

Most Ukrainians displaced by the war plan to return home when it is safe, research shows

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More than 4 million Ukrainians were forced to flee following the invasion of their homeland by Russian forces in February 2022, with the vast majority heading to neighboring countries and other European

nations.

[Research tracking the evolving plans and integration outcomes of Ukrainians across Europe](#) shows that around the start of this year, 58% said they still plan to return home when it is safe and 7% want to go back to Ukraine soon. Only 8% planned to settle outside of Ukraine.

The study, for which 11,783 Ukrainian refugees were surveyed, was launched in June 2022. It was led by Dr. Cevat Giray Aksoy, of the Department of Political Economy at King's, in partnership with the research and survey agency Verian. Dr. Aksoy and his team tracked the changing plans of the refugees over a period of 18 months, recording their location, return plans, and integration efforts such as work, training, or study.

Their work revealed that, initially, two-thirds of those surveyed intended to return home when conditions became safe, though that percentage continued to fall as time passed. Notably, 33% of those who planned to return soon have already done so, while none who intended to settle permanently abroad have returned.

The survey also showed the liberation of a refugee's home district significantly increased their likelihood of returning. However, intense conflict in their home municipalities reduced the probability of returning to those specific areas, although it did not deter return to Ukraine in general.

Using the same survey, a study by Dr. Aksoy and his-co-authors also highlighted that refugees who do not intend to return to Ukraine invested more in acquiring local human capital, such as [language skills](#) and labor market integration, with those whose districts remained occupied by Russians were more likely to invest in their integration due to lower return intentions.

The study authors said, "The success of post-war reconstruction and development efforts in Ukraine will depend crucially on the quantity and quality of the available human capital. The Ukrainian population had been declining even before the Russian invasion, with deaths outnumbering births annually since 1991.

"Furthermore, pervasive corruption and low confidence in the judiciary—underscored by Ukraine's ranking of 104th out of 180 countries in the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index—act as deterrents to return migration."

"A critical challenge for Ukraine will be to leverage the common purpose fostered by the war to drive broader institutional and cultural changes. By addressing these challenges, Ukraine can enhance the appeal of returning for refugees and effectively utilize their human capital in the post-war rebuilding process," said Dr. Aksoy and co-authors.

More information: Understanding return intentions and integration of Ukrainian refugees. [cepr.org/voxeu/columns/underst ... n-ukrainian-refugees](https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/understanding-return-intentions-and-integration-of-ukrainian-refugees)

Provided by King's College London

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