

# REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN GEORGIA PROFILES, INTENTIONS AND NEEDS



**A REPORT BASED ON A SURVEY CONDUCTED IN A PARTNERSHIP BY  
WORLD VISION AND UNHCR**

**April 2023**

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# CONTEXT

Since the launch of the military offensive by the Russian Federation in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, more than **8.1 million** Ukrainians have been forced to flee to neighboring countries and been offered temporary protection by all EU countries, while an additional estimated **5.3 million** people have been displaced internally. As of end-March 2023, some **24 000 Ukrainians who arrived in Georgia as a consequence of the war, remain**. UNHCR estimates that a similar number will remain in Georgia for the remainder of the year.

Due to Georgia's geographical location and the challenges for some to exit Ukraine from the west, many Ukrainians arrive in Georgia from heavily devastated, non-government-controlled areas of Ukraine via the Dariali (Larsi) border crossing point with Russia. For many, this route was their only choice.

In March 2023, the Government of Georgia extended the **visa-free stay for citizens of Ukraine for up to 2 years**, and processed asylum applications of over 500 Ukrainians in an accelerated manner. In addition to the simplified procedures in place to enter and remain in the country, the Government has also extended financial assistance to new arrivals as well as issued a decree allowing Ukrainians to receive a number of healthcare services and emergency treatment for free.

**From UNHCR's perspective, Ukrainians who fled due to the conflict in Ukraine and/or are unable to return, are considered refugees.** As such, UNHCR, alongside World Vision and other partners have been involved in providing assistance to refugees from Ukraine. Not all needs of refugees from Ukraine have been met however, and the cost of living, especially **rent, has proven to be unexpectedly high**, due to the influx of also many Russians arriving after the start of the conflict. This survey explores the intentions and needs of 300 families currently living in Georgia.

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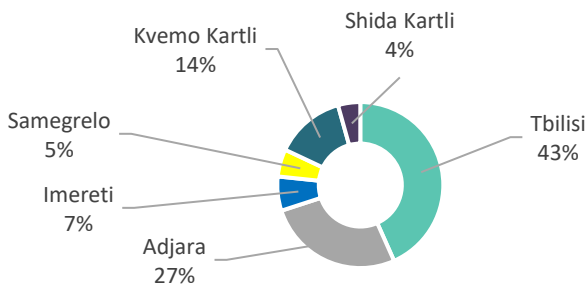
# METHODOLOGY

After a 6-month interval since the first Multi Sector Needs Assessment, this is the second survey executed by UNHCR and World Vision in partnership, serving to identify the primary needs and priorities of refugees from Ukraine, as well as to obtain an evidence-based situation overview to tailor/adapt program interventions accordingly in Georgia.

The questionnaire used was prepared by World Vision Georgia in partnership with UNHCR and designed to capture the situation and challenges of refugees from Ukraine in Georgia. Trained enumerators collected the data using Kobo Toolbox. The survey covered demographic and household information, priority needs and access to services, protection, safety, education, prior employment, children's needs and protection, humanitarian accountability and other related questions.

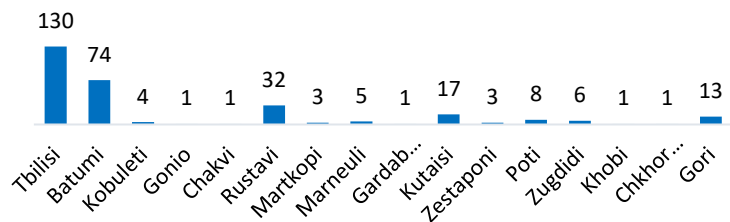
Interviews were conducted in different target regions: Tbilisi, Imereti, Kvemo Kartli, Adjara, Samegrelo and covered **300 unique** and anonymous respondents aged 18 and over. From each household, only 1 person participated. As the average household size is 3 persons, the survey thus assesses **the needs and intentions of up to 900 refugees from Ukraine in Georgia**.

## Locations of data collection



In the surveying process, both face to face and telephone interviews were conducted (65% of interviews were conducted face to face while 35% of respondents were reached by phone).

## Locations of data collection by cities



Respondents were identified in selected locations and asked for their consent to be interviewed. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and contained up to 90 questions.

The survey respondents were reached through the databases of UNHCR, World Vision Georgia, partner organizations and the State IDP Agency. In addition, the so-called snowball methodology and personal contacts were also used, especially in Adjara and Kvemo Kartli, as the enumerators were Ukrainians. **Special attention was paid to ensuring a gender balance and encouraging male participation, but men expressed less interest to take part.**

**Three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also held in Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi.** In these discussions, 32 people were engaged. The majority of participants were from newly occupied regions in Ukraine. Only six participants entered and live in Georgia alone. Others have at least one family member, usually a child. The discussions were led through a semi-structured approach to achieve active participation and in-depth discussion.



**Methodological limitations:**

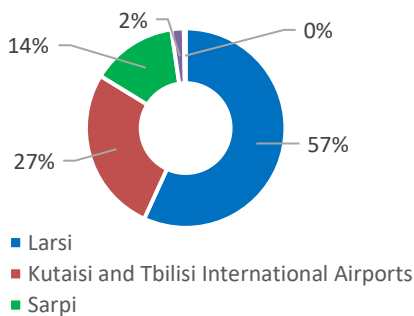
- The assessment was conducted in February - March, 2023, and the reflected results may therefore change over time depending on a wide variety of factors.
- The research was conducted in specific cities and urban areas of Georgia, hence the results may not necessarily represent the opinions of those living in other regions and rural areas in the country.

- The majority of the respondents were reached from the databases provided by World Vision Georgia, UNHCR, partner organization and the IDP agency. Some of them had already received assistance from different organizations, which created a bias in terms of participation and the level of sincerity. The sample may represent a group of Ukrainians who have more access to information and services and a section of the population who have felt the need to apply for financial assistance and are thus presumably more vulnerable.

# DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS & DEMOGRAPHICS

More than half of the respondents come from the east of Ukraine, many from areas heavily affected by the conflict, from newly liberated or areas out of control of the Ukrainian authorities. Escape routes include the Dariali (Larsi) border point, which was used by more than half of the interviewees, Kutaisi and Tbilisi International Airports 27%, 14% from Sarpi, 2% from Batumi International Airport and 0.3% from the Sadakh?lo/Border with Armenia.

**Entries by border crossing point**



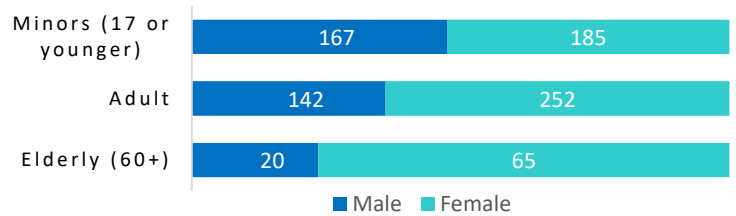
For many of those that had to leave Ukraine through Russia, the journey was filled with stress and difficulties, some having to leave without necessary documentation or belongings.

The majority of respondents of the survey (84%) were female and more than half were between the age of 30 and 40; 12% were between 24-29, and only 1% were 70 or over. As for the focus group participants, two thirds (65%) were female. Households were mainly comprised of women and children as illustrated in the chart on the right.

**Places of origin**



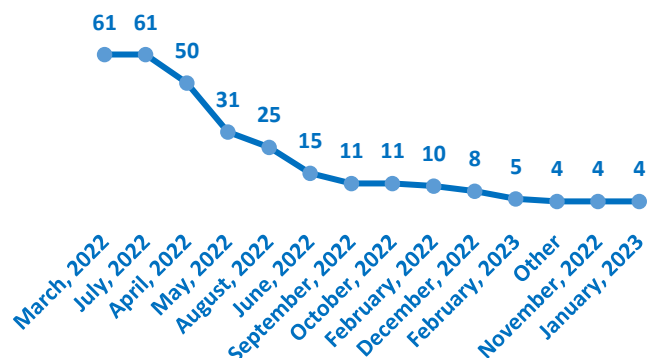
**Household composition of survey respondents**



Of those surveyed, 56% have been separated from family members. The majority of those staying behind in Ukraine are elderly or military age males. The reasons for separation were martial law, unwillingness to leave home, inability to leave due to health issues or lack of finances to do so. Only 10% of respondents noted that they still expect family members to join them from Ukraine.

Respondents chose Georgia for several reasons, Most commonly it was due to Georgia being the easiest option and the one closest to Ukraine, having friends of family here, the languages spoken, due to work and accommodation opportunities, cheaper price of living and other reasons. Some of those who fled to Europe at the beginning while accommodation and different benefits were being offered, have also decided to come to Georgia as these programs ceased and Georgia seemed cheaper to live in compared to other countries.

**Date of arrival in Georgia**



# SURVEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE



## Intentions

**45%**  
plan to stay in the country for at least 6 months while 86% are sure they will stay at least 3 months.



## Family in Ukraine

**10%**  
expects family members to join them in Georgia.



## Travel back home

**9%**  
of all respondents had been back to Ukraine at least once since their initial departure.



## Border crossing

**57%**  
of respondents arrived in Georgia through Russia.



## Place of residence

**88%**  
of respondents resided in Ukraine before arriving in Georgia. For others, the last place of residence was Poland, Russia, Turkey and other countries.



## Family separation

**56%**  
of respondents have been separated from immediate family members.



## Citizenship

**97%**  
are citizens of Ukraine.



## Documentation

**20%**  
of respondents mentioned that some or all documents are missing, mostly international biometric/non-biometric passports.





### Gender

**84%**

of all respondents are women.



### Elderly

**10%**

of respondents are over 60.



### Education

**59%**

of respondents had a university level education.



### Persons with specific needs

**48%**

of survey respondent households include at least one person with a chronic illness, disability, or pregnant/lactating women.



### Priority needs

Top priority needs named by respondents:

1. Affordable accommodation
2. Food
3. Healthcare/Medicine
4. Covering utility costs
5. Clothing



### Information needs

**36%**

of respondents felt that they do not receive enough information about available assistance and services.

# KEY FINDINGS

## 1. INTENTIONS

### ONE YEAR INTO THE CONFLICT, UNCERTAINTY REMAINS HIGH AMONG UKRAINIANS

Nearly half of participants said they have plans to stay in Georgia for at least the next 6 months and 86% of respondents were sure they would not move to another country within the next 3 months. Those intending to move to another country mentioned Germany as the main destination, due to available benefits and support there, only 1.6% had concrete plans to return to Ukraine. 90% of respondents do not expect that their family members will join them in Georgia within the next 3 months.

According to the survey results, 47% of participants find it difficult to determine how long they intend to stay in Georgia. It was also clear during the focus group discussions that future plans are a difficult topic to discuss, as uncertainty still prevents participants from clearly defining or planning their future. According to the UNHCR Regional Intentions Report #3 from February 2023, around 66% of Ukrainians express a desire to return home one day. The fact that the majority would like to return is also clear from the discussions, however they realize that this will not be possible in the nearest future and even if the war ends, it will take some time to put these plans into practice.



*It is very naive to talk about plans, we thought we would be back in a month, but still we're here and waiting for the territory to be liberated.*

- FGD participant

*Children are crying and want to go home. Although we are here with relatives, he studies online in Ukraine and attends classes there. They are mostly at home. My son cries every day; he wants to go home.*

- FGD participant

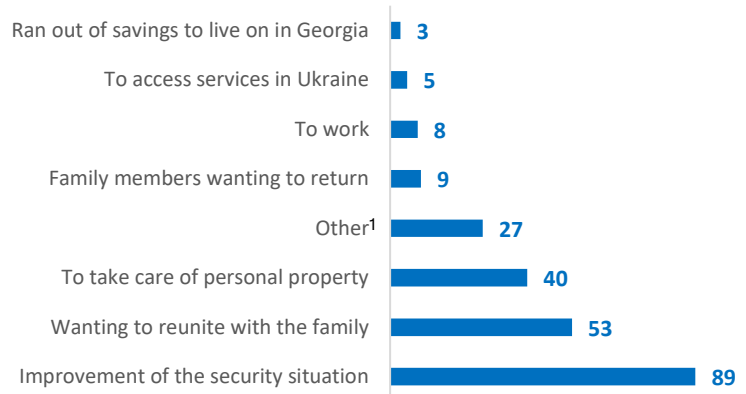


42% of the respondents state that their accommodation in Ukraine has been partially or fully damaged/destroyed. Partly due to this finding, 91% of the participants have not returned to Ukraine since leaving. 7% on the other hand note they have visited once and 2% have visited several times, which in total is a slightly higher number than the 4% finding in Autumn of 2022 during the first assessment.

Those who returned at least once explained that the reason for travel was to visit relatives/help them leave, to gather personal belongings and documents, and to check the condition of their houses.

It is also of interest that despite the damage, in case of returning to Ukraine, 44% of respondents hope to return to their old houses. If in case participants returned to Ukraine, over half would return permanently and only 7% thought they may never return to Ukraine.

#### Main reasons for wanting to return to Ukraine permanently



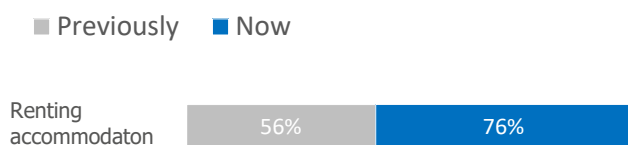
<sup>1</sup> Most of respondents who selected the option "other" in the chart above noted that the main reason for wanting to return to Ukraine was because it was their homeland, and they would return once the hostilities ceased.



## 2. ACCOMMODATION

### A THIRD OF RESPONDENTS SPEND NEARLY ALL OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT ALONE

According to the results of the survey, **76%** of respondents live in rented accommodation, a significant increase from the **56%** in autumn 2022, perhaps indicating a slight increase in levels of self-reliance.



As for the remaining participants:

- **11%** share space with friends/relatives/locals
- **8%** live in a shelter in Tbilisi or Martkopi
- **5%** own a house or an apartment.

**One third of those renting flats mentioned that they spend 90% - 100% of their household income on rent.** During the focus group discussions, access to affordable accommodation was also named as the main concern. The majority of refugees are unemployed, making it difficult for them to make ends meet.

**68%** of respondents reported that they had been living in their current accommodation for more than 6 months already. **47%** see no time limit to their current dwelling arrangements, while **35% of respondents reported that they do not know how long they would be able to stay in their current accommodation.** **8.4%** mentioned that they will need to leave their current accommodation due to financial difficulties or moving away from Georgia. Half of the individuals renting do not have a formal rental agreement, which leads to certain vulnerability risks.

According to the survey, **nearly one third of Ukrainians had had to change their accommodation at least once since arriving in Georgia.** Some of the cases were due to moving out of the government provided hotels or privately subsidized accommodations, while others simply had to find a cheaper place to live due to the sharp increase in rental prices.

Even though it is a small segment of the population, additional attention should be paid to those still living in temporary shelters and unable to transition to a more sustainable type of accommodation. Most of these residents should be encouraged and supported to start living independently. **Half of respondents living in shelters noted having an income of 0-400 GEL,** which is usually not enough to cover the price of rent, let alone other needs. Cash to cover rental costs will likely be needed for those with such acute vulnerabilities.



Several families of refugees from Ukraine sharing a two-bedroom apartment in Batumi, Georgia. March 2023 © Lasha Mumladze

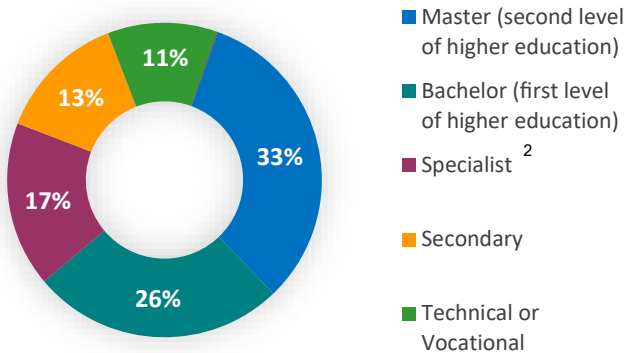


# 3. INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

## 77% OF RESPONDENTS ARE UNEMPLOYED

59% of survey respondents have a university level education. However, the requirement of Georgian language for qualified employment and the general lack of work opportunities has made it difficult for refugees from Ukraine to find jobs.

### Level of Education



While some employment opportunities appear to be available, salaries often do not correspond to qualifications or expectations. The language barrier, lack of child support services, including kindergartens and other challenges remain.



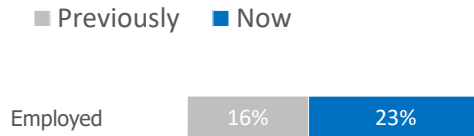
*Personally, I am physically unable to start working because I am alone with a child. Even if you take her to the kindergarten, sometimes they call saying that they don't work because there is no electricity etc. It is very difficult to work with a child.*

- FGD participant



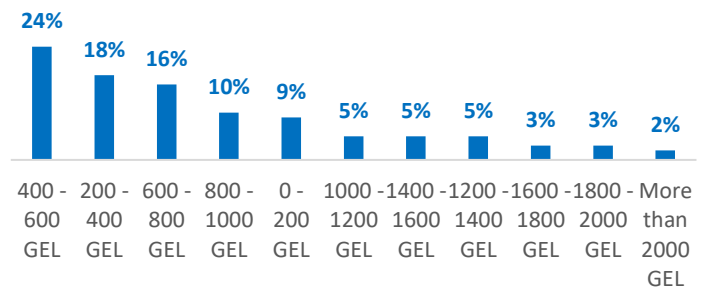
Employment and low wages were considered as the main challenge by the participants of the focus groups, many pointed out that most available jobs are in low-skilled and low-paying occupations. They are disappointed not to be able to use their previous experience and qualifications.

Only 23% of respondents are employed, 5% of who are working remotely for an employer in Ukraine. More than half of respondents report having been unemployed in Ukraine before the start of war. Of those with employment, often it is only one family member able to find work in Georgia.



The main sources of household income participants mentioned were the following: employment, cash assistance, remittances, loans/credits and pensions.

### TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Considering that most of this income goes to paying rent, very little is left to meet other basic needs such as food, hygiene supplies and clothes. The general lack of income remains a major stress factor for 68% of respondents.

Out of those who managed to find a job in Georgia, 70% did it independently, 27% were helped by friends/relatives and 3% mentioned that they were supported by local municipalities.

When it comes to interest in engaging in an entrepreneurial activity in Georgia, the majority (89%) were not interested, which is surprising given the level of interest expressed in business support schemes offered by INGOs and other actors. Correspondingly, only 9.5% demonstrated interest and only 1.5% had already pursued a business activity. The main challenges in this regard were the lack of knowledge or financial sources/start-up capital.

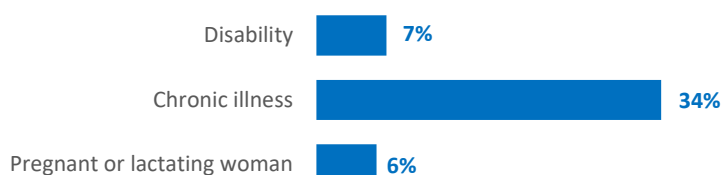
<sup>2</sup> Specialist was indicated by persons whose education was between technical/vocational education and a university level (Bachelor's) education. Such education varies in ranges of 2-4 years.

# 4. HEALTHCARE & SPECIFIC NEEDS

## HEALTHCARE REMAINS A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR UKRAINIANS

Up to 34% of respondents reported that they have a household member with a serious and chronic illness, 7% reported disability, while pregnant/lactating women comprise 6% of respondent households. Of the families that have a member with a disability, in 86% of cases the individuals are in possession of an official documentation/disability card.

### RESPONDENTS WITH AT LEAST ONE FAMILY MEMBER AT HEIGHTENED RISK



In the month before the interview, 37% of households reported having a health condition for which they needed medical services or medicine, but for 89% of them it was difficult to afford it. As many are not able to afford healthcare insurance and do not have a humanitarian status in Georgia, they are not included in the Universal Healthcare Programme and as a consequence expenditure for health purposes remains high.



*If you don't have insurance, everything is very expensive. My mom has various health problems and getting her to a doctor, buying all the medications and keeping her health under control is very difficult.*

- FGD participant



The psychological condition of refugees from Ukraine is especially important as the war in Ukraine and its impact on the lives of the population pose high risks to mental health and well-being. For most of the adult participants, the stress stems from the uncertainty that Ukrainians have to live with. Additionally, main sources of stress are financial instability, managing the daily needs, travelling with children, lack of access to health services, limited ability to communicate with loved ones and other factors.

58% of respondents are not aware of mental health services and how to access them. Out of the 35% that mentioned having sufficient knowledge, 3% mentioned that mental health and psychological services were not tailored to their needs.



*The emotional condition will not be good until the war is over. Kharkov, for example, is bombed every day, our relatives and friends are still there and suffer. As long as there is war, nothing will help us.*

- FGD participant



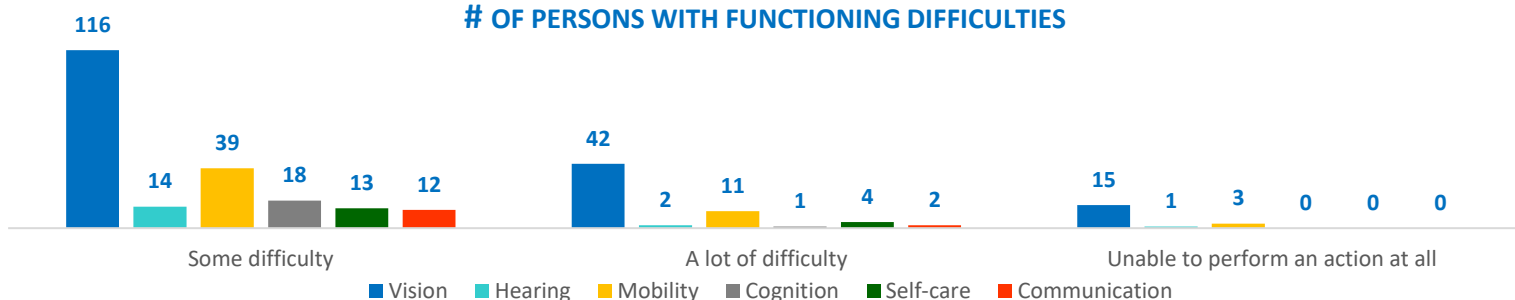
During the focus group discussions, it was also noted that adults and children with disabilities are often unable to access relevant state services, while private services are not affordable. These households may therefore have to deal with specific needs of family members themselves, which then reduces the possibility of employment and the ability to become self-reliant even further.

## Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS)

During the survey, respondents also had to make an in-depth assessment of their and family members' functioning levels according to the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) (assessing specific functions like vision, hearing, mobility, cognition, self-care, and communication). Functional capabilities were evaluated in detail, and the results are as follows:

Out of 300 households, there were 57 persons who experienced a lot of difficulty with vision or were not able to see at all, 3 persons had similar issues with hearing, 15 with mobility, 1 person with cognition, 4 persons with self-care and 2 with communication.

### # OF PERSONS WITH FUNCTIONING DIFFICULTIES





# 5. NEEDS AND WELLBEING

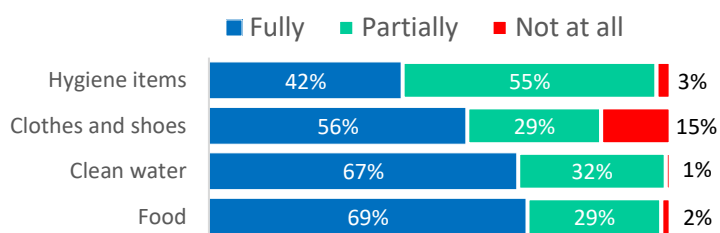
## PRIORITY NEEDS & CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN

Participants ranked their top 5 priority needs as follows:

1. Affordable housing,
2. Food,
3. Healthcare/Medicine,
4. Covering utility costs,
5. Clothing.

Other needs reported included clothing, employment, access to education, information about services, child-care services and psychological support.

When participants were asked how well they were able to meet their families' current needs for clean water, food, clothes and hygiene items, they answered the following:



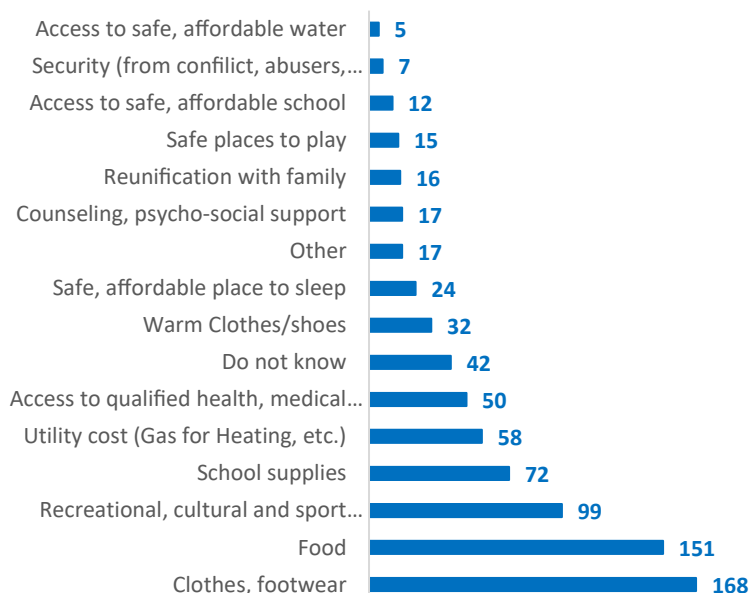
The survey shows that there still are a number of refugees from Ukraine who can only partially cope with the situation and some even being completely unable to meet their basic household needs.

Women are the majority of respondents of this survey and the main challenges they face in addition to urgent needs are taking care of children and other family members (53%), employment difficulties (37%), dealing with psychological problems (30%) and in few cases coping with discrimination because of their age when trying to find employment (5%).

## CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND CONCERNS

Regarding the immediate needs of children, the following were noted as the main priorities:

### Immediate needs of children over the next 1-2 weeks (multiple choice)



When parents were asked about the major concerns facing children: 41% of respondents mentioned difficulties with the integration process, 22% were concerned about mental health and 21% about the lack of out of school activities. During the focus group discussions, it appeared that the process of children's integration into schools shows positive signs, however the activities outside school which would help bring the children closer and start new relationships are lacking.

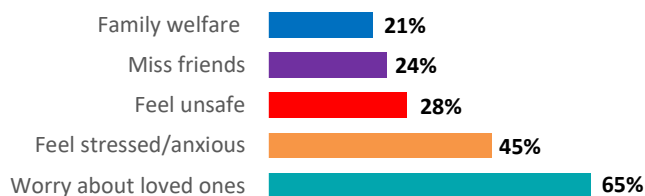
65% of respondents have school-aged/pre-school-aged children (3-18 years) in their households. Out of those who have school-aged/preschool-aged children, 73% of respondents reported that for the school year 2022/2023, they are enrolled in local schools/kindergartens. Out of those children enrolled in local schools/kindergartens, 31% have access to necessary educational materials/stationary items only partially or not at all, while 55% have partial or no access to uniforms/shoes.

In most cases, the children are enrolled in the Ukrainian (63%), followed by Georgian (27%) and Russian sectors (10%). As expressed in the Focus Group Discussions, a very small number study in the English language sector in Tbilisi. In cases where children were not enrolled, the reason given was the preference to continue with online/remote learning in Ukraine due to higher quality of education or plans to leave soon. Some respondents also cannot afford kindergartens and for several households school was too far away from their dwellings. 8% of children in respondent households do not have access to any electronic devices.

Parents believe that children are mostly well protected and generally safe but mention that there is not enough information about the response mechanisms available when it comes to child abuse and the social protection system in Georgia. Additionally, there were 3 cases of children of under 16 who felt the need or were encouraged by families to contribute to the household income.

Parents were also asked about the concerns and worries expressed by children themselves and the results are illustrated as follows:

### Concerns expressed by children (multiple choice)



## INFORMATION NEEDS

Some 36% of respondents still report they are not receiving enough information about available assistance and services, (a small decrease from 43% in the previous survey). The remaining 47% felt the opposite while 17% did not know or could not answer.

Regarding access to information, during the focus group discussions participants believed that they were mostly not being provided with relevant information in an up to date and timely manner. As a concrete example of this was the fact that some participants learned about key services from others during the focus group discussions. General dissatisfaction was also expressed regarding the phone hotlines as some mentioned having to wait for hours to receive the desired information.

Some felt that information sharing is not well organized and that there is no one single place where they could receive up to date and correct information. As an example, it could be noted that during focus group discussions participants complained that there is an existing regulation according to which foreigners arriving in Georgia by car have to leave the territory of the country every three months, which causes additional expenses for them, when in fact a vehicle can be registered temporarily after 90 days to avoid this expense.

Due to these experiences, social networks and groups on Telegram, WhatsApp and Viber are the ones mostly used among respondents to search for information when it comes to ongoing programs, services or other resources.



Information sharing meeting on GBV, child rights, MHPS, and available state services for refugees from Ukraine organized by World Vision Georgia Ukraine Crisis response team. December, 2022 © WVG



# DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SURVEY RESULTS AND ONE YEAR OF PROTECTION MONITORING

Since the first survey, there have been some changes in the overall situation and in the trends. In comparison to the last quarter of 2022, during the first quarter of 2023 there has been a decrease of 12% in the average weekly entries and a 14% decrease in exits from the country. As of March 2023, **some 24,000 Ukrainians who entered Georgia since 24 February, 2022 are remaining in the country**. UNHCR estimates that this number is likely to remain approximately the same for the foreseeable future. As more than one year has passed since the launch of the invasion, more Ukrainians are coming to realize that they may have to stay in Georgia longer than anticipated. During this time, many of them had to start looking for means to become self-reliant, find new places to live, look for employment, enroll children into schools and more, while facing a number of challenges during the process.

This section draws conclusions from the survey results as well as from one year of protection monitoring involving focus group discussions and information sessions in various regions of Georgia, monitoring of humanitarian points and community centers as well as talking face to face with refugees from Ukraine.

**Protection monitoring** refers to various forms of monitoring of the protection needs and risks of refugees in Georgia, as well as a situational monitoring of the economic, social and political environment in which refugees are living. Such monitoring is done to understand trends and changes in the overall well-being and self-reliance among refugees, to identify and address potential obstacles to accessing rights and services, and to obtain evidence for advocacy for the maintenance and improvement of such rights and services.

Although prospects for return have not improved much since 2022, most Ukrainians are still hoping to **return to Ukraine** at some point. The ambivalence in this regard is clear, with only 46% saying that they will definitely stay in Georgia over the coming six months and at the same time only a very small percentage having concrete plans to return. Given the data was collected in March, Ukrainians planning the coming six-month period may already be thinking about the start of the 2023-2024 school year, which many may still feel uncomfortable making predictions about.

Given the extension to the **visa-free stay** for Ukrainians (now two years upon entry), some may feel that crucial decisions about the future may not have to be made just yet, possibly also contributing to further insecurity about decisions on their future. At the same time it becomes clearer for some that more predictable, more comprehensive access to health care and other services for the longer term may require application for

asylum. As recent protection monitoring has showed, there appears to be more intent than before in applying for asylum among Ukrainians in Batumi.

Some confusion remains about the **access to healthcare** services for Ukrainians, among both service providers and refugees. Service providers occasionally show reluctance to refer patients under the designated referral system, being unaware of the possibility of reimbursing medical expenses for Ukrainians. Access to primary healthcare as well as consultations with a family doctor is not included under Decree N575 of the Government of Georgia. While the decree provides a list of free programs for Ukrainians, there are some associated costs that are not covered, e.g. related to vaccinations. This service is provided free of charge for Ukrainians, however a child cannot be vaccinated without a prior consultation with a pediatrician, which is not covered under the decree (approximately 50 GEL). Issues also arise in cases when Ukrainians leave the country and then decide to return. In such cases, as they are no longer considered “continuously in the country”, they can be rendered ineligible for medical assistance.

While the percentage of **Ukrainians residing in privately subsidized communal accommodation** (hotels/hostels) remains modest, this is a group deserving of additional attention. It is important from an integration perspective to support this vulnerable segment in leaving this type of accommodation and beginning independent living. While some support with accommodation from the Government and/or the international community is likely to be needed for the foreseeable future, any assistance should be tailored with a view for future self-reliance.

While challenging, an increased outreach will also be needed to **Ukrainians in rural locations**, as such populations are likely to have less access to both information and factual assistance.

**Psycho-social assistance** remains a significant need. While free of charge services and dedicated assistance platforms exist in this regard, it can be difficult to access face to face consultations in a timely manner. As more people may be battling with a realization that return to Ukraine is likely to happen later rather than sooner, access to counseling support may prove essential to maintain psychosocial well-being.

During UNHCR’s focus group discussions with school children in Batumi, two Ukrainian girls reported cases of **harassment** on the streets. However, the affected individuals were hesitant to call the police as according to them *“sexual harassment and rape is not punishable in Georgia, so it makes no sense to call the police”*. While only two girls were brave enough to talk about the given issues, there might be other unreported cases as well, so UNHCR recommends that the State Care Agency conducts regular visits to the Ukrainian sector schools and provides information

sessions for youth about relevant legislation, measures to be applied and who to address in case of need.

Despite high levels of **education** and the usefulness of the Russian language in Georgia for managing everyday living, without the knowledge of Georgian language, most are facing challenges in finding jobs where salaries would correspond to qualifications and would be sufficient to cover rent as well as other basic needs. While this survey segment shows a rather low employment rate and interest in entrepreneurial activities among Ukrainians, according to CARE Caucasus, in 2023 over 200 applicants have been registered for **business related support**, compared to only 2 in 2022. As more people realize that they might have to stay longer than expected in Georgia, demand for such grants/business supporting schemes can increase. Additional attention should be given to female-headed households and single caregivers.

While the number of Ukrainian children pursuing some sort of education remains high, the percentage of children physically attending schools in Georgia remains very low given the time elapsed since displacement. According to data provided by the Ministry of Education, only 55% of 3,984 school age Ukrainian children were enrolled in Georgian schools by April, 2023 (855 are enrolled in Georgian/Russian sector schools, 2,187 study in Ukrainian sector schools established in Tbilisi and Batumi). The high proportion of children not attending school continues to present **child protection risks** and where possible, parents and children alike should be encouraged and supported to enroll in Georgian schools.

Preliminary results of the UNHCR focus group discussions with children demonstrate a serious lack of information about the legal procedures related to access to higher education and

school graduation (11 years in Ukraine while in Georgia the general education step lasts for 12 years). In this regard, parents and children worry that the years spent in Georgian schools will not be recognized in Ukraine after their return. This affects their interest in enrolling children in local schools and they prefer to continue online education. The Ministry of Education should therefore be more actively engaged with the Ukrainian community and provide them with accurate and precise information about relevant procedures and other related issues.

20% still report that they are missing some documents, mostly international biometric or non-biometric passports. The same trend was identified during the protection monitoring throughout Georgia. Many Ukrainians find it difficult to gain access to the procedures to apply for an **international passport**, given the resource strain on the Ukrainian authorities in the country. The Ukrainian Embassy in Tbilisi does issue new passports, however there are challenges with the registration procedures, fees and timeframes. Furthermore, given that the service is not decentralized, those not living in Tbilisi must bear the costs of travel and usually accommodation to go the Embassy. The absence of documents poses extra risks, as it hampers access to rights and services, including freedom of movement, healthcare, employment and financial services. A Ukrainian identity document should give access to services as per Government decrees but in practice this can be difficult, especially when it comes to opening bank accounts.

UNHCR and World Vision Georgia will continue conducting periodic multi-sector needs assessments to monitor the overall situation, as well as the key topics/challenges of refugees from Ukraine described above, crucial for an effective and timely response.



72-year-old Raisa from Kharkiv, reunited with her daughter after one year of war. March 2023 ©UNHCR/Nino Kajaia



# KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Having generously extended the visa-free stay for Ukrainians to two years, and despite the obvious budgetary challenges, UNHCR recommends that the Government ensures better and more predictable access to health care for refugees from Ukraine, which is a key need and concern for many of them. Proactive information-sharing among service providers and refugees is also essential.
2. Children's wellbeing needs full attention. The still high proportion of school age children not enrolled in any Georgian school is of increasing concern. Ukrainians should be encouraged and supported to enroll their children in local schools, certainly by the beginning of the new school year in September 2023. Government programmes for language teaching and psychosocial support should be further capacitated. The Ministry of Education is encouraged to engage with the Ukrainian community, and to provide them with accurate and precise information about enrolment procedures and other related issues.
3. Information-sharing on rights and services generally for refugees from Ukraine is a continuous challenge for all service providers. The State Care Agency is encouraged to enhance information-sharing especially in relation to GBV. This could include joint information sessions for adults as well as regular visits to Ukrainian sector schools.
4. Access to face-to-face mental health and psychosocial support services should be improved, including in the regions. Community spaces and activities for children and adults continue to be important for the well-being and social integration of families.
5. Refugees with specific needs and vulnerabilities need support. Cash assistance should be expanded and sustained at least until end-2023, also to assist new arrivals and to support full-time caregivers. In some cases, additional support is needed at household level specifically to support rental costs.
6. Self-reliance, socio-economic inclusion, and eventually integration, are increasingly important priorities. Ukrainians need to be connected to Government employment schemes as well as the private sector. Female headed households and fulltime caregivers are faced with various obstacles (including childcare) and need tailored approaches to support their employability and self-reliance.

