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Centre



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Displaced from Ukraine to Bern

A case study on journeys, living conditions, livelihoods, and future intentions

This briefing paper is part of a series of three “sister” MMC publications covering displacement of people fleeing Ukraine in Europe, focusing on the cities of [Berlin](#), [Bern](#), [Warsaw](#). You can find all three publications [here](#).

Acknowledgement: This document uses MMC data to explore the profiles of people from Ukraine currently residing in Bern, their aspirations, journeys, situation in the host city, assistance and needs, livelihoods, and future migration intentions. The content of this report is entirely the responsibility of MMC. The data used in this paper stems from a research project conducted in partnership with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, funded by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). MMC extends its gratitude to the enumerators who conducted the data collection and to all respondents involved in this study.

Disclaimer: The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Danish Refugee Council or any of the donors supporting the work of MMC or this report.

Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022 triggered a displacement crisis, which resulted in millions of people being internally displaced in Ukraine and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries in Europe, Russia and beyond. The activation of the 2001 European Union (EU) Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in March 2022¹ simplified the refugee registration process across EU countries for Ukrainians fleeing the conflict, as well as for specific groups of non-EU nationals.² The TPD grants these displaced people an official status and access to services and rights, including employment, education, social welfare, and freedom of movement within the EU. As of 23 June 2023, 6 million refugees from Ukraine have been registered across Europe.³

In Switzerland, refugees from Ukraine are registered under Protection Status S (Schutzstatus S), which was activated on 12 March 2022.⁴ As of 30 April 2023, 65,644 refugees were registered across Switzerland,⁵ 97.5% of whom are Ukrainian nationals.⁶ These refugees are assigned to cantons proportionally to population size. Since the canton of Bern is the second most populous canton in Switzerland, it received the second highest number of refugees, at 7,942 as of 30 April 2022 (Figure 1); the most populous canton, Zürich, received 11,538 people.

Although the activation of the TPD (and Status S in Switzerland) for people fleeing Ukraine has been successful in many regards, the war in Ukraine continues, and more information is needed on the profiles of refugees in European cities, their needs, their living conditions, their vulnerabilities, and their aspirations. This briefing paper attempts to fill this gap by utilizing primary data collected in Bern by MMC, while two other briefing papers focus on [Berlin](#) and [Warsaw](#).

1 Article 5 of Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001; Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection.

2 In addition to Ukrainian nationals, the Temporary Protection Directive also applies to “Non-Ukrainian nationals and stateless people who had refugee status or equivalent national protection on 24 February 2022 and their family members, nationals of non-EU countries other than Ukraine and stateless people legally residing in Ukraine on 24 February with a valid permanent residence permit and are unable to go back to their country of origin in safe conditions” or additional categories of displaced persons selected by EU Member States. Source: European Commission (2022) [Temporary Protection Directive Factsheet](#)

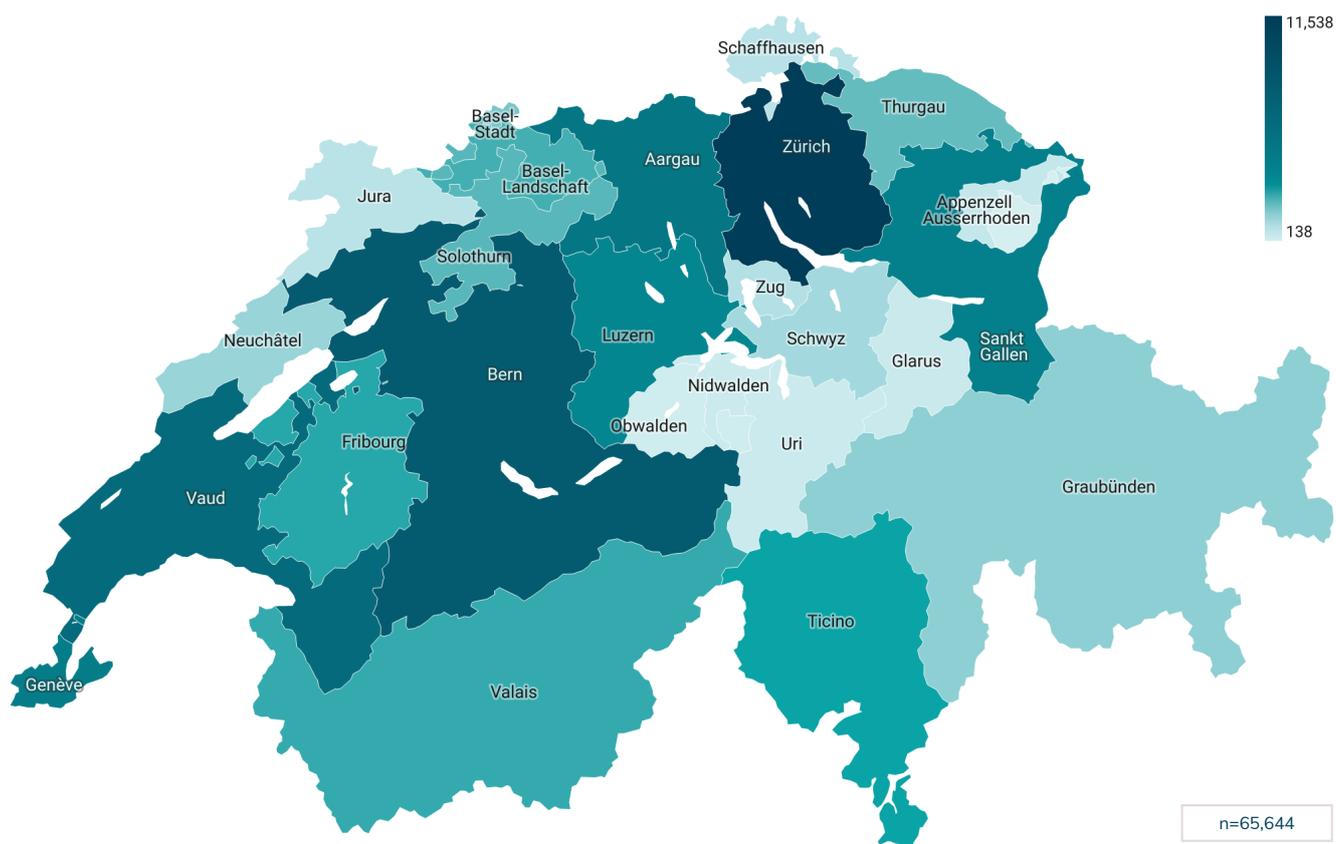
3 UNHCR (2023) [Ukraine Refugee Situation – Operational Data Portal](#)

4 Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), 2023, [Asile: Statistiques de 2023](#)

5 *Ibid.* Note, this corresponds to approximately 7 refugees per 1,000 residents.

6 Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations (SEM) - Etat-major Information et communication (2023) [Demandes d'asiles 2018-2023](#)

Figure 1. Ukrainian Refugees in Switzerland by Canton, as of 30 April 2023⁷



Methodology

This analysis is based on 603 face-to-face quantitative surveys conducted between January and April 2023 in the canton of Bern, with 422 in the city of Bern, 103 in Bernese Oberland, and 78 in Bern-Mittelland, to ensure a mix of urban and rural areas. All respondents had left Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022. MMC utilised a purposive sampling approach, while ensuring to interview a minimum of 20% of men,⁸ and to include a broad range of age groups from 18 to 81 years old. Although the sampling method used was not representative, the number of interviewees corresponds to 7.6% of all refugees from Ukraine in the canton of Bern. The sample aimed to achieve diversity and respondents were primarily identified through the social networks of enumerators, ensuring access to targeted and diverse places of residence such as hostels, shelters and private accommodations.

Furthermore, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants in Bern and remotely, between December 2022 and April 2023. These key informants were identified based on their expertise and included representatives from NGOs, community leaders, and researchers, as well as representatives of local and federal authorities.

⁷ Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), 2023, [Asile: Statistiques de 2023](#)

⁸ As per Ukraine martial law, most men aged 18-60 years are required to stay in Ukraine to participate to war effort or for conscription. Men included in the sample are men who fit exemption criteria (see the 'Drivers and Aspirations' section for more details), or men who managed to leave the country in violation of Ukrainian martial law. The sample approach does not distinguish between both groups. For exemption criteria as of 2023, see VisitUkraine.today (2023) [Departure of men abroad in 2023: what has changed for military servicemen](#)

Key findings

Journey

- Most respondents left Ukraine in the first five weeks after the war began, and arrived in Switzerland 6 days after departure, on average.
- 58% of respondents used their own money to fund their journey, with a median amount paid of 200 euros.
- 98% of respondents did not pay someone to cross the border illegally, and faced no incidents on the route.

Drivers and aspirations

- By far, war was the main reason for leaving Ukraine, with older participants more concerned about living through the winter than younger respondents, and men more concerned about conscription than women (although fear of conscription was very low, even amongst men).
- Respondents chose Bern for a wide range of reasons, mostly because it was recommended by other people or because they had family or friends there.

Discrimination, relationship with the locals, and accommodation

- 92% of respondents reported that they never felt discriminated in Bern, and 94% of respondents stated that their relationship with the locals was good or very good.
- More than two-thirds of respondents lived in a house or apartment for their family only, which is considerably higher than in Berlin and Warsaw.

Assistance and needs

- 74% of respondents received a wide range of assistance from Swiss authorities (mostly healthcare, language lessons, and support to find employment); and 65% of them reported not receiving any help from NGOs or civil society.

- The respondents' most cited needs were employment (49%), cash (22%), and accommodation (18%); when in need of support, most respondents turn to friends and relatives in Bern.
- When looking for services, most respondents use messaging apps, social media, and websites, with important differences in terms of gender and age (for example, older respondents use in-person interaction more than younger respondents).

Livelihood and income

- Less than 20% of respondents are in paid employment, with only 10% having a regular paid job; these low figures might be explained partly by the gender of respondents (as women in charge of childcare faced additional challenges), and more importantly by a lack of skills in the local language, which is, however, improving.
- Respondents who do have a paid job work mainly in the cleaning and restaurant industry (for women) or in construction and transport (for men); most of them found their job through friends, family, or their accommodation host.
- 60% of the same respondents stated that there were satisfied with their job, with women more satisfied than men.

Returns and future intentions

- A large majority of respondents (77%) had not been back to Ukraine since the war began; those who went were primarily women, had been back only once, and stayed for one week to one month; the main reason to go back was to visit family or friends, and for administrative reasons.
- Respondents were evenly split concerning their plans for the future, with 35% planning to permanently return to Ukraine, 32% planning to permanently stay in Switzerland, and another 30% having no plan.
- More men than women, and more younger respondents than older respondents, plan to stay permanently in Switzerland.
- To return to Ukraine permanently, respondents would unsurprisingly need the war to end, but also cited reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine, especially women.

Profiles and legal status of respondents

Nearly all (98%⁹) respondents in Bern were Ukrainian nationals.¹⁰ Out of all respondents, 80% were women and 20% were men. 31% of respondents were aged 18-36 and 69% were aged 37-81 (mean=44; median=42; Table 1).¹¹

Most respondents were married before leaving Ukraine (46% overall, and 61% for men), did not have children under 18 years old (56%, with no difference between younger and older age groups), had a high education level (69% completed a university degree), and had an income before leaving (82%). Most respondents reported knowing both the Ukrainian (98%) and Russian (92%) languages, and 35% also reported knowing German (i.e., the main language in the canton of Bern).

Table 1. Number of respondents by gender and age group

Age group	Gender				Total
	Women	Men	Refused	Unknown	
18-36	147	37	0	2	186
37-81	324	84	1	3	412
Unknown	0	0	0	5	5
Total	471	121	1	10	603

Most respondents (92%) had never lived outside Ukraine (for more than 2 months) before the Russian invasion. Before leaving, most respondents were living in an urban area (90%), with Kyiv (21%), Kharkiv (11%), Odesa (6%), and Zaporizhzhia (5%) being the most frequently cited cities. The oblasts with more respondents were Kyivska (14%), Kharkivska (11%), and Dnipropetrovska (7%), see Figure 2.

In Bern, 44% of all respondents were living with their child/children, while 29% were living with their partner, and 22% on their own. A larger proportion of women (46%) than men (35%) were living with their child/children, whereas a larger proportion of men (56%) than

women (22%) were living with their partner. 25% of older participants (age group 37-81) were living on their own, compared to 15% amongst the younger participants (age group 18-36).

As for the legal status of respondents, all but one had temporary protection status (S) or another legal authorization to stay in Switzerland.¹²

At the time of interview, the median duration of stay of respondents in Bern was 327 days, which is very similar to Berlin (331 days) and Warsaw (325), and which is arguably enough time to provide an accurate picture of the respondents' experience in these three cities.

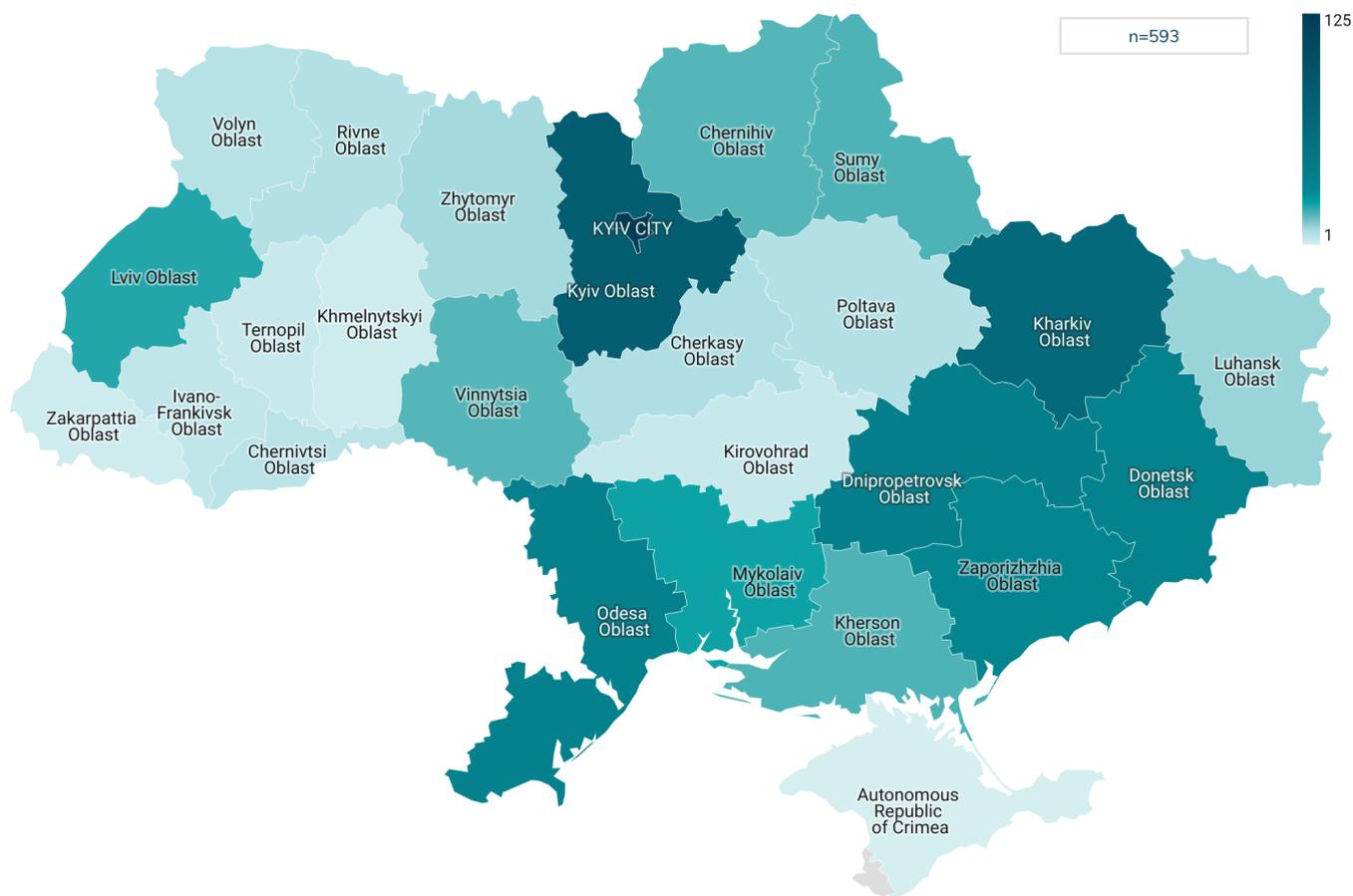
9 All percentages in this briefing paper were computed after the removal of missing (or unknown) data points. Furthermore, all percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, except in graphs.

10 The other nationalities were: Belarus: 2; Armenia: 1, Czech Republic: 1, Iraq: 1, Kyrgyzstan: 1, Russia: 1; Don't know: 1; Refused: 1. Despite our efforts to interview non-Ukrainian respondents, within the limited timeframe and the given resources for this research, we could only find a few in Bern. For this reason, unlike the other twin publications covering Berlin and Warsaw, we cannot present analyses disaggregated by nationality for Bern.

11 For all analyses, we used the same age groups for the 3 cities to make comparisons easier. A disadvantage of this method, however, is that age groups are not perfectly balanced for each city, as is the case for Bern.

12 Temporary protection: 584; Permanent resident: 3; Applied for permit/visa: 2; Temporary resident: 2; Refugee: 1; No legal documents to stay: 1.

Figure 2. In which region did you live in Ukraine before coming to Switzerland?



MMC's understanding of 'smuggler' and 'smuggling'

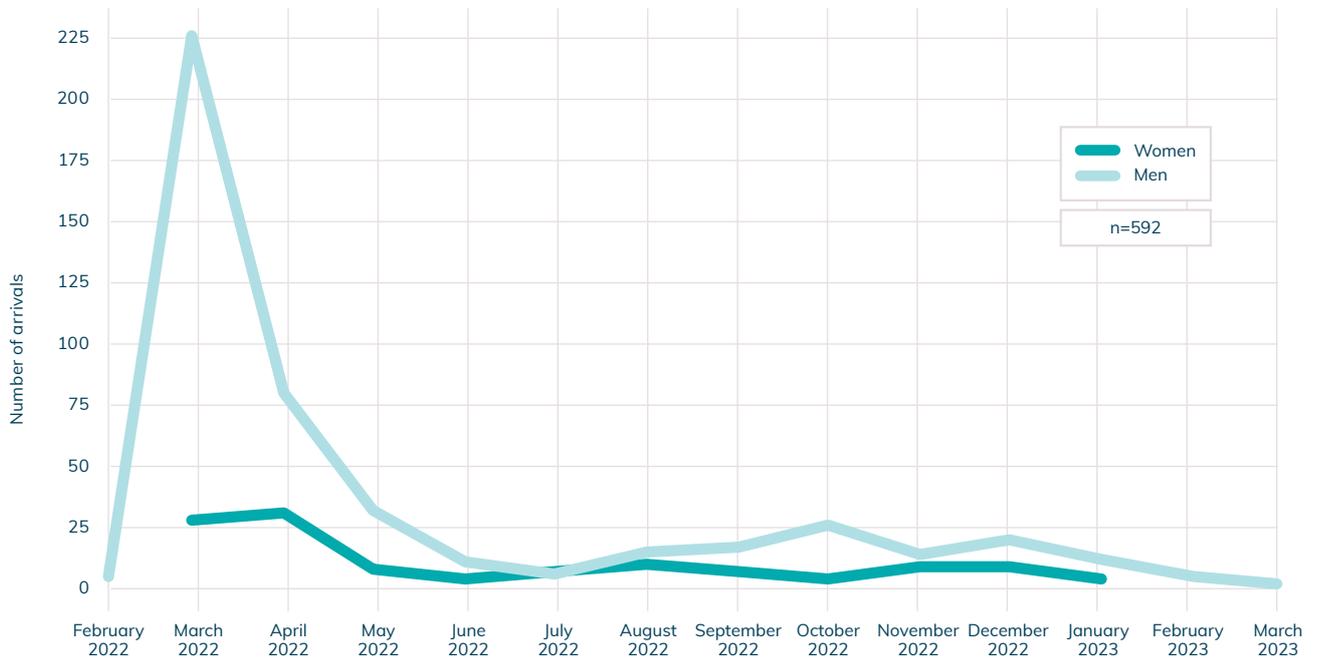
MMC uses a broad interpretation of the terms 'smuggler' and 'smuggling', one which encompasses various activities — paid for or otherwise compensated by refugees and migrants — that facilitate irregular migration. These include irregularly crossing international borders and internal checkpoints, as well as providing documents, transportation, and accommodation. This approach reflects refugees' and migrants' perceptions of smuggling and the facilitation of irregular movement. Our interpretation is deliberately broader than the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants' definition. However, this does not imply that MMC considers all activities it includes in its broad understanding of smuggling to be criminal offences. MMC prefers

to use the term 'human smuggling' instead of 'migrant smuggling' as smuggling involves both refugees and migrants.

This publication is produced in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants. The Observatory uses the word 'smuggler' when it can reasonably be assumed that the crime of migrant smuggling is constituted, as per Article 3 of the UN Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, while the word 'facilitator' is used whenever the elements of (a) irregular entry and/or (b) financial or material benefit, could reasonably be assumed not to be in evidence. www.unodc.org/res/som

Journey

Figure 3. When did you arrive in Switzerland?



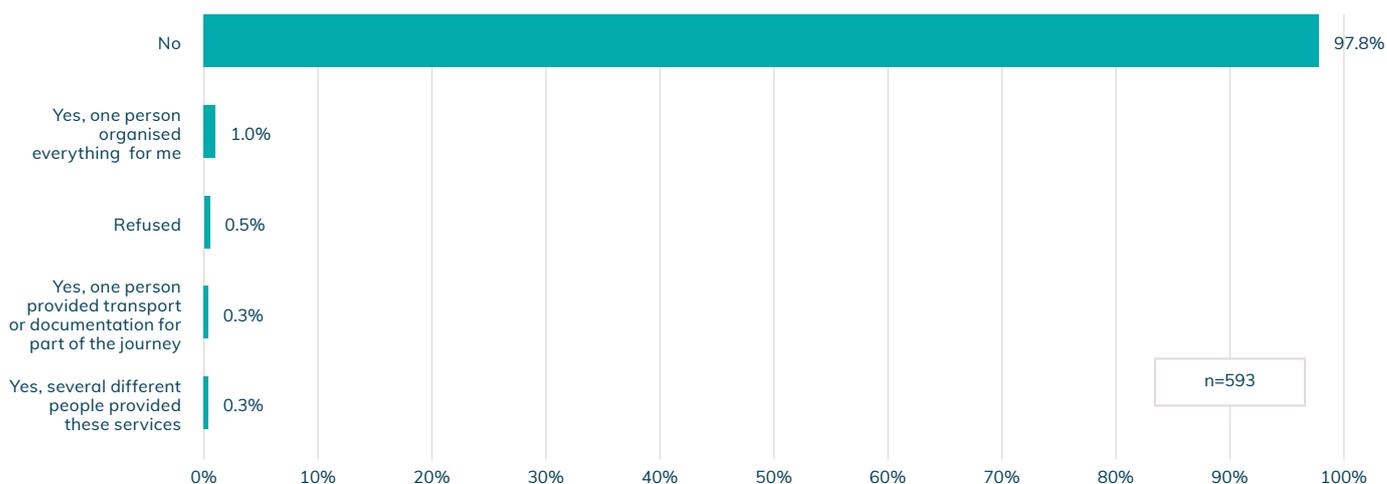
Most respondents left Ukraine between 24 February 2022 and the end of March 2022 (58%), and most arrived in Bern in March and April 2022 (62%), see Figure 3. The median journey duration was six days (mean=20), and most respondents used the train (46%) and/or bus (45%) as means of transport.¹³

To fund their journey, most respondents used their own money/savings (58%), and/or received support from humanitarian organizations (33%, which is higher than in both Berlin and Warsaw). Amongst the respondents who had to pay and could remember how much they paid (N=227), the median amount paid was 200 euros (mean: 277 euros), with men (median=226) paying slightly more than women (median=182), and younger people (median=176) paying slightly less than older people (median=200).¹⁴ Out of all respondents, 96% stated that they had enough money to pay for their journey.

¹³ Respondents could choose several answers.

¹⁴ The amount includes transport, smugglers, bribes, and pre-departure expenses. All currencies were converted to Euros on the same reference day. Extreme outliers were removed before computation, using the IQR method (threshold=.05/.95).

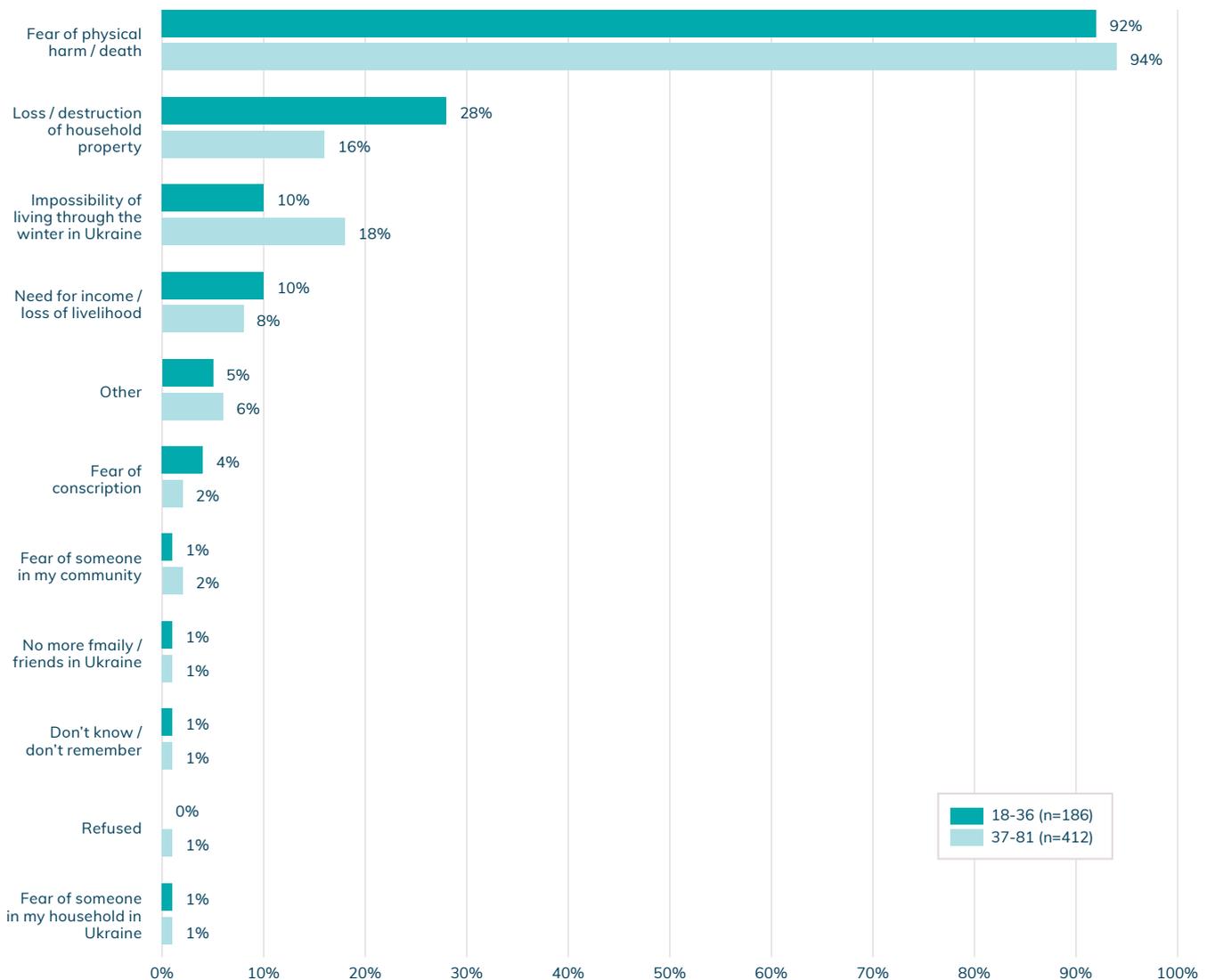
Figure 4. Did you pay anyone to provide transportation or documents to cross the border illegally during your journey? (not an official)



Importantly, 98% of all respondents reported that they had not used a smuggler nor had to pay anybody to cross a border illegally (Figure 4). Likewise, 98% of all respondents did not have to pay a bribe at any time, and 94% did not face or witness any problems on the way. The almost complete absence of smuggling from Ukraine to and within Europe at the height of the displacement crisis, compared with the use of smugglers by people fleeing other crisis situations such as Afghanistan or Syria, strongly suggests the effectiveness of legal mechanisms to provide Protection Status S to people from Ukraine, as a legal pathway which completely prevents smuggling.

Drivers and aspirations

Figure 5. What effects of the war drove your decision to leave Ukraine?



Unsurprisingly, most respondents cited the war as their main reason to leave Ukraine, with a slightly higher proportion of women (97%) than men (91%) stating this. **Specifically, fear of physical harm or death was most frequently cited (94%), followed by the loss or destruction of household property (19%), the impossibility of living through the winter in Ukraine (16%), and the need for an income following loss of livelihood (9%).**¹⁵ There were few differences in terms of gender and age group, although younger respondents cited the loss or destruction of property (28%) more often than older respondents (16%), whereas older respondents cited the impossibility of living through the winter (18%) more

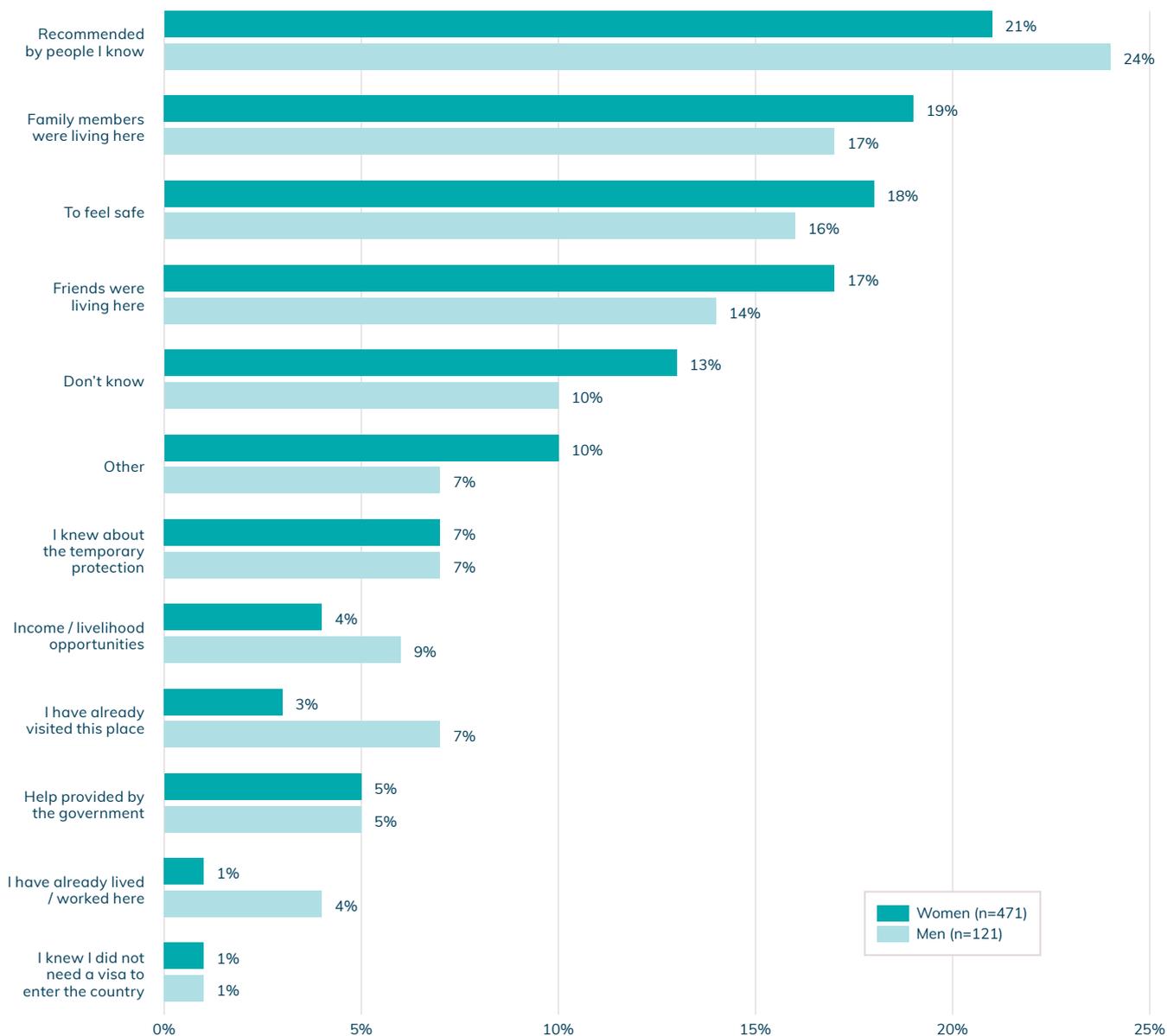
often than younger respondents (10%, see also Figure 5). Unsurprisingly, men cited fear of conscription (7%, which is arguably very low¹⁶) more often than women (1%). The Ukraine government has put in place several exemptions to the conscription of men (including men with at least three minor children, single fathers/guardians, individuals with special health conditions, men above 60 years old, and certain categories of transportation workers, scientists, NGO workers and politicians).¹⁷ The low level of fear of conscription reported by men, as well as the low number of respondents reportedly paying to cross the border illegally, suggest a significant proportion of men interviewed fit these criteria.

¹⁵ Respondents could choose several answers.

¹⁶ Indeed, this figure is lower than in both Berlin and Warsaw, where 18% and 28% of men cited this reason, respectively.

¹⁷ VisitUkraine.today (2023) [Departure of men abroad in 2023: what has changed for military servicemen.](#)

Figure 6. Why did you decide to come here?



Respondents reported that they had chosen Bern because it was recommended by other people (21%), because family members were living there (19%; note, 17% also cited friends living there), or simply to feel safe (17%).¹⁸ There were no major differences in terms of gender and age group. Interestingly, the inverse was true in Berlin. Other differences between genders can be seen in Figure 6. In general, the reasons for choosing Bern as a destination were complex and multifaceted, with most respondents providing multiple reasons. This may be explained by the fact that the activation of the TPD opened up the possibility for Ukrainians fleeing the conflict to reach any European country of their choice (including Switzerland, which applies a similar protection mechanism through Protection Status S). As a result, people fleeing Ukraine could carefully and freely evaluate

their destination choices, based on information available. This is of course only true for those who have the resources (financial and social capital) to move further than the first place of safety (internal displacement or neighbouring countries).

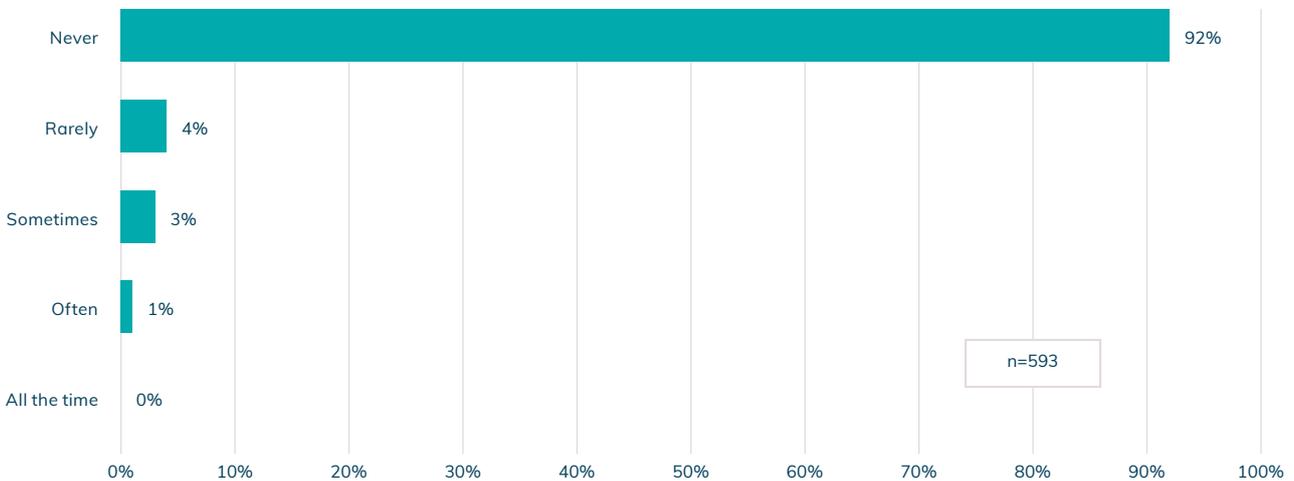
Respondents were also asked whether anything or anyone had influenced their decision to come to Bern. The most common answer was that nobody influenced them (30%), followed by family and friends in another country (23%), parents, spouse, and their children (10% each).¹⁹ Only 16 respondents cited information on social media as an influence, and less than five respondents cited smugglers. These results are a reminder of the importance of social networks and links with diaspora for the choice of destination.

¹⁸ Respondents could choose several answers.

¹⁹ Respondents could choose several answers.

Discrimination, relationships with the hosting population and accommodation

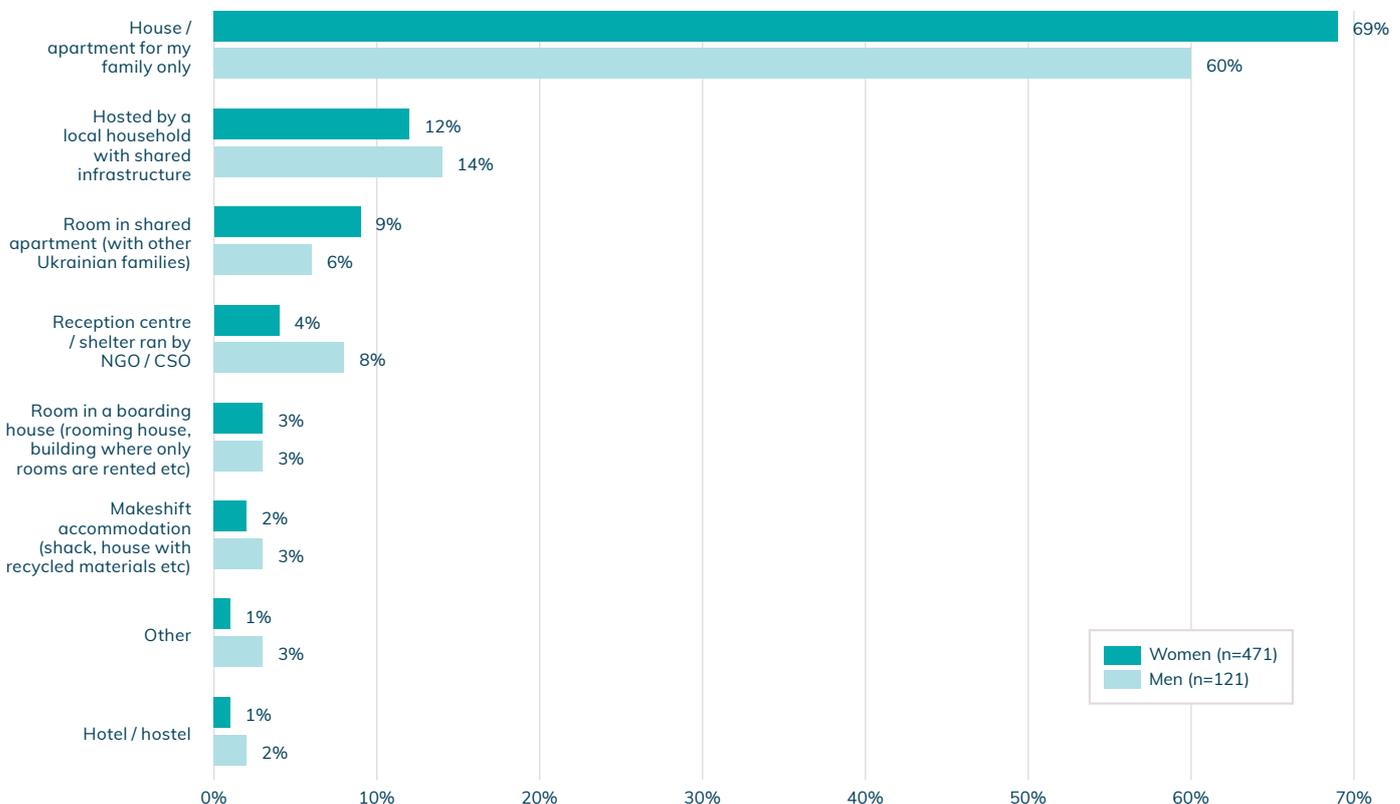
Figure 7. Since you arrived here, have you or anyone in your family felt any discrimination?



Most respondents reported that they had never felt discriminated in Bern (92%, Figure 7). Likewise, 94% of respondents stated that they have very good or good relationships with the locals, and 82% reported that they are very satisfied to rather satisfied in Bern. Several

key informants reported that it was generally more difficult for people from Ukraine to rent accommodation, despite fitting eligibility criteria, owing to the precarity of their situation.²⁰

Figure 8. What kind of accommodation do you currently live in?



²⁰ Interviews with a Ukrainian CSO and social workers in Bern, April 2023.

More than two-thirds of respondents (67%) were living in a house or apartment for their family only, which is considerably higher than in both Berlin (30%) and Warsaw (41%). There were some small differences in terms of gender (for example, slightly more men were living in reception centres or shelters than women, Figure 8), but not in terms of age group. This can be partially explained by the social support system in place in Bern: social benefits provided to people from Ukraine are sufficient for beneficiaries to rent accommodation meeting social standards.²¹ Furthermore, most respondents had an official rental contract (89%), and 6% were (non-paying) guests. Only less than five respondents reported not having an official accommodation arrangement.

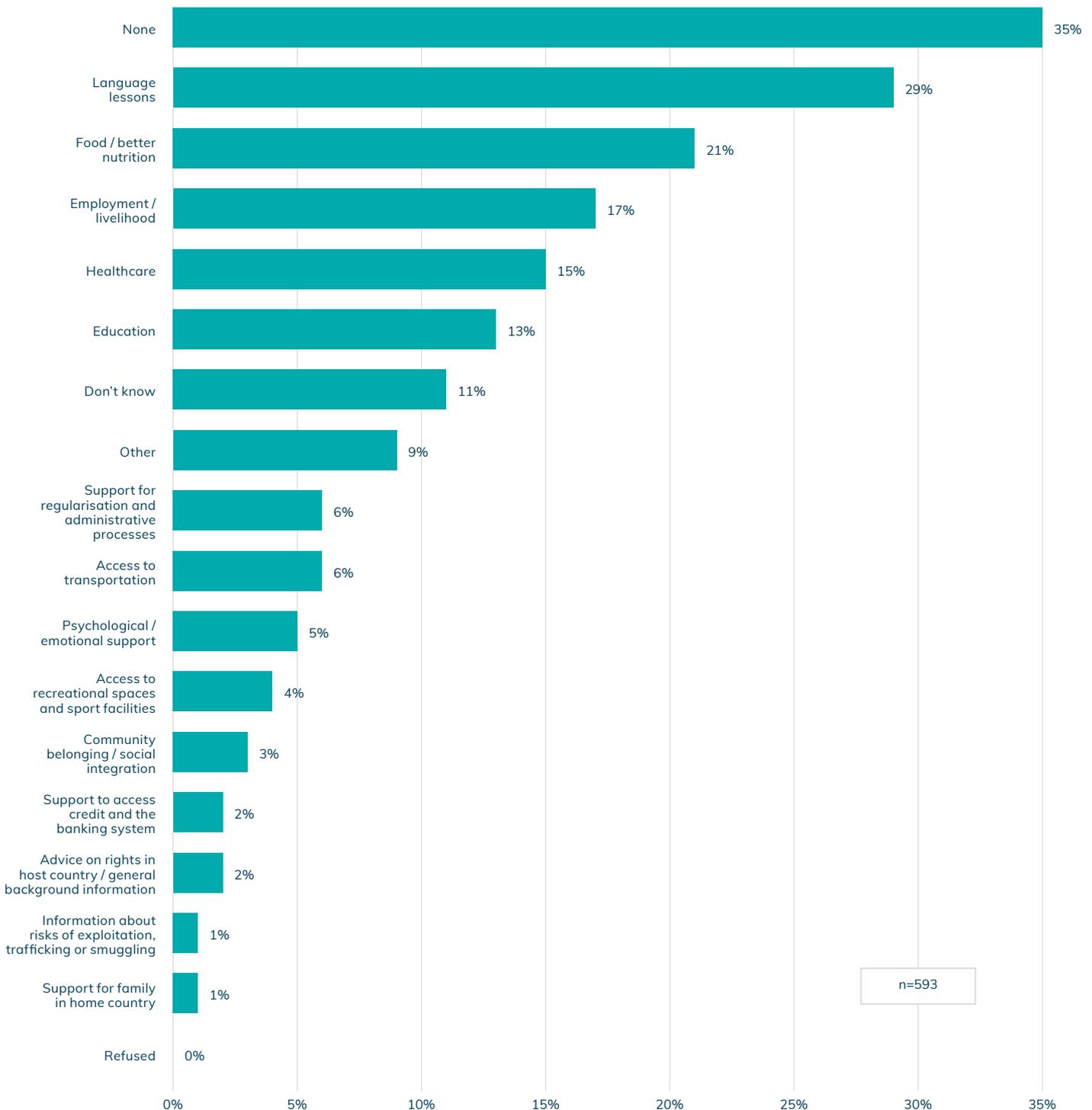
21 This situation is specific to the city of Bern and is not representative of the housing experience in other cantons of Switzerland, where social benefits and the housing market differ greatly. Interview with a Ukrainian CSO and social workers in Bern, April 2023.

Assistance and needs

Respondents received a wide range of assistance from the Swiss authorities, including healthcare (74% of all respondents), language lessons (61%), employment

(54%), education (37%), support for administrative processes (35%), and transportation (34%).²² Less than 4% of respondents reported receiving no assistance.

Figure 9. Arriving here, have you or anyone in your family received any kind of assistance from NGOs, civil society or community?

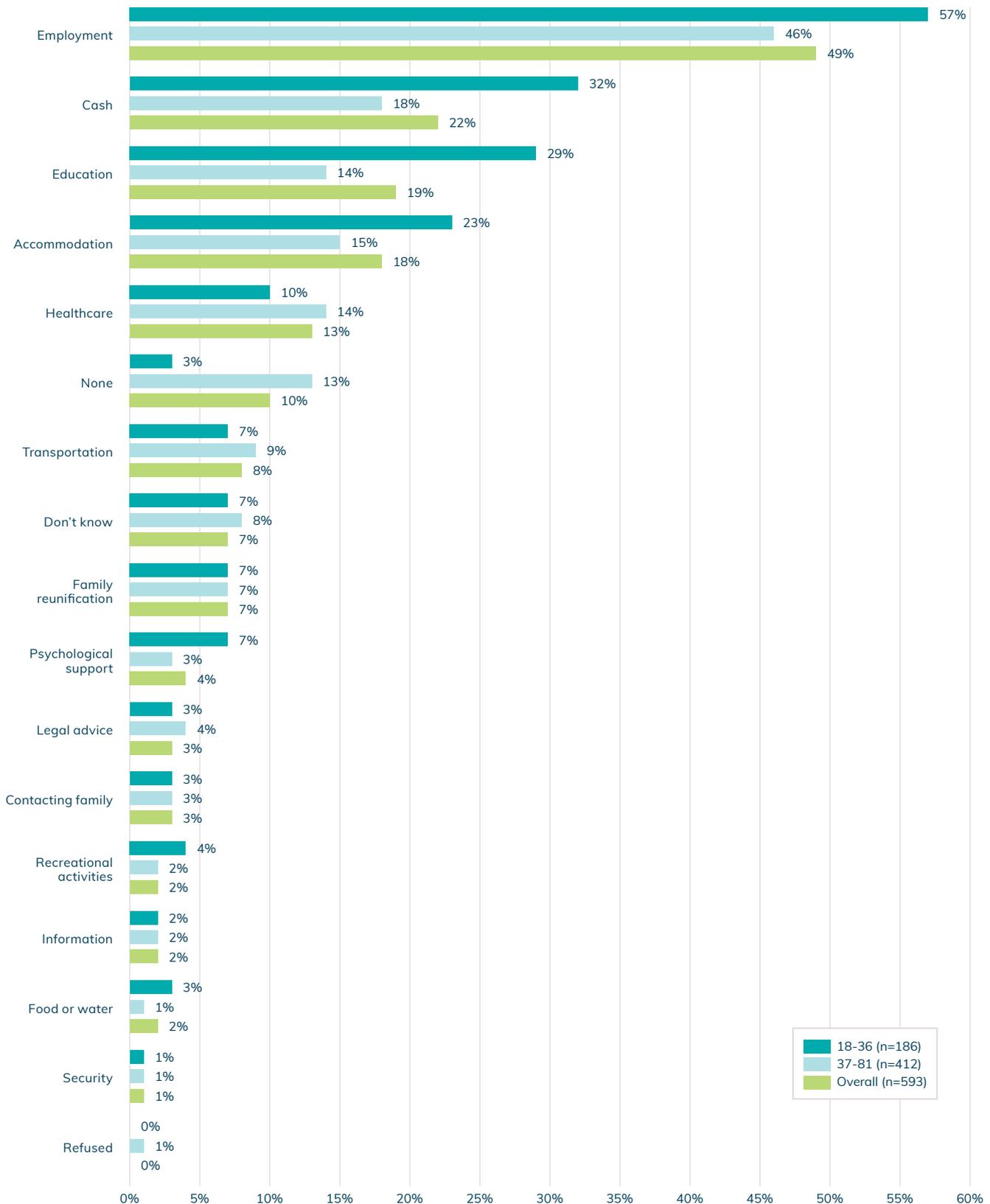


²² Respondents could choose several answers.

Slightly less respondents (65%) reported receiving assistance from NGOs, the civil society, or the Ukrainian community in Bern (Figure 9), highlighting the complementarity between authorities and NGOs in providing services. Those who did receive help most

often mentioned language lessons (29%), food (21%), employment (17%), healthcare (15%), and education (13%), with only small differences in terms of gender and age group.

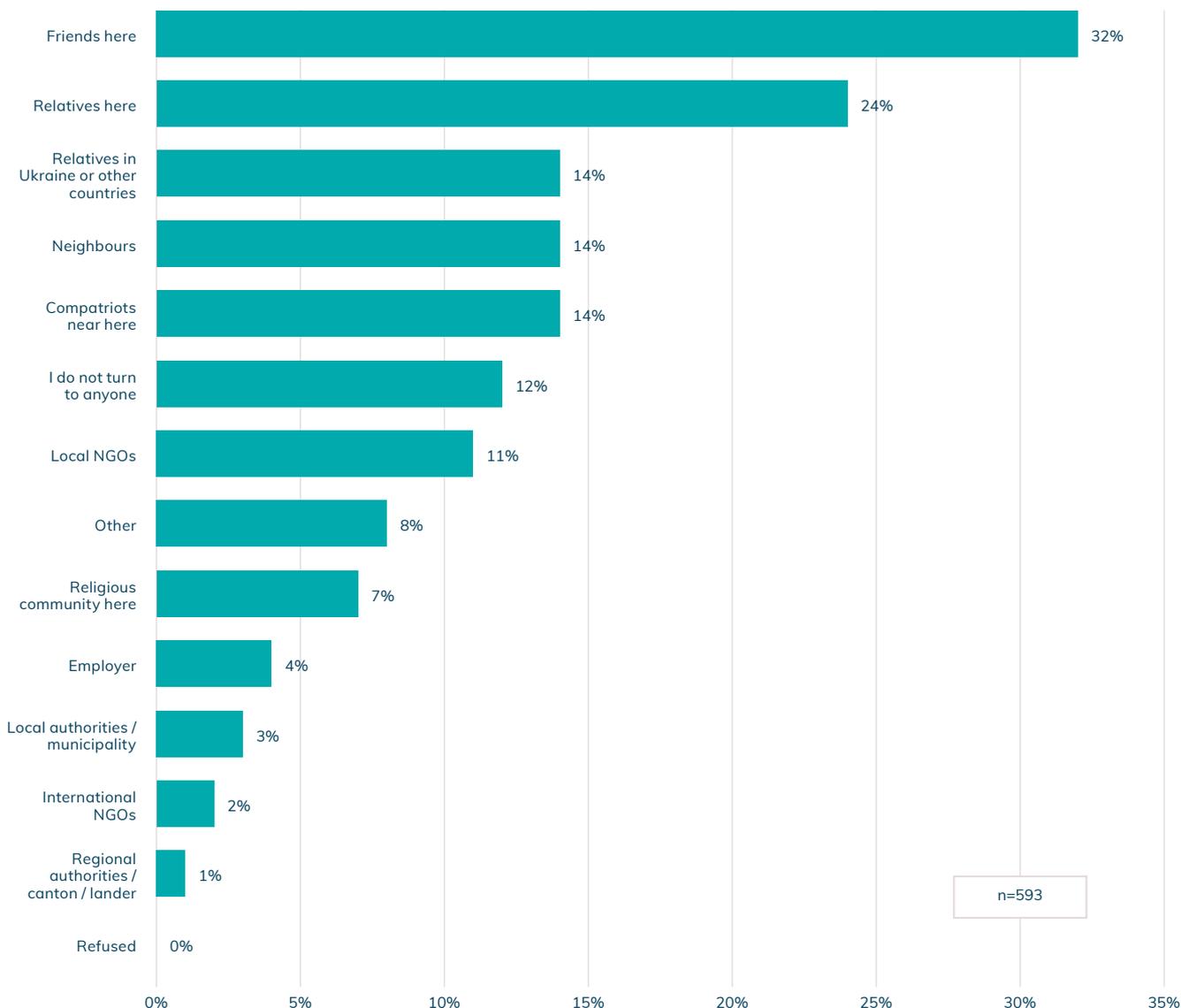
Figure 10. What are your most pressing needs at the moment? (By age group)



Respondents were also asked what their most pressing needs were at the moment of the interview.²³ **For almost one out of two people, employment was a pressing need (49%). Cash (22%), education (19%), accommodation (18%), and healthcare (13%), then, were most frequently cited, while family reunification and psychosocial support were cited by 7% and 4% of respondents, respectively (Figure 10).** Furthermore, 10% of all respondents stated that they had no pressing need at the moment. As in Berlin and Warsaw, though, key informants interviewed reported that psychological trauma was widespread among Ukrainian refugees in Bern, sometimes in severe forms, suggesting the need for psychological support may be underreported or little understood by Ukrainians.²⁴

There were interesting differences in terms of gender and age group. For example, employment and cash were cited by more men than women, whereas education and psychosocial support were cited by slightly more women than men.²⁵ The differences between age groups were larger, with younger respondents reporting more needs than older respondents, especially for employment (57% vs. 46%), cash (32% vs. 18%), education (29% vs. 14%), and accommodation (24% vs. 15%). Qualitative data also suggests that older people are keener to go back to Ukraine rather than staying in Switzerland in the long term, and in some cases, attach less importance to the accommodation they are in, since they consider it temporary (some, for instance, were willing to stay in the reception centre, instead of moving to independent accommodation).²⁶ There were some exceptions, including healthcare and transportation (Figure 10).

Figure 11. When you need support, who do you turn to?



23 Respondents could choose several answers.

24 Interview with a Ukrainian psychologist in Bern, April 2023.

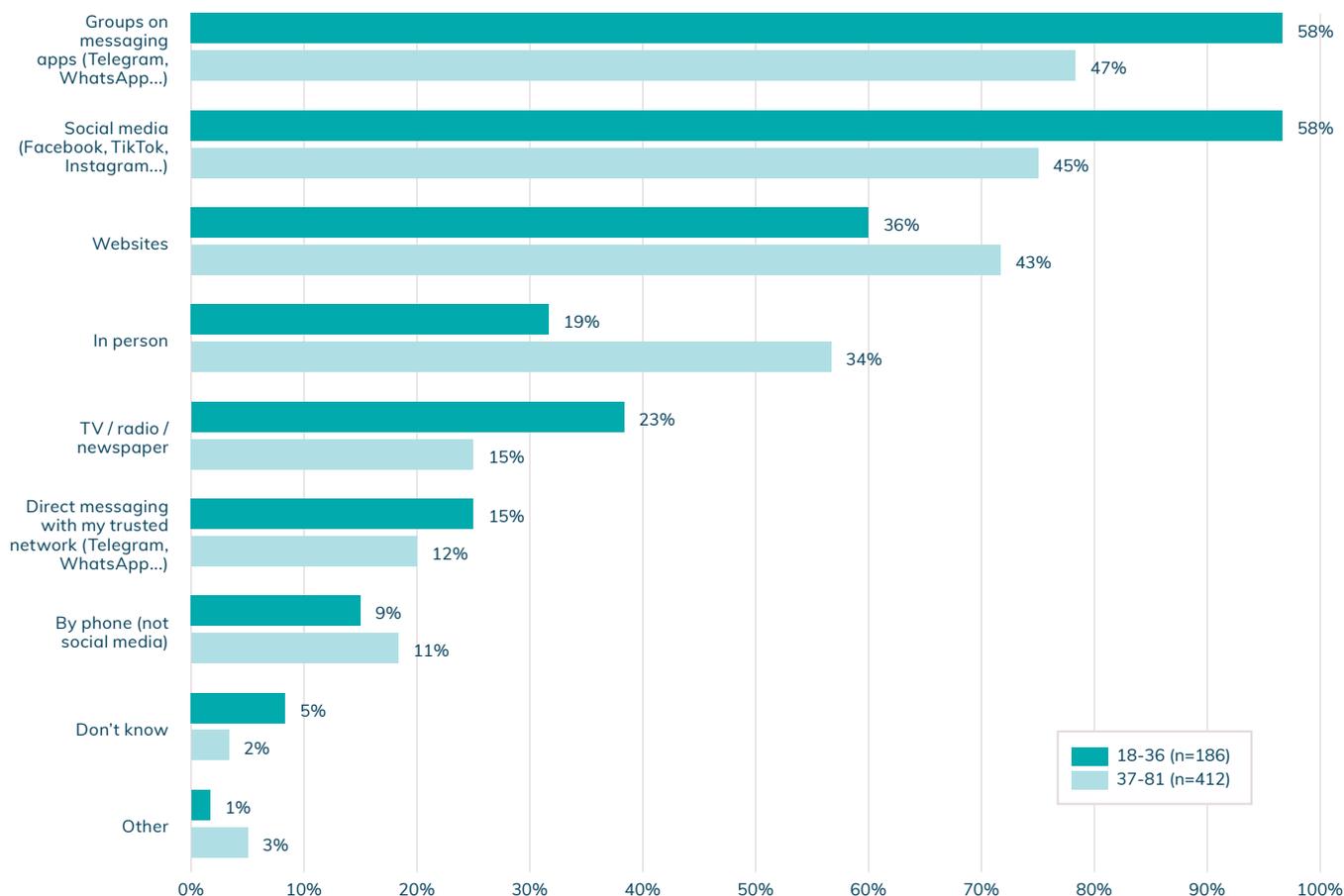
25 Employment: Men=55%, Women=48%; Cash: Men = 27%, Women=21%; Education: Women=19%, Men=17%; Psychosocial support: Women=5%, Men=2%.

26 Interview with staff at one of Bern's reception centres, April 2023.

When in need of support, most respondents report turning to friends (32%) and relatives (24%) in Bern, indicating the existence of a fairly strong social network in the city. This was followed by relatives abroad (14%), neighbours (14%), and other compatriots (14%), Figure

11.²⁷ There were, again, interesting differences in terms of gender, with more women (34%) than men (23%) reporting turning to friends, and more men (17%) than women (10%) not seeking support.

Figure 12. What are your preferred channels to look for information about services you need?



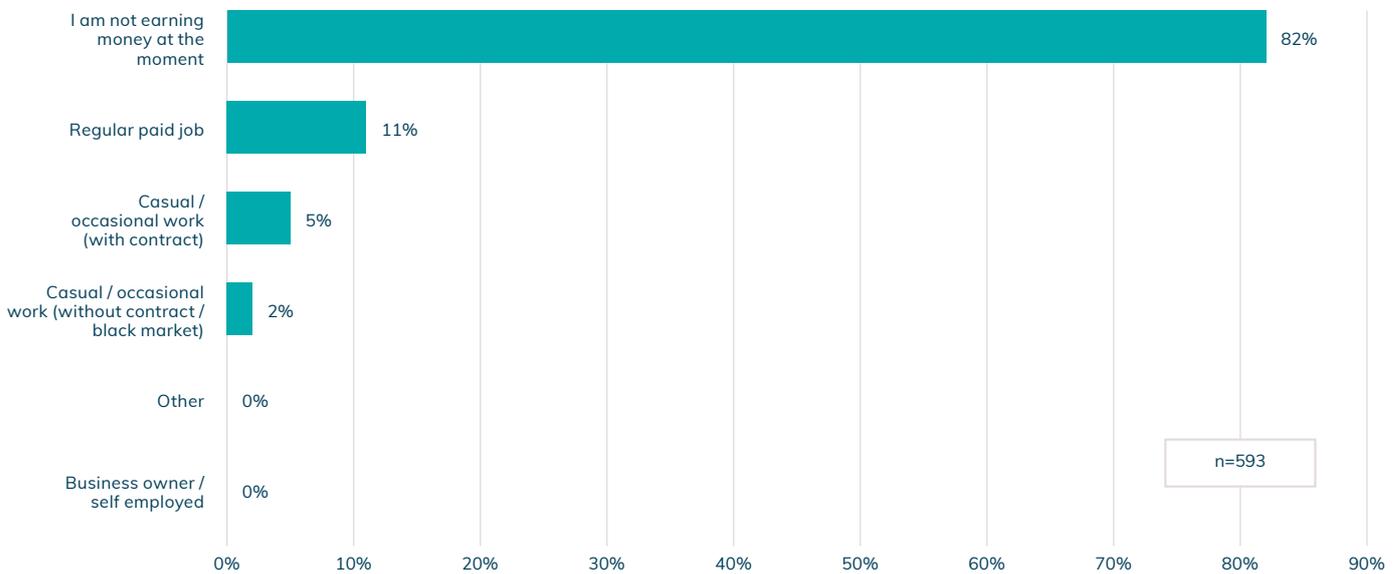
Respondents were also asked what their preferred channels of information about services were. **Although 29% of respondents cited in-person interactions, there is a high reliance on messaging apps (50%) and social media (49%) to get information,** especially amongst women (10 percentage points more than men for both messaging apps and social media) and younger respondents, although older respondents do also use message apps and social media very often (Figure 12).²⁸ Older respondents tend to use websites (43%) and in-person interactions (34%) more than younger respondents (websites: 36%; in-person: 19%).

²⁷ Respondents could choose several answers.

²⁸ Respondents could choose several answers.

Livelihood and income

Figure 13. Are you earning money now?



In Bern, less than 20% of respondents were in paid employment, with only 10% having a regular paid job (Figure 13; note there were only marginal differences in terms of gender and age).²⁹ This is consistent with official numbers, reporting between 13% and 15% of Ukrainians in Bern are registered with some form of employment.³⁰ These figures are low if we consider that before leaving Ukraine, 82% of respondents had an income, of whom 56% had a regular paid job. These low figures can be

partially qualified by the fact that some respondents do not look for paid work because they take care of the home and children (11%, with nearly all being women). Although key informants reported they do not know why the employment rate is so low,³¹ previous research has found that employment rate amongst refugees from Ukraine has tended to increase over time in Switzerland (for example, the employment rate increased from 3% in May 2022 to 14% in November 2022).³²

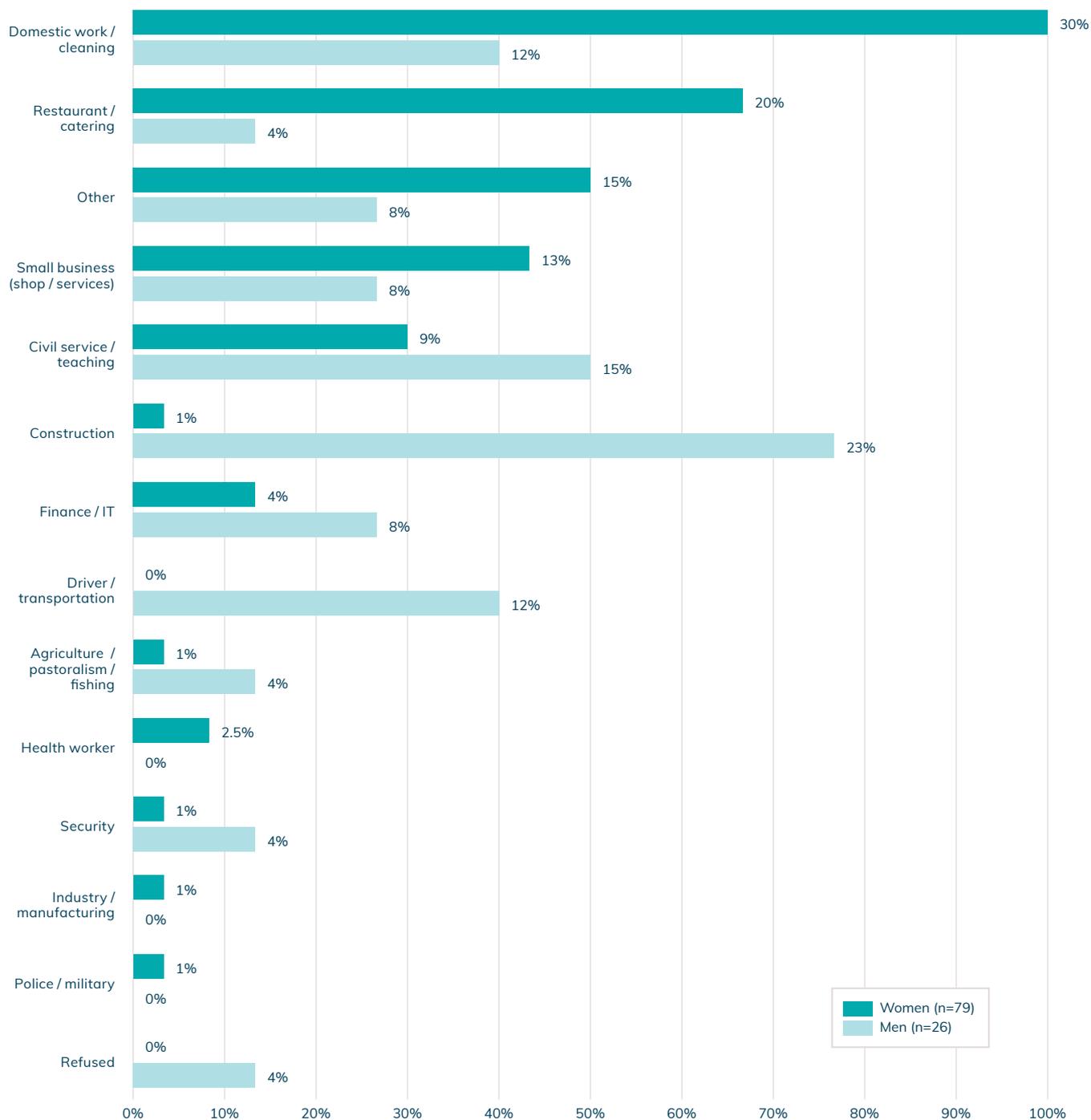
29 Although the latter figure is slightly higher than in Berlin, it is much lower than in Warsaw, where 43% of respondents reporting having a regular paid job.

30 Interviews with a representative of the Bern police and representatives of a local CSO, April 2023.

31 Interview with a representative of the Bern police and a representative of a Ukrainian CSO in Bern, April 2023.

32 OECD, (2023), [OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine - What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#), Figure 3.

Figure 14. What sector are you making money in?



The respondents who had paid work (N=105) most often found it through friends, family, or their accommodation host (38%), followed by their community (14%). Women mostly found work in the domestic/cleaning sector (30%) or hospitality and catering (20%), while men found work in construction (23%) or transportation (12%), see Figure 14.

Although the sample size is small (especially for men) and results should be interpreted with caution, **these findings suggest that respondents had to be flexible to find work, and that some of them had to change their**

usual sector of work. For example, while in Ukraine, only 3% of women were working in the domestic/cleaning sector, compared to 30% in Bern. The same is true for the hospitality and catering sector (2% of women in Ukraine, 20% of women in Bern). Men were apparently less affected by these changes (men in construction sector: 18% in Ukraine and 23% in Bern; men in transportation sector: 5% in Ukraine and 12% in Bern). There were also exceptions at the overall level. For example, the proportion of respondents working as teachers was 11% both in Ukraine and in Bern.

Among the respondents who found work (N=105), **60% stated that there were satisfied with their work, with women (63%) apparently more satisfied than men (50%)**. Indeed, 38% of men stated that they would prefer to do something more suited to their qualification level (compared to 25% of women), a surprising result given what we reported in the previous paragraph, while keeping in mind that the sample sizes were small and not balanced.

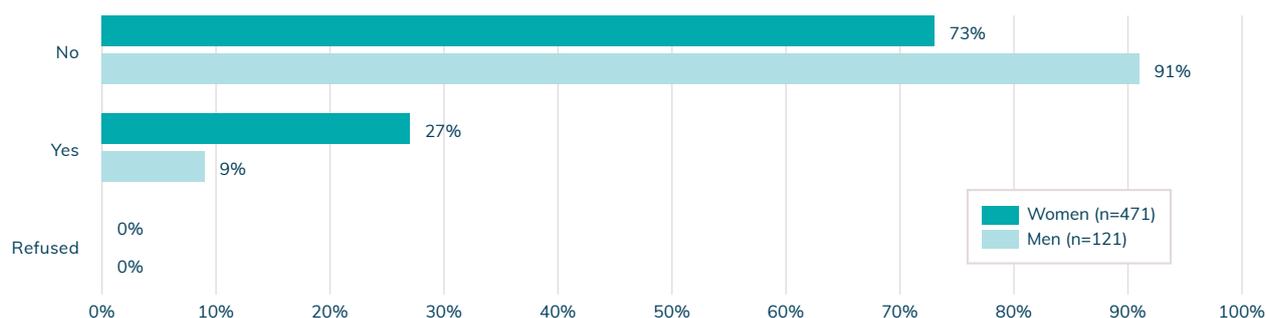
All respondents (irrespective of work status) were also asked about the main challenges to finding a job or running a business. **Even though 35% of respondents reported that they spoke German (see Introduction section), a lack of skills in the local language was, by far, the most cited challenge by the respondents (79%)**. The key role of language in integration is well-known

and confirmed by a previous survey and anecdotal evidence on refugees from Ukraine in Switzerland.³³ That said, given that language learning is the second most widely available service for refugees in Switzerland (see Assistance and Needs section), it is likely that knowledge of the local language will rapidly increase, which in turn might mean an increase in employment rate, as past trends suggest.³⁴

Finally, in terms of household needs, **46% of respondents stated that these were always or fully covered, while 44% stated that these were not fully covered or covered only sometimes** (with slightly more women, 46%, than men, 37%, stating so). Most respondents (92%) reported not having debts, with only marginal differences in terms of gender and age group.

Returns and future intentions

Figure 15. Since you left, have you been back to Ukraine?



A large majority of respondents (77%) had not been back to Ukraine since the war began. That said, more women (27%) than men (9%) had temporarily gone back to Ukraine at least once (Figure 15), with no differences in terms of age group. Out of all respondents who went back (N=136), 78% went back only one time, while 19% went back a few times. More than 60% of these

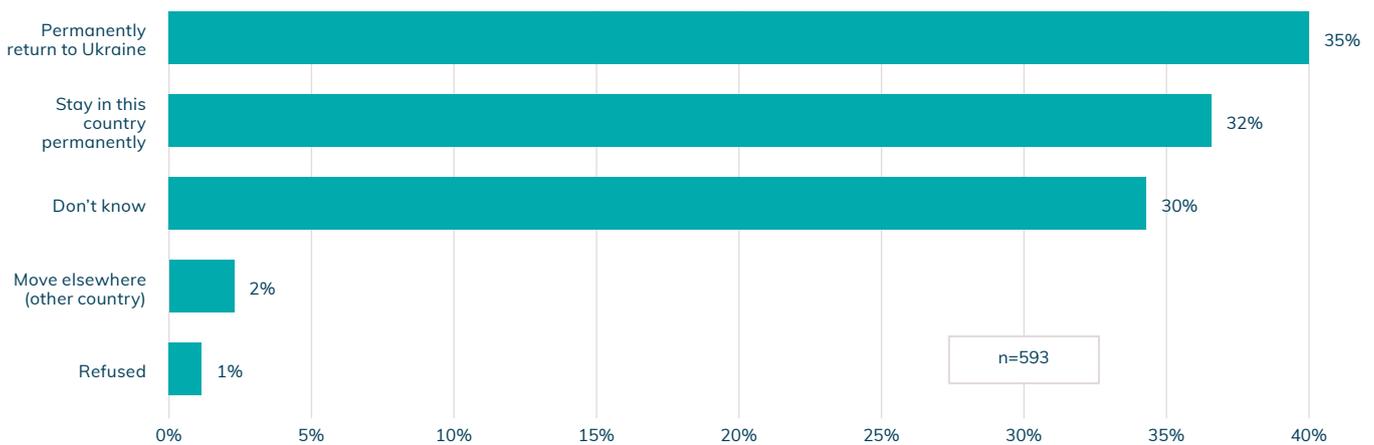
respondents usually stayed in Ukraine for one week to one month, while 32% stayed for just a few days. The most cited reasons for going back to Ukraine (N=136) were to visit family or friends (49%) or for administrative reasons (38%)³⁵, with women more likely to visit family or friends (52%) than men (18%).

33 Rey, M. and Henderson, M (2023) ["La difficile intégration professionnelle des réfugiés ukrainiens en Suisse"](#), RTS.

34 OECD, (2023), op. cit.

35 Respondents could choose several answers.

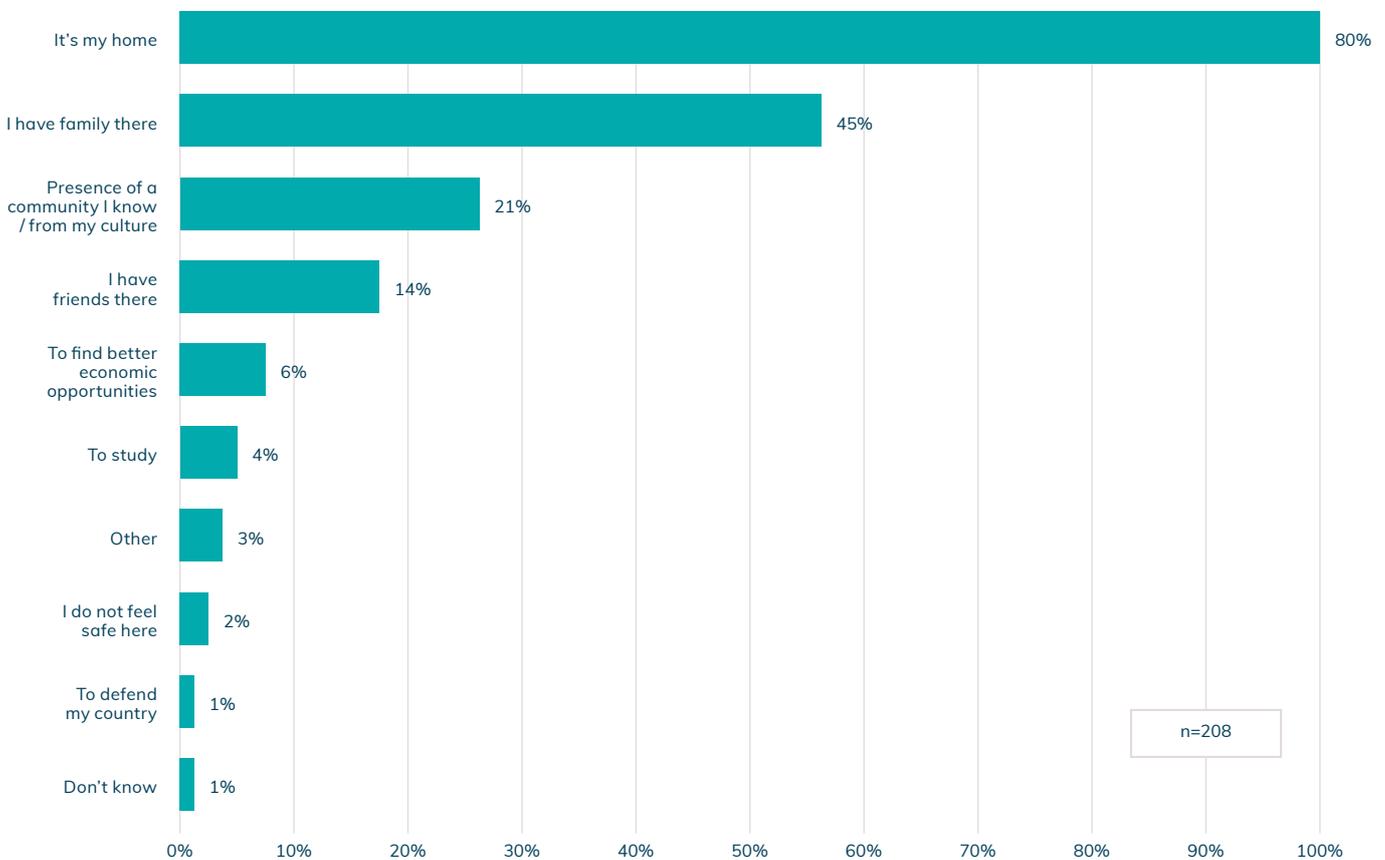
Figure 16. In the future, do you plan to stay here, return to Ukraine or go to another country?



Much like in Berlin, respondents had varying plans concerning where there would go in the future, with 35% planning to return permanently to Ukraine, 32% planning to stay permanently in Switzerland, and another 30% having no plan (Figure 16). That said, it should be noted that the proportion of respondents planning to stay in the host country is slightly higher in Switzerland (32% compared to 27% in Germany and 19% in Poland), and that only 2% of all respondents

plan to move to a third country, i.e. neither Ukraine nor Switzerland.³⁶ This is consistent with data collected in Poland and Germany: Ukrainians' plans split almost evenly between planning to go back to Ukraine, staying permanently, or not knowing. There were interesting differences in terms of gender and age group, with more men (44%) than women (29%), and more younger respondents (42%) than older respondents (28%) planning to stay permanently in Switzerland.

Figure 17. For what reasons would you like to go back to Ukraine?



³⁶ This result should be approached with caution. The purposive sampling strategy used in this study to interview respondents may have favoured individuals with larger social network in Bern, which may be correlated with intentions to stay in Bern move elsewhere or go back to Ukraine.

The respondents who plan to permanently go back to Ukraine (N=208) reported that they want to go back simply because that is their home (80%), because they have family and friends (together 59%) there, and because that is their own community and culture (21%), see Figure 17, with few differences between age groups and genders, except that more women (50%) than men (21%) cited their family and the community.³⁷ Finding better economic opportunities was only mentioned by 6% of respondents, hinting at concerns about the economic difficulties in a war-torn country and/or the opportunities that Bern can offer as a destination.

The same respondents (N=208) were also asked what they would need to happen for them to go back to Ukraine. Unsurprisingly, most cited the end of the war in Ukraine (73%) or in their home region (39%), as well as Russian forces leaving Ukraine (42%), followed by reconstruction and recovery in Ukraine (21%), with the latter answer cited by more women (23%) than men (11%).

³⁷ Respondents could choose several answers.



MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in Danish Refugee Council regional offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis, and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move, and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

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