

Planned? Forced? Analyzing the Mobility Decisions of Ukrainian Migrants in Poland in the Times of War

Extended abstract

Topic

The paper analyzes the migration plans and the realization of these plans of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland during the war in Ukraine. The analysis covers immigrants who were in Poland in July/September 2022, and thus takes into account various types of movers: from individuals, who have been in Poland for years, those, who circulated back and forth, to those who only arrived following the Russian invasion of February 2022. We hypothesize that intentions and their realization differ between migrants representing different categories on the volitional scale (ranging from voluntary to forced migrants).

Theoretical focus

Migration plans and migration decision-making is of interest to researchers. However, most researchers studying migration intentions (or plans or aspirations – different research strands use different names) do not proceed to verify whether migration intentions are actually put into actions (see Carling & Mjelva, 2021, for a comprehensive analysis of 212 surveys related to migration intentions).

Migration research that deals both with intentions and actual behavior (transition from plans to actions) is very limited. Notable exceptions dealing with international movements include Gardner et al. (1985), Creighton (2013), De Jong (2000) or van Dalen & Henkens (2008, 2013). In most cases, researchers refer to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) or its extensions. This framework assumes that plans and preferences are the immediate predecessors and best predictors of actual behavior, but that they are subject to constraints in terms of the control potential migrants may exercise over their actions.

Simultaneously, a large body of research deals with forced or refugee migration, albeit in most cases making a clear distinction from voluntary flows (Bakewell, 2010). Migration intentions of forced migrants are a subject of consideration only in the context of a potential return or further movement, and not in the context of leaving the home country. It has also been argued that intention might be a problematic criterion in such cases, due to the volatility experienced by refugees (Wissink et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, an increasing strand of literature advocate considering voluntary mobility and forced migration not as two separate types, but rather as interrelated, and often representing a continuum on a scale of voluntariness (Bartram, 2015; Erdal & Oeppen, 2018; Ottonelli & Torresi, 2013). Our paper fits precisely into this new research agenda. We analyze the intentions and realizations of mobility plans for migrants representing a wide range of contexts on the volitional scale, from typically reactive (experiencing coercion, escaping from threats) to typically proactive (maximizing advantages)(Richmond, 1993).

Data

Data analyzed in the paper derives from two measurements (online surveys) in a panel study of Ukrainians in Poland conducted within the Research Program “Between Ukraine and Poland”, operated by the Centre of Migration Research and Centre of Excellence in Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw. The first measurement was an establishment survey for the panel. It took place in July-September 2022. The sample consisted of N=4052 migrants who consented to participate in further research. The second measurement is related to the registration of panel participants at an internet platform designed for the panel study. This registration is taking place since September 2023, and as of October 30, 2023, N=1090 migrants already filled in the registration questionnaire.

In the establishment survey, Ukrainian migrants answered questions regarding their migration background and history, questions relating to their current stay, as well as questions about the planned duration of their stay in Poland. In the second measurement, upon registration to the internet platform of the research panel, the respondents declare their current place of stay (Poland, Ukraine or other countries).

Methods

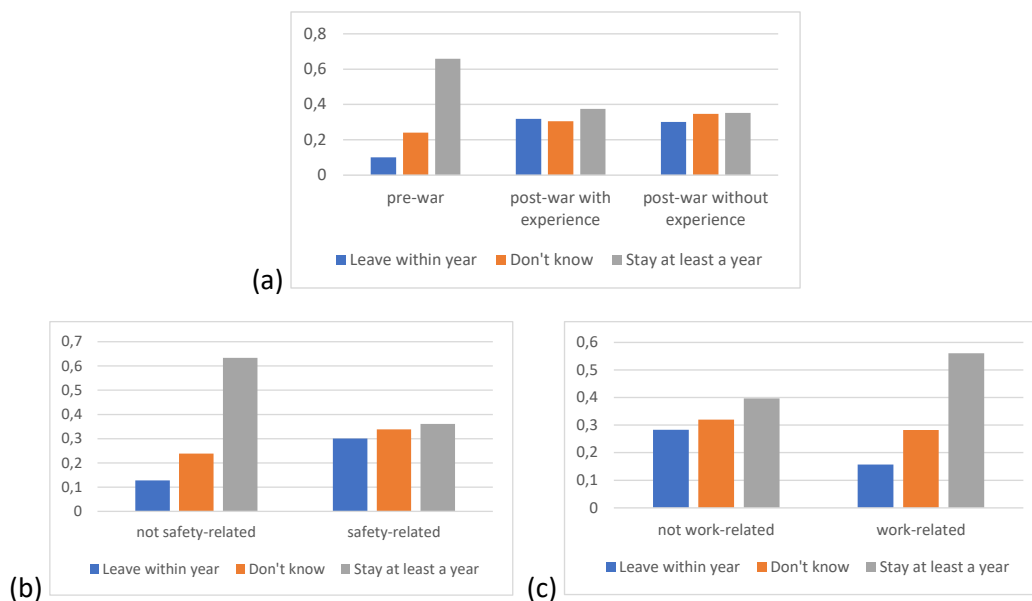
Based on the respondents' declarations from the establishment survey, a preliminary typology and a measure of "voluntariness" of the movement to Poland will be constructed. We plan to take into consideration in particular the responses to questions related to the place of residence in Ukraine (before arrival to Poland), the date of arrival for the 2022 stay in Poland (prior to February 2022 or later), having previous experience of migration to Poland (prior to February 2022), as well as the specified reasons for leaving Ukraine and choosing Poland (based on multiple choice questions, which allow in particular a cafeteria of work-related, family-related and safety-related options).

In the first stage of decision modeling, we will build econometric models aimed at predicting the chances that migrants of various types or places on the voluntariness scale have specific plans related to their stay in Poland (a plan to leave Poland / stay in Poland / doesn't know). In the second stage of decision modeling, we will build econometric models aimed at describing the mechanism of transition from plans to actual movements. The latter model might require taking into account selectivity. Not all migrants from the establishment survey will be captured in the follow-up on the panel platform, and it is possible that those who drop out are more likely to be out of Poland.

Preliminary findings and expected findings

We find that plans expressed by individuals vary with their previous experience and migration reasons (Figure 1), with pre- full-scale war migrants and those who declared work-related reasons for migration more likely to express their wish to stay, ad post-war migrants (especially without migration experience) more likely to be unable to specify their plans. These observations hold when we control for gender and age in a multinomial regression (Table 1), where age increases the chances that an individual will not be able to specify their plans, and males are more likely to have determined plans.

Figure 1. Migration plans by (a) migration experience (b) safety-related migration reasons (c) work-related migration reasons



Source: own elaboration based on the CMR/CESS "Between Ukraine and Poland" panel study

As far as the realization of plans is concerned, the results of a preliminary logistic regression (Table 2) suggest that migration experience and type also plays a role, with post-war migrants being less likely to fulfill their plans (controlling for gender – males are more likely to fulfill their plans -- and age – older individuals are less likely to fulfill their plans).

We expect to be able to perform a more sophisticated analysis on an enlarged database (migrants are still registering on the platform), taking into account the various dimensions of coercion/voluntariness and selectivity.

Table 1. Results of a multinomial regression for the category of plans (Leave within a year / Don't know / Stay at least a year)

Plans	Coef	Std Err	z	P> z	[95% Conf Interval]	
1 - Leave within a year						
Migrant type (pre-war base)						
post-war with experience	1,604	0,264	6,070	0,000	1,086	2,123
post-war without experience	1,571	0,239	6,570	0,000	1,102	2,039
Gender (female base)						
Male	-0,359	0,244	-1,470	0,141	-0,837	0,119
Age	0,012	0,007	1,670	0,095	-0,002	0,027
Constatnt	-2,200	0,342	-6,420	0,000	-2,871	-1,529
2 - Don't know						
Migrant type (pre-war base)						
post-war with experience	0,648	0,222	2,920	0,004	0,213	1,083
post-war without experience	0,774	0,186	4,170	0,000	0,410	1,137
Gender (female base)						
Male	-0,480	0,215	-2,240	0,025	-0,901	-0,059
Age	0,023	0,007	3,350	0,001	0,009	0,036
Constatnt	-1,687	0,295	-5,710	0,000	-2,266	-1,108
3 - Stay at least a year						
(base outcome)						

Source: own elaboration based on the CMR/CESS "Between Ukraine and Poland" panel study

Table 2. Results of a logistic regression for the realization of plans (1 – plans of leaving or staying were realized within a year, 0- plans were not realized)

Realization of plans	Coef	Std Err	z	P> z	[95% Conf Interval]	
Migrant type (pre-war base)						
post-war with experience	-0,692	0,190	-3,640	0,000	-1,065	-0,320
post-war without experience	-0,872	0,163	-5,340	0,000	-1,191	-0,552
Gender (female base)						
Male	0,463	0,185	2,500	0,012	0,101	0,826
Age	-0,018	0,006	-3,070	0,002	-0,029	-0,006
Constatnt	1,226	0,255	4,810	0,000	0,726	1,725

Source: own elaboration based on the CMR/CESS "Between Ukraine and Poland" panel study

Bibliography

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Bakewell, O. (2010). Some Reflections on Structure and Agency in Migration Theory. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), 1689–1708. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489382>
- Bartram, D. (2015). Forced Migration and “Rejected Alternatives”: A Conceptual Refinement. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 13(4), 439–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2015.1030489>
- Carling, J., & Mjelva, M. B. (2021). *Survey instruments and survey data on migration aspirations* (2; QuantMig Project Deliverable). University of Southampton. <https://www.prio.org/publications/12661>
- Creighton, M. J. (2013). The role of aspirations in domestic and international migration. *The Social Science Journal*, 50(1), 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2012.07.006>
- De Jong, G. F. (2000). Expectations, gender, and norms in migration decision-making. *Population Studies*, 54(3), 307–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713779089>
- Erdal, M. B., & Oeppen, C. (2018). Forced to leave? The discursive and analytical significance of describing migration as forced and voluntary. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 981–998. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384149>
- Gardner, R. W., De Jong, G. F., Arnold, F., & Cariño, B. V. (1985). The best-laid schemes: An analysis of discrepancies between migration intentions and behavior. *Population and Environment*, 8(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01263017>
- Ottonelli, V., & Torresi, T. (2013). When is Migration Voluntary? *International Migration Review*, 47(4), 783–813. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12048>
- Richmond, A. (1993). Reactive Migration: Sociological Perspectives On Refugee Movements*. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6(1), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/6.1.7>
- van Dalen, H. P., & Henkens, K. (2008). *Emigration Intentions: Mere Words or True Plans? Explaining International Migration Intentions and Behavior* (SSRN Scholarly Paper 1153985). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1153985>
- van Dalen, H. P., & Henkens, K. (2013). Explaining emigration intentions and behaviour in the Netherlands, 2005–10. *Population Studies*, 67(2), 225–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2012.725135>
- Wissink, M., Düvell, F., & van Eerdewijk, A. (2013). Dynamic Migration Intentions and the Impact of Socio-Institutional Environments: A Transit Migration Hub in Turkey. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(7), 1087–1105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.778026>