

CZECHIA

ACCOMMODATION AND FINANCIAL SITUATION OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

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KEY FINDINGS

Accommodation

More than half of respondents (56%) live **in regular rental housing** and the majority of respondents, regardless of the accommodation type, cover the housing expenses by themselves (75%).

Type of housing does not relate to **time of arrival from Ukraine**, but 81 per cent of those who arrived in 2022 are paying for their accommodation while only 55 per cent of those who arrived in 2023 do so.

The **need for long-term housing** is one of the top five most pressing needs, mentioned by 42 per cent of respondents.

The **main obstacles** mentioned by respondents in finding accommodation are unavailability of rental housing, lack of funds to cover rent and deposits at market price and repeated rejection by property owners.

Half of the respondents (50%) face **some problems** in their current accommodation. The main problem that was mentioned by the respondents more often was financial issues (77% for all respondents).

Financial situation

Main finding shows that the interviewed refugees often struggle financially and that this applies also to those who work.

Overall, 31 per cent of the respondents answer that they are not able to cover their daily expenses. The share of those who report **to have insufficient income** to cover their daily expenses is significantly lower (6%) among **those who work** (employed, daily workers, self-employed).

However, the share of **working respondents** (employed, self-employed, daily workers) who state that they would not be able to cover an **unexpected payment of 13,600 CZK¹** is 26 per cent (versus 44% for the total sample).

Only 7 per cent of those who are on maternity/paternity leave, 10 per cent of retired persons and 16 per cent of those unemployed and not looking for a job, answer that they would be able to cover an unexpected payment.

Finally, **half of the respondents (50%) face some problems with the living conditions in their current accommodation**. And that **the main problem they must deal with is financial issues (77%)**.

1. For the amount in other currencies, please consult:
<https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>

1. INTRODUCTION

As of 30 November 2023, 371,325 refugees from Ukraine including TCNs registered for temporary protection in Czechia according to national authorities.² This unprecedented situation puts enormous demands on everyone involved, from the refugees themselves, to the state administration, to all citizens of Czechia.

The need to provide accommodation and basic financial support for refugees was a huge challenge since refugees started arriving in the first months of 2022. Until July 2023, accommodation for refugees from Ukraine has been funded by the state. This, however, changed when the legislative amendment known as "Lex Ukraine V" came into force (further referred to as "Lex Ukraine", with changes to refugee housing support and the calculation of humanitarian financial support. These changes affected a significant number of refugees from Ukraine.

The aim of this report is to describe housing and financial situation of Ukrainian refugees in Czechia with data collected between August and September 2023, and to draw attention to those who are among the most vulnerable in terms of their financial situation.

Housing support

Accommodation allowance is provided directly to temporary protection holders (further referred to as "TP holders") as part of the humanitarian benefit (further referred to as "HuS"), in the amount of the countable housing costs, and only for the first 150 days (5 months). After this period, the allowance is provided only to persons defined as vulnerable by the law. These include children up to 18 years of age, students, those who care for a child up to 6 years of age (only one person at a time), pregnant women, persons over 65 years of age, persons with disabilities, as well as persons who care for them.

Humanitarian benefit (HuS)

From 1 July 2023 the amount of HuS takes into account all income and potential savings of the refugee. Like benefits for Czech citizens, the calculation is based on the subsistence and minimum living wage. It is calculated by summing up the benefits received by household members and the countable housing costs.³ From this sum, household income including savings is deducted to determine the allowance amount. If the income exceeds the benefits person is entitled to, by one CZK or more, he/she is not eligible for HuS.⁴ At the same time Ukrainian refugees don't have access to the Czech system of social insurance and are not entitled to the same social benefits as (from the system of state social support) Czech citizens or migrants with other types of visa. (reference to law 117/1995 Sb.).

During the first 150 days, refugees receive a humanitarian allowance that covers basic needs (4,860 CZK for adult, 3,490 or 4,188 CZK for child). After this period, if the refugee does not actively try to find a way to support himself/herself financially and is not considered vulnerable, the allowance is reduced to the minimum amount needed to cover basic living expenses (3,130 CZK for adult, for children stays the same).

Since October 2023 (after the data collection) a stricter interpretation of "Lex Ukraine V" came into force. In order to pass vulnerability assessment and be entitled to free social housing, the person must be a recipient of HuS. If a person is not eligible for HuS because he/she works and the total income exceeds the benefits the household is entitled to, all members of his/her household should cover living expenses in social housing by their own (even if they themselves qualify as vulnerable)⁵.

2. www.mvcr.cz/clanek/statistika-v-souvislosti-s-vaikov-na-ukrajine-archiv.aspx

3. Countable housing costs are determined as 2,400–3,000 CZK/per person (not more than 12–15,000 CZK/per household), depending on whether it is registered in the MoLSA database.

4. For example, if the person who is alone and not classified as to belong to a vulnerable category, he/she will not get HuS, if his/her income will be more than 4,860 CZK or 3,130 CZK, depending on date of displacement.

5. <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/cs/stat-nechrani-zranitelne-skupiny-uprchliku-jejich-nezavinene-dluhy-z-ubytovani-chce-resit-mimoradnou-davkou-pomoci-mop/>

2. METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a survey that IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) implements in Czechia since mid-June 2022. The survey focuses on the displacement patterns, needs, and intentions of refugees from Ukraine in Czechia.

It presents an analysis based on 587 surveys that were conducted in person between 8 August and 27 September 2023 among individuals in 11 regions in Czechia and in Prague. The report also includes information from qualitative comments provided by respondents alongside their replies to the closed-ended survey questions. The information presented in this report is also compared to findings from other relevant studies.

The data presented in this document are representative of the individuals surveyed in the covered locations and during the indicated timeframe.

Only adults (18 years and above) were interviewed. The survey is anonymous and voluntary. All the citations in the text have been anonymized.

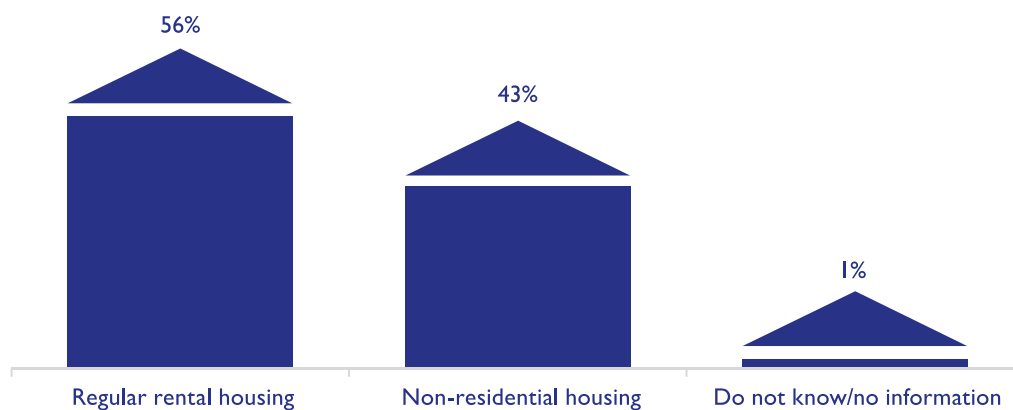
For further reading, please visit <https://dtm.iom.int/czechia>.

3. ACCOMMODATION

3.1. Most respondents cover the housing expenses by themselves

More than half of respondents (56%) live in regular rental housing (in independent or shared apartments, or in dedicated parts of houses provided by locals or friends), while almost 43 per cent of respondents still live in non-residential housing (in hostels, hotels or dormitories).⁶

Figure 1: Respondents housing situation according to type of accommodation, total (%), N=587

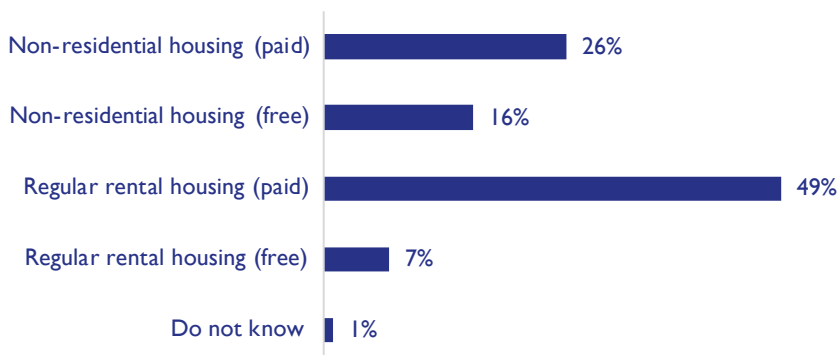


Type of housing does not relate to time of arrival from Ukraine, and the number of those staying in rental housing is the same for those who were displaced in 2022 as well as for those who were displaced in 2023.

The time of arrival is instead associated with different financial arrangements to cover housing expenses. Most of the respondents cover the housing expenses by themselves (75%). Eighty-one per cent of those who arrived in 2022 pay for their accommodation, while only 55 per cent of those who arrived in 2023 do so. This can be explained not only by the fact that the financial autonomy of refugees increases over time, but also by the fact that free accommodation is provided to refugees only for the first 5 months of their stay in Czechia (see Introduction).

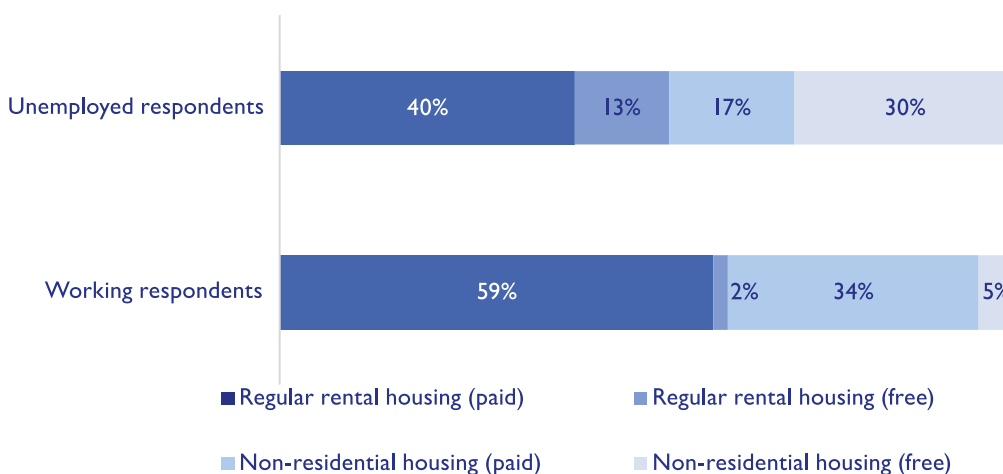
6. According to PAQ research the share of Ukrainian refugees living in non-residential housing, was 23 per cent in March 2023. According to the results from MSNA (UNHCR, June 2023, non-public), the share of Ukrainian refugees living in non-residential housing is 28 per cent. The number of people living in non-residential housing is likely overrepresented in the current IOM dataset due to the fact that 20 per cent of interviews have been conducted in non-residential type of housing facilities.

Figure 2: Respondents housing situation according to type of accommodation and financial arrangement, total (%), N=587



The situation is more favourable among those who work, with 61 per cent of all working respondents living in regular rental housing. Nevertheless, the share of those who work and live in non-residential housing is relatively high (39%). At the same time, almost all working respondents (93% of them) pay by themselves for the accommodation (compared with 75% for the whole sample).

Figure 3: Type of accommodation and financial arrangement according to work situation, total (%), N=587

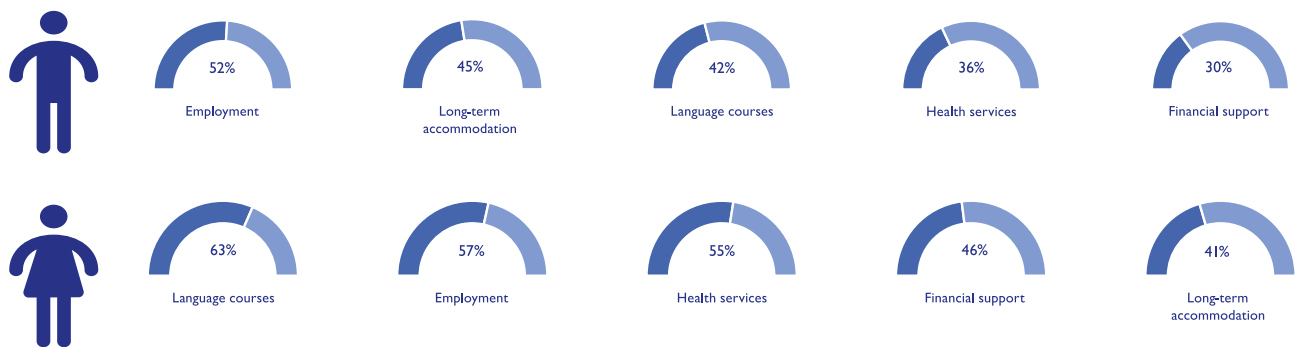


3.2. Barriers in accessing the housing market

Staying in non-residential housing is not a long-term sustainable solution especially when there are children in the household,⁷ and it is important that refugees can transfer to regular rental housing as soon as possible.

Long-term housing is one of the top five most pressing needs, mentioned by 42 per cent of respondents (45% of those in regular rental housing versus 52% of those in non-residential housing).

Figure 4: Top five most pressing needs, by gender (%), (more than one answer possible), N=587



According to an IOM research in collective accommodation facilities in Pilsen and Karlovy Vary regions (IOM Czechia 2023a; IOM Czechia 2023b), the main obstacles faced by respondents in finding accommodation were:

- unavailability of rental housing,
- lack of funds to cover rent (and deposits) at market price,
- repeated rejection by property owners for various reasons related to both ethnicity and other factors like multiple family, presence of a pet, distrust towards Ukrainian citizens and/or preference for long-term rentals (which is problematic in case of refugees with TP status).

These findings are supported by qualitative comments made by the respondents in the current sample: many of them report to have received repeated rejections of property owners and to lack funds sufficient to cover rent and deposit at market price. What also transpired from the qualitative data is the importance of social networks in finding accommodation. According to some respondents as one of the reasons, why property owners do not want to rent an apartment to refugees from Ukraine is because there are doubts about their solvency. That's why by example, one of the respondents could not find accommodation until her employer contacted the rental agency.

“At first, I lived with my children and my mother in a hotel – the conditions here were quite good. But since spring I started looking for an apartment. It was very difficult. The apartment was ready for rent. But as soon as the owner found out that Ukrainians wanted to rent it, he immediately refused. I already looked through a rental agency – it didn't help. But I began to work a little in this hotel – in the kitchen, at the reception – it can be from 4 to 12 hours a week. And only when the owner of the hotel vouched to the landlord that we were normal, we were given accommodation”.

(Woman, 35 years old, two children)

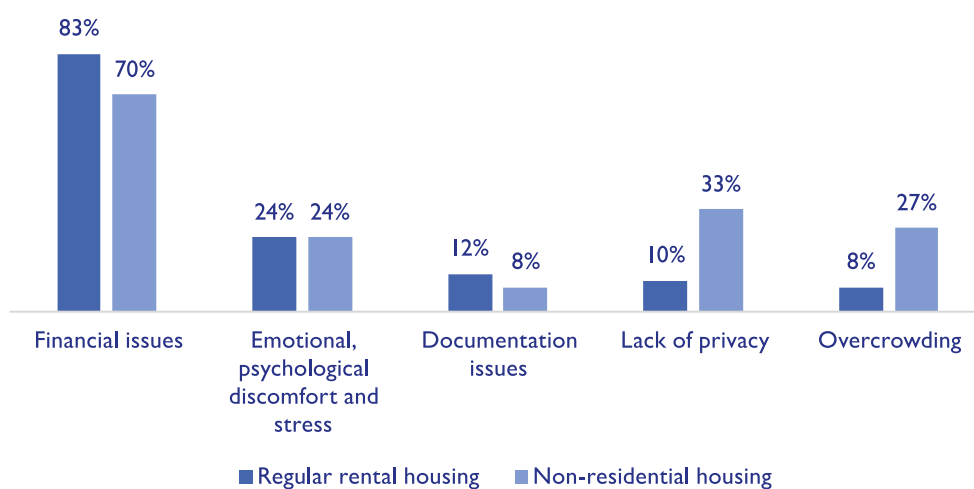
In other cases, friends who have been in Czechia already for over a year helped respondents who arrived more recently to find suitable accommodation in a relatively short time.

7. On impact of overcrowded or non-residential housing on children school results see by example Solari and Mare (2012); Prokop (2022)

3.3. Financial issues as main problem in accommodation

Half of the respondents (50%) face some problems with their current accommodation, with some differences between those living in regular rental housing and those who live in non-residential housing. More than half (56%) of those who live in regular rental housing do not face any problems in their current accommodation, versus 42 per cent of the respondents who live in non-residential housing.

Figure 5: Main reported challenges in accommodation, by type of accommodation (%), (more than one answer possible), N=247



The main problem is always related to financial issues, reported more often by those living in regular rental housing (83%) than by those who live in non-residential housing (70%).

These findings together with other qualitative information related to the financial situation of respondents suggest that some respondents struggle to pay for their accommodation.

This is for example the case of a family with two adults and four children, who pays 28,000 CZK/month⁸ for an apartment in Prague: the respondent is on maternity leave and almost the whole salary of her husband goes to cover the apartment rent.

8. For the amount in other currencies, please consult: <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>

Another example is the case of a woman from Kharkivska oblast, who lives with her husband and two sons in Prague, renting an apartment for 27,000 CZK/month. Their third son studies and lives separately in a student's dormitory. She explains that the apartment costs are too high, even though she and her husband are working, and their total net income is 40,000 CZK, but finding another apartment is difficult and costly:

“One son finished the first grade in Czechia, the second one will go to school this year. My husband got a job in construction. And for the first month I cleaned the entrances in the houses. Later, I found part-time job for cleaning. And then I got a job in a supermarket with an official contract. In Ukraine, with the education of an economist, I would never go to work in a supermarket. I have to serve customers at the checkout, and arrange all the goods, work hard. But my salary is not even enough to pay the rent of an apartment. And we also need to buy food, dress, and pay for school for children. So far, everything that has been earned has been spent on living. Although we work a lot. But we have nowhere to return, our house was destroyed”

(Woman, 39 years old, 3 children, one living separately)

High rental rates (which in these cases also do not correspond to the housing conditions) are sometimes also paid by respondents who live in a non-residential accommodation. Like by example a 47-year-old woman who lives with her disabled husband in a dormitory in one small room, where they must pay 21,000 CZK per month (350 CZK per day per person) or a 46-year-old woman who lives in a dormitory with her 21-year-old son, and together they pay 24,000 per month for one room with shower and toilet.

3.4. Housing costs

The 258 respondents who live in regular rental housing (except 42 respondents who stay for free with friends or in apartment of the resident) pay an average of 17,161 CZK/month per household (6,469 CZK/month per person) for this type of accommodation. In this case there is a significant difference in the average price between apartments rented from friends and those rented on the market (10,733 CZK versus 17,829 CZK/ per household or 5,683 CZK versus 6,550 CZK/per person) .

The highest price paid in regular rental housing was 38,000 CZK per household and 22,000 CZK per person and the lowest 5,000 CZK per household and 2,000 CZK per person.

The 141 respondents who live in paid non-residential housing and who were willing to share the information about their spendings, pay the average price 8,326 CZK/month per household (4,680 CZK/month per person) for this type of accommodation.

The highest price paid in non-residential housing was 24,000 per household and 21,000 CZK per person and the lowest 1,000 CZK per household and 500 CZK per person.

When housing is funded by the state, no additional housing cost should be paid by them to the accommodation provider. Nevertheless, some respondents who were accommodated in a state funded accommodation answer that they were asked to pay for utility bills, and the amount for these services ranged from 400 to 9,000 CZK per month per household or from 200 to 1,800 CZK per month per person.

Table 1: Monthly housing costs (rent and services) in regular rental housing and non-residential housing, N=399

	Respondents living in regular rental housing	Respondents living in non-residential housing
Average housing costs per household/per month	17,161 CZK	8,326 CZK
Average housing costs per person in household/per month	6,469 CZK	4,680 CZK
Highest price paid per household	38,000 CZK	24,000 CZK
Highest price paid per person in household	22,000 CZK	21,000 CZK
Lowest price paid per household	5,000 CZK	1,000 CZK
Lowest price paid per person in household	2,000 CZK	500 CZK

9. Housing costs include rent and payment for services. For the amount in other currencies, please consult: <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>

10. The average number of household members is 2 people for non-residential housing and 3 people for regular rental housing.

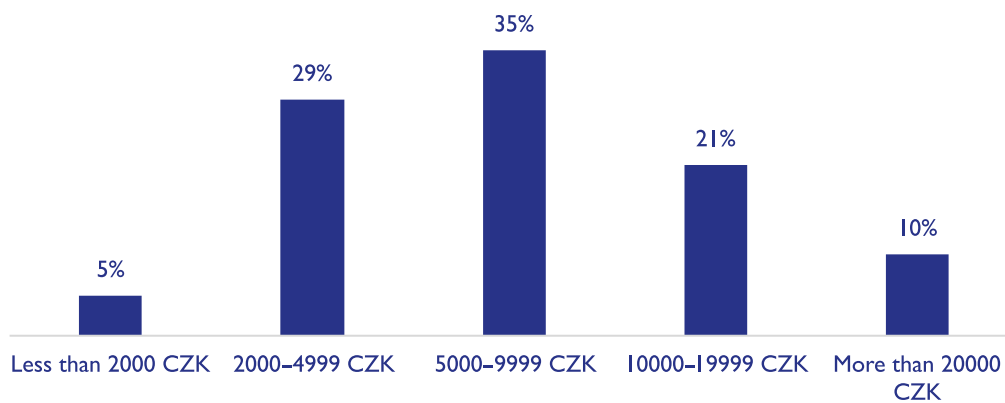
3.5. Balance between income and housing costs

For part of the sample (286 respondents) a comparison between the household income¹¹ and the housing costs was possible.

The Czech housing benefit system is based on the principle that an individual should not spend more than 30% (35% in Prague) of their income on housing.¹² More than half (56%) of the respondents' households living in Prague spend on housing more than 35 per cent of their total income. Also among those living outside of Prague, 47 per cent of respondents report that the amount spent on housing is more than 30 per cent of their household income.

Moreover, more than a third of respondents (34%) are left with less than 5,000 CZK per person, after covering their housing costs¹³.

Figure 6: Balance between income and housing costs, per person, total (%), N=286



3.6. Psychological discomfort, lack of privacy and other problems in accommodation

Respondents also mention emotional problems, psychological discomfort and stress (24%), lack of privacy (21%) in their current accommodation. This was followed by overcrowding (17%), documentation issues (10%), no kitchen available, lack of information (4%), presence of mold (3%). Other issues like the presence of bed bugs or other insects, insufficient heating/lighting, services that are difficult to access for persons with disabilities and geographical isolation are reported less often (by four per cent in total).

As expected, some of these problems are more frequently reported by respondents living in non-residential accommodations than by those in autonomous rented housing: lack of privacy (33% versus 10%), overcrowding (27% versus 8%), as well as issues such as the presence of bed bugs or other insects, insufficient heating, services that are difficult to access for persons with disabilities. On the other side, emotional problems, psychological discomfort and stress seem not to be connected to type of accommodation, as it is reported by 24 per cent of both groups.

11. Regarding the total income the respondent were asked to provide total household income, including net salary and social benefits from Czechia and Ukraine.

12. <https://www.mpsv.cz/-/prispevek-na-bydleni>

13. For the amount in other currencies, please consult: <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>

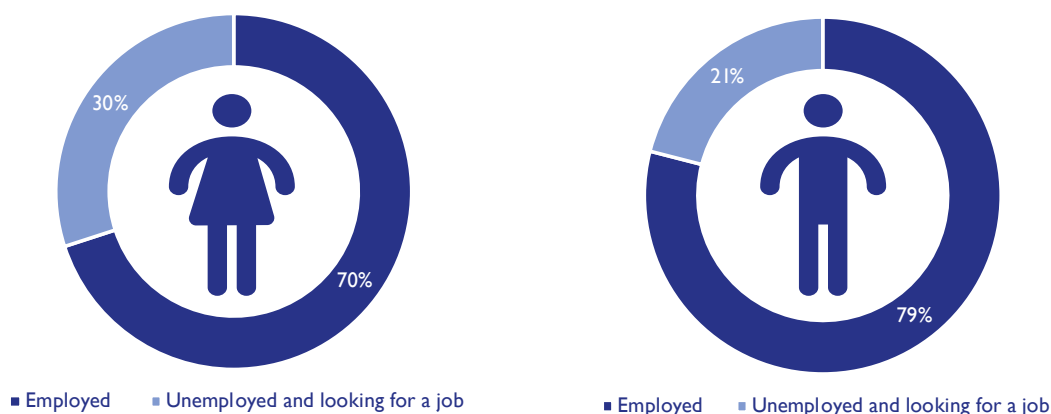
4. FINANCIAL SITUATION AND LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

According to a previous study, 68 per cent of refugees live below the income poverty line¹⁴ if considering humanitarian benefits and the value of housing support, compared to nine to ten per cent of Czechs ([PAQ Research 2023](#)).

IOM survey data supports these findings as many respondents struggle financially, especially in case of vulnerable groups such as retired people (especially older than 65 years), women with children, women on maternity leave or people with disabilities and health problems. Financial constraints are also linked to the level of access and participation into labour market of working-age members of the refugee households.

Overall, the participation in the Czech labour market of respondents is very high and higher than the average for Europe (IOM Europe 2023b). Among the economically active respondents (those employed or actively seeking work) the employment rate is 79 per cent for men and 70 per cent for women, while 21 per cent men and 30 per cent of women are unemployed.

Figure 7: Employment status of economically active respondents, by gender (%), N=587



14. The measurement of income poverty in this research is based on net household income converted into the number of consumption units (1st adult = 1 j., 2nd adult/child over 12 years = 0.5 j., younger child = 0.3 j.). They use the Czech poverty line based on the median income in 2021 (median net monthly income of 25,100 CZK per s. j.). The poverty line for a household of two adults and one child under 12 will be CZK 31,700 (PAQ Research 2023: 23).

4.1. Respondents' ability to cover daily expenses

Overall, 31 per cent of the respondents report that they are not able to cover their daily expenses.¹⁵ There are significant differences though between the financial situation of those who work and those who do not as well as between the vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups¹⁶ (see Table 2).

Issues with covering daily expenses are reported by 6 per cent of those who work and by a significantly higher share among those who do not work: 87 per cent of those who are retired and older than 65 years, and 67 per cent of those on maternity/paternity leave. The share of those with issues with daily expenses is also high among those unemployed and not looking for a job (58%), students (50%) and respondents who were unemployed and looking for a job (45%).

4.2. Unexpected expenses

The inability to cover the unexpected expense is one of the indicators through which material and social deprivation can be measured.¹⁷ According to Czech-SILC data in 2022, 17 per cent of Czech households could not afford to cover an unexpected expense of 13,600 CZK.¹⁸

Overall, 44 per cent of respondents report that they would not be able to cover an unexpected expense of 13,600 CZK. The share is higher among women (28 per cent of men compared to 48 per cent of women). Another 18 per cent answer that they did not know and only 37 per cent answer that they could cover it.

In the case of working respondents, the share of those who report that they would not be able to cover this expense was lower, but still high (26%). Most of working respondents answer that they could (51%) or that they do not know (22%) if they could cover this payment.

15. According to the Survey realized within the frame of the Statics of Household Income and Living conditions (SILC) project in 2022, 13,2 per cent Czech households were struggling financially every month <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/189719223/1600212301e.pdf/aaea46f7-c9c7-45d4-8ca6-c074dce517c7?version=1.2>

16. In this section, respondents who are retired (especially older than 65 years), women on maternity leave and people with disabilities and health problems are considered as belonging to vulnerable groups.

17. The term "unexpected expenses" is one of the indicators how to measure material and social deprivation, by EU-SILC, the amount is based on counting done by Czech statistical office, for the year 2022 (for the year 2023 the data are not available).

18. Czech Statistical Office. Household Income and Living conditions – 2022: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/189719223/16002123kc.pdf/ccc2ab05-fac6-4daf-929a-ec5442fcb782?version=1.3>. For the amount in other currencies, please consult: <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>

4.3. Respondents who most often face financial problems

Looking into different groups, only seven per cent of the respondents who are on maternity/paternity leave, 10 per cent of retired persons and 16 per cent unemployed and not looking for a job, answer that they would be able to cover an unexpected payment of 13,600 CZK. Among those respondents who are unemployed and looking for a job, the share is 28 per cent. Among students it is 39 per cent.

Table 2: Financial situation of respondents: sufficient income to cover daily expenses and ability to cover unexpected expense of 13,600 CZK, total (%), N=587

	Respondents who do not have sufficient income to cover their daily expenses	Respondents who are not able to cover an unexpected payment of 13,600 CZK (615 USD)
Women	34%	48%
Men	19%	28%
Retired (older than 65)	87%	74%
Respondents between 60-64y	54%	62%
Women on maternity leave	67%	80%
Women with children	30%	51%
Students	50%	33%
Unemployed and not looking for work	58%	79%
Unemployed and looking for work	45%	61%
Employed, total	6%	26%
Employed, women	8%	30%
Employed, men	1%	12%
Total (all respondents)	31%	44%

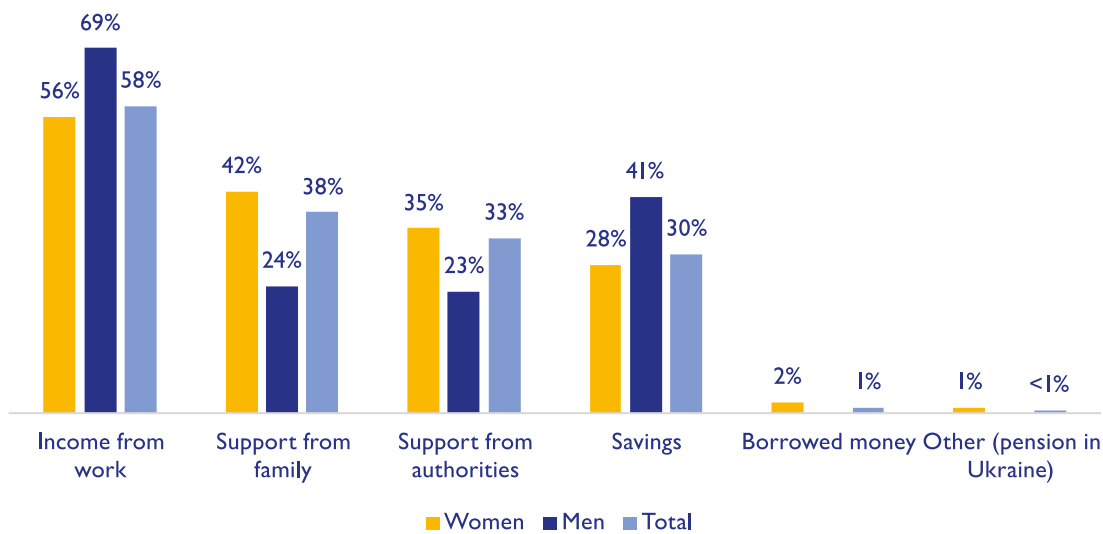
4.4. Income sources



When asked what sources people use to cover their living expenses, most of them mention more than one source. About one fourth of respondents rely only on their income from work (27%), while in 15 per cent of the cases respondents rely only on the money from authorities and in 14 per cent of cases they rely only on their savings and on support from family/community. Those who rely on savings and income are represented by eight per cent, income, and support from family/community by four per cent and those who rely only on their savings by three per cent. Other combinations are less common.

Overall, the sources that are mentioned the most are income from work (58%), support from their family or community (38%), the support from the authorities (33%), personal savings (30%), borrowed money (1%). Less than one per cent report other sources of income (pension in Ukraine).

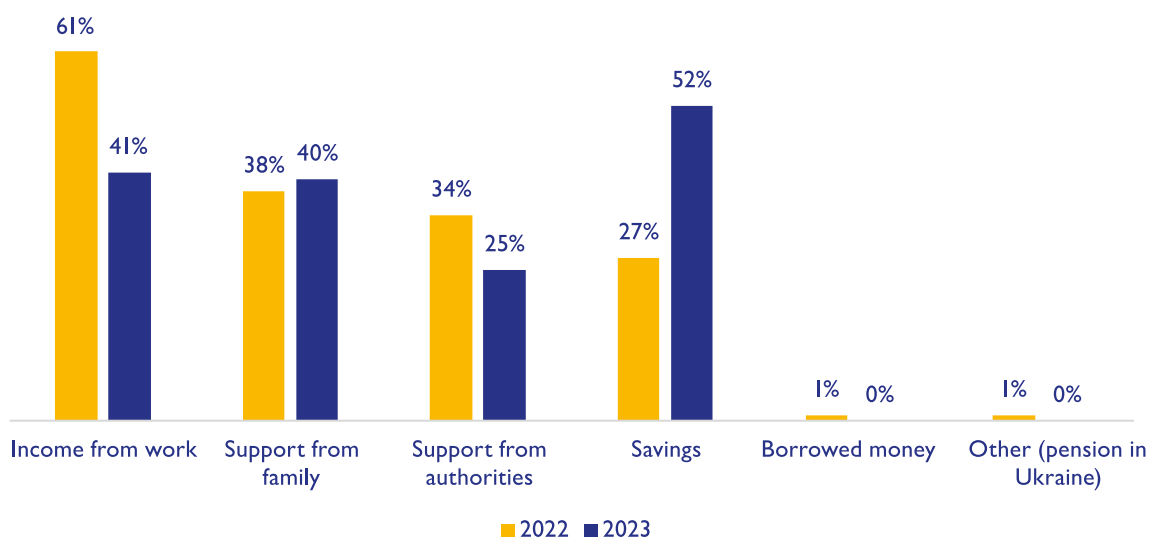
Figure 8: Income source by gender and total (%), (more than one answer possible), N=493



Overall, those who arrived in 2023 rely most often on personal savings (52%) compared to those who arrived in 2022 (27%). On the contrary, income from work (61%) was the most often reported source of income for those who came to Czechia in 2022.

The support from the authorities is mentioned more often by those who arrived in 2022 (34% compared to 25%). Borrowed money and pension in Ukraine (1% each) as a source of income is mentioned only by those who are in Czechia since 2022.

Figure 9: Income source according to year of arrival, total (%), N=493



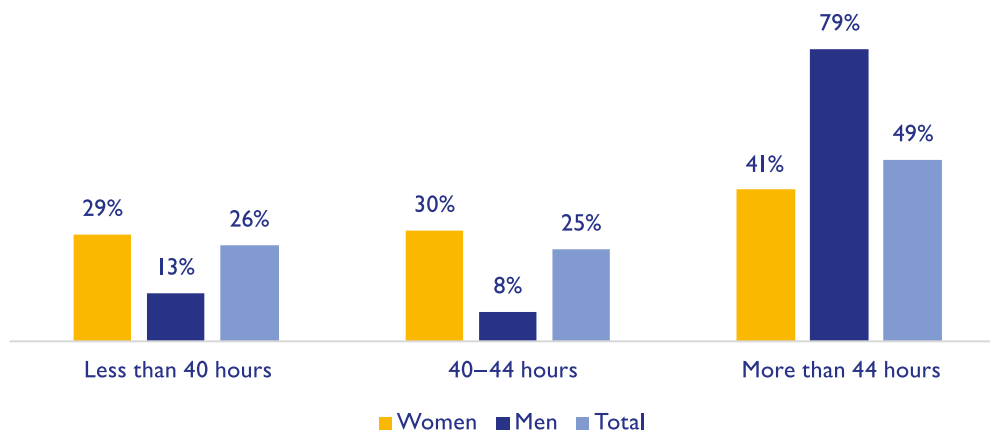
5. COPING STRATEGIES

This section is based on analysis of the qualitative and survey data and it presents the strategies applied by respondents to cope with the high accommodation costs or/and adverse financial situation: working extra hours, working irregularly, borrowing money, sharing care responsibilities and/or housing costs with others and family separation. By presenting this information we want to provide a more in-depth picture of the situations that the families of our respondents are dealing with. However, findings presented in the following paragraphs are indicative, and more tailored research is needed to better understand how often such strategies are put in place and whether more and diverse behaviours are also present among refugees from Ukraine.

5.1. Working extra hours

From those who work, 264 also answered the question about how many hours on average they spend working in a week. Almost half of the respondents report to work more than 44 hours per week (49%), and this is more frequent among men (79%) than among women (41%).¹⁹

Figure 10: Average number of hours spend working in a week, by gender and total (%), N=264



Respondents sometimes agree to work long hours because they have no other options and are not able to find a less demanding job. For example, some report about employment agencies that usually require to work between 12 to 16 hour shifts, six days a week. Sometimes, long shifts can be required or assumed as normal by the employer:

"I earn 100 CZK an hour and work for 12 hours, but I clean a large building – all the corridors, floors, toilets, kitchens, common areas. People think that if I'm paid for cleaning, it's okay to litter. And at first it was a 24/7 job, with new residents coming in and out all the time. We had to move in, move out, clean, wash linens. But the owner saves money on everything – he only invests in the premises at a minimum"

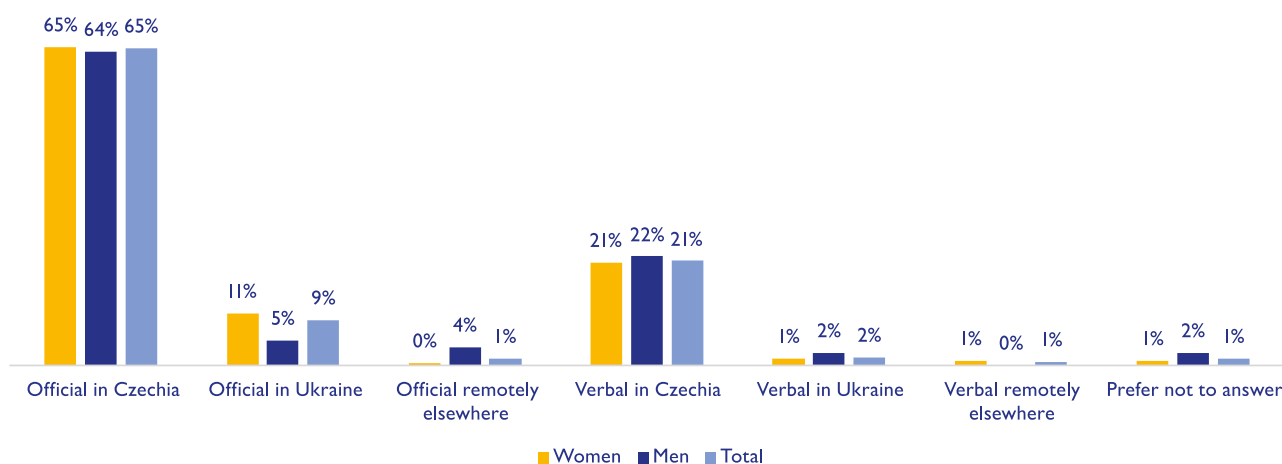
(Woman, 59 years)

19. This is an estimate based on the average number of hours worked per month reported by respondents.

5.2. Working without a written contract

About 24 per cent of respondents (out of 319 who replied to this question) work without written contract in Czechia or abroad (Ukraine or elsewhere). In other cases, respondents have a written contract but are paid the minimum wage officially and receive the rest in cash.

Figure 11: Respondents working arrangement (%), N=319



The strong demand for irregular foreign labour (especially in the area of physically demanding work) in Czechia is reported in several studies ([Drbohlav et al 2008:118](#)).

The qualitative information provided by the respondents seem to confirm this interest from the employer side, as respondents report that irregular working arrangements are proposed by the employers. Moreover, respondents admit that after the support for TP holders has been narrowed, due to which many TP holders are not eligible for any kind of state social support anymore (this even when they have a very low income or when they are incapacitated because of health issues, compared to Czechs who, if in similar situations, can apply for different kind of social benefits), they are more likely to accept a job in the so called “grey zone” in order to be still eligible for the housing support (See [Konsorcium 2023](#)).

For example, a 62-year-old woman, who used to work as a teacher back in Ukraine, could not find work and reports that the Labour Office does not cover the Czech language courses for her due to her age. Hence, she works without a written contract as a cleaner in a hotel earning 100 CZK per hour net, and from 6,000 CZK to 12,000 CZK per month depending on the season. Previously, she used to live in a state housing, but since July 2023 she has to pay 6,000 CZK per month for her accommodation.

Another woman in a pre-retirement age (61 years), who is a widow and alone in Czechia, explains that it is impossible for her to find regular job in Czechia due to the age and health situation. She used to live in state-provided accommodation, but since July she has to pay 6,000 CZK per month. She works with the mediation of the employment agency and earns monthly approximately 7,500 CZK. She receives her earnings in cash, so she can apply for humanitarian financial assistance. She also had to borrow money, to cover basic expenses, after she did not receive HuS for July and August due to delays in payments and system errors described also by other respondents. In the near future, she plans to move to Germany as the situation is not sustainable for her.

The situation is also very difficult for a young woman (30 years) who is alone in Czechia with two small children (3 and 4 years old) and who cannot find suitable work because she was not able to enrol the children to kindergarten. Although her housing is paid for by the state and she receives HuS (11,840 CZK per month) according to her, it is not possible to survive from this money. She performs different kind of work ranging from cleaning offices, hotel rooms, packaging parcels in warehouses or cooking. She takes night shifts only, when her children are sleeping and when the neighbour can look after them. This way she earns around 8,000–10,000 CZK, to cover her family's basic needs.

This and other accounts make clear that respondents are aware of the fact that they are breaking the law, and that they feel very uneasy about that. At the same time, they feel this is the only option for them to cope with their situation and “to survive”.

5.3. Sharing care responsibilities and /or housing costs with others

Most of the respondents are women (79%) and almost half of them (43 %) are in Czechia with children under 18 years old. In 54 per cent of cases they are alone with children, and in 46 per cent of cases they are accompanied by one or more adults (often other women).

In some cases, these women, who are not with their husbands, live in Czechia with other relatives (usually mothers) who look after the children while they can go to work or work longer hours. Like by example in the case of a woman whose mother helps her to take care of her 9-year-old daughter, so that she can do the 12 hours shift work with a very varied schedule. At the same time not all grandmothers are available to take care of grandchildren, as they often have to go to work themselves as well (for more information see IOM Czechia 2023a:21).

Some respondents live with their relatives not only to share care responsibilities but also housing costs. Moreover, in some cases respondents choose to share living space not only with family members but also with friends, or even with strangers (as in the case of those who live in a room in dormitory together with other people).

5.4. Borrowing money

In some cases, respondents are not able to cover other expenses besides the housing costs. Hence, few of them report to resort to borrowing money to cover, for example, their healthcare needs.

This is the case, for example, of a woman (39 years) who came to Czechia in May 2022 with her two children (12 and 14 years). She suffers from a chronic disease and faces difficulties to find a suitable job. As a former teacher, she sometimes conducts online lessons for Ukrainian children in Czechia. Also, as a person with disability, she receives HuS and 2,000 CZK per month from Ukraine. Even though she lives for free in a dormitory her monthly income, which is around 17,000 CZK, is not enough to cover all basic needs, especially for what concerns medical care. That's why she had to borrow 20,000 CZK lately to pay for the dentist.

5.5. Family separation (within the country, cross-border)

Based on the information from qualitative comments we can say that there are cases when families split within Czechia or across borders to cope with economic difficulties.

The first situation is mostly connected to families where the members, who are classified as vulnerable by law, stay in accommodation provided and paid for by the state, while one of the family members move to a shared dormitory near his/her workplace, until they find a suitable (and affordable) accommodation where they can all live together.

This can be illustrated by an example of a 40-year-old male respondent who stays in a dormitory in Prague, for 8,000 CZK per month, because of work, while his wife and children live in accommodation in Strakonice that is covered (so far) by the state. Or by a case of a young man (39 years) who originally stayed with his parents in a state funded dormitory in Plasy, but after finding work and moving to Prague, where he rented a room in a dormitory for 6,000 CZK per month, he decided to move his parent to Germany to his sister, so they would not be alone. To support them he works full-time in a warehouse and spends his free time working for a courier service. (He earns approximately 38,000 CZK per month, working almost 50 hours per week).

The second situation is connected to cases when some family members go back to Ukraine, leaving other family members behind.

This is by example the case of a 40-year-old woman, from the north part of Ukraine, who came to Czechia with her two children to join her brother, who shortly after that went to serve in the Ukrainian army. After facing a lot of hardship, she decided to go back to Ukraine as well, together with her younger daughter and to leave her son behind. She explained:

"We were put in a dormitory. We have a shower and a toilet in the room, these are considered very good conditions. In order not to be a burden to anyone, I immediately went to work. The first 7 months I worked in a confectionery for 12-hour shifts, I tore my kidneys when I was carrying sacks. The next 7 months I worked in a factory in 12 hours day shifts, hard and monotonous work for minimum wage. I tried many times to find another job. I have a higher education, I studied Czech hard. But I was rejected everywhere because I am Ukrainian. It's just like a diagnosis. I am very tired. My son will soon be 18 years old. He is staying in the Czechia to study, now he will be under the care of social authorities. And I'm going home with my daughter, a seventh grader. I have a job in Ukraine. I didn't want to go back with her because of the bombings. But now I can't anymore. It is incredibly difficult for Ukrainians without support here."

(Woman, 40 years, 2 children)

Another case is the one of a woman from Luhansk region who was in Czechia with her parents and son who just turned eighteen. She tried to work as a cleaner but was not able to earn enough money to cover basic living costs alongside the rent which was 7,500 CZK per month. That's why she decided to go back to Ukraine and to leave behind her son and parents, who all classify as vulnerable and eligible for support.

Not all family separations can be seen as "economical/survival strategies", sometimes they are the result of different kind of events and influenced by different factors, as by example the age of the family members. The comments show that there are cases of older people, who choose to stay in Czechia, after their family members decided go to Canada, as this kind of "overseas" migration was to be challenging from them and too far from their home, which they want to return to at any cost.

CONCLUSION

This report presents the findings of a survey conducted by IOM to assess the needs, intentions and integration challenges of refugees from Ukraine in Czechia, with data collected between August and September 2023. The size of the sample together with the in-depth qualitative information obtained from respondents, make this study a unique source of information on the housing and financial situation of Ukrainian refugees in Czechia.

Staying in non-residential housing is not a sustainable solution for long-term living especially when there are children in the household, and it is important that refugees can transfer to regular rental housing as soon as possible. Most respondents cover the housing expenses by themselves, although many still struggle in finding regular rental housing solutions. Even though the situation is more favourable among those who work, the number of those who work and still live in non-residential housing is relatively high.

The main obstacles respondents face in finding accommodation are unavailability of rental housing, lack of funds to cover rent and deposits and repeated rejections by property owners.

Half of the respondents face some problems with the living conditions in their current accommodation, which in most cases are connected to financial issues. Those who struggle the most financially are respondents who are retired (especially those older than 65 years), women with children, women on maternity leave and persons with disabilities and health problems.

In order to cope with the high accommodation costs or/and adverse financial situation, some respondents seem to apply several strategies such as working extra hours, working irregularly (without written contract, or having extra money paid by cash), borrowing money, sharing care responsibilities with family members or/and housing costs with family members/friends and family separation (internal, cross-border).

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Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility.

The survey form was designed to capture the main displacement patterns – origin country and region – for refugees of any nationality fleeing from Ukraine because of the war. It captures the demographic profiles of respondents and of the group they are travelling with, if any; it asks about intentions relative to the intended final destination and prospects of permanence in the country of the survey/first reception; it gathers information regarding a set of main needs that the respondents expressed as more pressing at the moment of the interview.

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, several IOM's DTM tools were deployed in countries neighbouring Ukraine and in other countries particularly impacted by the new arrivals of migrants and refugees from Ukraine.

DTM is part of IOM's Global Data Institute.

DTM EUROPE



<https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response>



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