

Promoting social cohesion and convergence  
**Barriers to employment of  
displaced Ukrainians**



Joint report by Eurofound and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights



# Barriers to employment of displaced Ukrainians



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# Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched unprovoked military aggression, invading Ukraine. The EU swiftly responded: sanctions against Russia were put in place, and extensive humanitarian, political, financial and military support was provided to people fleeing or remaining in Ukraine. Member States and local communities also engaged in aiding people displaced from Ukraine by welcoming more than 4.5 million people fleeing the invasion, the majority of whom had been registered under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) (Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001) by the Member States by April 2023 (UNHCR, undated). The TPD was activated by the EU two weeks after the invasion, on 4 March 2022; it allows all people displaced from Ukraine to settle in the EU. It provides rights to access housing, the labour market, medical assistance, education and social welfare assistance. Beneficiaries also have access to banking services and can move freely in EU countries for 90 days within a 180-day period.

These rights provided under the TPD should be implemented across the EU. To assess its implementation, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) collected data through its Franet research network and published two bulletins, one in May 2022 (FRA, 2022a) and one in October 2022 (FRA, 2022b). Throughout 2022, Eurofound recorded in its EU PolicyWatch database the policy measures that Member States put in place to support Ukrainian refugees. Then in early 2023, the Agency collected information on the working life of displaced Ukrainians through its Network of Eurofound Correspondents.

In addition, FRA carried out an online survey between 22 August and 29 September 2022 among people displaced from Ukraine who, at that time, were staying in one of the selected 10 EU Member States. The survey covered those countries that share a land border with Ukraine (Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), that had received the highest absolute numbers of people displaced from Ukraine (Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Italy and Spain) or that had a large population of people displaced from Ukraine relative to their own total population (Estonia).<sup>1</sup> The aim was to collect the views of displaced people on their experiences since they left Ukraine, in the areas covered by the TPD: reception in EU countries; access to work, education, housing and health; and crossing borders.

This paper is based on that FRA survey, focusing solely on experiences of accessing the labour market. The key question of this analysis is to what extent the objective of swiftly providing the right to access the EU labour market has so far been achieved. To explore this, the survey asked the following questions.

- What barriers in general did displaced people face when seeking a job?
- Among those who were not in work at the time of the survey, what barriers prevented them from securing a job?

This paper begins by presenting the EU policy context around the employment of displaced Ukrainians. An exploration of the evidence follows, describing the sample of the survey and analysing the survey data. Finally, the key findings and policy pointers are provided.

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<sup>1</sup> Lithuania was also considered for inclusion but ultimately was not included owing to contractual issues.





# 1 | Policy context

The large inflow of people displaced from Ukraine prompted social services in host countries to mobilise themselves in response.

Ensuring swift access to the labour market was an essential part of this response, from both a short-term and a longer-term perspective (since displaced people may stay in Member States longer than they initially intended to (Dadush and Weil, 2022)). According to Article 12 of the TPD, beneficiaries of temporary protection must be given the opportunity to engage in employed or self-employed work, subject to rules applicable to professions or vocational training. Article 15 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights stipulates that third-country nationals authorised to work in the Member States have the right to the same working conditions as EU citizens. A European Commission communication from March 2022 emphasised the importance of treating TPD beneficiaries equally to other workers in terms of pay and other working conditions, and supporting them through language courses, counselling and basic training, or helping them to build businesses.

In June 2022, the European Commission issued more detailed guidance on access to the labour market to facilitate the process (European Commission, 2022a). The guidance refers to the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and calls for the recognition of the principle of non-discrimination and for attention to be paid to the specific vulnerabilities of groups at greater risk of discrimination. It includes measures that could help to achieve this aim, for example relating to vocational education and training, and adult learning.

One of the main objectives of the TPD is to ensure quick access to the labour market, but the Member States vary in their implementation of the directive.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, as the war is becoming protracted, both medium- and long-term arrangements are needed for integrating displaced people into host societies. In this context, the other areas stipulated in the TPD, namely guaranteeing rights to access to key public services such as housing, education, health and care services, and social and employment assistance, are of great importance. All of these are linked to successful participation in the labour market.

The provision of durable housing, which has always been a significant starting point for displaced people's integration, is an obvious example, but access to other services is also vital. Education, including early childhood education and care, is a particularly important service, since so many of the people displaced from Ukraine are women and children. This is confirmed by various administrative and survey data (and supported by the make-up of the FRA survey sample): people displaced from Ukraine are mainly women and children; they accounted for about 73% of those who had registered under the TPD towards the end of 2022 (48% were women and 25% were children (Eurostat [migr\_asytpfm])). With easy access to early childhood education and care, women, particularly when they are primary caregivers, can enter employment, and they have more opportunities to participate in training programmes to adjust their skills to demand in the labour market of the host country. Access to school education can also prove challenging due to insufficient capacity (for example, teacher and classroom shortages). Under these circumstances, special support is needed – at EU level, for instance, through exchanges of good practice (European Commission, 2022b).

Data also show that people displaced from Ukraine have high levels of educational attainment, with the majority having a tertiary education.<sup>3</sup> This points to the importance of recognition of qualifications.

Acknowledging this, and in order to facilitate Member States' measures in this area, the Commission issued a recommendation on this topic in April 2022 (European Commission, 2022c). In addition, in June 2022, it published guidelines on the fast-track recognition of academic qualifications (European Commission, 2022d).

Article 35 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees the right to access healthcare, including mental health services, under conditions established by national laws and practices. This can also be an important prerequisite for employment. The negative psychosocial impacts that people have experienced because of the war and during their flight should be tackled; mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, make it more difficult

2 FRA's 2022 overview of TPD implementation covers nine Member States: Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Spain (FRA, 2022c).

3 Both rounds of a survey by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) among Ukrainian refugees in Europe show this to be the case, but this finding should be treated with some caution, since there could be bias (it may have been mainly those with higher education qualifications who responded). However, other sources also confirm the high share of people with tertiary education among people displaced from Ukraine (see, for example, OECD, 2023).

for them to settle, work and participate in the receiving countries. While initiatives providing mental health support to people from Ukraine have been undertaken in various Member States, the Commission is planning to further promote the issue of addressing mental health. For example, it will set up a network of

Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking mental health professionals and will collect and implement best practices on mental health through calls for proposals from non-governmental organisations (European Commission, undated) as part of its EU4Health programme (European Commission, 2022e).

## 2 Characteristics of people displaced from Ukraine in the EU

### Survey methodology

Between 22 August and 29 September 2022, FRA conducted an online survey of people who had fled Ukraine as a result of the war. The survey addressed several topics, including employment (the focus of this paper), labour market exploitation, economic situation and living conditions. The survey is described briefly here; a full description is available in FRA's report (FRA, 2023).

The survey was accessible via a URL or QR code. Although the original investigation included not only adults but also children (those who were at least 12 years old could participate in the survey), due to the focus on labour market access, this paper considers only the adult population (aged 18 years and over).

The survey was open to people who met all three of the following criteria:

- Ukrainian citizens or residents, including EU or third-country nationals, who had been permanently residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022
- who were staying in a country covered by the survey (even if only in transit during the survey)
- who had arrived in the EU directly before, on or after 24 February 2022

To ensure high rates of participation and the representation of various strata of the target population, FRA's research network, Franet, helped to promote the survey. Various communication channels were used to inform people of the survey and encourage participation. These included social media and other online and offline channels.

Open online surveys do not claim to be representative of the target population. FRA, however, took several steps to try to remedy this shortcoming to the extent possible. The findings of this analysis are based on weighted data, adjusted according to available statistics on estimates of the target population size in each country in the survey by gender and age group.

### Characteristics of the survey respondents

For an appropriate interpretation of the results of the analysis, it is relevant to have an overview of the respondents and their main characteristics (Table 1).

#### Sociodemographic profile

Since the weights applied to the proportions of people in each category are based on available statistics (as mentioned above), the percentages in Table 1 reflect the known composition of people displaced from Ukraine, namely that the majority are women, and they are highly educated for the most part. As shown in Table 1, three in four respondents were female, and one in four respondents were male. Regarding education, almost two in three respondents (66%) had a tertiary education. By country, over a third of the respondents were staying in Poland (39%), followed by Germany (29%) and Czechia (12%).

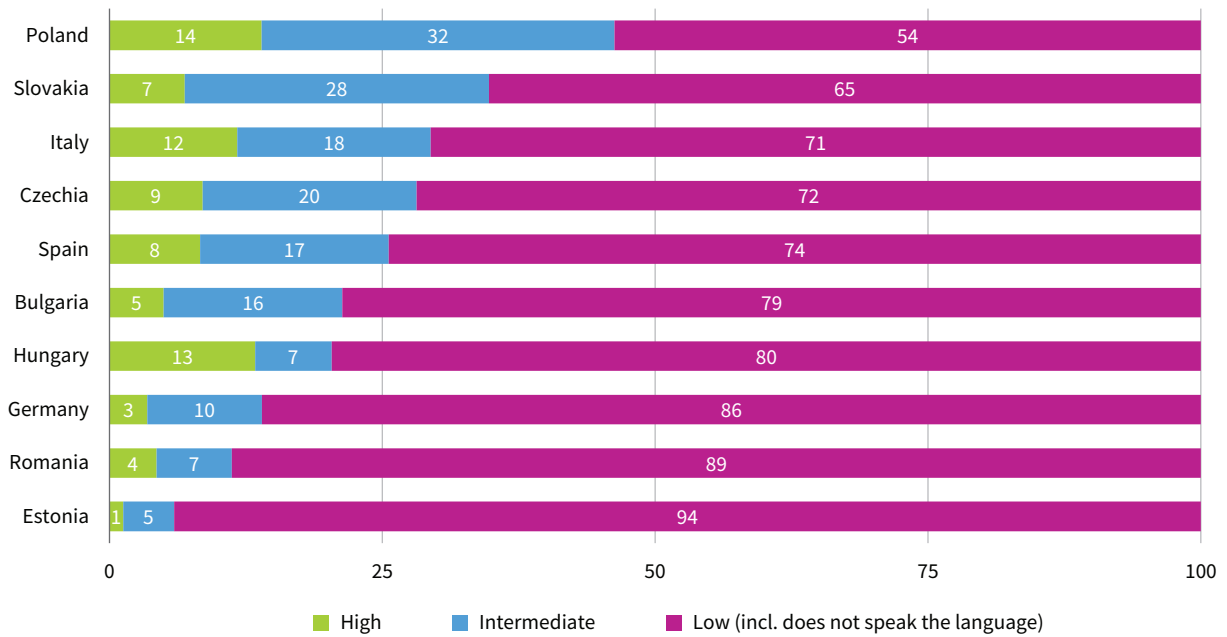
**Table 1: Key characteristics of the online survey respondents (numbers and (weighted) proportions)**

| Category                    | Subcategory                               | Number of survey respondents<br>(unweighted frequency) | Percentage in each category*<br>(weighted proportion of the total sample) |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Age                         | 18–29                                     | 2,108  | 14.4  |
|                             | 30–49                                     | 9,714  | 60.6  |
|                             | 50–64                                     | 2,091  | 14.8  |
|                             | 65+                                       | 448  | 10.1  |
| Gender** and children       | Women with children                       | 8,438  | 44.9  |
|                             | Women without children                    | 4,676  | 30.5  |
|                             | Men with children                         | 641  | 10.8  |
|                             | Men without children                      | 572  | 13.7  |
| Education                   | Primary education or lower                | 162  | 1.4   |
|                             | Secondary education                       | 1,586  | 13.4  |
|                             | Tertiary education                        | 8,274  | 65.6  |
|                             | Vocational education                      | 2,284  | 19.5  |
| Country                     | <b>Non-neighbouring</b>                   | 6,321  | 55.2  |
|                             | Bulgaria                                  | 636  | 3.4   |
|                             | Czechia                                   | 656  | 12.4  |
|                             | Estonia                                   | 736  | 1.3   |
|                             | Germany                                   | 2,925  | 29.3  |
|                             | Italy                                     | 183  | 4.6   |
|                             | Spain                                     | 1,185  | 4.2   |
|                             | <b>Neighbouring</b>                       | 8,040  | 44.8  |
|                             | Hungary                                   | 307  | 1.7   |
|                             | Poland                                    | 5,064  | 38.8  |
|                             | Romania                                   | 1,449  | 2.1   |
|                             | Slovakia                                  | 1,220  | 2.2   |
| Host country language level | High                                      | 1,135  | 9.0   |
|                             | Intermediate                              | 2,967  | 21.1  |
|                             | Low                                       | 10,162   | 69.9  |
| Residence permit            | Had a residence permit                    | 11,132   | 76.8  |
|                             | Did not have a residence permit           | 2,387  | 16.5  |
|                             | Did not know or did not answer            | 842  | 6.7   |
| Able to make ends meet      | Easily                                    | 1,887  | 16.5  |
|                             | With difficulty                           | 10,920   | 83.5  |
| Employment status           | Employed (currently in paid work)         | 5,169  | 34.5  |
|                             | Not employed                              | 8,461  | 62.3  |
|                             | Preferred not to say/do not know/no reply | 731  | 3.2   |
| Total observations          |   | 14,361   |   |

\* Due to rounding, the categories do not always add up to 100%. \*\* Respondents were given the option to identify 'in another way'; however, the number of respondents choosing this option was so small that they were excluded from these frequencies and the analysis. Only valid responses were considered, so non-responses were considered missing and excluded from the sample.

Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

Figure 1: Host language proficiency of the respondents, by country (% , weighted)



Notes: The question was phrased as follows: ‘How well do you speak the language of the country you are currently staying in?’ There were six response options, recoded into three for reporting here.

Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

### Knowledge of the host country’s language

Knowledge of the host country’s language can play a decisive role both in labour market integration and, more broadly, in social inclusion. As shown in Figure 1, almost half of the respondents in Poland spoke the national language to a high or intermediate level (46%), followed by respondents in Slovakia, where more than one-third of the respondents spoke Slovak to some extent (35%). The share of those who had low proficiency or did not speak their host country’s language was the largest in Estonia (94%), Romania (89%), Germany (86%) and Hungary (80%).

### Labour market status

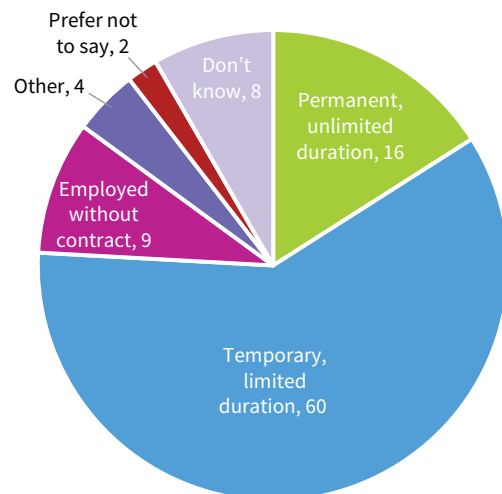
Within the total sample of adult respondents (aged 18 or over), 35% were in paid employment at the time of the survey (see Table 1).

For the purposes of presenting results in this paper, the focus is on the following categories.

- All respondents were asked ‘Since you arrived in your country, have you looked for work?’ Those who responded ‘yes’ are hereinafter called ‘jobseekers’ – regardless of whether they were in employment at the time of the survey or not. All of the jobseekers were asked about barriers they had encountered when searching for job (whether they had been successful or not), and the barriers reported are analysed in Chapter 3, ‘Experiences of jobseekers’. To further understand the type of

employment that the successful jobseekers had found in their host country, Figure 2 provides a breakdown by type of employment contract. Temporary contracts were the most common (60%). Almost 10% of the working respondents indicated that they were employed without a contract.

Figure 2: Contract types among respondents in employment in their host country (% , weighted)



Notes: The question was phrased as follows: ‘What kind of contract do you have for your new job in your current country?’

Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

- The people in the sample who were not in employment at the time of the survey are the focus of Chapter 4 'Reasons for not being in paid employment'. This includes those who said they had searched for work since arriving in a host country (53%) and those who did not mention searching for work. All of them are considered to have reasons for not currently being in paid employment, and those reasons are analysed in that chapter.

# 3 Experiences of jobseekers

## Barriers during job search

In line with the objectives of the TPD, the Member States acted swiftly to both welcome displaced people and allow them to work. For example, Poland introduced legislation that reduced bureaucracy for people displaced from Ukraine looking for work in Poland (European Commission, 2022a). Instead of requiring a work permit or a Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population (*Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności*, PESEL) number – a unique personal identifier issued to Polish residents – to access the labour market, new employers simply need to inform the local labour office about the hire within 14 days (European Commission, 2022a). This facilitated the integration of 185,000 people displaced from Ukraine into the labour market between February and June 2022 (European Commission, 2022a).

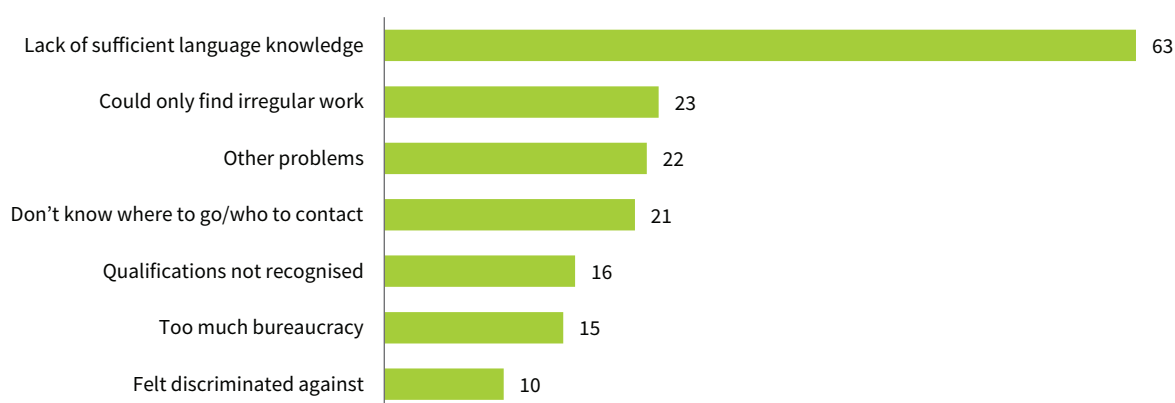
Of the 14,361 adult (i.e. aged 18+) respondents in the survey, 62% have been actively seeking a job since their arrival (excluding those who indicated ‘don’t know’ or did not reply). Out of those, 47% are currently in paid work. Even among those who have not looked for work, 20% are in employment (as has been mentioned, 35% of the overall sample of adults were in paid employment at the time of the survey). At the same time, among those who have looked for a job, 66% have been in employment since leaving Ukraine. This higher share compared with those who are in paid work now may be explained by seasonal work in the summer, which may

have been terminated at the end of the summer/autumn (precisely the period when the survey was conducted). In some countries where data on employment are available by sector, it is reported that many Ukrainian refugees are employed in sectors where seasonal work is prominent – for example agriculture, tourism and construction. This is the case in Romania, for instance, whereas in Hungary it is pointed out that those Ukrainians who worked in the country before the war were mainly employed in construction and hospitality (see the ‘Working life of Ukrainian refugees’ sections in Eurofound, 2023).

Despite efforts by the EU and its Member States to facilitate the labour market inclusion of people displaced from Ukraine, many of those who have sought jobs have faced multiple employment barriers since their arrival. The survey listed seven employment barriers that respondents could select. As shown in Figure 3, the barrier that was overwhelmingly reported was lack of sufficient language knowledge, with 63% of respondents indicating that this was an issue.

Nearly every fourth (23%) jobseeker mentioned that they could only find irregular work, even though some of them reported having legitimate contracts (such as temporary ones). The definition of ‘irregular work’ was not provided in the survey, and the fact that people with legitimate contracts thought they could only find ‘irregular work’ suggests that there could be issues with the quality of jobs from the perspective of these Ukrainian employees.

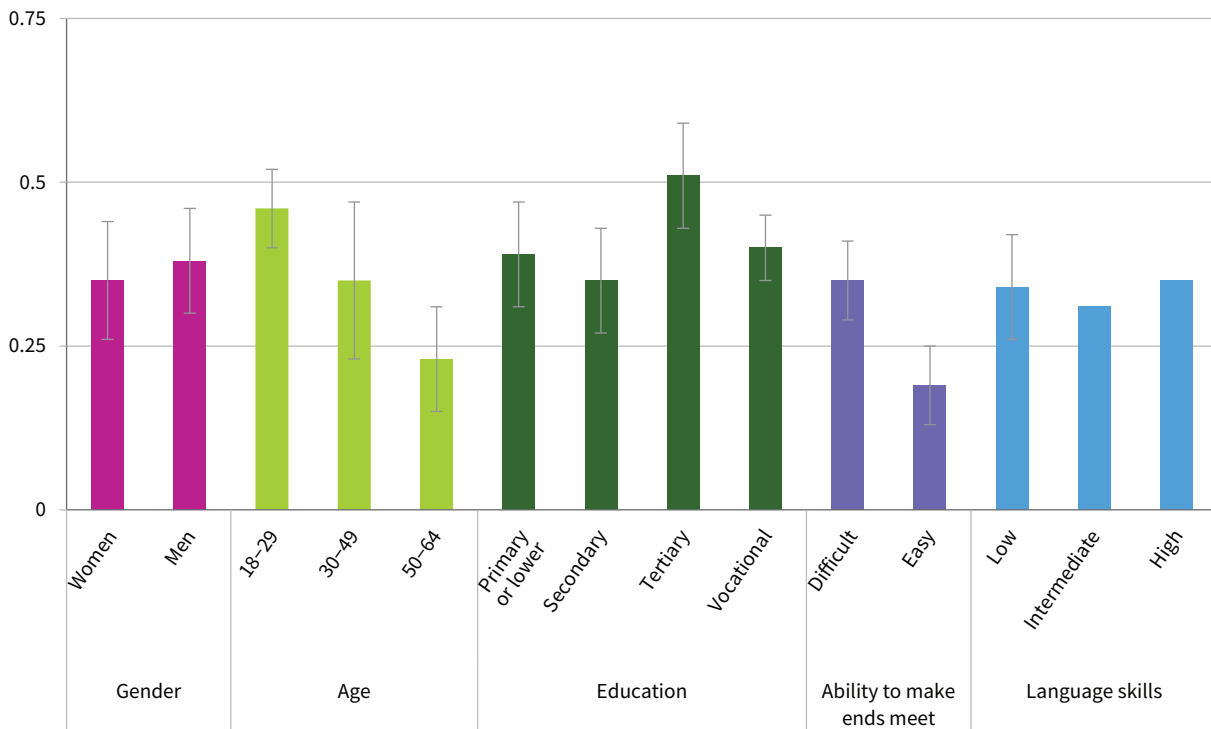
**Figure 3: Barriers reported by respondents who have looked for a job in a host country (% , weighted)**



**Notes:** Those who have searched for a job since arrival in their host country covers those in and not in employment. The question was phrased as follows: ‘Have you experienced any of the following problems when looking for work in the country you are staying?’ (multiple answers could be provided). Possible answers were ‘My qualifications were not recognised’; ‘I do not speak the language well enough’; ‘I didn’t know where to go/whom to contact’; ‘Too much bureaucracy’; ‘I felt discriminated against’; ‘I can only find irregular work’; and ‘Other problems’. Those who preferred not to say and those who replied ‘Don’t know’ were excluded from the data presented here.

**Source:** FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

**Figure 4: Probability of experiencing at least one barrier while seeking employment, by gender, age group, education level, financial situation and language skills**



**Notes:** Predicted probability is calculated with the R function *ggpredict*. The function generates predictions using a model holding the non-focal variables constant and varying the focal variable(s). The results can be described as conditional effects, for which the lowest value is held constant while varying the focal variable. The lines at the top of the coloured bars show confidence intervals. See Figure 3 for question and response options.

**Source:** FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

### Factors related to experiencing labour market barriers

In order to explore who is more likely to experience difficulties when entering the labour market, respondents were divided into two groups: those who had not experienced any barrier and those who experienced at least one barrier. The analysis compared the two groups, looking at how likely it is to experience barriers, given certain socioeconomic characteristics.

As can be seen in Figure 4, younger and well-educated respondents were more likely to report at least one barrier encountered when seeking employment, whereas being able to make ends meet easily decreases the likelihood of experiencing barriers during job search. It is understandable that younger respondents, owing to their lack of or lower levels of experience in the labour market, face more difficulties, whereas well-educated respondents may struggle to have their qualifications recognised and find a job matching their skills. Those who do not have financial problems may be under less pressure to find a job than those who have serious difficulties making ends meet. This is supported by other research exploring barriers to employment. For example, in categorising these barriers, the World Bank

has pointed out that having a sufficient income disincentivises a person from searching for a job (World Bank, 2017, p. 8).

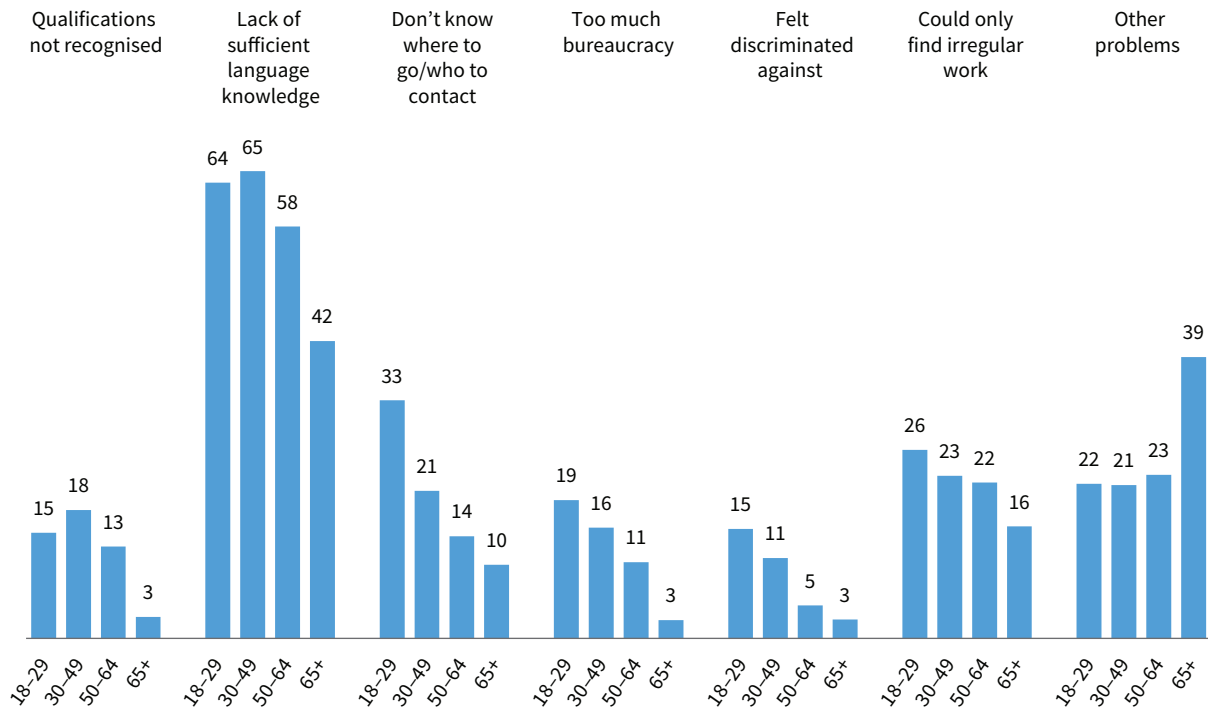
It is also important to consider which barriers were reported most often. Figure 5 shows this by age groups.

Unsurprisingly, a lack of language knowledge is the most common barrier in all age groups, but especially the younger groups (aged 18–29 years and 30–49 years). It is understandable that this is particularly important among those of prime working age (i.e. 18–49); people aged 65+ were the least likely to indicate barriers (except for ‘other problems’, which they were more likely than other age groups to cite as a barrier).

If the individual barriers are separated by educational attainment, the picture is similar in respect of the outstanding role of language knowledge. Among those who have a tertiary education (most respondents), the proportion of those who see insufficient knowledge of the host country’s language as a barrier is particularly high, at almost 70%. Regarding the other barriers, the distribution of barriers by education groups seems more even, with the ‘felt discriminated against’ barrier being the least common for all groups. Even in this case,



**Figure 5: Proportion of respondents who experienced labour market barriers while seeking employment, by barrier and age group (%)**

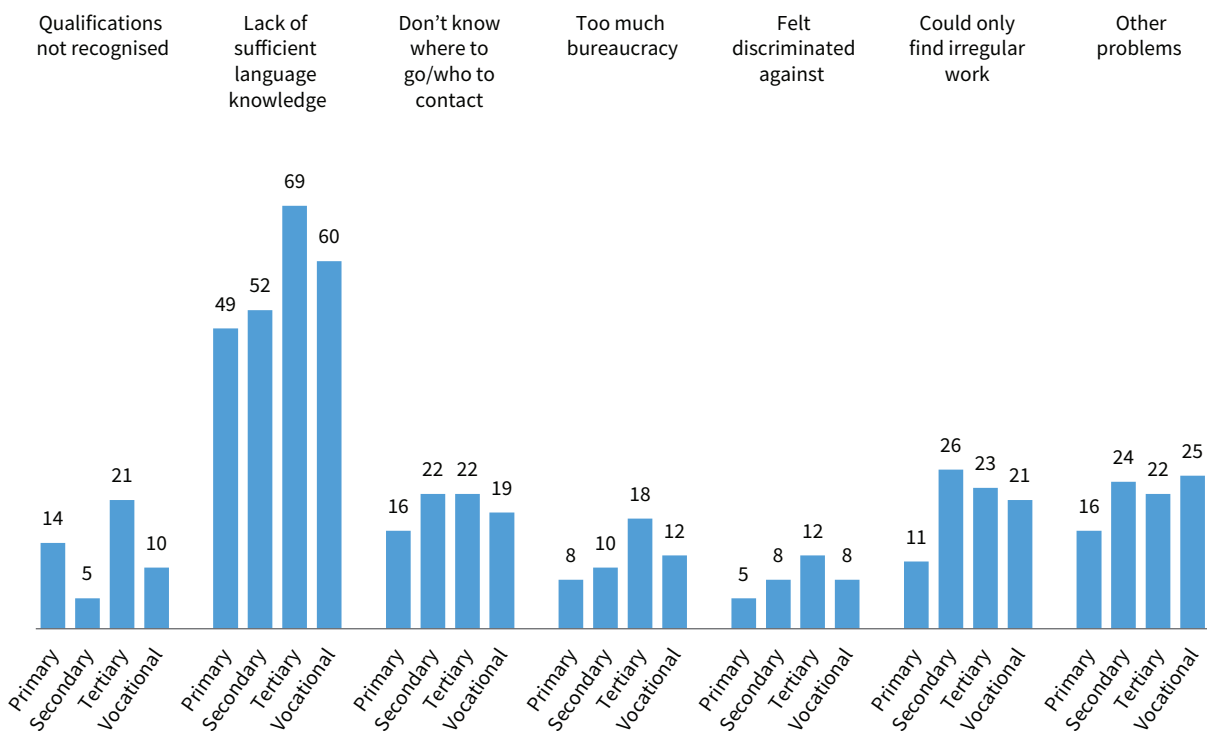


Note: See Figure 3 for question and response options.  
Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

however, this barrier was most commonly indicated by people with a tertiary education. Likewise, the ‘qualifications not recognised’, and ‘too much

bureaucracy’ barriers were also reported primarily by those who had the highest educational attainment (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Proportion of respondents who experienced labour market barriers while seeking employment, by barrier and educational attainment (%)**



Note: See Figure 3 for question and response options.  
Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

A lack of language knowledge is the entry barrier reported by the highest share of respondents, followed by difficulty to find work other than irregular jobs. However, it is important to emphasise that once they found employment, displaced people also face challenging working conditions. According to FRA's report on the survey, around 3 in 10 respondents in paid employment (among the population aged 16+) indicated at least one of the following: working very

long hours (16%); being underpaid or not paid for work (10%); having difficulties communicating freely with others (8%); working without a contract, or with a contract that did not cover all working hours (8%). A very low share reported not being allowed to take breaks/rest time; not having access to drinking water, food or a toilet; not being given protective gear when needed; being threatened or experiencing violence by the employer – about 1%, respectively (FRA, 2023).

## 4 Reasons for not being in paid employment

Among the Ukrainians surveyed, 62% were not in paid employment at the time of the survey. This section investigates the main reasons indicated by the respondents as to why they were not in paid work. For the purpose of analysis, three groups can be distinguished based on information provided in the survey: those who are currently economically inactive ('I am retired/too old', 'I have small children/elderly/sick relatives to look after', 'I will start working soon' or 'I am currently studying'); those who specified barriers other than inactivity; and those who did not specify ('other' barriers). Out of those who were not in paid work, almost two-thirds (64%) could be regarded as inactive, since they reported caretaking, studying, being retired or having another job soon as the main reasons for not working.

In this paper, the barriers identified by the second group – that is, the barriers other than inactivity – are labelled 'self-reported barriers'. 58% of respondents who were not working selected at least one 'self-reported' barrier. However, it must be noted that, since the respondents could select multiple response categories, inactive people could have indicated the self-reported barriers as well.

Table 2 shows the number of respondents who selected any given barrier.

Again, as in the case of those who experienced labour market barriers during their job search, among those who are out of work, more than half (51%) indicated that insufficient language knowledge was a barrier. Close to one-third (28%) reported family responsibilities

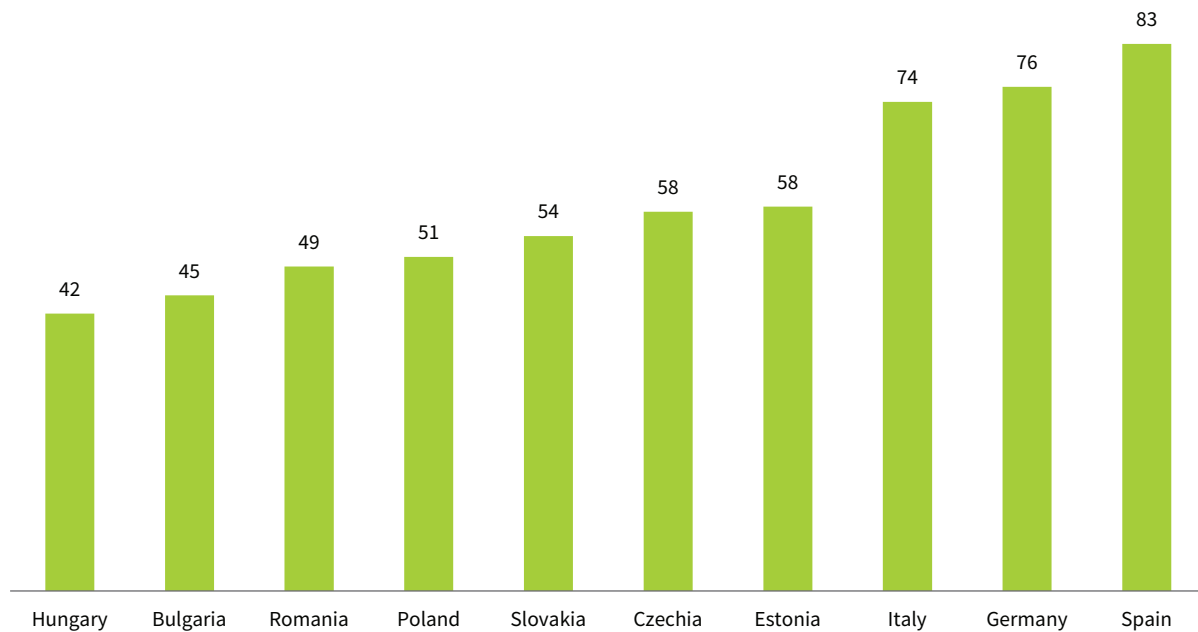
**Table 2: Respondents' reasons for not being in paid employment**

| Type of barrier   | Why are you currently not working? Select all that apply              | Number of respondents (unweighted frequency) | Percentage** |
|---|---|--|--------------|
| Inactivity (due to family duties, studying, old age, health issues, starting work soon, etc.) | I have small children/elderly/sick relatives to look after            | 3,107  | 28           |
|   | It is difficult for me to work because of physical or mental health   | 1,300  | 15           |
|   | I am currently studying   | 1,008  | 13           |
|   | I will start working soon   | 865  | 10           |
|   | I am retired/too old  | 775  | 19           |
|   | I plan to leave the country soon                                      | 636  | 7            |
|   | I have savings and don't need to work                                 | 166  | 2            |
| Self-reported barriers (other than inactivity)  | I do not speak the language well enough                               | 4,550  | 51           |
|   | Because there are no jobs   | 1,220  | 12           |
|   | I don't know how to find a job  | 1,158  | 14           |
|   | My qualifications are not recognised                                  | 883  | 10           |
|   | I don't know if I'm allowed to work                                   | 246  | 4            |
|   | Nobody hires me because of my ethnic background/religion/skin colour* | 79   | 1            |
| Not specified   | Other   | 594  | 7            |

\* Only chosen by a small sample size and therefore not always included in the analyses. \*\* Percentage of respondents who selected that barrier out of the 8,461 respondents who were not in paid employment at the time of the survey.

Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

**Figure 7: Share of respondents who mentioned self-reported barriers among those not in paid work, by country (%)**



**Notes:** The question was phrased as follows: 'Why are you currently not working? Select all that apply.' Possible answers were 'I don't know how to find a job'; 'I do not speak the language well enough'; 'Because there are no jobs'; 'My qualifications are not recognised'; 'Nobody hires me because of my ethnic background/religion/skin colour'; and 'I don't know if I'm allowed to work'. Other possible answers that refer to inactivity were not considered here.

**Source:** FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

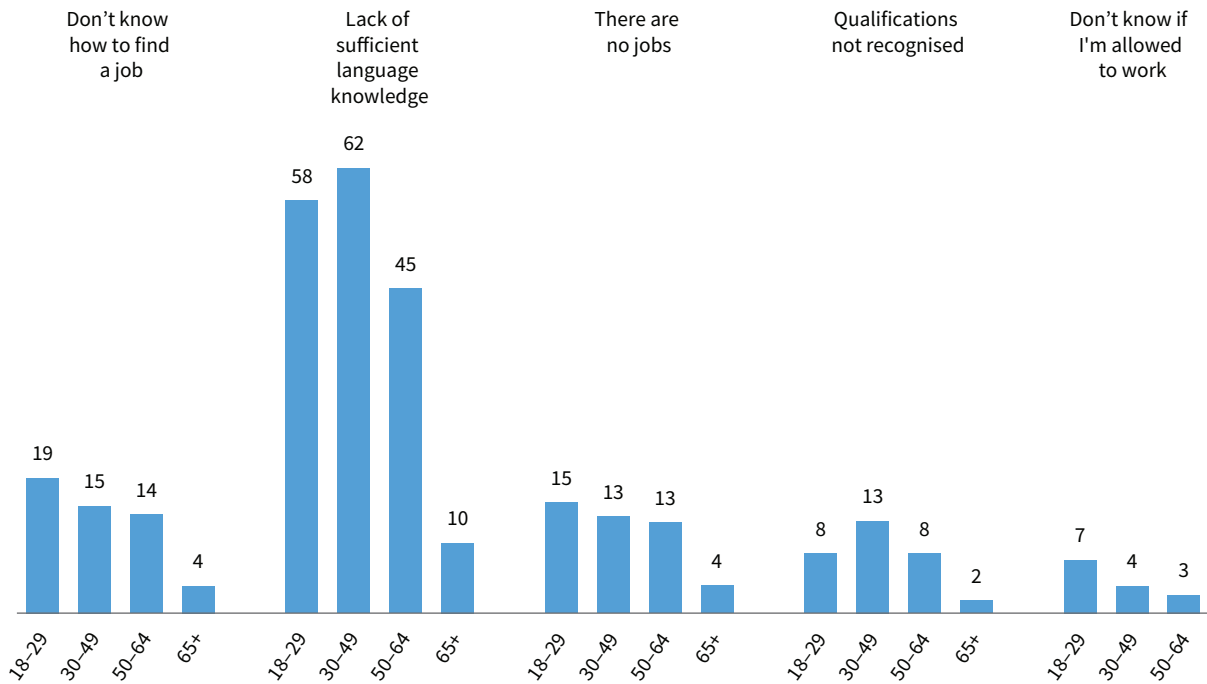
as a reason for not working – this is not surprising, given the general composition of the displaced people (mainly women with young children). For a relatively high share of respondents (15%), physical or mental health issues constitute a barrier to work, and a somewhat lower number (12%) of those not in employment indicated that there were no jobs available. A lack of job opportunities may pose a serious obstacle, as reported in Romania (Eurofound, 2023). Other evidence shows that a lack of jobs may be particularly severe in certain regions: this is the case, for example, in Estonia. More specifically, this was reported in Saare County, where most opportunities can be found in seasonal jobs (hotels, restaurants, spas, etc.). Almost the same share of respondents (14%) reported that they did not know how to find a job. Language difficulties may play an important role in this and, even if extensive information has been provided, there is

potentially still some scope for reaching out to displaced people (especially those most disadvantaged) through, for example, public employment services.

Reporting of the self-reported barriers was not evenly spread among the host countries. As displayed in Figure 7, higher proportions of displaced people in Spain (83%) and Germany (76%) reported that they faced barriers to finding employment, whereas the shares were much lower in Hungary (42%) and Bulgaria (45%).

Figure 8 shows how the self-reported barriers differ between age categories. The barrier that was most commonly reported across all age categories was not speaking the language well enough. Those in the youngest age groups (18–29 and 30–49) self-reported the most barriers.

Figure 8: Share of self-reported barriers among those not in paid work, by barrier and age category (%)

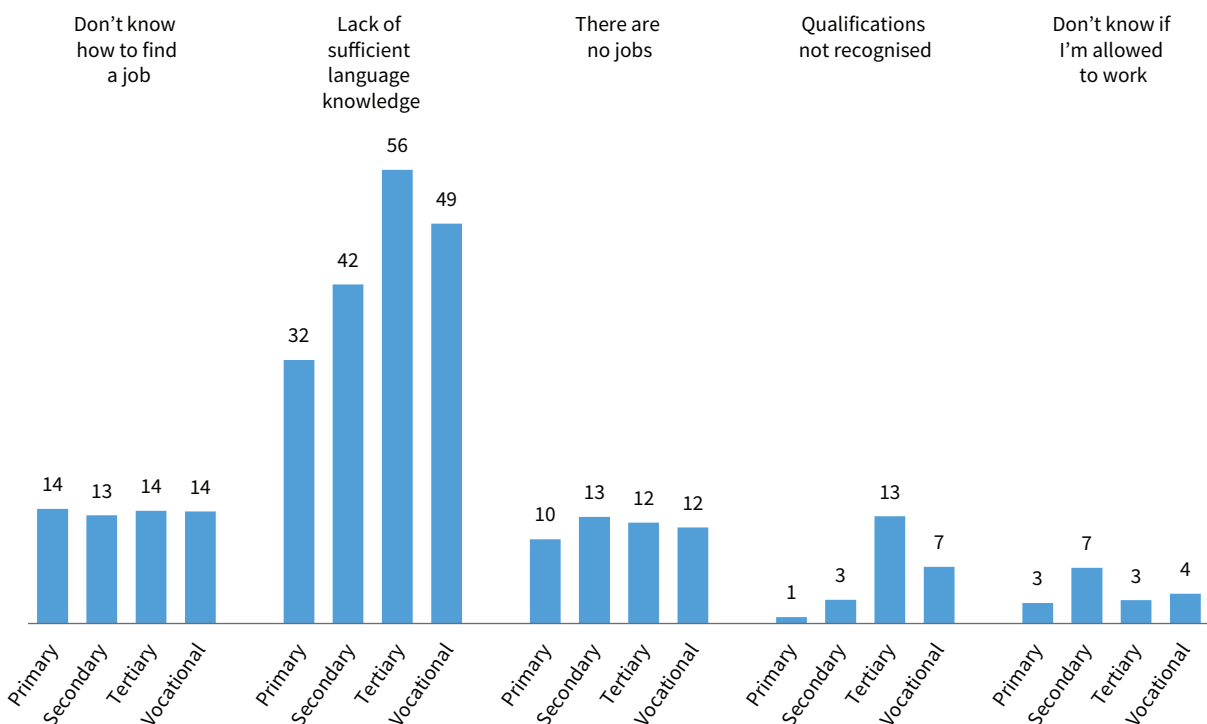


Note: See Figure 7 for question and response options.  
Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

As shown in Figure 9, the results suggest that there are significant differences between educational attainment groups in relation to the most common barrier, 'I do not speak the language well enough', and the least common barrier, 'I don't know if I'm allowed to work'. Over half of

those with a tertiary education reported language as a barrier to entering the labour market, while those with other education levels reported language as a barrier less often. However, not knowing where to find a job is distributed evenly across education levels.

Figure 9: Share of self-reported barriers among those respondents not in paid work, by barrier and educational attainment (%)



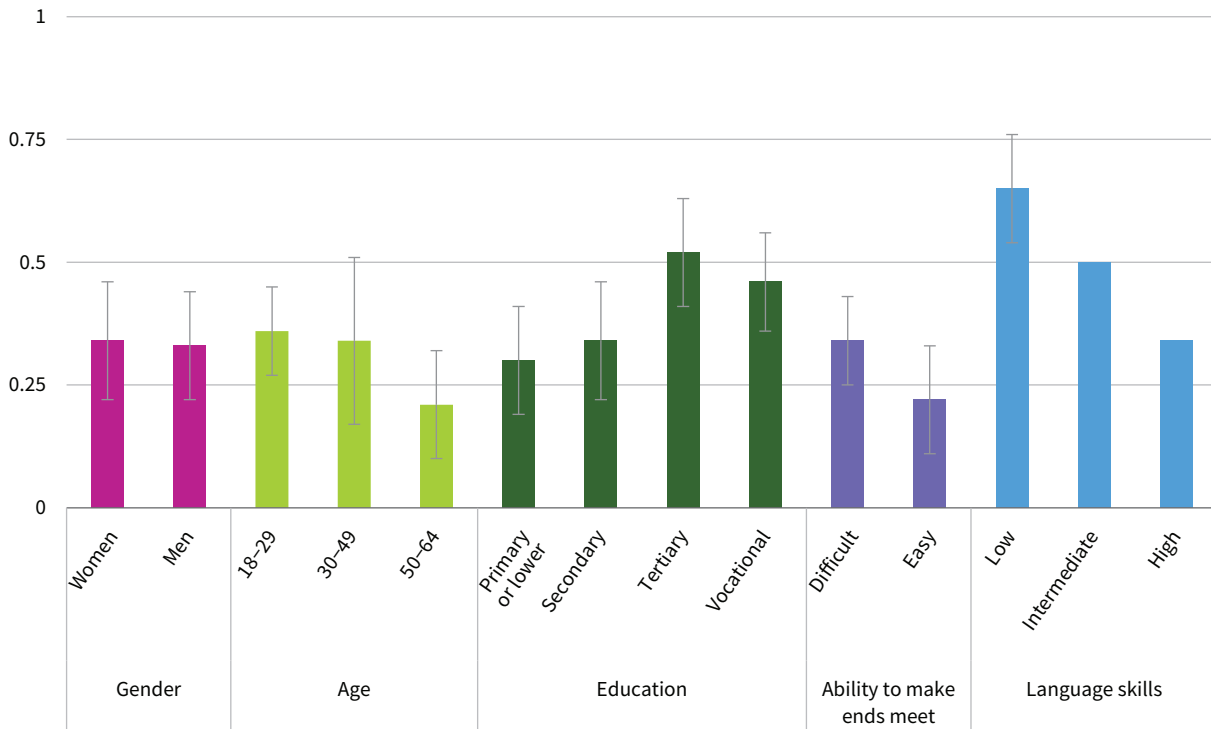
Note: See Figure 7 for question and response options.  
Source: FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

In terms of gender, no major differences were found for most of the barriers; it seems, however, that women tend to be better informed than men regarding whether they are allowed to work.

A summary overview of how background characteristics affect perception of barriers to entering the labour market is presented in Figure 10. As has been pointed

out, belonging to the younger age groups, having a tertiary education or having difficulties in making ends meet is associated with a higher probability of reporting at least one of the barriers (from the respondent’s perspective) to joining the labour market. It is not surprising that the language barrier stands out again (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Probability of perceiving at least one barrier to entering the labour market, by age, educational attainment, gender, financial situation and language skill groups**



**Notes:** Predicted probability is calculated with the R function *ggpredict*. The function generates predictions using a model holding the non-focal variables constant and varying the focal variable(s). The results can be described as conditional effects, for which the lowest value is held constant while varying the focal variable. See Figure 7 for question and response options.

**Source:** FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022

# 5 | Discussion

## Relatively fast entry to labour markets

The survey revealed that many displaced people were engaged in employment in a receiving country just six months after the war broke out (during the survey in August–September 2022). This is a positive development given the vast number of people displaced and the psychological shock that they had recently experienced. The data from this survey confirm other research findings that acknowledge that the labour market inclusion of people displaced from Ukraine was faster than that of other refugee groups (OECD, 2023). Undoubtedly, the TPD and the Member States' openness as well as their welcoming approach played an important role in this, together with the displaced people's determination to access the labour market in the host country. Indeed, in addition to the survey data, other sources confirm that displaced people were keen to take up jobs. For example, in Bulgaria, according to a national survey, nearly 70% of the newly arrived displaced people expressed their intention to work immediately (the 'Working life of Ukrainian refugees' section in Bulgaria's country report, Eurofound, 2023).

Another factor that may have helped the faster labour market integration of people displaced from Ukraine is linked to the language(s) they speak. Most of the displaced people are bilingual: they can speak both Ukrainian and Russian. This may explain, for example, why the employment level is high in Estonia (and in other Baltic states, see OECD (2023)). Although the people displaced from Ukraine did not know the host country's language, because many among the host population understand some Russian, communication is much easier than in other countries, especially those where non-Slavic languages are spoken.

## Number of Ukrainians employed continued growing

More recent surveys conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the European Network of Public Employment Services revealed that the number of displaced people in employment had increased since the time of the FRA survey (European Commission, 2023a; UNHCR, 2023a), and the most up-to-date information collected by Eurofound also confirmed this trend (in, for example, Czechia<sup>4</sup>). According to the longitudinal part of the UNHCR Lives on Hold survey

among Ukrainian refugees, employment increased by 10 percentage points in the countries surveyed (from 30% at the time of the second round of the survey, the same time as the FRA survey, to 40% by the third round, which took place at the end of 2022 – see UNHCR, 2023a, p. 5). Values reported by the European Network of Public Employment Services show that, in November 2022, about 1,098,000 displaced people were in employment in the 21 Member States covered by the network's questionnaire. Most of the countries included in the FRA survey (7 out of the 10) replied to the questionnaire (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).

As has been noted, overall, the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians was swifter than that of other groups seeking international protection in the EU. However, the displaced people could still be characterised as labour market vulnerable (World Bank, 2017). Many of these people face multiple barriers when trying to access employment – as shown in this paper. Most barriers fell into the category of 'insufficient work-related capabilities', such as care responsibilities and health limitations (for details of the categorisation, see World Bank, 2017, p. 8). Some of the limitations have to do with gender and family context, while some challenges are rather sector-specific.

## Gender differences are apparent

Employment varies across the 10 countries included in the survey, and the share of men who were in paid work in early autumn 2022 was higher than that of women in almost every country (FRA, 2023). In Estonia, the employed share of the population aged 15–75 stood at 43% among men and 34% among women (Statistics Estonia data cited in Eurofound, 2023). If all 10 of the countries are considered together, the difference by gender is 8 percentage points. However, this difference shrinks to just 2 percentage points if those who had had paid work at any time since leaving Ukraine are also considered. The reason for this is that women's share was higher among those who were not in employment at the time of the survey but had been in paid work since leaving Ukraine. The difference between men and women who had been in employment at any time since leaving Ukraine is the highest in Romania, at 9 percentage points (FRA, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> It is also reported in Czechia, that simultaneously with the increase in employment, the number of recipients of humanitarian aid has decreased (Eurofound, 2023).

Among women, the share of respondents who were in paid work ranged between 46% (Estonia) and 14% (Germany). The data for both countries are quite close to the findings from other sources. In Estonia, the share of employed people of working age (20–64 years) stands at 40% (Eurofound, 2023). According to estimates from a survey conducted in Germany around the same time as the FRA survey, 17% were in employment (Eurofound, 2023). Similarly, in Czechia, other sources confirm the shares shown in the FRA survey: the employment rate is around 33% for those who were in employment in autumn, and about 54% were employed in Czechia at some point since their arrival (estimate based on Eurofound, 2023, and UNHCR, 2023b). In three countries, around half of male respondents reported that they were in paid employment (Slovakia, 56%; Poland, 54%; Estonia, 50%); the rate was lower in other countries where data were available.

The discrepancy by gender in terms of current paid work versus work since arrival may suggest that it is primarily women who tend to accept short-term employment, whereas the jobs that men have last longer. Although more research is needed to explore the evidence in this regard, the finding points to the importance of providing childcare and long-term care services to enable women to establish themselves in the labour market. The EU's European Child Guarantee initiative has great potential: within its framework, many measures have already been introduced in the Member States and the planned measures could provide major improvements in this respect (see details of the national action plans in Molinuevo and Consolini, 2022).

### **Mental health matters for both well-being and employment**

As the survey has shown, however, poor mental or physical health is intricately linked to labour market barriers. Those who indicated encountering at least one labour market barrier during their job search reported lower life satisfaction (scoring 6 on a scale from 0 to 10) than those who did not (who scored 7). The relationship is also straightforward in more specific mental health domains: those who experience a barrier feel less valued, less relaxed and more depressed. There are slight gender differences in reported social and mental well-being. Female respondents tend to feel slightly more valued and slightly more relaxed than male respondents. However, a higher proportion of women also report they feel depressed. A higher share of female respondents always feel downhearted, even those who did not report experiencing a labour market barrier (41%), whereas the respective share of men was 10 percentage points lower (31%). Regarding self-reported barriers among those not in employment, the difference is even starker. The majority of those who did not report any barrier feel valued (61%), relaxed (64%) and part of the community (57%), whereas more

than two-thirds (69%) of those who do report seeing barriers always feel downhearted and depressed.

### **Housing arrangements and location affect employment opportunities**

Adequate housing conditions are crucial for labour market integration. However, as the survey has shown, only about one-third of all the respondents (35%) live by themselves, and one of the most often reported problems with accommodation is lack of privacy (FRA, 2023). Other sources pointed to problems with location: jobs may not be available in the areas where accommodation is more accessible (for example, small villages). In larger cities, where employment opportunities are more promising, it is extremely difficult to find affordable and adequate housing, even if the government provides funding, as in, for example, Bulgaria or Hungary, or introduces regulations affecting wages, as in Estonia (see details in the country studies on Bulgaria, Hungary and Estonia, respectively (Eurofound, 2023)). However, the extent to which these measures can alleviate the serious underlying housing issues in all Member States, which are under pressure from increasing demand for accommodation, is questionable.

While the employment situation has improved since the time of the survey (i.e. the end of August to the end of September 2022), most countries face problems that are difficult to solve (finding adequate accommodation in areas where jobs are available, learning the host country's language, skill mismatch, recognition of qualifications). Challenges manifest, for example, in the types of jobs displaced people can get.

### **Sectoral differences in working conditions**

The survey data presented in this paper showed that almost one in four respondents who have looked for a job in the host country report that they could only find irregular jobs. People displaced from Ukraine tend to be employed in sectors such as construction, hospitality, wholesale and retail trade (European Commission, 2023a), where irregular/temporary jobs are over-represented.

Eurofound findings also confirm this sectoral profile. In Romania, many people displaced from Ukraine found jobs in retail, hotels, restaurants and catering, and construction; in Slovakia, they found jobs in industry (as operators), catering, cleaning and restaurants (Eurofound, 2023). Similar sectoral issues are noted in Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Slovenia. In Luxembourg, the newly arrived Ukrainians are employed in the hotel, restaurant and catering industry, whereas those who arrived before the war are employed in scientific and technical activities, and in the financial sector (Eurofound, 2023). Labour shortages in construction and tourism and related sectors seem to be a driving force behind the initiatives of attracting people displaced from Ukraine to these sectors



specifically. As was reported by sectoral organisations of the social partners, this is the case in construction in Italy and tourism in Portugal (Eurofound, 2023).

In Croatia, most people displaced from Ukraine are estimated to be employed in accommodation and food service activities; due to the gender pattern (they are mostly women) few have jobs in construction. The labour shortage is also an issue in Croatia, where it is most prevalent in healthcare, tourism and catering. To attract workers to these sectors and overcome the temporary nature of jobs there, a programme called Permanent Seasonal Worker was introduced in Croatia. This provides seasonal workers with more security: they can make use of certain income and pension insurance schemes out of season, which could also potentially help reduce uncertainties for Ukrainian jobseekers (Eurofound, forthcoming).

Fraudulent contracting could be an issue in sectors where refugees and migrants are over-represented. In particular, Eurofound has noted the risks for those involved in seasonal work in agriculture and tourism (Eurofound, 2016). Evidence shows that certain sectors involve risks to people displaced from Ukraine, too: the FRA survey revealed that issues with working conditions reported by women had occurred mostly in manufacturing (26%) and tourism/hospitality (16%). Among men, these issues were most common in construction (26%), manufacturing (22%) and transport/logistics (16%).

Among the challenging working conditions, most respondents reported the following: being underpaid or not paid for work; working without a contract or a contract not covering all working hours; and very long working hours. Working very long hours seems to be a problem especially for those who work without a contract: the data showed that among this group, more than one-third (34%) reported that they had to work very long hours (among those who had permanent, or temporary contract, this share was 16% and 19%, respectively).<sup>5</sup> The abuse of working time is in breach of the Article 31 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which provides every worker with ‘the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety, and dignity. Every worker has the right to limitation of maximum working hours, to daily and weekly rest periods and to an annual period of paid leave’.

Intentions of staying (or not staying) in the host country could affect the motivation of people displaced from Ukraine to integrate into the labour market and to learn the language of the host country. These intentions seem to vary by country, and this may, at least partly, explain the different employment levels of displaced people across the Member States. For example, in Poland, the proportion of displaced people who want to move to another country is at one-digit level (6–8%), whereas this proportion is higher in Hungary (18%) and Romania (22%) (UNHCR, 2022).

However, a range of findings suggest that a substantial number of the currently employed people displaced from Ukraine may eventually seek to change their job or employment conditions. As mentioned, a high proportion are in temporary jobs and without an adequate wage, others have issues with their qualifications not being recognised, and another group – even if a smaller proportion – may have encountered challenging working conditions. Regardless of their experiences of barriers so far, they might eventually improve their language skills, and obtain better knowledge of the labour market and living arrangements, which could enable them to seek improvements in their work and lives. If so, policies and measures facilitating labour market transitions will become essential, and public services should prepare for these beyond the current phase of initial adaptation.

Both specific measures to assist displaced Ukrainians to enter the labour market and the more general measures addressing other groups could have a positive, potentially synergetic effect in further raising the standards of work and employment in the EU – for all groups. The risk of labour market duality has increased as the host societies have become more diverse. It is known that some groups, including women and younger people, are the most affected by the harmful consequences of labour market segmentation (Eurofound, 2019). The emerging needs of other groups in vulnerable situations (other displaced third-country nationals; people with low levels of education; long-term unemployed people; ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer people) must continue to be a focus – not only to avoid any tensions, but also to prevent further labour market segmentation.

5 These figures are weighted data for the population aged 18+.



# 6 | Key findings and policy pointers

## Key findings

- The Member States provided people displaced from Ukraine with access to their labour markets immediately after their arrival – an important prerequisite for these people to start the process of seeking employment. The survey data confirms (and other research also suggested – see, for example, OECD, 2023) that the labour market inclusion of people displaced from Ukraine was faster than in the case of other groups of displaced people: according to the data of this survey, not only did a majority (62%) of people aged 18+ look for a job, but, out of them, 66% had already been employed in the host country by the end of summer/early autumn 2022.
- However, this survey confirmed that the employment rate varies considerably by country. In Estonia, the rate of those who were in paid work at the time of the survey was more than 40%, whereas elsewhere it was much lower; for example, it was around 14% in Germany. Evidence from other sources (for example, European Commission, 2023a; OECD, 2023) confirm the country differences.
- A lack of language knowledge is the labour market barrier indicated by the highest share of respondents.
- Among those who are looking for a job, the second most prominent barrier is that they can only find irregular work (23%).
- The data suggest that many of the jobs of people displaced from Ukraine are temporary: while 66% of those actively looking for a job had already worked in the host country, only 35% were in paid employment at the time of the survey. Eurofound's research findings also confirm that many people displaced from Ukraine work in sectors where temporary jobs dominate (tourism/hospitality, construction).
- Among those respondents who were not working at the time of the survey, after a lack of language knowledge, the second most important labour market barrier was family and care responsibilities. This points to the importance of adequate and affordable childcare and long-term care provision, and access to public services, including transport, as important prerequisites for this group's labour market inclusion.
- Both the descriptive data and the statistical analysis show that younger and well-educated respondents are more likely to experience at least one barrier while seeking employment. Similarly, among those who are out of work, young people

and highly qualified people report at least one barrier. At the same time, knowledge of language decreases the likelihood of reporting a barrier among people who are out of work.

- Those who have a tertiary or vocational education are more likely to indicate their qualifications not being recognised as a barrier than those who have only a secondary education.
- The survey showed that about one in five respondents perceived their own health as bad (19%) or very bad (2%) (FRA, 2023). This worrying issue is reflected in the data this paper focused on: of those who were out of work, a relatively high share (15%) identified their physical or mental health issues as at least one of the reasons why they could not work.

## Policy pointers

- **As the war is becoming protracted, and when the displaced Ukrainians will be able to return home remains uncertain, integration measures, including labour market inclusion, have come to the fore – and should continue to do so to alleviate the difficulties faced by displaced people.**
- **Due to their specific features and situation (their profile, in particular gender and family situation, dispersal across Member States, intention to return to Ukraine or move to another country), they need a specific, tailored and targeted approach to facilitate their access to the labour market: it is necessary for public employment services to prepare to facilitate the labour market transitions, and for social services to support displaced people by helping with care, health and possible housing challenges.**
- A high proportion of respondents indicated that poor mental or physical health status was a labour market barrier. This is understandable, as most of these people have had traumatic war experiences. Adequate psychological support may be conducive to preventing displaced people from being exposed to abusive situations not only in their everyday lives but also at work. Therefore, **access to healthcare, including mental health services, may be vital for labour market integration. Other public services (education, childcare, long-term care, adequate housing) and access to other goods and services are also important prerequisites for taking up employment. In addition to providing access to these services, their affordability and quality are also important.**

- The employment rates of displaced Ukrainians vary across countries. There may be distinct reasons for this relating to the country context (such as displaced people's intention to return to Ukraine or greater inclination to move to another country, and therefore greater uncertainty about staying; varying difficulties in learning the host country's language; presence or absence of a large diaspora). **The introduction of arrangements making labour market entry smoother would still be desirable (for instance, facilitating recognition of diplomas for teachers, and/or relaxing certain strict rules/regulations on the provision of private childcare, as in Poland, or allowing employers to evaluate the skills and certificates of displaced people without complete documentation, as in Slovakia (Eurofound, 2023)).**
- This paper shows that respondents regard the lack of or difficulties with recognition of qualifications/diplomas as one of the key barriers to their labour market entry. Therefore, **accelerating the procedures for recognition of qualifications/diplomas is important, particularly for young people. The European Commission's initiative to compare the European Qualifications Framework with the Ukrainian National Qualification Framework is a significant step in this direction (European Commission, 2023b), and Member States could usefully apply the outcomes of this initiative within their own specific country contexts.** Difficulties could lie in, for example, the differences in the duration of study required for certain professions: in Slovakia, a student needs 10 years of study to become a paediatrician, whereas in Ukraine the duration of study is only 6 years (Eurofound, 2023). Public employment services act as key service providers in integrating people displaced from Ukraine into the labour market. The services exchange information and experiences across Member States to facilitate the integration of displaced people into the labour market, while aiming to help people navigate overly bureaucratic procedures.
- A lack of language knowledge was reported as a key labour market barrier by most respondents, and Member States have already been focusing on the provision of language training. **Policymakers, however, ought to pay attention to young people and those with high educational attainment to unlock their potential faster. At the same time, adequate information and outreach activities are needed to offer language training to less educated groups. English language training seems a necessity in addition to training in the host country's language (which is already offered in various countries), especially for certain sectors and occupations.** For example, in Slovakia, according to a new law adopted in 2022, applicants working in the health sector need to speak either Slovak or English (Eurofound, 2023).
- This paper highlights that care responsibilities pose a serious barrier to accessing the labour market in the host country. **Due to the profile of people displaced from Ukraine (mostly women with children), improving access to childcare, especially early childhood education and care, is crucial.**
- The data presented in this paper shows that most respondents do not regard discrimination as a significant labour market barrier. **It is important, however, to make sure that people displaced from Ukraine are not underpaid. The EU Member States could make sure the available checks and balances are activated to prevent fraudulent work and risk of mistreatment. Cooperation with the social partners should be considered for both awareness raising and for finding optimal ways to address issues.**
- The survey data shows that a relatively high percentage of respondents (between 16% and 25% (FRA, 2023)) reported challenging working conditions in those sectors known to have significant labour shortages, for example tourism/hospitality. The evidence shows that countries want to attract people displaced from Ukraine to these sectors. Although more employment opportunities may facilitate labour market integration, **it is important to prevent not only any abusive practices (trade unions could be active in this regard) but also potential insecurity due to the temporary nature of jobs. Therefore, initiatives that help provide displaced people with an income and social security even out of season (in cases of seasonal jobs), as done in Croatia, seem to be examples of good practice.**
- There should be awareness of the more general challenge of labour market segmentation and the need for systematic measures to address the related risks.** Both specific measures to assist displaced Ukrainians to enter the labour market and more general measures addressing other groups could have a positive, potentially synergetic effect in further raising the standards of work and employment in the EU – for all groups.

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In responding to Russia's war against Ukraine, the EU activated its Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for people who fled the country, allowing them to settle in the EU and to access basic public services and the labour market. By spring 2023, more than 4.5 million people had made use of the TPD or similar national protection schemes in the EU. In 2022, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights conducted an online survey among people displaced from Ukraine. Eurofound has analysed the survey results on their experiences when seeking to access employment. This paper highlights the main barriers that displaced people encountered and suggests ways to facilitate their inclusion.

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