

5. Trends in Ukrainian Migration and Short-term Work Trips

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Introduction

This report presents the results of a first-ever research project on migration from Ukraine for the purpose of earning income. Relying on a survey, expert interviews, and extensive study of the regional social and economic context, the project analyzed the migratory behavior of respondents in-depth, covering the types of trips taken, the role of migration for households, and its potential regional and national impacts.

The information gathered in the course of our research allowed us to identify the most popular type of migratory trip for Ukrainian citizens, namely, *short term mobility for the purposes of trade*. Other types of migration, such as longer-term labor migration and migration of specialists, were on the periphery of the research, but are also important for the social and economic development of Ukraine. Some background on the history of Ukrainian permanent and long-term migration is provided below before presentation of the research results.

History of Ukrainian Migration

A significant number of ethnic Ukrainians live outside Ukraine's legal borders. This can be attributed in part to the forced migrations of the 1920s–1950s, which cost Ukraine the best of its *intelligentsia* and also many workers and farmers.¹ Organized recruitment of laborers to work in the North and the Far East of the former USSR and military conscription resulted in the creation of a so-called “eastern” diaspora of ethnic Ukrainians (within the territory of the former USSR), which now comprises 6 million people.

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¹Entire ethnic groups were deported on the basis of their nationality, including Crimean Tatars, Germans, Greeks, Armenians and others.

A “western” Ukrainian diaspora arose as the result of labor emigration from western Ukraine at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, as well as the result of three waves of political emigration (1920s, 1940s, 1970s–1980s). Emigration to the West also reduced the population of certain minority ethnic groups in Ukraine—mostly Jews, but also Germans, Greeks, etc.

At the same time, favorable climatic conditions and a rather high level of economic development of Ukraine attracted immigrants from within the former USSR. Influenced by migration, the share of ethnic Ukrainians declined from 76.8 percent in 1959 to 72.7 percent in 1989, while the populations of other ethnic groups increased. The outflow of younger, more educated workers negatively affected the republic’s human resource structure.

Since the end of the 1980s, the character, scale, and direction of migration traffic to and from Ukraine have undergone fundamental changes. The disintegration of the USSR changed the character of migration into and out of Ukraine. Ethnic and military conflicts, as well as economic and political crises across the area of the former USSR have brought massive flows of refugees and forced migrants into the newly independent Ukrainian state.

Former emigrants, who had left the country for different reasons are now returning. Recent increases in immigration have been mostly comprised of native Ukrainians. Those now leaving Ukraine are generally representatives of other ethnic groups who are migrating to other newly independent states, typically where their ethnic group is the titular nationality.

In recent years, the volume of immigration into Ukraine has been noticeably decreasing while emigration has risen. This is attributable to the worsening economic conditions in Ukraine, which have led to a reduction of traditional migration based upon economic factors, family ties, education and army discharge. Positive net migration into Ukraine decreased in 1993 by almost four times in comparison to the previous year, to 77,000 people. In 1994, for the first time in the postwar period, Ukraine experienced a negative migration balance. Most of the loss was due to the emigration of Russians to Russia, with 124,400 more departing for Russia than coming from Russia, and an overall net loss of 143,200. Economic conditions have deteriorated in Russia, but the standard of living there has remained higher than in Ukraine.

At the same time, the disappearance of the “iron curtain,” which had separated the republics of the former USSR from the West, opened the way for Ukraine to participate in global migration flows. Emigration from Ukraine to the “far” abroad intensified and has taken the form of both permanent and temporary (for employment, education, etc.) emigration. In recent years, Ukraine has also faced

a new phenomenon: illegal immigration from other newly independent states, South-East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Between 1987 and 1992, of the 284,000 people emigrating from Ukraine, 75 percent went to Israel. Emigration to Israel from Ukraine has been declining, however, with 29 percent (of 48,000 emigres) departing for Israel in 1993. In 1994, only 6.2 percent of emigrants from Ukraine were headed for Israel. Emigration from Ukraine has been losing its ethnic character and is becoming primarily economic emigration.

Temporary emigration abroad, reaching 2 million trips a year (not including tourism), has also been tied to economic reasons. Two-thirds of these trips are to neighboring Poland. For many Ukrainian citizens, trips abroad have become an important source of supplementary income. In addition to the so-called "trade tourists," who transport small shipments of goods across the border, other working migrants also have begun to comprise a noticeable share of those leaving temporarily.

A large number of migrant workers travel to Russia, in addition to the far abroad. Due to the fact that customs controls are tightening and neighboring countries tend to limit immigration from the former USSR, the number of trips to the West is decreasing. At the same time, the flow of temporary migrants eastward (to Russia, primarily) is growing. Friendship and family ties are still strong there, there is no language barrier, no need to obtain any special travel documents, and there are also opportunities to earn money. This migration outflow increased especially in 1993 to 1995, when the economic situation in Ukraine was worse than in Russia. However, it is difficult to estimate the volume of temporary labor migration from Ukraine as there are no official statistics. Sociological surveys, then, are required to study such migration trends for Ukraine. Results of our own surveys are reported and analyzed below.

Analysis of Recent Trends in External Migration: An Ethno-Sociological Approach

In the late 1980s to early 1990s, temporary trips abroad for the purpose of migrant work or trade became a noticeable social phenomenon in Ukraine. According to a survey by the Center for Democratic Prospects (1994), 5 percent of those surveyed worked abroad full-time, and 21 percent did so from time to time. Since the total labor force in the republic numbers 29 million, one can assume that no less than 7 million people used trips abroad to survive under the difficult conditions of this transitional period.

The mass scale of these trips and their effect on income levels and consumer spending demonstrate the necessity of taking this phenomenon into account in developing social and economic policies. However, there is a lack of scientifically sound information on this phenomenon and there are no official records documenting temporary migration of Ukrainian citizens.

A survey aimed at filling this gap was conducted at the end of 1994 and beginning of 1995 by the National Institute for Strategic Research together with the Center for Social Monitoring (Kiev). We used an ethno-sociological research approach, developed and first used in the 1980's to study Mexican migration to the United States. In addition to a survey, this method makes full use of geographic, demographic, social, economic and other data about the migrants' environment, acquired from ethnographic observations, detailed interviews with the migrants and their families, experts' opinions, etc.

The focus of the research was foreign trips by Ukrainian citizens. All trips, with the exception of tourist trips and vacations, were analyzed regardless of their length, purpose and destination. The survey was conducted in families in which at least one member traveled abroad at least once for the purpose of earning income. A short preliminary questionnaire was used for advance screening, and the sample selection was random, although some respondents were selected according to the "snowball principle."

As the actual migration behavior of people in Ukraine was being studied for the first time, the term "migration" was interpreted rather freely. Thus, we studied, among others, short-term business trips, which are not, in the strictest sense of the word, usually considered migration, but which significantly affect the financial and social aspects of the travelers' families and market trends in Ukraine.

We selected three places to conduct the ethno-sociological survey: Kiev, the capital, from which people actively travel abroad and from which many highly skilled people are leaving, presenting the risk of "brain drain"; the city of Chernovtsy, a regional center on the border with a multiethnic population and which is a large source of Jewish emigration and of "near the border migration"; and, lastly, the rural Yavorovsky district of the Lviv region, with a monoethnic population, whose people have a long tradition of migration and foreign trips.

In Kiev, the main questionnaire was completed by 200 families, with information received on 663 people. In Chernovtsy, 120 families were polled, with information collected on 395 people total. In Prilbychi village, Yavorovsky district of the Lviv region, 120 families participated, with a total of 578 people polled.

The research instruments included the preliminary questionnaire, used for identifying migrant households, the main questionnaire, consisting of 23 tables with 10 to 12 questions each, and instructions for researchers. The main questionnaire asked about gender/age composition of the households, their occupations, education, income level and sources of income, property, etc. The tables covered the first and the last foreign trips, excluding vacationing or tourism. As more and more people travel to Russia and other countries of the newly independent states (NIS) for seasonal work, the questions accounted for migration in both directions.

Research Results

The results were analyzed in the context of other data concerning historic, social, economic, and demographic trends for selected regions, as well as in-depth interviews of experts. The survey showed that 30 to 40 percent of the households sampled contain someone who has made at least one trip abroad. Migrants were mainly men, highly educated, and traveling for business purposes.

Since 1987, international travel has become more frequent for Ukrainians. The majority of respondents undertook their first trip abroad in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Significant societal and political changes brought by *perestroika* and, later, the formation of independent Ukraine, not only increased foreign travel, but changed its character. The military no longer served as a migration channel. At the same time, people received the opportunity to travel abroad with tour groups and on personal business. Expansion of business, scientific and cultural cooperation with foreign countries brought an increase in the volume of foreign business travel. Long-term business trips were replaced by multiple, short-term visits. The demographics of migrants became more varied, including more women and young people.

Another decisive factor affecting the current state of migration has been the unfavorable trend in the Ukrainian economy and the decrease in the standard of living. Under conditions of a deep economic crisis, foreign trips are an important, and sometimes the primary, source of income and become the main survival strategy for many families.

The most prevalent form of implementing this strategy is short-term international trips (for up to seven days) for the purpose of trade. Such trips constitute one-third of all trips from Prilbychi, and 70 percent of all trips from Chernovtsy. Chernovtsy, thanks to its border location and a developed transportation system, as well as its tradition as a trade city, became an important

source for “shuttle trade” during recent years. From there, imported goods are transported all over Ukraine, as well as to Russia and Belarus. The median number of short-term (up to one week) foreign trips among respondents there was eight trips, compared to six trips in Kiev, and three trips in Prilbychi.

Purpose and Direction of Migration

The level and nature of migration in many respects depend upon the specifics of each region. According to our research results, a region’s location, employment rate, other economic circumstances, and historic traditions can all be considered regional determinants of migration. For example, the relatively active migrating population in Chernovtsy may be traced to a trade route through Chernovtsy which was established in the early 1980s by Polish traders. As a large scientific and cultural center, migration from Kiev in search of employment is mostly by scientists and highly skilled labor.

The majority of commercial trips conducted by Ukrainian citizens are in tourist groups, the so-called “shopping tours.” Specialized firms sell packaged tours for this purpose. Also, some of these travelers make use of personal invitations from abroad, which are easily obtained in the border regions.

The survey showed an increase in seasonal work-related trips, popular mostly among rural populations. In the western region of Ukraine, with its abundance of labor resources, peasants have a long tradition of seasonal labor, originating in the 19th century. In the Soviet period only eastward seasonal migrations were permitted due to restrictions on foreign travel. More recently, farmers from the Lviv region continue to migrate in search of seasonal work to Central and South Ukraine, Russia, and other countries, mostly to Poland. A group of seasonal laborers exists also in Chernovtsy.

Migrant workers from Ukraine perform temporary, seasonal work abroad in construction, agriculture, and the service sector, as a rule without work authorization, i.e., illegally. They travel with tourist vouchers or by private invitations. The nature of such trips determines their duration, which usually does not exceed several weeks or several months. Trips of educated professionals are somewhat more lengthy, but in general, are also relatively short-term. Generally, they are less than six months. These are mostly business trips, internships, and short-term contracts.

Overall, the survey results suggest that long-term trips abroad are not very popular. About one fourth of all trips lasted more than a month and these were

mostly limited to two to three months. Just a handful of trips exceeded three months duration.

The range of Ukrainian migrants' destinations is wide and constantly expanding. In recent years, more distant countries emerged as a destination, including the USA, China and United Arab Emirates. At the same time, the primary flow of emigrants continues to be in the direction of Poland and Russia. This is true for both trade trips and seasonal workers. Migrants who leave home to work in their area of specialization are mostly headed for developed Western countries, such as the USA and Germany. Migration also increased and has spread further eastward in the "near abroad," within the area of the former USSR. This can be explained by relatively low transportation prices within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the absence of visa requirements and language barriers, and the existence of chances to improve one's financial situation through trade or work.

Socio-economic Characteristics of Migrants

The main reason for all kinds of trips taken by Ukrainians is their desire to maintain or improve income. Over the course of time, this reason is becoming more and more widespread. Growing unemployment rate, or, rather, inability to find work providing adequate earnings, has had a strong effect on migration trends. This can be seen most clearly in those regions where the problem of employment is relatively acute, namely, in Chernovtsy and Prilbychi. In Kiev, in addition to economic motives common for all regions, professional considerations are also present.

The survey revealed a distinction between migrants for whom unemployment is a cause of their migration, and those who are not employed by choice and instead look for more profitable opportunities abroad. The highest number of unemployed persons among the migrant population is found in rural areas; however, in Chernovtsy the group of non-working migrants is also large.

Research has shown that people of a certain age and social background are most inclined to use external migration as a means of improving poor living conditions. The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of migrants from Ukraine were similar in all survey sites. Any differences between the urban and rural migrants correspond to the general differences among urban and rural residents.

Households of migrants surveyed were mostly comprised of young and middle-aged people, and did not have a large number of small children, elderly or

disabled. The majority of migrants in all regions are between the ages of 20 and 34. Men prevail, but women also actively participate in migration, primarily in short-term trade missions.

Migrants are generally characterized by a high level of education. In Chernovtsy and Kiev 51 percent and 41 percent of active migrants respectively have higher education. We have identified people with doctoral degrees, and authors of scientific papers and inventions. In the rural areas, people with higher education also take an active part in migration.

The age, education and professional composition of migrants imply that foreign trips are undertaken by people at the peak of their abilities. Those who travel abroad are generally more active people, who are strong both physically and psychologically. These are the people who can withstand the pressures of a trip abroad, while at the same time these are the people whose loss the country will feel the most if they emigrated permanently.

Results of Migration and Short Trips Abroad

Our research has established that families with migrants enjoy sufficiently high levels of income, as well as good housing conditions and ownership of property, mostly brought from abroad or purchased with the money earned during trips. In all surveyed regions, respondents considered the results of their migration abroad very positive. On a 3-point scale, they valued them at an average of 2.9.

The positive effects of migration were mostly based on the material results. This was mentioned by 97 percent of respondents in Prilbychi, 85 percent in Chernovtsy, and 80 percent in Kiev. Urban residents also mentioned that the trips enhanced their professional experience.

The survey showed that the average profit made from the respondents' latest trip abroad was \$206 in Kiev, \$322 in Chernovtsy, and \$181 in Prilbychi. At the same time, the average per capita income in the same families, earned by working locally or from pensions, etc., did not exceed \$15 in cities and was barely equal to \$5 in villages. Achieving some level of financial independence and avoiding poverty, and, consequently, lowering social tension, are the main outcomes of international migration.

The role of migration, especially "shuttle trade" migration, in saturating the consumer market in Ukraine is very important. Its importance grows with the decline of domestic production of consumer goods. If we look at the number of border crossings in 1994 in the western region alone (along the border with

Poland, Slovakian Hungary, Romania), and count only those who travel for the purpose of trade (approximately 40 percent of all crossings, according to various sources), and multiply this number by the amount of hard currency individuals are allowed to transport, assuming the traders are using this money to purchase consumer goods abroad and to import them into Ukraine, the resulting sum represents about one-tenth of all Ukrainian imports. Comparing that figure with the volume of revenues from retail sales, we estimate that the “shuttle” traders provide for at least one-sixth of those revenues, which is actually a conservative estimate.

To a certain extent, foreign trips promote the development of new economic relations and the diffusion of new management principles. Furthermore, some successful migrants could accumulate savings sufficient to start entrepreneurial activities. According to the results of the survey, 15 percent of the migrants in Kiev and 20 percent in Chernovtsy are in business for themselves (both registered and non-registered). However, due to current economic conditions in Ukraine, revenues from migration are used mostly for personal consumption, and not for opening private businesses or production. The investment and tax environment in Ukraine is unfavorable for development of small businesses and hinders full entrepreneurial use of migrants’ savings.

It should be noted that the growing rate of trips abroad has its costs. “Shuttle” trade is a breeding ground for the “shadow economy,” and frequently involves crime. Although the majority of migrants are highly educated, many lose their qualifications and skills when they travel abroad. Especially damaging in this sense are the consequences of frequent migration for the younger generation. Physical and psychological stress, unavoidable in frequent and extended trips can have a serious negative effect on the migrants’ health.

The survey revealed that people are not well informed of the living conditions abroad and do not have sufficient command of foreign languages. The support networks for migrants, such as intermediaries, consultants, and public services barely exist. For this reason, and also due to the nature of the trips (short-term trade missions or semi-legal seasonal work), Ukrainian migrants abroad live outside of the realm of the social and public institutions of the receiving countries and are deprived of any social guarantees. Over 85 percent of migrants surveyed did not have any medical insurance, and many did not know that it was necessary or possible to obtain such insurance. Migrants’ workdays usually last 9-10 hours and housing conditions were very modest, with 7 percent of migrants sleeping at railway stations during their latest trip.

Conclusion/Directions for Future Research

Important results were obtained from the survey, but we cannot consider the results to be representative for the whole territory of Ukraine. It would be dangerous to make generalizing conclusions based only on data obtained from the capital and two territories because of the clear regional economic, cultural and psychological differences across Ukraine's territory. It is quite possible that similar research conducted in southeast Ukraine can produce different or, possibly, opposite results.

We obtained only scant information on long-term migration, which is insufficient for serious analysis. Due to the fact that fewer people take long-term trips (for at least 3 months) such cases were essentially not captured by the survey, as the sample was selected at random. Permanent emigration abroad was not considered in this research. Even though it has become more widespread in Ukraine recently, there still has not been any serious attempt at conducting research on permanent emigration.

Insufficient information on migration for long-term employment prevented us from studying a number of important issues in this regard. In particular, these include the formation of a migration network, contact between migrants and their family members remaining in Ukraine, as well as adaptation problems in receiving countries. On the other hand, some of the important questions pertaining to short-term commercial trips were also not answered. Many economic questions remain to be explored, including the volume and commodity structure of imported goods, transportation routes, sales infrastructure, pricing policies, etc. Trade migration as a widespread form of migration for Ukrainians carries various important implications for the nation and deserves a separate study. This migration greatly affects the consumer market and has a potentially powerful income effect.