



Save the Children

**“THIS IS MY LIFE,  
AND I DON'T WANT  
TO WASTE A YEAR  
OF IT.”**

## **The experiences and wellbeing of children fleeing Ukraine**

November 2022

### **Acknowledgements**

The research would not have been possible without the participation of more than 1,000 children and caregivers who gave their time and shared their experiences. We are also indebted to colleagues from our member offices in Finland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, and Sweden. A special thank you to Sara Granath, Hannah Newth and Tory Clawson for providing guidance and input throughout the research process.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the escalation of conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, more than 7.7 million refugees have fled the country to seek safety in other European countries.<sup>1</sup> An estimated 40% are children.

Save the Children research with more than 1,000 children and caregivers in eight European countries, shows that children who have left Ukraine face significant challenges adjusting to their new environment. They report higher levels of anxiety and unhappiness than before, and a worryingly high proportion do not plan to enrol in or attend school.

These findings are based on a survey and focus group discussions with children and their caregivers carried out in Finland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania and Sweden in July and August 2022.

## The impact of displacement on children's wellbeing

The majority of children surveyed (57%) said they feel either a little or a lot less happy since leaving Ukraine. Older children (aged 16 years or over) seem to be most affected. Two in every three older children (66%) reported that they feel less happy compared with 55% of younger children.

When asked whether they had experienced any negative emotions in the last month, children commonly said that they worry about the future (55%) and feel restless (44%) and lonely (44%). Older children overwhelmingly reported that they were experiencing more anxiety (78% compared with 50% of younger children).

The feelings that children expressed are understandable psychological and emotional responses to fleeing a devastating conflict, being separated from close family members and adapting to a new country. But if left unaddressed, they have the potential to develop into longer-term psychosocial and mental health concerns.

## Welcomed by European states

The conflict in Ukraine has prompted an outpouring of support and solidarity for refugees from Ukraine from ordinary citizens across much of Europe. This has contributed to refugee children from Ukraine generally reporting that they felt welcome. One child refugee who fled to Poland said, *"We were indeed welcomed, one might say, with open arms. They helped a lot...we cried all the time because we had to leave...[but] when we arrived here...somehow that fear was no longer there."* However, across all countries surveyed, one in five children (21%) said they had experienced discrimination.

European states and the European Union have taken notable and positive steps to ensure refugee children from Ukraine are welcome. Most significant has been the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), under which refugees from Ukraine can access residency permits quickly and simply, and are entitled to education, healthcare and other government services.

## Problems in practice: access to education and other services

Implementation of the TPD has, however, proved a major challenge for European governments. Despite guaranteed access to education under the TPD, around one-third (32%) of the children surveyed did not attend school between the escalation of the conflict and the start of the summer holidays (online or in-person) and a further 25% had only attended school online. Around one in four said they did not intend to enrol in a local school in the 2022-23 academic year, or were unsure.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (2022) [Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/situations/ukraine).

These worrying findings are borne out by data on school enrolment in European countries. In Poland, only 41% of Ukrainian children who are registered in the country are enrolled in a local school.<sup>2</sup> In Portugal, only about 4,000 of the 15,000 children from Ukraine who are registered in the country are enrolled in a local school.<sup>3</sup>

Parallel to the efforts of European governments, the Ukrainian government has encouraged the use of a distance e-learning programme that was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Save the Children programme staff in European countries highlighted during consultations in September 2022 that while many children may be enrolled in online education, few children seem to actually be attending or engaging in online learning.

Importantly, the findings indicate a direct relationship between school attendance and children's reported sense of wellbeing and belonging. Around half the children surveyed said that they do not have friends around them, with boys significantly more likely than girls to report a longing for friends in their host community (64% compared with 52% respectively). In-person schooling has an important role to play in improving children's sense of belonging and reducing feelings of loneliness.

European governments are also struggling to find appropriate accommodation for refugees, at a time when the secondary economic impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and related cost of living crisis are being felt across the continent.<sup>4</sup> This was reflected in children's accounts. Many reported a lack of suitable accommodation or overcrowded accommodation, as a principal concern. Nearly half (47%) said they want to find an apartment for their family and 43% want their own bedroom or to share a room with a sibling.

### **The realities of long-term displacement**

Most of the surveyed children and caregivers said they wish to return to Ukraine one day. Three out of four children surveyed (75%) expressed this wish, while 18% said they are unsure. Just 7% said they do not intend to return. Older children (aged 16 years or over) were less likely to say they wanted to return (66%) than younger children (77%).

When asked about their plans to return, caregivers seemed less certain. Only 22% said that they plan to return within the next six months. Nearly half (47%) are undecided, while 30% do not intend to return.

Children said that in order to feel more at home in their host community, they would need friends from the community (57%) as well as opportunities to play sports or enjoy their hobbies (56%) and to learn the local language (54%).

The reality is that host countries will need to expand and adapt their social services systems to ensure the long-term support and integration of Ukrainians, while also making progress on their existing commitments to children who are living in poverty.

### **Urgency and long-term thinking are required**

Save the Children's research shows that a renewed sense of urgency is required to ensure that children from Ukraine can fully enjoy their rights to protection, health and education, and truly thrive in their host countries. This urgency must be matched with long-term thinking and planning, given that relatively few refugees from Ukraine plan to return home in the near future.

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<sup>2</sup> UNCHR (2022) [PESEL registration](#). 182,245 Ukrainian children were enrolled in Polish schools out of 441,000 children aged between 5 and 17 who were registered in the country (site accessed 24 October 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2022) [Overview of the current state of education and science in Ukraine in terms of Russian aggression](#). At September, only around 4,000 Ukrainian children were enrolled in Portuguese schools out of around 15,000 children registered in the country.

<sup>4</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2022) [Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries](#).

Ukrainian refugee children have a strong desire to belong in their new communities, and to establish a sense of normality in their daily lives. This is essential for their wellbeing and development.

To support them to do this, key actions the EU and European states should take include:

### **Provide longer term protection and social services for refugees from Ukraine**

- Commit to provide protection to all refugees from Ukraine for as long as hostilities are ongoing in the country and until it is safe to return, by extending the TPD or similar protections.
- Allocate new and ad hoc funding and include children from Ukraine in national action plans for the European Child Guarantee, specifically in the areas of education, housing and mental health support.

### **Ensure all Ukrainian refugee children are in school**

- Expand the capacity of national education systems, and strengthen the capacity of teachers to support the integration of students from different backgrounds.
- Ensure that refugees from Ukraine are aware of their right to access education in the local system, and encourage and support them to enrol for in-person education if they wish to do so.
- Integrate relevant and appropriate psychosocial support and child protection services with education.

### **Support Ukrainian refugee children's inclusion in their host society**

- Provide sports, music and other recreational activities for refugee children, integrated with local populations, subsidising access for low-income households.
- Provide language support for refugee children and their caregivers, as well as other preparatory classes for students entering the local education system.

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# BACKGROUND

Since the escalation of conflict in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, more than 1,000 children have been killed or injured in the country.<sup>5</sup> This is tragic and likely an underestimation. By October 2022, nearly one-third of the population was displaced<sup>6</sup> and more than 7.6 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded across Europe.<sup>7</sup> Thousands of children and families are still being forced to flee, while violence and fighting make it hard to access essential healthcare and education.

The overwhelming majority of refugees are women and children, as under Martial Law, men between the ages of 18 and 60 are not currently allowed to leave Ukraine. An estimated 40% are children.<sup>8</sup> More than 300,000 third-country nationals from countries such as Tunisia, Ghana and Lebanon have also fled Ukraine.<sup>9,10</sup> Poland and Germany are hosting the largest numbers of refugees from Ukraine, but countries as far from Ukraine as Spain are hosting as many as 140,000.<sup>11</sup>

European citizens, governments and the EU have shown remarkable solidarity with children and families fleeing the violence in Ukraine. Early in the crisis, the European Union for the first time unanimously activated the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). This is an existing mechanism to respond to mass refugee arrivals, which was adopted by the EU in 2001 following conflict in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Following activation of the TPD in March 2022, refugees from Ukraine have rights to a residence permit; access to employment, education and healthcare; and can move freely in EU countries.<sup>13</sup> On 10 October 2022, EU Justice and Home Affairs Minister Ylva Johansson announced that the TPD would be in place until at least March 2024.<sup>14</sup>

More than 4 million refugees have registered under the TPD or similar schemes implemented by non-EU countries. The scale of arrivals has posed significant challenges for national governments and the European Union. It is difficult to practically implement the TPD while they struggle to cope with the broader economic impacts of the conflict, particularly against a backdrop of shortcomings in public education systems, limited availability of social housing, and strained social safety nets. The Ukrainian conflict and associated cost of living crisis raise concerns that the EU and its member states may struggle to meet the European Child Guarantee target of lifting at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030.<sup>15</sup>

## Save the Children's response to the crisis in Ukraine

Since the escalation of conflict in February 2022, Save the Children has scaled up its response in Ukraine and across Europe. In Ukraine, Save the Children is working closely with partners to provide life-saving assistance including food and water, cash transfers, and safe spaces for children and families who have been forced to flee their homes or remain trapped by the conflict.

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<sup>5</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2022) [Ukraine: civilian casualty update 22 August 2022](#).

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Ukraine refugee situation](#).

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Ukraine emergency](#).

<sup>8</sup> Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation, June 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Migration Data Portal [Ukraine crisis movements](#).

<sup>10</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2022) [IOM Assists Nearly 100 Third Country Nationals Fleeing War in Ukraine to Return Home](#).

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Ukraine refugee situation](#).

<sup>12</sup> The TPD is "an exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons." European Commission [Temporary Protection](#)

<sup>13</sup> The TPD is for a maximum period of three years. It applies for one year initially and can be renewed for a second year, then for two further six-month periods. It can end prior to that on the basis of a qualified majority opinion of the Council based on a proposal by the European Commission.

<sup>14</sup> [Press briefing](#) by Nicolas Schmit and Ylva Johansson, European Commission, 10 October 2022

<sup>15</sup> See Save the Children (2022) [Putting Children First: Priorities for the EU's Response to the Conflict in Ukraine](#)

By September 2022, Save the Children had provided direct support to 345,759 people in Ukraine, including 172,872 children.

Across the border in Poland, Romania and Lithuania, Save the Children has reached 178,000 people with life-saving support, including 110,730 children. In addition, Save the Children's European programmes in the Balkans, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK have supported refugee children and their families with psychosocial support, child friendly spaces, and assistance to help children and their families settle and access the services they need.

## Methodology: approach and limitations

Data collection for this report took place between July and August 2022. The study applied a mixed-method approach involving primary and secondary data collection.

- **Online survey of Ukrainian children and caregivers:** Ukrainian children and their caregivers were asked to participate in a survey to share their experiences since leaving Ukraine, their sense of belonging in their host community, their hopes for the future and their needs and requirements. The first section of the survey contained questions for caregivers. The second section of the survey contained child friendly questions for children. The children and caregivers who were surveyed were identified through Save the Children programmes and partner organisations.
- **Focus groups with children:** Qualitative, in-depth group discussions were carried out with Ukrainian children across the eight participating countries. The children and caregivers were identified through Save the Children programmes and partner organisations. A minimum of one focus group was conducted in each country. Where a whole group discussion was not possible, individual interviews were conducted. The focus group built on the survey to gather qualitative information about children's experiences of:
  - their journey to the country in which they were staying
  - their reception in their host community and experiences of discrimination
  - the types of services they need to feel safe and their ability to access these services
  - their worries and hopes for the future.
- **Desk-based review of relevant data and reports:** the survey and focus group discussions were complemented by a review of secondary literature to provide additional context and validation of the findings. The review sourced data and statistical information from UN institutions as well as existing research on Ukrainian wellbeing and reception among adults, as well as comparative analysis of the effects of crises in Syria and Afghanistan on refugees from those countries.

Research country	Number of focus groups	Survey participants <sup>16</sup>
Finland	2*	37
Italy	1	52
Lithuania	1	107
Netherlands	1	138
Norway	1	0 <sup>17</sup>
Poland	1	450
Romania	1	147
Sweden	1	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>987</b>

\*One individual interview was conducted in addition to the focus groups

Figure 1. Number of focus group discussions and survey participants by country

<sup>16</sup> Not all participants completed all survey questions but responses were considered valid for analysis. Variations in base sizes for different questions are seen as a result.

<sup>17</sup> Norway did not take part in the survey component of the research due to other research activities ongoing in the country.

The research targeted children over the age of 12, who had been forcibly displaced from Ukraine since February 2022 and were residing in eight European countries: Finland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania and Sweden. For the purposes of this analysis, Lithuania, Poland and Romania are categorised as neighbouring countries to Ukraine while the remainder are categorised as onward destination countries.

The research approach was reviewed and endorsed by Save the Children's Ethics Review Committee. In line with GDPR requirements, participants were provided with information sheets and informed that their participation was voluntary and they could terminate the interview or discussion at any time. Written consent was obtained from the children, parents and caregivers. Facilitators received a research and safeguarding briefing and were obligated to adhere to country level safeguarding policies and referral mechanisms.

When reviewing the research findings, the reader should consider the following strengths and limitations of the approach.

### Strengths

- **Reaches a large cross-section of children in Europe.** The views and experiences of more than 1,000 children and caregivers were gathered for this research. This has enabled a substantial level of information to be captured and elevated the voices of children, so that we hear their views and experiences first hand.
- **Uses a mixed method approach with quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.** Quantitative and qualitative approaches answer different questions (what, or why). A mixed approach provides both breadth and depth of information and strengthens the evidence.

### Limitations

- **There is selection bias as the participants were a deliberative sample.** Participants were selected based on existing links and networks in Save the Children member countries, so do not represent the total population of Ukrainian children or caregivers in the host community. The research can only report on the experiences and views of children and caregivers who were surveyed.
- **There is sample bias because:**
  - **Each country has varying levels of direct engagement with children and caregivers.** Some Save the Children offices found it easier than others to reach the target audience. As a result, the 'voice' of refugees in some countries is louder than others when analysing findings in aggregate (see fig. 1).
  - **All children and caregivers surveyed were in Member States of the European Union.** This means they have the same access to protection and services following the activation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive. Many children have fled Ukraine to non-EU countries in Europe, including Russia, Moldova, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway.<sup>18</sup> However, these children are not included in the research.

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<sup>18</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Ukraine refugee situation](#)



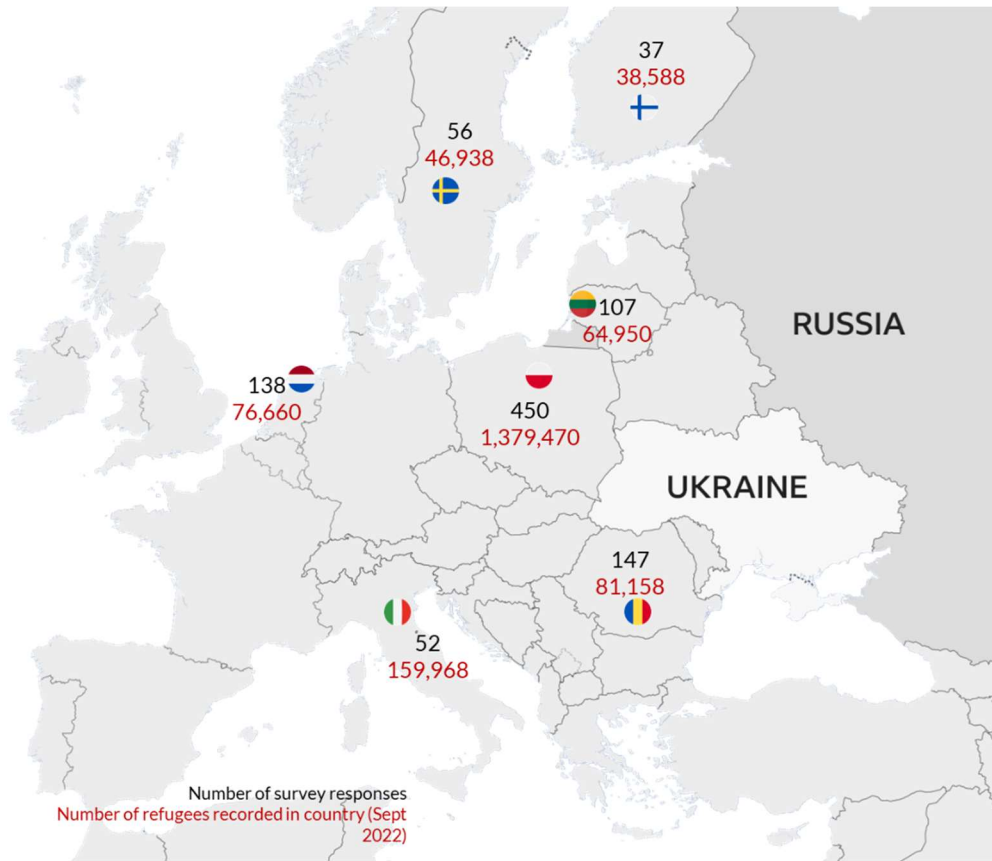


Figure 2. Number of refugees from Ukraine recorded (September 2022) v. number of survey responses. Source for refugees recorded: UNCHR Data Portal: [Ukraine Refugee Situation](#)

# CHILDREN'S WELLBEING SINCE LEAVING UKRAINE

## Key findings

- Children's confidence and happiness have declined since leaving Ukraine.
- Children commonly said that they worry about the future and feel restless and lonely.
- The language barrier, disruption to daily routines, and getting used to new places, are particularly challenging.
- Children reported better general living conditions in their destination country than in Ukraine, including cleaner streets, more cultural activities, and access to nature.

Many of the millions of children who have fled the violence in Ukraine are experiencing psychological and emotional impacts of the war. If left unaddressed or inadequately addressed, these have the potential to develop into long-term psychosocial or mental health conditions.

The extent to which a child's mental health is affected by war depends to a large extent on the support they receive from their caregivers.<sup>19</sup> But this, too, becomes difficult during times of war as secure attachments are frequently disrupted or caregivers themselves may feel anxious, distressed or preoccupied.

The journey to a country of refuge can place further stress on refugee children and their caregivers. On arrival, children may need to settle into a new school in an unfamiliar language, find a peer group, and in some cases assume an adult role prematurely, adding to the stress, worry and fear that these children experience.

## How children feel since leaving Ukraine

The majority of children surveyed (57%) said they feel either a little or a lot less happy since leaving Ukraine. Older children (aged 16 years or over) seem to be most affected. Two in every three older children (66%) reported that they feel less happy compared with 55% of younger children. There was no significant difference based on gender.

Along with lower overall levels of happiness among children, their levels of confidence also appear to be lower since leaving Ukraine. More than two in every five children (44%) said they feel a little or lot less confident. This is reinforced by the survey responses from caregivers, with 42% of caregivers reporting that their child or children have shown less confidence since leaving Ukraine and 54% saying that their child or children have felt less happy.

In addition, a substantial proportion of caregivers surveyed stated that their child (or children) displays more sadness (46%) or gets more tense or nervous (53%) since leaving Ukraine. Older children (aged 16 years or over) were significantly more likely than younger

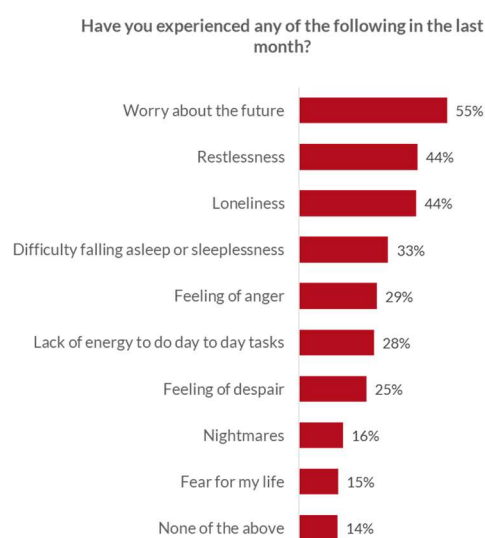


Figure 3 Negative experiences reported by children surveyed in the last month (n=457)

<sup>19</sup> WHO (2022) [Health of refugee and migrant children](#)

children to state that they feel less confident (51% of older children compared with 43% of younger children).

Children who had experienced challenges in their new environment often mentioned that they had found the language barrier particularly difficult, along with the changes to their routine and the challenge of getting used to new places.

When asked whether they had experienced any negative emotions in the last month, children commonly said that they worry about the future (55%) and feel restless (44%) and lonely (44%). Older children (16 years or over) overwhelmingly reported that they had experienced more anxiety (78% compared with 50% of younger children). Caregivers also reported that they experience ongoing anxiety about the future (76%), restlessness (58%) and feelings of despair (54%). This finding echoes past studies of newly arrived refugee children, which found that between 49% and 69% experienced increased anxiety, with the prevalence dramatically increasing if at least one parent had been tortured or if families were separated.<sup>20</sup>

**Daria,\* 12 years old, and her mother Vira\* live in Poland since they fled from Ukraine.**

Vira said, *“We were in a bomb shelter and from there we went to Lviv by an evacuation train. It was a very difficult trip to Poland. We were in such a nervous state, not knowing where we were going. The train was packed with people and children. Mothers and children sat on the floor. We travelled almost all day.”*

When they arrived in Poland, they stayed with a local family and Daria attended a summer camp supported by Save the Children, where she learned Polish and received psychosocial support. Vira said that now, Daria *“sleeps soundly. Before that, she could talk about bomb shelters, explosions in the middle of the night. This was the case when we first arrived here. Now...she talks about the camp and friends.”*

Describing her experience in Poland, Daria said: *“I’d say I understand about 60% of what is being said in Polish. Maybe a bit less. I can speak, but don’t understand all the words. I have found new friends, and there is much more interaction than just being at home.”*



Encouragingly, three out of four children (77%) stated that they talk to their family about how they feel at least sometimes, and one in four (26%) talk to their parents daily, indicating a strong emotional support network is available for many. Moreover, around half of caregivers (54%) reported that they speak to their children about how they feel more often since they left Ukraine.

Children who took part in the focus groups and reported that they felt happy within their host community, said that this was generally because there are better living conditions in their destination country including cleaner streets, more cultural activities, and access to nature. One child who participated in a focus group discussion in Finland said, *“I think there are good people in Finland. They always smile. I come for a coffee (somewhere) and they smile. And they always sort the garbage. Take care of nature.”*

## Conclusions on children’s wellbeing

<sup>20</sup> British Medical Journal (2002) [The mental health of refugee children: Archives of Disease in Childhood 2002;87:366-370.](#)

This research indicates that refugee children from Ukraine are at significant risk of developing psychological stressors.<sup>21</sup> Responses from the children who participated in this research reaffirm the effects of forced displacement and ongoing uncertainty about the future, including reduced levels of happiness and confidence and increased feelings of anxiety and loneliness. These feelings were more commonly reported and particularly acute among older children.

Governments and social services can play a key role in mitigating this harm by providing adequate psychosocial support and child protection services for refugees. Delivery of such services for children and adolescents can be undertaken in the school context as part of primary prevention,<sup>22</sup> ensuring that mental health support is well integrated within the education system.

## CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

### Key findings

- Around one-third (32%) of children surveyed did not attend school between the escalation of conflict and the summer holidays. A further one in four (25%) only attended online.
- Children who attended school (in-person or online) were less likely to say that they feel lonely.
- Around one in four children said they did not intend to enrol in a host community school for the 2022-2023 academic year or were unsure, so are at risk of dropping out of education.
- Some children are concerned about falling behind in the Ukrainian curriculum if they attend local schools.
- Some parents perceive their stay in the host community as short-term so would prefer that their child does not enrol in a local school.
- Younger children (below age 16) are more likely to want to enrol in school, in person or online.

Ensuring that more than two million children who have fled the conflict in Ukraine receive a safe, inclusive, quality education in their destination country is a significant challenge. Members of the European Union are mandated to grant Ukrainian children access to their education system under the same conditions as nationals.<sup>23</sup> But governments have struggled to ensure that children are enrolled in school and countries with the most refugees face the most acute challenges.

There are few language teachers to support children from Ukraine to learn their host language, and municipalities often do not have the funding to hire additional educational staff, even if they could be identified, to expand class capacities. More than 13,000 school teachers have fled Ukraine and now reside in other countries.<sup>24</sup> Many have applied to work in the school systems of their destination country<sup>25</sup> but they face administrative, practical and linguistic barriers.

In parallel to the efforts made by European governments, the Ukrainian government has produced guidance to encourage Ukrainian children to participate

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*"We did not study...we lived in Kyiv where the situation was dire and all the schools were closed and all the teachers went abroad. At first, they tried to organise remote learning but it was only successful for about 15 minutes before there was an alarm and we needed to go to the cellar."*  
*Child in focus group in Finland*

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<sup>21</sup> This is similar to findings in other contexts. See for example, British Medical Journal (2002) [The mental health of refugee children](#) Archives of Disease in Childhood 2002;87:366–370

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Article 14, [Council Directive 2001/55/EC](#) of 20 July 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2022) [Overview of the current state of education and science in Ukraine in terms of Russian aggression \(5 - 25 September 2022\)](#).

<sup>25</sup> For example, more than 3,500 teachers from Ukraine had applied to work in Polish schools by March 2022. Dziennik Gazeta Prawna [Czarnek: 3,500 Ukrainian teachers volunteered to work in Polish schools](#), 30 March 2022 (note: source is in Polish language).

in an online distance learning programme that was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>26</sup> but the number of children actively using this option is unclear.

In Poland, only 41% of Ukrainian children are enrolled in a local school (182,245 children out of 441,000 children aged between 5 and 17 who are registered in the country).<sup>27</sup> In Portugal, only about 4,000 Ukrainian children are enrolled in Portuguese schools compared to around 15,000 who are registered in Portugal.<sup>28</sup> In Finland, approximately 68% of 7-15 year old Ukrainian children who are currently registered in the reception system were attending school in August, when the school year started.<sup>29</sup> Other countries have higher enrolment rates: Sweden reported that 80% of children were attending school and highlighted that a majority of municipalities could enrol more students.<sup>30</sup>

## School attendance and participation

Among the children surveyed, the majority (62%) had been attending or completed lower secondary education in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> Almost seven out of ten (68%) said that since the escalation of the conflict in February 2022, they had attended school regularly before the summer holidays. 37% had attended in-person, 25% had attended online and 6% had done a mixture of the two.

The option of online schooling has enabled some children to continue their studies and to follow the Ukrainian national curriculum. However, online schooling has clear limitations. First, since the escalation of conflict, many children have had their online education disrupted due to a lack of teacher capacity and the challenges of teaching effectively under extremely challenging circumstances. Teachers who were available to teach only managed to conduct lessons for a few hours a day due to sirens going off or limited internet access. Second, school is not only about the lessons delivered. In-person schooling supports child development, mental health and wellbeing by building children's social skills, relationships with peers, and interactions with broader society. This is particularly important for refugee children, to help them integrate with their host societies.

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*“We have heard a lot of good things about school. We have heard many good things about school food and hobbies. And everything is organised in a way that children want to go to school. We very much want to go to school. I think here the schools are better than in Ukraine.”*  
Child in focus group in Finland

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The survey findings indicate that a large proportion of Ukrainian children have not been attending school at all since the escalation of the conflict. Around one-third (32%) of children surveyed said they did not attend school either in-person or online before the summer holidays.

Some caregivers that were surveyed expressed a preference for online schooling over enrolment in a school in the destination country. One caregiver in the Netherlands said: *“We have to allow children to learn online only in Ukrainian schools. Do not force them to study offline in Dutch schools.”*

However, consultations conducted in September 2022 with Save the Children domestic programme staff raised concerns that while many children may be enrolled in online education, few children are attending regularly. This was believed to be more often the case among children

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<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2022) [How to organize learning for Ukrainian children abroad: Q&A](#)

<sup>27</sup> UNCHR (2022) [PESEL registration](#)

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2022) [Overview of the current state of education and science in Ukraine in terms of Russian aggression](#)

<sup>29</sup> Finnish National Agency for Education [At the beginning of the fall semester almost 5,600 Ukrainians started early childhood education and training](#), 31 August 2022 (note: source is in Finnish language).

<sup>30</sup> Swedish National Agency for Education [Children from Ukraine in Swedish primary and secondary schools](#), 29 September 2022 (note: source is in Swedish language).

<sup>31</sup> Lower (or basic) secondary education comprises grades 5-9 for children aged 10- to 15-year-olds.



who were living in temporary shelters or reception centres, possibly as a result of limited internet, equipment and quiet space for online schooling and among lower income families.

In-person education is even less likely as many parents perceive their stay in the host community as short-term, or their protection status is unclear, so they do not want to enrol their child in school. As one caregiver in the Netherlands put it, *“Where will we live after March 4, 2023? Children will get involved in the schooling process, learn the language, and then?”*

However, education has the potential to alleviate refugee children’s feelings of loneliness. Children who attended school regularly before the summer holidays were less likely to say that they feel lonely. 41% of children who were attending school (either online or in-person) said they had felt lonely in the last month compared with 48% of children who had not attended school.

## Intention to go to school

Three out of four (76%) children surveyed said they intended to enrol in a host community school for the 2022-2023 academic year. 59% planned to enrol in-person, 6% online and 11% a combination of the two. In-person enrolment is significantly higher in onward destination countries (64%) than in neighbouring countries (57%). For instance, less than half (49%) of children surveyed in Romania intended to enrol in school there. This may be because children in

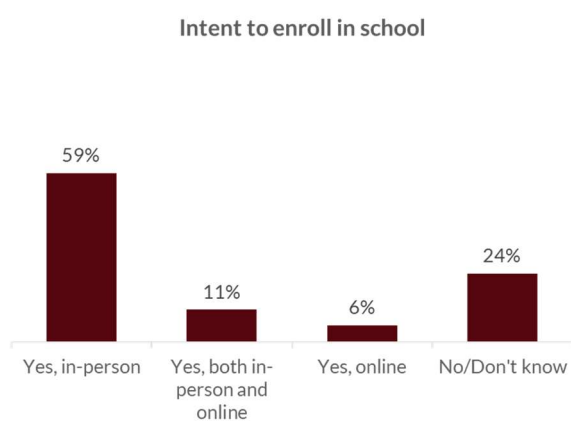


Figure 4 Children surveyed intent to enrol in school during the 2022-23 academic year (n=505)

neighbouring countries still intend to travel onwards or anticipate returning to Ukraine. Although 76% of children said they intended to enrol, this may not actually translate into attendance, as noted above. And the findings indicate that around one in four (24%) children surveyed either did not intend to enrol in a host community school, or were unsure.

One explanation for this is related to potential differences in school attainment levels. Some children and their parents want to continue to attend their Ukrainian school online to maintain links to the Ukrainian education system, where they know the certification and

grading system will be applicable. These children fear that by attending local schools, they will be placed in lower grades, or their certifications will not be valid on their return to Ukraine.

As one participant in a focus group in Italy said, *“I think I’ll stay in Italy, but I’m worried about losing another school year, I’m worried about school placement. This year I would like to make up for the year I have already lost, but it will be tough. I’m supposed to be in second year of high school, but if I’m*

*lucky they’ll put me in first year”.*

***“I understand that if I enter a lyceum or a technical school here, it will be level one or two, and if I continue studying here, I will have to graduate, and thus lose several years of my life. This is my life, and I don't want to waste a year of it.”***

*Child in focus group in Poland*

Younger children were significantly more likely to want to enrol in a local school than their older counterparts. 80% of children aged 15 years or younger intended to enrol (63% in-person, 5% online and 12% a combination of the two). This compares with 63% of children aged 16 years or over who intended to enrol (42% in person). This is potentially the result of older children wanting to work and be financially independent instead of going to school. Other reasons may be related to

***“I would like to become fluent in Dutch, but I want to attend a Ukrainian school.”***  
*Girl, 13, the Netherlands*

greater language barriers and concerns about wasting time on non-Ukrainian education, which may lead older children to choose not to enrol.

## Experiences at host country schools

Access to education gives children the opportunity to make friends, develop their self-reliance, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and improve their confidence and self-esteem.<sup>32</sup> School can be a conducive environment for children to integrate with their host communities, learn the local language, and make friends – the top three priorities that children identified for themselves in this research.

A few children mentioned that they felt apprehensive about starting school in the new academic year. For some, it is because they have become accustomed to online school. For others, it is because they now have much further to travel than they did in Ukraine. As one child said, *“I am used to living five minutes away from school. Here, I have to take a bus and change buses.”*

For some children, the apprehension about returning to school relates to fear of meeting new people: *“I’m a little scared to get to know new people.”* Other children, particularly in Finland, were excited about the prospect of going to a different school and the possibility of higher quality lessons and (free) lunches.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusions on participation in school

The findings of this research highlight the dilemmas that displaced children and families often face regarding education, particularly if they do not know how long they will be in their host country. In many ways, these dilemmas are more acute for families from Ukraine than for other displaced families, because of the option to continue their Ukrainian education online.

Parents and children from Ukraine will likely continue to have the desire to retain their educational progress, culture and language, while also recognising the importance of attending school for children’s development and adaptation to life in their host country.

Capacity issues in some EU countries are a key challenge, but other barriers to access include a perceived discrepancy between school attainment certifications for Ukrainian and host countries, and the expectations of parents and children regarding the length of their stay in the host country. Addressing these barriers will require coordination with the Ukrainian government. Families need clearer information and on how children can move between different educational and vocational systems.

**Ten-year-old Irina\* clearly remembers the day that the sirens went off and she had to flee from her home with her mother.**

*“[My dad] was probably at work because he got scared at first, big explosions, and he called. I was very afraid for my family, for myself, for all my relatives, for my grandparents. I was very scared... I was afraid that the rocket would hit our and my grandparents’ house,”* Irina told Save the Children.

*“It was somewhere around four in the morning. My mother woke me up quickly, we began to quickly pack things. We got into the car and drove off. We were supposed to go to my grandparents, but we couldn’t. We went to friends. And we lived with them for about a month. And then we came home and decided to leave, to [come to] this country [Romania].”*

<sup>32</sup> UNCHR (2016) [Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis](#)

<sup>33</sup> One psychologist, interviewed in Italy, mentioned that reception centres (and by extension schools) should be aware of the impact of giving children unfamiliar foods, as it can lead to children not eating. “Parents complain that their children often do not eat for several days because they are used to different foods.” He noted that this is often less of an issue for children who left Ukraine after April and have experienced war, so “understand the meaning of leaving home.”

She is very worried about her father and grandparents, who are still in Ukraine. *“I even have a little heartache sometimes because I worry about everyone. I’m sorry they hear those sirens and explosions.”*

But she was happy to attend summer classes in her new school in Bucharest, Romania. *“I really like that everyone here is friendly and welcoming. No one met me with angry or sidelong glances. I feel more comfortable here. It’s better to be here than at home there, sitting on the phone. And here I study, communicate, I’m just not bored here.”*

## CHILDREN’S SENSE OF BELONGING

### Key findings

- Around half of children reported that they do not have friends around them. Only 35% said they had made local friends.
- Attending school in-person appears to be an important way for children to make friends.
- Boys were significantly more likely than girls to report a longing for friends in their host community.
- Parents overwhelmingly remain the main point of call when children need help.
- While children acknowledged differences in culture, dress and routine in their host countries, they generally felt welcomed. But one in five children and one-third of caregivers had experienced discrimination.
- The top three things children said they need to feel more at home are: friends from their host community, opportunities to play sport or enjoy hobbies, and to learn the local language.

### Relationships and support networks

A feeling of belonging and connections to others are crucial for refugees’ wellbeing, meaningful integration into their host community, and overall life satisfaction.<sup>34,35</sup> Yet, just over half (53%) the children surveyed said that they do not have friends in their host community. Results indicate that boys, in particular, are impacted by this: only 39% of boys reported that they have friends around them compared with 47% of girls.

A wish to reunite with friends from Ukraine or make new friends in their host community was a recurring theme in children’s responses to this study. Children in destination countries (Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden), were more likely to report that they have friends around them (54%) than children in Ukraine’s neighbouring countries (Poland, Romania and Lithuania), of which only 39% reported having friends around them. It is possible that children in neighbouring countries do not intend to stay for as long, so are less invested in developing friendships.

Almost all children (95%) who said they have made friends since they left Ukraine state that these friends are other children from Ukraine. 35% of children said that they had made friends with children from their host country. More than half (54%) had met their

Do you feel that you have friends around you?

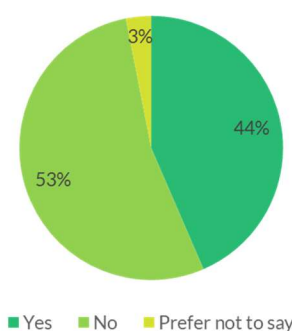


Figure 5 Percentage of children reporting they have friends in the host community (n=485)

<sup>34</sup> RESPOND Project (2017-2020) [Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond](#).

<sup>35</sup> Save the Children (2021) [Anywhere but Syria: How 10 years of conflict left Syria’s displaced children without a sense of home](#).



friends at school or at a learning centre. This suggests that attending school regularly and in-person may be an important way to make friendships.

Reinforcing this, almost half (49%) of children who attended school in-person regularly before the summer holidays said they had friends around them compared with 38% of those who had not attended school.

Parents overwhelmingly remain the main point of call for their children. Around nine in ten (87%) children said they rely on their parents when they need help.

For many children, their fathers, grandparents and older brothers remain in Ukraine. When prompted, however, most children do not believe the conflict in Ukraine has had a significant impact on their relationships with family members who remain in Ukraine. They can usually keep in contact via phone or online, except in areas where there is heavy fighting.

Some children mentioned tensions with family members because of political differences, which has resulted in communication being cut off. Others felt that relationships with family members who were with them in their host country had been somewhat altered because families were living more closely together. Older children said that they felt they had to alter their behaviour because of the changed circumstances, for example providing more practical and emotional support to their mother. One adolescent who participated in a focus group discussion in the Netherlands said, “*Sometimes I think that it this war made us very close.*”

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*“Everything has become much better, it has become much easier to communicate – there are no quarrels, there is no time for this.”*  
*Child in focus group in Romania*

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## **Inclusion in the local community**

Almost half (47%) of children said they are uncertain or have no strong opinion on whether they feel included in their host community. The remaining 53% are more or less equally split on whether they feel included or not, perhaps due to the short amount of time many had been in their host country (around seven months on average at the time of data collection).

The top three things children said they need to feel more at home are friends from their host community (57%), opportunities to play sports or enjoy their hobbies (56%) and to learn the local language (54%). The latter was often identified by refugees from Ukraine as crucial to access the job market and educational opportunities, in a study conducted by UNCHR.<sup>36</sup>

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*“[We] didn’t have friends in the beginning and it was difficult without communication.”*  
*Child in focus group in Netherlands*

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These top three needs are closely followed by the need for adequate housing. 47% of children said they want to find an apartment for their family, while 43% want their own bedroom or to share a room with a sibling.

Of particular interest is the importance of friendship to boys, who were significantly more likely to report a longing for friends in the host community (64% compared with 52% of girls).

While children acknowledged there are differences in culture, dress, temperament and routine in their host countries, they generally felt welcomed. Many of the children who took part in the focus groups felt that their receiving country was very welcoming and helpful, particularly in terms of providing material essentials like clothes or furniture.

Despite generally feeling welcomed, a minority of children mentioned experiencing hostility from others. One in five children (21%) surveyed said they have experienced discrimination. Nearly half

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<sup>36</sup> UNCHR (2022) [Lives on Hold – Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine](#)

(45%) of them had experienced discrimination on the street or in the neighbourhood. One child even alluded to harassment by a police officer.

Older children were more likely to say that they had been exposed to discrimination, with 27% of children aged 16 years or over reporting discrimination compared with 20% of younger children. It is possible that Ukrainian children will experience more discrimination as the conflict continues, communal resources become more strained, and they have more interactions with local people.

One-third of caregivers (34%) also mentioned that they had been hassled or experienced discrimination. More than half of them experienced this when trying to find a house (55%).

### Caregivers' support networks

Around two-thirds (65%) of caregivers have left behind one or more parents in Ukraine. Around half (47%) believe that they have someone who can help them in their host country. This rises to 65% for caregivers who are residing in onward destination countries, while only 41% of caregivers in neighbouring countries feel they have someone to rely on. Those that feel they can reach out to someone in their host country, tend to rely on support from the national government (50%), civil society organisations (44%), and friends from Ukraine (41%).

### Conclusions on children's sense of belonging

A sense of belonging is a powerful feeling that can help children and their families to feel settled in a new country after being forcibly displaced from their home. The children in this research underlined that learning the language, having spaces where they can enjoy recreational activities, and school attendance, are key ways to feel more at home in their host communities.

The importance of a sense of belonging was reinforced by the Director of the Unità Operativa di Neuropsichiatria dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza (UONPIA) of Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico in Italy, who told Save the Children that, *"The principle applies that the welcome and attention they receive in their host country, and the people around them, helps [refugees] to retain a sense of their own identity and hope for the future."*

While social tensions do not appear to have become an issue yet for most refugees from Ukraine, the welcome and solidarity shown in European countries since February should not be taken for granted, particularly in the context of a cost of living crisis and social and political pressures. Save the Children research with Syrian children in Turkey emphasises the importance of raising awareness among the host community to combat misconceptions and prejudice.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Save the Children (2021) [A Youth Centred Participatory Assessment in Turkey: Understanding refugee and host community youth's perceptions, challenges and needs](#).

# WHAT CHILDREN SAY THEY NEED

## Key findings

- Children said the most important things they need are places to meet friends, enjoy their hobbies, and receive medical care.
- One of the most often mentioned things that would make their lives easier right now is their own room or an apartment just for their family.
- Children said the biggest barriers to accessing services are lack of awareness of what's available, services not being available in their language, and services being too expensive.
- The majority of caregivers do not know where to seek support for their children. Those that have been able to use services overwhelmingly report the usefulness of recreational activities for children, followed by activities that focus on a child's wellbeing.

## Access and barriers to services

Children that were surveyed reported that they need places to enjoy their hobbies (51%), meet friends (31%), and receive medical care (29%) but currently do not have access to them. Younger children (below the age of 16) were more likely to say that they needed somewhere for their hobbies (53% compared with 43% of older children). Older children, on the other hand, indicated that they want to access services for work.

Around a third (36%) of children said that lack of awareness of available services (such as healthcare, education or housing) was a reason why they had not accessed a service they need. Other reasons were services not being available in their language (28%) or too expensive (27%).

Not knowing where to find services appears to be a particular challenge in Romania (56%) and the Netherlands (51%). These findings are reinforced by recent UNHCR research among adult refugees, in which some refugees from Ukraine noted difficulties finding reliable, up to date information on services and employment opportunities.<sup>38</sup>

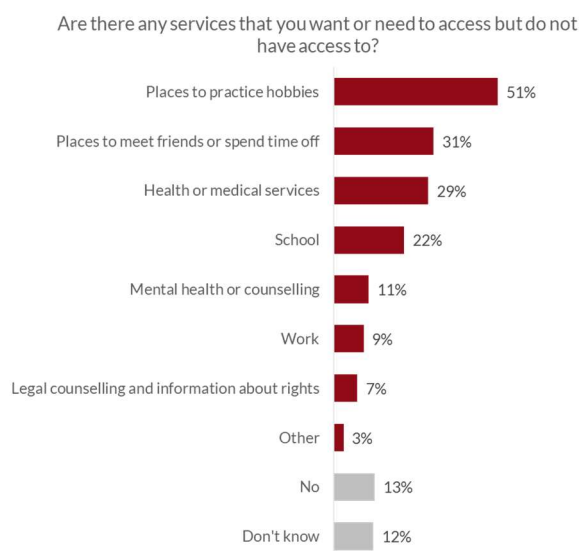


Figure 6 What children say they need but currently do not have access to (n=497)

***“We need a free Polish language tutor, because the family is big and it will be difficult for my mother to pay for everything.”***  
*Girl, 17, Poland*

A consistent flow of new refugees, and the fact that reception centres are often located in remote areas, means it is difficult for families to reach the schools and services they need. However, others welcome the opportunity to access services that are not available at home: *“I want to play ice hockey and you cannot do that in Ukraine.”*

Older children were significantly more likely than younger children to state that they do not know where to find the services they need (43% compared with 34% respectively). Further analysis indicates that this

<sup>38</sup> UNCHR (2022) [Lives on Hold – Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine](#)

indicates that this may be due to older children seeking opportunities to work, which is not a key focus for many reception centres. 27% of children aged 16 years or over stated that they want or need to access services to find work compared with just 6% of children aged 15 or under.

In relation to medical care, several children raised concerns with long wait times at health centres or lack of interpreters. One child in Finland said, *“My mother went to a doctor. There was no interpreter. She just sat there for two hours and nothing happened. And [the doctor] said something that my mother did not understand and that she needed to wait for two months.”*

Several children also spoke about the importance of access to housing with adequate space for their family. Older adolescents in particular, mentioned that they want a space they can call their own. Children also frequently said that they would like greater access to IT resources such as a laptop or tablet, to support their online studies and communicate with others.

## What caregivers need

The majority of caregivers are not aware of the services that are available for their children. Three out of five caregivers (59%) stated that they do not know where to seek support for their children. Only 41% of caregivers were aware of services in their community that focus on improving children’s wellbeing.

Awareness of available services is particularly low in the Netherlands, where 68% are unaware of what support is available, as well as in Finland (66% unaware) and Poland (65% unaware).

However, caregivers that had used local services overwhelmingly reported that recreational activities for children have been helpful (68%), followed by activities that focus on improving children’s wellbeing (54%). Recreational activities were most likely to be identified as helpful in Sweden (88%) and Lithuania (78%). Activities that focus on children’s wellbeing were most likely to be identified as helpful in Sweden (73%) and Finland (67%).

## Conclusions on what children need

While Ukrainian children and their caregivers feel welcomed by their host countries and communities, overcoming cultural and language differences and creating meaningful friendships can still be challenging. Establishing a sense of normality through day-to-day activities such as hobbies, can play a crucial role in ensuring children’s wellbeing and supporting caregivers to navigate challenging new circumstances.

Information campaigns to raise awareness of available services – particularly spaces for hobbies and meeting others, more permanent housing options, and access to healthcare – could help refugee children and their caregivers to access essential services and integrate more smoothly into the local community.

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*“Our four families live in one house. It is very difficult. My room is the smallest, the soundproofing is bad and other people’s children are screaming all the time and I have no opportunity to be in silence.”*  
*Girl, Netherlands, 17*

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# WHAT CHILDREN HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

## Key findings

- The majority of children and caregivers wish to return to Ukraine one day, but few have plans to do so in the next six months.
- The desire to return is lower among older children, who often mentioned that they had wished to leave Ukraine even before the conflict.
- The idea of returning to Ukraine triggers multiple emotions among children, ranging from the joy of seeing family again to fears for their safety, and concerns about how the country may have changed as a result of the conflict.
- Children's near-term priorities are to make friends and access opportunities to enjoy hobbies or sports. In the long-term, children wish to see peace in their country and to eventually return.

## Return to Ukraine

Most children and caregivers that took part in this research wish to return to Ukraine one day. Three out of four children surveyed (75%) expressed this wish, while 18% said they are unsure. Just 7% said they do not intend to return. As one child in Finland put it, *"In a year I will be home in Odessa, drinking Cola and playing on the PC."*

Older children (aged 16 years or over) were less likely to say they want to return (66%) than younger children (77%).

Similarly, 71% of caregivers hope to return to Ukraine eventually, although they seem less certain about their plans in the near future. Only 22% said that they plan to return within the next six months. Nearly half (47%) are undecided and the remaining 30% do not intend to return. This largely aligns with the findings of a recent survey carried out by UNHCR,<sup>39</sup> although the caregivers interviewed by Save the Children seem slightly more optimistic about their eventual return.

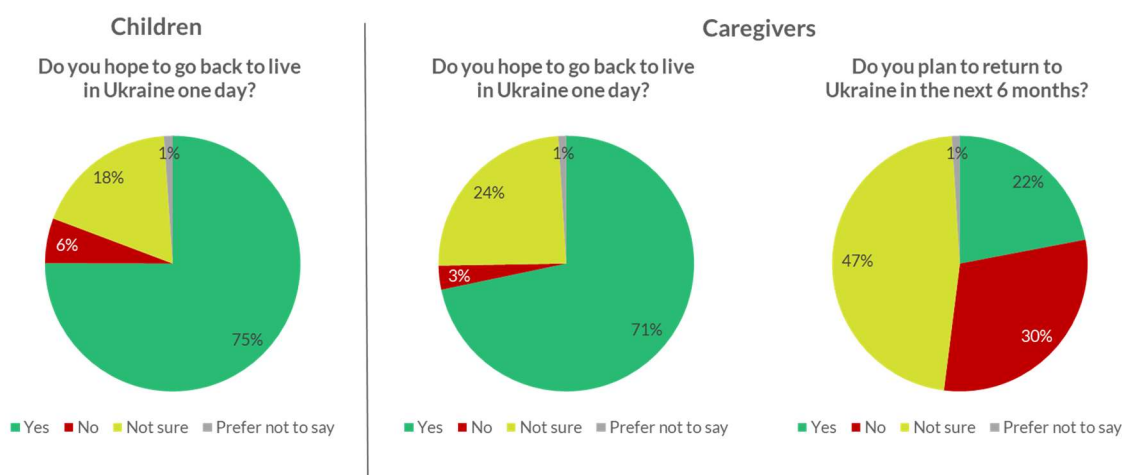


Figure 7 Chart 1: Children's hopes to return to Ukraine one day (n = 457) Chart 2: Caregiver's hopes to return to Ukraine one day (n = 849). Chart 3: Caregivers' plans to return to Ukraine in the next six months (n = 606)

The vast majority (75%) of the children who hope to return to Ukraine one day feel happy about the idea of return, but half (51%) also feel worried about their safety. Around two out of five older children (39%) also worry about how their home country may have changed since they left.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Lives on Hold: Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine](#).

Among adolescents who do not wish to go back to Ukraine, the most commonly mentioned reasons are wishing to stay in the country where they currently live (48%), having bad memories from when the crisis escalated (44%), and being worried about safety (44%) in Ukraine. One-third (32%) of the children who do not wish to return said that they had hoped to leave Ukraine even before the crisis.

When asked what would facilitate better integration in their current community, caregivers echoed children's call for language learning. An overwhelming three out of four caregivers (76%) report a desire to learn the language in order to feel more at home. This is followed by finding a job (58%), having friends from the host country (52%) and living in a normal house or apartment (51%).

Around half of the caregivers surveyed also mentioned the importance of having their own local friends (52%), safe and appropriate housing (51%), and access to school or a nursery for their children (46%).

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*"[Most helpful for me to feel at home] would be housing. Poland gave us shelter, but after 4 months, I have no more housing; I have to either pay 2,000+ zloty (€416) or leave the country. I do not have such funds, and it is not easy for a Ukrainian to make money here without knowing the language - I have to spend everything on housing."*

Similarly, children hope to learn the local language (54%), make friends from the host community (57%) and have recreational opportunities (56%). Children also mentioned that they hope to live in a normal house, or to have a room for themselves or that they only share with their siblings. One-third (34%) of the children surveyed wish to attend school with other students.

## Children's hopes and needs for the future

Children had varying predictions about what will happen in their lives over the coming year, but most participants in focus group discussions felt hopeful about their future. Overwhelmingly, they focused on everyday opportunities, such as access to hobbies and opportunities to learn the local language in their host country.

Many respondents mentioned their hope to study in order to secure a job and opportunities in the future. However, some also expressed concerns about the interruption to their education. Many also spoke about their wish to return to Ukraine, should the conflict end.

When asked about their most important wish for the future, the children who participated in this study overwhelmingly prioritise peace in their home country and being able to return home.

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*"[I would like] stability: housing for me and my family with my private room, education and friends to spend time with and to learn the language"*  
*Boy, 12, Finland*

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*"I think I will find a lot of friends, Ukrainian and Finnish, I will learn the Finnish language and we can discuss in Finnish. I will start going to school again. And I will get more information about Finland and about how to behave in Finland."*  
*Child in focus group in Finland*

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study show that European governments' policies and practices have had a significantly positive impact on children who have fled Ukraine. Most of the children who participated in this research feel welcome in their host country and are hopeful for the future.

The findings also show, however, that a renewed sense of urgency is required to ensure that children from Ukraine can fully enjoy their rights to protection, health and education, and truly thrive in their host countries. The fact that one in four children surveyed do not intend to enrol in a local school should spur the EU and national governments into action, particularly given the correlation between school attendance and child wellbeing.

This sense of urgency must be matched with long-term thinking and planning, given that few refugees from Ukraine plan to return home in the near future. Ukrainian refugee children have a strong desire to belong in their new communities, and to establish a sense of normality in their daily lives. This is essential for their wellbeing and development.

To enable this, the EU and European states should take the following actions:

## **Provide longer term protection and social services for refugees from Ukraine**

- Commit to provide protection to all refugees from Ukraine for as long as hostilities are ongoing in the country and until it is safe to return, by extending the TPD or similar protections.
- Ensure that the European Child Guarantee national action plans include children from Ukraine, specifically in the areas of education, housing and mental health support. Make adjustments to plans to ensure this, if they have already been submitted.
- Allocate new and ad hoc funding for the expansion of social housing suitable for long-term stays, which refugees can access.
- Ensure that refugees have access to information about services and opportunities that are important for their daily lives (such as how to access healthcare, enrol in a local school, and access recreational opportunities), in a language and format they can understand and access.
- Increase the capacity of specialised mental health support to help families through the psychological impact of the conflict and prolonged displacement.

## **Ensure all Ukrainian refugee children are in school**

- Invest in the swift expansion of the capacity of national education systems, with the aim of ensuring that all refugee children from Ukraine can enrol as soon as possible. Ensure they have free access to school materials, books, canteens and transport.
- Ensure that refugees from Ukraine are aware of their right to access education in the local system, including post-secondary and higher education.
- Encourage and support Ukrainian refugee children to enrol for in-person education if they wish to do so, to support their psychosocial wellbeing and development of crucial social skills, and enable Ukrainian children to socialise with their local peers.
- Strengthen the capacity of teachers to support the integration of students from different backgrounds and peaceful co-existence in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
- Make efforts, including in coordination with the Ukrainian government, to ensure Ukrainian refugee children can retain their cultural and linguistic connections to Ukraine while attending school in their host country.

- Integrate relevant and appropriate psychosocial support and child protection services with education based on the child's needs, particularly where there is a concentration of refugee students.
- Provide information on the equivalence of certificates between local and Ukrainian education systems.
- EU states with capacity in their national education systems should provide information to refugees in other EU states that have less capacity, to help them make informed decisions about their place of residence.

### **Support Ukrainian refugee children's inclusion in their host society**

- Provide sports, music and other recreational activities for refugee children, integrated with local populations.
- Subsidise and support access for low-income households, so that no child is left behind.
- Provide language support for refugee children and their caregivers, as well as other preparatory classes for students entering the local education system and cultural mediators.
- Tailor free-time activities so that they are age- and gender- appropriate and disability-sensitive and meet the needs and priorities of children, including adolescents.



## **ANNEX: Participants in the research**

### **Demographics of child participants**

- 569 children agreed to take part in the survey.
- More girls than boys took part.
- The largest proportion of children were aged 12-15 with an average age of 13.
- Children who participated in the survey were most likely to have travelled from Eastern Ukraine or Central and Northern Ukraine. The top 3 regions of origin were Kirovohrad (15%), Dnipropetrovsk (10%) and Donetsk (10%).

### **Demographics of caregiver participants**

- 418 caregivers agreed to take part in the survey.
- Caregivers were predominantly female (95%).
- Most caregivers (97%) were a parent or step-parent of the child(ren) they were responsible for in the host country. The majority were responsible for 1 or 2 children (89%). 11% were responsible for 3 to 5 children. The average age of the children they were responsible for was 10 years-old.
- Nearly all caregivers (95%) had left family members behind in Ukraine. 65% had left parents or step-parents, 35% had left grandparents, and 34% had left a spouse or partner. Others mentioned brothers, aunts and uncles who stayed behind.

### **Situation in host communities**

- Most children arrived in their host community in March 2022 following the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022.
- The vast majority were accompanied on their journey by their mother. Just 2% had come to the host country alone.
- They are typically living with their mother, sometimes with both parents and with siblings.
- Children and their caregivers are living in a mix of rented houses and apartments, and dormitories in hostels or reception centres for refugees.