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The 500+ Social Benefit among Households with Children from Ukraine Residing in Poland in 2023: Receiving and Spending

Abstract

The study aims to identify aspects connected with receiving and spending of the 500+ social benefit fund among households with children from Ukraine residing in Poland in 2023. The research was made from January to March 2023 on the sample of 354 respondents from Ukraine residing in Poland, using a combined PAPI and CAWI method. Research results showed that more than 62% of the surveyed receive funds from 500+ fund. The

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higher the education, the less often the benefit is claimed. The vast majority of respondents (85.3%) indicated that they spend the entire amount coming from 500+ on their basic children's needs. On one hand, approximately 50% of the respondents combine income from 500+ fund with income from gainful employment but on the other hand, for about ¼ of the surveyed respondents, funds from the 500+ fund and other social funds are the only sources of income at their disposal.

Keywords: 500+ fund, household expenses, Ukraine

JEL Classification Codes: I38, I39, H89

Świadczenie 500+ wśród gospodarstw domowych z dziećmi z Ukrainy znajdujących się na terenie Polski w roku 2023: pobieranie i wydatkowanie

Abstrakt

Badanie miało na celu zdiagnozowanie aspektów związanych z pobieraniem i wydatkowaniem świadczenia 500+ przez gospodarstwa domowe z dziećmi z Ukrainy, znajdujące się na terenie Polski w roku 2023. Badanie zostało przeprowadzone w okresie styczeń–marzec 2023 r. na grupie 354 obywateli Ukrainy przebywających na terenie Polski, za pomocą łączonej metody PAPI i CAWI. Wyniki badania wykazały, iż ponad 62% uprawnionych osób z Ukrainy pobierało świadczenie 500+ w roku 2023. Przy tym im wyższy poziom edukacji respondentów, tym rzadziej były pobierane środki z funduszu. Przeważająca liczba respondentów (85,3%) zadeklarowała, iż wszystkie środki z funduszu 500+ wydatkowane są przede wszystkim na bieżące, podstawowe potrzeby dziecięce. Z jednej strony około 50% respondentów łączyło środki z funduszu 500+ z dochodami z tytułu wykonywanej pracy, lecz z drugiej strony dla około ¼ badanych środki z funduszu 500+ i innych socjalnych funduszy to jedyne źródła dochodu będące do ich dyspozycji.

Słowa kluczowe: fundusz 500 plus, wydatki w gospodarstwach domowych, Ukraina

Kody klasyfikacji JEL: I38, I39, H89

Introduction

As a result of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, many residents of Ukraine left the country, heading first to neighbouring countries, and Poland, in particular. A significant number of refugees initially arrived in the eastern Polish regions of Lubelskie and Podkarpackie Voivodeships before

moving on to other regions of Poland and other countries (primarily the European Union). The support provided to refugees in Poland included many forms of assistance organised by various types of entities: government administration, local governments, public institutions, non-governmental and church organisations, entrepreneurs and individuals (Kawałko, 2022: 7). One of the significant steps taken by the Polish government to address the situation was the introduction of the Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine (Dz.U. z 2022 r. poz. 583 ze zm.) The Act granted Ukrainian citizens the rights to legal residence in Poland, to obtain a UKR PESEL number (personal identification number used in Poland), to perform legal work, to educate their children in Polish educational institutions, to receive medical assistance and to receive various monetary social benefits, including the right of Ukrainian citizens to receive the 500+ parental benefit for children up to the age of 18, which will be the focus of this paper (Dz.U. z 2022 r. poz. 583 ze zm). According to the Polish Central Statistical Office, the Polish Government allocated 1737.1 million PLN for parental benefits, called 500+, to 298.8 thousand Ukrainian children in 2022 (*Świadczenia na rzecz rodziny wypłacane obywatelom Ukrainy w 2022, 2023*). Most of these funds were paid in the Mazowieckie (19.1%), Śląskie and Dolnośląskie (10.6% each) and Wielkopolskie (9.7%) Voivodeships (*Świadczenia na rzecz rodziny ...*, 2023: 6).

This study aims to identify the receiving and spending patterns of the 500+ social benefit fund among households with children from Ukraine residing in Poland in 2023. In Poland, households with children under 18 have been covered by the government's Family 500+ programme since 2016⁶ (Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 2407, z późn. zm.). Since its introduction, the programme has aroused unrelenting discussion in academic and public discourse. This discussion revolves around aspects related to, among other things, the desirability of the programme's introduction, the degree to which the objectives set have been achieved or changes to the programme itself (Dziwosz, 2017; Gromada, 2018; Dawid, 2018; Krawczyk, 2019). Recently, the threads of the ongoing discussion mainly concern the Law increasing the value of the benefit from monthly amount of PLN 500 to PLN 800, which signed by President Andrzej Duda in August 2023 and introduces an increase in the 500+ benefit from 1 January 2024 by PLN 300 per month (the other conditions of the programme remain unchanged) (Government Support for Polish Families - 800+, 2023) and the discussion concerning the granting of the benefit to persons from Ukraine residing in Poland, as R. Staniszewski wrote: 'One of the most controversial issues concerning assistance for

⁶ From January 1, 2024, the amount of the upbringing benefit has been increased to PLN 800 per month per child (Family 800+ fund).

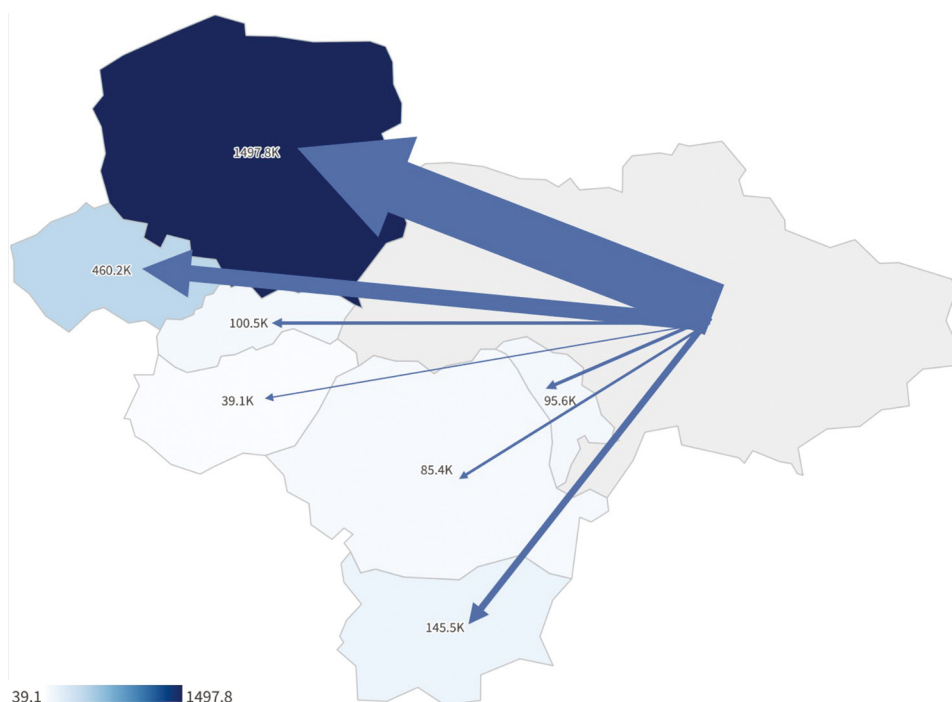
refugees from Ukraine was the inclusion of them in family and upbringing benefits, including the 500+ programme' (Staniszewski, 2023: 394). For example, during the pre-election debate organised by public television, which took place on 09 October 2023, Confederation candidate Marcin Bosak clearly advocated the need to deprive people coming from Ukraine of the fund (Pre-election Debate, 2023). According to R. Staniszewski's research, the opinion of Poles on the March 2022 law on assistance for Ukrainian citizens is primarily positive – $\frac{3}{4}$ of the surveyed Poles who have heard about this Law believe that its adoption was justified, 10% believe that it was not justified, 11% have no opinion, while 19% have not heard about this Law (Staniszewski, 2023: 389). For the general question regarding whether Poland should help Ukraine during the war with Russia, 91% of respondents said yes (Staniszewski, 2023: 389–392). However, when asked about the legitimacy of Ukrainian refugees' access to upbringing and family benefits (including 500+ one), only 28% of surveyed Poles represented a favourable attitude, 42% were against extending these benefits to Ukrainian refugees, and 26% were undecided (Staniszewski, 2023: 394–395). This factor negatively influencing Poles' attitude towards Ukrainians is also mentioned by N. Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak: 'At the same time, one can point to circumstances that are not conducive to contact based on a common system of values. A key one here appears to be the economic factor and the potential consideration of Ukrainians as being supported too strongly by the Polish state' (Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak, 2023: 337–338). Also, in another study by Sierakowski and Sadura: 'Poles do not like the inclusion of Ukrainians in PESEL system, the 500+ programme and others. There is a belief that refugees so 'generously' supported will not want to return to their country, will overburden the already inefficient public service systems, will take away jobs' (Sierakowski, Sadura, 2022: 29). Given the situation briefly described, it seemed reasonable to examine the significance of the 500+ programme as a source of income for people from Ukraine and to outline what these funds are used for.

Characteristics of migrants from Ukraine

According to estimates by the Border Guard Headquarters, from the moment of the Russian invasion to Ukraine until November 2022, more than 7.3 million refugees from Ukraine crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border (including almost 3.2 million through border crossings located in the Lublin Voivodeship). At the same time, 5.5 million Ukrainian citizens left Poland during this period (Kawalko, 2022: 9). Under the Law mentioned above on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine, which entered into force on March 12, 2022, refugees can apply for the status of UKR foreigner,

granted to more than 1 million people at the end of October 2022 (Kawałko, 2022). UNHCR estimates made at a similar time (November 2022) indicate that there were more than 7.8 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe at that time, of which 4.7 million had registered in various European countries for protection and temporary residence opportunities. The number of refugees registered in selected countries in Central and Eastern Europe by October 2022 according to UNHCR data was shown on the fig. 1. This situation indicates the most extensive population migration after the Second World War in Europe, one of the largest migration crises in the contemporary world, and the crucial role of Poland as an inflow country for refugees from Ukraine (Ukraine situation flash update #35, 2022). Noteworthy, Poland is mainly taking on the burden of supporting refugees. Even though Poland hosts by far the largest number of refugees from Ukraine, it has only 6 ‘Blue Dots’ – refugee support points organised by UNHCR and UNICEF. At the same time, Moldova has nine such points, Romania 7, Slovakia 3, and Bulgaria as many as Poland, i.e. 6 (Ukraine situation flash update #35, 2022).

Figure 1. Ukrainian refugee flows to neighbouring CEE countries as for October 2022 (thousands)



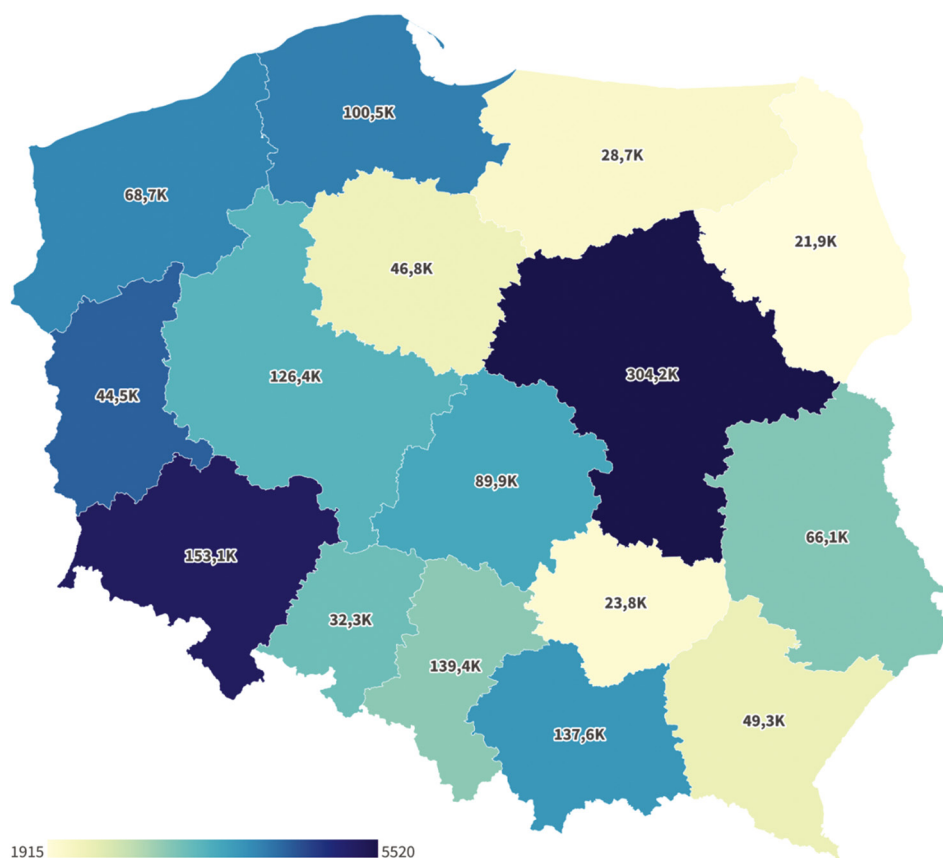
Note: Width of flow is proportional to the number of inflowing registered refugees.

Source: own elaboration.

Regarding the demographic structure of Ukrainian refugees in Poland (estimated at the end of October 2022), 46.8% were women aged 18–65, and 8.6% were men in this age range. Minors accounted for 40.8% (the distribution of women and men in this group was similar). Women over 65 accounted for 2.9%, while men over 65 accounted for 0.9% (Kawalko, 2022: 11).

Precise estimation of the spatial distribution of refugees on the territory of Poland seems difficult. However, based on the place of registration of the application for UKR status, it may be assumed that the location of people in particular voivodeships is according to the data shown on the fig. 2. The map contains a compilation of the number of refugees from Ukraine per 100 thousand inhabitants in relation to the population of voivodeships (as of the end of the year 2022, according to data from the LDB of the Central Statistical Office).

Figure 2. Number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland by voivodeships, as for the end of 2022 per 100,000 inhabitants (persons)



Source: own elaboration based on the data of the CSO LDB.

The largest number of refugees resided in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship (304.2 thousand), and the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (153.1 thousand), while the smallest number lived in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (23.8 thousand), and the Podlaskie Voivodeship (21.9 thousand).

Within each region, most refugees resided in the provincial capitals by the end of 2022. For example, Warsaw was the choice of about 104.9 thousand people – almost half of the refugees in the whole Mazowieckie Voivodeship. Similarly, in Kraków, about 30 thousand people representing about one-third of those in the Małopolskie Voivodeship, and for Lublin, about 22% of refugees from Ukraine located in the Lubelskie Voivodeship, i.e. about 8.8 thousand people (Kawałko, 2022: 12).

According to EWL foundation research as for March 2023, 62% of surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland intend to return to Ukraine in the near or long term (Ukraińcy na polskim rynku pracy, 2023: 4). Survey results published by UNHCR in July 2023 show similar figures, according to which more than two-thirds of Ukrainian refugees surveyed hope to return to their country, but do not plan to do so soon, usually due to insecurity. A return in the near future (within three months after the study) was considered by 17% of respondents; 8% were undecided on this question, and only 4% said they do not plan to return (Nowy sondaż UNHCR na temat uchodźców z Ukrainy w Polsce, 2023). Other surveys on the subject indicate that 42% of refugees intend to return to Ukraine as soon as possible after the end of the war, 7% want to return already, and another 14% plan to stay in Poland for a while but return to their country after earning money. 17% want to stay in Poland permanently, and 3% want to obtain Polish citizenship. Research by ARC Rynek i Opinia's indicated similar results, according to which 27% of refugees want to stay in Poland after the war's end (Wpływ uchodźców z Ukrainy..., 2022). In the statements of the refugees concerning the factors determining their willingness to leave Poland and return to Ukraine, in addition to the factors attracting them to their home country, such as homesickness and family, patriotism, or the reconstruction of the country, factors pushing them out of Poland are visible, such as the high cost of living, problems with taking a job, problems with renting a flat, and the feeling of alienation (Długosz, Kryvachuk and Izdebska-Długosz, 2022: 42). In conclusion, staying in Poland for the vast majority of Ukrainian citizens is a mentally and materially challenging stage, forced by the war and temporary, not involving permanent settlement in Poland.

Materials and research methods

In order to diagnose selected aspects related to the collection and spending of 500+ funds by Ukrainian households with children residing in Poland, an attempt was made to establish answers to the following research questions:

- Do careers of children from Ukraine residing in Poland in 2023 collect the 500+ benefit to which they are entitled?
- What is the money spending on the received 500+ benefit among Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023?
- Is the 500+ benefit combined with the other sources of income among Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023, and if so, what are these sources (professional work, other social benefits)?

For that purpose, a mixed-mode quantitative survey was conducted using a combined PAPI (Paper & Pencil Personal Interview) and CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) method. The preferred method of data collection was the PAPI method. However, some respondents, conditioned by their preferences and possibilities, could participate in the study by choosing the CAWI method (the questionnaire was placed on the 1K server of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, and the link to the questionnaire was made available to the respondents). Data was collected from January to March 2023. The selection of individuals for the study was purposive. Individuals who were guardians of children from Ukraine of legal age residing in Poland participated in the study.

A total of 354 people took part in the survey. The research conducted was only a pilot study and covered the period of several months (January-March 2023). It was aimed at identifying the preliminary trends in receiving and spending money from 500+ fund among households with children from Ukraine residing in the time of the research in Poland. The mix nature of the survey (PAPI and CAWI) did not permit controlled sample selection. Due to the lack of representativeness of the groups of respondents, the relatively low number of returned questionnaires (354), and the number of dependent variables, statistical tests could not be applied, and it was limited to a per cent analysis. The general characteristics of the respondents are provided in Table 1.

Among the respondents, almost 100% were women. Of these, 40.8% were aged 25–34 and 44.7% were aged 35–45. Most of the respondents were tertiary educated (61.4%), and were married (67.3%). As for the total number of children they had, 46.5% of the respondents had one child, and 37.7% – two children. On the other hand, regarding the number of children staying with the guardian in Poland, in 51% of cases it was one child, in 34.3% – two children, 13.2% – three children, and 1.5%, correspondingly, four or more children. Respondents most often resided in Poland,

starting from February–May 2022, i.e. they arrived immediately after the outbreak of the war (63%). Before coming to Poland, majority of the respondents resided in urban areas of Ukraine: 48% in a large city, and 29% in a medium city. As for the regional aspect, respondents were most often from the eastern region of Ukraine (26.9%), and the central and western regions (23.2% per each region, correspondingly).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed respondents, $n = 354$

Groups of respondents' characteristics	Answers	Share of respondents (%)
Age	15–24 years	6.3
	25–34 years	40.8
	35–45 years	44.7
	46–53 years	8.2
Education	incomplete secondary and intermediate	22.8
	part-time higher education	15.8
	higher	61.4
Civil status	married	67.3
	divorced	13.7
	widow/widower	2.6
	single	11.1
	in an informal relationship	5.2
Total number of children owned	1 child	46.5
	2 children	37.7
	3 children	12.9
	4 and more children	2.9
Number of children residing in Poland	1 child	51.0
	2 children	34.3
	3 children	13.2
	4 and more children	1.5
Socio-occupational status before arrival to Poland	working in the state sector	20.8
	working in the private sector	26.7
	self-employed	12.6
	on maternity leave	13.2
	unemployed	19.6
	student	5.3
	pensioner	0.9
Self-assessed level of income in Poland	definitely higher than I have in Ukraine	18.6
	rather higher than I have in Ukraine	20.9
	the same as I have in Ukraine	19.2
	rather lower than I have in Ukraine	22.1
	definitely lower than I have in Ukraine	19.2

Source: own elaboration.

Most respondents had worked before coming to Poland: 20.8% of these worked in the state sector, 26.7% in the private sector, and 12.6% were self-employed. One should mention that among the respondents, almost 1/5 were unemployed.

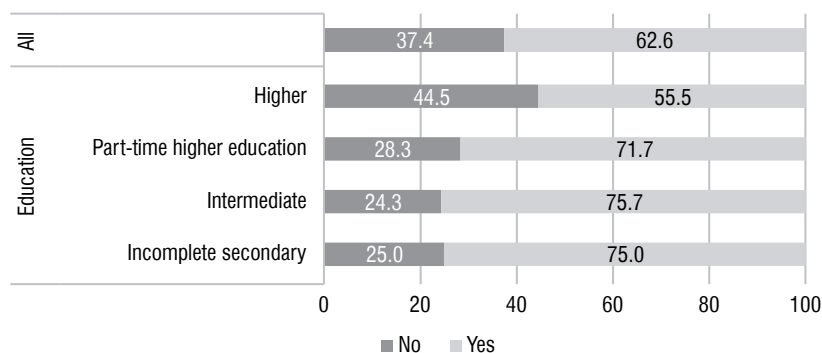
The data collected was analysed using the SPSS 29 statistical package.

Results

Receipt of 500+ benefit, other sources of income, and self-assessment of material situation of surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023

Establishing the exact number of guardians of children from Ukraine collecting the 500+ benefit in Poland is extremely difficult due to the situation's dynamics - submission of new applications by entitled persons and loss of the possibility to collect the benefit by persons leaving. It should be noted that the benefit is granted only for the duration of a person's stay in Poland - Ukrainians lose the right to the benefit in the situation of departure for a period longer than 30 days (Ukraińcy masowo tracą prawo do 500 plus, 2023). Research by P. Długosz, L. Kryvachuk, and D. Izdebska-Długosz (2022: 31) indicates that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the surveyed refugees from Ukraine have applied or intend to apply for the 500+ benefit for children. This corresponds with our own studies, which show that more than 62% of the surveyed guardians of children from Ukraine receive funds from the 500+ fund. Of these, more than half of the respondents receive funds for one child, almost 1/3 – for two children, 13.4% – for three children, and 1.4% for four or more children, correspondingly (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Receipt of 500+ benefit among surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023 in term of educational background, $n = 340$ (%)

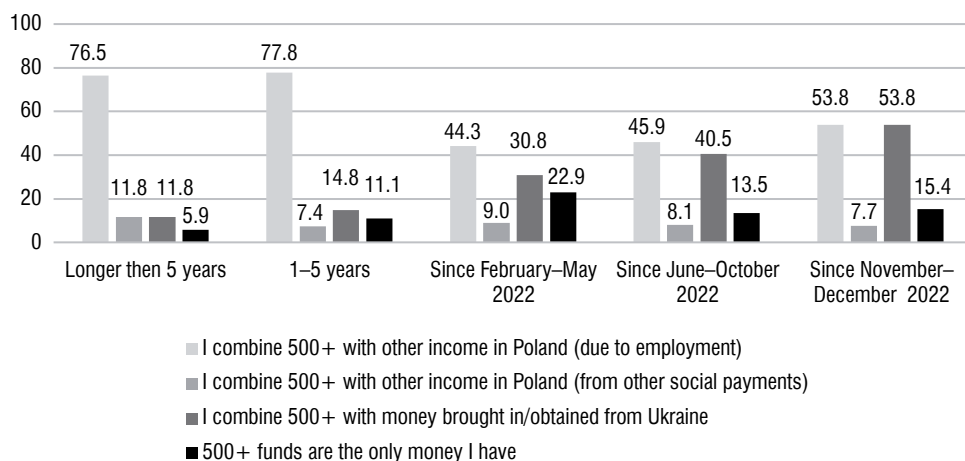


Source: own elaboration.

The analyses showed that claiming the child benefit depends on the respondents' education ($Chi\text{-square} = 12.044, p = 0.007, df = 3, V = 0.188$). The higher the education, the less often the benefit is claimed (75% of respondents in the group with secondary education or less, compared to 71.7% of those with incomplete tertiary education and 55.5% of those with tertiary education). This situation may be due to the greater mobility of people with tertiary education, their better material situation or their willingness to leave Poland for other countries. The relationship is also visible in relation to the region the respondents come from ($Chi\text{-square} = 14.114, p = 0.007, df = 4, V = 0.202$). People from the southern region are less likely (40%) to collect the benefit than those from the other regions (around 60% for each group). There was no correlation between claiming the benefit and the length of stay in Poland, place of residence, receipt of funds from other social benefits in Poland, marital status, number of children or subjective assessment of the material situation.

Respondents collecting the benefit were also asked about other sources of income they have while staying in Poland, as collecting the benefit is not dependent on the level of income. Ukrainian citizens legally residing on the territory of Poland who have a PESEL number are entitled to take up employment and, in addition to the upbringing 500+ benefit is entitled to other financial forms of support, for example, family benefits (care allowance, care allowance, childbirth benefit), benefits under the 'Good start' programme or the Family Welfare Capital.

Figure 4. Sources of livelihood and length of stay of surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023, $n = 295$ (%)



Source: own elaboration.

Approximately 50% of respondents combine income from the 500+ fund with income from gainful employment, and 30% of respondents combine funds from the 500+ fund with money brought from Ukraine. On the other hand, for about 1/4 of the surveyed respondents, funds from the 500+ fund and other social funds are the only sources of income at their disposal. The distribution of answers depends on the time of residence in Poland. Those who arrived in Poland before February 2022 are far more likely to combine 500+ with gainful employment (about 77%). On the contrary, in the group of immigrants who arrived in Poland as a result of war events, the percentage is much lower, oscillating around 45–53% for the respective groups. The longer the time spent in Poland, the share of resources brought from Ukraine from which the respondents earn their living decreases. 11.8% of those staying in Poland the longest connect 500+ with money brought from Ukraine, 14.8% of those staying in Poland 1–5 years, 30.8% of those who came between February and May 2022, 40.5% of those who came between June and October 2022, and 53.8% of those who came in the last months of 2022. 500+ is the only source of livelihood, most often for those who came to Poland in the first months after the invasion (22.9%).

On the contrary, the percentage of these who have been in Poland for more than five years and support themselves only with 500+ funds is about 6%. The distribution of answers to this question also depends on the respondents' place of residence in Ukraine. Those coming from rural areas are least likely to link 500+ with gainful employment – 29%, compared to approximately 60 to 45% for the other groups. For those from rural areas, 500+ is also more often the only source of income (35.5%, compared to between 12 and 26% of respondents from cities of all sizes).

It is worth pointing out that, according to data from other studies, 78% of Ukrainian citizens in Poland are employed, of which 35% perform work in line with their qualifications (pre-war and war immigrants combined) (*Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy nowe wyzwania i perspektywy*, 2023). However, if only war refugees are considered, the situation looks different. According to a study by K. Pędziwiatr, J. Brzozowski, and O. Nahorniuk (2022: 53), access to the labour market was indicated by respondents as the biggest problem they face in functioning in Poland (indicated by 47% of respondents). One should mention that data on refugees working in Poland varies. For example, a survey conducted in April 2022 indicated that 83% of refugees did not work, but more than half wanted to take up work (*Wpływ uchodźców z Ukrainy na polską gospodarkę*, 2022). As indicated by other data from a study on refugees in the Małopolskie Voivodeship, 27% of them had employment in Poland (as of June 2022), but most often in unskilled occupations (Pędziwiatr, Brzozowski, and Nahorniuk, 2022: 45–47). In turn, according to a study by P. Długosz, L. Kryvachuk, and D. Izdebska-Długosz (2022: 25–26), almost 1/3 of the refugees worked

remotely in Ukraine and received remuneration for this, another 18% of the refugees surveyed took up work in Poland and 71% intended to take up work in Poland. This is also confirmed by research by ARC Rynek i Opinia, according to which more than half of Ukrainian refugees declare their willingness to work in Poland (*Wpływ uchodźców z Ukrainy na polską gospodarkę*, 2022).

The percentages shown may be due to the difficulty of finding one's way in the labour market in a foreign country, especially as migrants from Ukraine arriving in Poland are typically educated persons. Approximately half of the Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland completed higher education - 51% according to a study conducted in the Małopolska region (Pędziwiatr, Brzozowski and Nahorniuk, 2022: 44) and 56% according to EWL research (*Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy*, 2023: 4).

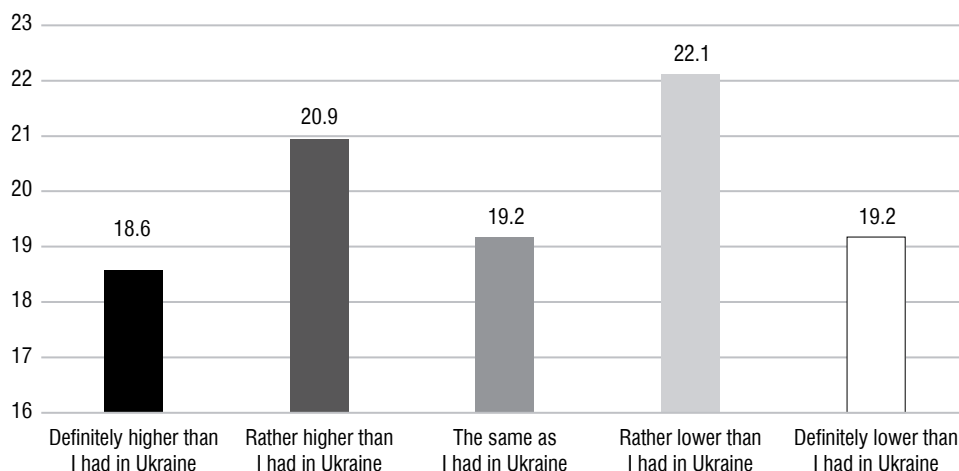
The situation of finding a job in Poland may not be facilitated by the fact that the majority of migrant women are women and that currently, the Polish labour market is mainly looking for "typically male" professions, e.g. in transport (truck driver or bus driver) or technical professions (bricklayer, carpenter). In addition, the situation is not facilitated by the need for childcare, the lack of support from loved ones, or the instability of the residence situation. Research from March 2023 carried out by EWL indicates that 40% of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland negatively assess the extent to which childcare is provided to enable their parents to seek and take up employment or further training (*Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy*, 2023: 11).

Another factor determining the opportunities for foreigners to work and study is the degree of language proficiency. According to a study by P. Długosz, L. Kryvachuk, and D. Izdebska-Długosz (2022: 19), only 16% of Ukrainian war migrants surveyed in Poland speak Polish fluently, 18% do not know the language at all, and 67% understand to a greater or lesser extent, but do not speak Polish. The results of another study indicate that knowledge of the Polish language was declared by slightly more than 20% of Ukrainian respondents (Pędziwiatr, Brzozowski and Nahorniuk, 2022: 15). On the other hand, according to EWL research from March 2023, only 3%, declare knowledge of the Polish language at a good or excellent level (*Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy*, 2023: 4). The majority of the surveyed refugees plan to make an effort to learn the Polish language – 81% declare that they plan to learn or are already making attempts to learn (according to ARC Rynek i Opinia 78%) of which 69% learn on their own. At the same time, the remaining persons use the support of associations, public schools or universities (Długosz, Kryvachuk and Izdebska-Długosz, 2022: 20).

The study analysed in this article also diagnosed the self-assessment of the level of income held in Poland, which showed that 41.3% of respondents declare that their income in Poland is lower than that held in Ukraine, of which 1/5 of respondents

indicate that it is definitely lower. On the contrary 39.5% of respondents have a higher income in Poland than they had in Ukraine. A further 20% indicate that their income is the same as in Ukraine.

Figure 5. Evaluation of the level of income received in Poland among surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023, $n = 339$ (%)



Source: own elaboration.

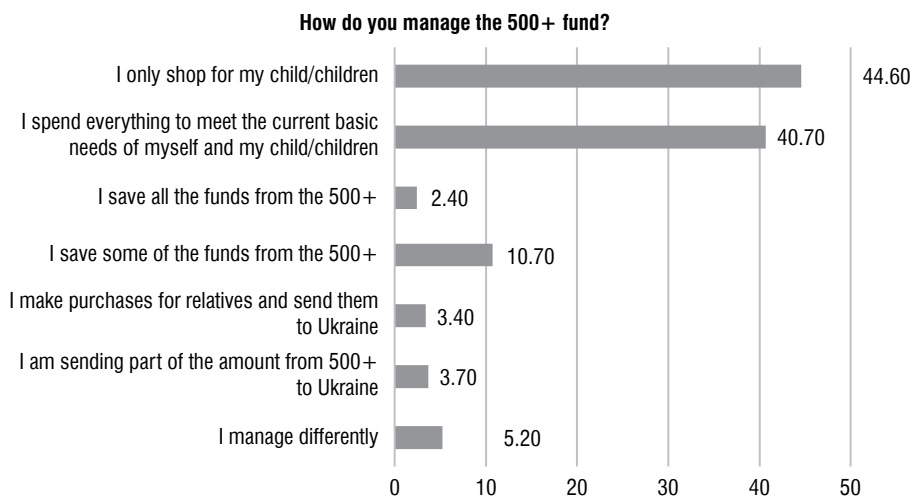
Thus, the study shows that a similar number of people that have higher incomes after arriving in Poland, that indicating their incomes are lower than in Ukraine. This corresponds with other research findings on the material situation of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland. According to a study by ARC Rynek i Opinia, 44% of Ukrainians assess their current material situation as average (*Wpływ uchodźców z Ukrainy na polską gospodarkę*, 2022). Similarly, research by EWL indicates that the material situation of Ukrainian citizens in Poland was subjectively assessed by them typically as average (55%), rather bad 18% or rather good 17% (*Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy*, 2023: 20). Research also indicates that Ukrainian citizens were not doing badly before the outbreak of war. Analyses conducted by P. Długosz, L. Kryvachuk, and D. Izdebska-Długosz (2022:13) showed mainly a good material situation of refugees before their arrival in Poland, as the authors wrote: 'The material situation of Ukrainian refugees before the outbreak of war should be assessed positively'. According to the study of the cited authors, 49% of the respondents could afford to buy expensive things, and another 13% could satisfy their needs without special restrictions. This, in turn, may be due to the relatively stable employment situation in Ukraine of the majority of the respondents as evidenced by data on the professional status of refugees, according to which

45% had employment in Ukraine, 14% had the status of a pensioner, 2.6% worked in their own business or family farm and only 4.2% were unemployed (Pędziwiatr, Brzozowski, Nahorniuk, 2022: 42).

Expenditure of 500+ funds by surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023

In the next part of the survey, respondents answered questions about managing the money from the 500+ fund in 2023 (fig. 6).

Figure 6. Ways of managing the 500+ funds by surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023, $n = 295$ (%)



Source: own elaboration.

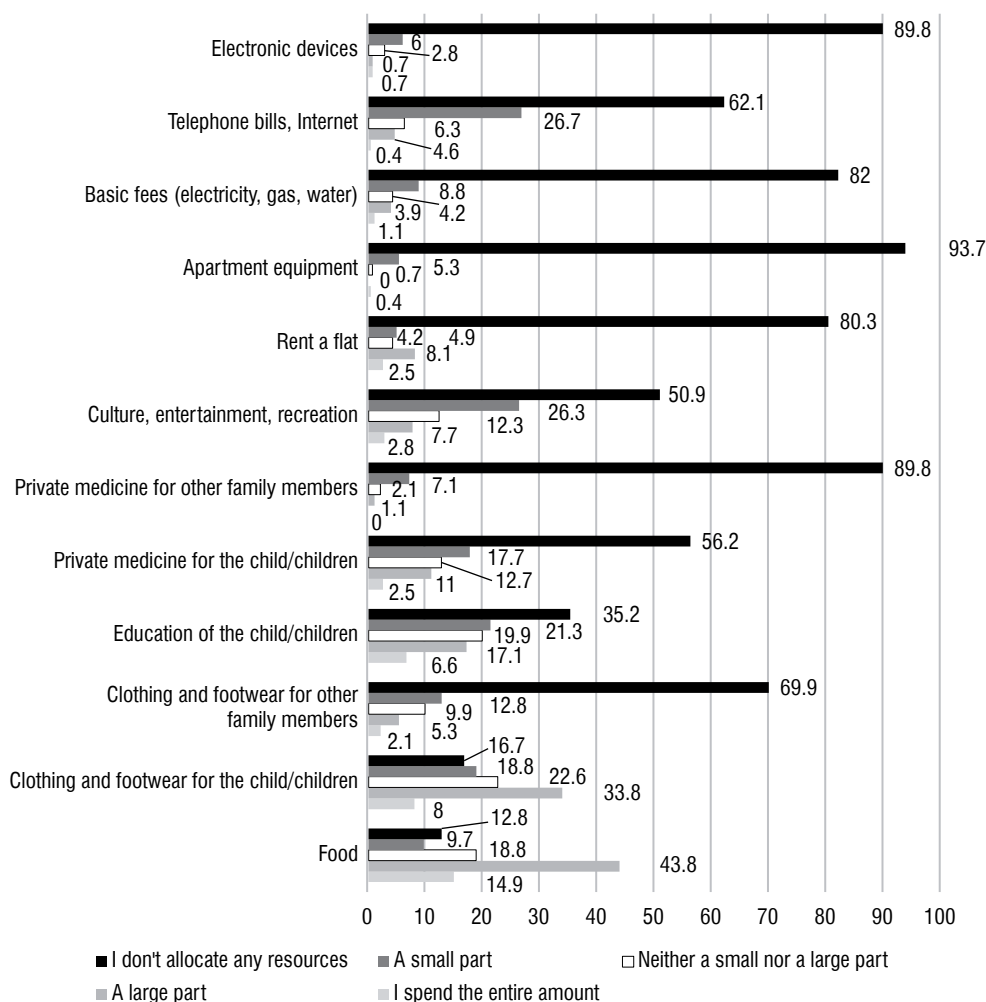
The vast majority of respondents to the survey (85.3%) indicated that they spend the entire amount coming from 500+ on their and their child's current needs, with more than half of them shopping exclusively for the child. 13% of respondents use the 500+ money for savings. 7% spend the amount received from 500+ on helping their relatives by shopping and sending products to Ukraine or by sending money. These results differ slightly from the data collected by EWL, according to which 54% of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland send money to Ukraine, and the average amount sent is 771 PLN per month (Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy, 2023: 21).

Only 5.2% of respondents indicated that they manage the funds from parental benefit in other ways. Among the individual responses, paying for a nursery for children

or kindergarten, paying for housing, or using the funds for health care (e.g., purchase of medication or rehabilitation of a sick child) were mentioned most frequently.

Respondents were also asked to estimate the proportion of the 500+ amount used for each category in 2023. The respondents' answers are included in the Figure 7.

Figure 7. Use of the 500+ fund by surveyed Ukrainians residing in Poland in 2023 by different categories of expenditure (%)



Source: own elaboration.

Among the most important expenditures, we can distinguish spending on food (59% of respondents spend all or most of the 500+ amount on this), clothing and footwear for the child (42% respectively), as well as on the child's education (24%)

and private medicine for the child (13.5%). According to UNHCR and UNICEF, approximately 173,000 Ukrainian refugee children residing in Poland are currently enrolled in schools. However, data simultaneously shows that 'more than half of Ukrainian refugee children in Poland are not enrolled in the national education system' (Wspólny komunikat prasowy UNHCR i UNICEF: Ponad połowa ukraińskich dzieci uchodźców nie jest zapisana do szkół w Polsce, 2023).

These children are likely to try often to continue their education online, using the Ukrainian curriculum or other distance learning platforms (according to research by P. Długosz, L. Kryvachuk, and D. Izdebska-Długosz this is about 45% of refugee children), others study informally or have dropped out. This situation may be due to frequent movement to and from Ukraine, language barriers and the inability of schools to accommodate new students (Wspólny komunikat prasowy UNHCR i UNICEF: Ponad połowa ukraińskich dzieci uchodźców nie jest zapisana do szkół w Polsce, 2023). According to a March 2023 EWL survey, 70% of respondents declare that their children benefit from the Polish education system (noting that the survey also included Ukrainians who arrived in Poland before the war). Of these, 1/3 indicate that they use only the Polish education system, 27% indicate that they educate their children in the Ukrainian education system, and 38% use both systems (Obywatele Ukrainy na polskim rynku pracy nowe wyzwania i perspektywy, 2023: 4).

A relatively high share of respondents allocating all or most of the 500+ amount to renting a flat was also quite common (in around 11% of cases), which does not seem surprising given that almost two-thirds of refugees currently live in flats they rent individually or jointly in Poland (Nowy sondaż UNHCR na temat uchodźców z Ukrainy w Polsce, 2023). Also, about 11% of respondents use at least part of the 500+ amount for culture, entertainment and recreation for themselves and their child/children.

Conclusions and recommendations

The issues related to the analysis of the validity of the directions of migration policy in Poland seem to be particularly relevant nowadays, especially in term of the challenge of building up a new policy of an immigration state (not an emigration state, as it was before). It was mentioned by H. Wyligala (2022: 26) in her work that: 'The annual migration balance has been positive since 2018, which shows the importance of inflow processes and changes the profile of the country from a transit and emigration one to an immigration one'. This policy should be aimed at building not only multicultural cohesion but also the economic efficiency of the country and the individual groups that comprise its components. There is no doubt that such a large

number of immigrants who arrived in Poland as a result of the hostilities in Ukraine will have an impact (and already has) on the Polish economy and society. A particular challenge will be the transformation of the labour market (Kubiciel-Lodzińska, Solga and Filipowicz, 2023).

According to EWL research, the factors most conducive to the integration of Ukrainian citizens in Poland are quick access to social benefits (50% of respondents indicated this answer), facilitation of access to language courses - 48%, and facilitation of access to education 47% (Citizens of Ukraine on the Polish labour market, 2023: 23). 500+ fund should therefore be considered as a strong motivating factor for Ukrainian citizens to stay in Poland, especially taking into consideration the fact that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the refugees surveyed came to Poland with children (Długosz, Kryvachuk and Izdebska-Długosz, 2022: 28). One of the main factors generating stress for refugees, besides separation from loved ones, fear of bombing and for the life of the family (which indicated more than 60% of indications), was leaving all possessions, lack of funds for living and lack of basic items such as clothes (about 40% of indications each) (Długosz, Kryvachuk and Izdebska-Długosz, 2022: 33). From the research carried out one should conclude that people from Ukraine use the benefit they receive precisely for such essential products.

Depriving Ukrainian refugees of the right to claim 500+ would probably result in a large group of people leaving Poland, and it is worth noting that an exit trend is already being identified. Research on Ukrainians leaving Poland for Germany shows that one of the main reasons for leaving, apart from having friends and acquaintances in Germany (43% of the respondents), is the offer of more attractive benefits, as indicated by 42% of the respondents, and the possibility to accumulate more savings as a motivation for 38% (Z Polski do Niemiec. Nowe trendy ukraińskiej migracji uchodźczej, 2023: 4).

Author Contributions

The authors confirm being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

The authors certify that the research published in the text was carried out in accordance with the research ethics of the affiliated university.

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