



INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND
DEVELOPMENT "POLITA"



FOUNDATION
R.I.W.E.
REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN BULGARIA: RISKS OF VULNERABILITY, THB/ GBV AND EXPLOITATION, ACCESS TO SUPPORT AND PERCEPTIONS OF 2027 TRANSITION

Analytical Report based on Online Survey Data

Organization: R.I.W.E. – Refugees International Women Empowerment, under MAP Program by New Women Connectors (in partnership with and funded by UNHCR)

Country: Bulgaria

Sample size: 454 respondents (anonymous online survey, Google Forms)

Dates: 25 November – 03 December 2025

Dissemination: local community Telegram groups, Facebook groups, Viber groups.

Supported by: Institute for Democracy and Development "Polita", European Association of Ukrainian women, Foundation for Access to Rights - FAR, Dignita Foundation, Animus Association, Fund Good in Bulgaria, Open Heart Foundation, New Women Connectors.

01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This analytical report presents the results of an online survey conducted among 454 Ukrainian refugees residing in Bulgaria between 25 November and 03 December 2025. The study examines patterns of vulnerability, labor exploitation, trafficking in human beings (THB), gender-based violence (GBV), online risks, access to services, institutional trust, and perceived risks linked to the planned end of the EU Temporary Protection regime in March 2027.

The sample consists predominantly of women (92.3%), most of whom are of working age and living with children or extended family members. Respondents are geographically concentrated along the Black Sea coast - mainly in Varna, Burgas, and Nessebar, although the survey also reached several groups in Plovdiv through peer-to-peer sharing. Most participants have lived in Bulgaria for more than one year, providing insights rooted in direct experience with the national labor market, social services, and local institutions.

Across the dataset, economic pressure emerges as a central driver of vulnerability. More than one in ten respondents (11.0%) report being offered unclear employment or housing arrangements, including offers involving barter or implied services. Nearly one quarter (24.0%) carry debts or financial obligations that heighten susceptibility to unsafe work, while 29.5% report unmet medical needs - an indicator of intersecting financial and systemic barriers.

More than 1/3 of respondents know someone who has experienced serious workplace violations from employers in Bulgaria. These findings align with known patterns of underreporting among migrant and refugee populations, particularly women working in informal or seasonal sectors.

Digital environments represent a growing risk ecosystem. One in four respondents (24.2%) has personally encountered or knows someone exposed to suspicious online recruitment, sexualized messaging, coercive communication, or “easy money” job offers. Telegram groups used by Ukrainian communities serve as both vital support spaces and unmoderated environments where illicit recruitment, sexual exploitation attempts, and criminal networks actively operate.

01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The data also reveal significant barriers to seeking help, including language obstacles, bureaucratic procedures, doubts about institutional effectiveness, fear of sharing personal information, and a lack of Ukrainian- or Russian-language information about available services. Trust in Bulgarian institutions and NGOs remains low (59.3% skepticism), while Ukrainian-led organizations are perceived as more accessible and culturally aligned.

Looking ahead to 2027, respondents express profound uncertainty and fear. A combined 65.6% expect exploitation risks to rise after the end of Temporary Protection. Many foresee losing legal status, housing, access to work, and social support, while others fear being compelled to accept unsafe employment or falling into irregularity within the EU. These perceptions underscore the urgent need for clear communication and strengthened protection measures well before 2027.

The findings point to a complex risk landscape shaped by economic hardship, administrative barriers, digital threats, institutional mistrust, and legal uncertainty. The report concludes with targeted recommendations for Bulgarian authorities, international organizations, and civil society actors, and highlights the critical bridging role played by Ukrainian RLO initiatives such as R.I.W.E. in mediating trust, providing information, and supporting community-level resilience.

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METHODOLOGY

This report is based on data collected through an online survey conducted among Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons currently residing in Bulgaria. The survey was administered via anonymous Google Form and was open from 25 November to 03 December 2025. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personal identifiers were required, and respondents could optionally leave contact details if they wished to participate in follow-up focus groups or volunteer activities.

The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions and covered the following thematic areas:

- socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, household composition, residence);
- migration and integration trajectories;
- exposure to labor exploitation and unsafe work practices;
- experiences or perceptions related to trafficking in human beings (THB) and gender-based violence (GBV);
- online risks and technology-facilitated exploitation;
- access to services and barriers to help-seeking;
- trust in institutions and NGOs;
- expectations and concerns related to the planned end of the EU Temporary Protection regime in March 2027.

A total of 454 valid responses were collected. The survey was disseminated through community-specific Telegram groups, Facebook groups, Viber channels, and networks maintained by Ukrainian volunteers and partner organizations. Support with dissemination was provided by the Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR), Dignita Foundation, Animus Association, Fund Good in Bulgaria, and Open Heart Foundation.

02

METHODOLOGY

Given the recruitment method and the concentration of respondents in coastal municipalities, the sample is not statistically representative of all Ukrainians living in Bulgaria. Individuals without access to the internet or those in situations of extreme exploitation may be underrepresented. Nevertheless, the sample size is substantial, and the consistency of patterns across responses provides strong, experience-based insights into risks, needs, and perceived vulnerabilities within the Ukrainian refugee population.

The findings should be interpreted as indicative, highlighting emerging trends, barriers, and risk factors. Rather than offering statistical generalization, the survey serves as an early-warning tool and a foundation for more systematic, longitudinal and participatory research, particularly in the period preceding and following the transition expected in 2027.

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PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

3.1. Location

Respondents are primarily concentrated along the Black Sea coast, particularly in municipalities where large Ukrainian communities have formed since 2022. The distribution is as follows:

- Varna + Golden Sands – 239 respondents (52.6%)
- Burgas – 65 respondents (14.3%)
- Nessebar – 57 respondents (12.6%)
- Other areas – 64 respondents (14.1%), including other cities in coastal region and Plovdiv
- Sveti Vlas – 26 respondents (5.7%)
- Pomorie – 3 respondents (0.7%)

While the survey primarily reached coastal regions - characterized by seasonal labor, hospitality-sector employment and high mobility of refugee households - it was subsequently shared in several Plovdiv-based Telegram groups, expanding the geographic diversity of the sample. The concentration along the coast is consistent with national data showing that Bulgarian seaside municipalities host a significant share of Temporary Protection holders and most of them are women with children.

3.2. Age and Gender

The sample is predominantly female, with 419 women (92.3%) and 33 men (7.3%). A very small number preferred not to disclose their gender.

Age distribution:

- 26–40 years – 222 respondents (48.9%)
- 41–60 years – 178 respondents (39.2%)
- 60+ years – 35 respondents (7.7%)
- 18–25 years – 19 respondents (4.2%)

03

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This demographic structure reflects broader trends among Ukrainian refugees in the EU, where women of working and caregiving age constitute the majority of displaced adults. This has implications for vulnerability profiles, labor market participation, access to services, and help-seeking behavior.

3.3. Household Composition and Length of Stay

Most respondents live with children and other family members, demonstrating the family-based nature of displacement and the prevalence of single-parent or female-headed households. Several respondents noted that living arrangements are shaped by economic constraints, childcare responsibilities, and a need for mutual support within Ukrainian networks.

A substantial proportion have lived in Bulgaria for more than one year, indicating accumulated experience with local labor markets, employers, service providers, and administrative systems. This makes their assessments of risks and institutional interactions more grounded and reliable.

It is also notable that coastal regions - especially Varna and Burgas - have slightly higher rates of women living with partners, could be linked to the presence of maritime - sector workers and long-term binational families.

Detailed distributions can be found in the annex, including tables for time in Bulgaria, number of household members, and additional comments provided in the open-ended responses.

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KEY FINDINGS

The survey reveals a complex and evolving risk environment for Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria, shaped by economic precarity, administrative barriers, digital vulnerabilities, limited institutional trust and heightened uncertainty related to the anticipated end of the EU Temporary Protection regime in 2027. Although based on a non-representative sample, the consistency of quantitative patterns and the depth of qualitative comments indicate systemic issues that merit urgent attention.

4.1. Economic Pressure and Exposure to Risky Offers

Economic insecurity is a central driver of vulnerability.

- 11 % of respondents report receiving unclear job or housing offers, including arrangements involving barter or expectations of “services.”
- 24.0% carry debts or financial obligations, increasing the likelihood of accepting unsafe or unregulated work.
- 29.5% needed medical assistance but did not receive it, reflecting barriers in access to health care and the compounding effect of financial strain.

These factors create conditions in which individuals: particularly single mothers, women with unstable housing, and newcomers with limited Bulgarian language skills may feel pressured to enter informal labor arrangements that increase exposure to exploitation. Even when such offers do not directly result in abuse, their prevalence signals a saturated environment of opportunistic recruitment practices targeting refugees. Policy implication: Strengthening labor protection measures and early identification mechanisms in high-risk sectors (hospitality, cleaning, construction, care, etc.) is essential to prevent exploitation linked to economic coercion.

04

KEY FINDINGS

4.2. Labor Exploitation and Unsafe Work Environments

While direct victimization rates are moderate, visibility of exploitation within Ukrainian networks is high:

- 36.3% know someone who experienced unsafe work, non-payment of wages, excessive pressure or violence from an employer in Bulgaria.
- 16.7% report excessive working hours.
- 15.2% report working without a contract.
- 10.1% experienced discrimination.
- 6.6% faced unsafe working conditions.

Smaller but significant proportions report clear THB-aligned indicators:

Around **6.6%** indicated potential coercive control (e.g., control over finances, movements, or communication)- one of key THB indicators. Some of this may reflect domestic or intimate-partner control, but it nonetheless signals elevated vulnerability.

Qualitative responses reflect broader structural problems: informal employment, seasonal labor dependency, lack of contracts, and a belief that reporting abuses “will not change anything,” discouraging help-seeking.

Policy implication: Enforcement of labor law, multilingual complaint mechanisms and community-based monitoring are essential to address systemic underreporting.

4.3. Trust, Information Gaps and Barriers to Seeking Help

Barriers to seeking support are widespread and multi-layered:

- 53.7% – language barrier
- 51.3% – doubts about the effectiveness of institutions
- 26.9% – bureaucratic obstacles
- 25.3% – mistrust toward institutions

04

KEY FINDINGS

Only:

- 3.5% would contact a Bulgarian NGO or hotline
- 14.3% would contact a Ukrainian NGO or hotline

Respondents consistently note a lack of clear information in Ukrainian or Russian, confusion about institutional responsibilities, and fear of sharing personal data. Many rely on informal networks rather than formal services, even when facing exploitation or violence.

The extremely low intention to contact Bulgarian service providers highlights a critical trust and accessibility deficit, rather than lack of need. Ukrainian-led organizations remain the most trusted intermediaries.

Policy implication: Bulgarian institutions must expand multilingual outreach, adopt simplified referral pathways and integrate Ukrainian mediators to rebuild trust and increase service accessibility.

4.4. Online Risks and Technology-Facilitated Exploitation

Digital spaces, particularly Telegram, play a central role in communication within Ukrainian communities.

However, they also function as high-risk environments with minimal oversight. Respondents report exposure to anonymous job offers, sexual recruitment, “quick money” schemes, and illegal proposals (transporting migrants, drug handling, escort services).

Such environments disproportionately may affect:

- women,
- single mothers,
- unemployed individuals,
- adolescents and youth,
- persons under financial pressure.

04

KEY FINDINGS

These trends mirror GRETA (2024) and NCCTHB findings showing the digital sphere as a major entry point for THB involving Ukrainian nationals.

Policy implication: Digital safety campaigns, monitoring support for TG/FB/Viber admins, and partnerships with cyber police are critical components of THB prevention. As well as this issue needs more deep monitoring and evaluation approach.

4.5. Gender, Vulnerability and the Role of Men

Respondents recognize that vulnerability extends beyond women:

- 35.7% believe Ukrainian men are vulnerable to violence and exploitation.
- 47.6% believe men are “partly / possibly” vulnerable.
-

While refugee women, especially single mothers, face heightened risks linked to economic dependence, unpaid care work and isolation, men encounter:

- unsafe work environments,
- employer violence,
- pressure in the construction and transport sectors,
- digital recruitment into illegal activities
- illegal migration routes

Gendered risk patterns therefore require nuanced, not one-dimensional, programming. Policy implication: THB/GBV interventions should address both women’s and men’s vulnerabilities, adapting to sector-specific risks.

Gendered risk patterns therefore require nuanced, not one-dimensional, programming.

Policy implication: THB/GBV interventions should address both women’s and men’s vulnerabilities, adapting to sector-specific risks.

04

KEY FINDINGS

4.6. Anticipated Risks After the End of Temporary Protection (2027)

Concerns related to the end of Temporary Protection in 2027 are profound:

- 27.5% expect a significant increase in exploitation
- 38.1% expect a partial increase
-

Open-ended responses express:

- fear of losing legal status,
- fear of losing housing and medical access,
- anxiety about returning to Ukraine under unsafe conditions,
- concerns about falling into irregular status,
- expectations of being forced into any available work, including unsafe jobs.

Respondents draw clear links between legal insecurity and vulnerability to exploitation, highlighting 2027 as a potential systemic shock to the protection landscape.

Policy implication: Bulgarian authorities, EU actors and NGOs must provide clear, timely communication and develop transition plans that prevent increased exploitation risks as early as possible.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the survey point to structural challenges that require coordinated, multi-actor interventions. The recommendations below are tailored to Bulgarian authorities, international organizations and civil society actors, with specific attention to the role of Ukrainian-led organizations such as R.I.W.E. Foundation.

5.1. Recommendations for Bulgarian Authorities and Institutions

Strengthen access to information and rights awareness

- Provide clear, accessible, multilingual information (especially Ukrainian and Russian), on labor rights, GBV/THB risks, social services and complaint mechanisms.
- Disseminate information through channels actively used by refugees, focusing on Telegram and Facebook groups.
- Create and disseminate an official “service map” for Ukrainian refugees, outlining roles of institutions and NGOs in understandable and easy language.

Enhance labor market protections

- Expand proactive labor inspections in sectors with high concentrations of Ukrainian workers (hospitality, construction, cleaning, agriculture, caregiving, etc.).
- Ensure inspectors have access to Ukrainian/Russian-speaking mediators during field visits.
- Promote standardized employment contracts and monitor compliance with minimum wage, working hours and occupational safety requirements.
- Create and disseminate an official “service map”, Q. and A. document outlining roles of institutions and NGOs in understandable and easy language where Ukrainian refugees may get support in violation cases.

Improve reporting mechanisms and legal protection

- Simplify procedures for reporting exploitation, abuse or discrimination.
- Guarantee that victims can safely report violations without risk to their legal status or accommodation and that their reports will be accepted.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish monitoring and evaluation system.
- Strengthen coordination between labor inspectorates, police, social services and NGOs to ensure survivor-centered responses.

Invest in capacity-building for frontline professionals

- Provide mandatory training for police officers, labor inspectors, social workers and municipal staff on trauma-informed, gender-sensitive and refugee-sensitive approaches, THB/GBV prevention and response.
- Develop/update/adapt and include modules on online exploitation, technology-facilitated trafficking and coercive control.

Prepare for the 2027 transition

- Ensure early, transparent and multilingual communication to prevent panic, misinformation, secondary displacement and elevated exposure to exploitation, survival strategies, and trafficking risks.
- Develop and publicly communicate clear scenarios for post -Temporary Protection legal pathways, including residence, employment, education, documentation and access to essential services.
- Establish an inter-institutional monitoring mechanism (government, NCCTHB, international partners, Bulgarian and Ukrainian NGOs) to track changes in homelessness, irregular work, GBV/THB vulnerability, school dropouts and family separation as 2027 approaches.
- Introduce preventive safeguards for high-risk groups (single mothers, elderly refugees, people in debt, persons with chronic illness or unstable housing) to reduce pressure to accept unsafe work or further migration under unsafe conditions.
- Maintain and legally safeguard minimal social guarantees for those who remain in Bulgaria after 2027, including access to:
 - medical insurance and healthcare,
 - legal employment,
 - education for children,
 - essential social assistance,
 - protection services (GBV/THB support).

05

RECOMMENDATIONS

- These guarantees are critical to preventing irregularity, homelessness and increased exploitation.
- Implement systematic, continuous monitoring of the Ukrainian population in Bulgaria, including:
 - regular collection of demographic data (given the lack of reliable national statistics),
 - periodic surveys and rapid assessments to capture emerging risks,
 - community-based reporting mechanisms for early detection of vulnerabilities.
- Ensure structured consultations with Ukrainian-led organizations, to integrate community perspectives into transition planning and to use trusted refugee intermediaries for communication, outreach, and risk identification.
- Develop rapid-response plans in municipalities with high refugee concentrations (Varna, Burgas, Nessebar, Sveti Vlas, Plovdiv, Sofia) to sustain service provision and prevent sudden gaps in protection during the transition period.

Include Ukrainian-led organizations in national coordination

- Integrate specific Ukrainian initiatives on THB, GBV and refugee integration into municipal and national coordination bodies.
- Recognize community-led structures as trusted outreach actors capable of bridging information and trust gaps.

5.2. Recommendations for International Organizations and Donors

Support Ukrainian-led community organizations

- Provide multi-year, flexible funding for initiatives that are trusted within refugee communities and address gaps in state services.
- Strengthen peer-to-peer outreach, community-based research, safe spaces and psychosocial support.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand protection and legal aid services

- Increase the presence of international training programs and best-practice exchange initiatives, ensuring capacity-building on GBV, THB and refugee protection for Bulgarian authorities, NGOs and frontline workers.
- Increase international attention to the situation of THB and GBV affecting Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria, including monitoring, advocacy and targeted programming in high-risk regions.
- Fund legal counselling and case management for documentation, work permits, residence issues and family reunification – especially ahead of 2027.
- Ensure that survivors of GBV/THB have access to shelters, medical care, psychosocial support and safe referral pathways.
- Develop and support long-term integration pathways, including access to employment, education and stable residence options.

Invest in digital safety and online risk prevention

- Develop and wide spread sustainable awareness campaigns for refugees on online recruitment, coercion, grooming and illegal job offers.
- Collaborate with cyber police and tech platforms to reduce trafficking-related content targeting Ukrainian refugees.
- Support training for Telegram/Facebook group administrators on digital threat recognition.

Enable longitudinal data collection

- Fund annual surveys and qualitative studies to track shifts in vulnerability, labor market participation and access to services.
- Support rapid assessments in the months preceding and following the 2027 transition.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3. Recommendations for Civil Society and Community-Based Actors

Expand peer-to-peer and community support

- Establish safe, accessible spaces (online and offline) where refugees can discuss concerns, access information and receive support without stigma.
- Activate Ukrainian refugee community for their rights protection and refugee meaningful participation.
- Train community leaders and volunteers to recognize signs of exploitation, spot potential victims of THB and GBV, enhance and support referral pathways.

Strengthen cooperation between Bulgarian NGOs and Ukrainian initiatives

- Facilitate joint outreach, co-led workshops, bilingual information sessions and shared case management approaches.
- Combine institutional knowledge of Bulgarian systems with the trust and cultural proximity of Ukrainian organizations.

Target high-risk groups

- Develop programs for single mothers, elderly refugees, youth, persons with disabilities, individuals with debt and those experiencing housing insecurity.
- Provide sustainable vocational guidance, Bulgarian language courses, digital literacy and employment mediation.

Integrate digital safety into all programming

- Include modules on identifying suspicious online offers, protecting personal information and recognizing grooming behaviors.
- Develop programs and train group administrators of Telegram/FB channels in moderating high-risk content with gaining access to expert consultation from cyber police and other authorities operating in prevention and protection of THB and GBV.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen community-based early warning systems

- Encourage reporting of emerging threats and patterns observed within informal networks.
- Collaborate with municipalities and national coordination bodies to ensure that community insights feed into early response strategies.

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LIMITATIONS

The findings presented in this report should be interpreted with the following methodological limitations in mind:

Sampling limitations

The survey used a convenience sample disseminated primarily through online platforms (Telegram, Facebook, Viber) and Ukrainian community networks. As a result, the sample is **not statistically representative** of all Ukrainians residing in Bulgaria. Individuals without internet access, some persons with disabilities, those living in institutional settings (hotels “by program”) or remote areas, those who do not use messengers and groups, and persons experiencing severe exploitation or isolation may be underrepresented.

Geographic concentration

Most responses were collected from coastal municipalities (Varna, Burgas, Nessebar, Sveti Vlas), where Ukrainian communities are particularly active online. Although the survey reached some respondents in Plovdiv and other regions, the geographic distribution is uneven.

Self-reporting and sensitivity bias

Questions related to exploitation, GBV, THB and online risks are highly sensitive. Some respondents may:

- underreport negative experiences due to shame, fear or mistrust,
- avoid answering specific items (“prefer not to answer”),
- interpret concepts such as coercion or unsafe work differently.

Avoidance responses are especially important: in sensitive topics, non-response may itself reflect discomfort, fear or exposure to risk.

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LIMITATIONS

Lack of statistical weighting

Data were not weighted by demographic factors such as age, gender, duration of stay or employment sector. Therefore, findings should be viewed as **indicative patterns**, not population-level estimates.

Online-only data collection

Reliance on digital platforms excludes individuals who do not use social media or who may be digitally illiterate, elderly, or in more severe forms of labor or domestic exploitation where device access is restricted.

Despite these limitations, the survey provides **robust, experience-based insights** into the risk environment and barriers faced by Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria. The consistency of patterns across both quantitative and qualitative responses, as well as alignment with European and national reports (GRETA, UNHCR, Dignita 2024), suggests that the identified issues are significant and warrant further investigation.

The results should be understood as an **early-warning assessment** that highlights structural vulnerabilities requiring immediate attention, especially in the context of the upcoming 2027 transition.

Conclusion & Acknowledgements

Conclusion

The findings of this survey reveal a complex protection landscape for Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria, shaped by economic precarity, limited access to services, low institutional trust, and the structural uncertainty surrounding the planned end of the EU Temporary Protection regime in 2027. Vulnerabilities are multidimensional and intersect across gender, digital exposure, financial strain, and labor market conditions.

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CONCLUSION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although not intended as a representative study, the consistency of patterns across quantitative responses and the depth of qualitative comments highlight systemic gaps in protection and integration. Many respondents articulate a strong sense of insecurity, not only in relation to labor exploitation or online risks, but also regarding their legal future, housing stability, lack of integration and overall well-being.

The survey illustrates that vulnerability is not confined to isolated incidents: it is produced and amplified by structural barriers in access to information, language, institutional support and rights-based services. At the same time, the responses demonstrate resilience, community cohesion, and the critical role of peer networks and Ukrainian-led organizations such as R.I.W.E. Foundation in bridging gaps left by formal systems.

As Bulgaria and the EU prepare for the 2027 transition, it is essential that protection measures, communication strategies and integration pathways are strengthened to ensure that refugees do not fall into irregularity, homelessness or exploitative labor markets. The insights generated through this assessment offer a foundation for evidence-based advocacy, programming and policy development aimed at safeguarding the rights and dignity of Ukrainian refugees.

Acknowledgements

R.I.W.E. extends its sincere gratitude to all 454 respondents who participated in this survey. Many shared experiences that were personal, difficult or emotionally sensitive. Their openness and trust made it possible to develop an evidence-based understanding of the risks and challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria.

We express special thanks to New Women Connectors and the MAP Programme (funded by UNHCR), and UNHCR for their strategic support, empowerment framework and commitment to amplifying refugee-led initiatives. Their contribution enabled the implementation of this assessment and strengthened the capacity of R.I.W.E. to serve as a community bridge.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are also deeply grateful to Dobryana Petkova and Tatiana Kotlyarenko, whose professional guidance and encouragement were instrumental throughout the project's development and implementation.

Our appreciation extends to the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) whose expertise, collaboration and advisory support enriched the analysis and helped align this work with national and regional anti-trafficking priorities.

We further thank our colleagues: Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR), Dignita Foundation, Animus Association, Fund Good in Bulgaria, and Open Heart Foundation for their support in disseminating the survey and helping us reach diverse segments of the Ukrainian community across Bulgaria.

We would also like to acknowledge the essential role played by administrators of Telegram/Viber channels and FB community groups, who kindly allowed the survey to be disseminated through their platforms. Their cooperation enabled wide outreach and made it possible to collect diverse perspectives from across Bulgaria.

This study was supported by the Institute for Democracy and Development "PolitA". Special thanks are extended to Kateryna Odarchenko, Head of the Institute for Democracy and Development "PolitA" and political strategist, for her institutional and informational support. The author is also deeply grateful to Iryna Kopanytsia, member of the Board of Trustees of R.I.W.E. and women's rights advocate, for her strategic advice and continuous engagement throughout the research process.

Appreciation is further extended to the European Association of Ukrainian Women and Head and Founder of EAUW - Violetta Dvornikova for their valuable support and contribution to strengthening the research's relevance and impact within the Ukrainian refugee community in Europe.

R.I.W.E. Foundation remains committed to strengthening protection mechanisms, promoting community resilience, and advancing the meaningful participation of refugee women in all stages of decision-making. By elevating women's leadership and ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of displaced Ukrainians are actively included in policy development, programming and advocacy, R.I.W.E. contributes to more equitable, gender-responsive and rights-based systems at the local, national and international levels.

ANNEX 1

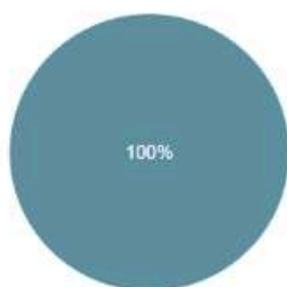
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

“I confirm and understand that: I participate voluntarily; I can skip any question or stop the survey at any time; My answers will be used only in aggregated form; No personal data will be collected without my permission.”

Я подтверждаю и понимаю, что: Я участвую добровольно; Я могу пропустить любой вопрос или прекратить опрос в любое время; Мои ответы будут использоваться только в обобщенном виде; Никакие персональные данные не будут собираться без моего разрешения.

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



 Подтверждаю

- **I confirm 100%**

This introductory consent question verifies that respondents voluntarily agree to participate in the survey and understand their rights, including anonymity, the ability to skip questions, and the absence of personal data collection. It serves as an ethical safeguard aligned with GDPR and standard research protocols. The fact that 100% of 454 respondents confirmed indicates full compliance and that all included responses come from individuals who explicitly consented. This question belongs to the Ethical Compliance / Informed Consent section of the report.

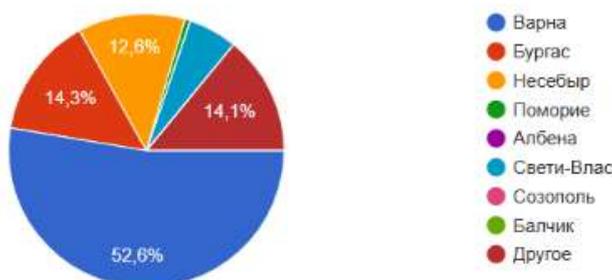
ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

City of residence

Город проживания
454 ответа

Копировать диаграм



- Varna - 52.6%
- Burgas - 14.3%
- Nessebar - 12.6%
- Pomorie - 0.7%
- Albena - n/a
- Sveti Vlas - 5.7%
- Sozopol - n/a
- Balchik - n/a
- Other - 14.1%

This question identifies the geographic distribution of respondents mostly along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast + Plovdiv. The majority of respondents - **52.6% -reside in Varna**, due to R.I.W.E. Foundation operational area though it aligns with existing demographic data showing that coastal region hosts the largest Ukrainian refugee community in the region. Burgas (14.3%) and Nessebar (12.6%) represent the next most common locations, indicating that refugee settlement is concentrated in a few major coastal municipalities. This information is essential for interpreting local service access, identifying where risks of exploitation or GBV may be geographically concentrated, and informing municipal-level policy recommendations.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

The “Other” category reflects smaller coastal cities and unintended methodological factor (Plovdiv).

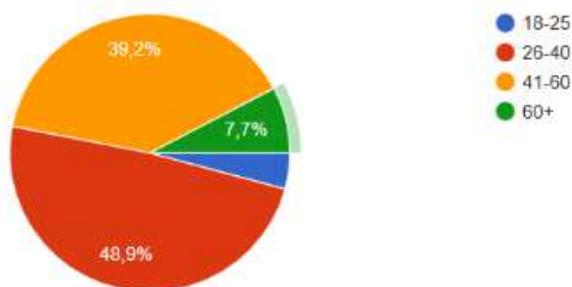
!The Varna category encompasses respondents living both in the city and in the Golden Sands (Zlatni Pyasatsi) resort area.

Note: The survey was initially designed for respondents residing in Varna, Burgas, and nearby Black Sea municipalities. However, during dissemination, the questionnaire link was shared in several Plovdiv-based Telegram groups, which led to a number of responses from outside the coastal region. Since modifying answer options after survey launch is methodologically unacceptable, the original geographic response categories were preserved. As a result, a portion of respondents from Plovdiv and other inland locations selected “Other,” which explains the higher percentage within this group. This should be taken into account when interpreting the geographic distribution data.

Age

Возраст
454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



This question captures the age distribution of survey participants. The largest group is 26–40 years old (**48.9%**), followed by 41–60 years old (39.2%), indicating that the majority of respondents are adults of working age with likely caregiving and economic responsibilities. Younger adults (18–25) comprise only a small proportion, while 7.7% are aged 60+, representing older refugees who may have heightened vulnerability to social isolation, health concerns, and barriers in accessing services. This age profile aligns with broader refugee demographic trends among Ukrainians in Bulgaria, where women aged 25–55 represent the core group. Understanding age structure is essential for tailoring GBV, labor exploitation prevention, and integration interventions.

ANNEX 1

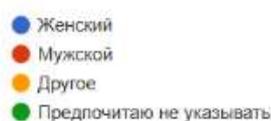
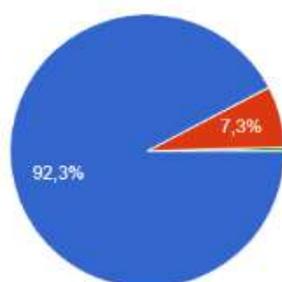
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Gender

Пол

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Female - 92.3%
- Male - 7.3%
- Other - n/a
- Prefer not to say - 0.4%

The gender distribution shows that the survey sample is overwhelmingly **female (92.3%)**, which somehow may reflect the demographic composition of Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria, where women and children constitute the majority due to wartime mobility restrictions for men. Only 7.3% identify as male, and minimal representation appears in “Prefer not to say.”

This **gender profile is highly relevant for GBV and trafficking risk analysis**, as women, particularly those living abroad without family support networks, face elevated vulnerabilities in labor exploitation, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation contexts. The gender imbalance also strengthens the validity of findings related to women-specific needs, safety concerns, and barriers to seeking help.

It is important to note that the survey was initially designed for women and was initially disseminated primarily in women-focused Telegram groups in Varna and proposal to answer the survey was formulated as “Dear women...”. However, several men expressed interest in participating and completed the questionnaire as well. This explains the presence of a small number of male respondents in the dataset, despite the survey’s original focus on women.

Their inclusion does not affect the validity of the findings, but it should be taken into account.

ANNEX 1

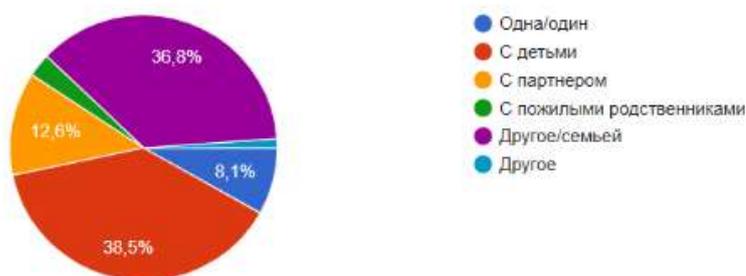
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Household composition (who do you live with)

Состав семьи (с кем вы проживаете)

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Alone - 8.1%
- With children - 38.5%
- With a partner - 12.6%
- With elderly relatives - 2.9%
- Other / with extended family - 36.8%
- Other - 1.1%

This question identifies the household structure of respondents, which is a key factor influencing vulnerability, caregiving burden, and access to support services. The largest groups are **those living with children 38.5%** and other/ living with extended family or other (for example roommates, hostels, other families etc.) 36.8%+1.1%, reflecting the multi-generational and caregiving-heavy composition typical among displaced Ukrainian households. A smaller share (12.6%) live with a partner, and a very small proportion live with elderly relatives, highlighting potential care responsibilities. Only **8.1% live alone**. Understanding household composition is vital for assessing protection risks, economic pressures, and barriers related to childcare, mobility, and help-seeking behaviors.

Note: The pie chart displays two 'Other' entries due to Google Forms auto-generation. Both refer to one conceptual category, which has been merged during analysis. The 'Other / extended family' category (36.8%) and Other (1.1%) reflects mixed living arrangements, including multi-family households, shared accommodation with friends or other Ukrainian refugees, and other non-standard household structures. This highlights the adaptive strategies used by displaced families to reduce housing costs and ensure safety, but may also indicate overcrowding and dependency patterns that increase vulnerability.

ANNEX 1

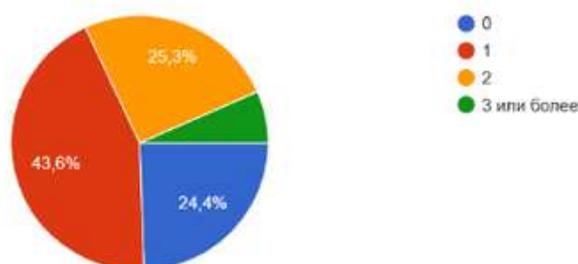
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

How many children live with you?

Сколько детей проживает с вами?

454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- 0 - 24.4%
- 1 - 43.6%
- 2 - 25.3%
- 3 or more - 6.6%

This question assesses the number of dependent children in the household, which directly affects economic vulnerability, care responsibilities, and exposure to stress factors among refugee families. **The largest group (43.6%) live with one child**, followed by households with no children (24.4%) and two children (25.3%). A smaller but significant group, those with **three or more children (6.6%)**, may face heightened risks related to financial strain, housing insecurity, and limited access to childcare services.

Single mothers with two or more children, especially those with young children or infants, face markedly reduced opportunities for formal employment due to childcare responsibilities and lack of accessible support services. This group is therefore at heightened risk of economic dependency, informal or exploitative labor, and overall social vulnerability.

These findings align with broader trends among Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria, where many displaced women are single mothers or primary caregivers. Understanding the number of children is essential for designing targeted support in GBV prevention, labor exploitation risk reduction/THB prevention and integration programming.

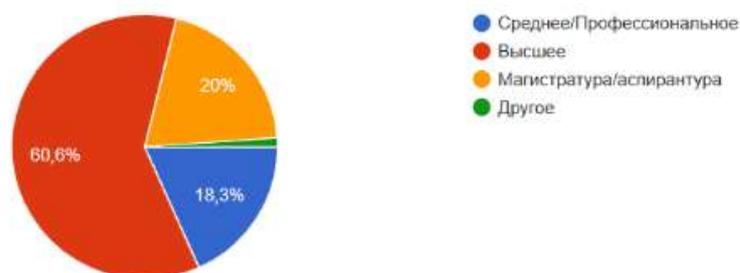
ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Education level

Образование
454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Secondary / vocational education - 18.3%
- Higher education (Bachelor's level) - 60.6%
- Master's degree / postgraduate studies - 20%
- Other - 1.1%

This question captures the educational profile of respondents and shows a notably high level of formal education. A majority 60.6% hold higher education, and an additional 20% have a Master's degree or postgraduate qualification, meaning that over 80% of participants possess tertiary education. This aligns with broader trends showing that **displaced Ukrainians in the EU tend to have higher-than-average educational attainment**. Only 18.3% reported secondary or vocational education, and a very small share selected "Other."

These findings are crucial for understanding labor market integration challenges: despite high qualifications, many refugees face barriers such as hardships with recognition of diplomas, language limitations, unwilling of the employer to hire migrants, precarious employment and etc., increasing vulnerability to labor exploitation and trafficking risks.

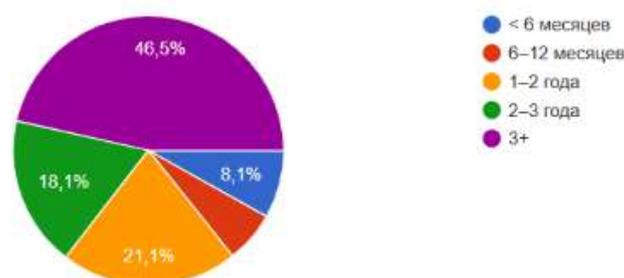
ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

How long have you been living in Bulgaria?

Сколько времени вы живёте в Болгарии?
454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Less than 6 months - 8.1%
- 6–12 months - 6.2%
- 1–2 years - 21.1%
- 2–3 years - 18.1%
- 3+ years - 46.5%

This question measures the duration of stay in Bulgaria, which is critical for understanding levels of adaptation, access to services, and changes in vulnerability over time. **Nearly half of respondents (46.5%) have lived in Bulgaria for over three years**, indicating a significant long-term refugee population that has remained since the early stages of displacement. Another large segment (21.1%) has been in Bulgaria for 1–2 years, and 18.1% for 2–3 years, meaning that the majority of respondents have medium- to long-term integration experience. Only a small group **(8.1%) arrived less than six months ago**.

Note: Although only 8.1% of respondents indicated that they arrived in Bulgaria within the past six months, it is important to consider the broader context. According to UNHCR, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Europe continues to grow, particularly after Ukraine allowed men aged 18–22 to leave the country. However, this group is likely underrepresented in our survey, which affects the demographic picture reflected in the data. The absence of accurate and up-to-date statistics on the real number and structure of Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria (at least in open sources) highlights the need for systematic and continuous collection of demographic data as a separate priority.

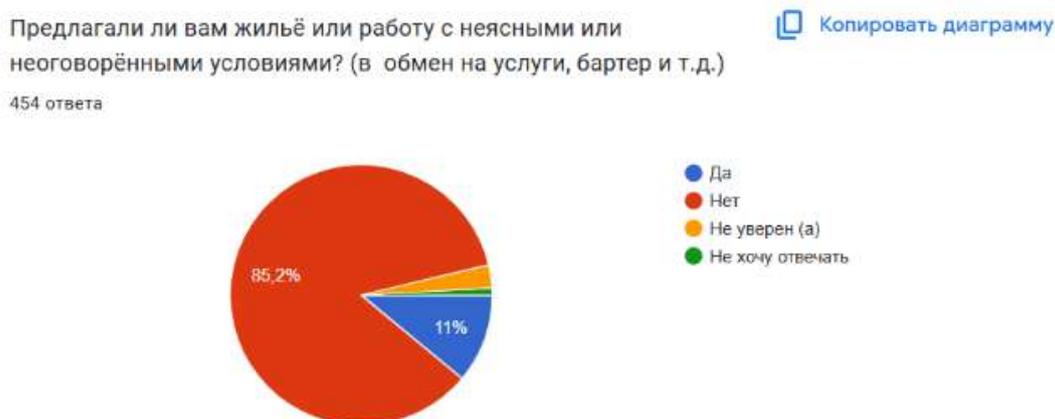
ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Newly arrived refugees often face acute vulnerabilities, while those with longer stays may encounter chronic pressures such as burnout, financial instability, or stagnation in legal and employment status. Given this wide distribution of length-of-stay categories, it is essential to conduct repeated measurements annually in order to monitor how needs evolve over time and to identify emerging risk trends. Integration trajectories shift substantially after the first year, making longitudinal data especially important.

Moreover, many integration services in Bulgaria such as free language courses, or **certain support schemes are limited to refugees who have been in the country for less than 12 months**. As a result, individuals who have lived in Bulgaria longer (and who form the majority of the Ukrainian population) often fall outside eligibility criteria and remain without institutional support, despite facing **persistent socio-economic vulnerabilities**.

Have you ever been offered housing or work with unclear or unspecified conditions? (in exchange for services, barter, etc.)



- Yes - 11%
- No - 85.2%
- Not sure - 2.9%
- Prefer not to answer - 0.9%

This question directly assesses exposure to ambiguous, exploitative, or high-risk proposals, which are recognized indicators of vulnerability to gender based violence (GBV), labor exploitation, sexual exploitation, and trafficking in human beings (THB).

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

According to the results, **11% of respondents reported receiving such offers**. It is a significant and concerning proportion in a sample of 454 people. Even more importantly, 2.9% indicated they were “Not sure,” which suggests potential grooming, coercive ambiguity, or offers they could not fully interpret due to language barriers, awareness or fear. The majority (85.2%) reported no such offers, but this does not exclude unreported or unrecognized risks, especially given the high share of women, single parents, and long-term refugees in the dataset.

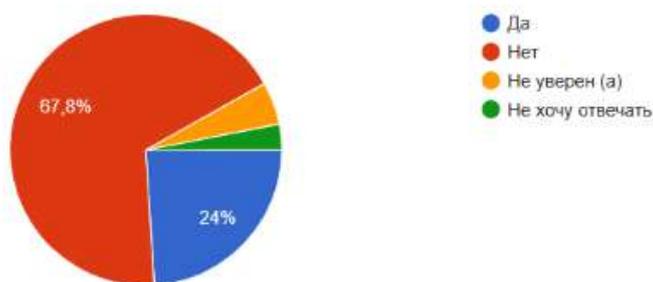
These findings clearly signal the presence of exploitative recruitment patterns in coastal Bulgaria and highlight the need for preventive messaging, awareness raising campaigns, spotting potential victims, safe reporting channels, and strong NGOs cooperation with main anti-trafficking actors (NCCTHB, Animus Association, IOM, Dignita and others). The question is central for recommendations related to GBV/THB risk mitigation.

Do you have any financial debts/obligations that create pressure?

Есть ли у вас финансовые долги/обязательства, создающие давление?

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Yes - 24%
- No - 67.8%
- Not sure - 5.1%
- Prefer not to answer - 3.1%

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

This question measures financial vulnerability, a factor strongly associated with heightened risk of labor exploitation, dependency-based coercion, GBV and susceptibility to trafficking.

According to the results, almost **quarter (24%)** of respondents report having financial debts or obligations that cause pressure. This is a significant proportion, especially in a refugee population where income instability and limited employment opportunities are common.

The majority (**67.8%**) report no financial pressure, though self-reporting may underrepresent hidden debt, informal borrowing, or reliance on acquaintances/landlords etc. A smaller percentage (8.2%) indicated **“Not sure”** or **“Prefer not to answer”**, which may reflect stigma, uncertainty, or fear - factors often observed in populations at risk of exploitation.

Overall, the data highlight that at least **one in four respondents experiences serious financial stress**, reinforcing the need for targeted socio-economic support and monitoring for debt-related vulnerabilities in THB and GBV risk assessments.

Have you encountered violations of labor legislation in Bulgaria? (select all that apply)



ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- Non-payment of wages - 9.5%
- Lack of a contract -15.2%
- Retention of documents by a third party - 0.7%
- Pressure or coercion - 3.3%
- Restriction of freedom of movement - 0.9%
- Unsafe working conditions - 6.6%
- Excessive working hours / overly long shifts - 16.7%
- Discrimination - 10.1%
- Threats or intimidation - 2.6%
- Other - 7%
- Not applicable - 64.5%

This multi-select question assesses respondents' exposure to labor rights violations, an important indicator of potential labor exploitation and trafficking in human beings (THB). Although 64.5% selected "Not applicable," this high share likely reflects the large proportion of respondents who are not currently employed, including single mothers with young children, women engaged in informal or episodic work, and those who have not yet entered the labor market. Therefore, the remaining responses should be interpreted with particular attention, as they represent individuals who have direct labor market exposure.

Among those who have worked in Bulgaria, the most commonly reported violations include: Excessive working hours – frequently associated with coercive, unsafe, or exploitative labor arrangements. Lack of a contract - a high-risk condition strongly linked to informal employment, denial of rights, and increased vulnerability to exploitation. Discrimination and non-payment of wages - recurring structural issues noted in sectors with high concentrations of refugees. Unsafe working conditions - particularly concerning given refugee employment in caregiving, hospitality, cleaning, and seasonal work.

More severe red-flag indicators of potential trafficking also appear, though in smaller yet significant proportions: Pressure or coercion (3.3%) Threats or intimidation (2.6%) Restriction of freedom of movement (0.9%) Retention of documents (0.7%) as the key global indicators of THB.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

The fact that 70.5% reported no unmet needs does not eliminate systemic issues, as many refugees may rely on self-treatment, delay care, or avoid seeking help due to fear of costs or other reasons.

Unmet medical needs can increase risks related to:

- deterioration of chronic illnesses and the development of preventable complications,
- mental health crises, including anxiety, depression, and burnout,
- GBV-related consequences (e.g., untreated trauma, physical injuries, or reproductive health issues),
- heightened vulnerability to exploitation (e.g., inability to work, dependency on employers or landlords for basic support),
- reduced capacity to care for children, which further amplifies stress and economic dependency,
- difficulties and bureaucratic barriers in obtaining TELK disability certification, which limits access to benefits, employment protections, and long-term treatment,
- hospitalization challenges for single mothers, who often have no one to leave their child(ren) with, resulting in delayed or avoided medical care even in urgent situations,
- significant challenges in accessing continuous care, medications, and specialized treatment for children with severe or incurable chronic conditions, including lack of specific specialists, limited availability of long-term therapies, high out-of-pocket costs, and bureaucratic obstacles in securing consistent follow-up care.

These gaps place substantial emotional and financial burdens on caregivers and can lead to deterioration of the child's health. This situation may also serve as a significant vulnerability point for THB/GBV exposure, as caregivers under extreme stress, lacking support, or facing high medical expenses may become more susceptible to coercive job offers, dependency-based exploitation, or other high-risk arrangements.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, please indicate the reason(s) (select all that apply). * optional question



- Lack of documents - 3%
- Lack of insurance - 27.5%
- Language barrier - 34.7%
- Cost - 40.1%
- Inability to reach the medical facility / transport difficulties - 10.2%
- Quality of services - 32.9%
- Bureaucracy - 24%
- Other - 23.4%

Only 167 of 454 respondents (36.8%) answered this optional question, indicating selective engagement likely driven by the sensitivity or relevancy of the topic. This question explores **specific barriers** that prevented refugees from receiving needed medical care: an essential indicator for health-system accessibility and structural vulnerability analysis.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Among the 167 respondents who reported unmet medical needs:

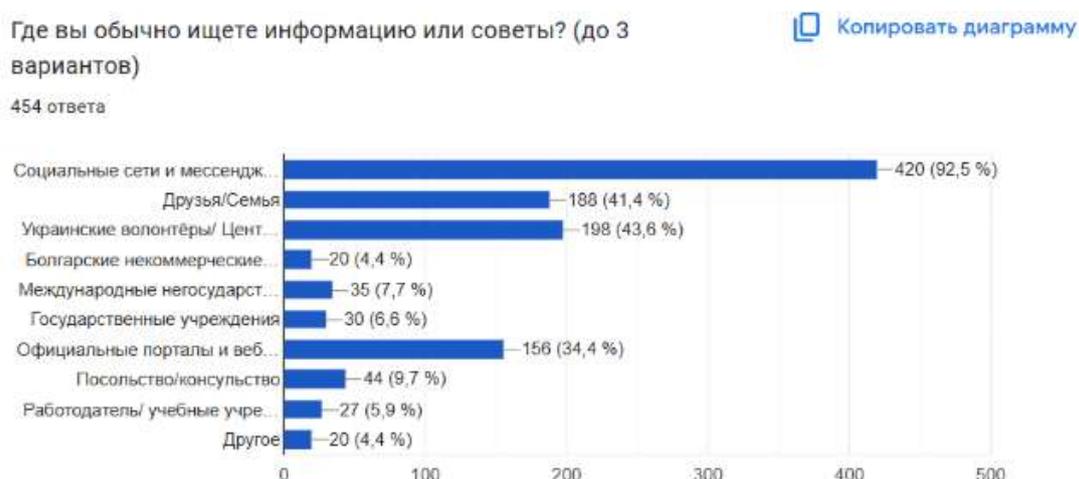
- Cost (40.1%) is the leading barrier, confirming that financial constraints remain a major obstacle despite the formal protections under Temporary Protection status. A number of essential medical services are not covered by the NHIF (H3OK)—including certain diagnostic tests, specialist consultations, and the option to choose a doctor in a hospital—resulting in significant out-of-pocket expenses for refugees.
- Language barrier (34.7%) is the second most common challenge, demonstrating the need for interpreters, translated medical materials, and culturally competent service provision.
- Quality of services (32.9%) and lack of insurance (27.5%) further highlight systemic gaps in the health system’s capacity to serve refugees.
- This category also likely includes individuals who cannot afford to pay their monthly health insurance. Only children under 18 and adults over the age thresholds (63+ for women and 65+ for men) do not pay health insurance. For others the monthly contribution is slightly above 40 BGN, creating a financial burden for unemployed or low-income refugees.
- Bureaucracy (24%) and “Other” (23.4%) suggest both administrative complexity and a range of individual cases that fall outside standard service pathways.
- Transport difficulties (10.2%) disproportionately affect families with children, elderly individuals, and refugees living outside major urban centers, where health facilities are limited or poorly connected.
- Lack of documents (3%), while less common, represents a critical red flag for at-risk groups such as newly arrived individuals or those with irregular paperwork, factors that may compound other vulnerabilities.

Overall, the findings underline that Ukrainian refugees face multi-layered barriers: financial, linguistic, administrative, and logistical which collectively reduce access to essential healthcare. These barriers also increase vulnerability to exploitation, deteriorating health, and unmet GBV/mental health needs.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Where do you usually look for information or advice? (up to 3 options)



- Social media and messengers - 92.5%
- Friends / family - 41.4%
- Ukrainian volunteers / community centers - 43.6%
- Bulgarian non-profit organizations - 4.4%
- International NGOs - 7.7%
- Government institutions - 6.6%
- Official portals and websites - 34.4%
- Embassy / consulate - 9.7%
- Employer / educational institutions - 5.9%
- Other - 4.4%

The results show an extremely strong dependence on digital informal networks:

- 92.5% rely on social media and messengers, highlighting both the efficiency and vulnerability of informal, unverified channels.
- 43.6% seek information from Ukrainian volunteers / community centers, indicating trust in peer-led structures rather than formal institutions.
- 41.4% rely on friends and family, reinforcing the importance of social networks within the diaspora.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

In contrast, engagement with formal structures is much lower:

- Official portals and websites (34.4%) are used by only one-third of respondents.
- Government institutions (6.6%), Bulgarian NGOs (4.4%), and international NGOs (7.7%) show very low usage, suggesting limited awareness, visibility, accessibility or trust.
- Embassies/consulates (9.7%) and employers/educational institutions (5.9%) also play a minor role.

These patterns indicate:

- A strong reliance on informal channels, increasing exposure to misinformation, scams, or exploitative/illegal job offers.
- Weak integration into Bulgarian institutional information ecosystems, which may contribute to unawareness of rights, services, and protective mechanisms.

Ukrainian-community Telegram groups also contain a high volume of messages from bots or anonymous accounts offering high-risk and illegal activities, including sexual services, drug sale or delivery, transport of irregular migrants, recruitment into unregistered or criminal businesses, and tasks linked to drug trafficking.

These environments expose refugees to considerable THB-related risks, as such offers often target individuals experiencing financial hardship, social isolation, or limited access to formal employment.

ANNEX 1

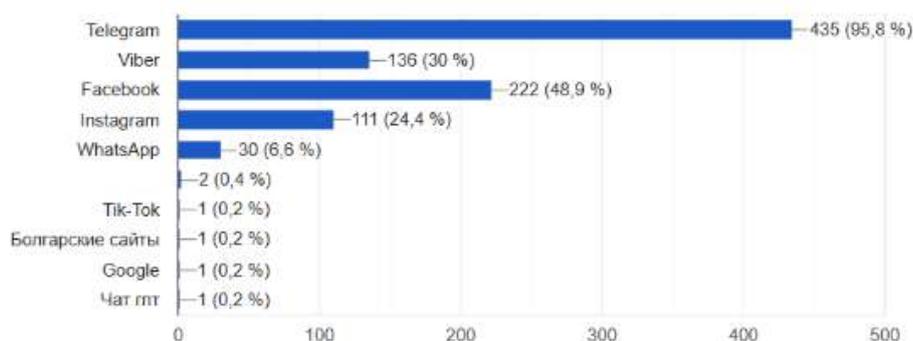
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Which 2 social media or messenger platforms do you use most often to obtain information?

Какие 2 платформы социальных сетей/мессенджеров вы используете чаще всего для получения информации?

[Копировать диаграмму](#)

454 ответа



- Telegram - 95.8%
- Viber - 30%
- Facebook - 48.9%
- Instagram - 24.4%
- WhatsApp - 6.6%
- Written in manually by respondents (each 0.2%)
- TikTok - 0.2%
- Bulgarian websites - 0.2%
- Google - 0.2%
- ChatGPT - 0.2%
- Other - 0.4%

The data shows an **overwhelming reliance on Telegram (95.8%)**, making it the dominant communication channel among Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria. Facebook (48.9%) and Viber (30%) function as secondary platforms, while Instagram (24.4%) is used more selectively, mostly for social updates rather than practical information. Usage of WhatsApp (6.6%) is comparatively low, and other sources such as TikTok (0.2%), Bulgarian websites (0.2%), Google (0.2%), and ChatGPT (0.2%) appear only marginally.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

“Other” accounts for 0.4%. TikTok and the other 0.2% entries were written in manually by respondents, indicating isolated, individual information-seeking habits rather than consistent platform use across the refugee community.

The extremely low engagement with Bulgarian websites or formal information channels indicates a near-exclusive dependence on informal digital ecosystems. This pattern is consistent with broader trends among refugee communities who rely on familiar-language platforms rather than host-country institutions.

Such dependence significantly increases exposure to:

- misinformation,
- scams and fraudulent “job offers,”
- illegal or exploitative recruitment attempts,
- prostitution
- unverified medical, legal, and administrative advice.

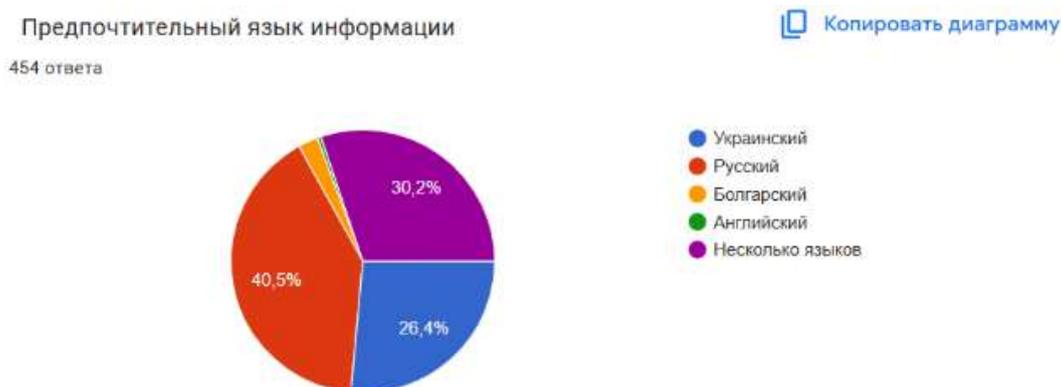
Given that Telegram is both the primary and most unregulated platform, these findings underline the critical need for targeted official communication, awareness-raising, and verified information channels within Telegram itself, where refugees are actually present and seeking guidance. The Telegram dominance may be explained by the platform’s ease of creating groups and channels, which enables rapid information sharing and facilitates community self-organization among refugees.

Note: This survey was also disseminated through Facebook and Viber, which may partially explain the secondary levels of engagement observed on these platforms.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Preferred language for receiving information



- Ukrainian - 26.4%
- Russian - 40.5%
- Bulgarian - 2.4%
- English - 0.4%
- Multiple languages - 30.2%

Russian is the most preferred language (40.5%), followed closely by Ukrainian (26.4%). An additional 30.2% selected multilingual formats, which can be assumed to primarily mean combined Ukrainian- and Russian-language communication. Bulgarian and English are barely preferred, which explains **communication gaps with institutions**.

For effective outreach, information must be consistently available in **Ukrainian and Russian**, with simplified or visual Bulgarian versions for integration purposes.

Note: This language preference structure may also reflect the fact that a significant proportion of Ukrainians who settled in Bulgaria, particularly along the Black Sea coast, traditionally come from predominantly Russian-speaking regions of southern Ukraine.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS

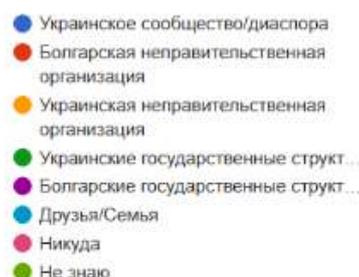
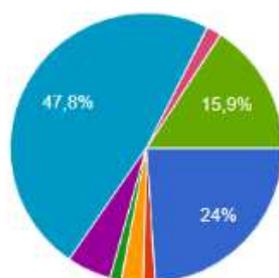
TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

If you needed help, where would you turn first?

Если бы вам понадобилась помощь, куда бы вы обратились в первую очередь?

454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- Ukrainian community / diaspora - 24%
- Bulgarian NGO - 1.3%
- Ukrainian NGO - 2.6%
- Ukrainian state institutions - 1.3%
- Bulgarian state institutions - 5.3%
- Friends / family - 47.8%
- Nowhere - 1.8%
- I don't know - 15.9%

The strongest reliance is on **friends/family (47.8%)**, showing the dominance of informal support networks.

24% would approach the Ukrainian diaspora/community.

Governmental institutions and Bulgarian and Ukrainian NGOs show **extremely low trust and visibility**, which is consistent with barriers reported elsewhere in the dataset.

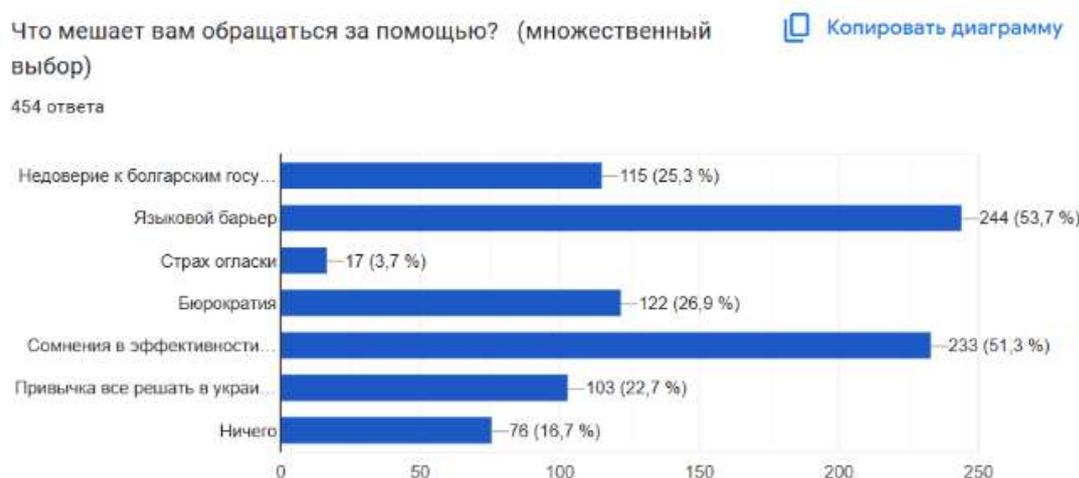
15.9% of respondents do not know where they would ask for help.

This highlights the need for intermediaries, community mediators, and improved communication between Bulgarian/Ukrainian services and the refugee community.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

What prevents you from seeking help? (multiple choice)



- Distrust toward Bulgarian institutions - 25.3%
- Language barrier - 53.7%
- Fear of publicity / exposure - 3.7%
- Bureaucracy - 26.9%
- Doubts about effectiveness - 51.3%
- Habit of solving everything independently in Ukrainian community - 22.7%
- Nothing - 16.7%

Top barriers:

- Language barrier (53.7%)
- Doubts in effectiveness (51.3%)
- Bureaucracy (26.9%)
- Distrust of institutions (25.3%)

Combined with previous results, this demonstrates systemic **institutional mistrust and communication barriers**. “Fear of publicity” appears in 3.7%, which may relate to GBV stigma, THB situations or migration status concerns. The language barrier emerges as the primary vulnerability, influencing nearly every aspect of integration and significantly limiting refugees’ ability to navigate healthcare, employment, education, and administrative systems as well as increasing reliance on informal networks, heightening exposure to misinformation, and potentially raising risks of GBV and THB-related exploitation due to dependence on unverified intermediaries.

ANNEX 1

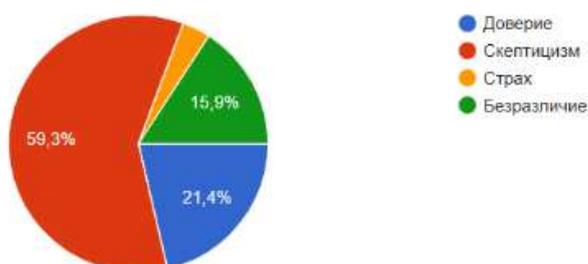
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

What is your first reaction when you hear about help from Bulgarian authorities or NGOs?

Какова ваша первая реакция, когда вы слышите о помощи от болгарских властей или НПО?

[Копировать диаграмму](#)

454 ответа



- Trust - 21.4%
- Skepticism - 59.3%
- Fear - 3.5%
- Indifference - 15.9%

The majority react with **skepticism (59.3%)**, reflecting deep distrust of Bulgarian institutions and NGOs.

Only **21.4%** express trust, while 15.9% are indifferent.

Fear (3.5%) is relatively low but relevant for trauma-informed programming.

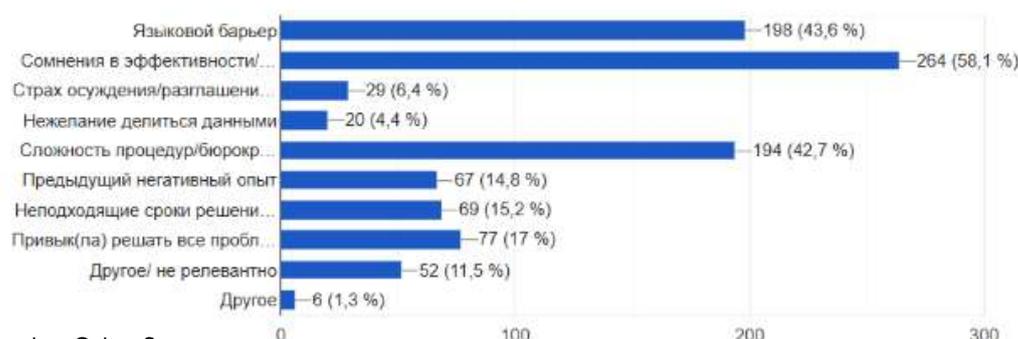
This aligns with trends across the survey: refugees rely heavily on informal networks and avoid official institutions.

If you don't trust or hesitate, why? (up to 3 options)

Если вы не доверяете или колеблетесь – почему? (до 3)

[Копировать диаграмму](#)

454 ответа



ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- Language barrier - 43.6%
- Doubts about effectiveness - 58.1%
- Fear of judgment / disclosure - 6.4%
- Unwillingness to share personal data - 4.4%
- Difficult procedures / bureaucracy - 42.7%
- Previous negative experience -14.8%
- Inconvenient processing time - 15.2%
- Habit of solving problems independently - 17%
- “Other” (not relevant) -11.5%
- Other - 1.3%

Top reasons for mistrust:

- Doubts about effectiveness (58.1%)
- Language barrier (43.6%)
- Complex procedures (42.7%)

These results show refugees perceive Bulgarian authorities and NGOs as **beurocratic, complicated, and ineffective**, which discourages help-seeking and increases vulnerability to exploitation.

Note: The difference arises because the two percentages come from different questions.

53.7% – “**What prevents you from seeking help?**” (general barriers to seeking any help)

43.6% – “**If you do not trust or hesitate, why?**” (specific reasons for distrust toward Bulgarian institutions/NGOs)

The first measures overall obstacles, while the second measures factors of institutional distrust; therefore the figures differ. In the first case, respondents think about **any support system**: the Ukrainian community, friends, volunteers, Ukrainian NGOs, Telegram groups, Bulgarians, and institutions – all together.

In the second case, respondents focus only **on Bulgarian authorities and Bulgarian NGOs**.

Therefore, the language barrier appears lower, because people avoid Bulgarian institutions **not only due to language**, but also because of:

- doubts about effectiveness (58.1%) – the leading reason
- bureaucracy (42.7%)
- previous negative experiences (14.8%)

This means that the language issue is **not the only and not the primary factor** shaping distrust in Bulgarian institutions; its impact is distributed among several other barriers.

ANNEX 1

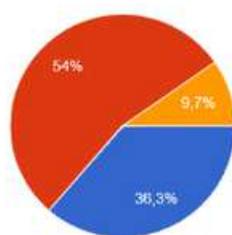
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Do you know anyone who has faced unsafe work, wage non-payment, pressure, or abuse from an employer?

Знаете ли вы кого-нибудь, кто сталкивался с небезопасной работой, невыплатой заработной платы, давлением или насилием со стороны работодателя?

[Копировать диаграмму](#)

454 ответа



● Да
● Нет
● Предпочитаю не отвечать

- Yes - 36.3%
- No - 54%
- Prefer not to answer - 9.7%

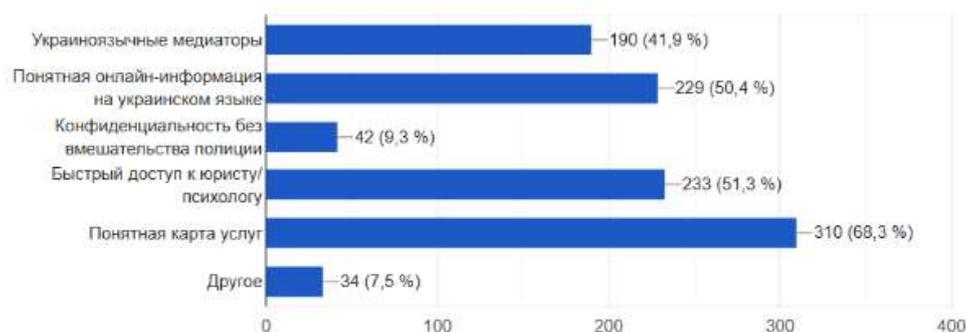
More than 1/3 (36.3%) know someone who has experienced serious workplace violations, which is a strong indicator of **community-wide exposure to exploitation**. 54% said “no”, but taking into consideration risk of underreporting, the actual number may be higher.

What would make it easier for you to seek help? (up to 3 options)

Что могло бы облегчить обращение за помощью (до 3х вариантов)?

[Копировать диаграмму](#)

454 ответа



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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- Ukrainian-speaking mediators - 41.9%
- Clear online information in Ukrainian - 50.4%
- Confidentiality without police involvement - 9.3%
- Fast access to a lawyer/psychologist - 51.3%
- A simple, clear service map - 68.3%
- Other - 7.5%

Which organizations have you heard of? (multiple choice)



- Animus - 2.4%
- Dignita Foundation - 0.9%
- FAR – Foundation for Access to Rights - 29.5%
- IOM Bulgaria - 55.5%
- UNHCR Bulgaria - 42.3%
- Caritas - 72%
- Red Cross - 92.1%
- NCCTHB (National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings) -3.3%
- Other - 0.9%
- I don't know - 3.5%

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

The rest of the answers written in manually by respondents include (each 0.2%)

Ukrainian House - 0.2%

- Ukraine Renovation Foundation (transliteration of “Фондация Юкрейн Реновейнш”)- 0.2%
- СЖББ (abbreviation not clearly identifiable) - 0.2%
- Compass - 0.2%
- “Mi Razom” - 0.2%
- Open Heart (Открите сърце) - 0.2%
- Ukrainian house - 0.2%
- “No one gives a damn about you. Not officially, but it exists.” - 0.2%
- Just don’t remember the exact name, something related to women’s rights and domestic violence prevention – 0.2%

The most recognized organizations are predominantly **international actors** (with the exception of FAR) that provide **well-funded, sustainable, and multi-sector services**

directly to Ukrainians. These organizations remain consistently visible and “top of mind” among Ukrainians:

- Red Cross – 92.1%
- Caritas – 72%
- IOM – 55.5%
- UNHCR – 42.3%
- FAR – 29.5%

In contrast, organizations working specifically in the areas of **GBV prevention/response** and **anti-trafficking (THB)** demonstrate an **extremely low level of visibility and community awareness**, ranging only between **0.9% and 3.3%**.

This significant discrepancy indicates a critical gap in outreach, underlining the need for targeted visibility, communication, and awareness-raising campaigns within Ukrainian refugee communities in Bulgaria.

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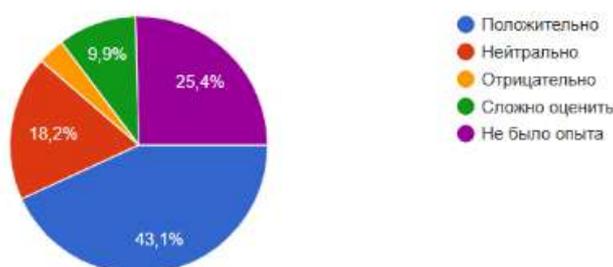
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

If you contacted them, what was your experience?

Если вы с ними связывались — каков был ваш опыт?

445 ответов

 Копировать диаграмму



- Positive - 43.1%
- Neutral - 18.2%
- Negative - 3.4%
- Hard to evaluate - 9.9%
- I have not contacted any - 25.4%

Among respondents who interacted with the institutions and NGOs mentioned in the previous question, primarily the eight organizations that received more than 0.2% of mentions, the distribution of organizations was as follows:

- Animus – 2.4%
- Dignita Foundation – 0.9%
- FAR (Foundation for Access to Rights) – 29.5%
- IOM Bulgaria – 55.5%
- UNHCR Bulgaria – 42.3%
- Caritas – 72%
- Red Cross – 92.1%
- NCCTHB (National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings) – 3.3%

Overall, **43.1%** reported positive experiences, while 18.2% described their interactions as neutral and 3.4% as negative. A notable 25.4% indicated that they have never contacted any organization at all, highlighting a large segment of the population with **no**

ANNEX 1

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engagement. This trend correlates with mistrust, lack of information, uncertainty about available services, or fear of bureaucratic processes.

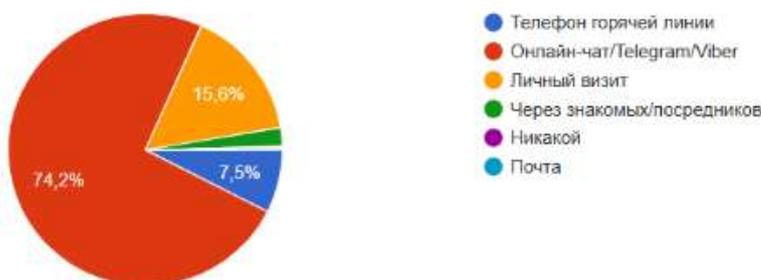
These findings demonstrate that, although many of those who do engage report acceptable or positive experiences, **a significant portion of the community remains disconnected from existing support systems**, representing both a risk and an opportunity for targeted outreach and trust-building initiatives.

Which organizations have you heard of? (multiple choice)

Какой способ связи с НПО для вас наиболее удобен?

454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- Hotline phone call - 7.5%
- Online chat / Telegram / Viber - 74.2%
- In-person visit - 15.6%
- Through acquaintances / intermediaries - 2.2%
- None - 0.2%
- Email - 0.2%

A strong majority (**74.2%**) prefer **online chat via Telegram/Viber** (assuming also other messengers mentioned earlier), confirming once again the centrality of messengers in communication patterns of Ukrainian refugees.

Only 7.5% prefer hotline calls, and 15.6% prefer in-person visits.

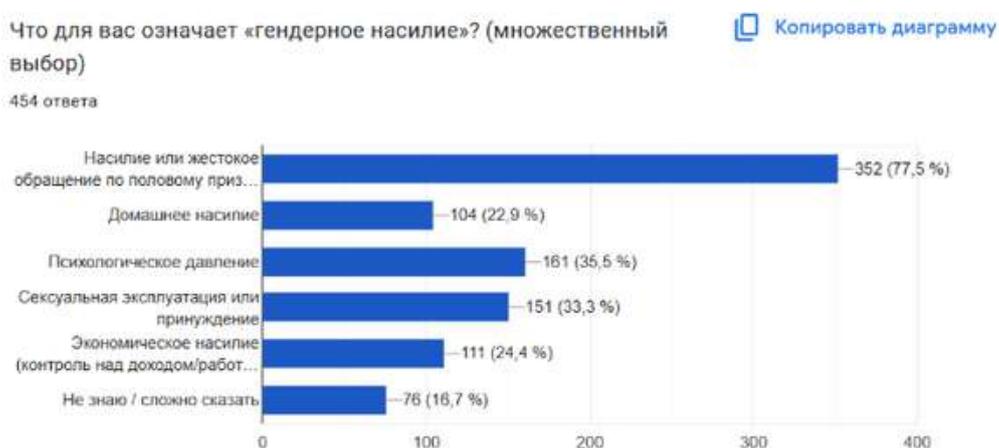
One of the assumed reasons for low hotline engagement is the language barrier, especially in cases where the hotline is operated exclusively in Bulgarian by state authorities or NGOs.

This reinforces the need for NGOs to prioritize messenger-based contact, chatbots, and quick-response chat operators.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

What does 'gender-based violence' mean to you? (multiple choice)



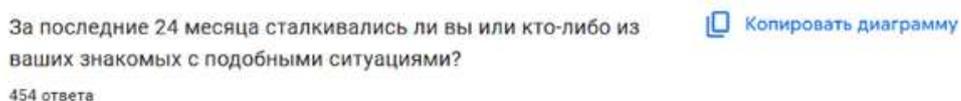
- Violence or cruel treatment based on gender - 77.5%
- Domestic violence - 22.9%
- Psychological pressure - 35.5%
- Sexual exploitation or coercion - 33.3%
- Economic violence - 24.4%
- I don't know / hard to say - 16.7%

Respondents demonstrate a strong conceptual understanding of GBV, with **77.5%** identifying it as gender-based violence and **35–33%** associating it with psychological or sexual exploitation.

However, **16.7%** still report uncertainty, indicating gaps in awareness.

This supports the need for **education, awareness campaigns, and clear definitions** in Ukrainian and Russian.

In the last 24 months, have you or anyone you know experienced similar situations?



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- Yes, personally - 5.9%
- Yes, among acquaintances - 6.8%
- No - 74%
- Hard to say / prefer not to answer - 13.2%

12.7% of respondents report either personal or indirect exposure to GBV-like or exploitation situations among Ukrainian refugees.

74% reported no cases, though underreporting is typical for GBV.

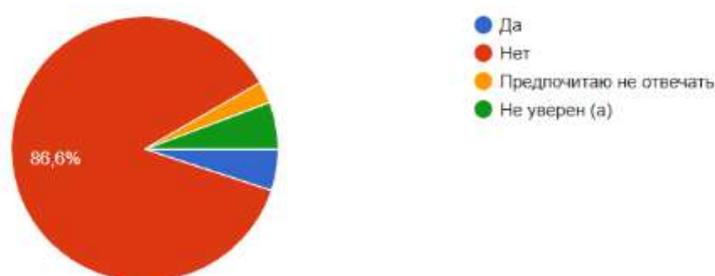
13.2% were unsure or preferred not to answer, which is itself an indicator of fear, stigma, law awareness or uncertainty.

Have you (or someone you know) been offered unwanted interaction or 'help' in exchange for housing or work? (last 24 months)

Предлагали ли вам (или кому-то из ваших знакомых) нежелательное взаимодействие или «помощь» в обмен на жильё или работу? (за последние 24 месяца)

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Yes - 5.1%
- No - 86.6%
- Prefer not to answer - 2.6%
- Not sure - 5.7%
- This is a direct THB-related indicator.

5.1% answered “Yes,” while another 5.7% were unsure, 2.6% preferred not to answer (which is itself an indicator of fear, stigma, law awareness or uncertainty). It makes **13.4%** altogether and is an important red flag.

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Based on the figures we may assume the presence of **sexual coercion risk, survival sex pressure, and exploitative ‘housing for favors’ offers** along the Bulgarian coast. Such indicators should be taken in account.

Note: while 11% reported receiving unclear work or housing offers, a separate 5.1% experienced unwanted interaction or coercive propositions, with an additional 8.3% unsure or unwilling to respond. These patterns reveal two layers of risk: (1) widespread ambiguous and potentially exploitative recruitment practices, and (2) a smaller but significant level of direct coercion or sexualized pressure. The differentiation between these two questions is essential for designing targeted prevention efforts, as the former requires labor rights and awareness interventions, whereas the latter demands GBV/THB-focused protection mechanisms and confidential reporting channels.

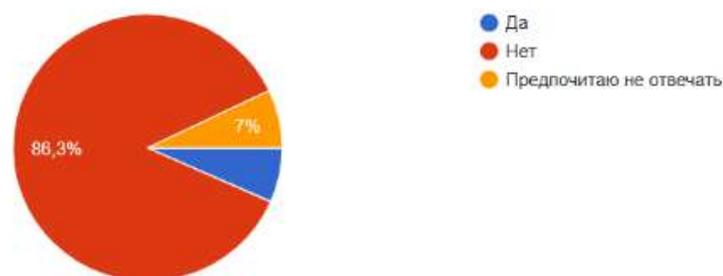
It is highly likely that the survey did not capture representatives of key populations, including women in prostitution and victims of trafficking, given the structural barriers to accessing these groups and their restricted opportunities to participate in surveys or complete questionnaires.

Has anyone controlled your documents, money, or movements? (last 24 months)

Контролировал ли кто-нибудь ваши документы, деньги или передвижения? (последние 24 месяца)

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Yes - 6.6%
- No - 86.3%
- Prefer not to answer - 7%

Around 6.6% of respondents indicate potential coercive control, one of the key trafficking indicators. While such control may in some cases originate from intimate partners or family members rather than external actors, its presence still signals heightened vulnerability, dependency and reduced ability to seek help or exit unsafe situations.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

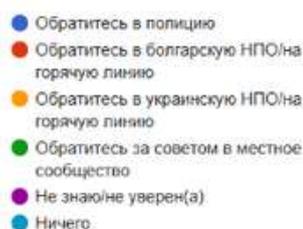
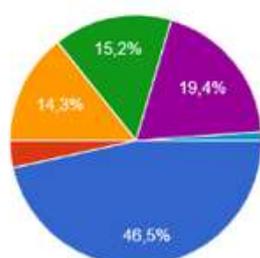
An additional 7% selected 'Prefer not to answer'. In the context of coercive control, avoidance responses often indicate discomfort, fear or uncertainty, and may reflect underlying exposure to control or violence. International research on GBV and THB shows that non-response on sensitive items should be interpreted as a potential risk signal rather than neutrality.

What would you do if someone you know experienced violence or exploitation?

Что бы вы сделали, если бы кто-то из ваших знакомых подвергся насилию или эксплуатации?

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Contact the police - 46.5%
- Contact Bulgarian NGO / hotline - 3.5%
- Contact Ukrainian NGO / hotline - 14.3%
- Seek advice from local community - 15.2%
- Don't know / unsure - 19.4%
- Nothing - 1.1%

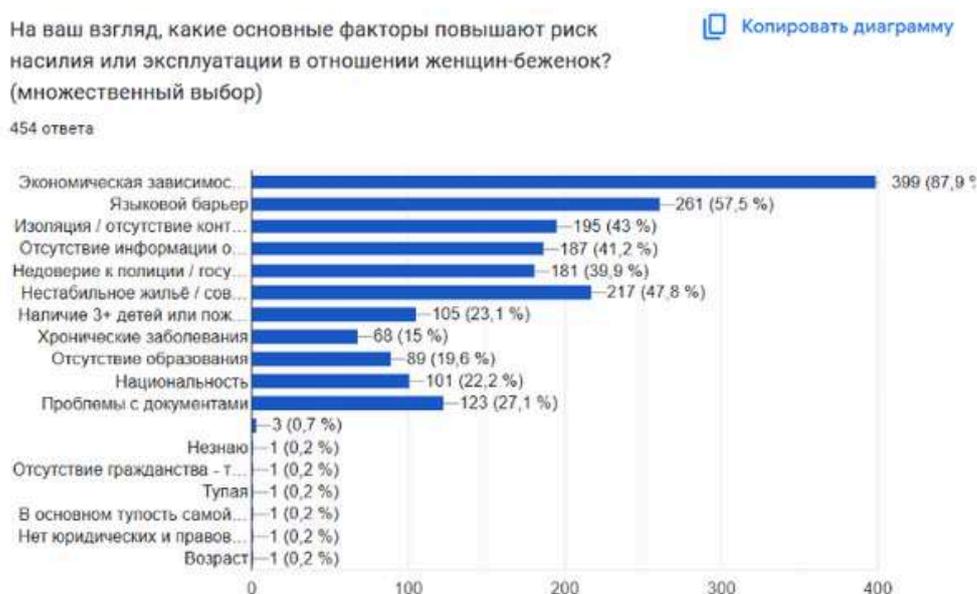
The majority (**46.5%**) would contact the **police**, which is encouraging. However, 1 out of 5 respondents (19.4 %) would “not know what to do,” and 15% rely on the community, indicating rather weak knowledge of safe referral pathways. Only **3.5% of respondents would contact a Bulgarian NGO or hotline**, while 14.3% would reach out to a Ukrainian NGO or hotline. This significant gap highlights the limited visibility, accessibility and trust in Bulgarian support services among Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian-led structures are perceived as more culturally and linguistically safe, whereas Bulgarian providers remain largely unfamiliar or inaccessible to many respondents.

This supports the need for service maps, online guides, and mediator support, which respondents already asked for earlier.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

In your opinion, what are the main factors increasing the risk of violence or exploitation for refugee women? (multiple choice)



- Economic dependence - 87.9%
- Language barrier - 57.5%
- Isolation / lack of contacts - 43%
- Lack of information about services - 41.2%
- Distrust of police / authorities - 39.9%
- Unstable housing / overcrowding - 47.8%
- 3+ children / caregiving burden - 23.1%
- Chronic illness - 15%
- Lack of education - 19.6%
- Nationality discrimination - 22.2%
- Problems with documents - 27.1%
- Other - 0.7%

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

The rest of the answers written in manually by respondents include:

- I do not know - 0.2%
- Lack of citizenship. That is what my employer, X.X, told me: ‘You don’t have citizenship, so you are nobody here- 0.2%
- Unintelligence - 0.2%
- Mostly, it is due to the woman’s own lack of awareness or poor decisions. I communicate with a few women who have children, and their complaints are mostly about household issues, not exploitation. I do not personally see cases of exploitation. Regarding men – they work extremely hard and undermine their health to support their families. - 0.2%
- There are no legal documents that would give us the right to obtain long-term residence and feel stable about the future, especially as a single mother with a child - 0.2%
- Age - 0.2%

Based on respondents’ perceptions, the strongest vulnerability factors include:

- **Economic dependence – 87.9%** (dominant driver across all categories)
- Language barrier – 57.5%
- Unstable housing / overcrowding – 47.8%
- Isolation / lack of contacts – 43%
- Lack of information about services – 41.2%

These patterns fully align with GRETA 2024 and EIGE findings, **which emphasise economic precarity, legal insecurity, and social isolation as the primary drivers of vulnerability among refugee women in the EU.**

Note. Additional Conclusion: Presence of **Victim-Blaming Narratives** among respondents (0.4%)

Although it appears only in a very small proportion of responses (0.4%), the presence of victim-blaming narratives is analytically significant. Several respondents suggested that women’s vulnerability results from “lack of awareness,” “poor decisions,” or “unintelligence,” rather than from structural factors. This indicates:

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- Stigma and societal stereotypes
- Reduced likelihood of help-seeking
- Misrecognition of exploitation
- Need for awareness-raising and community education

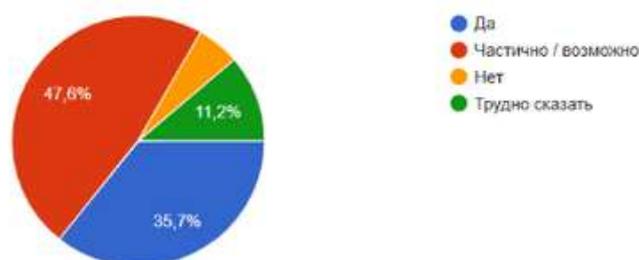
Even if numerically small, such responses underline the need for targeted information campaigns on rights, exploitation indicators, and available services – especially within refugee communities themselves.

Do you think male refugees are also vulnerable to violence or exploitation?

Считаете ли вы, что мужчины-беженцы также уязвимы к насилию или эксплуатации?

454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- Yes - 35.7%
- Partially / possibly - 47.6%
- No - 5.5%
- Hard to say - 11.2%
- Even though 93% of all respondents are women, a significant share 35.7% believe that men are also vulnerable, while an additional 47.6% indicate that men are “partially” vulnerable.

This means that over **83%** of respondents acknowledge that **vulnerability** in the refugee context is **not exclusively female**, but **gender-inclusive**. Women, who themselves face the highest documented risks, nonetheless recognize that men also experience economic pressure, exploitation risks, and psychosocial strain.

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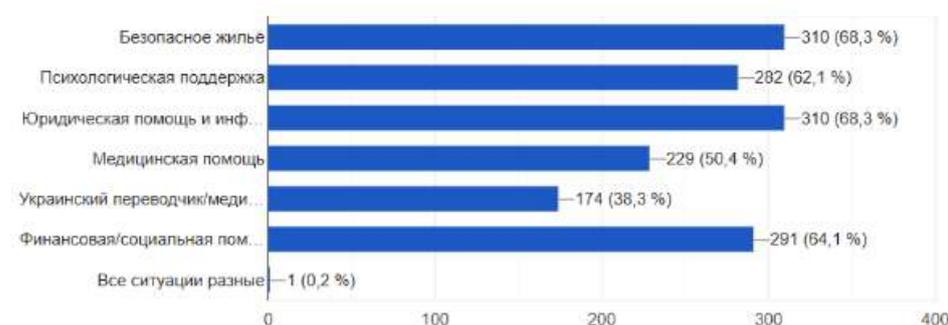
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Which types of support are most important for those experiencing violence or exploitation? (up to 3 options)

Какие виды поддержки наиболее важны для тех, кто подвергается насилию или эксплуатации? (до 3)

 Копировать диаграмму

454 ответа



- Safe housing - 68.3%
- Psychological support - 62.1%
- Legal assistance / information - 68.3%
- Medical assistance - 50.4%
- Ukrainian-language interpreter / mediator - 38.3%
- Financial or social support - 64.1%
- Other (written in manually by respondent “all situations are different”) - 0.2%

This is almost a perfect mirror of global GBV and THB response standards.

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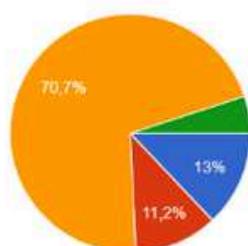
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Have you (or someone you know) encountered suspicious online or offline offers that could indicate sexual exploitation or drug distribution? (Examples: ‘easy money’, escort/modelling offers, ‘friendship’ for financial help, forced dates, pressure to send intimate photos, etc.)”

Сталкивались ли вы (или кто-то из ваших знакомых) онлайн или офлайн с подозрительными предложениями, которые могли указывать на сексуальную эксплуатацию или распространение наркотиков?
(Например: «лёгкий большой заработок», работа моделью/сопровождением, «дружба» за финансовую помощь, навязанные свидания, давление отправить личные или интимные фото и т.д.)

 Копировать диаграмму

454 ответа



● Да, лично
● Да, среди знакомых
● Нет
● Предпочитаю не отвечать

- Yes, personally - 13%
- Yes, among acquaintances - 11.2%
- No - 70.7%
- Prefer not to answer - 5.1%

A combined 24.2% of respondents report either direct or indirect exposure to suspicious or potentially exploitative offers. This means that **one in four refugee women** has encountered signs of grooming, coercion, or recruitment attempts, a **relatively high indicator** for a displaced population.

An additional 5.1% chose “prefer not to answer,” which is understandable given the sensitivity and stigma surrounding sexual exploitation and drugs usage. Such non-response is often interpreted in research as a possible indicator of unease or hidden exposure.

While 70.7% reported no such experiences, international evidence shows that sexual exploitation and involvement in drugs illegal turnover and usage are **highly underreported** due to fear, shame, distrust of institutions, and lack of safe reporting mechanisms.

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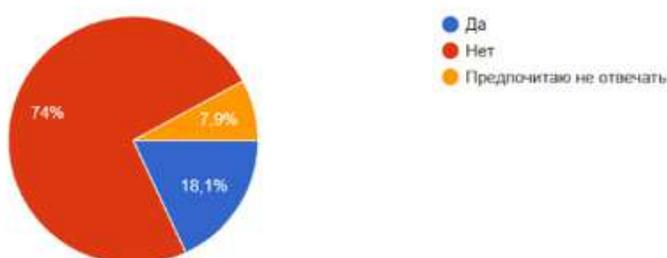
SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

Have you ever experienced online behavior that made you feel unsafe or pressured?
(Examples: unwanted sexual messages, persistent contacts, pressure to send photos, threats, attempts at blackmail, grooming.)

Сталкивались ли вы когда-либо с онлайн-поведением, которое заставило вас чувствовать себя небезопасно или под давлением?
(Например: нежелательные сексуальные сообщения, навязчивые контакты, просьбы или давление отправить фото, угрозы, попытки шантажа, «груминг».)

454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- Yes - 18.1%
- No - 74%
- Prefer not to answer - 7.9%

18.1% of respondents experienced online harassment, coercion, or grooming – a substantial proportion.

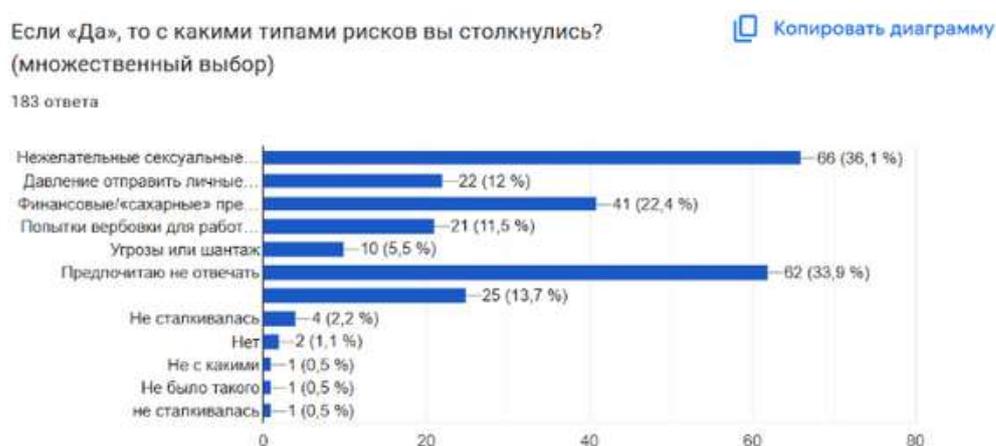
The fact that 7.9% preferred not to answer additionally suggests fear or shame.

Taken together, this data confirms the **presence of active grooming, recruitment attempts, and sexual-exploitation risks targeting Ukrainian refugee women in Bulgaria**. It underscores the need for strengthened prevention mechanisms, confidential reporting channels, and community-based awareness initiatives. This also highlights the urgent need for digital safety education, reporting mechanisms, and awareness campaigns specifically for Ukrainian women and girls.

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If 'Yes', what types of risks did you encounter? (multiple choice) * optional question



Among the 183 out of 454 respondents (**about 40%**) reported experiencing online risks, the data reveals multiple red flags associated with grooming, sextortion, and online sexual exploitation:

- Unwanted sexual messages - 36.1%
- Pressure to send personal or intimate photos - 12%
- Financial / “sugar” propositions - 22.4%
- Recruitment attempts for suspicious work - 11.5%
- Threats or blackmail - 5.5%
- Prefer not to answer - 33.9%
- Other - 13.7%
- Manually written responses meaning “no/not relevant” - 4.8%

The **33.9% “Prefer not to answer”** is particularly noteworthy. In the context of sexualized online violence, this is a **very high level of non-disclosure**, which strongly suggests:

- High shame or discomfort, common in sextortion cases.
- Fear of judgment or repercussions.
- Difficulty recognizing what constitutes online exploitation.
- Possible hidden exposure that respondents do not feel safe to share.

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Combined with the fact that:

- 36.1% received unwanted sexual messages
- 22.4% were targeted with financial/sugar-type propositions,

The dataset shows patterns that are **highly characteristic of online grooming, coercive control, financial manipulation, and sexual exploitation recruitment.**

These findings are **highly significant for anti-trafficking and GBV analysis**, indicating that online environments represent a major vector of vulnerability for Ukrainian refugee women - consistent with GRETA 2024, OSCE Online Grooming Studies, and Europol cyber-exploitation trends.

In what ways is your integration in Bulgaria taking place? (multiple choice)”



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- I work for a Bulgarian employer - 21.4%
- I work remotely for an international/ Ukrainian employer - 23.6%
- I opened my own business / self-employment - 9.3%
- I married a Bulgarian citizen - 2.2%
- I participate in local community activities - 6.2%
- My children are integrated into Bulgarian schools/kindergartens/universities -41.9%
- I study Bulgarian - 37.9%
- I face difficulties with integration (no support, no job, do not know language) - 28.9%
- Other - 0.7%

Written in manually by respondents (each 0.2%):

- Seasonal work for a Bulgarian employer.
- I work only during the season. The work is quite hard for me, physically.
- I work in a school.
- I am a pensioner; it is very difficult to find a job due to age and health, and it is impossible to live on a very small Ukrainian pension.
- I am a pensioner; I cannot work because my adult son is a person with disabilities.
- I am a pensioner with a small Ukrainian pension; it is difficult to work already, and it is impossible to survive without social (financial) support.
- I have a job (but a Ukrainian employer). Bulgarian language courses if possible (depending on work schedule).
- I work as a seafarer in long-distance navigation. I study Bulgarian on my own.
- My husband is a seafarer; we live here with self-sufficiency / self-financing.
- I have not integrated.
- I would like to start integrating, but I do not see the point – they will pushback us anyway.
- Integrated 100%.
- I simply live here and communicate with my neighbours.
- On maternity leave, not working.
- Studying Bulgarian.
- 3
- I have lived here since 2021; I studied in a medical institution, I know the language, now I simply live under Zakrila.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- Residence permit under the “self-sufficient pensioner” program.
- My children are integrated through schools. Unfortunately, I cannot get a job with an employment contract because I live in a hotel under the refugee housing program (free accommodation).
- My husband works; I cannot look for a job yet. The Regional Education Department has not assigned my children to a school and tells us to wait.
- Ready to become self-employed in Bulgaria.

Note: Open-text responses (“Other”) were analyzed through thematic coding. Most entries reflect structural vulnerabilities rather than additional types of integration. Respondents describe: (1) seasonal or physically demanding temporary jobs; (2) pensioners or individuals unable to work due to age, health or caregiving responsibilities; (3) remote work or employment with Ukrainian companies, which prevents integration into the Bulgarian labor market; (4) caregiving and maternity leave; (5) studying Bulgarian as the primary step towards integration; (6) administrative barriers to employment, including those related to the refugee accommodation program and delays in school placement; and (7) emotional attitudes, ranging from full integration to unwillingness to integrate due to fear of future expulsion. These narratives provide important qualitative insights into the obstacles and motivations shaping refugee integration trajectories in Bulgaria.

Main forms of integration include:

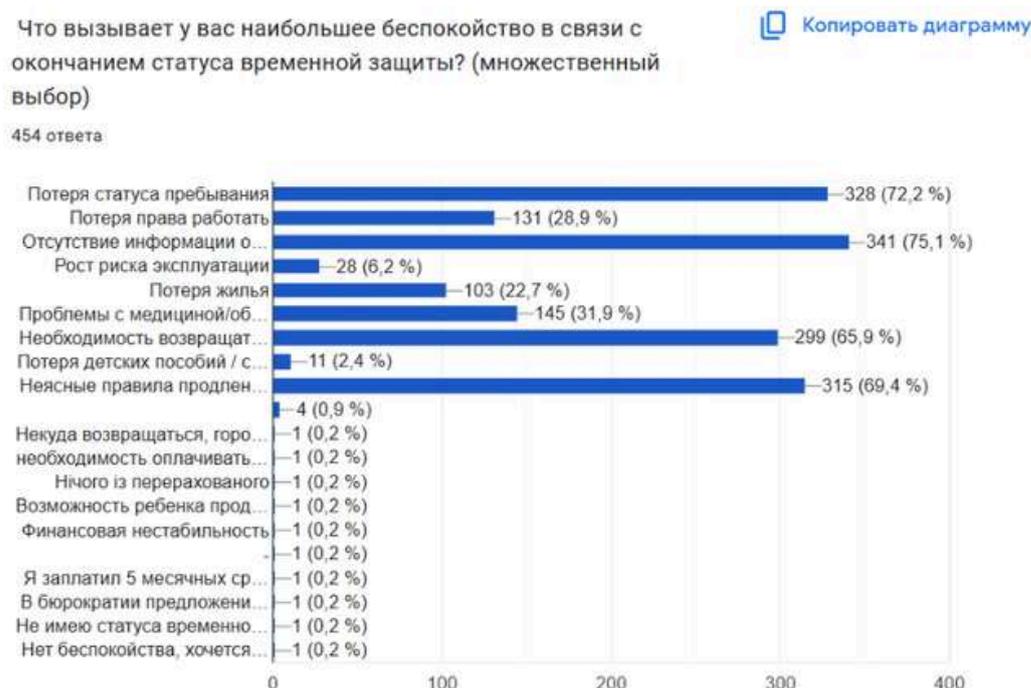
- Children in Bulgarian schools/universities: 41.9%
- Studying Bulgarian: 37.9%
- Remote work: 23.6%
- Bulgarian employer: 21.4%

This shows that **integration is strongest through children in education**, moderate through employment, and weakest in terms of social/community participation (6.2%). A third of respondents (**28.9%**) report significant **integration difficulties** – aligning with earlier data on language barriers and bureaucratic challenges.

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SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

What concerns you most about the ending of Temporary Protection status? (multiple choice)



- Losing residence status - 72.2%
- Losing the right to work - 28.9%
- Lack of information on further steps regarding refugees in Bulgaria - 75.1%
- Increased risk of exploitation - 6.2%
- Losing housing - 22.7%
- Medical/educational problems (access) - 31.9%
- Need to return to Ukraine - 65.9%
- Losing child benefits/social support - 2.4%
- Unclear status extension rules - 69.4%
- Other - 0.9%

Written in manually by respondents (each 0.2%):

- Nowhere to return to, the city is destroyed.
- The requirement to pay for medical insurance even without using it, for 4 years.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- The possibility for the child to continue studying in school or gymnasium.
- Financial instability.
- -
- I paid five months of an average Bulgarian salary to leave Ukraine. Do you think I will go back there until they return my money? A country without the rule of law is just chaos – don't care about that country. Sorry for the harsh wording, but you asked for opinions, so here it is honestly
- Within the bureaucracy there are offers to obtain a residence permit for 3000 euros and more!
- I do not have temporary protection status.
- No worries, I just want to go home.

These anxieties reflect large-scale uncertainty and fear, typical before major policy transitions.

The fear of exploitation (6.2%) must be interpreted as **underreported yet significant**, especially given earlier results.

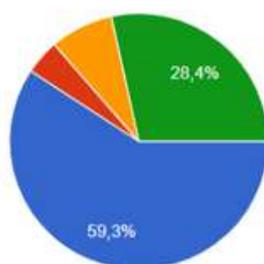
Note: The indicator 'loss of child benefits/social support' appears in only 2.4% of responses. This low percentage is explained by the fact that Bulgaria does not provide stable or substantial financial assistance to families under Temporary Protection. As a result, respondents do not perceive the loss of such benefits as a significant risk, simply because these payments generally do not exist in practice.

What decision are you considering for yourself and your family after 4 March 2027?

Какое решение вы рассматриваете для себя и своей семьи после 4 марта 2027 года?

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Остаться в Болгарии / Stay in Bulgaria
- Переехать в другую страну / Move to another country
- Вернуться в Украину / Return to Ukraine
- Не знаю / Don't know

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- Stay in Bulgaria - 59.3%
- Move to another country - 4.4%
- Return to Ukraine - 7.9%
- Don't know - 28.4%

A majority (**59.3%**) intend to stay in Bulgaria, indicating relatively strong long-term settlement bonds.

7.9% plan to return to Ukraine.

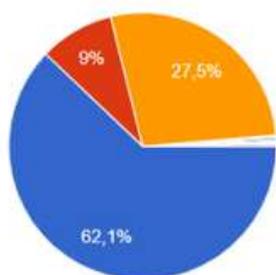
28.4% remain uncertain, which connects directly to lack of clarity about the future of TP status and integration opportunities.

Do you think changes in TP status will affect the safety and vulnerability of Ukrainian women, children, and men in Bulgaria?

По вашему мнению повлияет ли изменение статуса на безопасность и уязвимость украинских женщин, детей и мужчин в Болгарии?

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Да
- Нет
- Не уверен(а)
- Не знаю
- Не зрозуміло
- Смотря какой будет статус. Если он будет пло провам хуже, чем времен...
- Долгосрочное разрешение на преб...
- От других людей негатива не испыт...
- в лучшую сторону,перестанут травми...

- Yes - 62.1%
- No - 9%
- Unsure - 27.5%

Written in manually by respondents (each 0.2%):

- Depends on what the new status will be. If it gives fewer rights than temporary protection, then of course it will affect negatively.
- A long-term residence permit after temporary protection will increase the safety of Ukrainians.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- I have not experienced negativity from other people. Legally, probably yes, we make our contribution and should receive something proportionate. However, we should not pressure Bulgarians' self-identity or their historical self-perception.
- For the better: people will stop claiming that Ukrainians live here for free; they will understand that we work and pay for everything.
- I do not know
- Not understandable

A dominant **62.1%** believe the change **will increase vulnerability**.

Only 9% believe it will not.

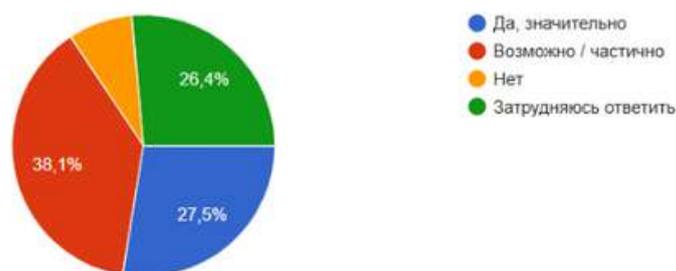
This clearly indicates community fear of losing legal protection and falling into irregularity: a known driver of exploitation, GBV and THB vulnerabilities.

Do you think the risk of exploitation will increase when Temporary Protection ends?

Как вы думаете, увеличится ли риск эксплуатации после окончания временной защиты?

454 ответа

 Копировать диаграмму



- Yes, significantly - 27.5%
- Possibly / partially - 38.1%
- No - 7.9%
- Hard to say - 26.4%

About 27.5% believe risks will significantly increase, and 38.1% say possibly.

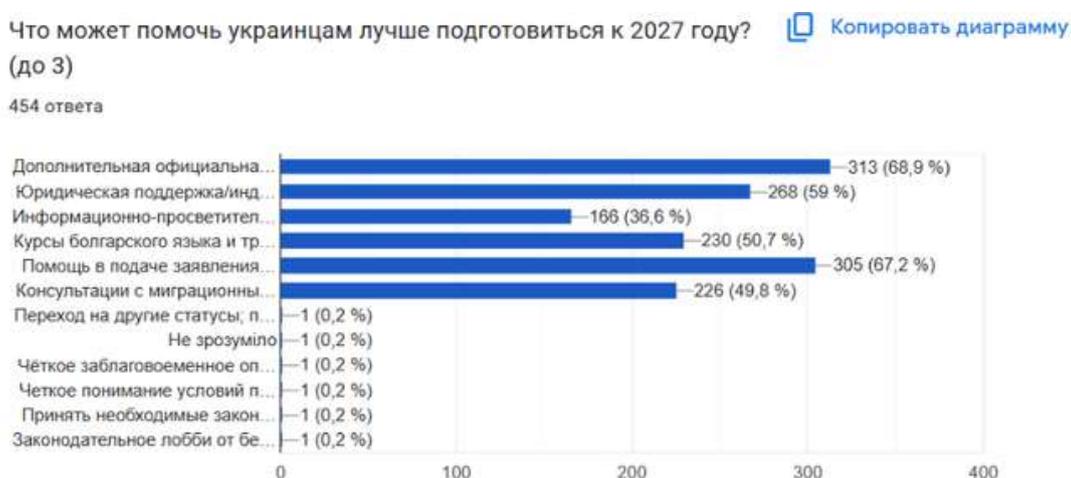
That is **65.6%** anticipating higher exploitation risks.

This is a critical policy finding and supports the need for proactive state-level risk mitigation measures.

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

What could help Ukrainians better prepare for 2027? (up to 3 options)



- Additional official information and consultations - 68.9%
- Legal support / individual consultations - 59%
- Information-awareness campaigns in community - 36.6%
- Bulgarian language and professional training courses - 50.7%
- Assistance with submitting an asylum application - 67.2%
- Migration lawyers consultations - 49.8%

Written in manually by respondents (each 0.2%):

- Not clear.
- A clear advance determination of the future status, not at the last moment.
- Clear understanding of the conditions.
- Adopt the necessary laws earlier so that people are not in an uncertain residence status without clarity.
- Legislative lobbying on behalf of refugees.
- Transition to other statuses, such as residence permit (ВНЖ) or permanent residence (ПМЖ).

Top requested needs:

- Official information and consultations (68.9%)

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

- Help with asylum applications (67.2%)
- Legal support (59%)
- Language and professional courses (50.7%)

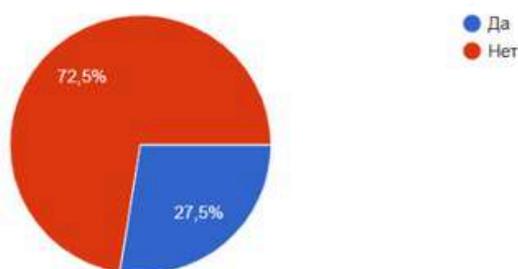
This shows that there is a need to develop a clear roadmap for 2026–2027 transition period. Clarity is the main concern.

Would you like to participate in a focus group on these topics? Share your story, suggestions, and contribute to shaping refugee-related policies in Bulgaria?

Хотели бы вы участвовать в фокус-группе по данным вопросам? Поделиться своей историей, предложениями и участвовать в формировании политики в отношении беженцев в Болгарии

454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- No - 72.5%
- Yes - 27.5%

Only 27.5% expressed willingness to join a focus group and engage in policy dialogue. Meanwhile, 72.5% declined.

This reaction correlates with earlier findings:

- low trust in authorities and NGOs
- fear of publicity and stigma
- language and bureaucratic barriers
- emotional exhaustion

ANNEX 1

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

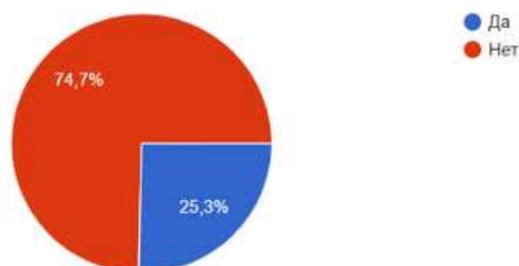
A participation rate below 30% is typical for vulnerable populations with high levels of uncertainty.

Important implication: **future engagement activities must ensure anonymity, emotional safety, and clear purpose.**

Would you like to volunteer or act as a contact person for other Ukrainians?

Хотели бы вы быть волонтером, контактным лицом для других украинцев?
454 ответа

[Копировать диаграмму](#)



- No 74.7%
- Yes 25.3%

Only 25.3% expressed readiness to volunteer or act as peer-support contacts, while 74.7% declined.

This low readiness reflects:

- burnout and chronic stress
- limited free time due to childcare and employment challenges
- unstable long-term status (TP ending in 2027)
- emotional fatigue from the war and displacement
- lack of training or confidence

Nevertheless, a quarter of respondents represents a significant potential core group for **community-based outreach, P2P mediators, and grassroots support.**

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Дополнительные комментарии или предложения (необязательно):

32 ответа

Открыта для сотрудничества, волонтер равда([имя](#))

-

Я мать ребёнка с тяжёлой формой аутизма, могу помогать другим украинкам с такими детьми информационно (какие собрать документы, как подать в телк, на что имеет право семья с ребёнком с таким диагнозом, контакты специалистов) Живу в Бургасе

Зовсім немає курсів з болгарської мови, або навчання на такі професії - перукаря, манікюра, повара, кондитера.. що є в інших країнах і дає змогу швидко знайти клієнтів та заробити гроші. Дуже погано з українською мовою.. мало хто спілкується нею, ще й у школах російська.. це засмучує

Очень полезный социальный опрос

“Open for collaboration, volunteer in Ravda (name).”

“I am a mother of a child with severe autism and I can help other Ukrainian women with such children by providing information (what documents they need, how to apply for TELK, what benefits a family with such a diagnosis is entitled to, contacts of specialists). I live in Burgas.”

“There are absolutely no Bulgarian language courses or training for professions such as hairdressing, manicure, cooking, confectionery... which exist in other countries and allow you to quickly find clients and earn money. Very poor Ukrainian language support... few people speak it, even schools use Russian. This is upsetting.”

“A very useful social survey.”

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Багато українців вже купили житло в Болгарії і є власниками житла, хотілося б, щоб ця обставина була врахована, як позитивна, при обговоренні варіантів переходу таких українців в статус біженців після 2027 року.

Пенсионерам- беженцам, которые имеют малую пенсию (менее 5000грн), оказывать юр.помощь и содействие в получении соц.помощи в Болгарии , которая, судя по официальным данным, положена при пенсии менее 315лв

При возможности, была бы рада помочь другим украинцам и также намного облегчило бы жизнь всем, если была бы ясность о том, что ожидает украинцев после окончания статуса временной защиты.

“Many Ukrainians have already bought property in Bulgaria and are homeowners. It would be good if this fact were taken into account as a positive one when discussing transition options for such Ukrainians after 2027.”

“Refugee pensioners who receive a very small pension (under 5000 UAH) need legal support and assistance in receiving social benefits in Bulgaria, which officially should be granted, but according to data, are only available to those whose pension is below 315 BGN.”

“If possible, I would be happy to help other Ukrainians, and it would make life much easier for everyone if we had clarity about what awaits Ukrainians after the end of Temporary Protection.”

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Предложение- украинские беженцы,которые живут по социальной программе бесплатного проживания в государственных базах или частных отелях,нуждаются в контролирующем органе(представителе) ,который будет проверять условия проживания!
Соответствуют ли реальные условия проживания человеческим нормам,есть ли возможность у людей элементарно постирать одежду,приготовить еду.
Часто беженцы становятся заложниками отельеров,которые диктуют свои правила проживания!
Нужны дополнительные методы интеграции людей проживающих в отелях в болгарское сообщество,так как ощущение что люди находятся в изоляции,как в резервациях.
Необходима помощь психологов,украинских,болгарских
так как выехать из отеля просто в город,например в Варну для жителей отелей стресс!

Пенсионеры нуждаются в социальных работниках которые бы им объясняли элементарные вещи,как заключить договор с семейным доктором,пройти ТЕЛК и тд

-/-

Спасибо что вы есть!

“Suggestion: Ukrainian refugees who live under the free accommodation scheme in state bases or private hotels need supervision, a representative who checks the living conditions. Whether they meet normal human standards, whether people have the ability to wash clothes, cook food.

Often refugees become hostages of hoteliers who dictate their own rules.

More additional methods are needed to integrate people living in hotels into Bulgarian society, because they feel isolated, like in a reservation.

Psychologists (Ukrainian and Bulgarian) are needed, because even going from the hotel to the city, for example in Varna, is stressful.”

“Pensioners need social workers who can explain basic things such as how to sign up with a family doctor, apply for TELK, etc..”

“Thank you for being here!”

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Українці роблять великий внесок в економіку Болгарії. В Польщі це давно зрозуміли. Польща стала лідером розвитку економіки в Європі завдяки українцям. Хотілось би аби широкий загал болгар теж зрозумів роль українців в економіці країни, про наші історичні зв'язки та роль українців у визволенні від Турції. Саме українські солдати під командуванням українських командирів визволяли Болгарію в російсько-турецькій війні. Саме українськими силами Росія визволила Болгарію. Хотілось би аби болгар знали про це. Та знали справжнє обличчя Росії та СРСР. Адже досі симпатії багатьох болгар належать Росії. І іноді до українців ставляться вороже. В цьому є і провина самих російськомовних українців, що досі говорять російською мовою.

Для українців важливо зараз мати безпечне дешеве житло, якісну дешеву медицину та всебічну підтримку уряду Болгарії, різних НПО (лише не Червоний Хрест, який допомагає Росії.) та людей, які є активістами та знають життя українців зсередини. Важлива можливість відкрити свою справу, якщо є бажання та можливість .

Доступное жильё

Ukrainians make a great contribution to the economy of Bulgaria. In Poland this was understood long ago. Poland became a leader of economic development in Europe thanks to Ukrainians. I would like the wider public of Bulgarians to also understand the role of Ukrainians in the country's economy, about our historical ties and the role of Ukrainians in the liberation from Turkey. It was Ukrainian soldiers under the command of Ukrainian commanders who liberated Bulgaria in the Russia -Turkish War. It was precisely with Ukrainian forces that Russia liberated Bulgaria. I would like Bulgarians to know about that. So that they know the true face of Russia and the USSR. Even now many Bulgarians still sympathise with Russia. And sometimes they treat Ukrainians with hostility. In this there is also the fault of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians who still speak Russian.

For Ukrainians it is important now to have safe affordable housing, quality affordable healthcare and comprehensive support from the government of Bulgaria, various NGOs (except for the Red Cross, which supports Russia). And people who are activists and know the life of Ukrainians from the inside. The possibility to open one's own business is important if there is desire and opportunity.

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Affordable housing

Не готова на данном этапе делиться произошедшим во взрослой фокус группе. Я ориентирована на детей и сфера моей деятельности тоже в этой плоскости. По возможности готова оказать волонтерские услуги.

К сожалению, моя работа не позволит на постоянной основе выполнять роль волонтера.

Добавьте пожалуйста "город" к.к. Солнечный Берег, где реально живёт большинство Украинцев в Болгарии. У меня есть и другие замечания к форме. Можете связаться со мной по телефону +359888888888 в Телеграм.

После временной защиты необходим статус легального пребывания для семей с детьми, которые учатся в гимназиях, школах, ВУЗах Болгарии, независимо от других факторов. Для детей большой психологический стресс возвращаться в Украину, менять школу, терять друзей, адаптироваться.

“I am not ready to share my personal story in an adult focus group. I work with children and my field of activity is also related to them. I am willing to volunteer.”

“Unfortunately, my job does not allow me to be a volunteer on a regular basis.”

“Please add “Sunny Beach” as a city, because many Ukrainians really live there. I have additional comments about the form. You can contact me at +----- on Telegram”.

“After Temporary Protection ends, families with children need a status that allows them to study in Bulgarian schools and universities regardless of other factors. Children experience great psychological stress if they return to Ukraine – changing schools, losing friends, adapting again.”

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Последние два вопроса - мой ответ не знаю:

- 1). я не считаю свою историю переезда в Болгарию интересной.
- 2). люди по разному относятся к волонтерам.....

Мне бы подходящую для меня работу. Ведь я хороший инженер - электрик, электронщик, преподаватель. А здесь даже охранником не могу устроиться.

Я не собираюсь залишаться в Болгарии,я хочу вернуться в Украину коли закончиться война!!!! Я не эмигрант! Я не планивала тут жить и мені тут не подобається... все, окрім моря...

очень сложно найти работу в Бургасе и рядом с ним, работы много только в Софии(

Упростить получения внж, увеличить рабочие места с достойной заработной платой, чтоб хотя бы прожить с семьей

“For the last two questions my answer is “don’t know”:

- 1)I do not consider my relocation story to Bulgaria interesting.
- 2)People have different attitudes toward volunteers...”

“I need a suitable job. I am a good engineer: electrician, electronics specialist, teacher. And here I cannot even get hired as a security guard.”

“I am not going to stay in Bulgaria, I want to return to Ukraine when the war ends! I am not an emigrant! I did not plan to live here and I do not like it here... except the sea.”

“It is very difficult to find work in Burgas and nearby; most jobs are only in Sofia.”

“Simplify residence permit procedures and increase the number of jobs with decent wages so that at least one can live here with a family.”

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Очень трудно без работы так как работа на побережье сезонная, а ребенок ходит в 7 класс в Несебре. Если программу бесплатного жилья не продлят я не знаю, что делать как выжить. Нет уверенности в завтрашнем дне. Постоянно на протяжении 3+ лет страх остаться на улице.

Неопределенность с дальнейшим статусом пребывания - основная проблема для тех, кто не может вернуться в Украину. Остаётся один путь - статус беженца.

Должна быть ассоциация юристов в Болгарии бесплатно для беженцев и помощь в заполнении документов. А так же провести семинары внятно и понятно с пунктами ссылки на закон базе в Болгарии для внж и работающего здесь бизнеса .

Спасибо вам за такой важный опрос! Надеюсь это повлияет на политику в отношении беженцев

Большинство организаций только делают вид что работают. Но когда, по факту, нужна помощь, тебя отфутболивают от одной организации к другой. И помощи, в итоге, так и нет.

“Very difficult without work because seaside jobs are seasonal, and my child is in 7th grade in Nessebar. If the free accommodation program ends, I don’t know how to survive. No confidence in tomorrow. For more than 3 years, constant fear of ending up on the street.”

“Uncertainty about future status is the main problem for those who cannot return to Ukraine. Only one path remains – refugee status.”

“There should be an association of lawyers in Bulgaria providing free support to refugees and helping with documentation. There should also be seminars explaining clearly the law and procedures for residence permits and for those running a business.”

“Thank you for such an important survey! I hope it influences refugee-related policy.”

“Most organizations only pretend to work. When you actually need help, they redirect you from one organization to another. And in the end, you get no help.”

ANNEX 2

SURVEY SCREENSHOTS AND TRANSLATION: QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (32)

Необходима юридическая поддержка при обращении за соц помощью для пенсионеров с очень малой пенсией, которая официально положена, но реально получить ее невозможно из-за отказов в Дирекции социальной помощи.

Я переводчик жестового языка, имею большой опыт сопровождения мероприятий, концертов, онлайн-конференций, так же перевожу информационные видеоролики на жестовый язык. Готова предложить свои услуги онлайн и оффлайн (в городе Варна) для обеспечения инклюзии и интеграции украинских беженцев с нарушением слуха в Болгарии

На данный момент мой сын подвергается нападкам со стороны подростков и к сожалению болгарская полиция не в силах помочь.

Нет возможности вернуться в Украину.
Если Болгария не предоставит возможности остаться, то оформление международной защиты в другой стране.

Хочу участвовать во всех программах связанных с легализацией украинцев. Готова помогать

“Legal assistance is needed when applying for social benefits for pensioners with very small pensions, which they are officially entitled to but cannot actually receive due to refusals from the Social Assistance Directorate.”

“I am a sign language interpreter with extensive experience accompanying events, concerts, and online conferences. I also translate informational videos into sign language. I am ready to offer my services online and offline (in Varna) to support inclusion for Ukrainian refugees with hearing impairments.”

“At the moment, my son is being attacked by local teenagers, and unfortunately Bulgarian police cannot help.”

“There is no possibility to return to Ukraine. If Bulgaria does not allow us to stay, then we will have to apply for protection in another country.”

“I want to participate in all programs related to the legalization of Ukrainians. I am ready to help.”

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