Displacement from Ukraine to Serbia

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ANALYSIS – NOVEMBER 2026

KEY FINDINGS

- Serbia recorded 694 applications for temporary protection in January–October 2026, compared with 290 in the same period of 2025. Protection was granted for the first time to 595 persons, compared with 285 a year earlier. Both figures are more than twice those of the same period of 2025, after three years of relatively stable annual totals. Most of the increase occurred from August 2026 onwards.
- Since October 2026, IDEAS has recorded cases in which persons were refused registration for temporary protection because they held or had previously held protection in an EU Member State. The Ministry of Interior should end these informal refusals and ensure access to registration and written, reasoned decisions by the Asylum Office.
- The recorded population under temporary protection remains small relative to Serbia's population. At the end of August 2026, 1,465 persons held temporary protection in Serbia, or 0.22 per 1,000 residents. The corresponding rate in the EU-27 was 9.80.
- Adult men made up 48% of applicants in January–October 2026, compared with 34% a year earlier. They outnumbered adult women among new applicants, while the shares of women and children decreased.
- Ukrainian citizens also reside in Serbia on the basis of residence permits under the Law on Foreigners. At the end of 2025, 1,787 Ukrainian citizens held a valid residence permit, mostly on family grounds or for employment.
- Vranje Asylum Centre, the centre designated for persons displaced from Ukraine, accommodated 137 beneficiaries on 26 October 2026, more than twice the 58 in January. This left 18 places within its stated capacity of 155.
- Serbia has not adopted a national plan for the transition from temporary protection or for its eventual end. Such a plan should enable beneficiaries who qualify to obtain another residence status without a gap in lawful residence, and should prepare sustainable, voluntary return to Ukraine for those who choose it, when conditions allow.
- Published data on temporary protection do not show how many persons leave Serbia, cease to hold temporary protection or obtain residence on other grounds. Better data on these changes and on access to work, education, health care and housing would help plan longer-term support.

1 Introduction

Temporary protection has been the main form of protection for persons displaced from Ukraine in Serbia since March 2022.[1] The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection defines it as protection granted by a Government decision in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons who cannot return to their country of origin or habitual residence.[2] Under the Government Decision on temporary protection, the status applies to persons who were forced to leave Ukraine, or were evacuated from it, and cannot return to safe and durable living conditions there. Four groups qualify:

1. Ukrainian citizens and their family members who resided in Ukraine;
2. Asylum seekers, stateless persons and foreign nationals granted asylum or equivalent national protection in Ukraine, and their family members who held residence there;
3. Foreign nationals with valid permanent or temporary residence in Ukraine who cannot return to their country of origin in safe and durable conditions; and
4. Ukrainian citizens and their family members who were lawfully staying in Serbia when the Decision was adopted and whose right of residence has since expired.[3]

In 2023, the Decision was extended until 18 March 2024. In 2024, it was amended so that protection continues for as long as the reasons for it persist, without an end date. Individual decisions, however, are still issued for one year and extended one year at a time.[4] The status provides residence, identity documents, health care, primary and secondary education, legal aid and access to the labour market.[5]

This report examines the available data on protection and residence in the light of the increase in applications in 2026.[6,7,8,9,10,11] It establishes a baseline for periodic updates on protection, residence and access to services.

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[1] Government of the Republic of Serbia, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (KIRS), *Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2025*, 2 July 2026, section 4.5 and relevant statistical tables (Migration Profile 2025), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracioni%20profil%202025%20_final.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[2] Republic of Serbia, *Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection*, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 24/2018, Articles 74–76 (Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection), available at: https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2018/24/2/reg [accessed 4 November 2026].

[3] Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Decision on the provision of temporary protection in the Republic of Serbia to displaced persons arriving from Ukraine*, 17 March 2022, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos. 36/2022, 21/2023 and 21/2024 (Decision on temporary protection), available at: https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/odluka/2022/36/1/reg [accessed 4 November 2026].

[4] Decision on temporary protection, points 3 and 5, as amended in 2023 and 2024.

[5] Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, Article 76.

[6] Unless stated otherwise, annual figures on temporary protection come from the national migration profiles. Monthly figures, figures for January–October and figures on asylum applications and documents issued come from the Asylum Office monthly reports. Where the annual totals in the migration profiles differ from the sum of the monthly reports, the report uses the migration profiles. Figures on temporary protection count persons rather than decisions.

[7] Government of the Republic of Serbia, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (KIRS), *Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2022*, section 4.5 and relevant statistical tables (Migration Profile 2022), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/cir/migracije/migracioni-profil-republike-srbije [accessed 4 November 2026].

[8] Government of the Republic of Serbia, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (KIRS), *Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2023*, section 4.5 and relevant statistical tables (Migration Profile 2023), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/1Migracioni%20profil.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[9] Government of the Republic of Serbia, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (KIRS), *Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2024*, section 4.5 and relevant statistical tables (Migration Profile 2024), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracioni%20profil%20Republike%20Srbije%20za%202024-%20godinu.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[10] Migration Profile 2025, section 4.5 and relevant statistical tables.

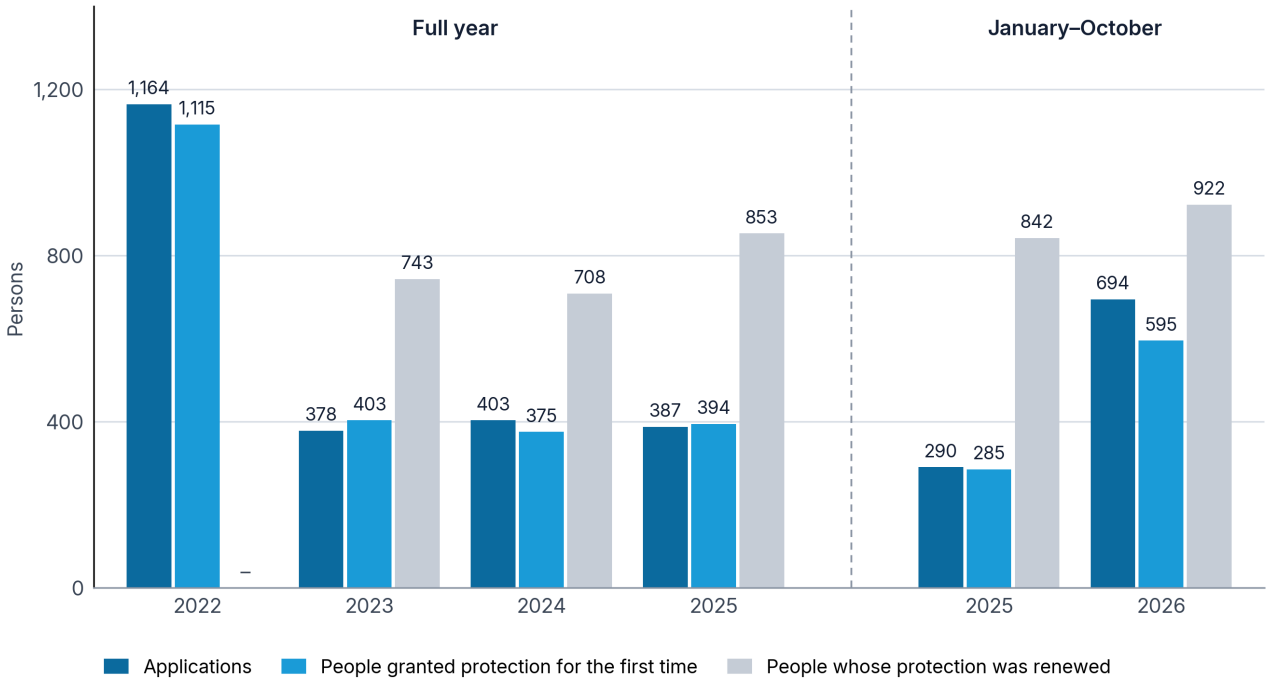
[11] Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, Asylum Office, *Izveštaj o radu Kancelarije za azil* [Monthly activity reports], March 2022–October 2026, unpublished, reports from June 2024 supplied to IDEAS through UNHCR Serbia (Asylum Office, Monthly activity reports).

2 From the 2022 influx to a new rise in 2026

After the outbreak of war in February 2022, the authorities recorded 137,853 entries of Ukrainian citizens into Serbia and 24,443 registrations of stay by the end of that year.[12] In 2022, 1,164 persons applied for temporary protection and the Asylum Office granted protection to 1,115.[13] After this initial influx, the number of new applications decreased and remained broadly stable from 2023 to 2025, before increasing again in 2026 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Applications in 2026 already exceeded the annual total of each year from 2023 to 2025

Persons applying for, granted or extended temporary protection, 2022–October 2026. Full-year totals and January–October totals are shown separately.



Sources: Migration Profiles 2022–2025 and Asylum Office monthly reports.

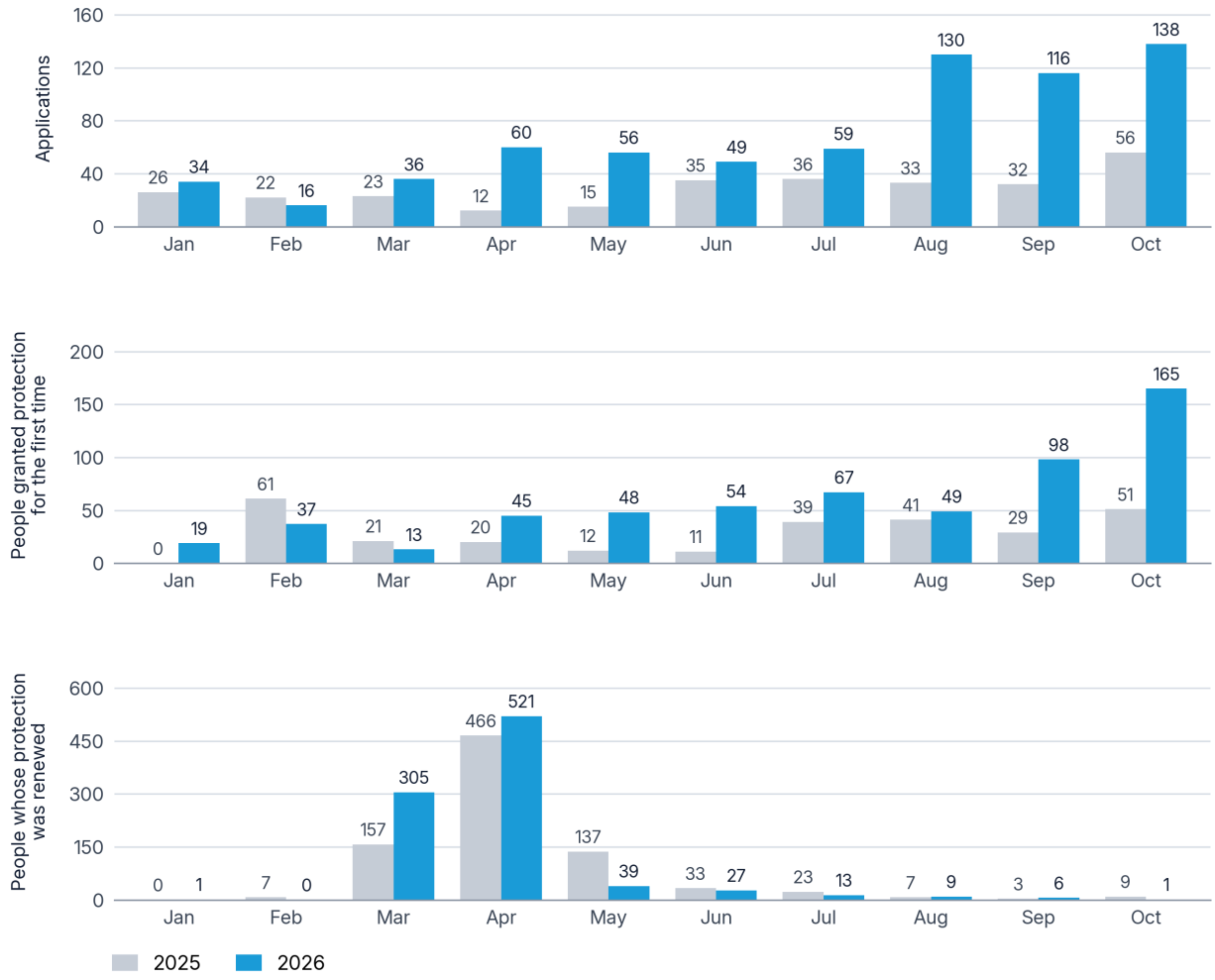
In January–October 2026, Serbia recorded 694 applications for temporary protection and granted protection for the first time to 595 persons, compared with 290 and 285 in the same period of 2025. Both figures more than doubled and already exceed the full-year totals for each year from 2023 to 2025. Extensions remain more numerous than protection granted for the first time. Every decision must be extended each year, so extension covers every person from earlier years who still holds protection. Applications rose particularly from August 2026, when they more than doubled from 59 in July to 130.

[12] Both figures count crossings and registrations, not persons.

[13] Migration Profile 2022, section 4.5.

Figure 2 Most of the rise in applications occurred in August–October 2026

Persons per month, January–October 2025 and 2026.



The 2026 increase is not confined to October alone. In May and June 2022, more than 300 persons a month were granted protection. From July 2022, monthly numbers decreased sharply and remained below 100 throughout 2023–2025. In 2026, the three-month average increased from 23 persons in January–March to 49 in April–June and 104 in August–October, its highest level since June–August 2022. This points to a renewed increase in persons receiving protection, although the figures record when protection was granted, not when persons arrived in Serbia.[14,15]

EU rules also changed in August 2026. Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/1912 extended temporary protection in the EU until 4 March 2028 and, from 5 August 2026, limited new grants to persons who have fulfilled their military obligations in Ukraine, where such obligations apply.[16] Persons who held protection in a Member State on or before 4 August 2026 and have kept it continuously in that Member State are exempt.[17] Serbia has introduced no such condition. The largest monthly increase

[14] IDEAS calculation. A Mann–Kendall test on the monthly figures shows a statistically significant upward trend in January–October 2026 ($\tau = 0.82$, $p = 0.001$), with an estimated Sen's slope of 9.5 persons per month, and the same pattern for applications ($\tau = 0.73$, $p = 0.004$).

[15] Asylum Office, Monthly activity reports.

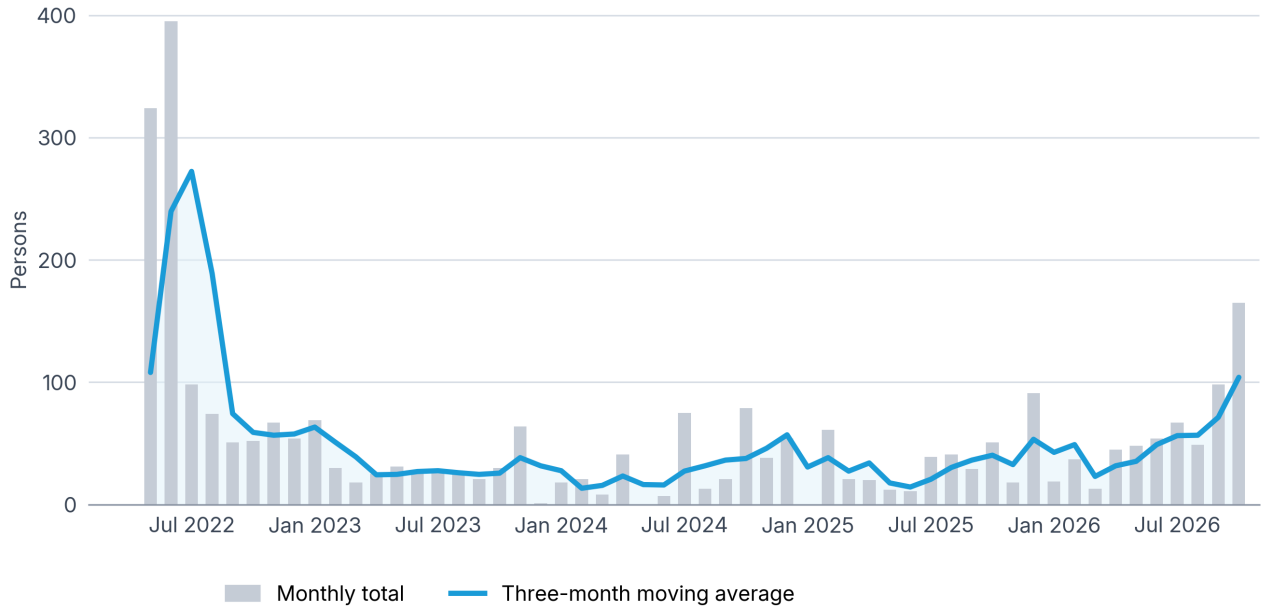
[16] Council of the European Union, *Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/1912 of 30 July 2026 extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*, OJ L, 2026/1912, 4 August 2026 (Decision 2026/1912), available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2026/1912/oj [accessed 4 November 2026].

[17] Council of the European Union, *Corrigendum to Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/1912 of 30 July 2026 extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*, OJ L, 2026/90680, 5 August 2026 (Corrigendum to Decision 2026/1912), available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2026/1912/corrigendum/2026-08-05/oj [accessed 4 November 2026].

in applications in Serbia occurred in the same month. Whether the two are connected cannot be established from the Asylum Office reports, which do not state where applicants lived before or why they applied in Serbia.

Figure 3 The three-month average of persons granted protection for the first time rose every month from March to October 2026

Persons granted temporary protection for the first time, by month, March 2022–October 2026. The three-month moving average shows the underlying direction of the monthly figures.



Source: Asylum Office monthly reports.
Note: the three-month moving average is the sum of the current month and the preceding two months divided by three.

The Asylum Office rarely refuses temporary protection. It issued four refusals in January–October 2026 and two in 2025, and annulled one decision in January 2026. Some applications from 2026 were still pending in October, so the final number for the year may be higher.

Since October 2026, the IDEAS legal team has recorded cases in which police stations refused to register persons for temporary protection because they held, or had previously held, temporary protection in an EU Member State.[18] These cases come from IDEAS's legal assistance and do not show how widespread the practice is. Neither the Law nor the Government Decision provides for previous protection in another state as a ground for refusal, and whether a person qualifies is for the Asylum Office to decide. Article 74(5) of the Law provides that persons are registered and requires an individual decision on temporary protection for each person.[19] An oral refusal at a police station therefore ends the case before the individual decision that the Law requires is ever adopted, and without an administrative act there is no decision against which an appeal could be lodged.

[18] IDEAS, legal assistance case records.

[19] Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, Article 74(5).

3 The scale of protection in Serbia and the EU

According to Ministry of Interior data published by UNHCR, 1,465 persons held temporary protection in Serbia at the end of August 2026.[20] The figure equals the number of persons granted or extended protection in the preceding twelve months. The Ministry has not published how it counts beneficiaries, so it is not clear whether persons who have left Serbia or obtained another status are removed from the count.

Relative to its population, Serbia has fewer persons under temporary protection than the EU-27. At the end of August 2026, it had 0.22 beneficiaries per 1,000 residents,[21] compared with 9.80 across the EU-27.[22,23,24,25] Rates in neighbouring EU states were also substantially higher, at 4.81 in Hungary, 7.87 in Croatia, 11.70 in Romania and 12.26 in Bulgaria (Table 1 and Figure 4).[26]

Table 1 Temporary protection in Serbia and neighbouring EU countries, 2026

Country	Persons holding protection, 31 Aug 2026	Per 1,000 residents	Granted for the first time, Jan–Aug 2025	Granted for the first time, Jan–Aug 2026	Change
Serbia	**1,465**	**0.22**	**205**	**332**	**+62%**
Hungary	45,680	4.81	2,865	3,235	+13%
Croatia	30,500	7.87	1,940	2,535	+31%
EU-27	4,431,115	9.80	394,540	414,030	+5%
Romania	222,795	11.70	17,120	22,990	+34%
Bulgaria	78,770	12.26	13,415	14,850	+11%

EU countries: non-EU citizens, counts rounded to the nearest 5. Serbia: all citizenships. Rates per 1,000 residents use the population on 1 January 2026. Data extracted on 3 November 2026. Sources: UNHCR Serbia, Eurostat and Asylum Office monthly reports.

In January–August 2026, protection granted for the first time grew faster in Serbia than in the EU-27 and in each neighbouring EU country (Table 1 and Figure 5). The base in Serbia was much smaller, 205 persons in January–August 2025, so a modest increase to 332 produces a large percentage change.

[20] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Serbia, *Refugee Employment Handbooks Presented for Employers and Persons Under International Protection*, 1 October 2026 (UNHCR Serbia, Release of 1 October 2026), available at: https://www.unhcr.org/rs/en/news/press-releases/refugee-employment-handbooks-presented-employers-and-persons-under [accessed 4 November 2026].

[21] UNHCR Serbia, Release of 1 October 2026.

[22] Eurostat, *Beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex – monthly data*, dataset migr_asytpsm, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Temporary protection beneficiaries at month-end (migr_asytpsm)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpsm/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[23] Eurostat, *Beneficiaries of temporary protection by citizenship – per thousand persons*, dataset migr_asytpspop, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Temporary protection beneficiaries per thousand persons (migr_asytpspop)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpspop/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[24] Eurostat, *Decisions granting temporary protection by citizenship, age and sex – monthly data*, dataset migr_asytpfm, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Monthly temporary protection decisions (migr_asytpfm)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpfm/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[25] Eurostat, *Decisions granting temporary protection by citizenship, age and sex – annual aggregated data*, dataset migr_asytpfa, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Annual temporary protection decisions (migr_asytpfa)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpfa/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[26] Eurostat, *Population change – demographic balance and crude rates at national level*, dataset demo_gind, indicator: population on 1 January, EU-27, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia (Eurostat, Population on 1 January), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_gind/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

Figure 4 Serbia has far fewer beneficiaries of temporary protection per 1,000 residents than its EU neighbours

Persons holding temporary protection per 1,000 residents, 31 August 2026.

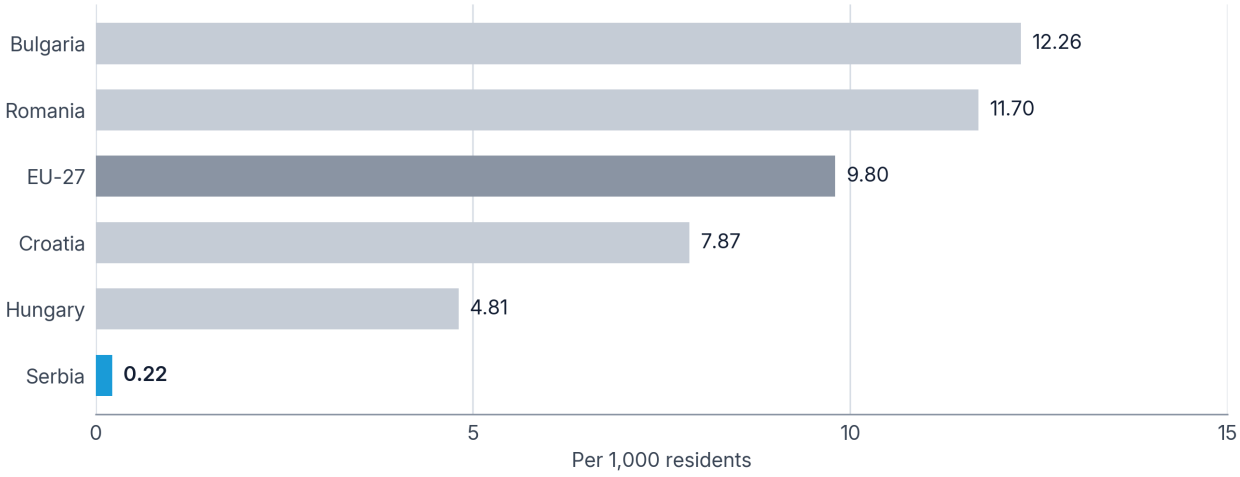
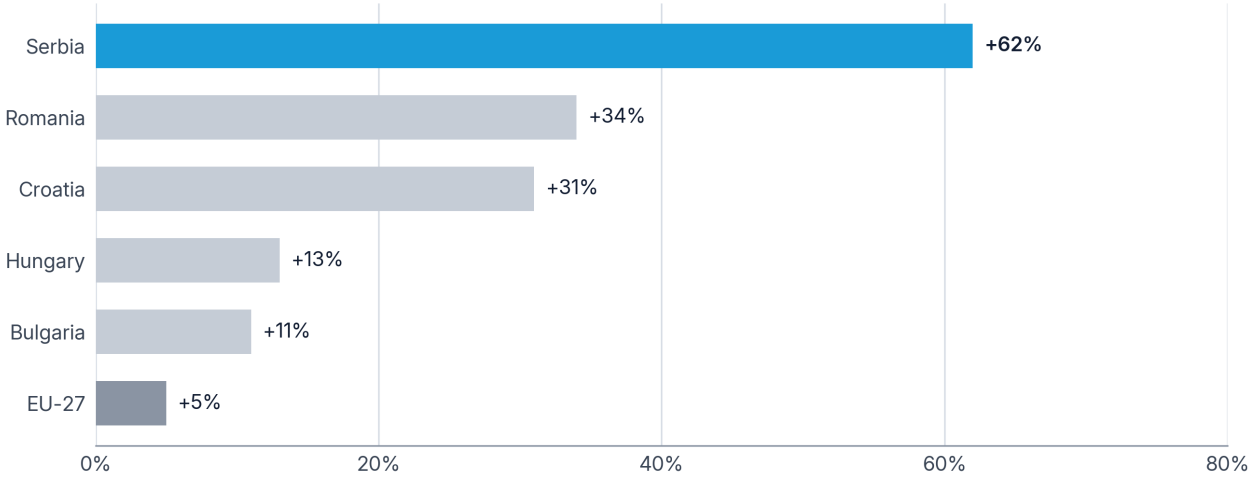


Figure 5 Protection granted for the first time rose faster in Serbia than in the EU-27 and neighbouring EU countries

Change in persons granted temporary protection for the first time, January–August 2026 compared with January–August 2025, %.

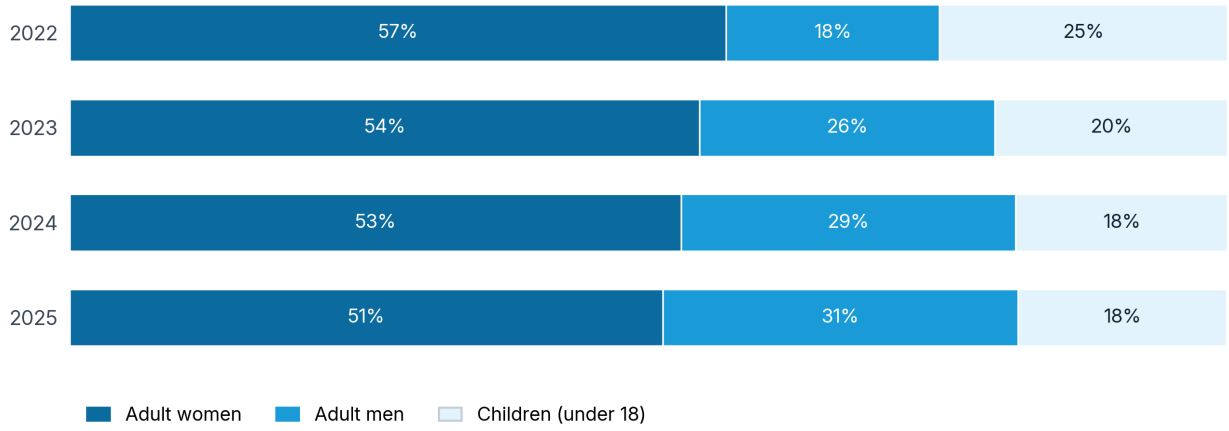


4 Demographic profile of applicants and beneficiaries

Among all persons granted or extended protection, the share of adult men increased every year, from 18.4% in 2022 to 30.7% in 2025. Adult women remained the largest group, although their share and the share of children fell (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Adult women were the largest group of beneficiaries in 2022–2025

Adult women, adult men and children, % of persons granted or extended temporary protection in Serbia, 2022–2025.

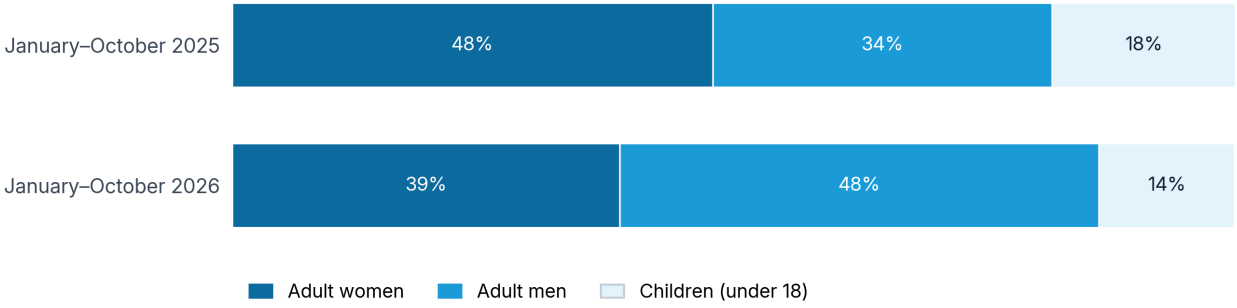


Shares of persons with known sex and age. Sources: Migration Profiles 2022–2025 and European Migration Network.[27]

In 2026, adult men became the largest group among new applicants, at 47.8% in January–October, up from 33.8% a year earlier, while the shares of adult women and children fell (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Adult men became the largest group of applicants in 2026

Adult women, adult men and children, % of applicants for temporary protection in Serbia, January–October 2025 and 2026.



Source: Asylum Office monthly reports.

The share of adult men also increased in the EU-27. The EU figures cover persons granted protection for the first time in January–August, whereas the figures for Serbia cover applicants in January–October, so the two are not directly comparable. Adult men accounted for 38.3% of persons granted temporary protection for the first time in January–August 2026, up from 30.7% a year earlier. EU Member States granted protection to 98,315 men aged 18–34, compared with 61,225 a year earlier, an

[27] European Migration Network (EMN), *Asylum and Migration Overview 2024 – EMN Observer Country Statistical Annex*, December 2025, Table 3.1, p. 13 (EMN, Observer Country Statistical Annex 2024), available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a34db239-ac6e-4fde-9178-570be03bd7b2_en?filename=2024_EMN_Observer_Country_statistical_annex.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

increase of 60.6%.[28] Ukraine's decision to allow men aged 18–22 to leave from 28 August 2025 provides relevant context,[29] but the Asylum Office reports record neither adult applicants' ages nor their previous country of stay, so they cannot show how much of the increase in Serbia reflects this policy change, movements from other host countries or other factors.

Monthly reports recorded no unaccompanied children among applicants from June 2024 to October 2026, although the September 2026 report is unclear on this point.

[28] Eurostat, Monthly temporary protection decisions (migr_asytpfm).

[29] Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, *Resolution No. 1031 of 26 August 2025 amending the Rules for crossing the state border by citizens of Ukraine*, in force from 28 August 2025 (Ukraine, Resolution No. 1031), available at: https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/uploads/public/68a/ef7/b36/68aef7b36a94d375805132.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

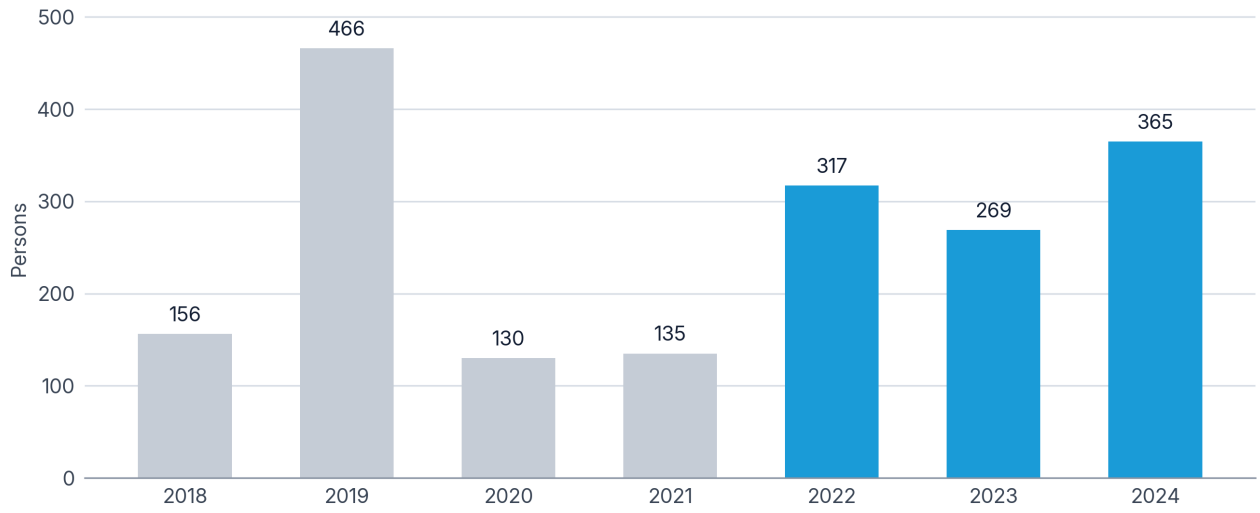
5 Residence on other legal grounds

Besides temporary protection, Ukrainian citizens can stay in Serbia on the basis of a residence permit or, rarely, asylum. Two sources describe this group. The national immigration statistics count the persons who settle in Serbia each year and cover the years before the war. Residence-permit statistics count everyone holding a valid permit at the end of the year and do not include temporary protection.[30] The Eurostat series used here begins in 2024.

Between 269 and 365 Ukrainian citizens a year settled in Serbia in 2022–2024, more than in 2020–2021 but fewer than the 466 recorded in 2019 (Figure 8). SORS counts as immigrants persons granted temporary residence for at least one year or permanent residence.[31,32]

Figure 8 Immigration of Ukrainian citizens rose after 2021 but stayed below the 2019 level

Ukrainian citizens who immigrated to Serbia, 2018–2024, persons.



Data for 2025 not yet published. Source: SORS.

[30] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), published by Eurostat, *Residence permits: National Reference Metadata in Single Integrated Metadata Structure (SIMS), Serbia*, 16 March 2026, metadata reference migr_resval_sims_rs (SORS, Residence permit metadata), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/EN/migr_resval_sims_rs.htm [accessed 4 November 2026].

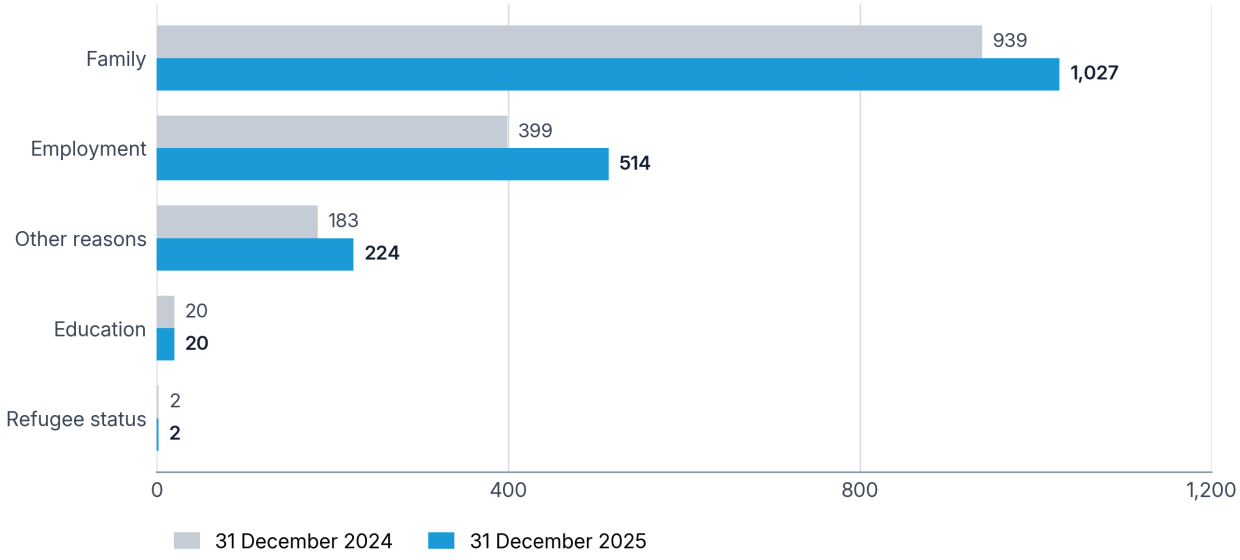
[31] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), *Immigration of foreign citizens, by municipality, sex and citizenship*, database table 1811010104 (SORS, Immigration of foreign citizens), available at: https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/1811010104?languageCode=en-US [accessed 4 November 2026].

[32] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), *Emigration of foreign citizens, by municipality, sex and citizenship*, database table 1811010204 (SORS, Emigration of foreign citizens), available at: https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/1811010204?languageCode=en-US [accessed 4 November 2026].

At the end of 2025, 1,787 Ukrainian citizens held a valid residence permit in Serbia, 16% more than a year earlier, mostly on family grounds or for employment (Figure 9). Of these, 700 held a long-term or permanent residence permit, compared with 630 a year earlier.[33,34,35,36]

Figure 9 Valid residence permits rose by 16%, mostly for family and employment

Ukrainian citizens holding a valid residence permit in Serbia on 31 December 2024 and 2025, by reason. Persons; temporary protection not included.



Source: Eurostat migr_resvalid (SORS data).

Ukrainian citizens held 1.4% of the 125,030 valid residence permits of all foreign nationals in Serbia at the end of 2025, far fewer than citizens of Russia (63,059) or China (16,715).[37] Eurostat publishes these data for Serbia from 2024 onwards; the only earlier figure is 1,185 Ukrainian citizens with valid temporary residence at the end of 2019.[38,39]

The data do not identify how many persons who held temporary protection later obtained a residence permit. In 2025, 1,180 Ukrainian citizens were granted or extended temporary protection.[40] Assuming that all temporary protection valid at the end of 2025 was covered by decisions recorded during that year, the two series suggest an upper bound of about 3,000 Ukrainian citizens across these two residence categories at the end of 2025. This is not an estimate of the number of Ukrainian citizens

[33] Eurostat, *First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship*, dataset migr_resfirst, Serbia, Ukrainian citizenship, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, First residence permits (migr_resfirst)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_resfirst/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[34] Eurostat, *All valid permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship on 31 December of each year*, dataset migr_resvalid, Serbia, Ukrainian citizenship, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Valid residence permits (migr_resvalid)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_resvalid/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[35] Eurostat, *Long-term residents by citizenship on 31 December of each year*, dataset migr_reslong, Serbia, Ukrainian citizenship, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Long-term residents (migr_reslong)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_reslong/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[36] Eurostat, *Change of immigration status permits by reason and citizenship*, dataset migr_reschange, Serbia, Ukrainian citizenship, data extracted on 3 November 2026 (Eurostat, Change of immigration status permits (migr_reschange)), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_reschange/default/table [accessed 4 November 2026].

[37] Eurostat, Valid residence permits (migr_resvalid), all citizenships, data extracted on 4 November 2026.

[38] Government of the Republic of Serbia, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (KIRS), *Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2019*, Table 11, p. 10 (Migration Profile 2019), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracije/Publikacije/Migracioni_profil_Republike_Srbi.%20godinu.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[39] Later profiles for 2020–2025 were also reviewed for tables on valid temporary residence by citizenship.

[40] Migration Profile 2025, section 4.5.

actually living in Serbia, because the figures may include persons who left Serbia, and persons who obtained a permit after holding temporary protection may be counted twice.

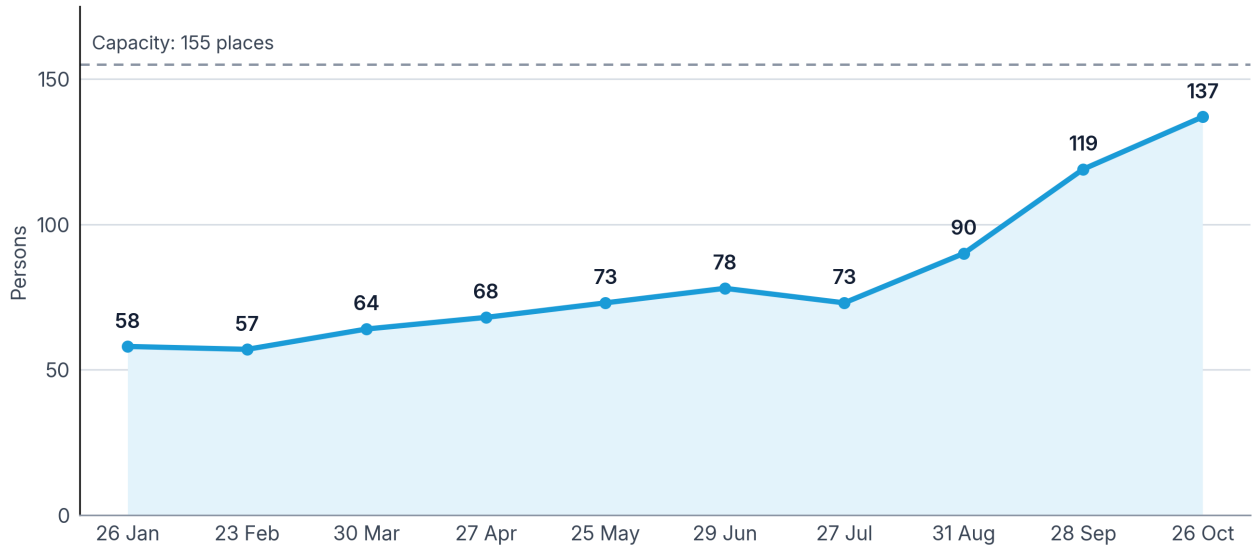
Ukrainian citizens rarely apply for asylum. The Asylum Office received four asylum applications from Ukrainian citizens in January–October 2026 and one in 2025.

6 Accommodation and access to services

Beneficiaries of temporary protection live mainly at private addresses. The state provides accommodation at Vranje Asylum Centre, the centre designated for persons displaced from Ukraine, which accommodated 137 temporary protection beneficiaries on 26 October 2026, compared with 58 in January (Figure 10).[41] This was the highest occupancy in the available series, leaving 18 places within its stated capacity of 155.[42] All its residents hold temporary protection. During 2025, the centre accommodated 77 Ukrainian and 10 Russian citizens.[43]

Figure 10 The number of beneficiaries at Vranje Asylum Centre more than doubled in 2026

Temporary protection beneficiaries at Vranje Asylum Centre on the reference date, January–October 2026.



Capacity: KIRS Reception Plan 2026. Source: KIRS data shared with IDEAS by UNHCR Serbia.

Identity cards issued to temporary protection beneficiaries rose to 1,303 in January–October 2026, from 982 a year earlier. Certificates of the foreigner's registration number issued to Ukrainian citizens more than doubled, mainly for health care and employment (Figure 11). Beneficiaries need these certificates to obtain health insurance, employment, school enrolment or a bank account, because their identity card does not contain the registration number.[44] These figures show how many documents were issued, not whether persons obtained treatment, work or a school place.

The available records give only a partial picture of participation. Schools enrolled 107 pupils from Ukraine in primary and secondary education in 2025, and the National Employment Service recorded 44 Ukrainian citizens as unemployed at the end of 2025. Since February 2024, beneficiaries of

[41] Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (KIRS), Vranje Asylum Centre occupancy, ten observations from 26 January to 26 October 2026, compiled from KIRS e-mails and shared with IDEAS by UNHCR Serbia, unpublished (KIRS, Vranje occupancy data).

[42] Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Plan prihvata državljana Ukrajine i ugroženog stanovništva koji su napustili Ukrajinu ili u nju ne mogu da se vrate usled oružanih dejstava, za 2026. godinu* [Plan for the reception of Ukrainian citizens and vulnerable persons who have left Ukraine or cannot return there because of armed hostilities, for 2026], adopted on 23 April 2026, with the report on implementation for 2025 (KIRS, Reception Plan 2026), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Plan%20prihvata%202026.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[43] Migration Profile 2025.

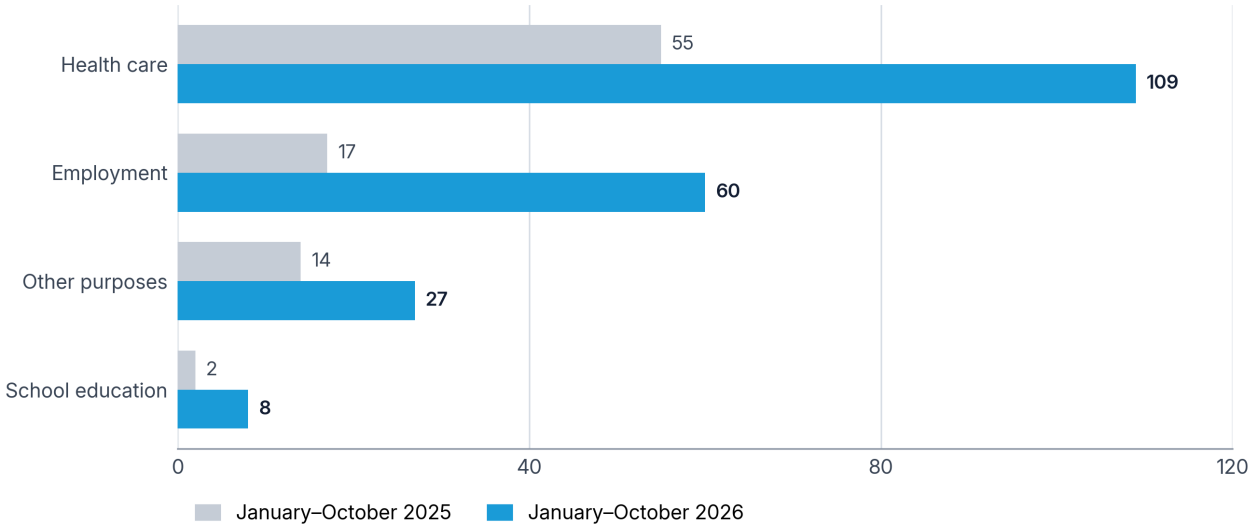
[44] Marko Milanović and Sara Lunić, IDEAS, *From Temporary Protection to an Orderly Transition: Proposal to Strengthen the Temporary Protection Mechanism in the Republic of Serbia*, 2026, sections 4.3 and 6.2 (IDEAS, From Temporary Protection to an Orderly Transition), available at: https://ideje.rs/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/IDEAS-temporary-protection-policy-proposal-2026-v3-1.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

temporary protection have not needed a work permit.[45,46,47,48] The sources reviewed do not show how many of them are employed.

The main gap is the absence of data linking legal status to persons' actual circumstances. Existing records cannot establish the employment rate among displaced persons, the proportion of children attending school or the share of persons unable to obtain needed health care.

Figure 11 Certificates issued more than doubled, mostly for health care and employment

Registration-number certificates issued to Ukrainian citizens, by purpose, January–October 2025 and 2026. Documents, not persons.



Of the identity cards issued to temporary protection beneficiaries, 933 in January–October 2025 and 1,231 in January–October 2026 went to Ukrainian citizens.
Source: Asylum Office monthly reports.

[45] Migration Profile 2022.
[46] Migration Profile 2023.
[47] Migration Profile 2024.
[48] Migration Profile 2025.

7 Border crossings and short stays

Border figures are often cited in public debate as the number of Ukrainians who have come to Serbia. They do not show that number. Border statistics count crossings, not persons. The Ministry of Interior records every border check, so a person who travels to Serbia several times, or passes through it on the way to another country, is counted each time.[49] By 19 June 2026, the Ministry had recorded more than 800,000 entries by Ukrainian citizens since February 2022.[50] From February 2022 to the end of 2025, the authorities recorded 739,497 entries and 723,377 exits. Exits amounted to 98% of entries, but this ratio does not show how many persons were in transit and how many stayed in Serbia.[51]

The two cumulative figures imply more than 60,000 entries between January and mid-June 2026. Such figures show how often Ukrainians travel to and through Serbia, not how many settle in it. Temporary protection and residence-permit records describe legal status more directly, but do not establish how many persons are actually living in Serbia (Sections 3 and 5).

Part of this movement is ordinary travel. Tourist accommodation in Serbia recorded 24,929 arrivals of guests resident in Ukraine in 2025, compared with 17,535 in 2019, before the war. In January–September 2026, it recorded 24,909, almost as many as in the whole of 2025 (Figure 12).[52,53] Tourist statistics count each stay in an accommodation establishment rather than each person, and exclude refugees and persons in transit, so they cannot be added to the border figures.

[49] KIRS, Reception Plan 2026.

[50] Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (KIRS), *Trajna stambena rešenja obezbeđena za više od 30.000 porodica izbeglica i interno raseljenih lica* [Durable housing solutions provided for more than 30,000 refugee and internally displaced families], 19 June 2026 (KIRS, Release of 19 June 2026), available at: https://kirs.gov.rs/lat/aktuelno/trajna-stambena-resenja-obezbedena-za-vise-od-30000-porodica-izbeglica-i-interno-raseljenih-lica/6974 [accessed 4 November 2026].

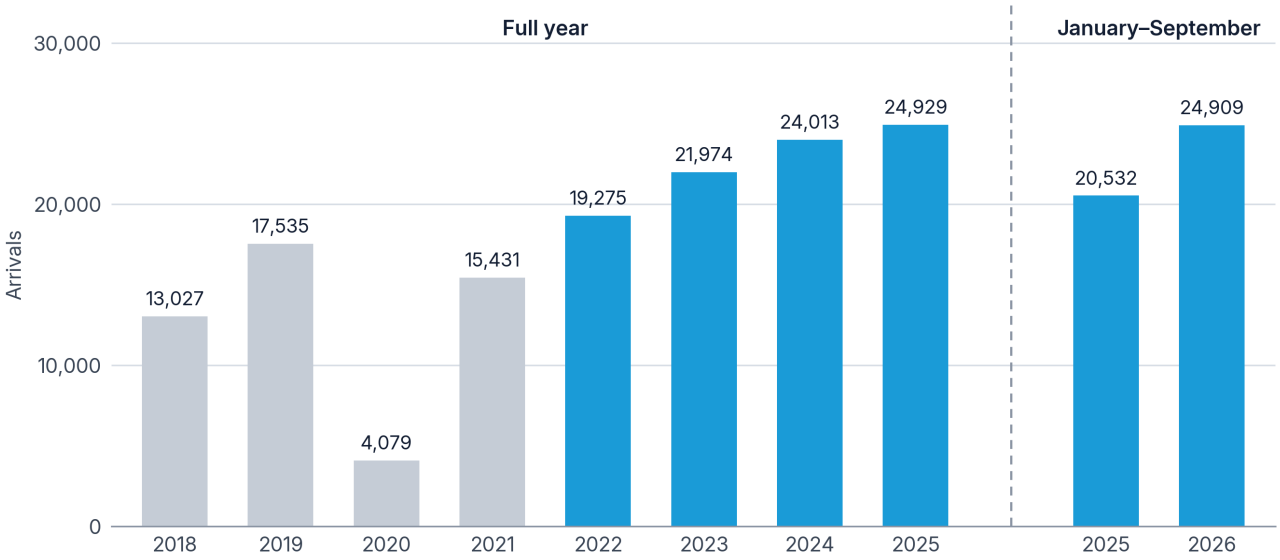
[51] KIRS, Reception Plan 2026.

[52] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), *Foreign tourist arrivals and overnight stays, by countries of tourists' origin – annual data*, database table 220206 (SORS, Annual tourist arrivals and overnight stays), available at: https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/220206?languageCode=en-US [accessed 4 November 2026].

[53] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), *Tourist turnover, September 2026*, 30 October 2026, with methodological notes (SORS, Tourist turnover, September 2026), available at: https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2026/Html/G20261289.html [accessed 4 November 2026].

Figure 12 Tourist arrivals from Ukraine have risen every year since 2020

Arrivals of guests resident in Ukraine in registered tourist accommodation, 2018–2025 and January–September 2025 and 2026.



A guest is counted at each accommodation establishment. Refugees and persons in transit are not included. Data up to 2021 come from a survey and data from 2022 from the eTurista register, so the two periods are not fully comparable. Source: SORS.

Registrations of stay are not a count of residents either. Foreign nationals must register the address at which they stay, and hotels and other accommodation providers register their guests.[54] By the end of 2025, 111,708 registrations of persons from Ukraine had been recorded since February 2022, including persons who later left Serbia, and 14,094 registrations concerned private addresses.[55]

[54] Republic of Serbia, *Law on Foreigners*, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos. 24/2018, 31/2019 and 62/2023, Article 111 (Law on Foreigners), available at: https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2018/24/1/reg [accessed 4 November 2026].

[55] KIRS, Reception Plan 2026.

8 Continuity of protection and transition planning

Serbia's public statistics show neither transitions out of temporary protection nor how many persons still counted as beneficiaries have in fact left Serbia, although the Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 asks EU Member States to keep this information.[56]

There is already a framework for addressing these gaps through Serbia's cooperation with the EU. The European Commission's Serbia 2025 Report assessed migration statistics as only partly aligned with EU requirements and called for revision of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection.[57] The EUAA–Serbia Roadmap for October 2024–September 2027 includes pilot collection and analysis of asylum and reception data under Output 1.2.[58] This offers a basis for developing regular and comparable protection statistics.

Serbia has not established a national plan for the transition from temporary protection. Temporary protection in the EU is currently extended until 4 March 2028 (Section 2), but that date does not determine when protection ends in Serbia. Beneficiaries may obtain residence on other grounds if they meet the general conditions, but the rules do not specifically guarantee that they can apply from within Serbia and retain their protection and rights until a decision is made. Nor do they provide for time spent under temporary protection to count towards permanent residence. These gaps leave persons who have spent several years in Serbia uncertain about their options for a more stable residence status.[59]

The Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 sets two objectives for the transition out of temporary protection: a gradual move to other residence statuses for those who are eligible, and sustainable return and reintegration in Ukraine when conditions allow.[60] In Resolution 2562 (2024), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe calls on EU member States to extend temporary protection or open new avenues for a regular and legally certain presence of persons from Ukraine, and encourages non-EU member States to take similar measures.[61]

IDEAS proposes changes to the law alongside a national transition plan. Eligible beneficiaries should be able to obtain another residence status without a gap in lawful residence or access to rights, with clear information and individual counselling on their options. Preparations for the eventual end of protection should include advance notice, followed by a period during which beneficiaries retain their status and rights, and support for voluntary return when conditions allow.[62]

Article 75 of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection limits temporary protection to two years in total, a limit reached in March 2024, while the amended Government Decision extends it for as long as

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[56] Council of the European Union, *Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine*, OJ C, C/2025/5129, 23 September 2025, point 9 (Council Recommendation C/2025/5129), available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5129/oj [accessed 4 November 2026].

[57] European Commission, *Serbia 2025 Report*, 4 November 2025, SWD(2025) 755 final, Chapter 24, pp. 54–56, and Chapter 18, pp. 66–67 (Commission, Serbia 2025 Report), available at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6e68ce26-b95b-48e1-921a-c60c12da8f00_en?filename=serbia-report-2025.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[58] European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), *Roadmap for cooperation between the EUAA and Serbia October 2024–September 2027*, February 2026, Output 1.2, Activity 1.2.1, p. 14 (EUAA, Serbia Roadmap), available at: https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2026-02/2024_Serbia_EUAA_Roadmap_EN.pdf [accessed 4 November 2026].

[59] IDEAS, From Temporary Protection to an Orderly Transition, sections 4.4 and 6.4–6.6.

[60] Council Recommendation C/2025/5129.

[61] Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), *Resolution 2562 (2024), An urgent call to Europe and its partners: envisioning immediate and long-term policy solutions in support of the displaced people of Ukraine*, 27 June 2024, paragraph 5 (PACE, Resolution 2562 (2024)), available at: https://pace.coe.int/en/files/33695/html [accessed 4 November 2026].

[62] IDEAS, From Temporary Protection to an Orderly Transition, sections 4.4 and 6.4–6.6.

the reasons persist.[63] IDEAS's legal analysis therefore proposes a clear statutory basis for extensions, continued status and rights while applications for extension are pending, and inclusion of the foreigner's registration number on identity documents.[64]

[63] Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, Article 75.

[64] IDEAS, From Temporary Protection to an Orderly Transition, sections 4.1–4.2 and 6.1–6.3.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

The rise in applications and in the use of accommodation in 2026 makes access to temporary protection and continuity of status immediate priorities. Serbia also needs a clear framework for persons whose stay extends over several years, supported by better information on changes in status and access to services. The available data do not reliably show who remains in Serbia, who has moved to another status or how persons are supporting themselves.

The Ministry of Interior should end informal refusals at police stations and instruct police officers to register every application for temporary protection and refer it to the Asylum Office. The Asylum Office should decide on eligibility in a written, reasoned decision with information on legal remedies. Current or previous temporary protection in an EU Member State should not, by itself, prevent access to the procedure.

In line with the approach of the EU and the Council of Europe, the Government should adopt a national transition plan, supported by changes to the law, to provide a gradual transition to other residence statuses for those who are eligible and prepare for the eventual end of temporary protection, including sustainable, voluntary return to Ukraine when conditions allow. The plan should ensure that residence remains lawful throughout, so that beneficiaries who qualify can apply for another status from within Serbia and keep their protection and rights until a decision is taken.

At present, legal status records give only an upper bound of about 3,000 Ukrainian citizens with temporary protection or a residence permit at the end of 2025, not the number living in Serbia (Section 5). The Asylum Office should publish regular data on the number of persons who hold temporary protection, receive it for the first time, have it extended or cease to hold it, with an explanation of how repeat decisions, departures and inactive records are treated. Consistent demographic categories would allow the resulting series to be compared with Eurostat data. Publishing the method is as important as publishing the totals, particularly while the relationship between the reported beneficiary count and annual decisions remains unclear.

Residence-permit statistics should identify transitions from temporary protection, while KIRS accommodation statistics should distinguish residents' legal status. These changes would connect information that is currently published in separate systems. Monthly border statistics, with unique persons distinguished from repeated crossings where possible, would provide a clearer account of movement. They should not be used as a substitute for data on the resident population.

A periodic survey of displaced persons, including those living at private addresses, is needed to examine employment, school participation, health care and housing. The available records identify documents issued and some services used, but do not show unmet needs or the reasons persons do not approach a service. Questions from EUAA, FRA and UNHCR surveys could be adapted for this purpose. Regular monitoring should show whether persons can maintain lawful residence and obtain the services they need.

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