UNHCR's Protection Response

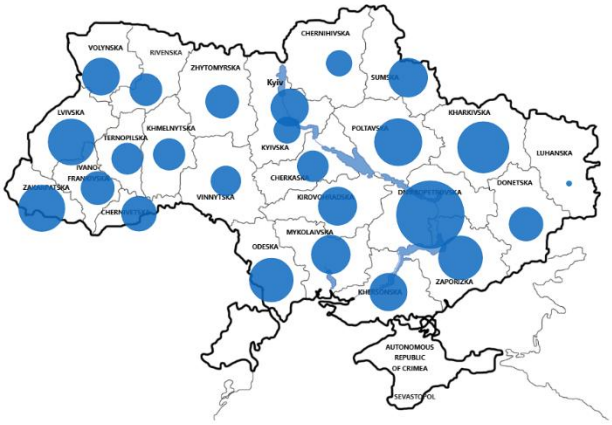
- The protection response by UNHCR and our partners provides tailored support to those most in need, aims to strengthen inclusive national systems and services, and encourages the participation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in decisions that affect them.
- Our protection response complements, reinforces and strengthens the capacity of national protection services to serve the growing population in need, in line with the Memoranda of Understanding with relevant Ministries and Oblast authorities.
- In implementing our protection response, we work directly with communities, including our network of supported community-based organizations and IDP Councils, and predominantly local NGO partners. In 2026, 13 out of 14 UNHCR funded partners are Ukrainian NGOs.



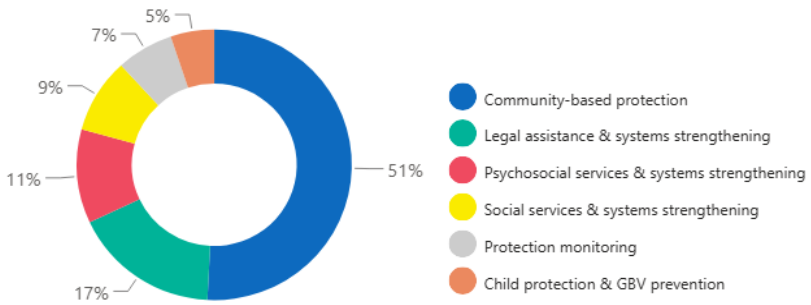
From legal, social and psycho-social support, to community-based protection and the strengthening of the national protection system. Watch here what UNHCR's protection work in Ukraine is about: Protection is about people.

- In the first half of 2026, **UNHCR's protection response reached 281,666 people**. Of those, 68 per cent are females, 31 per cent are older people above the age of 60 years, while 21 per cent are children. Over 27,200 people supported are living with a disability.
- Community-based protection was central to the protection response in the first half of the year, while **37 per cent centred on service provision**, including legal, social and psycho-social services.
- UNHCR and partners promoted legal and policy developments through **54 advocacy and judicial interventions** aimed at improving access to rights and services for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

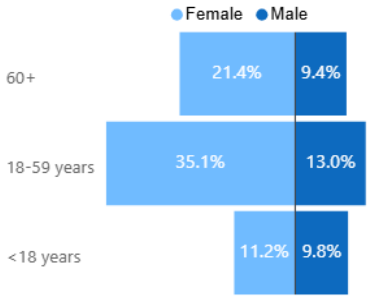
Number of people reached by oblast



Protection response overview



Protection response: age and sex breakdown



*Figures may change subject to validation.

Supporting a national system that protects

UNHCR's goal is to support and strengthen the national system protecting internally displaced and other war-affected people, returnees, asylum seekers, refugees as well as stateless people. To attain this goal, we work closely with Government counterparts at central and local levels and strengthen the role of communities who have stepped up since the onset of the war as first-line responders. Our work in support of a national system that protects contributes to the localization and greater sustainability of our protection response.

In 2026, the **main Government counterparts** of UNHCR's protection programme are the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity, its regional Departments of Social Protection and Centres for Social Service Provision, and the Pension Fund, the Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories, the Ministry of Justice and its Free Legal Aid Centres and Civil Registries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its consular services, the State Migration Service and the State Border Guard Service of the Ministry of Interior as well as the National MHPSS Coordination Centre established under the auspices of the First Lady. In addition, UNHCR works in concert with the Office of Ombudsman of the Verkhovna Rada on common strategic priorities.

2026 Advocacy & Response Highlights – Q2

Building a state system addressing and resolving internal displacement

On 10 June 2026, in a milestone decision, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the new five-year State Strategy on Internal Displacement (2026 to 2030) and the associated Operational Action Plan. The new strategy reinforces Government leadership, direction and coherence to the state policy on internal displacement. It addresses internal displacement systematically from evacuation to durable solutions and emphasizes national responsibility by adopting a whole-of-government approach to managing Ukraine's large-scale internal displacement situation. Overall, the strategy reflects the government's commitment to transition to a systematic policy on internal displacement and a comprehensive approach to supporting IDPs across Ukraine. In an important step toward strengthening and enabling implementation of the strategy, Law No. 12301, adopted on 1 July 2026, provides the framework for an updated legal and normative framework needed to operationalize its objectives. Read UNHCR's Policy Brief on the new State Strategy on Internal Displacement.

Our work at the Domanove border crossing

The Domanove corridor in Volyn oblast remains a critical humanitarian corridor through which Ukrainians from the temporarily occupied territories reach government-controlled areas of Ukraine. In the first half of 2026, just over 6,000 Ukrainians arrived through this corridor. This is an increase in arrivals of 57 per cent compared to the first half of 2025. At the border crossing, UNHCR together with its partner 'Right to Protection' is present to receive those arriving and provide counselling, legal and social support as well as cash assistance for the most vulnerable.





Leaving behind a lifelong home

Olena and Mykola*, both in their early 70s, arrived in Domanove after an arduous three-day journey from the temporarily occupied city of Berdiansk. The older couple had to leave their lifelong home, their community and many of their belongings behind. "It was our home for 40 years. And now we may not be able to ever go back home again", the couple said under tears. "We have not just lost a house; we lost our home. But we could not stay any longer. The pressure was too much. We were not safe." – The couple has since reunited with their daughter and grandchildren in central Ukraine, where they are rebuilding their lives and a new home.

Exploring mediation approaches to enhance social cohesion

From 8 to 13 June 2026, UNHCR participated as a partner in the 10th Forum on Mediation & Law, convened by the Ukraine Mediation Academy. The forum brought together more than 1,000 stakeholders from diverse professional fields to exchange on the use of formal and informal mediation in different settings and across various disciplines. UNHCR shared its experience in exploring mediation approaches through its community-based protection programme and mental health support. These efforts aim to strengthen social cohesion in communities, an important factor in supporting durable solutions for IDPs and returnees.

Legal aid supported thousands of IDPs, returnees and other war-affected people

UNHCR's legal aid programme in Ukraine centres on areas of law most relevant to the protection of rights of forcibly displaced people and spans primary and secondary legal aid. In the first half of 2026, UNHCR and partners provided 65,000 legal consultations to 43,600 people. Of those, 33,700 were internally displaced. IDPs continue to have a high reliance on legal aid to be able to access state services and restore their rights. This includes access to the social protection system, restoration of housing, land and property rights or identity and civil documentation. In the first half of the year, secondary legal assistance was provided to some 2,500 people. Need for secondary legal assistance has grown since the onset of the war due to the increasingly complex legal system and concerns of people.

Seen. Heard. Protected.

Protecting refugees & preventing and reducing statelessness amid war

Ukraine continues to offer protection to asylum-seekers and refugees seeking safety and maintains its efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness in Ukraine amid war – a strong testament of Ukraine's commitment to international law as we commemorate 75 years of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 65 years of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

To commemorate these conventions – and the protection they have brought to millions of people globally – UNHCR and its partners, R2P, TTA, Neeka and Rokada, launched the photo exhibition "Seen. Heard. Protected. Stories of Refugees and Stateless People Rebuilding Their Lives in Ukraine". The exhibition was launched on 17 June on the occasion of World Refugee Day with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Migration Service and the Office of the Ombudsman together with the diplomatic community, government counterparts, and importantly, refugees and stateless people in Ukraine. On the same day, UNHCR together with its partner Rokada and the Kyiv City Administration inaugurated the Kyiv Integration Hub – the largest such one-stop shop in Ukraine offering support and services to internally displaced people, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people and the local community.



"I love Ukrainians, thanks to whom I have never felt like a stranger and have always received support. Ukraine is my country. It accepted me, protected me, and gave me the opportunity to live, work, and love." – Tarek Hassun, originally from Syria received a protection status in Ukraine and lives in Odesa. He works in the Supply Unit at the Community House run by the Tenth of April.

Before coming to Ukraine, Tarek was living and working as a dentist in Syria. He first arrived in Ukraine in 2006 for a short visit and returned in 2010 with a visa. After war broke out in Syria, he was unable to return home due to the insecurity and as his house and neighbourhood were fully destroyed. He remained in Ukraine and, with UNHCR and partners' legal support, was eventually granted a protection status in 2023 to rebuild his life in Ukraine.

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UNHCR and partners' support to asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless people and those at risk of statelessness, while a small programme, is a lifeline for many as they are often not able to access other support or services due to their precarious legal situation.

- During the first half of 2026, UNHCR and its partners supported some 600 refugees and asylum-seekers from more than 40 countries of origin. Legal assistance remains a cornerstone of this support, enabling individuals to register and pursue their asylum claims, while also facilitating access to personal documentation, residency permits, and naturalization for recognized refugees. More than 480 people received legal assistance, including nearly 160 who were represented in court. Beyond legal support, UNHCR's programme provides social accompaniment to help refugees and asylum-seekers access essential services such as education and healthcare, as well as psychosocial support, material assistance for the most vulnerable, and measures to promote long-term integration.
- UNHCR and its partners also supported nearly 1,800 stateless people, persons with undetermined nationality and people at risk of statelessness across 15 of Ukraine's regions. As a result, 81 people were able to apply to the statelessness determination procedure, 58 people were recognized as stateless enabling access to related documentation, 246 children obtained a birth certificate preventing future statelessness risks, and 185 individuals had their nationality confirmed and were able to obtain identity documents.

A stateless person is someone who does not have a nationality of any State. Some people are born stateless, but others become stateless later in life. Statelessness can lead to a devastating cycle of deprivation, vulnerability, and exposure to risk, abuse and exploitation. A person without nationality is often denied other basic rights such as medical help, going to school, or moving freely. **For many, it is a life in invisibility.**

The war, mass displacement and the temporary occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory are resulting in a growing risk of statelessness. Together with key strategic partners in Government, Parliament and civil society, UNHCR is advocating for and taking preventative action. The adoption of Resolution No. 736 in June 2026 establishing a pilot mechanism for issuing travel documents to individuals born in temporarily occupied territories so they can travel to government-controlled areas of Ukraine, represents a relevant step toward achieving this objective.

UNHCR Ukraine
The UN Refugee Agency

Protection monitoring & return forecasting

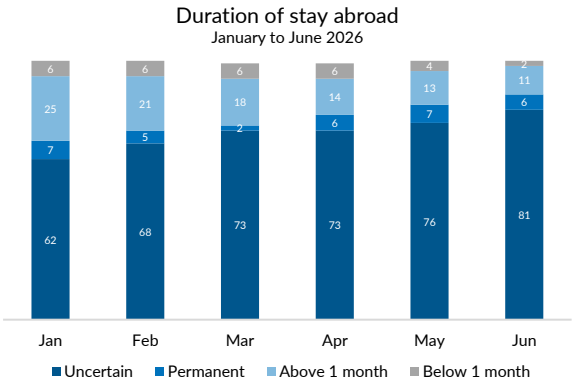
UNHCR and its partners' protection and solutions monitoring has the following components:

- **Monitoring of the protection situation** of IDPs, returnees and other war-affected people in Ukraine, through the bi-annual protection survey implemented in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman of Ukraine and as part of the Protection Cluster. In addition, UNHCR and partners undertake legal monitoring to inform the provision of legal assistance and advocacy efforts.
- **Border monitoring** at 30 international border crossing points between Ukraine and Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. If needed, border monitors provide support to people directly at the borders. UNHCR has also regular monitoring presence in Domanove for arrivals from the temporarily occupied territories. Reports are available here.
- **Monitoring of intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine, refugee returnees and IDPs** to inform people-centered planning, provision of information through the *Ukraine is Home* platform, and support to returnees as they a pursue a durable solution. Access the latest survey results here with curated micro-data also available.
- **Forecasting returns of displaced people** inform strategic and operational planning for future return scenarios. The return forecasting focused on Ukrainian refugees (see policy brief 2) will be complemented by an agent-based model for returns of IDPs.

The monitoring outcomes inform UNHCR's planning and programme and help identify those most in need. The outcomes are also shared through relevant coordination platforms to inform the wider humanitarian and recovery response.

In the first half of 2026, 12.6 million border crossings were recorded by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. Levels of in- and outbound movements were similar, with only 140,000 more outbound movements recorded. An upward trend in cross-border movements set in in the second quarter of 2026. This aligns with the trends observed in 2024 and 2025.

UNHCR's border monitoring partners, who interviewed nearly 12,700 people at 30 border crossing points during the reporting period, revealed growing uncertainty among Ukrainians leaving the country. The proportion of respondents reporting that they were departing for an undetermined period increased by almost 20 per cent in the first half of 2026. Safety concerns remained the primary driver of departure, cited by 97 per cent of respondents.



At the same time, a majority still intends to eventually return to Ukraine, aligned with the findings of UNHCR's most recent intention survey carried out among Ukrainian refugees in Europe, which suggest that 49 per cent of refugees hope or plan to return to Ukraine. In the event of the war ending and Ukrainian territorial integrity is restored, this percentage rises to 65 per cent.

Considering these intentions, UNHCR and partners are strengthening preparedness for the voluntary return of Ukrainian refugees from Europe, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine. These efforts focus on ensuring that refugees can access tailored information and counselling to support informed decisions about return. They include the establishment of a return counselling network in several European countries – including Germany, Poland, Sweden, Slovakia, Czechia and Romania – which complements the existing digital counselling offer with in-person support.

DONORS

UNHCR is grateful for the essential support provided by our top government donors and for the generous contributions from individuals and the private sector, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with softly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit Ukraine's **Operational Data Portal** for more information products here.
- Visit **UNHCR Ukraine's Website** here.

Contact **UNHCR's Hotline 0-800-307-711** for feedback and advice on assistance and services.

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