



BRIEFING

Ukrainian migration to the UK

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This briefing examines Ukrainian migration to the UK before and after the Russian invasion in 2022. It presents statistics on the number of Ukrainians who have come to the UK, where they have moved to, and their characteristics.

Key Points

Around 217,000 Ukrainians were living in the UK as of 30 June 2024. This estimate is based on the ONS numbers on long-term immigration under the Ukraine entry visa schemes.

Around 210,000 people had arrived in the UK under the Ukraine Family and Sponsorship Schemes by 16 July 2024. That was out of a total of 342,000 applications, and 261,000 granted visas.

Weekly arrivals under the two main Ukraine visa schemes peaked at 10,000 in May 2022 and fell below 1,000 after March 2023. In March 2024, several hundred people a week arrived under the Sponsorship Scheme. The Family Scheme closed in February 2024.

Scotland (18%), London (17%), and the South East (17%) together received a majority of all arrivals under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. In general, areas with larger Ukrainian populations before the war experienced more Sponsorship Scheme arrivals.

As of early 2024, 70% of adults who arrived under the two main Ukraine schemes were women. Around 27% of all arrivals were children under the age of 18.

Most Ukrainians now plan to stay in the UK long term. In an April 2024 survey, 68% of respondents said they intended to continue living here even after it was safe to return to Ukraine. Ukrainians' integration outcomes have also improved over time – the employment rate of Ukrainian adults reached 68% in early 2024.

Of the 6 million Ukrainian refugees recorded in European countries as of 13 June 2024, around 4% had come to the UK. Britain was fourth in terms of the number of arrivals, after Germany, Poland, and Czechia.

Understanding the policy

The UK's Ukraine visa schemes

The UK government created three visa schemes for people fleeing the war in Ukraine: the Ukraine Extension Scheme, the Ukraine Family Scheme, and the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, also known as Homes for Ukraine. Unlike most other visas, the visas were free to apply for and applicants did not have to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge. The government did not cap the number of people who could come under the Ukraine schemes, and the likely number of arrivals was not known.

The [Ukraine Extension Scheme](#), opened on 3 May 2022, allowed Ukrainians (or their close family members) who were in the UK on temporary visas on or before 18 March 2022 to apply to extend their stay for three years. This scheme was closed on 16 May 2024, although it remained open for children born in the UK. The visa permits access to benefits, work, and study. The [Ukraine Family Scheme](#), which opened for applications on 4 March 2022, was a visa scheme for people fleeing Ukraine who are the family members of either British citizens or people with settlement in the UK. The scheme was closed to new applications on 19 February 2024. Ukrainians on temporary visas were not eligible to bring family members under the Ukraine Family Scheme. The policy required people to apply for a visa from outside of the UK.

The [Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme](#), also known as Homes for Ukraine, opened for applications on 18 March 2022. At the time of writing in August 2024, it remained the only one of the original Ukraine schemes still open for new applications. This scheme allows any Ukrainian citizen fleeing the conflict, or the immediate family members of a Ukrainian citizen, to come to the UK if they can find a sponsor within the community. The Homes for Ukraine visa lasts for three years.

The Sponsorship Scheme had different arrangements for sponsorship in Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Wales and Scotland introduced 'super sponsor' schemes, where the governments of these nations acted directly as sponsors, with local authorities finding accommodation instead of individual sponsors. However, these super sponsor schemes were paused in the summer of 2022 and never reopened. The Welsh scheme closed to new applications from 10 June 2022, and the Scottish scheme closed to new applications from 13 July 2022.

For all three schemes, it was not clear whether visa holders would be able to extend their stay beyond the initial three years. On 28 February 2024, the government announced the [Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme](#). The scheme will provide an additional 18 months of permission to remain in the UK to those holding a visa under one of the original three Ukraine schemes, under the same conditions. It will open in early 2025, and those in the last 3 months of their original visa will be eligible to apply. As of July 2024, it remained unclear whether the Ukraine visas will ever provide a pathway to settlement in the UK (permanent residence).

How does UK policy towards people fleeing Ukraine compare with its policy towards other refugees?

In requiring visas and either family connections in the UK or sponsors within the community, the UK's approach to people fleeing war in Ukraine is more restrictive than that of the EU, which allowed visa-free travel and did not require sponsorship. But it is nonetheless in certain respects more liberal than the UK's approach to other refugees, particularly those coming through the asylum system.

Shortly after the war started, Priti Patel, then Home Secretary, referred to the UK policies towards Ukrainians as a "[bespoke humanitarian route](#)". The term 'bespoke' was also [used to describe](#) the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme announced in August 2021, and could also be applied to the Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) visa scheme. The Ukrainian route thus illustrates a broader trend in recent UK asylum and refugee policy: the government selecting and differentiating between refugees from different conflicts or parts of the world.

Each of these 'bespoke routes' has different terms and conditions, and can be compared with the UK's standard asylum system, in which people must reach the UK to apply for asylum (Table 1).

Table 1

How do the Ukraine schemes compare with other asylum or resettlement routes?

	The UK's Ukraine schemes	Standard UK asylum system	The UK's Global Citizens Resettlement scheme	EU Temporary Protection for Ukrainians
Eligibility	Family Scheme: must have a UK-based family member with British citizenship, or common-law partner, or partnership. Short-term: must have a UK-based sponsor.	Anyone can apply in the UK, but claimant must apply in person and waiting for the UK to claim asylum, which takes around a month, for some people.	Excluded in Oct. 2022; included or re-added until July 2023 when re-added as D+High Courts (Global World War) under EU law regularisation.	Non-EU/EFTA Being Ukraine.
Capped numbers	No	No	Yes - 5,000 in the first year, and up to a maximum of 20,000 in a five years.	No
Entry visa required	Yes (short-term)	No (short-term)	Requires an entry for resettlement.	No
Application required	Yes	Yes, but only in the UK	No	Yes
Cost	Free	Free	Free	Free
Right to work	Yes	No (only can apply for in general. Yes for certain medical refugees)	Yes	Yes
Access to benefits	Yes	No (only on applicants, although they can claim financial help and support while waiting for a decision. Yes for confirmed ref. jobs)	Yes	Yes
Path to settlement	No - 10 years (some visas permit to stop visa holders will be eligible for an 11-month accelerated route early 2025)	Confirmed refugees can apply for settlement after 5 years, although settlement can be applied for while on a temporary visa.	Yes (settles to citizenship)	No

The regular asylum system

Ukrainian refugees can also claim asylum in the UK. People who receive visas through the Ukraine Family Scheme are not officially designated as asylum seekers or refugees but receive a different temporary status. This status has some benefits over claiming asylum because it entitles those issued visas under the scheme to the right to work, study, and claim benefits.

By contrast, asylum seekers are not generally permitted to work while their claim is pending. People fleeing Ukraine may apply for asylum in the UK if they are not eligible for the Ukraine schemes, for example if they do not have qualifying family members in the UK or cannot find a sponsor. However, to apply for asylum in the UK, a person must be in the UK. It is not possible to apply from outside the country.

More background on the UK asylum system is available in the Migration Observatory’s briefing, [Asylum and Refugee Resettlement in the UK](#).

Understanding the evidence

The UN provides data on both the border crossings of people leaving Ukraine and registrations of Ukrainian refugees in European countries. The data presented in Figure 8 below are of the number of refugees from Ukraine (who are not necessarily Ukrainian citizens) who have been registered across Europe and are currently residing there. The figures include refugees from Ukraine who were granted refugee status, temporary asylum status, temporary protection, or statuses through similar national protection schemes, as well as those recorded in the country under other types of routes. The true number of refugees present in these countries will be different because not everyone who has left Ukraine will have registered or otherwise been recorded in the country to which they have moved. Nevertheless, these figures help show which countries have been the major destinations for people who have left Ukraine.

Other data in this briefing come from the UK government and the Office for National Statistics. Data on overall visa applications, grants, and arrivals under the Ukraine schemes are provided by the Home Office from an operational database [every week](#) and are provisional. Apart from the second section, the rest of the briefing uses more detailed final visa on Ukraine schemes visas and arrivals that are released [quarterly](#), which include local authority information and demographic statistics.

Data from the 2021 Census in England and Wales are used to identify the size and distribution Ukrainian-born population in the UK before the war (no information was available on citizenship or passports held). This is considerably more accurate than survey-based estimates like those from the Annual Population Survey, particularly for relatively small populations.

[Data](#) on National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations are from the Department of Work and Pensions. A National Insurance number is required for purposes of employment or claiming benefits. Individuals over 16 have to apply for one and maintain it regardless of leaving the country. Applications record basic information like the applicant's citizenship and address at the time of application.

Starting in September 2022, the HMRC has released [ad-hoc statistics](#) on the number of Ukrainian nationals in employment across the UK. The data are from its PAYE (pay-as-you-earn) administrative database, and count the number of Ukrainian nationals who received a NINo and were paid through the PAYE system each month. Such data hence exclude those who are self-employed.

Survey data on Ukrainians who arrived in the UK are from the ONS [UK Humanitarian Response Insight Surveys](#) and are collected periodically from samples of several thousand Ukraine Scheme visa holders. The results are weighted to be broadly representative of the population of arrivals, with adjustments for age, sex, and visa scheme bias. Respondents were contacted by email and could respond in either English or Ukrainian.

Homelessness statistics for Ukrainian nationals are [released](#) by the Department for Housing and Communities and only cover local authorities in England. Of 296 local authorities, 32 failed to provide information. Of these, data for 25 local authorities were imputed based on local socio-demographic characteristics.

Around 217,000 Ukrainians were living in the UK as of 30 June 2024

Our estimates suggest that, as of 30 June 2024, around 217,000 Ukrainians were living in the UK. We obtain this by combining two sources of data – on the number of Ukrainians living in the UK before the war, and on the number of wartime arrivals under the bespoke visa schemes.

The best estimate of the Ukrainian population in 2021 comes from the England & Wales Census, which recorded 39,500 Ukrainian-born individuals. Another 1,000 Ukrainian-born individuals were living in Scotland that year, according to official statistics. Numbers were lower in Northern Ireland and unavailable for confidentiality reasons. Together, this resulted in a pre-war Ukrainian population of roughly 41,000.

The ONS puts long-term net migration under the Ukraine visa schemes at 176,000 by the end of June 2024 (from when the schemes were opened, with only 1,000 emigrating). The number is lower than the roughly 209,000 arrivals recorded in the same period, since some Ukrainians will have left the UK after less than a year. The ONS had previously estimated long-term migration under the Ukraine schemes to be considerably lower but revised its estimates substantially on the 29th of November 2024, declaring it had missed several tens of thousands Ukrainian arrivals.

The sum of these figures leads to an estimate of approximately 217,000 Ukrainians living in the UK as of 30 June 2024. This makes two assumptions, that all Ukrainians living in the UK before the war remain here, and that all those arriving on the Ukraine schemes were Ukrainian.

Additionally, around 33,000 Ukrainians were granted in-country visa extensions by the same date through the Family and Extension Schemes. An unknown share of these will have arrived between the time of the census and the start of the war – which would push up the final estimate.

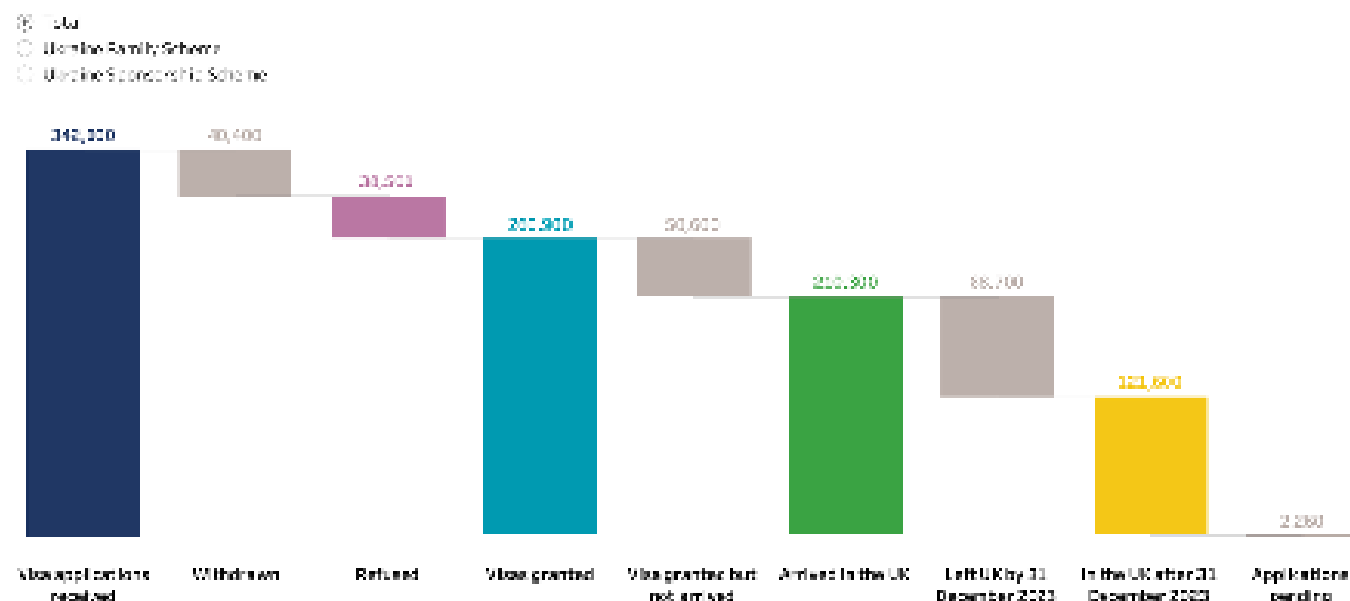
Around 210,000 people had arrived in the UK under the Ukraine Family and Sponsorship Schemes as of 16 July 2024

Around 210,000 people had arrived in the UK by 16 July 2024 using one of the two bespoke entry visa schemes for Ukrainians. This was out of a total of 342,000 applications submitted under the schemes, and about 261,000 visas which had been issued. Around 2,300 applications remained pending (Figure 1). Official ONS estimates suggest that many Ukrainians who arrived in the UK left within a year, since long-term immigration to 31 December 2023 was only 108,000.

Most applications, visa grants, and arrivals happened under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. Around 28% of Ukrainians arrived in the UK under the Family Scheme.

Figure 1

The Ukraine Family and Sponsorship schemes: applications, visa issuances, and arrivals
By stage of application, as of 16 July 2024



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office sponsorship data, Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (accessed 16 July 2024), and UK government migration data, year ending December 2023.

Notes: An application is completed for each individual, including one application per child. Therefore, one application refers to one person, and each successful applicant receives their own individual visa. The number of Ukrainians who arrive in the UK is calculated as the difference between long-term immigration figures recorded by the ONS and the number of arrivals in the same period. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred, and are provisional.



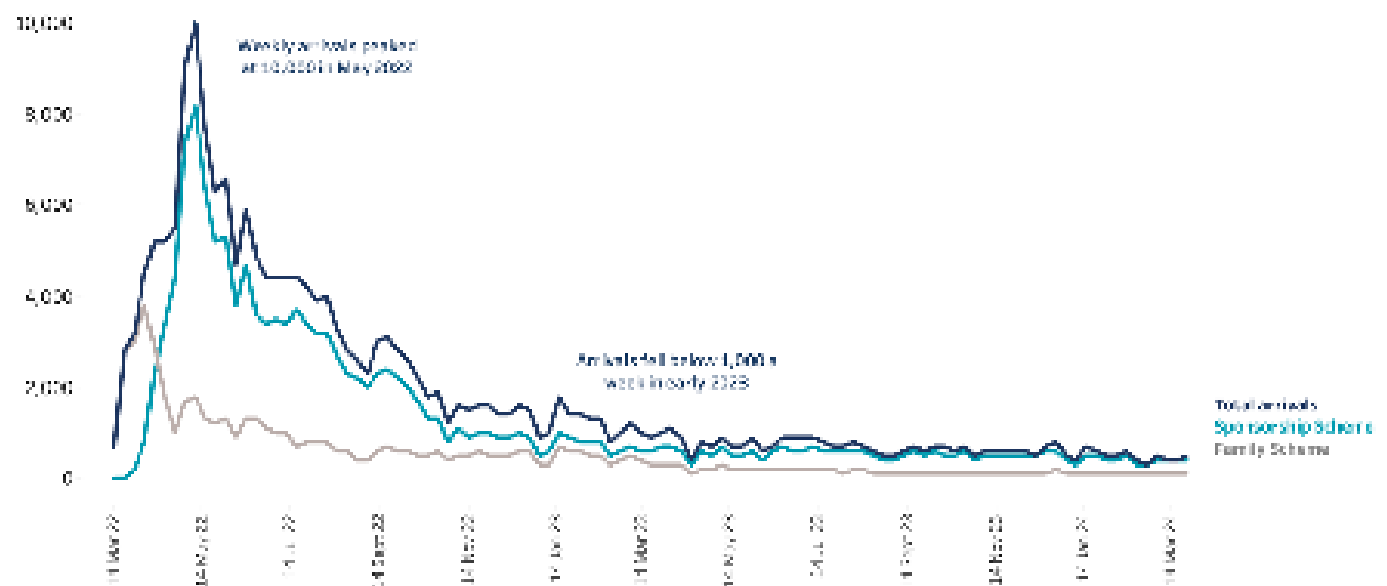
[Statistics](#) are also published on the Ukraine Extension Scheme, which allowed Ukrainians who had temporary visas in the UK before the war to remain in the country (this scheme closed in May 2024, with the exception of UK-born children). These show that 25,000 visas to remain in the UK were granted under the Extension Scheme. A further 8,200 people were granted Family Scheme visas whilst they were already in the UK on another visa.

Weekly arrivals under the two main Ukraine visa schemes peaked at 10,000 in May 2022 and fell below 1,000 after March 2023

A large majority of arrivals under the two main Ukraine visa schemes (as of 31 March 2024) – about 169,000 or 83% of the total – occurred in their first year of operation (until the end of March 2023). Weekly arrivals peaked at around 10,000 in May 2022, then gradually decreased over time, falling under 1,000 per week in March 2023. A few hundred people a week were still arriving in the UK in March 2024 under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (the Family Scheme closed in February 2024).

Figure 2

Number of people arriving in the UK using a Ukraine Scheme visa
By week, from week ending 14 March 2022 to week ending 25 March 2024



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office, Statistics on Immigration to the UK, Summary Tables, Table 1.47.01
Notes: Counts have been rounded to the nearest 100 and relate to individuals who arrived in the UK, where their arrival has been linked to a Ukraine scheme visa. Where individuals are recorded as arriving in the UK but are not linked to a scheme visa, their arrival is not included in this data. The data is based on initial arrivals, but may be subject to change as more individuals are recorded in the data.



Scotland (18%), London (17%), and the South East (17%) together received a majority of all arrivals under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme

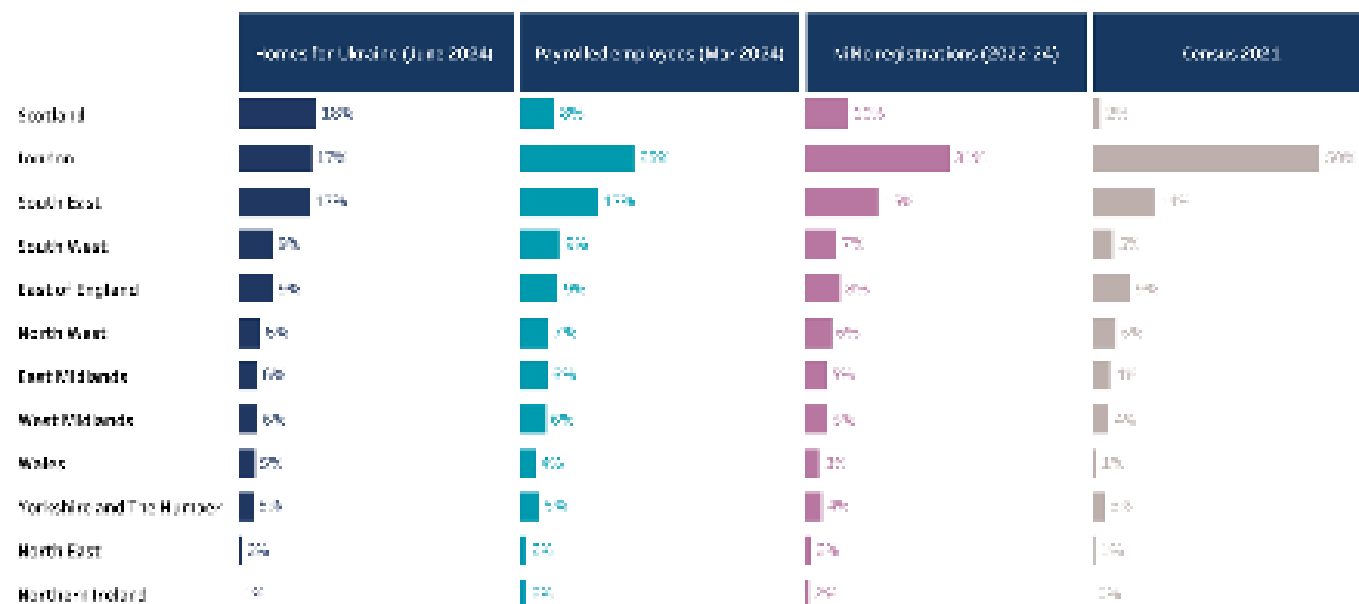
There are several ways of examining where Ukrainians live in the UK. The first is to look at data from the Sponsorship Scheme, which record where refugees were initially hosted in the UK. These initial numbers will become less accurate over time as more Ukrainians move out of their sponsor’s property to live independently.

By 31 March 2024, the highest number of Ukrainians had initially arrived in Scotland (18% or 27,000), London (17% or 26,000), and the South East of England (17% or 25,000). The share of Homes for Ukraine participants initially moving to Scotland is unusually high compared to [other types of migration](#), where Scotland is typically underrepresented. This is likely due to the Scottish ‘super sponsor’ scheme, which accounted for 78% of arrivals in Scotland. The lowest numbers of Ukrainian arrivals were in Northern Ireland and the North East of England (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Distribution of Ukrainians in the UK by region

By data source (Census 2021, Homes for Ukraine, Payrolled employees, and NiNo registrations)



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of England & Wales Census 2021, ONS Population by country of birth and nationality (year ending June 2023), Ukraine (Government Scheme), Miscellaneous Countries, Upper and Lower Hierarchical subtotals (7 June 2024), HMRC and NiNo analysis of Ukrainian nationals in employment in the UK (March 2024), and ONS Labour NiNo registration data to April 2024. Census Nationality (year ending March 2024).
 *Wales figures labelled as 'Wales' for Northern Ireland and Scotland were taken from ONS's Army-based population, a real data for these variables were not available. NiNo figures are for the period between 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2024. Census figures are for the Ukrainian born population.



Another source of data is the HMRC’s real-time records of payrolled employees, which count the number of Ukrainian nationals in employment each month (Figure 3). These figures are more current than arrival data, though they exclude individuals who are not in employment as well as the self-employed. In March 2024, a quarter of all Ukrainian employees were based in London, and another 17% were living in the South East of England. A similar distribution of Ukrainians across the UK is suggested by numbers on National Insurance Number (NiNo) registrations.

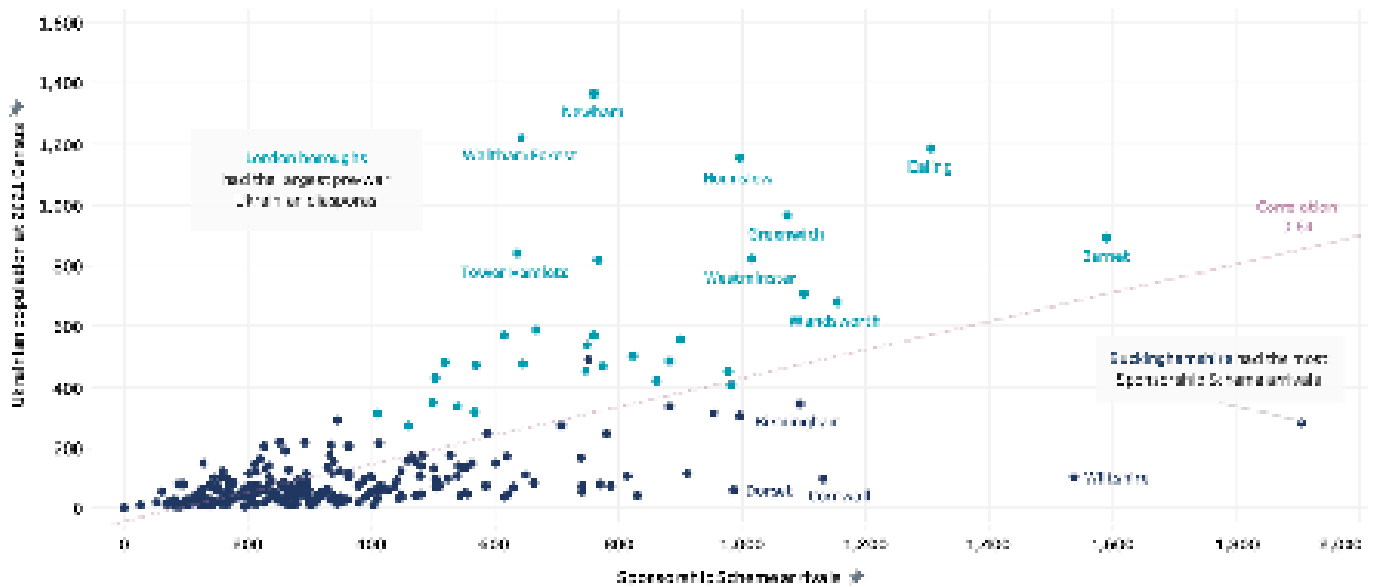
Notably, the proportion of Ukrainian employees based in Scotland, at 8%, was much lower than the proportion of Ukrainian arrivals in Scotland under the Sponsorship Scheme. This may indicate that some Ukrainians who initially arrived in Scotland later moved to other regions of the UK. Other factors may also be at play: for example, if Ukrainians had lower employment rates in Scotland or if arrivals under the Family Scheme were more concentrated elsewhere in the UK.

To an extent, places in the UK with larger pre-war Ukrainian diasporas also received more Ukrainian refugees after the outbreak of war. This is especially clear at the local authority level, where there is a positive correlation between the Ukrainian-born population at the time of the 2021 Census and the number of Sponsorship Scheme arrivals (Figure 4).

London boroughs had some of the largest Ukrainian-born populations at the time of the 2021 Census. Most of them also received significant numbers of refugees under the Sponsorship Scheme. Yet other areas in the UK saw more arrivals than would have been expected based on the size of their pre-war diasporas, including Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, and Cornwall. Indeed, the Sponsorship Scheme – influenced by who was offering up their homes – saw a much wider distribution of refugees compared to places where Ukrainians previously tended to settle.

Figure 4

Ukrainian arrivals under Sponsorship Scheme and 2021 Ukrainian population
By local authority (LA), as of 4 June 2024, England



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of England and Wales Census 2021 and Home Sponsorship Scheme, by local authority (as of 4 June 2024).
 *Note: Several local authorities that have been reorganised between 2021 and June 2024 have missing data and are excluded from this chart.

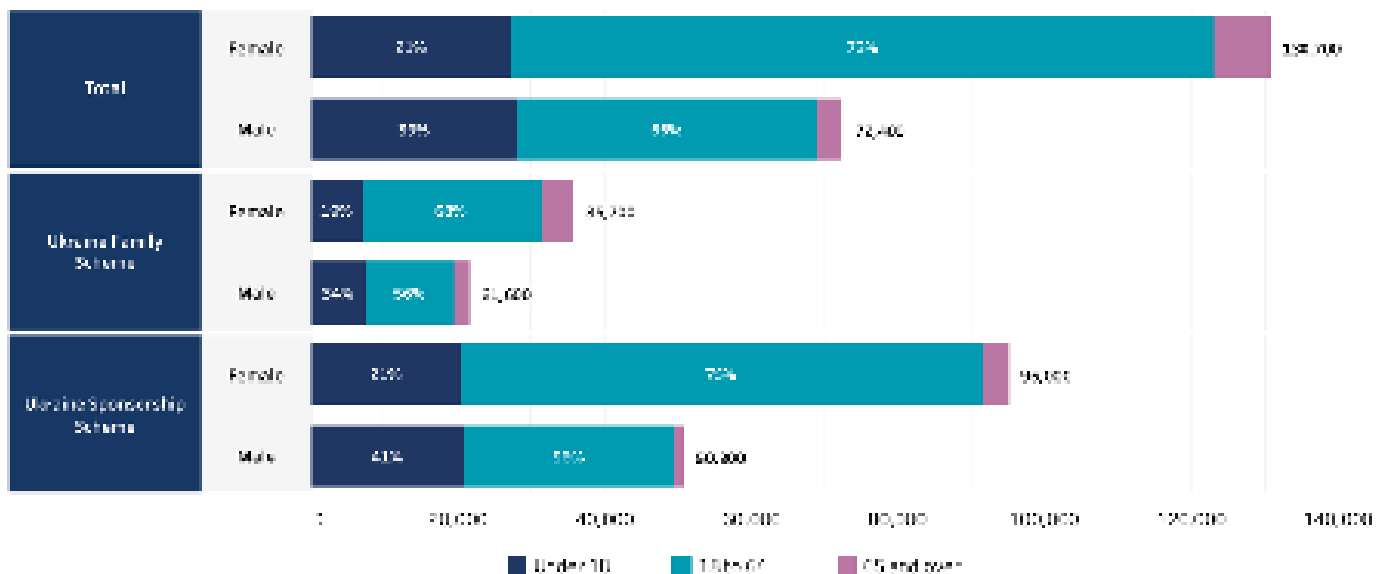


As of early 2024, 70% of adults who arrived under the two main Ukraine schemes were women

As of 31 March 2024, 70% of [Ukrainian adults](#) who arrived under the Sponsorship and Family Schemes were women (Figure 5). Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 are [not allowed to leave Ukraine](#). Of all arrivals under these schemes, 27% were under the age of 18.

Figure 5

Age and sex distribution of arrivals under Ukraine Schemes
 (by scheme, as of 31 March 2024)



Source: Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office immigration statistics year ending March 2024. Ukraine Flow Scheme summary statistics, UK to UKS 04.
 Note: Percentages are out of the total number of arrivals for each scheme/schemes.

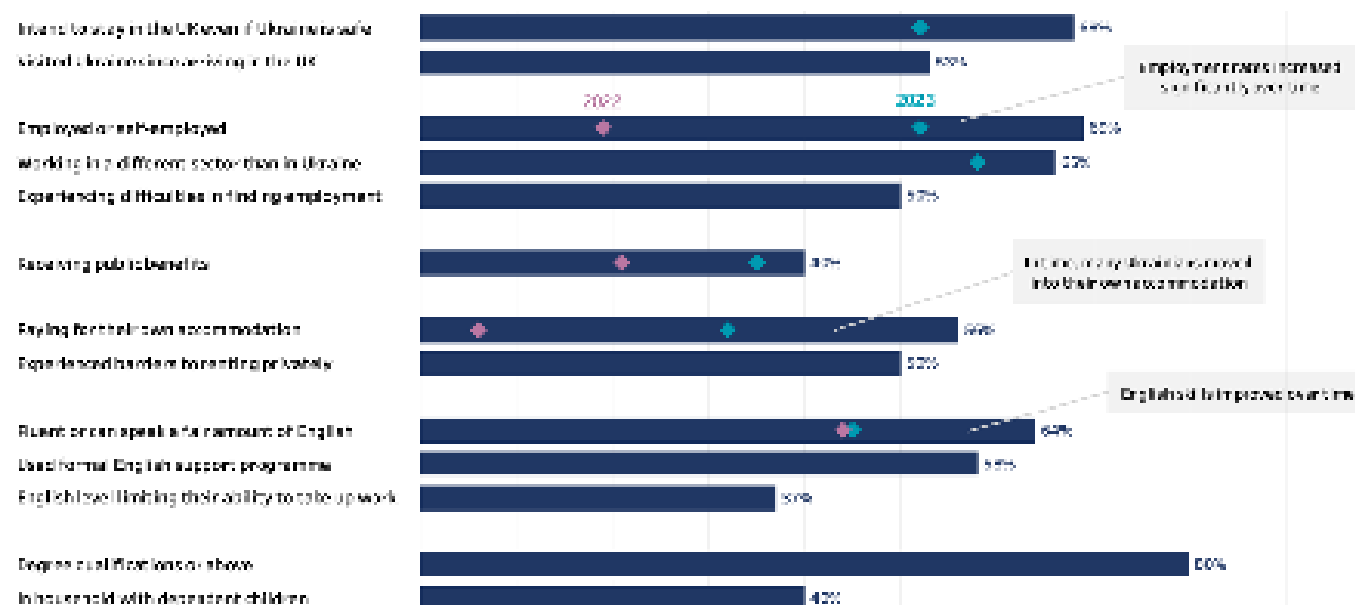


Most Ukrainians now plan to stay in the UK long term

In an April 2024 survey from the Office of National Statistics, 68% of respondents said they intended to continue living in the UK even if they felt that it was safe to return to Ukraine. This was notably higher than the year before (52%; see Figure 6). Better employment opportunities (60%), having a job in the country (52%), and staying with their family (44%) were among Ukrainians’ top reasons for wanting to remain in the UK.

Figure 6

Survey responses among Ukraine Scheme visa holders living in the UK
By year, results for 2024, 2023, and 2022



Source: Migration Observations analysis of the holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Scheme, December Survey, 2022 to 2024, Office for National Statistics. Note: Questions asked between different waves of the survey, including questions on the barriers when comparing figures across survey years.



The surveys reveal other important trends (Figure 6). First, 69% of Ukrainian adults either had a job or were self-employed in April 2024 – just below the employment rate of the UK-born population (78%). The employment rate of Ukrainians has increased considerably over time, from 19% in June 2022.

Second, many Ukrainians gradually moved into their own homes. Around 56% were paying for their accommodation in April 2024, compared to 6% in June 2022. However, half of the respondents experienced barriers to renting privately. Among them, many lacked references or a guarantor (49%) or could not afford to rent a home with their income (42%).

Some Ukrainian households faced the risk of homelessness after arriving in the UK. By 31 March 2024, around 9,500 had been identified as either homeless or facing a significant risk of becoming homeless. Two-thirds of them had overcome the situation after local authorities intervened ([data](#) are for England only, see Understanding the Evidence).

Third, the English skills of Ukrainian adults have improved over time, although they remain a barrier. In the survey, 64% of respondents said that they were fluent or able to speak a fair amount of English, up from 44% in June 2022. A majority (58%) of Ukrainian adults had accessed formal English support programmes. However, for 37% of Ukrainian adults, English was still limiting their ability to work.

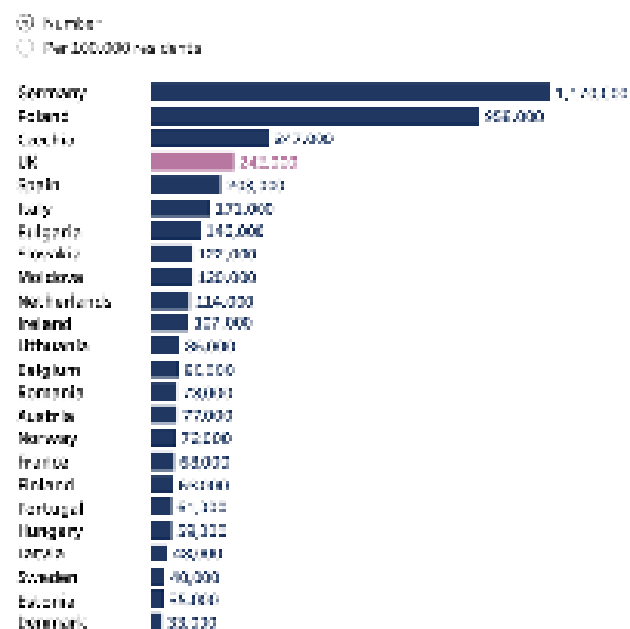
Of the 6 million Ukrainian refugees recorded in European countries as of 13 June 2024, around 4% had gone to the UK

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led to a large-scale displacement of people. The UN estimated that roughly 6 million Ukrainian refugees had arrived in European countries as of 13 June 2024. Another 558,000 were recorded outside of Europe.

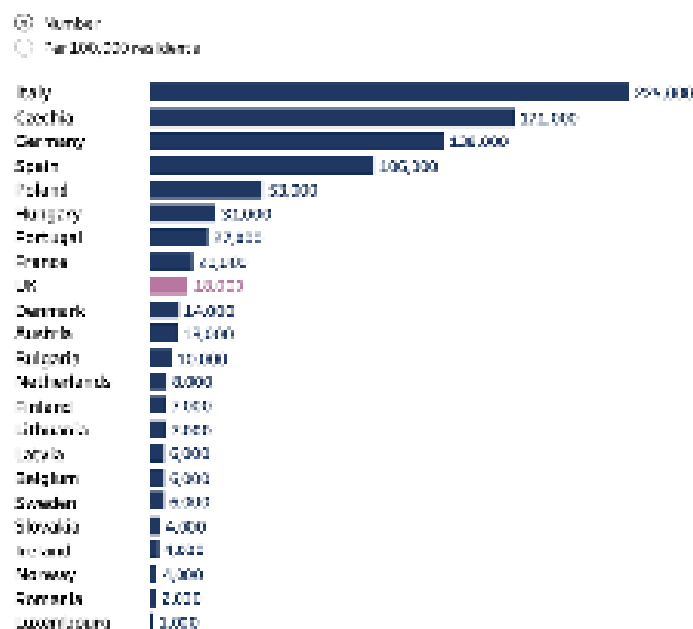
Around 4% of Ukrainian refugees in Europe – 242,000 people – had arrived in the UK. Leaving aside Russia – [the UN](#) estimated that over 1.2 million Ukrainian refugees had arrived there – the most Ukrainian refugees were recorded in Germany (1.2 million), Poland (958,000), and Czechia (347,000). The UK came in fourth in terms of total arrivals, although many countries in Central and Eastern Europe saw larger inflows of Ukrainian refugees relative to their population (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Number of Ukrainian refugees as of 13 June 2024 (for latest available data)



Number of Ukrainian citizens as of 1 January 2022



Sources: UNHCR Data Portal, [Ukraine Refugee Situation Dashboard](#), Population on 1 January 2022 by age group, sex, and citizenship, [Table in profile](#), Office for National Statistics, [Population by country of birth in Great Britain, year ending June 2022](#) (for the UK numbers), [Table in Canvas 2021](#). Notes: Population data are not available for several countries, including Moldova. Population numbers were calculated using total population data for January 2022, except for the UK and Poland (2021).



For refugees, the presence of family and friends shapes their choice of destination. Many people left Ukraine for places where they already knew people who could support them. Several EU countries had large Ukrainian diasporas before the war and thus became primary destinations for refugees. At the start of 2022, there were more than 100,000 Ukrainian citizens living in Italy, Czechia, Germany, and Spain (Figure 7).

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The Migration Observatory

Based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, the Migration Observatory provides independent, authoritative, evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK, to inform media, public and policy debates, and to generate high quality research on international migration and public policy issues. The Observatory's analysis involves experts from a wide range of disciplines and departments at the University of Oxford.



COMPAS

The Migration Observatory is based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. The mission of COMPAS is to conduct high quality research in order to develop theory and knowledge, inform policy-making and public debate, and engage users of research within the field of migration.

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