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# UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN BUCHAREST: INTEGRATION, OBSTACLES, AND FUTURE PLANS

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**Abstract:** *The war in Ukraine has multiple consequences, including a considerable number of people fleeing from conflict zones, becoming refugees. For the countries in proximity to Ukraine, including Romania, the main consequence is the transformation into host countries for refugees and, as such, the need to formulate social policies that consider the specific situation of those seeking refuge.*

*. In this context, the research that yielded the data presented in this article aims to investigate the perceptions of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest regarding access to services (health, education, social services, etc.) and their needs, to contribute to the adequacy of policies and response actions. Here, we refer to employment, education, and future plans, as reported by the respondents at the time of the research.*

**Keywords:** *refugees from Ukraine; access to the labour market; access to the education system; integration.*

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## Introduction

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 marked the beginning of the war in Ukraine, an event with extensive geopolitical, economic, and social consequences. The conflict led to the destruction of infrastructure, disrupting, or limiting access to essential services such as primary healthcare, food, and drinking water, and pushing significant portions of the population into poverty while mental health and individual well-being were severely affected (Data Friendly Space, January 2023; June 2023). Another immediate effect of the war is the emergence of refugees — individuals seeking safety in countries other than Ukraine.

According to UNHCR data, there are currently 82,600 refugees from Ukraine registered in Romania (i.e. 148,170 refugees from Ukraine who have applied for asylum, temporary protection, or other measures (Ukraine Refugee Situation, updated data for Romania as

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of 19.11.2023). The data suggest that for the majority of those coming from Ukraine, Romania was more of a transit country, with 3,620,235 entries into Romania from Ukraine. The high number of departures from Romania to Ukraine, 3,095,530, also indicates that returning, most likely temporarily, to Ukraine is a practice for many refugees. The number of those settled temporarily in Romania is not large compared to the situation in other countries such as Poland (954,600 refugees from Ukraine on 20.11.2023) or the Czech Republic (369,550 refugees from Ukraine on 19.11.2023). However, if we consider Romania's limited previous experience as a destination country for refugees (Voicu et al., 2018), this number becomes considerable and indicates the existence of a new type of reality to be managed, characterized by increased social needs.

Romania's response to the refugee crisis has been immediate and far-reaching, mobilising both ordinary people/private individuals, NGOs, and public institutions. The first response was an emergency one, covering basic needs such as food and shelter, both for those who remained in Romania and for those who continued their journey to other destinations. However, given the continuing critical situation and the influx of refugees, a structured, integration-focused, and longer-term programme was needed. The existence, as early as June/July 2022, of the National Plan of measures to be implemented to facilitate the integration of refugees from Ukraine, provided the general framework for the institutional response (both public and private) to the needs of refugees. The current Romanian legal framework on Ukrainian refugees is regulated by Emergency Ordinance no. 22/12.04.2023 and Government Decision no. 368/26.04.2023. According to these documents, for a period of four months after their first arrival in Romania, they receive unconditional support regarding accommodation and daily expenses. From the 5th month onwards, the general rule is that persons under the age of 65 must be integrated into the labour market and their minor children must be integrated into the educational system (schools or education centres) in order to qualify for state support. These regulations suggest a major shift towards active integration of refugees in the long term.

In this context, closely related to the conditions that refugees from Ukraine have to meet in order to receive state support, the present endeavour aims to identify the situation of Ukrainian refugees living in Bucharest in terms of access to the labour market and access to education services, as well as in terms of how refugees relate to the future. In the following, we briefly present some theoretical perspectives on refugees and their needs, methodological details, followed by a description of the results obtained, conclusions, and a series of recommendations for public policy.

## **Refugees, refugees from Ukraine**

Refugees are a category of population whose needs, usually related to integration into the host society, have been explored at length. The core idea is that refugees require support at their destination to identify and use existing resources. This aid facilitates access to various services such as health care, housing, and labour market entry counselling.

Integration is a complex process that requires a publicly accessible infrastructure of services and resources to be successful (Bešić et al. 2022). Among the issues that can contribute to placing or removing refugees in/from vulnerable situations are access to health services

(Chiesa et al. 2019), decent housing, especially in relation to refugee centres (Leiler et al. 2019). In this context, NGOs play a significant role in complementing the response of public institutions and providing support to refugees who may not have access to government assistance due to administrative requirements (Mayblin and James 2019). Collaboration between local and international NGOs is beneficial in terms of service provision and local NGO development (Adem et al., 2018). In addition, research indicates that the attitudes of the host society as a whole and daily interactions between refugees and locals are pivotal in the integration process (Voicu et al., 2018).

Various studies and reports have underscored different facets of the refugee crisis and the integration of Ukrainian refugees. The importance of a flexible response that addresses more than just basic survival needs, taking into account individualized needs, has been emphasized (UNDP, 2022). While the involvement of ordinary citizens in supporting refugees is vital, a structural response, including a coherent legislative framework, is essential for sustainable long-term support options (Ociepa-Kicińska and Gorzalczyńska-Koczkodaj, 2022). Access to health care services is a critical concern for Ukrainian refugees, both in conflict zones and neutral areas (Bielka et al., 2022). Language barriers significantly impact various aspects of daily life, including education and labour market access, as reported by Ukrainian refugees in Romania (IOM, 2022). Additionally, refugees in Romania face challenges due to limited access to local information and a reliance on informal networks for information exchange (Negru, 2022).

The positive attitude of the public and the active involvement of institutions and NGOs have become increasingly important amidst the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the internal challenges that host countries like Romania face (World Vision, 2022). Furthermore, the socio-economic impact of Ukrainian refugees in the European Union has been a subject of study, highlighting the need for effective migration policies and integration initiatives (Dumitrescu and Constantin, 2022). Ukrainian refugees confront various health-related risks, including limited access to healthcare, housing, employment, and education (Kumar et al., 2002; Kaufman, Bhui, and Katona, 2022; Murphy et al., 2022). Mental health issues, comorbidities, and infectious diseases are common, necessitating collaborative efforts to provide emergency medical care and essential resources (Kaufman, Bhui, & Katona, 2022; Murphy et al., 2022).

Current research emphasizes the importance of societal attitudes and flexible responses, as well as ensuring access to healthcare and education, for the effective integration of refugees. Overcoming language barriers, the pivotal role of NGOs, and collaboration among stakeholders are also highlighted. These studies underline the necessity for tailored support, comprehensive strategies, and the engagement of both public institutions and the general public, in facilitating the successful integration of specifically Ukrainian refugees.

## **Methodology and brief description of respondents**

This research is part of the projects conducted by the Social Incubator Association under the name *Together for Ukraine*. The aim of this research is to identify and analyse the needs of Ukrainian refugees in Romania. To answer the central research question about the perceptions of Ukrainian refugees living in Bucharest about their own needs, we used

both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research was conducted between March and June 2023 and had two components:

Online survey - questionnaire available as a Google form, containing items related to housing, health, employment, education, social services, future plans. The questionnaire, or the link to it, was distributed through both the researchers' personal networks and the networks of The Social Incubator Association. Particularly useful were events where the Association, serving Ukrainian refugees as beneficiaries, provided opportunities to engage with potential respondents and assist them in accessing the questionnaire. A total of 240 responses were registered. Most of the sampled respondents arrived in Romania in 2022 (over 85% of them) and travelled in groups of 3-5 people, accompanied by their own child/children. The percentage of women in the sample is over 98% and the most common age category is 20-39 years.

Regarding educational background, approximately 65% of the respondents in the survey have a higher education degree. Instances of extremely low (completion of primary education or less) or very high education levels (PhD level, completed or not) were relatively rare among the respondents. In our sample, the proportion of individuals living alone is nearly equal to those living with other refugees: 57% and 43% respectively. The '50/20' program was indicated by 44% of respondents as their current accommodation solution. Meanwhile, 29% are residing in refugee centres, and 27% are living independently (with relatives/friends or renting, but not through the '50/20' program).

Interviews with Ukrainian refugees living in Bucharest - to gain a deeper understanding of how Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest perceive their own situation and the challenges they face, the study included twenty-two interviews. These interviews provided more detailed insights into the personal experiences and specific needs of the refugees. The interview guide followed the same thematic logic as the questionnaire, ensuring consistency in the topics explored. Of the twenty-two interviews conducted, three were carried out by a Russian/Ukrainian speaker, four in Romanian with refugees fluent in Romanian/ Moldovan, and the remaining fifteen by the researchers, with the help of a translator.

All the approaches had their advantages and challenges: while it is preferable for interviews to be conducted by experienced researchers, the language barrier and the presence of a translator negatively impacted the dynamics of the interview situation. Additionally, considering the recent and ongoing nature of the trauma, along with uncertainties related to the situation in Ukraine, the discussions often turned out to be fragmented. They were predominantly marked by expressions of gratitude from the respondents, leading to a visible perceived hierarchy where the power dynamics were skewed in favour of the researchers. The respondents' gratitude is partly a result of the selection method, which involved a service provider (The Social Incubator Association) and its beneficiaries. This research experience was unique compared to previous interactions with refugees. The respondents were closer, both in time and location, to their trauma. This proximity contrasts with refugees who have had longer and more complex journeys to their destinations, which often creates a distance from their original trauma sites. This difference in proximity impacts the nature of the interactions and responses in the research.

Given that the size and characteristics of the Ukrainian refugee population in Bucharest are variable, with dynamics given by the evolution of the war, representativeness was not a stake of the quantitative research. The impossibility of designing a representative sample and, therefore, of generalising the findings to the entire population, does not affect the exploratory, descriptive nature of this approach, as the data obtained and presented here contribute to the accumulation of knowledge about refugees from Ukraine (temporarily) settled in Bucharest.

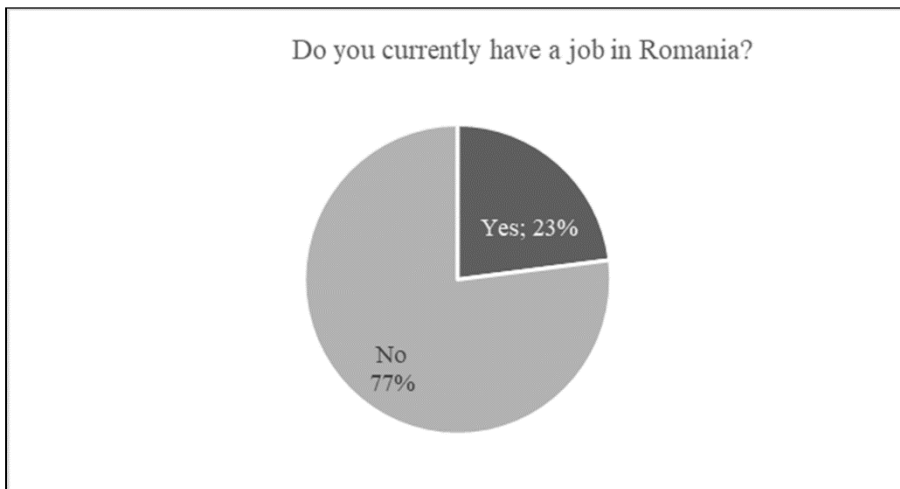
## Results

### Employment/labour market integration

#### Quantitative

Integration into the labour market is a significant challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest. Only about one-fifth (23%) of survey respondents have found employment. Of those employed, nearly half (43%) secured jobs independently, while the majority (57%) relied on support: from other refugees (26%), Romanian friends (21%), public institutions (6%), or NGOs (4%). This data highlights the importance of personal networking and individual connections, both among refugees and with Romanians, while also indicating the relative inefficiency of formal actors like public institutions and NGOs in job facilitation.

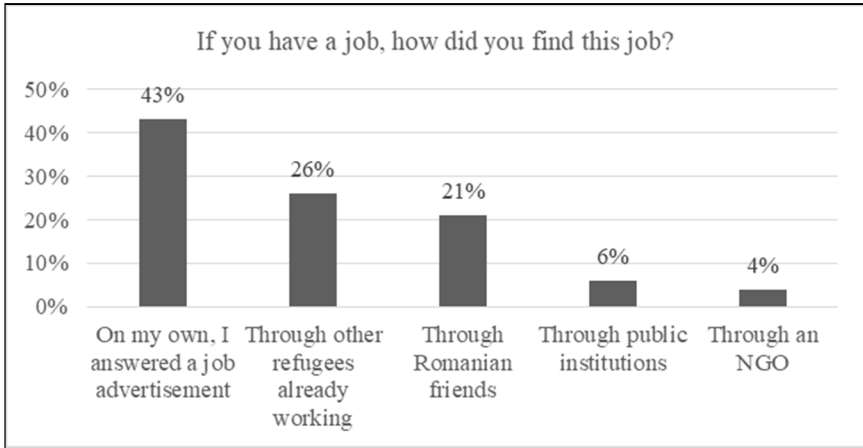
*Figure 1. Current Job Status in Romania of Ukrainian Refugees (%)*



*Data source: The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

Figure 2 highlights the importance of personal networking and individual connections, both among refugees and with Romanians, while also indicating the relative inefficiency of formal actors like public institutions and NGOs in job facilitation.

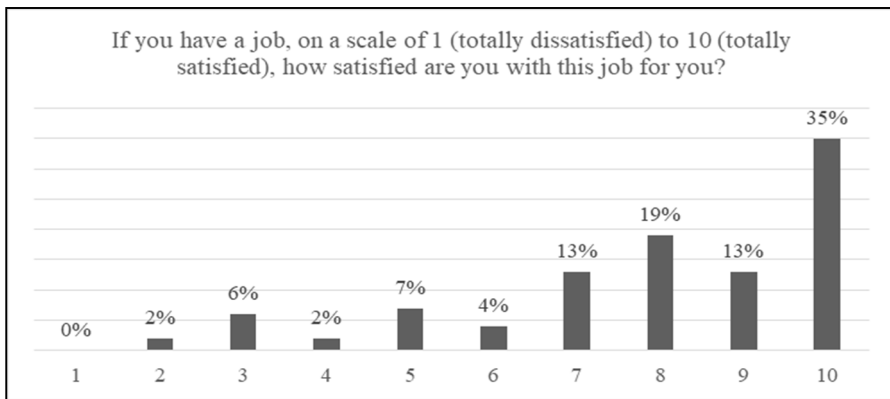
**Figure 2. How Ukrainian Refugees Found Employment in Romania (%)**



*Data source: The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

As shown in Figure 3, more than a third (35%) of respondents who have a job are totally satisfied with it. A high degree of satisfaction (scores of 8, 9 and 10) is shown by 67%, while only 17% are dissatisfied (scores in the range 2-5).

**Figure 3. Job Satisfaction of Ukrainian Refugees in Romania (%)**

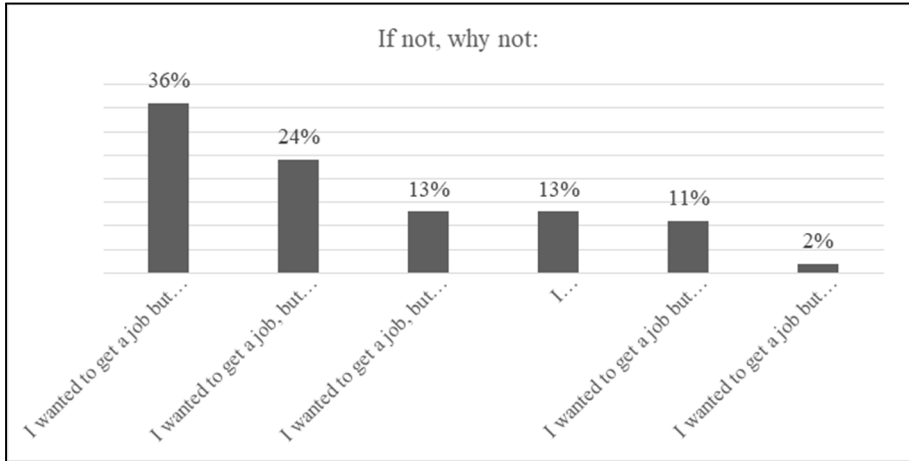


*Data source: The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

Among the respondents who have jobs, challenges and their current workplaces were identified: 25% mentioned being underpaid, 20% felt under-qualified for their roles, 14% had issues with working hours, and 4% each reported problems with overwork or the attitude of colleagues/employers. Among those not working, only 13% are in this

situation because they could not or did not want to work and did not look for work (Figure 4). Employers' reluctance is cited as a reason by 2% of the unemployed respondents, with most respondents saying that the problem is related to working hours (13%), not knowing Romanian (24%) or the need to take care of children (36%).

**Figure 4. Obstacles to Finding Suitable Jobs for Ukrainian Refugees (%)**



Data source: The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)

### Qualitative

Refugees expressed job preferences based on their previous experience and skills. Some showed interest in working in beauty salons, as nail technicians, for example, while others were inclined towards supermarket or clerical jobs. The importance of having job options that match their skills and interests was emphasized, highlighting the need for employment opportunities that are both suitable and fulfilling for them.

Psychological and social factors can play a significant role in refugees' employment decisions. For example, one refugee mentioned the psychological impact of working as a cleaner in a public space where she felt uncomfortable. Social interactions and positive relationships with colleagues were also highlighted as important aspects of work, providing a sense of friendship and support.

*I had a job in Ukraine, but here I don't really know which one I could do. I tried working in the Promenada shopping mall. I went to a job fair and was hired for cleaning, i.e. cleaning job at the mall, but I couldn't resist psychologically. It was impossible for me to get over the barrier that now I am a cleaning woman being very young. If it were a closed room, it would still have been acceptable, but in a large space where people circulate and see me it put a lot of pressure on me. Honestly, I would prefer something in a supermarket, to organize the goods on the shelves or something like that would suit me more and I would like it. In an office I couldn't work because I have a very low level of English and I don't know Romanian. (I, refugee, 29 years old)*

Limited knowledge of English or Romanian, was identified as a barrier to finding a job in certain fields. Refugees with poor language skills expressed great difficulty in obtaining clerical or better paid jobs. This language barrier limits their options and creates difficulties in accessing the labour market.

Some refugees cited care giving responsibilities as an obstacle to their ability to work. Caring for children or family members with permanent needs limited their availability for work outside the home. The desire to work from home and the need for flexible working arrangements were mentioned as potential solutions.

Several refugees reported experiencing age discrimination while seeking employment, with their age being cited as a reason for being overlooked or rejected. This prejudice has created additional obstacles for older refugees in finding suitable employment opportunities, despite their willingness and capability to work.

*I want to work, but they don't want to hire me because I am 75, when they hear how old I am, they refuse, but I still feel capable. (O, refugee, 75 years old)*

Refugees highlighted the role of support organisations in assisting them in their job search, creating CVs and putting them in touch with potential employers. In refugees' accounts, these organisations played a vital role in supporting their integration into the labour market and helping them in the employment process.

Overall, both the qualitative and quantitative components of the research highlight the importance of addressing language barriers, providing training and education opportunities, offering flexible working arrangements, combating age discrimination, and expanding support services to help refugees find meaningful employment. By addressing these challenges, policy makers, organisations and employers can facilitate the successful integration of refugees into the labour market, harnessing their skills and contributing to their overall well-being and self-sufficiency.

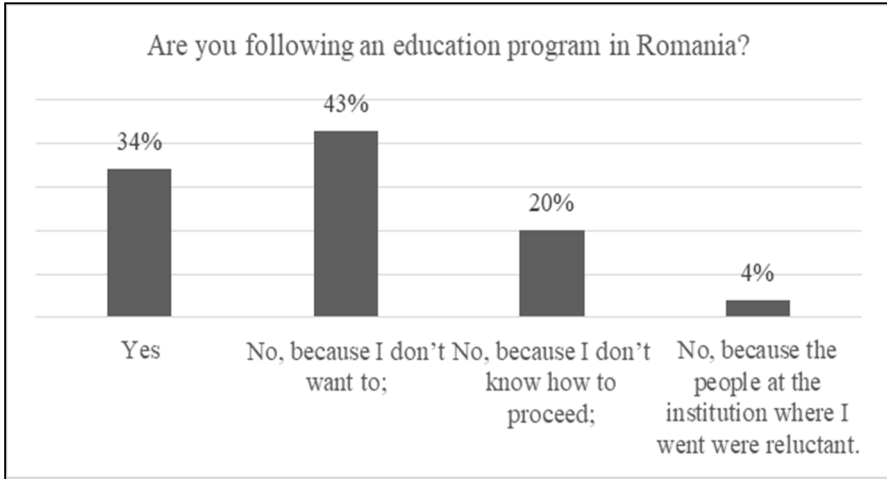
## **Education**

### **Quantitative**

Among the respondents, 34% are enrolled in an educational program in Romania, while 43% are neither enrolled nor interested in enrolling. For 4%, reluctance was the reason for not joining their desired program, and 20% were unsure about the enrolment process. Additionally, 63% of the respondents' children are not attending school in Romania, mainly due to language barriers, with 36% not knowing Romanian.

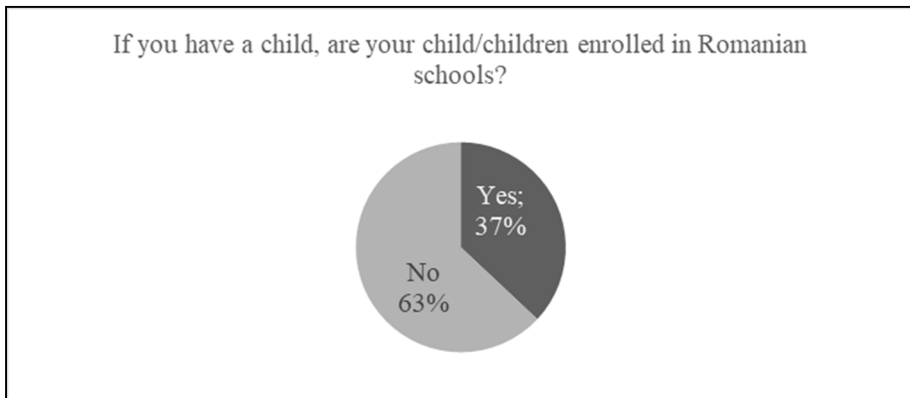


**Figure 5. Education Status Ukrainian Refugees in Romania (%)**



Data source: *The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

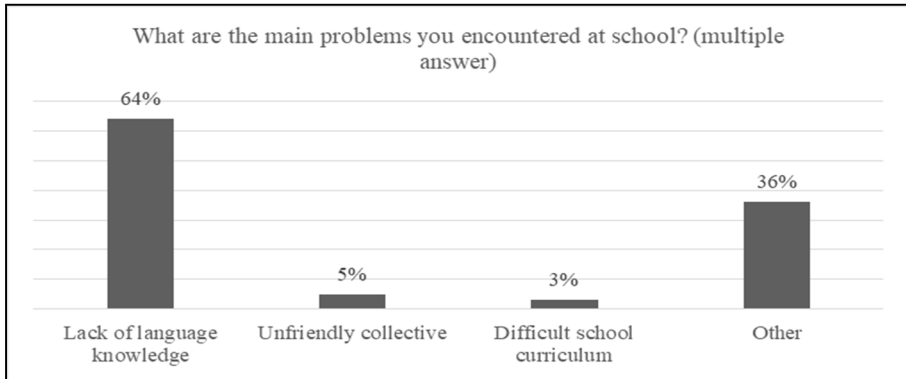
**Figure 6. Education Choices for Ukrainian Children Refugees in Romania (%)**



Data source: *The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

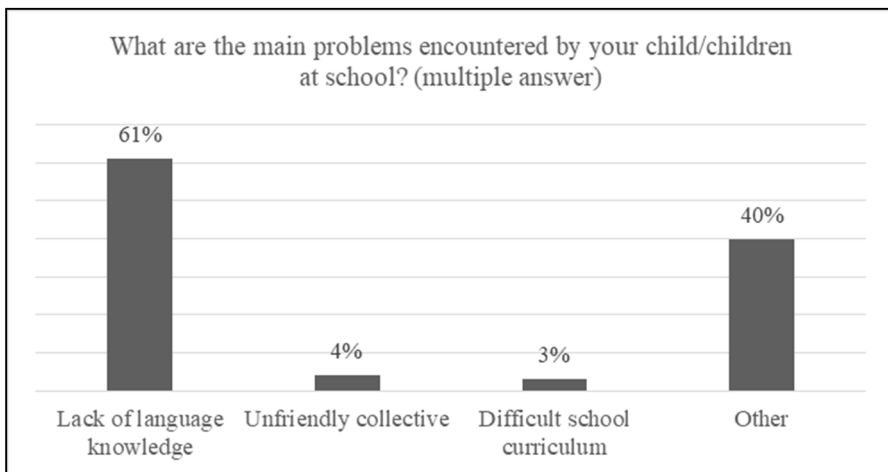
For respondents engaged in the education system, either directly or as parents, the predominant challenge is the lack of language proficiency (Figure 7). This barrier significantly hinders their or their children's effective participation in the educational system. The survey also reveals that adults perceive similar problems for their children (Figure 8), with the majority struggling with language barriers. Instances of a difficult school curriculum and unfriendly staff, though present, are less common.

**Figure 7. Educational Challenges Faced by Ukrainian Refugees in Romania**



Data source: *The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

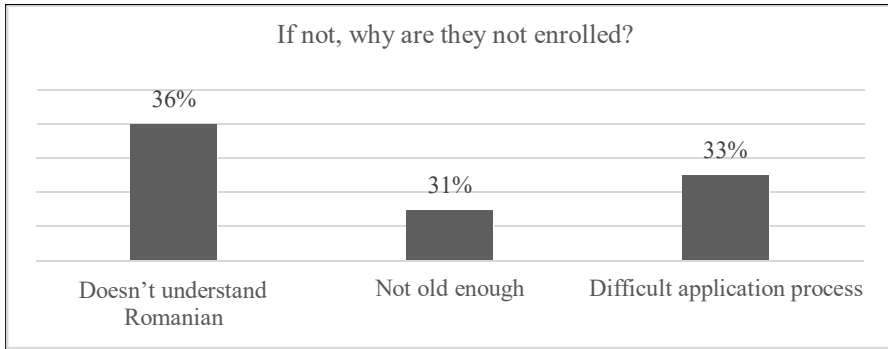
**Figure 8. Educational Challenges Faced by Ukrainian Children Refugees in Romania (parents' perspective)**



Data source: *The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

The research data indicates that the lack of Romanian language proficiency (Figure 9 is also a significant barrier to Ukrainian children's participation in educational programs in Romania.). Additionally, the perceived complexity of the enrolment process in schools is another common obstacle faced by these children and their families. This suggests a need for more accessible language support and a simplified enrolment process to facilitate their integration into the education system.

**Figure 9. Reasons for Non-Enrolment of Ukrainian Children Refugees in Romanian Schools**



Data source: *The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

### Qualitative

The qualitative research highlights that refugee children in Romania face various challenges in accessing education. While some children continue their education through Ukrainian schools or online classes, others, whose parents wish for them to attend Romanian schools, encounter issues like limited availability of places and concerns about health and integration into new student groups. This points to the need for more inclusive and accessible educational options for refugee children.

In the interviews, language learning has been identified as a crucial need among refugees. Many expressed a desire to learn Romanian, recognizing its importance for their children's integration and future educational opportunities. However, attending language classes is challenging for some due to other commitments or limited access to necessary resources.

*We would benefit from some Romanian classes. We have classes organized by ADRA, but I always don't make it to because I am always travelling at fairs [N.A. event organized by NGOs to help refugees]. But on Saturdays I always go to English classes. I would like to come to Romanian classes with my daughter, because I want her to eventually go to a Romanian school. I would also like her to go to SNSPA [N.A. SNSPA's accommodation centre] I know that there are English faculties at SNSPA, it would be good for her. It's easier for my daughter to learn Romanian, but it's far more complicated for me. (I., refugee, 29 years old)*

Online learning and technology are crucial in the education of refugee children. There's a vital need for access to technology like laptops or tablets for online courses. Challenges such as poor internet connectivity, which disrupts the learning process, were also noted. Addressing these technology-related issues is important for ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of refugees' educational experiences.

*My child attends remote school in Ukraine online... Then that's why I a tablet, a phone... but a tablet would be better. (O., refugee, 40 years old)*

The need for psychological support for refugee children is significant. For instance, one refugee, T., emphasized the importance of having a Ukrainian-speaking psychologist for effective communication with children. The language barrier with Romanian-speaking psychologists was seen as an obstacle, potentially affecting children's willingness to engage in therapy.

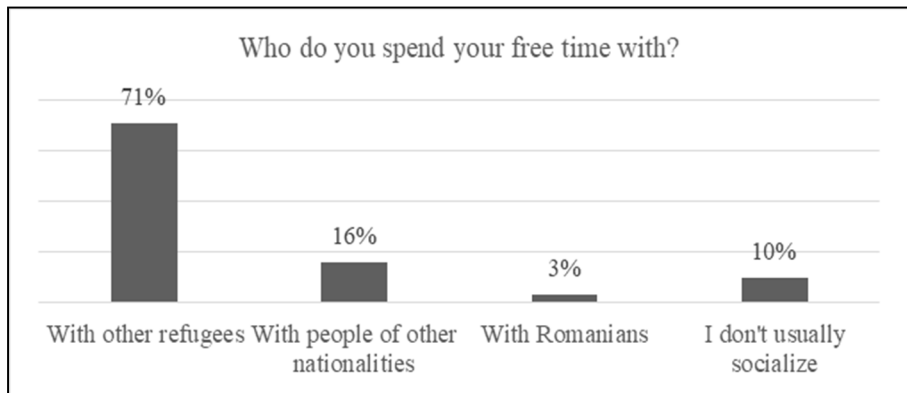
Children's individual preferences regarding language of instruction and their educational future were mentioned. Some children preferred to continue their education in Ukraine, while others expressed their openness to learn Romanian and explore educational opportunities in Romania.

Overall, the interviews highlighted the importance of addressing educational barriers, such as limited availability of schools and language barriers, to ensure access to quality education for refugee children. Providing adequate technological support for online learning, improving internet connectivity, and providing psychological support services in the mother tongue of refugees are crucial steps to address their educational needs. In addition, creating inclusive and welcoming environments in schools can support the successful integration of refugee children into the education system.

## Social relations and free time

Leisure time is insufficient for 26% of the sample. Slightly more than a third of respondents (35%) spend their leisure time shopping or going out, 21% attend cultural events and 18% go to events organised by NGOs (Figure 10).

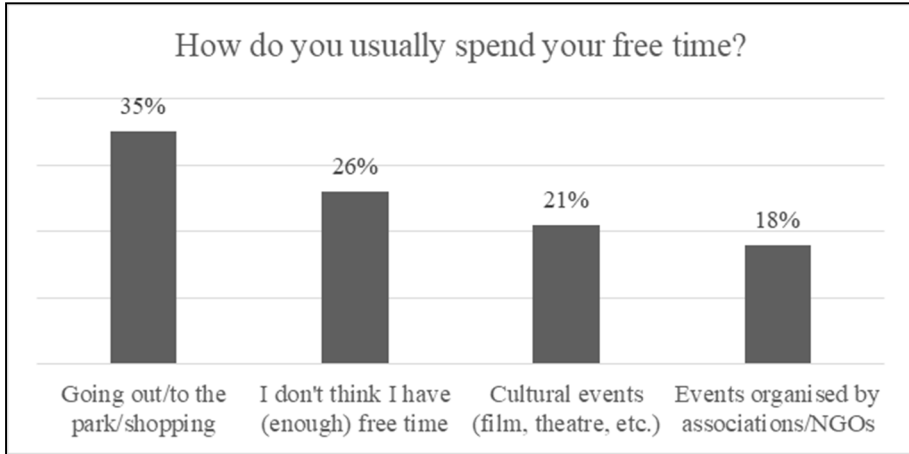
*Figure 10. Socializing Patterns among Ukrainian Refugees (%)*



*Data source: The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

Most respondents, 71%, tend to spend their free time predominantly with other refugees, while only a small fraction, 3%, usually spend time with Romanians (Figure 11). This suggests a preference or comfort in socializing within their own community among the refugee population.

**Figure 11. Leisure Activities Among Ukrainian Refugees (%)**



*Data source: The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

**Qualitative**

Refugees in Bucharest often spent their leisure time with family in parks, shopping centres, museums, and exploring the city. Watching movies or cartoons at home was also a popular activity. They faced initial adaptation challenges due to language barriers, which were partly mitigated using translators and tools like Google Translate. Positive interactions with friendly and communicative Romanians were a very much appreciated. Additionally, many refugees participated in cultural activities such as theatre, classical music concerts, and symphonies, showing their interest in engaging with Romanian culture.

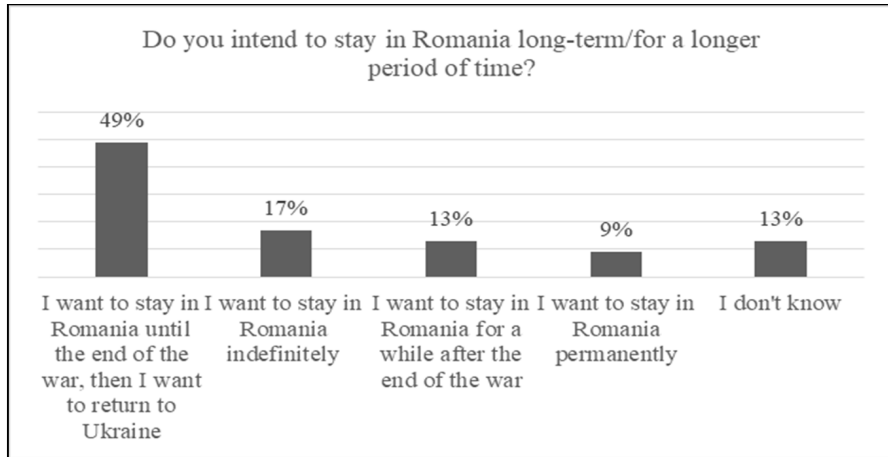
Overall, the analysis shows the refugees' engagement in diverse leisure activities, adaptation to new environments, and the forging of connections with local communities, supported by NGOs. The focus on family time, gratitude for assistance, and cultural exploration reflects their desire for normalcy and connection in their new circumstances.

**Future plans and intentions**

**Quantitative**

For half of the survey respondents, their future involves returning to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. Thirteen percent are undecided about their future plans, while another 13% wish to stay in Romania for some time after the war concludes. Notably, 26% of respondents have more substantial plans to remain in Romania, with 9% wanting to stay permanently and 17% indefinitely (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Long-Term Plans and Perspectives: Residency Intentions Among Ukrainian Refugees (%)**



Data source: *The needs and difficulties encountered by Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest, March-July 2023 (n=240)*

### Qualitative

Many refugees expressed a sense of uncertainty about making direct plans because of the unstable and unpredictable nature of their situation. They mentioned the challenges of living in a "fuzzy time", where the future is uncertain and unpredictable. Many refugees harbour a strong desire to return to Ukraine post-war, particularly the older demographic. They exhibit a deep connection to their homeland, emphasizing the emotional significance and longing to go back to their familiar homes, families, and communities. This sentiment reflects a profound attachment to their country and the life they left behind.

*As soon as the war is over, we want to go back home, but will keep your Romania in our hearts. (B., refugee, 73)*

*May the war end so I can go home. I'll be on the bus, you know, and sometimes I hear the ladies talking about their homes, and I start to think, God, do I still have the trees at my house?! I had many flowers there, you know? I don't know... I'm not even thinking about the house [N.A if it's still there]. And I cried for about four days, and they hold my hands, and said, "you are homesick, but if you go home and what are you going to do?" And I said, "you know what, I don't want money or anything, I'd eat bread with salt, or not even that, just to be home". (M., refugee, 45 years old)*

Younger refugees, in particular, have shown interest in staying in Romania, recognizing the potential for a better life compared to the uncertain future of returning to Ukraine. However, concerns about maintaining their refugee status, possible regulatory changes post-war, and the complexities of legal processes have raised doubts about their long-term ability to remain in Romania.

*I would have liked to stay in Romania, but I don't know how things will turn out. The only option to stay would be to marry a Romanian. But I wonder what the conditions will be to stay*

*if the war ends. Will they cancel our refugee status and deport us, or I don't know... but I would really like to stay. (I, refugee, 29 years old)*

Several refugees emphasized the necessity of learning Romanian for integration into Romanian society, recognizing its significance, particularly for their children, to access better opportunities and connections. They expressed gratitude towards the Romanian people and their location, finding comfort in being near their homeland despite the difficulties. The idea of relocating to other countries, like Norway or Germany, was considered, acknowledging the complexities of such decisions.

For the refugees, their future is filled with a mix of hope, uncertainty, and aspirations. They yearn for peace and stability in their homeland. Challenges such as legal status and the need to learn Romanian for better integration are significant. They have expressed gratitude for the support provided by NGOs, volunteers, and the Romanian public, who have assisted with essential items like food, hygiene products, and clothing.

## **Limitations, conclusions, and recommendations**

The data gathered provides insights into how Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest perceive their situation, particularly regarding access to services, resources, and challenges faced. However, this view is not comprehensive. The primary respondents were those in contact with the Social Incubator Association, despite efforts to widely distribute the online questionnaire through personal and professional networks. Consequently, many situations, especially those involving extremely vulnerable individuals who are disconnected from service providers, remain undocumented and unaddressed in this study.

The research indicates that employment is a significant issue for refugees, with only a small portion employed and the majority not integrated into the labour market. The main barriers to employment are language difficulties and working hours, particularly for refugees with childcare responsibilities. Most of the employed refugees secured jobs independently or through personal connections. This suggests that the efforts of public institutions and NGOs in facilitating access to the labour market, especially for those deemed harder to employ, could be enhanced.

Ukrainian refugees in Romania face challenges in participating in the Romanian education system, primarily due to a lack of Romanian language proficiency and complexities in the enrolment process. Despite these obstacles, those who have managed to navigate the system generally report satisfaction with the educational experiences provided. A common concern expressed by refugees was the lack of social connections and friends in their unfamiliar environment. They mentioned a desire to have someone to spend their free time with and to establish a support network. Involvement in social activities and participation in organisations that cater for refugees were seen as important for establishing connections and receiving additional support.

Many refugees wish to return to Ukraine but acknowledge the uncertainty of when this will be possible. Additionally, those considering staying in Romania face concerns about financial sustainability and stability, especially those with limited Romanian language skills, disabilities, age-related issues, or caregiver responsibilities for other relatives.

There's also apprehension related to the uncertainty of their legal status in Romania and how long they might be permitted to stay.

Based on these findings, we propose a set of recommendations that aim to align the resources available for refugee integration with the requirements they must fulfil to receive support. This includes facilitating labour market integration and assimilation into the education system. These guidelines are designed to enhance the overall support system for refugees, ensuring that their needs are met efficiently and effectively.

- Establishing a framework for inter-institutional cooperation as a means of making the response to refugees more efficient and responsive to existing needs, including through partnerships (continuation of existing partnerships, development of new collaborations) between the public and private sectors, as well as between entities working directly with beneficiaries and entities with responsibilities more around legislative decisions.
- Ensuring effective communication of essential information to refugees by utilizing appropriate methods, enabling them to easily access these resources. This approach should focus on making information about services, rights, and processes readily available and understandable to support their integration and well-being.
- Creating social events involving refugees and Romanians to increase the exposure of Romanians and refugees to otherness and encourage informal, everyday interactions between members of the two groups.
- Providing alternative day-care centre services for mothers who are seeking employment. This initiative would provide reliable childcare options, enabling mothers to actively pursue job opportunities without worrying about their children's safety and well-being during their absence.
- Involving NGOs and public institutions as intermediaries of labour demand and supply (specifically, Ukrainian refugees seeking employment).
- Promoting successful examples - refugees integrated into the labour market; employers employing refugees.
- Providing detailed explanation of the school and education enrolment process, ensuring clarity and accessibility for refugees. This guidance should cover necessary steps, documentation, and support services available, aiding in the smooth integration of refugee children and adults into the educational system.
- Encouraging the exchange of experiences/communication between refugees who have integrated into the education system and refugees who want to, but have not yet succeeded, with the aim of popularising ways of doing things.
- Provide Romanian language courses tailored to the specific needs and abilities of refugees, ensuring these courses are perceived as accessible. This approach should focus on facilitating easier integration into Romanian society, particularly addressing language barriers that affect daily life and access to services.



## Authorship

Equal contribution from both authors.

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The authors declare no conflicting interests.

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