INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

PROTECTION MONITORING Q2 2024

METHODOLOGY

In this cycle, the IRC Protection Monitoring Team conducted 437 surveys with refugees over the age of 18 and 14 expert interviews (KIIs) were conducted. Locations: Warsaw, Katowice and Gdynia.

Locations

Interviews are conducted in various locations, including local NGOs , community centers, collective accommodation, information, and assistance points, transit locations and reception/registration centers.

Sampling

Convinient, non-probabilistic sampling was used

Protection Analysis Framework

PAF is an analytical process undertaken to identify and understand protection risks with the aim of informing strategies and responses.

Methods

Mixed approach with Individual Household Survey; Semi-structured interviews (KIIs); Participant observation; FGDs Thematic and statistical analysis

Limitations

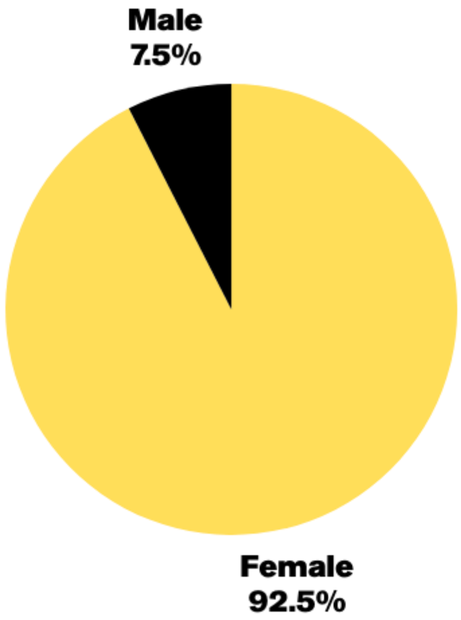
Sampling, results should not be generalized for the overall population; no TCNs; Locations

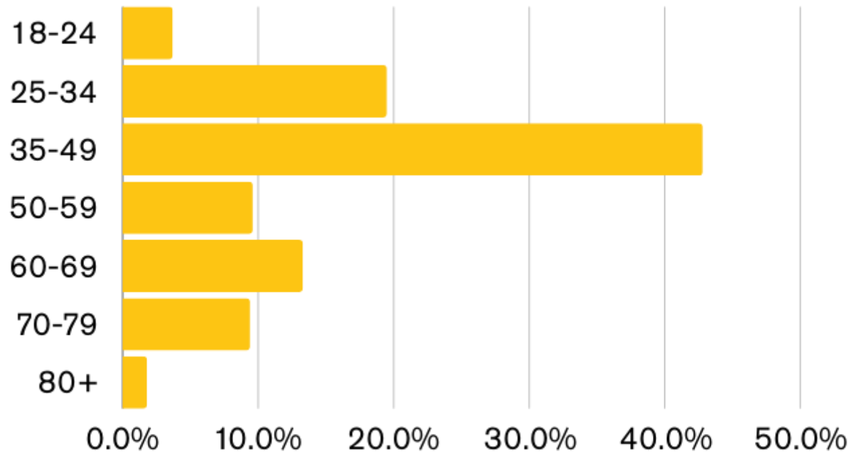
PROTECTION MONITORING

THE Q2 REPORT

1 RISK 1	**Risk of restrained access to basic services and assistance**
2 RISK 2	**Risk of eviction and homelessness**
PEOPLE AT RISK	Mother with children with disabilities
PEOPLE AT RISK	Children (teenagers)

DEMOGRAPHICS

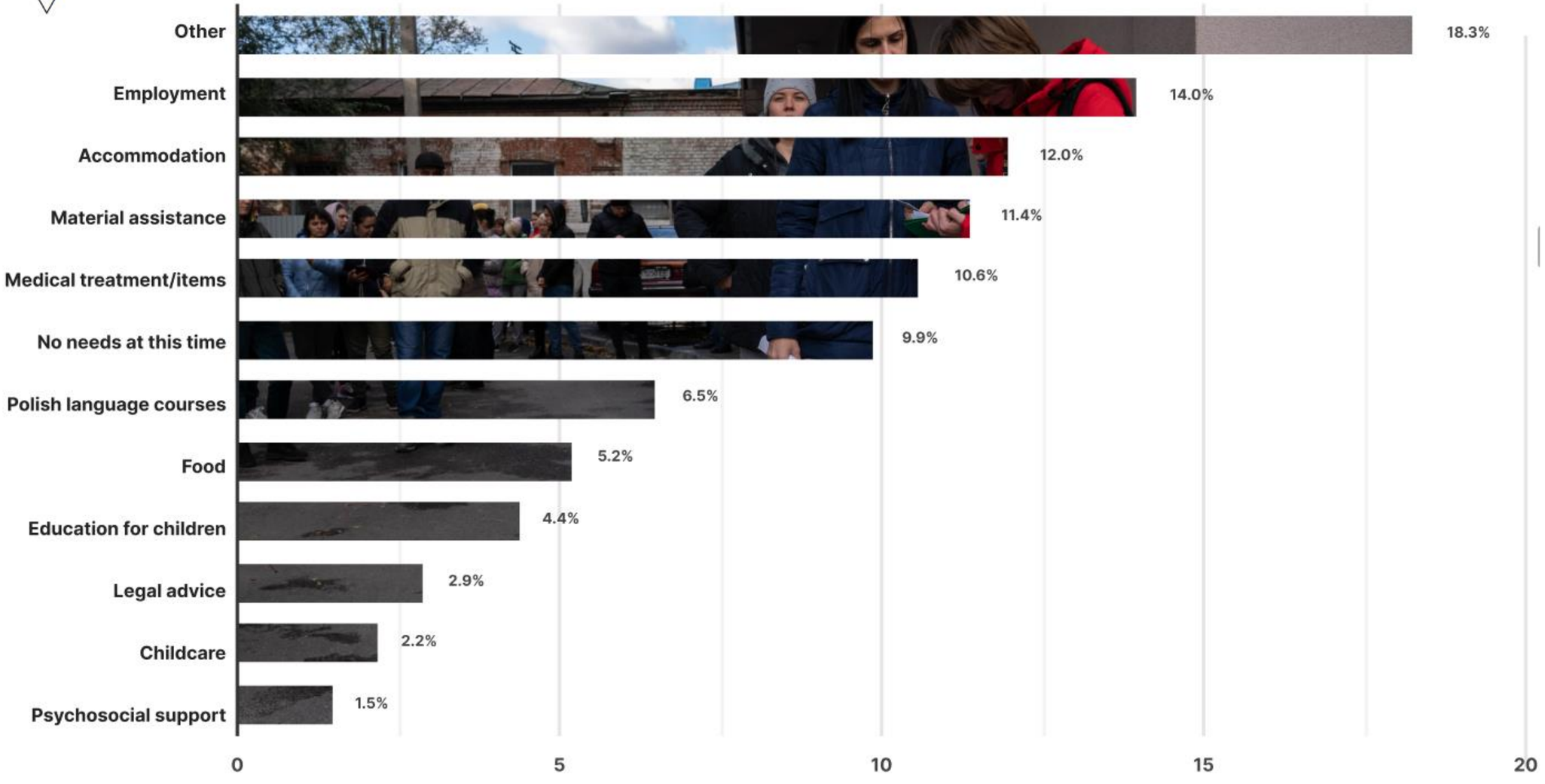




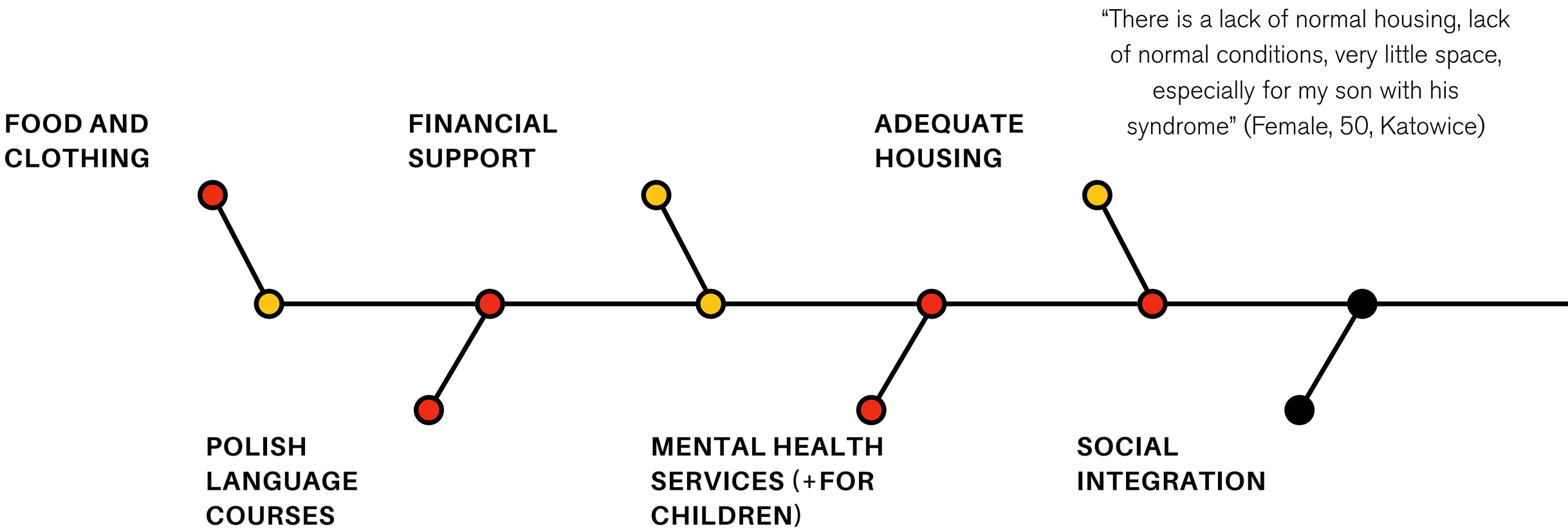
In this cycle 35.2% of people arrived in March 2022. In total, 60.6% of respondents arrived in 2022, 23.1% arrived in 2023 (mostly in last 3 months of 2023), and 16% in 2024.

Among the surveyed households, 31.1% have at least one member with a disability, and 53.8% report having members with chronic illnesses.

What are your most urgent needs?

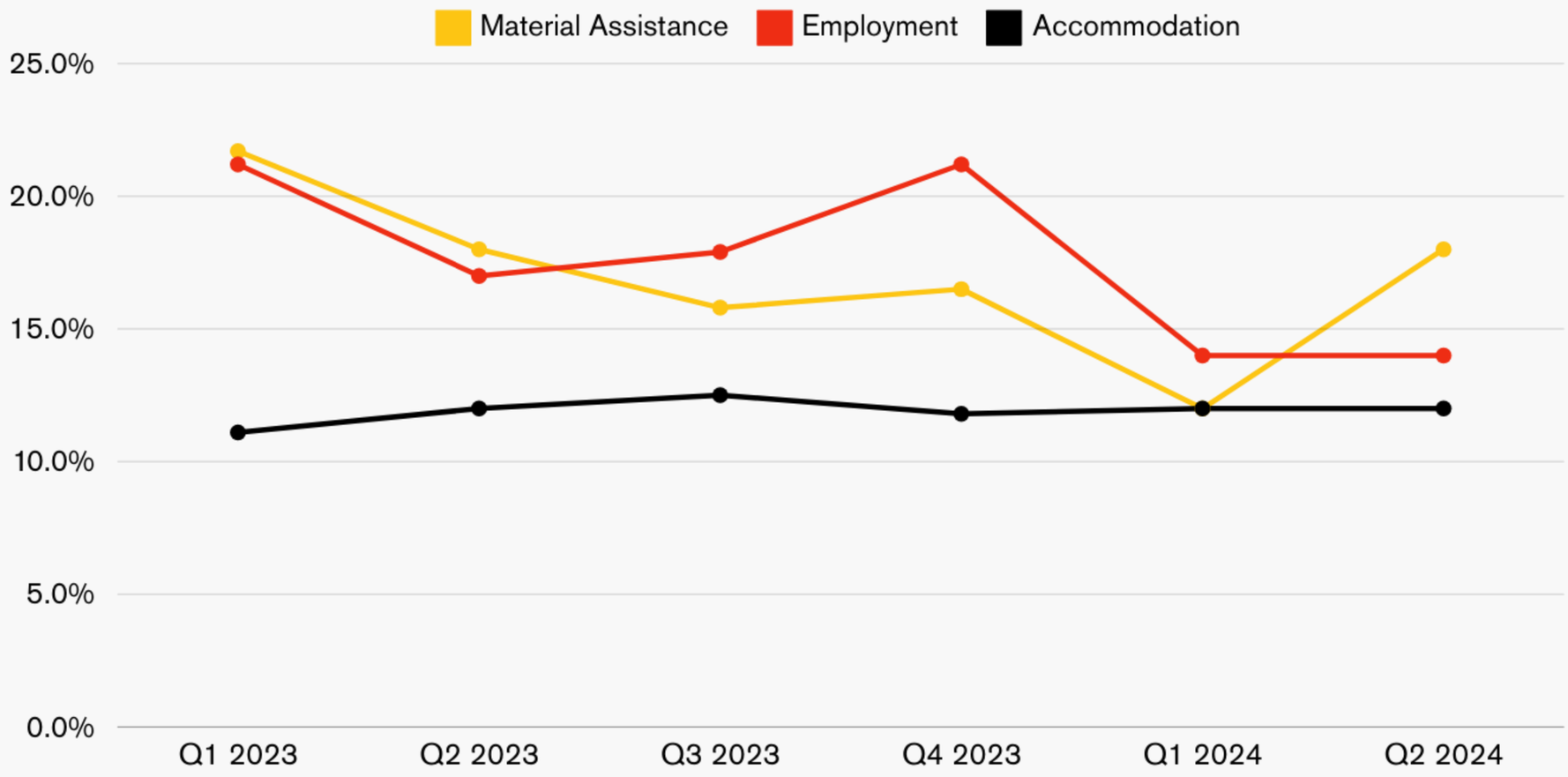


OTHER NEEDS



"There is a lack of normal housing, lack of normal conditions, very little space, especially for my son with his syndrome" (Female, 50, Katowice)

URGENT NEEDS Q1 2023 - Q2 2024



RISK 1

of eviction and/or homelessness

"Gdynia claims there is no homelessness problem. Social services responsible for addressing this issue visited seven locations known for homelessness and found no foreigners. But we all know those foreigners are there. The official stance, both now and in the past, remains the same — there are no homeless people and no refugees in need. A perfect city."

(KII, NGO representative, Gdynia)

1

40+

The termination of the 40+ program and doubts regarding the continuation of housing previously funded through this mechanism increase the risk of homelessness.

2

Relocations after 40+

Concerns exist about relocating people to smaller towns or rural areas, particularly those that are isolated in terms of communication and information.

3

People in homelessness crisis

The 2024 National Survey of Homelessness found that 6% of people experiencing homelessness in Poland (1,749 individuals) hold Ukrainian citizenship.

4

Access to information

People previously housed in private accommodations under the 40+ program sometimes had limited access to information about assistance procedures, local organizations' support, and their rights.

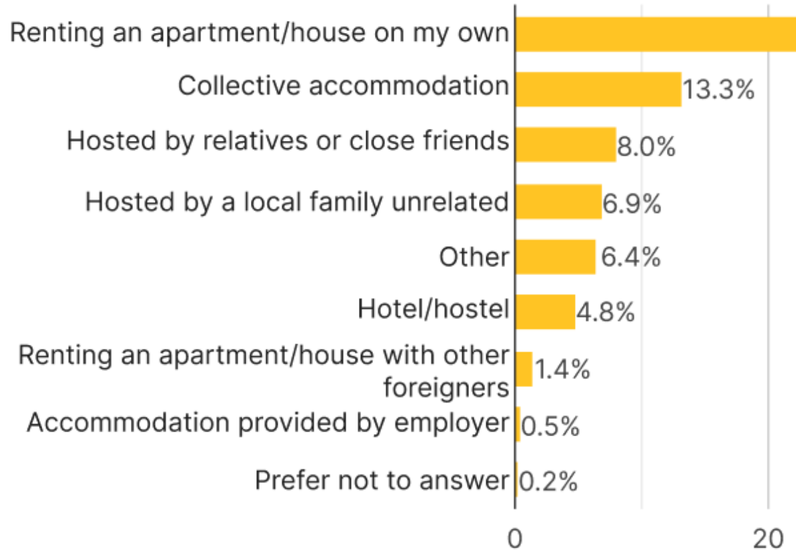
5

Services in exchange for maintaining housing

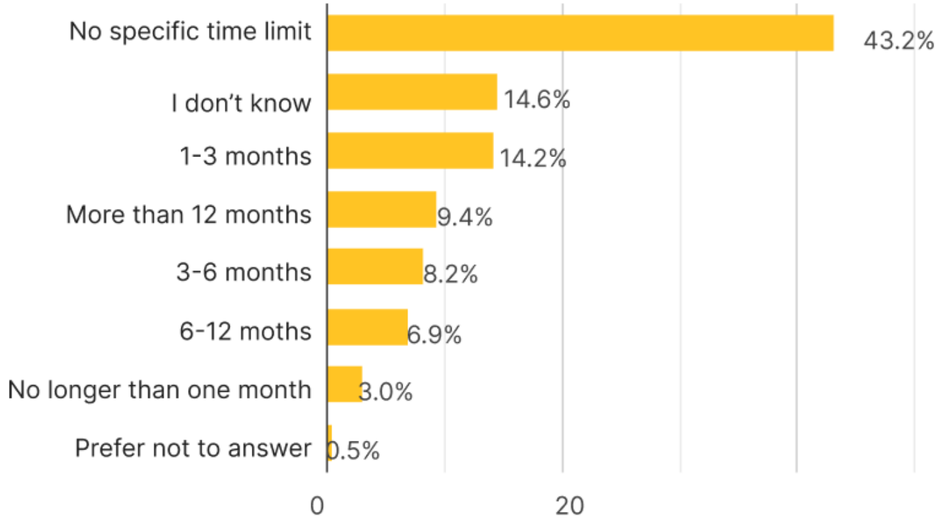
17 individuals reported being required to provide unpaid services or services in exchange for maintaining their living conditions while residing in their accommodations

Category	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024
Risk ID	Risk 1: Crossing to Poland via Third Countries (including Russia)	**Risk 1: Labour exploitation**	**Risk 1: Labour exploitation**	Risk 1: Access to legal identity	Risk 1: Denied or restricted access to legal identity	**Risk of restrained access to basic services and assistance**
	Risk 2: High reliance on free accommodation	Risk 2: Termination of PESEL UKR and associated benefits	**Risk 2: Insecurity of tenure and risk of eviction**	**Risk 2: Insecurity of tenure and risk of homelessness**	**Risk 2: The risk of eviction and homelessness**	**Risk 2: The risk of eviction and homelessness**
	Risk 3: Limited access to medical services	Risk 3: Limited access to medical services	Risk 3: Domestic violence	Risk 3: Domestic violence		
	Risk 4: Diminishing access to emergency aid					
	Risk 5: High reliance on social benefits					

Where do you live?



How long can you stay in the current accommodation?



Around 30% of participants do not have guaranteed housing for more than a year. Main other reasons for leaving current housing was the expiration of the 40+ program

“Take the story of a man who lived in a garage. The owner collected the 40+ benefit, but the living conditions were disastrous. Snow and water leaked through the metal garage doors. He stayed silent and didn’t tell anyone because he thought that was how it was supposed to be”

(KII, Social Services, Gdynia, KII)

“We are running out of the 40+ payments that helped us pay the rent. My dad is disabled and cannot be left alone for long, so we really need social housing”

(Female, 57 Warsaw)

“Just like adults, children are in a difficult housing situation. They earn, but they have, for example, deaf parents, so we are also talking about excluded groups. Social housing for refugees yes, they happen, but in terrible conditions, a hole in the bathtub, terrible! It was horrible! Unfortunately, this young boy had to arrange everything on his own” (KII, Gdynia, NGO)

Capacity and Effects

Capacity Contributions to Risk Severity	• **End of the 40+ program and uncertainty (and lack of information camapings)** • **Financial aid reductions** • **Rising rental costs** • **Introduction of Fees in OZZ** • **Inadequate information flow between stakeholders and limited cooperation** • **Crisis intervention system's capacity** • **Inadequate relocation and dispersion** • **Charter of rights for people in homelessness crisis** • **Lack of minimal oficial standards for OZZ**
Effects of the threat	• Premature returns to Ukraine • Increased risk during autumn and winter (heightening the risk of health issues and even loss of life) • Overfilled collective accommodation centers (OZZ) and poor living conditions contribute to further social exclusion and increase the risk of poverty • Limited access to essential services • Economic vulnerability • Increased risk of exploitation

Who is affected?

Groups particularly at risk of homelessness and eviction include:

- **Older people**
- **Persons with disabilities**
- **Large families**
- **Single mothers, especially those with children with disabilities**
- **Members of the Roma minority and refugees from third countries.**

RISK 2

Risk of restrained access to basic services and assistance

These risks include severe material and social deprivation, living in a household with very low work intensity, and the risk of homelessness.

1

Low Work Intensity and precarious employment

Most refugees indicated that their main activity in Poland were family responsibilities (30.4%), followed by employment at 24.8%, 16.6% unemployed. Social benefits, were cited as the most common source of living (34%). Refugees often work in low-wages, insecure jobs that do not match their qualifications, leading to **in-work poverty.**

2

Challenges to secure basic needs

Nearly 70% of individuals faced challenges to cover basic needs and urgent expenses. In the next three months, refugees identified significant concerns about meeting their basic needs, such as food and housing (50%).

3

Child material deprivation

Among those who expressed concerns about meeting basic household needs, health expenses, or unexpected costs in the coming three months, over 68% had children in their households.

4

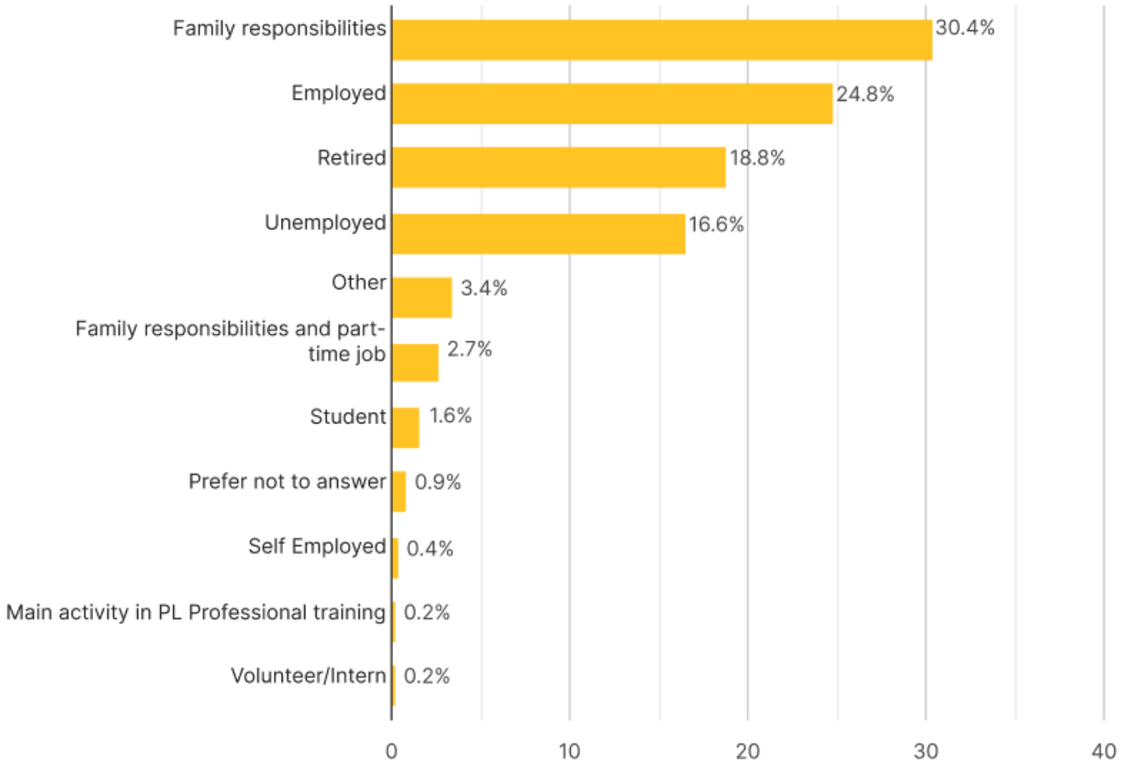
Negative coping mechanisms

These coping mechanisms include cutting back on food, clothing, and medical expenses, borrowing money or accumulating debt, seeking extra jobs under unsafe conditions, moving to lower-cost areas while commuting to larger cities, and sharing housing or living in substandard conditions.

5

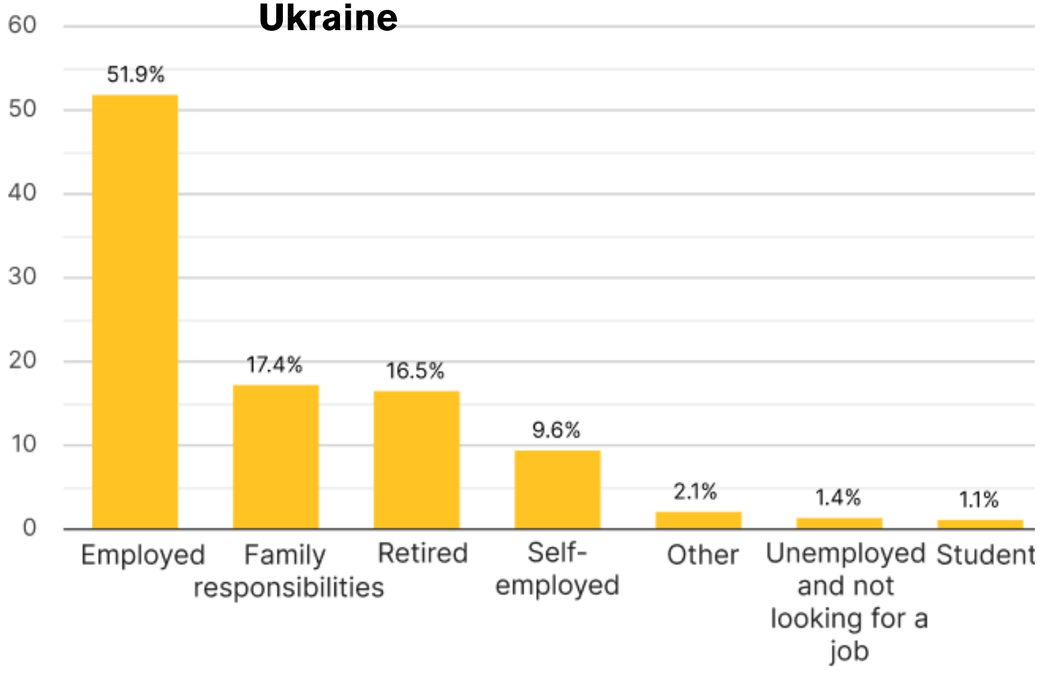
Risk of homelessness

The instability of housing and the conditions that refugees are sometimes forced to endure increase the risk of social exclusion and make access to basic needs and services more difficult.

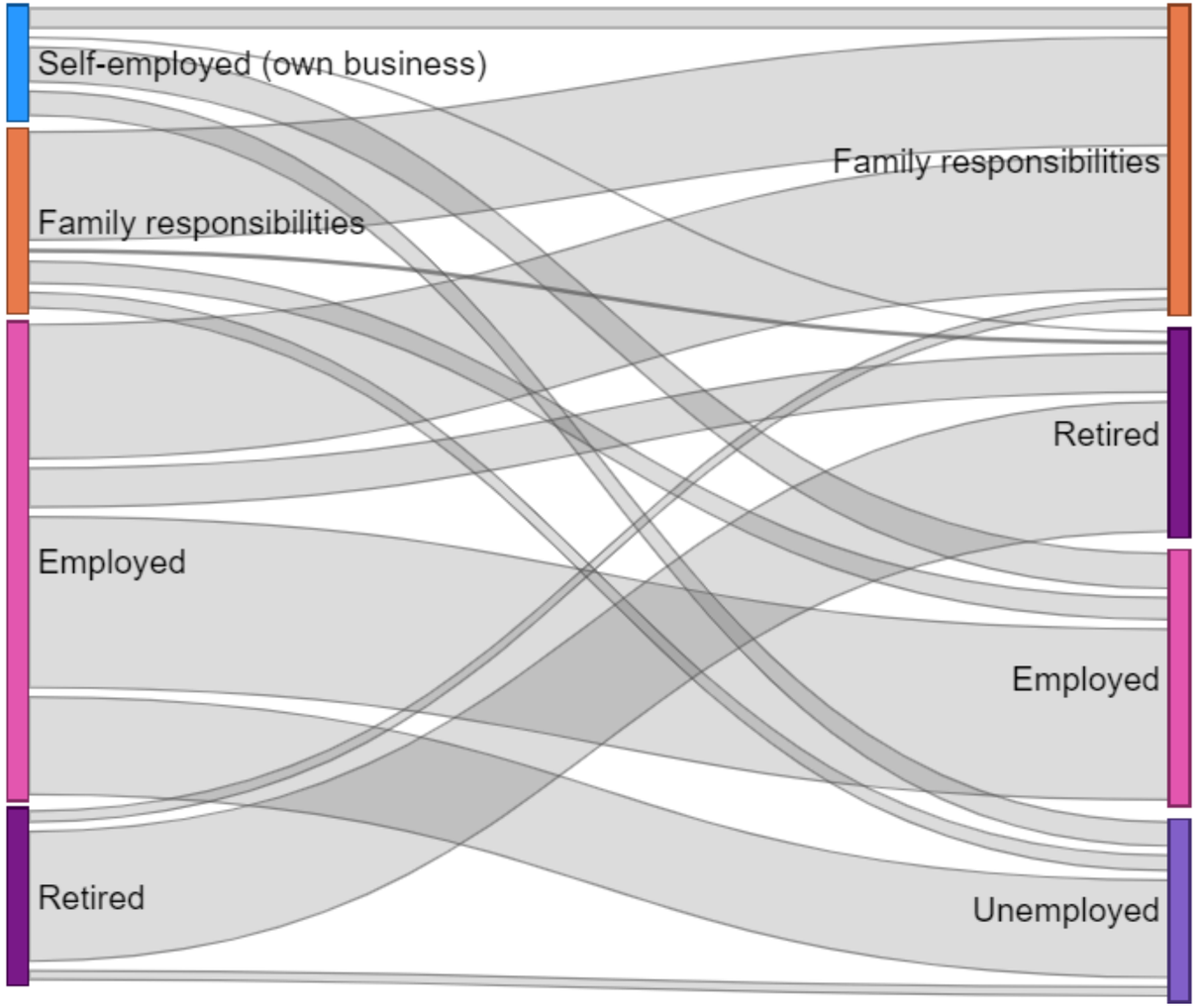


Main activity in Poland

Main activity before leaving Ukraine



Ukraine

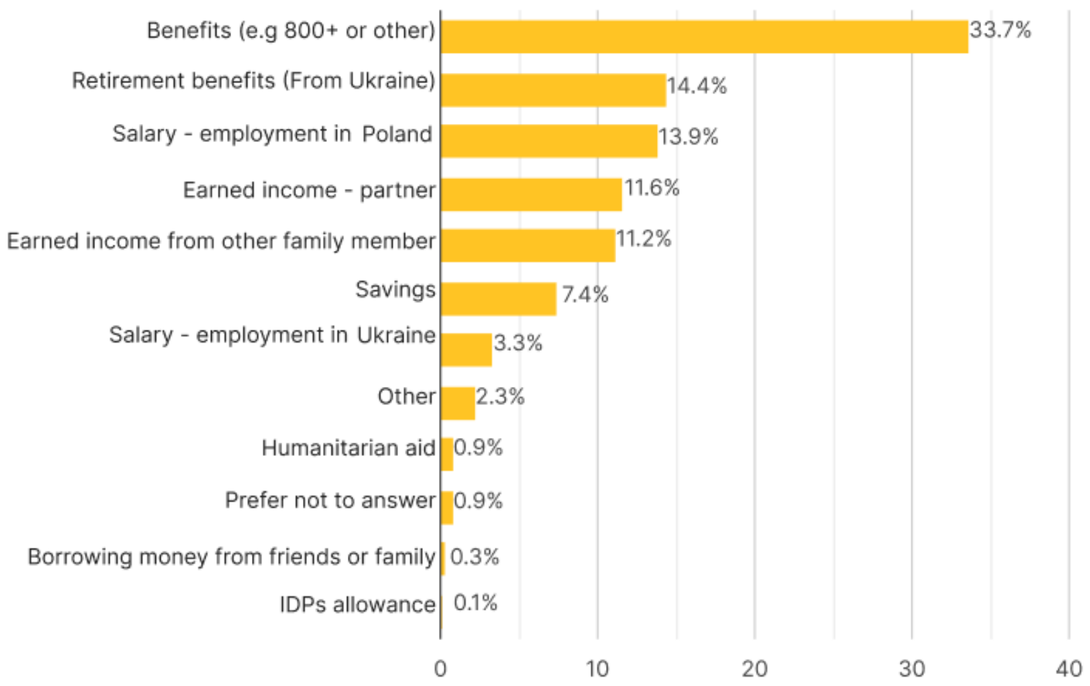


According to the PM data, individuals who were employed in Ukraine, have experienced various changes in Poland: 46 are now unemployed, 80 of them remain employed in Poland, and more than 60 people moved from employment to family responsibilities. Moreover, 12 people who owned their own business in Ukraine, now are unemployed in Poland.

Poland

MAIN SOURCE OF LIVING AND ACTIVITY

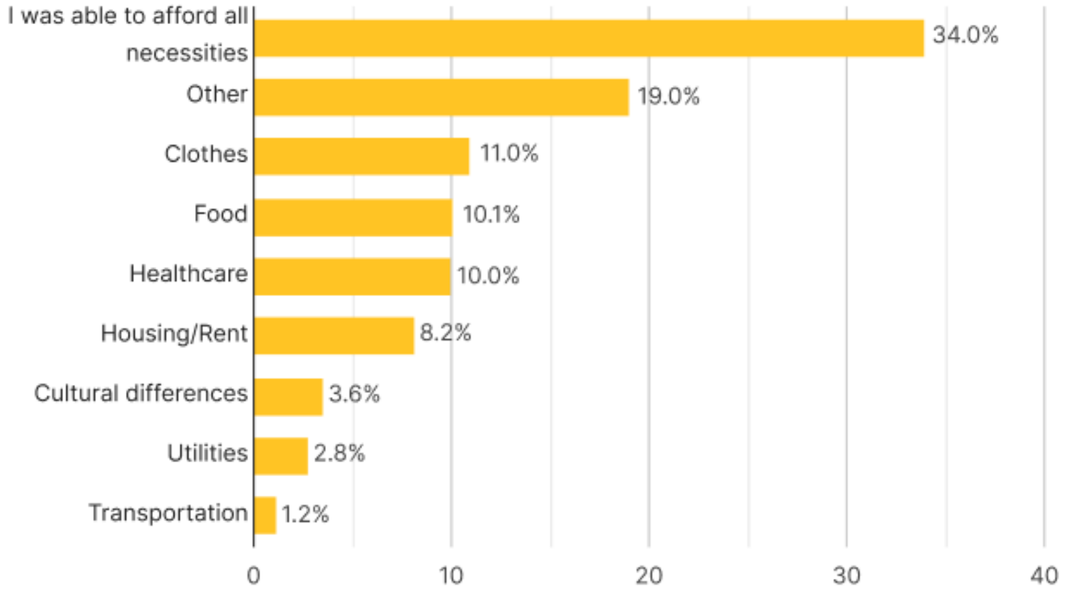
Main source of living



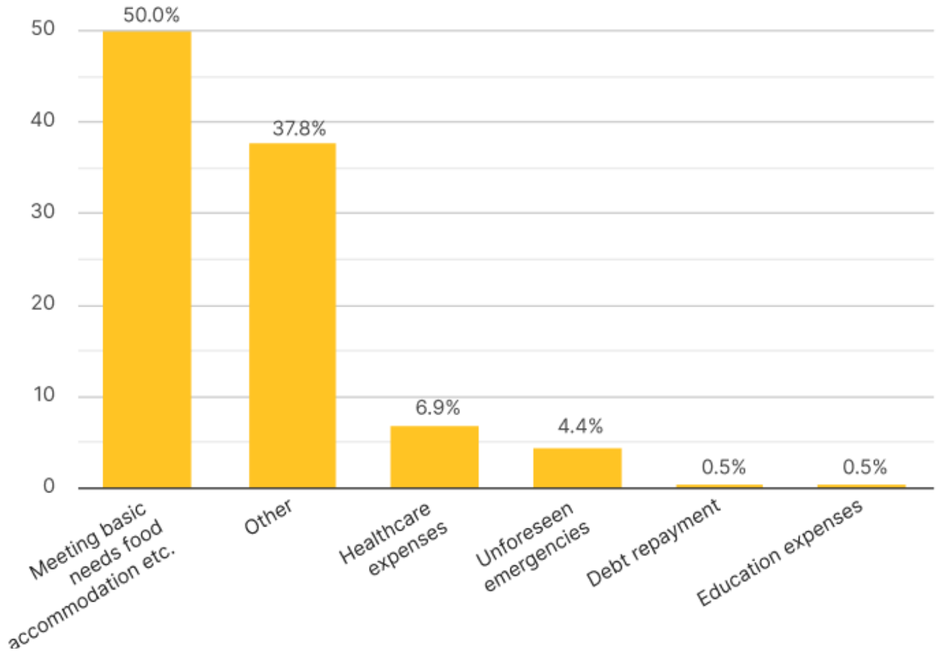
Main activity

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Meeting basic needs (last 3 months)



Meeting basic needs (next 3 months)



Among those struggling to meet basic needs were individuals who are employed (28.5%), those engaged in family responsibilities (36%), or retirees.

“Economic challenges at home are a problem. Financial issues are getting harder because parents are also struggling more. Children have to start working at 15. These are low-paid jobs, but it helps support the household. It's both nice and sad. Yes, maybe they are becoming more resourceful, but at the same time, they are losing their youth, not spending money on themselves or their passions, but giving it to help their parents. Where do they work? Food delivering, dishwashing, food services - some have internships, but they generally don’t earn much and are often exploited”

(KII, NGO, Gdynia)

“We are saving on food” (Male, 68, Katowice).

Capacity

Capacity Contributions to Risk Severity	• **Financial barriers** • **Bureaucratic inefficiencies** • **Rising rental costs** • **Support from local and international NGOs in free legal aid** • **Community support in sharing information and rising awareness**
Effect of the threat	• Risk of social exclusion, poverty and material deprivation • Lack of access to essential resources such as food, clothing, and healthcare exacerbates vulnerability • Limited financial resources may compel refugees to reduce spending on essential nutrition • Mental health impact • Child poverty risks: this can result in long-term developmental issues, reduced educational opportunities, and increased psychological stress for children • Labour exploitation (and child labour) • Homelessness risk

Who is affected?

- Older refugees
- Single mothers with children
- Single mothers with children with disabilities
- People with disabilities
- Refugees from third countries and the Roma community
- Women and children
- People living outside major urban centers
- Former beneficiaries of the 40+ program and refugees residing in collective shelters

People at Risk

Mothers/caregivers with children with disabilities

Currently, it is estimated that over 70,000 elderly refugees (aged 60 and above) are residing in Poland (UNHCR, 2024).

1

Social services experience

Social services in this field rarely have experience working with refugees. Additional barriers include language barriers, the unavailability of language courses for people with disabilities and their caregivers, and the inability of caregivers, who cannot work due to care giving responsibilities, to attend language courses

2

Information gaps

The lack of translation services and a general lack of knowledge about the rights and available services for PwD among refugees and local services.

3

Difficulties in housing/shelters

Seeking separate rooms with private bathrooms and better living conditions, adequate for people with disabilities. Difficulties to cover rent and other basic needs.

4

Lack of data

There is still a lack of data regarding the situation of PwD in Poland.

5

Access to benefits and employment

Challenges also extend to the benefits available for people with disabilities (and therefore, for children with disabilities) in Poland. The primary struggle, however, is finding employment and, in most cases, the inability to balance care giving with work.

When we talk about vulnerable groups, we're also referring to exhausted mothers of children with disabilities, who can't afford rent (let alone accessible housing for people with disabilities).
They can't take on jobs because they have disabled children to care for.

(KII, Katowice, Social Services)

People with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities face enormous emotional burdens and daily struggles (compounded by the challenges of being a refugee). In the morning, when a psychologist begins her day with clients, by the end of it, she is emotionally drained. And she only listens — imagine what it's like for those who actually live through it.

(KII, Gdynia, NGO)

People at Risk

Children and teenagers

"Youth often report suicidal thoughts. When they speak about it, there is an opportunity for intervention and the need for psychological work. There is a need to refer them to specialists, to draft a life contract. Fortunately, we have been able to manage these cases so far, as those who reported it have remained in contact. They keep their promises and attend therapy"

(KII, local NGO, Gdynia)

1

Bullying and Discrimination

The issue of bullying and persistent discrimination among children was highlighted in 9 expert interviews and safety audits (as well as the last CP report).

2

Changes in Schools

Insufficient communication, deepening disparities, inadequate preparation (preparatory classes without staff and necessary resources), unaddressed bullying, insufficient communication on new standards, lack of anonymous reporting mechanisms.

3

Fear of Military Mobilization

Among young Ukrainian refugees, particularly boys, there is an increasing fear of being mobilized into the military, leading to significant psychological stress.

4

Risk of Sexual Exploitation

The risk of sexual exploitation was noted in two expert interviews, in Gdynia and Katowice.

5

Suicidality

There is an increasing number of youths reporting suicidal intentions and the need for urgent psychological intervention. This is particularly noticeable from the perspective of NGOs (4/14 interviews)

“The risk of sexual exploitation of minor refugees is emerging. I wouldn’t call it a problem yet, but we know it exists. We observe such symptoms. Due to a lack of activities, a lack of constructive ways to spend time, situations arise where a child doesn’t attend school and is not accepted. Children have issues with the Polish language, and the accumulation of these problems makes them more vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual violence”.
(KII, Katowice, Social Services)

“We had to intervene several times to save the lives of these kids. For instance, during suicide attempts. There were instances when security called us because someone was on the roof, and we intervened, fortunately managing to save them. We also help with homelessness crises among youth, including foreign youth. In these cases, we receive calls more and more frequently. This issue often affects young boys, including those from Ukraine”.
(KII, Gdynia, NGO)

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