



# Protection Monitoring Report Poland

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February – March 2023

# Introduction

On February 24, 2022, a major escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, which started in 2014, forced millions of Ukrainian civilians to flee. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that at least 100,000 people left their homes in the first 24 hours of the conflict.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the displaced were women, children, and the elderly, as men of fighting age were largely prohibited from leaving the country.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, according to the latest UNHCR report from January 2023, over 8 million Ukrainian refugees have been registered across Europe, including over 1.5 million in Poland, making it by far the country with the highest number of refugees from Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

Polish society opened their homes and offered help in various forms to welcome the refugees. Just after the conflict escalation, from February until the end of June 2022, 70% of Polish households offered some form of help.<sup>4</sup> Around 80% of these households provided material help, and around 66% - financial help.<sup>5</sup>

On March 12, 2022, the Polish government introduced the *Special Act of Assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the conflict on the territory of that state* (Journal of Laws, item 583, as amended). The Special Act aims to provide the specific legal regulation and a legal basis for a number of rights for Ukrainian citizens fleeing the hostilities in their country. Ukrainians who fled the conflict could obtain a unique identification number, PESEL UKR, which provides temporary protection in Poland. Thanks to that, they could receive social benefits, use public medical services, and legally work and study at Polish schools and universities. At the time of writing of this report, 995,402 Ukrainian citizens have temporary protection status in Poland.<sup>6</sup> Ukrainian refugees are also entitled to claim 300 PLN per person, which is a one-off payment to those who have a PESEL number.<sup>7</sup> Their Polish hosts can get a 40 PLN daily subsidy for every person who fled Ukraine they are hosting for up to 120 days. Additional social benefits refugees are eligible for include child benefits (500+), financial support for

This report provides an overview of the protection needs and risks refugees from Ukraine coming to Poland after the 24th of February 2022 are facing. The data analyzed were collected during the Protection Monitoring (PM) conducted by the IRC in February and March 2023. During this period, the Protection Monitoring Team of the IRC in Poland interviewed a total of 204 displaced people: 78 people in Warsaw, 80 people in Katowice, and 46 people in Poznan.

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>,

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, 'Multi-Sector Needs Assessment – 2022', <https://microdata.unhcr.org/index.php/catalog/826>, accessed 4 April 2023.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, 'Multi-Sector Needs Assessment – 2022', <https://microdata.unhcr.org/index.php/catalog/826>, accessed 4 April 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 'Pomoc udzielona przez gospodarstwa domowe mieszkańcom Ukrainy w pierwszym półroczu 2022 r. w świetle wyników badania budżetów gospodarstw domowych', <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/warunki-zycia/dochody-wydatki-i-warunki-zycia-ludnosci/pomoc-udzielona-przez-gospodarstwa-domowe-mieszkancom-ukrainy-w-pierwszym-polroczu-2022-r-w-swietle-wynikow-badania-budzetow-gospodarstw-domowych,34,1.html>, accessed 14 April 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 'Pomoc udzielona przez gospodarstwa domowe mieszkańcom Ukrainy w pierwszym półroczu 2022 r. w świetle wyników badania budżetów gospodarstw domowych', <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/warunki-zycia/dochody-wydatki-i-warunki-zycia-ludnosci/pomoc-udzielona-przez-gospodarstwa-domowe-mieszkancom-ukrainy-w-pierwszym-polroczu-2022-r-w-swietle-wynikow-badania-budzetow-gospodarstw-domowych,34,1.html>, accessed 14 April 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Gov.pl, 'Szczegółowe statystyki dot. osób zarejestrowanych w rejestrze obywateli Ukrainy i członków ich rodzin, którym nadano status cudzoziemca na podstawie specustawy. Stan na 10.04.2023 r.', <https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/2715.zarejestrowane-wnioski-o-nadanie-statusu-ukr/resource/46829/table>, accessed 21 April 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Art. 31, Obwieszczenie Marszałka Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 16 listopada 2022 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa (Announcement of the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of November 16, 2022 on the publication of the consolidated text of the Act on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that state) (Dz.U. 2023 poz. 103).

children starting the new school year (300+), 1,000 PLN at the birth of a child, access to refunded medicines, and others.

The Protection Monitoring Team of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) started operating in early 2023. Many refugees were already present in Poland, the majority living in private accommodations and many children having enrolled in the Polish education system.

When IRC's Protection Monitoring Team started operating, the overall host community's attitude to refugees from Ukraine was good. However, it has worsened since the beginning of the war. In January 2023, 80% of Poles aged 16-65 perceived refugees from Ukraine positively, including 44% in a very positive way.<sup>8</sup> Notably, however, the question "Has your attitude towards refugees from Ukraine changed in the last 6 months, i.e., since June 2022?" had 25% affirmative responses, including 68% statements that the attitude had worsened.<sup>9</sup> Some groups refer to historical events as a justification for anti-Ukrainian sentiments. It is estimated that around 100,000 Poles were killed in the Wolyn massacre organized by Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) members ("Banderites") in 1943.<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, the reference to that massacre is relatively common among anti-Ukrainian groups.<sup>11</sup>

## Methodology

Since February 2023, the IRC has been implementing protection analysis through the Protection Monitoring of Persons of Concern (PoC) living in Warsaw, Katowice, and Poznan regions covering 204 individuals. The individual survey consists of questions allowing data collection at the individual level.

The quantitative data were further contextualized based on qualitative data, collected mainly through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), stakeholder interviews (KIIs), and direct observation. The IRC team conducted one FGD, 4 KIIs, and 12 observations. The primary data collection was complemented by secondary information, including social media monitoring.

The IRC's protection monitoring exercise aims at identifying and analyzing risks and trends relevant to the protection and assistance of affected populations to allow informed decision-making and the design of humanitarian responses.

This protection monitoring analysis is published quarterly and is mainly based on the above-mentioned information but is complemented by the information available through secondary sources.

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<sup>8</sup> Onet.pl, Jakub Kapiszewski, 'Coś zmienia się w stosunku Polaków do Ukraińców. "Musimy się temu przyjrzeć"', <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/cos-zmienia-sie-w-stosunku-polakow-do-ukraincow-musimy-sie-temu-przyjrzec/sbt180e>, accessed 24 April 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Onet.pl, Jakub Kapiszewski, 'Coś zmienia się w stosunku Polaków do Ukraińców. "Musimy się temu przyjrzeć"', <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/cos-zmienia-sie-w-stosunku-polakow-do-ukraincow-musimy-sie-temu-przyjrzec/sbt180e>, accessed 24 April 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, '1943 Volhynian Massacres: Truth and Remembrance', [https://zbrodniawolynska.pl/ftp/zbrodnia\\_wolynska/Volhynian\\_Massacres-Basic\\_Information.pdf](https://zbrodniawolynska.pl/ftp/zbrodnia_wolynska/Volhynian_Massacres-Basic_Information.pdf), accessed 24 April 2023, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance, OKO.press, 'Polskie antyukraińskie upiory rozpełzły się po 3internecie. Ale to nadal margines', <https://oko.press/polskie-antyukraińskie-upiory-rozpełzly-sie-po-internecie-ale-to-nadal-margines>, accessed 24 April 2023.

# Limitations

- Convenience, non-probabilistic sampling was used, therefore, these results should not be generalized for the overall population and represent only the situation of the surveyed population described in detail in the Demographics section of this report.
- All participants are Ukrainian citizens. No third-country nationals (TCNs) were surveyed in this round of Protection Monitoring.
- Sampling is skewed – most of the respondents are those targeted for the IRC targeted multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) for the new arrivals (those who came to Poland after October 2022), vulnerable households (persons with disability, chronic illness, or elderly), from Eastern regions of Ukraine (non-government-controlled, newly accessible territories or territories close to the frontline), arriving to Poland after October 2022.
- 60% of participants reported that they do not live in the location where the interview was conducted. This information indicates that the results do not necessarily reflect the situation in this city and should be treated as a broader regional category (e.g., in Katowice interviewed individuals came from Śląskie and Opolskie voivodeship, in Warsaw from Mazowieckie and Łódzkie, in Poznań from Wielkopolskie, Lubuskie).

## Protection trends & highlights

### CHANGES IN ACCESS TO COLLECTIVE ACCOMMODATION

In January 2023, several amendments concerning collective shelters were introduced to the Special Act. As of 1 March 2023, after 120 days from arrival in Poland, refugees are required to co-pay 50% (not more than 40 PLN per day), and after 180 days - 75% (not more than 60 PLN per day, as of May 1st) cost of their accommodation.

Groups of people for whom fees are not applicable:

- persons with disabilities;
- persons who are older than 60 (women) or 65 (men) years;
- pregnant women, persons raising a child up to the age of 12 months, persons with single custody of more than two children;
- other persons in difficult financial situations (to be decided on a case-by-case basis by voivodeships)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/nowelizacja-ustawy-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy-z-podpisem-prezydenta3>

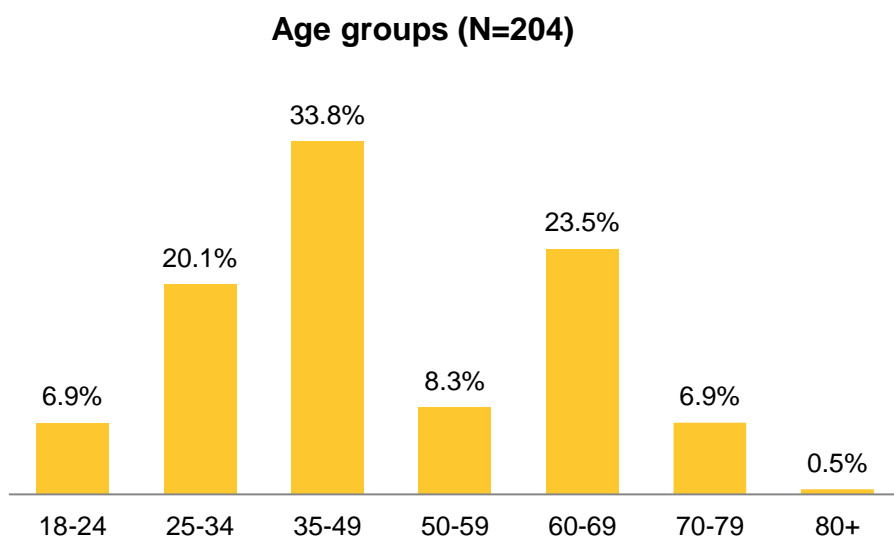
# Key demographics

## Gender

81% of the respondents were female, and 19% were male. The highest proportion of the male population is to be found in the age groups 18-24 (36%), 35-49 (25%), and 60-69 (19%). Men of the age below 60 years old can leave Ukraine only on an exceptional basis. Still, it should be noted that some of the interviewed men did not use the conventional border crossing points between Ukraine and Poland, and therefore, these limitations did not apply to them<sup>13</sup>.

## Age

The average age of the PM respondent is 47 years old, with the largest age cohorts being 35-49 years old (34%) and 60-69 years old (24%). When combined with older respondents (70+), the oldest respondents' group is comparable in size – 31% – with the 35-49-year-olds.



## Date of arrival

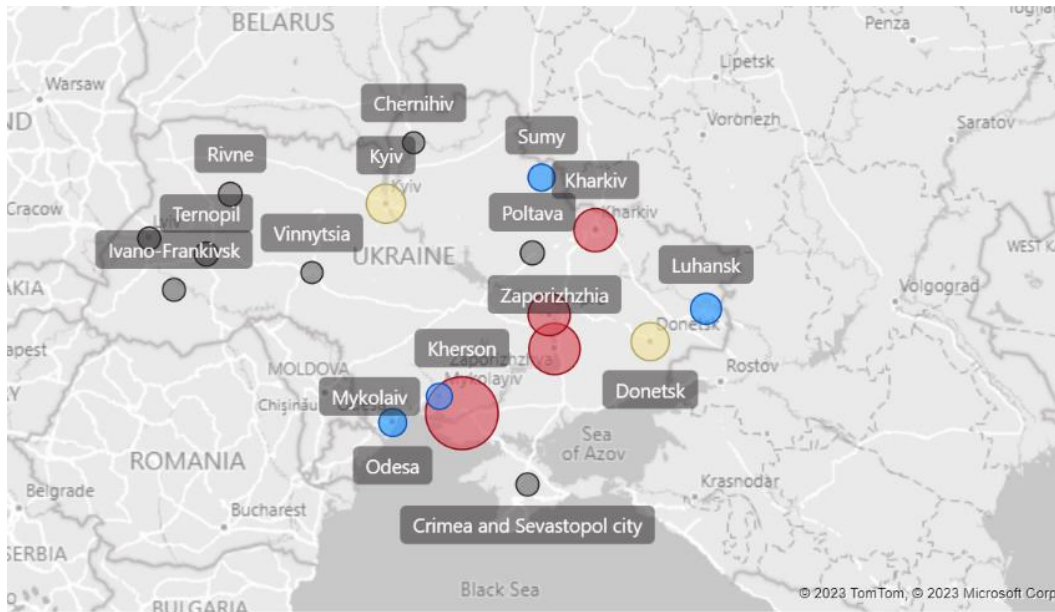
Three-quarters of the participants arrived in Poland between October 2022 to March 2023.

<sup>13</sup> See details in the section “Type of entry, short-and long-term intentions.”

## Region of origin in Ukraine

61% of participants arrived in Poland from the eastern part of Ukraine – Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Dnipro oblast.

Based on the comments provided during the interviews, respondents resided in both non-government-controlled territories and newly accessible territories in some of these oblasts, however, the survey instrument does not include questions on specific locations where participants lived before leaving Ukraine, therefore this report does not include precise numbers on the type of territories.



*Region of origin in Ukraine (red bubbles – the largest groups of respondents 10% - 25%: Kherson (25%), Zaporizhzhia (15%), Kharkiv (11%), Dnipropetrovsk (10%); yellow bubbles 6-10% – medium size groups of respondents: Kyiv (9%), Donetsk (8%); blue bubbles – small groups of respondents 3-5%: Luhansk (5%), Odesa (3%), Sumy (3%), Mykolaiv (3%); grey bubbles – the smallest groups of respondents 1-2%: Poltava (2%), Rivne (2%), Ternopil (2%), Crimea (1%), Ivano-Frankivsk (1%), Lviv (1%), Chernihiv (1%), Vinnytsia (1%) (N=204)*

## Education

Over 80% of the respondents hold post-secondary degrees - either higher education (52%), or technical/vocational training (32%).

## Main activity before leaving Ukraine

Half the participants were employed before leaving Ukraine, and a quarter retired or received disability benefits. Only 10% of participants identified family responsibilities as their main occupation before displacement.

## Household composition

The average surveyed household size is 3 people (the maximum household size is 9). 7 in 10 respondents reported being accompanied by at least one adult, and the same proportion by at least one child.

Participants are typically accompanied by partners (33%), children (23%), or parents (15%). Those who are accompanied by children (younger than 18 years old) are most often accompanied by their biological children (77%) or grandchildren (17%). When one of the household members is not the participant's biological child, in 9 out of 10 cases, the child's legal guardian is in the same household as the child.

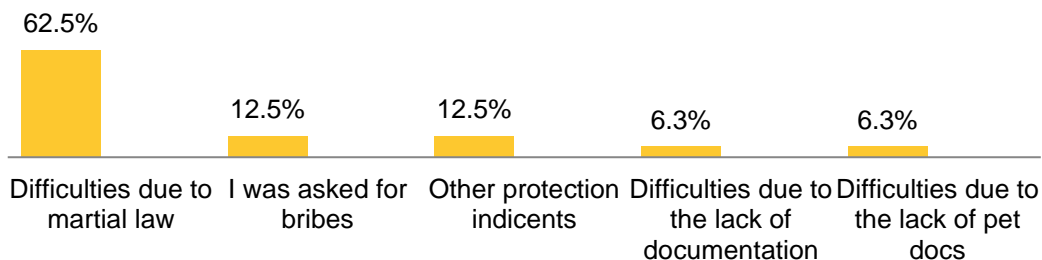
Three out of ten households include at least one person with a disability. In contrast, nearly half of the households include at least one person with a chronic illness (not necessarily the respondent).

## Type of entry, short- and long-term intentions

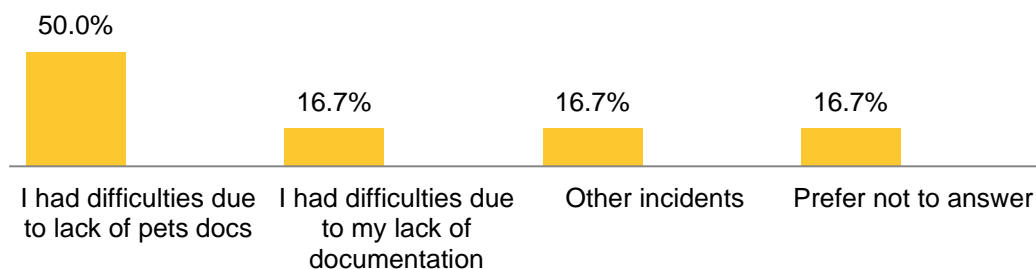
Border crossing from Ukraine to Poland should be divided into two types – most respondents crossed directly from Ukraine to Poland. However, approximately 10% of respondents, primarily residents of non-government-controlled territories, had to cross the border with Russian Federation first to travel to Latvia or Estonia and then Lithuania to cross the Polish-Lithuanian border as the only accessible way to enter Poland. The initial version of IRC's protection monitoring tool did not envision this possibility, and we can assume that the proportion of participants using this route is probably higher. The incidents at the Russian border ranged from long waiting times not caused by the border crossing procedures (participants mentioned waiting from 2 to 8 days to enter and exit the Russian Federation) to in-depth searches and interrogations exceeding the regular border guard's procedure (e.g., detailed check of the mobile phones, questioning regarding connection to the Ukrainian army or police, the purpose of travel, attitude towards the war).

Among those crossing the official Ukraine-Poland border, 8% of respondents reported incidents at the Ukrainian border, mostly difficulties due to martial law (despite having the required documentation, male respondents were subject to additional checks), and 4% at the Polish border, mostly incidents related to the lack of pet documentation.

### Ukrainian border - Border crossing incidents (N=16)

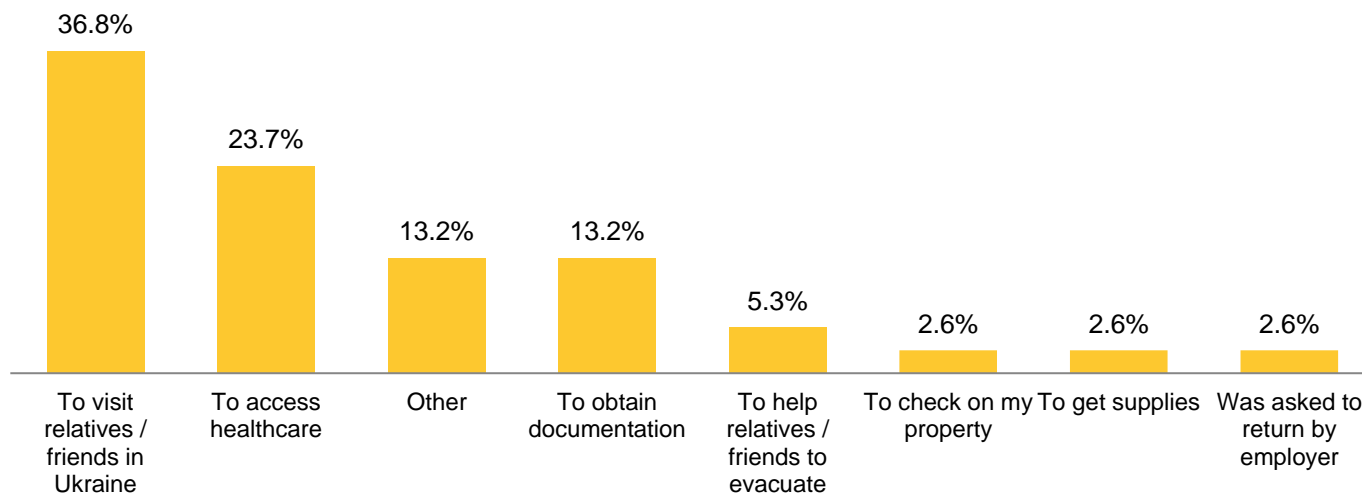


### Polish border - Border crossing incidents (N=6)



Over 80% of participants never returned to Ukraine, 14% went only once, and 4% visited Ukraine 2 to 4 times. The main reasons to return were visiting relatives/friends in Ukraine (37%) and accessing healthcare services (24%). 13% of participants went back to Ukraine to obtain documentation – the reason for that can be twofold: it's less costly in Ukraine, or access is easier/faster than in Poland. Among the people who traveled to Ukraine, 18% reported that they experienced difficulties returning to Poland (key difficulties mentioned by participants are benefits in Poland being suspended/removed, temporary protection status being revoked, and participants faced difficulties crossing back into Poland).

### Primary reason to return to Ukraine (N=204)



7 in 10 participants do not plan to return to Ukraine within the next 3 months, 17% do not know, and 8% plan to visit for a short period of time.

Only 3% of all surveyed participants plan to go back to Ukraine permanently, the key reason being a wish to reunite with the family members who stay in Ukraine.

The question about intentions, even for such a short period of time as 3 months, was difficult to answer for many participants, especially those who arrived soon after the conflict started. One of the key informants mentioned that there is a specific group of refugees, “those who wait” – they do not integrate with the host society and rely on social benefits and humanitarian aid as their main source of income. This group would probably be the first to leave when the security situation improves, however as mentioned by one of the focus group discussion participants, when refugees have certain commitments in Poland (e.g., work or schooling), their decision to leave or to stay might be more complex.

95% of participants plan to stay in Poland for 3 months. None mentioned planning to relocate to other countries. However, from the key informant interviews, we learned that some refugees, especially those with challenges settling down in Poland, consider moving to other countries, such as Germany, the UK, the US, or Canada.





## RISK IN FOCUS (1)

### **CROSSING TO POLAND VIA THIRD COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.**

- Threat to the population – border crossing with the Russian Federation is associated with an increased risk of protection incidents on the border and potential risks of detention, human trafficking, or smuggling.
- (Potential) Effect of the threat – risk to be detained in Russia, human trafficking, and smuggling.
- Capacity to address the risk – advocacy to establish humanitarian presence across the border.

# The situation in the host country

The main reason why participants came to Poland is having a network of family or friends in Poland (44%). This includes joining representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora and other Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Poland earlier. The second most cited reason is proximity to Ukraine (32%). Other reasons, including the simplicity of temporary protection/asylum procedures, were mentioned by a much lower proportion of respondents.

Close to 90% of participants feel completely accepted (42%) or mostly accepted (48%) by the local community. Conflicts with fellow Ukrainians are also uncommon – 86% of participants reported no conflicts inside the Ukrainian community. Respondents noticed that the source of conflicts is cultural differences (46%) or language spoken (33%).

Over 90% of participants reported feeling either very safe or safe in Poland. However, participants in qualitative research (FGD, KII) reported labor market exploitation, discrimination, and domestic violence.

## Access to documentation and procedures

### Documentation

Over 70% of participants reported that neither they nor the household members lack civil documentation. If any documentation is missing, in most cases, it's an international passport (27%).

Lack of an international passport seems to be linked to both age – among the youngest respondent (18-24 years old), 36% reported that they do not have an international passport, and the region of origin – from 29% in Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk, through 32% in Kharkiv and 48% in Kherson regions do not have international passports.

78% of participants reported that they do not forecast any problem renewing or obtaining new documentation. Based on the comments provided by respondents, the reason for not being able to obtain the documentation in Poland is the price, which is not affordable for participants, or the lack of services available in their location.

It should be noted that obtaining international or internal ID/passport can be done only in the Ukrainian consulates or the official State Enterprise “Document” center.<sup>14</sup> Based on the social media monitoring and observation conducted in the “Document” Center in Warsaw, IRC’s team noticed that registering for an appointment in either consulate or the center can be associated with long waiting (lining up at night, long before the opening) or paying people who claim that they can enable electronic registration.

All respondents reported having PESEL UKR status. Only a small proportion of participants (8%) ever had to re-apply for PESEL, either because their status was suspended or due to clerical mistakes. 46% percent of participants reported long waiting time to obtain PESEL. Otherwise, no significant difficulties with obtaining PESEL UKR were reported.

The proportion of those who arrived at the beginning of the conflict reporting difficulties obtaining PESEL is higher than those after October 2022. This was due to the massive influx of Ukrainians at the beginning of the war and the limited capacity of the governmental organization to register everyone on time.

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<sup>14</sup> At the time of the report writing, branches of SE “Document” are functioning in Krakow, Warsaw, Gdansk, and Wroclaw.

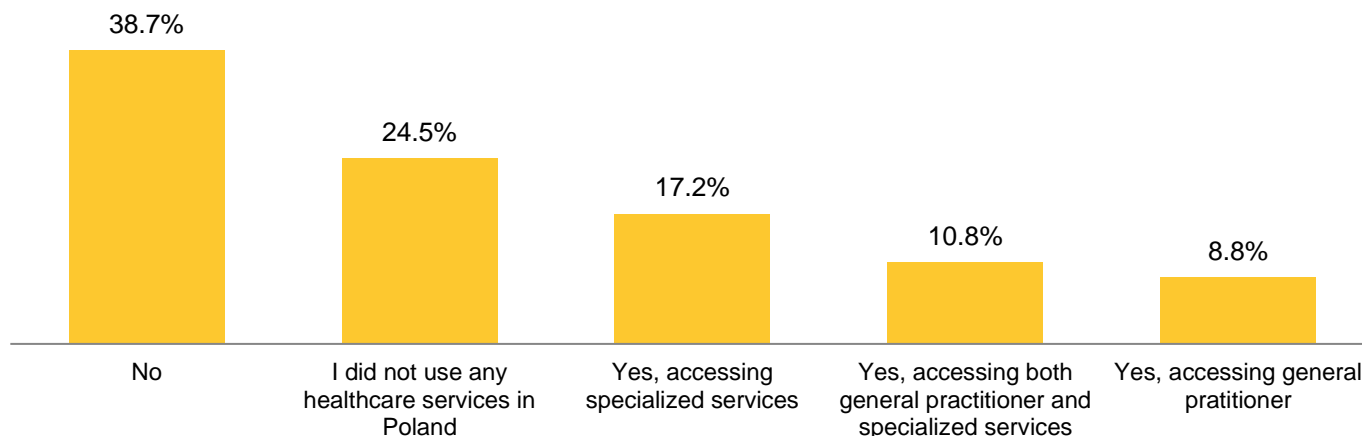
## Social benefits

94% of respondents accessed at least one type of social benefit in Poland, including 72% of participants reporting that they did not have any difficulty accessing social benefits in Poland. Among those who did, like the difficulties with obtaining PESEL UKR, the prevalent obstacle was the long waiting time. Warsaw is where the highest proportion of participants reported difficulties accessing social benefits.

## Medical services

While a quarter of participants reported that they hadn't used any healthcare services in Poland, among those who did, an almost equal percentage reported that they had no issues accessing them and had an issue with access to specialized or general services (more often specialized services). A higher proportion of participants who reported that at least one person in the household has a chronic illness reported more trouble accessing healthcare in Poland. The same is true for older participants.

**Did you or any of the household members had difficulties accessing medical services in Poland? (N=204)**



The coping strategies to deal with the systematic limited access to free medical services in Poland mentioned by the household interview participants are medical visits in Ukraine, including buying medicines and medical supplies from Ukraine.

24% of participants traveled to Ukraine to access healthcare services. It was the second most quoted reason to return temporarily to the country.



## RISK IN FOCUS (2)

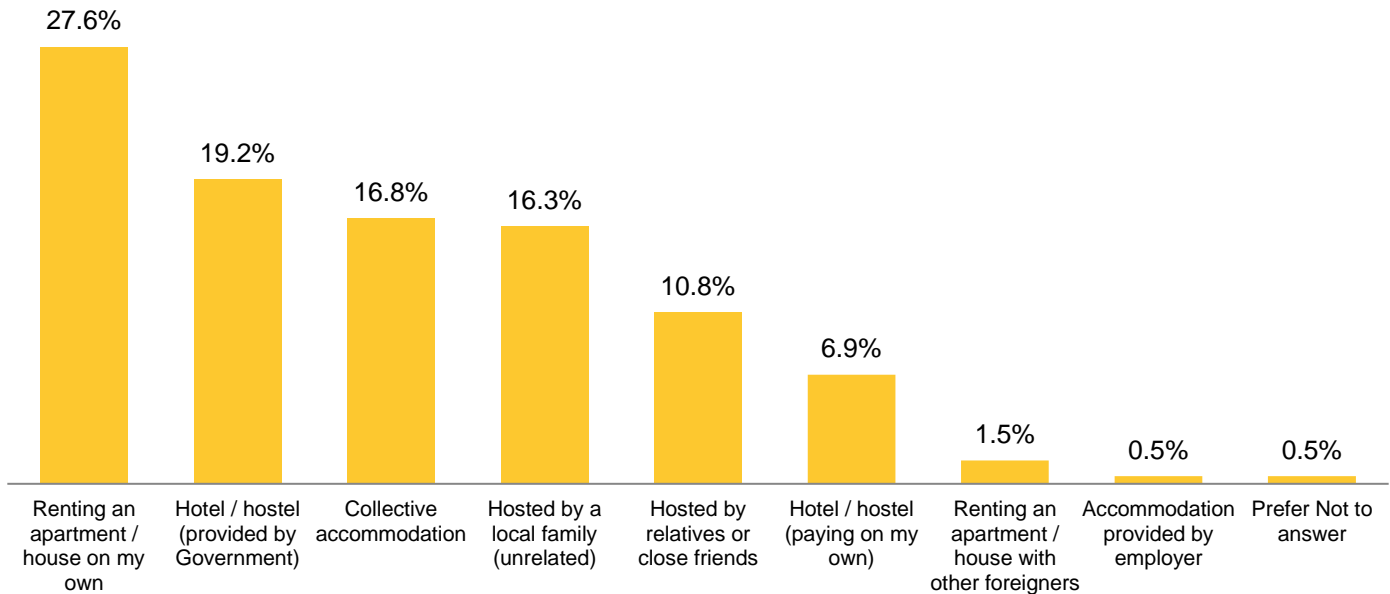
### LIMITED ACCESS TO MEDICAL SERVICES

- Threat to the population – Limited access to medical services rooted in structural limitation of the Polish healthcare system (long waiting time, limited availability of free specialized services)
- (Potential) Effect of the threat – Ukrainian refugees, especially those with chronic illnesses, might be forced to return to Ukraine to obtain medical services or cover expensive private healthcare, which will endanger meeting other basic needs at the cost of covering medical bills.
- Capacity to address the risk – access to Ukrainian healthcare system online and in Ukraine, selected free specialized consultations.

# Housing

Close to one-third of respondents reported renting an apartment or house on their own or with other foreigners (mostly for their household members only). However, most participants live in different types of free accommodations – hotel/hostel paid for by the government, collective accommodation, or hosted by family/friends or unrelated Polish families.

**Where do you live? (N=204)**



66% of all participants reported that no time limitations had been given to them on how long they could stay in their current accommodation. Among the ones who are in rented accommodation, 68% reported that there are no time limitations, whereas in collective accommodation - 62%. Among those living in hotels/hostels provided by the Polish government, it's 59%, and among the ones living with local families, this percentage is 55%.

18% of participants reported they had been informed they could stay in their current accommodation for one to three months (15%) or less than one month (3%). The main reason to leave the accommodation within one month is the end of the free accommodation program (3 in 5 cases).

6 in 10 participants had kept their accommodation the same from when they arrived. Among those who changed accommodations, the most common previous housing types were living with a local family (26%), staying with family or friends (19%), or staying in collective accommodation/government-paid hotels/hostels – 17%.



### **RISK IN FOCUS (3)**

#### **HIGH DEGREE OF RELIANCE ON FREE ACCOMODATION**

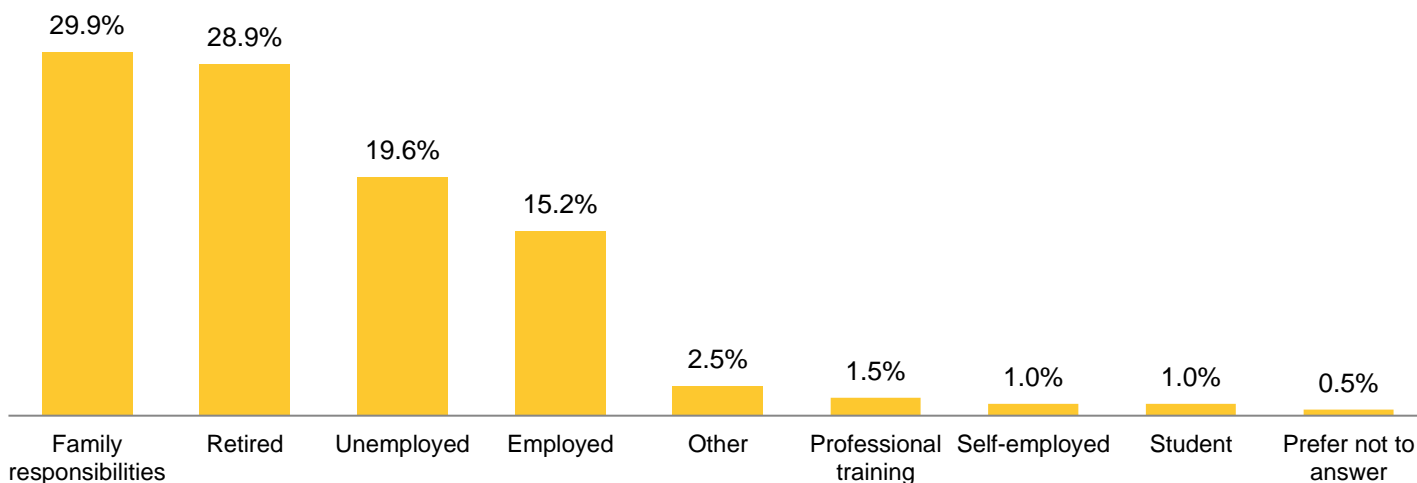
- Threat to the population – Over 60% of refugees live in collective accommodations, are hosted by local families or friends/family. With introduction of the fees as of March 1, some groups of refugees will have to pay for collective accommodations, which may overstretch their budgets, often limited to social benefits and/or humanitarian assistance.
- (Potential) Effect of the threat – Some may risk homelessness or will be forced to return to Ukraine.

# Main activities and sources of income

Only 15% of participants in the surveyed sample are employed full-time, and an additional 3% perform part-time jobs. The main activities in the general sample are family responsibilities (30%), being retired, which also includes people receiving disability pensions (29%) and being unemployed (20%). In the youngest age group (18-24 years old), 43% are employed, while in 25-34 – 24%, 35-49 – 20%. In the 50-59 age group, 53% of respondents identify as unemployed.

Respondents reported that Ukrainian pension benefits are very low to cover basic needs since the pension is often the equivalent of 250-300 PLN per month. In contrast, the minimal Polish pension benefits are 1588,44 PLN<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, no social benefits are in place to cover this gap in the pension amount received by pensioners from Ukraine and the minimum pension in Poland.

## What is your main activity in Poland? (N=204)



Irrespective of age, twice as many men are employed than women – 26% vs. 13% respectively.

The highest proportion of employed is among those who arrived at the beginning of the war, February-May 2022 (31%), compared to only 13% of those who arrived in December 2022-March 2023.

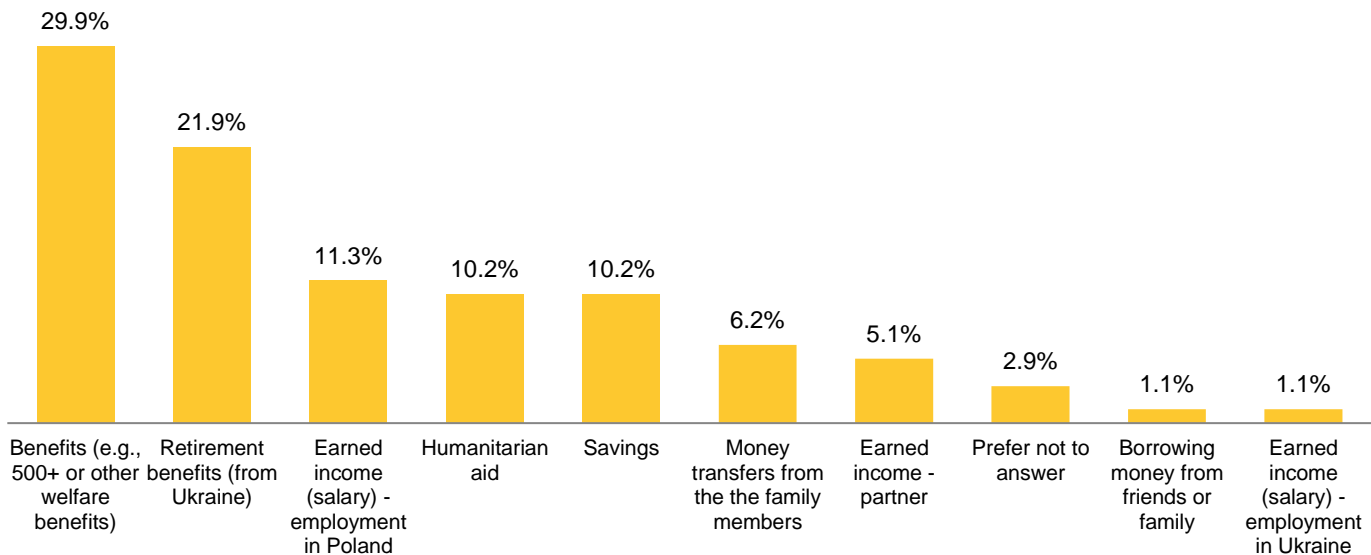
While more than 40% of respondents did not report any issues with finding employment, it should be noted that participants of both household interviews and qualitative research (FGD and KII) mentioned that Ukrainian employees are more prone than locals to labor market exploitation of different kinds – from being offered worse working conditions and lower salaries to not having the contract signed. Some additional issues mentioned in qualitative research or as additional comments to the household surveys are the lack of employment opportunities with flexible hours for mothers with young children, people with disabilities, or the elderly.

The primary sources of income are benefits (including 500+ child benefits, free housing program, etc.) and Ukrainian retirement benefits – 30% and 22% of participants, respectively, mentioned these as the main sources of income. Humanitarian aid and earned income are the source of income for comparable groups of respondents – 10% and 11%, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1543048%2Cminister-malag-od-1-marca-minimalna-emerytura-wyniesie-158844-zl-brutto>

As for the main activity, more people who arrived in the first 3 months of the war (February-May 2022) rely on earned income – 26% compared to 9% of those who arrived later (June 2022-March 2023).

### What are you main sources of income? (N=204)



## Education

Poland has yet to introduce mandatory schooling for Ukrainian children fleeing Ukraine. However, 56% of respondents reported that all school-aged children are enrolled in Polish schools. The highest percentage of children enrolled in the Polish schooling system is noted in Katowice - 61%, while the lowest is in Poznan – 45% (but the sample size and demographics of the surveyed population in Poznan should be considered, and direct comparison is not justified).

32% of respondents reported that none of their school-aged children are enrolled in Polish schools. The main reason not to enroll children in Polish schools is the preference to continue with the Ukrainian curriculum online (70%). At the same time, 15% of participants did not mention the wish to continue with the Ukrainian curriculum at all, but other reasons – no places available in the schools close to current accommodation (11%), language barriers (7%), discrimination, lack of special needs education, lack of specific documentation required to register with local schools or no plans to stay in Poland (2% each). This might indicate that some school-aged children are outside both Polish and Ukrainian schooling systems, however, the results of protection monitoring do not allow to formulate specific conclusions on this topic.

Among respondents who claim that their main activity in Poland is family responsibilities, 45% state that all children are enrolled in Polish schools. Among respondents who are employed – 67%.

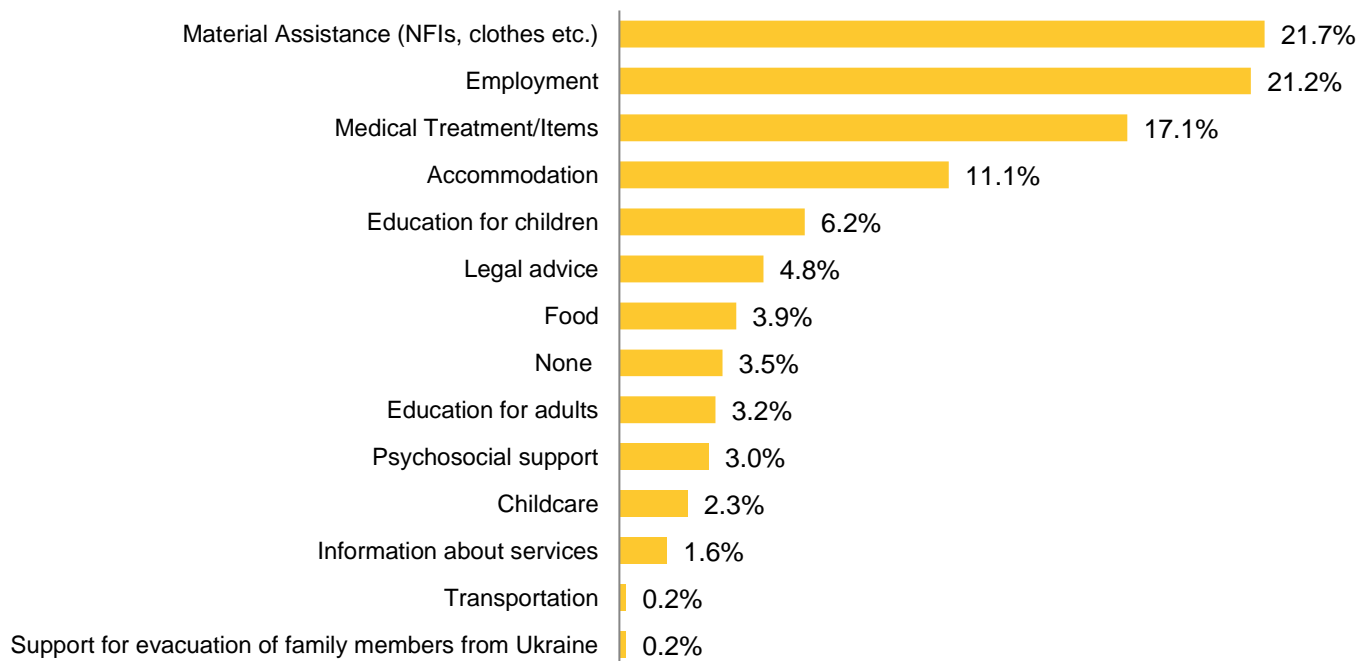
41% of preschool-aged children are enrolled in childcare institutions in Poland. The reasons for not enrolling children in childcare institutions range from lack of places in the nursery or kindergarten to children being too young (less than one-year-old) or often sick.



# Urgent needs

The urgent needs identified most often are material assistance (22%), employment (21%), medical treatment/items (17%), accommodation (11%), and education for children (6%), while 4% of respondents identified that they do not have any urgent needs.<sup>16</sup> The highest percentage of respondents who reported that they do not have any urgent needs are older participants (60+). They explained that free housing and food cover all their immediate needs, or they stay with their families who take care of them.

## What are your most urgent needs? (N=204)



The list of the most urgent needs varies depending on the location of the interview – in Warsaw, the most urgent need is access to medical treatment (22%), material assistance (19%), and employment (17%); in Poznan, material assistance (26%), employment (19%) and medical treatment (14%); in Katowice employment (28%), material assistance (22%) and medical treatment (14%).

Among those who arrived in December 2022- March 2023, 26% of participants reported that their most urgent needs were material assistance, 20% employment, and 17% medical treatment. Compared to the population who arrived during the first months of the war (February-May 2022), the most urgent need is employment (24%), material assistance (19%), and medical treatments (16%). Irrespective of other factors, the most urgent need for men is employment, whereas, for women, it is material assistance.

<sup>16</sup> \*Other category of the chart should be read as None – in the original version of the questionnaire, we did not envision the possibility of answering None



#### **RISK IN FOCUS (4)**

##### **DIMINISHING ACCESS TO EMERGENCY AID FOR NEW ARRIVALS**

- Threat to the population – refugees continue arriving in Poland, while a majority of the iNGOs and local NGOs consider the emergency phase of the crisis to be over and access to immediate help (food, clothes, cash) is diminishing.
- (Potential) Effect of the threat – refugees arriving after many months of the conflict are potentially more impoverished. Their adaptation in Poland, if relying only on the state-provided benefits is more problematic than for those who arrived at the beginning of the conflict.



## **RISK IN FOCUS (5)**

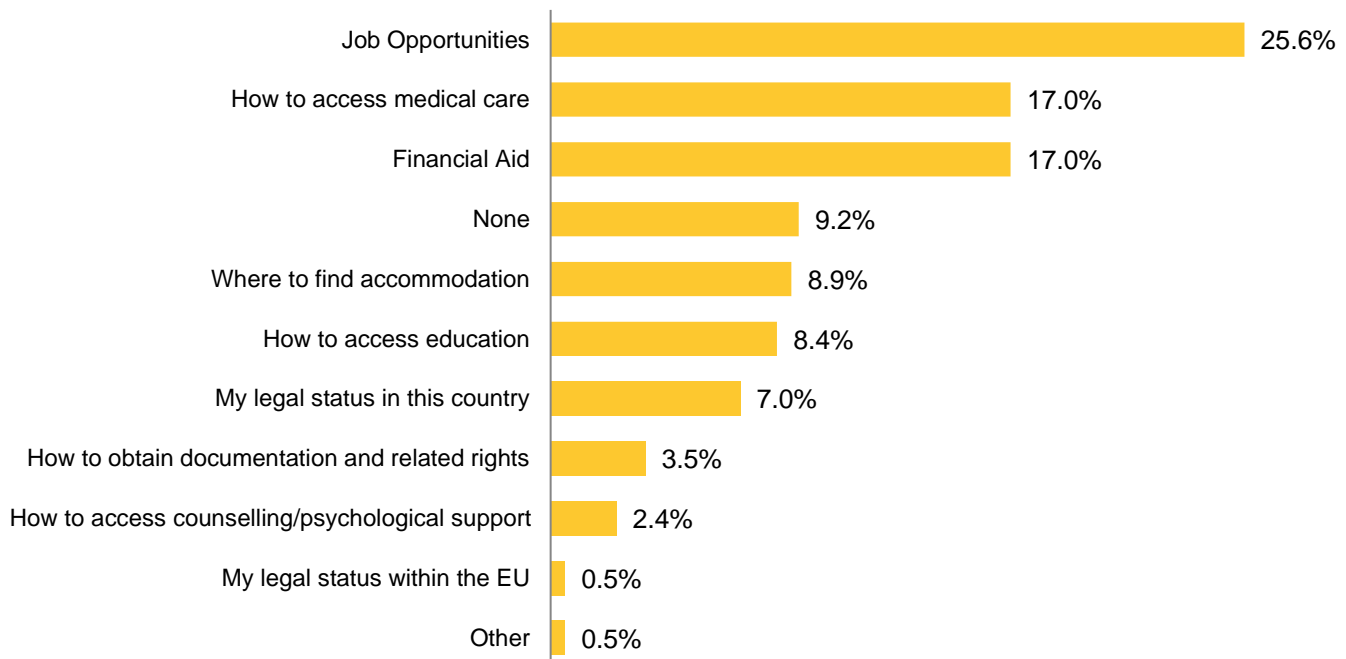
### **HIGH RELIANCE ON SOCIAL BENEFITS AND LIMITED CAPACITY OF THE LABOUR MARKET**

- Threat to the population – Large groups of refugees rely on social benefits (Polish and Ukrainian), which makes their financial situation fragile and often still does not allow them to meet all their needs.
- (Potential) Effect of the threat – Elderly refugees, refugees with disabilities, and mothers accompanied by children are especially reliant on social benefits and cannot find employment in Poland.

# Information needs

Key information needs identified by participants are job opportunities (26%), financial aid, and access to medical services (17%). 9% of participants reported that they do not have any information needs - the highest proportion of people who do not have any information needs are older respondents (60+), who explained that their information needs are addressed by younger household members.

## What are your main information needs? (N=204)



In the youngest age group (18-24), the most cited information needs are legal status in Poland and accommodation (21%). In groups 25-34, 35-49, and 50-59, the most requested information needed is job opportunities, whereas in group 60-69, it's access to medical care.

Depending on the time of arrival, in the group which arrived at the beginning of the conflict (February- May 2022), the most cited information needs are job opportunities (25%), financial aid (18%), and legal status in Poland (14%); in the group of the most recent arrivals (January-March 2023), the most cited needs are similar with one exception – first information need is job opportunities (32%), second financial aid and access to medical care (18%), and third one is accommodation (9%). A similar percentage in both groups – around 10% reported they do not have any information needs.

Over half of the participants prefer to get information from social media and messaging apps, with Telegram and Facebook being the most often used (29% and 28%, respectively). Other popular sources of information are friends/family (22%) and government websites (12%). Preferred sources of information do not vary depending on the age of participants.

# Recommendations



## Government of Poland

- Continue providing free-of-charge accommodation in collective shelters, including free-of-charge accommodation beyond 120 days for vulnerable groups of refugees.
- Introduction of legislative norms which will enable refugees from Ukraine who are pensioners to receive social benefits to cover the gap between the pensions they receive from Ukraine and the minimal Polish retirement pension.



## Protection Sector

- Establish a Task Force to analyze data gathered in the course of monitoring of the impact of the amendment to the Special Act, including the impact of the introduction of payment for shelters on refugees. The task Force should lead advocacy initiatives and communication with authorities regarding access to shelters and alternative accommodation by vulnerable groups of refugees.
- Monitoring trends in new arrivals and timely response to identified protection needs and risks, focusing on refugees from non-government-controlled territories.
- Systematical monitoring of cases of labor market exploitation and discrimination in the labor market. Carrying out awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns on labor rights, targeting refugees and potential employers.
- Implementation of a coordination mechanism between the sector and Basic Needs/Livelihoods, Education, and Health sectors to ensure an integrated approach to POC's needs coverage.



## Health sector

- Systematic monitoring of access to healthcare services in Poland for refugees and carefully coordinating non-state health services providers to ensure both their presence throughout Poland and the provision of accurate and up-to-date information about health services with a special focus on small towns and rural areas.



## Donors

- Supporting projects for provision of assistance to Ukrainian refugees fleeing non-government-controlled territories, using the border between Russia and Baltic countries.
- Continuation of funding projects related to provision of emergency assistance to Ukrainian refugees, including cash for rent, cash for health, and other health-related needs, and focus on access to labor market projects.



## Humanitarian organizations

- Combining integration assistance with at least some emergency aid provision (covering basic needs of new arrivals).
- Continuation of provision humanitarian assistance to refugees in need, including tailored protection services for elderly, people with disabilities and those unable to work.
- Thorough monitoring of the situation concerning refugees' abilities to pay for shelters, and designing of projects based on revealed needs, including cash for rent for vulnerable refugees, who are not exempted from paying according to current legislation.
- Designing and implementing of legal case management projects, which include not only legal assistance per se, but also transportation to the locations where services are available and coverage of state fees.
- Implementation of integrated cross-sectoral project to facilitate access to the labor market, including counseling, help in the job search, vocational education, and skills building combined with the care of the children, elderly, and those in severe medical conditions members of PoCs' family.



## **CONTACT US**

### **International Rescue Committee**

122 East 42ND Street

New York, NY10168 - 1289

USA

[contact.poland@rescue.org](mailto:contact.poland@rescue.org)

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people whose lives have been shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and rebuild.

Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, we now work in over 40 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas.

Ingenuity, fortitude and optimism remain at the heart of who we are. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always with a focus on the unique needs of women