

The number of Ukrainian refugees increased by 300,000 over the last year, reaching 5.2m

As of November 2024, about 5.2 million Ukrainians remain abroad due to the war—300,000 more than in January 2024.

This is highlighted in the study from the Centre for Economic Strategy, based on a survey conducted by the research agency Info Sapiens and open sources.

3.7 million of them left Ukraine through its western borders; around 0.2 million people travelled to Europe via Russia or Belarus, while another 1.3 million have been recorded as refugees in these two countries, according to the UN.

Studies reveal that fewer Ukrainians plan to return home. As of now, only 43% of refugees are willing to return, compared to 52% in January 2024 and 74% in December 2022.

According to CES estimates, 1.7 to 2.7 million Ukrainians may remain abroad permanently, even after the war ends. This could have a significant economic impact, potentially reducing Ukraine's GDP by 5.1% to 7.8% annually.

Experts note that the majority of refugees are women (primarily aged 35-44) and children. According to Eurostat, most Ukrainian refugees reside in Germany (27%) and Poland (23%).

“The profile of Ukrainian refugees has changed significantly since late 2022. While women and children comprised the vast majority at the start of the war, the proportion of adult men has risen substantially. Although adult women still form the largest group (44%), the share of adult men reached 27% in December—an increase of 9 percentage points from January 2024,” explains Daria Mykhailyshyna, co-author of the study and Senior Economist at the Centre for Economic Strategy.

What influences the decision to return?

For most Ukrainian refugees (53%), the key factor is the full cessation of hostilities and the restoration of air travel.

Other significant considerations include: a higher standard of living in Ukraine (e.g. improvements in education, healthcare, anti-corruption efforts etc.) – 46%; the ability to find well-paid employment – 33%; an

end to air strikes in their chosen city of return – 31%, and the cessation of hostilities in their home region – 24%.

Policy recommendations from CES experts to encourage return migration:

- Facilitate equal access to the EU's freedom of movement for Ukrainians.
- Strengthen cooperation with European countries to support refugee repatriation after the war.
- Provide social and financial assistance for individuals from war-affected and occupied regions.
- Increase engagement with Ukrainians abroad through diplomatic outreach.
- Simplify reintegration processes for children in Ukrainian schools and universities.

The research was conducted with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation.

Key graphs are available via [this link](#).