



# UKRAINE

## INTRODUCTION

As of September 2022, more than 7 million<sup>1</sup> people have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded, according to the United Nations. Refugees are crossing into neighbouring countries to the west<sup>2</sup>. It is thought that approximately 6.5 million people are displaced inside Ukraine.

Women and children make up the most significant proportion of Ukrainian refugees on the move.<sup>3</sup> Most men aged 18-60 are required to stay behind under martial law. Historically, displaced people in desperate situations fleeing war and persecution are at the highest risk of trafficking. Trafficking hotspots and trends follow migration; those on the move are likely to lack family ties, access to financial means, documentation or language fluency. This crisis presents each of these risk factors in the strongest terms.

## Who we are

STOP THE TRAFFIK has a strong 16-year history of fighting against human trafficking and supporting vulnerable communities to reduce the risk of trafficking and exploitation. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have turned urgent attention to this humanitarian crisis.

### Our response:

- 1) **To predict** where those fleeing Ukraine might go and when and where trafficking is likely to occur.
- 2) **To identify** those most at risk of trafficking using an established data-fed, intelligence-led approach.
- 3) **To inform** and equip those most at risk with increased knowledge, perception of risk and preventative behaviour, alongside options for holistic support including local referral pathways that will reduce their vulnerability to trafficking.
- 4) **To warn** all levels of society (governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses) about how this war links to trafficking and may impact them so they can take action.

<sup>1</sup>[Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/situation-ukraine-refugee-situation)

<sup>2</sup>[How many Ukrainian refugees are there and where have they gone? - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61111111)

<sup>3</sup>[A Brief Analysis on the Gendered Impacts of the Crisis in Ukraine: a Focus on Moldova](https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-crisis-analysis)

## How have our interviews fitted into this?

## And how have they shaped our campaign?

Since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, STOP THE TRAFFIK has been conducting interviews with NGOs and academics across various countries to learn more about the evolving migration situation and trafficking risks facing people both fleeing Ukraine and those displaced within the country. These interviews have informed, and continue to inform, STOP THE TRAFFIK's Europe-wide, geo-targeted digital prevention campaign. This is STOP THE TRAFFIK's longest-running campaign to date, providing vital safety information to those who are on the move because of the war in Ukraine.

Thus far, we have run a series of interviews across countries such as Ukraine, Romania, the UK, Germany, Greece, and Hungary. These interviews have provided significant insights into industries and population demographics vulnerable to human trafficking, in addition to migration routes and trafficking risks, highlighting personal stories of those in the know.



## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

### 1) Changing patterns of trafficking and a rise in sexual exploitation

Since the start of the war, the pattern of trafficking within Ukraine has shifted: it has moved more towards sexual exploitation, with labour trafficking becoming less dominant. In areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia (but since retaken by Ukraine), young women and children have been sexually exploited, some of whom have since committed suicide.

### 2) Exploitation of female-dominated job sectors

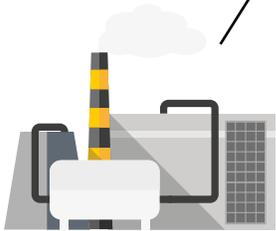
There are some sectors particularly susceptible to trafficking.

Exploitation is likely in:

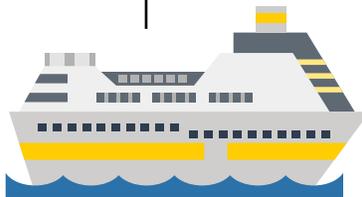


Female-dominated job sectors such as **care and private sector household work and cleaning**, as the majority of the displaced population are female.

**Manufacturing, construction, and leisure** – these are at high risk of trafficking even outside the context of war, as STOP THE TRAFFIK's previous intel shows.



**MANUFACTURING**



**LEISURE**



**CONSTRUCTION**



**AGRICULTURE**

**Agriculture** is of particular significance for Ukrainians. We know that Ukrainians have often come to work in seasonal agriculture in the UK, some of which has been exploitative, and that displaced Ukrainians have been searching for seasonal agricultural work over the summer in Southern Europe.

### 3) Lack of awareness

Often Ukrainian women do not realise they are being trafficked. There is a low level of awareness and a lack of education about the issue of human trafficking and modern slavery amongst Ukrainians in general.

### 4) Domestic servitude tied to accommodation

Accommodation being offered to those displaced is often tied to a requirement that the guest perform a job for the host – such as cooking. Domestic servitude is likely to be an issue, especially where the displaced family includes vulnerable elderly members who are not independent. There have been cases of Russian speakers in Germany who have trapped displaced people in domestic servitude and have taken their documents.

### 5) Children taken to Russia

Many children have been taken to Russia from Ukrainian orphanages and boarding schools. People from occupied territories are being deported to Russia and having documents and phones taken.

### 6) Third-country national discrimination

The rights of third-country nationals in other European countries who are fleeing the war in Ukraine are often less than those of Ukrainians fleeing the war:

in terms of where they can travel, whether they can work and what healthcare and social benefits they are entitled to for example. Third-country nationals are often discriminated against too.

### 7) Social media used as a tool of exploitation

On the Homes for Ukrainians Facebook groups, men are quick to respond to any posts by women or children.



Google is being used for prostitution. Thomson Reuters analysis showed that there was a 200 percent increase in Google searches for the term “Ukrainian escorts” in the UK between February 27th and March 5th compared to the previous six months.

Other social media platforms are also vulnerable. Messaging platforms such as Telegram and Viber are highly vulnerable – these are used as some of the main sources of communication and information for fleeing Ukrainians<sup>4</sup>.

### 8) Homes for Ukraine failing families and minors

The UK sponsorship and family schemes have not had adequate safeguarding and the processing times have taken too long. Unaccompanied minors have been frozen out of the system and left in limbo across Europe while they wait for answers from the UK government.

## A VISUAL GUIDE TO THE MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLE DISPLACED FROM UKRAINE

### Initial movements

Initially people fled to the countries bordering Ukraine. These include neighbouring countries such as:

**RUSSIA**

**POLAND**

**ROMANIA**

**HUNGARY**



<sup>4</sup> [How bad actors are using tech platforms to sexually exploit, traffic Ukrainian women | The Hill](#)

**In transit**

**POLAND**

**SLOVAKIA**

**HUNGARY**

are examples of countries that people initially fled to but have often since left to settle in other countries.



**Diaspora populations**

Destinations with large Ukrainian diasporas before the war (that could be relied upon to provide support to those displaced):

**GERMANY**

**SPAIN**

**ITALY**

**CZECH REPUBLIC**



## Internally displaced people

Regions of Ukraine that have hosted a high number of internally displaced people:

- KIEV REGION
- KHARKIV REGION
- LVIV
- VINNITSA
- POLTAVA



## DEMOGRAPHICS AT RISK

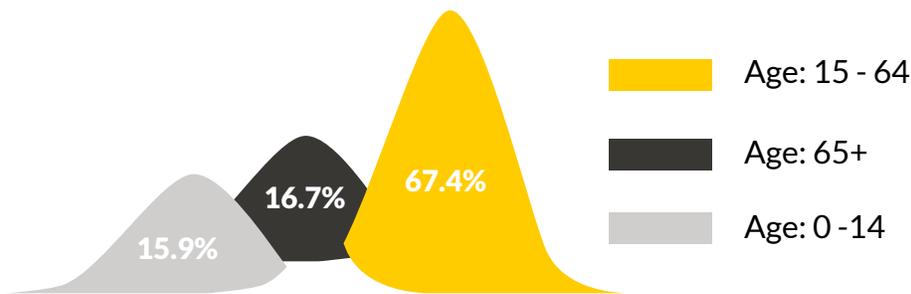
- Unaccompanied minors leaving and remaining in Ukraine.
- Women and girls, and women with children leaving and remaining in Ukraine.
- Those who have disabilities and serious illnesses such as mental health issues.
- Teenagers and young adults who are caring for younger siblings.
- LGBTQ+ people in Ukraine (who were beaten whilst sheltering in metro stations from the bombing).
- The elderly.
- Those living in extreme poverty – specifically the Hungarian minorities at the Western border of Ukraine.
- Third-country nationals.

2.7  
MILLION

People registered with **disabilities** at the start of the war.<sup>5</sup>



In the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts alone – **where some of the most intense fighting has taken place** – an estimated **30% of the population** was made up of older persons.<sup>6</sup>



The population **age demographics** at the start of the war.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>War on Ukraine: Protect people with intellectual disabilities and families - Inclusion Europe ([inclusion-europe.eu](https://inclusion-europe.eu))

<sup>6</sup>Joint statement on the situation of older persons in Ukraine ([who.int](https://who.int))

<sup>7</sup>CRAM: Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration - Ukraine crisis ([cream-migration.org](https://cream-migration.org))

## CALLS TO ACTION FOR NGOs

### 1) Build Awareness

NGOs should focus on increasing Ukrainian community awareness of trafficking risks, both in Ukraine and for Ukrainians elsewhere. Given that there is a lack of awareness amongst some Ukrainians about the different types of trafficking (labour, sex etc.), NGOs who work with Ukrainians should outline these various types of trafficking to their service users in a practical format that allows people to see how the issue could relate to them. It could be through interactive activities such as working through case studies. This would help to prevent exploitation and trafficking as it would build up knowledge about the risks and understanding of how to spot the signs if it were to happen.

### 2) Local authority engagement

Both in the UK and further afield in Europe, NGOs should reach out to local councils to offer assistance, particularly with regards to ensuring hosts are aware and equipped to deal with matters of exploitation and modern slavery. This is particularly pertinent given the expertise contained within anti-modern slavery NGOs and the fact that there has been a lack of safeguarding checks on hosts before displaced people have moved in.

### 3) Safeguarding against domestic servitude

NGOs should engage displaced Ukrainians and support and warn against accommodation offered in exchange for performance of a job or service, such as cleaning or cooking.

### 4) Social Media

NGOs must raise attention to the use of social media as a tool of exploitation when Ukrainians search for accommodation. This is particularly relevant now in the UK as the Homes for Ukrainians scheme comes to an end and the desperate search for a new place to live begins.

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