



Uniting for Ukraine in Illinois: Initial Findings on Needs of Ukrainians and Their Sponsors

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Summary

The Uniting for Ukraine (U4U) program has brought thousands of Ukrainians to Illinois. The program is important to the state because the numbers of persons involved are large, and nearly all are eligible for services delivered by state contractors. The program has unique challenges. Little information is available about the Ukrainians, including ways to contact them.

Service providers want to reach Ukrainians, and the State of Illinois seeks to support those services and maximize federal support. The Illinois Ukrainian Arrivals Study Project was created to gather as much information as possible on the needs of Ukrainians and their sponsors, and on the experiences they have with accessing services. The study collected data and held focus groups and interviews with Ukrainians and sponsors. **All findings should be treated as generalizations and initial impressions due to the limited number (~40) of Ukrainian participants.**

High-level findings of the project include the following:

Large numbers of Ukrainians are in Illinois

- By the end of May 2023, Illinois may have received more than 20,000 Ukrainian arrivals under U4U. This is a historically large number of immigrants under any circumstances. To date, about a quarter of those arrivals have had some contact with a social service agency funded by Illinois.

Where are the Ukrainians located?

- U4U participants appear to be concentrated in a set of suburbs spreading northwest from the city of Chicago and in the Ukrainian Village neighborhood of Chicago.

Most Ukrainians appear to be working and to be economically independent

- Getting persons to work quickly has always been a main goal of refugee assistance, and Ukrainians seem to have met this goal. U4U participants get employment authorization and go to work fairly soon after their arrival. The great majority of men we spoke with were working.

Many Ukrainians appear to be unaware of services available to them

- Many of the Ukrainians we spoke with did not know about the services available to them from social service organizations funded by the state to serve the Ukrainians.

Social media is a key method to reach Ukrainians

- Ukrainians we spoke with reported that ads or posts on Facebook are the best way to get their attention about social services.

Sponsors have serious needs that are not being addressed

- Multiple sponsors we spoke with described being alone in the process, with almost no information available to them. Some sponsored Ukrainians can need intensive assistance, and sponsors can find the experience emotionally and financially challenging.

The needs of sponsors should be a focus of assistance programs

- Sponsors we spoke with said they want opportunities to network and to learn from each other. They need information on how public assistance programs work, how to get driver's licenses, how to get medical tests, etc.

Table of Contents

Summary	2
Introduction: The Illinois Ukrainian Arrivals Study Project	4
Study Methods and Limitations	5
Study Findings	7
Numbers of Ukrainians Served	7
Services to Sponsors	8
Geographic Expansion of Services to Reach Ukrainians	8
Characteristics of U4U Participants in Illinois	10
Where Have Ukrainians Settled in Illinois?	10
Pace of Arrivals	13
Gender Composition	14
Public School Enrollment	16
Findings on Ukrainians from Focus Groups and Interviews	18
Findings on Sponsors from Focus Groups and Interviews	21
Discussion of Findings	23
Recommendations	25
Conclusion	26
Appendix	27
Study Methods	27

Report prepared in July, 2023

Introduction: The Illinois Ukrainian Arrivals Study Project

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, producing a massive flight of refugees from the ensuing war.¹ The United Nations reports that more than [six million Ukrainians](#) have fled Ukraine as of June 2023.

On April 21, 2022, President Biden announced a process to allow Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war to come to the U.S.² [Uniting for Ukraine](#) (U4U) provides a parole status for up to two years to Ukrainian citizens and their families.

Under the U4U program, 30,293 applications to sponsor a person from Ukraine were filed by Illinois residents as of May 30, 2022. Federal data shows that 68 percent of the applicants matched with their sponsors are approved for travel and 53 percent have arrived in the U.S. Using these estimates, by the end of May, **20,667** Ukrainians with Illinois sponsors may have received approval to travel to the U.S. (It is not known how many will remain in Illinois.)

To place the 20,667 number in perspective, it far exceeds the annual number of refugees from all nations that arrive in Illinois annually, which has been about 1,800 per year over the last decade. This number does not include Ukrainians who were already in Illinois before Russia's war with Ukraine, or those who have gotten Temporary Protected Status, which allows them to stay in the U.S. but limits the support they can receive.

All together, the number of Ukrainian new arrivals is nearly as large as the annual number of legal immigrants admitted to Illinois over the past decade, which has averaged about 36,000. Over the past century, it is unlikely any single country has ever had as many legal, if temporary, arrivals in a given year in Illinois as Ukraine has in the past year.

Illinois has a high stake in the success of the U4U program. The state ranks second in the nation in the total number of Ukrainian arrivals. This is likely due to the fact that the state has a relatively large ethnic Ukrainian population with well-established community institutions, such as churches, cultural organizations and vibrant commercial entities. Metropolitan Chicago has the third largest number of Ukrainian immigrants in the nation, at about 26,000.³ Newly arrived Ukrainians have the benefit of a supportive Ukrainian American community that shares common culture and language. As the war continues at this writing, Illinois can be expected to continue to receive large numbers of persons fleeing Ukraine.

¹ Lister, Tim, et al. "Here's What We Know about How Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Unfolded." *CNN*, 24 Feb. 2022, www.cnn.com/2022/02/24/europe/ukraine-russia-attack-timeline-intl/index.html.

² "Uniting for Ukraine." *Uniting for Ukraine | Homeland Security*, www.dhs.gov/ukraine. Accessed 16 June 2023.

³Rodriguez, Joshua, and Jeanne Batalova. "Ukrainian Immigrants in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*, 22 June 2022, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/ukrainian-immigrants-united-states#Distribution.

The **Illinois Ukrainian Arrivals Study Project** is designed to capture as much available information as possible to understand:

- the needs of the Ukrainian new arrivals
- the needs of sponsors of Ukrainians
- the impact of the existing service infrastructure that interacts with the U4U participants

The goal of the project is to help Illinois to develop the most effective strategies possible to assist both Ukrainians and their sponsors and to reach all U4U participants who may need assistance.

Support for the project was provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services, in collaboration with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago/Jewish United Fund and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, both of whom have contracts with the state to develop subcontracts with organizations that provide services to Ukrainians.

The project was guided by an advisory committee that included representatives of agencies that either fund or directly provide services to Ukrainians. The members of the advisory committee included

- Deborah Covington, Senior Vice President, Planning and Allocations, [Jewish United Fund](#) (JUF)
- Nataliia Kohut, Ukrainian Program Manager, [RefugeeOne](#)
- Liza Khalil, Education Manager, [World Relief](#)
- Ngoan Le, Immigration and Housing Policy Director, [Illinois Department of Human Services](#)
- Oleg Malski, Program Director, [Selfreliance Association](#)
- Megan McKenna, Consultant, [Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#) (ICIRR)

[Rob Paral](#) served as the consultant for the study responsible for gathering information and working with the advisory committee to produce the final study report.

Study Methods and Limitations

The study uses data collected from the following sources:

1. Illinois Department of Human Services – Data on sponsorship applications and Ukrainians receiving public benefits
2. Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) – Data on Ukrainian and Russian-speaking students enrolled in public schools
3. Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights – Data on Ukrainians provided with social services funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and the Illinois Department of Human Services

4. Selfreliance Association – Information on the locations of persons served in the Illinois Family Resource Program
5. Focus groups and interviews with Ukrainians, sponsors and subject matter experts

Further information on study methods is found in an appendix to this report.

The study was conducted during May and June 2023. For this reason, findings from the study should be considered limited. They provide *preliminary* insight into how U4U has been implemented in Illinois.



Participants at a community celebration

Study Findings

Numbers of Ukrainians Served

As of spring 2023, JUF and ICIRR had provided case management services to about 4,700 Ukrainians served in a six-month period. In that same time period 16,108 Illinois residents sponsored a beneficiary from Ukraine. Assuming the beneficiaries live in Illinois, and about two-thirds of them are adults, it could be estimated that about 40 percent of the Ukrainian adults were served.

The two prime contractors reported data in different categories. Some of the major categories of service among the JUF organizations were budgeting and cultural orientation, which each served over a thousand persons. Among ICIRR organizations, over a thousand persons had received information/referral services and legal services.

JUF-Funded Agencies' Services to Ukrainians through Spring 2023	
Total Case Management	3,371
Budgeting	1,439
Cultural Orientation	2,296
Housing	151
Health Screening	194
Job Placement	59
Mental Health	7
School Enrollment	8

ICIRR-Funded Agencies' Services to Ukrainians through Spring 2023	
Total Case Management	1,300
English-Language Classes	200
Information and Referrals	2,800
Legal Services	1,294



Students in English class

Services to Sponsors

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement provides funds for services to Ukrainian arrivals, but does not provide funding for services to sponsors. [Welcome.US](https://www.welcome.us), a national organization, supports sponsor services through a grant to the Selfreliance Association.

Under the grant, the Selfreliance Association recruits new sponsors, largely through its network of contacts, and assists them in the application process. The grant covers a full-time director of sponsor services, a part-time media coordinator and another part-time employee.

Selfreliance subcontracts with World Relief to fund a Ukrainian sponsor support coordinator located at that agency. The sponsor support coordinator at World Relief works with sponsors referred by SelfReliance, and also with sponsors located through other means such as via Facebook pages. The coordinator provides one-on-one assistance to sponsors, such as navigating needs for special services that some Ukrainians have, or counseling sponsors. The sponsor coordination effort is working on developing support groups and other types of networking for sponsors, including some in-person social events.

Geographic Expansion of Services to Reach Ukrainians

To reach the Ukrainian population, some of the agencies expanded their geographic reach by opening new offices and/or co-locating services with existing organizations. For example, Selfreliance began to serve Ukrainians in Bloomingdale, Palatine and Palos Park, and at a second site in Chicago.

The Polish American Association at one point co-located staff in the Selfreliance offices. World Relief, meanwhile, has a full-time sponsor coordinator who works with Selfreliance staff. RefugeeOne opened new offices in Buffalo Grove and in the Norwood Park community area of Chicago.



Chicago: Job fair

Characteristics of U4U Participants in Illinois

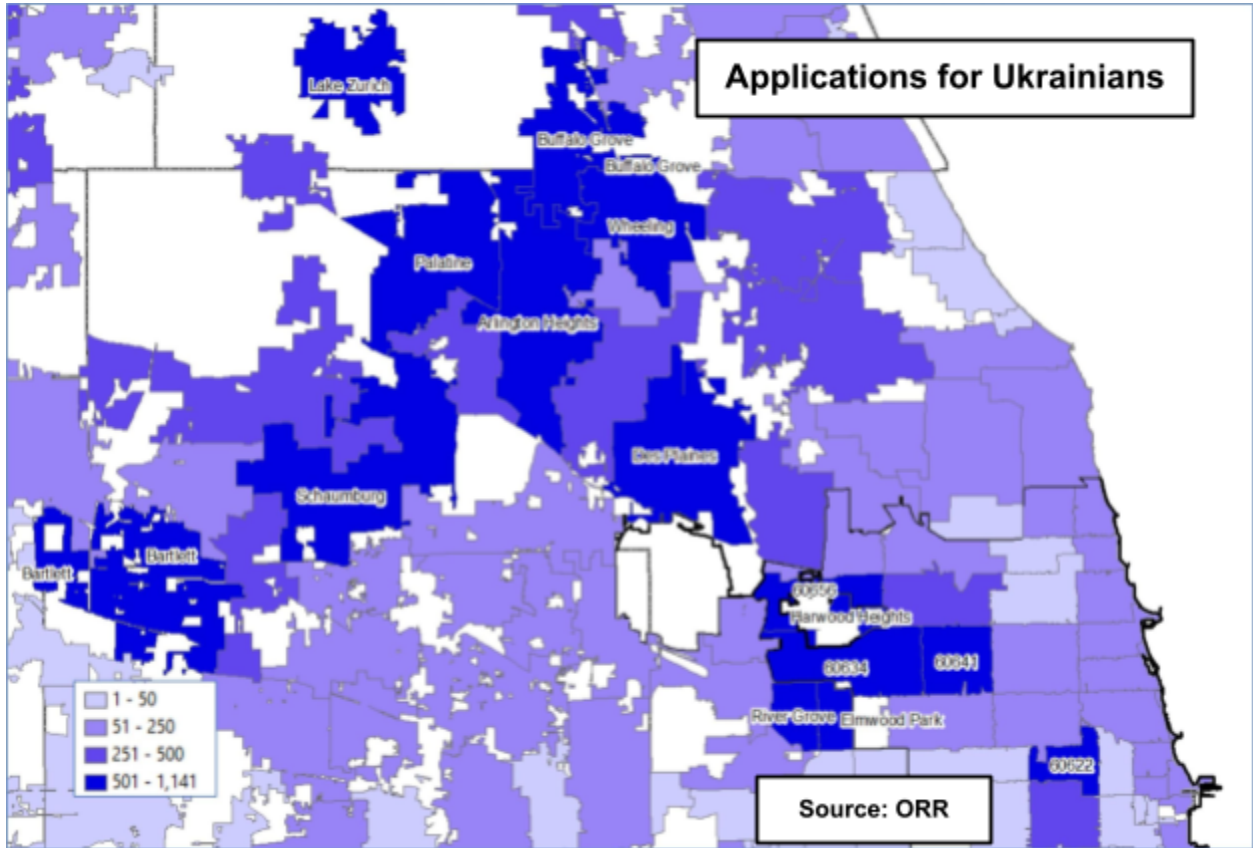
Where Have Ukrainians Settled in Illinois?

ORR provides data on the zip code and place (city, town or village) of sponsors. Not all Ukrainians will live in the same area as their sponsor, but it may be assumed that their settlement pattern would approximate that of their sponsors. For example, if sponsors are predominantly in the northern suburbs of Chicago, it is not unreasonable to expect Ukrainian arrivals to live in the same region.

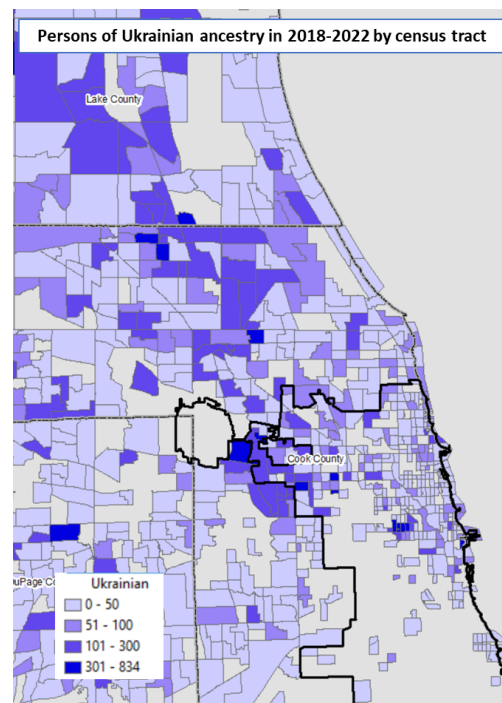
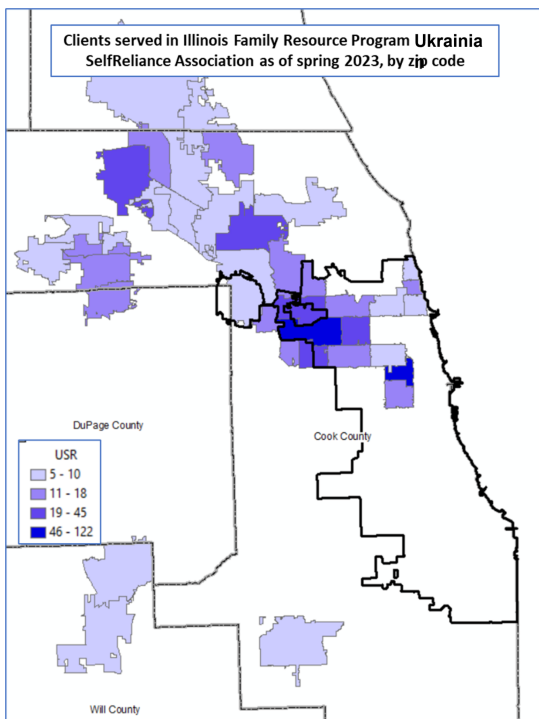
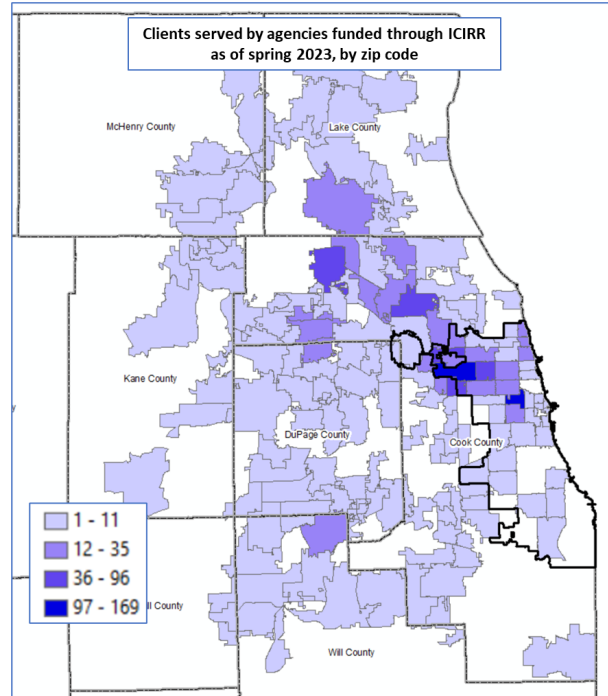
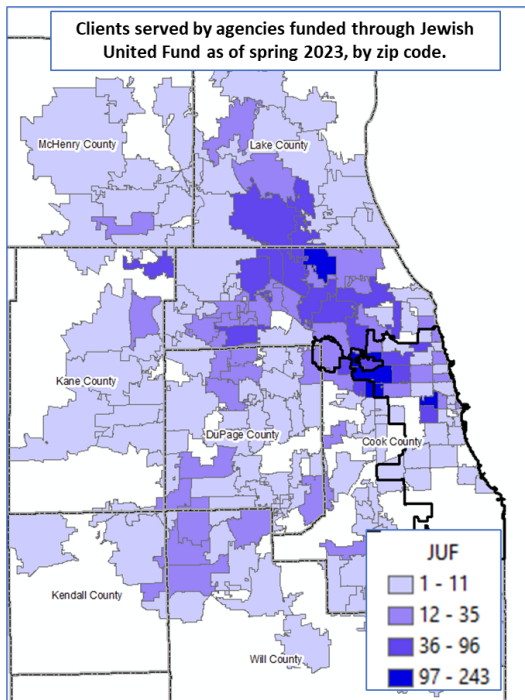
The state map and the map of metro Chicago below are based on ORR data for the July 2022 through May 2023 period. The zip codes of applicants show a clear geographic pattern. The applications are concentrated in two areas: 1) the Ukrainian Village neighborhood in Chicago, centered on Chicago Avenue roughly between Ashland and Western Avenues, and 2) an arc of suburbs spreading out from the northwest side of Chicago and including, notably, the villages of Elmwood Park, Harwood Heights and Norridge. Also of note are the suburbs of Bartlett, Des Plaines, Palatine, Wheeling and Buffalo Grove.

Illinois Places and Zips with Ukrainian Sponsor Applicants



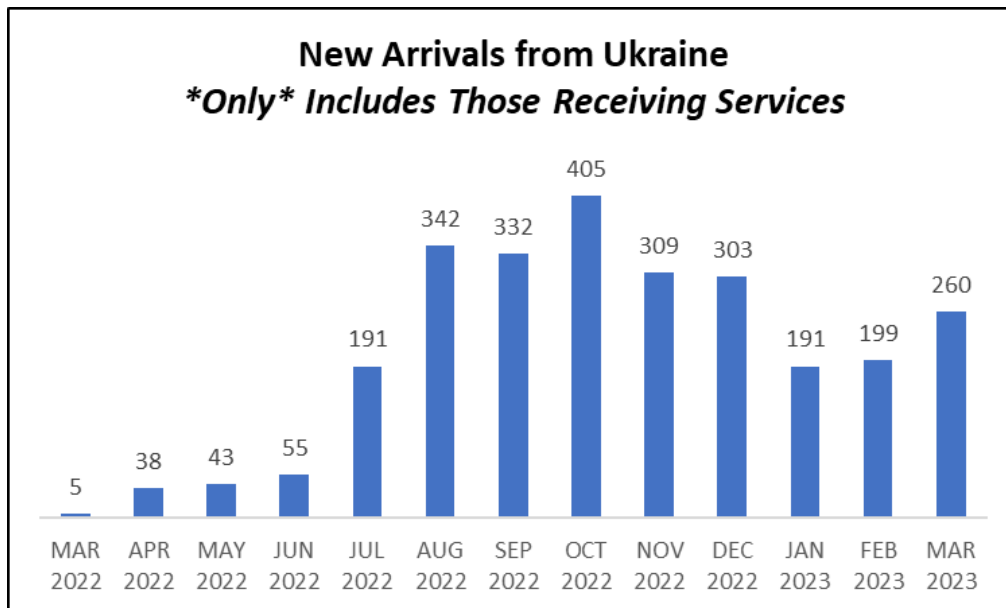


Maps of persons served by voluntary agencies, including those associated with the Jewish United Fund, ICIRR and the Selfreliance Association, show a similar pattern of Ukrainians reached by their organizations. Also shown is a map of persons with Ukrainian ancestry, the majority of whom are U.S.-born. The ancestry map suggests that many sponsors have ancestral or perhaps family relationships with Ukraine.



Pace of Arrivals

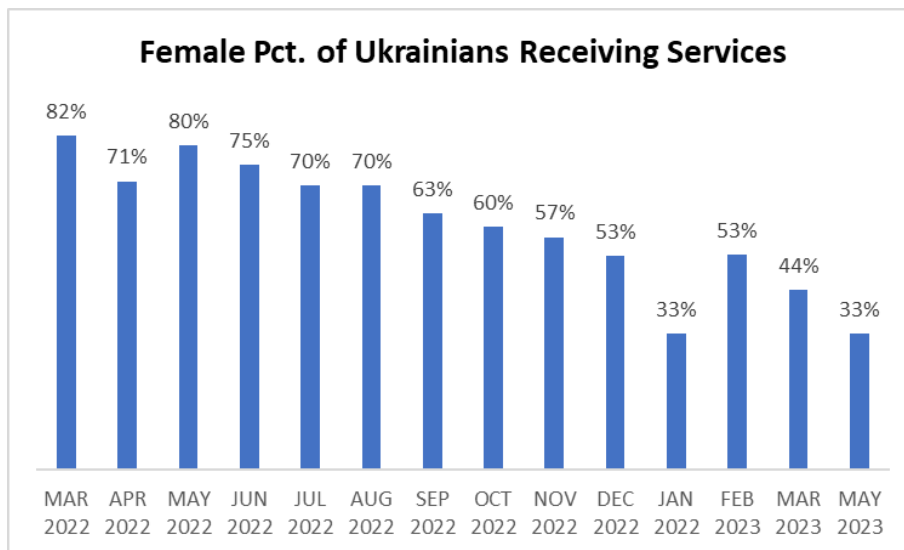
About 757 persons in Illinois per month applied to sponsor a Ukrainian between July 2022 and April 2023, according to data from ORR. The peaks of sponsor applications were in August and September 2022. In 2023, the average number of applications decreased to about 479 per month. Records from the social service providers on the arrival times of clients showed that arrivals also peaked somewhat in late summer and early fall 2022, similar to the ORR data on applications.



Source: Agency intake data; may include a small number of duplicated cases

Gender Composition

According to information on persons served through the JUF and ICIRR networks, more men began to arrive over the course of U4U. Women were 82 percent of persons receiving services in March 2022 but 33 percent in May 2023, 14 months later. These data do not include children and, as with all data based on persons getting services, may not accurately represent the overall population.





Ukrainians in Dixon, Illinois

Public School Enrollment

School enrollment of Ukrainian-speaking children has jumped in Illinois. The number of students who speak Ukrainian at home rose by 2,213 from 2021 to 2022, or by 85 percent. The increase raises questions about student needs for bilingual and multilingual services, and also about impacts on local school district resources.

ISBE Home Language Survey: Illinois

	2021	2022	# Change	% Change
Ukrainian	2,589	4,802	2,213	85%
Russian	5,441	7,602	2,161	40%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Ukrainian children are enrolling in school districts in a pattern that reflects the maps shown earlier in this report – namely, including Chicago and mostly northwest suburbs. The districts shown are those with the largest numbers of Ukrainian-speaking children, based on an annual [home language survey](#) conducted by the Illinois State Board of Education.

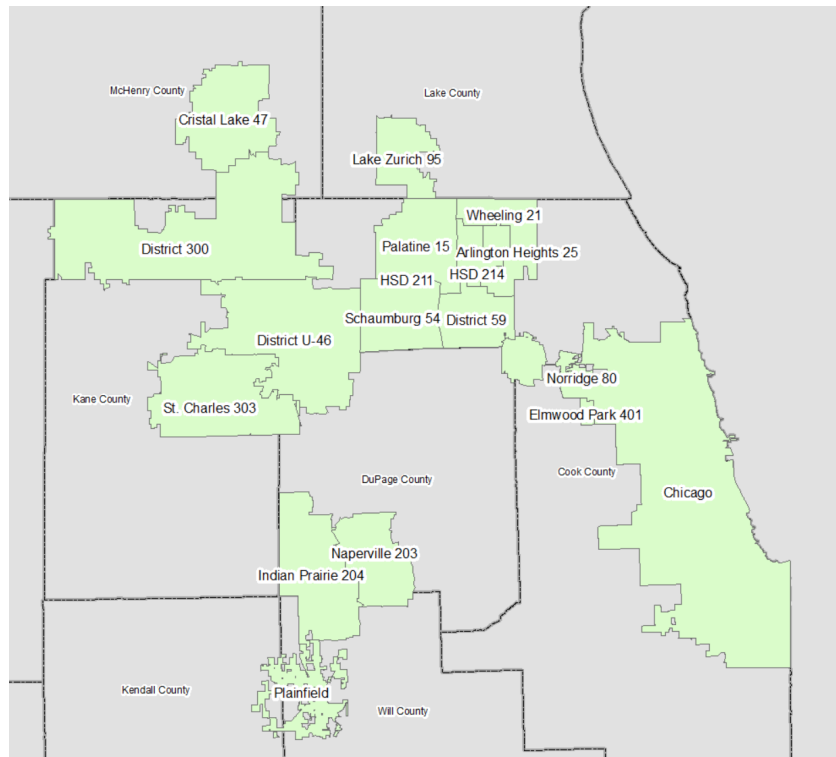
The table below includes Illinois school districts with at least 50 Ukrainian-speaking students in the fall of 2022, ranked by the number of those students. (Of note is the large number of Russian-speaking children in these districts, which may include some children from Ukraine.) It may be seen that many schools had dozens of new Ukrainian-speaking students in 2022.

The data show the City of Chicago with the largest number of Ukrainian-speaking students, followed by District 54 in Schaumburg and District U-46, which serves 11 communities in Chicago’s northwest suburbs. The suburban districts with at least 50 Ukrainian students include many high-ranked schools. About 19 percent of the districts have schools ranked “exemplary” by ISBE, which is the highest ranking given to schools. (Statewide, 10 percent of schools are considered exemplary.)

ISBE Home Language Survey

	Ukrainian 2021	Russian 2021	Ukrainian 2022	Russian 2022	Ukrainian Chg	Russian Chg
Total	2,589	5,441	4,802	7,602	2,213	2,161
City of Chicago SD 299	554	555	793	811	239	256
Schaumburg CCSD 54	123	147	176	176	53	29
SD U-46	54	45	135	110	81	65
Palatine CCSD 15	83	108	131	137	48	29
Indian Prairie CUSD 204	41	161	125	208	84	47
Wheeling CCSD 21	90	404	124	444	34	40
Township HSD 214	87	225	114	226	27	1
Plainfield SD 202	41	49	105	130	64	81
Elmwood Park CUSD 401	87	2	100	10	13	8
Lake Zurich CUSD 95	52	171	79	202	27	31
Township HSD 211	47	47	77	77	30	30
CUSD 300	27	23	76	75	49	52
Norridge SD 80	48	2	65	10	17	8
Comm Cons SD 59	28	39	60	63	32	24
Naperville CUSD 203	22	101	60	149	38	48
Arlington Heights SD 25	34	38	58	55	24	17
Crystal Lake CCSD 47	23	20	53	40	30	20
St Charles CUSD 303	16	24	50	65	34	41

Source: Illinois State Board of Education



Findings on Ukrainians from Focus Groups and Interviews

The study communicated with more than 40 Ukrainians in five focus groups and personal interviews. An interpreter assisted in most conversations, and a standard interview guide was used. The Ukrainians were a reasonably representative group in terms of gender, age, family structure (i.e., single, partnered with partner present or not, with children or not), whether they were from east or west Ukraine, etc. The researchers also spoke with more than a dozen individuals from social service agencies and other institutions that work with and know the experiences of the Ukrainians.

As noted earlier, these findings should be understood as limited and preliminary, given the sample size of about 40 persons.

The following is a summary of issues raised by the U4U participants:

Most Ukrainians we spoke with are working and economically independent

- Getting persons to work quickly has always been a main goal of the Refugee Program, and Ukrainians seem to have met this goal. Persons in the Uniting for Ukraine program can get employment authorization and go to work fairly soon after their arrival. The great majority of men we spoke with were working. Many women said that they could not work because childcare was too expensive. These findings were supported by interviews with community experts.
- In general, Ukrainians have found employment in the service sector, construction and retail. We spoke with persons who worked cleaning buildings, cleaning airplanes at O'Hare Airport, laying floor tile, and working in the delicatessen section of a popular supermarket chain. In June 2023, the Selfreliance Association had a job fair that was heavily attended by Ukrainians and included about 20 employers. (Unemployment in May 2023 was 3.5 percent in metro Chicago, according to the Illinois Department of Employment Security.)
- Multiple Ukrainian men wanted to obtain Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) from the State of Illinois, which give access to higher-paying truck-driving jobs. They said their main impediment to passing the CDL exam was English proficiency.
- Ukrainians have access to employment counselors funded by ORR, but some use other methods of finding jobs. More than one person said they looked for employment in Polish-language newspapers in Chicago. Others said they looked door-to-door. Some said that online job



Chicago: Bulletin board at service agency

searches were not useful because companies that appear in popular search engines seek English-speaking employees.

Many of the Ukrainians we spoke with appeared to be unaware of services available to them

- Although the great majority of Ukrainians who want to work seem to have a job, the same individuals could benefit from the social services for which they are eligible, such as English classes and advice on access to assistance programs.
- Yet many of the Ukrainians we spoke with did not know about the services offered by organizations funded with ORR dollars. One woman reported that she was working and needed nothing, but when asked whether she had gotten health insurance through Medicaid, and told that a service organization could help her to apply for Medicaid, she became quite surprised and excited to learn that she could finally get health insurance.
- Our focus groups that were done within a social service agency, perhaps unsurprisingly, included persons who were aware of services. But our focus groups and interviews at a church and at a large community celebration found almost no persons aware of benefits they could obtain via service agencies. This included English classes.

Many of the Ukrainians we spoke with are in contact with their sponsor, but some receive no assistance

- Most sponsor relationships seem positive and helpful to the Ukrainians in U4U. The great majority of Ukrainians we spoke with said they were sponsored by family or friends. There were more than a few stories of other Ukrainians who had a so-called “paper sponsor” who merely facilitated their arrival in the U.S. and gave no assistance. No person we spoke with described their own sponsor in those terms.

Social media is a key method to reach Ukrainians

- In each focus group and conversation, we asked about the best way to get information to Ukrainians in Illinois, and almost unanimously we heard that Facebook sites such as “Ukrainian in Chicago” were the best way because almost everyone looks at them. Ukrainians also look at YouTube for news from home. Respondents told us that ads or posts on Facebook or YouTube were the best way to get their attention about social services.
- We found that the social service organizations are active on social media to some extent, though a more proactive approach seems to be warranted, such as placing ads and perhaps using other online strategies on the major platforms of Facebook and YouTube.



Churches are an important gathering place

- We heard that attendance is strong at Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches in Illinois, and that Ukrainian newcomers are a large share of persons attending services. We attended, for example, a standing-room-only service at a Ukrainian Catholic church in Palatine, Illinois. Persons at the service told us that posters at the church are a good source of information for Ukrainians. The pastor could be given announcements about organizations and events.

Findings on Sponsors from Focus Groups and Interviews

The study communicated with 12 sponsors of Ukrainians via two focus groups. One focus group was held on Zoom, and the other was an in-person gathering. A standardized questionnaire was used. Sponsors were located in downtown Chicago, in Chicago neighborhoods on the northwest and southwest sides of the city, in suburban Chicago, in rural Illinois and in northwest Indiana.

Following is a summary of issues raised by the sponsors. These comments should be understood as preliminary and limited, given the limited number of sponsors we were able to speak with.

Sponsors have serious needs that are not being addressed

- Sponsors we spoke to accepted that they had chosen to assist newcomer refugees. But in truth, sponsors often find that they take on extraordinary responsibilities. Some vignettes illustrate this:
 - Sponsor 1 had a sponsorship fall through suddenly, and Sponsor 1 accepted a second family. Then the first family asked for sponsorship again, and Sponsor 1 willingly – if unexpectedly – accepted sponsorship of two families. Sponsor 1 now supports two separate families. One family has a child with a terminal illness that needs constant care, and the sponsor contributes to the family’s rent. For the other family, the sponsor has decided to support their enrollment in community college, which requires regular daycare for a minor child. The financial costs to Sponsor 1 have proved to be extremely high.
 - Sponsor 2 agreed to sponsor a distant relative. The relative has significant mental health needs and may have a trauma-related disorder. Complicating the picture is the fact that the sponsor does not live in an area with many social services.
- Multiple sponsors we spoke to described being alone in the process, with almost no information available to them. Sponsored Ukrainians often need intensive assistance, especially in the early months of their arrival, and sponsors are expected to provide support that can be emotionally and financially draining. One sponsor said that, as far as anyone seemed to be concerned, it did not matter what happened to a Ukrainian in U4U: no one would know.





There are different categories or types of sponsors

- Some sponsors are close family members or relatives. Others are friends. Some are humanitarians who have no links to Ukraine but are moved to help and become closely involved with the arrivals. Doubtless, there are unknown numbers of sponsors who do very little for their sponsored person. Considering the different kinds of sponsors can inform outreach efforts directed toward supporting sponsors in general.

Discussion of Findings

This section provides impressions of the meaning of the findings of the interviews and data analysis. Recommendations for expanded service to the Ukrainians are provided later.

Numbers of Ukrainians served

- As of spring 2022, about a quarter of Ukrainians appear to have had contact with a service provider. This rate of service should be reevaluated based on data as of July 1, 2023. Service providers and state government should discuss whether the rate of contact can be increased and what rate of service should be expected.

Settlement patterns

- The Ukrainians are racially white. To a great extent, they live and work in largely white communities of the northwest suburbs. These facts can make them seem somewhat invisible to policymakers and the public, who might otherwise be engaged to help them. The same characteristics can, realistically speaking, make their integration into U.S. society easier than in the case of other groups from Asia, Africa or Latin America.
- The settlement of U4U participants presents some service challenges. The suburban areas are well-known for lacking public transportation, for requiring persons to travel to find services, for requiring service providers to cover a large geographic area and for other issues that complicate delivery of human services. For example, what is the best way to reach a U4U beneficiary living in Lake in the Hills in southeast McHenry County, who spends two hours a day in a car driving to a job as an auto mechanic in another suburb?
- It may be necessary to find new ways of reaching Ukrainians in the suburbs. Even new suburban offices may be hard to reach for some suburban residents. The dispersion might require more online English classes.

Pace of arrivals

- The pace of arrivals seems lower than it was in late fall and winter 2022, yet the spring 2023 numbers suggest a steady flow. This lack of a drop-off would argue that current services should be maintained at least. The decline in numbers compared with late 2022 may reflect the fact that sponsors who are family or friends with Ukrainians and who were eager to bring their sponsored people have already done so. It would be of interest to understand whether more recent sponsors are any less likely to be family members.

Gender composition

- The increasing arrival of men can have consequences for the employment counseling available. It appears more men are in the workforce, as opposed to taking care of children, and they often seem interested in obtaining CDLs.

Public school enrollment

- Virtually all parents that we spoke with seemed content with their children's experience in school. At the same time, most of the parents said no Ukrainian-language materials were sent home. Some parents were unsure of the name of their children's school.
- It seems that public schools with large numbers of Ukrainian-speaking children could do a better job of reaching out to parents. The schools could also be a method of reaching parents with information about services.

Discussions with Ukrainians

- The sample of Ukrainians – about 40 – that were contacted for this project could obviously be larger, but it also represents a not-insignificant number.
- In our discussions, there were multiple examples of U4U participants who did not know about services. They had not refused services; they did not know of them.
- It is possible that the Ukrainians might not need some of the services offered. For example, most of them do not seem to have trouble finding jobs in the current low-unemployment economy. The strong demand for CDL training seems to call for English classes geared to the CDL exam.
- The use of very specific Facebook sites by the Ukrainians was impressive. Nearly all of them mentioned the sites. More targeted and strategic use of Facebook seems like a key way to introduce more U4U participants to the service agencies. Perhaps Facebook conversations and meetings could be arranged and moderated by providers. Facebook can provide metrics on engagement, and charge different rates for placement of advertisements. Social media experts may be needed.
- Some U4U participants said they wished that they could have gotten a sheet of information on social services when they arrived at O'Hare Airport. It's a simple idea if it can be implemented.

Discussions with sponsors

- As with U4U participants, our sample of sponsors was limited to focus groups and some individual conversations.
- Nevertheless, we were struck by stories of how "on their own" some sponsors are. They navigate social assistance programs on their own. They look for and research services like free mental health counseling or subsidized housing that are, frankly, extremely difficult to find.
- Sponsors need supportive counseling. This could take the form of Zoom meetings or, again, open meetings on Facebook. The sponsors we spoke with were spread across rural and suburban areas in Illinois and Indiana but were hungry to process their experiences, share stories and learn from one another.
- Some sponsors find themselves unexpectedly with sponsored persons that have very high needs for support. There should be a way to triage these cases and provide more intensive assistance.

Recommendations

Recommendations to improve services to Ukrainians

Reach Ukrainians more effectively

- Use targeted social media, especially Facebook, more strategically
- This would include ad purchases and tracking of interaction metrics such as time on posts, likes, forwards, etc.
- This may require a new hired position of social media strategist

Increase outreach and advertising via churches

- Use churches as a location to post notices of free English classes, access to medical insurance, etc.
- Work with pastors to have announcements made

Provide occupational English classes

- Respond to widespread desire for CDLs with classes or other assistance geared to the CDL exam

Investigate ways to reach Ukrainians shortly after arrival

- Investigate possibility of establishing relationship with the Ukrainian Consulate in Chicago.
- It will not be easy to work with new, institutional partners that are not involved with settlement, but attempts could include
 - conversations with Chicago Customs and Border Protection about making information available to Ukrainian arrivals
 - working with major air carriers bringing Ukrainians, especially on flights from Warsaw

Recommendations for serving sponsors

Reach sponsors more effectively

- As with the effort to reach Ukrainians, targeted social media, especially Facebook, should be used more strategically, including ad placement and interaction analysis; additional staff will be required to achieve this

Support sponsors more

- Organize sponsor support groups
- Develop a directory of sponsors willing to network
- Create referral information for sponsors
- Target sponsors with especially high-need persons

Recommendations to strengthen Ukrainian-serving organizations

Strengthen interagency communication

- Consider regular meetings of all agencies to share ideas and information

- Include meetings for frontline staff as well as supervisors and directors
- Consider gathering more directly comparable service data across all agencies involved in serving Ukrainians
- Consider an online/updated dashboard of information on Ukrainians served, and use the dashboard to discuss needed changes

Conclusion

Uniting for Ukraine is a new program for Illinois. It's a unique program, combining elements of sponsorship (as in legal immigration) with services (as in refugee resettlement). The state uses two sets of main contractors. The data gathering done for this report in a two-month period raises a number of questions that probably need to be discussed among the project principals further. It may or may not be the case that family/friends of persons in Ukraine have already submitted most of their applications, so the numbers of future arrivals are hard to predict. On the other hand, the war in Ukraine does not show signs of being resolved in the near future, [and civilians are suffering](#). Illinois should prepare for a continued stream of arrivals and find ways to reach the great majority.

Appendix

Study Methods

The project used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including individual interviews and focus groups, along with analysis of service organization records on persons served and other sources of information. Conversations with Ukrainians were either conducted entirely in Ukrainian or were done in English and Ukrainian with the involvement of an interpreter. Focus groups took place at two community centers, at a church and over Zoom. Interviews were done by phone and in person.

- Ukrainian arrivals
 - Two English classes of language learners at the Chicago office of RefugeeOne, a voluntary agency
 - A focus group at Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church in Palatine, Illinois
 - Group and individual interviews at a Ukrainian community celebration in Palatine, Illinois
 - A focus group at the Selfreliance Association in Chicago
- Sponsors
 - An online meeting
 - A focus group at the Selfreliance Association in Chicago
- Community experts
 - Director of the Selfreliance Association
 - Several program managers and staff of Selfreliance
 - A RefugeeOne case manager
 - A World Relief case manager
 - A World Relief education manager
 - Two employment counselors at RefugeeOne
 - A grant manager with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
 - A grant manager with the Jewish United Fund
 - A pastor at a Ukrainian church
 - An immigration attorney at North Suburban Legal Services
 - A sponsor coordinator at RefugeeOne

The advisory committee and lead researcher developed a set of topics to explore with Ukrainians and their sponsors:

- **For Ukrainians**
 - Length of time in the U.S.
 - Housing situation
 - English language ability
 - Enrollment in English class
 - Their children's experiences, including at school
 - Familiarity and communication with their children's U.S. school
 - Employment situation
 - Familiarity with and assistance from voluntary agencies
 - Willingness to receive assistance
 - Their relationship with their sponsor
 - Best way to communicate with them
 - Thoughts about their future in the U.S.

- **For sponsors**
 - Why they became a sponsor
 - Any previous relationship with the sponsored person
 - Method of communicating with the sponsored person
 - Their experience as a sponsor
 - How they have assisted the sponsored person
 - Familiarity with government assistance programs
 - Familiarity with voluntary agencies assisting Ukrainians
 - Their perception of the sponsored person's independence, health, housing, transportation

- **For community experts**
 - Perception of social, economic and health status of the Ukrainian arrivals
 - Status of children
 - Ukrainians' knowledge of and relationship to voluntary agencies
 - Best methods of communication with the arrivals
 - Experience of sponsors