

## Ukrainian refugees will stay in Germany for longer

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More than a third (37%) of Ukrainian refugees intend to stay in Germany permanently, while 34% intend to stay until the end of the war, 27% of respondents have not yet decided how long they will stay in Germany and 2% intend to leave the country within the next year. By mid-December, 1.03 million newcomers from Ukraine had been registered in Germany, and 200,000 Ukrainian children are studying in the country's schools. Realistically, there are probably fewer than 1 million refugees from Ukraine, but the lack of a register of those leaving Germany (e.g. going to other countries via Berlin or returning home) makes it difficult to estimate the number of refugees currently in Germany and to translate the survey results into concrete figures.

The study 'Refugees from Ukraine in Germany' was published on 15 December and was conducted on a sample of 11,000 Ukrainians between August and October. It was carried out jointly by several institutions dealing with migration and the German labour market – including the Federal Office for Migrants and Refugees (BAMF), the Institute for Labour Market Research (IAB) and the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW). The second part is planned for spring 2023.

### Main findings of the survey:

- The majority (80%) of refugees from Ukraine are women over the age of 18. 77% of them came to Germany without a partner, 12% are in Germany with a partner and children; by mid-December, 352,000 Ukrainians under the age of 18 were registered. Among men, 71% live in Germany with female partners. 42% of mothers under the age of 50 whose children live outside Germany intend to bring them to Germany.
- Almost two-thirds of the refugees come from the eastern regions of Ukraine (32%), Kyiv (19%) and the southern part of the country (14%).
- The most important reasons for choosing Germany as a destination country were: contact with relatives already there (60%), respect for human rights (29%), the welfare system (22%), the education system (12%), an immigrant-friendly culture (12%) and a strong economy (10%). Almost one in five (18%) respondents say that they were brought to Germany by chance.
- The vast majority (76%) of Ukrainian refugees felt welcome upon arrival in Germany. The opposite feeling was held by 7%.
- Accommodation – at the time of the survey, 74% of respondents lived in rented flats and houses, 17% in hotels and guest houses and 9% in refugee centres. Among those renting

accommodation, 60% live alone or with family members, 25% live with family members, friends and acquaintances already in Germany and 15% live with someone else.

- Education – Ukrainian refugees are, on average, significantly better educated than their compatriots in their country of origin, and also than Germans – 72% of newcomers have a university degree, mainly academic.
- Language skills – 80% of respondents declare that they do not know German or know it poorly, 14% consider their skills in this respect to be average and 4% consider their skills to be good or very good. Half of the respondents attend language courses.
- Employment – 17% of respondents were gainfully employed and a further 78% declared that they definitely (56%) or probably (22%) intend to engage in such activity. 74% of respondents were registered at a labour office, of which 21% were intensively looking for a job (participants of integration and language courses are included in the registered group). 83% of the employed are in paid work (with predominantly white-collar activities), 8% in physical work and 8% are self-employed; 88% work in the service sector. Professional activities 30% of refugees require tertiary education, 19% require higher technical education, 22% require vocational qualifications and 29% of respondents belong to the unskilled workforce.
- Schools – 22% of children under 3 years of age and 59% over 3 years of age attend a crèche or kindergarten until they start primary school. The percentage participating in education is increasing among families who work or take advantage of language and integration courses. Schools are attended by 91% of Ukrainian children registered in Germany. At the same time, 23% of pupils take online courses according to the Ukrainian curriculum and only 3% take exclusively Ukrainian online classes.

## Commentary

- Germany assumes that refugees from Ukraine will remain in Germany for a long time, or at best permanently. This situation calls for a new legal basis to be prepared by March 2024, when the current regulations guaranteeing Ukrainians the right to stay in the EU expire. Willingness to settle will increase as children regularly attending local schools settle in the country. At the same time, Germany places great emphasis on the participation of all Ukrainians in language and integration courses. Due to the intensification of hostilities and the destruction of Ukraine's infrastructure, Germany expects a further influx of refugees (at the end of November, an average of 261 new arrivals from Ukraine per day were arriving in Berlin; there is no data on those leaving the capital). This trend is likely to be reinforced (and the frequency of decisions to stay in Germany for longer increased) by Germany's increase in social benefits from 1 January (basic to €502 per month per person) and by taking shielding measures for the energy crisis and inflation, which also include resident Ukrainians (see '[Germany: dispute over benefits rules for the long-term unemployed](#)').
- The biggest challenge in hosting more refugees concerns their accommodation. Finding accommodation is one of the main problems for 31% of those surveyed. The lack of a sufficient number of properties exclusively for refugees and the difficult overall housing market situation in Germany's largest cities prolong the time spent in refugee centres.

The situation is also complicated by a significant increase in the number of asylum applications by, among others, Syrians, Afghans and Turks (Ukrainians are excluded from this procedure). From the beginning of the year to the end of November, 190,000 such applications were made in Germany, a jump of 43% on the previous year (see *'Germany: fears of a wave of refugees over winter'*).

- The second problem is the education system (see *'Obowiązek szkolny ukraińskich dzieci w Niemczech'*). German schools are constantly overburdened by the number of children and by a shortage of teachers, and the quality of education is also affected by insufficient investment. In addition, increasing criticism is being levelled at the welcome (integration) classes, which are attended by around a third of Ukrainian pupils. They are often not integrated into the curriculum, leading to the stigmatisation of children and the underperformance of pupils with a migrant background. The process of hiring Ukrainian teachers in German schools also needs to be improved (detailed guidelines on this issue are being worked out by the individual Länder). Currently, there are about 3,000 Ukrainian teachers working in Germany – mainly as auxiliary teaching staff with salaries lower than those of full-time teachers.
- The high qualifications of Ukrainian refugees (also compared to the German population) fit very well with Germany's absorptive labour market. According to IAB estimates, the country will be short of 7 million workers by 2035. This gap could be partly filled by Ukrainians. The realisation of such a scenario depends primarily on their mastery of the language, the minimisation of bureaucratic obstacles to the recognition of professional qualifications and the provision of schooling for refugee children. In their country of origin, a relatively large number of women worked in academic, technical or medical professions in areas where there is a major shortage of staff in Germany. The willingness of Ukrainians declared in the survey to take up employment can also be seen in data from the Federal Employment Agency. The number of workers with Ukrainian citizenship who are subject to social security contributions rose from 57,000 to around 116,100 between February and September. According to the agency, at the end of November, around 452,000 refugees from Ukraine were registered with employment offices; around 40% of them (around 187,000) were listed in the system as unemployed.