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Distress of forced migration: refugees from Ukraine in Slovenia

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**Background:
temporary
protection in
Slovenia**


- Background of the paper:
- **Forced migration: forced migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, extended temporary protection (until 2002), most problematic: legal employment only in the duration of 60 days per year or 8 hours a week; applying for a labour permit – loss of temporary protection;**
- Different situation for Ukrainians:
- **Decision of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine (10. 3. 2022); from 10. 3. 2022, persons who left Ukraine can apply for temporary or international protection in Slovenia; in accordance with the decision of the European Commission, temporary protection in Slovenia is extended until 4. 3. 2026.**
- Full extent of rights on the labour market, access to health care.



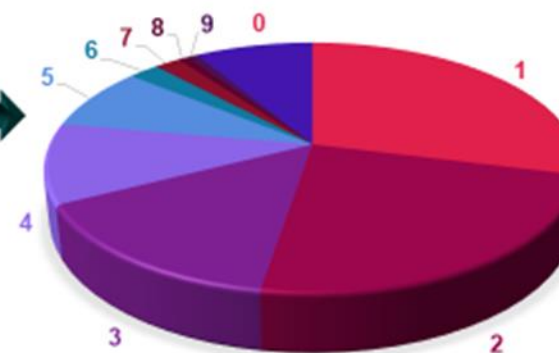
Background:
survey on
Ukrainian
refugees (2023,
270 respondents,
Faculty of social
sciences)



Path: departure from Ukraine and arrival in Slovenia 1/4

- Based on a survey of **270 respondents**, the following are the number of family members who have migrated besides the respondents: 
- Overall, the **majority of respondents had at least one family member** who has migrated, with the highest number being one family member. The percentage of respondents who had **no family members who migrated is relatively low at 8.5%**. The percentage of **respondents with two family members who migrated is also high at 23.7%**.
- These findings may be useful in understanding the prevalence of migration within families and its potential impact on family dynamics and relationships.

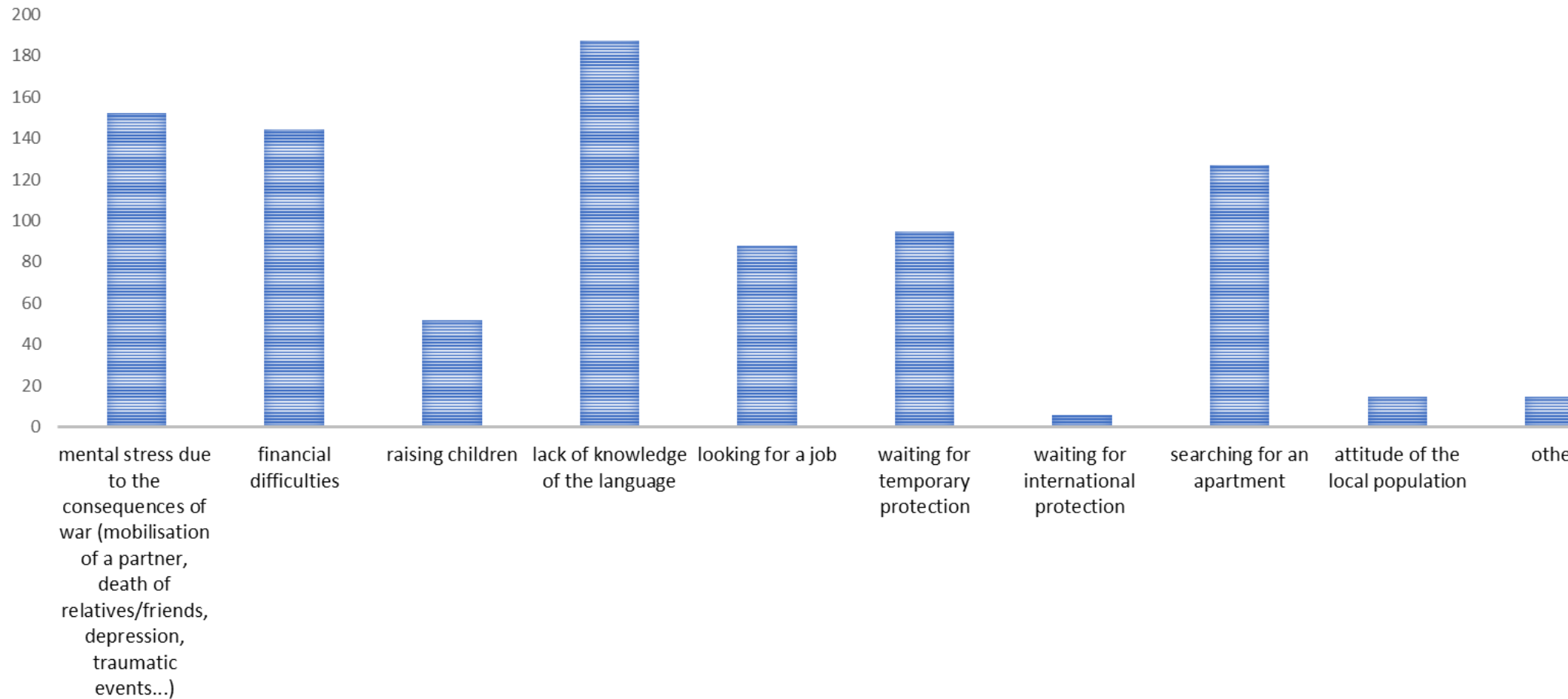
HOW MANY FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE MIGRATED
BESIDES YOU ?



- Zero family members: 23 respondents (8.5%)
- One family member: 78 respondents (28.9%)
- Two family members: 64 respondents (23.7%)
- Three family members: 40 respondents (14.8%)
- Four family members: 28 respondents (10.4%)
- Five family members: 22 respondents (8.1%)
- Six family members: 6 respondents (2.2%)
- Seven family members: 5 respondents (1.9%)
- Eight family members: 2 respondents (0.7%)
- Nine family members: 2 respondents (0.7%)

Obstacles in the new environment

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST OBSTACLES IN YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)



Findings of expert interviews

- Expert interviews with psychotherapists, psychologists, NGO workers, legal counselors.
- **pressures related to cultural expectations in terms of gender-appropriate behaviours, e.g. men who have fled Ukraine:**
- But they still feel under pressure, even more pressure, because you are a man, you have to fight and why did you flee your country, if they come to us and they don't want to go somewhere, they better send their wives and they feel that they have lost that role of a man who brings money. They feel they are not worthy of respect anymore, and then the other problem is that they separate families, they are separate in the sense that they are divided, yes, the husbands stay in Ukraine, sometimes the sons are older as well, yes, they are separated, they can't go and stay in Ukraine. The wife goes to Europe with the younger children and they live apart and they hear each other on the phone, zoom, I do not know what, but it affects the families too.



Insecurity and uncertainty

- **Insecurity of legal status** and the uncertain situation in Ukraine contributed to **psychological stress**:

Another psychological problem, yes, I think the biggest problem with refugees in general is the uncertainty, that they don't know how long it will last, they all came, they thought they were going to be here for a couple of months and then they would come back, and if you're here for a couple of months, then you're not going to learn the language, because it's an investment, it's, you're not going to put the kids in school, they're all stressed anyway, why add to that stress, life decisions like that. (NGO worker)



Sources of distress

- necessity to regulate first the most important **practical** aspects of people's everyday lives, such as housing, employment, education and the financial situation, access to reliable information, psychosocial interventions later;
- **Typical answers:** 'scared of returning home', 'there will be no home to return to', 'how to legally reside in Slovenia and obtain Slovenian citizenship', 'being lonely, lack of close contacts', etc.
- division among choices and wishes of Ukrainians regarding living in Slovenia;
- preferences closely connected to their legal status - uncertainty of temporary protection status and the limbo position – being in Slovenia and still having strong connections to Ukraine and/or maintaining hopes of return.



Concluding remarks

- ✓ **Various layers of vulnerabilities** before, during and after the migration process (economic integration, deskilling, language, health, education);
- ✓ **Reactions to trauma** - factors in country of origin (war, family separation, internal displacement) vs. host country (language, education – recognition of qualifications, economic issues, accommodation);
- ✓ **Insecurity** of legal status and prolonged waiting.
- ✓ **Complexity** of migration as a factor contributing to poor/improved (mental) health;
- ✓ **Need to rethink systems** of hosting societies: integration as a two-sided process.





- **Thank you for your attention!**
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