

Forced migration and war in Ukraine

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Millions of people in Ukraine have left their homes due to war. Some of them have moved within the country, others have left the country to go abroad. Some people moved for a while but have already returned to their places of permanent residence, and others may face the question of leaving later. A sudden displacement of a large number of population due to war poses new challenges and exacerbates the existing ones—both for host communities and for the communities which people are leaving. The moving processes and their consequences need to be evaluated and taken into account while developing national and local policies.

In our [previous brief](#), we recorded the most important decisions and events related to forced migration and war in the first month after February 24. This brief provides an overview of issues that have emerged as a result of further developments. Solving these issues will help support the displaced people and their host communities as well as preserve Ukraine's human potential.

In the first section, we present up-to-date data on population movement and analyze the key trends, and then we evaluate the challenges and consequences of displacement due to the full-scale war. For our analysis, we use published regulations, survey results, reports by Ukrainian and international media as well as by government representatives.

● Data on the movement of people

Movement within Ukraine. [According to the International Organization for Migration](#) (IOM), the number of people who are considered to be internally displaced (IDPs) is about 7.1 million as of mid-May. The Ministry of Social Policy [reported](#) over 2.7 million people who had registered for and received IDP certificates by early May.

IDPs who have arrived from eastern regions make up over a half (55%) of the total number; IDPs from southern regions make up 13%—their share has been gradually growing. Meanwhile, the share of IDPs from Kyiv and northern regions has decreased significantly compared to the first month of the full-scale war and stands at 16% and 12%, respectively.

The number of people who have returned home after moving within the country, [according to IOM](#), is around 4.5 million people.

Movement across the border. [According to](#) the Ukrainian Border Service, over 5.2 million people, most of them Ukrainian citizens, left Ukraine on February 24—June 3, 2022. [According to](#) UNHCR, as of June 9, 2022, there were over 4.9 million refugees in European countries who have left Ukraine due to the war.

UNHCR reports that as of June 9, over 3.2 million refugees from Ukraine had registered in Europe to obtain temporary protection or a similar status. The European countries where they register the most frequently include Poland (1.1 million), Germany (565,000), Czech Republic (366,000), Spain (118,000), Bulgaria (113,000) and Italy (97,000). [As of May 19, 2022](#), 31,699 people had applied for refugee status.

Return. Since May 10, 2022, more people have been entering Ukraine on average than leaving the country. [According to the Border Service](#), over 2.2 million Ukrainian citizens returned to the country between February 24 and June 3, 2022. Some of these people may have returned, particularly at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, in order to join the Armed Forces. At the same time, some of those who have left Ukraine since February 23, 2022, return to Ukraine for a short period of time. According to a survey by Gradus

Research, as of April 20, 77% plan to return to Ukraine at the first opportunity they get. At the same time, 13% do not plan to return to Ukraine.

Deportation to Russia and temporarily occupied territories. According to the [Ukrainian government's data](#), as of May 26, 1.4 million Ukrainian citizens, including 230,000 children, had been deported to Russia from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.¹ People who are deported to Russia by force have to stay in “filtration camps” for some time. These are mostly administrative buildings, such as schools or houses of culture, without any proper conditions even for short-term accommodation.

According to [testimonies](#) of the relatives of people who have undergone the procedure of “filtration,” in these camps people are brutally interrogated, their phones are checked, some of them are stripped naked to check their tattoos; during interrogation, they are asked about their connections with the military and Azov, as well as about whom they blame for the war.

After “filtration,” some people are deported to remote regions of Russia. Those who are deemed to be “unreliable” are [kept](#) in camps in inhuman conditions or transported in an unknown direction; some of the prisoners are [forced](#) to work. At the same time, some people [manage](#) to leave Russia.

[According to Liudmyla Denisova, the Ukrainian Ombudsman](#), Ukraine will initiate an international committee to return those who have been deported.

● Employment of internally displaced persons

The full-scale war has made the functioning of nearly all branches of the Ukrainian economy impossible or very difficult. At the same time, economic activity is [resuming](#) in the regions where there has been no combat, as well as in the de-occupied regions. However, economic activity has shrunk significantly in eastern and southern regions. There, companies have stopped working (conservation, bankruptcy), facilities have been damaged or destroyed.

When a company continues to work, but a worker, after assessing safety risks, moves to another region, they are very likely to lose their income or even their job. Only a minor fraction of the displaced can work remotely. Thus, IDPs have

¹ These data require verification by intermediary countries or the government of the destination country.

found themselves in a situation of complete or partial loss of income, or under the threat of losing it soon.

At the moment, there are no reliable data on the number of people who have lost their jobs. [The numbers of the State Employment Service](#) do not indicate a growing share of the unemployed, as could be expected. In particular, this situation has developed due to the downtime status of some companies, when employees formally remain employed but are not paid wages and have no guarantee that the company will resume its operations. In addition, until recently, IDPs were unable to terminate their labor contracts for their previous place of residence. After [legislative amendments](#), the displaced can terminate a labor contract unilaterally via an Employment Center.

Therefore, surveys are used to estimate the number of people who have lost paid employment. According to the findings of a May [survey by IOM](#), almost two thirds (64%) of the IDPs who had jobs before the full-scale war have lost them. More than a half (52%) of them look for jobs in places where they have moved to. Some IDPs do not plan to look for a job in the near future—one possible explanation of this is the expectation to resume working after they return home.

Forcibly displaced people may have fewer competitive advantages on the labor market in cities where they have moved to. IDPs have no or very few personal contacts that could help them find paid employment. In addition, some of the IDPs did not have jobs before being displaced, and now they have to look for a job because they need to provide for themselves. Such people may not know where exactly to look for a job and in what area; they may not have the skills to write modern CVs, etc. IDPs need to spend time looking for a place to live in and settling in it, solving issues related to welfare aid, caring for their children and elderly relatives, etc. Such workers may need a flexible working schedule or an option with part-time employment.

Thus, people who have moved may lower their wage expectations both for reasons mentioned above and due to the shortage of vacancies in host communities which could be observed in many regions even before the full-scale war. IDPs are likely to demonstrate higher willingness to take jobs which require much lower qualifications than they are used to. In addition, displaced people may be more willing to accept a job offer where labor rights are violated and to work without official employment.

Despite the introduction of a program to compensate employers for each internally displaced employee,² some [labor legislation changes](#) may have a detrimental effect on the employment and working conditions of IDPs. The legislation changes expand employer rights: for the period of martial law, they can increase maximum working hours, transfer employees to do tasks which are not listed in their contracts, and fire employees while they are on vacation. For instance, if an employee is fired under martial law, they cannot expect compensation for unused vacation days. The law does not protect the vulnerable categories of workers. Employers can abuse some of these regulations since the powers of trade unions have been significantly reduced.

In view of this situation, it is worth considering the introduction of policies aimed at developing the potential of internally displaced people—for instance, by retraining, particularly in partnership with companies. It is important to provide each local employment center with career advisors who should be trained to work with vulnerable population categories. To reduce the obstacles in IDPs' access to the labor market, it can be useful to look for ways to expand the network of kindergartens while taking into account the security situation and to provide access to preschool education to all displaced children. The projects by international organizations and businesses that aim to develop competence, provide mentoring and increase employment, particularly for internally displaced women, should pay attention to the aspects of protecting labor rights and organizing the interaction with customers.

● Social support for internally displaced persons

Due to the full-scale invasion, more and more categories of people may need help, particularly internally displaced persons. Within three months, the government changed its policies regarding monetary aid payment several times, balancing the needs and capacities of the state budget. By gradually reducing the categories of people who can receive payments, the programs become more targeted. At the same time, there is a risk that some of the people who need help may end up outside the scope of the aid programs.

² Applications for compensation can be filed by employers that have employed an IDP and pay them at least the minimum wage (6,500 UAH), are registered as payers of the Unified Social Contribution, have filed their tax reports for the 4th quarter of 2021 or the entire year 2021, and are not a non-profit organization.

The introduction of one-time payments in the amount of 6,500 UAH [as a part of the ePidtrymka program](#) for employees and entrepreneurs was quick, within a week of the beginning of the full-scale war. In order to receive the payments, people had to meet minimum requirements: be insured (that is, have a confirmed fact of paying the unified social contribution in the previous quarter) [in the territories where combat was taking place](#), and file an application in Diya.

On the one hand, this aid could support those who suddenly lost their income due to the war and had to move out of the regions on the list. However, since the applications were automatically reviewed by the Ministry of Digital Transformation based on information from the Pension Fund and the Tax Service, some people were deprived of the opportunity to receive the aid. In particular, these were people who worked in a region where combat was taking place but for a company registered in a region where the ePidtrymka program does not apply. The aid was not available to people who did not have employment (including the registered unemployed) or to employees of public institutions, regardless of whether they were paid salaries in March. The only way to apply for the aid was through the Diya app, so people who did not have smartphones were not able to do it.

[21.5 billion UAH was allocated](#) for the ePidtrymka program from the state budget, enough to support just over 3.3 million people. However, within three weeks of the program's validity, almost [5 million people](#) applied for it. The government [shut down the program](#) and allocated [additional funding](#) from the state budget's reserve fund. As of mid-May, about a third of the applicants still had not received the payments.

At the same time, [policies regarding sustenance payments were changed](#) and [higher sums of payments](#) were set (compared to "first wave" IDPs). Payments were set in the amount of 3,000 UAH per month for children and people with disabilities and 2,000 UAH per month for others. The aid is only available to people who have registered as IDPs and applied for the payments. The government initially announced aid for everyone displaced from the regions where the [ePidtrymka program](#) was available, but after some of these regions were liberated, it was decided to change the principle of payment.

Starting in May, the aid was available [only to those IDPs who cannot return to their places of residence](#) rather than to all IDPs. These are people who have been displaced from communities where active combat has been taking place, communities under occupation or blockade, and people whose homes have

been destroyed or are unfit for residence. The list of territorial communities with active combat is maintained and regularly reviewed by the Ministry of Reintegration in coordination with the Ministry of Defense. Up-to-date information is published on the pages of the Cabinet and the [eDopomoga map](#). Aid is paid to IDPs on a monthly basis as long as martial law is active.

For several groups of people, monetary aid is currently not available, or the process of obtaining it is much more complicated. First of all, these are people who cannot register as IDPs due to missing documents and who, for various reasons, cannot confirm their residence in temporarily occupied or blocked areas or in the active combat zone. When original documents are not available, their electronic versions can be accessed in the Diya app, but one needs to have a Ukrainian bank account and a smartphone to do that. In addition, the government hotline [recorded](#) cases in April 2022 when responsible government bodies required originals or copies of documents despite the fact that applicants demonstrated them in Diya. At the same time, personal identification and production of documents can take more time than usual under martial law. People who find it difficult to present the required documents include homeless and elderly people and those who lost all their belongings while leaving a combat zone.

Monetary aid is available to people whose homes are unfit for residence as a result of combat activities only in certain cases. Homeowners need to apply via Diya for compensation for destroyed/damaged housing, and only then they can also receive sustenance payments. At the same time, personal property of people who did not officially own housing (for instance, in cases when only one of two spouses was the owner of housing), as well as the property of tenants could also have been damaged by combat. These groups of people will not be able to apply for compensation, so they will not receive sustenance payments.

Residents of liberated localities whose housing has not been damaged or who cannot apply for compensation may also need monetary aid. Housing in some liberated localities can remain unfit for residence for some time, for instance, due to the lack of electricity, gas or water, the threat of mining, etc. Even though the residents of liberated localities in Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and other regions [can receive one-time monetary aid](#) in the same amount as IDPs, they cannot apply for regular payments at the moment.

In addition, even after applying for aid, an IDP may have to wait for it for a while. As of late May, some IDPs [had not received](#) payments for March and April yet. The government reported that the delays are associated with [state](#)

[budget revenue](#), [lack of staff to process the applications](#), and [errors in people's personal information](#). Changes in the rules regarding payments to IDPs may also increase the workload of institutions which register them and arrange the aid.

Some categories of IDPs have the opportunity to receive additional monetary aid from international organizations, particularly [UNHCR](#). However, this program was unable to launch quickly in all regions. Aid payments are also sometimes delayed, and the application process is occasionally [paused](#).

The government, in collaboration with its partner organizations, should determine the goals of providing monetary aid to IDPs and victims of military activities. There is a need to respond to the vulnerable situation of the residents of liberated areas and to create programs of government aid for them for a certain period of time. In addition, it is worth prolonging the validity of the instant aid program for people who evacuate from active combat zones, occupied, surrounded or blockaded localities, and expanding the program. It is also important to improve the system of informing about various opportunities and ways to receive aid or to solve certain issues. For example, IDPs who undergo registration or apply for payments should be informed about other kinds of aid they can receive, particularly about unemployment registration and redirection of social payments.

● Return of forced migrants

As of late May 2022, the data on people returning to Ukraine are approximate: it is difficult to assess how many people have returned or will return for the long term. At the same time, a realistic estimate of those who have returned or plan to return is important for the development of policies and measures for restoring infrastructure and socioeconomic development.

The difficulty with assessing the number of those who have returned partially lies in the fact that not everyone who enters Ukraine plans to stay in the country for a long time. In addition, it is harder to assess movement within the country. So the available data on IDPs returning to the places they left when the full-scale war began are approximate.

The reasons for returning include the perception of the security situation; family reunification; difficulties with the search for housing or jobs; temporary return to collect some belongings, see one's family or evacuate loved ones. According to a [survey](#) of people returning to Ukraine, conducted by UNHCR on

April 3–27, the highest number of respondents were returning to Lviv Region, Kyiv and Kyiv Region, Odesa Region and Ivano-Frankivsk Region.

The length of combat activities in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine will affect the number of people leaving as well as the likelihood of their return. Damage or destruction of urban infrastructure, particularly businesses, housing stock, and social infrastructure buildings, can affect the willingness to return.

According to the findings of a [survey](#) of people who left Ukraine at the beginning of the full-scale invasion and who are now returning to Ukraine, conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center in Zakarpattia, almost two thirds (63.4%) of the respondents who had left had children; however, less than a half (44.8%) of the respondents who were returning had children. This may mean that people with children are more likely to stay abroad for a long time because their children start going to local schools and can partially integrate in local communities.

The population groups that are more mobile, particularly those who had higher education degrees before the full-scale war began, who knew foreign languages, had high incomes, those who planned to emigrate before February 24, 2022, and those who worked abroad on a seasonal or permanent basis, are less likely to return to Ukraine.

Those who will not lose their connection to Ukraine are more likely to return. So it is important to develop policies and make decisions which will allow them to maintain this connection. At the moment, it is maintained, in particular, through the possibility of remote studying at Ukrainian education institutions. When the full-scale war ends and the security situation stabilizes, there will be a need to create opportunities for return, particularly in terms of housing and employment. People whose homes have been damaged or destroyed will probably have fewer reasons to return. This increases the importance of introducing policies to ensure access to long-term comfortable housing, particularly using the instruments of affordable renting. In addition, the longer the refugees stay abroad, the more likely they are to find jobs and start building their careers at the new location. To encourage people to return to Ukraine, the government will have to develop policies in order to create jobs for those who plan to return.

● Changes in the number and structure of the population

At the moment, there is a lack of data on changes in the population of specific localities, so it is difficult to predict how Ukrainian cities will change after the full-scale war ends. Since the people who have left the country are mostly women, children and the elderly, the gender and age structure of Ukraine's population may change, which will also affect urban development. Local governments will need these data to develop measures and policies for adapting cities to the changing number and structure of the population and for integrating IDPs.

Due to active combat and occupation, the population of southern and eastern regions of Ukraine is shrinking. Meanwhile, the population of western regions is growing due to the movement of people within Ukraine. The growing population affects the urban infrastructure, particularly by increasing the load on the residential, transit, social and administrative infrastructure. Even though IDPs were welcomed on the first days and weeks of the war, the overloaded social infrastructure can cause increased social tension and discriminatory treatment of IDPs in the medium- and long-term perspective. In addition, it is likely that some of the IDPs will not return to the places where they lived before February 24, 2022. This means that they will need long-term affordable housing and jobs in their host cities.

Due to the war, companies from eastern and southern regions have to move their production to safer locations. In March 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Economy launched a program for relocating companies from combat zones. [As of May 28, 2022](#), more than 600 companies had moved to western regions, and 390 of them had resumed operations. According to the Cabinet, Zakarpattia, Lviv and Chernivtsi Regions are chosen as relocation destinations the most frequently. The longer the war goes on, the higher number of companies will have to move. For the communities that receive them, this will mean more jobs, particularly for IDPs. In the long term, this can affect the population growth in these cities.

In order to develop policies for adapting city infrastructure, it is important to collect information about the changing population structure and the needs of IDPs.

We ask you to support the approach of victory through donations to help [the Armed Forces of Ukraine](#) and [humanitarian initiatives](#).

[The donations](#) we are currently receiving for our work will be used to research and analyse the impact of the war on a civilian population. We thank those who made donations, the Prague Civil Society Centre, the International Renaissance Foundation and the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Ukraine, for their assistance.