



## **LIVES ON HOLD** **INTENTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES** **OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE**

UNHCR's office in Tbilisi, Georgia  
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### **THIRD NEEDS AND INTENTIONS ASSESSMENT**

Based on the third comprehensive assessment carried out in partnership between UNHCR and World Vision, the report indicates the main needs and priorities of refugees from Ukraine and provides an evidence-based overview of the situation to facilitate tailored interventions in Georgia. As the conflict enters a third year, this survey goes beyond basic and immediate needs, and explores in more detail the issues of education, employment and self-reliance.

## Contents

1. Methodology and Demographic Profiles	3
2. Key figures	6
3. Intentions	7
4. Accommodation	8
5. Employment and Income	10
6. Education, Children’s Needs and Concerns	14
7. Basic Needs	19
8. Healthcare, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support	21
9. Asylum and Safety	23
Drawing Conclusions from the Survey Results	24
Key Recommendations	26

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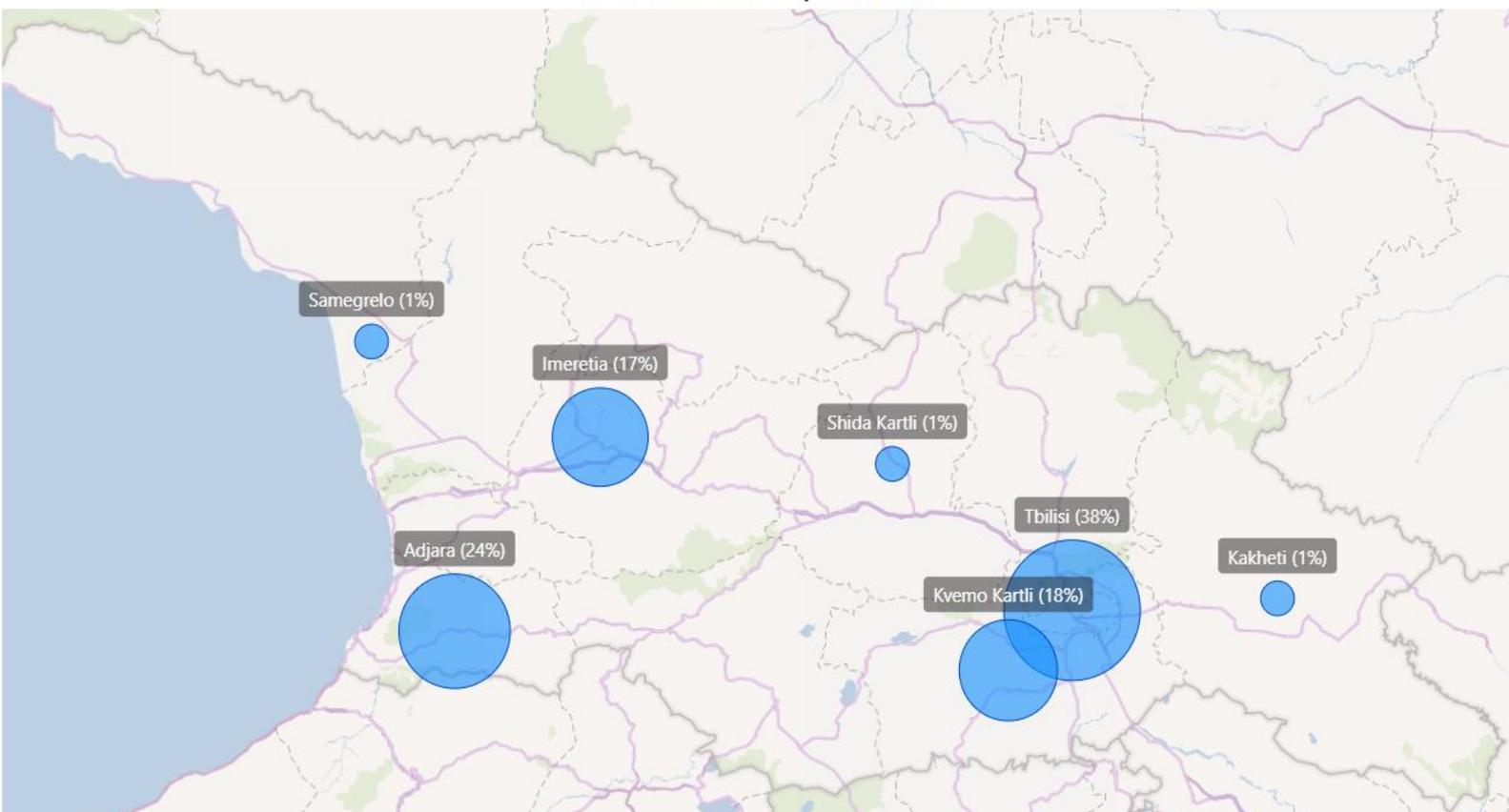
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# 1. Methodology and Demographic Profiles

**Third needs assessment:** Following a half-year interval since UNHCR and World Vision's second multi-sector needs assessment, this survey aimed to identify the main needs and priorities of refugees from Ukraine to understand the dynamics and changes in the overall situation and to provide an evidence-base for programming. A combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods was employed during the assessment.

**Quantitative research:** The survey involved conducting interviews with **403** refugees from Ukraine across various target regions between October – early December. Since the average household size is 3 persons, this survey effectively evaluates the needs and intentions of up to **1200** refugees from Ukraine residing in Georgia. Half the respondents were randomly chosen from the UNHCR/World Vision database, while the snowball methodology was utilized to select the remaining **50%**. Interviews were conducted with the express consent of respondents. The questionnaire comprised over 100 mostly closed-ended questions, with each interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. **Seventy percent** of interviews were conducted in person while **30%** were conducted by phone.

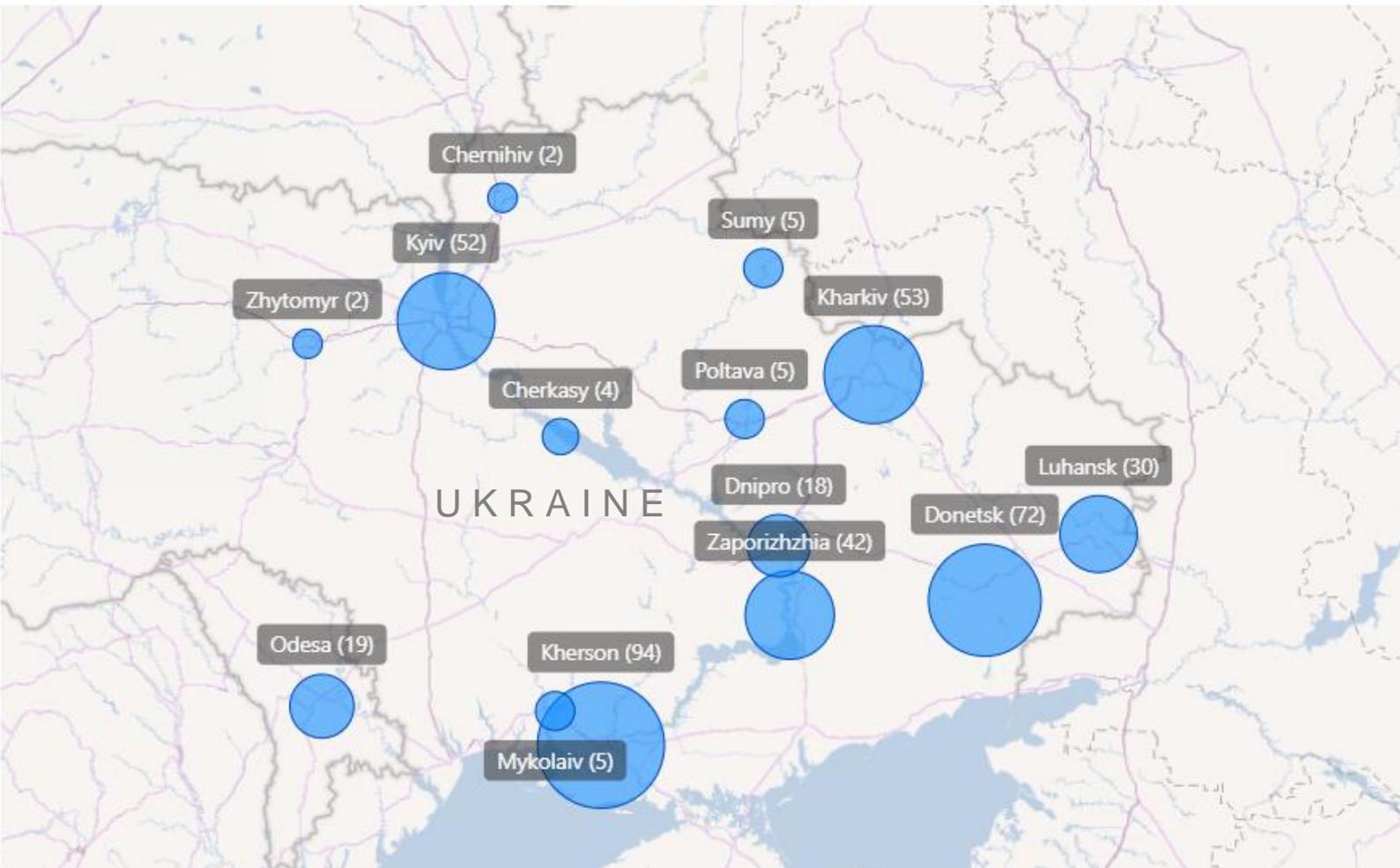
Location of respondents



**Qualitative research:** The research comprised five focus group discussions in **Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi**, each involving 10-12 individuals. A session was dedicated to single mothers, and another one to individuals with family members with disabilities to ensure that diverse perspectives were captured. As part of the qualitative research, Key Informant Interviews were also conducted with representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), international organizations, school principals and representatives of state agencies to assess existing services, identify needs and enhance understanding of how current support services and programmes align with those needs.

**Demographic profile:** Most of the respondents originate from areas heavily affected by conflict. The majority (**52%**) entered Georgia through the Dariali (Larsi) border crossing, while **30%** arrived via Kutaisi and Tbilisi International Airports. Another **17%** crossed through Sarpi, with a smaller proportion, **1%**, entering through Batumi International Airport. Only **0.2%** utilized the Red Bridge Customs/Border with Azerbaijan. Of 403 respondents, **24%** came to Georgia in 2023 and the remaining **76%** arrived in 2022.

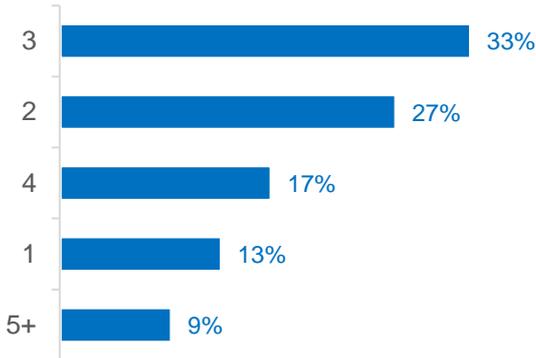
### Places of origin



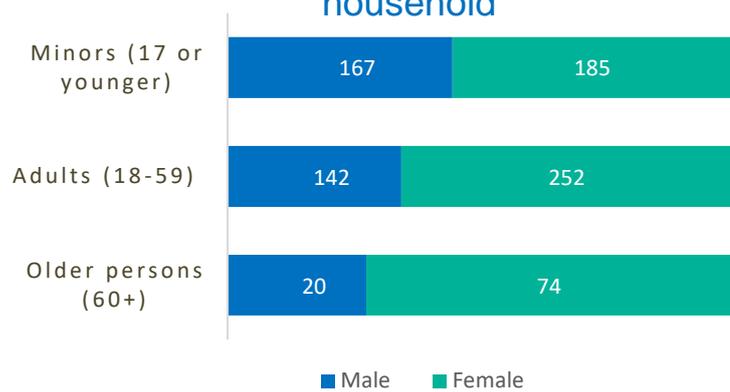
*As of February 2024, Ukrainian government control extends over all locations marked on the map, except Donetsk and Lugansk. However, Kherson remains on the frontline of conflict and Kharkiv continues to be subject to heavy bombing.*

Statistics from UNHCR and World Vision database show that approximately **76%** of Ukrainians in Georgia are female. Effort was made to ensure a greater participation of men in this survey; however, men showed less willingness to participate, resulting in **87%** of participants being female and **13%** male. The average age of participants falls within the range of 35 to 44 years. The majority (**93%**) of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 65 and **7%** are above the age of 65. On average, the household size is three.

### Household size



### Age and gender breakdown of the household



Kutaisi, Georgia © UNHCR/Nino Kajaia

## 2. Key figures



**38%**

have plans to stay long-term in Georgia



**20%**

have travelled back to Ukraine at least once



**84%**

rent accommodation while 4% own their homes



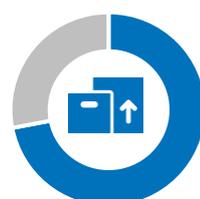
**72%**

have enrolled their children in local schools



**43%**

are employed, while 9% are students or retirees



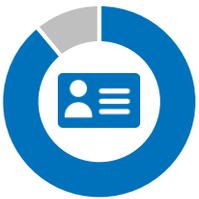
**72%**

have received assistance



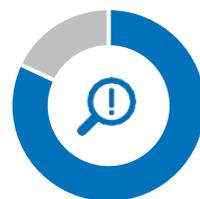
**14%**

are not able to access medical services they require, while another 15% could only access them occasionally



**11%**

do not have all the documents they need (identity/travel documents)



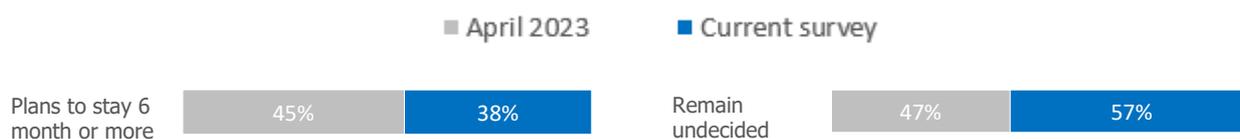
**18%**

feel that they are not receiving sufficient information about assistance and services

### 3. Intentions

**Reasons for choosing Georgia:** Most respondents stated that they chose Georgia as their destination either because it was the easiest option (**36%**) or because it was the closest (**34%**). Respondents were allowed to select more than one answer, and some (**32%**) also cited having family and friends in Georgia as a factor for coming here, while a smaller segment referred to the convenience of being in a country where Russian is widely understood (**17%**). **Thirteen per cent** of respondents expressed expectations that their family members will join them in Georgia in the near future.

**Stay in Georgia:** A significant portion of respondents is still undecided about whether they will stay in Georgia. Furthermore, compared to the results of the previous survey, fewer people indicated plans to stay in Georgia for 6 months or more.



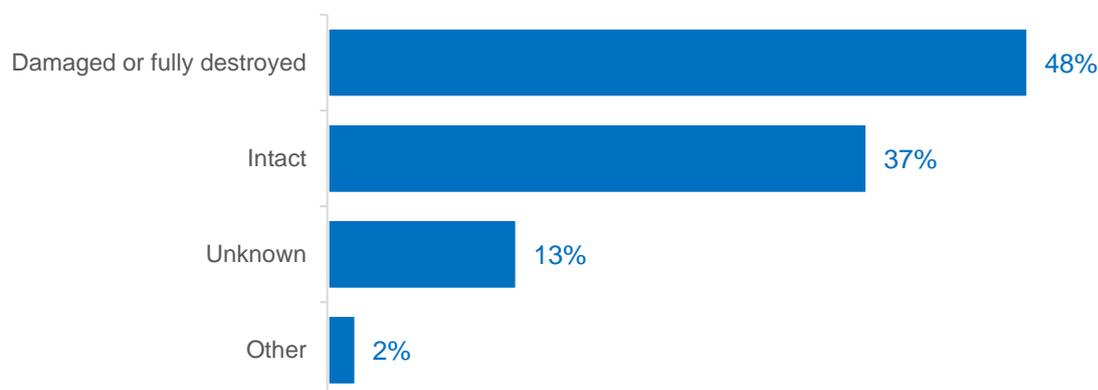
Insights from focus groups suggest that the duration of stay of Ukrainians is influenced by a combination of factors, including uncertainty about the progression of the war and the relative instability and insecurity in certain regions of Ukraine.

**Eventual return to Ukraine:** The majority (**74%**) of survey participants said that they intend to return to Ukraine permanently in the future, others (**17%**) remain uncertain while **6%** claim that they do not intend to ever return.

**Increase in return visits:** There has been a noticeable increase, from **9%** to **20%**, in the number of respondents who have travelled to Ukraine at least once. The main reasons for these trips include visiting relatives or friends (**40%**) acquiring documents (**21%**) and assessing the current situation back home (**25%**).

**Housing conditions in Ukraine:** Notably, around half of respondents' dwellings in Ukraine have suffered significant damage or are fully destroyed.

#### Condition of dwellings in Ukraine



**Moving to third countries:** Two per cent of survey respondents plan to relocate to another country. Focus group discussion participants stated that they were considering relocation to Spain, Germany or Moldova. The choice is based on the presence of relatives in these countries who would help them in accessing information and better living conditions compared to Georgia.

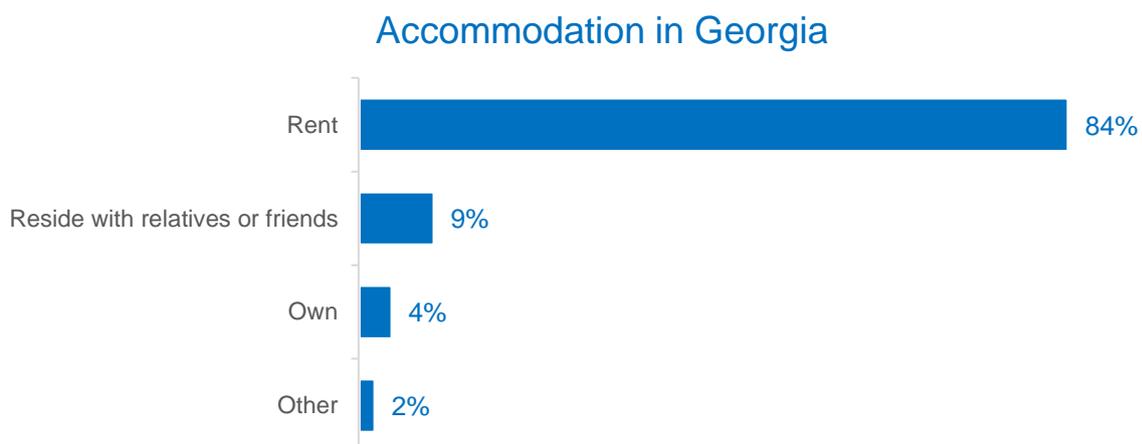
In a separate question, when asked about potential obstacles to relocating to third countries, **84%** faced no challenges while **16%** of respondents identified several factors. These included a lack of international passports or funds, insufficient information about living conditions in the third country and health issues.

## 4. Accommodation

**Accommodation remains a major challenge:** Despite the efforts of the government, donor organizations and NGOs, accommodation remains the most challenging issue for Ukrainian refugees in Georgia due to high rental costs (see Basic Needs section below for more details on the main challenges faced by Ukrainians).

**Increase in rented accommodation:** Examining changes in housing over time, the survey shows an increase in the number of people who are renting homes. In 2022, **56%** of Ukrainians lived in rented accommodation while **5%** remained in government provided hotels. By spring 2023, there was a substantial increase, climbing to **76%** renting and **8%** still in shelters. This upward trend continued, with the number of people renting reaching **84%** and almost no one in shelters by December 2023, as they were closed down.

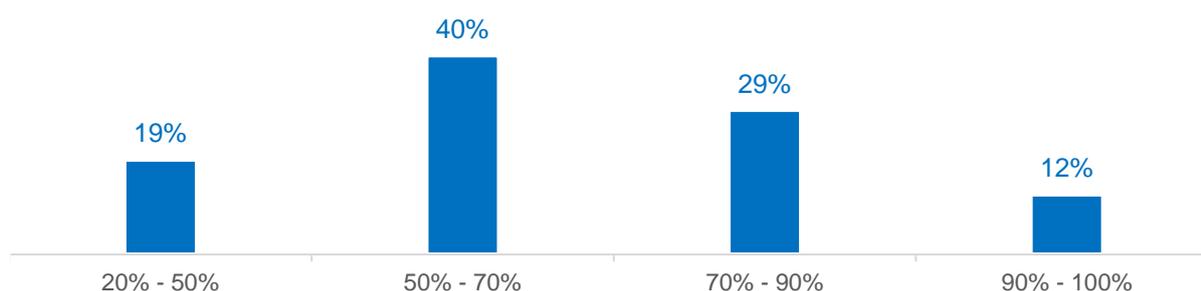
Breaking down the accommodation situation further, we have the following picture:



**Economic Burden on Households and Coping Mechanisms:** More than one-third of the respondents spend most of their income on accommodation needs. Excessive rental expenses severely limit their ability to cover other basic needs.

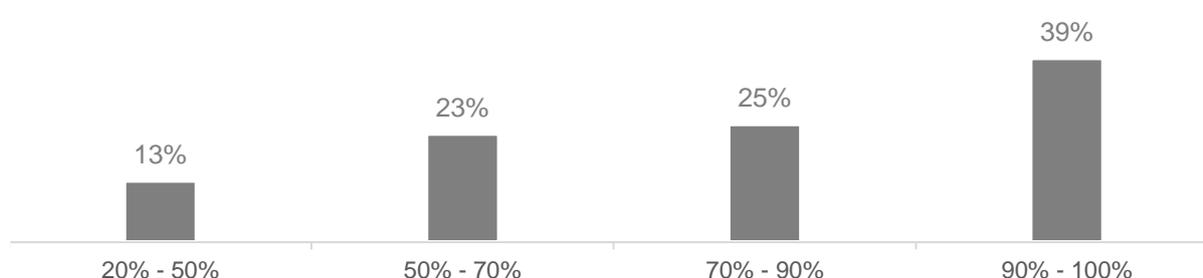
## Current survey

### % of Household Income Spent on Rent



## April 2023

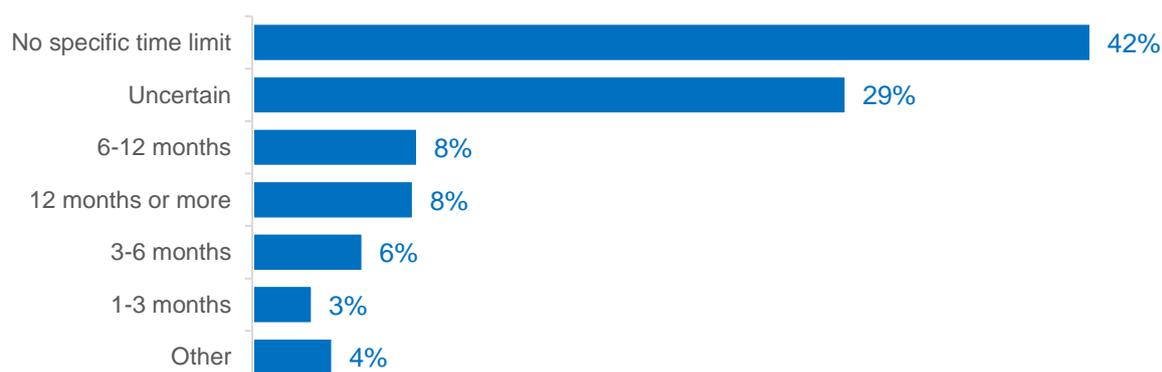
### % of Household Income Spent on Rent



Focus groups discussions highlight that many Ukrainians are trying to reduce accommodation expenses by opting to live in suburban or outskirts locations or sharing flats with friends and relatives. While the majority find it feasible to move out of the city centre, **93%** of respondents mentioned having no plans to relocate to another city or village.

**Duration of stay:** While most respondents now rent accommodation, a significant portion of this population remains uncertain about how long they will be able to keep doing so. Only around **16%** of respondents had concrete plans to remain in their current, rented accommodation for 6 months or more, while **13%** of respondents mentioned plans to move in 6 months or less, with the main reasons being the intention to depart Georgia, demands from apartment owners and insufficient financial resources for rent.

### Duration of Stay in the Same Accommodation



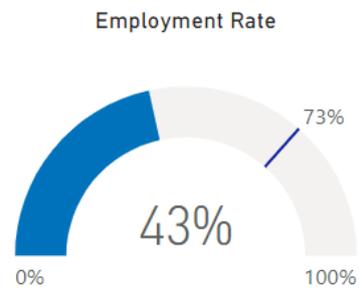
## 5. Employment and Income

**Employment remains a core issue:** Studies show that economic insecurity is a significant challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Georgia, creating anxiety and prompting urgent needs such as financial assistance. The successful employment of refugees from Ukraine is connected with other aspects, such as availability of care services for vulnerable groups such as children and older persons, language learning and information about opportunities.

**Employment rates and trends:** Survey results and Key Informant Interviews indicate an increase in employment rates.



Before arriving in Georgia, **73%** of respondents were employed in Ukraine, of whom **20%** owned a business or were self-employed. In Georgia the employment rate is **43%** while **9%** are either students or retirees and **48%** unemployed.

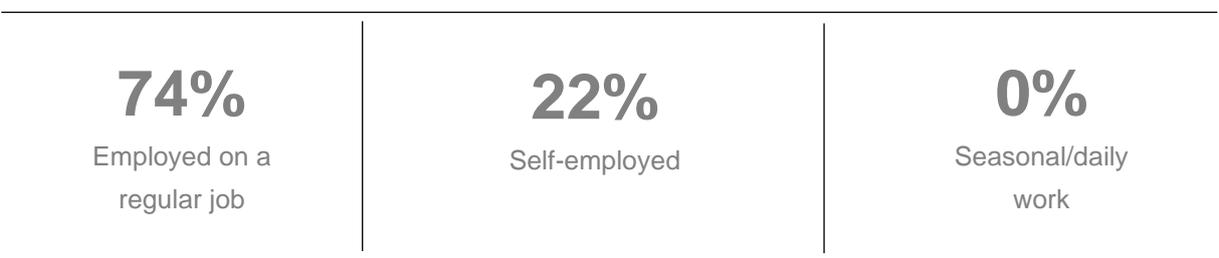


Among those who are employed, the type of work they are engaged in may be broken down as follows:

### Current survey



### April 2023



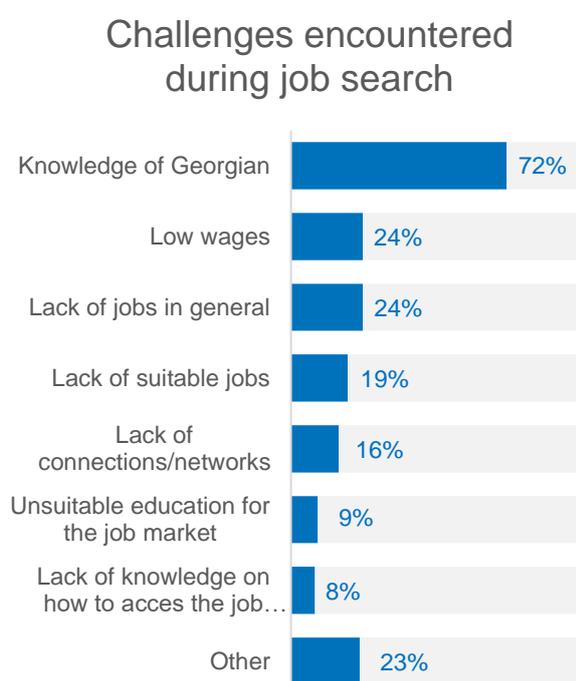
**Job satisfaction:** Among employed respondents, **44%** express a desire to change their current job, primarily due the low pay. A smaller subset of respondents, in addition to pay concerns, also emphasizes the importance of enhancing working conditions and securing employment in jobs that align with their qualifications.

**Average household income: 915 GEL** Is the average income of a household, including pensions and remittances but excluding aid and donations.

Note\*: there were a number of instances when respondents who worked online or had high income jobs locally, refused to be included in the survey.

**Barriers in Georgia:** During the qualitative and quantitative assessment, several barriers to employment were identified. **Half of the unemployed respondents** attribute personal responsibilities as a hindrance to accepting job offers. This underscores the pressing need to enhance care services. Other challenges include:

- **Language** – Lack of proficiency in Georgian is by far the most significant challenge to securing employment. This was confirmed by both the survey as well as in the focus group discussions.
- **Low wages** – According to focus group participants, the wage disparity between Ukraine and Georgia is evident across all levels. In low-skilled work, the remuneration is at least half of what it is in Ukraine for a comparable job. In spite of this, many respondents accept such jobs, underscoring the severity of their financial situation. Many also identify a general shortage of jobs as a significant challenge.



*\*Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.*

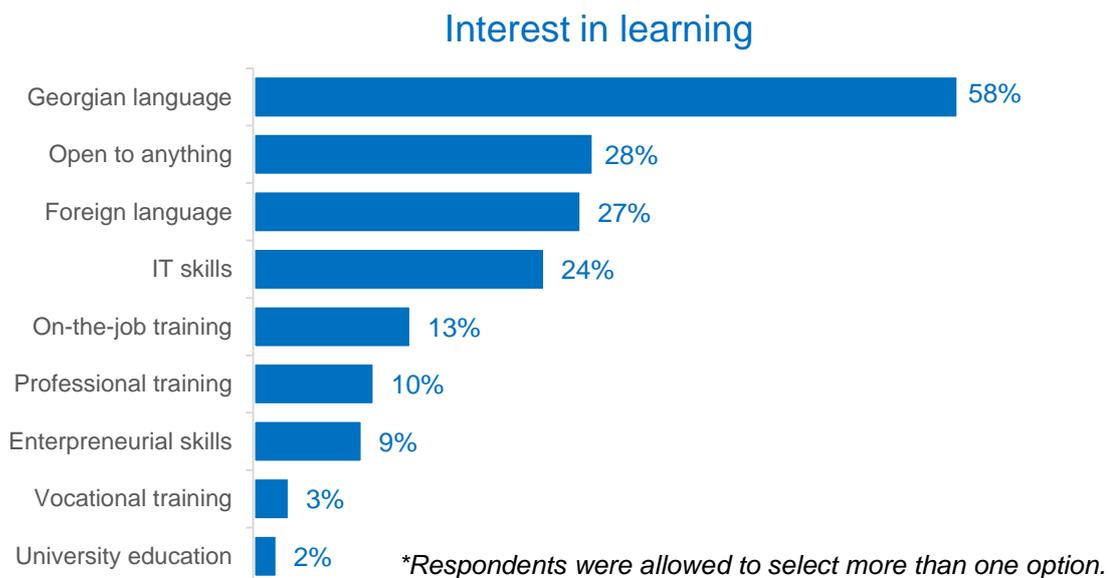
- **Limited awareness on how to find jobs** – One in ten jobseekers lack information on effective ways for searching for employment. Focus groups indicate that some participants are unaware of employment websites and organizations providing employment support. Those who know how to look for jobs mainly seem to be able to find low-skilled work (janitor, courier, waiter, consultant, nanny, gas station operator, etc.). Respondents are not optimistic about finding better employment opportunities and are generally sceptical about investing more time in searching for better jobs.
- **Not meeting the requirements of the labour market** – During focus group discussions participants said that specific professions in Georgia, for example in IT, design, business analytics, advertising, construction and engineering, employ different technologies and methods from those employed in Ukraine. In some cases, a more modern approach is applied in Georgia compared to Ukraine, while in other cases the approach applied in

Georgia is more traditional. Consequently, acquiring additional knowledge or skills may become a necessity, even for those with prior work experience in the same field.

- **Carer responsibilities and time constraints** – Respondents note challenges for individuals with parental and caretaker responsibilities. A lack of support in providing care to family members makes it difficult to adapt to full-time work and part-time jobs are not frequently available.

**Overcoming the barriers:** Among those who are able to work but are unemployed, when asked about their efforts in the past four weeks to secure employment, the majority confirmed they are actively applying for jobs. Additionally, a substantial number sought assistance from friends, relatives or colleagues.

According to **76%** of unemployed respondents, training, professional courses and workshops are key to assisting them in their job search. The detailed breakdown of participants preferences when it comes to acquiring new skills or knowledge is as follows:



About **13%** of unemployed respondents’ state that they intend to return to Ukraine specifically for employment. Consequently, some have limited motivation to overcome the barriers mentioned above. For them, activities such as learning a language or exploring job opportunities are not considered worthwhile, particularly given the existing pay gap. Top of Form

**Further insights into employment preferences:** One-third of jobseekers look for jobs aligned with their professional backgrounds, **20%** express willingness to accept any job and the rest express an interest in specific fields or areas of work. Approximately **60%** of jobseekers find a salary of **1000 GEL** or below acceptable, while **30%** deem a salary exceeding **1500 GEL** as the minimum acceptable amount.

**Entrepreneurship, banking and loans:** Around one-third of respondents attempted to initiate entrepreneurial ventures upon arrival in Georgia. The primary obstacle for the vast majority (90%) is the lack of financing. Most respondents (74%) stated that they initiated their business without any capital, with their own savings, or with savings from close family members, and 64% are continuing to rely on their own resources for ongoing operational costs. Overall, when asked if they received support for start their business, only 12% indicated that they received support from non-governmental or international organizations and only 3.3% indicated that they received financial assistance from non-governmental or international organizations to start up their business.

Although Crystal, a microfinance institution, provides micro loans, leasing products and business mentoring services to Ukrainian entrepreneurs in Georgia, none of the surveyed individuals in Georgia mentioned taking out loans or credits. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents expressed a lack of awareness regarding loan application procedures, with only a minority citing the absence of collateral as a barrier to accessing bank loans.

When it comes to bank accounts, more people prefer Georgian banks (84%) compared to Ukrainian ones (57%). Respondents have a very favorable impression of the service at Georgian banks, giving them an average rating of 4.5 out of 5. Respondents describe opening an account as quick and easy provided that all documentation is in order.

**Stress related to employment and economic integration:** The increasing economic integration of refugees from Ukraine in Georgia is noteworthy. Compared to the previous survey, the percentage of individuals attributing stress directly to employment issues has decreased from 65% to 34%. However, the overwhelming stress factor for 73% of respondents is uncertainty about the future, which may well include job and income--related stress as well as uncertainty about the course of the war, return or stay in Georgia. Despite persistent challenges impacting employment outcomes, refugees from Ukraine are beginning to integrate into the job market.

Key Informants (representatives of CSOs and international organizations, school principals and government officials) analysed the current employment landscape, consistently attesting to an overall increase in self-employment rates among Ukrainians. During the interviews, emphasis was placed on the necessity of language education and economic integration, particularly for the younger demographic. Special attention was also given to the importance of better informing Ukrainians about self-employment possibilities and business programmes.



## 6. Education, Children's Needs and Concerns

**Enrollment trends:** The survey shows that **67%** of respondents have children aged between 3 and 18, with the majority attending local educational institutions, while some remain enrolled in Ukrainian online classes. This pattern does not apply to kindergarten-age children, as only one in five are enrolled in local kindergartens.

As for the distribution of children by language sectors, due to the language barrier, parents of school-age children show a preference for Ukrainian and Russian sector schools over Georgian ones, leading to a lower enrolment rate in the latter. However, when it comes to children of kindergarten age, most parents opt for Georgian language kindergartens, with Ukrainian being the second choice and Russian being the least favoured option.

	Enrolled in Local Institutions	Pursuing Online Education	Distribution per sectors	Kindergarten	School
Kindergarten age children	19%	2%	Georgian Sector	51%	17%
School age children	72%	17%	Ukrainian Sector	35%	43%
			Russian Sector	14%	40%

**Registration:** The registration process for the majority (**90%**) of children in local educational institutions proceeded smoothly without significant practical issues. However, some participants in focus group discussions highlighted challenges arising from a lack of information on procedures, particularly among parents whose children have recently reached kindergarten or school age. Additionally, others reported difficulties related to not having international protection, underscoring the complexities some families face in navigating the enrolment process. A small percentage (**28%**) of parents whose children are not yet enrolled in local schools expressed a willingness to register them in Georgian kindergartens if the enrolment process were further simplified.

**General satisfaction:** Among parents of children who are enrolled in kindergartens, **71%** are generally satisfied with the quality of pre-school education. Of those who are not satisfied, **62%** would like to see improvement in the quality of food, **31%** in the quality of teaching and **30%** have concerns about relations between children.

For parents with children in schools, **50%** are satisfied with the quality of education. The primary concerns among the dissatisfied parents include the schools' equipment and facilities (**44%**), issues with lack of discipline at schools (**38%**) and the quality of teaching (**33%**).



**Kindergartens:** Parents of the **19%** of children who are enrolled in local kindergartens noted that preschool-age children tend to fare quite well in Georgian-language kindergartens as they easily pick up the language. Consequently, families that intend to settle in Georgia often opt for Georgian kindergartens to ensure their children become fluent in Georgian before starting school. Additionally, some parents opt for Georgian kindergartens as they are more conveniently located.

During focus group discussions, it became apparent that when parents choose Russian or Ukrainian sector kindergartens, it is usually due to the child's lack of proficiency in the Georgian language combined with uncertainty on how long the family plans to remain in Georgia and not because of the difference in the quality of education or treatment.

Overall, there is a positive perception of local kindergartens, the quality of education provided and treatment from the teachers, however, there were some concerns raised about children frequently falling ill due to overcrowding in kindergartens.

Parents who have not yet enrolled their children in local kindergartens (**81%**) gave the following reasons:

**52%**

Language barrier

**21%**

Cost of private kindergartens

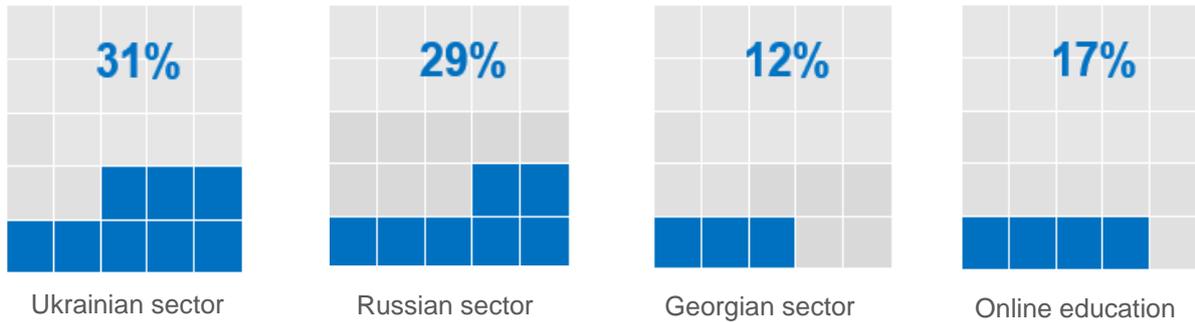
**18%**

No reason/other

**7%**

Lack of spaces in state kindergartens

**Breakdown of children in schools per sector:**



**Ukrainian sector schools:** Parents generally express satisfaction with the teaching methods and teachers' qualifications in Ukrainian sector schools. The main issue cited is that there are only three Ukrainian sector schools available in Georgia (one in Batumi and two in Tbilisi), which leads to limited enrolment spaces and overcrowding in classrooms. Additionally, focus group discussions indicate that some parents are transferring their children, particularly those of primary school age, from Ukrainian to Russian or Georgian schools. This shift stems from Ukrainians relocating to suburbs for cost-saving purposes. Another reason is that primary school age children are considered more likely to be able to learn Georgian, whereas older children continue to opt for Ukrainian schools. Families who live in suburban areas but are continuing to choose Ukrainian schools responded that transportation is a significant challenge due to long travel distances.

**Russian sector schools:** Parents of children enrolled in Russian sector schools in Tbilisi and Kutaisi expressed dissatisfaction with the teaching methods and overall quality of education. They highlighted concerns regarding the shortage of teachers, pointing out cases of a single teacher tasked with teaching multiple subjects or managing several classes, while possessing limited expertise in each subject area.

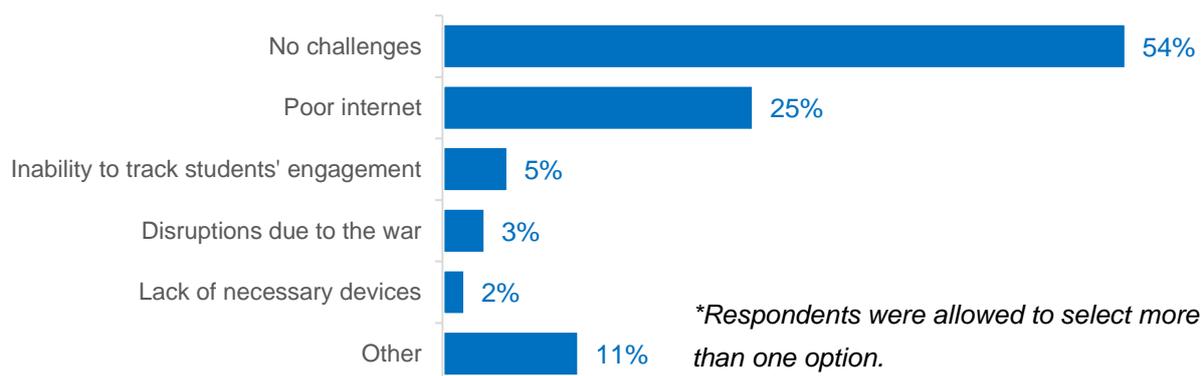
**Georgian sector schools:** Parents whose children are enrolled in Georgian sector schools emphasize that the language barrier is a significant obstacle to quality education. They note that children have to spend more time trying to gain language skills than learning specific subjects. Nevertheless, parents view this as an issue that any foreigner studying in a local language would have to confront and not as a country-specific issue. Furthermore, they express contentment with the overall quality of education and the qualifications of teachers in Georgian sector schools.

**Online education:** Of the 17% whose children were engaged in online education, two thirds (66%) were satisfied with this modality and 9% even very satisfied. Parents often cited as a reason for preferring online education that they felt they were supporting teachers and schools in Ukraine (44%), while some considered the quality of education to be better than in-class learning (16%).

**Reasons for not enrolling children into local schools:** Those parents who haven't enrolled children into local school state the following (**61%**) preference to continue with online learning, **29%** not planning to stay in the country, **6%** lack of spaces in schools, **4%** language barrier.

According to respondents, the primary challenges associated with online learning are poor internet connectivity and interruptions in the learning process due to the ongoing war.

### Challenges with online education



The survey indicates that a significant number of parents have not ruled out sending their children to local schools—one-third of parents with children currently pursuing online education indicated they would consider transitioning to a local school if additional spaces became available in the Ukrainian sector, while **28%** stated they would do so if they manage to register. Approximately a quarter (**24%**) attributed their decision to continue with online education to their lack of certainty over whether they intended to remain in Georgia. Notably, **83%** of parents whose children are engaged in online education express a keen interest in their children learning the Georgian language.

Initially prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic and now further complicated by the conflict, the shift to online learning poses additional challenges. Parents are particularly concerned about the prolonged adverse psychological effects of online learning aggravated by the stress related to ongoing war. This might be an additional motivation for parents to enrol their children in local schools.

**Parent's concerns and children's wellbeing:** Beyond education needs parents are also concerned about the general wellbeing of children, citing difficulties with the integration process (**29%**), mental health issues (**19%**) and a lack of extracurricular activities (**13%**).

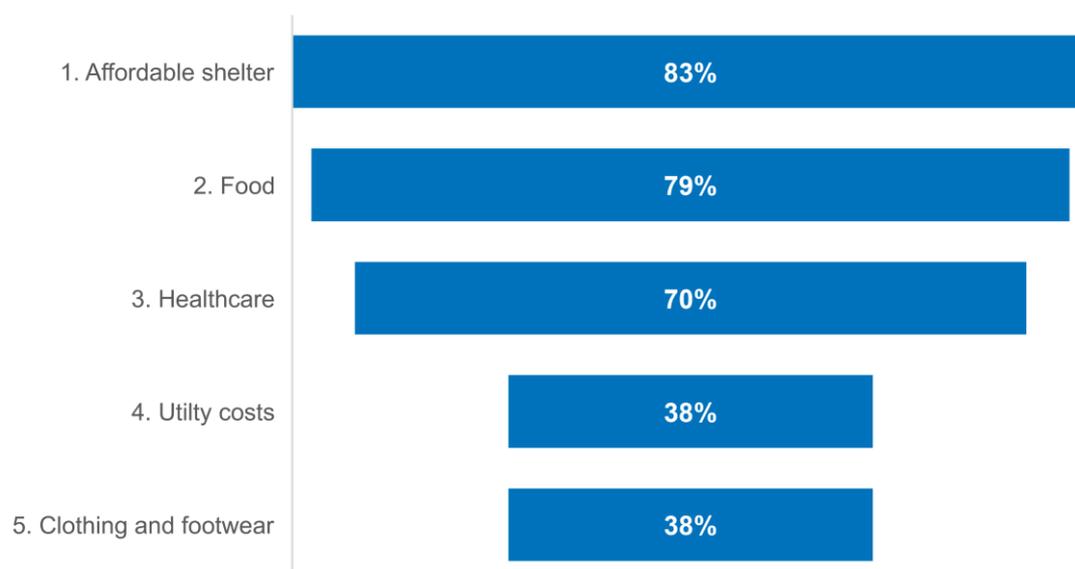
- **Integration process** – Difficulties related to integration in the local community is a major concern for most parents, especially families who have arrived recently or whose children are pursuing online education. They observe that children often face limited opportunities to interact with locals and make new friends.

- **Mental health concerns** – Some parents have observed that their children are facing psychological challenges due to the war, and these challenges are exacerbated by online education and lack of social integration in Georgia.
- **Extracurricular activities** – While respondents are generally aware of kindergarten and school services, there is a notable lack of information regarding extracurricular activities, whether paid or free. Parents express a strong desire for free music classes, sports and other activities for children.
- **Children with special needs** – Parents highlight the challenge of accessing services for children with autism and Down syndrome. They report that neither free nor paid services are available for them because of these services have a very limited capacity. There were also concerns about the level of protection in inclusive classes for children with special needs or behavioral issues, indicating the need for enhanced support from school staff and authorities.
- **Georgian language classes** – Language learning, especially Georgian, holds significant importance for refugees from Ukraine. Parents stress there is limited information regarding available language classes and highlight there is a need to make these classes more accessible. They believe that offering additional language classes and promoting Georgian language will lead to higher enrolment rates in local educational institutions in the future.



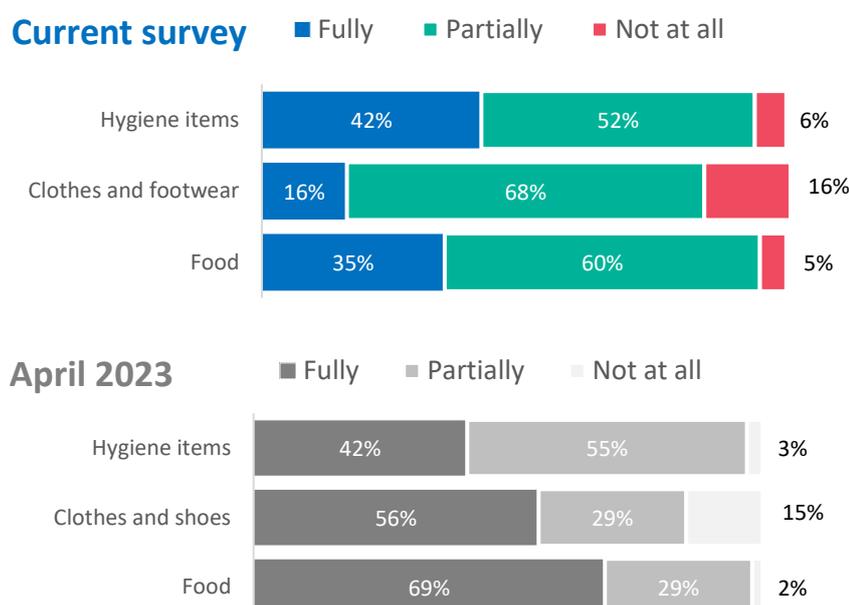
## 7. Basic Needs

**Priority needs:** When asked to prioritize their top needs, participants reiterated the priorities that were identified in the April survey.



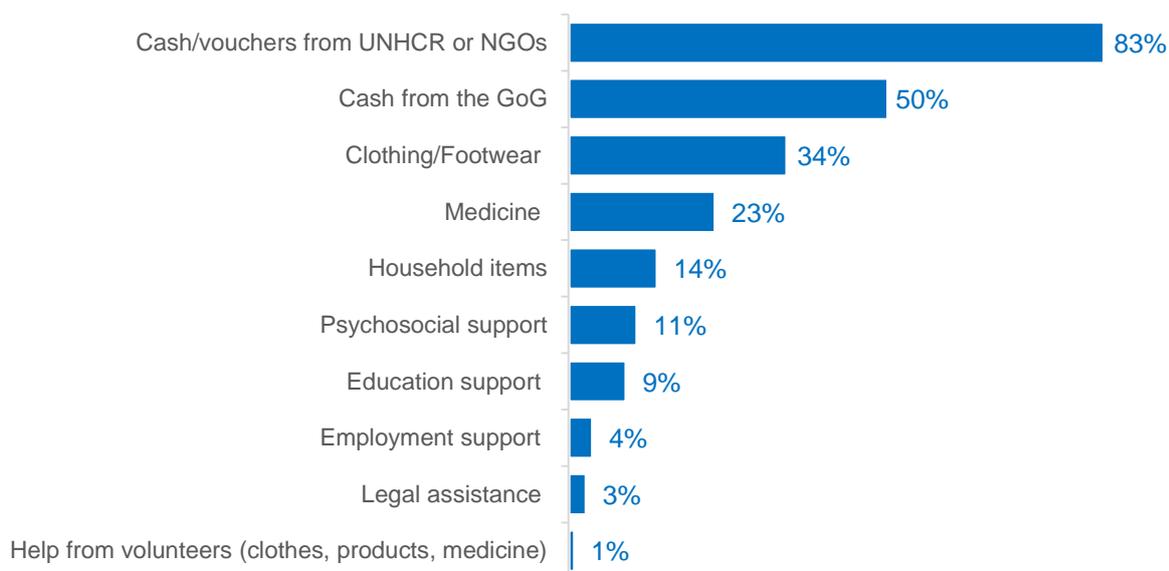
*\*Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.*

**Ability to meet households' needs:** Participants were also asked about their ability to meet their families' needs for food, clothing and hygiene items, and the results suggest that while there is a higher number of refugees presently renting accommodation, a greater percentage report insufficient funds for food compared to the April survey (**65%** versus **31%**). This underscores the critical need for sustained economic support.



**Assistance provided:** **Seventy-two per cent** of the survey respondents have received some type of assistance, including financial aid, since arriving in Georgia. Out of this number, **83%** received cash or voucher assistance from UNHCR, World Vision, CARE Caucasus, ASB, PIN and other non-governmental organizations, and **50%** received aid from the state (not including free public healthcare).

### Type of assistance received



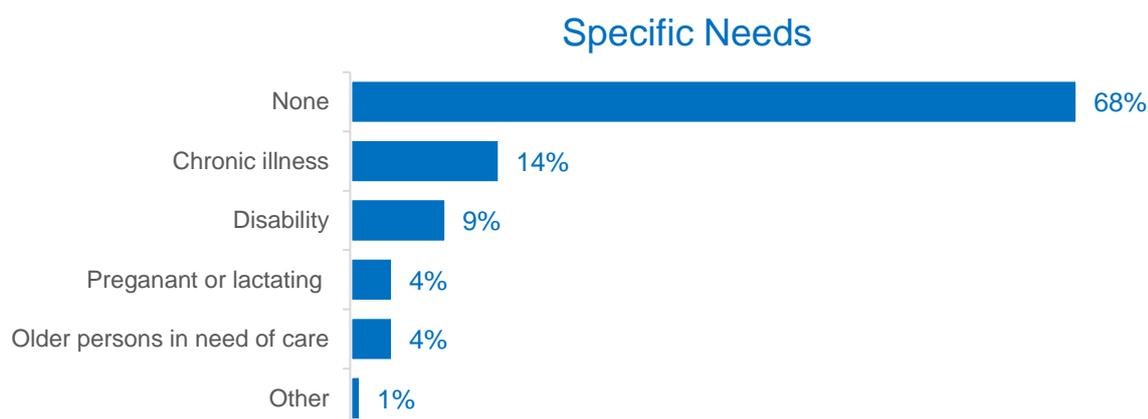
*\*Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.*

**Feedback from the community:** The percentage of individuals lacking information on available services and assistance has significantly dropped from **36%** in the previous survey to just **18%**. Regarding satisfaction with the assistance or services provided, insights from Key Informant Interviews indicate that organizations typically receive positive feedback from Ukrainians and negative feedback is scarce, even though organizations are usually receptive to constructive criticism. Key Informants suggest that Ukrainians may hesitate to provide negative feedback out of concern that it might affect their chances to receive assistance or services in the future.



## 8. Healthcare, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

**Specific needs:** Around **30%** of respondents reported having at least one household member with a specific need, as per the breakdown below:



**Access to healthcare:** Nearly half (**47%**) of respondents are able to access medical services upon need. This is made possible by Decree N387 of the Government of Georgia, granting Ukrainians access to various healthcare services. Healthcare needs are also addressed through the support of various organizations. Ukrainians holding humanitarian status receive care from the public healthcare system on an equal footing with Georgian citizens.

A number also reported facing challenges accessing healthcare, with **15%** indicating that they were not able to receive services on a regular basis and **14%** reporting an inability to access them altogether. According to more than two-thirds of respondents (**71%**), financial constraints are the primary barrier to accessing the services or for the procurement of medicine. A considerable percentage of those surveyed (**32%**) state that the main challenge in accessing healthcare is the lack of free services for chronic diseases. This was also confirmed through focus group discussions, where participants stated that they tend to avoid visits to a doctor unless absolutely necessary, underscoring the significant burden healthcare has on the financial situation of some respondents.

This concern is especially pronounced for individuals in need of diagnostic tests, which often entails visits to multiple doctors, and for families with older persons, children or persons with chronic illnesses. Despite being eligible for free, basic medical services offered by the government, the majority of respondents report not being able to utilize them or not having sufficient information.

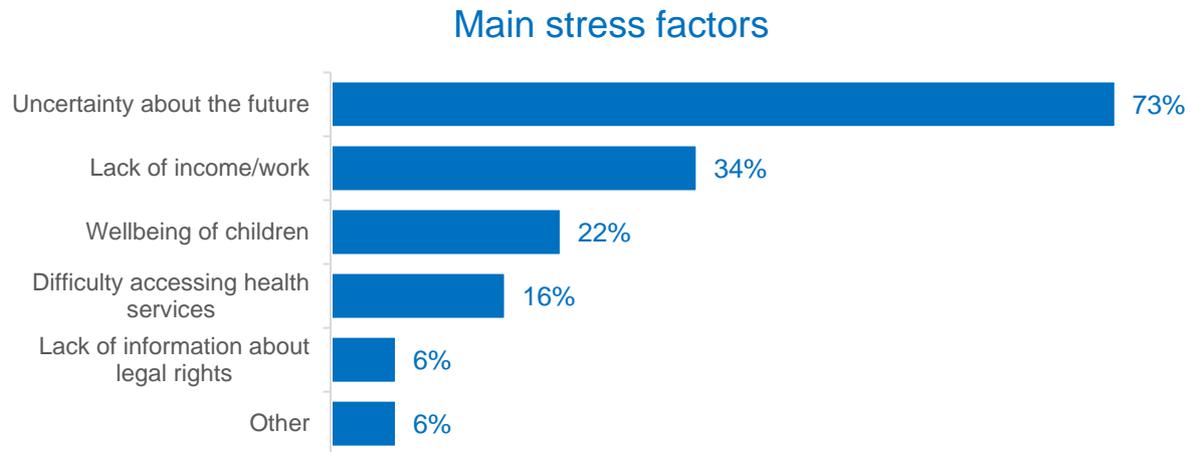
Most respondents with a disability, or those with family members who are disabled, hold an official status, obtained in Ukraine, attesting to their disability. Georgian legislation restricts

disability determination procedures exclusively to citizens and permanent residents and only those who were granted this status in Georgia can access relevant services. When urgent medical treatment was needed, this policy compelled many families to return to Ukraine for healthcare services.

**Lack of information and concerns about quality:** Participants in the focus group discussions highlighted not only the financial burden of healthcare but raised concerns about the quality of services offered. Some mentioned having to consult with multiple doctors without receiving a clear diagnosis or effective resolution to their health issues. Moreover, participants expressed their uncertainty about where to find reliable information on the quality of clinics and doctors' qualifications to make informed decisions and avoid such situations.

The discussions further showed a lack of general awareness regarding available health services and how to access them among those residing outside the capital. Because of the information gap, many respondents rely on the support of NGOs to access healthcare, but some are not even aware of this possibility.

**Mental health and psychosocial support:** When participants were asked to select their main reason for stress, the results were the following:



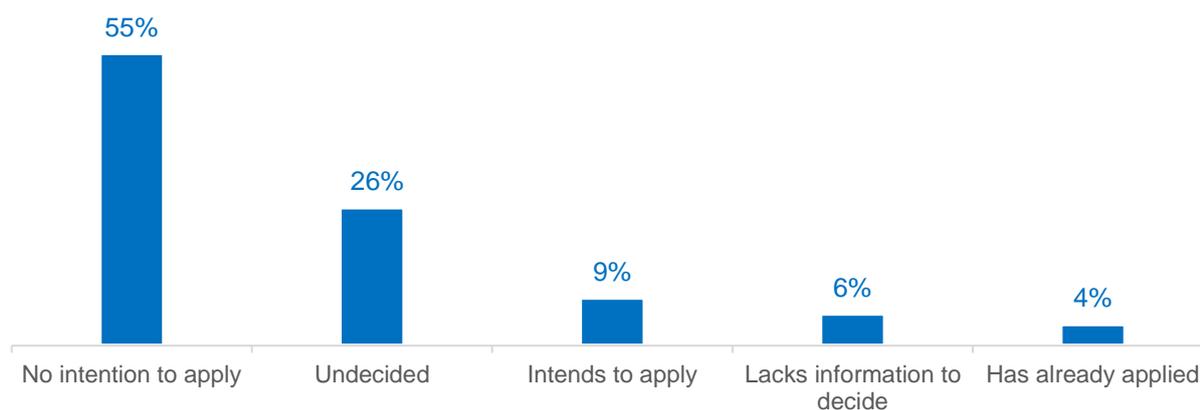
Out of the surveyed respondents only **35%** were aware of the available mental health services. Among those who were aware, **26%** felt that these services do not cater for their needs adequately.

According to respondents, special treatment is crucial for youth impacted by the war, as well as for women who experience anxiety and stress due to displacement, unemployment and/or the responsibility of caring for family members.

## 9. Asylum and Safety

**International protection:** When participants were asked about their plans to apply for international protection in Georgia, the results were the following:

### Intentions to apply for asylum in Georgia



Among those who do not plan to seek asylum, **40%** believe they will soon return to Ukraine, while **19%** lack information about the possibility of doing so.

**Safety and security:** When asked about the dangers experienced by Ukrainians in Georgia, an overwhelming majority (**91%**) indicated that they have not encountered any threats and feel secure. Among the minority who reported facing threats, discrimination was cited as the primary issue. Additionally, those inclined to address this matter predominantly chose to report it to government officials.



## Drawing Conclusions from the Survey Results

According to year-end data from 2023, the number of Ukrainians who have entered Georgia since the start of the war in Ukraine remains at 24,000 individuals, unchanged from when the previous survey was released in April 2023 but slightly down on overall figures for 2022. This time around, the survey results indicate an increase in uncertainty among the Ukrainian refugee population regarding their continued stay in Georgia. Even as the war enters a third year, the majority of Ukrainians remain hopeful about returning to Ukraine. There has been a slight decrease in the number planning to stay in Georgia for the next six months. The survey also shows that one-fifth of Ukrainians have traveled back to Ukraine at least once since the start of the war has increased.

**Accommodation and basic needs:** Accommodation continues to be a significant challenge for Ukrainians in Georgia, with more of them renting accommodation since the last survey. Independent living is a positive trend which needs continued support, since it also appears that high rental costs have led many to allocate a substantial portion of their income to accommodation expenses, hindering their ability to meet other basic needs. The survey shows a decline in the capacity of Ukrainians to afford essentials: the percentage of those able to fully cover their food requirements has halved and the percentage of those capable of meeting their clothing needs has decreased to a third of what it was in the previous survey.

The majority of the surveyed individuals have received some type of assistance at some stage either from UNHCR or from non-governmental organizations, while half also received aid from the state.

**Employment and entrepreneurship:** This survey aimed to delve deeper into the areas of employment and entrepreneurship. The percentage of employed Ukrainians has shown a positive trend, nearly tripling since the first survey and doubling since the second. Interestingly, fewer people have regular jobs, while self-employment has increased. The primary obstacle to securing well-paid jobs is lack of proficiency in the Georgian language, alongside caretaker responsibilities which restrict the possibilities for many to engage in full-time employment. The majority of Ukrainians are now interested in learning the Georgian language and show interest in professional and vocational training. While a third of those surveyed tried to start small businesses, 90% said they lacked access to loans or capital. Those who managed to start businesses did so without bank loans, and most did so without any external support.

**Education and child wellbeing:** The survey included an expanded focus on education and the needs of Ukrainian children in Georgia. There was a preference for sending children to Ukrainian or Russian sector schools, with a smaller percentage of parents opting for the Georgian sector. In contrast, for kindergarten-aged children, Georgian kindergartens are preferred. The vast majority of Ukrainians encountered no difficulties in registering their children in local educational institutions. Half of respondents were pleased with the quality of school education. For some, access to kindergartens is a continuing challenge due to the lack of the available space.

A small percentage of parents still choose online education for their children, appreciating its quality and viewing it as a way to support and remain connected to their Ukrainian schools. There is, however, a strong interest among these parents in their children learning the Georgian language.

Parents identified social integration as a major challenge for their children. Mental health issues have been exacerbated by the ongoing war. These issues were acknowledged to be particularly challenging for children engaged in online education. The survey further underscores the need for psychosocial support programmes tailored for children and expanded extracurricular activities providing opportunities for social interaction, especially for those pursuing online education. This would improve psychological wellbeing and lay the basis for inclusion and eventually, better integration in the local community. Although there are a number of state and non-state actors offering psychological support services to Ukrainians, there is a lack of awareness about available services among the community. Parents with children with special needs face additional difficulties as they cannot access either free or paid services due to the limited capacity of those services.

**Access to healthcare:** This continues to be a significant issue for over two-third of surveyed individuals, primarily due to financial constraints. Primary healthcare is not covered in the decree providing access to healthcare for Ukrainians, and the absence of free services for those with chronic diseases presents a substantial challenge for Ukrainians. Persons with disabilities who have an official status recognized in Ukraine are not entitled to access relevant services in Georgia. The focus group discussions also underscored a lack of information about available healthcare services as an additional barrier to accessing these services. We also know that service-providers are not all clear on what will be compensated and what may not be, relying on a referral and approval system which may give negative decisions.

**Refugee and humanitarian status:** Regarding intentions to apply for international protection in Georgia, through which around 500 individuals have already received or are in the process of receiving humanitarian status, more than half of the respondents indicated no intention to do so, with the rest either undecided or unaware of the option. Only a small percentage have decided they will apply for asylum. These findings align with statistics showing that since February 2022, the majority of Ukrainians in Georgia have not applied for asylum, preferring to stay under the visa-free arrangement. However, the international protection system is a viable option for facilitated access to state services and legal stay within the country.

Notwithstanding ongoing gaps in knowledge of available services in the area of psychological and health services, outreach and information-sharing efforts of all parties involved in the Ukraine response appear to be reasonably effective, as the results show that the percentage of those who lack information about the available services has halved since the last survey.

To end on a positive note, the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians feel safe in Georgia, reporting no concerns relating to physical safety or discrimination since their arrival.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the prevailing uncertainty among Ukrainians regarding their long-term stay in Georgia, it is important that the focus remains on short- to medium-term interventions that assure the basic needs of these individuals are met, contributing to their well-being and stability during this period. Ukrainians are great self-organisers and have strong community networks, significantly contributing to outreach, information-sharing and psychological wellbeing through mutual support. Offering spaces and opportunities for community activities and supporting the initiatives of newly established refugee-led CSOs are having a significant positive impact on refugee wellbeing. The international community should additionally contribute in the following priority areas:

**1) Education and child wellbeing:** More support and encouragement is needed for parents, children and teachers to enroll in face-to-face education and co-curricular activities appropriate to the age group. Opportunities for social interaction and educational engagement even while pursuing the Ukrainian curriculum online should be explored and supported. While enrolment rates in school are promising, there remains a large subset of children not engaged in any face-to-face education modality whose mental health and wellbeing may be at risk. For younger children enrolment in local schools should be particularly encouraged. Support to the Ministry of Education to strengthen the system for refugee children, including appropriate language and psychosocial support, would particularly benefit children from Ukraine living far from the Ukrainian sector schools in central Tbilisi and Batumi.

**2) Employment and entrepreneurship:** It is encouraging that the employment rate is increasing. The limited job market accessible to Ukrainians and the significant interest in small business and self-employment highlights the importance of promoting both employment opportunities (including the enablers such as reorientation or upgrading of skills and Georgian language learning) and business education and support for start-ups (including access to financial services, particularly access to loans). Enhancing financial wellbeing is key to ensuring that Ukrainians are in a better position to afford accommodation and meet their basic needs. Approximately half of those surveyed who were unemployed said they would be unable to accept job offers because of family responsibilities. Childcare and support for single parents and full-time caregivers are important enablers for self-reliance.

**3) Social and financial assistance:** This continues to be needed from the international community to assist the most vulnerable families and individuals, complementing the limited assistance provided by the state. While the high rate of independent living is encouraging for the longer term, high living costs including rent and healthcare are a major challenge for many, especially those with full-time caring responsibilities, older persons or those with specific health or disability issues. It is crucial that effective targeting criteria and case management is in place to ensure that the assistance reaches the most vulnerable households.

