

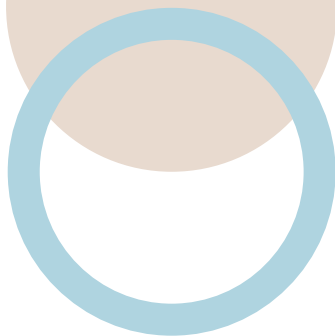
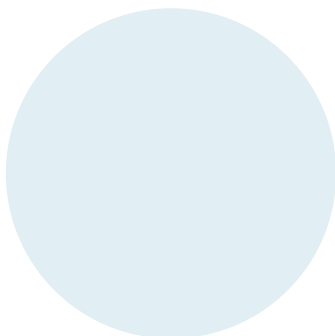
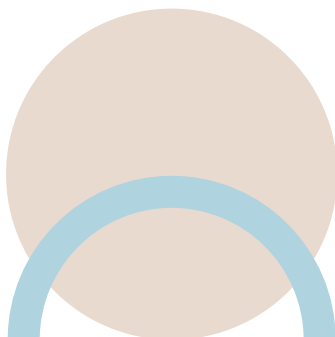
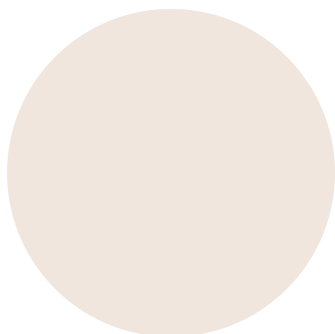
# UKRAINE AND POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

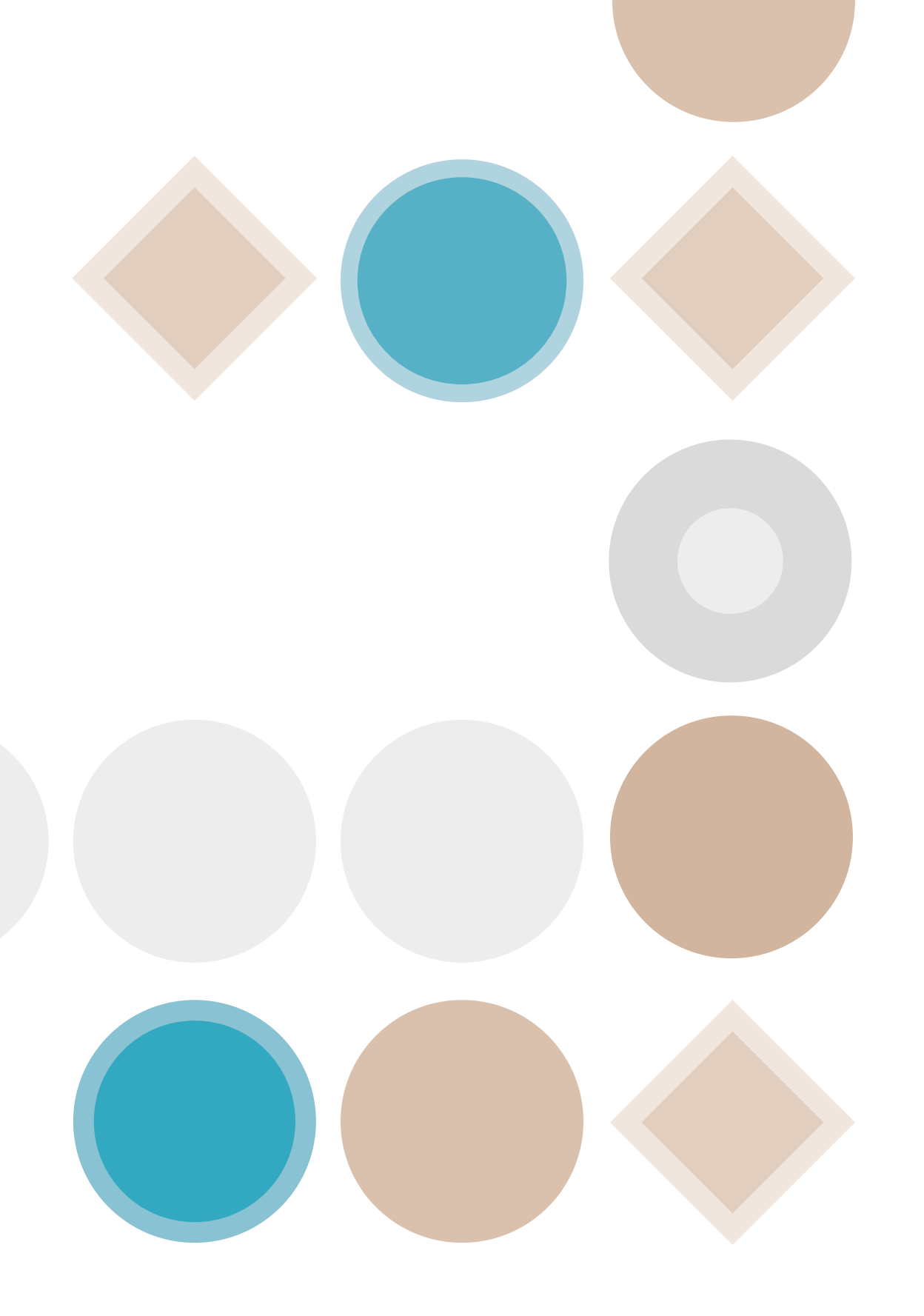


Warsaw 2024

Report of the Mieroszewski Centre  
on public opinion research conducted in Poland

## AS SEEN BY POLES







# **UKRAINE AND POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS AS SEEN BY POLES**

Report of the Mieroszewski Centre  
on public opinion research conducted in Poland

**Survey provider**

ARC Rynek i Opinia

**Analysis and report**

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction – Background and objectives of the study | 6  |
| 2. Information about the study                           | 8  |
| 3. General associations and attitudes                    | 12 |
| 4. Politics  | 29 |
| 5. History   | 38 |
| 6. Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU            | 47 |
| 7. Common interests and disputes                         | 50 |
| 8. War   | 59 |
| 9. Summary   | 65 |

## 1. Introduction – background and objectives of the study

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations have been at the very centre of public debate in Poland.

The first months following Russia's attack primarily saw humanitarian and military aid, particularly focusing on Poland's reception of war refugees from Ukraine. The experience of contact with people seeking refuge in Poland from the threat of war left a lasting mark in the collective consciousness of the Polish society. On this occasion, a great deal of social capital was built up in relations with Ukraine, which is also significant in shaping Poland's image and international position.

Two years after these events, both the agenda of relations with Ukraine and the surrounding public emotions have partly changed. Protests by Polish transport companies and, shortly afterwards, mass protests by farmers leading to a partial blockade of border crossings with Ukraine introduced new themes into this debate. The conflict of economic interests, arousing strong emotions on both sides of the border, has undermined relations with Ukraine, at least at the level of public gestures and declarations. This complex and multifaceted process demonstrates the scale of the political, social and economic challenges that will arise in the future when building relations with Ukraine in the emerging new international reality.

Moreover, Poles are experiencing very strong influence of various narratives concerning issues related to Ukraine. Of course, the crucial factor here is the constant information war, consistently waged by Russia on this issue, which skilfully plays on social emotions, fears and divides. Its effectiveness is particularly evident in those communities and social groups that are more exposed to social media messages, with a tendency to stay in their own 'information bubbles'. Russian disinformation is aimed, on the one hand, at antagonising Polish society versus Ukrainian refugees residing in Poland and, on the other hand, at shaping unfavourable opinions about Ukraine as a country, its authorities and its policy towards Poland.

However, Russian disinformation is not the only factor leading to a reassessment of Poles' attitudes towards Ukraine and its affairs. Since Poles became somewhat accustomed to the ongoing war (which, after two years, entered a phase of relative balance of forces on the frontline), the social attention has shifted to other areas and spheres of life. In Polish thinking, Ukraine and Ukrainians have become not only the target of assistance and support in the face of Russian aggression, but also a source of challenges and problems. This process is fairly natural, inevitable and expected, although not easy to manage, both politically and in terms of communication. The aforementioned differences in economic interests can serve as an example, alongside some tensions over the support provided to Ukrainian refugees by the Polish government.

Other examples of difficult areas include the historical issues that remain unresolved from the Polish point of view, especially the Volhynia Massacre in the 1940s. Since the Ukrainian authorities have not unequivocally named and condemned this crime, and the exhumation of the victims remains an unresolved issue, this tragedy is also a significant factor adding fuel to anti-Ukrainian sentiment, promoted and reinforced by the Russian disinformation machine.

Finally, purely psychological factors must be added to the picture. They are related to the fears generated by the messages of an imminent threat to Poland's security, which have intensified in recent months. This news exacerbates the tension that has prevailed in Poland for at least two years, intensifies the fatigue with the topic of war and, indirectly, may negatively influence the public attitudes towards all of the events happening east of Poland's borders, including attitudes towards Ukraine.

Under these circumstances, the Mioszowski Centre commissioned a survey concerning Poles' opinions on

Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations. Its main objective was to capture the change that has been occurring in the thinking and emotions of the Polish public two years after the Russian attack on Ukraine. In view of the highly dynamic events, strongly impacting the Polish-Ukrainian

relations, it seems particularly important and necessary to explore the current state of public awareness. Understanding the sources of certain attitudes and behaviours can help, at least partially, to tone down emotions and support rational action in Poland and Ukraine.

## 2. Information about the study

### Methodology

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The study was based on qualitative and quantitative techniques. As part of the qualitative component, seven focus group interviews (FGI) were conducted: two in each of Lublin, Wrocław and Łowicz, and one group in Rzeszów. In the first three locations, groups were recruited by age: in each city/town, one interview was conducted with younger people (aged 26–45) and another with people aged 46–65. In Rzeszów, where one additional discussion group was conducted, the respondents were aged 30–60. The selection of locations for focus group interviews was guided, on the one hand, by the need to ensure regional dispersion

and distance from the eastern border, and, on the other hand, by the size of the city/town in order to include small, medium and large urban centres (in terms of population) in the sample.

The quantitative survey was conducted using computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) on a total sample of N=1002 people aged 18–65, representative of the Poland's population structure in terms of gender, size of domicile and voivodeship (province) of residence.

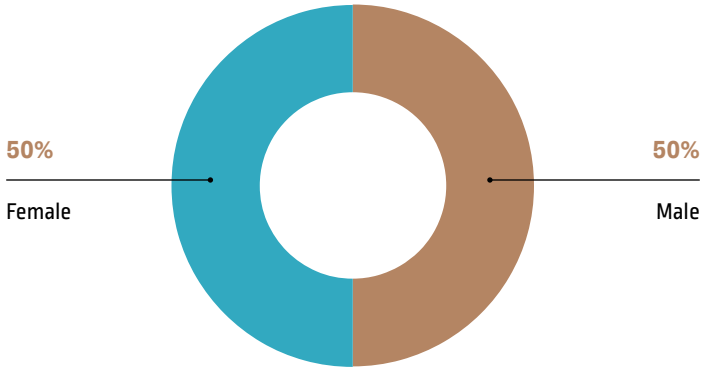
The qualitative and quantitative components of the study were carried out in February 2024.



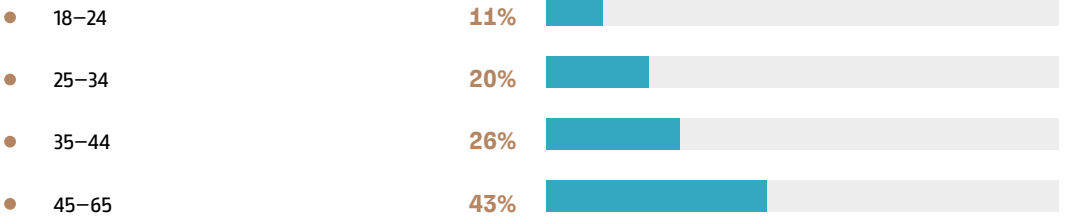
## Structure of the survey sample

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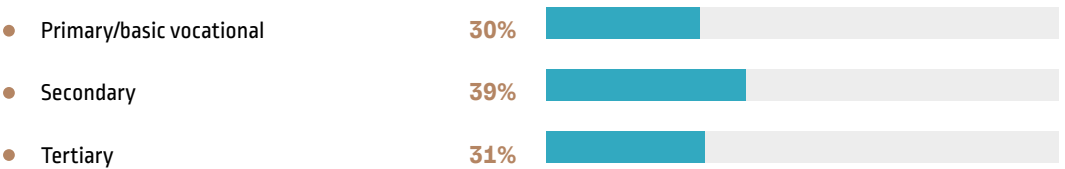
### Gender



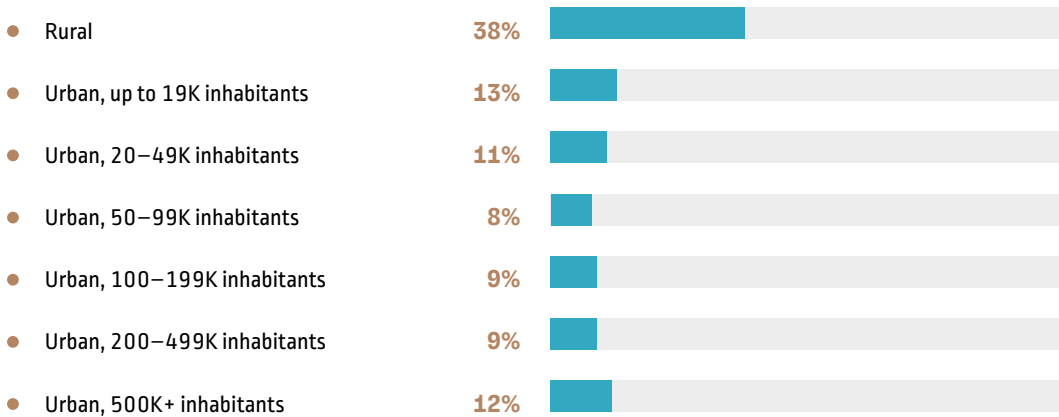
### Age



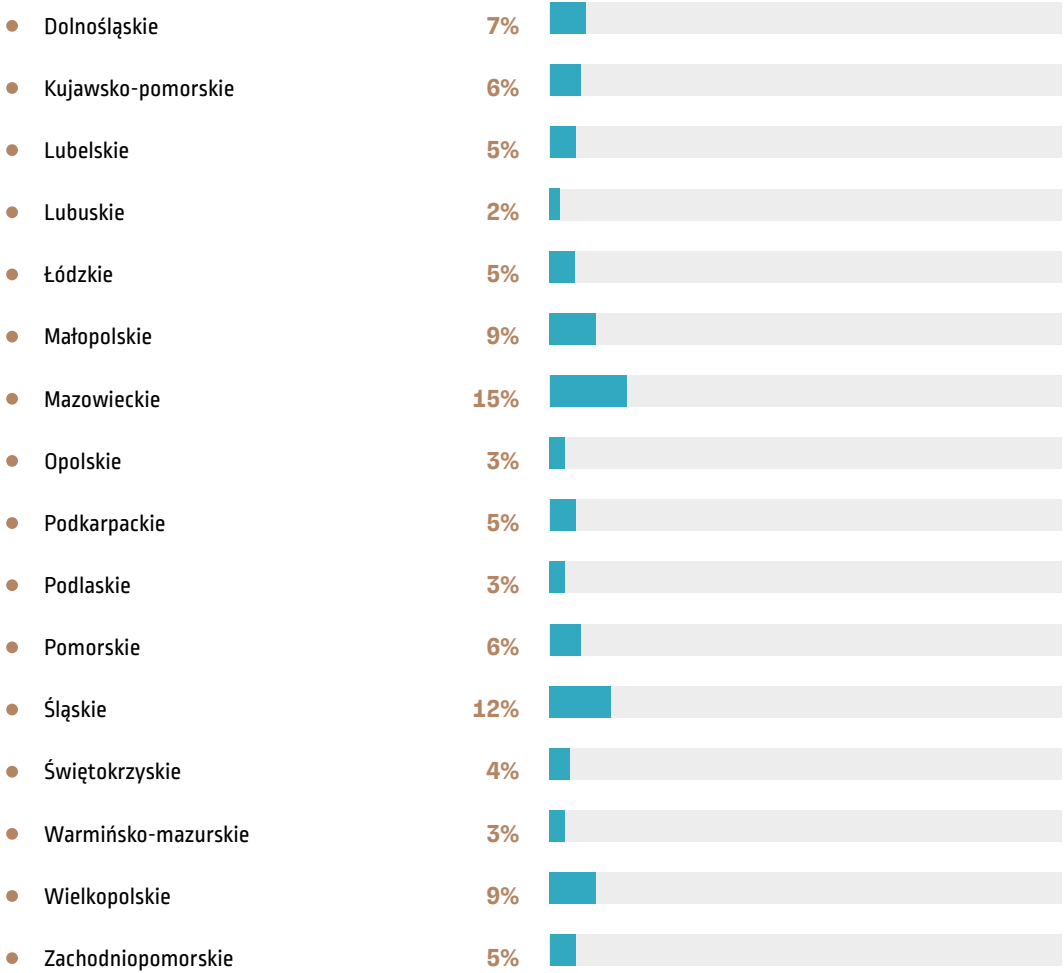
### Education



## Size of domicile

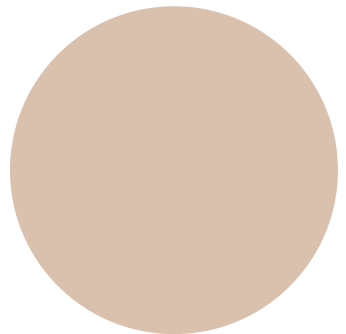
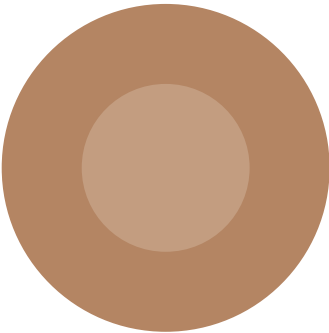


## Province





# General associations and attitudes



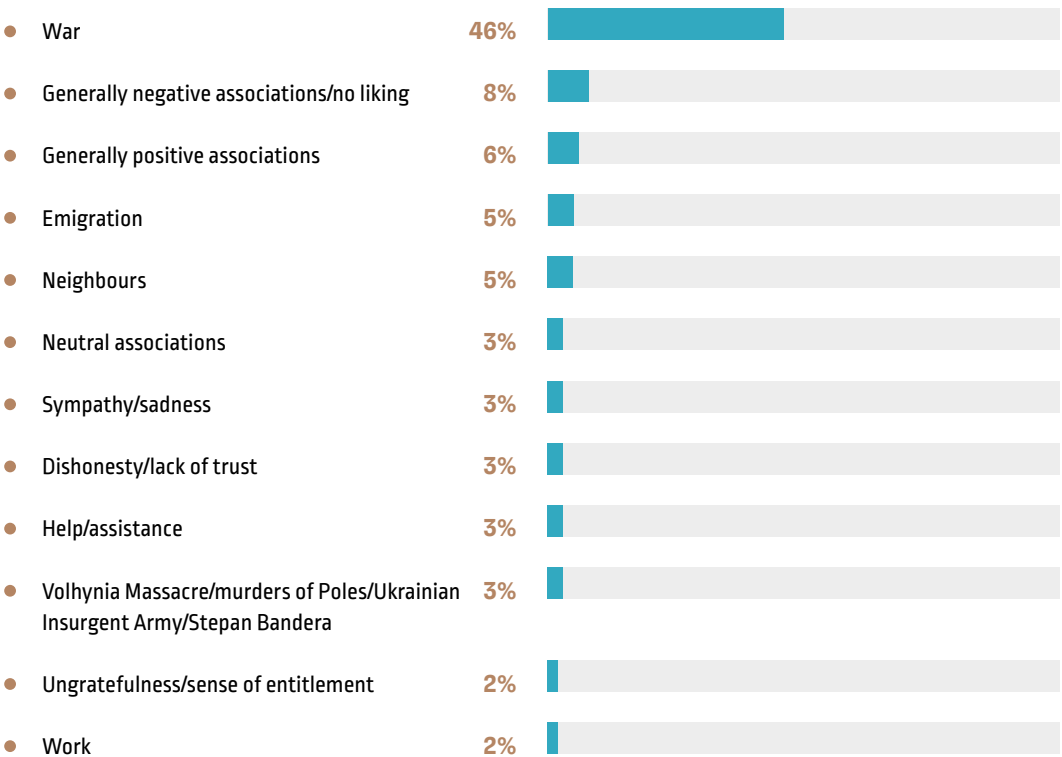
Quite obviously, the dominant spontaneous association with Ukraine was primarily 'war'. This answer was given by almost half of the respondents in the quantitative survey.

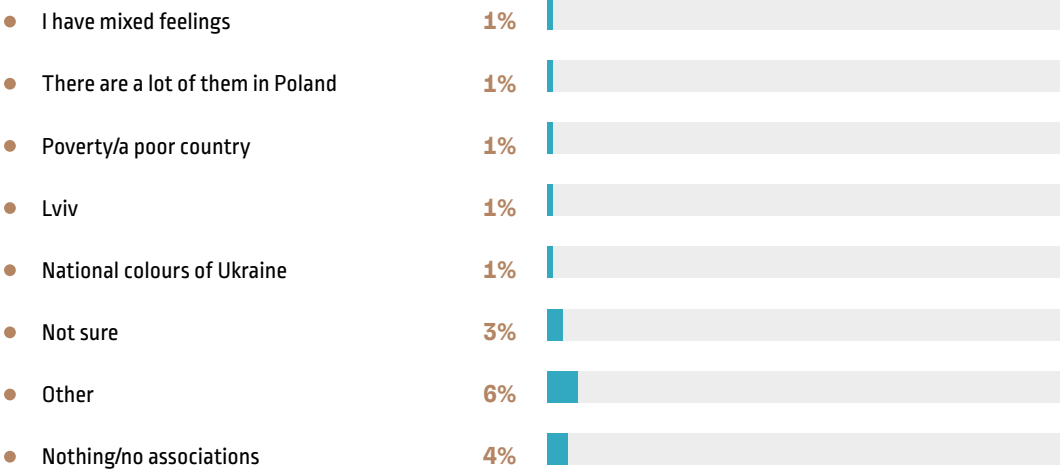
The remaining answers, spontaneously reported by the respondents, can be subdivided into three groups, based on their attitude towards Ukrainians. The answers included those with positive, negative and neutral tones. In the quantitative study, the proportions of negative and

positive associations were very close. The situation was similar in terms of associations provided by focus group participants, although the negative narrative towards Ukrainians and Ukraine was stronger in this case.

↓ FIGURE 2:

### *Spontaneous associations with Ukraine and Ukrainians*





During the focus groups, each respondent was asked to write down their own ideas that spring to mind after hearing words and phrases such as Ukraine, Ukrainian man and Ukrainian woman. In this case, statements of varying tonality were also recorded, reflecting differing attitudes towards Ukrainians.

War was the most common association mentioned by the respondents. It was possible to deduce the respondents' attitude towards Ukrainians on the basis of the remaining connotations. The word 'grain' was frequently mentioned, but it rarely indicated a negative attitude towards Ukraine and Ukrainians. More often than not, the respondents simply aimed at highlighting a current development taking place during the fieldwork time.

Among the neutral associations, the respondents also cited those dating back to the period before the start of the full-scale war. In those times, they had met Ukrainians who had come to Poland (predominantly economic migrants), most often in the construction industry (in the case of men) and in the beauty industry and cleaning services (in the case of women).

*Ukraine – war, humanitarian aid, politics.  
Ukrainian man – refugee, soldier, victim.*

*Ukrainian woman – suffering mother, wife, out of country, out of home. [older group, Lublin]*

*Ukraine makes me think of war, grain, the army, when it comes to the borders with Poland. [younger group, Lublin]*

*Of course, it makes me think of Ukrainians, helping them as neighbours, we help them, a lot of people have got very involved in that help. And Ukrainians make good workers. When I talk to my friends, I hear they work well in various traditional sectors or as employees of large-format stores. When it comes to Ukrainian women, I have this image of them mainly as working in the broadly defined beauty industry, i.e. hairdressers, beauticians. [older group, Lublin]*

*And when it comes to Ukraine as such, it makes me think of workers in our labour market, that was before the war, and now it's about refugees. When you ask about a Ukrainian man, it's a builder or a driver because those are the industries that they occupy, so to speak. A Ukrainian man could also be an oligarch. In other words, those landowners in Ukraine, rich people who own many hectares of land, and that's it. And as for a Ukrainian woman, well, unfortunately, this makes me think of a cleaning lady because this has been also popular in Warsaw. [younger group, Lublin]*

*Ukraine is about the war, grain and neighbours. [Rzeszów]*

In the context of the war and the assistance provided to Ukraine, including military aid, the respondents suggested

more rational spending of funds and deployment of equipment to make sure Poland's security is not compromised. Many respondents also expressed the need for Poland and European countries to enhance their defence capabilities, which the ongoing war in Ukraine has made clear to everyone.

*This war could last five years, and we have limited resources, and we also have problems of our own. So, well, hospitality comes to an end here. It's time to deal with our own problems. As for Ukrainians, I wrote it's a similar culture, and I think they will assimilate very quickly, I'm talking about these workers from Ukraine. They will be much easier to work with than these refugees who are supposed to come to us by boat. That's a big plus. They are very hard-working. And, similarly, I think we will get along somehow. [older group, Lublin]*

As already mentioned, FGI participants made a great deal of critical remarks when talking about their connotations with Ukrainians. These remarks reflected negative attitudes towards Poland's eastern neighbours, and since the attitudes towards Ukrainians were discussed separately, this topic is discussed more extensively later in the report. At this point, we just present the tonality of respondents' associations and the main themes they focused on.

The vast majority of statements in this context referred to issues related to the social welfare that, in respondents' view, Ukrainian refugees can count on in Poland. The second problem reported by the respondents was the attitude towards Poland and Poles presented by Ukrainians. According to FGI participants, Ukrainians often present an attitude of 'entitlement' and are dishonest when using social assistance: for instance, someone who is living permanently in Ukraine has been registered in Poland as a refugee and only occasionally comes to Poland to

receive welfare payments. Another quite common theme referred to historical topics and the unresolved issue of crimes in Volhynia.

*When you ask me about Ukrainians as people, in general, they make me think of greed and lack of gratitude. And a lack of respect for us [Poles] in general. I think we behaved properly in the beginning but now the opinions vary but in general that gratitude towards us has not been demonstrated. [younger group, Lublin]*

*Quite negative impressions lately. Ukraine makes me think of corruption, a bit of transport and farmers. As for the people, they're ungrateful, very demanding and feeling they're the most important ones. [Rzeszów]*

*Associations with Ukraine: Bandera, genocide and grain. [younger group, Wrocław]*

Half of the respondents regularly follow news about Ukraine and the current situation in that country related to Russia's aggression. However, during the focus groups, the respondents admitted that their level of focus on these topics was certainly not as high as in the first weeks and months of the war.

The majority of Poles personally know a Ukrainian man or woman, but these relations are generally superficial: only just over ten percent of respondents declare to have closer acquaintances or friends among people from Ukraine.

Even though 14% of respondents claim to participate in cultural events and activities related to Ukraine, none of the FGI participants could name even a single artist from Ukraine.

↓ FIGURE 3:

### Personal experience with Ukraine and Ukrainians

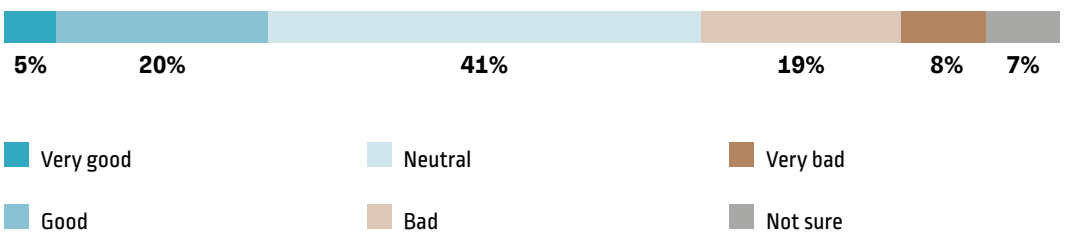


Poles' opinions about Ukrainians expressed in the survey were generally neutral. Positive and negative opinions almost perfectly balance each other, with 25% of

respondents declaring a positive opinion and 27% reporting a negative one.

↓ FIGURE 4:

### Current opinions on Ukrainians





Various opinions about Ukrainians are correlated with certain socio-demographic characteristics. For example, it turns out that men are more likely to be positively predisposed towards Ukrainians than women. This may be caused by various reasons, for instance, the perception of the large number of Ukrainian women residing in Poland in terms of competitors, either on the labour market or in personal relationships. In this context, FGI respondents shared everyday observations that may explain this difference.

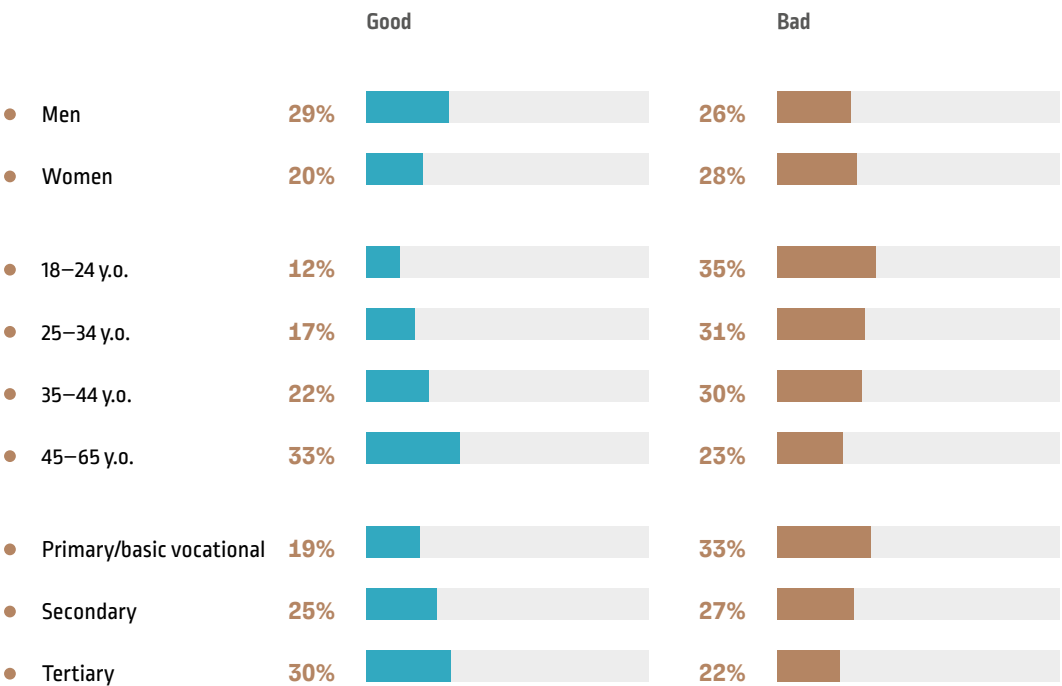
A clear correlation with opinions about Ukrainians was also observed in different age groups: the older the

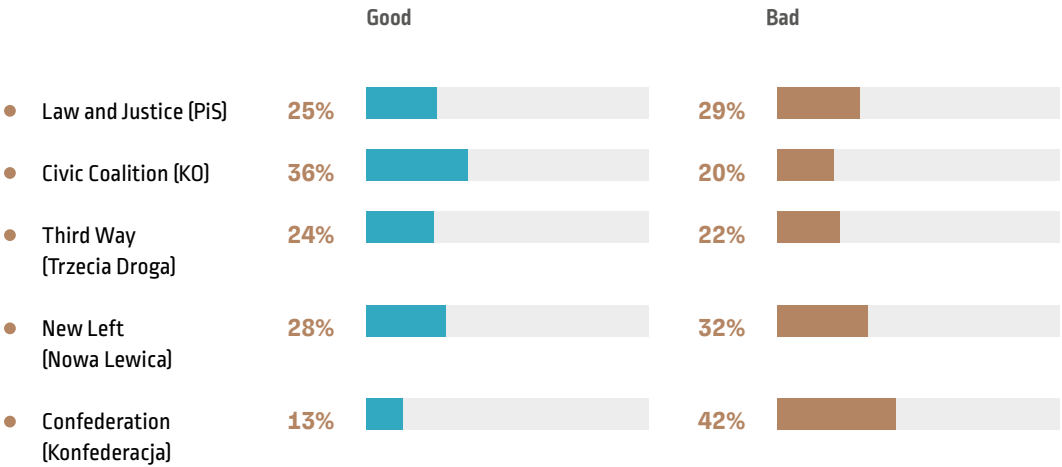
respondents, the more likely they are to have a friendly attitude towards Ukrainians. A similar linear correlation was observed in terms of education: people with higher education have a significantly better opinion of Ukrainians than the least educated ones.

Moreover, differences in opinions about Ukrainians can also be seen in the electorates of different political parties in Poland. The friendliest attitudes can be found among Civic Coalition voters while the most unfriendly ones were displayed by Confederation supporters.

↓ FIGURE 5:

### Current opinions about Ukrainians in different social groups



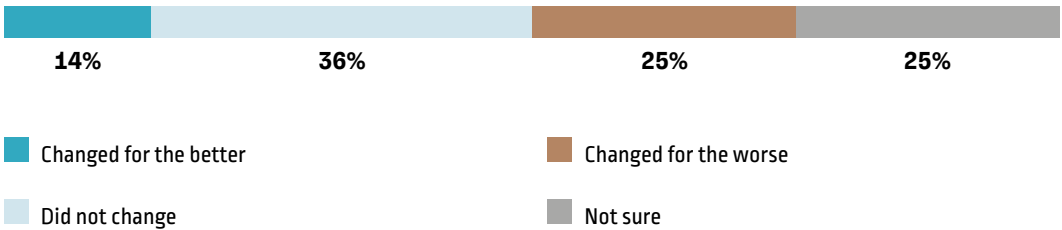


Approximately **40%** of respondents declare that their opinion of Ukrainians has changed since Russia's aggression against Ukraine: the predominant view among these

respondents is that their overall opinion has changed for the worse **[25%]** rather than for the better **[14%]**.

↓ FIGURE 6:

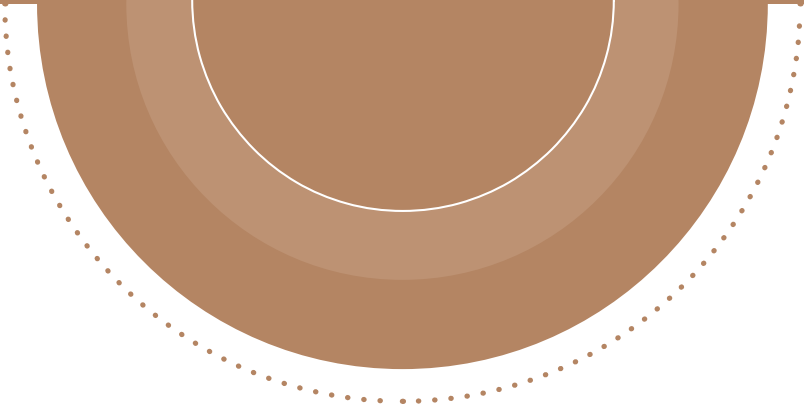
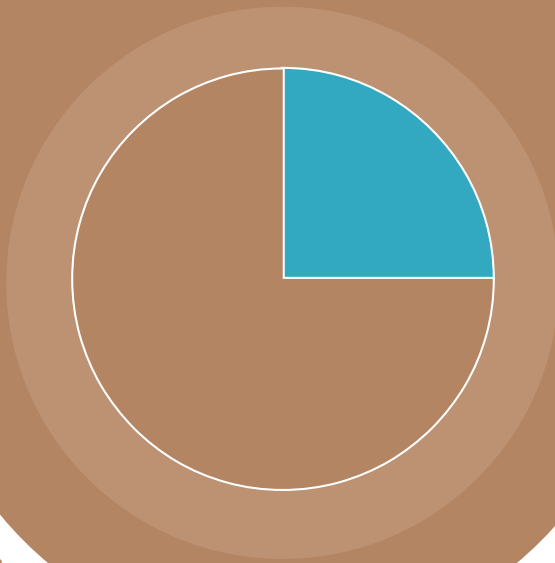
### Impact of Russia's aggression on Poles' opinions about Ukrainians



Current opinions  
on Ukrainians

*Good/  
Very good*

25%



Based on the accounts of the FGI participants, it appeared that opinions about Ukrainians changed quite significantly over time. Before the full-scale war, most Poles had perceived Ukrainians in a neutral way, with no special positive or negative tonality. At that time, personal interactions between Poles and Ukrainians were usually limited to economic migrants or temporary workers who came to Poland to earn money. Poles generally appreciated the industriousness and dedication shown by Ukrainians, many of whom worked in Poland to support their families staying in Ukraine.

*At work, I have two colleagues from Ukraine, they are very hard-working. They do whatever they're told, they aren't fussy, they really want to work, above all. Will you come on Saturday? Others say 'No', and the Ukrainian guy says 'Sure, I'll come, I'll earn some money'. People are different, it all depends on who you come across. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*More than 10 years ago, when I was still at university, I lived with a Ukrainian guy, we were all renting a room. I remember this relationship very well, without any preconception about him being Ukrainian. He had quite a tough character, but he was OK as a person. When the war broke out, we felt sorry for them and wanted to help them. Now, I think the time has come for us to take care of our own interests, too. [Rzeszów]*

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 triggered a huge wave of war refugees, mostly women and children. The first feelings and reactions at the time involved sympathy and support. Today, this extraordinary upsurge, which was also reflected in attitudes towards and opinions about Ukrainians, has changed under the influence of numerous events and experiences. Even despite the awareness that a brutal war is still being fought, economic and social issues come to the fore among the elements that shape Poles' sentiments.

*A year ago, we had a person working with us, she came from Ukraine with her family when the war started. She came with her husband, her children and her parents. She said she was happy, she had a good life back there. Here,*

*in Poland, she got used to that assistance because, in fact, they really got a lot of assistance here. [older group, Lublin]*

*I have two pupils under subsidies that are available for Ukrainian pupils, and they got a lot of help from us. When it comes to meeting their obligations, they lie that they're poor and that they don't have things, but in fact they received lots of things. I work as a vocational teacher preparing kids to become cooks, so they have to bring food products so that we can cook. They got everything throughout the school year, and then they take all the cooked meals out of school. [older group, Łowicz]*

*Ukrainians are a bit rude. Well, when the war started, they were... Looking at preschools, and I know such opinions... A husband came to a nursery school with his wife, and they talked to my colleague that their kids have to be accepted, one, two, three kids. Those kinds of cases. Yes, it wasn't very nice, they felt they were entitled to everything at that point. And on the other hand, Ukraine is like former Russia, so there were good people and bad people there, just like everywhere else. [older group, Lublin]*

*There should be clear, transparent rules: if you work in Poland and pay your welfare contributions, that's fine, you can enjoy the privileges. But if you come only once a month to collect the money, that's not right. If people have a job, they pay social security and taxes, they buy stuff in Poland, buy a flat or rent one. [Rzeszów]*

Therefore, the factor that drives the not-quite-favourable opinions about Ukrainians is a sense of injustice as regards the rules of allocation of social assistance and privileges to Ukrainians. In respondents' view, these should be limited. The respondents feel that the scale of assistance provided by the Polish authorities far too high, especially now when two years have passed since the outbreak of the war. In respondents' view, the time that has elapsed since February 2022 has been sufficient for the majority of refugees to adapt, i.e. find housing, jobs and school for their children. Therefore, there is no reason to continue the privileges for

Ukrainians such as various subsidies and benefits. According to the respondents, Ukrainians should be treated by the Polish authorities in the same way as Poles in this respect.

Given the large volume of assistance available for Ukrainians living in Poland, respondents are all the more irritated by tokens of ungratefulness and 'entitled' attitudes that they have encountered among Ukrainians in various situations. Precisely these two terms, i.e. 'sense of entitlement' and 'ungratefulness' were used in virtually every focus group in this study, irrespective of location.

*Before the war, I didn't think about them at all, and there were fewer of them. When the war broke out, I felt sorry for them, people would help them at the border. Over time, we got used to the situation. Later on, when we saw those complaints, the vector turned in the opposite direction. [Rzeszów]*

*My opinion hasn't changed because it was never negative before. There was a moment of compassion and openness, and a sense that they need to be helped, but they aren't doing anything to change their reputation. In fact, they even add to the negative feelings. [older group, Łowicz]*

*They don't appreciate the translations, the adverts on TV, I saw translations in the trams. They cannot appreciate that we are trying to make things easier for them in Poland. Now, they actually demand it of us. I'm not sure, this may have happened over time. Maybe they didn't have that attitude at the beginning, maybe this changed over time. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*As for Ukrainians, I wrote about them being double-faced. Them leaving their country. For example, I think it's quite irresponsible if young men, relatively young men, come here to Poland and they don't stay there in Ukraine to fight. [older group, Lublin]*

*They are sloppy, that's their way of being. If something doesn't go as they want it, they don't understand. But if they can have it their way, then things are fine. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*As for Ukrainians, they have no desire to learn the language, even though they've moved to Poland. They don't want to learn. They're not grateful for our help, they think they're entitled to it. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*A Ukrainian is a refugee and a lazy person. Even those ones who work are very lazy. If you don't keep an eye on them, if you don't give them new assignments, they won't ask for work themselves. They don't seek to have something to do. They just stare at their phones and wait for someone to check what they're doing. [younger group, Wrocław]*

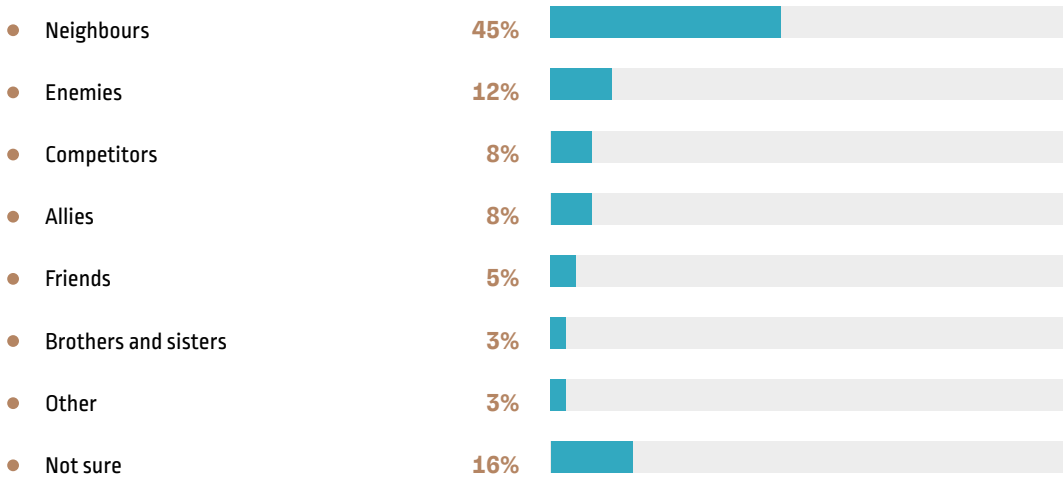
Many myths have developed around the privileges enjoyed by Ukrainians in Poland, which perhaps originate not so much from specific legislation but from everyday practice and the respondents' first-hand experience. One good example of such privileges are the medical services, surrounded by the respondents' belief (often supported by eyewitness accounts) that Ukrainians have priority when asking to be seen by a doctor. Similar situations were mentioned by respondents in virtually all towns and cities where group interviews were conducted.

*I don't agree with the idea to put refugees on an equal footing with immigrants, that's the first thing. Since the war broke out, they've been treated equally. Generally, I'll call all of them 'Ukrainians' in Poland. I've seen a real example of a Ukrainian man who was working and living in our country for many years. But at the moment he gathered his whole family here, he brought all his friends here, and these friends receive all the welfare benefits. I can't get a doctor's appointment for my child, but he got one without any problem. They are given priority, simply, well, you just need to believe me. These are not refugees, these are just immigrants. [younger group, Lublin]*

The changing attitudes and opinions about Ukrainians are visible in the way Poles talk about them. Among the labels selected to describe Ukrainians, 'neighbours' is still the most frequently selected one, but there is a large group of respondents who refer to Ukrainians as 'competitors' or even 'enemies'.

↓ FIGURE 7:

## Attitude towards Ukrainians



Focus group participants spoke in a similar vein about Ukrainians, usually referring to them as 'neighbours'. Only a handful of people could boast having Ukrainian friends: these people had the most positive opinions of Ukrainians. Also echoed in this context were fairly unflattering terms, either rooted in history or in illegal practices observed in Ukraine and among Ukrainians.

*I would just say that they are simply our neighbours. We didn't choose it, we're in this place on the map of Europe and we probably will be, and so will they, so we should find a way to get along with them. [younger group, Lublin]*

*When I think of Ukrainians, I always think of that piece of history related to Volhynia. [older group, Łowicz]*

*A Ukrainian is a refugee and a troublemaker. [older group, Łowicz]*

*When you ask about Ukrainians, my take is this: a refugee, and a smuggler, on the other*

*hand. I remember it more from the times before the war. There were a lot of people doing some kind of smuggling there. [younger group, Lublin]*

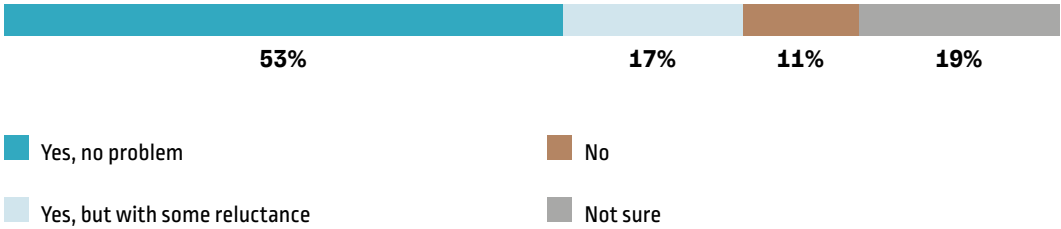
*I chose 'friends' just because I have a lot of [Ukrainian] friends that I made when I was 18. They are people my age, medical students, very hard-working people and I still keep in touch with them. I can see how they are worried about the stuff that is happening in their country every day. They want to go back to normal. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*My perception is good, I have nothing against them. Poles also used to travel to work in Germany, in the UK. [older group, Wrocław]*

However, Poles continue to recognise the cultural proximity between the two nations, as evidenced by the fact that only a minority of respondents (11%) would find it difficult to accept a person from Ukraine into their family (through a marriage with a member of their family).

↓ FIGURE 8:

## Acceptance of marriage between a family member and a person from Ukraine



Not a single FGI participant said they were against the marriage of a member of their family with a Ukrainian man or woman. No such objection was declared even by the most ardent critics of Ukrainians.

*I believe that love has no nationality. If my son brought a Ukrainian girl home and said 'Dad, this is the woman I love', I would support him. [younger group, Lublin]*

*I talk to my children a lot. And I believe that when they are grown up, they will also be able to talk as openly as they do now. And they know all the pros and cons. Poles, people with black skin or yellow skin, the skin colour doesn't matter, and nor does nationality.*

*Even though my kids are not very old, they already have experiences with different nationalities. And I think they wouldn't get into a relationship with a Ukrainian man or woman. So, I think that wouldn't happen. But if it did, we'd be talking about love, and not about the nationality or skin colour. [younger group, Lublin]*

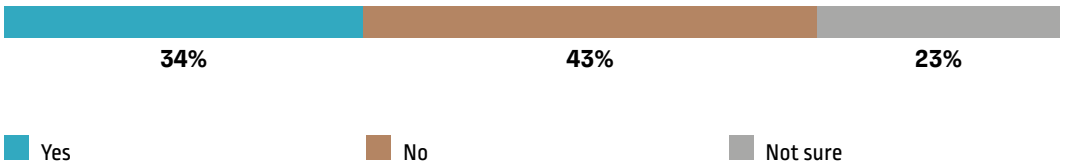
*Love is not picky. If he fell in love, he'd be happy. This is my child, so I'd support him. He might as well come with a Ukrainian man. This is my son, and I will love him, no matter if he loves a woman or a man. He'll be my son for the rest of my life. [older group, Wrocław]*

Most respondents cannot distinguish between the Ukrainian and the Russian language. However, if they already know which language they are dealing with, the sound of

Russian is much more likely to evoke negative emotions in comparison with the Ukrainian language.

↓ FIGURE 9:

### *Distinguishing the Ukrainian language from the Russian language*





↓ FIGURE 10:

## Emotions related to Ukrainian and Russian language

Ukrainian



Russian



Like it

Annoyed by it

No particular emotions

During the focus group interviews, some respondents claimed that it is easier for Polish people to understand Ukrainians speaking Ukrainian, even without knowing the language, as opposed to someone who speaks Russian.

*For example, I've learned Russian so it's all the same for me. [younger group, Lublin]*

*But when I hear a foreign language in the street, Russian or Ukrainian or whatever, it doesn't annoy me because I've also been abroad, and I can put myself in that person's shoes. That's why I'm fairly neutral. [younger group, Lublin]*

*I am not able to tell the difference. Even one Ukrainian man made a comment when I said 'pryviet' to him. He said I shouldn't say 'pryviet' to him because it's in Russian. [older group, Lublin]*

*Ukrainian is softer and Russian sounds tougher. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*My wife says she can't understand a Russian woman at work, but she can understand a Ukrainian one. [older group, Łowicz]*

*At first, I was annoyed by seeing Ukrainian language suddenly at Lidl and in other stores. I couldn't accept it because I live in Poland. At the public office where I work, someone came up with the idea to translate documents into Ukrainian. I was upset because I live in Poland, the official language is Polish, not Ukrainian. [Rzeszów]*

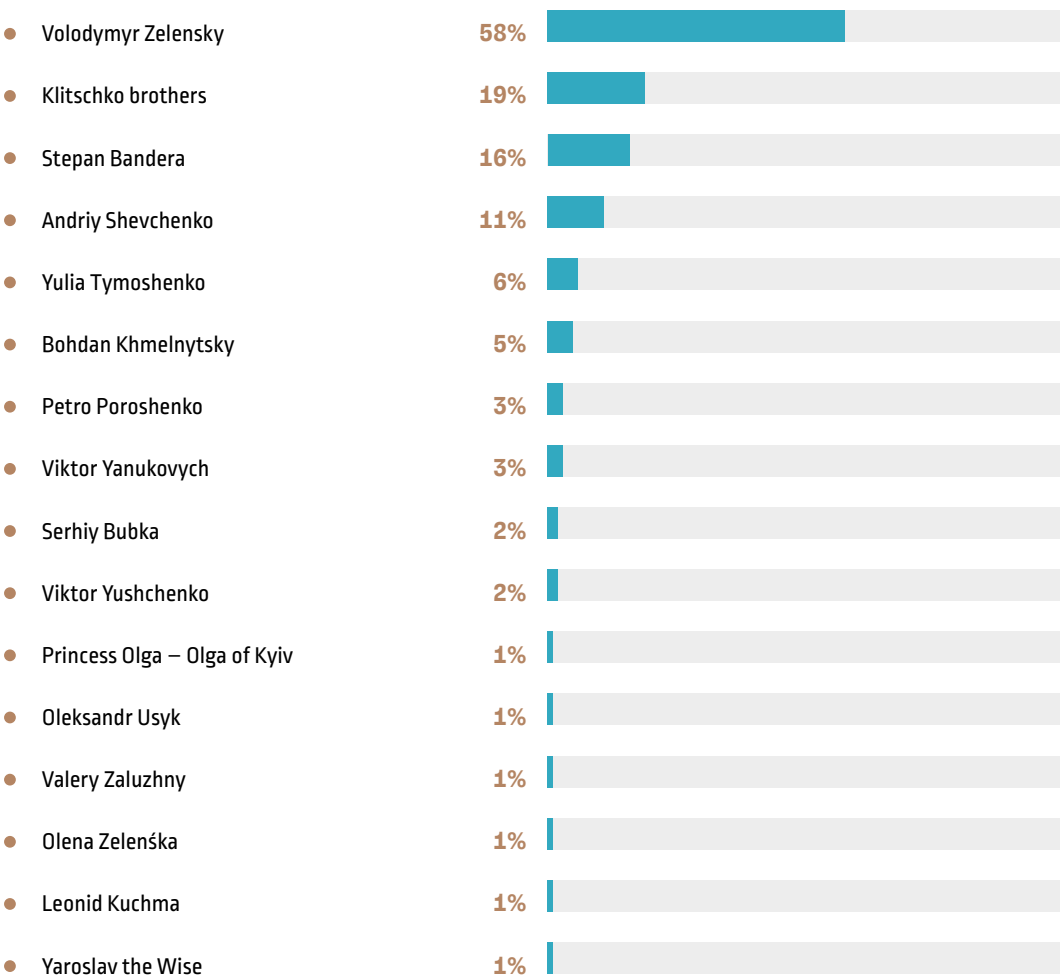
*Whether it's Russian or Ukrainian, maybe it's subconscious or something, but it somehow has a strange effect on me. Maybe it's not annoying, it's more like some kind of fear. [younger group, Lublin]*

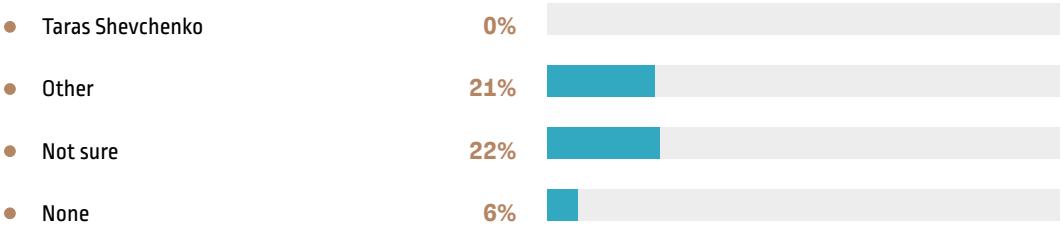
When it comes to spontaneous knowledge of figures associated with Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky comes well ahead of all other Ukrainians who are known to Poles. Among contemporary figures, names such as Klitschko,

Shevchenko (footballer) and Yulia Tymoshenko were mentioned relatively frequently. As regards historical figures, the respondents recalled Stepan Bandera and Bohdan Khmelnytsky.

↓ FIGURE 11:

### Spontaneous knowledge of figures associated with Ukraine



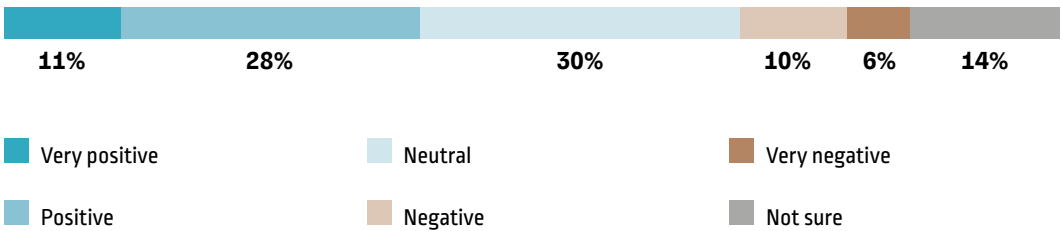


The overall assessment of President Zelensky is more often positive (39%) than negative (16%). Moreover, a sizable group of respondents rated the Ukrainian President neutrally. Interestingly, ratings given to the current Ukrainian President are not differentiated by any demographic

variables but only by political preferences. As it turns out, Volodymyr Zelensky is viewed very critically by the electorate of Confederation. A total of 42% of Confederation voters negatively assess the current Ukrainian President, with only 14% expressing a positive sentiment.

↓ FIGURE 12:

### Assessment of President Volodymyr Zelensky



In the eyes of many people, Volodymyr Zelensky underwent a positive transformation. Initially, i.e. before the full-scale war, many people did not take him seriously, still remembering his career in show business. Even if people previously had some reservations about his presidency, Zelensky turned out to be the right man in the right place after the outbreak of the war: the majority of those interviewed spoke with appreciation about how the Ukrainian President handled the difficult situation. The respondents particularly emphasised the fact that he remained in Kyiv throughout the war, even at the most difficult moments, encouraging Ukrainian soldiers to fight.

Interview participants could not fail to notice President Zelensky's activity in the international arena, soliciting aid for Ukraine, primarily in the military sphere. In respondents' view, it is mainly thanks to him that Ukraine has been able to withstand attacks from Russia all the time. However, the Ukrainian President's activity was even sometimes commented on with a bit of sarcasm: some respondents felt that such frequency of requests for further deliveries of equipment might be surprising.

In the context of relations with Poland, the Ukrainian President was remembered for his speech at the UN, where, although not directly, he criticised Poland for blocking grain imports from Ukraine. In their view, the Ukrainian President lacked empathy and understanding of the Polish perspective at that time, and the words he used were seen as exaggerated, fitting into the narrative of 'ungrateful Ukrainians'.

*Before the war broke out, I viewed him more as a comedy performer. Well, actually, I didn't take him seriously or objectively. On the other hand, he earned my 'thumbs up' for standing up. I believe he is a serious politician to some*

*extent, and he has also done a lot of good stuff for Ukraine, in the sense that he arranged equipment, and a lot of money is flowing from the West. If it wasn't for that, the war would have been over a long time ago. So these are the positives in that respect. [younger group, Lublin]*

*He has certainly proved effective as the president of Ukraine because he has stayed there. He's been there all the time, he has not evacuated anywhere, he is not managing Ukraine from some nice country with warm weather. He's been there all the time, so he has stood up to the challenge. But I'm starting to get sick of his constant crying that no one wants to help him, that he is left alone and cannot count on anyone. After all, so much stuff is being pumped into Ukraine all the time. [older group, Łowicz]*

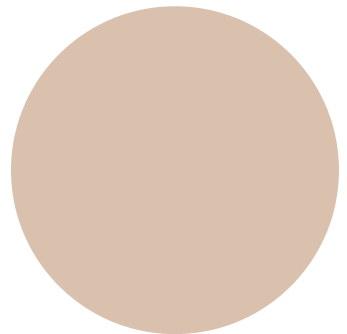
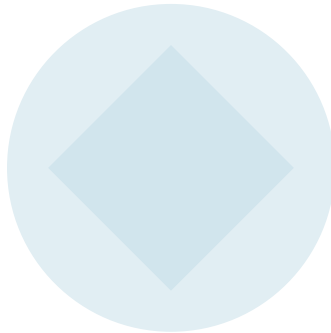
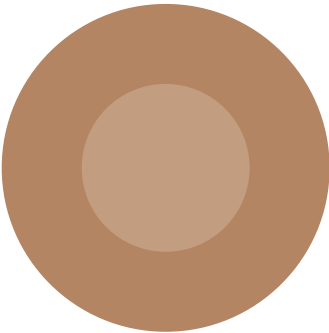
*He is entangled in stuff and the Ukrainian public is getting really fed up with him. In the beginning though he was indeed a hero. [older group, Lublin]*

*He cries all the time that he is underfunded, he has no ammunition, no weapons. All the time we hear that he isn't getting stuff. [older group, Łowicz]*

*At his UN speech, he said some words that Poles perceived as ingratitude. [Rzeszów]*

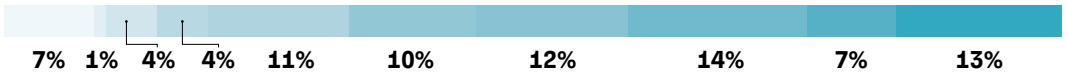


# Politics

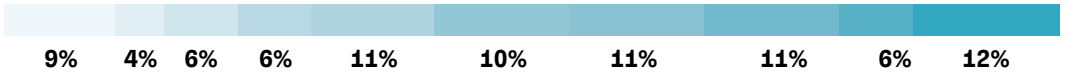




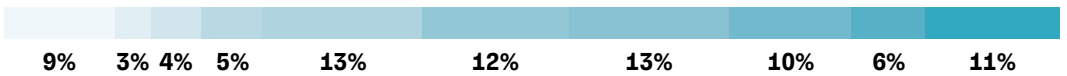
## Facilitate the operation of Polish businesses in Ukraine



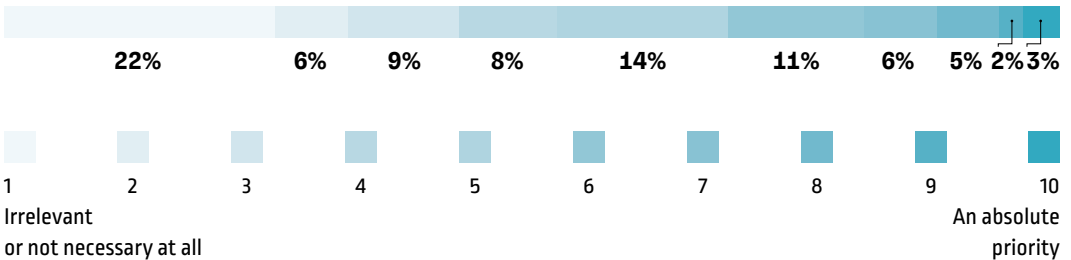
## Assist in reconstruction and reforms



## Popularise Polish culture and language among Ukrainians



## Encourage economic immigration of Ukrainians to Poland



Quite naturally, the list of issues considered by the respondents in the quantitative survey did not exhaust all matters that are of interest to Poles in relation to Polish-Ukrainian relations. Above all, the list did not include the most current issues, such as the grain crisis, which the respondents were very eager to discuss during the focus group interviews. This theme is discussed in more detail in another chapter of this report, devoted to common interests and disputes with Ukraine.

In the context of the policy towards Ukraine, the issue of social welfare was an essential element of discussions during the focus groups. Rationalisation and reduction of social welfare provided by Poland to Ukrainians should be among the most urgent tasks for Polish politicians.

*Since we're looking into the future, I must mention the streamlining of the politics of memory. I believe that this is an obstacle which will always be a burden and a nuisance, also at the social level and in terms of stereotypes. But it's going to be an obstacle in politics as well. [younger group, Lublin]*

*First of all, they should take care of the grain issue because now there is excessive stock of grain and various raw materials in warehouses, but spring is coming and farmers don't know which way to go. The harvest time is coming soon and they don't know where they are going to store more grain and take money for investment. [Rzeszów]*

*Let me say this: our politicians must remember that internal politics is the politics of values while external politics is the politics of interests. I have the impression that we get it wrong sometimes. They need to remember about that. [older group, Lublin]*

*Well, when it comes to the reconstruction [of Ukraine], they should invite Poles first since we're the ones who helped the most, I mean, we started a wave of accepting them in our homes and so on. We made a second home for them here, so this should be remembered as an advantage for us. They [Ukrainians] shouldn't forget about it. [older group, Lublin]*

*The money depends on the financial situation of the person. It's possible to determine whether someone is employed or not, and whether they can afford to cover the living costs. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*The authorities at the top should take a fair approach and say that we have a limited budget [in Poland], we can't afford this kind of subsistence and we need to cut back on welfare. [older group, Łowicz]*

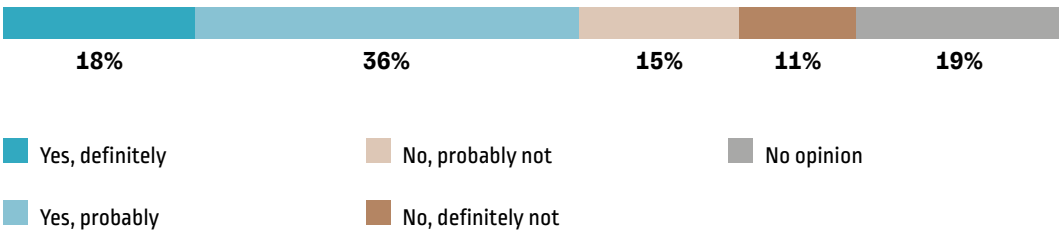


The majority of the respondents (54%) have no doubt that the military support Poland provides to Ukraine should be continued, with 26% of respondents being against this kind of assistance. However, the latter voices are generally not very categorical. This topic was also mentioned

during the FGIs, where the participants simply emphasised the need to preserve common sense in this sphere, so as not to lose sight of Poland’s own security and its own military potential.

↓ FIGURE 14:

### Poland’s continued military support of Ukraine

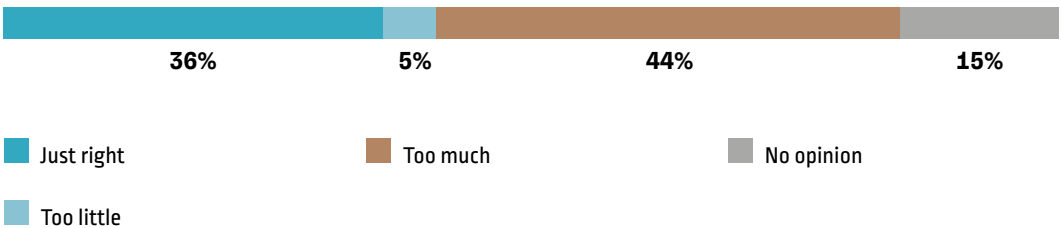


Another issue raised in the study, i.e. assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees by the Polish government, aroused the strongest emotions during the focus group interviews. In the survey, 44% of respondents felt that the scale of

assistance provided by our country was too high. Only 5% of the respondents said the assistance could be greater, and 36% said it was just right.

↓ FIGURE 15:

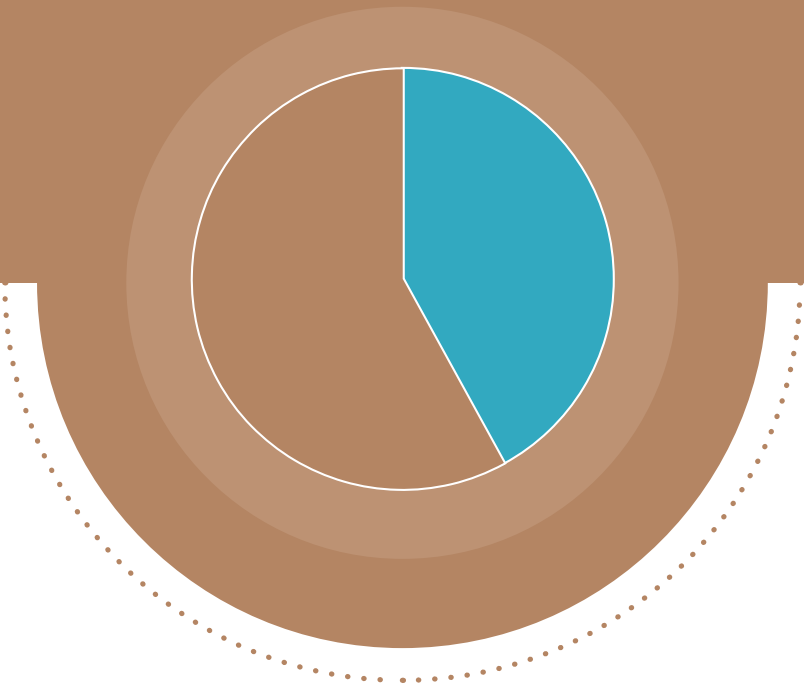
### Opinions on the scale of assistance provided by the Polish government to Ukrainian refugees



Continued assistance  
to refugees from Ukraine

Yes

42%

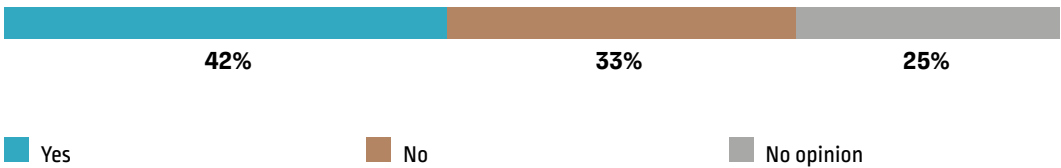


This specific distribution of responses does not mean, however, that the majority of Poles would like to see an end to assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees altogether,

although such voices were also recorded. The majority of the respondents would simply like to see changes and certain limitations.

↓ FIGURE 16:

## Continued assistance to refugees from Ukraine



The previously discussed suggestions of changes in social assistance provided by Poland to Ukrainians seem to have two sources. Firstly, the respondents believe that Ukrainians should not be favoured and should not have privileges over Polish citizens which, in their view, is happening at present (cf. the claim that Ukrainians have priority access to doctors' appointments). Another reason, closely related to the one above, is the particular assessment formulated by the respondents regarding the adaptability of Ukrainians. In the respondents' view, many Ukrainians receive assistance undeservedly or by 'stretching the rules'. Another line of criticism against Ukrainians refers to their attitudes in daily life: the respondents feel Ukrainians display a high sense of entitlement as well as resentment whenever they cannot get what they expect. The respondents recalled some high expectations from their own experience, e.g. people demanding a free haircut, beautician's services or entry to the swimming pool. While demonstrating such attitudes, some Ukrainians are thought to behave very rudely, with very bad attitudes towards Poles, while they should be grateful for their assistance instead. Hence the accusations that Ukrainians are being ungrateful.

*Well, I think that the government should definitely move away from these welfare benefits. I think that this process has gone wrong in general. At the initial stages, this assistance was necessary, but now we should see a gradual departure from it. [younger group, Lublin]*

*Well, they should be grateful for all the help that [president] Duda offered, and the previous government gave them. Well, it might be tough, but we also have to take care of our own interests. Like someone here said, it's time that assistance stopped. [older group, Lublin]*

*I would like to see an end to all that welfare policy at last, not to mention some electoral rights. And I think it's crucial to start phasing that out gradually. [older group, Lublin]*

*A war broke out in their country and it's not their fault. Actually, our country is at fault since it started the support too quickly, ending up offering ill-considered handouts on a large-scale. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*We opened up to Ukrainians too much by giving them all the rights, to get a PESEL [identification] number, to get all the other opportunities, which they are using in their own way. They have a PESEL number in Poland, they have Polish citizenship, they receive welfare benefits, they receive everything, and they go back to their country anyway. [older group, Łowicz]*

*All allowances for Ukrainians should be cut off because many Poles are gnashing their teeth when they hear what Ukrainians are getting.*

*And Poles have to wait in a queue because they don't get stuff for free while Ukrainians get preschool childcare and everything else for free while Poles have to pay for it. Poles have to pay for everything while Ukrainians get everything for free. This is wrong. [older group, Wrocław]*

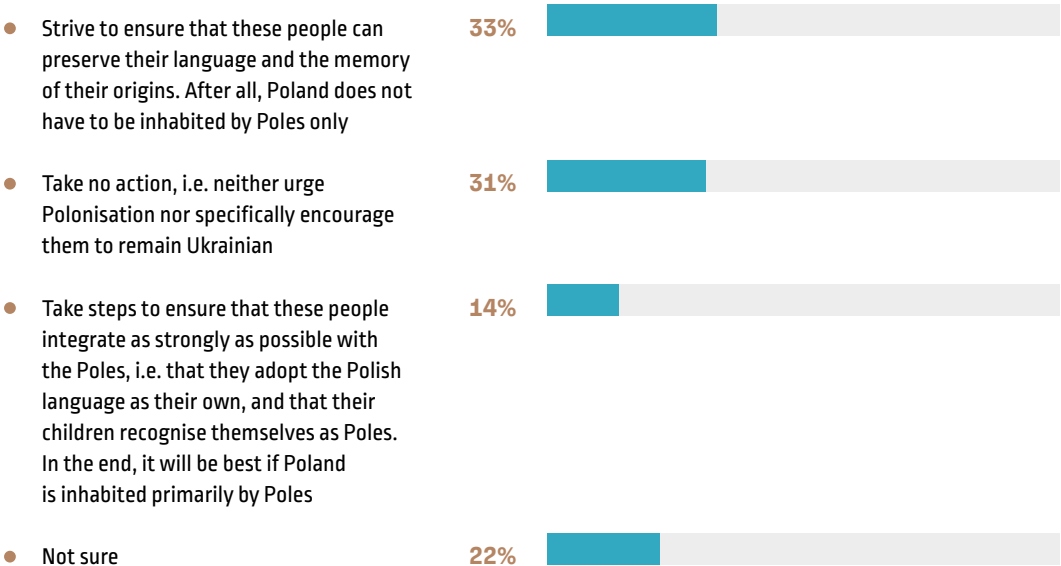
*There should be an end to hospitality because they've abused our hospitality. And now there's the behaviour of their politicians, some texts towards us, Poles. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*As a nation, we've had enough of them, too. [younger group, Wrocław]*

In the survey, only a small number of respondents suggested measures to integrate Ukrainians more strongly with Poles. The more popular option was the idea that Ukrainians should be able to preserve their language and the memory of their origins, or the idea that no action should be taken, leaving the decisions to Ukrainians themselves.

↓ FIGURE 17:

## The behaviour of the Polish government towards refugees and migrants from Ukraine



In respondents' opinion, the requirement to know the Polish language should be obligatory for people applying for higher-ranking positions at work. However, the lack of Polish language skills by Ukrainians in less skilled jobs is also sometimes annoying for Poles, and, in respondents' view, Ukrainians themselves are not interested in learning Polish.

The reluctance to take measures that would aim at a kind of 'Polonisation' of refugees from Ukraine is linked to the concern formulated also during the FGIs, namely that the Ukrainian community in our country might become so strong that this would lead to the emergence of a strong lobby, and a kind of 'country within a country'.

*One should survey the Ukrainians like we're being studied today, to see their opinions about us if they live here. It would be cool to find out what the Poles think, what the Ukrainians think, and find a way to talk. To make sure we don't have a negative attitude towards each other because they are going to live here, they'll make a mess, and we'll have to clean it up because they won't give a damn. [younger group, Łowicz]*

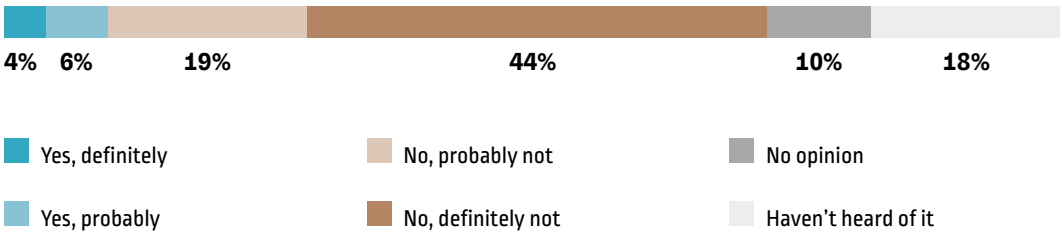
*A command of the Polish language should be required at higher positions, not at the lowest levels. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*Support them, help them to go somewhere abroad. I'd prefer to mix them up a bit so that it's not just Ukrainians here. We can swap refugees. Otherwise, I'm afraid that they will create a mini-country for themselves here one day. [older group, Wrocław]*

In this context, it is worth looking at the answers to another survey question, namely about the attitudes towards the concept of a Polish-Ukrainian state. The majority of respondents oppose such a concept (63%), while a minority (10%) support the idea.

↓ FIGURE 18:

## Attitudes towards the concept of a Polish-Ukrainian state



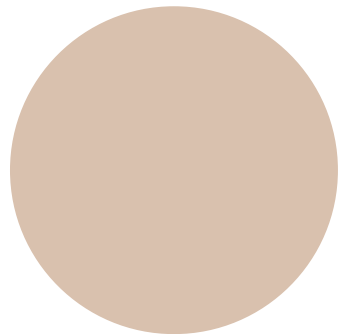
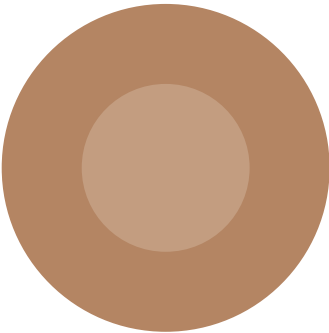
The idea, formulated very soon after the start of the war, did not gain currency among Poles. The majority of focus group respondents were surprised by this question, let alone by the idea of a common state, and all the FGI participants, without exception, were against it.

*At the beginning of the war there was this idea that we would create a union, a common state*

*here, with two parliaments, but we would speak as a single state to the outer world. [...] That would have been the stupidest idea we could come up with. In that case, I would not unite [the two countries] under any circumstances. [older group, Wrocław]*



# History

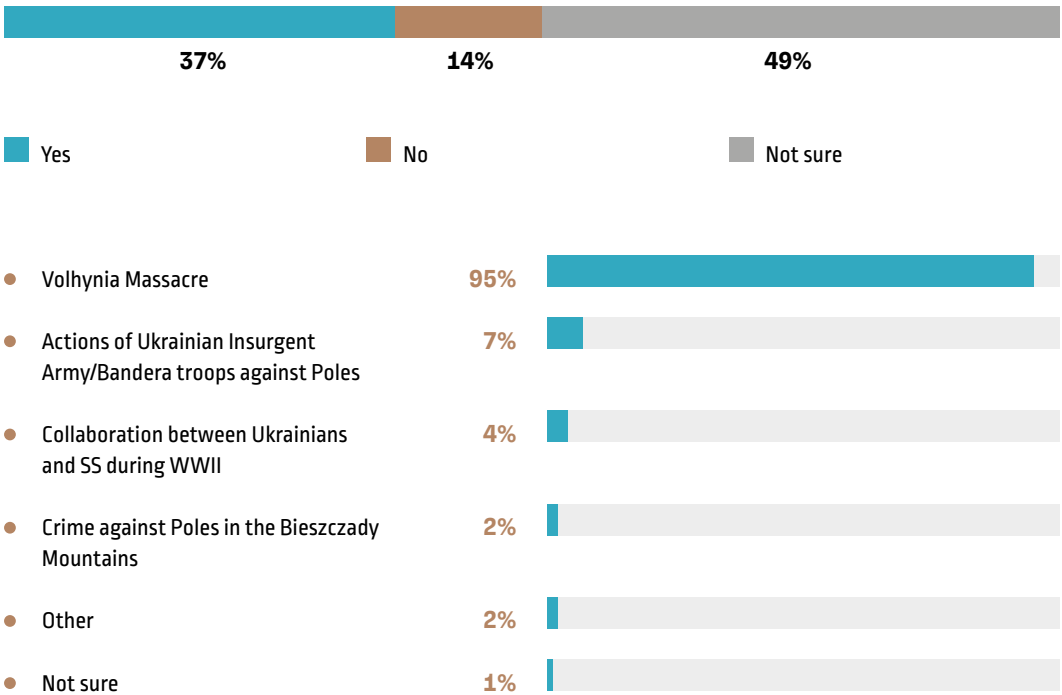


## Two-thirds of the respondents were unable to name historical events which should arouse a sense of guilt in Ukrainians vis-à-vis Poles today

For the 37% of respondents who have knowledge on the subject, the Volhynia Massacre is the central event of this kind.

↓ FIGURE 19:

### *Events in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations that should make Ukrainians feel guilty towards Poles today*



The Volhynia Massacre was mentioned by participants in all focus groups, in every town and city where the interviews were conducted, although with varying intensity. The respondents' level of knowledge about this event also varied across locations. Participants in focus groups conducted in Łowicz were least knowledgeable of all. In the remaining locations, this topic aroused similar emotions. No matter if the discussion was held in Rzeszów, Lublin or Wrocław, there was always a participant who could share stories related to Volhynia that were told at their home. Generally speaking, however, the level of knowledge about the Volhynia Massacre seemed very superficial. At two focus groups, the respondents even confused the Volhynia Massacre with the Katyn Massacre.

In the context of Polish-Ukrainian relations, the FGI participants mostly expected symbolic gestures: an apology and a dignified commemoration, which also entails

the demand for exhumations. The respondents had heard about problems with exhumations in the media, but were unable to determine the scale of the problem, i.e. approximately how many locations were involved, etc.

*I, for one, think that we have a difficult history and somewhere, at some point, both sides were guilty, yes, but as a descendant of those people in Volhynia who were murdered there, I could say, well, these things happened. They happened, it's history, it's a difficult history. [younger group, Lublin]*

*Probably both nations have done something wrong. In Poland, the most focus is on the Volhynia killings. [older group, Łowicz]*

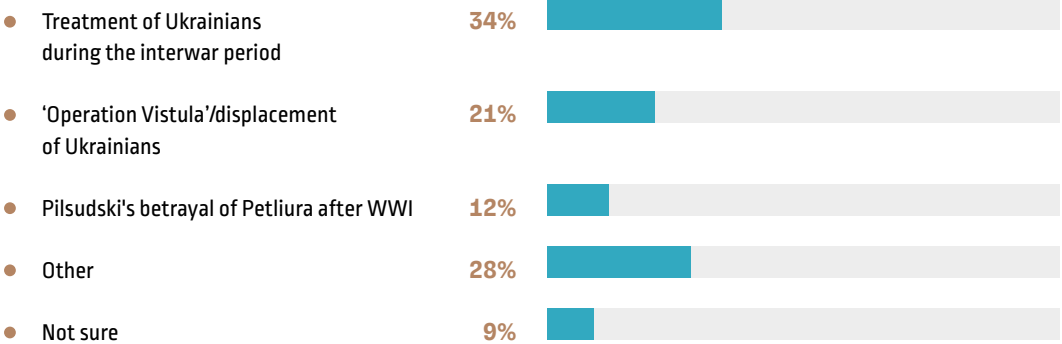
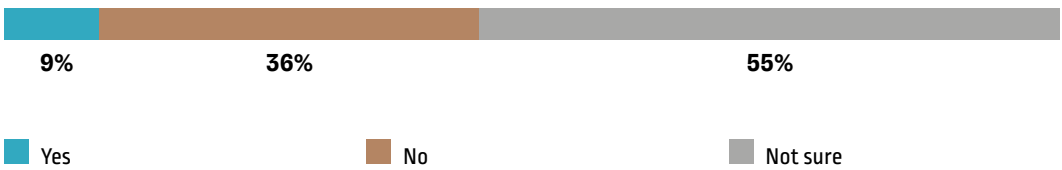


Only **9%** of the respondents felt that there were also events in our common history when Poles could have something to feel guilty for vis-à-vis Ukrainians. However, specific mentions of such events were isolated and

included the treatment of Ukrainians in the interwar period or the period immediately following the end of World War II, and 'Operation Vistula' (resettlement).

↓ FIGURE 20:

### *Events in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations which should make Poles feel guilty vis-à-vis Ukrainians today*



The lack of knowledge about events that may make Poles feel guilty vis-à-vis Ukrainians was also visible during the focus groups. A handful of participants mentioned 'Operation Vistula', but their knowledge on the subject was very superficial.

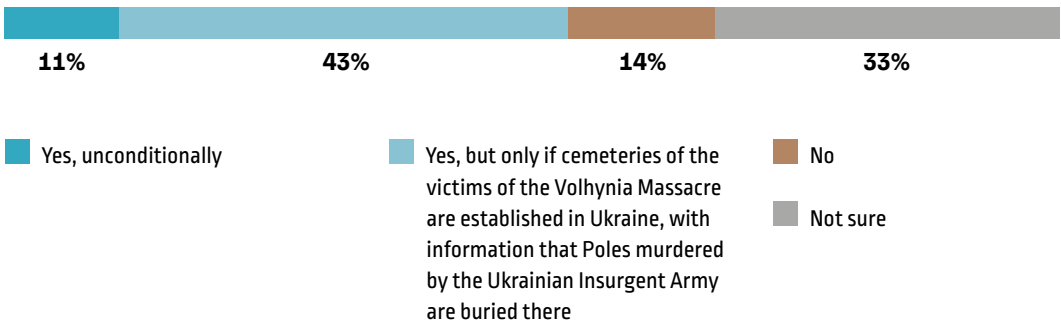
*As Poles, we didn't do the kind of ethnic cleansing that they did in Volhynia. We invaded their areas, a lot of Ukrainians were killed, but it wasn't..., a lot of people were killed, but it wasn't done as ethnic cleansing, murdering whole families and children.*  
[older group, Łowicz]

*There was a retaliatory action called 'Vistula' and it's far from glorious. By and large, killing another human being is not a good thing.*  
[younger group, Wrocław]

The majority of the respondents would not object to placing information in Polish cemeteries about the perpetrators of the murders of Ukrainians, although the consent was usually formulated on a conditional basis, i.e. it had to be linked to a corresponding action on the Ukrainian side related to the Volhynia Massacre.

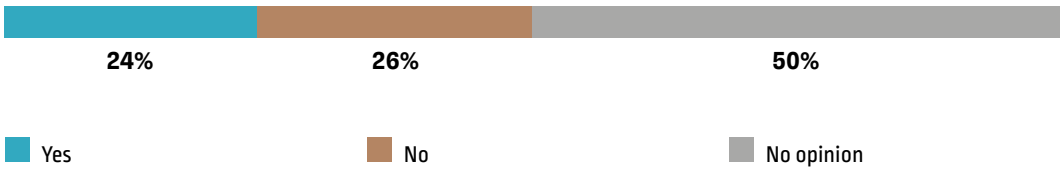
↓ FIGURE 21:

## Information to be placed in Polish cemeteries about perpetrators of murders of Ukrainians



↓ FIGURE 22:

## Opinions on the inscription 'Fallen for Free Ukraine' to be placed on the graves of members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army



The placement of the inscription 'Fallen for Free Ukraine' on the graves of Ukrainians in Poland proved to be more problematic for the participants. In their view, it should be sufficient to state in each case that a Ukrainian was buried there, without any additional text stating why this person was killed since this would unnecessarily trigger political connotations.

*I'm not accusing those who are alive now for what their grandparents or great-grandparents did 70 years ago. All I want is for them to exhume the victims, avoid destroying the Polish memorials commemorating the victims and admit those deeds. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*There should be firm efforts all the time to make sure Ukrainians admit what they did, apologise for it and allow the families to dig up the remains and bury the victims. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*It should all be clarified. Things were like this here, and let it be written like this. Here, it was like this, so let it be like this and like that. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*OK, but do they have to put this kind of text there? It's just enough to say that Ukrainians are buried here, yes, and that's it. [younger group, Lublin]*

The Volhynia Massacre and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army are the two most recognisable historical events. In the survey, a sizable group of respondents also declared awareness of 'Operation Vistula', but the respondents' knowledge of this event, as mentioned earlier, turned out to be very superficial.

The survey results have shown that only a few people have heard of the Uman Massacre or the Haidamaks while FGI discussions revealed that knowledge of these events is virtually nil.

↓ FIGURE 23:

### Knowledge of historical events

Volhynia Massacre



Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA)



'Operation Vistula' (resettlement)



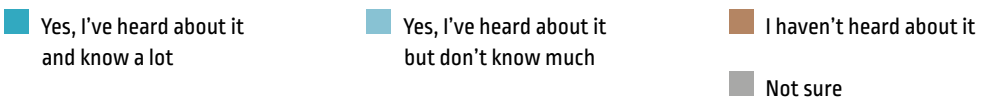
Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)



Uman Massacre



Haidamaks



Stepan Bandera turned out to be the most recognisable historical figure associated with Ukraine. Bandera is also the most critically assessed figure among Poles.

↓ FIGURE 24:

## Knowledge of historical figures associated with Ukraine

### Stepan Bandera



### Symon Petliura



### Roman Shukhevych



■ Yes, I've heard about it and know a lot

■ Yes, I've heard about it but don't know much

■ I haven't heard about it

■ Not sure

↓ FIGURE 25:

## Assessment of historical figures associated with Ukraine

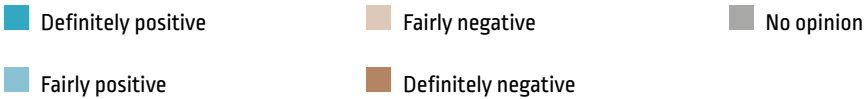
Stepan Bandera



Symon Petliura



Roman Shukhevych



Nevertheless, the respondents seemed to understand that Stepan Bandera is a very important figure for Ukrainians and therefore his memory is still alive in Ukraine. Although Poles may link him exclusively with the Volhynia events, the respondents think that Bandera is very often treated by Ukrainians as a national hero fighting for Ukraine's independence.

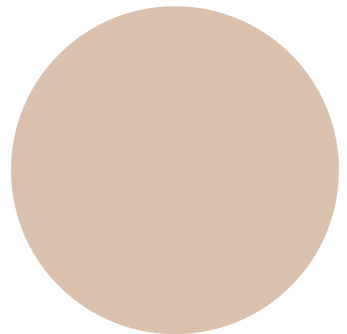
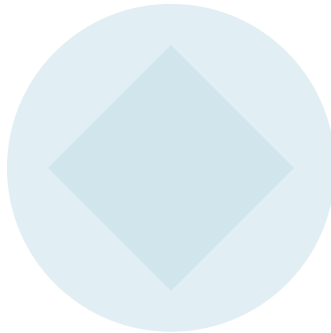
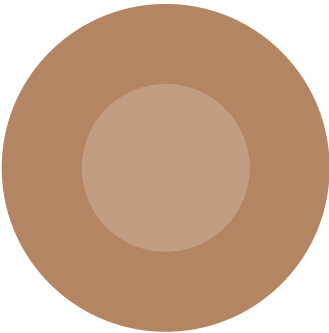
*We need to remember that Bandera fought not only with the Poles, but also with the Russians. Of course, he fought with the Jews as well towards the end. It was a cross-cultural melting pot there, so he fought against different nations. [younger group, Lublin]*

*When you went to Ukraine, there were these monuments to Bandera, always with fresh flowers laid there. For them, he is a national hero. Well, we have quite a different image of him, we link him with the Volhynia events and so on. Well, for me, this felt like a clash. [older group, Lublin]*

*For us, Bandera is a bandit while he is a hero for Ukrainians. [older group, Wrocław]*



# Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU



An overwhelming majority of respondents (63%) support Ukraine's accession to the EU, although it is obvious to respondents that Ukraine would first have to meet all the required criteria for this to happen.

Some people would even like to link the possible accession of Ukraine to the EU to its resolution of problems with Poland, including historical issues. Opposition to Ukraine's admission to the EU was reported by 16% of the respondents.

The oldest respondents, those with tertiary education and those who sympathise with centre-leftist parties are more likely to support the idea of Ukraine joining the EU in comparison with other respondents.

↓ FIGURE 26:

### *Poland's support for Ukraine's membership of the European Union*





The idea of admitting Ukraine to NATO enjoys almost the same level of support (62%). However, in this case, many

people formulate a critical condition: ending the war and making peace with Russia.

↓ FIGURE 27:

## Poland's support for Ukraine's membership in NATO



Identical socio-demographic correlations were observed in the answers to the question on support for Ukraine's accession to NATO and its accession to the EU.

In the case of Ukraine's EU accession, the respondents express a number of concerns and doubts as to the validity of this move and potential benefits/losses for Poland. When considering Ukraine's accession to NATO, the benefits for Poland came to the fore. This was observed during focus group discussions where the participants raised the argument that Ukraine acts as a buffer for Poland's security, separating us from Russia.

*In my opinion, Ukraine should not enter the European Union, at least not now, because it doesn't meet any standards. [younger group, Lublin]*

*I believe this would be fine but only on condition that Ukraine deals with corruption, which is omnipresent there. And they should simply sort their issues with the oligarchs. I can't imagine that they would join the European Union with the kind of situation in their country that they have now. [older group, Lublin]*

*[About the European Union] It's better if they don't because it won't be good for our economy. [younger group, Łowicz]*

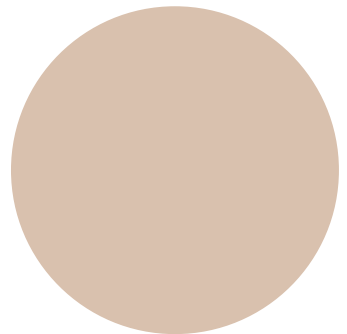
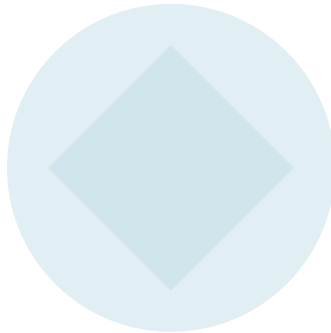
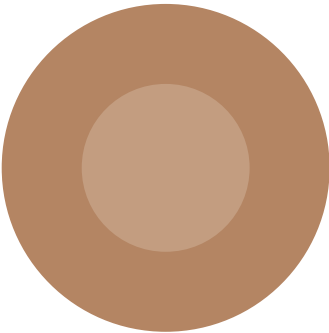
*I am against it because I believe that no matter if there is a state of war or not, this still doesn't change the tension and the escalation. Because the Russians perceive Ukraine more as part of their own land. Putin himself does not recognise the Ukrainian people. So, in my opinion, if we include Ukraine in NATO, this will be very dangerous. Then we would immediately be forced to fight for Ukraine. I wouldn't want that, that's why I'm strongly against this move in any variant. [younger group, Lublin]*

*It would be better for Poland if Ukraine joined NATO because, hopefully, then they would cut Putin's and Russia's a\*se a bit. If Ukraine is part of NATO, Putin wouldn't be fighting Ukraine, he would be fighting NATO. [older group, Łowicz]*

*They should join NATO as soon as possible. As for the EU, they should stabilise their country. The war should come to an end. They need to see who comes back and who doesn't. They should rebuild their country and regain mental peace. [older group, Wrocław]*



# Common interests and disputes



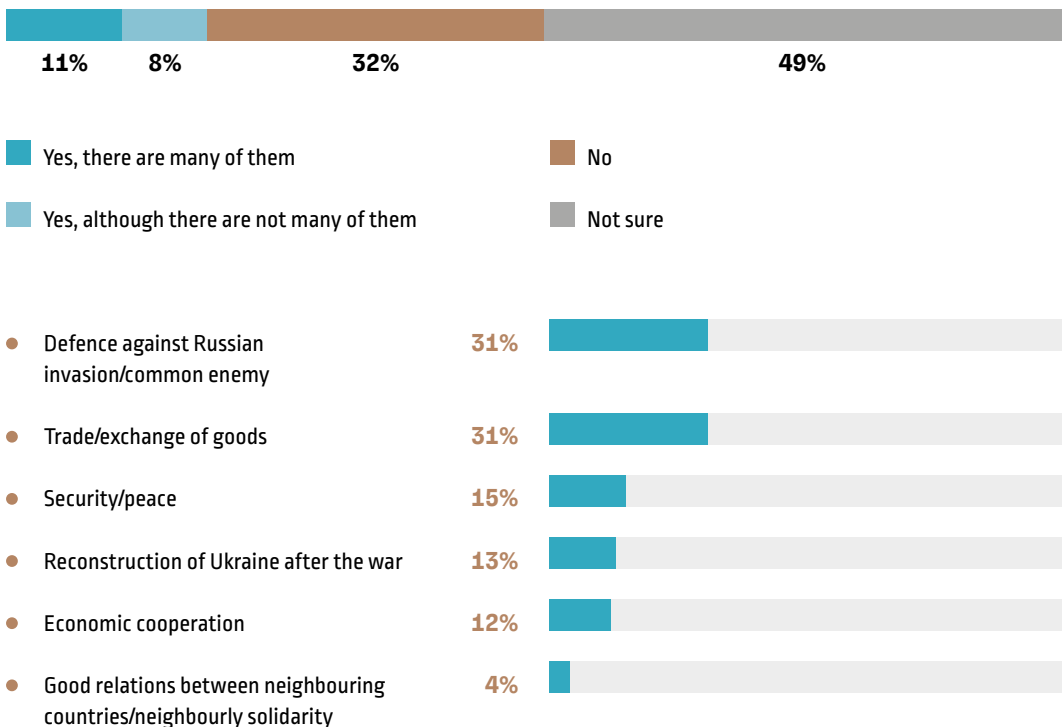
Slightly fewer than one in five respondents notice any interests linking Poland and Ukraine. One third of respondents do not see any common interests with Ukraine, while half of those surveyed cannot provide a clear answer to this question.

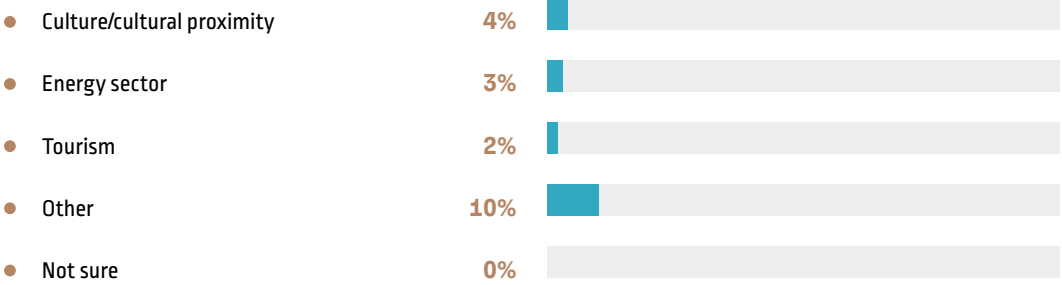
This result is quite surprising given that we are talking about a country which, firstly, is Poland's immediate neighbour and, secondly, is fighting a war on its territory. Therefore, this neighbourhood indisputably has geopolitical relevance.

If common interests linking Poland and Ukraine are noticed, they generally revolve around issues of national security.

↓ FIGURE 28:

### Interests linking Poland and Ukraine





The failure to notice common interests with Ukraine is such a surprising finding that it warrants more attention. This topic was also raised during the focus group interviews and the situation was similar: the question about common interests with Ukraine was usually followed by silence. The FGI participants had hardly anything to say about it.

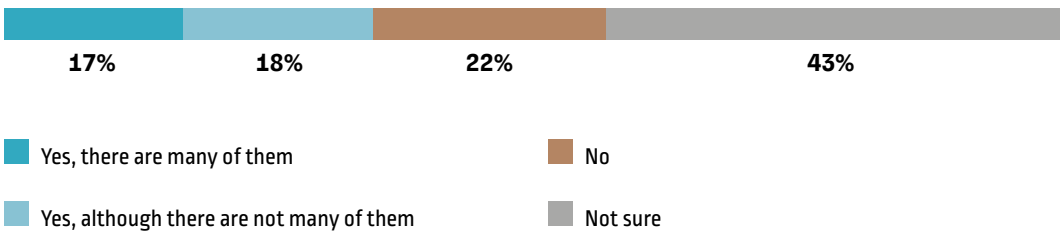
The lack of knowledge of Poland's common interests with Ukraine may stem from two reasons, both of which may occur simultaneously. Firstly, poor communication could be a natural explanation: trade relations with Ukraine have never been widely discussed, except, of course, for individual situations when disputes arose. The second reason

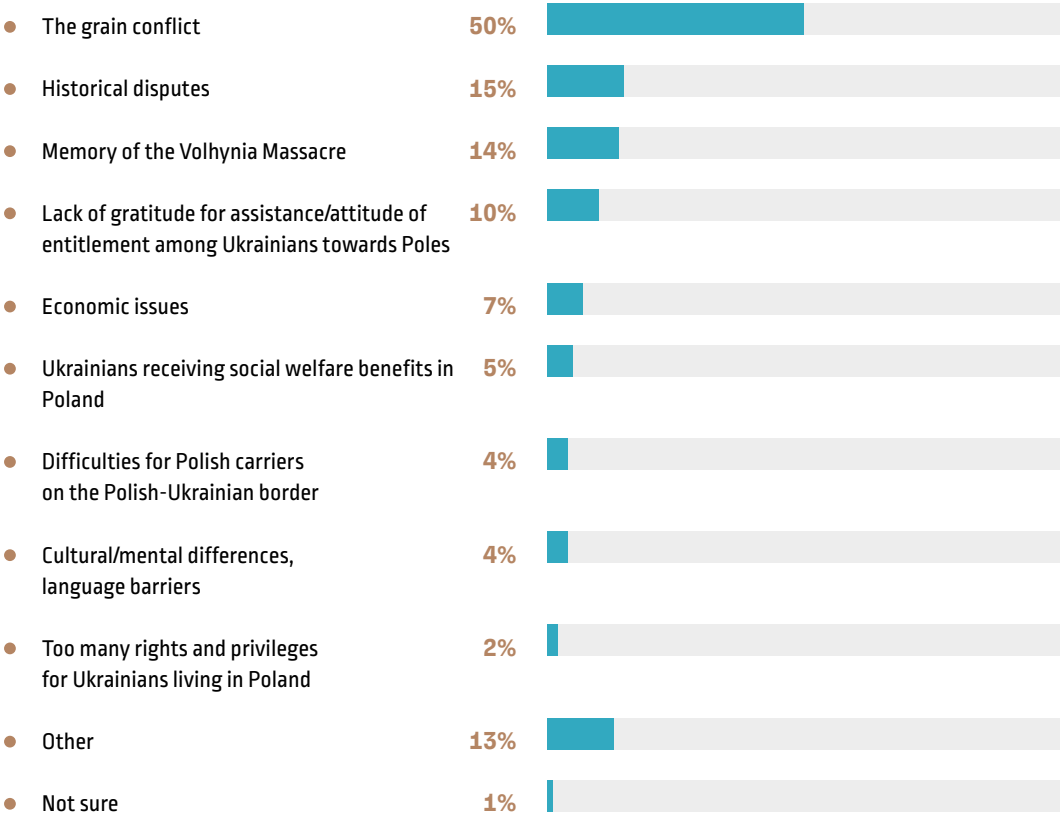
is associated with the current events during the period when the study was conducted. The grain crisis, and earlier also the blockade of the state border by transport companies, made it easier for Poles to notice disputable issues rather than common interests of the two countries, even in areas as obvious as security.

This claim seems to be confirmed by the results of the next question, which concerned precisely the contentious issues in Polish-Ukrainian relations. It turns out that disputes in Polish-Ukrainian relations are noticed by almost twice as many respondents as common interests, with the 'grain conflict' undisputedly topping the list of disputes.

↓ FIGURE 29:

### Perceived disputes in Polish-Ukrainian relations





*In fact, we are also helping the Ukrainians militarily, partly in order for them to act as a buffer. So it's in our interest for Ukraine to hold on and not fall. [older group, Lublin]*

*For now, they're workers, helping to keep the economy going. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*It is in our interest when Ukraine is defending itself and all of Europe is helping them. [Rzeszów]*

*It is in our common interest to make sure that nothing happens there. As long as something is going on there, things will get messy in our*

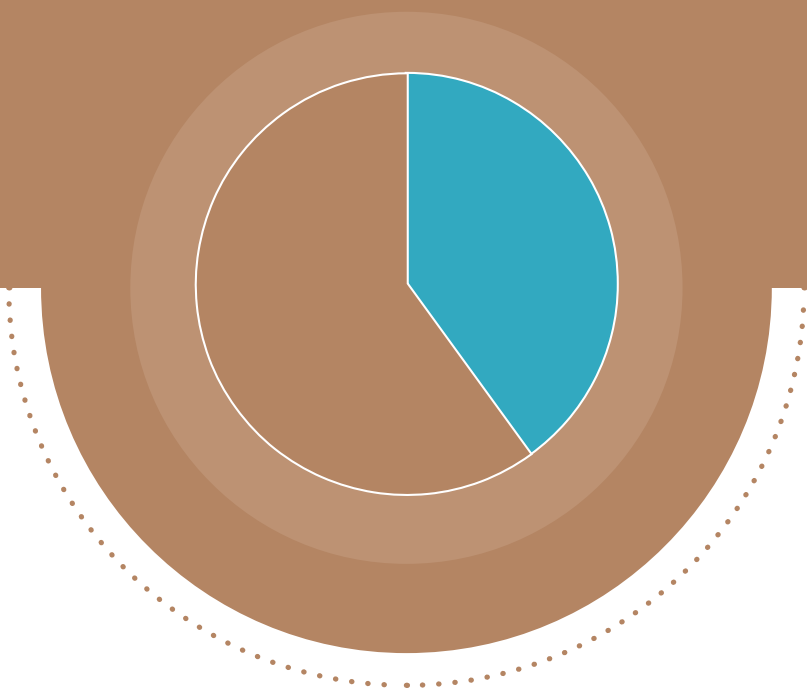
*country. Everyone would like to go back to the pre-war reality. Then they would do what they please, and we'd do what we want at home. But if there is a war there, this has a huge impact on us, too. [younger group, Wrocław]*

Almost everyone has heard about the border blockade as well as the grain crisis. A sizeable group of respondents even claim that they are very well familiar with these topics. This is corroborated by the statements made by focus group participants, who pointed to these topics as examples of events where they took an extra effort to expand their knowledge on the subject.

Perceived disputes  
in Polish-Ukrainian relations

*No/Yes, although there are  
not many of them*

40%



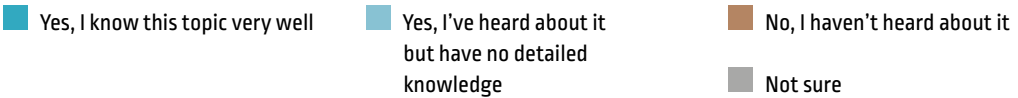
↓ FIGURE 30:

### Familiarity with the topics of grain crisis and border blockade

The grain crisis



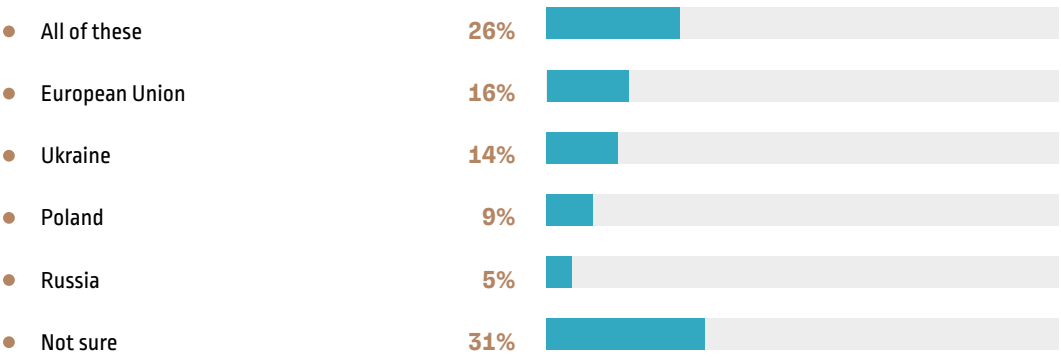
Blockade at the Polish-Ukrainian border



In the respondents' view, it is not easy to unequivocally identify the party responsible for the border blockades. Hence the response options 'not sure' and 'all of these' [i.e. Poland, Ukraine, the European Union, as well as Russia] were chosen frequently.

↓ FIGURE 31:

### Responsibility for blockades at the border



The lack of clear identification of those responsible for the border blockades was also noted during the focus group interviews. In addition to the actors mentioned in the survey, i.e. the Polish government, the EU, the Ukrainian authorities, FGI participants mentioned oligarchs, i.e. owners of vast land estates in Ukraine.

*Somewhere, I heard that the grain is coming from Ukraine. I heard that this was technological grain, of inferior quality. But I didn't know that the quantities were so vast. I didn't realise it was such a huge scale, that the scam was so huge. [younger group, Lublin]*

*I think it's the oligarchs who are responsible for this. People who are very rich and who simply control this thing. Not ordinary Ukrainian farmers, they have no say out there. It's precisely those who manage thousands of hectares of land. [older group, Lublin]*

*I think it's the fault of the European Union. It permitted this to happen. And we should also take part of the blame because we agreed to it. We allowed the EU to adopt such regulations. It's all very well but we have destroyed our own market by trying to help Ukrainian haulage companies, because they needed help. So it's no wonder that we're seeing a protest. It's all because of the EU, we can say 'thank you, Brussels'. But also our politicians are to blame because they raised their hand politely. [older group, Lublin]*

*It's not the government, the Poles themselves. In a war situation, we opened the border, we let exports in, duty-free, but this grain was supposed to pass through Poland, but because*

*of Polish greed the grain stayed here. The Ukrainians didn't force us to keep this grain in Poland. No, we actually bought it. [older group, Łowicz]*

*The tax on grain that enters Poland has not been sorted out. No one inspects the goods that are coming across the border. Apparently, the order was imposed in April, but it still turns out that hundreds of tonnes of low-quality grain, untested and not complying with EU standards, are still coming to Poland. Why are the Polish uniformed services guarding the tracks to prevent a blockade but, at the same time, blocking them to avoid seeing the content of these rail cars? The stuff that is hidden there? [younger group, Wrocław]*

*This is where diplomacy should come in, and this should be resolved at the EU level rather than having us and Ukraine settle issues back and forth. This is creating a completely unnecessary conflict between the two countries. [older group, Wrocław]*

Although the main objective of the survey was to diagnose Polish-Ukrainian relations, the respondents were also asked about their attitudes to various forms of social protest (acceptance/opposition). The inclusion of this question was justified given that Poland has seen numerous protests (including farmers' protests) in the context of economic disputes with Ukraine.

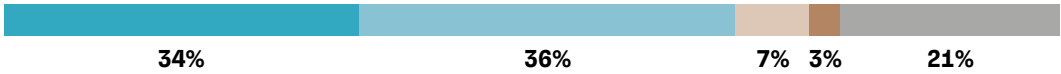
It turns out that even 'tough' forms of protest such as border blockade enjoy widespread support. This support is relatively lower only with regard to goods dumping, even though the support for this form of protest is relatively high (39%), with an equal number of opponents.



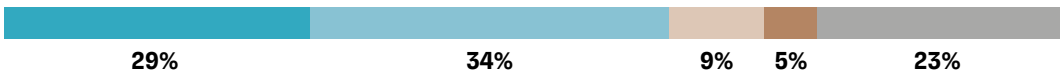
↓ FIGURE 32:

## Attitudes towards various forms of protest

### Pickets, street protests



### Border blockade



### Import ban, even if this is against EU law



### Goods being dumped on the ground or destroyed in other ways



■ Always acceptable if it is in the interest of Polish entrepreneurs and/or farmers

■ Acceptable as long as it does not cause undue hardship for ordinary people in Poland

■ Unacceptable when there is a war in Ukraine

■ Never acceptable, regardless of circumstances

■ No opinion

The FGI participants also showed a far-reaching understanding of, and solidarity with, the farmers who were protesting at the time by blocking roads and dumping goods from Ukrainian trucks. The participants did not object even to the dumping of grain: they said that virtually any form of protest is good as long as it is effective. Only the focus group in Rzeszów differed in this respect. The participants in Rzeszów opposed forms of protest that restrict freedom and, even more so, the ability of other Poles to perform their work.

*This form of protest, i.e. a blockade at the border, attracts quite a lot of media attention. It can be shown in the media. So if you talk about something, then the topic is 'alive'. So I support it from this point of view because this protest will be shown not only on Polish TV but there is a chance that foreign TV stations will also show it, like French or German TV. Maybe a solution will be found then. [younger group, Lublin]*

*In our history, protests have always proven to have an effect on government, so now there should be a powerful protest and I'm sure it will work. They will realise they can't do anything about it [the protest] and then they will change something for us. However, they will change something only for a while, to make things better, but they can do something. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*When there are protests out there, I know that everyone is fighting for their own interests as much as they can and that's OK. If I had some*

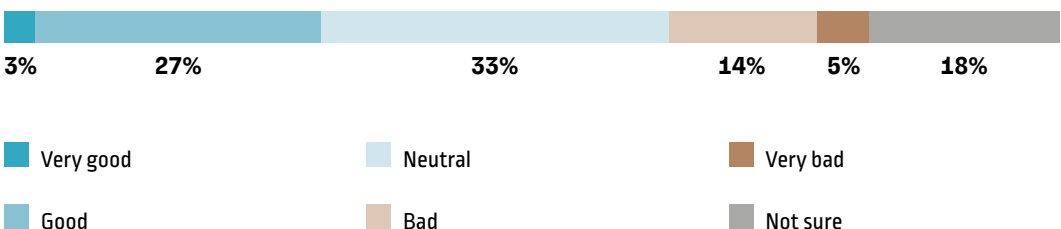
*interests there, I'd also fight for it and I'd try my best. But when violence escalates then they're going too far. [younger group, Wrocław]*

*[On the 'grain crisis'] This causes further discord, further conflict spiralling. After spontaneously helping them without thinking much, without checking if it's a good deal for us. We acted like humans. All sorts of opinions are beginning to circulate, on the Internet, and social media are winding it up, all the negative opinions, but everyone has to form an opinion of their own. Grain is just one product, and there are many more. This makes us look like fools, from the economic perspective. I'm not talking about defence, because it's in our interest for Ukraine to be defending itself and the whole of Europe helping them. One thing cannot come at the expense of the other. I'm surprised that this is taking so long. I think it's a political puzzle, but it's having a negative impact on Polish-Ukrainian relations. [Rzeszów]*

Considering these findings, the assessment of the current Polish-Ukrainian relations should not come as a surprise: only slightly less than one third of the respondents assess them as positive. On the other hand, however, the respondents do not fully extrapolate the existing disputes (above all with regard to agricultural products) onto the overall relations between the two countries. Polish-Ukrainian relations are assessed as 'bad' by 19% of the respondents. Therefore, they majority view these relations as neutral [33%] or are unable to take a position on the matter [18%].

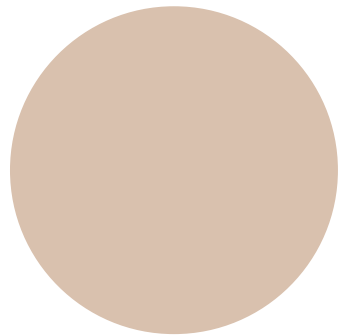
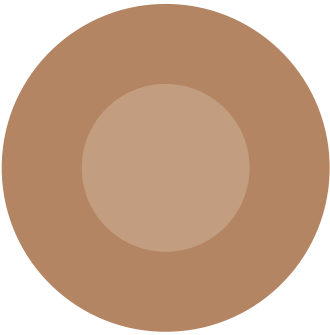
↓ FIGURE 33:

## Assessment of current Polish-Ukrainian relations





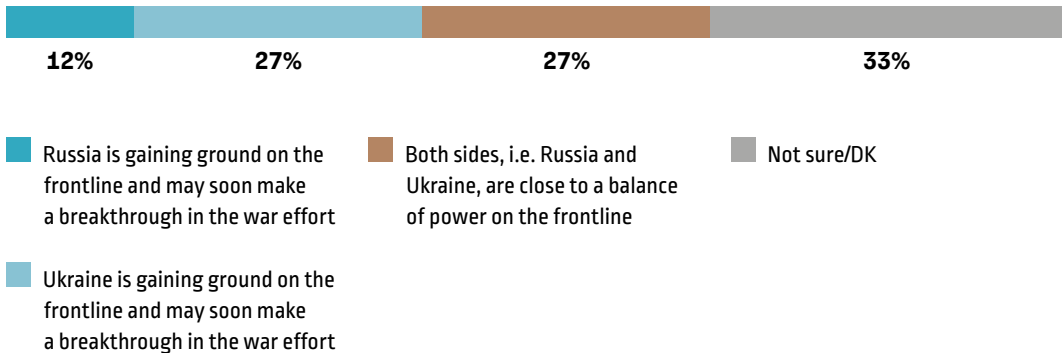
**War**



According to the survey respondents, the current situation on the frontline has reached a kind of stalemate, with neither side able to achieve a clear advantage. However, the survey fieldwork coincided with the seizure of Avdiivka by the Russians, which could suggest that the scales were tipping in favour of the Russian troops.

↓ FIGURE 34:

### Assessment of the current war situation



Russia's growing advantage is mentioned more often primarily by the respondents with tertiary education and by men (in comparison with women). The answers to this question reveal, moreover, that women are much less interested in the war in Ukraine than men. This is suggested by the very high share of women answering 'Not sure' [44%]. Among men, this answer was selected by 23%.

*Somewhere in the background, voices are being heard that Russia is beginning to gain advantage in this war, but there are no concrete examples. At the beginning of the war, we saw a map every day, showing the shifts,*

*the cities and towns that were taken back. That's not the case anymore. [older group, Lublin]*

*It seems to me that the situation right now is a bit 'frozen', with Russia's advantage. [older group, Lublin]*

*This conflict must be ended immediately to make sure the West doesn't put so much money in there. [younger group, Wroctaw]*

The respondents believe that it is quite unlikely for Russia to attack any country other than Ukraine. Nevertheless, such a risk undoubtedly exists, and if this were to happen, Moldova is thought to be the most vulnerable country, followed by the Baltic States, with Finland running the lowest risk. Russian aggression against Poland is considered

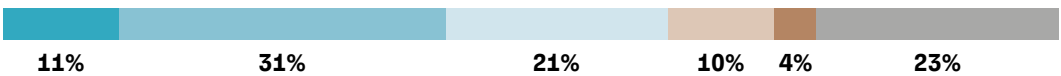
by 23% of the respondents, of whom 7% answer that such aggression is 'very likely'.

The likelihood of the conflict spilling over to other countries is indicated more frequently by respondents with tertiary education and by men.

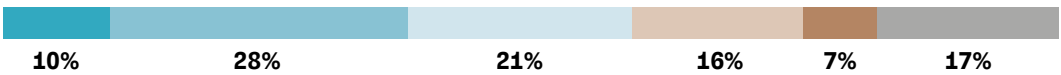
↓ FIGURE 35:

### Likelihood of Russia attacking further countries

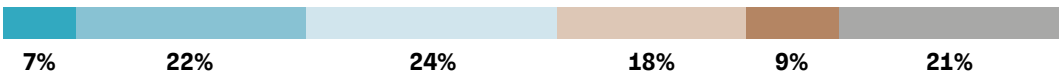
Russia will attack Finland



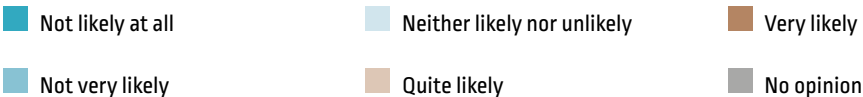
Russia will attack Poland



Russia will attack one of the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia)



Russia will attack Moldova



According to FGI participants, the international situation is further complicated by the prospect of Donald Trump being elected for a new term as U.S. President. They believe this

development would further increase the risk of war spilling over into more countries, with Moldova being most at risk.

*We can't have a situation where Putin is telling everyone what to do. He said it's best to move the borders back to 1997, which means that Poland wasn't a NATO member then. And he has an appetite for Poland because Russia is an imperial state, he's a madman and he won't stop at Ukraine. [younger group, Lublin]*

*If I had to give you a point in time, I'd say... Although I'm really not knowledgeable when it comes to wars, but I think that we can expect some new conflict in our close neighbourhood in three to five years, and this conflict will be inspired by Putin, unfortunately, because he won't stop. [younger group, Lublin]*

*It is real. If Trump wins and if he actually fulfils his election promises, and abolishes NATO, withdraws from Europe, fights the Chinese over Taiwan, which means he'll go about his business, Europe will be left alone and then, if Russia wins the war in Ukraine by that time, it may have an appetite to try other countries.*

*Estonia, Latvia, then Poland, in that order, and that's a risk. [older group, Lublin]*

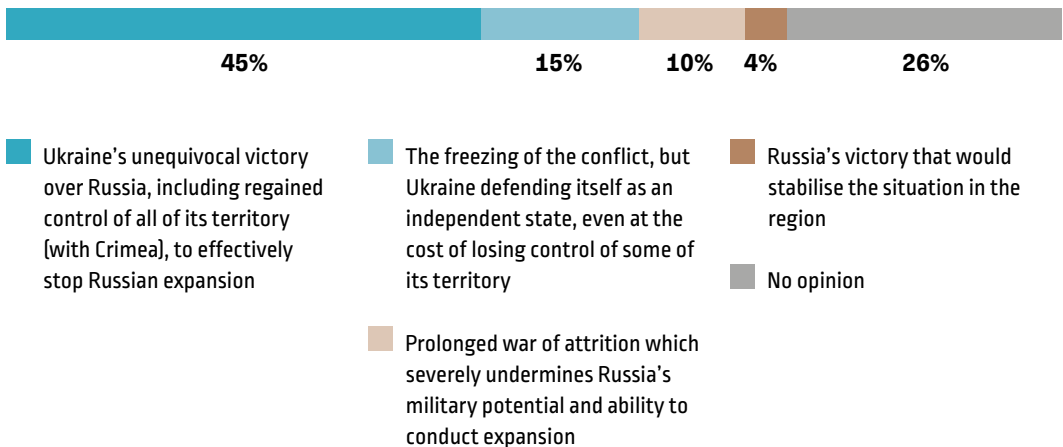
*He [Putin] was hoping that once he's dealt with Ukraine, he'd would move further on. [older group, Łowicz]*

*Putin won't dare because he doesn't stand a chance. He doesn't even have the weapons to fight with anymore, let alone fight NATO. [older group, Wrocław]*

Hardly anyone among the respondents believes that Russia's victory in the war in Ukraine could bring a lasting sense of security for Poland. Such security can only be ensured by a complete victory of Ukraine, with Russia being removed from all the occupied territories, including Crimea. This view is shared by the largest proportion of the respondents, i.e. **45%**. A quarter of the respondents were unable to provide an unequivocal answer as to the developments in Ukraine that could provide lasting security for Poland, which may suggest that such a large group of respondents do not actually believe that lasting security is possible in the first place.

↓ FIGURE 36:

## Potential developments in Ukraine that could ensure lasting security for Poland

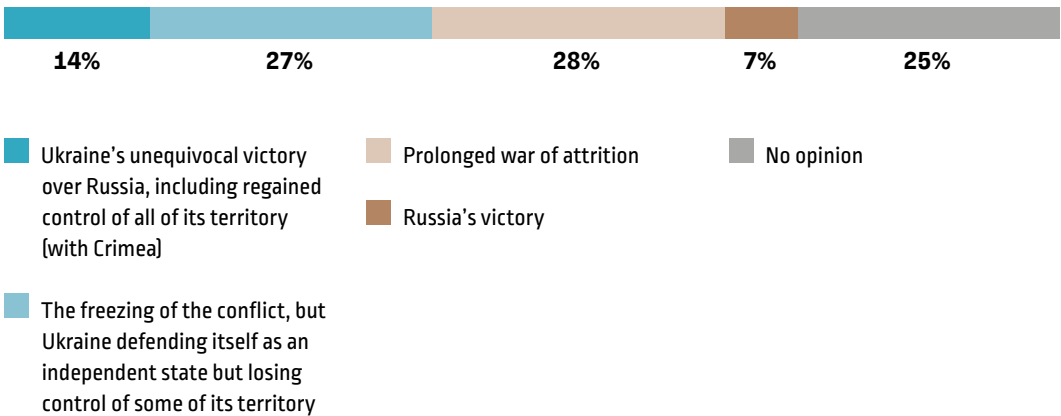


When considering the most likely scenarios of events related to the war in Ukraine, only a handful of respondents actually consider the possibility of one party having an unequivocal victory over the other. Nevertheless, if one side were to win, the respondents assume this would probably be Ukraine rather than Russia.

However, what is thought to be much more likely is either the freezing of the conflict with Ukraine defending its remaining territory, or continued war of attrition. Both possibilities are considered with similar frequency [27% and 28% respectively].

↓ FIGURE 37:

### Most likely developments in Ukraine



Similar opinions were expressed by focus group participants. Additionally, they often mentioned the topic of U.S. presidential election in this context. The participants felt that this is currently the most relevant variable that could influence the developments in Ukraine in the long term. None of the FGI participants assumed anything else than a very negative scenario for Ukraine in the event of Donald Trump being elected president. Nobody in the focus groups shared the belief that a total victory of Ukraine would be possible. Even if there is an agreement between Ukraine and Russia, the participants had no doubt that this would come at a price: Ukraine will lose some of its territory.

*I would say it's the most realistic scenario, and I think, although I'm not going to sound optimistic, that peace negotiations will begin. I mean, they're already underway, but they will enter a more advanced phase between Russia and Ukraine. And Ukraine will agree to lose some territory, certainly Crimea. And there will be negotiations with the West being the mediator... [younger group, Lublin]*

*It's hard to believe that Ukraine will win this war. It may win it, but only by the hand of the Americans. The Americans no longer want to*

*withdraw... At least Trump, who will probably win the election. [older group, Lublin]*

*I have a theory that I've made up by looking at those things that could have an impact. Largely, these would be the elections that are going to take place in the USA later this year. They could have an impact and either Putin has a chance now to get as much as he can and then it's over, or things are going to drag on. In fact, it's been dragging on for 2 years now. [younger group, Łowicz]*

*I can't see a quick end to this war because it serves many people's interests if the war continues. [older group, Łowicz]*

*I don't think Russia will lose because it's got too many people to lose it. I don't know what makes people think that Ukraine will win. I only see some kind of truce, territories being taken over. [Rzeszów]*

*It will be a war until everyone has bled out. [older group, Wrocław]*



## 9. Summary

The ongoing war still casts a deep shadow over the opinions and emotions of the Polish public whenever they speak on Ukraine-related issues. The war context tops the list of spontaneous associations related to Ukraine and affects answers to other questions very strongly, introducing tension and anxiety into respondents' daily lives.

At the same time, however, after two years, the view on Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations increasingly takes into account perspectives other than that related to the war.

The present study was carried out at a time when the potential of emotions and spontaneous social reflexes seen at the beginning of the war were already largely exhausted. Over time, a new social homeostasis has ensued, involving the permanent presence of Ukrainian citizens in Poland, daily exposure to war news, also covering scenarios of threats to Poland's security. Other components have been recently added to this picture as well: conflicts of interest in the area of transport and trade in agricultural produce. Also, the topic of historical settlements has been revived. The Polish public has come to realise that Ukrainians are not just neighbours who have been affected by the cataclysm of war (and they deserve to be helped and supported), but also potential competitors in the economy and labour market, rivals in international politics, and their country has been gaining importance and self-confidence despite the hardships. This is a new situation, and social attitudes are only just being shaped, with specific groups and communities only forming their views. The study was conducted at a time when Polish-Ukrainian tensions and disputes were heightened, for the first time on such a large scale. Hence, the respondents felt that Poland and Ukraine have more differences than common interests.

One cannot but notice that the Polish public is beginning to fear the great potential of Ukraine, which had not been fully apparent before. It was only with the grain crisis that this potential and its impact on Poland's economy became more apparent.

The findings from the study discussed in the report show the increasing complexity of Poles' attitudes towards Ukraine and Ukrainians. We observe strong support for military aid coming from and through Poland. A visible majority of Polish respondents are in favour of Ukraine's membership in NATO. Support for its EU membership is also high, albeit with some preconditions attached. However, a large proportion of the Polish public believe that the assistance provided by the Polish government to refugees is excessive and beyond Poland's capabilities. There are clearly negative and critical themes in statements about Ukraine and Ukrainians. Qualitative research has also revealed some hearsay and unverified news that casts a negative light on refugees, their attitudes and behaviour in Poland.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the overall assessment is not as positive as one would expect given the atmosphere prevailing in Poland two years ago. While neutral answers prevail, a lot of critical aspects are also present. This is not the first survey where this negative trend can be observed.

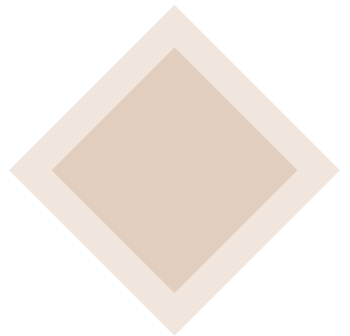
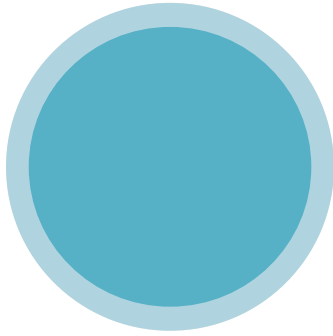
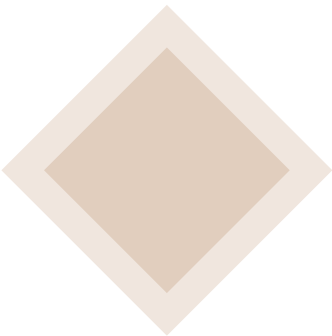
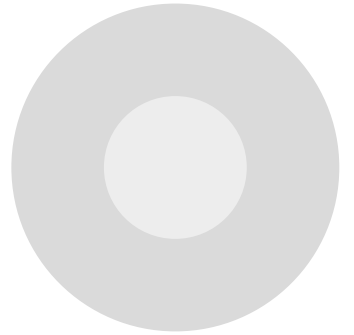
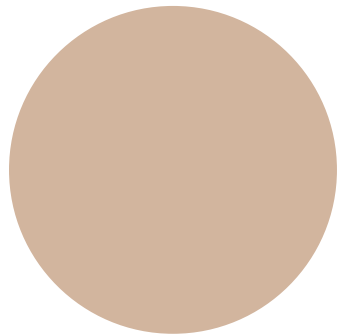
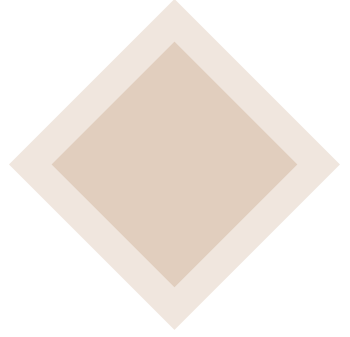
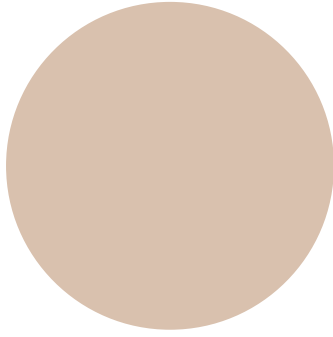
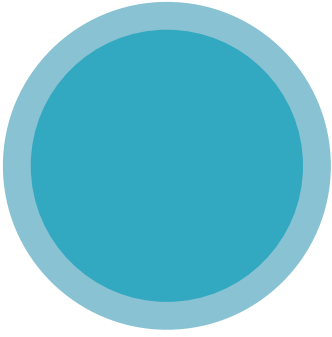
In fact, however, one should view this as an adjustment rather than a reversal of the trend of support and liking for


Ukraine in Polish society. Notably, the very high figures recorded at the beginning of the war were not sustainable in the long term. For a long time to come, Ukraine will continue to be a difficult and complex topic for the Polish public, with multiple nuances and shades of grey. This is related to the purely emotional layer (with strong swings in public mood in recent years, caused by the accumulation of extraordinary events) as well as a new understanding of particular and collective interests.

It can be said that Poles and Ukrainians, as communities, are only just getting to know each other. This new relationship is only just taking shape under extraordinary circumstances and against many odds. Importantly, the

research findings do not really reveal any deep resentment towards Ukrainians as human beings: even the existing critical voices are not coming from a nationalistic or xenophobic stance. Cultural proximity is noted and openness to family relationships or friendships is commonly declared.

The importance of relations with Ukraine, both in the context of the ongoing war and in the perspective of the future regional and European architecture, calls for regular monitoring of public sentiment in both countries. While this sentiment will be susceptible to fluctuations and crises, it is likely to be fairly resistant to more serious breakdowns, despite ongoing efforts to put the two nations and countries at odds with each other.





The study sought to capture the change that is taking place in the thinking and emotions of Polish public two years after the Russian attack on Ukraine. In view of the highly dynamic events that strongly influence the Polish-Ukrainian relations, it seems particularly important and necessary to explore the current public awareness. Understanding the sources of certain attitudes and behaviours helps to tone down emotions, at least partially, and support rational action in Poland and Ukraine.



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The Mieroszewski Centre is a Polish state institution established by the Polish Parliament and supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Our mission is to run and support projects aimed at building dialogue between Poles and the nations of eastern Europe. The Centre is named after Juliusz Mieroszewski, one of the most prominent Polish political writers of the 20th century. He championed cooperation between Poles and other nations suffering under Russian and Soviet imperialism.