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Voice of Ukrainians: Experiences of refugees with housing in the Czech Republic and outlook for the future

/ Research among refugees

Sociologický ústav
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PAQ RESEARCH

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Main findings

Quality of living

/ 1 / Roughly a fifth of refugees from Ukraine live in the Czech Republic in commercial or municipal rentals, about 30% in non-residential types of housing (hostels, hotels and other types of housing) and the rest in apartments provided or shared with Czech or Ukrainian households. **Non-residential housing is more often occupied by refugees who arrived in the Czech Republic in later months, did not have family contacts here before the war, or are from smaller and childless households.** This may also be the result of significantly lower state support for smaller households.

/ 2 / **More than half of the refugees live in cramped conditions** – with less than 6 m2 of living space per person (bedrooms and living rooms). This applies mainly to people in accommodation facilities, but also to households accommodated by locals, as they tend to be numerous.

/ 3 / **Problems with the lack of privacy and hygienic conditions are particularly evident among refugees in hostels,** where, for example, every third person does not have a key to be able to come and go independently.

/ 4 / The overall view shows that only a **quarter of refugees from Ukraine in the Czech Republic live in apartments or houses with sufficient living space** (6 m2) per person **and their own access to social facilities.** The next and largest part of refugees (46%) currently resides in apartments, which, however, do not reach standard quality. The third part (29%) is in hostels, hotels and other non-residential housing types.

Moving and plans

/ 5 / Refugees who get into hostels often have problems moving out of them to better accommodation – 75% stayed in hostels and only 17% moved into independent housing (rents or separate apartments from Czech households).

/ 6 / **Half of the refugees are looking for or plan to look for other housing, more often those who are in hotels and hostels** - there is still such a high demand for housing.
Ukrainians living in apartments provided by the Czechs are less often searched. People who stay in them and do not look for rental housing, more often plan to return to Ukraine soon, which, however, may not be possible in view of the development of the conflict.

The connection between housing and the degree of integration

/ 7 / Refugees who have been in the Czech Republic since March and **live in apartments speak Czech better than those who live in a more isolated environment of hostels and hotels.** People who live together with Czechs speak Czech best (21% can get along in common situations). Children from families who were provided housing by Czechs attended Czech schools more in June - probably due to, among other things, a higher level of assistance with enrolment.

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PAQ Research recommendations

/ 1 / The state should **support the integration of Ukrainian refugees** who decide to stay in the Czech Republic **into housing.** Otherwise, he may bear additional costs in not using work qualifications (knowledge of the Czech language) and problems in education. Integration in housing is related to integration in education and knowledge of the language.

/ 2 / Based on our research and public data, it can be assumed that around or over 250,000 refugees from Ukraine lived in the Czech Republic in June. 1 About 14% of them had a planned return. Given the unclear development of the conflict, it cannot be ruled out that up to 200,000 refugees will need accommodation even in the fall. State policy in the area **of housing support must therefore have a longer-term horizon.**

/ 3 / **Support for the provision of housing from the Czechs,** on which a large number of refugees depend, should continue at least **until the end of the year. Support should be degressive** (e.g. CZK 5,000 for the first person, but only CZK 12,000 for 3 persons), it should apply only to **apartments and parts of the house not yet used,** so that there is no limitation of the offer for the Czech population.

/ 4 / State support for housing in hostels, hotels and apartments provided by Czech households should set **minimum quality standards** - for example, in terms of the living area and access to social facilities.

/ 5 / The key is **to support the supply so** that there is enough accommodation for the vulnerable Czech population and refugees - i.e. support for **the reconstruction of the municipal housing stock,** construction **affordable housing** and a robust system **of guaranteed rental housing** (the municipality and the state guarantee the risks to the landlord).

/ 6 / Refugee integration support centers should focus on helping households in accommodation facilities that face the greatest risks due to unfavorable conditions, especially for families. And **help them progress to more standard forms of housing.**

/ 7 / For newly arrived refugees and those who remain in non-residential or emergency accommodation and their integration in other directions (schools, work) stagnates, the state should implement **relocation systems in** order to exploit the supply of housing and schools in regions with a smaller number refugees.

/ 8 / The state should prepare and announce in advance **the system and conditions for extending temporary protection** and possibly subsequent granting of work visas. This can increase the confidence of both housing and full-time job providers in offering opportunities to people from Ukraine.

/ 9 / The state should set up a system of phasing out ad-hoc forms of support (humanitarian benefit, solidarity housing) over time, which will not depend only on the achievement of work activity, so that the motivation to work illegally does not grow. He should also prepare a transparent **transition of refugees from ad-hoc forms of support to the standard system of** social state support benefits (SSP). This transition should prevent refugees from finding themselves in a social support vacuum (restriction of ad-hoc benefits and impossibility of SSP entitlement), increased segregation in housing and, as a result, the linguistic and educational integration of children worsened and illegal forms of work, etc., strengthened.

[1] We base our data on school attendance on parents' declarations, actually registered school attendance and the representation of refugee age groups.

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About research

Objectives and content of the research

In the document, you will find findings from the first representative research of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic, which dealt with issues of education, housing and strategies for staying in the Czech Republic / returning to Ukraine. This report describes experiences with housing in the Czech Republic, problems with different types of accommodation for Ukrainian refugees and the connection between the type of housing and the level of integration.

Implementers and partners

The research is carried out **by PAQ Research, z. ú.** (content and processing of outputs) **Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, vvi** (data collection, cooperation on content). The research was financially supported **by the 3WFoundation** (the topic of housing) and **the City of Prague** (expansion of the sample within Prague for a more detailed mapping of the situation in the city districts).

Methodology

The research is based on interviews with N=1,300 households of refugees from Ukraine, in which a **total of 3,721 people** live who came from Ukraine since February 2022. The survey took place from 20 June to 13 July 2022, and respondents answered questions about their experiences with living in the Czech Republic for their entire household. At the same time, the research collected detailed information on the composition of individual households. The average household in the sample has 2.9 refugee members. The data in this report only describe the experiences of Ukrainians fleeing the war since February 2022, members of households living in the Czech Republic for a long time are not included in the sample.

The research is carried out by online questioning of a panel of refugees from Ukraine, which is operated by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The panel was created in cooperation with the Social Security Office of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, which during the census of the work activity of applicants for the Humanitarian Benefit approached refugee households with the opportunity to participate in the research of the Social Security Office of the Czech Republic. Participation in the research is anonymous and paid (transfer of rewards to charity), the identity of the respondents is verified by phone during the recruitment of the panel.

The outputs presented in this report are based on a sample that is **representative in terms of region of residence within the Czech Republic and the combination of age and gender of individual household members within regions.** Representativeness is ensured by a combination of random stratified sampling (approaching randomly selected contacts within the microregions of the Czech Republic) and subsequent data import so that the structure of the sample corresponds to statistics from the data of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (CIS).

The research represents the attitudes and experiences of people from Ukraine who came to the Czech Republic after February 2022 and are still staying in the Czech Republic. Their estimated number is currently around 250,000 people (combination of data and analyzes of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Ministry of the Interior and our research).

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/ 1 / Where do Ukrainian refugees live and what does it depend on

More than a fifth of Ukrainian refugees live in ordinary rental housing - that is, in commercial leases or sub-leases (18%) or in municipal apartments (3%). Less than a third live in separate apartments or reserved parts of houses provided by local – mainly Czech – households (31%). Roughly a sixth of the refugees then live together with these "willing" households in the same apartment or part of an apartment. This shared housing is relatively often offered to refugees by Ukrainians who lived in the Czech Republic before 2022 (6% of refugees live this way).

The rest, i.e. almost 30% of refugees, still live in non-residential housing - in hostels (16%) and to a lesser extent in hotels and boarding houses (9%) and other types of housing (5%).

The type of housing is significantly related to the time of arrival from Ukraine, household structure, location of residence in the Czech Republic, whether the refugees knew someone in the Czech Republic, and whether they planned to return to Ukraine *(Table* 1):

/ 1 / 23% of refugees who arrived in the Czech Republic in April or later live in hostels (compared to 14% of those who arrived earlier). Later arrivals, on the other hand, less often live in independent housing provided by the Czech Republic or in rentals. It is not excluded that refugees who arrived later will move to residential housing. But they may more often allude to the fact that its capacity is exhausted.

/ 2 / Refugees in households with children live significantly more often in separate apartments and parts of the house provided by the Czech Republic (34% vs. 21% of those without children). This may be related to the greater willingness of Czechs to provide housing for their children, but also to the fact that state support for the provision of apartments to households with fewer members was set up very unfavorably. The providing Czechs received 3,000 CZK per person, which only motivated them to rent to larger families.

/ 3 / People who already had relatives in the Czech Republic before February 2022 will have significantly more often managed to find rental housing or live with these relatives. On the contrary, those without local ties are dependent on apartments provided by Czech households, and when they run out, they often end up in hostels and hotels.

/ 4 / Refugees in Prague live more often in rented accommodation or with Ukrainian friends and relatives. This may be due to the size of the Ukrainian diaspora in Prague before 2022, which helps refugees with housing.

/ 5 / People who do not have a planned departure to Ukraine live significantly more often in rented housing. On the contrary, those planning to leave more often stay in apartments and parts of the house provided by the Czech Republic. Planning and expectation of return apparently affects the effort to obtain rental housing.

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Table 1

/ Housing type according to factors: time of arrival, type of household, location, knowledge and departure plan

		All Ukrainian refugees	When did they arrive in the Czech Republic?		Household type		Location		They had a close relative in the Czech Republic before their arrival		They are scheduled to leave	
			February March	April and beyond	Without children	With children	Prague	Outside Prague	Yes	No	Yes	No
Rental housing	Lease or sublease	**18%**	19%	16%	19%	18%	26%	16%	30%	14%	9%	20%
	Municipal apartment	**3%**	3%	1%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Living in a separate apartment or part of a house provided...	... by the Czech household	**31%**	32%	27%	21%	34%	26%	33%	24%	34%	43%	29%
	… Ukrainian household	**1%**	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Cohabitation in an apartment together with …	... by the Czech household	**11%**	11%	12%	13 %	11%	9%	12%	6%	13 %	10%	12%
	… Ukrainian household	**6%**	6%	5%	7%	6%	12%	4%	15%	3%	8%	6%
Non-residential forms of housing	Hostel	**16%**	14%	23%	24%	14%	11%	17%	12%	17%	14%	16%
	Hotel, guest house, etc.	**9%**	9%	10%	8%	9%	8%	9%	5%	10%	10%	9%
	Other + emergency	**5%**	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	3%	5%
	In total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; Question wording: Where do you currently live?

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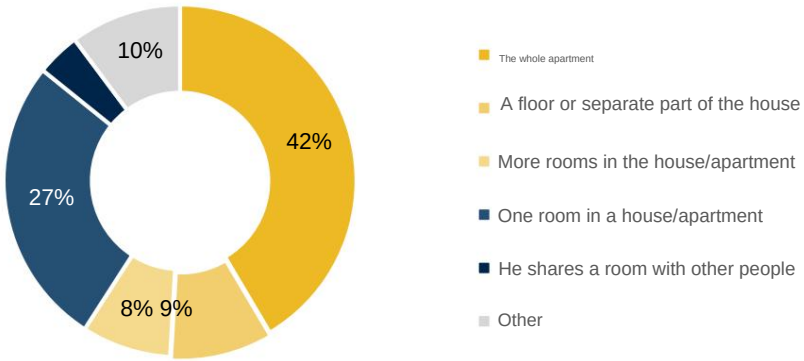
/ 2 / Quality of housing

A third of Ukrainian refugees have only one room available for their household in a house or apartment shared with other people, or even share a room with another household (31%). This applies to Ukrainians in hostels, hotels and those accommodated by Czechs and Ukrainians.

52% of refugee households live in the entire apartment or a separate part of the house *(Chart 2.1).*

Graph 2.1

/ Disposition and privacy in contemporary housing



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households. Wording of the question: Do you and the members of your household have:

More than half of refugees (54%) live in housing with less than 6 m2 of living space (bedrooms, rooms) per person. At the same time, this limit corresponds to the minimum standards of mass accommodation facilities2 and was recommended by experts as a condition for state funding of housing in hostels and in households.3 In Germany, when financing temporary accommodation for refugees, a living area of at least 7 m2 per person was required.

The research asked about the area that a household can use for living (bedroom and living room), even if it is shared with another, for example a Czech household. The estimate that 54% of refugees live in very cramped housing can therefore be described as conservative.

Available living space differs greatly between Ukrainians who live in collective accommodation facilities and in ordinary apartments or houses *(Chart 2.2).* Ukrainians have the least space at home in accommodation facilities, 67% of them have less than 6 m2 per person. Therefore, in most cases, the standards of accommodation facilities are violated. On the other hand, those who live in rent, sublet or municipal apartments have the most places, of which 30% have more than 10 m2/person for housing.

2 The official uniform classification of accommodation facilities of the Czech Republic sets the minimum size of the accommodation unit at 12.6 m2 for double and 17.6 m2 for triple rooms in the cheapest types of accommodation (one- and two-star hotels), respectively 13.3 m2 and 18.3 m2 for better types of accommodation. For the most common types of households, the size is roughly 6 meters per person (http://www.mmr.cz/getmedia/d2e0a220-2540-4d5b-a0e0-798762e1a82c/Oficialni-jednotna klasifikace-CR-2010-2012.pdf) .

3 Recommendation of People in Need and PAQ Research in March 2022.

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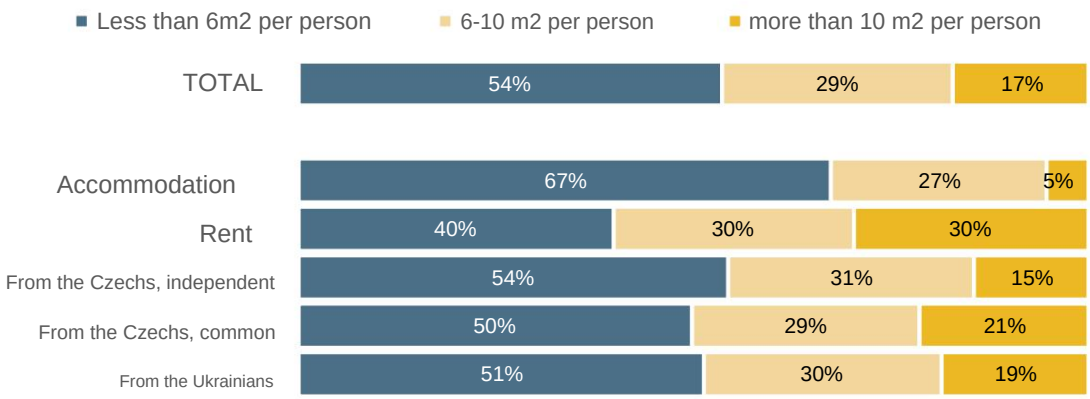
Graph 2.2

/ Living space per person in different types of accommodation



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; Question wording: How many square meters is the area you have available for sleeping and living (bedroom and living room)?

The vast majority of Ukrainian refugees (84%) have their own access to housing - that is, keys and the ability to come and go independently. Two-thirds have their own toilet, which they do not have to share with anyone, and just over half (56%) have their own kitchen *(Chart 2.3).*

In terms of equipment, separate and shared accommodation are again significantly different. Accommodation facilities, in which a quarter of refugees live, mean a reduced level of privacy and freedom for them - 28% do not have the possibility to come and go independently, half have shared toilets and only a minimum have their own kitchen. Similarly, although to a lesser extent, it is the case with apartments and houses shared with Czech and Ukrainian households. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of refugees who rent and in separate apartments or floors of houses provided by Czech households have independent use of all basic equipment.

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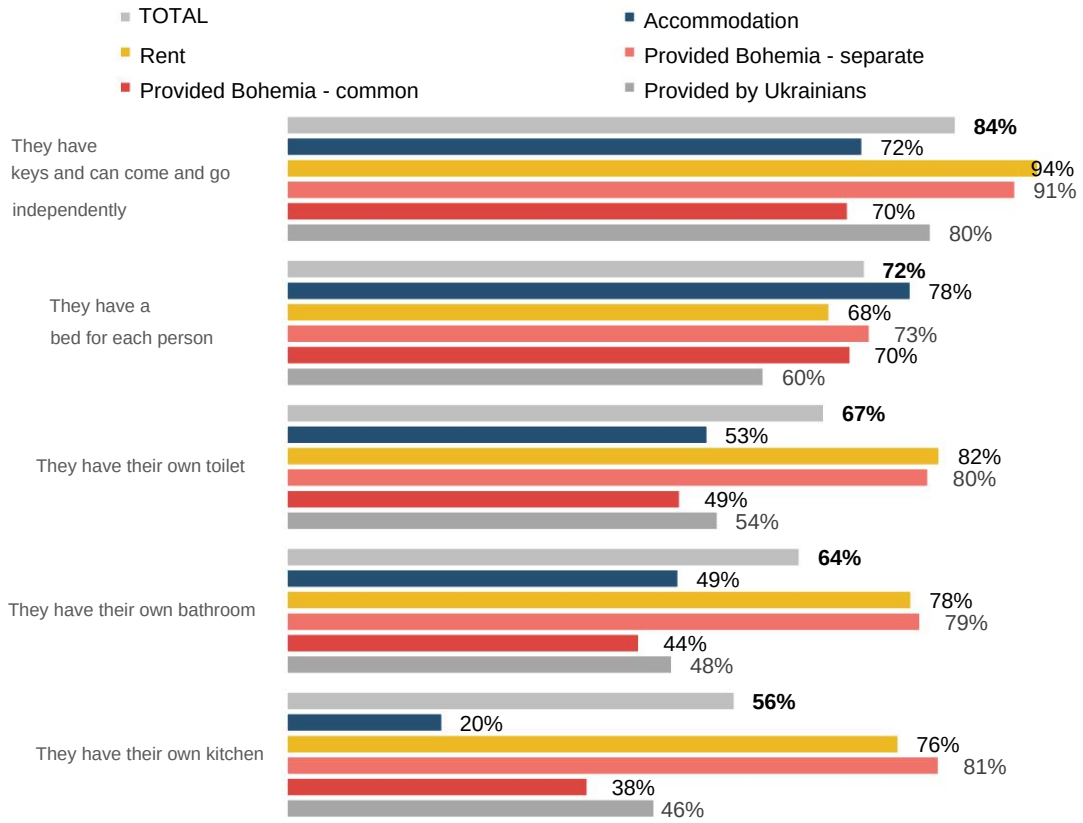
Graph 2.3

/ Household equipment by type of accommodation



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; Question wording: Do you have the following items in your accommodation?

Refugees most often rate the availability of work nearby in their field, the availability of places in schools and kindergartens, and the high cost of housing as the "fundamental problem" associated with housing *(Chart 2.4).*

According to the research, these types of problems usually do not differ significantly depending on the type of accommodation. The exception is housing costs - these are faced as a serious problem mainly by people in rented housing (48% of them). Compared to others, people in accommodation facilities often encounter a lack of space for playing with children and a great distance from other relatives and acquaintances from Ukraine.

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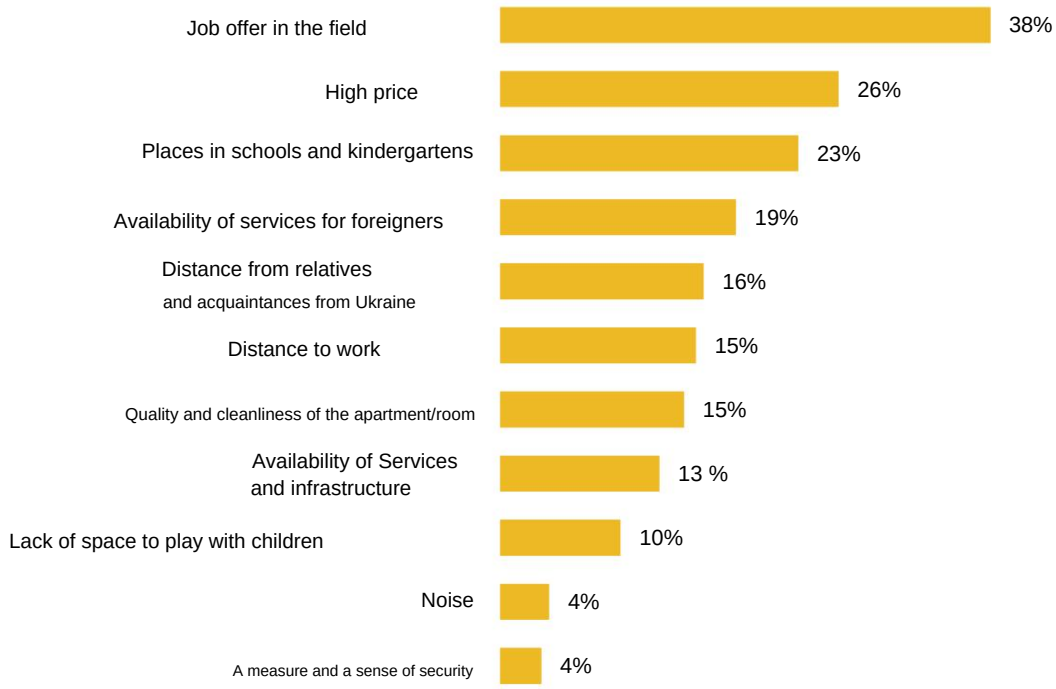
Graph 2.4

/ Problems with housing



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; Wording of the question: Do you have a problem in your accommodation in the following areas? (% It is a fundamental problem that we are trying/intend to solve)

The overall typology of housing can be determined from the form, area and basic amenities of housing. It shows that:

/ 1 / A quarter of refugees from Ukraine live in standard housing (rented, municipal or provided by local households), where they have access to their own toilet and bathroom and at least 6 m2 of living space (bedroom, living room) per person.
This housing can be characterized as sufficiently stable and of high quality.

/ 2 / Almost half (46%) of households live in apartments that do not meet quality standards - they are usually significantly small compared to the size of the household (less than 6 m2 per person) or lack separate access to social facilities. This substandard housing also includes sharing apartments with Czech or Ukrainian households.

/ 3 / Almost a third (29%) then live in non-residential (hostels, hotels, other) housing.

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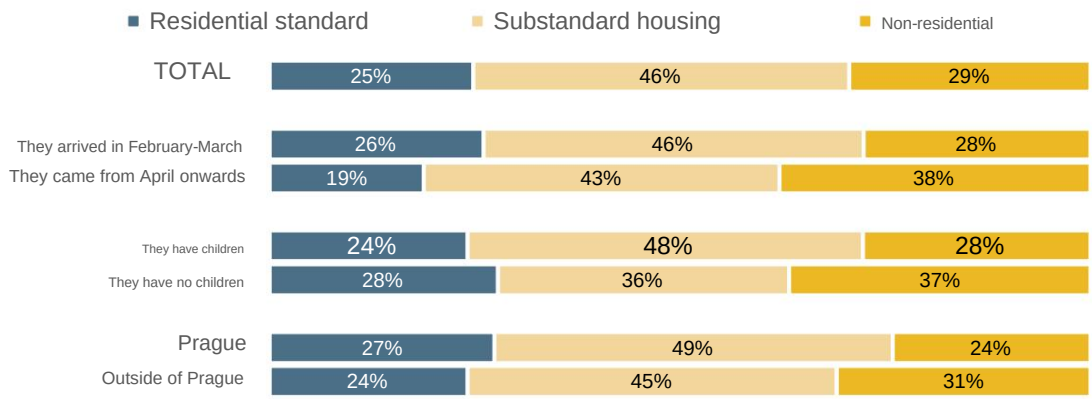
Graph 2.5

/ Overall housing typology by type and quality



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; Non-residential = accommodation facilities and others, Residential standard = apartment house with a living area > 6 m2/person and own toilet and bathroom for the household (including shared housing), Substandard housing = other housing in an apartment or house (including shared);

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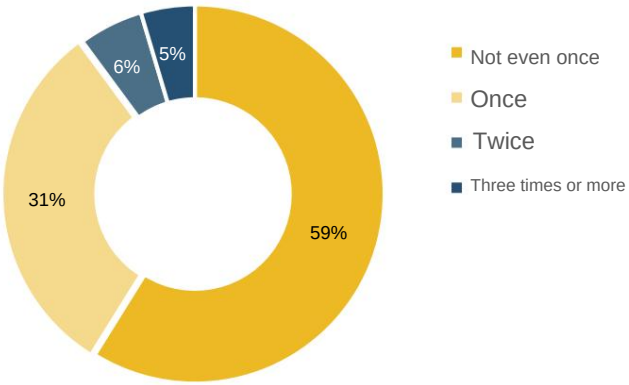
/ 3 / Migration of Ukrainians within the Czech Republic

So far, 41% of Ukrainian refugees have moved at least once since arriving in the Czech Republic. 11% moved significantly *(Chart 3.1).* Unstable housing and frequent moves are associated with a lower probability of enrollment in primary and kindergarten, because the family does not know where they will live (see report Education). Households of Roma refugees differ significantly in the intensity of moving – 29% of them had to move at least twice.

Graph 3.1

/ How many times have you moved in the Czech Republic?



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households. Wording of the question: How many times have you moved since coming to the Czech Republic?

Graphs 3.2 and 3.3 show where refugees moved from their original accommodation in the Czech Republic, including those who remained there. Refugees who get into hostels often have problems getting out of them to better accommodation – 75% stayed in hostels and only 17% moved into independent housing (rents or separate apartments from Czech households).
On the contrary, for example, of the refugees who were first accommodated in a hotel or boarding house, almost half are now in more stable and apartment living, although 42% of these people have also moved to hostels.

Households that found housing from Czech households or rents and municipal housing at the beginning of their stay mostly kept it until June. So far, only a minimum of them are moving back to hostels and other substandard housing. For quality housing, it is apparently key to accommodate the household in housing types in time and to increase their offer.

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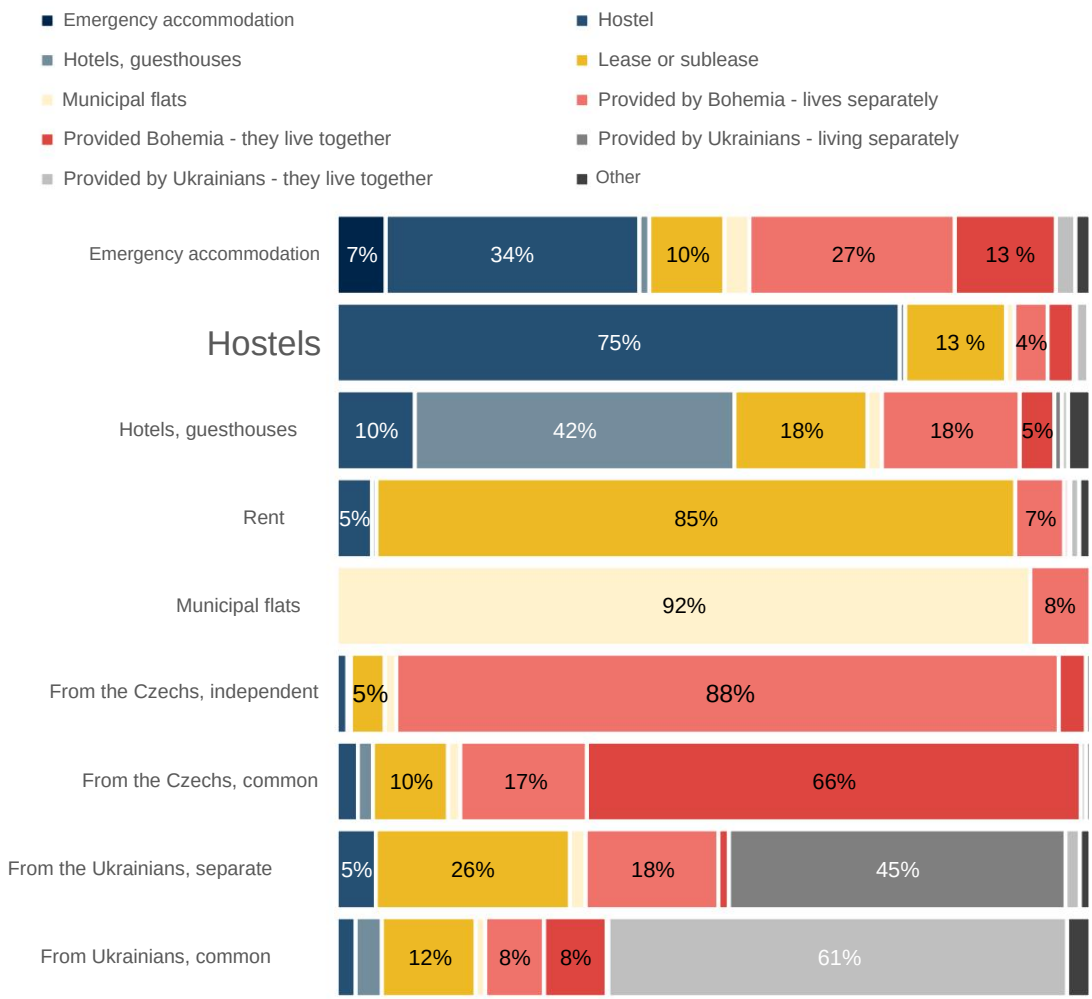
Graph 3.2

/ Where did refugees move from their original accommodation - % of people who originally lived in the given type of housing



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households, Question wording: Have you lived in the Czech Republic in the past – i.e. before coming to your current accommodation – in the following types of accommodation?; *Emergency accommodation = temporary accommodation in public buildings, tent cities, etc.

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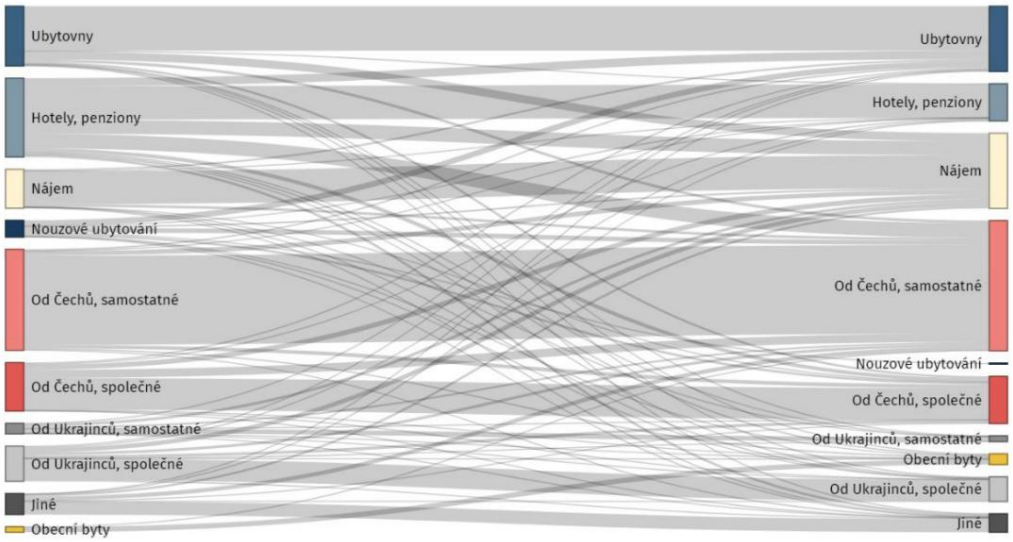
Chart 3.3

/ Movement of refugees from the original type of accommodation to another - interactive graph to be found here



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; see also *Chart 3.2. Left side – original housing, right side – current housing*

Almost half of the refugees plan to look for another place to live in the coming weeks or months or are already actively looking. This mostly concerns those who live in hostels or hotels and boarding houses *(Chart 3.4)*.

A large part of Ukrainians who are currently staying in hotels or living together with Czechs (38% and 58%) say that they are not looking for other housing and that they are satisfied with the current one. However, the fact that Ukrainians in the Czech Republic mostly want to return to their country as soon as possible is the reason why they are not looking for new housing. Ukrainians who want to return to their homeland soon often live in shared households - apparently because the plan
return, they have not yet started looking for more stable housing.

However, the desire to return does not necessarily mean that the refugees will not stay in the Czech Republic, because the key is the development of the war conflict in the place of their original residence. It may thus happen that a large part of those who are comfortable with short-term accommodation as a temporary one, will also need to look for more permanent housing in the next few months.

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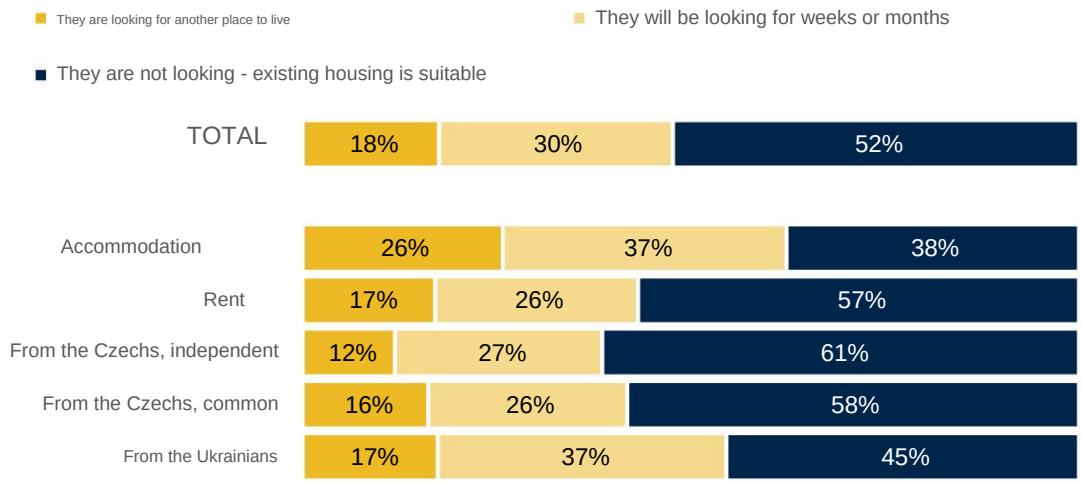
Graph 3.4

/ Proportion of refugees looking for other housing



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households; Wording of the question: Are you looking for a different/better housing?

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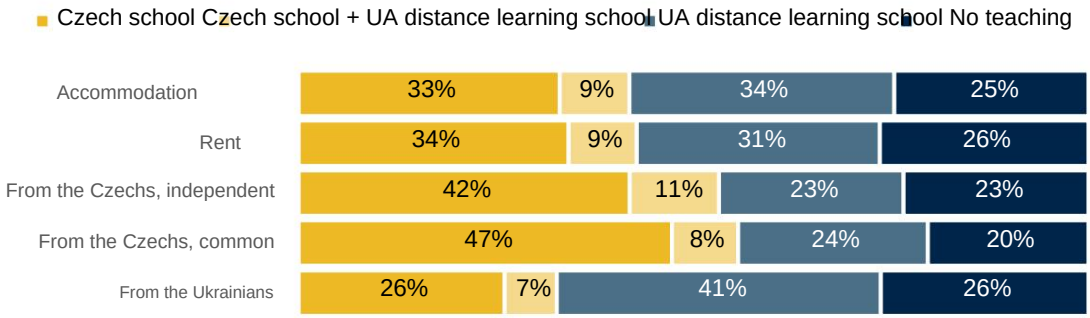
/ 4 / The relationship between housing and the degree of integration

The type of housing is related to the degree of integration, such as children's participation in school facilities and knowledge of the Czech language. The largest participation in Czech schools and kindergartens is among Ukrainians in accommodation provided by the Czech Republic – 53%, or 56% *(Chart 4.1).* This relationship exists between people who came to the Czech Republic in February or March - so it is not determined by a later time of arrival. The relationship may be due to a better understanding of the Czech system thanks to ties to local residents and the fact that Czechs handle communication with institutions on behalf of their guests.

The biggest difference can be seen in elementary schools, where in June only half of the children in residential facilities attended, while 63% of children in so-called solidarity households attended.

Chart 4.1

/ Participation of children in school facilities in the Czech Republic by type of accommodation



Note: N= 1355, children 3–17 years; Wording of the question: Does this child attend classes in the Czech Republic in one of the following facilities?

Refugees' knowledge of Czech depends on the time of arrival - that they can "communicate in common situations and understand the text" is declared by about 15% of people who arrived in February or March, and very few of those who arrived in April and later.

Among people who have been in the Czech Republic longer but report better knowledge are those who live in standard housing and are in contact with the majority population. Among refugees who live in households directly with Czechs, 21% can communicate in common situations and 61% can put together at least a few sentences and understand simpler ones *(Chart 4.1).* On the contrary, Ukrainians have the worst time with Czech, who they stay in accommodation facilities. Only 11% of those who arrived in the Czech Republic in February a March 2022, they get along in common situations and 36% put a few sentences together. Knowledge of Czech is almost half.

Among refugees who arrived in April and later, the association with language proficiency is smaller and unclear. This suggests that it may indeed be an effect of long-term contact with the majority company.

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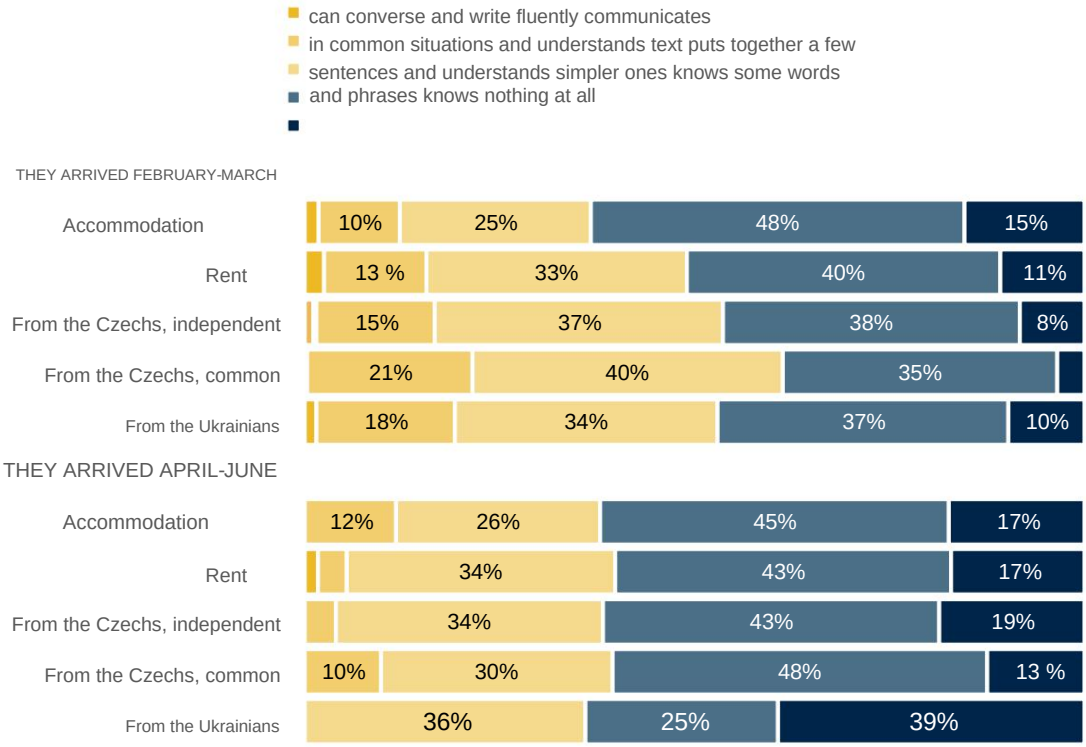
Chart 4.2

/ Knowledge of Czech depending on the type of accommodation



Note: N=3721 individuals in 1300 households, Question wording: What are your language skills in the Czech language? / What is this child's language skills?