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Attitudes of rural Polish population towards Ukrainian migrants

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Abstract

Over the two years, the sentiment and attitudes of Poles towards those who came from Ukraine have evolved. The coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians presents a substantial challenge marked by history, culture, and religion. The aim of the article is to present the attitudes of Poles towards supporting people from Ukraine who came to Poland against the backdrop of the integration of the two nations. The authors attempted to identify factors shaping Poles' attitudes towards migrants from Ukraine in a study titled 'National Identity of Poles in Light of Migration of Ukrainian Nationals: Prevention of Social Conflicts'. The CATI survey was conducted in March 2023. The independent variables considered relevant under the research design are sex, age, education, and type of residence (village or small town). The authors proposed that the historical and cultural diversity of Poland may affect the current attitudes of Poles towards Ukrainians. Despite the long time since the Ukrainian aggression against Poles, the trauma may still influence relationships. The statistical analysis offers the following conclusions: women demonstrated a less favorable attitude towards Ukrainian refugees than men; young respondents aged 25–34 declared the most negative attitudes; people with higher education declared the most positive attitudes; residents of municipalities where the number of Ukrainians grew assumed less favorable attitudes; the respondents indicated three potential causes of problems for Polish-Ukrainian relationships: mindset differences, historical resentments, and cultural differences. They found religious differences to be much less of a potential problem. The results demonstrate the need to educate Polish society, especially in the eastern region bordering Ukraine. Moreover, residents of rural municipalities where the Ukrainian population grew exhibit more critical attitudes. This suggests a passive approach by municipal authorities to integrating these individuals. The present study should be considered a pilot that needs to be complemented with further in-depth qualitative analyses.

Keywords: Integration, Migration of Ukrainians, Poland, Social attitudes.

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1. Introduction

It has been two years since the Russo-Ukrainian war began. The situation has diversified international impact. Neighboring countries, Poland included, help war refugees by implementing long-term policies covering social assistance, labor market inclusion, education, and integration of Ukrainian communities with Poles. The population of economic migrant Ukrainians has been growing in Poland since 2017. Ukrainian nationals have been able to stay in Poland legally under the visa-free regime since June 2017 [1]. The legal environment for the foreign national labor market in Poland changed substantially on 29 January 2022 through the Act of 17 December 2021 amending the Act on foreign nationals and some other Acts. The amendments are intended to streamline stay and labor procedures for nationals of six states: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine, including work permits and declarations of entrusting work to a foreign national under the Act on the promotion of employment and labor market institutions. Migration intensified after the full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. According to Eurostat data, Poland granted temporary protection to 949,365 refugees from Ukraine at the end of April 2024 (1.6 thousand fewer than in March). This number is still lower than in September 2022, when Poland granted protection to over 1.3 million Ukrainian nationals [2]. Over the two years, the sentiment and attitudes of Poles towards those who came from Ukraine have evolved.

This article investigates the attitudes of Poles towards the support of people from Ukraine who came to Poland against the backdrop of the integration of the two nations. The coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians is a substantial challenge marked by history, culture, and religion. The theoretical considerations are expanded by analyzing an original survey on rural areas and towns in Poland.

The research on mutual Polish-Ukrainian relationships referred to in the Discussion indicates the role of historical frictions, differences in mindsets, and cultural differences between Poles and Ukrainians. The research gap identified by the authors concerns the specific characteristics of Polish rural and town populations' attitudes towards migrants from Ukraine. These populations are more conservative and can be perceived as less open to newcomers from urban Poland and international migrants. Ukrainians have been providing seasonal labor for a long time, mainly in agriculture and horticulture. In the countryside, Ukrainian migrants have never been part of the crowd as they are in cities. Therefore, the selected study group and topic of the research reported here help capture the attitude of Polish rural and town residents towards Ukrainians as described by themselves.

Based on a literature review, the article describes the impact of history, culture, and religion on the coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians. The nations share a long history dotted with conflicts. The authors emphasize the critical points in modern history that affect mutual relations the most because they are still well remembered. Next, the article looks into the attitude of Poles towards Ukrainians as it changes due to sociopolitical factors.

The literature review introduces the problems investigated with surveys discussed in the article. The attitudes of residents of Polish rural areas and towns towards Ukrainians were measured with the following research questions:

1. Do Ukrainians take jobs from Poles?
2. Are Ukrainians supported at the expense of Polish nationals?
3. Are Poles treated worse because of the support Ukrainians receive?

The results are discussed in the context of the migration of Ukrainians to Poland and in a broader European setting. The authors indicate factors beneficial and detrimental to the attitudes of Poles towards Ukrainians. They emphasize the effect of stereotypes and prejudice, which hinder proper patterns of coexistence on the part of Poles.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Impact of History, Culture, and Religion on the Coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians

Poles and Ukrainians share a long history. Their first encounters have been lost in the mists of time. Some researchers date them back to the Middle Ages and contacts between the House of Piast and Kyivan Rus' and other countries in the Rus'. Our focus is on the selected latest events of historical origin that have directly affected Polish-Ukrainian relationships. For instance, Polish public opinion was aggravated by conflicts caused by an initiative of the Ukrainian minority in the 1990s. Various Ukrainian circles in Poland and associations in Ukraine succeeded in erecting over a dozen illegal monuments to the

soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA[1]) [4]. Other historical frictions include those related to the Ukrainian and Lemko minorities demanding Polish authorities to denounce and reverse the effects of Operation Vistula[2] and the problem of rehabilitation of former illegal prisoners — Ukrainians, Lemkos, and Germans — of post-war camps in Jaworzno, Łambinowice, Świętochłowice, and other places and compensation for them. Similar conflicts arose in connection with demands for the restitution of property of Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, and Lemkos. Other examples of types of conflicts were the demands by Ukrainian and Lemko minorities to restore the historical names of places and streets in Bieszczady and Low Beskid, which were changed after Operation Vistula to leave no trace of their cultural presence. In all the disagreements above, the Polish majority and national minorities perceived historical events differently [6].

Some ethnic conflicts involved both historical wounds and religion. Religious disparities were often rooted in the past. Some conflicts involved religious objects and church property. Among the first was the ownership conflict concerning former monastery buildings in Supraśl and the remains of the Church of Resurrection. The main parties were priests representing local Orthodox and Roman Catholic parishes, their superiors, local communities, and local authorities. This conflict was partially ethnic in nature because many Orthodox Christians in the area are Belarusians or Ukrainians, while most Catholics are Poles. A similar conflict occurred concerning the Carmelite Church of St. Theresa, which was to be returned to the Greek Catholic Church until the plan sparked fierce opposition from Catholics of the Social Committee for the Defense of the Polish Carmelite Church. In addition to disputes over temples, there were numerous conflicts over the restitution of former Orthodox and Greek Catholic cemeteries. One example of direct aggression against the Ukrainian minority is the attack on a religious procession held by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church on 26 June 2016. The procession was disturbed by Poles: hooligans, nationalists, and a far-right youth organization, All-Polish Youth, who chanted anti-Ukrainian slogans and tried to use force against Ukrainians. Many tensions were brought about by oversensitivity, mistakes, stubbornness, and ill will of officials (mainly local authorities). It was what happened to the Ukrainian and Lemko minorities in their native land in southeastern Poland. According to the Ukrainians, central and local authorities in Przemyśl were biased against the demands of the minorities, for example, when they refused to consent to a Ukrainian Festival in Przemyśl in 1997 [7].

2.2. Poles' Attitudes towards Ukrainians in the Context of Integration

Such endogenic factors as territorial or social capital are critical for many processes in rural areas [8]. One of them is the building of a multicultural community through social integration. In the case of the integration of Ukrainian nationals into Polish society, Deutschmann [9] emphasizes the following integration issues: language barriers, cultural differences, unrealistic expectations, ghettoization, historical education, lack of a legal and formal framework, unfamiliarity with Polish regulations, official institutions, and their competencies, and poor information about rules and institutions. Integration conditions for Ukrainians in Poland and Hungary were identified through a survey among adults from Ukraine who entered Poland and Hungary after 24 February 2022. The results show that refugees in Poland perceived much greater social support and exhibited more readiness for integration than those in Hungary. Attitudes towards integration were connected with the host country rather than sex or age [10].

Amplification of social capital is correlated with integration-supporting policy. Social and economic networking is highly relevant as well [11]. Europe, Poland included, is yet to develop stable mechanisms for supporting the acculturation and integration of immigrants into Polish society [12]. Research shows that Ukrainian refugees in Poland attach great weight to the places where they are staying. Initially, they stayed in places selected haphazardly. Over time, they moved to more friendly locations. State institutions lack appropriate tools for assessing state integrity and struggle to control migration processes [13]. Moreover, the Ukrainian migrant community is far from homogeneous, which is a factor in how Poles perceive them. There were many Ukrainian nationals working and living in Poland before the war. They underwent assimilation and contributed to integration standards. Those who came to Poland fleeing from the Russian occupier after the full-scale war broke out are entirely different [14]. The essentialistic concept of the alleged 'shared culture' of Poles and Ukrainians is routinely discussed and maintained by the elites of the Ukrainian diaspora. An investigation of this phenomenon, first identified through fieldwork, helps uncover internal tensions. Indeed, the idea of 'shared culture' promotes cultural differences. The imaginary 'shared culture' can, in fact, uphold 'otherness' instead of bringing the diaspora together [15]. Effective decision-making regarding increased immigration is just as challenging in this case [16]. The state should continuously monitor cultural integration conditions. It is a substantial challenge to build a new narrative [17-19] in a country such as Poland, where Catholic anti-immigration attitudes take root [20].

Opinions about migrants conditioned on migration-related experience [21, 22] that take into account stereotypes and history [23, 24] are relevant. In host countries, the tolerance [25] towards refugees hinges on race, residence, sex, age, and other variables [26, 27]. Ukrainian scholars who conducted research in Poland pointed out a paradox suggesting varying standards of attitudes towards foreigners among Poles. They concluded that Poland is simultaneously one of the most welcoming countries to people coming from Ukraine and the strictest on the Belarusian border concerning migrants, mainly from such countries as Syria and Afghanistan [28].

[1] Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was a military formation established by the Bandera faction of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists in late 1942 and led by it. It operated mainly in Volhynia, Eastern Galicia, and west of the Curzon Line. Its objective was to facilitate a fascist independent state of a single Ukrainian nation. It pursued this goal by warring against German occupation authorities, Polish partisans, and Soviet partisans. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and OUN-B are jointly responsible for organising and perpetrating genocide of Polish civilians (massacre in Volhynia and ethnic cleansing in Lviv, Tarnopol, and Stanisławów Voivodeships [3].

[2] The Operational Group Vistula was established on 20 April 1947. It was tasked with liquidating UPA units in south-eastern Poland and resettling Ukrainian and Lemko populations from the area. Regardless of the enormous pain and suffering UPA inflicted on Poles, there is no justification for Operation Vistula, which injured thousands of Ukrainians and Lemkos. The communist state was capable of defeating the Ukrainian underground without forced relocation, just as it did with the Polish anti-communist underground. Operation Vistula has proven to be a totalitarian project organised and conducted in line with Soviet models, which has irreversibly disturbed the social, cultural, and economic structures of the places it affected. In August 1990, the Senate of the Republic of Poland denounced the operation as an example of a collective responsibility method typical of totalitarian regimes [5].

A Poland-wide representative survey among Ukrainian nationals in Poland shows that most respondents declared declining solidarity with Ukrainians among Poles. Some contributing factors include the growing living costs in Poland and media reports on issues such as the cereal crisis or carriers protesting on the Ukraine-Poland border. Although some positive examples of relationships between Ukrainians and Poles were presented, conflicts dominated the news. The respondents were aware of the problems some Poles attribute to their presence in Poland, such as the burden on the social insurance and healthcare systems, job and housing "stealing," and an increased crime rate. Furthermore, several division lines emerged: 1. pre-war migrants who criticize war migrants for ingratitude and entitlement; 2. migrants from eastern (pro-Russian) Ukraine and migrants from western Ukraine; 3. refugees who integrate with Polish society and those who do not [29].

In short, Poles' attitudes towards Ukrainians, which condition successful integration, are shaped by multiple factors. The critical ones are worth noting. At least four reasons stand behind the annoyance with Ukrainians growing among some Poles. The first one is that Poles have an entitlement mentality, especially those dependent on the state social welfare system [30, 31]. Their simplistic reasoning is that sharing funds earmarked for Poles with Ukrainians deprives them of wealth. The next reason is the Russian anti-Ukrainian propaganda in Poland, which fuels adversarial attitudes [31, 32]. The third reason is much more serious. It is the problematic Polish-Ukrainian history that no one can navigate effectively. The genocide by Ukrainian nationalists with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during the Second World War in the former Volhynian Voivodeship is harbored in the Polish historical memory. The estimated number of killed Poles varies from 50,000 to 60,000 [33-35]. The last main reason for anti-refugee attitudes among Poles is a low level of knowledge, close-mindedness, and reliance on extreme opinions, which go viral online despite being unfounded. Opinions regarding stealing jobs, housing, spots in daycare centers, kindergartens, etc., are very dangerous. In addition to cultural differences, Poles and Ukrainians face the challenge of divergent mindsets. In the context of business activity, Ukrainians in Poland have to adjust to the requirements of hiring transparency, compliance, and taxation. These are new practices for Ukrainians who are staying in Poland [36].These facts must not be exaggerated, but on the other hand, they have to be considered. The contact between two different cultures and confrontation with the problematic history of Poles and Ukrainians are the challenges both nations face.

3. Materials and Methods

The authors attempted to identify factors shaping Poles' attitudes towards migrants from Ukraine in a study titled 'National Identity of Poles in Light of Migration of Ukrainian Nationals: Prevention of Social Conflicts'. The CATI survey was conducted in March 2023. The sampling frame was a database of telephone numbers of adult residents of rural areas and towns (up to fifteen thousand people). Of the initially randomly selected 5,000 telephone numbers, 700 people participated in the survey, resulting in a return rate of 14 percent. The sample was stratified proportionally to size. The strata were NUTS 1 units: seven macro-regions of Poland: Northern, North-Western, Mazowieckie Voivodeship, Central, South-Western, Southern, and Eastern. The final sample was not significantly different from the planned structure, with differences not exceeding ±3 percentage points.

The attitudes of residents of Polish rural areas and towns towards Ukrainians were measured with the following research questions:

1. Do Ukrainians take jobs from Poles?
2. Are Ukrainians supported at the expense of Polish nationals?
3. Are Poles treated worse due to the support Ukrainians receive?

The questions concern three domains: economics, society, and law. The responses were on 5-point scales with values labeled as: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – no opinion, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree. Considering that the responses to the three questions were satisfactorily consistent (alpha = 0.745), the authors have combined them into a single index. As a result, the index of attitudes towards Ukrainian nationals was the average value of the responses to the three questions. The higher the index value, the more favorable the attitude. The index was introduced in this form into a linear regression model as a dependent variable.

Next, the authors selected independent variables as potential predictors of attitudes towards Ukrainians and divided them into three categories. The first category includes demographic variables such as sex, age, education, residence (countryside vs. town), and macro-region. The authors assumed that negative attitudes would be exhibited by women, younger individuals, those with lower education levels, and those living in rural areas and the border Eastern macro-region.

The second category covers a single variable reflecting the relative increase in the migrant population in the municipality where the respondent lives. The participants were asked, "Has the number of refugees from Ukraine increased in your municipality after the Russo-Ukrainian war broke out?" The response range was a five-point scale (definitely not – definitely yes). Its values were recoded into a binary form for analytical purposes: 0 (definitely not, not, hard to say) and 1 (yes, definitely yes). In this case, the authors assumed that a negative attitude towards Ukrainians should be identified in people who noticed an increase in the number of individuals from Eastern Europe.

The third category contained dichotomous variables for potential causes of Polish-Ukrainian relationship (and integration) problems. It covers such issues as 1) mindset differences, 2) divisive history, 3) cultural differences, 4) religious differences, and 5) others. For this group of factors, it was assumed that an indication of each of the problems driving Polish-Ukrainian relationship issues translates into a negative attitude towards Ukrainian nationals.

4. Results

The attitude of residents of Polish rural areas and towns towards Ukrainians turned out to be neutral, with a slight advantage of favorable inclination, as evident from the average value of the index of 2.85 (95 percent CI 2.77–2.92). One can only assume that the attitude is shaped by the respondents' experiences to a large extent. Over 80 percent of them admitted

that after the Russo-Ukrainian war began, the number of Ukrainian refugees in their municipalities increased to a larger or smaller extent. Attitudes towards Ukrainians can be affected by actual experiences on one hand and stereotypical perceptions on the other. The respondents most commonly suggested three potential causes of problems with managing Polish-Ukrainian relationships. These were mindset differences (22.9 percent), historical resentments (20.1 percent), and cultural differences (16.7 percent). The Poles pointed out religious differences much less frequently (4.4 percent). The attitudes differed by demographic variables. Women exhibited less favorable attitudes than men. Age was a differentiating factor as well. The most negative stance was found among representatives of younger age groups, particularly those aged 25–34. Positive attitudes increased with education. People with university degrees declared the most positive attitudes. The strongest negative attitude by macro-region was identified among residents of the Eastern, South-Western, North-Western, and Mazowieckie Voivodeship macro-regions. No differences in attitudes of inhabitants of villages and towns were identified. Detailed statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Analyzed variables vs. attitude towards Ukrainians (mean values).

Variable		Mean	95% CI
Sex	female	2.94	2.83÷3.05
	male	2.75	2.63÷2.86
Age	18–24	3.19	2.60÷3.78
	25–34	3.37	3.15÷3.60
	35–44	2.95	2.81÷3.10
	45–54	2.66	2.47÷2.85
	55–64	2.74	2.55÷2.92
	over 64	2.57	2.42÷2.73
Education	primary or vocational	3.09	2.87÷3.31
	secondary	2.97	2.85÷3.09
	higher	2.65	2.52÷2.77
Residence	village	2.84	2.74÷2.94
	town with up to 15,000 residents	2.85	2.72÷2.94
Macro-region	Eastern	2.93	2.73÷3.13
	Central	2.84	2.59÷3.08
	South-Western	2.93	2.67÷3.20
	Southern	2.79	2.61÷2.96
	North-Western	2.93	2.75÷3.12
	Northern	2.65	2.45÷2.85
	Mazowieckie Voivodship	2.93	2.68÷3.18
Increase in Ukrainian refugees in the municipality	definitely not, not, hard to say	2.66	2.47÷2.85
	yes, definitely yes	2.88	2.79÷2.97
Causes of problems in Polish-Ukrainian relationships (Mentioned / not mentioned)	mindset differences	3.04	2.86÷3.21
	religious differences	3.07	2.57÷3.57
	dividing history	3.14	2.92÷3.34
	cultural differences	2.92	2.70÷3.15
	other	2.43	2.13÷2.74

The descriptive statistics failed to identify significant predictors of attitudes towards Ukrainians. It was done with linear regression. The authors introduced the index reflecting the attitude to the model as a dependent variable. The independent variables were those that identified potential problems in Polish-Ukrainian relationships and the variable estimating the change in Ukrainian populations in respondents' municipalities. Additionally, the model covered demographic variables: sex, age, education, residence, and macro-region. Table 2. presents the analysis results.

The model exhibits a decent predictive power (R^2=0.173). It also revealed interesting dependencies. As regards demographic variables, attitudes towards Ukrainians were significantly predicted by sex, age, education, and also macro-region to some extent.

Men exhibited a more favorable stance than women, which confirms earlier findings. The difference between women and men can be explained by the fact that after the war broke out, primarily women came to Poland. The disparity between adult men (minority) and women (majority) in Poland exists mainly in younger age groups (18–49) and in rural areas [37], which may account for the more favorable attitude of men.

In the case of age, where the youngest group of 18–24 years is the reference, the most favorable attitude was found among people in the last three age groups (44 years and over). The attitudes of representatives of the 25–34 and 35–44 age groups were not much different from those of the reference category.

Table 2.
Attitude towards Ukrainians: results of linear regression model estimation.

Variable		B	Std. Error	Beta
Sex (ref. male)	female	.251	.079	.117**
Age (ref. 18–24)	25–34	.104	.309	.034
	35–44	-.250	.302	-.103
	45–54	-.600	.306	-.216*
	55–64	-.574	.305	-.202*
	over 64	-.796	.301	-.308*
Education (ref. primary or vocational)	secondary	-.336	.118	-.155*
	higher	-.736	.124	-.339**
Residence (ref. village)	town with up to 15,000 residents	.017	.083	.008
Macro-region (ref. Eastern)	Central	-.086	.153	-.025
	South-Western	.005	.160	.001
	Southern	-.178	.131	-.067
	North-Western	-.012	.139	-.004
	Northern	-.315	.138	-.109*
	Mazowieckie Voivodship	.055	.154	.016
Increase in the number of Ukrainian refugees (ref. definitely not, not, hard to say)	yes, definitely yes	.247	.113	.080*
Causes of problems in Polish-Ukrainian relationships (ref. not mentioned)	Mindset differences	.246	.097	.097**
	Religious differences	.155	.209	.029
	Dividing history	.306	.100	.114**
	Cultural differences	-.041	.112	-.014
	other	-.330	.142	-.086
Constant		3.403	0.325	
Model summary				
R^2		0.173		
Std. Error of the Estimate		0.990		
F-test		p<0.001		
N		700		

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01.

The model also confirmed the impact of education mentioned above. People with secondary education and, even more so, those with university degrees exhibited a more favorable inclination than those with primary or vocational education. Many other migration studies corroborate this result. The higher the educational background, the lower the prejudice against people from outside [38-40].

Only one macro-region stood out against the background. Residents of the Northern macro-region exhibited the most positive attitude. Those from the other macro-regions did not differ from people living in the reference macro-region, i.e., the Eastern macro-region.

The attitude towards Ukrainians in peripheral areas also depends on the perceived increase in the number of refugees in the participants' municipalities. Residents of those municipalities where the number of Ukrainians grew assumed less favorable attitudes.

Two potential causes of problems in Polish-Ukrainian relationships were also significant predictors of the attitude. People who suspected historical issues and mindset differences could be problematic demonstrated a more negative attitude towards Ukrainian nationals. As mentioned above, historical resentments are an important factor in usually negative attitudes towards Ukrainians in Poland. The analysis seems to confirm that. The conviction of mindset differences between Poles and Ukrainians is rooted in stereotypes about the latter. Most Ukrainian refugees are women and children, often with no means of support and dependent on social assistance. As per the stereotype content model [41, 42], upon arriving in Poland, they were perceived as having good intentions (high warmth) but low competencies and, therefore, unable to act on those intentions. The typical attitude in this case is paternalistic, associated with pity and compassion. This is what happened in Poland after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine when many Poles made individual efforts to help Ukrainian refugees. After some time, they received institutional and social support, which turned many of them into welfare clients. The realization of this fact among Poles might have contributed to a shift in the stereotype. Worse-off people dependent on social support are perceived as low warmth (bad intentions) and incompetent, which leads to contempt, disgust, anger, or resentment.

The Ukrainian reality undoubtedly influences the norms and values of people living there, which can, in turn, be reflected in the specific attitudes of Ukrainians in Poland. They may also fuel the stereotypical image of Ukrainians, which is not necessarily true. Still, both possibilities help better understand Poles' anxiety about the clash of the two—real or imagined—mindsets.

5. Discussion

The enormous number of immigrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea in recent years fuels anti-immigrant sentiments throughout Europe. It poses even more challenges for the debate on immigration policy. The current state of the European Union immigration policy indicates problems with reaching an agreement on immigration issues. Instead of a common policy, the EU has 28 migration systems varying in openness and flexibility. Although immigration can benefit the aging European population, it will not solve all its economic problems. Still, there are serious obstacles, not only in the form of immigration attitudes. Paradoxically, some countries that could profit the most from a larger working-age population oppose migration significantly. What is more, it is older people who dispute it the most. At least 40 percent of older people in every European Union country declare a negative attitude towards immigrants [43]. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the Ukrainian community of labor migrants consists largely of Generation Y (and younger Generation Z born after 2000). They are well-educated, familiar with new technologies, aware of their needs, and persistent in pursuing them. Among all the people who left Ukraine from 2014 to 2018 for financial reasons, 41 percent were below 35 years old, and only 20 percent of labor migrants were older than 60 [44]. Many of them went to Poland. They are a new type of migrants: world citizens who often consider the country they are in a mere stop along the way. They are not looking for a job. Being aware of their advantages and strengths, they seek to consistently work on their professional careers and high living standards.

A qualitative expert panel study on the human capital of Ukrainian migrants revealed that they exhibited two primary labor strategies. The first was to seek intensive contact with their own culture: working for Ukrainian employers or offering services to other migrants and living near Ukrainians. The other strategy involved penetrating the social fabric of the host country: searching for a job and a place to live among Poles and integrating with Polish circles through participation in the cultural life of Poles, for example. According to the experts, the first strategy was chosen by individuals with an educational background that was either lower or unsuitable for the Polish labor market. At the same time, the other was preferred by young people, students, or those with higher education [45].

The support for the inclusive immigration policy towards Ukrainian nationals is changing in Poland as well. Just after the war started, it reached 90 percent. The enthusiasm declined over time to 70 percent in April 2023. Apparently, nearly all Poles would accept a Ukrainian as their neighbor (92 percent) or coworker (91 percent). A vast majority would not mind a Ukrainian doctor (85 percent). A slightly lower share, but still well over half of Poles, would accept a Ukrainian as a son or daughter-in-law (78 percent), babysitter (74 percent), or boss (73 percent) [46]. As the perception of the war, Russia, and immigration in Polish society changes over time, the population's beliefs about Ukrainian refugees evolve as well. The duration of the war and the costs for host countries are also consequential. Moise, et al. [47] identified a slight decline in the general support for refugees (accounted for by lower support for Ukraine and the West and more negative attitudes towards immigration) five months into the war. The trend will probably continue depending on the dynamics of the war situation. According to a 2023 report by the Polish Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) [48], support for Ukrainian migrants dropped to 73 percent. This indicates a decline compared to the period immediately after the start of the war in February 2022, when nearly all Poles favored welcoming Ukrainians. Today, every fifth person is against it, according to the report. Groups the least ready to accept Ukrainian refugees are:

- Young women aged 18–24 (47 per cent);
- People who believe their own financial situation is poor (50 per cent);
- People without a university degree (60 per cent);
- Residents of towns and rural areas (68 per cent).

April 2023 was also the time when the lowest share of Poles since the beginning of the war offered Ukrainians free help of their own volition: 39 percent compared to 63 percent year-over-year and 46 percent a month earlier, according to the report. The possible reasons for the distinctive decline in hospitality towards refugees from Ukraine are correlated with the deteriorating economic situation in Poland. Young women perceive female Ukrainians as competition in the labor market [49]. Poles are growing less and less favorably inclined towards Ukrainian refugees, except for the acceptance of Ukrainian children in schools. The group of people with negative attitudes towards refugees from Ukraine is growing, and increasingly fewer people believe it is necessary to aid Ukraine. According to the latest study by the European Website on Integration [50], Poles are becoming less and less favorably inclined towards refugees from Ukraine. The survey shows a drop in openness in nearly all aspects of everyday life. The authors identified a significant decrease in positive attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees among Poles, except regarding schools for Ukrainian children, which remains high. As many as 82 percent support accepting Ukrainian children in schools. Still, the respondents do not support the Ukrainian curriculum. Half of them believe only the Polish curriculum should apply, and 40 percent are inclined towards a new one developed jointly by Poland and Ukraine. The group of people exhibiting negative attitudes towards war refugees continues to grow, primarily because of the entitlement mentality among Ukrainians. More and more respondents see differences between the two nations. The participants mentioned the eastern mindset of Ukrainians and Soviet culture[3], embodied in disregard for common property [52]. Ukraine's policy does not help alleviate the sentiment. Some representatives of authorities and media have stigmatized people from eastern Ukraine. This has contributed to cautious or hostile responses from Ukrainians living in central and western districts. Authorities and journalists have often expressed negative opinions about residents of Donbas. One example is a statement made by Oleksii Reznikov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, on 31 October 2020, referring to areas of Donbas not controlled by Ukraine as 'mentally ill territories' and comparing them to a tumor [53].

[3] Note that 94–97 per cent of Ukrainians in south-eastern regions used the Russian language for everyday communication in 2019 [51].

The specific assessment of the Ukrainian mindset, different from the assessed Polish mindset, may also stem from the different organizations of the two states and their institutions. Corruption is particularly relevant as it degrades institutional and social trust [54] in public life [55-57]. Corruption is widespread, tolerated, or even accepted in Ukraine because many politicians and the public do not consider it a deviation. Corruption is part of Ukraine's culture and political will, which affects civil society. It is rooted in the legislation and institutional system, providing a foundation for a state of blackmail and organized crime [58]. Any obstacles to a political and economic monopoly of power are removed through co-option, bribery, threats, and selective justice [59].

The outcomes are reflected in macrosocial indices. Ukraine was classified as the 132nd state out of 163 regarding societal safety and security (SSaS)[4] in 2018 (Poland was 32nd). Regarding corruption, Ukraine was 164th among 192 countries (Poland 52nd). Regarding the Human Development Index, Ukraine was ranked 80th (Poland at position 34) [60]. In 2018, Ukraine was counted among hybrid regimes and No. 84 on the Democracy Index list[5], while Poland was a flowed democracy at position 54.

A hybrid regime consists of both democratic and authoritarian mechanisms. It may have formal democratic institutions, but authoritarian practices of those in power severely hinder their functioning [62].

6. Conclusions

The statistical analysis offers the following conclusions:

1. Women demonstrated a less favorable attitude toward Ukrainian refugees than men;
2. Young respondents aged 25–34 declared the most negative attitude;
3. People with higher education declared the most positive attitude;
4. Residents of those municipalities where the number of Ukrainians grew assumed less favorable attitudes;
5. The strongest negative attitude by macro-region was identified among residents of the Eastern, South-Western, North-Western, and Mazowieckie Voivodeships, while the strongest positive attitude was found in the Northern macro-region.
6. No differences in attitudes of inhabitants of villages and towns were identified;
7. The respondents indicated three potential causes of problems for Polish-Ukrainian relationships: mindset differences, historical resentments, and cultural differences. They found religious differences much less of a possible problem.

The less favorable attitude among women is rooted chiefly in more experience with female Ukrainians. Most of the refugees are women and children. They displayed various behaviors, some of which were typical of the entitlement mentality to a lesser or greater extent. This has aroused opposition, particularly among Polish women. The young age of the female respondents who exhibited a cautious approach is correlated with their participation in the labor market and perception of young Ukrainian women as competitors, made worse by the access to social support and any aid offered by the Polish state to the latter. Note further that people with university degrees have different life outlooks and more advantageous labor market situations, which can lead to more tolerant attitudes towards economic migrants (conclusions 1, 2, and 3).

Ukrainian sentiment grew more radical in places where the respondents declared an increase in migrant population after the Russo-Ukrainian war broke out (conclusion 4).

Ukrainians who come to Poland tend to settle in voivodeships with large urban agglomerations. Secondary data show that the most popular voivodeships are Mazowieckie (21 percent of people), Dolnośląskie (11 percent), Wielkopolskie (11 percent), Małopolskie (10 percent), and Śląskie (9 percent) (Obywatele Ukrainy w Polsce – aktualne dane migracyjne [Ukrainian Citizens in Poland. Current Migration Data], 2023). Negative attitudes towards migrants have been identified among respondents from macro-regions with large agglomerations. The more prominent presence of migrants leads to more interactions that intensify the negative experiences for host country residents. Similarly, the positive attitude among the respondents from the Northern macro-region stems from the small population of migrants due to the lower level of economic development (conclusion 5) and a focus on tourism (Pomerania).

The mindsets of people from rural areas and towns are not different enough to significantly influence differences in attitudes toward migrants (conclusion 6).

The respondents shared the main problems with building proper Polish-Ukrainian relationships. These include differences in mindset, historical resentments, and cultural differences (conclusion 7).

It is the most complicated part of the study, which identifies a research gap. Beyond any doubt, history harms relationships between these nations, as demonstrated in the section 'Impact of history, culture, and religion on the coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians.' On the other hand, the issues of mindset and cultural differences require more extensive research, considering such matters as internal historical and cultural divisions within the Ukrainian nation. People living in eastern Ukraine are more pro-Russia and conservative and speak primarily Russian. This 'language of the enemy' causes significant confusion and controversy for Poles. Poles note differences in the mindsets of Ukrainians from the east, who are more asocial, do not respect public property, and disregard work as opposed to Ukrainians from the western part of the country. These matters are worth looking into to improve our perspective on identifying barriers towards a common identity of Poles and Ukrainians.

[4] This index takes into account such issues as crime levels, percentage of refugees and internally displaced people, political instability, scale of political terror, terrorism impact, homicides per 100,000 residents, level of violent crime, likelihood of violent demonstrations, number of jailed population per 100,000 people, and number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 people.

[5] Democracy Index (DI) is based on 60 indicators in five categories: electoral process and pluralism; functioning of government; political participation; political culture; and civil liberties [61].

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Appendix 1.
To the Rector's Order No. 222/2020 dated December 17, 2020.

Application no:	114/2023
Opinion date:	28.02.2023