

The Majority of Ukrainians Wish to Stay in Denmark

POST

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The temporary protection scheme for Ukrainians in Denmark, like in the broader EU, is designed with the expectation that Ukrainians return once the war in Ukraine ends. This policy has been the legal foundation for the protection and residence of Ukrainians in the EU since Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. While some probably look forward to returning home and rebuilding the lives they had before the war, many seem to have established a daily life in the host countries, with work and social networks, and may therefore have a smaller desire to return — even if the war no longer poses a threat to their hometown. The temporary protection scheme, which was initially valid until 2024 and has since been extended twice, first to March 2025 and now to March 2026, creates uncertainty about the prospects of Ukrainian refugees in Europe.

Based on this, researchers from the University of Copenhagen and the ROCKWOOL Foundation Research Unit have examined the desire to return home and the fear of being sent home among adult (18+) Ukrainians living in Denmark who arrived between the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 and July 2024. The data were collected via a survey distributed to this entire population between October 2024 and January 2025.

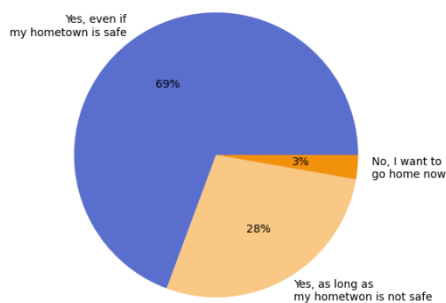
Overall, we find that the majority of Ukrainians in Denmark wish to stay, even when the war no longer poses a threat to their hometowns (nearly 70 percent). Likewise, fear of being sent back to Ukraine is a significant concern in their daily lives. We also find that four out of five do not (or no longer) have a partner or children in Ukraine, and this group is significantly more likely to want to stay compared to those who report having children and/or a partner in Ukraine.

Desire to Stay and Fear of Deportation

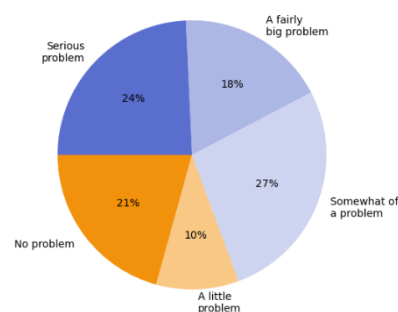
69 percent of Ukrainians in Denmark wish to stay, even if their hometown is no longer at risk from the war (Figure 1a). The remaining 31 percent either want to return home when their hometown is safe (28 percent) or immediately (3 percent)¹. At the same time, 42 percent indicate that fear of being sent back to Ukraine is a fairly big or serious problem in their everyday life (Figure 1b)². Most Ukrainians in Denmark have temporary residence permits under the Special Law for Displaced Ukrainians, which was extended to April 2026 in November 2024³.

Figure 1. Desire to stay and fear of being sent home.

(a) Desire to stay in Denmark



(b) Fear of being sent home.



Note: Own calculations based on the Danish Refugee Cohort (DARECO), data collected between October 2024 and January 2025.

Compared to Ukrainians who were in Denmark a year after the war began, there is now a significantly larger proportion who wish to stay in Denmark even if their hometown becomes safe again (69 percent now versus 50 percent in the spring of 2023, Karstoft et al., 2023). This change may be due to shifts in the composition of the group through migration or differences in survey respondents, as well as evolving attitudes toward staying as their time in Denmark increases. There is a strong overlap between those who wish to stay despite their hometown becoming safe again and those who fear being sent home⁴. In the following sections, we focus on the share of

¹ We have consistently omitted individuals who answered “don’t know.” These could meaningfully be included in Figure 1.a, but doing so does not significantly affect the conclusions; the proportion of those who want to stay even when their hometown is safe drops from 69 to 68.

² This proportion does not change significantly if we include individuals who answered “don’t know.”

³ The population responded to the questionnaire between October 16, 2024, and January 31, 2025. The government presented the proposal for an extension in June 2024, and the proposal was finally adopted on November 26, 2024.

⁴ 77 percent of those who wish to remain in Denmark, even though their hometown is safe again, report that the fear of being sent home constitutes a serious, major, or somewhat of a problem in their daily lives.

respondents who wish to stay even when the war no longer poses a threat and analyse variations across age, gender, and family status.

Most Have Neither a Partner nor Children in Ukraine

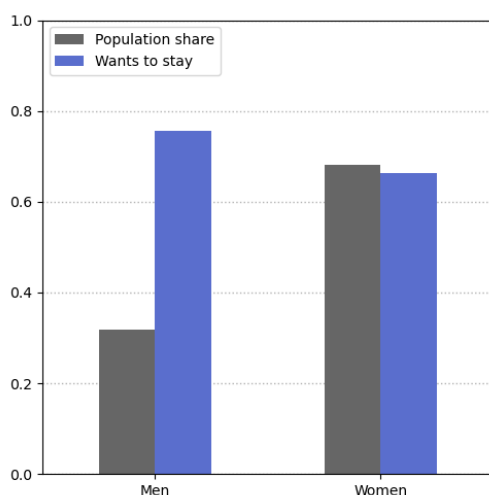
The following figures each show two different things. The gray bars represent the distribution of respondents across gender, partner and/or children in Ukraine, and age, while the blue bars show the proportion within each group that wishes to stay in Denmark even if the war no longer poses a threat to their hometown.

Two out of three adult Ukrainians who arrived in Denmark since the war began in February 2022 are women. Women are less likely than men to wish to stay in Denmark even if their hometown becomes safe again (Figure 2a). This is linked to the fact that they are more likely to have a partner and/or children still in Ukraine compared to Ukrainian men living in Denmark.

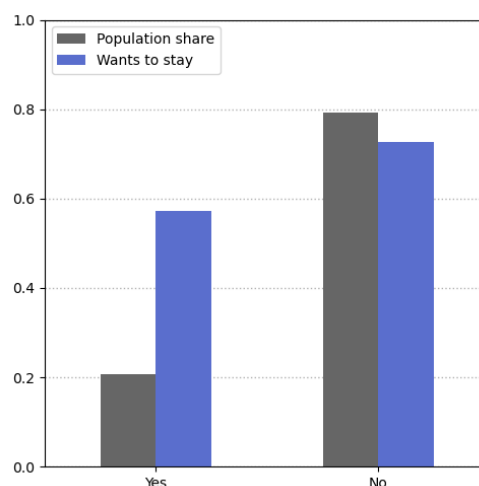
Overall, one in five adult Ukrainians has a partner and/or children in Ukraine. This is a significant decrease compared to the Ukrainians who were in Denmark one year after the war began (Karstoft et al., 2023). Currently, 9 percent have a partner in Ukraine, 2 percent have children aged 0-17, and 12 percent have children aged 18 or older. In total, 21 percent have a partner and/or children still in Ukraine. Those without close family in Ukraine are significantly more likely to wish to stay in Denmark (73 percent compared to 57 percent among those with children and/or a partner in Ukraine, Figure 2b).

Figure 2. Gender, close family in Ukraine, and the desire to stay.

(a) Gender



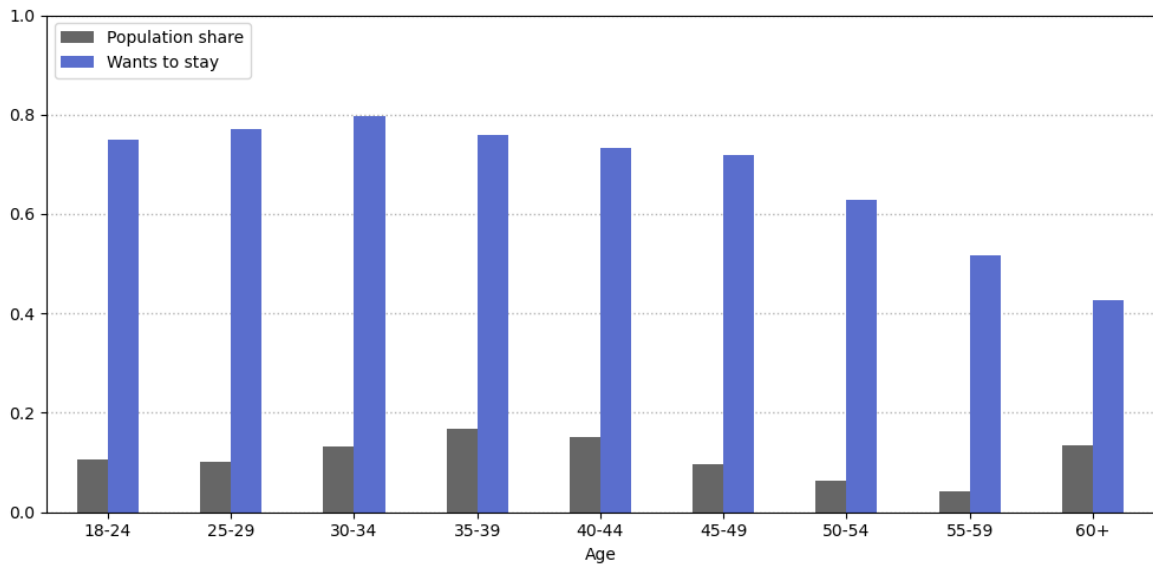
(b) Partner and/or children in Ukraine.



Note: Own calculations based on the Danish Refugee Cohort (DARECO), data collected between October 2024 and January 2025. "Population share" indicates the group's share of all respondents, while "Wants to stay" indicates how many in the group wish to remain in Denmark.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents across age groups and the proportion within each group that wishes to stay even if their home becomes safe again. More than half are under 40 years old. The desire to return is greater among older individuals who have spent a larger part of their lives in Ukraine before the war began.

Figure 3. Age and desire to stay.



Note: Own calculations based on the Danish Refugee Cohort (DARECO), data collected between October 2024 and January 2025.

FACT BOX

Data Basis

The analysis includes all individuals who fully completed the survey, which was sent to all Ukrainians living in Denmark who are at least 18 years old and arrived between the full-scale invasion in February 2022 and July 2024. In the main analysis, we exclude 207 individuals who answered "don't know" to one of the two key questions listed below, leaving us with 8,318 respondents. Those who answered "do not wish to answer" are treated as non-respondents, and similar for incomplete responses.

The data is part of the third collection of the Danish Refugee Cohort (DARECO). The first two surveys took place in spring and fall 2023, funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. This third survey was funded by the ROCKWOOL Foundation as part of a larger project on trauma and employment. It includes not only the initial arrival cohort (those who came within the first year of the invasion) but also all who arrived until July 2024 and are still in the country. Therefore, this population differs from previous surveys and represents a snapshot of Ukrainians in Denmark at the time of the survey.

Key survey questions and response options used in this analysis are:

1. "Do you wish to stay in Denmark long-term?"
 - No, I want to return home now
 - Yes, as long as my hometown is not safe
 - Yes, I wish to stay even after the war no longer threatens my hometown

2. The question regarding the fear of being sent home is part of a module on daily life in Denmark. The introductory text is: "The following questions concern your daily life in Denmark. Please assess the following statement by indicating how big of a problem it is in your daily life:" This is followed by a series of questions, of which we only use the following for this analysis: "How big of a problem is the fear of being sent back to your home country for you in your daily life?"
 - No problem
 - A little problem
 - Somewhat of a problem
 - A fairly big problem
 - Serious problem

If respondents attempted to proceed without selecting one of the response categories above, they were asked to choose "don't know" or "do not wish to answer" before continuing. We treat "do not wish to answer" the same as other non-responses (non-participation and dropouts). "Don't know" can meaningfully be included as a response to the question about staying in Denmark, but it was not a genuine response option (only if the respondent attempted to avoid answering by clicking

through), and it does not qualitatively change the conclusions of the analysis. In the next section, we discuss various sources of uncertainty regarding the precise proportions we report.

Uncertainty

The classical statistical uncertainty is small (approximately \pm one percentage point for the overall proportions) due to the large dataset underlying the analysis (8,318 in the main analysis and 8,525 if we include “don’t know”; see Table 1). Therefore, the statistical uncertainty is not a significant concern regarding the main results: nearly 70 percent, or just over two-thirds, wish to remain in Denmark even when it is once again safe where they come from. The overall proportion wishing to remain, even though the war no longer poses a threat in their place of origin, drops by one percentage point (from 69 to 68 percent) if we include “don’t know,” while there is no real difference in the proportions who fear being sent home when “don’t know” is included.

As with all survey studies, non-response and dropout can lead to bias in the data. In this context, it is worth noting that we know the underlying population and have achieved relatively high response rates. Forty-six percent participated in DARECO in autumn 2024, and 38 percent completed the entire questionnaire (39 percent if we include “don’t know”). These are very high figures among displaced persons, and it would require extreme differences between respondents and non-respondents to significantly alter the overall conclusion that the majority wish to stay in Denmark. However, it is an important source of uncertainty regarding the precise proportions if a larger or smaller share of non-respondents wishes to stay compared to respondents. Simple calculations can be made to assess this uncertainty. Based on these, our assessment is that extreme assumptions would be required to change the conclusion that the majority of the population would like to remain in Denmark even if their hometowns are safe⁵.

⁵ As an extreme example, note that if only 34 (38) percent of non-respondents wish to stay compared to 69 percent of respondents, then exactly half of the population would wish to stay: $0.69 \cdot 0.45 + 0.34 \cdot 0.55 = 0.50$ ($0.69 \cdot 0.38 + 0.34 \cdot 0.62 = 0.50$). We consider it an extreme assumption that there are such large differences between respondents and non-respondents.

Table 1. Main results and relevant statistics for uncertainty assessment.

	Desire to Stay		Fear of Being Sent Home	
	Excl. "don't know"	Incl. "don't know"	Excl. "don't know"	Incl. "don't know"
Mean (proportion)	0,693	0,678	0,423	0,418
Std. Error of Mean	0,005	0,005	0,005	0,005
95% Confidence Int.	(0,684, 0,703)	(0,668, 0,688)	(0,412, 0,434)	(0,408, 0,429)
Number of obs.	8318	8525	8318	8525
Number contacted	21649	21649	21649	21649
Response rate, Complete	0,384	0,394	0,384	0,394
Response rate, All	0,457	0,457	0,457	0,457

Note: "Do not wish to stay" and "Fear of being sent home" refer respectively to question 1 and question 2 listed above under "Data basis". The table shows the proportions that answered, respectively, "Yes, I wish to stay, even after the war is no longer a threat to my hometown" for question 1 and "A major problem" or "A serious problem" for question 2.

REFERENCE

Karstoft, K.-I., Korchakova, N., Pedersen, A. A., Weiskopf, S. V., Koushede, V., Power, S. A., Morton, T. A., & Thøgersen, M. H. (2023). *Fordrevne ukrainere i Danmark: Indledende resultater fra DARECO (The Danish Refugee Cohort)*. Institut for Psykologi, Københavns Universitet