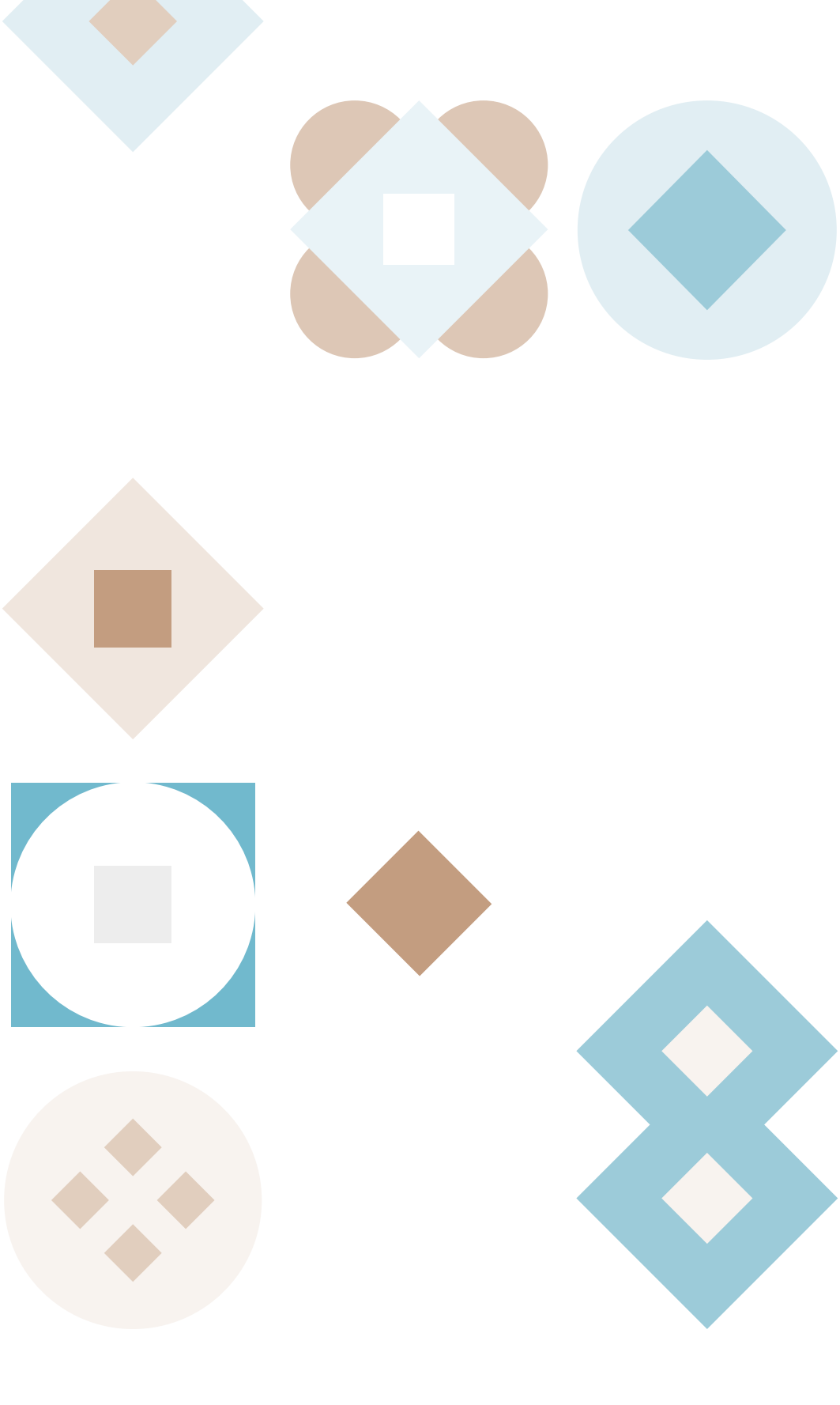
UKRAINE AND POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

Warsaw, January 2026

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

AS SEEN BY POLES 2025



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Survey
ARC Rynek i Opinia

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1. Introduction – background and context of the study

The war in Ukraine entered its fourth year with an accelerated pace of events. Public opinion, already somewhat accustomed to a relative balance of forces on the frontline, has faced a much greater intensity of developments. Polish social and political life has also undergone significant changes.

The meeting between the presidents of the United States and Ukraine in the Oval Office in February 2025 proved to be a turning point in many respects and made the public aware of the shift in the American administration's approach to the conflict. It was not only a political watershed, but also the beginning of a new narrative and emotional tone. One could say that the previously coherent Western narrative began to unravel, giving way to a more transactional approach in place of the earlier emphasis on shared values.

In the first six months of 2025, the new approach was reflected in the agreement concerning the exploitation of Ukrainian mineral resources. In the following months, it was further underscored by growing concerns over potential behind-the-scenes arrangements between the United States and Russia. The overall picture was further complicated by tensions – often not fully understood by the public – both between the United States and Europe and between supporters and opponents of Donald Trump's policies.

Public opinion in Poland that closely followed Ukrainian affairs became immediately aware of this shift. The 2025 developments engendered swings in sentiment accompanied by unexpected twists in the ongoing 'peace process'. These unpredictable developments deepened a growing sense of uncertainty about the future of international affairs. Poles are especially sensitive to any manifestations of the weakening of Western allied solidarity including potential agreements that sideline the countries of the region. The gradual shift from the initial United States' definition of the situation as a defence of the core values of Western civilisation against Russian aggression to a more pragmatic approach focused on attempts to put an end to the conflict, stabilise relations with Russia and move on to other global challenges – was difficult for many in Poland to accept.

However, these were not the only sources of social tension and concern related to the ongoing war. The year 2025 saw an escalation of Russian and Belarusian hybrid attacks directly targeting Poland's security. Drone incursions into Polish airspace, acts of sabotage on the railways, cyberattacks, systematic probing of Poland's response systems as well as disinformation campaigns – all these phenomena have become part and parcel of everyday life in Poland.

Echoing concerns expressed by respondents in the previous wave of research on Polish views on Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations, there has also been a shift in the approach of Polish political elites to Ukrainian issues. The 2025 presidential campaign differed immensely from the campaign preceding the 2023 parliamentary election in the way the main political forces treated issues related to Ukraine and its citizens residing in Poland. Attitudes towards refugees – their legal and social status – as well as perception of Ukraine and its authorities became instrumentalised during the 2025 election campaign. As a result, new sentiments entered the mainstream debate: scepticism, critical undertones and even open hostility. There is always a loopback between the statements and actions of politicians, on the one hand, and public opinion, on the other. These two spheres are intertwined, and they mutually reinforce available attitudes and arguments.

Meanwhile, social life in Poland – of which Ukrainians have become an integral part – evolves at its own pace. Occasional incidents and local tensions have not reversed the prevailing pattern of support and goodwill toward newcomers from Ukraine. Many of them have become embedded in the social fabric, achieved stability in Poland and make a meaningful contribution to the country's economic and social life.

An additional event during the period under discussion played a notable role in shaping perceptions of the Ukrainian immigrant community in Poland. In August 2025,

a concert by Belarusian rapper Max Korzh took place at the National Stadium. The concert was accompanied by a number of incidents and disorderly conduct involving, among others, the Ukrainian audience. Media coverage focused on the red-and-black Banderite flag waved by one of the concert participants. From the point of view of Polish public opinion, however, something else was even more important. The concert highlighted that immigrant communities from Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, have their own cultural and social life, and their audiences can fill the largest entertainment venue although their artists are largely unknown to the Polish public. It was an unintended manifestation of strength, social dynamics and cultural identity of the immigrant community, which came as a surprise to Polish public opinion at large.

Thus, the third in a series of studies commissioned by the Mieroszewski Centre and covered in this report was conducted against the backdrop of growing ambiguity in matters concerning Ukraine. The fractured Western narrative, the shift from an ethics-based approach towards transactional realism, the politicisation of Ukrainian issues in Poland and the rise of hybrid threats - these are the key contextual factors underlying the findings discussed here. Against this backdrop, how has public opinion in Poland evolved? To what extent have developments related to Ukraine influenced Polish attitudes toward Ukrainian issues?

As in previous studies, this research adopted a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative (survey) and qualitative (group discussions) components to enable an in-depth understanding of Polish views on Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations. Comparison of these findings with earlier data enabled assessment of both the scale and direction of changes in respondents' views and related social sentiments.

2. Information about the study

Methodology

The research consists of qualitative and quantitative components. The design of the study is similar to the one used in the previous waves of research.

As part of the qualitative component, 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 i.e. one group comprised younger participants (aged 26–45) and another – respondents aged 46–65. In Rzeszów, respondents aged 30–60 were interviewed.

The choice of locations for FGIs took into account the regional distribution and distance from Poland's eastern border. An additional criterion was the number of inhabitants, which ensured a representation of small, medium-sized and large urban centres.

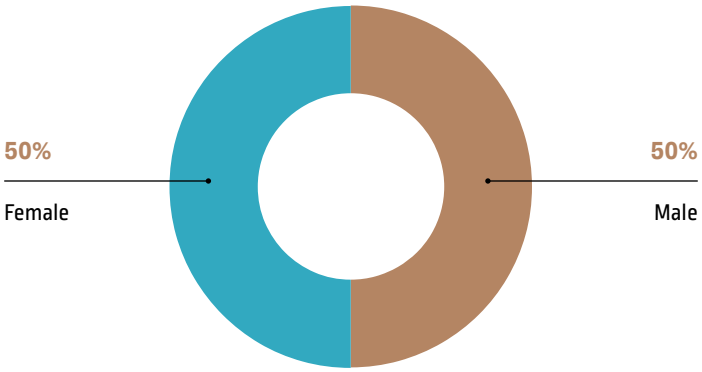
The quantitative survey was conducted using the computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) technique on a total sample of N = 1009 respondents aged 18–65, representative of the structure of Polish society in terms of gender, size of domicile, and province (voivodeship). The online research panel operated by ARC Rynek i Opinia (epanel.pl) was used.

The opinion polling took place in November 2025.

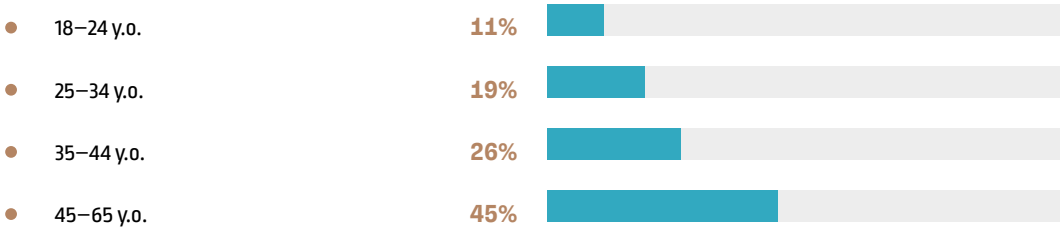
With some data, the numbers do not sum up to 100%. This occurs in multiple-choice questions. In the case of single-choice questions, minor deviations from 100% result from rounding.

Sample structure in the survey

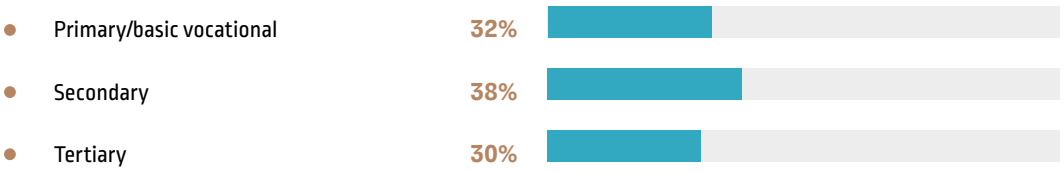
Gender



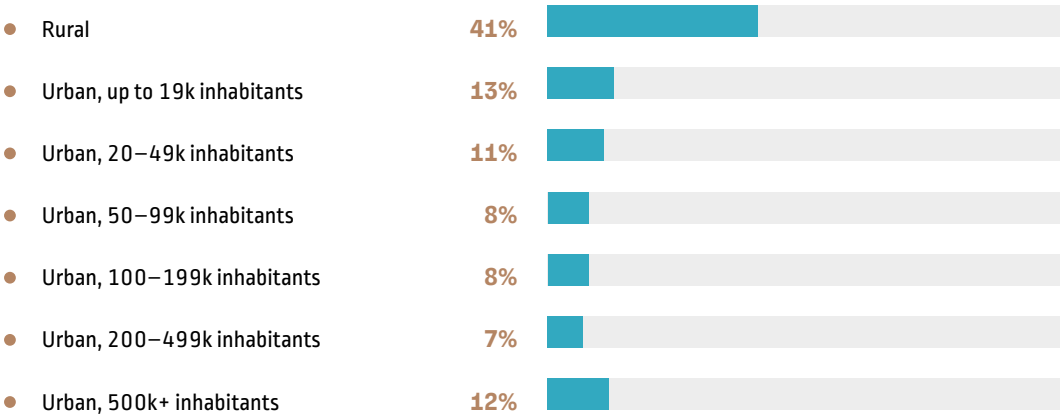
Age



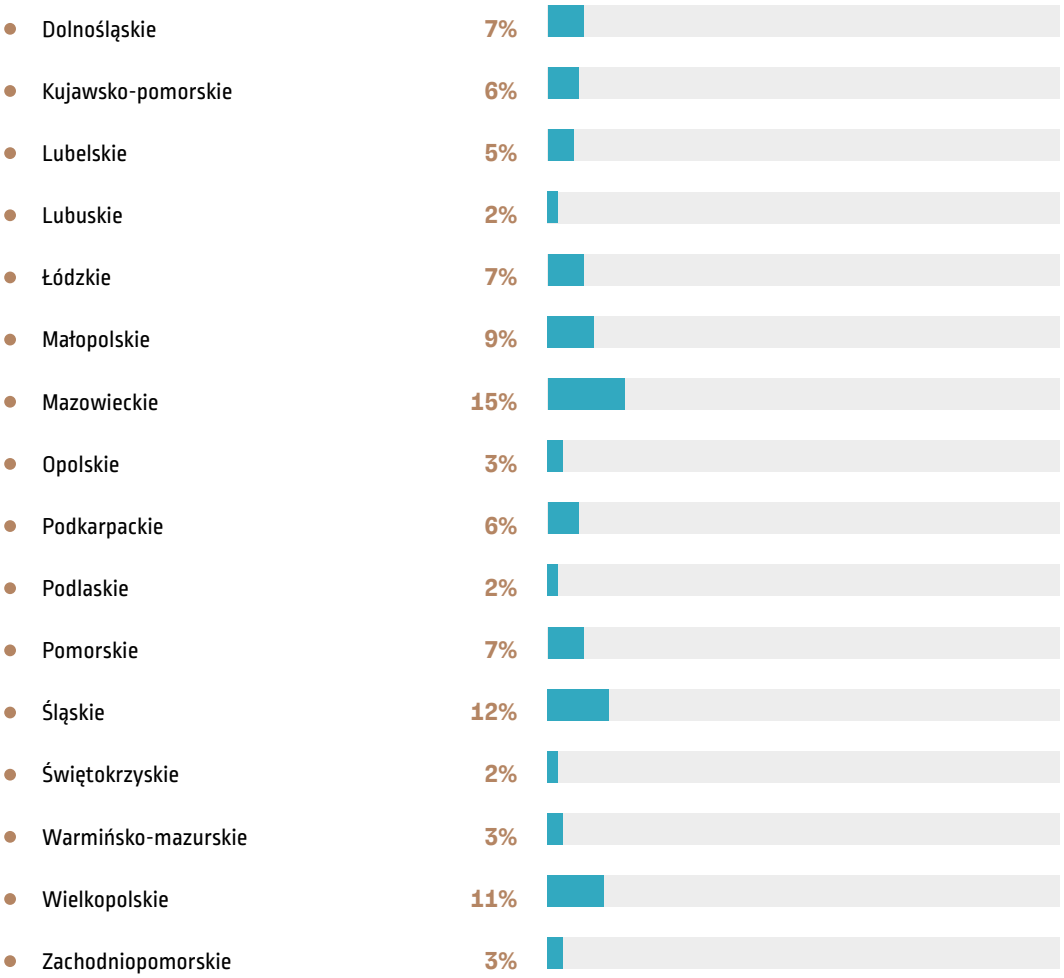
Education



Size of domicile



Province


Dolnośląskie 7%
Kujawsko-pomorskie 6%
Lubelskie 5%
Lubuskie 2%
Łódzkie 7%
Małopolskie 9%
Mazowieckie 15%
Opolskie 3%
Podkarpackie 6%
Podlaskie 2%
Pomorskie 7%
Śląskie 12%
Świętokrzyskie 2%
Warmińsko-mazurskie 3%
Wielkopolskie 11%
Zachodniopomorskie 3%

3

General associations and attitudes

Ukraine

In focus group interviews, 'Ukraine' evoked very strong, often ambivalent emotions among Poles. Nearly every respondent, when asked about their first association with 'Ukraine', answered without hesitation: 'war', 'Russia', 'refugees', 'aid/support', but also 'fatigue' and 'historical controversies'.

↓ FIGURE 1:

Spontaneous associations with Ukraine

The most common connotation with 'Ukraine' is 'war', its tragedy and its consequences. The respondents openly admit that this topic has overshadowed all other associations.

> *"Ukraine? The first thing that comes to mind is the war. Images like people fleeing, mothers with children crossing the border... I still have that in front of my eyes."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *"For me, it's a country that is fighting, that is in ruins, that is suffering. That's the main association that comes up immediately, before I think of anything else."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

The war is not only a context but also a lens through which Poles view Ukraine. Many respondents emphasise that helping Ukraine was one of the most important moments of collective solidarity in Poland in recent years.

> *"I remember how it all started, how everyone was trying to help. A collective national effort. Heart-to-heart."*
> [Wrocław, older group]

Today, however, reflections are somewhat different – more realistic, sometimes bitter. The war has been going on for a long time while help offered to Ukraine and Ukrainians is no longer an ad hoc initiative but a lasting element of state policy.

> *"Aid? Yes. But this time rules should be in place, no haphazard efforts. That only worked for a short while."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Although many respondents admit that their knowledge of Ukraine's history is limited, associations with the difficult past – especially the Volhynia Massacre – resurface regularly. While history does not determine attitudes, it nonetheless creates a backdrop that cannot be ignored in the current perspective.

> *"Memories resurface. My great-grandfather's brother, my grandfather... those stories. And that's the association I have in mind, even though it was a long time ago."*
> [Wrocław, older group]

> *"Just like Bandera... everyone has heard of him, even though no one knows exactly what happened. But this association with Ukraine is very strong."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Ukraine is also perceived by Poles as a frontline that protects Poland:

> *"If Ukraine falls, we're the next in line. This is the connotation that everyone has even if they won't say it out loud."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *"This country is fighting for us. It keeps Russia away from us."*
> [Rzeszów]

Ukrainians

Due to the war in Ukraine Poles got to know Ukrainians better than ever before – as refugees, neighbours, co-workers and local community members. However, the analysis of the statements of focus group interviewees indicates that the image of Ukrainians as seen by Poles is full both of admiration and visible tensions and ambiguities. In the opinion of Poles, Ukrainians are hardworking and ambitious, although some groups believe that they also have a sense of entitlement and are focused on personal gain. This is a clearly polarised image, and these contrasting narratives coexist simultaneously.

> *"Ukraine means refugees. It means queues at aid centres, schools full of children from Ukraine, and a language heard in shops. We see this every day."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

↓ FIGURE 2:

Spontaneous associations with 'Ukrainians'

The most prominent positive narrative concerns Ukrainians' determination in fighting for their country. Poles see Ukrainians as having a strength they may themselves be lacking. This admiration is one of the foundations of solidarity with Ukraine.

Many statements show that Poles continue to primarily see Ukrainians as victims of the war. This image fosters emotional understanding and provides moral justification for offering help.

> *"I saw mothers with children who had nothing. They came here with just one rucksack. How could I not sympathise with them? These are ordinary people who just wanted to survive."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

Many interviewees perceive Ukrainian migrants as hard-working, honest and modest. Many Poles even say that many business sectors would not have survived without Ukrainian workers.

> *"I have Ukrainian neighbours – they work from dawn to dusk, their children go to school, everything is fine. They just want to live a normal life here and not act as if they're entitled to anything."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

> *"I have a few Ukrainian fellow workers, they're great girls. Well-organised, diligent, they get everything done. If everyone was like that, there wouldn't be any problem."*
> [Lublin, older group]

The strongest negative narrative concerns a perceived sense of entitlement, particularly in the context of benefits funded by public resources. It is not a manifestation of hostility toward Ukrainians as a social group, but rather a feeling of frustration with what respondents perceive as insufficient oversight of the social welfare system.

> *"Some women come just to collect their childcare benefit [known in Poland as 800+]. They take it, go back, and come again. And this is infuriating, because we're the ones paying for it."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"I have nothing against them but I'm against them taking advantage. If someone comes here and doesn't intend to work, well, excuse me..."*
> [Rzeszów]

Some Poles are also concerned about a lack of integration, especially of adult migrants.

> *"If someone wants to stay here, they should learn the language. But sometimes they've been here for years and still only speak their own. How are we supposed to build a common society?"*
> [Lublin, younger group]

> *"Children, yes, they adapt really well. But adults? Many don't even try."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Poles expect Ukrainians to make symbolic efforts to integrate in a society, including learning the language. Poles' statements are typically based on observation and conveyed in a non-hostile tone.

> *"I have nothing against Ukrainians. Really. There just has to be order, rules. It's not right when some have more and others have less."*
> [Rzeszów]

This statement summarises the dominant sentiment: approval of Ukrainians as people, but criticism of state policies which – according to this group of Poles – generate conflicts and inequalities.

Poles and Ukrainians are growing closer in everyday life. Personal encounters are something familiar, although travel to Ukraine is not popular, which is understandable, given the circumstances.

Although public debate on Polish–Ukrainian relations often focuses on politics, security, or history, the research findings reveal a social picture of these relations. It shows how much everyday experiences of Poles have changed in recent years. As many as **69%** of respondents declare that they personally know a Ukrainian. This is the highest percentage among the compared studies, which indicates a strong presence of the Ukrainian community in Poland.

One in five respondents (**22%**) works or studies in the same institution as people from Ukraine. This means that

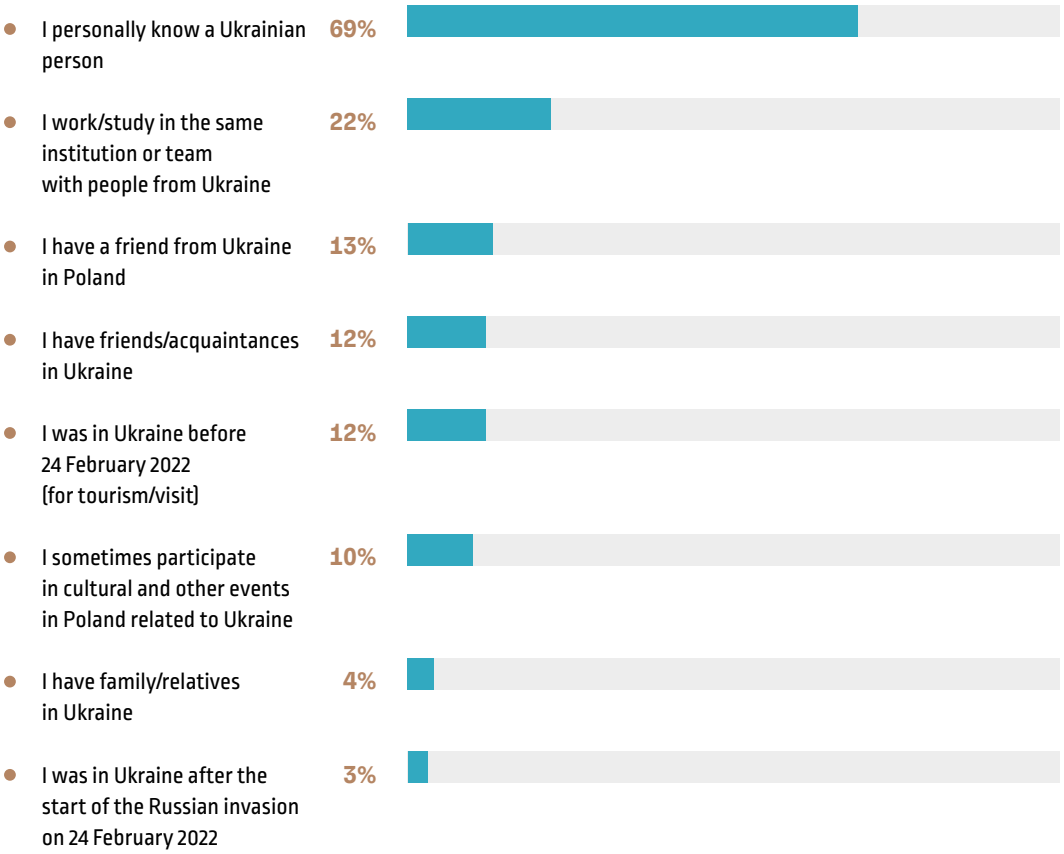
professional and social contacts are the second most common source of mutual acquaintance – far more significant than travel (currently limited), family ties, or participation in cultural events.

Few Poles have had the opportunity to visit Ukraine, especially since the start of the full-scale Russian aggression in 2022. As few as **3%** of respondents visited Ukraine during the war. Previously, travel was not very popular either – **12%** of respondents reported having done so. This clearly shows that travel to this country is not the main source of Poles' experiences or opinions about Ukraine.

Twelve per cent (**12%**) of respondents have friends or acquaintances in Ukraine, and **13%** have a friend from Ukraine living in Poland. One in ten respondents participates in cultural events related to Ukraine, which shows that interest in the neighbouring country's culture is growing although this interest is expressed by a smaller proportion of Polish society.

↓ FIGURE 3:

Personal experience of Ukraine and Ukrainians



The attitude of Poles toward Ukrainians living in Poland has been less positive when compared to what was declared before February 24, 2022. Currently, a shift toward negative opinions can be observed: the percentage of negative opinions has increased from 21% to 35% (+14 pp.), while the share of neutral opinions has decreased from 21% to 15% (–6 pp.). A positive attitude is still predominant although a decline from 43% to 39% (–4 pp.) could be observed. At the same time, the share of 'don't know/not sure' responses has dropped (from 15% to 10%).

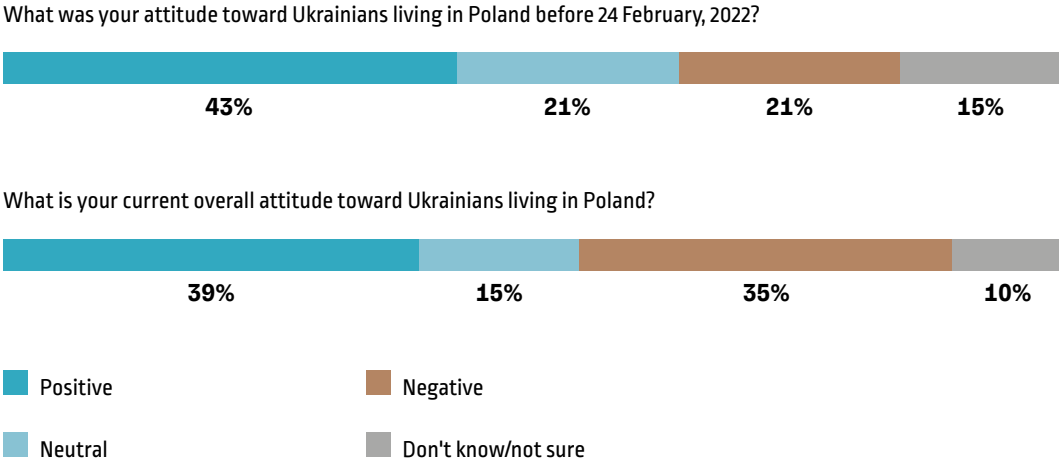
Positive attitudes are clearly determined by political preferences and level of education, and to a lesser extent by gender and age.

Currently, positive attitudes toward Ukrainians living in Poland are typical of supporters of the New Left [Nowa Lewica] (60%) and the Civic Coalition [Koalicja Obywatelska] (56%), people with higher education (49%), respondents aged 45–65 (45%), and men (45%).

The percentage of positive attitudes is the lowest among those who vote for Confederation [Konfederacja] (18%), people with primary/vocational education (30%), respondents aged 25–44 (32–33%), and women (33%).

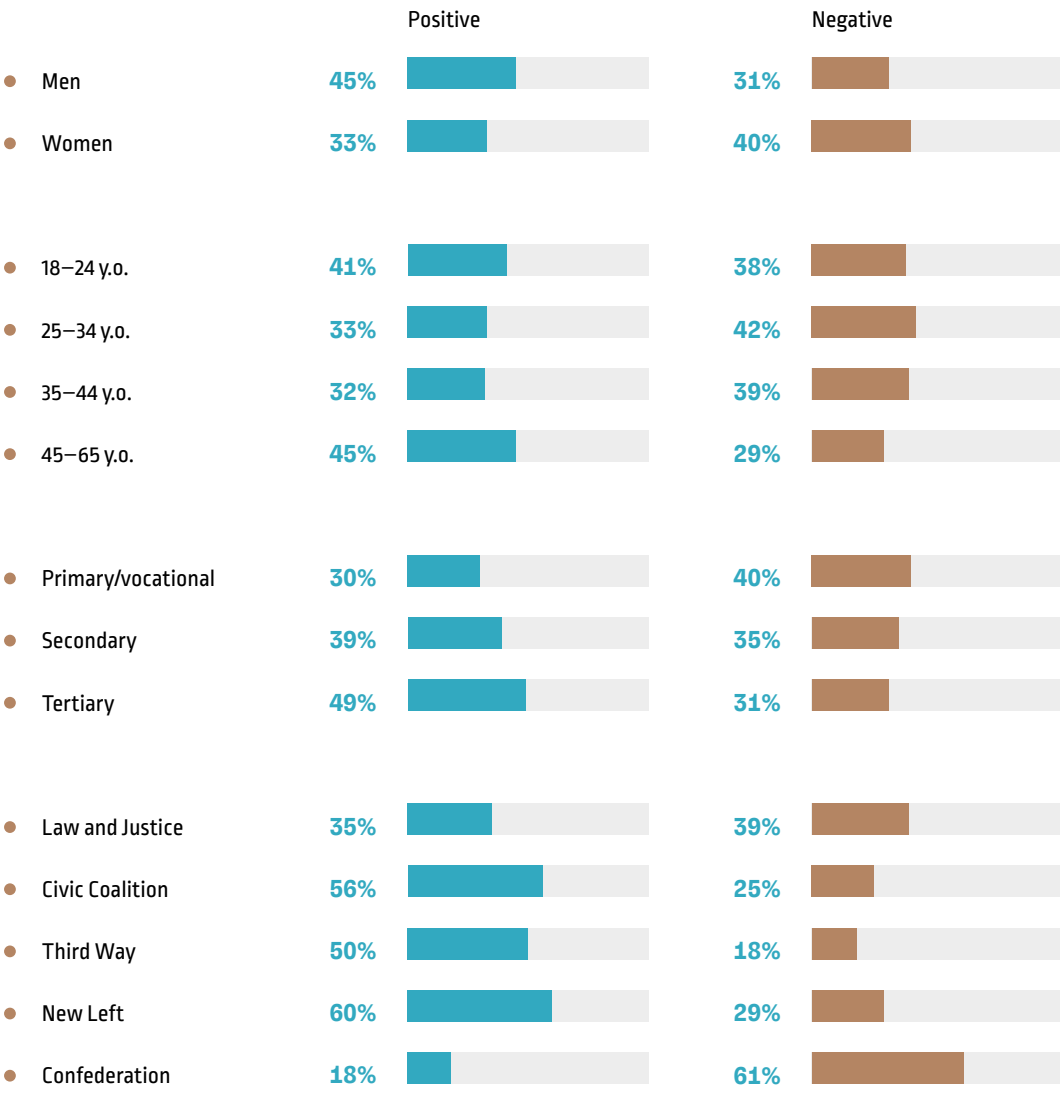
↓ FIGURE 4:

Attitude toward Ukrainians living in Poland



↓ FIGURE 5:

What is your current overall attitude toward Ukrainians living in Poland? Analysis across different social groups.



Unlike opinions about Ukrainians living in Poland, attitudes toward Ukrainians residing in their home country are more stable.

Before February 24, 2022, an overall positive attitude toward Ukrainians living in their home country prevailed (45%) in Poland, and it remains at a very similar level nowadays (44%, –1 pp.). The share of neutral opinions has decreased slightly (from 22% to 20%, –2 pp.). The most noticeable change is the increase in negative attitudes (from 15% to 20%, +5 pp.). At the same time, the number of 'don't know/not sure' responses has declined (from 18% to 15%, –3 pp.).

The highest percentage of positive attitudes toward Ukrainians living in Ukraine is found among Civic Coalition [KO] voters (61%), people with higher education (58%), respondents aged 45–65 (49%), and men (48%).

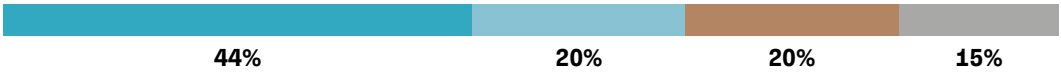
The lowest share of positive attitudes is declared by Confederation [Konfederacja] voters (27%), people with primary/vocational education (33%), respondents aged 25–44 (40%), and women (41%).

↓ FIGURE 6:

Attitude toward Ukrainians living in Ukraine

What was your attitude toward Ukrainians living in Ukraine before 24 February 2022?

What is your overall attitude toward Ukrainians living in Ukraine?



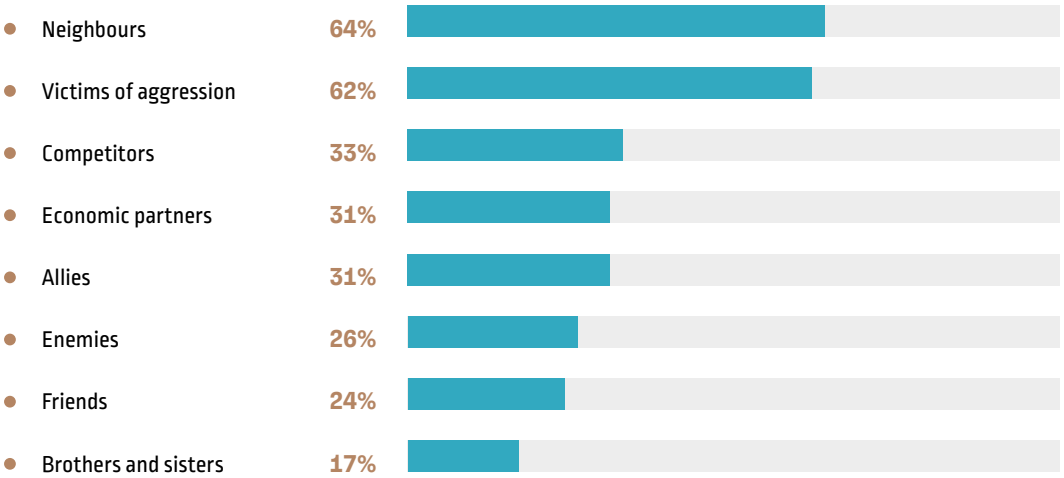
Positive
Negative
Neutral
Don't know/not sure

Today, Poles most often see Ukrainians as 'neighbours' (64%) and 'victims of aggression' (62%). Thus, notions of geographic proximity and compassion related to the ongoing war dominate. At the same time, a significant percentage of respondents put Ukrainians in the context of competition ('competitors' – 33%) and pragmatic cooperation ('economic partners' and 'allies' – 31% each). Fewer respondents see Ukrainians as 'friends' (24%) or 'brothers and sisters' (17%), while as many as 26% view them as 'enemies.'

As can be concluded from the findings on attitudes toward Ukrainians, the issue is complex: feelings of solidarity and compassion coexist with a sense of competition and tensions. A noticeable feeling of affinity and empathy does not yet widely translate into a deep sense of community ('brothers and sisters').

↓ FIGURE 7:

To what extent do the following notions describe your current attitude toward Ukrainians?



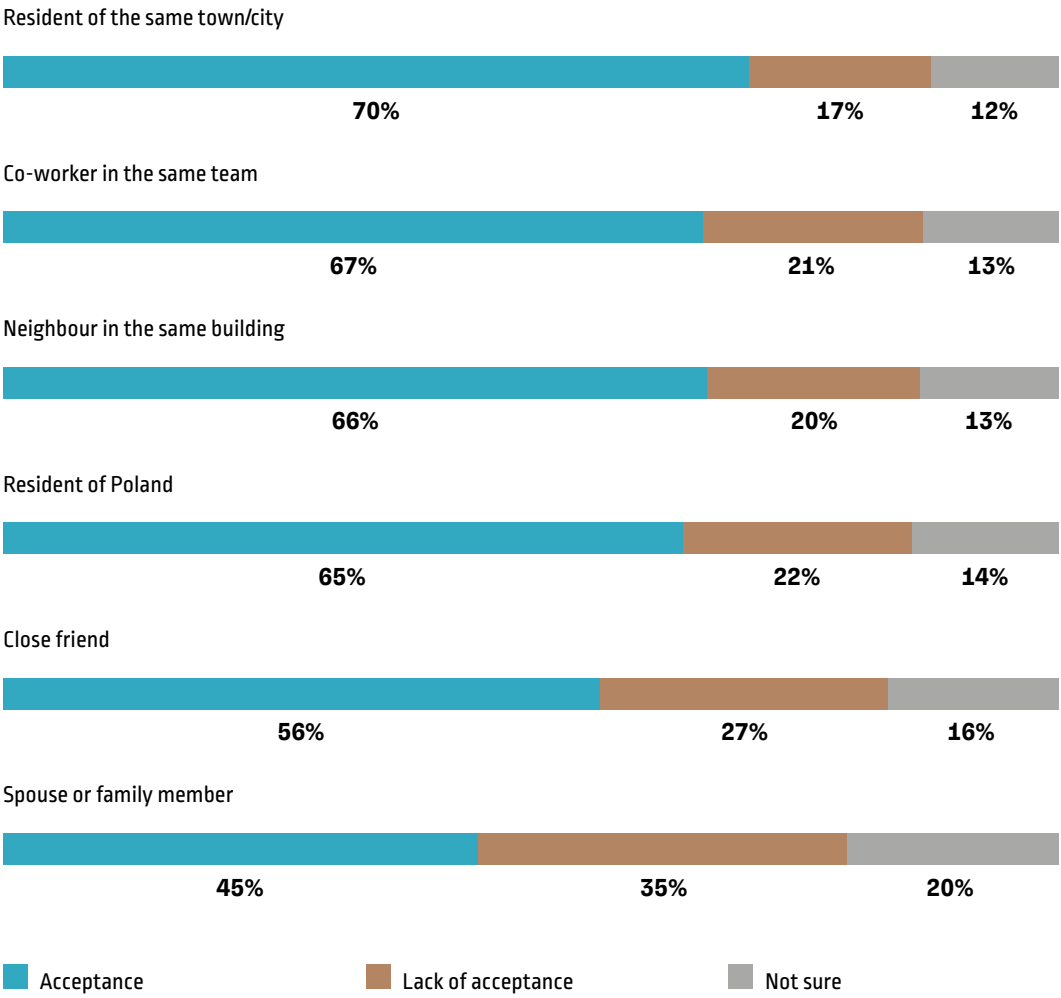
Social approval of Ukrainians is generally high, especially in the context of everyday coexistence and cooperation. The strongest social approval covers the following roles: living in the same town/city (70%), working in the same team (67%) and being a neighbour in the same building (66%). This indicates that most Poles have no issue with the close, regular presence of Ukrainians in their milieu.

Slightly lower, though still typical of the majority of respondents, is the acceptance of Ukrainians as residents of Poland (65%). There is less openness as regards more intimate and emotionally demanding relationships such as close friendships (56%) or marriages (45%).

Overall, the results suggest that Poles feel most comfortable with Ukrainians in neighbourly and professional roles, while acceptance declines as relationships become more intimate.

↓ FIGURE 8:

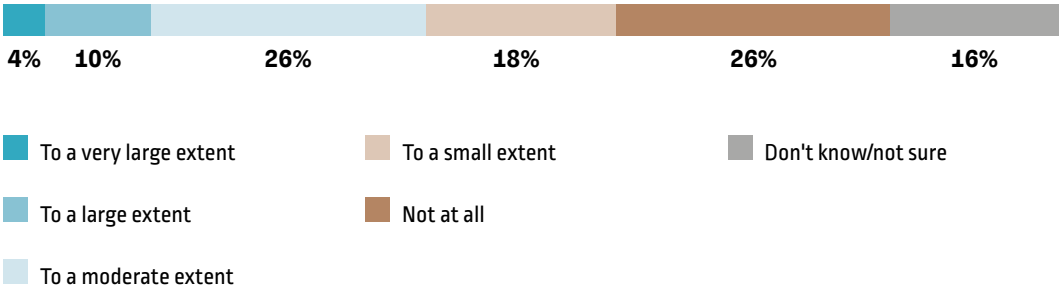
To what extent would you accept a Ukrainian as a:



The distribution of responses suggests that, in the event of the influx of a new wave of refugees, Poles' willingness to provide assistance would be limited. Specifically, **26%** indicate they would not help at all, and an additional **18%** report they would help only to a small extent, totalling **44%**. A moderate level of willingness to help is reported by **26%** of respondents, indicating readiness to help, albeit to a limited extent. High willingness (to a large or very large extent) is expressed by **14%** of respondents. Additionally, **16%** selected a 'don't know/not sure' response which indicates potential uncertainty regarding personal resources and external constraints. Overall, these findings point to some enthusiasm, but the mass mobilisation observed in 2022 cannot be expected. This should be taken into account by public institutions and NGOs when planning their activities.

↓ FIGURE 9:

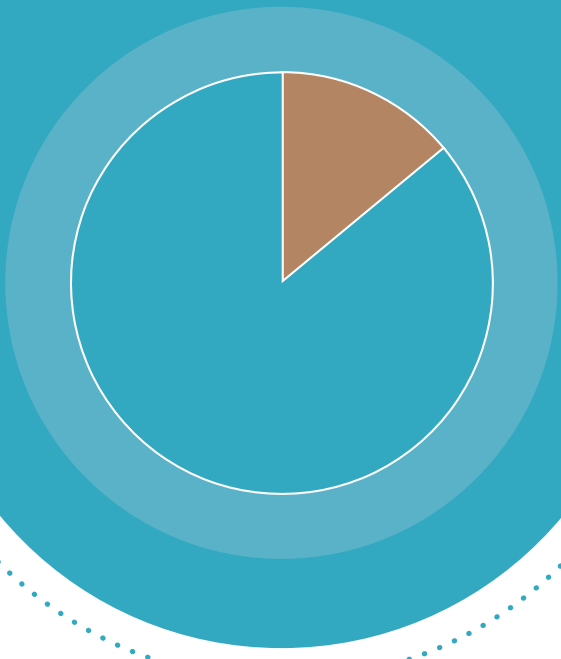
Willingness to help Ukrainians in the event of a new wave of refugees



Willingness to help Ukrainians in the event of a new wave of refugees

To a large/very large extent

14%



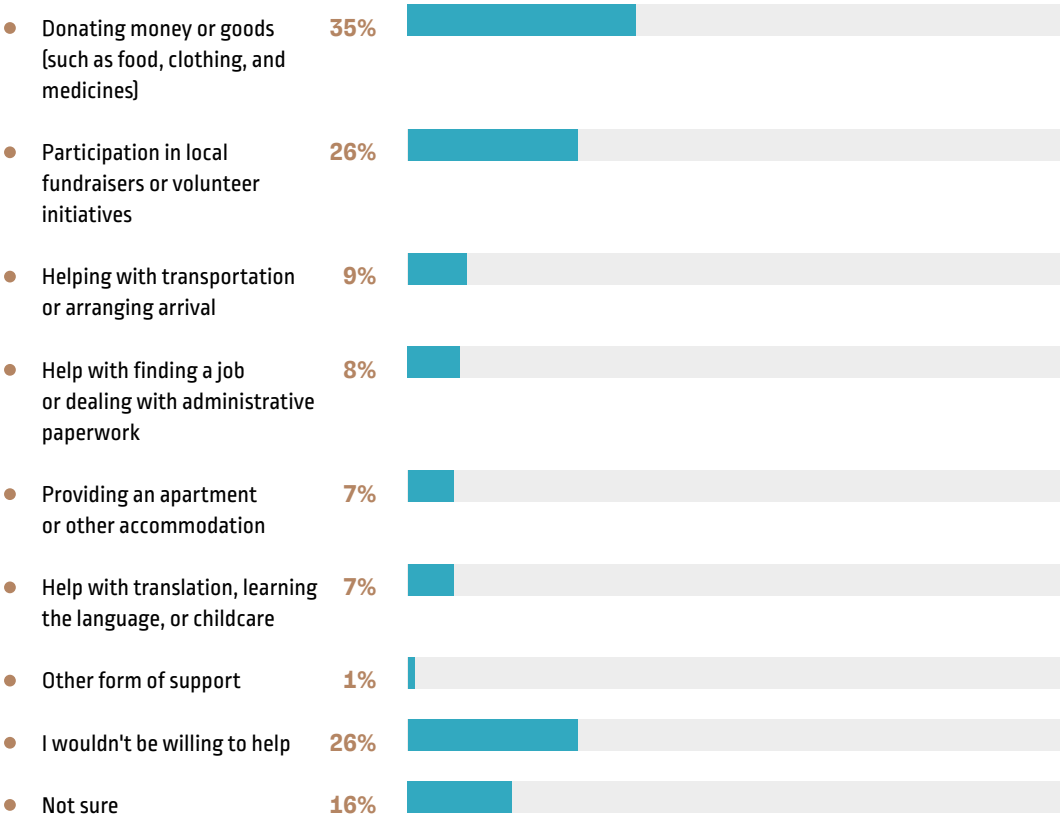
The distribution of responses indicates that willingness to help is mainly limited to low-cost and easily available forms of support. The most frequently declared form is 'donating money or goods' (35%). The second most popular form of support is 'participation in local fundraisers or volunteer initiatives' (26%), which suggests openness to collective efforts, but usually in a limited, occasional form.

Forms requiring more time, responsibility, and direct contact are significantly less popular: 'helping with transportation or arranging arrival' is declared by 9%, 'help with finding a job or dealing with administrative paperwork' – by 8%, 'providing accommodation' – by 7% and 'help with learning the language, or childcare' – also 7% (other forms of support: 1%). At the same time, a notable share of respondents indicate 'no willingness to help' (26%) or uncertainty ('not sure' – 16%).

In practice, this means that in the event of the influx of a new wave of refugees, donating money or goods and local initiatives would be the easiest to organise on a large scale, whereas more demanding forms of assistance (housing, formalities, transportation or language) would require stronger involvement of public institutions and specialised aid organisations.

↓ FIGURE 10:

In what way would you be willing to help?

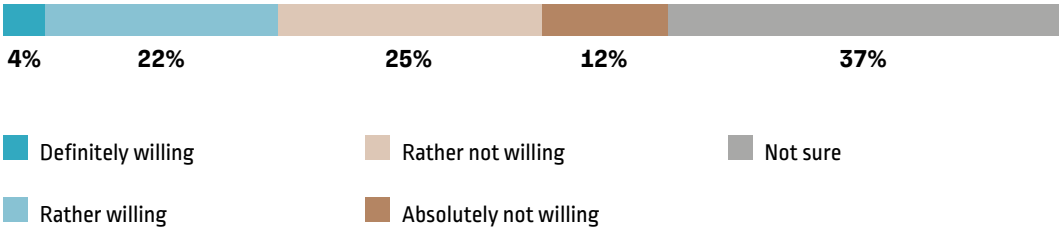


It is difficult to assess Polish society's willingness to provide assistance mainly because the largest group of respondents is 'not sure' (37%). Among those who have an established opinion, negative opinions prevail. A lack of willingness to help is indicated by a total of 37% of respondents (12% 'definitely not' and 25% 'rather not'), while willingness to help is declared by 26% (22% 'rather willing' and 4% 'definitely willing').

Thus, the picture of social readiness to help is ambiguous. However, if we set aside the undecided respondents, a limited willingness to provide support transpires, while definitive positive opinions remain marginal.

↓ FIGURE 11:

In your opinion, to what extent would Polish society be willing to help Ukrainians in the event of another wave of refugees?

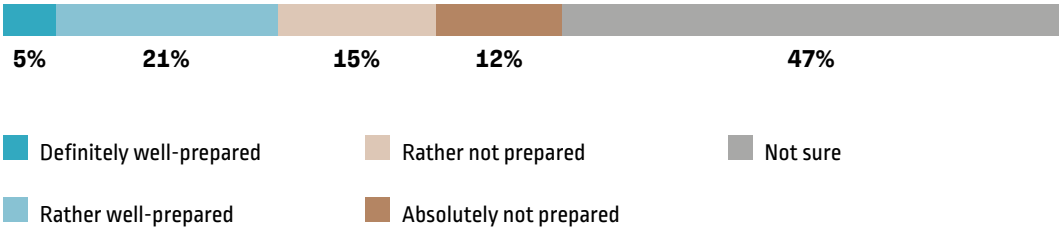


Almost half of respondents (47%) answered 'not sure' while assessing preparedness of the public sector (government, local authorities, and other institutions) to provide assistance in the event of another wave of refugees. This indicates a lack of certainty or experience to commit to a view on the subject.

Among respondents who have formed an opinion, scepticism rather than optimism prevails: 27% believe that the state would not be prepared (12% 'absolutely not,' and 15% – 'rather not'). Positive opinions are somewhat less common but still significant: 26% indicate that the state would be ready (21% 'rather ready,' and 5% – 'definitely ready') to provide assistance. Overall, the findings present an ambiguous picture, with a clear dominance of uncertainty and a slight prevalence of negative opinions over affirmative answers among those who have an opinion.

↓ FIGURE 12:

In your opinion, to what extent would the Polish state (government, local authorities, public institutions) be prepared and ready to provide effective assistance in the event of a new wave of refugees from Ukraine?



Focus group interviews suggest that Polish hospitality has not faded but evolved. What can be observed is a shift from an impulsive, emotionally driven response to more organised forms of assistance grounded in rational calculation. In 2022, helping was a manifestation of national pride. Today, it is more often a source of social tensions.

Interviews indicate that Polish society is still aware of its moral obligation to provide assistance, yet shows signs of fatigue. While the willingness to support Ukrainians in the event of a new wave of refugees persists, assistance is likely to take a more nuanced, selective, and less spontaneous form.

> *"I would help again. But I would like to know that they are really people in need, and not those for whom living in Poland is simply more convenient."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"I'm tired of it. I feel that the issue of Ukrainians is all over the place and it's a never-ending story. It affects the way we look at them."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

In the event of a new wave of refugees, Poles would be far less spontaneous. Assistance would no longer be a reflex but rather a calculated decision taken depending on the circumstances, assessment of the situation and the behaviour of the Ukrainians themselves.

> *"At the beginning of the war there was compassion; now it would be calculation: can we afford it, is it worth it, will they take advantage?"*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

Many respondents indicate that 'help has its limits' and that it should be organised by the state and not citizens.

4

Information sources

The image of Ukraine and Ukrainians as seen by Poles is shaped by a range of sources including personal experiences and direct contact, media representations, knowledge, historical memory and pre-war perceptions. Statements by focus group participants in Rzeszów, Lublin, Łowicz and Wrocław indicate that information derived from these sources is not only diverse but often contradictory. Respondents tend to combine firsthand experiences of providing assistance with emotions, stereotypes and narratives drawn from the media and historical accounts.

For many respondents, personal contact – whether in their workplace, at university or in the neighbourhood – is the most credible source of knowledge about Ukrainians. In Rzeszów, Lublin, and Lower Silesia, the respondents emphasised that their Ukrainian acquaintances 'are people just like us.'

> *"I've met many Ukrainians, on different occasions. And really – there are good Ukrainians and bad Ukrainians, just like there are good Germans and bad Germans. There aren't that many differences between us."*
> [Rzeszów]

Similar views were expressed by respondents in other cities. They emphasised that everyday cooperation helped debunk stereotypes.

> *"I work with Ukrainians and I can see that they're hard-working. Not all of them, of course, but the majority of them are hard grafters. It's a different picture from the one shown by the media."*
> [Lublin, older group]

At the same time, some respondents mentioned that personal contacts did not always result in good relations. For some of them – especially those residing in smaller towns – everyday experiences of having Ukrainian neighbours became a source of tensions.

Both traditional and social media constitute the second most important source of knowledge about Ukraine. The respondents noted that media coverage was often 'emotionally loaded' and had a tendency to promote polarised viewpoints.

> *'On the internet, you can see how the issue of Polish-Ukrainian relations is being stirred up. Online hate is spreading, and this shapes our image of Ukraine."*
> [Rzeszów]

Many respondents admitted that they had learned about the tragedy of the war thanks to media outlets. However, nowadays they take media coverage with a grain of salt.

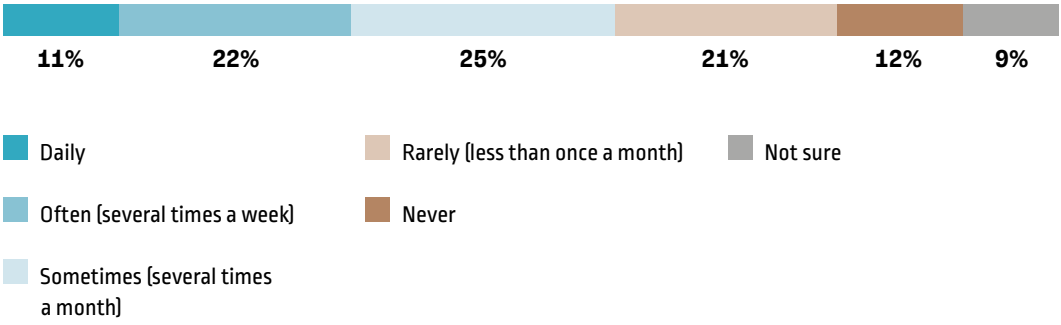
> *'On TV it looks like a war of heroes. On the Internet, on the other hand, everyone has something negative to say. So then, who can be trusted?"*
> [Lublin, younger group]

Social media, particularly TikTok and Facebook, were cited as platforms where 'online hate has been spreading' and 'emotions obscure the facts.' Rather than clarifying the situation, these platforms tend to reinforce feelings of animosity or fatigue regarding the topic.

According to quantitative findings, respondents show moderate interest in information about Ukraine. As few as **11%** follow the news about it daily while **22%** check it several times a week. The largest group (**25%**) follow such information 'occasionally,' that is several times a month. Meanwhile, **21%** do so rarely, and **12%** not at all. These findings indicate a gradual decline in the once-strong interest in the topic that was characteristic of the period immediately following the outbreak of the war.

↓ FIGURE 13:

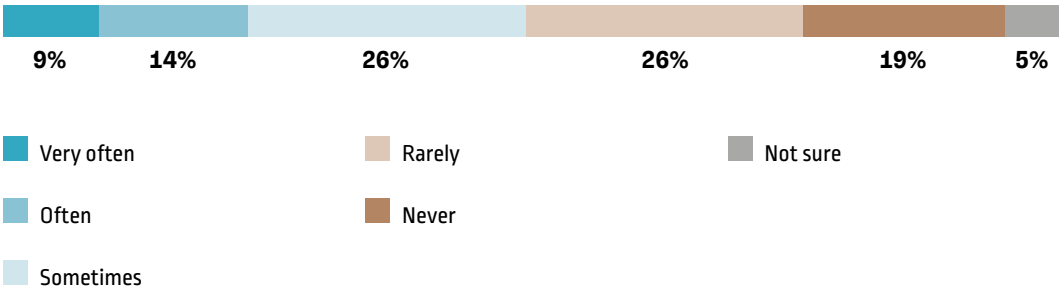
Frequency of following information about Ukraine



Personal encounters with Ukrainians are not a frequent source of information on Ukrainian issues among Poles. As few as **9%** have direct interactions with Ukrainians very often and **14%** – often. The most numerous groups comprise respondents who admit they have face-to-face contacts with Ukrainians 'sometimes' or 'rarely' (**26%** each). Nineteen per cent (**19%**) have no personal encounters with Ukrainians.

↓ FIGURE 14:

Frequency of interactions with Ukrainians living in Poland

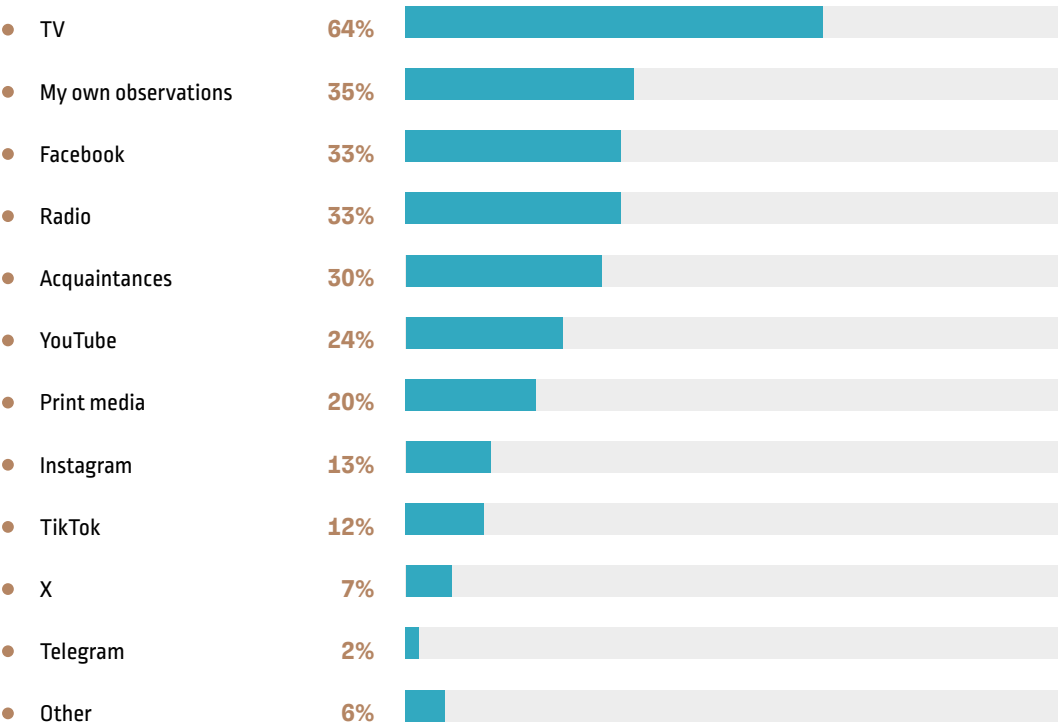


The primary source of information about Ukraine and Ukrainians is again television, indicated by 64% of respondents, which demonstrates that traditional media outlets are still playing an important role in shaping public opinion on this topic. Personal observations (35%) are the second most popular source of information, followed closely by Facebook (33%) and radio (33%). Information passed on by acquaintances also plays a significant role (30%).

Among social media and platforms other than Facebook, YouTube stands out (24%), while Instagram (13%) and TikTok (12%) have a noticeably smaller reach, and X remains niche (7%). The print media (20%) have a strong, though secondary, presence compared to television. Telegram (2%) is at the bottom of the ranking, which indicates that respondents rarely turn to sources associated with the Ukrainian information ecosystem.

↓ FIGURE 15:

Where do you get information about Ukraine and Ukrainians?

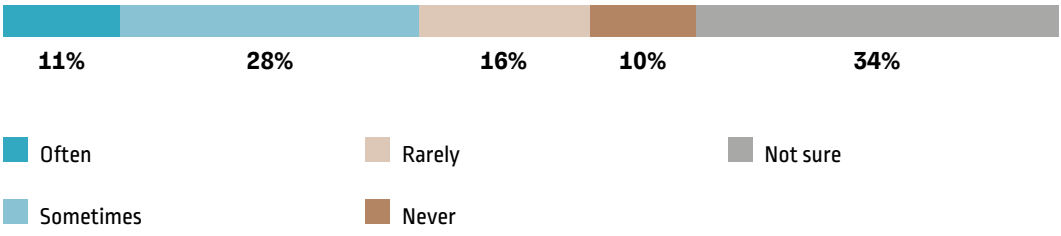


Respondents declare that encountering disinformation or content about Ukraine that raises doubts is a relatively common experience. A total of **39%** of respondents admit they have come across such information about Ukraine (**28%** – 'sometimes,' **11%** – 'often'), while another **16%** report that this happens rarely. At the same time, only **10%** declare that they have never encountered information that raised doubts.

A key finding, however, is the high proportion of individuals who are unable to assess the scale of the phenomenon – **34%** selected the response 'not sure.' This may suggest that a significant proportion of respondents are either unable to identify unreliable content or do not follow information about Ukraine closely enough to assess its credibility. Overall, the distribution suggests that the problem of inaccurate information is noticeable. What is equally important is the lack of sufficient competence to assess the credibility of information.

↓ FIGURE 16:

In the past month, have any pieces of information about Ukraine raised doubts regarding their reliability and accuracy (for example, sensational headlines or unverified reports in messaging apps)?



In addition, the topic of disinformation emerged unprompted in qualitative research, often as an expression of distrust in the media and concerns over information overload. Respondents indicated that:

- the internet and social media are the main channels for spreading unreliable information;
- clickbait and emotionally-loaded headlines amplify fear and polarisation;
- Russian sources and propaganda are perceived as a real threat;
- conflicting messages across media create a sense of chaos and cognitive fatigue.

Poles are aware of the existence of disinformation and are learning how to verify information. At the same time they feel confused and tired of it.

5

Politics

Between December 2024 and November 2025, the hierarchy of priorities in state policy toward Ukraine, as perceived by respondents, remained largely unchanged, although the emphasis has shifted somewhat. Historical issues – especially the burial of the victims of the Volhynia Massacre – continue to rank as the top priority, although the emotional intensity of expectations in this regard has slightly diminished.

The findings indicate a gradual shift in major expectations towards Poland's policy on Ukraine: the importance of tasks directly related to countering Russian aggression is declining, while priorities with a focus on normalisation of relations in the spheres of culture, economy, and – to a limited extent – labour migration remain relatively stable (and in some cases are on the rise). Thus, the overall picture suggests a gradual transition from the logic of solidarity in an emergency situation to one of long-term relations, in which – alongside security – issues of historical memory, mutual understanding and everyday cooperation come to the fore.

In late 2025, according to respondents, the most important task for Polish policymakers in relations with Ukraine was ensuring that all victims of the Volhynia Massacre were buried. After a surge in the importance of this demand between February and December 2024 (from 7.1 to 7.6), November 2025 saw a decline to 7.0. Still, the issue remains a clear priority.

The next most important group of priorities involves high-ranking objectives related to culture, economy and commemorative practices. Among these, the only objective that has shown a consistent increase in importance is the promotion of Polish culture and language (6.1 ⇢ 6.2 ⇢ 6.3). By contrast, the expectation that the Ukrainian state should cease commemorating individuals or formations responsible for past crimes against Poles has gradually declined in significance (6.5 ⇢ 6.4 ⇢ 6.2). A similar trend is observed in relation to facilitating the operation of Polish businesses in Ukraine, which has also seen a slight decrease (6.5 ⇢ 6.3 ⇢ 6.2). Despite these shifts, all of these priorities remain relatively high on the agenda.

The findings show a clear decline in the importance of direct war-related support, specifically assistance to Ukraine in countering Russian aggression. The support for this priority decreased from 6.5 (February 2024) to 6.0 (December 2024) and further to 5.6 (November 2025). While it remains an important task, it no longer serves as a central reference point in public perception. Assistance related to reconstruction and reforms has remained relatively stable, though at a lower level compared to most other priorities (6.0 ⇢ 5.7 ⇢ 5.7).

The lowest-rated task in the entire set is to encourage labour migration from Ukraine to Poland. After a drop in December 2024 (4.0), November 2025 shows a rebound to 4.3 (compared to 4.2 in February 2024). This indicates a moderate increase in willingness to accept this approach. Still, there is no change in the ranking: it is rated the lowest by respondents.

The lowest-rated task in the entire set is to encourage labour migration from Ukraine to Poland. After a drop in December 2024 (4.0), November 2025 shows a rebound to 4.3 (compared to 4.2 in February 2024). This indicates a moderate increase in willingness to accept this approach. Still, there is no change in the ranking: it is rated the lowest by respondents.

↓ FIGURE 17:

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

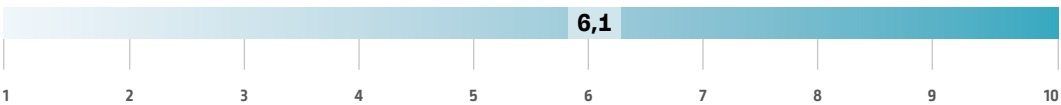
February 2024

December 2024

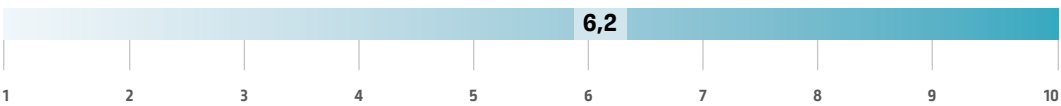
November 2025

- Popularise Polish culture and language among Ukrainians

February 2024



December 2024



November 2025

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

February 2024

December 2024

November 2025

- Facilitate the operation of Polish businesses in Ukraine

February 2024

December 2024

November 2025

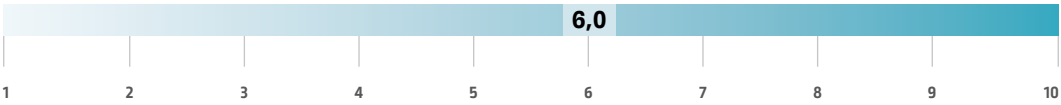
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Irrelevant or not necessary at all

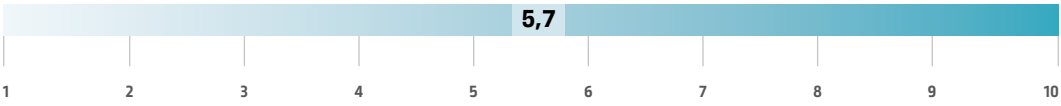
An absolute priority

- Assist Ukraine in reconstruction and reforms

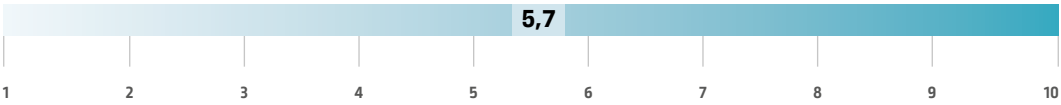
February 2024



December 2024



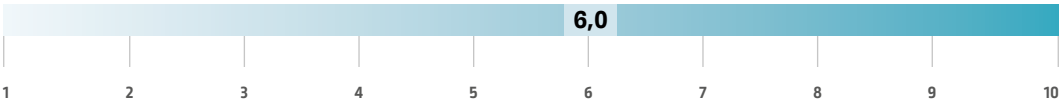
November 2025



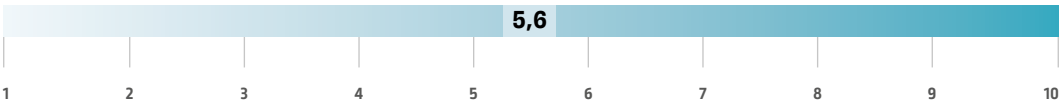
- Assist Ukraine in countering Russian aggression

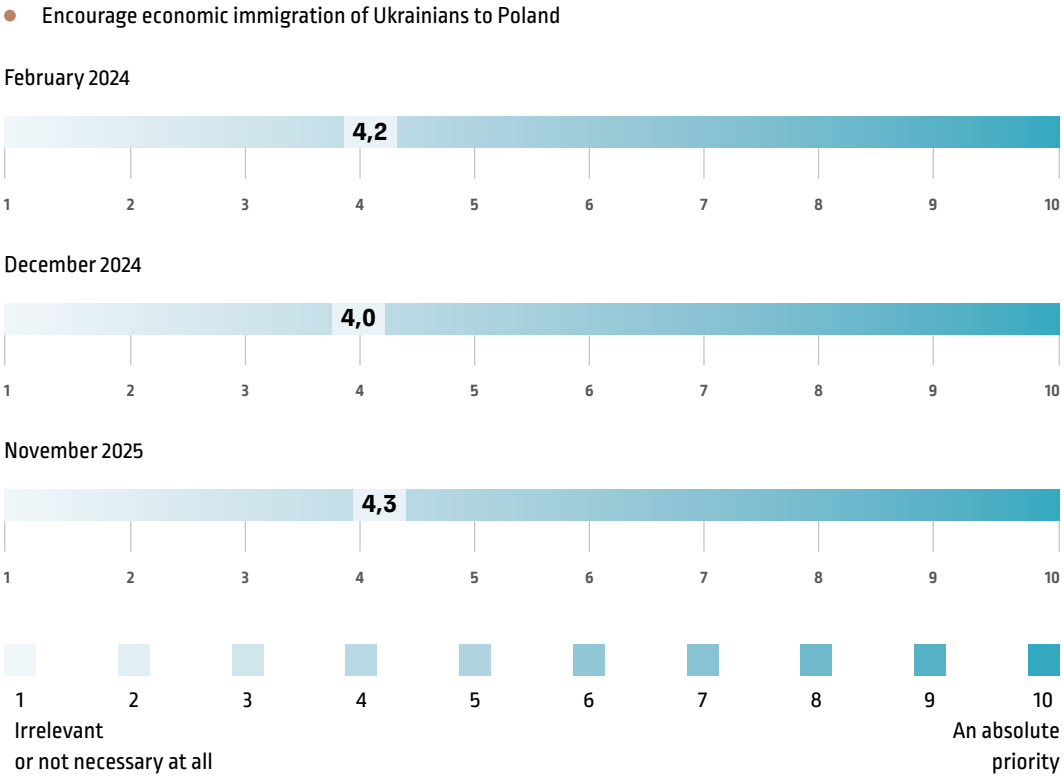
February 2024

December 2024



November 2025





The war in Ukraine has significantly elevated the salience of foreign policy among the Polish public. Focus group participants consistently identified Polish-Ukrainian relations as a central issue in domestic political discourse. However, their expectations of political actors extend beyond mere declarations of solidarity.

Respondents articulate expectations in a precise, emotional and sometimes highly critical way. In their view, Polish politicians should, above all, be responsible, realistic and capable of acting across party lines.

Poles expect foreign policy to be based on analysis and consistency rather than emotion or public relations. A lack of coherence is perceived as a sign of weakness – both domestically and internationally. Respondents expect fairness: providing support for those in need while avoiding excessive privileges or systemic chaos. Exhumations, remembrance of the Volhynia Massacre and historical dialogue are seen as extremely important. Respondents also emphasise the importance of a strong military, cooperation with NATO and an understanding that regional security depends on a resilient and supported Ukraine.

Above all, Polish politicians are expected to adopt a pragmatic approach and prioritise the national interest. Respondents do not want relations with Ukraine to be used as a tool of partisan struggle.

> *"If you say something, if you do something, you're doing it for your country."*
> [Lublin, older group]

Many respondents emphasise that helping Ukraine cannot come at the cost of depleting Poland's strategic resources. This expectation reflects both concern and war fatigue.

> *"It is unacceptable that our military equipment is depleted, and we're left with nothing."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

Thus, respondents express support for assisting Ukraine but stress that it should be done in a responsible way and grounded in a careful assessment of its implications for Poland.

A recurring theme is the view that Polish politicians are too focused on domestic rivalries to conduct an effective policy toward Ukraine.

> *"It's a constant struggle for power between political factions."*
> [Lublin, older group]

This approach is seen as irresponsible in the context of the ongoing war, with respondents calling for a coherent message and foreign policy as well as cooperation across party lines.

> *"In all this European politics, we are simply irrelevant."*
> [Wrocław, older group]

Respondents do not oppose providing assistance to Ukraine but they emphasise the need for transparency. They expect clear information on the scale and cost of aid, its allocation, its effectiveness and the security guarantees in place for Poland. Respondents are also eager to share their views regarding the inflow of refugees and migrants from Ukraine, highlighting concerns about the chaos and granting of excessive privileges.

> *"I can agree with that... They received help although nothing was destroyed there."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

> *"I guess they should cut back on these social benefits."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

This reflects not hostility toward Ukrainians, but a belief that the state should apply clear rules and ensure equal treatment. Many Poles believe that politicians have failed to establish an effective migration policy, a shortcoming exposed by the war.

According to respondents, history – and, above all, the history of the Volhynia Massacre – cannot be downplayed. Many interviewees state that relations with Ukraine will be full of tensions as long as Poland is unable to clearly address the issues of exhumations and remembrance of the victims. The expectation is that politicians should defend historical truth, but in a constructive, non-confrontational manner.

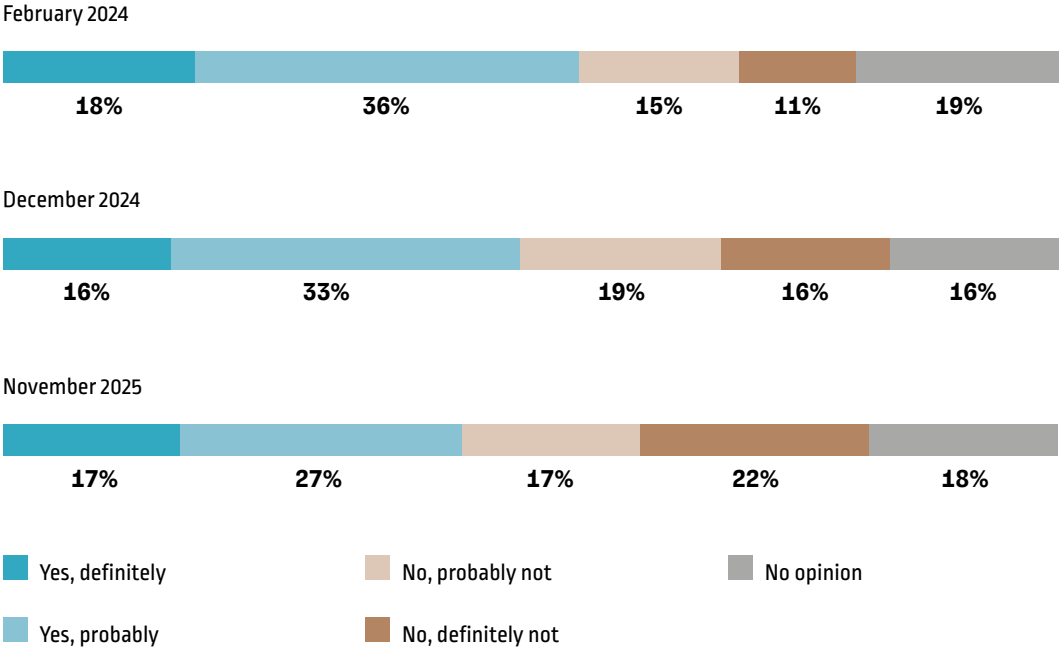
The war in Ukraine sparked immense fear, and respondents want politicians to address and alleviate these concerns rather than ignore or exacerbate them. In practical terms, this entails strengthening the army, deepening cooperation with NATO and recognising the strategic dimension of support for Ukraine.

The November 2025 findings reveal changes in Poles' opinions regarding the continuation of military support for Ukraine. Positive responses ('yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably') totalled **44%**, indicating a decrease of 5 percentage points compared to December 2024, when the figure stood at **49%**.

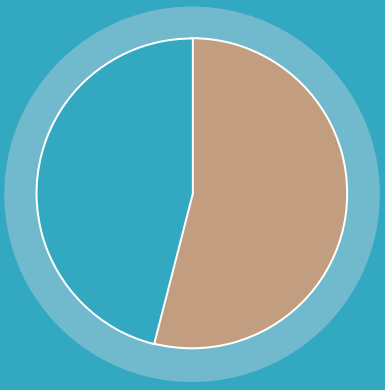
At the same time, there has been a noticeable increase in opposition to continued military support of Ukraine – in November 2025, **39%** of respondents were against it ('no, probably not' – **17%** and 'no, definitely not' – **22%**), compared to **35%** in December 2024 **19%** ('no, probably not' and **16%** 'no, definitely not'). This trend may be associated with growing war fatigue in society as well as economic challenges that impact public priorities.

↓ FIGURE 18:

Poland's continued military support of Ukraine



Poland's continued military support of Ukraine:

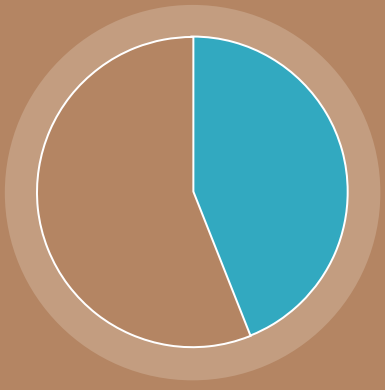


February 2024

Yes, definitely/yes, probably

54%

Poland's continued military support of Ukraine:



November 2025

Yes, definitely/yes, probably

44%

Poles are becoming increasingly cautious in their assessments of the scale of assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees. Following a peak of criticism in 2024, public sentiment has calmed down.

The debate over whether Poland is helping Ukraine 'too much,' 'just right,' or 'too little' remains one of the most emotionally loaded topics in public discourse. The findings from subsequent waves of the study show clear shifts in opinion.

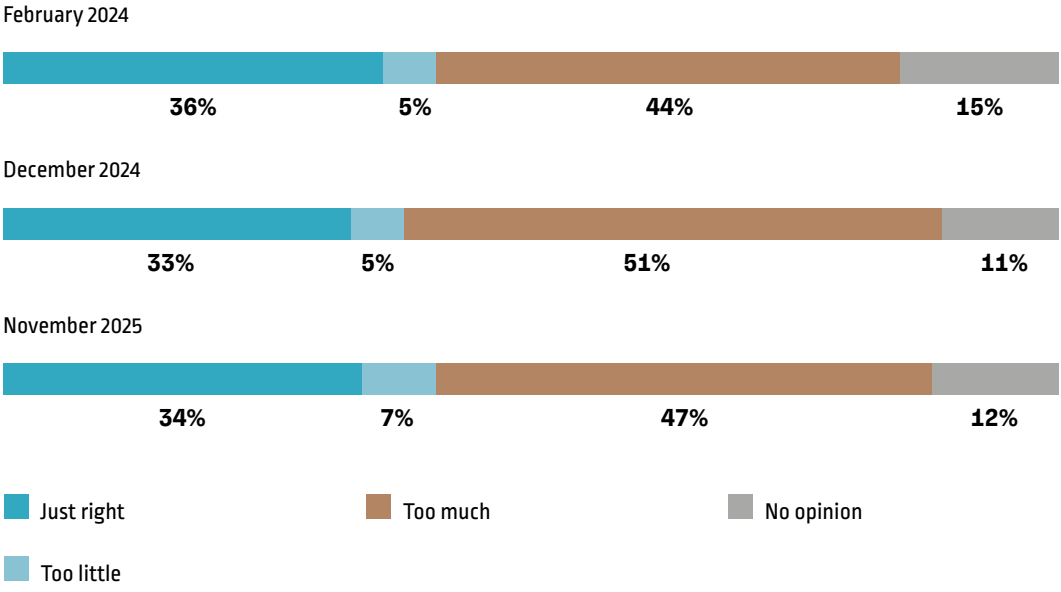
In December 2024, the share of respondents who believed that assistance for Ukrainian refugees was excessive reached a peak of **51%**, marking the highest level of public criticism on this issue. The percentage was significantly higher than the **44%** recorded in February 2024. However, by November 2025, this figure had declined to **47%**, suggesting an overall easing of negative sentiment.

At the same time, the shares of responses 'just right' and 'too little' remained relatively stable. Those who viewed the level of aid as adequate accounted for **33%** in December 2024 and **34%** in November 2025. Meanwhile, the proportion indicating that assistance was insufficient increased slightly – from **5%** to **7%** – which may suggest a growing recognition among some respondents of the need to continue assisting refugees despite fatigue with the issue.

The proportion of undecided respondents remained insignificant, indicating that opinions on this issue are well established.

↓ FIGURE 19:

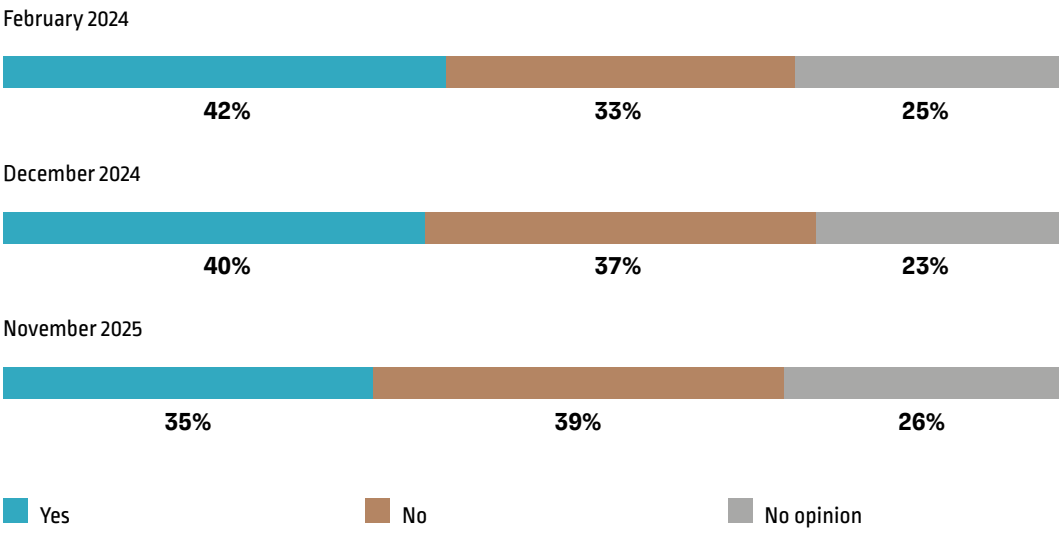
In your opinion, taking into account Poland's capabilities , is the Polish state helping Ukrainian refugees:



The findings from November 2025 confirm a gradual decline in support for continued assistance to refugees from Ukraine. When asked whether Poland should continue to provide support, **35%** of respondents answered 'yes' in November 2025. This percentage is smaller than a year earlier, in December 2024 (**40%**), and in February 2024 (**42%**). At the same time, the share of 'no' responses is on the rise. In December 2024, **37%** of respondents expressed discontent, compared to **39%** in November 2025. This means that opponents of continued assistance now slightly outnumber its supporters (**39%** versus **35%**), which indicates a shift in public sentiment toward greater scepticism. The proportion of undecided respondents remains substantial: **26%** selected 'no opinion' (compared to **23%** in December 2024 and **25%** in February 2024). This distribution suggests that public opinion is not only divided, but also largely amorphous or unstable, which should be taken into account when designing communication strategies and institutional initiatives aimed at providing support.

↓ FIGURE 20:

Continued assistance to refugees from Ukraine



In the early months of the war, assistance to Ukraine was spontaneous, widespread and often genuinely enthusiastic. However, after years of conflict, the situation has become more complex. The interviews reveal that Polish public opinion is evolving. Compassion and the belief that Ukrainians should receive help still prevail but fatigue, a sense of injustice and expectations of transparent rules resurface. Respondents put it bluntly: Poles want to help, but they do not want to be taken advantage of. Poles want Ukraine to be secure but not at the expense of Poles' own stability; they need a sense of community without chaos and without privileges that provoke resentment.

The statements show that the initial reaction to the outbreak of the war was emotional, accompanied by an immediate willingness to help:

> *"When the war broke out, compassion was overwhelming. Each of us helped as much as we could."*
> [Rzeszów]

Many respondents recall the first months of the war: hosting families, helping children, spontaneous fundraising and grassroots initiatives. This wave of mobilisation had a strong emotional undertone and, as some respondents recall, fostered a powerful sense of community, unity and pride. Today, however, there is a noticeable change in the tone of the accounts – there is a growing sense of fatigue, accompanied by more pragmatic, cost-benefit considerations.

> *"I work hard, and they arrive and receive benefits. Some come only to collect childcare benefits [known in Poland as 800+]."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

An increasing number of respondents argue that assistance offered by both government and society has, over time, become too extensive, insufficiently regulated and prone to misuse. In this context, they highlight increasing economic strain and perceived inequalities in access to benefits, which emerge as key sources of frustration. An important distinction is drawn between those genuinely fleeing the war and those who, in their view, 'take advantage of the system.' This distinction reflects how aid is perceived: it is not about rejecting assistance as such but about it being more targeted, based on clear criteria and offered to those who are truly in need.

During focus group interviews, two contrasting narratives emerged.

A positive narrative:

> *"They are hardworking and want to live a decent life."*
> [Łowicz, older group]
>
> *"I have neighbours who work decently, who want to live and work here."*
> [Łowicz, older group]
>
> *"They are normal families; they want to live here, to raise children here."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

A negative narrative:

> *"Sharp practice and shying away from work."*
> [Rzeszów]
>
> *"They come only to collect social benefits and do not work."*
> [Łowicz, older group]
>
> *"They don't learn the language, they don't integrate."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

These two contradictory narratives show that individual experiences largely shape the way the legitimacy of continued support is perceived.

> *"We need to finally draw conclusions."*
> [Wrocław, older group]
>
> *"It is unacceptable that our military equipment is depleted, and we're left with nothing."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

Respondents clearly expect transparency: how long the assistance is to last, what its costs are, what are the costs and benefits for Poland, and how it translates into the security of the country and the region? When such information is lacking or communication fails, it fosters a growing sense of strain, uncertainty, and loss of control.

Some respondents express concerns that far-reaching support – and especially military aid – may increase the risk of escalation by provoking Russia, may deplete Poland's resources or draw the country into the conflict. As a result, assistance is increasingly viewed not as a self-evident necessity, but as a policy tool which requires well-defined limits, justification and thorough risk assessment.

> *"There are no sentiments in geopolitics."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *"We need to think about our own security."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

These concerns are not so much an argument against providing assistance as they are an indication that Poles expect rational, carefully planned decisions rather than emotional ones.

The statements show that the majority of Poles still believe Ukraine should be supported, especially in humanitarian and military terms, but they call for oversight, rules, transparency, limits and a more realistic approach.

> *"Help – yes, I agree. But wisely. Not everything at once, not everything for free."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

Poles are still in favour of continued assistance but increasingly expect it to meet specific conditions: oversight over spending, transparent rules and well-defined objectives. When there is an impression that Ukrainians receive more support than Poles in comparable situations, it fuels a growing sense of injustice and frustration.

Personal experience also plays an important role. Personal encounters with Ukrainians who are perceived as hardworking and self-reliant translate into higher willingness to offer continued assistance, whereas contacts with individuals seen as having a sense of entitlement or misusing the system have the opposite effect. Thus, it is believed that assistance should be justified from the point of view of Poland's interests and communicated clearly in order to reduce uncertainty and discourage negative sentiments.

The findings from late 2025 confirm that there is no consensus as to the way the state should approach refugees and migrants from Ukraine. Three main tactics can be identified. It is noteworthy that the share of those who haven't made up their mind is consistently high.

In December 2024, the distribution of responses was as follows: **29%** of respondents believed that the state should support Ukrainians in preserving their language and identity. A nearly identical share (**30%**) preferred a 'no action' approach, that is neither promoting Polonisation nor strengthening Ukrainian identity. Meanwhile, **20%** supported an active policy of close integration/Polonisation, involving closer ties with Polish society and adoption of the Polish language as their own. A further **22%** indicated they were 'not sure'.

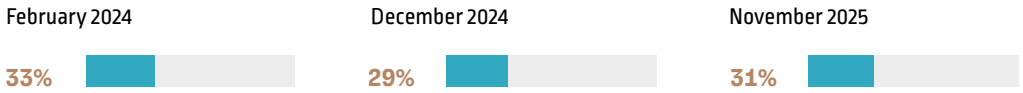
In November 2025, the overall picture was similar, although several shifts were visible. The view that 'Poland does not have to be inhabited by Poles only,' the approach in favour of the preservation of Ukrainian language and cultural identity, increased from **29%** to **31%**. At the same time, the share of supporters of non-intervention declined from **30%** to **27%**, suggesting a growing expectation that the state should adopt a more targeted policy, rather than 'leave it as it is.' Support for active integration/Polonisation remained stable at **20%**. The proportion of those who were 'not sure' was consistently **22%** across all three waves of the study.

The key finding is that these three approaches do not divide society evenly. In 2025, the first two segments were comparable in size (**31%** and **27%**), but the third one was noticeably smaller (**20%**). Besides, there was a large group of undecided respondents (**22%**). The most accurate conclusion is therefore that, in 2025, the earlier pluralism of attitudes persists. In addition, there is a slight predominance of respondents in favour of measures to preserve Ukrainian identity, alongside a declining share of the non-interventionist group. Meanwhile, the group advocating integration/Polonisation is small but stable.

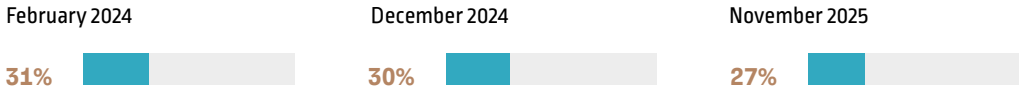
↓ FIGURE 21:

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

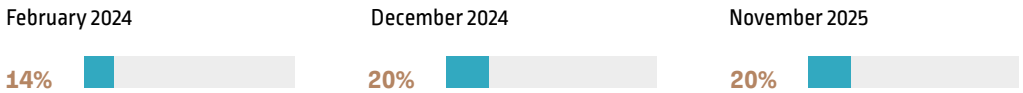
- Strive to ensure that these people can preserve their language and the memory of their origins. After all, Poland does not have to be inhabited by Poles only



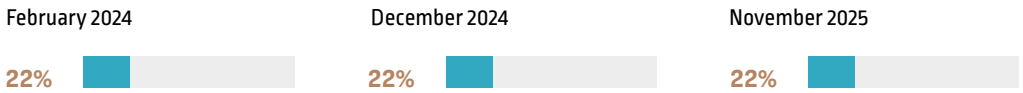
- Take no action, i.e. neither urge Polonisation nor specifically encourage them to remain Ukrainian



- Take steps to ensure that these people integrate as strongly as possible with the Poles, i.e. that they adopt the Polish language as their own, and that their children recognise themselves as Poles. In the end, it will be best if Poland is inhabited primarily by Poles



- Not sure



When the war broke out in Ukraine, the Polish state and society were driven by a sense of solidarity; the state opened its borders and Polish citizens opened their homes to those fleeing Russian aggression. However, the analysis of focus group interviews shows that today, after nearly four years of war, the policy towards Ukrainians is evaluated in a much more critical way, with a strong emphasis on assessing the balance of costs and benefits.

There are three main recurrent themes: the scope and management of state aid, the model of integration and the issue of equal treatment and social justice. Respondents recall the intense emotions of the first weeks of the war: compassion, fear and a strong urge for immediate action. On the whole, that period is still viewed positively as a moment of mobilisation and unity. However, when it comes to long-term, formal state aid, expectations are much higher. Respondents believe assistance should not be unconditional, and their views become notably more critical.

> *"When the war broke out, the feeling of compassion was overwhelming. Everyone helped as much as they could. But later on it seemed that something was taken away from us to give them. And people won't accept that."*
> [Rzeszów]

According to some respondents, the state acted in the heat of the moment and its response was largely based on emotions, while rules did not apply. The lack of clearly defined systemic principles now translates into a sense of disorder, inconsistency in decision-making and a growing feeling of injustice.

Respondents are particularly critical of social welfare policy toward Ukrainians. While they generally do not question the need for humanitarian aid, many argue that the system of social benefits is, in their opinion, too generous, has been in place for too long and lacks sufficient oversight. Thus, there is growing demand for more precise eligibility criteria, clear time limits and more effective oversight mechanisms.

> *"I wish there were fewer of these social benefits. I work hard and I'd like my salary to reflect that, rather than having something taken away from me and given to someone else."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

> *"They come to collect their childcare benefits [known in Poland as 800+] and then leave. That's really awful when you see people who come only to collect their benefits. And this is frustrating, because we are the ones who pay for it."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

Respondents emphasise that the system of benefits should differentiate between war refugees, economic migrants and people who have lived in Poland for years. The lack of such a distinction fuels frustration.

> *"Those who were really fleeing bombs, let them have everything. But if someone comes here only for the sake of benefits and their home is intact, then no, I'm sorry..."*
> [Rzeszów]

Respondents stress that the main problem is not the scale of assistance itself, but the fact that Poles did not understand how the system worked, and politicians failed to explain it effectively.

> *"This is what it looked like: they have priority, they get services for free, they get services faster. And what about Poles? 'Wait please.' That's not how it should. There must be equal rules for everyone."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Numerous examples of unequal treatment – real or interpreted as such – are mentioned.

> *"At our outpatient clinic, a nurse said: 'Ukrainians first.' I will never forget that. How are we supposed to feel?"*
> [Rzeszów]

Even if such cases are relatively rare, they create an impression that the state prioritises Ukrainians over its own citizens. Respondents point out that integration works best when Ukrainians work, learn the language, send their children to school and try to be self-reliant.

> *"I have Ukrainian neighbours; they work, they try to do their best, their children go to school.*

They live like an ordinary family. Those are the kind of people we would like to see."
[Łowicz, older group]

The following recurrent theme can be found across all groups: the Polish state has not developed any plausible integration policy. It took a reactive rather than strategic stance.

"The state was unprepared. There is no system, no rules, no oversight. There is chaos."
[Rzeszów]

"Our help was heart-to-heart, but the state should have regulated it. However, it has failed."
[Lublin, older group]

"Help – yes, I agree. But in an orderly and not haphazard way."
[Lublin, older group]

"Not everything for free, not everything at once. There has to be balance."
[Lublin, younger group]

According to respondents, assistance is no longer a temporary and emergency measure. It has become a permanent element of public policy which requires adjustments, greater oversight and transparent rules.

During focus group interviews, diverse opinions were expressed regarding the future of Ukrainians in Poland. These statements can be grouped into two main categories. On the one hand, many respondents emphasise economic benefits and tend to view Ukrainians as hardworking, honest and well-integrated. On the other hand, a more sceptical stance – often rooted in negative experiences – leads some to argue that Ukrainians' eventual return to their home country should remain the preferred long-term outcome.

Many respondents perceive Ukrainians as people who have ordinary families, who work and strive to live normal lives. They often refer to personal examples of individuals who are well-integrated into local communities. At the same time, they highlight the important role Ukrainians play in the Polish labour market, noting their visible contribution across multiple sectors. From this perspective, Ukrainian workers help address labour shortages, fill vacancies and support areas such as construction, agricultural services and care work.

"If they suddenly left our country, our economy would simply collapse."
[Wrocław, younger group]

"In our company, it's Ukrainians who keep everything in check. They are reliable, they work hard and you can always count on them."
[Łowicz, younger group]

According to this group of respondents, the continued presence of Ukrainians in Poland brings economic benefits, while their departure could result in labour shortages, particularly in manual jobs. Poles recognise that many newcomers are building ordinary lives in Poland and making a tangible contribution to local communities.

"They are hardworking, that's true… I work with a Ukrainian myself – he's very hardworking and a very decent person."
[Lublin, younger group]

Apart from these positive opinions, some respondents clearly expect greater integration on behalf of Ukrainians who wish to permanently stay in Poland.

Moreover, concerns, caution and sometimes even reluctance toward the long-term presence of Ukrainians in Poland resurfaced in focus group interviews. These attitudes were justified in multiple ways. Respondents pointed to factors such as economic competition and labour market tensions, growing social strain and war fatigue as well as concerns related to historical memory and national security.

"Poles are the first to be laid off, and they have to hire them."
[Łowicz, older group]

"There's no gratitude, not at all."
[Lublin, younger group]

"If we look at history… they did worse things than the Germans."
[Łowicz, older group]

6

History

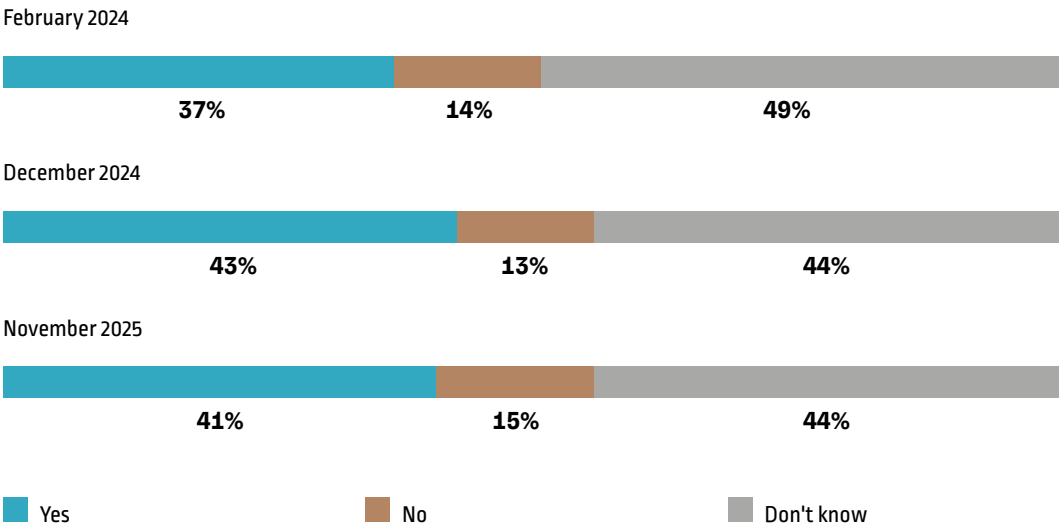
More than 40% of respondents believe that there have been events in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations for which Ukrainians should feel guilty with respect to Poles today. In November 2025, this view was held by 41% of respondents, a level similar to that recorded in December 2024 (43%). Compared to February 2024 (37%), the share of 'yes' responses has increased and remains relatively high.

The proportion of respondents who answered 'no' remains stable and significantly lower than the percentage of affirmative answers: 15% in November 2025 compared to 13% in December 2024 (and 14% in February 2024).

A substantial share of respondents selected 'I don't know': 44% in November 2025 and December 2024, compared to 49% in February 2024. Nearly half of those surveyed do not have an opinion, which may indicate the lack of knowledge, ambivalence or reluctance to take a stance on a sensitive issue. The overall findings suggest that a considerable number of Poles show awareness of sensitive historical issues. At the same time, a large proportion of respondents express ambiguity. Thus, debates over conflicting interpretations as well as fluctuations in opinions can be expected.

↓ FIGURE 22:

Were there events in the 20th-century history of Polish-Ukrainian relations for which Ukrainians should feel guilty with respect to Poles today?



The strongest conviction regarding this issue is observed among older respondents (aged 45–65). In this group, 51% answered 'yes' and 9% – 'no.' These findings may indicate the persistence of an enduring or inherited historical trauma.

By contrast, younger respondents (aged 25–34) account for the largest share of undecided individuals, with 53% selecting 'not sure.' This suggests a lack of crystallised views within this cohort, which may be associated with limited historical knowledge and/or lower engagement in public debate.

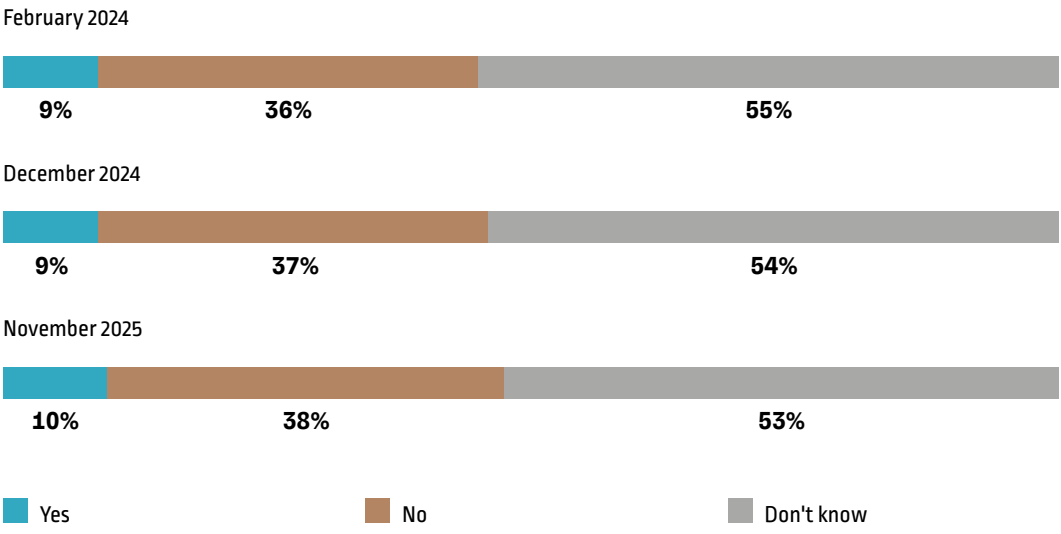
Most respondents lack a clear view on whether, in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations, there have been events which Poles should feel guilty about with respect to Ukrainians today. In November 2025, 53% of respondents selected 'I don't know' (versus 55% in February 2024 and 54% in December 2024). This consistently high level of uncertainty indicates that a considerable share of society find the issue ambiguous, lack awareness of it or find it difficult to assess.

Among those who do have an opinion, many are sceptical as to whether the feeling of guilt is justified: in November 2025, 38%of respondents answered 'no' (compared to 36% in February 2024 and 37% in December 2024). The share of 'yes' responses remains consistently low: 10% in November 2025 (compared to 9% in both February and December 2024).

Demographic differences indicate that younger respondents are either less interested in or less aware of this aspect of history. An informed public debate on the shared past could contribute to a better understanding of the issue and foster more balanced views on Polish-Ukrainian relations.

↓ FIGURE 23:

Were there events in the 20th-century history of Polish-Ukrainian relations for which Poles should feel guilty with respect to Ukrainians today?



Against the backdrop of the war, Poles have spoken about Ukraine and its history more often than ever before. However, an analysis of focus group interviews shows that Poles' historical knowledge is fragmented, selective and centred on recurrent themes, especially the massacres in Volhynia and the figure of Stepan Bandera.

Ukraine's history is not discussed as a coherent sequence of events, but rather as a mosaic of family stories, second-hand information and painful emotions.

Respondents frequently admit that their knowledge of Polish-Ukrainian relations is shallow.

> *"Everyone has heard that something like that happened, but apart from maybe our parents or grandparents, [no one] really knows what happened."*
> [Lublin, older group]

The knowledge is transmitted mainly through informal channels – orally, within families. Respondents admit that Ukrainian history was not taught at school. Thus, the Volhynia Massacre became the main reference point in narratives about Polish-Ukrainian relations. It resurfaces as the main axis around which historical awareness of Ukraine is constructed. Some respondents also refer to family stories passed on from one generation to another.

Thus, for many respondents, the Volhynia Massacre is not a mere textbook fact but an emotional legacy that shapes current perceptions of Ukrainians and relations between the two countries. It is also noteworthy that respondents often emphasise institutional responsibility: in their view, promotion of genuine historical knowledge is not solely the task of society. Both states – Poland and Ukraine – should undertake consistent efforts in this regard.

> *"It has simply been swept under the carpet. It's not being addressed".*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"If there is no acknowledgment of one's own past, there will be no understanding."*
> [Lublin, older group]

One of the most frequently recalled figures is Stepan Bandera. Respondents know the name but their knowledge of his role is very limited:

> *"Just like let's say Bandera... they don't really know what happened there, but now he is kind of a hero for Ukrainians."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Many respondents emphasise that in Poland, Bandera is almost exclusively perceived as a symbol of crimes, whereas in Ukraine he has a different, more complex status, which results in misunderstandings and lack of a shared narrative. Respondents admit that Ukrainian history was not taught in Polish schools, except for fragmented information from the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

> *"It wasn't addressed at school at all."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"No one explained to us where Ukraine came from or what its history was."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

As a result, many Poles view Ukraine primarily through the lens of its Soviet past, the trauma of the Volhynia Massacre, ongoing war with Russia, migration and the presence of Ukrainian workers in Poland. Few respondents declare detailed knowledge of Ukrainian political culture, national movements, the complexities of the 20th-century history or Polish-Ukrainian relations across different historical periods.

Respondents stress that, in the absence of thorough historical education, emotions often overshadow facts. This is exactly the case when they speak of the earlier lack of consent for the exhumation of victims of the Volhynia Massacre. Many respondents treat it not only as a historical problem but as a test of the credibility and intentions of today's Ukraine.

A generational divide is also evident: respondents in older age groups more frequently draw on family narratives and emotional memory whereas respondents in younger age groups more frequently report a lack of even basic knowledge of the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations. This divide generates tensions not only in dialogue between the two nations, but also within Polish society itself, as reflected in disputes over how to interpret the past and what strategy to adopt in relations with Ukraine today.

7

Ukraine's integration into NATO and the EU

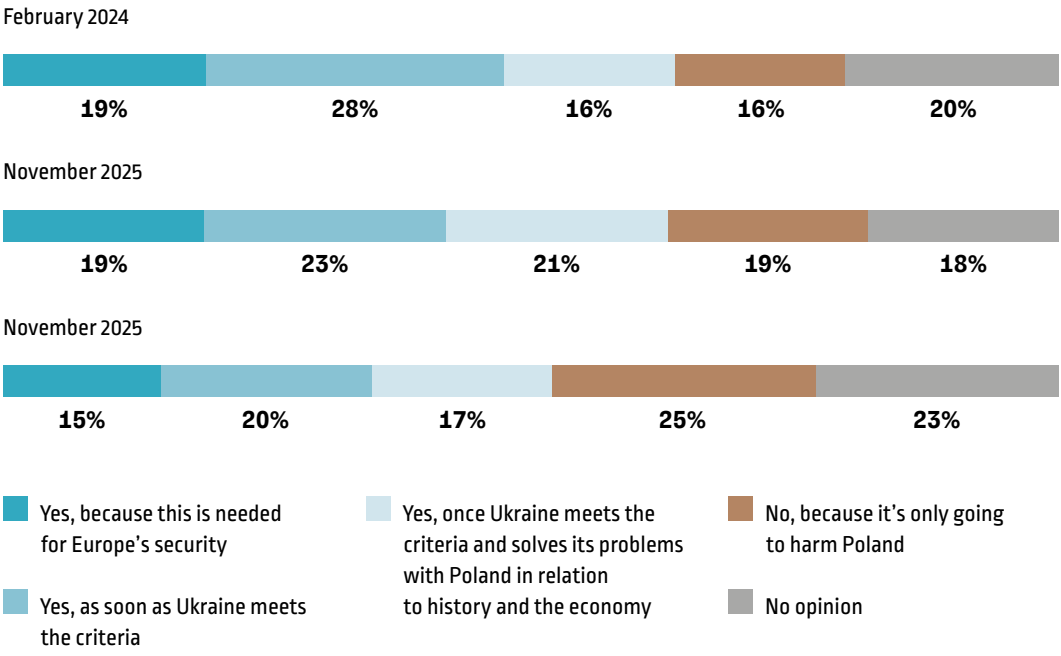
Poles are clearly divided when it comes to views on Ukraine's membership of the European Union. Compared to 2024, there is a noticeable decline in support alongside a rise in scepticism.

The percentage of those who support Ukraine's EU membership unconditionally or based on certain conditions has decreased. Fifteen per cent (15%) of respondents believe that Ukraine should be admitted to the EU for the sake of Europe's security (down from 19% in both February and December 2024). Conditional support is also declining: 20% of respondents support Ukraine's accession after Ukraine meets the required criteria (down from 23% in December 2024 and 28% in February 2024). A third option for accession, that is to accept it once Ukraine meets the criteria and solves its problems with Poland with regard to history and the economy is supported by 17% (compared to 21% in December 2024 and 16% in February 2024). At the same time, the share of opponents of accession increased, reaching 25% in November 2025 (up from 19% in December 2024 and 16% in February 2024), as did the percentage of undecided respondents, at 23% (compared to 18% in December 2024 and 20% in February 2024).

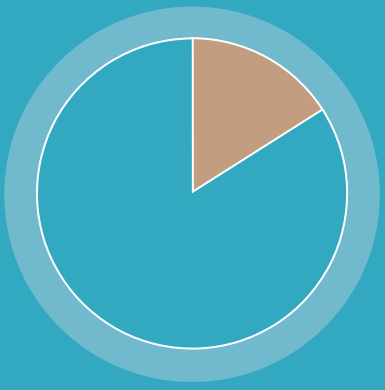
In 2025, enthusiasm for Ukraine's EU membership clearly declined, while sceptical attitudes and caution came to the fore. The overall picture is more polarised, with the focus shifting from pro-integration arguments to considerations of the costs for Poland.

↓ FIGURE 24:

Should Poland support Ukraine' s membership of the European Union?



Should Poland support Ukraine's membership of the European Union?

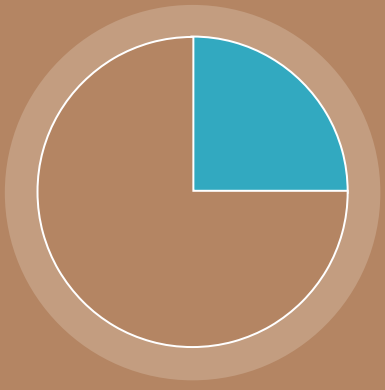


February 2024

No, because it's only going to harm Poland

16%

Should Poland support Ukraine's membership of the European Union?



November 2025

No, because it's only going to harm Poland

25%

The majority of Poles still support Ukraine's membership of NATO but the gap between supporters and opponents is visibly shrinking. At the same time, the share of undecided respondents is growing.

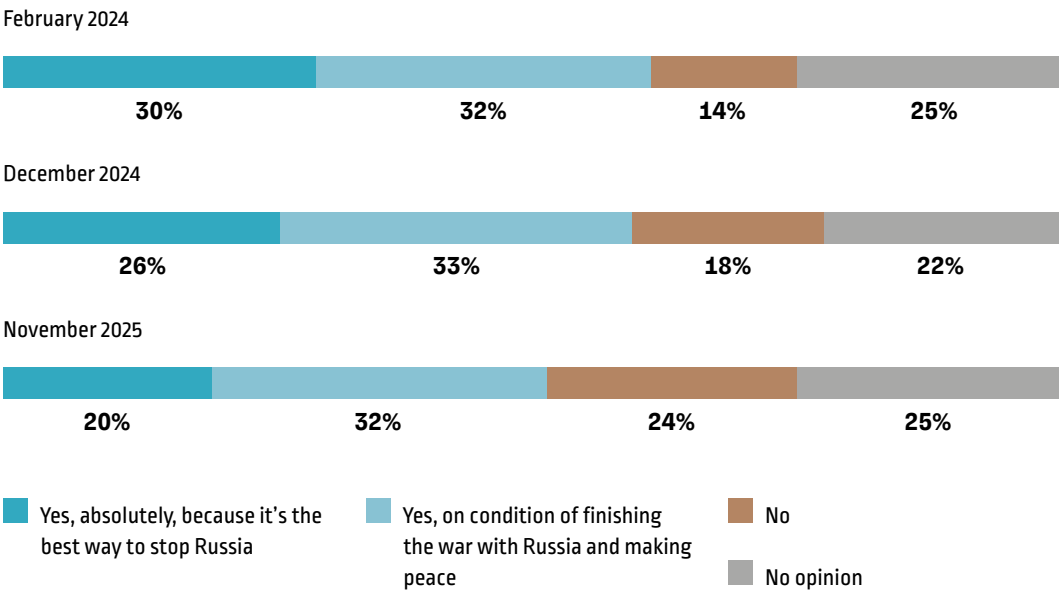
Between December 2024 and November 2025, overall support fell from **59%** to **52%**. The largest decline was observed in unconditional support ('because it's the best way to stop Russia') which dropped from **26%** to **20%**. Another pro-membership option ('Yes, on condition of finishing the war with Russia and making peace') is supported by **33%**, a proportion nearly identical to a year earlier, and still the largest segment of supporters.

At the same time, scepticism is on the rise: the proportion of 'no' responses increased from **18%** in December 2024 to **24%** in November 2025, while the share of respondents with no opinion reached **25%** (up from **22%**).

Overall, a shift in public sentiment is evident: unconditional support is shrinking while the largest group of respondents favours NATO membership only after the war ends. At the same time, scepticism and concerns related to Ukraine's potential accession to NATO are becoming more pronounced. Thus, the findings on both the EU and NATO indicate growing caution in this regard: while Poles continue to support Ukraine's institutional integration with the West, they are becoming increasingly wary of real or perceived risks.

↓ FIGURE 25:

Should Poland support Ukraine's membership of NATO?



Focus group interviews also show that support for Ukraine's future membership of the EU and NATO is fading, and reservations are mentioned more often. The issue of Ukraine's accession to both organisations has entered mainstream public debate in the aftermath of the war. At the same time, an analysis of respondents' statements reveals that Poles think about Ukraine's integration in pragmatic, emotional and strategic terms simultaneously. The issue of Poland's security frequently comes to the fore alongside discussions about European values.

In many statements, Ukraine's accession to NATO is presented as favourable for Poland's security. Respondents openly express this:

> *"It's in Poland's interest that Ukraine wins and is on our side."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *"As long as we present a united front, Russia won't come up to our border."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

From this perspective, a strong, pro-Western Ukraine acts as a buffer. Its anchoring in NATO would reduce the risk of potential Russian aggression against Poland. At the same time, a clear undertone of concern has transpired: some respondents perceive Ukraine's NATO membership not only as a safeguard but also a factor which might potentially increase the risk of confrontation with Russia. Such doubts are more often expressed by respondents in older groups and those more sceptical of the West.

Opinions on Ukraine's membership in the European Union tend to be more nuanced and are more often framed through an economic lens. On the one hand, respondents point to geographic proximity and the need to firmly align Ukraine with the West:

> *"They are our neighbours – they should be with us, not against us."*
> [Rzeszów]

> *"Let them join Europe – it's better for everyone."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

On the other hand, concerns about the costs of integration and the effects of economic competition recur in respondents' statements – especially among farmers, small business owners and residents of smaller towns. In these groups, Ukraine's accession to the EU is seen not as a symbolic value but as a real change in economic conditions that could affect local interests and a sense of stability.

> *"Grain is a separate issue. If they join the EU, they'll flood us with it."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

> *"Competition will be enormous, and we're already barely making ends meet."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

Respondents raise arguments about the potential costs of Ukraine's accession to the EU. They point to the competitive advantage of Ukrainian agriculture (lower production costs and larger scale), potentially greater pressure on the labour market, concerns about the redistribution of EU subsidies and competition from large Ukrainian companies.

At the same time, many respondents portray Ukraine's EU membership as an opportunity to establish well-regulated relations especially in areas such as managing the border, transportation and trade. In the case of EU accession, both sides would be part of the same regulatory framework. This pragmatic argument is captured in the following statement:

> *"If they're in the EU, at least the same rules will apply."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

A recurrent theme is the belief that Ukraine should fulfil certain conditions on its way toward integration with Western organisations. Respondents point to corruption, ineffective institutions, problems with the rule of law, administrative chaos and a lack of transparency as issues Ukraine must solve before accession.

> *"First, they need to curtail corruption at home, because everything there is done under the counter."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

Thus, respondents do not reject the idea of integration itself; on the contrary, many recognise its strategic and

civilisational rationale. However, they emphasise that the decision is not unconditional: accession should be preceded by deep reforms and the responsible implementation of standards.

The issue of integration does not exist in a vacuum. For some respondents, their perception of Ukraine is entrenched in historical memory. The Volhynia Massacre and disputes over exhumations play a decisive role. Respondents suggest that Ukraine's attitude to historical issues serves as evidence of its intentions, even if it is not explicitly indicated as a condition for accession:

> *"If there is no acknowledgment of one's own past, there will be no understanding."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

This does not mean that respondents explicitly state that Ukraine's membership in the EU or NATO depends on dealing with the past. However, it is clear that trust, and therefore the willingness to support integration, largely depends on the emotional context of historical memory.

Overall, focus group interviews present a coherent picture of 'yes, but' attitudes: Ukraine's membership in NATO is often seen as strengthening Poland's security but at the same time it raises concerns about the escalation of military aggression and risk of being drawn into conflict. European integration is considered reasonable, provided it is preceded by reforms in Ukraine and the resolution of agricultural and economic issues that underpin the greatest concerns about Ukraine's competitive advantage. Many respondents believe Ukraine belongs to the Western world; the point of contention lies therefore not in whether to support accession, but in its timing, conditions, and guarantees – not 'whether' Ukraine should join these organisations but 'when and on what terms.'

8

Common interests and disputes

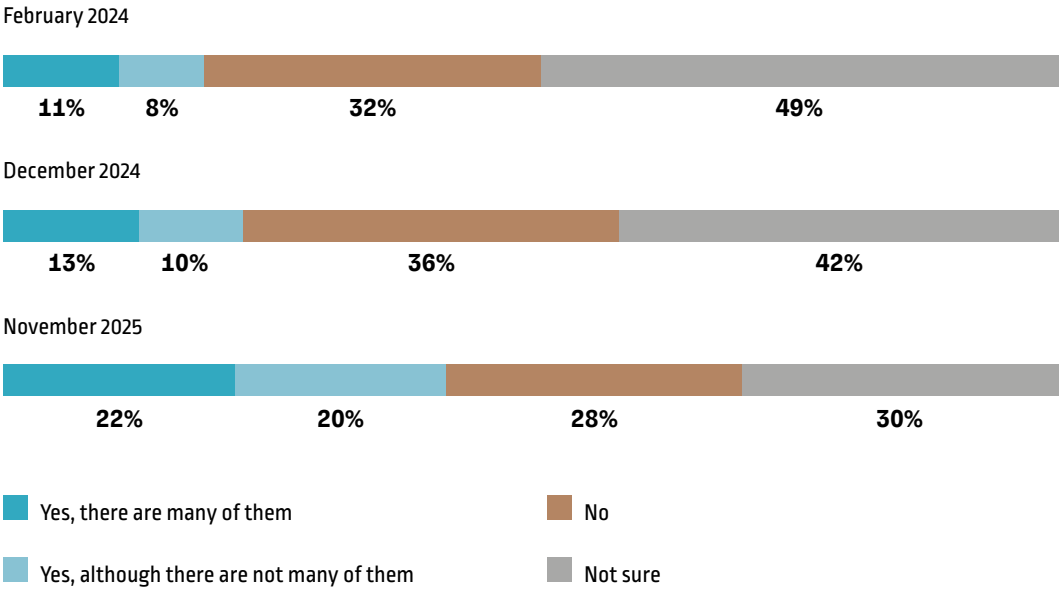
Polish-Ukrainian relations have become one of the most important topics in public debate in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine. Focus group participants describe two countries that remain entangled in numerous tensions and potentially conflicting interests despite their geographic proximity and common threats. Alongside solidarity, they also notice a growing number of potential economic, social and symbolic conflicts that may affect cooperation in the future.

At the same time, survey findings show a clear shift in the way shared interests are perceived. Between December 2024 and November 2025, the belief that Poland and Ukraine shared areas of cooperation became significantly stronger. The share of responses 'yes, there are many interests linking Poland and Ukraine' rose from 13% to 22%, while the percentage of replies 'yes, although there are not many of them' increased from 10% to 20%. Overall, the proportion of affirmative responses grew from 23% to 42%.

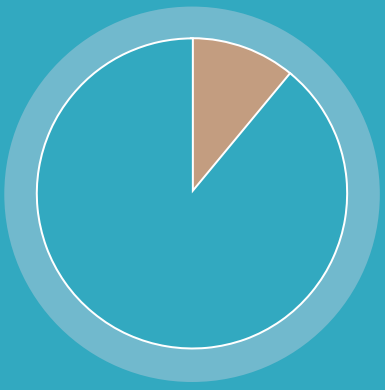
At the same time, the share of negative and 'not sure' responses declined. The proportion of 'no' answers fell from 36% to 28% while the percentage of 'not sure' responses decreased from 42% to 30%. Compared to late 2024, respondents more often recognise shared Polish-Ukrainian interests and less frequently indicate the absence of such ties or express no opinion.

↓ FIGURE 26:

Interests linking Poland and Ukraine



Interests linking Poland and Ukraine

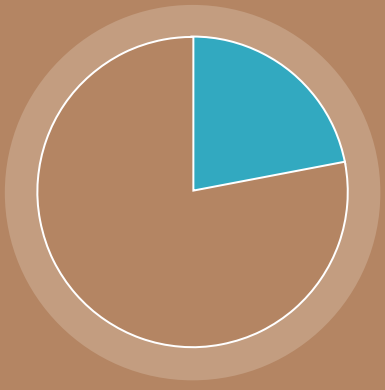


February 2024

Yes, there are many of them

11%

Interests linking Poland and Ukraine



November 2025

Yes, there are many of them

22%

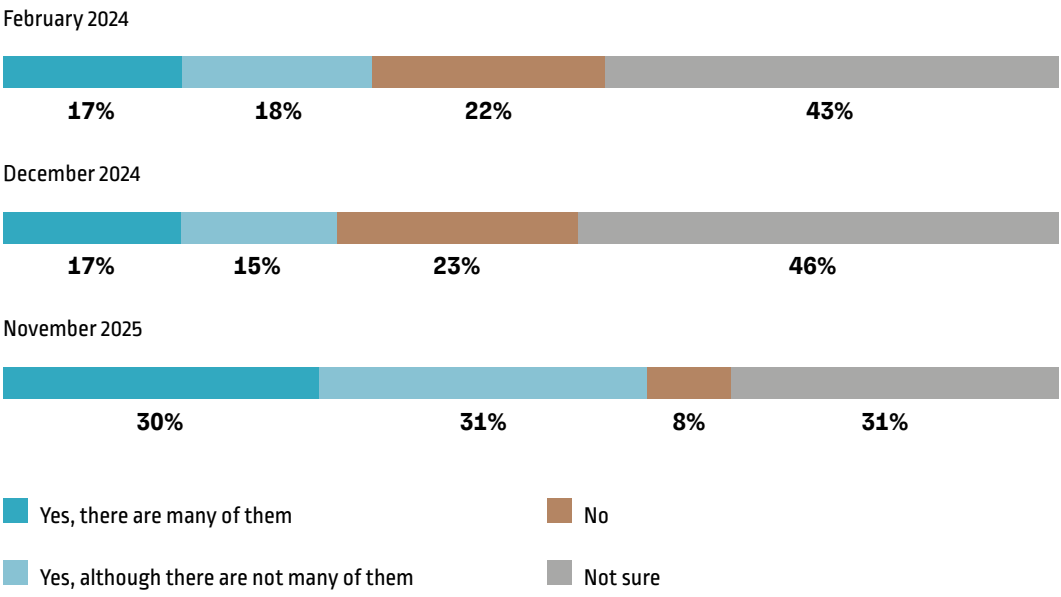
The growing awareness of shared interests is accompanied by a more widespread recognition of existing disputes. As a result, Polish-Ukrainian relations are increasingly perceived as complex. They are viewed both as promising in terms of potential benefits and loaded with existing tensions.

Between December 2024 and November 2025, there was a marked increase in awareness of disputes in Polish-Ukrainian relations. The share of responses 'yes, there are many of them' rose from **17%** to **30%**, while the percentage of answers 'yes, although there are not many of them' increased from **15%** to **31%**. The total share of affirmative responses grew from **32%** to **61%**.

This was accompanied by a drop in the proportion of respondents who did not notice disputes as well as those who were 'not sure'. The share of 'no' responses fell from **23%** to **8%**, while the percentage of those who selected 'not sure' decreased from **46%** to **31%**. Overall, opinions are becoming more settled: fewer respondents say they have no opinion, while more accept that tensions in Polish-Ukrainian relations are a real and lasting feature

↓ FIGURE 27:

Are there significant disputes in Polish-Ukrainian relations?



Focus group interviewees widely commented on the issue of shared interests and conflicts.

There is a general agreement that Poland and Ukraine share a fundamental common interest in containing Russian imperialism.

> *"Ukraine's victory in this war is in Poland's interest."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *"They are keeping Russia away from our borders."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

More than anything else, this narrative brings the two nations together. A common adversary fosters their cooperation. A stable and sovereign Ukraine is seen as a buffer protecting Poland.

Respondents note that mass migration from Ukraine brings not only challenges but also economic benefits.

> *"My neighbours work. They earn an honest living and want to live here."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"I know Ukrainians who genuinely want to integrate and earn a living."*
> [Łowicz, older group]

Many respondents believe that Ukrainian workers help alleviate labour shortages, especially in construction, retail and service sectors. For some, this is a tangible example of shared interests, especially in smaller towns, where labour shortages are most acute.

The issue of grain imports frequently emerges as a symbol of a real economic dispute in Polish-Ukrainian relations that directly affects the interests of Polish farmers. Imports of cheaper grain from Ukraine are associated with downward pricing pressure and the risk of a loss of income. From this point of view, the dispute is purely economic, as it touches upon real costs and a sense of unfair competitive advantage.

Respondents' statements also show that the interpretation of relations with Ukraine is closely intertwined with historical policy and memory. The memory of both the distant past and 20th-century events impacts the assessment of current developments. Respondents often claim that many historical issues have remained unresolved and both Polish and Ukrainian politicians avoid a consistent and honest discussion of difficult issues.

> *"It has simply been swept under the carpet. It is not being addressed."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"Dealing with the past would allow us to move forward."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

> *"If there is no acknowledgement of one's own past, there will be no mutual understanding."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

At the same time, some respondents emphasise that history does not have to determine the future, provided that politicians are willing to discuss it openly. There is a recurrent thought that dealing with the past is a prerequisite for building trust and further cooperation, whereas 'sweeping the past under the carpet' has the opposite effect: it perpetuates uncertainty, fuels suspicion and emotions.

Respondents describe historical policy as a neglected area. They are critical of both the Polish and Ukrainian parties. Poland's historical policy is seen as inconsistent and lacking a unified voice. As regards Ukraine, some respondents claim that it promotes narratives that do not align with dominant Polish sensitivities. Thus, according to respondents, policy toward Ukraine is not only a matter of current interests but also a test of the accountability and maturity of the political class.

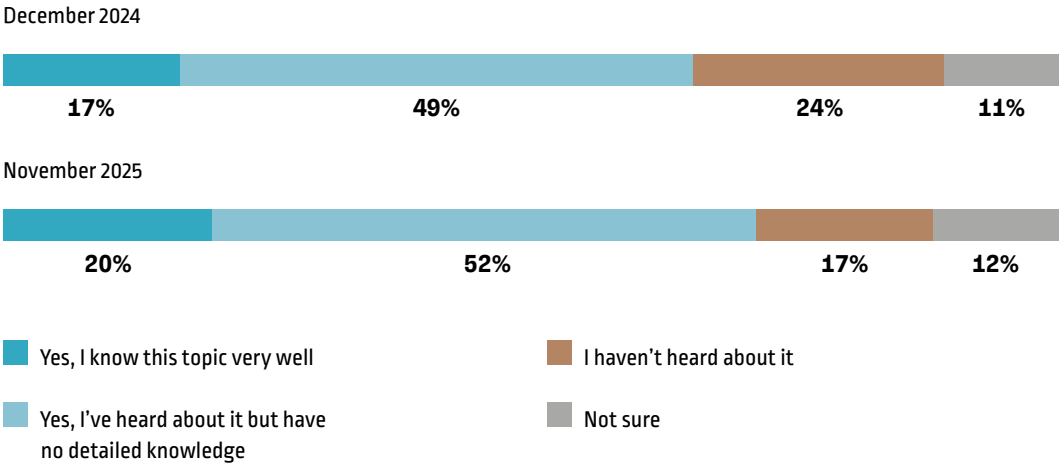
Awareness of the exhumations and burials of Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre is rather limited, although there is a slight increase in the percentage of those who declared familiarity with the topic compared to December 2024. In November 2025, the largest group of respondents (**52%**) selected 'Yes, I've heard about it but have no detailed knowledge' (up from **49%** in December 2024). The share of those declaring very good knowledge of the issue remains a minority, although an increase was also registered from **17%** in December 2024 to **20%** in November 2025. At the same time, the proportion of those who had never heard of the issue declined from **24%** to **17%**. The share of 'not sure' responses remained unchanged (**12%**).

The demographic analysis indicates that men are more likely than women to report very good familiarity with the topic (**28%** vs. **12%**). By age group, the highest level of awareness is found among those aged 45–65 (**27%**),

while the youngest respondents (aged 18–24) report the lowest familiarity with the matter (14%). The topic of the exhumations and burials of Polish victims is more widely known among older respondents, likely due to their greater interest in history.

↓ FIGURE 28:

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

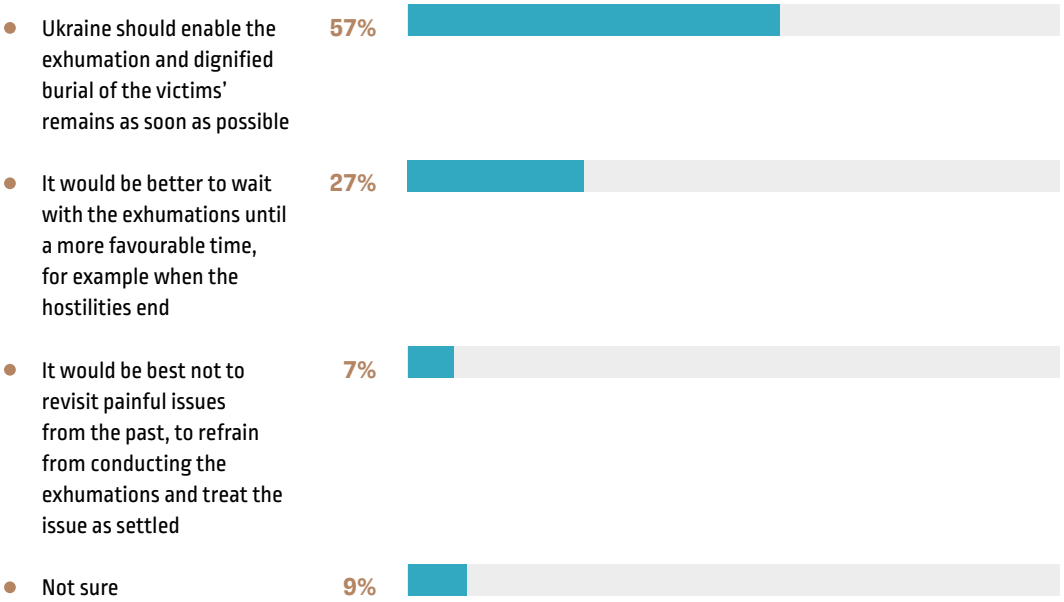


Respondents insist that the absence of the exhumations and dignified burials of the victims of the Volhynia Massacre remains an important and still unresolved problem. They believe that Ukraine should address this issue as soon as possible. Only a small proportion of respondents accept that the exhumations and burials can be postponed while the belief that the issue can be treated as settled without exhumations being conducted is marginal. Issues related to historical memory have a large impact on expectations regarding Polish-Ukrainian relations.

A majority of respondents expect Ukraine to take action on this matter, with **57%** indicating that Ukraine should enable the exhumation and dignified burial of the victims' remains as soon as possible. Twenty-seven per cent (**27%**) are in favour of postponing the exhumations until a more favourable time, for example after the end of hostilities. As few as **7%** state that the issue should not be revisited and the exhumations should not be carried out, while **9%** have no opinion.

↓ FIGURE 29:

What should Ukraine do regarding the exhumations and burials of Polish victims of the Volhynia Massacre?



The Volhynia Massacre is perceived by many respondents not merely as a historical event but as a family trauma that continues to resurface, especially when Polish-Ukrainian cooperation is discussed.

> *"It's been swept under the carpet. There has been no reckoning with the past."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Respondents believe that the issue of the exhumations and burials of the victims of the Volhynia Massacre remains unresolved and that the Ukrainian state avoids taking a clear stance.

> *"It's neither one way nor the other, the issue isn't addressed – it's simply been swept under the carpet."*
> [Lublin, older group]

Some respondents openly state that they perceive Ukraine's failure to grant permission for exhumations as one of the most glaring flashpoints in Polish-Ukrainian relations.

> *"If there is no acknowledgement of one's own past, there will be no mutual understanding."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

The statements also demonstrate that memory of the massacres in Volhynia is often transmitted within families rather than through formal education or public discourse. Many respondents have acquired knowledge of the Volhynia Massacre through emotionally-loaded family stories.

> *"Everyone has heard that something like that happened, but apart from our parents or grandparents, [no one] really knows what it was."*
> [Łowicz, younger group]

Such fragmented and incomplete knowledge intensifies the sense of injustice. Rather than alleviating emotions, the lack of historical education appears to amplify them. Many respondents refer to family stories about the victims.

> *"They murdered my great-grandfather's brother, my grandfather – it comes up in conversations."*
> [Wrocław, older group]

Family stories give these events a personal touch. Thus, the issue of the exhumations is not only a political decision but also a moral obligation of the state towards the victims' families. Some respondents interpret Ukraine's approach to the exhumations as a test of its maturity and readiness for a genuine partnership with Poland:

> *Clarifying what happened in the past would allow us to look to the future."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

Respondents express the belief that until the right to the exhumations and proper burials is restored, Polish-Ukrainian relations will always bear the burden of an 'unspoken truth.'

Respondents perceive the issue of the exhumations primarily in moral and symbolic terms rather than technical ones. It is not a logistical but emotional matter; it is about preserving the memory of those who were murdered, historical justice, mutual respect between the nations and the right of families to a dignified burial.

This is why the issue is so susceptible to emotional reactions even if it is raised in a subtle or implicit way in public debate.

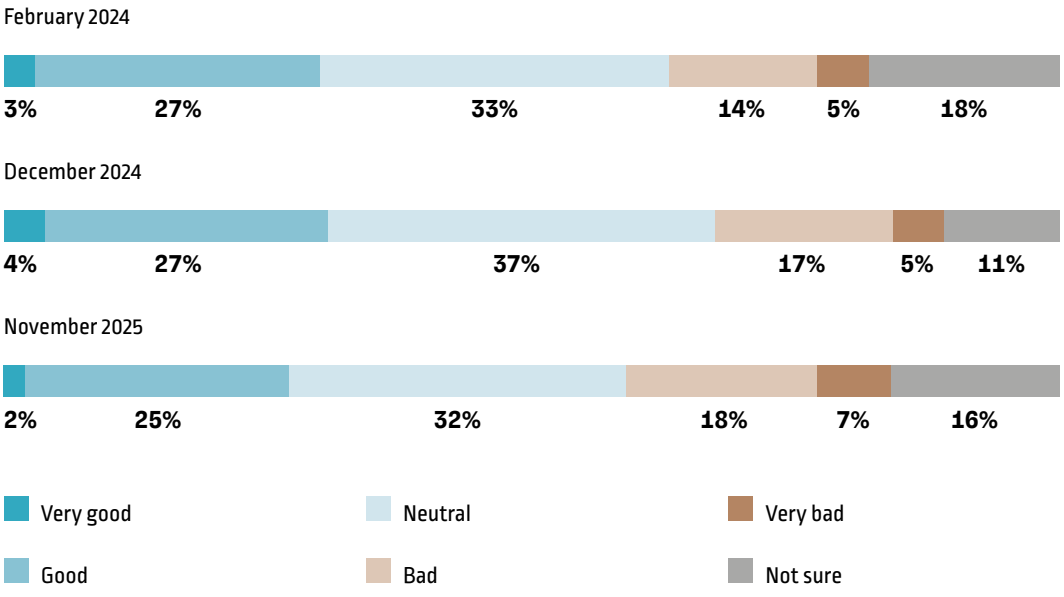
The overall assessment of Polish-Ukrainian relations slightly deteriorated in November 2025 compared to late 2024: the share of affirmative responses dropped while the proportion of negative replies increased. At the same time, the percentage of undecided respondents grew. Thus, opinions became more polarised, and the earlier predominance of positive views – visible in December 2024 – shrank considerably.

Between December 2024 and November 2025, the combined share of respondents who viewed Polish-Ukrainian relations as 'good' or 'very good' fell from 31% to 27%. At the same time, the proportion of negative opinions increased: the combined share of 'bad' or 'very bad' responses rose from 22% to 25%. The proportion of respondents who stayed neutral declined from 37% to 32%, while the share of those who selected 'not sure' increased from 11% to 16%, which indicates growing difficulty in making a clear assessment of Polish-Ukrainian relations.

To conclude, the percentage of respondents who had a positive opinion about Polish-Ukrainian relations in November 2025 was very similar to the share of those who held an opposite view for the same period (27% versus 25%). To compare, in December 2024, Polish-Ukrainian relations were more on the affirmative side (31% versus 22%).

↓ FIGURE 30:

How would you describe current Polish-Ukrainian relations?



9

War

For Poles, the war in Ukraine has become something more than just a dramatic event on the eastern border. Focus group participants believe that this conflict affects everyday life, the sense of security, approval ratings of politicians and even perceptions of Europe's future. It is a war that has a strong impact on everything: Polish-Ukrainian relations, public debate and social sentiments.

While there is hope for a decisive Ukrainian victory, it is not generally seen as a realistic scenario. In respondents' narratives, three main outcomes are most frequently mentioned: a partial Ukrainian victory, a prolonged freezing of the conflict and an imposed peace. The worst-case-scenario – Ukraine's defeat – serves as the strongest argument in favour of supporting Kyiv. At the same time, fear of escalation reduces willingness to support full military involvement, particularly among older respondents.

The first scenario implies a Ukrainian victory understood as a moral victory and the survival of the state rather than the recovery of all pre-war Ukrainian territory. Poles sympathise with Ukraine and admire its determination:

> *"They are really fighting there and living on the edge."*
> [Rzeszów]

Victory understood as the regaining of control over Crimea, the Donbas and other occupied territories seems implausible to many. There is a stronger belief that Ukraine will not be defeated and will endure thanks to its resilience and support from the West.

Respondents sharing this perspective also believe that assistance to Ukraine is not only an act of solidarity but an element of Poland's security strategy as well.

A frozen conflict is most frequently mentioned by focus group participants. They draw analogies with Korea or Transnistria. They are not enthusiastic about such an outcome but admit that this may be the political logic of the war.

Opinions are as follows:

> *"No one knows how it will end; they are still fighting all the time."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *"This will drag on for years."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

Signs of war fatigue can be traced. Respondents are also concerned about the consequences of the war such as the influx of refugees, the burden of aid and Poland's own defence assets. Among those who consider this scenario likely, some support the continuation of assistance, albeit in a more balanced form and under certain conditions:

> *Yes, but: "...so as not to disarm Poland..."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

> *Yes, but: "...based on clear rules..."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *Yes, but: "...not endlessly..."*
> [Wrocław, older group]

Yet another scenario is an imposed peace and Ukrainian capitulation. Poles perceive it as the most alarming outcome, as it would mean that the area controlled by imperial Russia moves closer to Poland.

> *"If Ukraine falls, we're the next in line."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

In line with this logic, support for Ukraine is seen not as an option but as a necessity. For many respondents, this worst-case scenario constitutes the most compelling rationale for continued military and political support, as it combines solidarity with security interests.

Less likely scenarios also appear in the discussions, such as political change in Russia. When respondents speak about Putin stepping down, this is usually accompanied by sceptical remarks rather than belief in a lasting change of political course:

> *"It is driven by imperial logic anyway."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

Consequently, this scenario does not give rise to clearly articulated views on Poland's assistance to Ukraine. Rather, it functions as a distant and uncertain "what if" scenario.

A separate and highly emotional issue concerns the risk of escalation and the spreading of the war beyond Ukraine. Respondents fear that Poland – as a NATO frontline state – could be drawn into the conflict. It is precisely this fear that most often limits support for extensive military involvement, as reflected in the comment below:

> *"We should help, but in a reasonable way, so that we're not drawn into the war."*
> [Lublin, younger group]

Respondents see escalation as the least likely but the most emotionally burdensome scenario.

Discussions about the end of the war almost always transition smoothly into the topic of Poland's assistance, which divides respondents into two camps. The approach of the first camp can be summarised as: "let's help because it is in our interest" – here, the dominant belief is that Ukraine is protecting us from Russia:

> *"It's better to send weapons now than to pay with our own blood in a few years."*
> [Wrocław, younger group]

> *Support is necessary, because they are also fighting for us.*
> [Rzeszów]

The second camp is guided by the principle of "help, but wisely," placing strong emphasis on Poland's budgetary, social, and military constraints. The protracted nature of the war contributes to growing frustration and concerns about the state's capacity to sustain current levels of support. Accordingly, assistance is seen as requiring clear limits, conditionality, and effective oversight.

Both camps share similar expectations: Poles want a concrete strategy, not merely slogans about solidarity. They seek clear answers regarding the potential consequences of assistance, its duration and the benefits for Poland.

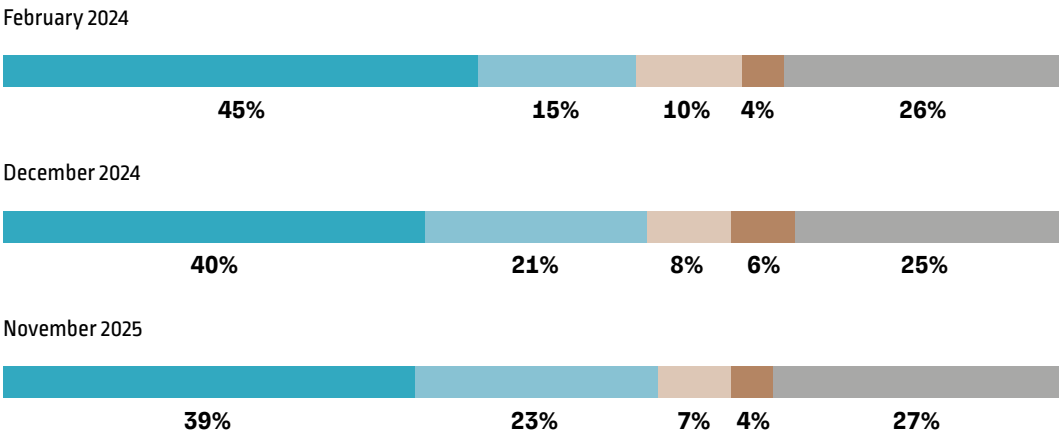
In this year's survey – similarly to the December 2024 wave – the scenario most often seen as ensuring Poland's long-term security is a Ukrainian victory over Russia (**39%**).

There has been a slight increase in support for the scenario of a frozen conflict while maintaining Ukraine's independence – from **21%** to **23%**. The remaining scenarios are at similar levels to last year. A prolonged war of attrition is indicated by **7%** of respondents while Russia's victory remains a marginal option (**4%**).

The results suggest that Poles continue to link Poland's security to Ukraine's unequivocal victory. At the same time, the relatively large share of respondents pointing to a frozen conflict may signal growing doubts about the likelihood of this preferred outcome, as well as increasing societal fatigue with the protracted war.

↓ FIGURE 31:

Potential developments in Ukraine that could ensure lasting security for Poland



- 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

10. Summary

The findings of this third wave of research on Polish views on Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations show changes across several dimensions. Overall, one can observe a downward shift in public sentiment in Poland; critical and sceptical views are becoming more common while the initial surge of mobilisation - spontaneous solidarity and a willingness to bear costs regardless of consequences – is fading. Both survey findings and interviewees' accounts now reflect a different emotional landscape: greater concern, reserve and war fatigue, alongside a more realistic assessment of the situation related to Ukraine. The picture that emerges is ambivalent and at times inconsistent. This, however, should not be interpreted as waning public support in Poland for Ukraine or Ukrainians.

Poles clearly stand with Ukraine, support its defensive struggle and recognise the importance of Kyiv's resistance for Poland's security. Respondents' views on the strategic implications of Ukraine's fight are highly consistent. Polish public opinion has not, so far, fallen prey to the Russian disinformation to which Poles are exposed.

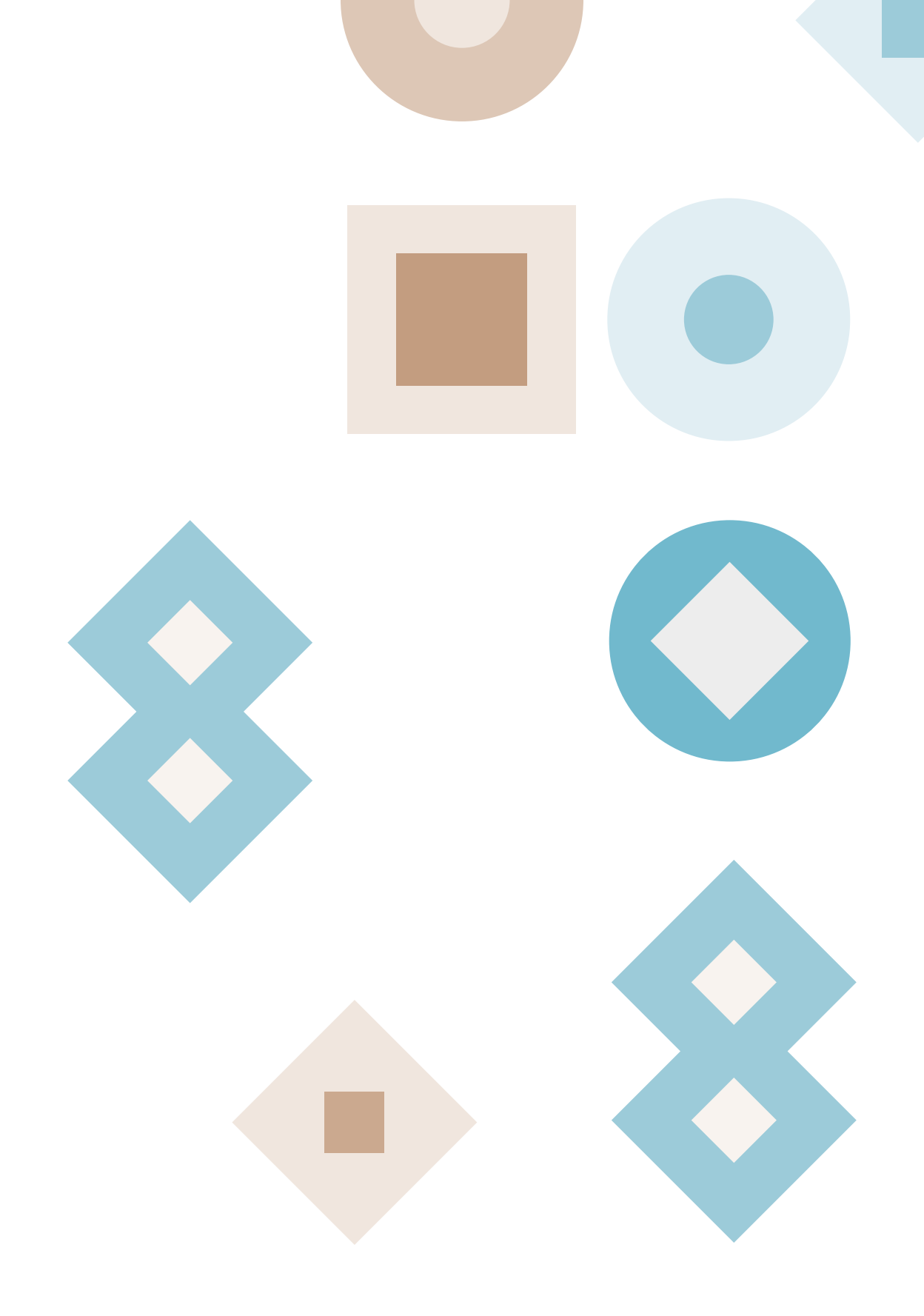
At the same time, this consistent strategic approach is intertwined with two key developments that shape a new realism in attitudes. The first one is a decline in belief in a unequivocally positive outcome of the war. To a large extent, this is due to shifts in U.S. policy as regards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The uncertain course of the so-called peace process has undermined public confidence that the war will end on terms favourable to Ukraine and the region as a whole. This, in turn, discourages unconditional support and boosts caution, especially as concerns about direct risks to Poland's security grow. From this perspective, support for Ukraine remains justified but is more often framed in terms of a balance of risks, available resources and suggested limits of engagement.

Concerns about national security go hand in hand with a second dimension to this new realism, namely the approval of public assistance provided to Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland. Critical voices are focused not on the refugees themselves, but primarily on the rules governing aid, its scale, transparency and oversight. Many respondents expect assistance to be more targeted, based on clear criteria, and better communicated in order to minimise the feeling of injustice and risks of misuse. Still, it appears that the peak of emotions on this issue has already been reached. Respondents appreciate that most Ukrainian guests work, study, and are self-reliant; direct personal encounters with Ukrainians often influence the degree of support for assistance to them.

Thus, we seem to be witnessing the next stage of realignment and greater realism in both social sentiment and perception of the international and domestic contexts. This is clearly visible in responses to questions about the interests that unite and divide Poland and Ukraine. Respondents are increasingly aware of both shared interests and real economic and political tensions. Over nearly four years of war, Polish public opinion is, in a sense, rediscovering Ukraine. It notices both opportunities and challenges, while moving away from the black-and-white picture that prevailed at the beginning of the conflict. As a result, views on Polish-Ukrainian relations don't fit neatly into clear-cut categories.

Despite this growing complexity of opinions, one thing remains constant: Ukraine is seen by Poles as a sovereign actor. While they may express expectations regarding memory policy or economic cooperation, they do not question Ukraine's right to determine its own path. This constitutes a durable foundation on which future Polish-Ukrainian relations can be built, regardless of the war's uncertain trajectory or developments in the international landscape.

Notes



The findings of this third wave of research on Polish views on Ukraine and Polish-Ukrainian relations show changes across several dimensions. A downward shift in public sentiment in Poland can be observed; critical and sceptical views are becoming more common while the initial surge of mobilisation – spontaneous solidarity and a willingness to bear costs regardless of consequences – is fading. Both survey findings and interviewees' accounts now reflect a different emotional landscape: greater concern, reserve and war fatigue, alongside a more realistic assessment of the situation related to Ukraine. The picture that emerges is ambivalent and at times inconsistent. This, however, should not be interpreted as waning public support in Poland for Ukraine or Ukrainians.

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