

Still at Risk: Homelessness among displaced Ukrainians in the UK

February 2025

A policy briefing from the British Red Cross

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1) Summary

Introduction

Following the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, the UK government created the Ukraine visa schemes to enable forcibly displaced Ukrainians to seek protection in the UK safely. They were usually hosted either by relatives via the Family Scheme, other households willing to open their homes via Homes for Ukraine, or through welcome accommodation in Scotland and Wales. More than 200,000 people have arrived through the two main Ukraine visa schemes and the response should be celebrated for providing swift access to safety.

However, there have been some challenges related to integration for people displaced from Ukraine. One example is accessing safe, secure and affordable housing, which was explored in our recent report '[Finding a Safe Home](#)'. As the conflict has continued, challenges have arisen in transitioning from original hosting arrangements to longer-term living, working and inclusion in communities across the UK. As a result, too many Ukrainians have experienced homelessness and large numbers have spent extended periods in temporary accommodation.

Our new research estimates levels of homelessness among displaced Ukrainians in the UK. It shows that there has been good progress in reducing homelessness for this group, but displaced Ukrainians remain at risk. They are around 2.5 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. It is critical that holistic support is given to help Ukrainians access safe, secure and affordable accommodation. This can also reduce homelessness costs to the public purse: we estimate that around £13.8 million a year has been spent supporting Ukrainians into temporary accommodation, but other options for renting are far more cost-effective. As we mark three years since the conflict's escalation, it is vital that the government drives down homelessness and supports Ukrainians to integrate in the long term.

Aims and methods

The research carried out for the British Red Cross by Professor Bramley at Heriot-Watt University explores housing and homelessness among displaced Ukrainians in the UK by pulling together a range of datasets on the extent, risks, and drivers of homelessness among this group.

The aim of the research is to: publish updated forecasts for homelessness among displaced Ukrainians; provide analysis of statutory homelessness (the number of applications to local authorities) and core homelessness (more acute and immediate forms of homelessness such as sofa surfing or rough sleeping) and explore the potential impact of homelessness prevention measures.

The research draws on a range of official data from across the UK including from the Home Office, Ministry of Housing, Scottish government and the Office of National statistics. However, there are some limitations to the homelessness data available in the devolved nations as it is published less regularly and is not available in Northern Ireland. We use an established method to project future homelessness rates based on the projection models developed for the Crisis Homelessness Monitor. Please see the Appendices for further details on the methodology.

Key findings

- ***Displaced Ukrainians are at greater risk of homelessness than the general population***

Displaced Ukrainians are more than 2 times as likely to experience homelessness than the general populationⁱ. We estimate that for the financial year 2024/25 displaced Ukrainians are:

- 2.34 times more likely to experience statutory homelessness (i.e. make homelessness applications to local authorities).
- 2.57 times more likely to experience core homelessness (which includes more acute and immediate forms of homelessness, such as staying in emergency hostels, sofa surfing or rough sleeping).

People displaced from Ukraine experience homelessness and precarious living arrangements for a range of reasons. Through our work helping close to 70,000 displaced Ukrainians in the UK, we know that these can include relationship breakdowns between hosts and guests, the cost of living preventing continued hosting, and uncertainty about the length of a hosting placement beyond the initial six months. Ukrainians have also faced challenges transitioning from hosting to longer-term accommodation arrangements.

- ***Barriers to employment and securing affordable housing have combined to make it hard for Ukrainians to transition to independent living***

Our analysis of Office of National Statistics (ONS)ⁱⁱ surveys of Ukraine visa holders shows that homelessness prevention must address integration holistically. Surveys showed challenges for Ukrainians in securing decent work and navigating the private rented sector.

There has been a divide within the cohort between those who are working and/or finding it relatively easy to do so and those facing barriers:

- In second wave surveys undertaken in June 2022, 47% cited barriers to employment with the following commonly cited: language (27–28%), qualifications not recognised (16–17%), not found suitable job (11–14%), limited access to transport (11–12%), working hours not suitable (7–11%), unable to find childcare (6–8%), physical/mental health constraints (6–8%), and jobs not paying enough (5–8%). 30% are not working in the same sector as previously and many felt the pressure to ‘take any job’ (11–15%).
- While English language skills grew over successive waves of the survey, by April 2024 half (50%) of all adults, including those already in employment, were still experiencing difficulties with finding work. The most reported reasons were: English language skills not meeting job requirements (50%) and not being able to find a job that suits their skills (40%).

At the same time, Ukrainians have experienced barriers to accessing long-term accommodation, especially in the private rented sector.

- When asked about barriers to private sector renting in surveys undertaken Oct–Nov 2022, 45% said they experienced barriers and the most common ones were: can’t afford rent from income and benefits (29%), lack of guarantor (27%), can’t afford deposit (18%), no suitable properties (15%), poor credit history (12%) and language (10%).
- By April–May 2023, the overall proportion citing barriers was up at 50%, with ‘can’t afford rent’ cited by 21% (of all respondents), lack of guarantor (25%), can’t afford deposit (14%), no suitable properties (11%), poor credit history (7%) and language (8%). While there is a slight

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fall in most of these percentages, half of the whole cohort still identified one or several of these problems.

Wider systemic issues such as the unmet need for social housing¹ and the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance in 2020 (ahead of the uprating for this financial year), also reduced the number of properties that displaced Ukrainians can realistically access.²ⁱⁱⁱ

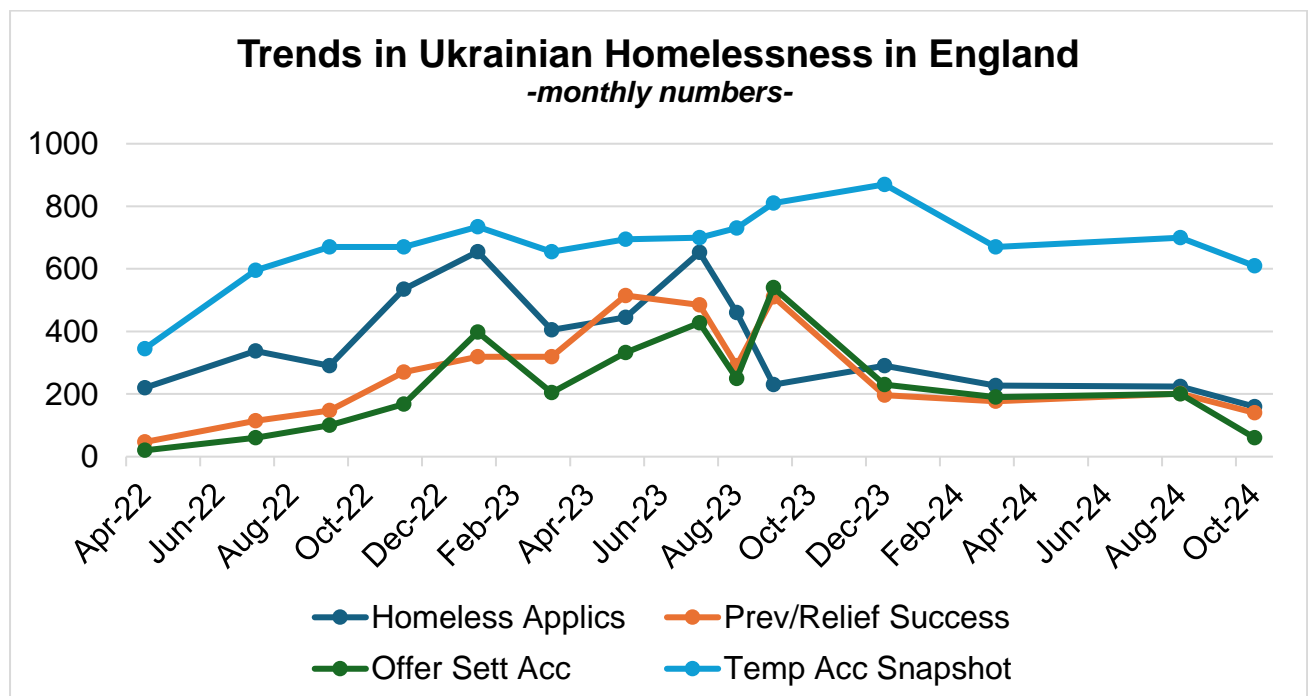
- **There has been progress on reducing homelessness among Ukrainians, but sustained action is vital to prevent future escalation**

In the Autumn of 2023, our forecasting found that homelessness was set to increase for Ukrainians in the UK up until to March 2024 and then remain at elevated levels until March 2025.³

However, since then, there have been impactful changes in the policy environment (e.g. extending 'thank you' payments for a third year for hosts on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and uprating the Local Housing Allowance, which makes it easier for people in receipt of benefits to rent privately). Displaced Ukrainians have also had longer to secure decent work and build English language skills. These measures have enabled a downward trend in homelessness.

This is shown by the declining number of homelessness applications to local authorities. It is also demonstrated across further measures of homelessness, such as the number of offers of settled accommodation (e.g. council, housing association or private rented sector properties) and households in temporary accommodation (which includes Bed and Breakfasts and hotels). However, figures still show a persistently high number of people in temporary accommodation, even while the overall trend is downwards.

Figure 1.



This graph shows trends in Ukrainian homelessness in England, with figures from the Ministry of Housing's Homelessness Management Information.

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Projecting ahead, our model now shows the broad trend for statutory and core homelessness is downwards, although Ukrainians remain at risk.

We estimate that:

- Around 4,800 households experienced statutory homelessness between April 2023 and March 2024, and 3,700 households experienced core homelessness. (Note: there is likely to be some, but quite limited, overlap between these two groups).

We predict that:

- Around 3,300 households will have experienced statutory homelessness between April 2024 and March 2025, and 3,250 households will experience core homelessness.
- Around 2,950 households will experience statutory homelessness between April 2025 and March 2026, and 3,450 households will experience core homelessness.
- Around 2,100 households will experience statutory homelessness between April 2026 and March 2027, and 2,900 households will experience core homelessness.

Statutory homelessness for displaced Ukrainians is projected to rise somewhat between April 2027 and March 2028 to 3,100 households. However, core homelessness is likely to remain at similar or slightly lower levels in financial years 2027/28 and 2028/29.

The rise partly reflects homelessness across the UK increasing due to a combination of elements in the UK housing market, the economic environment and demographic factors. It is also the case that the Ukrainian refugee population are also geographically more present in regions most affected by these pressures, such as London and the South-east⁴ (where there has been a high rate of arrivals under Homes for Ukraine) and affordable housing is in scarcer supply.⁵

- ***There is likely to be a fiscal benefit to homelessness prevention***

Not only is homelessness deeply distressing on a personal level, but it sets back integration prospects and comes at significant cost to the public purse. Drawing on analysis from the Centre of Homelessness Impact for average costs of homelessness measures, we estimate that £13.8 million per year has been spent on supporting Ukrainians in temporary accommodation. This spend would be considerably reduced were displaced individuals prevented from falling into homelessness in the first place. Placing homeless households in temporary accommodation costs around £380 a week. This is less cost effective than a typical social rent of around £104, an 'affordable rent' of £165 or market rent of £213.^{iv} Implementing our recommendations below can help ensure value for money for the taxpayer.

Our recommendations

There has been good progress on reducing homelessness for people from Ukraine, but the evidence shows that they remain at risk. It is vital that the government drives down homelessness and addresses barriers to finding longer-term accommodation.

Recently, displaced Ukrainians have been able to extend their leave to remain in the UK by another 18 months, with applications for the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme opening this February. This is a positive development, but Ukrainians need a longer-term plan for protection and integration. Planning ahead can prevent homelessness, save money and support displaced individuals as they rebuild their lives.

We recommend that policy makers:

Make it easier for Ukrainians to rent privately by:

- The Ministry of Housing, devolved governments and local authorities working together to:
 - Provide funding for rent deposit schemes so they are consistently available for Ukrainians and other displaced people.
 - Incentivise landlords to rent to displaced people. For instance, through landlord insurance schemes.
- The Department of Work and Pensions uprating the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) annually to prevent a widening gap between 30th percentile rates and rents.
- The Home Office and the Ministry of Housing investing in English language training and employment support to help Ukrainian and other displaced people access decent work.

Invest in social housing for refugees and the wider community by:

- The Ministry of Housing launching a further round of the Local Authority Housing Fund to provide accommodation for displaced people across safe routes and contribute to the government's aim of increasing housing stock in local communities.

Plan for the future by:

- The Ministry of Housing providing long-term integration funding for local authorities so that they can prepare to welcome new arrivals.
- The Home Office and Ministry of Housing providing long-term protection for displaced Ukrainians to make it easier to secure an income and rent independently.

2) Appendix A: Data and statistical models

This research has drawn on a range of sources including government data on visas issued under the different schemes^{6,7}, Office of National Statistics (ONS) data on long term migration, 2021 census data on background populations down to local authority level^v, official data on homeless applicants, temporary accommodation (TA) and outcomes in the statutory homelessness system⁸, ONS surveys of visa holders and sponsors (hosts) in several waves (up to mid-2024), and the Heriot-Watt Destitution in the UK Survey for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation conducted in Autumn 2022.⁹

Data across the UK

Although the analysis seeks to build a picture across the UK, detailed data from the statutory homelessness systems in Scotland and Wales is currently more limited. Also, devolved governments in these countries acted as super-sponsors and placed significant numbers of people, initially, in larger communal settings including hotels and cruise ships, which, while posing other challenges for the integration of Ukrainians, is likely to have prevented many from experiencing homelessness during those initial stages. There is also no publicly available data for Northern Ireland and so it is not included in this rapid research review.

For England specifically, the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities/the Ministry of Housing published monthly data on homelessness applicants, prevention and relief activity and temporary accommodation numbers (up to October 2024). This provides a fairly solid basis for the statutory numbers estimated in this sector over the first two-and-a-half years of the crisis (though not all local authorities report on their statutory homelessness figures every time).

Heriot-Watts and ONS

The Heriot-Watt Destitution Survey provides complementary data on a largely non-overlapping group of people experiencing core homelessness and others at risk of homelessness in Autumn 2022, based on users of crisis services, including evidence of destitution for some of this group evidenced by significant use of food banks. The ONS surveys provide a reasonably robust picture of the demographics of the refugee households, their stated intentions, their achievements so far (e.g. in obtaining work) but also the difficulties they have encountered. Some complementary and confirmatory evidence was also collected by the ONS from surveys of sponsor households. We also analysed recent data from the Labour Force Survey and from Department of Work and Pensions data on working populations which both identified Ukrainians.

Analysis

We have been able to carry out analyses at local authority level across England. We looked at the relationship between visa numbers and existing populations of Ukrainians, with similar analyses of the patterns of statutory homeless applications, temporary accommodation, and outcomes. We use a synthetic model, calibrated on the Family Resource Survey¹⁰ and Destitution in the UK Survey, to estimate core homelessness at the local level. These patterns and insights are combined with forward projections from the well-established homelessness projection models used and reported in the Crisis Homelessness Monitor Series^{vi,11} to predict rates of homelessness (statutory and core homelessness) up to five years ahead at regional and national levels. This projection represents a central scenario seen as most likely on current knowledge. Specific policy and contextual factors are then varied to assess the sensitivity of outcomes to different assumptions about the course of the conflict, the economy, and UK Government policy decisions on key factors.

Model for statutory homelessness analysis

A multiple regression model was developed to try to summarise and quantify the measurable factors affecting the rate of statutory homeless applications by Ukrainian households (as a percentage rate over all resident households) at local authority level across England. This model was influenced by similar models used for the Crisis Homelessness Monitor Series to predict overall homeless applications rates at local level. It used an enhanced version of the same panel database of local authority indicators, but simply including the last two years of data (financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24), which were the first two years of Ukrainian refugee presence in England. Similar models were developed to predict numbers of Ukrainian households in temporary accommodation, a contributor to one of the most costly and difficult challenges facing local government currently.

Model for core homelessness analysis

The Heriot-Watt's Destitution in the UK survey was used for the base level of core homelessness in 2022/23. Rolling this forward, we have used a combination of applying a local authority predictive model based on combined analysis of the Family Resource Survey and Destitution in UK Survey, some indicators of trends in destitution/severe poverty (e.g. Trussell Trust¹² food parcel data), estimates of the changing Ukrainian household numbers, and judgement about the transition from the initial situation on arrival and a more stable situation that recognises distinct socio-demographics. The local predictive model then flexes over time with predicted values of the driver variables derived within the sub-regional housing market model used for Crisis Homelessness Projections.

Table 1. Key forecasting assumptions for the central scenario (updated for 2025)

Relevant Assumptions	Main scenario
Conflict in Ukraine	Visa extension available for 18 months and large numbers apply
UK Government decision on visas	Visa extension available for 18 months and large numbers apply
UK Government support for sponsors	Extension of 'thank you' payments beyond third year so they are available for the 18-month visa extension
UK Government provides specific support for access to private renting for Ukrainian refugees	No consistent offer of guarantees, but local authorities have discretion to offer deposits, rent in advance, and insurance for landlords, as part of homelessness prevention
UK Government policy on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) uprating	Government increased LHA in April 2024 but does not commit to annual indexing or review.
UK Government policy on priority need in England	No change in formal priority rules

3) Appendix B: Forecast tables

Table 2: Statutory homeless applications and projections (households per financial year)^{vii}

Regions	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
North East	225	170	99	95	49	124	88
Yorkshire and the Humber	288	261	184	156	102	212	159
North West	361	265	204	171	114	260	186
East Midlands	258	244	170	145	101	196	153
West Midlands	450	343	264	212	151	261	199
South West	554	552	335	282	202	322	255
East of England	372	370	269	225	158	247	198
South East	917	896	536	505	316	519	406
Greater London	1,679	1,334	819	698	551	674	575
England	5,105	4,435	2,880	2,488	1,744	2,814	2,220
Wales	120	149	129	135	110	98	93
Scotland	270	265	291	322	242	231	207
Estimated Total	5,495	4,849	3,300	2,944	2,097	3,143	2,521

Table 3: Core homelessness estimates and projections (households per financial year)^{viii}

Regions	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
North East	67	54	47	50	43	41	39
Yorkshire and the Humber	168	131	113	119	102	97	93
North West	224	169	150	162	139	131	120
East Midlands	114	86	76	83	72	68	64
West Midlands	187	143	128	142	124	118	110
South West	216	166	148	164	142	134	124
East of England	175	132	116	125	109	105	100
South East	556	422	378	417	363	343	319
Greater London	2,567	1,955	1,683	1,746	1,446	1,341	1,291
England	4,275	3,257	2,838	3,008	2,539	2,379	2,260
Wales	120	149	129	139	116	104	99
Scotland	270	265	291	316	270	245	247
Estimated Total	4,665	3,671	3,258	3,463	2,926	2,728	2,607

4) Appendix C: Displacement journey

We analysed the Office of National Statistics (ONS) surveys of visa holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes to better understand Ukrainians' experiences of displacement. The ONS has conducted six surveys between May 2022 and April 2024.

	Stage	Indicative milestones (employment/self-reliance)
1.	<p>Reception in the UK. Familiarisation with initial accommodation placement (whether on the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme or Family Scheme), obtaining documentation, engaging with services such as the NHS and schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For some, this first stage may include challenges with the initial accommodation placement and risk of homelessness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a UK bank account. This rose from 43% in April 2022 to 82% in June 2022, 94% in July and 97% in Oct–Nov 2022. Having 3 months' worth of funds to cover costs. This rose from 26% in April 2022 to 37% in June–July 2022 to 60% by Oct–Nov 2022.
2.	<p>Seeking to integrate. Improving language skills, settling into the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proficiency/confidence in English language skills. For reading, this rose from 40% in April 2022 to 61% in Oct–Nov 2022,

	<p>community and preparing for and entering employment.</p>	<p>while those who could read little or none fell from 40% to 14% in the same period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment. This rose from 11% in April 2022 and 20% in June 2022 to 56% by Oct–Nov 2022, with a slight fallback to 52% in April–May 2023 but then a further advance to 69% in April–May 2024.
<p>Transition phase: end of initial accommodation placement. This might be followed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sponsor agreeing to continue to host • Negotiation of a lodging arrangement with a host • Searching for longer-term accommodation options • For some individuals this phase will include the risk of homelessness <p><i>Please see below for further analysis on challenges arising during the transition phase.</i></p>		
<p>3.</p>	<p>Independence/self-reliance. Securing decent/adequate employment and independent accommodation (often in the private rented sector but including the social rented sector).</p>	<p>Entering independent accommodation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% had remained living with a sponsor in the Oct–Nov 22 survey. • The proportion in private renting rose from 17% in Oct–Nov 2022 to 45% in April–May 2024, while at the latter date 56% were paying for their accommodation.
<p>4.</p>	<p>Planning for the future. Choosing between remaining in the UK long-term or returning to Ukraine (once it is safe to do so).</p>	<p>Refugee intentions. Survey findings show displaced Ukrainians are increasingly planning to stay in the UK: In the April 2023, 52% said they intended to stay in the UK, 28% said they were likely to return. However, a year later (April 2024), these figures had changed to 68% intending to stay, only 15% likely to return and 16% don't know. Underpinning this, 70% said they had a strong or very strong personal connection to the UK. The most important reasons for wanting to stay were work (31%), being in an English-speaking country (25%) and better quality of life (24%).</p>

5) Endnotes, references and further sources

Endnotes

ⁱ Please note that the ratio applies to England, Wales and Scotland, due to the lack of publicly available data in Northern Ireland.

ⁱⁱ The ONS has conducted six surveys between May 2022 and April 2024. This analysis is based on the data sets of six waves of surveys. Office of National Statistics (ONS) [Visa holders living in the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes, follow-up survey: 15 April to 22 April 2024](#), Office of National Statistics (ONS), [Visa holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes : 27 April to 15 May 2023](#), July 2023; Office of National Statistics (ONS), [Visa holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes – Follow-up survey: 17 October to 7 November 2022](#), November 2023; Office of National Statistics (ONS), [Visa holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes – Follow-up survey: 20 July to 4 August 2022](#), August 2022; Office of National Statistics (ONS), [Visa holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes: 16 to 24 June 2022](#), July 2022; Office of National Statistics (ONS), [Visa holders entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes: 20 to 27 April 2022](#), May 2022.

ⁱⁱⁱ Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates are based on private market rents being paid by tenants in a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA). This is the area within which a person might reasonably be expected to live. Valuation Office Agency (2023). 'Understanding Local Housing Allowance rates and broad rental market areas.' Retrieved from: [Understanding Local Housing Allowances rates and broad rental market areas - GOV.UK](#)

^{iv} Costing developed using estimates in Wilkins, M., Reeder, N. and Gray, T. Centre for Homelessness Impact (2024). 'Spending on Temporary Accommodation: Is it value for money.' Retrieved from: [Spending on Temporary Accommodation: is it Value for Money? \(p.10\)](#). We have divided the cost of temporary accommodation in England by the average number of Ukrainian households in temporary accommodation (based on the Ministry of Housing's homelessness management information). The comparison with the costs of social, affordable and private renting are based on 2024 figures from Heriot-Watts homelessness projection model.

^v We used population data from the 2021 Office of National Statistics census. Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2021. 'Census.' Retrieved from: [Census - Office for National Statistics](#)

^{vi} The Homelessness Monitor is a longitudinal study, commissioned by Crisis and funded by Crisis and the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#), providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments in the United Kingdom. Please see Crisis 'Homelessness Monitor' for more information. Retrieved from: [Homelessness Monitor | Crisis UK | Together we will end homelessness](#)

^{vii} Figures for the financial year 2022/23 are actuals based on the Destitution in the UK Survey. Financial year 2023/24 onwards are based on composite local predictions (England) and the homelessness projection model (set out in appendix A). The data for Wales and Scotland is more limited and so these are rougher estimates than for England.

^{viii} Ibid.

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⁴ Migration Observatory (2024). 'Ukrainian migration to the UK.' Retrieved from: [Ukrainian migration to the UK – Migration Observatory – The Migration Observatory](https://www.migrationobservatory.com)

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