and be ahead of their parents at integrating. In the event of a prolonged war, the number of asylum seekers will also increase, and the likelihood that asylum applications made will be accepted will be very high. Undoubtedly, there will be people who will not stay long in the host country and will try to find their fortune elsewhere, hoping for personal contacts, better chances of finding a job, or social benefits.

In any scenario of further development in Ukraine, four categories of Ukrainian refugees – returnees, onward travelers, labor migrants, and asylum seekers can be expected. Depending on the duration of the war and its outcome, the number of these groups will vary greatly.

The results of German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (INFO 2022) allow us to look at the short-term plans for refugees from Ukraine as well as their variations of different social groups (see Figure 7, which demonstrates respondents’ answers

Figure 7
Respondents’ Plans for the Coming Months



Source: INFO GmbH (2022).

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to the question “What are your plans for the next few months?” as well as their distribution by gender, age, place, accommodation, and also depending on who they came to Germany with). Figure 7 shows that 42 percent would definitely like to stay in the following months in the interview location. Moreover, the number of those who want to stay is significantly higher among those who are in large cities, live with relatives, or in separate apartments or hotels, than other categories. In addition, among those who want to stay are more men, young people from 18 to 29 years, as well as those who travel alone. It is difficult to say today whether these people will remain. Much will depend on the migration policy of Germany, their success in integration, professional skills, and the specific biographical situation of each migrant.

The results of the survey show that not many would like to move on in the next few months – only 2 percent are thinking about moving to another country – and 5 percent of those surveyed are thinking about moving within Germany. It should be noted that among those who are ready to move to another country, there are slightly more young people under 29 years, those who have settled in large cities, and men, especially men with children. Most of those who are thinking about moving within the country live in camps (13 percent) and hotels (10 percent), which is understandable. In addition, men (especially those with children) are more prepared to move within Germany than women.

One-third of those surveyed (32 percent) said they wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as possible. It should be noted that there are significantly more people over 60 years old (44 percent) among those who want to return than among other age categories. Among those who want to return are fewer men (again, especially men with children) than women, there are somewhat fewer people aged 40 to 60 than representatives of other ages. In addition, the smallest proportion of those wishing to return are those who live in single accommodation or hotels (20 percent) and refugee camps (23 percent). The latter can obviously be explained by the fact that they are those who most of all sought to get to Germany, daring to take such a step without having friends and relatives in the country.

Finally, the last category, but not in terms of numbers and significance, are those who do not yet have definite plans. At the end of March, they were 19 percent of the total number of respondents. It is the life strategies of representatives of this category that are most affected by the duration of the war. Among the undecided, most are under 18 years old (32 percent), which is easily explained by their dependence on adults, and there are also significantly more women than men. The smallest number of undecided is among people aged 18 to 29 and among those who found accommodation in big cities or live with relatives.

INFO-study on the immediate plans of the refugees surveyed only allow us to conclude that the category of onward travelers will be small, at least in Germany (in other EU countries, it can be much larger). How the rest of the categories we have chosen will be distributed will depend not only on the duration of the war but also on living conditions and the level of support in the host country. When it comes to the chances of Ukrainian refugees to find work in Europe, one must also take their level of education, their qualifications, their motivation, and their willingness to learn into account. So far, there is not enough data on the above components of success in the labor market. All we know, including thanks to this study, is that the majority of new arrivals from Ukraine are women with children who were employed in Ukraine and were engaged in skilled work, as well as that their language skills are insufficient. As for other characteristics, this group can be quite heterogeneous. Mentions in the mass media about the high level of education and employment of pre-war Ukrainian migrants, as well as their successful integration, cannot be extrapolated to people who immigrated from Ukraine after February 24.

It should be remembered that such an influx of refugees from the war from a democratic country, where the nation has united in a few months, increased confidence in the president and other authorities, and has strengthened faith in winning the war,⁸ has never happened before. Therefore, it is quite natural that many of the most active and motivated people stay in Ukraine or will return to Ukraine to help the army or those who need or to fight with weapons in their hands or on the information front. In addition, some active and motivated people left Ukraine before the war, when corruption, undemocratic practices, and distrust of state institutions were still widespread. It is likely that those who left Ukraine after 24 February 2022, are people who are most in demand in the labor markets of the countries to which they have moved, in particular, specialists who have a high level of qualification and education. Also, there are people who agree to jobs that for various reasons are not occupied by the local population. However, some of the women who are in demand in their professions are in a difficult situation, perhaps having lost relatives and left the country to save their children. Some of them will need psychological help and will not be able to quickly find their place in the European labor market. These are also the people who can claim high social protection. It is large families, people with disabilities, and the elderly who are the more vulnerable categories and receive much more social protection abroad than they can have in Ukraine. In order to reveal all these categories of Ukrainians, their potential in the

⁸ Four waves of Gradus Research surveys conducted in Ukraine in February, March, April and May by self-completion in a mobile application show a steady increase in national unity, trust in the president, and faith in victory among the Ukrainian population (GRADUS 2022).

European labor market or the possible burden on the social protection system, further research is needed.

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