



# REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN POLAND PROFILING UPDATE JUNE 2022

UNHCR/R.Kostrzynski

More than 6.3 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe<sup>1</sup>. 1.2 million individuals registered for Temporary Protection in Poland as of 30 June 2022, the highest number among the EU countries.

To understand the demographics of the Ukrainian refugee population, their intentions, immediate needs, access to information and displacement patterns, UNHCR, in partnership with REACH, launched a region-wide [profiling exercise](#). Interviews were carried out in multiple locations, including border areas, transit and reception centres, collective sites and information and assistance points. While the interviews were conducted in selected locations (i.e. NGO information offices, train and bus stations, reception and transit centers), the results cannot be extrapolated to the population of all refugees from Ukraine residing in Poland and the findings remain indicative. Respondents were randomly selected and asked for their consent to participate in structured interviews using a harmonized regional questionnaire. This update presents results from [4,569 interviews](#) conducted with refugees currently residing in Poland and includes cumulative responses from [1 to 30 June 2022](#).

Additionally, UNHCR conducted a series of [focus group discussions](#) (FGDs) in eight locations in Warsaw, Rzeszow and Lublin reaching 158 participants in the period between 13 and 15 June. FGDs included women, men, children adolescents and elderly, seeking their perspective on their future plans and challenges.

[READ MORE](#)

Regional report  
**LIVES ON HOLD: PROFILES  
AND INTENTIONS OF  
REFUGEES FROM  
UKRAINE**  
July 2022



Operational Data  
Portal - Ukraine  
Refugee Situation:  
**POLAND**

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

While most refugees are hoping to return to Ukraine as soon as safety allows, most of the respondents are planning to stay in Poland in the short to medium term - which generates a further need to build support systems and promote longer term perspectives, including by providing safe accommodation and access to dignified employment.

■ **63%** of refugees intend to stay in Poland, at least for some time. For the majority of the respondents, their decision is driven by safety reasons. Those planning to return (**22%**) are most often motivated by the perception that the situation in Ukraine has improved. For a significant part (17% of those planning to return) plans to return are just temporary - they want to visit family, but not necessarily stay in Ukraine.

■ **78%** of the respondents say they are hosted or rent accommodation in Poland (35% and 34% respectively), while **15%** of respondents are staying in reception, transit centres and collective sites.

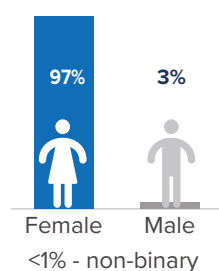
■ Financial support, access to employment and accommodation are the most frequently reported immediate needs, followed by in-kind assistance and medical treatment. Access to housing is likely to remain one of the main concerns, with rising rental and energy prices in Poland, particularly in the main cities, where most refugees are currently residing<sup>2</sup>. Given that the majority of refugees have vocational and/or university education, support in validation of diplomas and access to job opportunities for women with childcare responsibilities will be crucial to enhance self-reliance and inclusion.

## DEMOGRAPHY

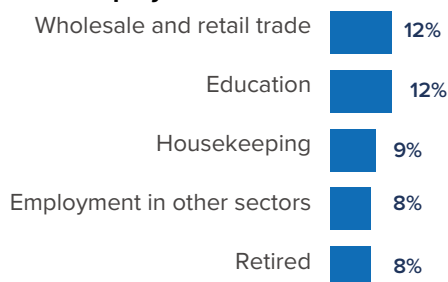
The majority of refugees are women of Ukrainian nationality travelling with members of close family (mainly other adult females, children and infants), with high level of education (more than half of respondents holding university degree) and diverse professional experience.

**75%** of respondents are travelling with other people, of whom 94% with close family. More than half (59%) are with at least one child or infant and 13% with at least one person aged 60 or more.

### Gender Breakdown



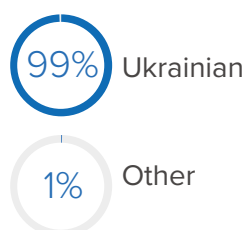
### Top 5 pre-displacement employment status



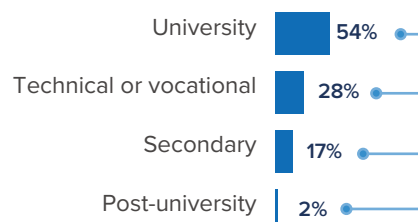
### Age differences in employment:

- For younger respondents (18-24 y.o.) most common employment status was education (30%), followed by unemployment (19%).
- Respondents aged 25+ most often worked in wholesale.

### Nationality



### Highest formal education level



### by age group

	18-24	25-39	40-59	60+
University	41%	61%	49%	44%
Technical or vocational	27%	22%	32%	35%
Secondary	32%	13%	17%	19%
Post-university	0%	3%	1%	2%



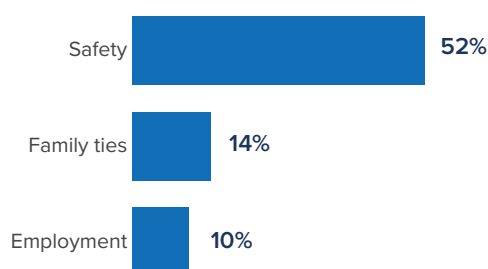
## FUTURE PLANS

The majority of respondents plan to stay in Poland at least for some time, mainly for safety reason. The proportion of those planning to stay is higher among refugees travelling with dependents (70% among households with children or infants, 71% among households with elderly, 73% among households with persons with special needs). One fifth reported their intent to return to Ukraine, however with very frequent concerns for their safety upon return. One tenth plans to move elsewhere to another country, with Germany, United Kingdom and Netherlands being the most frequently reported destinations.

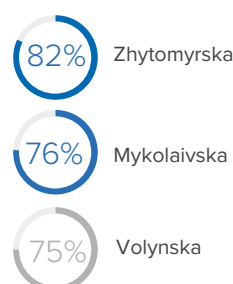
### Intentions: Stay in Poland

**63%** of respondents plan to stay in Poland

**Top 3 reasons for staying** (n=2,865)



**Top 3 oblasts of origin by intention to remain in Poland\***



**Top 3 oblasts of origin by intention to return to Ukraine\***



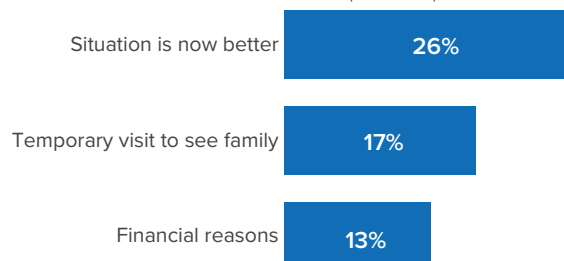
\* % shows the proportion of respondents from an oblast intending to stay in Poland

### Intentions: Return to Ukraine

Return to Ukraine is taking place in a spontaneous manner. The return theme continues to be actively discussed within families on both sides of the border and within communities at large. Return decisions are taken individually and are often made as a balancing act between the situation in Poland and changes in security situation in the area of origin. A significantly higher proportion of respondents plan to move among those who arrived in June (31%), than among those who arrived between February and May (5%). Family ties are the more common motivation to move back among those who have relatives abroad (main motivation for 50%), while those without relatives abroad are most often motivated by safety reasons (mentioned by 55%).

**22%** of respondents plan to return to Ukraine, of which 80% to the oblast of origin

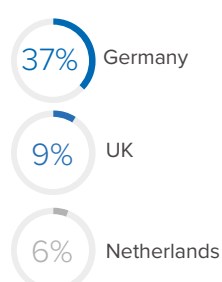
**Main reasons for return** (n=989)



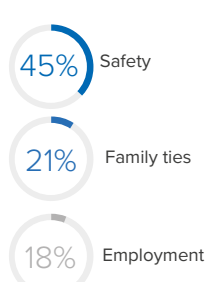
### Intentions: Moving Onward

**9%** of respondents plan to move to another country

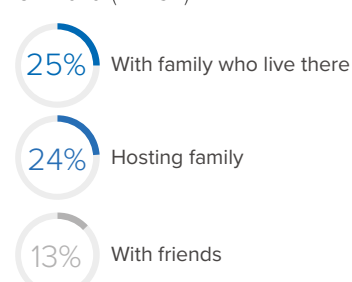
**Top final destinations** (n=434)



**Top reasons for moving elsewhere** (n=434)



**Most common accommodation arrangement for those moving onward** (n=434)



# Voices of Refugees: Perspectives and Future Plans

In line with [UNHCR's Age, Gender, and Diversity Policy \(2018\)](#), UNHCR held a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews with refugees from Ukraine living in eight different locations in Warsaw, Rzeszow and Lublin. The first round of FGDs focused on access to information concerning situation in places of origin or former habitual residence in Ukraine, refugees' views concerning return, stay in Poland and onward movement to EU and other countries. The key objective of focus group discussions is to place refugee voices at the center of discussions and planning. It is paramount that the international community listens to refugees and respects their choices.

As the situation in Ukraine remains fluid and uncertain, UNHCR acknowledges the positive stance of several countries on access to asylum and calls on all countries to allow civilians of all nationalities fleeing Ukraine non-

discriminatory access to their territories and to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement at all times. As the situation in Ukraine is volatile and may remain uncertain for some time to come, [UNHCR calls on States](#) to suspend the forcible return of nationals and former habitual residents of Ukraine, including those who have had their asylum claims rejected. The bar on forcible return serves as a minimum standard and needs to remain in place until such time as the security situation in Ukraine has significantly improved to permit a safe and dignified return of those determined not to be in need of international protection.



## Needs in Poland

While individual circumstances, needs and characteristics of refugees in Poland may impact their duration of stay in Poland in diverse ways, it is clear that a substantial number of refugees would continue staying in Poland unless the security situation improves in Ukraine.

Acknowledging and appreciating an overwhelming support and hospitality they have received upon their arrival and during their stay in Poland, refugees state that life in Poland for some within their community, particularly people with serious medical conditions and disabilities and elderly has proven to be challenging, and their situation worsened due to a lack of resources and a limited access to the job market.

Considering that the labour market remains quite competitive and lack of documentation often prompts several barriers to employment, [refugee women](#) request to be supported in

accessing the language classes and job orientation services. For [young adults](#), support with language and qualification and certification processes remain a crucial step in securing meaningful job opportunities.

For [elderly people and persons with disabilities](#), who faced disruption or loss of family and income, information on social services available where they are is vital. Further support in accessing healthcare through language and other assistance is regarded as an important intervention for this group.

[Children](#) constitute nearly half of the refugee population in Poland. Getting them back to attend school would help their learning and wellbeing. In addition to providing them with routine and sense of normality and safety, school may also enable them to socialize more with their peers from host communities and adjust to circumstances.

*"My family in Ukraine wants me to stay here. They are worried. Kids will be safer here."*

Deaf female participant

## The key factors impacting decision to return

Returns are taking place in spontaneous manner, with Kyiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Odessa, Poltava and Dnipro being quoted as the most common places of return at the time. Refugee communities are aware of these returns and explain that the main reasons of return include family reunification, job-related factors, family/community support and availability of property.

Return-related discussions are happening at a regular frequency within refugee families and to a certain degree, at community level in Poland. The vast majority of FGD participants reported that they are willing to return. The main factor for determining a return to Ukraine was mentioned to be the end of the war. However, the overwhelming majority of FGD participants indicated that while they are likely to stay in

Poland in the upcoming months, they would like to go back to Ukraine as soon as it is safe there.

FGD participants from certain regions expressed that they would not go back if their region was occupied by Russia and/or completely destroyed. The issues that may trigger return decisions are similar to the ones that may render continued stay in Poland increasingly untenable. These vary from language barrier, shortage of financial resources, integration difficulties and limited livelihood opportunities in Poland.

Respondents, especially elderly persons, people with disabilities and families with small children, report that transportation costs to return are prohibitive.

## Level of awareness about the situation in their place of origin

Refugees from eastern Ukraine report difficulties in accessing information about the state of their family and property, explaining that internet connectivity and phone reception are often not available in some parts of the country where the conflict is still active.

For many, family members and friends remaining in Ukraine, are the main sources of information on communal situation, availability of services and general security situation;

Internet was frequently quoted as the main source of

information on the general situation as well as situation in particular areas. **Elderly refugees** refer to YouTube (Ukrainian channels/TV) to obtain information, as well as Ukrainian and Polish media as the main sources of news, while **participants from other age groups** report to be actively using of social media platforms such as Telegram, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook for the same purpose. **Adolescent and young adults** state that websites managed by the Ukrainian armed forces, as well as some channels in telegram and volunteer pages are the most trusted platforms providing helpful information to Ukrainian refugees.

## Moving onward

The majority of FGD participants across all locations indicated they had no intention of moving elsewhere, the main reason being the proximity to Ukraine and the facility of returning once the situation allows. Strong family ties and community support in Ukraine and Poland were also quoted as factors stabilizing refugees' stay in Poland.

At the same time, existence of family links and support networks in other parts of Europe and beyond, was regarded as one of the factors informing onward movement.

Within the **Roma community**, lack of livelihood opportunities in Poland, language barriers and advice from family and friends who are already in third countries were listed as the reasons to consider moving onwards.

Amongst the **adolescent and young adult** groups (14-18 years old and 18-30 years old), where adaptability levels are perceived to be higher as compared to other age groups, a majority would not wish to move onward.

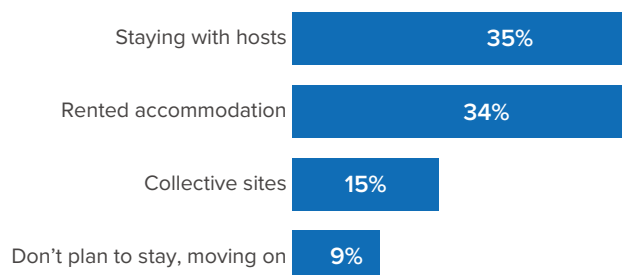


## ACCOMMODATION

Majority of refugees are staying with hosts (35%) or in rented (34%) accommodation, 15% in collective sites, and one in ten reported not planning to stay in Poland, thus not having accommodation here.

There is a significantly higher proportion of respondents staying with hosts among those who travel with close family (37%), than among those who do not (24%). Those who do not travel with close family, in contrary, more often stay in rented accommodation (44% vs 34%).

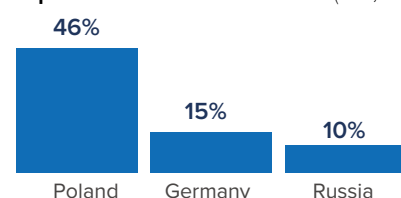
### Top 5 current/planned accommodation types



## SUPPORT NETWORKS

**29%** of respondents have relatives residing outside Ukraine

### Top 3 countries of relatives (n=1,318)

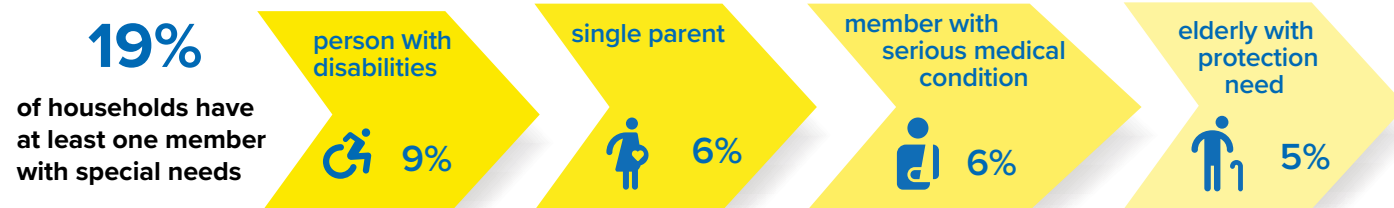
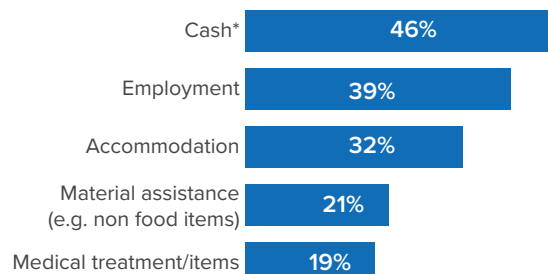


## PRIORITY NEEDS

Cash, employment and accommodation are most often mentioned as priority needs. Material assistance and medical treatment is needed by one fifth of respondents - among others, respondents express concerns about the long waiting time and difficulties in access to specialists doctors.

- Cash is more often a priority need among those travelling with children (50% compared to 40%).
- 33% of those travelling with elderly need medical assistance, compared to 16% of those without elderly.
- Also material assistance is needed more among those with elderly family members (27% vs 20%).

### Most frequently reported basic needs

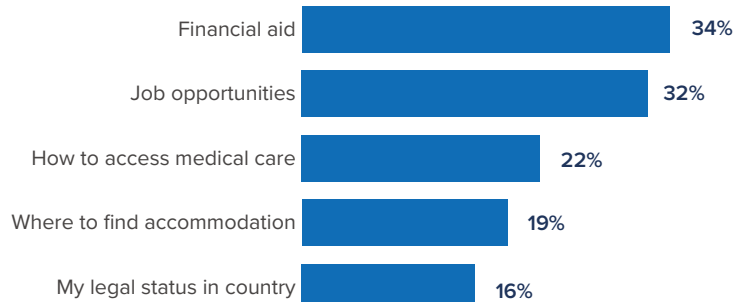


\* While cash is the priority basic need reported by refugees, it covers several underlying needs. Future reports will explore what these underlying needs are.

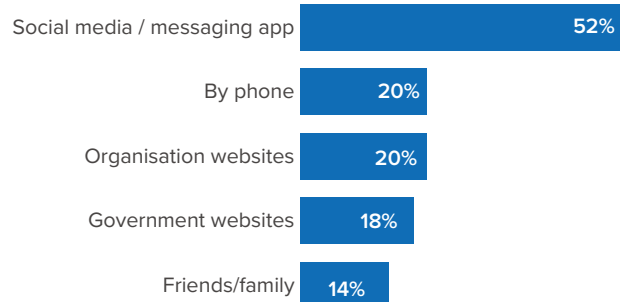
## INFORMATION NEEDS

Those who expressed information needs most often indicated the need to receive information about financial aid, job opportunities and accessing medical care. Social media and messaging apps are preferred methods for communication, especially Facebook, Telegram and Viber.

### Top 5 reported information needs\*



### Preferred methods of receiving information\*



42% reported no need for receiving information

\*Multiple responses permitted. The sum might exceed 100%.

### Preferred social media channels\*



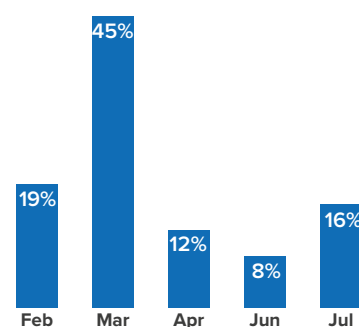
## ORIGIN & ARRIVAL

The majority of respondents (64%) left their place of origin between late February and March. 100% have national passport or national ID with themselves (of whom 78% biometric, 22% non-biometric or did not tell). 11% were internally displaced within Ukraine prior to leaving the country.

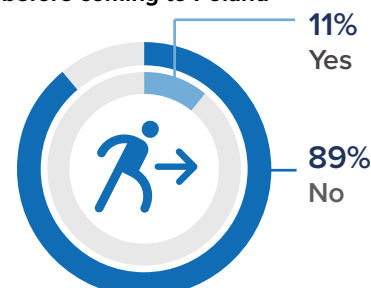
### Most frequent oblasts of origin



### Month of departure



### Were internally displaced before coming to Poland



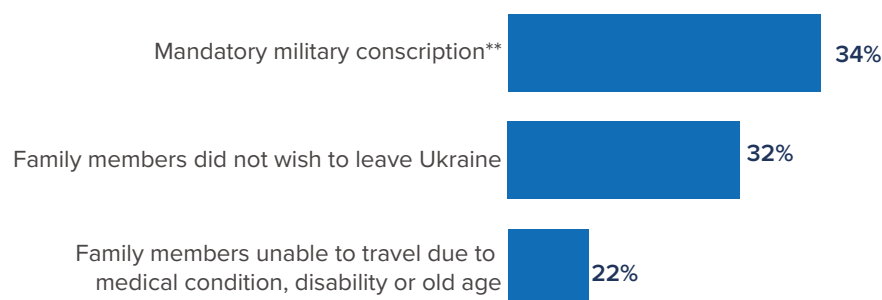


## FAMILY SEPARATION

Most of respondents were separated from immediate family members since the onset of war. This was most often caused by military conscription or the fact that family members did not wish to or could not leave Ukraine.

### 85% of respondents were separated from immediate family members

#### Top 3 reasons for separation (n=3,805)\*



\*Multiple responses permitted. The sum might exceed 100%.

\*\*Military conscription applies to martial law in place in Ukraine which prevents men from 18-60 from leaving the country, however it does not imply that those who remained are in active military service.

### Limitation of findings

- Non-probability sampling was applied and therefore the results cannot be extrapolated to the population of all refugees from Ukraine residing in Poland.
- Conflict is ongoing and rapidly changing, and population movements continue, therefore results might differ significantly in the next round of data collection.
- Data was collected only in certain regions, including border areas in Podkarpackie and Lubelskie voivodships, as well as major cities like Warsaw, Krakow, Wrocław, Lublin and Poznań - the situation might differ in other regions and smaller cities.

### Endnotes

- 1 [Ukrainians in 12 Largest Polish Cities after 24 Feb 2022: Key Results from Reports of the UMP Research and Analysis Center / June 2022](#)
- 2 [UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Poland](#)

### CONTACT US

Lorena Isla Rodriguez, Senior Protection Officer at [isla@unhcr.org](mailto:isla@unhcr.org)

Andrii Mazurenko, Senior Information Management Officer at [mazurenk@unhcr.org](mailto:mazurenk@unhcr.org)

Paula Gierak, Country Focal Point, [paula.gierak@reach-initiative.org](mailto:paula.gierak@reach-initiative.org)