

UKRAINE AND POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

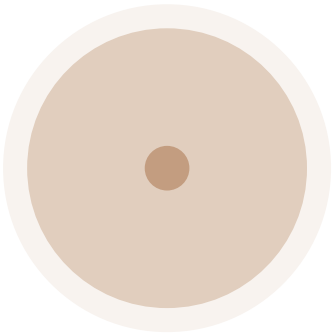
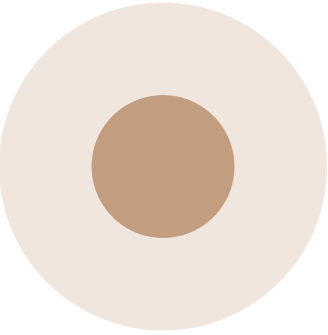
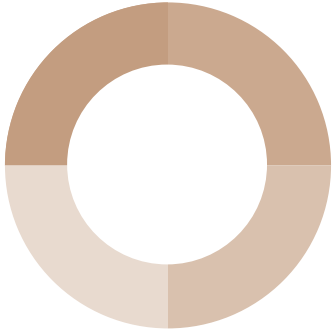
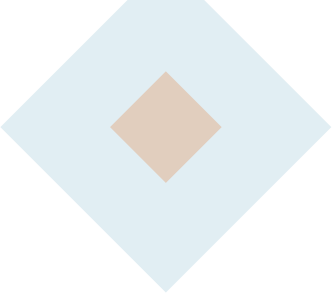


Warsaw, January 2025

Report by the Miosroszewski Centre
on public opinion research conducted in Poland

AS SEEN BY POLES

CHANGE
OR CONTINUITY?





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1. Introduction – background and objectives of the study

The third year of the war in Ukraine is stirring a variety of emotions and attitudes within Polish society.

On the one hand, Poles have grown accustomed to daily news of the ongoing Russian aggression. On the other hand, they feel increasingly tense and uncertain about the future. Forecasts concerning the changes in U.S. policy under the new administration taking power, reports of deteriorating conditions on the frontline, security concerns among European countries, hybrid operations, and Russian disinformation are shaping an increasingly complex and evolving view of the conflict among the Polish public. Understanding the nature of these phenomena has become a significant challenge.

The tension triggered by the war in Ukraine is not always visible but subtly affects the everyday lives and thoughts of Poles. An increasing number of people see the conflict as part of a broader global shift in international politics, a contest of power between the new contenders for hegemony and the West. This only amplifies feelings of uncertainty and a sense of insecurity.

The Polish debate on Ukraine is also influenced by issues that are not directly linked to the war, such as economic disputes (less intense than a year ago) or historical disputes. Lively discussions, and even everyday conversations, have focused on the Ukrainian government's declarations that no discriminatory restrictions are in force against Polish institutions' applications to search for and exhume victims of war and repression buried in Ukraine, including victims of the Volhynia Massacre. The tone of the commentaries is mixed, with critical and sceptical views on Ukraine's sincerity alongside opinions expressing hope that the Ukrainian elites have ventured to offer a new, constructive approach.

Regardless of the nature of the views that Poles hold on this particular matter, the majority of respondents consistently views Ukraine as a sovereign entity endowed with political agency. Discussions about Ukraine's European integration, post-war reconstruction or other forward-looking topics are based on the assumption that

Poland's neighbour should remain—and will remain—an independent country. This is a significant yet not always fully realised aspect of Polish thinking.

Social life in Poland continues at its usual pace, and Ukrainians have now become an integral part of it. The term 'refugees', once commonly used to describe their status, is gradually falling out of use, as Ukrainians work, study, travel between countries, and increasingly embed themselves in Poland's social fabric. Although some circles in Poland are sceptical about the scale of the Ukrainian presence, real tensions and conflicts appear to be rare and are characterised by low intensity. Ukrainians are filling labour market gaps, particularly in larger cities, where many sectors and businesses would otherwise struggle. Cultural proximity and Ukrainians' growing proficiency in the Polish language help to reduce social distance and foster better integration.

The results of our study show that Polish-Ukrainian relations spark considerable public interest, generating both positive and negative emotions. Also, it is worth noting that the nature of these relations is also influenced by Russian disinformation and hybrid activities aimed at driving a wedge between the two nations. Although the Polish public is more resistant and sensitive to such efforts than its Western counterparts, these factors should not be underestimated.

The perception of Ukrainians in Poland is increasingly shaped by the presence of Ukrainian capital in Poland's economy. In 2024, when several Polish companies were taken over by Ukrainian entities, this provoked rather negative reactions in Polish media because of controversies surrounding these transactions (e.g., closure of the acquired plant, allegedly underpriced purchase). The Polish public began to recognise that Ukraine was not only a country engaged in a war of defence but also a competitive economy. Poles have also become more aware of the material stratification within the Ukrainian community, including

the presence of affluent individuals, prompting some Poles to question the continued need for Polish government support for Ukrainians in its current form.

The political context in Poland also plays a role. Although, in principle, the issue of supporting Ukraine and backing its EU and NATO membership ambitions united major political forces during the autumn 2023 parliamentary elections in Poland, it is unclear whether this consensus will persist in the run-up to the upcoming 2025 presidential elections.

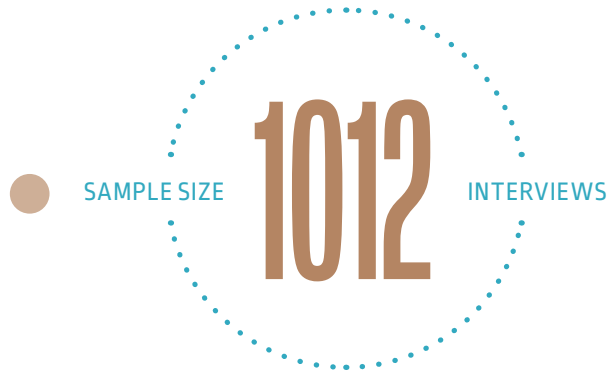
This report presents the findings of a public opinion survey conducted in November and December 2024,

commissioned by the Mieroszewski Centre, alongside data collected nearly a year earlier. This comparison allows for identifying potential changes in public sentiment. The report presents both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of attitudes presented by Poles. We hope that the findings will inspire interest and reflection among individuals and institutions committed to shaping optimal Polish-Ukrainian relations.



2. Information about the study

Methodology



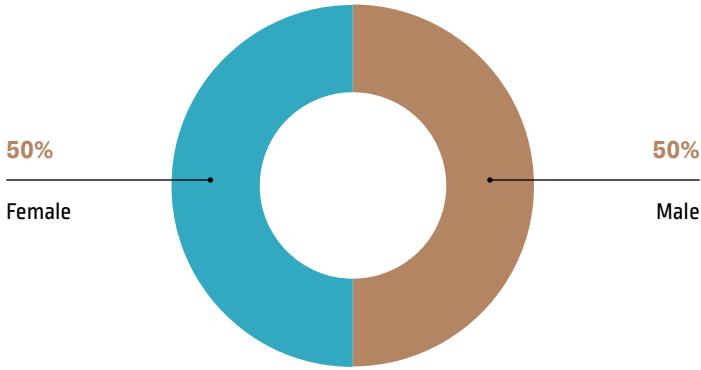
In the qualitative section of the study, seven focus group interviews (FGIs) were conducted: two in Lublin, two in Wrocław, two in Łowicz, and one in Rzeszów. In Lublin, Wrocław, and Łowicz, group recruitment was based on age: one group for those aged 26–45 and one for respondents aged 46–65. In Rzeszów, respondents aged 30–60 were interviewed. Locations were chosen with consideration for regional distribution, distance from Poland's eastern border, and population in order to include a representation of small, medium-sized, and large urban centres.

The quantitative survey was carried out using the computer-assisted web interview technique (CAWI) on a sample of N=1012 people aged 18–65, representative of the structure of Poland in terms of gender, size of domicile, and voivodeship (province). The survey was based on the online research panel operated by ARC Rynek i Opinia [epanel.pl].

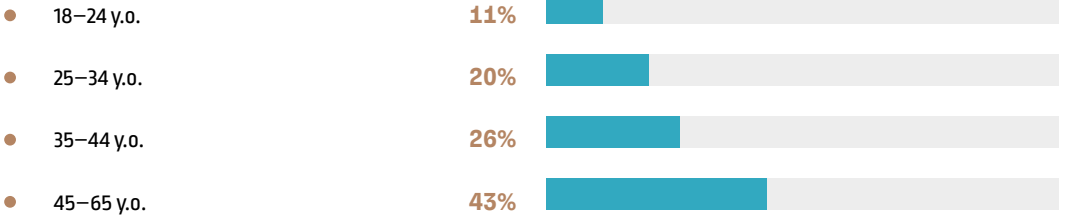
The opinion polling took place in late November and early December 2024.

Sample structure in the survey

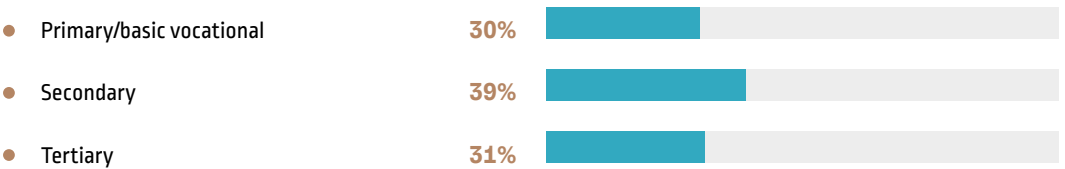
Gender



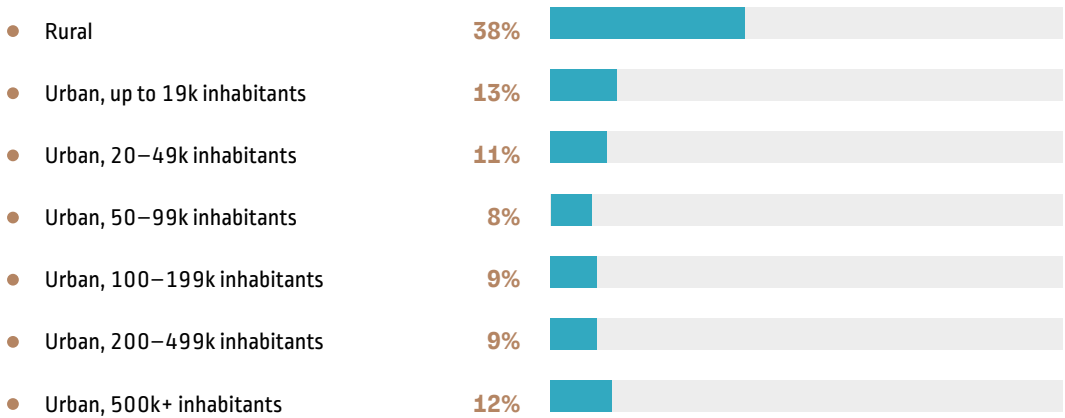
Age



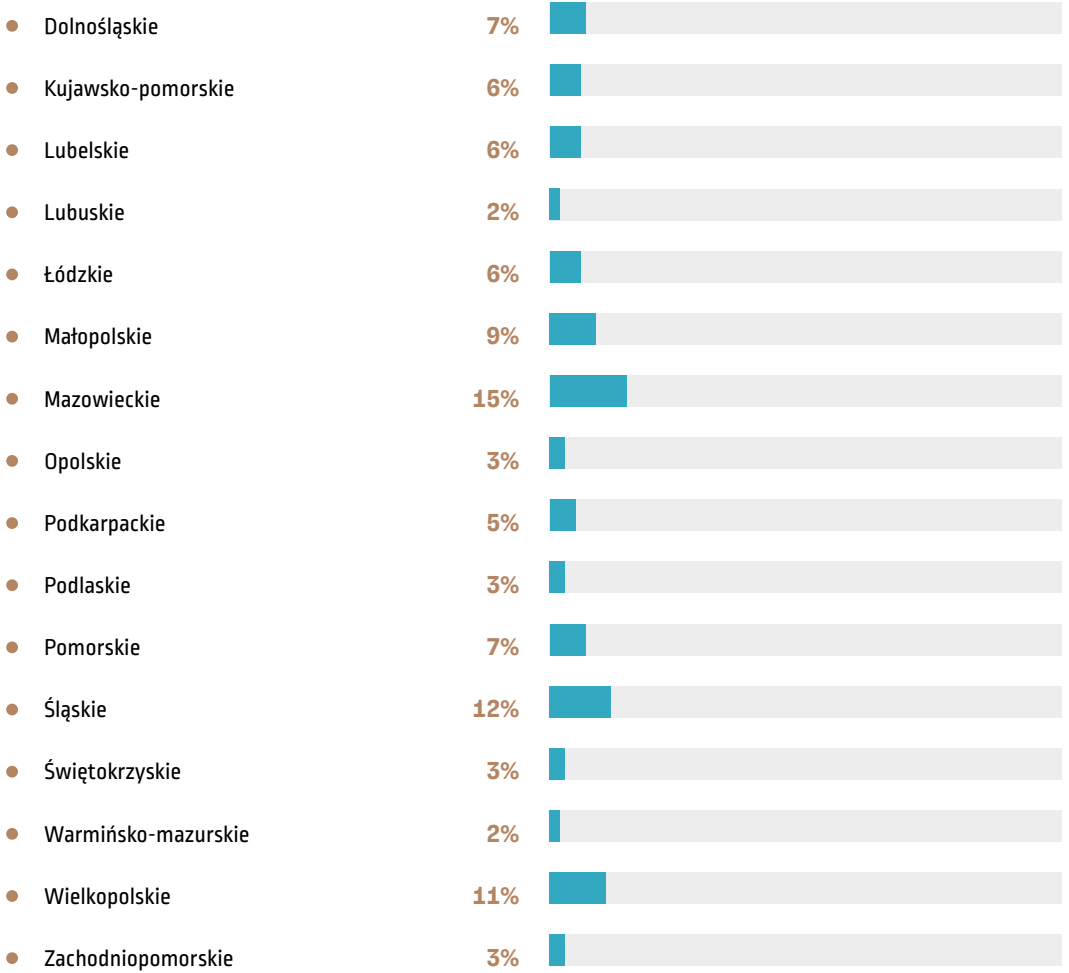
Education



Size of domicile

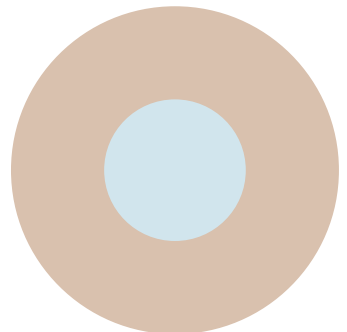
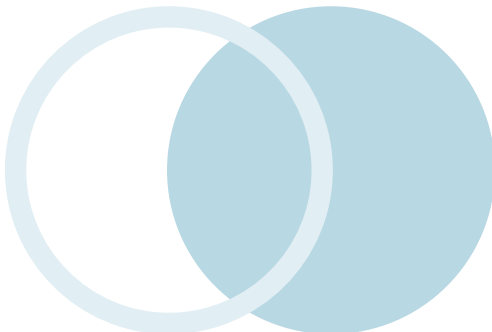
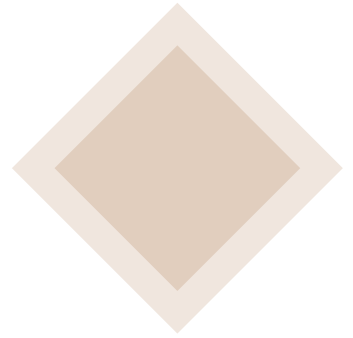


Province





General associations and attitudes



During focus group interviews, respondents were asked to write down their spontaneous associations with the word 'Ukraine'.

Unsurprisingly, given the ongoing armed conflict, 'war' turned out to be the most common connotation. Words such as 'war', 'refugees', 'Russia', and 'Putin' were mentioned in all groups, regardless of location or participants'

age. The war was perceived both as a humanitarian disaster and a political and economic issue. The participants mentioned the immense destruction suffered by Ukraine and the consequences of the conflict for Poland.

↓ FIGURE 2:

Spontaneous associations with 'Ukraine'



The history of Polish-Ukrainian relations was another significant theme in respondents' spontaneous associations. In groups of older participants, not only in eastern regions, dramatic events from the past such as the Volhynia Massacre were cited as determinants of the current perceptions of Ukraine. Many respondents noted that historical grievances continue to impinge on relations between the two nations, contributing to an ambivalent view of Ukraine. Words such as 'Volhynia' or 'Bandera' were invoked as elements of historical memory.

"One thinks of Volhynia, which is related to Banderites, and they are still supporting Bandera now, with the flags and all that stuff." (Lublin, older group)

The assessment of Ukraine's economic potential also featured prominently in respondents' comments. They mentioned the country's rich natural resources, particularly its fertile soils, but also highlighted internal issues such as corruption and social inequalities. Mixed emotions were reported in response to the influx of Ukrainian agricultural products to the Polish market.

"To me, Ukraine is about fertile soils, the granary of Europe, but also a country divided into strata where the poor struggle to survive while the rich take advantage of every single loophole." (Rzeszów)

"Ukraine is beautiful in terms of its landscapes." (Łowicz, younger group)

While negative associations prevailed, some respondents nevertheless appreciated the beauty of Ukrainian landscapes, the country's culture and development potential.

Comparing the two waves of research, i.e., February and December 2024, we can see a certain stabilisation of negative views of Ukraine, although fatigue with the Ukrainian issue seems to be continuously growing. Negative emotions that were already present a year ago have become more pronounced.

"At first, I felt very sorry for them, but now I'm angry with them because it seems that we're bearing more costs of this war than they are." (Rzeszów)

When writing down their spontaneous connotations with Ukrainians, respondents presented a diverse picture, albeit with a predominance of negative themes. As a social group in Poland, Ukrainians are perceived in light of the actions

taken by their country, their own customs, and the impact of their presence on the daily life of Poles.

↓ FIGURE 3:

Spontaneous associations with ‘Ukrainians’



The most common association with Ukrainians was a sense of entitlement. Many respondents felt that Ukrainians expect special treatment, often citing their difficult situation related to the war. Such observations provoked frustration, particularly when respondents perceived preferential treatment for Ukrainians by public sector institutions, such as the social welfare system.

“Some people feel superior to us in our own country. They say that if someone offers things to them, they’re entitled to it. You can see in the shops what kind of profits they have, what kind of money they spend, and we’re the ones working for it.” [Łowicz, older group]

“Elderly ladies whose husbands are fighting on the front think they’re entitled to everything. They jump the queue at the doctor’s office because they say their husband is ‘fighting for us.’” [Lublin, older group]

“They’re very loud, you can hear them talking everywhere. On public transport, in the shops; it seems like they want to be noticed.” [Rzeszów, mixed group]

“They come up to me in the shop, demanding a discount and saying they’re poor and they deserve it. They’ve arrived in expensive cars but that doesn’t seem to matter.” [Łowicz, older group]

Some respondents expressed opinions about some Ukrainians’ reluctance to integrate with Poles and learn the Polish language, which was viewed as a factor that hinders everyday cooperation and relationship-building. Attention was drawn to certain behaviours displayed by Ukrainians, perceived as disrespect for Polish social norms.

“Most of them don’t want to learn Polish, they don’t want to adapt to our culture. They live in blocks of flats, shouting, being loud, paying no attention to their neighbours.” [Lublin, older group]

“They live in their own enclaves, they don’t even try to establish closer ties with Poles.”

“They handle everything among themselves.” [Łowicz, younger group]

At the same time, Ukrainians were perceived as hard-working and enterprising, able to quickly acquire relevant competences or take up manual work that Poles are less willing to do. Respondents also noted differences between Ukrainians who arrived in Poland before the outbreak of the full-scale war and those who arrived later, with the former group being perceived as more determined and better integrated.

“Those who came before the war really wanted to work. They were honest, reliable. Things are different now, but many of them still want to grow and develop.” [Rzeszów]

“Those are entrepreneurial people, they open their own businesses. They had nothing at the start and now they run successful businesses.” [Lublin, younger group]

Respondents from older groups drew attention to generational differences in the perception of Ukrainians, reflecting a greater sensitivity to historical issues, particularly those related to the Volhynia Massacre, which negatively impact the image of Ukrainians. In younger groups, such references were less common, with opinions mainly based on everyday experiences.

“I can’t forget what my grandma told me about Volhynia. Things that happened have stayed in my mind. How am I supposed to see them differently now?” [Łowicz, older group]

“The younger generation of Ukrainians is different. They want to study, to learn about our country. These are no longer the people who remember the old times.” [Rzeszów]

Although the opinions were predominantly negative, there were also some positive voices recalling examples of good encounters with Ukrainians, emphasising their openness, their ability to establish relations and willingness to offer help in difficult situations. Some respondents emphasised that individual interactions help to overcome stereotypes.

The comparison of results from the two surveys leads to the conclusion that the perception of Ukrainians as a social group in Poland has changed only slightly. Mixed emotions, with a clear predominance of criticism, prevailed already in February 2024. In December, an additional increase in negative opinions was observed.

“My next-door neighbours are from Ukraine. They helped me with renovation, very friendly people. Thanks to them I've changed my opinion about Ukrainians.” (Lublin, younger group)

“My Ukrainian colleague at work is always eager to help. I can't say a bad word about her. It all depends on the person, not on the nationality.” (Łowicz, younger group)

The results of the December 2024 quantitative survey show that Poles' declared experiences related to Ukraine and Ukrainians remain largely unchanged compared to February of the same year. The most common forms of social relations with Ukrainians include working together

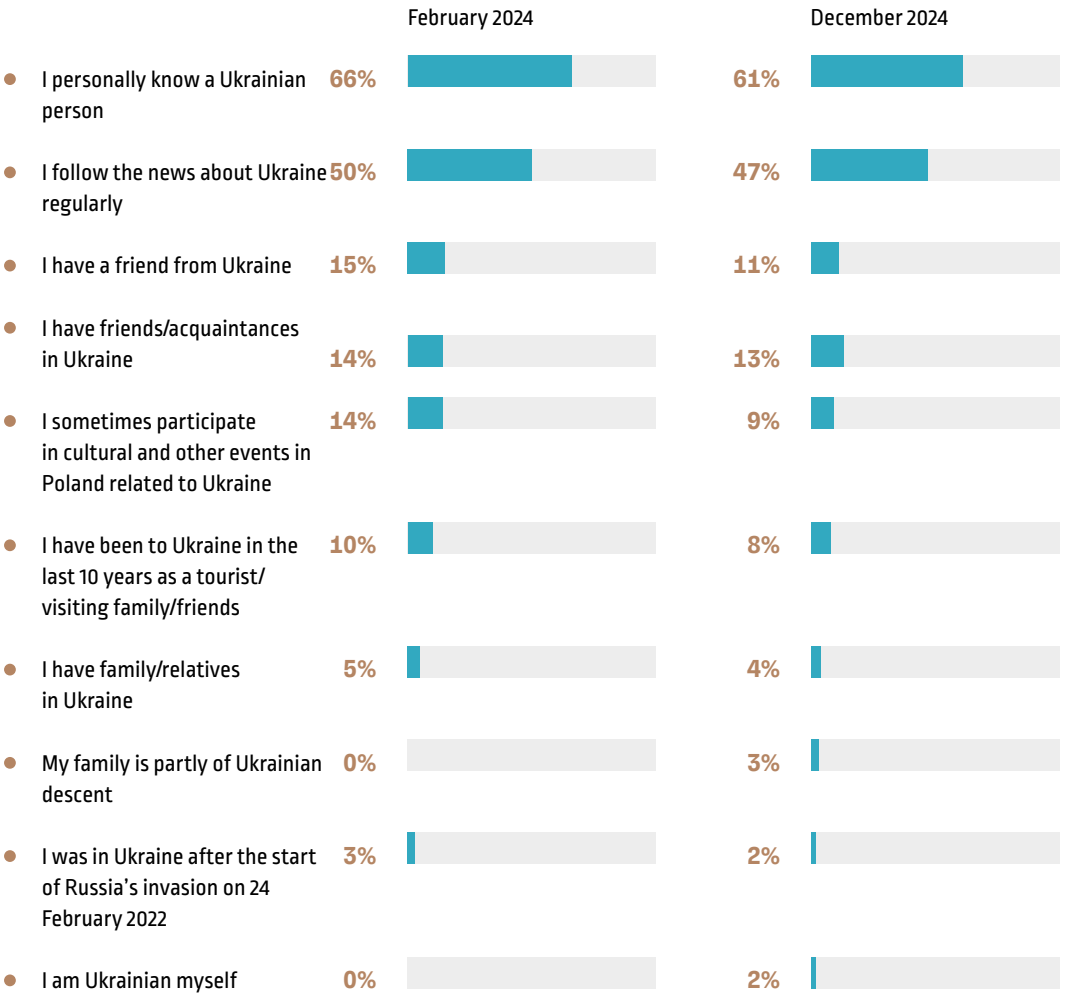
as colleagues, living together as neighbours and participating in public events.

In both studies, contacts with Ukrainians were usually described as superficial, short-term interactions, such as those occurring at the workplace. Those living in larger cities indicated the professional world as the main platform of interactions. In small towns and rural areas, contacts with Ukrainians remained less frequent, and personal experiences were mainly limited to incidental encounters. Demographic data reveal interesting differences between social groups. Younger respondents were more likely to indicate work relations as the main platform of contact with Ukrainians, while older people were more likely to mention living in the same neighbourhood. In both groups, the percentage of respondents declaring closer contacts remained at a similar level.

The frequency of interactions with Ukrainians depends on the size of locality: residents of large cities report many more interactions. The reason is that Ukrainians are more present in sectors typically found in cities, such as retail trade, services, and construction.

↓ FIGURE 4:

Personal experience with Ukraine and Ukrainians



In December 2024, Poles' opinions about Ukrainians were similar to those recorded in February, indicating the stability of social attitudes in this regard. The data show an almost even split between positive, neutral, and negative opinions, with neutral ratings slightly prevailing.

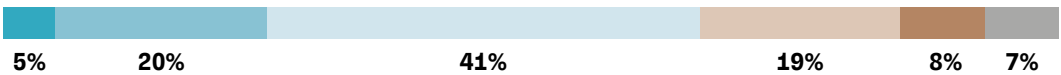
About a quarter of respondents expressed positive opinions about Ukrainians, primarily appreciating their hard work, courage, and involvement in professional and

social life in Poland. On the other hand, 27% of respondents spoke negatively of Ukrainians, mainly related to concerns about competition on the labour market, perceived abuse of the Polish social welfare system, and cultural differences. However, the majority of opinions remains neutral. A comparison of findings obtained in February and December 2024 reveals a slight, statistically insignificant increase in negative opinions.

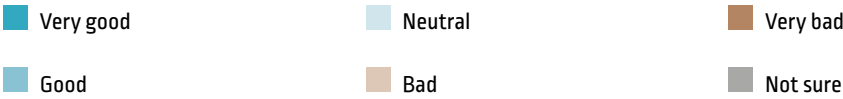
↓ FIGURE 5:

Current opinions on Ukrainians

February 2024



December 2024



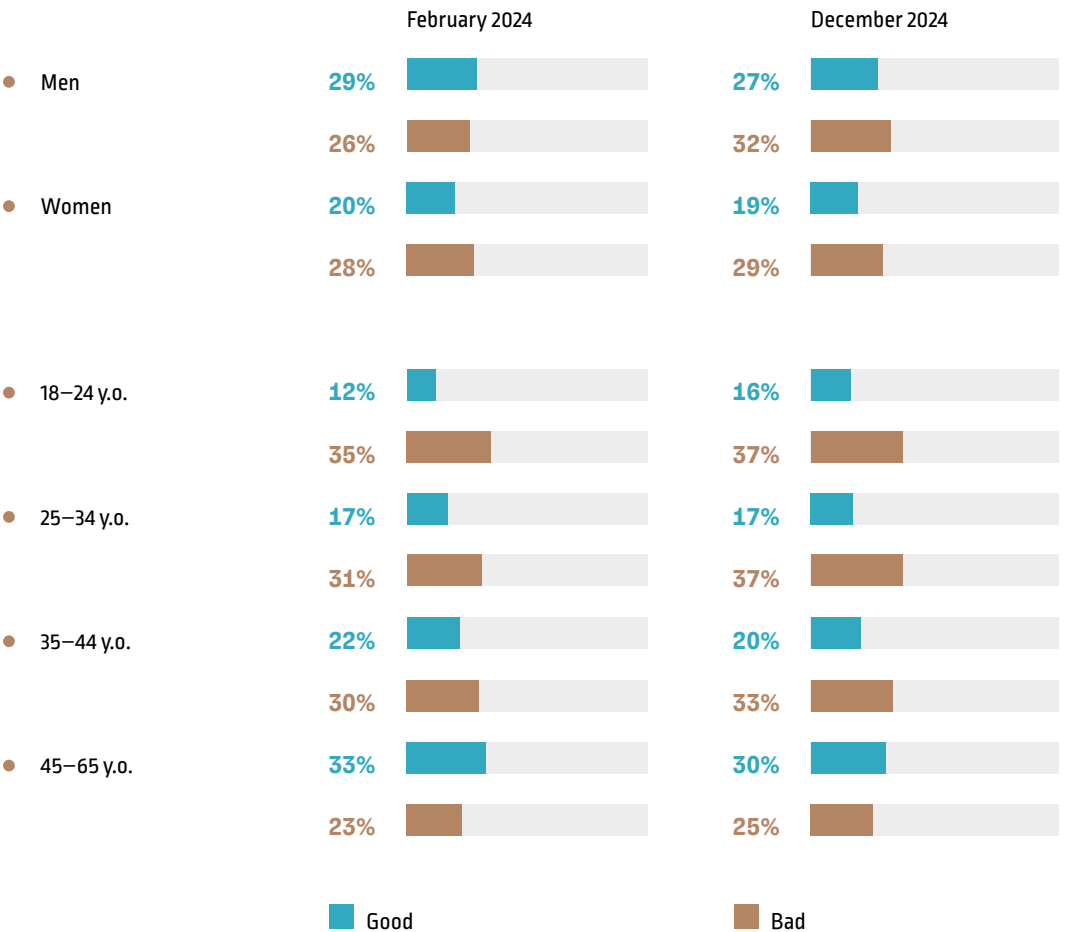
The differences between various age groups are worth noting. Younger, better-educated individuals and those living in large cities are more likely to express positive views, perceiving Ukrainians as hard-working and able to integrate into the local community. Conversely, older people and those living in smaller towns are more likely to report negative opinions, perhaps due to less frequent

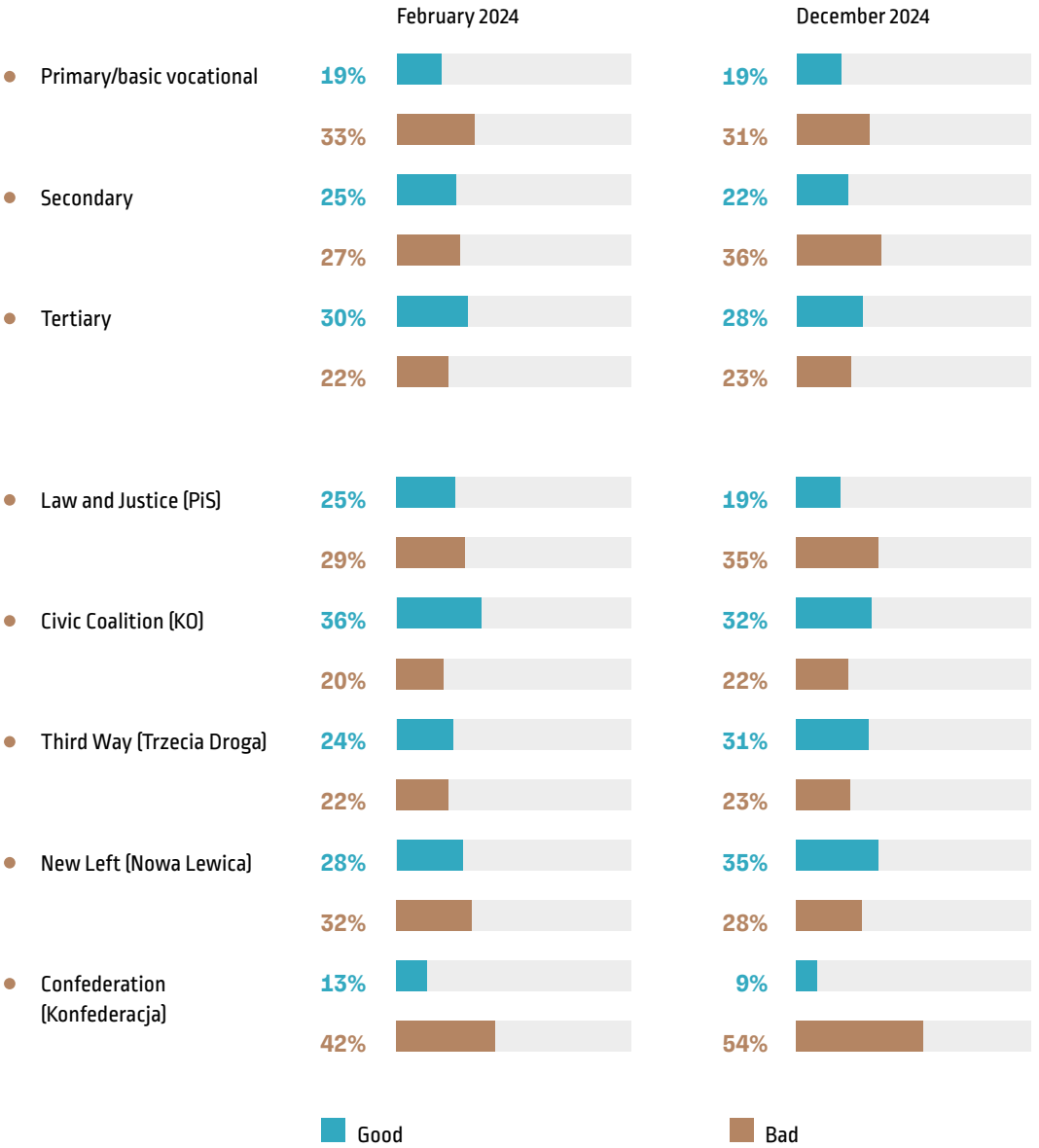
interactions or a stronger perception of competition on the labour market.

Noticeable differences in attitudes towards Ukrainians exist between voters of different political parties, i.e., those adhering to left-wing and centrist ideologies on the one hand, and right-wing ones on the other. Confederation (Konfederacja) voters are particularly critical of Ukrainians.

↓ FIGURE 6:

Current opinions on Ukrainians in different social groups





The focus group participants represented a variety of opinions on Ukrainians. Their responses clearly reflected divisions stemming from different individual experiences, regional circumstances, and generational differences. However, negative views prevailed, often justified by growing fatigue with the protracted war and migration management.

The latest study shows that Poles' opinions about Ukrainians are still significantly influenced by an awareness of Russian aggression against Ukraine, although the significance of this factor has declined in comparison with the early months of the full-scale war. Some **40%** of respondents declare a change in their opinion of Ukrainians since February 2022, with a higher percentage [**28%**] indicating a deterioration rather than an improvement in their views [**14%**]. These figures are similar to the findings recorded in February 2024.

The shift of opinions towards the negative end is often driven by increasing challenges related to Poland's prolonged support for Ukraine, including the strain on the social welfare system, competition in the labour market, or cultural differences. The massive support offered by the Polish society and government in 2022 is gradually giving way to facing new challenges.

The percentage of people whose opinions about Ukrainians have improved remains stable. This group often expressed admiration for Ukrainians' courage and determination in the fight for independence, and their commitment to settling and starting a new life in Poland. Positive opinions are particularly strong in large cities, where Ukrainians are more visible.

Significant differences have been recorded between different age groups. Younger people, who are generally more open to interacting with Ukrainians, are more likely to declare a change in opinion for the better. Older respondents, particularly those living in smaller locations, are more likely to report a deterioration in attitudes, which may be caused by local economic tensions and limited social interactions.

In communities where Ukrainians actively participate in local social life, their acceptance by the Polish population is greater. In contrast, in areas where the Ukrainian presence is less noticeable, respondents are more likely to express concerns, often fuelled by disinformation or fatigue with the military conflict.

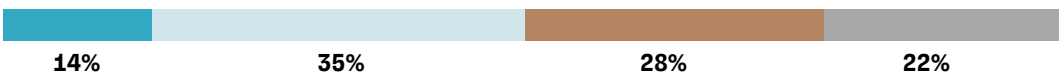
↓ FIGURE 7:

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

February 2024



December 2024



■ Changed for the better

■ Changed for the worse

■ Did not change

■ Not sure

A comparison of the February and December 2024 findings from focus groups reveals a significant shift in public sentiment. In February, opinions were dominated by mixed feelings, while the December study revealed a marked increase in the number of people expressing impatience and fatigue with the situation. The war, although not taking place on Poland's territory, is increasingly perceived by Poles as an issue that directly affects their daily lives.

"At the beginning of the war, I helped as much as I could. I gave out clothes, I donated money because I felt this was temporary and they needed support. But I've grown tired of it now." [Lublin, older group]

"At first, we all wanted to help them, we welcomed them into our homes, we shared whatever we had. But that can't go on forever." [Rzeszów]

"It seems that Poles are now being pushed to the back burner. Ukrainians get more assistance than we do, but we are the ones living here, we pay taxes, we work our whole lives." [Łowicz, younger group]

"Prices in shops are going up because of the war, because of inflation, and they're living on welfare and still complaining. It's just not fair." [Lublin, older group]

"I used to think they were grateful for the help, but now they seem to think they're entitled to it. This changes my attitude towards them." [Rzeszów]

"They are ever less willing to adapt to our country. They live in their groups, as if they were living here only temporarily." [Łowicz, older group]

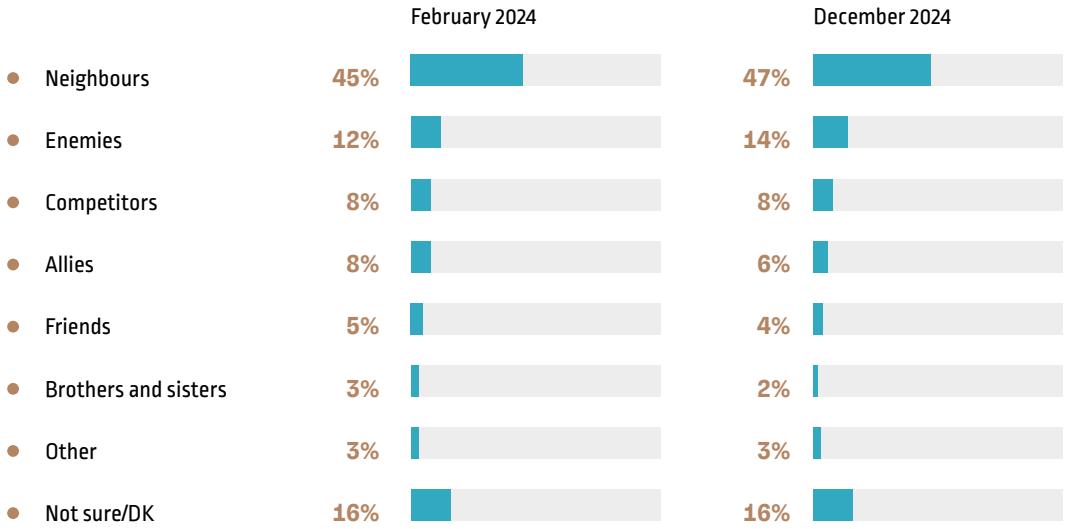
"At first, I thought the war would last a few months and everything would go back to normal. But it goes on and on, and we're paying for it, not only with our money but also with emotions." [Lublin, older group]

"I've grown tired. I get the impression that the topic of Ukrainians is present everywhere in Poland and it's endless. It affects how we view them." [Łowicz, younger group]

In the December 2024 survey, **47%** of Poles described Ukrainians as 'neighbours', compared to **45%** in February. At the same time, there was a slight increase in the number of respondents calling Ukrainians 'enemies' (from **12%** to **14%**), with the share of those choosing the word 'friends' remaining almost identical (**5%** in February, **4%** in December). A similar decline was recorded for 'allies' (from **8%** to **6%**). This may indicate a growing tendency to view Ukrainians in a more pragmatic way rather than the lens of emotional solidarity, particularly as the percentage of people opting to call Ukrainians 'brothers and sisters' fell marginally (**2%**) compared to February. The category of 'competitors' remains stable at **8%**, which is probably related to the fact that Ukrainians are fairly commonly viewed as rivals on the labour market, while Ukrainian businesses are seen as rivals to Polish businesses.

↓ FIGURE 8:

Attitude towards Ukrainians



The December 2024 study shows that the vast majority of Poles still accepts marriage between their family members and people from Ukraine. Only a slight decrease in the level

of social approval was recorded: from 70% to 67%. Polish-Ukrainian marriages are more likely to be accepted by Poles from younger generations and residents of large cities.

↓ FIGURE 9:

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

February 2024



December 2024



■ Yes, no problem

■ No

■ Yes, but with some reluctance

■ Not sure/DK

Poles' opinions about President Volodymyr Zelensky have deteriorated. In December, **33%** of respondents rated him favourably (**24%** 'positive' and **9%** 'very positive' opinions), while the respective percentage in February was **39%** (**28%** 'positive' and **11%** 'very positive' ratings).

At the same time, the proportion of negative ratings has increased, with **23%** of respondents expressing a critical opinion of the Ukrainian president in December (**15%** 'negative' and **8%** 'very negative' opinions), compared to

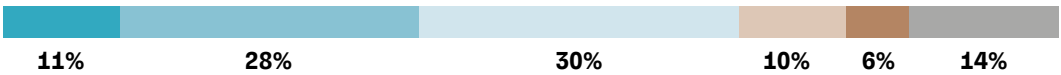
16% in February (**10%** 'negative' and **6%** 'very negative' opinions). In contrast, the percentage of neutral ratings increased from **30%** in February to **34%** in December.

Therefore, Zelensky is still held in relatively high regard in Poland, arousing more liking than dislike, although the perception of him is no longer as enthusiastic as it was at the beginning of the full-scale invasion.

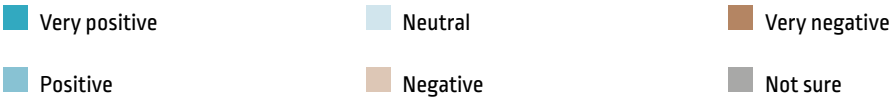
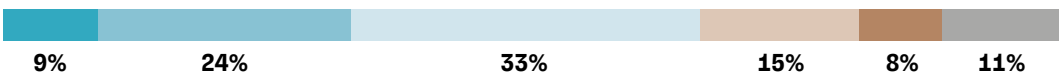
↓ FIGURE 10:

Positive and negative assessments of President Volodymyr Zelensky

February 2024



December 2024



Respondents in focus groups expressed varied opinions about Zelensky. In many comments, he emerged as a strong and courageous leader who, in the face of the Russian aggression, has united his country and successfully mobilised international support. Respondents highlighted his ability to maintain international attention on Ukraine's problems, as well as his charisma and personality, which appeals to media. For some participants, he has become a respected symbol of the Ukrainian struggle for freedom and independence. However, there were also critical voices, particularly in the context of the perception of Zelensky's actions in Poland and the tensions in Polish-Ukrainian relations in the context of the belief that Poland bears disproportionately high costs of helping Ukraine.

Some respondents also noted that Zelensky focuses excessively on securing international aid while ignoring the difficulties faced by countries supporting Ukraine.

In older groups, there were references to his beginnings in the entertainment industry and his earlier career as a comedian. This was often accompanied by scepticism about the Ukrainian president's ability to rise to the challenges facing Ukraine. Nevertheless, even some critics admitted that Zelensky has been effectively fulfilling his role during the war.

The younger groups were more likely to voice neutral or positive opinions, focusing on the Ukrainian leader's actions on the international stage. They emphasised that his communication skills, particularly on social media, have helped to raise awareness of Ukraine's situation among young audiences around the world.

"This is a man who, at the worst moment for his country, was able to stand at the lead and unite the people. We cannot deny it." [Rzeszów]

"His courage is impressive. He could have run away, but he stayed to fight with the people. You can see that he's the kind of leader who knows what he's doing." [Lublin, older group]

"He is very effective in getting help from other countries. Thanks to his efforts, the world does not forget Ukraine." [Łowicz, younger group]

"He is able to convince leaders around the world about his cause. It's clear he knows how to talk to people, particularly in the media." [Rzeszów]

"I get the impression that he's constantly demanding something. He's present everywhere, but sometimes I think Poland is already giving too much and he doesn't appreciate it." [Lublin, older group]

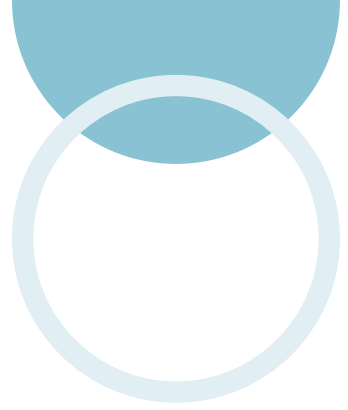
"That's all nice, but has he ever thanked us for what we've done? Instead, I only see him making further requests." [Łowicz, older group]

"He was a comedian and now he's president. I know the war turned him into a hero, but does he really know about politics?" [Lublin, older group]

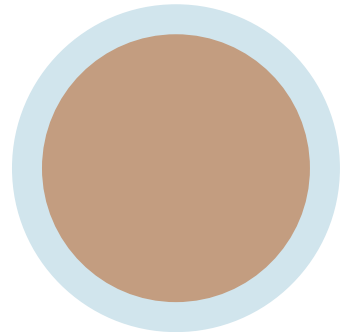
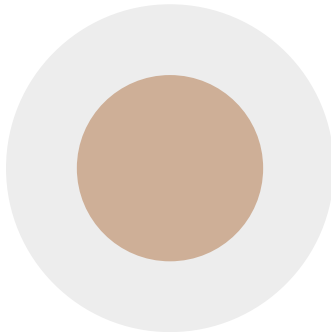
"It's hard to take him seriously, he's a man who used to do skits. He may be trying, but I'm not sure if that's enough to steer a country through a crisis." [Rzeszów]

"He's been great on social media. Thanks to him, young people all over the world know what is happening in Ukraine." [Łowicz, younger group]

"To me, he's just a man trying to do the best he can in the situation. I don't idealise him, but you can see that he cares." [Rzeszów]



Politics



The December study revealed a diversity of opinions among Poles on the priority tasks for Polish politicians in relations with Ukraine.

Compared to the February findings, some changes can be noticed.

In December, the most commonly mentioned task was to “make sure that all victims of the Volhynia Massacre are [properly] buried,” which gained significance since February. This result is not surprising in light of the lively discussions on historical topics in the media in the run-up to the study.

At the same time, the provision of ongoing assistance to Ukraine and Ukrainians has slightly lost importance, which resonates with other observations from the study.

The December results demonstrate stability in Poles’ preferences regarding politicians’ priorities in relations with Ukraine.

↓ FIGURE 11:

Tasks for Polish politicians in relations with Ukraine

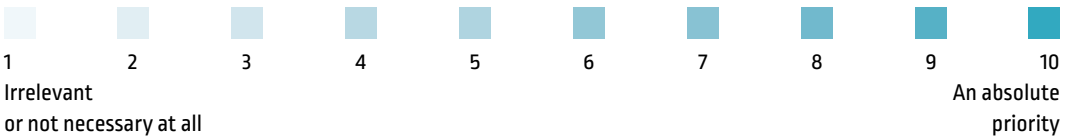
[Weighted average on a scale from 1 to 10]

- Make sure that all victims of the Volhynia Massacre are buried

February 2024



December 2024

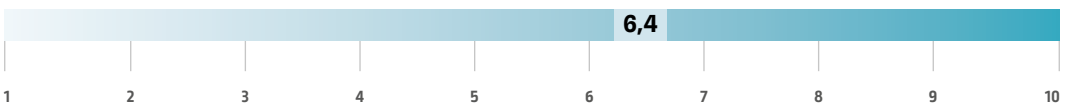


● Stop the Ukrainian state from commemorating people or formations responsible for past crimes against Poles

February 2024



December 2024

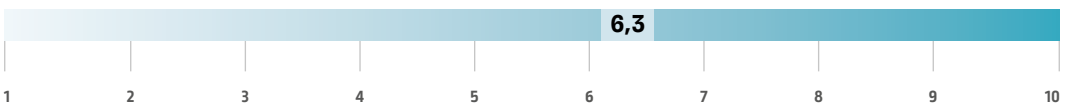


● Facilitate the operation of Polish businesses in Ukraine

February 2024

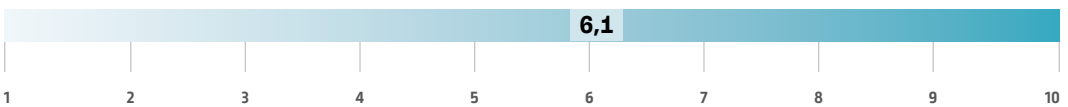


December 2024

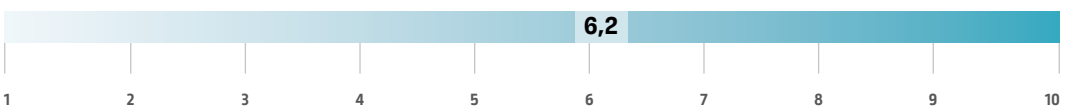


● Popularise Polish culture and language among Ukrainians

February 2024



December 2024



1 Irrelevant or not necessary at all

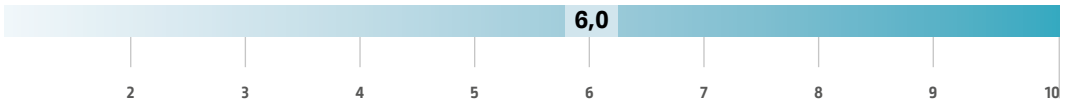
10 An absolute priority

● Assist Ukraine in countering Russian aggression

February 2024

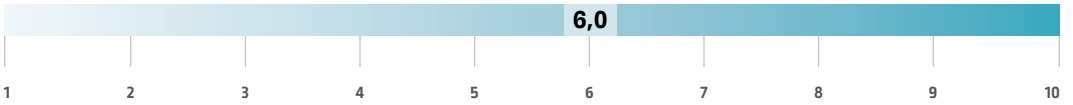


December 2024

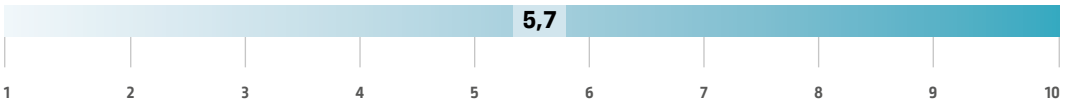


● Assist Ukraine in reconstruction and reforms

February 2024



December 2024

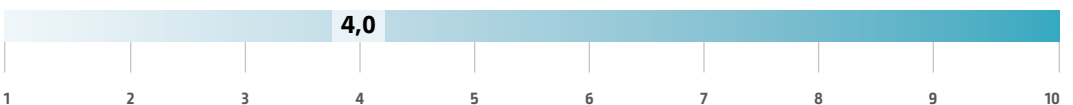


● Encourage economic immigration of Ukrainians to Poland

February 2024



December 2024



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Irrelevant or not necessary at all An absolute priority

During the focus groups, respondents were asked about their expectations towards Polish politicians in the context of relations with Ukraine. In response, they presented a wide range of demands, reflecting both a pragmatic approach to international cooperation and growing social tensions. Respondents expected more balanced support for Ukraine, protection of Poland's interests, and improved communication in bilateral relations.

One of the most commonly raised demands was to ensure that support for Ukraine becomes more proportionate and also takes the needs of Polish society into account. Respondents emphasised that although Poland plays a key role in assisting Ukraine, this often happens at the expense of Polish citizens. It was suggested that the government should ensure a fairer distribution of both financial and social burdens.

Some participants expected the government to show greater concern for Polish economic interests, particularly in trade and agriculture. Respondents often pointed to the need to protect Polish farmers from an influx of cheap produce from Ukraine. They highlighted the need to negotiate the terms of economic cooperation to ensure mutual benefits.

With reference to historical issues, respondents highlighted the need for dialogue to resolve unresolved disputes about the difficult past, in particular regarding the Volhynia Massacre. Many participants stressed the need for an open conversation about history and memory in order to build lasting, mutually respectful relations.

Some people drew attention to the importance of international cooperation, in particular Poland's presence in the process of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. The need for effective lobbying in the international arena was underscored.

Younger respondents drew attention to the need for better communication and education regarding cooperation with Ukraine. They stressed that Polish politicians should be more active in informing the public about the activities undertaken for Ukraine and the benefits of this cooperation.

Consequently, the study has demonstrated a growing expectation for a more pragmatic and balanced approach to relations with Ukraine. While Poles continue to appreciate the importance of cooperation with the neighbouring country, they also recognise that Poland's interests in these relations need to be given greater consideration.

"Politicians should finally start thinking about us, the Poles. Aid to Ukraine is important, but we cannot be paying more than the rest of Europe." (Lublin, older group)

"I'd like the support to be more balanced. Poland is doing a lot, but what do we get in return? Prices are going up, and we're barely making ends meet." (Rzeszów)

"Politicians must take care of our farmers. Ukrainian grain is flooding the market and Polish farmers are going bankrupt. That's not fair." (Łowicz, younger group)

"I'm not saying we shouldn't be helping, but we should help smartly. Poland's economy cannot suffer because of ill-considered policies." (Lublin, older group)

"They should finally start talking openly about Volhynia. Without that, there will never be true reconciliation." (Łowicz, older group)

"History cannot be neglected. If we want to build good relations, we must resolve the historical issues." (Rzeszów)

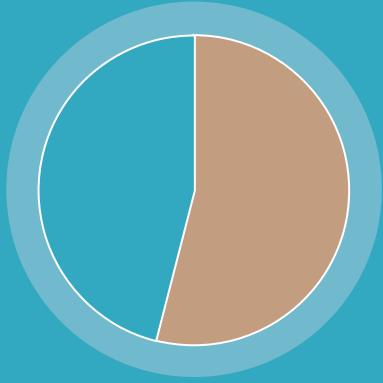
"Poland should fight for its place in the reconstruction of Ukraine. This is an opportunity for our companies to make money and help at the same time." (Rzeszów)

"If Ukraine recovers, it could represent a huge market for our goods. Politicians should think about it right now." (Lublin, younger group)

"Politicians should be straightforward about what they are doing for Ukraine and why it's important for us. People are confused, that's why there is so much negativity." (Łowicz, younger group)

"Nobody is trying to explain what kind of benefits we are getting from helping Ukraine. If people knew more, maybe they would be less frustrated." (Rzeszów)

Poland's continued military support of Ukraine



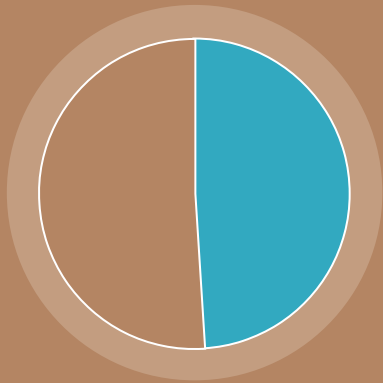
February 2024

Yes, definitely/probably

54%



Poland's continued military support of Ukraine



December 2024

Yes, definitely/probably

49%

The December study revealed some decline in support for Poland's continued military support for Ukraine. Positive answers ('yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably') received a total of **49%** of mentions versus **54%** in February.

At the same time, the share of those opposed to military support increased, from **26%** [15%: 'no, probably not' and 11%: 'no, definitely not'] to **35%** [19%: 'no, probably not' and 16%: 'no, definitely not'].

↓ FIGURE 12:

Poland's continued military support of Ukraine

February 2024



December 2024



■ Yes, definitely

■ No, probably not

■ No opinion

■ Yes, probably

■ No, definitely not

The latest results also show a marked increase in the percentage of Poles believing that the scale of assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees by the Polish government is too large. In December, this opinion was expressed by **51%** of respondents, compared to **44%** in February. The percentage of those rating the assistance as 'just right' fell from **36%** to **33%**. Only **5%** of those surveyed in February and December felt there was 'too little' assistance.

Most probably, undecided respondents had migrated to the sceptical group. The rising proportion of people

who believe that Poland is offering 'too much' assistance probably reflects a sense of strained public resources, such as the central budget, the social welfare system or public infrastructure.

The shift recorded between February and December 2024 may foretell growing challenges in maintaining a policy of long-term support for refugees. Poles continue to accept assistance efforts, but expect more efficient and transparent management of the resources allocated to such efforts.

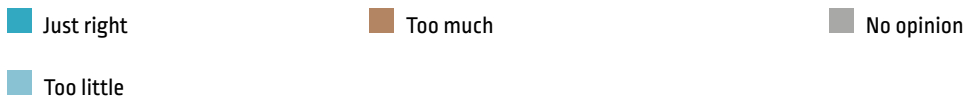
↓ FIGURE 13:

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

February 2024



December 2024



The share of respondents supporting continued assistance for Ukrainian refugees fell from **42%** in February to **40%** in December. At the same time, the share of those opposed to continued assistance went up, from **33%** in February to **37%** in December.

The reduced percentage of undecided respondents, from **25%** in February to **23%** in December, may indicate

a trend towards more polarised attitudes, but it is certainly not dramatic.

Inhabitants of larger cities and those with tertiary education are more likely to admit they would like to see continued assistance. In contrast, negative opinions are more common in smaller localities, where the pressure on local resources is more strongly felt.

↓ FIGURE 14:

Continued assistance to refugees from Ukraine

February 2024



December 2024

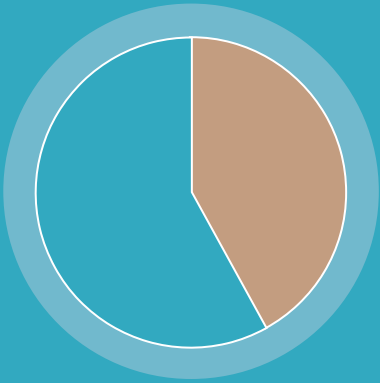


■ Yes

■ No

■ No opinion

Continued assistance to refugees from Ukraine



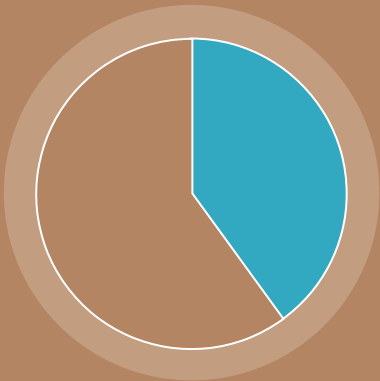
February 2024

Yes

42%



Continued assistance to refugees from Ukraine



December 2024

Yes

40%

Mixed feelings about continued assistance to Ukraine and Ukrainians were also reported by focus group participants. On the one hand, they expressed an understanding of the need to provide further support but, on the other, felt frustrated about its costs and the consequences of such aid for Poles. The discussions strongly emphasised the need for a more considered and balanced approach to such assistance.

Many people stressed that aid to Ukraine continues to be necessary in light of the ongoing war and that it is even a moral obligation. At the same time, it was pointed out that such assistance should focus on those who are most in need.

Frequent concerns were also raised that the scope of assistance is too broad and disproportionate compared to that provided by other European countries, affecting Poland's economic and social situation. It was noted that Poles are becoming increasingly tired of the burden, which increases the risk of tensions. Some respondents highlighted the need to prioritise greater support for refugees' return to Ukraine and the creation of conditions that would facilitate the country's reconstruction.

The younger groups were more likely to mention the importance of international cooperation and the need to spread the burden of assistance more evenly across all EU member states.

Greater caution in opinions on the provision of assistance were accompanied by expectations to modify the current approach to address Ukraine's long-term needs and take into account the limitations existing in Polish society.

"We are helping them because they're our neighbours. How would they manage without us now? After all, the war isn't over yet."
[Lublin, older group]

"As long as the war continues, we have to help them. Those people have lost everything, and we are closer than anyone else, so it's only natural that we've got the biggest role to play."
[Rzeszów]

"I get the impression that Poland is taking on more than its fair share. Other EU countries should get more involved." [Łowicz, younger group]

"We've been supporting them since the beginning, but who is supporting us? Prices are going up and we continue to send money, food, and all other stuff." [Lublin, older group]

"Poles have already grown tired of this assistance. At the start, everyone was involved, but now more and more people are saying that it's taking too long." [Rzeszów]

"Helping them is important, but can we afford this burden? We've got our own problems and the government should take care of those problems." [Łowicz, older group]

"Instead of supporting them here for longer, we need to help them to go back and rebuild their country. That would make more sense." [Lublin, younger group]

"Maybe it's time to rethink where exactly this aid is going. Not every refugee needs it, many of them could already be going back." [Łowicz, older group]

"Poland should not act alone. We need to look for support in the European Union to make sure that everyone shares the responsibility."
[Rzeszów]

"If other countries aren't helping, we just won't make it. It should be an international solution, not just a Polish one." [Lublin, younger group]

When asked about the desired course of action that the government should take towards refugees and migrants

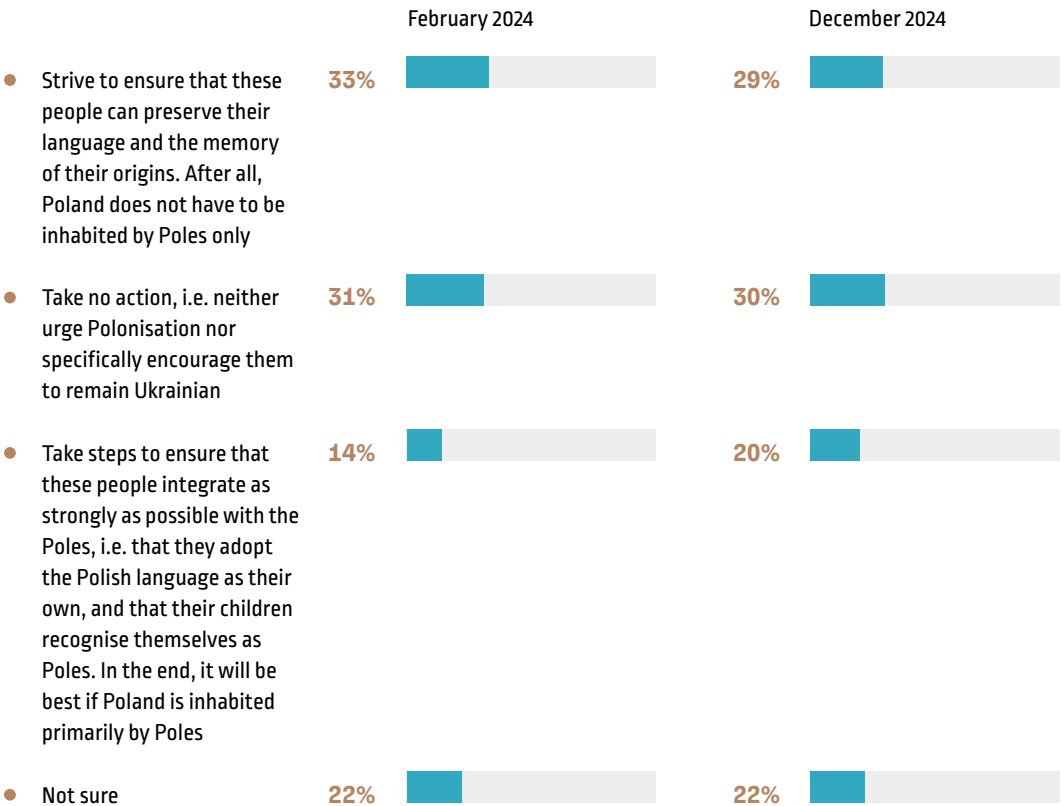
from Ukraine, **30%** of respondents were in favour of taking no specific action, either for integration in Poland or return to Ukraine. There was no change in this response between February and December 2024.

The percentage of those in favour of supporting Ukrainians in retaining their cultural identity fell slightly from **33%** in February to **29%** in December.

On the other hand, there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of those supporting deeper integration of refugees in Poland: from **14%** in February to **20%** in December. Thus, Poles differ quite significantly in their expectations regarding migration policy towards Ukrainians.

↓ FIGURE 15:

Polish government's expected stance towards refugees and migrants from Ukraine



When asked about their opinions on refugee policy, many focus group participants pointed to the importance of integration, knowledge of the Polish language, and countering the creation of closed communities in order to reduce the risk of tensions and bridge the divide between Poles and Ukrainians.

“If they want to live here, they should learn our language. In Germany or France, no one would let them go without it, but such a situation is still tolerated in our country.” (Lublin, older group)

“It’s not about making them forget their origins, but they should be able to speak our language. That will make life easier for everyone.” (Rzeszów)

“If they continue to create their closed communities, we’re going to have more and more problems. This must be stopped before we get a second Berlin here.” (Łowicz, older group)

Some participants highlighted the importance of preserving the Ukrainian language and culture. It was considered important to enable Ukrainians to cultivate their cultural identity in Poland in the context of Russian attempts to destroy it. Attention was drawn to the benefits of multiculturalism, provided that it did not entail living in isolation.

“They want to keep their language but that doesn’t mean they can’t integrate. It’s important for them to feel comfortable here and have the chance to return to their country with dignity.” (Lublin, younger group)

“We cannot take away their identity. Ukraine is fighting a war for its identity, and we should help them preserve it, not force them to assimilate.” (Rzeszów)

Some participants suggested a two-pronged approach: simultaneously encouraging Ukrainians to learn Polish and supporting actions to protect their identity. It was pointed

out that integration policies should be flexible and adapted to different groups of Ukrainians, considering their age and future plans, particularly their desire to settle in Poland.

“Poland could be like a bridge. They should learn Polish, but at the same time we must respect their traditions and culture. This enriches our society.” (Łowicz, younger group)

“Children in schools should have the opportunity to learn things in the Ukrainian language, but at the same time they should learn Polish. This is a future that will be mutually beneficial.” (Rzeszów)

Younger participants were more likely to talk about the importance of tolerance and openness towards other cultures. Older ones, on the other hand, expressed the expectation that Ukrainians would adapt more closely to Polish cultural norms.

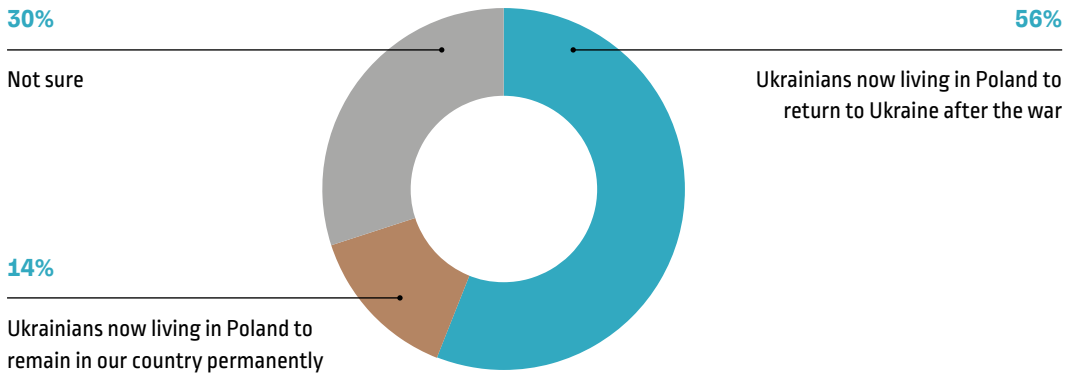
“To me, them speaking Ukrainian is not a problem. The important thing is that we can live together in harmony, but cultural differences are a normal thing.” (Łowicz, younger group)

“When Poles were immigrants elsewhere, they weren’t always immediately fluent in the language of the country they went to, either. We must show understanding.” (Lublin, younger group)

The December study shows that the majority of Poles (56%) believes that Ukrainians who are currently living in Poland should return to Ukraine as soon as the situation improves. This finding indicates an underlying belief that the presence of Ukrainians in Poland is temporary. Merely 14% of respondents are in favour of Ukrainians settling permanently in Poland. In contrast, one in three Poles (30%) has no opinion on the matter. Poles realistically assume that the return of a large group of refugees to their homeland will depend on the political and economic situation in Ukraine.

↓ FIGURE 16:

Ukrainians returning to their homeland. I would like...



The statements expressed during the focus groups' discussions on the future of Ukrainians staying in Poland concentrated on two themes: the benefits of their staying in Poland and the need for them to return to their homeland.

Many respondents highlighted that Ukrainians play an important role in Poland's economy, particularly in sectors such as construction, agriculture, services, or elderly care and child care, filling gaps in the job market arising from labour shortages. According to this group, the mass departure of Ukrainians from Poland would result in difficulties filling jobs in many sectors.

"If they leave, who will work on building sites or in warehouses? Poles don't want these jobs, and Ukrainians are ready to work in them."
[Rzeszów]

"In our company, it's the Ukrainians who keep everything together. They're reliable, they work hard and we can always count on them."
[Łowicz, younger group]

In contrast, some respondents expressed the belief that the return of refugees is inevitable and essential for the reconstruction of Ukraine after the war. Their presence in

Poland should therefore be treated as temporary. Many participants invoked the moral obligation for Ukrainians to return to their country to enable its development.

"How are they supposed to rebuild their country if they stay here? Ukraine needs its people to recover from the war." [Lublin, older group]

"I understand that they need shelter now, but they should go back after the war because Ukraine is their country, not ours." [Rzeszów]

Some respondents suggested that the decision to stay in Poland or to return to Ukraine should be left to the Ukrainians themselves, without putting any pressure on them. It was pointed out that Poland should create mechanisms to support both options: for those who want to settle in Poland and for those who decide to return.

"We cannot force them either to stay or to leave. It's their lives, their decisions. We can only help them to move in either direction."
[Łowicz, younger group]

“If they want to stay here, they should have the opportunity to do so, but if they want to go back, we need to make it easier for them.” [Lublin, younger group]

Participants in younger groups were more likely to claim that Ukrainians staying in Poland could be beneficial not only for Poland’s economy but also for Polish society, through cultural enrichment and exchange of experiences. On the other hand, the predominant opinion in the older groups was that the return of Ukrainians was a natural step after the end of the war, and that their presence in Poland should be treated as a temporary consequence of the crisis.

“Thanks to them, our society is becoming more open. They bring something new that we didn’t have before, and that could be beneficial for us.” [Łowicz, younger group]

“Working and living together with Ukrainians shows that diversity can be a strength. This gives us a chance to grow.” [Rzeszów]

“Everyone knows that it’s not forever. The war will end and they will have to go back because Poland is not in a position to admit them permanently.” [Lublin, older group]

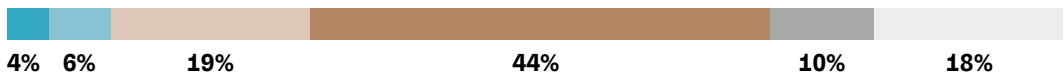
“I have nothing against Ukrainians, but their place is at home, not here with us. We also have our own problems to solve.” [Łowicz, older group]

The majority of Poles (63%) was sceptical about the idea of creating a Polish-Ukrainian state (17%: ‘no, probably not’, 46%: ‘no, definitely not’). Only 9% of respondents gave a positive answer to this question (3%: ‘yes, definitely’, 6%: ‘yes, probably’). In turn, 16% of respondents had not heard of this concept. The findings were similar in February. The public’s distance towards this concept remains stable.

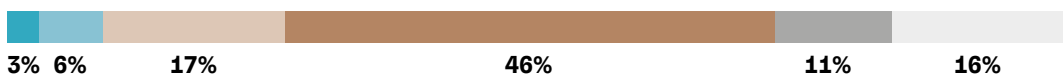
↓ FIGURE 17:

Attitudes towards the concept of a Polish-Ukrainian state

February 2024



December 2024



Yes, definitely

No, probably not

No opinion

Yes, probably

No, definitely not

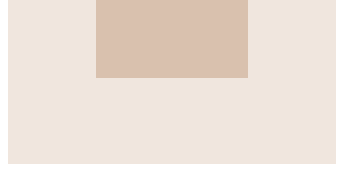
Haven't heard of it

Focus group participants mostly expressed scepticism towards the idea of a Polish-Ukrainian state: they found it unrealistic, burdened by too many challenges, historical legacies, and current tensions. Some participants pointed out that such a concept could lead to the domination of one nation over the other. Others emphasised the cultural, linguistic, and social differences that would be difficult to overcome.

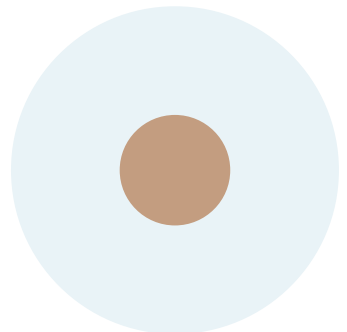
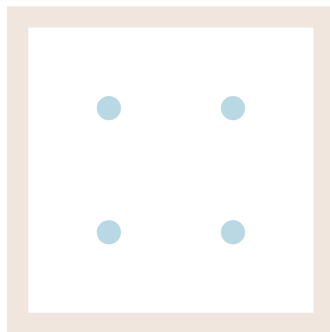
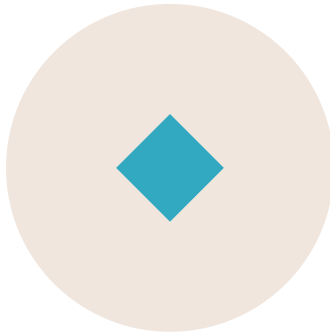
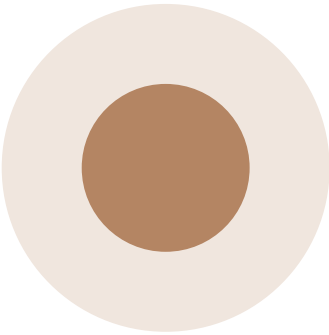
Younger groups and respondents from large cities were slightly more likely to claim that closer cooperation

with Ukraine could be mutually beneficial and that a common state, although challenging to establish, could provide greater stability in the region and strengthen the position of both countries.

Some respondents suggested that instead of considering a common state, efforts should focus on strengthening the strategic partnership of the two countries. They highlighted the need to develop economic cooperation, jointly plan Ukraine's reconstruction and provide continued military and political support.



History



About **43%** of Poles support placing information in cemeteries in Poland about the perpetrators of crimes committed against local Ukrainians, provided that similar information is displayed in cemeteries in Ukraine where murdered Poles are buried. In February, expectations were at the same level.

However, there was a change regarding the response 'yes, definitely', which was chosen by **16%** of respondents

in December, compared to **11%** in February. Poles still largely expect reciprocity in this matter, but there has been a slight increase in the percentage of those who, perhaps due to awareness of more pressing challenges, are willing to accept greater concessions.

As expected, younger respondents showed less interest in historical issues, while older respondents were more likely to raise the subject of historical grievances.

↓ FIGURE 20:

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

February 2024



December 2024



■ Yes, unconditionally

■ Yes, but only if cemeteries of the victims of the Volhynia Massacre are established in Ukraine, with information that Poles murdered by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army are buried there

■ No

■ Not sure

A total of **24%** of respondents supported the idea of placing the inscription 'Fallen for a Free Ukraine' on the graves of members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) while **26%** opposed this idea. Half of the respondents had no opinion on the matter.

↓ FIGURE 21:

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

February 2024



December 2024



Yes
 No
 No opinion

Poles' declared that their knowledge regarding historical events related to Polish-Ukrainian relations is generally superficial. Only in the case of the most widely debated Volhynia Massacre did 46% of respondents say they had in-depth knowledge, while 41% stated they had heard something about it.

A solid understanding of issues related to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was declared by 30% of respondents, one third have 'heard something about it' and the

same share of respondents admitted having no knowledge of this formation. In the case of Operation Vistula and the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the relevant figures are even lower. A total of 25% of respondents claimed to have detailed knowledge of Operation Vistula, while 18% reported a similar level of knowledge about the OUN. The majority of respondents (51%) admitted they had never heard of the OUN.

↓ FIGURE 22

Knowledge of selected aspects of history

● Volhynia Massacre

February 2024



December 2024

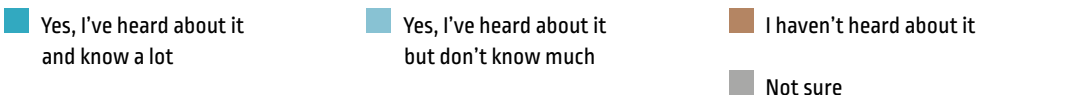
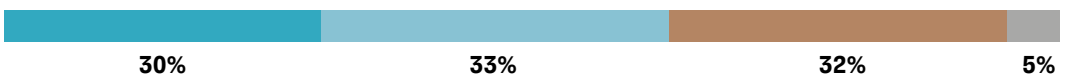


● Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA)

February 2024



December 2024



● 'Operation Vistula'

February 2024



December 2024



● Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)

February 2024



December 2024

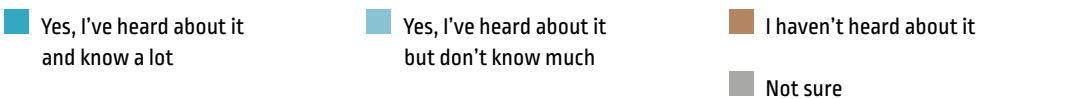


● Uman Massacre

February 2024



December 2024

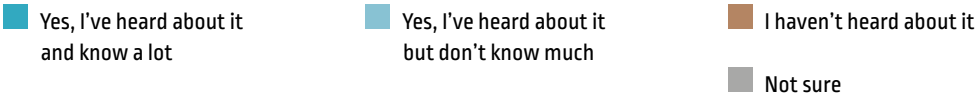


● Haidamaks

February 2024



December 2024



Stepan Bandera remains by far the most recognisable Ukrainian historical figure of the 20th century, identified by nearly 64% of the respondents. One in three respondents

knew something about the other two figures mentioned in the survey: Symon Petliura and Roman Shukhevych.

↓ FIGURE 23:

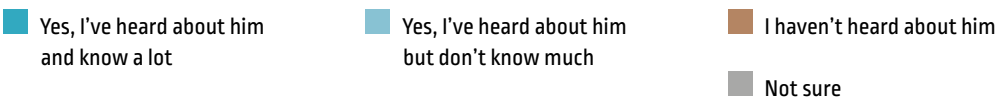
Knowledge of historical figures associated with Ukraine

● Stepan Bandera

February 2024



December 2024



● **Symon Petliura**

February 2024



December 2024

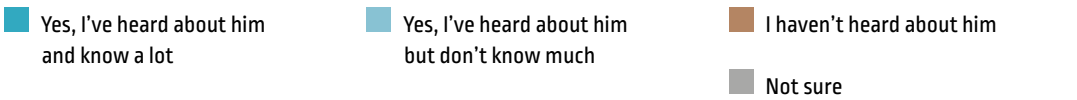


● **Roman Shukhevych**

February 2024



December 2024



The study highlights varied opinions on these three figures strongly associated with Ukraine's independence movement: Bandera, Petliura, and Shukhevych. The overall results clearly show a predominance of negative views, particularly in the cases of Bandera and Shukhevych, while Petliura is perceived more neutrally. A strongly positive opinion about the latter was expressed by 10% of respondents, with 19% giving him a 'fairly positive' rating. However, even for Petliura, negative opinions predominate, reaching a total of 42% (25% 'fairly negative', 17% 'definitely negative'). At the same time, 28% of respondents had no opinion about him, suggesting that Petliura remains less recognisable than Bandera, who is judged far

more unequivocally. As many as 54% of respondents expressed a negative opinion about Bandera, with only 3% giving him a definitely positive rating. The predominance of 'definitely negative' answers reflects the strong associations between Bandera, the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Volhynia Massacre.

Shukhevych, meanwhile, evokes more mixed emotions, despite being less well-known than Bandera. Negative views (54%) outweigh the positive ones (20%). The largest group of respondents, 29%, gave him a definitely negative opinion, which clearly stems from the perception that, as the UPA commander-in-chief, he is seen as a war criminal jointly responsible for the Volhynia Massacre.

↓ FIGURE 24:

Assessment of historical figures associated with Ukraine

● Stepan Bandera

February 2024



December 2024



Definitely positive

Fairly negative

No opinion

Fairly positive

Definitely negative

● **Symon Petliura**

February 2024



December 2024

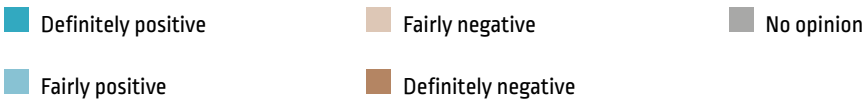


● **Roman Shukhevych**

February 2024



December 2024



Focus group participants demonstrated varying levels of knowledge about historical events common to Poland and Ukraine. Historical awareness was significantly greater among older participants, who often recalled events from World War II, particularly those related to the Volhynia Massacre and the activities of the UPA. The strong emotions expressed by those participants noticeably influenced their perception of contemporary Ukrainians. Their comments reflected a sense of grief and injustice, as well as an expectation that Ukraine should take steps to confront its past and commemorate Polish victims.

In younger groups, detailed knowledge of shared history was often lacking, which resulted in relatively neutral

opinions expressed on the subject. Discussions mainly focused on well-known historical figures, such as Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who continues to evoke mixed feelings. At the same time, some respondents highlighted positive aspects of cooperation, primarily the role of the Lithuanian-Ruthenian lands, known as 'Kresy' (comprising today's Lithuania, Belarus, and much of Ukraine), in Polish culture and history.

The participants emphasised that difficult historical events still cast a shadow over relations between Poles and Ukrainians. Many respondents expressed the expectation that dialogue should be conducted, addressing issues such as an acknowledgement of guilt for past events,

mutual apologies, and an understanding of the historical context. However, some participants expressed hope that younger generations would be able to move beyond these conflicts and build a future based on cooperation rather than mutual resentment.

When comparing the results from February and December 2024, it is evident that knowledge of historical events has not changed significantly. However, in December, respondents were more likely to express a need for greater openness to historical dialogue.

“I read about the Volhynia Massacre, the things that happened there. To be honest, my hair stood on end as I read it. Hermaszewski was there as a child and he ran away. The things that happened there were the height of brutality.” [Wrocław, older group]

“They should apologise for Volhynia to us. Officially and with full recognition. The same thing that the Germans did towards the Poles for World War II.” [Wrocław, older group]

“I am totally bad at history. Apart from Volhynia, I don’t know much about the common history with Ukraine.” [Lublin, younger group]

When discussing the shared history of Poland and Ukraine, respondents often referred to the example of Polish-German relations after World War II. They noted that, despite the tragic past, relations between Poland and Germany evolved towards cooperation and mutual respect. Respondents highlighted official apologies from Germany, acknowledgement of guilt, and efforts to build partner-like relations as key elements of this transformation. Such actions were seen as a model for Polish-Ukrainian relations. Respondents expressed the belief that similar gestures from Ukraine, particularly concerning the Volhynia Massacre, could serve as a starting point for building lasting relations based on mutual respect.

“The Germans said: yes, we were guilty, we apologise. Ukrainians should do the same about the Volhynia events. This cannot be swept under the carpet.” [Wrocław, older group]

However, the Polish-German example was also sometimes used as a reference point for criticism of the lack of similar actions from Ukraine. For many respondents, declarations about cooperation and the need for good neighbourly relations were dismissed as empty words, as they were not accompanied by efforts to address the difficult past. In fact, the absence of apologies or the presence still today of UPA symbols in Ukraine were seen as undermining trust.

“The Germans have memorials to the victims of the Holocaust. They are fully aware of their crimes. How about Ukraine? They build monuments to Bandera and hold UPA marches. How are we supposed to view this?” [Łowicz, older group]

Some respondents pointed out that history is not black and white, and that both Poles and Ukrainians should acknowledge the difficult episodes in their shared past. At the same time, according to some comments, Poles have already taken steps towards reconciliation, and it is now time for action from Ukraine.

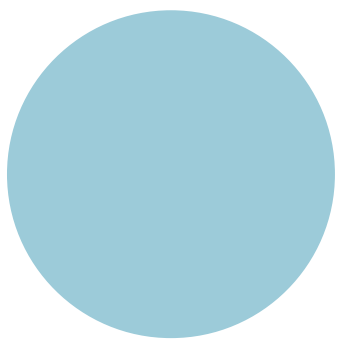
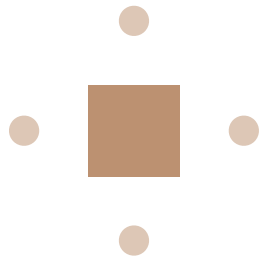
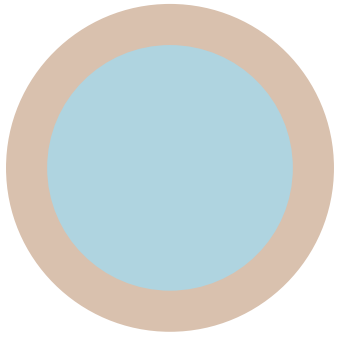
“We don’t want anything more than the truth. The Germans acknowledged their guilt, and we can work with them. Ukraine must do the same if we are to talk about genuine reconciliation.” [Lublin, older group]

In younger groups, references to Polish-German relations were less frequent, with the focus shifting more to the contemporary context. Respondents expressed the belief that mutual relations should be built with the future in mind rather than dwelling excessively on historical grievances. However, even in these groups it was acknowledged that transparency about the past is a prerequisite for building a lasting partnership in the future.

“We’re in the 21st century. History is important, but we can’t let the past hold us back. Germans and Poles managed to move forward, we and the Ukrainians can do the same.” [Łowicz, younger group]



Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU



The survey findings show that overall support among Poles for Ukraine's EU membership remains at a similar level versus February, although there have been some shifts regarding the preferred conditions for accession.

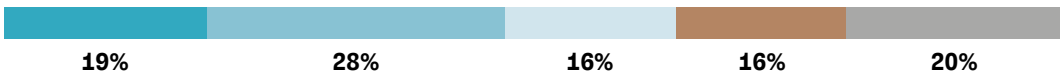
About **19%** of Poles are still in favour of Ukraine's unconditional admission to EU, but **23%** (down from **28%** in February) emphasise the need for Ukraine to meet the required criteria, while **21%** (up from **16%** in February) believe that bilateral issues in Polish-Ukrainian relations should first be resolved. In contrast, the group opposing Ukraine's membership—concerned about its negative impact on

Poland—grew from **16%** in February to **19%** in December. This increase may reflect broader concerns about Ukraine's stability and capacity to function as a potential EU member, as well as the perceived need for Ukraine to show greater respect for Poland's interests, although this is not formally a condition for EU membership.

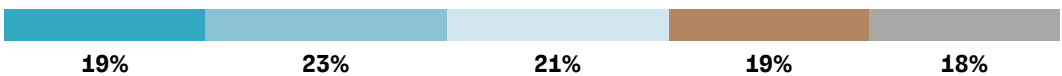
↓ FIGURE 25:

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

February 2024



December 2024



■ Yes, because this is needed for Europe's security

■ Yes, as soon as Ukraine meets the criteria

■ Yes, once Ukraine meets the criteria and solves the problems with Poland in history and economy

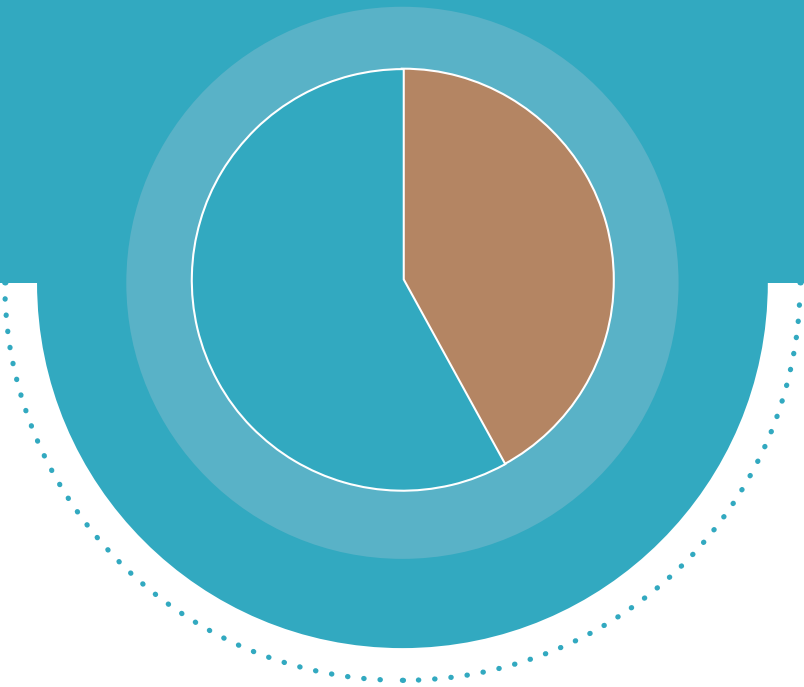
■ No, because it's only going to harm Poland

■ No opinion

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

Yes, because this is needed for Europe's security/Yes, as soon as Ukraine meets the criteria

42%



Support for Ukraine's NATO membership remains stable, with a slight decrease in December. Unconditional admission of Ukraine to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was supported by 26% of respondents (down from 30%). An even larger group, representing 33% of those surveyed, supports Ukraine's membership but only on the condition that the war with Russia ends and NATO criteria are met.

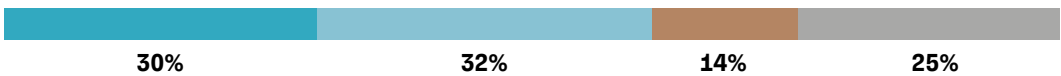
Meanwhile, 18% of respondents (up from 14% in February) opposed Ukraine's membership, while 22% had no opinion on the matter.

The lack of clear changes in the findings over the year suggests that these views are well-established and that Poles appear to be aware of the strategic importance of Ukraine's NATO membership.

↓ FIGURE 26:

Poland's support for Ukraine's membership of NATO

February 2024



December 2024



■ Yes, absolutely, because it's the best way to stop Russia

■ Yes, on condition of finishing the war with Russia and making peace

■ No

■ No opinion

Many focus group participants pointed out that Ukraine's integration into the European Union could benefit both Ukraine and Poland, ensuring greater political and economic stability in the region. It was often added that Poland should take the lead in promoting Ukraine's integration due to shared interests and geopolitical challenges.

"Ukraine would be an investment just like Poland was once an investment for the EU. Personally, I'm not in favour of this idea, but I know that we benefited a lot from joining the EU." (Lublin, younger group)

"In my opinion, Ukraine shouldn't join the European Union, at least not now, because it doesn't meet any standards. They need to deal with corruption and oligarchs first." (Lublin, older group)

"After its reconstruction, Ukraine will flood Poland, and maybe also the entire EU, with products. This won't be a good deal for us as we're already struggling with the influx of their cheap grain." (Łowicz, younger group)

"Ukraine's EU membership poses a potential risk for Poland's agriculture. If their products

are introduced into the EU market, this could ruin our economy.” (Łowicz, younger group)

“If Ukraine joins the EU, it should meet EU standards. That could be beneficial because their agricultural products would have to meet the same standards as ours.” (Lublin, younger group)

Respondents also expressed support for Ukraine joining NATO, arguing that membership in the military alliance could provide security for Ukraine, particularly to prevent possible further aggression from Russia. It was noted that, as a NATO member, Poland has a moral obligation to support Ukraine's aspirations, particularly in the context of the ongoing armed conflict. A stronger Ukraine in NATO, according to respondents, could increase stability in the region and strengthen defence cooperation between neighbouring countries.

However, some respondents voiced concerns about Ukraine's ability to meet the standards required for EU and NATO membership. They emphasised the need for Ukraine to tackle corruption, reform state institutions, and improve the human rights situation. Doubts were also raised about whether Ukraine's rapid admission into these structures could lead to political tensions in Europe and opposition from other member states.

Some respondents pointed to potential benefits for Poland resulting from Ukraine's membership of the EU and NATO. They highlighted that Ukraine could become Poland's strategic partner in the region and that closer economic cooperation could open up new opportunities for growth. The importance of Ukraine as a security buffer against Russia was also emphasised.

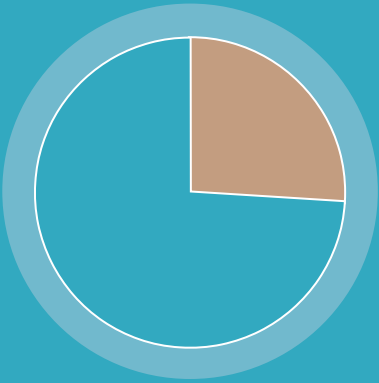
Support for Ukraine's membership of the EU and NATO remains high. However, in December 2024, respondents were more likely to indicate the need for Ukraine to meet specific conditions and stressed the importance of caution during the integration process.

“I'm in favour of Ukraine being in NATO. That way, the border is shifted further and Russia is further away from us. This increases our security.” (Wrocław, older group)

“NATO should support Ukraine, but bringing them into the alliance at this stage would mean dragging all member states into a state of war with Russia.” (Lublin, younger group)

“Ukraine's membership of NATO is impossible while the war is going on. It would be too much of a risk for all of us because we'd have to defend them.” (Lublin, younger group)

Poland's support for Ukraine's membership of NATO

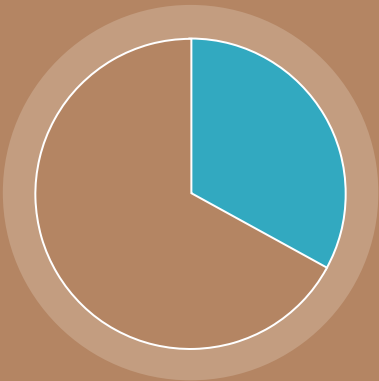


Yes, absolutely, because it's the best way to stop Russia

26%



Poland's support for Ukraine's membership of NATO

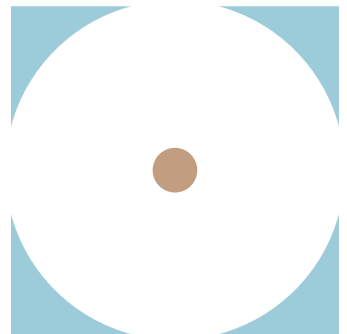
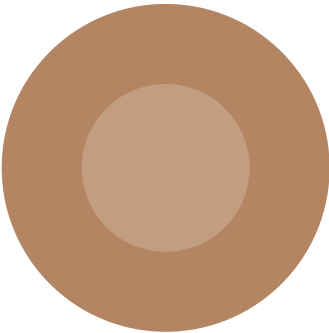


Yes, on condition of finishing the war with Russia and making peace

77%



Common interests and disputes



In December 2024, the majority of Poles was unable to identify shared interests linking Poland and Ukraine.

The largest group, **42%**, chose the response 'not sure', while slightly fewer, **36%**, thought that there were no such interests. Another **10%** of respondents felt there were few shared interests, and only **13%** believed there

were many. Men were more likely than women to see common interests (**20%** vs. **14%**), as were younger respondents aged 18–24.

↓ FIGURE 27:

Interests linking Poland and Ukraine

February 2024



December 2024



■ Yes, there are many of them

■ No

■ Yes, although there are not many of them

■ Not sure

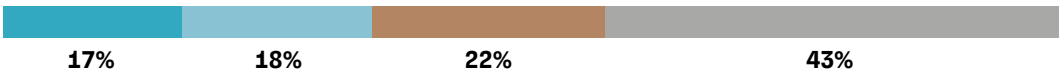
A comparison of responses to the question about perceived disputes in Polish-Ukrainian relations between February and December 2024 indicates that Poles' views are fairly well-established: the percentage of people recognising some disputes remains at **17%**, while those who do

not see any disputes stand at **23%**. At the same time, the high proportion of undecided respondents (**46%**) suggests that a significant part of society has no firm opinion on the matter.

↓ FIGURE 28:

Perceived disputes in Polish-Ukrainian relations

February 2024



December 2024



- Yes, there are many of them
- Yes, although there are not many of them
- No
- Not sure

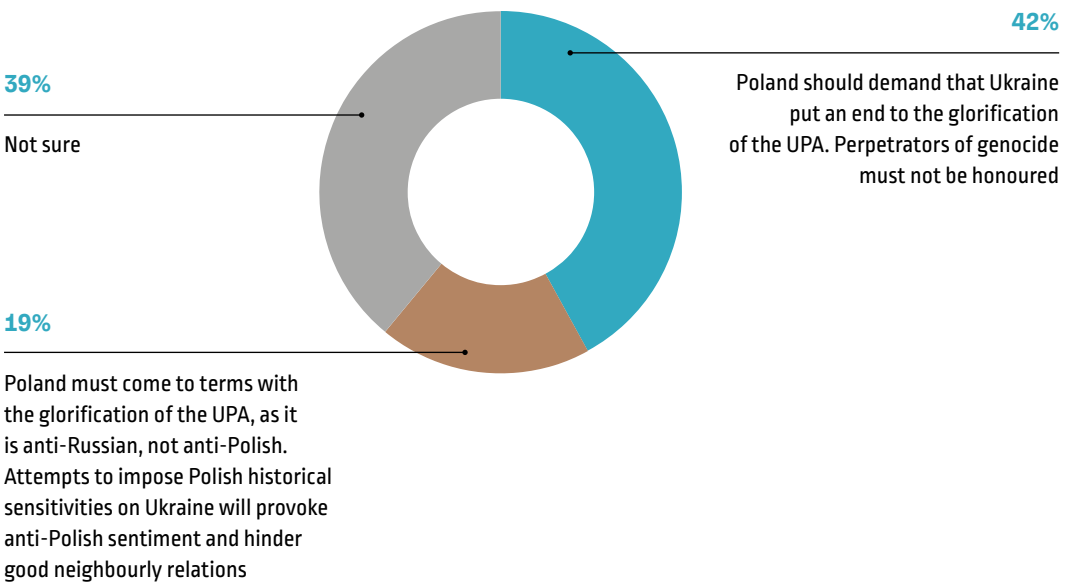
Most Poles support a firm stance against the glorification of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in Ukraine. Over **42%** of respondents believe that Poland should demand that Ukraine cease glorifying this formation, while the percentage of those who believe that such practices should be condoned is less than half as much (**19%**). A significant proportion of respondents (as much as **39%**) say they have no opinion on the matter.

Opinions vary by gender and age. Men are more likely than women to support a firm stance against UPA

glorification (**48% vs. 36%** of women), while women are more likely to declare that they have no opinion on the issue (**47% vs. 30%** of men). In terms of age breakdown, the groups aged 25–34 (**41%**) and 35–44 (**41%**) are most likely to be in favour of putting an end to the glorification of the UPA. Meanwhile, the youngest respondents (aged 18–24) are more likely to be uncertain: as many as **51%** of respondents in this group said they were 'not sure'.

↓ FIGURE 29:

Poland's expected stance on the glorification of the UPA in Ukraine



In the focus groups, glorification of the UPA in Ukraine sparked strong emotions and controversy among the respondents. Judging by their comments, there is high awareness that the praise of figures and organisations associated with the UPA remains a sensitive issue in Polish-Ukrainian relations. Expectations of the Polish authorities in this regard include: opposing the glorification of the UPA, engaging in diplomatic efforts to promote reconciliation, and paying greater attention to commemorating

Polish victims. Respondents noted that monuments, marches, and other forms of honouring individuals responsible for crimes against Poles are perceived as a lack of respect and disregard for Polish suffering and sensitivities.

"We should demand that they put an end to this glorification. Nothing good comes from the UPA." [Rzeszów]

“For us, the UPA is a criminal organisation. For Ukrainians, they are heroes, but we cannot accept this. Our government should respond firmly.” (Wrocław, older group)

At the same time, it was argued that Poland should strive to develop a common position with Ukraine on historically contentious issues. It was suggested that an approach based on cooperation and sincere acknowledgement of the mutual wrongs committed in the past would be more effective than exerting pressure. Some participants even voiced hope that discussions conducted in a spirit of reconciliation could help to reduce the glorification of the UPA in Ukraine. There were also comments expressing an understanding for the Ukrainian perspective on the UPA as part of their struggle for independence. Respondents from younger groups were more likely to note the differences in historical perspectives between the two nations, emphasising that while the UPA remains controversial in Poland, it can be seen as a symbol of the fight for freedom in Ukraine. These remarks included suggestions that Poland should focus on the future rather than escalating tensions around this issue.

“Polish diplomacy shouldn’t be held hostage by Ukraine. We can help, but we shouldn’t

allow them to ignore our historical concerns.” (Wrocław, younger group)

“We need to discuss the UPA with Ukraine, but in a diplomatic way, without imposing our position. This calls for a sensitive approach.” (Rzeszów)

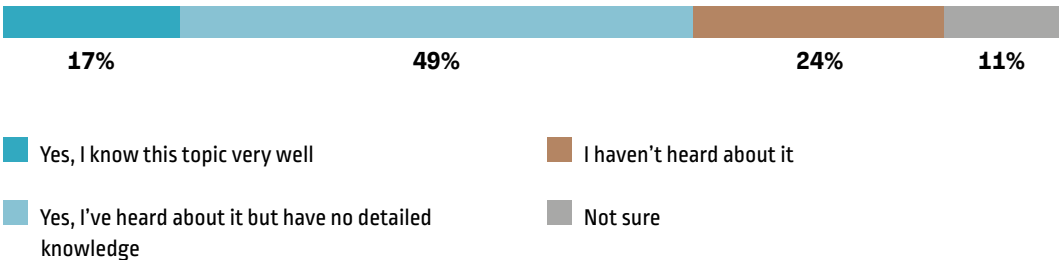
“For Ukrainians, the UPA is a symbol of the fight for independence. Poles should try to understand this, even if it’s difficult for us.” (Rzeszów)

“It’s impossible to reconcile our view of the UPA with the Ukrainian view. But we can at least try to understand why they see it that way.” (Wrocław, older group)

Awareness of issues related to the exhumations and burials of Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre is generally low in Poland. The largest group of respondents declared a superficial understanding of the matter, while a clear minority claimed to have detailed knowledge. Men are more likely than women to declare familiarity with the topic (25% vs. 9%).

↓ FIGURE 30:

Awareness of the exhumations and burials of Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre

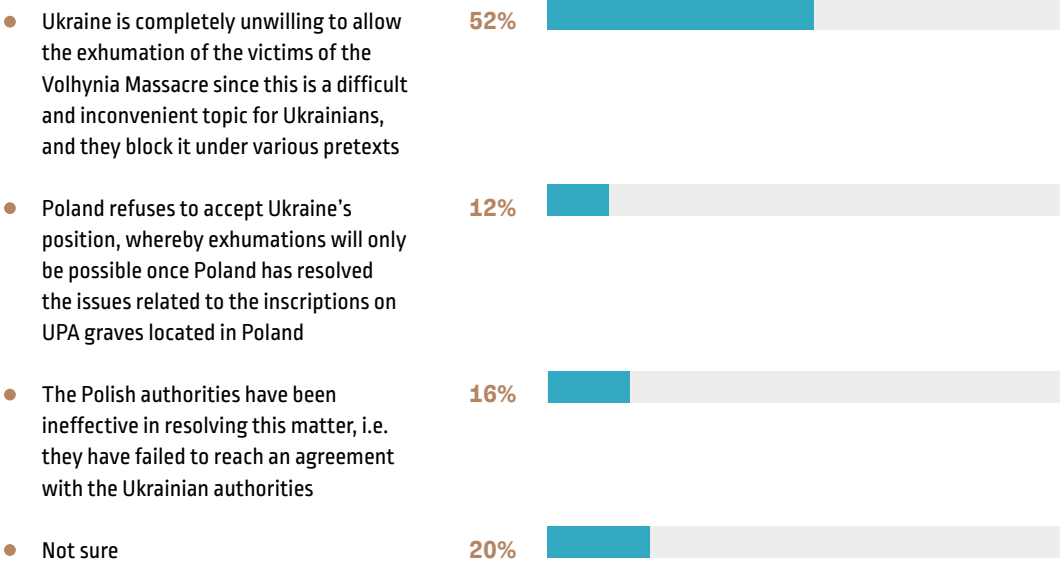


Poles' opinions on the reasons behind the unresolved issue of exhuming Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre are clearly divided. The largest group of respondents (52%) believes that Ukraine has avoided conducting exhumations because the topic is difficult and uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, 20% of those surveyed felt that Poland has been unwilling to accept the conditions associated with the exhumations, and 18% pointed out that the Polish authorities were not sufficiently committed to resolving this issue.

↓ FIGURE 31:

Reasons for the unresolved issue of exhumations of Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre



During the focus group interviews, the topic of the exhumation and proper burial of Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre raised strong emotions. However, familiarity with these issues rarely extended beyond generalities, particularly among the younger generation.

In the older groups, participants often shared deeply emotional comments related to painful personal memories or family stories. They stressed the importance of the exhumation and dignified burial of the victims as both a moral duty towards the murdered Poles and an act of

historical justice. These groups called for firm action by the Polish government and expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of progress on the issue. Many felt that Ukraine's refusal to allow exhumations was tantamount to disrespect for the victims.

This topic did not evoke as intense emotions among younger respondents as it did in the older groups. Some younger participants emphasised the need for a cautious approach, fearing that pushing too hard on the issue of exhumations might harm Polish-Ukrainian relations,

particularly in the context of the ongoing war and strategic cooperation between the two countries.

“I don’t blame those who are alive today for what their grandparents or great-grandparents did 70 years ago. All I want is that they should exhume the victims, stop destroying the Polish memorials commemorating the victims, and acknowledge what they did.” (Wrocław, younger group)

“Be firm, strive all the time to press the Ukrainians to acknowledge what they had done, have them apologise for it and allow the remains to be unearthed and buried by the families of the victims.” (Wrocław, younger group)

“Since Ukraine aspires to join the EU and NATO, they should open up their archives, give access

to sites where we could enter, conduct studies, perform exhumations that are still possible to do.” (Łowicz, older group)

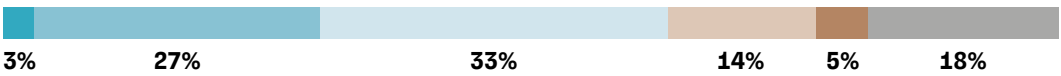
“These issues should be resolved because that’s the main thing that divides us. There are some maps of villages that were razed to the ground because they were inhabited by Poles. Many things are left behind and many bodies are still there.” (Łowicz, older group)

The December survey shows that Poles perceive Polish-Ukrainian relations mainly as neutral, with 37% of respondents expressing this opinion. Polish-Ukrainian relations are viewed positively by 31% of respondents, which means that this percentage remained stable compared to the February survey. In contrast, 22% of respondents assessed these relations as bad (up from 19%).

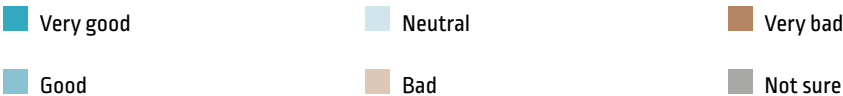
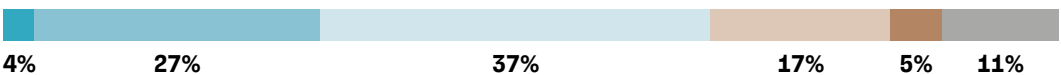
↓ FIGURE 32:

Assessment of current Polish-Ukrainian relations

February 2024

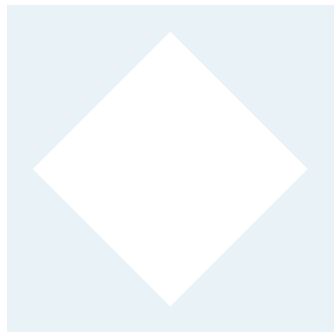
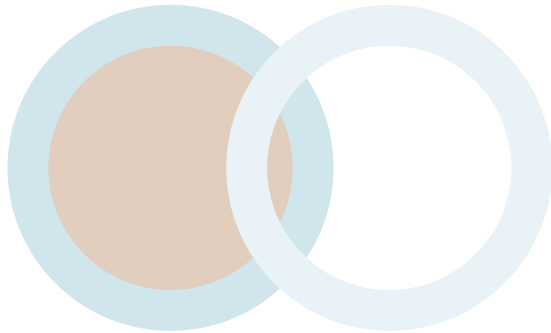
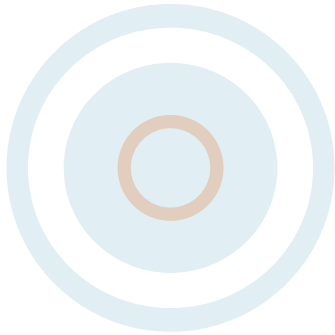


December 2024





War



Poles believe that the likelihood of Russia attacking other countries in the region depends on the geographical location of the country in question.

With regard to Poland, 24% of respondents think there is a high or certain risk of a Russian attack on the country, while 36% consider this scenario unlikely. For the Baltic States, 30% of Poles see the possibility of a Russian attack whereas 27% are sceptical about such a scenario. In the case of Finland, 14% of Poles see a risk and 45% deem

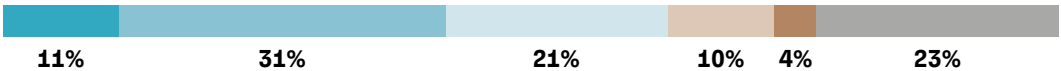
it unlikely. For Moldova, which does not share a border with Russia, the risks is seen by 33% of respondents, with 20% believing the likelihood is low. Compared to February 2024, assessments of the risk remained stable.

↓ FIGURE 33:

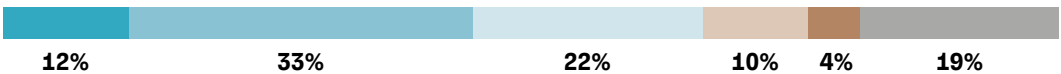
Likelihood of Russia attacking further countries

- Russia will attack Finland

February 2024



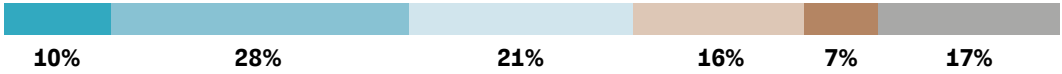
December 2024



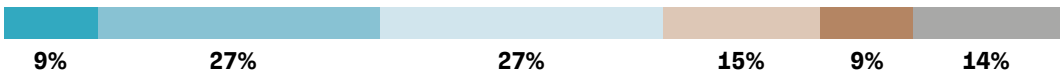
- Not likely at all
- Not very likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Quite likely
- Very likely
- No opinion

● Russia will attack Poland

February 2024

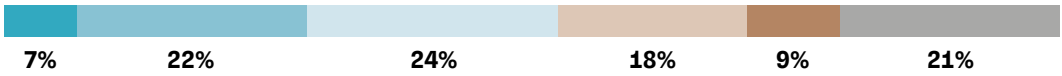


December 2024

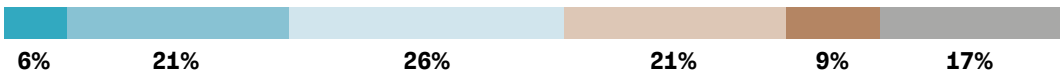


● Russia will attack one of the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia)

February 2024

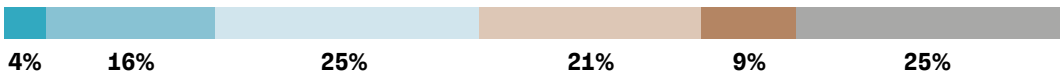


December 2024



● Russia will attack Moldova

February 2024



December 2024



■ Not likely at all

■ Neither likely nor unlikely

■ Very likely

■ Not very likely

■ Quite likely

■ No opinion

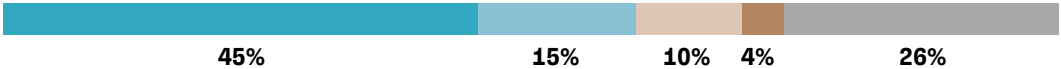
In the December survey on potential scenarios for the developments in Ukraine that could ensure lasting security for Poland, Poles most commonly indicated an unequivocal Ukrainian victory over Russia as the best solution (40%). In February, this view was expressed by 45% of respondents. The option of freezing the conflict while preserving Ukraine's independence gained more support compared to February, reaching 21% (up from 15%). The scenario of a prolonged war of attrition is increasingly less favoured: only 7% in December, compared to 10% in February. A Russian victory, seen by a small group as a potential way to stabilise the region, also remains a marginal choice, although support for this latter option rose from 4% in February to 6% in December.

The survey findings show that Poles continue to place significant hope in an unequivocal Ukrainian victory, though an increasing number of people are beginning to accept the possibility of a freezing of the conflict. This shift in preferences may reflect growing uncertainty about the final outcome of the war and public fatigue with the prolonged conflict. It is worth noting that similar trends are observed in Ukraine where an increasing number of respondents are growing ready to accept the option of ending the war through a truce not preceded by an unequivocal Ukrainian victory. This would mean leaving all or part of the territory occupied by Russian forces under occupation.

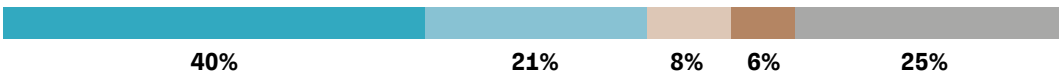
↓ FIGURE 34:

Potential developments in Ukraine that could ensure lasting security for Poland

February 2024



December 2024



- Ukraine's unequivocal victory over Russia, including regained control of all of its territory (with Crimea), to effectively stop Russian expansion
- The freezing of the conflict, but Ukraine defending itself as an independent state, even at the cost of losing control of some of its territory
- Prolonged war of attrition which severely undermines Russia's military potential and ability to conduct expansion
- Russia's victory that would stabilise the situation in the region
- No opinion

The growing acceptance of what can be called a realistic, albeit imperfect scenario of freezing the conflict is also reflected in responses to the next question, which was not about the optimal outcome for Poland but about the most likely developments in Ukraine. In December, 34% of respondents pointed to the scenario of a freezing conflict while maintaining Ukraine's independence, a rise of 7 percentage points compared to February.

Belief in the possibility of a complete Ukrainian victory over Russia has slightly weakened. This scenario was

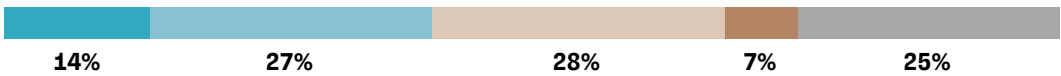
indicated by 12% of respondents in December, compared to 14% in February. The scenario of a prolonged war of attrition was also less frequently chosen, with 28% of respondents selecting it in February and 23% in December.

A Russian victory over Ukraine is still seen as unlikely, with 9% of respondents choosing this scenario in December, a slight increase from 7% in February.

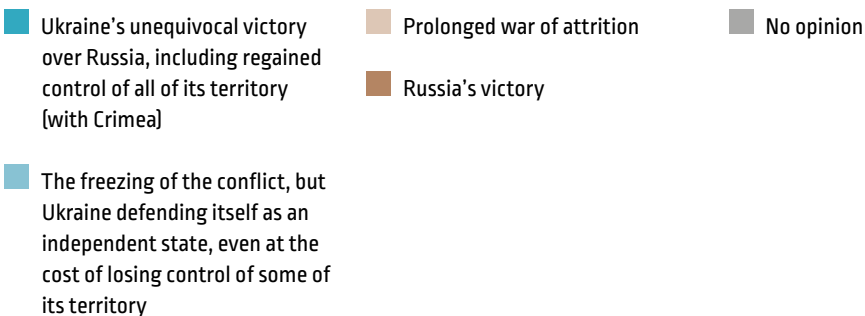
↓ FIGURE 35:

Most likely developments in Ukraine

February 2024



December 2024



When analysing possible developments in Ukraine, focus group participants primarily discussed the ongoing armed conflict and its potential consequences. Their comments reflected both optimism, stemming from Ukraine's resistance to Russia's aggression, as well as concerns about the escalation of the conflict and its impact on regional and global security.

Many respondents expressed admiration for the determination and perseverance of Ukrainians, both on the frontlines and in everyday life. Respondents noted that, despite the challenging situation, Ukraine has managed to maintain its sovereignty and successfully defend its territory. Respondents emphasised that continued military and political support from the West, including Poland, could be crucial to sustaining this position.

However, some respondents voiced concerns about the protracted nature of the conflict, suggesting that the war could last for many years, leading to Ukraine's exhaustion, both economically and socially. These comments often focused on issues such as population loss, mass emigration, and the destruction of infrastructure, all of which would hinder Ukraine's recovery after the war is over.

The older groups often stressed that a prolonged conflict could destabilise Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, due to the risk of Russia escalating hostilities or attacking other countries.

Some participants, when discussing possible scenarios for ending the war, including peace negotiations, suggested that Ukraine might be forced to make territorial concessions. They felt this would be perceived as a defeat and could undermine the morale of Ukrainian society. Respondents stressed that Poland should support Ukraine's pursuit of full sovereignty, but also cautioned against direct involvement in the conflict.

The younger groups were more likely to express hope that the war would lead to lasting changes in Ukraine, such as the modernisation of the armed forces and stronger ties with the West. These comments reflected optimism about Ukraine's ability to survive the conflict and rebuild in the future.

In December, respondents were more likely than in February to emphasise war fatigue, both in Ukraine and within the international community. However, there was also a growing awareness that further support and

solidarity from Poland and its allies would be required to end the conflict.

"This will go on and on, for decades. One side will advance, then the other side, then they push them back. It's been like this for a long time now." (Łowicz, younger group)

"I don't see this war ending anytime soon. Too many people have a vested interest in keeping it going." (Łowicz, older group)

"[The probability of escalation] in Moldova is quite high. With the Baltic states, we're talking NATO countries, so the risk is quite low. I don't think escalation is likely there because Ukraine is showing so much resistance that Russia is focused on that front." (Rzeszów)

"There is a risk that the conflict could expand, but Ukraine is a buffer. It's getting hit, and, sadly, people are dying, and that is the worst part." (Łowicz, younger group)

"I think Zelensky will give up part of Ukraine. This will be the only way to reach some sort of agreement." (Lublin, younger group)

"The most realistic scenario is that peace negotiations will begin and Ukraine will agree to lose some of its territory, including Crimea." (Lublin, younger group)

"Military aid should continue in order to push the frontline away from our border. It could also happen that Ukraine collapses if the situation in the U.S. changes and the aid stops." (Łowicz, younger group)

"If the U.S. withdraws its support for Ukraine, the other allies will need to intensify their support, otherwise Ukraine won't survive." (Wrocław, older group)

9. Summary

The Polish public is aware of Ukraine's situation and the growing challenges in Polish-Ukrainian relations, both at the state level and in social interactions.

The second round of the study on this topic reveals a picture of views that have been fairly stable over the past year, but with a slight increase in criticism, scepticism, or negative views. This shift stems from several factors, including negative media reports about the situation on the front-line or about Polish-Ukrainian relations, the experience of daily interactions with the large Ukrainian community in Poland, and Russian disinformation efforts.

It seems that there are at least two dimensions of public reactions to Polish-Ukrainian affairs or, in other words, two perspectives on these matters. As regards the war, not much has changed: Poles continue to support military and political aid for Ukraine, understand the potential consequences of a possible Ukrainian defeat, and see this support as aligned with Poland's *raison d'état* in this context. However, there is a noticeable increase in pragmatism in the assessment of events, with more caution about endorsing solutions that could directly involve Poland in the war. The public seems to expect all decisions to be made with restraint rather than driven by impulses generated by ideological narratives, and falling within alliances, taking into account Polish security interests.

The second dimension can be called a non-war or even post-war perspective. It encompasses a wide spectrum of views and emotions related to history (a topic of particular importance for older age groups) as well as economic and social relations (important to everyone). This dimension has brought a lot of new themes and experiences in recent months, with their echoes reflected clearly in the most recent findings: the resurgence of debates on historical issues, and the actual or perceived competitive tensions in the economy.

The situation in the early months of the full-scale war seemed cognitively and emotionally simpler for the Polish

public. Refugees arriving en masse from Ukraine deserved help and support, and there was broad social mobilisation and consensus on this issue. Today, Polish respondents no longer have such clarity. They wonder whether Ukrainians staying in Poland still need the same level of assistance from the Polish government and society. Are they still refugees or has their status changed in some way? How can the narrative about aid be reconciled with the observed social divides within the Ukrainian community? The issue of alleged 'sense of entitlement' among Ukrainians residing in Poland provokes strong emotions, with accusations of abuse of Poland's aid and overburdening the social welfare system.

Thus, the analysed findings reveal a growing tendency to demythologise Ukraine, to go beyond the heroic image and also notice more mundane contexts. The interviewed Poles are increasingly aware of the challenges faced by the Ukrainian government and society, and have their own observations from the experience of interacting with Ukrainians living in Poland.

The Polish public has, in a sense, become accustomed to the Ukrainian themes, moving away from the lofty rhetoric that prevailed after February 2022, and which continues to dominate the mainstream media. This is not particularly surprising—such is the nature of social reactions. Ukrainian affairs have become an important part of Poles' everyday experience, leading to a degree of normalisation and social routine. The rise in negative and critical opinions about Ukraine and Ukrainians can still be seen as a stronger adjustment rather than a complete reversal of the overall trend of sympathy and support.

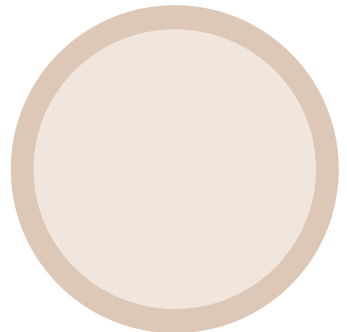
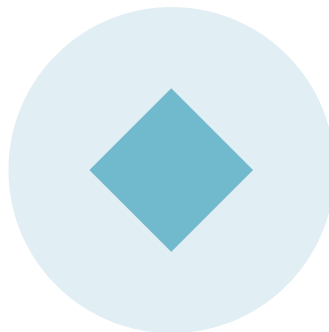
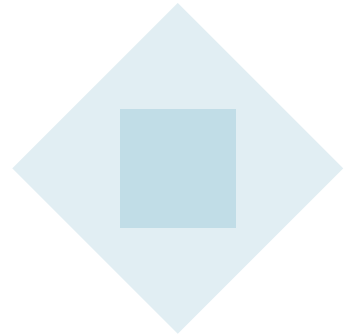
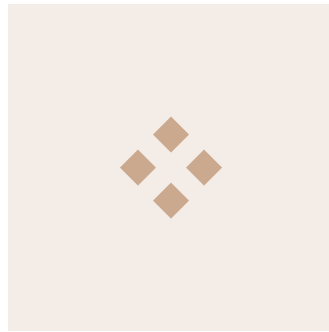
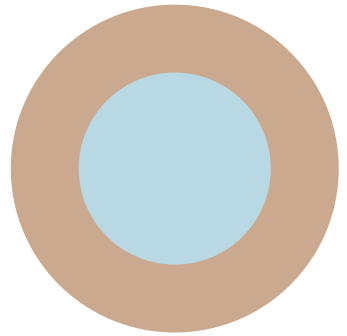
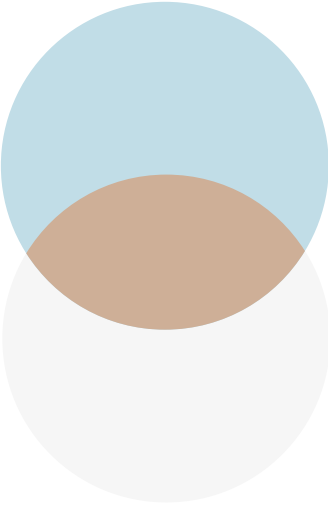
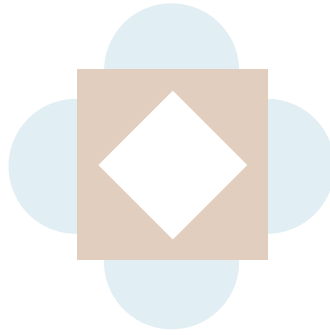
However, this more critical tonality in public reactions calls for attention and further monitoring. This space is particularly vulnerable to attempts at manipulation,

whether by Russian disinformation or by local populists and demagogues. Beyond any doubt, some members of the public have already been exposed to such influences. The passing time, the ongoing uncertainty about the future developments around Ukraine will exacerbate these risks and presumably foster growing scepticism and resentment.

The battle for the hearts and minds of the Polish public should also be seen, in a sense, as yet another front of the ongoing war.

Notes

Notes





This report presents the findings of a public opinion survey conducted in November and December 2024, commissioned by the Mioszowski Centre, alongside data collected nearly a year earlier. This comparison allows for identifying potential changes in public sentiment. The report presents both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of attitudes presented by Poles. We hope that the findings will inspire interest and reflection among individuals and institutions committed to shaping optimal Polish-Ukrainian relations.



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The Mioszowski Centre is a state institution established by the act of the Polish Parliament and supervised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland. The mission of the Mioszowski Centre is to initiate, support and carry out activities aimed at the peoples of Eastern Europe, in particular Ukrainians, Belarusians, Georgians and Moldovans, in order to strengthen the independence of their countries in the light of Russian attempts to revise borders and rebuild regional hegemony, to support processes that will contribute to the building of mature democracies, to bring them closer to Euro-Atlantic structures and to deepen their ties with Poland. Dialogue with the Russians remains within the Centre's sphere of interest, but for both political and moral reasons it must be limited to individuals and institutions that have unequivocally condemned Russian aggression and crimes.

