
The Impact of Migration on the Labour Resource Shortage in Ukraine's Economy

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Abstract. This article examines the impact of labour migration on the shortage of labour resources in Ukraine's economy amid prolonged war and economic instability. The topic's relevance is determined by the unprecedented scale of migration processes, which have acquired a systemic nature and become a defining factor in the transformation of the national labour market since 2022. The significant outflow of the working-age population, particularly those in strategic professions, poses a major challenge to post-war recovery processes, business competitiveness and social stability. This study aims to identify how migration processes affect labour shortages in Ukraine, analyse their socio-economic consequences, and develop proposals to minimise negative effects. The methodological framework is based on general scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalisation, as well as specialised methods such as the structural-functional approach, statistical analysis and systemic and comparative approaches. Data sources include materials from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the National Bank of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, and international organisations such as the IOM, Eurostat and the World Bank, as well as sociological surveys and analytical centre reports. The study found that labour migration significantly reduces the human resources available in the industry, construction, healthcare, education and high-tech sectors. Notably, the shortage of skilled workers in construction exceeds 30%, while there is a significant exodus of young doctors and nurses from the healthcare sector. Additionally, an increasing number of researchers are leaving the education sector. Despite opportunities for remote employment, a high level of migration intentions persists in the IT sector, which exacerbates the risk to Ukraine's innovative potential. The research shows that, while migrants' remittances help to maintain the balance of payments, they do not offset the losses resulting from the depletion of the country's human capital. The article's practical value lies in formulating a set of policy recommendations aimed at minimising the negative impact of migration on the labour market. Key recommendations include developing a National Labour Reintegration Strategy, creating programmes to support returning citizens, promoting dual education and retraining systems, and stimulating the reverse migration of highly qualified professionals. Implementing these measures will help to overcome labour shortages, preserve human capital and ensure Ukraine's sustainable socio-economic development during the post-war recovery period.

Keywords: labour migration, labour shortage, labour market of Ukraine, socio-economic consequences, human capital.

JEL Classification: J61, J21, J24, O15

1 Introduction

In the contemporary context of global transformation, the issue of labour migration and its impact on the socio-economic development

of the state has gained particular significance for Ukraine. The considerable increase in the number of migrants that occurred subsequent to 2014, and particularly as a consequence of the full-scale war in

2022, has resulted in a significant diminution of the country's labour potential. As of early 2025, several million Ukrainian citizens remained abroad, with a significant portion of this group having integrated into EU labour markets. This phenomenon is further exacerbating the pre-existing problem of labour shortages in the national economy and heightening the risk of losing the human capital necessary for the state's post-war recovery.

A salient feature of Ukrainian labour migration is its large-scale nature and the high proportion of working-age individuals among those who have departed the country. This engenders a dual challenge: firstly, the number of qualified professionals in the domestic labour market is in decline; secondly, the country's reliance on migrants' remittances is increasing. According to Orlyuk (2024), private remittances to Ukraine totalled approximately 4.37 billion USD during the initial five months of 2024.

Notwithstanding the beneficial impact of these funds on the balance of payments, they prove incapable of compensating for losses incurred as a result of a paucity of labour resources within pivotal sectors of the economy, including industry, construction, transport, healthcare and education.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that labour migration is considered not only as a social phenomenon but also as a strategic factor that determines the pace of economic growth, the level of competitiveness, and the economic security of Ukraine. It is imperative to comprehend the magnitude and trajectory of this impact in order to formulate efficacious state policies within the domain of migration regulation.

The objective of the present study is twofold: firstly, to identify the specific features of the impact of labour migration on the labour resource shortage in Ukraine's economy; and secondly, to develop proposals aimed at minimising its negative consequences. In order to achieve this objective, a number of interconnected tasks must be completed. These include the analysis of current trends in Ukrainian labour migration, the identification of the main problems arising from labour shortages, the assessment of the socio-economic consequences of this phenomenon, and the outline of policy directions to reduce migration-related losses.

The study's methodological framework is based on general scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalisation. This approach revealed the theoretical foundations of the problem. To examine real trends in labour flows, a structural-functional approach was adopted alongside statistical methods and comparative and systemic analyses.

The research database was compiled using official documents from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine and the National Bank of Ukraine, as well as data from international organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Eurostat and the World Bank. Additionally, the study utilised the results of sociological surveys and research conducted by leading analytical centres.

Further research is intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of labour migration trends, to assess their consequences, and to identify effective mechanisms of state regulation in the context of contemporary challenges.

2 Trends in External Labour Migration of Ukrainians in 2023–2025

During the period 2023–2025, the external labour migration of Ukrainians reached unprecedented proportions and became one of the key factors shaping the dynamics of the labour market and the country's socio-economic development. According to the Centre for Economic Strategy, as of the end of November 2024, the number of Ukrainian refugees abroad had surpassed five million, with a considerable proportion of these individuals having become integrated into the labour markets of EU countries (Centre for Economic Strategy, 2025).

According to the forecasts of the National Bank of Ukraine, the net outflow of population will remain at a substantial level between 2025 and 2027. In accordance with the baseline scenario, it is anticipated that the number of individuals departing Ukraine in 2025 and 2026 will exceed the number of returnees by approximately 200,000 per year. However, a potential reversal of this trend is projected to occur in 2027, with approximately 100,000 citizens expected to return (Fig. 1). The data demonstrate that the magnitude of migrant return is predominantly contingent upon prevailing security conditions and economic dynamics within Ukraine.

In the baseline scenario, re-migration will remain minimal, resulting in a continued labour shortage. The alternative scenario provides a foundation for anticipating a more proactive return; however, this will be viable only if the government implements comprehensive policy measures aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of wages, developing the labour market, and establishing institutional support for migrant reintegration. The hypothesis of a pessimistic scenario, predicated on the risks of a protracted war and a languid economic recovery, posits a deepening of migration outflows.

Analysis of structural changes in migrant composition indicates an increasing proportion

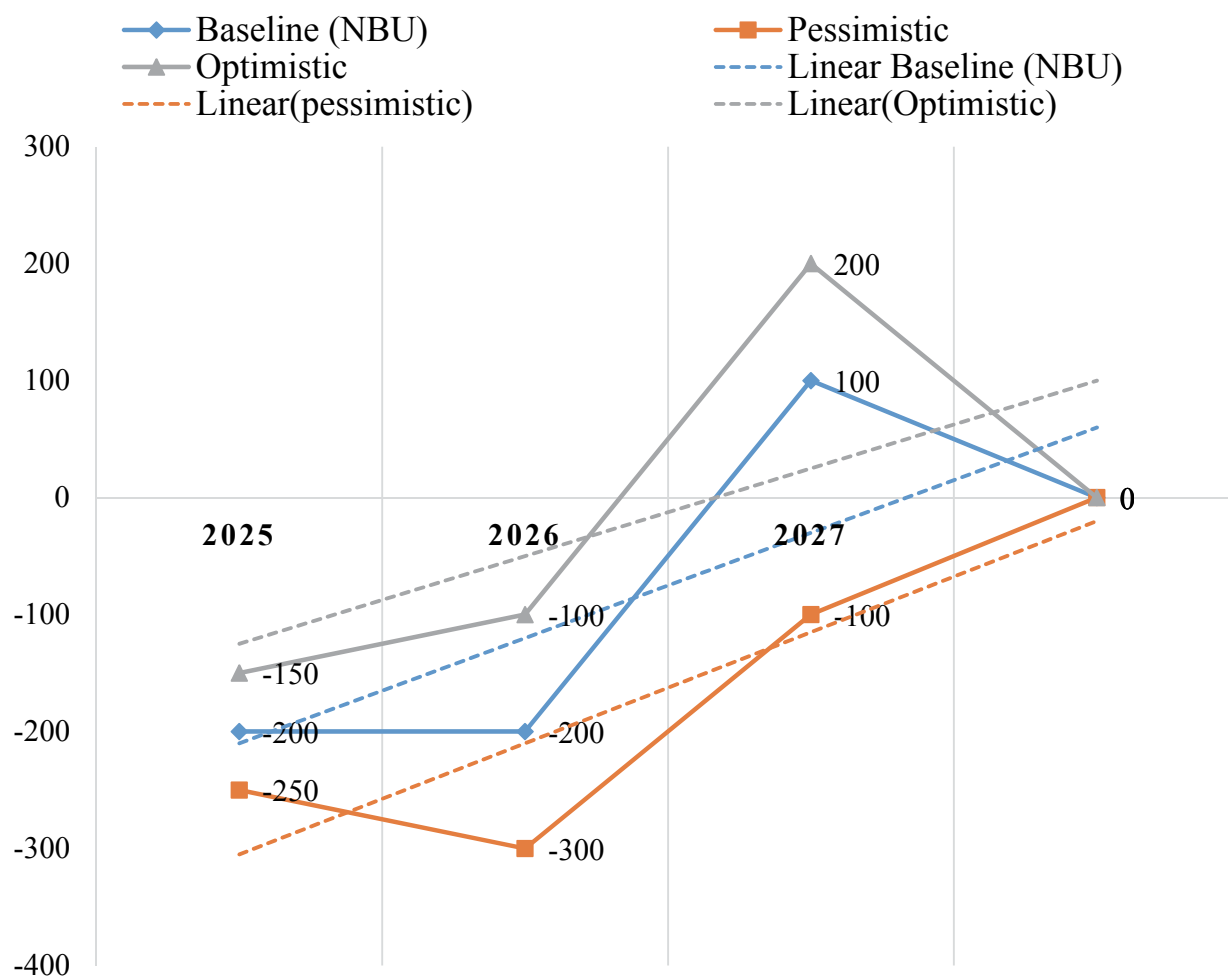


Figure 1 Net population outflow from Ukraine in 2025–2027, thousand persons

Source: compiled by the author based on (Slovo i Dilo, 2025), (Suspilne News, 2025), (Karpat.in.ua, 2025)

of working-age men, driven by a desire to find employment abroad and economic difficulties in Ukraine. The outflow of skilled workers and young specialists poses a risk of labour shortages in key sectors of the economy.

The integration of Ukrainians into the labour markets of host countries is uneven. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Poland has the highest proportion of employed working-age refugees (65%). The United Kingdom ranks second with 61%, followed by Sweden with 56%. The employment rate of Ukrainian refugees is 53% in Lithuania, 51% in the Czech Republic, and 46% in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Estonia. In France, it is 33%. The lowest employment rates were recorded in Switzerland and Italy, where only 19% of working-age refugees are employed. The proportion of employed Ukrainian refugees of working age in Germany is also 19% (RBK Ukraine, 2023).

Concurrently, Ukrainian migrants have been shown to exert a positive influence on the economies of their host countries, through an increase in consumer spending, a contribution to the labour supply, and the payment of taxes (Tucha, Zholud, Spivak, 2025).

However, numerous obstacles are faced by these students, including language barriers, social isolation, and limited access to information, which hinder their optimal integration through education (Slipetska & Bula, 2025).

3 The Impact of Migration on Labour Shortages in Ukraine

A considerable proportion of Ukrainian citizens who have become integrated into European labour markets have effectively exited the national economy, thereby undermining the human resource potential of strategic sectors. As Hrishnova and Risnyi (2021) have observed, this phenomenon poses a significant threat to the sustainable

development of the domestic labour market, particularly in strategic industries that require highly qualified personnel.

One of the most pressing challenges facing the national labour market is the shortage of skilled workers in strategic economic sectors, particularly industry and construction. While these sectors play a key role in post-war infrastructure reconstruction, they are also experiencing substantial workforce shortages. According to Finway (2025), the shortage of workers in the production and service sectors is at 30–40% of pre-war levels, which indicates a critical degree of human resource depletion. This issue is particularly acute in the construction sector, where the shortage of skilled workers exceeds 30%, hindering the implementation of state programmes for reconstruction and modernisation.

Research shows that large-scale military conflicts can significantly transform employment and unemployment dynamics, exacerbating socio-economic challenges in conflict-affected areas. As Zub, Atamanska, Turenko, Krymchak and Rebryk (2025) emphasise, military action leads not only to a sharp reduction in jobs and an increase in unemployment, but also to radical shifts in labour supply and demand, putting additional pressure on national economies. In these conditions, strategies for socio-economic recovery that aim to preserve and restore human capital are particularly important.

There is a significant exodus of young doctors and nurses from the healthcare sector, which complicates the population's access to medical services. Ukrainian medical professionals often leave the country to join the defence forces or flee their cities due to destruction or occupation. Consequently, many hospitals across Ukraine now face significant staffing shortages. According to the Minister of Health, Viktor Liashko, the shortage of healthcare personnel is expected to reach global proportions by 2030 (AgroReview, 2025).

A similar situation is observed in the education sector, where the increasing outflow of lecturers and researchers is weakening domestic institutions' capacity to train highly qualified specialists. In an interview, Ukraine's Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Denys Kurbatov, emphasised that around 20% of researchers have left the country or changed professions. This group comprises research staff, university lecturers and other academic personnel, totalling around 80,000 individuals. This represents around a fifth of the country's scientific potential and creates a significant shortage of human resources (Pohorila, 2025).

The situation has been further exacerbated by the fact that some researchers have voluntarily

joined the frontline, with some of them being killed. In frontline and border regions, the destruction of research infrastructure is an additional factor; it is estimated that approximately 30% of scientific facilities have been damaged or destroyed. Nevertheless, the majority of researchers (around 80%) have remained in Ukraine and are continuing their work under wartime conditions, demonstrating great flexibility and adaptability. In particular, novel approaches to the organisation of scientific activity are being developed. These include the establishment of shared-use equipment centres and innovative infrastructure formats, such as underground laboratories.

The high-tech sectors of Ukraine, notably the IT industry, have also been significantly impacted by labour migration. A proportion of IT specialists has integrated into global labour markets, although remote employment allows them to continue generating foreign currency inflows for Ukraine, thereby mitigating the negative economic consequences of workforce outflows (Galera.news, 2025).

As of August 2024, the Lviv IT Cluster reported that 238,000 (78.8%) of the total 302,000 Ukrainian IT specialists remained in Ukraine, while 62,000–64,000 (20.5–21.2%) were abroad (Ms. detector.media, 2024).

Concurrently, approximately 50% of Ukrainian IT professionals are contemplating emigration. According to a survey conducted by DOU, in 2024, 48% of specialists were contemplating relocating abroad, which is nearly identical to the previous year's figure of 51% (Dou.ua, 2025).

The scarcity of labour resources exerts a detrimental influence on both production processes and macroeconomic indicators. In the draft Budget Declaration for 2026–2028, the Government of Ukraine outlined two economic development scenarios. These differ significantly in their assumptions and projected indicators.

The baseline scenario is predicated on the cessation of hostilities by 2025. In this case, it is anticipated that the economy will receive a stimulus for recovery: in 2025, GDP growth is projected at 2.7%, with a gradual acceleration of economic dynamics in subsequent years. Specifically, it is predicted that GDP will increase by 4.5% in 2026, by 5.0% in 2027, and by 5.7% in 2028.

The alternative scenario contemplates the possibility of protracted hostilities, a scenario which poses risks to economic stabilisation. In this scenario, growth rates are projected to be more restrained, with an estimated increase of only 2.4% in 2026. For the subsequent period of 2027–2028, the economy is forecast to expand at a more

moderate pace, with an annual average growth rate of 4.6% (RBK-Ukraine, 2025).

The situation is further complicated by demographic factors, including population ageing, worsening regional imbalances, and increased pressure on the social sector.

The outflow of Ukrainian labour migrants during 2022–2025 has resulted in a systemic labour shortage, which has had a significant impact on a wide range of sectors, including traditional industries such as industry, construction, healthcare and education, as well as high-tech industries. This has the potential to engender a number of risks, including the deceleration of the nation's economic recovery, the diminution of the competitiveness of enterprises, and the exacerbation of socio-demographic challenges.

4 Mechanisms for Minimising the Impact of Migration on Ukraine's Labour Market

Intensified migration processes in Ukraine, driven by military action, economic instability and demographic decline, have led to a significant labour shortage in key economic sectors. In order to ensure the resilience of the labour market and preserve human capital, it is necessary to implement systemic mechanisms that minimise the negative impact of migration.

One of the priority areas is the development and implementation of a National Labour Reintegration Strategy. This strategy involves creating support programmes for citizens returning from abroad, including financial incentives, professional adaptation and retraining. A key part of this strategy should be a regional policy to attract people to areas and sectors facing severe labour shortages.

Currently, no official document titled "National Labour Reintegration Strategy" has been published in the public domain. However, in November 2024, the Ukrainian Ministry for the Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories presented a draft government strategy for the employment of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which includes the following elements of labour reintegration:

- Creating equal employment opportunities for IDPs;
- supporting entrepreneurial initiatives;
- aligning professional training with labour market needs;
- providing financial support for small businesses;
- involving international partners (ILO, UNDP, IOM) in the implementation of the strategy.

This draft can be regarded as a basis for the development of a more extensive national labour reintegration policy, particularly in the context of

post-war recovery (MinReintegration, 2024).

Optimising the system of career guidance and workforce training is another key mechanism. The implementation of short-term educational programmes, the development of dual education, and the strengthening of co-operation between educational institutions and employers enable a rapid response to changes in labour market demand. In the context of the digital transformation of the labour market, the digitalisation of career counselling and the expansion of access to online employment platforms are of particular importance. These processes contribute to increased mobility, awareness, and adaptability of the population regarding employment opportunities. In light of the increasing prevalence of remote work and digital services, career counselling is being conducted with greater frequency online, thereby enabling consultants to serve geographically dispersed audiences. This approach is intended to ensure broader coverage, faster responsiveness to client needs, and integration of career services into the digital employment ecosystem (Ukrainian Association of Career Management, 2025).

The encouragement of the return migration of highly qualified specialists is dependent on the recognition of professional experience gained abroad, the creation of favourable conditions for scientific and entrepreneurial activity, and the enhancement of co-operation with the Ukrainian diaspora as a source of knowledge, technology, and investment transfer.

In order to protect the domestic labour market, it is necessary to implement mechanisms for monitoring workforce shortages in strategic sectors, regulate labour migration through intergovernmental agreements and quotas, and ensure social protection for vulnerable population groups, including internally displaced persons, women, and youth.

It is imperative that particular emphasis be placed on the promotion of international co-operation and the mobilisation of international technical assistance. International technical assistance (ITA) is recognised as a pivotal instrument in mobilising resources for Ukraine's structural transformation, addressing social and economic challenges, and establishing essential infrastructure to facilitate European integration (Antonyuk, Bukharina, Shyshkin, 2019).

Ukraine's participation in international mobility programmes, which include mechanisms for the return and reintegration of migrants, is seen as a way of stabilising the labour market in the face of demographic challenges. Adapting European migration management models, particularly those of Scandinavian countries, enables the adoption of

effective practices to support repatriates. Involving resources and expertise from international organisations such as the European Union, the ILO and the World Bank helps to reform employment policies and enhance the institutional capacity of Ukrainian state authorities.

Comprehensive application of these mechanisms will reduce labour shortages, ensure sustainable labour market development, improve human capital utilisation efficiency and strengthen the country's economic security during post-war recovery.

5 Conclusions

The research conducted has shown that labour migration is one of the key factors contributing to the shortage of labour resources in Ukraine's economy. The large-scale emigration of the working-age population to other countries, driven by war, economic instability and demographic processes, poses systemic risks to the national labour market.

The most vulnerable sectors are strategic industries, construction, healthcare, education and the high-tech sector, particularly IT, where labour shortages directly impact the pace of infrastructure recovery, economic competitiveness and social stability. At the same time, labour migration has mixed effects: on the one hand, it weakens the country's human resource potential; on the other hand, it provides inflows of remittances and facilitates Ukrainian integration into international labour markets. Nevertheless, these positive effects are insufficient to offset the losses caused by workforce depletion.

In order to minimise negative consequences, it is necessary to implement a comprehensive state policy. This should include creating conditions for the return and reintegration of labour migrants, developing retraining and upskilling mechanisms, attracting foreign investment to create jobs, stimulating entrepreneurial activity and digital employment, and building social institutions capable of supporting the population in the face of demographic and wartime challenges.

Thus, labour migration influences both the current state of Ukraine's labour market and the prospects for its transformation in the post-war period. Understanding its impact is essential for developing effective recovery and sustainable economic development strategies.

Future research in this area should focus on analysing the effectiveness of state programmes for the return and reintegration of labour migrants, examining how new models of remote and hybrid employment can reduce labour shortages, developing forecasting methodologies for labour resources that consider demographic and wartime challenges, assessing the potential of digitalisation and automation to compensate for deficits in the critical workforce, and studying the socio-economic effects of labour migration across different regions of Ukraine.

Adherence to these guidelines is expected to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge regarding labour migration processes, while concurrently furnishing practical instruments for the formulation of strategic plans and the stabilisation of the national labour market.

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