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METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

During the period of 25-27 April the DTM team in Warsaw conducted **11 focus group discussions**, attended by **90 people in total**, in collective sites on Woloska 7 (A and B), Jana Pawla 15 and Modlinska 6 D. The aim of this exercise was to explore the living situations of refugees residing in collective accommodation, their experiences finding employment in Poland, reasons for not relocating from collective sites and intentions for the coming months.

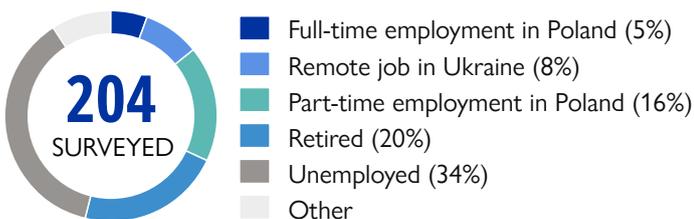
Four main groups were targeted:

1. People who are employed or who can work/looking for work
2. Elderly persons
3. Single women with children under 5
4. Persons with disabilities or those having household members with disabilities

This report covers topics which were mentioned the most during discussions. For more information on the methodology, see page 6.

CONTEXTUAL STATISTICS: INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION SURVEY

In tandem to the FGDs, DTM Poland conducts an on-going Integration and Social Inclusion Survey. The below statistics summarise key employment statistics from survey respondents living in collective sites.



- **51% of employed individuals** report that their job aligns with their profession. **Against only 25% among part-time employed** respondents.
- Only **8% of respondents** can afford an unexpected necessary expense of PLN 1,000 (approximately USD 240). **27% of full-time employed** and **16% of part-time employed** individuals can afford such an expense.

KEY FINDINGS



EMPLOYMENT

Employment is one of the primary factors contributing to the decisionmaking process of whether to relocate outside of a collective site. The majority of participants have been employed at some point while in Poland or have faced barriers while looking for a job. At the same time, several respondents have mentioned how challenging it was to adapt to working a lower-wage job in Poland, having held a higher-wage job in Ukraine. Low-paying manual labour jobs often do not include proper contracts or benefits, according to participants, making it more challenging for households to move out from collective sites. The following issues related to employment were identified during this round of focus group discussions:

Most respondents found it difficult to secure employment matching their professional profile. Professionals such as teachers, lawyers and bank employees now work in lower-wage jobs and jobs perceived as less-desirable out of desperation and fear of not being able to survive only on support provided in collective sites.



"I'm a Ukrainian lawyer, I work online but it is not enough. I'm not looking for intellectual jobs anymore, I am willing to do manual labour -- but only if it's not something too physically exhausting, as I have health issues. And I can't find anything like that."

"It is difficult to find something related to your profession. But if you're looking for any unrelated type of work there is plenty of that."

"Finding a job is not that hard. What is important is who we were back in Ukraine. Everyone had their own profession... we had an idea of who we were..."

"It is easy to find a job for the minimal pay, even the most difficult one, this is not a problem. The problem is finding a suitable job."



One of the most frequently mentioned issues was the **language barrier**. Even after completing language courses and receiving certificates - ranging from beginner (A1) to upper intermediate level (B2) - many still feel that they don't have sufficient knowledge to communicate with their coworkers, read their contracts or speak up when facing injustice in the workplace.

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“Without knowledge of the language it is very difficult to find a job.”

“Even my part-time contract was in Polish.”

“Personally, it was hard to find a job, but I did. But without the language I find it quite challenging now. You definitely have to learn Polish.”

“There is a lot of work in cleaning for example, but without Polish it's difficult to find something better.”

“Even if you know the language a little bit, you are still offered hard jobs with low pay...”

“The main issue is that we aren't able to communicate in Polish, we can't come to work and talk with colleagues to solve some problems like we used to in Ukraine.”

“I have to say that the main problem is the Polish language. The lessons that we attend are A1-A2, B2 but they are not teaching [enough] of spoken language. We don't learn to verbally communicate ... with Polish people.”

“...I was treated a little different because I speak Polish, I understand and I communicate with them [Polish people]. Women who didn't speak [Polish] were treated very differently [than I was].”

Many respondents shared their experiences of **poor treatment in the workplace**, either by their managers or colleagues. They often did not receive proper contracts, were offered less than minimum wage (15 zł/hour), and did not receive health benefits, normal working hours or days off. It was frequently reported that employers treat Ukrainian employees poorly because they are seen as easily replaceable. Participants mentioned that they were desperate to earn any kind of salary even if it did not match the work-load, and that they were afraid to speak up for the fear of being let go. After working jobs that required a large amount of physical labour for very little pay, many people chose to stop working out of fear that their health would deteriorate.

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“I've been actively looking for a job since December 2022. I am a seamstress, and there are no suitable opportunities in Warsaw, only outside of Warsaw. So I'm looking for [something like] a dishwasher, this is something I can do. I've registered in the labour office, I'm looking on OLX [job search website] and I see some offers. But all of those are part-time and unofficial. I can't seem to find anything official yet.”

“We have no voice here. We can't fight for our rights. If money is deducted from my salary I can't ask why. And you continue to work and stay quiet because you understand that tomorrow you might be let go of and end up with nothing to live on. So you don't have any other choice.”

“[In the beginning] I worked 4 jobs, both officially and unofficially, because one would recruit me officially and another wouldn't. I made 2,000 zloty [per month]. How can I afford to rent [an accommodation]?”

“A job fitting to my abilities, for example, sufficient amount of work is not 10, not 12, not 13 or 16 hours but 8...I've worked in two places here in Poland, and I am very disappointed.”

“We called [different job offers] a million times and all we heard were rejections. Then at one point someone says yes, you can come. You come to a construction site and you are told you will be paid 17 zloty [per hour], if you work for a week you will get 22 zloty. You end up working for 1,5 months for 17 zloty and then you are told that part of your salary will be taken and that's it.”

“I want to say that you are not earning enough to rent on your own, buy clothes and food.”

“...Ukrainians mostly get part-time contracts. You don't have healthcare, you don't have days off...You are a slave”.

The perceived difficulty of finding work is another factor in participants' hesitance to relocate to smaller towns, given that they had already faced significant challenges in finding employment in a larger city like Warsaw. **Participants believed that in a smaller town these challenges would be exacerbated.**

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“There is no possibility of finding part-time jobs in smaller towns.”

“What's the point in moving to a smaller town? The price of accommodation [in Warsaw] and there is the same. But the salary in a smaller town is lower.”

“There are no well-paid jobs.”

“If it's a smaller town then the hourly rate is also lower. And less work, maybe you will have fewer hours. A larger city is better for this. For example, you can have a job and find something part time. People are coming to Warsaw to get a job, even Polish people themselves. Because you can get a job here.”

“If there is no possibility of finding [work in] my profession in Warsaw, then in a smaller town it probably would be even less possible.”



EMPLOYMENT

Out of those who voiced opinions on travelling for work outside of Warsaw, the majority said they were satisfied with commuting, however, if they were to relocate to a smaller town, **the majority said they would prefer to have a job in the same location rather than to commute.**

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“I work outside of Warsaw, I spend 1,5 hours [commuting], my employer pays for it. My oldest son is taking my other child to and from kindergarten on his way to school, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to work.”

“I get to work by three different types of transport so I have to get up at 4 A.M.”

“I work on the outskirts of Warsaw. It's about a 50 minute journey with three changes, metro and bus. But it's an okay route.”

“I was offered a job in Warsaw, so living outside of Warsaw is inconvenient. I would prefer to find accommodation in Warsaw.”

“[Commuting] is unrealistic. You have to take your child to school and then take them from school at 15-16 P.M., plus two hours to get to work, then eight hours of work.”



INTEGRATION AND ADAPTATION



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Integration and adaptation to life in Warsaw is another factor mentioned by participants when discussing challenges moving to a different location.

Availability of services and assistance, access to schools and overall familiarity with infrastructure were listed as reasons for staying in their current location.

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“I'm comfortable in this centre because everything is here. My child is going to school on his own, he has learnt Polish.”

“Children take it really bad, the relocations. They come from under bombings, it is very hard on them. My children started going to Polish school. They got used to the children, to teachers. There are assistants at schools I can contact. Everything is tied to the schools. If we move we have to start from scratch.”

“Great infrastructure, you can get everywhere. There is an app, it shows how to get to places. The travel card system is great.”

“...There are a lot of entertainment options, for when the child is on summer break, there will be places to show her.”

“Higher standard of living, well developed infrastructure, healthcare...”

“...My granddaughter is going to school here, I stayed for a surgery. I've adapted here.”

“After living in Warsaw you don't really want to live in a small town.”

“...In all honesty, I've been to several places, to villages, towns and at the moment with what I have in Warsaw, they will have to offer me something really interesting for me to move out.”



ACCOMODATION



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Accommodation was another integral factor mentioned by most respondents when asked about moving to a different location. Participants' experiences searching for accommodation or living outside of collective sites shaped their intentions and desire to remain in their current location.

Many respondents had negative experiences with the subsidiary programme (40+) when they first arrived in Poland. This programme allows Ukrainians to be accommodated in host families or in housing provided by Polish nationals for free, while their stay is compensated by the government with 40 zł/day per person. Some respondents went through multiple relocations within short periods of time or were treated poorly by their host families. Some participants mentioned that they were not sure if they were eligible for this type of housing, some did not know it was available in the first place, and others worried about being an inconvenience for or being mistreated by their hosts. There was also a smaller subset of participants who, once their stay in a host family was over, were not able to find any other option through the programme and resorted to staying in a collective site out of necessity. Another category consisted of those who lived in smaller towns while in the 40+ programme, but once it ended, they moved to Warsaw.

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“I lived with a Polish family, then changed locations 6 times until I got into this system of hostels...In the 4-5 months that I was changing accommodation I had enough of moving around, and now I don't want to move anywhere.”

“Our 40+ stay was over and we had to find an alternative because renting is too expensive, and my salary wouldn't have covered that. We found out about this centre and moved...We started having financial issues but here the accommodation is free, so that's why we're here, we don't want to ask our family in Ukraine to send us money.”

“40+ is inconvenient with all the moves.”

“There is fear [about living with a host family] because you are not sure [about your situation] or about the [host], they can treat you the way they see fit. And here [in a collective site] you feel more protected I think, more supported.”

“When I got into this hostel I didn't know that there was 40+.”

“Not every [host] family likes when something happens, when there is an ambulance, this is bothersome. I didn't want to make someone uncomfortable.”

“I've been living in this centre since the very beginning, I didn't know about 40+.”

There were several reports of people facing discrimination while looking for an apartment because of their nationality and/or the age of their children.

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“We lived in an apartment from March until June and then we were asked to move out and we didn't manage to find another apartment. We looked [for an apartment] on different resources but when we would arrive they would refuse because we had young children and because we were from Ukraine. This was our search for rented apartment, not via 40+ because at that moment we didn't know it existed.”

“...When we started looking for private accommodation it was too expensive and there was an issue because we had a baby, who was 1,5 years at that point.”

“We lived on the 40+ programme, but after it was over we were looking for accommodation, but not even for an apartment, just for a room because I wouldn't have been able to afford a whole apartment. I had a part-time job back then and was hoping to find at least something. But you would come to a meeting with a baby in a stroller and they would straight away say that it has already been rented out, that they are looking for students or that they prefer Polish [nationals]. They would also ask about full-time contract but I was working part-time. In the end I just gave up but still needed social support. This centre was recommended to me by the Red Cross.”



NEEDS AND ASSISTANCE IN CASE OF POTENTIAL RELOCATION



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Though the majority of respondents were very content with living in Warsaw and would not consider moving out of the city, there were those who would consider relocation if certain needs were met and assistance provided. After this round of FGDs, several **key needs were identified:**

- **affordable accommodation;**
- **financial aid;**
- **close proximity of healthcare facilities, pharmacies and shops;**
- **good infrastructure;**
- **employment perspectives (suitable for their skillsets);**
- **access to childcare facilities (including specialized);**
- **a case manager to provide guidance, assist with the transition and advise on different matters.**

Another interesting finding was the need for community. Humanitarian support was identified as crucial factor in planning for the future by vulnerable participants, however, it was not mentioned as a factor by non-vulnerable participants.*

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“I would need money and help with transporting my belongings. In the first three months I would need more financial support, then after that I don't have to rely on that. If I get paid, I wouldn't need that much of financial assistance. I also would need a person to help me or guide me, I feel safer with a friend or someone else.”

“I would have moved to a different city if there were healthcare facilities, not a village where there weren't any.”

“Doctors, medical services to be available and in close proximity.”

“For people who have children – schools and kindergartens are needed. For me personally a job and an accommodation. Then I would have moved.”

“It is important for me to know if there is a school for my child. And of course the living conditions.”

“I would like to say that I would move if there was an interesting job offer.”

“...For example, if there was my profession there then I would think about it.”

“I would move if there was a place to live and a job.”

“[Good] salary, guaranteed workplace. And someone to give me a push.”

“I would move if there was high enough salary. So the time I spend on travel [to and from work] was compensated, so that I know I have a good salary.”

“It would be good if there were volunteers or some sort of a coordinator. So you could ask [your questions].”

“It would be less stressful, if there was someone you could ask about something or someone who could give advice...[This kind of] support.”

“We would like to [move], but we need assistance with looking for a job, with adaptation, looking for a kindergarten, financial support. We need help managing.”

“Hypothetically we could move, my husband can get a job ... but here we have doctors. This is very convenient. If something happens I know where to go. It is easier here because there are coordinators who help with our day-to-day questions.”

“I think [relocation] is possible when there are coordinators, when you know who to come to, when there are social workers. Otherwise I simply wouldn't be able to handle it on my own.”

“Communication, psychologist, some kind of community to understand that you are not alone in this situation.”



INFORMATION SOURCES AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Most frequently mentioned sources of information used for decision-making were thematic groups on social media (Telegram, Facebook, Viber), word of mouth, personal experience and relatives and friends.

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[I value] my own experience. I read [through] groups but the opinions are always different so until you see it for yourself you can't make a choice.”

“You can ask a question [in an online group], there are many groups on work and accommodation on Facebook, Instagram and Viber, everything is there.”

Some participants mentioned the tensions between Ukrainians who were living in Poland prior to war and those who arrived after February 24 2022. Participants emphasized the importance of having an open dialogue between the two groups.

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“The problem of people who came earlier, before the war, it really exists. It is plain envy, that they had to go through the whole process to get where they are. Meaning the hard jobs, negative decisions when applying for karta pobytu etc. And here come the Ukrainian women, after the beginning of the war, who come here all ready to go.”

“...We have left [Ukraine] to save our lives and lives of our children. And we left for this reason and not with the reasons other Ukrainians [came here before].”

“They've come here to earn money, we've come here to live and survive.”

METHODOLOGY

This report is intended to provide IOM with key information on the challenges and barriers to seeking employment that Ukrainian refugees face, as well as the key factors that are taken into consideration when deciding to remain in or move from collective accommodation, and whether to continue living in a large city (Warsaw) or to relocate to a smaller municipality.

The data used to produce this report was generated from focus group discussions (FGDs), which were organized in three of the largest collective sites in Warsaw. In total, 90 participants took part in this study.

The approach chosen for the analysis of data collected during FGDs was framework analysis, or a so-called thematic approach, which allowed the themes to develop both from the questions and from the narratives of FGDs participants.

TARGETED POPULATIONS

Participants were assigned to groups based on demographic characteristics that corresponded with different living situations and potential vulnerabilities. The groups were (1) people who are employed or who can work/looking for work, (2) elderly persons (according to DTM data, this demographic is overrepresented in collective sites), (3) single women (without family support in Poland) with children under 5, and (4) persons with disabilities or those having household members with disabilities. This approach allowed participants to voice their needs and preferences in a safe space with other persons in relatively similar situations.

* Participants in group 1 were identified as non-vulnerable (due to their ability to earn income), while participants in groups 2-4 were identified as vulnerable due to the additional barriers they face in finding employment and transitioning to private accommodation.

DATA SOURCES

The discussions took place in three of the largest sites in Warsaw during the period of assessment from the 25th-27th April 2023. There were three groups organised in each site (with an exception of Woloska B, where only two were organised), with the amount of participants ranging from 5-13. Each FGD was facilitated, observed and recorded by three DTM members. This exercise did not exclude TCNs from participation, however, none were present during the discussions. Participants were chosen through convenience sampling. The FGDs were advertised through posters and via Telegram channels, which are the most used source of information for the refugees within the collective sites. Those willing to participate did so by signing up at the collective site reception desks.

DATA GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

Convenience sampling brings some limitations such as under/over representation of the population and the inability to generalize the results. For example, many who are living in collective sites not included in the FGDs (such as sites in towns outside of Warsaw), might have similar or different experiences in terms of barriers preventing them from moving out from collective sites but were not included in the study. Therefore, the analysis may not be completely representative of the total refugee population (falling under criteria mentioned previously). However, despite limitations, convenience sampling was pursued for time-efficiency and ease of implementation to gather results.



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