



Refugees from Ukraine in the Polish labour market: opportunities and obstacles

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last decade has seen an accelerated transformation of Poland from a historically emigration country into an immigration country. After years of elaborate processes of temporary labour immigration, there suddenly started refugee movements, whose magnitude is unprecedented in post-World War II Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and the full-scale war across our eastern border caused a massive influx of war refugees to Poland. Mainly women and children.

In response to these events, the majority of the Polish public (77%) became involved in helping refugees from Ukraine. This support varied from financial and material support, through various types of voluntary activities, to providing their own houses and flats to those left without a roof over their heads. According to our research, Poles spent PLN 9-10 bln out of their own pockets to help refugees in the first months after the outbreak of war alone.

Those arriving in Poland obtained shelter and safety fairly quickly, however, the continuing armed conflict has extended the time they plan to spend in our country. This translated into the need to find sources of income and economic activation. Data from both public records and academic research paint a picture of surprisingly high labour force participation among refugees. Compared to OECD countries, it is in our country that the scale of employment of war refugees is the highest. And it must be remembered that it was not the intention to earn money that motivated refugees to come to our country, but to separate themselves and their loved ones from the threat to their lives.

In our analyses, we also wanted to explore the challenges faced by war refugees in the Polish labour market. As in previous publications on 50+ employees or women returning to work after childcare breaks, we conducted an experiment using fake CVs. Based on that, we can say that there is some discrimination against Ukrainian refugees at the stage of recruitment processes, although it is clearly smaller-scale than, for example, in the case of age differences among Polish employees.

The findings of unequal treatment of refugees or migrants are quite widely covered in the academic literature, thus the occurrence of such phenomena also in our country should not come as too much of a surprise. Similar results in experiments of the same type as ours were also obtained in other countries.

However, this should not absolve us from looking for ways to improve the situation and reduce the factors that may influence discriminatory behaviour. Creating tools for the adaptation and integration of refugees into Polish society, and into the labour market, in particular, seems crucial in this respect.

I trust that our publication will trigger discussions on this issue and provide an insight into the challenges faced by Ukrainian citizens in Poland. Our institution is ready to support the work on the implementation of relevant strategic actions, and by way of an initial contribution to the debate on the integration of foreigners, here we would like to present a set of recommendations.

I hope our report will provide an interesting read!

Sincerely,

Andrzej Kubisiak

Deputy Director, Polish Economic Institute

Key numbers

65%

employment rate of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland (OECD, 2023)

46%

percentage of war refugees who worked below their qualifications in Poland in 2022

82% and 50%

employment rates in 2022 of refugees who knew and did not know the Polish language, respectively

30%

lower callback rate for Ukrainian applicants to job advertisements not requiring specialist qualifications than for Polish applicants

25%

fewer calls made to Ukrainian applicants than to Polish applicants for job advertisements requiring professional experience and specialised qualifications in finance and economics

420

number of fake CVs sent for jobs with low qualification requirements in the PEI experiment

330

number of fake CVs sent for specialist positions in finance and economics in the PEI experiment

Key findings

- **The employment rate of working-age war refugees from Ukraine in Poland is 65%, the highest among OECD countries (much higher compared to Poland's other neighbours, with 53% in Lithuania, 51% in the Czech Republic, 34% in Slovakia and 18% in Germany).** This result can be considered a major achievement, given that Ukrainian refugees active in the Polish labour market represent a variety of qualifications and work experience, which makes their professional integration a complex and diverse process.
- **PEI's experimental study, however, suggests that employers respond fewer job applications from Ukrainian female candidates than from Polish women, especially in industries that do not require specialised qualifications.** Ukrainian female candidates received almost 30% fewer responses than Polish women with similar qualifications, a signal of potential unequal treatment.
- **For positions requiring higher qualifications, the difference in callback rates between Polish and Ukrainian women was not statistically significant, which makes it impossible to unequivocally conclude that discrimination exists.** Although Ukrainian female candidates received 25% fewer responses than Polish women, the low overall response rate for applications for specialist positions (around 10%) makes it difficult to interpret these results.
- **PEI's in-depth interviews show that refugees in Poland are forced to confront a variety of challenges in the labour market, often requiring them to be flexible, resilient, and adaptable in a new environment.** One of these challenges is actually discrimination on the basis of nationality. This manifests itself as inadequate or no pay, exploitation of a weaker position in the labour market, unequal treatment and workload, all the way to the occurrence of harmful stereotypes. Refugees also face difficulties in having their qualifications accepted and often work below their skills or in the informal economy.
- **War refugees experience significant emotional problems while facing challenges in their new place of residence in Poland.** Struggling with language and cultural barriers and difficulties in securing basic livelihoods for themselves and their families is a daily reality that social and institutional support in Poland tries to alleviate. The language barrier is one of the main obstacles to finding their way in the new reality and finding a job. Refugees also face the lack of recognition of Ukrainian documents, certificates and diplomas, and difficulties in obtaining information about the labour market.
- **Despite difficulties, there are also positive testimonies related to working in Poland.** Refugees recognise and appreciate the support they receive in the adaptation process. Assistance offered in creation of CVs, adaptation to the workplace, or explaining the specifics of the labour market is a much noticed and appreciated support.

Introduction

The adaptation of war refugees from Ukraine to the conditions of the Polish labour market is today not only a humanitarian problem, but also a challenge of a socio-economic dimension. Having accepted one of the largest groups of war refugees, Poland must effectively face this challenge (Duszczuk et al., 2023). This report summarises the results of a study aimed at understanding the conditions of refugees in the Polish labour market with a particular focus on the phenomenon of discrimination.

The report consists of five chapters. The first one provides a general introduction to the socio-economic situation of refugees. It presents basic indicators, such as the number of refugees in Poland in comparison with other countries, the employment rate, the percentage of underemployed, the sectors they work in or their income. In the second chapter, we present the results of interviews with twenty Ukrainian refugees, male and female, about their living and working situation and their perception of discrimination in the labour market. In the third chapter, we report on the results of an experiment using fake CVs, designed to enable us to investigate discrimination at the stage of recruitment processes. The concept of the experiment was to send two pairs of CVs (Polish and Ukrainian) in response to different existing job offers. A total of 750 applications were sent in order to analyse the application response rate. Chapter four of the report is a discussion of factors affecting the lives and integration of refugees using data from the academic literature and international research. The final section provides recommendations for the public sector including suggestions for action in public policy and multi-sectoral cooperation.

From an economic point of view, especially under conditions of insufficient labour supply, discrimination against job applicants and employees may contribute to suboptimal use of labour resources (Becker, 1957; Murphy, Shleifer, Vishny, 1991; Gramozi et al., 2021). Polish Economic Institute illustrated this problem in publications on age discrimination (Baszczak et al., 2021) and the situation of women returning to work after a maternity leave or childcare break (Baszczak et al., 2022). Discrimination based on ethnicity, which we face both in the case of refugees and migrants, is a similar problem. It concerns not only working conditions, but also the recruitment process itself. However, the situation of Ukrainian refugees in the Polish labour market, also in the context of discrimination, has its own specificity and therefore deserves a separate analysis. The role that employment plays in the process of social integration of migrants and refugees should also be highlighted.

The interpretation of PEI's research findings requires that the negative consequences of forced migration be taken into account. War refugees, unlike other migrant groups, often witness traumatic events of armed conflict and the need to flee their previous place of residence. This affects their mental

health, social relations and ability to adapt in a new environment, which has a direct impact on their working life and also distinguishes them from other migrants who may have planned ahead for migration. Refugees often face linguistic and cultural barriers that can impede their effective communication and interaction in the workplace, as well as the process of seeking employment itself. This can lead to discrimination, both conscious and unconscious, by employers, as well as a kind of self-discrimination and exclusion from social integration processes by Ukrainian workers.

This report does not cover all aspects of the problem. However, we do show that it is important to understand the specifics of actual and potential discrimination of war refugees in the labour market against other discriminatory factors in order to develop more effective methods of integration of those refugees who decide to stay longer in Poland.

1. Ukrainian refugees in Poland – scale and structure of employment

Poland is one of the countries, alongside the United States and Germany, that has received the largest number of war refugees from Ukraine in absolute numbers. As of June 2023, more than 4.7 million refugees from Ukraine were residing in OECD countries (2023). The exodus from Ukraine is the biggest population movement in Europe since the Second World War. Approximately 14 million people were internally displaced or sought safety outside Ukraine. The scale of this forced migration is shown by data from the Polish Border Guard. From February 24, 2022 to October 25, 2023, more than 16.66 million Ukrainian citizens crossed the Polish border. 14.84 million crossed the border from Poland to Ukraine during the same period (www1).

According to UNHCR data, the total number of refugees in Poland was 958,935 (as of 18.10.2023). The refugees submitted 1,639,725 applications for various forms of temporary protection to the relevant institutions in Poland. Most of them stayed in five voivodeships: Mazovia, Lower Silesia, Silesia, Greater Poland, and Lesser Poland (www2), with a high predominance in the Mazovian Voivodeship and large cities (Górny, Kaczmarczyk, 2023).

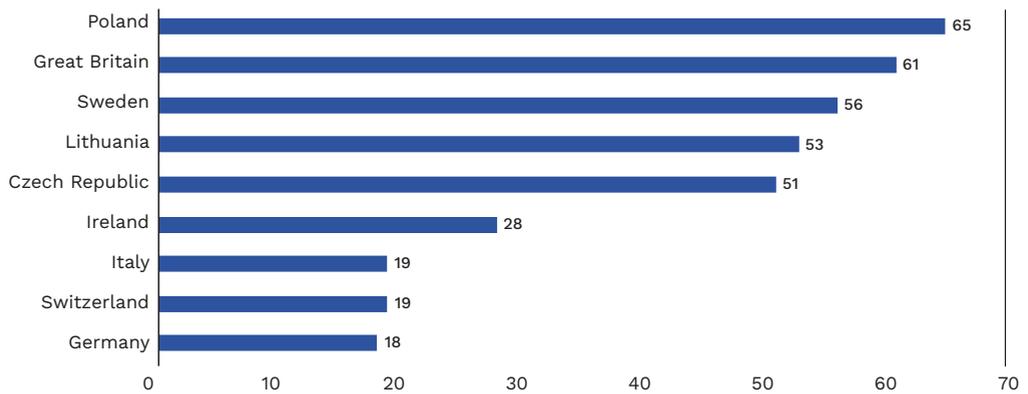
The specific demographic profile of refugees from Ukraine to Poland is noteworthy. Nearly 90% are women and children (www3). A recent study by the National Bank of Poland also shows that the largest age group is those aged 27 to 44 (48%), followed by those aged 45 to 59 (24%) and those under 26 (18%). Older people who are over 60 years old account for only 9% (NBPa, 2023).

The labour market is an area where the effect of the mass arrival of migrants is evident and requires in-depth analysis. Although the subject of our analyses are war refugees, the extension of their presence in Poland requires that they also be categorised as potential employees (Duszczczyk et al., 2023). Therefore, in the following section we analyse the number of Ukrainian women and men employed in Poland, identify the sectors in which they can find jobs, their long-term career plans and the forms of support they receive. We also point out the challenges they face - from language barriers to skills

mismatches. All these aspects are relevant to both public policies and employer strategies (Jarosz, Klaus, 2023).

At 65%, the employment rate of refugees in Poland is the highest among OECD countries. Over 40% of refugees are employed in several other European countries: the United Kingdom (61%), Sweden (56%), Lithuania (53%) and the Czech Republic (51%), respectively. In contrast, the smallest percentage of those employed is found in Germany (18%) (DIW, 2023), Switzerland (19%) and Italy (19%) (OECD, 2023).

Chart 1. Percentage of refugees employed in selected OCED countries



Source: prepared by PEI based on Central Statistical Office data.

Such a high rate of refugee employment in Poland was most likely influenced by the Ukrainians working here even before the Russian invasion began in 2022. According to ZUS data, 667,000 Ukrainian nationals were enrolled in the pension and disability insurance system in March 2022 (ZUS, 2022). The large number of working immigrants before the war could help incoming refugees to find employment, housing, provide organisational assistance to facilitate their new situation. The existing Ukrainian social network in Poland to some extent neutralised the negative effects of forced migration at the very first stage of the refugees' stay in Poland. Central Statistical Office data shows that at the end of 2019, there were 2.1 million foreigners in Poland, of which 1.3 million were Ukrainian citizens (www4). Another factor that contributed to such a high employment rate was the high demand for labour in the Polish economy, especially in the largest cities.

An analysis of OECD data shows that refugees find employment as manual workers, as well as in tourism and hospitality, manufacturing, logistics, IT, and construction. This means that a mismatch of skills with the market and underqualified work are common. A 2022 study found that more than 50% of refugees were employed to do simple unskilled jobs (Gromadzki, Lewandowski, 2022). They often find work through social networks,

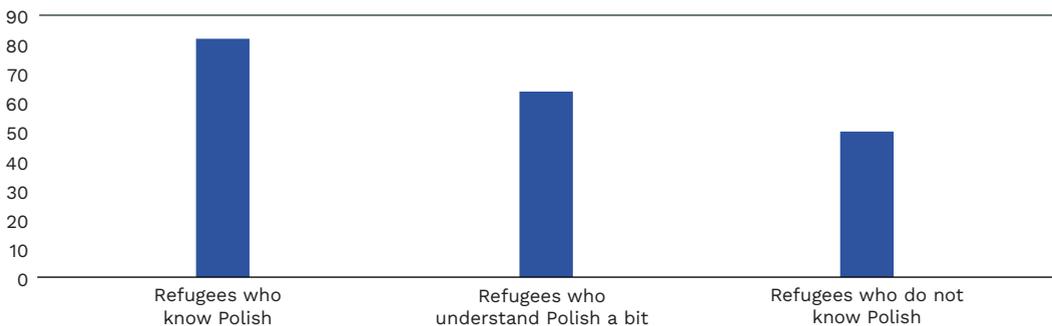
with the support of other migrants, in jobs with low barriers to entry. Moreover, female refugees who care for children look for part-time work or the most flexible form possible.

The employment structure of Ukrainian refugees in Poland does not deviate from European trends. According to a 2022 NBP study, 19% of refugees worked in industry, 10% in trade and warehousing, and 9% in household services. A significant proportion of refugees work in poorly paid jobs - 49% of them earn less than PLN 3,000 net per month (NBP, 2023). However, NBP data show that there was a significant increase in their earnings between 2022 and 2023. While in November 2022 the largest number of respondents in this group of workers (close to 40%) indicated monthly earnings of PLN 2,000-3,000, in a subsequent survey conducted in the summer of 2023, when asked about earnings, the most common answer (close to 30%) was to indicate an income range between PLN 3,000 and 4,000 net. The number of refugees earning less than PLN 3,000 net decreased by more than 10 pp. There is an increasing number of those earning above PLN 4,000 and above PLN 5,000 net (NBP, 2023). The highest earners are refugees (and pre-war migrants) working in IT and transport.

Refugees are relatively more likely than pre-war migrants to work below their qualifications. Among war refugees, the percentage working below their qualifications was 46% in 2022 (32% for pre-war migrants). Among those with higher education, 47% of respondents reported working below their qualifications (NBP, 2023).

Knowledge of the Polish language is a key element in the process of finding a job, especially in the context of efforts to better match skills and qualifications. The employment rate for refugees who knew Polish was 82%, while for those who did not know the language it was as much as 32 percentage points lower, reaching a ceiling of only 50%. Among those declaring that they understood the language a little, the employment rate rose to 64%.

Chart 2. Percentage of working refugees vs. knowledge of the Polish language



Source: prepared by PEI based on Central Statistical Office data.

The percentage of refugees who declare their intention to stay in Poland is significantly lower than for pre-2022 migrants. The intention to stay permanently is declared by 21% of Ukrainian refugees and almost half (48%) of pre-war migrants. 18% of refugees and 13% of pre-war migrants want to stay in Poland for longer than one year. However, as many as 52% of refugees signal a difficulty in declaring the date of their return, indicating high uncertainty about the future (NBP, 2023). A comparison with data from the previous NBP survey (NBP, 2023) shows that the percentage of pre-war migrants interested in permanent residence in Poland has decreased by 7 pp. In a survey conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in selected voivodeships in April-June 2023, when asked about the reasons for return, most respondents indicate homesickness (42%); the next reason relates to the labour market, i.e. work in the basic services sector (16%); and in third place is the desire to meet family members living in Ukraine (16%) (IOM, 2023).

In order to analyse the situation of war refugees from Ukraine, it is necessary to take into account not only the basic economic indicators that draw a picture of their overall socio-economic situation, but also the more detailed complex aspects of their labour market experience. The challenges of combining professional and parental responsibilities, or the emotional consequences of an interrupted career, require an analysis of the psycho-social profile of refugees. Furthermore, phenomena related to discrimination often remain invisible in traditional quantitative research, which is why the results of qualitative research, including the in-depth interviews (IDIs) and experimental studies conducted for this report, are relevant. They reveal important mechanisms that affect their working situation and provide a deeper understanding of specific challenges.

2. Refugee perspective – findings from in-depth interviews

We conducted twenty in-depth interviews (IDIs) with Ukrainian refugees to understand their experiences, attitudes, and challenges to professional and social integration in Poland. The purpose of these interviews was, among other things, to identify voices indicating the existence of discrimination in the labour market and to understand in which forms it may manifest itself. Although qualitative research does not allow us to know the scale of the problem, it helps us to understand the impact of discrimination on refugees' behaviour, attitudes and expectations. In-depth interviews also help to identify the personal experiences of refugees and show the complexity of their situation, which can help to develop more effective and empathetic solutions in public policies.

In our research, we focused mainly on women, who make up the majority of refugees arriving in Poland in 2022. We interviewed sixteen women and four men. Our interviewees represented different age groups (from 18 to 60), different levels of education and different work experiences. In Poland, they live in towns and cities of different sizes – from smaller and medium-sized cities to large agglomerations. An important aspect of the study was the perspective of the mothers, showing the unique dimension of the challenges of motherhood in the context of migration and integration.

2.1. Life of refugees

When analysing the situation of refugees as employees or job seekers, it seems impossible to ignore their particular life situation. This is also important for a later assessment of their experiences in the Polish labour market, as well as for a proper evaluation of employers' potential attitudes. Recording these aspects in the description of the survey results allows for their accurate interpretation by eliminating negative ethical implications and distortions of the real nature of their experiences and needs.

War refugees are a heterogeneous group of people with diverse skills, experience and career aspirations. Among the respondents we interviewed, there are those who work in agriculture and commerce, services, managers, employees of small and large companies, people with experience in the construction sector, IT, education and health care, as well as one university

lecturer. This diversity significantly limits the scope for generalisation of conclusions about refugees' work and non-work experiences.

Refugees, despite the aforementioned differences, are united by difficulties of an emotional nature, which are present in the daily adaptation challenges faced by women and men. A sense of loneliness, loss, insecurity, memories of experienced or observed violence, lack of loved ones or concerns about providing them with decent living conditions in their new place of residence are just a few examples of the emotional challenges that some of them face.

I used to work for a construction company. There I dealt with office matters, organisational matters, documentation... it is difficult to find such a job here.

One of our daughters is a lawyer. She can't find a job here in Poland. She worked in a factory, tried cleaning, too... she got very discouraged and is not working at the moment.

Some refugees clearly communicate longing for their country and loved ones as an important element that influences the adaptation process and, in particular, the very willingness to adjust to living and working conditions in Poland. Several interviewees indicate a deep need to return to their country as soon as circumstances allow. This, in turn, may translate into the way they are treated by employers who do not need or want to tie their professional future to Poland.

The declared desire to return immediately may be compounded by a change in social status and a loss of a sense of economic security. The respondents highlighted financial challenges including lack of a regular source of income, higher living costs and difficulties in securing basic necessities for themselves and their families. This is a radical change for these refugees, who were quite well off before the war, and whose social status has dropped significantly after fleeing Russian aggression. This generates additional stress and disappointment due to the growing uncertainty of the future.

We all want to go home, to Ukraine. My husband has stayed there, we can't be together. I would very much like to be with him.

The language barrier is one of the main obstacles to finding one's way in a new reality, including getting a job. Nevertheless, for those who declare their intention to return as soon as they can, the conviction that they need to learn the language is also gone. The impact of the language barrier appears complex and manifests itself in many spheres of professional and social activity. For example, a nurse could not find a job in a hospital because of insufficient knowledge of the Polish language. An interesting case is that of a person who, although she communicates in English in the workplace and only this language is required by the employer, stresses that **full integration and efficiency requires knowledge of the local language, since team communication and informal communication both take place in Polish.** Therefore, the language barrier is one of the key factors

In Kharkiv we had everything; here we needed to start from scratch.

increasing the likelihood of social exclusion and non-acceptance of refugees in the workplace and in social life. International research, as well as research conducted in Poland on which this report is based, shows that language proficiency is one of the key factors significantly increasing the chance of successful integration into the host society.

I am a university lecturer, and a professor. I specialise in acoustic education. I used to teach pedagogy. I didn't speak Polish, but I do a bit now - I took courses. I taught in the department of music-theoretical and artistic preparation, so I can help with the rhythmic classes (in a Polish kindergarten - author's note).

The refugees' quality of life is undoubtedly also influenced by their relations with the Polish administration. And although administrative procedures in Poland are perceived as rather uncomplicated, especially compared to those in Ukraine, there are problems in some areas,

e.g. diploma nostrification. One female refugee sent her documents to a Polish university, but no one there was able to help her. Although the paperwork to find a job, with exceptions, is not too burdensome, some refugees feel fearful of the red tape. Some are frightened when they have to open a bank account, for example. In their case, as suggested in the interviews, more education and information is needed.

Despite the challenges and difficulties, Ukrainian refugees in Poland recognise and appreciate the support they receive - that provided by public institutions and international organisations, but in particular, the support provided by civil society. For example, when it comes to the labour market, help in understanding the specifics of the labour market is an appreciated and noticed element of support. And so is help in preparing a CV with support from career counsellors. One refugee shared his opinion that he 'had no problem at all' because his employer and colleagues, helped him a lot.

All in all, a whole spectrum of attitudes emerges in the in-depth interviews: from pessimism, uncertainty, war fatigue to gratitude and optimism. In the interviews, some of the people appear to be war-weary and would like to return to their country already, but for various reasons cannot do so. There is also gratitude for all that Ukrainian women and men have received in Poland and the conviction that Poland and Ukraine will continue to cooperate on many levels in the future.

2.2. Refugee as an employee

The labour market in Poland poses numerous challenges to refugees, ranging from the need to find a job, being able to earn a living for themselves and their families as soon as possible, and therefore a possible complete change of profession or branch, often to a job below their qualifications, to problems with adapting to the requirements and expectations of employers in the Polish labour market. Refugees are also a potential target of discriminatory behaviour, and we will devote the last part of the chapter to this problem.

The first challenge is finding employment. Some people use online services to look for a job, they send applications without even knowing what the company does. The priority is to find employment quickly. Others look for jobs where no CV is required. This is most often the case for blue-collar jobs. There, an informal recruitment process involving an interview with a job seeker is sufficient. Some people rely on the support of friends, compatriots in order to find employment, deal with paperwork and adjust to life in a new country more effectively.

It is common for people to go for physical jobs, not intellectual ones. In factories where nothing needs to be said just done. Even people who do speak Polish. My sister is a qualified nurse and she tried to get a job in a hospital. It's not possible for the time being either - she needs to learn the language better.

Finding a job sometimes requires the aforementioned change of career path, including working below one's qualifications. This situation is particularly acute for highly educated people with extensive work experience, who may face difficulties in finding a suitable job that allows them to continue their careers. Such groups of workers include, for example, lawyers or accountants. Differences in legal systems, the need to nostrify diplomas and the need to pass additional examinations are barriers that hinder professional integration in these sectors. Many refugees are aware that in Poland they may have to start their careers at a lower level. However, simple physical jobs, although easier to obtain, may be less rewarding and certainly less well paid compared to other types of employment. Still, there are some exceptions, mainly for those with specialist skills, such as programmers, who have a relatively better chance of finding work in their field.

I was really lucky because when I arrived it was still pretty early, so I got a job quickly. Later on, the girls started to have trouble getting a job, not even cleaning or helping in the kitchen was easy to find.

One respondent needed to send around 200 CVs before she found a job, which demonstrates the difficulty of finding suitable employment. In contrast, another noted that traditional job search methods may not be effective for skilled people. A third was willing to take a cleaning job due to language barriers, which also shows the complexity of labour market challenges. This disparity shows how much the social context and the individual characteristics of refugees influence adaptation strategies and the final results of integration into the Polish labour market.

What the refugees also have to face at times is the fact that Ukrainian certificates and diplomas are not recognised and that it is difficult to get information about the labour market. For example, one person with a medical degree had to wait a long time for the nostrification of her diploma and additionally pass an exam. This process is often lengthy and

I don't know the language, not a thing. Cleaning is my most valuable qualification.

Cleaning. That's the truth. A lot of Ukrainian women started with that. My sister also started with cleaning. Now she is an assistant teacher. At the beginning, very few people could find a job in a profession or anything better than cleaning or helping in the kitchen.

I am a psychologist and psychotherapist. I haven't nostrified my diplomas, although everyone tells me that I should have done it a long time ago (smiles). I have degrees from the Wiesbaden Academy of Psychotherapy and they are internationally accepted. So far that has been enough. Anyway, I am just looking forward to going home.

My daughter's example shows that it is very difficult for lawyers, accountants and other similar professions to find their way. There is no chance for them to work in their profession.

I would like to have a job to have some money, because 500 zloty per child is very little, and it's just not enough. I'm looking for a job as a cook, but I could also do something else.

I'd like to work in a kindergarten, but I don't think anyone would hire me there because I don't speak Polish. Besides, I'm nearly 60. I don't think they hire people of that age.

I know that refugees are welcome at workplaces. People tend to praise such work. We are all grateful for what we have been given. What's most important is that here we're not in danger of bombs falling on us.

complicated. In contrast, another interviewee does not plan to do this at all, as she assumes that she will be able to return home in the near future.

Due to their challenging professional situation, the expectations and plans of refugees in Poland are varied and reflect the diversity of experiences, backgrounds and skills.

Those with higher education want to pursue a career in IT or medicine. Others are open to various forms of employment, including manual and service jobs. There is also a group of people who think ahead and plan long-term as they get ready to open their own business. Many are united by hope for

a better future and a desire to adapt, although for some the current social and linguistic context are barriers. And there are also those who are anxious about the current labour market situation (e.g. previously working illegally), which causes concerns about their professional and financial future due to insecurity. Regardless of individual plans and expectations, the priority for many is to secure stability and prosperity for their families, as well as to be able to pursue their own career goals.

Refugees are not alone in the labour market. One important aspect of successful integration is the supportive attitude of employers.

Participants in the study reported, on the one hand, support from employers, assistance, fair treatment and remuneration for work. On the other hand, there were also negative examples of relationships in which employees felt financially exploited or resigned when health problems had arisen. Occasionally, respondents highlighted that the time it takes to receive a response from employers is quite long, which may be related to differences in the expectations and needs of employers and employees. For example, one respondent indicated that she only received a response to her job application after a year.

All in all, refugees from Ukraine exhibit different attitudes in the labour market.

A positive self-esteem sometimes appears among those with high skills. They emphasise English language skills, knowledge of the sector (e.g. IT), in some cases also specialist qualifications (e.g. psychotherapy). Having a good and stable job before the war is a positive factor for self-esteem.

Knowledge of the Polish language was also a factor that increased refugees' self-confidence, both in those who initially had to find a job much below their qualifications and in those who ultimately planned to start a business. Some interview participants, despite language and cultural barriers, managed to find employment in occupations close to their qualifications, often thanks to social networks and support from Polish institutions.

In turn, lack of self-confidence and fear of risk become barriers to finding their way in the new reality.

Among refugees, there are also those who use their linguistic, professional or social skills as assets, which not only allows them to find employment, but also to achieve a certain degree of satisfaction and fulfilment. However, there are also situations where, due to language barriers, differences in the Polish labour market or legal system, highly qualified persons may also have problems on the labour market and thus their self-esteem may be lowered.

It is worth emphasising that the structural mismatch between job offers and workers' qualifications, the lack of proactive efforts on the part of employers in searching for staff and the ineffective job placement system are problems that also affect Polish workers. However, in the case of refugees - due to their particular life situation - they often have more serious consequences. Therefore, alternative ways of looking for work, e.g. informal networks, are becoming more important.

I'd like to earn my own living. To open my own business in some time and carry out orders myself. The biggest problem is the language. Because I'm constantly working, there's no real time to learn Polish.

2.3. Discrimination against refugees in the labour market

During the interviews, the topic of discrimination in and outside of the labour market was also addressed. Among the interviewees were people who had been discriminated against, had heard about discrimination or had witnessed unfavourable comments directed at Ukrainians. There were also interviewees who claimed that there is no such discrimination, or at least they have not encountered it. In this part of the report, we will present conclusions based on the statements of those who confirm that discrimination does exist.

In the interviewees' stories, discrimination in the workplace manifests itself in the form of inadequate or no pay, exploitation of a weaker position, unequal treatment, and workload. One example of underpayment shared by one interviewee was that of a doctor performing procedures for which she

There're some people at my work who earn very little, who are in a difficult situation. They go to the shop and there it just gets more and more expensive. And one of them says to me that it's all because of the Ukrainians.

It happens that the owners of the flats where we work keep a kind of distance because they think that we're coming here and taking jobs away from Poles.

I've never witnessed a situation where someone overtly or subliminally discriminates against people from Ukraine, but I have this feeling that it can happen in the case of work in the so-called shadow economy, where someone gets money in an envelope.

For me, the worst thing is that I can't find a job like the one I had in Ukraine. Yeah, you see this everywhere. It's so normal. Ukrainians are given only hard work.

was paid the equivalent of a medical aid. The salary was much below her qualifications and skills. An example of discrimination involving unequal treatment and workload, on the other hand, was the story of a female employee in one of the plants, where she was obliged to carry out tasks that were usually shared by two people. She also noted that her Polish colleague did not have a similar workload. These are examples of situations where the vulnerable position of refugees in need of any work was exploited by dishonest employers or co-workers.

Further examples of the vulnerability of refugees are those of working in the shadow economy. Sometimes refugees perform work without a proper contract,

which can even end in not being paid at all. In one case, a café worker performed her work without a contract, was not paid her due wage and was subjected to hurtful comments from her employer. Some of the interviewees emphasised that, although they had not encountered discrimination, they assumed that in the so-called 'shadow economy', i.e. the one that occurs 'below the radar', the situation of refugees is definitely more difficult and discrimination is more likely to occur there.

There were also statements in the interviews implying incidents of harmful stereotypes.

It can be cautiously assumed that interviewees were reluctant to share thoughts that could put Polish society in a bad light. Nevertheless, there were accounts of statements such as "go back to your compatriots" or negative comments about Ukrainians, about their negative impact on the economic situation in Poland heard in various social contexts. These statements are examples of discrimination based on the criterion

of nationality. One person mentioned an unpleasant situation when talking on the phone in Ukrainian on public transport was pushed and heard unpleasant comments. Somewhat spontaneously when asked about discrimination in the labour market, the topic of discrimination against children in schools also came up in several interviews.

The issue of peer violence in schools came up again and again in the interviews with the women. Refugee children face difficulties in the school environment, where they are subject to much derision and prejudice from other students. In addition, the fact that they are not fluent in Polish is a barrier to communication and is often a source of social exclusion. Some refugee women pointed to the difficulty of arranging care, which in turn is clearly

Schools are the worst. Teachers have no understanding of our situation. It was more than once that my grandson cried when he came back from school. No, I'm not conflicted. I don't want arguments. I'd like to be in my Ukrainian group, because I haven't found a place for myself among Poles.

a barrier to employment, and the cost of care in turn can offset the financial benefits of work.

However, one cannot say that all the refugees' experiences regarding professional situations in the Polish labour market are unequivocally negative.

For example, one of the women participating in the survey remarked that in Poland 'everyone is so good'. She mentioned how her supervisor (in this case a chef) in the workplace helped her understand the various tasks assigned, which accelerated her learning and thus adaptation and affected her psychological well-being. Another example of positive workplace interactions was the story of a woman who did not speak fluent Polish but felt 'respected and accepted' in her work environment. In certain sectors, the skills and competences of refugees are valued and Polish co-workers express this. One mother was grateful to Poles for the positive evaluation of her work, saying that 'Poles are all happy with us'. The Polish labour market is also a story of successful adaptation and integration. This can be demonstrated by the experience of one woman's daughter, who quickly learned Polish and found employment in a public office. These positive cases show that despite the existing challenges, there are also favourable circumstances that can foster the adaptation and integration of refugees into the labour market and Polish society.

In-depth interviews show evidence of potential discrimination in the workplace.

The examples include unequal distribution of responsibilities, underpayment, working without a proper legal basis, harmful stereotypes. However, qualitative research alone does not provide insight into the scale of these negative phenomena among Polish employees and employers. Therefore, in order to explore the issue of discrimination in the labour market in more depth, we conducted an experiment using fabricated pairs of Polish and Ukrainian CVs. The aim of this experiment was to identify possible discrimination at the stage of candidate screening.

No, there were no barriers or difficulties. I was helped a lot by the Poles in everything. I only met wonderful people who helped me. Poles do help us. My daughters at school are helped and supported by their teachers. Our neighbours help us. As a refugee, I've never been treated differently. No, I haven't encountered such things. I can sometimes hear offensive comments when we speak Ukrainian on the train. But I pretend I don't understand.

3. CV-based experiment

3.1. Forms of discrimination in the recruitment process

Discrimination, which can be simply understood as unjustified unequal treatment of people from different social groups (e.g. national minorities), can take different forms in the labour market. In the academic literature, discrimination is measured in very different dimensions and in many different ways (Neumark, 2018; Zegers de Beijl, 2000; Reimers, 1983; Auer, 2022; Fleischmann, Dronkers, 2010; Constant, Massey, 2005) primarily because it is a complex and ambiguous phenomenon. Examples of discrimination against people from migrant or refugee communities include:

- lower wages and lower labour force participation rates,
- higher risk of dismissal when the company underperforms, and poorer promotion prospects compared to non-migrant workers,
- employers' evaluation of competences acquired in the country of origin (e.g. university degree) as less valuable compared to similar competences of non-migrants - this is also related to the phenomenon of work below competences, i.e. work in a lower position than the competences or experience of a migrant or refugee would indicate,
- less concern for compliance with labour law by employers, and
- less willingness of employers to hire migrants or refugees.

In our experiment, we investigate this last point: discrimination in the recruitment process. This process consists of many stages. Employers analyse their staffing needs and, on this basis, create job offers, with more or less specific requirements or job descriptions, and decide where to post such ads (many employers post them on popular job aggregation sites, such as Pracuj.pl or OLX, but some decide, e.g., to advertise in local media or even use word-of-mouth, which affects the reach of the offer). Job offers are therefore formulated with more or less conscious expectations of potential candidates. Jobseekers also have their own expectations of the position. These expectations, on the one hand, may be based on experience or competence, and on the other hand, they are influenced by the financial situation, e.g. a sudden loss of livelihood and the need to find a source of income quickly, as is the case for at least some people from the refugee community.

Box 1. Taste-based discrimination and statistical discrimination

The psychological determinants of a discriminator's behaviour can be of a different nature. An employer may have a consciously discriminatory taste, i.e. a subjective preference that generates (for no specific reasons) an unjustified dislike towards a certain social group and its representatives - this is called taste-based discrimination. Another type - called statistical discrimination - occurs when the discriminator perceives a particular person not through his or her individual characteristics, but through the prism of the group of which that person is a member (Schwab, 1986).

In the case of national minorities, stereotyping, describing individual negative behaviour of minority representatives as characteristic of the entire minority group and other unjustified generalising inferences may play a major role in the formation of discriminatory attitudes. The use of stereotypes in the assessment of candidates by the employer may make them lose in the eyes of the hiring manager, regardless of their qualities or competences - especially if the existing stereotypes concern, for example, laziness, sense of entitlement, dishonesty or similar characteristics of the minority in question. In contrast, candidates from the employer's home country are usually not subject to stereotypical assessment, unless the phenomenon of autostereotyping is present.

Discrimination can manifest itself in the recruitment process right from the stage of the employer's selection of applications submitted by candidates. This decision results in the rejection of CVs of people from the social group exposed to discrimination, not necessarily because of a mismatch between the applicant's competences and the position, but precisely because of the employer's discriminatory preference. Let us add that this preference may even be unconscious - it is possible to discriminate and not be aware of it.

3.2. Field experiment method using fake CVs

Discrimination at the screening stage is difficult to demonstrate with a specific, single example. Each candidate has individual characteristics and their own work experience. Therefore, there is always room to try to rationalise the employer's decision to reject a particular application not as a sign of discrimination, but as a legitimate failure of the candidate to meet expectations. Showing that there are indications of discrimination against a selected social group in the labour market (in general or in selected sectors or regions) is not an easy task, then.

The experiment carried out with the fake CV method (correspondence studies) is one of the popular ways of researching the existence of discrimination against different social groups or minorities in the labour market (Menés, Rovira, 2021). This method, developed five decades ago (Jowell, Prescott-Clarke, 1970), has proved useful in identifying different types of discrimination, e.g. based on gender (Riach, Rich, 1987), age (Bendick, Jackson, Romero, 1997;

Bendick, Brown, Wall, 1999); this is also confirmed by the results of a study on ageism in Poland (Pogorzelski, Dębowski, Siembida, 2010; Baszczak et al., 2021), race, religion and others. It is also frequently used today in experiments on discrimination against migrants in different countries (Weichselbaumer, 2017; Kaas, Manger, 2012).

In the experiment, this type of discrimination is found by sending suitably crafted CVs to real job offers and then counting how many applications the employers have called back. If the difference in callback rate (CR) is significantly different between fictitious candidates, one of whom is a member of a group that may be discriminated against (e.g. between a Pole and an immigrant, a refugee, or between a man and a woman, a younger person and an older person), the existence (and scale) of discrimination against people in the social group under analysis can be established (Baert, 2018). This method allows for testing the hypothesis of discrimination in the field - in the real labour market, with its real conditions. Thus, it provides an insight into the reality of the problem at hand far beyond statistical or declarative data collected in surveys or theoretical models. A great advantage of this method is that it reveals at the same time the scale of conscious bias against people from the analysed social group, as well as unconscious discriminatory aversion, statistical discrimination of the decision-makers in the recruitment process - it is therefore not sensitive to the problem of specific decision-makers rationalising discriminatory choices in individual cases.

By sending pairs of made-up CVs in response to real job offers, real employers are confronted with a choice at which their true discriminatory preferences (if any) are likely to be revealed. Since in such a situation the employers do not know that they are participating in the experiment - they think they are receiving job applications from real people - they have no incentive to possibly conceal their preferences (concealment of discriminatory preferences need not be conscious, some people may be convinced that they do not have preferences of this type but actually manifest them in the actual selection scenario).

A prerequisite for methodological correctness in experiments of this type is first and foremost a sufficiently large database of job vacancies to which the fake CVs are sent, and that the pairs of candidates' CVs resemble each other and differ significantly only in the belonging of one of the candidates to the social group under analysis, i.e. the fictitious candidates must not differ in terms of relevant competences, education level, skills, or any other similar characteristics.

3.3. Design of the experiment

Our experiment involved searching for real job offers posted on official websites such as Pracuj.pl, OLX and sending pairs of CVs of fictitious candidates: a Polish woman and a Ukrainian one who arrived in our country in 2022.

Job offers for the experiment were collected from all over Poland. We attempted to ensure that the ratio of the number of offers collected from

a given voivodeship to the total population and the working population in a given voivodeship was similar for each of them. The experiment was carried out in the period from 4 September to 27 October 2023.

We divided the job offers we collected into two groups:

- those concerning lower-level positions and simple jobs that do not require higher education and experience. This group included job offers for positions related to customer service, work in trade or services, catering, simple office work, reception work, etc., and
- those for specialist positions, i.e. jobs requiring some work experience in a similar position and higher education. There were offers in such fields as auditing, finance, administration, management, HR, controlling, etc.

There are two reasons for identifying these two groups of job offers. Firstly, it allows the fake CV to be better matched to the offer, so that competences or education are not too high in relation to the expectations presented by the employers, and at the same time different types of industries and occupations can be explored. Secondly, discrimination, as a strongly context-driven phenomenon, may manifest itself only at lower or only at higher career levels or only in specific types of work (e.g. only in manual work or only in customer service or only in creative work or work involving team management), so it is reasonable, in order to obtain a better picture of this phenomenon and to be able to make inferences about the labour market in Poland in general, that the positions are differentiated.

We therefore created two pairs of CVs of female candidates (Polish and Ukrainian): one pair with competences suited to specialist positions and the other without higher education or specialist competences (Table 1, Table 2). We searched only for offers for which our fictitious female candidates met the formal requirements of the job description. We decided to use only female CVs due to the demographic structure of the Ukrainian refugee community in Poland (significant predominance of women).

Table 1. Characteristics of candidates for non-specialist positions

CV Item	Pole	Ukrainian
Age	39	39
Education	Secondary – graduated from an economic and hotel technical school	Secondary – graduated from an economic and hotel technical school (in Kiev)
Work experience	A total of 20 years' work experience in positions such as receptionist, waitress, warehouse worker or sales employee	A total of 21 years' work experience in positions such as receptionist, waitress, warehouse worker or shop assistant. The last position with 10 months' seniority was a salesperson in a retail chain in Poland (working after arriving in Poland in 2022), the remaining seniority in Ukraine
Languages	Basic English, native Polish	Basic English, advanced Polish, native Ukrainian
Skills	Customer service, driving licence (cat. B), knowledge of H&S regulations	Customer service, knowledge of H&S regulations, driving license (cat. B)
Interests	Crime fiction, volunteering, gardening	Nature, movies, series

Source: prepared by PEI.

Table 2. Characteristics of candidates for specialist positions

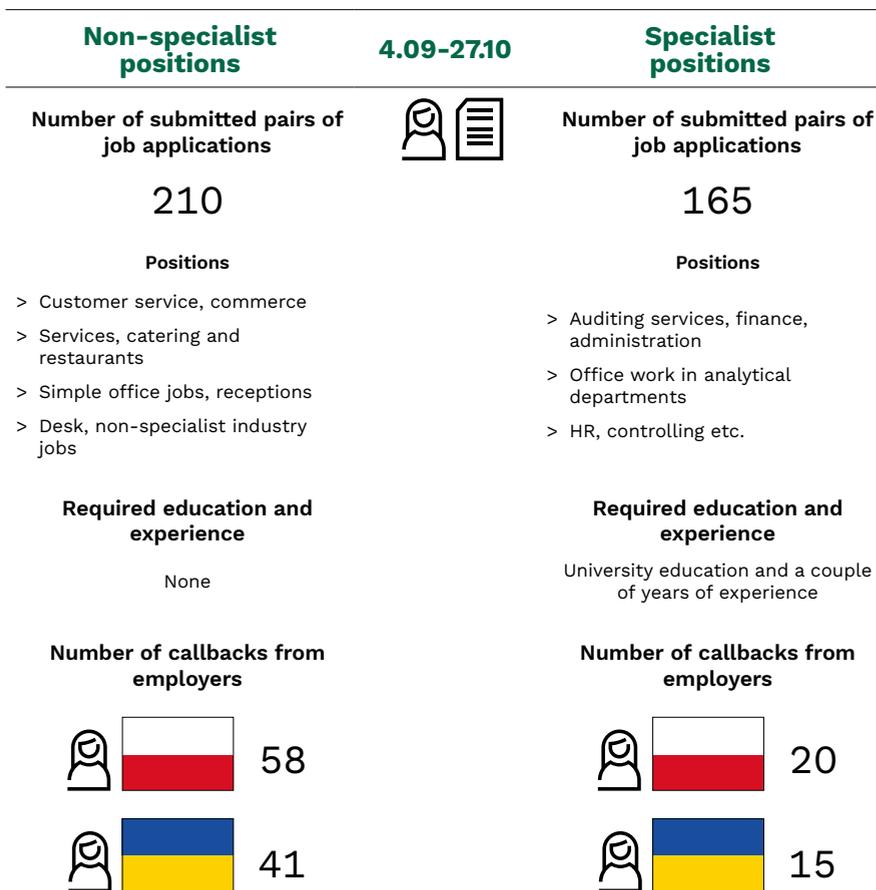
CV Item	Pole	Ukrainian
Age	30 years old	30 years old
Education	Master's degree in Economics	Master's degree in Economics
Work experience	9 years of work experience, including 3 years as a senior specialist in the accounts team, 2 years as a controller in the financial department	9.5 years of work experience, including 2 years as an operational support specialist, 3 years as a senior financial controller – these positions in Ukraine; 7 months as a financial and personnel specialist – this job after arriving in Poland in 2022
Languages	Advanced English, native Polish	Advanced English, advanced Polish, native Ukrainian
Skills	Organizational skills, knowledge of MS Office, teamwork and team management skills	Organizational skills, knowledge of MS Office, teamwork skills
Interests	Travelling, cycling, cooking and experimenting with food	Equestrianism, history, crime movies

Note: full versions of all the pairs of CVs are attached in the Annex.

Source: prepared by PEI.

We designed the CVs of both pairs so that they resembled each other as much as possible in terms of essential elements. Differences appeared in less key aspects, such as the graphic design or the description of interests, so that the applications, usually sent a maximum of 24 hours apart, did not appear suspiciously similar to their addressees. It is worth noting, in particular, that all Ukrainian candidates declared in their CVs their ability to speak Polish fluently. Ukrainian women, of course, also had the Ukrainian language listed in their CVs, however, candidates for non-specialist positions declared a basic knowledge of English, while those for specialist positions declared an advanced knowledge. CVs were also tailored to a certain extent to the specific positions applied for, so that requirements related to, for example, experience were met by both candidates. In addition, both Ukrainian candidates had already had several months of work experience in Poland in 2022 in positions relevant to their competences. The CVs we created did not include photos of the candidates.

Infographic 1. Summary of the experiment

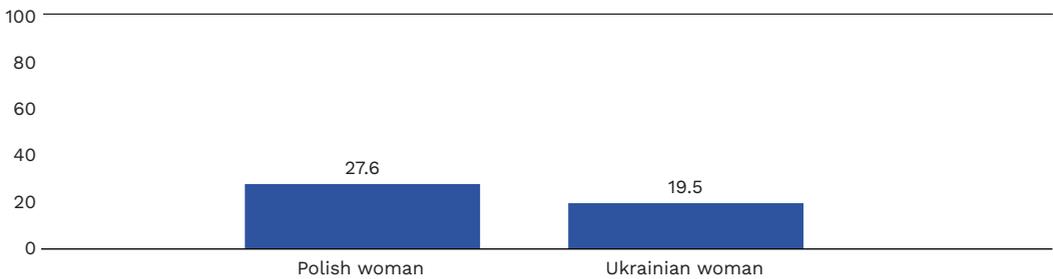


Source: prepared by PEI.

3.4. Findings

We have reasonable grounds to conclude that there is discrimination against Ukrainians in the Polish labour market in the scope we examined, i.e. the candidate screening. The percentage of callbacks for applications for non-specialist positions was 27.6% (58 callbacks out of 210 applications sent) for the Polish candidate and 19.5% (41 callbacks for the Ukrainian candidate) for the Ukrainian candidate (Chart 3). This difference is statistically significant (with a significance level of $p < 0.05$, one-tailed test of t-Student).

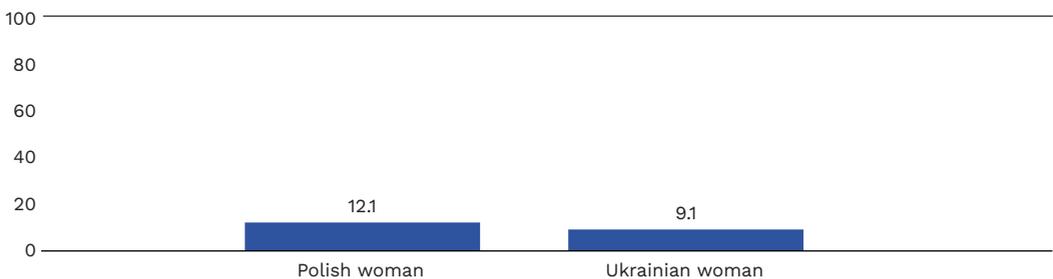
Chart 3. Percentage of callbacks to job applications by Polish and Ukrainian female candidates – non-specialist positions (%)



Source: prepared by PEI.

We found no statistically significant differences in the callback rate in the case of applications for specialist positions. The Polish candidate was contacted in response to 12% of the applications sent (20 callbacks out of 165 job applications), while the Ukrainian candidate's CR was 9.1% (15 callbacks) (Chart 4).

Chart 4. Percentage of callbacks to the applications sent by Polish and Ukrainian female candidates – specialist positions (%)



Source: prepared by PEI.

The findings allow us to conclude that there is discrimination against Ukrainians applying for offers in the Polish labour market. Our analysis suggests that the problem particularly concerns positions that do not require higher education or specialist competences. Here, discrimination is difficult to question: a CV from a Ukrainian woman was called back almost one third less often than a CV from a Polish woman. When it comes to applications for specialist positions, it is more difficult to interpret the results. The Ukrainian candidate received 25% fewer calls from employers compared to the Polish woman, but in absolute numbers this was only 5 callbacks less. The sheer number of callbacks for both candidates was quite low (employers responded to approximately one in ten applications sent, while in the case of offers for non-specialist positions, approximately one in four / one in five applications was contacted), so the difference in CR between the Polish and Ukrainian woman is not statistically significant (under the assumptions made). Therefore, neither can we conclude that such discrimination occurs here, nor do the results allow us to be certain that such discrimination does not occur. Moreover, discriminatory preferences of employers may emerge at further stages of the recruitment process (e.g. at the interview), which is something we are not able to show in our experiment.

3.5. Limitations of the applied research method

There are several factors that limit the effectiveness of the experimental method we used in establishing whether there is discrimination in the labour market.

Firstly, an experiment of this type provides information about possible discrimination only at the initial stage of the recruitment process. Discrimination may also emerge in another phase, for example during the interview, or even later, taking the form, e.g., of non-renewal of the contract at the end of the probationary period after the employee has been hired - to put it simply, in a number of other settings and moments that such a method does not provide insight into. Consequently, conclusions based on the results of this type of experiment can only be one-sided: if the difference in CR in a pair of candidates is statistically significant, discrimination can be identified. But if there is no such difference (or if it is so small as to be insignificant), one cannot conclude that there is no discrimination, since this may become apparent at another stage of the recruitment process.

Secondly, it does not provide insight into the decision-making process - we cannot analyse the recruiter's reasoning process or actions, or even the time taken by the employer to decide to reject CVs or to make contact with candidates. Our method only provides binary information about the final result (callback or lack thereof). We therefore do not know the detailed reasons behind a particular employer's decision. This also raises another problem: as researchers, we do not know who actually dealt with the CVs sent in the first step - whether the person making the final hiring decision or the HR

department (larger companies may have HR departments with specialised methods for selecting and screening candidates, while in other companies, hiring decisions may only be made by people in the departments to which they recruit candidates). Differences in discriminatory attitudes between individuals within a company may also to some extent obscure the true picture of discrimination.

Thirdly, the adopted method does not allow us to be absolutely certain about the basis of possible discrimination. In our study, the CVs of Ukrainian female candidates were prepared to reflect the characteristics of those in the 2022 refugee wave with a view to exploring employers' reactions to refugees, specifically. However, employers' biases did not necessarily stem directly from the refugee status of the female candidates, and employers may have reacted negatively to the mere fact that the candidate is not Polish, regardless of other details of the CV. Since the 2022 refugees represent a large subgroup of the Ukrainian minority in Poland, who may also be affected by similar discrimination. It seems reasonable to suspect that the discrimination detected may to some extent apply to this entire group. It is also reasonable to assume that the callback or lack thereof for some employers may have been determined by subtle differences in the CVs, which are irrelevant to the job. For example, a Polish woman applying for positions involving simple tasks had worked as a warehouse worker for six years, while a Ukrainian woman had worked for four years. The Ukrainian woman, on the other hand, worked longer (by one year) as a receptionist. Another example: the graphic design of the CVs of the two Polish women tended to be in warm colours (mild orange and brown), while that of the Ukrainian women tended to be in colder shades (blue and green), although altogether there were few colours other than black on all CVs. With a sufficiently large number of vacancies, such effects distorting the results should offset, but one can never be sure whether such minor and impossible-to-eliminate details do not affect the final result.

Fourthly, there is the problem of seasonality and other uncontrollable labour market characteristics. In the case of low unemployment in a region, employers may be willing to respond to every application for their offers, even if they adopt a discriminatory attitude (as we have already mentioned, this may become apparent later). The characteristics of the labour market can therefore influence the results, and the method we have adopted cannot check that. There is also a limited possibility of replicating the experiment in the same way and under the same conditions by other researchers. Even the exact duplication of the procedure and the use of identical CVs will not guarantee replication, because the conditions of the economic environment may have changed within the time between the experiment and the attempts to replicate it.

4. Discussion and elaboration of the results

In this study, female candidates from Poland were more likely to receive invitations to interviews. Such results may suggest the existence of statistical discrimination, which is sometimes a more difficult phenomenon to detect than preference-based discrimination. In such cases, the employer does not discriminate against a particular female job applicant on the basis of their own prejudices but general assumptions about the group the applicant belongs to.

Discrimination in the labour market, including the one related to ethnicity or nationality, is a well-known and quite common phenomenon in countries hosting refugees and migrants. In OECD countries, this form of labour market discrimination has been the subject of research and analysis over the past 25 years. Candidates from ethnic, national, or racial minorities had to, and still have to, send significantly more applications than candidates not belonging to these groups in order to be invited to an interview. Data from a study published in 2016 showed that this difference is around 50% (Zschirnt, Ruedin, 2016). Furthermore, studies in Austria, Sweden and Germany show that refugee mothers have a particular difficulty in finding a job compared to other women (but their chances of employment are not lower than those of refugee men). In this context, an in-depth analysis of labour market-relevant factors such as the possible lack of access to childcare and poor support for work-family reconciliation opportunities is needed (Fossati et al., 2022).

Similar results in experiments have also been obtained in other countries. In the Swedish study, a significantly lower callback rate was observed for migrants (2.5%) than for native Swedes (19%). And it does not matter whether migrants have work experience or even whether they have citizenship. Furthermore, Swedish employers' decisions revealed an ethnic hierarchy: Swedes received the highest response rate (21%), followed by people born in Poland (17%), Iraq (10%) and Somalia (5%) (Vernby, Dancygier, 2019). In an experiment in Austria that investigated discrimination against migrants, unequal treatment was observed as well. In this case, fictitious applicants had received their education in Austria and held Austrian citizenship; in addition, photos were added to the application. The experiment showed significant discrimination against candidates with Serbian, Turkish, Chinese, and Nigerian nationalities. The study also showed discrimination in the speed of

the companies' response: candidates without a migrant background were invited to interviews faster and stayed longer among potential candidates, while migrant applications were rejected (Weichselbaumer, 2017).

Research conducted in twenty European countries confirms the fact that forced migrants perform worse in the labour market compared to natives and economic migrants. Moreover, refugees form a group that performs significantly worse in labour markets than both EU and non-EU forced migrants. Refugees are 11.6% less likely to find a job compared to other migrants with similar characteristics. They are also exposed to higher unemployment. Refugees are as much as 22% more likely to be out of work compared to non-refugee migrants. Their income and the quality of their work is also lower. The cumulative results of these phenomena create the so-called refugee gap. This concept describes a slower and more difficult process of economic integration for refugees than for migrants with other similar characteristics, such as area of origin, time of arrival or demographic characteristics (Fasani, Frattini, Minale, 2021). This shows that the situation of economic migrants, but also that of forced migrants, including war refugees, needs to be analysed and addressed separately, as their own personal and life circumstances impinge on their attitudes, behaviour, and decisions in other areas of their lives, as well.

War refugees are thus more likely to work in unskilled jobs, perceived as less attractive, with low barriers to entry. For this reason, their income is lower compared to other migrants, and they perform jobs that are more often below their qualifications. These adverse effects on the market persist in the case of refugees for 10-15 years of their stay in the host country. Thus, we speak of the long-term and persistent effects of forced migration. Reasons for the poorer performance of refugees in labour markets include lower levels of mental and physical health and lack of knowledge of the language of the host country. Refugees are more likely than migrants to report that the language is the main obstacle to employment (Fasani, Frattini, Minale, 2021). This can also be observed in studies conducted in Poland, where the percentage of war refugees speaking Polish is lower than the percentage of pre-war migrants. In this respect, the situation in Poland is similar to that of other host countries.

Although the results of PEI's analysis are consistent with the findings of research on refugees in labour markets in other countries, it is difficult to answer unequivocally why employers were less likely to contact female candidates from Ukraine. Perhaps they assumed that refugees would find it more difficult to adapt to new living conditions, or - despite emphasising knowledge of the Polish language in their CVs - there might be difficulties in communicating with such workers. Employers may also fear uncertainty related to the legal status of refugees in the long term or perceive them as less stable employees, planning a quick return to Ukraine. On top of this, there is also the perception that refugees, due to their situation, may find it difficult to commit to work in the long term for family reasons, especially when part of their family has been left behind in the hostilities. The perception of social and cultural differences as barriers to integration into the

team or assimilation into the organisational culture is also not insignificant. Additionally, employers may find it difficult to recognise the qualifications or experience of job applicants, or there may be a mismatch between refugees' qualifications and the labour market (OECD, 2016). Of course, employers' decisions may be driven by stereotypes and prejudices based on nationality and not necessarily related to the fact of refugee status. It is impossible to clearly indicate the reasons for the lower percentage of invitations to interviews addressed to candidates from Ukraine. In order to identify the motives behind those decisions, it is necessary to conduct further research. Nevertheless, a lower percentage of invitations to recruitment processes is a fact.

The need to change career paths and take jobs below one's potential are further factors influencing refugees' attitudes, their willingness to adapt to a new situation and their long-term planning. As we have noticed, this is especially the case for those with higher education or significant professional achievements. In such cases, starting the adventure with the new labour market from lower positions can negatively affect the motivation to continue working (e.g. the case study of the female lawyer from the in-depth interviews). People tend to avoid losses, and additionally, the effect of lost benefits may cause frustration and reluctance to integrate into a labour market valuing their skills below the level to which they were accustomed in their home country. Such a situation can lead to lower career aspirations and less willingness to invest in further professional development, which in turn affects long-term prospects for professional and social integration.

There is no doubt that the difficult situation in the labour market may be one of the factors influencing refugees' own attitudes, decisions, and interactions with the labour market. Respondents in the interviews presented a whole spectrum of self-esteem, which naturally reflects the diversity of refugee stories. And yet, high self-esteem can reinforce positive behaviours such as persistent job search, taking up career initiatives or a desire to learn new skills. The hospitality of the host country, in the broadest sense, can increase optimism, enable better coping with setbacks and motivate further professional development and successful adaptation with Polish society (Marley, Mauki, 2018; Altinay et al., 2023). However, the experiences from other countries with a longer history of coping with the influx of migrants and refugees than in Poland show that openness and hospitality melt away with prolonged exposure to outsiders (Hangartner et al., 2019), though the factor of cultural proximity to the incoming population is important. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, can lead to risk aversion, procrastination or not taking on any challenges. Low self-esteem can also lead to an excessive focus on failure or interpreting information in a negative way. And this can consequently result in the abandonment of activities aimed at professional or social integration (Schuettler, Caron, 2020). Risk aversion and varying time preferences may also affect refugees' decisions related to employment, training, education, or long-term planning. Refugees who exhibit strong risk aversion avoid investing in long-term professional development or education for fear of uncertainty related to future employment. Yet refugees who prioritise the future may be more willing to invest in their skills

(Dustmann et al., 2017). Finally, discrimination – especially wage discrimination – contributes to lower productivity (Gramozi, Palivos, Zachariadis, 2021), which has implications for the performance of the employers' businesses as well as the whole economy.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the qualitative research has shown that refugees in Poland have different expectations and plans. The differences arise from individual characteristics, experiences, and the current social and economic situation of the respondents. However, refugees' career expectations and aspirations may have a direct impact on their attitudes and behaviour in the labour market, including their willingness to retrain or acquire new skills. One of the key mechanisms facilitating refugees' plans in their new environment is social networks. Contact with those who have previously migrated to the country can significantly contribute to reducing uncertainty in the host country. As far as refugees from Ukraine are concerned, this support often comes from economic migrants, family or friends already living in Poland before the Russian invasion in 2022. While these social networks are an important element in the assistance process, they cannot be considered the only way to help refugees.

We should not overlook another important characteristic of war refugees. Research reveals a variety and frequency of emotional problems among them (Blackmore et al., 2020). The concordance of analytical findings in the literature on this issue may point to the significant and universal challenges refugees face and highlight the need for integrated public strategies to address these specific problems (Javanbakht, 2022; Becker, 2019). Based on an analysis of forty studies with 11,053 refugees, it was found that MDD (major depressive disorder) was reported in 32% of cases, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) in 31%, and BPD (borderline personality disorder) in one in twenty study participants. We observed some differences depending on the wealth of the host countries. MDD was more common in low- and middle-income countries (47%) than in high-income countries (28%) (Patanè et al., 2022). Other meta-analytic studies have arrived at different estimates of the prevalence of MDD or PTSD, but in each case, there are high proportions of those in need of mental health support or treatment (Henkelmann et al., 2020).

The experience of forced migration and permanent displacement also has a negative impact on mothers' mental health and an increased likelihood of negative parenting behaviour. In turn, this may contribute to poorer psychosocial performance of their children (Sim, Bowes, Gardner, 2018). A meta-analysis of eight studies on children and adolescents – refugees and asylum seekers – found that 22.7% had PTSD, 13.8% had depression and 15.8% had anxiety disorders (Blackomre et al., 2020).

There is a natural feedback loop between war refugees and members of the host society. In this sense, stereotypes and prejudices can have a profound and far-reaching impact on the behaviour, attitudes, and well-being of refugees. The incidents reported, such as negative comments in public places or in schools, can have long-lasting consequences for refugee children, affecting their emotional, economic, or educational development.

However, not all relations between refugees and Polish society are negative. Positive experiences, such as assistance in learning the language and understanding the working culture, contribute to integration a lot. Appreciation of refugees' skills and competences by Polish co-workers can significantly contribute to their well-being and facilitate the adaptation process (Aksoy, Poutvaara, Schikora, 2023, Lundborg, Skedinger, 2016). In the longer term, it will also be important to provide the public with reliable data on the impact of refugee and migrant employment on Polish GDP and the labour market. Good experiences of employers over time may offset the stereotypical thinking that characterises all the migrant-receiving societies studied (Alesina, Armando, Stantcheva, 2022). In economics, these stereotypes are explained by e.g. incomplete information (Arrow, 1973).

5. Recommendations

Given the challenges, institutional and social support should play an important role in the adaptation and integration of refugees into Polish society and into the labour market, in particular. Experiences of the host countries receiving forced migrants should be taken into account and further measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination. These may include the elimination of behavioural barriers, both among refugees and employers, educational campaigns, or institutional support for refugees in the process of adaptation to the labour market.

Forced refugees, in particular war refugees, experience a range of challenges in the labour market that are more pronounced and long-lasting compared to other migrant groups, especially if we compare them to pre-war economic migrants. Refugees who were entrepreneurial in their home country are likely to adapt more easily to their new environment, but others may need help in acquiring new skills, learning the language, or finding secure employment.

Support, including assistance in acquiring language skills, access to the education system, health care, enabling social connections, all play an important role in breaking down behavioural barriers. From the perspective of behavioural sciences, such support often acts as positive reinforcement that facilitates refugees' adaptation and their engagement in the process of professional and social integration. Research (Altınay et al., 2023; Finsterwalder et al., 2020) shows that friendly social attitudes and the introduction of appropriate support measures can help to minimise the negative effects associated with low self-esteem and increase the effectiveness of refugee integration.

Any tools to neutralise the negative effects of being forced to change career paths and take up jobs with low entry requirements are also significant. Effective strategies can include measures such as mentoring programmes, vocational training tailored to refugees' needs or support in the process of nostrification of their diplomas and certificates to facilitate refugees' access to employment in line with their qualifications and work experience. Notably, attitudes of openness to different forms of employment were also identified in interviews with refugees, which may reflect their desire (or need) to adapt and provide livelihood for themselves and their relatives.

The largest migration within Europe since the Second World War requires an approach that not only addresses the current and immediate needs of war refugees, but should also take into account long-term social and economic goals. This holistic approach requires an understanding of the multidimensional integration process including legal, educational, cultural, and vocational aspects. It is therefore crucial, when faced with a challenge of this magnitude, to use empirical data, research, the support of specialised

centres on migration, the best practices of international organisations and the involvement of refugees themselves.

The following set of recommendations respond to the challenges identified in the qualitative and experimental research conducted, on the one hand, and the problems identified in the academic literature, on the other. They are a signpost setting the direction of changes that need to be undertaken in order to create an integration-friendly environment for war refugees from Ukraine, thus enabling their full participation in social and economic life in Poland.

1. Polish language courses

Polish language courses for war refugees developed upon their professional and educational needs. Achieving this objective includes not only issues directly related to increasing the accessibility of the courses, their formula and quality, but also providing childcare during the classes or financial support for the refugees taking part in them.

2. Support in the process of nostrification of diplomas and recognition of qualifications

Refugees report problems with the nostrification of diplomas and the recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside Poland. We therefore recommend simplifying procedures and providing professional advice and easily accessible information. Shortening the duration of procedures, lowering financial and non-financial costs, and clear and precise communication of current regulations and of steps that refugees need to take are very important in this respect.

3. Counteracting discrimination in the labour market

Counteracting discrimination in the labour market is only possible by strengthening the control mechanisms of this market, promoting equal opportunities in the recruitment process, introducing educational activities also for employers. Additionally, one can consider organising meetings in local communities, establishing intercultural dialogue, and supporting all initiatives that increase the chances of integrating refugees into the Polish labour market. Only the time and positive experiences in the labour market will naturally reduce the scale of discrimination and build mutual trust and understanding, thus supporting anti-discrimination initiatives.

4. Programmes supporting employment in line with qualifications

Highly skilled refugees often work below the level of their educational and professional background. It is therefore worthwhile helping them find jobs in line with their professional qualifications through support, mentoring, apprenticeship, or guardianship programmes.

5. Ensuring personal and professional stability

One of the key factors influencing refugee integration is legal stability and security. The more predictable the future, the easier the integration into the labour market, the education system, health care and society as a whole, the easier it is for refugees to plan and invest in themselves and their surroundings. Therefore, we recommend ensuring the stability

of the legal framework for war refugees from Ukraine in a way that allows them to plan their future in the long term, which will also translate into improvements in their mental health and well-being.

6. Research and monitoring of the situation of war refugees

Continuous monitoring of the situation of refugees is necessary to understand their needs and expectations, which may evolve over time. Regular research will allow for the evaluation of implemented policies and interventions, and thus assess their effectiveness, which in turn is a necessary step for the development of more precise and empathetic tools to support their integration. The results of these studies should be publicly available and subject to expert debate.

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CVs of fictitious candidates used in the study.

CVs of candidates for non-specialist positions:

CV

Marta Gład

✉ marta.glaz84@gmail.com 🎂 20.03.1984
☎ +48 888 195 179 📍 Warsaw

A saleswoman with experience in various industries. Responsible, communicative, and excellent at sales and logistics.

Experience

- 10.2019 – present**
(4 years) **Sales Clerk**
Media Expert
Brief job description:
Sales advisor in an electronics store, providing customers with professional advice and handling purchase transactions.
- 10.2014 – 09.2019**
(5 years) **Waitress**
Stara Kotłownia | Bełchatów
Brief job description:
Serving customers, taking orders, serving food and drinks, keeping the premises clean.
- 10.2008 – 09.2014**
(6 years) **Warehouse worker**
Biedronka
Brief job description:
Receiving deliveries, storing goods, completing orders, and maintaining order in the warehouse.
- 10.2003 – 09.2008**
(5 years) **Receptionist**
Hotel Wodnik | Bełchatów
Brief job description:
Serving guests, making reservations, answering calls, assisting with paperwork and providing excellent customer service.

Education

- 09.2000 – 07.2004**
(3 years 11 months) **Technical School of Economics and Hotel Management in Bełchatów**
Educational level: secondary

Languages

English: basic
Polish: native

Skills

Customer service • Category B driver's license • Knowledge of health and safety regulations and hygiene procedures

Hobbies

Crime novels, volunteering, gardening

✓ I consent to the processing of my personal data for the purpose of recruiting for the position for which I have applied.

CONTACT

E-mail:
wera.kovalenko84@gmail.com

Phone:
+48 503 062 990

Date of birth:
20.08.1984

SKILLS

Knowledge of health and safety regulations and hygiene procedures · Driver's license

LANGUAGES

English:
basic

Ukrainian:
native

Polish:
advanced

CV | WERA KOVALENKO

CVI am great at customer service, working at the checkout counter and providing shopping advice. I am communicative, committed and always ready to provide excellent customer service.

WORK EXPERIENCE

12.2022 – present (10 months)
Sales assistant | Żabka

Brief job description:
Customer service, cash register operation, receiving deliveries.

10.2016 – 09.2022 (6 years)
Sales assistant | Citrus

Brief job description:
Sales advisor, customer service, giving advice.

10.2011 – 09.2016 (5 years)
Receptionist | Hotel' Irpin | Irpin, Ukraine

Brief job description:
Customer service, handling reservations, providing information and ensuring smooth operation of the hotel reception.

10.2006 – 09.2011 (5 years)
Waitress | Khinka'l'nya | Irpin, Ukraine

Brief job description:
Customer service, taking orders, serving food and drinks, and maintaining order on the premises.

10.2002 – 09.2006 (4 years)
Warehouse worker | ATB-Market

Brief job description:
Receiving deliveries, storing goods, completing orders and maintaining order in the warehouse.

EDUCATION

09.1999 – 07.2003 (3 years 11 months)
Kharkiv Technical School of Hotel Management and Trade
Educational level: secondary

HOBBIES

Nature
Movies
TV Series

✓ *I consent to the processing of my personal data for the purpose of recruiting for the position I am applying for.*

CVs of candidates for specialist positions:

CV. ALICJA WOZNIAK

E-mail: wozniakalicja1993@gmail.com

Telefon: +48 888 194 720

Data urodzenia: 12.03.1993

I have extensive experience in finance, which includes the ability to prepare forecasts and financial reports, and to analyse the company's budget. I'm a responsible, disciplined, and reliable employee.

01. SKILLS

Excellent organizational skills · Effective leadership and coordination skills in working with a team · Excellent knowledge of Microsoft Office · Knowledge of financial processes · Business economist.

02. WORK EXPERIENCE

08.2020 – obecnie < 3 years 2 months >

Senior Specialist in the Settlement Team

Reflex Polska

Brief job description:

Preparing financial forecasts, analysis of the implementation of the company's budget, supporting the organization in operational improvement projects.

05.2018 – 07.2020 < 2 years 3 months >

Controller in the Finance Department

TASKOPROJEKT / Poznań

Brief job description:

Identification, monitoring, and reporting of regulatory risks, optimization of the company's financial procedures, ongoing analysis of receivables and liabilities.

11.2015 – 03.2018 < 2 years 5 months >

Administrative Worker

Auction House Numimarket.pl

Brief job description:

Working with the finance team, preparation of statements, records and reports, coordination of office work.

10.2014 – 10.2015 < 2 years 5 months >

Waitress

Pizza Hut

Brief job description:

Taking orders from customers, serving food and drinks.

03. LANGUAGES

English: advanced

Polish: native

04. EDUCATION

10.2011 – 07.2016 < 4 years 10 months >

Poznan University of Economics

Major: economics

Educational level: Master's degree

05. HOBBIES

Travels

Cycling

Cooking and culinary experiments

✓ I consent to the processing of my personal data for the purposes necessary for the recruitment process (in accordance with the Act of May 10, 2018, on the Protection of Personal Data (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1000) and in accordance with the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2016/679 of April 27, 2016.

CV Tetiana Tkaczenko

✉ tkaczenkotetiana@gmail.com

📅 18.02.1993

☎ +48 663 704 720

📍 Warsaw

I am an economist with extensive experience in corporate financial management. I have excellent organizational and communication skills. I'm hardworking, ambitious, and ready for new challenges.

Experience

03.2023 – present (7 months) **Finance and Personnel Specialist** | BISAR S.A.

Brief job description:

- preparing internal reports
- settlement of commercial contracts with customers
- support in administrative and office tasks

08.2019 – 10.2022 (3 years 3 months) **Senior Financial Controller** | WARTO | Kiev, Ukraine

Brief job description:

- coordination of procedures, standards, process descriptions and training
- verification and assessment of the profitability of implemented products and offers
- analysis of accounting and reporting issues in terms of compliance with relevant standards

05.2017 – 07.2019 (2 years 3 months) **Operations Support Specialist** | Storm Digital | Kiev, Ukraine

Brief job description:

- preparing financial reports and statements
- organizing activities and ensuring operational efficiency
- inventory of internal finances

09.2015 – 04.2017 (1 years 8 months) **Administrative Specialist** | dok.ua | Kiev, Ukraine

Brief job description:

- work in the administrative and financial department
- assistance in organizing and supporting the team's work
- organization of processes and maintaining operational liquidity

02.2014 – 08.2015 (1 years 7 months) **Receptionist** | Hotel de Paris | Kiev, Ukraine

Brief job description:

- reception management
- guest services, reservations
- coordination of administrative activities

Education

10.2014 – 07.2015 (10 months) **Taras Shevchenko National University in Kiev**

Major: economics
Educational level: master's degree

09.2010 – 07.2014 (3 years 11 months) **Taras Shevchenko National University in Kiev**

Major: economics
Specialization: business economics
Education level: bachelor's degree

Languages

English: advanced

Ukrainian: native

Polish: advanced

Skills

Knowledge of Microsoft Office · Good organizational skills · Financial knowledge · Working effectively with the team

Hobbies

- equestrianism
- history books
- crime films

✓ *I consent to the processing of my personal data for the purposes necessary for the recruitment process (in accordance with the Act of May 10, 2018, on the Protection of Personal Data (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1000) and in accordance with the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2016/679 of April 27, 2016.*

Table 3. Characteristics of qualitative study participants

User ID	City size	Age group	Sex	Educational level	Mother
1	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Primary/secondary	No
2	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Primary/secondary	Yes
3	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Higher education	No
4	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Higher education	Yes
5	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Primary/secondary	No
6	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Primary/secondary	Yes
7	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Higher education	No
8	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Higher education	Yes
9	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Primary/secondary	No
10	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Primary/secondary	Yes
11	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Higher education	No
12	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	18-40	Female	Higher education	Yes
13	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Primary/secondary	No
14	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Primary/secondary	Yes
15	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Higher education	No
16	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	41-60	Female	Higher education	Yes
17	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	N/A	Male	Primary/secondary	N/A
18	Small/medium (up to 100,000 inhabitants)	N/A	Male	Higher education	N/A
19	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	N/A	Male	Primary/secondary	N/A
20	Large (over 100,000 inhabitants)	N/A	Male	Higher education	N/A

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The Polish Economic Institute

The Polish Economic Institute is a public economic think tank dating back to 1928. Its research primarily spans macroeconomics, energy and climate, foreign trade, economic foresight, the digital economy and behavioural economics. The Institute provides reports, analyses and recommendations for key areas of the economy and social life in Poland, taking into account the international situation.

