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## „Ukrainian refugees' plans to stay in Austria: Evidence from the first arrivals of 2022"

verfasst von / submitted by

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# I.    INTRODUCTION

On the 24ᵗʰ of February 2022, Russian Federation forces invaded Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023c). Early that morning, there were missile attacks on targeted Ukrainian cities and soon after the first attacks, a large scale invasion began, where Russian forces entered the country from Russia, Belarus, and Crimea (Britannica, 2023).

The conflict roots back to 2014, when Russia occupied Crimea and openly started supporting Ukrainian Russia-supported separatists (House of Commons, 2023). During that 8-year period, there has been a general tension between the two countries including heated incidents (House of Commons, 2023).

In the beginning of 2022, Russia initiated a full-scale armed attack against Ukraine. The first cities that were targeted were Kyiv and others in the Eastern and Southern region of Ukraine, close to the border with Russia. In the meantime, Russian forces were trying to invade the country from various locations (Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). During the first few days, the attack was targeted on strategic infrastructures, but soon hospitals, schools and other places used by civilians became target for Russian troops (The Guardian, 2023).

After the first attacks, people started feeling unsafe regardless of the location they were in. The threat was spread within the whole country and there was a constant fear. The number of people leaving the country was increasing in a high rate due to the high amount of casualties (Statista, 2023). The majority of these were from the Eastern part of the country and mainly from the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, which used to be densely populated. Those two regions are closest to the border with Russia and those that were attacked by Russian troops during the first days of the war (Goncharenko, 2022; UNHCR, 2023b).

It is important to note that during the first month after the invasion, 10% of Ukraine's total population left the country (UNHCR, 2023f). As of May 2023, it was reported that almost one third of the country's population were displaced (UNHCR, 2023e, 2023f). As of November 2023, UNHCR reported that there were almost 6 million Ukrainian refugees within Europe (UNHCR, 2023a) which corresponds to 14% of Ukraine's population as estimated by Eurostat in 2022 (Eurostat, 2022). According to data from the European Commission,  Ukrainian migrants in Europe in 2019 were 4 times more than in 2014 (Adema et al., 2023).

The present study uses data from the 'UkrAiA' project, a survey that was focused on displaced people from Ukraine arriving in Austria. The survey took place in Vienna during the period between April and June 2022. The aim of this thesis is to explore respondents' plans to stay in Austria and their considerations about returning to Ukraine, as well as how those are related with various socio-demographic factors.

The invasion of Ukraine has caused the largest flow of refugees in the last decades in Europe as well as one of the largest ones since World War II (Riabovolyk, 2022; Gerlach, 2022;

Libanova & Pozniak, 2023; Sobolieva, 2023). For context, the estimated number of Syrian refugees that reached Europe during the refugee crisis that started in 2015 was 1,1 million (UNHCR, 2021), while in the case of Ukraine, the refugees across Europe have already exceeded the 8,1 million mark. The UNHCR estimated that more than 5,1 million people had applied for temporary protection in Europe by May 2023 and their status will be valid until March 2024 (UNHCR, 2023e).

The countries that share borders with Ukraine received the largest amount of refugees (Albrecht & Panchenko, 2022; UNHCR, 2023a, 2023b). As a result, almost immediately after the war started, neighbouring countries adjusted the procedure of border crossing in order to simplify the situation for Ukrainian refugees searching for a safe place to move to (European Commission, 2022b; Migration Data Portal, 2023). The 'Temporary Protection Directive', which was adopted in 2001, was activated for the first time by many countries in Europe as a response to the war in Ukraine (ASILE Global Asylum Governance and the European Union's Role, 2022; European Commission, 2022b; UNHCR, 2023e).

Ukrainian refugees were generally welcomed by European societies (Enríquez, 2022; Coninck, 2022). Specifically, Poland which was the country that received the majority of refugees. Poland accepted around 60% of the total amount of refugees from Ukraine (UNHCR, 2022).

By May 2023, Austria had received more than 97,000 refugees from Ukraine and had granted them with temporary protection (UNHCR, 2023e). The number of registered refugees that still remained in Austria as of June 2023 was uncertain, but the number of registrations for temporary protection status in the country that reached 72,000 can give us some insight (UNHCR, 2023e). Interestingly, Austria saw a 1.4% increase in its population in 2022, which is significantly higher than the 0.5% increase recorded in 2021. This increase corresponds to 125,843 people. Net migration went up by 161%, surpassing the levels recorded in 2015, half of which due to refugees coming from Ukraine. This was the most significant population raise within a single year since 1945 (Statistics Austria, 2023).

'Return intentions' refer to migrants' movement back to their home country in order to resettle (United States Institute of Peace). Although there were many refugees returning to Ukraine, those movements were mainly short-stay travels to the home country for vacation during holidays (e.g. Christmas or Easter) or visits to relatives and/or friends without the intention to move back temporarily. Generally, those movements are not considered return intentions, unless refugees are visiting their home country with a prosect to return permanently (Rush, 2022; Snel et al., 2023).

Return intentions are a crucial facet of migration, exerting a significant influence on the demography of both the country of origin and the host country. Understanding refugees' intentions to return not only offers insights into the prospective structure of their home country, but also sheds light on the essential considerations for policymaking and planning to address the needs of the refugee population in the host country (Perzanowski, 2022).

In the case of Ukraine, a country with an already aging population, a small number of refugees returning to Ukraine after the end of the war could mean shortage of labour force and decline in fertility rates. Furthermore, an outflow of young people would also mean an outflow of people of reproductive age and thus, less births (Lutz, 2019). In order for Ukraine to recover from its loss of young people of working age that fled due to the war, the government would need to create an attractive environment for refugees to return, rather than target higher birth rates to fill this gap. This strategy would be more effective as it is normally easier for governments to create policies to attract refugees rather than increase the country's birth rate (Lutz et al., 2002).

Although, return intentions are often quite difficult to forecast as they depend on various complex factors, they are crucial as they can give important insights for both the home and host countries (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007; Kulu et al., 2023).

## II. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### II.I Status of refugees in the host country

Refugees are individuals who flee their home countries due to war, persecution, or personal danger, in some cases leaving them stateless and without citizenship or documentation. Despite common associations with universal conditions like camps, rations, and reliance on reluctant hosts, the refugee experience is diverse (Benard, 1986).

Temporary protection is a tool that the EU has developed in order to provide immediate protection to people in need in the event of a large influx of displaced persons originating from a non-EU country and are unable to return to their home country. This tool can be activated once the Council and the Commission both agree that there is a need for it in order to facilitate the process of the regular asylum process, which in a demanding case like this, might not be as efficient (European Commission, 2022a).

The Temporary Protection Directive was developed in 2001 in response to the conflict in Yugoslavia, but it was activated for the very first time in 2022, as a response to the war in Ukraine (European Commission, 2022a). The Commission estimated that the large flows of Ukrainians could not be supported by the current European asylum system, which would cause delays throughout the process. Hence, it was proposed to make use of the Temporary Protection to provide displaced persons with temporary protection status.

The status of temporary protection grants displaced persons with residence permit, access to employment, education, accommodation, social welfare, medical care and ability to move freely within the EU. Thus, Ukrainian refugees that arrived in Europe, did not necessarily have to apply

for asylum, as they were granted with temporary protection status (European Commission, 2022a).

## II.II Why are return intentions important?

Return intentions of refugees are crucial for several reasons, emphasizing the significance of initially understanding them in order to address them in an effective way. Firstly, these intentions provide valuable insights into the conditions and the level of stability of the refugees' countries of origin (Alrababah et al., 2023). Monitoring and comprehending return intentions enables policy makers and humanitarian organizations to achieve post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building efforts successfully in the home country.

Additionally, understanding why refugees may or may not want to return helps in tailoring appropriate support mechanisms and interventions, ensuring that repatriation is voluntary, safe, and sustainable (Müller-Funk & Fransen, 2023). Migration due to conflict is a very complex topic. Recognizing this complexity, it becomes evident that there is no one-size-fits-all policy for refugees. Different conflicts in different contexts generate distinct challenges and necessitate tailored solutions. Policy makers need to consider the unique circumstances of each case, considering various factors.

Refugees' return intentions can offer valuable insights about the needs of home and host countries. They can also give information to help forecast future movements and provide context to policy makers in order to develop more efficient policies (Valenta et al., 2020). By adopting a case-specific approach, policy makers can create more effective and sustainable solutions that align with the specific needs and aspirations of the displaced populations.

Flexibility in policy making allows for responsiveness to dynamic and evolving situations, promoting a more empathetic and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by refugees. Recognizing the diversity of factors influencing return intentions underscores the importance of tailoring policies to the unique contexts of each refugee situation, ensuring that refugee movements are managed in a humane and dignified manner, promoting long-term solutions and stability for both the displaced individuals and their home countries (Sinatti, 2015).

In summary, these results are valuable for shaping policies, programs, and interventions that can positively impact the lives of refugees and contribute to their successful integration and well-being in the host country.

Return intentions are valuable for the reasons summarized below:
i. Policy Implications: Understanding the factors influencing refugees' intentions is crucial for policy makers involved in refugee resettlement and integration. The insights provided

by the models can help with the development of targeted policies that address the specific needs and concerns of different demographic groups, such as older individuals, widowed or divorced individuals, and those from specific regions (Müller-Funk & Fransen, 2023).

ii. Resource Allocation: The results can assist in the allocation of resources and services to meet the diverse needs of refugees. For instance, recognizing that unemployed individuals or those with partners in the home country are more likely to express intentions of not staying in the host country can guide resource allocation to support their specific challenges or concerns (Müller-Funk & Fransen, 2023).

iii. Integration Programs: The findings contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of integration. Tailoring integration programs to the specific characteristics and needs of different demographic groups can enhance their effectiveness. For instance, programs supporting family reunification for married individuals or addressing the uncertainties faced by those who have just arrived can be better designed (Carling & Pettersen, 2014).

iv. Humanitarian Assistance: Recognizing the impact of uncertainties and indecisiveness among refugees highlights the importance of providing adequate humanitarian assistance and support, especially during the initial stages of their displacement. This understanding can guide the development of programs to address the mental and emotional well-being of refugees (OCHA, 2019; Beaman et al., 2022).

v. Research Contribution: From an academic perspective, these results contribute to the broader understanding of refugee decision making processes. They add value to the existing literature and provide empirical evidence of how socio-demographic factors interplay with intentions to stay in the host country or return to the home country.

## II.III History of Ukrainian migration

A displaced person is an individual compelled to escape or abandon its home or regular living area, typically due to armed conflict, widespread violence, human rights violations, or natural and/or human-induced disasters (European Commission). Individuals that have been displaced within their countries fall under the category of 'Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) (OCHA, 1998), while those who have crossed an internationally recognized state border are called Externally Displaced Persons (EDPs).

Migration from Ukraine in the last century has been correlated with war in most cases. There have been five big waves, of which four were a consequence of war. However, only the last two were linked to a war or conflict that was directly involving the country itself (Iqbal, 2007).

The first wave started before the beginning of World War I, and mainly involved populations from rural regions of Ukraine. These migration flows resulted from challenging social and economic conditions in Ukraine, encompassing issues such as overpopulation, poverty, and underdevelopment in the industrial sector (Pawliczko, 1994). The majority of people from the Western part of Ukraine that left the country during that period chose to migrate to the USA, Canada, Argentina or Brazil. On the contrary, migrants from Eastern Ukraine – which during that period was part of the Russian Empire – moved further East with some of the most common destinations being Siberia, Altai and the Far East (Lapshyna, 2022).

The second wave took place between World War I and World War II during which, at least one million people were obliged to move internally within USSR grounds. Many people migrated in order to evade collectivization and the man-made famine of 1932-1933 (Pawliczko, 1994).

The third wave was a consequence of World War II and went on until the 1980's. During the war, Ukrainians were also put in concentration camps in the eastern regions. Some of those who had served as forced laborers in Germany and Austria, were sent back home in 1945-1946 and subsequently deported to Siberia. By the end of World War II, there were about 2,8 million migrants in Germany from the Soviet Union. After the war ended, most of them returned to their home countries, some voluntarily and others forcibly. However, there were people that decided to stay abroad due to the economic depression caused by the war. Around 85,000 Ukrainians were resettled in the United States (Rovenchak & Volodko, 2018). During the 1950s, young individuals from Ukraine were sent to the eastern regions for the construction of new industrial facilities (Pawliczko, 1994).

The fourth wave started with the armed conflict in Crimea in 2014 (Albrecht & Panchenko, 2022). In the beginning of this wave, most people were moving within Ukraine. Ukraine had the largest count of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Europe, exceeding 1,4 million individuals who had fled by July 2021, even before the outbreak of the war in 2022 (Mikheieva & Kuznetsova, 2023).

However, the large-scale war triggered a fifth wave that started in February 2022. This wave caused even more internal movements as well as large-scale border crossings. European countries with large diasporas of Ukrainians, such as Poland, were the ones that received the largest amounts of refugees. The fifth wave in the first months of the war can be divided in three sub-periods. Firstly, the period of peak movement during the first two weeks of the war, when around 100-200 thousand people were fleeing Ukraine daily (Fig. 1). Next came the period of stabilization, which lasted for two months and during which,as the name of the period suggests, the number of people leaving the country stabilized, and the average border crossings per day were around 50,000 (Center for Research & Analysis of Migration, 2023) (Fig. 1). The third period lasted until June 2022 and during that time the entries in the country were exceeding the exits. On average there were 30 thousand people leaving the country per day during that period.

Figure 1: Daily number of Ukrainian border crossings 24/2/2022 - 23/2/2023
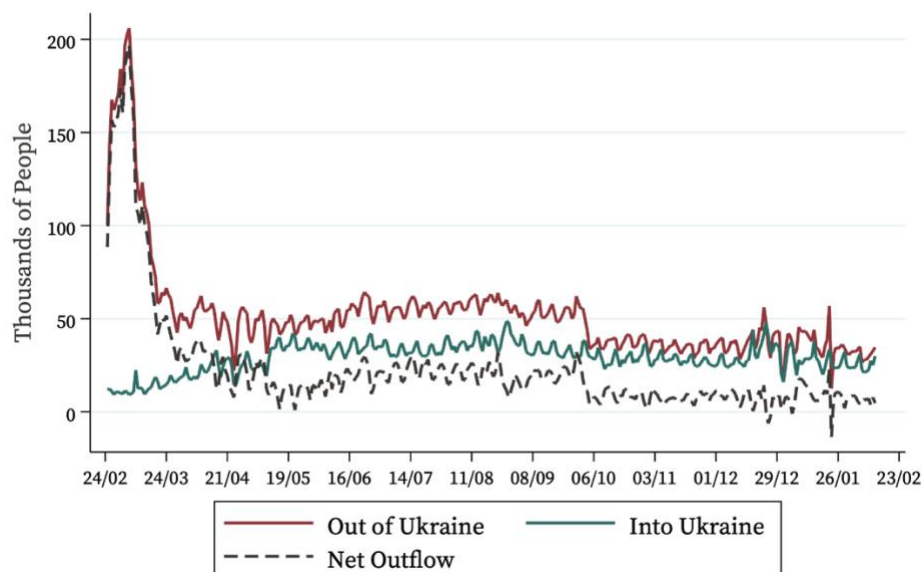


Source: Center for Research & Analysis of Migration, 2023

Meanwhile, the amount of people returning to Ukraine started increasing in May 2022 and as of February 2023, there were around 30 thousand people per day. These flows of refugees returning to Ukraine were more prominent during holidays and weekends. However, there were no intentions to return temporarily, and the main reasons of these movements were to visit family. Those movements created a pattern of circular migration between Ukraine and host countries (UNHCR, 2023a). UNHCR estimated that in February 2023, there were around 35 thousand daily border crossings from Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023a).

## II.IV Why do refugees return to their home countries during conflicts?

Regardless of the fact that returning to a home country during a war is not safe, a number of refugees decide to do so either for short-term visits to relatives with the prospects to then go back to the host country, or sometimes to return permanently. An article by Alrababah and colleagues (2023) produces a better understanding of what Syrian refugees in Lebanon were thinking about going back to their home country while the conflict was still ongoing. It challenges the idea that their decision to return is mostly about comparing how things are in their home country and the host country where they currently live.

The study shows that what is happening in refugees' home countries is a big factor in their decision, even more than what is the situation in the country where they are currently living in

(Alrababah et al., 2023). The findings suggest a model that supports safety in the home country is more important than economic related factors when considering returning to the home country. The article suggests that it is crucial to understand what makes refugees feel safe. It also points out that helping refugees with economic related challenges is important, even if they are not planning to go back in the near future. The study finishes by highlighting that policy makers need to comprehend refugees' needs and the challenges they face in the host countries.

Another study by Beaman and colleagues (2022) analysed displaced Syrians that voluntarily returned to their home country during war, between 2011 and 2018, showed that an enhanced level of security and improved access to essential services in the country of origin increases the probability of individuals returning. However, the study revealed that unfavourable conditions in the host country do not necessarily correlate with a higher rate of returns to the home country.

Surprisingly, in specific aspects, such as access to food and challenging conditions abroad, unfavourable conditions in the host country are inversely related to the likelihood of returning. The authors proposed a straightforward framework which supports that an increase in income during the refugees' stay abroad may trigger a return for individuals with low income, particularly in the presence of associated mobility costs (Beaman et al., 2022).

Data from UNHCR (2023e) reveals a pattern of refugees returning to Ukraine. This suggests that a considerable number of Ukrainians may opt for life in their war-torn home country over the uncertainty of living a refugee life. The premature repatriation poses a significant human security risk, emerging immediate attention from host countries (Hickson, 2022). More specifically, during the first 14 days of the war, there was a large flow of men entering Ukraine. There were around two hundred thousand people who entered Ukraine during that period, and 80% of them were men. In most cases, those returnees were Ukrainian migrants working abroad, returning back to their homes to defend their country and support their families and relatives back home (Libanova & Pozniak, 2023).

The first large wave of people entering Ukraine was during April 2022, two months after the beginning of the war, when people were visiting Ukraine for the Easter celebrations. Another large wave was observed in March 2022, especially during Saturdays. Those were people that were going back to Ukraine to visit their partners and/or family that had stayed behind. Those stays could be short (e.g. a couple of days) or longer (e.g. several days) (Libanova & Pozniak, 2023).

Refugees make the return journey for various reasons, including evaluating the situation, visiting family, and more with some of them intending to return permanently (Libanova & Pozniak, 2023). However, challenges emerge as returnees encounter damaged properties and struggle to find jobs due to the ongoing economic repercussions of the war, obliging some to leave

once again. Notably, over 70% of refugees that have returned to Ukraine were people that had chosen Poland as their destination after fleeing war (Libanova & Pozniak, 2023).

Addressing this complex situation requires host countries to focus on supporting refugees, particularly the more vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly, facilitating their integration into host communities. This assistance should be extended beyond immediate humanitarian concerns. While housing remains a critical issue, host countries also lag in providing adequate support for childcare and employment. Single mothers and children may choose to return in seeking of support provided by their family back home, shared language, and reduced risks.

## II.V The role of diaspora

During the early stages of the war, Russia and Poland were the countries that received the majority of refugees. Germany, Czech Republic and Italy were other European countries that received many displaced Ukrainians. Those are all countries with large pre-war diaspora (Teke Lloyd & Sirkeci, 2022) (Table 1). Existing networks are one of the most important factors when refugees are choosing a host country (Brücker, 2022; Morrice, 2022).

Table 1: Top 10 countries with largest Ukrainian diaspora in 2020

| Russia | 3,268,263 |
| --- | --- |
| USA | 370,255 |
| Kazakhstan | 355,751 |
| Germany | 289,743 |
| Poland | 272,594 |
| Italy | 248,460 |
| Belarus | 222,436 |
| Czech Republic | 131,316 |
| Israel | 131,205 |
| Uzbekistan | 123,658 |

Source: UNPD, 2020

Diasporas stay connected with their family and networks back in their home country and they transfer their experiences and knowledge. Thus, they play an important role for displaced people when deciding where to go after being forced to leave their home country. In Germany, 60% of the refugees that arrived from Ukraine mentioned that they chose to go to Germany because they either had family or friends there (Brücker et al., 2023). Furthermore, diasporas can help with the repatriation of their family members that fled their home country, the displaced

persons' integration (Molodikova et al., 2018), as well as the rebuilding of the country after a war (Dadush & Weil, 2022).

More specifically, family is a fundamental resource in the process of refugee integration as it is playing a crucial role across various dimensions. Firstly, diasporas help with practical challenges associated with navigating an unfamiliar environment (Poros, 2011). Family members serve as an invaluable support system. Whether it involves registration processes or understanding and adapting to new systems, the strong bond within the family helps them work together to solve practical problems.

Language, often a significant barrier in the integration journey, is significantly eased with the support of family. As a linguistic support system, family members help bridge communication gaps, fostering a smoother transition into the new cultural and linguistic environment. Beyond the practicalities, the social support provided by family is very important in preventing anxiety and empowering resettled refugees to establish a sense of control and independence in their new environment (Katsiaficas, 2023). This emotional support builds a strong base for a positive way of dealing with the challenges of refugees' integration.

Moreover, family connections facilitate relationships within the receiving community, contributing to the restoration of a refugee's sense of belonging. This not only creates a supportive environment, but also creates a network of connections that are vital for successful integration (Katsiaficas, 2023). The family's role extends further by providing support on building connections with the broader receiving community. These connections are not only social, but also open doors to employment opportunities and a more expansive social network (Gërxhani & Kosyakova, 2020). By becoming part of the community, refugees boost their prospects for a holistic integration experience.

Crucially, family support plays a role in helping refugees maintain a connection with their cultural and religious institutions (Poros, 2011). This allows them to preserve their cultural identity, while simultaneously expanding it within the host community. This balance is vital for a successful integration process, as it enables refugees to combine the experiences of their past with the opportunities of their present and future. In conclusion, family plays a pivotal role in integration of refugees by providing both practical and emotional support that is essential for a successful transition to a new life (UNHCR, 2022a).

As mentioned above, Ukraine has a large diaspora in the EU, as well as non-EU countries. Poland is a European country with one of the largest Ukrainian diasporas, and this is due to its geographical proximity as well as the strong cultural and linguistic similarities the two countries share. This could explain why many Ukrainians that fled Ukraine chose to move to Poland. Countries with large diasporas of a national group, are expected to increase their diaspora further, in an occasion of a major event such as conflict, which could push people to flee their home countries (Adema et al., 2023).

**II.VI Push and Pull factors of Migration**

Migration and forced migration happen in very different contexts. Primarily, migrants have the option to migrate, while displaced people are forced to leave their home country, mainly for security reasons. Secondly, migrants have the time to prepare. Often migrants may already have a job and a house settled in the host country before they emigrate. However, this is not the case for displaced persons who are leaving their countries due to a threat, and do not have time to plan, consider options or think of where to go. Consequently, the push and pull factors differ for migrants and displaced persons.

Migrants are reasonable and are expected to make the decision to migrate if the benefits of migrating to another country are more than the benefits of staying in their home country (Borjas, 1989). In other words, migrants choose to migrate if their home country's push factors are stronger than its pull factors. The push factors of migration refer to the factors that can make a home country less attractive for people to stay, while pull factors refer to characteristics that can make a place more attractive for people to migrate to (Oxford Reference, 2023).

Consequently, push factors refer to all the characteristics that can potentially make people in a country want to leave. Some push factors can be conflict, political and economic uncertainty, lack of opportunities and more. On the other hand, security, opportunities in the labour market, and political and economic stability in another country can function as pull factors for this country (Dluhopolskyi et al., 2019; Iqbal, 2007).

Evidence from previous research indicates that pull factors are in most cases stronger than push factors, which means that pull factors have a bigger impact in migrants' decisions. The pull factors that influence potential migrants the most were found to be economic factors. Economic factors can include various factors, but the ones affecting migrants the most are better paying jobs, higher quality of life, opportunities for growth, such as opportunities in the labour market and more (Iqbal, 2007; Jirka, 2023).

On the other hand, the most impactful push factors are political factors. Political factors can include political instability, lack of freedom, conflict or war, corruption, and more. The most important political elements influencing migration were found to be conflicts, corruption, human rights violations and poor governance (Iqbal, 2007; Urbański, 2022).

Political factors are very important for migration not only as push, but also as pull factors. Consequently, traditionally sending countries that face demographic challenges due to the loss of population emigrating to other countries, would need to develop policies in order to address these factors, if they are willing to reduce emigration flows. Resolving issues that are related to conflicts,

poor governance, poverty and lack of opportunities for growth is key to leading and/or shifting migration patterns (Urbański, 2022).

In summary, push factors, include elements that make a country less appealing and are often related to political instability, conflicts, and economic challenges, while pull factors, such as economic opportunities and a higher quality of life, act as motivators for migration. However, political factors, which can work as both push and pull factors, play a crucial role, with issues like conflicts, corruption, and poor governance identified as some of the most important determinants.

Addressing these elements becomes vital for managing emigration flows, especially in countries facing demographic challenges. A policy approach that addresses issues related to conflicts, governance, poverty, and growth opportunities is essential for influencing and managing migration patterns.

## II.VII Intentions to emigrate and choice of host country

Elinder and colleagues (2022) used data from the Gallup World Poll to investigate Ukrainians' intentions to emigrate and their top chosen destinations before the war broke out. The authors suggest that the data can be used to project how displaced people from Ukraine would be distributed within the European Union.

The data used for Ukraine are from the years 2007-2021 and the total amount of participants is 14,301 people. The participants were asked if they would like to move to another country and if yes, which country would they choose (Elinder et al., 2022). Possibly, this number would be an underestimate as it is expected that in the case of a war, people that were not planning to leave their country, might be obliged to do so due to security reasons.

The results indicated that more than a quarter of Ukrainians during 2007-2021 expressed a desire to emigrate, which would be around 12 million people willing to emigrate without an ongoing war. Of the people that answered that they want to move to another country, almost half (47%) stated that they wanted to move to a European country with the most popular answers being Germany (36%), Poland (15%), and Italy (11%). Austria was ranked 8th, chosen by almost 3% of the respondents who said that they want to emigrate to a European country.

This would be translated to around 28,800 refugees from Ukraine, a number that was exceeded very early on after the war. For reference, Austria received around 97,000 refugees in the first 15 months after the war (February 2022 – May 2023) (UNHCR, 2023e). This strengthens Elinder's (2022) hypothesis that the willingness of people to emigrate expressed before the war is an under representation of the amount of people that will chose to leave the country due to a war.

It is assumed that the destination countries that people chose, are the countries that would still attract them the most in case of fleeing a major conflict. However, there is also the scenario suggesting that some people might feel that their country needs them the most during the war and they might have a stronger will to stay behind to defend it now than they did before in the absence of a war (Elinder et al., 2022).

Among the main reasons for people fleeing Ukraine before the war were low quality of life and lack of opportunities for work. On the other hand, the conditions under which Ukrainian migrants would consider returning to Ukraine were related to safety such as the cessation of hostilities, improvements in living standards, working opportunities, and more. Safety reasons were reported more often, which indicates that a large-scale repatriation is not a possible scenario under the current situation in Ukraine (Dluhopolskyi et al., 2019).

## II.VIII Reasons for leaving Ukraine

In a paper about Syrian refugees' self-selection, Aksoy and Poutvaara (2019) explore the main reasons reported by refugees for leaving their home country. The survey's findings highlight that the majority of people who arrived in Germany left Ukraine as a result of the war. Undoubtedly, responses including humanitarian concerns emerged as the most common ones among the survey participants.

It is crucial to note that the population within a country can be affected by conflict in a different degree. In Ukraine, the regions most affected by the war were those in the South, East as well as regions surrounding big cities, including the capital. Therefore, higher proportion of refugees from the severely affected regions in Ukraine, namely refugees from eastern, southern Ukraine and Kyiv, can be expected. Research by Brücker and colleagues (2022) supports this, revealing that individuals residing in more impacted areas in the country of origin are more likely to seek refuge abroad, compared to their peers in less affected areas. This insight shows clearly how the movement of people is affected by how impactful the conflict is and the differences between living in different regions within the same country.

The survey (Brücker et al., 2023) highlighted that the war's impact was the primary reason for leaving Ukraine, with family and network-related factors playing a key role in the choice of the host country. Economic conditions played a smaller role, while humanitarian concerns emerged as the most influencing factor. The study aligns with previous research emphasizing violence as a key push factor. Furthermore, the varying impact of conflict within Ukraine influences migration patterns, with a higher proportion of refugees originating from severely affected regions. The research underscores the significant role of conflict severity in shaping migration decisions and revealing regional disparities within the country.

## II.IX Health status

An individual's health status is another critical factor that affects one's decision to flee from their home country. In most cases, it is people with good health conditions who migrate, while the ones with poor health often stay behind (Markides & Rote, 2019).

Brucker and colleagues (2023) found that almost 40% of the respondents rated their health status as 'very good' or 'good' as opposed to 10% that stated that their health is either 'very poor' or 'poor'. Other factors such as age, sex, education, location of children's residence and type of accommodation are relevant to one's health status.

Younger people, men, people with higher level of education, people with their children in Germany, and people owning private accommodation are the groups that are more likely to report good or very good health. In contrast, people of older age, women, people with lower levels of education, people with children that stayed back in Ukraine, and people living in shared accommodation are more likely to report very poor or poor health (Brücker et al., 2023).

## II.X Educational attainment

People with higher education are more likely to migrate compared to people with lower education. Especially when analysing populations that fled major conflicts, migrants often have higher education than their peers that choose to stay in their country regardless of the conflict (Mazal et al., 2023). Displaced women who arrived in Austria due to the war in Ukraine have on average high levels of educational attainment and participation to the labour market. Those findings indicate that the population that arrived in Austria shows a pronounced self-selection (Kohlenberger et al., 2022).

Highly educated and high skilled refugees fleeing a country due to conflict, would result to a wave of brain drain that could heavily affect the home country's future. This would also have as a consequence raise the share of people with lower education in the country of origin. A big loss of highly educated people can affect the home country's economic growth (Lutz, 2019).

Education is very often connected to one's occupation. People with higher level of educational attainment often have better paying jobs and thus higher income, while people with lower or no education often occupy lower paid positions. Hence, higher education is connected to the logistics of one's travel to migrate. Migrants with lower education may face more challenges financing their trip, due to differences on income, whereas people with higher education and income most of the times find it easier to finance such a trip (Aksoy & Poutvaara, 2019).

**II.XI Employment**

With regards to employment in the home country, the findings differ for men and women. For men, there seems to be a positive correlation between employment and migration, meaning that men from countries with major conflict are more likely to migrate if they are employed in their home country (Aksoy & Poutvaara, 2019). Being employed means having a stable income and thus, being able to make savings and cover the costs of the trip. Unemployed people with no income are expected to face more challenges funding their trip.

However, the results for women are different. It is found that women from countries with major conflict are less likely to leave their home country if they are employed. On the other hand, women seem to be more likely to do so if they come from countries with minor or no conflict. This might be a result of the limited opportunities for work for women, to which employed women react more fiercely (Aksoy & Poutvaara, 2019).

Women in employment would not risk losing their jobs in this context when they are aware of how scarce things are for women in the labour market. Conversely, unemployed women have a lower risk to take, which coupled with the prospect of migrating to a new country with more opportunities for women makes the decision to emigrate easier. It should be stressed that in the case of families with children, women are more likely to either take language courses or find a job if the host country provides childcare.

Employment does not only play a crucial role in refugees' decisions on fleeing conflict, but also in their intentions to stay in the country of arrival. In most cases, immigrants are of younger age compared to the national average age of the host country. However, the migrants' participation to the labour market is not enough to have a big positive impact. This is due to the fact that often the employment rates of migrants are lower than those of the native population and this difference is more pronounced for women. As a result, a large influx of immigrants to a country should be followed by a series of targeted policies in order to facilitate and boost immigrants' participation to the labour market, especially for women who may seem to face more challenges in this matter (Lutz, 2019).

Having a job means participation to the labour market, social benefits, stable income, security and being part of the society. Thus, employment is an important catalyst towards integration. Good employment opportunity can be a start to one's new life abroad. According to data from UNHCR, in April 2023 there were around 9,000 Ukrainian refugees active in the Austrian labour market under formal employment (UNHCR, 2023e).

**II.XII Language skills**

Language can be an important factor affecting refugees' decision making when choosing a host country (Mazal et al., 2023). Lack of skills of the host country's language makes their integration and entrance to the host country's labour market more difficult. Additionally, in the case of families with children the absence of skills of the country's official language can be a bottleneck for children continuing their education in the host country.

Many European countries respond to this challenge by offering free courses for refugees to learn the language faster and more efficiently. Should displaced people that arrived to a new country take advantage of these language programs and start learning the language in early stages, they will have an easier transition and integration, not only in the host country's labour market, but also in society in general (Mazal et al., 2023).

As a consequence, displaced people that manage to achieve fluency in the host country's language have more opportunities to find jobs in their fields and not settle for lower paying jobs because of the language barrier. Being able to speak the language opens more opportunities to them in terms of socialising, networking, and feeling more established. Language skills provide economic and social returns, and it is expected that people that have those skills are more likely to stay in the host country even after the end of the war.

**II.XIII Return intentions**

There are several factors that play a crucial role in affecting refugees' return intentions. Why do refugees return to their home countries after a war? What makes them consider staying in the country of arrival? Libanova and colleagues (2023) conclude that refugees' intentions to return to their home country heavily depend on how long the conflict or war lasts. For instance, the longer the war lasts, the more likely the refugees to stay in the country of arrival.

A study by Özkan and colleagues (2023) explored various socio-demographic factors associated with the intentions of Syrians to either return to their home country or migrate to Western nations. The research identified several factors such as gender, location of residence in the host country (East or West), employment status, language spoken at home, property ownership, accommodation conditions, and education level that were linked to their decision for repatriation. Additionally, the number of years spent in the host country, perceived threat in the home country, the number of children, and their age were closely linked to their intentions to return. Intentions to migrate to Western countries were found to be associated with the host country's language proficiency, the number of children, and family income. While understanding

the motivations behind remigration is crucial, the study emphasized that the current conditions for return are not ideal, considering safety and sustainability concerns in the region.

Furthermore, Beaman and colleagues (2022) also explored the factors that affected the return intentions of Syrian refugees from 2011 until 2018. They found that the improvement of security and access to utilities at the home country are connected with higher chances of returning to the country of origin. Interestingly, challenging conditions in the host country are not necessarily related with higher chances of return. In some cases, bad living conditions in the host country are negatively associated with repatriation. The authors proposed a framework which supports that for people with low income who have difficulty covering their mobility costs, the increase of income in the host country is associated with higher likelihood of return.

Regardless of the high numbers of casualties that has been recorded and is still growing as the war continues, the significant damage many regions have faced, and the everyday danger people are in, there are people that choose to stay and others that are returning. Staying in a war zone is dangerous, but driving a car around Ukraine is equally dangerous due to possible attacks. Additionally, other reasons why people may choose to stay is hesitancy to leave their homes and/or family behind, poor health conditions and more. The majority of people that choose to remain in the country despite the danger are men and elderly people (Albrecht & Panchenko, 2022).

Tyldum and Kjeøy (2022) studied the Ukrainian refugees in Poland and Norway. This survey started during the summer of 2022 and ended in autumn of the same year. Their findings show that the refugees that arrived during that period can be divided into two categories, each with a different profile. The refugees can be distinguished into those categories according to the period that they decided to leave Ukraine. The first group included all the refugees that left the country shortly after the invasion and the second one included those that left Ukraine later.

The authors concluded that the refugees that left during the first stages of the invasion were the ones that were more affected by the conflict and thus were soon looking for a safe place to move. Consequently, they were lacking time to make decisions. As a result, they did not have a solid plan and they ended up choosing to move to places that were accessible, easier, and faster, mainly because they were geographically closer. Staying closer to Ukraine also means staying physically closer to family members that are still in Ukraine. In addition, choosing to migrate to Poland rather than a Western European country translates to less expenses, since the cost of living is lower in the East as it is in the West and for people that are depending on Ukrainian salaries, migrating to a Western European country could be challenging regarding expenses such as rent and food. As opposed to those that left Ukraine shortly after the conflict started, those who left the country at a later stage usually had a plan not only regarding their destination, but also the logistics of their travel (Ho et al., 2022; Tyldum & Kjeøy, 2022). An important fact to note is that the study took into consideration only early arrivals until the end of the autumn of 2022.

However, there is a quite small second group of people that left with a more concrete plan and with the prospect of moving to a country with a quality of life higher of the one in Ukraine. This second group is not expected to return after the war ends. The first group though, which primarily consists of young mothers with children have two options; either return back to Ukraine after the war is over, or stay abroad and bring their husbands/partners for family reunification.

There are surveys which are suggesting that refugees who have chosen to move to a neighbouring country and stay in Eastern Europe, in Moldova or Poland for instance, are more likely to move to third countries in the future (IOM, 2022). As opposed to the forementioned, the majority of refugees that have arrived in Western European countries, such as Germany, are not willing to move to another country, with the exemption of a few that are willing to return to Ukraine soon. However, it is important to keep into consideration the fact that those surveys have been based on small samples.

Adema and colleagues (2022) used Google trends data to estimate return intentions. To distinguish Ukrainians that were planning to stay in Poland short term from those that were planning to stay long term, they looked for search term related to travels to Ukraine and Germany. They found that there was a correlation between refugees' searches about Ukrainian railways and the events in Ukraine. Namely, in May 2022, those searches increased as a result of the retreat of Russian troops in the region of Northern Ukraine. Searches including the word "Berlin" decreased with time, indicating that refugees had either changed their mind about transiting from Poland to Germany or they did it in the early stages soon after arriving to Poland or they returned to Ukraine (Adema et al., 2022).

The European Pravda (2022) projected that if the Russo-Ukrainian war was prolonged by several months and the whole country became involved in the conflict and thus people are affected regardless of the region they live in, more than 50% of displaced people would not return to Ukraine ultimately. The length of the war will play an important role in the reunification of families after the war is over. The longer the war lasts, the more likely that men whose families have fled Ukraine and are living abroad, will leave Ukraine as well as soon as the martial law is not in place anymore (European Pravda, 2022; Mazal et al., 2023).

Security is also one of the most crucial factors when considering returning to the home country. With regards to that, the end of the occupation of Ukrainian regions by the Russian forces along with the sense of security which was lacking at the moment of the survey can affect people's intentions. Refugees' responses to a survey by UNHCR (2023e) which took place in Austria in January and March 2023, indicated that they would return to Ukraine under specific conditions which are connected to security. Some other related factors that were mentioned by respondents were the end of the war and the ability to move freely within the country. A few mentioned that the end of the obligatory military service is a requirement for them in order to go back (UNHCR, 2023e).

Another factor is the economic situation of the home country and how long it takes for the infrastructure and housing facilities to be restored. The longer time it takes for those things to be restored, the highest the likelihood of people choosing to not return to their home country (Dadush & Weil, 2022). Following the same pattern, the worse the general economic situation of the country which means not enough opportunities for work among others, the less likely for individuals to return (Gerlach & Ryndzak, 2022).

Along with all the above factors goes the emotional bond with family and friends that have stayed behind. The more tied and close people feel with their families that are in their home country, the more likely to choose to return to it (Brücker et al., 2023).

Conversely, the host countries' policies for refugees can create opportunities for employment, education and integration which would raise the rate of people choosing to stay in the host country (European Pravda, 2022; Libanova & Pozniak, 2023). The situation in the country of arrival and several factors that make the host country more or less attractive can equally affect refugees' return intentions. It is important to note that in migration policies, it is very important for the policy to be tailored on each population. Different populations with different characteristics require different integration policies (Kohlenberger et al., 2022).

Difficulties related to accessing important services or limited rights in the host country are an important reason for respondents to say that they would rather return to their home country. Some of the important services could be health or education institutions. Lack of good work opportunities are also crucial for this matter. If there are good employment opportunities for refugees, they are more likely to express willingness to stay in the country even after the war ends. Finally, difficulties related to gaining or renewing their legal status (either of temporary protection or refugee status) is a factor that could push refugees to return to Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023e).

Most Ukrainian refugees that arrived in European countries are under the status of temporary protection which does not restrict them from visiting or going back to Ukraine as opposed to the refugee status. People are granted refugee status when it is dangerous to stay in their country and hence they are not allowed to go back as this would mean that returning is not dangerous anymore and the refugee status is not needed. The preference of Ukrainian refugees to apply for temporary protection over refugee status indicates that they are intending to go back to Ukraine in the future (UNHCR, 2023e).

Data from the '4Service' survey which interviewed more than three thousand Ukrainians abroad and took place the last week of March 2022 showed that almost 90% of the respondents were planning to return to Ukraine, of which 61% stated that there is a possibility to stay abroad if the war lasts long. More than half of the respondents (57%) mentioned safety as one of the main conditions in order to return to Ukraine. Almost 10% of them said that the opportunities for employment are critical and 5% mentioned housing (4service Group, 2022; Malynovska, 2022).

Of course it is important to keep in mind that people's answers may change as time passes. The longer the war lasts, the more refugees integrate into the new societies. The groups that are more prone to not return are people that belong in the most vulnurable groups such as women with children, especially young ones (Van Tubergen et al., 2023), large families and people with disabilities (Libanova & Pozniak, 2023).–Furthermore, people like single individuals, young people, people with high qualifications and education have more chances to find job oportunities in the host country that could possibly make them stay and not return to Ukraine.

A survey from the International Institute of Sociology in Kyiv in 2022 showed that less that 43% of displaced Ukrainians with children or grandchildren are planning to raise their children in Ukraine. In case of a ceasefire, the percentage is higher and almost reaches 55%. However, some of the conditions that made a difference into people's answers on that matter was the possibility of change of the political situation in Russia towards a democratic direction, Ukraine's participation in NATO and demilitarization of Russia. However, there is a percentage of at least 20% of respondents, that are not planning to return to Ukraine not even under the best circumstances (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2022).

Adema and colleagues (2023) found that the majority of refugees that arrived in Germany in June 2022, were planning to either settle in Germany or move back to Ukraine. There were very few that said that they want to move to a third country. The proportion of those wanting to stay in Germany increased between February 2022 and October 2022  reaching 63%. This result indicates that, in the case of Germany, the longer migrants stay in the host country, the stronger are their intentions to stay in it. The authors found that married women whose husbands remained in Ukraine,  and people of older age are more likely to return to Ukraine.

UNHCR conducted an online survey in 2023 where 553 individuals participated. The sample consisted of Ukrainian refugees that arrived in Austria between January and March 2023. The data was collected at the household level and covered around 1,500 refugees, since the average size of a household is 2.9 people. Among other questions, respondents were also asked about their return intentions in the next three months as well as in the long run. The survey's results showed that around 42% of the respondents stated that they hope to return to Ukraine some day and 4% said they were planning to return in the next three months already. Some people (37%) had not made up their mind regarding their return intentions by the time the survey took place. Additionally, 16% of the respondents reported that they were not planning to return to their home country. The vast majority (87%) of people that answered that they are not considering returning to Ukraine said that they would like to stay in Austria. Very few (2%) said that they were planning to move further to a third country. The remaining were still undecided about their future plans (UNHCR, 2023e).

The survey analyses the profile of each group based on their return intentions. The main reasons that people mentioned for wanting to return to Ukraine was their will to live in their

cultural environment, return to their relatives that were still in Ukraine and check their properties. People that said that they are planning to return to Ukraine soon (in the next 90 days) were more likely to come from the Northwest part of the country (UNHCR, 2023e).

These regions are the ones that were affected the least by the war, which means that infrastructures and people's houses are in a better situation or at least need less restoration compared to the ones in the most affected regions (South and East). This could explain why people from these regions are more likely to return to Ukraine. There were no significant differences between men and women. However, with regards to age, elderly and retired people are more likely to report that they want to return to Ukraine soon compared to people of younger age. People that reported that they were not living in private accommodation, but they were instead hosted by family or friends in Austria were also more likely to say that they are planning to return to Ukraine in the near future. People that have moved to Austria and are hosted by relatives or friends seem to be considering this a temporary solution. They did not invest in housing and this indicates their intentions to leave the country soon (UNHCR, 2023e).

Women with children or partners in Ukraine are more likely to say that they want to return to Ukraine sometime in the future (not specified when). People that are not financially independent and they receive social assistance, as well as people that are hosted by family or friends in Austria were more likely to answer that they are planning to eventually move temporarily back to Ukraine in the future without specifying a timeframe for that. Additionally, people that have returned to Ukraine at least once after they fled, are also more likely to be willing to return one day. Their visits to Ukraine might indicate that they have family or friends that stayed behind and they go back to visit. Another reason for going back is to check on their houses or businesses (UNHCR, 2023e).

The respondents that arrived in Austria more recently (after September 2022) seem more likely to be indecisive. Recent arrivals were more likely to state that at the time of the survey (UNHCR, 2023e), they did not know if they would like to stay in Austria or return to Ukraine. Same goes for people that were either already employed in Austria, were looking for jobs or were in an educational institution. As opposed to those that were planning to return to Ukraine in the future, people that said that they have not made up their mind yet were more likely to be hosted by a local family.

UNHCR (2023e) found that the respondents that replied that they were not willing to return back to Ukraine permanently were mostly men coming from Central or Southern Ukraine. They are more likely to be people of working age, less than 60 years old, and already having found or looking for work in Austria. People that are planning to stay in Austria were more likely to rent private accommodation and be financially independent. Finally, people that said that they did not have family in Ukraine and thus no strong ties to the country were more likely to say that they did not want to return.

There are estimates that show that if the past demographic trends continue, Ukraine will lose more than 15% of its population in the next 20 years (Kulu et al., 2023). Another survey indicated that the population decline due to the large emigration flows from Ukraine are not going to reverse in the next decade. There are different scenarios, some are more and others less optimistic. However, even in the most optimistic scenario where Ukraine is expected to become a receiving country, the population will decline by 21% by 2050. In the more pessimistic scenarios, in the case of a long war, the decline is projected to be around 30% (Kulu et al., 2023; Ueffing, P. et al., 2023). All scenarios, even the most optimistic ones indicate that there is expected to be a large share of Ukrainian refugees staying in Europe, even after the war ends in Ukraine (Dadush & Weil, 2022).

## II.XIV Characteristics of refugees

Aksoy and Poutvaara (2019) studied the migrants' self-selection in Europe and analysed their characteristics using data from Flow Monitoring Survey (IOM), the World Bank, and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Data from the IOM showed that the majority of respondents, who represent migrants arriving in Europe, were young single men with an average age of 26 years. About 50% of them were employed in their home country and around 18% had tertiary education. With the exception of refugees coming from Nigeria, Bangladesh and Senegal, migrants arriving in Europe have higher educational level than their peers in their home country.

The authors also analysed the reasons that led people to leave their countries, taking into account the chosen destination country. More than 80% of people that were planning to move to Scandinavian countries, Germany or Austria have fled their home country due to conflict. Generally, the majority of people arriving in Europe were seeking refuge because of persecution in their country of origin.

Data from the first wave of the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey on Ukrainian refugees in Germany show that the people arriving in Germany between August and October 2022 were mostly young and educated women (Brücker et al., 2023). Germany was the second country receiving most Ukrainian refugees in Europe after Poland. Namely, as of November 2023, Poland had received more than 1.7 million refugees (cumulative), including those who have inactive records due to leaving Poland for longer than 30 days (UNHCR, 2023d). On the other hand, Germany had received more than 1.1 million refugees from Ukraine as of November 2023 (UNHCR, 2023c). However, if only active records are taken into account, Germany is the first country receiving the largest amount of Ukrainian refugees with Poland coming second with more than 950,000 refugees as of November 2023 (UNHCR, 2023c).

The survey had collected data of 11,000 people between August and October 2022. The ifo surveys in Germany (Adema et al., 2023; Panchenko & Poutvaara, 2022) showed the same results; most respondents were highly educated, often employed in their home country with a stable income, with their own accommodation in Ukraine and women with children whose partners have stayed behind.

The recent wave of Ukrainian refugees that arrived in Germany was very different from other refugee waves from other countries in the past years with regards to demographic and cultural factors (Åslund, 2022; Kohlenberger et al., 2022; Coninck, 2022; Brücker, 2023). The previous waves of refugees (e.g. Afghans) mainly included men of young age, whereas refugees arriving from Ukraine are mostly women, children and people of older age, as men aged 18-60 were not allowed to leave the country, with very few exceptions, such as men with three or more children (Brücker et al., 2022; Kopeć, 2022).

European countries could not comprehend the reasons behind the civil war in Syria or the motivations of those who fled. As a result, they showed limited empathy for Syrian refugees. On the other hand, Russia's invasion of Ukraine was seen as an unjustified act of aggression. This made Europeans more supportive towards Ukrainians, not only on a political, but also personal level (Åslund, 2022).

The fact that Ukrainian refugees are mostly women with children is one of the reasons that makes this population differ from others. Children play an important role in decision making. In most cases where no conflict is involved, migrants leaving their country for better job opportunities, would leave their children and partners back to their home country. In the case of Ukrainian refugees, the opposite is happening, where women and children leave the country and men stay behind. Children's protection is often one of the main reasons that made them take the decision to flee (Andrews et al., 2023).

Moreover, Ukrainian refugees were treated differently by the host countries. They are not required to live in refugee camps in the host countries and unless they rely on social benefits, they can choose where to live as they are not required to follow any distribution policies, unlike refugees from other countries. Data from the University of Warsaw show that almost two thirds of refugees over 18 years old have tertiary education and experience (Galinfo, 2022).

## III.    DATA & METHODS

### III.I Data

The present study focuses on understanding the plans of respondents to stay in Austria and their considerations regarding a potential return to Ukraine. It further explores the correlation of these plans and considerations with selected demographic and socio-economic factors.

The data used in this study was collected and provided by the UkrAiA project (Ukrainian Arrivals in Austria). The project is a rapid-response survey that started soon after the arrival of the first waves of refugees. The survey was aiming to collect primary data on Ukrainian displaced people for academic research and policy making and was particularly focused on respondents' sociodemographic characteristics. The survey was conducted starting in March 2022 and was completed in June 2022.

Independent academic researchers from the University of Economics and Business and the Austrian Academy of Sciences were organized in this survey, while there was support provided by FH Salzburg (UkrAiA website: https://www.ukraia.at/en/home). The project collaborated with other teams that conducted interviews in order to collect data from people in the city of Krakow in Poland.

The participants were asked to fill a questionnaire. Most of the respondents of the survey chose to answer the questionnaire in paper and pencil format (PAPI). However, a second option was offered to fill the same questionnaire using the Computer Assisted Web Interviews method (CAWI). The survey was available in three languages (Ukrainian, Russian, and English) from which respondents could choose the one they would feel more comfortable with. Questions about their demographic characteristics, level of educational attainment, work status, occupation, intentions to stay in Austria, future plans, health status, migration path, family and marital status were included in the questionnaire. There was also an additional section, which included questions from the World Value Survey regarding the participants' values, beliefs, and motivations.

In total, 1,094 people were interviewed in Austria. After excluding individuals with missing data on plans to stay in Austria, the sample consists of 1,083 respondents. For Models 2 and 3, the sample is 531 individuals. When analysing respondents' considerations about returning to Ukraine, the sample consists of 1,086 individuals after the exclusion of records with missing data.

Almost 90% of the participants in the survey were females. This imbalanced sex proportion can be explained by the travel ban of men aged 18 to 60 that did not allow them to leave the country under a martial law. As mentioned prior, for this law there were very few exceptions, namely for men with three or more children and men with health issues (Harlan, 2022). As a result, in most cases, families were separated with men staying behind and women with children as well as older people seeking refuge in other countries.

The sample includes responses of people aged 18 and over and there is good representation of different age groups and places of residence in Ukraine. Although, some of the results that came out after the first round of analysis have already been published, the research is still ongoing (Kohlenberger et al., 2022; Pędziwiatr et al., in press).

The analyses are grounded in the participants' responses to two key questions: "Do you plan to stay in Austria?" with response options: Yes/Do not know/No, and "Which statements below may express your considerations about returning to Ukraine?" with response options: I have nothing to return to in Ukraine/I want to return as soon as the war ends/I may return in case the war ends/I may return even if the war continues/I do not have an idea, I do not know. Consequently, respondents' intentions to return are discerned through their plans to remain in Austria and their considerations about returning to their home country.

Respondents' plans to stay in Austria and their considerations about returning to Ukraine are studied within a multivariate framework. The dependent variable is either the plans to stay in Austria (Models 1, 2, 3) or the considerations about returning to Ukraine (Model 4). The probabilities are derived by multinomial logistic regressions for Model 1 and Model 4 and by binomial logistic regressions for Model 2 and Model 3.

The answers to the second question asking about respondents' considerations about returning to Ukraine are analysed in three broader groups. The first group includes all people that answered "I have nothing to return to in Ukraine" or "I do not have an idea, I do not know", the second group includes everyone that stated "I may return in case the war ends" or "I may return even if the war continues" and lastly, the third group includes those who answered "I want to return as soon as the war ends".

The three groups were formed this way in order to distinguish people that want to return to Ukraine, those who may return and those who do not want to return. The percentage of those who answered "I do not have an idea, I do not know" was very small, so it was merged with those who answered that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine.

Both odds and probabilities are presented in tables for all four models. Positive coefficients indicate that the people of the corresponding group more often answered that they do not want to stay in Austria or they do not know if they want to stay in Austria (depending on the column) for Model 1, while negative coefficients indicate that the people of the group were less likely to respond that they did not want to stay in Austria or they did not know if they wanted to stay in Austria (depending on the column).

For Models 2 and 3, positive coefficients indicate that the respondents were more likely to report that they did not want to stay in Austria and negative coefficients indicate that the corresponding group of people was more likely to state that it wanted to stay in Austria.

Finally, for Model 4, negative coefficients show that this specific group of people was less likely to report either that they wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends or that they might return (depending on the column). Conversely, positive coefficients indicate that the group was more likely to choose one of those two answers (depending on the column).

The primary explanatory variables include age (classified into age groups) and sex, while other socio-economic status-related factors such as employment, marital status, education, and more are included as control variables.

## III.II Methods

On the first step, descriptive statistics of the results are presented including bivariate analyses with the variables in focus; plans to stay in Austria and considerations about returning to Ukraine.

The results of the multinomial logistic regression for the respondents' plans to stay in Austria are presented, distinguished between three groups in the basic Model 1: those planning to stay in Austria (answered "Yes" – reference group), those not planning to stay in Austria (answered "No"), and those uncertain about their intentions (answered "Do not know").

In Model 2 and in the extended Model 3, the group of people that answered "Do not know" is dropped and the results of the binomial logistic regression are presented only for the two categories of people that answered "Yes" and "No".

In Model 4, the results of the multinomial logistic regression are distinguished between the three groups of people that "Have nothing to return to in Ukraine", those who "Want to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends" and those who stated that they "May return".

A chi-square test was performed to test whether the chosen variables are related to the dependent variables (return intentions/considerations about returning to Ukraine). In the next step, the variables that are not related to the outcome variable are excluded from the model.

The choice to exclude uncertain people that answered that they do not know if they want to stay in Austria derived from the challenges that were observed in Model 1 with regards to the accuracy of the model. To begin with, someone's answer "I do not know" to the question "Do you plan to stay in Austria" does not provide any insight as this could mean that the respondents in this category could either end up staying in or leaving Austria. Hence, it was decided to drop this group of people and focus on the two groups that gave more concise answers.

A good model fit demonstrates high value, but it's essential to recognize that it relies on the observed data. Consequently, its performance in predicting a new set of input values (the predicted value) remains uncertain. The assumption is that a high value indicates the model's expected accuracy in forecasting future observed data. Regression models exhibit adaptability and are forming complex relationships between variables, yet they may excessively emphasize non-reproducible patterns. Without a methodical model evaluation approach, issues may only appear when predicting future set of samples.

The available data aims to identify the optimal predictive model. Most predictive modelling techniques feature tuning parameters enabling the model to flex data structures. Hence,

utilizing existing data is crucial for identifying parameter settings that provide the most realistic and effective predictive performance (referred to as model tuning) for future data (Galvao et al., 2005).

One way to do this involves splitting data using R into training (70% of the sample) and test sets (30%) (Joseph, 2022). The training set constructs and trains the model, while the test set estimates the model's predictive performance. Modern approaches involve multiple training and test sets, enhancing the search for optimal tuning parameters and providing a more accurate representation of the model's predictive abilities (Gareth et al., 2013).

During training, the data is used to regress Y on X and the fitted model is then applied to a new set of predictors from the test set to estimate a new response. Prediction involves multiplying the new predictor values by the regression coefficients obtained from the training set. The resulting prediction is compared with the actual response value (Xu & Goodacre, 2018). The predictions on the testing data along with other metrics such as accuracy, can be used to evaluate the performance of the model.

It's crucial to note that this quantity differs from that calculated from the training data, as the latter is often misleadingly optimistic. It estimates the predictive ability of the fitted model using the same data used for model fitting (Gareth et al., 2013).

The first basic model (Model 1) explores the respondents' return intentions with regards to age (18-29/30-39/40-49/50-59/60+), sex (men/women), place of residence in Ukraine (East/West/Kyiv), type of accommodation in Ukraine (rent/own), level of education (secondary or less/tertiary), German language skills (yes/no), family status (married/single/cohabiting /divorced/widowed) and number of children (0/1/2/3+). The model is a multinomial logistic regression indicating how those factors are correlated with the respondents' willingness to either stay in Austria, not stay in Austria, or respond that they do not know whether they would like to stay or not.

A model that would predict outcomes randomly is expected to have an accuracy of around 50% (Gareth et al., 2013). The accuracy of the model was calculated as an average of 10 tests. Notably, the performance of the basic Model 1 was around 60%. This level of accuracy is not satisfactory. However, the exact same model had very high accuracy (around 80%) when the group of people that answered that they do not know if they plan to stay in Austria were excluded (Model 2). This improvement in accuracy was exclusively because of the change in the sample as no other changes were applied.

Model 3 used the same sample as model 2, but it includes a few more additional explanatory variables such as partner's location (with me/in Ukraine/in other country), health status (bad/neutral/good), and work status (employed/unemployed). The accuracy of the extended Model 3 was around 90%.

Lastly, Model 4 explores the respondents' considerations about returning to Ukraine and how they are related with the same variables used in Model 3.

### III.III Limitations

In view of the shortage of data on Ukrainian refugees, the challenges to create a good, representative sample and the fact that this survey took place soon after the war started the results of this thesis should not be considered relevant for all refugees from Ukraine. The sample is limited to early arrivals between the first months of the conflict (February – June 2022) and it does not include refugees that arrived later than June 2022. Moreover, the survey only accounts for refugees that have registered in the country of arrival. The survey took place in the location of registration in Vienna, so unregistered refugees are unaccounted for. The participants of the survey are not necessarily representative of all Ukrainian refugees in Austria or other European countries. The sample consists mostly of women. There is lack of representativeness and a very small sample of men. Finally, it should be noted that people were asked about their return intentions quite soon after arriving in Vienna. It is likely that if the same people were interviewed some months later, their answers might be different as they are based on the respondents' situation at the time of the survey and they could be affected by multiple factors (length of stay in host country, situation in home country, employment etc.).

## IV.   RESULTS

### IV.I Description of the sample

The results of the UkrAiA project indicate that the people that participated in the survey in Vienna, Austria have many similarities with regards to their characteristics and profile with the results of other surveys on Ukrainian refugees. Firstly, the vast majority of the respondents, almost 90%, were women and 10% were men (Table 2). As mentioned above, this skewed sex ration is a consequence of the martial law that did not allow men aged 18-60 to leave the country with very few exceptions.

Moreover, the majority of people that participated in the UkrAiA survey in Austria (81%) were mostly young people of working age between 18 and 49 years old. The vast majority of women (82%) and men (74%) were aged 18-49 years old (Table 2). Of the remaining, 10% were in their 50's and 9% were 60 or older. The proportion of women aged 60+ was 8%, whereas there were around 17% of men aged 60 or older. The percentage of men 60 years or older is more than

double compared to the percentage of women of age 60 or older. Men in that age group were exempted from the martial law that did not allow men to leave the country and they are one of the groups that could move freely.

Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (57%) – both women and men – were below 40 years old. More than 57% of women were between 18 and 39 years old and around 58% of men were younger than 40 years old as well. The sample's mean age is 39.1 years and the difference between men (39.9) and women's (39.0) mean age is very small (Table 2).

In terms of educational attainment, the people that participated in the survey have a higher level of educational attainment in their majority. More than 80% of the respondents have tertiary education (Bachelor, Master or PhD), while the rest have secondary or lower level of education (uncompleted secondary, secondary, vocational) (Table 2). More specifically, more than half of the respondents (51%) are holders of a master's degree (Fig. 2). Although there are more women with Master's degrees and PhD's, the differences in level of education for men and women are not large. Moreover, it is important to note that the sample of men is quite small (10% of the sample) and the representation of men is not as good as women's.

Figure 2: Level of educational attainment by sex, in percent
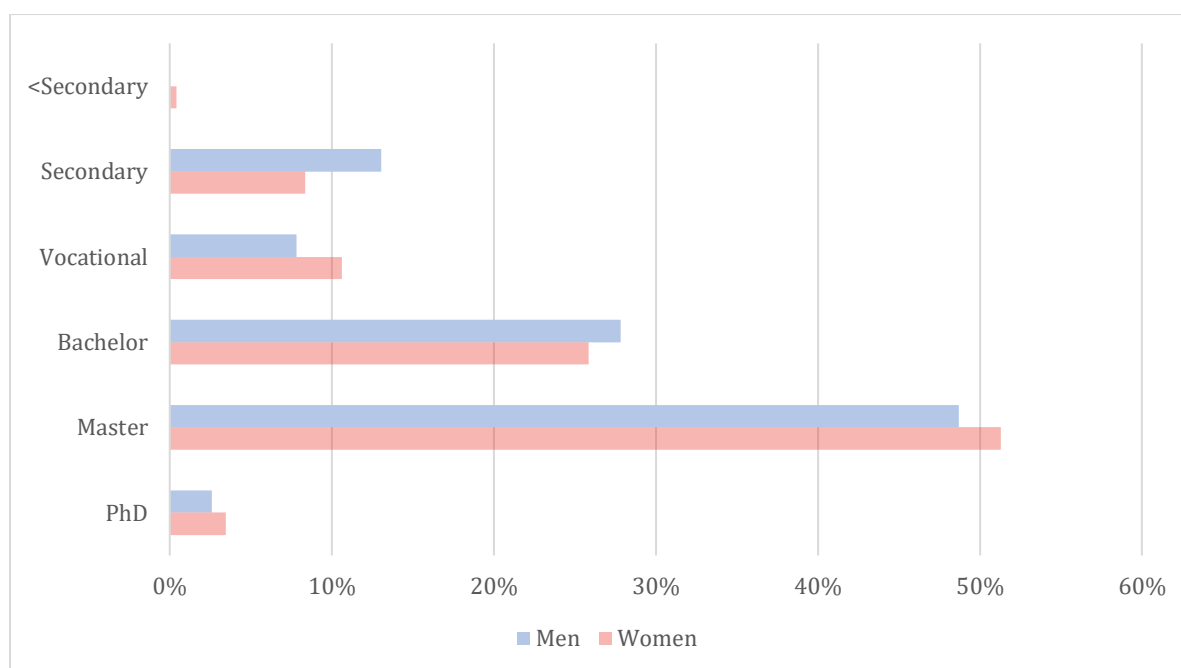


Source: UkrAiA, 1,094 persons

In comparison to the total population in Ukraine, Ukrainians' education in Austria is higher and there are pronounced differences in the two populations' participation in tertiary education. Fig. 3 visualizes the level of education of Ukraine's population in 2020, before the war. At that time, the share of people with tertiary education (post-secondary) was relatively lower.

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For people aged 18-49, which is the majority of people that arrived in Vienna, around 23% of people have tertiary education, as opposed to 80% of the sample of Ukrainian refugees in Austria (Table 2). Less than 20% of men of age 20-49 have tertiary education. The share of women with higher than secondary education is higher in Ukraine (in accordance with the survey's sample as well) with more than 25% of women having tertiary education. These results indicate that the people that fled Ukraine and chose to move to Austria are not only highly educated, but also have higher educated than the national average of Ukraine.

Figure 3: Total population of Ukraine by level of education, 2020
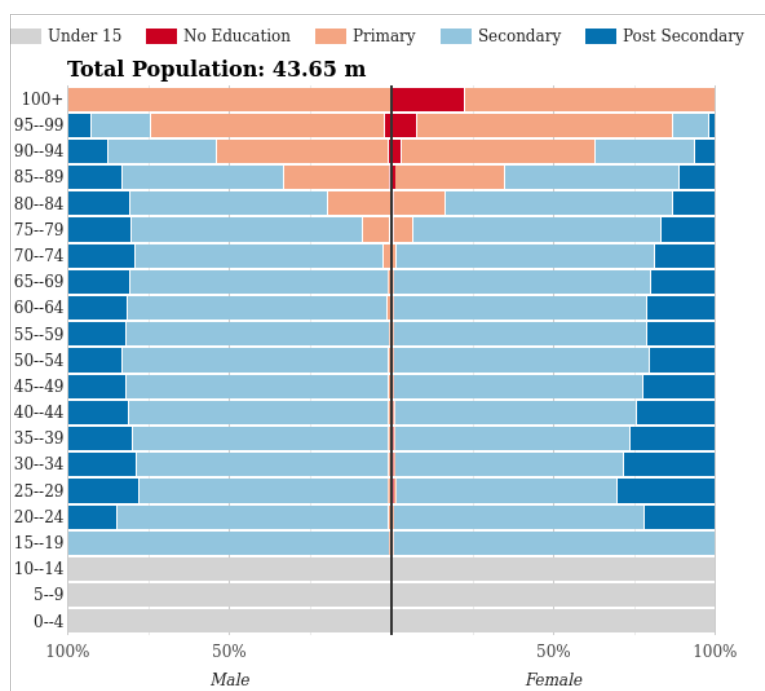


Source: (Wittgenstein Centre, 2018)

The help given to refugees from Ukraine is quite extensive. In the EU's history, refugees fleeing wars have not received such comprehensive support before. This aid for Ukrainian refugees could set a new standard for helping those escaping wars in the future. Yet, there's no sign of that happening. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean that the Temporary Protection Directive would be activated for other situations in the future (Duszczyk et al., 2023).

It is very important for displaced people to be in a place where they feel safe and welcome after being forced to leave their home country. It would be expected that people that do not feel welcome in a place for various reasons, would be more likely to leave since this situation could potentially affect their everyday life as long as opportunities, feeling part of the community and integrating. The UkrAiA survey showed that the vast majority of respondents (93%) reported that they felt welcome in Austria. A few (6%) felt neutral and only 1% of the respondents did not feel welcome after arriving in Austria. There were no significant differences between men and women.

It was more likely for older people to report that they felt very welcome than for younger people, especially those aged 30-39 who reported the lowest percentages of all age groups. Almost half (49%) of people between 30-39 said that they felt very welcome in Austria, compared to 68% of people in their 50s or older. Overall, 88%-91% of people said that they felt very welcome or welcome in Austria with very small differences between different age groups.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, in percent

|  | Women | Men | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sex** | | | |
| Female |  |  | 89,5% |
| Male |  |  | 10,5% |
| **Age** | | | |
| **Mean age** | 39.0 | 39.9 | 39.1 |
| 18-29 | 23,2% | 33,9% | 24,3% |
| 30-39 | 34,0% | 23,5% | 32,9% |
| 40-49 | 24,7% | 16,5% | 23,9% |
| 50-59 | 9,9% | 9,6% | 9,9% |
| 60+ | 8,2% | 16,5% | 9,0% |
| **Region of residence in Ukraine** | | | |
| East | 41,2% | 43,0% | 41,4% |
| West | 25,2% | 21,9% | 24,8% |
| Kyiv | 33,6% | 35,1% | 33,8% |
| **Education** | | | |
| Lower than secondary | 0,4% | 0,0% | 0,4% |
| Secondary | 8,4% | 13,0% | 8,9% |
| Vocational | 10,6% | 7,8% | 10,3% |
| Bachelor | 25,8% | 27,8% | 26,1% |
| Master | 51,3% | 48,7% | 51,0% |
| PhD | 3,5% | 2,6% | 3,4% |
| **Education (lower/higher)** | | | |
| Secondary or lower | 19,4% | 20,9% | 19,6% |
| Tertiary | 80,6% | 79,1% | 80,4% |
| **Type of residence** | | | |
| Own | 84,2% | 79,8% | 83,7% |
| Rent | 13,5% | 18,4% | 14,0% |
| Other | 2,3% | 1,8% | 2,2% |
| **Marital status** | | | |
| Married | 50,8% | 57,4% | 51,5% |
| Cohabitation with partner | 9,4% | 13,9% | 9,9% |
| Widowed | 3,9% | 3,5% | 3,8% |
| Divorced | 12,5% | 2,6% | 11,4% |
| Single | 23,5% | 22,6% | 23,4% |
| **Partner's location (if partnered)** | | | |
| In Austria | 29,6% | 95,1% | 37,7% |
| In Ukraine | 65,9% | 1,2% | 58,0% |
| In other country | 4,5% | 3,7% | 4,2% |
| **Number of children** | | | |
| **Mean number of children** | 1.02 | 0.98 | 1.02 |

| Mean number of children (excl. childless) | 1.46 | 1.59 | 1.47 |
|---|---|---|---|
| No children | 28,2% | 33,6% | 28,7% |
| 1 child | 34,5% | 21,5% | 33,2% |
| 2 children | 29,8% | 30,8% | 29,9% |
| 3+ children | 7,6% | 14,0% | 8,2% |
| **Sample** | **979** | **115** | **1,094** |

Source: UkrAiA, 1,094 persons

In the context of the survey conducted, respondents were asked to self-report their health status. The vast majority, a substantial 80% of the surveyed people reported that their health status is good, underscoring an overall positive health outlook within the sample. In contrast, 17% chose to give a more neutral answer, indicating neither good nor bad health, while 3% described their health status as poor.

Speaking the language of the host country is crucial for the integration of refugees for several reasons. Firstly, language proficiency is a fundamental tool for effective communication, enabling refugees to interact with local communities, access services, and navigate daily life. It empowers individuals to express their needs, seek employment, and engage in social activities, fostering a sense of belonging.

Integration involves not only economic participation but also social and cultural adaptation. Language proficiency facilitates social interactions, allowing refugees to build connections, friendships, and community relationships. This social integration is vital for mental well-being, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting a positive adjustment to the new environment.

The linguistic diversity within the surveyed sample is notable, with a significant majority of respondents (85%) lacking proficiency in the German language. In contrast, a minority (15%) demonstrated the ability to communicate in German, although the proficiency level remains unspecified.

Existing literature indicates that individuals from regions significantly impacted by conflict are more likely to flee compared to those in less affected areas (Brücker, 2022). The findings of this survey reveal that over 41% of the surveyed participants that arrived in Austria came from the eastern part of Ukraine, with an additional 34% originating from Kyiv.

Consequently, a combined 75% of the surveyed individuals who fled Ukraine belonged to the Eastern part of the country and Kyiv. Both these regions were heavily impacted by the war, especially during the first stages when the survey was conducted. Conversely, those who fled from the western part of Ukraine constituted approximately a quarter of the sample.

With regards to the type of accommodation in the country of origin, more than 84% of the respondents own their own house or flat. The people that were renting a house were around 14%.

In terms of their family status, in total 62% of the respondents answered that they were in a union. Namely, the majority of the respondents (52%) stated that they were married and an

additional 10% of them were in a union, cohabiting with their partner. The people that identified themselves as singles were around 23%. Of the remaining, 11% said they were divorced and 4% were widowed.

When people that had answered in a previous question about their family status answered that they were in a union (married and cohabiting with their partner both included) were asked about the location of their partner, the answers were very different between men and women. More than 95% of men said that they came to Austria with their partner, thus their partner was with them at the time of the survey, as opposed to 30% of women. The vast majority of women - around 65% - came to Austria alone while their partner was still in Ukraine. There were few women and a few men (around 4%) that said that their partner is either in a different country or that they do not know where their partner currently is. The question was not asked to people that had answered that they are not in a union in a previous question.

The survey included questions about whether the respondents had any children and if so, how many. Around 71% of the people that participated in the survey, answered that they had children. More specifically, 33% of the total respondents answered that they had one child, 30% said they had two children and 8% of the respondents stated that they have three children or more. The remaining 29% of the participants said they were childless. The mean number of children taking into account all the answers of all the respondents (including the childless) was 1.02 children.

However, the mean number of children among people with children (excluding the childless) was 1.47 children. Even though the mean number of children of the whole sample was slightly lower for men (0.98) compared to women's (1.02), the mean number of children of people with children, was higher for men (1.59) as opposed to women's that was 1.47 children. Men's answers do not affect the total mean as they compose 10% of the sample. Nevertheless, it is important to note that 14% of men in the sample said that they had three or more children, while the percentage of women of the same category was less than 8%. This is another consequence of the martial law that was mentioned above, as men with three or more children were exempted from the martial law and they were allowed to move freely outside of the country.

Considering the plans of the respondents in Austria is crucial for understanding their potential future decisions to stay in the country. When asked about their intentions in Austria, 72% mentioned they plan to start looking for jobs. Approximately 5% stated their intention to continue their studies, while almost a quarter reported not having a clear plan at the time and were uncertain. Importantly, there were no noticeable differences in the responses between men and women.

## IV.II Plans to stay in Austria

When participants were asked about their plans to remain in Austria, it emerged that 46% of the respondents expressed a desire to stay, whereas approximately 44% expressed uncertainty about their future plans (Table 3). Among the remaining respondents, 9% explicitly stated that they were not considering staying in the country, and a small percentage opted not to provide a response.

Table 3: Intentions to stay in Austria, in percent

| Yes | 46% |
|------------|------|
| No | 10% |
| Do not know | 44% |

Source: UkrAiA, 1,083 persons

Noteworthy is the observation that women exhibited higher levels of uncertainty in comparison to men. Specifically, 45% of women expressed a desire to stay in Austria, contrasting with 56% of men who demonstrated a more pronounced will to remain. Additionally, 45% of women had not reached a decision at the time of the interview, while the indecisive men were around 35%. Finally, a combined 9% of women and men explicitly stated that they did not intent to stay in Austria. These findings underscore the diversity and complexity of individuals' perspectives regarding their future plans about staying in Austria with regards to gender.

People of younger age were more likely to answer that they are willing to stay in Austria and the percentage of people saying that they were planning to stay is reducing for older age groups. Half of the people between ages 18-29 answered that they want to live in Austria (Fig. 4). The percentage gradually falls to 48% for people 30-39 and 40-49 and to 46% for people aged 50-59. Finally, people in their 60s or older were the least likely to answer that they want to stay. Less than one third (31%) of people aged 60 or older expressed willingness to remain in Austria. Respondents' negative answers are consistent to the above trend. Young people aged 18-49 were the least likely to say that they do not want to stay in Austria and the percentages grow for older ages, with the highest for people aged 60+ of which more than a quarter (26%) reported that they do not want to stay in Austria.

Even though the respondents' answers mentioning that they wanted to stay in Austria do not show big differences with regards to their educational level (52% for people with secondary education or lower and 46% for people with tertiary education), people with tertiary education are a particular group. Many (45%) people with higher level of educational attainment (Bachelor and higher) said that they did not want to stay in Austria. This is an interesting exception, since they are the only group with such a high percentage of intentions to leave Austria. In most cases,

people's answers are polarized between those wanting to say and those that they had not decided with a small amount of people saying that they did not want to stay. Conversely, people with tertiary education indicate low levels of uncertainty and uncommonly high percentage of respondents that want to leave (Fig. 4). Answering that one is not willing to stay in Austria, does not necessarily mean that they were willing to return to Ukraine. It could also be the case that they were planning to move to a third country.

The results of the study draw a picture showing how the respondents' migration intentions are affected based on their employment status in the home country before the war. The fact that almost half of both employed (48%) and unemployed (47%) respondents express a desire to stay in Austria indicates that employment alone may not be the sole determinant of the decision to migrate. This suggests that individuals consider a range of factors beyond job opportunities when contemplating their future in Austria, highlighting the complex interplay of socio-economic and personal considerations.

The minority of employed (7%) and unemployed individuals (14%) expressing a hesitancy to stay in Austria adds an additional layer of complexity to the findings. Exploring the reasons behind this phenomenon could provide valuable insights into the specific challenges or concerns and challenges that individuals may be facing in the host country, regardless of their employment status.

A substantial proportion of respondents (45% employed, 39% unemployed) who remain uncertain about their decision to stay in Austria highlights the need for a more in-depth exploration of the various factors influencing their hesitancy. This uncertainty may be influenced by a plethora of elements such as integration experiences, social connections, or broader economic and political conditions.

In fact, the results underscore the importance of considering a multifaceted set of factors beyond employment status when examining migration intentions. Further qualitative research could possibly provide a deeper understanding of the motivations and challenges influencing individuals' decisions in the context of their employment status.

Moreover, more than half (55%) of those aiming to find a job expressed a desire to stay in Austria. This insight suggests that a majority of respondents ideally wish to secure employment and remain in Austria. While Austria, as a receiving country, could benefit economically by welcoming highly skilled refugees who can contribute to the market (Dadush & Weil, 2022), it is essential to acknowledge that if the Austrian job market fails to offer sufficient opportunities, refugees' plans may change in the future. Notably, the majority of respondents have a high educational level, and they are likely to have high standards while seeking employment, avoiding settling for low-skilled jobs. Coupled with the language barrier for those without German language skills, this could pose a significant challenge.

In this context, Austria would need to create opportunities for a substantial influx of highly skilled individuals to develop an environment for growth for refugees. This includes active participation in the labour market, opportunities for personal and professional development, investment possibilities in order for refugees to decide to stay even after the war concludes. The creation of such an environment is pivotal for the long-term integration and well-being of refugees in Austria.

Figure 4: Intentions to stay in Austria, in percent
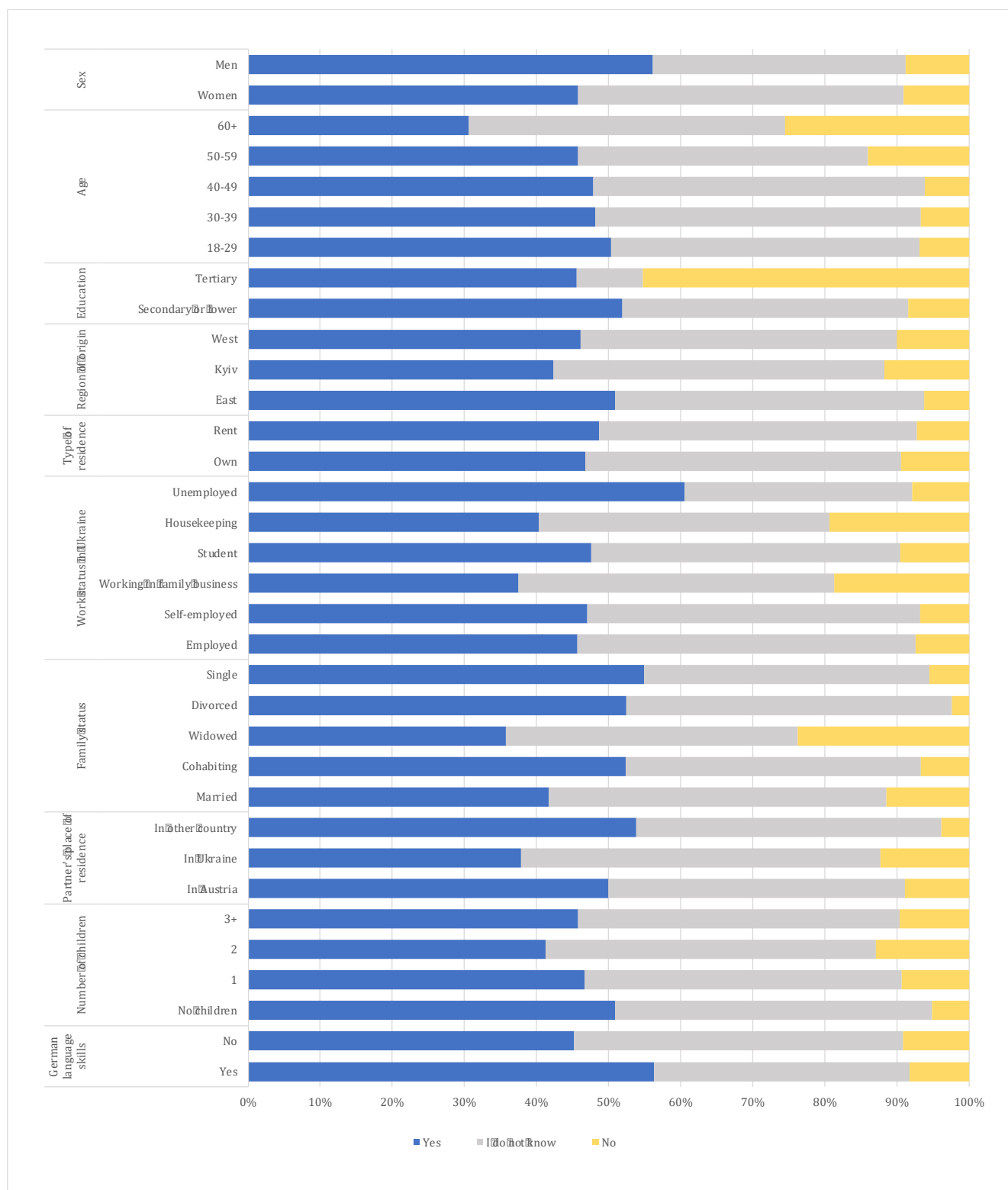


Source: UkrAiA, 1,083 persons

Furthermore, more than half (51%) of individuals from the Eastern regions of Ukraine expressed their intention to stay in Austria. Those originating from the Eastern part of Ukraine, the most severely affected by the war, were most prone to express a desire to stay in Austria. In

comparison, 46% of individuals from Western Ukraine and 42% from Kyiv reported similar aspirations to remain in Austria. These insights highlight the varying preferences and decisions among individuals based on the different experiences they might have depending on the impact of the conflict on the region they used to reside in, in Ukraine.

Single (55%), people cohabiting (52%) and divorced people (52%) replied more often that they wanted to stay in Austria. A quarter of widowed people replied that they would rather leave the country. Furthermore, half of people whose partner was in Austria with them, answered that they wanted to stay as opposed to 38% of people whose partner was in Ukraine. There were only a few people whose partner was in another country, so the sample cannot be trusted for conclusions to be extracted for this group.

It was shown that there is a subtle correlation between health status and migration intentions. Delving deeper into the data, a compelling pattern emerges concerning the relationship between health and the intentions to stay in Austria. Notably, almost half (49%) of those with good health expressed a desire to continue residing in Austria, suggesting a positive correlation between good health and the intention to stay in the host country. Intriguingly, 26% of individuals reporting poor health also conveyed a similar inclination, challenging conventional expectations. Conversely, one-fifth of those with poor health, along with 12% of individuals with neutral health and 8% with good health, indicated an unwillingness to stay in Austria. This diversity in responses highlights the multifaceted nature of migration decisions, influenced by various factors including health perceptions.

It is noteworthy that more than half (55%) of respondents with poor health expressed uncertainty about their decision to stay in Austria. This uncertainty adds a layer of complexity to the analysis, suggesting that health considerations may introduce a level of indecision or contemplation among individuals facing health challenges. In conclusion, these findings underscore the intricate interplay between health perceptions and migration intentions, urging a comprehensive exploration of individual factors that contribute to the complexity of decisions regarding refugees' future plans.

Among those who reported German language skills, 56% expressed a desire to stay in Austria. This suggests a potential correlation between linguistic assimilation and a willingness to remain in the country. On the other hand, 45% of respondents without German language skills indicated a preference not to stay in Austria. This divergence in responses may underscore the role of language as a factor influencing individuals' decisions about their future in the host country.

A portion of both groups expressed uncertainty about their intentions. Specifically, 8% of those with German language skills and 10% without such skills reported not wanting to stay in Austria. Moreover, a notable 36% of German speakers and 45% of non-German speakers indicated

uncertainty, highlighting a common thread of indecision among individuals irrespective of their linguistic abilities.

These results illuminate the complex interplay between language proficiency and migration intentions. While language skills may contribute to a sense of belonging and attachment to Austria for some, a significant portion remains uncertain about their future, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the factors influencing refugees' decisions in a new cultural and linguistic context.

## IV.III Considerations about returning to Ukraine

Apart from respondents' intentions to stay in Austria, the participants were also asked what are their considerations about returning to Ukraine. The respondents were almost equally split among the three groups (Table 4). Around 35% of the respondents said that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine, 34% stated that they want to return as soon as the war ends and the remaining 31% reported that they may return.

Table 4: Considerations about returning to Ukraine, in percent

| | |
|---|---|
| I have nothing to return to in Ukraine | 35% |
| I want to return as soon as the war ends | 34% |
| I may return | 31% |

Source: UkrAiA, 1,086 persons

When we look into respondents' considerations about returning to Ukraine and what they answered to the question about their plans to stay in Austria, the results indicate that almost a quarter of the sample (23%) said that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine and they were planning to stay in Austria (Table 5). Almost one fifth (19%) of the sample said that they want to return as soon as the war ends and they did not know if they plan to stay in Austria.

Table 5: Considerations about returning to Ukraine and Plans to stay in Austria, in percent

| | Yes | No | Do not know |
|---|---|---|---|
| I have nothing to return to in Ukraine | 23% | 1% | 11% |
| I want to return as soon as the war ends | 10% | 6% | 19% |
| I may return | 14% | 2% | 15% |

Source: UkrAiA, 1,086 persons

Figure 5: Considerations about returning to Ukraine, in percent
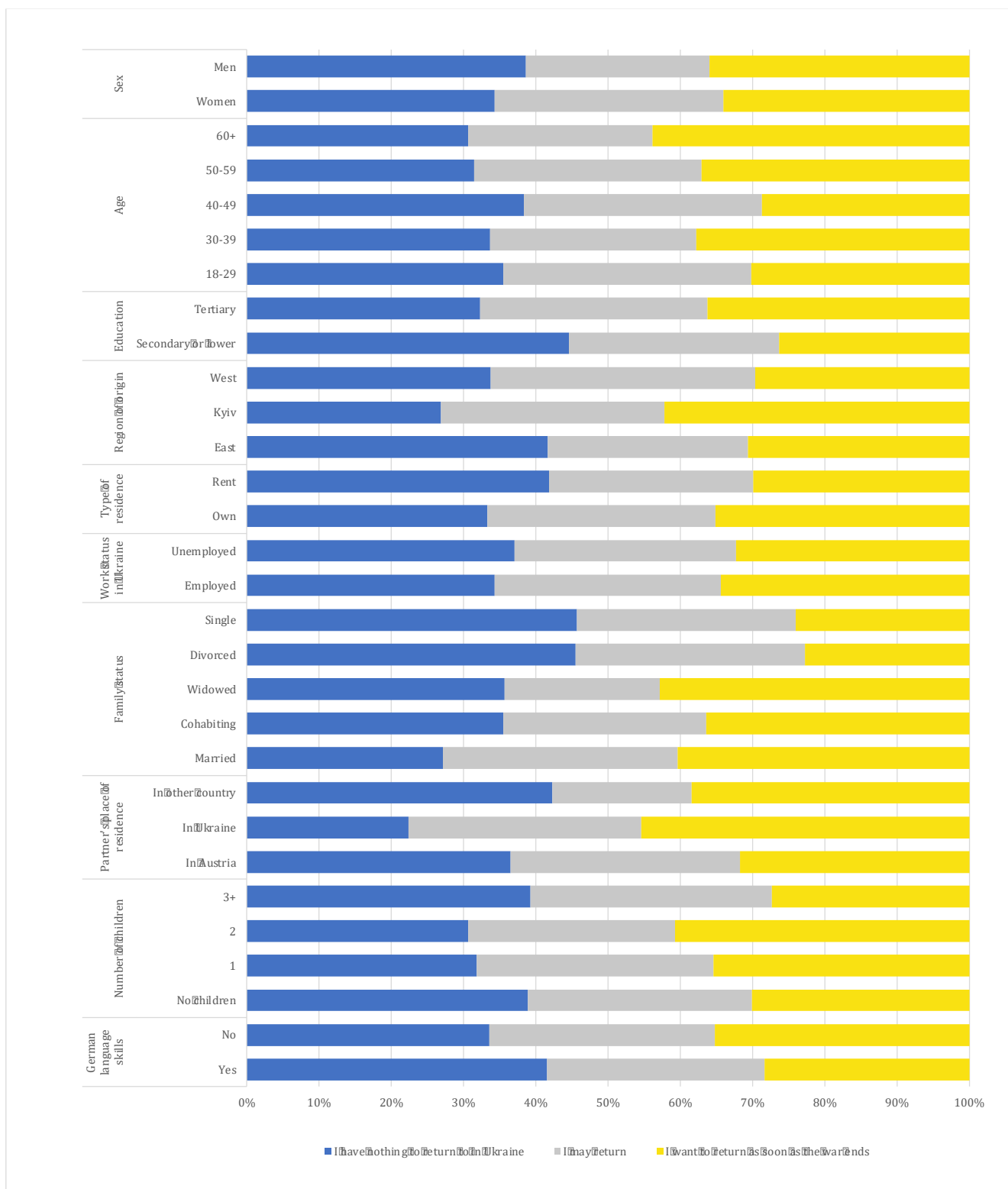


Source: UkrAiA, 1,086 persons

With regards to sex, 39% of men and 34% of women said that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine (Fig. 5). On the other hand, 36% of men and 34% of women said that they want to return as soon as the war ends and 25% of men and 32% of women said that they may return (Fig.

5). Older people, especially those 60+ reported more often that they want to return as soon as the war ends (45%), while people aged 40-49 were those that answered more often that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine (38%). At the same time, 29% of them reported that they want to return as soon as the war ends.

Of the people with secondary or lower level of education, 45% replied that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine, while 32% of highly educated people gave the same answer. Those with tertiary education did not show significant differences, as they were almost equally distributed to the three groups depending on their answers (Fig. 5).

Respondents that fled the eastern part of Ukraine, the most affected region by the war were more likely to say that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine (42%), while those from Kyiv where the least likely to answer that (27%). People from Kyiv were the most likely to answer that they want to return as soon as the war ends (42%) (Fig. 5).

Married (40%) and widowed (43%) more often reported that they want to return as soon as the war ends, while divorced (46%) and single (46%) where those that mostly answered that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine. In the meantime, people whose partners were in Ukraine were those that reported more often that they want to return as soon as the war ends (45%) and those with partners in another country (neither Austria nor Ukraine) reported more often that they have nothing to return to in Ukraine (Fig. 5).

## IV.IV Regression analysis

During the phase of the data analysis, various models were developed and tested before arriving at the final one. While not all explored models are presented in this thesis, the focus here is on those demonstrating superior performance and higher accuracy levels. The level of accuracy of each model was tested using the data partition method. One of the very first models that was developed (model 1) was a multinomial logistic regression exploring how the respondents' intentions were related with age, sex, place of residence in Ukraine, type of accommodation in Ukraine, level of education, German language skills, family status and number of children. The outcomes of the return intentions were derived from the question "Do you plan to stay in Austria?" and the possible answers were 'Yes/No/I do not know'.

As shown above, the percentage of participants in the survey that replied "I do not know" was 44% (Table 3). It should be noted that the survey took place in the very early stages of the war when people were still in shock, and could not estimate how long the war would last. Additionally, the respondents of this survey were people that had just arrived in Austria. It is important to take into account the fact that refugees were in a state of uncertainty and thus in many cases they were not in a position to give a solid answer regarding their intentions to stay in

Austria. This is also shown in the high percentage of people replying that they do not know if they want to stay in Austria or not.

This high level of uncertainty makes the analysis more challenging. All the models that were including 3 levels of return intentions (Yes/No/I do not know) indicated relatively low levels of accuracy (57-63%). The dataset was randomly divided into two sub-datasets (training data: 70% of the records and test data: 30% of the records). Next, the model was applied on the training data and based on that it was asked to provide predictions for the test data. Accuracy is a metric that can give insights on the goodness of fit of the model, indicating what percentage of the test data was predicted correctly. Hence, an accuracy level of 57-63% would mean that 57-63% of the predicted values were matching the actual values in the test dataset.

The output of the multinomial logistic regression model was expressed in log odds. In order for the results to be easier interpreted, they were converted to probabilities. The formula used to convert log odds to probabilities was the one below:

Equation 1: Conversion of log odds to probabilities

$$p = \frac{exp(log\ odds)}{1 + exp(log\ odds)}$$

The results of model 1 are presented in the table below. As mentioned above, a negative probability indicates that this specific category is less likely (compared to the reference group) by x% to reply that it does not want/does not know if they want to stay in Austria (reference group: people that answered that they want to stay in Austria. The results are marked according to each specific result's level of significance.

The regression's results of model 1 indicate that men were less likely than women to either say that they do not want to stay in Austria (32%) or they do not know (35%) (Table 7). People of age 40-49 were also less likely by 32% to say that they do not want to stay in Austria, as compared to those aged 18-29. Conversely, people of older age (60+) were more likely by 75% to report that they do not want to stay in Austria.

Respondents coming from the Western part of Ukraine were more likely by 65% than people from the Eastern part of the country to say that they do not want to stay in Austria (Table 7). Likewise, respondents coming from Kyiv, were more likely by 83% to report that they do not want to stay in the country. The Eastern part was the most heavily affected by the war reporting more damages in infrastructure. People that come from this region may have lost their houses and, hence, it is expected for them to express unwillingness to return to Ukraine and consequently, stronger willingness to stay in Austria.

Table 6: Results of logistic regression; Basic Model 1 and Model 2

| "Are you planning to stay in Austria?" | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | "No" | | "I do not know" | | "No" | |
| | Log odds | Probability | Log odds | Probability | Log odds | Probability |
| **Sex** | | | | | | |
| Women (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| Men | **-0.78*** | **0.32*** | **-0.64**** | **0.35**** | **-0.97*** | **0.28*** |
| **Age** | | | | | | |
| 18-29 (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| 30-39 | -0.64 | 0.35 | -0.22 | 0.44 | -0.60 | 0.35 |
| 40-49 | **-0.77+** | **0.32+** | -0.26 | 0.44 | **-0.81+** | **0.31+** |
| 50-59 | 0.22 | 0.56 | -0.25 | 0.45 | 0.21 | 0.55 |
| 60+ | **1.10*** | **0.75*** | 0.24 | 0.56 | **1.05*** | **0.74*** |
| **Region in Ukraine** | | | | | | |
| East (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| West | **0.61*** | **0.65*** | 0.14 | 0.53 | **0.62*** | **0.65*** |
| Kyiv | **0.83**** | **0.70**** | 0.24 | 0.56 | **0.88**** | **0.71**** |
| **Type of accommodation** | | | | | | |
| rent (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| own | 0.05 | 0.51 | 0.04 | 0.51 | 0.06 | 0.51 |
| other | -0.02 | 0.49 | -0.37 | 0.41 | -0.09 | 0.48 |
| **Education** | | | | | | |
| secondary or lower (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| tertiary | 0.21 | 0.55 | 0.23 | 0.56 | 0.28 | 0.57 |
| **German language skills** | | | | | | |
| no (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| yes | -0.04 | 0.49 | -0.37 | 0.41 | -0.03 | 0.49 |
| **Marital status** | | | | | | |
| married (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| cohabiting | -0.38 | 0.40 | -0.32 | 0.42 | -0.36 | 0.41 |
| widowed | 0.11 | 0.53 | -0.27 | 0.43 | 0.37 | 0.59 |
| divorced | **-2.16**** | **0.11**** | -0.19 | 0.45 | **-2.29**** | **0.09**** |
| single | -0.51 | 0.38 | **-0.54*** | **0.37*** | -0.47 | 0.39 |
| **Number of children** | | | | | | |
| no children (ref) | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| 1 child | 0.49 | 0.62 | -0.20 | 0.45 | 0.48 | 0.62 |
| 2 children | 0.79 | 0.69 | -0.07 | 0.48 | 0.82 | 0.69 |
| 3+ children | 0.60 | 0.65 | -0.11 | 0.47 | 0.58 | 0.64 |
| **Sample** | 1,083 | | | | 531 | |

Significance levels: + $p<0.10$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

Source: UkrAiA, 1,083 persons

Divorced people were more likely by 11% to say that they plan to stay in Austria compared to married people (reference group) (Table 7). The vast majority of the respondents (almost 90%)

are women. More than 65% of women that are in a union (either married or cohabiting) answered that their partners are in Ukraine. Since married people are the reference group and after taking the context of separation into consideration, we can expect those results of divorced people being more open about staying in Austria than married ones. Married women have left their husbands behind and are expecting the end of the war/martial law in order to reunite with them. Single people were less likely by 37% to state that they do not know if they want to stay in Austria than married ones.

To sum up, according to model 1, men, people of age 40-49 and divorced people were 32% more likely to report that they plan to stay in Austria. On the other hand, older people aged 60+ (75%) and people from the Western part of Ukraine (65%) and Kyiv (70%) were more likely to answer that they were not planning to stay in Austria. Finally, men (35%) and single people (37%) were less likely to say that they did not know if they want to stay in Austria or return to Ukraine. The type of accommodation, the educational level, the German language skills and the number of children did not have a significant correlation with people's return intentions.

When people that have responded "I do not know" to the question "Are you planning to stay in Austria", were excluded from the sample, the results were quite different. The size of the new sample (model 2) is 531 respondents and the model performed better in the tests. In fact, the accuracy of model 2 excluding the uncertain people was between 82-85%, but 84% on average. This shows how the indecisiveness and uncertainty of people that had just arrived to Austria from Ukraine to respond to this question is strongly influencing the final results.

The results of Model 2 do not show significant differences in probabilities compared to model 1. The most important difference is the model's accuracy when predicting the outcome.

The updated model (Model 3) performed even better in tests, reporting a level of accuracy between 87% and 90%, with an average of 88% accuracy. The results of Model 3 are presented below in Table 8.

In the third model, there are no significant differences between men and women. However, with regards to age and following the trends of the previous models, it is shown that people aged 60+ were more likely than young people (18-29) by 78% to answer that they do not want to stay in Austria (Table 8). People from Western Ukraine (64%) and Kyiv (68%) were more likely to express that they did not plan to stay in Austria than people that fled Eastern Ukraine (Table 8). Something that was not shown in the previous models, is that according to Model 3, widowed people were more likely by 75% to state that they do not plan to stay in Austria compared to married people (Table 8). As shown before, divorced individuals were less likely than married by 19% to say that they do not want to stay.

Table 7: Results of logistic regression; Extended Model 3

| "Are you planning to stay in Austria?" | Model 3 | |
|---|---|---|
| | "No" | |
| | Log odds | Probability |
| **Sex** | | |
| Women (ref) | 0 | |
| Men | -0.44 | 0.39 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-29 (ref) | 0 | |
| 30-39 | -0.53 | 0.37 |
| 40-49 | -0.74 | 0.32 |
| 50-59 | 0.25 | 0.56 |
| 60+ | **1.27*** | **0.78*** |
| **Region in Ukraine** | | |
| East (ref) | 0 | |
| West | **0.58+** | **0.64+** |
| Kyiv | **0.77**** | **0.68**** |
| **Type of accommodation** | | |
| rent (ref) | 0 | |
| own | 0.11 | 0.53 |
| other | -0.13 | 0.47 |
| **Education** | | |
| secondary or lower (ref) | 0 | |
| tertiary | 0.32 | 0.58 |
| **German language skills** | | |
| no (ref) | 0 | |
| yes | 0.15 | 0.54 |
| **Marital status** | | |
| married (ref) | 0 | |
| cohabiting | -0.27 | 0.43 |
| widowed | **1.12**** | **0.75**** |
| divorced | **-1.48**** | **0.19**** |
| single | -0.01 | 0.50 |
| **Number of children** | | |
| no children (ref) | 0 | |
| 1 child | 0.31 | 0.58 |
| 2 children | 0.60 | 0.65 |
| 3+ children | 0.19 | 0.55 |

| Participation in labour market | | |
|---|---|---|
| yes (ref) | 0 | |
| no | 0.19 | 0.55 |
| **Health status** | | |
| bad (ref) | 0 | |
| neutral | -0.63 | 0.35 |
| good | -0.90 | 0.29 |
| **Work status in Ukraine** | | |
| employed (ref) | 0 | |
| unemployed | **0.69*** | **0.67*** |
| **Partner's location** | | |
| in Austria (ref) | 0 | |
| in Ukraine | **0.79*** | **0.69*** |
| other | -0.64 | 0.35 |
| **Sample** | **531** | |

Significance levels: + p<0.10; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Source: UkrAiA, 531 persons

Moving to the additional variables of this model, the results suggest that unemployed, compared to employed people, were more likely by 67% to answer that they did not plan to stay in Austria and lastly, people whose partners were in Ukraine were 69% more likely to state that they did not want to stay in Austria compared to respondents whose partner was with them in Austria (Table 8).

These findings highlight the complexity of the factors influencing refugees' return intentions and emphasize the challenges caused by the uncertainty in migration decisions. The analysis showcases the effect of socio-demographic variables, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of refugee decision-making processes. The results could provide valuable insights for policy makers indicating the needs of the refugee population as well as the actions needed in order for the host country to support them.

Finally, Model 4 was developed, which focused on the respondents' considerations about returning to Ukraine rather their plans to stay in Austria. The results of the model indicated that men were more likely than women by 66% to report that they want to return as soon as the war ends. Interestingly, this finding contradicts the results of Models 1 and 2 which indicated that men were more likely to say that they were planning to stay in Austria.

Table 8: Results of logistic regression; Model 4

| "Which statements below may express your considerations about returning to Ukraine?" | Model 4 | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | "I want to return as soon as the war ends" | | "I may return" | |
| | Log odds | Probability | Log odds | Probability |
| **Sex** | | | | |
| Women (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| Men | **0.65+** | **0.66+** | -0.08 | -0.52 |
| **Age** | | | | |
| 18-29 (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| 30-39 | -0.62 | -0.35 | -0.41 | -0.40 |
| 40-49 | **-1.51***** | **0.18***** | -0.39 | -0.40 |
| 50-59 | -0.41 | -0.40 | -0.25 | -0.44 |
| 60+ | -0.09 | -0.48 | -0.07 | -0.48 |
| **Region in Ukraine** | | | | |
| East (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| West | -0.18 | -0.46 | 0.41 | 0.60 |
| Kyiv | **0.72**** | **0.67**** | 0.37 | 0.59 |
| **Type of accommodation** | | | | |
| rent (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| own | **0.69+** | **0.67+** | 0.37 | 0.59 |
| other | 1.48 | 0.81 | **1.79*** | **0.86*** |
| **Education** | | | | |
| secondary or lower (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| tertiary | **0.94**** | **0.72**** | 0.34 | 0.58 |
| **German language skills** | | | | |
| no (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| yes | 0.12 | 0.53 | 0.04 | 0.51 |
| **Marital status** | | | | |
| married (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| cohabiting | **-0.75+** | **-0.68+** | **-0.79+** | **-0.69+** |
| widowed | **0.85*** | **0.70*** | -0.43 | -0.39 |
| divorced | -0.40 | -0.40 | -0.10 | -0.47 |
| single | **-0.70+** | **-0.50+** | 0.10 | 0.53 |
| **Number of children** | | | | |
| no children (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| 1 child | -0.07 | -0.48 | -0.09 | -0.48 |
| 2 children | 0.14 | 0.53 | -0.19 | -0.45 |
| 3+ children | -0.20 | -0.45 | -0.62 | -0.35 |
| **Participation in labour market** | | | | |
| yes (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| no | -0.54 | -0.37 | -0.31 | -0.42 |
| **Health status** | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| bad (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| neutral | **1.39+** | **0.80+** | -0.01 | -0.50 |
| good | 0.76 | 0.68 | 0.05 | 0.51 |
| **Work status in Ukraine** | | | | |
| employed (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| unemployed | 0.27 | 0.57 | -0.26 | -0.44 |
| **Partner's location** | | | | |
| in Austria (ref) | 0 | | 0 | |
| in Ukraine | **1.06\*\*** | **0.74\*\*** | 0.47 | 0.62 |
| other | 0.44 | 0.61 | -0.87 | -0.30 |
| **Sample** | | 1,086 | | |

Significance levels: + $p<0.10$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

Source: UkrAiA, 1,086 persons

Following the same trends for age as Models 1 and 2, Model 4 also shows that people aged 40-49 were 18% less likely to report that they want to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends (Table 9). Other age groups were not significant in Model 4.

Model 4 also indicates that people that came from Kyiv were 67% more likely to say that they want to return as soon as the war ends compared to those who fled eastern regions of Ukraine (Table 9). Those findings support the results of the previously presented models as well.

It is worth mentioning that the type of accommodation in the country of origin is significant in Model 4. This variable was not significant in any of the previous models. Model 4 indicates that people who used to live in their own house/apartment in Ukraine were 67% more likely to answer that they want to return as soon as the war ends compared to those who used to rent houses in Ukraine. Additionally, people who did not rent or owned houses in Ukraine (living with parents or living in a house owned by a family member) were 86% more likely to state that they may return (Table 9).

Education is also significant in this model. It should be noted that education as a variable was not significant in any of the previous models. The results suggest that those with tertiary education were 72% more likely to answer that they want to return as soon as the war ends.

With regards to their marital status, people cohabiting (68%) and singles (50%) were less likely to report that they want to return as soon as the war ends, while widowed, as shown in Model 3 too, where 70% more likely to say that they wanted to return as soon as the war ends compared married. Moreover, people cohabiting were also less likely by 69% to answer that they may return (Table 9).

Health is another variable that is only significant in Model 4 (Fig. 6) and it is shown that people who self-reported their health status as neutral (neither bad or good) were 80% more likely to say that they want to return as soon as the war ends compared to their peers who reported their health status as bad (Table 9).

Lastly, partner's location seems to be playing an important role when looking into respondents' consideration about returning to Ukraine as it is shown that people whose partners are in Ukraine were 74% more likely to respond that they want to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends compared to respondents whose partners were with them in Austria (Table 9).

Figure 6: Significant variables for Models 1, 2, 3 and 4



Green: significant, Red: not significant, Grey: not included in model
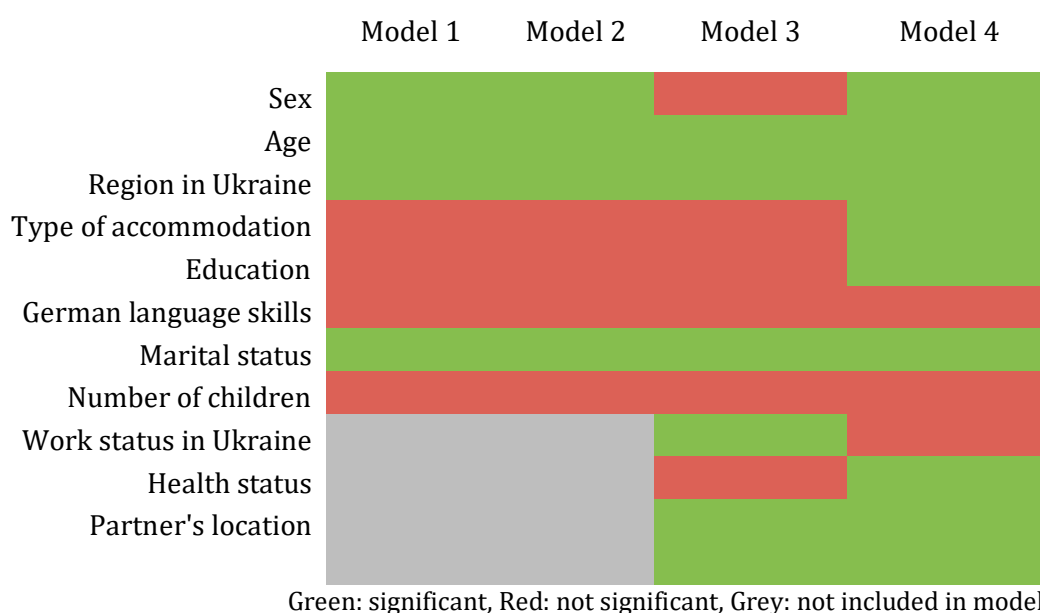
## V. DISCUSSION

The results of the UkrAiA project indicate that the people that participated in the survey in Vienna, Austria have many similarities with regards to their characteristics and profile with the results of other surveys on Ukrainian refugees. As highlighted by the IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP (Brücker et al., 2023) and the ifo surveys (Adema et al., 2023; Panchenko & Poutvaara, 2022), the vast majority of displaced people that arrived in Austria were young women with high level of educational attainment whose partners were in Ukraine.

More than 80% of the respondents had tertiary education with around 50% of them being a master's degree holder. This finding confirms Mazal's (2023) findings that  people with higher education are more likely to migrate compared to people with lower education. Especially when analysing populations that fled major conflicts, migrants often have higher education than their peers that choose to stay in their country regardless of the conflict.

The vast majority of the sample, a substantial 80% of the surveyed people reported that their health status was good, underscoring an overall positive health outlook within the sample.

This finding supports Markides and Rote's (2019) finding that in most cases, it is people with good health condition who migrate, while the ones with poor health often stay behind.

The results of the study show that 46% of the respondents were planning to stay in Austria, 44% had not made up their mind and around 10% did not want to stay. This finding confirms UNHCR's (2023e) results, but is contradictory to the results by 4service (2022). it should be noted that people's answers may change over time. The longer the war lasts, the more refugees integrate into the new societies.

The European Pravda (2022) projected that if the Russo-Ukrainian war is prolonged by several months and the whole country gets involved in the conflict and thus people are affected regardless of the region they live in, more than 50% of displaced people will not return to Ukraine ultimately. The length of the war will play an important role in the reunification of families after the war is over. The longer the war lasts, the more likely that men whose families have fled Ukraine and are living abroad, will leave Ukraine as well as soon as the martial law is not in place anymore (European Pravda, 2022; Mazal et al., 2023).

Existing literature indicates that individuals from regions significantly impacted by conflict are more likely to flee compared to those in less affected areas (Brücker, 2022). The findings of this survey reveal that over 41% of the surveyed participants that arrived in Austria came from the eastern part of Ukraine, with an additional 34% originating from Kyiv. Those who fled from the western part of Ukraine constituted approximately a quarter of the sample.

People of older age as well as people with partners in Ukraine were found to be more likely to express their willingness to return to Ukraine. On the contrary, those who were planning to stay in Austria were mostly men, from Kyiv or Western Ukraine, younger than 60 years old or people whose partners were not in Ukraine. All of the above results support the trends that were found in UNHCR's (2023e) survey.

Additionally, Özkan and colleagues (2023) found that Intentions to migrate to Western countries were found to be associated with the host country's language proficiency and the number of children among others. This is not confirmed by the results of the present study as it was found that neither German language skills nor the number of children were significant in any of the models presented here. In fact, Among those who reported German language skills, 56% expressed a desire to stay in Austria and 45% of respondents without German language skills indicated a preference not to stay in Austria.

Results from the 4service survey showed that people like single individuals, young people and people with high qualifications and education have more chances to find job opportunities in the host country that could possibly make them stay and not return to Ukraine. This thesis provides further evidence of single people stating more often that they wanted to stay in Austria, but age for younger age groups was not significant and highly educated people were more likely to report that they did not want to stay in Austria.

The fact that almost half of both employed (48%) and unemployed (47%) respondents express a desire to stay in Austria indicates that employment alone may not be the sole determinant of the decision to migrate. This suggests that individuals consider a range of factors beyond job opportunities when contemplating their future in Austria, highlighting the complex interplay of socio-economic and personal considerations.

To sum up, the outcomes of Model 1 suggest that factors such as gender, age, region of residency in Ukraine, and marital status play a significant role in predicting the likelihood of individuals staying in Austria or returning to Ukraine. Notably, men show a 32% higher probability to stay compared to women. This finding does not confirm Van Tubergen's (2023) findings stating that women with children are more prone to not return.

Individuals within the 40-49 age group are 32% more likely to choose to stay compared to their younger counterparts (18-29), while those aged 60 and above show a substantial 75% reduced likelihood of staying compared to the younger age group (18-29).

The region of origin in Ukraine also plays an important role, with residents from western Ukraine being 65% more likely to return to Ukraine and following the same trends, individuals from Kyiv have a 70% higher probability of returning to their home country as compared to those originating from the eastern regions of Ukraine. Marital status is another critical factor. The results indicated that divorced individuals have an 11% higher likelihood of staying compared to their married counterparts. Furthermore, men are 35% less likely than women to express uncertainty about staying, and single individuals exhibit a 37% lower probability of reporting that they are unsure of whether they wanted to stay or not compared to their married peers.

In Model 2, the findings are very similar to those of Model 1, showcasing very subtle differences. The results show that gender, age, and marital status are crucial factors influencing the probability of staying. Notably, men were 28% less likely than women to report not planning to stay in Austria. Individuals aged 40-49 remained 31% more likely to stay, compared to the younger age group (18-29), while those aged 60 and above exhibit a 74% reduced likelihood of staying. Regional disparities persist, with individuals from western Ukraine and Kyiv being 65% and 71% less likely to stay, respectively, compared to those from the east part of Ukraine. Divorced individuals were 9% more likely to stay than their married peers.

In Model 3, the emphasis shifts to certain demographic factors. Individuals aged 60 and above were 78% less likely to stay than their younger ones aged 18-29. Consistent regional trends persist, with people from western Ukraine and Kyiv being 64% and 68% less likely to stay, respectively. Widowed individuals exhibited a 75% reduced likelihood of staying compared to the married, while divorced individuals showed a 19% higher likelihood of not wanting to stay. Employment status emerged as a factor, with unemployed individuals being 67% more likely to leave Austria compared to the employed people. Lastly, having a partner in Ukraine increased the

likelihood of wanting to leave Austria by 69% compared to individuals whose partners were with them in Austria.

Lastly, Model 4's focus was shifted to the respondents' considerations about returning to Ukraine. The results showed that men were 66% more likely to report that they wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. This result is contradictory to the results of previous models where men were more likely to answer that they wanted to stay in Austria. People aged 40-49 presented a lower chance by 18% to say that they wanted to return, whereas people who used to live in Kyiv showed a higher likelihood in answering that they wanted to return to Ukraine by 67%, same as people who owned their own house in Ukraine. Highly educated (72%) and people who self-reported their health as neither good nor bad, but neutral (80%) answered more often that they wanted to return. People who were cohabiting (68%) or were single (50%) were less likely to say that they wanted to leave Austria. Also, people cohabiting were 69% less likely to say that they might return to Ukraine. However, widowed individuals showed a 70% higher likelihood to report that they wanted to return. People with partners in Ukraine, were 74% more likely to state that they wanted to return as soon as the war ends.

## VI.    CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study showed that the vast majority of the respondents, almost 90%, were women and 10% were men. As mentioned above, this skewed sex ration is a consequence of the martial law that did not allow men aged 18-60 to leave the country with very few exceptions. Moreover, the majority of people that participated in the UkrAiA survey in Austria (81%) were young people of working age between 18 and 49 years old. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (57%) – both women and men – were below 40 years old.

More than 80% of the respondents have tertiary education. People that fled Ukraine and chose to move to Austria are not only highly educated, but also have higher educated than the national average of Ukraine. More specifically, more than half of the respondents (51%) are holders of a master's degree.

In total 62% of the respondents answered that they were in a union. Namely, the majority of the respondents (52%) stated that they were married and an additional 10% of them were in a union, cohabiting with their partner. The people that identified themselves as singles were around 23%. Of the remaining, 11% said they were divorced and 4% were widowed. More than 95% of men said that they came to Austria with their partner, thus their partner was with them at the time of the survey. The vast majority of women - around 65% - came to Austria alone while their partner was still in Ukraine. Around 71% of the people that participated in the survey, answered that they had children.

When participants were asked about their plans to remain in Austria, it emerged that 46% of the respondents expressed a desire to stay, whereas approximately 44% expressed uncertainty about their future plans. Among the remaining respondents, 9% explicitly stated that they were not considering staying in the country.

The results of the multivariate regressions indicated that sex, age, education, region of origin in Ukraine, marital status, location of partner, health status (self-reported), work status and type of accommodation in Ukraine were significant when analysing respondents' plans to stay in Austria and their considerations about returning to Ukraine.

More specifically, men (M1, 2), people of age 40-49 (M1, 2, 4), people cohabiting (M4), single (M4) and divorced ones (M1, 2, 3) were more likely to say that they want to stay in Austria. On the other hand, people coming from Kyiv (M1, 2, 3, 4) or the Western regions of Ukraine (M1, 2, 3), older people of age 60+ (M1, 2, 3), widowed (M3, 4), people who owned their own house or apartment in Ukraine (M4), highly educated (M4), people who self-reported their health neither as bad nor good (M4), people whose partners are in Ukraine (M3, 4) and respondents who were unemployed in Ukraine (M3) were more likely to say that they wanted to return to Ukraine. German language skills and number of children were not significant in any of the models.

# VII.  APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Abstract in English

On the 24th of February 2022, Russian Federation forces invaded Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023c). The invasion of Ukraine has caused the largest flow of refugees in the last decades in Europe as well as one of the largest since World War II (Libanova & Pozniac, 2023). Even though there are studies on Ukrainian refugees, their intentions to stay in host countries as well as their considerations about returning to Ukraine have not been thoroughly analysed. This thesis uses data from the UkrAiA project which focused on Ukrainian refugees arriving in Austria soon after the war started to explore refugees' return intentions and identify the factors that affect them, performing binomial and multivariate logistic regression analyses. Men, individuals in their 40's, single, divorced or individuals cohabiting were more likely to stay in Austria, whereas people from Kyiv or Western Ukraine, elderly, widowed, those with partners in Ukraine, highly educated, unemployed and those owning their own house in the country of origin were more likely to report that they wanted to return to Ukraine. German language skills and number of children were not significant.

**Appendix B: Abstract in German**

Am 24. Februar 2022 fielen die Streitkräfte der Russischen Föderation in die Ukraine ein (UNHCR, 2023c). Der Einmarsch in die Ukraine hat den größten Flüchtlingsstrom der letzten Jahrzehnte in Europa und einen der größten seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg ausgelöst (Libanova & Pozniac, 2023). Obwohl es Studien über ukrainische Flüchtlinge gibt, wurden ihre Absichten, in den Aufnahmeländern zu bleiben, sowie ihre Überlegungen, in die Ukraine zurückzukehren, nicht gründlich analysiert. In dieser Arbeit werden Daten aus dem UkrAiA-Projekt verwendet, die sich auf ukrainische Flüchtlinge konzentrierten, die kurz nach Kriegsbeginn in Österreich ankamen, um die Rückkehrabsichten von Flüchtlingen zu untersuchen und die Faktoren zu ermitteln, die diese beeinflussen, wobei binomiale und multivariate logistische Regressionsanalysen durchgeführt werden. Männer, Personen in den Vierzigern, Alleinstehende, Geschiedene oder Personen, die in einer Lebensgemeinschaft leben, wollten eher in Österreich bleiben, während Personen aus Kiew oder der Westukraine, Ältere, Verwitwete, Personen mit Partnern in der Ukraine, Personen mit hohem Bildungsstand, Arbeitslose und Personen, die im Herkunftsland ein eigenes Haus besitzen, eher angaben, in die Ukraine zurückkehren zu wollen. Die deutschen Sprachkenntnisse und die Anzahl der Kinder waren nicht signifikant.
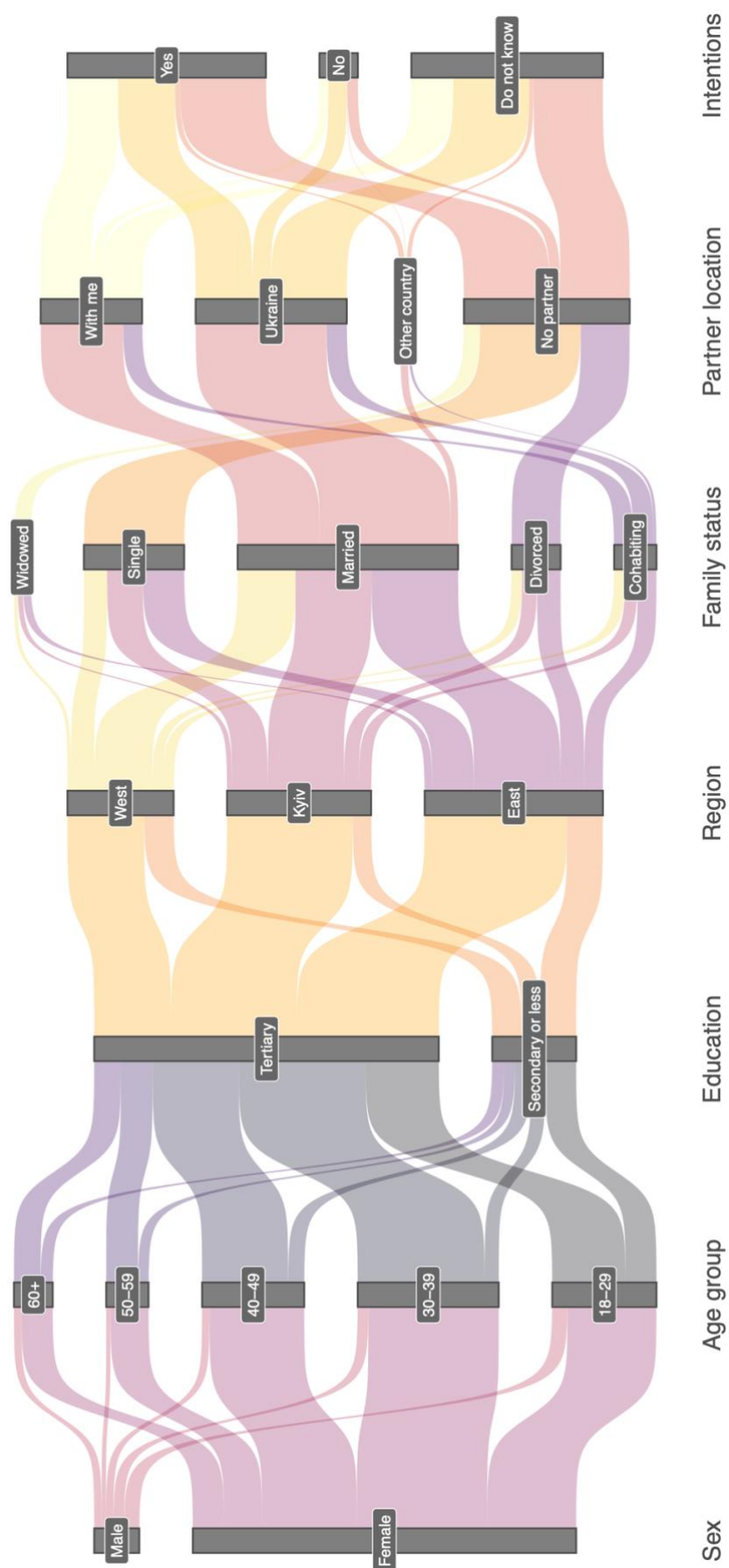
## Appendix C: List of Figures

## Appendix D: List of Tables

**Appendix E: Descriptive results, plans to stay in Austria**

**Appendix F: Descriptive results, considerations about returning to Ukraine**
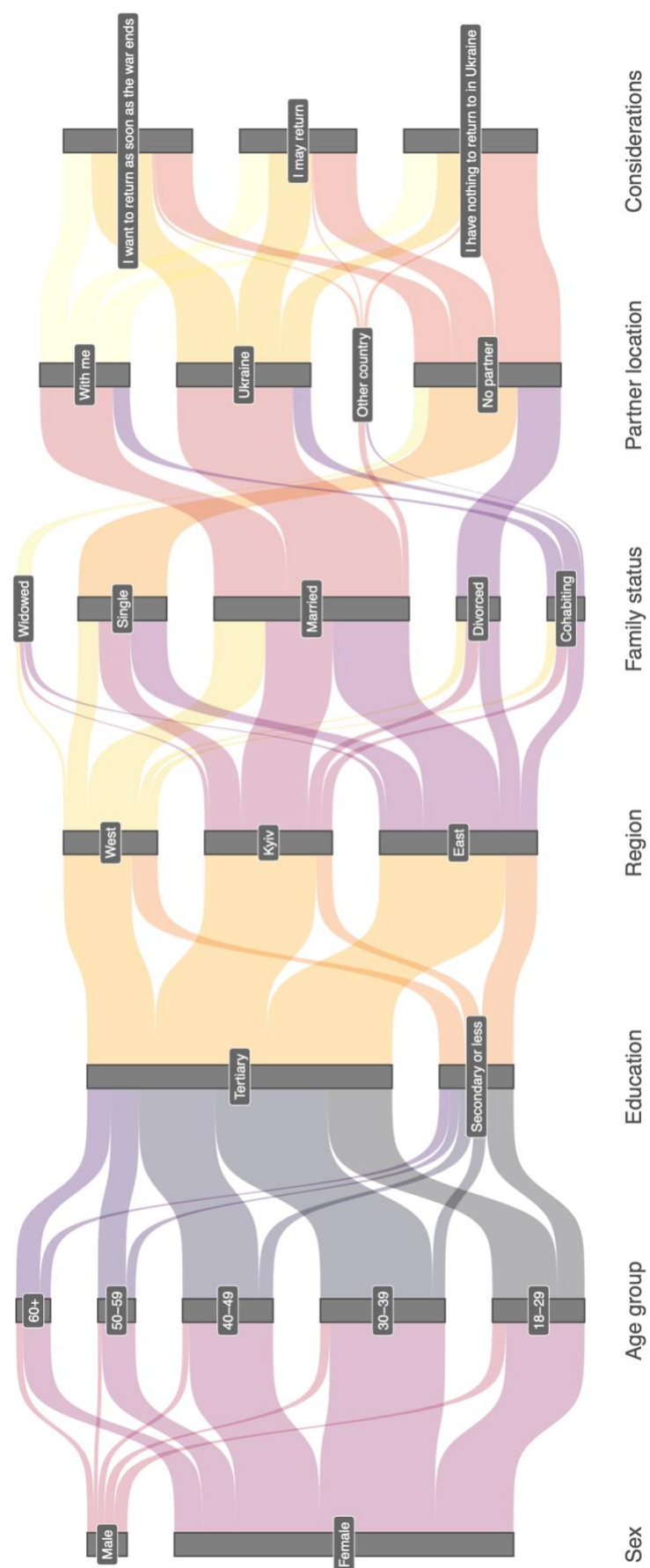
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