REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Crossing Back Surveys with Ukrainian Nationals

July – September 2023
Country Report & Data Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY FINDINGS

Top 3 countries of stay:

- Republic of Moldova (48%)
- Romania (11%)
- Türkiye (7%)

Top 3 oblasts* of origin:

- Odeska (35%)
- Kyiv city and Kyivska (22%)
- Mykolaivska (7%)

* Regions in Ukraine

Intended destinations:

To the oblast of origin **(92%)**

To a different oblast **(8%)**:
Kyiv city, Vinnytska & Odeska

Needs:

Financial support (22%)

Medicines and health services (9%)

Support with personal safety and security (8%)

No immediate needs (35%)

More than one answer possible

Intentions:

- Long term stay
- Short term visit
- Don't know

4%

38%

58%
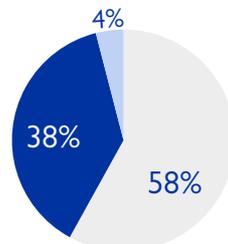
Assistance:

- Food (29%)
- Financial (28%)
- NFIs (8%)
- Accommodation (7%)

More than one answer possible

Entries & exits:

85%

had crossed back to Ukraine twice or more prior to the survey.

Information:

60%

looked for aid and support on social media.

Transport to Ukraine:

- Car (55%)
- Bus (32%)
- By foot (13%)

Map 1: Republic of Moldova, surveys deployed, countries of stay and oblasts of destination in Ukraine

Surveys: 2,855

Women - 95%
Men - 5%

BELARUS

POLAND

SLOVAKIA

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Kyiv city
Kyivska

UKRAINE

Vinnytska

Otaci 1,324

Republic of Moldova

Mykolaivska

Odeska

Palanca 1,531

Sea of Azov

Black Sea

Top 5 countries of stay*

HUNGARY

MDA	48%
ROU	11%
TUR	7%
DEU	6%
BGR	4%

ROMANIA

SERBIA

Top 5 oblasts of destination in Ukraine

Palanca 1,531 Interview number and location

*prior to crossing from Republic of Moldova

BULGARIA

0   50 100 Km

The map is for illustration purposes. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

1. Socio-Demographic Profile

Gender and age

Out of the 2,855 total survey respondents, 95 per cent were women and five per cent were men. The average age of the total sample was 42 years old.

On average, male respondents were older than female respondents (55 years old for men versus 42 years old for women). The largest proportion of respondents were between 30 and 39 years old (34%).

Thirty-five per cent of women were between 30 and 39

years old, while 27 per cent were between 40 and 49 years old. The remaining were between 18 and 29 years old, 50 and 59 years old, and 60 years old and older (13% each).

Fifty-seven per cent of men were over 60 years old, while 18 per cent were between 40 and 49 years old and 10 per cent were between 30 and 39 years old.

Figure 1: Age, by gender and total, (%)
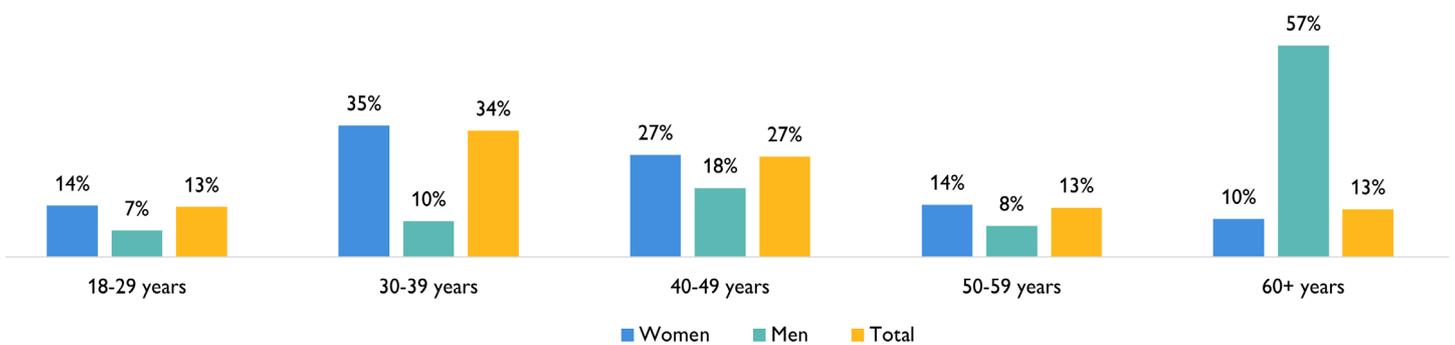
Marital status

Most respondents (81%) were married. Others reported being single (8%), divorced (6%), widowed (4%), or in a partnership (1%). Less than one per cent preferred not to answer. The proportion of married men was slightly higher than of the proportion of married women (82% versus 80%). The proportion of single women was higher

than men (9% versus 6%), while proportion of divorced men were higher than women (9% compared to 5%). Five per cent of women were widowed, compared to 2 per cent of men. One per cent of women was in partnership or union and one per cent of men preferred not to answer.

Figure 2: Marital status, by gender and total, (%)
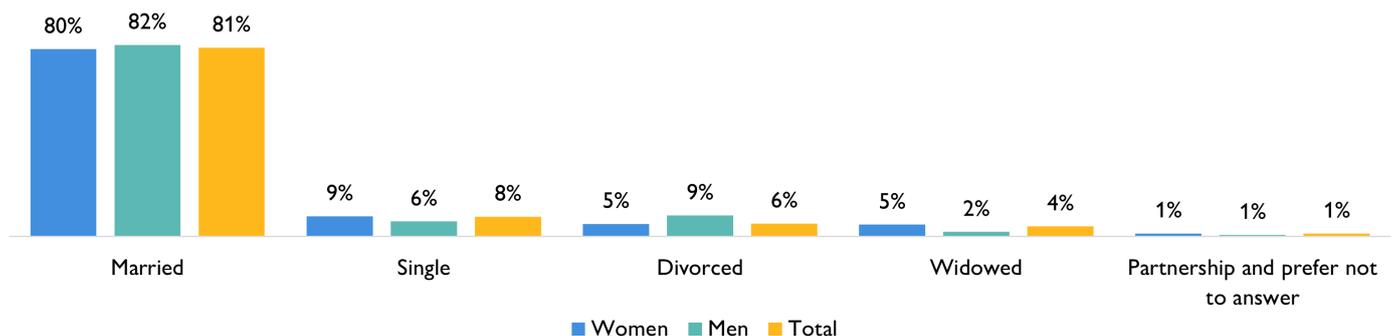
Legal status

Beginning in August 2023, DTM enumerators introduced a survey question on respondents' legal status in the Republic of Moldova. As a result, this report includes data on the legal status of 2,410 of the total 2,855 survey respondents but excludes 445 individuals who were interviewed before this date.

Figure 3. Current legal status of respondents in the Republic of Moldova, by age group, (%) (N=2,410)
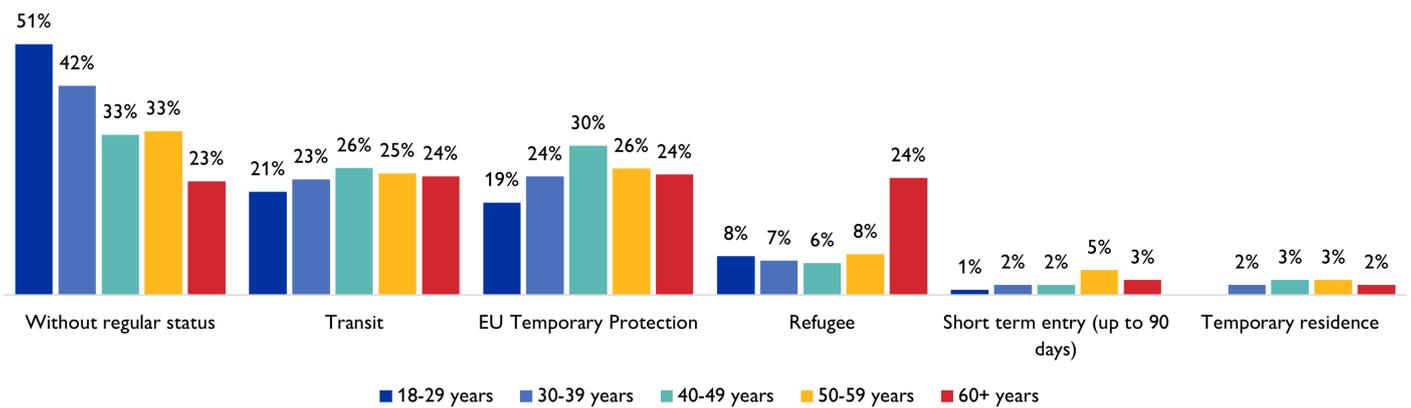
Of the respondents who answered the question, 37 per cent do not hold any legal status in the country of stay. Additionally, 26 per cent of respondents had obtained EU Temporary Protection (TP) status.* Nine per cent of respondents reported having official refugee status, while two per cent reported having a temporary residence status.

Notably, 24 per cent of the respondents reported being in the Republic of Moldova only for transit purposes. A higher percentage of male respondents (36%) reported being in transit, compared to female respondents (23%). Finally, only two per cent of respondents reported having entered the Republic of Moldova for a short period (less than 90 days).

Over 40 per cent of respondents lack any type of legal status that regulates their stay in the Republic of Moldova. Collecting data on the legal status of respondents is critical to understanding the insecurity and possible vulnerabilities of displaced populations in the Republic of Moldova.

Figure 4. Current legal status of respondents in the Republic of Moldova, (%) (N=2,410)

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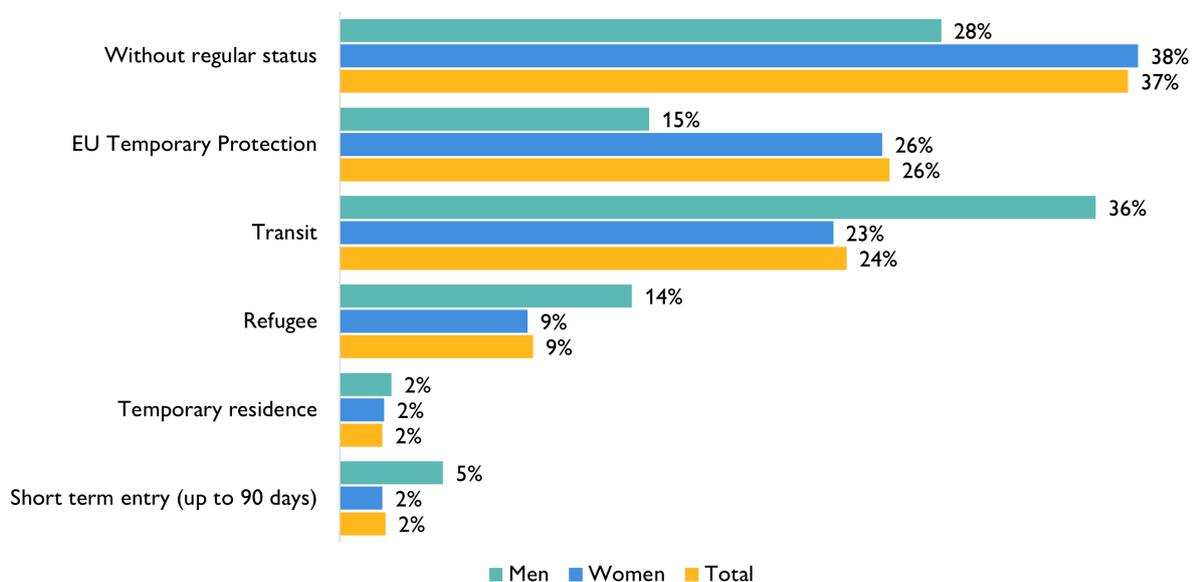
* The Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55 EC) has been activated by EU Council Decision EU 2022/382 of 4 March 2022, to provide immediate protection in EU countries for people displaced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2. Time Outside of Ukraine

Countries of stay while abroad

Among those returning to Ukraine, 48 per cent had been residing in the Republic of Moldova, 11 per cent came from Romania, 35 per cent came from other European Union (EU) member states, and 6 per cent came from countries outside the EU. Among those who had been staying in other countries besides Romania, respondents were coming from Türkiye (7%), Germany (6%), Bulgaria (4%), Israel and Poland (3% each), as well as France, Czechia and the United Kingdom (2% each).

Of those who had been staying in the Republic of Moldova, half were residing in the locality of Chisinau (52%). Other respondents reported having stayed in Balti (13%), the Transnistrian region (5%), Donduseni (4%), and Orhei, Tighina and Calarasi (3% each). Seventeen per cent reported staying in other places in the Republic of Moldova (17%).

Figure 5: Main areas of residence in the Republic of Moldova since fleeing Ukraine, (%) (N=1,367)

Figure 6: Countries of stay, (%)
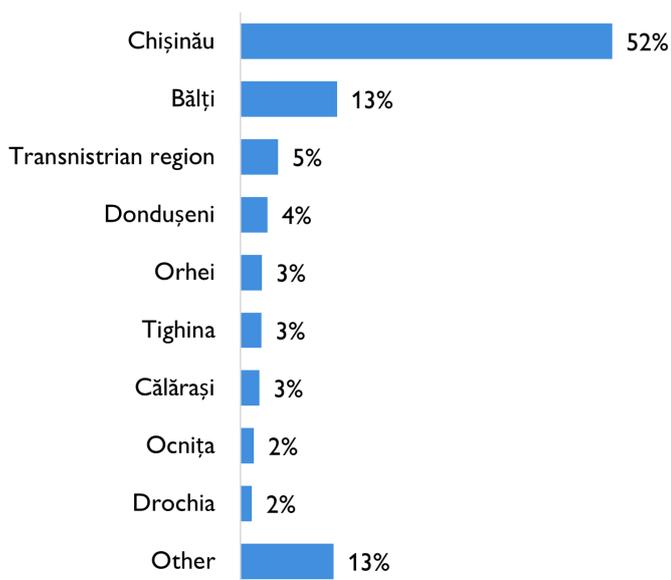
Average time since initial displacement

The average time spent outside of Ukraine can be assessed by looking at the difference between the initial date of displacement of respondents and the date of the interview (July-September 2023). Out of the total 2,855 respondents, 42 per cent were displaced between January and March 2022 and had therefore spent about a year and a half outside of Ukraine. Thirty-eight per cent were displaced between April and December 2022. Fifteen per cent were initially displaced between January and June 2023, while five per cent reported being initially displaced between August and September 2023 (within the three months that surveys were conducted).

Figure 7: Approximate time spent in displacement, (%)
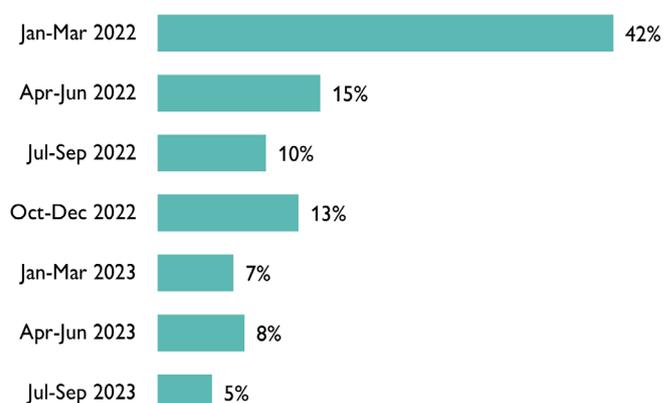
Number of exits/entries

Of the total number of respondents, 46 per cent had entered/exited Ukraine twice since 24 February 2022. Thirty-nine per cent had entered/exited more than twice, while 15 per cent had entered/exited only once. Less than one per cent had not re-entered Ukraine since their initial displacement. Forty-seven per cent of male respondents reported having entered and exited Ukraine twice, compared to 45 per cent of female respondents. Moreover, more men than women had entered/exited Ukraine once at the time of assessment (22% versus 14%).

However, 40 per cent of women had entered/exited Ukraine more than twice, compared to only 30 per cent of men.

Figure 8: Number of entries/exits between 24 February 2022 and 30 September 2023, by gender and total, (%)
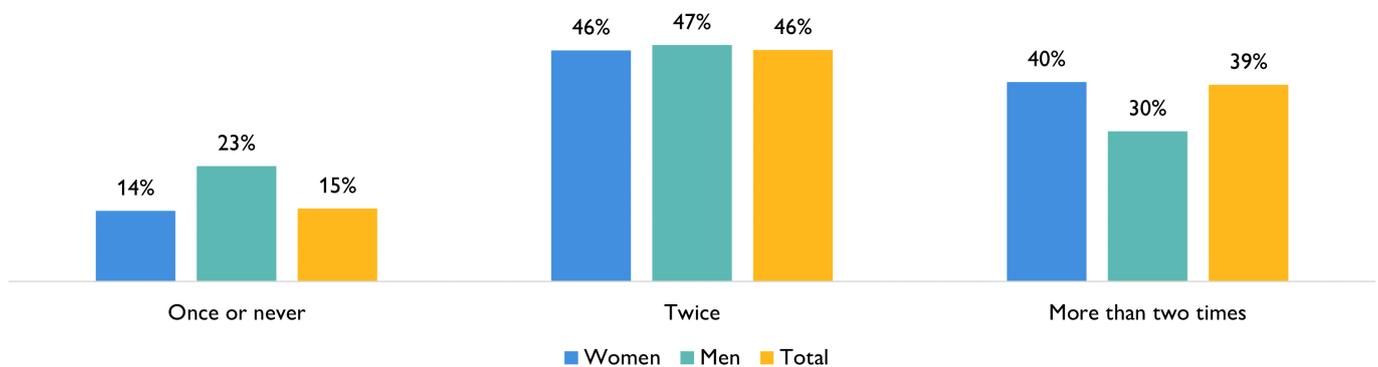
Transport

Over half of the respondents were travelling to Ukraine by car (55%). Twenty-seven per cent of respondents were traveling by bus, and 13 per cent were traveling on foot. The remaining five per cent were traveling by minibus or by taxi.

Figure 9: Main modes of transportation to Ukraine, (%)

55%   **32%**   **13%**

Figure 10: Transport to Ukraine means, by gender and total, (%)
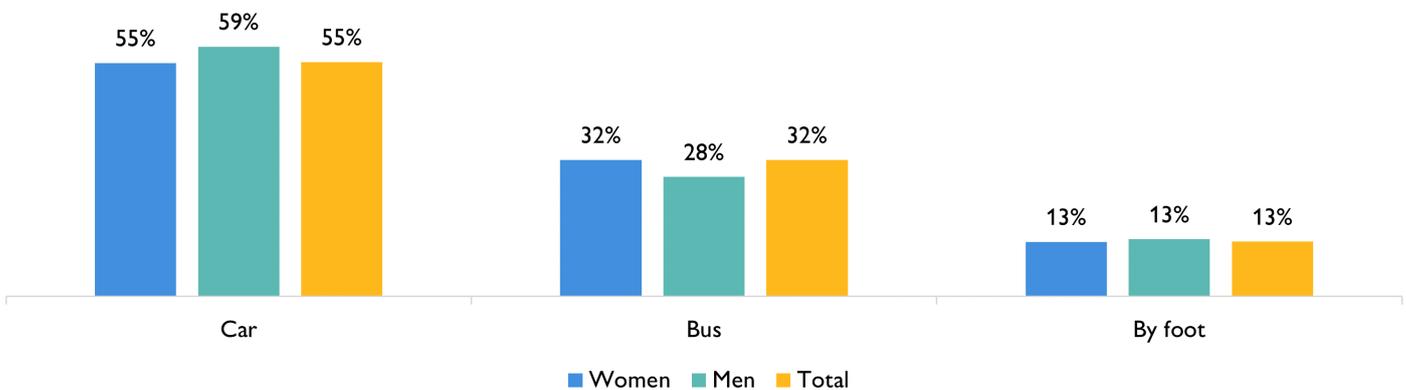
3. Oblasts (regions) of Origin and Destination

Origin or habitual residence

The majority of respondents came from five oblasts in Ukraine: Odeska (35%), the City of Kyiv (16%), Mykolaivska (7%), Vinnytska (6%) and Kiyvska (6%).

The remaining respondents originate from various oblasts, mostly around the City of Kyiv as well as in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine (the regions most impacted by the war).

Intended destination

Ninety-two per cent of all respondents were planning to return to the same oblast of origin, while eight per cent intended to go to a different oblast. Among those returning to a different oblast, 79 respondents intended to go to Kyiv city, 77 intended to go to Vinnytska, and 42 intended to go to Odeska. Others intended to go to Khmelnytska, Zhytomyrska, Dnipropetrovska, Lvivska, Mykolaivska, Poltavska, Cherkaska, and Sumska oblasts.

Map 2: Intended oblast of destination versus oblast of origin in Ukraine, (%)
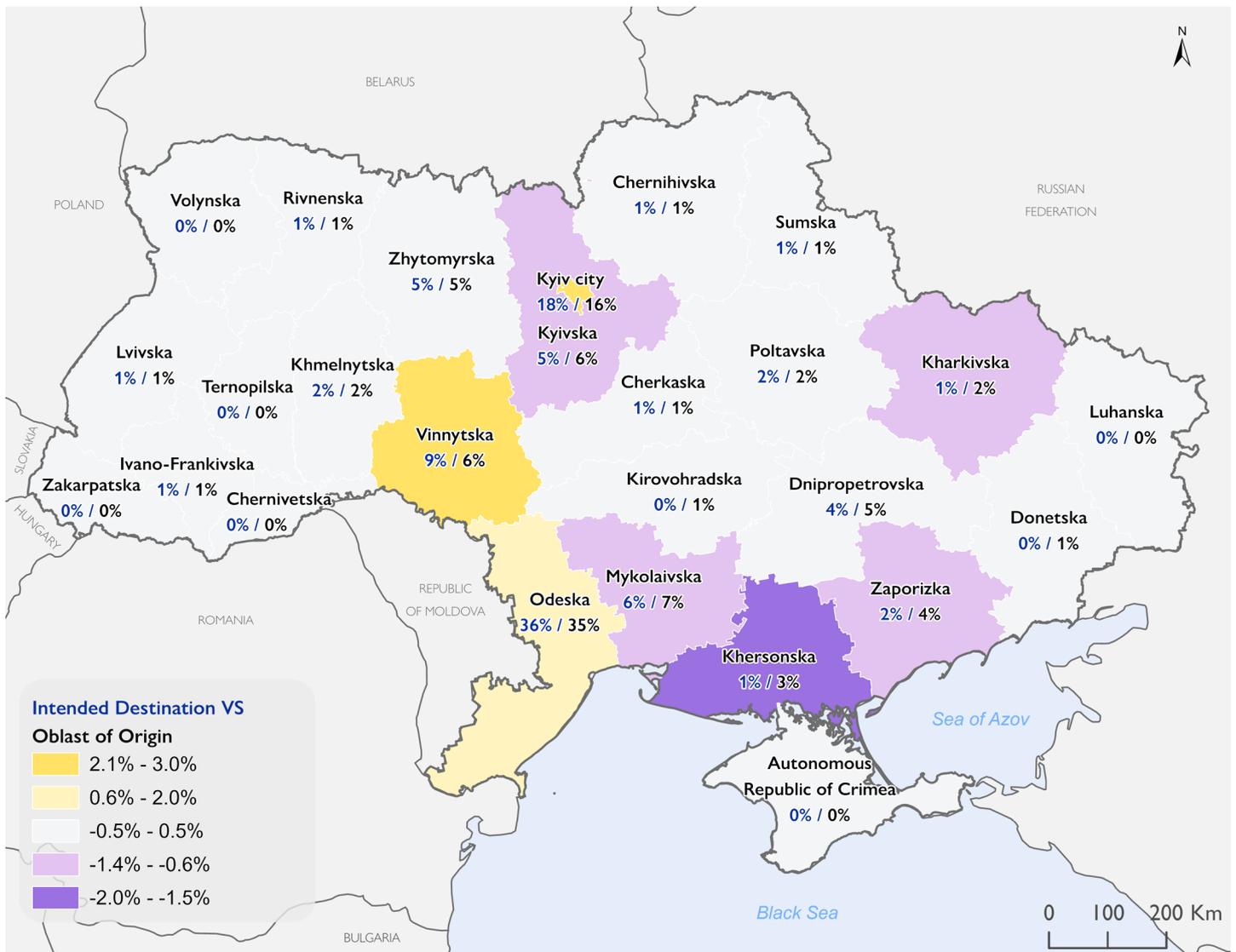
This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

4. Intentions and Reasons to Cross Back to Ukraine

Duration of stay

Fifty-four per cent of respondents were traveling to Ukraine for a short visit (less than 30 days), while 21 per cent indicated they intended to stay in Ukraine (prospective returnees).

Twenty-five per cent were not sure about the length of the visit.

Most respondents who intended to stay in Ukraine had been residing before in other countries (15%), compared to those who were before in the Republic of Moldova (6%). In addition, more men (40%) were intending to stay in Ukraine compared to women (20%).

Figure 11: Duration of stay, by gender and total, (%)
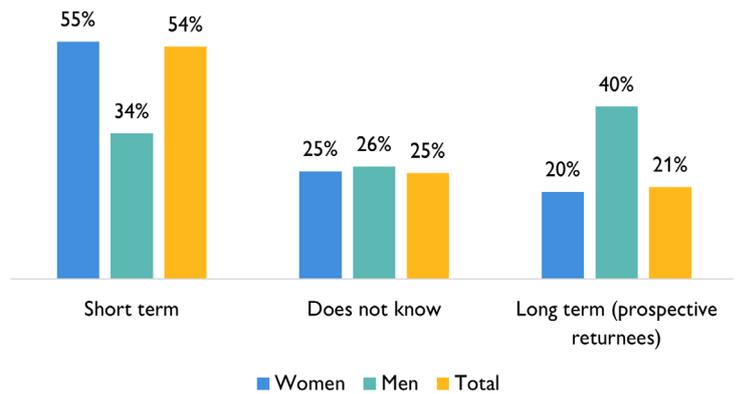
Figure 12: Distribution of respondents by intended duration of stay in Ukraine, by country of residence outside of Ukraine, (%)
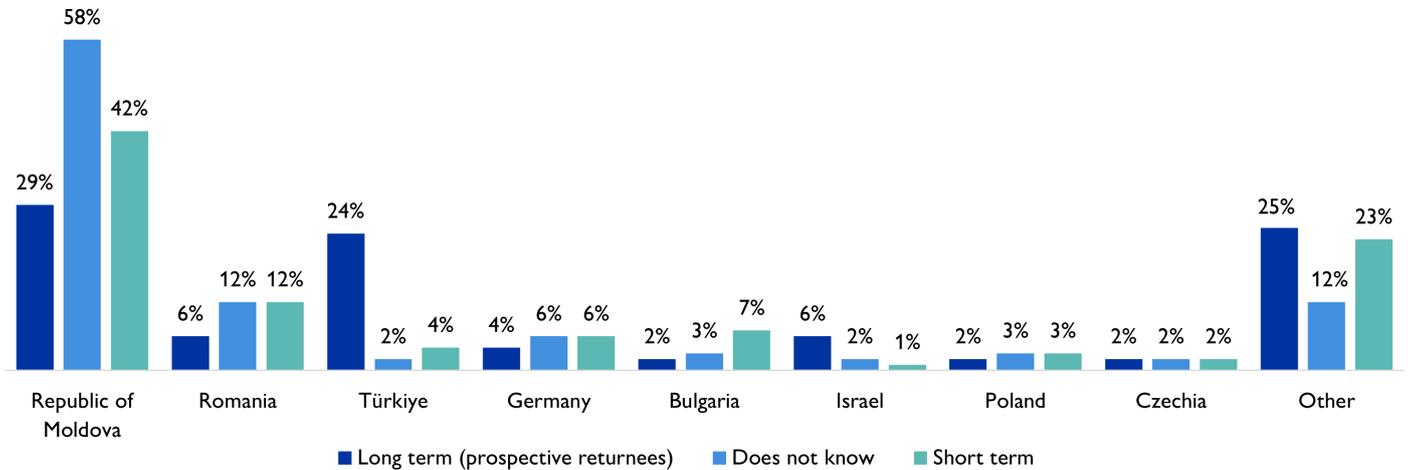
Long term stay

A total of 614 respondents (21%) intended to remain in Ukraine. Among them, 47 per cent indicated that they were returning to Ukraine to reunite with family. Eighteen per cent were returning because they missed home, while seven per cent were returning to visit a relative or friend. Other key reasons for returning include starting or continuing education for themselves or their children (5%) and working in essential services (4%). Nineteen per cent cited other reasons (19%), such as checking on their properties, visiting a doctor for medical assistance, and obtaining or renewing their documents.

Table 1: Main reasons for planning on returning to Ukraine for a long term period, by gender and total, (%) (N=614)

(multiple answers possible)

Reasons for long term return	Women	Men	Total
To reunite with family	49%	37%	47%
I miss my home/country	18%	16%	18%
To visit someone	8%	5%	7%
To start/continue education (for myself/children)	5%	3%	5%
I work in essential services	4%	6%	4%
Help other family members/friends	4%	1%	3%
To check on property	3%	4%	3%
To go to the doctor	1%	4%	2%
Other	8%	24%	11%

Short term visit

Fifty-four per cent (1,539 respondents) of respondents were planning to stay in Ukraine for a short period of time. Of this sample, 33 per cent cited visiting family members as their main reason for returning. Other motives for returning included returning to collect or renew their documents (16%), to check their properties (14%), to visit a doctor (12%), and to help family and friends (8%). Seventeen per cent gave other reasons.

Table 2: Main reasons for returning to Ukraine for a short term period, by gender and total, (%) (N=1,539)

(multiple answers possible)

| Reasons for short term return	Women	Men	Total
To meet with family	32%	40%	33%
To obtain/renew documents	16%	7%	16%
To check on property	14%	17%	14%
To go to the doctor	12%	19%	12%
Help other family members/friends	8%	7%	8%
I miss my home/country	5%	1%	5%
To collect personal belongings	4%	2%	4%
Other	9%	7%	8%

5. Needs, Assistance Received, and Challenges

Immediate needs upon crossing back

Twenty-two per cent of respondents reported that they would need financial support upon returning to Ukraine. Other cited needs include support with health services (9%), with personal safety and security (8%), with long term accommodation (6%), as well as language courses and employment (4%). Only 3 per cent of respondents cited needing support with food or medicines (3% each). Five per cent of respondents had various other needs.

Thirty-five per cent of respondents reported not having any immediate needs. There were no stark differences in needs between male and female respondents.

Figure 13: Needs upon crossing back, (%)
(multiple answers possible)
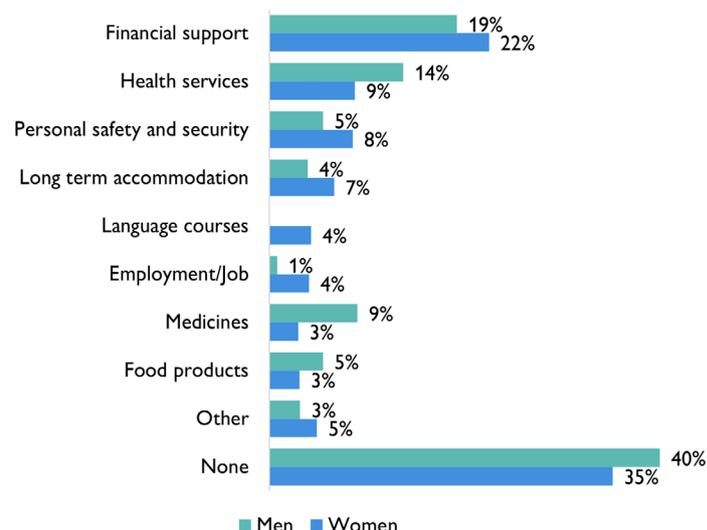
Assistance received in the Republic of Moldova

Of the 1,751 respondents who answered a question on whether they had already received any form of assistance, all respondents indicated that they had received some form of assistance.

Types of assistance received included food support (29%), financial support (28%), and hygiene/sanitary items (22%). Among other types of Non-food items (NFIs) received by respondents were vouchers (8%), clothes/shoes (3%). Other support provided was for transportation, and psychological counselling (1% each).

Table 3: Main areas of assistance received, by gender and total, (%) (N=1,751) (multiple answers possible)

Assistance received	Women	Men	Total
Food products/meals	29%	30%	29%
Financial support	28%	29%	28%
Personal hygiene and sanitary supplies	22%	23%	22%
Vouchers	8%	6%	8%
Accommodation	7%	6%	7%
Clothes/shoes	3%	2%	3%
Free transportation	1%	2%	1%
Psychological counseling	1%	1%	1%
Toys	1%	1%	1%

Sources of information

The majority of respondents reported that social media platforms (60%) and in particular Telegram (30%) were their main source of information to learn about available support and services for displaced Ukrainians. Followed by eleven per cent reported using other internet-based media outlets. Only 8 per cent of respondents reported that they were relying on NGOs, grassroots or community organizations, or other humanitarian organizations (such as IOM or Red Cross, among others) despite these organizations being at the forefront of the humanitarian response. Other cited sources of information included other people (7%), messages and calls via mobile phone (6%), four per cent relied on volunteers deployed by humanitarian organizations or public authorities, while two per cent of respondents relied on local authorities and municipal officials for information.

Figure 14: Channels of information, by age category, (%) (multiple answers possible)
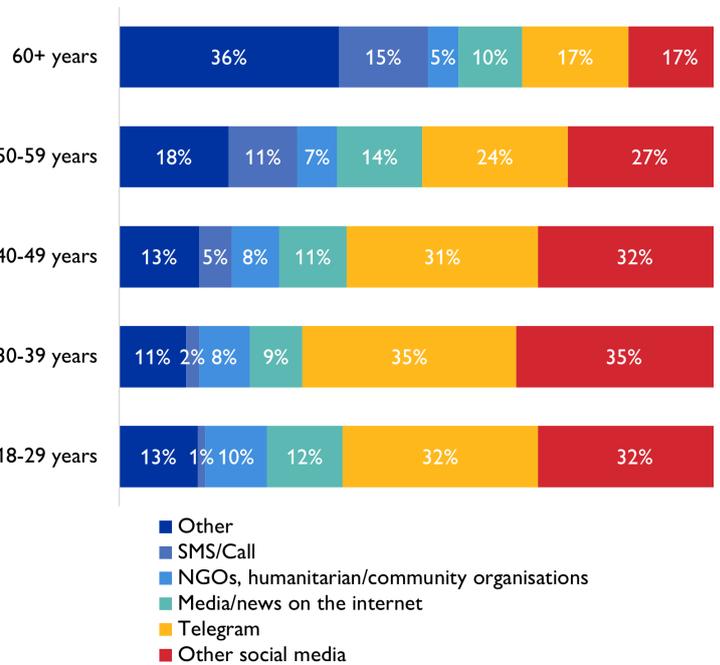
Figure 15: Channels of information, by gender and total, (%) (multiple answers possible)
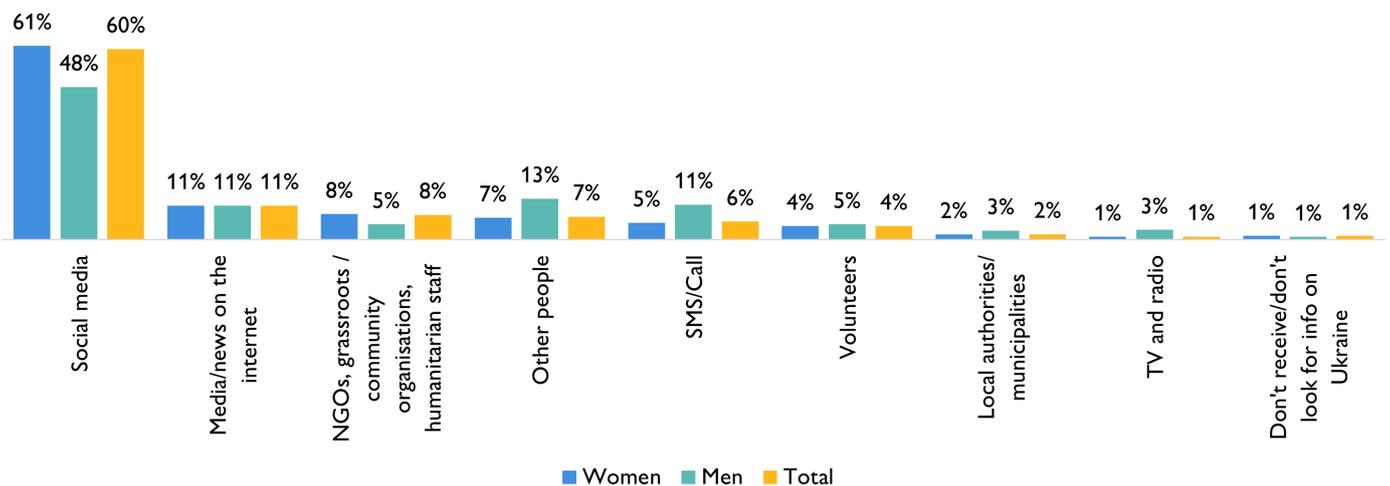
Experiences of discrimination

The majority of respondents (99 per cent) did not experienced any form of discrimination. Less than one per cent (9 respondents) reported experiences of discrimination in their country of displacement, including France, Israel, the Republic of Moldova, Türkiye (2 respondents each), and Spain (1 respondent). Two respondents did not know or preferred not to answer the question on discrimination. Notably, all of the respondents who experienced discrimination and all who preferred not to answer were women.

6. Group Composition

Travel mode

Of the 2,855 total respondents, 56 per cent were crossing back to Ukraine with the same group with which they had originally left Ukraine. Twenty-nine per cent were travelling alone, despite having initially left Ukraine with a group. Another 10 per cent were travelling alone but had travelled alone when first leaving Ukraine. The remaining five per cent were either crossing back with a different group or with some of their original travel members.

Figure 16: Travelling mode, by gender and total, (%) (multiple answers possible)
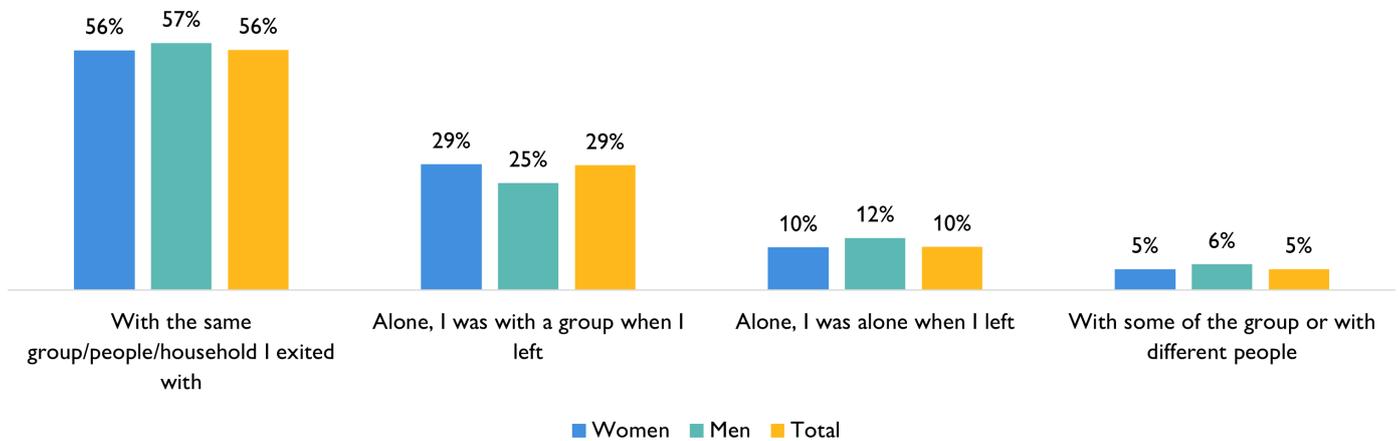
Of those travelling in a group (N=1,673), 92 per cent were travelling with family members, five per cent with other relatives, and three per cent with friends, colleagues or neighbours. Moreover, 19 per cent were travelling with at least one elderly person (more than 60 years old) and 45 per cent were travelling with at least one child (17 years old or younger). Of the 1,144 respondents who were travelling with at least one child, 14 per cent were travelling with a child between 0-4 years old, and 84 per cent were travelling with a child between 5-17 years old.

Figure 17: Travelling groups, by gender and total, (%) (N=1,673) (multiple answers possible)
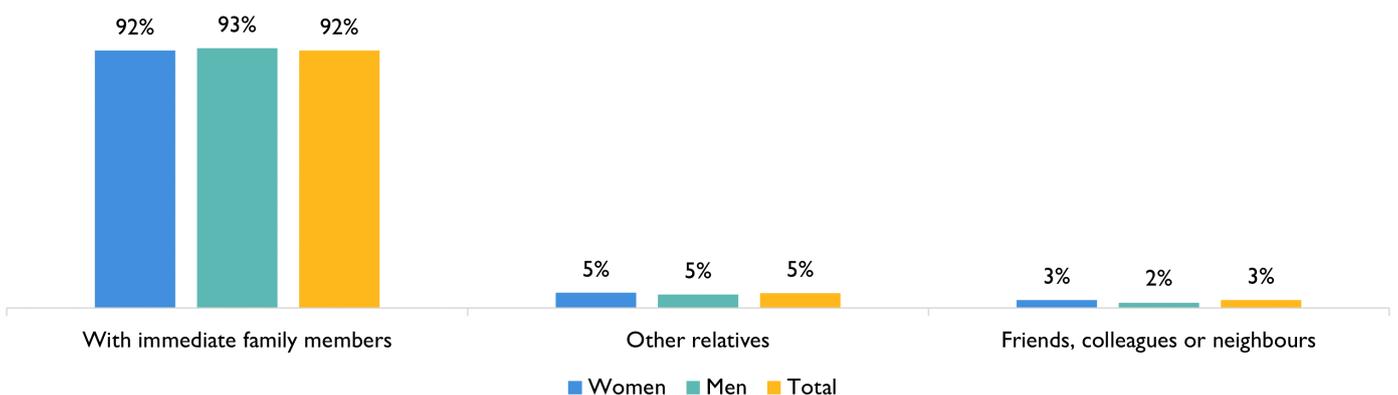
7. Methodology

Background

Since 24 February 2022, refugees from Ukraine and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) have been fleeing to neighbouring countries as a result of the war. As of May 2023, more than eight million refugees from Ukraine were recorded across Europe. At the same time, almost 13 million of border crossings of border crossings of Ukrainian and Third-Country refugees and migrants were reported from Ukraine into the neighbouring countries since February 2022.

IOM has deployed its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools since mid-April 2022 to collect individual surveys in neighbouring countries with persons crossing into Ukraine, with the aim to improve the understanding of main profiles, displacement patterns, intentions and needs of those moving into Ukraine.

This report is based on surveys collected in the Republic of Moldova between 01 July and 30 September 2023 in two border crossing points, Otaci and Palanca. To improve the quality of the questionnaire, continuous reviews of the questionnaire and additional questions must be implemented in each iteration of the data collection in the Republic of Moldova as and when necessary.

Methodological framework

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. It is designed to regularly and systematically capture, process and disseminate information to provide a better understanding of the movements and evolving needs of displaced populations, whether on site or en route.

This survey is part of IOM's DTM activities to monitor the profiles, displacement patterns and most immediate needs of the Ukrainian refugees and TCNs crossing back to Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

In the Republic of Moldova, surveys were conducted in Ukrainian, Russian, and English by IOM's DTM trained teams of enumerators on a mobile application.

The interviews are anonymous and carried out one-on-one with respondents, provided they consent to be interviewed after a brief introduction. Enumerators trained on ethics of data collection, information provision and protection principles, approached people crossing back to Ukraine, to verify their willingness to conduct the survey, which was only addressed to adults (18+).

The survey form was designed by IOM to capture the main displacement patterns for refugees crossing back to Ukraine following the outbreak of the war. It analyses the demographic profiles of respondents and of the group they are travelling with, if any; it asks about intentions relatively to the permanence in Ukraine; and it gathers information regarding a set of main needs at the moment of the interview.

Various settings were identified to conduct surveys, to maximise the number of interviews, and reach out to different profiles of individuals.

Among the limitations encountered during data collection were the reduced time to carry out surveys at border crossing points and the presence of only four enumerators at the moment of the interviews.

To address the aforesaid shortcomings, and cover different viewpoints, a mixed sampling strategy guided the data collection exercise.

Consequently, this analysis does not proportionally represent the whole population and results cannot be deemed representative of a full picture of mobility towards Ukraine from the Republic of Moldova.

DTM

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. The survey form was designed to capture the main displacement patterns – origin country and region – for refugees of any nationality fleeing from Ukraine because of the war. It captures the demographic profiles of respondents and of the group they are travelling with, if any; it asks about intentions relative to the intended final destination and prospects of permanence in the country of the survey/first reception; it gathers information regarding a set of main needs that the respondents expressed as more pressing at the moment of the interview.

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, several IOM's DTM tools were deployed in countries neighbouring Ukraine and in other countries particularly impacted by the new arrivals of migrants and refugees from Ukraine.

For more information, please consult: https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response
DTM is part of IOM's Global Data Institute.

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