

2024

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR
UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS

Report

**PROJECT “BRIDGE TO WELL-BEING:
SUPPORT FOR THE INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA”**

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 105 years, the Latvian Red Cross (LatRC) organisation has been providing diverse assistance to various groups of people in need. In late February 2024, tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians began to arrive in Latvia, leaving Ukraine and being unable to return home due to the armed conflict caused by the Russian Federation.

After a short stay in Latvia, some of them move to other countries, some return to Ukraine, but a significant number, i.e., more than 45 000 Ukrainian civilians, have settled in Latvia for an indefinite period of time. In the new environment, Ukrainian civilians face various practical and emotional challenges and therefore need initial social support.

The LatRC has been supporting Ukrainian civilians in Latvia since 2014, when the Russian Federation started its military occupation of Crimea. Since February 2022, following the start of the full-scale armed conflict in Ukraine, the LatRC has expanded its support services for Ukrainian civilians, providing access to a wide range of regional humanitarian aid and first aid support in refugee reception centres, as well as by setting up refugee accommodation sites.

Identifying the needs of Ukrainian civilians, the LatRC also started to provide psychological and first aid support, integration and Latvian language activities, as well as the distribution of non-cash assistance to vulnerable groups throughout the territory of Latvia.

In order to plan long-term activities and assess the results achieved, the LatRC regularly conducts a needs analysis of Ukrainian civilians.

This is the second Needs Assessment of Ukrainian civilians, which includes an analysis of the needs of 406 respondents and findings from the LatRC's regular work in support of Ukrainian civilians.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NEEDS

The 2023 Needs Assessment of Ukrainian civilians in Latvia highlighted the importance of a comprehensive support system and identified various challenges faced by Ukrainian civilians in Latvia, including access to mental health services and the need for targeted psychosocial support.

The 2024 Needs Assessment aims to monitor the progress of the support achieved, identify any persistent or emerging problems and adjust support strategies accordingly. By reviewing the mental health and psychosocial needs of Ukrainian civilians, the LatRC seeks to ensure that the services provided are relevant, effective and appropriate to their changing circumstances.

The 2024 Assessment places a strong emphasis on communication analysis with the target group, i.e., Ukrainian civilians in Latvia, in order to be able to effectively exchange information and reach as wide an audience as possible. The information from the Assessment will also help to plan Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) activities and provide recommendations to other providers of support.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment survey was carried out between March and April 2024. The survey was designed by the LatRC team based on the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (IFRC) Psychosocial Support Centre guidelines. The survey target group – Ukrainian civilians in Latvia who have arrived here as of 24 February 2022. Survey language – Russian. The survey was created on the KoboToolbox platform, which is used by the IFRC and national associations to conduct surveys and collect data. The link to the survey was distributed by sending it to the personal e-mails of Ukrainian civilians collected during previous activities organised by the LatRC. Some of the respondents were also surveyed in person using an interview method.

406 respondents participated in the survey, 75% of them online and 25% in person.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

GENDER

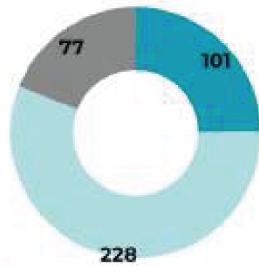


342 women
(84.5%)



62 men
(15%)

AGE



aged 16–34 (24.88%)
aged 25–65 (56.16%)
66* (18.97%)

N=406

REGIONS

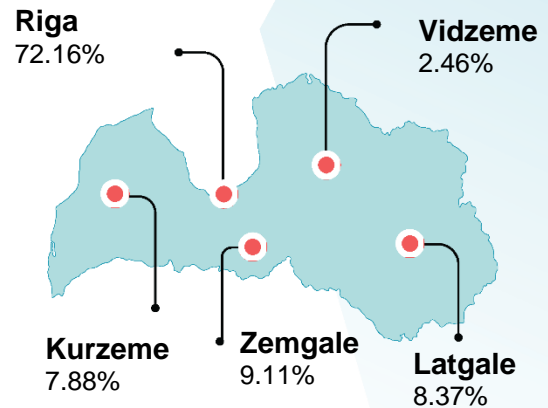


Table: Profile of respondents: gender, age, by region.

Out of 406 respondents, 342 persons or 84.5% were women and 62 persons or 15% were men; 2 respondents or 0.05% did not specify their gender. The respondents were between the ages of 18 and 66+.

The majority of the respondents – 329 or 81.03% – represent the demographically active population aged 18–65. 72.16% live or reside in the Riga region, 8.37% – in Latgale region, 2.46% – in Vidzeme region, 9.11% – in Zemgale region, and 7.88% – in Kurzeme region.

Arrival in Latvia

183 respondents or 45.07% have been living in Latvia for more than 2 years. Analysing the survey data obtained by the LatRC, it is evident that the number of newcomers periodically decreases, and this needs assessment reflects the opinion of Ukrainian civilians who have been staying in Latvia for two years or more.

ARRIVAL IN LATVIA

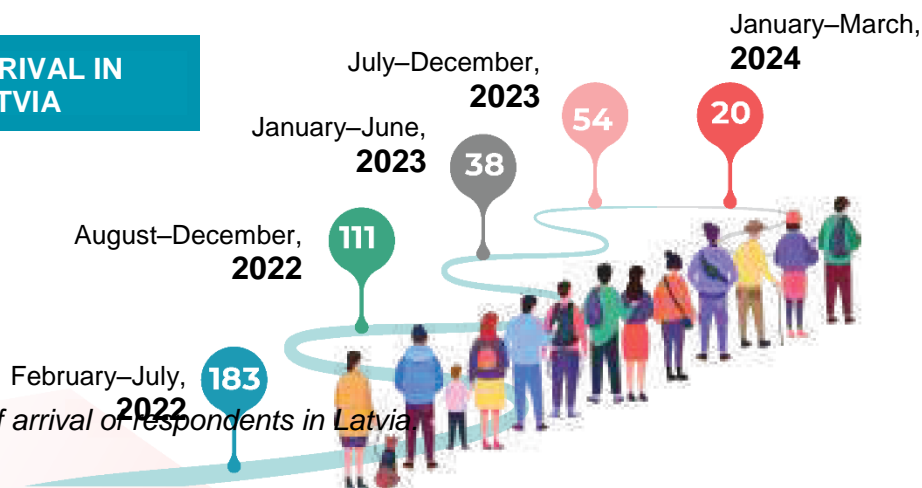


Table: Period of arrival of respondents in Latvia.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Socio-economic needs

Latvian state institutions in cooperation with local municipalities, the LatRC and other NGOs continue to support Ukrainian civilians in Latvia for more than 2 years. The provision of support to Ukrainian civilians in Latvia is stipulated in the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians adopted on 3 March 2022*.

The most common forms of support used by the target group, from state and local authorities and NGOs:

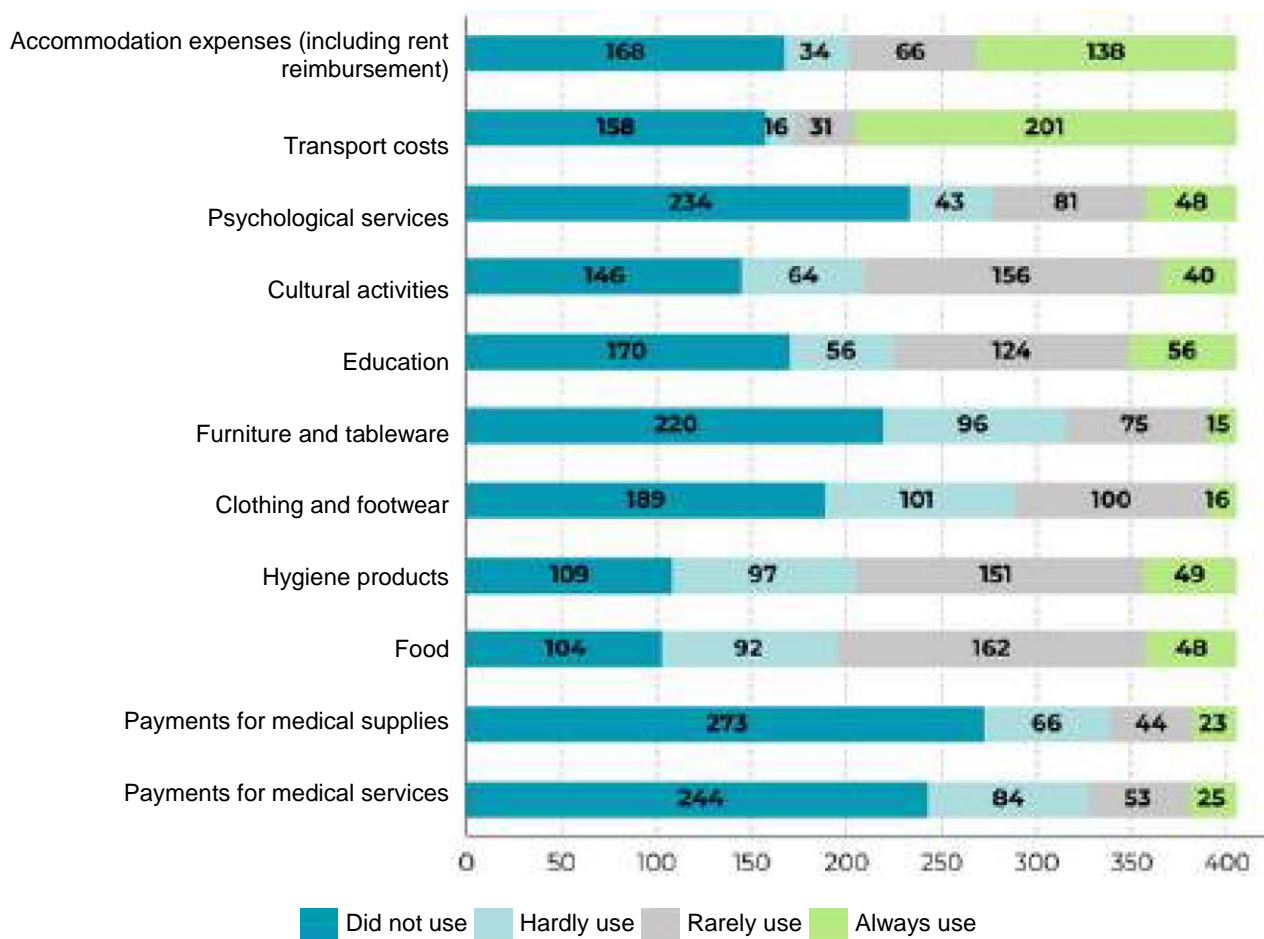


Table: Frequency of use of social support among respondents.

The data show that the target group most often uses the possibility to receive support for primary needs – transport, accommodation and utilities, hygiene and food. Medical services, medical supplies and psychological support services are rarely used. This suggests that Ukrainian civilians may not have access to these services or may not be sufficiently informed about them, hence the need for targeted interventions to improve access to information on the availability and receipt of these services.

* <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/330546-law-on-assistance-to-ukrainian-civilians>

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Participation in educational and cultural activities is moderate, with a large number of respondents not participating in these activities at all. It can be concluded that more information and support is needed to encourage the participation of Ukrainian civilians in educational and cultural programmes. This data also explains the insufficient involvement of Ukrainian civilian children in the Latvian education system.

Transport costs are one of the most important needs and a significant number of respondents rely on this support. This underlines the importance of mobility in their daily lives. A reduction or withdrawal of this support could significantly worsen the living conditions of Ukrainian civilians in Latvia.

Overall, the data shows that there is a need for continued support in areas of high demand, while removing obstacles to accessing health and mental health services. Providing targeted information on the availability of these services and how to access them could further improve the well-being and integration of respondents into Latvian society.

Initial social support. Use of humanitarian aid

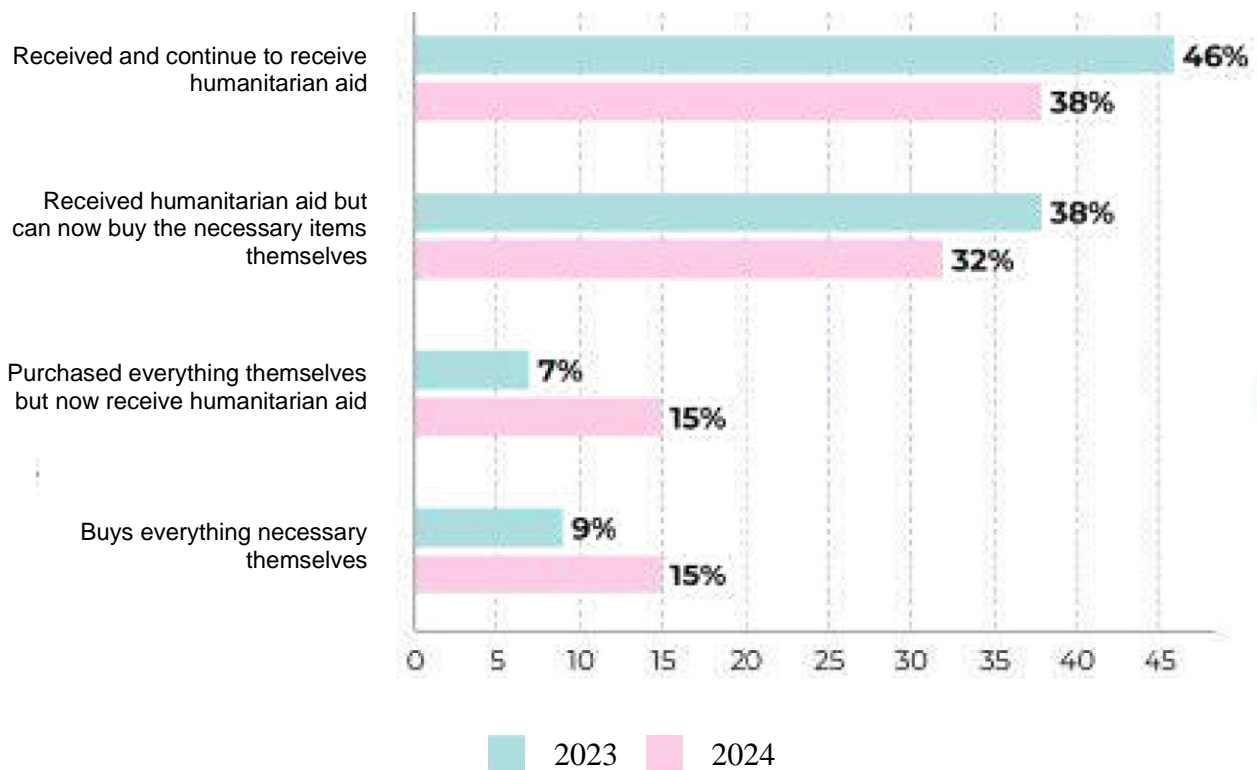


Table: Changes in use of humanitarian aid in 2023 and 2024.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Comparing the results of the 2023 and 2024 Needs Assessment shows that the reliance of Ukrainian civilians on humanitarian aid has changed.

There has been an 8% decrease (38% in 2024) in the number of persons relying solely on humanitarian aid and an 8% increase (15% in 2024) in the number of persons who are fully self-sufficient and do not use humanitarian access.

An 8% increase (15% in 2024) in the number of people who have moved from being self-sufficient to being dependent on humanitarian aid has been observed, indicating possible economic or social problems. While there has been some progress towards self-sufficiency, these findings suggest that ongoing support and interventions are needed to meet new needs and ensure long-term sustainability for this group.

To find out which types of support recipients thereof currently use the most, a question was asked about the types of support they have received in the last 3 months (multiple choice).

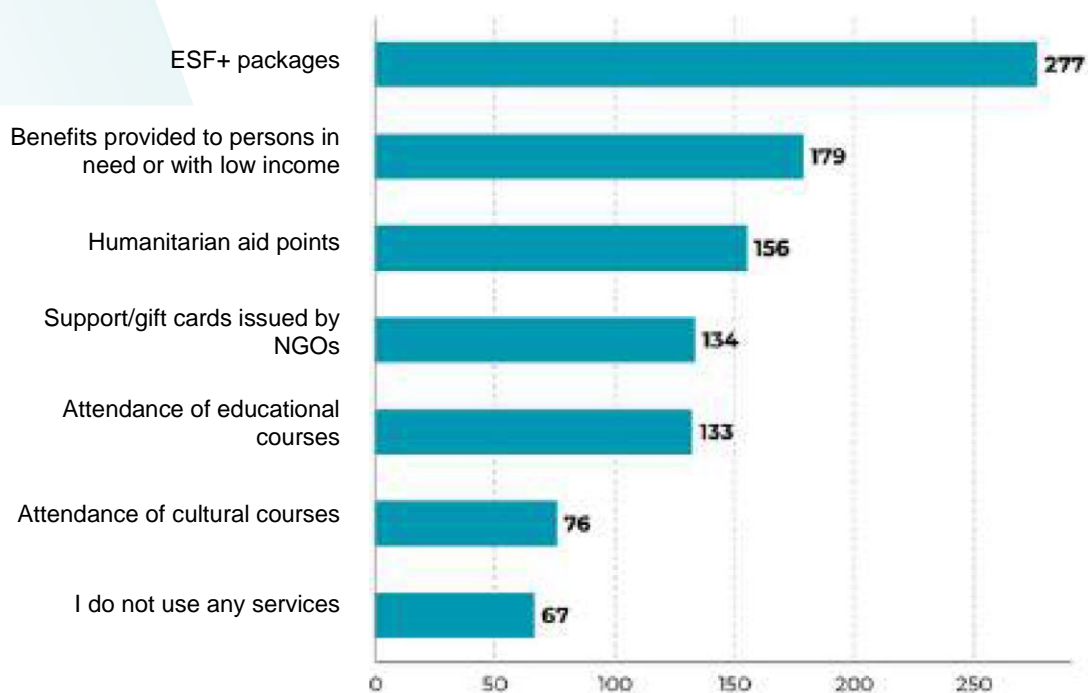


Table: Types of social support used by respondents in the last 3 months.

ESF+ food packages are the most frequently used (68%) social support service by Ukrainian civilians, indicating the wide availability and reach of this type of support through the extensive network of distribution points and the relatively high income threshold to receive this service.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Almost half of the respondents (44%) have used the benefits provided to refugees, thus confirming that they are aware of the legal financial support mechanisms and make use of the opportunities they offer.

38% of respondents used the humanitarian aid points, indicating a constant need for basic goods such as clothing, footwear and textiles.

33% of respondents indicated that they had received supermarket gift cards from NGOs as humanitarian aid in the last 3 months, showing that non-cash aid is an accessible and important form of humanitarian aid that provides financial flexibility to improve living conditions.

Education (language) courses were attended by 33% of respondents and cultural (integration) courses by 19%. This shows that Ukrainian civilians are interested in acquiring new knowledge and successfully integrating into Latvian society. A smaller share of respondents, or 16%, indicated that they had not used any social support services in the last 3 months.

Education

The majority of respondents – 260 or 64% – have completed higher education (university or institute), which means that a significant part of the surveyed Ukrainian civilians have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to be competitive on the labour market. Their qualifications meet the demand for skilled professionals in various sectors. 118 respondents or 29% of the respondents have completed special education (college or technical school). These qualifications are highly valued in practical and technical fields, improving their employability and competitiveness in specific sectors. 19 respondents (4.7%) have primary education. 9 respondents (2%) have an academic degree (candidate of sciences or doctoral degree).

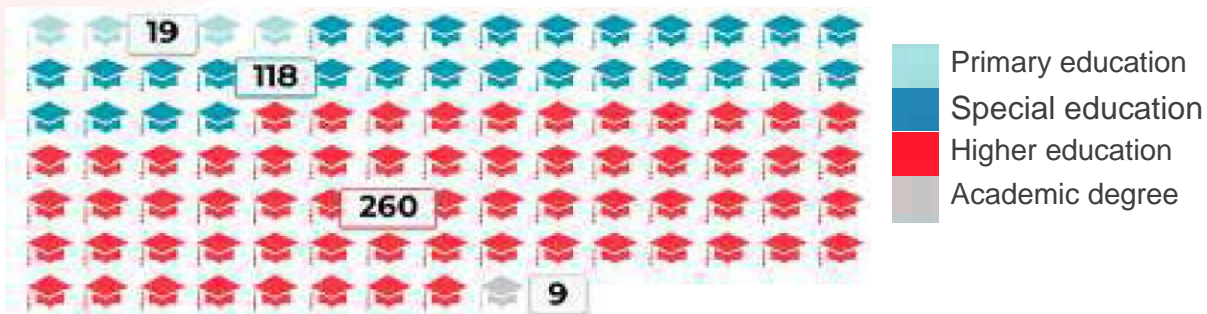


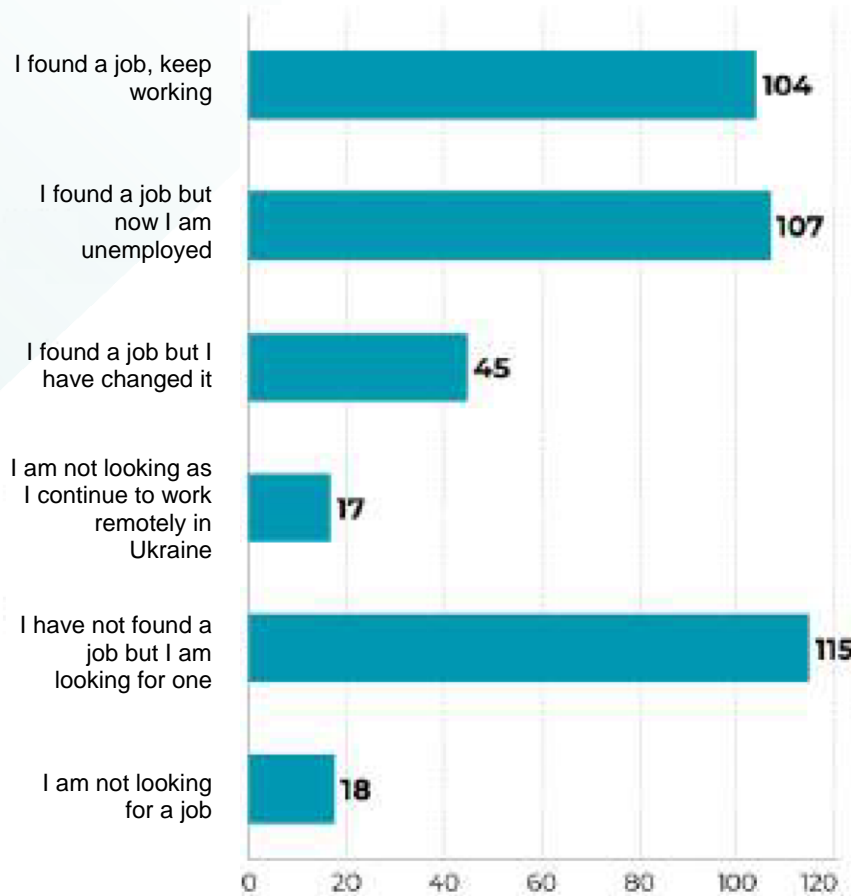
Table: Education level of respondents.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

The data show that respondents are generally well prepared and ready to enter the Latvian labour market. The advantage of education is likely to improve their employability and help them to obtain skilled jobs, thus contributing positively to the economy.

Referring to the above-mentioned survey data, which show a proportionally high need for humanitarian aid, it can be concluded that Ukrainian civilians are currently not fully integrated into the Latvian labour market and their potential, knowledge and skills are not being used.

Employment opportunities



The current job of 208 respondents is not related to the job they had in Ukraine



Table: Ability of respondents to find a job in Latvia.

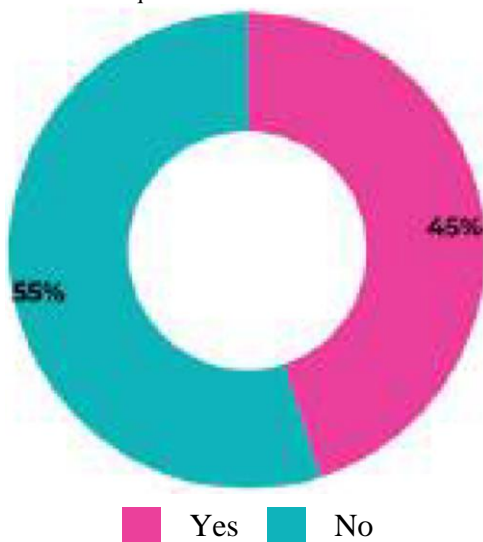
DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

When asked if the job in Latvia was related to what they were doing in Ukraine, most Ukrainian civilians who had managed to find a job in Latvia answered negatively. Out of 256 respondents, 208 or 91% indicated that their current job is not related to their previous job in Ukraine. Despite these changes, people have managed to adapt and take on other types of work to support themselves and their families in the new country. This resilience is a positive indicator of their ability to cope with the new challenges that have arisen as Ukrainian civilians have arrived in Latvia.

Adaptation to the labour market

Recognising the high motivation of Ukrainian civilians to work and be socio-economically independent, as well as a realistic assessment of the labour market trends in Latvia, it is necessary to actively work on planning new support services to promote employment and reduce unemployment.

Have there been efforts to continuously increase qualifications in Latvia?



Wish for continuing professional development programmes

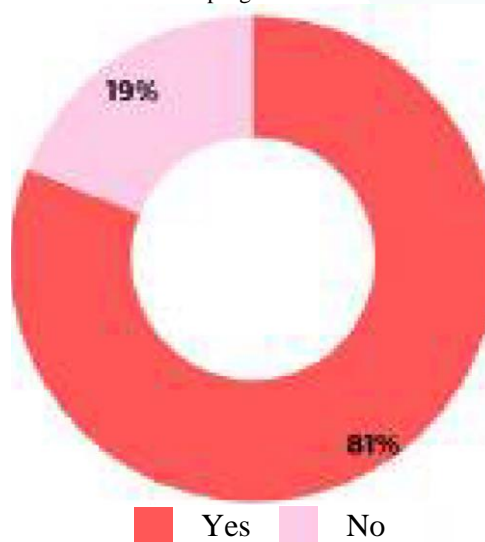


Table: Wish of respondents for professional retraining.

The majority of respondents (55%) indicated that they had not attempted to improve their qualifications independently in Latvia. At the same time, the majority (81%) of respondents expressed an interest in attending retraining courses and learning new skills. This reflects the desire of Ukrainian civilians to improve their job prospects and adapt to the Latvian labour market, highlighting the need for accessible and effective training programmes to support their professional development.

Given the high level of interest in skills upgrading programmes, it is crucial to ensure that training opportunities are accessible, affordable and in line with labour market trends.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Availability of services

Respondents assessed the availability of different services.

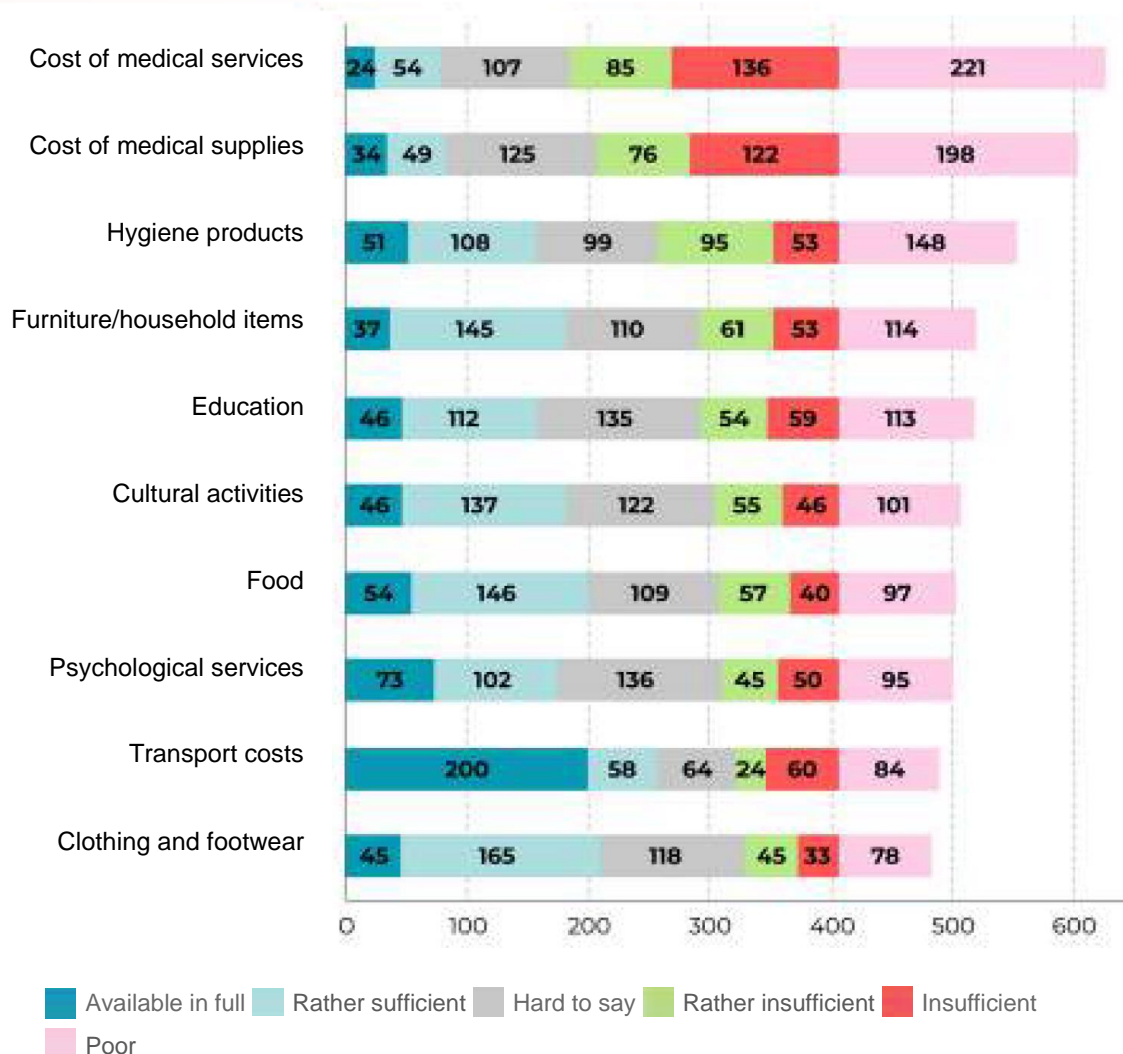


Table: Availability of social services according to respondents.

When assessing the availability of services and goods, respondents indicated that medical services, medical supplies, hygiene products and furniture as well as household items were insufficiently or poorly available. This is due to the fact that there are no or fewer support programmes for obtaining these services or goods, and most often they have to be purchased out of pocket.

In contrast, respondents consider clothing and footwear to be more accessible services/goods, which are provided free of charge by NGOs and municipal social services in almost every municipality. Similarly, respondents find transport services to be fully accessible or rather accessible, which is explained by the fact that such services are offered free of charge to this target group.

Education and integration of children and young people

Another important aspect for Ukrainian civilians is the cultural and social adaptation of their children and their access to education. Educational institutions can become a place where children can not only receive an education but also integrate into the hosting society.

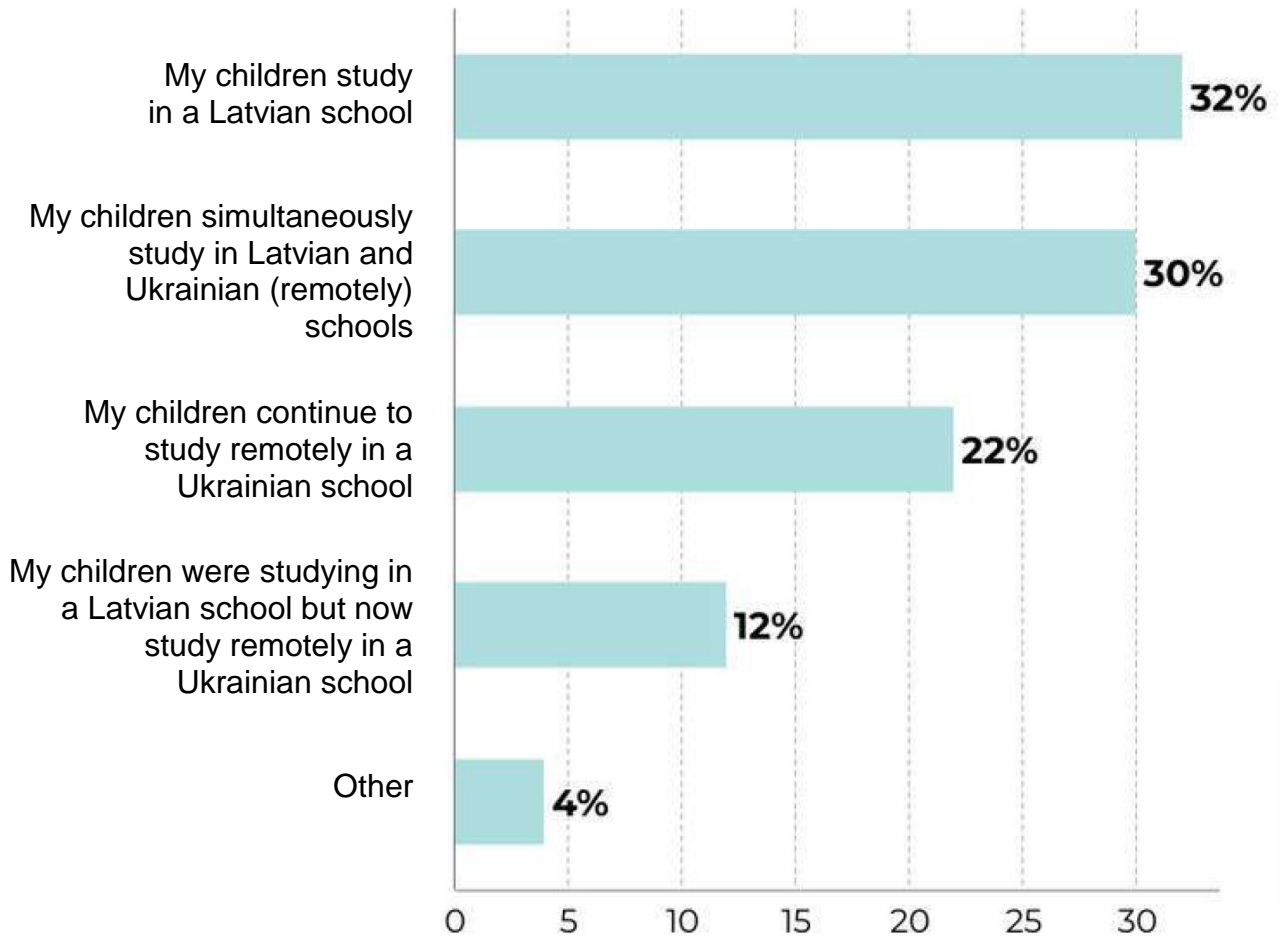


Table: Inclusion of children of respondents in Latvian schools.

32% of the respondents indicated that their children are currently attending an educational institution (school/technical school/university or pre-school educational institution) in Latvia, 30% indicated that their children attend both schools in Latvia and remotely in Ukraine, 22% continue their education remotely in Ukraine, and 12% attended Latvian school but now study remotely in Ukraine. 4% gave another answer. Although the number of Ukrainian children in Latvian schools is increasing, there are still a large number of children who do not attend school in Latvia and who have limited opportunities for socialisation in their daily lives.



Table: Reasons why Ukrainian civilians choose remote learning.

53% of respondents indicated that their children do not attend school in Latvia because they plan to return to Ukraine one day and perceive Latvia as a temporary residence country with no plans to stay here for a long time. 5% of respondents mentioned the lack of available places in nearby schools, pointing to logistical problems related to enrolling children in local educational institutions. Parents of the target group are also concerned about the high level of physical and emotional abuse in Latvian schools and fear that this will affect their child’s safety, as reported by 3% of parents surveyed.

20% of parents chose the answer “Other”, more often mentioning aspects such as:

- language barrier;
- different education system and plans to pursue higher education in Ukraine;
- emotional instability, post-traumatic stress and fear of a new environment.

19% of respondents indicated that the reason for distance learning in Ukraine was anxiety about their child’s academic performance.

This suggests that targeted support, such as language courses, psychological support and programmes against emotional and physical abuse, can contribute to the better integration of Ukrainian civilian children into the local education system. In addition, providing flexible educational opportunities and improving communication between schools and families can help to meet the diverse needs of these children and their families.

Socialisation can be measured by the number of social contacts, so the question was asked about the social circle of children.

Social contacts of children of respondents



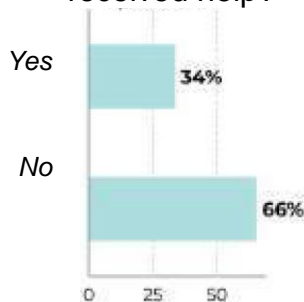
Table: Social contacts of children of respondents.

The survey shows that 35% of the children of the respondents are successfully integrating into Latvian society, as they are forming links with their Latvian peers. Although a significant number of children successfully make new friends in the local or Ukrainian diaspora environment and maintain links with Ukrainian friends, there are also children (6%) who face difficulties and are unable to interact socially. Efforts to support these children, including through social activities and emotional support, can help to improve their overall social well-being and integration into the host society.

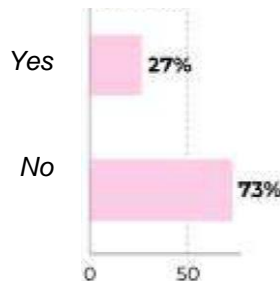
Mental health and psychosocial well-being

Acknowledging the various challenges faced by Ukrainian civilians who have been forced to flee their homes, leave their jobs, and often lose a family member or friend, the target group’s experiences and needs for mental health support were identified, and the availability of mental health support was assessed.

While in Latvia, have you had any counselling with a psychologist and received help?



Is there a current need for a psychologist/psychotherapist?



Do you know where to seek help in Latvia for long-term depression, hopelessness, insomnia, self-harm?

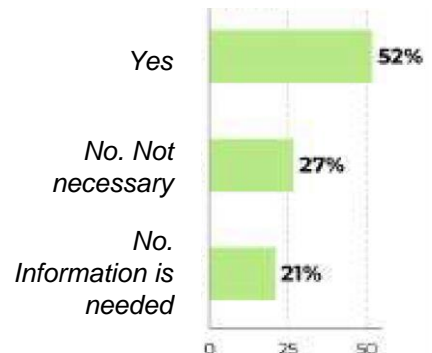


Table: Need of respondents for mental health support services.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Despite the fact that a significant number of respondents – 34% – use psychological support services, more than half of them have not used them. Currently, 111 respondents, or 27%, need psychological support. While most of them know where to seek help, 85 respondents or 21% do not and need such information.

In order to understand the mental health challenges in more depth, the different feelings experienced by respondents in the last two weeks were gathered.

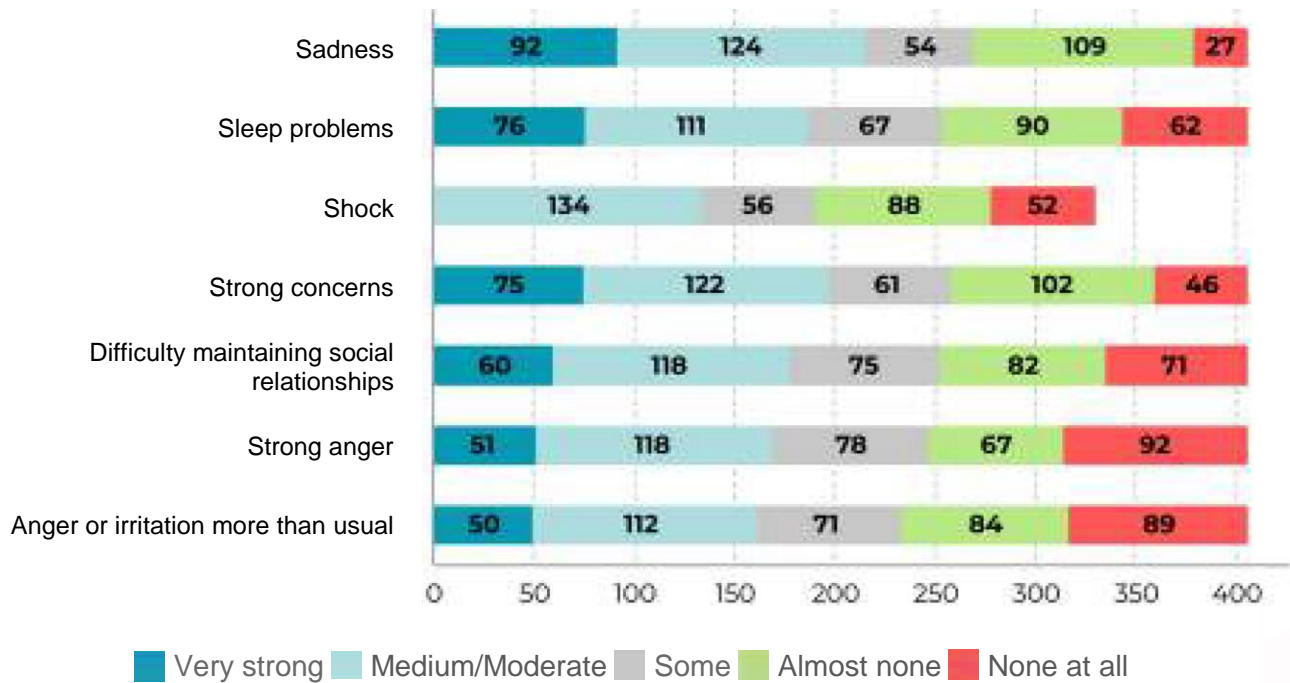


Table: Feelings experienced or affected in the last two weeks by respondents.

A significant proportion of respondents report that most problems affect them very strongly or moderately, suggesting that various mental health problems and their consequences are widespread. This highlights the need for ongoing, accessible mental health support.

Satisfaction with quality of life

In order to find out respondents' satisfaction with different aspects of quality of life in Latvia, including general life, social life, economic situation, mental health and psychological well-being, they were asked to rate their level of satisfaction.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

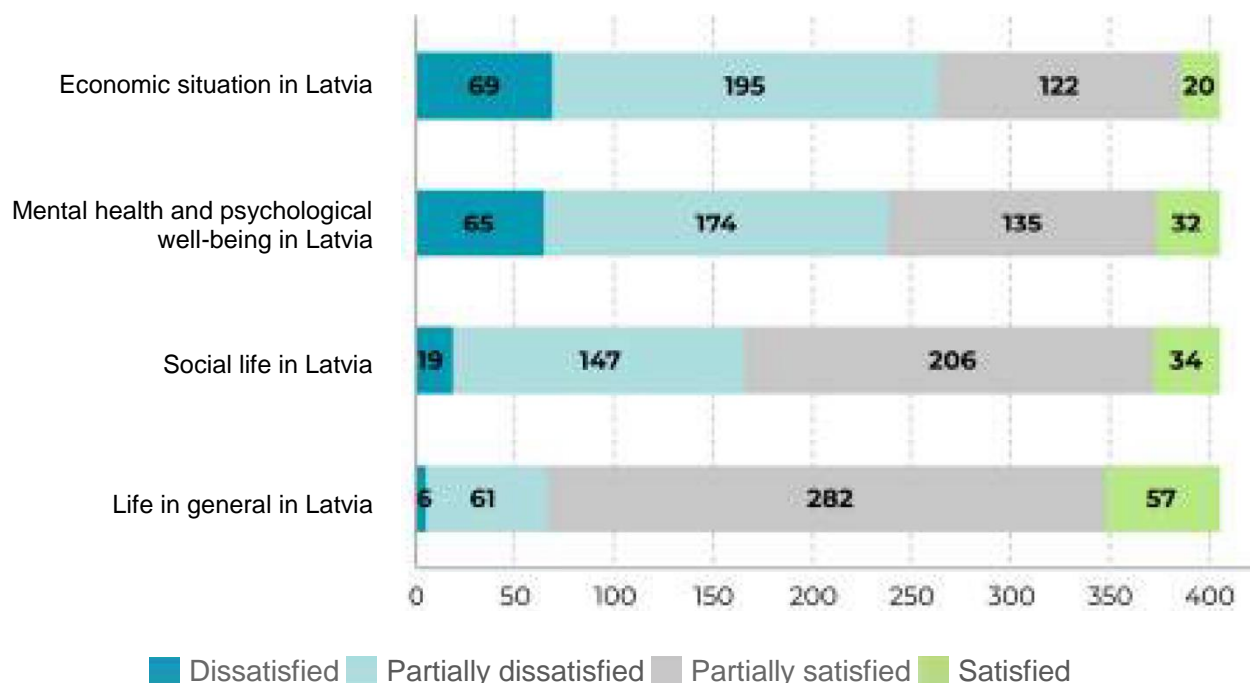


Table: Level of satisfaction of respondents with the quality of life.

The economic situation is one of the main areas of concern for most respondents. Satisfaction with mental health and well-being is also low.

Most respondents are partially satisfied with their general life in Latvia, but there are areas for improvement, especially in social life and economic situation. The low satisfaction with mental health and psychological well-being suggests that mental health support services and support systems need to be improved to target the mental health problems faced by respondents.

Factors of well-being

When analysing well-being factors, it is important to consider the impact of the information received on the individual, including news from Ukraine, as well as what is happening in the home country. According to the respondents' answers, their well-being is most influenced by the news about armed conflicts and developments in Ukraine.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

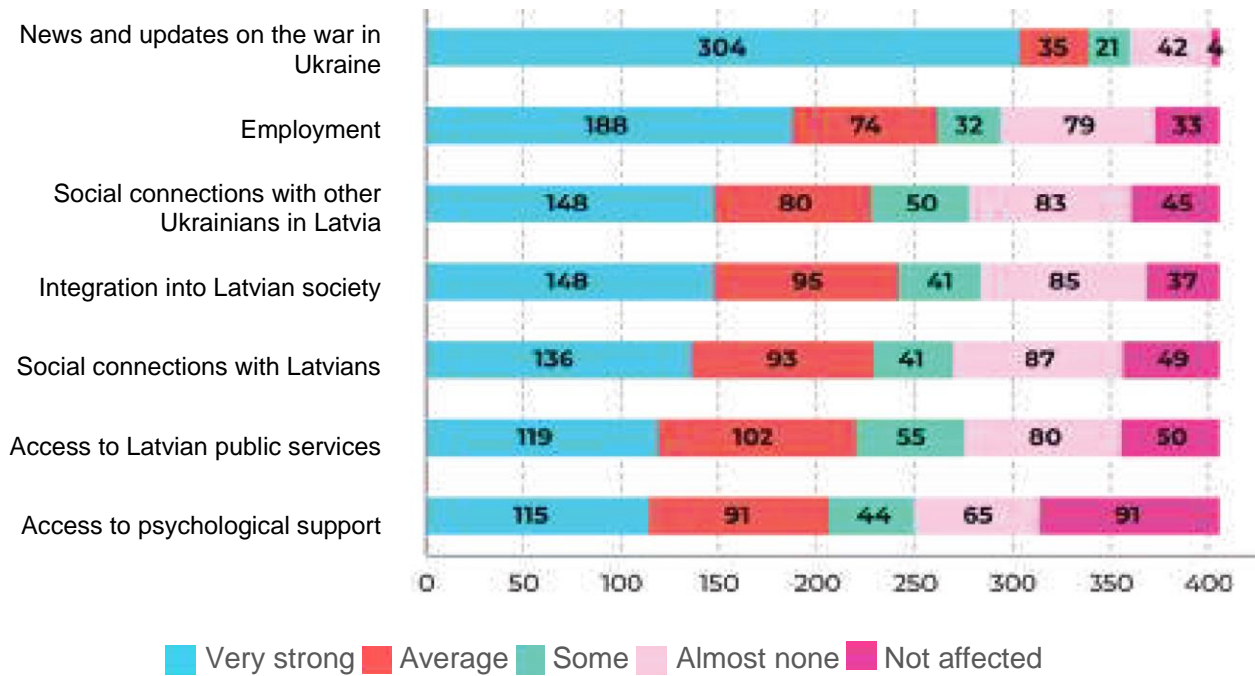


Table: Factors affecting respondents' current well-being/state of well-being.

To understand how support affects respondents, they were asked: "What improves your emotional state? How do you cope with stress?" The answers highlighted different methods and activities that help respondents to cope with stress and improve their emotional well-being.

Mental health promotion resources



Table: Resources used by respondents to promote mental health.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS IN LATVIA

Various other methods were mentioned by 14 respondents, including time with family and children, taking medication, seeing a psychologist, watching films, listening to music, reading, self-employment, travelling, making camouflage nets, work, including satisfaction from what has been done, and participation in projects.

Respondents use a variety of coping strategies, including hobbies, sports, educational and cultural activities, professional help and medication. This diversity highlights the need for a variety of support options to meet different wants and needs.

The data show that Ukrainians in Latvia rely on social contacts, spending time in nature, doing hobbies, sports, educational and cultural activities, as well as other activities of personal choice. Providing access to social networks, outdoor activities, cultural and educational events, and professional mental health services can significantly improve the emotional and psychological support of these people.

LatRC COMMUNICATION WITH UKRAINIAN CIVILIANS

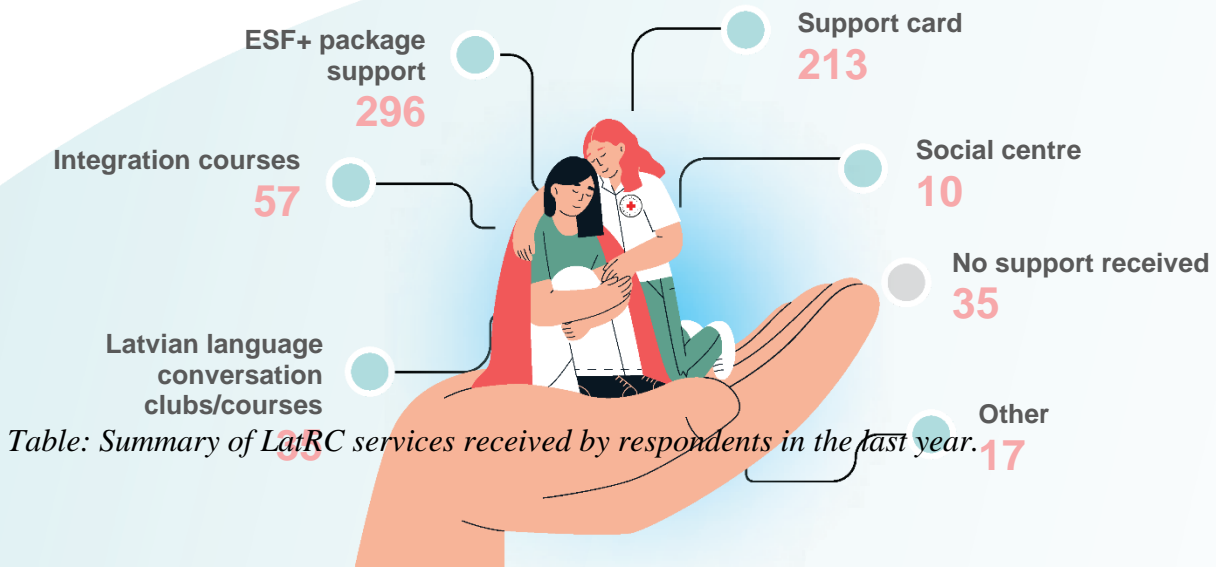
Awareness of the LatRC

In order to raise the popularity of the services offered by the LatRC among the target group, an analysis of the awareness and communication of the LatRC was carried out. To the question “What do you think the Latvian Red Cross is?” the majority – 389 respondents or 95.81% of respondents answered that it is a humanitarian organisation; the rest of the respondents marked answer options not related to the organisation’s activities.

Use of services

The most widely used service among the respondents is receiving ESF+ food, hygiene and school supply packages at one of the LatRC package distribution points. Receiving a “Support card” from one of the LatRC committees across Latvia is also a popular service among respondents, used by 32.1% of respondents. This type of support was very popular among respondents, as “Support cards” worth EUR 50 or EUR 100 could be used to buy necessary goods in supermarkets across Latvia. The third most popular service is integration courses, which help the target group to understand Latvian culture and society more easily, as well as Latvian language courses or the services of social centres.

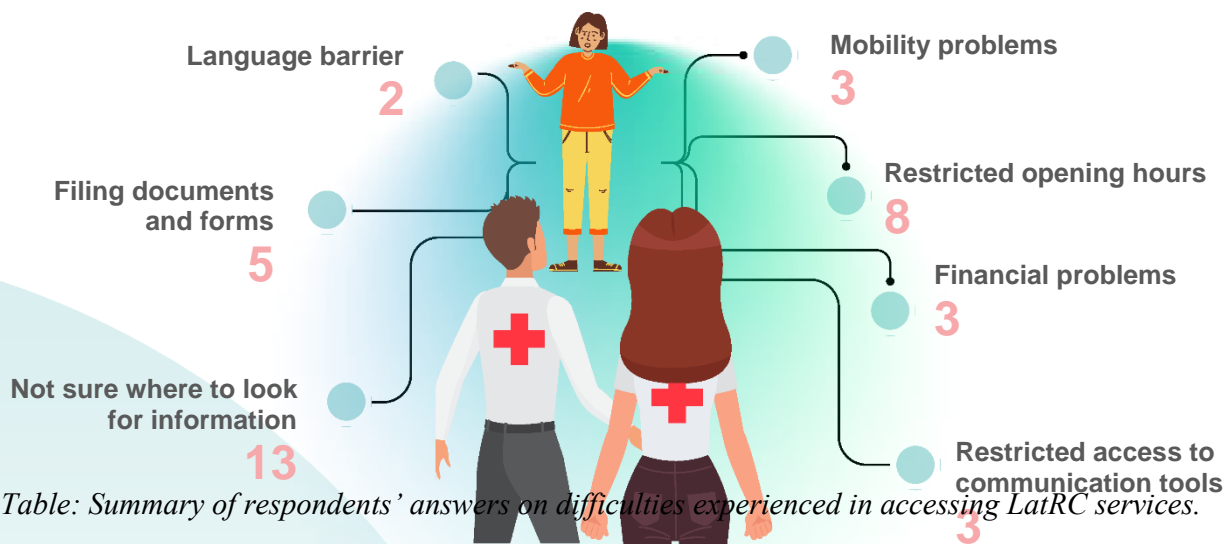
Summary of LatRC services received in the last year



Problems with the use of services

When asked whether the target group had experienced any difficulties in accessing or using LatRC services, 380 people, or 93.6%, said they had not experienced any difficulties, and only 26, or 6.4%, had experienced difficulties, indicating that LatRC services are relatively easy to access and friendly to the target group. Positive answers to this question also provided a specific answer as to the exact obstacles encountered, indicating specific problems that can be addressed.

Summary of difficulties experienced in accessing LatRC services



Improvement of services

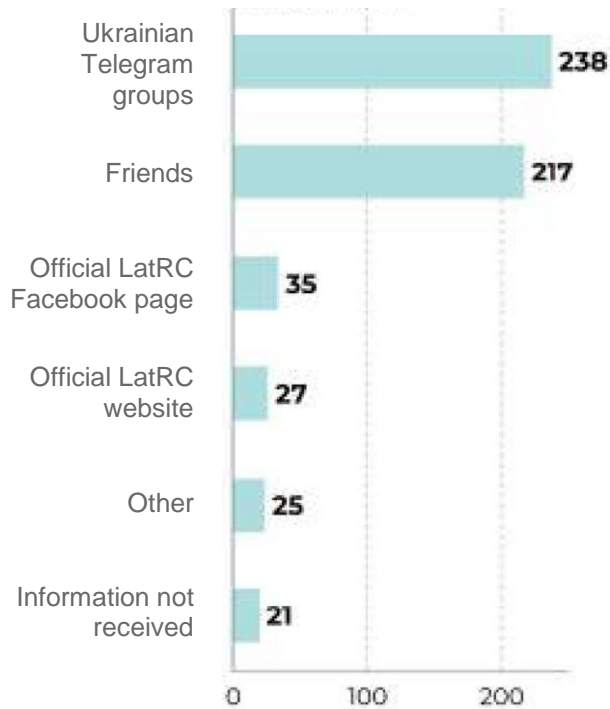
Respondents were asked to provide suggestions on possible improvements in the provision and communication of LatRC services. Suggestions included increasing the use of social media in LatRC communication and making information about services more easily accessible.

Communication channels

The data collected from the survey on respondents' use of LatRC services provides valuable information that can help to improve communication activities. This information allows one to identify which services are popular among the target group and which might need more promotion. For example, it is possible to examine and analyse through which channels the target group is most likely to have learnt about the most popular services, which allows for assessing the possibility of also placing information about less used services on these channels.

When compiling data on sources of information, the Telegram group was the most frequently used. The least used source of information was the LatRC website www.redcross.lv. 239 or 58% of respondents said that they would like to receive information in the future via the Telegram group and other messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Messenger, etc.

Sources of information about LatRC services



Communication channels where the target group would find it most convenient to receive information about LATRC services in the future

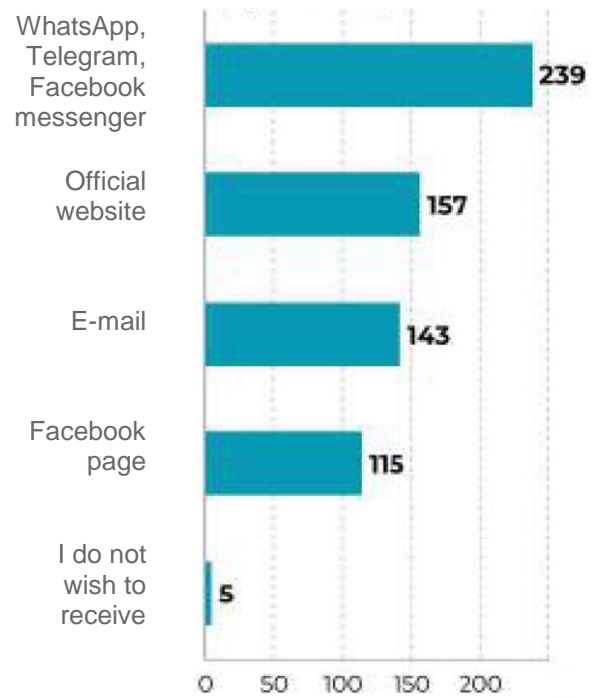


Table: Sources of information on LatRC services and communication channels where the target group would prefer to receive information on LatRC services in the future.

SUMMARY OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In Latvia, various support mechanisms for the integration of Ukrainian civilians already exist and are known, recognised and used, including free language and integration courses, food and financial support programmes, as well as psychological support services. However, there are still Ukrainian civilians who have difficulties in accessing the services offered and thus do not have sufficient resources to fully integrate into society and the labour market. As a result, they are socially vulnerable and in need of ongoing support. In order to provide comprehensive and effective support to Ukrainian civilians, it is important to:

- continue to provide Latvian language learning and vocational retraining programmes;
- provide more information on mental health support services (e.g., public campaigns, GP consultations, information seminars/materials, etc.);
- promote the involvement of Ukrainian civilians in cultural and social life activities, in particular, the inclusion of children in school, extracurricular and sports activities (e.g., free tickets to sports and leisure events, competitions, tournaments, etc.);
- provide regular food and financial support, in particular, to improve access to medical services, dental care and medicines.

Language learning

Free language courses are currently available to Ukrainian civilians, which help to facilitate their integration into Latvian society. Knowledge of the local language is essential for effective communication, employment opportunities and overall social integration. It is, therefore, very important to continue and possibly expand the offer of language courses to ensure that they are accessible to all Ukrainian civilians arriving in Latvia.

Employment opportunities

The arriving Ukrainian civilians are mostly highly educated and economically active citizens, capable of highly responsible and intellectual work. However, most Ukrainian civilians cannot find work in their profession because they do not have sufficient knowledge of the Latvian language. Many respondents work in jobs that are not appropriate to their knowledge and previous professional experience. This could be addressed through vocational support, mentoring programmes and initial language support in the workplace.

Psychological support

111 or 27% of respondents currently need psychological help, and 85 or 21% do not know where to get it. Common mental health problems and their consequences include sleep problems, sadness, guilt, feelings of worthlessness and stress.

One of the effective strategies to address this problem is to promote the involvement of Ukrainian psychologists in the Latvian labour market. In this way, the mental health support system would benefit from professionals who understand the nuances of Ukrainian culture and language, providing effective and empathetic care.

There is also a need to improve the way in which information is provided on available mental health services to ensure that all respondents know where to seek help.

Inclusion of culture, social life and children

Although around 40% of Ukrainian civilians are involved in both the labour market and social activities, there is a tendency within the target group to only make social contacts within the diaspora, which limits their involvement in Latvian cultural and social events.

It is still observed that 34% of the children of Ukrainian civilians only continue their education remotely in schools in Ukraine, which does not contribute to their socialisation and full integration in Latvia. Inclusive extracurricular programmes should be developed where children who do not attend educational institutions in Latvia can meet their peers from Latvia, thus widening their social circle.

Material support

Food and financial support programmes are an essential part of the aid provided to Ukrainian civilians. More than 50% of the respondents need material support on a daily basis and only 15% are self-sufficient. It is important to note that most Ukrainian civilians had savings when they arrived in Latvia, but these are decreasing with time. Therefore, support programmes ensuring access to basic necessities should be continued. Equally important are financial support programmes, including direct financial support and assistance with accommodation costs.

The cost of private medical services and medicines in Latvia is several times higher than in Ukraine, and state-funded medical services are difficult to access for migrants due to long waiting lists. This worsens access to medical services and medicines.

Communication

Within the target group, the most widely used source of information is Ukrainian Telegram groups; the other way of getting information is through communication with friends or acquaintances. According to the target group itself, they would prefer to continue to receive information via WhatsApp, Telegram or Facebook messenger tools that provide quick, easy-to-understand and accessible information, so messages should be short, concise and to the point.

SUMMARY OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The fact that the target group is predominantly demographically active women aged 18–65 should also be taken into account when planning communication, e.g., by using engaging keywords, images, communication style, etc. However, the less active members of the target group, i.e., men and seniors, should not be forgotten, and interesting and relevant content should also be offered to this part of the community, e.g., by planning specific activities for them and spreading information about them. The data also shows that the target group mostly lives in Riga or the region, so the information should be displayed in places and channels where this group is most often found, e.g., Telegram or Facebook groups of Riga residents, social centres, etc. Although most of the target group lives in the Riga region, less populated regions should not be forgotten, and the communication should be adapted to these areas as well.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER SUPPORT NEEDED

Below are the areas where support to Ukrainian civilians in Latvia needs to be improved:

- Language learning. There is a need for Latvian language learning opportunities for both children and adults of different intensity, level and scope;
- Improving qualifications and retraining. Vocational training and certification opportunities in Russian or Ukrainian are needed at different levels and intensities;
- Integration into the labour market. Opportunities for internships, temporary work and qualification training with employers are needed;
- Labour market regulation. Specific incentives are needed for the recognition, adaptation or temporary certification of professional certificates, as well as for the training and national recertification of Ukrainian civilians, in particular, through language support;
- Support of psychologists. More psychological and coaching services are needed to mitigate the effects of trauma and stress. Implement regular mental health seminars and support groups to address common problems such as anxiety, depression and stress;
- Inclusion. Specific activities are needed to integrate Ukrainian civilians, especially children, into cultural and sports events and social life;
- Material support. There is a need to continue material support programmes and to add support for medical services and goods, in particular, dental services;
- Communication. Telegram and other social networking groups, as well as direct communication by telephone or messages, should be used to communicate with Ukrainian civilians.

ROLE OF the LatRC IN IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND ENSURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR UKRAINIANS IN LATVIA

The LatRC has helped to provide comprehensive support to Ukrainian civilians, focusing on both immediate needs and longer-term support. Through targeted programming and initiatives, the LatRC has made significant progress in improving the mental health and socio-economic integration of this vulnerable population.

One of the main areas of support provided by the LatRC is basic material support programmes. These initiatives have been crucial in easing the immediate financial burden faced by Ukrainian civilians in Latvia. The organisation successfully implemented two major Support card (gift card) distribution programmes. The first programme was designed to help children prepare for school by ensuring that they have the necessary supplies and resources to start the school year. The second programme targeted socially vulnerable groups, providing them with essential support during the winter months. These financial support programmes have been crucial in helping Ukrainian civilians in Latvia to manage their daily expenses and improve their overall quality of life.

The LatRC, in cooperation with local authorities and communities, has implemented activities throughout Latvia to support this target group. Including:

- first aid training: first aid training to ensure that Ukrainian civilians are prepared to deal with medical emergencies;
- psychological first aid training: training to help people provide immediate psychological support to those experiencing stress, thus fostering a supportive community environment;
- retraining courses: courses aimed at helping Ukrainian civilians to acquire new or improve existing skills, thereby improving their employability and economic prospects;
- children's conversation clubs: informal groups where Ukrainian civilian children can talk and interact socially, helping them to integrate into the local education system and society at large.

Recognising the critical importance of mental health, the LatRC plans to expand mental health support programmes. The current programmes have been useful, and the evaluation shows that the demand for mental health programmes is stable.

Through basic material support programmes, community-based initiatives and a strong focus on mental health and socio-economic integration, the LatRC has contributed to the well-being of Ukrainian civilians in Latvia.

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