

DISPLACED, TWO WEEKS ON: WHAT NEXT?

1 April 2022

Background and Context

As of 1 April 2022, more than 4 million refugees have left Ukraine in search of safety in neighbouring countries and further afield (UNHCR). As part of IMPACT's wider work responding to the humanitarian information needs resulting from the crisis, IMPACT is conducting a longitudinal study with refugees who leave Ukraine, interviewing them first at border crossing points in partnership within UNHCR and then calling them every two weeks to understand changing situations, needs and priorities.

As of the end of March, we have interviewed more than 3000 people fleeing Ukraine at the border with Poland, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia and Hungary. Data collection at border points is continuous, so our database continues to grow. Our first set of follow-up interviews conducted via phone is also ongoing.

This bulletin presents the key concerns raised by 190 respondents interviewed through the first set of follow-up interviews between 10 and 31 March 2022. Adopting an iterative methodology, interviews are open-ended, to allow respondents to speak to what is most important to them. To make sure we ask the right questions, we adapt questions in each interview round, based on the key concerns raised by respondents during previous interviews.

The five topics below represent the key areas of concern for 190 respondents interviewed two weeks after crossing the border. We will investigate these issues further in the second round of follow-up interviews, which will be conducted one month after respondents first crossed the border. The output will be available in mid-April 2022.

HOUSING

Two weeks after having crossed the border, **the majority of our respondents were staying with friends and family.** Most did not pay for their accommodation. Out of a total of 190 respondents 178 stayed with family and/or friends and of all respondents only 29 reportedly paid for their current housing situation. Many respondents felt this set-up was temporary only and were concerned that they would have to find a more suitable longer-term living situation quickly. For parents in particular, finding a more sustainable living situation was important to be able to sign up their children to a local kindergarten or school.

Safe housing is of particular concern as most refugees are women and children. They may be at particular risk of abuse staying in domestic situations where government and other support organisations have less reach and oversight is limited.

WORK

While many respondents were not sure how long they would want to remain in their present location, most reported that a priority for them was to find work. This was because they had either lost their jobs when they fled, or because the existing income from their Ukraine-based (remote) job was not sufficient to cover their needs in the country of displacement, which had higher living costs than Ukraine.

Gaining a better understanding of respondents' work situation few weeks on will be important to understand their ability to support themselves and their families in the longer term, as well as to uncover potential risks tied to informal work and other forms of labour.

CHILDCARE & EDUCATION

Of our 190 respondents, 175 were women and a total of 180 respondents (out of 190) reported that children were traveling with them. **Parents were very concerned to find childcare opportunities and secure access to school for their children.** This was primarily motivated by parents' wish for their children to re-gain a sense of normality as soon as possible, as well as to make sure children do not lose out on education. At the same time, many single mothers also reported that finding a childcare arrangement/school for their children was a pre-requisite for them to work and make a living and, as such, of immediate concern to them.

ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION

When we spoke to respondents, most were in the Schengen area, where Ukrainians are entitled to free movement with no need to regularize their stay for up to 90 days. **Out of 190 respondents, only 18 had registered for temporary protection (TP) in the EU or were in the process of doing so.** As more time passes, we would like to see whether more individuals register or whether some decide to claim asylum, allowing them to access a special set of rights and entitlements (such as healthcare and social assistance), as well as allowing them to work on a longer term basis.

INTENTIONS

Almost all respondents were uncertain about what to do next: whether to stay, leave or return home. In the second round of follow-up interviews we aim to understand how individuals' intentions develop and whether some have already moved further, taking advantage of their right of freedom of movement within Schengen. More than one month on since the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine, we will also investigate whether and how respondents' intentions to stay, go, and return – and to where – change.

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Refugees' Voices

39-year old woman, travelling with her daughter, at the time of interview in Hamburg, Germany

I knew some friends from my hometown who live here- they offered me to stay with them, so we came here. I am trying to register for refugee status, but I don't know how. I worry about money, we need support. We were afraid that we might be sent to another city if we claim asylum, so we took away the documents when we came there. Since our friends told us that it is better to wait, we are not doing anything yet. [...] I would like to start working. There are people who offer small jobs, but I need to do it legally. I don't know the language, so I use an app. My daughter has currently stopped her university courses, but I hope she will continue remotely.

44-year-old woman, travelling alone, at the time of interview in Munich, Germany

First I went to Moldova. I had friends with me, they were going to to the UK (they are already settled now). There was no place for me in Molodva, but there were friends who came here, to Germany. Now I'm just going to the immigration center: I plan to get an apartment as a refugee. You need to speak German to work here, on a good level. In general, I would like to return to Ukraine, I have a job there. I know English, but I don't know German at all. So, the most difficult thing here is what to do, how to make a living.

I have no real plans to leave the country, but I want to know more about the UK: I know English and I think that would make a big difference. I am an auditor by training,

I have a lot of experience. I know I can find a good job.

36-year-old woman, travelling alone, at the time of interview in Prague, Czech Republic

I've come here because friends of mine wanted to come here and we left together- they have already settled. I am waiting for my family to arrive to decide what next. My most urgent problem right now: find work. Then a place to live. And I need to think where I want to live - in which country I mean. I may stay or go to some other country. I know English, my level is good enough.

I have two weeks to decide everything. The country I end up in may depend on where I find a job.

25-year old woman, travelling alone, at the time of interview in a town close to Krakow, Poland

It was the closest country for me to reach. I just got on the train and that's all. I didn't even know where I was going. I don't have anyone who helps, I haven't applied for documents.

I will be looking for a job until I find it, in Warsaw, I don't like it in this village. I'd work in almost any field. I don't speak Polish, that makes it difficult.

About IMPACT

IMPACT Initiatives is a Geneva based think-and-do-tank, created in 2010. IMPACT's teams implement assessment, monitoring & evaluation and organisational capacity-building programmes in direct partnership with aid actors or through its inter-agency initiatives, REACH and Agora.

Headquartered in Geneva, IMPACT has an established field presence in over 25 countries. IMPACT's team is composed of over 400 staff, including 180 full-time international experts, as well as a roster of consultants, who are currently implementing over 90 programmes across Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Central and South-East Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Methodology

This brief presents findings from a pilot research project exploring the experiences of refugees fleeing Ukraine to neighbouring countries and further afield over time. Through its humanitarian data initiative REACH, IMPACT, in partnership with UNHCR, continuously monitors refugees crossing borders from Ukraine. As refugees cross, they are first interviewed on their most urgent needs at the border to inform the immediate humanitarian response. Many give their consent to stay in touch with our field teams for follow-up interviews every two weeks over the phone.

The data collection tool administered during each round includes some indicators which remain the same, to ensure longitudinal analysis, and a core section which changes each time, to reflect the changing situation and key concerns of respondents. Follow-up interviews are conducted by trained enumerators, who conduct the interviews in respondents' mother tongues. Data collection at the border, as well as follow up interviews, is done continuously, to ensure comparability of refugees' profiles as they cross at different times, originate from different places, and end up in different locations.

The present product is based on the first 190 interviews conducted as part of this larger research stream. It presents the key issues raised by respondents, which will be investigated in further depth in the second set of follow-up interviews.