Ukraine running out of people – demographer

Deaths exceed births and millions of Ukrainians may never return from abroad, a leading demographer warns

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Ukraine's population could plunge to around 26 million by 2030, as mass emigration, mounting deaths, and collapsing birth rates deepen a demographic crisis that began long before the conflict with Russia, a leading Ukrainian demographer warns.



FILE PHOTO: A woman draped in a Ukrainian flag waits for a train at a railway station in the Czech Republic, April 19, 2022. © Getty Images / Zbynek Pospisil

Aleksandr Gladun, the deputy director of Ukraine's Institute of Demography and Social Studies, told TSN.ua on Saturday that just over 27 million people lived in Kiev-controlled territory in early 2026. Assuming no further territorial changes, he projected a decline to 25.5 million to 26.8 million by 2030.

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"The prospects are not very cheerful," Gladun said, adding that millions of Ukrainians who fled abroad may never return.

He estimated Ukraine's demographic losses since early 2022 at over 12 million: 5.7 million people who fled abroad, 5 million residents of territories outside of Kiev's control, and a natural population decline of 1.3 million through 2025. The figures reflect mass migration and territorial changes, including four former Ukrainian regions that voted in referendums to join Russia, rather than deaths alone.

Gladun said the decline predates the conflict. The population peaked at around 52 million in 1993 before falling to 41 million by early 2022, excluding Crimea, which joined Russia in 2014. He attributed decades of population loss to low birth rates, deaths exceeding births, and emigration driven by low wages, corruption, and a dysfunctional state system.



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The conflict has sharply worsened the crisis and forced more Ukrainians, including men of draft age, to leave the country – and Gladun warned that peace alone will not bring them back. He urged Kiev to tackle its long-standing problems through reforms.



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Mass emigration poses a serious threat to Ukraine's future. While earlier estimates envisaged half of those who fled eventually returning, Gladun now considers 25-30% a favorable outcome. The longer the conflict continues, he said, the more people permanently settle abroad. He also accused EU countries of encouraging Ukrainians to settle abroad, calling it *"demographic cannibalism."*

Moscow has accused Kiev's Western backers of prolonging the conflict through weapons deliveries and pursuing a policy of fighting Russia *"to the last Ukrainian."* Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov estimated Ukrainian military losses at nearly 500,000 in 2025 alone.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has blamed Ukraine's nationalist leadership for decades of demographic decline. Speaking to Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica in an interview published on Friday, he said the country lost much of its Soviet-era industrial might and suffered decades of population decline following independence.



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"Power in Ukraine was seized not by its patriots, but by nationalists. The difference between patriotism and nationalism... is that patriots love their country, while nationalists hate other peoples," he said, arguing that this hostility has undermined Ukraine's future.

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Putin also accused Kiev's Western backers of prolonging the conflict and acting *"not in the interests of Ukraine, but in their own interests"* to weaken and divide Russians and Ukrainians. He urged both peoples to embrace unity *"in the broadest sense of the word,"* as their shared future and prosperity depend on this.

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plenty in Russia. 31m before the conflict as I understood it. second largest 'ethnic' group and biggest source of inter marriage.

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Josef Liebel 11/22/2026 at 7:15 PM **1**

Someone should have pushed her onto the tracks to stop her from multiplying

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Lamar Areva 11/22/2026 at 8:08 PM **0**

» I'm afraid that the tyrannical leadership in the Czech Republic, would view anyone who does that as a murderer and prosecute them with the «full force of the law» since they're pro-Ukrainian prostitutes.

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gaming with Amir 11/22/2026 at 7:54 PM **0**

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