

Ukrainian Refugees in Switzerland

A research synthesis of what we know

Didier Ruedin

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The objective of this research synthesis is to collect and summarize the research literature on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. This is done through a systematic review, mostly in the form of a narrative review and with statistical indicators that are synthesized. Graphical summaries and an evidence gap map are provided to better identify the nature of evidence available and highlight areas where comparatively little is known about Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. There is a wide range of evidence on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland and their integration, although substantive and systematic gaps remain. The review provides a brief historical background, looks at the demographic composition of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, discusses economic integration, housing, education, social integration, crime and safety, health and well-being, and attitudes to Ukrainian refugees. Where feasible, changes over time are discussed. The demographic profile of Ukrainian refugees (many women, many children and elderly people, highly educated) is well documented, as are challenges to economic integration due to an insecure status and limited knowledge of local languages. Much less is known about cultural integration and political participation, for example. Given the size of the population and the ongoing war in Ukraine, more research on Ukrainian refugees is warranted, particularly in the direction of successful integration in a context where return in the near future seems increasingly unlikely, despite so-called dual-intent remaining the official focus. More research is also warranted in areas beyond economic integration that affect well-being and intentions to return.

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Summary – Zusammenfassung – Résumé

Highlights

- There are over 73,000 Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland.
- Many Ukrainian refugees are women.
- Many Ukrainian refugees had to leave behind a partner and family members.
- Around 70 percent of Ukrainian refugees have university degrees.
- German and French skills of Ukrainian refugees are improving over time.
- Over 1 in 3 Ukrainian refugees of working age are in work. This share is higher than for other refugees, but much smaller than for the Swiss population. The number is substantially higher for those with more than 2 years residence in Switzerland.
- Until early 2026, women were less likely to be in paid work than men.
- Employers do not hire Ukrainian refugees because the duration of stay is uncertain.
- Language barriers hinder more rapid economic and social integration.
- Host families played an important role in housing Ukrainian refugees.
- Access to primary education works well.
- Beyond primary education, language barriers are substantial.
- Most Ukrainian refugees feel welcomed in Switzerland.
- Intentions to return are declining over time.
- Intentions to return depend security, economic development, and social ties.
- Most rate their health and well-being well, but there are signs of trauma commonly found among refugee populations.
- There are some indications of deteriorating mental health over time.
- Attitudes to and media coverage about Ukrainian refugees tend to be positive: Ukrainian refugees experience solidarity.
- Attitudes to Ukrainian refugees was more positive in 2022 than in 2026.
- Attitudes to Ukrainian refugees tend to be more positive than attitudes to other refugees.

Wichtigste Erkenntnisse

- In der Schweiz leben über 73'000 ukrainische Geflüchtete
- Viele ukrainische Geflüchtete sind Frauen.
- Viele ukrainische Geflüchtete mussten ihren Partner und Familienangehörige zurücklassen.
- Rund 70 Prozent der ukrainischen Geflüchteten verfügen über einen Hochschulabschluss.
- Die Deutsch- und Französischkenntnisse der ukrainischen Geflüchteten verbessern sich mit der Zeit.
- Mehr als ein Drittel der ukrainischen Geflüchteten im erwerbsfähigen Alter ist berufstätig. Dieser Anteil ist höher als bei anderen Geflüchteten, aber deutlich geringer als bei der Schweizer Bevölkerung. Bei denjenigen, die seit mehr als zwei Jahren in der Schweiz leben, ist die Zahl deutlich höher.
- Bis Anfang 2026 gingen Frauen seltener einer bezahlten Arbeit nach als Männer.
- Arbeitgeber stellen keine ukrainischen Flüchtlinge ein, da die Aufenthaltsdauer ungewiss ist.
- Sprachbarrieren behindern eine schnellere wirtschaftliche und soziale Integration.
- Gastfamilien spielten eine wichtige Rolle bei der Unterbringung ukrainischen Geflüchteten
- Der Zugang zur Grundschulbildung funktioniert gut.
- Über die Grundschulbildung hinaus sind die Sprachbarrieren erheblich.
- Die meisten ukrainischen Geflüchteten fühlen sich in der Schweiz willkommen.
- Die Rückkehrabsichten nehmen mit der Zeit ab.
- Die Rückkehrabsichten hängen von der Sicherheitslage, der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung und sozialen Bindungen ab.
- Die meisten bewerten ihre Gesundheit und ihr Wohlbefinden als gut, doch es gibt Anzeichen für Traumata, wie sie bei Geflüchtetengruppen häufig anzutreffen sind.
- Es gibt einige Anzeichen dafür, dass sich die psychische Gesundheit im Laufe der Zeit verschlechtert.
- Die Einstellung gegenüber ukrainischen Geflüchteten und die Berichterstattung in den Medien sind tendenziell positiv: Ukrainische Geflüchtete erfahren Solidarität.
- Die Einstellung gegenüber ukrainischen Geflüchteten war 2022 positiver als im Jahr 2026.
- Die Einstellung gegenüber ukrainischen Geflüchteten ist tendenziell positiver als die Einstellung gegenüber anderen Geflüchteten.

Points clés

- La Suisse compte plus de 73'000 réfugiés ukrainiens.
- De nombreux réfugiés ukrainiens sont des femmes.
- De nombreux réfugiés ukrainiens ont dû laisser derrière eux leur partenaire et des membres de leur famille.
- Environ 70 % des réfugiés ukrainiens sont titulaires d'un diplôme universitaire.
- Les compétences en allemand et en français des réfugiés ukrainiens s'améliorent au fil du temps.
- Plus d'un sur trois des réfugiés ukrainiens en âge de travailler occupe un emploi. Ce pourcentage est supérieur à celui des autres réfugiés, mais nettement inférieur à celui de la population suisse. Ce chiffre est nettement plus élevé chez les personnes résidant en Suisse depuis plus de deux ans.
- Jusqu'au début de l'année 2026, les femmes étaient moins susceptibles d'exercer un emploi rémunéré que les hommes.
- Les employeurs n'embauchent pas de réfugiés ukrainiens car la durée de leur séjour est incertaine.
- Les barrières linguistiques entravent une intégration économique et sociale plus rapide.
- Les familles d'accueil ont joué un rôle important dans l'hébergement des réfugiés ukrainiens.
- L'accès à l'enseignement primaire fonctionne bien.
- Au-delà de l'enseignement primaire, les barrières linguistiques sont importantes.
- La plupart des réfugiés ukrainiens se sentent bien accueillis en Suisse.
- Les intentions de retour diminuent avec le temps.
- Les intentions de retour dépendent de la sécurité, du développement économique et des liens sociaux.
- La plupart évaluent leur santé et leur bien-être comme bons, mais on observe des signes de traumatisme fréquemment rencontrés chez les populations de réfugiés.
- Certains indices laissent entrevoir une détérioration de la santé mentale au fil du temps.
- Les attitudes à l'égard des réfugiés ukrainiens et la couverture médiatique à leur sujet ont tendance à être positives : les réfugiés ukrainiens bénéficient d'un élan de solidarité.
- Les attitudes à l'égard des réfugiés ukrainiens étaient plus positives en 2022 qu'en 2026.
- Les attitudes à l'égard des réfugiés ukrainiens ont tendance à être plus positives que celles à l'égard d'autres réfugiés.

i Updates and Recommended Citation

If you cite this document (do not forget to cite the underlying studies), please refer to: Ruedin, Didier. 2026. 'Ukrainian Refugees in Switzerland: A research synthesis of what we know'. SocArXiv. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/tcnhx>.

It is my intention to continue updating this document as new research is published. The first version I uploaded on OSF on 12 January 2024 had 42 pages. Updates of this document can be found at SocArXiv: <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/tcnhx>. More frequent updates can be found at <https://druedin.com/0/ukraine.pdf>. If anything is missing, outdated, or if you spot an error, please contact me at: didier.ruedin@unine.ch. Note: Where previously available, weekly data provided by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) stopped at the end of 2025.

Introduction

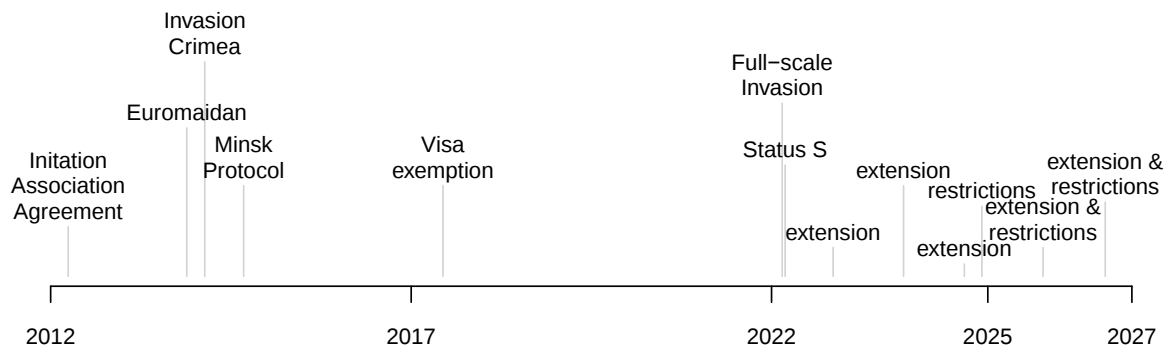
With Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, much attention was placed on Ukrainian refugees. Apart from media reports, there is also scientific research on Ukrainians in Switzerland, but these studies are scattered across disciplines and institutes. This document collates and synthesizes research on Ukrainians in Switzerland. Research from other countries is included only to the extent that this can be useful to understand the situation in Switzerland. While Status S grants Ukrainian refugees temporary protection, the duration of the war remains unclear and the focus is on 'making the most' of the situation: learning the language, finding work, becoming part of society — without necessarily losing sight of an eventual return (P. A. Fischer 2024; Hett 2025).

Background

When the USSR was dissolved in 1991, Ukraine became an independent nation. The transition to a market economy brought about economic decline and hyperinflation between 1991 and 1999. A class of rich and powerful oligarchs could establish themselves, and the country suffered a sharp recession as a result of the global financial crisis in 2008 (for an extensive list of relevant background literature, see Koller 2022; for a summary of the historical background, see Werdt 2026).

Balancing the orientation of Ukraine towards Russia on the one hand and the West on the other hand has long dominated Ukrainian politics. The decision to reject an association agreement with the European Union and strengthen ties with Russia has led to mass protests in 2013 — widely known as the Euromaidan movement (Figure 1). Subsequently, Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014, under the pretext of protecting ethnic Russians in the region (Ahmed 2025).¹ A violent conflict between pro-Russian separatist movements

¹Bendix (2022) draws a parallel to the 2008 invasion in Georgia as an important predecessor. The invasion of the Crimea led to around 2 million internally displaced people in Ukraine (Mikheieva, Sereda, and Kuzemska 2023; Thiollet et al. 2025; A. Blum and Malynovska 2023). See Tarkhanova (2023) on how internally dis-



and the Ukrainian government emerged, leading to a ceasefire and full Ukrainian government control of the state border under the Minsk Protocol of 2014. Nevertheless, violations and sporadic fighting continued, sometimes referred to as a proxy war. As a result, many Ukrainians fled the country, leading to a growing Ukrainian diaspora (Albrecht and Panchenko 2022; Elinder, Erixson, and Hammar 2022a; Robert-Boeuf 2023).²

On 24 February 2022, a full-scale invasion by Russia ensued, leading to many more families and individuals fleeing the conflict, the violence, and instability — seeking safety in Western Ukraine or countries abroad (Figure 2).³ As of early 2026, Russia controls around one fifth of the Ukrainian territory and attacks targets elsewhere in the country (P. A. Fis-

placed Ukrainians often struggle to understand the benefit of being documented as internally displaced and how doing so can emphasize their vulnerabilities. Contrary to many other contexts of internal displacement, the situation in Ukraine was marked by individual efforts and a lack of concentration (e.g. no refugee camps). Most of the internally displaced fled to the larger cities. Kokhan (2026) finds that the elder generation are much less likely to flee their residence unless there is direct and immediate danger. Especially women draw on their social connections to keep community structures going.

²By the end of 2024, the number of Ukrainian refugees worldwide was estimated to be around 6.9 million (UNHCR 2025a). Of these, 6.3 million were staying in a European country, predominantly in Western Europe (Kohlenberger et al. 2023). Using semistructured interviews, Amit et al. (2024) found that for the refugees the timing of the full-scale invasion came as a surprise, and they left unprepared. The choice of destination country was determined after the refugees left their homes and influenced by many factors, including the decisions of other family members, friends, acquaintances, or perceptions of cultural similarity. Using an online experiment with Ukrainian refugees across Europe, Adema, Chargazii, Giesing, and Poutvaara (2025) demonstrate that Ukrainian refugees are guided by job prospects rather than welfare provisions. Ukrainian refugees are more attracted by destination countries where wages are higher, for which they consider language skills. The model included distance to Ukraine (which played little role), having family and friends in the country (important factor), easy to find a job according to qualifications (strongest factor), wage (strong factor), social assistance (weak factor), child benefits (weak factor), average rent (weak factor). Considerations of safety or cultural similarity were not considered in the experiment (Adema, Chargazii, Giesing, and Poutvaara 2025). Drawing on a representative survey of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Zürich, Yassenok et al. (2024) report that 89.9% experienced displacement, 15% had their own residence damaged in the war, and 11.9% have relatives who were mobilized or conscripted. While those with injuries or trauma from hostilities (0.8%) and victims of gender-based violence (0.8%) were much less common, 10.4% reported the death of one or more relatives, and 77.1% suffer from separation from family members (see also Yassenok et al. 2025).

³ A simulation study came to the conclusion that earlier (when troops were amassed along the border) and credible sanctions against Russia may have prevented the full-scale invasion (Mayer, Méjean, and Thoenig 2026).

cher 2024).⁴ The extent of this refugee flow was at a different scale from previous movements (Albrecht and Panchenko 2022; Guichard, Machado, and Maystadt 2022; Mikheieva, Sereda, and Kuzemska 2023), hence references to a ‘refugee shock’ are sometimes used in the receiving countries.⁵ Most Ukrainian refugees left their country within five weeks of the full-scale invasion (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023). The immediate trigger for fleeing was often a direct experience with military attacks or deprivation of necessities such as food or electricity (Gradus 2024), although the flow of refugees has not stopped since. Given visa-free travel in the Schengen area and corresponding practice of other countries, Ukrainian refugees were free to choose their host country (within their means) (Welfens 2022), although the nature of fleeing an armed conflict often means that there’s an element of hazard where refugees end up, depending on the choices of acquaintances and happenstance (Lazarenko 2024). It is estimated that Ukraine lost between 5% and 8% of its GDP because of the refugees who have left the country (Mykhailyshyna et al. 2025). Among the refugees there are many academics and intellectuals (Shkoda and Ovchynnikova 2025).

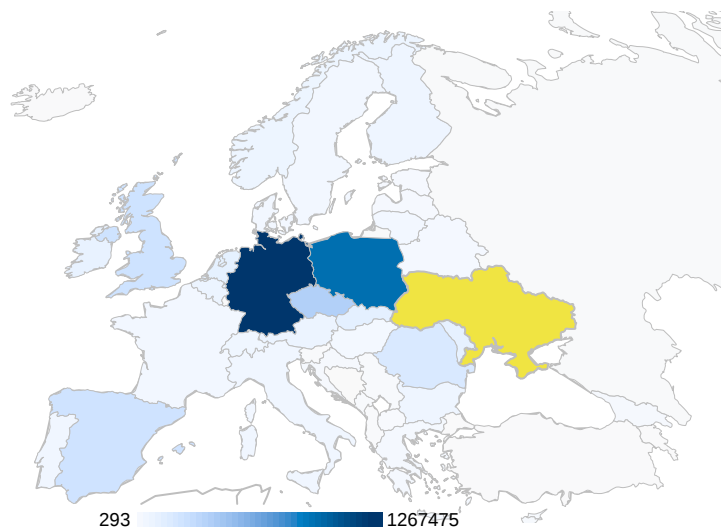


Figure 2: Map of Europe with Ukraine highlighted in yellow, and the number of Ukrainian refugees in each country. The number of Ukrainian refugees was taken from the UNHCR (<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>) and Eurostat (2026) (where available), as of February 2026, country populations as of 2003, taken from Our World in Data (United Nations, World Population Prospects). No separate data for Kosovo are available from UNHCR. See Figure 28 for a figure that considers the size of the population of each country. Mollweide equal area projection.

⁴ A study carried out among Russian prisoners of war found that many Russian soldiers have dehumanizing views of Ukrainian, considering them ‘less evolved’ than Russians and as ‘less than full humans’. The authors of the study suggest that this is a consequence of propaganda (Frich 2026).

⁵ In addition to the refugees who fled Ukraine, there are millions of Ukrainians who have fled within the country (Mikheieva, Sereda, and Kuzemska 2023) and refugees who headed to Russia who are very difficult to enumerate. The extent of internal displacement is less well known than refugees who fled to other European countries because most movement was organized individually (Mikheieva, Sereda, and Kuzemska 2023). For ‘refugee shocks’ and their impact on host countries, see the review in Salathé, Malancu, and Ruedin (2025).

As is common, the largest share of refugees were either internally displaced⁶ or moved to one of the neighbouring countries (Jäggi 2022; Elinder, Erixson, and Hammar 2022b; Tarkhanova 2023) — especially Poland.⁷ With the possibility to seek protection in any European country, many moved onwards from Poland to neighbouring countries, such as Germany or the Czech Republic. By 2025, Germany hosts the largest number of Ukrainian refugees (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). More distant countries such as Switzerland attracted fewer Ukrainian refugees (Thränhardt 2023b). Most Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland originated in the Eastern and South-Eastern regions (*óblast*) most affected by the war (Figure 2), as well as the populous Kyiv (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; Adema, Guha, and Adema 2022) (Figure 3).⁸

In Figure 3 we can see the regions of origin of Ukrainian refugees as identified by a European-wide survey (Gradus 2024). Several Ukrainian regions (*óblast*) have been combined by Gradus (2024) to reflect the sample size, but we can see that most Ukrainian refugees come from the most heavily affected East of Ukraine, followed by the South, the city of Kyiv, the North, West, and Centre. This is the perspective that tells us where most Ukrainian refugees come from. If we consider the population of these regions (as of January 2022), we can see that the highest share in relation to the population comes from the city of Kyiv, followed by the East, South, and North, all of which are over-proportionally represented among the regions of origin (Figure 29 in the appendix). In contrast, Ukrainians from the Centre and West were less likely to leave the country. This is the perspective that shows in which regions Ukrainians were most likely to flee. We have to bear in mind, though, that many Ukrainian refugees had already fled after the invasion of the Crimea and maybe fleeing for the second and third time (Tarkhanova 2023). This also implies that questions of region of origin are necessarily vague, as Ukrainian refugees may have been internally displaced for several years before leaving the country.

⁶Some Ukrainian refugees have been displaced multiple times because of the war, including displacement in 2014 (Tarkhanova and Pyrogo 2024).

⁷Poland was the country with the highest number of Ukrainian refugees until the end of 2022 (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). Poland not only saw an increase in immigration from Ukraine, but also a great decline in return to Ukraine from migrants previously characterized by circular or seasonal migration (Górny and Zwan 2024). Indeed, for many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Ukrainian refugees were the first time the countries experienced large inflows of refugees (Isański et al. 2023). For Poland, however, there was an important Ukrainian population before the war (A. Blum and Malynovska 2023), and Ukrainian refugees settled with preferences near existing Ukrainian migrants (Wiśniewski et al. 2026).

⁸This distribution of regions of origin corresponds to what is reported for Ukrainian refugees in general (UNHCR 2025a; Mykhailishyna et al. 2025; Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). For countries of destination, the sudden arrival of Ukrainian refugees was a test for authorities, which often struggled to coordinate across offices in a timely manner (Zavolokina et al. 2022; Popławska et al. 2026; Mészáros 2026). For Poland, Popławska et al. (2026) reports that the large number of refugees meant that smaller and medium-sized cities were faced with refugees in substantial numbers in the first time and needed to organize themselves accordingly. Zentai et al. (2026) similarly reports that in Hungary there was no system in place to handle the arrival (and transit) of large numbers of refugees and that civil society actors quickly emerged to fill this gap. New (digital) platforms have been proposed so that in future situations, authorities can react more quickly and in a concerted manner (Zavolokina et al. 2022) and avoid making decisions too fast because key actors are not consulted (Katashinskaya, Miscione, and Zavolokina 2025; Katashinskaya et al. 2026). There are privacy considerations for such applications and refugees are vulnerable to (feeling) pressurized into divulging private information in exchange of support (Tang et al. 2025).

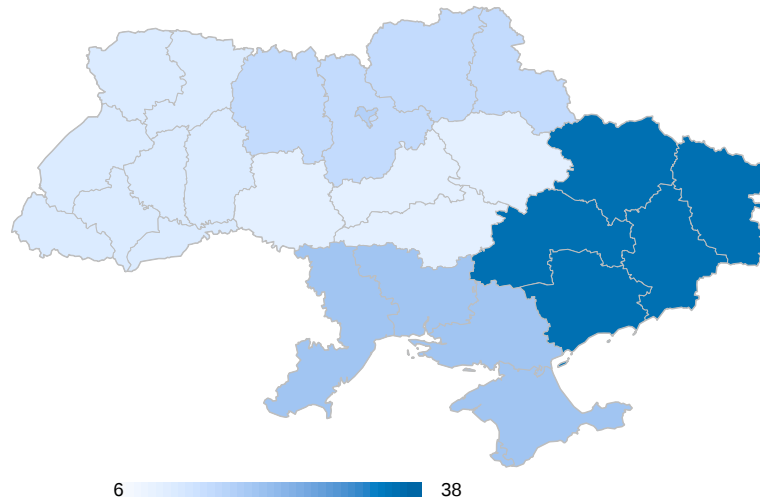


Figure 3: Map of Ukraine showing the origin of Ukrainian refugees, based on Gradus (2024). Data collected in 2023, self-selected sample. The percentage of the sample is given; administrative regions have been combined.

Demographics

How many Ukrainians are there?

Summary

There are over 73,000 Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland.

*Distribution of evidence:*⁹

abroad	CH
	Ukrainian
	other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Of these refugees, more than 73 thousand now live in Switzerland (73,448 individuals with Status S, as of 31 July 2026, Asylstatistik SEM).¹⁰ This corresponds to 0.81% of the perma-

⁹Bearing in mind that this review focuses on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, these summaries of the evidence reflect the evidence cited in the sections that follow, not the evidence that exists (which is evidently much larger for Ukrainian refugees in other countries and for refugees in general).

¹⁰The number of demands for Status S and the number of permits issued is notably larger (see Figure 31 and Figure 32 in the appendix) because some Ukrainian refugees moved to another country or returned to Ukraine. As in other countries, the number of Ukrainian refugees was high and peaked in spring 2022, but the total number of refugees continues to grow at a low level (Eurostat 2024). A reason for this is the continuous destruction of property, itself a major reason for fleeing Ukraine (Luczaj and Dziekońska 2025). Using satellite-supported sensing, the damage caused by the war can be assessed in a complementary way to what text-based approaches can do (Sticher et al. 2026). Russian advances in territory are associated with greater damage to property and infrastructure than Ukrainian recaptures (Sticher et al. 2026).

nent population of Switzerland.¹¹ As a share of the population, other countries have received more Ukrainian refugees — notably the Moldova (3.9% of the population are Ukrainian refugees), Czech Republic (3.2% of the population are Ukrainian refugees), Estonia (2.7%), Latvia (2.6%), Poland (2.5%), or Slovakia (2.2%) — while others received a lower share, such as Italy (0.3%), Spain (0.4%) or France (0.1%) (see also Figure 2). The share in Switzerland corresponds to the European average 0.6 (see also Thränhardt 2023a).¹² For the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) notes that Status S is the second-largest refugee population (after recognized refugees with Status B and Status C, before Status F and Status N).

i Ukrainian refugees

This review relies on the classifications in the different studies included. It therefore cannot differentiate between people with Status S, those with Ukrainian nationality, those born in Ukraine, and those who fled Ukraine because of the Russian invasion. In this sense, the P in the PICO framework is not precisely defined (Scientific Research Division 2022), but there is a clear overlap in that the studies try to capture Ukrainian refugees. It is not the purpose of this review to resolve possible differences in definition.

In Figure 4, we can see that the arrival of Ukrainian refugees was very concentrated in spring 2022 (Panel A on the left), but has not ceased since. Weingartner (2024) highlights that proportionally, the share of Ukrainian men among newly arriving refugees has increased after the initial peak. The available data does not allow identifying the reason for this. In Panel B of Figure 4, we can see that the recognition rate for Status S was very high at the beginning, but decreased notably towards the end of 2023. Recognition rates have somewhat increased during 2024, decreased again towards the end of 2024, and increased again in the second half of 2025.¹³

¹¹ permanent population as of 2022

¹² Thränhardt (2023a) reported a concentration of Ukrainian refugees in countries with low social security payouts and high labour market participation, although Kosyakova et al. (2024) find no such association in a comparative analysis. A study drawing on Facebook users who have set the user interface to Ukrainian suggests a more nuanced picture when looking at the distribution of Ukrainian refugees within countries. Overall, there is a concentration in cities with a larger existing Ukrainian diaspora, notably so in Poland and the Czech Republic. In other countries, the association is less pronounced, such as in Spain, where there is some clustering around the capital, or in Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom where greater geographical spread can be observed (González-Leonardo et al. 2024). There is no clustering immediately around the border with Ukraine (González-Leonardo et al. 2024). Of all the refugees who have left Ukraine, around 1 per cent live now in Switzerland (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024).

¹³ Norway has stopped accepting Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 (Thränhardt 2026).

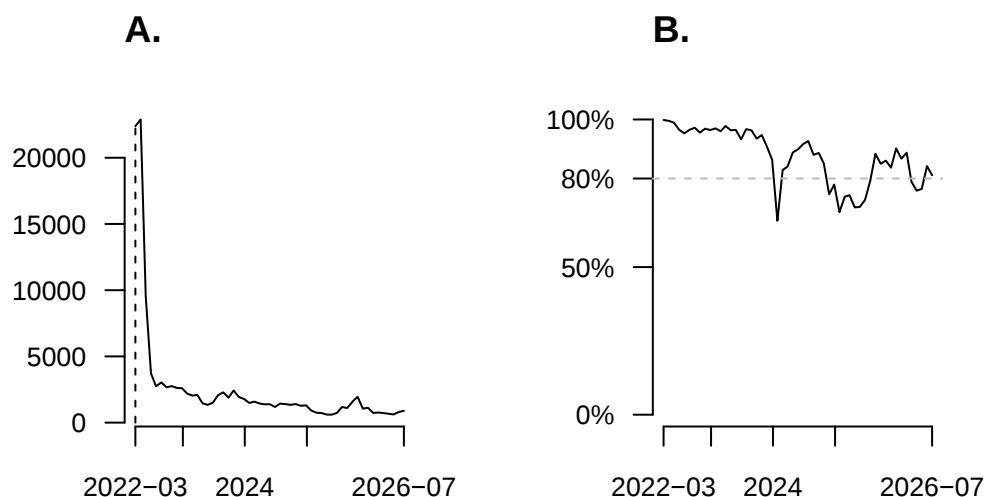


Figure 4: Panel A shows the number of applications in Switzerland for Status S. Source: SEM (2026a). The dashed line is included to show that before the data started, Status S was not available, hence 0 observations. Panel B shows the recognition rate in Switzerland. The dashed line indicates 80%, an arbitrary value to aid interpretation. Source: SEM (2026a). All data are monthly. See Figure 35 and Figure 37 in the appendix for time series projections.

In Figure 5 we can see that the recognition rate tends to be slightly higher for women than for men, but they follow the same patterns over time. For both men and women, there was a marked drop in recognition rates at the beginning of 2024 (Strasser 2024). While recognition rates quickly recovered, they have not reached previous levels, and have since decreased again.

Figure 6 shows that since June 2022, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland has slightly increased, and throughout 2023, it remained largely stable with small fluctuations over time. Since early 2024, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland has grown at a low but steady rate. In the press, there were reports of an uptake of applications from young Ukrainian men after they were given the opportunity to leave Ukraine before the age of 23 in August 2025 (e.g., Ptak 2025; Urbancik 2026). Looking at Figure 6, however, it is difficult to discern such an increase as of early December 2025, given that the number of Ukrainian refugees has steadily increased for more than a year with no apparent acceleration in the growth.

Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there were around 7,000 Ukrainians in Switzerland, around 5% of which were non-permanent residents (Figure 7). In Figure 7, we can see that the share of Ukrainian refugees by far outstrips the number of Ukrainians ordinarily resident in Switzerland (dashed red line). Before the full invasion, there were around 7000 Ukrainians living in Switzerland.¹⁴ As we can see in the figure, by the end of 2023, the permanent population grew to almost 60,000 people because most Ukrainian refugees are now counted as part of the permanent population. Ukrainian refugees are now the 9th largest

¹⁴In the Czech Republic and Poland, there were substantial Ukrainian diasporas before 2022, where in countries like Switzerland or Austria, this is not the case.

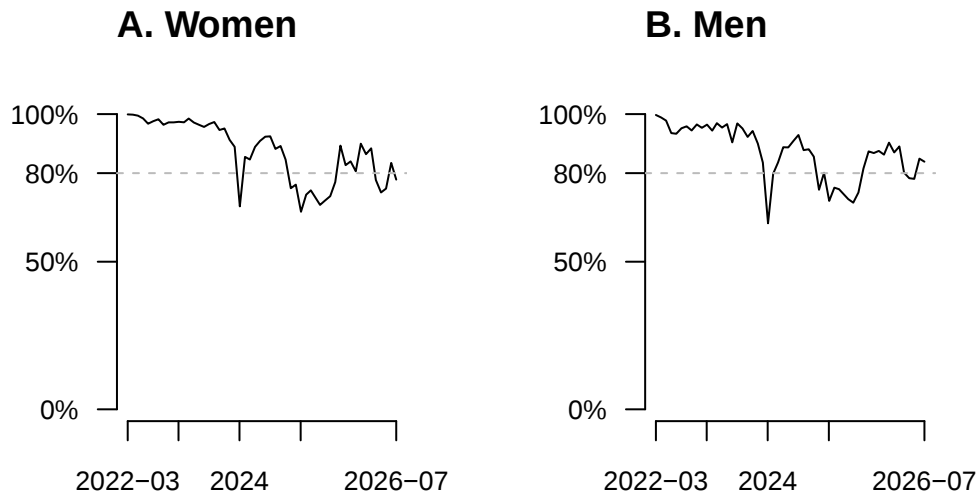


Figure 5: Panel A shows the recognition rate for women, Panel B that of men. The dashed line indicates a recognition rate of 80%, an arbitrary value to aid interpretation. Source: SEM (2026a). All data are monthly.

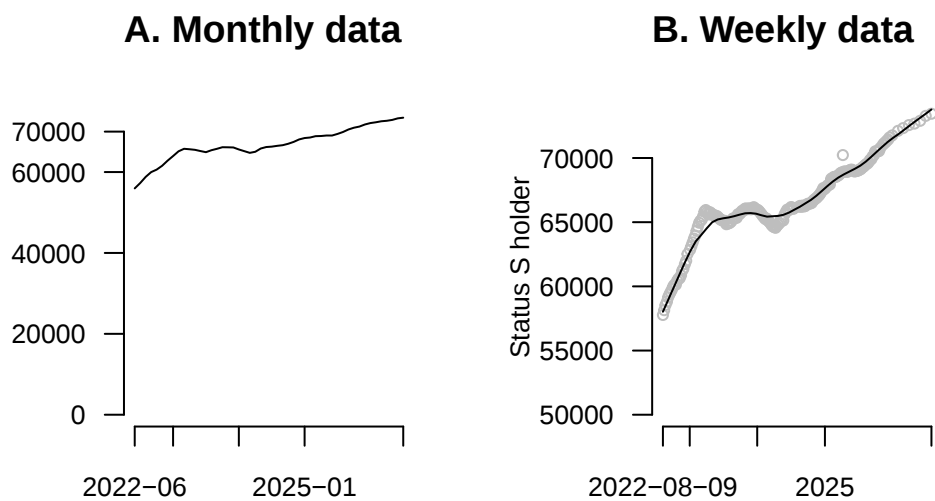


Figure 6: Number of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland over time, starting in June 2022. Monthly data in Panel A, weekly data in Panel B. The y-axis for the weekly data in Panel B does not start at 0 to emphasize changes over time. The solid line in Panel B is LOESS-smoothed with a bandwidth of 0.25, there is an outlier with little face validity; in Panel A no smoothing is used. Source: SEM (2026a).

nationality among the foreign population in Switzerland, and responsible for a sizeable part of population growth between 2022 and 2023 (BFS 2024).

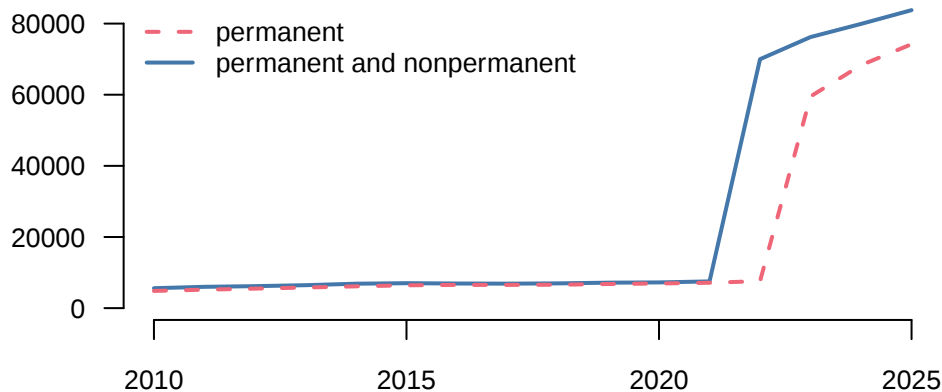


Figure 7: Ukrainian population in Switzerland since 2010. Source: [OFS](#), data as of end of 2025. See Figure 30 in the appendix for the number of asylum applications from Ukraine (not counting Status S).

i Irregular migration

Based on the latest report on irregular migration in Switzerland we could find (Morlok et al. 2016), irregular migration from Ukraine appears only in the context of people who have contributed to old-age and survivors’ insurance (AHV/AVS) without a residence permit (Table 19 in Morlok et al. 2016). This applied to around 5 times more women than men, and Ukrainians were ranked behind Kosovo, Bolivia, Brazil, Philippines, and Ecuador. Based on the estimations used in Morlok et al. (2016), this corresponded to around 800 irregular migrants with a very large uncertainty. The experts identified (non-EU) Eastern-Europeans as the second-largest groups after Central- and South America, without identifying specific nationalities. We have no information how the situation changed since the Russian invasion.

Where do they live?

Summary

Ukrainian refugees are distributed to cantons proportionally to population size.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Ukrainian refugees are distributed to cantons proportionally to population size. Figure 8 shows the number of Ukrainian refugees in each canton, which by definition closely cor-

relates with the population of the cantons. We have no readily available information as to where in the cantons Ukrainian refugees settle. Places of residence are likely correlated with reception centres and the availability of (affordable) housing, as well as where host families live. The availability of housing may suggest some clustering, while host families tend to live in areas with few other asylum seekers (Balsiger 2022). This last point differs notably from other refugees, who tend to be concentrated in reception centres and in places with affordable housing. Given that authorities try to move Ukrainian refugees out of reception centres — if they ever stay there — and given the important role of host families, we can expect that Ukrainian refugees are more evenly spread in the country than other refugees.

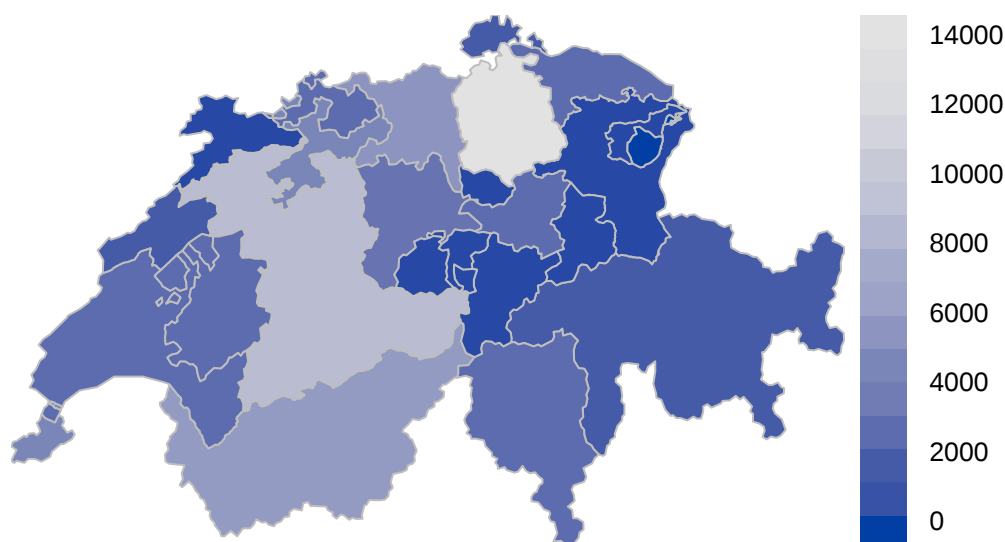


Figure 8: Number of Ukrainian refugees in the Swiss cantons (only Status S). Source: Asylstatistik.

Characteristics: Gender, age, nationality, marital status, duration of stay

Summary

Many Ukrainian refugees are women, and many had to leave behind a partner and other family members.

Distribution of evidence:

	abroad	CH	
			Ukrainian
			other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Among people with Status S, there are 43703 women (i.e. 59.5%) and 29745 men (i.e. 40.5%) (SEM 2026a). If we look at Ukrainian nationals irrespective of residence status,

there is a similar gender imbalance in favour of Ukrainian women (61.2% women).¹⁵

Figure 9 shows the age distribution by gender. We can see the gender imbalance, with many more women than men among the Ukrainian refugees, as visible by the longer bars on the right of the figure. The gender balance holds for all adult ages, but is particularly pronounced for women 30 to 50 years old. At the same time, there is no gender imbalance among children and young adults in the age group 15 to 19 years shown at the bottom of the figure.¹⁶ Among women, the peak age is at 40 to 44 years.

The age pyramid (Figure 9) also highlights that there are many elderly persons among the Ukrainian refugees (Tchermalykh 2023). While there is a higher proportion of people over the age of 60 or 65 than among the Swiss population than among Ukrainian refugees (Wilson 2016), this age distribution is different from other refugee populations, often dominated by young men (Juran and Broer 2017; Krafft et al. 2019). For example, focusing on refugees to Germany in 2015, Juran and Broer (2017) report the most common age 18 to 24 years, with a very strong dominance of men.

In Figure 10, we can see that the share of women among the Ukrainian refugees has slightly decreased since June 2022, but remains dominant (Panel A, on the left). In Panel B on the right, we can see that the share of women among the applicants has decreased. After the change of policy in August 2025 to allow young Ukrainian men to leave the country, the share of women among new applicants for Status S dropped below half (50.3% in the last data available). Because the number of new applicants is small compared to the number of Ukrainian refugees, these changes in the gender distribution of applicants (Panel B) does not affect the share in the population (Panel A) a great deal.

Status S does not only include Ukrainian citizens, but also individuals with different nationality who lived in Ukraine at the moment of the full invasion or family members.¹⁷ The

¹⁵Since Ukrainian men between 18 and 60 years old are not allowed to leave the country (exceptions exist for health reasons and fathers of three or more children, and fathers of disabled children), families with men present are often internally displaced people (IDP) in Ukraine (Albrecht and Panchenko 2022). However, generally speaking, families with children are more likely to leave the country (35% for refugees, 27% for IDP (UNHCR 2023b)). Status S applies irrespective of conscription, even though in May 2024, some conservative politicians in Switzerland called for Ukrainian men to return to Ukraine to fight in the war (Plüss 2024). After 23 April 2024, Ukrainian men between 18 and 60 years could not extend their passport outside of Ukraine, potentially restricting their freedom of travel (Plüss 2024). In August 2025, the Ukrainian government changed its policy so that Ukrainian men between 18 and 23 years were allowed to leave the country. The intuition was to prevent young men to leave school shortly before 18 and to allow them to continue their education abroad or earn money so that they will voluntarily return to defend the country (Ptak 2025; Urbancik 2026). Departures from Ukraine have increased following the change of policy, with Ukrainian companies reporting that many young men (and their girlfriends) hand in their notice (Culverwell 2025). In summer 2026, there were reports that Ukraine was exploring means to entice back Ukrainian men (Urbancik 2026).

¹⁶This dominance of women can also found in other European destination countries (Gradus 2024; Mykhailyshyna et al. 2025). It differs from other refugee populations, notably Status F and Status N, where there is overrepresentation of young men (Weingartner 2024). There are around 1,000 unaccompanied minors among the Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland (Eurostat 2024).

¹⁷[SEM FAQ](#); for Germany Bhimji and Momade (2022) report how international students who lived in Ukraine at the time of the full-scale invasion struggled to access the same rights as Ukrainian citizens. Many of them come from African countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Uganda, or Tanzania, as well as Asian countries (Bhimji and Momade 2022; Olumba 2025). Many of them were in

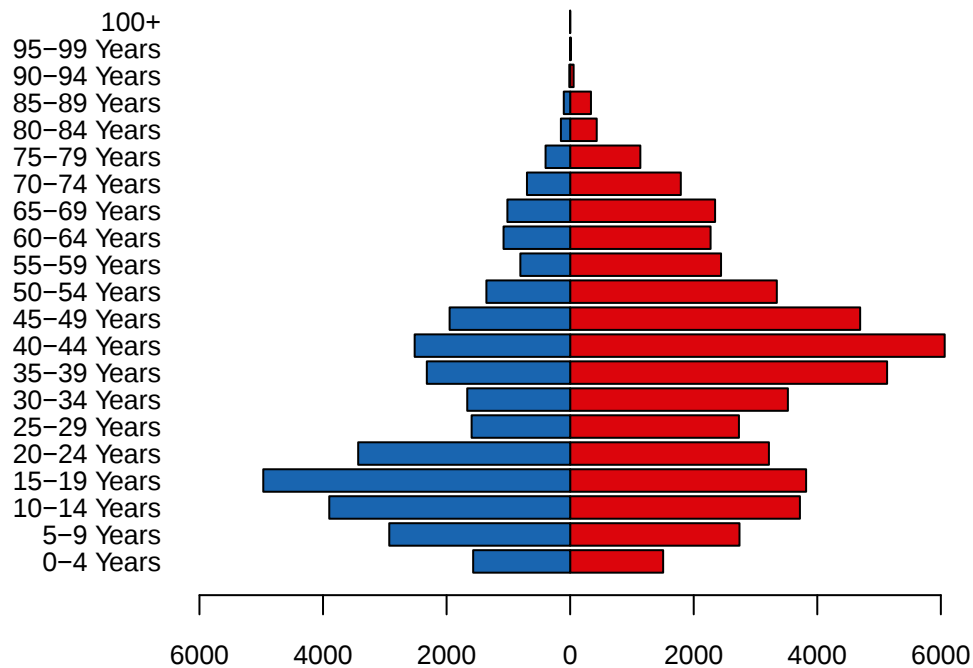


Figure 9: Age distribution of Ukrainians in Switzerland by gender. Blue for men (on the left), red for women (on the right); Age groups of 5 years (from 0 at the bottom to 100 and above at the top of the figure). Source: [OFS](#); data as of end of 2025, permanent and nonpermanent population combined.

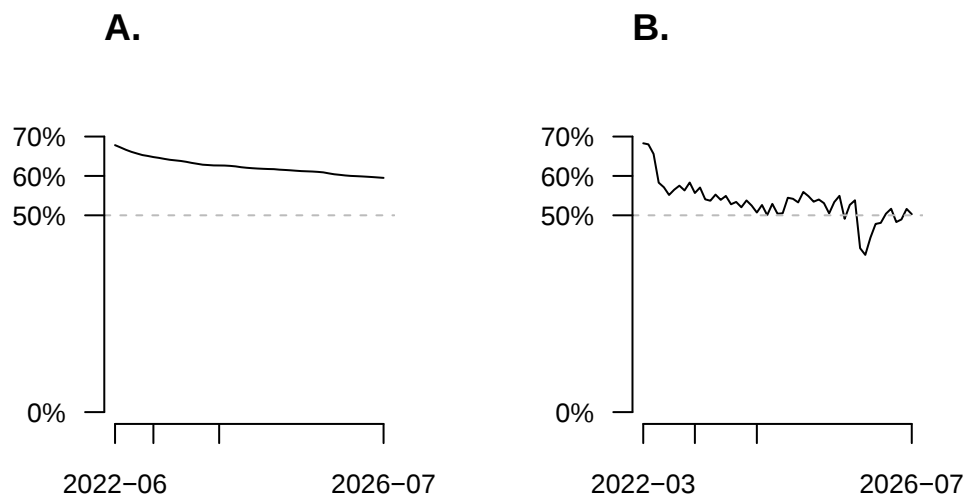


Figure 10: Share of women among Ukrainian refugees since June 2022 (Panel A, as percentage), and share of women among new applicants for Status S (Panel B, as percentage). The dashed line indicates 50%. The two panels are not on the same time scale (Panel A begins in June 2022, Panel B in March 2022). Source: SEM (2026a).

refugees with Status S are counted as permanent residents one year after arrival. Of those 73448 with Status S, 72005 people had Ukrainian nationality (98%). Figure 11 shows that among those who were granted Status S, the share of Ukrainian citizens has increased over time — although the share of Ukrainian citizens has been above 95% all the time.¹⁸

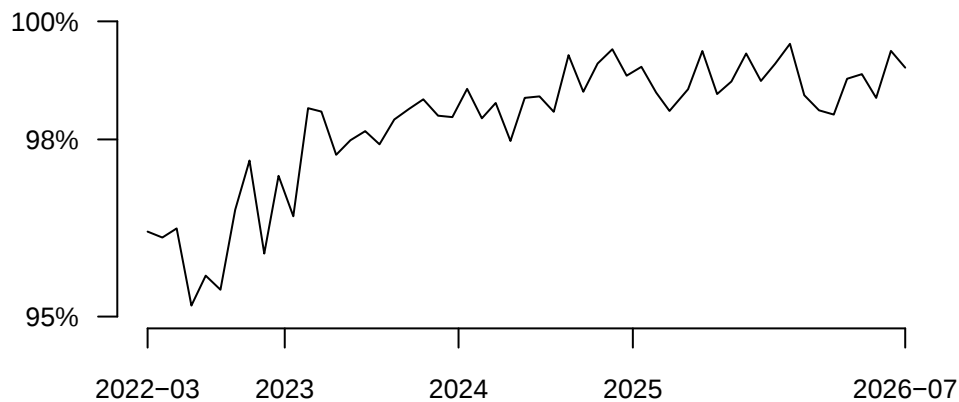


Figure 11: Share of new Status S permits who are Ukrainian citizens. Figure does not start at 0 to highlight differences over time. Source: SEM (2026a).

Following two parliamentary questions,¹⁹ in early 2024, a racialized debate emerged in the media, where alleged Roma with Ukrainian passports were decried ‘fake’ because they do not speak Ukrainian or Russian, and it was assumed that the passport must be bought (Neuhaus 2024a; Hochreutener 2024; OSAR 2024; Laederich 2026; with first allegations in August 2023, Mörgeli 2023). As of May 2024, the evidence appears to be of an anecdotal nature (Suter 2023; EKR and FRB 2024) or based on a small number of *suspected* cases — like 10 cases in the city of Bern (Nau 2024). These debates do not consider the diversity in the Ukrainian population: In 2006, there were an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 Roma in Ukraine (Initiative Group 2006; OSAR 2024; Laederich 2026), some of whom do not speak Ukrainian and many without official documents (Jikhareva 2024; Laederich 2022, 2026; M. Blum 2025; Stern 2025; see also Thompson and Halilovich 2026; Eredics 2024).²⁰ By the end of 2024, there are extended families from Ukraine that the cantons refuse to admit (leaving them in the care of the SEM): extended families that have in the past often left

Ukraine to study medicine, engineering and information technology, as well as business, economics, and management (Bhimji and Momade 2022). The struggle was mostly concentrated around the ability to leave Ukraine (Olumba 2025). McCarthy, Hynes, and Coakley (2026) interviewed 10 international medical students who moved to Ireland after the full-scale invasion. They report a loss of support networks, trauma related to escaping the war, but also appreciation for the support that they have received and determination to complete their studies.

¹⁸ A similar share of Ukrainian citizens can be found in other European countries, Gradus (2024)

¹⁹ by Boris Tschirky in the canton of St. Gallen, and Beni Würth at the national level; a cantonal initiative picked up this line of reasoning in June 2024 and called for an end of Status S in favour of individual asylum requests (St. Gallen 2024)

²⁰ While Roma in Ukraine face exclusion and discrimination like in many other European countries (Laederich 2022, 2026; M. Blum 2025), there are signs that attitudes to Roma in Ukraine have somewhat improved since the full-scale invasion by Russia (Zharonkin et al. 2024), while other sources disagree (Eredics 2024). For Switzerland, Temesvary et al. (2026) report difficulties for Roma in Switzerland, including refugees. She highlights difficulties in finding adequate housing, work, accessing adequate healthcare and social benefits at the local level. Equivalent results were reported for Germany (Arnold and Neuburger 2025).

Switzerland within a short period, but subsequently insisted on reentry. These patterns do not fit with integration efforts of the cantons (Neuhaus 2024b).

Figure 12 shows the civil status of Ukrainians in Switzerland by gender. The largest share are unmarried, which includes many children. While in 2022 a higher share of women than men were married, but also divorced or widowed, these gender differences have since largely disappeared. Among early refugees from Ukraine, Albrecht and Panchenko (2022) found that mother–children relationships were the most common ones (across all countries). This is also the case for Switzerland, where around two thirds are mother–children pairs (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). The figure indicates that the distribution of the civil status for men and women among Ukrainian refugees is similar.²¹

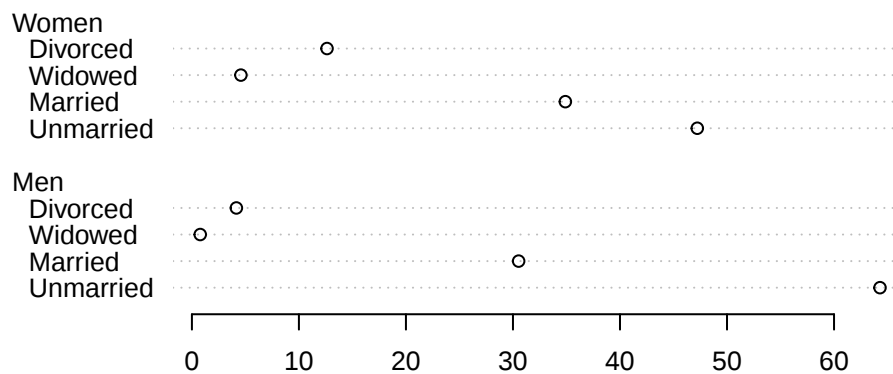


Figure 12: Civil status of Ukrainians in Switzerland by gender in %. Source: OFS. Not shown are unknown civil statuses. Data as of end of 2025.

For individuals with Status S, the duration of stay as of July 2025 was as shown in Figure 13. The biggest share has been in Switzerland between 2 and 3 years, followed by people who have been in Switzerland between 18 and 24 months. Put differently, most Ukrainian refugees have been in Switzerland for over two years, with only few newly arrived. The duration of stay also reflects the concentrated time of arrival presented further up in Figure 4, with most Ukrainian refugees arriving soon after the full-scale invasion. There are very few Ukrainian refugees with a residence in Switzerland greater than 3 years (see also Figure 4). Given the nature of Status S, there are hardly any Ukrainian refugees who have stayed in Switzerland for more than 4 years.

Studying Ukrainians in Poland, Kochaniak and Huterska (2023) could establish that Ukrainian refugees often not only had to leave behind their partners, but also elderly relatives and parents.

²¹Eser Davolio et al. (2024) cite anecdotal evidence that the stress of war and living separately has contributed to marriages being dissolved. This pattern can be confirmed for Germany, where there is good panel data, tracing Ukrainian refugees over time (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). Around a third of Ukrainian women who arrived in Germany but left behind their partner in Ukraine have ended their relationship three years later. This pattern is attributed to difficulties around the war and stress from separation.

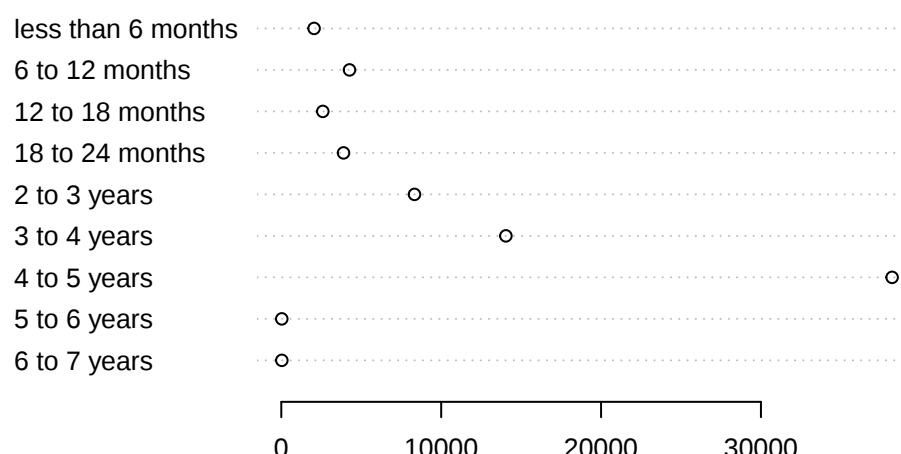


Figure 13: Duration of stay in Switzerland of Ukrainian refugees. Source: SEM (2026a).

Educational attainment

Summary

Around 70 percent of Ukrainian refugees have university degrees (tertiary education). About half have good levels of English (self-declared), with German and French skills gradually improving over time.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

A representative survey among Ukrainian refugees in December 2023 indicates that around 70 percent of adult Ukrainian refugees have a university degree (UNHCR 2023c; Yasenok et al. 2024).²² The opportunity sample by Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann (2022) in August 2022 suggested 80 percent with university degrees. That survey mentioned common degrees: law, economics, engineering, psychology, pedagogy, and medicine. A representative survey in autumn 2022 identified 70 percent with university degrees (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023). The specialities in principle match well to sectors with a shortage of skilled workers

²²This is the same percentage as found among Ukrainian refugees in Germany (Brücker et al. 2023; Schmidt 2024) or Poland (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023). The share in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion was 62% (Bushanska et al. 2022), indicating that people with university degrees were somewhat more likely to flee the country or move to Switzerland. The high share of people with tertiary education sets Ukrainian refugees apart from other refugee population: not the positive selection among refugees as such, but the *extent* of this selection effect — although the Ukrainian population is also comparatively highly educated on average (compare Kosyakova and Kogan 2022; OECD 2023a; Weingartner 2024). The share of immigrants with tertiary education is increasing more generally, including refugees (Fasani 2025; D'Amato et al. 2026). Mészáros (2026) reports that most Ukrainian refugees passing through the border town Oradea in Romania did not consider the economic opportunities in manual work in the city because they were a poor match for the profile of the Ukrainian refugees.

in Switzerland (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023). Using voluntary data from the *RegisterMe* obtained from Ukrainian refugees between June 2022 and September 2023, 58% indicate having a university degree (SEM 2023b). Data from newly arrived Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland shows that this high share of refugees with tertiary education can be found among those who arrived in 2022 as well as those who arrived in 2023 (Figure 48 in the appendix). Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) report that before leaving the country, the average Ukrainian refugee where among the wealthier Ukrainians. The share of Ukrainians with tertiary degree was somewhat higher in 2022 than in 2023. It was highest among the age group 20 to 39 years, with a lower share of older refugees having university degrees (Figure 49 in the appendix).

According to the representative study in 2023 (UNHCR 2023c), the most common fields of study are in order: economics, public administration, law; engineering and building; health and social care; pedagogy; services; humanities and arts; information and communication technology (ICT); social sciences, journalism, information sciences; agriculture; natural sciences, mathematics (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 3). This distribution is similar to that in the *RegisterMe* data, which uses different categories: law and economics, engineering, health and social care, pedagogy, ICT (SEM 2023b, fig. 4).²³ These data also register the sector in which Ukrainian refugees worked before leaving Ukraine: law and economics, engineering, health and social care, services, pedagogy, ICT (SEM 2023b, fig. 5).

In autumn 2022, just 50 percent of Ukrainian refugees declared a good level of English (“understand most of what is being said”), and 10 percent of German, while for French and Italian the percentage was even lower (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023; see also Eser Davolio et al. 2023).²⁴ Where existing German skills can be observed, it tends to be older refugees; younger refugees tend to be more proficient in English (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023). Language skills were notably higher for those who have stayed longer in Switzerland (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 7). Self-reported language skills have noticeably improved between 2023 and 2024 (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Similarly, in Germany, self-declared language skills have improved between 2022 and 2023 (Brücker et al. 2023), but in their case more than half indicate no or rather bad language skills. Higher language skills are reported by those who attend language courses, as well as those who intend to stay in Germany beyond the war. Using voluntary data from the *RegisterMe* obtained from Ukrainian refugees between June 2022 and September 2023, 34% indicate having good English skills (SEM 2023b). 14% speak English nearly perfectly, 17% understand most of it, 17% manage in everyday situations, and 24% master common expressions. French, German, and Italian language skills are comparatively low (SEM 2023b), which is unsurprising for newly arrived refugees.

In 2025, Hett and Ruedin (2025) report that of their sample of Ukrainian refugees, language levels in the local languages were still predominantly around A2, with probably lower lan-

²³Figure 50 in the appendix shows that this distribution has not changed substantially between four cohorts of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees between 2022 and 2023.

²⁴Data from newly registered Ukrainian refugees in 2022 and 2023 show the highest language skills in English, with little existing German and particularly French and Italian (Figure 46 in the appendix). The language skills of the newly arrived refugees did not change substantially across the four cohorts for which they were analysed. The highest language levels could be found among those aged 20 to 39 (Figure 47 in the appendix).

guage levels in the Italian-speaking area. Levels B2 and higher (C1, C2) remained rare. For many of the refugees, English remains their strongest language, but it is not necessarily strong enough for the jobs that allow working entirely in English (Hett and Ruedin 2025).

Destination choice

💡 Summary

Ukrainian refugees typically used public transport to come to Switzerland. Many cited having friends or acquaintances in Switzerland as the choice of destination, along with a general reputation for safety and stability.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

A survey with an opportunity sample in August 2022 reported that around 45% of Ukrainian refugees had no previous contact with people in Switzerland, such as relatives, friends, or acquaintances (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022). Around two thirds of the Ukrainian used public transport to come to Switzerland.

In an ad-hoc survey in 2025, Hett and Ruedin (2025) report that the most common reason to choose Switzerland was the presence of friends and family in the country. The second most commonly stated reason was the reputation of the country as neutral and safe. Other refugees had not particular reason they could recall, or anecdotal information about social services available to Ukrainian refugees (Hett and Ruedin 2025). These findings are in line with Tarkhanova and Pyrogoва (2024), who examined the decision-making process of Ukrainian refugees more generally. They highlight that within the constraints of the situation, Ukrainian refugees used their agency, including the timing of their departure. While all refugees they interviewed had traumatic experiences, some were already fleeing when they were exposed most to the war. For families, decisions are greatly influenced by the ability to move as a unit (Tarkhanova and Pyrogoва 2024).

Using semistructured interviews in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Israel, Amit et al. (2024) showed that social factors were important in the choice of destination country, notably the presence of family members in a country in the case of Poland and the Czech Republic, the decisions of friends, family, and acquaintances *en route*. Because the decision to leave the country was made quickly and without planning, the choice of destination country was often something that evolved as time went by. Perceptions of cultural similarity and geographical proximity also played a role in Poland and the Czech Republic, but foremost was the perception that the destination would be a safe place (Amit et al. 2024).

Teney (2025) also highlights social factors and social networks in particular. She differentiates the immediate decision to leave from the choice of destination country, highlighting that different mechanisms are at play. For the decision to leave, close family and friends were

normally decisive ('strong ties'), whereas for the destination choice acquaintances and colleagues play a more important role ('weak ties'). In both situations, the refugees weighed up reasons for and against, although these considerations were not necessarily complete and often made under extreme time pressures: from a decision to leave to actually as little as half an hour can pass, just enough to gather some essential items (Teney 2025). For the destination choice, safety was the foremost consideration, but once out of immediate danger, considerations of affordability or economic opportunities also played a role — although in the context of forced migration that does not allow detailed planning (Collier 2013).

Using an ad-hoc survey of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, Liudmyla and Długosz (2026) agrees that both pull and push factors played a role in the destination choice of Ukrainian refugees. They show that push factors were clearly related to the war, particularly bombardments and the destruction of property. However, once the decision was made to leave the Ukraine, longer-term considerations also played a role, which led many Ukrainian refugees to seek Germany. In Germany the expected better long-term prospects, especially in terms of education and improved living standards — alongside the all-important safety (Liudmyla and Długosz 2026).

Legal situation

Summary

Ukrainian refugees benefit from temporary protection under Status S, which has been extended several times to March 2027. Temporary protection is collective, but since October 2025 seven regions are considered 'safe' and no protection is provided for refugees from these regions.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Since 2017, Ukrainians have been exempt from visa requirements when travelling to the Schengen area. This allowed a stay of up to 90 days within a period of 180 days. In this sense, the legal situation of Ukrainian refugees was different from previous refugee flows, despite similar protection needs (Huter and Marti 2024; Bešić, Primecz, and Brandstetter 2023). On 12 March 2022,²⁵ the protection Status S was activated, offering Ukrainians in Switzerland a possibility to stay longer than 90 days, albeit a temporary protection (Progin-Theuerkauf 2022; Pétremand 2024).²⁶ It has been extended five times to March 2028

²⁵The activation was announced on 11 March 2022 (Bundesrat 2022).

²⁶Several arguments have been put forward for the activation of Status S, among which the sheer number of applications that would have overwhelmed the asylum system (Huter and Marti 2024). Other arguments constitute legal inequalities or discrimination (Huter and Marti 2024). For the historical origins of temporary protection schemes, see Dalkiran and Lipman (2025) or Festa (2024). Research in Canada suggests that

(Figure 1).²⁷ The differential treatment between Ukrainian refugees and other refugees has raised questions of legitimacy, among academics, practitioners, and refugees (Janda 2023; T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023; Huter and Marti 2024; Tchernalykh 2023; Mazzola 2022; Bodenmann et al. 2023; Łysienka and Kurt 2025; Heschl 2022).

At the beginning of 2024, applications for Status S started to be examined more closely (Strasser 2024). Initially, this led to a higher rate of rejections compare 5, but recognition rates have somewhat increased since. The stricter application procedures have led to a substantial backlog of Ukrainian refugees who have applied for protection, but whose applications remain pending. In April 2024, there were reports of over 6,000 pending applications, in November 2024 of almost 4,300, in January 2025 of around 5,000 pending applications (Strasser 2024; Plüss 2025; Riklin 2025). Initially, the SEM did not report these numbers systematically, but annual numbers are now available (Figure 33 in the appendix) as are monthly numbers for the previous 12 months (Figure 34 in the appendix). Since autumn 2023, Ukrainian refugees who have held a (temporary) protection status in another European country normally do not receive Status S (Strasser 2024), though it remains unclear how cases (should be) handled where the former protection lapsed or when six months have passed and Dublin procedures no longer apply.

On 2 December 2024, parliament decided to restrict the conditions under which Status S could be obtained (Friedli 2024; Würth 2024; Watson 2024; Gerny 2024b).²⁸ Status S would henceforth be limited to those who lived in Ukrainian regions occupied by Russia or where there is active combat. Ukrainian refugees from other areas would not see their status revoked, and a restriction to Ukrainian nationals (i.e. excluding residents from other countries) was also rejected by parliament.²⁹ [In contrast, people who have resided in 'safe' areas of Ukraine could not be prevented from applying for asylum in Switzerland, and — under current practice — would not be returned to Ukraine, but receive temporary admission. Until October 2025 it remained unclear how 'safe' areas would be defined, especially given that Russia attacks targets in the entire country (Hiss 2024; Servettaz 2025; Gerny 2024b). In June 2025, it was reported that Switzerland could adopt the Norwegian classification, possibly with a larger area around Kyiv being considered unsafe (Meier 2025). The actual implementation was limited to seven regions rather than 14 in the Norwegian classification (Fopp 2025b). The SEM recorded the region of origin since July 2022, and in summer 2025

legal distinctions and labels (notably 'refugee' versus a 'special category' status for Ukrainians) are embraced by those those labelled (Karimi 2026).

²⁷ In June 2024, the European Council extended temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees to March 2026. The Swiss Federal Council did so in September 2024. On 8 October 2025, the Federal Council extended temporary protection to 4 March 2027. In July 2026, the European Council extended temporary protection to March 2028, a decision that was mirrored by the Swiss administration a month later. The Council explicitly encourages countries to find alternative paths for transitions to long-term residence (Thränhardt 2026).

²⁸ These decisions go back to two parliamentary motions that were originally accepted in June 2024 in the upper chamber with the aim of restricting the protection of Ukrainian refugees (Friedli 2024; Würth 2024). The decision in December 2024 by the lower chamber was to implement only some of the proposed changes. In June 2024, the upper chamber wanted to limit Status S to Ukrainian refugees from Russian-occupied territory or areas with military operations. This restriction would also have been applied to Ukrainian refugees already in Switzerland (not retained in December 2024), who according to the motion would lose their status. The motion would limit Status S to Ukrainian citizens (not retained in December 2024). A different motion would revoke Status S from Ukrainian refugees who spend more than two consecutive weeks outside of Switzerland (Friedli 2024; Würth 2024; Nay 2024).

attempted to classify the origin for all Ukrainian refugees present in the country, which they did for around 89% of the refugees (Blumer 2025). According to this analysis, 73% of the Ukrainian refugees are from regions directly affected by the war (see also Figure 3). Since October 2025, periods of absence from Switzerland of more than 15 days would henceforth lead to revoking Status S (Fopp 2025b), and Status S would not be conferred to refugees who had a similar status in another country in the Dublin-area.

When temporary protection was extended to March 2027 in October 2025, it declared 7 Ukrainian regions as ‘safe’ to return: Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Ternopil, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Chernivtsi (Fopp 2025b). Figure 14 illustrates that the regions considered ‘safe’ are exclusively those at the Western end of the country. From 1 November 2025 onwards, no Ukrainian refugees from these regions will be admitted into Status S. Ukrainian refugees from these regions who already have Status S are unaffected by these restrictions (Fopp 2025b). By early April 2026, the SEM reported that until then, 303 Ukrainian refugees were affected by the ‘safe’ regions (Nau 2026). 104 of them were removed, 84 retracted their application, 145 returned independently, 20 are pending appeals in court, while 20 received a positive decision. For the SEM, the ‘safe’ regions are additional work, because they have to verify in each case, whether a removal to Ukraine would be lawful, reasonable, and feasible. Medical considerations can play a role. Overall, the SEM reported a decline in applications from ‘safe’ regions.



Figure 14: Map of Ukraine showing the areas considered ‘safe’ and ‘not safe’ according to the Swiss government, as of October 2025.

When temporary protection was extended in August 2026, there were restrictions introduced for men who are subject to military service in Ukraine. From 20 August 2026, new applications from Ukrainians subject to military service are rejected. This restriction does not apply to Ukrainians already in Switzerland who maintain their temporary protection status. By so doing, Switzerland implements the same rules as the countries of the European Union in this regard.

In early 2026, the Federal Administrative Court released a landmark decision to clarify that Ukrainian refugees who have received subsidiary protection in a different country are not eligible for temporary protection in Switzerland — even if the status in the other country has expired and has not agreed to taking the refugee back (Scherrer-Bänziger et al. 2026). With

this, the court supported the practice by the SEM implemented since December 2023 (Spörri and Kálin 2026), and ruled in line with policies in the Czech Republic (Víchová 2025).

While focusing on the situation in Denmark and Poland, Pencheva, Engebretsen, and Ruhan (2024) argue that there is a need to clarify how Ukrainian refugees can become permanently settled (see also A. Kuznetsova 2024). While the path to settlement is in most countries defined in principle, the exact procedures and criteria often remain vague. Moreover, Pencheva, Engebretsen, and Ruhan (2024) call for a European database so that Ukrainian refugees can be monitored more closely and that secondary movements — from one country of destination to another European country — can be followed.

i Status S

The protection Status S was introduced in Switzerland in 1998 in response to the refugee movements in connection with the Balkan wars (Asylum Act, Art.4, Art.66ff.). However, it was only used for the first time in connection with the Ukrainian refugees in 2022 (Romer and Nufer 2022; Hemmi and Hefti 2022).²⁹ Protection status is declared by the Federal Council and allows refugees to be admitted without an ordinary asylum procedure. The protection status is a temporary humanitarian admission that is granted for a maximum of one year and can be extended for a maximum of one year at a time (SEM 2022). Ukrainian refugees are allocated to cantons in proportion of their population size (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; Pétremand 2024). Extended nuclear families are allocated to the same canton, as are vulnerable persons with close connections to outside the extended nuclear family (Pétremand 2024). Status S does not confer residence rights for the first five years; after this period, residence rights (permit B) are granted — automatically — until Status S is withdrawn. Put differently, the status B that will be granted from 2027 will be tied to the recognition of a need of protection (i.e. the status S). Permanent residence (permit C) can be granted by the cantons after 10 years, but there is no automatism (Pétremand 2024; Huter and Marti 2024; RTS 2026). If the refugees change their place of residence (“Lebensmittelpunkt”) abroad, their Status S is normally withdrawn (Pétremand 2024). An evaluation in 2025 concluded that Status S was largely successful (Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025).

Legal research considers whether the Status S is appropriate for the situation (Panizzon 2022; Hemmi and Hefti 2022; Janda 2023; Pencheva, Engebretsen, and Ruhan 2024), especially given that it was designed as a short-term measure (NCCR Roundtable 2024; Łysienia and Kurt 2025). The Status S is not entirely the same as the temporary protection provided by the countries of the European Union (Panizzon 2022; Rodier 2022; Carrera and Ineli Ciger 2023),³⁰ for example, the European status foresees the ability to claim asylum. Unlike the EU Directive, Switzerland does not provide for access to the ordinary asylum procedure when individual reasons for asylum exist, except in cases of “obvious persecution”. It has been

²⁹ For the parallel use of ‘temporary protection’ in the European Union, see Selm (2022). The status was introduced in 1998 in the context of the Balkan Wars, but never used.

³⁰ Alternative forms of protection were also discussed (e.g. Fabbriotti 2022; Honusková 2023). While the temporary protection provided to Ukrainian refugees bears a lot of similarities, there are also legal distinctions (Pesegova 2025).

argued that Ukrainian refugees often struggle to understand the nuances of international refugee law and the nature of protection (Status S) (Tsyhanenko 2023). Because Status S assumes an eventual return, Ukrainian refugees experience great uncertainty about their future (Oldfield et al. 2025; Fasani 2025; Hett and Ruedin 2025; SODK et al. 2025).

It is often argued that, given the different legal statuses between asylum seekers and Ukrainian refugees, minimization of the legal situation should be aspired to in the name of equal treatment (DFJP 2022; Gemenne and Thiollet 2022; NCCR Roundtable 2024; Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025; see also Schmoll and Lejeune 2026 on differential treatment by cities). Some of the legal differences cannot be avoided, given the different (legal) context (DFJP 2022; Janda 2023). The end of the Status S needs to be coordinated with the European Union (DFJP 2022), but in general, greater ability to move between statuses should help focus on individual needs (NCCR Roundtable 2024; A. Kuznetsova 2024). Indeed, young refugees from other countries have expressed unease at the prioritization of Ukrainians and the solidarity they receive compared to other refugees (Brunner and Schichl 2023; see also Bischof 2023).

Status S provides immediate access to the labour market (contrary to recognized refugees and temporarily admitted persons, Status S requires a work *permit* rather a simple notification at the employment office) and schools, without restrictions that may be in place for asylum seekers (Pétremand 2024).³¹ Individuals with Status S are free to travel abroad and return to Switzerland — contrary to temporarily admitted persons (Huter and Marti 2024).³² The cantons receive a lump sum from the federal government (Art. 22 AsylV 2) for social security, health insurance, integration costs, etc.

For stateless persons in Ukraine, obtaining protection can be difficult because streamlined approaches such as Status S do not consider the difficulties that come with statelessness (Cabral, Ivashuk, and Kanics 2022).

To maximize livelihoods, longer-term perspectives for refugees would be desirable. The World Economic Forum (2023) highlights the 10-year protection provided by the Colombian government for Venezuelan refugees as good practice.

³¹Obtaining this permit can take a considerable amount of time, which is a reason why many employers and jobseekers call for a notification procedure (*Meldeverfahren*) (Reinhardt 2024).

³²Around half of the Ukrainian refugees indicate not to have travelled anywhere. Around one third have travelled to other European countries — in most cases to visit relatives —, while only 20% have travelled to Ukraine (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Almost all of those journeys to Ukraine were by women with partners in Ukraine.

Economic integration

How many work?

Summary

Around 1 in 3 Ukrainian refugees of working age is in work. This share is higher than for other refugees, but much smaller than for the Swiss population. The share in paid work has been increasing steadily, and is around 2 in 5 for Ukrainian refugees who have lived in Switzerland for more than two years. In most cantons, the employment rate of Ukrainian refugees remains short of the government target of 40%, set for the end of 2024. Ukrainian refugees are highly motivated to work, but language skills and affordable childcare remain major hurdles.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Ukrainian refugees are allowed to work in Switzerland (Pétremand 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). As of March 2025, there were 46605 Ukrainian refugees of working age (18 to 65 years old, SEM 2026a). Of these, 38% were in work (SEM 2026a).³³ The share of those in work is higher among refugees who have been in Switzerland for longer, indicating

³³ In May 2022, 1.6% of Ukrainian refugees were registered as being in work (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023). Looking at the situation in different European countries, Thränhardt (2023a) reported large differences between countries: As of December 2022, 78% of Ukrainian refugees in Denmark worked, compared to 17% in Belgium (see also Andrews et al. (2023) who notes higher labour force participation in Poland than in Germany). The following participation rates are cited in Thränhardt (2023a): Denmark 78%, Czech Republic 66%, Poland 65%, UK 56%, Sweden 56%, Netherlands 50%, Ireland 33%, France 33%, Austria 27%, Switzerland 20%, Germany 19%, Belgium 17% — although ways of counting labour force participation vary across countries (e.g. whether temporary and part-time positions are included, but also whether official statistics are used, or estimates are based on surveys as is the case in Poland and the United Kingdom — which can bias estimates upwards (Weingartner 2024)), as does the presence of Ukrainian citizens from before the full-scale invasion that may be included in these statistics (Bundesamt für Arbeit 2024; Kosyakova et al. 2024; OECD 2023a). In the comparative study by Kosyakova et al. (2024), labour force participation in Switzerland is low in comparison to many other European countries. Thränhardt (2023b) also notes the high share of temporary and part-time workers among Ukrainian workers in the Netherlands, something Belousova (2024) called an invitation to precarious work conditions and questions the sustainability of this ‘work first’ approach (see also Guzi et al. 2024; Berveno and Moskvina 2024; Papcunová et al. 2026). Otten et al. (2025) highlight the high proportion of Ukrainian refugees working with temporary contracts in the Netherlands: 31% have a temporary contract, 27% have a temporary contract with the potential that this might turn into a permanent one at some stage, 23% have zero-hour contract (also known as gig-workers), while 18% have a permanent contract. Moreover, many of the workers in the Netherlands work below their skill level [deskilling; Otten et al. (2025)], and around a third reports poor working conditions such as very long working hours, unpaid overtime, lack of breaks or rest, or threats of violence (Otten et al. 2025). Looking at refugees in general, Ozgen et al. (2026) suggests that a dedicated integration course for labour market training, namely the ONA, was effective in helping refugees navigate the labour market and end up with better jobs in the medium term. Labour market integration was faster, wages were higher, and the refugees were more likely to be employed in occupations which were less routine-task intensive (Ozgen et al. 2026).

that adjustment processes are part of the reason why this number is smaller than for the general population. Compared to other refugees, integration to the labour market is around 2 to 3 times as fast (Sturm et al. 2023; OECD 2023a),³⁴ although for the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) does not find substantial differences to other refugee groups, despite accounting for the duration of residence in Switzerland. In fact, compared to other European countries, the labour force participation in Switzerland is one of the lowest (Thränhardt 2026). Generally speaking, the labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees is higher in countries in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, although Ukrainian refugees tend to have low wages in the latter (Thränhardt 2026). Ukrainian refugees have had access to the labour market from the beginning, in principle avoiding the detrimental long waiting times other refugees may be subjected to (Efionayi-Mäder and Ruedin 2014; Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Lawrence 2016; Bešić, Primecz, and Brandstetter 2023).³⁵ The rapidity of the procedure leading to Status S in itself contributes to reducing this friction for refugees ready to work.

Ortlieb et al. (2024) note that refugee women tend to use temporary jobs more often as a means to enter the labour market, which can shape patterns of economic integration for Ukrainians given that the share of women is much higher than that of men. For the Czech Republic, it is reported that labour shortages and the qualifications of the Ukrainian refugees match relatively well (Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024).³⁶ As in Poland, outmigration to other European countries has left labour shortages that can be filled by Ukrainian refugees (Kusek 2024).³⁷

The share of Ukrainian refugees in work has consistently increased Figure 15. The smoothed trend line looks like a straight line, reflecting a consistent increase in the share of Ukrainian refugees who are in paid work. Projections based on these data are included in Figure 44 in the appendix.

The share of Ukrainian refugees in work varies between cantons Figure 16. These differences cannot be explained by differences in employability because since April 2022, refugees

³⁴For temporarily admitted persons, SEM (2026a) reports that after 2 years, around 20 percent are in paid work, with around 35 percent after 3 years for the most recent cohort of temporarily admitted persons in Switzerland. For the Czech Republic and Poland, Macková, Zogata-Kusz, et al. (2024) report that faster economic integration leads to perceptions of greater deservingness.

³⁵However, in practice obtaining a work *permit* can take considerable time, and Ukrainian refugees may fear that employers hire someone else in the meantime (Reinhardt 2024). Using (arguably as-if random, but see Bartl and Lutz (2025) for a discussion on dispersal policies in Europe) variation in the wait time due to administrative differences, Kuhn (2023) finds no such effect of waiting time for Syrian refugees in Switzerland. In this analysis, however, longer waiting times were associated with larger differences between male and female refugees, with female refugees working less often if they had to wait longer (Kuhn 2023). In the case of Ukrainian refugees, however, there was no substantial waiting time.

³⁶For Kazakhstan, Alpysbayeva, Bazarkulova, and Sagyndykova (2025) report that the arrival of Ukrainian and Russian refugees put pressure on young males with vocational degrees, highlighting that depending on the economy, the ability to absorb larger numbers of refugees in the local labour market varies.

³⁷Strzelecki, Growiec, and Wyszynski (2025) show that the impact of Ukrainian refugees on economic growth is measurable in Poland. A particular case are academics working in universities. Jaroszewicz, Shkoda, and Ovchinnikova (2025) report that they often switch to remote work initially and continue their work at Ukrainian institutions. At the same time, they seek job opportunities in their country of residence.

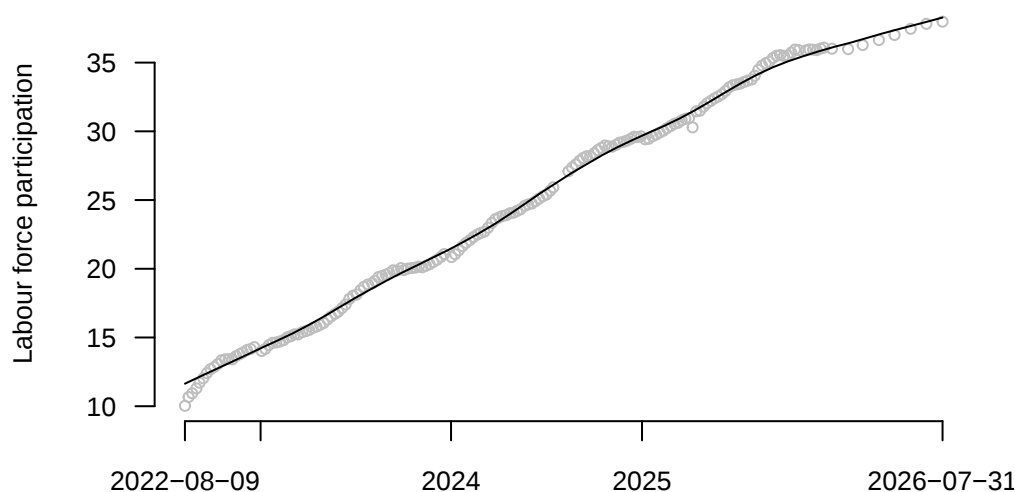


Figure 15: Share of Ukrainian refugees in work. Weekly data from ZEMIS until December 2025, then monthly data from ZEMIS. The solid line is LOESS-smoothed with span 0.3. Source: SEM (2026a).

are randomly allocated to cantons (Sturm et al. 2023).³⁸ Considerable differences were present since June 2022, when the first statistics were released.³⁹ In January 2024, rapid integration into the labour market was announced as a clear aim, with a government target of 40 percent (SEM 2024, 2025c). This target emphasizes a ‘classic’ integration via work, and in some cases may reduce investments in training and language learning that may pay off in the medium term (Caritas 2023; Dustmann, Andersen, and Landersø 2024; Schmidt 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).⁴⁰ This target was not reached by the end of 2024, and most cantons remained below the target (SEM 2025c; Fopp 2025a; SFH 2025). For the end

³⁸ This means that Switzerland does not know the concentration of Ukrainian refugees as it can be observed in Austria, for example, where 43 per cent reside in Vienna (Guzi et al. 2024)

³⁹ Similar differences exist in the share of temporarily admitted persons (permit F) in work (Tamò-Gafner 2022).

⁴⁰ A simulation study in Germany draws on regression analyses based on earlier refugees from former Soviet countries and studies on the economic integration of refugees. It estimates that in Germany, economic participation will reach 45% after 5 years, and 55% after ten years (Kosyakova and Brücker 2024). While the study recognizes high levels of education and a high motivation to work — like in Switzerland — the high share of single mothers with children is a major factor preventing Ukrainian women from entering the labour market. In this sense, the simulation study expects the gender gap in economic participation to continue (Kosyakova and Brücker 2024). Initial projections on labour market integration in Germany, however, were too pessimistic, and as of October 2024, a higher share is in work than predicted (MiGazin 2024). A qualitative study in Germany finds that Ukrainian refugees often see language training as an alternative to work, but acknowledges that in low-skilled jobs opportunities to improve language skills are often limited (Schmidt 2024; see also MiGazin 2024). Nonetheless, Schmidt (2024) calls for more creative approaches to combine the benefits of both. For refugees in Germany in general, Ullein and Welker (2025) find that risk-seeking migrants are more likely to learn the language of the host country quickly and that they also find paid work more quickly. An in-depth evaluation of the German *Job-Turbo* programme found that the increased and intensive effort to get Ukrainian refugees into paid work was indeed successful (Hainmueller et al. 2026). Ukrainian refugees were much more likely to end unemployment with paid work, and these jobs were regular jobs with adequate income. What is more, there was no negative spillover to German job-seekers, so the success of Ukrainian refugees in finding paid work was not at the expense of German job seekers (Hainmueller et al. 2026).

of 2025, a target of 45 percent was set, but later dropped (Nau 2025; swissinfo.ch 2025). In early 2025, the Swiss Refugee Council emphasized that the labour force participation of the Ukrainian refugees who have been in Switzerland for 2 years or longer is close to the set target (SEM 2025c; SFH 2025) Figure 23. In line with these observations, in May 2025 a new target was announced, namely that 50% of Ukrainian refugees who have stayed in Switzerland for at least three years should be in work. This should account for movements in the refugee population.⁴¹

It is normal for populations such as Ukrainian refugees that a transition period into work takes time (Welfens 2022; Tamò-Gafner 2022; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). In an opportunity sample in August 2022, a good third stated that they were looking for work and had an intention to stay in Switzerland, around a third were looking for temporary work and returning to Ukraine;⁴² with around 15 percent having already found work (Baier, Bühler, and Hart-

⁴¹ At the same time as the SEM publicly announced that the 40% target was missed for Ukrainians in Switzerland — to some degree because of the high volume of movement (SEM 2025c), the summarized current and future measures that should help increase the labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees (or other, future refugee populations with Status S). The measures include an increased role of (regular) employment services (RAV) to support Ukrainian refugees finding work. They also include support for the *Path2Work* pilot programme by the ETH Zürich and the University of Lausanne that provides a website where Ukrainian refugees can provide skills profiles and online assessments in addition to their formal qualifications. In March 2025, the pilot should be opened to more additional jobseekers. The SEM also supports online platforms that support the recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications, including Ukrainian qualifications, such as *HEKS: Projekt MosaiQ* or *Découvrir: Projekt Pro Act*. Moreover, a new website was launched in September 2024 with information for employers considering or seeking to hire refugees. The website includes testimonials to encourage employers. Legal changes are planned, including compulsory programmes for Ukrainian refugees on social benefits, compulsory registration with employment services for those out of work, the right to change the canton of residence for Ukrainian refugees in paid work who fulfil certain conditions — analogous to the possibility for temporally admitted persons since June 2024. To increase certainty about Status S, Ukrainian refugees in paid work should receive a guarantee that they can stay in Switzerland 12 months after the end of Status S (analogous to the possibility for apprentices to complete their apprenticeship that was introduced in March 2023). These propositions were confirmed by the Federal Council in February 2025 (Bundesrat 2025), and were expected to probably be finalized for debate in May 2025 (SEM 2025d). Plans to fine cantons that do not make sufficient progress towards labour-market integration were dropped in May 2025, but cantons with labour force participation rates clearly below average will have to develop measures to increase participation (swissinfo.ch 2025; Nau 2025). Thränhardt (2026) suggests that much dequalification could be avoided or reduced if the focus were on language skills rather than establishing equivalence in other aspects. He mentions Poland and Italy as examples where medical workers could access the labour market as if the Ukrainian qualifications were verified EU-equivalents. In Italy, this was facilitated by the fact that at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Ukraine sent doctors to support Italian healthcare, and language and qualifications were not an issue then (Thränhardt 2026).

⁴² Lazarenko (2024) cites similar numbers for Germany. Gorodnichenko and Gros (2025) note that in Germany intentions to return to Ukraine have declined, but highlight that increasing wages in Ukraine (due to labour-shortages linked to the war) may entice Ukrainian refugees back. Ette, Kosyakova, and Kothe (2026) look at settlement intentions of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, focusing on those who want to stay in Germany 'forever'. At the end of 2020, this included around a quarter of all Ukrainian refugees in Germany. They find that factors associated with the return intentions of refugees resemble those of labour migrants. In particular, poorer refugees have greater intentions to settle, while those with higher levels of education and previous economic success in Ukraine are more likely to want to eventually return to Ukraine. Greater settlement intentions were found for those refugees who had their core family in Germany, and those with high life satisfaction, contact with Germans, and higher language skills. Another important association can be found between the intention to complete a tertiary degree in Germany and settlement intentions. Economic factors are slightly more important than socio-psychological factors, but Ette, Kosyakova, and Kothe (2026) note that intentions and behaviour are not necessarily the same, even though the two align

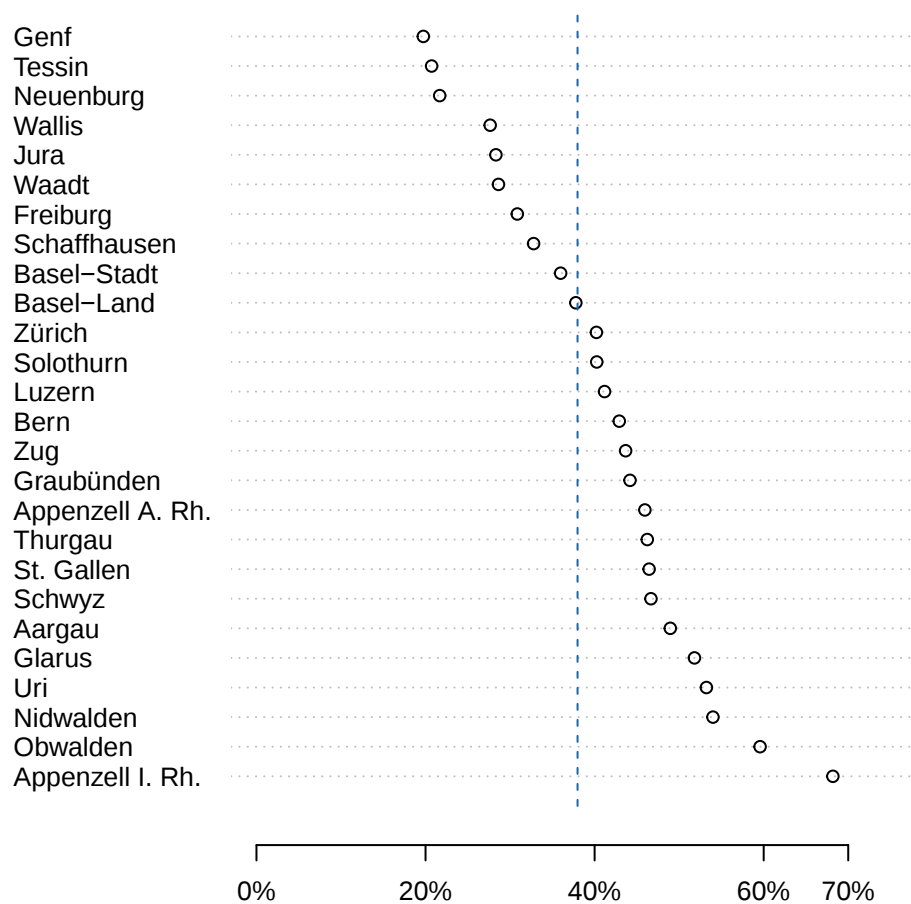


Figure 16: Rate of labor force participation of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. Notes: In percentages. The dashed vertical line gives the average for Switzerland. Source: SEM (2026a).

mann 2022; very similar numbers are cited in a separate study by Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023 with a sample representative of the working-age population of Ukrainian refugees).⁴³ 10 percent did not intend to work because they hoped to return to Ukraine quickly (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022). Fritschi and Ammann Dula (2023) report around 15 percent with a work contract in Switzerland, around 3 percent working elsewhere — notably online — and 2 percent working independently (see also SEM 2023a reporting 1% independent workers, and 2% interns).⁴⁴ A qualitative study attested high motivation to work in 2024 (Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).

As visible in Figure 17, we not only observe differences across cantons, but also different developments over time.⁴⁵ In some cantons, labour force participation increased notably, while in others, developments have been much less pronounced. These differences between cantons reflect the substantial differences between European countries at a larger scale. As with country differences, the differences between cantons in Figure 17 are persistent (OECD 2024).

In Panel A of Figure 18, we can see that the labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees at the cantonal level correlates strongly with the unemployment rate in the canton ($r=-0.81$) (see also Gerny 2024a; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). Combined with the patterns of development in Figure 17, this suggests that the general economic situation of the canton is a major factor for explaining cantonal differences, an association that resonates findings by Foged, Hasager, and Peri (2024) that refugees in general are more likely to find work in areas with a strong economy (Tammaru and Kalm 2024 finds the same for Ukrainian refugees in Estonia; Kosyakova and Brücker 2024 for Germany; Dietrich Thränhardt 2024 for Poland where labour market participation is 93 per cent in economically strong areas, but 50 per cent in other areas; Perchinig et al. 2025 in a comparison between Austria, Germany, and Poland).⁴⁶ Figure 43 in the appendix includes time-series projections for the subsequent 12 months.

These findings for Switzerland correspond to what a comparative study established for country differences within Europe (Kosyakova et al. 2024). Looking at the rate of labour force participation in countries across Europe between Q4 of 2022 and Q1 of 2024, Kosyakova et al. (2024) report large differences between countries. The demographic composition of Ukrainian refugees — age, share of women, children in household — is a major factor

closely.

⁴³For comparison, for labour migrants and students, around a quarter effectively return to their country of origin Bucheli and Fontenla (2023a).

⁴⁴In Poland, Ukrainians had access to the labour market since 2014. Of the approximately 1.3 million Ukrainians in Poland at the beginning of 2022 — before the full-scale invasion — around 90% of them were in employment (Guzi et al. 2024). In Poland, around 50% of working refugees are employed in positions in line with their education and experience, while a substantial part works in positions requiring little skill (Guzi et al. 2024).

⁴⁵It should be borne in mind, however, that these figures show the rate of labour force participation by the canton of residence, not the canton of work (Gerny 2024a). This is a relevant distinction as labour markets span cantonal borders, and it is not uncommon for Ukrainian refugees to work in a different canton from where they live (Gerny 2024a).

⁴⁶In a multiple regression model in Germany, however, the unemployment share in the district (*Kreis*) is associated with only a small reduction in the probability to be in paid work (Ette et al. 2024).

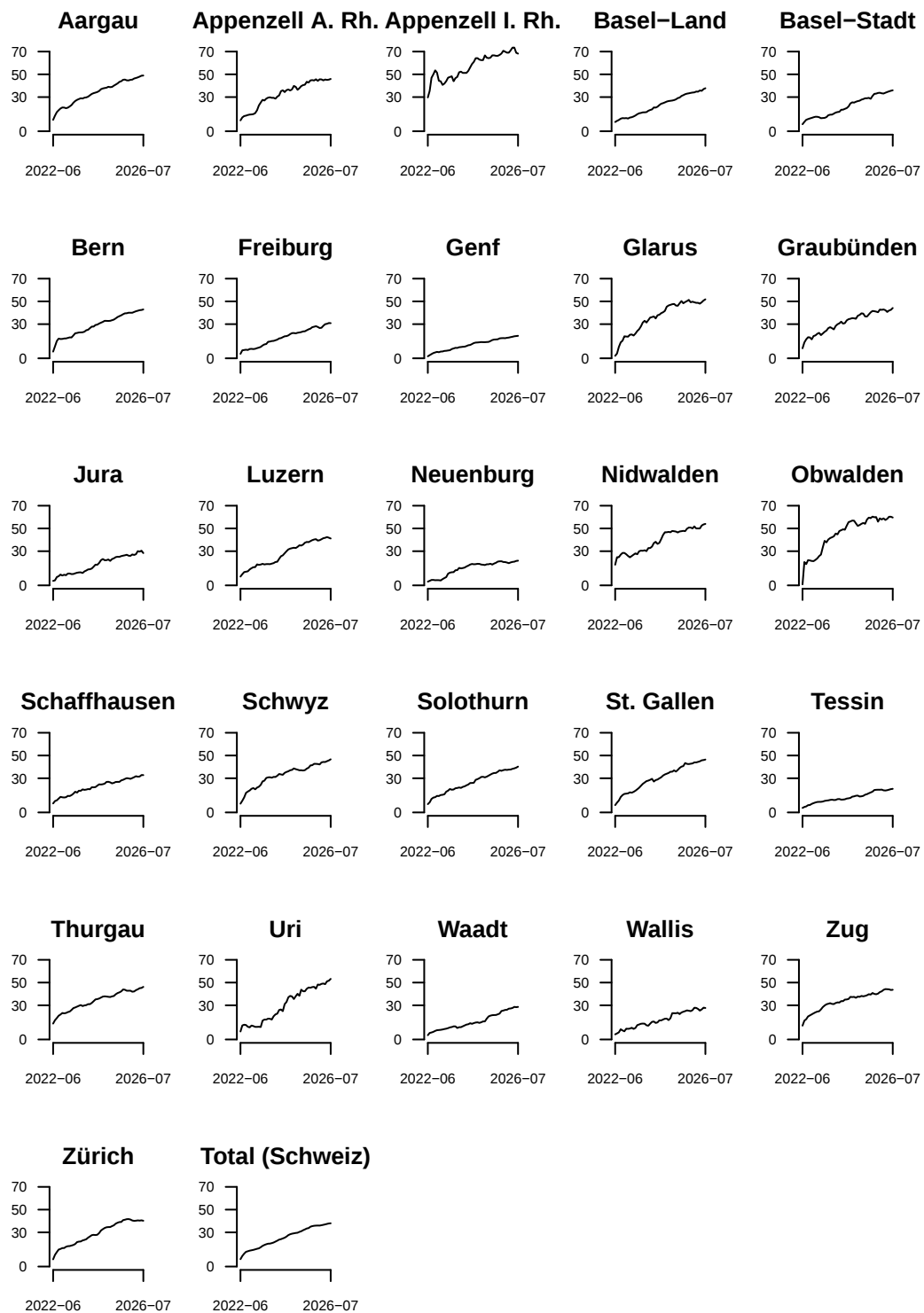


Figure 17: Rate of labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland by canton.
Notes: Development since June 2022, in percentages. Total refers to all cantons combined (Switzerland). Source: SEM (2026a). See Figure 43 in the appendix for time-series projections.

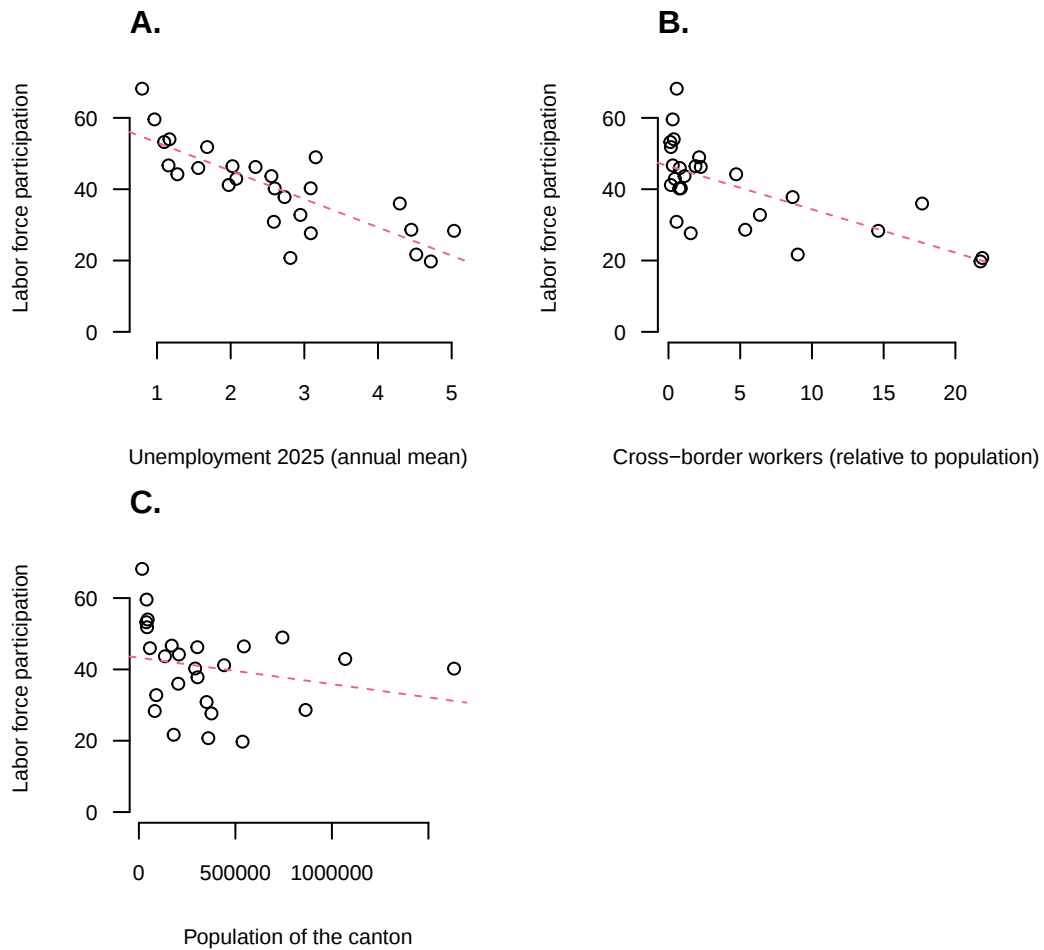


Figure 18: Labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees (most recent data; on the y-axis) compared to: the unemployment rate in 2025, annual mean, using SECO definition (on the x-axis, Panel A); the number of cross-border workers in Q4 of 2025 (relative to the resident population, Panel B); and the population of the canton in 2025 (Panel C). The red dashed lines are OLS regression lines.

for country differences.⁴⁷ Countries where there is demand for low qualified workers have higher rates of labour force participation, whereas unemployment and strong market regulation are associated with lower labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees.⁴⁸ Higher labour force participation can be found in countries with more extensive external childcare and access to healthcare. The majority population also plays a role in that countries where the share of the population speaking English is higher, is associated with greater labour force participation — presumably because this facilitates communication.

In Switzerland, external childcare is frequently mentioned by Ukrainian refugees trying to find paid work. Studies highlight the high cost, and — compared to Ukraine — limited time, especially for young ages (see also Gerny 2024a; Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). In Ukraine, kindergarten care appears to be available for the entire day, which is not the case in all Swiss municipalities (Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). Yet, Ukrainian refugees prefer professional childcare (or childcare by family members) over ad-hoc solutions with friends and neighbours (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Childcare is also cited as a major reason in Germany (Ette et al. 2024; Bellmann, Hohendanner, and Zimmermann 2024; Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn 2025) and Austria (Perching and Perumadan 2023), where the availability of childcare *in principle* may fail in practice (Schmidt 2024). In Denmark, there was a concerted effort to provide childcare to Ukrainian refugees early on because the absence of external childcare was recognized as a major hurdle to labour force participation (Gerny 2024a). In Austria, Perching and Perumadan (2023) identified affordable and accessible childcare as the most important reason for Ukrainian women not to be able to integrate into the labour market. While external childcare is often accessible in cities, it remains a major stumbling block in rural areas (Perching and Perumadan 2023).

Kosyakova et al. (2024), Kosyakova (2025) and Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß (2025) outline a trade-off between fast labour force integration and a focus on integration in the long term, as it has been found for refugees in general in the past. In this sense, countries with extensive integration programmes are associated with lower labour force participation in the short term, but we can expect higher labour force participation in the long term — assuming that Ukrainian refugees (have to or can) stay. Work on the social and economic integration of refugees in Denmark suggests that fast labour force integration may have overwhelmingly negative consequences in the long run (Dustmann, Andersen, and Landersø 2024). In Denmark, social benefits were cut in an attempt to increase labour force participation. One year after the policy change, labour force participation was indeed up, but this was entirely driven by geographical areas with high labour demand. After 5 years, these initial effects have completely disappeared. For areas with low labour demand, the policy change never managed to increase labour force participation — neither in the short nor in the long term (Dustmann, Andersen, and Landersø 2024). Many refugees were pushed into insecure low pay, with the consequence that average household income dropped drastically. This decline in household income is associated with increases in crime, poor educational outcomes, and

⁴⁷ lower labour force participation where refugees are on average older, and where Ukrainian refugees have more children

⁴⁸ For Austria, Wett, Torres, and Steinmayr (2024) report that refugees in areas with greater labour demand are more likely to be in paid work. They also find that refugees in areas with low labour demand are likely to move when they can.

lower well-being among the refugees, suggesting that long-term costs to society may increase (Dustmann, Andersen, and Landersø 2024; Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025).⁴⁹

There are other aspects of the labour market and reception context that are sometimes cited as reasons for differences in labour force participation between cantons. For example, employers may be focused on cross-border workers in some of the cantons, who have the benefit of speaking the local language (Gerny 2024a). The cantons with the highest shares of cross-border workers all have comparatively low labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees, notably Ticino, Geneva, Vaud, and Basel-Stadt (Gerny 2024a). In Panel B of Figure 18, we can see a negative correlation in line with the argument ($r=-0.68$), but we can also see that low labour force participation is not exclusive to cantons with many cross-border workers. In the bottom-left corner of this panel, we can see cantons with few cross-border workers and low labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees. There is no clear evidence that more limited social benefits — which vary notably between cantons — would be an incentive for Ukrainian refugees to take up paid work (Gerny 2024a). The cantons with the highest labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees are small cantons. This is attributed to more flexible labour markets because of the small size and employers knowing each other, as well as the influence of individual employers. In the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden, more than half of the Ukrainian refugees are employed in the same company (Gerny 2024a).⁵⁰ In Panel C of Figure 18, we can see the relationship between population size and labour force participation ($r=-0.23$). While the highest levels of labour force participation are indeed found in cantons with small populations, there are also small cantons with low levels of labour force participation.

Finding work

Summary

Ukrainian refugees are keen to find paid work, but there are several stumbling blocks, including limited language skills.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

⁴⁹ A qualitative study in Germany suggests that the availability of social benefits allows Ukrainian refugees to decline inadequately low-skilled job offers (Schmidt 2024). In Austria, Perching and Perumadan (2023) report that some Ukrainian refugees hold back education because they feel pressed to work, which means delaying education that may lead to higher income after completion.

⁵⁰ A small qualitative study from Czechia suggests that smaller municipalities may have stronger incentives to integrate Ukrainian refugees economically, because they face relatively higher financial burdens if they fail to do so (Mikešová, Čermák, and Špaček 2026). This argument applies to Swiss municipalities where funding from the SEM stops after 5 years, leaving the cantons and municipalities in charge. At the local level, the lack of bureaucracy means that often practical solutions can be found (Mikešová, Čermák, and Špaček 2026), although they are unlikely to scale to broader areas.

In a snowball sample of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Bern in early 2023, finding work was the most commonly stated need of Ukrainian refugees, mentioned by nearly half of all respondents (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; see also Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024; A. Kuznetsova 2024). However, many Ukrainian refugees also report difficulties in finding work (Reinhardt 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025; Kosyakova 2025; A. Kuznetsova 2024).

Looking at country differences within the EU, Thränhardt (2023a) suggests that one-stop procedures and digitalization combined with a prioritization of work may be the reason why economic integration varies. At the same time, the need to obtain a separate work permit (Austria) or administrative hurdles for becoming independent workers (Germany) have been cited (Thränhardt 2023a; Guzi et al. 2024; Schmidt 2024; Leko et al. 2025). Countries with lower economic participation rates often invest in language training, with the aim that the refugees can later work in occupations that better correspond to their skills than low-pay jobs — indeed because of the kind of work they often do, Ukrainian refugees have been compared to ‘guestworkers’ (Welfens 2022). Refugees who take up a low-pay position may later struggle to move into a more adequate job (Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Bellmann, Hohendanner, and Zimmermann 2024; A. Kuznetsova 2024; Leko et al. 2025). However, language skills can also be acquired at work, apparently successfully so in some countries where language requirements were not as strictly followed as in Germany (Thränhardt 2023a). Indeed, some Ukrainian refugees do not enter the labour market because they want to strengthen their language skills to the extent that deskilling becomes *less* likely (Lazarenko 2024; Ette et al. 2024). For others, having a temporary perspective makes them *more* likely to take ‘any’ job — assuming a return to Ukraine in the ‘near’ future (Lazarenko 2024; Macková, Medová, et al. 2024; Bellmann, Hohendanner, and Zimmermann 2024; Kosyakova 2025). At the same time, in Germany, Ukrainian refugees often work in occupations with low language requirements, which may limit the possibility to learn the language while working (Büssing 2023).

A study on refugees in Austria in general casts strong doubts on work first approaches (Degenhardt and Nimczik 2025). Using register data, they show that refugees who quickly entered the labour market in the so-called gig economy — food delivery in their study — subsequently stay in low-skilled and low pay jobs, unable to reach positions similar to refugees who invested in language learning. Degenhardt and Nimczik (2025) show that work first approaches negatively affect human capital investments and reduce job search intensity. This results in greater deskilling and in the medium term the quicker entry into the labour market through the gig economy leads to poorer economic integration. Rather than regarding such jobs as a universal entry, their suitability needs to be assessed on an individual basis (Degenhardt and Nimczik 2025).

A qualitative study in Germany identified different behavioural patterns (Falkenhain et al. 2026). One group of interviewees had strong work intentions and mostly needed an opportunity to find work. They were confident to find work once their German skills improved and diplomas recognized, if necessary. A second group were keen to start working as soon as possible. They felt uncertain about how to go about this, and may well end up stuck in a de-qualified position without adequate support. The largest group in their study were hesitant. They had intentions to work, but these intentions were either weak or vague because their situation in Germany more generally felt uncertain. For this group, the authors identified

employment counselling as an appropriate solution. The last group identified by Falkenhain et al. (2026) did not want to work in Germany. They felt negatively about this, but were overwhelmed by the situation or generally overstrained. Across all profiles they identified, the nature of the labour market with a focus on human capital and formalized diplomas was considered a hindrance to greater uptake of paid work (Falkenhain et al. 2026).

Ehab, Gatskova, and Kosyakova (2026) looks at vocational training (VET), and using a survey experiment suggests that Ukrainian refugees in Germany invest in VET programmes strategically with an eye to a potential return and whether the skills gained in Germany would be useful in Ukraine.

For the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) highlights that the distribution of economic sectors in which Ukrainian refugees work is consistent with the use of social networks and contacts with Ukrainians who lived in Switzerland before the full-scale invasion. This network effect, however, seems to be limited to women (Weingartner 2024).⁵¹ The use of employment agencies to find (temporary) work has declined between 2022 and 2023, suggesting that Ukrainian refugees are better able to find work directly (Weingartner 2024). At the national level, however, it is difficult to find a correlation between the number of Ukrainian residents before the full-scale invasion and labour force participation in the different cantons. Leaving aside cantons with fewer than 100 Ukrainians in 2020, the correlation is negative and inconclusive (-0.15). However, with the small number of Ukrainian residents before the full-scale invasion, any association is difficult to ascertain, notwithstanding the work of Ukrainian associations in facilitating social integration.

For Switzerland, Fritschi and Ammann Dula (2023) note that Ukrainian refugees struggle to enter some sectors where they would be qualified, notably engineering, economics (15% of qualifications), health and social care (8% of qualifications), public administration, and law. This was confirmed by qualitative work on hurdles to find work (Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). This suggests that Ukrainian refugees struggle to use their formal qualifications. Some occupations are protected, however, like many medical professions, making them effectively unattainable to Ukrainian refugees in the short term (Thränhardt 2023a; Weingartner 2024).

For the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) highlights how Ukrainian refugees are concentrated in a few economic sectors: hospitality (restaurants, hotels), education, retail, and

⁵¹For Germany, Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn (2025) find that personal networks can help to find paid work, but also that jobs found this way tend to be associated with dequalification. Such dequalification is also reported in Poland, where labour force participation is higher than in many other European countries (Lewandowski 2025; Kubiciel-Lodzinska and Maj 2025; Faggian, Michelangeli, and Tkach 2025; Thränhardt 2026), as well Austria (Brandstetter, Besic, and Al Ariss 2025) or Germany where many Ukrainian refugees work part-time (Klaus and Deyerler 2025). In Poland, dequalification is often substantive, from managerial level in Ukraine to clerical level in Poland (see also Shkoda and Ovchynnikova 2025; Kubiciel-Lodzinska and Maj 2025). However, Poland made a concerted effort to provide access to medical workers (doctors, nurses, dentist, etc.) and introduced modest language requirements only in 2026 (B1-level, which implies mastery of the main points in specific, work-related situations) (Thränhardt 2026). A small-scale qualitative study in Slovakia found that dequalification is common, but also that paid work often fails to protect households from material deprivation (Papcunová et al. 2026).

personal services.⁵² These are predominantly sectors with few formal skills, although there are also sectors, such as education and IT, with high skill requirements. The concentration of work in low-skilled sectors, however, does not match the high share of university graduated among Ukrainian refugees (Weingartner 2024). Around 22 per cent of the work permits in the canton of Zürich were for gastronomy, a sector where only 4 per cent of the population works. Compared to the general population, Ukrainian refugees are also more commonly found among personal services such as hairdressing, food production (e.g. bakeries), or in private households (Weingartner 2024). This is similar to the situation in Germany, where many Ukrainian refugees work in sectors where they do not utilize their skills (dequalification) – they estimate around 3 out of 4 workers in dequalified situations (Bellmann, Hohendanner, and Zimmermann 2024).⁵³ This has negative consequences for their career and affects their mental health (Tsybuliak et al. 2025). In Poland, around 40 per cent of Ukrainian refugees report dequalification (Lewandowski 2025), where dequalification is often linked with language barriers (Kubiciel-Lodzinska and Maj 2025).⁵⁴

For refugees in Switzerland in general, Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo (2023) shows that unemployment among refugees has negative cumulative effects on subsequent employment. It is unclear to what extent these results transfer to Ukrainian refugees who do not seek employment. The presence of a co-ethnic network is not associated with faster labour market integration for refugees in Switzerland in general (Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo 2023; OECD 2024; see also Foged, Hasager, and Peri 2024; Leitner 2026), whereas more negative attitudes in the canton are associated with somewhat higher employment rates, although it is not clear why this is the case. In general, the co-ethnic networks of refugees are often unable to mobilize the necessary resources for adequate economic integration (Kosyakova and Kogan 2022). More useful is contact with the general population (Kosyakova and Kogan 2022), which may be facilitated by cultural events.⁵⁵

⁵² A newspaper article drawing to a large extent on the study by Weingartner (2024) identified restaurants and crèches (*Kita*) as a major work sector for Ukrainian refugees (Trachsel 2024).

⁵³ A case in point are Ukrainian academics who often find it difficult to continue their research abroad, lost relevant networks, and have difficulties in accessing resources because of limited institutional support

⁵⁴ Kohlenberger et al. (2023) finds that dequalification and low-pay jobs are particularly common for Ukrainian refugees in Eastern Europe, where workers report stress and uncertainty (Kubiciel-Lodzinska and Maj 2025). To overcome dequalification Yalova et al. (2025) suggest online platforms for self-paced instructor-led learning, for which they see great potential in the IT sector – even though this sector may be less affected by dequalification than others. For their sample across different European countries, Canada, and the US, Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) estimate that around half of the Ukrainian refugees in work actually found work outside their field of expertise.

⁵⁵ For refugees in Switzerland in general, Chiriatti (2023) identified obstacles to labour force integration that echo those put forward for Ukrainian refugees: lack of adequate language skills, not knowing the institutions, lack of money to pay for education, or an unstable legal status (permit F) (see also Arcaio, Parroco, and Mendola 2025). Moreover, obstacles include a lack of confidence, discouragement by caseworkers, and the experience of discrimination. For Germany, Arnold and Neuburger (2025) report discrimination of Roma from Ukraine by caseworkers and bureaucrats in centres where refugees are initially help (see also Eredics 2024 on discrimination of Roma in Hungary and Poland; see also Laederich 2026). In some cases, refugees are too old to start apprenticeships, making it difficult to transfer skills to the Swiss labour market. Chiriatti (2023) also identified support factors: optimism, motivation, knowledge of the Swiss work culture, emotional and social support from colleagues and caseworkers, as well as a more stable legal status (permit B, see also Ruedin et al. (2022)). Using a factorial survey experiment in Germany, Norway, Poland, and Romania, Buttler et al. (2025) showed that Ukrainian refugees face discrimination. Simply providing more information on the candidates did not lead to lower levels of discrimination (see also Zschirnt, Lacroix, and Ruedin 2025).

Fritschi et al. (2023) calculated indices to capture the labour market potential of Ukrainian refugees in autumn 2022. They found exceptionally high levels of motivation to work, high levels of education and health.⁵⁶ In contrast, language and social support were ranked much lower — highlighting the main stumbling blocks for economic integration. In a snowball sample of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Bern in early 2023, the most common sectors of work were cleaning, restaurants, construction, and transportation (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023). Using data from ZEMIS,⁵⁷ in early 2024 the largest sectors across Switzerland were: restaurants (22%), IT and consulting (19%), personal services (7%), teaching and education (5%), and retail (4%) (SEM 2025a).

For the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) finds that some economic sectors that experience an acute shortage of skilled workers are more likely to hire Ukrainian refugees, in particular IT, restaurants and hotels. For other sectors, language requirements and the formal recognition of diplomas means that few Ukrainian refugees are hired (Weingartner 2024).⁵⁸

Integration measures for immigrants to find work are also available to Ukrainian refugees (SEM 2023c). In March 2023, 10 cantons offered job coaches for adults seeking work, and 12 cantons offered a limited version of job coaches. Depending on the canton, these offers are integrated in those by job centres (RAV) (SEM 2023c), with clear guidelines encouraging the cantons to do so as of January 2024: the aim is to integrate support for Ukrainian refugees into ordinary structures as much as possible (SEM 2024) — support structures created for the general population.⁵⁹ The implementation of these support measures, and the extent to which they are accessible to Ukrainian refugees, varies a great deal between cantons. Some cantons have actively contacted Ukrainian refugees in an effort to support them in finding paid work, and approaches to individualize support also vary greatly between cantons (Gerny 2024a).

In a carefully carried out high school thesis, Vera Mezzera examined patterns of socio-economic integration in urban and rural areas (Prokopchuk 2026). Drawing on interviews and survey data, she highlights that in urban areas finding work and the recognition of diplomas were considered the most pressing issues. In contrast, in rural areas, social isolation and discrimination were felt more. Yet, across areas, language skills, social contacts,

In contrast, they find that inclusive hiring practices and mentoring/buddy programmes are effective ways to reduce discrimination in hiring (see also Lukas et al. 2022). Along this line, Szkudlarek et al. (2026) highlights that multinational enterprises (MNE) are in a good position to provide employment to skilled refugees.

⁵⁶ This high motivation to work can be found in all European countries (Dietrich Thränhardt 2024).

⁵⁷ *Zentrales Migrationsinformationssystem* (ZEMIS) is the register of foreigners and asylum seekers living or working in Switzerland, including Status S.

⁵⁸ A study in Austria has followed highly qualified Ukrainian women, and highlights that in May 2026, the recognition of diplomas remains a major issue for the refugees (Standard 2026). While many found paid work, they cannot use their full skills. Part of this is due to language skills, where level B2 is insufficient for some highly skilled occupations, notably in healthcare. The study also highlights the high costs of having diplomas recognized and language courses, which can easily cost €4000. Internships were a common path into paid work (Standard 2026).

⁵⁹ In Poland, Ukrainian refugees can register at unemployment offices under the same conditions as Polish workers looking for work (Guzi et al. 2024), although there is additional support particular for refugees, like language learning.

and finding work are three pillars of integration — factors the thesis recognizes as areas where the reception context and the local population can play a supportive role (Prokopchuk 2026).

The most common way to find work for Ukrainian refugees was through job adverts on the internet (around 40%), followed by help from friends and relatives (around 30%). Host families and agencies play a limited role, while job centres (RAV) are not considered useful by Ukrainian refugees (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). In November 2024, it was reported that only around 7.6 percent of Ukrainian refugees without employment are registered at job centres (RAV) (Stüdli 2024). There are hurdles, such as insufficient language skills, or lack of external childcare. A registration at a job centre does not mean a guaranteed job (Stüdli 2024), and Ukrainian refugees may find the offer insufficiently adapted to their needs (Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). Experts emphasize the need for coordination across involved actors — municipalities, integration programmes, and job centres (Stüdli 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).

Studying refugees in Denmark between 1987 and 2008, Foged, Hasager, and Peri (2024) show that language training is beneficial for finding work, but also that refugees benefit from being placed in strong labour markets — with the implication that we cannot expect refugees to do equally well in all regions (see also Tammaru and Kalm 2024 for an equivalent finding for Ukrainian refugees in Estonia). Foged, Hasager, and Peri (2024) also show that cutting welfare payments (in an attempt to incentivize labour-force participation) does not increase the chances of refugees to actually finding work. Similarly, Foged, Hasager, and Peri (2024) find that being placed near where there are many other refugees does not increase chances of finding work, countering the common assumption that ethnic networks could help refugees enter the labour market. More specific to Ukrainian refugees, Tammaru and Kalm (2024) show that Ukrainian refugees do not seem to benefit from the presence of Ukrainian immigrants in the region they are placed: labour-force participation is not higher. In contrast, policies that match refugees with sectors that experience shortages have at least short-term effects (Foged, Hasager, and Peri 2024). This is compatible with the correlation between labour force participation and unemployment shown in Figure 18.

In the Netherlands, Bekkers et al. (2024) studied whether volunteering could be a path to work for refugees. They studied refugees from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, and found that most refugees were unfamiliar with the notion of volunteering. Most of them only volunteered once, and language barriers were identified as an important limitation. Those who volunteered did not do so to find (paid) work, but because they sought social connections. As such, volunteering can bring about positive experiences for the refugees, but seems unlikely a major path towards work (see also Bader and Mugglin 2024).

A study in Poland compared Ukrainian refugees with Ukrainian migrants who moved before the full-scale invasion. They find no discernible difference between the two groups of Ukrainians in their likelihood of becoming entrepreneurs (David et al. 2024). However, in both groups, men were more likely to be entrepreneurs (David et al. 2024), suggesting that there will be comparably fewer entrepreneurs among the Ukrainian refugees because they are dominated by Ukrainian women fleeing the country.

Conditions of work

Summary

Ukrainian refugees who find work tend to be employed and work at a high percentage, with women working at a lower percentage. The most common sectors are hospitality (declining over time) as well as IT and consulting.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH
	
	

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Depending on the industry and sector, the workload of Ukrainian refugees differs greatly. In June 2023, the average workload in the construction sector was just above 90% FTE,⁶⁰ while for domestic services it was 37% (SEM 2023a). Salaries varied greatly according to sector and industry, with a standardized average salary of just over 4,600 CHF (SEM 2023a). By June 2025, these differences largely remained in place,⁶¹ with significant differences between sectors (SEM 2026b). The standardized average salary was slightly higher, at 4,571 CHF (SEM 2026b).

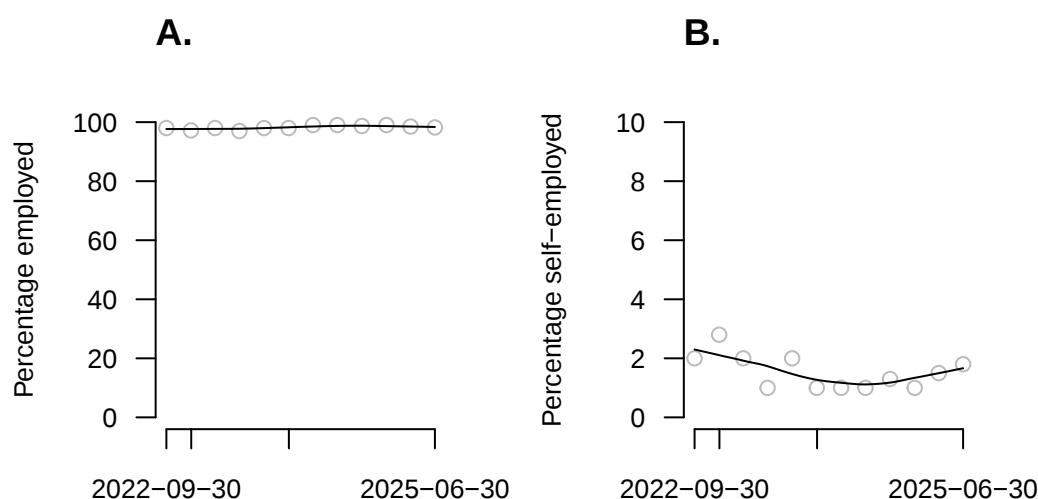


Figure 19: Percentage of Ukrainian refugees in work who are employed (Panel A) versus self-employed (Panel B). The panels are on a different scale to make visible the changes in self-employment. Quarterly data from ZEMIS, last updated end of June 2025. The line is LOESS-smoothed. Source: SEM (2025b), SEM (2026b).

In Figure 19, we can see that the majority of Ukrainian refugees in work are so as employees. This number includes an increasing share of young Ukrainian refugees in an apprenticeship

⁶⁰ full-time equivalent

⁶¹ In June 2025, the highest FTE was in the food industry, with well above 85%, while domestic services remained just under 40%.

and individuals in an internship. These two categories amounted to around 19 per cent at the end of June 2025 (SEM 2026b) – 6 per cent as interns and 13 per cent as apprentices. The sectors with the largest numbers of Ukrainian apprentices in Switzerland are: gastronomy, consulting and IT, healthcare, welfare, personal services, and education. The share of self-employed in Panel B has remained small throughout the period.⁶²

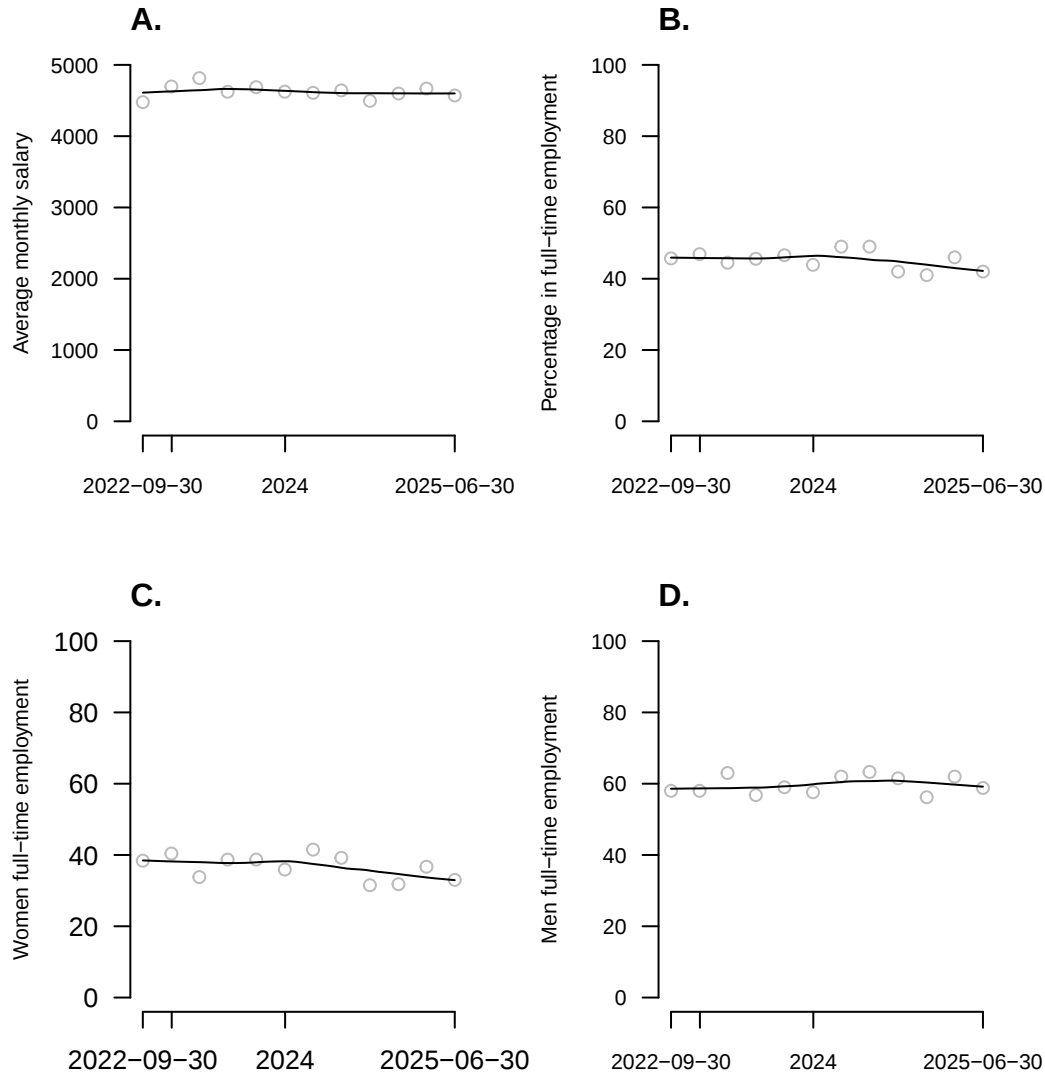


Figure 20: Mean standardized salary of Ukrainian refugees (Panel A), and percentage of Ukrainian refugees in full-time work (who are employed) as opposed to part-time work, Panel B). Panel C for women, Panel D for men. Quarterly data from ZEMIS, last updated end of June 2025. The line is LOESS-smoothed. Source: SEM (2025b), SEM (2026b).

The average standardized income⁶³ of Ukrainian refugees in work has not changed sub-

⁶² A small qualitative study on self-employed refugees in Finland suggest that they can contribute to society through cosmopolitan activities (Ivanova-Gongne et al. 2026).

⁶³ Salaries are standardized to 100% FTE to make them comparable before the average is calculated.

stantially since 2022 (Figure 20). The figure does not show the large differences between economic sectors (SEM 2026a), although the trends within sectors have also been stable. Panels B to D in Figure 20 show that the share of Ukrainian refugees in full-time employment is largely stable. The difference between Panel C and Panel D makes it clear that among Ukrainian refugees, women are less likely to work at 100 per cent.

Of the Ukrainian refugees who work, not all can live free from social benefits (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). This may be due to part-time work or low wages, but also affects large families, or families where only one adult is in paid work — some of the interviewees in Eser Davolio et al. (2024) report salaries that are substantially lower than what Swiss citizens would get in the same company and position.

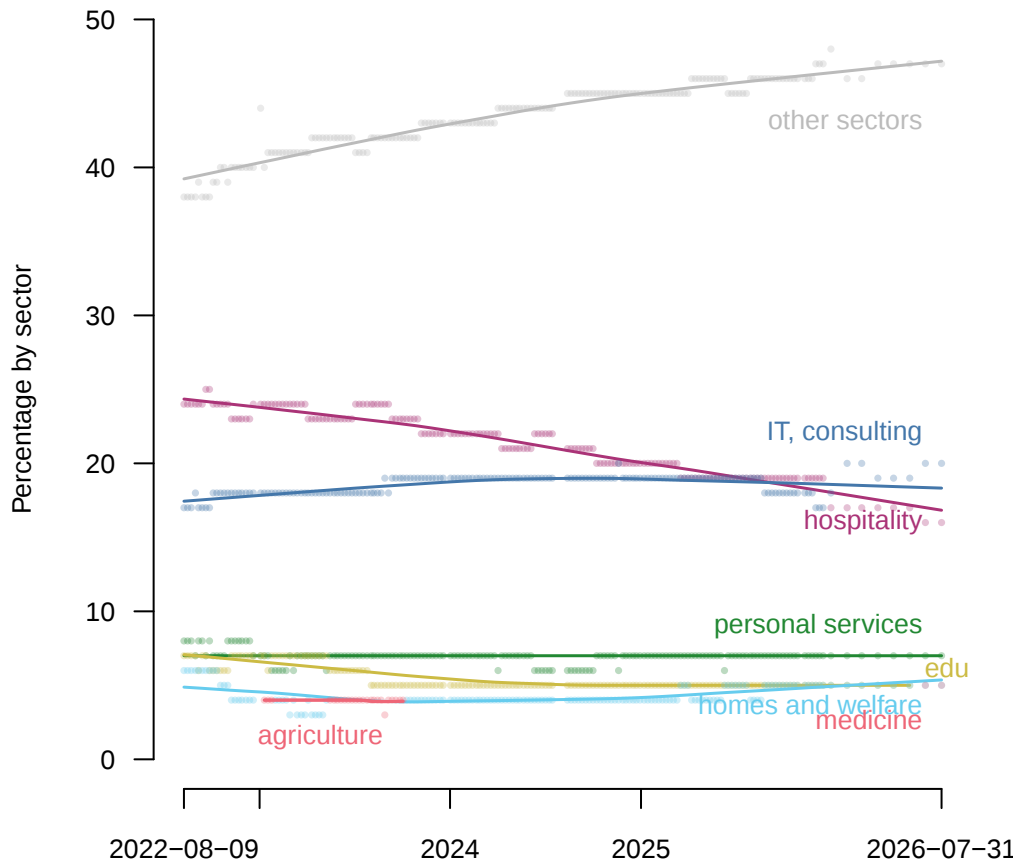


Figure 21: Largest sectors in which Ukrainian refugees work. Weekly data from ZEMIS. Data are rounded to whole percentage points in the reports provided by the SEM. Agriculture and homes and welfare were not consistently around the biggest sectors. Solid lines are LOESS-smoothed. The abbreviation 'edu' stands for education. Source: SEM (2026a).

Looking at the biggest sectors in which Ukrainian refugees find work in Figure 21, we see two dominant sectors: the hospitality sector (restaurants, hotels), and IT and consulting. Of these, over time, the hospitality sector has become less common over time, while IT and consulting have become slightly more important. Consistently among the five most common

sectors are personal services (slight decreasing trend) and education (stable after a slight decrease in the first year). To complete the five most common sectors, work in homes and welfare has been stable after an initial decline, while agriculture appeared as the fifth most sector for some weeks in 2023. At the top of the figure, we can see the increasing important of other sectors, suggesting a diversification overall.

For Austria, Guzi et al. (2024) reports that Ukrainian refugees are concentrated in three sectors: accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail, and manufacturing. While many positions in accommodation and food services are ‘traditional’ entry positions, there is a labour shortage in this sector after Covid-19 (Guzi et al. 2024). For Germany, Schmidt (2024) reports that limited language skills often imply that Ukrainian refugees are limited in the tasks they can carry out, which increases feelings of dequalification.

Health and work


Summary

It is rare for Ukrainian refugees not to work because of poor health, but the war is a source of stress that affects their work performance

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In autumn 2022, around 3 percent of Ukrainian refugees mentioned health as a reason not to work (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 11). However, it is recognized that trauma can greatly affect the ability to effectively carry out paid work, something confirmed in the case of Ukrainian refugees (Perching and Perumadan 2023; Arcaio, Parroco, and Mendola 2025; Maj et al. 2025). This relationship has not been studied in Switzerland in particular, but there is no reason to think it would be different. Taking a broader perspective, Kosyakova et al. (2024) highlight that in countries where access to healthcare is better, Ukrainian refugees are more likely to be in paid work.

Looking at refugees in Germany in general, Goßner, Jaschke, and Kosyakova (2025) finds that those in good health are more likely to be in paid work. They also show that better health is associated with a greater likelihood to participate in language courses, which in itself is an important predictor of labour force participation for refugees.

In Denmark, Foged, Karstoft, and Zink (2026) surveyed Ukrainian refugees shortly after arrival to test for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They compared Ukrainian refugees to members of the general population without PTSD to demonstrate that trauma-related mental health is associated with lower employment probability. In fact, around a quarter of the native–refugee employment gap one to two years after arrival can be explained by PTSD. This explanation is about twice as important as the statistical effects of

English proficiency, and comparable to the effect of having been in employment before leaving the Ukraine (Foged, Karstoft, and Zink 2026). Among those refugees who found paid work, those with PTSD work fewer hours (Foged, Karstoft, and Zink 2026).

Gender and work

Summary

The labour force participation of Ukrainian women remains lower than that of men. This is partly due to women working more often in the social domain, where language requirements are comparatively high and the recognition of diplomas more complicated than in other domains.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In terms of gender, for a long time, the share of men with Status S in paid work was substantially higher than for women (SEM 2026a). In Germany, a similar gender difference could be found Thränhardt (2026). For temporally admitted persons in Switzerland (permit F), Tamò-Gafner (2022) noted that women are less likely to be in paid work than men.⁶⁴

In Figure 22, we can see that gender differences in labour force participation could have been observed since June 2022 when the data series starts, and they have not changed substantially between autumn 2022 and the end of 2025 (see also Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). At the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026, however, gender gap seems to have greatly diminished — to the extent that by the end of March it barely exists any more. The diminishing differences are caused by the labour force participation of men no longer increasing, which may be linked to the recent arrival of Ukrainian men who may not yet have found paid work. Before this, the gender differences in labour force participation were consistent — over three years no substantial widening or narrowing can be observed.⁶⁵

⁶⁴This is commonly the case, as outlined by Dumont and Lauren (2023) or Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo (2025). In Germany, Hartmann and Kosyakova (2026) compare labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees with that of refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) in earlier years. They show that differences in labour force participation can to a large extent be explained by differences in pre-migration human capital, but also post-migration investments in skills, care-giving responsibilities — which tend to affect women more than men — and legal conditions (Hartmann and Kosyakova 2026). They highlight that the biggest differences are in terms of entry into the labour market. Once in regular paid work, employment gaps tend to disappear (Hartmann and Kosyakova 2026). For the US, Akee, Chin, and Crown (2026) show that pay and employment gaps tend to disappear for refugees within around 10 years after arrival, although it is unclear to what extent these results apply to Europe or even Switzerland.

⁶⁵A study on the labour market integration of refugees in Austria — carried out just before the arrival of Ukrainian refugees — finds lower labour force participation for female refugees in general. While higher levels of education are associated with a higher chance of finding paid work for (female) refugees, it is particularly in the countryside where refugee women find it more difficult to find work (Baumgartner, Palinkas, and Bilger 2023). Work on refugees in Germany in general suggests that the gender gap in labour force participation

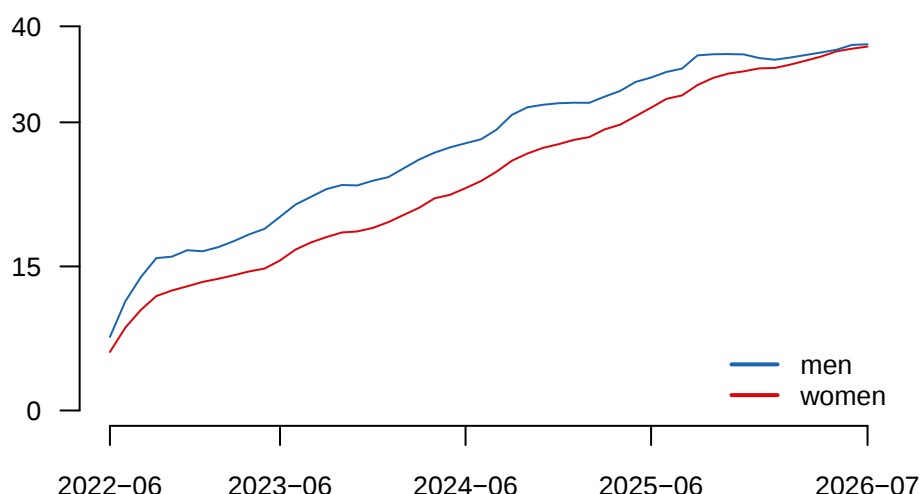


Figure 22: Labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland by gender. Source: SEM (2026a).

Among the Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, there are many women with children who are responsible for care work on their own (Caritas 2023; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). This aspect may explain why Ukrainian *women* are relatively less likely to work.⁶⁶ Many Ukrainian women are effectively single-parents. In addition, because of the war, they are reluctant to leave childcare to other people (keyword trauma). Moreover, the focus on an eventual return puts pressures on Ukrainian women to look after the children themselves so that the children can return to Ukrainian society more easily. This is reflected in the many Ukrainian children who are expected to follow school in two countries at the same time (Schmidt 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). Another stumbling block mentioned was the inaccessibility of external childcare, which with traditional gender roles affects women more than men (21% of responses, Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023; see also Kosyakova and Kogan 2022; Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; Belousova 2024; Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Perching and Perumadan 2023; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). Dumont and Lauren (2023) highlight care burdens as a major reason for the lower rate of labour force participation of women: many of them have fled without their partners, making them effectively single-parents when it comes to care duties. These care duties may interact with low certainty about the future, which can lead to a decision not to seek paid work (Dumont and Lauren 2023). It should be borne in mind, that most Ukrainian women cannot rely on their parents for child care, which means that for them an important pillar of child care for Swiss parents remains elusive (Zanasi et al. 2023; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). For these reasons, Dumont and Lauren (2023) suggest integration measures targeting Ukrainian refugees, but also generic labour-market integration programmes — noting that gender-specific needs were taken into consideration during the immediate reception phase, but not when it comes to longer-term (economic) integration (Dumont and Lauren 2023).⁶⁷

often declines after the first year (Kosyakova 2025).

⁶⁶ A qualitative study in Germany suggests that this is actually a major factor (Schmidt 2024).

⁶⁷ Drawing on a survey among refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria living in Austria, Ortlieb et al. (2024) outlines common theories for the gender gap in employment for refugees. Even though refugees in

In the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) highlights that older refugees and women tend to be less often in paid work. For Ukrainian women, the association with age is stronger, which means that young women are more likely to be in paid work than older men (this is the opposite to what can be observed for recognized refugees and temporarily admitted persons (Status F)). Overall, once considering the duration of stay in Switzerland, there are no substantial differences in labour force participation for Ukrainian refugees and other refugees in the canton of Zürich (Weingartner 2024).

For Estonia, Tammaru and Kalm (2024) report that Ukrainian women with children are less likely to end up in paid work, while Ukrainian men with children are more likely to do so. They attribute this to the (lack of) availability of affordable daycare. The absence of daycare can also negatively affect participation in language courses. For Germany, Kosyakova and Brücker (2024) report that the high share of single mothers with children is a major factor preventing more Ukrainian women from entering the labour market. In Switzerland, where daycare is less developed, this factor may therefore play an even bigger role (see also Perchinig et al. 2025 a description of this finding in Austria, Germany, and Poland).

For Germany, Belousova (2024) highlights that compared to Ukrainian men, Ukrainian women are more likely to work in the social domain, which brings challenges not found to the same degree for IT or engineering. In the social domain, language requirements are often higher, and the recognition of diplomas in this domain tends to be more difficult in Germany (see also Weingartner 2024; Ette et al. 2024; Perchinig et al. 2025). For the Czech Republic, Guzi et al. (2024) reports that administration around work permits and the recognition of diplomas slow down labour market integration for Ukrainian refugees (see also OECD 2024).

In a comparative study, Kosyakova et al. (2024) highlight particular challenges for Ukrainian women: Their work experience is often in sectors that are regulated in the country of origin, such as healthcare or education — sectors that are heavily regulated in Switzerland and where cantonal differences also come into play (see also Weingartner 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).⁶⁸ This means that questions of the formal recognition of diplomas are more important than for refugees seeking work in unregulated sectors, which can be complicated if there are different paths to recognition when diplomas do not have direct equivalents and may count to different diplomas in the country of residence. These are factors that encourage dequalification or skill underutilization.⁶⁹ For Ukrainian women, access to affordable

general are ill prepared for their move (language skills, certificates, specific training), this is particularly the case for women. Gender norms also play a role, where it is easier for women to assume a role at home, which also means that women are more likely to forego their skills. Norms that associate women with care, tend to steer refugee women towards jobs in the care sector, which are poorly paid and offer limited career prospects. Ortlieb et al. (2024) further states that women tend to have less contact with the majority population than men do. Due to these factors, refugee women tend to receive lower pay, and end up in temporary positions as a means to enter the labour market. Ortlieb et al. (2024) also finds suggestive evidence that the gender gap may be larger in highly skilled occupations.

⁶⁸ This includes notably psychiatrists whose Ukrainian diploma are not recognized as equivalent, contributing to a shortfall of psychiatrists speaking Ukrainian in Switzerland (Bäni 2024; Vogel 2025). However, there are reports that some Ukrainian refugees overestimate their diplomas and underestimate other factors such as relevant work experience or language skills (Vogel 2025).

⁶⁹ For Poland, Maj et al. (2024) report that prospects of dequalification negatively affect the mental health of female Ukrainian refugees (see also Dustmann, Andersen, and Landersø 2024).

external childcare can also be a major challenge (Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Kosyakova et al. 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).

Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo (2025) follow all refugees in Switzerland 1998 to 2018 using register data to examine gender gaps. They highlight the importance of the country of origin in what can be understood as cultural differences or the importance of socialization. These differences are persistent over time. What is more, initial unemployment is associated with lower labour force participation subsequently (Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo 2025), but they generally find a positive association for the presence of co-ethnic immigrants in the canton. The attitudes of the local population are also associated with the gender gap in employment: In cantons where the population revealed negative attitudes to women participating in the labour force, refugee women are less likely to be in work than in cantons with more positive attitudes (Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo 2025). Because refugees are assigned to cantons, these differences can be attributed to the attitudes of the local population.⁷⁰

Duration of stay in Switzerland and work

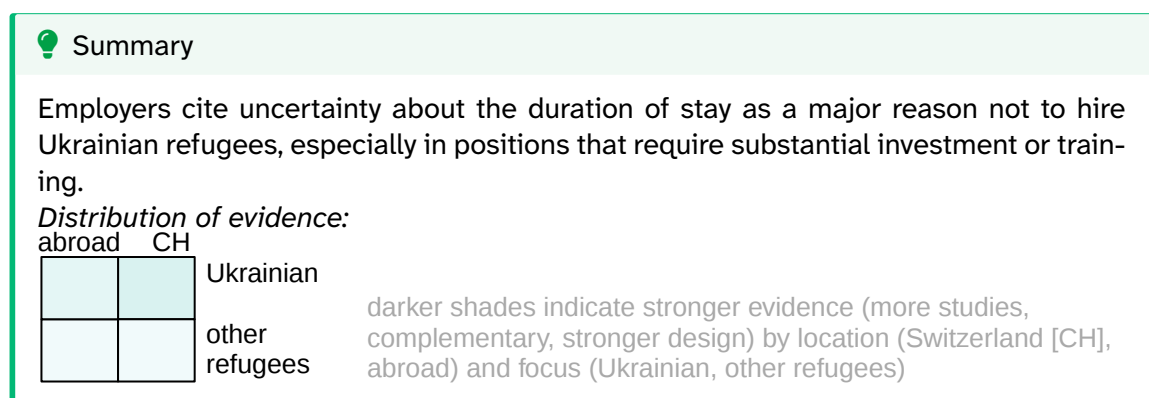


Figure 23 shows that a longer period of residence in Switzerland is associated with higher levels of labour force participation Kohlenberger (2026). The World Economic Forum (2023) highlights that many employers assume that Ukrainian refugees would only stay [in Switzerland] for a limited period, and therefore do not consider them for permanent roles (see also Guzi et al. 2024; Perching and Perumadan 2023; Perchinig et al. 2025; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025; Kohlenberger et al. 2023). However, it is foreseeable that many Ukrainian refugees will not — because they cannot — return to Ukraine in the near future; even after the war ends, livelihoods may have been destroyed and need time to rebuild (Troxler 2023; Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; Ruedin et al. 2019; Masuhr and Zogg 2022; Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Stavrou 2025b). Since 1 March 2023, Ukrainian refugees pursuing an apprenticeship have the right to stay in Switzerland until completion of the apprenticeship, irrespective of when Status S will end (SEM 2023c; Pétremand 2024; Huter and Marti 2024).

⁷⁰ Müller, Pannatier, and Viarengo (2025) also confirm earlier findings that speaking the language of the canton is associated with higher labour force participation (see also Auer 2018), although this factor is not relevant for most Ukrainian refugees.

This was done to give certainty to both the refugees and the employers.⁷¹ Such certainty about the stay can improve economic integration (Brücker, Goßner, Hauptmann, Jaschke, Kassam, and Stepanok 2022; Brücker, Goßner, Hauptmann, Jaschke, Kassam, Kosyakova, et al. 2022) and is not provided for temporarily admitted persons (Huter and Marti 2024).

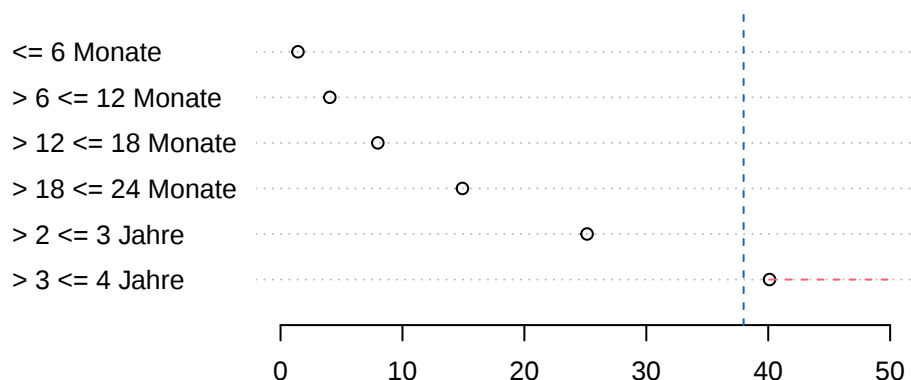


Figure 23: Labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland by duration of stay in Switzerland. Notes: latest data available, in percentages. Not shown are individuals with a residence in Switzerland over 4 years. The blue dashed vertical line gives the average for Switzerland. The red dashed horizontal line indicates the difference to 50% for Ukrainian refugees who lived in Switzerland for at least 3 years, a target declared by the government in May 2025 to be reached by the end of 2025 (which was missed). A target of 40% across all Ukrainian refugees by the end of 2024 was missed (Nau 2025). Source: SEM (2026a).

Employers identified the limited duration of the Status S as a hurdle for hiring Ukrainian refugees, notably for positions where investments and training are larger, such as traineeships or internships (Craviolini and Hermann 2022; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025; Eser Davolio et al. 2024). The limited duration makes planning difficult for employers, and may be a reason why Ukrainian refugees often work in jobs which do not correspond to their (academic) skills. This also applies to language skills which may be insufficient at the time of potentially hiring a Ukrainian refugee (Perching and Perumadan 2023; Bellmann, Hohendanner, and Zimmermann 2024). In such cases, from the employer's perspective, it makes a difference if a refugee can stay less than a year or a substantially longer period.

Compared to internally displaced persons in Ukraine, Shyroka et al. (2023) reports better access to employment and education for Ukrainian refugees in European countries.

⁷¹As of March 2023, the rate of labour force participation among Ukrainian refugees aged 19 to 25 was 19.4%, although the ZEMIS data cannot identify how many of them are in an apprenticeship or in other kinds of paid work.

Language barriers in the labour market

Summary

Employers cite language barriers as a major reason not to hire Ukrainian refugees.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In a survey of employers in summer 2022, language skills were identified as the largest hurdle for hiring Ukrainian refugees (Craviolini and Hermann 2022). This corresponds to the experience of Ukrainian refugees cited in Varela (2023), Faggian, Michelangeli, and Tkach (2025), and Guzi et al. (2024), and the situation in Austria, Italy, Germany, as well as Central- and Eastern Europe (Leko et al. 2025). The studies by Efionayi-Mäder et al. (2025) and A. Kuznetsova (2024) came to the same conclusion in Switzerland.⁷² Interestingly, those employers who had already hired Ukrainian refugees when interviewed were less likely to highlight language skills — but this may be a selection effect. Language skills were mentioned especially by restaurants and related businesses, as well as in health and social care, notably the two sectors where employers generally see most potential for Ukrainian refugees (Craviolini and Hermann 2022). Similarly, for Germany an association between language skills and labour force participation can be observed (Brücker et al. 2023; Kosyakova 2025; Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025) — though a causal or temporal direction cannot be asserted.

In an analysis of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) finds that Ukrainian refugees are more common in economic sectors where language barriers tend to be lower. This can be because language requirements are very low, or because communication in English is possible. Weingartner (2024) cites teaching assistants or researchers in high schools as examples of the latter.

Language skills are also cited by Ukrainian refugees as a reason why they think they do not find paid work (Hett and Ruedin 2025). Language is the most commonly stated reason, well ahead of a lack of local experience, and qualifications not being recognized. Less common was the sentiment that there were too few (adequate) jobs in the region, or finding information to find work (Hett and Ruedin 2025).

In a global review, the World Economic Forum (2023) suggests skills-first approaches to reduce reliance on language in hiring. They cite examples where interviews were conducted with interpreters, or IKEA Switzerland where instead of an interview a five-day trial period was used for Ukrainian refugees. The intuition is to offer language support while working, such as by having language buddies. Language buddies are co-workers with good language skills who are trained to support refugees in language acquisition on the job (Lukas et al. 2022). No professional background in language teaching is required, but language buddies

⁷²as do studies on refugees in general, e.g. Bildung für alle jetzt! and Flüchtlingsparlament Schweiz (2026)

are instructed via online courses how language learning can be facilitated, and they receive training in intercultural communication. Initially developed for hotels and gastronomy, such programmes have now successfully been applied in various sectors across industry (Lukas et al. 2022). Such programmes not only enhance language skills, but also social competence (Lukas et al. 2022). Although they encouraged creative solutions on the part of the employers, the experts at a round table in March 2024 recognized that these can only be part of a wider effort of matching Ukrainian refugees and employers (NCCR Roundtable 2024).⁷³

While language courses are offered, they are often not intensive enough to allow the rapid progress needed to encourage labour market integration (Troxler 2023; Belousova, Funke, and Ihlau 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025; A. Kuznetsova 2024).⁷⁴ Similarly, when employers insist on near-native language levels for recently arrived refugees, Ukrainian teenagers entering the labour market will find it difficult to find work despite large economic demand.⁷⁵ Delaying language requirements or assuming that customers will be tolerant given the circumstances would open the economic potential of Ukrainian refugees (Troxler 2023), but employers may hesitate if they regard the residence status as short-term (Perching and Perumadan 2023; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).

More than half of the Ukrainian refugees looking for work (56%) cited insufficient language skills as the main reason (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023; Fritschi et al. 2023; see also Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024; Mubi 2024; Belousova, Funke, and Ihlau 2024; A. Kuznetsova 2024; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). In fact, by autumn 2022, around 80 percent of Ukrainian refugees have started or begun language courses, but more than half indicated that they needed more training and support (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023).

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that the most common language at work is German, followed by English (Eser Davolio et al. 2023).⁷⁶ Few found work in Ukrainian or Russian (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). In small and medium-sized companies, English language skills are often of little use, and in the German-speaking area of Switzerland, Swiss German skills are often demanded (Gerny 2024a).

⁷³In Germany, language skills are associated with higher labour market participation Kosyakova and Brücker (2024); Belousova, Funke, and Ihlau (2024). Ukrainian refugees across Europe report that language requirements are a major hurdle, and in their view may be too high in many jobs (Thiollet et al. 2025; Hett and Ruedin 2025).

⁷⁴Work on the impact of language courses on labour market integration of Syrian refugees in Germany indeed suggests that some courses may not be intensive enough to help refugees find work. Other than the intensity of the programme, a certificate at the end of the course may make a difference (Marbach et al. 2024). What is more, in many cases, the level of the courses is insufficient for the labour market. For example, Dietrich Thränhardt (2024) reports that typically courses are not offered beyond level B2, while in many occupations — especially in the social domain — at least level C1 is required (see also Belousova, Funke, and Ihlau 2024 on language requirements in Germany). For Germany, Belousova, Funke, and Ihlau (2024) reports that Ukrainian refugees who fail a language exam often have to wait for a long period until they can resit the exam.

⁷⁵This pattern can be found in all European countries where access to occupations is regulated (Dietrich Thränhardt 2024).

⁷⁶Goñda (2024) warn against relying too much on ad-hoc surveys like they are often used at the onset of conflicts because these purposive samples are likely to miss important parts of the target population, including the most vulnerable parts of the refugees.

For Poland, language similarities are often cited as a reason why Ukrainian refugees find work more readily than in many other European countries (Gerny 2024a). In a comparative study, however, Kosyakova et al. (2024) do not find higher labour force participation in countries where the local language is closer to Ukrainian than in countries with a more distant language.

Skills, qualifications, and mismatch

💡 Summary

Some Ukrainian refugees struggle to have their diplomas recognized or valued. Given the high share of Ukrainian refugees with university degrees, the recognition (formal or informal) of diplomas remains an important issue for access to paid work.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Of early refugees from Ukraine, more than half of the adults have been in full employment before fleeing the country (Albrecht and Panchenko 2022). Like all refugees, Ukrainian refugees are at high risk of working in positions where they are overqualified (Hofmann 2022; Kosyakova and Kogan 2022; Seberíni et al. 2024; Berveno and Moskvina 2024; OECD 2023a; A. Kuznetsova 2024; Shkoda and Ovchynnikova 2025). Although gaps in language and local knowledge can typically be closed in two to four years, it can take refugees ten years to overcome qualification mismatches (Hofmann 2022), while some refugees never catch up. For this reason, the OECD has identified accelerated recognition of diplomas as a priority (OECD 2024). In the opportunity sample in Eser Davolio et al. (2024), half the participants in paid work indicated being overqualified for their job.

When Ukrainian qualifications are not recognized by potential employers, this can have demotivating effects on jobseekers who often seek to be ‘useful’ for society (Tsyhanenko 2023; Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024; Shkoda and Ovchynnikova 2025; see also experiences cited in Varela 2023). Shkoda and Ovchynnikova (2025) highlights how the recognition of diplomas is related to broader sociocultural adaptation and is often the source of much stress. In fact, looking at the situation in Europe more broadly, refugees who had their qualifications recognized are 3 times more likely to actually work in a position that is in line with their qualification (OECD 2024). Because Ukrainian refugees often have university degrees, questions of skills-mismatch and the recognition of diplomas are of great importance for the economic integration of Ukrainian refugees (OECD 2023a). Women are more likely to work in occupations that are regulated, and are therefore more affected by the (non-)recognition of diplomas than men (Dietrich Thränhardt 2024). A qualitative study in Germany argues that part of the problem are university degrees that are closely tied to Ukraine — culture, education — and in some cases it may be difficult to establish equivalence. However, the

Ukrainian refugees affected may still fear loss of status and dequalification and be unwilling to work in low-skilled jobs (Thiollet et al. 2025). It is thought that women are more often affected by this phenomenon than men (Schmidt 2024). What is more, the fact that a substantial part of Ukrainian refugees remain focused on returning to Ukraine means that incentives to invest in the recognition of diplomas and country-specific qualification may be limited (Schmidt 2024).⁷⁷

For the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) finds that Ukrainian refugees are less likely to work in sectors that are regulated and where the recognition or acceptance of diplomas is a hurdle, notably health, independent professional services, scientific and technical services, and the financial and insurance sector. Drawing on an unsystematic analysis of work permits in the canton of Zürich, Weingartner (2024) suggests that in education, many Ukrainian refugees work as teaching *assistants* — possibly to support Ukrainian children —, which implies that the recognition of diplomas was not resolved in these cases.

The World Economic Forum (2023) highlights how the recognition of diplomas continues to be an issue and suggests the *European Qualifications Passport for Refugees* (EQPR) as a tool to aid employers find suitably qualified candidates. The World Economic Forum (2023) also identified a mismatch between offers and demand, in the sense that the job offers targeting Ukrainian refugees did not match well the skills available. For instance, often employers were seeking in the area of information and communication technology (ICT), finance, human resources, and engineering, while the refugees were often looking for administration, customer services, sales, or hospitality. It is unclear to what extent these findings also apply to Switzerland, although a report by the OECD suggests that this is indeed the case (OECD 2023a).

Comparing the situation across European countries, Dietrich Thränhardt (2024) comes to the conclusion that formal and informal restrictions to work in some occupations is a major hurdle for Ukrainian refugees. This affects both highly qualified occupations and low-skilled jobs such as truck drivers or bus drivers — where there is also great demand for workers. In Germany, access to protect and regulated occupations was not changed for Ukrainian refugees, or it took almost two years to do so. In July 2024, there were 1,402 applications for (formerly practising) medical doctors pending in Germany, compared to 187 applications that had been treated since early 2022. In contrast, in countries such as in Poland and the Czech Republic, access was enabled quickly, and many Ukrainian refugees could find work in a job they carried out before fleeing Ukraine (Dietrich Thränhardt 2024). For example, in Poland, Ukrainian doctors and nurses were provided access to the labour market through a special law (Dietrich Thränhardt 2024). For some occupations, like truck drivers, this meant that Ukrainian refugees in Germany actually found work in a neighbouring country. Within Germany, Dietrich Thränhardt (2024) reports different access in the education sector, depending on the *Bundesland*. In Sachsen, Ukrainian teachers were recruited to support Ukrainian pupils, while in Bayern, they insisted on final degrees from the EU or Switzerland as a qualifying requirement.

In autumn 2022, around 20 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland mentioned lack of

⁷⁷ A study in Poland highlights that refugees working in occupations for which they are overqualified are ill prepared for their eventual return to Ukraine (Lewandowski 2025).

qualifications as a reason not to work (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 11), while 7 percent mentioned difficulties with public administration (*Behörden*).⁷⁸ An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that around the same proportion would be willing to work below their level of qualification as those who would not do so (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). This can also be observed among those who found work: around the same proportion state that their work is in accordance with their skills, as those who state working below their qualification (Eser Davolio et al. 2023).

Using qualitative interviews, Fedrigo et al. (2023) studied the meaning of work for recently arrived refugees in Switzerland, including refugees from Ukraine. Refugees seek structure, identity, and material benefits. They also expect decent working conditions and meaningful work that corresponds to their abilities. A challenge is identifying adequate job opportunities that do not fully correspond to the title of the previous employment. When coupled with a return perspective, some Ukrainian refugees find it difficult to invest in getting their qualifications recognized or invest in country-specific training that they cannot use after returning to Ukraine (Lazarenko 2024; Bellmann, Hohendanner, and Zimmermann 2024). Such a lack of investment in Switzerland will have detrimental consequences should it turn out to be impossible to return to Ukraine in the future. Deskilling and overqualification can lead to feelings of being rejected by the receiving society and being left behind (Mexi 2023).

Employers who had hired Ukrainian refugees before summer 2022 were generally happy with their recruits (85%, Craviolini and Hermann 2022). They highlighted in particular the high motivation and quality of the workers.⁷⁹ A key motivation for hiring Ukrainian refugees was solidarity, but also a means to counter the acute demand for skilled workers. At the same time, they find it difficult to understand the qualifications and reputation of former employers in Ukraine (Perching and Perumadan 2023).

In Ukraine, women were commonly working in healthcare, medical professions, or at pharmacies — occupations where there is a lack of skilled workers in destination countries, but also occupations that are heavily regulated in places such as Switzerland and Germany (requiring professional qualifications and language skills, Bushanska et al. 2022). Looking at statistics in Germany before the full-scale invasion, Ukrainians were most frequently requesting formal recognition in the medical professions, as care workers, teachers, and engineers. In general, Ukrainian diplomas are well recognized (Bushanska et al. 2022; Hofmann 2022). For a better economic integration of Ukrainian refugees, however, examinations or trials on the job are recommended (Bushanska et al. 2022). Moreover, early competence checks (*Potenzialabklärungen*) can help focus resources on refugees to facilitate economic integration in the long term, rather than pushing refugees into immediate employment that may reduce their potential in the long term (Hofmann 2022).

A representative survey among Ukrainian refugees in December 2023 indicates that around half of those in work are employed at a lower level than their previous employment in Ukraine

⁷⁸ A study in Slovakia suggests that this is the second most important hurdle for Ukrainian refugees after general language barriers, Seberini et al. (2024).

⁷⁹ Among early refugees from Ukraine, only 5% ruled out to work, with more than half indicating an interest in taking up work (Albrecht and Panchenko 2022).

(UNHCR 2023c). From their perspective, the highest hurdles for labour market integration was the lack of sufficient knowledge of the local language (see also Kamp et al. 2024). A smaller share highlighted a lack of opportunities to work according to their qualifications, insufficient qualification, or that their qualifications were not recognized.

Efforts to provide refugees with skills such as programming have been expanded to Ukrainian refugees (Morgenthaler 2023). Schools and institutions have begun sharing resources such as equivalence of formal qualifications or guidelines on how to speak about the war and refugees (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023; Anderegg 2022). The recognition of Ukrainian pedagogical training remains a contentious issue, but could help alleviate teacher shortages (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023). To date, most positions in teaching or pedagogy were found through personal contacts, not in response to advertised positions (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023). The experience of Ukrainian teachers as refugees could make them suitable to teach other refugees (Li and Fragonara 2024).

A study in Germany examined the potential of Ukrainians in the healthcare sector in particular, given that many Ukrainians have worked in this sector in the past and that there is an acute labour shortage (Gatskova and Kosyakova 2024). They highlight a high willingness to work, but formal hurdles due to the lack of recognition of certificates and high levels of language requirements. Especially for the around 25% of Ukrainian surveyed who worked in non-specialized areas of the healthcare sector, the authors identify large potential. Moreover, they suggest sector-specific language training to allow the Ukrainians in question — 90% are women — to enter the labour market more quickly. Specifically, they suggest language training in parallel to entry into the labour market for faster progress. Many of the Ukrainians studied already took steps to allow entry in the labour market, including formal training (Gatskova and Kosyakova 2024). With support in the recognition of diplomas, language training, and finding suitable placements, the authors are optimistic that Ukrainian women can successfully integrate in the healthcare sector — given a bit more time (Gatskova and Kosyakova 2024). A study in the canton of Zürich echoes these findings (Weingartner 2024).

A study from the Czech Republic suggests that given enough time, many Ukrainian refugees may find economic niches that are beneficial for the economy of the host country (Wiedermann et al. 2025). As refugees change their focus on staying in their host country, they may become more reactive to market signals and willing to refocus their priorities. This will increase complementarity in the market and be beneficial for the economy as a whole (Wiedermann et al. 2025).

Nieuwenhuis et al. (2026) looked at the effect of Ukrainian refugees on the local workforce in the European Union. Overall, despite the large number of refugees, there is no evidence of displacement effects, where existing workers would be replaced by Ukrainian refugees (see also Salathé, Malancu, and Ruedin 2025). Looking at subgroups and individual countries, however, there are nuances to this pattern. For example, in the Czech Republic, low-educated men benefited from increased labour demand related to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees (Nieuwenhuis et al. 2026). In contrast, in Poland no such increased labour demand could be observed, leaving low-educated men on average with negative consequences. In Germany, Nieuwenhuis et al. (2026) report competitive pressures for men with secondary education, although in this case this was often ‘solved’ by early retirement.

Reasons for these country- and group-level differences are related to the economic situation in the countries, as well as the composition of the Ukrainian refugees. The share of Ukrainian refugees with degrees, the age distribution, or gender varies between countries. Moreover, language differences are larger for countries without Slavic languages (Nieuwenhuis et al. 2026).

Discrimination in the labour market

Summary

Few Ukrainian refugees report discrimination, but a field experiment in the Czech Republic suggests that Ukrainian refugees are systematically disadvantaged in the labour market.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

No study currently covers discrimination of Ukrainian refugees in the Swiss labour market. While 92% of a snowball sample in the canton of Bern in early 2023 stated to never have experienced discrimination in Switzerland (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023), a field experiment in the Czech Republic — notably one of the European countries with the highest levels of labour force participation for Ukrainian refugees (Thränhardt 2023a) — is less optimistic (Pasichnyk 2023; see also Buttler et al. 2025). In the correspondence test by Pasichnyk (2023) (also known as *CV-study*), fictitious applications were sent to 875 real jobs between September 2022 and March 2023, and in line with studies for other minority groups, Pasichnyk (2023) reports a notably lower response to equivalent applications with a Ukrainian name. Specifically, while 34 per cent of the applicants with a Czech name were invited for an interview, this was the case for only 20 per cent of the applicants with a Ukrainian name. While other ethnic minority groups may face larger levels of discrimination, the result is in line with other minority groups (Bartoš et al. 2016; Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016).

In qualitative interviews, some Ukrainian refugees report that they have accepted salaries that are substantially lower than what Swiss citizens would get in the same company and position (Eser Davolio et al. 2024; A. Kuznetsova 2024). This is also reported in Germany, where a qualitative study suggested that the availability of social benefits and language learning may be a face-saving option to decline inappropriate and exploitative job offers (Schmidt 2024). African Ukrainians in Germany also report discrimination (Adedeji, Kaltenbach, Buchcik, et al. 2025). A qualitative study in Germany reports discrimination and undue pressure at job centres because inability to find suitable work is often misunderstood as unwillingness (Leko et al. 2025).

A longitudinal study on reported discrimination among refugees from countries other than Ukraine identified an increase in discrimination in 2023 compared to 2016 to 2021 (Cum-

ming and Heidinger 2025). Ukrainian refugees were not included in this analysis, because there are too few observations to track changes over time. This increased reported discrimination in Germany affected the labour market, both when looking for work (18%) and at work (14%), and particularly when looking for accommodation (32% of refugees, not including Ukrainians) (Cumming and Heidinger 2025).

Job visibility and accessibility

Summary

Some Ukrainian refugees are not aware of job opportunities.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Some Ukrainian refugees are not aware of job opportunities. In a global review, the World Economic Forum (2023) highlighted that the visibility of available opportunities can be a challenge: Ukrainian refugees often do not know about all the offers. Countries like Portugal sought to counter this with a centralized database, but implementation is central to success. Ukrainian refugees can use regional employment centres (RAV) which can support them finding work (Pétremand 2024), although Eser Davolio et al. (2024) reports that these job centres are hardly used by Ukrainian refugees because they focus on finding work (independently) and they do not arrange work placements (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Efionayi-Mäder et al. (2025) find that there is potential to improve the interface between different institutions supporting Ukrainian refugees and that many Ukrainian refugees seek more information — nota bene in late 2024 —: both specific information about finding adequate work, and general information about life in Switzerland (see also A. Kuznetsova 2024).

Many host families actively support Ukrainian refugees in their efforts to find work (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023; Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023; NCCR Roundtable 2024). In summer 2022, some employers indicated that they had no applications by Ukrainian refugees, or that the applicants did not have the right qualifications (Craviolini and Hermann 2022; Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025). An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found the most common way to find work was through job searches on the internet, followed by help from friends (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). Few found work through the host family or through social media, and none of the participants found work through the unemployment agency (RAV) (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

A large and systematic study in Germany found no effect of living with a host family and the ability to find paid work (Herpell et al. 2024). While living with host families improves social integration and the ability to navigate everyday situations, language acquisition and economic integration do not appear to follow suit systematically (Herpell et al. 2024).

An aspect that has received little attention in Switzerland is whether the place of residence hinders economic integration. Given that Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland are randomly assigned to cantons and assigned to municipalities within cantons, some of them live in remote areas where economic possibilities are limited. In Austria, Perching and Perumadan (2023) identified this as a major factor hindering economic integration, especially for Ukrainian refugees with tertiary degrees for whom the offer may be severely restricted in rural areas and where public transport may further limit which jobs are effectively accessible (see also Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2025).

Investments by Swiss businesses

Summary

The full-scale invasion in Russia does not seem associated with investments by Swiss businesses. Direct investments have declined.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Contrary to expectations, the Russian full-scale invasion in Ukraine and the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has not affected general investments by Swiss businesses in the short and medium term (Sturm et al. 2023). Looking ahead, Guichard, Machado, and Maystadt (2022) highlights historical ‘refugee shocks’ (outside of Switzerland), arguing that there is unlikely to be a negative impact on the Swiss economy because of the Ukrainian refugees — with complementary skills being the norm —, although in the short-term costs for integration may be notable. Neustroieva et al. (2025) identify a long-term potential where returning Ukrainian refugees can help spread (business) practices and principles that will help Ukraine and Swiss-Ukrainian business relations.

Neustroieva et al. (2025) examine direct investments of Swiss firms in Ukraine and note a decline in investment due to the uncertainties brought about by the war. Switzerland continues to be regarded as a reliable partner and investor (Neustroieva et al. 2025).

Torres and Sommerfeld (2025) report that the arrival of refugees has positive short- and medium-term effects on the labour market of natives, largely because of services to refugees.

Housing and Accommodation

Summary

Host families initially played an important role in housing Ukrainian refugees. Support for host families varies between cantons and municipalities.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Normally, Ukrainian refugees should not stay in federal centres for more than three nights before being assigned to a canton (DFJP 2022; Ovsiiuk 2024). In the cantons, some Ukrainian refugees were initially housed collectively (e.g. Sharudina, Prikhodko, and Osadcha 2023; Ovsiiuk 2024), with the explicit aim to find private accommodation if the conflict lasts (Stadt Bern 2022).⁸⁰ For the first time, housing with host families played an important role and helped reduce strain on the asylum system (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; NCCR Roundtable 2024; Herpell et al. 2024; Bühler and Reiser 2023; Rancew-Sikora et al. 2025; Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025; SODK et al. 2025), not least financially (Balsiger 2022).⁸¹ The State Secretary for Migration SEM mandated the Swiss Refugee Council to arrange host families (Ammann Dula et al. 2024).⁸² A survey with an opportunity sample in August 2022 reported that around a third of Ukrainian refugees lived in private accommodation with a host family, a smaller proportion in their own accommodation, and around 15% in shared accommodation (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022; see also Ammann Dula et al. 2024 who report that the share in host families has declined from around 60% initially to around a third in May 2023). Other forms were much less common, such as living with people they already knew before coming to Switzerland, hotels, or moving between places. Later, around 60% of Ukrainian refugees stayed in private accommodation (Caritas 2023). An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found many Ukrainian refugees living in housing provided by the municipalities, either together with other refugees (shared living) or on their own (Eser Davolio et al. 2023).⁸³ The allocation to group accommodation

⁸⁰In general, there are priority rules in place so that some asylum seekers can move out of centres to private accommodation more quickly (Lacroix and Bertrand 2023), but in practice the availability of adequate housing determines much of who gets to move out of collective housing.

⁸¹Balsiger (2022) reports that a container village for 1000 refugees in the canton of Bern cost 10 million CHF, while the canton of Zug paid around CHF 330,000 to Caritas to support 500 host families – the same number of refugees.

⁸²This direct arrangement from federal centres to host families continued until the end of 2022, but several cantons continue their own initiatives and so do private initiatives (Ammann Dula et al. 2024).

⁸³Similar processes were reported for Germany, Herpell et al. (2024); while refugees finding their own accommodation may seem ideal in terms of administrative costs, a consequence may be that these refugees miss important basic information which has to be provided using other channels (Bühler and Reiser 2023). Bühler et al. (2023) developed a chatbot to offer such basic information, but as with all such alternative sources of information, reaching the populations who need them most can be a major challenge (Ruedin et al. 2022; see also Sprenkamp, Eckhardt, et al. 2025 for Switzerland). By the end of 2023, the majority of Ukrainian refugees in Germany was in private accommodation (83%), and they are generally satisfied with the housing

seems to be done to avoid mixing Ukrainian refugees with refugees from other countries (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

Of those who live in their own rented accommodation, most are working — a necessity given the rents in Switzerland and the low social benefit payments (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Some Ukrainian refugees in low-pay positions are unable to afford their own housing (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Between 2023 and 2024, the share of Ukrainian refugees living in an accommodation they rent privately has nearly doubled from 17% in 2023 to 31% in 2024, according to the survey by Eser Davolio et al. (2024). This is linked to an increased labour force participation. Around a third of those living with host families in 2023 have found an alternative solution by 2024 (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

The situation in host families and collective housing varies a great deal between cantons (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023), notably also in terms of preparations, monitoring and support by external parties (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Stellacci 2024; NCCR Roundtable 2024). In some cases, support would have been available, but was not communicated to all host families. Some disappointment could be avoided by managing expectations before hosting arrangements are concluded (Stellacci 2024; Syniakova 2022).

Over time, the number of Ukrainian refugees living with host families has declined (Spörri and Kälin 2026). This was expected, given that most arrangement with host families were meant to be a temporary solution from the onset. For example, in the canton of Basel-Stadt, there were over 200 Ukrainians living with host families at the end of 2022, while at the end of 2025, there were just 9. In the canton of Aargau, the number of Ukrainian refugees staying with host families declined from 2,148 at the end of 2022 to 877 at the end of 2025 (Spörri and Kälin 2026). There are no standardized statistics across cantons.

i Housing: Status S versus asylum seekers

Housing for asylum seekers is organized differently than for Ukrainian refugees, with the federal government in charge. Cantons receive a lump sum of CHF 18,000 for the socio-economic integration of asylum seekers; for Ukrainian refugees, there is a lump sum of CHF 3,000 to aid language acquisition and support integration, plus CHF 250 per month (DFJP 2022; SEM 2023c). In addition, around CHF 1,500 is paid to cantons for accommodation, social aid, and medical costs (SEM 2023c). This can be used to pay for accommodation with host families (Ammann Dula et al. 2024).

Stable and secure housing is important for the mental health of refugees and overall life satisfaction, factors that facilitate integration (Kosyakova and Kogan 2022; Syniakova 2022; Eser Davolio et al. 2024).⁸⁴ Looking at access of refugees in the canton of Zürich more generally, Hauller (2023) notes how difficult it can be for refugees to find accommodation

situation (Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn 2025). By the end of 2025, there are still Ukrainian refugees staying with host families, which can lead to frictions between the host and the refugees, irrespective of the financial compensation paid by government (Lazarenko 2025).

⁸⁴For Syrian refugees and asylum seekers, Kiselev et al. (2020) reports language barriers, lack of awareness, and stigma as major hurdles for not accessing mental health support. As an explanation for this stigma, in Ukraine, mental health has long been associated with large residential psychiatric care, and often with abuse and neglect (Pinchuk et al. 2024).

in a tight market. Often refugees rely on co-ethnic networks, which leads to informal solutions characterized by instability and insecurity, as well as low-quality housing. Subletting arrangements are common. A comparative study of five European countries highlighted how responses were mostly short-term (e.g. municipal housing, NGO) and ad-hoc solutions (e.g. collective accommodation, host families) (Hegedüs et al. 2023), suggesting that in the medium term questions of housing will become more pronounced in contexts where there is a shortage of public housing. Arrangements in host families may overwhelm the persons involved in the medium to long term (Schild 2022; Birger, Tarshish, and Nouman 2024).

Host families

Summary

Host families support the social integration of Ukrainian refugees. Most arrangements between host families and refugees work well, but long-term arrangements can be particularly challenging — especially in the absence of systematic support from municipalities or NGO.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Many Ukrainian refugees were initially housed in host families (Strauss, Fuchs, and Ammann 2023; Syniakova 2022; Politi et al. 2025; Liechti et al. 2025).⁸⁵ In spring 2022, around 60,000 potential hosts registered with the Swiss Refugee Council/Campax (Balsiger 2022), of which around 10% became actual hosts.⁸⁶ An analysis at the end of 2022 showed that in most cases these arrangements work well and there is sufficient space to ensure privacy. For example, the ability to lock one's bedroom is important (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; see also Birger, Tarshish, and Nouman 2024; Politi et al. 2025). Most host family arrangements are stable and stay in place for a long period (Strauss, Fuchs, and Ammann 2023; Liechti et al. 2025); around half of the Ukrainian refugees who moved out of host families did so because they found their own accommodation. The way Ukrainian refugees found their host family varies greatly. Around 40% used personal contacts with friends and relatives, around 25% used an official placement programme, 13% through cantons or municipalities,

⁸⁵ Such arrangements are also common in other European countries, where the possibility to host refugees was previously not available (Hertault, Rea, and Roblain 2023; Rancew-Sikora et al. 2025) and rarely used (Riedener and Barandun 2022), although not entirely new (Balsiger 2022; Herpell et al. 2024; Thränhardt 2023b; Liechti et al. 2025). The share of refugees staying with host families can be as low as 10% or 11% in Ireland and France, or as high as 80% or 90% in Italy and the UK (Thränhardt 2023b). The countries vary in their financial support for host families, but also in the regulation of who among the Ukrainian refugees is eligible for staying with a host family (Thränhardt 2023b).

⁸⁶ In addition, many host family arrangements were found on an informal basis or through an NGO who were not mandated by the SEM (Balsiger 2022; Stellacci 2024; Bischof 2023; Ovsiiuk 2024).

and 12% through social media (Liechti et al. 2025). Their satisfaction with housing is much higher than for refugees in collective housing.

For Germany, around a fifth of Ukrainian refugees have moved after arriving in Germany between late summer 2022 and spring 2023, most often in the same city or municipality (Siegert et al. 2023). Indeed, it is rare for Ukrainian refugees in Germany to stay with host families for more than a year, with most moving after 1 to 4 months (Herpell et al. 2024). The main reason for moving was that they had found a more suitable place. With the moving activities, the share of Ukrainian refugees in private accommodation has further increased (Siegert et al. 2023).

Host families are helpful for social integration and can help refugees with practical and administrative questions, and attempts to find paid work (Strauss, Fuchs, and Ammann 2023; Eser Davolio et al. 2023; Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Herpell et al. 2024; Ovsiuk 2024; Ammann Dula and Fuchs 2025; Tarkhanova 2026). Tarkhanova (2026) highlights how host families allowed refugees to play out their agency despite difficult circumstances. The study by Liechti et al. (2025) emphasizes that the biggest advantages are for the ability to cope with everyday tasks. Support for host families by officials varies a great deal by canton (see Liechti et al. 2025 for a systematic overview of responsibilities and arrangements).⁸⁷ A study in Germany suggests that living with host families has positive effects on social integration, psychological well-being, and the ability to navigate everyday situations, but finds no effect on economic integration, political integration, and self-declared language ability (Herpell et al. 2024).

Although there is a wide variety, host families⁸⁸ tend to be richer (in a survey in 2023, around half earned at least 100,000 (annual household income), and around a third at least 120,000), have spare living space, middle-aged, and live in cities (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Liechti et al. 2025).⁸⁹ On average, there are two Ukrainian refugees in a host family (Ammann Dula et al. 2024). Based on spontaneous statements in qualitative interviews, Ammann Dula et al. (2024) report that Ukrainian refugees in host families feel safer and more secure than Ukrainian refugees in collective accommodation (see also Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022; Ammann Dula and Fuchs 2025). In some cases, arrangements in host families made it difficult for Ukrainian refugees to retire to their own space, and some host families involved them in more (or different) activities than they appreciated (Ammann Dula et al. 2024).

⁸⁷Sprenkamp, Dolata, et al. (2025) and Sprenkamp, Eckhardt, et al. (2025) find that the public sector in Switzerland often lacks effective current data on the immediate needs of Ukrainian refugees, and as a consequence tends to make decisions on the basis of internal insights. What is more, the various public sector organizations involved in supporting the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland do not exchange information well, partly due to incompatible IT systems (Sprenkamp, Dolata, et al. 2025). As a consequence, the public sector underestimated various needs of Ukrainian refugees. Sprenkamp, Dolata, et al. (2025) demonstrate that it is possible to mine social media (Telegram) in real time to find which topics refugees find important, and they developed a chat interface so that users can easily ask questions to get answers based on real-time social media data of Ukrainian refugees. A chatbot can help distribute relevant information to refugees when trained on reliable information (Sprenkamp, Eckhardt, et al. 2025).

⁸⁸not all hosts are families (Ammann Dula et al. 2024), but this review follows common usage of the term (*Gastfamilien*)

⁸⁹A consequence of this is that Ukrainian refugees are more common in parts of towns that tend not to be exposed to other refugees (Balsiger 2022).

While initially host families and Ukrainian refugees tended to be positive about their arrangements, latent conflicts can emerge later — for example if there is a lack of privacy, or other personal needs cannot be met for a prolonged period (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Balsiger 2022; Stellacci 2024; Birger, Tarshish, and Nouman 2024; Ammann Dula and Fuchs 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al. 2025; Politi et al. 2025; Lazarenko 2025; Liechti et al. 2025). One reason is that most accommodation was not built with long-term host arrangements in mind, requiring both the hosts and Ukrainian refugees to make concessions (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Ammann Dula and Fuchs 2025; Liechti et al. 2025). Communication difficulties can also increase strain. Around a third reported communicating in the local language (German, French, Italian), around half in English; Russian (12%) and Ukrainian (5%) are also used, while over 70% make recourse to translation applications such as Google Translate (Ammann Dula et al. 2024, multiple answers possible). Explicit expectations and a formal rental agreement were useful to reduce disagreements (Ammann Dula et al. 2024). Host families often felt ‘on their own’ vis-à-vis officials, but there are large differences between municipalities.

The cantons (and municipalities) differ in the kind of support provided to host families (Liechti et al. 2025). The most common forms of support are: a hotline or a point of contact, officials visiting the host families, documentation prepared for host families, or regular meetings. Five of the cantons did not provide any support to host families (Liechti et al. 2025). Financially, most host families received some support, although it rarely covered all their expenditures. 20% report not having received any financial support, 15% declined such an offer. 25% report that they received support towards rent, 26% received a lump sum (Liechti et al. 2025).

While host families could provide much support for Ukrainian refugees initially, they also need professional support and contact persons (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Ammann Dula and Fuchs 2025; Politi et al. 2025). Ammann Dula et al. (2024) conclude that host families are suitable as a temporary measure at the beginning when refugees arrive, but call for better support for the host families by officials, such as designated contact persons (see also Balsiger 2022). Often, the support on the ground is assured by NGO and volunteers without specialized training (Balsiger 2022; T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023; Bischof 2023).⁹⁰ When asked whether they would host refugees in the future, the majority of the host families was unsure (55%, compared to 16% yes and 29% no) (Liechti et al. 2025).

Access to information and social contacts are highlighted as a positive aspect of living with a host family, but these resources depend a great deal on the hosts, the municipalities, and support for host families. Arrangements with host families should not distract from the need to find independent accommodation for refugees (Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Liechti et al. 2025). The potential of using host families is difficult to gauge, and is likely limited in time (Balsiger 2022). In Germany, voluntary involvement and the offer of accommodation

⁹⁰ A survey among volunteers in Germany found that most volunteers who helped Ukrainian refugees did not have experience with refugees beforehand (SVR 2024). A study from the Czech Republic suggests that many of the smaller municipalities were unable to respond quickly when large numbers of refugees arrived initially, and how gradually municipalities could take over (compare the experience in Germany in 2015 cited in T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023). This was in part possible because NGO working in the field of refugees have been organized and cooperating with one another already before the arrival of the Ukrainian refugees (Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024).

by host families in 2015 saw a subsequent consolidation and professionalization, which has discouraged some who previously volunteered their time and resources, notably because of the bureaucracy involved (T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023). Indeed, many volunteers do not anticipate how many different government offices can be involved (T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023).

Evidence from Germany shows that living with host families can be difficult — especially in the longer term (Lazarenko 2025). For example, initially many private arrangements were free of cost, but later Ukrainian refugees were asked to contribute financially — also considering raising energy prices (Büssing 2023). An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023, however, found that most Ukrainians living with host families would describe their relationship as ‘friendship’, spending time and sharing information with them (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). A more extensive and systematic study in Germany highlighted the benefits of living with host families, suggesting that conflicts have on average been less serious than some feared (Herpell et al. 2024). An extensive ethnographic study in Berlin concludes that host families are not a suitable solution in the long term because tensions in everyday power dynamics and unequal dependencies are unsustainable in the long run (Lazarenko 2025).

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of living with host families (adapted from Bundesrat 2026; Liechti et al. 2025)

Advantages	Disadvantages
better integration, especially coping with everyday	depends on willingness of host families
individual support for refugees	additional work for officials (checks, support for families, coordination)
increased acceptance in population	limited duration
satisfaction of refugees with housing	potential (latent) conflicts from different expectations
reduced strain on collective housing	

In Switzerland, the government evaluated the use of host families (Liechti et al. 2025; see also Bundesrat 2026; Henderson 2026). Drawing on the study by Liechti et al. (2025), they conclude that host families are a useful form, especially when there is an unexpectedly high demand. In terms of costs to taxpayers, it is unclear whether there are benefits compared to others forms of housing. According to representatives of the cantons, the administrative cost is substantial, and compared to collective accommodation little can be saved financially.⁹¹ Compared to refugees in collective housing, those living with host families are much happier with the situation (88% compared to 34%), and may find it easier to integrate. The government underlines the importance of careful matching between refugees and host families

⁹¹As Bundesrat (2026) highlights, however, the availability of host families was important for authorities to be able to cope with the large demand. This is in line with the assessment by the cantons, which consider host families particularly suited for exceptional situations as well as for unaccompanied minors (Liechti et al. 2025).

(Bundesrat 2026). Table 1 summarized the advantages and disadvantages the government and Liechti et al. (2025) identified.

From the perspective of representatives of the cantons, the influence of host families on the integration of Ukrainian refugees tends to be positive (Liechti et al. 2025). Using an integration index, Liechti et al. (2025) could identify small advantages compared to refugees in collective housing. They are a bit more likely to use a Swiss language on a daily basis. However, when looking at the kind of support the refugees state they need, there are no substantial differences between refugees with host families and those in collective accommodation. In both situations, the biggest needs are language acquisition and finding work. Liechti et al. (2025) find that Ukrainian refugees living with host families have a slightly higher probability of finding work in the first few months after arrival, but over time this advantage seems to diminish.

Expenditures in Ukraine

Summary

Many Ukrainian refugees have expenditures in Ukraine.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In an ad-hoc survey in early 2023, 36 per cent of respondents stated that they had no expenditures in Ukraine, while around 1 in 5 was accumulating debt (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Of these expenditures in Ukraine, 90 per cent were related to keeping accommodation in Ukraine in view of a return after the war, though few were actually paying their usual rent in Ukraine. Just over half indicated that they were financially supporting family members left in Ukraine (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

Education

How many are in education?

 Summary

For access to levels of education beyond primary education, language barriers are substantial; few Ukrainian refugees are in education at higher levels.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Ukrainian refugees of school age have access to education (Pétremand 2024), including university education (Huter and Marti 2024).⁹² Like for temporarily admitted persons, access to scholarships depends on the canton; in many cantons, Ukrainian refugees cannot access scholarships (Huter and Marti 2024). A representative survey among Ukrainian refugees in December 2023 indicates that around a quarter of those not in work are in (further) education (UNHCR 2023c). For autumn 2022, Fritschi et al. (2023) reported that the most common form of education of their sample of Ukrainian refugees aged 16+ was distance (online) learning from a provider abroad, followed by unspecified education in Switzerland, high schools, and vocational training. A report by the SEM draws on data from cantons to establish that at the end of November 2022, around 2,000 Ukrainian refugees were following education at secondary II level. The majority of them (1,700) followed post-obligatory courses and bridging offers (*Brückenangebote*). Around 300 were in high school (Gymnasium), and a few dozens have started an apprenticeship (SEM 2023c).

In August 2022, 940 young Ukrainian refugees were following university studies, mostly in Zürich (n=189), Geneva (n=110), Bern (n=82), and Lausanne (n=72). Eleven universities stated not to have received any applications from Ukrainian refugees (SEM 2023c).

⁹² Across European countries, an estimated 40 per cent of Ukrainian refugees are children and young adults who need to continue learning in formal education (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024). In Switzerland, the share of Ukrainians in Switzerland below the age of 25 was 37 per cent at the end of 2023. In some countries, Ukrainian refugees did not have access to formal education, although this is changing at the end of 2024. Many countries were overwhelmed by the number of new pupils and unclear legal situation (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024). In the second half of 2023, the OECD estimated that almost half of Ukrainians in school age missed out on formal education (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024). This number is surprisingly difficult to estimate because of access to online schooling in Ukraine, as well as refugees who move to different countries (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024).

Access to education

Summary

Access to primary education works well.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Access to education is a priority for refugees, although their experience as refugees makes it important that their integration in the school context works out well (Abramicheva 2023). In Switzerland, all Ukrainian refugees can access education, and there were never waiting lists as they have been reported in Germany (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023) or other European countries (Styslavaska-Doliwa 2024).⁹³ Contrary to some other countries, in Switzerland it is not possible to take (Ukrainian) children out of school to simply teach them online (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023; compare Stolarski 2024).⁹⁴ Such online courses, however, are of variable quality and — because of the war — may be unreliable in terms of access (Bulanuchuk et al. 2025). The biggest offer is the *All-Ukrainian Online School* (AOS), which was originally set up during Covid-19, and allows pupils to follow a full Ukrainian curriculum online (Styslavaska-Doliwa 2024).⁹⁵ AOS has become an integral part of Ukrainian education. It allowed Ukrainian refugees to continue their education with less interruption than those who had to attend schools in the country of destination — as it is the case in Switzerland —, but in the longer term, online schooling is widely accepted to hinder integration and lead to lower well-being for the pupils (Styslavaska-Doliwa 2024).

The approach in Switzerland requires competent teachers who are trained in teaching to a diverse class, which in most places does not pose a fundamental departure from the

⁹³There are waiting lists for some language courses, however, which is a source of great frustration for Ukrainian refugees seeking work (Reinhardt 2024). For Austria, Woltran, Hassani, and Schwab (2024) report that children like going to school and experience positive interactions with their peers and teachers. However, around one year after arriving, only half report having a close friend, and those with close friends tend to have friends with whom they can converse in Ukrainian or Russian.

⁹⁴Approaches to integrating Ukrainian pupils vary greatly across European countries (Styslavaska-Doliwa 2024). Countries such as Finland and Sweden focus on individualized solutions; in Romania there are Ukrainian schools open to the refugees, and ordinary schools are encouraged to provide Ukrainian tuition. In Portugal, Ukrainian schoolbooks are provided to refugee pupils to aid integration in schools. Many countries offer ‘bridging classes’ where pupils gradually transition from intensive language courses to regular classes (Abramicheva 2023). Chuiko, Shkuro, and Semigina (2024) report that Ukrainian schools could learn from Covid-19 and the need to adapt to online teaching then, to offer an effective learning experience after the full-scale invasion.

⁹⁵It has been argued that online learning may actually be beneficial because online learning encourages micro-learning strategies (Magier et al. 2024). In this sense, but also because it provides the Ukrainian pupils ample experience with online platforms and IT skills in general, online schooling may actually be beneficial for labour-market access in the long term (Zinaida et al. 2024). It is the forced digitalization of education that may be beneficial (Zinaida et al. 2024).

status quo.⁹⁶ In the context of the Ukrainian refugees, many teachers received additional training, including on mental health of refugees, which means that schools can offer better protection of risk factors than countries where online schooling is widespread (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024).

In Germany, state-sponsored language courses typically take place during the day, which means that those in paid work either cannot attend language courses or attend courses by NGO. In jobs with low language requirements — where many Ukrainian refugees found work — opportunities to learn the language while working may (currently) be limited (Büssing 2023).

In Germany, access to schools initially seemed unproblematic, but special support measures tend to be concentrated at the level of primary school. In high schools, few support measures such as language support are available (Büssing 2023). By comparing Ukrainian refugees who arrives early with Ukrainian refugees who arrived after June 2022, Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn (2025) conclude that in Germany access to schooling demands attention. In particular, they show that in Germany Ukrainian children are unevenly distributed across different levels of secondary schools, which they interpret as problems in the choice of school. They also highlight that despite high educational aspirations, just 16 percent were in formal education or further education, which they attribute to language challenges and limited access to childcare for adults with children.

Experience in education

Summary

Ukrainian refugees find it difficult to understand the Swiss education system, but over time come to appreciate many of its quirks and features

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

For Ukrainian refugees — pupils and parents alike — the Swiss education system is difficult to understand (Abramicheva 2023). Depending on the canton and school, there were distinct approaches to integrating Ukrainian pupils at school. One approach was to intensive language classes in the local language in parallel to placement in a regular class, one was separate classes for Ukrainian refugees (often of mixed ages), and one was integration in regular class from the beginning. All three approaches can lead to successful integration,

⁹⁶The widespread use of work in small groups has been highlighted as particularly beneficial for educational integration (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024).

but not all pupils thrive in the same ones (Abramicheva 2023). Probably the most common approach was an intensive focus on language learning for 2–3 months, followed by integration into regular classes (Abramicheva 2023).⁹⁷

Children who entered school in kindergarten found integration easiest because the curriculum allows for plenty of space and playtime for language acquisition and getting used to the new environment. In these cases, small class size aided language acquisition, and typically parents were supportive of teachers. Children in this situation could typically transfer to primary school without particular problem (Abramicheva 2023).

For older pupils, the experience of having learned a foreign language in the past is associated with faster integration in school (Abramicheva 2023). English and knowledge of the local language (German, French, Italian) were particularly helpful. For older pupils, social skills — finding friends — were an important factor. In some cases, making friends with other pupils learning the language as a second language helped Ukrainian refugees to learn the language jointly (Abramicheva 2023). If parents speak a foreign language, language acquisition of their children is also faster (Abramicheva 2023). At the same time, older children were more likely to report missing their old school and friends.

In many cases, however, pupils struggled to successfully integrate in the short term. These children report trauma from the war, but also the humbling experience in regular class, where they failed to understand much (Abramicheva 2023).⁹⁸ The hardest aspects were the inability to communicate with peers, the sense of not learning anything, and bullying and rejection by other pupils (Abramicheva 2023). Parents of these children reported that their children became withdrawn and reluctant to go to school.

A study of Ukrainian pupils and university students in Switzerland, Spain, and Ukraine examined how they experience stigma (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. 2026). Stigma is experienced as multidimensional, with discrimination and exclusion playing an important role in the experience of stigma. In the case of refugees, loneliness and limited support from peers and schools were identified as factors that can make the experience of stigma worse and can cause emotional distress. The experience of stigma may be limited overall, but for those affected, the impact on mental health and well-being is substantial (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. 2026).

⁹⁷ Comparing strategies in Germany and Poland, Teney (2025) different strategies depending on how Ukrainian refugees see their future. A common strategy is to rely on online teaching (in Poland) or a combination of offline teaching in schools with additional online teaching to ensure a possible return to Ukraine and access in education. Those who plan to stay in Germany and Poland beyond the immediate war focus on education in the host country, while a small group return to Ukraine for educational purposes. These considerations are influenced by uncertainty about how long they will stay in Germany or Poland, dissatisfaction with the quality of education in the host country, and great uncertainty how children can adjust to Ukraine and Ukrainian education on return. They also consider the fastest and easiest path to a secondary school certificate. Since schooling in mainstream schools is now also mandatory in Poland, participation in online schools has declined. Many Ukrainian parents have observed that double schooling is stressful for their children, and as the war continues return intentions decline, shifting the focus on finding a future in the host country.

⁹⁸ For Germany, there is evidence that young Ukrainian refugees use different kinds of coping methods for dealing with trauma (Chabursky and Walper 2024), including a focus on education in the country of destination. The implication is that support from the healthcare system should find ways to support various coping strategies and not focus on a single one (Chabursky and Walper 2024).

Language classes for Ukrainian pupils of mixed age were judged difficult by both parents and their children. While such an approach allows a gradual integration and getting to know the new school environment, mixed age groups left the pupils with a sense of not making progress in subjects other than the local language, and offered a clear contrast between a class where they could follow the content and one where they could not — and felt rejected (Abramicheva 2023). In some cases, a smooth transition could be achieved, in others the pupils struggled.

Especially for parents, the Swiss curriculum feels easier, notably in mathematics, the lack or low level of homework, and the near absence of a very teacher-centred approach (*Frontalunterricht*). In contrast, they appreciated the safe environment, and that pupils got plenty of hands-on experience (Abramicheva 2023). The timetable and the lessons taught were unfamiliar to pupils and parents. Moreover, parents are generally more involved in their children's education, and for that reasons used to more common and in-depth communication with teachers. This left many parents with the feeling that they do not get enough information about their children's progress in school (Abramicheva 2023).

For Austria, Perching and Perumadan (2023) report that Ukrainian refugees living in centres, shared accommodation, or poor housing as a result of their low income often lack space for children to withdraw and carry out schoolwork. This has negative repercussions on their education and long-term prospects of economic integration (Perching and Perumadan 2023).

For Germany, Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß (2025) report that language levels of Ukrainian refugees in schools have well developed over time, but the feeling of belonging to one's school has not increased in the same way. Such feelings of belonging to one's school are associated with better educational outcomes and better well-being. They find that Ukrainian refugees with better language skills and participation in leisure activities are more likely to feel attached to or belonging to their schools (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). A study on refugees in Germany 2014 to 2018 suggests that refugees tends to have high educational aspirations (Will et al. 2026). An insecure residence status, limited (German) language proficiency, and age-inappropriate school placement were identified as reducing positive educational outcomes. What is more, in the study newcomer classes — as opposed to integration in mainstream classes — is associated with lower educational outcomes (Will et al. 2026).

Language barriers in education

Summary

Limited language skills can be a hurdle for Ukrainian refugees to access high schools and university education.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Swiss schools planned for the arrival of Ukrainian refugees early, recognizing that integration in schools is useful also in case the refugees do not stay in Switzerland for a long period (Fleischmann 2022; Huber et al. 2022). The strategy was to provide a welcome and seek integration in regular classes with support as soon as possible (Huber et al. 2022; Abramicheva 2024; Markina, Melnyk, and Novikov 2025).

More generally, language acquisition is one of the hardest tasks for Ukrainian refugees in school (Abramicheva 2024). There is great variability in the ability to acquire sufficient levels of the local language, depending on age, prior experience of learning foreign languages, and the availability of support in Ukrainian or English. It is rare for Ukrainian pupils to have knowledge of one of the Swiss languages (Abramicheva 2024), but knowledge of English often helped pupils to communicate in their new schools (see also Markina, Melnyk, and Novikov 2025). From the pupils' perspective, language acquisition was facilitated by bilingual teachers (e.g. Ukrainian–German), teachers with experience teaching French or German as a second language at school, and teachers who switched to English when necessarily or otherwise made great efforts communicating with Ukrainian refugees in school (Abramicheva 2024). In earlier grades, pupils have more space to learn the local language and get used to their new environment, which aids language acquisition. Moreover, pupils from families with a strong return perspective are less motivated to learn the local language and progress more slowly in language acquisition (Abramicheva 2024).

Looking at language learning in Swiss schools, Abramicheva (2025) finds that full integration of Ukrainian refugees in ordinary school classes is best. In the German-speaking area of Switzerland, the diglossic school setting makes language learning particularly challenging at the beginning, but overall full integration helps with language learning in the longer term and is preferable over separate classes from the language acquisition point of view (Abramicheva 2025). Drawing on a school visit in early 2026, Aregger (2026) observes that the Ukrainian children speak predominantly German at school — a sign of linguistic integration.

For high schools (*Gymnasium*) language skills were identified as a potential stumbling block, as well as the limited importance of the VET-track⁹⁹ in Ukraine and hence unfamiliarity among refugees (Huber et al. 2022; Russi 2022). In Germany, Büssing (2023) report that

⁹⁹ vocational education and training

some potential students fail to reach sufficient language skills (typically B2, or C1 for university studies). In the case of university studies, there may be a financial requirement (€10k) for non-EU/EFTA students that can be difficult to fulfil for Ukrainian refugees. For Switzerland, a report by the SEM drew the same conclusion that in practice, access to university courses may be difficult (SEM 2023c). In October 2022, 95% of Ukrainians studied at level A1 to A2, with 4% at B1 to B2.

Many teachers report that Ukrainian pupils have a high level, but struggle to participate accordingly because of language difficulties (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023). While language learning causes much stress initially, within a year most pupils attend regular classes (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023). Evidence from Poland suggests that integration in schools happens more quickly when language is not seen as something refugee children are deficient in, but when they are included and receive support in class (Stolarski 2024).

Compared to 2023, the language skills of Ukrainian pupils have increased by 2024, but this has not led to a better inclusion in school activities (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

Marina (2024) argues that forced migration can also have positive aspects in the sense that professional mobility takes place. Such professional mobility is actively supported in other contexts, such as the ERASMUS+ programme, and the benefits should also apply to Ukrainian refugees. However, the forced nature of the migration means a lack of preparation, especially in terms of language skills, which can reduce the benefits of professional mobility in this case.

In contemporary Ukraine, parts of the population also speak minority languages (Crimean Tatar, Krymchak, Karaite, Polish, Moldovan, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian) and the languages of indigenous peoples (Trostynska, Titarenko, and Hrebenshchykova 2023). When designing support for Ukrainian refugees, these differences need to be considered. In a small ad-hoc survey in Poland, Germany, and the UK, Ukrainian refugees did not express significant difficulties for children in school, despite the limited language skills (Chovpan 2023). A greater source of stress was the uncertainty about how long they would stay in the host country (Chovpan 2023; Macková, Medová, et al. 2024; Macková, Zogata-Kusz, et al. 2024; Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Hett 2024; Oldfield et al. 2025; Oriel Kagan and Pinson 2026). Paradowski et al. (2025) looked at language learners in Poland, finding that Russian and Ukrainian speakers in language schools were frequently parts of different networks, which can pose challenges in the learning environment.

A study of pupil networks in Czech schools shows that most Ukrainian refugees manage to integrate in school networks and make friends with local pupils (Lintner et al. 2025). They traced friendship networks over time. This social integration was notably stronger for Ukrainian children who spoke the language better and showed other signs of sociocultural adaptation. In contrast, parental socio-economic status was not associated with integration in school networks (Lintner et al. 2025).

Transition to work

Summary

Limited language skills can be a hurdle for teenagers transitioning into work. Some cantons therefore prioritize language acquisition among Ukrainian refugees.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Focusing on asylum seekers more generally, Fehlmann et al. (2019) highlighted that for teenagers, integration in school and the transition to work can be particularly difficult: the change of context coincides with a period when decisions about one's future and choice of work come to the fore. Many of the stumbling blocks identified for asylum seekers do not apply for Ukrainian refugees with full access — but the psychological situation may be similar. The conclusion that investments in education are likely to be cost-effective in the medium term (Fehlmann et al. 2019) also applies, especially if an ongoing war effectively prevents a return. A qualitative study in Austria suggests that there are few differences in the nature of the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees and Afghan refugees when it comes to integration in school: language is a key challenge, followed by inclusion (L. Fischer and Jelinek 2023). They highlight the diversity of needs, as it is also found in Germany (Lizengevic 2025). These different perspectives have not abated by 2025: for some of the young adults the education in Germany has become dominant, while others still seek a return to Ukraine (Lizengevic 2025).¹⁰⁰

Language learning

Summary

Most Ukrainian refugees attend formal language classes.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that language learning predominantly takes place in intensive language courses or by independent learning (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Semi-intensive and private online courses were also mentioned.

¹⁰⁰ Using an automated analysis of posts on *Telegram*, Zavolokina et al. (2022) developed an automated content analysis to identify the most pressing concerns of Ukrainian refugees, and which can traced them over time. At the moment, no results are publicly available.

In the canton of Uri, intensive language courses are prioritized for those Ukrainian refugees with a high labour market potential (SEM 2023c). In Bern and Aargau there are specific bridging offers in education focusing on language acquisition (SEM 2023c). Of all the expenses by the cantons, language is the biggest one (70%), followed by education and labour-market integration (14%), primo-information for newly arrived refugees (6%), and counselling (*Beratung*, 5%). Intercultural interpretation was 1% of the expenses (SEM 2023c).

A study in Germany casts doubt on the proposition that living with host families increases language skills substantially compared to refugees who have different living arrangements (Herpell et al. 2024).¹⁰¹ In Poland, the key motivation to take up language courses was of instrumental nature: finding work, navigate administration, or advancing at work (Bednarz-Okrzynska et al. 2025). Interestingly, language learners who did not progress much on objective criteria still felt more confident in everyday social interactions (Bednarz-Okrzynska et al. 2025).

Stress and education

Summary

School can be a source of stress, but also a structure to reduce stress among refugee children.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

For many children among Ukrainian refugees, the situation is stressful, but schooling can reduce this stress to some extent. For refugees in general, schools are an important site for their mental health and well-being because they spend a lot of time in school compared to other places (Cowling, Whelan, and Anderson 2025). In a small ad-hoc survey in Poland, Germany, and the UK, children reported much homesickness, stress, and worsening living conditions (Chovpan 2023; see also Humphrey and Forbes-Mewett 2025). Interestingly, for Germany Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß (2025) report that homesickness and intentions to return to Ukraine are larger among children than for their parents. The uncertainty about a possible return was a source of stress for the children and parents alike (Chovpan 2023; see also Lazarenko 2024; UN 2024; Hett 2024; Oldfield et al. 2025). A larger study comes to the conclusion that the combination of language learning, integration into a new context, and academic demands causes much stress for Ukrainian refugees in education (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023). Continued access to Ukrainian education, be it in person or remotely, was underlined to alleviate some of these problems (Chovpan 2023). Indeed, many children continue Ukrainian education online (so-called double schooling), keen to maintain

¹⁰¹In Iceland, innovative ways were tried to make language learning more accessible, such as through drama plays (Tavares and Benediktsson 2024).

the possibility to return to Ukrainian schools without losing a year [Huber, Lüke, and Günther (2023); Stolarski (2024); few countries exempt Ukrainian children from attending local schools if they attend Ukrainian schools, e.g. Poland (Dietrich Thränhardt 2024), although this may have negative long-term consequences if the children do not return to Ukraine.]. This is the case to around 1/4 of children (Mubi 2024). This double perspective, keeping up with two curricula, is often a source of stress (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023; Eser Davolio et al. 2024). In the medium term, schools should better respond to this double perspective, which requires cooperation with Ukrainian teachers and institutions (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023).

In response to the widespread double-schooling, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education has created a reduced curriculum (*Ukrainian component*) with just 6 to 8 hours per week and just 3 to 7 school subjects (depending on the grade year) (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024). There are also steps to easily have language skills and other learning results recognized to allow a smooth transition back to the Ukrainian curriculum. In this context, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education seeks active collaboration with their counterparts across European countries. In addition, there are initiatives such as the *Ukrainian bookshelf* project to make available Ukrainian literature in both Ukrainian and translations (Styslavska-Doliwa 2024).

The early tracking in Switzerland and the lack of extracurricular activities compared to what they were used to in Ukraine is a common topic among Ukrainian parents (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). They regard extracurricular activities such as sports or music to improve the social integration of children, but often find the offer to be too expensive for their restricted budget or that courses are offered in places difficult to reach for those living in more remote areas (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).¹⁰²

Covering Central- and Eastern Europe as well as Austria, Guzi et al. (2024) report uncertainty around the residence status as a source of stress (see also Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Humphrey and Forbes-Mewett 2025), but also that childcare workers continue to struggle to establish adequate services (Guzi et al. 2024). Some parents were exposed to rumours that authorities in Western Europe, including Switzerland, were placing Ukrainian children in foster care, which led to low trust towards school authorities, especially educational psychological services (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). This may have evoked images of state interference linked to Soviet times, especially in a context of displacement where refugees had to leave behind a great deal.

In Germany, Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß (2025) find that girls are more likely to report emotional difficulties in school, especially older girls and teenagers. Emotional difficulties are reduced for pupils with German friends, those who speak German well, and those who are at least partly in school classes with Germans — as opposed to being uniquely in classes specifically

¹⁰² Looking at refugees in Germany in general, Kuhlemann and Kosyakova (2025) suggest that regular physical activities of refugees are associated with positive labour market outcomes: refugees who regularly engage in physical activities are more likely to be work in later waves of the study. However, they find no association with occupational prestige, suggesting that sports does not prevent deskilled employment. With a focus on university education in Switzerland and Ukraine, Ponomarenko (2026) highlights the federal nature of education in Switzerland, but still finds — compared to Ukraine — a clear strategy of integrating language education in all Swiss universities examined.

for Ukrainian refugees (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). Many pupils, boys and girls alike, report low feelings of attachment to their school (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025).

Social integration

Summary

Most Ukrainian refugees feel welcomed in Switzerland. Limited language skills are a hurdle for broader integration, but living with host families can sometimes overcome these hurdles. Uncertainty about the future makes social integration difficult.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that most Ukrainian refugees feel welcomed in Switzerland (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). This was also confirmed in individual interviews (Tarkhanova 2026).

The importance of early language acquisition for social integration is widely recognized (Auer et al. 2023; L. Fischer and Jelinek 2023), often described as the main barrier to integration for Ukrainian refugees (Sharudina, Prikhodko, and Osadcha 2023; Uebelhart 2026). At the same time, Ukrainian refugees who hope or expect to return to Ukraine in the near future are less motivated to learn the language (Lazarenko 2024).

For Ukrainian refugees who live with a host family, they often report spending time with the host families (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022; Ovsiiuk 2024). This contact in host families was an important resource for Ukrainian refugees, both in terms of social connections and as a source of social belonging (Tarkhanova 2026). In this way, meaningful connections with members of the majority population helped make sense in an unfamiliar environment (Tarkhanova 2026). At the same time, almost all Ukrainian refugees reported that they were in touch with other Ukrainian refugees in one way or another — including personal meetings, messenger applications like *Telegram* or *WhatsApp* (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022). Living with a host family increases social integration through regular contact and access to information (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023; Ammann Dula et al. 2024; Herpell et al. 2024; Ovsiiuk 2024). Drawing on interviews in Germany, Pierobon (2024) highlights that social contact means access to resources — social capital (Engbers, Thompson, and Slaper 2017) —, but also that Ukrainian refugees vary in the way they can mobilize this potential through (regular) contacts. It is this kind of regular contact that can help give meaning to places (Kotus and Adams 2024).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ A qualitative study with Ukrainian refugees in Poland suggests that security and stability contribute to a sense of home as much as rootedness does (Wnuk and Góralska 2024). This suggests that Ukrainian refugees can construct a new sense of home in their countries of residence as the war continues. Adams and Kotus (2025)

In autumn 2022, just 53 percent of Ukrainian refugees stated to have received financial support (from the state or NGO), with many refugees indicating that they use savings or work as a source of income. 20 percent have received no support whatsoever, while 23 percent received support from their host families (Fritschi and Ammann Dula 2023).

When asked about areas in which they need support, in autumn 2022 around 2/3 mentioned finding work (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 25), followed by language learning (57%), recognition of diplomas (40%), housing (21%), finances (18%), medical (18%), everyday skills (17%), dealing with public administration (10%), childcare (10%).

Many teachers and pupils alike report that Ukrainian refugees are mentally only temporarily in Switzerland, which can cause stress. For example, some pupils seek Ukrainian qualifications (in the ‘future’ or online), and teachers struggle to meet such expectations (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023). Insecurity about the situation and the future can lead to Ukrainian refugees feeling socially excluded (Uebelhart 2026).

For women with small children, lack of daycare can be a stumbling block, limiting participation in social activities (Stähli, Obrist, and Brunnschweiler 2023). Existing offers may be inaccessible and not meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees — participatory approaches have been suggested (Stähli, Obrist, and Brunnschweiler 2023).

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that most Ukrainian refugees with children in school reported a positive impact on social integration: Schools can be a site of contact with the Swiss population for parents (Eser Davolio et al. 2024, 2023). Around 80% of parents indicated that through the fact that their children are at school, their social integration improved. It has allowed Ukrainian refugees to gain insights into how people live in Switzerland (77% of respondents), could make new contacts (45%), and could strengthen their language skills by practising the local language (42%) (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). When they have questions about schools, most of the time they reach out to teachers and other members of staff at school (55% of respondents), though many have become independent in finding relevant information (37%) or rely on their children (26%) (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Looking at language learners in Poland, Paradowski et al. (2025) found that language barriers were often cited as a problem in communication with officials, a bit less when communicating with neighbours, at work or school, or when receiving services, but least so when communicating with volunteers.

A different approach was tried by Gerber and Aregger (2022), who developed a game that (young) Ukrainian refugees could download to learn more about their new home — in this case the city of Zürich. The aim was not only to help Ukrainian refugees to cope with and navigate their new or temporary home, but also to engage them with a playful approach. It is unknown whether the game was widely used by Ukrainian refugees and fulfilled the aims. Notwithstanding, the app developed by Gerber and Aregger (2022) illustrates the creative approaches that were sometimes used to support integration.

looks at Ukrainian refugees in Poland and identifies different ways in which the ‘home’ is constricted in the context of the war, and emphasizes that refugees have some agency in this process of shaping the ‘home’ and ‘roots’.

On a more formal level, the SEM recommends that the cantons use continuous case management and integrate Ukrainian refugees into the Integration Agenda Switzerland (IAS) (SEM 2023c). As of March 2023, 11 cantons do so, 13 in a reduced form, and 2 have no plans to do so (SEM 2023c). The reasons for not doing so are mostly a lack of resources. In the canton of Vaud, continuous case management is used once the refugees reach language level A2 (SEM 2023c).

In an ad-hoc survey in 2025, Hett and Ruedin (2025) report that few Ukrainian refugees feel stable and secure with Status S (around 7 percent of their sample). A slightly larger group considers the stability and security of Status S ‘adequate’, while by far the largest group emphasize how Status S means great uncertainty about the future (Hett and Ruedin 2025; see also Oldfield et al. 2025). This uncertainty affects decisions about the future and a possible return at the end of the war.

A study of the content of the largest discussion group of Ukrainian refugees in Finland provides some clues as to how refugees handle uncertainty through boundary making and constructing a sense of belonging (Smahina 2025). The study outlines how the Ukrainian refugees created a narrative of deserving refugees that carves out a place in Finnish society. At the same time, this narrative allows a rejection of ‘bad’ immigrants. There are different strands that contribute to this narrative of Ukrainian refugees as deserving or ‘good’ refugees. A first element draws on the centrality of work as a means of integration, either by working or by actively seeking work. It is not just a willingness to work in principle, but the more or less active search or serious attempts to learn Finnish that distinguishes refugees as being on the right path. Another important element is the assertion of agency and the rejection of being victims (Smahina 2025; see also Kyliushyk, Winogrodzka, and Chról 2026).

An extensive and systematic study in Germany highlights that living with host families has clear benefits on the social integration of Ukrainian refugees (Herpell et al. 2024). They use data from the largest German organization that places Ukrainian refugees to compare equivalent refugees who were successfully placed in host families and others (matching). The benefits of living with a host family can be found on a multidimensional measure of integration, and can be found across age groups, gender, education, and marital status (Herpell et al. 2024). These benefits are associated with the contact with the host families, and are not due to locational differences, as they can show. When the integration index is disaggregated, living with host families is beneficial for social integration, psychological well-being, and the ability to navigate everyday situations (Herpell et al. 2024). In contrast, there are no discernible effects on economic, political, and linguistic integration (Herpell et al. 2024).

Hett (2024) highlights the importance of (social) trust for successful integration in Switzerland (see also Hett and Ruedin 2025). She emphasizes high levels of corruption in Ukraine¹⁰⁴ and the need for Ukrainian refugees to adjust to a new context that is typically characterized by high levels of trust in authorities. Hett (2024) argues that Ukrainian refugees need to learn this to some extent. However, given the uncertainty around residence and the difficulty of planning for the future, this process is not easy. Indeed,

¹⁰⁴see also McGee, Benk, and Darden (2025) or Richter (2026)

refugees typically lack close friends and family, who are important for coping with uncertain situations (Hett 2024; Arcaio, Parroco, and Mendola 2025).

An ethnographic study in Switzerland and Norway argued that the way asylum of Ukrainians is handled amounts to a continuous sense of crisis and uncertainty for the refugees (C. Fischer and Insberg 2025). As a consequence, encompassing protection is not provided, and Ukrainian refugees are stuck in a position of “perpetual others” and have few opportunities to build on their capacities. C. Fischer and Insberg (2025) argue that many Ukrainian refugees are forced to wait the situation out, which amounts to a loss of time and a waste of opportunities. They cite diplomas that are misrecognized and discounted, but also a constant doubt about many aspects of the everyday that marks boundaries between Ukrainians and the majority population (C. Fischer and Insberg 2025).

A large survey in the Netherlands highlights how different forms of integration (economic, social, health) are often correlated among Ukrainian refugees (Otten et al. 2025). Women tend to do a bit worse on all the dimensions they studied, as do higher-educated refugees if we consider their qualifications. Krol, Mishchuk, and Bilan (2026) came to similar conclusions looking at economic integration, social protection, and social integration at the country level in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They found a clear positive association between economic integration and social protection, but no clear association between social integration on the one hand and economic integration or welfare engagement on the other hand (Krol, Mishchuk, and Bilan 2026). The availability of social protection does not seem to hinder economic or social integration of Ukrainian refugees (Krol, Mishchuk, and Bilan 2026).

A small-scale qualitative study with female refugees and labour migrants from Ukraine examined strategies for maintaining cultural identity abroad, including participants from different Western European countries (including Switzerland) (Soroka 2025). She reports cultural shock for both types of migrants, citing language barriers, social exclusion, differences in social norms, and difficulties in accessing medical services. These barriers can lead to confusion, homesickness, frustration, but also curiosity and excitement. To overcome cultural shock, the participants consulted digital media, tried to learn from experience, and sought social support (Soroka 2025). Labour migrants and refugees alike were keen to maintain cultural identity, which they tied to language use, traditional celebrations, and Ukrainian food.

A study in Germany examined the link between forced family separation and social integration using a large cross-sectional dataset (Levchuk et al. 2026). This study demonstrated that family separation is associated with lower levels of integration and life satisfaction. They suggest that loneliness is a key mediator in this association: Forced family separation leads to loneliness, which in turn affects language acquisition negatively, leads to lower social integration, and increases worries, all of which affect life satisfaction of separated Ukrainian refugees (Levchuk et al. 2026).

Friendship

Summary

Without access to paid work or education, some Ukrainian refugees risk isolation, but most of them have friends and acquaintances they can rely on if needed.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Participation in the labour market and financial independence are important for refugees and other migrants, but social integration does not automatically follow. Women in particular run the risk of feeling isolated (Mexi 2023), highlighting that successful integration cannot rely on immigrants and refugees alone. Without access to employment or education, there is a real danger of social isolation (Tsyhanenko 2023; Le Temps 2023; Otten et al. 2025).

In autumn 2022, around a third of Ukrainian refugees had at least three close people on whom they could rely in case of problems (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 15), but 13 percent stated that they had nobody in Switzerland with whom they could exchange in case of problems.¹⁰⁵

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that most Ukrainian refugees have frequent contact with Swiss and Ukrainians, with slightly more frequent contact with other Ukrainians (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024), though there are Ukrainian refugees who state not having any contact with Swiss citizens or other Ukrainians. Friendship with Swiss citizens is more common for Ukrainian refugees who live with a host family, or those who have kept contact with their former host family (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Between 2023 and 2024, there was a slight increase in the number of contacts Ukrainian refugees report (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). In an ad-hoc survey carried out in 2025, Hett and Ruedin (2025) find that some Ukrainian refugees have an extensive friendship network that includes Swiss friends. The most common answer was between 1 and 5 Swiss friends. A smaller group, however, reports having no Swiss friends, which may be a sign of social isolation (Hett and Ruedin 2025).

Language in general is linked with successful integration, not only in the sense of finding work, but also to achieve social integration in the context of work (Hutter 2022). Using qualitative interviews with refugees in a rural canton, Hutter (2022) showed how those refugees with better language skills before they started work or an apprenticeship were more successful in integrating in general.

Schools recognized that they can play an important role by encouraging Ukrainian refugees to participate outside regular classes, such as in choirs, sports, music classes, theatre, or trips (Huber et al. 2022). Ukrainian pupils report struggles to integrate in school, often

¹⁰⁵ In their ad-hoc survey across European countries (without Switzerland), Canada, and the US, Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) report that around a third of Ukrainian refugees have no friends among the local population, with little change between November 2022 and December 2024.

referring to isolation and lack of friends (Huber, Lüke, and Günther 2023; L. Fischer and Jelinek 2023).

A challenge to social inclusion lies in the allocation to cantons (and distribution within cantons), making it difficult to change cantons (Tsyhanenko 2023). Such questions of restricting movement will play a greater role as Ukrainian refugees stay in Switzerland for longer because the situation in Ukraine makes a return impossible. Even within cantons, when allocated to a particular accommodation, some Ukrainian refugees end up in remote areas, which makes social integration more difficult (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). In such remote locations, opportunities for contact may be limited (e.g. no events targeting Ukrainian refugees), and costs of reaching the nearest town may be expensive to Ukrainian refugees on social benefits, limiting opportunities to buy everyday items at low prices (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

For refugees in Germany in general, Eckhard and Siegert (2024) report that they are often socially isolated. This is particularly the case for those who live in group accommodation. According to their study, refugees rarely have contact with Germans, and are more likely than members of the majority population to lack a close contact person more generally (Eckhard and Siegert 2024). For the Netherlands, Otten et al. (2025) report high levels of social loneliness for Ukrainian refugees and that many desire more contact with the majority population.

Social protection and benefits

 Summary

Many Ukrainian refugees depend on social benefits, which are based on a significantly lower rate than for the general population.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Many Ukrainian refugees depend on social benefits, which are based on a significantly lower rate than for the general population. Social protection for Ukrainian refugees is tied to the system in place for asylum seekers (or temporarily admitted refugees). This means, that compared to the SKOS guidelines used for the majority population, Ukrainian refugees face financial struggles and can expect levels of support that can be as low as a third of what the majority population receives (Caritas 2023). The level of social benefits for Ukrainian refugees is on par with individuals in the asylum procedure, which is between 20% and 60% lower than that of the general population (Huter and Marti 2024; RTS 2026).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ In contrast to temporarily admitted persons, the automatic conversion into a residence permit after 5 years means that social benefits for Ukrainian refugees are set to increase for those on benefits at that moment (Huter and Marti 2024). In spring 2026, cantons and municipalities started to lobby against the increase in

In Figure 24 we can see the number of Ukrainian refugees on social benefits by gender and age. The numbers reflect the age pyramid in Figure 9. There are more women on social benefits as they constitute the majority of Ukrainian refugees. For children aged 0 to 17, there are more boys than girls, which is also reflected in Figure 24. The secondary peak for women aged 36 to 45 years old corresponds to the age pyramid. Put differently, considering the composition by age and gender, there are no immediately obvious patterns in the use of social benefits among Ukrainian refugees.

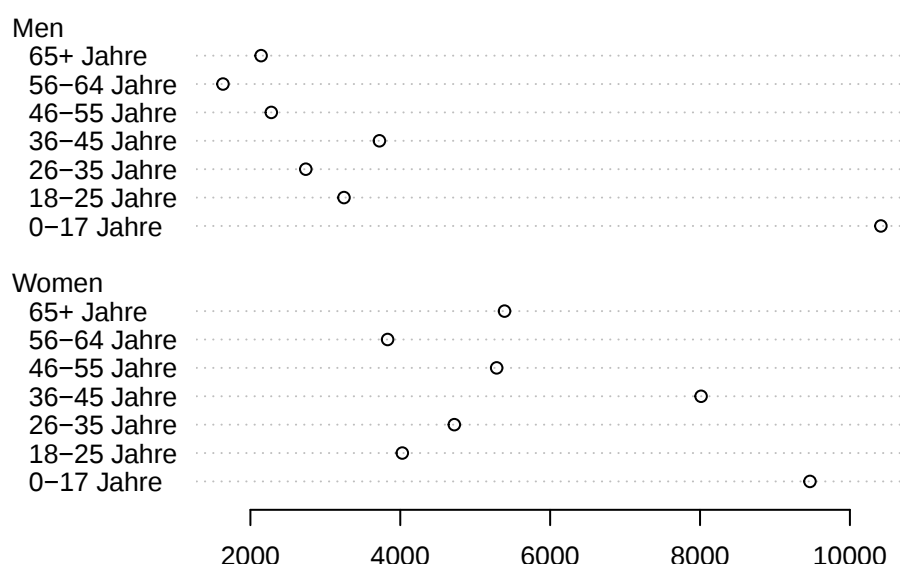


Figure 24: Use of social benefits by Ukrainian refugees by age group and gender, end of 2024. Results are partially weighted. Source: [BFS - Sozialhilfeempfängerstatistik SHS](#).

Using a chatbot, which was used 1000 times during the project, Ukrainian refugees could obtain relevant information. While most were interested in housing, in three cases information on (physical or psychic) violence could be provided, contributing to social protection (Bühler et al. 2023; Bühler and Reiser 2023). With the increased integration of Ukrainian refugees into ordinary structures, it has become possible for authorities to sanction Ukrainians unwilling to integrate (SEM 2024). This has caused conflict for some Ukrainians, when they could not understand the reason why they were sanctioned (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Ukrainian refugees also report unequal treatment between municipalities when it comes to considering rents from Ukraine as income that should be deducted from social benefits (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

In an ad-hoc survey in 2025, Hett and Ruedin (2025) report that many Ukrainian refugees experience challenges in accessing services. The most common reasons are a lack of information about the services that are available, and language barriers. Less common was unfamiliarity with the way bureaucracy works in Switzerland, and plain discrimination (Hett

social benefits, highlighting inequalities within the Ukrainian refugee population and differences between permit S and permit F (RTS 2026; Studer 2026). Given that the permit B after 5 years is tied to the situation in Ukraine, there are efforts to keep social benefits at a reduced rate.

and Ruedin 2025). At the same time, the participants in this survey highlight that they often manage to overcome challenges and feel neutral or positive about accessing services that are available (Hett and Ruedin 2025).

In October 2025, the government reported that in 2024, the federal government has paid CHF 1.4 billion for Ukrainian refugees with Satus S. Of these, 1.1 billion were spent on social benefits, and around 200 million on integration measures (Fopp 2025b).

Return intentions

Summary

Over time, intentions to return decline. In early 2025, Ukraine has started programmes to entice Ukrainian refugees back.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In December 2023, around one third of Ukrainian refugees planned to return to Ukraine (UNHCR 2023c). Many were undecided, but around one third plans to stay in Switzerland.¹⁰⁷ The reasons cited — notably security and lack of economic opportunities in Ukraine — resonate findings from other conflict situations (Ruedin et al. 2019; Bucheli and Fontenla 2023b; Andrews et al. 2023; Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025) and for Ukrainians in Germany (Brücker et al. 2023; Maxwell, Leybenson, and Yemini 2024; Kosyakova 2025; Olivo Rumpf et al. 2026) and across European countries (Savatic et al. 2025; Otten et al. 2025).¹⁰⁸ Also in line with other conflict situations is the finding that intentions to return declined over time as the war in Ukraine dragged on (OECD 2024; Chas Pravdy 2025; Rasenko 2025).¹⁰⁹ In an ad-hoc survey in early 2023, Eser Davolio et al. (2024) report better living

¹⁰⁷ See also EUAA (2024). A different interpretation is that around two thirds intend to return to Ukraine, while a good part of them are unsure whether such a return is a realistic scenario in the near future (P. A. Fischer 2024; Winogrodzka, Kyliushyk, and Chról 2025). This interpretation is supported by numbers from Germany, where in summer 2025, 59 percent of the Ukrainian refugees who had arrived in early 2022 state that they plan to stay in Germany for good (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). Citing survey data from across Europe, Levchenko (2026) suggest that return intentions have declined from 70% in 2022 to 40% in 2025/6.

¹⁰⁸ An ad-hoc study in Norway in 2022 finds much lower intentions to return among young Ukrainian refugees in Norway, suggesting that in their case just a quarter of them intended to return to Ukraine after the end of the war (Hernes et al. 2024).

¹⁰⁹ In July 2022, the majority of respondents in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia expressed a clear desire to return to Ukraine, but were doubtful whether this would be possible soon (UNHCR 2022a). In 2022, 81 per cent of Ukrainian refugees sampled by the UNHCR intended to return to Ukraine one day. About half did not think that this would happen in the subsequent 3 months, with a similar share remaining unsure. The most important reason not to return were safety concerns (UNHCR 2022b). Around 9 per cent of the respondents planned to move to another country. These numbers did not change greatly by early 2023 (UNHCR 2023a). Return perspectives are similar for Ukrainian refugees in other countries and internally displaced people (IDP) within Ukraine (UNHCR 2023b), although IDP were

conditions and children in Switzerland as reasons not to return to Ukraine (see also Vakhi-tov, Zaika, and Kandul (2024) who shows that social bonds in Switzerland are associated with lower return intentions). In Germany, intentions to stay are similarly larger for those without a partner in Germany, for those with children, those who feel welcome, with more contact with the majority population, and good German skills Otten et al. (2025).¹¹⁰ There are no apparent gender differences in the intentions to return (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

In an opportunity sample in August 2022, around a third stated that they wanted to stay in Switzerland beyond the immediate conflict Otten et al. (2025). Using a small qualitative study, Maxwell, Leybenson, and Yemini (2024) identifies three types of return intentions in Germany, which correspond well with the intentions of return identified in surveys — including in Switzerland. Accordingly, around a third are waiting to return, but they embrace life while waiting to do so: they actively seek to make the best of their situation, try to earn their living, and become part of the host society as far as possible until they return. A third is stuck in a limbo, with a desire to return to Ukraine in principle, but unable to adapt to the sudden change in situation. A final third does *not* want to return and actively work towards a future in Germany, in their case (Maxwell, Leybenson, and Yemini 2024).

In an ad-hoc survey in 2025, most Ukrainian refugees reported a desire to stay in Switzerland beyond the end of the war (Hett and Ruedin 2025). The category of undecided refugees,

more likely to return to their place of origin for short visits (50% for IDP, 39% for refugees in other countries — mostly in neighbouring countries). By early 2024, return intentions remained high for Ukrainian refugees and IDP, although only 6 per cent of refugees (5 per cent of IDP) expected to return within 12 months (UNHCR 2024a). As reasons for giving up plans to return, the respondents cited worsening security in Ukraine. By autumn 2024, return intentions have declined a bit (UNHCR 2024b). In early 2025, a study from the Czech Republic reported that around 70 percent of the Ukrainian refugees wanted to stay in the Czech Republic beyond the war (Wiedermann et al. 2025). Comparing different cohorts of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn (2025) identified a declining intention to return to Ukraine. In their survey, more than half of the refugees plan to stay in Germany permanently. This number is higher among refugees who arrived after June 2022 than for those who arrived immediately after full-scale invasion. Return intentions are greatly dependent on the end of the war (90% of respondents) and the economic situation (60% of respondents). At the end of December 2025, Ukrainian media reported greatly reduced return intentions, which led journalists to worry that the Ukrainian population would be substantially smaller after the war (Chas Pravdy 2025; Rasenko 2025).

¹¹⁰ In a Europe-wide survey, Gradus (2024) report higher intentions to return to Ukraine among Ukrainian refugees in countries closer to Ukraine than in countries further away. A survey in Germany in spring 2022 reported high levels of intentions to return to Ukraine ‘as soon as possible’ (Andrews et al. 2023). A different study from Germany traced the declining intentions to return over time (Giesing, Panchenko, and Poutvaara 2022; UNI Europa 2025; Schneider 2025; Chas Pravdy 2025). The online study with around 2,000 participants reports a general decline in return intentions, but also an increase in the share of the refugees who intend to stay in Germany at least two years. By early 2025, only a quarter had a clear intention to return to Ukraine after the war. Rather than necessarily intending to return in person, the refugees send money and support the country in other ways Schneider (2025). These changes over time resonate to findings from other conflict situations (Bucheli and Fontenla 2023b). Beyond stated intentions to return, Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß (2025) examine births to Ukrainian refugees, noting that by 2025 births have increased and Ukrainian refugees enter new relationships. Both relationships and births are seen as evidence that Ukrainian refugees plan their stay in Germany in the medium- to long-term (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025). In a broad sample of Ukrainian refugees across Europe and countries in North America, Ippolitova et al. (2026) report that return intentions may have stabilized in 2025. However, the share of ‘definitely not’ has increased from 14% to 17% in that period. Compared to November 2022, when the first wave was carried out, the share indicating that they were ‘definitely planning’ a return has decreased from 50% to 19%, while the ‘definitely not’ has increased from 2% to 17%. The largest impediment are security concerns (Ippolitova et al. 2026).

or those who wanted to decide based on the specific circumstances at that moment was clearly smaller, with a much smaller group planning to return to Ukraine. Very few refugees indicated an intention to move to a third country (Hett and Ruedin 2025). Those who intend to stay in Switzerland beyond the war, the most common reasons are work and studying, with a smaller proportion citing family reunification (Hett and Ruedin 2025). They do expect challenges, however, notably visa regulations, the ability to find or keep work, or financial reason (Hett and Ruedin 2025).¹¹¹

Using register data from 1999 to 2016, Ahrens et al. (2023) show that variations in restrictions for refugees in the Swiss labour market do not encourage return migration (see also review in Ruedin et al. 2019). Since the time of return is unknown, the OECD recommends a ‘dual-intent’ approach where Ukrainian refugees are prepared for both indefinite stay *and* a possible return (OECD 2023b; see also Fleischmann 2022; SEM 2024; NCCR Roundtable 2024; Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025; SODK et al. 2025). This can be achieved by investing in human capital and language skills, yet allowing or even encouraging the refugees to maintain links — notably also financial links — to Ukraine to facilitate a possible return. The experts of a roundtable in March 2024 focused on integration in Switzerland, possibly because return looks increasingly unlikely (NCCR Roundtable 2024; see also Krastev and Leonard 2024; Winogrodzka, Kyliushyk, and Chról 2025).¹¹² For the Ukrainian refugees, however, intentions to return may remain dominant, and this may prevent them from investing in integration or obtaining a good job — effectively making them stuck in ‘temporariness’ (Lazarenko 2024; see also Maxwell, Leybenson, and Yemini 2024).

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that the most common answer was a long-term stay in Switzerland, followed by a return to Ukraine as soon as possible and an equivalent part who are unsure about their future (Eser Davolio et al. 2023). The most common reason for not wanting to return to Ukraine were fears over safety, including the possible presence of mines (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). For this reason, many would want some time after the end of the conflict to better understand how and when to return to Ukraine.

Drawing on a survey and interviews, Holm-Hansen et al. (2025) finds that those Ukrainian refugees who are more likely to (say that they would) return to Ukraine are elderly and those in need of medical care. Ukrainian refugees whose skills are likely to be needed in

¹¹¹These results correspond to numbers from a large study in Austria, where two thirds state that they do not want to return to Ukraine (‘not at all’ and ‘rather not’) (Pollak 2026). The remainder are mostly unsure about return plans, while only 1.9% have concrete plans to return to Ukraine (Pollak 2026). They show that return intentions are lower for those refugees with better German skills. A panel study of Ukrainian refugees in Germany confirms the importance of families in return intentions, but shows how these associations are more complicated and dynamic than often assumed (Kokonowskyj and Nowicka 2026; see also Jirka, Kamionka, and Macková 2026). Ukrainian women consider the situation of the family and in particular their children when formulating return intentions. They report high moral pressures, although these pressures can point towards intentions to return or intentions not to return — depending on the individual situation. Even when they express no intentions to return because of their children, Ukrainian refugees may still have (weak) intentions to return (Kokonowskyj and Nowicka 2026). Carling et al. (2026) suggests that such transnational ties may — in the long term — increase intentions of Ukrainians in Ukraine to leave the country.

¹¹²In May 2024, the most common view in Switzerland was for the war in Ukraine to continue 1 to 5 years (51% of responses), while a much smaller proportion see the war end within 1 year (11%) or last more than 5 additional years (11%) (Krastev and Leonard 2024).

the rebuilding of the country are actually less likely to seek a return. The dominant factor, however, are children and their well-being (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025). Parents seek a stable and safe future for their children, whether this can be achieved in Ukraine or abroad. The longer the children are schooled abroad, the greater the worries that they would not integrate well in Ukraine. They want to avoid uprooting their children once again (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025).

Vakhitov, Zaika, and Kandul (2024) used a survey experiment to examine how different scenarios affect return intentions. When return is associated with national identity, Ukrainian refugees are more likely to want to return. In a scenario when return is associated with (national) pride, however, no such effect could be identified. In the accompanying survey, the most important reasons for return were security and living conditions like electricity supply. These two factors — security, infrastructure — can also be found in Figure 26 below, drawing on data from other European countries (Mykhailyshyna et al. 2025). These findings are reflected in a separate European-wide study, highlighting that political reasons are more important for return intentions than financial aspects (Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025). Similarly, Olivo Rumpf et al. (2026) used a survey experiment in Germany to highlight that the security in Ukraine is the most important factor for return intentions, but both the situation in Germany and Ukraine affect return intentions. Economic opportunities in Ukraine are an important factor (Olivo Rumpf et al. 2026).

Figure 25 shows return intentions from Ukrainian refugees across European countries, interviewed in five waves since summer 2022 (UNHCR 2024b). We can see a gradual decline in the share of those planning or hoping to return, while those unsure and unwilling to return increased over time. Still, the share of Ukrainian refugees planning to return remains by far the largest group. The main reason for not wanting to return are fears over safety (UNHCR 2024b; see also Chas Pravydy 2025). The return intentions of internally displaced people (IDP), in contrast, declined less (from 83% in December 2022 to 73% in July 2024). While almost half of the respondents stated to have visited Ukraine for short periods, a return in the next three months seems unlikely for most Ukrainian refugees (UNHCR 2024b). Holm-Hansen et al. (2025) show that Ukrainian refugees want to return to their home town, or not at all. They regard a return to a different city in Ukraine as a source of stress and are worried they would not find their place easily.

Among early Ukrainian refugees in Germany, Albrecht and Panchenko (2022) found that around 40 percent wanted to stay where they were (in the receiving countries) for the next months, and around a third who expected to return to Ukraine 'soon'. Around 20 percent had not clear plans, with few individuals in the remaining categories indicating a desire to move onwards to another receiving country. A study covering eight countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Moldova, Netherlands, Romania) in summer 2022 suggested that Ukrainian refugees in countries closer to Ukraine — as well as Italy — had higher intentions to return (Tubergen et al. 2024). At the individual level, higher levels of education and older age were associated with a lower intention to return, while those in a better financial situation before the war and especially those with a partner in Ukraine stated higher intentions to return. In terms of region of origin, Ukrainian refugees from regions directly affected by the war had lower intentions to return (Tubergen et al. 2024).

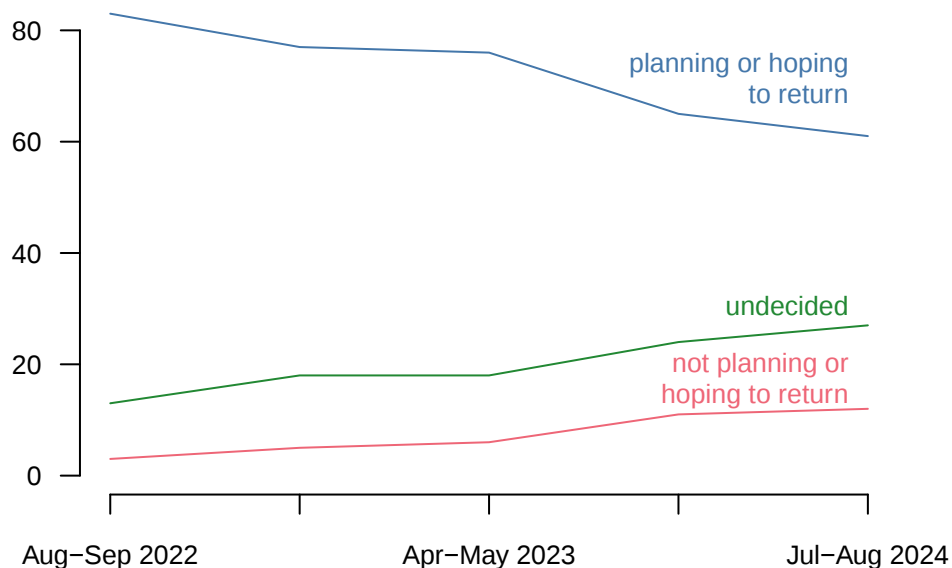


Figure 25: Development of return intentions between summer 2022 and 2024. Respondents were from across European countries, with a bigger representation of respondents from countries neighbouring Ukraine. Source: UNHCR (2024b).

Kosyakova, Ette, and Schwanhäuser (2026) examined return intentions of Ukrainian refugees over time, finding that return intentions are lower for refugees coming from areas under intensive fighting. These effects are both short-term and long-term. Put differently, refugees from areas more directly affected by the war are less likely to want to return. At the same time, refugees with family members in Ukraine are more likely to state an intention to return after the war, and are less influenced by the intensity of fighting (Kosyakova, Ette, and Schwanhäuser 2026). In a separate study based on the same data, Adunts et al. (2026) find that uncertainty about returning is associated with lower language skills, less investment in human capital, lower aspirations to find paid work, and generally lower levels of socio-economic integration. Those who intend to stay in Germany permanently acquire the language more rapidly and seek employment (Adunts et al. 2026).

Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) carried out an ad-hoc survey among Ukrainian refugees in several European country (not including Switzerland), Canada, and the US to look at return plans. In their sample 43% of the surveyed refugees planned to return (a share that is declining over time), and only 20% are fully confident that they will return. Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) identified four different return perspectives:

- (a) *patriots* who are certain that they want to return to Ukraine as soon as possible
- (b) quasi-labour migrants, most of who want to return eventually, but the timing depends on economic opportunities
- (c) classic refugees, who expect to return when and if real security can be achieved in Ukraine
- (d) refugees from the war zone, divided whether they want to return or not

They note that many of the ‘classic refugees’ depend on social benefits. They also examined

factors that influence individual plans to return to Ukraine (Figure 26). While they could identify many factors, few of them can be influenced by the country of residence of the refugees (given in red in the figure: the end of temporary protection, the end of social benefits, and lack of access to affordable housing). Much more important for the decision to return are questions of security (given in green in the figure), economic considerations (given in blue),¹¹³ and restoration after the war (given in yellow; restoration of infrastructure, rebuilding the home). The mix of reasons identified by Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) reflect the different kinds of perspectives outlined by them.

A survey experiment with a sample across European countries with strong coverage of Germany confirms these associations in broad terms (Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025). In a single-profile conjoint experiment, they find that for every additional year until the war ends, the stated return probability declined. The difference in means amounts to around 2 percentage points between an end of fighting in 2025 and one in 2027. Without formal peace agreement, return intentions are lower (Figure 1 in Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025). If Russia is to keep most or all occupied territory, return intentions are around 12 percentage points lower than if borders are restored to the situation of 1991. Security guarantees increase return intentions substantially, with NATO membership having the strongest positive impact. EU membership negotiations are associated with increased return intentions, but substantially security guarantees by NATO countries have a larger effect. The importance of job opportunities in Ukraine amounts to an increase in return intentions of around 5 percentage points, with income changes (compare to those in Ukraine before the war) similarly affecting stated return intentions (Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025). The importance of corruption in Ukraine is highlighted by differences in return intention of similar size than the differences in income tested (-20% to +20% compared to the situation before the war, Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025).

Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker (2025) report differences in return intentions. For those who consider returning, post-war conditions are the most important. They also find that women are more responsive to conflict outcomes, while young Ukrainian refugees are more responsive to economic prospects. The importance of territorial integrity plays a similar role for those who lived in affected regions before the full-scale invasion and those who lives in other regions (Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker 2025). If return intentions are added up, Adema, Chargaziia, Giesing, and Necker (2025) estimate that between 3% and 47% of Ukrainian refugees intend to return, depending on how the war develops.

Looking at regional differences within Ukraine, Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025) find that refugees from the South and East generally do not want to return to a different region in Ukraine: if they cannot return to their place of origin, they often state a desire to stay in their current country of residence (see also Holm-Hansen et al. 2025). In contrast, children who study in Ukrainian schools are more likely to want to return to Ukraine (Mykhailyshyna et al. 2025), with those undertaking double schooling in between, and those in local schools less. In this case, however, it is difficult to ascertain causality.

¹¹³ For Poland, Lewandowski (2025) report that greater dequalification at work is associated with a greater desire to return; for the Nordic countries, Holm-Hansen et al. (2025) support the importance of safety



Figure 26: Factors that influence plans to return to Ukraine. Source: Mykhailyshyna et al. (2025), p.46

Closely linked to intentions to return are questions of remittances, which are not much studied. Using an ad-hoc survey and interviews in Poland Grabowska (2025) looks at remittances in the sense of what Ukrainian refugees intend to bring back to Ukraine when they return. The study focused on intangible transfers, and identified educational practices, professional development, and a life-long learning approach as central elements. They also identified work ethics, mental health support, and inclusivity as something they intend to bring to Ukraine (Grabowska 2025).

In line with a dual-intent focus and capacity-building, Switzerland supports Ukraine in developing the economy and governance (Bulhakova 2024). These efforts focus on digitalization, information technology, and agriculture in particular. A stronger Ukrainian economy is more likely to absorb Ukrainian refugees after the conflict, although it remains unclear to what extent such efforts affect the *intentions* to return (e.g. OECD 2023b). The economic recovery of Ukraine depends to a large extent on its ability to attract Ukrainian refugees back into the country, and making new cross-border links — of the refugees — work (Landesmann et al. 2024). Herzfeld and Kvartiuk (2026) shows that Ukrainian agriculture remains strong despite the war. Nagy (2024) suggest that we look at previous conflicts, notably in former Yugoslavia, as a source for successful post-conflict development in Ukraine. Stronger institutions, predictable policies, and more effective fighting against corruption have been identified as areas where Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland may contribute (Mikhno 2026).

A survey experiment in Germany exposed Ukrainian refugees to statements where politicians either supported military support for Ukraine or opposed it (Hilbig, Sichart, and Syun-

yaev 2024). They find that these statements did not affect the return intentions of the feeling of belonging in Germany, and conclude that support or opposition to military aid to Ukraine is probably unrelated to integration efforts and return intentions (Hilbig, Sichart, and Syunyaev 2024).

A different survey experiment included Ukrainian refugees now residing in different European countries (Nguyen et al. 2024). They presented the participants different scenarios and measured the stated likelihood of returning to Ukraine in each scenario — assuming a free decision. High levels of return intentions were measured when the war ended with a peace deal that covers either Donbas or Donbas and Crimea. Without a peace deal including either region, the participants declared no intention to return. Intentions to return were also high if Ukraine achieved EU membership or obtained a special association agreement with the European Union.¹¹⁴ A restored industry and, to a lesser extent, low levels of unemployment were also associated with greater intention to return, while the return of other Ukrainian refugees made no difference to the return intention of the participants (Nguyen et al. 2024). Put differently, the participants assume that their return intentions are independent of the intentions and behaviour of other Ukrainian refugees.

The situation in Poland is particular in that there was a sizeable Ukrainian population between the full-scale invasion by Russia. Gońda (2024) compare return intentions of Ukrainian students in Poland with those of Ukrainian refugees. Not only do they find that Ukrainian refugees are more likely to want to return to Ukraine, but also are they less likely to be in paid work.

In January 2025, Ukraine has started programmes to entice Ukrainian refugees back (Blue News 2025; Holm-Hansen et al. 2025). Starting with a “Unity Hub” in Berlin, Germany, Ukraine plans to set up centres in several European cities to encourage Ukrainian refugees back to Ukraine, especially in what they call ‘critical sectors’ — the arms sector, the energy sector, and sectors related to rebuilding infrastructure. Ukrainian men in these sectors are given a guarantee that they will not be drafted into the armed forces (Blue News 2025). The “Unity Hubs” should also provide education and information to support a return to Ukraine. Drawing on interviews of actual returnees, financial support (from Ukraine or the Nordic countries in their case) did not influence their decision to return to Ukraine (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025).¹¹⁵

Five different return scenarios were predicted in July 2025 using an agent-based model (UNHCR 2025b). In line with surveys on return intentions, the socio-demographic profile of the simulated returnees differed substantially from the general population of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. In all scenarios studied, older refugees without family responsibilities were more likely to return. Similarly, those who have successfully found paid work in the

¹¹⁴In summer 2022, Ukraine became an EU member candidate. In December 2025, it was reported that countries of the European Union proposed that Ukraine could become a member state as early as January 2027 (Imwinkelried 2025).

¹¹⁵Looking at support by international organizations and NGO, Giessen et al. (2025) identify an opposing tendency: a change in support because the war in Ukraine continues longer than what many anticipated initially. They suggest community building among the Ukrainian refugees, and strengthening identification, with a hope to increase social integration in the host countries and enabling a successful transition after the end of the war.

country of residence are less likely to return. What is more, there are large differences between the scenarios, into which regions the refugees are most likely to return. In all cases, return takes many months and years.

Looking at integration policies, the simulations by UNHCR (2025b) suggest that they make a difference. Refugees in countries with more inclusive policies are less likely to return, but so are refugees in countries with more work opportunities and a larger Ukrainian diaspora — factors that cannot readily be influenced by the country of residence. While they did not provide estimations for Switzerland in particular, the estimated share of Ukrainian refugees who will return according to the simulated scenarios was between 43% (Poland) and 81% (Moldova). For Germany, they estimate that 66% of the refugees will return, for Italy 75%, and for the Netherlands 71% (UNHCR 2025b). Looking at the situation in Ukraine, on the other hand, according to the simulated scenarios, Kyiv is likely to receive more returnees than that region, as are regions in the North and West more generally. This has implications on housing demands, for example (UNHCR 2025b).

Pucek, Düvell, and Pronk (2026) developed four scenarios in October 2025 to estimate the number of Ukrainian refugees who are likely to return to Ukraine after the end of the war. They draw on previous population flows after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and displacement patterns during the 2022 full-scale invasion on the one hand, as well as on various surveys that capture intentions to return Table 2. They conclude that under all scenarios they considered, a large number of Ukrainian refugees is likely to remain in their host countries because the need for protection continues. Pucek, Düvell, and Pronk (2026) expect them to stay for many years if not permanently.

Table 2: Four scenarios and their estimated outcome on the number of Ukrainian refugees in Europe (Pucek, Düvell, and Pronk 2026)

Scenario	Outcome
significant territorial gains for Ukraine	1.9 million return
significant territorial gains for Russia	7.1 million+ additional refugees
volatile ceasefire along front line of 2025	370 thousand return, family reunification in host countries
robust ceasefire along front line of 2025	2.5 million return, family reunification in host countries

The first scenario they considered was a continued war of attrition, although over the period of 4 years Ukraine makes substantial territorial gains. The gains in this scenario include part of the south and the east of the country, but not the big cities under Russian control as of summer 2026. Because of the continuing war, economic recovery remains limited. Under these circumstances, Pucek, Düvell, and Pronk (2026) estimate few additional refugees and a return of around 1.9 million Ukrainian refugees. Their second scenario is similar, but with Russia making the gains: capturing the entire Donbas region as well as the city of Sumy. In this scenario, cities like Kharkiv, Dnipro, and Zaporizhzhia are within distance for shelling and drone attacks. As a consequence, insecurity and political instability in Ukraine continues. They estimate substantial new displacement of 7.1 million to over 11.7 million

Ukrainians, many of which will seek protection in European countries. Return migration would be negligible.

The third scenario considered a volatile ceasefire along the front line as of end of 2025. There are no significant security guarantees and no proper monitoring mechanism, so that the threat of Russian attacks is not abated. Pucek, Düvell, and Pronk (2026) estimated around 70 thousand additional Ukrainian refugees, but around 500 thousand Ukrainians moving to European countries through family reunification. At the same time, around 370 thousand Ukrainian refugees are expected to return. The last scenario concerns a robust ceasefire along the front line as of end of 2025. There is robust security and improved governance. While there are no additional refugees, family reunification may lead to 300 thousand additional Ukrainians in European countries. At the same time, around 2.5 million Ukrainians are expected to return (Pucek, Düvell, and Pronk 2026).

Indications of return

💡 Summary

There are no indications of substantial return migration at this stage, although over 35,000 Ukrainian refugees had their Status S lapse since 2022.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Strictly speaking, there are no systematic data on return migration of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. Asylum statistics (SEM 2026a) give some indication of the number of Ukrainian refugees who are likely to have left Switzerland — though the data do not distinguish between those who have returned to Ukraine, those who have moved to a third country, or indeed those who died. Technically, an irregular stay cannot be ruled out, but it seems unlikely. The statistics distinguish between (1) revocation of protection following a decision by the Federal Council — which has not yet happened, (2) revocation of protection at the individual level, (3) revocation/withdrawal of protection status, and (4) expiry of protection. This last category is compatible with a return to Ukraine or a move to a third country (but also includes death) (Figure 27). In January 2026, media reports highlighted that a bit over 11,000 Ukrainian refugees have claimed financial support for returning to Ukraine, an amount of CHF 500 per refugees (Spörri and Kälin 2026). It is unknown whether they remained in Ukraine or moved to another country since. The greater share of expired permits is unaccounted for. Thränhardt (2026) highlights that in all countries entries are better accounted for than exits.

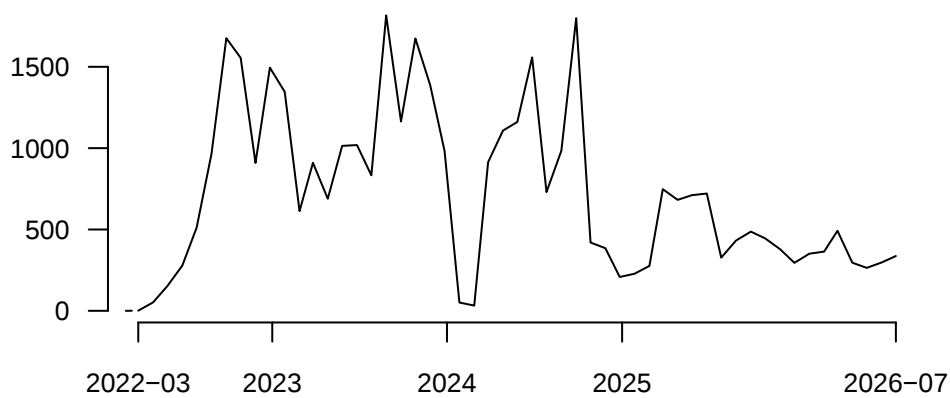


Figure 27: Number of expired permits by month.

Table 3: Sum of all expired or revoked permits to date

Revoked FC	Revoked ind.	Revoked	Expired	Re-applied
0	0	673	38525	839

Table 3 gives the sum of all Status S permits that expired or were revoked up to date. We can see that, to date, few were revoked because of a decision by the Federal Council or on individual grounds. A negligible number was revoked by overturning the decision. Although the number of expired permits remained low throughout the period, they add to 38525 expired permits that may suggest a return to Ukraine or move to a third country. The lack of re-applications in the last column of the table suggests that the expired permits are not mere lapses where refugees forgot to renew their permit — which should not be possible with automatic extensions as they are in place in Switzerland.

Looking at the decisions by the European Council, Thränhardt (2026) highlights that there are pressures on European countries to find more permanent solutions to the temporary protection offered to Ukrainian refugees. This may mean increasing the number of pathways, differentiating refugees in paid work from those on benefits, for example (Thränhardt 2026).

As of 2025, few countries had programmes to promote voluntary return to Ukraine (M. Wagner and Grama 2025). Most European countries consider return unsafe, but there are programmes in France and the Netherlands, although the latter does not promote it. Several countries provide organizational support for return in individual cases for voluntary returns (M. Wagner and Grama 2025).

For Germany, Siegert et al. (2023) report at the end of 2023, only very few Ukrainian refugees have left the country after registering. Looking at register data between February 2022 and the end of June 2024, Siegert (2025) identify around 15% of Ukrainian refugees in Germany having left the country — presumably returning to Ukraine. Over time, the rate of this out-migration is stable, with no indication of an acceleration or slowing down of movement. This is in line with a large ad-hoc panel survey of Ukrainian refugees across Europe,

which shows that once Ukrainian refugees have reached a temporary country of destination, they tend not to move to other countries (few so-called secondary moves) (Savatic et al. 2025). There is very little evidence of return migration from Poland, Germany, and countries of Central and Eastern Germany, or from any of the other European countries that their survey did not cover equally well (Savatic et al. 2025). In spring 2026, three countries saw their number of Ukrainian refugees decline, while it continued to grow in other European countries: The largest proportional reduction was observed in Estonia (-2.1% between 1 January 2026 and 28 February), France (-0.9%), and Luxembourg (-0.1%) (Eurostat 2026).

i After Status S

Currently, Status S is valid to March 2027. After 5 years, responsibility of the Ukrainian refugees will fully pass to the cantons, and they will obtain a residence permit (permit B) that is tied to temporary protection. This procedure was confirmed in summer 2026, when Status S was extended to March 2028.

In principle, after 5 years refugees can apply for cases of hardship, which will also lead to a permit B — although not tied to the temporary protection scheme (Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025; SODK et al. 2025). This means that uncertainty around how long a refugee can stay in Switzerland remains (SODK et al. 2025). The basic decision for hardship cases lies with the cantons, and at the end of 2025, many applications were expected. This would lead to a great deal of administrative strain. The most recent concept about the end of Status S dates from 2023 (Sommer, Hänni, and Senn 2025).

With the reiteration in summer 2026 of the standard procedure leading to a permit B that is still tied to temporary protection, it remains unclear how cantons react in the case of hardship applications. It is possible that such cases will be deferred to the end of the protection status.

Levchenko (2026) suggests that in many European countries, the looming expiration of subsidiary protection in — at the time — 2027 is accompanied with reductions in social benefits, although there are clear efforts to prepare the legal transition (Levchenko 2026). Several countries have opportunities for specific groups of refugees (M. Wagner and Grama 2025). For example, in Austria a transition to a renewable permit is possible for Ukrainian refugees with at least 2 years of residence, at least 1 year of employment, and financial self-sufficiency. In Czechia a new long-term status (5 years) was implemented for Ukrainian refugees with at least 2 years of residence, stable employment, and if children are in school (M. Wagner and Grama 2025). In Latvia and Spain, transition to other statuses is possible if Ukrainian refugees meet those criteria, while Poland created a new status (M. Wagner and Grama 2025). M. Wagner and Grama (2025) warns that transition plans may exclude vulnerable groups.

A study that combines survey evidence from six European countries (Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Slovakia) and survey evidence from Ukraine finds that actual return to Ukraine is highly precarious (IFRC 2025). While many return because of family

reasons, around 12% of returnees are driven by financial hardship. In many cases, it is a difficult choice between precarious situations in safe countries and the hope for a better economic situation in Ukraine, putting their lives at risk. Financial hardship is driven by unemployment, rising living costs, and for one third of returnees debt (IFRC 2025). When they arrive in Ukraine, the situation is often worse than they expected, leaving them in vulnerable positions. It is estimated that 27% of returns are unsafe (IFRC 2025). 23% of returnees report reduced food intake because of financial strain. 21% do not think they will stay for more than three months because of the situation they met in Ukraine. Among those returning to front-line regions, 79% report that basic humanitarian needs are not met (IFRC 2025).

UNHCR (2025a) estimates that by the end of 2024, around half of Ukrainian refugees have visited Ukraine at least once for a brief visit. Such visits are more common for refugees staying in neighbouring countries or from Ukrainian regions closer to the border with countries of the European Union or Moldova. The reasons for temporary return are visiting family,¹¹⁶ checking on property, healthcare, temporary employment opportunities, as well to obtain official documents (UNHCR (2025a)). In total, 950,000 Ukrainian refugees have returned to Ukraine for at least three months. Permanent return remains rare (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025), and is mostly linked to health issue. Contrary to worries of Ukrainian refugees across European countries, the Ukrainians who stayed in Ukraine do not have negative views on Ukrainian refugees and welcome returnees (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025). However, returnees routinely struggle financially (Holm-Hansen et al. 2025).

Ash (2025) looks at the return of internally displaced Ukrainians, highlighting that they are responsible for most of the 'return' observed in Ukraine. In this case, we are looking at individuals who fled the immediate fighting and returned as the situation stabilized — even if it remained dangerous. Compared to individuals who never left, these internal returnees were on average younger and more educated (Ash 2025). Higher education is associated with more mobility, hence a higher probability to leave and to return. The regions most affected by such internal return are the area around the capital and Dnipropetrovsk in the south. Return to Kharkiv and Donetsk in the east was rare. Of international returns, the highest rate was for Ukrainians in Lviv in the west of the country, who crossed the border into Poland and returned (Ash 2025). Return migrants were more optimistic about the future of Ukraine than those who never left. Pereira (2026) report that 1.6 million Ukrainians have returned to areas with active combat. The reasons stated are the high cost of living in their (previous) host countries, homesickness, or feeling isolated in the (previous) host country (Pereira 2026).

A return to living under Russian occupation is not documented. Indeed, Ukrainians who have not left areas occupied by Russia report systematic prosecution of Ukrainian activists, looting, and shortage of basic necessities like medical supplies or clean water (Stavrou 2025a). There are reports of forced Russian citizenship, property expropriation, and pressure on young Ukrainians to join Russian paramilitary organizations (Stavrou 2025a). Despite this, however, there are reports of Ukrainian resistance in areas occupied by Russia, including non-violent action, sabotage, and support for Ukrainian intelligence (Stavrou 2025a).

¹¹⁶ Refugees with their spouse in Ukraine and refugees with children were more likely to return for a visit (UNHCR 2025a).

A study in Ukraine demonstrates that people who have left the country during the war, their return, or the absence of a return are controversially debated on social media such as Facebook, Telegram channels, or blogs (CAT-UA 2025). In the social media, there is evidence that those left behind can feel anger directed at the refugees (CAT-UA 2025), but there is no evidence that this would affect ambitions of return or actual return.

Ippolitova et al. (2026) report increasing border crossing since September 2025 – although their data do not include the initial refugee flows. Between November 2024 and July 2025, border crossing into and out of Ukraine was low. Since September, they report an increase in people leaving from the Ukraine to Poland and to a much lesser extent to Moldova. In contrast, return to Ukraine also increased, although to a much smaller degree. By far the largest return recorded was from Poland (Ippolitova et al. 2026, 16).

Cultural integration and attitudes

 Summary

Participation in cultural events remains limited, but little is known. Ukrainian refugees are more pro-European than Ukrainians who live in Ukraine.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In autumn 2022, around a fifth of Ukrainian refugees participate in social events organized by an association, a cultural association, or a religious organization, but around three fifth rarely participate in social events (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 16).

Ukrainian refugees report larger cultural differences than what media discourse suggests (Tsyhanenko 2023). Participation in cultural activities of the majority society remains limited (Tsyhanenko 2023; Stähli, Obrist, and Brunnschweiler 2023). Open spaces may facilitate participation and the creation of friendship (Stähli, Obrist, and Brunnschweiler 2023). Cultural integration also encompasses the organization of Ukrainian cultural events (see also Uebelhart 2026).

Riederer et al. (2025) compare gender attitudes of Ukrainian refugees in Austria with Ukrainians in Ukraine and non-refugee Austrians. They can show that Ukrainian refugees are a selective group in that they are more liberal on gender attitudes than Ukrainians who live in Ukraine. At the same time, compared to Austrians, Ukrainian refugees have more conservative gender attitudes. A second dimension they examine are pro-European attitudes. Here, Ukrainian refugees are clearly more pro-European than Ukrainians who live in Ukraine, but also more pro-European than Austrians (Riederer et al. 2025).

Political participation

Summary

Little is known about political participation of Ukrainian refugees, though it does not appear widespread.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

For asylum seekers and immigrants in general, Gashi, Gruber, and Bühlmann (2023) note that political participation enhances integration in other domains.

In Germany, Ukrainian refugees do not appear to be politically active (Büssing 2023), both because other questions have priority, and because political participation in Ukraine was often limited before the war. In Switzerland, Ukrainian refugees do not have the right to vote at any level of governance. Drawing on an ad-hoc online survey covering several European countries, Thiollet et al. (2025) come to a different conclusion, emphasizing that the war has rendered many refugees more politically active. However, this activism seems to be focused on Ukraine rather than countries of residence. They report strong adherence to territorial integrity of Ukraine, which they consider a patriotic position (Thiollet et al. 2025). Moreover, Ukrainian refugees are overwhelmingly pro-European and in favour of NATO membership for Ukraine (Thiollet et al. 2025) — although we need to bear in mind that they focus on refugees in Western European countries.

Looking at protests related to the war in Ukraine, Dziadyk (2026) highlights that Ukrainian refugees often feel a moral duty to protest in support of Ukrainian defence efforts. She highlights that these protests are focused on the situation in Ukraine, yet by protesting in the country of current residence, the refugees claim the right to protest and be politically active (Dziadyk 2026). In that sense, even though the protests are about Ukraine, they demonstrate refugees navigating political action in the country of residence — in this case the Czech Republic.

Thränhardt (2023a) reports that the public discourse about Ukrainian refugees is most open in Ireland, where paths to naturalization and electoral participation at local elections are discussed.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Ukraine has introduced a limited path to dual citizenship, opening up new possibilities for Ukrainian refugees in (European) countries seeking stability before return (Sushch 2026).

Health and well-being

Summary

Most Ukrainian refugees rate their health and well-being well, but there are signs of trauma commonly found among refugee populations. Few systematic assessments of health are carried out, with the risk that traumas are not recognized — especially because social workers and volunteers who are not medically trained are common contact points.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Ukrainian refugees have access to basic healthcare in Switzerland (Pétremand 2024).¹¹⁸ In an opportunity sample in August 2022, a good quarter of Ukrainian refugees rated their subjective health poorly (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022).¹¹⁹ Common problems included sleep problems and dizziness. 80% of the participants reported nightmares because of the war in Ukraine, 70% were easily frightened (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022). For Germany, L. Biddle, Marchitto, and Zinn (2024) report poorer health outcomes across different indicators for those Ukrainian refugees who experienced discrimination or social isolation, while those with high levels of German and frequent contact with Germans were not negatively affected. L. Biddle, Marchitto, and Zinn (2024) and Louise Biddle, Marchitto, and Zinn (2025) find that pre-migration factors did not affect self-reported health one year after arriving in Germany, suggesting that the arrival contact is crucial for self-reported health of refugees.

In autumn 2022, around three quarters of Ukrainian refugees stated good or very good quality of life (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 14). The average satisfaction with one's health was 7.9 on a scale from 0 to 10 (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 17). While general health is good, Fritschi et al. (2023) note that the share with mental health problems is higher than in the general population: 15 percent of the general population reported mental stress, the share among Ukrainian refugees was 36 percent. This share is more pronounced among the youngest age group included in their sample (52% among 16 to 19 years old, Fritschi

¹¹⁸ A small qualitative study in Denmark (N=15 interviews) demonstrated that universal entitlements and rapid integration into mainstream healthcare as it exists for Ukrainian refugees across Europe do not automatically produce equitable care because general practitioners are (perceived as) gatekeepers that limit access (Martí-Castañer et al. 2026). Limits can be caused by language differences, expectations, or 'wait-and-see' attitudes that are perceived as rejection by the refugees. A qualitative study of Ukrainian refugee mothers in Poland similarly describes the tensions between being immobile and being secure (Penkala and Lietaert 2026).

¹¹⁹ For Germany, Brücker et al. (2023) report 3/4 good mental health for children. For those seeking support, however, Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn (2025) report long waiting times. Kosyakova, Rother, and Zinn (2025) also find that Ukrainian refugees may often not see a need to seek treatment, despite stress, depression, and other mental health issues. Limited knowledge of German may be a reason for this.

et al. 2023, fig. 21; see also Schelker and Hössli 2023). Feelings of loneliness are also prevalent, especially among younger refugees (Fritschi et al. 2023, fig. 22).¹²⁰

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that most Ukrainian refugees rate their health well or moderate (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). Causes for stress are principally the war in Ukraine, divided families, finding work, and the lack of concrete plans for the future (Eser Davolio et al. 2023). Shkoda and Ovchynnikova (2025) report stress from language barriers, the recognition of diplomas and qualifications, the complexity of sociocultural adaptation, as well as financial instability.¹²¹ There is a gender dimension in the distribution of stress linked to traditional gender roles: Men — as traditional ‘breadwinners’ — were more concerned about financial difficulties, finding work, or property in Ukraine, women were more concerned by separation of the family and schooling of children (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).¹²² This stress has not resulted in an increased consumption of alcohol (Eser Davolio et al. 2023, 2024). A year later, in spring 2024, the mental health of many of the participants has deteriorated (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

In contrast to self-reported health, there is only limited evidence on the health of Ukrainians after the war, both in Ukraine and among refugees across European countries (Fornaro et al. 2024; Goto et al. 2025; Adedeji, Kaltenbach, Metzner, et al. 2025; Adedeji, Kaltenbach, Buchcik, et al. 2025).¹²³ In a scoping review of the available evidence, Fornaro et al. (2024) note especially the limited evidence in terms of mental health. An exception is the representative study by Yasenok et al. (2024), both because it includes different measures of mental health beyond self-reported (general) health, and because it compares the situation of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Zürich in Switzerland with the general population in the same canton and with Ukrainians in different Ukrainian regions. Their headline finding is that the mental health burden of Ukrainian refugees in Zürich was similar to that in central and south Ukraine (Yasenok et al. 2024) — areas that are more affected by warfare than other parts of Ukraine. The comparison with locals from the canton of Zürich allows Yasenok et al. (2024) to demonstrate that the mental health of Ukrainian refugees is worse across

¹²⁰Using focus groups in Germany, Buchcik et al. (2025) identified different sources for stress among female Ukrainian refugees: stress from exposure to the war, loss, and separation were the most important sources, but there is also stress from difficulties in integrating, struggles to finding friends, but also feelings of guilt (having left others behind) as well as envy and uncertainties about life in general. See also Kubiciel-Lodzinska and Maj (2025) for similar findings in Poland and Kurapov et al. (2025) for Ukrainians staying in Ukraine.

¹²¹For Hungary and Poland, however, Walawender, Liszka, and Szczygiel (2023) find that those without paid work do not have lower self-esteem than Ukrainian refugees in paid work.

¹²²Drawing on a survey in Poland and Hungary, Walawender, Liszka, and Szczygiel (2023) report higher well-being for Ukrainian refugees with children compared to Ukrainian refugees without children.

¹²³A longitudinal study in Ukraine traced the development of mental health among adolescents in Ukraine. They identified a clear association between the war and all the psychiatric conditions they screened for, including clinically relevant psychological trauma, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder, and eating disorders. Mental health among Ukrainian adolescents is worse in areas more heavily affected by the war (Goto et al. 2025). In Germany, Adedeji, Kaltenbach, Metzner, et al. (2025) provide qualitative evidence that anxiety and depression are common among Ukrainian refugees, including Ukrainian refugees of African origin (Adedeji, Kaltenbach, Buchcik, et al. 2025). Dembitskyi et al. (2025) finds that the war is a major source of stress for Ukrainians in Ukraine, caused by displacement, loss of homes, loss of workplaces, and family separation. See also Zabolotna (2025) on how Ukrainian teachers cope with the uncertainties brought about by the war in Ukraine.

a series of validated measures. For most indicators, there are no strong age differences in the high levels of mental health burden among the Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Zürich.¹²⁴

A. T. Hoffmann et al. (2024) confirm the discrepancy between self-reported health and well-being among Ukrainian refugees (high rating for general and mental health) and health status when measured more precisely. In their case, A. T. Hoffmann et al. (2024) find that self-reported vaccination records of Ukrainian refugees do not fit well with serological tests. Ukrainian minors have vaccination hesitancy (A. T. Hoffmann et al. 2024), which probably requires a specific approach to reach this population.

For refugees in general, it has been noted that refugees may have specific physical and psychological health needs, which sets them apart from other immigrant populations (WHO 2023; Kosyakova and Kogan 2022; Spielberger et al. 2022).¹²⁵ The temporary nature of Status S is a source of stress and insecurity, which negatively affects motivations to participate in social and cultural activities (Tsyhanenko 2023; Gashi, Gruber, and Bühlmann 2023; Lazarenko 2024). For Germany, Herpell et al. (2024) report improved psychological well-being for Ukrainian refugees placed in host families. What is more, low levels of language skills in the local language or English tend to be associated with low levels of health literacy Lor (2024), thus having broader implications for the health and well-being of Ukrainian refugees. Nimko et al. (2025) look at food security after the full-scale invasion, combining a large sample in Ukraine with a smaller ad-hoc sample in Switzerland. They identify substantial levels of food insecurity, including Ukrainians who have to go without food because of the war. They identify similar levels of food insecurity among the sampled refugees in Switzerland, ignoring the fact that the question wording in their survey is ambiguous whether the questions refer to the period between the full-scale invasion and leaving the country or whether it exclusively refers to the situation in Switzerland (as the authors interpret it).

To provide better mental healthcare to refugees, it is advisable to offer different entry points and formats (Spaaij et al. 2023). Indeed, during refugee crises, the focus is often (rightly) on providing immediate needs such as providing food and shelter (Spielberger et al. 2022). Once these are met, however, mental health should be addressed, since events around the war in Ukraine – attacks, lack of protection and security, forced migration, separation,

¹²⁴Avendano et al. (2025) highlight that the federal nature of Swiss healthcare makes it difficult to assess the healthcare provided to Ukrainian refugees.

¹²⁵Based on German reforms, Bozorgmehr and Razum (2015) establish that restricting access to healthcare for asylum seekers ends up costing more in the long term. Similarly, Stevens et al. (2024) highlights how restrictions in access to healthcare, such as limiting it to basic healthcare, have negative consequences on immigrants – notably children. Even where healthcare is available, language barriers are a major hurdle, and often interpreters are not available. For Germany, a qualitative study suggests that language barriers are the biggest hurdle when it comes to access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees. Some of the refugees consult general practitioners in Ukraine by telephone for advice, but for actual care rely on German healthcare (Davitian et al. 2024). For mental health, Eser Davolio et al. (2024) report that many Ukrainian refugees are not at ease with psychologists and fear that traumas may become worse or lead to additional trauma (see also Moskalenko et al. 2025). Drawing on a survey in Poland and Hungary, Walawender, Liszka, and Szczygieł (2023) report that Ukrainian refugees with disabilities have lower self-esteem, and lower expectations regarding paid work. In 2026, Poland restricted access to free medical healthcare, which was available to Ukrainian refugees without having to have health insurance (Dyka 2026).

disruption of education, or recruitment of family members into the army — can have devastating effects on mental well-being (Pinchuk et al. 2024; Al-Dekah et al. 2024). If not addressed, the effects on children can lead to further problems in the medium and long term (Villalonga-Olives et al. 2023). Specifically, refugees may seem to cope well with the stress related to the war, but remain at a higher risk of developing anxiety-depressive disorders, as well as cognitive, behavioural, and emotional dysfunctions (Kundii et al. 2024), which can lead to long-term costs for the healthcare system and social insurance. A qualitative study in the German-speaking area of Switzerland highlighted the role of families for the well-being of Ukrainian children among the refugee population. The families ‘left behind’ can also play an important role in supporting the well-being of the children studied (Ramos and Riepl 2025). What is more, healthcare providers working with (Ukrainian) refugees experience a substantial emotional burden (Grosjean et al. 2025). Institutional resources are necessary to complement leverage strong intrinsic motivation present among the healthcare providers in question (Grosjean et al. 2025).

Even though the arrival of Ukrainian refugees caught many services unprepared, it is important to maintain equitable access to healthcare (Morisod and Bodenmann 2022; Kamoun, Prasad, and Durieux-Paillard 2023). While Status S includes basic health protection, intercultural interpretation and support is not covered yet essential for providing adequate health support for refugees (Morisod and Bodenmann 2022; Schelker and Hössli 2023; Jäger, Berger, Buettcher, Depallens, Heininger, Heller, Kohns Vasconcelos, Leforestier, Pellaud, Relly, Trück, Overbeck Ottino, Bernhard-Stirnemann, et al. 2022).¹²⁶ At the level of medical care, guidelines have been adopted, including guidelines for the vaccination of children among Ukrainian refugees, screening for tuberculosis, HIV, and hepatitis B and C (Spielberger et al. 2022; Jäger, Berger, Buettcher, Depallens, Heininger, Heller, Kohns Vasconcelos, Leforestier, Pellaud, Relly, Trück, Overbeck Ottino, Wagner, et al. 2022; Brinkmann et al. 2022; Jaeger et al. 2025). There is consensus among medical providers, that interpreter services are essential, that urgent health needs should not be deferred and that general health check-ups are needed for Ukrainian refugees (Jäger, Berger, Buettcher, Depallens, Heininger, Heller, Kohns Vasconcelos, Leforestier, Pellaud, Relly, Trück, Overbeck Ottino, Wagner, et al. 2022). Mental health is highlighted as an important issue, but care should be taken to identify distress without going into traumatic details (Jäger, Berger, Buettcher, Depallens, Heininger, Heller, Kohns Vasconcelos, Leforestier, Pellaud, Relly, Trück, Overbeck Ottino, Wagner, et al. 2022) — this points to professionalism (Elvas 2022; Pileggi 2023). Age-appropriate preventive information and information about the availability of health services targeting Ukrainian refugees have also been identified as an important task (Jäger, Berger, Buettcher, Depallens, Heininger, Heller, Kohns Vasconcelos, Leforestier, Pellaud, Relly, Trück, Overbeck Ottino, Wagner, et al. 2022; Jäger, Berger, Buettcher, Depallens, Heininger, Heller, Kohns Vasconcelos, Leforestier, Pellaud, Relly, Trück, Overbeck Ottino, Bernhard-Stirnemann, et al. 2022). Spiegel (2022) notes that there are many ad-hoc surveys, but most of these studies are generic. When Jaeger et al. (2025) checked for implementation of these recommendations two years later, they found that 91 per cent of healthcare providers were aware of the recommendations. However, actual implementation was lower because of lack of time, language barriers, or refusals of check-ups (Jaeger et al.

¹²⁶ For legal and practical reasons, it remains difficult to circulate medical goods between Ukraine and countries of the European Union (Berzina et al. 2024) — in both directions.

2025).

Health support for refugees in shared accommodation and centres can be difficult and fair access is not always possible (Morisod and Bodenmann 2022; Stevens et al. 2024). The sharing of resources and specific education of healthcare providers can help address particular needs (Morisod and Bodenmann 2022). In practice, interdisciplinary cooperation between healthcare and social care is required (Morisod and Bodenmann 2022).

An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that most Ukrainian refugees either exercise weekly or not at all, though a sizeable part also indicates daily exercise (Eser Davolio et al. 2023). Some Ukrainian refugees with chronic health problems reported difficulty in accessing the medicines they need in Switzerland (Eser Davolio et al. 2024). Dental care was sometimes highlighted as a problem because basic health insurance excludes most treatments (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

In early 2022, there were worries that Ukrainian refugees would import medical problems, notably tuberculosis, gram-positive bacteria, and emerging antibiotic resistance (see description in Chuard and Genné 2024; considerations that may be based on the generally lower health in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion Berger et al. 2026). These worries were based on higher prevalence in Ukraine, some of which is based on poor data, and did not consider the fact that the refugee population is on average younger than the general population (in Ukraine). As a matter of fact, no increase in tuberculosis could be found, nor any other ‘Ukrainian problem’ in hospitals (Chuard and Genné 2024).

Trauma

Summary

Few systematic screenings for trauma exist. There is a danger that many war-related traumas will go untreated. Psychiatrists trained in Ukraine cannot readily work in Switzerland because their diplomas are not recognized as equivalent.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Even though Ukrainian refugees may rate their health well in generic surveys, few systematic screenings exist (Morisod and Bodenmann 2022). In Germany, a screening of this kind screening was carried out in a reception centre in Heidelberg. Although at a small scale, over 90% reported experience with war, over half reached the cut-off score for post-traumatic stress disorder, and above a quarter of the cut-off for depression and that of generalized anxiety disorder. This is typical for refugee populations (Kamp et al. 2024). More than half had relatives in cities in the war zone, including a third with close relatives who were on active duty (Rzepka et al. 2023). Pre-existing health issues can be exacerbated (I. Kuznetsova and Mikheieva 2023; Rogan 2022).

Ukrainian refugees trained as psychiatrists cannot work in Switzerland because their Ukrainian diplomas are not recognized as equivalent (Bäni 2024). This contributes to the shortfall of Ukrainian-speaking psychiatrists in Switzerland, requiring translators, which makes access to psychiatric care less accessible. It seems likely that there is insufficient offer for mental health for Ukrainian refugees, and for trauma in particular (Bäni 2024).

Beyond medical attention, trauma among refugees can be addressed with intercultural approaches (Gül 2023). Social workers need adequate training to understand post-traumatic stress disorder, attention to cultural diversity is needed. Intercultural approaches can probably be helpful, but they need several sessions and reflexivity to avoid stereotyping refugee groups (Gül 2023). In the testimonies collected by Gradus (2024), around 1 in 5 mentioned traumatic experiences for children in particular.

Social contacts play an important role in resilience and the ability to cope with trauma (Oviedo et al. 2022). A qualitative study highlights that contact with family members in Ukraine is important in this regard, as is exchange with other Ukrainian refugees. Religious practice can be a means to cope with trauma, but the study also highlights the need that the receiving society is aware of war-related traumas (Oviedo et al. 2022). Strengthening the well-being of parents has positive implications on the ability of children to cope with stress (Schelker and Hössli 2023).

Schwientek et al. (2026) report that psychological and somatic distress among young Ukrainians are associated, both for young Ukrainians in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. While they could find clusters of different profiles, these were mostly associated with different severity of distress. They recommend that screenings should consider burdens across multiple dimensions to adequately assess mental health of young Ukrainian refugees (Schwientek et al. 2026).

The war in Ukraine and arrival of Ukrainian refugees in many European countries is also associated with increased levels of uncertainty and stress among university students (Limone, Toto, and Messina 2022).¹²⁷ Despite this, a study in Germany found that most users of psychiatric care were people who were already in psychiatric care before the full-scale invasion (Kamp et al. 2024), suggesting that few Ukrainians are seeking treatment for war-related problems. Part of this may be due to the role of psychiatric care in Ukraine, which may not only have negative associations, but also evoke images of undue state involvement, including forced removal of children into care homes.

Because of the war, there is increasing demand for psychological services in Ukraine. At the same time, the large number of refugee means that the number of available staff is reduced, leading to a decline in support available at a time of heightened need (Pinchuk et al. 2025).

¹²⁷ This association is highlighted for the Ukrainian refugee population in general in the US, where Childress et al. (2024) highlight how trauma and other sources of stress can interact to amplify integration challenges. Access to language courses and interpretation seems to be a problem in the US.

Elderly care

Summary

Little is known about how Ukrainian refugees care for parents and elderly relatives who stayed in Ukraine.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Little is known about how Ukrainian refugees care for their parents and other elderly relatives who stayed in Ukraine. Drawing on interviews with Syrian refugees, Carbajal, Otmani, and Baghdadi (2024) suggest that the separation can be a source of stress and frustration because they can do little more than provide emotional support. Moreover, the fact that they cannot do more to support their relatives makes them think about the situation in the country of origin, which can reinforce stress.

Return perspectives and health

Summary

Ukrainian refugees with health needs are less likely to return because the infrastructure in Ukraine cannot meet their needs. This applies to Ukrainian refugees with disabilities.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

The war in Ukraine has put the health system in Ukraine under enormous pressures (Roborgh et al. 2022; Kiefer 2022; Chioloro 2022; UN 2024; Holt 2024). This makes it less likely that people in need of healthcare will return to Ukraine once the open conflict is over (Ruedin et al. 2019), such as chronically ill persons who have medical needs that cannot be met everywhere (Mell 2022).¹²⁸ Swiss medics can play an important role in helping to rebuild (Rüegger 2022). Whether Ukrainian refugees return to Ukraine or stay, investment in the health of Ukrainian refugees is necessary — both in terms of prevention and treatment. Either healthcare in host countries needs to adjust to the particularized needs of Ukrainian refugees (Spiegel 2022), or infrastructure in Ukraine needs adequate rebuilding.

¹²⁸ A study among Ukrainian medical students, however, reports most medical students in Ukraine do plan to work in Ukraine on completing their studies (Kuchyn et al. 2024). The war does lead to disruptions for most of the medical students (Kuchyn et al. 2024), but it does not seem to have increased the desire to leave the country.

For Ukrainian refugees with disabilities, Eser Davolio et al. (2024) report that some have chosen Switzerland as a destination because they anticipated adequate treatment (evidence from qualitative interviews). In an ad-hoc survey in early 2023, 7% of respondents declared a disability (Eser Davolio et al. 2024).

Some Ukrainian refugees cite unmet medical needs as a reason to return to Ukraine, even if it is unsafe to do so (IFRC 2025). This applies in particular to Ukrainian refugees over the age of 65. It is unclear to what extent this observation applies to Switzerland.

Crime and Safety

Feeling safe

Summary

Most Ukrainian refugees feel safe in Switzerland.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In an opportunity sample in August 2022, 90% of the Ukrainian refugees participating reported feeling safe in their environment (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022). Around 10% reported insult and menace. An ad-hoc survey in the canton of Zürich in early 2023 found that few Ukrainian refugees have had open conflicts in Switzerland (Eser Davolio et al. 2023).

Human trafficking

Summary

98% of Ukrainian refugees have not paid anyone to cross borders illegally, although some have *heard* of situations that may point to human trafficking.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

In an opportunity sample in August 2022, around 1 in 10 participants have observed or heard of situations that indicate human trafficking (Baier, Bühler, and Hartmann 2022). In a

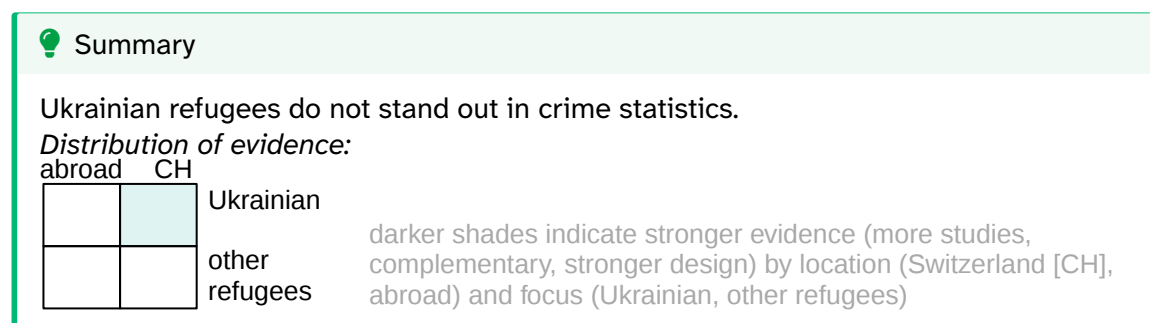
snowball sample of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Bern in early 2023, 98% of respondents stated not to have paid anyone to cross borders illegally (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023).

There were signs of human trafficking in the first weeks after the full-scale invasion by Russia (Hoff and Volder 2022; Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024). At risk are in particular individuals who cannot access the temporary protection scheme by the European Union or believe so because they lack adequate information, women and girls regarding sexual exploitation, undocumented and stateless people living in Ukraine, and marginalized groups like chronically ill, disabled, elderly, Roma, or LGBTQI+ (Hoff and Volder 2022; see also Metersky et al. 2025). The report did not provide evidence of actual human trafficking, but highlighted criminal networks already operating in the region (Hoff and Volder 2022). There is a risk that (gendered) stereotypes influence the perception of risk of human trafficking, making it appear more prevalent than it actually is (Schmoutz 2023).

This observation is complemented by qualitative evidence from a *Facebook* group that organized help for Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland (Bischof 2023). The moderators of this public group removed pictures of Ukrainian women seeking a place to live where the pictures emphasized physical attraction because they felt compelled to intervene: The worried about sexual abuse (Bischof 2023).¹²⁹

Thränhardt (2023a) reports that in countries with high labour force participation, exploitation and underpay were observed. Dumont and Lauren (2023) do not provide evidence of actual exploitation, but consider the context a risk for female Ukrainians.

Accusations registered by the police



Crime statistics from the police identify the number of Ukrainian refugees who have been accused of infractions against the Swiss Criminal Code (StGB/CP, PKS 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). It is important to bear in mind that many accusations do not lead to a conviction, and that crime statistics include non-residents. In Table 4, Ukrainian citizens under the category ‘asylum’ are considered, which explicitly covers Ukrainian refugees with Status S.

As a share of the population, the total in 2025 is equivalent to 1.7%, which is higher than that for the permanent resident population in Switzerland (0.8%). In 2023 and 2022, this

¹²⁹ Similarly, the moderators faced ethical questions of what kind of fundraising to tolerate, and decided against allowing fundraising for arms (Bischof 2023).

share was smaller (1.3% in 2023, 0.4% in 2022), in 2024 it was larger (1.9%). The gender distribution in Table 4 is greatly affected by the fact that the gender distribution of Ukrainian refugees is unbalanced. Concurrent with the increasing number of men arriving in 2025, the share of men among the accused increased. The gender distribution in the crime statistics for the permanent resident population is 73% men and 27% women. The age distribution for Ukrainian refugees accused of a crime is not substantially different from that found for the permanent resident population (PKS 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025).

Table 4: Accusations registered by the police (Ukrainian refugees); the percentages refer to the total number of accusations among the Ukrainian population with status S. Because of rounding errors, the total or all age groups may differ from 100%.

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Total	1195	1213	879	273
Men	65%	59%	53%	53%
Women	35%	41%	47%	47%
under 10	0%	0%	0%	0%
10-17 years	22%	20%	15%	15%
18-29 years	24%	25%	22%	16%
30-39 years	19%	22%	25%	29%
40-49 years	21%	17%	20%	22%
50-59 years	7%	9%	10%	12%
60+ years	6%	5%	6%	6%

The most common accusation in 2025 concerned offences against property (Title Two; 59%, was 64% in 2024, 65% in 2023, 52% in 2022), followed by offences against life and limb (Title One; 26%, was 24% in 2024 and 2023, 32% in 2022), felonies and misdemeanours against liberty (Title Four; 24%, was 21% in 2024, and 19% in 2023, 22% in 2022), and offences against personal honour and in breach of secrecy or privacy (Title Three; 12%, was 11% in 2024, 10% in 2023, 11% in 2022). These are also the same categories for which the permanent resident population in Switzerland is accused most often (in the same order) (PKS 2023).

At the end of 2024, three deportations of Ukrainians received some media attention (Lippert 2024) – at least one of which was not a refugee but resident in Switzerland for longer. In accordance with the deportation of some categories of criminals without Swiss citizenship, three men were deported to Ukraine. The judges did not accept the fact that they face conscription in Ukraine accepted as a reason against deportation (Lippert 2024).

Attitudes to Ukrainians

Summary

Attitudes to Ukrainian refugees tend to be positive, and Ukrainian refugees experience solidarity, especially initially so. Attitudes tend to be more positive than attitudes to other refugees, although in the medium term differences may be less pronounced.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

		Ukrainian
		other
		refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

As in other countries, Ukrainian refugees received much solidarity when they arrived in Switzerland (Bischof 2023; Eser Davolio et al. 2024; Mazzola 2022; Kentmen-Cin 2024; Mykhailyshyna et al. 2025; Sánchez Sienra 2025; Kentmen-Cin and Dikmengil 2026).¹³⁰

Some of this positive reaction was organized through NGO, but much spontaneous and ad-hoc support sprang up — including help and support organized online and individual initiatives to help Ukrainians flee the country (Bischof 2023). Bischof (2023) recounts the experience of a large *Facebook* group that was used to organize help for Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. It was most active around April to June 2022, during the period where governmental support struggled to keep up (Bischof 2023). Later, some fatigue and a sense of normalcy set in — some talk of “compassion fatigue” (Lazarenko 2025; Zogata-Kusz, Öbrink Hobzová, and Cekiera 2026), but attitudes generally remain positive. The online group was used to coordinate support and fundraising in support of Ukrainian refugees.¹³¹

There may more generally be declining solidarity and a more diverse set of attitudes to Ukrainian refugees in 2024, compared to the initial positive reaction (Kentmen-Cin 2024; Lazarenko 2025).¹³²

By June 2024, Scherrer, Schuler, and Wäspi (2024) reported that attitudes to the war in Ukraine were a polarizing issue in Switzerland. Just like attitudes to immigration in general, support for Ukraine was divided, with more people taking a position at the end of the

¹³⁰This positive reaction was not observed when Russia invaded Crimea and de-facto took over Donbas in 2014 (Sardelić 2025). Śpiewak and Halamska (2025) reports somewhat more positive attitudes in rural Poland for Ukrainian refugees who work, and some latent worries about welfare costs — although overall attitudes were positive. Looking at changes over time, Kubiciel-Lodzińska et al. (2026) can show how these latent worries have become more important over time as the initial wave of solidarity waned. The positive reactions in 2022 included Hungary, despite a government narrative that was favourable to Russia (Zentai et al. 2026). The Hungarian government implemented temporary protection alongside other European countries and explicitly welcomed Ukrainian refugees (Zentai et al. 2026).

¹³¹The group also faced — opportunistic — attempts to defraud willing members with fake fundraising and dubious offers (Bischof 2023). Bischof (2023) outlines the difficulties of moderating the online group and finding a clear line in moderation. For the Czech Republic, Guzi et al. (2024) reports declining support over time.

¹³²The decisions in the upper chamber to restrict access to Status S in June 2024, and particularly the decision to follow in the lower chamber in December 2024, were interpreted by some pundits as a clear sign of declining solidarity (Rosch 2024). In contrast, politicians supporting the restrictions argued that these measures were necessary so that the population would continue support for Status S (Watson 2024).

scale (strongly in favour or strongly against) than people taking an intermediary position. Especially in the age group 65+, the war in Ukraine is an issue that polarizes and leads to people perceiving negative reactions from others because of their position (a.k.a. affective polarization). According to Scherrer, Schuler, and Wäspi (2024), there is no such affective polarization along the left-right division in politics or by level of education. In 2024, around one third of the population considered the political climate around the support of Ukraine ‘hardened’, while the majority did not agree (Scherrer, Schuler, and Wäspi 2024). 31 per cent of the population consider their position on the war in Ukraine ‘middle’, with 16 per cent clearly against support for Ukraine, and 24 per cent in favour of support — with the remaining positions taking intermediary positions somewhat in favour or against support (Scherrer, Schuler, and Wäspi 2024). In contrast, the results from a survey experiment by Schlöpfer (2026) suggests that attitudes to the war in Ukraine evoke rather similar responses to the origin of the war. His questions do not capture responses to Ukrainian refugees, how they are received, and sentiments that Ukrainian refugees ‘get more’ than Swiss citizens as some people have it — a sentiment about support for refugees in general. Hedegaard and Larsen (2026) uses a survey in Denmark, France, and Sweden and reports that Ukrainian refugees did not lead to polarization along the left-right spectrum. Weßels and Rose (2025) highlights that across Europe, attitudes to security in relation to the war in Ukraine have been relatively stable since the full-scale invasion in 2022.

The findings by Scherrer, Schuler, and Wäspi (2024) do not correspond to a panel study in Poland, which found different age trajectories in changing attitudes (Kubiciel-Lodzińska et al. 2026). In Poland, the youngest cohort were initially the most positive to Ukrainian refugees, but over time have experienced the sharpest decline. In contrast, the oldest age group consistently expressed supportive views. Overall, looking at changes between 2022 and 2025, Kubiciel-Lodzińska et al. (2026) identify a shift from (very) positive to more neutral attitudes. Critical voices are now more vocal, especially regarding social assistance.

Using a large-scale survey experiment, Sánchez Sienra (2025) finds widespread solidarity to Ukrainian refugees almost 3 years after the full-scale invasion. Most respondents show willingness to accept and integrate Ukrainian refugees in local schools. Tellingly, this willingness is *higher* for schools in the district of the participants than for schools elsewhere in the canton. These results contradict nimbyism (not-in-my-back-yard attitudes) that is often reported for attitudes to immigrants and refugees more broadly. Women report greater willingness to integrate Ukrainian refugees in local schools than men, although both men and women support such integration (Sánchez Sienra 2025). In fact, the support for integrating Ukrainian refugees can be found across the political spectrum, with the exception of the far right. Among respondents further on the political left, support is largest, with lower support as we move to the right of the political spectrum. Participants of the centre-right still support integration in local schools, while participants of the far right on average reject such an integration and show signs of nimbyism in that they prefer integration in schools elsewhere in the canton (Sánchez Sienra 2025).

Klymak and Vlandas (2024) use the fact that fieldwork of the *European Social Survey* was ongoing at the time of the full-scale invasion,¹³³ allowing a better understanding how attitudes changes. They can demonstrate that attitudes to immigrants in general improved

¹³³This was the case in Switzerland and seven other countries.

following the full-scale invasion: Respondents were more likely than before the full-scale invasion to state that the economic and cultural consequences of immigration for Switzerland are positive. As the number of Ukrainian refugees increased, there was no sign of a backlash, but attitudes became more favourable and supported welcoming more refugees one month after the full-scale invasion (Klymak and Vlandas 2024).¹³⁴

In a snowball sample of Ukrainian refugees in the canton of Bern in early 2023, 92% of respondents stated to never have experienced discrimination in Switzerland (Jucker, Forin, and Giraudet 2023).¹³⁵

Using two small samples in Belgium, Politi et al. (2023) showed that individuals with prosocial personality showed greater interest in helping Ukrainian refugees. This was particularly the case for those with very high levels of prosociality and those with strong European identity — which they extended to Ukrainians. Moise, Dennison, and Kriesi (2023) highlight that existing attitudes to immigrants can predict attitudes to Ukrainian refugees. Using a small sample of actual volunteers in Poland, Sengupta, Verghese, and Rys (2023) could demonstrate the intrinsic nature of helping Ukrainian refugees, although there is a range of motivations for volunteering during crisis situations (see also Gemenne and Thiollet 2022; Dziekońska 2025). A sentiment of injustice played a great role for volunteers and social workers in Belgium — the unprovoked invasion by Russia (Poisson 2023).¹³⁶ The profile of those involved in solidarity action for Ukrainian refugees in Germany resembles that of those involved in 2015 for Syrian refugees, partly explained by a reactivation of volunteers (T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023). This suggests that future comparable refugee movements may benefit from similar reactions.¹³⁷ A study in Germany found that altruism was the strongest predictor for voluntary engagement for Ukrainian refugees (SVR 2024). Around half of those who helped Ukrainian refugees in Germany were already volunteering in one form or another, although only 13% of them in the context of refugees (SVR 2024).

Indeed, compared to refugees from other countries — Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Kosovo, Pakistan, Syria — Ukrainian refugees receive more warmth in online experiments across Europe (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2023; see also Bieńkowski et al. 2026). However, higher warmth towards Ukrainian refugees does not come at a cost for other refugees:

¹³⁴ Other changes in attitudes Klymak and Vlandas (2024) reported are: less support for leaving the European Union for countries other than Switzerland (where this question is not asked), an increased importance of living in a democracy (see also Pleines 2026), less support for strong leaders who may stand above the law, less support for the view that a country needs loyalty towards its leaders, and more favourable attitudes to redistribution. Examining attitudes to immigrants in the Czech Republic, Gheorghiev and Collini (2024) finds similarities in attitudes to immigrants and refugees from Ukraine. At the individual level, they show that economic uncertainty can lead to perceptions of cultural threat and rejection of (Ukrainian) immigrants.

¹³⁵ In a study in the German Thüringen (Thuringia) in 2022, Soliman et al. (2022) find that the largest source of discrimination for Ukrainian refugees was from the post-Soviet Russian-speaking diaspora in Germany (around 20% responded experienced some form of discrimination), higher than for local authorities (around 10%). The Russian-speaking diaspora in Switzerland is much smaller than in Germany, and largely concentrated in the cantons of Vaud and Geneva, but there are isolated reports of insults in Switzerland, too (Hirschi 2022). In contrast, in a country comparison, Kosyakova et al. (2024) report higher levels of labour force participation in countries with larger existing Ukrainian diasporas.

¹³⁶ see also the *leitmotiv* of ‘solidarity’ evoked by the European Union (Forum on the EU Temporary Protection Responses to the Ukraine War 2022)

¹³⁷ T. Wagner and Schwenken (2023) identify a strong involvement of the Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking diaspora in Germany.

they are perceived similar to 2015. In a different study in France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Poland, Moise, Dennison, and Kriesi (2023) even report a positive spill-over in the sense that attitudes to refugees from other origins have also improved. Individuals with pro-European attitudes tend to welcome Ukrainian refugees more (Moise, Dennison, and Kriesi 2023). Reasons for more positive attitudes to Ukrainian refugees (compared to Syrian refugees) include the assumption to better understand Ukrainian refugees and greater perceptions of deservingness (Echterhoff et al. 2023; Gemenne and Thiollet 2022). The Germans surveyed were also more positive that Ukrainian refugees would integrate successfully, assumed that Ukrainians are more willing to integrate, and feel less threatened by them. With that, there is more solidarity towards Ukrainian refugees (Echterhoff et al. 2023). In Germany, the geographical proximity to the war in Ukraine has been identified as a motivation for volunteering for Ukrainian refugees (T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023) — something not present for other refugees. Mazzola (2022) suggests that both racial/cultural aspects (White, not Muslim) as well as political aspects (Western orientation, against Putin) played a role in the positive perception of Ukrainian refugees.¹³⁸

This solidarity may also be linked to the demographic profile of Ukrainian refugees, notably the perception of Ukrainian refugees as European and Christian (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2023; Albertazzi et al. 2022; T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023). This allowed right-wing and radical right-wing parties that tend to take anti-immigrant — and especially anti-asylum seekers — positions, to embrace Ukrainian refugees, who were perceived as ‘genuine’ compared to other asylum seekers (Albertazzi et al. 2022; see Hadj Abdou and Ruedin 2023 for a discussion of such bifurcation strategies). The high proportion of children and women, as well as the perception of Ukrainian refugees as ‘White’ is also associated with higher levels of solidarity (T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023). Rather than referring to race and ethnicity, such preferences are typically expressed in references to ‘cultural proximity’ or ‘similarity’, but spelled out when probed in the context of interviews (T. Wagner and Schwenken 2023).

Trying to understand the generally more positive attitudes to Ukrainian refugees compared to other refugees, Jasko et al. (2024) carried out two studies in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Netherlands. They found that attitudes to refugees are associated with how respondents believe the refugees will behave: Attitudes are more positive if refugees are perceived as having no alternatives to fleeing (‘less choice’), and if refugees are perceived as wanting to return to the country of origin as quickly as possible. Ukrainian refugees were more commonly seen as having had no choice other than fleeing, and they were seen as wanting to return to Ukraine as soon as possible. As a consequence, attitudes are more positive and participants support policies that are accommodating of the refugees’ needs (Jasko et al. 2024). Taken together, the findings by Jasko et al. (2024) suggest that attitudes to Ukrainian refugees are more positive because of how they are perceived, which implies that media coverage may play an important role in shaping such attitudes.

In Poland, like many European countries, attitudes to asylum seekers are generally negative, but they were positive for Ukrainian refugees (Sobczak-Szelc et al. 2022; Dyka 2026).¹³⁹

¹³⁸ see also Karimi (2026) who suggests that in Canada the label ‘refugee’ is not commonly applied to Ukrainian refugees as a (post-colonial) marker of being (more) White than typical refugees.

¹³⁹ In summer 2026, it was reported that for the first time negative attitudes prevailed in Poland (Dyka 2026):

Negative attitudes are associated with lower levels of social and economic integration (Kosyakova and Kogan 2022). With an eye on international and US-centred debates, Sipahioğlu (2023) suggests that attitudes to Ukrainian refugees could be more positive if they were not referred to as ‘refugees’ in the media or by policymakers because the term ‘refugee’ is arguably negatively connoted (for a detailed study of the vocabulary used in the context of refugees in German-speaking countries in 2015 and 2016, see Valešová 2022). The positive responses in empirical studies (Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2023; Moise, Dennison, and Kriesi 2023) suggests that this negative connotation does not necessarily apply to all refugees and that the population indeed makes distinctions (Helbling et al. 2023; Ruedin 2020; Gemenne and Thiollet 2022). In the Czech Republic, there are reports of declining support for Ukrainian refugees, which may be linked to an economic downturn.¹⁴⁰ In this context, there are reports of Ukrainian refugees being stereotyped to highlight (cultural) differences (Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024). These stereotypes resonate the perception of immigrants in other situations: being loud, occupying public space, frowning in public, being reserved or keeping to themselves. Attempts to capture such purported differences in the case of Ukrainian refugees empirically failed (Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024).

A study focusing on social workers in Poland identified a positive response among social workers (Necel 2025; see also Fragkos 2025). The arrival of Ukrainian refugees did not trigger the social workers to engage in advocacy, but the social workers reported high levels of support from others, including NGO and local communities (Necel 2025). It was their support that allowed the social workers to feel valued at a time of heightened pressure and demand of social work.

Government support for Ukraine is a different reaction. While Ukraine has received billions of support, especially from the US, the EU, the UK, and Germany, the support is not as large as wars in which the countries were directly involved in, such as the Korean War, Vietnam, or Iraq. The contribution of Germany to the liberation of Kuwait was larger than its contribution to Ukraine to date. What is more, European countries spent more than 10 times as much on domestic energy supplies than on Ukraine (Trebesch et al. 2023).

Research in Germany and Eastern Europe using panel data suggests that the Russian full-scale invasion did not coincide with more negative attitudes to immigration in general (Brunarska, Piekut, and Toruńczyk-Ruiz 2024).

52% of the respondents were of the opinion that Poland should no longer accept Ukrainian refugees from war-affected regions. To put this into perspective, immediately after the full-scale invasion, 92% of Poles were in favour of accepting Ukrainian refugees. Dyka (2026) also reports that 54% of the respondents considered that the amount of help for Ukrainian refugees was too high, and the majority supports the (implemented) restrictions on free medicines. In contrast, the (implemented) end of free accommodation for women and children is actually opposed by the majority (Dyka 2026).

¹⁴⁰In her account of support for Ukrainian refugees organized online, Bischof (2023) tells of waning support after the peak of refugees was over, with some volunteers citing exhaustion, the time needed, lack of support for the volunteers, as well as burnout and trauma from the stories the refugees shared with the volunteers (Bischof 2023). Looking at the response to Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Giessen et al. (2025) find that international organizations, NGO, and others involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees adapt their help in response to the fact that the war in Ukraine continues for longer than what many anticipated initially.

Media reactions to Ukrainians

Summary

Media coverage about Ukrainian refugees tends to be positive, highlighting notions of deservingness to an extent not observed for other refugees.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH	
		Ukrainian
		other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Using keyword searches in media contributions, McCann, Sienkiewicz, and Zard (2023) found more positive media coverage about Ukrainian refugees in 2022 than on Syrian refugees in 2015 (see also Bassoli and Greppi 2025).¹⁴¹ The focus in their study is on English-language content, with many sources from the United Kingdom. Notably, there were fewer media reports framing refugees as threats in 2022. Notions of ‘deservingness’ and ‘vulnerability’ play a large role in articles on refugees Schenk (2022). This focus on ‘deservingness’ may be linked to the high share of women and children among Ukrainian refugees (Bischof 2023).¹⁴² Compared to 2015, in 2022 there was much more discussion of housing and access to the labour market (McCann, Sienkiewicz, and Zard 2023).¹⁴³ McCann, Sienkiewicz, and Zard (2023) came to the conclusion, that media coverage of refugees is racialized (see also Mugglin et al. 2022; Mugglin and Ruedin 2022). Schenk (2022) finds that media coverage of refugees tends to be negative in tone, though the analysis does not include Ukrainian refugees.¹⁴⁴

A qualitative analysis of media coverage of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland

¹⁴¹ A large survey experiment with Ukrainian refugees in Germany suggests that media coverage affects Ukrainian refugees (Hilbig, Sichart, and Syunyaev 2025). Media messages on specific topics where salience is a priori not high can reduce the psychological integration of refugees. For issues that are already discussed a lot in the media, the authors find no substantive association.

¹⁴² In her account of an online group facilitating support for Ukrainian refugees, Bischof (2023) reports that young Ukrainian men looking for accommodation faced suspicion. Looking at the representation of refugees by Reuters, Babassa and el-Nawawy (2026) finds similarities between Ukrainian and Syrian refugees in that they often show women and children. For Ukrainian refugees, however, they find that the photos suggest greater access to resources and support.

¹⁴³ Hristova (2026) argues that the extensive media coverage of Ukrainian refugees may lead the population to overestimate their size in the population, which could lead to negative reactions.

¹⁴⁴ A Europe-wide study which included Switzerland established that the inclination to seek fact checking news (when offered in the study) was related to obtaining accurate information (because uncertainty was high) and unrelated to political views (Tulin et al. 2024). This implies that in situations such as the war in Ukraine, the media play an increasingly important role for the population (Tulin et al. 2024; see also Carvalho, Duarte, and Ruedin 2024 on the importance of the media in shaping public attention to issues) A study of war coverage in four Telegram channels suggests that coverage is more nuanced: Sulzhytski et al. (2024) analysed two Ukrainian and two Russian Telegram channels and found variation in tone, frames, and positions between the channels beyond the expected difference between countries. A longitudinal study on media coverage in the Czech Republic and Poland found that questions of deservingness were initially tied to the fact of being a refugee (who they are) and have shifted to questions of behaviour and integration (what they do) (Zogata-Kusz, Öbrink Hobzová, and Cekiera 2026).

finds clear differences during the first three months. Reactions to Ukrainian refugees are more positive and less doubtful (Hersperger 2023). While in both cases the refugees are portrayed as victims (of ‘terrorists’ in the case of Syrian refugees, of Russia in the case of Ukrainian refugees), welcoming Ukrainian refugees was unconditional compared to a more conditional engagement in the case of Syrians (if other countries participate, Switzerland would be willing...) (Hersperger 2023).

A large-scale content analysis of news coverage about Syrian and Ukrainian refugees which includes Swiss news coverage of an entire year could identify different frames — different ways Syrian and Ukrainian refugees were presented (Bregoli 2023; see also Vigneri, Daga, and Barana 2025). While both in 2015 and 2022, housing was a prominent topic in the news, only in 2015 was this topic controversially discussed: in 2022 there was agreement on how to deal with housing across the political spectrum (Bregoli 2023). In the same direction, only in 2022 was there a prominent solidarity frame in the news (Bregoli 2023). The portrayal of non-Ukrainian refugees remains politicized, ambiguous, and focused on problems — even in 2022 when Ukrainian refugees received more positive news coverage (Bregoli 2023).¹⁴⁵

A comparative study including Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (L. B. Hoffmann and Hameleers 2024) comes to a similar conclusion. Like Bregoli (2023), L. B. Hoffmann and Hameleers (2024) use automated content analysis (LDA) and identify different frames used in news coverage for Ukrainian and Syrian refugees. In all the countries, Syrian refugees were presented in more negative tones than Ukrainian refugees, with more threat and context being mentioned in articles on Syrian refugees. In contrast, for Ukrainian refugees, humanitarian and victimization frames were more common. The authors conclude that the way Ukrainian refugees were covered, their presence in Switzerland (as in other countries of destination) is considered legitimate, while for Syrian refugees, this legitimacy was questioned (L. B. Hoffmann and Hameleers 2024).

A large-scale study of reactions in the Switzerland-focused “r/Switzerland” Forum on Reddit found that online reactions to Ukrainian refugees were very rapid and full of (various) emotions (König 2025). The salience of Ukrainian refugees increased swiftly in February 2022, but has also declined over time. Beyond the refugees, many online discussions revolved around Swiss neutrality and what this meant in the face of the Russian full-scale invasion (König 2025). A BA thesis examined how official Switzerland reconciled its neutrality with sanction against Russia. It concluded that sanctions were framed as siding with the legal order of rule-based conflict, and not as a ‘tool’ of a belligerent party. This allowed Switzerland preserve its identity as a neutral party and commitment to its humanitarian tradition (Andoff 2026).

The war in Ukraine is characterized by misinformation campaigns (‘fake news’), which also

¹⁴⁵Unalp Cepel (2025) used a discourse analysis of speeches of European elites on digital platforms. She found that Ukrainian refugees were typically presented as victims of the Russian invasion, whereas Syrian refugees were often presented as potential terrorists. She also highlights that the EU was quickly working with ‘safe countries’ like Turkey to take back Syrian refugees, while no such efforts were discernible for Ukrainian refugees. So both at the level of discourse and behaviour, there are clear differences in the reaction.

affect Switzerland.¹⁴⁶ In a qualitative study of such misinformation in alternative media Switzerland, Grynko and Baeriswyl (2023) found made-up justifications for the full-scale invasion and notably accusations that Western media spread false information. Some of these misinformation campaigns were localized, in that messages mentioned local politicians or organizations (Grynko and Baeriswyl 2023). Grynko and Baeriswyl (2023) regards such misinformation a clear threat to democracy.¹⁴⁷ Hodlevska, Raczyński, and Kutsyk (2026) analysed disinformation that is increasingly spread in social networks. This disinformation targets both Ukrainian refugees and members of the majority population, with the aim to undermine support for Ukrainian refugees (Hodlevska, Raczyński, and Kutsyk 2026). Ukrainian refugees are presented as incompatible with (civilised) Western European society, and even spread HIV (Hodlevska, Raczyński, and Kutsyk 2026).

A large-scale and systematic study of the sources used by media coverage does not paint such a bleak picture (Udris et al. 2023).¹⁴⁸ While different news outlets rely on different sources, news agencies are the dominant source on the war in Ukraine (around 40% of all sources), especially in heavily commercialized and advertising-based media. The most common voices are those of governments and representatives of the military. Social media were used as sources in around 16% of news items examined. Yet, there are clear differences in framing: The way the war in Ukraine is reported depends on editorial priorities (Ibrahim et al. 2025).

A content analysis of media reports of Ukrainian refugees in Romania finds that Ukrainian refugees are indeed present in the media, but it is in the context of the war and conflict. In contrast, the socio-economic integration of Ukrainian refugees is hardly visible in media reports (Beciu 2026). Looking at the same country, Cheregi and Ciocea (2026) suggest that media coverage presents Ukrainian refugees in a way that emphasizes a strong humanitarian commitment in Romania. Put differently, the way the reception of Ukrainian refugees is described suggests a great effort on behalf of the majority population and does not present refugees as an ordinary phenomenon (Cheregi and Ciocea 2026). An analysis of how Members of the European Parliament (MEP) reacted to the full-scale invasion on Twitter demonstrates that reactions were quick, polarized, but also that they declined within two months (Brockmann et al. 2026).

¹⁴⁶Steblyna and Vasylyk (2026) examine the role of Telegram channels as alternative news sources among Ukrainians. Telegram channels are popular but they do not adhere to the same reporting standards than mainstream news, with a blurry boundary between alternative (but legitimate) news on the one hand, and amateur contributions and propaganda on the other hand. There is no effective regulation regarding Telegram channels.

¹⁴⁷Bafoil (2025) argues that from a Russian perspective, these various narratives — many of them ‘totally fantasized’ — are rooted in a sense of loss of national dignity; Ukraine as an autonomous or sovereign entity has little place in these Russian visions of history (see also Shtok 2025; Jakupec 2025).

¹⁴⁸This study focuses on mainstream media, not alternative media like Grynko and Baeriswyl (2023).

Reactions in art

Summary

The arts reacted to the war in Ukraine, including (online) cartoons.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad CH

Ukrainian

other
refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

The arts also reacted to the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Some of these reactions predated the full-scale invasion, considering Ukrainian history and the relationship to Russia and Europe (Omelchenko and Hushcha 2022). More recent reactions counter the Russian rhetoric that denies Ukrainian language, identity, and culture, and report experiences of violence and discrimination — often with a focus on personal loss (Omelchenko and Hushcha 2022). After the annexation of Crimea, (online) cartoons and graphic novels have become an important means to reflect on developments and to deal with trauma. Even after the full-scale invasion in 2022, the cartoons continue to focus on individual suffering rather than the battlefield (Pidoprygora 2022).¹⁴⁹

Looking at six case studies of Ukrainian refugees across Europe, Lashchuk (2024) argues that Ukrainian women are at risk of exclusion and being stereotyped. Being a refugee means positioning oneself in a new context. She suggests that art can be an effective means to speak about otherness and struggles of integration (Lashchuk 2024).

After the full-scale invasion, the use and perception of the Ukrainian and Russian language underwent changes (Pidkuimukha 2025). Since February 2022, some Russian speakers have switched to speaking Ukrainian in public. Many cities offer Ukrainian language courses. There is increasing popular support for making Ukrainian the only official language (Pidkuimukha 2025). Compared to 2017, the share of the population stating that they only spoke Ukrainian increased by 9 per cent, while the share speaking only Russian declined by 11 per cent. Among those changing their public language are prominent writers (who have started writing in Ukrainian), business people, YouTube and music stars (Kiss 2026). Some of them have since started using Russian in social media posts, suggesting some ambivalence (Pidkuimukha 2025).

Pidkuimukha (2026) reports systematic oppression of Ukrainian in the regions occupied by Russia, making resistance difficult. She reports of forced Russification in education (including the removal of Ukrainian books from libraries), media, and public spaces. Ukrainian signage and memorials are removed. She presents these changes as a systematic effort to eradicate Ukrainian identity — a context in which reactions in art are impossible.

Jeska (2026) report efforts of ‘decolonization’ to counter what is considered undue Russian influence in places such as Odesa. Symbols of ‘Russian imperialism’ are removed to give

¹⁴⁹ Kiss et al. (2025) report that the study and use of Ukrainian in Ukraine has increased since the onset of the full-scale invasion as some Russian-speaking Ukrainians seek to distance themselves from Russia.

place to Ukrainian history — to the extent that some locals feel like the history and heritage of the cities are undermined. Bookshops in Odesa are reported to no longer sell literature in Russian, and publishers are reported to be prevented from printing new editions in Russian. In a city with a cosmopolitan past, such efforts are divisive (Jeska 2026).

Kärkkäinen and Pöyhönen (2026) explored the use of arts in education to allow Ukrainian refugees — in Finland — to express themselves despite language barriers. They suggest that art as a medium is suitable to foster participation and allows for continued negotiation of the context in which memories and experiences are shared. According to the authors, this not only fosters self-expression, but can also support community-building (Kärkkäinen and Pöyhönen 2026).

(Global) Politics and Relations with Ukraine

 Summary

The war in Ukraine changed diplomacy and global politics. People in Switzerland support Ukraine, and most expect the war to continue for more than a year.

Distribution of evidence:

abroad	CH
	
	

Ukrainian

other refugees

darker shades indicate stronger evidence (more studies, complementary, stronger design) by location (Switzerland [CH], abroad) and focus (Ukrainian, other refugees)

Not limited to Switzerland, the full-scale invasion in Ukraine has changed diplomacy and global politics, and some fear it may threaten European integration more generally (see contributions in Mörner 2024; see also Jakupec 2025). European reactions to the invasion can be classed into three types: North-Eastern countries such as the United Kingdom, Estonia, or Poland support Ukraine’s military most; countries in Western Europe tend to be more ambiguous (Germany, France, Spain); Southern European countries such as Italy and Romania tend to favour peace as soon as possible — irrespective of the genesis of the war (Mörner 2024). This assessment does not explicitly treat Switzerland, which has been characterized as ambiguous by others (Washington 2023; but see Bendix 2022 for a contrasting assessment earlier in the conflict). Across Europe, political parties took clear positions against the Russian invasion and support Ukraine to various degrees in 2024 (Iso-Markku 2025). Differences in the party manifestos were about the nature and extent of support, but not about the basic position.

Specific to Switzerland, Ferst and Roost (2024) notice how wars and related sanctions affect politics in the sense that attitudes to Switzerland’s neutrality may be changing at those moments — although overall these attitudes are quite stable. It may be the activation through popular initiatives in this context, that encourages political debate and possibly attitudinal

change.¹⁵⁰ Jakupc (2025) identifies the raise of populist parties after the 2024 European elections as an important influence on how European countries react to the war in Ukraine, given that populist actors undermine a uniform European position.

In 2024, a Europe-wide survey covered attitudes to the war in Ukraine, including in Switzerland (Krastev and Leonard 2024). The authors of that study note how public opinion to the war does not seem to change much over time, and there remains strong support for Ukraine across European countries. Most respondents expected the war in Ukraine to last another 1 to 5 years (51% of respondents in Switzerland) (Krastev and Leonard 2024), while 45% consider it likely or very likely that Russia will attack another country.¹⁵¹ 34% of the respondents in Switzerland consider it likely or very likely that NATO will go to war with Ukraine.

In 2024, just 9% of Swiss respondents expected Ukraine to win the war outright, 17% expect Russia to win, while 42% expect the war to end up in a compromise settlement. In comparison, in Ukraine, 58% of the population expect Ukraine to win the war (Krastev and Leonard 2024). In line with the expectations how the war will end, in Switzerland 29% think that the government should help Ukraine win the war, while 42% think Switzerland should push Ukraine to negotiate peace with Russia (Krastev and Leonard 2024). The Ukrainian population is open to peace negotiations, but rejects dictated peace and shows readiness to protest if the government give in too lightly (Rzheutka 2025). In Germany, these opinions are available by party support, and there is a clear left-right divide: the left support providing help to Ukraine to win the war, the right support a peace deal.

A clear majority in Switzerland, the great majority oppose Swiss troops fighting in Ukraine (78% opposition and 12% support) (Krastev and Leonard 2024). Support is higher for technical assistance (35% of respondents in Switzerland) and patrolling the border without engaging in fighting (29% of respondents in Switzerland).

In Switzerland, a majority of 54% oppose increasing military spending, despite the war in Ukraine (Krastev and Leonard 2024). In contrast, only 23% explicitly support such a change.

The full-scale invasion has also intensified EU accession intentions of countries such as Georgia, Moldova, or Ukraine (Schwarz 2025).

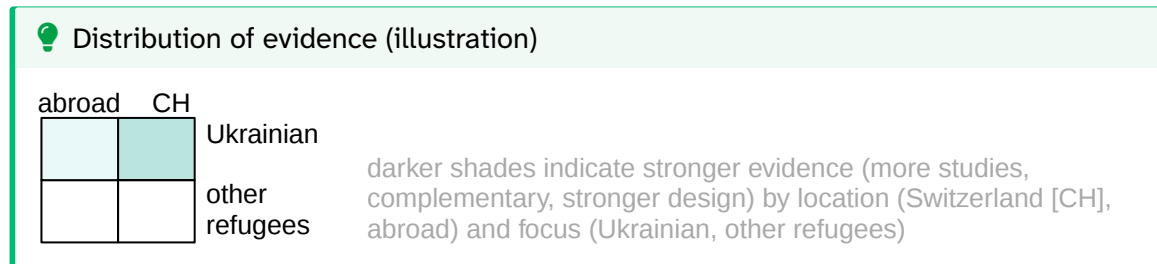
¹⁵⁰In contrast to other European countries, levels of trust in state institutions such as the police, government, or the judiciary did not change after the Russian full-scale invasion and remain high (Nussio 2024).

¹⁵¹Numbers do not add up to 100% because non-responses and refusals are not reported in the present review.

Appendices

Evidence Gap Map

To better understand the nature of evidence, each section in this review includes a graphical summary. Since this review focuses on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, these summaries of the evidence reflect the evidence cited in the sections that follow, not the evidence that exists. Evidently, there is much more evidence on Ukrainian refugees in other countries and on refugees in general. Reviewing this literature is beyond the scope of the present review.



The graphic in these summaries shows the nature of evidence, distinguishing between studies on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland (top-right), other refugees in Switzerland (bottom-right), Ukrainian refugees in other countries (top-left), and other refugees in countries other than Switzerland.

Darker shades indicate stronger evidence. Evidence is considered stronger if there are more studies, if the evidence provided is complementary, and if the studies use stronger research designs. Register data and large-scale experiments are considered stronger research designs than observational and qualitative studies (Guyatt et al. 2008; Lewin et al. 2018). Larger sections have more evidence, and no attempt was made to standardize these scores.

The following table is an attempt to quantify the nature of evidence by the length of the section. Given are the number of pages of the different subsection and an indication whether the evidence cited therein is mostly from studies on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland (CH), roughly in balance, or mostly from other sources (Ukrainian refugees abroad, other refugees).

Table 5: Number of pages in the review, divided by the nature of evidence. See individual section on more details on the distribution of evidence included. Length was rounded to 1/2 pages, so rounding errors are likely. If in doubt, this table prefers the category “similar”. Last updated 22 June 2026.

Section	Mostly Ukrainians in CH	Similar	Mostly other
Economic integration	18.0	13.0	1.0
Housing	5.0	1.0	
Education	6.0	2.5	1.5
Social integration	7.5	5.0	7.0
Cultural integration		0.5	
Political participation			0.5
Health, well-being	1.0	5.0	1.0
Crime and safety	1.5		1.0
Attitudes	0.5	4.5	
Media reactions		2.0	1.0
Global politics		1.5	

Overview of Population Surveys Carried Out

Table 6: Population surveys carried out in Switzerland

Study	Time	N	Sample	Content/Focus
Savatic et al.	June 2022 +	17k	opportunity	trajectories, integration ¹⁵²
Baier et al.	Aug 2022	701	opportunity	integration, support, esp. ZH
Bansak et al.	May 2022	997	online panel	attitudes to refugees
BFH	Sep/Oct 2022	1984	representative	labour market integration
Craviolini	Jul 2022	376	opportunity	enterprises
Adema et al.	2022	1211	opportunity	attitudes to refugees ¹⁵³
Eser Davolio	Feb/May 2023	389	snowball	integration, esp. ZH
Eser Davolio	Apr 2024	123	panel (from 2023 sample)	integration, esp. ZH
Gradus	Feb/Sep 2023	68	self-selected	experience, N=3418 in EU-29+
Jucker et al.	Jan/Apr 2023	603	opportunity	integration, BE only
SFH	Oct/Dec 2022	986	snowball	host families
Nimko et al.	Oct/Feb 2023	107	opportunity	food security ¹⁵⁴
Vakhitov et al.	Dec 2023	937	online panel	return intentions
UNHCR	Mar/May 2023	1125	representative	integration, return
Krastev/Leonard	May 2024	1079	representative	war
MAP Studies	Apr 2024 +	657	online panel	mental health, well-being ¹⁵⁵
Kuznetsova	Jun 2024	154	opportunity	labour market integration
Scherrer et al.	Jun 2024	2573	online panel	attitudes
Sienra	Dec 2024	4756	online panel	attitudes
Liechti et al.	Jan/Feb 2025	1455	representative	housing ¹⁵⁶
Hett	2025	1470	opportunity	integration, trust, return ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² European-wide survey with a focus on Poland and Germany, also includes respondents from Central and Eastern Europe as well as “other Europe” which covers Switzerland; no separate results published for Switzerland to date; 7 waves until 2024

¹⁵³ Recruited on Facebook, includes all countries of the European Union, UK, Norway, and Switzerland

¹⁵⁴ includes larger sample in Ukraine for comparison

¹⁵⁵ Canton of Zürich, <https://www.map-studies.ch/de/>, starting in April 2024; this is the first large-scale panel study on Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland. The study also includes a (much larger) sample in Ukraine and a control group of non-refugees in the Canton of Zürich. 4th wave in spring 2025

¹⁵⁶ report suggests limited representativeness, despite best efforts

¹⁵⁷ Fieldwork continued until the end of 2025, first results with N=1470 in Hett and Ruedin (2025)

Share of Population

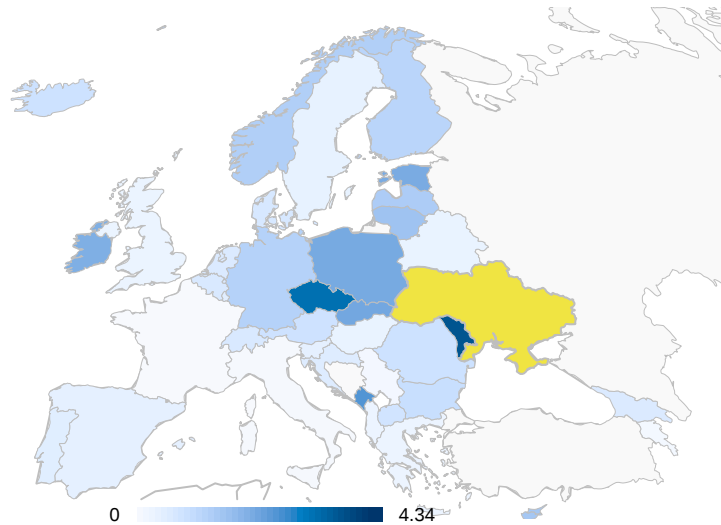


Figure 28: Map of Europe with the share of Ukrainian refugees as part of the overall population. The number of Ukrainian refugees was taken from the UNHCR (<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>) and Eurostat, as of February 2026 (where available), country populations as of 2003, taken from Our World in Data (United Nations, World Population Prospects). No separate data for Kosovo are available from UNHCR. Mollweide equal area projection.

Origin as ratio

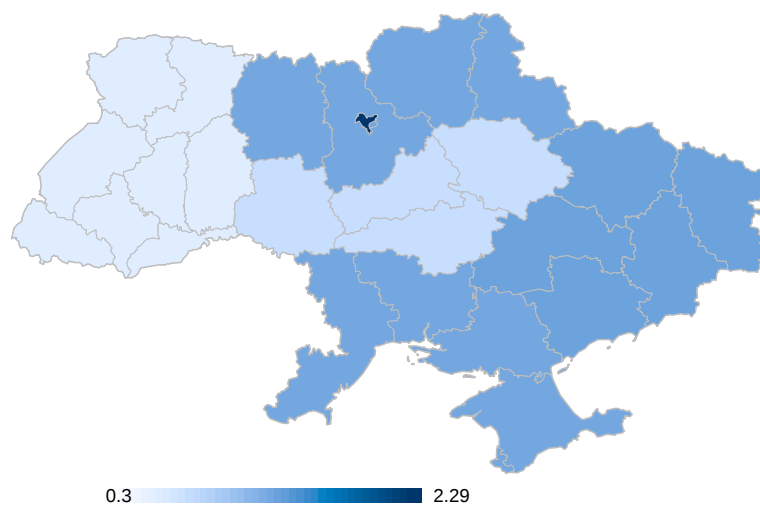


Figure 29: Map of Ukraine showing the origin of Ukrainian refugees, based on Gradus (2024) as ratio of the population. Data collected in 2023, self-selected sample. The share of the population (as of January 2022) of the different regions is taken into consideration to calculate a ratio. The percentage of the sample is given; administrative regions have been combined.

Number of asylum applications from Ukraine

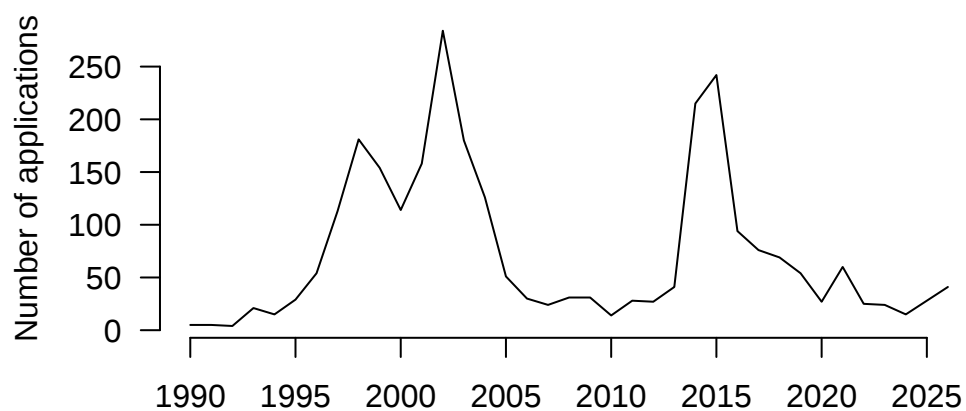


Figure 30: Number of asylum applications in Switzerland from Ukrainians, not including Status S. Data available 1990 onwards, last updated 28 August 2026. Source: SEM (2026a).

Number of demands and Status S permits issued

In this appendix (Figure 31, Figure 32), the number of demands for Status S over time is shown, as well as the number of Status S permits granted. When Ukrainian refugees leave the country, these permits lapse, which is why the number of permits issued is larger than the number of Ukrainian refugees resident in Switzerland.

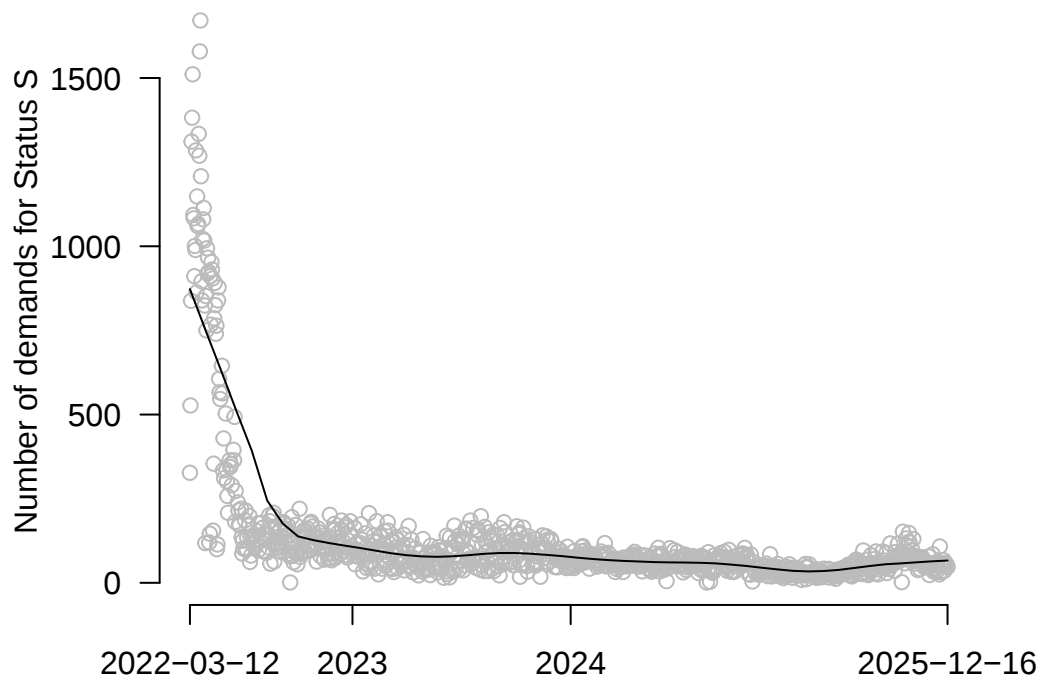


Figure 31: Number of applications in Switzerland, daily, not showing days without applications. The solid line in LOESS-smoothed with bandwidth 0.2. Data start on 12 March 2022. Source: SEM (2026a).

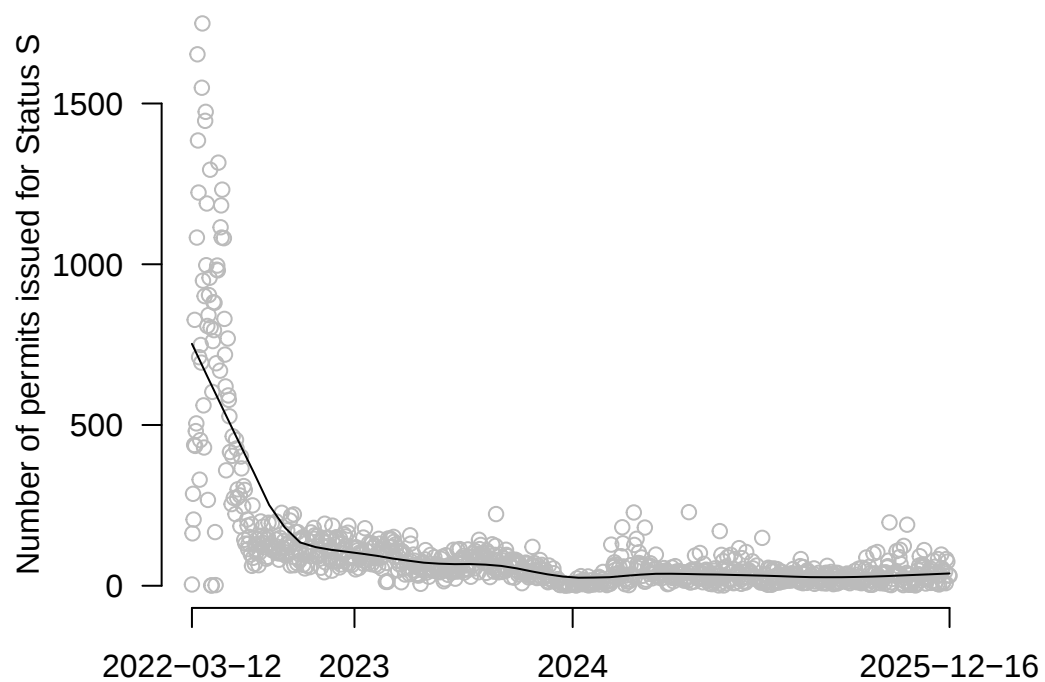


Figure 32: Number of permits issued in Switzerland, daily, not showing days without permits issued (week-ends). The solid line in LOESS-smoothed with bandwidth 0.2. 12 March 2022 to the last available data. Source: SEM (2026a).

Backlog: Number of applications without permit

In addition to the Ukrainian refugees who have obtained Status S, there are demands that are pending. This number is published by year (Figure 33) and monthly since February 2024 (Figure 34).

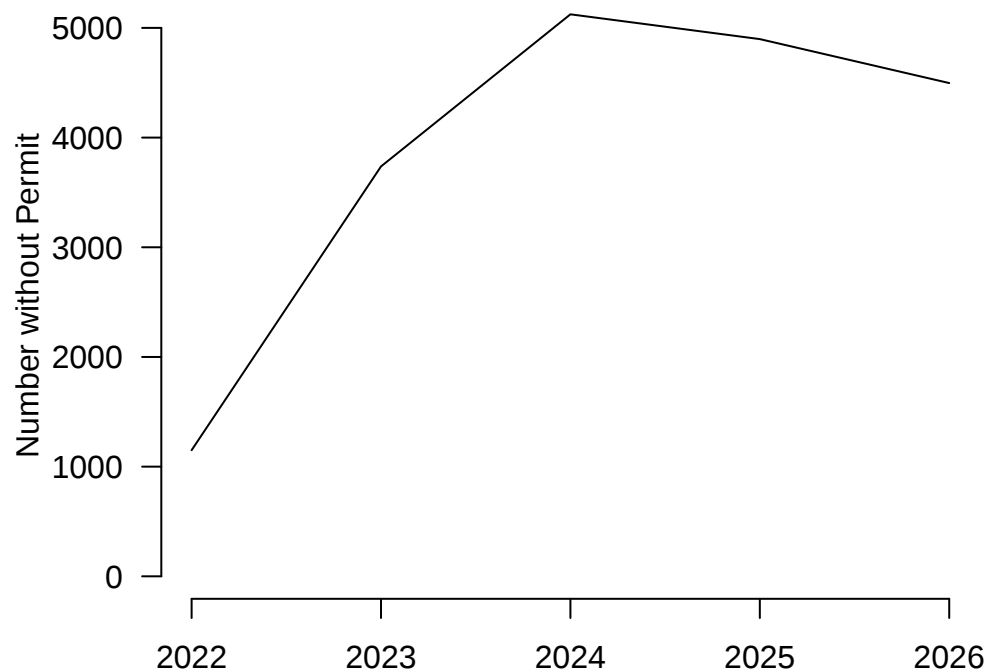


Figure 33: Number of persons in process for Status S without a permit, annual data (current year to date). Source: SEM (2026a).

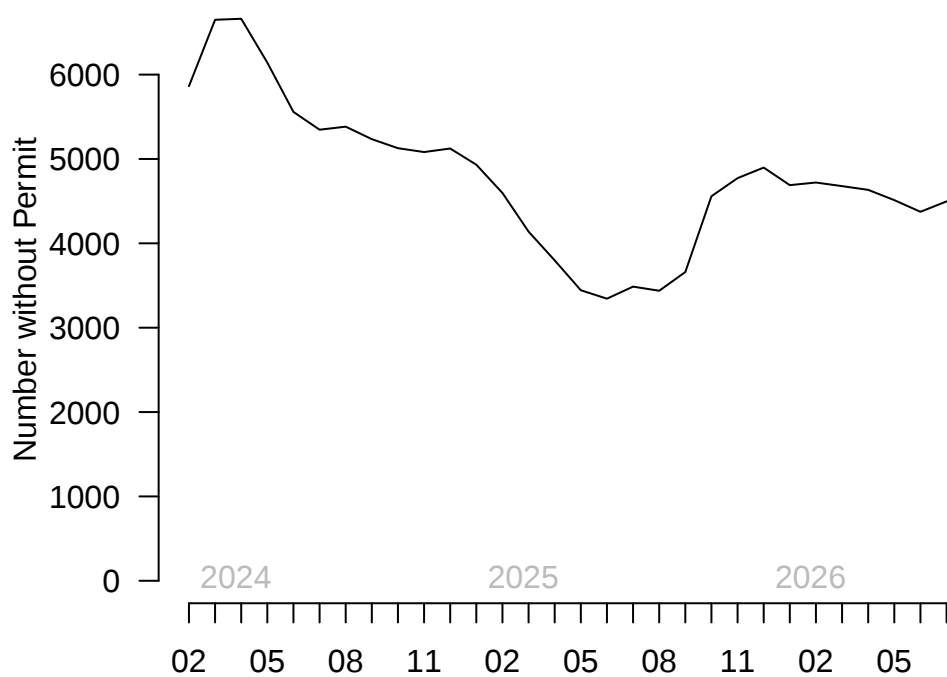


Figure 34: Number of persons in process for Status S without a permit, since February 2024.
Source: SEM (2026a).

Projecting into the future

In this appendix, simple time-series analysis is applied to predict the likely development over time. The projections are based on the ETS framework (Hyndman and Athanasopoulos 2021), and models use exponential smoothing and model seasonality if present. The models do not include any dedicated predictor variables and only predict the future based on existing values, so they can be considered projections or forecasts more than predictions, depending on how these terms are understood. Especially in the case of refugees, we can *expect* these projections to be inaccurate if the circumstances in Ukraine or Switzerland change.

Number of applications, with projection

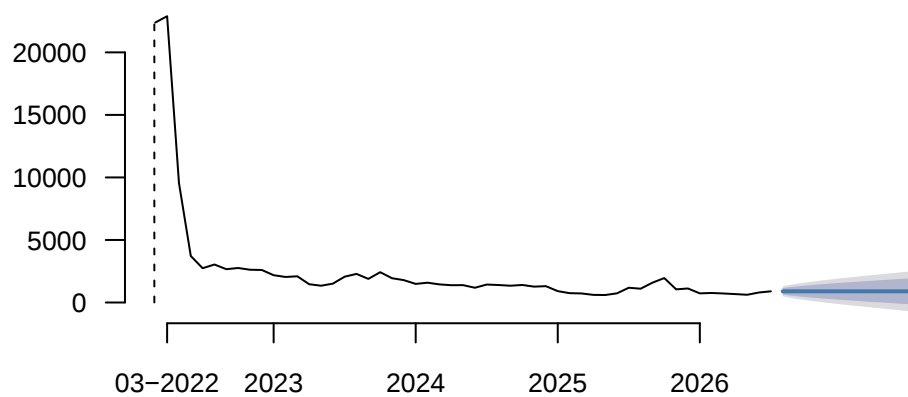


Figure 35: Number of applications in Switzerland. Source: SEM (2026a). With projections.

Number of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, with projection

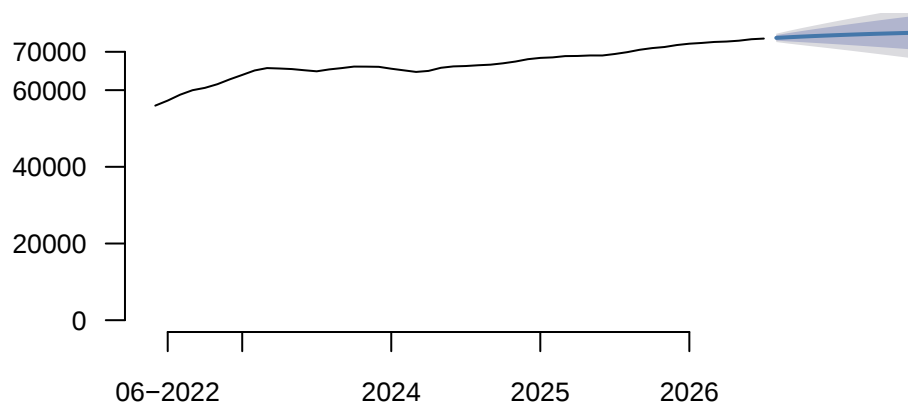


Figure 36: Number of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland over time, with time series projections

Recognition rate overall, with projection

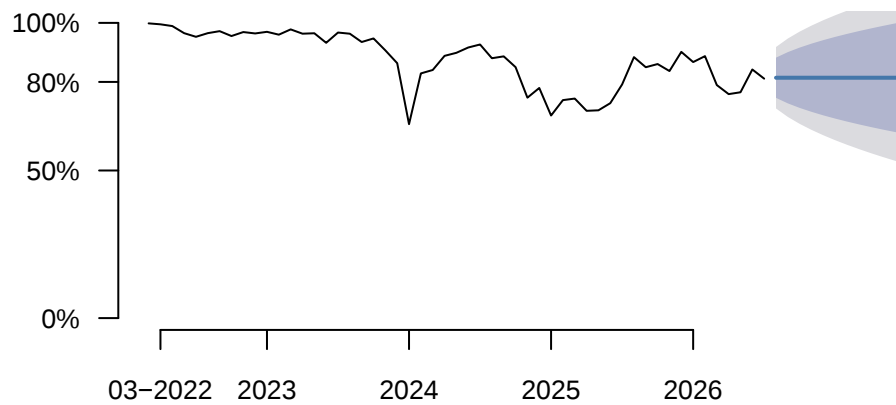


Figure 37: Recognition rate in Switzerland with time series projections.

Recognition rate by gender, with projection

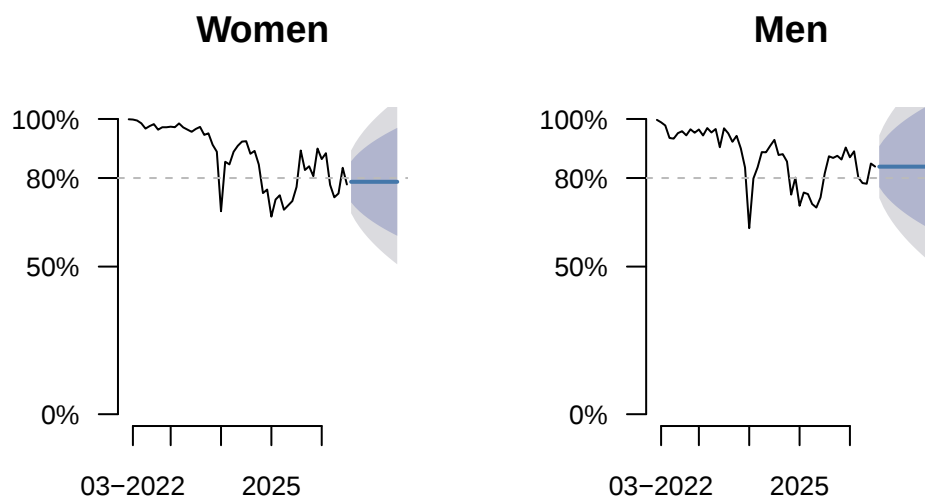


Figure 38: Recognition rate for women and men in Switzerland with time series projections.

Share of women among Ukrainian refugees, with projection

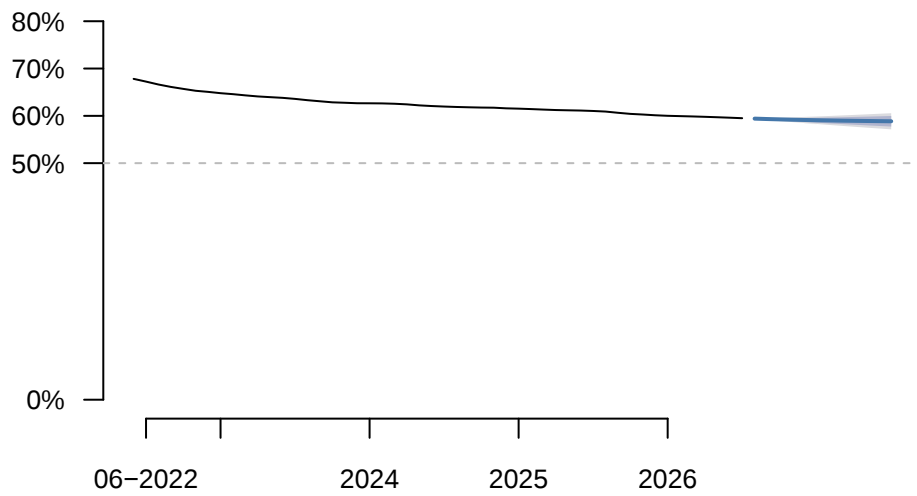


Figure 39: Percentage of women among Ukrainian refugees, with time series projections

Share of women among applicants for Status S, with projection

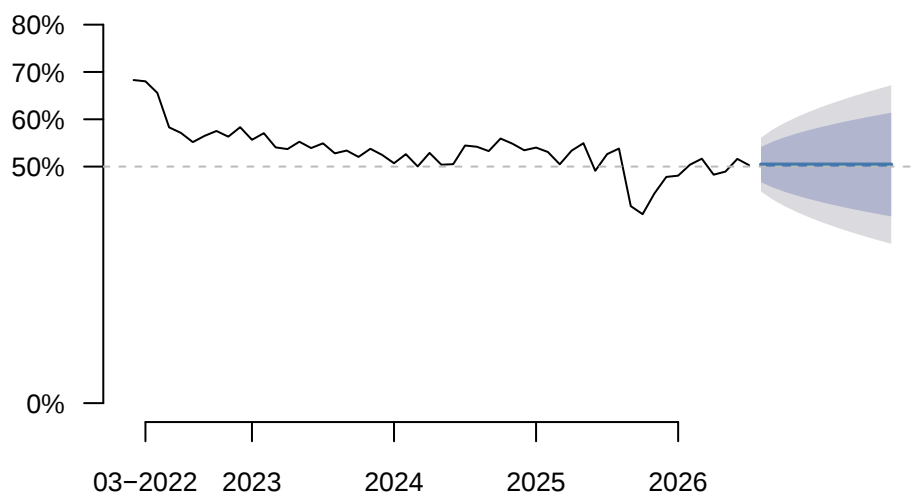


Figure 40: Percentage of women among new applicants for Status S, with time series projections

Share with Ukrainian citizenship among applicants for Status S, with projection

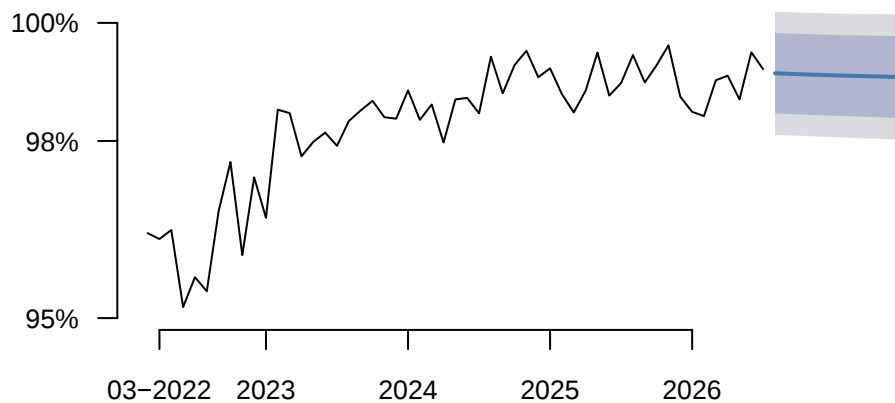


Figure 41: Share of Ukrainian citizens with time series projections.

Expired permits, with projection

At this stage, there is an increase in expired permits projected in the time series, but the uncertainty remains very large.

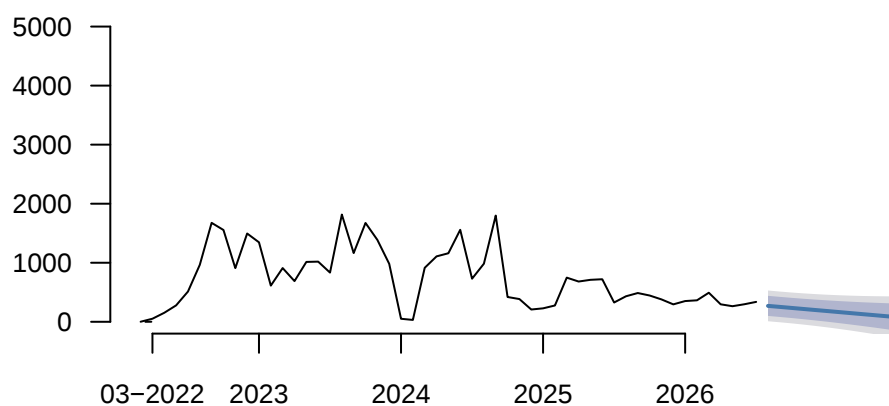


Figure 42: Number of permits that expired. Source: SEM (2026a). With projections.

Developments of labour force participation, with projection

In this appendix (Figure 43), simple time-series analysis is applied to predict the likely development of labour force participation for the subsequent 12 months. The projections are based on the ETS framework (Hyndman and Athanasopoulos 2021). These models use exponential smoothing and model seasonality if present. There are large bands in many of these projections, suggesting great uncertainty — beyond the uncertainty inherent in a changing context.

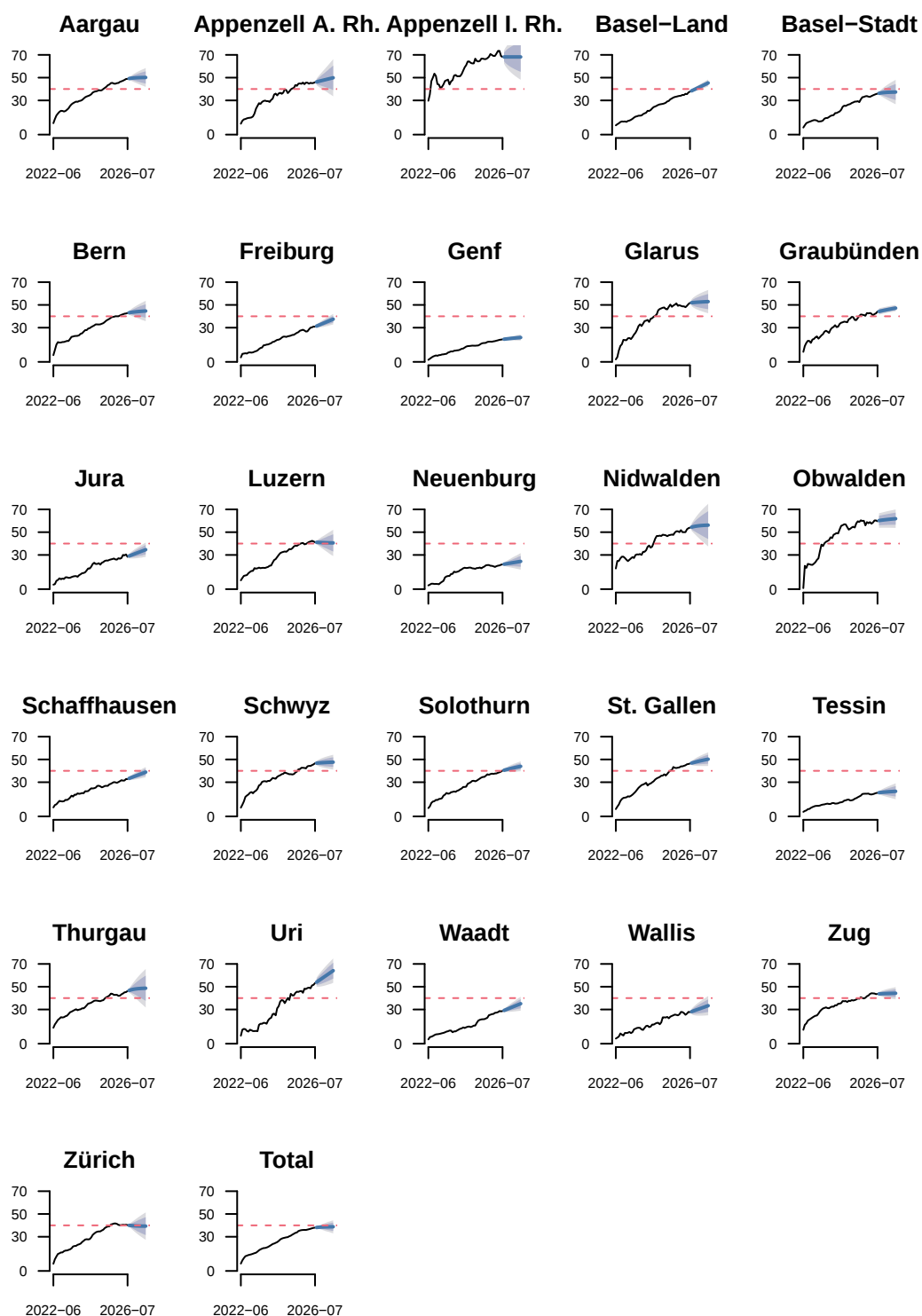


Figure 43: Rate of labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland by canton, including ETS time-series projections for 12 months (Hyndman and Athanasopoulos 2021). Notes: Development since June 2022, in percentages. The dashed horizontal line indicates 40%. Total refers to all cantons combined (Switzerland). Source for trends: SEM (2026a).

In Figure 44, simple time-series analysis is applied to predict the likely development of labour force participation for the subsequent 24 weeks. These projections are based on the weekly data and use exponential smoothing. Weekly data are only available until end of 2025.

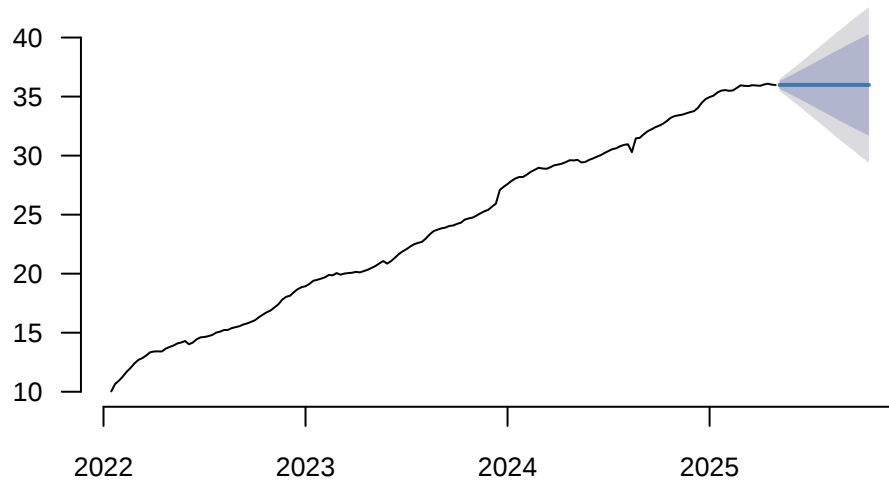


Figure 44: Rate of labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, including ETS time-series projections for 24 weeks (Hyndman and Athanasopoulos 2021). Based on weekly data, all cantons combined. Weekly data are only available until end of 2025. Source for trends: SEM (2026a).

Labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Switzerland in 2022. Data presented on a monthly basis since April 2025, including ETS time-series projections for 7 months (Hyndman and Athanasopoulos 2021).

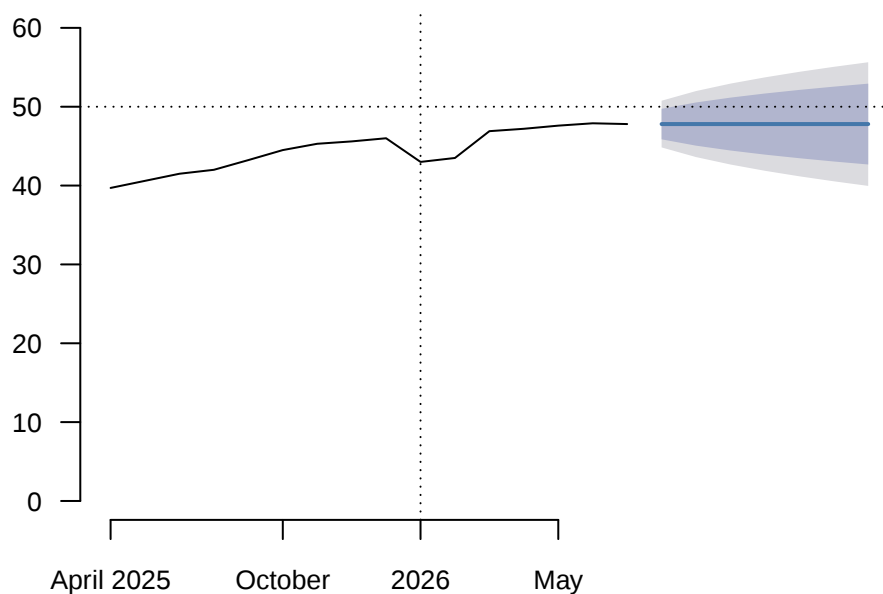


Figure 45: Labour force participation of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Switzerland in 2022. Monthly data, starting in April 2025 (black line). ETS time-series projections (blue line with uncertainty). The dotted lines indicate 50% labour force participation and the beginning of 2026. No data were provided by the SEM for August 2025, and the geometric mean between July 2025 and September 2025 was used as imputation to complete the timeline. Source: SEM (2026a).

Language skills, education, and work experience across cohorts

Through the registration app *RegisterMe*, the language skills (Figure 46) and education levels (Figure 48) of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees were assessed at several points in time. In Figure 46 good language skills are presented in shades of green (can understand most and speak well; almost perfectly), while shades of purple represent poor language skills (none; understand basic words). The middle category represents refugees who can communicate in everyday situations.

Figure 47 gives the share of recently arrived Ukrainian refugees with good language skills in at least one of English, German, French, or Italian, for different age groups. In this figure, good language skills refer to those who speak the language almost perfectly, or can understand most and speak well.

Figure 48 shows the education level of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees, demonstrating the high proportion of refugees with tertiary education (given in dark green). Similar patterns can be observed in Germany (Ette, Rumpf, and Spieß 2025).

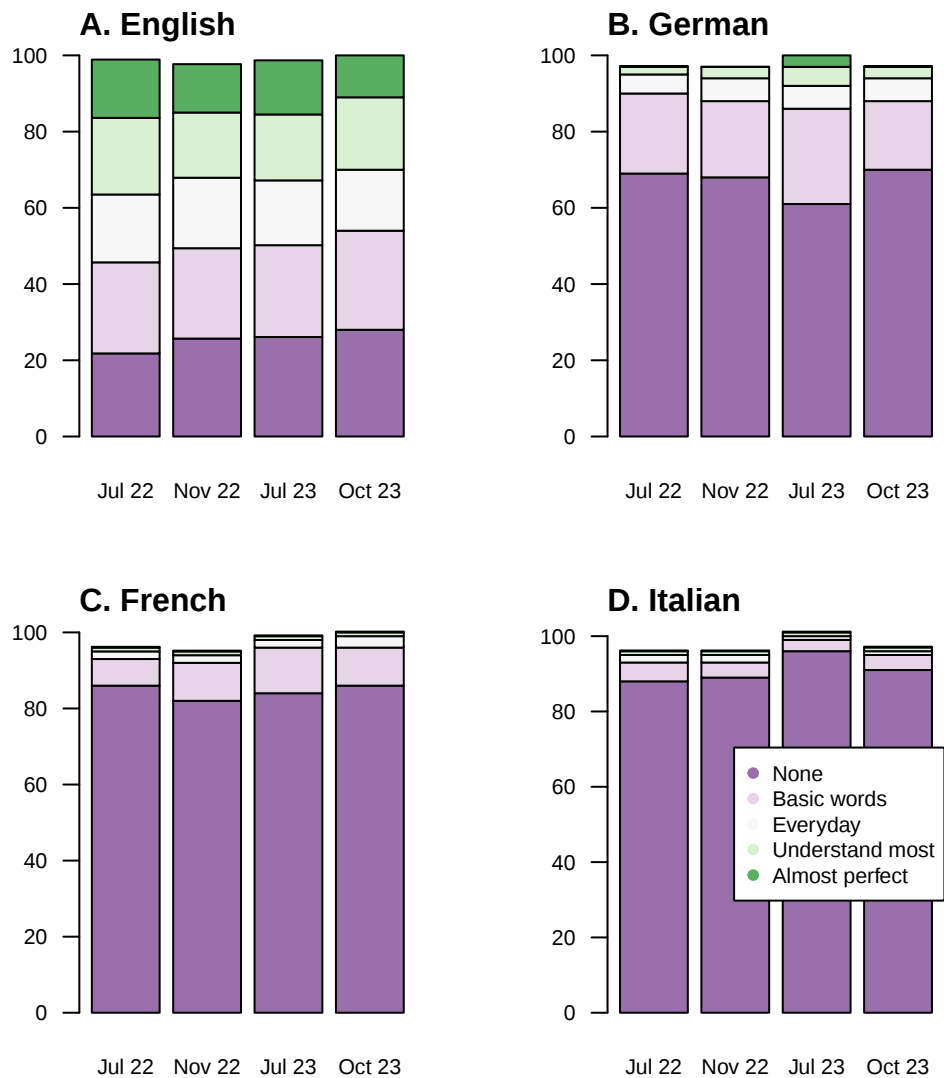


Figure 46: Language skills of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees across 4 cohorts (waves). Each cohort (wave) consists of different people. Language skills are self-assessed. Numbers do not add to 100% because of missing values. Source: SEM (2026a).

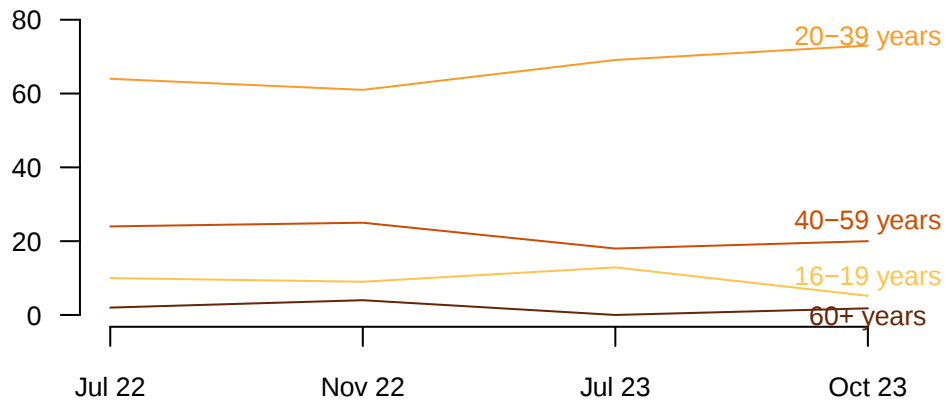


Figure 47: Share of newly arrived Ukrainian with tertiary education by age group across 4 cohorts (waves). Each cohort (wave) consists of different people. Education is self-declared. Source: SEM (2026a).

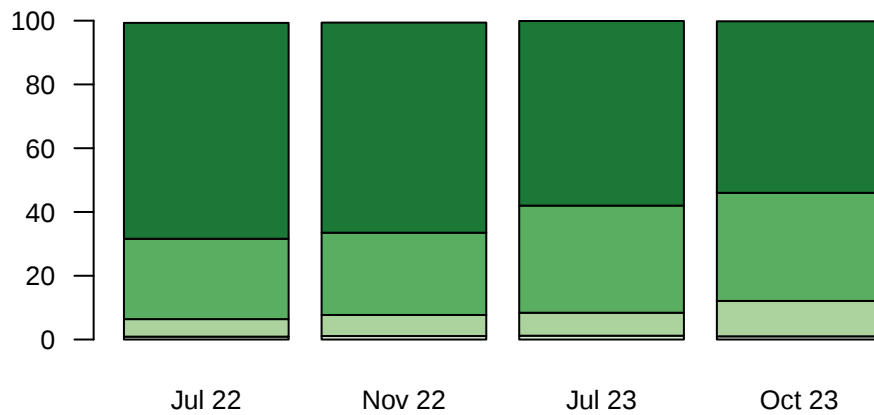


Figure 48: Education level of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees across 4 cohorts (waves). Each cohort (wave) consists of different people. Education level is self-declared. Darker shades of green represent higher levels of education (none, basic, secondary, tertiary). Numbers do not add to 100% because of missing values. Source: SEM (2026a).

Figure 49 gives the share of recently arrived Ukrainian refugees with tertiary education for different age groups. We can see that the share with tertiary education is highest for the youngest age group included in the figure.

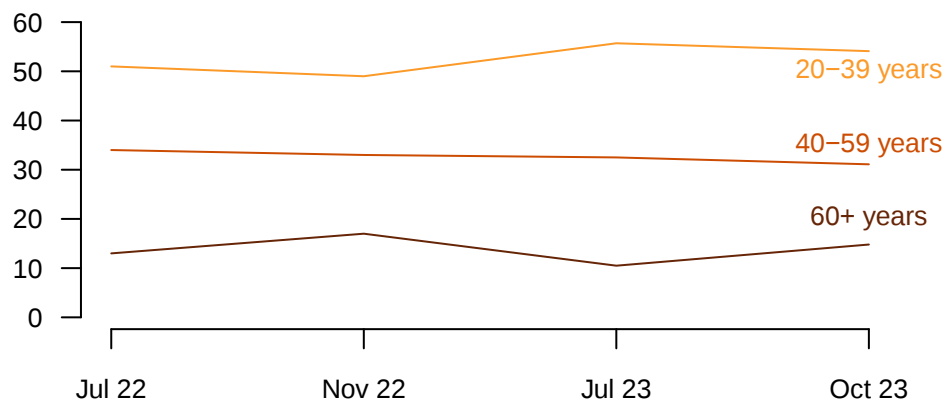


Figure 49: Share of newly arrived Ukrainian with tertiary education by age group across 4 cohorts (waves). Each cohort (wave) consists of different people. Education is self-declared. Source: SEM (2026a).

In Figure 50, the area of the diploma and work experience of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees is given for 4 separate cohorts (waves).

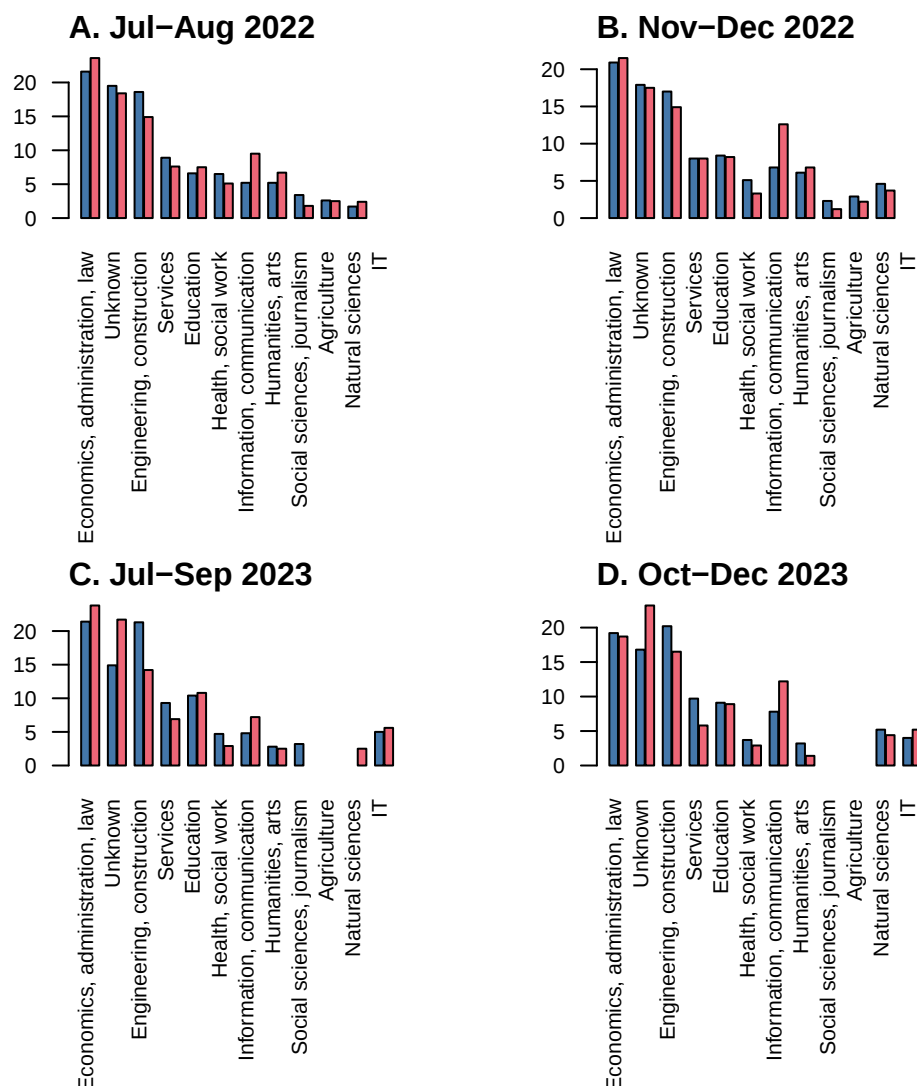


Figure 50: Area of diploma (blue) and work experience (red) of newly arrived Ukrainian refugees across 4 cohorts (waves). Each cohort (wave) consists of different people. Education and work experience are self-declared. The categories used in 2022 and 2023 are not entirely congruent (notably the separate IT category in 2023). Source: SEM (2026a).

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Ethics

Literature research is exempted according to the institutional guidelines of the SFM.

Methodology

PICO

The PICO for this review (Scientific Research Division 2022) is as follows:

- population: Ukrainians in Switzerland
- intervention: having fled Ukraine and sought protection in Switzerland
- control: not applicable (some studies include a comparison to ordinary asylum seekers and refugees, others a comparison to the general population, but neither of these was used as a selection criterion)
- outcome: socio-economic integration in the wider sense.

Sources and PRISMA

This literature review draws on three sources: (1) a literature research by the CentreDoc of the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM) of the University of Neuchâtel, (2) a search on Google Scholar, (3) haphazard records that were identified by other means (e.g. newsletters, highlighted by colleagues, media reports) (Figure 51). All sources explicitly include so-called grey literature, such as research reports or communication by government offices. Purely theoretical and opinion pieces are excluded, which includes most newspaper articles that may show up in some searches. Review articles are in principle included.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Sasse et al. (2023) suggest that academic attention to Ukrainian refugees and the war in Ukraine may be similarly sporadic than media attention, and warn against falling prey to Russian propaganda in historical accounts. With ongoing media attention to Ukraine, this assertion is difficult to verify, though Palko (2023) identifies a generic Russo-centrism in Western academia. Veira-Ramos and Liubyva (2026) use survey data

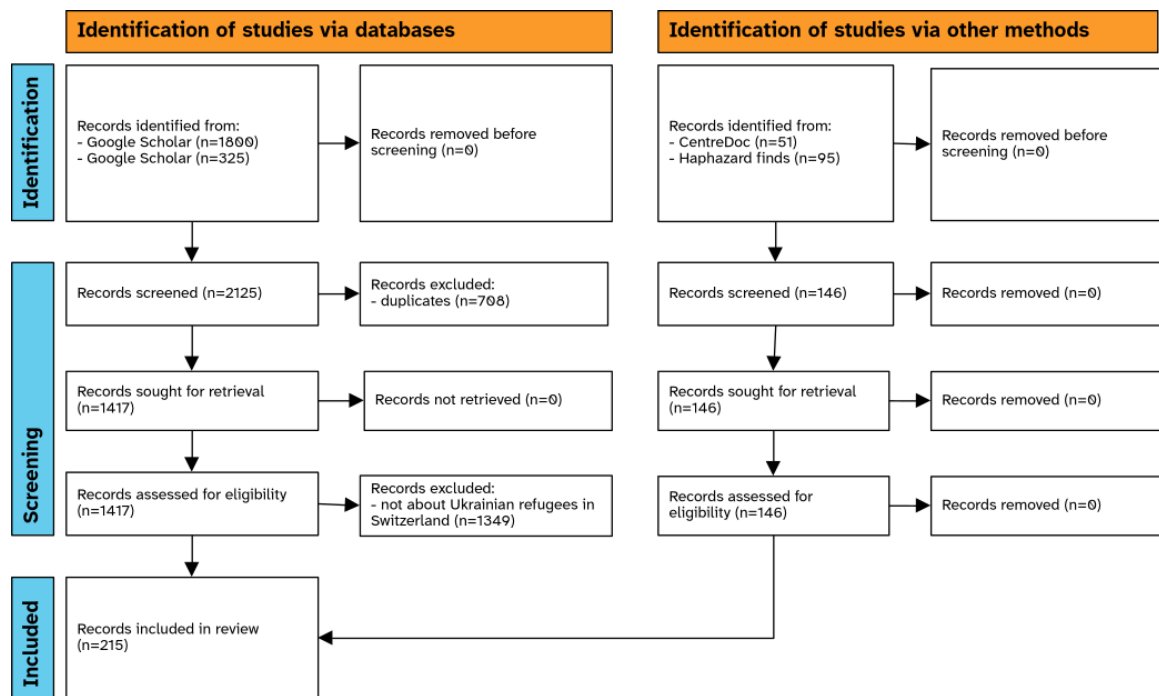


Figure 51: PRISMA Diagram (cf. Page et al. 2021). The initial search is recorded as ‘CentreDoc’, which was complemented by the first search on Google Scholar. See description in the main text for details (‘search’).

Search

The initial search was carried out by the CentreDoc and complemented with a first search on Google Scholar, which was carried out on 13 December 2023. A second search on Google Scholar was carried out on 9 June 2024 (the smaller search in Figure 51). Google Scholar was chosen as the source because of its extensive inclusion of grey literature. In December 2023, the first 30 pages of the following keyword combinations were manually screened for relevance: “Ukraine Switzerland”, “Ukraine Schweiz”, “Ukraine Suisse”, “Ukraine Switzerland Refugees”, “Ukraine Schweiz Flüchtling”, “Ukraine Suisse réfugiés”. All searches were limited to publications since 2022. Duplicates with the CentreDoc search were skipped at this stage. In June 2024, all records published since the initial search were considered (sorting by date, 180 days). These searches were since repeated on a weekly basis. Studies identified this way are included under ‘haphazard’ given that they were often identified by different means at the same time. Studies that are not about Switzerland are not included in this diagram. Last repeated on: 14 September 2026.

from Ukraine to highlight that reports of a divided Ukraine cannot be supported, with respondents across the country pursuing similar goals, notably freedom, free speech, economic development, and democratic rule. They are also united in that they support Ukrainian unity despite regional differences (Veira-Ramos and Liubyva 2026). In a survey experiment in Switzerland, Schläpfer (2026) shows that men and older participants are more likely to believe misinformation in the media, for which he used questions on the war in Ukraine amongst other topics.

Analysis

All analysis was carried out in *R* (R Core Team 2026).

Distribution of evidence

The distribution of evidence is a qualitative assessment of the evidence for the section where the graphic is provided (evidence gap map, Guyatt et al. 2008; Lewin et al. 2018). Darker shades refer to stronger evidence: more studies, complementary evidence in the studies, stronger designs used in the studies. The strength of designs was assessed following the GRADE criteria (Guyatt et al. 2008). Accordingly, experimental designs are considered stronger evidence than observational designs. Register data, a larger number of observations, controls for confounders, and complementary evidence lead to higher scores. In contrast, selection bias, risk of bias, and unclear evidence lead to lower scores.

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