



RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Refugees from Ukraine in Poland

Sectors: Protection; economic recovery and development; health; education; and safeguarding (cross-cutting)

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Data Collection: March 11 – 24 2022

Locations in Poland: Warsaw, Krakow, Wroclaw, and Lublin

INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Months of escalating hostility towards Ukraine have culminated in a concerted invasion of the country and the launch of military attacks across multiple cities in Ukraine starting from February 24th, 2022. As of March 26, 2022, an estimated 2.2M people have fled to Poland from Ukraine.¹ Many have been welcomed by the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland, many more are being hosted by Polish families, and the rest reside in recently established shelters and reception centers.² While the Polish government, Polish NGOs, UN agencies, and local civil society actors have provided multisectoral relief across the country, this rapid needs assessment aims to better understand the priority needs, vulnerabilities, and barriers to accessing information, services, and humanitarian support that people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine face in Poland, including those experienced by groups with heightened vulnerability. This assessment will be used to inform the IRC's strategic response to these displaced populations in Poland and will be widely shared with the overall humanitarian community, including with Polish civil society and governmental bodies who have provided rapid and much needed relief to people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this assessment were:

1. Understand the self-prioritized needs of persons displaced into Poland by the Ukraine conflict.
2. Recognizing a large population has been affected by the conflict, understand who amongst them (profiles), and by assessment location, are particularly vulnerable to increased suffering due to the crisis; understand what their vulnerabilities are and how they might be addressed.
3. Investigate what forms and modalities of assistance persons of concern believe would best help them to meet their current needs.
4. Understand the current movement patterns of displaced persons, as well as their intentions for future movement.
5. Map out gaps and opportunities for humanitarian actors to integrate within existing service provision structures.

The assessment included: (1) 33 service provider interviews with municipality officials, reception center/shelter directors, NGO actors, and other service providers (donation coordinators, foundations, Ukrainian diaspora groups), (2) four focus groups to better understand the opinions, risks and priorities of families residing in shelters, and (3) a family survey with 520 recently arrived Ukrainian families in Poland, using a purposeful sample. Full explanation of the methods and links to the tools used can be found in Annex 1. Key details are provided below.

Municipality	Respondents
Warsaw	115
Krakow	110
Wroclaw	150
Lublin	114
Other	31
Total	520

Several comparative analyses of the survey were conducted looking at differences between:

- Respondents by location surveyed.
- Respondents who noted they were staying with a host family (either friends, family, or newly met Polish hosts) vs respondents staying in alternate accommodation (shelters, reception centers, train stations, etc.).

¹ https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.212478674.716916044.1648307506-1149494509.1648307506

² OCHA Ukraine Humanitarian Impact Situation, 4 March 2022:

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Ukraine%20Humanitarian%20Impact%20Situation%20report%204%20March.pdf>

Differences between any of these groups were only reported when they were found to be sizable.³ This was rare, and as such, there is no weighting by location or type of respondent in the ‘overall results’ presented in this report. The survey aimed to include at least 100 families in each of the four surveyed municipalities. The actual breakdown of survey participants was 93% female, and per location ranged from 110 to 150 respondents, based on availability and willingness of families to be surveyed.

Limitations

This assessment used a non-representative sample. The nature of a purposeful sample is that it is not considered to be representative of the entire population of interest, in this case, Ukrainians and others who have fled the war to the four locations surveyed. However, the survey included as part of its design, a mapping of the locations where displaced people were congregating in each city (shelters, service provision points, train/bus stations, municipality offices, consulates, and information points) to ensure surveys were completed at all of the available locations. The target sample-size was increased to help address the lack of representativeness of the sample and initially aimed to include at least 800 families. Due to constraints explained in the Methods annex, we were only able to survey 520 families.

To ensure that the sampling methods do not preclude an accurate understanding of the situation – we systematically report on the total number included in each point estimate. That is to say, if in Warsaw 108 people responded to the question of ‘how old are you?’ resulting in an average age of 39, there will be an (n=108), to allow consideration of the level of accuracy. In some cases, our accuracy is better than others, as some participants elected not to respond to some questions.

Several groups are expected to be under-represented in our survey. This includes persons who were residing with hosts (34% of our sample but expected to be 70-75% of the population), as well as persons who were not still on the move (unknown estimates, but as train and bus stations were often the most accessible locations to survey, we believe the survey has too high of a proportion of persons in transit).

POLISH CONTEXT

As the recipient of over 2.2 million Ukrainian refugees in the span of a month, Poland has acted quickly to provide assistance. On March 12th the national government passed a law that allows for any Ukrainian fleeing the war who crossed the border from Ukraine to Poland starting February 24th onwards to stay legally in Poland for a period of 18 months and to register for and receive a Polish ID number (called a PESEL). The PESEL enables them to access a range of benefits and social assistance available to Polish citizens.⁴ This includes a one-time 300 PLN (70 USD) payment, as well as additional financial benefits if they qualify, such as the child allowance “Family 500+” (a monthly payment of 500 PLN per dependent under the age of 18), and the Family Care Capital (RKO) which provides 500 PLN/month for the second and subsequent children aged from 12 to 35 months.⁵ Additionally, Ukrainian refugees may access the job market, childcare, education for children under 18 and public healthcare without PESEL. The national government has also passed legislation that allows for Polish citizens and other entities to access 40 PLN/night/person that they host, either in private homes or shelters. However, the longest the allowance can be claimed is 60 days.⁶

Meanwhile, municipalities have largely taken a leading role in facilitating/coordinating assistance. As this displacement is unprecedented in Poland, there are no standard operating procedures, and each municipality has approached the crisis slightly differently. Some by seconding large portions of the city workforce to help set up and run shelters and other assistance provision such as information points and dedicated PESEL registration sites. Others have focused on partnering with local NGOs and regional government to coordinate a response together. For now, the assistance provided across the municipalities has succeeded in keeping millions of people from Ukraine sheltered, warm and fed. The Polish population and business communities in large cities around the country have stepped in to help. Local businesses have donated buildings and office complexes to be retrofitted into shelters. Private citizens have provided

³ In general, ‘sizable’ means statistically significant, or more than 10% variance.

⁴ <https://www.gov.pl/web/ua/Bazovi-vyplaty-na-vypadok-khvoroby>

⁵ <https://www.gov.pl/web/ua/Dopomoha-na-vykhovannya-500plus-i-Simeynny-kapital-opiky>

⁶ <https://www.krakow.pl/aktualnosci/258278,26.komunikat.wyplata.swiadczen.dla.polakow.goszczacych.uchodzcow.co.trzeba.wiedziec.html?ga=2.190181871.575654667.1647250899-408666617.1645692290>; <https://samorzad.infor.pl/wiadomosci/5435695,Rozporzadzenie-RM-40-zl-za-dzien-zakwaterowania-i-wyzywienia-obywatela-Ukrainy.html>

donations of clothing, toys, food, bedding, and continue to volunteer their homes to host, and their time to help organize shelters and information provision sites. The outpouring of support can be seen in train stations, shelters, NGOs, and other service points around the country.

Data collection for this assessment occurred during the 3rd and 4th week of the conflict. In interviews with key informants (largely service providers and official counterparts), respondents often focused first on how proud people were of their country and community for the support to Ukrainians. However, these discussions then shifted towards a recognition of the exhaustion everyone who has been participating in the response already feels and a sense of impending crisis. In two or three weeks, some fear the volunteers will have to go back to work, the seconded government workers will have to return to their jobs, and the outpouring of food and goods provided by the Polish people and others will naturally reduce. They worry that Polish citizens will not be able to host Ukrainian families in their homes indefinitely, and that buildings currently functioning as shelters will need to return to their original purpose. Despite all of the key informants interviewed expressing some version of these concerns, none saw a clear answer or way forward. There does not yet seem to be a comprehensive national plan for how to support the refugees in the mid- to longer term.

In addition, approximately half of the key informants expressed concern about the longer-term outlook for the Ukrainian refugee population in Poland and potential tension that may arise, despite expressing unanimous positivity around the March 12th bill and provision of the PESEL and other assistance. Uncertainty was raised about how to mitigate the potential longer lines for healthcare, overfull classrooms, and increased rents if demand outpaces supply. Many encouraged the adoption an 'integration' approach early on to mitigate these challenges - with a focus on longer-term housing, employment, language learning, etc.

LOCATIONS

For this assessment, a total of four locations were included. These locations were selected based on existing knowledge of the whereabouts of Ukrainians in Poland (both recently displaced and longer established diaspora communities), as well as IRC’s expected locations of intervention. The below provides an overview of the response per city, as seen by the IRC staff conducting the survey, and may not provide an exhaustive list of actors and services.

City	Populations	Description
Warsaw	<p><u>Polish citizens:</u> 1.8 million</p> <p><u>Ukrainian diaspora:</u> 66,000⁷</p> <p><u>Est. refugees:</u> 200k – 400k⁸</p> <p><u>Shelter beds:</u> 30,000⁹</p>	<p>Warsaw is the capital and largest city in Poland. It is known as the economic and modern center. It is also hosting the largest number of Ukrainian refugees with over 50 shelters (key informant estimate).</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Municipality is playing the leading role in assistance and information provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seconding leadership and staff to run shelters and info points</i> • <i>Organizing volunteers</i> • <i>Identifying and retrofitting service points (office buildings, sports facilities, etc.)</i> • <i>Referring families to hosts and doing limited hosting case management</i> → NGOs are active, but are less visible than in other cities, sometimes taking on distinct roles in specific locations and sectors <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well organized shelters, with longer-stays more common; more private rooms, more funding going into refurbishing/conversion efforts ■ Seconded paid staff who have knowledge of the government (to ease through systems)
Krakow	<p><u>Polish citizens:</u> 800,000</p>	<p>Krakow is the second largest city in Poland and is known as a center of culture.</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u> (similar model as Warsaw, smaller scale)</p>

⁷ <https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/obywatele-ukrainy-w-polsce--raport>

⁸ <https://warszawa.tvp.pl/59144677/konstanty-radziwill-hale-ptak-warsaw-expo-moga-przyjac-kolejne-tysiace-osob>

⁹ Ibid.

	<p><u>Ukrainian diaspora:</u> 36,000</p> <p><u>Est. refugees:</u> 110k – 130k¹⁰</p> <p><u>Shelter beds:</u> 1,500¹¹</p>	<p>→ Municipality is playing the leading role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seconding staff</i> • <i>Ambition for systems development: database of vetted hosts, volunteer management tool</i> <p>→ NGOs engaged in service provision mainly outside of shelters</p> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seconded paid staff who have technical knowledge/relevant experience ■ Private sector visibly engaged through provision of facilities and large-scale donations (Plaza shopping mall, TAURON Arena) ■ Focus on fast-tracking longer-term hosting options ■ Has established a single dedicated service point (at the TAURON Arena) where refugees can apply for the PESEL, receive a SIM card, the initial 300 PLN distribution (see below), receive counselling on how to access schools, and sign up for a local bank account
<p>Wroclaw</p>	<p><u>Polish citizens:</u> 700,000</p> <p><u>Ukrainian diaspora:</u> 27,000</p> <p><u>Est. refugees:</u> 80k – 200k¹²</p> <p><u>Shelter beds:</u> 2,000¹³</p>	<p>Wroclaw has a very dynamic Ukrainian diaspora population who have stepped in to support service provision by organizing volunteers who can translate (Ukrainian, Polish, English), facilitating service delivery.</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u></p> <p>→ Response coordinated between municipality, NGOs, and voivodeship</p> <p>→ Integrated response between municipality and NGOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unlike Warsaw and Krakow, shelters in Wroclaw are managed by NGOs and not municipality staff</i> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Municipality can focus on core responsibilities (less time on direct service delivery) ■ NGOs have expertise in housing support and related needs based on experience serving people experiencing homelessness, but may have less resources available
<p>Lublin</p>	<p><u>Polish citizens:</u> 400,000</p> <p><u>Ukrainian diaspora:</u> Unk. < than cities above</p> <p><u>Est. refugees:</u> 10k¹⁴</p> <p><u>Shelter beds:</u> 2,000¹⁵</p>	<p>Of these four cities, Lublin is the closest to the border and has a history of both dynamic NGO action and connection to border issues.</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u> Coordinated response through a committee established immediately after the war started</p> <p>→ City Council and Homo Faber (NGO) are playing the leading roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sixteen chapters of committee servicing different functions</i> • <i>Host-family matching</i> • <i>First location using cash as an assistance modality</i> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coordination committee made up of a mixture of city council and NGO staff ■ Highly organized

¹⁰ <https://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7.44425.28241605.w-krakowie-brakuje-juz-miejsc-dla-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy.html?disableRedirects=true>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://wroclaw.tvp.pl/59188070/uchodzczy-na-dolnym-slasku> (dated 22 March)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/obywatele-ukrainy-w-polsce--raport>

¹⁴ <https://lublin.eu/lublin/aktualnosci/miasto-lublin-pomaga-obywatelom-ukrainy.9392.66.1.html>

¹⁵ Ibid.

KEY FINDINGS

Profile of those surveyed

The vast majority (93%) of survey respondents were female with an average age of 40; 3% were under 18 (16 or 17 years old given that children under 16 were not invited to complete the survey); 9% were 60 years old or over (n=520). Very few third country nationals who fled Ukraine into Poland were able to be identified for the survey (98% of respondents were Ukrainian; n=517).

Family Composition	Poland		Ukraine	
	F	M	F	M
N = 497				
12 and under	207	231	106	69
13 to 17 years old	112	108	32	44
18 to 59 years old	848	55	437	616
60 and over	106	34	265	180
Total	1273	428	840	909
Grand Total	1701		1749	

On average, households have split nearly in half, leaving many family members behind in Ukraine. The average size of a displaced family in Poland is 3.5 persons, having left 4.2 people behind in Ukraine (n=497). The table at right shows the total number of family members of those surveyed by gender, age, and current location. Due to mandatory conscription for men aged 18-60 years old, 75% of IRC’s sample were female who had fled to Poland, while those who remained in Ukraine are 52% male.¹⁶ In our sample, 79% of the males who are displaced are under the age of 18, resulting in a displaced family structure that is largely women, children and older adults (only 3% of the family members were adult, under 60 year old males). Notably, men who have medical conditions or fathers of three or more children, are not required to remain in Ukraine.¹⁷

Movement and intentions

On average, surveyed families had been in the location where they were surveyed just over a week (9 days). The two cities most commonly listed as the place of origin were Kyiv (20%) and Kharkiv (9%), but refugee families were from all across Ukraine, rather than a few specific regions (see table at right).

Origin	Percent
N	515
Chernihiv	1%
Dnipro	6%
Donetsk	2%
Kharkiv	9%
Kyiv	20%
Luhansk	1%
Lutsk	3%
Lviv	3%
Mykolaiv	4%
Odesa	3%
Poltava	1%
Rivne	2%
Sumy	3%
Zaporizhzhia	7%
Zhytomyr	4%
Other	28%

When asked if their family intended to stay in the location they currently were, to move on to another location, or to return to Ukraine in the next 1-3 months, almost half (48%) of respondents chose to skip the question, while another 12% responded that they do not know (n=490). This was unexpected but largely explained during focus groups and through key informants, as many noted there is a desire by many Ukrainians to return home as soon as possible. Many arrived believing they may stay in Poland only a few weeks. Some believe the war will end imminently, and they will be able to return home. Others are just beginning to accept they may need to make decisions about what to do next if a quick return to Ukraine is not possible.

Of those who responded to this question (i.e. did not skip/answer ‘I don’t know’) 63% intended to stay in the location where they were surveyed. Eighteen percent wanted to move to another country, 14% intended to return to Ukraine, and 10% intended to move to another location within Poland. One focus group raised that in some shelters they are only allowed to stay for 2-3 days and then they are asked to move on. This compounds their sense of unrest and uncertainty and creates the inability to plan for next steps.

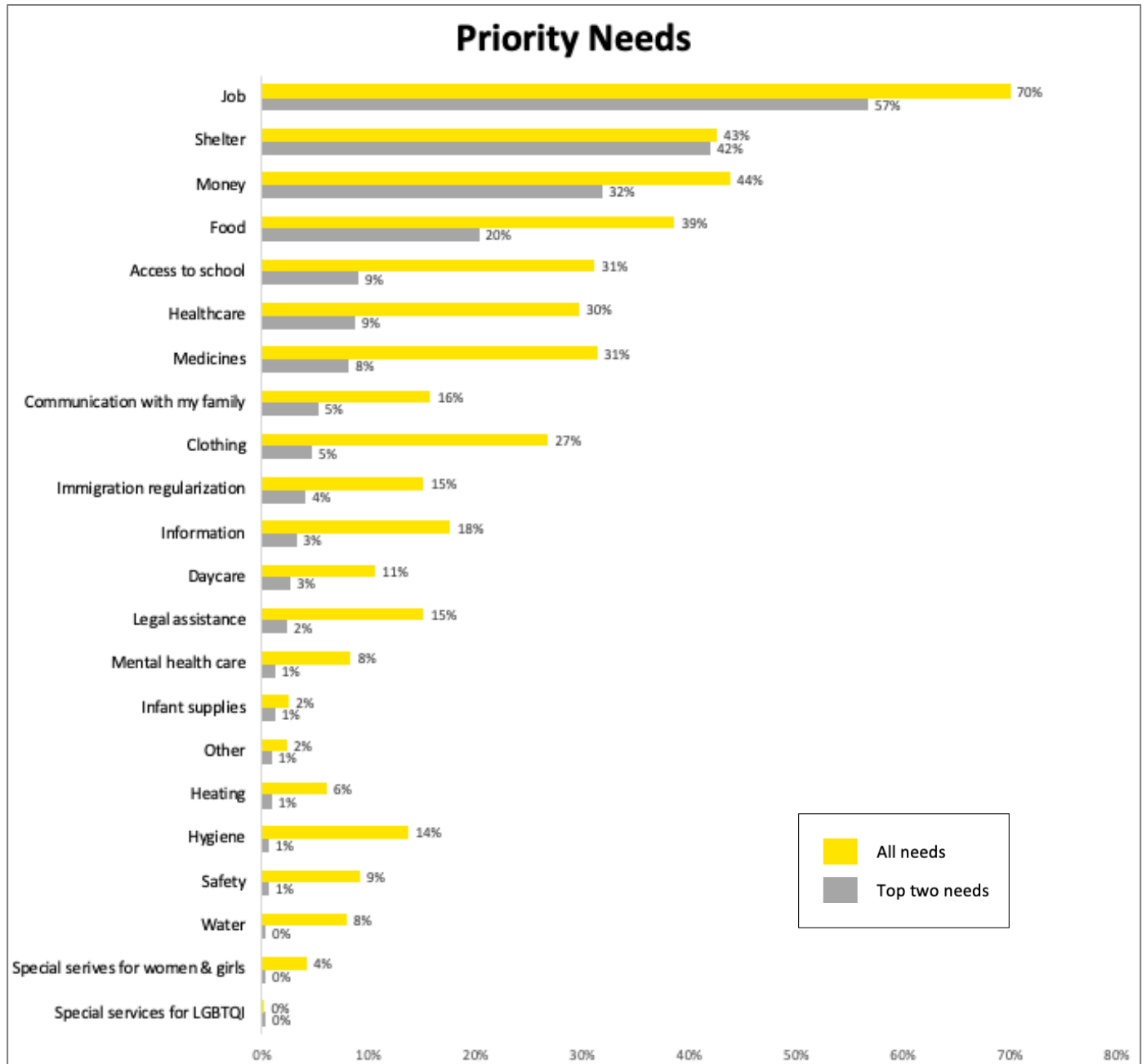
Respondents were also asked if they intended to return to Ukraine at some time in the future. Again, 50% refused to answer the question, while 6% said they did not know, 5% said they would return in the next 1-3 months, 27% noted they would return as soon as the fighting stops, 8% that they would return but did not know what would motivate their return, while only 2% noted they did not have a plan to return to Ukraine (n=490). The majority of those who intended to return to Ukraine (83%) said they would return home to the same place; 15% said they did not know (n=225).

¹⁶ Including both displaced and non-displaced family members, this is a population that is 61% female. According to recent statistics, 54% of Ukrainians are female. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=UA>

¹⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/09/ukraine-men-leave/>

Needs

Survey participants were asked to list their priority needs. First, they were asked to list all of their needs (n=482), and were then asked to choose two top priority needs from the list (n=346). Employment and shelter/accommodation were listed most commonly, for both questions; followed by money, food, and access to education. Though it should be noted, services related to protection (immigration regularization, information, legal assistance, mental health/psychosocial services, safety, special services for women and girls, and special services for LGBTQI) were split out in the options; when considered together, they are prioritized as the fifth need (40% choose at least one of these when listing all needs, 11% prioritized at least one of these when listing top two needs) (see chart below for all responses).



Importantly, priority needs did not vary significantly between locations or hosted families vs. non-hosted families. The top five needs when all listed were the same for all groups with the exception that in Lublin, more families reported a need for healthcare and clothing than for education. The same was true for identifying the top two needs: there was little difference between locations and hosted/non-hosted groups, with the one exception being hosted families prioritized medicines over healthcare, and non-hosted families prioritized healthcare over medicines.

Economic and basic needs (income/shelter/food)

Notably, the top four needs prioritized by survey respondents were economic-related needs. **The first, by far, was a job.** Ukrainians have a legal right to work in Poland, employers need only notify the government within 14 days of hiring.¹⁸ Multiple key informants noted that there is low unemployment in Poland (5.5%),¹⁹ and the labor market could likely absorb a significant number of workers, but likely not the entire working-age population of the two million Ukrainians who have newly arrived. The major concern, however, is what type of jobs Ukrainians who do not speak Polish may be able to fill. Focus group respondents also noted that while finding a job was a top priority, this was something that they could not do without stable housing and access to childcare.

For those not living with hosts, shelter was the second most prioritized need (for those being hosted, it was third). Accommodation types broke down as follows for survey respondents (n=495): 32% spent the last night in some form of shelter (reception center, longer-term shelter, or community shelter). Twenty-one percent were hosted (not by a friend or family member), 12% stayed with a friend or family, 12% stayed in a hotel (2/3s of which were offered for free), 12% stayed in rented accommodation, and 4% stayed in a public space or on the street. The remaining 8% noted 'other' most of whom wrote in "on a bus/train". While this represents a vast diversity of accommodation, and relatively few being forced to sleep in public places, the reality that very few Ukrainians (even those living with hosts) see their current shelter as a sustainable solution, is a concern.

This was echoed by key informant interviews, where 10+ interviewees noted that some households who are hosting displaced families are already feeling overwhelmed and are seeking support to help these families move to alternative accommodation. Shelter directors also remain unclear about how long their shelter will be open, or if/when it will return to its original usage (many are in office buildings, sports complexes, train stations, etc.). The current housing options are not viewed by actors involved in the response as sustainable, or of the quality and quantity required to be sustainable. Meanwhile, key informants in Warsaw, Krakow and Wroclaw noted that the housing market is already full. The question for them is not just if displaced households can afford to rent a home, but also whether there is sufficient housing stock available in these locations. They note that new housing would likely need to be built if displaced families are to move into individual housing within their current cities.

Even though most of the reception centers/shelters are 'make-shift' and only began to operate as shelters within the last four weeks, all four focus group participants and observation suggested the shelters to be in general meeting the basic needs of their guests.²⁰ Even considering those who slept the last night in transit or in public, 98% of respondents noted there was a toilet available, 91% said there was a place to bathe, while 93% noted that they had sufficient heat (n=284). When asked if there were safety concerns for women and girls in the place where they are staying, 6% of respondents noted that there were (n=286). While it is unclear what these risks are, as an observation, showers and toilets have been newly constructed in many of these shelters, often they are not fully functional (no locking doors), or fully private. Participants in all four of the focus group discussions, which were held exclusively with those currently residing within the shelters, expressed appreciation for the shelters, with one woman noting, "I have not had to spend money on anything. Everything is free." When asked in the survey about preferred assistance modalities, with 60% of respondents preferring financial assistance, 44% free service provision, and 22% receiving items in-kind (n=270).

¹⁸ praca.gov.pl portal

¹⁹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/poland/unemployment-rate>

²⁰ Note the shelters visited were extremely diverse, but all provided a variety of services. Some were in donated office buildings, others in sports areas, old shopping malls, etc. The shelters were run very differently in different cities. In Warsaw, for example, most shelters had a director and several other paid staff who had been seconded from their regular jobs working for the city, to run and operate the shelters for the short-term. While in Wroclaw, all shelters were run by NGOs, with support and coordination, but no management, from the city government.

The third most commonly-noted need was for money (presumably to spend on shelter, food, basic needs, and to send back to Ukraine). When asked, most survey respondents preferred a card loaded with cash (69%), which was echoed in focus groups, or Polish currency provided in cash (29%) (n=272). There was no preference noted for mobile money or other cash transfer mechanisms. Seventy percent of respondents noted that everything they needed to purchase was available in the markets, while 26% said they did not know what was available, likely this is because many respondents are residing in shelters where all basic items (including clothing, bedding, hygiene items, food, child items, etc.) are provided (n=272).

Most (74%) respondents are currently able to access their bank account in Ukraine (n=506), however two focus groups noted that many displaced people withdrew most or all of the money they had in the bank when they fled from Ukraine. Now they find themselves with large amounts of cash, which they cannot store safely in shelters, and which holds minimal value due to poor exchange rates with money changers in Poland. 36% of respondents have taken out a loan since the crisis began (n=365), and only 6% believe that the money they currently have access to will meet the basic needs of their family for more than one month.

Duration families can meet basic needs with current finances	Percent
N	485
1-3 days	23%
4-7 days	22%
2 weeks	23%
3 weeks	9%
1 month	17%
> 1 month	6%

The fourth most commonly noted need was for food. At first glance this seems unexpected as most respondents (91%) noted they have access to enough food (n=285). However, the most commonly noted food source (45%) is hot food distributions (located in shelters, train stations, and information points, around the cities), followed by cold food distribution in similar sites (27%). Some respondents have been purchasing their own food (27%) or receiving it from hosts (23%) or family/friends (11%) (n=286). During the assessment, places for Ukrainians to receive food were abundant and easy to locate. Key informants (n=6) note that the vast majority of this food is being provided by individual Polish donors, restaurants, etc.; they expressed a serious concern that this outpouring of individual support will not last forever, and there is a need to identify more sustainable and systematic access to food. It is possible Ukrainians themselves note the fleeting nature of this type of support, and thus continue to prioritize their food needs.

Access to Education

One unique characteristic of the refugee crisis in Poland is the high priority placed on access to education (the fifth-ranked need). This may be related to the majority of basic needs being met (in the immediate term) by the Polish authorities and civil society, or perhaps influenced by the relatively high education rates in Ukraine, regardless, it is clear parents are concerned about ensuring their children access schooling. According to the survey, the majority of children displaced from Ukraine who are accessing education are doing so via distance learning to Ukraine (see table at right).²¹ However, some have already registered in schools in Poland. When asked about educational priorities for their children, some parents intend to keep their children in the distance learning program (47%), but others are prioritizing registering for Polish schools. One focus group repeatedly listed internet and laptops for children who are still trying to access distance learning in Ukraine as an important need.

Current education	Percent
N	255
Distance learning	56%
Formal school	20%
Daycare	3%
Community center	2%
Other/none	25%
Education priorities	Percent
Distance learning	47%
Registering for school	38%
Daycare	21%
Home learning	11%

While some refugee children are already accessing Polish schools, according to key informants, and observations at information centers, many more are trying to register. According to the March 12th law, Ukrainian refugee children are granted the right to education, equal to Polish students. However, four key informants noted that the expected increase of students in school could be between 10-20%, and they do not believe the system can sustain this increase. In addition, they are concerned that very few Ukrainian children speak Polish and thus they may not be able to attend classes as normal. At the time of data collection, no decision for how to address these concerns had been made by the government. However, according to two key informants, three models of refugee education were being considered:

²¹ On 21 March a regulation was passed allowing the online Ukrainian education system to be recognized in Poland and therefore these children are excluded from the obligation to attend Polish schools.

<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20220000645&SessionID=BA6C874732EAA0BEBFD4B151478D2631BC94A755>

- Ukrainian-only schools that are funded by the Polish government but follow the Ukrainian curriculum and transcript system (one such school already exists in Warsaw for children of the Ukrainian diaspora).
- Preparatory classes that students would attend for one year to learn Polish (and some 'light' educational curriculum) before joining the Polish school system. This system has also been tried in Poland, reportedly with some success in Krakow. The main concern is that children would likely fall behind about a year in school while learning Polish.
- Full integration into Polish schools, with language tutoring after school and other assistance where feasible (such as dedicated Ukrainian-speaking staff in classes for tailored support to children).

Health needs

After economic needs and education, health (both healthcare and medicines) was the third most common type of need mentioned. The reporting of health needs in the survey (see below for details), as well as the prevalence of older persons within the refugee population both align with this prioritization. Forty-three percent of survey respondents noted that they or a family member with them in Poland has current health needs; 12% of respondents noted at least one family member with them had a form of disability (difficult hearing, seeing, walking, climbing, difficulty remembering or with self-care tasks); 8% of respondents noted at least one family member with them who was pregnant or lactating; and 11-12% of their family members were over the age of 60 (n=497). Five key informants also noted concerns regarding displaced people with special needs among the population, including individuals with chronic illnesses, mental health concerns, and physical disabilities. Multiple shelters had set aside specific rooms/floors for families with special needs, while key informants anecdotally mentioned numerous cases that had been referred to and found places in special care homes. That said, three key informants with knowledge of Polish social services expressed concern that there were not enough places in such care homes to accommodate all of those with special or elder-care needs, and alternative solutions would need to be developed.

In terms of care-seeking behavior, 21% of respondents noted that they or a family member had attempted to access healthcare within Poland (i.e., in the last weeks/month) (n=449). Of these, 71% were able to receive care (n=70), of which 75% was free of charge, and 20% was partially free (n=44). Similar to education, Ukrainians who have fled to Poland due to the war are granted access to the Polish public healthcare system as a Polish citizen. However, public healthcare in Poland, according to key informants, has long waitlists and lines, and can be difficult to navigate. Most of the shelters visited during the assessment had medical staff who came to the shelter to provide care. The two major concerns were that they are not always there (in 10+ shelter visits only two medical staff were available), and very few speak Ukrainian or Russian, thus the language barrier presents a very real challenge (also noted by one focus group). At least three of the shelters visited noted that children, adults, and volunteers/staff were complaining about stomach ailments (diarrhea/vomiting).

Of the 1,701 refugee family members represented in the survey, 39% have reportedly completed their COVID vaccinations. This is concerning for three reasons: 1) while several shelters visited are clearly trying to enact COVID protocols, many are not, with at least one having made the choice not to follow mask-wearing precautions, reportedly in order to make displaced people feel more comfortable; 2) the close living quarters and limited personal space available for sleeping, eating and generally spending the day in the various shelters make them ideal locations for outbreaks to occur; 3) the relatively high number of older adults among the refugee population, who are at greater risk of severe COVID symptoms.

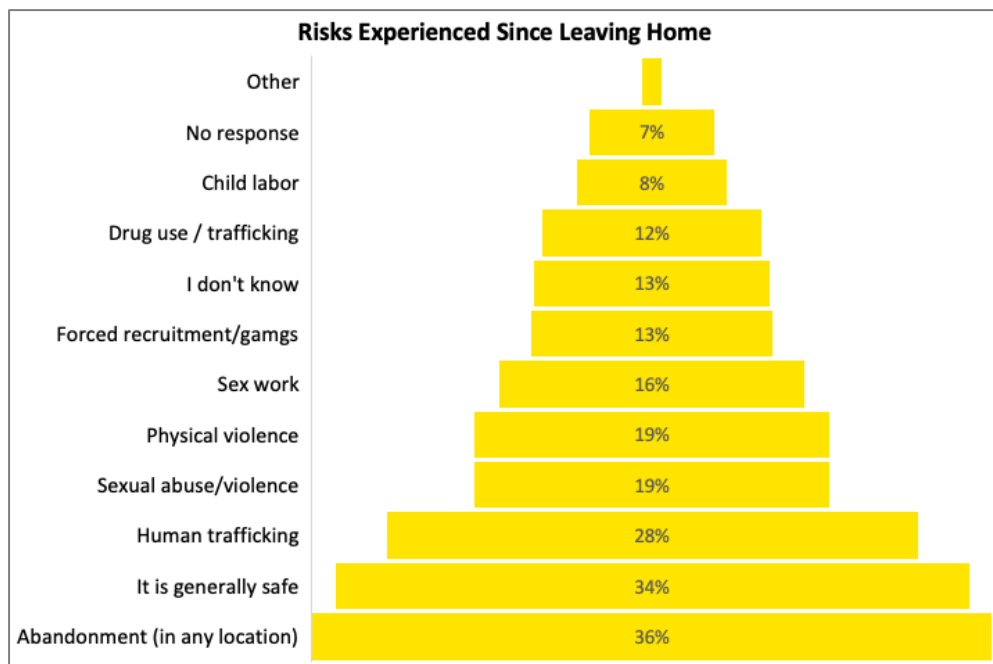
Protection needs

While protection need were not, prioritized as their primary need, when combined, protection concerns were the fifth most commonly prioritized. Almost all survey respondents (99%) noted having some form of documentation (see table at right). While many had IDs with them, there was a concern expressed by key informants that they might not have the right kind of ID to receive the PESEL number. Specifically, in order to receive a PESEL number a person must be Ukrainian and have crossed into Poland directly from Ukraine after February 24th. However, this excludes third party nationals, Ukrainians and others who used another European border to flee Ukraine before

Documentation	Total
N	512
International passport	74%
Ukrainian ID	63%
Birth certificate	48%
Other	8%
None	1%

entering Poland, and those that fled in the weeks leading up to the start of the invasion (but fled due to fear of conflict). Key informants noted there may be ongoing discussion with the government to revise these requirements, but this had not been accomplished by the time of the assessment. This means there is an unknown proportion of displaced people who will not be able to immediately claim the benefits offered by the PESEL number. In addition, two focus groups mentioned that older adults face mobility challenges going to offices and service points to wait in line and register for the PESEL; they request the possibility of registering for their PESEL number at the shelter.

Refugees also noted experiencing a number of risks since they left their homes. Most commonly these included risks of abandonment/family separation (36%) and human trafficking (28%), followed by physical violence and sexual violence/abuse (both 19%). The full list of risks can be seen in the chart at right (n=461). About one-third of those surveyed felt that it was generally safe in Poland, and they had faced few risks. Given that the majority of survey respondents were female, there was not clear data from the survey on risks specific to men versus women. However, key informants noted that given the mobility restrictions for men under 60 crossing the border from Ukraine, there has been evidence of stigma within the community against younger men who have managed to leave the country. At least one situation of conflict and discrimination against men in a displacement shelter was found during the assessment.



In most cases, respondents who noted risks said that they did not report those risks to anyone or seek any help to address them. When focus groups were asked who they would seek help from, three identified the police and did not express any fear or concern with approaching them. Additional information on help-seeking from the survey can be found in the table at right. Discussions in the four focus groups evidenced that women are, in general, aware of the human trafficking risks. One group noted they keep their documents safe and stay together, another noted being approached to take a ride and reporting to the police, while the last group had heard rumors about trafficking, but did not know of any first-hand accounts.

Help seeking	Total
N	336
I did not seek help	66%
No response	20%
No, I do not know where to seek help	4%
By members of the host community	4%
Hospital/health staff	2%
Other	2%
Police	1%
Public official	1%
Other refugees	1%
An NGO	1%

Another concern expressed by 12 key informants is around the emotional and psychological state of people: many refugees who have arrived, and in particular children, have been severely emotionally impacted by the separation of their families (leaving loved ones behind in Ukraine), and the experience/fear of war. Shelter directors and one focus group spoke of children who cry or wet themselves at night, mothers who tend to leave their children alone in the 'kids' area of the shelter, anecdotally seeking quiet elsewhere. While most shelters have an area for children, with toys and materials available, and often with volunteers to play with the children, there are rarely structured activities, and the volunteers have not received training or support to ensure quality care for the children, including specialized assistance to adequately respond to acute trauma.

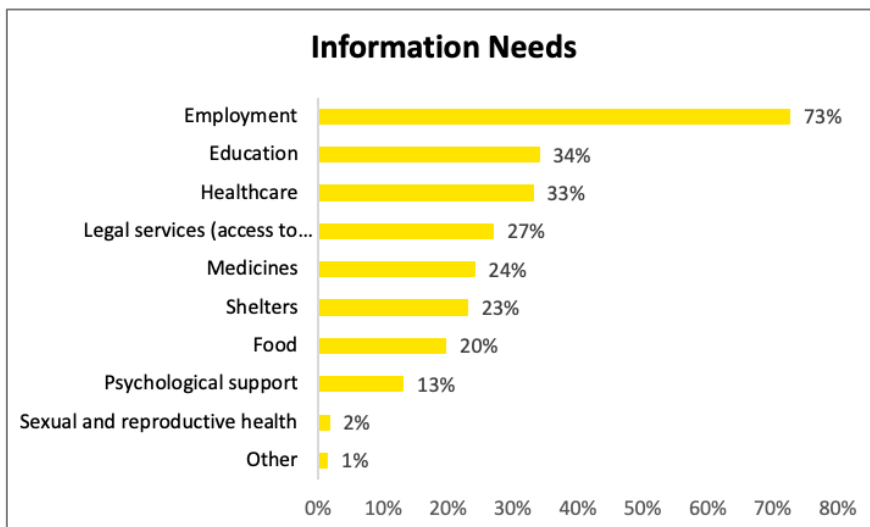
Of survey respondents, 6% were aware of unaccompanied refugee children living in Poland (n=331). Reportedly unaccompanied children are no longer being allowed to cross the border into Poland, but this does not preclude the

possibility. Part of the special act of March 12th passed by the Polish government allows for the establishment of a temporary guardian for minors who have crossed the border without their parents, details can be found on the government website.²²

In terms of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), multiple shelters have areas set aside for psychological counseling, but as with the medical staff, no counselors were seen to be present during the shelter visits of the team. This is not a critique, as most are working as volunteers, coming when they can, to support as much as they can, rather a concern that a non-voluntary system may be needed in the near future. Also, similar to medical assistance, key informants noted that counselling sessions generally occur with a translator, as Ukrainian-speaking psychologists are not readily available. Only limited case management services for women, children, or persons with special needs were identified during the assessment.

Information needs and assistance

Information needs reported in the survey (n=455) largely mimicked overall needs with a prioritization of information about employment, education, and healthcare. The one deviation is in regard to a higher prioritization of legal aid (potentially in regard to accessing the PESEL), and a lower prioritization of information about shelters and food (potentially because these services are relatively easy to identify and utilize). Preferences for receiving information do not fully match where information has been found, to date. Survey respondents preferred information to come via the internet (76%) and face-to-face interactions (51%), however so far, the majority of the information received has come via friends and family (60%) and social media (40%). Three focus groups noted getting much of their information at the shelter, though two pointed to the concern that volunteers try to help, and explain, but they do not know everything about the policies.



Surprisingly, given the high visibility of services such as food distribution points, information points and shelters, the majority (57%) of survey respondents report having received no assistance so far (n=504). Of those who have received assistance (n=196), the most common types are food (90%), shelter (58%) and healthcare (17%). Less than 10% report having received cash, MHPSS, or protection services.

Information Delivery Preferences	Percent	Information to-date	Percent
N	374	N	358
Internet	76%	Friends and family	60%
Face-to-face	51%	Social media	40%
Social Media	32%	Posters	14%
SMS	17%	Government website	10%
Posters	7%	NGO website	1%
TV	7%		
Radio	2%		

As a part of key informant interviews, the assessment team mapped the current services of 28 organizations/service provision locations across the four locations. We found a few key trends worth noting: no service providers reported distributing cash specifically for rent, or food, though two were providing unrestricted cash; despite the clear need for Polish language lessons, no service providers had yet adapted to offer them. Only three service providers were providing case management for women, four were providing group sessions for women, and four case management services for children. Given the sheer number of women and child refugees in Poland, significant increases in this

²² <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20220000583>

sector are expected to be needed. Although the number one priority of displaced people is to find a job, only three organizations noted they were working to assist on this issue. Similarly, despite the clear prioritization of education, only one organization was providing education on site, and only four were assisting with school registration. The results of the service mapping exercise, for the organizations who chose to share them publicly, can be found in Annex 3.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Recovery and Development

- Economic needs were the highest priority for those displaced from Ukraine. While most of their basic needs are being met for the moment (particularly for those who are currently residing within the temporary shelters) the anticipation of a change/depletion of assistance has both service providers and affected persons highly concerned. As a result, IRC should consider:
 - Partnering with existing service providers and reception centers/shelters to ensure mid-to-longer term continuation of services such as shelter, food, and distributions in select locations.
 - Partnering with municipalities and legal aid organizations to improve and increase single service points for access to the PESEL and its corresponding assistance.
 - Exploring opportunities to support displaced people with Polish language classes and linkages to livelihoods, either through partnership or direct service provision.
 - Direct cash assistance to impacted households as a stop-gap intervention for vulnerable families who have not yet been able to register for PESEL or have not yet started receiving their stipulated assistance, on the basis of transparent targeting criteria.
 - Investigating pairing livelihoods assistance with education/protection/child-care support activities, as many of affected persons seeking employment are the sole caregiver for their children at this time.

Access to Education and Early Childhood Development

- Prioritization of access to education by refugee families was clear in the assessment. As a result, IRC should consider:
 - Working with select service points/shelters to provide access to the technology and internet required for distance learning in Ukraine.
 - Partnering with municipalities as they explore options for education integration, and address challenges as they arise, including working with partners and education stakeholders on any assessments that look at school capacities to absorb large numbers of Polish refugee children.
 - Explore partnership with the several organizations that are helping to register students in the Polish education system, specifically on the issue of information provision and registration support
 - Support partners in the provision of teacher trainings that focus on integration and SEL infused teacher training, including, but not limited to localized adaptations of Healing Classrooms used across EDU programs such as Germany, Lebanon, and Colombia to provide teachers with knowledge and skills to support student wellbeing and integration into host communities or the SAFE programming model to support integration of migrant/refugee youth, and their families into their new communities. Important to also ensure complementarity with the services/curriculum already in use by partners.

Health

- While the law of March 12th gives Ukrainian refugees access to healthcare, some specific cases will still need assistance. As a result, IRC should consider:
 - Partnership with select service providers/shelters to ensure access to healthcare (including specialized mental health services, such as psychiatric services) onsite, particularly for new arrivals, older adults, and special needs cases who will likely struggle to access both the PESEL system and healthcare in a timely manner.
 - Partner with select service providers and shelters to improve the implementation of COVID and other infectious disease outbreak protocols at service access points, including, but not limited to hosting vaccination clinics.

- Consider partnering with the Ministry of Health to develop a strategy to improve the provision of care to Ukrainians by better provision of language support either via translators, translation sheets, or other innovative modalities.

Violence Prevention and Response

- Though refugees largely noted feeling safe and having access to some form of documentation, there are notable protection risks and gaps around access to social protection (through the PESEL), case management and mental health and psychosocial services for adults and children who face heightened risks, have special needs or have experienced violence and trauma. As a result, IRC should consider:
 - Capacity-building targeting the ‘new cadre’ of responders that have, either as volunteers or seconded staff, recently become responsible for caring for refugees. Trainings could cover topics including, but not limited to: humanitarian and protection principles, humanitarian standards, safe identification and referral of people in need of specialized care, safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), staff wellbeing and Duty of Care. Consider the establishment of a support group, or ‘problem solving’ committee to provide resources to new leaders as challenges arise.
 - Coordinating and/or partnering with select service providers and shelters to provide in-house protection case management for at-risk and vulnerable persons and children, and psychosocial assistance for any who are seeking such service, through individual and/or group modalities.
 - Establishing safe healing and learning spaces in select shelters/service provider locations to deliver socio-emotional learning services to children in a safe, structured, and healing environment. These can be complemented with responsive and adapted services to support parents, and specifically mothers. This should include the training of any staff who work with children (including volunteers) and parents to ensure appropriate and safe service delivery. Such services would complement and support the transition of children into the schooling system in Poland, where relevant and appropriate.
 - Supporting access to and provision of responsive information based on the expressed preferences of respondents, including through online/face-to-face, with specific focus on legal information and access to employment.

These activities are intended to not only support those displaced from Ukraine, but also to ensure that Polish nationals do not experience a decline in services or support as Poland rapidly scales its national schemes to those arriving from Ukraine. Across all sectors, the IRC should ensure that services can accommodate Polish citizens as relevant to ensure equitable access for all members of the community, displaced and national alike.

ANNEXES

1. [Methods Doc/Assessment Tools](#)
2. [Survey Summary](#)
3. [Service Mapping](#)²³

²³ Note that not all service providers we spoke to were ready to publicly share what services they are offering, as many services are currently influx. However, for those who were willing to share, we wanted to highlight their work in the attached.