

DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS, PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Regional Protection Analysis #4

Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia,
Lithuania, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia

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We are grateful for the extensive involvement and support of UNHCR's partners, local authorities, civil society, international organizations, and donors. Most importantly, UNHCR would like to acknowledge the resilience and strength of refugees from Ukraine, who continue to share with us their challenges, fears and hopes.

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Cover photograph:

Romania. UNHCR is supporting refugees who remained displaced after fleeing Ukraine.
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Key findings



1 Access to identity documents in host countries remains a challenge for some refugees from Ukraine.

23% of respondents have at least one household member who is missing or possessing at least one expired identity document, with international passport being the most reported missing identity document in all countries. Among the 23% of households who reported missing identity documents, 16% reported inability to obtain a replacement in the host countries.



2 A sizable portion of refugees reported difficulties registering civil status changes in host countries.

Since their first arrival to host countries, 11% of respondents reported the occurrence of vital events in their households, such as birth, death, marriage, and divorce. Of these, 17% reported facing difficulties with completing registration procedures for these events, with almost half (49%) reporting to lack information on the registration procedure and requirements.



3 Almost half of respondents in employment reported working conditions that may provide limited legal protection or indicate increased vulnerability to labour exploitation.

43% of respondents reported being employed in host countries. However, a significant number of employed respondents reported working without employment contracts (15%), working excessively long hours (22%), the confiscation of their documents by employers (2%), and/or having irregular to no access to their earnings (9%).



4 Refugees continue to report challenges around legal status and access to services after returning from short visits to Ukraine.

38% of respondents or their household members reported having visited Ukraine at least once since their initial departure from the country, with 95% having remained in Ukraine for less than three months during their most recent visit. Some 12% of refugees reported facing difficulties upon their return to host countries – mainly the revocation or suspension of their legal status and social protection benefits.



5 Whilst the vast majority of respondents continue to benefit from temporary protection, an increasing number of refugees require information on accessing legal status in host countries.

A proposal has been made to extend the application of temporary protection to refugees from Ukraine in the EU for another year – until March 2026. At the same time, some host countries have started to create alternative residency options for refugees from Ukraine outside of the temporary protection framework, in some cases linked to employment. In this context, an increasing number of refugees reported needing information on legal status in their host country – up from 17% in the last quarter of 2023 to 21% in the first quarter of 2024.

Key recommendations



1 UNHCR continues to advocate with host countries to apply or maintain a flexible approach should valid identity documents be required for certain purposes, such as registering for temporary protection, receiving residency permits or accessing other rights. UNHCR recommends adopting flexible approaches in this regard, including accepting expired identity documents and expanding the list of documents which may be used to prove identity and access rights.



2 UNHCR recommends continued efforts to address administrative, legal and practical barriers hindering refugees' access to civil registration. Refugees, particularly those with specific needs, require additional support to register changes in civil status, to ensure their access to rights and reduce risks of statelessness.



3 UNHCR recommends increased efforts to improve awareness of labour rights and reporting mechanisms for exploitative working practices amongst refugees from Ukraine, by employers, and/or having irregular to no access to their earnings.



4 In light of the fact that the ability of refugees to travel home for short periods can help pave the way for more durable returns in the future, once conditions permit, UNHCR recommends that refugees' legal status and associated rights in host countries are unaffected by a visit to Ukraine lasting less than three months. In the event of longer-term travel to Ukraine, it is recommended that hosting countries opt for deactivation of legal status and benefits instead of revocation – to avoid administrative burdens and facilitate renewed access to protection and assistance if required.



5 Refugees from Ukraine require access to timely, comprehensive information and counselling in order to make informed decisions regarding their options to access legal status in host countries. More vulnerable and marginalized groups – including minorities, persons with disabilities, older persons and those who are not digitally literate – should be provided additional support to ensure they also have effective access to information in this regard.

REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE ACROSS EUROPE (AS OF 16 MAY 2024)



*Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. *Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))*

Background and methodology

The war in Ukraine has precipitated one of the largest refugee crises in the world. Since its escalation in February 2022, and as of 16 May 2024, [more than 6.4 million refugees](#) from Ukraine have been recorded globally – with the vast majority (92%) in Europe.

Since the start of the crisis, UNHCR has established protection monitoring systems to conduct evidence-based programming and advocacy, which is informed by the experiences and perspectives of forcibly displaced and stateless persons. In this regard, UNHCR and its partners collect and analyze data about the protection situation of refugees and monitor changes over time.

Interviews are conducted in various locations, including information and assistance points, community centers, collective sites, transit locations and reception and registration centers. Trained enumerators digitally collect data through Kobo Toolbox, which is safely stored in a UNHCR server. Respondents are identified in the selected locations and asked for their consent to be interviewed using a harmonized regional questionnaire. The results presented in this report must be interpreted according to the limitations of the methodology and the context, particularly:

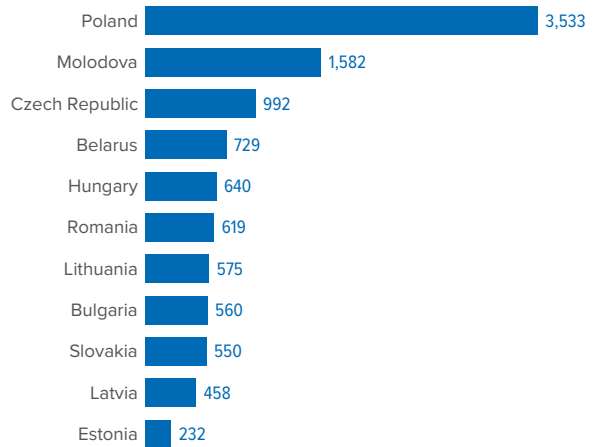
- While diversification in places of data collection is employed to reduce potential bias and ensure the sample covers different segments and profiles of the target population, results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the population of refugees from Ukraine as a whole, given the non-probabilistic sampling method used.
- The comparison of results over time may be influenced by changes in the distribution of interviews across various locations within different countries.
- The results reflect refugees' situation and needs at the time of data collection, which may subsequently change depending on a wide range of factors.

With the goal of reducing sampling errors and ensuring regional results are more representative of the overall refugee population, for this regional analysis, post-stratification weights have been applied. The weights were calculated to adjust the sample by using the estimated number of refugees

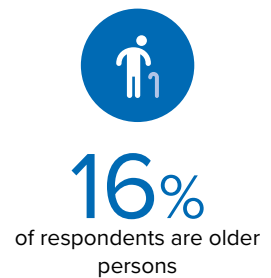
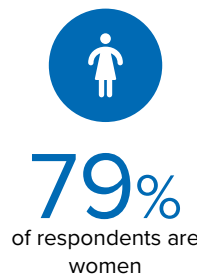
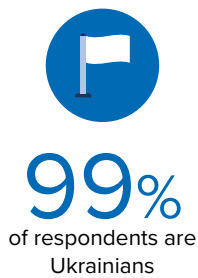
recorded in each country to adjust the completed interviews in each country to the true population distribution across countries.

This report, the fourth in the series, presents findings based on 10,470 interviews conducted between October 2023 and April 2024 in 11 countries. See [report #1](#), [report#2](#), [report #3](#),

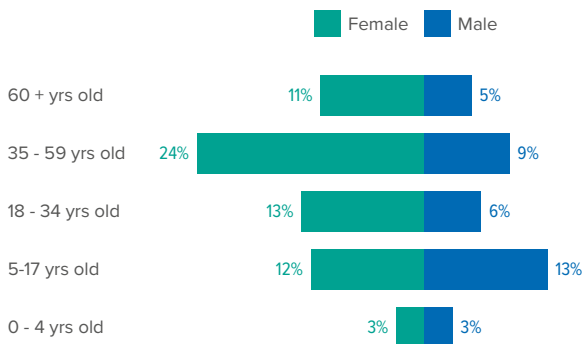
OF INTERVIEWS BY COUNTRY



Demographic profiles

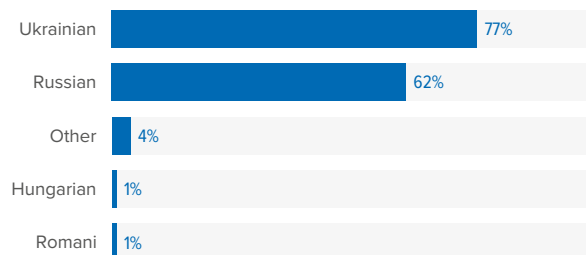


HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS BY AGE GROUP AND GENDER*



* Including the respondent. Due to rounding some percent totals do not add up to 100%.

TOP LANGUAGES SPOKEN*

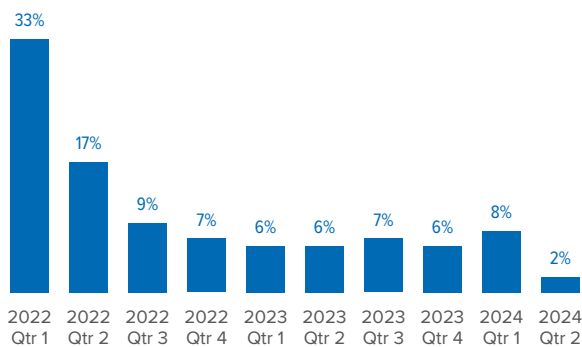


* Multiple responses were possible. So percentages can go over 100% when added

Displacement patterns

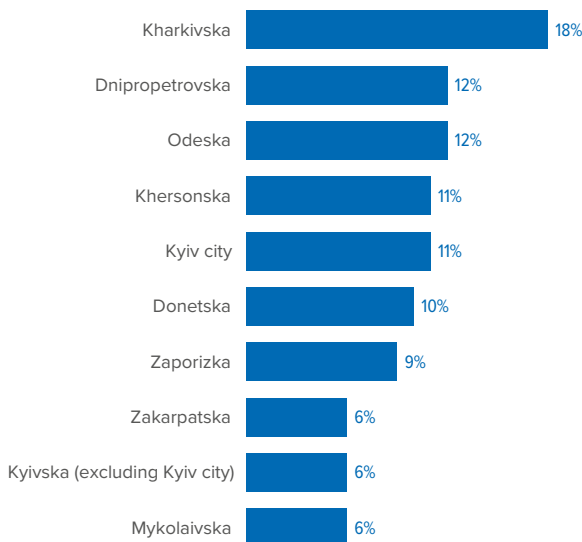
Sixty-nine percent of respondents arrived in host countries in 2022, with the majority originating from Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska, and Odeska. The remaining respondents arrived in host countries during 2023-2024, and most hailed from Kharkivska, Khersonska, and Odeska.

ARRIVAL DATE TO HOST COUNTRY*



* Due to rounding, some percent totals do not add up to 100%

TOP OBLASTS OF ORIGIN*



* Due to rounding, some percent totals do not add up to 100%

Access to legal status

The vast majority of respondents, 93%, have applied for temporary protection (TP) in host countries – 89% of whom have received a positive decision. The remaining 4% of refugees who applied for temporary protection are waiting for a decision on their application.

Out of those interviewed, 6% of refugees have not applied for temporary protection. Of these, almost half (49%) reported not applying for temporary protection because they are undecided about applying for it or because they do not plan to stay in their current host country. An additional 26% of refugees without temporary protection reported transitioning to other legal statuses – mainly to long-term and short-term residency arrangements. The share of respondents who transitioned from temporary protection to other legal statuses is relatively higher in Poland (44%) and the Czech Republic (23%).

A proposal has been made to extend the application of temporary protection to refugees from Ukraine in the EU until March 2026. At the same time, some European states have enacted legislation to facilitate the transition of temporary protection holders to alternative legal statuses.

In some of these countries, however, the possibility to transition to alternative legal statuses is limited to employed temporary protection holders. Such restrictive eligibility requirements risk excluding the most vulnerable – including older persons, single mothers, and persons with disabilities – from benefiting from these arrangements. In addition, the security of legal stay and associated rights attached to alternative residence permits, including rights to family reunification and access to social benefits, can differ significantly from those provided to beneficiaries of temporary protection.

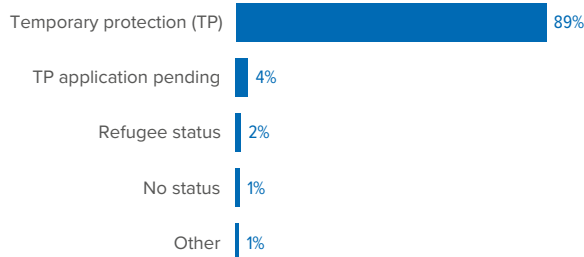
In this context, an increasing number of refugees reported needing information on legal status in their host country – up from 17% in the last quarter of 2023 to 21% in the first quarter of 2024. Moreover, according to UNHCR’s intentions survey, a significant proportion of refugees (60 per cent) indicate that they could be compelled to return

even if the full-scale war was to continue if they face challenges in accessing rights and services in host countries, in particular related to uncertainty about legal status or lack of work opportunities.¹

% OF RESPONDENTS HAVE NOT APPLIED FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTION

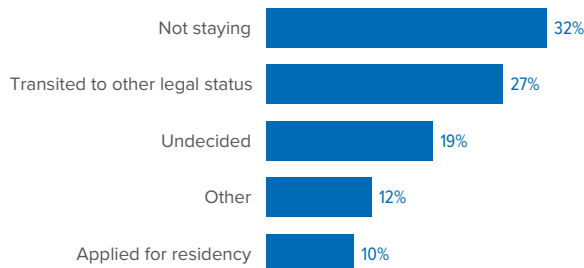
6%

TOP CURRENT LEGAL STATUS IN THE HOST COUNTRY*



* Due to rounding some percent totals do not add up to 100%.

TOP REASONS FOR NOT APPLYING FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTION*



* Due to rounding some percent totals do not add up to 100%.

Access to identity documents

Twenty three percent of respondents have at least one household member who is missing or possessing at least one expired identity document, with an international passport being the most commonly reported missing identity document in all countries. Out of the 23% who reported missing documentation, 16% reported that they were unable to obtain a replacement in the host country, with comparatively higher proportion in Estonia, Hungary, and Latvia.

Regionally, the most commonly reported obstacles to replacing identity documents are the inability to afford associated fees, long waiting times, and unavailability of services. The prevalence of these challenges varies by country, however. Inability to afford administrative and other costs is the predominant challenge in Poland. In six countries² – which represents more than half of the countries included in the survey – long waiting times are the main barriers. In four countries – Belarus, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Slovakia – respondents most frequently reported inability to access Ukrainian consular services, noting excessively long waiting times and difficulties with affording administrative fees.

In host countries, the demand for identity documents significantly outweighs the capacity of Ukrainian consular institutions. As a result, the need to obtain documentation remains one of the key driving factors for temporary visits to Ukraine. Out of 38% of refugees who reported visiting Ukraine, 15% did so to obtain documentation – mostly identity documents.

The lack of identity documents impedes refugees' ability to exercise their rights. In some countries, refugees are required to present valid identity documents to access legal status, effectively preventing those without documents from enjoying all rights flowing from the legal status. Due to a lack of documentation refugees have also reported

1 UNHCR, 'Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees, Refugee Returnees and IDPs from Ukraine' (February 2024) available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/106738>

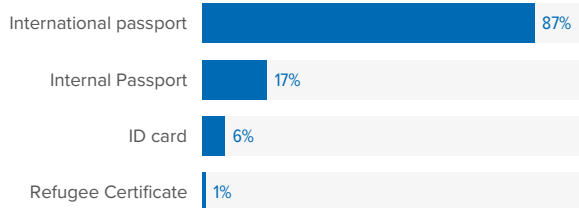
2 Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, and Romania

limited freedom of movement, limited access to basic services, and challenges finding work, among others.

% OF RESPONDENTS HAVE AT LEAST ONE HOUSEHOLD MEMBER MISSING DOCUMENTATION OR WHOSE DOCUMENTS HAVE EXPIRED

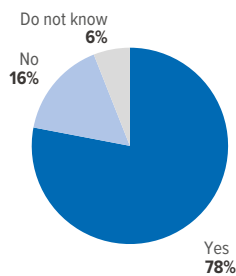
23%

TOP MISSING DOCUMENTS*

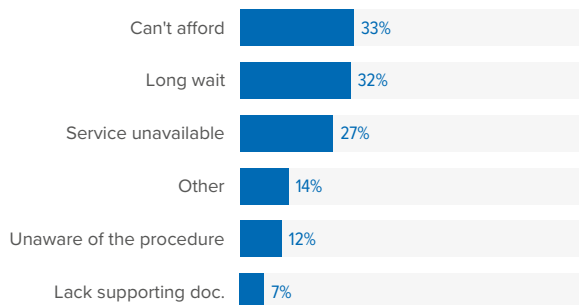


* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

ABILITY TO REPLACE/RENEW DOCUMENTATION IN THE HOST COUNTRY



REASONS FOR INABILITY TO RENEW/REPLACE DOCUMENTATION IN THE HOST COUNTRY*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Access to civil registration

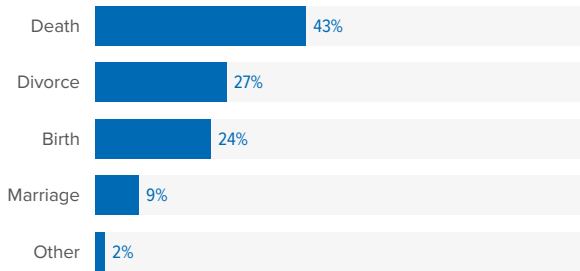
Since their first arrival to host countries, 11% of respondents have reported the occurrence of events requiring civil registration such as birth, death, marriage, and divorce in their households. Of these, 17% reported facing difficulties registering them, both with Ukrainian consular institutions and civil authorities of host countries. Comparatively, the proportion of respondents who faced challenges registering vital events is higher in Hungary (31%), Poland (26%), and Romania (19%).

Reported by almost half (49%) of refugees who were unable to register vital events, unawareness of associated procedures is the most common barrier to civil registration. This obstacle is particularly prevalent in Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, and Poland – with refugees often lacking information on where and how to access civil registration services. Long waiting times are the second most reported obstacles preventing access to civil registration.

For an additional 30% of refugees who struggled to register vital events, inability to afford administrative fees and associated costs related to civil registration is a prohibitive factor. While the registration of vital events in host countries is mostly free or fairly affordable, refugees have reported significant expenses related to the official translation and certification of supporting documents, and travel costs. The requirement to provide supporting documents, in and of itself, was also reported as an obstacle. To register some vital events with civil registration authorities of host countries, refugees are often required to provide supporting documents issued by Ukrainian authorities and vice versa.

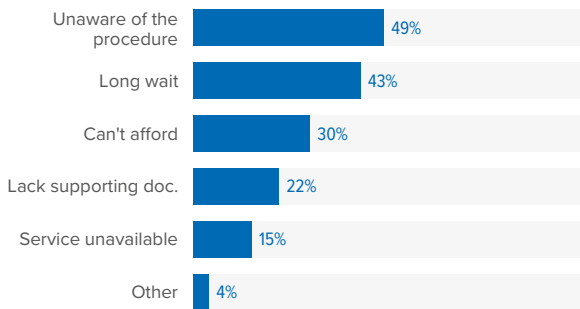
The lack of access to civil registration may expose refugees to protection risks and hinders the enjoyment of their other rights. For example, uncompleted birth registration procedures may place refugee children at heightened risk of statelessness – while without death certificates, refugees will most likely be unable to exercise their inheritance rights, among others.

REPORTED CHANGES IN FAMILY COMPOSITION*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

CHALLENGES FACED REGISTERING VITAL EVENTS IN THE HOST COUNTRY*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

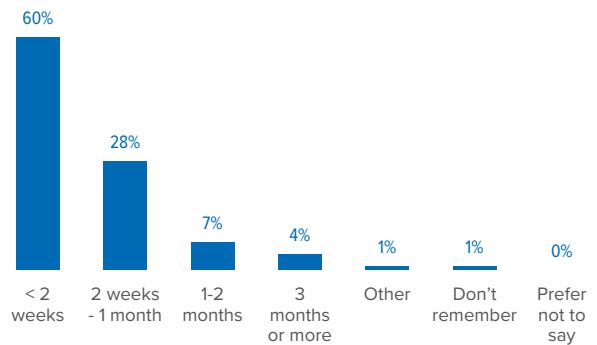
Impact of visits to Ukraine

Since their first departure, 38% of respondents or their household members had visited Ukraine at least once, mostly to see their relatives, to access healthcare, and to obtain documentation. Out of those who temporarily returned, 95% stayed in Ukraine for less than three months during their recent visit. Following this brief stay in Ukraine, 12% of refugees reported facing difficulties upon their return to host countries – mainly the revocation or suspension of their legal status and social protection benefits.

Among refugees interviewed, 32% reported being unable to visit Ukraine, largely because of security concerns (71%), lack of funds (17%) and out of fear of losing their legal status in host countries (10%). In Poland, a larger proportion of respondents reported the fear of losing their legal status as a factor preventing them visiting Ukraine, as compared to the regional average. This is likely due to legislation which stipulated that stays outside of Poland for over 30 days will result in loss of temporary protection status.³

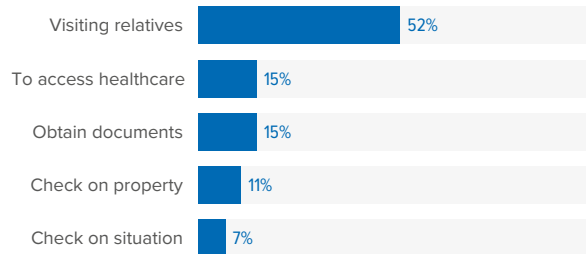
The ability of refugees from Ukraine to return home for short periods, including to maintain links with relatives and to check on the prevailing situation, can help pave the way for more durable returns once conditions permit. As findings from UNHCR's intentions survey revealed, refugees who had returned to Ukraine for short visits are more likely to report longer term intentions to return.⁴

DURATION OF STAY IN UKRAINE DURING MOST RECENT VISIT*



* Due to rounding some percent totals do not add up to 100%.

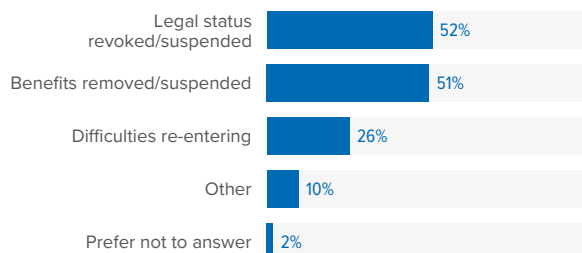
MAIN REASONS FOR TEMPORARY VISITS TO UKRAINE*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

3 UNHCR Poland, 'Protection Monitoring Brief #3' (July 2023) available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102103>

4 UNHCR, 'Lives on hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees and IDPs from Ukraine #4' (July 2023), available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101747> page 35

% OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTIES UPON THEIR RETURN TO UKRAINE**12%****DIFFICULTIES FACED UPON RETURN TO HOST COUNTRY***

* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Labour rights

Out of those interviewed, 43% of respondents reported being employed in host countries. Of these, 15% reported working without employment contracts; 22% reported working excessively long hours; 2% reported the confiscation of their identity documents; and 9% reported having irregular to no access to their earnings.

The data further shows that, compared to refugees with employment contracts, a higher proportion of refugees without employment contracts have reported working excessively long hours (30% vs 20%) and having irregular to no access to their

earnings (23% vs 6%). During focus group discussions, refugees highlighted that employers are often reluctant to sign contracts with them – and in cases where work contracts are signed, employers stipulate conditions that are not reflective of actual working conditions e.g., shorter/regular working hours.⁵

Vulnerability to labour exploitation could stem from poverty, the lack of sufficiently protective labour contracts, or maybe driven by the lack of decent employment opportunities. In fact, 27% of employed refugees cited employment as their top urgent need, indicating a dire need for better job opportunities. In host countries, refugees face a range of obstacles hindering their access to decent work, most notably language barriers and lack of jobs matching their qualifications.⁶

% OF RESPONDENTS WORKING WITHOUT AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT**15%****% OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED THE CONFISCATION OF THEIR IDENTITY DOCUMENTS BY THEIR EMPLOYER****2%****% OF RESPONDENTS WORKING EXCESSIVELY LONG HOURS****22%****% OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED HAVING IRREGULAR TO NO ACCESS TO THEIR EARNINGS****9%**

5 UNHCR Poland, 'Protection Brief (January-March 2024)', available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/protection-brief-poland-january-march-2024>

6 Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation, 'Helping Hands – The Role of Housing Support and Employment Facilitation in Economic Vulnerability of Refugees from Ukraine' (April 2024), available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108068>

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